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SIX OSTRACA OF *THE TEACHING OF KHETY* IN THE STATE PUSHKIN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, MOSCOW

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This paper is the first publication of six Ancient Egyptian ostraca from the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (I, 1b 334, 340, 344, 347, 348, 362) with fragments of *The Teaching of Khety*, also known as *The Satire of the Trades*. The ostraca used to belong to the collection of the Russian Egyptologist Vladimir S. Golenischeff. They date from the 19th–20th Dynasty and probably originate from Deir el-Medina.

Keywords: Ancient Egypt, *The Teaching of Khety*, ostrakon, hieratic, V.S. Golenischeff, State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts

ШЕСТЬ ОСТРАКОНОВ С «ПОУЧЕНИЕМ ХЕТИ» ИЗ СОБРАНИЯ ГМИИ ИМ. А.С. ПУШКИНА

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Статья представляет собой первую публикацию шести древнеегипетских остраконов из собрания ГМИИ им. А.С. Пушкина (I,1b 334, 340, 344, 347, 348, 362), которые содержат фрагменты литературного произведения «Поучение Хети» («Сатира на профессии»). Остраконы первоначально находились в коллекции первого русского египтолога Владимира Семеновича Голенищева. Они датируются временем 19–20 династии и происходят, вероятно, из Дейр эль-Медины.

Ключевые слова: Древний Египет, Поучение Хети, остракон, иератика, В.С. Голенищев, ГМИИ им. А.С. Пушкина

The *Teaching of Khety*, also known as *The Satire of the Trades*, seems to be the most popular composition used for scribal training in the New Kingdom Egypt (along with *The Book of Kemit* and *The Teaching of Amenemhet I*). The number of known copies has been growing in recent decades. W. Helck¹ in 1970 could collect 104 copies; B. Mathieu² in 1998 knew of 6 papyri, 2 tablets and more than 250 ostraca; S. Jäger³ in 2004 was aware of 9 papyri, 3 tablets and 263 ostraca. Now the number of ostraca has grown to 323⁴. To those we can now add six more fragments kept in the collection of the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow: ostraca I,1b 334, 340, 344, 347, 348, 362. They all formerly belonged to the collection of the Russian Egyptologist Vladimir S. Golenischeff. There is no information about their provenance, although they might have come from Deir el-Medina, as other ostraca of the Golenischeff collection (Pushkin Museum I,1b 326 (now State Hermitage 5598)⁵, I,1b 328⁶, I,1b 345)⁷. Judging by the paleography, they be dated to from the 19th–20th Dynasty.

The Teaching of Khety is written in the Middle Egyptian language, which was not in everyday use in the New Kingdom. The text was used in the training of young scribes, who followed different versions of the text and introduced many mistakes. This makes *The Teaching of Khety* difficult to read, with some parts of it still being unintelligible. The same can be said about the Golenischeff fragments. Detailed philological analysis of many problems of *The Teaching* is the subject of extensive bibliography⁸, and now a new full edition by J. Jurjens⁹ is awaited. Introducing new fragments to the corpus of *The Teaching of Khety* contributes to our understanding of the meaning of the text, as well as the process of its transmission.

¹ Helck 1970, 1–6.

² Mathieu 1998, 37–40.

³ Jäger 2004, 5–9.

⁴ Vernus 2010, 243; Jurjens 2021a, 83.

⁵ Bogoslovsky 1973, 79–82.

⁶ Bogoslovsky 1973, 96–103.

⁷ To be published soon.

⁸ For the bibliography on *The Teaching of Khety* before 2000 see: Mathieu 1999–2000, 65–73. The list of texts published after the latest synoptic edition by S. Jäger (Jäger 2004), see Quack 2020, 240. A short bibliography and profound commentary can be found in the work of P. Dils on TLA: URL: <https://thesaurus-linguae-egyptiae.de/object/7MAXH6NAXVB6VAIHPPH Q6XXY3Y>; accessed on: 26.02.2024.

