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# **Ancient Egyptian military matters, priestly responsibilities, a prestigious local deity: evidence from Twenty-first Dynasty personal correspondence.**

Susan Thorpe

## **Abstract**

The personal letters from ancient Egypt can be seen as primary sources of social and historical information. This is evidenced by the letters in this study of personal correspondence from the Twenty-first Dynasty, the suggested provenance of which is an extensive archive from the fortress of el-Hibeh. The study of these letters will show how they give insight into the lives and personalities of the 'god's father priests' and the diverse responsibilities evidenced in addition to their priestly duties. From the perspective of religious belief it will discuss how they reveal the presence and importance of an otherwise obscure deity known as 'Horus of the Camp' or 'He of the Camp'. It will argue and confirm how, with regard to the above aspects, the letters from ancient Egypt are an important primary source of additional knowledge.

## **Introduction**

Prompted by a person's need to communicate in writing to a recipient at a distance, over the years private letters have been an important source of social and historical information. The personal correspondence from ancient Egypt exemplifies the extra insight from such letters. The following study focuses on a selection from the Twenty-first Dynasty (c.1070–945 BC), which form part of an extensive archive of papyri. Firstly, it will argue the importance of their content – the reasons for writing – in extending our knowledge of military matters, the priestly responsibilities related to these matters and the associated daily life issues. Secondly, it will look at the evidence they contain regarding the existence of, and the belief in, a deity known as Horus of the Camp or He of the Camp. The reference to 'Camp' has been seen to indicate the military fortress at el-Hibeh.

The analysis of each letter, based on translations of the primary sources and referencing of secondary sources,<sup>1</sup> will initially give an overview of content rather than

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<sup>1</sup> These primary and secondary sources are fully referenced for each letter.

a full translation of the complete text. Specific transliteration and translation of words and phrases will be included in the analysis in confirmation and discussion of the content. Where appropriate it will highlight possible differences in interpreting the transcription/translation that may, for example, affect the letter's message, the information regarding writer and recipient or the meaning of specific words in the context of the letter's topic

The senders and/or recipients of the first five letters to be discussed give themselves the title 'god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp"'.<sup>2</sup> They are discussed under the headings 'Military Matters' and 'Priestly Responsibilities'. The 'He' of this association has been attested as Horus. Herihor, the chief priest of Amun, who also assumed the title Army-leader and Viceroy of Nubia,<sup>3</sup> is depicted in a relief at Karnak in the temple of Khonsu making an offering to a god named as 'Horus of the Camp'<sup>4</sup> showing he was Horus as being Lord of the Promontory/*ḥrw nb t'-dhnt*.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the armies and principal temple Herihor had control of all the main areas of administration in Upper Egypt, the economy and legal affairs. In the context of his Horus offering this status indicates his correct identification.

Two oracle petitions found at Nag el-Deir are specifically addressed to 'Horus of the Camp' with the connotation 'He-of-the-Camp'. Nag el-Deir is an important ancient Egyptian cemetery site located on the east bank of the Nile River in Upper Egypt, near ancient Thinis (near Abydos). The two papyri constitute a pair of complementary petitions. Although oracle petitions written upon papyrus are known from this period, these two are the only ones which have actually been preserved.<sup>6</sup>

Excavations at el-Hibeh have uncovered the remains of the fortress's mudbrick wall and the remains of a temple bearing the inscriptions of Shoshenq I and Osorkon I. So far no evidence has been found of a temple specifically dedicated to 'Horus of the Camp' whose priestly officials are the writers of these letters.<sup>7</sup> Apart from these pieces

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<sup>2</sup> See pages 30–39 for these letters.

<sup>3</sup> Kitchen 1986: 248.

<sup>4</sup> The Epigraphic Survey: 1994: Pl.14.

<sup>5</sup> Faulkner 2010: 162.

<sup>6</sup> Ryholt 1993: 189–190.

<sup>7</sup> Redmount 2001.

of correspondence, and the previous references, as Ryholt comments with regard to the background and history of this deity 'To say that Horus of the Camp is obscure is to put it mildly'.<sup>8</sup>

## Background

Looking at the el-Hibeh location from an historical perspective, the early years of the Twenty-first Dynasty saw a divided structure of power develop. Smendes I, situated in Lower Egypt at Tanis, was recognised as pharaoh of all Egypt. This recognition was based on an understanding that he in turn recognise the authority of the line of the Theban priesthood in Upper Egypt in their role as High Priest of Amun and military commander of Upper Egypt. It was a reciprocal arrangement in which 'one half of Egypt (Tanis) ruled the whole realm only by kind permission of the other half (Thebes)'.<sup>9</sup> The boundary point between the two and the northern base of Theban rule was at el-Hibeh. Situated at a strategic point on the Nile some 20 miles south of Heracleopolis, it became a fortress that could stand guard over southward moving river traffic. The location of the correspondents and incidents in these letters is referred to as *t' dhnt* 'the Promontory'. This description, in line with the geography of el-Hibeh, led to Spiegelberg citing it as the provenance of this archive of letters.<sup>10</sup> However, other locations are thought to be possible. Müller has presented an argument for el-Ahaiwah as an alternative. He also references Vernus' argument of el-Mesheikh and the 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome as that of Lefèvre.<sup>11</sup> Having considered these alternative views I have chosen to reference el-Hibeh in the context of this study.

