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The teaching of Khety and its use as an educational tool in ancient Egypt

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The Teaching of Khety

&

Its Use as an Educational Tool in Ancient Egypt

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Preface

The thesis that lies before you concerns *The Teaching of Khety*, a Middle Egyptian literary poem, also known as *The Satire of the Trades*. Both these titles are modern designations. The composition actually begins with the words: "Beginning of the teaching (*sbꜣy.t*) that a man from Sile, named Khety, son of Duauf, made for his son, named Pepi". This introductory formula is typical for texts that belong to what Egyptologists call the genre of wisdom literature. Judging by the large number of surviving sources, *The Teaching of Khety* was the most popular of all the "Teachings" or "Instructions". Hundreds of ostraca (i.e. pottery shards and pieces of limestone used for writing or drawing) containing excerpts of the text are known, as well as various papyri, writing tablets and dipinti.

In the poem Khety travels to the Residence to enrol his son Pepi in school. As they sail south, the father wants to teach his son the benefits of being a scribe. Therefore, he describes the hardships of various other professions, such as that of reed-cutter and fisherman, and contrasts these with the leisurely life of the scribe. The father's goal is to convince his son to do his best in school and become a scribe. The description of the manual professions constitutes about two-thirds of the composition. In the second (shorter) half, Khety advises Pepi on the rules of everyday conduct, for example how to behave properly when dining with someone of higher rank.

Part one of this thesis focuses on the TEXT of *The Teaching of Khety*. It presents a new synoptic text edition that includes several new sources, some of which are still awaiting publication. This part of the dissertation ties in with the "old" philological tradition.

Part two sets as its aim to study the CONTEXT of *Khety*. It focuses on the social environment in which the text was written, in this case how it was used as an educational tool in ancient Egypt. This part is inspired by "new" or "material" philology, which urges to look beyond the text itself, and also to take into consideration the material object (such as a papyrus or an ostracon) on which the text was applied. According to material philology, the study of the material aspects and layout of manuscripts will shed light on their social and historical context.

Part two is presented in the form of a thesis-by-publication, consisting of six articles all published in peer-reviewed Egyptological journals. The articles themselves are grouped into two interrelated sections. The first section comprises four articles. These discuss paratextual features that sometimes appear on material objects in addition to the text itself: dates, colophons, corrections, drawings and writing exercises. The second section consists of two articles, each focusing on a single object. They offer a "close reading" of these objects (the first an ostracon, the second a papyrus), thus providing insight in the (educational) context of K*hety*.