

“The Satirical Letter of Hori the Scribe”  
Papyrus Anastasi I  
Slightly adapted from Wente 1990: 98-110

**Sender**

The scribe of superior intellect, with sound advice, over whose utterances there is rejoicing when they are heard, so skilled in God’s Words<sup>1</sup> that there is nothing of which he is ignorant, who is an able champion in the occupation of Seshat (goddess of writing and accounting) and a servant of the lord of Hermopolis (Thoth) in his writing chamber; an instructor of apprentices in the bureau of archives, the first of his colleagues and foremost among his associates, a leader of his class like whom there is none; of whom an example is made for every young man, one who has advanced through his own efforts and whom his fingers have aggrandized; a precocious child who has attained his maturity, versed in intellectual pursuits and astute because of them; discreet in his character, one beloved in people’s hearts and not rebuffed, whose friendship one longs for and never gets tired of; who bestirs himself in inscribing blank sheets of papyrus; youthful, of distinguished appearance and pleasant demeanor, who can interpret difficult passages in past records just as the one who wrote them, whose every utterance is so steeped in honey that hearts are restored thereby as through a ready potion; groom of

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1. An expression that includes both script and sacred writings in all fields of learning.

His Majesty, l.p.h. [= life, peace, health], and retainer of the lord, l.p.h., who trains the Sovereign's steeds, who is such an energetic stable hand that even a senior man who toils as he is outstripped; one who loosens the yoke, Hori, son of Wennofer, of the district of Abydos, the Island of the Righteous, born of Tawosre from the region of Bilbeis, a chantress of Bastet in God's Field.<sup>2</sup>

### Addressee

He sends greetings to his friend and esteemed colleague, the royal command-writing scribe of the victorious army, who is of exceptional intelligence and good character, versed in intellectual pursuits, whose like does not exist in any other scribe; beloved of everybody, as beautiful to one who observes his demeanor as is a swamp flower in the estimation of foreigners; such a scribe in every respect that there is nothing of which he is ignorant, whose response is sought after in order to ascertain what is best; alert, patient, and humanitarian, rejoicing over instances of justice and eschewing iniquity, the scribe of recruits of the Lord of the Two Lands, Amenemope, son of the steward Mose, a possessor of reverence (i.e., deceased).

### Greeting and Blessing

May you live, be prosperous and healthy, O esteemed colleague, being well supplied and well established without suffering want, possessing the requirements of life in food and provi-

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2. The region of Bubastis in the Delta.

sions while joy and gladness are combined in your vicinity. May they be issued to you during your lifetime and your gateway not be barren. May you observe the rays of the sun and be satiated thereby. May you spend [your] lifetime [in happiness] with your gods pleased with you without displaying anger. May your reward [be received] after old age. May you be salved with fine quality unguents like the blessed ones. May you enter your tomb of the necropolis and associate with the excellent *Bas* [= personality, unique character]. May you be judged among them and be declared righteous in Busiris before Onnophris, being well established in Abydos in the presence of Shu-Onouris. May you cross over to the district of Poker in the god's retinue and traverse the divine region in the retinue of Sokar. May you join the crew of the Neshmet-bark without being turned away.<sup>3</sup> May you see the sun in the sky when it initiates the year.

May Anubis (god of embalming) unite for you your head to your bones. May you come forth from the hidden district without being annihilated. May you observe the solar glow in the netherworld when it passes by you. May the primordial waters overflow in your domain, immerse your path, and irrigate to a depth of seven cubits near your tomb. May you sit down at the river's edge at your moment of repose and wash your face and hands. May you receive offerings, and may your nose inhale the breezes and you let your throat breathe freely. May Tayet (goddess of

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3. These lines refer to the annual ceremonies at Abydos in which the dead were believed to participate.

