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Necropolis journal: daily records of events in an ancient Egyptian artisans' community

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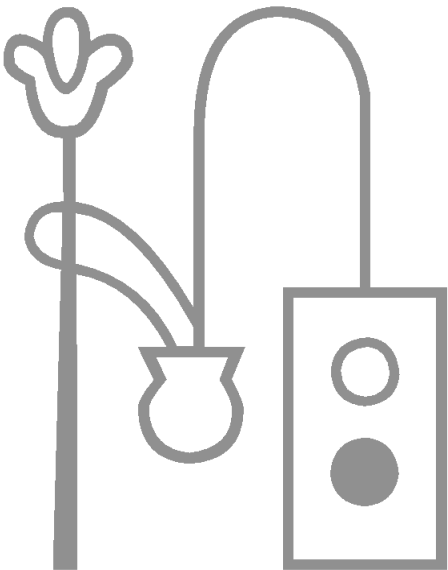
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PART II



4. What was considered a journal in ancient Egypt

4.1 The notion of journal in a broader Egyptian perspective

In order to understand what a journal would actually look like according to Egyptian standards, the notion of journal in a broader Egyptian perspective must be considered. The studies by Redford, *Pharaonic King Lists, Annals and Day-Books*, Eyre, *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt*, and Moreno García, *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, are fundamental; while for the concept of accountability, Ezzamel, *Accounting, Control and Accountability: Preliminary Evidence from Ancient Egypt* and Farazmand, *Bureaucracy and Administration*, will provide the guidelines.

What was the practice of keeping continuous daily records and notes of activities, facts, lists of goods, income, and how was this done?

*“The Egyptians who live in the cultivated parts of the country,
by their practice of keeping records of the past,
have made themselves much the best historians of any nation
of which I have had experience”
(Herodotus in II, 77.2)*

The ancient Egyptians have long been recognised for having developed an obsession with bureaucratic detail. For example, Kemp, in describing ancient Egyptian society, writes: *“A developed bureaucratic system reveals and actively promotes a specific human trait: a deep satisfaction in devising routines for measuring, inspecting, checking, and thus as far as possible controlling other people’s activities”*⁶³.

As is evident from the many discoveries made throughout Egypt, and especially in the village of Deir el-Medina, the ancient Egyptians were fond of bureaucracy. Everything, event or daily business, was noted, copied and recorded. The lists of staff, food, tools, and rations are abundant, as well as all kinds of dated entries that record in detail the work that was completed (e.g. the work in the tombs of the pharaohs) or the annals of the kings.

⁶³ Kemp 2018, 165.

The question regarding what genre terms the Egyptians themselves applied to their own texts should be asked. The administrative documents of the Ramesside Necropolis are varied, and it is difficult to classify them. It is true that Necropolis scribes used a number of denominatives to differentiate between texts, but some of them, such as 'writing' (*r-ḥ-sš*), are very general and does not provide us with substantial information for a classification of the material. Others denominatives have been investigated by Donker van Heel and Haring (2003, 85-123) and can be listed as follows: 'memorandum' (*šḥ3.w*), 'name-list' (*im.y-rn=f*), 'property-deed' (*im.y.t-pr*), 'dated record'/'dated document' (*hry.t*), 'account' (*hsb*), and 'list' (*snm*).

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that all kinds of records and notes we might define as a fixed genre are abstractions, necessary for purposes of studies and which may or may not reflect the ancient Egyptian point of view. We should not forget that, as it happens with ancient Egyptian 'poetry' and 'literature', we are using here an heuristic approach, i.e. we are assuming that a genre distinction did exist in Ancient Egypt, but are we sure that the scribes knew they were producing literature, poetry, Necropolis journals? Probably not. The use of genres for ancient Egyptian documents is a modern etic structure that does not always fit; therefore identifying genres in Egyptian texts is extremely problematic⁶⁴. Using the words of Michalowski, warning caution in relation to Mesopotamian literature, valid to Egyptian texts as well, "Generic categorizations...are closely linked with reception, and the reading of ancient texts, when no continuous tradition of reading has survived, presents particular problems that are different from those encountered in old texts belonging to a living stream of interpretation...By placing together certain texts we create a close and closed intertextuality, which, in turn, provides us with a false sense of security in reading" (Michalowski 1989, 4). Nonetheless, "the absence of a consistent terminology for Egyptian genres does not imply that no concept or system of genre existed⁶⁵", and it is our duty, for study reasons to try to sort the material. Besides "pure" genres, combinations and hybrids can be expected; but the main features and characteristics of the first type should be defined.

In order to consider the notion of journal in a broader Egyptian perspective, we will start by giving a summary of historical records that the ancient Egyptians kept, called protodynastic labels, annals and king lists⁶⁶:

⁶⁴ Parkinson 1996, 297 and Parkinson 2000, 32-42.

⁶⁵ Parkinson 1996, 298.

⁶⁶ See Redford 1986, chapter 1-2.

- **PROTODYNASTIC LABELS.** The format sometimes adopted a series of horizontal registers, usually divided by lines. The basic division was into a right side (containing the events) and a left side (containing the royal name and variables). The kinds of events memorialised in these tablets include acts of worship, progress, taxation, sculpture, construction, and battles; in short, content identical in every way to that of the Palermo stone and the Cairo fragments. The latter include flood levels absent from the labels.

- **ANNALS** (from the early Old Kingdom onwards)  (*gn.wt*⁶⁷). The Egyptian word is the plural of *gn.t* 'memorization', derived from *gnw.t* 'branch', which originally referred to a tally stick that served to aid the memory⁶⁸. It seems fairly clear that these purported to be records of some kind, arranged by regnal years. The format is usually date + royal names and titulary + events in infinitive or, less commonly, date + *nswt-bity* + royal names + *jr.n=f m mnw=f* formula. The content is the same as that of the yearly "rectangles" of the protodynastic labels and the Palermo and Cairo fragments.
- **KING LISTS** (from the 1st Dynasty onwards)⁶⁹. The basic form consists *usually* (not in the Den seal impression) of a line in which the following elements occur: 1 - *nswt-bity*, king of Upper and Lower Egypt; 2 - the cartouche containing the king's name; 3 - a figure which can be in tripartite form (year, month and day).