⁹ Jurjens, J. (forthcoming): *Being and Becoming a Scribe: The Teaching of Khety and Its Use as an Educational Tool in Ancient Egypt*. PhD thesis. University of Leiden. URL: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/judith-jurjens#tab-1>; accessed on: 26.02.2024.

1. Ostrakon I, 1b 340 (Golenischeff no. 5519) (fig. 1, a, b, c)

Date: 19th–20th Dynasty

Provenance: no information

Dimensions: 14.5x13.3 cm

Materials: pottery, paint

Acquisition: from the Golenischeff collection, in the Pushkin Museum since 1911

Four lines of the text are written on the upper part of the ostrakon. The scribe used technical horizontal grooves as guiding lines. Only the right part of the original ostrakon is preserved. Judging by the length of the lacunae, the ostrakon was three times bigger. There are rubs and cuts on the surface. On the back side of the ostrakon there are four lines written in cursive hieratic in Late Egyptian.



The text corresponds to the chapter 15.1–15.4 of *The Teaching*¹⁰.

1. *ir.w* *h3.w* {*s*}*fn*{*d*}^[1.1][=*f* *r-sy* *hr* *pr*(.*t*) *r* *h3s.t* *hw* *wr* *ddy.t=fn* *3.w*]¹¹
2. {*ir.w*}<*r*>^[1.2] *k3.t=st* *iry*^[1.3][.*w*]^[1.4] [*wr* *ddy.t=fn* *imy.w-s3* *ddy.w* *sw* *hr*]
3. *w3.t* *spr.w*^[1.5] *r* *imy-s3*^[1.6] *spr*[=*f* *r* *pr=f* *mšrw* *wd^c.n* *sw*]
4. *šm.t*

The weapon-maker is weakened [utterly
going out to the hill land.

What he gave to the asses is greater]
than their work.

Оружейный мастер [совсем
изможден походами по нагорью.

То, что он задал ослам (по стоимости), больше,] чем их работа.

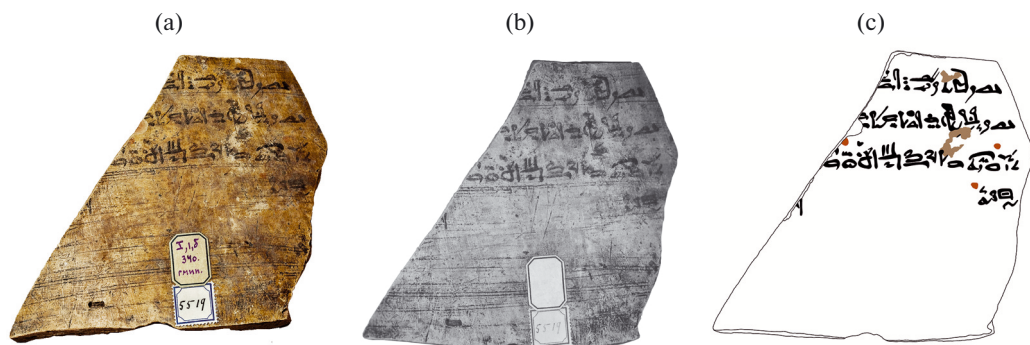


Fig. 1. Ostrakon I, 1b 340: a – photo; b – infrared photo; c – facsimile © Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

¹⁰ The numeration of chapters in the paper is given in accordance with Jäger 2004.


¹¹ Here and elsewhere sentences are restored in accordance with the transcriptions of *The Teaching* collected by S. Jäger (Jäger 2004). We chose the transcription presenting a set of signs most similar to the Golenischeff fragments. When there was no specifically similar variant, we chose one that presented less problems of grammar and interpretation. The commentary of P. Dils displayed on TLA was useful for that.

[Great is his gift to the men in the marshes
who put him on] the track,
Reaching there through the marshes.
He reaches [his home in the evening,
and he is exhausted from] the travelling¹².

[А еще много он отдал жителям зарослей за то,
что его вывели на] дорогу,
добираясь через заросли.
[Он] возвращается [домой вечером, разбитый]
переходом¹³.