The archive of letters is spread across collections in several countries and continents,<sup>12</sup> and gives some insight into a deity known as 'Horus of the Camp'. In 1917 Spiegelberg published 16 letters from the considerable number of texts and fragments held by the Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire in Strasbourg, France.<sup>13</sup> In 2006 Müller presents his translation, with footnote comments but without

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<sup>8</sup> Ryholt 1993: 195.

<sup>9</sup> Kitchen 1986: 256, §214.

<sup>10</sup> Spiegelberg 1917: 1.

<sup>11</sup> Müller 2009: 256–259.

<sup>12</sup> For full details see Müller 2009: 255 n.42.

<sup>13</sup> Spiegelberg 1917: 1–30.

transcription, of nine of these letters.<sup>14</sup> With regard to social and historical analysis, a study of these letters was initiated by an international group of researchers. An article by Müller identifies the members of the group and presented a 'preliminary overview of the current state of our research, including an outlook on the socio-cultural information to be gained from the archive'.<sup>15</sup> The history of the site is discussed by Lefèvre who comments on the diverse topics found in the letters and the information provided regarding the people and their background. In a further article he considers the content of the papyri and their provenance.<sup>16</sup> This study addresses the content of this correspondence to evidence the administrative hierarchy as well as further confirmation of the wide-ranging duties expected of the god's father priest and temple scribe of 'He of the Camp'.

### **Military Matters**

The following letters evidence that priestly responsibilities were not restricted to specific religious duties but could also be related to military requirements such as the removal of people from a house, the arrival of horses, the need to deal severely with some warriors.

This first letter is from Horpenese<sup>17</sup> regarding a message delivered by a weaver named Besbes, which has instructed him to remove all the people belonging to a captain/military leader who are in the house of Saupaankh. Horpenese writes that he has sent someone to carry out the request and advises his recipient that he himself has now come north to the Promontory, where he will stay until tomorrow.

While its actual text is missing the initial greeting appears to be in the simple sender *n*/'to' recipient style, which came to replace the more elaborate introductory phrases. It does, however, invoke Amun-Re, King of the Gods, your good lord, followed by a complimentary preamble mentioning forms of Amun. In the style of the Twenty-first Dynasty the sender calls upon Amun-Re-Harakhti when he rises and sets, who is *hr-*

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<sup>14</sup> Müller 2006: 330–339.

<sup>15</sup> Müller 2009: 251–264.

<sup>16</sup> Lefèvre 2006: 32–47.

<sup>17</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Strasburg* 31, Spiegelberg 1917: 6–7; Müller 2006: 335; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 198–199; Thorpe 2021; Wente 1990: 206, Letter 334.

*jb*/'content of heart, the *ntr* ʕ/'great god'.<sup>18</sup> The blessing is also consistent with the Twenty-first Dynasty, being introduced by *jmj n.k* and wishing the recipient a long life, a good and great old age, and many numerous favours in the presence of the gods and men every day.<sup>19</sup>

The sender describes himself as *jt-ntr hm-ntr sš hwt*/'the god's father priest and scribe of the temple' and that he is Horpenese of *pn pʔ jhʔ*/'He of the Camp'. The upper right of the recto of the original *P. Strasburg 31* containing the full name of the recipient is missing.<sup>20</sup> A fragment was subsequently identified by Černý as a match to this *lacunae*, so that the full name and title can be discerned as the scribe and priest *Ns-pʔ-kʔw-m-Kmt*/'Nespakauemkemet'.<sup>21</sup> The address line contains the concluding words 'of the Camp' which implies he was also in the same priestly service. The connotation 'He of the Camp' in this, and the other letters discussed, is seen as being a reference to Horus as the local god of el-Hibeh.<sup>22</sup> This is also shown by the correspondents' names which are compounded with Horus. In this instance *Hr-pn-ws*/Horpenese. Additionally, Ryholt notes that He-of-the-Camp does not refer to Amun, that the phrase *tʔy-k nb nfr*/'your good lord' in the introductory greeting is added 'only when the god invoked in the greeting is not identical with the god of the writer',<sup>23</sup> evidence that the sender was serving a local god.

Horpenese writes that he has received the message in the hand of Besbes, a *šhty*/'weaver'.<sup>24</sup> The reason for sending it by **his** hand is not given. Possibly he was just someone available to the sender at the time. The letter requests him to *wjʔ rmt nb*/'remove all the people' belonging to the military leader who are in the house belonging to Saupaankh. There is no reason given for the request nor an indication of why they were there. They are described as being *n pʔ hʔ(w)ty*/'of the leader'. This was a general military connotation, used in a descriptive sense rather than as an indication of rank, and signified anyone who held a military command.<sup>25</sup> This would suggest that

<sup>18</sup> Bakir 1970: 57–58.

<sup>19</sup> Bakir 1970: 63–64.

