AN APPRENTICE’S BOARD
FROM DRA ABU EL-NAGA*

By JOSÉ M. GALÁN

A wooden board used for drawing and writing was found in pieces by the Spanish-Egyptian mission at Dra Abu el-Naga (TT 11–12). It probably dates to the reign of Hatshepsut-Tutmosis III. On the recto, there is a double drawing of a royal standing statue in frontal view. The two figures are drawn on squared grids traced in red ink. Next to the drawing exercise the first paragraph of Kemit has been written three times. On the left half of the verso a pharaoh is drawn in the posture of fowling, while the right half of the surface has been washed for re-use.

The Spanish–Egyptian mission at Dra Abu el-Naga has been working at the rock-cut tombs of Djehuty and Hery, TT 11 and 12 respectively, since January 2002.1 The former was ‘Overseer of the Treasury’ and ‘Overseer of Works’ under Hatshepsut; the latter must have lived half a century earlier, under Ahmose and Amenhotep I, and held the title ‘Overseer of the Granary of the King’s Mother and Royal Wife, Ahhotep’. The tombs are located ten metres to the northeast of the modern houses, at the southwestern end of the area called ‘Dra Abu el-Naga north’. They are cut into the foothill, very close to one another, and are nowadays interconnected through a third tomb, -399-,2 which also dates to the early Eighteenth Dynasty, but whose owner is still unknown.

The open courtyards of the tombs were covered by more than five metres of rubble that had accumulated over the years, due to successive reuses of the area in later times, the actions of nineteenth century Egyptologists and early twentieth century robbers.3 A large number of objects have been found scattered randomly and are the remains of funerary equipment of various periods, from the Seventeenth Dynasty onwards.4

During the excavation of the open courtyards, eighteen fragments of a wooden board that had been used for drawing and writing were found spread over a wide area. Four fragments were uncovered in the first season, ten in the second, one in the

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1 I am very grateful to Richard Parkinson, Gay Robins and Bridget Leach for reading through the manuscript and providing most valuable comments. Responsibility for possible errors is, nevertheless, entirely mine.


3 In the course of the excavation of the courtyards some of the missing fragments from the walls of the tombs of Djehuty and Hery have been found a good distance from the tomb itself and in several different locations.

4 Eighteenth Dynasty material is quite common, including black-yellow painted coffin fragments, and pottery. Twenty-first Dynasty ushabtis and coffin fragments are also spread through the area, as well as Saite pottery deposits.
Fig. 1. *Recto* of the Apprentice’s Board from Dra Abu el-Naga (before restoration, and completed with fragments found in 2005 and 2006).

Fig. 2. *Recto* of the Apprentice’s Board from Dra Abu el-Naga (as reconstructed in 2006).
Fig. 3. *Verso* of the Apprentice’s Board from Dra Abu el-Naga (before restoration, and completed with fragments found in 2005 and 2006).

Fig. 4. *Verso* of the Apprentice’s Board from Dra Abu el-Naga (as reconstructed in 2006).
fourth, and three during the fifth. Thirteen of them were unearthed between Djehuty’s courtyard and that of the neighbouring tomb, -399-, above the separating wall between the two tombs, at a height of two metres above the court’s floor, and five to thirteen metres away from the façade. Two further fragments were found in front of Djehuty’s tomb entrance, at a distance of fifteen to twenty meters from the façade, and four metres above the court’s floor. Finally, three fragments had found their way into the funerary shaft of tomb -399-, and were found four metres deep, mixed up with other dumped material, including four funerary cones of Baki and one of Min-Montu.5

These fragments make up slightly more than half of the original rectangular board (figures 1–4), which would have measured 31 x 45.8 cm, and which was drawn on both sides. The corners are rounded and the sides slightly tapered. The wood is *Acacia gerrardii*, and it is covered on both sides with a layer of creamy yellowish stucco (figure 5).6 A thin linen tissue was placed between the wood and the stucco at the recto’s central section, in order to soften the irregularities of the wood’s grain and to level the surface (figure 6). Altogether these layers make the board 1 cm thick.

6 Colour photographs of the board and of the excavation area outside the tombs are published in J. M. Galán and M. el-Bialy, ‘An Apprentice’s Board from Dra Abu el-Naga’, *EA* 25 (2004), 38–40. At that time only fourteen fragments had been found.
type of learning/practice boards and share many characteristics. Therefore it seems convenient to refer to the British Museum board for comparison while studying this new finding.

The surface of each side was divided into two halves by an imaginary vertical line. On the side that has been considered the recto, there is a drawing exercise on the left half and a writing exercise on the right half. On the verso a drawing again occupies the left half.

I. The drawing on the recto

The drawing consists of two figures outlined in black ink, each one drawn over its own squared grid in red. Examination shows that the two figures were initially sketched in red also, and then outlined in black with small corrections introduced at the same time. The two figures are almost identical since they represent the same object, namely a standing statue of a pharaoh. The striking feature of this double drawing is that the pharaoh has been portrayed in a frontal view, which is exceptional (figure 7). The king is wearing a nemes-headdress, with a uraeus-diadem on his forehead. His bare torso is adorned with a shebyw-collar, and he is dressed only in a short shendyt-kilt, whose frontal folded piece of cloth does not quite reach his knees. Since the transverse middle section of the board has not been preserved, it has to be assumed that the kilt would have reached the mid thigh, and would have been tied up to the waist by a belt. This unfortunate lacunae has perhaps deprived us of the pharaoh’s name, which could have been written on the belt’s buckle, as is common on statuary. Hence, there is no written evidence as to who the pharaoh was.

