

THE RAMESSIDE PERIOD IN EGYPT  
STUDIES INTO CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL PROCESSES  
OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> DYNASTIES

DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT  
ABTEILUNG KAIRO

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ABTEILUNG KAIRO

## The Ramesside Period in Egypt

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# Writing, marks and pseudo-script in the Ramesside necropolis workmen's community

By BEN HARING\*

## New research on the necropolis workmen's marks

During the past sixteen years the marking system used by the royal necropolis workmen of the New Kingdom has been a topic of research at Leiden University<sup>1</sup>. The research project 'Symbolizing Identity', carried out in Leiden since 2011<sup>2</sup>, has proved to be a major step forward in the understanding of this marking system. Its aims were to reconstruct as much of the system as possible, and to explain its workings by looking carefully at the historical background, at comparable marking systems in Ancient Egypt and worldwide, and at modern theories of visual communication and semiotics.

Marks were used by the workmen's community of Deir el-Medina for the expression of ownership on their belongings (especially pottery), for self-presentation in graffiti and votive inscriptions, and for the creation of administrative records on ostraca (see figs. 1–3). Whereas marking property and self-presentation are well-known functions of marking systems in other periods and cultures, the frequent and long-term use of marks in administrative records as practised in the royal necropolis during the Egyptian New Kingdom is unique. The system probably found its origin in the team markings of earlier monumental building projects<sup>3</sup>, but in the course of the New

Kingdom it became part of a visual code that was clearly a semi-literate alternative to writing, a pseudo-script.

The Leiden research project significantly extended the corpus of relevant source material. Before its start in 2011, the main basis of research was a group of less than 300 ostraca. By 2014, however, a corpus of over 1000 ostraca had been assembled<sup>4</sup>. Although ostraca formed the main type of source material, other sources, mainly pottery and graffiti, were studied as well. As a result, a detailed overview of the marking system is now available for the period from Thutmosis III to Ramesses XI. Some important new insights will be briefly presented below, with a focus on the Ramesside Period<sup>5</sup>.

## The Nineteenth Dynasty

From its earliest stages, the research into the marks used by the workmen of the royal necropolis proceeded from two main clusters of ostraca found at Deir el-Medina and in the Valley of the Kings. One cluster can be dated to the period from Thutmosis III to Amenhotep III, another from Ramesses III to IV. The former group can be dated mainly because of its archaeological context (association with the tombs of Amenhotep II and III)<sup>6</sup>; the latter because of its

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\* I wish to thank HELEN RICHARDSON-HEWITT for correcting my English.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. HARING 2000, 2009a and b, 2014. The same marking system is the subject of ASTON 2009; DORN 2011a, 139–141, 369–382; DORN 2015; KILLEN/WEISS 2009; FRONCZAK/RZEPKA 2009; RZEPKA 2015. Since 2006 Leiden research has benefited especially from discussions with colleagues at Humboldt University, Berlin, and Warsaw University. It has also benefited from unpublished images and manuscripts generously shared by many institutions and colleagues.

<sup>2</sup> The project was conducted from May 2011 to September 2015, supervised by the author of this paper, and fully funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Much of the research was done by KYRA VAN DER MOEZEL and DANIEL SOLIMAN, whose resulting PhD manuscripts were submitted to the Faculty of

Humanities of Leiden University at the time of writing this contribution. The promoter was OLAF KAPER. The project has benefited immensely from the advice of ROBERT DEMARÉE. Publications that have so far resulted from the project are HARING 2015; HARING/SOLIMAN 2014; MOEZEL 2015; SOLIMAN 2013 and 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See ANDRÁSSY 2009; MOEZEL 2015; HARING in press.

<sup>4</sup> Approximately 600 of which are unpublished pieces kept in the IFAO. I am grateful to the former director of the institute, BEATRICE MIDANT-REYNES, for her permission to study the ostraca, and to the keeper of the IFAO archive, NADINE CHERPION, for her help.

<sup>5</sup> For details, the reader is referred to the publications mentioned in the bibliography, as well as to the future publications of the dissertation manuscripts by KYRA VAN DER MOEZEL and DANIEL SOLIMAN, and the project synthesis by the author.