<sup>20</sup> Lefèvre 2006: 45, Fig. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Müller 2006: 255 n.42.

<sup>22</sup> Ryholt 1993: 193–198, Müller 2006: 332.

<sup>23</sup> Ryholt 1993: 196.

<sup>24</sup> Hannig 2003: 751.

<sup>25</sup> Schulman 1964: 49, 116.

the people in the house were soldiers. The sender does not name their leader and Saupaankh's identity (his name translates as *s<sup>3</sup>-p<sup>3</sup>-nh* 'belongs to the living')<sup>26</sup> and the location of the house are not provided.<sup>27</sup> Horpenese presumably has this information as he is able to get their removal, confirming in his response that he will *ptr n<sup>3</sup> rmt jw dj šm twr r wj<sup>3</sup> m p<sup>3</sup> pr* 'See to those people for I have sent (caused to send) someone to remove them from the house'.<sup>28</sup> He then notes that he will now go *ht n dhnt* 'north to the Promontory' and will *h<sup>3</sup> m dw<sup>3</sup>t* 'stay tomorrow'. The action that has been requested and undertaken shows that in his role as 'god's father priest and temple scribe' rather than being involved in a religious duty Horpenese was expected to be responsible for enforcing his authority in resolving a military issue.

The second piece of correspondence from Horpenese<sup>29</sup> is in reply to a message from the commander of shield-bearers Shepti, telling him he has taken note of his message which has come by the hand of Horpesh. Shepti has told Horpenese to let him know whether any horses have come to him. Horpenese writes that he has not received any, but that when they have arrived he will write again at which time Shepti should send him some men. He tells Shepti to treat severely the warriors living at the Promontory. He orders Shepti to send a watch onto the ramparts because he has received an order not to send anybody into the countryside.

As in the previous letter Horpenese refers to himself as *jt-ntr hm-ntr sš hwt* 'god's father priest and scribe of the temple' of *pn p<sup>3</sup> jh<sup>3</sup>* 'He of the Camp' again using the words 'your good lord' in his initial greeting which is in the *n* 'to' recipient form. His complimentary preamble follows the same style and content except the words *hr-jb* 'content of heart' have been omitted.

Horpenese's recipient, Shepti, is given the title *hry-krw* 'commander of shield - bearers'. The term 'shield-bearer' has been designated as one connected with chariot personnel, but as the instances of a named shield-bearer are few, it has been

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<sup>26</sup> Ranke 1935: 302, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Müller 2006: 335 n.25, 2009: 258 suggests that the house in question was that of General Piankhy.

<sup>28</sup> Lines 10–11.

<sup>29</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Strasburg* 33, Spiegelberg 1917: 7–8; Müller 2006: 336; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 200; Thorpe 2021; Wente 1990: 207, Letter 335.

suggested that this did not refer to a rank but to a task taken on by one of the charioteers.<sup>30</sup> This does not seem consistent with Shepti being ‘commander of shield-bearers’, indicating ‘shield-bearer’ as actually being a designated title. The few specific references to ‘shield-bearer’ noted are from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties,<sup>31</sup> so this could be an indication of a differing status occurring in the Twenty-first Dynasty.<sup>32</sup>

No title is given to the bearer of the message, Horpesh. The name is again compounded with Horus, so it is likely that he was also associated with the god’s temple. Horpesh addresses Shepti in the brief *n/*‘to’ recipient style. His response to Shepti’s message *h’b nj wnn htr ‘nn r tnl* ‘write me as soon as horses come to you’ is in the negative *bw-pwy wn htr jj n njl* ‘not any horses have come to us’. Shepti and Horpesh both refer to the horses as being *htr* ‘a yoke’ or ‘team’ appropriate to the requirements of a charioteer rather than *ssmt* ‘horse’. It is when they have arrived that Horpesh will write to Shepti to send him *nhy rmt* ‘some men’. The men that Horpesh asks to be sent are not given any particular military connotation, but this request combined with the anticipated arrival of horses implies that they are connected either with stabling and upkeep or with actual charioteer duties (or both). The military context of the letter is continued with Horpesh’s instruction to Shepti to deal severely with *n’ h’wty nšw nt(y) hms dhnt* ‘those warriors of Neshyet who are living on the Promontory’.<sup>33</sup> This could be a reference to a location near present-day Sohag on the west of the Nile. Shepti is not told why they are there or the reason for Horpesh’s request. There appears to be a threat of some kind at the Promontory since Horpesh instructs Shepti to send a *rs-tp r n’ sbty* ‘watch onto the ramparts’ because he has received an order<sup>34</sup> *m dj hn rmt nb sht jw-f nht jw-f shty jw-f rmt wndw nbt* ‘Do not send anybody (to the) countryside, be he a strong man, be he a weaver, be he any person’.<sup>35</sup> Müller has suggested in this context ‘bird catcher’ as the translation for *shty*.<sup>36</sup> This

<sup>30</sup> Schulman 1964: 67–68.

<sup>31</sup> Schulman 1964: 162, 477, 478.

