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Pebbles inscribed in Demotic
from a burial in the tomb of Padikem at Tuna el-Gebel*

(Tafel 1–6)

The group of objects presented in this article consists of fifteen quartz pebbles, inscribed in demotic with the names of Egyptian deities. They were excavated in Tuna el-Gebel arranged around the head of a mummy that had been buried without a coffin against the outer eastern wall of Padikem's tomb. The combination of the divine names is unique, and the group of objects is so far unparalleled in a funerary context. Because of the number fifteen and the presence of some specific deities, it is possible to establish a context of the moon eye and rebirth. The pebbles might also reflect in a very simplified way the protective function of funerary masks.

Introduction

Khemenu, Greek Hermupolis, modern el-Ashmunein, was the capital of the fifteenth Upper Egyptian nome and an important administrative centre from an early date onwards. The metropolis was at the same time of great religious importance because of its temple of Thoth, whom the Greeks identified with Hermes. Tuna el-Gebel, the necropolis of Hermupolis, is situated south-west of el-Ashmunein.¹ From the Twenty-sixth Dynasty onwards animal mummies, mainly ibises and baboons, were buried in the underground galleries at Tuna el-Gebel. In the Graeco-Roman period of Egypt, the human burial ground was located near the sacred precinct at Tuna el-Gebel, the so-called 'temple of

* This article is based on a paper presented at the Sixth Demotic Summer School in Heidelberg in August 2009. As always, the discussion was stimulating, and I thank the participants for their useful observations. I am very grateful to John Baines and Sven P. Vleeming for most valuable comments on a draft, to Katja Lembke and Silvia Prell for their helpful archaeological observations, and finally to the referees/editors of *Enchoria*, who made very useful suggestions.

¹ See D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie der Region zwischen Mallawi und Samalut*, Beihefte TAVO Reihe B, Nr. 30 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1981), 19, 109–19, for a geographical and historical description of the necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel.

Thoth'.² The earliest tombs of considerable size were built for the priests of Thoth in around 300 BC, Petosiris and his elder brother Djed-Thoth-*iu-ef-ankh*. While Djed-Thoth-*iu-ef-ankh* had his tomb chapel erected near the animal necropolis,³ Petosiris chose a place about 200 m to the south, much closer to the temple of Thoth. Hermupolis and Tuna el-Gebel became centers of pilgrimage for Greeks and Egyptians, and Petosiris's temple-like tomb soon became a focal point for visitors, who carved graffiti, mainly in Greek but also in demotic, on the walls of both the naos and pronaos and on the columns.⁴

Already from the third century BC onwards, further tombs were built near that of Petosiris, situated along a processional way leading from the Nile valley to the temple of Thoth. Padikem, a royal scribe at Hermupolis responsible for the animal sanctuaries,⁵ was among the first to construct his stone tomb chapel at this site.⁶ It is located around 50 m to the east of Petosiris's tomb chapel and probably also aligned with the processional way that led to the temple of Thoth.⁷ The bipartite tomb of Padikem comprises two chambers, the inner chamber or naos and an outer transverse hall or pronaos. From the inner chamber

² For a plan of the animal necropolis and the temples, including the so-called 'temple of Thoth' or the 'great temple', see D. KESSLER and P. BROSE, *Ägyptens letzte Pyramide. Das Grab des Seuta(s) in Tuna el-Gebel* (Haar: Verlag Patrick Brose, 2008), 104.

³ For a short description of the tomb and its location see M. SABOTTKA, 'Tuna el-Gebel – Grab des Djed-Thot-Iw-Ef-Anch – Vorbericht', *ASAE* 69 (1983), 147–51.

⁴ G. LEFEBVRE, *Le tombeau de Petosiris I* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1924), 21–5.

⁵ For Padikem and his titles see G. GORRE, *Les relations du clergé Égyptien et des lagides d'après les sources privées*. *Studia Hellenistica* 45 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 194–7 (no. 40), 596–8; D. KESSLER, *Die heiligen Tiere und der König I. Beiträge zu Organisation, Kult und Theologie der spätzeitlichen Tierfriedhöfe*, *ÄAT* 16 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), 201–3; ID., 'Tuna el-Gebel', *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* VI, eds. W. HELCK and W. WESTENDORF (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 802.

⁶ There are no clear indicators for an absolute date of the tomb of Padikem. S. GABRA, 'Le monument funéraire de Padykam et de sa famille', in: S. GABRA, É. DRIOTON, P. PERDRIZET, W. G. WADDELL, *Rapport sur les fouilles d'Hermoupolis Ouest (Touna El-Gebel)*, Le Caire 1941, 11, dated Padikem 'à une époque postérieure' compared to Petosiris. GORRE, *Les relations du clergé*, 194, dates it to the third century BC.

⁷ K. LEMBKE et al., 'Preliminary Report on the Survey in the Petosiris Necropolis of Hermopolis/Tuna el-Gebel (Middle Egypt) 2004–2006', *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 2007/2, 81. See ead., 'The Petosiris-Necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel', in K. LEMBKE, M. MINAS-NERPEL, and S. PFEIFFER (eds.), *Tradition and Transformation. Egypt under Roman Rule. Proceedings of the International Conference, Hildesheim, 3–6 July 2008*, *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East* 41 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 231–2. Since 2004, Katja Lembke (Roemer- and Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim/Landesmuseum Hannover) and her team have been investigating the 'Petosiris-necropolis'. This mission continues the research initiated by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft in 1913 under Walter Honroth, resumed by Sami Gabra (Cairo University) in the 1930s and by Günter Grimm (Trier University) in the 1970s and 80s; see G. GRIMM, 'Tuna el-Gebel 1913–1973. Eine Grabung des deutschen Architekten W. Honroth und neuere Untersuchungen in Hermupolis-West (Tanis Superior)', *MDAIK* 31 (1975), 221–36.

a shaft lead to the subterranean burial complex. At least until the second century AD, Padikem's tomb was used for secondary burials.⁸

In contrast to Petosiris's well-preserved tomb chapel, which has a similar ground plan, only the subterranean chambers and the bottom courses of the above-ground structures of Padikem's tomb survive; Sami Gabra excavated them in the 1930s.⁹ Roughly fifty years later, in 1989, Günter Grimm and his team from Trier University removed the sand in and around the tomb of Padikem in order to re-excavate the surviving stone layers. The aim was twofold, firstly to enable Michael Sabbotka to measure the foundation, and secondly to collate the reliefs and inscriptions. In the process, Susanne Nakaten discovered the secondary burial of a human mummy against the outer eastern wall (figs. 1–2). Without a coffin, the body had been buried around 50 cm below the masonry. Fifteen pebbles had been arranged around the head, starting from the shoulders (fig. 3). The mummy disintegrated already during the excavation, but the pebbles were carefully stored in tin boxes in the local magazine, where Katja Lembke rediscovered them in 2007, without any documentation (fig. 4).¹⁰

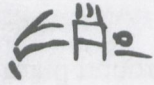
The demotic inscribed divine names

The quartz pebbles, which are most likely of local origin (see the section on the material below), are 2.1 to 4 cm wide and 1.5 to 3.4 cm high (fig. 4). Each pebble is inscribed in black ink in demotic with a divine name. Since there is no documentation about the order in which the pebbles were originally placed around the mummy's head, they are presented alphabetically:

⁸ GABRA et al., *Rapport sur les fouilles d'Hermoupolis Ouest (Touna El-Gebel)*, 13–5, discovered several secondary burials in the tomb of Padikem. A female mummy was dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161) by a coin.

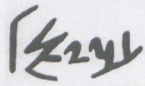
⁹ GABRA et al., *Rapport sur les fouilles d'Hermoupolis Ouest (Touna El-Gebel)*, 11–27.

¹⁰ The excavation of Padikem's tomb in 1989 has not been published. I am therefore most grateful to the late Günter Grimm and to Susanne Nakaten for their personal communications in 2008/9 when I enquired about the tin boxes and the pebbles. They kindly gave me access to the photographs taken in 1989 (fig. 2) and reported that the mummy had been placed between 'the central pillar and the inner wall of the second chamber'. The photographs, however, show clearly the outer eastern wall, and this location has been confirmed by further excavations of the Hildesheim team in autumn 2009 (fig. 1). Susanne Nakaten also very kindly shared her notes with me, including her 1989 correspondence with Harry Smith and his tentative reading of the fifteen names. In 2007, the pebbles were allocated the numbers FN 175, 1–15. The amulets, which S. Nakaten found on the mummy and stored in further tin boxes, are now lost.

Pebble 1.¹¹ *jn-hr.t*: Onuris (fig. 5)

jn, it seems, is written as the *nw*-bowl with walking legs and the water sign *n* or the fish and *n*,¹² followed by the sky-sign, a *t*-sign, and another unrecognisable sign. For this particular writing of *jn* see P. dem. Mallawi Inv. Nr. 480 Recto, Z. 2, also from Tuna el-Gebel.¹³ Because of a regnal year 15 and the early demotic script Zaghloul dates the papyrus to 575 BC,¹⁴ Vittmann to 507 BC.¹⁵ For a comparable, but slightly later hand see P. dem. Louvre E. 3333 from Hermupolis, a letter of complaint from an ibis-embalmer about the dereliction of an ibis-cult. John Ray dates this papyrus to the time of Ptolemy V Epiphanes,¹⁶ so that the question arises whether P. dem. Mallawi Inv. Nr. 480 should perhaps be dated to the Ptolemaic period rather than the sixth century BC.

Onuris is attested in the *Demotisches Namenbuch* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1980–2000), for example s. v. *p3-tj-jn-hr.t* (p. 286), for both the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.

Pebble 2.¹⁷ *jtm*: Atum (fig. 6)

The name consists of a writing of the god Atum with two determinatives, a rather prominent lotus bud and a divine determinative. The lotus is quite surprising and not attested for Atum in the *Demotisches Glossar*, *CDD*, or *LGG*.¹⁸ Though names comprising Atum are well attested in the *Demot. Nb.*, they are never determined by a lotus bud, see for example *p3-šr-jtm* (p. 229), *p3-tj-jtm* (p. 294), *p3-jtm* (p. 355), *t3-šr-jtm* (p. 1091).

¹¹ FN 175, 8. Size: 3.1 cm long and 1.9 cm high.

