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KEPER'S APPEAL BEFORE RAMESES III – OR THE MOTIVATION BEHIND KILLING UNARMED ENEMIES

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Abstract

A passage in the Medinet Habu account of Ramesses' third Libyan war is analyzed and the crucial term ḫaḥ is investigated. It is argued that the killing of surrendering Libyans at the hand of Pharaoh is to be explained by their ḫaḥ-like behaviour.

On the north wing of the first pylon at Medinet Habu there is a textual composition known as the 'Triumphant Poem of Year 11'. The text commemorates in highly rhetorical style the victory of Ramesses III during the second Libyan war. In the course of this campaign the Egyptians succeeded in capturing the Libyan chief, Mešer. His father, Keper, thereupon offers his own life in exchange for his son's. However, instead of showing mercy, Pharaoh Ramesses III not only slays Keper but also the disarmed Libyan army. The passage in question (KRI V, 70, 4-10) reads as follows:

Kpr jj.w r śrm m shr n ḫaḥ w3h=f h=f w=r t3 hnu,:

Keper came to make 'shalom' (i.e. to surrender) in the manner of a Tjak. He put his weapons to the ground together with:

mṣf=jry=f q r hr.t r dbh s=f (j)y b.t(w) rd.wj=f(j) dr.t=f h m s.t=f,

his army. He made a cry to heaven in order to beg for his son. (But) his feet and his hand(s) were 'united', standing where he was.

1 Daniel Arpagaus, Ägyptologisches Seminar der Universität Basel, Petersgraben 51, 4051 Switzerland. E-mail: daniel.arpagaus@gmx.ch. Special thanks are due to Dominique Basler for correcting my English.
2 Cf. the plan given by Cifola (1991: 12).
5 At Medinet Habu, Mešer appears in a battle scene on his chariot (MH II, 1932: pls. 71f.), as well as captured and fettered in a scene showing Ramesses III examining prisoners (MH II, 1932: pl. 75).
6 For this Libyan name cf. Schneider (1992: 4 with n. 16) and Rössler (1952: 133 no. 25): The etymology of this personal name stems from the root ḫpr, meaning 'proud, energetic, audacious but also recalcitrant.'
(Only) God was the one who knew his innermost thoughts (and so) His Majesty descended upon their heads like a mountain of granite!

(They were) ground up, pulverized and cleaving to the ground; their blood, in the place where they were, was like floodwaters! Their corpses lay crushed in the (very) place they had walked (before). Keper was seized upon, brought away and slain was his army whose hearts had relied upon him to save them. (He was) slain, his arms bound, pinioned like a bird and (finally) he was made prostrate on the chariot under the tread of His Majesty.

The “Year 11” inscription has been regarded as the most reliable source among the three war accounts of Ramesses III that are recorded at Medinet Habu. Thus, despite
its »flowery language« and a story element whose literary quality is reminiscent of the Iliad, the episode of the capture and killing/murder of Kaper should be taken at face value. It goes without saying that its content is somewhat repellent to the modern reader, after all killing surrendering enemies constitutes a war crime according to modern legal standards. However, as no Geneva Convention was in place at that time, the murder of captured hostile leaders should not be interpreted as an act of (particular) cruelty – back then it was just common practice. Nevertheless, some scholars have felt uneasy about cet épisode dramatique and even dismissed the ferocity of Ramesses III as unegyptian. One wonders what could have provoked such strong reactions. The key to a better understanding may be found in the rather obscure word ṭlk, which describes Kaper’s behavior towards Pharaoh. The expression ṭlk was thought to be of Semitic origin – with good reason, as the text of the Triumphal Poem is replete with words that have Semitic roots. Unfortunately, this framework does not further elucidate ṭlk. Different translations have been proposed, ranging from month, and day. More importantly, the scenes that accompany the lengthy royal narrative are far more realistic with regard to the numbers of enemy slain or captured. [...] The location of the year eleven campaign is connected to the actual military clash, and thus the account sheds welcome light upon the system of border posts that were established earlier under Ramesses II. [...] Ramesses III’s success in this second Libyan war was different than in the first, with the battle depictions and accompanying captions more vivid. Furthermore, cf. Cifola (1991: 20): »All of this seems to confirm once more our assumption: the two Libyan war reports are more realistic than that of the Sea Peoples’ campaigns. For the historicity of the war accounts in general cf. Noort (1994: 104-112).