<sup>32</sup> Chevereau 1981 sees it in this context to still have the generic meaning of ‘charioteer’; Antony 1985: 270.

<sup>33</sup> *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>34</sup> See Jansen-Winkel 2007: 200 n.v.5.

<sup>35</sup> *Verso* Lines 5–6.

<sup>36</sup> Müller 2006: 336, n.33.

seems an appropriate alternative in this instance as someone of that trade would be more likely to need to go outside into the country.

This piece of correspondence appears as confirmation of the military presence at the Promontory. Horpenese's authority over Shepti and his requirement for horses and men again evidences the involvement of the Horus-of-the-Camp temple personnel in both military and civil administration. An actual hierarchy is unclear. While the order Horpenese has received and passed on to Shepti is presumably from a superior, there is no indication of that person's location or whether he is of a religious or military status.

### **Summary**

These letters have provided the evidence that priestly responsibilities were not restricted to specific religious related duties. The first letter is concerned with the authoritative removal of people from a house. In the second letter from Horpenese his recipient is a shield-bearer and he is asking about the arrival of horses and is also instructing his recipient to deal severely with some warriors. These examples are able to provide a primary source of the fact that priestly duties could additionally include a connection to military matters.

### **Priestly responsibilities**

In contrast to the previous military related duties the following correspondence is concerned with societal and daily life issues, the following of a fowler downstream, the apprehension of runaway servants – again evidencing their responsibilities outside specific priestly duties.

Due to the *lacunae* positive interpretation of the greeting for the initial address in these priestly responsibilities letters has not always been possible. The second letter is in the brief 'to' recipient style and the letter to Horkhebe is in the form *nty jw.f*/'which is to'. A complimentary preamble appears in four of the five pieces of personal correspondence. The wording in three instances has 'when he rises and sets'. Its inclusion appears as one of courtesy towards colleagues rather than of deference.

In this third piece of correspondence Horpenese is the recipient.<sup>37</sup> The sender cannot be identified due to the *lacunae* in the greeting and in the subsequent address lines. He writes that his mistress has sent a fowler of migratory birds downstream, to follow other fowlers to where Horpenese is. Horpenese is told to put these fowlers into the arriving fowler's charge but not to let him leave before he has provided him with other men who were in his charge before. It is only then that Horpenese should send him on as fast as possible and note in a letter, which the fowler should bring, the date when he dispatches him. While Horpenese is still addressed as *pn p³ jh³* 'He of the Camp', in this instance the Horus bird determinative has been added to emphasise the connection. He once more refers to Amun as *t'y-f nb ntr* 'your good lord' indicating a focus on another deity.

The complimentary preamble has content similar to the previous letters, except that the blessing is introduced by *rdj.f n.k* rather than *jmi n.k*. The only information regarding the sender is that he refers to his mistress as being the *dw³-ntr n jmn* 'Votaress of Amun', indicating a location at Thebes. The *w* 'fowler' is named as Horiutowy. Horpenese is told he has been *jw-f m h d r p³-nty tw-k jm m-s³ n³ wh' gšw* 'sent downstream to where you are, following the fowlers of migratory birds'.<sup>38</sup> As soon as Horiutowy arrives they must be put in his charge. Additionally, Horpenese has to *dj n-f rmṯ š'w wpwt n³ rmṯ mt wnw m-dj f 'n* 'Give to him men worthy of the work, the same trustworthy men who were in his charge before'.<sup>39</sup> To advise his recipient when Horiutowy should be there, the sender notes the date that the fowler left, which was *³bd 2 prt sw 15* 'second month of winter day 15'. He tells Horpenese to *mtw-k jr-f n sš n š't t'y-k n³y jw k rdt jnj f sw* 'put in writing in your letter which you shall have him bring'<sup>40</sup> the day of his departure. It seems the sender wanted to be able to judge when the fowler would be back and perhaps note there was no unnecessary delay on the way. The date given for the fowler's departure reflects the time of year for fowling, but the reason for such a request to be sent by the divine votaress of Amun is not stated. It is possible the fowler's catch was needed for provisioning of offerings, and the

<sup>37</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Strasburg* 25, Spiegelberg 1917: 11–12; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 202; Thorpe 2021; Wente 1990: 207–208, Letter 336.

<sup>38</sup> Line 5.

<sup>39</sup> Line 6.

<sup>40</sup> *Verso* Lines 2–3.

additional men for temple or estate duties. The fact that reference is made to a previous assignment of men of this calibre to Horiutowy means there was on-going contact between the sender in Thebes and his recipient – a further indication of Horpenese's administrative non-priestly responsibilities within the overall bureaucratic hierarchy.

The fourth letter is a brief communication addressed to Horpenese by Pashed of the Estate of Amun-Re.<sup>41</sup> He asks that Horpenese look for some servants belonging to a god's father priest named Padiamon, who have fled to the Promontory. He tells Horpenese that when he has apprehended them he is to hand them over to Padiamon's servant who will take them back south.

