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Höhe 12,5 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum Acc. no. 31.4.1a.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544521>.

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Kemit, writing-boards, and palaeographic studies¹

AUORE MOTTE

Abstract

This paper is conceived as a case study to examine how relevant the Kemit script is for a better understanding of New Kingdom cursive scripts. In this perspective, I concentrate on the wooden tablets that bear extract(s) of this literary letter. After a concise description of each tablet, I consider its layout and its *mise-en-texte*. I then devote my attention to the recorded handwriting(s). To illustrate this point, I selected five signs: the 𐎎 (M17), 𐎏 (G17), 𐎐 (E34), 𐎑 (Aa1), and the weeping eye-sign with upper lid (D5–6+D9). I compare them with earlier, contemporaneous, and later witnesses of the Kemit written on ostraca or papyrus to provide a diachronic perspective and to draw some preliminary conclusions.

Introduction

The Kemit-book is usually known as a text written in old-fashioned cursive signs into evenly spaced and vertically ruled columns,² like on the well-preserved example kept in Brussels, on which Kemit §§ I–XIV have been arranged in 20 columns with red vertical dividing lines (see O. Brussels E 3208 in fig. 1).³ However, the text is not always as nicely displayed, nor are the signs well formed.⁴

¹ For the acknowledgements see the section at the end of this paper.

² Goelet 2013, 114.

³ The O. IFAO cat. 1171 A and O. IFAO cat. 1171B are joined pieces of this artefact as we can see it in Posener 1951a, pl. 22. See <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19622> [29 July 2020] for color pictures of O. IFAO cat. 1171 A–B. O. IFAO cat. 1171 A bears the lower parts of col. 2–8 of O. Brussels E 3208 whereas O. IFAO cat. 1171 B displays the lower parts of col. 18–20 of O. Brussels E 3208, Kemit §§ XIVc–XV in the next two columns as well as the titles and name of the copyist ([...] *sš hꜣy p(i)-n ꜣ-n-js.t hꜣy* “[...] scribe Hay, he of the chief workman Hay”, which has been written at a 90° rotation on the last line. See McDowell 2000, 227 about this colophon, the named copyist of which is also mentioned on O. IFAO cat. 1560 (Satire of Trades) and O. BM EA 29549 (unidentified literary text). About *p(i)-n* indicating filiation, in this case figuratively since the deputy Amennakhte was the real father of the scribe Hay, later deputy himself, see for instance Vernus 1981, 437, Černý and Groll 1984³, § 3.6, Junge 2005², 54 and Neveu 2010³, § 3.2.

⁴ See for instance O. IFAO cat. 1129 and 1134 in Posener 1951a, pl. 25; O. DAN hierat. 5 in Burkard 2003, pl. 20–22 or more recently Burkard 2018, pl. 4–5; O. IFAO cat. 1830, O. IFAO cat. 1833, O. IFAO cat. 1838, O. IFAO cat. 1854, and O. IFAO cat. 1856 in Gasse 2005, 104–

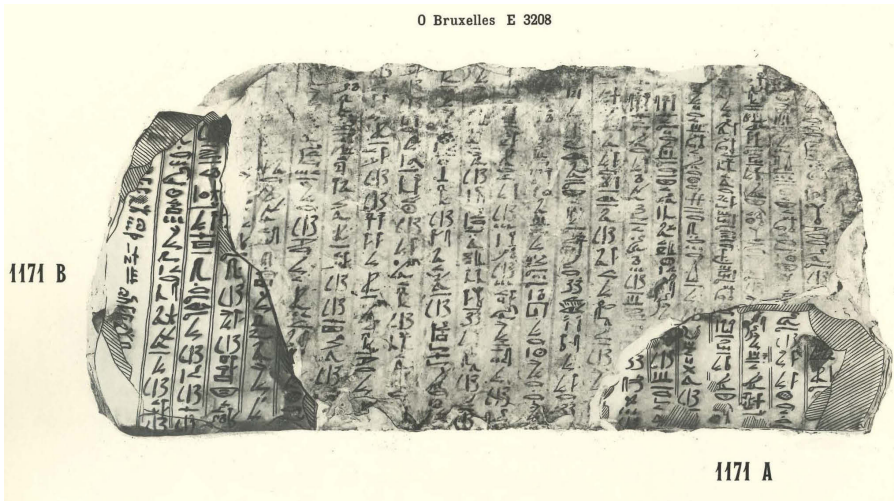


Fig. 1: O. Bruxelles E 3208 and O. IFAO 1171 A–B from Posener 1951, pl. 22 (© Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale)

The Kemit, a letter-like composition made up of texts from different textual genres, was apparently used to teach New Kingdom scribes the conventions of classic textual genres. This text, whose composition date is still unknown,⁵ was widely copied in excerpts on ostraca, tablets, and walls during the New Kingdom (1552–1069 BC) but is also known from a few earlier witnesses, such as P. London, UC 32271A (Late Middle Kingdom), which bears the final sections of the Memphite formula (§§ III–IV),⁶ or O. DAN hierat. 5 (late 17th dynasty), on which not less than six paragraphs of the Kemit are preserved (§§ IIa–VIIc).⁷ Up to now, 488 witnesses have been recorded (276 of them are still awaiting publication):

105, 109, 115–116, 136, 139; O. DeM 1168 or O. DeM C 2640 in Mathieu and Ritter 2008, pl. 13 and pl. 21. There are many more examples in the IFAO collection, some of which are currently under study by V. Ritter. May she find here my warmest thanks for letting me see the artefacts on which she is working.

5 It may likely have been composed at the end of the reign of Amenemhat I or Senwosret I. See Posener 1956, 5 and note 10; Parkinson 2002, 322; and Mathieu and Ritter 2008, 194.

6 Cf. Collier and Quirke 2004, 50–51 and Goelet 2013, 113.

7 Burkard 2003. A third early witness might be the Lisht North ostrakon housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. No. 15.3.988), which shows part of Kemit section one (§ 1c–d). A dating cannot be provided by means of the palaeography. However, the sherd itself, the fabric of which is Marl C (Vienna System classification), can be dated from the 12th or 13th dynasties. For an overview of the settlement area at Lisht North, see Arnold 1996, 13–21. For more information on the Marl C fabric and the Vienna System classification, cf. Arnold and Bourriau 1993, 166–169 and 175–181 as well as Bader 2002. I would like to express my gratitude to S. Allen who shared her knowledge to provide a plausible date for this sherd. That said it

- 476 ostraca or limestone flakes
- 5 dipinti
- 5 writing-boards
- 1 papyrus
- and 1 scribe's palette, although this last witness might be an example of a model letter rather than another witness of the Kemit.⁸

This text is said to be written in an archaizing script imitating late Old Kingdom – early Middle Kingdom letters in the same vein as the documents from the Elephantine archive or the Heqanakht letters. Parkinson suggested that the script of the Kemit embodies a continuous textual tradition going back to a period when its form was very close to the cursive hieratic of literary manuscripts and letters.⁹ A plausible explanation for this continuity is that the text was employed as a training text when

cannot be fully excluded that the artefact was inscribed in later times, during the Ramesside period for instance. The excavations at Lisht have revealed ostraca with a Ramesside dating. As such, a similar date for Acc. No. 15.3.988 could seem likely according to R. Demarée (pers. comm.), whom I would like to thank for his time and his explanations. He suggested that the black vertical dividing lines could speak for a later date. As it will be discussed later in this paper (see for instance footnotes 43–44 below with further examples and references), such black ruled vertical lines are found on the previously mentioned P. UC 32271A as well as on later witnesses of the Kemit, unlike red-inked column lines, which seem to be present only on New Kingdom copies as far as we can tell in the current state of the documentation. In essence, an early dating might be possible but because of its unsecured dating, it is not further considered in this paper.

- 8 The previously mentioned Guimet palette (published in Drioton 1944) was identified as a Kemit witness by Posener in his appendix of van de Walle 1948, 42. The palette, now housed in the Louvre (AF 12725), bears as a matter of fact what might correspond to the first section (§ Ia–b) of the Kemit on the back-side. However, section § Ic does not follow. We read instead the imperative of *iwi*, *my* “come.” This verbal form rather suggests the start of the second part of a (model-)letter. After the epistolary formula of conventional phrases of salutation, the real matter of the letter is introduced. On the structure of Middle Kingdom letters and their epistolary formulae, see for instance James 1962, Appendix D.
- 9 Parkinson 2002, 322. As for the Lahun letters, the vertical format tends to be supplanted by the linear mode on papyri. Cf. Goelet 2013, 114. See Luft 2006, pl. 1–37, which record many Lahun letters from the temple archive in which the columnar mode is still preferred. The material from the town also revealed a few letters with vertical lines of hieratic text but the linear mode is more frequent. See for instance Collier and Quirke 2002, 4–5 (P. UC 32092A–C), 18–19 (P. UC 32106G), 20–21 (P. UC 32109E), 36–47 (P. UC 32117–32120), 60–61 (P. UC 32124), 76–77 (P. UC 32149–32150), 114–117 (P. UC 32203), and 126–127 (P. UC 32207–32208). Goelet 2015a, 198, 206 and 210 also observed that the shift from a vertical, columnar mode to a horizontal, linear mode most likely occurred around the period from the reigns of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III whereas the linear format was already the preferred mode of text presentation from the First Intermediate Period on private stelae. As the Ramesseum papyri from the 13th dynasty onwards demonstrate, the columnar format become obsolete for literary documents, with the

the linear script was still in wide use; Fischer-Elfert noted that such old-fashioned hands were still used for administrative documents in provincial centres such as Elephantine well into the late 12th dynasty.¹⁰

These observations raised the following questions: is the allegedly archaizing script of the Kemit identical through time and space? Does the writing medium (and implements) have any impact on the shape of the signs? This led me to conceive this paper as a case study to examine the relevancy of the Kemit script for a better understanding of New Kingdom cursive scripts, which was the focus of this fourth *Ägyptologische „Binsen“-Weisheiten* edition. Examining all these witnesses to address this question obviously falls beyond the scope of a paper, but the five writing-boards provide a coherent sub-corpus and a workable sample.¹¹ This paper is structured as follows. After a concise description of each wooden tablet, I consider its layout and its *mise-en-texte*. I then devote my attention to the recorded handwriting(s). To illustrate this point, I selected five signs: the Ꞗ (M17), ꞗ (G17), Ꞙ (E34), ꞙ (Aa1), and the weeping eye-sign with upper lid (combination of Gardiner D5–6 and D9). I compare them with earlier, contemporaneous, and later witnesses of the Kemit written on ostraca or papyrus to provide a diachronic perspective and to draw some preliminary conclusions.

I Corpus: five or three writing-boards?

At first sight, five writing-boards bear extracts of the Kemit-letter: T. Cairo CG 25367 (= JE 26442), the so-called “Puiemre board,” T. Louvre AF 497, T. Carnarvon III (= Cairo JE 43217, SR4/694), and T. Luxor J 1001. The identification of the first Middle Kingdom tablet, T. Cairo CG 25367, is controversial (see Appendix).