[1.1] The word *fn* is written with superfluous signs as in *pSallier* II and *pAnastasi* VII¹⁴.

[1.2] The scribe mistook the preposition *r* for the ‘eye’ sign.

[1.3] The scribe wrote *r k3.wt=st iry* ‘more than their corresponding work’ while the majority of the texts read here *r k3.wt=st r s3 iry*. Erroneous determinative  is also found in oDeM 1179 and oTurin 57316.

[1.4] Other witnesses have here  or . The horizontal sign does not look like the ‘plural stroke’ earlier in the same line, it might be a very cursive ‘seated man’ sign.

[1.5] Similar ‘superfluous’ phrase occurs in *pSallier* II (*spr=f r imy-s3 spr=f r pr=f*).

[1.6] The scribe had to deal here with the confusing consonance *m-s-r/3* which occurs at least thrice in the Teaching (chapters 13.5–6, 15.3–4 and 16.2–3). It plays on consonantal likeness of *imy.w-s3* ‘those of the marshland’, *m3r* ‘evening’ and *r im m s3* ‘through marshes’. Our scribe obviously did not understand the sentence, his spelling of the beginning of the word looked as an imperative  and he put a wrong ‘sun’ determinative as in *m3r* ‘evening’. Alternatively, the round sign at the end of the word might be understood as a  determinative, also present in oRamesseum 82¹⁵.

2. Ostrakon I,1b 344 (Golenischeff no. 5526) (Fig. 2, *a*, *b*, *c*)

Date: 19th–20th Dynasty

Provenance: no information

Dimensions: 9x10.5cm

Materials: pottery, paint

Acquisition: from the Golenischeff collection, in the Pushkin Museum since 1911

Three lines of the text can be seen. There was at least one line over them, yet what is left cannot be surely placed in the text of *The Teaching* preceding the passage in lines 1 and 2. These words appear three times in some copies of *The Teaching* (13.5–6, 15.3–4, 16.2–3). Our text may correspond to 13.5–6 or 15.3–4, which ends with this phrase. Since chapter 16 ends differently, 16.2–3 is ruled out because the ostrakon I,1b 344 has a date which was always added after the end of a chapter¹⁶. The lines are broken off on both left and right sides. The date in line 3 is in cursive hieratic, probably in a different hand¹⁷.

¹² Our English translation of the ostraca is based on that of S. Quirke (Quirke 2004, 121–126).

¹³ For Russian translations of *The Teaching of Khety* see Turaev, Borozdin 1917, 25; Turaev 1935, 222–223; Matthieu 1934, 66–68; 1936, 94–97; 1950; Katsnelson, Mendelson 1958, 242–244; Katsnelson 2000, 425–430; Korostovtsev 1962, 143–144; 2001, 209–210; Berlev 1963; 1980; 2002; Bogoslovsky 1983, 101, 166, 199, 216, 224, 227; Panov 2021, 86–115.

¹⁴ All references to text variants are given according to Jäger 2004.

¹⁵ We owe this suggestion to J. Jurjens.

¹⁶ We thank J. Jurjens for this observation.

¹⁷ On dates on the literary ostraca see: Jurjens 2021a (with a bibliography). About the meaning of dates on the Golenischeff ostrakon with *The Hymn to the Inundation of the Nile* (I,1b 327

