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

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7 *The Teaching of Khety* as an educational tool

What information about the educational system can be derived from the material objects which contain *The Teaching of Khety*? How was *Khety* used as an educational tool? The following chapter will summarize and discuss the comments, posited statements and conclusions about ancient Egyptian education which were covered in the six preceding articles. This will be supplemented using insights from my research which has not previously been covered in any of the articles, such as the analysis of individual ostraca, and the study of other texts found on the objects which contain *Khety*.

7.1 To what extent do the material objects represent school exercises?

Before discussing these issues, the question of to what extent the sources with *Khety* represent school exercises should be addressed. The long-held assumption that the material stems solely from an educational context has recently been debated. Questions have been raised about the criteria traditionally set as indicators of an educational environment, such as the presence of dates, or corrections.[112] It has been stated that classical literature was transmitted in a variety of contexts, not just in an educational setting. For example, scribes also read or made copies for their own amusement; they enjoyed reading works of classical literature such as *Khety*.[113] As a result, K. Widmaier remarked that: "Die Frage, wie diese Beispiele gegenüber der großen Masse an literarischen Ostraka einzuordnen und zu interpretieren sind, wäre jedoch erst einmal neu zu stellen und auch die Kontexte des Schreibens und Schreiben-Lernens werden insbesondere mit Blick auf Deir el-Medina im Zukunft insgesamt neu zu betrachten sein."[114]

The criteria traditionally put forward to mark an object as a school exercise are the presence of dates, corrections, mistakes and colophons.[115] Further indicators are the material used (for example, an excerpt on an ostracon is more likely to represent a school exercise than one on papyrus); poor handwriting (clumsy, large characters, irregular signs, a lack of ligatures, not maintaining a straight line); problems with ink dosage; type of text (for example, an onomasticon); and the presence of a teacher's model.[116] It should be stressed that none of the criteria mentioned above are sufficient on their own for securing the attribution of an object to an educational context, as previously concluded by Fredrik Hagen regarding the presence of dates.[117] Thus, the higher the number of the above criteria that can be observed on any given object, the more likely it is, that it was used in the training of scribes.

It is easier to identify school exercises of beginners than those of advanced students, who are more versed in writing. Some ostraca within the current corpus are immediately recognisable as student products. One of these is oBM EA 65597, which is discussed in detail in the article *The Teaching of Khety Twice: A New Reading of oBM EA 65597 as a School Exercise*, included in this thesis, see also fig. 6 below. Other examples include oANAsh.Mus.H.O.521, oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576 (see plate 3), oANAsh.Mus.H.O.632, oDeM 1541 (see fig. 3), and oTT 110, which all meet several of the criteria listed above. Still others contain such obviously inexperienced handwriting that they can also be attributed to less advanced students. These include oANAsh.Mus.H.O.880, oBrussels E 6466, oDeM

[112] For an overview of this discussion, see Widmaier 2013: 492–503.
[113] E.g. Janssen 1992: 86–87; Hagen 2006: 92–93; Parkinson 2009: 111. See also Osing 1997: 138–142.
[114] Widmaier 2013: 541.
[115] Particularly since Erman 1925, but as early as Lauth 1872: 36.
[116] Venturini 2007a; Lazaridis 2010: 4; Marshall 2022: 95–97. Regarding ligatures, see Gasse 2018.
[117] Hagen 2012: 94.

1832, oEg.Exp.23001.55, oMML 108 and oSGP/2004/18. The similarities between oEg.Exp.23001.55 and oMML 108 are striking: they were both written in red ink, have similarly poor handwriting, and both contain chapter 19 of *Khety*. Moreover, they were most likely both inscribed at Deir el-Bahri. Perhaps these two ostraca were the products of two students working on the same assignment in the same class, although the exact discovery site of oMML 108 is unknown.

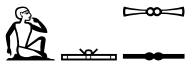
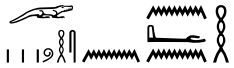
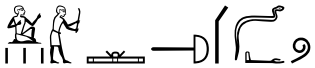
Ostracon	Correct word(s)	Faulty correction
oBM EA 65597 (vs. 5)		
oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576 (rt. x+3)		
oDeM 1541 (3)		

Table 1. Faulty corrections on oBM EA 65597, oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576 and oDeM 1541.

As a result of the study of these ostraca produced by beginners, I will provide several other criteria that may help to identify an object as a school exercise. Firstly, evidence showing that the scribe misjudged the amount of space required for the text.[118] For example, the scribe of oBM EA 65597 had trouble fitting his text on the verso and was forced to flip the ostracon to finish his excerpt on the already occupied recto. The scribe of oTT 110 did succeed in completing his text on one side of the ostracon, but in order to do so he had to write the last few lines diagonally up along the edge. Compare also oMML 108, where the scribe clumsily wrote the last signs of the second line on the verso, vertically along the edge of the ostracon (Römer 2023: 478): . Secondly, the occurrence of erroneous, sometimes crudely executed, corrections (see table 1). Furthermore, the presence of imperfectly formed (uncommon) hieratic characters. A particularly telling example of this, can be found on oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576, where the scribe shaped the determinative of the word *ḫrp* in two different ways (see table 2). These criteria all showcase the inexperience of the scribe in question. A final criterium is the presence of other texts used in the training of ancient Egyptian scribes, such as onomastica (see below) and *Kemyt*.

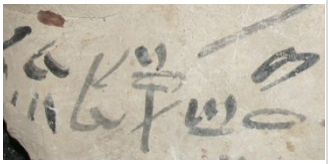
Hieroglyph	Mö no. 450	oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576 (vs. 3)	oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576 (vs. 4)
			

Table 2. The *ḫrp* sign on oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576.

[118] In general, scribes tried their best to make the excerpt fit. For example, the scribe of oBodmer narrowed his line spacing toward the end because of the limited amount of space still available. The scribe of oDeM 1039 did it the other way around. His handwriting grew larger and larger as he approached the end, so that the extract neatly filled the ostracon.

Kemyt appears on two of the aforementioned ostraca (oDeM 1541; oDeM 1832). It was one of the texts most studied as part of the training of scribes besides *Khety*.[119] Several scholars have suggested that the text was used in the early stages of education and was learned before *Khety*.[120] oDeM 1541 (see fig. 3) and oDeM 1832 were most certainly the product of inexperienced scribes, given the poor quality of the handwriting. Moreover, the *Kemyt* excerpt on oDeM 1832 shows clear signs of retracing, which was a familiar didactic method (see below). Thus, the presence of *Kemyt* on this ostracon makes it very likely that the *Khety* extract was also produced in an educational context. It is difficult to determine whether the same scribe was responsible for both excerpts, because the use of different scripts (hieratic for *Khety*; cursive semi-hieroglyphs for *Kemyt*) makes a palaeographic comparison difficult. It cannot be proven that they were not both produced by the same scribe. The scribe Hay, for example, wrote an excerpt of both *Kemyt* and *Khety*, albeit on two different ostraca.[121] If the same scribe did not produce both, the two different scribes certainly had the same level of competence. The same applies to oDeM 1541. Thus, it can be assumed that *Khety* was not exclusively reserved for the training of more advanced scribes (see below), but less skilled students also had a go at it.

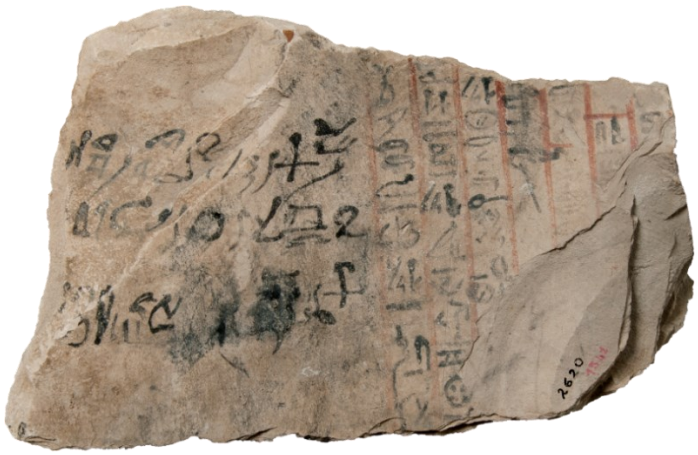


Fig. 3. oDeM 1541 © IFAO.

In contrast to these beginners, there were (semi-)professional scribes writing excerpts of *Khety*. One of these was Inena, who wrote several papyri. His experience as a scribe is not only evidenced by his beautiful handwriting, but also by several paratextual features. From the colophons it can be deduced that he was the owner of a library. The jottings on the verso of pAnastasi VII (see table 3) show that he was familiar with administrative practices, as does the colophon on the same papyrus. The latter features a phrase which is usually found in administrative documents and *Miscellanies*: "while One (i.e. the King) was in Piramesse (i.e. a location)".[122] The colophon also identifies the person to whom the text was dedicated, namely: Qageb, a Scribe of the Treasury, who also appears in colophons or titles of other works by Inena. At one point, Inena served as an apprentice (*ḫry-ꜥ*) to this person, who was his mentor (*nb*). Inena may have written *Khety* early in his career, when he was not yet Scribe of the Treasury himself, but still simply a scribe (*sš*). The margins of pSallier II and pAnastasi VII contain corrections that were executed in a different hand, which suggests a learning context, where one scribe corrected the work of another.