The Puiemre board

The second Middle Kingdom tablet was found during the excavations of Puiemre’s tomb (TT 39, el-Khokha) by N. de Garies Davies and his team on behalf of the Metropolitan Museum in the early 20th century. Several splinters of what was initially a wooden board covered with stucco were found during the clearance of the

notable exception of the Kemit. See *inter alia* https://projects.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/online_research_catalogues/rp/the_ramesseum_papyri.aspx [16 June 2020].

¹⁰ Parkinson 2002, 323 and Fischer-Elfert 2002, 214–215.

¹¹ It is well understood that the obtained results could be compared with the other known witnesses of the Kemit-book or with contemporary texts, such as the ostraca from Edfu, graffiti, or Books of the Dead.

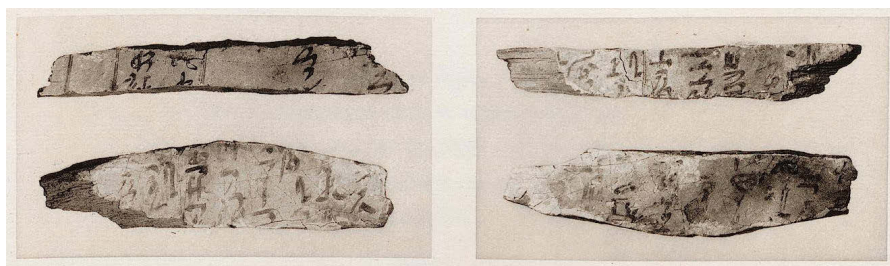


Fig. 2: Puiemre board (after De Garis Davies 1923, pl. 79a)

courtyard and its approach.¹² The original dimensions of this tablet are unknown, as no more fragments have been found. The artefact itself and the excavation context suggest a Middle Kingdom dating, even though such writing boards were still used by the end of the 18th dynasty.¹³ The current location of these splinters of wooden board is unknown.¹⁴ This artefact is henceforth designated as the “Puimre board”. Posener identified it as one of the earliest known witnesses of the Kemit.¹⁵ Such a witness would thus be precious for the diachronic dimension of this paper. However, the two low-resolution published pictures do not allow for full examination of this artefact.

T. Louvre AF 497

In the Louvre museum is a wooden tablet (T. Louvre AF 497) layered with an originally white stucco, which has now turned a brownish colour. This tablet has

¹² De Garis Davies 1923, 62 and pl. 79a.

¹³ Vernus 1984, col. 704. For a similar wooden tablet, dated from the 18th dynasty, see for instance Hagen 2013.

¹⁴ I am not aware of its current localisation. Even if these fragments were excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, they were never accessioned (or intended to be brought out) of Egypt (N. Allon, pers. comm.). I thought the writing board could be in the Cairo Egyptian Museum but, after consultation of their database, for which I am indebted to the RMCDD (Registration, Collections Management and Documentation Department Egyptian Museum, Cairo) team to allow me to do so during my short stay in Cairo in the occasion of the 12th International Conference of Egyptologists in 2019, it seems not to be the case. It is possible that they are still stored in the MMA magazines or the Carter’s magazine on the Thebes West bank. I am also indebted to N. Allon (Metropolitan Museum), E. Froid (Oxford University), Fr. Hagen (University of Copenhagen), K. Kapiiec (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures), Ch. Ragazzoli (Sorbonne Paris IV University), and C. Roehrig (Metropolitan Museum) who helped me in my search of the current location of this Puimre board.

¹⁵ De Garis Davies 1923, 62 and Posener in van de Walle 1948, 42.

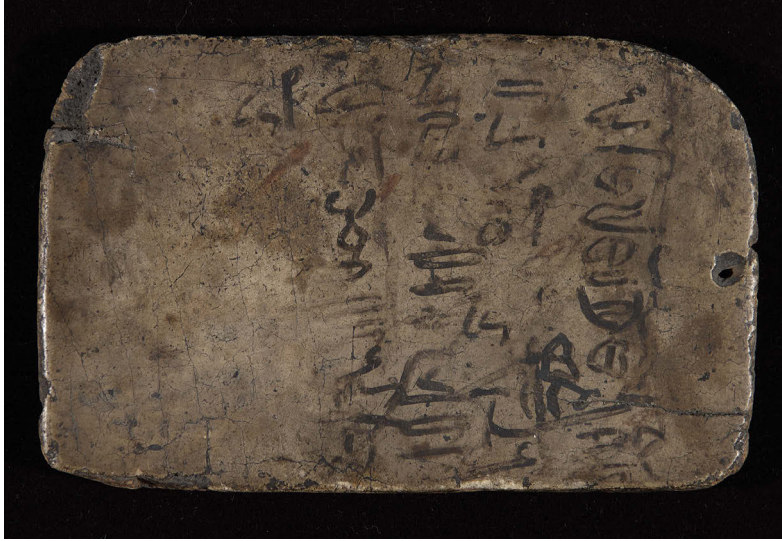


Fig. 3: T. Louvre AF 497 (© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Christian Décamps)

a smaller size. It measures 10.1 cm in height by 15.5 cm in width.¹⁶ Little is known about this small writing-board: both its provenance and circumstances of discovery are unknown.¹⁷ However, based on palaeographical criteria and despite the so-called archaizing aspect of the script, Barbotin offers a likely date between the end of the 17th dynasty and the very start of the 18th dynasty¹⁸ for this apprentice board containing the first paragraph of the Kemit.

T. Carnarvon III (T. Cairo JE 43217, SR4/694)

The Carnarvon writing board (T. Cairo JE 43217, SR4/694) was discovered in 1911 by the Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter in a re-used *saff* tomb of the late Middle Kingdom, east of Deir el-Bahari temple (Carnarvon Tomb 37).¹⁹ It was found

¹⁶ For another small tablet, even though this one is a bit larger than T. Louvre AF 497, see T. Vienna 3924 (14,8 cm × 18,5 cm × 0,75 cm) on <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=4921> [11 April 2020].

¹⁷ Barbotin 1997, 247, n. 1.

¹⁸ Barbotin 1997, 249.

¹⁹ Hayes 1948, 3. See also Hagen 2020, 1 and Lilyquist 2020a for a recent recontextualisation of all the Carnarvon boards as well as the online publication of the Carter excavations hosted by Chicago University (“Excavations at Thebes: The Earl of Carnarvon and the Metropolitan Museum of Art at Carnarvon Tomb 62 and Surrounds”): Lilyquist 2020b.

among the stones covering the floor of chamber C with T. Carnarvon IV.²⁰ More importantly, though, they were next to the coffins of Djehuty and his wife Ahhotep, and near a basket of scribal equipment.²¹ It is a unique and rare case where a board can plausibly be linked to a historic individual.²² This gessoed board has inscriptions on both sides: sections I to VIII of the Kemit on the *recto*, while the reverse bears extracts of § Ia-b and § VIId, as well as a list of names,²³ which has been written at a 180° rotation.²⁴ The board, broken in two halves, measures 48 cm by 26.5 cm.²⁵ The tablet is probably to be dated to the first years of the 18th dynasty.²⁶ Both the archaeological context and the location of the tomb support this dating and provide a *terminus ante quem*.²⁷ The board, previously in the Cairo Egyptian Museum, has been transferred to the GEM (Grand Egyptian Museum) in Giza.²⁸

T. Luxor J 1001

From 2002 to 2004, the Spanish-Egyptian mission at Dra Abu el-Naga found in the disturbed sand of the courtyards of TT 11, TT 12, and tomb 399 several splinters of a board made of wood, wrapped in linen and covered with a fine coat of stucco.²⁹ In total, 18 fragments have been uncovered.³⁰ The tablet (T. Luxor J 1001), when complete, would have measured 45.8 cm by 31 cm.³¹ It bears drawings on both sides but only the right-hand side of the so-called *recto* shows an inscription, being the first paragraph of the Kemit written three times, side by side.³² This board was probably part of the funerary equipment of Djehuty, owner of TT 11 and a high official under

20 Cf. Lilyquist 2020b, Essay 2.

21 Lilyquist 2020a, table 1 and Hagen 2020, table 1 and footnote 17.

22 Fr. Hagen (pers. comm.). About the social context in which the Carnarvon boards might have been written, see Hagen 2019, Essay 25.

23 Being a narrative or an exercise according to Lilyquist 2020a, table 1.

24 See Lilyquist 2020b, fig. 52 for a color photograph of T. Carnarvon III reverse.

25 Carnarvon and Carter 1912, 77. 48 × 27 cm according to Lilyquist 2020a, table 1.

26 Hayes 1948, 3.

27 Carnarvon and Carter 1912, 70. Lilyquist 2020a, 2 and 12 highlights the fact that the tomb was probably covered during the construction of the valley temple of Hatshepsut.

28 I would like to thank Marwa Badr el-Din from the RCMDD for letting me know about this recent transfer.

29 Galán and el-Bialy 2004, 38–39.

30 Galán 2007, 1.

31 Galán and el-Bialy 2004, 39.

32 Repeating a text on the same manuscript is not very common. Galán nevertheless identified another example among the Turin ostraca, in which § Ia–b has been written twice. See Galán 2007, 16, n. 49 and O. Turin 57054 in López 1978, pl. 29. This example is also mentioned in Hagen 2013, 85, footnote 53.