¹² For the similar writing of *jn* see W. ERICHSEN, *Demotisches Glossar* (Kopenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1954), 33. For the name Onuris (*jn-hr.t*) see *Demotisches Glossar*, 322; *Wb* I 91: „der die Ferne (Göttin) zurückholt als Gottes(bei)name“. *Chicago Demotic Dictionary (CDD)* (s. v. *j*) 158; C. LEITZ et al. (eds.), *Lexikon der Götter und Götterbezeichnungen (LGG)* II. OLA 110 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 378b–379c.

¹³ EL HUSSEIN OMAR M. ZAGHLOUL, ‘Frühdemotische Urkunden aus Hermupolis’, *Bulletin of the Center of Papyrological Studies* 2 (Cairo: Ain Shams University, Center of Papyrological Studies, 1985), 23–31, Abb. 4, Taf. III.

¹⁴ ZAGHLOUL, *Frühdemotische Urkunden*, 4–5, 20: year 15 of Apries.

¹⁵ G. VITTMANN, ‘Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zu Fremden und hellenisierten Ägyptern im Dienste einheimischer Kulte’, in: W. CLARYSSE, A. SCHOORS, H. WILLEMS (eds.), *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years II. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur*. OLA 85 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1232 (with further references), who dates the papyrus to 507 BC: year 15 of Dareios rather than Apries. See also *Demot. Nb. Korrekturen und Nachträge*, 123 (ad p. 27).

¹⁶ J. D. RAY, ‘The Complaint of Herieu’, *RdE* 29, 1977, 97–104.

¹⁷ FN 175, 10. Size: 3.4 cm long and 2.3 cm high.

¹⁸ *LGG* VII 411c–422c. *Demotische Glossar*, 47 (Atum) and 631 (*tm* vollständig sein). *CDD* (s. v. *jtm*) 242.

The scribe could have had the name of Nefertem in mind when writing the *tm*-sign.¹⁹ Nefertem is indeed written with the lotus bud, as attested in the *Demot. Nb.*, for example in the name of *p3-tj-nfr-tm* (p. 320). In the name of Atum on the pebble, however, the divine determinative follows the lotus, whereas it is usually the other way round in the name of Nefertem.

Pebble 3.²⁰ ꞥ*pp*: Apep, the solar scarab (fig. 7)



The name is written alphabetically with a divine determinative and a puzzling small stroke at the end, which we also encounter after the names of Onuris (pebble 1) and Banebdjedet (pebble 5). In hieroglyphs, the name is rendered ꞥ*pj*, ꞥ*bb*, or ꞥ*pp*, usually with a winged beetle as a determinative.²¹ In the *CDD* and the *Demotisches Glossar*, 59, the solar beetle is rendered only as ꞥ*pj*.

Apophis is a less likely but possible alternative reading, since he could also be written ꞥ*pp*, though the usual writing is rather ꞥ*pꞥp*.²² One might expect an evil determinative if the name Apophis was meant.²³

Pebble 4.²⁴ ꞥ*wsjr*: Osiris (fig. 8)



A clear writing of the god Osiris, completed by a divine determinative.

¹⁹ *Demotische Glossar*, 218 (Nefertem).

²⁰ FN 175, 11. Size: 3.6 cm long and 3.4 cm high.

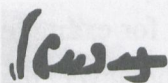
²¹ *Wb* I 178, 10 (ꞥ*bb*); I 179, 22 (ꞥ*pj*); I 180, 5 (ꞥ*pp*). See also M. MINAS-NERPEL, *Der Gott Chepri. Untersuchungen zu Schriftzeugnissen und ikonographischen Quellen vom Alten Reich bis in griechisch-römische Zeit*. OLA 154 (Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Peeters, 2006), 450.

²² *Demotisches Glossar*, 59; *CDD* (s. v. ꞥ) 56–7: ꞥ*pꞥp*, variant: ꞥ*pp*.

²³ Neither ꞥ*pp* nor ꞥ*pj* is cited in the *Demot. Nb.*, but in the Myth of the Sun's Eye 9, 17: ꞥ*pꞥj*, the solar beetle, see W. SPIEGELBERG, *Der ägyptische Mythos vom Sonnenauge nach dem Leidener demotischen Papyrus I 384* (Strassburg: Strassburger Druckerei und Verlagsanstalt), 86; F. DE CENIVAL, *Le mythe de l'oeil du soleil translittération et traduction avec commentaire philologique*. Demotische Studien 9 (Sommerhausen: Verlag Gisela Zauzich, 1988), 26, and Myth of the Sun's Eye 21, 31: ꞥ*pꞥp*, Apophis (SPIEGELBERG, p. 87) or ꞥ*pp.w* (DE CENIVAL, p. 68).

²⁴ FN 175, 4. Size: 2.1 cm long and 1.5 cm high.

Pebble 5.²⁵ *b3-nb-dd.t*: Banebdjedet, ‘The Ram, Lord of Mendes’ (fig. 9)



The divine name reads *b(3)-nb-dd.t*,²⁶ the designation of the chief deity of Mendes, who manifested himself in a ram.²⁷ The name is written with a clear *b* and *n*, followed by two small strokes, a simplified ligature of *t* and egg, and a divine determinative. For comparable writings see *Demot. Nb.* 661 (*ns-b3-nb-dd.t*).²⁸

Pebble 6.²⁹ *pth*: Ptah (fig. 10)



The name consists of a common writing of Ptah ending with a divine determinative plus one additional sign, which is not attested for Ptah in the *Demotisches Glossar*, 142, or the *CDD*. The question arises whether this sign might be an extend sign of the divine determinative, perhaps like the little stroke following the name *p3-dj-ptḥ* (*Demot. Nb.* 309. 2–3) or *pa-ptḥ* (*Demot. Nb.*, 367.1–2, 5). The writing of the divine name with the separate *h* seems to occur more earlier than late.³⁰

A further possible reading of the first two signs could be the *k3*-arms plus an ideogram stroke, referring to the *ka*, the aspect of the human person, which is not attested in the *Demotisches Glossar*, whereas *k3w* ‘nourishment’ is known (*Demotisches Glossar*, 557), with the typical pellet determinative plus plural strokes completing the word. This pellet/plural determinative is also found in the *CDD* for *k3.w*, the plural of the aspect of the human person. This plural determinative might have been abbreviated to the short form on the pebble following the divine determinative. It does not, however, solve the question why the *Ka* should be referred to on a pebble, so I prefer to read Ptah.

²⁵ FN 175, 9. Size: 3.2 cm long and 2.2 cm high.

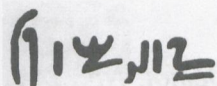
²⁶ *CDD* [s. v. *b(3)-nb-dt.(t)*], 5. See *LGG* II 683b–685a: ‘Der Ba (Widder), der Herr von Mendes’.

²⁷ E. SWAN HALL and B. V. BOTHMER (eds.), *Mendes I* (Cairo: The American Research Center in Egypt, 1980), vii–viii. H. DE MEULENAERE, ‘Cult and Priesthoods of the Mendesian Nome’, in: H. DE MEULENAERE and P. MACKAY, *Mendes II* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1976), 178–81. D. B. REDFORD, *City of the Ram-Man. The Story of Ancient Mendes* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 124–37.

²⁸ To read the name *bnw*, ‘phoenix’, seems less likely (*Demotisches Glossar*, 117). Besides *bnw*, a word *bjn* ‘heron’ is cited in the *Demotisches Glossar*, 112 (*bjn*); see *CDD* (s. v. *b*) 51. See also W. SPIEGELBERG, ‘Zu dem Namen des Phönix’, *ZÄS* 46 (1909) 142.

²⁹ FN 175, 5. Size: 2.7 cm long and 2.5 cm high.

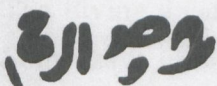
³⁰ W. ERICHSEN, *Auswahl frühdemotischer Texte zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht, sowie zum Selbststudium 3: Schriftliste* (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1950), 15, 27.

Pebble 7.³¹ *mꜣj-ḥs*: Mahes/Miysis (fig. 11)


The name is a clear writing of the god Mahes/Miysis, the ferocious lion.³² Miysis is attested in the *Demot. Nb.*, for example s. v. *mꜣj-ḥs* (p. 576), *ḥr-mꜣj-ḥs* (p. 815: Horus-Miysis), or *tꜣ-šr.t-ḥr-mꜣj-ḥs* (p. 1142: ‘the daughter of Horus-Miysis’) for both the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.

Pebble 8.³³ *mntj-sꜣ-ꜣs.t*: Montu, son of Isis (fig. 12)


The filiation ‘son of Isis’ is otherwise unknown for Montu.³⁴ Originally a local Theban solar deity, Montu became a state and war god, who could manifest himself in a falcon. Because of this appearance “hat man Month früh als eine Form des Horus verstanden. Man nannte ihn geradezu den ‚thebanischen Horus‘.”³⁵ This might explain his association with Isis, with whom he is usually not combined,³⁶ but the writing seems rather clear. The only other option, it seems, is to read the *sꜣ*-sign as the hieratic flame *ps* and thus the name as *Mnt-ps*, the burning Montu. However, this epithet is not attested for Montu so far either, only for *kꜣ ps*, the burning bull.³⁷ Since Montu manifests himself in the form of the Buchis bull, such a connection cannot be ruled out.

Pebble 9.³⁸ *mḥj*: Lion-goddess Mehit (fig. 13)


The name of the lion goddess Mehit is associated with the Egyptian verb *mḥ* ‘to seize, to fill’.³⁹ In allusion to the moon that is filled again, her name *mḥj* can be understood as ‘the

³¹ FN 175, 7. Size: 3 cm long and 1.9 cm high.

³² *Demotisches Glossar*, 148, 331; *Wb* II 12; *LGG* III 211a–212b.

³³ FN 175, 12. Size: 2.9 cm long and 2.5 cm high.

³⁴ Not in the *LGG* or *CDD*.

³⁵ H. BONNET, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1952), 476. See also the name ‘Horus-Month’ in the *Demot. Nb.* 818.

³⁶ Montu is related rather to Rat-Taui, see e.g. BONNET, *Reallexikon*, 478.