[119] See below: table 7. There are now 488 known textual witnesses of *Kemyt*, see Motte 2022: 342–343.

[120] Brunner 1957: 85–86; Van de Walle 1963: 196–198; Eyre, et al. 1989: 95; Janssen, et al. 1990: 79–80. Contra Gasse 2005: 87, 90; Mathieu 2003: 121; Gasse 2022: 215. See also Chappaz 1989: 34 n. 11; Hagen 2021: 8.

[121] McDowell 2000: 227; Motte 2022: 341 n. 3.

[122] For other examples, see Hagen 2016.

The scribe of pTurin CGT 54019 was also no longer a student. A reconstruction of the colophon of this papyrus shows that he was associated with the temple of Medinet Habu, working as a "[scribe of] the mortuary temple of Ramesses III", or perhaps serving as an assistant to this scribe.[123] A graffito on one of the walls suggests that the temple also served as a place of training. It reads "Beginning of The Teaching of…",[124] and was probably left by a student, since 'teachings' were an important part of the curriculum (see below).

A statement that is often repeated in Egyptological literature is that beginners wrote on ostraca, and more advanced students on papyri.[125] Although this may appear true based on the examples discussed above, there is also evidence linking the scribes who wrote on ostraca to the scribes who used papyrus. Firstly, most ostraca contain neat hands, just like the papyri. Although there is sometimes a lack of fluency in the handwriting, as shown by the absence of ligatures, uneven spacing between signs, or hesitantly drawn characters, these ostraca are clearly not the work of beginners first learning how to write. Secondly, similar scribal practices can be found on both papyri and ostraca. Both types of material show the same correction techniques: erasing signs, adding signs above the line, squeezing in omitted signs, and so on. Colophons were also added on ostraca, just like on papyri, with very similar phrasing, and they sometimes even contained verse points, such as in the case of oDeM 1014 / 1478. The colophon of the latter ostracon also explicitly states that the scribe is a *ḫry-ꜥ*, just like the reference to Inena on pAnastasi IV. The practicing of signs was done both on ostraca and papyri. Scribes writing on papyrus used the top margin, while others took advantage of the available space on ostraca which they reused for this purpose. Specific signs were practiced more often than others, and as such, clearly considered to be difficult. Thirdly, drawings found on both papyri and ostraca display similar iconography, such as lions. Taking all of this into account, it seems that at least some of the scribes who wrote literary excerpts on ostraca were at the same stage of advancement as those who used papyrus. Thus, the claim that only beginners wrote on ostraca requires additional nuance. No strict boundaries appear to have existed, and sometimes individuals were responsible for producing literary excerpts on both types of material.[126] This, however, only worked one way: While experienced scribes also used ostraca, the inverse was not true. No papyri containing the work of beginners have been identified.

In conclusion, the scribes who copied *Khety* were highly varied in skill level, especially those writing on ostraca. They ranged from beginners to more advanced students, and from apprentices to professional scribes.[127] It is often difficult to determine to which category the scribe of a particular ostracon belonged. Many of the ostraca are very fragmented, containing only a small amount of text, sometimes so faded that it is no longer possible to assess the quality of the handwriting. Their fragmentary state also means that any paratextual features that might have provided information concerning the matter have been lost. Regarding the ostraca mentioned above which were identified as beginners' exercises, they all contain a significant amount of text, and were thus easily recognisable as such. It seems clear, however, that this type of exercise makes up only a small percentage of the material, with the majority being produced by more experienced scribes. How many of these scribes were advanced students and how many were professional scribes is difficult to determine. J. Janssen once calculated that, to account for the thousands of ostraca with literary texts found in Deir el-Medina, a literate person, meaning a professional scribe, must have produced around 250 excerpts during his lifetime. He considered this "not impossible" and

[123] Due to the damage, it is not entirely certain whether the title belonged to the scribe or to the person to whom the text was dedicated.

[124] Edgerton 1937: pl. 10 no. 30.

[125] Brunner 1957: 73–74; Williams 1972: 218; Fischer-Elfert 2001, I: 439; Zinn 2013: 4.

[126] Brunner 1957: 76 n. 59. See also McDowell 2000: 217–223.

[127] For the latter category, see for example oDeM 1536, which was probably written by an Overseer of the Storehouse, and possibly the scribe of pTurin CGT 54019. Very fluent handwriting can also be observed on ostraca, see for example oCRB/97/N.E./26 (Hagen 2012: 74).

suggested that these ostraca were produced in such large quantities to serve as "books" for the semi-literate inhabitants of the community of Deir el-Medina.[128] In contrast to this, many scholars, even the ones critical of attributing all of this material to a school context, agree that most ostraca must have been produced in an educational setting. In the words of O. Goelet: "[….] the vast quantity of these literary ostraca is far in excess of what might have been needed for private entertainment. Didactic purposes must have played an important part in how they were used, particularly when we consider that the initial portions of these texts are the most frequently attested. We should not be over-zealous in disassociating literature from the didactic environment […]."[129]

7.2 Educational environment

This didactic environment Goelet mentions, looked different than modern or Western observers might presume. Teaching did not take place in schools, at least not in the later stages of education. After a student learned how to read and write, education continued in the form of an apprenticeship, with a professional scribe acting in the capacity of a teacher.[130] Sometimes a relative, such as a father or grandfather, took on this role (oDeM 1204; oDeM 1014). This on-the-job learning must often have taken place in an environment where professional scribes were at work. This explains why literary ostraca are sometimes discovered alongside administrative ones.[131] In fact, a quarter of the textual material found in the school section of the Ramesseum consists of "actes de la pratique (lettres inclus)".[132] Additionally, the current corpus contains objects that include both *Khety* and documentary notes (see table 3). One of these is oANAsh.Mus.H.O.107, which was initially used as a limestone writing tablet upon which *Khety* was copied, presumably within an educational context.[133] After breaking into two sections, one of the pieces was used by a different scribe, who wrote a distribution of rations on the verso. Thus, the object was reused for practical purposes, which applies to most of the ostraca in table 3. In these cases, there is no observable, direct link between the literary text and the administrative notes, other than that they were produced in the same environment,[134] within which different scribes made use of the same object, which shows that the worlds of literary and documentary texts were never far apart. Some of the scribes who wrote *Khety* also produced administrative texts themselves, such as Inena (see above) and Itnefer, the latter being responsible for oDeM 1042 (*Khety*), oDeM 1022 (*Khety*), and most likely oCairo CG 25559 (administrative note).[135]

Scribes did not only copy literary works in the Ramesseum, but also in other temples, one of which was the temple of Medinet Habu. pTurin CGT 54019 is associated with this temple, and most likely pTurin CGT 54020 is as well, given the many similarities between the two papyri. Moreover, on the verso of the latter we find a religious text. The first line, followed by two more fragmentary lines, reads:

[128] Janssen 1992: 85–87. Cf. Moers 2001: 160–163.

[129] Goelet 2013: 119. See also McDowell 1992: 95; Goelet 2010: 122; Hagen 2012: 85; Quack 2013: 419 n. 85. See also Widmaier 2013: 541.

[130] Brunner 1957: 19–20; Schlott 1989: 202–203; Fischer-Elfert 1989: 62; Osing 1997: 131; Fischer-Elfert 2001, I: 441.

[131] E.g. Gasse 2000: 109; Demichelis 2003: 87–88; Dorn 2011; Müller 2014: 145; Hagen 2021: 2–4.

[132] Barbotin 2013: 77. However, as this material is not yet published, it is not possible to be sure whether these were practice pieces by students or the product of professional scribes working on administrative matters.

[133] Other limestone writing tablets are, for example, oÄMUL 3969 and oDeM 1581. For more on the subject, see Gasse 2008–2009.

[134] See Gasse 2015: 223.

[135] McDowell 2000: 227–228.

mỉ n=ỉ pɜ bɜ šps ỉḳr
“Come to me, o noble, excellent ba!”

Not only *Khety*, but also other literary texts are connected to the mortuary temple of Ramesses III: Both pTurin C (*Miscellanies*) and pChester Beatty II (*The Blinding of Truth by Falsehood*) are associated with a scribe who worked at this temple.[136]

Material object	Type of administrative text	References
pAnastasi VII	jottings: “Titles of a person holding the offices of Athlophoros and scribe / Four mutilated fragments; two containing dates of the 2nd of the month Epiphi in the eight year of the king's return / Commencement of the preamble of a document / A register of objects”	Hawkins 1841–1844: 11
pBerlin P. 15738f; pBerlin P. 15738g	grain accounts in *ḥḳɜ.t*	Fischer-Elfert 1999, II: VIII
oANAsh.Mus.H.O.107	distribution of a month’s rations among the workpeople of the Royal Tomb	Černy, et al. 1957: 21, 30, pls CXV.3, LXXI–LXXIA.2
oTurin CGT 57082	list of workmen with date	López 1978–1984, I: 42, pls 49, 49a; K*RI* III, 530.11–15
oUC 32266	five names of scribes	Černy, et al. 1957: 3, pls X–XA.1; Jurjens 2020: 229
oUC 32986	a line of hieratic in black ink mentioning a certain *pɜ ḥry-pḏt* (‘the troop-commander’, see Ranke *PN* 115.27) / two separate rows of black dots	Spiegelberg 1898: pls VIII–VIIIa no. 66
tUC 59420	part of a series of names / a grain account	Quirke 2016: 614–615

Table 3. Overview of the material objects with *Khety* that also contain administrative texts.