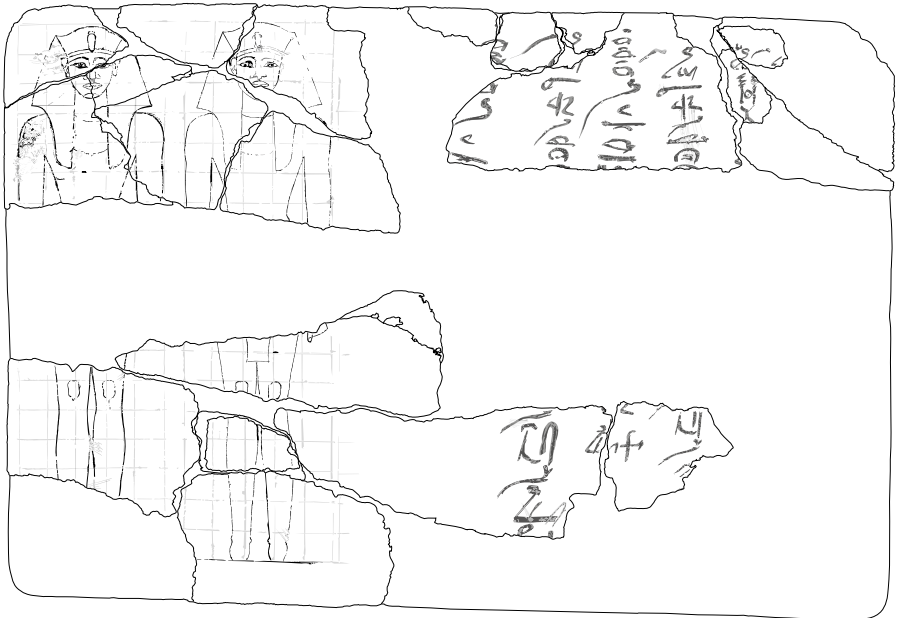
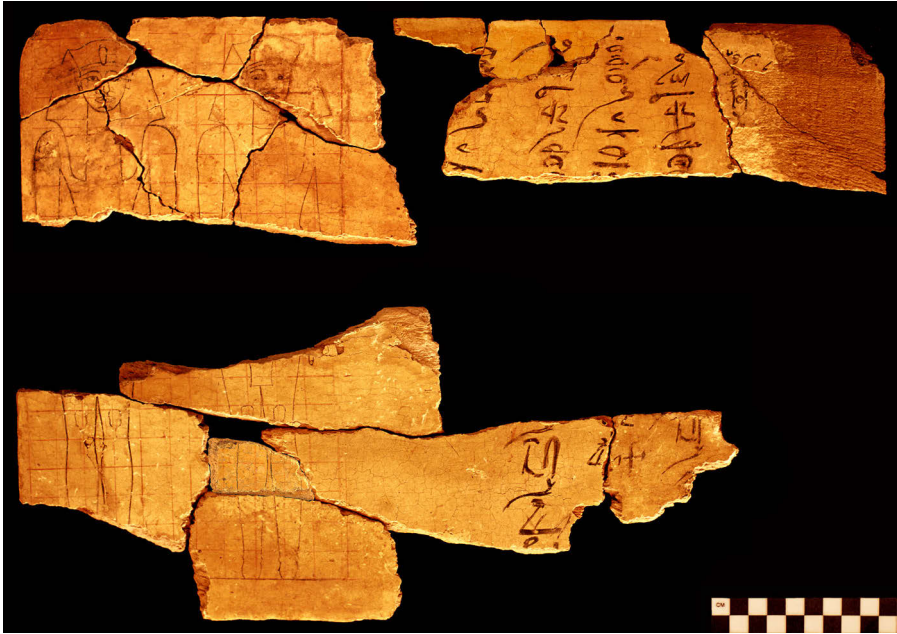


Fig. 4: T. Luxor J 1001 (© Proyecto Djehuty, previously published in Galán and el-Bialy 2004 and Galán 2007)

Hatshepsut.³³ This and the likely depiction of Hatshepsut³⁴ on it indicate an early 18th dynasty dating (Hatshepsut – Thutmose III).³⁵

A concise overview

The table below summarizes the main information of each writing board (table 1).³⁶ It may not be out of place to note here that the Puemre board is problematic. Its preservation state and its unknown current location prohibit any detailed study of the layout and *mise-en-texte* (section 2). This board will only be discussed when useful for palaeographic comparisons (section 3).

2 Layout and *mise-en-texte* of the Kemit tablets

At first glance, the boards have a size roughly similar to a full sheet of papyrus during the Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos period.³⁷ The Louvre tablet is of a much smaller size, perhaps with a view to imitating a quarter-height papyrus sheet, which ranged from 6 cm to 9 cm at that time³⁸ and from 8 cm to 12 cm during the New Kingdom.³⁹ As a matter of fact, Barbotin links this small tablet to one of the Carnarvon tablets (JE 43216) based on the pictures available in the book of Earl of Carnarvon and H. Carter.⁴⁰ However, this tablet, which lists several names just like the reverse of T. Carnarvon III, is longer than it looks in the photo.⁴¹ This tablet initially was roughly the same size as T. Carnarvon III and was later broken in half.⁴²

None of the boards has an identical layout, even if each of them bears one extract of the Kemit-book, written in columns from right to left as expected. In case of a short extract, it may be combined with text or drawing on the same side of the tablet as we can see on T. Luxor J 1001 (cf. table 1). T. Louvre AF 497 reveals that

33 Galán 2007, 19.

34 Galán 2007, 6–7 and 12–13.

35 Galán 2007, 1.

36 T. Cairo CG 25367 has been withdrawn from this table given its controversial status. Cf. Appendix – T. Cairo CG 25367 below.

37 See for instance Erman 1901, 5; Möller 1909, 6–7; Černý 1952, 8 and 15; Vernus 1984, col. 704; Parkinson and Quirke 1995, 16; Allen 2002, 76; and Hagen 2013, 82.

38 Černý 1952, 15.

39 Parkinson and Quirke 1995, 16–17.

40 Barbotin 1997, 247, footnote 2.

41 Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. LXXVI (1–2).

42 I would like to warmly thank Fr. Hagen, who kindly gave me more information on this board during the conference (pers. comm.).

Table 1: The Kemit writing boards

	Puïemre board	T. Louvre AF 497	T. Carnarvon III (Cairo JE 43217, SR4/694)	T. Luxor J 1001
Dimensions	Unknown	15.5 cm × 10.1 cm	48 cm × 26.5 cm	45.8 cm × 31 cm
Provenance	EL-Khokha, TT 39	Unknown	Deir el-Bahari (tomb n° 37)	Dra Abu el-Naga, in the courtyards of TT 11, TT 12 and tomb 399
Dating	Middle Kingdom?	Late 17 th dynasty – early 18 th dynasty	Early 18 th dynasty	Early 18 th dynasty (Hatshepsut – Thutmose III)
Kemit §§	§ IIa and § VIIa?	§ I	§§ I–VIII (ro) and § Iab + VIII (vo)	§ I (x3)
Other text(s) preserved	Impossible to say	No	Yes, list of names (vo)	No, but drawings on both sides instead

a short extract can also stand by itself on a writing-board, leaving an empty space. Short extracts are written with unruled, more or less evenly spaced columns. In the longer version on the *recto* of T. Carnarvon III, the scribe used black-inked column lines, while the short repetitions on the reverse are not framed with such vertical lines. While black ruled lines are also found on the earlier P. UC 32271A,⁴³ they tend to be replaced by red lines in the Ramesside period.⁴⁴

The use of black ink is prevalent on all of them, even though we know of earlier and later witnesses with rubrics, such as the incipit of the text, specific clauses or the first paragraphs of the letter.⁴⁵ The exclusive use of black ink is not unique to these tablets, as we know of other copies of the Kemit being written only with black ink.⁴⁶ It might be linked either to the writing medium itself, a wooden board, or its purposes – i. e. writing medium meant for exercises, drafts, preliminary copies – or even both.

Red ink is found only on T. Louvre AF 497, where it is used only for paratextual marks,⁴⁷ just as the 17th dynasty O. DAN hierat. 5 and several Ramesside copies.⁴⁸

43 See Collier and Quirke 2004, 50–51.

44 See *inter alia* O. CGT 57551–57552 in López 1978, pl. 177; O. Prague P 2034, O. Prague P 3824 and O. Prague P 3826 in Fischer-Elfert, Navrátilová, Onderka and Toivari-Viitala 2018, pl. 8–10; or O. IFAO cat. 1824–1826 in Gasse 2005, 92–96. Black vertical lines are, however, still attested during the Ramesside period. See for instance O. IFAO cat. 1828 in Gasse 2005, 98–99 or O. Prague P 3830 in Fischer-Elfert, Navrátilová, Onderka and Toivari-Viitala 2018, pl. 9. Ruled vertical lines are also attested in several 18th dynasty ostraca. See for instance O. EA 329 and 330 from Amarna in Pendlebury 1951, pl. 97. Since red ink is usually noted in the other plates of Pendlebury's volume, we may assume that the vertical lines are in this case black. In addition to these examples of long extracts written in ruled columns, there are also Kemit copies without any vertical lines, such as O. DAN hierat. 5, one of the earlier witnesses. See Burkard 2018, pl. 4–5.

45 For a concise overview, see for instance the synoptic edition in Posener 1951a, pl. 1–21 and Petersmarck 2012, 115–140, to which Mathieu and Ritter 2008 should be added for the last sections of the Kemit.

46 See *inter alia* O. IFAO cat. 1837, O. IFAO cat. 1844 or O. IFAO cat. 1852 in Gasse 2005, 113, 125 and 134 or O. UC 31927 on the Petrie Museum website <http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk/> [19 April 2020].

47 For other tablets with red-inked paratextual signs and marginal annotations, see *inter alia* T. BM EA 5646, T. Louvre N 693, T. MMA 28.9.4, and T. CG 25224. In a very few cases, red ink may also be used for rubrics on writing-boards. See for instance T. Prague P 7228.

48 See e.g. O. IFAO cat. 1828–1829, O. IFAO cat. 1840–1841, O. IFAO cat. 1863, O. IFAO cat. 1870–1871 in Gasse 2005, 99–101, 120–121, 147, 157–158; O. Cairo JE 54949, O. DeM 1159, O. DeM 1164, and O. DeM 1166 in Mathieu and Ritter 2008, pl. 1–2, pl. 6, and pl. 9–11. It should also be noted that a couple of Ramesside Kemit copies are written entirely in red ink. See for instance O. IFAO cat. 1854, in which not only the vertical lines but also the text itself are in red, in Gasse 2005, 136 for an example among the published material. Posener 1951b provides an excellent synthesis on red ink uses in ancient Egyptian manuscripts.

Three red dots have been added as a means of punctuation,⁴⁹ or verse-divider,⁵⁰ as in many other literary compositions copied from the very late Middle Kingdom until the end of the New Kingdom.⁵¹ It is striking, though, that the longer version of T. Carnarvon III does not contain any punctuation marks. On T. Louvre AF 497, each dot is inked close to the cursive text, in the right margin (see fig. 3). The first dot, in the first column, separates § Ia (*bꜥk ḏḏ ḥr nb.f*) from § Ib (*mrrw.f ḥnh.f*), which continues into the next column. The second dot has been inked slightly before § Ic (*wḏꜥ.f snb.f*), in between the verbal form ḥnh and its third-person suffix pronoun. The end of § Ic corresponds with the end of the column, and no dot was added there. A third dot is then used to separate § Id (*m ꜣwt ḏt r nhḥ*) from § Ie (*mi mrr bꜥk im*) in the middle of column four.

In addition, the Louvre writing-board reveals a red oblique stroke, which appears to mark the end of the first Kemit paragraph (see fig. 3). This stroke, which I will henceforth refer to as an ending mark, must be linked to the *grḥ*-sign (D41) on several New Kingdom copies of the Kemit and on the 17th dynasty O. DAN hierat. 5 as well.⁵² This sign is used to mark a separation between two sections of text.⁵³ To the best of my knowledge, this kind of ending stroke is rather infrequent, unlike the previously mentioned *grḥ*-sign or even the red (or black) horizontal strokes coming from the *ḥwt*-sign (O6) as early as the 5th dynasty in the Pyramid Texts of Unas.⁵⁴ I could find one similar mark on O. Berlin P. 11297, which dates from the Hyksos period (see fig. 5). On this roughly contemporaneous administrative text, several lines have been crossed out. A long horizontal black line marks the beginning of this crossed-out section, while an oblique stroke has been written next to the last line to be deleted. This mark is strikingly similar to the oblique stroke of T. Louvre AF 497.