The greeting is in the straightforward *n/*'to' recipient form and the following complimentary preamble follows the usual style but omits the reference to Re-Harakhti. The sender Pashed addresses Horpenese as 'He of the Camp'. He refers to himself as being the scribe of the *šḥn n pr jmn-r/*'business of the Estate of Amun-Re', and as *jmj-r-mš/*'belonging to the general'. He demands that Horpenese act immediately in finding the servants who are here referred to as *sdm*-s, literally 'one who hears the call' rather than the usual *b'k*. This suggests that their duties were priestly related which could explain Pashed's urgency. No reference is made to their number or the reason for their flight, which he states is to the Promontory where Horpenese is. It was possibly to escape from the priestly jurisdiction of their Theban master in the south and cross over into the northern domain of the reigning pharaoh.<sup>42</sup> When Horpenese has found them he is to *šfd tw/*'apprehend them' and hand them over to *p'y-f sdm-š' r rdt t'y-f st n f r rsy 's/*'This servant in order that he take them south speedily'.<sup>43</sup> The name of Padiamon's servant is incomplete in the original papyrus, only *jmn* is readable. However, a fragment, so far unpublished, has enabled a completion of the name to read *nfr-jmn/*'Nafiramun'.<sup>44</sup> Pashed's location and titles

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<sup>41</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Strasburg* 26, Spiegelberg 1917: 9–10; Müller 2006: 336–337; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 201; Thorpe 2021; Wente 1990: 206, Letter 333.

<sup>42</sup> See Müller 2009: 261 regarding an alternative to this argument – in discussing the different site to el-Hibeh (el-Ahaiwah) noted previously, he suggests the runaways were heading for the oases.

<sup>43</sup> *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>44</sup> Müller 2009: 256, no. 58.

indicate his superior rank. The reference to being the scribe of both administration and the general suggests his status as being in the personal service of the High Priest of Amun/Commander in Chief at Karnak.

The content of this piece of correspondence evidences Horpenese's place in the administrative hierarchy as well as further confirmation of the wide-ranging duties expected of the god's father priest and temple scribe of 'He of the Camp'. In this case it is the policing role of apprehending runaway servants and handing them over to the servant sent for them. This letter from Pashed reflects an efficient means of communication which enabled him to know where the servants could be found.

Another god's father priest and temple scribe of *pn p' jh'j* 'He of the Camp', Horkhebe, is the recipient of a fifth piece of correspondence from a god's father priest of Onouris named Bakhonsu.<sup>45</sup> He tells Horkhebe that a servant named Bakenhor belonging to Ankhef has run away and is in the Promontory. Bakhonsu writes that he has sent Ankhef to get him back, and that Horkhebe is to send one of his servants in pursuit of him. Horkhebe is to have him apprehended, brought to him and hand him over to Ankhef. The initial greeting in the sender to recipient style, uses the words *nty jw.f n/* 'which is to', and there is no complimentary preamble. Both the sender and recipient are given the same title in the initial greeting of 'god's father priest', so the relative status of the correspondents is uncertain. The lack of any elaborate greeting suggests that the recipient is of an inferior status to the sender, Bakhonsu, who is of the temple of Onouris – the Egyptian Anhur, the god of war and hunting. The centre of his cult was at Abydos<sup>46</sup> which implies this is from where Bakhonsu is writing. He advises Horkhebe that *b'k-n-ḥr p'y b'k 'nh.f* 'Bakenhor, this servant of Ankhef' who has run away is *m-ḥnw t'-dhnt p'y-k dmj/* 'in the Promontory your town'. Bakhonsu specifically refers to the Promontory (el-Hibeh) as *p'y.k dmj/* 'your town', in this way confirming not just the location of Horkhebe but also of the other correspondents with his title 'He of the Camp'.<sup>47</sup> He tells Horkhebe *ḏd-w-j sw p' pr n 'y p' rḥtyw/* 'I am told he is in the

<sup>45</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Strasburg* 39, Spiegelberg 1917: 20–21; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 203–204; Thorpe 2021; Wente 1990: 206, Letter 332.

<sup>46</sup> Wilkinson 2003: 118.

<sup>47</sup> As noted previously see Müller 2009: 256–259 for detailed discussion of possible locations other than el-Hibeh.

house of Aay the laundryman'. Horkhebe is to have a *šms*/'follower' go after him and *jmj šfd sw mtk djt jnj tw f m-bʾ-k*/'have him apprehended and brought before you'.<sup>48</sup> He can then hand him over to Ankhef.

The correspondence reflects an overall hierarchy of the people involved, which runs from Horkhebe to Ankhef, who is responsible to him, to Bakenhor who is the servant of Ankhef. The lower status of Bakenhor is emphasised by the fact that he has taken refuge in the house of a *rḥtyw*/'laundryman'. The details in this letter again indicate the Promontory as being the destination for a runaway servant. It confirms once more that to organise the apprehension of such a fugitive is the responsibility of the god's father priest of 'He (Horus) of the Camp' and hand him over to a person sent to him by the writer of the letter. The fact that Bakhonsu has been informed of the servant's whereabouts again indicates on-going communication between the administration in a southern location and the Promontory in the north.

