Some unpublished inscriptions from Quarry P at Hatnub

Yannis Gourdon (IFAO) and Roland Enmarch (Liverpool)

Abstract: Preliminary presentation of some of the results of the *Hatnub Epigraphic Project*, which has been working at Hatnub Quarry P since December 2012, and which aims to provide a full photographic and epigraphic record of the surviving texts. Before the inception of the project, no in-situ epigraphic study of the Hatnub texts had been undertaken since Georg Möller's visit in summer 1907, the results of which were published by Rudolf Anthes in 1928. Nearly all the remaining in-situ texts identified by Möller have been located, as well as over 80 previously unpublished texts and images. This paper surveys two groups of texts: first, those datable to the reigns of Merenra I and Pepy II; secondly, the texts datable to the late First Intermediate Period/Eleventh Dynasty which mention the nomarchs of the adjacent Hare nome. As well as highlighting improvements in understanding the long-published texts, two newly discovered inscriptions are preliminarily presented: a text dated to the first regnal year of Merenra I, and a text commemorating a scribe of the portal Ahanakht, who was responsible for creating a number of the other long-published texts from the time of nomarch Neheri I.

Keywords: Hatnub, alabaster, inscriptions, Old Kingdom, nomarch

Hatnub is today the best-known source for the stone known variously as travertine, Egyptian alabaster, or calcite. The toponym 'Hatnub' covers a region of several square kilometres of the the Eastern Desert in Middle Egypt, approximately 16 km south-east of the site of the city of Amarna. The region preserves rich traces of ancient activity, most notably in the form of a well-preserved road connecting the quarries to the Nile valley, and extensive traces of huts and occupation debris. However, only two of the quarries in this region (Quarry P and Quarry R) are thus far known to contain texts of the pharaonic period,

These quarries have been known to Egyptology since 1891, and the most significant study of the texts at Hatnub was undertaken by Georg Möller in the summer of 1907. Möller did not live to see the full publication of his work, which was undertaken by Rudolf Anthes in 1928 working from Möller's copies and notebooks.[1] This has remained the definitive edition of the Hatnub texts to the present day. Since 1928, there has been further archaeological investigation at Hatnub (see e.g. Shaw 2010), and the content of the Hatnub texts themselves has been extensively discussed in a large number of Egyptological works. However, there has not been significant further on-site epigraphic study of the actual texts at Hatnub. Moreover, Anthes' publication contains hand drawn facsimiles of the texts, but no photographs. Anthes also notes that he himself had not visited the site, and in a couple of places indicates that he is not sure how to interpret the comments made by Möller in his notebooks.

---

[1] Anthes divided the texts into 'Inschriften' (carved/incised texts, mostly in hieroglyphs) and 'Graffiti' (texts executed solely in red paint/pigment, almost entirely in hieratic), and for convenience we follow his conventions here when discussing the previously published texts. Our work has, however, highlighted the problematic nature of this division, with an increasing number of texts that do not fit neatly into either category.

The current *Hatnub Epigraphic Project*[2] aims to produce a full epigraphic and photographic record of the surviving texts from Hatnub. Work has so far focused on one part of the landscape, Quarry P, which contains the overwhelming majority of previously known texts from the site. Quarry P today takes the form of a 28 m deep open-cast oval approximately 76 x 50 m, with a descending entryway leading down into it from the north-west (about 80 m long in total, with a width varying between 9 and 7m, narrowing towards the bottom). During the first three years of the project, between 2012 and 2015, our objective was to identify and verify the previously published texts in Quarry P, and to seek unpublished texts. Nearly all of the remaining in-situ texts noted by Möller were identified, as well as over 80 previously unpublished images and texts, some of which are quite substantial. Chronologically, most of the texts in Quarry P fall into two main groups: 1) those of the Old Kingdom, and 2) those contemporary with the nomarchs of the adjacent Hare nome (such as Ahanakht I and Neheri I), whose dating remains disputed but probably spans the late First Intermediate Period to the Eleventh Dynasty (see Willems 2007: 84-87). This paper provides preliminary discussion of some of the long known, and some newly discovered, texts belonging to both these groups.