³⁷ For *kꜣ ps* see *LGG* VII 256a–c. I am grateful to Friedhelm Hoffmann for drawing my attention to this designation. For the *ps*-sign see F. HOFFMANN, ‘Die Verwendung hieratischer Zeichen in demotischen und medizinischen Texten’, in: S. P. VLEEMING (ed.), *Aspects of Demotic Orthography. Acts of an International Colloquium Held in Trier, 8 November 2010*, *Studia Demotica* XI (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 31–2 with note 9.

³⁸ FN 175, 6. Size: 2.9 cm long and 1.9 cm high.

one that is filled'.⁴⁰ The ancient Egyptians identified Mehit with the eye of the moon or the eye of heaven.

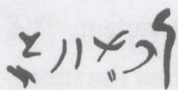
Mehit is well attested in personal names, for example in *p3-šr-mhj* (*Demot. Nb.*, 250, only Ptolemaic), *p3-mhj* (*Demot. Nb.*, 375, only Ptolemaic), *t3-šrj.t-mh.t* (*Demot. Nb.* 1114: the writing of Mehit seems to fit the Ptolemaic period best) and *mhj-wsh.t* (*Demot. Nb.*, 604: attested in the pre-Ptolemaic and the Roman periods).

Pebble 10.⁴¹ *nj.t*: Neith (fig. 14)



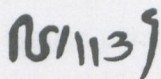
The name is a clear writing of the goddess Neith.⁴² The goddess is attested in personal names, for example in *p3-tj-nj.t* (*Demot. Nb.* 316, Ptolemaic) and *pa-nj.t* (*Demot. Nb.* 385, only Ptolemaic).

Pebble 11.⁴³ *h(3.t)-mhj*: Hatmehit (fig. 15)



This is a clear writing of the nome deity of Mendes in the Delta, consisting of the forepart of a lion and the name of Mehit, related to Pebble 9, though written with a much finer rush. Hatmehit is a well-known goddess, but very rarely attested in demotic.⁴⁴

Pebble 12.⁴⁵ *hmj*: Hemi (fig. 16)



The name of the minor god Hemi is presented in a purely alphabetical writing with a snake determinative.⁴⁶

³⁹ *Demotisches Glossar*, 174; *Wb* II 127; *LGG* III 371a–372a: „Die Packende(?)”.

⁴⁰ L. KAKOSY, ‘Mehit’, *LÄ* IV (1982), 5–6.

⁴¹ FN 175, 14. Size: 4 cm long and 2.7 cm high.

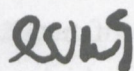
⁴² *Demotisches Glossar*, 206–7. See *Wb* II 198. See also *Demot. Nb.* 316 (*p3-tj-nj.t*).

⁴³ FN 175, 15. Size: 3.8 cm long and 2.3 cm high.

⁴⁴ For the evidence see K. RYHOLT, *The Petese Stories II (P. Petese II)* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1999), 101–2 (with further references). The divine name Hatmehit is not listed in the *Demotisches Glossar*, *CDD*, or the *Demot. Nb.*, but see *Wb* III 21, 15 (Göttin des Gaus von Mendes) and 127, 12 (Name der Göttin des Gaus von Mendes, ursprünglich wohl Name des Gaus selbst), and *LGG* V 17c–18b.

⁴⁵ FN 175, 1. Size: 2.9 cm long and 1.9 cm high.

Pebble 13.⁴⁷ *hnb*: Heneb (fig. 17)



The minor god is written alphabetically *hb*, with a prominent snake determinative, but should be read *H<n>b*, as pointed out by D. Devauchelle.⁴⁸

Pebble 14.⁴⁹ *hr*: Horus (fig. 18)



This is a clear writing of the god Horus,⁵⁰ whose name is well attested in the *Demot. Nb.*, for example in *p3-tj-hr* (p. 322–3).

Pebble 15.⁵¹ *hr-p3-hrd*: Harpokrates (fig. 19)



The clear writing for Harpokrates is completed by a divine determinative.⁵² For a comparable writing, dating to the Ptolemaic Period, see for example *Demot. Nb.*, 688 (9: *ns-hr-p3-hrd*).

Analysis

The divine names on the fifteen pebbles represent a rather unusual grouping of deities. Some have obvious connections to funerary rituals or a clear relation to resurrection or creation, such as Atum, Osiris, and Harpokrates. Horus the child was venerated at Hermupolis, as several priestly titles attest, and he stood, among other things, for

⁴⁶ *Wb* III 82, 2. According to *LGG* V 147a, *Hmy-š3-rnw* ‘*Hmy* mit vielen Namen’, is written without any determinative, but was a ram-headed deity in a sarcophagus. *LGG* V 142c also lists a *hmy* ‘Steuermann’, but this does not fit the context with the snake determinative.

⁴⁷ FN 175, 3. Size: 2.9 cm long and 2.8 cm high.

⁴⁸ For the god Heneb see D. DEVAUCHELLE, ‘Notes et documents pour servir à l’histoire du Sérapéum de Memphis (VI–X)’, *RdE* 51 (2000), 29–31, who refers to the reading of *P3-dj-hk3* in the *Demot. Nb.*, 336, which should be corrected to *p3-dj-hb3* or *p3-dj-hnb3*. I am grateful to Günter Vittmann for drawing my attention to this reference.

⁴⁹ FN 175, 13. Size: 3.4 cm long and 2.1 cm high.

⁵⁰ *Demotisches Glossar*, 316.

⁵¹ FN 175, 2. Size: 2.8 cm long and 1.9 cm high.

⁵² *Demotisches Glossar*, 393.

regeneration.⁵³ The wise and powerful Neith is associated with Lower Egypt in general, and from the Late Period onwards with Sais in particular. She is a goddess of many different aspects, a primeval one as much as a goddess of war and hunting, but she has also domestic and funerary aspects as the goddess of weaving. As the latter, she bestows mummy shrouds upon the deceased, which could have been one reason why her name is inscribed on a pebble in a burial context. Furthermore, together with Isis, Nephthys, and Selket, she also watches over Osiris on his bier (Pyr. 606) and is generally regarded as a protective goddess of the dead.⁵⁴ Her name, when invoked, promised magical protection, for which the deceased in Tuna el-Gebel obviously wished. Apep, the solar scarab, embodies the hope for rebirth in the afterlife, since he represents the sun god who ascends to heaven.

The pebbles include two protective deities in snake form, Hemi and Heneb. Hemi is known as a heavenly creature from Pyramid Texts: 'O *h̄mj*, O *sh̄d*-star, I will never give you my magic, for I sit side by side with Her who is holy in On. Take me to the sky.'⁵⁵ Heneb is venerated as a god in snake form, in particular in Herakleopolis, where in myth he protects Osiris's body.⁵⁶ Herakleopolis is around 130 km north of Tuna el-Gebel, and Heneb's cult could have spread southward. Both Hemi and Heneb are minor gods, whose presence on the pebbles is striking.

The pebbles also invoke two lion deities, Mahes/Miysis and Mehit. Mahes is known already from the Pyramid Texts (Pyr. 573a, 1124b) in the meaning of lion but does not designate a deity before the MK.⁵⁷ Mahes was the son of Bastet or Sakhmet and associated with Bubastis and Leontopolis (Tell el Muqdam) in the Nile delta. From these traditional cult centres in the north the worship of Mahes spread southwards right into Nubia. He was predominantly a war god and guardian of sacred places, but was also identified with the sun god. His cult spread relatively late, mainly in the Libyan and Late periods, and became prominent in the Graeco-Roman period. In Tuna el-Gebel, he was presumably invoked because of his protective qualities.

⁵³ S. SANDRI, *Har-pa-chered (Harpokrates), Die Genese eines Götterkindes*, OLA 151 (Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Peeters), 53, 78, 178–85.

⁵⁴ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, 512–6; R. SCHLICHTING, 'Neith', *LÄ* IV (1982), 392–4.

⁵⁵ Pyr. 506. For the translation see R. O. FAULKNER, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 99.

⁵⁶ DEVAUCHELLE, *RdE* 51 (2000), 30. See also *LGG* V 220a–b.

⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion of Mahes see L. V. ŽABKAR, *Apedemak. Lion God of Meroe. A Study in Egyptian-Meroitic Syncretism* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1975), 52–70, and ID., 'Miysis', *LÄ* IV (1982), 163–4.

The goddess Mehit is quite unexpected in a funerary context, but in Tuna el-Gebel and Hermupolis, the city of Thoth, her name might not be so exceptional since it alludes to the waxing of the moon and thus to the context of resurrection. The Egyptians identified Mehit with the eye of the moon or the eye of heaven. In myth, Mehit is associated with Onuris,⁵⁸ who is also present among the pebbles. In the mythology of the sun and moon eyes, Onuris takes over characteristics of Thoth, and as a powerful war god he is connected to Horus and Montu,⁵⁹ both of whom are named on the pebbles. In the funerary context, Montu plays a rather subordinate role,⁶⁰ and his connection to Isis is otherwise unknown, but maybe comprehensible through his Theban connection with Horus. Montu seemed – perhaps only locally – important for the protection of a mummy.

To find the goddess Hatmehit among the deities of the pebbles is also rather striking. As the nome deity of Mendes in the Delta,⁶¹ bearing her emblem of a fish (or dolphin) on her head,⁶² she was originally restricted to her local area. Since she had helped to find Osiris's scattered limbs she gained supra-regional importance as a protective goddess in the context of resurrection and could thus be equated with Isis,⁶³ who is not named on the pebbles except as the mother of Montu. Hatmehit's name may allude to a possible connection of the deceased to the Delta, which Sami Gabra had postulated for the original tomb owner, Padikem. The name Padikem means 'he whom Kem has given'. The bull Kem or Kemwer, the huge black one, was venerated at Athribis in the Delta, in the tenth Lower Egyptian nome.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ L. KAKOSY, 'Mehit', *LÄ* IV (1982), 5.

⁵⁹ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, 545–7.

⁶⁰ J. F. BORGHOUTS, 'Month', *LÄ* IV (1982), 201–2.

⁶¹ Attested for example on the Mendes stela, where she is depicted and captioned on the lunette: *Urk.* II 32, 1–3. See A. GEISSEN and M. WEBER, 'Untersuchungen zu den ägyptischen Nomenprägungen IX, 15.–19. Unterägyptischer Gau', *ZPE* 160 (2007), 277–8.

