

# AN ELEVENTH DYNASTY FARMER'S LETTERS TO HIS FAMILY<sup>1</sup>

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THE PUBLICATION of the fourteen documents discovered at Thebes by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the late Eleventh Dynasty tombs of Emsah, Harhotep and Meketre has been eagerly awaited by Egyptologists since they were found in the 1921-22 season. The tantalizing preliminary report<sup>2</sup> hinted at their importance for the study of the social and economic life of a period for which virtually nothing had been available previously, but utilization of the disjointed extracts in the report had to await publication of the full text. After years of delay, the publication was entrusted to James. The resulting volume fully answers one's expectations. The typography, plates and manufacture are of the quality to which the Oxford University Press has long since accustomed us; the text itself offers more than one had hoped for. In addition to translations, accompanied by full introductions and philological commentaries, of the fourteen texts excavated in 1921-22, six others of the same period are included in an attempt to make all the documentary material of the early Middle Kingdom accessible. A series

<sup>1</sup> *The Heḳanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents.* By T. G. H. JAMES. (Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, Volume 19.) Pp. xiii + 146. 17 plates of paleography, 30 plates each of facsimile and hieroglyphic transcription. New York: 1962.

In addition to the usual abbreviations, the following are used in this article:

- CDME Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*  
HP James, *Op. cit.*  
JARCE *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*  
JWH *Journal of World History (= Cahiers d'histoire mondiale)*

The reviewer is deeply obligated to the authorities of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for permission to examine the originals of the Heḳanakht Papers and especially to James for sending him advance proofs of portions of his publication of the texts. Dr. Fischer was kind enough to read the typescript and saved me from several blunders.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri, 1911-1931*, 57-67.

of appendices deals with questions of grammar and syntax, the meanings of certain words requiring discussion too lengthy for the notes, the metrology, the structure and formulae of the letters, the geographical and personal names, and finally the palaeography, accompanied by a series of seventeen plates.

Of the twenty texts included in this volume, the two letters that Heḳanakht sent to his family are unparalleled in ancient Egypt, both for the light that they shed on the personality of an elderly farmer living in the fall of 2002 B.C. and for the inherent interest of the matters discussed in them. They are virtually the only source for Egyptian agriculture before the New Kingdom and the sole surviving texts from ancient Egypt to give the cultivator's point of view rather than that of the administrator and landlord. They have suggested the plot for a novel by Agatha Christie, *Death Comes as the End*, and are likely in the future to be used as sources outside the limited circle of Egyptologists. A definitive translation and interpretation of these texts is needed—and is likely to remain elusive since they are written in the colloquial language of a period that provides little parallel, illustrative material, and deal with a subject whose vocabulary and usage in the Eleventh Dynasty have not yet been the object of intensive study. James' publication is a pioneering effort, and all future work on these texts must be based on it. The following remarks are intended to continue the discussion necessary to solve the problems raised by Heḳanakht's letters. The writer has the advantage of being able to build on the far more extensive labors of the author of this edition, and it lies in the nature of a review article that it emphasizes the points of disagreement rather than the areas of agreement. In order to give a fairer impression of the latter, and also to preserve the unity of the letters, they are translated below in full, somewhat more freely than by James. Comments are restricted to passages in which there is some substantive difference between the interpretations. Some general

points will be dealt with after the textual evidence has been presented.

## LETTER I

- (1) To be said by<sup>3</sup> the *ka*-servant Ḥekanakht to Merisu:

As for everything which is reached by the inundation<sup>4</sup> in our fields, it is you who should cultivate it carefully<sup>5</sup> and all my people with

<sup>3</sup> The unusual construction *r ḡḡ jn NN* in the salutation occurs three times in these letters and is discussed *HP*, 120, where the rather free translation "communication" is chosen. There is a parallel in the absolute use of phrases such as *r rdjt rh·tw* in headings, cf. *WB* II, 444.20-22 and, for instance, the LE example P. Leopold II, 3.7 = *JEA* 22 (1936), 172 and pl. xiv. The use of *jn* to indicate the subject of the infinitive is normal, but makes the interpretation of the phrase as an abbreviation of one of the epistolary formulas suggested by James rather difficult. The initial *r* presumably indicates purpose or futurity (Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 163.10), and is an example of the tendency to write these letters from the point of view of the recipient rather than the writer. Cf. the use of the adverbs '3 and *mjn*? discussed in n. 10, below, and II. 32. Note also *r ḡḡ* in II. 26.

<sup>4</sup> The translation proposed here for *jwht nbt* is the same as that offered by James, but he differs in interpreting the implications; according to him, Ḥekanakht is referring to the accidental flooding of fields under summer crops (*HP*, 15). As is pointed out *HP*, 4, this letter was probably written during August, before the inundation had reached its full height; James' suggestion that the fields may have been near the Nile or canals would imply a date quite early in the month before the filling of the basins was begun (about August 12; Willcocks, *Egyptian Irrigation*, 3rd ed., I, 306). There is nothing in the letter which would contradict such a date. However, several objections can be raised to James' interpretation of *jwht* in this context. As he himself notes (*HP*, 18 n. 2), the verb regularly refers to the normal flooding of the fields in the course of irrigation. Nowhere in the letter is there any further reference to the eventual harvest to be expected from the presumed fields under summer crops, while considerable space is devoted to the renting of land and the sowing of crops. James quotes the consensus of Winlock and Gunn to support his interpretation of *jwht*, but in fact there is no need to give this word a meaning different from its usual one and no evidence is offered. Ḥekanakht is holding Merisu responsible for the proper irrigation of his fields, not the hurried harvest of crops threatened by the flood. Cf. Spiegelberg, *ZAS* 53 (1917), 106 for a discussion of the use of *jwht* at this time; the passage (now Clère, Vandier, *Textes de la Prem. Pér. Int.*, 47, cf. *HP*, 18 n. 2) cannot be taken to refer to summer crops. Grain and flax, the only farm products mentioned in the Ḥekanakht Papers, are normally winter crops (cf. Niemeyer, *Ägypten zur Zeit der Mamluken*, Tabelle I).

<sup>5</sup> For use of the participle to express obligation or

- (2) you. | I will hold you responsible for it. Be energetic in cultivating! Take care! My seed must be preserved; all my property must be

futurity cf. Gardiner, *Grammar* § 368, 371, 373. My interpretation of *m j'nw* differs considerably from that proposed *HP*, 109, which evidently is influenced by the way in which James understands *jwht*. The word *j'nw* has been discussed several times (*Admonitions*, 103; Gardiner, Sethe, *Letters to the Dead*, 20; Gunn, *JEA* 16 (1930), 151). The following are examples of its use:

- (a) Ḥekanakht I. 1: As for everything which is reached by the inundation in our fields, it is you who should cultivate it *m j'nw* and all my people with you. James tacitly emends to *m j'nw·k*.
- (b) Ḥekanakht I. vs. 6-7: Moreover, if my field is reached by the inundation, he should cultivate together with you and Anup *m j'nw·k hn'* Sihathor. The text is emended in accordance with *HP*, 27 n. 61.
- (c) Cairo 28086 (Coffin B 4 C). 253 (unpublished, cf. *HP*, 109 n. 1): She caused *j'nw '3* within heaven *m j'nw n* a great slaughter.
- (d) P. BM 5645. ro. 11-12 (*Admonitions*, 102-03; from the Lamentations of *Kha'kheperre'sonb*): Mourning is everywhere; towns and nomes are *m j'nw*; everyone together is subjected to wrongdoing.
- (e) *Zauberspr. für Mutter und Kind*, 9.8: *j'nw* is in the Netherworld, distress in . . .
- (f) *Peasant R* 113-15: Dispel my need; behold I am burdened *m j'nw*; behold I am faint.
- (g) Kanais (Wadi Abbad or Redesiya), B. 3 (Schott, *Nachr. Gött.*, I, 1961, no. 6, 143): The (inhabited) land is distant, the mountains are wide. *J'nw n, f*, the man who thirsts in the wilderness (about the traveler through the deserts before a new well was put in).
- (h) *Letters to Dead*, IV. 2: *J'nw '3 3h*: *j'nw n* him whom you have made a partner (?).
- (i) P. Leiden I 348, vs. 12. 5 and Lacau, *Sarcophages II*, 184 both quoted by Gardiner as examples for the use of *j'nw* parallel to *jmw* "grief."
- (j) CT V, 244 b: [At the opening of a spell to repulse Apopi] *J'nw n·k*, Iminehedef etc. CT V, 321 a: [Again at beginning of a spell] *J'nw n·k*, Re' etc. Similarly the other exx. from BD quoted *WB* I, 41. 12 and *Admonitions*, 104.
- (k) *Mythe d'Horus*, pl. 3 = Chassinat, *Edfou VI*, 67. 1 = Blackman, Fairman, *JEA* 29 (1943), 10: Grief (*jmw*) is in the southern sky, *j'nw* is in the northern sky, the grief of my brother Seth (who has just been harpooned).
- (l) Newberry, *Beni Hasan II*, pl. 7: A man or boy firmly grasped by a woman in a scene in which tax delinquents are being beaten says: *j'nc*.

Gunn, *JEA* 16 (1930), 151 and *CDME*, 11 are probably correct in separating (h, j) from the others and translating "attention," and "greeting," respectively. Certainly "woe to you" is completely out of place in these cases. In (1) one would expect the boy to say, "Be careful!" or "Ouch!" or

(3) preserved. | I will hold you responsible for it.<sup>9</sup>  
Take care of all my property!

You should send Heti's son Nakht and Sineb-  
(4) nut down to Perhaa<sup>7</sup> | to cultivate [for us] x  
arouras<sup>8</sup> of rented land. They shall take<sup>9</sup> its

something of the sort rather than "Woe is me," or "Woe to you"; the connotation of pain is clear also in (k). In (f), the context permits a wide range, but (k, l) suggest the elimination "woe" in favor of "care" or "pain." A basic meaning of "pain" with a semantic range including "care" or "pains" will fit all the examples, and at the same time avoids the rather unusual exclamatory construction of *m j'nw*, which is required by James. It seems particularly inappropriate since it occurs in (a, b, c) in the middle of sentences, and because the identical phrase *m j'nw* occurs in clearly non-exclamatory uses in (d, f). I translate (a) by "carefully" and (b), perhaps a bit less literally by "under your care." Gunn translates "attention, care, solicitude," but I prefer to extend the semantic range of *j'nw* closer to *jmw*.

<sup>9</sup> My student Marjorie Hansen points out to me that the examples quoted *HP*, 18 n. 5 do not support the meaning "to consider responsible" for *jp r* but rather the common meaning "to assess" taxes or imposts of various kinds. The meaning of "holding responsible for" the correct irrigation of fields (or the prevention of premature flooding, if James' interpretation is accepted) is unknown both to *WB* and *CDME* but seems required by the context.

<sup>7</sup> This suggests that Perhaa was situated on lower land than Heḳanakht's home in Nebesit. Nebesit may have been situated somewhere along the edge of the cultivation near the Theban necropolis. None of the lands that Heḳanakht farmed were at Nebesit, which would be unusual if the village were situated in the midst of good, arable fields.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the units of area used here see Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 34-36. Unfortunately neither the text nor the parallel information gathered by James in *HP*, 115-16 provides a basis for determining the size of the area here. It was almost certainly some multiple of the unit which I believe to be the  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$  of 10 *arouras*, but contrary to James, I do not think that the evidence of the passage before us permits us to identify the  $\frac{1}{2}$  here with the sum of two  $\frac{1}{3}$  in I. 6-7. If  $\frac{1}{2}$  is 10 *arouras* and  $\frac{1}{3}$  is 20, could  $\frac{1}{2}$  be 30?

