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With a Focus on an Unpublished Deir el-Medina Archive (P. BN Ms. Égyptien
237)**

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New Kingdom Hieratic Texts in the French National Library

With a Focus on an Unpublished Deir el-Medina Archive (P. BN Ms. Égyptien 237)

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ABSTRACT

The National Library in Paris holds about 21 accession numbers corresponding to at least 275 fragments of texts written in hieratic on papyri during the NK and the end of NK/early TIP, which have been acquired during the 19th Century. The collection includes oracular decrees; *Late Ramesside Letters*; registers and accounts from the Memphite Archives; religious, literary, and administrative texts and drawings from Deir el-Medina; as well as a part of the *Conspiracy of the Harem* and of the *Tale of Astarte*.

1. HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION

The presence of Egyptian artefacts in the French National Library (Bibliothèque nationale de France or BnF) dates back to the library's existence as a royal institution, and many of these artefacts entered the possession of the king or the crown in similar fashion to other antiquities.¹ Their acquisition was overseen by such notable antiquarians as Rascas de Bagarris (1601–1620), Gros de Boze (1719–1753), and the Abbot Barthélemy (1753–1795). In order to understand the history of these Egyptian artefacts, as well as the route by

which they arrived in their present locations—in the Louvre, the Muséum National d'Histoire naturelle, the Musée d'archéologie nationale de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and numerous museums all over France—it is important to bear in mind the various relocations of the royal court over the centuries, as well as the upheavals of both the French Revolution and other regime changes, in addition to institutional changes and the redistribution of the collections across the French cultural landscape during the 19th and 20th centuries. Neither can a complete overview of the

¹ There is a separation between the king's private collection and the royal collections (which were meant to be enriched by and passed on from king to king). The "Cabinet des Médailles" or "Cabinet de France" (now Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques of the BnF, often referred to as MMA inside the BnF, and not to be confused with the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art), for example, was established on the basis of the royal collection under Philippe Auguste (1165–1223). Later, Charles IX (1560–1574) established the role of keeper or "*garde particulier des médailles et antiques du roi*". The cabinet took a stable shape during the reign of Henri IV (1594–1610), and then passed into the hands of the public during the French Revolution (see Aghion & Avisseau-Broustet 1994).

Egyptian antiquities in the custody of the BnF neglect to mention the collection of the typographer L. Mandel (1921–2006), which is held in the Arsenal and consists of writing samples from all over the world on various surfaces,² and the 22nd Dynasty sarcophagus of Irbastetoudjaennéfou, exhibited in the Louvre since 2017 (Desclaux & Payraudeau 2017).

1.1. History of the BnF papyrological collection

The papyrological collection of the BnF (papyrus, ostraca, tablets, textiles, etc.) has undergone little change relative to other types of Egyptian artefacts in the collection. Before 1860, the papyrological material was held in the Cabinet des Antiques under the umbrella of the Cabinet des Antiques and the Cabinet des Médailles (often referred to simply as the Cabinet des Médailles, due to the pre-eminence of the numismatic collections) until it was transferred to the BnF's Manuscripts Department.³ Research was conducted in 2021–2022 by J. Auber de Lapierre on the history of the Greek and Coptic papyrus collections in the BnF, while an ongoing project is currently surveying the BnF archives; the results of these projects should shed further light on this transfer to the Manuscripts Department.⁴ Since 1860, a few

private collections have entered the Cabinet des Médailles, meaning that a few papyri and other Egyptian manuscripts in the collection are actually in the Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques (MMA). These materials include three funerary papyri in cursive hieroglyphs from the 18th and 21st Dynasties gifted to the library by H.T. d'Albert (1802–1867), duc de Luynes in 1862 (two under the shelfmark inv. 53.1 and one as inv. 53.2). And while a few papyri and books on linen entered the collection even earlier (during the 18th century), most of the items in the papyrological collection were donated or acquired during the 19th century as a result of the many antiquities that came onto the market following the French Campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798–1801).⁵

A description of the pharaonic papyri in the collection has been published by C. Ragazzoli (2012) as part of a four-year project partly conducted in the BnF. As “*chargée de recherches documentaires*”, she identified and fully described the collection for the library's online catalogue “BnF Archives et manuscrits” (in Extensible Markup Language [XML] and currently being enriched using the Encoded Archival Description [EAD] standard, with a permanent URL or Archival Resource Key [ARK]). As part of this project, most of the collection was digitized.⁶

² Among the 18 Egyptian artefacts in L. Mandel's collection are a hieroglyphic inscription carved on limestone, the feet of a sarcophagus, scarabs, a shabti, amulets and seals, and five papyrus fragments written in Greek, Coptic, and Arabic.

³ Note the entry under the 31st May 1860 in *Le Journal du Cabinet des Médailles*, 1854–1889, Ms 141 (Archives of the BnF MMA): “Tous les papyrus sont remis au Dépt des MS.”

⁴ We are indebted to Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet and colleagues from the MMA, who notify us each time they come across new information about the Egyptological collections in the archives. These archives are being catalogued in the “BnF Archives et manuscrits” (<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/>; accessed 12.06.2023) and have been partly digitized.

⁵ See Desclaux (2022).

⁶ The digital files on Gallica are freely downloadable in HD via the IIIF button and may be freely published, embedded, etc. for non-commercial purposes with the appropriate credit and a link to the original source. The terms of use are available online: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/edit/und/conditions-dutilisation-des-contenus-de-gallica> (accessed 12.04.2023).

(BnF) Archives et manuscrits

ACTUALITÉS

UNE QUESTION ?