9 Thus the characterization of the text according to Gardiner (1961: 287). Regarding its style cf. also Wilson (1990: 24-33).

10 Cf. Dironon / Vandier (1946 : 422): »Un épisode touchant nous a été conservé dans une autre inscription: le vieux roi Kaper vint, en personne, supplier Ramsès III d’être clément envers son fils Meshesher. Tel, plus tard, Priam réclamera à Achille la dépouille de son fils Hector. Mais moins heureux que Priam, Kaper fut fait lui-même prisonnier et Meshesher fut tué.«

11 This leads to the somewhat paradoxical statement that the decapitation of dead enemies is a more severe act of cruelty than the beheading of living captured leaders (); cf. Müller (2002: 1223f.); id. (2009: 126): »While the beheading [of] rebel leaders cannot be classified as cruelty because it is the customary punishment for this type of people, the beheading of dead soldiers is a different matter and does constitute an act of cruelty. For Helek (1980: 786), the capture of enemies, to turn them into sor-anx-prisoners-of-war in order to later kill them with relish, was an original motivation behind Egyptian warfare. For a recent re-examination of the term sor-anx cf. Fazekas (2006: 59-64).


14 In our passage alone we encounter ','#, to beg for peace, to surrender (cf. Galán 1997: 37-44), Dao, to cry out (for help), qDH, to cut of, to break; to grind (cf. Iârûs, op. cit., p. 312f. nr. 451), ḫrs, to crush, pulverize (cf. Hoch 1994: 561f. nr. 538; Sauneron 1988: 175). The impetus to search for Semitic loanwords in the text, however, has mislead scholars before: the word  #* that was traced back to Akkadic kamas/šu, to bow, kneel and Ugaritic kms, to throw oneself down (Görg 1975: 75-77) turned out to be just simply a mishapen writing for Egyptian gns, violence, outrage (Jasnow 1994: 201f.).
a blindfolded man,15 a blind man(??)?,16 a supplicant17 to one who is hedged-in(??).18 The first two suggestions seem to be mere educated guesses with regard to the - determinative, and neither has the translation a supplicant received any comment by Galán19 nor Kitchen’s one who is hedged-in(?).20

The solution to the problem lies in the well-known but often overlooked , which occurs several times in the Wilbour Papyrus,21 where it functions as an ethnonym for Libyans who possessed land in Middle Egypt at that time. It is likely that they were soldiers since one of the was a standard bearer.22 In addition to this, Spiegelberg (1904: 30f.) argued some one hundred years ago that these -people should be identified with the , who are mentioned in Papyrus Anastasi IV23 as well as on the famous Israel stela of Merenptah.24 Shortly before and independently of Spiegelberg, Lefébure had arrived at the ingenious conclusion that the of Papyrus Anastasi IV constitutes a Berber plural form of a word (of whose existence, however, he had no idea whatsoever).25 Another toponym , on the other hand, should be distinguished from the above mentioned Libyans. This toponym refers to a town26 or the district in which Tell er-Retaba and Tell el-Maskhuta lay27 and might be identified with the Biblical Sukkoth.28

