

A RAMESSIDE TEXT FRAGMENT (O. FES 4)

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The Finnish Egyptological Society (FES) has in its possession a couple of hieratic ostraca. One of these was displayed at an exhibition held at the Amos Anderson Art Museum in 1970, a photograph thereof being published in the exhibition catalogue *Muinainen Egypti: taide ja kulttuuri* (p. 12). The same ostrakon was also on display at Helsinki University Library at the exhibition *Niilin varrelta 12.11.1999–28.1.2000*. This was an exhibition in association with which no catalogue was compiled.

The notes of the founder and former chairman of the Finnish Egyptological Society, Professor Rostislav Holthoer, refer to the ostrakon with a provisional number 4. Thus the item may now be labelled O. FES 4 (*Fig. 1*). According to Holthoer's notes, the ostrakon was acquired at Luxor, and it seems most feasible that it was donated to the Finnish Egyptological Society as a gift at some point before the exhibition at the Amos Anderson Art Museum took place. Perhaps the omission of more specific information on the manner in which the ostrakon was obtained indicates that it had previously belonged to Holthoer's own private collection, a collection which was donated to the FES, piece by piece. The limestone flake is identified as limestone of the Luxor-type and it has a maximum height of 11.5 cm and a maximum width of 10 cm (as measured by the author).

The provenance is possibly Deir el-Medina with its surroundings. The writing consists of four lines of hieratic script made with black ink. There are traces of an older text both underneath and between lines 1–4, so the ostrakon is a palimpsest. The present text is unfortunately quite damaged. The beginning of each line (lines 1–4) is missing, and the ink has become quite faded at the end of every line. In line 1 the present text seems to have been partly rubbed off, then subsequently written anew, which points to a correction made by the scribe. Although the text appears at first glance to be written by quite an accomplished scribe producing a neat example of ramesside hieratic, a second look reveals that the writer seems to have got his signs and sign groups somewhat muddled. As a

Commentary

a) The reading $\square \overset{\circ}{\circ}$ is not certain. If it is correct, the writing is unusual since one tends to find the word written either $\square \overset{\circ}{\circ}$ as, for example, in O. DeM 763, 3, 4, 5 (Grandet 2000: 165) or $\square \leftarrow \overset{\circ}{\circ}$ as in O. BM 5625 rto. 1 (Demarée 2002: plate 9), or in the simplified form of the latter variant as, for example, in O. DeM 780, 1 (Grandet 2000: 183). I have so far not been able to find any writing identical with the one shown in O. FES 4, 1, but forms such as $\square \overset{\circ}{\circ}$ do occur, as in P. BM 10042, rto. VIII, 12 (Leitz 1999: plate 19). If considered within the frame of the typology compiled by Dr. Stefan Wimmer, the sign \leftarrow (D 21) in O. FES 4, 1 appears to be of type a or type b (Wimmer 1995, I: 152; II: 32), \square (O 4) resembles type b (Wimmer 1995, I: 200; II: 248), and \circ (N 5), if this indeed is the correct reading, resembles type e (Wimmer 1995, I: 188–189; II: 194). I am not sure whether the stroke above \circ should be understood as $\overset{\circ}{\circ}$ (Z 7) or simply as a diagonal stroke.

b) The reading $\square \text{pn}$ is highly tentative, as the sign \square (Q 3) would thus have quite an unusual shape. The writing appears to be the result of a correction made by the scribe (with remnants of smudges and partly erased older writing still visible), and this may have played some part in the sign taking such an odd shape, especially if the scribe hesitated or was unsure of how to make the desired correction. However, the word *pn* occurs relatively often in Late Egyptian texts, not least in the fixed phrase *hrw pn* (Černý & Groll 1984: 40), so it is somewhat hard to imagine that this sign group would pose great difficulties for a writer. Thus, the reading \square remains problematic, whereas — (N 35) fits nicely into Wimmer's typology (Wimmer 1995, II: 268).

