



SOME UNPUBLISHED DEMOTIC OSTRACA FROM THE PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

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Abstract:

This article concerns publishing some demotic ostraca from the Ptolemaic period deal with different kinds of texts such as tax receipts, an account, a reminder, a list of personal names, a list of the properties of the wife and a temple oath. These texts are kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and spotlight on social life and economic system in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period. Dating the texts depends on some interior evidences like mention the date in some texts, for example text nos, 2. 1. 1-2. 1. 2, 2. 3. 1, 2. 6. 1 and also the style of the handwriting. As for the provenances some of them are known from their excavations nos, 2. 3. 1, 2. 6. 1, while the others are not known. Some texts were written on both the Recto and the Verso such as nos. 2. 2. 1 and 2. 5. 1. Each text is preceded by a short introduction that provides information on the contents of the text.

1. Introduction

Daily life texts in Demotic inscriptions such as taxes, accounts, reminders, temple oaths, and so on spotlight on social life and economic system in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period. For that important reason I will try in this paper to publish some of these texts which are kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, to know more about the life of the Egyptians in this period. Dating the texts depends on some interior evidences like mention the date in some texts, for example text nos, 2. 1. 1-2. 1. 2, 3.1, 6.1 and also the style of the handwriting. As for the provenances some of them are known from their excavations such as texts nos, 2. 3. 1 and 2. 6. 1 while the others are not known. Some texts were written on both recto and verso such as nos. 2. 2. 1 and 2. 5. 1. First kind of texts that will be studied here are tax receipts deal with salt tax which was a well-known tax especially during the early Ptolemaic period.

2. Methodological Studies

2.1. Salt taxes

Two tax receipts concern salt tax and dated to the early Ptolemaic period they belong to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus between years 259 B.C. to year 256 B.C., their provenance is not known.

2.1.1. Ost. Nr. 20/10/14/1 c/155

- **Type:** potsherd, brown, fig. (1)
- **Measures:** 6×8 cm. thick, 1.3:1.6 cm.
- **Description:** The text is complete. It's in a good state of preservation. The handwriting is small, neat and regular.
- **Provenance:** Unknown
- **Date:** Early Ptolemaic, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (2 January 259 B.C.)
- **Transliteration**

1) in Ta-Hb(?) t3 rmt.t Pa- ht ht (kt) ¼

2) r ht hm3 n h3.t sp 26 sh Thwty-i.ir-ti=s
s3 Hr-nd-it=f sh

3) *n h3.t sp 26 n ibt 3 3h.t sw 8 sh Pa-hr*
 (?) (s3) Pa-Mn


▪ **Translation**

1) *Ta-Hb(?) the wife of Pa-hṯ has paid 1/4 silver (kite)*

2) *to the salt tax of year 26. Signed (by) Thwty-i.ir-ti=s son of Hr-nd-ṯt=f. Written*

3) *in year 26, in 8 Hathyr, day 8. Signed (by) Pa-hr (?) (son of) Pa-Mn*

Notes: Ta-Hb(?) the wife of Pa-hṯ has paid 1/4 silver kite as an installment for the salt tax in year 26 of the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

It seems that both the taxpayer and the tax collector are not known from other texts before. L.3. . It is not usual that the month in the date is preceded by a preposition *n* like in this text.

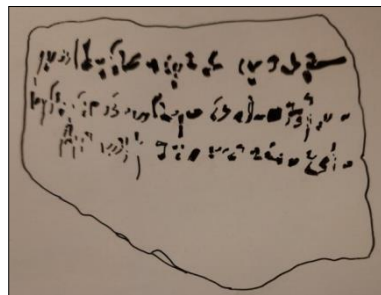
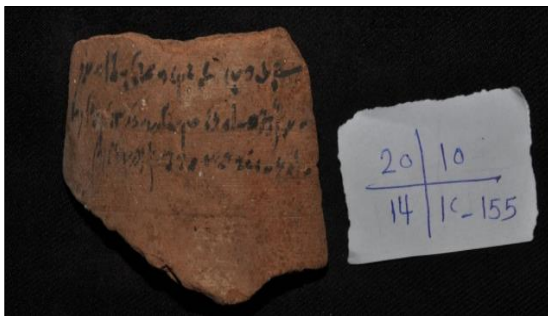