Tous documents ▾

Q

Recherche avancée >

Collections >

Accueil

Collections

Collections

Allemand

Américain

Anciens catalogues et instruments de recherche

Anglais

Angrand

Arabe

Arménien

Assyrien

Berbère

Catalogues thématiques

Celtique et basque

Chinois

Collections généalogiques - Cabinet des titres

Copte

Coréen

Egyptien

Egyptien

Inscriptions des Pyramides

Estampages Rochemonteix (Edfou)

Erudits et bibliophiles

Espagnol

Ethiopien

Français

Fonds maçonnique

Géorgien

Grec

Hébreu

Indien

Indochinois

Inscriptions du Champa et du Cambodge

Inscriptions de Nasik

Inscriptions du Népal

Italien

Egyptien

Instruments de recherche (89)

Egyptien 182. Décret oraculaire

Egyptien 183-194. Papyrus Prisse

Egyptien 196. Papyrus Rollin (Conspiration du Harem)

Egyptien 196-199. Late Rameside Letters

Egyptien 200. Semelles de papyrus enduit

Egyptien 201. Fragments divers administratifs et religieux

Egyptien 202. Début du Conte d'Astarté

Egyptien 203. Registre de livraison

Egyptien 204, 206-208. Registre de boulangerie

Egyptien 205. Registre de boulangerie

Egyptien 209. Comptabilité

Egyptien 210. Registre d'inventaire

Egyptien 211. Registre d'inventaire

Egyptien 212. Registre d'inventaire

Egyptien 213. Registre d'inventaire

Egyptien 214. Lettre démotique

Egyptien 215. Collection de textes démotiques et "Chronique démotique".

Egyptien 216. Contrat démotique (P. Tsenhor 5)

Egyptien 217. Contrat démotique (P. Tsenhor 6)

Egyptien 218. Contrat démotique (reçu pour paiement)

Egyptien 219. Contrat démotique (contrat de mariage)

Egyptien 220. Contrat démotique acéphale

Egyptien 221. Contrat démotique acéphale

Egyptien 222. Contrat démotique acéphale

Egyptien 223. Contrat démotique (P. Tsenhor 8)

Egyptien 224. Contrat démotique (P. Casati 1)

Egyptien 225. Contrat démotique (P. Casati 2)

Département des Manuscrits > Egyptien > Egyptien

Egyptien 182. Décret oraculaire

Q

Cote : Egyptien 182

Décret oraculaire.

Fin du Nouvel Empire - Troisième Période intermédiaire (c. 1188-715 av. J.-Chr.)

Thèbes ?

Le bandeau est collé sur un papier végétal lui-même déposé sur un papier blanc. Une aquarelle sur ce papier présente la présentation d'origine de l'objet. Le tout est conditionné dans un cadre de chêne avec passe-partout, carton arrière et verre minéral. Hiératique très cursif, 52 lignes

La bandelette était roulée, et glissée d'un cylindre de bois évidé qui pouvait se porter en amulette. L'objet porte le numéro d'inventaire 53.1889 (ancien numéro 1044) et se trouve au Cabinet des Médailles.

Hauteur : 34,5 cm ; largeur : 5,5 cm.


Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits

Documents de substitution

Il existe une version numérisée de ce document.

Numerisation effectuée à partir d'un document original.

Voir le document numérisé



Biographie ou histoire

Le nom du propriétaire n'est pas lisible

Présentation du contenu

Décret oraculaire, placés dans la bouche de Mout et Khonsou, les deux divinités représentées sur l'amulette. Le texte est très lacunaire mais les deux dieux promettent de protéger le bénéficiaire contre toutes sortes de maux.

Historique de la conservation

Acquis par le Cabinet des Médailles, le papyrus a ensuite été transféré au Département des Manuscrits.

Bibliographie

Publication : I.E.S. Edwards, *Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Londres, 1960, pl. 35 et p. xix ; 89-91.

Fig. 1a and b. Snapshot of the online catalogue “BnF Archives et manuscrits” and description of BnF Ms. Égyptien 182 (Oracular Decree; <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc589009>; accessed 25.01.2024)

1.2. History of the New Kingdom hieratic collections

The New Kingdom hieratic texts (*NKHT*) in the BnF were all acquired during the 19th century. Most of them were purchased on the art market, though a few were given to the BnF in 1891 as the Virey papyri. The first papyri to enter the BnF were those brought back by F. Cailliaud (1787–1869) from Deir el-Medina in 1824. Two other notable acquisitions were the Papyri Rollin, bought in 1846 and probably from the Memphis Residence, and the Deir el-Medina lot acquired through the Mauduit sale in 1887.

2. THE NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC MATERIAL

2.1. Number of papyri (+ fragments), ostraca, tablets, etc.

Except for some labels in Demotic, the pharaonic papyrological material held in the BnF consists only of texts on papyrus and textiles. The BnF assigns inventory numbers to individual physical units (the frame). As such, a given text may be divided across several inventory numbers, while another inventory number may embrace several different texts or documents (as in the case of Égyptien 237). 21 inventory numbers in the BnF relate to hieratic texts written during the New Kingdom and the early Third Intermediate Period, all on papyri:

- Égyptien 182: an oracular decree (end of NK–early TIP) that was rolled up inside an 8 cm long reed cylinder topped with the heads of Mut and Khonsu, with a double suspension ring on the

back. Entered the BnF in March 1844, bought for 11.25 francs from Morel Fation; sale Linck; Registre 1838–1850, p. 25 n° 974.⁷ Provenance: Thebes? Published in I. Edwards (1960: XIX; 89–91, pl. 35). Digitized.

- Égyptien 238: an oracular decree from the 21st Dynasty, published in I. Edwards (1960: 93–94, pl. 36), and two unpublished amuletic formulae. AKA the “Virey fragments” (20th–21st Dynasty). Provenance: unknown. Donated by P. Virey (possibly together with a gift by P. Virey [n° 2894] specified as Eg. 236 on 9th July 1891); Registre 7, 1848–1895]. Being prepared for publication by S. Donnat. Digitized.
- Égyptien 195: P. Rollin AKA Harem Conspiracy (Ramesses IV). Acquired from Rollin, 12 rue Vivienne, on 10 November 1846, along with the Memphis Archives, the *Tale of Astarte* and six demotic papyri—all for 1,200 francs. Registre 1838–1850: 50, n° 1888: “other fragment without date, very nice handwriting.” Provenance: Thebes. Published. Digitized.
- Égyptien 196–199: 19 Late Ramesside Letters (20th–21st Dynasty). According to W. Spiegelberg (1895: 202), these letters may have belonged to F. Cailliaud. The Cailliaud collection was bought for the BnF by the state and registered on 3rd November 1824; Registre 1817–1828. Provenance: Deir el-Medina, excavations from 1817–1818.⁸ Partly published by J. Černý (1938) and E. Wente (1967). Under study for publication by F. Hagen and C. Ragazzoli. Digitized.
- Égyptien 201: Letters and funerary or magical texts (19th–21st Dynasty). Under study for publication by F. Hagen and C. Ragazzoli. Digitized.