## Summary

Following the evidence of involvement in military matters these letters have again confirmed that priestly responsibilities were not restricted to specific religious duties. Individually they have given insight into the lives of the High Priest and god's father priest of 'He of the Camp'. They have revealed aspects of their relationships, together with personal information and diverse societal issues, confirming that their responsibilities involved other than any specific religious duties.

The request that Horpenese, the recipient of the third letter, has to fulfil provided an insight into an occupation of daily life – the following of migratory birds by fowlers downstream. It once again showed a non-religious responsibility. Horpenese has to put them into the charge of the fowler who has followed them downstream. He also has to send back with the fowler the same 'trustworthy' men he took charge of once before. It also indicated, for reasons not stated, the involvement of the divine votaress of Amun in the request.

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<sup>48</sup> Verso Line 2.

In the fourth and fifth letters a societal problem of runaway servants was the issue. Horopenese has to find servants who have fled to the Promontory and hand them over to their owner's servant who will take them back south. A further runaway issue regarding a single servant is addressed to the god's father priest Horkhebe who is told to apprehend and enable the return of this servant who is also thought to have found refuge at the Promontory. The reason for writing, which has prompted these two letters, suggests the Promontory as a destination for runaways such as this because of the position of el-Hibeh on the boundary to the North. The letters also reflect a reliable means of communication between the North and South. Lefèvre notes Horopenese and Horkhebe as being '*contemporains l'un de l'autre car plusieurs papyrus les mentionnent tous deux*', (*P. Louvre 25361/P. Berlin P8538*) but adds so far no information has been found regarding a relationship or their family background.<sup>49</sup>

### **A Prestigious Local Deity**

These first five pieces of personal correspondence have reflected the existence of the local god 'He of the Camp' and given insight into the religious personnel in his service and their responsibilities. The three following letters provide additional evidence of the belief in the divine presence of this deity and his ability to resolve personal issues. Analysis of the texts indicates the writer as Menkheperre. Their content concerns himself and his brother Masaharta. They both held office as High Priests of Amun during the Twenty-first Dynasty.

The beginning of this first letter is missing but allows the name of Masaharta to be discerned, with the attribution the *b'k*'servant' of 'He of the Camp'.<sup>50</sup> The letter is an appeal from the sender to the deity 'He of the Camp' to cure Masaharta of an illness and listen to the latter's plea. The sender asks that he (Masaharta) may be preserved, made well and given back, in response to the sender's petition, in the same way that previous requests for help have been granted.

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<sup>49</sup> Lefèvre 2008: 114 and n.33.

<sup>50</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Strasburg 21*, Spiegelberg 1917: 1–14; Müller 2006: 339; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 205–206; Thorpe 2021; Wente: 1990: 208, Letter 337.

The extant evidence for the chronology of the early Twenty-first Dynasty indicates Masaharta as High Priest of Amun in Thebes, the son of Pinudjem I and the brother of Menkheperre.<sup>51</sup> The sender notes that Masharta is *m-bʿh pn-pʿ-jhʿy pʿy.j nbʿ* 'in the presence of He of the Camp, my good lord',<sup>52</sup> using the Horus determinative to indicate that it is a divine presence and a similar status for his 'good Lord'. He refers to Masaharta as *pʿy.f šrj pʿy.f shprlʿ* 'his son' and **his** ward' and asks *mtw.f šd snw pʿy.bʿk sʿwtʿ* 'that **he** may preserve a brother, this servant of **his**'.<sup>53</sup> In each case the pronoun and possessive pronouns have the Horus determinative to signify a divine attribution, and the letter's interest lies both in the fact that it is addressed to a local deity and that it does not refer to him directly but in the third person. This suggests a certain deference, and the letter's address line reads to 'the majesty of this noble god He of the Camp, the great god residing in...', (the final words are missing), which appears commensurate with a local god of a prestigious nature.

The reference to 'brother' indicates that the sender was in fact Masaharta's brother Menkheperre, who was to become High Priest after the former's death.<sup>54</sup> The appeal to the local god 'He of the Camp' indicates the sender's presence there as well as being the place where Masaharta has been taken ill. From the historical perspective it has been suggested that Masaharta may not have survived the illness referred to in the correspondence, which precipitated a 'hiatus period'<sup>55</sup> resulting in Menkheperre's succession. The style and mode of address used for this petitioning, combined with the content, have resulted in an unusual piece of correspondence directed specifically at a deity.

The second piece of correspondence is a fragmentary letter from Menkheperre – only some of the greeting remains and a few broken lines of the content.<sup>56</sup> While the initial greeting is incomplete, it has been argued as being the same wording as the address line of the previous letter.<sup>57</sup> The reason for his writing appears to be a confirmation

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<sup>51</sup> See Kitchen 1986: 4–5; Lefèvre 2006: 40–42.

<sup>52</sup> Lines 4–5.

<sup>53</sup> Line 8 and Verso Lines 1 and 2.

<sup>54</sup> Kitchen 1986: 4; Lefèvre 2006: 41.

<sup>55</sup> Kitchen 1986: 259–260.

<sup>56</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P. Moscow 2660*, Posener 1982: 134–135; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 205–206; Thorpe 2021; Wente 1990: 208, Letter 338.