Figure (1) Shows Ost. Nr. 20/10/14/1 c/155

2.1.2. Ost. Nr. 382

▪ **Type:** Limestone, fig. (2)

▪ **Measures:** 9×14.5 cm.

▪ **Description:** The text is incomplete as the ostracon is broken partly on the left side, the ink is very faint on the right side which is affected the text. The handwriting is rounded and compact.

▪ **Provenance:** Unknown

▪ **Date:** Early Ptolemaic, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (3 January 256 B.C.)

▪ **Transliteration**

1) *in [N.N.] s3 Hr-m3c-hrw(?) hṯ (kt) 1/22 r hṯ ḥm3ṯ [sh]*

2) *n h3.t sp 28 sh Thwty-i.ir-ti=s ḥs3 Hr-wd3(?)ṯ n h3.t sp 29 ibt 3 3h.t (sw) 10*

3) *sh ḥ Thwty-iwṯ(?) [s3] ḥP3-rṯ(?)*

▪ **Translation**

1) *[N.N.] son of Hr-m3c-hrw(?) has paid 1/22 silver (kite) to the ḥsalt tax [Written]*

2) *in year 28. Signed (by) Thwty-i.ir-ti=s ḥson of Hr-wd3(?)ṯ in year 29, Athyr, (day) 10.*

3) *Signed (by) ḥThwty-iwṯ(?) [son of] ḥP3-rṯ(?)*

Notes: [N.N. son of] Hr-m3c-hrw(?) has paid 1/22 silver (kite) as an installment for the salt tax in year 29 for the previous year for the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

L.1, 3. The ink in these lines which contain the names of the taxpayer and the tax collector is very faint to recognize and seems they are not known before.

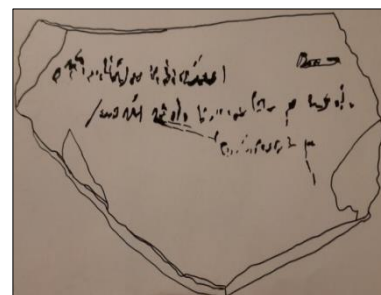
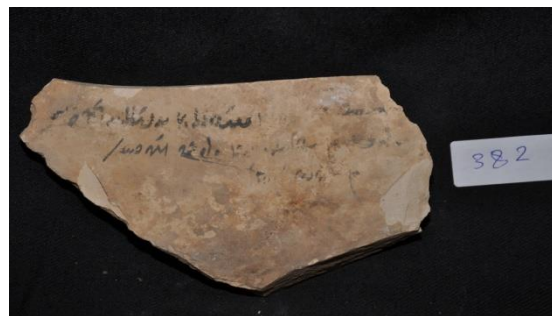


Figure (2) Shows Ost. Nr. 382

2.2. Account

Second type of the texts is the account. It represents some values which should be accounting in money, liquids, goods and so on. The accounts always mention some people who should probably be received, delivered or paid by them. This account represents an account of money which is written on both recto and verso.

2.2.1. Ost. Nr. 20/10/14/1c/178 R&V

- **Type:** Potsherd, brown, figs. (3- & 4)
- **Measures:** 10×14 cm. thick, 1.4:2 cm.
- **Description:** The text is incomplete as the ostrakon is broken on the left side in the recto, on the right side in the verso and at the bottom. The ostrakon is washed out in some places especially on the left side and at the bottom of the recto and in the middle and at the bottom of the verso which is affected the text. The handwriting is small, rounded and compact.

▪ **Provenance:** Unknown

▪ **Date:** Ptolemaic.