18 Kitchen (2008: 54).
20 Is this translation based on the Semitic root skr, taking the eye for a misunderstood cover, shelter but this is the merest guess. This translation was adopted by Janssen (1948: 39): «en geblinddoekte (?)«.
22 It is conceivable that they were either stationed in garrisons in the area or had received the land as a gift once they had retired from active duty; cf. Katary (1999: 69-71); O’Connor (1972: 695).
24 The writing is . cf. Gardiner (1941: pl. 21 (46,28); pl. 27 (58,43); pl. 33 (70,11); pl. 37 (77,45.46.48); pl. 43 (89,17)) and the commentary in Gardiner (1948: 81 n. 1). Besides the Wilbour Papyrus, the same ethnonym seems to be attested already on the fragment Louvre A 18, a list of subjugated countries from the reign of Amenhotep III, as . cf. Varille (1935: 166 & pl. IV).
25 It is conceivable that they were either stationed in garrisons in the area or had received the land as a gift once they had retired from active duty; cf. Katary (1999: 69-71); O’Connor (1972: 695).
27 CG 34025 vs., l. 24 (= KRI IV, 18, 9), cf. the parallel passage on the Karnak stela of Merenptah (KRI IV, 18, 10).
28 Cf. Lefébure (1900: 151f.): »… la terminaison tana ou tinu est un suffixe, non égyptien, ce qui indique qu’il y a là un mot tek ou teka, étranger ou non, avec un pluriel étranger en tana, tinu, etc. C’est parce que le singulier était teka que les Égyptiens ont affixé au groupe complet les déterminatifs qu’il a. Quant au pluriel tana, tinu, c’est vraisemblablement une forme berbère [...] For Berber plurals see also Idrissi (1999: 101-124); Saib (1986: 109-133; en riiu).
29 Tallet (2003: 475) voted for a city at the entrance of the Wadi Tumilat.
Let us now consider our word’s unusual determinatives. First of all, it is interesting to note that the word \( T(t)k \) did neither in the Wilbour Papyrus nor in the Medinet Habu inscription retain any of the common determinatives to designate foreign peoples (e.g. \( \overline{\text{Na} \text{w}} \) or the like). Instead, we find \( \overline{\text{Tktn}} \) – in the case of the Wilbour Papyrus – and only the \( \overline{\text{dk}} \)-determinative in our Medinet Habu passage. While Lefebure reckoned that the former were added by the Egyptians because the word stem of \( Tktn \) reminded them of \( \overline{\text{Tktn}}, \overline{\text{dk}}, \overline{\text{j}} \text{go} \) and \( \overline{\text{dgj}}, \overline{\text{mto sec}} \), behold, another interpretation was put forward by Karola Zibelius-Chen. She saw a connection between the determinatives and the occupation of the \( Tktn \), who seem to have worked as scouts for the Egyptians.\(^{29}\) This can be inferred from a reference to the \( Tktn \) in Papyrus Anastasi IV, where by a Royal edict Pharaoh strictly forbids the removal of any of the \( Tktn \) scouts who were engaged spying(?): \( \overline{\text{ntj hv smt}} \).\(^{30}\) While Kitchen interpreted the \( Tktn \) as some kind of Libyan auxiliaries (mercenaries?), Müller took them to be some sort of (secret?) border police.\(^{32}\) Spiegelberg, on the other hand, perceived them as spies working for the Egyptian secret service.\(^{33}\) Whatever the expression under discussion might have once referred to, the word \( Tk \) as mentioned in the Ramesside documents appears to have undergone a semantic transformation starting as a reference to a distinct ethnic group and ending...

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\(^{28}\) To identify \( Tk \) with \( Sukkutu \) is virtually a \textit{communis opinio} which can be found in Brugsch (1875: 8), Helck (1965: 35f.) and Spalinger (2008: 147f.). This does not answer the question, however, if the \( Sukkutu \) mentioned in 2 Chron. 12:3 as forming part of Shoshenq’s army had something to do with the \( Tktn \)-Libyans; cf. Spiegelberg (1904: 30f.); Kitchen (1986: 295 n. 291); Wilson (2005: 84) and Winnicki (2009: 72).

\(^{29}\) Zibelius-Chen (1972: 188 s.v. \( \text{Tk}, \text{Tktn} \)): »Es ist aber auch möglich, dass \( \overline{\text{Ak}} \) sowie die Determinative \( \overline{\text{J}} \) und \( \overline{\text{dg}} \) mit der Verwendung der \( Tktn \) als Kundschafter und Wächter zusammenhängen.« For the combination of \( \overline{\text{dg}} \) and \( \overline{\text{J}} \) in the case of the Papyrus Wilbour spelling \( \overline{\text{ntj hv smt}} \) cf. the comments of David (2006: 29; 2007: 8-10). Instructive is the use of the classifier couplet \( \overline{\text{dg}} \overline{\text{J}} \) in Middle Kingdom literary context: In \textit{Simu}, the \textit{Dialogue of a Man with his Ba} and the \textit{Eloquent Peasant}, the pairing occurs in only a handful of words; but in all three stories is, \( \text{j}, \text{thj} \) to transgress, one of them (David 2007: 9). Thus, in the eyes of the Egyptians, the determination of the ethnonym of the \( Tktn \), who were scouting along the desert edge, might have already been regarded as being close to the metaphor ‘CRIME IS MOTION’ (David 2007: 10). This much can be inferred from the classifier couplet \( \overline{\text{dgj}} \overline{\text{J}} \). In the dichotomy between righteousness and transgressions, the \( Tktn \) belonged to the former category only because of their habitat at the periphery of the Egyptian world and the classifiers of their ethnonym, or, to say the same thing in linguistic phrasing (David 2007: 10): »the righteous proceeds on a straight path from which the transgressor strays, crossing the limits between right and wrong territories. The offender tramples the rule. His crime is a metaphor for the different groups of barbarian auxiliary troops mentioned afterwards, the \( Ndjw, \text{Tktn} \) and \( N\text{hw} \) (cf. here n. 33).«