weaving) clothe [ . . . ]. May Neper (grain god) give you bread and Hathor give you beer. May you suck from the udder of Sekhayet-Hor. May fine quality unguents be opened up for you. May you enter [ . . . ] your [ . . . ] , and may you place him upon his seat. May [your] *ushebti*-figure<sup>4</sup> be accepted [when] it [comes over] carrying sand from the east [to] the west. May you grasp [ . . . ] of your sycamore goddess, and she lubricate your throat. May you drive [your opponents] away. [May you be powerful in] the earth, and may you be glorified [ . . . ] air. May you be triumphant in the sky, a luminary [ . . . ] . May you descend to the slaughterhouse(?) without being annihilated. May you transform yourself into whatever you desire like the phoenix, with each form of yours being that of a god according to your [predilection].

### Occasion for Writing

A further matter: Your letter reached me during the hour of siesta. Your messenger found me as I was sitting beside the horses which are in my charge. Being so glad and joyful, I was all set to reply, but when I entered my stable to have a look at your letter, I discovered that it comprised neither praises nor insults.

Your sentences are jumbled, this one with that one, and all your words are turned about and disconnected. Each composition of yours is fragmented by digressions(?). [ . . . ] bottom and top(?). Your beginning is [ . . . . Your letter is mix]ed up treating impro-

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4. A small mummiform image of the deceased capable of performing agricultural labor in the beyond on his behalf. [Also, *shabti*.]

prieties and niceties and the best with [ . . . ]. Your statements are neither sweet nor bitter. All that issues from your mouth is [bitter almonds] and honey. You have surpassed pomegranate wine mixed with second-rate wine.

I have written to you advising you as a friend, instructing one who is senior to myself to be a proficient scribe. Now as for me, since you have expressed yourself, I must respond inasmuch as your statements are idle words. You act like one who is agitated(?) so as to alarm me, but I have not become awestricken before you knowing your character. I fancied that you would answer alone by yourself. However, your aides stand in back of you, and you have assembled many agents(?) as helpers as though you were on your way to court. Your face is wild as you stand coaxing supporters, saying, "Come along with me and assist me." You tender them gifts, each one individually, and they tell you, "Have courage, we shall prevail over him."

You stand per[turbed . . . ] in their presence, and they sit deliberating, that is, the six scribes. You go with them [for a] seventh, and you assign two sections to each one so that you might finish off your letter of fourteen sections. While one composes praises and two compose insults, the next one is standing by instructing them regarding the proper arrangement. The fifth says, "Don't rush! Be patient at it with careful work." The sixth hurries off to measure the lake. He squares it off in cubits in order to have it dug. The seventh stands near at hand receiving the rations for the soldiers. Your pay schedules are so disorganized that they

cannot be unraveled. Kheruef<sup>5</sup> plays deaf and does not listen. He swears by Ptah saying, “I won’t let a seal be put on the granary,” and off he goes in a huff. By what amount is the *hekat*-measure too scant when the loss is five *hin*-measures for each *oipe*?<sup>6</sup>

See here, **you are the scribe who issues commands to the army**. Men hear what you have to say, and you are not bypassed. You are expert as a scribe, and there is nothing which you are ignorant of. Yet your letter is too inferior to merit consideration. You have foolishly been deprived of your papyrus. If you had only known beforehand that it is no good, you would not have sent it but said, “As for the documents(?), they are all the time in contact(?) with my fingertips like an incantation scroll against ague on an invalid’s neck. They are all the time on [my] *la(p)* (?) and do not tire of being bound by the string of my seal.”<sup>7</sup>

I will answer you in a similar manner in a letter that is original from the first page to the colophon, it being filled with utterances from my lips that I have composed alone by myself with no one else with me. By the *Ka* [= vital essence] of Thoth, it is on my own that I have written without having summoned any scribe to have him assist. I shall deliver even more to you by twentyfold. I will detail for you what you have said, point by point, (in) the fourteen sections of your letter.

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5. A superintendent of the granary by this name is attested in the first part of Ramesses II’s reign, see Letter No. 46 and Kitchen (1968-: 3:30, 147, 154).

