

Research note

Two Papyrus Fragments with Historically Relevant Data

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This small article is a foretaste of the richness in historical data provided by the thousands of papyrus fragments contained in the archives from the ancient workmen's community of Deir el-Medina now gradually consultable in the online database TPOP.

ملخص

هذه المقالة الصغيرة هي لمحة موجزة عن المعلومات التاريخية الغنية جداً التي تحتويها آلاف قطع البردي حول المجتمع القديم للعمال في دير المدينة والمحفوظة في الأرشيف والتي يمكن في الوقت الحاضر الاطلاع عليها ضمن TPOP، وهي منصة البردي في تورينو على الإنترنت.

Thanks to the unfailing diligence of the curator of the papyrus collection in the Museo Egizio, Susanne Töpfer, and her team of collaborators, the almost Herculean work of creating an online database of the dozens of hieratic papyri and the thousands of fragments has made considerable progress.¹ The subsequent work of transcription and searching for joins and/or fragments belonging to the same original document is meanwhile in full swing.

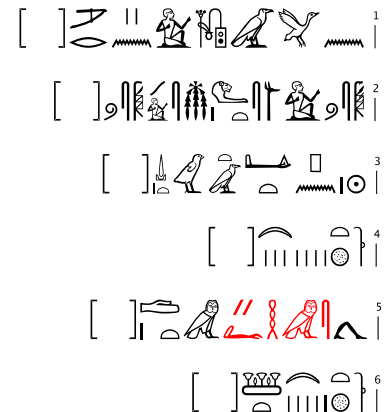
Publications of several documents have already seen the light, and more are in various stages of preparation. Many fragments will hopefully end up in publications of complete documents, but on account of their text passages with historically relevant information the versos of two fragments deserve preliminary advance publication.

CP29/035 = Cat.2105/360 verso

<https://papyri.museoegizio.it/o/473257>

The recto of this fragment (Fig. 1) bears six incomplete lines of a list of commodities, most likely dating to the mid-20th Dynasty. The passage I am concerned with here is on the verso (Fig. 2).

Transcription



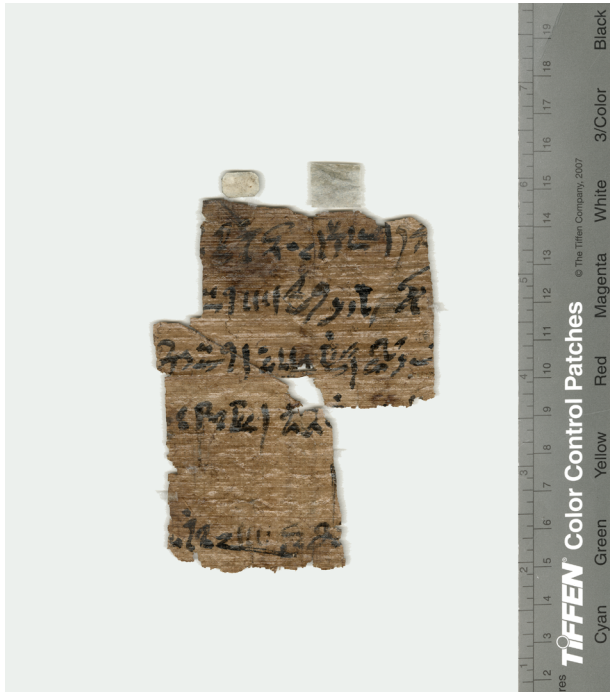


Fig. 1: CP29/035 = Cat. 2105/360, recto. Scan by Museo Egizio.