⁶² I. GAMER-WALLERT, *Fische und Fischkulte im Alten Ägypten*, *ÄA* 21 (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1970), 98–101; A. GEISSEN and M. WEBER, *ZPE* 160, 2007, 275–300, esp. 277–9. According to D. KESSLER, *Die heiligen Tiere und der König*, 158, Hatmehit's fish is also a sign of protection, especially for rebirth and the deceased's transformation into Osiris, and thus very appropriate for a burial. For Hatemhit's mythological background, of which little is known, see also C. LEITZ, *Tagewählerei. Das Buch ḥt nḥ ph.wy dt und verwandte Texte*, *ÄA* 55 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 187–9.

⁶³ I. GAMER-WALLERT, 'Hatmehit', *LÄ* II (1977), 1042–3; BONNET, *Reallexikon*, 282.

⁶⁴ GABRA et al., *Rapport sur les fouilles d'Hermoupolis Ouest (Touna El-Gebel)*, 12. For Padikem see also H. RANKE, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen I. Verzeichnis der Namen* (Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1935), 126.11, with a reference to *km* as the name of the god in Athribis. For Kemwer see P. VERNUS, *Athribis, textes et documents relatifs à la géographie, aux cultes, et à l'histoire d'une ville du delta égyptien à l'époque pharaonique*, *BdE* 74 (Le Caire: IFAO, 1977), 411–3. According to KESSLER, *Die heiligen Tiere und der König*, 201, Padikem's father Thoteus and his grandfather Disuhor had also been administrators at Tuna el-Gebel (see also GORRE, *Les relations du clergé Égyptien et des lagides*, 194). It

Hatmehit was associated with Banebdjedet, the ram of Mendes, who is also attested on the pebbles. Together with their son Harpokrates they formed the Mendesian triad. Banebdjedet's procreative abilities were stressed in his personality and cult, emphasising the god's regenerating power.⁶⁵ Because of the homonymy of *b3* 'ram' and *b3* 'ba-spirit', Banebdjedet was also described as the spirit of Osiris, and certain characteristics of that god were attributed to him as well.⁶⁶

There are probably enough reasons why the name of each of these deities was inscribed on the pebbles in order to protect the deceased, even if some of them are unusual in such a context. However, one is struck that some of the more important deities are absent, for example Isis and Nephthys, who are strongly linked with funerary rites. For this burial, other goddesses such as Hatmehit may have taken over their characteristics. Thoth, the patron deity of Hermupolis and Tuna el-Gebel, is also not named on the pebbles, a point that is addressed below. But before discussing the function of the pebbles in more detail, their specific number should be considered.

The specific quantity of pebbles: 15

The two tin cans contained fifteen pebbles. Günter Grimm and Susanne Nakaten, the excavators, confirmed this number in person. Once they had realised that there were inscribed pebbles placed right next to the mummy, they carefully sieved the sand and found exactly that many around the mummy's head.

There is no obvious Egyptian symbolism associated with the number 15, in contrast to the numbers 1 to 4 or 7 to 9, for example.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the Egyptians connected the number 15 with one important event, the waxing and waning of the moon. On average, the number of days between two similar phases, such as one full moon and the next, is about thirty days. Therefore, the new moon needs fifteen days to change into a full moon.

is noticeable that the grandfather Disuhor had been married to the musician TadiKem, whose name also established a relationship to Kem(wer).

⁶⁵ H. DE MEULENAERE, 'Cults and Priesthoods of the Mendesian Nome', in: H. DE MEULENAERE and P. MACKAY, *Mendes II* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1976), 178–81. D. B. REDFORD, *City of the Ram-Man. The Story of Ancient Mendes* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 124–37.

⁶⁶ DE MEULENAERE, 'Cults and Priesthoods of the Mendesian Nome', 179 (with further references in n. 28).

⁶⁷ R. H. WILKINSON, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994); he does not discuss the number 15 in his chapter on the symbolism of numbers (pp. 126–47). K. SETHE, *Von Zahlen und Zahlworten bei den alten Ägyptern und was für andere Völker und Sprachen zu lernen ist. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Rechenkunst und Sprache* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1916), 33, did not discuss this number either.

Thoth, the chief god of Hermupolis and Tuna el-Gebel, is a moon god, and his relation to the heavenly body is twofold. He can be directly identified with the moon,⁶⁸ but in another mythological tradition, he only protects it,⁶⁹ since he finds and heals the sacred eye that is identified with the moon. The connection to Thoth and the importance of the number 15, the full and the new moon, is referred to in the Coffin Texts: 'I know the souls of Khemenu. What is small in the full month and great in the half-month, that is Thoth.'⁷⁰ The half-month falls on the fifteenth day of a month.⁷¹

When Seth and Horus fought for the legacy of Osiris, the kingship of Egypt, Horus lost his eye. In their battle, Seth had torn out Horus's eye and damaged it, but Thoth, the god of wisdom who knows the correct ways in dealing with the heavenly bodies, found and healed the moon eye, an episode that is directly related to the waxing and waning of the moon. This episode is also related to the danger that there would be an eclipse which happens only on the day of the full moon; after it the moon would come forth again as full and perfect as before, in Egyptian terms: *wḏ3*.⁷² In this process, Thoth is supported by Onuris,⁷³ who is also named on the pebbles. As mentioned above, Mehit is identified with the moon eye of the sky god Horus.

The god of the dead, Osiris, and the moon eye share the same fate in being dismembered by Seth and healed again, except for one missing part. This parallel might have been the point of departure for seeing Osiris as a lunar deity.⁷⁴ Osiris is identified with the

⁶⁸ P. BOYLAN, *Thoth. The Hermes of Egypt. A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 62–8. For Thoth as a lunar deity see also M. A. STADLER, *Weiser und Wesir. Studien zu Vorkommen, Rolle und Wesen des Gottes Thot im ägyptischen Totenbuch*, *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike* 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 200–18.

⁶⁹ BOYLAN, *Thoth*, 68–75.

⁷⁰ Spell 156: CT II 323–5. See R. O. FAULKNER, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts I* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1973), 134.

⁷¹ FAULKNER, *Coffin Texts I*, 135, n. 8, explained for the spell in question that 'Sethe's allocation of the half-month and the full month to the 15th and the 2nd days of the month is correct in terms of the 360-day calendar'. See also STADLER, *Weiser und Wesir*, 395, who translates CT II 325–5 without comment: 'Ich kenne die Bau von Hermupolis, das Kleine am Fest des zweiten Mondmonatstages und das Große am 15. Monatstag: Es ist Thot'. For the significance of the fifteenth day and further texts see BOYLAN, *Thoth*, 69.

⁷² BOYLAN, *Thoth*, 70.

⁷³ P. DERCHAIN, *La lune, mythes et rites*. *Sources orientales* 5 (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1962), 36–40; D. KURTH, 'Thot', *LÄ* VI (1986), 508.

⁷⁴ For Osiris's lunar aspect see DERCHAIN, *La lune*, 44–6; M. SMITH, *Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the British Museum III. The Mortuary Texts of Papyrus BM 10507* (London: British Museum, 1987), 60–1; ID., *Papyrus Harkness (MMA 31.9.7)* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2005), 126, note f (with references). See also P. P. KOEMOTH, 'Osiris-Lune, l'horizon et l'œil oudjat', *CdE* 71 (1996), 208–20; A. VON LIEVEN, *Der Himmel über Esna. Eine Fallstudie zur religiösen Astronomie in Ägypten am Beispiel der kosmologischen Decken- und Architravinschriften im Tempel von Esna*, *ÄA* 64 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 22–3, 127–32 (with references).

moon and thus associated with the *udjat*-eye.⁷⁵ In addition, Thoth appears as Osiris-Ibis and Osiris-Baboon in the Osiris sanctuaries of Tuna el-Gebel.⁷⁶

Osiris's relation with Thoth becomes further apparent in the 'lunar stairs' depicted for example on the ceiling of the third western chapel of Osiris on the rooftop of the temple of Hathor at Dendera.⁷⁷ The period of the waxing moon is symbolised in the form of a staircase comprising fourteen steps, on which fourteen deities are depicted.⁷⁸ They help Thoth, who is shown on an additional fifteenth platform in front of the *udjat*-eye, in filling or healing the moon eye. Once again, the number 15 is displayed in connection with Thoth and Osiris.

A similar staircase is depicted on the east wall of the naos or inner chamber of Petosiris's tomb. The staircase leads to a platform, on which Djedhor, Petosiris's son and the *sem*-priest, ritually purifies the mummy of his grandfather (and Petosiris's father) Nesshu before the tomb, with the text of Opening the Mouth next to it.⁷⁹ No deities are depicted on the stairs and the mummy takes the place of the *udjat*-eye, but the scene obviously alludes to the lunar stairs represented in later Graeco-Roman period temples.⁸⁰ If one includes the base, the number of levels is again fifteen. The idea of the staircase depicting the lunar cycle and the connection of Thoth and Osiris had thus already been represented in the most prominent tomb chapel in Tuna el-Gebel before it was shown in

⁷⁵ See Esna text 434: 'Geöffnet sind die Türflügel des Himmels, aufgetan sind die Türflügel der Nut, das heile Auge leuchtet für alle, die Re geschaffen hat, Osiris lebt durch es als Mond, Oberhaupt des Monats.' (translation by VON LIEVEN, *Der Himmel über Esna*, 125; see also pp. 21–3 and 127–32).

⁷⁶ For example in Paviankultraum G-C-C-2: D. KESSLER, *Tuna el Gebel II. Die Paviankultkammer G-C-C-2*, HÄB 43 (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1998), especially pp. 100–1, 114.

⁷⁷ B. PORTER and R. L. MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings VI. Upper Egypt, Chief Temples, (Excluding Thebes), Abydos, Dendera, Esna, Edfu, Kôm Ombo and Philae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 96, West Osiris Chapel, Inner Room, Ceiling. Dendera X/2, Pl. 260, 283. S. CAUVILLE, *Le temple de Dendara. Les chapelles osiriennes II. Commentaire*, BdE 118 (Le Caire: IFAO, 1997), 204–5. For this and further attestations see PH. DERCHAIN, 'La pêche de l'œil et les mystères d'Osiris à Dendera', *RdE* 15 (1963), 11–25; F.-R. HERBIN, 'Un hymne à la lune croissante', *BIFAO* 82 (1982), 237–82. For the general context of these lunar stairs see D. KURTH, 'Thot', *LÄ* VI (1986), 504 and n. 90.