Texts with names of kings Merenra I and Pepy II

Anthes (1928: Inschriften I-III, V-VIII, Graffiti 1-3, 6-7) reproduces 12 official texts (i.e. beginning with a royal protocol) of the Old Kingdom carved in hieroglyphic signs or painted in hieratic. Most of them – 10 to be specific — date back to the 6th dynasty. We will focus here on those bearing the names of kings Merenra I and Pepy II:

Known texts

Merenra I:
Anthes' inscription VI, dated to the king's 11th year, might have been left by Weni of Abydos (see Gourdon 2016: 152-153). According to his Abydos biographical text, we know that he conducted an expedition to Hatnub under Merenra I. The inscription is almost entirely destroyed due to severe erosion of the wall, and attempted robbery. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some corrections to Möller's drawing, especially for the rendering of the head of the falcon over the king, as well as for the exact position of the date of the expedition. We also found some traces of blue pigment, which show that the panel was probably painted with one single colour.
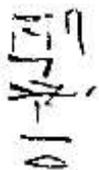
Pepy II :

- Inscription VII: this gave the royal protocol of Pepy II but no date. The inscription is now almost illegible because of erosion, especially in its lower half. However, we can add to the original drawing one seated figure carved in relief, facing the *serekh* and holding a staff in one hand; it is probably a king. The general layout of the left half of the panel resembles inscription VI of Merenra I, but, to my knowledge, the presence of a royal figure between two royal protocols is something unattested so far.

- Graffiti 3 and 7, respectively dated to year 28/29 and year 62/63: they are still as legible as they were at the time they first published in 1894 by Blackden and Fraser, although graffito 3 has suffered some small subsequent damage in the form of vertical white lines drawn over the graffito to delineate the *serekh* and the two large columns of text. Graffito 7 is completely preserved.

- Graffito 6, without surviving date, is in a good condition of preservation. Our observations have allowed us to augment the drawing made by Möller. We now have a better understanding of text located within the upper left corner mentioning the *pr-šnꜥ* and giving the name of the author of this text, Tjer, who might have borne a priestly title. We were also able to improve some readings, including the following passage:

which, when compared with another passage in graffito 4 (*ḥdj*), might be understood as: 'and I made (them) navigate to (*sḫnt.n(.j) r*) the south […]' (Gourdon 2016: 156). It is interesting to note that, unlike graffito 4, the convoy does not go north but rather south, to the house of a *ḫꜣty-ꜥ* named Idi. The latter could be a parent of the vizier and director of the South, also named Idi, mentioned on stela CG 1577 from Abydos (Borchardt 1964: 58 no. 1577); alternatively he may actually be the Idi of CG1577, as he bears some very similar titles. If so, then his mention at Hatnub would date to an earlier stage of his career, before he accrued his highest titles as found on CG1577.

Some newly discovered texts

Pepy II :

We have discovered 7 previously unpublished texts probably related to Pepy II, meaning that a total of 13 texts in Quarry P can now be dated to his reign. This number of texts confirms Pepy II's special interest in Egyptian travertine from Hatnub. The north wall of the descending entryway into Quarry P (an area from which no texts have previously been noted) bears 4 new texts with his name. What survives of these new texts is, in most cases, merely traces of a serekh with the more or less complete Horus name of Pepy II, Netjerkhau (though one of them additionally preserves traces of several columns of very badly weathered and almost illegible text).
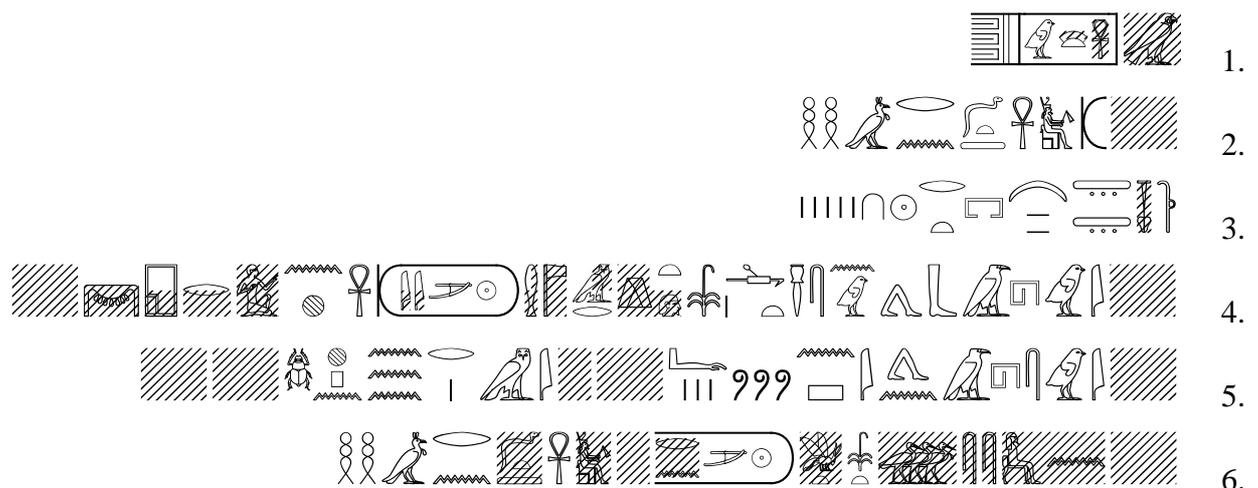
- Text of year 52/53/54: this is the only one of the new Pepy II texts that bears a date. It is located on the south wall of the descending entryway. Under the serekh including the intact name of Netjerkhau, is the