Fig. 7. Detail of the recto, showing the upper part of the two royal figures.

The pharaoh is shown standing with his two feet together, although if depicting a statue from the front it could show one leg moving forward as if walking. It is interesting to observe how the feet and the knees have been depicted frontally. The arms fall straight down parallel to the body, with the fists closed and touching the outer side of the thighs.

**Identity of the pharaoh**

Due to its uniqueness, comparing parallels is difficult since there are no other frontal portraits of pharaohs, either painted or in relief (see below). The most useful corpus is royal statuary which, significantly, is the motif of the drawing. The statue closest to our figure is the well known green greywacke statue of Thutmose III, found in the cachette north of pylon VII at Karnak, and now on display in Luxor Museum. This could certainly be the kind of statue depicted on the board. The pose of the young king and the proportions of the body are strikingly similar. Could he then be the pharaoh depicted on the board? There is, however, one notable difference between the statue and the drawing: while the statue wears a false royal beard, the pharaoh of the board is beardless. This feature is of significance, since most of the statues identified as portraying Thutmose III show him with a false beard.\(^9\)

Who then could be the pharaoh on the board? Four facial stylistic features seem to be relevant. First, the inner end of the eyebrows make a descending curve towards the nose. Second, the line that traces the inner part of the eye, the lachrymal, falls down, turning inside and then describing a sharp curve that prolongs the vertex towards the nose, resembling the shape of the Arabic numeral 2. Third, the upper lip is as thick as the lower one, and there is no trace of a smile. Fourth, the face has a small rounded chin. Taking into account the combination of these distinctive features, together with the lack of a beard, Hatshepsut is a good candidate for the pharaoh depicted. Some of the queen’s earlier statues portray her with an upper lip as thick as the lower one, without a smile, a slightly receding chin and, most importantly, beardless.\(^10\)

Looking at the statues referred to above, it is entirely possible that our figure is a representation of one of these drawn from the front, from which perspective the breasts can be plausibly minimised. Nevertheless, in the same way that early statues represent Hatshepsut as a male king without hiding her feminine gender completely, of which her contemporaries were well aware, the figure drawn on the board contains hints at the possible feminine nature of the image. First, the width from shoulder to shoulder, taking up only five squares, is narrower than the conventional width for men which takes up six squares, as is the case in Thutmose III’s image on the British Museum board (surpassing 5½ squares). The distance from armpit to armpit is correspondingly shorter too, 3 squares versus Thutmose III’s 3½. The arms, however,

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\(^9\) Luxor J. 2; *Catalogue of the Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art* (Cairo, 1979), 50f. (no. 61), pl. vi.


maintain the male width of 1 square. The figure is not only slimmer in the upper torso, but the waist is also narrower, 2 squares versus Thutmosis III’s 2½. Finally, the hips are slightly higher than in male figures, beginning at a height of 12½ squares.¹²

The five squares width of the Dra Abu el-Naga figure produces an interesting use of the grid’s vertical lines. The torso is not divided in two halves by a vertical line, as happens with figures of six squares width, but a whole column of squares is used as the figure’s symmetrical axis. The side lines of this central column are used to locate symmetrically the exterior of the eyeballs, the inner side of the nemes’ vertical fold, the knees and the toes.

To sum up, the combination of the facial features, the narrowness of the shoulders and waist, high hips, and the lack of beard, suggest that Hatshepsut is the most plausible pharaoh portrayed frontally on the Dra Abu el-Naga board.¹³

Master and apprentice

Comparing the two drawings of the king, it can be noticed that the image to the right has been executed with greater skill: the line thickness is consistently very fine with a firm and confident hand, even on difficult curved areas (figure 8). However, the figure to the left has been drawn with tentative movements of hand, releasing uncontrolled amounts of ink which has produced lines of varying thickness. It can be seen that

¹² G. Robins, Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art (London, 1994), 87–118. See also the remarks and tables with measurements and proportions of statuary by Bryan, in A. P. Kozloff and B. M. Bryan, Egypt’s Dazzling Sun: Amenhotep III and his World (Cleveland, 1992), 77 f., 147 f., 461–75.

¹³ See the concluding remarks by G. Robins, ‘The Names of Hatshepsut as King’, JE 85 (1999), 111 f., taken up by C. A. Keller, ‘The Statuary of Hatshepsut’, in Roehrig (ed.), Hatshepsut, 158–73; on p. 163 it is stated: ‘Her royal titulary remained clearly female, and there was never an attempt to pretend that as an individual she was anything other than female. Yet in the imagery of the statues that presented her as king she of necessity portrayed herself as male’. See also remarks by P. Dorman, ‘Hatshepsut: Princess to Queen to Co-Ruler’, in Roehrig (ed.), Hatshepsut, 88: ‘Hatshepsut’s metamorphosis into a “male” pharaoh took place gradually, over a period of years, and went through a series of exploratory phases’. On these phases, see D. Laboury, ‘Royal Portrait and Ideology: Evolution and Signification of the Statuary of Thutmose III’, in E. H. Cline and D. O’Connor (eds), Thutmose III: A New Biography (Ann Arbor, 2006), 260–91. See, in the same vein, L. Gabolde, Monuments décorés en bas relief aux noms de Thoutmosis II et Hatchepsut à Karnak (MIFAO 123/1; Cairo, 2005), 164–72.
attempts to correct the tracing of a line have been made, and there are several blots.
The left shoulder of this figure, for example, shows a correction of the curved line,
while his right shoulder has a blot on it which has retained, by chance, part of the
draughtsman’s fingerprint. A second fingerprint can be seen between the muscles
of the calves. It seems therefore that two different hands, two altogether different
draughtsmen, have taken part in the double drawing, one considerably more skilful
than the other.