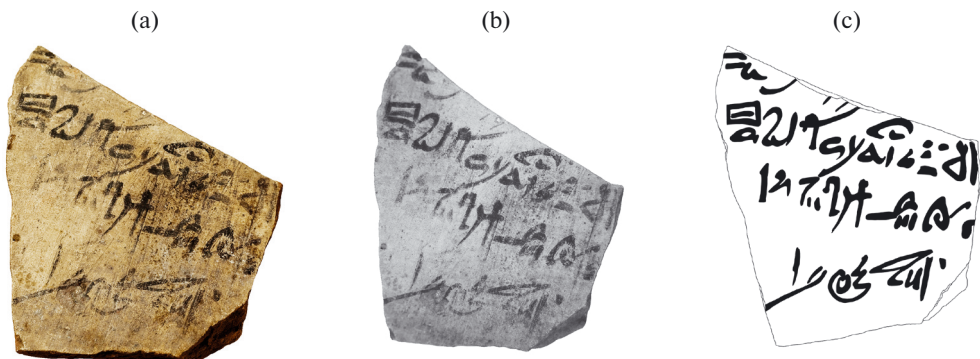


Fig. 2. Ostrakon I,1b 344: *a* – photo; *b* – infrared photo; *c* – facsimile © Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow




































1. [spr=f im m]^[2.1] š3 spr=f r pr 3šr(w)
2. wd^[2.2].n sw {sn hr^[2.3]}
3. 3bd 4 3h.t (sw) 21

[...He reaches there through] the marshes.
He reaches home in the evening,
and he is broken?..
Month 4 Akhet season (day) 21

[...добирается он туда по] зарослям.
Добирается он до дома вечером,
Он разбит?..
Месяц 4 сезона ахет (день) 21

[2.1] Precise placing of the restored text by lines is not possible.

[2.2] Either *mDd* or *wDa* are normally found in this place. What is left of the first sign might be the left part of  or  (most copies have the book roll  before the striking man ¹⁸).

[2.3]  is scarcely visible. While *wd^f.n sw šm.t* is more satisfying grammatically, some scribes put here *hr šm.t*. oRamesseum 82 (chapter 16.3) has similar sequence of signs:                            

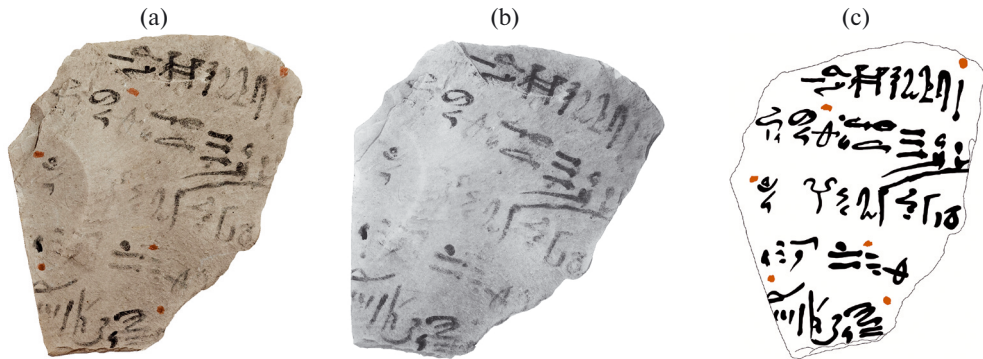


Fig. 3. Ostrakon I, lb 334: *a* – photo; *b* – infrared photo; *c* – facsimile © Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

Partly preserved five lines of the text correspond to the chapter 19.1–19.5. This part is unclear in all of the copies; interpretations can be found in the work of S. Jäger¹⁹. Precise placing of the restored text by lines is not possible.



1. [rḥt.y ḥr rht ḥr mry.t] s3h=f n^[3.1] [hnty]
2. [pri] it=f^[3.2] mw^[3.3] ḥ^[3.4] hr z3=f
3. nn i3w.t ḥtp.n=f ḥr=s t]nw^[3.5] <ḥ^[3.6]> i3w.t^[3.7] nb.t
4. [šbb=f šbnw n s.t-ḥs] nn ḥ(.t)^[3.8] [wḥb(.t) im=f
5. ddi=f sw m d3iw ny z.t-ḥm.t] wnn.t^[3.9] m ḥzmn

[The washerman does the laundry on the shore,]
he neighbours [crocodiles.

‘May] his father [leave] the destroying water’,
says son [of him.

It is not a job to be satisfied with,
more than] any other job.

[He mingles mixture of filth],
and there is no [pure] limb [on him.