6. Since there are four *hekat*-measures in an *oipe*, the answer is one and one-fourth *hin*.

7. Perhaps the implication of this obscure passage is that Amenemope should have kept his letter tied up without sending it.

Keep me supplied with papyrus, and I will tell you many things and pour out to you choice words just as the Nile inundation overflows, and the flood glitters [in] the inundation season when it has attained the raised mounds, for all my words are sweet and pleasant in diction. I will not do as you when you cursed and started out against me with insults at the very onset. You did not even greet me at the beginning of your letter. Far from me be your threats! They shall not assail [me], because my god Thoth is a shield about me. By the *Ka* of Ptah, lord of Maat [= truth, justice, balance, order], I wouldn't think of repulsing them. Look here, carry out your threats! They have proved so effective! Turn each utterance of yours against whatever enemy! I will yet be buried in Abydos in my father's tomb, for I am a son of Maat in the Island of the Righteous. I will be buried among fellow men in the mountain of the Holy Land (the Abydos necropolis).

Of what does my fault consist in your opinion? Then you should reprove it. And to whom have I mentioned you with an evil mention? As if for recreation, I will write for you a composition so that it becomes diversion for everybody.

You continued by calling me a weakling lacking vigor. You have held me in contempt as a scribe and have said, "He knows nothing." I won't spend a moment in your presence for the sake of coaxing you and saying, "Be a protector for me, for someone else is tormenting me." By the decree of the Mighty Lord (the king), whose name is powerful and whose statutes are as enduring and permanent as those of Thoth, it is I who am the supporter

of all my kinsfolk. Again you have said concerning me, “You shall fall,” . . . but I know many persons lacking vigor, weaklings who are exhausted and have no strength, yet who have been so enriched in their homes with food and provisions that they need not express want of anything.

Come, let me describe to you the way of the scribe Roy, dubbed the firebrand of the granary. He neither budged nor stirred since his birth. Strenuous work was an abomination to him, and he never became acquainted with it. Now he rests in the West with his body intact, and dread of the Perfect God (the king) shall never overtake him.

You are more foolish than Kasa, the reckoner of cattle. But to move on, since I have already described to you his way lest you should scoff(?). Haven’t you heard the name of Amenwahsu, a veteran of the treasury? He spent his lifetime as manager in the workshop next to the armory.

Come, [let me tell] you about Nakht, the one employed in the wine store. He seems ten times more glamorous to you than these others. Let me tell you about Paherypedjet, who used to live in Heliopolis. He is a veteran of the Palace, l.p.h. He is smaller than a cat but bigger than a monkey, yet he is well-off in his home having his property in his possession. It is forever(?) that you will remain there in the stable!

Have you heard the name of Kyky, the dust ball? It is unnoticed that he moves over the ground, disheveled in attire and tightly girt. If you were to see him at evening in the dark, you



would think that he was a bird passing by. Put him on the scales and see how heavy he is! He will weigh for you twenty *deben*, excluding rags. If you should exhale close to him as he passes by, like a leaf of foliage he will drop down far away.

If I tell you about Wah, the one employed in the cattle stalls, you will reward me with thrice-refined gold. I swear by the lord of Hermopolis (Thoth) and Nehemawayet, saying, "You are strong-armed and will overthrow them." You should let [them] be tested, those and these. I will overwhelm them with my arms, [for none can thwa]rt my hands. O What's-your- name?, my friend, who does not know what you say, see, I will interpret your difficult passages and render them easy.

### Literature Knowledge

You have come provided with great secrets and have quoted to me one of Hordedef's maxims, but you do not know whether it is good or bad. Which stanza precedes it and which one follows it? You are supposed to be an expert scribe at the head of your (text: his) colleagues having the lore of every book engraved in your memory. How precious your tongue is when you speak! A single maxim issues from your mouth worth three *debens*. You cast aspersion upon me so as to frighten me. My eyes stare at what you do, and I am aghast when you say, "I am profound as a scribe regarding heaven, earth, and the underworld, even knowing the size of mountains in *deben*-weights and *hin*-measures." Granted that the library is hidden and not to be seen, and its

ennead of gods is concealed far away from [your sight], tell me what you know. Then I will answer you, “Beware lest your fingers approach God’s Words!” If an apprentice . . . as when [ . . . ] sits down to play the game of *senet*.

