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The messy scribe from Deir el-Medina. A palaeographical journey through the texts of a draughtsman, scribe, and poet from the 19th dynasty: Pay (i)

STÉPHANE POLIS*

Abstract

This paper gathers a number of texts that it argues were written by a single scribe from Deir el-Medina who lived during the first half of the 19th Dynasty and who was active mostly during the reign of Ramesses II. The identification of these texts takes as its point of departure the archaeological context of ‘Maison G/J’, situated north of the Ptolemaic temple and to the east of the *Grand Puits*. Based on palaeographic, orthographic, and thematic evidence, the paper shows that this scribe wrote a series of hymns to Amun that are expressive of a vivid personal piety. By correlating certain features of this scribe’s handwriting, it further argues that the same scribe was also responsible for hymns addressed to the deities Mut, Taweret, and Iaret, as well as for a hymn to Thebes. Outside of the literary realm, the same hand is attested in administrative documents, including letters that allow us to situate the scribe in question within a family of draughtsmen. The paper identifies this polygraph as Pay (i) – the first of this line of draughtsmen from Deir el-Medina – to whom dozens of hieratic texts can be attributed.

1. Introduction

Jaroslav Černý queried¹ “[w]hether, and how far it will be possible to classify the variety of hands occurring in the documents of the Tomb, and to link the handwritings to individual scribes”.² The present paper aims to provide a first answer to these questions, delegated by Černý to future scholars, though the pitfalls attendant upon

* This contribution was written under the aegis of the project “Crossing Boundaries: Understanding Complex Scribal Practices of Ancient Egypt” at the University of Basel, the University of Liège, and the Museo Egizio of Turin (<http://crossing-boundaries.uliege.be> [08 June 2021]); see Polis et al. 2020. The scribe discussed in the present paper is related (by blood) but probably not identical to the author of the two letters published and discussed in Demarée, Gabler and Polis, this volume.

1 See van den Berg and Donker van Heel 2000, 13.

2 Černý 2001, 222–223.

such an endeavor are well-known. There is, on the one hand, the significant degree of variation³ – both synchronic⁴ and diachronic⁵ – that can be observed within the hieratic texts of a single hieratic hand, depending on the medium and written registers.⁶ And conversely, the resemblances between hands of the same period, which allow us to date witnesses based on palaeographic features,⁷ are actually a hindrance when one wishes to single out an individual hand.⁸ Finally, the difficulties in attributing specific hands to particular scribes are substantial when compositions are not accompanied by colophons⁹ or ‘signatures’.¹⁰

Despite these complications, recent years have witnessed major progress in the field.¹¹ Clusters of documents written by specific hands have been identified¹² and a number of texts have been attributed to individual scribes.¹³ Crucially, these studies do not rely solely on palaeographic features – whether on the level of isolated signs or on the broader level of ligatures, words, and even entire phrases – but complement the identification of these essential features with observations about the provenance of the inscribed objects, their genre (journals, letters, hymns, etc.) and date of composition (usually based on prosopographic information), and the layout and general appearance of the texts.¹⁴ These multiple factors are always intertwined to an extent, and it can be difficult to find a satisfactory way to present all of the data and the reasoning that lie behind the identification of a specific hand.¹⁵

In the present case, after careful deliberation, I decided that the most efficient way to convey my (highly provisional) reconstruction of the body of texts written by the ‘messy polygraph’ from Deir el-Medina was to tell a story – the story of my own journey through places, collections, and essays that led to my current understanding of this scribe’s *dossier*. Rather than a rational account of the palaeographic,

3 Polis 2020, 552–559.

4 Janssen 1987 and 2000; Sweeney 1998.

5 Dorn 2015.

6 Dorn and Polis 2016, 67–73; Polis 2018a, 74–78; Vernus 2019, 12–14.

7 For the Ramesside period, see Wimmer 1995, 1998, and 2001, with Janssen 1997; Dorn, this volume.

8 Eyre 1979, 86–87.

9 McDowell 2000; Lenzo-Marchese 2004.

10 Burkard 2013 and 2014; Dorn 2017; Hassan 2017; Polis 2018b, 97–98; Dorn and Polis 2019, 20–21.

11 Fischer-Elfert 2020, 654–660.

12 van den Berg and Donker van Heel 2000; Donker van Heel and Haring 2003, 39–82; McClain 2018.

13 Dorn 2006; Ragazzoli 2012; Demarée 2018a and 2018b, 10–12; Hassan and Polis 2018; Kamal and Sojic 2019.

14 Gasse 1992.

15 In the present case, I wondered whether I should even publish the data at all, knowing that I could in truth deal only with the tip of the iceberg within the framework of an article.

diplomatic, orthographic, linguistic, and stylistic features of the writings of this scribe, presented *en bloc*, I hope the reader will bear with me as I trace the steps that led me to cluster together dozens of texts written in Deir el-Medina during the 19th Dynasty and to attribute these texts to a single scribe.¹⁶

2. A first encounter: *La Maison 'G'* (or 'J') as a point of departure

In recent years, archeological context has increasingly been taken into account in philological analyses of written materials from the community of Deir el-Medina. Annie Gasse¹⁷ and Andreas Dorn¹⁸, for example, have demonstrated the kind of results that can be achieved when one takes into consideration the provenance of Ramesside ostraca from Western Thebes, while Hans van den Berg and Koen Donker van Heel¹⁹ have shown that archaeological data can be a valuable point of departure for grouping texts written by the same hand. Stimulated by these findings, Andreas Dorn and I proposed to prepare for publication some literary ostraca from Deir el-Medina based on their specific find-sites within the village. Drawing upon the marks used by the excavators, we set out to investigate those ostraca stamped with 'Maison G' and 'K 290', two locations north of the village, on the northern and southern side of the Ptolemaic temple respectively. Several ostraca found in these two places turned out to have been written by the same distinctive hand; these stimulated my interest in this scribe and his idiosyncratic writing habits.²⁰

'Maison G' is the name given by Bernard Bruyère in his *Journal* of the 1946–1947 excavation season (p. 6, left) to a three-room structure (G, G', G'' in fig. 1) which he identified as a house. The structure is located between Chapel F and Chapel G, five meters south-east of the ramp leading to Chapel G, in proximity to the *Grand Puits*. It was excavated between the 17th and 19th of January 1947 (fig. 1, blue) and was later renamed 'Maison J',²¹ evidently to avoid confusions with the aforementioned Chapel G.

16 Annex 1 represents a table of the ostraca (detailing their text genres and provenances) that are firmly attributed to the 'messy polygraph' in the framework of this study. The corpus is preliminary; I do not intend to list here all the published texts written by this scribe, as other witnesses to this hand are currently being gathered and form part of a larger endeavor whose scope far exceeds the limits of this paper.

17 Gasse 2000.

18 Dorn 2011.

19 van den Berg and Donker van Heel 2000.

20 The results of my and Dorn's research will be presented in a volume of the *DFIFAO*. In the present paper, I focus exclusively on documents that have been published.

21 Bruyère 1952, 33–34, pl. I and VI, left.

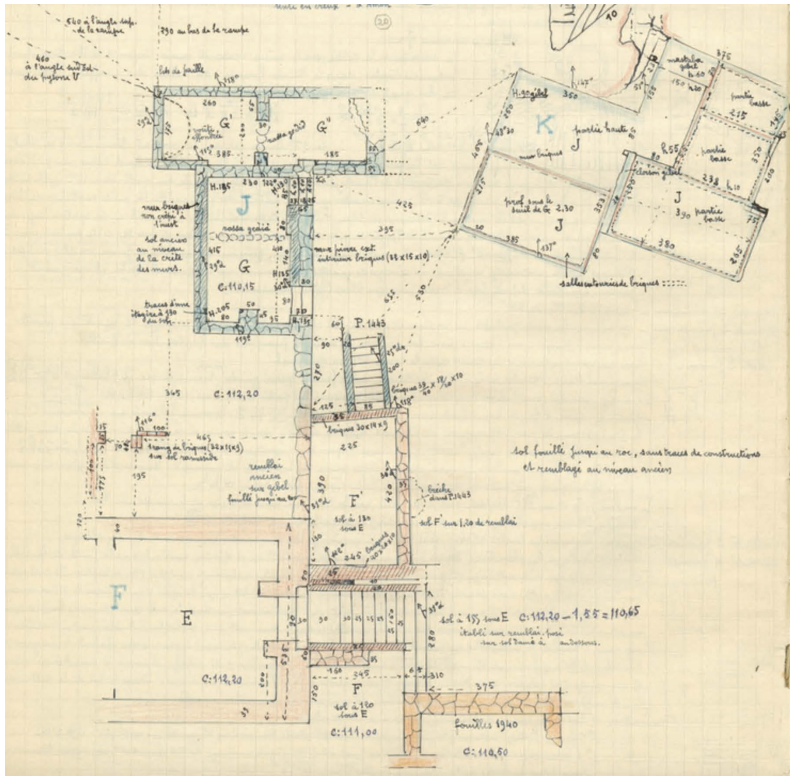


Fig. 1: Maison G/J in Bruyère's Journal (MS_2004_0163_011)

Among the hieratic ostraca found within Maison G/J²² was an intact prayer to Amun (O. IFAO inv. 2181). This was published by Georges Posener in a paper entitled 'Amon juge du pauvre' (fig. 2).^{23, 24}

Posener connected this ostrakon to another ostrakon bought in Western Thebes by Ludwig Borhardt, which he knew from a photograph given to him by Černý (fig. 3).²⁵ He established the link between the ostraca on thematic grounds²⁶ – both

22 See already Bruyère 1952, pl. XII–XIV.

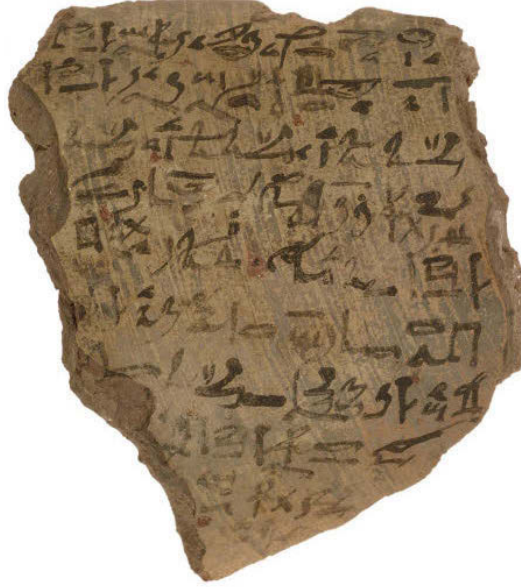
23 Posener 1971.