49 Not to be confused with the checking dots, for example on O. IFAO cat. 1828 and O. IFAO cat. 1840 described in the footnote above.

50 See for instance the early 18th dynasty Ashmolean board 1948.91 in Hagen 2013 for another example of such punctuation marks on a writing board.

51 See for instance Motte and Sojic 2020, 60, note 211, which list previous bibliography. *Inter alia*: Grapow 1936, 52–53; Posener 1951b, 27–48; Burkard 1983; Buchberger 1993, 22–24; Fecht 1993; Winand 1998; Tacke 2001; Parkinson 2002, 115–117; Gohy 2012, 55–56; Goelet 2015b; Landgráfová and Mynárová 2016.

52 See e.g. O. Fitzwilliam E.GA.4758.1943 in Hagen 2011, pl. 117; O. Munich ÄS 3402 in Schoske and Wildung 2009, 35; or O. Michaelides 32 and 78 in Goedicke and Wente 1962, pl. 12–14.

53 On the 17th dynasty pottery, the sign is misplaced. It is expected in column 9, between paragraphs IV and III but the scribe added it erroneously in the middle of column 2 within paragraph VI. Cf. Burkard 2018, pl. 4–5.

54 About this *ḥwt*-sign, see for instance de Halleux 1986, 90; Allam 2007, 30. As a side note, the red-inked O. CGT 57549 v^o has small black horizontal lines. Black-inked text with black strokes are also found on e.g. O. BM EA 5641 r^o in Demarée 2002, pl. 36–37, or even O. Strasbourg BNU H 137, in which a red *grḥ*-sign is added at the end of § II. See Koenig 1997, pl. 74 and 127.

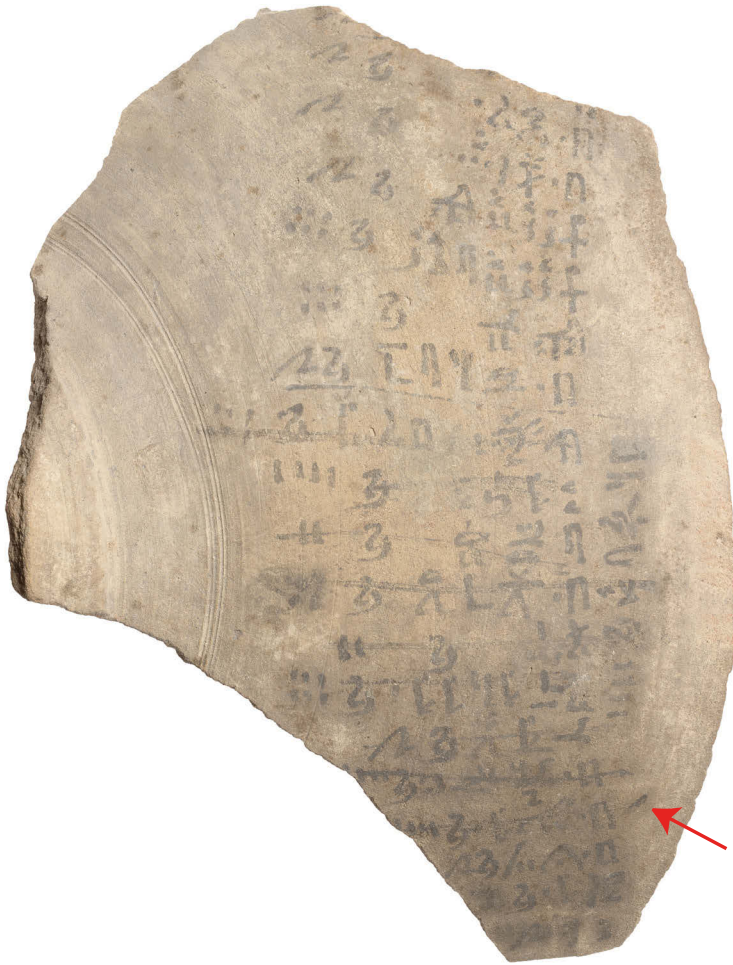


Fig. 5: O. Berlin P. 11297 (© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Inv. Nr. 11297, Foto: S. Steiß)

Both strokes in O. Berlin P. 11297 and T. Louvre AF 497 seem to be paratextual marks indicating the end of a section, but we cannot exclude another meaning and/or use. Strokes are found in earlier texts. Among the documentary material from the Lahun settlement, for instance, are mathematical papyri in which one or several strokes have been added in the right margin.⁵⁵ Such strokes are understood as checkmarks attesting a didactic practice and are somehow related to the attendance

⁵⁵ See for instance P. UC 32134A or P. UC 32160 in Collier and Quirke 2006, 74–77 and 84–89.

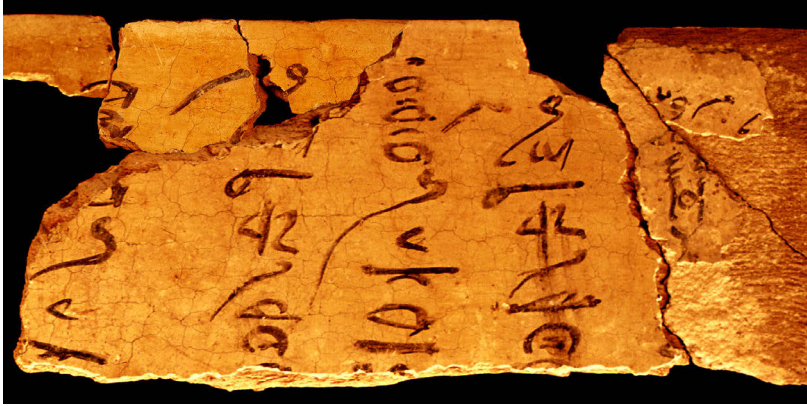


Fig. 6: T. Luxor J 1001, right-side upper part (© Proyecto Djehuty, previously published in Galán and el-Bialy 2004 and Galán 2007)

marks on the Lahun accounts.⁵⁶ This didactic aim echoes the likely purpose of the Kemit writing-boards. Therefore, one cannot exclude this possibility of a checkmark for the stroke on T. Louvre AF 497, especially as this board is said to be the product of an apprentice.⁵⁷

T. Louvre AF 497 is not the only Kemit tablet with paratextual marks. T. Luxor J 1001 bears three diagonal black strokes in between the upper parts of the columns (cf. fig. 6). They look similar to the stroke used as a substitute for unusual or complicated signs in hieratic (∕, Z5).⁵⁸ In this case, the strokes should not be understood as terminal marks. As mentioned above, this board includes three copies of the Kemit's first paragraph, each being written in two columns. If this stroke had a similar function as the red one found on the Louvre tablet, we should have expected to see them at the end of each pair. Yet, they are found between the two columns of each pair.⁵⁹ In such a position, I suggest instead a linking function, to show, in case it wasn't clear enough, that the two columns in each pair should be read together as the Kemit opening paragraph. Here again, the didactic context, in which this text has been written, might explain the *raison-d'être* of these linking strokes.




⁵⁶ About the Middle Kingdom attendance marks in Lahun material, see for instance Di Teodoro 2018, 83–91.




⁵⁷ Cf. Barbotin 1997.

⁵⁸ Galán 2007, 13.


⁵⁹ Galán 2007, 13.

Handwritings and apprentice context

The recorded handwritings on T. Louvre AF 497, T. Luxor J 1001, and T. Carnarvon III also suggest training practices.⁶⁰ Barbotin previously pointed out the clumsy handwriting of T. Louvre AF 497 (see for instance the bird-signs G17 () , G29 () , and G21 ()), the few hesitation marks showing the tentativeness of the writer, the messy layout due to which columns are not easily distinguishable from one to another, and the uneven size and the irregular inking of the signs.⁶¹ All of this made him conclude that this board was written by an apprentice, a junior scribe unsure of the script.⁶²

On T. Luxor J 1001, the presence of two hands next to each other with a clear difference in the handwriting strongly suggests a practice board and therefore an apprenticeship context. As Galán noted, in the first pair of columns, the handwriting is neat, small and tight, while the signs of the two other versions are larger and disconnected and show imprecision and hesitancy in their writing.⁶³ This led him to say that the first pair of columns (copy A) was probably written by a senior scribe and accordingly used as a model for the two others (copy B–C). He further noticed that the second time the model was copied (copy C), the handwriting improved significantly as we can see for instance with the signs of the seated man (A1 ) , the *f*-sign (I9 ) or the *d*-sign (D46 ) . Additionally, there are no blots and inky fingerprints anymore. For these reasons, he assumed that the other two copies were made by an apprentice.

The Carnarvon board is a further telling example in favour of a didactic context for the Kemit tablets. The handwriting is compact and as clumsy as on T. Louvre AF 497, and many signs are ill-formed (e.g. the writing of *mrr* in the first sections of the text). The size of the cursive signs is erratic. Even though a columnar guideline has been drawn before the text to ease the vertical writing, the scribe (or rather the apprentice scribe) did not write its text carefully, as suggested by several signs that cross over these lines (fig. 7).


The repetition of § Iab and § VIId on the reverse is, in my opinion, another clue of an apprentice context. The handwriting is different. The script is more flexible and well mastered.⁶⁴ A first telling example is the quail chick (G43 ) , made of two

60 The fragmentary state of the Puiembre board prevents us of drawing any conclusion for this witness. About the classical literature, part of the New Kingdom scribe curriculum, being transmitted in a variety of contexts, not only in school, see for instance Hagen 2013, 85.