⁷ There is a drawing and some notes on the papyrus that date to c. 1850; cf. Égyptien 214. Restoration work on Égyptien 214 revealed a date hidden under the frame: “February 1850”. The 1862 inventory gave the new inventory number 1889 to Égyptien 182, indicating “a. [for ancient] 1044”. Égyptien 182 is described in Legrain (1894–1896, vol. 3: 944, inv. 1889).

⁸ See Gee (2022: 183–184).

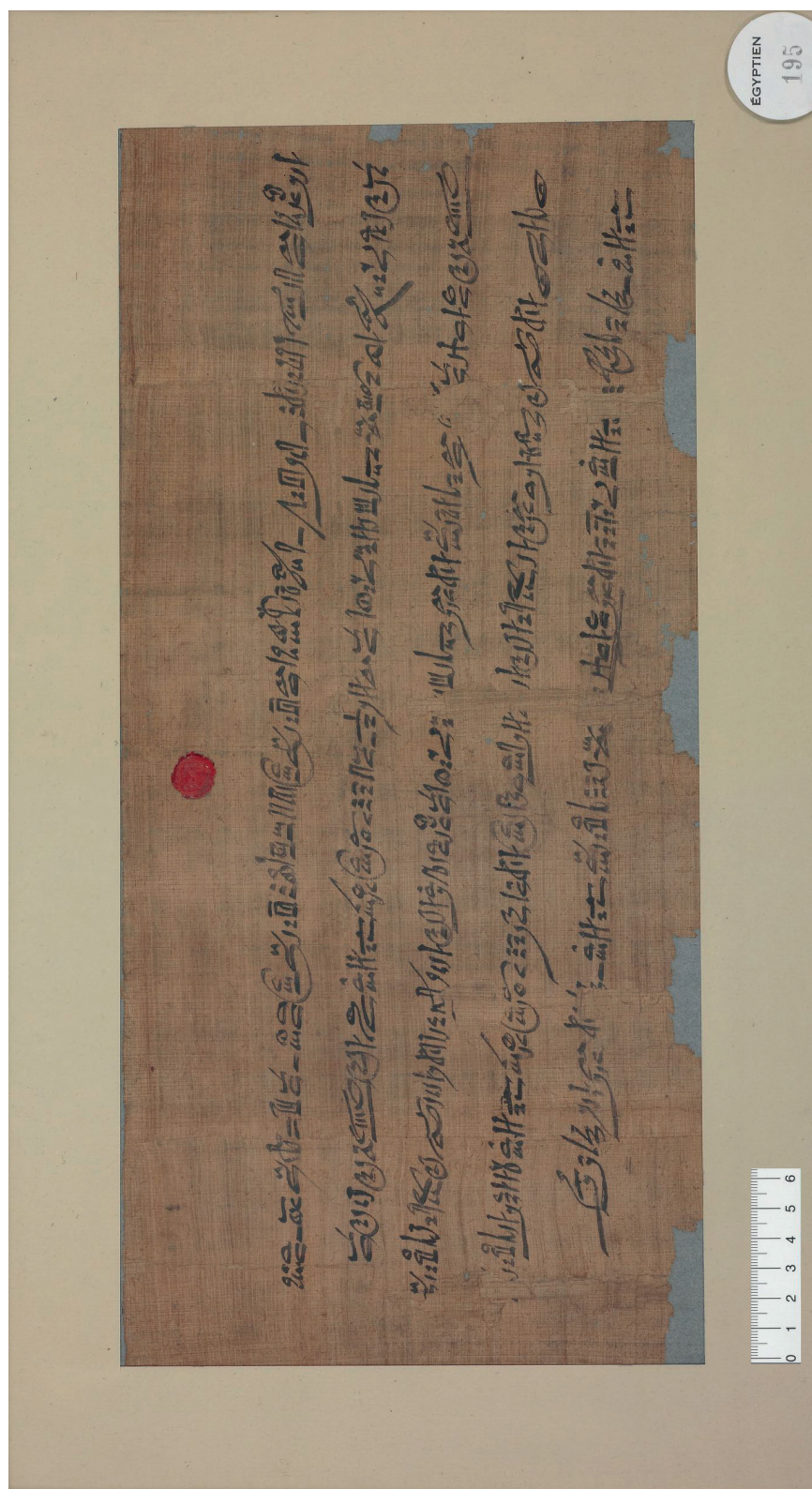
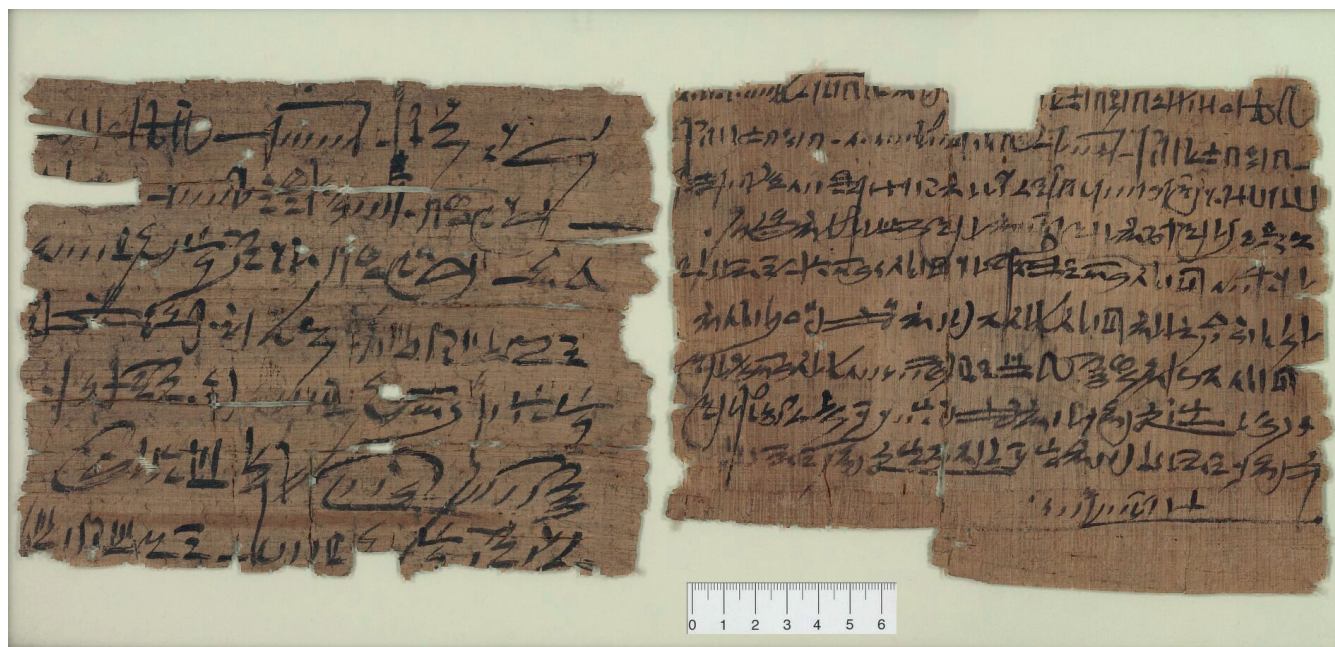