<sup>6</sup> HARING 2009a, 152–154.

relation with documentation in hieratic script. The datable Ramesses III–IV material mainly consisted of series of marks combined with calendar dates, which reflect the roster of day duties that is so well-known from hieratic ostraca and papyri. The comparison of hieratic data and marks made it possible to identify the owners of many specific marks<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, ostraca with marks excavated by the Swiss expedition in the Valley of the Kings come from workmen's huts, and are datable, thanks to the hieratic material also found there, to the reigns of Ramesses IV–VII<sup>8</sup>.

The period of almost two centuries between Amenhotep III and the later years of Ramesses III remained problematic since it presented neither precise archaeological data on material with a substantial number of marks, nor precise hieratic parallels for any series of marks appearing on ostraca. Therefore, what exactly had happened to the marking system during and after the Amarna Period, and during the Nineteenth Dynasty remained obscure. It was also not known if or how long the marking system remained in use after the middle of the Twentieth Dynasty. These questions can now be addressed with the help of much more data, and some aspects of the underlying historical processes are emerging from obscurity.

What exactly happened to the Theban royal necropolis and the gang of workmen during the reign of Akhenaten and the years immediately following it has long been a matter of conjecture. The Amarna Period left little archaeological and written material in the Theban necropolis that can be related to the workmen, and the remains of the workmen's settlement near the royal tomb at El-Amarna tell us little about the identity of its inhabitants. The question of whether necropolis workmen moved from Thebes to Akhetaten in Akhenaten's reign, therefore, remains an open one. Inscriptions on some objects from Deir el-Medina include references to the cult of the Aten, but these do not necessarily imply that workmen or their families had moved, or even moved back, from Akhetaten to Thebes<sup>9</sup>. The reign of Horemheb saw the reburial of the mummy of Thutmose IV by the treasury overseer Maya and the 'steward of Thebes', and the assignment of 'places' to the necropolis workforce at Deir el-Medina by the same steward of Thebes. These events are thought to be connected to

a new start or a reorganization of the royal necropolis workforce, but some workmen may have been there all along. Nakhy, who was 'servant in the place of truth to the West of the horizon of Aten' according to an inscription on a stone seat, was still 'servant in the place of truth to the West of Thebes' after the reign of Akhenaten, as becomes clear from a stela erected by him for Osiris and Anubis<sup>10</sup>.

Many of the earliest known workmen of the Nineteenth Dynasty had titles connecting them to the Amun temples, or their fathers had such titles, and so it is possible that much of the royal necropolis workforce was newly introduced from a temple background. On the basis of written sources alone, it is conceivable that the workmen of the royal necropolis and their administration did not develop into a permanent institution before the early Nineteenth Dynasty, and that any earlier workforce should not to be considered separately from those involved in the construction of temples and of private tombs<sup>11</sup>. Although inscriptions from the pre-Amarna Period feature titles of workmen and administrators 'of the great place', the workmen did not necessarily live and work in the royal necropolis exclusively and permanently.

That there was a defined workforce in the royal necropolis before the Amarna Period is suggested by a repertoire of workmen's marks on pottery vessels and on ostraca. Marks appeared and disappeared together with the workmen, while some continued to be used, and so the repertoire slowly and partly changed from the reign of Thutmose III to that of Amenhotep III. From the latter's reign there is a complete limestone ostrakon from Deir el-Medina inscribed with forty-two different marks, and also an almost complete pottery dish with thirty-nine marks, both strongly suggestive of the full extent of the gang of workmen at the time<sup>12</sup>. These numbers are close to the number of workmen under Ramesses II, but there is no clear indication yet of the division in a right and left side of the gang, which was common in the Ramesside Period. The dish has the sequence of marks starting with  $\mathcal{X}$ , a sign also attested on numerous items of the burial equipment of Kha (TT 8), 'overseer of construction in the great place'.

No workmen's marks can be dated with any certainty to the Amarna Period or to the years

<sup>7</sup> HARING 2000 and 2009a, 147–152.

<sup>8</sup> DORN 2011a, 139–141, 369–382. I am grateful to ANDREAS DORN for providing me with images of the ostraca prior to their publication, and for stimulating discussions of the material.

<sup>9</sup> As was suggested by ČERNÝ 1973, 51–52. See now e.g. LABOURY 2010, 151; HARING in press.