He puts on the clothing of a woman]
who was in her menstruation.

[Прачечник стирает на берегу], Соседствует
он с [крокодилом

«Пусть выйдет] его отец из опасной воды», –
говорит сын [его.

Это не то занятие, которым можно быть до-
вольным, более чем] всякое другое.

[Он смешивается с вонючей смесью]. Ни одна
часть тела не [чиста у него.

Одевается он в одежду женщины], у которой
была менструация.

[3.1] s3h=f n is also in oBM 29550, while most copies show either s3ḥ t3 or s3ḥ m.

[3.2] it=f is also in oDeM 1551.

[3.3] While some copies have  between it and mw, this ostrakon omits it.

¹⁹ Jäger 2004, 96–99; see also the commentary of P. Dils on TLA.

[3.4] As in some other copies, ʕd has a determinative S as in ‘fat’²⁰. As ‘fat’ does not make good sense here, it is often emended to ʕd ‘to hack’, hence ‘stir up, destroy’.

[3.5] The sign under the ‘duck’ could be a failed ‘papyrus roll’ as in the other copies.

[3.6] r is omitted before $i3w.t$, as in oDeM 1550.

[3.7] The scribe left the jut on the stone blank.

[3.8] t could be originally on the ostrakon but then faded away; now the sign is not visible. J. Jurjens suggested that black blot at the end might stand for 𓂏 , which is not in other witnesses.

[3.9] $wnn.t$ is also found in oBM 29550, while the large papyri (*pSallier* II and *pAnastasi* VII) read here $hr\ wnn=f$.

4. Ostrakon I, 1b 347 (Golenischeff no. 5524) (Fig. 4, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*²¹)

Date: 19th–20th Dynasty

Provenance: no information

Dimensions: 15x8.5 cm

Materials: pottery, paint

Acquisition: from the Golenischeff collection, in the Pushkin Museum since 1911

Originally this ostrakon could have contained full chapter 16 written in three lines. We now have only its left part. The ink is very faded, particularly on the right side, and often merged with dark colored technical grooves. Line 3 is hardly visible. There are traces of red pigment on the ostrakon’s surface (see Fig. 4, *b*). The one on the lower left in a date put after the end of the chapter²². It is difficult to establish if other dots are verse points or just blots. That is why the placement of red dots in the transcription is uncertain, the more so as it does not always correspond to the beginning of phrases.

Precise placing of the restored text by lines is not possible.



1. $[shhty].w^{[4.1]} hr\ pr(.t)\ r\ [h3s.t]$
 $s\{w3d\} <wd>=f\ [3]hw.t=f^{[4.2]}n\ [ms.w=f]$
 $snd.w\ m\ m3i.w\ hn^c\ 3m.w$
2. $rh=f\ sw\ r=f\ iw=f\ hr\ Km.t$
 $spr=f\ im\ m\ 33$
3. $[spr=f\ m\ pr=f\ 33rw]$
 $wd^c.n\ sw\ hr\ sm.t^{[4.3]}...$
 $3bd\ 3?^{[4.4]}sw\ 12$

²⁰ *Wb* I, 239.8.

²¹ DStretch enhanced photos are given only when they bring out new information.

²² The note in the lower left corner of the ostrakon enhanced with DStretch:



Fig. 4. Ostrakon I, lb 347: *a* – photo; *b* – enhanced with DStretch; *c* – infrared photo; *d* – facsimile © Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

[The messenger] goes out to the hill land
after bequeathing [his goods to his children,
fearful of lions and Asians.
He recognises himself again,
when he is] in Egypt.
He reaches through the marshes.
[He reaches home in the evening,
and he is exhausted from] the travelling.
Month 3 of... day 12.

[Посыльный] уходит в пустыню.
[Свои вещи он завещает детям.
Напуганный львами и азиатами,
Он приходит в себя
только] в Египте,
Когда возвращается туда по зарослям.
[Он] возвращается [домой вечером, разбитый]
из-за перехода.
Месяц 3... день 12.