Fig. 2. Harem Conspiracy (P. Rollin),
BnF Ms. Égyptien 195

- Égyptien 203–213: Accounts, bakery registers, inventories, archives from the Memphis Residence (Sethi I). W. Spiegelberg (1896: 1) notes that two papyri from this lot (Égyptien 205 and 206) were reported by J.-F. Champollion in 1828 to be in Cairo, in the possession of an employee of the French Consulate. Acquired from Rollin, 12 rue Vivienne, 10th November 1846, along with the Harem Conspiracy, the *Tale of Astarte*, and six demotic—all for 1,200 francs; *Registre* 1838–1850: 49–50. First Published in W. Pleyte (1868). Partly digitized.
- Below are the details given in the Register (translated from French) for a number of other documents:
- n° 1882: manuscript on papyrus, inscribed on both sides; from Year III, with a cartouche; now Égyptien 211 “Accounts” and 212–213 “Inventory of wood for carpentry”. Not digitized.
 - n° 1883: other; inscribed on both sides; from Year 2 (*sic*), with accounts of the days 10, 11, 12 of the same month; now Égyptien 210 “Inventory of wood for carpentry” and maybe Égyptien 209. Not digitized.
 - n° 1884: manuscript on papyrus with a cartouche (line 13); now Égyptien 207 and 208 “Bakery Register”. Not digitized.
 - n° 1885: other (perfectly preserved); from Year 2, with the cartouche of “Ménephta” (in fact Sethi I) (1583 ACN); now Égyptien 204 and 206 “Bakery Register”. Digitized.
 - n° 1886: other fragment; Year III of the same king with the date 29 Athyr (1582 ACN); now Égyptien 203 “Delivery of bird”. Digitized.
 - n° 1889: other; from Year II of “Ménephta” (in fact Sethi I), 5 Choiak; now Égyptien 205 “Bakery Register”. Digitized.



- Égyptien 202: the *Tale of Astarte* (c.1420). Acquired from Rollin, 12 rue Vivienne, 10th November 1846, along with the Harem Conspiracy, the Memphis Archives, and six demotic papyrus—all for 1,200 francs; Registre 1838–1850: 50, n° 1887: “other fragment, Year V of the same king”. Published in P. Collombert & L. Coulon (2000). Digitized.
- Égyptien 237: more than 200 fragments of religious, literary, and administrative texts, including drawings. W. Spiegelberg (1895: 202) mentions that these items were bought from a binder in Paris. Provenance: probably from Deir el-Medina. Under study for publication by F. Hagen and C. Ragazzoli. Not Digitized.

2.2. Provenances

The NKHT from the BnF appear to derive from two main locations: the Memphis Archives and the Theban area (in particular, Deir el-Medina).

2.3. Distribution according to genre

The BnF collection comprises a few examples of oracular decrees, amulets, and magical-religious texts, as well as one literary tale. Archives from both the Residence and the community of Deir el-Medina, as well as *LRL* from the same site, constitute more than 95 % of the NKHT held in the BnF.

2.4. Published vs. unpublished materials

Recent work demonstrated that some significant manuscripts held in the BnF remain unpublished—perhaps even forgotten. However, most of the NKHT will soon see publication.