\(^{30}\) Kitchen (1966: 159); id. (1986: 295 n. 291). Recently, Rosmorduc (2009: 143-146) convincingly demonstrated that the word \( \overline{\text{Tktn}}, \overline{\text{Na} \text{w}}, \overline{\text{Aaa}{.t}} \) in line 22 of the \textit{Israel stela} is a collective term (barbarian mercenary) for the different groups of barbarian auxiliary troops mentioned afterwards, the \( \text{Mdyj.w}, \text{Tktn} \) and \( \text{Ndjw} \) (cf. here n. 33).

\(^{31}\) Müller (1898: 31).

\(^{32}\) Spiegelberg (1896: 22): »Die \( \text{Nh} \) und \( \text{Tktn} \) sind uns aus Pap. Anastasi 10/8 ff. als Bewohner der libyschen Oasengegend bekannt, welche, wenn ich recht verstehe, den Ägyptern Spionendienste leisteten.«
as a term used to describe an occupation. This is corroborated by the phraseology of the Medinet Habu passage, which informs us that Keper came along in the manner of a Tlk (m sḥrt n Tlk). Further comparative phraseology can be found in other texts which also support the view that such m-sḥr-n-characterizations of hostile (and even friendly) elements were either employed in a pejorative and mocking fashion, or to relate to unseemly behavior:

- In the Karnak account of Merenptah’s Libyan war of year 5 we find the enemy leader compared to a dog:

\[ pływ=sn \ w r m sḥr n jwjw s tw3 jwty h3jt=f, \]

Their chief is in the manner of a dog – a beggar and a fool.

On the famous Pije stela, the king requests his own army to fight a clean war in Egypt without resorting to dirty tricks:

\[ \text{KRI IV, 2,6f.:} \]

\[ twk mj šlw m w'r ntwk n w jhis mlfy n t3 jntl.t, \]

you are like an antelope (barricocco, Alcelaphus buselaphus) in flight, you are a hunter/scout of the desert, a mlfy of the west! (for the text cf. Gardiner 1937: 36, for translations e.g. Brunner 1957: 172; Ivensen 1986: 183; Tacke 2001: 54; Pernigotti 2005: 89). In this comparison, the antelope, the mww-hunters and mlfy (Tacke 2001: 54 interprets them as Fällenstelten, i.e. trappers) share the habitat in the desert and a lifestyle that is obviously incompatible with the ideal of self-control typical for a scribe, or, as Goeßl (1968: 125) has put it: s/he consistent main feature is the life in the desert. Connected with it is the unlimited desire for freedom and the horror of any restriction. As far as the mww-hunter is concerned, his lifestyle is commented on in the Late Period wisdom text of P. Brooklyn 47.218.135: the wife of a mww-hunter is childless since her husband is away hunting for half of the year (cf. Janssen 1992: 96).

11 Problematic is not only Tlk but also the word sḥrt: »Defining sḥrt is a formidable task (Goeßl / Levine 1998: 265), based on the term’s bewildering range of meanings (ibid.). As it is so polysemic term, whose meaning is determined by its context» (Shupak 1993: 43), for m sḥr n Tlk translations like with the intention of a Tlk or in the usual way of a Tlk are also feasible. For discussions of sḥrt cf. Kniege (2006: 94; 282E); Junge (2003: 213, 228, 230, 260); Goeßl / Levine (1998: 262-271), Doxsey (1998: 506 and passim); and Shupak (1993: 42-45).