▪ **Transliteration**

• **Recto**

Col.1

- 1) *P3-ti-Wsir s3 Pa-h.t -ntr ht kt ½*
- 2) *Hr-s3-Is.t s3Ns-k(y)-šw.ty (?) š'r (?) ht kt 4*
- 3) *nh...ht kt ½ sp kt ½*
- 4) *T3-rmt.t hry=s-n-f(?) ht kt ½*
- 5) *Ta-Hr t3 Twtw ht kt ½*
- 6) *Ta-Hr s3 (sic) P3-ti-Hnsw (?) ht kt ½*
- 7) *「Ta」-「.....」 [ht] 「kt」 ½*

Col. 2

- 1) *T3-Mn「.....」[]*
- 2) *Ta-Hr t3 Pa-wn ht kt 1 ½*
- 3) *Ta-Mn s3(sic) Thwty-htp ht kt ½*
- 4) *Pa-Hnm (s3) Pa 「.....」 ht kt ½*
- 5) *[] s3 Ns-p3 hy ht kt 2 ½*

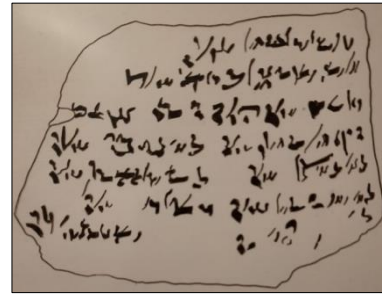
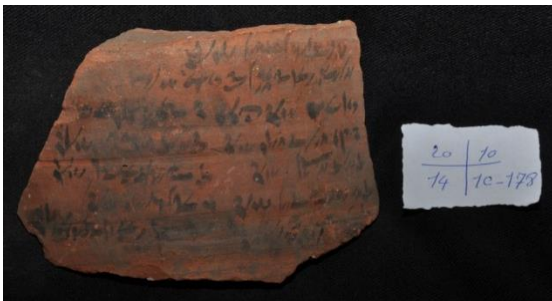


Figure (3) Shows Ost. Nr. 20/10/14/1c/178 R &V

• **Verso**

- 1) *Ns-p3-hy s3 Pa-hnm 「swn(?)」*
- 2) *ht kt 2 sp ht kt 4「.....」 2*
- 3) *「.....」 7½ 「.....」*
- 4) *swn bn r ht 「I(?)」 kt 3½*
- 5) *swn irp7½ nh(?) kt 3½*
- 6) *[] 「...」 ht kt I「...」*
- 7) *[] 1/6 「.....」 ht kt ½*
- 8) *[swn(?)] hnk ht kt 1*
- 9) *[] 「.....」 []*

▪ **Translation**

• **Recto**

Col.1

- 1) *P3-ti-Wsir son of Pa-h.t -ntr ½ silver kite*
- 2) *Hr-s3-Is.t son of Ns-k(y)-šw.ty (?), price(?) 4 silver kite*
- 3) *nh... ½ silver kite rest ½ kite*
- 4) *T3-rmt.t hry=s-n-f(?) ½ silver kite*
- 5) *Ta-Hr t3 Twtw ½ silver kite*
- 6) *Ta-Hr son of (sic) P3-ti-Hnsw(?) ½ silver kite*
- 7) *「Ta」-「.....」 ½ silver kite*

Col. 2

- 1) *T3-Mn「.....」[]*
- 2) *Ta-Hr daughter of Pa-wn 1 ½ silver kites*
- 3) *Ta-Mn s3(sic) Thwty-htp ½ silver kite*
- 4) *Pa-Hnm(s3) Pa 「.....」 ½ silver kite*
- 5) *[] son of Ns-p3 hy 2 ½ silver kites*

• **Verso**

- 1) *Ns-p3-hy son of Pa-hnm 「price(?)」*
- 2) *2 silver kite rest 4 silver kite 2 「.....」*
- 3) *「.....」 7½ 「.....」*