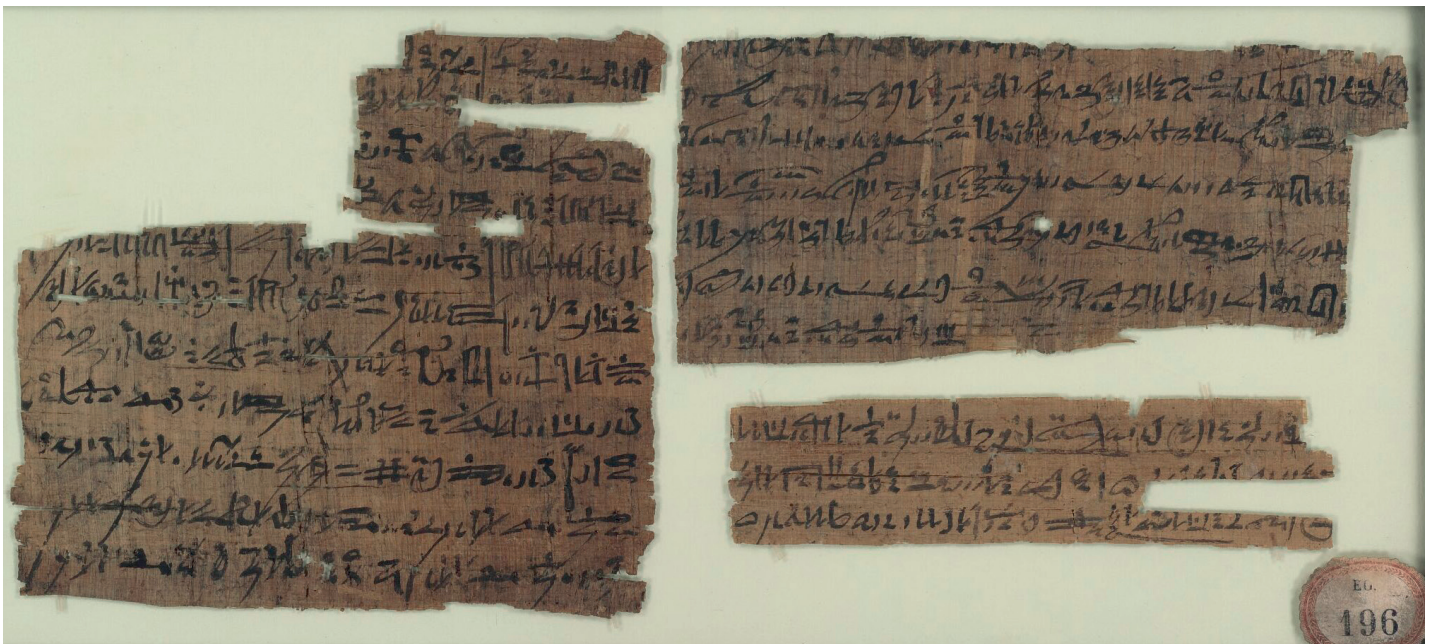


Fig. 3. *LRL* from Deir el-Medina, BnF Ms. Égyptien 196

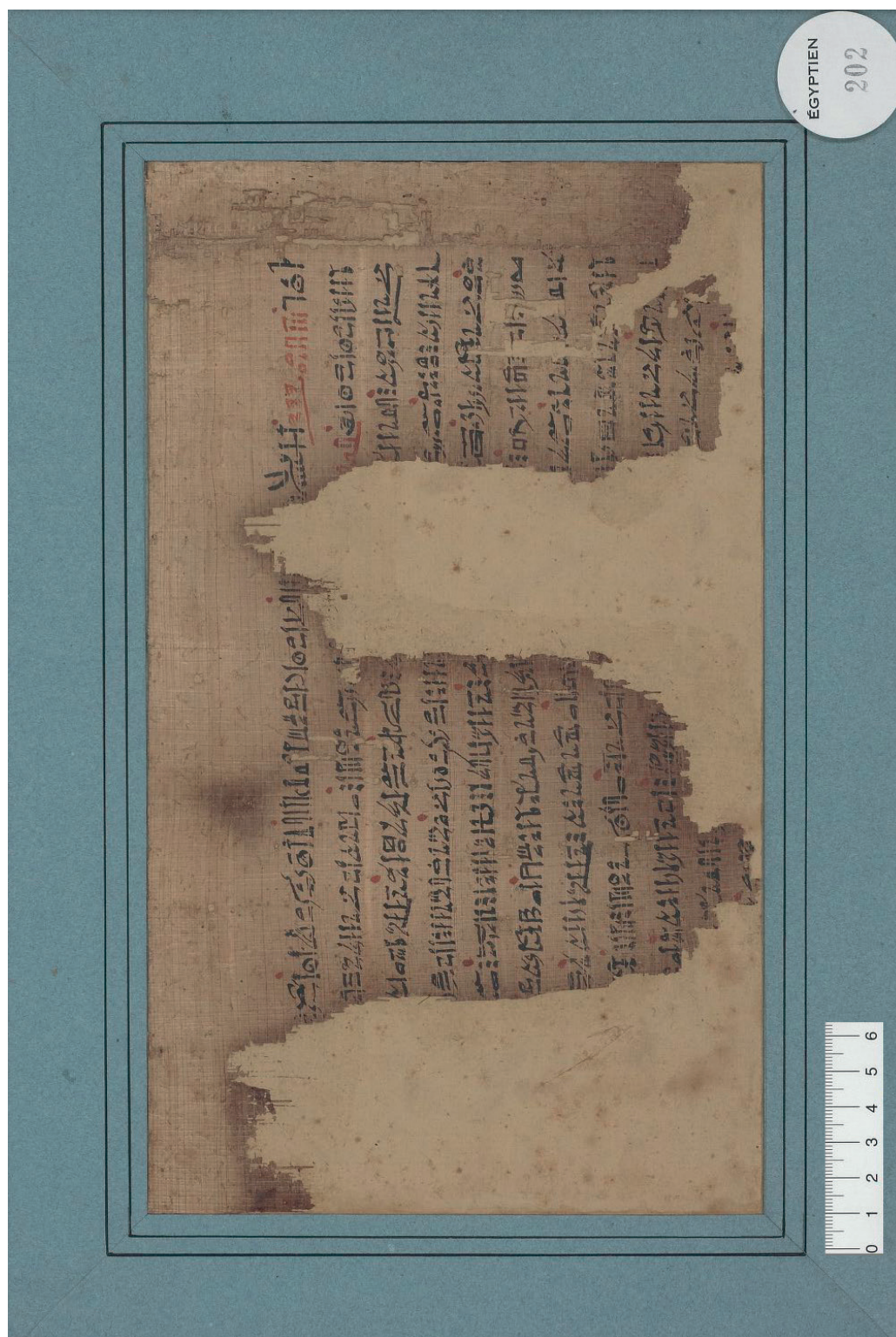


Fig. 4. Beginning of the *Tale of Astarte*, BnF Ms. Égyptien 202



Fig. 5. Bakery register from the Memphite archives of Sethi I, BnF Ms. Égyptien 205

3. AN ON-GOING PROJECT: THE DEIR EL-MEDINA ARCHIVE OF PAPYRUS BnF Ms. Égyptien 237 (WITH FREDRIK HAGEN)

Institutional inventories and catalogue numbers sometimes conceal items or lead to them being forgotten. An inventory number and brief description, for example, may elide certain details of a dossier that then disappear from memory, even as the items remain physically present in the collections. And indeed, this is the case for an important group of papyri in the BnF. The lot is correctly inventoried, but its original description did not account for either the extent or its scholarly value. In the published inventories and catalogues, the lot in question (lurking behind the BnF inventory number Ms. Égyptien 237) is said to contain around 30 epistolary and administrative fragments, a description that elides over 200 additional fragments. This material (over 240 fragments in total) is the largest group of papyri from the New Kingdom to come to light in the past thirty years. It includes literature, administrative documents, letters, and (exceptionally) even drawings. These fragments can be shown on the basis of internal evidence to come from the village of Deir el-Medina in Thebes, and to date from the second part of the 20th Dynasty. The modern biography of this ensemble can also shed light on both known and unknown agents involved in the transfer of Egyptian artefacts to Europe in the 19th century.

F. Hagen and C. Ragazzoli are currently editing the fragments for publication. The fragments themselves are being conserved by E. Menei and will be mounted between sheets of glass following their study and publication.