12 KRI IV, 1, 2-2: for translations cf. Davies (1997: 157): »Their chief is in the manner of a dog – an evil and heartless man; Kießchen (2003: 5): »Their chief is just like a dog – an inferior man and a fool; Manassa (2003: 34): »Their chief being in the manner of a dog, a wretched man, without his heart. The dog-like characterization may refer to an unspecific submissive behaviour of defeated enemies (von der Way 1992: 30; Manassa 2003: 36f. n. e; Gödewski 2002: 107), or it is a reference to a practice mentioned elsewhere, namely that subdued enemies were made to crouch and do the dog-walks (Brunner 1979: 147)."

do not attack during the night in the way of a ‘trickster’, (but rather) fight when you can be seen.

A passage in the Nauri decree of Sethy I featuring legalistic content prohibits any fortress commander to misuse belongings of the fort for himself in an arbitrary manner:

r tm rdj.t b3 m prj-r.t hm nb hpr.tj=f(j) hr p*r t hm n (Sthry mry.n Pth) nty m Shtm(?) (jh)t nb.t jmsn m nbw m jd.w m jn[w nb] n hm m (jh)t nb.t n(t) w[lw?] m shr n wstn r nbh l.t d.t,…

to prevent any future fortress-commander who shall be in charge of the Fort of Sethy I beloved of Ptah which is in Sekhemet, from seizing any property from them (i.e. passing ships), (whether) of gold, of pelts, (or) of any of the tribute/income of the fort, (or) of any property (even) of a sailor in an arbitrary manner, eternally and forever.

Summing up, I would like to suggest translating the key phrase *m shr n Tk* as in the manner of a (Libyan) spy or with the intention of a (Libyan) spy. The determinative of *Tk* is therefore highly suggestive insofar as it points to the activity of spying rather than focusing on Keper’s Libyan descent.

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38 For the word b3b, to play a game, cf. the comments by Grimal (1981: 30 n. b).
41 Another, although somewhat far-fetched interpretation proposed that the Egyptian scribe of the Medinet Habu text did no longer associate the word *Tk* with a Libyan tribe and its spying role at all. Rather he may have connected the term with a word he knew, quite in the same fashion as modern translators tried to look for a possible Semitic origin to make sense of the word. Here an Egyptian candidate is the word *Tk*, predecessor of Demotic *dq* (etc.) and Coptic *tk*, *tk*, *tk*, which means knife, razor (cf. Andrea 1979: 166f.). So far, this word is attested three times in Ramesid documents, i.e. on O. Nash 1, v° 9 (as *tk*), cf. Cerny/Gardiner 1957: pl.46; Menu 2002: 43), Weight IFAO 5110 (as *tk*), cf.) and O. Varille 19, III 6 (as *tk*), cf. Janssen 2009: 96) – not including the enigmatic *tk* of O. DeM 347 (cf. Janssen 1975: 325). In later Demotic sources a term *dq* denotes a sword blade (cf. Hoffmann 1996: 191 n. 211; in addition, Lipper/Schemelait 2006: 169). What if the scribe of the Medinet Habu text mistakenly took the *Libyan* *Tk* with *tk*, determinative to be an Egyptian metaphor razor-eyed?
The circumstance that the Libyan surrender was not to be trusted becomes clear from the text itself; almost immediately after Keper’s characterization as a §Ak, we read: only God knew his (=Keper’s) innermost thoughts. The text alludes to God’s omniscience, i.e. his ability to look into man’s heart and detect potential wrongdoing (which by extension also applies to the king as God’s intermediary). What these innermost thoughts (jmj.w-h.wt) consisted of in our particular case is made explicit in the introductory statement in KRI V, 69, 14: »They deliberated to plot rebellion yet again«. In the present author’s view, the insistence on the Libyans plotting yet again (m-whm sp) is to be understood as referring to Keper’s initiative and not to the prior Libyan attack under Meïer.

Overall we may say that these words imply that the Egyptians sensed that something was fishy about the Libyan surrender. At least that is what the text wants us to believe. Whether or not the threat was real, we will probably never know. Pharaoh’s actions, however, are presented as a pre-emptive strike that came about only through his god-like insight into those treacherous §Ak-Libyans. Thus, the killing of surrendering and defenceless enemies was not meant to display an act of indiscriminate brutality; it merely followed as a natural reaction to information that has been hitherto hidden to modern readers.