- 4) Price of date makes 1(?) silver (piece) 3½ (silver) kites
 5) Price of 7½ (jar of) wine, oil(?) 3½ (silver) kites
 6) [] 1 silver kite
 7) [] 1/6 silver kite
 8) [Price(?) of] beer 1 silver kite
 9) [] []

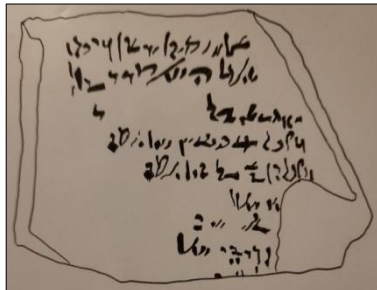
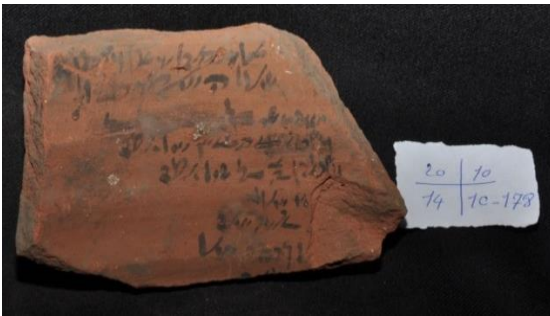


Figure (4) Shows Ost. Nr. 20/10/14/1c/178 R & V

▪ **Notes:**

• **Recto**

Col. 1.

L.2. This word probably read as šr (price, value) [1,2], It seems that sign r has a ligature with the determinative.

L.3. The proper name nh always written without a determinative but in this text there is a heavy ink after the sign probably represents in here a determinative?.

L.6. The scribe in this line had written s3 (son of) instead of t3 (daughter of).

Col. 2.

L.3. The scribe mistaken wrote s3 (son of) instead of t3 (daughter of).

• **Verso**

L.3. Reading this proper name is problematic, and it is clear that it ends with the determinative.

L.4. Writing word bn meaning date [1,2] with this sign is unusual.

L.8. This line is probably begins with word swn (price) as its determinative is obvious.

2.3. Reminder

The text belongs to the demotic ostraca from the excavation of the French Institute for Oriental Studies in Thebes in the year 1963. It is kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. This text represents a reminder which is a simple text related to an exchange between individuals to transfer certain amounts of goods or money [3]. Comparing the handwriting of this text with other texts seems that it belongs to the early Ptolemaic period.

DO 251

▪ **Type:** Potsherd, light brown, fig. (5)

▪ **Measure:** 5.5×7.5 cm. thick, 0.8:0.9 -cm.

▪ **Description:** The text is incomplete as the ostracon is broken at the left side and at the bottom. The handwriting is neat and regular.

▪ **Provenance:** Thebes

▪ **Date:** Early Ptolemaic, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (5 June 273 B.C.) or Ptolemy III Euergetes (27 May 235 B.C.)

▪ **Transliteration**

- 1) h3.t sp 12 ibt 4 pr.t (sw) 9
- 2) nty mtw P3-šr-p3-hy s3 P3-h3c=s(?) []
- 3) sw 16 1/4 r sw 6 5/6(?)
- 4) [] 1 []

▪ **Translation**

- 1) Year 12, Pharmouthi, (day) 9
- 2) which P3-šr-p3-hy son of P3-h3c=s(?) []
- 3) 16 1/4 (artabas of) wheat to 6 5/6(?) (artabas of) wheat
- 4) [] 1 []

Notes:

L.2. This proper name is probably read as 'P3-h3c=s' [4].

L.3. The sign probably represents the fraction 5/6 [2].