<sup>10</sup> The stone seat is now lost, ČERNÝ 1973, 51. Stela Turin CG 50010, TOSI/ROCCATI 1972, 43–44, 265.





<sup>11</sup> See DORN 2011b, 35–41.






<sup>12</sup> Ostrakon IFAO ONL6788 (BRUYÈRE 1953, pl. XVIII top left) and dish IFAO 6289 (unpublished).

immediately following. The earliest datable marks that come next are from about the regnal year 40 of Ramesses II, when the repertoire had changed drastically. Out of forty marks that can be ascribed to workmen active at that time, no more than eight have morphological parallels in the reign of Amenhotep III. Of course, the death of the latter and year 40 of Ramesses II were separated by more than a hundred years, a period long enough to expect quite a few changes in the repertoire of marks. But the period separating the first years of Thutmose III as sole ruler and the death of Amenhotep III was approximately as long, and no less than fifteen marks from the earlier reign seem to have survived for a century. What is more, the total set of marks under Thutmose III was probably smaller than under Amenhotep III, and so the differences between the two sets may be due to a large extent to an increase in the number of workmen<sup>13</sup>. The almost entirely different set under Ramesses II, then, is probably due to an even greater number of new workmen. The evidence presented by the marks thus suggests a great change, if not a break, in the history of the royal necropolis workforce during or shortly after the Amarna Period.

The core group of ostraca with marks that can be dated to the time around year 40 of Ramesses II was found by an expedition from the University of Memphis under the direction of the late OTTO SCHADEN, concentrating on the area near KV 10 (Amenmesse). The ostraca with marks were found together with hieratic ones, one of which is dated to the regnal year 38 and also bears some of the marks in question<sup>14</sup>. The ostraca, which are still unpublished, show rows of marks with additional information in the form of dots, strokes and other signs, sometimes in tabular format. Very probably they reflect deliveries of commodities, the presence or absence of workmen, and perhaps even a duty roster similar to the system we know from the later Ramesside Period. The marks appear in a more or less fixed order, and can therefore fruitfully be compared with lists of names in hieratic sources of the same years, such as the famous absence ostrakon BM EA 5634<sup>15</sup>, and ostrakon DeM 706. On both ostraca, the sequence of workmen on the right side starts with Pendua, Harnefer, Siwadjet, Haremwia, Amennakht (also called Nakhy), Wadjmose and Nebimentet. The corresponding sequence

of marks on some of the SCHADEN ostraca is (here from right to left): .

The marks of Siwadjet () and Nebimentet () are clearly related to the names of these workmen, more precisely to the elements, *w3d* and *imn.t.t*. Perhaps  for Pendua was inspired by  (*dw3*) or its hieratic equivalent. For Harnefer, Haremwia, Amennakht and Wadjmose no relation between the marks and names is apparent. Observations made on the historical development of the marking system suggest the following possibilities for these marks: (1) they may have been inspired by names of the workmen's ancestors (that is, they were possibly passed on within workmen's families); (2) they may have been taken over from colleagues who had previously held the same positions in the right side of the gang; (3) they referred to these very positions instead of names; (4) they had some other relation to the workmen personally (e.g. reputation or nicknames).

It is clear from at least one Nineteenth Dynasty example that a mark could reflect a man's position in the formal hierarchy. One ostrakon found in the Valley of the Kings by an Egyptian expedition under the supervision of ZAHÍ HAWASS<sup>16</sup> is closely related to the SCHADEN material, and shows fourteen marks arranged in two rows, the last mark being a variant of , the sign for '(senior) scribe'. The mark is well-attested in the Twentieth Dynasty, in hieratic and pseudo-hieroglyphic forms. Ordered lists of marks from the reigns of Ramesses IV and his successors often start with the mark of the foreman of the right or left side, which are  and  respectively (see fig. 1)<sup>17</sup>. The precise motivation for these marks, which probably referred to positions rather than to individual persons, is unclear. The 'bee' may have been borrowed from royal imagery as a reference to the high local status of the foreman of the right side; what is expressed by the shape of  is unclear but it may have been used more generally as a reference to the left side (see below). The deputy of the foreman, who was referred to by his personal mark, appears in the third position, the second position being reserved for the scribe , very probably Amennakht for both the right and left sides. By the middle of the Twentieth Dynasty, the use of this mark was already a century old, as is shown by the HAWASS ostrakon. At the time that this ostrakon was made, the scribe

<sup>13</sup> The total number of different marks datable to Thutmose III is 22; that of Amenhotep III 46, D. SOLIMAN, *Of Marks and Men* (PhD manuscript).

