

A COMMUNITY
OF WORKMEN
AT THEBES
IN THE RAMESSIDE
PERIOD

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Rezerisioen:

- JEA 63, 1977, S. 187-189,
(Moris L. Biebia)

- VDI 2/144, 1978, S. 209-215
(E. S. Bogoslovsky)

besides inquiring and recommending he only once betrays his feelings : ‘ *If⁽¹⁾ only Hemtshere were here!* ’, he writes from Elephantine ⁽²⁾, and in an obscure passage an actual visit by Hemtshere in the south seems to be alluded to ⁽³⁾.

And yet it could not have been so long since Butehamūn was greatly afflicted by the death of Akhtay. We still have a witness to his grief in a curious little limestone chip ⁽⁴⁾, to which he entrusted his feelings in writing. The ink used is red throughout and black dots separating the sentences are a proof that it was carefully re-read. The text contains an appeal to Akhtay’s coffin to communicate with the deceased and to transmit to her the messages from the husband. We are certainly not far from the truth if we surmise that the ostrakon was deposited in Akhtay’s tomb in front of the coffin. Unfortunately, many lines are irretrievably damaged by the rubbing to which the stone was exposed after it had been thrown out of the tomb by impious hands into the rubble of the Theban necropolis. It is thus impossible to offer a translation of the whole and much can only be guessed at or paraphrased :

‘ *Oh thou noble chest of Osiris, songstress of Amūn Akhtay who rests under thee! Listen to me and give the message. Tell her since thou art next to her : ‘ How do you fare? How are you? ’ Thou shalt say⁽⁵⁾ to her : ‘ Woe, (Akhtay) does not prosper! ’⁽⁶⁾ so says your brother, your companion. ‘ Woe, you beautiful one⁽⁷⁾ who has no equal. One does not find an example of [any] ugliness [to] find it on you.*



⁽¹⁾  for the particle  ERMAN, *Näg. Gr.*, § 689.



⁽²⁾ *LRL* 22, 2.

⁽³⁾ *LRL* 64, 13. The probable translation is : What does it mean when you say that ‘ *you have written after Hemtshere had been there?* ’. The letter containing the passage was sent by someone from Thebes to Shedsehōr in Nubia.

⁽⁴⁾ O. Louvre Inv. 698 = *H.O.*, pls. 80.80 A.

⁽⁵⁾ *Mntj dd(t)*.

⁽⁶⁾ *Bw rwḏ* is found again in two N.K. mourning songs written  and  ^x (*MDAIK* 11, 124 and 144), the latter passage also in DAVIS, *Seven Private Tombs*, pl. 25, bottom register (where there is another example of the expression), there too used of the dead ; the name Akhtay has been inadvertently omitted here, but is present further on. Our text confirms brilliantly Maspero’s emendation (*Études égypt.* I, 116, note 3).

⁽⁷⁾  is probably a better reading than .

I have been calling all the time and you too answer [to him who calls] you. Good to me are (my) mother and father, brother and sister; they have come, but <you> have been taken from me' 'Woe, [Akhtay] does not [prosper], you who brought home your cattle. They did not let you do [when] you offered their young ones. Woe, Akhtay does not prosper, [you who attended] our many fields while you were loaded with all kind of heavy loads, though there were no carrying poles for them, no resting place where to put them down Oh Akhtay, you gracious one as woman'

This is what the scribe Butehamūn of the Tomb says to the songstress of Amūn Akhtay :

'Prē' has gone and his ennead (of gods) after him and the kings likewise, the humans in one body after their fellows. There is no one who will stand, for we shall go after you all. If one (can) hear me <at> the place, where you are, say to the lords of eternity : Let my brother reach (me) so that I may make in their hearts, great or small. It is you who should speak well in the netherworld. For I did not do any displeasure to you while you were upon earth.

And fill yourself with my behaviour! Swear to god in every manner saying : Do thou according to [all] he said. I will not cheat your heart in whatever I said until I reach you. [Behave to me (?)] in every good manner, if I am heard'.

The house in which Dhutmose lived when still a bachelor ⁽¹⁾ was one of the village of Dêr el-Medîna since the register mentioning it seems to have been compiled in the reign of Ramesses IX. It was in Dhutmose's time that the inhabitants of the village were transferred within the safer precinct of the temple of Medînet Habu, and so he writes to the deputy of the estate of Amon-rē' Hōr on the latter's visit to Thebes ⁽²⁾ : *'We heard that you had arrived and reached the town of Nē; may Amūn give you a good reception, may he do you all good things. We are dwelling here in the Mansion and you know thoroughly our way of dwelling. But the boys of the Tomb have gone. They dwell in Nē, while I am dwelling here alone with the scribe of the army Penthōnakhte'.* The house at Medînet Habu is likely to be the same which Butehamūn later

⁽¹⁾ *Stato civile* II, 6.

⁽²⁾ *LRL* 23.

took over and rebuilt or redecorated providing it with six columns still standing west of the temple near the rear of the brick fortification wall. Four columns are decorated with reliefs and inscriptions in Butehamūn's name, and this house is the most probable provenance of the two lintels which earlier in this Appendix supplied valuable information as to the members of the families of Dhutmose and Butehamūn⁽¹⁾. This position of his residence in the latter part of the XXth Dynasty also explains why Dhutmose appears together with another scribe of the Tomb as witness to a marriage settlement made by a prophet in the court in the temple of Medînet Habu⁽²⁾.

The rough date of the correspondence of Dhutmose and Butehamūn has been correctly established by Spiegelberg⁽³⁾. The clue was given in the person of the ' *Commander of the army* ', usually unnamed. Only from one letter it transpires that it is Pi'onkh, successor of the high-priest of Amon-rê Hrihōr. This letter⁽⁴⁾ written by Butehamūn on behalf of himself and the gang of workmen gives Pi'onkh an elaborate titulary, the most important being the titles of ' *King's scribe, commander of the army, high-priest of Amon-rê,, king's son of Kush, overseer of the southern lands and overseer of the granaries of Pharaoh* '⁽⁵⁾. The titles are precisely the same on a Cairo ostrakon⁽⁶⁾ except that this latter adds also the title of ' *vizier* '. Its handwriting is identical with that of another piece⁽⁷⁾ containing the beginning of the draft of a letter to Hrihōr by Butehamūn.

Butehamūn was therefore active, almost certainly as scribe, already during the high-priesthood of Hrihōr, that is during the period called *Repeating of birth*, between years 19 and 26 of Ramesses XI. It is, therefore, surprising that there is no trace of him, either as scribe or workman, in the extensive accounts of year 8 of Ramesses XI⁽⁸⁾, in which his father Dhutmose occurs again

⁽¹⁾ See above, p. 357-358.

⁽²⁾ P. Turin Cat. 2021, 4, 9 (= JEA 13, pl. XV).

⁽³⁾ *Correspondances du temps des rois-prêtres*, 9-11.

⁽⁴⁾ LRL 44, 3-5.

⁽⁵⁾ Pi'onkh without any title occurs in LRL 26, 4; as ' *Commander of the army* ' in 61, 16.

⁽⁶⁾ O. Cairo '745.

⁽⁷⁾ O. Cairo '744, 5.

⁽⁸⁾ P. Turin Cat. 2018.