However, might not a single artist have drawn the same object twice with slightly
different results? If this were the case, one would expect the second tracing to be of
better quality. However, if the direction of cursive writing, from right to left, is also
applicable to drawing, it is then the opposite case, since the better drawn figure is the
one to the right, and the second one on the left is the less precise.

If two artists have both drawn the same object, it is very likely that the author of
the right hand figure would be a master draughtsman, while the other would be his
apprentice, copying his master’s model next to it. Thus, we would have here a case
of learning by copying a model on a single object, master and pupil side by side. For
this reason, the piece has been named ‘the Apprentice’s Board’. This proposal can be
further substantiated and strengthened below when discussing the writing exercise
on the recto.

A figurative ostracon from Deir el-Bahari and dating to the reign of Hatshepsut
may also be a learning exercise accomplished by copying a model of the same object.
In this piece the better drawing is also the one to the right and the less accurate, the
one that could be a copy of the master’s model, is the one to the left. The subject of
the double drawing is the head of a man in profile and the head of an owl, one above
the other, both outlined with the help of guidelines.14

**Frontal portrait**

Egyptian two-dimensional representations of the human figure usually display a
combination of views but always show the head in profile. This artistic convention
was set aside only in very specific cases,15 most of them representing defeated foreign
chiefs or soldiers, exotic female musicians, goddesses of foreign lands (Qadesh), of
heaven (Nut), and other deities related to protection, music and birth (Hathor, Bes).

Why is the king shown in frontal view? Is it due to the fact that it is a statue that
has been depicted? This does not seem to have necessarily been the case as statues de-
picted in representational scenes are shown by artists in profile or in an ‘approximate

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the ostracon with a double portrait of Senenmut, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 31.4.2, in Roehrig
(ed.), *Hatshepsut*, 126f. (no. 63). Note also the double profile portrait of a king carved on a limestone ostracon
found at el-Amarna: O. Cairo JE 59294. In this case also, the first and better executed figure seems to be the one

to the right.

drn; Oxford, 1949), 322–6; R. Tefnin, ‘Regard de face — regard de profil. Remarques préliminaires sur les avatars
E.6783 aus den Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire in Brüssel und verwandte frontaldarstellungen — eine
profile view.’\textsuperscript{16} A good example of this is the profile representation of the Ramesses II colossi at the entrance to Luxor temple, while the temple itself is shown frontally.\textsuperscript{17}

However, when sculptors were carving a statue, they had to face the task of composing a frontal portrait. This challenge is clearly shown in sculptors’ studies and unfinished works.\textsuperscript{18} Some of them preserve the squared grid drawn on the stone, traced to help the sculptor in carving the human figure according to a pre-defined set of proportions.\textsuperscript{19} Among the unfinished portraits found at the workshop of the sculptor Djehuty at el-Amarna, at least one of them shows a vertical line in black, dividing the face symmetrically into two halves.\textsuperscript{20} When a sculptor was asked to carve the figure of a tomb owner coming out through the false door, for instance, he had to produce a frontal portrait in high relief. The most significant example of this is the well known frontal figure of Redi-nes carved in sunk relief with raised interior elements, dating to the middle of the Fifth Dynasty.\textsuperscript{21} At the end of the same dynasty, in the tomb of Irukaptah, at Saqqara, a succession of fourteen niche-statues of the owner was left incomplete, and the last five were just sketched in red ink on the rock’s surface, showing the outline of a human figure in frontal view.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, the drawing on the Dra Abu el-Naga board does not seem to be a view of an existing statue, but rather a study on the proportions of a statue as it would be carved on a stone block. It is not surprising to find evidence for teaching artists how to produce a frontal image when realizing that many of the stone statues carved would have started out with a front sketch and proportions of the image drawn on the front of the block of stone.

Considering that the statue has been drawn on a learning/practice board, the drawing was not necessarily the product of a sculptor’s workshop or a design for a specific statue. It could rather be an exercise in draughtsman’s skills and knowledge, in how to use a fine brush, or even how to draw the newly established royal proportions, in this case an adapted feminine version of the male standard.

Another possible explanation for the frontal portrait of the king, apart from it being a preliminary study for a statue, could relate to the nature of the board itself.

