

Unpublished Coptic Writing Exercises from Thebes

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Abstract

The monastic groups that settled in Thebes during the sixth and eighth centuries CE contributed to the prosperity of many aspects of life in Thebes, including education.

The Theban region provides us with many documents related to writing exercises, which reveal the development of education levels; there were many levels of writing and scripts, where the student would practice an entire course of literary education, with the goal of teaching the student to read and write properly. This course differed depending on the student's level: beginner, intermediate, or professional.

This study aims to track Coptic education levels by publishing three ostraca: the first ostrakon is being published for the first time, bears alphabetical exercise, and is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum's excavation storehouse in Qurna; the photo of the second ostrakon was previously published in a catalogue of the Graeco–Roman Museum, bearing biblical extracts, and is preserved in the Graeco–Roman Museum in Alexandria; and the third ostrakon, which bears epistolary exercise and is preserved in the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) in Cairo, is being published for the first time as well.