<sup>9</sup> In his discussion of the use of the imperfective *sḏm·f* for single actions here and elsewhere in the correspondence (*HP*, 106-07), James nowhere refers to Polotsky, *Études de syntaxe copte*, 78-83 and the later discussions of the interpretation proposed there. This is regrettable since all the examples quoted agree well with Polotsky's idea that the function of the imperfective *sḏm·f* was to emphasize an adverbial adjunct.

<sup>10</sup> On the use of '3' "here" in letters to indicate the place where the recipient is, cf. *HP*, 109-10; the other examples quoted there show that writing from the recipient's point of view is not unknown elsewhere in

rent from the *mn*-cloth woven there where you  
(5) are.<sup>10</sup> But if they have | sold<sup>11</sup> the emmer  
which is in Perhaa, they shall pay it (the rent)

Egyptian letters, cf. note 3 above. The resulting ambiguity is paralleled in these letters by the adverb *mjn*<sub>3</sub>. The discussion of this word (*HP*, 111-12) is largely devoted to its etymology. *Mjn*<sub>3</sub> occurs in the following cases in the *HP*:

I. 9-10: *mk grt jj·n·j mjn*<sub>3</sub> *m bntyt, ḥsb·n·k n·j kdb . . .*

II. 4: *mtn jj·n·j mjn*<sub>3</sub> *m bntyt, jr·n·j 'kw·tn*

II. 36: *n mr·f grt jwṯ mjn*<sub>3</sub> *ḥn·j.*

II. 38: *nm* (sic!) *grt jj n·j js mjn*<sub>3</sub>.

II. 39-40: Take very good care of her! *H*<sub>3</sub> *rwd·tn m bt nbt mjn*<sub>3</sub>.

In II. 36, 38, *mjn*<sub>3</sub> clearly refers to "here" with the writer. The first two examples are closely parallel and must be considered in connection with the discussion of the use of *sḏm·n·f* after *jj* in *HP*, 106. I fail to see the basis for James' statement that *jj* regards the notion of "coming" from the point of view of the beginning of the movement rather than the end as is the case in English; such common usages of *jj* as the meaning "to return" and the phrases meaning "welcome" rather prove the opposite. And does it follow that "one result of this difference in outlook is that the Egyptians sometimes use  $\frac{1}{2}$  in the main clause of a sentence where we would . . . put 'come' into a subordinate clause?" The reviewer would have preferred a fuller discussion of this point.

Two translations of the first example are possible:

(1) Now behold, I have come southwards to here (where I am) after you had reckoned for me the rent . . .

(2) Now behold, after I had come southwards to there (where you are), you reckoned for me the rent . . . , and similarly for II. 4. In either case, the reckoning must have taken place at Heḳanakht's home. Since both sentences occur in the middle of passages dealing with rent and rations, respectively, and there is no further mention of Heḳanakht's travel, the second alternative seems the more probable. This agrees with James' arrangement of main and subordinate clause, with the difference that I have followed the usual opinion that *sḏm·n·f* in a virtual clause of time indicates action anterior to the time of the main clause, cf. Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 212. A third alternative might be to take *jj·n·j* as the "emphatic" *sḏm·n·f* of Polotsky, *Rev. d'Ég.*, 11 (1957), 109-17: Now behold, it is only after you had reckoned for me the rent . . . that I came southwards to here (where I am). But this would imply that Heḳanakht's aim was to emphasize only his concern for the family, and particularly in the first example this does not suit the context.

It follows that *mjn*<sub>3</sub> in these two examples refers, as does '3' in the passage under discussion, to the place where the recipient is. If the translation of the two passages given here is accepted, Heḳanakht's travels will have to be interpreted differently from *HP*, 8-9: he returned southwards to Nebesit from the trip preceding

- out of it (the payment for the grain) also,<sup>12</sup> so that<sup>13</sup> you will not have to concern yourself
- (6) with the |*mn*-cloth of which I said, "Weave it, and they shall take it to be sold in Nebesit, and they shall rent land for its price." But if
- (7) | it seems pleasant to you to cultivate 20 (?) *arouras*<sup>14</sup> of land there, cultivate them. You

the one from which he wrote the letters, so that I. 9-10; II. 3-4 give us no indication of the direction in which Ḥekanakht had gone on the current trip. | As is pointed out in *HP*, 124, the occurrence of Ptaḥ and Harsaphes in III cannot be used as evidence that the letter was sent from the north. In this case also, the difficulty of identifying Djedisut (I vs. 1) with the Mamphite area vanishes. Ḥekanakht had been in the north on a previous trip, and it is quite possible that "the old, dry northern barley which had been in Djedisut" was collected on that journey and brought to Nebesit, from which Siḥathor later delivered it to his angry father shortly before Letter I was written.

The last example James interprets: And may you prosper in everything accordingly. The translation: And may you prosper in everything there (where you are), is, however, not absolutely excluded by the context.

<sup>12</sup> The phrase is *šdj šn't m-dbꜣ n*, and the context both here and in II vs. 3 requires the meaning "sell." The other example of the stem is I. 6: Weave it, and they shall take it to be *šn'w* (for the construction, cf. Lefebvre, *Grammaire*, § 350) in Nebesit, and they shall rent land for its *šn't*. If the basic significance of the stem is taken as "value," difficulties arise in the last example. The cloth is to be sold, not merely valued, and Ḥekanakht is not telling his sons to rent land up to the value of the cloth but for the actual goods received in exchange for the cloth. So the literal translation of the passage is: But if they have already collected a price in exchange for . . .

<sup>13</sup> *Dd·sn st jm gr. HP*, 13, 19-20 has: they shall use it there (i. e. in Perhaa). This leads to difficulties, both in view of the meaning of *dd* and because restricting the use of profits from the sale of grain to Perhaa seems unlikely. By taking the *jm* in the sense of I. 4: *jtt·sn kdb·f m pꜣ mn*, this difficulty is avoided, and *rdj* in the sense of "pay" is well known (*WB II*, 465. 10).

<sup>14</sup> *HP*, 104-05 demonstrates that *nfr ꜣ* in these letters is a negation corresponding to the *nfr n* of OE and occasional later texts. To my knowledge, *nfr n* does not occur at the head of sentences, but only in subordinate clauses or after particles (cf. Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 351. 1 and references; *WB II*, 257. 8 and *Belegst.*); the translation as a virtual clause of purpose seems required by the context here and in II. 31.

<sup>15</sup> It seems reasonably certain from the context that this included the 20 *arouras* mentioned in the next sentence, but it is possible that a larger area was meant here. For a while, the writer was toying with the possibility that the sign might be the front half of the recumbent jackal with a coil through its forepaws used in the Old Kingdom to write 30 *arouras* (Baer, *JNES*, 15 (1956), 114-15 and cf. Möller, *Paläographie*, I, no. 129 for the shape), but there is no way to prove this.

- should find<sup>15</sup> land, 10 *arouras* of land (to be planted) with emmer and 10 *arouras* with barley, which must be | [good] land [of Kh]epeshit. Don't go down onto the land of (just) anybody,
- (8)
- (9) but ask Hau the Younger; and if you find | that he has none, then you should go before [Heru]-nefer and he will put you on well-watered land
- (10) of Khepeshit.<sup>16</sup> Now after I had come | southwards to there (where you are),<sup>17</sup> you reckoned for me the rent of 13 *arouras*<sup>18</sup> of land in northern barley a[alone]. Take care! Beware
- (11) | lest you misappropriate (even) a *ḥꜣr*<sup>19</sup> of northern barley therefrom as though (you were) one who is sowing<sup>20</sup> his own northern barley, since you have made renting them painful for me (since it is) for northern barley alone and
- (12) | its seed. Moreover, as for one who sows northern barley—as for 65 *ḥꜣr* of northern barley from 13 *arouras* of land, amounting to 5 *ḥꜣr* of
- (13) northern barley from one *aroura*, now | that is not a burdensome "squeeze."<sup>21</sup> Now 20 *arouras*

<sup>15</sup> Since in the next line (I. 8) *gm* certainly means "to find" land to rent, the suggestion that *gm ꜣḥt m* could here be an otherwise unknown technical term meaning "to sow land with" a crop (*HP*, 21 n. 21) is unconvincing.

<sup>16</sup> *HP*, 21 n. 26 translates *ḥbt* as "unworked (?)" while Gunn suggested "well-watered." Neither suggestion can be documented, but considering the determinative and the importance of adequate irrigation with the right kind of flood water (cf. Willcocks, *Egyptian Irrigation*, 3rd ed., I, 301, 308, 326-28), Ḥekanakht is more likely to have been looking for well-watered rather than currently idle or fallow fields. As long as they received their share of "red" Nile water, fields were in no danger of exhaustion under basin irrigation.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. note 10.

<sup>18</sup> The interpretation of the units of area here is supported by the calculations. Cf. Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 35-36.

<sup>19</sup> The *ḥꜣr* used in these letters was of 10 *ḥḥꜣt* only or 47.8 litres, cf. Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 35 n. 70, and the comparison with the *ḥꜣr* used in the New Kingdom in *HP*, 23 n. 33(d) must be corrected accordingly.

<sup>20</sup> *HP*, 13 translates: Do not sow with the barley belonging to it. In his discussion of *m jr m jt-mḥ n·f·jmy* (*HP*, 22 n. 31) both alternatives are given, and while he admits that the version chosen here makes far better sense of *n·f·jmy*, he prefers the other because "a man who works with his own barley has no need to purloin." But this misses Ḥekanakht's point: it is purloining if Merisu behaves as though his father's grain were his own.

<sup>21</sup> For the figures and the interpretation of "ft" "squeeze" as referring to rent rather than yield, cf. Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 34-35. The use here of *ḥsn* "difficult, burdensome" causes some difficulty when the passage is understood as referring to a past yield, cf. the discussion *HP*, 23 n. 33(c).

- add up to <sup>22</sup> 100 *hꜣr* of northern barley. Be careful! Beware lest you take | liberties with (even) one *hkꜣt* of northern barley therefrom. This is not a year for a man to be remiss in regard to his master, his father, or his brother.
- (14) Now as for | everything which Hēti's son Nakht will do for (me) in Perhaa, I have allotted him a ration (for) not more than one month, amounting to a *hꜣr* of northern barley, | and I have allotted a second (ration) amounting to 5 *hkꜣt* of northern barley to his dependents <sup>23</sup> at the first of the month.<sup>24</sup> If you overstep this (limit), I will treat it as a misappropriation on your part. | Now as for what I (just) told you, "Give him a *hꜣr* of northern barley for the month,"<sup>25</sup> you should give him only <sup>26</sup> 8 *hkꜣt* for the month. Take care!
- (vs. 1) | Now what is the idea <sup>27</sup> of sending Sihathor to me with the old, dried-up northern barley (vs. 2) that was in Djedisut <sup>28</sup> | without giving me the

<sup>22</sup> The verb *'bw* here probably is the same as the infinitive *'bt* of I vs. 3: the verb *j'b* (which became *'bj* in ME, cf. *WB* I, 40) in the sense of gathering, piling up grain. Here the *arouras* are the subject and the grain the object of the verb, which cannot well be a passive *sdm·f* as *HP*, 23 n. 33(d), but must be the form discussed by Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik*, § 511-30.