incomplete mention of the "year [after?) the [2]6th (count), the [xth] month of peret, [the xth day]", i.e. year 52/53/54.

- Text of 'Hatnub of the north': in another place on the southern wall of the descending entryway is the most noteworthy newly discovered Old Kingdom text from the quarry (Gourdon 2016: 149). It is painted in red and entirely written in hieroglyphs. This text, which has not yet been completely deciphered, awaits cleaning and conservation. Nevertheless, some elements are readable: beside the cartouche of Neferkara, there is another attestation of the connection between the Hare nome and the site of Hatnub, here described as 'Hatnub of the north'/'northern Hatnub' (*ḥwt-nbw mḥtt*). The detail of the very fragmentary text clearly deals with a royal expedition and mentions the central administration of the Two Granaries, and 'every nome in Upper and Lower Egypt'. It also lists various quantities of stone extracted from the quarry.

Merenra I:

Finally, among the recent discoveries in Quarry P we found a very beautiful hieratic text painted in red. Partly erased, the text deals with a mission sent by a certain Ankhmeryra to extract blocks of Egyptian travertine:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

[Ḥr ʿnḫ-ḫ] ʿw, [nswt bity] □[...]□, ʿnḫ(w) ḏt r nḥḥ,

rnpt zmꜣ Tꜣwy, ꜣbd 2 Prt, sw 15 (?) :

[...] Ỉw hꜣb.n w(j) smr wʿty, [ḫry]-tp nswt, mr ḥm(w)-[nṯr], ʿnḫ-Mry-Rʿ r (?) Ḥwt-[nbw] (?) [...]

[...] Ỉw shꜣ.n(.j) ỉnr 300 (?) mḥ 3 (?) [...]y (?) m rꜣ-mw/rꜣ (?) ḫpr.n [kꜣt tn (?) ...]

[... n špss bꜣw] nswt [bity] □Mr[.n]-Rʿ □, ʿnḫ(w) ḏt r nḥḥ.

"[The Horus Ankhkh]au, living for ever and ever, [the king of Upper and Lower Egypt] □[…]□, the year of the union of the Two Lands, the 2nd month of Peret, the 15th (?) day:

[…] The sole companion, the royal chamberlain, the director [of priests] Ankhmeryra sent me to/in order to […] Hatnub (?) […]

[…] I have caused to descend 300(?) (blocks of) stone of 3 cubits (?) […] in/from Ro-mou (?). [This work?] was done […]

[… for?] the king of Upper and Lower Egypt] Mer[en]ra, living for ever and ever."

Although the royal protocol which opens the text is almost completely gone, traces within the serekh and within the cartouche at the end of the text confirm that it dates to the reign of Merenra I.[3] The name is here followed by the epithet 'living for ever and ever', which first appears in a decree of Abydos from the time of king Teti (Goedicke 1967: 37-40 and fig. 3). Almost systematically used from the reign of Pepy II, this epithet is still unattested for the reign of Pepy I and our example is the first attestation for Merenra I.