c) The group $\overset{\circ}{\circ}$ is found with such frequency in Late Egyptian texts that it will suffice to mention just a couple of references, such as O. DeM 558, rto. 2 (Sauneron 1959: plate 6a) and P. Chester Beatty VI, vso. 1, 6 (Gardiner 1935: plate 32A). An alternative reading $\overset{\circ}{\circ}$ might, however, be possible.

d) The sign \circ (Aa 1) is written as an open S-curve in the way typical of the 19th dynasty (Wimmer 1995: I/229–230, II/396). The frequently used divine epithet Lord of All (Allherr) is *nb r dr* (Helck & Otto 1972: 136–137) rather than *nb hr dr*, so one is tempted to interpret the writing as a spelling mistake for the former. The epithet features in so many Late Egyptian texts that it will suffice to mention just a few references, such as the well known story of The Contendings of Horus and Seth in P. Chester Beatty I, rto. 1–16 (Gardiner 1931: plate I–XVI), where the god Atum is addressed as Lord of All, O. DeM 1222, vso. 6 (Posener 1951–72: plate 52a), and O. DeM 1610, 4 (Posener 1977–80: 54a–55/a). The \leftarrow (D 21) written underneath \circ (Aa 1) is also problematic. The left curve of the sign

has become effaced, presuming that this indeed is an open c type (Wimmer 1995, II: 32), and traces of an older text can be seen sunk into the surface of the limestone at this particular spot.

e)  (I 9) may be the 3rd person masculine singular suffix pronoun attached to some presently lost word preceding , as for example in O. Turin N. 57126, 3 (López 1980: plate 58). The reading  (A 1) is not entirely certain, as it might alternatively be  (X 1).

f)  (A 2), although basically resembling type a (Wimmer 1995, I: 146; II: 10), has some curious features. Perhaps the shaping of the sign has become influenced by  (V 2) or  (V2 & D54), the usual determinative of the word *ꜥs*.

The above-presented limestone flake contains a very limited number of written words, so the identification and classification of the text is, and will remain for the time being, a daunting task. This is indeed true, as the reading of some of the written signs is tentative to say the least. The use of the epithet Lord of All may be taken as an indication of the text being magico-religious or literary, perhaps something in the genre of the Miscellanies. There are no visible verse-points to be seen, but the neat handwriting in the shaping of  (M 35:D 21) in line 2, for example, suggests a literary rather than a non-literary text (compare Möller 1909: 27). With regard to questions concerning a possible attributed date, the hazards of using only palaeography as a dating criterion are well known (Janssen 1984: 305–306; 1987: 161–167; Winand 1995: 188–189). However, Wimmer has made a strong argument for the s-form of  (Aa 1) being strictly limited to the 19th dynasty (Wimmer 1995; I: 229–230; II: 396; 2001: 286). As this particular shape is found in O. FES 4, 2 it would appear that the text is of a 19th dynasty date.

The ostrakon O. FES 4 does unfortunately not contain a well preserved text. Rather, it is a demanding fragmentary piece of reading exercise for the present-day scholar. But even small text fragments can occasionally be identified as parts joining a larger body of text, as has recently again been shown (Dorn 2005: 25–28). This certainly makes it worthwhile to get all limestone flakes and pottery sherds containing fragmentary texts published, for one can never foretell when adjoining pieces might be found.



Fig. 1.

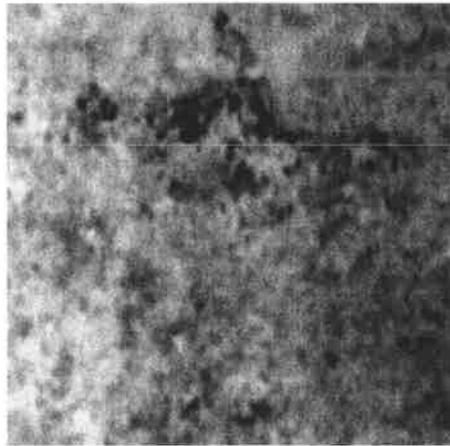


Fig. 2

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