You have told me, “You are neither a scribe nor are you a soldier, yet on your own you have set yourself up as an authority. You are not on the register.” But you yourself are a royal scribe who enrolls soldiers, and all [commands] under the sky are spread out in your presence. Go to the office of the record [keepers] that they may let you see the chest containing the rosters, taking a bouquet for Heresh that he may quickly disclose to you information about myself. You will discover my name on a papyrus scroll as a squire in the Great Stable of Sese-miamon, l.p.h.,<sup>8</sup> and you will find testimony in the administrative order of the stable that a food allowance is on record in my name. So I will prove to be a squire and prove to be a scribe! There is no youth of my generation who can even match me. Inquire about a man from his superior! Be off to my captains that they may report on me to you!

You continued saying to me, “A lofty forested mountain(?) lies ahead of you. Enter into such a wild mountain forest(?), which you do not know.” As soon as you have entered therein ahead of me, I must come in after you. If only you had not drawn near to it, you would not have attempted it! If you should dis-

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8. The name of the stable employs the nickname of Ramesses II, Sese.

cover its interior, while I have turned back, beware of helping me extricate myself.

You have told me, "You are not a scribe, an appellative that is empty and hollow. You hold the palette illicitly without having been authorized." I am stupid [for want of] a teacher. Tell me such confounded things [so as to] be able to displace me. You have harnessed yourself against me once more again. Your utterances falsify and will not be listened to. Let your fetters be taken before the god Onouris that he may determine for us who is right lest you become angry.

A further matter: See, I have come replete with your calling so that I might inform you of your situation since you have said, "It is I who am the command-writing scribe of the troops." You have been assigned a lake to dig. Having forsaken your calling, you have come to me to inquire about the distribution of rations to the workforce and have told me, "Figure it out!" To teach you how to do it has fallen upon my shoulders.

Come, and I will tell you more than what you have said. I warn you that you will be disheartened. I will disclose to you a command from your lord, l.p.h., inasmuch as you are his royal scribe. You are dispatched from beneath the royal audience window for all sorts of splendid products when the mountains are disgorging great monuments for Horus, Lord of the Two Lands. See, it is you who are the expert scribe who is at the head of the troops.

## Engineering Knowledge

There is to be constructed a ramp of 730 cubits in length with a width of 55 cubits, containing 120 compartments provided with rushes and beams, having a height of 60 cubits at its summit and 30 cubits at its middle, with a batter of 15 cubits, while its base is of 5 cubits. The amount of bricks required for it is asked of the commander of the workforce. The scribes are all gathered together through lack of one who knows among them. So they all put their trust in you, saying, "You are an expert scribe, my friend. Decide for us quickly. See, your name is celebrated. Let one be found in this place capable of magnifying the other thirty. Don't let it be said of you that there is anything of which you are ignorant. Answer for us the amount of bricks required for it. Look, its dimensions(?) are before you with each one of its compartments being 30 cubits long and 7 cubits wide.

O What's-your-name?, you vigilant scribe who is at the head of the workforce, with a distinguished position at the Great Double Portal and handsome while bowing down beneath the royal audience window. A dispatch arrives from the crown prince at the district of Ka<sup>9</sup> to convey good tidings to the Horus of Gold and to glorify the raging lion (the king), saying, "An obelisk has been newly made, engraved with the name of His Majesty, l.p.h., and having a shaft of 110 cubits. Its pedestal is of 10 cubits, while the perimeter of its (the obelisk's) base measures 7 cubits on each

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9. "Ka" was perhaps a designation of one of the branches of the Nile in the western Delta.

side. It proceeds with a taper of one cubit and one digit as far as the top, and its pyramidion is one cubit in height with its point(?) being two digits." Total up their parts(?) to make them into portions so that you may assign each man who is needed to haul them and they may set out for the Red Mountain. See, they are awaited. Give fair passage to the crown prince. The sun's offspring (the prince) is near at hand. Determine for us the required number of men who shall be at his disposal.