[4.1] As in several other witnesses, *shhty.w* is plural here, which disagrees with 3rd masc. suffixes further. For coherency, we put it in singular in the translation.

[4.2] Superfluous *ae* as in some other copies.

[4.3] The reading of the last line is uncertain. If this reading is correct, the wording is the same as in oRamesseum 82 and the ostrakon I, lb 344 (see above).

[4.4] The traces are consistent with *pr.t* as well as *šmw* season.

5. Ostrakon I, lb 348 (Golenischeff no. 5538) (Fig. 5, *a*, *b*, *c*)

Date: 19th–20th Dynasty

Provenance: no information

Dimensions: 9x6.5 cm

Materials: pottery, paint

Acquisition: from the Golenischeff collection, in the Pushkin Museum since 1911

Remains of four lines written across technical grooves correspond to the chapter 3.4–4.1²³. The precise placing of the restored text by lines is not possible.



1. [wr sw gr].t^[5.1] i[3w.t nb.t nn wn mit.t=st m t3
2. š3^f.n=f w3d].t iw=f m hrdw [tw r nd-hr.t=f
3. tw r h3b]=f r ir.t m^[5.2] wpw.t n^[5.3] [ty.t=f sd sw m d3iw]
4. n] m33[.n=i gnw.ty m wpw.t...]

[For it is greater than any profession,
there is none like in this land.
He started to succeed,]
being just a child.
[He will be greeted,
He will be sent] to carry out a mission,
[and before he returns,
he is clothed in apron.
I do not see a sculptor on a mission...

[Важнее это, чем любое занятие,
Нет подобной в стране.
Стал он процветать,]
будучи еще ребенком.
[Будут его приветствовать.
будут посылать] выполнять задания,
И еще до того, как он вернется,
будет облачен в (должностное) одеяние.
Не видел я скульптора на задании...

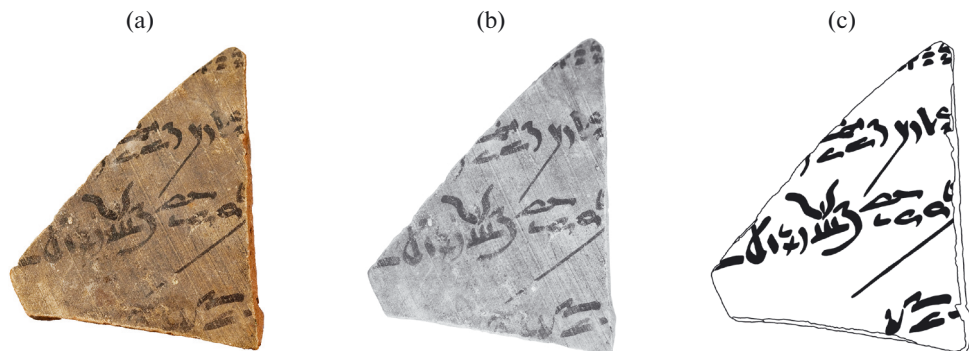



Fig. 5. Ostrakon I, 1b 348: *a* – photo; *b* – infrared photo; *c* – facsimile © Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

²³ This ostracon might be the one mentioned by A. Piankoff in his paper on the writing tablet Louvre N693 with *The Teaching of Khety*: «...son début, sur un ostrakon de Golénischeff, au Musée de Moscou, encore inédit...» (Piankoff 1933, 52). The ostracon I, 1b 348 is the only one in the Pushkin Museum which contains a passage from the beginning of *The Teaching*. The authors are indebted to J. Jurjens for the reference to the paper of A. Piankoff.

[5.1] The traces of the signs in the upper line may be the end of *gr.t* written in the same way  in oDeM 1014.

[5.2] Some other scribes (oDeM 1014, 1042, 1047) wrote *m wpw.t* as here.

[5.3] The rest of the sign is consistent with *n* as well as with *nn* negation. Both variants occur in other witnesses.