As for daily records, the topic of this work, the ancient Egyptians kept day-books:

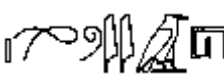
- **DAY-BOOKS.** At an early date, the central government and its institutions had developed a genre of daily records for the practical requirements of day-to-day business. The Egyptian term denoting such a "journal" varies over the two millennia of its occurrence.

⁶⁷ See Schott 1990, 379 n. 1655 for hieroglyphic attestations.

⁶⁸ LÄ I, 278 n.3; Redford 1984, 327-341.

⁶⁹ See Deicher-Maroko 2015.

In what must be its pristine form⁷⁰ it appears as *hrw.yt*⁷¹, “day-(book)”, derived fairly certainly from the word *hrw*, “day”, but in the New Kingdom and later *hrw.yt* turns up as *h3y*, *3h3ry*, or *h(3)r*, or is rendered by a circumlocution such as *ʿr(t)*⁷² *h3w*⁷³, “roll of days”.

DAY 	<i>hrwy.t</i> 
	<i>h3y</i> 
	<i>ʿr(t) h3w</i> 

By the Ramesside period, the term acquired an additional meaning of “dated record of a legal act or declaration”⁷⁴. Only three Ramesside attestations of the term are known so far: P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.97 (Naunakhte document, recto l 4-5), P. Berlin P 10496 (verso 15) and O. Turin N. 57455 (verso 5-6)⁷⁵.

In any case, the term *hrwy.t* and its variants denotes a document which records an event or series of events by dates. The fact that the word “day” is the root from which the term is derived underscores the importance of the calendric notation: “the *hrwy.t* has its meaning and function only because it is provided with specific dates”⁷⁶.

⁷⁰ Wb 2, 500.26; Faulkner 1962, 159. The word occurs as early as the 12th Dynasty in P. Berlin 10012, a temple journal containing a copy of the letter announcing the heliacal rise of Sothis.

⁷¹ See Schott 1990, 289 n. 1348 for hieroglyphic attestations.

⁷² See Schott 1990, 39-40 n. 65 for hieroglyphic attestations.

⁷³ Curiously, we also find this term in the Tale of Wenamun (dating to the 21st Dynasty), when Wenamun is in front of the Prince of Byblos who “*had the **daybook** of his forefathers brought and had it read before me*”. The word used for daybook is , “roll of days”, evidence of a well-known practice of keeping daily records. (See Gardiner 1931, 68, Wenamun 2, 8-9).

⁷⁴ Redford 1986, 101.

⁷⁵ Černý, 1945, 32 ff.

⁷⁶ Redford 1986, 101; LÄ VI, 151.

Focussing on the last type of documents, Redford first looked for the term "day-book" in various documents in order to understand what the Egyptians meant by this term⁷⁷. He then analysed other documents that could be called such, even if they did not contain or mention this specific term.

He concludes that *"the day-book of an institution was a heterogeneous collection of dated entries, recording a variety of events which would be of use to that institution in the future. The dependence of the organization of these events on a simple, chronological format shows that the criterion for filing was that of an archive: the hrwyt was a diary, and items would be looked up under date". [...] "the hrwyt in essence is a record of human events and activity, acts and states of nature, or statements of purpose or intent. The calendrical notations constitute the single most important criterion in ordering the material. The hrwyt commonly notes [...] the arrival and departure of officers and messengers on official business, and receipts and disbursements of commodities with which the institution in question is concerned. It can also record verbal declarations, or contains copies of official correspondence [...] lists of people are common"*.

Syntactically, in this type of document defined as "day-book", there is a constant recourse to the "absolute" use of the infinitive⁷⁸, a general laconic style, a preference for unintroduced prepositional phrases, and a tendency toward simple tabulation. We have to note that the type of activity recorded depends on the group, office or institution involved (a ship's *hrwyt* might note the vessel's progress or the state of the weather; a workshops' *hrwyt*, the work to be assigned etc.). Different types of content, therefore, do not necessarily correspond to different document genres⁷⁹.

As we have seen, recording events is intrinsic to the culture of ancient Egypt. The political and economic domains were coordinated by a powerful bureaucracy where accounting and accountability played a major role.

⁷⁷ Redford 1986, 97 ff.

⁷⁸ Gardiner 1957, §306. "...the infinitive may be used as the equivalent of a sentence, i.e. as significant and complete in itself... It often occurs absolutely in *headings...*, *titles...* and the like..."

⁷⁹ In those cases where royal annals and administrative documents relate to the daily operation of royal palaces and other institutions catering to the king, for example, the emphasis is on the location of the king, which is part of their standardised dating formula: 'regnal year, month and day', and adding the information that 'the king is in (such-and-such a place)'. In this case, we can understand that "the king's precise location was a matter of great importance to individuals charged with the running of royal institutions, and to those who were responsible for the expenditure of royal resources" (see Hagen 2016, 155-181).

In regards to this concept (accounting and accountability), Ezzamel, drawing on evidence from the New Kingdom, provides some preliminary findings related to accounting, particularly as it relates to control and accountability⁸⁰.

Large numbers of administrative texts have survived from ancient Egypt, showing the history of bureaucracy back to the third millennium BC. As numerous sources demonstrate, detailed accounting records were constantly kept, not only for taxation purposes, but also to document daily temple income, lists of equipment inventory and personal wealth, wages of Necropolis workers, barter transactions in village markets, and detailed activities in other state institutions such as dockyards, workshops and breweries⁸¹. The use of accounting calculations was widespread in ancient Egypt. Accounting systems in the New Kingdom operated as powerful mechanisms for closely monitoring human performance in state institutions, and also as a means of endowing action with legitimacy by emphasising conformity to expectations.

A calculative and reporting mentality pervaded all aspects of the administration of the New Kingdom in Egypt.

According to Ezzamel, this system was leading towards a system of accountability or, to use his words, “complete accountability”. He describes a system of “complete accountability”, quoting Hoskin and Macve as one in which “accounting data are used to construct a *managerial* system of cost and labour efficiency, one that involves the monitoring of material flow and human performance”⁸².

In conclusion, with the words of Ezzamel, *“the social and economic contexts of ancient Egypt reveal an extremely powerful bureaucracy at work, with the Pharaoh at its apex and an army of administrators and accountants measuring, recording, and monitoring activities in considerable detail. Accounting developed a simple, yet extremely powerful, metric that made calculable and visible the activities of those individuals who inhabited state organisations. By engaging in the process of quantifying and reporting economic activities, it played a major role in defining, and thereby constituting, the domain of economic transactions that were deemed of concern. Through its ability to measure and quantify, accounting imparted particular meaning and significance upon these transactions”*.