61 Barbotin 1997, 247.

62 On the other hand, the text does not seem to contain any grammatical or lexical mistakes. Cf. Barbotin 1997, 249.

63 Galán 2007, 14.

64 See e.g. A1-sign or the hoe-sign (U7 ) in fig. 7–8.

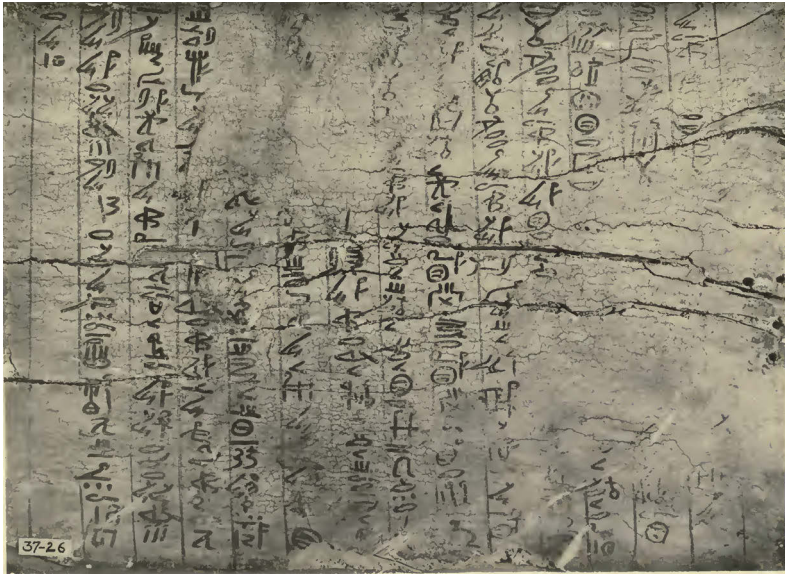


Fig. 7: T. Carnarvon III, reverse (© Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76)

brushstrokes.⁶⁵ It has a different shape on both sides of the board. On the reverse, the first part of the ductus is systematically tilted and the diagonal stroke is quite close to the second part of the ductus,⁶⁶ while on the obverse the quail chick (G43) has a rather vertical shape. Another indicative example is the group *dd* (𓄀). The first sentences of the Kemit are not well preserved on the *recto* and, as such, this prevents us from taking into consideration the same section on the verso. However, the verb *dd* is visible in column 12, as part of § VIII. The sign group here has a narrow size; the *d*-sign (I10 𓄀) has an elongated shape and a small oblique stroke form the hand-sign (D46 𓄁) with the horizontal line from below. On the reverse, on the other hand, the group is stretched on a vertical axis. The curve of the snake's back is more pronounced, and the hand-sign (D46) is made of two strokes more or less equivalent in size. In short, the two columns on the reverse reveal the hand of a master scribe whereas the obverse is the pupil's exercise.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ This is often the case. See for instance the Heqanakht papyri palaeography in Allen 2002, 201.

⁶⁶ Like the Heqanakht documents, the signs are drawn from top to bottom and from left to right. See Allen 2002, 77.

⁶⁷ While the possibility of a school exercise is mentioned in Carnarvon and Carter 1912, 90, nothing is said about the different hands, and no mention of a teacher and an apprentice is made.

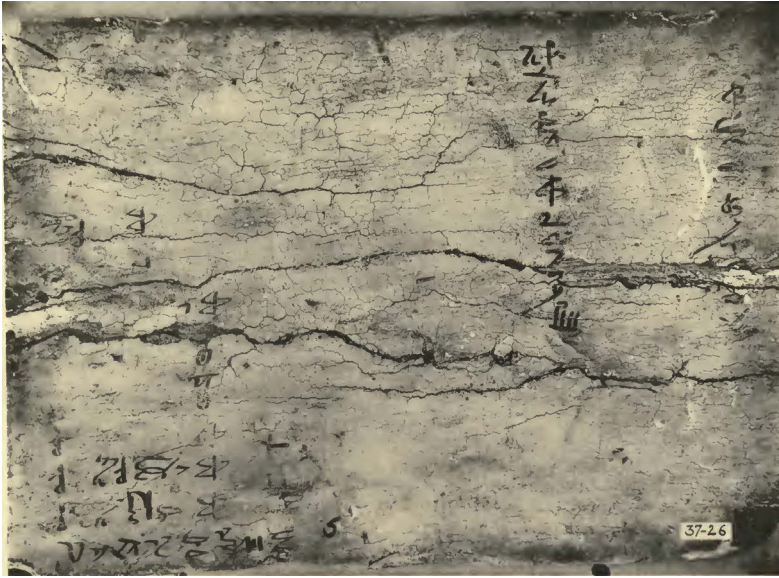


Fig. 8: T. Carnarvon III, obverse (© Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76)

To sum up, the three early New Kingdom writing boards bear conclusive evidence of an apprenticeship context for the Kemit tablets.⁶⁸ They are valuable artefacts to study the forms, as well as the agents (“teacher” versus “student”),⁶⁹ of the New Kingdom cursive scripts.





3 Handwritings and palaeography

Barbotin and Galán have previously discussed the palaeography of T. Louvre AF 497 and T. Luxor J 1001 respectively, with short mention of T. Carnarvon III.⁷⁰ More can be said on the handwritings of these three boards, in comparison with earlier, contemporaneous, and later Kemit copies, in order to shed light on the particularity of the Kemit-script at that time and, at the same time, to give a diachronic perspective. In this respect, I first discuss two of the most common signs in the Kemit: the owl

68 It should be noted that not all the writing boards are evidence of an apprenticeship context. See for instance Hagen 2013, 82–85 and Hagen 2020, 31 about the social context and the material culture of writing boards, which can also be part of the basic equipment of fully trained scribes as he pointed it out.

69 Cf. the “teacher-student” paradigm in Hagen 2013.

70 Cf. Barbotin 1997 and Galán 2007, 16–17.

(G17 ) and the reed-leaf (M17 ). Both are considered by Galán, but only the reed-leaf (M17) is mentioned in Barbotin, who relies on its shape in T. Louvre AF 497 to offer a likely dating. I then study two cursive signs whose shape evolves characteristically over time according to the available palaeographies: the hare-sign (E34 ) and the *h* (Aa1 ).⁷¹ I conclude my short discussion of the Kemit palaeography with the eye with flowing tears and painted upper lid (D5–6+D9), which appear, with regard to the Kemit tablets, only on T. Carnarvon III, in the hand of the apprentice. This sign is another telling example for comparing handwritings and discussing palaeographic features. These five selected signs enable me to determine whether the archaizing script of the Kemit is identical through time and space.

The reed-leaf sign (M17)

Both Barbotin and Galán discussed the single reed-leaf for the *yodh* (M17), which, as a characteristic sign, is useful for the dating of an artefact.⁷² During the Second Intermediate Period, the upper part of the sign is drawn with a short loop because, as Möller observed, “the characteristic of the manuscripts of the Hyksos period is a certain predilection for the rounded forms, sometimes somewhat ornamented, which however differ according to the texts.”⁷³ Such a rounded version of the reed-leaf sign (M17) is indeed found on 17th dynasty papyri such as P. Ebers or P. Westcar.⁷⁴ This form is found in T. Carnarvon III and T. Louvre AF 497, which is why a late 17th dynasty and/or early 18th dynasty dating has been suggested (see table 2). On the earlier P. UC 32271A, the reed-leaf (M17) has a straight layout in the same way as any other kind of Middle Kingdom cursive texts (see fig. 9).⁷⁵

During the Ramesside period, on the other hand, several Kemit copies feature the 17th dynasty loop, along with less rounded version.⁷⁶ This reappearance of the rounded *yodh* (M17) raises (new) questions about the Ramesside scribes’ conception of the archaizing script of the Kemit. That said, as Hagen pointed it out, the vertical stroke with the loop could be a more exaggerated version of the sign without the loop.⁷⁷

71 See signs 132 and 574 in Möller 1909–1912 for a concise diachronic overview.

72 Barbotin 1997, 249 and Galán 2007, 16–17.

73 Möller 1909, 11*. O. MMA 35144 and 36112 have a similar handwriting style. See e.g. the *aleph* (G1) at the end of col. 6, the *ib*-sign (F34) at the beginning of col. 4, or even the eye-sign (D4) in col. 2–3 and 6–7 of O. MMA 35144 in Hayes 1948, pl. 1.




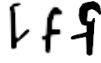


74 See for instance the recent text edition, including photographs, of Scholl 2002 and Lepper 2008.

75 Collier and Quirke 2004, 50–51.

76 See for instance O. Brussels E 3208 and O. Cairo CG 56842 in Posener 1951a, pl. 22–23 or O. Brussels E 7627 in Posener’s Appendix in van de Walle 1948, pl. 3–4.

77 Cf. Fr. Hagen (pers. comm.).

Table 2: Palaeographic table of the yodh (M17 \beth)

T. Louvre AF 497, drawing based on Barbotin 1997, 247	
T. Carnarvon III, drawing based on Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76	
T. Luxor J 1001 © Proyecto Djehuty, previously published in Galán and el-Bialy 2004; Galán 2007	
O. DAN hierat. 5, drawing based on photos by G. Burkard and DAI Kairo	
O. Brussels E 3208, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 23	
O. Brussels E 7627, drawing based on van de Walle 1948, pl. 3–4	

This sign might deserve further study considering a wide range of texts, administrative and literary, in a diachronic perspective to address more fully this issue.⁷⁸

While T. Carnarvon III and T. Louvre AF 497 share the common feature of the shape of the reed-leaf sign, a peculiarity must be noted for T. Luxor J 1001. In the fourth column, a small horizontal stroke crosses the middle of the sign, as if it was the rush sign with shoots (M22 f).⁷⁹ This occurs neither on T. Louvre nor on T. Carnarvon,⁸⁰ but it can be seen on the 17th dynasty Dra Abu el-Naga ostrakon.⁸¹ This peculiarity might be linked to the shape of this sign in documentary texts. As a matter of fact, the type b in Wimmer's palaeography of 19th–20th dynasty non-literary texts is strikingly similar to the reed-leaf examples in T. Luxor J 1001 and O. DAN hierat. 5.⁸²

78 Such a study obviously falls beyond the scope of this paper, which is a short case study.

79 Sign 289 in Möller 1909.

80 That said, the two rushes with shoots for *nm* (f f) in the seventh column of T. Carnarvon III allow us to compare it with the peculiar sign of T. Luxor J 1001.

81 As observed by Galán 2007, 17.

82 Wimmer 1995, 184–185 (vol. 1) and 181 (vol. 2); Wimmer 2001, 288.



Fig. 9: P. London, UC 32271A (courtesy of the Petrie Museum, UCL)

The owl-sign (G17)

From Old Kingdom to early 18th dynasty, two cursive versions of the owl-sign (G17) coexist, before the more abbreviated form, frequent in groups and ligatures, takes precedence over the other.⁸³ All the Kemit tablets display the cursive form closer to

⁸³ See for instance sign 196 in Möller 1909–1912 for a concise diachronic overview.


the owl hieroglyph. However, none of them has identical owl-signs. For instance, as Galán noted, the upper part of the sign is quite unusual on T. Luxor J 1001; it closely resembles the way the scribe of O. Brussels E 3208 (Ramesside period) drew his owl-signs (G17) on this copy.⁸⁴ They are not, however, exactly identical (see table 3). The upper parts are indeed composed of tilted stroke(s) but they are different. While in O. Brussels E 3208 the ear tufts of the owl are rather long, in the Luxor board they are shorter, and the ductus is even rounder in the apprentice's first trial (cf. end of col. 4, copy B). The lower parts, on the other hand, are less similar in T. Luxor J 1001 and O. Brussels E 3208. In the Luxor apprentice board, the owl-signs (G17) end with a pronounced loop. A similar ending loop is found in one of the owl-signs (G17) in T. Louvre AF 497, but in O. Brussels E 3208 this loop has a different layout. It is smaller and crosses below the horizontal line. A closer look at T. Louvre AF 497 reveals that the owl-signs (G17) have another similarity with the Luxor board. The upper part is tilted as well, even though it is made of one single stroke in this case. While these two boards share common features in the drawing of the cursive owl-signs (G17), T. Carnarvon III has another form, closer to the contemporaneous Kemit copies on O. MMA 35144 (e.g. in col. 3–5 and 7), O. MMA 36112 (e.g. in col. 9–11 and col. 23), and O. DAN hierat. 5 (e.g. in col. 9 and 13). The ear tufts of the owl are made in two brush strokes: one for the left ear and another for both the right ear and the body of the owl. Further strokes are then drawn for the owl legs. As regards T. Louvre AF 497, the lower part of the owl-signs (G17) seems to be an intermediary version between the Luxor board example on one hand and the examples in T. Carnarvon III, O. MMA 35144+36112, and O. DAN hierat. 5 on the other hand. In short, this highly characteristic old-fashioned sign of the Kemit-script is subject to a slight variation from text to text, be it diachronic evolution and/or peculiarities due to the script unfamiliarity.