⁷⁸ CAUVILLE, *Les chapelles osiriennes* II, 204, designates the deities on the stairs as "l'ennéade thébaine".

⁷⁹ PM IV 172 (81)–(82), Upper register. East wall of the naos, scene 90: N. CHERPION, J.-P. CORTEGGIANI, and J.-F. GOUT, *Le tombeau de Pétosiris à Touna el-Gebel. Relevé photographique*, Bibliothèque générale 27 (Le Caire: IFAO, 2007), 129, 132; LEFEBVRE, *Le tombeau de Petosiris* III, pl. xxviii, xxxii. Text of Opening of the Mouth: LEFEBVRE, *Le tombeau de Petosiris* II, 60–64, no. 82.

⁸⁰ Similar steep staircases leading to tombs, almost like 'podium temples', are archaeologically attested in Tuna el-Gebel, for example in T1 and T12 (GABRA et al., *Rapport sur les fouilles d'Hermoupolis Ouest (Touna El-Gebel)*, pl. 18–20, 29), or GB 51, an early Ptolemaic tomb, which K. Lembke and her team excavated in 2009/10 (monograph on the early Ptolemaic tombs in preparation by K. Lembke and S. Prell). The number of stairs in any of these cases, however, does not add up to fifteen. They are also different to the rather shallow ramp leading to the tomb of Padikem.

the temples. This scene demonstrates that the Hermupolitan priests pursued lunar-Osirian ideas. The fifteen pebbles placed near a mummy's head, that is around a deceased person transformed into Osiris, should be seen in the same context.

To navigate the way to and through the afterlife, the deceased hoped for Thoth's support, especially at Hermupolis and Tuna el-Gebel. As a moon god Thoth symbolizes monthly regeneration, in which the deceased expects to partake. Thus, a deceased could be designated as Thoth's brother,⁸¹ repeating the moon's renewal.⁸² One can therefore ask whether the deceased had been identified with Thoth. This might be a reason why the moon god is not referred to on the pebbles. Otherwise, one would have expected that the protection of the chief god of the area would have been invoked by naming him on a pebble.

Possible parallels?

The fifteen quartz pebbles are the only ones known so far in Tuna el-Gebel to be inscribed with divine names. Other inscribed small round stone objects, including a flint pebble, have recently been discovered in Tuna el-Gebel by the Munich expedition. They are not inscribed with divine names though, but with other short texts.⁸³ A further inscribed flint pebble was excavated in 2009 by the Hildesheim team, once again next to the tomb of Padikem, but this time much larger than the pebbles discussed here and inscribed with three lines of demotic. It belongs to a different context and is therefore discussed in the Appendix at the end of this article. For our purpose, however, these additional small stone objects recently found in different contexts confirm the habit of utilizing cheap local

⁸¹ See D. KURTH, 'Thot', *LÄ* VI (1986), 505 (with n. 102–3).

⁸² W. HELCK, 'Mond', *LÄ* IV (1982), 192 (with n. 3).

⁸³ I thank Friedhelm Hoffmann for this information (personal communication, 20 July 2012). I am also grateful to Brian Muhs for drawing my attention to two stone pebbles or cobbles inscribed in demotic, housed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA M.80.203.216 ('irregular worn stone cobble, 5.8 x 10.3 cm; 2 lines Demotic on Side A, 1 line Demotic on Side B; it appears to preserve the names of at least two people') and LACMA M.80.203.217 ('egg-shaped stone cobble, 7.8 x 11.8 cm. 4 lines Demotic, beginning with a date; possibly a receipt'). See a generic reference in B. P. MUHS, K. A. WÖRPER, AND J. VAN DER VLIET, 'Ostraca and Mummy Labels in Los Angeles', *BASP* 43 (2006), 11, where they refer to demotic ostraca on limestone fragments. B. Muhs now wonders whether they might be hard stone rather than limestone (personal communication, 4 September 2009). Images and short descriptions of these cobbles or pebbles are available at the LACMA website:

<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=46762;type=101>,

<http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=46763;type=101>.

material in different administrative and religious contexts (for a short discussion of quartz and flint and their symbolic meaning, see below).⁸⁴

The only other inscribed pebbles from a funerary context of which I am aware of come from the Bucheum at Armant.⁸⁵ Single personal names were roughly written on them, often preceded by a number.⁸⁶ They could have been used as votive offerings that seem to 'have originated after the names dropped off the private stelae, and to have run parallel to the two stages of uninscribed stelae ... It may, perhaps, be suggested that the modern custom of dropping a pebble on a Sheikh's grave may have originated in these named pebbles'.⁸⁷ These named pebbles are not dated, and the publication does not give their size. Even if the Tuna el-Gebel and the Bucheum pebbles are similar in that they bear a single name, the Tuna el-Gebel ones are divine and the Bucheum ones are private. The purposes of the two groups are different. However, it is important that the use of pebbles as a cheap writing material is not attested only at Tuna el-Gebel. One should assume that this habit might have been even more wide spread, but pebbles – a material so common in Tuna el-Gebel – can easily be overlooked during an excavation in their natural environment, especially when covered in dust and sand, when the script is almost invisible.

One knapped pebble from the Bucheum is altogether different from those bearing names: a late Ptolemaic hymn or prayer to Buchis is inscribed in fourteen lines on an

⁸⁴ In relation to small stone objects, recent discussion of the 'l 'stone' comes to mind. This 'l mentioned in P.dem.Wien D. 12006 Recto, col. 1.1, is published by M. A. STADLER, *Isis, das göttliche Kind und die Weltordnung. Neue religiöse Texte aus dem Fayum nach dem Papyrus Wien D. 12006 Recto*, Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek (Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer), Neue Serie 28, 2 (Wien: In Kommission bei Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 2004), 47, 88–9, who translates 'l as 'child' instead of 'stone'. J. F. QUACK disputes this rendering in his review of STADLER in *APF* 51 (2005), 174–5. STADLER in turn contests QUACK's translation as 'stone' in his response 'Isis würfelt nicht', *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia* 3 (2006), 187–203. QUACK stresses the divinatory aspect of the stone, which is entirely different to the magical purpose of the Tuna el-Gebel pebbles, but may demonstrate the relevance of these small and cheap stone objects in very different circumstances.

⁸⁵ R. MOND and O. H. MYERS, *The Bucheum* I, *Memoir of the Egypt Exploration Society* 41 (London: EES, 1934), 165–7 (Class VI); II, 65–6 (translation and comments by G. MATTHA); III, pl. LXXII (nos. 100–2, 105, 162, 164, 166). The photographs show the names only, but not the entire pebbles. No exact findspot is provided except for 'north end of the Bucheum' (vol. I, 166). On p. 133 of vol. I, it is stated that 'The provenance of the objects has little bearing on their significance'.

⁸⁶ On pebbles nos. 100, 102, and 105, the names are preceded by the numeral 2, on pebble no. 162 by the numeral 5, and on pebble no. 166 by the numeral 20 (G. MATTHA, in: MOND and MYERS, *The Bucheum* II, 65–6, read instead *p3* 'belonging to' [nos. 100–2, 105, 162, 164] and *mr* 'superintendent' [no. 166]). It is not clear what these numbers refer to.

⁸⁷ T. J. C. BALY, 'The Ritual Significance of the Funerary Objects', in: MOND and MYERS, *The Bucheum* I, 134.

angular, much larger pebble (no exact measurements are provided by Mond and Myers).⁸⁸ The text is accompanied by a vignette that shows a standing male figure, his arms raised in adoration. The demotic inscription is to be understood as a kind of prayer recited by the adorant depicted.⁸⁹

The protective function of the fifteen pebbles

When looking for conceptual parallels of the fifteen pebbles – that is small objects inscribed with divine names – little clay balls, incised with the names of protective goddesses, come to the mind. The ritual ‘Revelation of the secrets of the four clay balls’ describes these tiny objects. It is attested on the papyrus of Imuthes (P. New York MMA 35.9.21) from around 320 BC,⁹⁰ which forms part of a larger group of Osiris rituals and liturgies.⁹¹ Examples of such clay balls have been discovered *in situ* in the Osiris crypt in the Graeco-Roman period necropolis of Tihna, north of Tuna el-Gebel. They were found in small falcon-shaped coffins, two at the head and two at the feet of pseudo-mummies of Osiris.⁹² They are resin-coated and measure from 2.5 to 3 cm in diameter. C. Ziegler describes these balls in detail, as well as the names of the protective goddesses inscribed in them: Wadjet, Bastet, Neith or Shesemtet, and Sakhmet.⁹³ Similar clay balls, whose provenance is not known, are kept in the Übersee-Museum zu Bremen. They are slightly smaller than the Tihna ones (1.8 to 2.2 cm in diameter), also coated with resin, and inscribed with the names of the same protective goddesses.⁹⁴ According to the ritual of the

⁸⁸ MOND AND MYERS, *The Bucheum* I, 152; II, 56; III, pl. LXVII (no. 167).

⁸⁹ For the context see H. KOCKELMANN, *Praising the goddess. A Comparative and Annotated Re-edition of Six Demotic Hymns and Praises Addressed to Isis*. APF Beiheft 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 84.

⁹⁰ J.-C. GOYON, *Le papyrus d'Imouthès, fils de Psintaès au Metropolitan Museum of Art de New-York (Papyrus MMA 35.9.21)* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 63–73. See ID., ‘Textes mythologiques II. Les révélations du mystère des quatre boules’, *BIFAO* 75 (1975), 349–99. For a detailed discussion of the ritual and its attestations, see N. Fiedler, *Sprüche gegen Seth. Bemerkungen zu drei späten Tempelritualen*. Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde, Universität Heidelberg (Heidelberg, 2011; PDF available at: <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/13643>), 338–407.

⁹¹ J. ASSMANN, *Altägyptische Totenliturgien* III. *Osirisliturgien in Papyri der Spätzeit*, Supplement zu den Schriften der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Band 20 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008), 23.

⁹² Now in the Louvre: G. LEFEBVRE, ‘Sarcophages égyptiens trouvées dans une nécropole gréco-romaine à Tehneh’, *ASAE* 4 (1903), 227–31, pl. II.