Draughtsmen (“outline-scribes”) conducted their activities alongside scribes. Figured ostraca and literary ones are often found together at archaeological sites,[137] resulting in examples where both drawings and text are present on the same material object. The source material pertaining to *Khety* also contains examples of this. The drawings in question bear no relation to the literary excerpt; the material object was simply reused for drawing purposes. Most of these drawings seem to be doodles, others display a level of quality which suggests that they were produced by an experienced draughtsman. oUC 32968, for example, may even have functioned as a preparatory sketch. As such, these drawings do not indicate an educational context, and they can, therefore, not serve as evidence that the *Khety* excerpt in question was executed as a school exercise.

One possible exception is oDeM 1547 (see fig. 4). Two cartouches are drawn on the verso of this ostracon, both containing the name of Ramesses I (*Mn-pḥty-Rʿ*) written in hieroglyphs. They are clearly the work of a beginner, as they are very coarsely executed with very thick outlines. Both scribes and draughtsmen studied cartouches as part of their training,[138] but the cartouches on oDeM 1547 were most

[136] Jurjens, forthcoming.
[137] E.g. Peterson 1973: 11, 26, 29, 57, 58; Sesana, et al. 1998; Dorn 2011; Müller 2014: 145; Hagen 2021: 8–9. See also Haring 2018: 43–44.
[138] For example oDeM 1785–1787 (Gasse 2005: 23–27); Vandier d’Abbadie 1959: pl. CLVII no. 3040. A telling example of the use of cartouches in education is MM 14 116 (Peterson 1973: 105, pl. 73 no. 138). On one side two cartouches are drawn, containing the names of Amenhotep I, the patron god of Deir el-Medina: *Ḏsr-kɜ-Rʿ* and *ỉmn-ḥtp*. These are drawn in a neat,

likely executed by a draughtsman, because they are oriented vertically (as on tomb walls), and not horizontally (as on administrative documents).[139] As such, this particular ostracon serves as an example of the close connection between artisan apprenticeship and scribal activities.[140] Due to this social environment and the pictorial nature of the Egyptian script, it should come as no surprise that some of the scribes who wrote *Khety* displayed (basic) drawing skills: the scribe of oANAsh.Mus.H.O.311 drew the head of a vulture; Inena drew a lion (pAnastasi VII); the scribe of pChester Beatty XIX made a sketch of a ceiling pattern; the scribe Men repeatedly produced drawings of animals on the walls of tomb N13.1 in Asyut, and then inserted his name.[141]

It should also be noted that ostraca need not be the product of teaching within a formal setting, in order to stem from an educational context. In fact, direct contact between a teacher and a student is seldom observed in the material, with the noticeable exception of oBM EA 65597 (see below). I propose to include another category which falls between 'real' school exercises and professional copies, namely practice pieces, made by scribes wanting to practice or maintain their skills, without a teacher being present. Although these stem from an informal setting, they can also be contextualized as being part of the training of scribes, whether they were executed as a teacher's assignment or on the scribe's own initiative, because their main goal was practising, and not, for example, serving as a 'book' copy. The fact that they are practice pieces may explain why only a small percentage of the source material (about 15–20 percent) contains corrections and/or dates. It is very difficult to establish what the exact percentage distribution is between school exercises versus practice pieces versus professional copies.

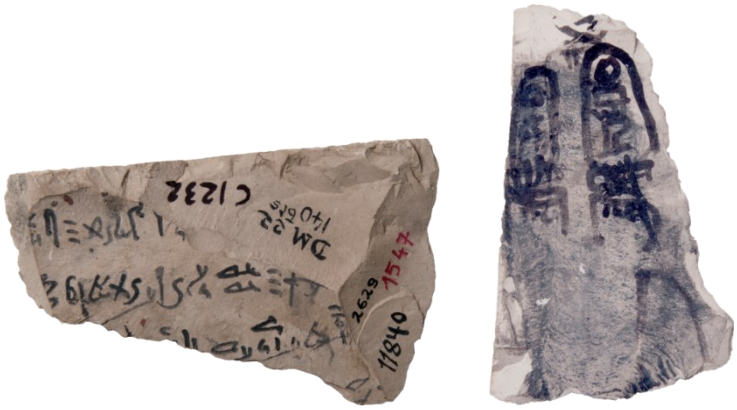


Fig. 4. oDeM 1547 recto and verso © IFAO.

All of the above must be noted, when considering the conclusions on ancient Egyptian educational practices presented below. For example, a particular ostracon may not actually have originated from an educational context. In that case, conclusions based on that object describe general scribal practices rather than educational ones. Furthermore, most of the sources come from Deir el-Medina. Thus, the observations below are largely applicable to the Theban region and may not be representative of other

experienced hand. The verso contains exactly the same cartouches, with only one difference: The signs in the cartouche on the right (verso) are oriented in reverse compared to the corresponding cartouche on the recto. Additionally, in contrast to the cartouches on the recto, the ones on the verso are drawn poorly. B. Peterson suggests two possible scenarios: the teacher made a model and the student copied it on the other side (copying is a well-known didactic practice) or, less likely, the teacher corrected his student's work.

[139] Compare, for example, Spiegelberg 1898: pl. XLVIII no. 5: an ostracon where cartouches are part of a drawing.

[140] Compare, for example, a writing board, on which both *Kemyt* and a drawing of a statue were practiced (Galán 2007). From other sources we know that at least some draughtsmen knew hieratic, see Laboury 2016. Regarding oDeM 1547, the draughtsman was most likely someone other than the scribe of the *Khety* excerpt, because the ostracon had broken before the cartouches were applied.

[141] Verhoeven 2020, I: 269.

parts of Egypt. Nevertheless, textual witnesses of *Khety* were found in Saqqara, Kom Medinet Gurob and Abydos as well. Recent finds add further locations to this list, namely: Asyut, Elephantine and even as far south as Sesebi in Nubia.[142] Apparently, *Khety* played a nation-wide role in the training of Egyptian scribes and in scribal culture in general.[143] Finally, it should be noted that most sources date from the 19th/20th dynasty, although there are also attestations from earlier (18th dynasty) and from the Late Period.[144]

7.3 The curriculum

In the current corpus there are several objects that contain other literary texts in addition to the extract from *Khety* (see tables 4, 5 and 6). Most common is *Amenemhat* (8 examples), followed by *Hymn to the Nile (*5 examples), *Kemyt* (2 examples) and *Hordjedef* (2? examples). *Amennakht*, *Man for his Son* and *Miscellanies* are contained in one example each.

Ostracon	Literary text
oBerlin P. 11288	*Hordjedef;*[145] (recto) *Khety* (verso)
oBerlin P. 14934[146]	*Amenemhat;* (recto) *Khety;* (recto and verso) *Hymn to the Nile* (verso)
oCairo CG 25217	*Amenemhat;* (interior) *Khety* (exterior)
oDeM 1039	*Khety;* (recto) *Amenemhat* (verso)
oDeM 1175	*Amenemhat;* (recto) *Khety* (verso)
oDeM 1204	*Amenemhat;* (recto) *Khety* (recto)
oDeM 1541	*Kemyt;* (recto) *Khety* (recto)
oDeM 1832	*Kemyt;* (recto) *Khety* (verso)
oMünchen ÄS 396	*Khety;* (recto) *Amennakht* (verso)
oT3.L20	*Khety;* (recto) *Amenemhat* (recto)

Table 4. Overview of the ostraca with *Khety* which contain other literary texts.[147]

[142] Asyut: dAsyut N13.1 TS18; dAsyut N13.1 TW30; Elephantine: pBerlin P. 23045; Sesebi: oBM EA 71367.

[143] See also Brunner 1957: 92–93; Hagen 2019a: 205–206.

[144] 18th dynasty: pBerlin P. 15738f, pBerlin P. 15738g, pBM EA 10775e / pAmherst XIV, oBM EA 71367, oDAN hier 19 a-k, oSenmut 147, oSenmut 148, tLouvre N 693, tUC 59420, dAsyut N13.1 TS18, dAsyut N13.1 TW30, and possibly pAmherst XIV, pBM EA 10775f, oBM EA 41650 / 47896, oEg.Exp.23001.55 and oMML 108. Late Period: pBerlin P. 14423, pBerlin P. 23045, oSaqqara, tAsasif 222, and tLouvre E 8424.

[145] The excerpt was originally considered to belong to the second half of *The Teaching of a Man for his Son* (Fischer-Elfert 1999), but recent research has shown that this part actually forms the end of *The Teaching of Hordjedef* (Verhoeven 2020, I: 247–255; Verhoeven 2023).

[146] This is the only ostracon discovered to date that contains all three compositions. The ostracon may be identified as the one Posener refers to as "un grand O. Berlin calcaire sans numéro, inédit", containing both *Khety* and *Amenemhat* (Posener 1975: 108 n. 15). For the transcription of the excerpts of *Amenemhat* and *The Hymn to the Nile*, see appendix C.