<sup>23</sup> This ration of 15 *hkꜣt* was cut to 8 *hkꜣt* in II. 12-13, written a month or so later. I believe that the figure of 15 *hkꜣt* was close to a normal ration for Nakht and his family (cf. note 89, below); in view of the threatening food shortage, Hēkanakht warns Merisu not to continue this ration beyond the month and then decides to reduce it by 2 *hkꜣt* even in the current month. The figure of 8 *hkꜣt* in I. 17 refers only to Nakht's personal ration and thus cannot be identified, as in *HP*, 5(f), with the ration of 8 *hkꜣt* for the entire family in II. 12-13. Cf. also note 47.

<sup>24</sup> The examples quoted *HP*, 25 n. 42 for the supposed preposition *r·tp* are actually the *r* of time (Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 163.3) followed by the familiar feasts *tp ꜣbd* and *tp smdt(?)*. Here literally: at the beginning of the opener (of the month).

<sup>25</sup> *HP*, 25 n. 45 translates *n ꜣbd* "per month." This directly contradicts his interpretation of the preceding passage (*HP*, 24 n. 39), that the ration in question was not to be continued beyond the month. *N* can mean "within" a stated period, Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 164.8; this also suits the example quoted in support of James' translation. Cf. II. 32 *n wꜣw* "for the first of the month."

<sup>26</sup> The force of the unusual *m* of predication (discussed *HP*, 104) here and in I vs. 3 seems to the reviewer to have been closer to a restrictive "only" than the author's "in fact," especially if *dd·j m mꜣ't* is an example of this construction. Cf. *Sh. S.* 20.

<sup>27</sup> I fully agree with *HP*, 102-03 on the significance of *jn jr*. James' translation "what about" has, at least in colloquial American usage, the opposite meaning from that intended.

<sup>28</sup> For the identification with Memphis cf. note 10 above.

- 10 *hꜣr* of northern barley in good, new northern barley? And are you not happily <sup>29</sup> eating good northern barley while I am neglected? The boat | is moored at your landing-place,<sup>30</sup> but you only <sup>31</sup> treat (me) badly in every way.<sup>32</sup> If you had sent me the old northern barley in order to accumulate the | new northern barley, what could I say? "How good it is!" If you don't allot me a single (*hkꜣt*) of northern barley that is new, I won't allot any to you | forever.
- (vs. 3) Now I have been told that Snefru is [— —]. Take care of him and give him food! And greet | Snefru a thousand times, a million times as Khentikhe says. Take care and write me! Now if my field is reached by the inundation <sup>33</sup> he should cultivate <sup>34</sup> | together with you and Anup under your care and Sihathor's. Take care of him! You should send him to me after the cultivating. Have | him bring me 3 *hꜣr* of wheat <sup>35</sup> together with whatever northern barley you are able, but (only) what is in excess of your food requirements until you reach the harvest.<sup>36</sup>
- (vs. 4)
- (vs. 5)
- (vs. 6)
- (vs. 7)
- (vs. 8)

<sup>29</sup> For construction of *n hr nfr tw* cf. the example of a clause with adjectival predicate negated with *n* and used as a question, Lefebvre, *Grammaire*<sup>2</sup>, § 631 (*Urk.* VII, 46.18)

<sup>30</sup> For *dmj* in the sense of "landing-place" cf. Blackman, *JEA* 22 (1936), 104 and Goedicke, *JEA* 43 (1957), 79-80.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. note 26 above.

<sup>32</sup> Contrary to *HP*, 26 n. 53, I suppose that Hēkanakht is complaining that Merisu has at hand the means to remedy the neglect of his father, but that this, of course, is the last thing that his ungrateful and self-indulgent son would think of. Hēkanakht would not have objected to Merisu's hoarding grain, but since that is not the case, he threatens retaliation.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. note 4, above, for the meaning of *jwḥ*. There was some question in Hēkanakht's mind whether the threatened low Nile, which actually did materialize (II. 4), would permit the irrigation of his fields at all.

<sup>34</sup> Since I interpret *m j'w·k* as a prepositional phrase modifying the preceding verb (cf. note 5, above) rather than as an exclamation, *skꜣ·f* must be the apodosis of the condition.

<sup>35</sup> *Swt*, wheat, is attested in Egypt from early times (*WB* III, 426.12-17) but appears to have played only a minor role among the grain crops until a very late period. Even in the time of Herodotus (ii. 36, 77), emmer and barley were the chief grains used by the Egyptians, cf. also Kees, *Kulturgeschichte*, 32 n. 1. It is mentioned by Hēkanakht only here and he was evidently not happy about having to use it. *Swt* occurs again in Account IX—but only in the heading. None was actually issued to the soldiers in the preserved sections.

<sup>36</sup> *Smw* is here written as though the third season of the Egyptian calendar were meant, but *HP*, 3-4 shows that this cannot be Hēkanakht's intention; the calendrical season had already begun, and in the context of the

(vs. 9) | [Don't neglect anything about which I wrote you. This is a year for a man to act in his master's interest. Now as for all the affairs  
(vs. 10) of my estate | and all the affairs of my farm<sup>37</sup> in . . . wi,—I had planted them with flax<sup>38</sup>— don't let anybody go down onto it<sup>39</sup> (to rent

passage *šmw* must mean the point at which new supplies of food could be expected, i.e. the word meaning "harvest" which is attested from the MK (WB IV, 481.1-11). The two words are homonymous in Coptic (*šōm*), and this passage suggests that Ḥekanakht, at least, thought that the name of the season actually meant "harvest," whatever the origin of the words may have been. Note also *prt* "seed" and "winter," though here Coptic vocalizes the words differently.

<sup>37</sup> I am not happy with the translation "estate" for *q3tt* since the English word has overtones of size which are probably inappropriate here, but so long as evidence for a more precise definition of *q3tt* and *š* is lacking, it will be difficult to improve on James' translation. The current passage does, however, help somewhat. Flax was grown on both the *q3tt* and *š* and barley on the *š*, which shows that both categories were situated on ordinary basin land (cf. Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 40 n. 98 near the end) or on the berms. *CDME*, 260 translates *š* by "garden," but this is inappropriate for grain land. The meaning of *š* is connected with the vexed problem of the *ḥnty-š*, adequate discussion of which is impossible until the "Laws of the *ḥntyw-š*" mentioned Möller, *Paläographie* I, 14 are finally made available after a delay of now more than 63 years since the papyrus was found.

<sup>38</sup> *HP*, 17 and n. 2 has already seen that this must refer to the previous crop year. By considering it a parenthesis in Ḥekanakht's instructions, the use of *h3w* "affairs" becomes easier to understand. He is telling Merisu what to do with the land in the current season, and the parenthesis serves either to help identify the land in question or possibly to suggest that the land, having been under flax in the previous season, could now properly be cultivated with grain. However, nothing is known of crop rotation practices in ancient Egypt, if any, and this passage is an inadequate basis for any conclusions. James is mistaken when he believes that flax was the first crop of the year in ancient times. It was a winter crop planted somewhat later than the grains (in December rather than in October) but harvested at the same time in the north, and later than the grains in the extreme south of Egypt. Cf. Niemeyer, *Ägypten zur Zeit der Mamluken*, Tabelle I.

<sup>39</sup> The phrase *h3 hr* refers to renting land in I. 8, and presumably has the same meaning here. *HP*, 28 n. 70 supposes that there might be some risk of having to sell land if it is not cultivated, but this is improbable. It seems more reasonable to interpret this passage as instructions not to let out the land but rather to cultivate it himself. Cf. p. 15 below for a discussion of the economic aspects. Alternatively, *rmḥ nb* may have been used here as in I. 8; then this would be an instruction to rent not to just anybody but only to specific individuals. Certainty is impossible because of the lacuna

(vs. 11) it). And as for anybody who will talk | to you,<sup>40</sup> you shall go on account of him/upon it [— —]. And you shall sow the farm with northern barley. Don't sow emmer there. But  
(vs. 12) if it turns out to be a high inundation, | you shall sow it with emmer.<sup>41</sup>

Take care of Anup and Snefru! You will die with them and live with them. Take care!  
(vs. 13) There is nothing more | important than he in the house with you. Don't neglect this.

And have the housemaid Senen thrown out  
(vs. 14) of my house—take care!— | on whatever day Sihathor reaches you (with the letter). If she spends one day (more) in my house, I'll . . . !<sup>42</sup> It is you who let her treat my concubine badly. | Why must I scold you?<sup>43</sup> What can she do to you five boys?

And greet my mother Ipi a thousand times, a  
(vs. 16) million times. | And greet Ḥetepet and the entire household and Nefret. Now what is the idea of this mistreatment of my concubine? You  
(vs. 17) are going too far.<sup>44</sup> | Have you been given to me as a partner? If you stop, how good it will be!

And send an account of what is to be collected from the things which are in Perhaa. Take care! Don't neglect it.

(vs. 18) (Address:) | What the *ka*-servant Ḥekanakht  
(vs. 19) sends | to his household of Nebesit.

## LETTER II

(1) | A son speaks to his mother, the *ka*-servant Ḥekanakht to his mother Ipi and to Ḥetepet:

in I vs. 11 and the resulting difficulty in translating *šm·k hr·f*, but the instructions after the lacuna hardly seem to envisage any alternative to Merisu's farming the land himself.

<sup>40</sup> This can be an offer to rent as well as to buy.

<sup>41</sup> While barley does well under relatively arid conditions and can stand a wide climatic range, the young plants are sensitive to excessive moisture; Schindler, *Der Getreidebau* (Berlin, 1909), 256-58.

<sup>42</sup> An attempt to translate the dangling *jr*, which is all that is left of an apodosis in this sentence.

<sup>43</sup> *Rdj wg n*, "cause distress to." The context here and in II. 31 and the determinative here (A 2) suggests a reprimand. *Wgg* is used as a word for the distress caused by famine, but the conclusion *HP*, 30 n. 81 that Ḥekanakht is threatening to cut his family's rations even further to ensure obedience seems a bit extreme. The spelling resembles the verb *wg* "to chew," but a translation "chew out," though tempting to a speaker of English, cannot be supported.

<sup>44</sup> Literally: You are one who fills to the limit, participial statement followed by a complementary infinitive, which is regularly feminine, Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 298 Obs. Translating, "what fills, fills you," leaves no alternative but to guess the meaning. Cf. II. 40-44: where Ḥekanakht suspects that advances were made to his concubine in his absence.