24 Throughout this paper, I use photographs whenever possible and resort to black and white facsimiles when the quality of the photographs at my disposal is not sufficient or the ink too faint to allow for proper palaeographical assessments.

25 Curiously, this document is now part of the IFAO collections, though its detailed history is not recorded.

26 Note the intertextual connection discussed by Posener with O. Wilson (Wilson 1933) = O. London BM EA 29559 (Demarée 2002, pl. 86–87; formerly numbered 5656a). The hand-

The messy scribe from Deir el-Medina



INV_2181 

Fig. 2: Doc. A = O. IFAO inv. 2181 (© IFAO, Archives)

texts are intercessory prayers to Amun on behalf of the poor at a tribunal²⁷ – though he also noted the resemblance between the handwriting on the two ostraca.²⁸

Indeed, there is not much doubt that the two texts were penned by the same scribe, as they share most (if not all) palaeographical features:

- The hand is untidy and smudged, characterized by “un pinceau défectueux et une encre trop épaisse”.²⁹ The ductus is fast, with round but jerky movements, and lacks precision. Also very noticeable is the variation in terms of ink density that characterizes this hand: from dark black to light grey, the quantity of ink varies significantly from sign to sign, and traces of dipping³⁰ are clearly visible throughout the texts.

writing on O. Wilson shares several features with the hand of the ‘messy scribe’, but nonetheless looks decidedly different.

²⁷ Vernus 1993, 183–187; Quack 2013, 164–165.

²⁸ Posener 1971, 61.

²⁹ Posener 1971, 59.

³⁰ Allen 2002, 193–242.

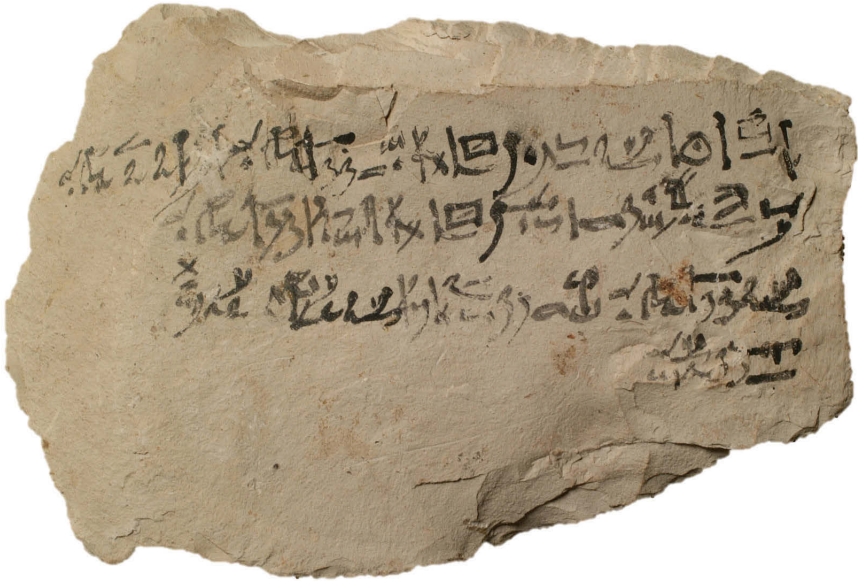


Fig. 3: Doc. B = O. Borchardt (© IFAO, Archives)

- In terms of layout, interlinear spacing is limited (corresponding globally to less than half the height of the written line). Horizontal spacing between signs ('kerning') is small, with occasional overlaps between individual signs (table 1a, a–b), a phenomenon which scribes usually tend to avoid. These features contribute to the crowded appearance of this scribe's texts. Note that the signs inside a line quite often progress upwards in a stair-like fashion (table 1a, c–d) before returning to the baseline.

Table 1a. Palaeographical features of Docs. A and B (part 1):


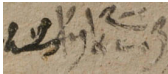

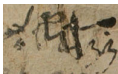
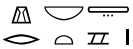




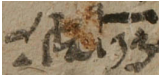






















			
			
(a) A,2	(b) B,3	(c) A,5	(d) B,1

Table 1b. Palaeographical features of Docs. A and B (part 2):

			
			
(a) A,4	(b) B,3	(c) A,7	(d) B,2



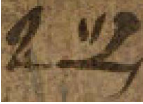

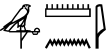
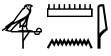


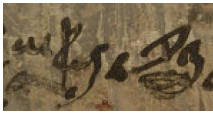


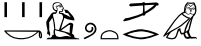



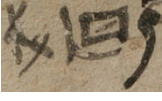




- Spelling habits and the ductus of entire words are also shared by the two texts. One may compare, for instance, the words *nmḥ* ‘poor’ (table 1a, d; 1b, a–b) and *knb.t* ‘tribunal’ (table 1b, c–d) that occur on both ostraca.³¹
- Zooming down to the level of individual groups of signs and signs, the following features shared by the two documents can be observed.³² The group $\overline{\text{mn}}$ is quite distinctive, with a squarish form and a large (dotted) loop on top (table 1c, a–b). The definite article *p3*  is distinctive as well (table 1c, c–d): the wings of the *p3*-bird are drawn as two small converging strokes, and the following aleph is tall and may be almost as high as the *p3*-bird. The -sign (A2) is yet another ‘marker’ of this hand (table 1c, e–i): the strokes representing the ‘hand to the mouth’ and ‘legs’ are drawn in the upper part of the sign, while the vertical stroke – which stands for the body – extends downwards, not infrequently below the baseline. Finally, note the -shape (A1, ) that the hieratic \triangle can take, for instance, in table 1c (j) in the words *nb.t* and *mḥ.t*, as well as the frequent highly abbreviated form of  as a simple dot, as in table 1c (h).

Besides the palaeographical features discussed above, three spellings from Doc. A are worth observing at this point. First, the 2SG.M independent pronoun is written   (A,2, A,8) – like a conjunctive with the 2SG.M suffix pronoun – rather than   (or the like), as is usually the case in hieratic texts of the New Kingdom. The negative relative *jwtj* is spelled phonographically   (A,5), with a classifier borrowed from the homophone *j3d* ‘to suffer’, and the verb *dm* ‘to pronounce’ (A,7–8) is written    , without the -classifier (see Doc. C,14), a spelling which

31 O. Gardiner 45 (= HO 8.2) is also an appeal to Amun for help, made by a man standing in front of the court. It will not be analyzed here, but the spelling of *knb.t* is identical to the spelling in Docs. A and B, and it shares the palaeographical features identified here. It was most probably written by the same scribe. See already Posener (1971, 61), who remarked that it was “inscrit par une main qui ressemble à [O. IFAO inv. 2181]”.

32 I focus here on a selection of palaeographical commonalities, but other key features of the hand that are attested in these texts will be discussed in the following sections.

Table 1c. Palaeographical features of Doc. A and B (part 3):

			
			
(a) A,5	(b) B,1	(c) A,3	(d) B,1
			
			
(e) A,1	(f) A,4	(g) A,8	
			
			
(h) B,1	(i) B,2	(j) A,1	

is not exceptional for this verb in New Kingdom hieratic. We shall see throughout this paper that such non-standard orthographies are quite typical of this scribe.

3. Amun leads the way: hymns by the same hand

If one is willing to accept the conclusion of Section 2, namely that Docs. A and B were most likely written by the same scribe, there are different avenues to be explored when it comes to identifying other texts by the same hand. The most obvious path might be thematic. Because this scribe appears to have been an adherent of Amun, it is possible to hypothesize that other hymns and prayers to this god from Deir el-Medina might have been penned by him. And indeed, there are several other religious compositions on ostraca from Deir el-Medina that invoke Amun as the main divinity, and these are – beyond reasonable doubt – by the same scribe.

The messy scribe from Deir el-Medina

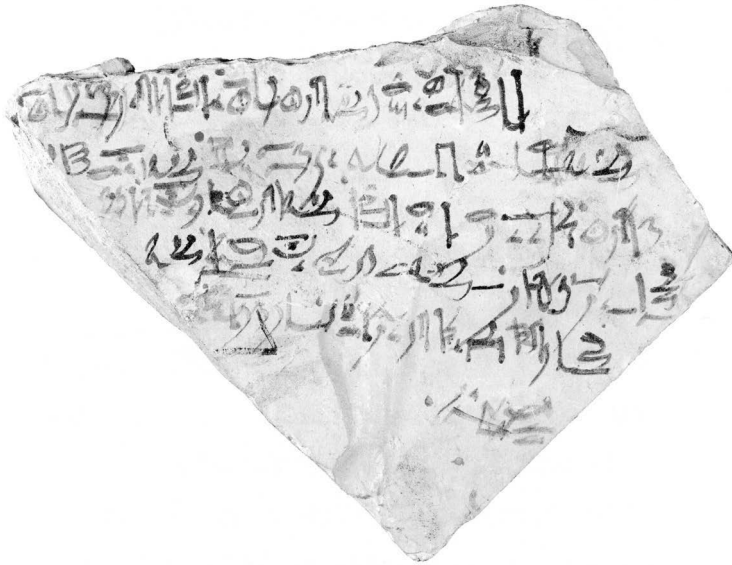


Fig. 4a: Doc. C, r^o = O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6134.1943, r^o
(© Hagen 2011, pl. 40)

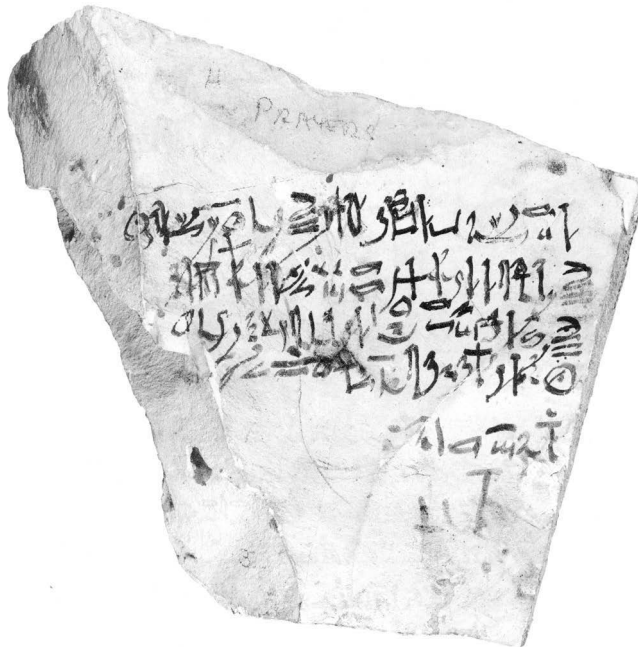








Fig. 4b: Doc. C, v^o = O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6134.1943, v^o
(© Hagen 2011, pl. 42)



The most striking case – the easiest to identify and attribute to this hand – is probably O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6134.1943.³³ This two-fold hymn to Amun features a prayer to Amun on the *recto*, and describes the beneficial effects that the god has on his follower on the verso. Both faces of the ostrakon reflect the palaeographical features discussed above, from the global down to the specific. Besides the overall appearance of the hand (which will not be discussed further below, except in cases when it deviates significantly from previous observations), especially noteworthy are the lines that progress like stairs (*passim*); frequent horizontal overlaps between signs³⁴ (table 2a, a³⁵–c), with a neat increase of the text density on the verso; the form of *Jmn* ‘Amun’, with the squarish, non-ligatured, and dotted *mn* (table 2a, d–f); the shape of the *p*; usually with a tall *;* (table 2a, g–h); and the -sign, with the hands and feet positioned particularly high on the body stroke (table 2a, i–j). Note that we can also observe variants or allographs of the same signs: the ligature for *dr* has a broad and narrow variant (table 2a, k vs. l), while *šw* can be written both without (usual) and with (once) the two diacritic strokes (table 2a, c and m vs. n).