⁹³ C. ZIEGLER, ‘À propos du rite des quatre boules’, *BIFAO* 79 (1979), 437–9, Taf. LX.

⁹⁴ K. MARTIN, ‘Einige magische Kleindenkmäler griechisch-römischer Zeit im Übersee-Museum zu Bremen’, in: U. LUFT (ed.), *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt. Studies Presented to László Kákossy by Friends and Colleagues on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, *Studia Aegyptiaca* 14 (Budapest: Chaire d’Égyptologie de l’Université Eötvös Loránd, 1992), 419–21.

protection of Osiris these balls were thrown towards the four cardinal points in order to prevent Seth from coming.

Comparable balls, 1.5 to 2 cm in diameter and made of earth, were found inside the mummy of Amenhotep, a Theban priest of Thoth, probably dating to the Ptolemaic period.⁹⁵ In contrast to those now in the Louvre and Bremen, they are neither decorated nor inscribed. Niwiński connected them to the ritual for Osiris attested on the Papyrus of Imuthes, assuming that the same magical spell to protect the mummy, i.e. Osiris, could have been used as a part of the embalming ritual, accompanying the act of inserting the balls into the body.⁹⁶

The Tuna el-Gebel pebbles may be similar in size to the clay balls and they too served to protect the mummy, but the material is different, there are fifteen instead of four, and they were placed very carefully around the head, not in the mummy or in a coffin. They are not connected to the Osiris ritual 'Revelation of the secrets of the four clay balls', but perhaps to another, so far unknown one.

The embalming ritual, mentioned above, might lead us to a better understanding of the fifteen pebbles. To date, four incomplete versions of this ritual are known, P. Boulaq 3 and P. Louvre 5158,⁹⁷ P. Durham 1983.11,⁹⁸ and P. St. Petersburg DB 18128,⁹⁹ all dating to the Graeco-Roman period. This ritual gives the instructions according to which the embalmers were supposed to carry out the mummification process. The head is a part that especially deserves attention and protection. Being dismembered and risking of losing one's head in the afterlife are major concerns, and parts of the *Book of the Dead* are dedicated to the protection of the head. *BD* spell 43, for example, is called 'Spell for preventing a man's decapitation in the realm of the dead'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ A. NIWIŃSKI, 'Excavations in a Late Period Priest's Mummy at the National Museum Warsaw. Preliminary Report', in: *Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia*, Atti II (Torino: International Congress of Egyptology, 1993), 353–61; ID., 'Some Unusual Amulets Found on the Late Period Mummies in Warsaw und Cracow', in: W. CLARYSSE et al. (eds.), *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur I*, OLA 84 (Leuven: Peeters 1998), 179–90, esp. 180.

⁹⁶ NIWIŃSKI, 'Some Unusual Amulets', 180.

⁹⁷ H. STERNBERG, 'Balsamierungsritual pBoulaq 3', in: C. BUTTERWECK et al. (eds.), *Religiöse Texte, Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments II/3* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1988), 405–31.

⁹⁸ C. N. REEVES, 'Fragments of an Embalming Ritual Papyrus in the Oriental Museum, Durham', *RdE* 36 (1985), 121–4.

⁹⁹ S. TÖPFER, 'Fragmente des Balsamierungsrituals in der Eremitage von St. Petersburg (Pap. St. Petersburg DB 18128)', *ZÄS* 138 (2011), 182–92, pl. ix–xvi.

¹⁰⁰ E. HORNUNG, *Das Totenbuch der Ägypter* (Zürich und München: Artemis, 1979), 118–9, 443; R. O. FAULKNER, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: British Museum, revised edition: 1985), 43.

The embalming ritual provides the context for the deification of the human limbs. Through the identification of parts of the body with specific deities, the deceased was entirely integrated into the pantheon. The pebbles could perhaps be interpreted in this light, and in this way protect the head and shoulders.

On the so-called ‘magical bricks’ parts of *BD* spell 151 were incised. Once again, the title alludes to the protection of the mummy – as expected in a tomb – and of the head: ‘Spell for the head of mystery, the mummy, or funerary mask’.¹⁰¹ The ‘magical bricks’ became a part of the burial equipment during the New Kingdom. They were to be used by the deceased in warding off enemies who might approach from any of the cardinal points. They were therefore placed at the cardinal points of a tomb, a usage that resembles the protection of Osiris with the four clay balls described, which were thrown towards the four cardinal points.

The spell incised on the ‘magical bricks’, *BD* spell 151, is also inscribed on funerary masks, for example on Tutankhamun’s.¹⁰² It is intended to protect the deceased during the mummification process and in the afterlife. The spell is to be recited over the magical brick on which it is also inscribed. The result is: ‘your head will never be taken away’.¹⁰³ In the same spell, the deification of human limbs is described, especially of the head and its parts:¹⁰⁴ ‘Your right eye is the Night-bark, your left eye is the Day-bark, your eyebrows are the Ennead, the crown of your head is Anubis, the back of your head is Horus, your fingers are Thoth, your lock of hair is Ptah-Sokar.’

Without question the pebbles were supposed to ward off evil from the deceased’s head, around which they had been placed. The fifteen deities on the pebbles may possibly have signified the deification of the mummy’s upper body parts. It seems likely that they

¹⁰¹ HORNING, *Totenbuch*, 318 (Vignette). A. M. ROTH and C. H. ROEHRIG, ‘Magical Bricks and the Bricks of Birth’, *JEA* 88 (2002); D. SILVERMAN, ‘Magical Bricks of Hunuro’, in: P. DER MANUELIAN (ed.), *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson 2* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996), 725–41; A. WIESE and A. BRODBECK (eds.), *Tutanchamun. Das Goldene Jenseits. Grabschätze aus dem Tal der Könige*. Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, 7. April bis 30. Oktober 2004 (München: Hirmer, 2004), 162–3, no. 17; J. H. TAYLOR, ‘The Burial Assemblage of Henutmehyt: Inventory, Date and Provenance’, in: W. V. DAVIES (ed.), *Studies in Egyptian Antiquities. A Tribute to T. G. H. James*. British Museum Occasional Paper 123 (London: British Museum, 1999), 59–72, 163–170 (colour pl. 9–16), esp. pp. 63, 169, colour pl. 15.

¹⁰² HORNING, *Totenbuch*, 318–23. For *BD* 151 on Tutankhamun’s mask see H. BEINLICH and M. SALEH, *Corpus der hieroglyphischen Inschriften aus dem Grab des Tutanchamun* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1989), 82–3, no. 256a. For *BD* 151 on mummy masks see also L. GESTERMANN, ‘Gegrüßt seist Du, Schöngesichtiger – Zur Bonner Mumienmaske des Imhotep’, in H. GYÖRY (ed.), *Le lotus qui sort de terre. Mélanges offerts à Edith Varga*. Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, Supplement 2001 (Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2002), 106–7.

¹⁰³ HORNING, *Totenbuch*, 320.40. FAULKNER, *Book of the Dead*, 145.

¹⁰⁴ HORNING, *Totenbuch*, 318.8–319.4. FAULKNER, *Book of the Dead*, 145.

performed the protective function of a funerary mask, since they were placed in exactly the same position as a mummy mask: on the shoulders around the head (fig. 3).¹⁰⁵ In this specific context, the pebbles most probably formed a part of a kind of magical practice, but we do not know the specific ritual (if there was one), as we do in the case of the clay balls and the papyrus of Imuthes or the embalming ritual. It fits the context very well that Thoth was connected to the mummy and its circumstances on several levels: He was not only a lunar deity, whose monthly renewal the deceased wished to emulate; Thoth was at once the god of wisdom and of magic; and he knew exactly which rituals were necessary to be resurrected.¹⁰⁶

Also explicitly connected with the protection of the deceased's head are *hypocephali*.¹⁰⁷ They are small disk-shaped objects, made of linen, papyrus, or leather, among other materials, which were placed from the Late Period onwards under a mummy's head. They were inscribed with protective and life-giving spells (including *BD* 162) and decorated in several registers with images of composite and other deities, often with solar connotations. They were supposed to bring light and warmth to the deceased. The pebbles belong to the same context of magical protection of the head as the *hypocephali*, but were not nearly so elaborate and they were not placed under the deceased's head, but around it, and different gods were invoked. However, a *hypocephalus* could also form the ornate upper part of a mummy mask.¹⁰⁸ The mask was an instrument, which was supposed to magically ensure the deceased's ability to live in the afterlife, as were the *hypocephali* and the pebbles.

¹⁰⁵ For the development of mummy masks see GESTERMANN, 'Gegrüßt seist Du, Schöngesichtiger', 107–12; M. A. STADLER, *Ägyptische Mumienmasken in Würzburg (Schenkung Gütte)* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 18–25.

¹⁰⁶ BOYLAN, *Thoth*, 124–35. For the relation of Thoth to magic see also R. K. RITNER, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, SAOC 54 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 32 (with n. 143), 35, 40, 46.

¹⁰⁷ A comprehensive study of the *hypocephali* is still a *desideratum*, but several useful articles have been published on this topic, for example J. GEE, 'Towards an Interpretation of Hypocephali', in: H. GYÖRY (ed.), *Le lotus qui sort de terre. Mélanges offerts à Edith Varga*. Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, Supplement 2001 (Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2002), 325–34. E. HASLAUER, 'Hypocephali in Wien und im Asasif', in: H. GYÖRY (ed.), *Le lotus qui sort de terre. Mélanges offerts à Edith Varga*. Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, Supplement 2001 (Budapest: Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts, 2002), 173–84. L. MIATELLO, 'The Hypocephalus of Takerheb in Firenze and the Scheme of the Solar Cycle', *SAK* 37, 2008, 277–87. W. CLARYSSE, 'A Hypocephalus from Ptolemaic Memphis in Vienna', in: W. CLARYSSE, A. SCHOORS, H. WILLEMS (eds.), *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur I*, OLA 84 (Leuven: Peeters 1998), 321–7.

¹⁰⁸ GESTERMANN, 'Gegrüßt seist Du, Schöngesichtiger', 101–12 (on p. 110 she lists three known examples of *hypocephali*, which are integrated in mummy masks).