- How are you? Are you alive, prosperous and healthy? In the favor of Mont, Lord of Thebes!
- (2) | And to the entire household: How are you? Are you alive, prosperous and healthy? Don't worry about me. I am well and alive.
- (3) | Now, you are (like) the man who ate until he was satisfied when he was hollow-eyed with hunger.<sup>45</sup> The entire land is dead, but [you] have not been hungry. | After I came south to there (where you are),<sup>46</sup> I fixed your rations liberally.<sup>47</sup> But is the inundation ve[ry high]?
- (5) Now [our fo]od is fixed for us | in accordance with the inundation. So be patient, each one of you.<sup>48</sup> I have managed to keep you alive until today.
- (7) List of Rations of the Household:
- (8) Ipi 8  $hk\ddot{z}t$ <sup>49</sup> (of barley)

(9)	Her servant	
(10)	Ĥetepet	
(11)	Her servant	8
(12)	Ĥeti's son Nakht	8
(13)	And his dependents	
(14)	Merisu (and) his dependents	8
(15)	Sihathor	8
(16)	Sinebnut	7
(17)	Anup	4 [changed from 5]
(18)	Snefru	4 [changed from 8]
(19)	Siinut	4
(20)	Mi's daughter Ĥetepet	5 [changed from 9]
(21)	Nefret	3½ [changed from 4½]
(22)	Sitweret	2
(23)	Total	7 $h\ddot{z}r$ 9½ $hk\ddot{z}t$ <sup>50</sup>

- (5) | (Note:) Rations should be measured for
- (6) | Sinebnut from his northern barley which he has on his threshing floor until he leaves for Perhaa.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *HP*, 36-37 n. 4 and Vandier, *Famine*, 13-14 both believe that in this passage the eating to repletion is anterior to the hunger. Vandier takes it as a description of the current situation with a reference to past prosperity; James rather as a threat of the consequence of unrestrained eating in a famine. Ĥekanakht emphasizes in this passage how well-fed his family is. Vandier's interpretation seems improbable. The reviewer prefers the translation given above (taking  $hkr$  as an Old Perfective) to that offered by James because the claim that his household was in the position to stuff themselves like a starving man suits Ĥekanakht's claims to have provided unusually well for his family.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. note 10.

<sup>47</sup> Taking *nfr* in the sense of "well-supplied," *CDME*, 131. The time seems to be the same as that referred to in I. 9-10, when Ĥekanakht discussed the rent of certain fields with Merisu after returning from a trip to the north. Presumably it was at this time that Nakht was allotted 1.5  $h\ddot{z}r$  for himself and his family, a figure that Ĥekanakht reduced to 1.3 in Letter I after he had left Nebesit again. The rations of II. 7-23 are not the liberal rations to which he refers here, but rather a new list, substantially reduced, to take effect after the month to which the former allotment appears to have been restricted (I. 15). This is indicated not only by the reduction in the ration for Nakht and his dependents to 0.8  $h\ddot{z}r$  (the list is too carefully drawn up and revised for me to believe that Ĥekanakht would carelessly have forgotten the ration for the dependents), but also by omission of Iutenhab. At the time that Letter I was written, Ĥekanakht evidently still expected her to remain with the family, and only in Letter II does he instruct them to send her to him. One expects her name only to be left out of a list intended to take effect after the receipt of Letter II (presumably on the first of Khentekhtayperty, II. 32) but not the one drawn up earlier.

<sup>48</sup> Following Gunn's suggestion quoted *HP*, 38 n. 9. There are obstacles in the way of interpreting *mj rnuw* as an idiom ancestral to the *m rn·f* of the New Kingdom, but a literal translation is meaningless.

<sup>49</sup> For interpretation of the figures as single  $hk\ddot{z}t$  cf. Baer, *JARCE*, I (1962), 35 n. 70. The amounts seem to

be close to half rations. Eight  $hk\ddot{z}t$  per month amount to about 2600 calories per day, which is not much for two adults, even if eked out by fruits and vegetables.

<sup>50</sup> The total is obtained from the original figures. Before sending the letter, Ĥekanakht reduced several rations. The new total should be 6  $h\ddot{z}r$  9½  $hk\ddot{z}t$ . The manuscript shows no trace of an erasure in II. 10; the 7 is original and the spots on the lower left are accidental. On the other hand, the 3½ in II. 21 is written over an erasure; the end of the original 4 can be seen near the fraction. In discussing these rations, James remarks (*HP*, 34) that the allocations seem unfair, and proposes that Nakht and Merisu had other sources from which to supplement this ration in order to feed their families. However, the note squeezed in after the list was written and here translated after the list tells us that Sinebnut's ration was to be supplied from the household stock only after he went to Perhaa. Before then the ration was to be taken from his own grain. Under these circumstances, and in view of the tight rein which Ĥekanakht kept on everyone in his household, it seems likely that Merisu and Nakhte would only receive rations if they had no other sources of food.

The inequities are inherent in the list, and were far worse in the original form, where the favorite, Snefru, was allotted an amount equal to that of an adult. In the final version, the ration is about 4  $hk\ddot{z}t$  for everyone except Sihathor and Sinebnut, young men who had to do a large part of the physical labor, and the girl at the end of the list.

<sup>51</sup> In I. 3-4 Nakht and Sinebnut are to go down to Perhaa to find land to rent. In I. 14-17 Nakht's ration for the month while he is in Perhaa is fixed at 1.5  $h\ddot{z}r$  reduced to 1.3 (including his family). Here (II. 5-6) we find Sinebnut at Nebesit and planning to go to Perhaa at some time after the beginning of Khentekhtayperty, when the rations are to begin (II. 32). In II vs. 1-4 Ĥekanakht discusses further the rental payments for land in Perhaa that has already been found. Since the letters were written about a month

- (24) | If —<sup>52</sup> Take heed lest you be angry about  
 (25) this. | The entire household is like [my]  
 (26) children, | and everything is mine.<sup>53</sup> (It) must  
 be said, "Being half alive is better than dying  
 (27) altogether." | Now one should (only) say "hun-  
 ger" in regard to (real) hunger. They have  
 (28) begun | to eat people here. There are none to  
 whom such food is given anywhere. You should  
 conduct yourselves with stout hearts until I  
 (29) reach | you. I will spend Shōmu<sup>54</sup> here.

To be said by the *ka*-servant Ḥekanakht to Merisu and Ḥeti's son Nakht as subordinate:

- (30) You shall only give this | food to my people  
 as long as they are working.<sup>55</sup> Take care! Hoe

apart (*HP*, 4-5), while Perhaa was close to Nebesit, it is reasonable to suppose that Sinebnut and Nakht had returned from Perhaa after carrying out the instructions in Letter I and were preparing to go back there again to pay for and begin cultivating the land that they had negotiated for. This eliminates the difficulties discussed in *HP*, 34. Cf. also notes 23 and 47, above, for the supposed discrepancies in Nakht's ration, which actually are rations for different months. James translates *rwj r* in II.6 as "leave" a place and concludes that Sinebnut was to receive the grain he would need in Perhaa in advance. In *WB* II, 406.11 and *Belegst.*, however, *rwj r* means to "leave for" a place. It occurs in Dyn. XVIII, in the sense of "abandoning" a corpse, but simply takes a direct object when it means "to leave." The passage under discussion says nothing about advance payments but only indicates from where Sinebnut's rations are to be taken.

<sup>52</sup> The grammatical and semantic difficulties discussed *HP*, 39 n. 17 are most easily solved by assuming that Ḥekanakht started a sentence and changed his mind after the first word. It is not the only anacolouthon in these letters: cf. I.12, vs. 14, II.42.

<sup>53</sup> And therefore Ḥekanakht has the responsibility for their welfare? For *r dd* at the beginning of the next sentence cf. note 3.

<sup>54</sup> *HP*, 28 n. 65 cf. p. 4 believes that this refers to the same *šmw* as I vs. 8, where the word is used for the actual harvest, cf. note 36 above. Here, on the other hand, Ḥekanakht refers not to a point in time but a season, and in the writer's opinion the context indicates the calendrical season *šmw*, which had already begun. The letter was written before the beginning of Khen-tekhtayperty, the later Payni. Since the natural season was the inundation, one would expect him to word his statement differently if he was planning to stay through the winter and summer as well.

<sup>55</sup> *HP*, 40 n. 27 believes that this passage indicates that the rations were not only for food but also intended as payment for work. Since they did not even provide an adequate diet, this is improbable, in contrast to the grain-wages familiar from Deir el-Medina (Černý, *JWH*, I (1954), 916-20), where the foreman's 88 *hk3t* of emmer and 32 of barley per month would provide about 34,000 calories per day, enough to feed a large family and leave a substantial surplus. Here we have simply the order: if they won't work, don't give them anything to eat.

- (31) all my fields, sieve (the seed grain?) with the  
 sieve and hack with your noses<sup>56</sup> | in the work.  
 If they are energetic, you will be thanked, so  
 that I will not have to scold you.<sup>57</sup> One shall  
 (32) begin to issue | these rations about which I have  
 written you<sup>58</sup> on the first of Khen-tekhtayperty  
 for the first of the new month.<sup>59</sup>

- (33) Don't neglect | the 20 *arouras*<sup>60</sup> of land which  
 are in the neighborhood and were given to Ip  
 the Younger's son Khen-tekhe<sup>61</sup> and hoe them.  
 Be energetic! You are eating my food.

- (34) | Now as for any property of Anup's which  
 is in your possession, give it back to him and  
 replace whatever has been damaged. Don't make  
 (35) me write you about it again; | I have already  
 written you about it twice.

- (36) Now if Snefru wants to be in charge of the  
 bulls, you shall put him | in charge of them.  
 He did not want to be with you cultivating and  
 going up and down, nor did he want to come  
 (37) here with me. Whatever else he wants, | you  
 should grant his wishes.

- (38) But as for anyone among the women and men  
 who will reject this food, | let him come to me  
 here with me that he may live as I live. But  
 there is none who will come here to me.

- (39) I told you, "Don't keep | any companion of  
 Ḥetepet from her, whether her hairdresser or  
 her *prt*."<sup>62</sup> Take care of her! And may you  
 (40) prosper | accordingly in everything. But you do  
 not like her.<sup>63</sup> And you shall send Iutenḥab to

<sup>56</sup> The determinative is not an oddly formed nose (D 19) but the lump of meat (F 51). Cf. the palaeographic tables.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. notes 13, 43, above.

<sup>58</sup> Another example of writing from the recipient's point of view, cf. notes 3 and 10, above.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. note 25, above.

<sup>60</sup> The same as those referred to in I.13.

<sup>61</sup> Apparently the same as the friend who sends his regards to Snefru in I vs. 6. The land was to be cultivated by Ḥekanakht's household, who had rented it from Khen-tekhe, to whom the land had been given. If his father is identified with the person in III.7, VI.5 who owed Ḥekanakht grain, Khen-tekhe is not likely to have been a wealthy landowner. The writer believes that he was a *ka*-servant like Ḥekanakht and had been given the land in exchange for his services. As the conclusions will show (cf. p. 15, below), it was advantageous for a landowner who could not farm the land himself to let it out rather than to farm it with hired help. Purchase of land was, in general, not advisable for persons of Ḥekanakht's status, and I suspect that most of the land they owned was obtained either by inheritance or by gift.

<sup>62</sup> *HP*, 42 n. 47 translates *prt* by "domestic servant(?)." The context rather requires someone who comes in occasionally from outside like a hairdresser, but I have no suggestion to offer.

<sup>63</sup> *N grt mr-k sy. HP*, 42 n. 49 takes this as a conditional clause and the following sentence as the apodosis.

- (41) me. I swear by this man—I'm referring | to Ip<sup>64</sup>—whoever shall make any sexual advances against my concubine,<sup>65</sup> he is against me and I am against him. Behold, this is my concubine. | It is known what is done for a man's concubine. Now as for anyone who will do for her the same as I have done<sup>66</sup>—would even one among you be | patient when his wife has been denounced to him? In that case I will be patient. How can I be with you at the same table?<sup>67</sup> | No, you won't respect my concubine.
- (vs. 1) | Now I have caused 24 *deben* of copper for the rent of land to be brought to you by Sihathor.<sup>68</sup>
- (vs. 2) Now | have 20 (?) *arouras* of land cultivated for us in Perhaa beside Hau the Younger<sup>69</sup> by (paying) the rent with copper, clothes, northern barley | or any[thing], but only after you have sold the oil and everything else there.<sup>70</sup> Take
- (vs. 4) care! Be energetic! Be watchful. | [Now,] you are on good, well-watered land of Khepeshit.
- (vs. 5) (Address:) | What the *ka*-servant Heḳanakht
- (vs. 6) sends | to his household of Nebesit.