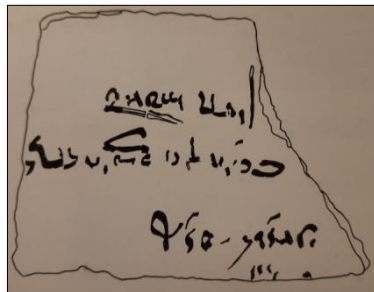
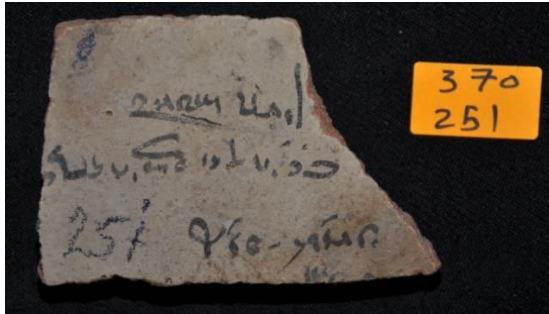


Figure (5) Shows DO 251

2.4. List of personal names

It is difficult to know the nature of this kind of texts as it is always written without headings or dates. The proper names in our text might refer to officials of temples or workmen [3].

20/10/14/1c-181

- **Type:** Potsherd, brown, fig. (6)
- **Measure:** 12×12.5 cm. thick, 0.8:1.2 cm.
- **Description:** The text is complete. The handwriting is small, neat and regular
- **Provenance:** Unknown
- **Date:** Ptolemaic
- **Transliteration**

- 1) Pa-Mnt s3 Pa-sny
- 2) Wrš-nfr (?) s3 Ti-m-htp
- 3) Wn- nfr s3 Pa-Hnm
- 4) Pa-t3.wy s3 P3-htp
- 5) P3-ti-Imn (s3) Ns-p3-mtr s3 Hri=w
- 6) n Pa-Mn s3 Stm-n=i-Hnm
- 7) Hr-Pa-Is.t s3 nḥ-Hp
- 8) Pa- t3.wy s3 Pa-mtr
- 9) Pa- t3.wy s3 Pylws(?)

Notes:

L.1. Pa-Mnt is written in unusual way as there is an unusual sign is written between the second and the third signs.

L.2. This proper name is probably read as Wrš-nfr(?) [5].

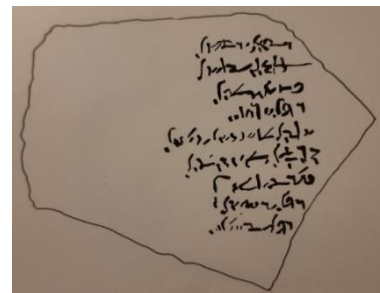
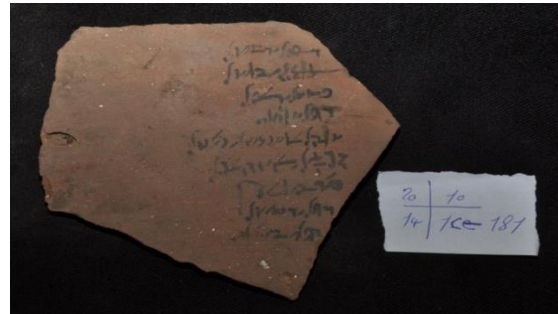


Figure (6) Shows 20/10/14/1c-181

2.5. List of the properties of the wife

This kind of texts is a proof of the properties of the wife which should have them according to her marriage contract [6]. It always contains her properties and their values. Most of these texts came from Thebes and Gebelen [7]. These texts usually beginning with a heading titled with n3 nkt.w n s.hm.t “the properties of the woman” and including the private possessions she shared in the marriage such as mirrors, wigs, vessels, ornaments, in addition to what was called inšn; which was the most expensive and important property in her properties. The present text is written on the recto and the verso.

20/10/14/1c-209 R & V

- **Type:** Potsherd, brown, fig. (7)
- **Measure:** 13.5×9 cm. thick, 0.7:1 cm.
- **Description:** The text is incomplete as the ostracon has washed out in lines, 3

and 4 in the Recto and in most of the text in the Verso. The handwriting is thick, rounded and compact.