The physical monitoring measures adopted by the administrators, and the quest for details from the scribes, were buttressed to a large extent by powerful social and religious sanctions which inflicted shame and supernatural punishments upon those who

⁸⁰ Ezzamel 1997.

⁸¹ E.g. Janssen 1975 and Kemp 2018.

⁸² Hoskin-Macve 1988, 37-73 and Hoskin-Macve 1992.

were perceived to have failed the Pharaoh⁸³. Accounting systems in the New Kingdom therefore operated as powerful mechanisms for monitoring human performance in state institutions, thereby controlling costs and labour efficiency⁸⁴.

If we consider the role of the vizier and the scribe as it appears from the 'Duties of the Vizier', we can have a clearer idea on rule and governance, since it offers one way into the subject of Ancient Egyptian administration⁸⁵. The so-called 'Duties of the Vizier' is a composition found on the walls of the tombs of four viziers at Thebes belonging to the 18th and 19th Dynasty⁸⁶. The text lays out the duties associated with the highest civil office in the state administration and the functioning of his bureau and it was composed before the first phase of 'the Tomb'. The text clearly stresses that every leader of any institution or the like in the country should report to the vizier. Further, the text stipulates that the scribes of the vizier are sitting immediately beside him (line 2 of text from TT 100 of Rekhmira, Van den Boorn 1988, 13), therefore holding a very significant and crucial role. Scribes of the vizier are also regularly mentioned as coming to visit the Tomb, bringing the orders and going back with progress reports, closely linking writing to social control. Examples of the efficiency and all-controlling tasks of the scribes of the vizier are contained in e.g. P. Turin Cat. 1898 + P. Turin Cat. 1926 + P. Turin Cat. 1937 + P. Turin Cat. 2094 recto I16-17, where the scribe of the vizier arrives together with the high priest, or in P. Turin Cat. 1881 + P. Turin Cat. 2080 + P. Turin Cat. 2092, where the scribe of the vizier is mentioned three times and in P. Turin Cat. 1999 + P. Turin Cat. 2009 verso I, 12-15, where assistants of the vizier, including the scribe, come to collect a bed and a letter for him.

A different approach is used by Eyre to study ancient Egyptian bureaucracy. He chooses to "focus on the importance of writing as symbol of authority, and on bureaucracy as a process and not as a record⁸⁷". He believes that the action of writing *per se* was much

⁸³ As Ezzamel well indicates as happening in the Nauri Decree issued by Seti I (punitive measures were laid down to protect his religious Foundation at Abydos), where the guilty one was not only punished by being beaten, but also punished by Osiris, who will castigate him by not letting him rest in the necropolis. Furthermore, in P. Brooklyn 35.1446 (recto, line 63), the punishment for not delivering what the bureaucracy had expected extends to even innocent family members.

⁸⁴ Quoting the definition in Ezzamel-Hoskin, 2002, 335, accounting is a "practice of entering in a visible format a record (an account) of items and activities [...] any account involves a particular kind of signs which both name and count the items and activities recorded [...] the practice of producing an account is always a form of valuing: (i) extrinsically as a means of capturing and representing values derived from outside for external purposes, defined as valuable by some other agent; and (ii) intrinsically, in so far as this practice of naming, counting, and recording in visible format in itself constructs the possibility of precise valuing".

⁸⁵ For translation and commentary, see Van den Boorn 1988.

⁸⁶ TT 29 Amenemope, TT 100 Rekhmira, TT 131 User, TT 106 Paser. Parts of this text were also found on fragments of a same ostrakon discovered in front of TT29, see Tallet 2010.

⁸⁷ Eyre 2009, 16.

more important than reference to the written text. According to him, the answer to what the scribe did with his writings once he had produced them is: nothing. He claims that the scribe, in the act of writing a document, is a symbol of social and hierarchical authority, simply “performing his function”, and he considers that there is no evidence in Pharaonic history of an effective way of retrieving information. We do not fully accept this theory. Admittedly, it was impractical to use documents that had not been stored in an accessible way, even though we do not know much about the requirements of Egyptian archives (see note 53). However, we have at least evidence from the Deir el-Medina material that some of the documents included ‘markers’ of control process and were therefore checked and not only written *per se* (see further 7.1). It is hard to our mind to see bureaucracy only as a process and not as a record and to believe that a Necropolis journal was simply used to “control people at work”.

However, the myth of an overwhelming, exceptionally efficient bureaucracy requires caution, and the same can be said for the idea of the state (= the Pharaoh) as source of unlimited authority and apparatus of power. As illustrated by Moreno García⁸⁸, a limit to the efficiency of the bureaucracy is to be seen in deeply entrenched local powers, which should have limited the role of the state and its apparatus of power and lead to a gradual paralysis in decision-making and to the emergence of autonomous institutions and spheres of influence more concerned with their own immediate interests than with the effectiveness and the smooth working capacity of the entire system. As we can easily understand, “an increasingly dense structure of divisions, functions, and officials might limit and complicate decision-making, thus leading to the consolidation of autonomous spheres of power within the structure of the state. New divisions and new appointments would only exacerbate the problems they intended to solve. [...] The fact of Egypt’s complex bureaucratic organization, so often considered as proof of efficiency, can thus be seen to be rather misleading and may in fact point to increasing difficulties in the exercise of power and authority⁸⁹”.

⁸⁸ Moreno García 2013, 2.

⁸⁹ Moreno García 2013, 4-5.

4.2 Overview of annals and day-books⁹⁰

An overview of documents such as annals and day-books (material from the Old Kingdom until the New Kingdom) will provide comparative material to identify common features and differences between these records and the so-called Necropolis journals.

“In assigning texts to genres, the Egyptologist should adopt a historical approach that uses ancient sources such as titles and context, together with an inductive approach in which the genres are elucidated from the works themselves⁹¹”

The intention of this work, however, is not to include a complete list of earlier similar documents, but rather to show the ones which can be similar and therefore useful for a comparison with the so-called Necropolis journal⁹². Sometimes the notes of the previous periods will be used only to compare a short passage, sometimes to identify similarities in the layout of the documents or in the organisation of the different parts of the papyrus.