<sup>14</sup> Provisional number oSchaden 96 (unpublished). I wish to thank The University of Memphis expedition for sharing images of the ostraca with the Leiden project team.

<sup>15</sup> Ostrakon BM EA 5634: DEMARÉE 2002, 18, pl. 25–28; oDeM 706, GRANDT 2000, 1–3, 11, 105–106.

<sup>16</sup> Not published in print, but see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSTMyBuiPc> (checked 27.02.2017).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. oBM EA 50716 (DEMARÉE 2002, 32, pl. 109), oPrague 3836 (unpublished), oTurin CGT 57534 (LÓPEZ 1984, pl. 173a).



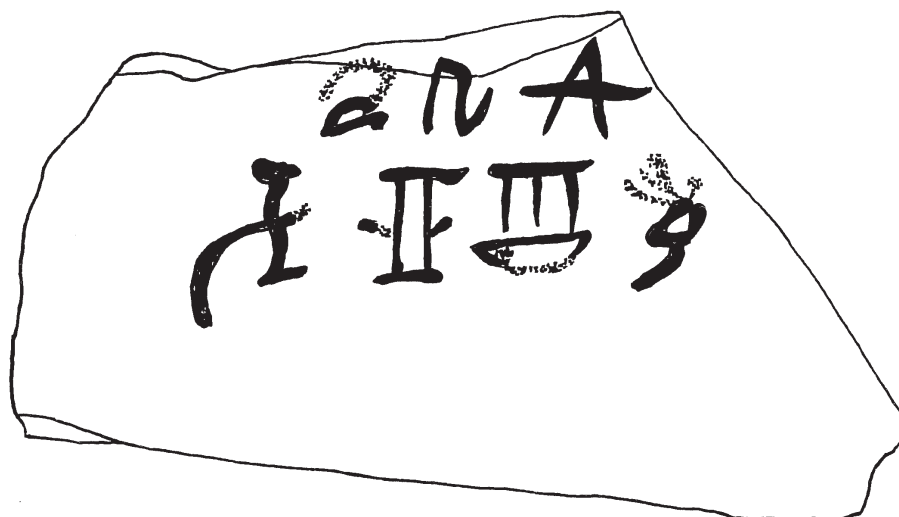


Fig. 1 Ostrakon Turin CGT 57534 (after LÓPEZ 1984, pl. 173a)

in question was probably the famous senior scribe, Qenhirkhopshef.

## The Twentieth Dynasty

Ostraca, both hieratic and with marks, from the late years of Ramesses III and from the short reigns of his successors are relatively plentiful. It is the rich data found in both types of ostraca that enable us to identify the owners of individual marks, and to say something about the purpose of the marking system as a whole. The most important sources for this analysis are rosters of day duties and ordered name lists, both of which have already been mentioned in the previous section.

The duty rosters, in particular, often allow precise dating, and many matches exist between hieratic ostraca and ostraca with marks that record the same days and what happened on them. These matches even make it possible to understand some of the ostraca with marks sign by sign, such as oLeiden F.2000/1.5, which records information for II 3<sup>h</sup>.t 10–12 in the regnal year 1 of Ramesses IV, and whose entries have almost precise duplicates in hieratic oDeM 41 (see fig. 2)<sup>18</sup>. The ostraca with marks even make it possible to extend the period for which the

duty roster is documented by several years in both directions, beyond the period for which there is sufficient hieratic documentation<sup>19</sup>. We know now, for instance, that prior to year 24 of Ramesses III there was an eighteen-day roster instead of the nineteen-day one that is reflected on hieratic ostraca. Thanks to the marks, we also know a little bit more about the duty roster after year 2 of Ramesses IV. Several ostraca from the reign of Ramesses V with sequences of marks and calendar dates together suggest a roster that is much longer than the 30 days known from years 1–2 of his predecessor; a roster not explicitly attested in hieratic texts<sup>20</sup>. The latter remain largely silent on the roster of day duties in the later part of the Twentieth Dynasty.