[147] The terms *recto* and *verso* are given here as indicated in the publications. They do not necessarily represent the original writing order. The following ostraca were not taken into account, because they contain unidentified or illegible texts in addition

Papyrus	Literary text
pAnastasi VII	*Khety;* *Hymn to the Nile*
pBerlin P. 15738f; pBerlin P. 15738g	*Khety; Man for his Son; Hordjedef (?)*[148]
pBerlin P. 23045	*Khety;* *Amenemhat*
pChester Beatty V	*Khety;* *Hymn to the Nile;* *Miscellany-text* (with two excerpts from *The Teaching of Ani*)[149]
pSallier II	*Amenemhat;* *Khety;* *Hymn to the Nile*

Table 5. Overview of the papyri with *Khety* which contains other literary texts.[150]

Writing tablet	Literary text
tAsasif 222	*Khety*; (recto) an unidentified Late Egyptian narrative (verso)[151]
tLouvre N 693	*Khety* (recto x+1–x+2: §30,1–§30,5); *Hymn to the Nile* (recto x+3–x+7); *Khety* (recto x+8–x+12: §13,4–§15,4) (verso: §16,1–§22,2)[152]

Table 6. Overview of the writing tablets with *Khety* which contains other literary texts.

to the *Khety* excerpt: oBerlin P. 10642, oDeM 1466 (possibly a hymn, see Popko 2019), oDeM 1476, oMMA 14.1.453, oMoscow I,1b 347 and oUC 32000.

[148] pBerlin P. 15738 consists of several separate fragments. How these should be positioned in relation to each other, and therefore in what order the texts were written, is unknown. Two of the fragments (f and g) contain *Khety*, whereas two other fragments (a and c) contain *Man for his Son* and possibly *Hordjedef* (a). The first column of fragment 'a' contains *Man for his Son* §10,9–§11,6, and then the papyrus breaks off. The second column contains §17,2–§17,4 according to Fischer-Elfert's transcription. However, as Verhoeven states, it is highly unlikely "dass auf dem kleinen Papyrusabschnitt die dazwichen liegende Paragraphen §11,7 bis §17,1 untergebracht worden sein können" (Verhoeven 2020, I: 251). Her research has shown that chapters §15–§24 of what was originally thought to be *Man for his Son* are in fact the end of *Hordjedef* (see note 145). However, this doesn't solve the problem, because the amount of lost text (chapters §12–§14 of *Man for his Son* and the entire first half of *Hordjedef*) is still too large. Verhoeven's assertion that the recto must contain *Man for his Son* and the notion that the verso contains *Hordjedef* is incorrect. After consulting a high-quality image of the papyrus, I was able to establish that both columns are in fact found on the recto (I thank Jan Moje for providing me with this photograph). I think the solution lies in collating the text. Due to surface damage, the second column is very difficult to read, and after collation it may be found that it does not actually contain what Fischer-Elfert concluded were chapters §17,2–§17,4 of *Man for his Son*.

[149] Quack 1994: 10–11.

[150] The texts are all found on the recto of the papyrus in question, except for pChester Beatty V where the Miscellany-text continues on the verso, which also contains some jottings, and magical spells. The two fragments pBM EA 10775e–f (*Khety*) are not taken into consideration here, as they do not belong to the same papyrus as pBM EA 10775a–d containing *Man for his Son* and *Hordjedef* (Verhoeven 2020, I: 251), although they were mounted in the same frame (see also note 56). pBerlin P. 29054 is also not taken into account here, because too few traces remain to identify the other texts (see plate 1 and note 55), and the same applies to the text on the verso. However, there are enough legible signs to say with certainty that the excerpt does not belong to *Khety*.

[151] For the unknown story, see Vittmann 2006; Quack 2016: 52.

[152] About one third of the upper half of the tablet is lost. The unusual order of texts may be explained as follows: The scribe started writing the first fifteen chapters of *Khety* on the recto and then continued on the verso. When he ran out of space on the verso, he erased the previously written text on the first half of the recto (up to chapter §13,4) to finish the composition. However, he had erased too much, had some space left, and evidently decided to add the beginning of *The Hymn to the Nile*, which is commonly found after *Khety*. See also Posener 1966: 55–56.

Amenemhat and *Hymn to the Nile* top the list mentioned above. When looking at other lists of literary texts ranked by popularity (see table 7), it should be noted that *Khety*, *Amenemhat* and *Hymn to the Nile* are the top three most often found only in the present corpus. Thus, *Amenemhat* and *Hymn to the Nile* were more often copied together with *Khety* than might be assumed based on these popularity lists. Earlier scholars have already pointed out the close connection between the three texts. They provide various reasons, namely: practically speaking, the texts fitted neatly together on an ancient scroll; they were written by the same author; or they were canonized as part of the school curriculum.[153]

The three texts always appear in the following order: *Amenemhat*, *Khety*, *Hymn to the Nile*, except on the Late Period pBerlin P. 23045 where *Khety* precedes *Amenemhat*. This leads to the question of whether this means that these texts were also taught in this sequence. In order to investigate this, the following section will examine the scribes who mastered one of the other two compositions alongside *Khety*. The scribe Itnefer used three different ostraca to write both *Khety* (oDeM 1022; oDeM 1042) and *The Hymn to the Nile* (oDeM 1027), making it impossible to determine the order in which the excerpts were written and how much time passed between them. The scribe Men copied extracts of both *Khety* (dAsyut N13.1 TS18; dAsyut N13.1 TW30) and *Amenemhat* (dAsyut N13.1 TN2) on the walls of tomb N13.1 in Asyut, but it is unclear if he did this during one visit or on separate occasions.[154] Nebnetjeru, an apprentice, first copied *Amenemhat*, and then *Khety* on the same ostracon (oDeM 1204). He may have written the two excerpts in quick succession, as they are only separated by a colophon, and not by a date. Finally, the unknown scribe of oDeM 1039 wrote *Khety* on one side and *Amenemhat* on the other. Notably, he used red ink, which was unusual, for both excerpts, suggesting he wrote them in a single session.

Dates may also provide clues regarding this matter. The dates on oCairo CG 25217 show that the *Amenemhat* excerpt was written approximately one month before *Khety*.[155] The scribe of tLouvre N 693 wrote several chapters of *Khety*, most of which he ended with a date. Then he continued with *The Hymn to the Nile*. Unfortunately, the date, if any was inscribed, between *Khety* and *The Hymn to Nile* falls into a lacuna and is lost. The *Khety* chapters were all written several days apart, and the same may have applied to the transition between *Khety* and *The Hymn to the Nile*. Lastly, pSallier II contains a date in the top margin between columns 10 and 11. The latter column features the end of *Khety* and the beginning of *The Hymn to the Nile*. The date may indicate that the scribe paused for a while before moving on to the next poem.[156]

On the whole, it cannot be conclusively established whether the order in which the three texts are often presented corresponds to the order in which they were taught. The scribe of oDeM 1039 had mastered both *Amenemhat* and *Khety* at the time of writing, and the dates on oCairo CG 25217 suggest that the two poems were written with little time in between. Although the evidence is scarce, it seems that at least *Amenemhat* and *Khety* existed at a similar level in the training of Egyptian scribes.

In addition to *Amenemhat* and *The Hymn to the Nile*, other Middle Egyptian literary texts are also represented in the corpus, namely: *Man for his Son*, *Hordjedef* and *Kemyt* (see tables 4 and 5). The

[153] See e.g. Maspero 1912: 49–50; Van de Walle 1948: 33–35; Seibert 1967: 103–104; Parkinson 2002: 90–92; Quack 2003: 183–184; Quirke 2004: 31–32; Widmaier 2013: 487–488.

[154] The scribe Men left no less than five visitor's graffiti in the tomb (Verhoeven 2020, I: 222).

[155] This assertion assumes that the extracts were not written a year apart. The dates are as follows: *Amenemhat*: I (?) *šmw* 4+x (Daressy 1901: 47); *Khety*: II *šmw* 24. It is unknown whether both excerpts were written by the same scribe, because no images of the verso (*Amenemhat*) of this ostracon are available, making a palaeographic comparison impossible.

[156] The top margin above column three also contains traces of ink (visible on the photograph, but not in the facsimile: Hawkins 1841–1844, I: pl. XII). Unfortunately, a hole in the papyrus prevents us from establishing with certainty whether these are the remnants of a date. However, it is noticeable that the column in question features the transition between *Amenemhat* and *Khety*.

relation between *Kemyt* and *Khety*, and their respective place in the curriculum, has been discussed above. Regarding *Man for his Son* and *Hordjedef*, H.-W. Fischer-Elfert's theory bears mentioning. Fischer-Elfert pointed out many similarities between *Khety* on the one hand and *Man for his Son* and the *Loyalist Instruction* on the other, regarding both their style and content. He concluded that the three texts formed a tight unit and were always taught in a particular order ("Lehrsequenz"), namely *Khety*, then *Man for his Son*, and finally the *Loyalist Instruction*.[157] However, this hypothesis was put forward before Ursula Verhoeven discovered that the second half of *Man for his Son* actually belongs to *Hordjedef* (see note 145). Fischer-Elfert's argument must therefore be reconsidered in light of this discovery. In the present corpus, *Khety* is never found in conjunction with the *Loyalist Instruction*, but it occurs twice alongside *Man for his Son/Hordjedef* (oBerlin P. 11288; pBerlin P. 15738). It can be concluded that the excerpt from *Hordjedef* on oBerlin P. 11288 was inscribed first since it was written on the smooth surface of the ostracon, while the extract from *Khety* was written on the irregular, opposite side. It is uncertain whether the same scribe was responsible for both excerpts. The order in which *Man for his Son/Hordjedef* and *Khety* were copied on pBerlin P. 15738 is unknown, because only separate, non-adjoining fragments of the papyrus have been preserved (see note 148). As such, the material in the corpus does not provide clear evidence to prove or disprove Fischer-Elfert's theory.