<sup>57</sup> Posener 1982: 136; Wente 1990: 208, Letter 338.

that *sdm-j hr p3 n n3 shr nfr j-sr-f* 'k3-jl' 'I have taken note of the good decisions...which he has proclaimed as apt for me'.<sup>58</sup> The 'He' has the Horus determinative consistent with the sender directly addressing the same local deity 'He of the Camp'. The style of greeting is that of the basic sender/recipient, but in this case the formula is inverted to recipient/sender. This is noted as being a rare occurrence and an 'abbreviated variant' of the form used in addressing superiors.<sup>59</sup> Menkheperre gives himself the titles of '[beloved] son, the high priest of [Amun]-Re King of the Gods', the *jmj-r-mš' smsw* 'General-in-Chief of Upper and Lower Egypt', who is *h3(w)tyw mš' 3'* 'leader of the great armies of all Egypt'. As noted by Posener<sup>60</sup> references to the military title of other High Priests of Amun have mentioned a command only of the army of Upper Egypt not of the whole country. Given the additional titles that Menkheperre attributes to himself, his use of the recipient/sender style of address shows that he considered his recipient to have an even higher status. This respect is commensurate with his letter again being directed to the local deity personally, and this argument would be in line with the indication that the previous letter was also written by Menkheperre.<sup>61</sup> The Horus determinative in this piece of correspondence has been seen to refer to Amun.<sup>62</sup> However, its presence as a determinative in the title of Horpenese<sup>63</sup> indicates an association with Horus as the 'He' of the Camp. Also, as noted in the previous piece of correspondence, it is the determinative for 'He of the Camp' and 'good Lord' indicating Horus as the divine presence, and the pronoun and possessive pronouns again have the Horus determinative to signify the local deity. The continued interpretation of the determinative in this letter as Horus rather than Amun therefore seems to be appropriate.

It has been noted that Pinudjem I, father to Masaharta and Menkheperre, had his seat for a time at el-Hibeh, and that Menkheperre would have done likewise.<sup>64</sup> Masaharta's presence at the fortress was suggested by the previous letter, and building activity by Menkheperre indicates his presence there. Excavations at the site have confirmed

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<sup>58</sup> Line 5.

<sup>59</sup> Bakir 1970: 45, 51.

<sup>60</sup> Posener 1982: 136.

<sup>61</sup> On this point I agree with Posener's (1982: 137–138) argument, his 'idée pour le moins audacieuse'.

<sup>62</sup> Wente 1990: 209, Letter 338.

<sup>63</sup> Line 1.

<sup>64</sup> Lull 2009: 242–243; Kitchen 1986: 259.

bricks stamped with his name showing he was instrumental in the building of its massive town wall.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, given the strategic importance of el-Hibeh with its military camp, and Menkheperre's additional title of General-in-Chief, it could indicate this was a primary place of residence for him. This is also evidenced by the words of the 'Banishment Stela',<sup>66</sup> which states how Menkheperre was 'summoned to Thebes by Amun himself to come South in valour and victory to pacify the land...'<sup>67</sup> This need could have been prompted by the death of Masaharta from the illness which was the subject of the previous first letter discussed, and confirms that Menkheperre was at a location in the North. If, as appears the case, he was stationed at el-Hibeh, this can be seen as substantiation of the argument that he was petitioning his local deity, He of the Camp, regarding Masaharta and himself.

Although these two letters are incomplete due to the *lacunae* in each, an analysis of the content has provided an insight into the lives of these two High Priests of Amun, as well as adding credence to current historical knowledge of this period. However, most importantly they are characterised both by the fact that the sender, who is a High Priest of Amun and General-in-Chief of Upper and Lower Egypt and leader of the great armies of Egypt, is giving higher status to a local deity about whom evidence is scarce, and by their showing the continuing belief that a god could be petitioned in this way.

A further letter from Menkheperre is addressed to the priest and scribe of 'He of the Camp', Horkhebe, rather than directly to the deity himself.<sup>68</sup> It is regarding a dispute between a commander and his brothers. Menkheperre tells his recipient to stand them before 'He of the Camp' so that he can settle the matter which is regarding the *pš*/'apportionment/sharing' of a servant. The identity of Menkheperre is revealed by the address line. In the initial greeting of the letter he does not state his name, only his title as 'High Priest of Amun, King of the Gods', and the style is in the direct *n*/'to' recipient form. Menkheperre tells Horkhebe that as soon as the letter *spr r-k jw-k djt ḥ' pḥ ḥ't ʕ-f-n-ḥrj nḥy-f snw m-bḥ pn-pḥ-jhḥy*/'reaches you, you shall cause to stand the

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<sup>65</sup> Černý 1970: 652; Kitchen 1986: 269–270; for further information, see Redmount reports 2001 onwards.

<sup>66</sup> Stele Louvre 256.

<sup>67</sup> Lull 2007: 241–242; Kitchen 1986: 260 and 260 n. 93.