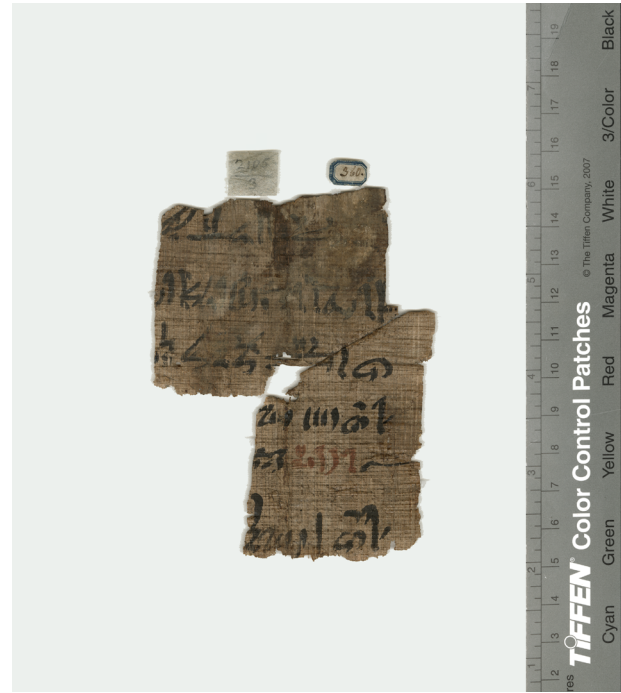


Fig. 2: CP29/035 = Cat. 2105/360, verso. Scan by Museo Egizio.

Translation

- (x+1) of the two scribes of the river-[bank ...]
- (x+2) retainer Userhatmose, retainer [...]
- (x+3) This day: giving the remainder [...]
- (x+4) Regnal Year 4 Month III [...]
- (x+5) Entered (for) the left side from [...]
- (x+6) Regnal Year 1 Month IV of Ax.t [...]

Commentary

- (1) The two scribes are most likely members of the team of four *rwḏw*-agents of the riverbank mentioned in O. Ashmolean Museum HO 53, rt. 3 (Černý-Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, 1957, pl. XLIX, 1).
- (2) A retainer Userhatmose is not known from other sources.

The importance of the text on this fragment lies in lines 4 and 6. The few incomplete lines doubtlessly present fragmentary journal notes,² in view of the paleography dating to the second half of the 20th Dynasty. The dates in lines 4 and 6 indicate a change in a monarch's reign between a Regnal Year 4 Month III of *šh.t* and a Regnal Year 1 Month IV of *šh.t*. The only king in the second half of the 20th Dynasty who reigned for a brief period was Rameses X. So far, this king was thought to have reigned

for 3 years, based on the evidence of the so-called “Giornale” of Year 3. The last date mentioned in this journal text is Year 3 Month II of *šh.t*, Day 2 (recto 7, 27), or Month IV of *šh.t*, Day 24.³ Based on the text of the fragment under discussion, his reign continued after Year 3 Month II of *šh.t* for more than a year, until sometime between Month III and Month IV of *šh.t* of Year 4. The accession date of Rameses X fell on I *pr.t* 27. Consequently, his reign lasted almost 10 months into his fourth regnal year. The last date of the reign of Rameses X coincides with the accession date of his successor Rameses XI and therefore lies in the same period between Month III *šh.t* and Month IV *šh.t*. This then contradicts the proposed date of the latter king's accession, namely III *šmw* Day 20.⁴ This date has been accepted by most authors until recently.⁵ Yet, the sources to support this suggested date can hardly be called decisive. The two key documents quoted are P. Turin Cat. 1888 + Cat. 2095 and P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.96, the Adoption Papyrus. The first is a journal text from the reign of Rameses XI containing a series of dates spread over several months, with only one full date: Year 18 IV *šmw* Day 14 or 24.⁶ Considering this as certain indication of a recent year change is speculation and beyond proof. The

CP37/092 verso

The recto of this fragment (Fig. 3) bears six incomplete lines of a journal text dating to the second half of the 20th Dynasty. Again, the text we are concerned with here is on the verso (Fig. 4).

[illegible]

(x+1) [rnp. |t-sp 15 [ʒbd I ʒh.t] sw 10 (+h...)]
 (x+2) tʒy n r^c-wnm [...]
 (x+3) qʒi r 'Imnt.t i[n ...]
 (x+4) rnp.t-sp 15, ʒbd I ʒh.t sw 18 [...]
 (x+5) [...] nswt Hr-m-hb [...]
 (x+6) [...] dl.t diw [...]