\textsuperscript{17} M. Abd el-Razik, ‘Some Remarks on the Great Pylon of the Luxor Temple’, \textit{MDAIK} 22 (1967), 69–70, pl. xxvii. A similar depiction, dating to the early reign of Thutmose IV, can be found in the tomb of Amenhotep Si-se (TT 75): N. de G. Davies, \textit{The Tombs of Two Officials of Thuthmosis the Fourth} (TTS 3; London, 1923), pl. xiv.
\textsuperscript{18} Although from the late Period, see M. C. C. Edgar, \textit{Sculptor’s Studies and Unfinished Works} (CGC Nos 33301–33506; Cairo, 1960); C. Aldred, ‘Bildhauer und Bildhauerei’, \textit{LÄ} I, 800–5.
\textsuperscript{19} An interesting pair is the unfinished sphinx statue in the former Berlin-Charlottenburg Museum (Inv. No. 22445) and the preliminary drawing on papyrus of a sphinx statue (Berlin P. 11773), both of them using a squared grid as guide. The drawing shows a frontal standing female figure between the sphinx’s paws. See Schäfer, \textit{Principles of Egyptian Art}, 327–31; W. Seipel, \textit{Gott — Mensch — Pharao: Viertausend Jahre Menschbild in der Skulptur des Alten Ägypten} (Vienna, 1992), 502f. (no. 211).
\textsuperscript{21} P. Der Manuelian, ‘The Giza Mastaba Niche and Full Frontal Figure of Redi-nes in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston’, in D. P. Silverman (ed.), \textit{For his Ka: Essays offered in Memory of Klaus Baer} (SAOC 55; Chicago, 1994), 55–78.
\textsuperscript{22} A. McFarlane, \textit{The Unis Cemetery at Saqqara, I: The Tomb of Irukaptah} (ACE Reports 15; Warminster, 2000), pls viii, xiii, xix, xxiv, xxv. Note also the case of an abandoned cutting of a block in Zawiet Sultan, meant for a royal statue, with a drawing of a king in profile (Amenhotep III?) to help in cutting the correct size of the block for a statue; R. Klemm and D. D. Klemm, \textit{Steine und Steinebrüche im Alten Ägypten} (Berlin, 1992), 96f.
Being a learning/practice board it might have seemed an appropriate medium on which to produce unorthodox drawings, whose theme, approach, or aesthetics would not fit within the confines of official art. Among the large number of ostraca from Deir el-Medina depicting the king there is only one that shows him in frontal view, a very sketchy drawing of a standing pharaoh wearing a nemes and a short kilt, with both arms falling down parallel at each side of the body, a narrow waist and a prominent chest. Another sketch traced on a limestone chip, found by Howard Carter inside the burial chamber of Merneptah’s tomb, shows a frontal outline of the king’s sarcophagus with the measurements indicated next to it.

The drawing on the Dra Abu el-Naga board is certainly not a rough or preparatory sketch, but a careful and detailed drawing, traced with the help of a squared grid in order to do it as neatly and precisely as possible from the start, to avoid later corrections. It was not a casual product but was well thought out and meant to last for some time, both the figure and the squared grid. The grid was part of the exercise, and for that reason when drawing the second figure on the left, the draughtsman did not extend the horizontal lines of the first grid, but traced a new separate grid. The use of squared grids was a basic aid for the draughtsmen working on the decoration of tomb walls, where the grids would eventually be erased or painted over, unless the monument was carelessly finished or left unfinished. There are, however, a large number of artists’ exercises on limestone flakes and other surfaces that intentionally kept the squared grids in order to better show the proportions and how the drawing was done, and should be done. The most significant of these are the portraits of Senenmut, in profile, with the squared grid drawn in red as part of the drawing.

II. The drawing on the verso

The Dra Abu el-Naga board preserves a second drawing exercise on the verso (figures 3 & 4). The drawing is upside down in relation to the figures of the recto, the board having been turned on a horizontal axis. As on the recto, the drawing takes up the left half of the surface. In this case there is no duplication and only one figure has been

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23 Some of them even show the king unshaved, like the ostracon now in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 32.1.; Peck, Drawings from Ancient Egypt, 104 (no. 31); see also J. Vandier d’Abbadie, Catalogue des ostraca figurés de Deir el Médineh: Nos 2256 à 2722 (DFIFAO 2/2; Cairo, 1937), lxxi ff., lxxii, lxxiii, lxxxvi (nos 2568, 2569).

24 J. Vandier d’Abbadie, Catalogue des ostraca figurés de Deir el Médineh: Nos 2734 à 3053 (DFIFAO 2/4; Cairo, 1959), pl. cli (no. 3010). The author, however, points out on p. 222: ‘Dessin vu de face, d’un dieu ou d’un génie nu, coiffé du nemès. Ce dessin est fait sans doute d’après une statue.’ A fragmentary drawing in red ink of the head of a king in frontal view, wearing a nemes and a royal beard, can also be found in BM 50741; R. J. Demarée, Ramesside Ostraca (London, 2002), 36, pl. cxliii.


26 Cf. the figured ostracon with a frontal portrait of a celestial genii in Vandier d’Abbadie, Catalogue des ostraca figurés: Nos 2734 à 3053, 203 (CCG 2927), pls cxvi, cxxiii.


28 MMA 36.3.252; W. C. Hayes, Ostraka and Name Stones from the Tomb of Sen-Mīt (No. 71) at Thebes (PMM 15; New York, 1942), 9, pl. i. See also Peck, Drawings from Ancient Egypt, 54, 76 f. (nos 2–4), pl. iv; Roehrig (ed.), Hatshepsut, 119 f. (no. 62).
outlined, although there are traces of a second grid on the right half which was then washed for re-use. A squared grid was traced first in red, then the figure was sketched in red and finally it was carefully redrawn using black ink. The figure has been drawn on a slightly smaller scale than those on the recto. The grid is also smaller, each square measuring 1.0 or 1.1 cm versus 1.5 or 1.6 cm for the recto squares. The grids are not exact mathematically, and the small variation of 0.1 cm in the tracing of some of the squares on both sides results in an overall error of almost 1 cm in the size of each grid and of the figure drawn on it.