3.1. The modern story of the archive: a regressive narrative

3.1.1. *Rediscovery in 2011 of a partially known dossier*

As mentioned above, between 2007 and 2011, C. Ragazzoli (2012) created a new online inventory of the papyri in the BnF. The inventory also provides a general survey of the collection and its state of preservation. While the vast majority of the BnF collection is conserved in wooden frames and between sheets of glass—with one inventory number per frame—the item inv. nr. 237 presented some problems upon its rediscovery as part of C. Ragazzoli's work. This item corresponded to an old tailor-made archival box with a lid that, once opened, revealed a bundle of cardboard sheets. Over time, the latter had become deformed due to stress and could not be removed from the box without further damage.⁹ Eventually, the box was dismantled and it became clear that, at an unknown date, the fragments of papyri represented by inv. nr. 237 had been glued onto paper or tracing paper that had then been incased (and glued) onto a cardboard frame behind a window made of cellulose acetate (rhodoïde)—this had then decayed, leading to distortion of both the paper and the papyri glued to it. The rhodoïde was removed and E. Menei was commissioned to conserve the individual fragments; these will be remounted under the supervision of F. Hagen and C. Ragazzoli after a full study of the contents of the dossier.

3.1.2. *Papyri BnF 237 in the literature*

At least some of the fragments represented by BnF 237 are known in Egyptological literature and within the Manuscripts Department:

- In the typewritten inventory of the collection made by M. Muszynski (1975) and held by the department, the entry for 237 read: “237: Fragments (15 et 19, cartons). Bibl.: il y a un

⁹ See the photo in Ragazzoli (2012: 31, fig. 11).

fragment des *Late Ramesside Letters*, pour lequel on verra SPIEGELBERG, *Correspondance, et BAKIR, Epistolography*.”¹⁰ The entry suggests a total of 35 fragments mounted on “cartons,” including a letter fragment.

- M. Bellion’s “catalogue of published or mentioned papyrus” presents “P. BN 237” under the heading “letter” and four sub-headings or categories (accounts, letters, Necropole, and a lexicographic mention of a medical/magic text). She makes reference to eight “cartons” (4, 11, 21, 22, 25, 26, 30, 32).¹¹ She also gives a reference to W. Spiegelberg (1896: 78) and KRI 1, 280–281, which corresponds to the recto of one fragment (BnF Ms. Égyptien 237, carton 27). She connects 8 fragments (numbered from 1 to 8) to 8 “cartons” corresponding to the fragments published in the *Correspondance du temps des rois-prêtres* by W. Spiegelberg). The third category “nécropole—Carton I” is a large fragment belonging to the day book of Deir el-Medina, made available by K.A. Kitchen in the sixth volume of his *Ramesside inscriptions* (KRI 6, 339–340). The fourth is mentioned by G. Posener with respect to the word *nbw* “aphonie, stillness,” which appears in the text on the verso of a fragment from carton 26.¹²

Other Egyptologists visited the BnF at various points and also copied some of the fragments. In the period between the two World Wars, these scholars numbered:

- A.H. Gardiner, probably around 1929, as may be inferred from his notebook.¹³

- J. Černý in September 1934. J. Černý collated A.H. Gardiner’s copies and made his own copies of a total of 21 fragments (letters and log-book excerpts).¹⁴
- T.E. Peet, whose examination of the fragments is mentioned in J. Černý’s notebook (see above).

The principal publication of BnF 237 was by W. Spiegelberg who spent most of his career in Strasbourg, and who devoted a monograph to the vast collection of accounts from the Memphite Residence of Sethi I (BnF n° 203–213 mentioned above). W. Spiegelberg plainly surveyed the entire collection in the BnF, along with the epistolary fragments. He would also have been around when the fragments assigned inv. nr. 237 arrived in Paris. In his *Rechnungen* (1896) he included a fragment “PAP. B.N. 237” with a record of a delivery of loaves on the recto in longhand, as well as an absentee workers’ list on the verso (which he did not mention; see below).¹⁵ The fragments of letters from the late 20th Dynasty were included in his *Correspondance du temps des rois-prêtres* (6 fragments).¹⁶

3.1.3. From Vincent Boutin, spy for Napoléon in Egypt in 1813–1814, to the acquisition of the dossier by the Bibliothèque nationale in 1887 (with a detour via Drovetti)

The fragments assigned inv. nr. 237 were first purchased in “two envelopes” from the Nantes’ antiquarian A. Levy, who in 1887 put on sale a collection belonging to a so-called Dr. Mauduit, also from Nantes. The transaction is documented

¹⁰ Muszynski (1975).

¹¹ Bellion (1987: 80–81).

¹² Posener (1965: 192).

¹³ Griffith Institute, Gardiner MSS 23.9.

¹⁴ Griffith Institute, Černý MSS 17.3.

¹⁵ Spiegelberg (1896: 78).

¹⁶ Spiegelberg (1895: 88–97).

in the archives of the Manuscripts Department.¹⁷ There can be found a letter from G. Maspero (1846–1916), who often pointed the BnF towards papyri that might be of interest, whether Egyptian or Coptic. This letter is dated 20th July 1887 and is addressed to L. Delisle (1826–1910), the director of the Bibliothèque nationale. The letter mentions “*deux enveloppes contenant des fragments de papyrus de bonne époque provenant de la collection du Dr. Mauduit (sic) de Nantes*” sold by “*la librairie ancienne et moderne de A. Levy, sise au 10, rue Boileau de Nantes*”. In the letter, G. Maspero advises the library to offer 200 francs for the envelopes. In a letter to L. Delisle dated 23rd July 1887, A. Levy offered the BnF both the papyrus *and* some further small objects for 300 francs. L. Delisle subsequently returned the small objects to A. Levy with a payment of 200 francs for the papyri. There is no mention in these letters of provenance, though G. Maspero does mention in his letter that “*les notes au crayon et à l’encre sont de l’écriture de Devéria*”.