With this final stream of his favorite exhortations, Heḳanakht's second letter to his family comes to a close. Both letters are largely devoted to making arrangements for the agricultural year which was just beginning, and the data regarding his farm and cultivation are worth examining more closely.<sup>71</sup>

Heḳanakht owned and cultivated an indeterminate amount of land in . . . wi, presumably a place near the fields he rented in the vicinity of Thebes. He had there a *d<sup>3</sup>tt* and a *š*, both used for normal winter crops, flax and grain. The *š* was to be planted with barley except in the event of a high Nile, when emmer was preferable. This suggests that the *š* was in a low area likely to remain under water beyond the optimum period during a high flood (I vs. 9-10).

Before Heḳanakht left Nebesit, arrangements had already been made to rent 13 *arouras* of land for 5 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of barley each (I. 9-13), and it is likely that negotiations for the rent of + *arouras* near Perhaa had been concluded at the same time, though the rent had not yet been paid (I. 3-6). This was to be obtained by selling emmer in Perhaa, and in the event that it had not been sold, or that it was insufficient, the price obtained by the sale of cloth in Nebesit could be used instead.

Cf. I. 4-6, where the *mn*-cloth is only to be used for rent if the emmer in Perhaa has not yet been sold. I. 4-6, II vs. 2-3 and III. 8-vs. 1 suggest that emmer and oil were not desirable and that there may have been difficulties in using them to pay rent. James has Heḳanakht instructing his family, in effect, to exchange whatever they have in Perhaa for anything whatever, as long as it is different, before using it for payments.

<sup>71</sup> *HP*, 3-4 shows that the letters were written within about a month of each other during the inundation of 2002 B. C., probably in August and September, respectively. This was, as James notes, the season when land leases were normally arranged. Letter II was written before the first day of Khentekhtayperty, or October 15th following Gardiner's interpretation of the months, as James does. In the writer's opinion, Parker (cf. now also *Rev. d'Ég.*, 11 (1957), 85-107) is correct in his interpretation of the calendar, in which case Khentekhtayperty corresponds to the tenth month of the civil year and begins on September 15th. But since a low inundation would be manifest by early September, the contents of Letter II do not require a later dating.

James admits that this would be a very odd construction for a protasis. Use of a pronoun to refer to a noun not yet stated is avoided by Egyptian (Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 507.1). While it is true that *br·f sdm·f* occurs in the apodosis of conditional sentences, it is by no means restricted to this use. And there are no ifs about sending Iutenhab to join Heḳanakht; no rations are provided for her in the list.

<sup>64</sup> Probably the vizier whose *ka*-servant Heḳanakht was, *HP*, 2, 6, 43 n. 50.

<sup>65</sup> *Jr·ty·fy sp nb hr pg<sup>3</sup> n h<sup>3</sup>swt·j*, literally: He who shall commit any misdeed on account of the opening of my concubine. The interpretation seems obvious to the reviewer; *WB* I, 562.8-9 shows that *pg<sup>3</sup>* can have anatomical connotations. The reference to adultery is clear in the parallel situation in II. 42-43. *HP*, 43 n. 51 proposes to translate *pg<sup>3</sup>* by "person," but can only quote Siut, III. 5: *h<sup>3</sup> hr pg<sup>3</sup> n h<sup>3</sup>rt*, which is the phrase of *WB* I, 562.15-16 used figuratively; "he who stands firm on the widow's battlefield" meaning "the champion of the widow."

<sup>66</sup> In view of what follows, a sexual connotation seems likely here also.

<sup>67</sup> The sense of *tt*, "table-company" fits the context here; there is no need to use the later meaning "staff, gang."

<sup>68</sup> As in I vs. 1, 14, Sihathor is the messenger.

<sup>69</sup> These are the additional fields mentioned I. 6-9. Apparently Hau had land to let, so there was no need to have recourse to Herunefer.

<sup>70</sup> *Wun swt šd·n·tn šn·jm n mrht n ht·nbt*. *HP*, 36 states "For the renting they can use these copper *debens* or certain other things such as clothes and barley; but renting is to be done only after the chosen commodity has been exchanged for oil or something else. This . . . suggests that at this period only certain types of goods were . . . used as currency . . ." I do not see how James arrives at this interpretation; his translation basically agrees with the one offered here. For *šd šn·n* meaning "sell" cf. note 11, above. Heḳanakht tells his family they can use the copper he sent or anything else available to pay the rent, but only after using up the oil and other property they already have in Perhaa.

It is likely that this emmer is "what is to be collected from the things which are in Perhaa," of which he asked for an accounting (I vs. 17) and identical with the debts in Perhaa to which Letter III and Account VI are devoted. In Letter III, Herunefer, a high official also mentioned I. 9, is asked to assist Sinebnut and Nakht in collecting 38  $h^3r$  of emmer and 13.5 of barley; in view of the bad Nile and impending famine, need of official assistance to enforce repayment of the loan was anticipated. Since the letter was not delivered, it seems that the debts were collected without difficulty.

James (*HP*, 47, 64) has pointed out that Account VI is in all likelihood the accounting that Hekanakht asked for in I vs. 17, and also that, with the exception of 3  $h^3r$  of emmer owed by

III in order to enforce the collection mentioned there. The following proposal to interpret the figures might be advanced: In III. 8-vs. 1 Hekanakht states that he will accept repayment in oil if necessary but prefers barley. The entries in emmer then refer to the grain originally loaned, not to that expected in repayment. I. 5 and the absence of emmer in the list in II vs. 2 suggest that emmer was not an acceptable means of payment at the time. Could the figures in Letter III be quantities of barley that include 50 per cent interest added to the corresponding loans in VI? If the loan was in emmer, the interest is obtained simply by requiring repayment of the same amount in barley, which was worth 50 per cent more, as we know from III. 8. If the loan was in barley, the repayment had to be larger.

## LETTER III

Amount to be collected and measured in Hekanakht's own corn-measure:

PLACE	NAME	DEBT
(Huthaa)	Neneksu	15 $h^3r$ emmer
(Iusobk)	Ipi the Younger	13.5 barley
(Sepatmat)	Nehri's son Ipi	20 emmer
	Deshher his brother	3 emmer
Totals		38 $h^3r$ emmer 13.5 barley

Deshher, the brother of Nehri's son Ipi, entries corresponding to all the debtors of III can be found in VI, which, however, lists a few debts not mentioned in III. There are some difficulties in reconciling the figures.

Account VI does not specify the grain and writes all the figures in black. Below a line, 13.5  $h^3r$  of barley owed by persons not mentioned elsewhere are added to the list of debts outstanding, and a grand total of 117  $h^3r$  is given. This suggests to James that the unit used above the line is the  $h^3r$  of 20  $h^3t$  used in the later Middle Kingdom. The agreement between the two lists is perfect only in the case of Nehri's son Ipi, but Ipi the Younger is the same person in both, and Neneksu might be Nenrenef's brother. It is tempting to try to reconcile the figures, which are identical where Letter III lists emmer, while the barley entry is 50 per cent higher in III. James explains the difference by an actual change in the amount owed, but this seems unlikely if VI was written in response to the request in I vs. 17 and

## ACCOUNT VI

To be measured in the big measure which is in Nebesit:

PLACE	NAME	DEBT
(North Huthaa)	Nenrenef and brother	15
(Sununsobk)	Ipi the Younger	9
(Sepatmat)	Nehri's son Ipi	20
(Setsema)	Three persons owing	
	a total of	8
		52

But there are decisive arguments against this: Hekanakht was willing to accept repayment in oil at different rates for debts stated in III to be in emmer or barley, respectively. The outstanding debt is stated in both III and VI simply to be "with" (*m-'*) the debtor. It is hard to see why one should be a statement of the amount originally loaned and the other of the expected repayment. Furthermore, though this is not a very strong point, interest of only 50 per cent on a debt to be repaid during the inundation and thus probably outstanding for at least a year<sup>72</sup> is low for ancient Egypt.<sup>73</sup>

There is, however, a far simpler solution if we assume that the parallelism between III and VI is spurious, that Neneksu in Huthaa is not to be identified with Nenrenef or his brother in North

<sup>72</sup> A debtor who had to borrow at or after the harvest in March would be in no position to repay in grain, a winter crop, during the following inundation.

<sup>73</sup> Normally 100 per cent per annum, cf. references Baer, *JARCE* 1 (1962), 45 n. 115.

Huthaa, that the 13.5  $h^3r$  of barley owed by Ipi the Younger in Iusobk are not identical with the 9 he owed in Sununsobk, that Nehri's son Ipi had taken out two loans and owed 20  $h^3r$  on each, and that greater weight has to be accorded to the fact that each account also contains debtors not mentioned in the other. This is to consider Account VI a supplement to the figures in Letter III. For if we add the figures in III (38 and 13.5  $h^3r$ ) to those in VI (52 and 13.5  $h^3r$ ) we obtain exactly 117  $h^3r$ , the grand total in VI. 20 without explaining away a discrepancy in the arithmetic<sup>74</sup> or assuming use of a double- $h^3r$  otherwise not attested in these papyri. The references to Hekanakht's own corn-measure are intended to guarantee, as often in later times, that it will be up to the creditor and not the debtor to determine when the debt has been paid in full. Hekanakht asked for Herunefer's assistance in the immediate collection of some outstanding debts in the Perhaa area, to which someone else, probably Merisu (see p. 19 below), added on a separate sheet a list of the remaining debts there when it became clear that the letter need not be delivered. The grand total of both was noted separately to the left. In view of the statement in I. 5, the debts in VI will also, as those in III, have largely been loans of emmer. Since III was still sealed when found, it is probable that another list of the debts recorded there was available to Merisu.

Hekanakht then had 117  $h^3r$  in Perhaa of which 27 were barley, and most of the remaining 90 emmer. At the rate mentioned in I. 12, and taking emmer as having  $\frac{2}{3}$  the value of barley, this would have sufficed to rent 17  $\frac{2}{5}$  *arouras*. Since this is probably less than  $\pm$  *arouras*, cloth or sources of emmer not mentioned made up the difference.<sup>75</sup>

Apart from these two areas, it appears that arrangements had already been made to rent 20 *arouras* (written  $\pm$ ) from Khentykhe, a friend of the family (II. 32-33) and it is likely that these are the same as those whose rent is stated to be 100  $h^3r$  of barley in I. 13. They are written the same way and are treated there as though it were

certain that Hekanakht's family would cultivate them.

Hekanakht suggested to his family that they rent additional land if they felt able to handle it. The area is written with a sign of uncertain reading that may be an alternative way of writing 20 *arouras*; it cannot have been smaller, since 10 *arouras* each are to be planted with barley and emmer. In I. 6-9 it is suggested that this land be rented either from Hau the Younger or, if he has none, from Herunefer. Apparently the family was willing and was able to get land from Hau that was, as Hekanakht had insisted, "good, well-watered land of Khepeshit," and Hekanakht sent 24 *deben* of copper to help pay for it (II vs. 1-4). The oil and whatever else the family had available in Perhaa was to be sold first, then the metal and other goods could be used to pay the rent. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, 24 *deben* of copper would have bought about 230.4  $hk^3t$  of emmer<sup>76</sup> which in Hekanakht's time corresponded to 154  $hk^3t$  of barley, or the rent of about 5 *arouras*. However, I suspect that prices were far lower at the end of the First Intermediate Period.

