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*Miscellaneous Demotic Ostraca from the Collections
of the Egyptian Museum-Cairo*

(The Priestly Archive at Kom El-Sultan-Abydos)

Palaeographical, Philological and Cultural Study

Doctoral Dissertation

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2009

Abstract

Publishing a group of 61 demotic ostraca is the main subject of this study. They are from the collections of the Egyptian museum in Cairo of which 28 are potsherds, and 33 are of limestone. The potsherds are part of a group of 99 demotic ostraca inventoried as JdE 91282. The limestone ostraca belong to a group of 102 fragments, mostly with demotic texts and some with hieratic, registered as JdE 91283. Both groups were found in the excavations conducted at the site of Kom El-Sultan by Pennsylvania-Yale from 1967 to 1969.

The site of Kom El-Sultan occupies part of the northern area of Abydos, the religious capital of the eighth Upper Egyptian Thinite nome 6A-Wr called after its administrative capital 7ny. Abydos (AbDw- Ibt) lies on the west bank of the Nile, 50 km south of modern Sohag, within El-Ballina province, where it includes the villages of El-Arabah El-Madfunah, Bani Mansour and El-Gayat. This town occupied a religiously distinguished prestigious rank remained until the Christian times. This distinguished reputation gained by the town led to numerous tombs, temples, chapels, stelae, offering tables, and private votive objects to be found at the site. The reason lurking behind this distinguished reputation is being the main cult center of one of the early local deity involved with the deceased, the canine god 2ntj-Imntjw, who identified with Osiris, the funerary god of Busris, in the Old Kingdom Pyramid texts to take the syncretic form of Osiris-Khentyimntiu. The fame of this deity reached the apex during the Middle kingdom, when the site turned to be the main destination to the pilgrims and the preferable burying place for individuals from all over Egypt. The vital role played by Kom El-Sultan in these religious and probably also the social activities became conceivable after the excavations conducted at the site in 1902-1903 by Petrie, which unveiled a town as well as a temple dated to the pre-dynastic and early dynastic periods. This

temple as well as the town were apt to many additions until the end of the late period (21-30 dynasties). This temple represented the center of gravity in the Osirian doctrine and the festivals held at Abydos which remained through all the ancient times. This amazing continuity and the great fame gained by this religious institution throughout the whole country can be attributed to a resourceful priestly body who managed, controlled and promoted all the temple's affairs. Some scattered pieces of information about this priestly community were known through some finds dated to the New kingdom as well as the late period. The group of ostraca of this study represents the first source shedding the light on the daily life of the priests lived at Kom El-Sultan, and the way they ran their religious and economic affairs at the temple during the Ptolemaic rule and probably also the early Roman period, where they include substantial information such as:

- Some Priestly titles
- The remuneration of the clergy having two different types (A) the fixed salaries in the form of bread or baked bread (B) the shares given from the offerings as well as other economic sources of the temple
- The rituals conducted in favour of Osiris, the chief god of the temple, this beside some other divinities
- Feasts and festivals celebrated at the temple especially those of Osiris and his consort Isis during Choiak the fourth month of the Inundation season
- The different kinds of offerings presented before gods and goddesses
- The gods and goddesses venerated in Graeco-Roman Abydos
- The phyles of the temple and the way adopted to assign priestly duties to each one

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