These palaeographical arguments can be further corroborated by noting the scribe’s spelling habits and phraseological choices. The hymn opens with an invocation to Amun as a solar deity and reads³⁶ (C,rt):  •  *jb-ḥr.t m p: šw wbn ° Jmn jst ntk wbn °* “Thinking in the rising sun: Amun, for sure, you are the one rising!” As stressed by Hagen,³⁷ the spelling  has to be the 2SG.M independent pronoun in this context, just as in A,2 and A,8, used here as subject of a cleft-sentence.³⁸ The spelling thus plays a role in

33 Hagen 2011, 34–36, 98–101; Quack 2013, 169–170.

34 In Table 2a, a and c, note the almost complete overlap between the feather *šw* and the *;* of the *p*-bird. Though this could indicate a scribal correction (Hagen 2011, 35), it is actually a habit of this scribe, and it appears especially after he dipped his pen (see already Doc. B,3). In *recto* 3, emend the edition  to , the confusion deriving from overlapping signs.

35 The signs above the first line must have been erased on purpose and may have represented (something similar to) *jb-ḥr.t* in l. 1 (probably not *dw*: [*Jmn*], as previously understood). The irregularities of the writing surface on the top right produced a series of ugly sign shapes that the scribe erased before starting anew on the flat surface below. A such, I number l. 2 in the edition here as l. 1.

36 The third sign in this line is definitely  (compare with Fischer-Elfert 1986, 65, n. d), not  (Hagen 2011, 99). The confusion derives from strokes belonging to the (erased) line above.

37 Hagen 2011, 35.

38 Quack (2013, 169) translates “Ich dürste nach Bedarf in der aufgehenden Sonne, und du, Amun, bist noch aufgegangen.” However, as we shall see below, *jb-ḥr.t* should be understood as a compound of the type *nd-ḥr.t* (Wb II, 373,12–20). Furthermore, the First Present pronoun *tw=k* would be the expected subject of *wbn*, used as a pseudo-participle, as suggested by Quack’s translation.

The messy scribe from Deir el-Medina

Table 2a. Palaeographical features of Doc. C (part 1):










(a) C,r1	(b) C,r5	(c) C,v1			
(d) C,r1	(e) C,r3	(f) C,v1	(g) C,r4	(h) C,v1	
(i) C,v2	(j) C,v2	(k) C,r2	(l) C,r5	(m) C,r1	(n) C,r3

Table 2b. Palaeographical features of Doc. C (part 2):

(a) C,r2	(b) C,v2	(c) C,r5	
(d) C,r3	(e) C,v1	(f) C,r1	(g) C,v3

the attribution of this hymn to the ‘messy scribe’. In terms of common phraseological choices, one can observe the construction *p; dm (nb) rn=k* ‘the one who/whoever invokes your name’ (both A,7–8 and C,r4).

At this point, some additional writing habits of our scribe should be highlighted in order to help add some other texts to his corpus of writings:

- When the text that he wrote is faint due to lack of ink, he touches it up after dipping his pen. He does not try to follow the faint signs precisely (e.g. C,r1), but instead redraws the entire sequence independently (table 2b, a).
- A *supra lineam* addition in the same hand shows that the scribe proofreads his texts directly after writing them, though he does not care much about overlaps between the supralinear additions and the signs belonging to the main line. As shown by table 2b (b),  overlaps with  and  overlaps with .
- Some words he wrote very quickly, and some signs he wrote in highly simplified fashion. Table 2b (c) is a case in point.³⁹ Here the evil-bird  on the edge of the ostrakon is barely visible in the spelling of *ḥkr* ‘to be hungry’, and all the more so because the subsequent  sign overlaps with it.
- In terms of spelling habits, the particle of thematization *jr* ‘as for’ is written as  (table 2b, d–e), instead of the usual , which can be used as an additional hand-marker of this scribe.
- Finally, the uniliteral  (table 2b, f–g), with its distinctive <s>-shape, is a reliable marker of texts written during the 19th Dynasty.⁴⁰ As such, it can be used as an initial means to narrow down the dating of this hand, which Posener⁴¹ situated between the mid-19th and mid-20th Dynasty. It likely belongs to the 19th rather than to the 20th Dynasty.

As should be clear from the foregoing, the identification of the ‘messy’ hand clearly relies on a cluster of interwoven features. Now that we are more accustomed to the visual appearance of this hand and the ways in which its features correlate, several other hymns to Amun that share the above-mentioned features can be rather straightforwardly attributed to our scribe. O. DeM 1409⁴² is an obvious candidate. This elaborate prayer, followed by a numerical hymn to Amun,⁴³ was written by a man seeking to recover from blindness (*dj=k m:n=j psd=k nfr* ‘may you let me see your beautiful light’), a fact that will be of great importance when trying to identify

39 See Quack 2013, 170, n. 55.

40 Wimmer 1995, 396a–aa; 1998, 1229; Dorn, this volume.

41 Posener 1971, 59.

42 Posener 1977a, 32 and pl. 17–17a.

43 Posener 1977b, 389, n. 23; Fischer-Elfert 1986, 63–67; Mathieu 1996, 212; Quack 2013, 165–166.

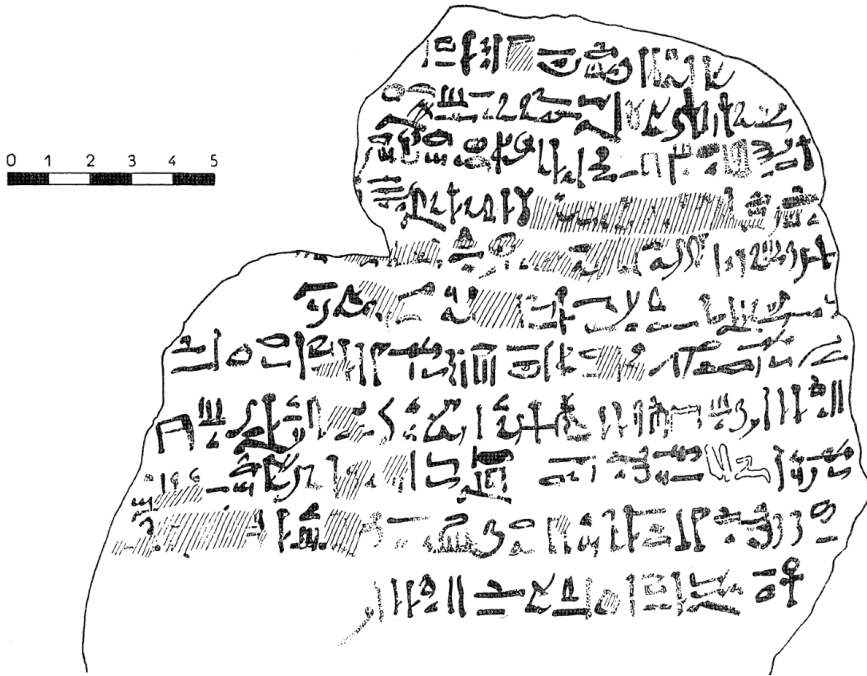


Fig. 5: Doc. D = O. DeM 1409 (© Posener 1977a: pl. 17a)

the scribe (Section 5). It also displays all of the features discussed so far; in addition, it also features the rare collocation *jb-hr.t* (l. 3, cf. n. 14), already attested at the beginning of Doc. C. Following Fischer-Elfert and Quack,⁴⁴ I understand this collocation to be a compound construction of the verb *jb* ‘to think, to reflect, to surmise’⁴⁵ rather than of *jbi* ‘to be thirsty’.⁴⁶ This is due to (1) the lack of the \equiv -classifier, which would be expected, though it is not mandatory, for the verb *jbi* ‘to be thirsty’; (2) the parallelism with the compound *nd-hr.t* ‘to inquire after, to greet’,⁴⁷ which is also a verb of intellection; and (3) the fact that a translation based on *jbi* ‘to be thirsty’ would be difficult to understand in other contexts in which it occurs.⁴⁸ Its general meaning seems to be in accordance with its etymology, with translations that include ‘to meditate, to think or ponder’, usually about future situations, with

44 Fischer-Elfert 1986, 64 and 65, n. d; Quack 2013, 166.

45 Polis and Stauder 2014, 203–206.

46 Wb I, 61,8–10.

47 Wb II, 373,12–20.

48 Pace Quack 2013, 169.

a nuance of either hope or fear. Here the text formulates a wish and reads *jb-ḥr.t ḥpr ḥtp[=k]* ‘hoping that [you] be satisfied [...]’ (l. 3–4).