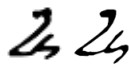


Next to the elaborate form, T. Carnarvon III presents the abbreviated form (see table 4). It happens in § VII only. At the end of column 10, the word *hnm.w* “smell” (Erman and Grapow 1926–1931, 3: 293.2–6) is written with the phonogram *nm* (T34) alongside with its phonetic complement, the owl-sign (G17). In this case, far from being close to the hieroglyphic form, the sign is cursively written as in the contemporary hieratic documents.⁸⁵ Few Kemit copies display this paragraph.⁸⁶

84 Galán 2007, 16.

85 Cf. sign 585 in Möller 1909.

86 See for instance Posener 1951a, pl. 7, who lists O. IFAO cat. 1114, O. IFAO cat. 1115, O. IFAO cat. 1126, O. IFAO cat. 1132, O. IFAO cat. 1133, O. IFAO 1135, O. IFAO cat. 1136, O. Cairo JE 56842, O. Brussels E 3208, O. EA 330, O. MMA 36112, and T. Carnarvon III; and Petersmark 2012, 128, who adds O. CGT 57060, O. CGT 57546, O. CGT 57552, and O. DAN hierat. 5 to this list.

Table 3: Palaeographic table of the owl-sign (G17 )

T. Louvre AF 497, drawing based on Barbotin 1997, 247	
T. Luxor J 1001 © Proyecto Djehuty, previously published in Galán and el-Bialy 2004; Galán 2007	
O. Brussels E 3208, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 23	
T. Carnarvon III, drawing based on Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76	
O. MMA 35144, drawing based on Hayes 1948, pl. 1	
O. MMA 36112, drawing based on Hayes 1948, pl. 2–3	
O. DAN hierat. 5, drawing based on photos by G. Burkard and DAI Kairo	

A close look reveals two ways of doing: one with the elaborate form and another with the abbreviated form.









Two contemporary witnesses of T. Carnarvon III (O. MMA 36112 and O. DAN hierat. 5) display the classical owl-sign with the easily recognizable ear tufts.⁸⁷ However, it should be noted here that a drawing of O. MMA 36112 could not be included in table 4 due to the low resolution of the black-and-white picture and the faded ink of the word *hnm.w* on this artefact (cf. fig. 10, second half of the first column).

The 18th dynasty O. EA 330 and the Ramesside O. CGT 57552 present the elaborate version as well.⁸⁸ The other Ramesside copies such as O. IFAO cat. 1114,

87 See Hayes 1948, pl. 2 and Burkard 2018, pl. 4–5 respectively.

88 See O. EA 330 in Pendlebury 1951, pl. 97; O. CGT 57552 in López 1984, pl. 177–177a. O. IFAO cat. 1133, the ink of which is extremely faded, seems to display the elaborate version too. See on: <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19581> [28 July 2020]. I would like to thank the IFAO Archives for sending me high-resolution pictures of this ostrakon, allowing me to examine the cursive signs.



Table 4: Palaeographic table of the group *hnm* from Kemit § VII

T. Carnarvon III, drawing based on Carnarvon & Carter 1912, pl. 76	
O. DAN hierat. 5, drawing based on G. Burkard and DAI Kairo	
O. EA 330, drawing based on Pendlebury 1951, pl. 97	
O. CGT 57552, drawing based on photos by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio	
O. IFAO cat. 1115, drawing based on photos © Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale	
O. IFAO cat. 1132, drawings based on photos © Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale	
O. CGT 57060, drawing based on photos by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio	
O. Brussels E 3208 + O. IFAO 1171A, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 22	


O. IFAO cat. 1115, O. IFAO cat. 1132, and O. CGT 57060 have the abbreviated form, in the same vein as T. Carnarvon III.⁸⁹ It might be surprising at first sight,

⁸⁹ See O. IFAO cat. 1114 on <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19561> [28 July 2020]; O. IFAO cat. 1115 on <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19562> [03 May 2020]; O. IFAO cat. 1132 on <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19580> [03 May 2020]; and O. CGT 57060 in López 1978, pl. 35–35a. O. Brussels E 3208 and O. IFAO cat. 1171 A, which are in fact two joined pieces of the same artefact, display another example of the cursive *m*, partly written on both fragments. See Posener 1951a, pl. 22 (end of column 8).

especially since the other owl-signs (G17) occurring on these copies correspond to the elaborate version (see fig. 11 and table 3).⁹⁰

Kemit § VII reveals in fact a unique phenomenon. The few early witnesses display several spellings of *hnm.w*, resorting either to the cursive form closer to the owl hieroglyph or the abbreviated form. From late 18th dynasty onwards, the copies tend to favour the abbreviated form despite the fact that such a form is not expected in an old-fashioned cursive script.⁹¹ In my view, the explanation is to be found in the group writing and in the scribal habits. As early as 12th dynasty, the forms of the biliteral sign *nm* (T34 ) and its phonetic complement (G17 ) look alike in hieratic. Yet, both can be distinguished by means of an additional dot above the cursive sign of *nm*.⁹² The presence of all these cursive owl-signs is thus nothing more than a *lapsus calami* induced by the habit of writing these two similar signs together.⁹³

O. Cairo JE 56842, picture of which is published in Posener 1951a, pl. 23, presents on the other hand the first tradition, i. e. with the elaborate owl-sign, but caution is advised due to partial lacuna. Only the end of the word *hnmw* is preserved on O. CGT 57546, preventing any observation regarding the owl-sign (G17). See López 1984, pl. 175–175a.

⁹⁰ It should be noted here that in O. Brussels E 3208, as well as the joined pieces O. IFAO cat. 1171 A/B, the abbreviated form is used four more times in place of the expected elaborate version. In § VIIa (column 8 on O. Brussels E 3208), the preposition *m* has been written cursorily. In this case, the following *ayin* (D36) might have induced a *lapsus calami*. In § VIII (column 10 on O. Brussels E 3208), the verb *rmi* “to weep” (Erman and Grapow 1926–1931, 2: 416–417.10) has been systematically erroneously written with the butcher knife *nm* (T34) and the uniliteral sign *m* (G17). Posener himself already observed this. See Posener 1951a, pl. 7, note f–f and pl. 9, note f. The fourth abbreviated version appears in the word *nmḥw* “orphan” (Erman and Grapow 1926–1931, 2: 268.4–8) of § Xc (column 13 on O. Brussels E 3208). The explanation for the presence of the more cursive form is similar as for the word *hnmw*. In contrast, § Xa (column 13 on O. Brussels E 3208) reveals a hypercorrection. The verb *ndm* has strikingly been written by means of two elaborate owl-signs. If the second corresponds to the phonetic complement *m*, the first stands for the trilateral sign *ndm* (M29 ) , the form of which looks like the abbreviated version of the owl-sign, with an extra dot above (from 13th dynasty onwards), in the same vein as the hieratic sign for *nm* (T34). Compare signs 296 and 585 in Möller 1909. Posener 1951a, pl. 11 (note a) previously observed this sign distortion.

⁹¹ As I said in footnotes 88–89 above, Ramesside witnesses like O. Cairo JE 56842 and O. IFAO cat. 1133 seem to display the version close to the hieroglyphic sign, indicating that both ways of drawing the owl sign co-existed even during the Ramesside Period.

⁹² See sign 585 in Möller 1909. Such a disambiguation is found on O. Brussels E 3208 for instance. See the end of column 10 on fig. 1.

⁹³ Similar explanation applies for the erroneous writing of *rmi* in O. Brussels E 3208. In the other Kemit copies, the verb is written with two owl-signs (G17) next to each other, which could have led to a confusion with the cursive spelling of *nm-m*, signs of which are written alongside, just like the spellings of *rmi* in § VIII in the other Kemit versions.

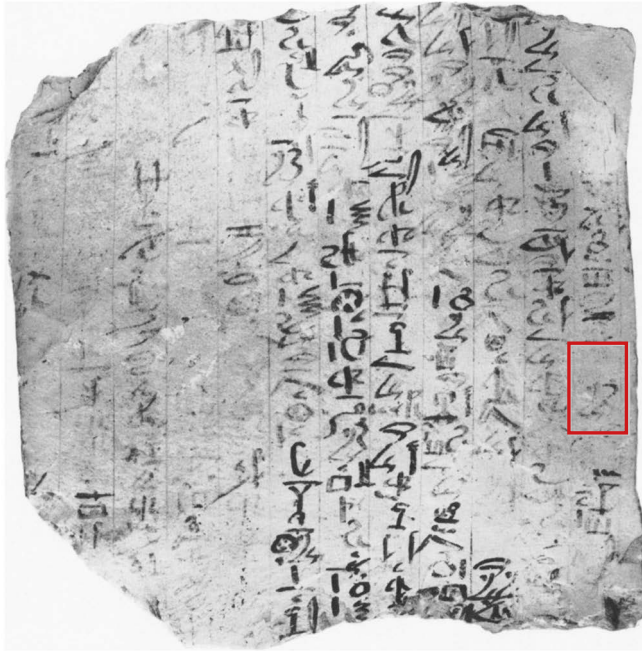


Fig. 10: O. MMA 36112 (Hayes 1948, pl. 2)

The hare-sign (E34 𐀓)

Möller outlined an evolution of the hare ductus from the Old Kingdom to the Roman imperial period.⁹⁴ On the securely identified Kemit writing boards, the sign is nowhere to be found except on T. Carnarvon III, where it occurs twice (see table 5). The ears are made of two long horizontal strokes, in an early Middle Kingdom way. As such, they can be paralleled with the Puiemre writing board, as long as the relevant fragment is in fact an extract of the Kemit (§ VIIa²). On the contemporary O. MMA 36112, the hare-sign has a similar shape on both sides (r^o col. 8 and v^o col. 22).⁹⁵ During the 19th and 20th dynasties, some ostraca have the old ductus with two long ears, such as the O. IFAO cat. 1855 or O. CGT 57552,⁹⁶ but

94 See for instance sign 132 in Möller 1909–1912 for a concise diachronic overview.

95 Hayes 1948, pl. 2. The 18th dynasty O. EA 329 also has the hare-sign (E34), whose form seems to be consistent with the 18th dynasty examples in Möller 1909, sign 132. See Pendlebury 1951, pl. 97. O. DAN hierat. 5 has been put aside as the two examples of the hare-sign (in col. 5 and 9) are not easily readable due to the partly faded ink. See Burkard 2018, pl. 4–5.