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42 Cf. the beginning of the Loyalist Teaching, where, after a request to be loyal to the king, the ruler is described as follows: w3j pw jmj hbj.w jw jr.1=f(j) dF=sn h.t nb.t, he is the (divine) Sia-Knowledge inside the hearts, his eyes can scan every body (i.e. discern the thoughts); (after the version of the Loyalist Teaching on Stela Cairo CG 20358 l.11f.; cf. Kamal 1940: 214; Posener 1976: 19; Schipper 1998: 164 – for the Loyalist Teaching in general now Verhoeven 2009). The same phraseology is also applied to gods, e.g. a gate keeper in BoD 125 is called, w3j.w-bj.w-dF(w)-X.wt, Who perceives the hearts-who-scans-the-bodies (cf. LGG VI, 166) and in the tomb of the High Priest of Amun Nebwenenef (TT 157), the god Amun is described as w3j.w-nb(w)-X.wt mbA(w) HAtj.w w3j(rx(w)) Xnw X.t, (he is) Sia-Knowledge, who reveals hearts, who scans backgrounds, who knows what is in bodies (KRI III, 284, 1-2; cf. Frood 2007: 37). For more examples cf. the references given in Toye (2009: 262 n. 23). Thus, regarding our particular passage, we may say that his attempts at trying to hide his true thoughts from the king make Keper the epitome of disloyalty. As such he is inevitably doomed, just like somebody who cannot pass the above-mentioned gate-keeper of BoD 125, or somebody who ventures to be disloyal to the king and who, according to the Loyalist Teaching, would be denied a burial and thrown into the river (nn js n shf h wshf jw h.t=f qm(w) n mwr; cf. Schipper 1998: 164).

43 This should be taken into account when meditating on the Egyptian ideology of war (cf. Liverani 1990: 126ff.; Hazél 1998: 17ff.). While the battle scenes on temple walls present for the most part a homogeneous picture of the rebellious or resistant foreigner as the wizened opponent and doomed victim of Egypt’s superiority (O’Connor 2003: 169), accompanying texts allow for more subtitles than the stereotypical phrases that focus on the so-called Todesbefallenheit of the enemies (von der Way 1992: 61; cf. furthermore Guerry/Gillen 2010: 59-63) and the Tötungsentschlossenheit of the Pharaoh (Assmann 1995: 82).
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Keper’s appeal before Ramesses III or the motivation behind killing unarmed enemies. Advances in Egyptology, 2. pp. 95-108. PDF - Published Version 658Kb. Official URL: http://edoc.unibas.ch/41762/. Downloads: Statistics Overview. Faculties and Departments: 04 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences > Departement Altertumswissenschaften > Fachbereich Ägyptologie. How To Kill Ramesses Shadow In Assassin Creed Origins. Once you locate him comes to the tedious job of killing him before it disappears. so you will have to be aggressive while evading charge attacks to not get staggered by him. The first thing you should do is keep attacking him on his back. the reason being he has quick short-range mace attack which deals heavy damage but he only uses it in front of him. so wait for his attack and then quickly circle around him and do heavy and quick attacks, you can also use bow and arrow to do damage. This method is efficient and also fast to kill Ramesses before he escapes. so all you have to do is evade, then attack and build up adrenaline and use the special on him and rinse and repeat till it dies. Related. Post navigation. Daniel Arpagaus (Switzerland) Keper’s appeal before Ramesses III or the motivation behind killing unarmed enemies. Mladen Tomorad (Croatia) Shabtis from the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (Croatia): a typological study. APPENDIX. Ashkhen Zakharyan (AEC Head Librarian) 2009 – 2010 publications in our fields of research in our library (by author, thereafter by subjects). Black and white photographs may be inserted at will; color photographs or plates are also accepted in reasonable numbers if justified. The authors receive one copy of the bulletin and the PDF of their article under the agreement that diffusion of the latter, by e-mail or in print, will be made in a responsible and controlled manner. Please e-mail your contribution to: äE⁄©gyptology_AT_ysu.amäE.