Deir el-Medina (and other places)	**IFAO**	**Deir el-Medina: K2**	**Deir el-Medina**	**Deir el-Medina (instruction genre only)**	**Ramesseum**	**Mortuary temple of Thutmose III**
1. *Khety* 2. *Amenemhat* 3. *Kemyt* 4. *Satirical Letter of Hori* 5. *Hymn to the Nile*	1. *Khety* 2. *Amenemhat* 3. *Kemyt* 4. *Satirical Letter of P. Anastasi I* 5. *Hymn to the Nile* 6. *Loyalist Instruction*	1. *Kemyt* 2. *Khety / Amenemhat* 3. *Neferti* 4. *Sinuhe / Hordjedef / Loyalist Instruction*	1. *Kemyt* 2. *Khety* 3. *Amenemhat* 4. *Man for his Son* 5. *Satirical Letter of Hori* 6. *Hymn to the Nile* 7. *Loyalist Instruction*	1. *Khety* 2. *Amenemhat* 3. *Man for his Son* 4. *Loyalist Instruction* 5. *Hordjedef* 6. *Amennakhte*	1. *Khety* 2. *Amenemhat* 3. *Miscellanies* 4. *Hymn to the Nile* 5. *Kemyt* 6. *Loyalist Instruction*	1. *Amenemhat* 2. *Khety / Kemyt*[158] 3. *Man for his Son / Hymn to the Nile*
Van de Walle 1948: 30–31	Gasse 1992: 53	Gasse 2000: 118	Mathieu 2003: 121–122, 134	Hagen 2012: 84	Barbotin 2013: 77	Hagen 2021: 5–7

Table 7. Lists of literary texts on ostraca arranged by popularity (from various publications). Regarding the placement of *Hordjedef* and *Man for his Son* in these lists, see Verhoeven 2020: 248.

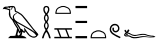
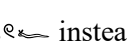
7.3.2 Late Egyptian texts

In addition to the Middle Egyptian compositions discussed above, there are also several Late Egyptian texts which occur alongside *Khety* (see tables 4, 5 and 6), namely: *The Teaching of Amennakht* (oMünchen ÄS 396), *Miscellanies* (pChester Beatty V), and an unidentified Late Egyptian narrative

[157] For his argumentation, see Fischer-Elfert 1999: 381–99. See also Fischer-Elfert 2001, I: 441. For some criticisms of his argument, see Quack 2000: 536–538; Parkinson 2002: 274; Jäger 2004: 191–192.

[158] F. Hagen postulated that oT3.L53 contains an unidentified literary text, reminiscent of *The Teaching of Khety*, however, it actually contains an excerpt from *Khety* (§12,3–§12,4). As a result, both *Khety* and *Kemyt* survive in 6 copies.

(tAsasif 222). Late Egyptian literary texts had been part of the curriculum since the 19th dynasty, when it became necessary to teach students the contemporary language, which differed significantly from Middle Egyptian. The Middle Egyptian classics were not replaced but supplemented with these New Kingdom texts.[159] A. Dorn observed a clear break ("Zäsur") between the 19th and 20th dynasty regarding the presence of Middle Egyptian texts on ostraca used in the training of scribes. According to him, Late Egyptian texts completely replaced the Middle Egyptian ones in education from the mid-20th dynasty (the reign of Ramesses III–Ramesses IV) onwards, with the classics only appearing sporadically after that period.[160] However, Dorn only took ostraca that were signed into account, as these can be more securely dated because names were mentioned. It would be interesting to see if this "Zäsur" can also be observed when studying other material. In any case, *Khety* continued to be written after the 19th dynasty, as evidenced by pTurin CGT 54019 and 54020, and several Late Period sources. The scribe Reshpetref (Ramesses III/IV) copied an extract from *Khety*, just as his grandfather Neferhotep (Ramesses II) did when he was still an apprentice.[161] *Khety* was even practiced alongside contemporary compositions, as the ostracon from München and the writing tablet from Asasif show.

Previous scholars have suggested that students learned how to write Middle Egyptian even before they were taught Late Egyptian, however, the evidence presented in support of this notion is quite weak. It is primarily based on the fact that Middle Egyptian poems are more often found on ostraca (a type of material used in primary education) than Late Egyptian literary texts, for which papyrus (material used in secondary education) was commonly used. Furthermore, Posener once stated that, when contemporary compositions do appear on ostraca, they were usually written in more experienced handwriting than Middle Egyptian texts.[162] What evidence can be observed from the corpus in the present thesis regarding this issue? First of all, the scribe Inena wrote a Late Egyptian story early in his career, when Seti II was still crown prince. In Seti II's first year as king, Inena first copied *Amenemhat*, *Khety* and *Hymn to the Nile* (pSallier II), and a few months later *Miscellanies* (pAnastasi IV). Based on this evidence, it cannot be established that Middle Egyptian constituted the first stage in the education of an Egyptian scribe and Late Egyptian a second stage. The same is true of tAsasif 222, which features the beginning of *Khety* on one side and the start of an unidentified Late Egyptian story on the other, thereby providing that the tablet was used by the same scribe with little time in between. oMünchen ÄS 396 cannot serve as proof for his theory either, because the excerpts of *Amennakht* and *Khety* were copied on opposite sides by two different scribes.[163] However, the Late Egyptian variants that are occasionally found in the material, provide evidence of another kind. These variants include not only grammar (e.g. the addition of the article *pꜣ*; the omission of prepositions), but also orthography (e.g.  instead of ;  instead of).[164] The Late Egyptian spellings, in particular, point to scribes who were already familiar with the orthography of the colloquial language.

Because such a wide linguistic gap existed between the colloquial language and the Middle Egyptian in which *Khety* was composed, the question arises to what extent the scribes understood what they were writing. It has been suggested that students had very little understanding of the contents of the text, as evidenced by the high number of mistakes.[165] In the present corpus there is evidence that at least some scribes engaged with *Khety* on a content level. For example, the scribe of oMünchen ÄS 396 was

[159] Brunner 1957: 89–90; Van de Walle 1963: 200–201; Osing 1997: 138; Dorn 2009: 74–75.
[160] Dorn 2009.
[161] Jurjens 2020: 228.
[162] Van de Walle 1948: 19; Brunner 1957: 87; Eyre, et al. 1989: 94; Janssen, et al. 1990: 80.
[163] Beckerath 1983: 64.
[164] For other Late Egyptianisms in the *Khety* material, see Brunner 1944: 72–73; Helck 1970: 163–166 (especially 166); Burkard 1997: 189–190; Jäger 2004: xxi–xl.
[165] E.g. Erman 1923: 100–101; Brunner 1957: 90; Williams 1972: 219; Fischer-Elfert 1989: 66. For some critical remarks on this notion, see Hagen 2007: 40–41.

inspired by the beginning of *Khety*, which was previously applied on the recto, to copy the opening words of *Amennakht* on the verso; both teachings having similar content.[166] The scribe of oBM EA 65597 may also have been influenced by the contents of *Khety*. On the lower part of the ostracon (recto) seven vertical lines were drawn. R. Demarée suggested that these were part of an older text, possibly *Kemyt*. However, it is noticeable that the lines were applied on that segment of the ostracon where *Kemyt* is quoted (*Khety* §2,5). Perhaps the scribe added the lines as a reference to this composition, which was almost always written in vertical columns.[167] On oANAsh.Mus.H.O.367 the scribe wrote the name of the god Ra in a cartouche, a feature that does not occur in the other sources. Finally, the scribe of pTurin CGT 54019, wanting to improve the understandability of the text, added some variants of his own while copying the text. These alterations were made intentionally, thereby showing the scribe's active engagement with the poem. Such deliberate variants also occur in other *Khety* sources.[168] In order for scribes to do this, they must have had at least a partial understanding of the text.

7.3.3 Other subjects

The scribes who wrote *Khety* also dealt with other subjects in addition to Middle Egyptian and Late Egyptian literary texts. One of these was practicing cartouches and royal titulary, as has been mentioned above, and writing lexical lists or onomastica.[169] These served to "make known all that existed"[170] and the words they contain are usually arranged by category, such as birds, vegetables, or minerals. Lexical lists were considered to be *sbꜣy.t* ("teachings") by the ancient Egyptians, making their didactic value clear. In education their purpose was twofold: to become familiar with unusual words, and to practice their spelling. As such, these lists often contained rare and difficult words written in syllabic writing.[171] Two such exercises can be found in the material with *Khety*. On both oDeM 1179 and oDeM 1575 a lexical list is presented immediately after the *Khety* excerpt and date, and was probably written by the same scribe. The words are listed in horizontal lines instead of the more usual columnar format. This layout was chosen to make the lexical list match with the literary excerpt written horizontally above it. The scribe of oDeM 1575 added verse points between the words, a feature also found in lexical lists included in the *Miscellanies*.[172] The preserved words are all *hapax legomena* and thus difficult to translate. However, the determinatives show that oDeM 1179 contains a list of organic material (Gardiner, Sign List, M2 and M3), and oDeM 1575 contains an enumeration of animals (Gardiner, Sign List, F27). The fact that these lists occur on the same material object supports the assertion that the *Khety* excerpt was also produced in an educational context. This fact also suggests that both types of exercises were considered suitable for students of the same level.