▪ **Provenance:** Thebs or Gebelen

▪ **Date:** Ptolemaic

▪ **Transliteration**

• **Recto**

- 1) $w^c \text{ ht } \text{ ht } 3$
- 2) $w^c \text{ ht } \text{ tb}^c.t \text{ 2.t}$
- 3) $w^c.t \text{ sdr}(.t) (\text{ht}) 2.t$
- 4) $\lceil w^c \lceil \lceil \dots \lceil$
- 5) $w^c \text{ wnh} (?) (\text{ht}) 2$

• **Verso**

- 1) $\lceil \dots \lceil \lceil \text{wy} (?) \lceil \dots \lceil$
- 2) $\lceil \dots \lceil \lceil \dots \lceil$
- 3) $\lceil \dots \lceil$
- 4) $\lceil \dots \lceil$
- 5) $\lceil \dots \lceil$

▪ **Translation**

• **Recto**

- 1) one *ht* -cloth 3 silver (piece)
- 2) one *ht* -cloth 2.t silver obols
- 3) one *sdr(.t)* -bed 2.t (silver piece)
- 4) $\lceil \text{one} \lceil \lceil \dots \lceil$
- 5) one *wnh(?)* -vessel 2 silver (piece)

• **Verso**

- 1) $\lceil \dots \lceil \lceil \text{pair of} (?) \lceil \dots \lceil$
- 2) $\lceil \dots \lceil \lceil \dots \lceil$
- 3) $\lceil \dots \lceil$
- 4) $\lceil \dots \lceil$
- 5) $\lceil \dots \lceil$

Notes:

• **Recto**

L.1-2. Word *ht* "cloth, garment, a type of cloth" [1,2] is written in these texts in two different ways as follows:

L.1.

L.2.

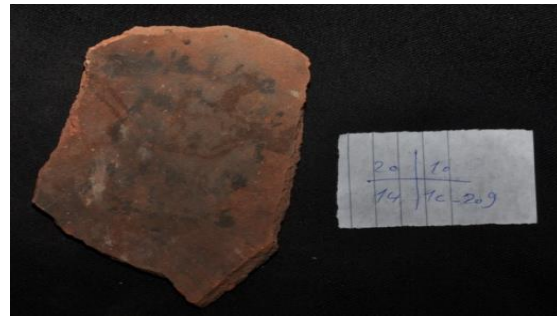
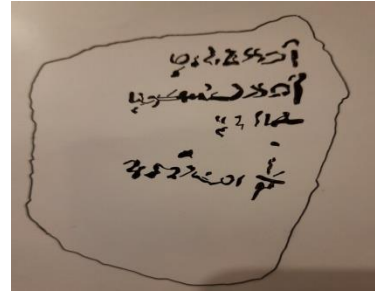
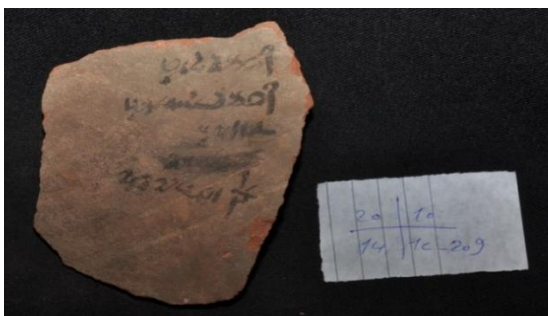


Figure (7) Shows 20/10/14/1c-209 R & V

2.6. Temple Oath

The temple oath is usually concerned with private matters of the individuals as stealing, beating or the disputes concerning the rents or buying [8]. The oath was given to the hand of the temple official who should receive it and “had the authority to supervise the performance of the oath” [9], accompanied by the title *šms* “the attendant” [8], or *rt* “the representative” [8]. The temple oath is usually written on ostraca (potsherds and limestone flakes) [9]. The oldest text is dated to about the year 200 B.C. And that kind of oath continued until the Early Roman Period [8]. The performance of the oath was done “at the entrance of a special gate of the temple of the local god” [9] of Thebes or those of Gebelen or on the Dromos of the temple [10]. The formula of the oath from Gebelen always starts with $\lceil \text{nh}$ (means by) while in Thebes starts

with *dd ḥnh* (means Saying: by). This temple oath came from Thebes and belongs to the excavation at Medinet Habu performed by the Oriental Institute's 1929/30 [11-18].