96 See Gasse 2005, 137 and López 1984, pl. 177–177a respectively. O. IFAO cat. 1124 and O. IFAO cat. 1127 are further examples. See <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostra>

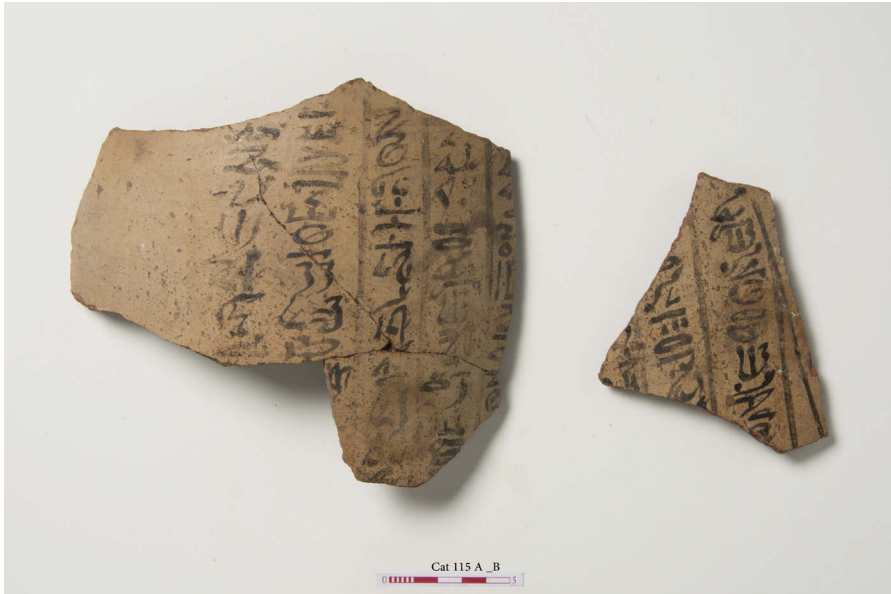


Fig. 11: O. IFAO cat. 1115 (© Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale)


there are also many examples of shorter ears in the Ramesside style like O. IFAO cat. 1115 (fig. 11).⁹⁷ Both forms even sometimes appear on the same artefact, such as on O. Brussels E 3208.⁹⁸







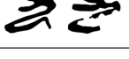

The early Kemit witnesses have thus a consistent way of drawing the hare-sign (E34), resorting to the early Middle Kingdom ductus with the two long ears. Ramesside copies, on the other hand, reveal an influence of the contemporary hieratic, in which the short ears hare-sign is the usual form. The co-existence of both *ductus* on a same copy could suggest slips from a scribe less familiar or unpractised with the cursive script of the Kemit.

[ca/?id=19572](https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19572) and <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19575> for colour photographs [21 April 2020].

97 See for instance O. IFAO cat. 1115 on <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19562> [21 April 2020], O. CGT 57060 in López 1978, pl. 35–35a, or O. Cairo JE 56842 in Posener 1951a, pl. 23.

98 See Posener 1951a, pl. 23.

Table 5: Palaeographic table of the hare-sign (E34 )

Puiembre board, drawing based on De Garis Davies 1923, pl. 79a	
T. Carnarvon III, drawing based on Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76	
O. MMA 36112, drawing based on Hayes 1948, pl. 3	
O. IFAO cat. 1855, drawing based on Gasse 2005, 137	
O. CGT 57552, drawing based on photos by: Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio	
O. CGT 57060 ⁹⁹	
O. Cairo JE 56842, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 24	
O. Brussels E 3208, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 23	

The third h (*h*, Aa1)

The third h (*h*, Aa1) is another indicative sign for this case study. Based on available palaeographies,¹⁰⁰ the cursive sign drawn on one fragment of the Puiembre writing board has a Middle Kingdom form, just like the examples recorded on P. UC 32271A (see fig. 9 above, col. 4–5 and table 6).¹⁰¹ Similarly, its shape on T. Louvre AF 497 suggests a 17th dynasty dating. The sign is drawn in three strokes, two curved and one vertical, and is similar to other known examples from Second Intermediate Period documents.¹⁰² Two Second Intermediate Period copies of Kemit, O. DAN hierat. 5 and O. MMA 35144, reveal further shapes: empty circles drawn from top to bottom on the jar stand and circles made of two curved strokes with an *antilambda*



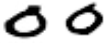












99 In this case I based my drawing on the ostracon facsimile in López 1984, pl. 177a instead of the colour pictures kindly sent by S. Töpfer (Egizio Museo, Turin). Something partly covers the hare-sign (E34), making it hardly recognizable now.

100 Möller 1909–1912 (sign 574); Wimmer 1995, 396–403; Wimmer 2001, 286 and 288–290. See also Janssen 1997, 343 for a review of the Aa1 sign in Wimmer 1995, in which he adds an uncommon form with a clockwise curl.

101 Collier and Quirke 2004, 50–51. Compare with Allen 2002, 216.

102 Compare with Möller 1909, sign 574.

Table 6: Palaeographic table of the *h* (Aar ☉)

Puiembre board, drawing based on De Garis Davies 1923, pl. 79a	
T. Louvre AF 497, drawing based on Barbotin 1997, 247	
O. DAN hierat. 5, drawing based on pictures by G. Burkard and DAI Kairo	
O. MMA 35144, drawing based on Hayes 1948, pl. 1	
O. MMA 36112, drawing based on Hayes 1948, pl. 2–3	
T. Carnarvon III, drawing based on Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76	
T. Luxor J 1001 © Proyecto Djehuty, previously published in Galán and el-Bialy 2004; Galán 2007	
O. Brussels E 3208, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 23	
O. IFAO cat. 1112 © Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale	
Dakhla ostracon, drawing based on Kaper 2010, 117	
O. Brussels E 6768, drawing based on van de Walle 1948, pl. I	
O. CGT 57286, drawing based on photos by: Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio	
O. Prague P 2034 © Fischer-Elfert, Navrátilová, Onderka, Toivari-Viitala, and Demarée 2018, pl. VIII	
O. Prague P 3830 © Fischer-Elfert, Navrátilová, Onderka, Toivari-Viitala, and Demarée 2018, pl. XI	
O. IFAO cat. 1847, drawing based on Gasse 2005, 128	

inside it on the MMA ostrakon.¹⁰³ Yet no examples of these forms are recorded in Möller.

T. Carnarvon III and T. Luxor J 1001, on the other hand, show a shape closer to the hieroglyph itself. The sign is a circle traced as a single stroke, with one or two horizontal lines inside. These examples have parallels in several Ramesside copies, such as O. Brussels E 3208, O. IFAO cat. 1112 and the Dakhla ostrakon (see fig. 1 and table 6).¹⁰⁴ Both of these also have cursive signs very close to the hieroglyph, but their inside strokes are oblique. Ramesside ostraca display even more variation. For instance, on O. Brussels E 6768, the *h*-sign (Aa1), which is no longer visible because of a modern restoration, is written like the Ramesside examples recorded in Möller.¹⁰⁵ O. CGT 57286 has a more elaborate version, with two extra dots inside the sign.¹⁰⁶ O. Prague P 2034 has an almost complete circle with two dots inside, while O. Prague P 3830's is made of two curved strokes in the same way as T. Louvre AF 497 and O. MMA 35144, except that the signs are filled with dots or what looks like a left angle bracket instead of strokes.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, other witnesses, like O. IFAO cat. 1847, display a ductus similar to the contemporary documentary cursive script.¹⁰⁸ Without detailing all the recorded *ductus* in the later copies, these examples, including those recorded on the Kemit tablets, suffice to show the absence of a single and unique form common to all the known witnesses. Some are helpful evidence to date or confirm the dating by comparison with the existing palaeographies. Many others have not been listed in these useful tools and would deserve inclusion for a more comprehensive understanding of the co-existing practices.¹⁰⁹

103 Such an *antilambda* sign is also found on O. Cairo CG 54949 for instance. See Mathieu and Ritter 2008, pl. 1.

104 For O. Brussels E 3208, see Posener 1951a, pl. 22; for O. IFAO cat. 1112, see <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19559> [16 April 2020] and for the Dakhla ostrakon, see Kaper 2010, 117.

105 Compare Möller 1909, sign 574 and Posener's Appendix in van de Walle 1948, pl. 1.




106 See López 1980, pl. 91–91a.

107 See Fischer-Elfert, Navrátilová, Onderka, Toivari-Viitala and Demarée 2018, pl. 8 and 11; Barbotin 1997, 246–247; and Hayes 1948, pl. 1 respectively.

108 According to the white and black picture in Gasse 2005, 128, it seems to me that the sign has been drawn in one stroke. Compare Gasse 2005, 128 and Wimmer 1995 (vol. 2), 396–397 (version a of Aa1).

109 The remark made about the *yodh* sign (M17), namely that the sign might deserve further study considering a wide range of texts, administrative and literary, in a diachronic perspective to address more fully the question, is also applicable here.

The weeping eye-sign with upper lid (D5–6+D9)

Before concluding this short case study, I consider the eye-sign with painted upper lid (as in D5  or D6 ) and with flowing tears (as in D9 ).¹¹⁰ It appears twice on the reverse of T. Carnarvon III. At first sight, they look ill-formed and are larger than the other signs (see table 7). Far from being only clumsy signs, they are rather evidence of scribal practices of the Second Intermediate Period, when the writing of cursive signs is sometimes more rounded and/or ornate.¹¹¹ The weeping-eye-sign is not frequent in the Kemit; it is present only in § VIII.¹¹² One could have assumed that (apprentice) scribes paid close attention when drawing this sign in an old-fashioned way due to its infrequency. This sign shows instead an interesting variation across time and place. For instance, the well-preserved Brussels ostrakon (O. Brussels E 3208) has a very nicely drawn D6+D9 eye. This sign that looks like a calligraphic style has nothing to do with the other known examples in the Kemit-texts. As a matter of fact, the shape of the weeping eye with upper lid (D5-6+D9) lacks consistency within the Kemit copies. On the 17th dynasty O. MMA 36112,¹¹³ the upper part – the painted upper lid – is narrow and small, whereas on the Ramesside ostraca they are rather horizontal and more spaced out. They are even linked by means of a (ornamented) curved stroke on O. Brussels E 6768, O. Cairo JE 56842 A/B, and O. IFAO cat. 1161 for instance.¹¹⁴ On O. Brussels E 3208, the upper lid is decorated with multiple very small strokes.¹¹⁵ The lower part, namely the so-called flowing tears, is just as variable on each copy. The tears are symbolized through three oblique, vertical, or wavy lines,¹¹⁶ some of which are ornamented with one or two small oblique strokes. O. Brussels E 3208 is again a bit different, with only two vertical tear strokes.