Students were also taught the proper formulae of the so-called visitor's inscriptions: *ỉw*(*t*) *pw ỉr.n sš NN r mꜣꜣ* "the scribe NN came to see" and so on. The scribe Men left several such dipinti on the walls of tomb N13.1 in Asyut in addition to two excerpts of *Khety* and other kinds of inscriptions (Verhoeven 2020, I: 268–272). Regardless of whether Men was a student or not, the fact that this type of text was

[166] Beckerath 1983: 65.
[167] The lines could also be pen-trials, but I consider this to be a less likely option. Cf. Parkinson 2009: 197; Gasse 2005: 43, e.
[168] For a list of such "Redaktionelle Textänderungen" in *Khety*, see Burkard 1977: 216–229. It must be said that some of these variants are the result of an initial misunderstanding of the text, resulting in the scribe making alterations to produce a sentence that made sense to him.
[169] These terms are often used interchangeably. For a distinction made between the two, see Brunner 1957: 95.
[170] *The Onomasticon of Amenope, 1,1*: *rḫ wnn*(*t*) *nbt* (Gardiner 1947, I: 1*).
[171] Brunner 1957: 93–94; Van de Walle 1963: 199 n. 1; Eyre, et al. 1989: 95; Hoch 1994: 475; Ragazzoli 2019: 235–236.
[172] Ragazzoli 2019: 244.

part of the training of Egyptian scribes is evidenced by an ostracon on which a student copied two lines of a typical visitor's graffito after a teacher's model (oUC 31918).[173]

7.3.4 Scripts

The instruction in various scripts may also have been part of the training of ancient Egyptian scribes. oDeM 1175 (see fig. 5) contains a *Khety* excerpt written in hieroglyphs presented in vertical columns, rather than hieratic in horizontal lines. The verso uses cursive hieroglyphs for an excerpt of *Amenemhat*, and is also presented in a columnar format. While the handwriting on the recto is very neat, the same cannot be said of the verso. The difference in quality is so striking that O. Goelet has suggested that the writing may have been the work of a teacher and his student.[174] This ostracon has also been associated with an educational context by others due to its unusual script and layout.[175] A close parallel to oDeM 1175 is oLACMA M.80.203.204, which also contains an excerpt of *Amenemhat* in cursive hieroglyphs, written in vertical columns. The fact that this ostracon features a didactic method[176] makes an educational setting for oDeM 1175 even more likely. According to Goelet and Eyre, these unusual hieroglyphic versions of literary texts were transcription exercises designed to teach the pictorial script.[177] This could explain the use of hieroglyphs on oDeM 1175, a script which was usually reserved for monumental discourse such as religious and funerary texts.[178] There are not many such exercises, which suggests that students learned hieratic before hieroglyphs, but also that many students never reached this second stage, as their mastery of hieratic was sufficient to work as a professional scribe and perform administrative tasks.[179]

The script of the *Amenemhat* excerpt on oDeM 1175 is reminiscent of that of *Kemyt*. The latter was almost invariably written in a cursive, semi-hieroglyphic writing style combined with a vertical layout.[180] The two ostraca in the corpus containing *Kemyt* (oDeM 1541; oDeM 1832; see above) are no exception in this regard. Both ostraca feature vertical guidelines in red ink which were added to facilitate regular handwriting.[181] The reason why this text was so popular as a didactic tool is explained by the fact that it was necessary for scribes, especially the ones in the community of Deir el-Medina, to be acquainted with a columnar textual format and cursive hieroglyphs, because many religious and funerary texts, such as the *Book of the Dead*, were written in this way.[182]

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[173] Ragazzoli 2016. The dipinti may have been left by teachers and students, who visited tombs and temples for educational purposes (Kahl 2006: 29; Megally 1981: 240; Navrátilová 2007: 40 ,74–76, 134, 139, 143).

[174] Goelet 2010: 126 n. 32; Goelet 2013: 117 n. 22.

[175] Parkinson 2002: 73; Hagen 2012: 99; Widmaier 2013: 541 n. 234. See also Hagen 2007: 43–44. Hagen later suggested (Hagen 2019b: 263–264) that the rare examples of literary texts written in vertical columns and (cursive) hieroglyphs may represent copies made from a master-copy taken from a temple library, providing a reference to Parkinson 2009: 148. However, on this page Parkinson only takes magical and religious texts into consideration, whereas he explicitly states on page 73 of the same work that "the choice of script probably derives from the ostracon being an apprentice exercise, written in the same script as the educational text *Kemit* […], and not from its being copied from an otherwise unattested type of literary papyrus, a copy in linear hieroglyphs from a temple library."

[176] See Jurjens 2019: 131–132.

[177] Eyre, et al. 1989: 93; Goelet 2010: 126. See also oUC 31954 (Hagen 2012: 99–100).

[178] It is not likely that the ostracon formed a preparatory piece for a monumental inscription, because instruction texts are seldom found in the monumental record (for some examples, see Hagen 2012: 74–75).

[179] Meeks 1967: 190; Williams 1972: 219; Eyre, et al. 1989: 93; Vernus 1990: 36–37; Janssen, et al. 1990: 78; Fischer-Elfert 2001, I: 439; Goelet 2010: 124; Lazaridis 2010: 7; Marshall 2022: 96; Gasse 2022: 2016. Contra Van de Walle 1963: 194–196.

[180] A few examples in a horizontal format are known: Kaper 2010: 122 n. 48.

[181] Kaper 2010: 122–123; Goelet 2010: 125. See also Gasse 2005: 36. The scribe of oMoscow I,1b 340 used horizontal grooves in the pottery as guiding lines (Anokhina, et al. 2024: 153).

[182] Goelet 2010: 125–126; Goelet 2013: 118–119.

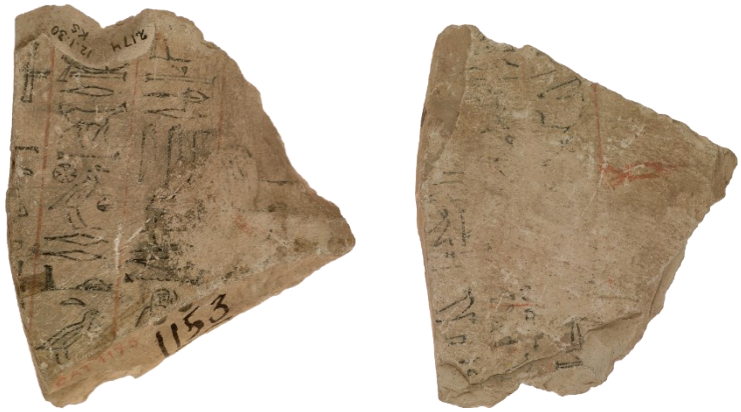

Fig. 5. oDeM 1175 recto and verso © IFAO.

A writing tablet from the Late Period (tAsasif 222) also features two different scripts. The *Khety* excerpt on the recto is written in "(spät-)hieratisch", while the text on the verso (an unidentified contemporary story) is written in what G. Vittmann describes as "kursivhieratisch" and J. Quack as "abnormal-hieratisch".[183] The difference between the choice of scripts is explained by the contents of both texts. The contemporary script was used for the Late Egyptian narrative, while the less cursive variant of hieratic was considered more appropriate for *Khety*, a Middle Egyptian classic. Learning the 'old-fashioned' hieratic was still part of the curriculum, even though it differed significantly from the contemporary script.

7.4 Scribal practices

7.4.1 Dates

Students were often taught one chapter at the time. Not only do many ostraca contain only one chapter, those with multiple dates also provide evidence of this practice. In most of these cases a date follows each chapter, suggesting that the student wrote one chapter and then paused for several days before moving on to the next. Occasionally a date occurs after two chapters, implying that the student wrote both chapters in one go. The interval between chapters varied from 2 to 10 days. The scribe of oBM EA 29950 spent an average of 5.3 days between chapters before resuming his assignment, whereas for the scribe of oDeM 1179 this was 1.3 days. All this implies that tuition did not take place at regular intervals. As the dates themselves show, there were no fixed moments when students were educated. Training took place all year round, including on weekends.

It is difficult to determine whether the student or the teacher wrote a particular date. In two cases (oCairo CG 25217; oDeM 1037) the dates were certainly written by the scribe himself. More often, however, a palaeographical analysis is difficult, if not impossible to perform. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that teachers were sometimes responsible for the addition of dates. There is some evidence that dates were added later. For example, several ostraca contain blank spaces between chapters which appear to be intended for the later inclusion of dates. These dates were probably added after revision of the text. Therefore, it may not be a coincidence that ostraca with corrections are about 50 percent more likely to contain a date than those without.

[183] Vittmann 2006: 187–188; Quack 2016: 52.