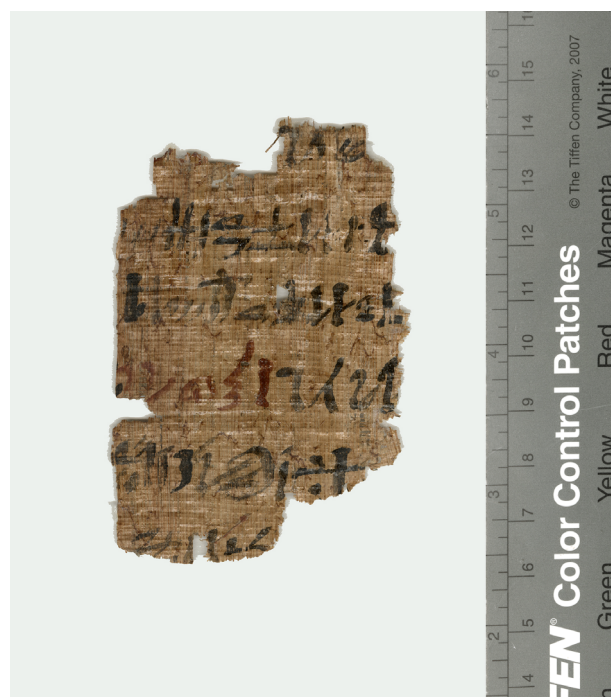


Fig. 4: CP37/092 = Cat. 2105/360, verso. Scan by Museo Egizio.

Translation

- (x+1) [Reg]nal Year 15, [Month I of *šh.t*], Day 10
[+ x ...]
(x+2) food basket [...]
(x+3) crossing to the West by [...]
(x+4) Regnal Year 15, Month I of *šh.t*, Day 18 [...]
(x+5) [...] King Horemheb [...]
(x+6) [...] distributing grain rations [...]

Commentary

This fragment bears six incomplete lines of a journal text from Regnal Year 15 of Ramesses IX. The incomplete state of the fragment slightly hampers a definite reconstruction of the event recorded in lines 4 and 5, but parallel records in other journal texts may help to offer a solution. Notably, during the 20th Dynasty the anniversaries of both the accession to the throne and the date of death of several deified or venerated monarchs were observed in the community of Deir el-Medina.¹⁰ Among these first and foremost are the founder patrons of the village, Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari, followed by Sethi I, Ramesses II and Ramesses III.¹¹ In the journal texts these events are usually noted in similar terms: *h^c* – “accession of king NN”, or *hnw n* – “sailing of king NN”, sometimes preceded by a standard formula like *wsf n t3 is.t* – “the gang was idle”, or *b3kw* – “working”. A few examples will illustrate this style of recording such events.

The accession of Ramesses II:

P. Turin Cat.1898 + Cat.1937 + Cat.2094/244, rt.

5,15: III *šmw* 27 *wsf t3 is.t h^c n nswt Wsr-m3^c.t-R^c-S^tp-n-...*¹²

P. Turin CP21/004 (unpub.), rt. 3: III *šmw* 27 *b3kw h^c n nswt [...]*.

The accession of Ramesses III:

O. DeM 55, vs. 1-2: I *šmw* 26 *ir.t h^c nsw.t n pr-^c3*.¹³

P. Turin Cat.1898 + Cat.1937 + Cat.2094/244, rt. 2,26: I *šmw* 26 *h^c nswt Wsr-m3^c.t-R^c-S^tp-n-...*¹⁴

The death of Sethi I:

O. Ashmolean Museum HO 11, vs. 7: III *šmw* 24 *m p3 hnw Sthy*.¹⁵

O. Cairo 25503, vs. 4: [III *šmw* 24 *h^c.n t3 is.t m wsf n p3 hnw St[hy]*].¹⁶

The death of Ramesses II:

P. Turin Provv.8538, rt. I, 5: II *šh.t* 6 *wsf hnw Wsr-m3^c.t-R^c-S^tp-n-R^c*.¹⁷

One event recorded in a journal text but not yet noticed in this respect is: P. Turin Cat. 1898 + Cat. 1937 + Cat. 2094/244, rt. 5,10: III *šmw* 22 *q3 Hr-m-hb*.¹⁸

The spelling of the word *q3* with the determinative D1 looks suspicious. This D1 is most likely a mistake for P1, the determinative of the verb *q3i*, “to cross”. “Crossing” may well be an earlier version for the term *hnw* – “sailing” later used to indicate the date of death of a monarch. If so, we would have here a dated note observing the day of death of king Horemheb on III *šmw* 22. This finding allows for a possible reconstruction of the dated note in lines 4-5 of the journal fragment under discussion as: “Regnal Year 15, I *šh.t* 18. Observing the accession day of King Horemheb”.