Don't make it so that a communication has to be sent again, for the monument lies ready in the quarry. Answer quickly! You should not dawdle, since it is you who are seeking them (the number of men required) for yourself Press on! See, if you bestir yourself, I will make you glad. Previously I used to [work] like you. So let us marshal the ranks together, for my mind is shrewd and my fingers obey being skillful just where you go astray. Get on and do not weep! Your helper is right behind you. I will cause you to say, "Horus, Mighty Bull, has a royal scribe." May you commission men to make chests into which letters can be put. I would have written you secretly, but see, it is you who are seeking them (the number of men) for yourself. You have caused my fingers to be slicing away up as if at a bull in a feast at every festival of eternity(?).

You are told to empty the magazine that is loaded with sand beneath the colossus of your lord, l.p.h., which has been brought from the Red Mountain. It measures 30 cubits lying extended on the ground and has a width of 20 cubits. The foundation consists

of ten cells filled with sand from the riverbank, while the partitions of [its] cells have a width of 12(?) cubits, and they all have a height of 50 cubits. Vents are located in their encasements(?). You are charged to ascertain what should be before (the statue). How many men will be required to remove it in six hours—although they are reliable, their will is insufficient to remove it before mid-day has come and you can give a break to the workforce that they may take their lunch(?)—so that the colossus may be erected in its place? It is One's (the king's) wish to see it beautiful!

### Campaign Supply Knowledge

O you scribe, so alert and competent that there is nothing at all of which you are ignorant, who blazes in the darkness at the head of the troops and illumines for them, you are dispatched on a mission to Djahy (Syro-Palestine) at the head of the victorious army in order to crush those rebels who are called Naarin-warriors. The host of soldiers that is under your charge comprises 1,900 men (Egyptians), 520 Sherden, 1,600 Kehek, [100] Meshwesh and 880 Nubians, a total of 5,000 all told, apart from their captains. There are brought to you bonus rations into your presence: bread, sheep and goats, and wine. The number of men is too large for you, and the foodstuff is insufficient for them: only 300 sweet loaves, 1,800 cakes, 120 assorted goats and sheep, and 30 jugs of wine. The army is so numerous that the foodstuff has been underestimated as though you had pilfered from it. You receive it in charge to be deposited in the camp. The troops are prepared and

ready, so divide it quickly into portions, each man's share into his hands. The Shasu-Beduin are watching furtively. *O Sopher yodea*,<sup>10</sup> midday is come, and the camp is hot. One says, "It's time to move on." Don't make the troop marshaler angry. We still have a long march ahead of us. What bread do we have at all? Our night camp is far away. O What's-your-name?, what's the sense of scourging us so, when you are supposed to be an expert scribe? It is only after six(?) hours have elapsed in the day that you proceed to distribute the provisions through want of a scribe from the Ruler, l.p.h. Getting you to scourge us, that's not good! Mose<sup>11</sup> shall learn of it and send to do away with you.

Your letter abounds in sarcasm and is overburdened with grandiose words. See, I will requite you with such as they deserve, for you have piled them on just as you pleased. "I am a soldier-scribe." so you did retort. If there is truth in what you have said, come outside in order that you may be tested.

There is harnessed for you a span of horses, swift as a leopard, whose ears are red, and which are like a storm-wind when they burst forth. You let go of the reins and pick up the bow. We will see what your hands can achieve! I will explain to you the way of a Maher-warrior<sup>a</sup> and show you what he has to do.

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10. Meaning "expert scribe" in Semitic language.