Following this lead, we were able to find more information in the archives of the curator of the Louvre, T. Devéria (1831–1871), which are currently held in the Library of the National Museums in Paris and in the National Archives in Pierrefitte (shelfmark: 20144775/1–20144775/34). Among T. Devéria’s archives is a wooden box of lexical slip cards (n° 13) which include several entries concerning Dr. Mauduit’s fragments. One of these cards in particular provides crucial information about the modern history of these papyri: “*Fragments des papyrus de M. Mauduit de Nantes / voir (?) format I, règles d’Aménophis I, de Ramsès III, et 19^e dynastie / généralités, panthéon, Ammon, et Isis*” and on the back: “*Le colonel du Génie Boutin né au Loroux près Nantes, chargé par l’Emp. Napoléon I de connaître les trois régences a apporté d’Égypte les fragments de papyrus qui*

sont maintenant en la possession de M. Mauduit de Nantes”.

The name of V.-Y. Boutin (1772–1815) conjures up a very different world—that of the western “rediscovery” of Egypt driven by the universalist and colonial aims of Europe and of Napoleonic France in particular. In future research, we intend to conduct a thorough exploration of existing archives that refer to V.-Y. Boutin, his Egyptian trip, and his collection of antiquities, but some key information is already available.¹⁸ Born in 1775, V.-Y. Boutin graduated from the École du Génie of Mézières in 1792, was made a captain in the army in 1795, and campaigned in Switzerland, Italy, and the Netherlands. He joined Napoléon’s Grande Armée and fought against the English in Dalmatia as part of the defense of Constantinople and the Dardanelles. In 1808, he was sent to Algeria to reconnoiter the fortifications of Alger. He was then entrusted with a secret political and military mission in the Near East and stayed in Egypt from 1811 to 1813. The official reason for his presence in Egypt was to convey official news to French residents there of the “*heureux accouchement de sa Majesté l’Impératrice et la naissance du roi de Rome*.”¹⁹ In fact, V.-Y. Boutin was there to collect military and political intelligence about Egypt. As cover for this mission, he adopted the persona of an antiquarian and explorer, there being many such persons in Egypt at this time.

V.-Y. Boutin landed in Alexandria at the end of May 1811 and was introduced to Viceroy Mehemet Ali (1769–1849) by the French Consul B. Drovetti, who is well-known for his active policy of collecting antiquities throughout Egypt. V.-Y. Boutin obtained permission from Ali to buy wheat at a good price and to travel around the country. He left for Upper Egypt with B. Drovetti (V.-Y. Boutin would then travel to the Red Sea and Siwa, about which the English consul at the time complained

¹⁷ BNF, Archives modernes 241 (11), letter 24.657.

¹⁸ We draw here upon Berjaud (1950: 177–193).

¹⁹ Berjaud (1950: 177).

to the sultan.)²⁰ While collecting intelligence, V.-Y. Boutin acquired a collection of statuettes, papyri, and small antiques that were found in his luggage after his death in 1815.²¹ B. Drovetti's role in the acquisition of these materials is known to us from a letter he wrote about the antiquities that he provided to V.-Y. Boutin: "*Messieurs Autran doivent vous remettre quelques objets d'antiquités qui se trouvaient faire partie d'une expédition faite par la maison Fua, Loria et Tilche de compte de M. Boutin. Les parents de cet officier, ignorant que presque tout ce qu'il leur laisse en fait d'antiquités, il l'a reçu de moi, sans compter les frais d'un voyage dans la Haute Égypte et l'hospitalité assez dispendieuse d'un an, ont exigé que je contribue au paiement des frais pour les objets qu'on a dû laisser et dont M. Boutin avait bien voulu se charger pour remettre en France ou pour me renvoyer, tels que les gravures qu'il avait voulu que je lui confie pour les faire encadrer. Si les frais que réclament MM. Autran ne sont pas trop considérables, je vous prie de leur en tenir compte; autrement, avant de retirer ces objets, vous aurez la bonté de m'en prévenir pour que je voye s'il ne me convient pas mieux de leur en faire l'abandon.*"²² But even if a link between (at least part of) V.-Y. Boutin's collection and B. Drovetti is firmly established, the papyri's place of origin can only be deduced on the basis of internal clues in the document (West Thebes, Deir el-Medina). The papyri may have come from an excavation commissioned by B. Drovetti and V.-Y. Boutin, and/or been bought on the antiquities market flourishing at the time.

Other artefacts in V.-Y. Boutin's collection are already known. A statue kept in the Louvre,

which also passed through the hands of the physician Dr. Mauduit, completes V.-Y. Boutin's collection. It is accompanied by a molding made in 1859 by Dr. Mauduit himself, which subsequently passed through T. Devéria's hands before he in turn gave it to the Louvre in 1860. The statue itself entered the Louvre in 1954 (as E25398). The dedication of the object to Thoth *nb Hmnw ntr*²³ and to the regional god *Shepsy nswt Hmnw hry-tp ntrw* connects it with Hermopolis in Middle Egypt, as well as demonstrating that V.-Y. Boutin's collection was composed of objects with different origins.²³ A *Book of the Dead* from the Ptolemaic period—Toulouse 73.1.6, known as the Papyrus Varille—also formed part of V.-Y. Boutin's baggage according to the scholars who published it.²⁴ An inventory of V.-Y. Boutin's baggage was made after his death by the French consul in Aleppo before it was sent to France; the inventory mentions "*un paquet de toile cirée contenant dix paquets plus ou moins gros de manuscrits anciens sur papyrus*".²⁵

3.2. A Deir el-Medina archive

3.2.1. Overview

The dossier P. BnF 237 currently consists of around 240 fragments. Some are the size of a postage stamp, while most are more substantial (c. 10 cm). The larger fragments from a Deir el-Medina logbook (see below) make up an entire section of a scroll (c. 20 cm [full] height, 35 cm cumulated length). These logbook fragments were published by K.A. Kitchen in his *Ramesside Inscriptions*²⁶ from J. Černý's notes in the Griffith Institute. The

²⁰ Berjaud (1950: 182–185).

²¹ Berjaud (1950: 193).

²² Letter n° 78, 3rd May 1818 to P. Balthalon (chargé d'affaires à Marseille), MS 508 (I, 16) 11 to 12 in Guichard (2003: 297). Thanks to Christophe Barbotin for bringing this letter to our attention, in addition to the two objects referred to in the next two footnotes.

²³ <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010004035> (accessed 12.06.2023), with complete bibliography.

²⁴ Guillevic & Ramond (1976: 9).

²⁵ Quoted by Guillevic & Ramond (1976: 14).