The material which will be presented in the following pages, has been selected in order to provide the reader with a background of texts which are precursors of the journal texts in Deir el-Medina, and to draw conclusions and observations which will serve as the basis in formulating criteria which will be used in the selection of journals made in this study. The material included in the overview contains different documents with different purposes very similar in many respects to Necropolis journals. For each of them, the reason of their inclusion in this overview will be provided at the beginning of each paragraph.

Annals are clearly not daily notes, and their purpose was not administrative, nonetheless they are included in this overview of texts since they spring from the same idea of a calendric structure. They have consecutive dated events and might be informative and provide the background from which journals originated.

All the documents which follow are written in hieratic (except the Palermo and South Saqqara Stone, the Annals of Amenemhat II and the Annals of Thutmose III in Karnak

⁹⁰ Depending on the intention to show different features of the document, we will provide either the photo or the transcription of each text, while in some cases both will be shown.

⁹¹ Michalowski 1989, 34 and Parkinson 1996, 299.

⁹² The recently discovered papyri archive from the mortuary temple of Thutmose III at Thebes, as part of the Spanish-Egyptian excavation project directed by Myriam Seco Alvarez, are still awaiting for publication, therefore these documents will not be dealt with here. The vast majority of the fragments are administrative and stem, for the most part, from a daybook roll organised chronologically with headings in red ink for each day, often simply followed by a list of offerings (Hagen-Soliman 2018, 99-100).

which are in hieroglyphs); only some photos for each document will be provided and only when considered useful, since a few examples will suffice to illustrate the point. No translation will be given, except in some cases when considered necessary.

4.2.a The Papyri of Wadi el-Jarf⁹³

These texts, one of the oldest ever-found on papyrus, are included here since one of these records daily activities of a team of workmen involved in the building of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, a very similar task to the one of the Deir el-Medina artists. In an interview immediately after the discovery, Pierre Tallet (expedition leader from the University of Paris-Sorbonne) states that, "the journal discovered provides a precise account for every working day". The purpose of the production of such documents was to administer such an important royal activity. We therefore expect to see similarities with the Deir el-Medina journal. We can identify mainly two categories of documents: accounts of monthly deliveries organised in tables, and a ships' log that records the progress report corresponding to the activity of the crew on that specific day.

On April 12, 2013, the then Minister of State for Antiquities, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, announced the discovery of what is believed to be the most ancient harbour ever found in Egypt. The harbour dates back to the time of Pharaoh Cheops and is located in the Wadi el-Jarf area, about 180 kilometres south of Suez. The place is considered one of the most important commercial harbours in ancient Egypt as all the trading expeditions to import copper and other minerals from Sinai to the Nile Valley were supposedly launched there.

The 4,500-year-old port was discovered by a French-Egyptian team headed by Pierre Tallet (IFAO) and Sayed Mahfouz (University of Assyut). The mission also discovered a collection of vessel anchors carved in stone as well as the harbour's docks and the remains of workers' houses. Thirty caves were discovered along with the stone blocks used to close their entrances, inscribed with Cheops' cartouche written in red ink, and ship ropes and stone tools used to cut ropes.

The most important find unearthed during the excavation in the storage galleries is a large group of several hundred papyrus fragments, some measuring over 80 cm in length, revealing details of the daily life of the Egyptians during year 27 of Cheops. The newly discovered papyri are considered the oldest found so far. They are administrative

⁹³ For a general overview see Tallet-Marouard 2014, Tallet 2016 and Tallet 2017.

documents dating to c. 2600 BC, and they include two categories of documents: a large number of accounts organised in tables, which describe daily or monthly deliveries of food from various areas including the Nile Delta; and a logbook that records everyday activities of a team led by a Memphis official involved in the building of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, inspector Merer, who was in charge of a team of about 200 men.

Many of the papyri describe how the central administration, under the reign of Cheops, sent food, mainly bread and beer, to the workers involved in the Egyptian expeditions departing from the port.

The papyri have now been transferred to the Suez Museum for documentation and further studies. It is obvious that we are dealing with an “Old Kingdom administrative style”, where the data are included in grids composed of horizontal and vertical lines, written in red or black ink (see Abusir Papyri). This documentation is dominated by an analytical spirit and by a purely geometric appearance resembling offering lists.

As we can see from the fragment of a document (a ships' log) represented in fig. 3 and 4 (photo with a partial transcription corresponding to the right side of the papyrus), the tabulation and the arrangement of the data in columns is very simple: below the mention of each day, two columns are available to draw up a progress report corresponding to the activity of the crew on that specific day. We notice here that the scribe mainly uses the infinitive verb form (such as *nʿt*, “to navigate”, or *sdrt*, “to spend the night”), the stative and the *hr* + infinitive form (see Papyrus Boulaq 18, further fig. 18 for the use of the same verb *nʿt*). The results are short sentences where the construction is never complex, for example: “*Jour 27: appareiller [literally to sail] depuis l'Étang de Chéops, navigation vers l'Horizon de Chéops, chargé de pierres; passer la nuit à l'Horizon de Chéops*”⁹⁴. Syntactically, this use of the narrative infinitive and laconic style is characteristic of this type of document called “day-book”⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ Translation after Tallet 2016, 17.

⁹⁵ See Tallet 2017, 33 and here chapter 4.3.

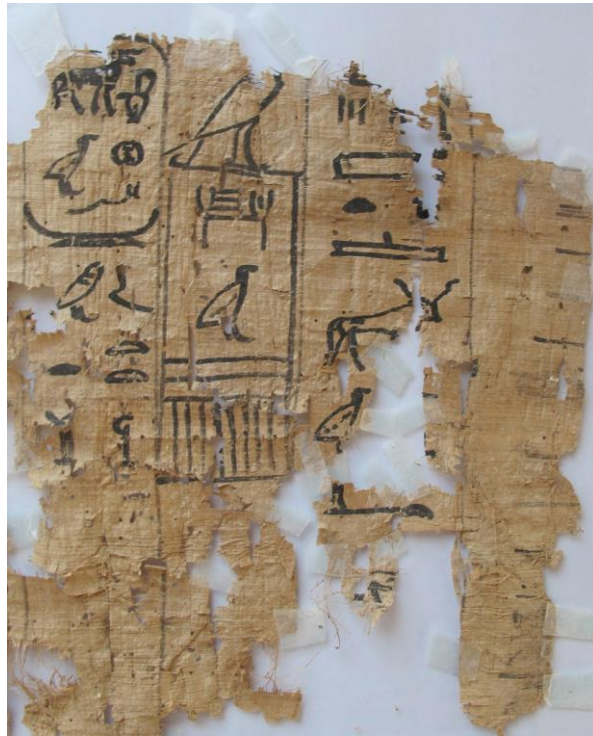


Fig. 1 Wadi el-Jarf papyrus. After Ahrām Online. (In the photo the *praenomen* and the Horus name of Cheops are visible)