11. Probably the name of a high military officer.

a. "A soldier of officer status who served as a scout in preparing the way for the advancing army."

## Geographical Knowledge

You have not journeyed to the land of Ḫatti nor have you visited the land of Upe. As for Khadum, you do [not] know its topography, nor that of Yagadiya either. What is the Simyra of Sese, l.p.h.,<sup>12</sup> like? In which direction from it lies the city of Aleppo? What is its river like? You have not had occasion to set out for Kadesh and Tubikhi, nor have you gone with the host of soldiers to “Spring of the Shasu-Beduin.” You have not trodden the road to Magara, where the sky is dark by day. It is overgrown with junipers and oaks, and pine trees reach the sky. Lions are more abundant than leopards and bears, while it is hemmed in on all sides by Shasu-Beduin. You have not climbed Mount Shawe barefoot with your hands placed upon your legs and your chariot lashed with ropes while your horses are tugging.

O come and visit [I]birta(?). You panic [at] the prospect of climbing it after you have crossed its river for it (the climb). You experience how it feels to be a Maher-warrior with your chariot placed on your shoulder. Your aide is exhausted. When at last you quit in the evening, your whole body is crushed and battered, and your limbs are bruised. You get lost in sleep. You wake up when it is time to move on in the too-short night, being alone to harness up, for no colleague comes to (assist) another. The vagabond band has penetrated the camp, and the horses have been cut loose. The [ . . . ] has withdrawn by night, and your

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12. Sese is Ramesses II's nickname.



clothes have been stolen. Your groom awoke during the night and realized what he must do. He has taken what was left and has joined up with those who are wicked. He consorts with the Shasu-Beduin tribes and assumes the guise of an Asiatic. The enemy comes furtively to pillage, and they find you torpid. You awake but can find no trace of them. They have carried off your possessions. So you have become a fully outfitted Maher-warrior if you have been attentive!

I will recount to you another remote city which is called Byblos. What is it like? And its goddess?<sup>13</sup> Once again [you] have not set foot in it. Please inform me about Beirut, about Sidon, and Sarepta [= Zarephath]. Where is the river Litani? What is Usu (Old Tyre on the mainland) like? They speak of another city in the sea the name of which is Tyre-of-the-Harbor. Water is taken over to it in scows, and it is richer in fish than in sand.

I will mention to you another difficulty: “the Pass of the Hornets” (the Ladder of Tyre). You will say that it burns more than a (hornet’s) sting. How miserable he is, a Maher-warrior! Come and put [me] on the road heading south to the region of Acco. Where does the route to Achshaph originate? Next to which city? Please inform me about the mountain of User [= Mt. Carmel]. What is its summit like? Where does the mountain of Shechem rise? Who can conquer it? The Maher-warrior, where does he march to get to Hazor? What is its river like? Put me [on] the highway to Hamath

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13. This goddess was Hathor.

[= Tiberias], Dagal, and Dagal-El, the promenade of every Maher-warrior. Please instruct me about his route and let me visit Yan [= Yenoam]. If someone is traveling to Adumim, in which direction should he head? Do not falter from your teaching. Guide us to know them (the places)!

Come and I will tell you of other cities which lie above these. You have not gone to the land of Takhsy, to Kur-Marruna, Taminta, Kadesh, Dapur, Azaya, or Hermon. You have not visited Kiriath-Anab and Beth-Sopher. You are not acquainted with Adu-run [= Edrai] or Sidiputu either. You do not know the name of Khalsu, which is in the land of Upe, a bull on its frontier and the battle scene of all sorts of champions. Please instruct me about the topography of Kina, acquaint me with Rehob, and explain Beth-shan and Tirek-El. As for the river Jordan, how can it be crossed? Inform me of the pass to Megiddo, which lies above it.