M.H. 3726

- **Type:** Potsherd, brown, fig. (8)
- **Measure:** 9×7 cm. thick, 1:1.5 cm.
- **Description:** The text is incomplete as the ostrakon is broken on the left side, on the bottom and partly at the right side; the ink is very faint in most of the text. The handwriting is neglected.
- **Provenance:** Thebes
- **Date:** Late Ptolemaic. Cleopatra III and Ptolemy IX Soter II (13 July, 114 B.C.)
- **Transliteration**
 - 1) *ḥ pꜣ ḥnh nty i.ir* [N.N. sꜣ N.N. r.ir=f]
 - 2) *n N.N. sꜣ(?)* [N.N.]
 - 3) *[n] ḥꜣ.t-sp ꜣꜣ ibt 2 šmw sw 16 [dd]*
 - 4) *ḥnh ḥmn nty ḥtp* [*dy ḥrm ntr nb nty ḥtp ḥrm=f*]
 - 5) *bn-pw=i.....*[]
 - 6) [] []
- **Translation**
 - 1) Text of the 'oath' 'which' [N.N. son of N.N. should do it]
 - 2) to 'N.N.' son(?) of [N.N.]
 - 3) [in] year ꜣꜣ, Payni, day 16 [Saying:]
 - 4) by ḥmn who 'rests' [here together with every god who rests with him]
 - 5) I did not []
 - 6) [] []

Notes:

The handwriting of the text is similar to that had been published by U. Kaplony-Heckel which was written also in year 3 and dated the text to the late Ptolemaic period and she dated to the reign of Cleopatra III [8].



Figure (8) Shows M.H. 3726

3. Results

The article concerns publishing different kind of texts to spotlight on social life and economic systems in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period as follows: **1)** Two salt tax receipts which have been paid by a woman and a man, dated to the early Ptolemaic period belong to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus between years 259 B.C. to year 256 B.C., their provenance is not known. Both of the taxpayers have paid the tax in installments as follows:

- * *Ta-Hb(?)* the wife of *Pa- ḥt* has paid ¼ silver kite as an installment for the salt tax in year 26 for the previous year for the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.
- * [N.N. son of] *Ḥr-mꜣ-ḥrw(?)* has paid 1/22 silver (kite) as an installment for the salt tax in year 29 for the previous year for the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

2) A money account from unknown provenance which is written on both recto and verso. The account on the Recto is written in two columns, deals with money account and delivered by some persons; most of the payments are ½ silver kite, while the account on the Verso mention proper names of some men concern different kinds of goods and its values in money.

3) A Reminder from Thebes, dated to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (5 June 273 B.C.) or Ptolemy III Euergetes (27 May 235 B.C.). In this text a man called

P3-šr-p3-ḥy son of $\lceil P3-ḥ3^c=s(?) \rceil$ should deliver amounts of wheat which are $16 \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{4}$ (artabas of) wheat and $6 \frac{5}{6}(?)$ (artabas of) wheat to another person or to a place which is vague because the text is incomplete.

4) A list of personal names of some men which its provenance is not known. It is difficult to know the nature of this kind of texts as it is always written without headings or dates, but proper names which are written maybe related to officials of temples or workmen [3].

5) A list of the properties of the wife probably from Thebes or Gebelen, which is written on both recto and verso, contains the properties and their values. These possessions differ between cloths, bed and vessels.