Reconstructing the original arrangement of the pebbles

The order in which the fifteen pebbles were arranged in the burial is not known. I suggest that the Apep or solar beetle (pebble 3) had most likely been placed at the top, in the very same position in which he is located on mummy masks,¹⁰⁹ with the other fourteen pebbles placed symmetrically as seven pairs on the right and left side of the head down to the shoulder (see fig. 3), forming something like a protective halo around the head, perhaps in imitation of a mummy mask, as proposed above. On mummy masks and *hypocephali* different gods are attested, though, but one scenario could be that the three pairs of male and female deities came first and then the four pairs of associated male gods: Ptah (pebble 6) and Neith (pebble 10) are both primeval deities and could thus form a matching pair. Banebdjedet (pebble 5) and Hatmehit (pebble 11) are both associated with Mendes, and Onuris (pebble 1) and Mehit (pebble 9) are linked in the mythology of the moon eye. Osiris (pebble 4) and Atum (pebble 2) could have corresponded as ancestor or elder gods. Further corresponding pairs could have been Montu son of Isis (pebble 8) and Harpokrates (pebble 15), Horus (pebble 14) and Miysis (pebble 7), Hemi (pebble 12) and Heneb (pebble 13), as indicated in the figure below. This arrangement is only a suggestion, as are some of the associations. Osiris and Atum could have rather been placed close to the apex, or there could have been, of course, a stronger geographical emphasis in the order of the pebbles.

Apep (3)		
Ptah (6)		Neith (10)
Banebdjedet (5)		Hatmehit (11)
Onuris (1)		Mehit (9)
Osiris (4)		Atum (2)
Montu, son of Isis (8)		Harpokrates (15)
Horus (14)		Miysis (7)
Hemi (12)		Heb (13)

Material

The pebbles are quartz and are derived from a rock, termed ‘(hydrothermal) vein quartz’, that occurs originally as veins in the igneous and metamorphic rocks of the Eastern Desert and Aswan region and when eroded produces pebbles and cobbles like those at Tuna el-Gebel. Such gravel is found virtually everywhere along the Nile River, and so our pebbles

¹⁰⁹ For the scarab as a symbol for regeneration, especially on top of coffins and mummy masks, see MINAS-
NERPEL, *Der Gott Chepri*, 313–6 and 324–6. See also STADLER, *Ägyptische Mumienmasken*, 50–4.

probably come from a local Nile deposit like those found on the alluvial terraces above and to the west of Tuna el-Gebel.¹¹⁰

The additional pebble, also from the tomb of Padikem and discussed in the Appendix below, is a local flint. In ancient terms, quartz and flint could be viewed as the same material, because they can both be knapped.¹¹¹ Flint (and therefore quartz), which can be characterized as protective and dangerous,¹¹² was closely associated with the sun god, celestial serpents, transfiguring fire, and solar lions.¹¹³ Such associations might help to understand why the two minor snake gods, Hemi and Heb, and the two lion deities, Mahes/Miysis and Mehit, were named on the pebbles. In addition, Thoth has well attested connections with flint.¹¹⁴ In P. Westcar (9.1–7), the sanctuary of Thoth is mentioned with reference to flint: ‘There is a chest of flint (*ʿfd.t n.t ds*) in the building called ‘inventory’ in On.’¹¹⁵ This chest contains the number of secret chambers in the sanctuary of Thoth. The chest of flint may have been selected because of its protective nature.

The quartz pebbles were therefore not only material readily available for the ritual use in a modest (secondary) burial, but through their material also had a symbolic meaning that fitted well with the funerary context.

¹¹⁰ I am most grateful to James A. Harrell, who kindly answered my geologic questions about the name pebbles and the ‘account’ pebble discussed in the Appendix, and to Carolyn Graves-Brown for her valuable comments on flints.

¹¹¹ C. GRAVES-BROWN, *The Ideological Significance of Flint in Dynastic Egypt* (PhD thesis: University College London, 2010: http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/view/theses/UCL_Thesis.html; accessed on 12 December 2011), 62. On p. 20, the author defines flint ‘as microcrystalline quartz commonly used for the manufacture of knives, sickle blades ... and other knapped tools’. See also ead., ‘Flint and Life Crises in Pharaonic Egypt’, in: R. J. DANN, *Current Research in Egyptology 2004. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Symposium, University of Durham 2004* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), 68. See also P. T. NICHOLSON and I. SHAW, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 28–9, for a general discussion of chert, flint, and quartz.

¹¹² C. GRAVES-BROWN, ‘The Spitting Goddess and the Stony Eye: Divinity and Flint in Pharaonic Egypt’, in: K. PIQUETTE and A. LOVE (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2003. Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium, University College London 2003* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 60–1.

¹¹³ GRAVES-BROWN, ‘The Spitting Goddess and the Stony Eye’, 57–70.

¹¹⁴ For the evidence see GRAVES-BROWN, *The Ideological Significance of Flint in Dynastic Egypt*, 256–60; ead., ‘The Spitting Goddess and the Stony Eye’, 65–6.

¹¹⁵ For a translation see e.g. M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I. The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, 219). See also V. M. Lepper, *Untersuchungen zu pWestcar. Eine philologische und literaturwissenschaftliche (Neu-)Analyse* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 46 (transliteration and translation), 116–7 (short commentary on *ʿfd.t n.t ds* and its connection with Thoth).

Dating the pebbles

The third century BC tomb of Padikem establishes the *terminus post quem* for the secondary burial with its pebbles. Beside this fact, we can only look for palaeographic clues in the demotic script. We must bear in mind that – unlike papyrus – it is very difficult to write on pebbles since they are such uneven and small objects. Nonetheless, the palaeography seems to attest some details that point to the Ptolemaic rather than the Roman period. Pebble 1 with the name of Onuris and Pebble 6 with the name of Ptah display rather early Ptolemaic writings, and Pebble 9 with the name of Mehit seems to fit the Ptolemaic period best, while a Roman date seems less likely. This seems to be supported by the use of a traditional rush pen that was generally used in the Ptolemaic Period, whereas a *calamus* (reed pen) was used in Roman times.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The group of objects presented in this article consists of fifteen pebbles and is so far unparalleled in a funerary context. The habit of inscribing pebbles with names in demotic was not unique, as the examples from the Bucheum demonstrate. These, however, served a different purpose, being inscribed with private names and possibly dedicated as votive offerings, probably by the living person named. The pebbles from Tuna el-Gebel, by contrast, are inscribed with the names of Egyptian deities, of which some are rather unexpected and otherwise not attested, for example Montu, son of Isis. The combination of all fifteen names is so far unique. The pebbles can be called magical since they were intended to protect the deceased, to ward off evil, and to ensure resurrection with the support of the named deities, very much like mummy masks or *hypocephali* with the decoration and spells inscribed on them. Because of the number fifteen and the presence of some specific deities, it is possible to establish a context of the *udjat* or moon eye and rebirth. Thoth, the god of the moon as well as of magic and wisdom, who found and healed the eye, is not named on the pebbles. The deceased wished to be rejuvenated in the afterlife, and Thoth was supposed to control the regeneration. The deceased was probably identified with Thoth in the same way.

¹¹⁶ See for example G. MENCI, 'New Evidence for the Use of the Greek Reed Pen in the Hieratic Script of the Roman Period', in: Z. HAWASS (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2003), 397–9 (with further references).

The person buried in the sand without a coffin, seeking the protection of Padikem's tomb, did not belong to the wealthy elite who could afford tombs and expensive funerary equipment. The deceased's family had the means to pay for mummification, but a mummy mask was evidently too costly. However, a priest was able to supply magical protection by using local pebbles and by inscribing names of deities on them, thus transferring age-old knowledge onto material readily available that he had only to pick up from the ground. The pebbles may also attest a ritual so far unknown, perhaps comparable with the 'Revelation of the secrets of the four clay balls' (P. New York MMA 35.9.21), which forms part of the Osiris rituals.

The pebbles were based on religious traditions thousands of years old and reflect in a simplified way the mythology of the moon eye, of Thoth, the lunar staircase, and the protective function of funerary masks known from the Old Kingdom onwards.¹¹⁷ Even if we do not know any direct parallels so far, we should assume that the practice to bury someone with pebbles around their head was not unique. Other pebbles might not have attracted the excavators' attention, since the writing, if covered by sand, is hardly recognizable, especially in an environment where pebbles are everywhere. The same practice could also have existed with uninscribed pebbles (but with spells being recited nonetheless), in which case it would be very hard to pick them up.

Appendix: Another pebble from the same tomb

Another, quite different, flint pebble was found at Tuna el-Gebel when the Hildesheim team cleared the tomb of Padikem from sand in autumn 2009 (FN 1204, figs. 20–21). The knapped flint pebble is 10.5 cm long, 6.5 cm wide, and 3.5 cm deep. It comes from a level, close-packed layer of fill in front of the west façade of the tomb, around 20 cm thick, that consisted of pebbles as well as numerous limestone chips. Because of these limestone chips this layer most probably dates, according to the excavators,¹¹⁸ to the construction period of Padikem's tomb (third century BC), but the palaeography of the demotic script seems to suggest a later date. Three rather well preserved lines of demotic text are written in black ink on the upper half:

¹¹⁷ See N. Tacke, 'Die Entwicklung der Mumienmaske im Alten Reich', *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 307–36.

¹¹⁸ Personal communication from Silvia Prell (12 December 2011), who directed this part of the Hildesheim excavation in 2009.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | (r-)hn sw 13 hrw 9 | Until day 13, 9 days |
| 2 | (r-)hn sw ʕrkj hrw 53 | Until the last day, 53 days. |
| 3 | 3bd 1 šmw sw 1 ¹¹⁹ (r-)hn sw 12 ¹²⁰ hrw 12 | First month of the šmw-season,
first day. Until day 12, 12 days. |

Though the text is complete, its meaning is unclear. Days and different periods are counted, so it could have belonged to an account.¹²¹ The inscription could also be related to the time span between death and burial or to the actual embalming process and its different stages. Three phases are referred to on the pebble, nine days in line 1, fifty-three days in line 2, and twelve days in line 3, seventy-four days in total. This is obviously different to the seventy days of an ideal embalming period mentioned by Herodotus in his *Histories* (II 86). This specific time span of seventy days is confirmed by several ancient Egyptian sources;¹²² other sources, however, attest a longer or shorter period, usually varying between seventy-two and eighty-one days, or, to mention the extremes, thirty-two and 272 days.¹²³ It seems therefore quite possible to relate the seventy-four days in total mentioned on this pebble to the mummification process, especially given the funerary context, in which this flint pebble was found. Without further evidence, however, this cannot be ascertained. Further excavation at Tuna el-Gebel or elsewhere may bring to light other inscribed pebbles whose purpose was magic, documentary, or perhaps altogether different.