Despite the disappearance of some signs, the text apparently dates to the coronation year of Merenra I. The *rnpt* sign is followed by a vertical and narrow sign, which must be *zmꜣ*, and this latter sign is itself followed by the word *tꜣwy* meaning the 'Two Lands'. This year, unknown in any other rock inscriptions connected with quarries or mines, is however attested on the 'South Saqqara stone', where it also connected with the first count of great and small cattle under this king (Baud 2006: 151).

The official who ordered the expedition, named Ankhmeryra, might not be unknown. This name, which is not as common as one might expect,[4] is attested only once elsewhere with this exact same sequence of titles (among others) for Ankhmeryra of Meir (Kamal 1915: 256),[5] better known as Ankhpepy the Middle. It is thus possible that Ankhmeryra of Hatnub is in fact Ankhmeryra of Meir before he became nomarch. It is worth pointing out that Meir is only a few kilometres south to Hatnub, and, as we saw in graffito 6, at least one expedition could return from Hatnub towards the south, and not to the north to the Residence.

Texts from the time of the Hare nomarchs

The densest concentration of texts remaining at Hatnub is on the south inner wall of the open cast depression in Quarry P. Here, sheltered under a slight overhang of the cliff wall, there is a dense cluster of red inked/painted hieratic texts spread over a width of some 7 m of wall. This space was originally marked off by large boulders at either side, and free standing stelae were originally ranged along the bottom of it (Anthes 1928: 4). The space thus seems to have been marked off as a focus for commemorative activity. The earliest texts on this wall are two giant red-ink hieratic texts commemorating expeditions under the Sixth Dynasty king Teti, but densely clustered above these are the

---

[3] This text was formerly thought to belong to Pepy II (Gourdon 2014: 40-41), but new pictures and cleaning definitely show that its date is from the time of Merenra I.

[4] AGÉA-N/591 : http://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/agea/noms/?noms=%C3%82nkhmeryr%C3%AA&os=1
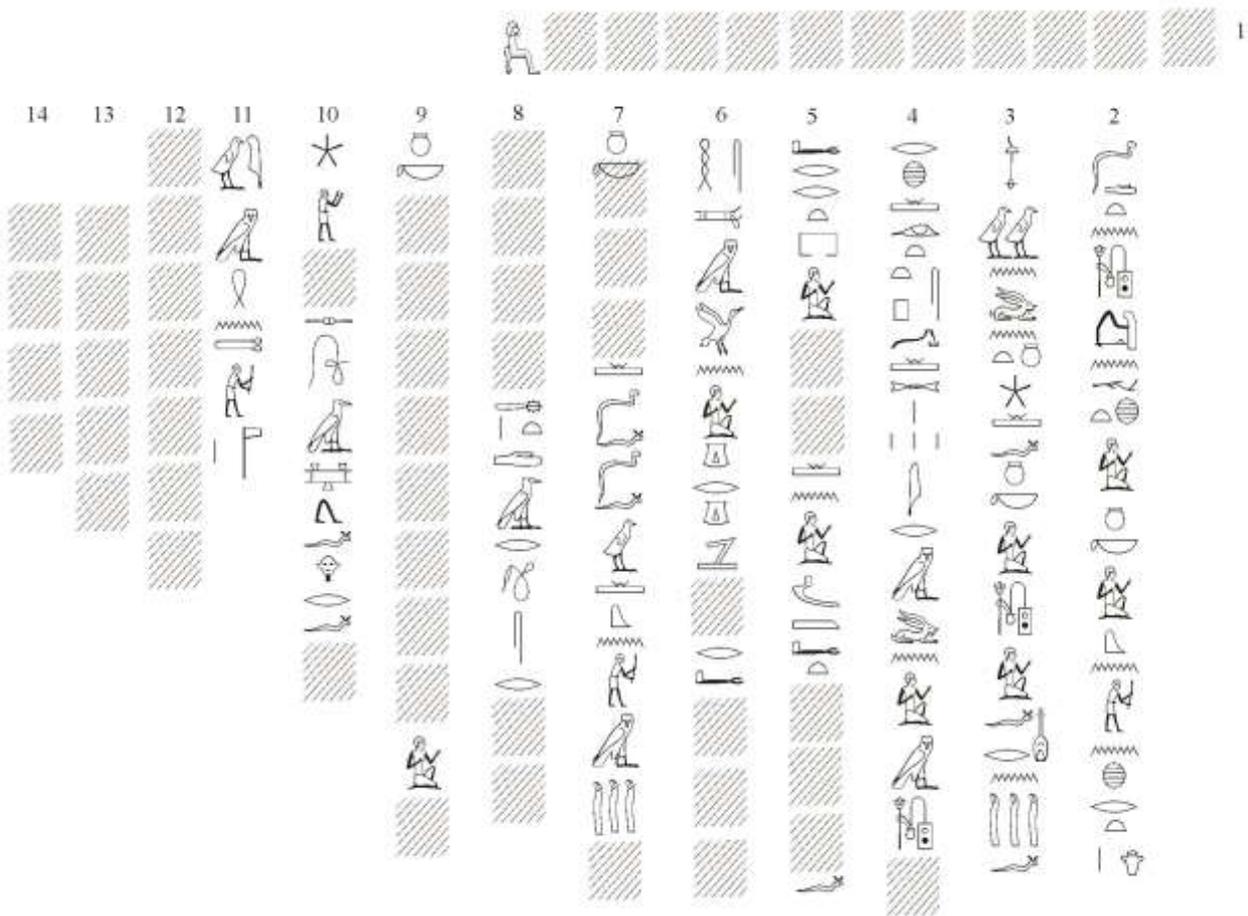
[5] See also AGÉA-N/807.