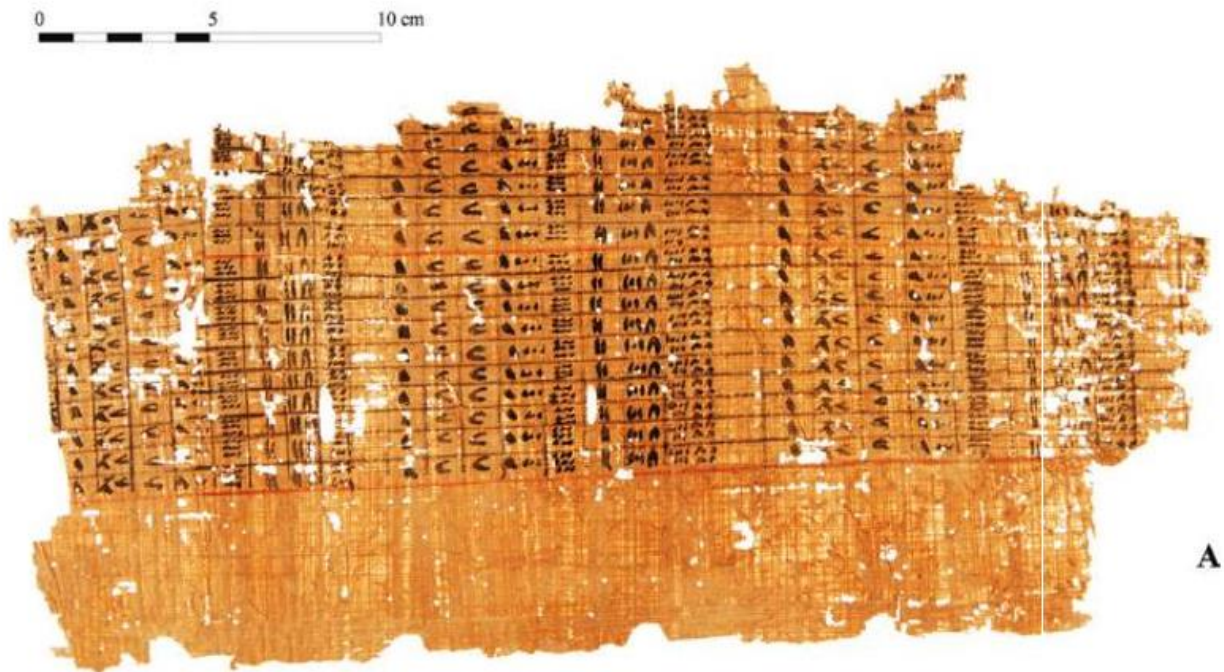


Fig. 2 Wadi el-Jarf papyrus. Accounts recorded in tabular form. After Tallet-Marouard 2014, 7

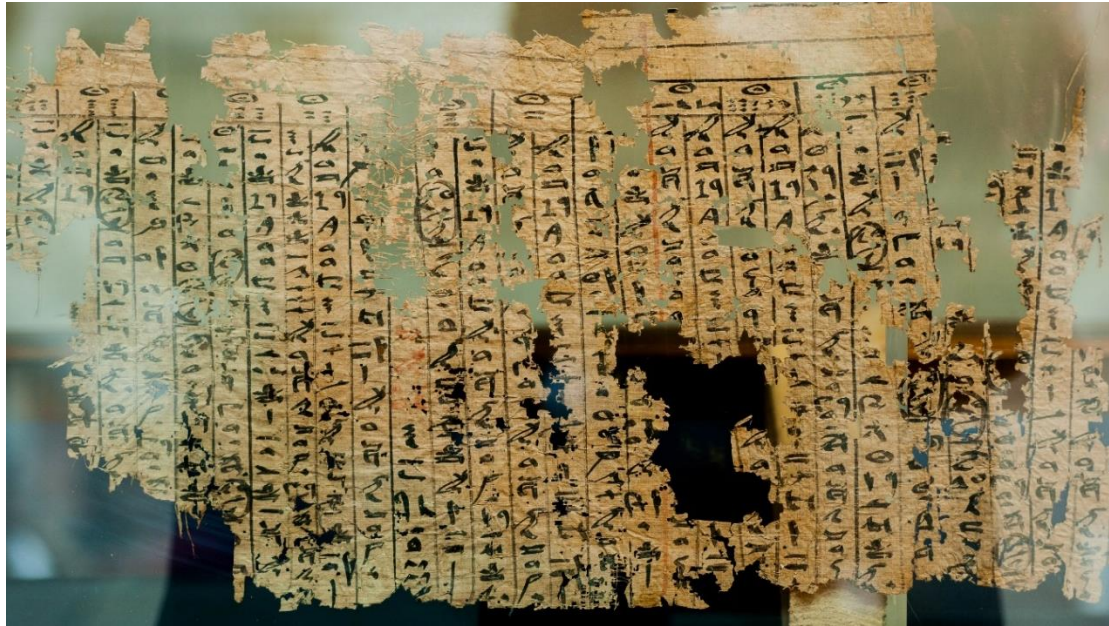


Fig. 3 Wadi el-Jarf papyrus. The log book of captain Merer. Photo by Mostafa AlSaghir (Cairo Museum, temporary exhibition, July 2016)