6. Ostrakon I, 1b 362 (Golenischeff no. 5527) (Fig. 6, a, b, c²⁴)

Dating: 19th–20th Dynasty

Provenance: no information

Dimensions: 8x7 cm

Materials: pottery, paint

Acquisition: from the Golenischeff collection, in the Pushkin Museum since 1911

Three lines correspond to the chapter 22.3–22.5 and belong to the second half of *The Teaching*, which was rarely copied²⁵. The handwriting is sloppy, with small spaces between the lines. Precise placing of the restored text by lines is not possible.



1. *m=k*^[6.1] {*i*} -*ir.t*^[6.2] *st n* [*mry=k*

3h n=k hrw m t sb3]

2. *i*^[6.3] *w*^[6.3] *r nhh* {*k.ty*}^[6.4] <*m k3.t*> [*dww*

iw 3s zp snw di=i rh=k

3. *di=i mri*] *w sshp*^[6.5] *btn*[*w*]

Look, it is done for love of [you.

A day in the school chamber is more useful for you]

than an eternity of toil

[in the mountains].

It is the fast way I made you know,

I made you like removing (?) revolt.

Смотри, это делается из любви к [тебе.


День в школе полезен для тебя]


более, чем вечность выполнения работ
[в каменоломнях].




Так вот очень быстро я объяснил тебе,

Я заставил полюбить изгнание (?) бунта.

[6.1] Two strokes in *m=k* are written vertically.

[6.2] It's impossible to establish here if  before *ir.t* is a fallacious writing of infinitive *ir.t* (or *sdm.t(w)=f* form), or a Late Egyptian emphatic form, as proposed by J. Jurjens for similar writing in *pTurin* CGT 54019²⁶.

[6.3] Alternative reading is proposed by J. Jurjens. She suggested to read  here as in *pTurin* CGT 54019²⁷.

[6.4] All known copies speak of *k3.t* «work» here. *pAnastasi* VII has  while oDem 1529, oDeM 1590 and *pTurin* CGT 54019 read  / . Our scribe

²⁴ Due to the technical reasons, infrared photos have not been taken.

²⁵ Jurjens 2021b, 109.

²⁶ Jurjens 2021b, 116.

²⁷ Jurjens 2021b, 116.

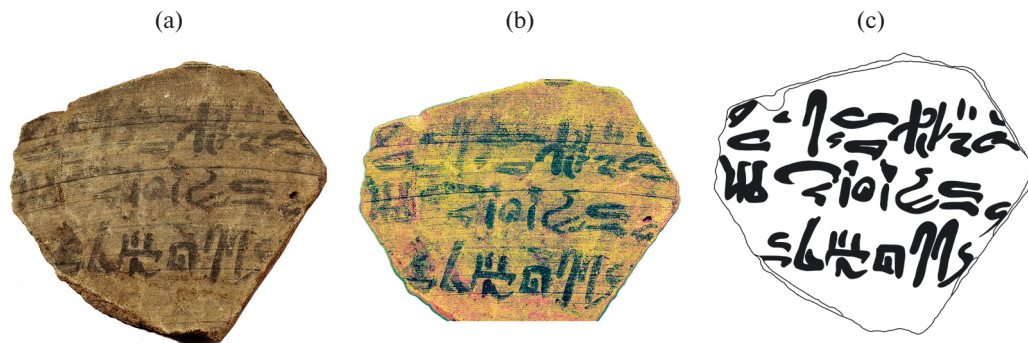







Fig. 6. Ostrakon I, Ib 362: a – photo; b – enhanced with DStretch; c – facsimile © *Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow*

has probably confused *k3.t* and *kj.t* (female form of the word *ky* ‘other’). The sign at the end might be  or .

[6.5] The word  is written the same way as in *pSallier II*, other copies spell it *ssnhp* or *ssh3p*. Normally it is emended to *snhp*. See different translations of this unclear passage in the commentaries of P. Dils on TLA²⁸.

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²⁸ URL: <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd0sPQ9cri09HmK-SEO25Vviw>; accessed on: 26.02.2024.

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