From II. 35-36 and V. 18-29 we learn that Hekanakht had a small herd of cattle, 20(?) head in Year 5, three years before the letters to his family were written. There is no way of telling whether he owned or rented pasturage for them or whether there was any need to do so in his time. From another account of the same year (V. 16) we learn that he had at least 1 *aroura* under flax, and probably very much more.

In Year 8, Hekanakht's household farmed the following areas:

Owned: $d^3tt$ and $\dot{s}$	? <i>arouras</i>
Rented:	13
Near Perhaa	30 (?)
From Khentykhe	20
From Hau the Younger near Perhaa	20 (?)

The total must have been of the order of 90 *arouras* and close to the limit of what his household could handle, since Hekanakht shows a certain amount of hesitation about the last plot. To cultivate this there were available, assuming that

<sup>74</sup>Twice 52 and 13.5 are 117.5. James tends to assume that the scribe could not calculate correctly (HP, 57, 64, 114, 23).

<sup>75</sup>Note the use of *gr* "also" in I. 5, which implies that the emmer may not suffice to pay the rent.

<sup>76</sup>P. Boulaq 12 vs. 4 gives the price of 16  $hk^3t$  as 1/60 *dellen* of silver, which is converted at the usual silver-copper ratio of 100:1.

Ḥekanakht himself did not work in the fields, four men (Nakht, Merisu, Sihathor and Sinebnut) and two boys (Anup and Snofru). In P. Bologna 1086.20-26<sup>77</sup> a (probably unfree) laborer is expected to produce 200 *h̄sr* (of 16 *h̄k̄st*), the crop of about 20 *arouras*; a boy is responsible for half that amount. By this standard, Ḥekanakht's family could farm about 100 *arouras* if forced to labor like slaves.

The only crops mentioned in the Ḥekanakht Papers are barley (invariably the variety known as "northern"), emmer, wheat and flax, all staple winter crops planted after drainage of the basins. As we have seen (notes 4 and 5, above), there is no reference in the letters to summer cultivation. How much land was devoted to these crops? The normal monthly grain consumption was about twice the total for the famine ration in II. 23, say 16 *h̄sr*, or 192 *h̄sr* per year.<sup>78</sup> Allowing for grain to pay next year's rent and for seed,<sup>79</sup> this would require about 24 *arouras*. In year 8, Ḥekanakht also had outstanding debts of 117 *h̄sr*, mostly of emmer, due to him during the inundation of that year (III and VI) and a further 43.5 *h̄sr* of barley and 41.25 of emmer apparently not yet due (V. 37-54). As we have already seen (note 72), the 117 *h̄sr* was probably not part of the immediately preceding crop, but the 84.75 *h̄sr* not due at the moment may have been. We cannot tell whether interest is included, but assuming that it is not and that 117 *h̄sr* is likelier to have been a normal amount available for lending than the 84.75 from the poor crop that caused the famine to which so much space is devoted in these letters, a minimum of 14 *arouras* will have been required to raise it. This is still less than half of the total area cultivated. A certain amount was used for flax and cattle fodder. Ḥekanakht may have lent quantities not mentioned in the surviving records. In any case, he overestimated the amount

<sup>77</sup> Wolf, *ZAS*, 65 (1930), 95-96; Gardiner, *Wilbour*, II, 115.

<sup>78</sup> Probably barley. The references to food specify barley (I. 14-17, vs. 1-2, 7-8; II. 6), never emmer, and only once wheat in an emergency (I vs. 7-8). Since the rations of Nakht and Sinebnut are stated to be barley, and the figures in the ration list are all black, it seems that Ḥekanakht tried to feed his family and himself on barley, preferring to lend or sell emmer.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 30-31. I assume an average crop of 15-16 *h̄sr* of 10 *h̄k̄st*, a rent of 5 *h̄sr*, and about 1.5 *h̄sr* for seed per *aroura*.

of grain available to him until the harvest after the inundation of Year 8. He loaned and committed himself to the payment of rentals to the point that there was not enough left to feed the family adequately. If the 25.5 *h̄sr* of grain mentioned in V. 34-36 was all that was available to his household at the time that the account of Year 8 was drawn up, the situation was critical. Even with the short rations of Letter II, they will barely have lasted four months.

But apart from the exigencies of a famine, Ḥekanakht was a prosperous and substantial citizen. He was able to pay rent for his lands in advance,<sup>80</sup> could, in addition, lend substantial amounts of grain and had at his disposal copper, oil, and cloth woven from the flax raised on his farm, all of which could be used to make purchases. He cultivated more than was needed for the immediate requirements of his household, and had substantial capital reserves. One wonders why he did not avail himself of his financial position to buy more land, particularly if the conclusions obtained elsewhere by the writer for the low price of land in the New Kingdom<sup>81</sup> are also valid for the early Middle Kingdom. One possible interpretation was suggested there: that the rates of interest usual at the time were higher than the return to be expected from investing in land. The difference would, however, not be so noticeable if the landowner farmed the land himself (100 per cent interest per year with risk of default on the one hand; on the other, about 8/10 of the crop remaining after deduction of seed and taxes from a field whose cost was twice the annual net).<sup>82</sup>

Could it be that land simply was not available for purchase at the time? The frequent mention of the acquisition of land in the biographies of the First Intermediate Period<sup>83</sup> guarantees that indi-

<sup>80</sup> Certainly in I. 3-6, II vs. 1-5, probably in I. 9-13.

<sup>81</sup> Between one and one and two-thirds the value of one crop from the land, *ibid.*, 29-30. For a similarly low price in relation to annual income, cf. the discussion of prices and rents of houses in medieval Egypt. Ashtor, *JESHO*, 3 (1960), 67-69. The annual rent of a house was more than half of the purchase price.

<sup>82</sup> In *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 31-33, I came to the tentative conclusion that taxes in ancient Egypt amounted to about 1/10 of the crop.

<sup>83</sup> E. g.: Berlin 24032.3 (Fischer, *Kush* 9 (1961), 47-49); Clère-Vandier, *Textes de la Prem. Pér. Int.* 5, no. 7; Cairo, CG 20805 (Fisher, *loc. cit.*, 49); MNK-IX-999.8 (Černý, *JEA*, 47 (1961), 6-7); Daressy, *ASAE*, 15 (1915), 207, line 5.

viduals could convey land, at least as far as the law was concerned, as easily at that period as during the Old Kingdom or later Middle Kingdom, for which private ownership of arable land is well documented. Some restrictions may have been imposed on the sale of land which would make it difficult for a man such as Heḳanakht, who was not a functionary as far as is known, to acquire land, but not even a hint of such restrictions has survived.

In his biography, the Fourth Dynasty official Metjen states that he bought 200 Old Kingdom *stꜣt* or 6000 *arouras* from numerous *nswtjw*, who must have been some kind of small freeholder.<sup>84</sup> The area involved was at least 1/1000 of the arable area of Egypt at the time, and if Metjen was typical of the higher officials of the Old Kingdom, one would expect that the bulk of privately owned land would soon have been concentrated in the hands of a few families, with the peasantry reduced to tenants, assuming that they managed to maintain their personal freedom. Certain tendencies, whose cumulative effects it is impossible to judge, will have counteracted this. The hazards of political life must have led to the confiscation of many large estates, though there is no way of knowing whether such land was then kept by the state, sold or distributed to individuals or granted to the religious endowments that proliferated in the later Old Kingdom.<sup>85</sup> Lower Egypt appears not to have been fully settled at the beginning of the Old Kingdom, and at least a small proportion of land newly brought under cultivation may have been available to small landholders rather than to the state or such officials as Metjen. As far as we can tell, it was not the practice of the Egyptians to entail estates, and in the course of several generations a large estate would normally be divided

<sup>84</sup> *Urk.* I, 2.8, 4.8: *jn-n-f jsw ꜣht stꜣt 200 hr nswtjw ꜣꜣw*. It is unlikely that *hr* could here mean "together with," implying that the *nswtjw* were serfs. No such meaning is attested in *WB*, III, 315-16, while such usages as to receive favors or rewards "from" someone are well documented. Cf. also examples such as *Urk.*, I, 291. 1-2 where *hr* used with *jn* refers to the bringing of documents "from" an official. The *nswtjw* have recently been discussed by Wenig, *ZAS*, 88 (1962), 66-68 and Kaplony, *ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. the long lists of donations of land to temples in the Annals of the Old Kingdom from the time of Userkaf onwards, *Urk.*, I, 240-49, particularly the huge donation of over 57,120 *arouras* to Re' in *Urk.*, I, 242. 9-10.

and subdivided among the children of successive heirs; the unique case of P. Berlin 9010,<sup>86</sup> where a trustee was appointed to manage the property of all the heirs and to allot them shares from the income, contrasts with Nika'ankh<sup>87</sup> who divided his funerary endowment and priestly functions among his wife and children. His eldest son was responsible for the proper execution of the family's priestly duties but had no other authority over them or their property. To this the common practice of endowing one's mortuary cult with fields must be added as a factor leading to the break-up of large estates; Heḳanakht's profession of *ka*-servant suggests that this may have been the source of the fields he owned.

It is hard to say which of these tendencies prevailed at a given time, but it is the writer's impression that the earlier Old Kingdom is characterized by a relatively small number of tombs belonging to individuals of extremely great wealth; in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties the number of decorated tombs increases steadily but they were mostly built for persons of moderate rank and means. Even the largest tombs in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery appear to have involved a smaller expenditure for masonry and decoration than the mastabas of officials of corresponding rank a few generations earlier. At the same time, decorated tombs became common in the provinces. The material is not amenable to statistical investigation, but the writer wonders whether the economic history of the later Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period can be entirely described in terms of an overall decline. Decentralization of wealth, and in an agricultural society with virtually no large scale private commerce this means the fragmentation of the great estates of the time of Metjen, is a factor that should be given far more weight than it has in the past in explaining the evident decline in the prosperity of the Memphite area late in the Old Kingdom.

This will have benefited the lower ranks of the scribal class; whether any sizeable proportion of the actual cultivators owned their land seems more questionable. The *nswtjw* of the early Old Kingdom are poorly attested later and seem to

<sup>86</sup> Sethe, *ZAS*, 61 (1926), 67-79.

<sup>87</sup> *Urk.*, I, 24-32, 162, cf. Harari, *ASAE*, 54 (1957), 317-44 and pl. i.

have lost their freedom; most cultivators documented in the texts were tenants or serfs. During the First Intermediate Period, such texts as the biography of Henkꜣ at Deir el-Gebrawi<sup>88</sup> suggest that shortage of farmers gave the rural population a greater degree of freedom and mobility than had been the case earlier, but whether these peasants actually obtained title to the lands they cultivated is another matter. The countless texts of the period with their recitations of official virtue and succour to the poor and hungry tell us nothing in this regard.