many red-ink hieratic texts mentioning the nomarchs Ahanakht I, Neheri I, and others of the Hare nome, dating to the late First Intermediate Period to early Middle Kingdom.

There is minimal preparation of the rock surface onto which the texts are written: the surface is usually left uneven and (in many places) is aggressively jagged. The fading of the red paint/ink, and the patination and unevenness of the background rock, make reading these texts difficult, but with the use of digital enhancement technologies such as 'D-stretch',[6] it has been possible not only to identify further unpublished sections of some of the long-known texts on this wall (such as Anthes' graffito 11), but also to find and read many previously unknown or illegible texts.

Many of the newly discovered features comprise red-ink figures of seated or standing men, sometimes with title string and name, sometimes without discernible hieratic accompanying text. These images of men are often arranged in lines, or in some cases in larger, multi-register compositions. A number of larger and longer texts have also been discovered. The largest of these has been provisionally designated CS 8, and comprises a standing red man surrounded by extensive traces of text (at least 40 columns in fact). The text traces are very faint, and full interpretation will only be possible after cleaning and conservation, but suffice it to say that it seems to commemorate one of the nomarchs [Djehuti]nakht or [Aha]nakht, and contains a lengthy series of moral biographical claims.

Another of the newly discovered red-ink texts has been provisionally designated CS 56, which lies to the far left of the wall. Again, while it awaits cleaning and conservation, it already reveals interesting details, commemorating the 'scribe Ahanakht', who has himself depicted at right, standing leaning on a staff, and who tells us:

[… … … …]

ḏdt.n sš ꜥḥꜣ-nḫt

jnk qn n ḫrt-jb

ḥmww n wnwt=f

jnk sš nfr n ḏbꜥw=f

rḫ jrt stp ṯsw

jr m wn=j m sš ꜥrrt

[…].*n=j mꜣꜥt* [… …]=*f*

sḥtm.n=j grg […] *rdj(?)*

jnk [… …] *ḏfḏfw qn m ḏbꜥw=f*

[…]-*ḫt dꜣr sr*[*f* …]

jnk [… … …]

dwꜣ […] *swꜣ=f ḥr=f*

šw m šnṯ nṯr

[… … … …]

[… … … …]

[… … … …]

7

(1) [presumably titles and names of nomarch under whom Ahanakht served, currently illegible]

(2) What the scribe Ahanakht said:

I am a capable one of confidence, (3) a skilled one of his duty.[7]

I am a scribe perfect of his fingers,

(4) who knows how to make choice of words.[8]

When I was scribe of the (5) portal, I [created(?)] truth […]

(6) and I destroyed falsehood […] give(?) […].