²⁶ KRI 6, 339–340.

logbook embraces the delivery of rations, visits from officials, and details of workmen missing from work.

Most of the fragments in the dossier are administrative (60%)²⁷ or of a related nature, mixing shorthand and bookhand scripts. Fragments of letters (12%) round off the administrative part of the dossier. Many fragments (15%) reflect a wide repertoire of literary texts—narratives, poetry, hymns, and medico-magical texts. Last but not least, 13% of the fragments bear a variety of drawings, including a royal scene with a protocol in hieroglyphs relating to the monumental repertoire, the representation of some topographic features with the typical black and pink dotted surface (that represent desert or mountains), and a magical theme with a scorpion.

3.2.2. *Dating of the materials and prosopographic data*

Most of the data harvested so far from the logbook point to its use in the second part of the 20th Dynasty. The longer sections from the logbook are dated to Year III, probably of Ramesses VI, while the palaeography of some fragments suggests that they may well date from the 19th Dynasty. A fragment of a letter mentions the fan-bearer on the right-hand side of the king, the Mayor and Vizier Neferronpe (carton 22, fragment a). Neferronpe is attested from the accession of Ramesses IV (c. 1153) to the accession of Ramesses VI (c. 1144).²⁸ In addition to appearing in the texts of many ostraca, he also appears in the texts on P. DeM 24 and P. DeM 28, which belonged to the archives of Qenherkhepshef (Scribe of the Tomb between approx. 1240–1195). Among the various fragments of the logbook featuring lists of workmen, we

publish one below that includes the workman Khonsu-imen son of Iyrniwtef (fig. 6), who is also mentioned in a list on an ostrakon that comes from the workmen's huts in the Valley of the Kings.²⁹

(x+2, 1) *h³t-sp 3 ³bd 2 prt sw 2[...]*

(x+2, 2) *t³-sryt j³ bn jn.f m hnw*

(x+2, 3) *³bd 3 prt sw 6 nty m wsf*

(x+2, 4) *³-p³-t³w (m-^c) hry.f³⁰*

(x+2, 5) *Ipwy (m-^c) hry.f*

(x+2, 6) *Hnsw s³ Jy-r-njw.t.f (m-^c) hry.f*

(x+2, 7) *[Jy-r-njw.t.f] (m-^c) hry.f*

(x+2, 1) Regnal year 3, month 2 of Peret, day 2[...]

(x+2, 2) the standart since he won't be able to bring jars.

(x+2, 3) Month 3 of Peret, day 6, he who is absent:

(x+2, 4) Aapatjaw, (with) his boss

(x+2, 5) Ipuy, (with) his boss

(x+2, 6) Khonsu son of Iyrniwtef, (with) his boss

(x+2, 7) Iyrniwtef, (with) his boss.

Finally, the royal protocol in the figurative scene belongs to Ramesses VII (*nswt-bjty Wsr-M³t-R^c Stp~n R^c [...] dt r nh^h mj jt.f [...]*).

As mentioned above, our current state of knowledge permits us to date the dossier to the second part of the 20th Dynasty, sometime between the beginning of the reign of Ramesses IV to the reign of Ramesses VII, a gap of around 25 years. The repertoire covered by the ensemble—both visual and textual—is heterogenous, though it would be fairly typical of a Head-Scribe of Deir el-Medina, mixing papers evocative of a private library with literary books and other documents pertaining to his professional activities within the institution of the Necropolis (logs of local events, deliveries, workmen's lists, etc.).

²⁷ Including a fragment in carton 27 with an account of bread and cakes published in hieroglyphic transcription by W. Spiegelberg (1896: 78).

²⁸ Černý (2001: 103).

²⁹ O. BTdK 651 (= Dorn 2011: 407, pl. 523–525).

³⁰ On this formula and for a possible cause of absence, compare O. BM EA 6634 and O. BM EA 66409, v^o 1 (with a very similar hand) in Demarée (2002: pl. 25–26, 212).

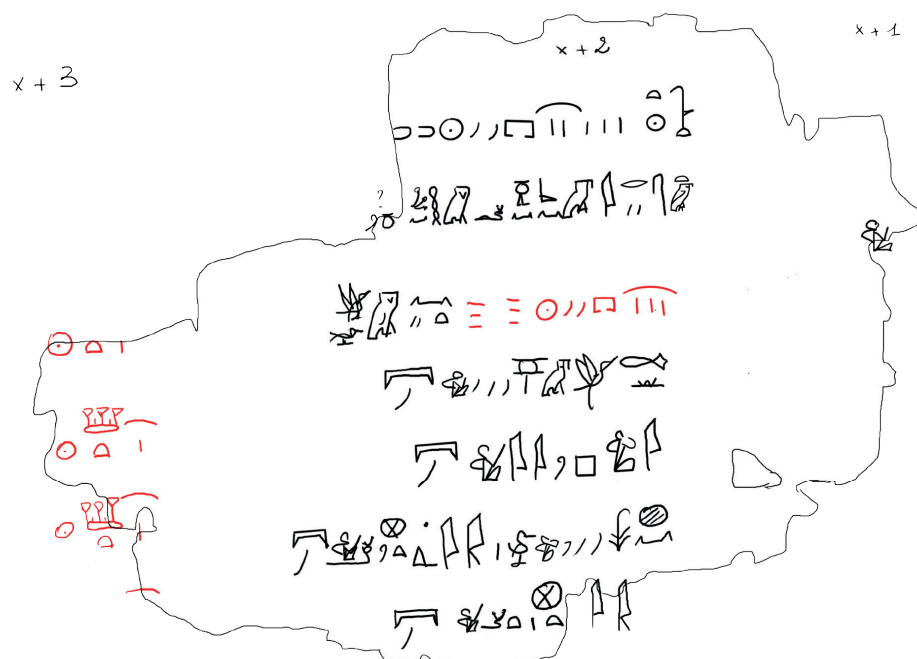


Fig. 6. Shorthand palimpsest fragment (originally "carton 27"), v^o.
The recto contains a list of loaves in longhand, Spiegelberg (1896: 78)

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³¹ According to M. Dewachter (2015: § 7), the date added to the first page of the first volume is to be questioned, as the redaction of the Register is more likely to have taken place c. 1890, before G. Legrain first traveled to Egypt.