The motif of the drawing exercise is once more the figure of a king. This time he is represented in the conventional way, i.e. with the head in profile. The royal figure is shown in the posture of fowling: he is holding in his left forward hand a duck as decoy, while his right arm is raised behind him, presumably holding a curved throw-stick now lost. His legs are placed wide apart in a strong active pose. This differs from a running pose in two details: (a) the foot of the advanced leg, including the heel, is fully settled on the ground, not just the toe; (b) the bull-tail of the kilt hangs down between the legs and is not flying behind the rear leg as often when running.

The king wears the red crown. It has no uraeus at its front, which is an unusual absence, but this omission could be due to the fact that it is simply a learning/practice board or that the drawing is unfinished. The spiral of the crown has been left in red ink, without tracing it over in black, and it has the peculiar artistic touch that the spiral’s curl cuts and goes beyond the frame’s line.²⁹

Royal fowling

The drawing is part of a fowling in the marshes scene, though no papyrus thicket has been drawn, nor any wild ducks taking flight. There is no indication of the skiff on which the hunter would be standing. Thus it seems that the drawing has to be regarded not as a preparatory sketch for painting or carving such a scene, but purely as a draughtsman’s exercise, a trial of his skills and knowledge of the correct proportions of the human body. Although such a scene could have been represented in a mortuary temple or in a palace, the drawing does not necessarily have to be associated with a particular monument.

There is some earlier evidence of representations of the Egyptian king fowling in the marshes, but these are very fragmentary. In the funerary complexes of Sahure and Userkaf, there are a few relief blocks that may have been part of this scene.³⁰ In the Eighteenth Dynasty, there is a possible fowling scene on the northern side of the first terrace of Hatshepsut’s temple, which would be contemporary with the Apprentice’s Board.³¹

The most complete parallel scenes closest in time to the drawing are to be found

²⁹ For examples of this artistic feature, see e. g. H. G. Fischer, L’écriture et l’art de l’Égypte ancienne: Quatre leçons sur la paléographie et l’épigraphie pharaoniques (Paris, 1986), 34 ff.


³¹ Briefly mentioned in F. Pawlicki, ‘Une représentation inconnue de la Fête de l’Hippopotame Blanc dans le Temple de Hatchepsout à Deir el-Bahari,’ ET 14 (1990), 16.
about one hundred years later, on the small golden statue shrine of Tutankhamun,\textsuperscript{32} and in the tomb of King Ay in the Western Valley (KV 23).\textsuperscript{33} At the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, scenes that were common in high officials’ tombs, such as fowling in the marshes,\textsuperscript{34} were incorporated into the royal iconographic repertoire, including the royal tomb.

Identity of the pharaoh

The facial features fit well within the style on relief of Hatshepsut’s portraits:\textsuperscript{35} a rounded nose, the inner line of the eye falling inside and then twisting horizontally towards the nose, and large lips (figure 9). However, it is often difficult to distinguish between the face of Hatshepsut and that of Thutmose III. The drawing on the verso of the Dra Abu el-Naga board and that on the British Museum board have a vertical grid line going through the eyeball but, while in the former the lips are prolonged up to this line, in the latter they do not reach as far as this. On the BM board, Thutmose III has a sharper nose, straight inner eye line and shorter mouth.

Fig. 9. Detail of the pharaoh’s fist grasping a duck on the verso.


Moreover, the royal figure on the verso of the Dra Abu el-Naga board has the same shoulder width as the figure on the BM board. The distance from armpit to armpit is four squares, what would be the standard male width for the torso, but this could well be the consequence of movement taking place. The left arm, bent and holding a duck, has been drawn almost exactly as Thutmosis III’s left arm holding a staff on the BM board. Not only is the position the same with the hand raised at the height of the shoulder and at a distance of two squares from it, but also the way in which the artist uses the squared grid with the corner of the elbow coinciding with the intersection of two grid lines. The left fist, holding an object, follows the same pattern in the two drawings.

The waist here is slightly thinner than Thutmosis III’s waist on the BM board. The royal figure on the verso is lacking a royal beard as on the recto. Taking into account the drawing on the recto, it is perhaps Hatshepsut who is depicted on the verso, although there is no conclusive proof for it.

III. The writing exercise on the recto

The right half of the recto was used for a writing exercise in linear hieroglyphs. The brief text which has been written down is the first paragraph of the composition known as the ‘Book of Kemit’. The passage is arranged in two columns, from right to left, and it is repeated three times, making a total of six columns side by side (figure 10). There is a peculiar stroke, similar to that used for the cursive abbreviation of signs, that links the upper part of the pair of columns belonging to each of

![Figure 10](image-url)
the three copies. The first pair of columns written were those on the far right, and although there are only traces of the opening sign and three words at the top of the second column, the handwriting is neat, small and tight. The signs of the subsequent columns are larger, disconnected and show imprecision and hesitancy in their writing (figure 11). Two different hands can thus be identified. Due to the difference in quality it seems reasonable to assume that the passage was first written by a master, and then, beside it, an apprentice copied it twice. This writing exercise thus follows the same pattern as the drawing exercise, with master and pupil side by side, the former executing a model on the right hand side and the latter copying it to the left. In the case of the writing exercise, the model was copied not once but twice, the second time showing some improvement in the writing of certain signs, such as the seated man (A1) used as determinative of the word bṣk, the sign for d, and the sign for h. As in the apprentice’s drawing there are blots and inky fingerprints on the pupil’s copy.

Fig. 11. Hieratic text with part of the opening words of Kemit written by the apprentice.

The first paragraph of Kemit consists of an epistolary formula for opening a letter addressed to someone of superior status, with whom the writer has or feels some kind of dependency, and to whom he has to show respect.