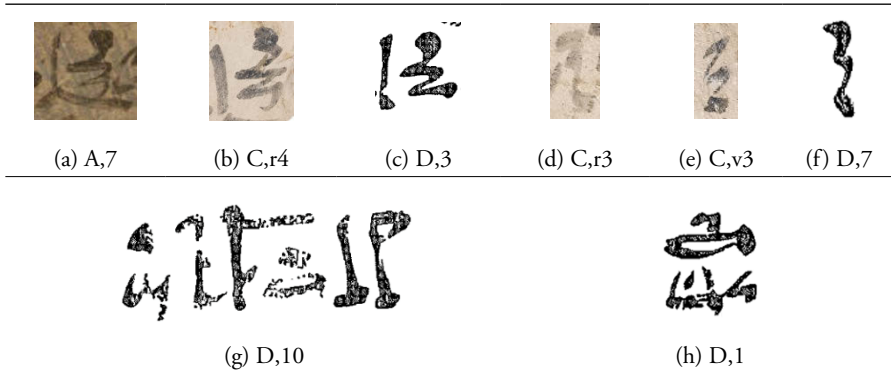
In line with what we have observed for Doc. A and C, the scribe tends to borrow classifiers from homophonic words, such as  ‘light’ (l. 2), with  from *psd* ‘back’, or  ‘to link, to unite’ or ‘light’ (l. 4), with  from *(mk)ḥ*: ‘back (of the head)’ (or sim.). Doc. D also allows one to highlight further habits of the ductus that are common to Doc. A–D. The group  has two distinctive features (table 3, a–c): (1) the top is shaped almost like the head of a hieratic bird (see table 3, b where it is touched up) and is not centered horizontally but tends to be positioned on the right-hand side of the group; (2) the bottom part displays two marked angles to the left, the first of which is particularly pronounced in each case, with a clear-cut alternance between oblique and horizontal strokes. The plural strokes  are also written in quite particular fashion (table 3, d–f), with the first two horizontal strokes closer to one another, while the bottom part of the sign has a characteristic <z>-shape. Of the three types of variants illustrated here, we shall see that (d) is the most individual to this hand.

Table 3. Additional palaeographical features of the hand:

























Finally, two spellings deserve attention: *sntr* ‘incense’ is spelled      (table 3, g), with the highly unusual group  in the middle, while the root *ḥtp* is written                



Fig. 6: Doc. E = O. IFAO inv. 2971 (© Gasse 1992, 61)

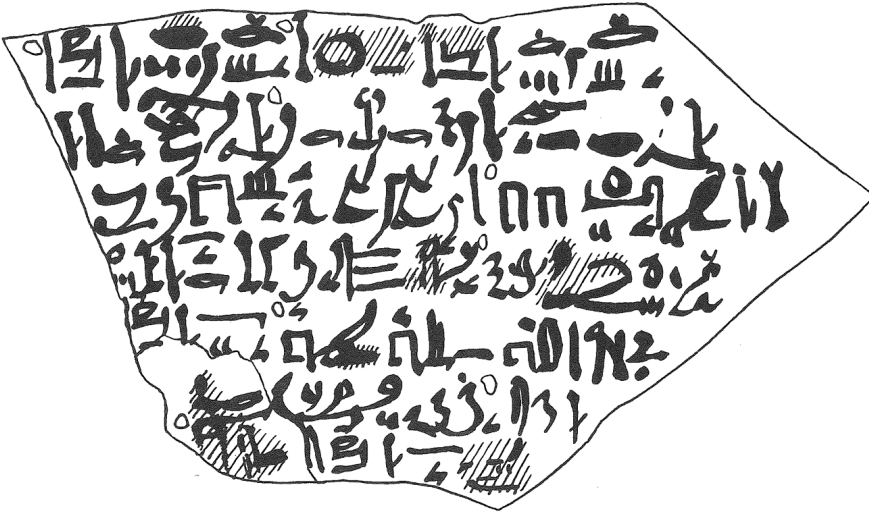


Fig. 7: Doc. F = O. Glasgow D.1925.88 (© McDowell 1993, pl. 31a)


les lignes ne sont pas régulières, non plus que l'encrage, ce qui confère au texte un aspect dense peu avenant alors que les signes sont plutôt sobres et réguliers⁴⁹. Even a glimpse at O. IFAO inv. 2971 (fig. 6) reveals that this ostracon assuredly belongs to the corpus of the messy scribe.


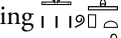

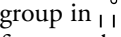
Before leaving Amun for other deities and text types, O. Glasgow D.1925.88⁵⁰ is worth considering. Indeed, the vocabulary of this hymn to Amun⁵¹ in his solar forms of Ra and Horakhti (fig. 7) overlaps significantly with one of the texts that we have just examined. Even in facsimile, one quickly recognizes the general habits

49 Gasse 1992, 61.

50 McDowell 1993, 29–30, pl. 31–31a.





51 Note the strong intertextual links with 18th Dynasty visitor graffiti (Navrátilová 2011, 259).


of the scribe, e.g. the stair-like progression of signs and the way in which the signs collide horizontally (e.g. at the beginning of l. 5, with *tp* infringing upon *hr* in ).

Furthermore, the ductus of several common words in Doc. F is identical to that observed in other documents examined so far (compare, for instance, *Jmn* in l. 1 and 7 with table 2a, d–f, and  *p.t* ‘sky’ in l. 3 with Doc. D,8 [twice]). Finally, the spelling  of the verb *htp* (l. 1) is identical to Doc. D,4, while the unexpected  group in  also appears in Doc. D,10 (cf. table 3, g). Taken together, these features demand attribution to our scribe. Interestingly, next to his preliminary transcription of this ostrakon in his *Notebooks*, Černý wrote ‘Pay’s hand’,⁵² a laconic remark of the highest relevance, as we shall see in Section 5.

4. From Amun to Mut and the city of Thebes

The previous sections might give the impression that our scribe was exclusively a devotee of Amun, but O. DeM 1055⁵³ (fig. 8) offers a corrective to this idea as well as permitting a segue into discussion of other deities in our scribe’s output. While the first five lines of this ostrakon correspond to a hymn to Amun ‘the warrior’ (*p; ḥz.wtj*), a hymn to Mut follows directly in the same hand.⁵⁴

The attribution of this text to our scribe is quite straightforward. Line 4 asserts the identity between Amun and the light, Shu (cf. Doc. D), as well as the identity between Amun and Pre, in a sentence that reads  [n]tk p; šw, ntk p; R: ° “you are the light, you are Pre.” As we have seen (Doc. A,2 and 8; Doc. C,11), the spelling  for the 2SG.M independent pronoun is a habit of our scribe. Further indicators of his hand include the characteristic shape of the *p;*-article, with tall aleph (table 4, a–c); the ductus of *Jmn* (compare table 4, d–e with table 1c, a–b and 2a, d–f) and of  in the verbal prefix  (table 4, f), with the hands and feet appearing high on the body stroke (compare table 2a, i–j).

The occurrence of Ra in Doc. G (table 4, g) further allows me to comment on the ductus of two signs that have not yet been discussed. His s are made up of two strokes: the first stroke almost takes the shape of a hieratic n and is usually very flat and horizontal (table 4, g–i) even though more curved variants occur (table 4, j–k), while the second stroke starts from the left and reflects a flattened loop down-

52 McDowell 1993, 29 (= Černý, *Notebook* 36, 74).

53 Posener 1938, 15 and pl. 30–30a.

54 Mathieu (1996, 240–241), who discusses the intertextual links between numerical hymns and love songs, considers the hymn to Mut on this ostrakon to be a direct source of inspiration for several stanza found in the Chester Beatty Cycle.

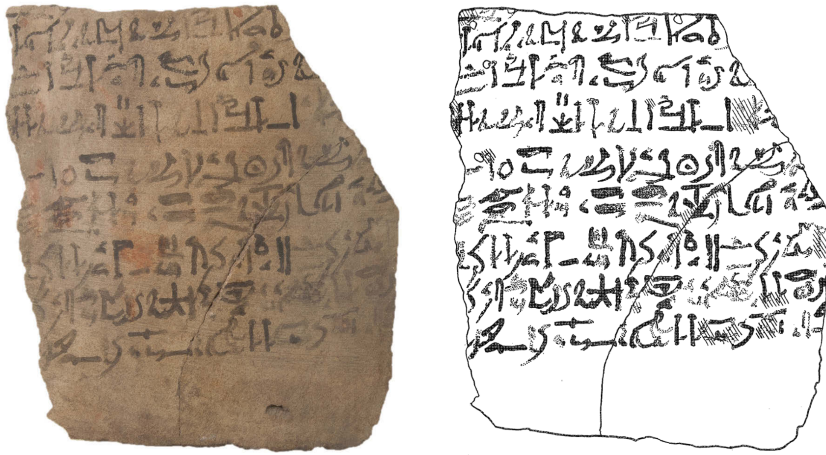




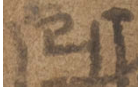









Fig. 8: Doc. G = O. DeM 1055 (© IFAO, Archives and Posener 1938, pl. 30a)

wards. The 4 is also noticeable: while the shape of this sign varies significantly in the cases where it is written and preserved, the stroke on top of the vertical line opens towards the left (table 4, k), and fairly often takes a slightly curved shape (table 4, l).


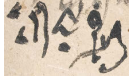
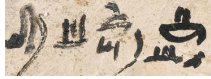
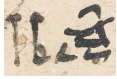








Table 4. Indicators of scribal hand in Doc. G and beyond:

					
(a) G,1	(b) G,4	(c) G,4	(d) G,2	(e) G,3	(f) G,5
					
(g) G,4	(h) A,8	(i) B,2	(j) C,r4	(k) D,7	(l) B,1

If the surface of the medium (pottery sherds vs. limestone) generally affects the overall appearance of the texts (with a slightly more fluid ductus on pottery sherds), the essential features of the hand are not deeply impacted by this variable. This is demonstrated by a comparison between Doc. G and the magical incantation on O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6128.1943, v^o (Fig. 9).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Hagen 2011, 25–26 and pl. 84–86.

Table 5. Some palaeographical features of Doc. H:

						
(a) H,1	(b) H,3	(c) H,4	(d) H,5	(e) E,2		
						
(f) H,3	(g) H,3	(h) H,3	(i) H,1	(j) H,2	(k) H,2	(l) H,3

Even if the ink is not particularly well-preserved, especially on the right-hand side of the ostrakon, a final text will be discussed in this section in order to illustrate the variety of textual genres mastered by this scribe: the hymn to Thebes on O. DeM 1584.⁵⁹ Thanks to parallels on O. Petrie 39⁶⁰ and O. DeM 1641i–ii,⁶¹ the beginning of the hymn – which has not been entirely understood so far – can be reconstructed as [mk bw ʔ]b=j pr m W:s.t, šd wj hr ms[d=j,jb-]hr.t=j wnn=j m hd, jw Njw.t m tp-m:=[j] ‘Look, I do not want to leave Thebes! Protect me from what I hate, when I think that I am travelling north, while the City is at my side (and ...)’. The occurrence of the compound verb *jb-hr.t* (see Doc. C, r° 1 and Doc. D, 3) is a first clue pointing to our scribe. The palaeographical features of the text further strengthen this attribution, for instance, the stair-like progression of certain groups of signs (table 6, a–b; compare [a] with *hbs.w* in Doc. C, v° 3), the characteristic ductus of *Jmn* (table 6, c–d) and the plural strokes $\overline{\quad}$ (table 6, a, e–f), as well as the distinctive shape of $\overline{\text{𐀓}}$ (with the body stroke extending downwards).