The evidence indicates rather vaguely that individual land holdings during the First Intermediate Period were somewhat smaller than those usual among the officials of the Old Kingdom, and that there may have been a shortage of agricultural labor. Heḳanakht apparently had no difficulty in renting land, even in a famine year, as he was in a position to insist that his family take only the best (I. 8). However, this need not indicate a great abundance of available land. A substantial citizen capable of paying his rent in advance as Heḳanakht was could expect preferential treatment by landowners. But the same factors should have made it relatively easy for him to purchase land if he desired, since it does not appear to have been in the firm control of a limited number of landowners at that time.

Heḳanakht's reasons are likely to have been economic, and these factors will be considered next. We will have to assume that the rule-of-thumb averages already mentioned in notes 79, 81-82 can be used to estimate probable costs and income, and that the New Kingdom price of land, about 150-250 *hkꜣt* of grain per *aroura*, was roughly the same as the cost in the Eleventh Dynasty. This is open to serious objection, but no contemporary evidence exists. Seed and taxes for an *aroura* of grain land cost about 3 *hꜣr* of 10 *hkꜣt*. Heḳanakht paid a rent of 5 *hꜣr* per *aroura* (I. 12; there are too many uncertainties for us to utilize II vs. 1-2 here). However, persons in a poorer bargaining position, particularly peasants who had to wait until the harvest to pay, will have had to agree to a substantially higher rent, probably a half of the crop

<sup>88</sup> *Urk.*, I, 78. 4-7: Moreover, I refounded Villages that had become deserted (?) in this nome with livestock and people of other nomes, and those who had been serfs in them I appointed to be officials.

as in the New Kingdom, or about 7-8 *hꜣr*. For the wages of a hired hand we are forced to generalize from one example, the 1.5 *hꜣr* per month for Heḳi's son Nakht and his family mentioned in I. 15-16<sup>89</sup> or 18 *hꜣr* per year. A hired hand working for an absentee landowner would certainly cost more, both because of less conscientious farming and dishonesty, and because many needs which could be satisfied directly by Heḳanakht's household would have to be paid for when the laborer was in the service of an absentee. The evidence of P. Harris I<sup>90</sup> shows that an average man (with his family?) cultivated about 10 *arouras* during the New Kingdom. The passages in the Miscellanies<sup>91</sup> do not seem to refer to ordinary cultivators. In P. Bologna 1086 an unfree cultivator is expected to farm 20 *arouras* (see note 77).

The output of a free hired hand is likely to have been nearer the figure averaged from P. Harris, perhaps even lower if he worked without detailed supervision. Hired labor cost an absentee landlord at least 2 *hꜣr* per *aroura* per year, and probably substantially more; the figure will be doubled here. Slaves, if used to any extent to farm estates, did not require wages above their physical needs, but much of the resulting savings will have been balanced by increased costs of supervision and the original cost of purchase, which appears to have been relatively high at least in the New Kingdom. The wages for free labor have been estimated here at barely above the subsistence level. Heḳanakht's household, on the other hand, included four men and two boys old enough to help in the fields. Heḳi's son Nakht worked under close supervision, and since a family such as Heḳanakht's would have kept a servant in any case, not all of his wages can be charged to the grain fields. Dividing his wages among all the fields farmed by the family

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 42-43. This amounts to about 5000 calories per day, which is barely adequate for a man, his wife and perhaps a small child. Other items which would have to be provided, such as clothes, caused no expenditure from the grain fields, since flax was raised and cloth manufactured by the household. The amount of grain stated was the absolute minimum that could be paid to a hired hand with family.

<sup>90</sup> The summations P. Harris, I, 67.6, 8 show 113,433 "heads" working 1,071,780 *arouras*. The figures are not quite accurate. Cf. Schaedel, *Die Listen des grossen Papyrus Harris*, 52-56 and Baer, *loc. cit.*, 42.

<sup>91</sup> Gardiner, *JEA*, 27 (1941), 20-21, cf. Gardiner, *Wilbour*, II, 116.

(90 *arouras*) the amount per *aroura* becomes negligible. Assuming now that Hekanakht had 20 *h3r*, an average price for an *aroura* of land, he could:

buy 1 <i>aroura</i> with an average crop of minus: seed taxes rent for next year other expenses yielding	15 <i>h3r</i> 1.5 1.5 — small 12 <i>h3r</i>	rent 4 <i>arouras</i> 60 <i>h3r</i> 6 — 20 small 34 <i>h3r</i>
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Renting thus was far more profitable than buying as long as the total area was one that could be handled largely by the family. Once significant numbers of hired hands had to be employed, the picture would change.

A man who did not plan to have his household

buy 1 <i>aroura</i> and let it for farm it, yielding minus: seed taxes rent for next year labor Supervision, administration, transportation of grain leaving	5-8 <i>h3r</i> — 1.5 — — — — 3.5-6.5	15 <i>h3r</i> 1.5 1.5 — 4 — — much less than 8 <i>h3r</i>	rent 4 <i>arouras</i> 60 <i>h3r</i> 6 — 20-32 16 Probably very substantial if the fields were at a distance from the owner's home much less than 6-18 <i>h3r</i>
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do the farming could either let land he owned or have it worked by hired help. For rented land he would have to hire laborers, since subletting at a profit is not likely to have been feasible. With a capital of 20 *h3r* he could:

Except when very tight control over labor and overhead costs was practicable, the second and third alternatives were hardly worth the additional bother, and when rents were near the upper end of their range, renting rather than buying land was a poor investment for the absentee. The choice between the first two will have depended on a variety of circumstances. With good management the cultivation of owned fields by hired help or especially slaves will have been the more profitable. This alternative was practical for institutions and the largest landowners, but one suspects that the moderately well-to-do will have preferred to let their land. P. Wilbour shows that even institutions rented out much of their land. Broadly speaking, the same choice seems to have been made in modern Egypt before the recent land reforms.

Where a farmer owned land already, it was more advantageous to cultivate it himself than to let it to a tenant, as long as the work did not require the

hiring of additional help. He would get about 12 *h3r* per *aroura* in the former case, 3.5-6.5 in the latter, so that collecting rent from a tenant was far less profitable than in the case of the absentee landlord. Accordingly, Hekanakht instructed Merisu in I vs. 9-11 not to permit anyone to rent the land he owned but to cultivate it himself. As far as acquisition of additional land was concerned, the circumstances of his time favored landownership only on the part of those who did not intend to farm in person, largely officials, while renting was more advantageous to a farmer with moderate means. The mass of peasants who had no capital had, of course, no choice in the matter, assuming that they were legally free to make such a choice. One would expect to find ownership of land concentrated in non-agricultural hands if the reconstruction presented here is accurate. The evidence of the apportioning paragraphs of P. Wilbour<sup>92</sup> at least does not contradict this, since among the

<sup>92</sup> Gardiner, *Wilbour*, II, 79-84.

private landholders mentioned there only a fifth are cultivators, herdsmen or beekeepers, while most of the remainder are in public service, almost a half of the total being military.

The New Kingdom provides virtually no additional evidence for the landholding practices of private individuals beyond the mere fact of extensive private property. Much of this was undoubtedly cultivated by tenants as in the case of P. Berlin 8523<sup>93</sup> where a Theban functionary of the Twenty-first Dynasty informally renews a Nubian's lease on the orders of his wife. A local official was entrusted with the supervision of the tenant, a situation recalling the problems of managing property at a distance from home that was mentioned above, and the letter itself was to serve as an informal contract.

In P. Wilbour, the apportioning paragraphs list large numbers of private landowners in all stations of life who shared rights to the produce of their fields with an institution.<sup>94</sup> In a minority of cases, the property of individuals of high rank is stated to be "in the hand of" (*m-drt*) someone else, the phrase being the same as that used in headings of non-apportioning paragraphs to indicate the official responsible for supervising the activities of cultivators on the temple domains, some of whom must have had subordinates to work the extensive fields for which they were responsible. The controller Pre'nakht, who supervised portions of the domain of the temple of Ramesses V, will serve as an example (P. Wilbour, 25.23-47, 76.29-39). The following cultivators were "in his hand":

The scribe Hori	5 <i>arouras</i>
The servant Nesamun	158
The bee-keeper Setabu	2
The cultivator Amenkha	55

Among the private landholders in the apportioning paragraphs whose fields are not "in the hand of" another we find<sup>95</sup> high-ranking officers and officials who are unlikely to have farmed the lands in Middle Egypt in person. The phrase *m-drt* only indicates that certain persons of extremely high rank had an agent to supervise their property, but neither its presence nor its absence

tells us whether the land was cultivated by tenants or by hired help.

So far we have assumed that income was the major factor influencing Hekanakht to rent rather than buy land, and this seems to have been the case at the time that the surviving records were written. The tone of the correspondence suggests nothing else. Under other circumstances, however, Hekanakht might have decided differently. Quite apart from economic considerations such as a decrease in the manpower available to the family or the desire to farm more land than could be worked by the household alone, Hekanakht's generation is no more likely to have been composed of perfect economic beings than any other. Landholding as such does not appear to have been the status-symbol that it was at other times in the Near East—the ancient Egyptian price was far too low. In the eyes of a farmer, landownership may even have had the disadvantage of bringing one's prosperity too obviously to the attention of the authorities. But on the other hand, if a man wished to arrange for the cult of his *ka* and did not trust his family to conduct the services, he will have needed land to endow his *ka*-servants. One could imagine other situations, for instance a shortage of land available for rent, which would make the security of ownership worthwhile. The conclusions obtained above only have limited validity as long as there is no material to judge these possibilities.

Returning now to Hekanakht, we find him encouraging his family to rent land up to the limit of their ability to farm it, but no further, if I understand the implications of I.6-7 correctly. Hekanakht apparently loaned the remaining grain to others. On the whole, he seems to have tried to keep his financial condition as liquid as possible, and apart from emergencies, this will have resulted in a steady increase in his stocks of the durable commodities that composed most of his capital. Hekanakht mentions copper once (II vs. 1-2) but neither gold nor silver, and refers otherwise to cloth (I.4-6; II vs. 2) or grain (I.5, 11-13, 15-17; II vs. 2): in III vs. 1 he indicates that he would prefer to have debts repaid in grain rather than oil, which could turn rancid (cf. also II vs. 3). Precious metals and similar valuables do not appear to have played a very great role in Hekanakht's economy.

To what end was Hekanakht accumulating these financial reserves? He does not appear in

<sup>93</sup> Spiegelberg, *ZAS*, 53 (1917), 107-11.