It is the servant who says to [his lord that he (the servant) wishes that he (the lord) may live, be prosperous] and be healthy for the length of eternity and forever, as [this (his) humble servant wishes].

Kemit

The Book of Kemit includes epistolary formulae that go back to the end of the Old Kingdom. In the Brooklyn letter from Elephantine mentioning King Neferkare, which was written by a son to his father, the opening formula is the same one: si ḏd ḫr it f mrrw f “nh ṣḏi snb ...36 The Boston jar stand from Naga ed-Deir, dating to the First Intermediate Period, mentions the same king and reproduces the Kemit

36 Brooklyn Museum acc. no. 47.218.157; P. Posener-Kriéger, Les archives du temple funéraire de Néferirkarê-Kakaï (Les papyrus d’Abousir) (BdE 65; Cairo, 1976), II, 454 (she refers to it as 47.218.18).
opening formula exactly: bik ḏḏ ḫr nb.f mrrw.f Ṿnh.f Ṧḏḥ.f snb.f ...


38 Among the letters to the dead, only the one from Saqqara, and now in the Cairo Museum, JE 25075, dating to the end of the Old Kingdom, uses the preposition ḫr instead of n: st ḏḏ ḫr it.f/int ḏḏ ḫr n.sn; A. H. Gardiner and K. Sethe, Egyptian Letters to the Dead Mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms (London, 1928), pl. i. See also the writing board MMA no. 28.9.4; T. G. H. James, The Hekanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents (PMMA 19; New York, 1962), pl. xxx. On the different prepositions following ḏḏ, see H. Jenni, ‘„Sagen zu“ im Ägyptischen’, LingAeg 10 (2002), 239–59. On the construction ḏḏ n, see also A. M. Bakir, Egyptian Epistolography from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-first Dynasty (BdE 48; Cairo, 1970), 47–50.


42 See also O. DeM 1823 (= IFAO 8700); A. Gasse, Catalogue des ostraca littéraires de Deir al-Médina, V: Nos 1775–1873 et 1156 (DFIFAO 44; Cairo, 2005), 88, 91.


44 G. Daressy, Ostraca (CGC Nos 25001–25385; Cairo, 1901), 95 (no. 25367), pl. lii.

45 G. Posener, Catalogue des ostraca hiématiques littéraires de Deir el Médineh, II/3: Nos 1227–1266 (DFIFAO 18/3; Cairo, 1972), vi n. 2. However, see now Gasse, Catalogue des ostraca littéraires de Deir el-Médina, V, 89: ‘La très grande majorité des pièces portant un extrait de la Kemyt n’ont reçu aucune indication ou seulement celle de “GP” pour le “Grand Puits”’.
exceptionally accurate, each passage has a number of small variants. The opening paragraph, however, is written in a remarkably consistent fashion.\textsuperscript{46} It was certainly considered to be a unit in itself, as shown by the Apprentice’s Board and by the small Louvre board, whose author stops at the end of it and leaves the rest of the surface blank.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly O. DM 1824 (= IFAO 6144), has an end-section sign, the arm with the hand down (\textsuperscript{-\textasciitilde} gr\textsuperscript{h}), written in red ink closing it.\textsuperscript{48}

Among the published ostraca of \textit{Kemit}, there is one that seems to repeat the text of each column. The fragment is unfortunately very small, and it appears that it is the same handwriting throughout.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Paleography}

It is generally accepted that the calligraphy of the copies of \textit{Kemit} attempted to keep close to the calligraphy of a supposed original text, and therefore reproduced or imitated an old-fashioned handwriting going back to the First Intermediate Period at least. Nevertheless, there are palaeographic differences among the copies. The palaeography of the Apprentice’s Board is quite similar to that of Carnarvon Tablet no. 26 for example, in the way the signs for \textit{bik}, \textit{dt}, \textit{nHh}, and the letter \textit{h} have been written. However, there are a number of peculiar features that are worth pointing out. (a) The upper part of letter \textit{m} (cols 4 and 5) is quite unusual and closely resembles the way the scribe of O. Brussels E 3208 does his \textit{m} (cols 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 18, 20 and 22). (b) The figure of the seated man used as the determinative for the word \textit{bik}, is quite close to that of O. MMA field no. 35144+36112 recto (cols 1, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 13); it is also similar to the jar stand now in Boston.\textsuperscript{50} (c) And finally, the yodh of col. 4, used to make up the word \textit{im}, resembles the peculiar way the yodh was written on the vase from Dra Abu el-Naga, showing a shape similar to the reed-sign for \textit{m}. The Louvre wooden board and Carnarvon Tablets no. 26 and no. 28 also have the yodh written with the upper part rounded.\textsuperscript{51} Although they do not have exactly the same shape,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item G. Posener, \textit{Catalogue des ostraca hiématiques littéraires de Deir el Médineh}, II/1: Nos 1109 à 1167 (DFIFAO 18/1; Cairo, 1951), pl. i; B. Mathieu, 'La littérature égyptienne sous les Ramsés d’après les ostraca littéraires de Deir el-Médineh', in G. Andreu (ed.), \textit{Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois: La vie en Égypte au temps des pharaons du Nouvel Empire. Actes du colloque organisé par le Musée du Louvre, les 3 et 4 mai 2002} (Louvres conférences et colloques; Paris, 2003), 121.
\item Barbotin, \textit{RdE} 48, 247–50. See also O. DeM 1828 (= IFAO 9464); Gasse, \textit{Catalogue des ostraca littéraires de Deir al-Médina}, V, 98 f. The opposite case is the copy written on a pot found at Dra Abu el-Naga, since its author skipped the first paragraph; Burkard, in Kloth, Pardey, and Pardey (eds), \textit{Es werde niedergelegt als Schriftstück}, 37–48, pls xx–xxii. Thirty metres away from the façade of TT 11 and tomb –399–, at Dra Abu el-Naga, we found a limestone ostracon (10 x 12.8 x 2.5 cm) with the beginning of \textit{Kemit} written on it, \textit{bik \textit{dt} \textit{im} […]}, in black ink, in a vertical column.
\item Gasse, \textit{Catalogue des ostraca littéraires de Deir el-Médina}, V, 92 f. See also IFAO 1113; Posener, \textit{Catalogue des ostraca hiématiques littéraires de Deir el-Médineh}, II/1, pl. i. Note that the author of ostracon MMA field no. 35144 made the end of the first paragraph coincide with the end of the first column. The two first paragraphs of the text were by far the most copied; Gasse, \textit{Catalogue des ostraca hiématiques littéraires de Deir el-Médineh}, V, 86.
\item MFA 13.3791; Simpson, in Simpson and Davies (eds.), \textit{Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan}, 178.
\item Barbotin, \textit{RdE} 48, 249 (col. 5); Burkhard, in Kloth, Pardey and Pardey (eds), \textit{Es werde niedergelegt als Schriftstück}, 43 (col. 4); The Earl of Carnarvon and H. Carter, \textit{Five Years’ Explorations at Thebes: A Record of Work Done 1907–1911} (London, 1912), pls lxxvi–lxxviii.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
this feature might be an indication of a common chronological frame, the end of the Seventeenth or very beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