It is mainly the ostraca with marks, duty rosters and deliveries that confront us with a phenomenon we may call ‘pseudo-writing’. It combines marks, numbers, hieratic or hieroglyphic characters and other iconic signs, so as to form one single sign system. This system even includes syntagmatic rules that go beyond simple relations like e.g. object – number. Line 2 on the Leiden ostrakon has two occurrences of the sign 𓂏. One follows immediately after the day number ‘10’ and is the mark of a workman named Mose; the other is the last sign in the line, following after a delivery (‘600 units of firewood’) and the sign 𓂏. The line corresponds with lines 11–12 of

<sup>18</sup> HARING/SOLIMAN 2014, 86–89.

<sup>19</sup> For the duty roster of this period as reconstructed on the basis of hieratic sources, see R. J. DEMARÉE, *The Turnus Lists*, in: K. DONKER VAN HEEL ET AL., *The Deir el-Medina Database*, URL:

<http://www.leidenuniv.nl/nino/dmd/dmd.html> (retrieved January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> For the duty roster before year 24 of Ramesses III and after year 2 of Ramesses IV, see HARING/SOLIMAN 2014, 74–80.



Fig. 2 Photo and line drawing of oLeiden F.2000/1.5 (photo KYRA VAN DER MOEZEL, line drawing DANIEL SOLIMAN; courtesy of the National Museum of Antiquities [RMO], Leiden)

hieratic oDeM 41. There, we read about Mose's day duty on day 10 and about two deliveries of firewood: 300 units by a person called Ptahmose, and another 300 units by one Amenhotep. We know these two persons to have been woodcutters and members of the supporting workforce (*smd.t*) of the royal necropolis. It is clear that the two deliveries of 300 units were added together as 600 in oLeiden F.2000/1.5, and that the signs  $\pm$  (a stylized version of the *hnp* hieroglyph) and  $\text{𓂏}$  refer to Amenhotep and Ptahmose respectively<sup>21</sup>. This means that  $\text{𓂏}$  referring to the workman Mose and  $\text{𓂏}$  for the woodcutter Ptahmose are two different signs, according to their positions in the line: directly after the day number or after a wood delivery. Only the first of these two signs can be called a mark, since we know that the necropolis workmen used their personal signs as such, for marking property and in graffiti. The signs used for the *smd.t* workforce, however, are probably not marks (there being no evidence for their use outside the administrative records), but merely abbreviations used by the 'scribe' in his pseudo-written record.

Yet another illustration, along the same lines of meaning depending on its position is  $\text{𓂏}$ , which we have come to know already as the mark of the chief workman of the left side. The sign does not have precisely the same meaning here, but it is written over a triangular sign that stands for a delivery of dates. Indeed, 'one unit of dates, left side' is what we read in line 12 of hieratic oDeM 41. By this it becomes clear that, when added above the sign for dates,  $\text{𓂏}$  does not stand for 'chief workman of the left side' but for 'left side' only. Similar deliveries for the right side

were marked with a variant of  $\text{𓂏}$  *wnmy*, as is also illustrated by the Leiden ostracum (line 1), and by several others.

It is not certain how widely used this pseudo-script was within the workmen's community. Whereas the marking system itself had been used for centuries and by different members of the workmen's community, including trained scribes as well as semi-literates, the particular code we see in the ostraca with marks and duty rosters from the reigns of Ramesses III and his successors may have been the work of a very limited group of persons. The handwriting of these ostraca remains to be studied more closely, but shows much uniformity. Given the scope of the texts (deliveries of dates, firewood, fish and other commodities), the so-called 'scribes of the *smd.t*' are likely to have produced them<sup>22</sup>, and the similarity of the administrative practice reflected by the ostraca with marks to hieratic ostraca suggests close cooperation with other scribes of the royal necropolis.

In the previous section, reference has already been made to ordered lists of marks from the reign of Ramesses IV and later, which are headed by the marks of the chief workmen, their deputies, and the scribe. The marks of the chief workmen and the scribe seem to be references to positions rather than names. Unlike the *smd.t* signs, however, they were 'real' marks in the sense that they also occurred individually, as property marks and in graffiti. The same is true for the scorpion charmer (*hrp-Srq.t*), actually a necropolis workman whose additional task it was to remedy the effects of scorpion stings. His mark

<sup>21</sup> HARING/SOLIMAN 2014, 88.