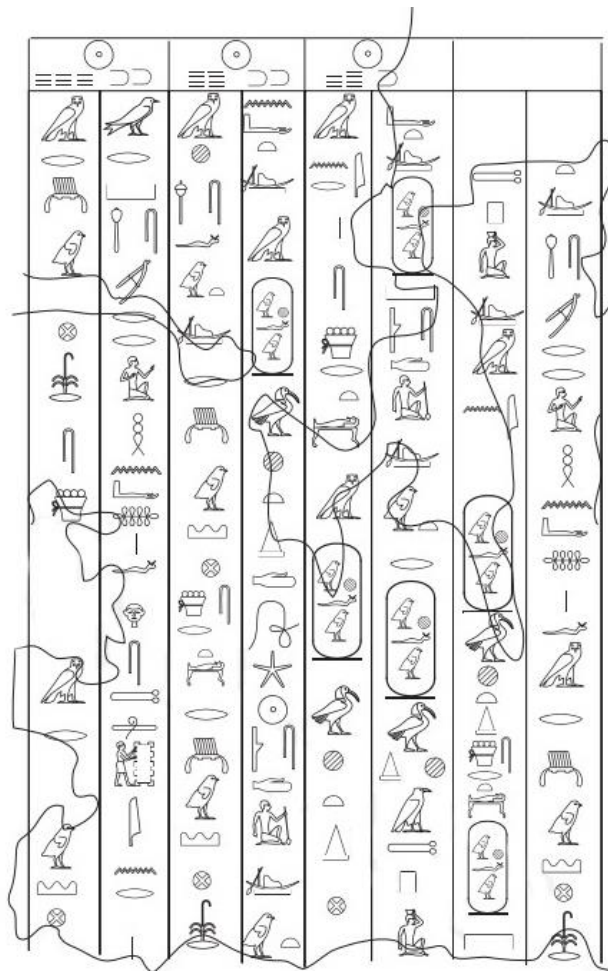


Fig. 4 Wadi el-Jarf papyrus. Transcription of the first columns of the log book shown in fig. 3. The days are written in the upper horizontal boxes. The events of each day are recorded in two vertical columns. After Tallet 2016, 29

4.2.b The Palermo Stone⁹⁶

The reason of the inclusion of annals like “Palermo Stone”, “Saqqara Stone” (4.2.c), and the Annals of Amenemhat II (4.2.h) in this overview, as already indicated in the introduction of this chapter, is their arrangements of events in consecutive dates⁹⁷. Annals were clearly not daily notes, nonetheless they spring from the same idea of a calendric structure and might provide the background from which journals originated. The regnal years of each king are usually listed, plus important events which occurred during each king's reign (the height of the Nile flood, information on festivals, taxation, sculpture, buildings and warfare). The purpose of annals is not certainly the same of journals written on papyrus; we are not here in front of an administrative process of an ongoing project, instead, events which took place are chronologically mentioned and written in the stone.

The Old Kingdom Annals, most commonly known as the Palermo Stone, is a large fragment of what was originally a stela known as the Royal Annals and dating to the Old Kingdom. It contains records of the kings of Egypt from the 1st Dynasty through the 5th Dynasty. It was composed during the 5th Dynasty (2565-2420 B.C.), and it is the oldest extant written chronicle of Egyptian history⁹⁸.

The stela is made of black basalt and it is inscribed on both sides. Originally, it probably measured about 2.2 metres tall by 60 cm wide and 6.5 cm thick. It was broken into an unknown number of pieces, many of which are now missing. The original location of the stela is unknown, but a fragment of it was found at an archaeological site in Memphis. Since 1866, this has been located at the Palermo Museum in Sicily (Italy), while another five smaller fragments are at the Cairo Museum and one is at the Petrie Museum of the University College of London.

The text of the stela is a list, written in hieroglyphic and formatted as a table, which covers the period from the Old Kingdom back thousands of years into the predynastic period⁹⁹. It starts with the predynastic god-kings, proceeding on through the demi-gods, and finally with a long list of Egyptian kings down to the middle of the 5th Dynasty (up to King Neferirkare Kakai). The regnal years of each king are listed, plus important events which occurred during each king's reign (the height of the Nile flood, information on

⁹⁶ For a general view see O' Mara 1979, Von Beckerath 1997, St. John 1999, Wilkinson 2000, Jiménez 2004.

⁹⁷ The Annals of thutmose III will be dealt with later (4.2.m).

⁹⁸ For a discussion about the date when the annals were compiled and inscribed, see Wilkinson 2000, 23.

⁹⁹ From the second register onwards, the rectangular format used has a year-branch on the right.

festivals, taxation, sculpture, buildings and warfare for some kings). Each name of a ruler is contained within a rectangular compartment set out in horizontal rows or registers.

The annals begin a new year compartment regardless of the beginning or end of a reign. Indeed, "...each year designated by a separate compartment begins on New Year's Day, the first day of the first month of the inundation; whereas regnal years, regularly used in date formulae from the First Intermediate Period onwards, ran from a king's accession date to each subsequent anniversary of his accession"¹⁰⁰.

What can this stela tell us about the ancient Egyptians' own view of history?

Sethe notes that the intentions of those who compiled the annals was never to give a complete record of the early dynasties, but rather a simplified chronological table¹⁰¹. The original location of the annals is still not certain, but it seems most probable that they were displayed in a temple context, perhaps as part of an ancestor cult and to stress the legitimacy of the reigning king as latest in a long line of rulers stretching back in an unbroken succession to the time of the gods¹⁰². This should dispel at once any ideas of accuracy, reliability and historicity.

The royal activities recorded in the annals concern: the administration of government (the biennial 'following of Horus'¹⁰³ and the biennial census of the country's wealth (*tnwt*) amongst the most important); the ritual activities connected with the king to display his own power and to defeat the forces of chaos; and the actions undertaken by the king in his religious role (dedication of new divine images, visits to centres of worship, foundation of temples, etc.).

It is highly unlikely that the annals were ever intended as an objective historical record. Nevertheless, they present a vivid picture of the ancient Egyptians' own view of their past and the way they arranged information.

Fig. 5 illustrates the face side of the fragment of Palermo formatted as a table and with the information regularly inserted into compartments. Each line is divided into small compartments. With the exception of the first register, all the cells are introduced by the sign for "year", thus separated from the others. In turn, the cells are divided into two registers: the upper one, larger, mentions the most relevant events; and the lower one, where in most cases the height of the Nile during that year is registered. Sometimes the upper part of some cells show a few internal subdivisions.

¹⁰⁰ Wilkinson 2000, 19.

¹⁰¹ Sethe 1903, 70 n.2.

¹⁰² Roccati 1982, 36.