7.4.2 Corrections

Roughly 20 percent of the ostraca contain corrections. These were often done in black ink, although occasionally, in less than a quarter of the cases, red was used. The use of red ink does not necessarily point to the involvement of a teacher. For example, the scribe Inena made use of both black and red ink to correct his work.[184] Apparently during the copying process he noticed some mistakes and immediately corrected them with his black brush. Other corrections were made during revision of the text, when red verse points were also added.[185] oDeM 1058 may be another example where the scribe corrected his own work using red ink. In contrast to this, the correction in red on another ostracon (oDeM 1456) was most certainly executed by another scribe, possibly a teacher. There may be other ostraca in the corpus where a teacher was responsible for the corrections either in red or black ink, but due to the difficulties involved with a palaeographic comparison, this cannot be established with certainty. Evidence suggests that even inexperienced scribes often corrected their work themselves.[186]

It has been suggested that scribes primarily concentrated on calligraphy and spelling while correcting their Middle Egyptian literary excerpts. Thus, according to these scholars, the sole use of these texts was to practice writing, and they were not intended as a means of learning grammar or to study the textual content.[187] This view goes back to A. Erman, who observed that the corrections in the margins of several papyri were calligraphic in nature.[188] However, a study of the marginalia of pSallier II and pAnastasi IV shows that while many corrections indeed involve calligraphy, this is not always the case. Corrections also cover determinatives, entire words, the regrouping of signs, and in one instance, even grammar.[189] Furthermore, it must be pointed out that pSallier II also contains interlinear corrections. These mostly involve adding omitted words or erasing incorrectly placed verse points. In one case a suffix pronoun was altered (*r-gs=f* to *r-gs=k*).[190] These kinds of corrections are comparable to the ones found on ostraca. Unlike papyri, no known ostraca feature corrections in the margins, and as such, the number of calligraphic corrections is very small compared to other types. As for grammatical mistakes, these were occasionally corrected, mainly in cases of errors related to the suffix pronoun or omitted prepositions. The latter is a typical example of the New Kingdom scribes' familiarity with the Late Egyptian language being responsible for (grammatical) mistakes. The fact that the Ramesside scribes added prepositions during the correction process shows that they had some concern for Middle Egyptian grammar, although perhaps not as much as Egyptologists would have liked. Even if not all grammatical 'mistakes' were corrected, this does not necessarily mean that grammar was not considered important.[191] Rather, it points to the complex transmission history of a Middle Egyptian text such as *Khety*. For example, Hoch has shown that many of the 'corruptions' appear to be part of the received text, and that the scribe faithfully copied his model.[192]

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[184] See below, note 190.

[185] M. Geoga came to the same conclusion concerning Inena's corrections in *Amenemhat* on pSallier II (Geoga 2020: 247–250). See also Černý 1952: 25; Beck 2023.

[186] Jurjens 2021c: 190–195. See also table 1, listed above.

[187] Van de Walle 1948: 19; Brunner 1957: 90; Williams 1972: 219; Burkard 1977: 319; Janssen, et al. 1990: 78; Zinn 2013: 4; Burkard, et al. 2015: 185; Marshall 2022: 96–97.

[188] Erman 1925.

[189] pAnastasi IV, 4,7, see tables 2 and 3 in Jurjens 2021b.

[190] The interlinear corrections: pSallier II, VI,3 (added word in red ink); VII,3 (added word in red ink); VIII,6 (added negation in black ink); IX,1 (added preposition in black ink); IX,7 (erased verse point); IX,9 (suffix pronoun after compound preposition in red ink); X,4 (erased verse point); X,9 (erased verse point).

[191] There are two, possibly three, ostraca from the New Kingdom with grammatical exercises: oPetrie 28 (Černý 1957: 3, pls VIII–VIIIA), oCairo CG 25227 (Daressy 1901: 55–56) and oTurin CG 57139 (López 1978–1984, II: 21–22, pls 61–61a).

[192] Hoch 1991–1992: 88. See also Helck 1970: 152–153; Parkinson 1995: 47.

7.4.3 Writing exercises

Ostraca with *Khety* were sometimes reused to practice difficult signs. The scribes in question did not concern themselves with the text that was already there, but simply used the material available for their own purposes. There are no known cases where the scribe of the *Khety* extract himself practiced signs before writing them in the main text. In this respect, ostraca differ from papyri, where the hieratic signs written in the margins all have their equivalent in the main text. The function of these *marginalia* varies. They served as writing exercises made by the same scribe (pChester Beatty V); or as corrections made by another (pAnastasi IV; pSallier II). Knowing this suggests the need for caution when trying to apply conclusions based on one object to another.

The scribes who used ostraca for their writing exercises only practiced individual signs once or twice, which suggests an informal setting rather than a systematic way of training.[193] In this practice environment extracts from *Khety* were also written. This does not necessarily mean that beginners, who produced the writing exercises, and more advanced students, who produced the *Khety* excerpts, were taught side by side.[194] Firstly, it may have taken a long time before an ostracon was reused for practicing signs. For example, oTurin CGT 57403 was most likely broken before being used again by another scribe. Secondly, not just beginners, but also more experienced scribes practiced signs, as the case of pChester Beatty V shows.

7.5 Didactic methods

Teachers used several didactic methods to teach their students. For example, teachers would write a passage in red ink for students to retrace in black. This approach can be seen on oDeM 1832, where part of the *Kemyt* excerpt on the recto was written in red before being retraced by a student in black.[195] As noted above, oDeM 1832 clearly is a beginner's exercise. However, the *Khety* excerpt on the verso shows no signs of this particular didactic method, and neither do other material objects with *Khety*. Retracing does occur, but almost always as a means of correcting (single) characters or rubrics.[196] A special case is oDeM 1466. After the ostracon had broken in two, a scribe picked up the lower part and started retracing all the rubrics in black. His reason for doing so is unknown, but it is reminiscent of this training practice, and the scribe may have (until recently) been a student. Nonetheless, the apparent lack of retracing for didactic purposes implies that *Khety* was usually reserved for more advanced students who no longer followed this educational method to learn how to write.

Another didactic method was copying a text after a teacher's model. Not many material objects have survived that contain both the teacher's text and the student's copy.[197] The present corpus contains no examples, with one possible exception. The ostracon BM EA 65943 contains *Khety* §26,1–§27,1 (with a date), after which a single line follows. This line is a copy of the first line of the excerpt, albeit not an

[193] Compare, for example, oTurin CGT 57300 (López 1978–1984, II: 69, pl. 95a), where different characters were practiced multiple times in a grid pattern.
[194] See Gasse 2005: 2–3.
[195] Other examples outside the corpus include O. CG Turin 57545 + 57546 (López 1978–1984, IV: 39, pls 175–175a); oDeM 1833 (Gasse 2005: 109); oDeM 1823 (Gasse 2005: 91). Regarding the latter, the retracing is most likely a correction, as it concerns the opening words of *Kemyt*, which were first written in black before being retraced in red.
[196] oDeM 1542; oDeM 1014; oDeM 1466. oDeM 1583 is written entirely in a greyish pink ink, but this colour seems to be the result of a mixture of black and red ink, and not the result of retracing. See also the greyish pink ink on oDeM 1518 (§9,1) and oDeM 10418 (§14,3).
[197] For some examples, see Jurjens 2019: 132–133. Additional examples include oDeM 1791 (Gasse 2005: 31), tCanarvon III (Motte 2022: 355–356); tCanarvon VII (Hagen 2019a: 207); and possibly oOL 141 (Posch 2022: 230, 241).

exact one (see table 8). The scribe altered the orthography of the suffix *=k*, changing the Late Egyptian spelling to the more correct Middle Egyptian one, while placing the suffix underneath the determinative of *pri*. He also regrouped the signs of the words *m ꜥ.t*. However, it is not certain whether the person who did this was a student who copied and modified the first line of his teacher's model. It could also have been the teacher himself who corrected the work of his student, even though the handwriting looks very similar. It may also be that the scribe himself was experimenting with the arrangement of the characters, or was given an assignment to do so.

oBM EA 65943	Text
line 1	
line 6	

Table 8. Repeated text on oBM EA 65943.

The rearrangement of signs on oBM EA 65943 is all the more noticeable since it shows an understanding that words consisted of individual characters. It is often stated that students learned how to write according to the "Ganzheitsmethode", which means that they were not, as in Western society, first taught single signs, then words and sentences, but rather that they learned words or even short sentences in their entirety, thus memorizing their overall picture. Only more advanced students were able to recognize the individual signs of words.[198] This last observation, however, requires some reconsideration, since oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576 suggests otherwise. The latter is clearly a beginner's exercise, yet, like the scribe of oBM EA 65943, this scribe was able to regroup the signs of the word 'crocodiles' to make it more compact.[199] Furthermore, when arguing in favour of the "Ganzheitsmethode" H. Brunner pointed to the fact that no ostraca (which were believed to be used by beginners) containing writing exercises of individual signs had been found, whereas these exercises had been discovered in the margins of papyri (which were believed to be used by more advanced students).[200] However, since Brunner's time ostraca with such exercises have come to light. The *Khety* corpus also contains some of these, although it is difficult to determine whether they were part of primary education or the work of more experienced scribes.[201] Considering all of the above, it seems that (novice) students were at least aware that words consisted of individual characters, which could be rearranged if necessary.

oBM EA 65597 (see fig. 6) features a didactic method that has not been described before in the Egyptological literature. The ostracon contains two distinct hands, one belonging to a teacher and the other to an apprentice. The handwriting of the master is neat and small, whereas the signs written by the student are large, irregular and unevenly spaced.[202] The method employed is as follows: The teacher first wrote the beginning of *Khety* (§1,1–§2,1) on the recto, after which he ordered his student to write the next chapter on the verso. The student completed the task, although he could not quite fit the text on

[198] Brunner 1957: 66–69. See also Meeks 1967: 190; Fischer-Elfert 1989: 62; Schlott 1989: 62; Eyre, et al. 1989: 95; Janssen, et al. 1990: 78.