<sup>22</sup> For these scribes, see DAVIES 1999, 123–142 and 283–284.

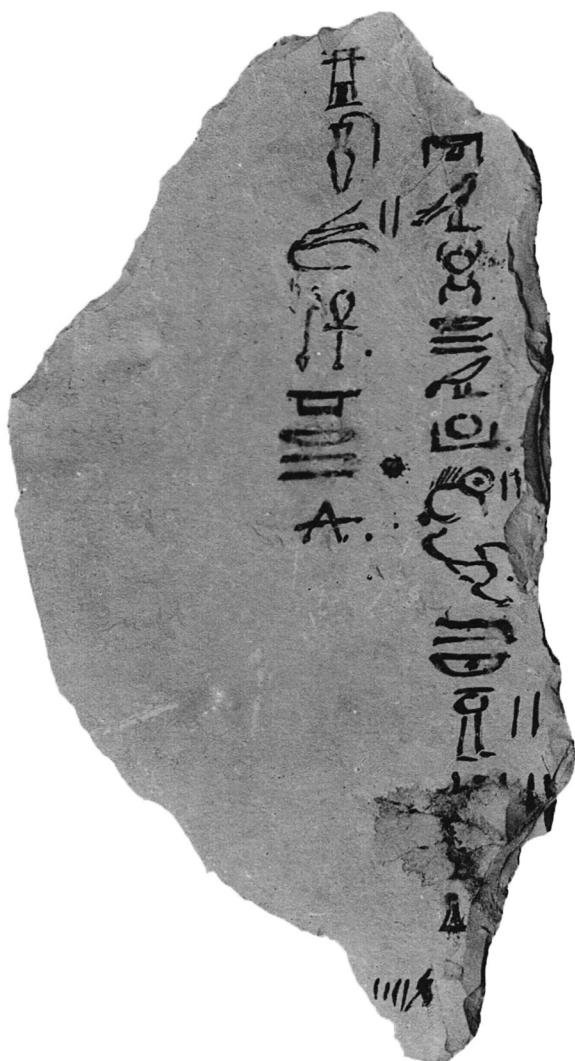


Fig. 3 Ostrakon Cairo CG 25317 (DARESSY 1901, pl. LIX)

was the scorpion (𐩐 or 𐩑), which we see among the workmen's marks on ostraca from the middle of the Twentieth Dynasty (see fig. 3, right column)<sup>23</sup>, as well as individually on pottery vessels and in graffiti.

Among the workmen's marks on ostraca may also figure a sign for the doorkeeper (*ir.y-ꜥ3*), a door 𐩔 (see fig. 3, left column). It is usually near the bottom of the list, just like the title *ir.y-ꜥ3* in hieratic texts: the doorkeeper was of lowly status, close to (but not part of) the *smd.t*; he was responsible for the storage of

food and its delivery to the workmen, and he acted as their messenger<sup>24</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the sign is not attested outside the ostraca, and may therefore not have been a real mark, but rather a designation employed by the users of the pseudo-script like the signs for *smd.t* workforce. We know of at least one doorkeeper, however, who climbed up a step on the social ladder: Qaydjoret, who is known from the reigns of Ramesses IX–XI. Qaydjoret became a guardian (*s3w*), and as such he was responsible for the safekeeping of precious materials, such as tools and paint. As a doorkeeper, he may still have been referred to by the door sign, but in his new capacity he used a mark of his own, which was clearly inspired by the first element of his name: 𐩔. The mark is known from late Twentieth Dynasty ostraca, where it usually occurs near the bottom of columns of marks<sup>25</sup>, but it also frequently occurs as graffiti.