¹⁰³ *šms-Hr*: the biennial progress of the royal court on a travelling judicial and tax-collecting visit to demonstrate royal authority throughout the Egyptian land. See LÄ III, 51, esp. note 8.

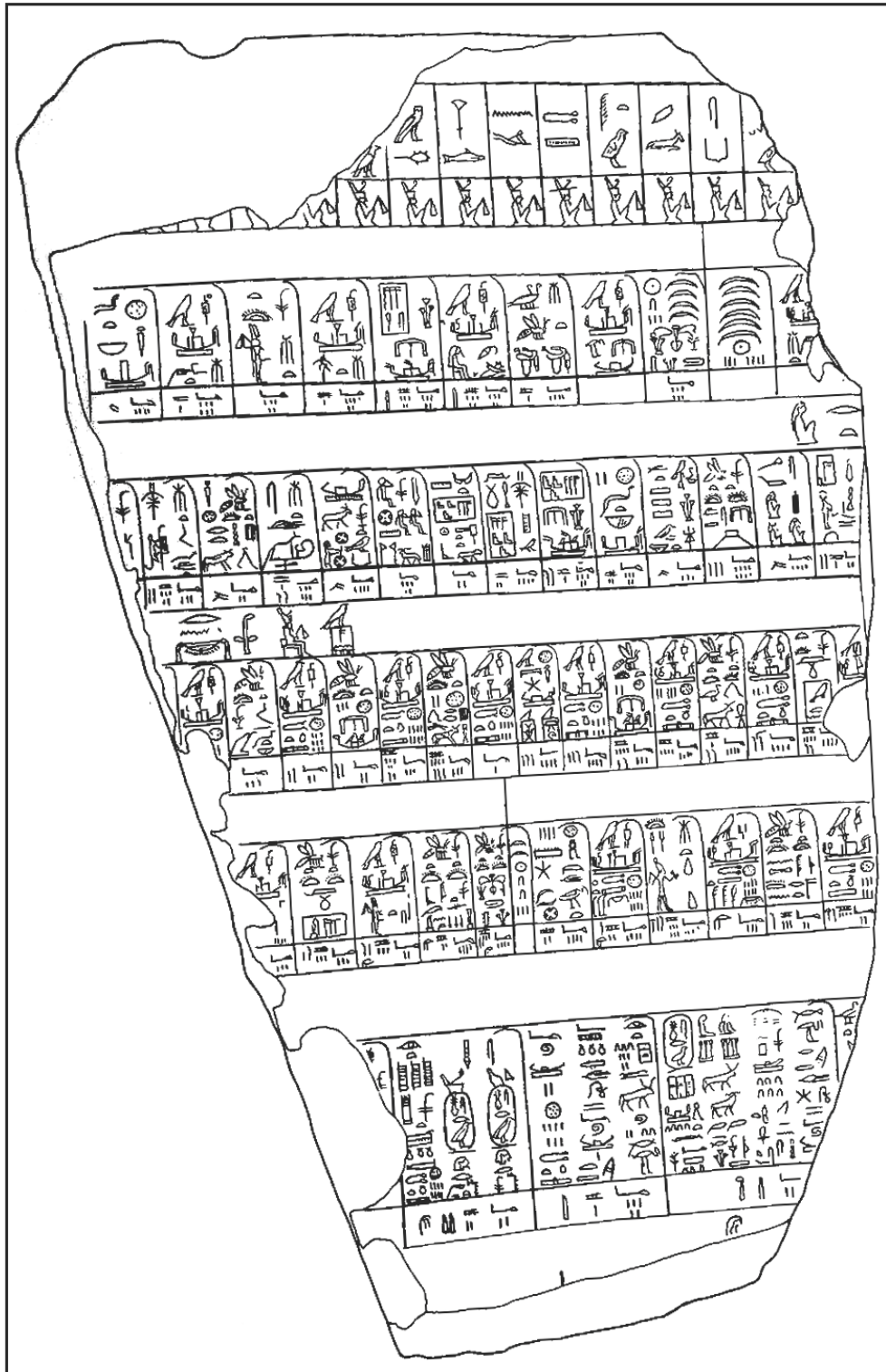


Fig. 5 Fragment of the Palermo stone, face side. After Wilkinson 2000

4.2.c The South Saqqara Stone

What is called the “South Saqqara Stone”, known as a “Palermo Stone” for the VI Dynasty, is worth noting in spite of its bad state of preservation (almost completely erased). The text was identified in 1993 on the sarcophagus lid (recto and verso) of Queen Ankhnespepy (*ḥnḥ.s-n-Ppjj*, possibly the mother of Pepy II), found at south Saqqara in 1931 and now held in Cairo Museum (JE 65908)¹⁰⁴. The inscribed texts are royal annals (using the typical formula *nswt-bity* + cartouche + *jr.n=f m mnw=f n* and the typical narrative infinitive) covering the period from the reign of Teti to that of Merenre on the upper surface of the sarcophagus=recto and the years from Merenre into the reign of Pepy II on the verso. Differently from the Palermo Stone, we note here the absence of separation lines in the inscription, whether columns or lines. Only on the verso, we can appreciate two large *mnpt*-signs delimiting a band of two horizontal lines.

4.2.d The Gebelein Papyri¹⁰⁵

These administrative papyri are here briefly mentioned (Papyrus Geb. III recto) since they present a series of consecutive dated notes, the daily accounting of cereals and working lists for the construction of a temple, and we expect that their features can be compared with the journal of Deir el-Medina.

The village of Gebelein, located in Upper Egypt, about 29 km south of Thebes, on the west bank of the Nile, takes its name from the presence of two hills (*Gebelein* in Arabic). In ancient times, the first hill housed a fortress with sections of its walls made of mud brick and a temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor. The second hill housed the Necropolis with tombs from the Old to the Middle Kingdom. It was in the Necropolis, during excavations in 1935 by the Italian Mission of Giulio Farina, where the papyri of the Old Kingdom were discovered¹⁰⁶.

Five papyri and some fragments of various dimensions are at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 66844). Other fragments are at the Egyptian Museum in Turin (Suppl. 17505/1-2-3-4-5). These administrative papyri were part of the funerary equipment of an Old Kingdom tomb. The papyrus rolls of Gebelein normally have two

¹⁰⁴ See Baud-Dobrev 1995 and Baud-Dobrev 1997.