6) A temple oath from Thebes. According to the style of the handwriting the text dated to the reign of Cleopatra III and Ptolemy IX Soter II (13 July, 114 B.C.). The defendant here is denied the charge which is vague because the text is incomplete.

4. Discussion

4.1. Salt taxes

Salt tax was a capitation tax [19-21] levied on all adult men, women, and slaves [19]. The rate of salt tax differs from men to women as for men before the year 32 of the reigns of Ptolemy II Philadelphus paid $\frac{2}{3} \frac{1}{12}$ kite while women paid $\frac{1}{2}$ kite (or $\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{4}$ kite for both men and women) From year 32 of Ptolemy II Philadelphus men paid $\frac{1}{2}$ half kite, and women paid $\frac{1}{4}$ kite. From the first year of Ptolemy III Euergetes men paid $\frac{1}{3}$ kite and women paid $\frac{1}{8}$ kite [22] and this tax could also be paid in installments [3]. Slaves paid one-half rate of the freemen [19]. The salt tax in the present study was paid by a woman (No. 2. 1. 1. Ost. Nr. 20/10/14/1c/155) who

paid $\frac{1}{4}$ silver (kite) and by a man (No. 2. 1. 2. Ost. Nr. 382) who paid $\frac{1}{22}$ silver (kite) which both of the rates represent installments of the tax.

4.2. Account

The account on the Recto is written in two columns, deals with money and mentions proper names of some men and women most of the payments are $\frac{1}{2}$ silver kite, while the account on the Verso mention proper names of some men concern different kinds of goods and its values in money.

4.3. Reminder

It seems that *P3-šr-p3-ḥy* son of $\lceil P3-ḥ3^c=s(?) \rceil$ should deliver amounts of wheat which are $16 \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{4}$ (artabas of) wheat and $6 \frac{5}{6}(?)$ (artabas of) wheat to another person or to a place which is vague because the text is incomplete.

4.4. List of Personal Names

It is a list of personal names of some men and probably related to officials of temples or workmen [3].

4.5. List of the Properties of the wife

The list of woman properties sometimes appears in the first type of marriage *šḥ n ḥm.t*^(*) [6] “document of the wife” and sometimes it doesn't. In this type of marriage, the husband gave the *šp n s.ḥm.t* to his wife. It is a gift representing an amount of money and sometimes accompanied by a quantity of corn [6]. At the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, the father of the bride received it from the future husband before the marriage while in the middle of this period the wife received it by herself, and at the end of it she received it after the divorce [24].

4.6. Temple Oath

The defendant in this text is denied the charge which is vague because the text is incomplete. According to the style of the handwriting of the text, it seems that it belongs to the late Ptolemaic period.

5. Conclusion

The present article concerns publishing different kinds of daily life of demotic texts from the Ptolemaic period. Two salt tax receipts have been paid in installments by a woman and a man and dated to the early Ptolemaic period belong to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus between years 259 B.C. to year 256 B.C. A money account which is written on both the recto and the verso mentions some names of men and women. A reminder dated to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (5 June 273 B.C.) or Ptolemy III Euergetes (27 May 235 B.C.) deals with an amount of artabas of wheat. A list of personal names of some men. A list of the properties of the wife which is written on both the Recto and the Verso. A temple oath probably dated to the reign of Cleopatra III and Ptolemy IX Soter II (13 July, 114 B.C.). These texts spotlight on social life and economic systems in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period.

Endtontes

(a) It appears a few times in the other two types of marriage: *ḥd n ir ḥm.t* “money in order to become a wife”, that wife gave money to her husband who received a receipt from his wife and he had to bring it back after the divorce through 30 days and if he couldn't he gave her his property which he pledged it to her. In the type of marriage the contracts don't mention the children's rights. This type of marriage could be turned to the first type. *šꜥnh* “to cause to live”, money was also given by the wife to her husband and he has to bring it back after the divorce too and in this type the husband mentioned that his children inherit him after his death.

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