Qaydjoret's sign is also found on the latest Ramesside ostraca inscribed with workmen's marks. These are unpublished limestone ostraca found in the *grand puits*, which are now part of the collection kept in the IFAO, and bear regnal years 16–20 of a king who can be none other than Ramesses XI<sup>26</sup>. They are difficult to interpret, but essentially give us calendar dates, workmen's marks, numbers and additional signs possibly referring to commodities and administrative notions. The information they provide therefore seems to be similar to the duty rosters of the earlier Twentieth Dynasty, and they employ a similar (but not quite the same) pseudo-script. Their date and find-spot suggest that ostraca were still being produced and discarded at Deir el-Medina by the twentieth regnal year of Ramesses XI, and therefore cast doubt on the commonly voiced theory that the workmen had settled at Medinet Habu by that time. As I have pointed out earlier, there is no compelling evidence for this theory<sup>27</sup>. It is only from the Late Ramesside Letters that a glimpse of the actual situation can be had: in one of these, the necropolis scribe Thutmose writes that he is dwelling in 'the temple' (i.e. Medinet Habu), while the men of the necropolis are in Thebes (i.e. on the east bank)<sup>28</sup>. The letter is thought to date from *whm-ms.w.t* year 2, i.e. regnal year 21 of Ramesses XI<sup>29</sup>. Had the workmen still been

<sup>23</sup> E.g. oCairo CG 25317 (DARESSY 1901, 82, pl. LIX), oARTP 99–027 (<http://www.nicholasreeves.com/item.aspx?category=Collections&id=102>, fig. 27).

<sup>24</sup> JANSSEN/FROOD/GOECKE-BAUER 2003, 138–140.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. oCairo CG 25315 (DARESSY 1901, 81), JE 96647 (unpublished). Traces of the mark can be seen on oCairo CG 25317 (see fig. 3 here, right column, beneath 𐩔).

<sup>26</sup> The group includes oIFAO ONL 6178–6185 and several more. Possibly related published ostraca are oCairo CG 25316 (DARESSY 1901, 82, pl. LIX) and oLouvre N. 699 (KOENIG 1991, 116).

<sup>27</sup> HARING 2006, 111–112.

<sup>28</sup> Papyrus Berlin 10494, ČERNÝ 1939, 23–24; WENTE 1967, 44–45.

<sup>29</sup> After year 19 of Ramesses XI, the extant hieratic documents use *whm ms.w.t* datings only; this practice was apparently not followed by the ostraca with marks.

living at Deir el-Medina the year before? We know that they were still working in the necropolis in later years under the supervision of Thutmose's son Butehamun. Hieratic ostraca from the Valley of the Kings and especially from Deir el-Bahari tell us about their activities, which did not include the construction and decoration of royal tombs – that of Ramesses XI was never finished – but they probably did include the emptying of existing tombs and the reburial of their owners<sup>30</sup>. The ostraca with marks do not shed any light on this last stage of activity in the royal necropolis, as none of them can be dated later than year 20 of Ramesses XI.

## The marking system through time

In this paper I have given a very brief historical overview of the marking system used by the Deir el-Medina workmen, focusing on the mid-Nineteenth and the mid- to late Twentieth Dynasties. The system was demonstrably in use from the reign of Thutmosis III to the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, or some 350 years. It seems to have started as a collection of individual workmen's marks that came to be noted together on ostraca for administrative purposes. This was the first step in the development of a visual code that was an alternative to local administrative writing, and which assumed the form of a pseudo-script with its own characteristic set of signs, and syntagmatic rules for their use. We see this pseudo-script most clearly, in slightly different forms, in the middle of the Nineteenth Dynasty (the SCHADEN ostraca and related pieces), the middle of the Twentieth Dynasty (the duty rosters and name lists from the late years of Ramesses III to the reign of Ramesses IX) and the end of that dynasty (the 'grand puits group'). This pseudo-script, in its different stages, is probably the work of semi-literate administrators, who were inspired by the administrative hieratic documents produced by scribes, and who used the system to create similar records. The individual signs of this 'script' include imitations of hieratic characters, but their style betrays the hands of less or untrained 'scribes'. Fully trained scribes, however, also used the marks on ostraca that show a perfect hieratic ductus<sup>31</sup>. At the same time,

individual workmen used the signs as property marks and graffiti. Clearly, the marking system employed by the royal necropolis workmen of the New Kingdom was a commonly shared, multi-purpose visual code that assumed many characteristics of linguistic writing, thrived in an exceptionally literate community, but despite this remained a code in itself for centuries.

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<sup>30</sup> DEMARÉE 2003, 248–250.

<sup>31</sup> HARING 2009b, 132 with fig. 8.



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