In addition, the occurrence of *nb.t* in l. 2 allows us to observe that this scribe resorts almost exclusively to the closed variant of $\overline{\quad}$ (Table 6, i–p), with a horizontal stroke on top of the basket;⁶² the only occurrence of the open variant in the texts examined so far appears in the temporal phrase *r° nb* ‘every day’ (table 6, q).

⁵⁹ Posener 1977b, 391; 1978, 77, pl. 46–46a; Verhoeven 2005, 75; Ragazzoli 2008, 34–36.

⁶⁰ HO 8.3.

⁶¹ Posener 1980, pl. 66.

⁶² Cf. Möller II, 510.

Table 6. Some palaeographical features of Doc. I:

(a) I,5	(b) I, 6	(c) I,4	(d) I,6	(e) I,4	(f) I,5	(g) I,2
(h) I,3	(i) I,2	(j) A,2	(k) A,3	(l) C,r3	(m) C,r4	(n) D,1
(o) D,7	(p) G,7	(q) C,v3				

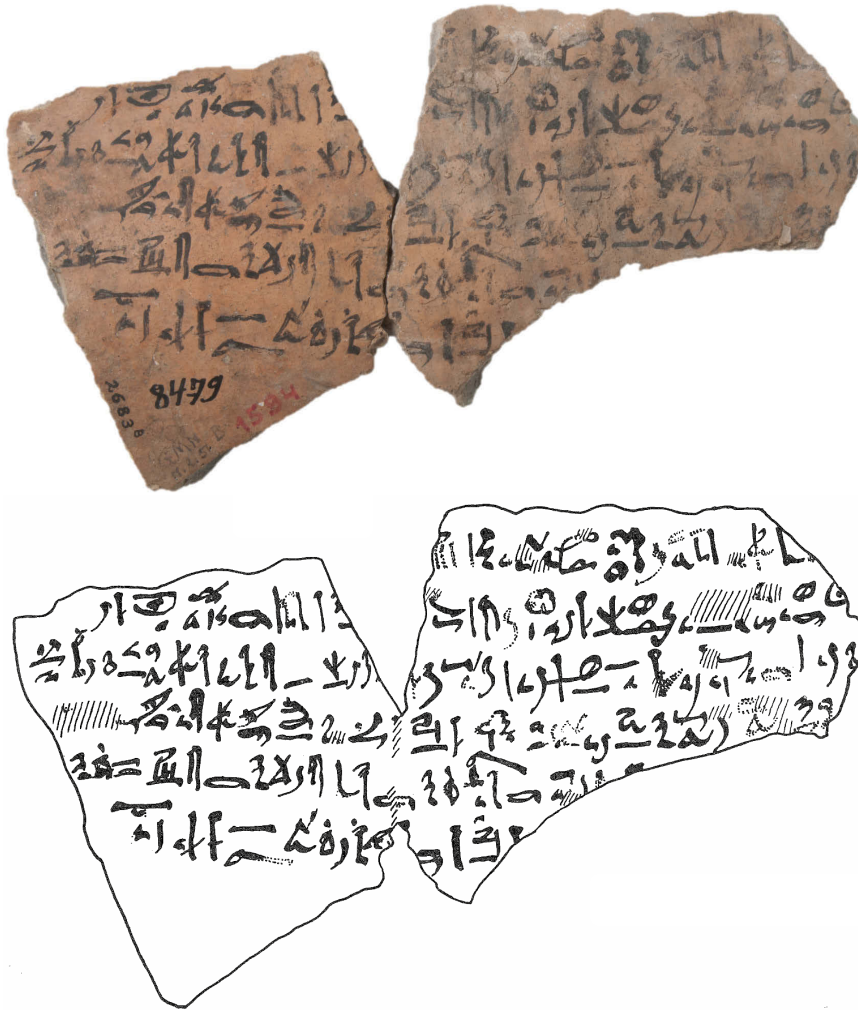


Fig. 10: Doc. I = O. DeM 1584 (© IFAO, Archives and Posener 1978, pl. 46a)

5. Towards an identification of the scribe: the letters sent by Pay (i)

While looking through the literary compositions by our scribe, various pieces of evidence that might help in narrowing down the number of possible individuals behind this hand have also been observed. The provenance of the ostraca makes clear that we should look inside the community of Deir el-Medina, while the spe-

cific ductus of some signs (e.g. ☉) clearly points to the 19th Dynasty. We further observed the writer's obvious attachment to Amun (Doc. A–D, F–G) – including a prayer asking for recovery from blindness (Doc. D) – and to the city of Thebes (Doc. I). We also noted the presence of drawings on one of the ostraca (Doc. H) as well as hieratic signs with cursive hieroglyphic shapes (Section 3). Finally, we have a comment by Černý concerning Doc. F that reads simply ‘Pay’s hand.’

In agreement with Černý's identification, the most obvious candidate for our ‘messy scribe’ is the draughtsman Pay (i), son of Ipuy (v), who was active in the community during the first part of the 19th Dynasty, and who is mostly attested during the early years of Ramesses II.⁶³ Pay (i) regularly bore the title ‘draughtsman of Amun (in the Place of Truth)’⁶⁴ and probably worked with his father Ipuy (who was also a draughtsman) within Amun's temple precinct at Karnak before he was transferred onto the Deir el-Medina workforce. This could explain in part his devotion to Amun and to the city of Thebes. Pay (i) was the founder of a family dynasty of draughtsmen in Deir el-Medina: at least three of his sons and five of his grandsons followed in his professional footsteps. This profession may account for idiosyncrasies of his hand. This could account for idiosyncrasies of his handwriting. He may have passed away at a ripe old age, around year 47 of Ramesses II.⁶⁵

As we shall see, the various features discussed above match what we know about his life and career but also what we know about his other scribal habits. In order to further concretize our identification of Pay (i) as the messy scribe, I turn to the letters sent by Pay (i). These are a sound point of departure, following the (somewhat positivistic but nonetheless realistic) hypothesis that, as a literate in the community,⁶⁶ he would have penned them himself. Within the published material, there are four different letters that were sent by Pay (i) (fig. 11–14). The best of these to begin with is O. Berlin P. 11247.⁶⁷ In this letter to one of his sons – either Prehotep (i) or Preemheb (i)⁶⁸ – he says that he is not doing well and is suffering due to a loss of sight. Amun has abandoned him,⁶⁹ he says, and he asks his son to provide him with

63 Málek 1979; Fábrián 1997; Davies 1999, 149–155, Chart 10; Keller 1991, 63–65; Keller 2008; Davies 2018, 231–235; Menéndez 2019, 219–242.

64 E. g. Weiss 2015, 84 and 86.

65 If he is the Pay mentioned in O. Turin CGT 57062, ro 6. But his grandson Pay (ii) is a more likely candidate (see already Davies 1999, 150).

66 Baines 1983, Baines and Eyre 1983.

67 *Deir el Medine online* ID 290 (<https://dem-online.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/fragment.php?id=209> [08 June 2021]).

68 Preemheb (i) is perhaps more likely because, where the name of the addressee is preserved in other letters (Doc. K and M), it is Preemheb (i) who is asked for help.

69 Luiselli 2011, 280–281.









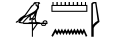











Fig. 11: Doc. J = O. Berlin P. 11247 (© Deir el Medine online)

honey and other products to serve as medicine for his ailing eyes.⁷⁰ The contents of this letter echo the prayer to Amun in Doc. D (l. 2: *dj=k m:n=j psd=k* ‘may you let me see your light!’). Additionally, Goldwasser⁷¹ has highlighted the literary Late Egyptian registers and style used in this letter, which would be expected of a scribe versed in literature.

70 In texts displaying personal piety, the divinity (here Amun) may be both punisher and savior (see Posener 1975, 202, n. 20 for a mention of this letter with previous references to the topic). Cf. for instance O. Cairo 12202, r^o and v^o (= Posener 1975, 196–201 and pl. 19) for an invocation of Amun from someone who has recovered from blindness.

71 Goldwasser 2001, 130–132.

Table 7. Some palaeographical features of Doc. J:

				
				
(a) J,r2	(b) J,v1	(c) J,r4	(d) J,r3	
				
				
(e) J,r4	(f) J,v2	(g) J,v6	(h) J,r3	(i) J,v2

In terms of its hand, this letter exemplifies the palaeographical features identified in Section 2–4, from the more general – marked dipping, the occasionally stair-like progression of signs (table 7, a), and signs that collide horizontally⁷² (table 7, b) – to the specific: *Jmn* conforms to the usual ductus (table 7, c), the *p* adopts its typical shape with a tall aleph (table 7, d), the *nb*-basket is closed on top (table 7, e), the *h* takes the expected *s*-shape table 7, f–g), and some signs are rendered in a ‘hieroglyphic’ fashion (table 7, h–i).

Taken together, the contents and formal characteristics of this letter seem to confirm that the messy scribe was indeed behind O. Berlin P. 11247. But is this letter an autograph? This would allow us to identify the messy hand with Pay (i). As I will show below, I think that we have every reason to answer in the affirmative, as these distinctive formal features occur in all of the letters sent by the draughtsman Pay (i). Instead of tediously rehearsing these palaeographical arguments for each of the next three letters, however, I will focus on some (a) stylistic and grammatical, (b) orthographical, and (c) palaeographical features that have not been discussed thus far. These appear in O. Černý 19⁷³ – a moving letter in which Pay (i) asks his son Preemheb (i) to help him acquire some commodities for the funeral of his wife and Preemheb’s mother, Merytre (ii) – and in O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum

72 Note that a *n* is to be added in the hieroglyphic transcriptions of $v^{\circ} 1$ (see *Deir el Medine online* [08 June 2021]): it is visible below the front leg of the bee, but the scribe – following a habit of his – wrote over it almost entirely after dipping his brush. See Doc. M,r2 for another use of this phrase by Pay (i).