<sup>68</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *P.Louvre* E25359, Müller 2006: 338; Jansen-Winkel 2007: 204.

commander Ajafnehor and his brothers before “He of the Camp”.<sup>69</sup> The title of commander suggests a military rank which would be in line with a location at a military camp such as el-Hibeh. No names are given for the brothers. The fact that Menkheperre does not include any complimentary preamble, and the use of just his title in the greeting gives an added authority to his directive to the local priest. The matter is regarding the *pš n b'k* ‘apportionment of a servant’ and they are to stand before ‘He of the Camp’ so that he will *jrj p'y pš* ‘make the apportionment’. His final words to Horkhebe are *mꜣ hꜣb mt.k* ‘see your precise instruction’. Given that the commander and his brothers are at el-Hibeh, then Menkheperre’s knowledge of the dispute would be possible by his own presence there, as indicated by the previous correspondence.

Although brief, the letter is another confirmation of the existence and importance of this local deity. It has also shown the continuing belief that a god could be petitioned in this way. From a social aspect it has also provided an example of the kind of problem occurring for a family in their everyday life. It has shown the involvement of a high-ranking person such as Menkheperre in the kind of familial issue that occurred amongst the people under his command.

## Summary

The importance of the final three letters involving the High Priests of Amun at Thebes – Masaharta and Menkheperre – lies in both the religious and personal information they contain, together with the fact that they were written by Menkheperre himself. The first two are addressed specifically to the local deity ‘He of the Camp’ which underlines the status of this local deity and emphasises the ongoing custom of appeal to a god to alleviate adverse circumstances. The first request involving a cure for Masaharta’s ill-health provides personal information regarding this high official not found elsewhere. In the second letter the sender has used the inverted style, placing his recipient first to indicate his deference – further evidence concerning the status of the local deity. There is also historical relevance in its confirmation of the Banishment Stela as to Menkheperre’s location in the North.

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<sup>69</sup> Lines 3–4.

In the final piece of correspondence it is the god's father priest (again Horkhebe) who petitions the local deity directly to settle a disagreement. The nature of the problem – a dispute between family members regarding the sharing of a servant – gives insight into the problems that could arise in the domestic daily life of a military family. It evidences that a commander with the status of Menkhperre saw it necessary to involve himself.

## Overall conclusion

There has been considerable interest in the study and discussion of ancient Egyptian personal correspondence, with the focus on certain aspects of the letters. For example – those discovered amongst a collection, those looking at a collection within a certain timeframe, related to a specific grouping, a specific topic, a single letter, structure and wording – such as the following representative examples.<sup>70</sup>

A focus on personal correspondence within collections is shown by the studies of five letters found amongst the *Hekanakhte Papyri*<sup>71</sup> and of letters which form part of the *Lahun Papyri*.<sup>72</sup> Examples of collections studied within a certain timeframe are the *Amarna Letters*,<sup>73</sup> the *Late Ramesside Letters*,<sup>74</sup> and the *Late Egyptian Miscellanies*.<sup>75</sup> By topic, *The Semnah Despatches* and *Egyptian letters of the New Kingdom*.<sup>76</sup>

The specific topic of this article *Ancient Egyptian military matters, priestly responsibilities, a prestigious local deity: evidence from Twenty-first Dynasty personal correspondence* and the study and analysis of these letters has added to the ongoing research noted above. It has focused on the importance of, and the further knowledge needed, regarding the deity known as 'Horus of the Camp' or 'He of the Camp' depicted before Herihor in the temple of Khonsu. This original appearance and connection with Herihor, who had become head of the army, suggested a military connotation for 'Camp'. His presence in these letters as a local deity of high status,

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<sup>70</sup> For further discussion and references to topics and other aspects see Thorpe 2001: 103–118.

<sup>71</sup> Allen 2002: 243–255.

<sup>72</sup> Collier and Quirke 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Moran 1992.

<sup>74</sup> Černý 1939.

<sup>75</sup> Gardiner 1937.

<sup>76</sup> Smither 1945: 3–10; Baines 2001: 1–31.

identifies their senders and recipients as being located at, or in the vicinity of, a military site. The provenance of these letters in this article has been the subject of much discussion but their content and the references to the Promontory have suggested el-Hibeh, given its fortress and its importance as a military base, as one of the possible locations.<sup>77</sup> The first five pieces of correspondence involve the religious personnel who are in the service of this local deity – He of the Camp. However, there are no specific references to their religious duties or to the organisation of religious festivals. The emphasis is on administrative and policing responsibilities of a kind which suggest these priests could be within the military jurisdiction. The final three letters studied have confirmed the status of this deity by evidencing the belief that he can be appealed to directly for his intervention to resolve specific issues.

Focused on the representative selection of the available correspondence from the preliminary collection of preserved pieces, this study has evidenced the role of the god's father priest and temple scribe of He of the Camp, showing the importance of this deity in the context of the issues which were their responsibility to resolve. The focus on this topic has added knowledge to current research by arguing and evidencing these particular personal letters as being a primary source of personal and historical information, in this case concerning Twenty-first Dynasty military matters, priestly responsibilities, a prestigious local deity.

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<sup>77</sup> See previous comments regarding other arguments for different locations.

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