Notes

- ¹ For this project, see Töpfer, *RiME 2* (2018), <https://rivista.museoegizio.it/article/the-turin-papyrus-online-platform-tpop-an-introduction/>.
- ² For journal notes, see the lemma “Journal of the Necropolis” in: Davies, *Life Within the Five Walls*, 2018, pp. 162–164, and Van der Moezel, *Administrative Hieratic from Dynasties 19 and 20*, 2022, pp. 25–27.
- ³ Botti-Peet, *Il Giornale della Necropoli di Tebe*, 1928, pl. 55 and pl. 55 text d.
- ⁴ Cannuyer, *GM 132*, 1993, pp. 19–20; Ohlhafer, *GM 135*, 1993, pp. 59ff.
- ⁵ E.g., Beckerath, *Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten*, 1997, p. 107; Barwik, *The Twilight of Ramesside Egypt*, 2011, p. 39; Antoine, “Le premier prophète d’Amon et l’ascension de Piankh à Thèbes pendant l’Aire de la Renaissance”, *JEH 12*, 2019, p. 3.
- ⁶ P. Turin Cat. 1888 + Cat. 2095, rt. 2, 14; Gardiner, *Ramesside Administrative Documents*, 1948, p. 67, 16. Noticeably, in his introduction to this document on p. xx Gardiner states that “the earlier parts of the present Journal (before 2, 14) record events doubtless belonging to the 13th Year”.
- ⁷ Gardiner, *JEA 26*, 1941, p. 23 with note 3.
- ⁸ The suggestion by Ohlhafer, *GM 135*, 1993, p. 59, that Gardiner considered the opening lines of the Adoption Papyrus as a reference to the accession date on III *Shemu 20* is incorrect.
- ⁹ Ohlhafer, *GM 135*, 1993, p. 60 (the document is there cited as pTurin 2097/161+2105 vso. after the transcription in Černý’s Notebook 152, pp. 12–13).
- ¹⁰ Remembering and observing anniversaries of accessions and deaths of former kings is an interesting aspect of the sense of history in the village of Deir el-Medina; cf. McDowell, “Awareness of the Past in Deir el-Medina”, 1992, pp. 101–02.
- ¹¹ Jauhainen, “Do Not Celebrate Your Feast Without Your Neighbours”, 2015, pp. 159–61, 172–77 and 178–86.
- ¹² Botti-Peet, *Il Giornale della Necropoli di Tebe*, 1928, pl. 53.
- ¹³ Černý, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non-littéraires*, 1935, pl. 45.
- ¹⁴ Botti-Peet, *Il Giornale della Necropoli di Tebe*, 1928, pl. 53.
- ¹⁵ Černý-Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, 1957, pl. XXV, 2. Contrary to the idea of Jauhainen, “Do Not Celebrate Your Feast Without Your Neighbours”, 2009, p. 179, the *hnw* – “sailing” does not refer to the accession of a king but to his death; see the text quoted below with note 15. Since the death of Sethi I thus fell on III *Shemu 24*, it is noteworthy that his son and successor Ramesses II ascended to the throne three days later, on III *Shemu 27*.
- ¹⁶ Černý, *Ostraca hiératiques*, 1930, pp. 1–2, pl. 1*.
- ¹⁷ Unpubl.; cf. Demarée, “Announcement of the Passing of Ramesses II”, *JEOL 46*, 2016–2017, p. 121.
- ¹⁸ Botti-Peet, *Il Giornale della Necropoli di Tebe*, 1928, pl. 58.

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