110 Such a sign *per se* is not recorded in Möller but compare with signs 83 and 85 in Möller 1909–1912.

111 Cf. Möller 1909, 11*.

112 For a recent commentary on this specific paragraph of the Kemit, with a new interpretation, see Klotz 2009.







113 Hayes 1948, pl. 2–3.

114 See Posener's Appendix in van de Walle 1948, pl. 1; Posener 1951a, pl. 23–24; and <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19611> [21 April 2020] respectively.

115 Posener 1951a, pl. 22.

116 The two examples on O. IFAO cat. 1138 have three vertical lines, connected to the eye-part. See on <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/?id=19587> [16 April 2020].

Table 7: Palaeographic table of the weeping eye-sign (D5–6+D9)

T. Carnarvon III, drawing based on Carnarvon and Carter 1912, pl. 76	
O. MMA 36112, drawing based on Hayes 1948, pl. 2	
O. Brussels E 3208, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 23	
O. Brussels E 6768, drawing based on van de Walle 1948, pl. 1	
O. Cairo JE 56842, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 23	
O. IFAO cat. 1161, drawing based on Posener 1951a, pl. 24	

Conclusion

This short case study was exploratory to address the relevancy of the Kemit script for a better understanding of (early) New Kingdom cursive scripts. Each board is a product of its time. In this way, Middle Kingdom *ductus* have been recorded on the Puiemre board. T. Carnarvon III and T. Louvre AF 497 have characteristic features of a 17th dynasty script based on the available material for comparison, whereas T. Luxor J 1001 is consistent with 18th dynasty scripts. These wooden boards, though few in number, enable several observations. They have been shown to be further cases of scribal exercises. T. Carnarvon III even revealed the coexistence of two distinct handwritings on a single artefact – one belonging to a master scribe, another to an apprentice – similar to T. Luxor J 1001. The apprenticeship context is also noticeable through the handwritings themselves, the hesitancy marks, as well as the presence of the unique black linking strokes on the apprentice board T. Luxor J 1001.

On these tablets, short extracts of the Kemit are written with unruled, more or less evenly spaced columns, while the longer version on T. Carnarvon III is framed

with black-inked column lines. In both cases, the extracts are mostly written in black ink. The use of red ink is limited to paratextual marks on the small T. Louvre AF 497 only. Its ending mark, which can be linked to the *grḥ*-sign (D41) and the later short horizontal lines, is evidence of scribal practices, with parallels in contemporary documents.

The recorded handwritings are just as informative. Even though the Kemit is said to be written in an old-fashioned or archaizing style, the copies display variation across time and/or space. The earlier witnesses (P. UC 32271A and Puiemre board) have a consistent Middle Kingdom style, whereas the 17th dynasty and early 18th dynasty witnesses (T. Carnarvon III, T. Louvre AF 497, O. DAN hierat. 5, O. MMA 35144, and O. MMA 36112) present a typical 17th dynasty or early 18th dynasty style, with a more elaborate and ornamented script, despite the clumsiness of the apprentice scribes. They would deserve more comparisons with contemporary documents, like the late 17th – early 18th dynasty material from Edfu or 18th dynasty Books of the Dead. Ramesside copies, however, show a combination of contemporary sign forms and earlier ones. The studied copies have revealed sporadic influence or slips from the contemporaneous hieratic, be it administrative or not, indicating incidentally that both administrative and literary texts have not such distinctive scripts. The owl-sign (G17) is highly telling in this regard. Commonly written with the elaborate form, closer from the hieroglyphic version, this sign appears in his abbreviated, more cursive form in group writings only, being a *lapsus calami* from the scribe unease or unpractised with the Kemit script.

T. Carnarvon III, T. Louvre AF 497, and T. Luxor J 1001, alongside with the contemporary copies on ostraca, remain a source of ideas for the study of social context and the agents behind these texts at the dawn of the New Kingdom. Comparisons with earlier and later copies of the Kemit made appear how valuable this old-fashioned script is. Far from being a uniform style throughout time and space, with fixed ductus for each sign, variety and peculiarities have arisen. More study should be deserved – and will be in the future – but the Kemit-book seems to present a range of archaizing styles. This literary letter has promising avenues of research for the palaeography, the scribal practices, and the scribal training.

Appendix – T. Cairo CG 25367, a witness of the Kemit-book?

T. Cairo CG 25367 (= JE 26442), today kept in the Egyptian Museum, dates to the 12th-dynasty (38th regnal year of Senwosret I)¹¹⁷ and was found in Akhmim according

117 According to James 1962, 120, the traces of the letter on the right-hand side of the board are probably earlier in date than the list of names on the left-hand side. But the shape of the

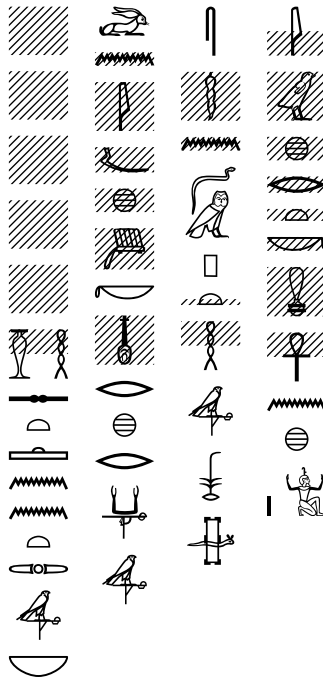


Fig. 12: Hieroglyphic transcription of T. Cairo CG 25367

to the *Catalogue Général*.¹¹⁸ It measures 46.5 cm × 25 cm. It is covered with plaster and gum¹¹⁹ but this layer is partly left out on the obverse. The tablet is inscribed on both sides. On the reverse are mathematical exercises,¹²⁰ while the front side has a list of auxiliary personnel on the left side¹²¹ and what might be an extract of the epistolary formula of the Kemit on the right side.

This section is the most damaged part of the writing-board. Those damages and losses in the right-side text are severe hindrances but the remaining content and the palaeography are helpful evidence for this controversy.

Although this letter-extract on the right side of the board has many lacunae, it is immediately obvious that the signs have a characteristic shape. In the first three

handwriting could have induced this remark.

118 Daressy 1901, 95. It was found with another tablet bearing a similar name-list of *smdt* as well as mathematical exercises on the other side: T. Cairo CG 25368. See Daressy 1901, 96.

119 Cf. Daressy 1901, 95.

120 See for instance Peet and Woolley 1923, Daressy 1906, and Vymazalova 2002.

121 Valbelle 1991.

columns, some signs are extremely elongated and have a neat, elegant ductus.¹²² The writing, which could be described as uncial, is characteristic of initial greeting formulas in the formal correspondence of the early Middle Kingdom.¹²³ A comparison with the third letter of Heqanakht (P. MMA 22.3.518),¹²⁴ or the so-called letter of Meketre (P. MMA 22.3.524), which is more likely a writing exercise,¹²⁵ makes it obvious.¹²⁶ James observed that such elongation is especially found with the long upright signs *yodh* (𓂏, M17), *waw* (𓂑, G43), *mi* (𓂒, W19), *nh* (𓂓, S34).¹²⁷ Its purpose was, according to him, to give greater dignity and formality to the opening lines of a letter. Hayes, on the other hand, suggested that it might be for a decorative purpose.¹²⁸ On T. Cairo CG 25367, the *yodh* (M17) and the *nh*-signs (S34) are indeed large and calligraphic, just as the phonogram *s* (S29) on the upper part of column 2, the god with upraised arms (C11), the falcon on the standard (G7) and the *k3*-sign combined with the standard (D29) on the lower part of the three first columns.¹²⁹ Such a stylized handwriting with elongated signs is not characteristic of Kemit.

Neither do the textual contents suggest that T. Cairo CG 25367 bears an excerpt of Kemit (see transcription below). Column one might match with § IIIa in the Kemit. Yet the lacuna in the introductory phrase of the greetings formula prevents us from reading the preposition *m* (G17) as in the Kemit (*iw hrt.k m nh hḥ n sp* “your condition is as (that of) one who (truly) lives a million times”) or rather *mi* (W19) as in the regular letters (*iw hrt.k mi nh hḥ n sp* “your condition is like living a million times”). Sections IIIb–c are then absent. The absence of the sentence *iry n.k mntw nb wst* (§ IIIb) is all the more crucial, since in the early Middle Kingdom letters this sentence gives the name of another deity, Harsaphes, lord of Heliopolis.¹³⁰ Its presence on the board would have enabled us to identify the literary letter with certainty. Column two starts with what could be Kemit § IV, and whose end is written in the subsequent column. Again two sections (IVb–c) are missing. The lacuna following the *wn*-sign (E34) in column three is another obstacle to the text’s identification as only the Kemit-text has a superfluous *r*-sign (D21) in between the

122 James 1962, 80.

123 James 1962, 48.

124 See for instance Allen 2002, pl. 12–13. James 1962, 46 wrote “the letter begins with the long formal introduction found in letters of the 11th-dynasty, but which Heqanakht neglected in the less formal letters to his family (I and II).”

125 According to James 1962, 81. See James 1962, pl. 21 for a picture of the papyrus.

126 See also, for instance P. BM 10567 and P. Cairo 91061 (= CG 58045) in James 1962: pl. 26 and pl. 28.

127 Cf. James 1962, 120.

128 Cf. Hayes 1948, 2.

129 See Daressy 1905, pl. 62.

130 See for instance the Appendix D in James 1962, 122 and 124.

hare-sign (E34) and the word *imꜣḥ* (*wn {r} imꜣḥ.k nb nfr ḥr k; n mnṯw nb wꜣst*).¹³¹ Furthermore, the column ends with the word *kꜣ*, without specifying which god's Ka is meant. Letters would have Harsaphes, Lord of Heliopolis, whereas the Kemit has Montu, lord of Waset.¹³² Finally, after the threefold greeting, the Akhmim tablet has the following partially restored sentence [*iw.k m*] *ḥst nt mnw nb [ipw]* “[You are in] the favour of Min, god of [Akhmim]”, which is still readable at the end of column four. However, such a sentence is nowhere to be found in the Kemit.

In essence, this tablet should be cast aside from the Kemit-corpus. It is rather a writing exercise in the early Middle Kingdom epistolary style and its pro forma.¹³³ For this reason, the Akhmim writing-board hasn't been considered for this paper.

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131 Cf. Appendix D of James 1962, 123 for a synthetic view of Middle Kingdom letters.

132 Cf. James 1962, 123–124.

133 Parkinson 2002, 325 does likewise and interprets it as a model letter. As such, he lists parallels T. MMA 28.9.4, T. MMA 26.3.277AB, O. Cairo JE 49911, Jar Nag ed-Deir, and P. UC 32196.

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