**Table 1 Palaeography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owl /m/ (G17)</th>
<th>Apprentice Board DAN</th>
<th>MMA 35144+36112</th>
<th>Carnarvon Tablet 26</th>
<th>Brussels E 3208</th>
<th>Cairo JE 56842</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seated man (A1)</th>
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<th>MMA 35144+36112</th>
<th>Carnarvon Tablet 26</th>
<th>Brussels E 3208</th>
<th>Cairo JE 56842</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><img src="image6" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Image" /></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reed /i/ (M17)</th>
<th>Apprentice Board DAN</th>
<th>MMA 35144+36112</th>
<th>Carnarvon Tablet 26</th>
<th>Brussels E 3208</th>
<th>Cairo JE 56842</th>
<th>O. DAN hierat 5</th>
<th>Louvre AF 497</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *Kemit* exercises trained a student to write an archaic style of hieratic or linear hieroglyphs, displaying the text in columns without ligatures and giving the signs an old-fashioned appearance. Aside from these well recognized features, it seems that many exercises were written down quickly and they show that it was not the calligraphy that was being practiced, as Chappaz argues, but rather getting the text correct and giving it an arcane look.

**IV. Drawing and writing**

The Dra Abu el-Naga board was apparently used to train someone in both drawing and writing. The connection between the two activities is a natural one in most literate cultures and ancient Egypt was no exception, since both needed the skilful

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handling of a fine brush.\textsuperscript{53} The combination of drawing and writing side by side, however, is not as frequent as one would expect among the ostraca and boards that have been found so far. The closest parallel is the British Museum board mentioned above. The two boards seem to be of similar nature and had a similar use. In both pieces, the board’s surface was conceived in two halves, with the left half being used for drawing and the right half for writing, although in the Dra Abu el-Naga board, on the right half of both recto and verso there are traces of a squared grid traced in red that was later washed out, indicating that this half could also have once been used for drawing.

There is a striking contrast between the high quality of the drawings and the poor copying of the written signs. Although the drawings preserve the squared grids, making their functional purpose clear, they have been carefully executed and the result is very appealing. On the contrary, the signs on the BM board and the cursive hieroglyphs on the Dra Abu el-Naga board have been written without much care, and despite their simplicity the outcome is mediocre. Indeed the writing exercises seem quite basic compared to the skill needed for the drawings.

The colour of the stucco of the BM board is now uneven, being much darker on the left half. This seems to indicate that the right half was wiped out and reused much more often than the left half. While this feature cannot be appreciated so well on the recto of the Dra Abu el-Naga board, on the verso the right half has been completely wiped out, while the left half preserves the drawing untouched, suggesting that the right half may have been washed more frequently than the left half. This fine drawing seems to have been saved perhaps as an image that was meant to be kept as a good example. It is probably not by chance that the carefully kept and nicely drawn figures all represent the king. In contrast, the basic writing exercises on the right half seem to have been wiped out repeatedly by the apprentice in his learning process, as on a school-slate.