73 HO 16 and pl. 54.4–54a.4.

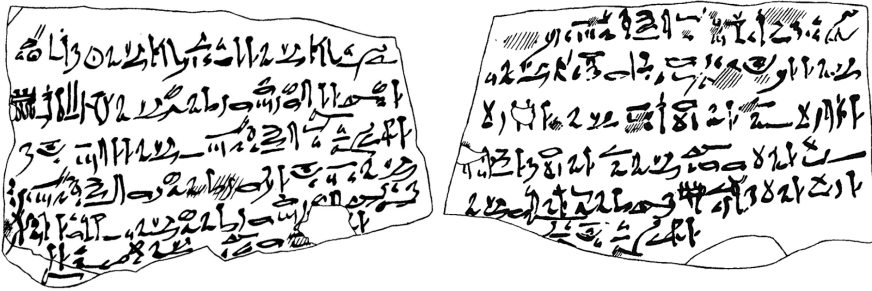


Fig. 12: Doc. K = O. Černý 19 (HO 54a.4)

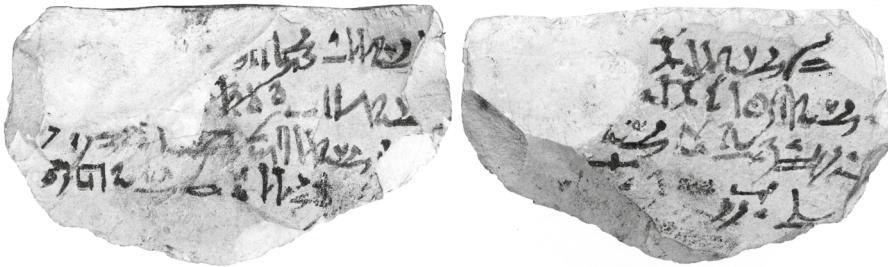


Fig. 13: Doc. L = O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6135.1943
(© Hagen 2011, pl. 44–45)

E.GA.6135.1943⁷⁴ and O. DeM 10249⁷⁵ – in which Pay (i) again asks Preemheb (i) to bring him a series of goods.

In terms of written style, Grandet noted of O. DeM 10249 that: “[c]et emploi d’un vocabulaire rare ou original (...), et de tournures grammaticales recherchées (...), témoignent probablement de l’érudition de l’auteur du document.”⁷⁶ He thus concurs with Goldwasser that the missives must have been written by a man of letters. Interestingly, it appears that *variatio delectat* when Pay (i) swears by a god. Instead of the typical *wšḥ Jmn* (*wšḥ p; ḥk;*) formula, he refers to several deities – *wšḥ p; šw* (Doc. L,v2), *wšḥ Pth* (Doc. M,4), *wšḥ p; R^c* (Doc. M,13) – a rare feature in the corpus of oaths from Deir el-Medina.⁷⁷

The morphological and orthographical choices in the letters are rather old-fashioned and conservative. Together, they are indicative of an (early) 19th Dynasty com-

74 Hagen 2011, 36–37 and pl. 44–45.

75 Grandet 2010, 131–134 and 358; Müller 2010, 312 and 317.

76 Grandet 2010, 133.

77 Polis 2011, 390–391.



Fig. 14: Doc. M = O. DeM 10249 (© IFAO Archives)

position.⁷⁸ Three examples can be given to illustrate this point. (1) The old subjunctive morphemes of the verbs *jni* ‘to bring’ and *m3* ‘to see’ – *t* and *n* respectively – are spelled out, for example, *jh-jnt=k* ‘could you bring’ (Doc. J,v1; Doc. M,2⁷⁹) and *dj=k m:n=j* ‘may you let me see’ (Doc. D,2). (2) The 3PL suffix pronoun =*sn* is still employed for the *sdm=f* constructions (Doc. B,2, Doc. H,4 & 5) and the possessive determiners (Doc. K,r3; Doc. L,r3), while the 3PL suffix =*w* is attested after nouns (Doc. K,r4) and the *jw* of the Third Future (Doc. F,2). (3) The predicative negation is usually written \overline{nn} (nominal predication = D, 7–8 & 11; G, 2 & 6; First Present = J, 2; existential = M, 5; infinitive = C3, v4). The Late Egyptian negation *bn* is limited to letters, for the subjunctive form (Doc. L,v4) and for the First Present pattern introduced by the rhetorical question marker *js bn*⁸⁰ (Doc. J,v5).

Zooming in on the spellings, three features are noticeable.⁸¹ (1) The *sš-ḳd* ‘draughtsman’ title is sometimes spelled out in full and sometimes abbreviated, even in the same document (table 8, a vs. b). The choice between the two variants seems to have been motivated by the space available for the first lines of the letters, which contain – in all four letters discussed here – the complete names of the sender and of the addressee. (2) The preposition *hn* ‘with, and’ is written \overline{hn} (table 8, c–d). This








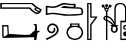



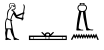
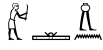
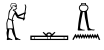




⁷⁸ Winand 1995.


⁷⁹ See Winand 1992, 223 with Müller 2010, 312.





⁸⁰ See Collier 2014, 19–20.

⁸¹ Note that *sntr* ‘incense’ is written normally in Doc. K,r5, and not with the unusual spelling discussed at the end of Section 3.

Table 8. Orthographical and palaeographical features of the letters:

						
						
(a) M,1	(b) M,1	(c) K,v3	(d) M,3	(e) L,v3	(f) M,9	(g) M,12
						
(h) K,r1	(i) K,v1	(j) M,4	(k) M,13			

spelling cannot be used in itself to identify a hand, though it is specific to a limited number of hands from Deir el-Medina during the 19th Dynasty, and particularly the reign of Ramesses II.⁸² As such, it can be used as an efficient heuristic device for potentially identifying further texts written by the messy scribe. (3) In this respect, the spelling of the infinitive of *jni* ‘to bring’ is noteworthy as well (table 8, e–f), with the unusual classifiers .

Regarding the palaeographical features of individual signs, two habits of the ductus are noticeable. As observed in Section 2 (see table 1c, j), our scribe could write his hieratic  much like a . This is very clearly the case in the introductory formula  of Doc. K (table 8, h) and it has led to some faulty hieroglyphic transcriptions of this scribe’s hieratic texts (e. g. *HO* 54.4). The -sign (e. g. table 8, i–k) is also particularly distinctive,⁸³ especially as regards the four diagonal strokes added to the main vertical body of the sign.

As can be seen, the handwriting across the letters penned by Pay (i) is very consistent. It also perfectly mirrors the observations made above concerning the messy scribe of the literary compositions discussed in Section 2–4. As such, I believe it is reasonable at this stage to hypothesize that the messy scribe was indeed the draughtsman Pay (i). Before proceeding, however, it should be stressed that the corpus of letters sent by Pay (i) is obviously not limited to communications in which the name of the sender has been preserved. O. DeM 10111,⁸⁴ for example, possesses

82 According to the Ramses corpus (<http://ramses.ulg.ac.be> [08 June 2021]; see Polis et al. 2013, Winand et al. 2015), this spelling is attested 22 times as of the end of May 2021.

83 Compare with Möller II, 398–400 and Wimmer 1995, 398.

84 Grandet 2006, 112 and 311.

all the formal characteristics of a letter written by Pay (i), though the names of the sender and addressee of this letter are lost.

6. Negative evidence: letters from Nebre (i) and Khay (i), or, “not everything messy is Pay’s”

So far, I have provided only positive evidence for the clustering of texts together based on their resemblances, but I have not contrasted the hand of our messy scribe with other hands. Put bluntly, an obvious criticism of the preceding attributions of texts to Pay (i) might read as follows: you are lumping together texts with similar hands, but in doing so, you have ignored aspects in which these texts vary; in fact, these texts may have been written by different scribes with similar hands.

In order to forestall such criticism, it is necessary to compare the hand behind the texts I have attributed to Pay (i) with other hands from the same time and place. In this respect, I have chosen ostraca that were penned by very similar hands: my *comparanda* take the form of letters sent by both his son Nebre (i) and his grandson Khay (i), two draughtsmen of the family.⁸⁵ Given what we know about scribal education in the village,⁸⁶ the transfer of scribal knowledge and the mediation of scribal practices are likely to have taken place to a large extent within the family, with a subsequent filiation of hands. Here I consider two letters sent by Nebre (i)⁸⁷ – one to his brother Preemheb (i) (O. Bruxelles MRAH E 678r⁸⁸) and another to his son Nakhtamun (iii) (O. DeM 558⁸⁹) – and two letters sent by Khay (i) – one to his uncle (literally ‘brother’) Preemheb (i) (P. Grdseloff⁹⁰) and the other to an unknown individual (O. DeM 58r).⁹¹

A glance at the two letters by Nebre (i) (figs. 15–16) immediately reveals that we are dealing with the same family of hands, which share a dense organization of the text, a tendency for the neatness of the hand to deteriorate as the text unfolds, sim-

85 It would also have been possible to investigate letters sent by his son Prehotep (i), such as O. DeM 303, or his grandson Nebneteru (i), such as O. DeM 119 and 317, but I decided to limit my investigations to one branch of the family within the framework of this contribution.

86 McDowell 2000.

87 I disregard Nebre’s model letter to the Vizier Paser on O. Toronto A 11, v^o 13–25 (Gardiner 1913, 16d–e and m–n; cf. Raedler 2004, 328), an ostrakon which deserves a study of its own, and I set aside O. DeM 10250 (Grandet 2010, 134–135 and 359–360), a poorly preserved text that nonetheless conforms with my conclusions below.

88 *KRI* VII, 200,10–201,2.

89 Sauneron 1959, 3 and pl. 5.

90 Grdseloff 1940.





91 Sauneron 1959, 7 and pl. 16–16a.




Fig. 15: Doc. N = O. Bruxelles MRAH E 6781 (© MRAH, Bruxelles)



Fig. 16: Doc. O = O. DeM 558 (© IFAO, Archives).

ilar orthographical habits⁹² (note, for instance, the preposition *hn* written  in Doc. O, r7), and a similar ductus for individual signs. Consider, for instance,  () in Doc. N, 3 (and compare it with table 2a, i–j; 4, f; 6, g–h) or the  that is closed on top (e.g. Doc. N, r1 & 2; Doc. O, r1).

However, there are also features that we have not observed so far in the corpus of texts attributed to Pay (i). The most noticeable differences are as follows. (1) The inking of the texts is much more homogeneous in Docs. N–O; these texts do not feature the noticeable dipping effect that can be observed in the documents in Sec-

92 Conversely, some spelling habits are specific to Nebre (i) and were not observed above for Pay (i), like the orthography  for the demonstrative determiner *py*. Note that O. DeM 784 (a short communication to Nakhtamun, like Doc. O) and O. DeM 790 (a letter to an unknown individual) display the same spelling of the demonstrative determiner and are most likely by the same hand.

tions 2–5. (2) The lines are considerably straighter, without the stair-like progression that we documented in all of the texts above (except for Doc. G). (3) The general ductus is much smoother and more rounded. (4) Finally, some frequent hieratic signs and groups of signs deviate significantly from what we have observed so far.