(7) I am the [scribe of the archive(?)], abundantly capable[9] with [his] fingers,

(8) [cool of(?)] body, controlled of temp[er …]

(9) I am [… … …]

(10) who praises […] the one who surpasses him,[10]

(11) one free from reviling god,

(12) [… … … …]

(13) [… … … …]

(14) [… … … …]

Several of the damaged passages can be partly restored based on close phraseological and thematic parallels among the other nomarchal-era texts on this wall of Quarry P, particularly Anthes' graffiti 10 and 12, allowing some reconstruction of the destroyed text. It is possible to go a little further than this, however, as it is likely that this individual was responsible for the creation of many of the best known normarchal-era texts at Hatnub. In our new inscription the scribe Ahanakht refers to an (apparently past) time when he was 'scribe of the portal' (*sš ꜥrryt*). This rare title[11] also occurs in connection with several of the long-known nomarchal texts (graffitos 15, 20-21, and 22-25), which were made by a 'scribe of the portal Ahanakht':

- graffito 15 (dated to year 4 of Neheri I) commemorates two individuals, both alluding to their medical knowledge. The larger figure is labelled as 'the *wab*-priest of Sakhmet Herishefnakht'; behind him, and on a somewhat smaller scale, comes 'scribe of the portal Ahanakht', who tells us (amongst other things) 'I was a [*wab*-priest] of Sakhmet, a capable one, a skilled one of his duty'. On a smaller scale in front of Ahanakht are shown two men identified only as 'Nakht' and 'Ahanakht'; they could well be his sons.

---

[7] See Doxey (1998: 345). The phrase also occurs in tomb 17K74/1 at Deir el-Bersha, belonging to the Djehutinakht who probably left Hatnub graffito 12; Willems (2007: 43 n.t) suggests 'a craftsman in his (finest) hour'.

[8] Or perhaps 'a knowledgable one, one select of words'.

[9] For *dfdfw qn*, 'abundant of skill', which also occurs in Hatnub graffito 12, see Ward (1981: 171 n. 2).

[10] See Doxey (1998: 394). There may be no words missing in the lacuna, but cf. graffito 12.5.

[11] In fact, Ward (1982: no. 1366) lists only the examples from Hatnub discussed here.

- graffito 21 (dated to year 6 of Neheri I) proclaims that the 'scribe of the portal and *wab*-priest of Sakhmet Nakht's son Ahanakht' made the adjacent graffito 20 commemorating the nomarch Neheri.

- graffito 25 (dated to year 7 of Neheri I) primarily commemorates the nomarch himself, but a note at the end again tells us it was made by the 'scribe of the portal Nakht's son Ahanakht'. He also created the directly adjacent graffiti 23 and 24 from the same year, commemorating other members of the nomarchal family (Kay and Djehutinakht). In graffito 25, Ahanakht explicitly states that he came to Hatnub with the overseer of the lake Sobekemhat, who is commemorated in graffito 22; it is thus possible that Ahanakht executed Sobekemhat's graffito too.

It is also possible that two other long-known graffiti (18 and 19) refer to the same man:
- Graffito 18 (dated to year 5 of Neheri I) informs us that an [… Aha]nakht[12] created graffiti 16 and 17, commemorating member's of the nomarchal family (Kay and Djehutinakht).

- More tenuously, Graffito 19 (dated to year 5 of Neheri I) commemorates an 'Ahanakht born of Nakht (*ms.n nḫt*)', whose title is 'overseer of craftsmen (*mr ḥmwtyw*). His inscription also tells us that he was 'a skilled one of his duty' but then also goes on to say he was a gold- and silversmith, and worked with precious stones. One potential obstacle to identifying this individual with the author of the other texts is its mention of two sons, Djehutinakht and Sobeknakht, who are not the same as the two possible sons listed in graffito 15.

In all these other texts (except the doubtful graffito 19), scribe Ahanakht takes secondary billing to more highly ranked individuals (though graffito 15 places him nearly on a par with Heryshefnakht). In our newly-discovered text, this does not appear to be the case, and among the many adjacent nomarchal texts on the wall there is no plausible candidate that our new text can be attached to. It thus appears that scribe Ahanakht left this new text primarily for his own benefit, rather than as an 'author's note' ancillary to a nomarchal text.