You are a Maher-warrior who is experienced in heroic deeds. A Maher-warrior such as yourself should be found qualified to advance at the head of an army. O Maryan-warrior,<sup>b</sup> forward to shoot! See, the declivity(?) is a ravine 2,000 cubits deep, filled with boulders and small stones, so you make a detour. You pick up the bow and draw to your left that you might let the chiefs see, but their vision is perfect and weakness is discerned(?) in your hands. "You wander about like a sheep, dear Maher-soldier!" Thus you celebrate the name of every Maher-warrior,

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b. A chariot warrior.

Egypt's chariot officers. Your name has become like that of Kezardy, the prince of Asher, when the bear found him in the balsam tree.

The narrow pass [= **Aruna Pass**] is dangerous, having Shasu-Beduin concealed beneath the bushes, some of whom are of four cubits or five cubits (from) their nose to foot and have fierce faces. They are unfriendly and do not take to cajolery while you are alone having no aide with you nor soldiery backing you up. You find no scout to prepare safe passage for you. You reach a decision by forging ahead ignorant of the road. Such bristling fright grips you that (the hair of) your head is ruffled. Your *Ba* lies in your hands. Your path is filled with boulders and small stones without a toe hold for passage as it is overgrown with reeds and thorns, brambles, and "wolf's-paw." The declivities lie to one side of you, and the mountain rises on the other side of you. With your chariot lying on its side, you move along swerving to and fro too afraid to pursue your horses. If they are thrown toward the abyss, your horse collar is left exposed and your harness(?) falls. You unharness the team in order to repair the horse collar in the middle of the narrow pass, but you are inexperienced in how to lash it and cannot tie it fast. The clamp(?) is left where it is, for the team is too overburdened to support it. You are disgusted and get set to trot off. The sky is now clear, but you imagine that the enemy is behind you, and trembling grips you. If only you had a hedge of shrubbery to put on the other side! The team is exhaust-

ed by the time you locate a camping spot. You have undergone a miserable experience.

You have now entered **Joppa** and find the meadowland verdant in its season. You force your way in because of appetite and encounter the beautiful maiden who is tending the vineyards. She allures you to herself to be a partner (in love) and surrenders to you the flesh of her bosom. You are recognized as soon as you have uttered advice.<sup>14</sup> So judgment is rendered against a Maher-warrior, and you must sell your tunic of fine thin linen.

Tell me how you can go to sleep each evening with only a piece of sackcloth over you. You slumber only because you are so exhausted. A poltroon(?) takes away your bow, your girdle-dagger, and your pair of quivers. Your reins have been severed in the darkness, and your team goes off picking up speed(?) over the slippery terrain as the road extends ahead of it. It smashes your chariot and makes [ . . . ] your leather canteens fall to the ground and are buried in the sand. They become part of the dry earth. Your aide begs for bread(?) for your mouth, "Now that I have safely arrived, you people should give a bit of food and water." But they play deaf and do not hearken. They take no notice of your accounts.

If only you could enter inside the armory with workshops surrounding you and carpenters and leather workers in your vicinity, they would do all that you desire. They would take care

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14. Possibly advice in love-making.

of your chariot so that it would cease to be inoperative. Your chariot pole would be retrimmed and its supports(?) installed. They would attach leather straps to your horse collar and . . . and furnish your yoke. They would mount your chariot case, which has burin engraving, [on] the frames. They would attach a pommel to your whip and fasten a lash [to] it. You would then go quickly forth to fight on the battlefield in order to perform heroic deeds.

O What's-your-name?, you elite scribe and Maher-warrior, who know how to use your hands, a leader of Naarin-troops at the head of the soldiery, I have described to you the hill countries of the northern reaches of the land of Canaan, but you have not answered me in any way nor have you rendered a report to me. Come, and [I] will describe [ma]ny things [to] you. Head toward(?) the fortress of the Way[s of Horus].<sup>15</sup> I begin for you with the Dwelling of Sese, l.p.h. You have not set foot in it at all. You have not eaten fish from [its pool(?)] nor bathed in it. O that I might recall to you Husayin. Whereabouts is its fortress? Come now to the region of Edjo of Sese, l.p.h., into its stronghold of Usermare, l.p.h., and [to] Seba-El and Ibesgeb. I will describe to you the appearance of Aiyanin.<sup>16</sup> You are not acquainted with its location. As for Nekhes and Heberet,<sup>17</sup> you have not visited them since your birth. You Maher-warrior, where is **Raphia**? What is its

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15. The frontier fortress of Tjel at the head of the military road to Palestine.