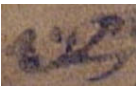

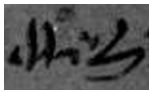


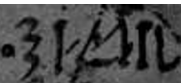


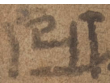
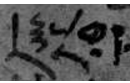


Table 9 (a–d) shows the different appearance of the group  in the two letters sent by Nebre (i). The aleph in these letters is always quite small, in stark contrast with what we saw in the texts attributed to Pay (i) (cf. table 9, e, for an extreme case; see further table 1c, c–d; 2a, g–h; 4, a–c, 7d). The group  in Nebre (i)'s letters knows two main variants: the fully ligatured version in the name of the *sš-kd Nht-Jmn*, for instance (table 9, f), and the non-ligatured version (e. g. table 9, g–h). The non-ligatured version appears at first glance to be quite similar to Pay (i)'s *mn* (table 9, i), but it actually features an additional horizontal stroke on top of the -sign. The *hr*-group is quite similar as well (table 9, j–k), but markedly narrower than in the texts attributed to Pay (i) (e. g. table 3, a–c). Lastly, note that the spatial organization of the signs sometimes differs as well: while the *f* is below the *w* in the sequence *fw* in the texts attributed to Pay (i) (e. g. table 9, l), it follows the *w* in Nebre (i)'s letters (e. g. Table 9, k).

Table 9. Comparison of some hieratic groups in documents attributed to Nebre (i) and Pay (i):

						
(a) N,r5	(b) N,R1	(c) O,r3	(d) O,7	(e) C,r4		
						
(f) O,r2	(g) N,r4	(h) N,r4	(i) G,3	(j) O,r2	(k) O,r5	(l) J,v2

Taken together, these observations are sufficient to postulate a filiation between the hands of Pay (i) and his son Nebre (i). At the same time, the comparison reflects numerous dissimilarities, suggesting that Nebre (i) was not the messy scribe who authored the literary compositions discussed in Section 2–4. The same conclusions hold for the two letters written by Khay (i) examined below (fig. 17–18).

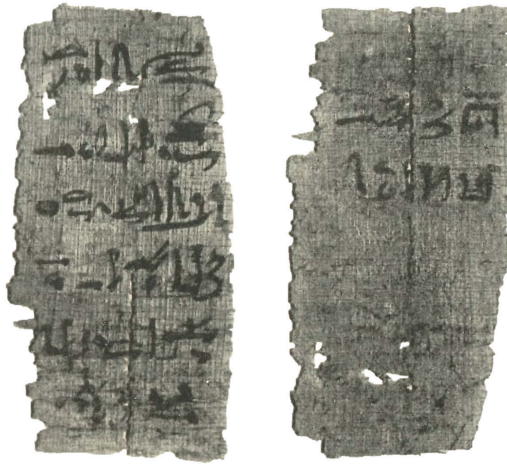














Fig. 17: Doc. P = P. Grdseloff (© Grdseloff 1940, 533)

Table 10. Hieratic features of letters sent by Khay (i):

							
(a) Q,6	(b) Q,9	(c) P,r3	(d) Q,12	(e) Q,3	(f) Q,4	(g) Q,2	(h) P,r4

Unfortunately, these two documents are either short (fig. 17) or badly damaged (Doc. Q).⁹³ This obviously hampers a proper palaeographical comparison of these letters with the documents attributed to Pay (i). However, enough text is preserved to highlight both commonalities – such as the overall disorganised and messy appearance of the hand, the minimal horizontal spacing between signs (including some overlaps), the spelling  of the preposition *hn* ‘with, and’ (table 10, a–b) – and differences. As to the latter, we can observe in Doc. P the abbreviated form of the  (table 10, c) next to the *p*; with tall aleph (table 10, d); the -sign is also open on top (table 10, e–f); and the -group is attested with an additional stroke in the middle of the *mn*-sign (table 10, g). These are features that do not occur in the texts attributed to Pay (i).

93 Sauneron 1959, 7 comments on the poor state of preservation of the text of O. DeM 58r: “le texte entier a été lavé ou barbouillé d’encre après avoir après sa rédaction, de sorte que la surface est devenue d’un gris sale”. As such, I refer only to the facsimile in this contribution.

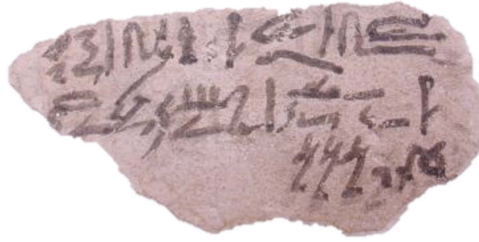


Fig. 18: Doc. R = O. London University College 32245 (© Petrie Museum)

The sentence 'Bring me a fledgling' (Doc. P,r°4–6) is interesting in at least two respects. First, from an orthographical point of view, the scribe employs a 'faulty' phonographic spelling of the verb *jni* 'to bring'. Second, from a palaeographical viewpoint, the *yod* of this verb form is written with a relatively uncommon three-stroke ductus. These two features recall the habits of the scribe who penned the two Turin letters published in this volume⁹⁴ and suggest that we might viably consider Khay (i) to be their author. To the best of my knowledge, this phonographic spelling of the imperative of *jni* occurs in just one other (also very short) communication between two draughtsmen, O. London University College 32245:⁹⁵ 'Bring me a bird very, very, very quickly' (Doc. R,r2–3). The brevity of this letter prevents proper palaeographical judgement, but one can certainly not rule out a connection of some sort between the two hands.

7. Extending the corpus of texts attributed to Pay (i): Identifying and connecting documents

The palaeographical data surveyed in Section 6 demonstrate that – even within a family of hands – it is possible to isolate individuals by correlating an array of features. In this final section, I explore three more examples in order to illustrate different means by which we might attribute further texts to Pay (i). These examples were cherry-picked from amongst the writings that I deem most likely to have been written by Pay (i) and that I believe have the most potential to enrich his 'scribal profile.'

The first example (fig. 19a–b) shows that Sections 2–4 did not exhaust the corpus of texts by Pay (i) that feature prayers and hymns to Amun (and other deities). As

⁹⁴ Demarée, Gabler and Polis, this volume, Section 5.

⁹⁵ HO 34.3.

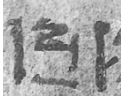



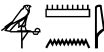
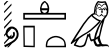




Fig. 19a: Doc. S = O. Strasbourg H. 188

Fig. 19b: Doc. T = O. Strasbourg H. 190

(© BNU Strasbourg)

Table II. Palaeographical features of Docs. S–T:


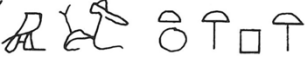







			
			
(a) S,1	(b) T,3	(c) T,4	(d) T,5


shown in table II, two ostraca from the Bibliothèque Nationale Universitaire of Strasbourg – O. Strasbourg H. 188 and H. 190⁹⁶ – display the characteristic features of Pay (i)'s hand.⁹⁷ One can observe, for instance, (a) the ductus for *Jmn* (including the backward-facing 4; cf. Section 4); (b) the 'hieroglyphic' organization of *hṭp* (cf. Section 3); (c) the tall-aleph *p*; and (d) the two-stroke plural marker (e. g. table 3, d–f).


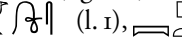



⁹⁶ Koenig 1997, 15, pl. 97 and 134.

⁹⁷ These two ostraca can be usefully contrasted with O. DeM 1262 (= Posener 1972, 42 and pl. 69–69a; Fischer-Elfert 1986, 68–69; Fischer-Elfert 1997, 117–120; Quack 2013, 166–167), which contains a hymn to Amun (r°, written in red ink) and a hymn to Thot (v°, written in black ink). While displaying some similarities with Pay (i)'s hand, typical hand-markers are not present and the ductus of some signs is decidedly different from the messy scribe's standards.

Table 12. Improved readings of Doc. T:

l. 1		
l. 2		
l. 3		→ 
l. 4		
l. 5		

A first advantage (and positive side-effect) of the emphasis on handwriting adopted in this paper is that one becomes familiar with the idiosyncrasies of a hand and can regularly enhance the hieroglyphic transcription of the *editiones principes* as a result. Table 12 shows the results of such an exercise for Doc. T.⁹⁸ Interestingly, *hp.tj* (l. 2) could be an early attestation of the word ‘universe,’ known from other texts from the Ptolemaic Period onwards,⁹⁹ while l. 4 is probably a phraseological parallel to Doc. D,4, with the nominal predication *ntf p; R* ‘He is Pre’ (the unusual spelling of the 3SG.M independent pronoun *ntf* as  echoes what we observed for the 2SG.M, e. g. in Doc. A,2 & 8 and Doc. C,r1).

A second advantage of this approach is that fragments that might belong to the same document can be clustered together more easily. In the present case, it quickly became obvious that O. DeM 1084¹⁰⁰ represents the left-hand side of O. Strasbourg H. 188 (fig. 20), since the first four lines read continuously:  (l. 1),  (l. 2),  (l. 3), and  (l. 4). Furthermore, Doc. T is likely to have been part of the same composition – if not the same document – since its l. 1 must read  (Table 12), which corresponds to the sequence of Doc. U,3.