<sup>94</sup> Gardiner, *Wilbour*, II, 76-77 and cf. above, p. 15-16.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-84. For instance: 3 *Thr* (91.20), *jdww n t3-nt-htr* (61.19), *sš n pr Jmn* (75.39), *sš n t3ty* (61.41), *sš n st š't n Pr-3* (16.18) and many others.

the letters as a person who would use them to improve his standard of living. In I vs. 1-4 he does not blame Merisu for sending him old, dry barley as such—if Merisu's motive had merely been to economize, Hekanakht would not have objected—but only for economizing on his father's food but not on his own. Instructions tacitly to cut the wages of Heti's son Nakht suggest that profit was more important than honesty in that household. And however much one would like to suppose that Hekanakht used some of his resources to succour the poor and starving among his neighbors, charity is not likely to have been a significant element in the personality of a man who was capable of putting his family on short rations for profit. Hekanakht was a miser, and possibly we need not look beyond the thought of all those sacks of grain and bales of linen waiting to be admired to explain his economic practices. But he was not completely out of touch with reality, and the customs of his time demanded a far greater amount of liquid assets in anticipation of death than usual in most societies. Outrageous as funeral expenses have become in the modern United States and however high inheritance taxes may be, they pale to insignificance beside the cost of providing and furnishing a tomb appropriate to a middle-class standard of living in ancient Egypt. There is no evidence from the Eleventh Dynasty for funeral expenses, but their level is suggested by the fact that in the New Kingdom a copy of the Book of the Dead cost 1 *deben* of silver, a sum which only in the extreme inflation of grain prices in the later Twentieth Dynasty fell much under half the annual income of a skilled laborer.<sup>96</sup> And this is only one item in an expenditure that included the construction of a tomb far more elaborately and durably built and furnished than an ordinary house. The total will have far outweighed the value of land to endow the mortuary cult, and for Hekanakht, whose family was capable of performing the duties of a *ka*-servant, the major consideration will have been to accumulate enough wealth to pay for a comfortable existence in the next world—or, if he was cynical enough to consider the probable fate of an elaborate tomb, to be buried in the style appropriate to his station

<sup>96</sup> O. Gardiner, 133, cf. Černý, *JWH*, 1 (1954), 912, the wages discussed *ibid.*, 917-19 and the discussion of grain prices in Baer, *JARCE*, 1 (1962), 28.

in life. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Egyptian of moderate means followed Hekanakht's practice of keeping his funds liquid rather than investing them in land, and that mortuary expenditures will have played as dominant a role in the private economy of Egypt as they did at some periods in the public.

Our discussion so far has been devoted to the economic aspects of Hekanakht's establishment in Nebesit. He had other interests which made it necessary for him to be absent from home for long periods. In Year 5, Merisu provided him with the equivalent of 6000 *tr-sst* loaves, presumably provisions for a journey. Even if these loaves, otherwise unknown, were not much larger than biscuits, they will have lasted several months. In Year 8, Hekanakht writes (II.29) that he intends to stay where he is at least until the end of Shōmu, more than three months after the date on which the letter was written; he probably left Nebesit shortly before he wrote Letter I in August, since he made arrangements to rent land while still at home. I. 9-10 and II. 4 suggest that he had just returned from an extensive trip to the north which took him as far as Djedisut (probably Memphis, cf. note 10). He seems to have come back with a supply of old, dry barley. There is no way of telling whether he had estates in the north or simply collected grain in the course of administrative or priestly duties. James, *HP*, 8-9, concludes that Hekanakht had no agricultural interests outside his home, and that the journey from which the surviving letters come cannot have taken him to a distance as great as that of Memphis. Since nothing indicates that Hekanakht had any official position, it is reasonable to suppose that his journeys were in some way connected with his functions as a *ka*-servant for the vizier Ipi. Hepdjefa at Asyut gave his *ka*-servants rights to a certain proportion of the income of some of his estates,<sup>97</sup> and Ipi may have used property or income that he had acquired in Lower Egypt to pay his *ka*-servant, as Winlock suggested. There is evidence to substantiate the assumption that Theban officials acquired wealth and influence in the north in this period, not the least of which is the presence in Perhaa of Heruner, an official who is addressed as "overseer of

<sup>97</sup> Siut I. 279; Montet, *Kémi*, 3 (1930-1935), 56.

Lower Egypt" in III vs. 3.<sup>98</sup> Apart from these vague hints, nothing is known about Hekanakht's business interests outside of Thebes; the frequency and length of the journeys indicates that they were important and at least time-consuming if not profitable.

The greater part of the surviving papers of Hekanakht were written within a few weeks of each other during August and September, 2002 B. C. (Letters I, II, III; Accounts V.34-54, vs. 1-10 [a list of wooden objects not discussed here], and VI). There remains the first half of Account V drawn up in Year 5 and already mentioned. For completeness' sake, a little space will be devoted to it, since it indicates the financial state of Hekanakht's household during a normal year.

The account is dated to the 9th of the 2nd month of Shōmu in the 5th year of S'ankhkare' Mentuhotep, or September 24, 2005 B. C., Gregorian.<sup>99</sup> It is divided by lines into four sections, two of which deal with grain and flax turned over to Merisu, Sihathor and Sinebnut, his "cultivators," presumably before Hekanakht's departure on an extended journey. One lists the cattle turned over to Sinebnut, while the fourth details the bread given by Merisu to Hekanakht. In contrast to the accounts of Year 8, which are almost entirely devoted to outstanding debts with only a small amount of grain listed in the possession of the family, the accounts of Year 5 are solely concerned with substantial quantities of grain, flax and cattle in the hands of the family.

The first two accounts belong together, since the dividing line is cut short so that the date and "Account of the northern barley of Hekanakht" serve as the heading of both parts (V.1-2). To the right of the line is a list of the "barley," here used as a general term for field crops (HP, 55), handed over to Merisu: 122 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of barley, 63 of emmer, and 1100 "bundles" of flax, a unit of unknown size (V.3-10). To the left is first a listing of "his produce(?) for the bulls" amounting to 4 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of barley and 10.5 of emmer (V.11).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. also Fischer, *Artibus Asiae*, 22 (1959), 240-52, *JNES*, 19 (1960), 258-68; Helck, *ZAS*, 80 (1955), 75-76 for a few other examples of officials transferred after the reunification of Egypt.

<sup>99</sup> HP, 54-55 is a little confusing, since Khentekhtayperty is used as the name of 2 *šmw* (as does the writer, cf. note 71) while in the discussion HP, 4 n. 1 it is 3 *šmw*.

There follows a heading, "In terms of <sup>100</sup> northern barley, which Hekanakht allotted to his cultivators." Sihathor and Sinebnut receive 46 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of grain and 100 bundles of flax each, Merisu 50 *h<sup>3</sup>r* and 110 bundles. Beside this latter is the notation, "One *aroura* under flax," and below the account the number 12 is written in a blank space (V.12-17). In HP, 56-57, James attempts to show that the accounts to the left of the line state how the grain and flax turned over to Merisu in the first account was disposed of.

There is no compelling philological reason to interpret the accounts in this way, and the figures are troublesome. James succeeds in balancing the quantities of grain by including the cattle-fodder and the floating 12 on the left and noting that the figure 63 on the right, which has been altered, originally was 64.5. But since the reading not only of this figure but also of two others<sup>101</sup> is uncertain, since the final figures do not balance and nothing indicates what the 12 in the second account referred to, and since it is quite impossible to reconcile the figures for flax, it is safer simply to take the accounts as separate entities. They inform us that Hekanakht left 268 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of barley, 73.5 of emmer and 1410 bundles of flax at the disposal of his family when he left. The amount is not unreasonable. Until the harvest, the family would eat about 80 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of barley; the remaining grain, if entirely used to rent land, would suffice for 47 *arouras*. Some of this grain was needed for seed, but the family had linen and possibly other resources with which to pay whatever rent Hekanakht had not already paid before leaving. The first two accounts indicate that the household farmed an area comparable to that reconstructed from the papers of Year 8, without the food shortage they endured three years later.

The third account lists the cattle entrusted to

<sup>100</sup> *Jr m*, literally "made, converted into," which must depend on some preceding phrase. This cannot be the "produce for the bulls" in the line above (V.11), nor is it likely to refer generally to the first account (V.3-10) as HP, 56 thinks since it is separated from it by a line. It probably continues the general heading in V.2, which is practically on the same level and is not separated from it: Account of the crops of Hekanakht in terms of northern barley, which Hekanakht allotted to his cultivators.

<sup>101</sup> The reading of V.4 as 112 seems reasonable, but the form of the 100 is unusual. In V.13, 15 it would be possible to read 40.6 instead of 46.

Sinebnut, 20 head if James is correct (*HP*, 60 n. 12) in assuming that the 15 head suitable for teams (V. 24) are among the 20 head itemized in V. 20-23. There follows a note:

- (25)(26) | But [if] Sinebnut calls | [NN about the  
mat]ter of the bull, he (NN or Sinebnut?)  
(27) shall go | up to take him (the bull) away so  
(28) that he (the bull) will not go— | for his price  
(29) has increased by a half—with | Hēti's son  
Nakht.<sup>102</sup>

Apparently there was a chance to sell a bull at a good price, and Hēkanakht orders that the bull shall not go out with the rest of the herd if negotiations are continued.

Two more documents were found together with the five from Hēkanakht's archives. One (IV) is a fragmentary letter sent by a woman, Sitnebsekhtu, to her mother of the same name. The other (VII) is an account of emmer, yarn and flax belonging to Sitnebsekhtu and her family. None of the personal or place names occur elsewhere in the Hēkanakht archives, and the connection Sitnebsekhtu had with Hēkanakht's household remains obscure. But the circumstances of discovery and the handwriting of the two documents indicate that there must have been one.

According to James, three hands occur in the Hēkanakht Papers, apart from altered addresses or remains of earlier texts where the papyri are palimpsest; they wrote I-II, III-V and VI-VII, respectively. Letter III was sent to Nebesit from some distance away. Account V was written by

<sup>102</sup> *HP*, 53 reads: Now [if] Sinebnut calls to [Hēti's son Nakhte about] the matter of a bull that goes up (?), that he should catch it, and he does not go, half of its price is upon him and (a half on) Hēti's son Nakhte. The Egyptian reads: [*Jr*] *grt j3š S3-nb-njw t n* [— — — *hr m*] *dt nt k3 3k-f jtt-f tm-f šm jw gs n swnt-f hr-f hn' Hty s3 Nht*. The lacunae and vague pronominal reference complicate our understanding of this passage. The major objection to James' translation is that *gs n . . . hr-f* means "half of . . . is added to it," cf. Gardiner, *Grammar*, § 165.8; in the sense of "charged to," Egyptian requires *r* instead of *hr*. But if we read "half of his price is added to him," i. e.: his price has increased by half, *jw . . . hr-f* must be a parenthesis and *hn' Hty s3 Nht* follows *šm*. Then *3k-f jtt-f* must be the apodosis.

the same hand over a space of three years, and apparently at Nebesit. It follows that the hand of III-V cannot have been that of a public letter-writer, and since Hēkanakht is not likely to have had a secretary, we are left to choose between Hēkanakht himself and Sīhathor who conveyed letters between Hēkanakht and his family. Our choice of the younger man is based on the noticeable increase in skill and neatness between Year 5 and 8 in Account V. Also Sīhathor is more likely to have done favors for Sitnebsekhtu than his crotchety father. Letters I and II were probably written by Hēkanakht himself, while Merisu, who was told to draw up Account VI (I vs. 17), will have written VI and VII.

It seems then that the younger men kept the accounts and wrote the letters of the family of a propertied lady named Sitnebsekhtu, who can safely be assumed to have been illiterate. The interest shown by the younger Sitnebsekhtu in Gereg makes it unlikely that she was married to Merisu or Nakht. The households were completely separate. The families may have been related or friends. The most reasonable explanation for the presence of the two documents among the Hēkanakht Papers is that they had been discarded as no longer needed, and that whoever took them up to the tomb of Emsah was planning to erase and reuse them.

Nothing much can be done with the remaining tatters from Hēkanakht's archive, though it is reassuring to note that the document from which one comes was devoted to loans of grain.

This article has been largely restricted to the economic aspects of five of the twenty texts presented by James. It goes without saying that they are rich sources for many other matters of Egyptological interest, ranging from philological questions to social history. The careful edition and elaborate series of commentaries offered in this book will make it easy to use for further research. It is hoped that others will be induced to express their gratitude for James' labors in the only way possible—by further discussion.