[199] Also on pAnastasi IV two corrections involve the (partial) rearrangement of signs, see table 3 in Jurjens 2021b.

[200] Brunner 1957: 68. See also, Van de Walle 1948: 17: "Aucun des exercices conservés ne semble représenter le stade élémentaire de l'enseignement, celui où le débutant apprend à tracer des signes isolés, des ligatures ou des mots séparés en écriture hiératique."

[201] Jurjens 2021b: 184–188. I. Venturini has studied more examples which fall outside the present corpus in her unpublished thesis, presenting them as the product of elementary education (Venturini 2007b). See also Gasse 2022: 213.

[202] Smaller handwriting points to greater professionalism (*LÄ* V, 695).

his side of the ostracon and had to use the recto for the final words of his excerpt (§2,2–§3,1). This ostracon is a rare example of a student continuing his teacher's text rather than copying it.[203]

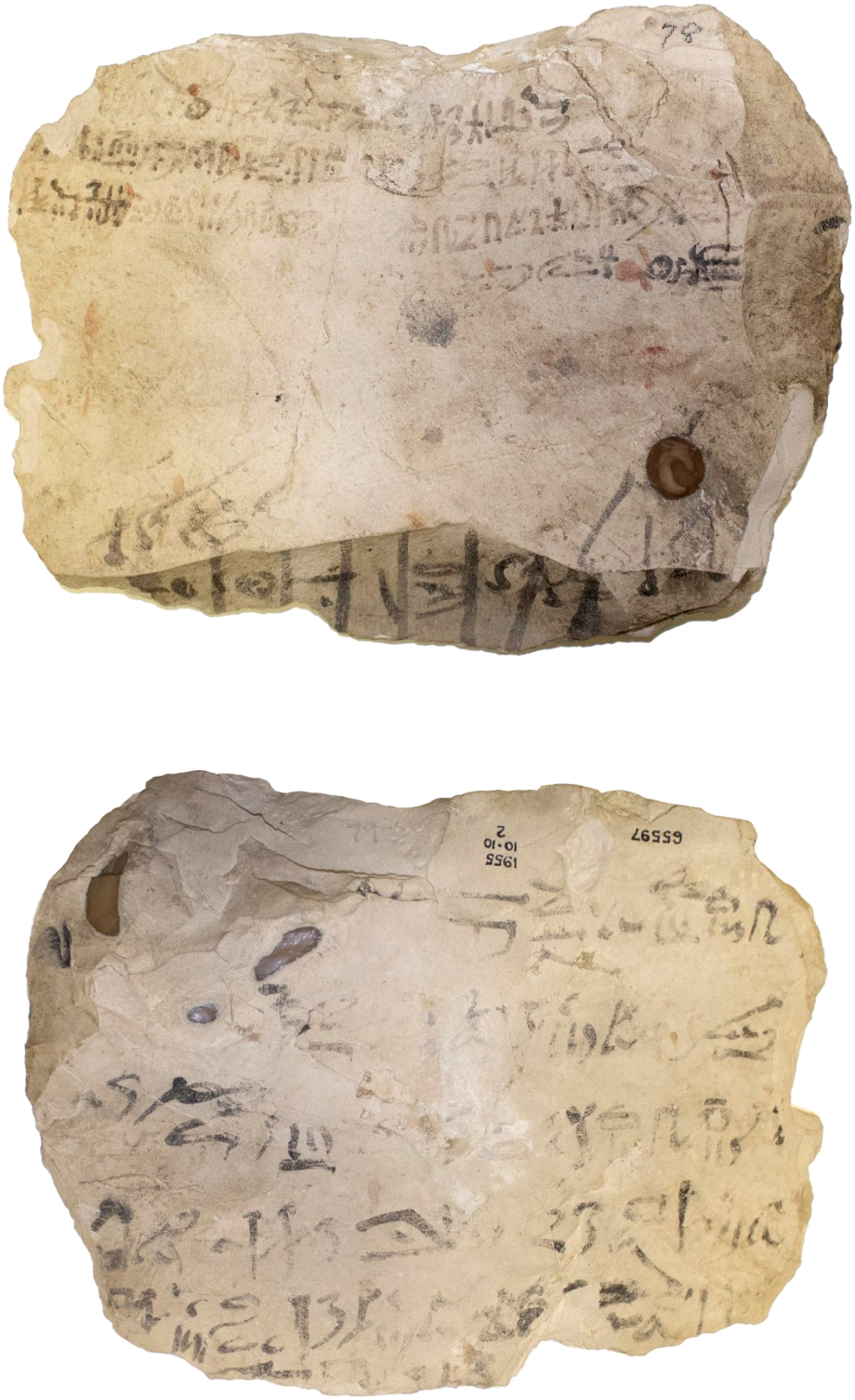

Fig. 6. oBM EA 65597 recto and verso © The Trustees of the British Museum.

[203] Compare to oDeM 1823 (Gasse 2005: 91), where the text was continued in a different script, but according to Gasse by the scribe himself.

The teacher used this particular didactic method to check whether his student correctly remembered how the text continued; great importance was attributed to knowing the precise order of a text's chapters by heart. This is also apparent in two other ostraca in the corpus (oDeM 1017 / 1586; oANAsh.Mus.H.O.19), as they both contain only the *incipit*s of each chapter.[204] It was also common practice to end an excerpt with the first verse of the next chapter, which undoubtedly aided in memorizing the chapter sequence. For example, almost each time the scribe of tLouvre N 693 finished writing a chapter, he added a date, as well as the first verse(s) of the next chapter. Every time he took up his assignment again, he repeated these verses before continuing with the rest of the chapter. This proves that memorization played an important role in educational practices and in the transmission of literary texts, perhaps more so than previously assumed.[205] A study of the mistakes that were corrected by the ancient Egyptians themselves, indicating 'true' mistakes instead of variants, has revealed more instances of scribes writing from memory (oANAsh.Mus.H.O.311; oDeM 1022; oDeM 1513) instead of copying or taking dictation. Some scribes even corrected their text from memory, as opposed to checking it against a model (oANAsh.Mus.H.O.311; oANAsh.Mus.H.O.576; oDeM 1513). This explains the occurrence of erroneous corrections and the fact that only obvious mistakes, such as omissions, were corrected while others, such as incorrectly executed hieratic signs, were left untouched.

As a final note I would like to add some enriching context on contemporary didactic practices. Parallels have been drawn between ancient Egyptian education and traditional Qur'anic schools which still exist in (North) Africa and the Middle East.[206] The focus of Qur'anic schools is placed on memorizing the Qur'an. H. Boyle (2004: 1–2) describes the "archetype" of such schools as follows: "[…] a one-room school, with a male teacher and several assistants (graduates of his school or advanced, older students) who taught children to memorize the Qur'an through a combination of recitation and copying activities. Through memorization of the Qur'an, children learned to write and read in the Arabic language. The typical school consisted of students of varying ages, mostly males from about 7 to 20 years. The students and the teacher sat on straw mats or sheepskins on the floor. […] Students wrote with an inky mixture on a wooden slate called a *luh*. […] The teacher taught by one-on-one coaching of individual students or by working with small groups of students who were at the same level in their studies. Students also worked in groups (learning circles) and worked independently. Learning was self-paced. As a student completed one verse or chapter of the Qur'an, the teacher assigned him/her a new verse. There were no formal tests, only the demonstration of mastery—reciting and writing the verse properly. Corporal punishment was widely used both to remedy misbehavior and to punish a student for not memorizing or reciting well."

How the memorization process worked is described in more detail by J. Østrup, a Danish professor, who made a study trip to Egypt in the late 19th century. During his field studies, he observed local customs, including those of primary schools associated with mosques: "Die Kinder sitzen im Kreise um den Lehrer, jeder mit einer kleinen Blechtafel in der Hand, worauf er einen oder mehrere Verse eines der ersten Kapitel des Korans geschrieben hat; dieses liest er ihnen vor, und dann wiederholen sie es im Chor, solange bis es alle auswendig wissen. Auf diese Weise lernen sie nach und nach die einzelnen auf die Tafel geschriebenen Wörter unterscheiden und danach auch die einzelnen Buchstaben; von einem Durchgang der einzelnen Teile des Alphabetes ist gar nicht die Rede."[207] Descriptions like these,

[204] This was not recognized by Jäger with regards to oANAsh.Mus.H.O.19. Jäger's synoptic text implies that the ostracon contains §7,1–§8,1 instead of §7,1; §8,1.

[205] Cf. Burkard 1977: 70, 113–114, 143.

[206] Volten 1937–1938: 10–11; Van de Walle 1948: 22–23; Brunner 1957: 67; Eyre, et al. 1989: 94; Janssen 1990: 78–79. See fig. 7.

[207] Østrup 1894: 67. German translation by Volten (1937–1938: 10–11). Ancient Egyptian school children also chanted their verses aloud in order to memorize the text, as is evidenced by *The Teaching for Merikare*: "Do not kill a man […] with whom

although brief and perhaps not entirely representative of ancient Egyptian didactic practices, nonetheless help to clarify and bring life to the ancient Egyptian material. It is as if one sees the Egyptian schoolboys chanting their verses and memorizing their text before one's eyes.

Fig. 7. A Qur'anic lesson in the open air in Qurnah (1967) © R. Demarée.

you used to chant the verses" (50–51). For another more or less contemporary (early 20th century) account of Egyptian Qur'anic schooling, see Lane 1908: 60–64.