98 See already the emendations suggested by Müller 2000, 284.

99 Wilson 1997, 639.

100 Posener 1938, 22 and pl. 47–47a.

The messy scribe from Deir el-Medina



Fig.20: Doc. U = O. DeM 1084 (© Posener 1938, pl. 47a) and O. Strasbourg H. 188

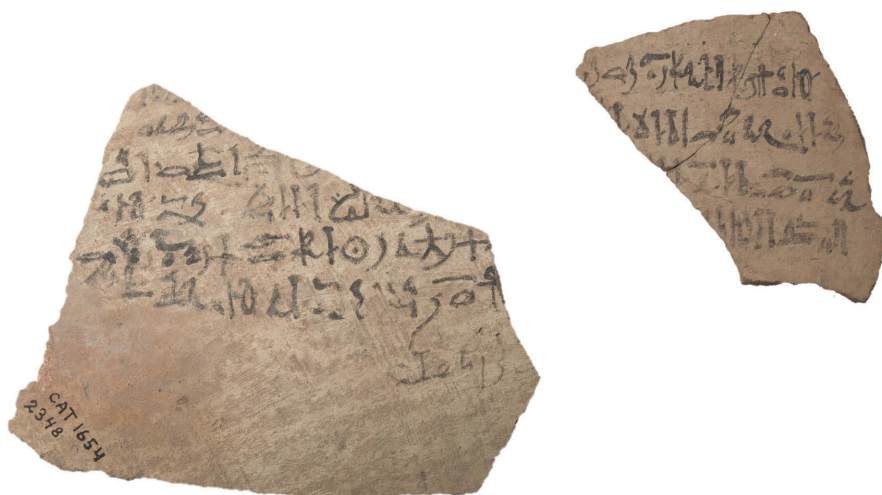





Fig. 21: Doc. V = O. DeM 1654 & Doc. W = O. DeM 1657 (© IFAO, Archives)

The second and third examples – O. DeM 1654¹⁰¹ and O. DeM 1657¹⁰² respectively – broaden the number of text genres that the messy scribe may be said to have had an interest in. According to Posener,¹⁰³ both these texts were copied on “tesson[s] de poterie gris verdâtre,” but while the first is written parallel to the axis of the vase, the second is said to have been inscribed perpendicular to this axis, thereby excluding the possibility that they both belonged to a single composition. That said, both texts do appear to belong to the genre of ‘Songs’ and thematize the heart (lexicalized as both *jb* and *h;ty*) as the center of emotions: *mk jb=j [...]* ‘look, my heart [...]’ (Doc. V,4), *h;ty=j r [...]* ‘my heart is towards [...]’ (Doc. V,5), *y; jb=j ;tp [...]* ‘indeed my heart is loaded [...]’ (Doc. V,6), *jb=j r wnm* ‘I want to eat’ (Doc. W,1), *sy n ;k;3-jb* ‘it is for the righteous’ (Doc. W,4).

The palaeographic features of these ostraca argue for their unambiguous attribution to Pay (i). They show (a) the familiar alternation of dark and faint ink (*passim*); (b) the stair-like progression of groups of signs (*passim*), as well as colliding lines (Doc. V,5–6); (c) overlapping signs, in particular the group  over  in Doc. V,3, which does not appear to reflect an emendation (since *[s]dr hn=k* ‘sleep with you’ would make perfect sense); and (d) the characteristic shape of  (Doc. V,5 and Doc. W,1; compare with table 2a, i–j; 4, f; 6, g–h). If I am correct in attributing these additional texts to Pay (i), this shows that he was an actual polygraph, able to produce texts in various literary genres at a time when those genres were emerging within the corpus of texts from the community of Deir el-Medina.

8. Conclusions

Before concluding, I would like to stress once more that this contribution reflects only the tip of the iceberg – many more documents by the same hand have been identified in both the published and unpublished materials from Deir el-Medina – and a complete reconstruction of the corpus of texts written by the messy scribe represents a long-term project. The present contribution is thus more a proof-of-concept than an exhaustive endeavor. Nonetheless, in spite of the fledgling nature of this investigation, a series of preliminary conclusions may be drawn based on the palaeographical and – to a lesser extent – orthographical observations made in this paper:

1. Provided that we possess enough material written by a given scribe, it is possible to trace that scribe’s hand across texts and genres – even when the com-

101 Posener 1980, 94 and pl. 74–74a.

102 Posener 1980, 95 and pl. 75–75a.

103 Posener 1980, 94–95.

positions are not ‘signed,’ as in the case of Amennakhte (v).¹⁰⁴ In order to successfully track a hand, a set of features specific to that hand have to be identified, while their co-occurrence can be used to distinguish between groups of similar hands (Section 6).

2. Shorter documents represent a challenge for handwriting analysis, as a sound attribution necessarily relies on a set of converging palaeographical and orthographical features. The shorter the text, the harder it is to assess whether or not it belongs to a given cluster of texts.
3. Although Pay (i)’s handwriting varies slightly from text to text, there is no correlation between the quality of the hand and the (literary or non-literary)¹⁰⁵ genre of the text. It is precisely the fact that his hand remains the same across genres that allows us to track this scribe.¹⁰⁶
4. When available, data about provenance can help to cluster texts together. In Section 2, we saw that the discovery of several texts by the same hand in Maison G/J is what set the present research in motion. Annex 1 further shows that all of the texts for which we possess a precise provenance come from areas located north of the village (GMN, K 215, KGP, and Maison G/J).

The present case-study is certainly interesting in its own right, but – in my view – it should serve mostly as a foundation for studies in broader domains. In the field of literature, for example, Pay (i) may have represented one of the first ‘authors’ in Deir el-Medina, paving the way for a number of draughtsmen-scribes¹⁰⁷ – individuals who are known to have written literary compositions and sometimes ended up occupying the official role of scribe in the village – such as Menna (i),¹⁰⁸ Amennakhte (v),¹⁰⁹ Harshire (i),¹¹⁰ and Amenhotep (vi),¹¹¹ to name the most famous exemplars. Pay (i)’s literary production suggests that the scribal environment of Deir el-Medina might have fostered a conceptual shift from *scriptor*¹¹² to *author*.¹¹³ Indeed, the originality of Pay (i)’s compositions¹¹⁴ shows beyond doubt that creativity flourished

104 See Dorn and Polis 2019, with previous references on the topic.

105 Note that Pay (i)’s hand seems to be attested in documentary texts dealing, for instance, with deliveries, but their analysis would require a study of its own.

106 The possible diachronic changes affecting Pay (i)’s hand is not straightforwardly visible.

107 See the discussion in Laboury 2016.

108 Fischer-Elfert 2006.

109 Černý 2001, 339–383; Polis 2018b, Dorn and Polis 2019.

110 Janssen 1982.

111 Keller 1984, 2003; Bács 2011.

112 Ragazzoli 2019.

113 Loprieno 2019.

114 See already the remark in Valbelle 1985, 340, n. 4.

in the literary works of the Deir el-Medina community long before the first official claims of authorship during the 20th Dynasty with their ‘signatures’.¹¹⁵

This creativity in the literary realm appears to correlate with Pay (i)’s expressions of personal piety.¹¹⁶ The hymns that he wrote evidently furnished an auspicious context in which he developed his individual style. Keller¹¹⁷ devoted a study to the religious beliefs of Pay (i)’s family. Looking principally at Pay (i)’s stelae¹¹⁸ and at the names he gave to his children, she highlighted his devotion to divinities with solar, astral, or celestial associations, and argued that we can observe a diachronic shift within the family’s private pantheon, with increasing attention paid to the community’s divine patrons. While this seems quite likely based on the available evidence, the profound and stable relationship between the members of this family and Amun have largely been overlooked. The hymns to Amun, Mut, and Thebes that I attributed to Pay (i) in this paper demonstrate his deep attachment to the Theban gods. Amun is identified with several deities in these hymns, including Shu (e.g. Doc. C) and Re-Horakhti (e.g. Doc. F). These are also the gods revered on his Stela Turin CGT 50042,¹¹⁹ where he states: “I adore Re when he sets, oh god noble, beloved, and merciful, who hears the prayers, who hears the supplications of the one who calls him, who comes to the voice of the one who pronounces his name” (l. 2–5). Additionally, Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep is the god praised on Stela Turin CGT 50052,¹²⁰ a stela that he dedicated to his mother Wadjetronpet (iii). On this stela, he calls for mercy regarding his blindness: “look, you made me see the darkness that you create. May you be merciful to me, who proclaims: ‘How sweet is your mercy, oh Khonsu, to the poor of your town!’” (l. 3–5). This obviously echoes Doc. D, where Pay (i) asks Amun to let him see his light, as well as Doc. J, in which his son is to deliver him medicine for his ailing eyes.¹²¹

In the corpus of religious texts produced by subsequent generations of Pay (i)’s family, the Theban triad looms large as well. The best and most famous example is

115 Dorn 2017.

116 Luiselli 2011, 2014.

117 Keller 2008.

118 The attribution of Stela Liverpool Museum 1973.2.340 to Pay (i) – suggested by Criscenzo-Laycock (2011) – is highly debatable and is an attribution that I do not consider to be plausible.

119 Tosi and Roccati 1972, 76–77 and pl. 278.

120 Tosi and Roccati 1972, 87–88 and pl. 283 and Morgan 2004, 124–127.

121 *Contra* the traditional interpretation (i. e., physical blindness), Galán (1999; see also Luiselli 2011, 162–168) suggested a metaphorical explanation for this locution: “[s]eeing darkness is a metaphor used to refer to the situation in which the deceased finds himself after his Final Judgment and before he reaches the Hereafter, where god is” (Galán 1999, 29). In Pay (i)’s case, at least, what we know about his personal life (Section 5) assuredly argues in favor of the traditional interpretation.

certainly the so-called penitential hymn to Amun on Stela Berlin 20377.¹²² In this hymn, Nebre (i), son of Pay (i), expresses his deep and humble gratitude towards Amun, who saved his son Nakhtamun (iii). The force of literary and religious tradition was strong within this family.

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122 Erman 1911, 1087–1097 and pl. 16; Wente 2003, 284–286; Luiselli 2011, 378–382 and pl. 11.

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Annex 1 – Ostraca attributed to Pay (i) in this paper

1	O. Berlin P. 11247	Letter	?
2	O. Černý 19	Letter	?
3	O. Borchardt	Prayer to Amun	Deir el-Medina?
4	O. DeM 1055	Hymn to Amun and Mut	Deir el-Medina
5	O. DeM 1084	Hymn to Amun	K 215 janv. 1929
6	O. DeM 1409	Prayer and numerical hymn to Amun	KGP (18.3.50 & 18.12.50)
7	O. DeM 1594	Hymn to Thebes	GMN 11.02.51 B
8	O. DeM 1654	Song	KGP 20.12.50
9	O. DeM 1657	Song	Deir el-Medina
10	O. DeM 10111	Letter	KGP 29.12.1950
10	O. DeM 10249	Letter	KGP 19.03.1950, 20.03.1950 & 21.03.1950
11	O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6128.1943, v ^o	Invocation to Weret-Iaret	Deir el-Medina?
12	O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6134.1943	Hymn to Amun	Deir el-Medina?
13	O. Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.6135.1943	Letter	Deir el-Medina
14	O. Gardiner 45	Prayer to Amun	?
15	O. Glasgow D.1925.88	Hymn to Amun	Deir el-Medina?
16	O. IFAO inv. 2181	Prayer to Amun	Maison G/J
17	O. IFAO inv. 2971	Report?	Deir el-Medina
18	O. Strasbourg H. 188	Hymn to Amun	Thebes West (1911)
19	O. Strasbourg H. 190	Hymn (to Amun?)	Thebes West (1911)