V. Possible owner and original location

While the carefully drawn royal figures of the BM and the Dra Abu el-Naga boards may suggest a master owned them, the writing exercises on both suggest apprentice owners. On the recto of the Dra Abu el-Naga board the frontal drawing of a royal statue, as well as the writing exercise of Kemit, show the hand of a master and the hand of his apprentice next to each other. Indeed, a master would see no point in keeping the copies of his apprentice for himself, but a pupil might keep a record of his learning from his master’s model.\textsuperscript{54}


\textsuperscript{54} In the tomb of Djeserkaraseneb (TT 38), from the reign of Thutmose IV, there is an eloquent image of an apprentice son following his father and master during an administrative duty, holding a writing board by a string that passes through a small hole at one of the board’s sides; N. de G. Davies, Scens from some Theban Tombs (PPT 4; Oxford, 1965), pl. ii; R. M. Janssen and J. J. Janssen, Growing up in Ancient Egypt (London, 1990), 76–8 fig. 31. Due to the missing areas, it cannot be confirmed that the Dra Abu el-Naga board had a hole to be hanged. Concerning the training of sculptors, see Bryan’s discussion of the term hry-q, ‘apprentice’, in Kozloff and Bryan (eds), Egypt’s Dazzling Sun, 77–8 with n. 23.
Most of the pieces of the Dra Abu el-Naga Apprentice’s Board were found in front of Djehuty’s tomb and in an area between its open courtyard and that of tomb -399-. Due to the fact that the board can be dated through stylistic criteria to the reign of Hatshepsut–Thutmose III, it seems reasonable to conclude, among the various possibilities taken into consideration, that the board came from inside the tomb of Djehuty, who was a high official during that time in Thebes and an overseer of craftsmen under Hatshepsut. As such he would have had a professional interest in such pictorial compositions.

It is likely that the board was placed inside the tomb as part of the funerary equipment, perhaps a display of his own education in writing and drawing, and at some point it was thrown out by later occupants of the tomb, or by robbers. This was also the case of the so-called ‘Carnarvon Tablets I and II’, the former containing the famous account of Kamose’s campaign against the Hyksos. The two tablets were found in 1908 at el-Birabi in the courtyard of Tomb 9 dating to the Seventeenth Dynasty ‘among great masses of pottery and mutilated mummies’. When clearing the open courtyard of Puyemre’s tomb, dating to Hatshepsut’s reign, Davies found two fragments of Kemit written on ‘two splinters of one of those boards covered with fine, smooth, ivory-coloured stucco which the Egyptians used as writing-tablets in the Middle Kingdom and subsequent period and buried with their dead, even when not of funerary import’. The hypothesis that such writing boards were originally placed inside tombs is supported by Carter’s discovery in 1911 of a writing tablet inside Tomb 37 at el-Birabi. It was found among the stones covering the floor of the innermost chamber. This board can be dated to the early Eighteenth Dynasty since the chronology of the objects found inside range from Amenhotep I to Thutmose III’s reign. One of its sides had part of Kemit written on it.

VI. Conservation and restoration

The fragments of the board were cleaned and consolidated as they were unearthed. The cleaning was conducted with a very thin brush and a scalpel. The consolidation of the most delicate parts, namely the edges and sides of the fragments, was done with an acrylic resin, Paraloid B72, lessened to 5% in acetone. At the end of the second season, February 2003, the Head of Museums Sector requested the board to be readied for display when the new galleries of the Luxor Museum were opened in the following spring. The joining of the pieces and the reconstruction of the board were carried out on site during the third season, January–February 2004. Two factors complicated the restoration: first that it was drawn on both sides and both should

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55 It has to be remembered that the tomb next to Djehuty’s, –399–, dates also to this period, in view of the pottery found inside the funerary shaft. On the other hand, objects of a slightly later date, such as a linen cloth with the cartouche of Amenhotep II and a reference to his regnal year 2, were found during the excavation of the courtyards (now in Luxor Museum, register no. 1010).


57 Carnarvon and Carter, Five Years’ Explorations at Thebes, 34–5.

58 N. de G. Davies, The Tomb of Puyemre at Thebes (PMMA Robb de Peyster Tytus memorial series 2–3; New York, 1922-3), II, 62, pl. lxxix.a.

59 Carnarvon and Carter, Five Years’ Explorations at Thebes, 77, pl. lv (‘chamber C’).
remain visible, and second that there were large gaps between some of the pieces that could make the finished assemblage very fragile. Since the details of the display were not yet finalised, priority was given to the safety of the object. The pieces were joined and the lacunae infilled with Paraloid and a light epoxy resin stable to temperature variations (Araldit SV 427 for wood), which was later coated with a synthetic stucco that is also soluble in acetone. The modern infills were finished with a slightly different colour and a lesser thickness than the ancient pieces. The total width of the ancient board could easily be deduced from the fragments, but the height was more difficult to ascertain, due to the missing central section. Using the squared grids of the ancient drawings it was concluded that the board would have measured between 31 and 32 cm in height. The smallest grid, on the verso, appears to be the most precise, and on this basis the total height is estimated at 31 cm.

The board was then placed between two thin methacrylate sheets (‘perspex’), slightly larger than the object. The two sheets were attached to each other by four screws at the corners, leaving the sides opened for ventilation. Several silicone spacers were placed on both sides in the areas of the infills to keep the object motionless in the mount while leaving space between the board and the sheets.

Since the restoration was finished and the board displayed inside a glass case in the Luxor Museum (receiving the register no. 1001), four new fragments were found. It was decided not to dismantle the restoration since the new fragments add little to the understanding of the piece. However, it has been possible to incorporate three of the fragments to the photograph, and to the drawing of the board. One fragment was found during the fourth season, with part of the legs of the pharaoh drawn by the master (and the left shoulder of the pharaoh drawn on the back side), and in the fifth season two fragments were found, completing the upper part of the last two columns of text. One other new fragment does not preserve any trace of drawing or writing and therefore cannot be placed precisely and so has been left out of the photograph and drawing. If more fragments are found in the future, the possibility of further conservation treatment will be considered.

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60 It corresponds to one of the board’s sides and, since it preserves linen fibres between the wood and the stucco, it may come from the middle of the left side, i.e. near the waist of the left standing royal figure.