¹¹⁹ The scribe later added *sw 1* to the line.

¹²⁰ The number 12 seems to be a correction of an original number 18.

¹²¹ See for example P. dem. Cairo 31080: W. SPIEGELBERG, *Die Demotischen Denkmäler II. Die Demotischen Papyrus* (Strassburg: Elsässische Druckerei, 1908), 257–60, pl. CIII–IV, esp. col. 4.2–3: ‘Die Rechnung der Beiträge für das Haus des Month, Herrn von Totun vom 1. Thot bis zum 10. Tybi = 130 Tage.’

¹²² For the sources see C. THEIS, ‘Die Dauer eines altägyptischen Bestattungsrituals’, *GM* 227 (2010), 93–104.

¹²³ For the different periods of the embalming process see THEIS, *GM* 227 (2010), 93–104, and ID., *Deine Seele zum Himmel, dein Leichnam zur Erde. Zur idealtypischen Rekonstruktion eines altägyptischen Bestattungsrituals*, SAK Beiheft 12 (Hamburg: Buske, 2011), 182–95. Interestingly, the usual period calculated by THEIS (p. 102, respectively pp. 186–7) adds up to seventy or seventy-one days plus four days of mourning, seventy-four or seventy-five days in total – exactly the time span mentioned on our flint pebble.



Fig. 1 The tomb of Padikem from the east
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)



Fig. 2 The secondary burial against the outer eastern wall of the tomb of Tadikem
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)

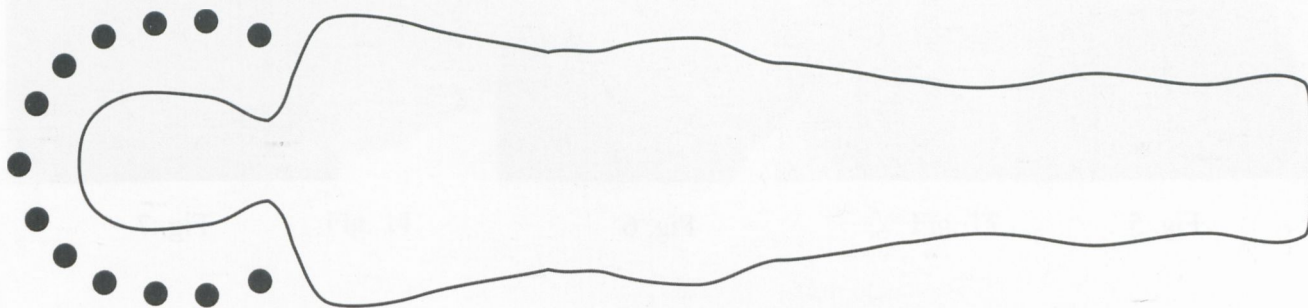


Fig. 3 Schematic drawing of a mummy with pebbles placed around the head
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)

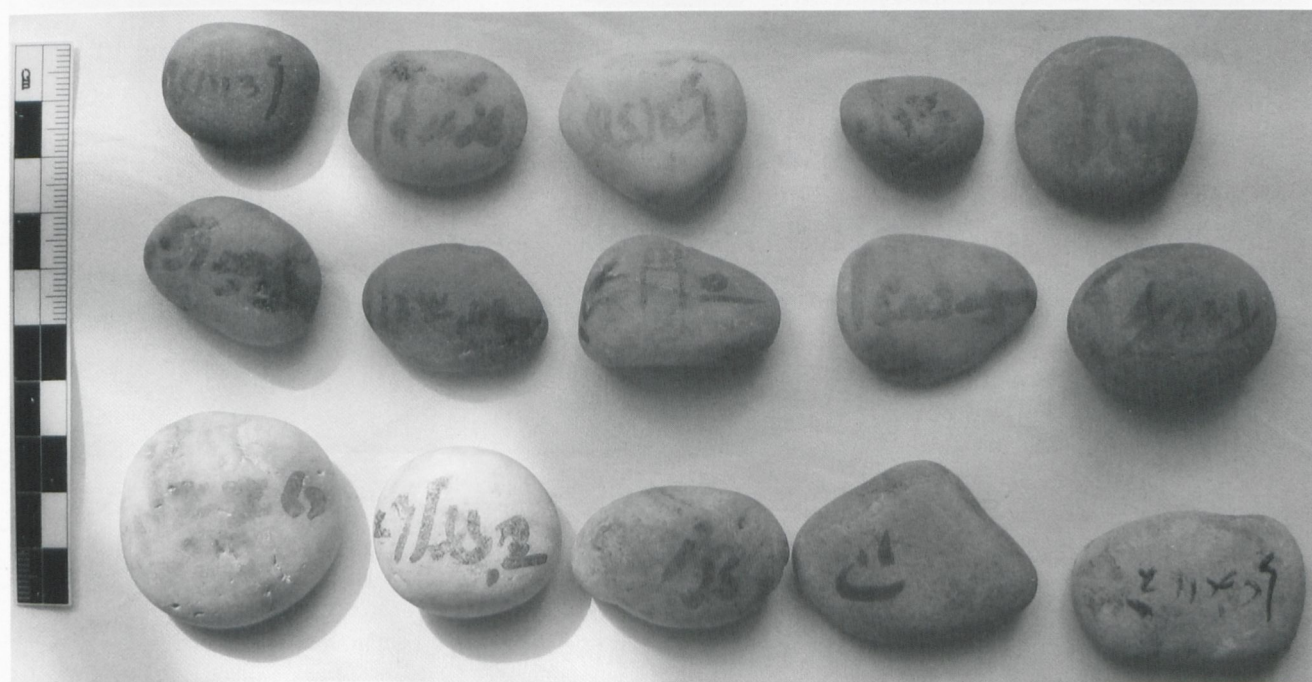


Fig. 4 The fifteen pebbles in 2007
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

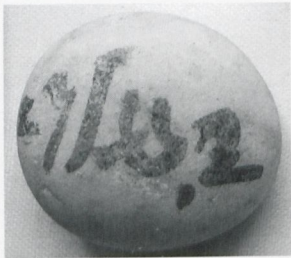


Fig. 12



Fig. 13

Fig. 5–13 Pebbles 1–9 (1 : 1)
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

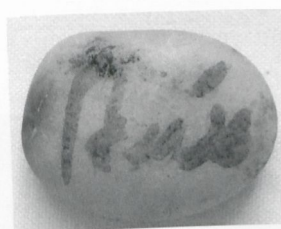


Fig. 19

Fig. 14–19 Pebbles 10–15 (1 : 1)
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)

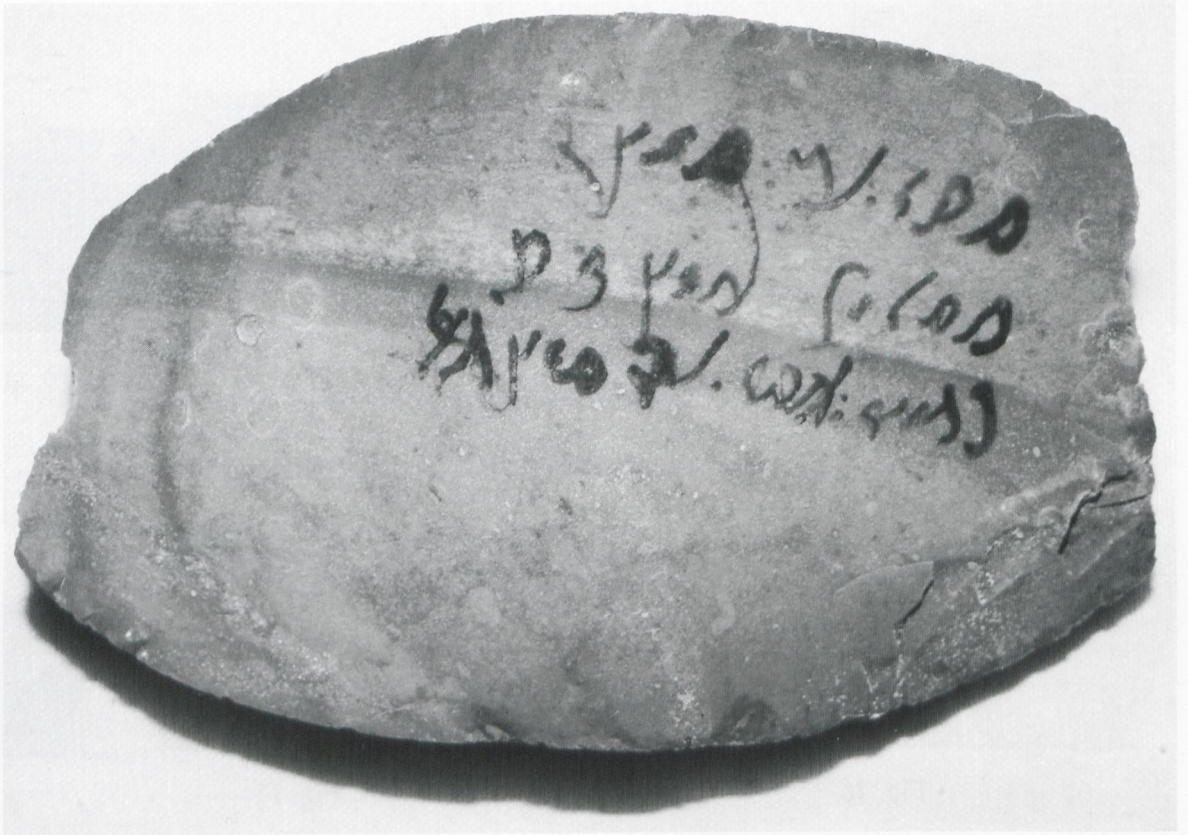


Fig. 20 The flint pebble from the tomb of Tadikem, recto (1,4:1)



Fig. 21 The flint pebble from the tomb of Tadikem, verso (1,4:1)
(zu MINAS-NERPEL, *Pebbles inscribed in Demotic*, Seite 65 ff.)