Scribe Ahanakht's range of titles (medical/priestly, scribal/administrative, and maybe even overseer of craftsmen and smith) shows a broad range of areas of responsibility, and perhaps a pride in his self-presentation as an omnicompetent servant of the nomarchs. The newly found text CS 56 reinforces the sense of this man's central importance in the nomarchal expeditions to Hatnub. It may possibly be slightly later than those previously published, first because unlike them it seems to mention being 'scribe of the portal' as a past activity, but also because the new text occupies a less desirable place,

---

[12] Given as […]nakht in Anthes (1928: 41); the ꜥḥꜣ sign is, however, clear in the digitally enhanced photographs recently taken.

low down on the rock wall, possibly because all the more visible locations higher up the wall had been occupied.

If this text truly is a latecomer among the adjacent texts on the wall, the phraseological parallels with the wall's earlier texts may result from scribe Ahanakht's perusal of them: many of the texts at Hatnub from this period explicitly address future visitors to the quarry, and hence presume that they will be read (it is worth noting that the new text's closest and most plentiful phraseological parallels are with Anthes' graffito 10, which is in a slightly older-fashioned hieratic hand, and which was created by the scribe Khnumiqer and dated to year 20 of nomarch Ahanakht I, perhaps nearly a couple of decades before scribe Ahanakht's activity under nomarch Neheri I).

Be that as it may, some of the phrases in the new text are not directly paralleled at Hatnub, though they are generally reminiscent of the poetic register of Middle Egyptian language: for example, knowing how to choose ones words carefully as a description of eloquence makes one think of *ṯsw stpw* 'choice words/phrases' in e.g. *The Words of Neferti* 1m,[13] and the phrase *sḥtm grg* 'destroy evil' occurs in the *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* B1 98. One wonders whether the use of such expressions at Hatnub is a performative demonstration of scribe Ahanakht's vaunted eloquence.

Conclusion

This very brief overview of some of our new discoveries at Hatnub has shown how even a well-known site can throw up a few surprises. Considering the newly-discovered texts from the end of the Old Kingdom or from the First Intermediate Period/Eleventh Dynasty, the first results of our research within Quarry P are already very positive. The cleaning and conservation of these texts, which began in September 2015, showed that we can hope to learn much more about the expeditions to the Hatnub quarries. Much work remains to be done to determine how, when and why these different strategies of communication were deployed by the ancient visitors to Quarry P.

---

[13] The phrase *stp ṯsw* 'select of words'/'who selects words' also occurs on stelae, such as that of the late Eleventh Dynasty Theban Antef son of Tjefi (MMA 57.95); see Fischer (1960: 261 n. ag).

List of cited references

Anthes, R. 1928. *Die Felseninschriften von Hatnub: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens*. UGÄA 9; Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs.

Baud, M. 2006. The Relative Chronology of Dynasties 6 and 8. In E. Hornung, R. Krauss, and D. Warburton (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*. HdO 83; Leiden, Brill.

Blackden, M. W. and Fraser, G. W. [1894] *Collection of Hieratic Graffiti from the Alabaster Quarry of Hatnub situated near Tell el Amarna*. 'For private circulation only'; no place, no date.

Borchardt, L. 1964. *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches (ausser den Statuen) im Museum von Kairo,* II. CGC; Cairo, Organisme général des imprimeries gouvernementales.

Doxey, D. M. 1998. *Egyptian Non-royal Epithets in the Middle Kingdom: A Social and Historical Analysis*. PdÄ 12; Leiden, Brill.

Fischer, H. G. 1960. The Inscription of *Ỉn-Ỉt.f*, Born of *Ṯfỉ*. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 19: 258-268.

Godicke, H. 1967. *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*. ÄA 14; Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz.

Gourdon, Y. 2014. Les nouvelles inscriptions rupestres de Hatnoub. *BSFE* 189: 26-45.

Gourdon, Y. 2016, *Pépy Ier et la VIe dynastie*. Paris, Pygmalion.

Kamal, A. Bey 1915. Le nouveau tombeau de Méîr. *ASAE* 15: 209-258.

Shaw, I. 2010. *Hatnub: Quarrying Travertine in Ancient Egypt*. EES EM 88; London, Egypt Exploration Society.

Ward, W. A. 1982. *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*. Beirut, American University of Beirut.

Ward, W. A. 1981. Middle Egyptian *smꜣyt*, 'archive'. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 67: 171-172.

Willems, H. 2007. *Dayr al-Barshā*, I: *Rock Tombs of Djehutinakht, Khnumnakht, and Iha*. OLA 155; Leuven, Peeters.