16. Meaning "Two Wells."

17. Or, "As for the runnels of Heberer."

enclosure wall like? How many miles march is it to Gaza? Answer quickly! Render a report to me that I may call you a Maher-warrior and boast of your name to others. “He is a Maryan-warrior,” so I shall tell them.

You have become angry over my having told you that I am versed in every calling. My father taught me what he knew and gave instruction so many times that I am able to hold the reins even more skillfully than you. There is no champion who can even match me, for I am initiated in the ordinances of Montu.<sup>18</sup> How slanderous is all that issues from your tongue! How feeble your sentences are! It is wrapped up in confusion and laden with errors that you have come to me. You split words apart in charging straight ahead and are not loath to grope (for words). Be energetic! Forward! Hurry on! You shall not fall! What is it like for one to be ignorant of what he has attained? And what will the outcome of this be? I shall back off now that I have reached the end. Submit yourself! Control your emotions with a composed mind. Don’t get in a huff, rushing because of appetite(?). I have cut short for you the end of your letter and have answered you what you have said. Your discourses are collected on my tongue and remain fixed on my lips, for they are so confused when heard that no interpreter can unravel them. They are like a Delta man’s conversation with a man of Elephantine.<sup>19</sup>

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18. I.e., the art of warfare, whose patron deity was Montu.

19. Evidence for the existence of dialects in ancient Egypt.

Yet you are a scribe of the Great Double Portal who reports the affairs of the Two Lands, so comely and handsome [to] one who observes this that you should not say that I have made your name reek before foreigners and all. See, I have described to you the way of a Maher-warrior and traveled through [Re]tenu for you. I have introduced to you foreign countries at a single time with cities in their proper sequence. O that you might look them over at leisure so that you might be found able to describe them and become with us a well-traveled guide(?).

# Notes

From Wente 1990.

1. Papyrus Anastasi I dates to second-half of 19th dynasty, and comes perhaps from Memphis or Saqqara necropolis.
2. Deir el-Medina has produced ca. 80 copies on ostraca.
3. Apparently there were northern and southern recensions. the southern Theban one names Amenemope; the northern does not.
4. The original composition was perhaps from the early reign of Ramesses II.

Topics discussed: “proper greetings with wishes for this life and the next, the rhetoric of composition, interpretation of aphorisms in wisdom literature, application of mathematics to engineering problems and the calculation of supplies for an army, and the geography of western Asia.”

Wente, Edward F.

1990      *Letters from Ancient Egypt*. Writings from the Ancient World 1. Atlanta: Scholars.

Apparently, Amenemope had written an incoherent letter in which he was contemptuous towards the senior scribe.

His letter apparently had 14 sections.



Is Maʿat analogous to Shalom?

“My god Thoth is a shield about me.”

Papyrus Anastasi I is located in the British Museum.

Museum number 10247.

[Sheet 1](#)

[Sheet 2](#)

[Sheet 3](#)

[Sheet 4](#)

[Sheet 5](#)

[Sheet 6](#)

[Sheet 7A](#)

[Sheet 7B](#)

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[Sheet 16](#)

Purchased in 1839 from Giovanni Anastasi. Written in Hieratic.

Text edition: H.-W Fischer-Elfert, *Die satirische Streitschrift des Pa-*

*papyrus Anastasi I: Textzusammenstellung*. Kleine Ägyptische Texte 1992a [1983].

This manuscript is available on TLA <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/>.

Commentary: H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die satirische Streitschrift des Papyrus Anastasi I.: Übersetzung und Kommentar*. ÄA 44 1986.