¹⁰⁵ For an introduction see Donadoni Roveri, D'Amicone, Leospo 1994, Posener-Kriéger 2004 and Roccati 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Schiaparelli started the excavations there in 1910 after he abandoned the work in Deir el-Medina, but Farina took over in 1930.

different sizes: the standard one of 20-22 cm, and a smaller one of 10-12.5 cm. These dimensions, also common to the Abusir papyri, seem to be typical of administrative documents in the Old Kingdom.

The administrative papyri contain working lists for the construction of a temple, notes about distributed food rations, a bread and materials list, and sales receipts. The papyri were in large part published in 2004 (Posener-Kriéger). Only a section of the documents will be shown here.

Papyrus Geb. III recto

This is a daily accounting of cereals arranged within a grid that has been designed but not fully used. In fact, in the final part of the document, only the headings of the columns remain, without any data inside the cells, which shows that the grids were drawn before the text was actually included (see fig. 37). The daily record is divided into four sections: the revenue of the chief village *ḥꜥ ḥꜥꜥ*, the total amount *ṛḥt dmd*, the actual expenditure *pr nb km*, and the remainder *wḏꜣw ḥt*. For each of these sections, seven corresponding columns indicate the people interested in the accounting.

4.2.e The Abusir Papyri and the “new” Abusir Papyri¹⁰⁷

The Abusir documents are administrative papyri and are included in this overview because, being mainly concerned with the daily life of the temples at Abu Gorab and its economy, present a series of daily dated notes, as we expect in a journal. The grids, divided in thirty horizontal compartments representing the three decades of the month, list the activities necessary for the running of a mortuary temple.

The Abusir Papyri and the “new” Abusir Papyri are one of the most important finds of administrative documents from the Old Kingdom. They provide detailed information about the running of a royal mortuary temple and include duty rosters for priests, inventories of temple equipment, and lists of daily offerings to the two solar temples at Abu Gorab, north of Abusir, as well as letters and permits.

The site of Abusir is located about 10 km south of Giza. It contains two types of monuments: tombs of kings, queens and private individuals coming from the time of the 5th Dynasty, and tombs from the Saite-Persian period.

¹⁰⁷ For a general overview see Posener-Kriéger 1968 and 1976, Posener-Krieger, Verner, Vymazalova 2006 and Verner 1995.

The large royal cemetery of the Old Kingdom includes four kings' pyramids from the 5th Dynasty and other tombs built by royal family and officials. In addition, the kings of the 5th Dynasty constructed solar temples to the northwest of the pyramids.

The Abusir Papyri are a collection of administrative papyri dating to the 5th Dynasty and they are considered to be a major archive of Old Kingdom documentary texts. They are of key importance to the study of the organisational and economic aspects of the royal funerary complexes of the Old Kingdom. These documents represent a unique and important source in that they contain information rather distinct from the formal and royal records or tomb inscriptions.

The papyri were found in the archives of the funerary temple complexes of Neferirkare Kakai (found in storerooms located in the southwestern part of the complex), Raneferef (called here “new” Abusir Papyri) and Khentkaus II¹⁰⁸.

The first papyri were discovered in 1893 at Abu Gorab, near Abusir in northern Egypt, during illegal excavation. They contained manuscripts regarding Neferirkare Kakai. Their origins are dated to the 5th Dynasty. Later on, a large number of additional manuscript fragments were discovered in the area by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft expedition under the direction of L. Borchardt in 1907. Nowadays, they are divided between the British Museum, the Louvre, the Cairo Museum, the Egyptian Museum of Berlin (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung) and the Petrie Museum in London.

In the mid 1970s, based on information in the first Abusir Papyri, Czech archaeologists from the Czech Institute of Egyptology, under the leadership of Miroslav Verner, found the funerary monument of Raneferef with an additional 2,000 separate pieces of new papyri.

Further excavations by the Czech expedition on the site also uncovered papyri at the funerary monument of Khentkaus (the mother of Khentkaus II).

In addition to the successful excavations in the Abusir pyramid conducted by the Czech Institute of Egyptology of Charles University since the early seventies, the Institute of Egyptology of Waseda University began its work in September 1990.

The Abusir documents are mainly concerned with the daily life of the temple and its economy. They illustrate the integration of the royal funerary complexes into the state economy and their connection with various institutions that provided an economical base

¹⁰⁸ Few fragments of papyri were discovered during the Czech archaeological excavation of the small pyramid complex of Neferirkare's wife, Khentkaus II. These fragments were published by Verner (Verner 1995) with contributions by Paule Posener-Kriéger and Peter Jánosi and relate to the queen's cult. They will not be included in the present study because of their poor state of preservation and because of their fragmentary condition. They wouldn't add any further useful information for a comparison.

for cemeteries (e.g. residence). Of particular importance are the accounts, which provide detailed information about the running of a royal mortuary temple and include duty rosters for priests, lists of people involved, inventories of temple equipment, registers of income and expenses, records of inspections of the temple furniture, special duty tables for priests officiating feasts, accounts of all kinds and lists of daily offerings to the two solar temples at Abu Gorab.

Although such information cannot be complete, much can be learned about daily income and expenses of the temple economy. Not only amounts of commodities delivered to or from the funerary temple were inspected, but also their sources or destinations and names of responsible persons were recorded. These documents are more or less uniform and they work with a specific account terminology, which expresses all the necessary operations.

ARCHIVE OF NEFERIRKARE KAKAI

Only the documents considered relevant will be shown here:

Duty tables

They were compiled to allocate the daily tasks to each member of the temple staff on duty. There is a *detailed type* inscribed in the compartments of a grid, and a more *summary type*. It may be supposed that the more summary duty tables were a kind of outline of what had to be recorded in detail later in the compartments of a grid. Some duty tables were compiled for one month and deal with regular daily tasks, while other duty tables were compiled for special occasions, such as various feasts.

Example of a duty table:¹⁰⁹

The duty table shown here is arranged in a grid. In the top lines, the tasks of the temple staff are specified, while the rest of the page is divided horizontally into three groups of ten compartments, each group ending with a red line. The grid therefore consists of thirty horizontal compartments representing the three decades of the month. Each day has a compartment for each of the tasks specified in the top lines. The columns for the tasks are then divided into secondary columns for the time of day or the place where the same

¹⁰⁹ Only one example will be given here. The duty tables are all slightly different, but this example shows the main features.

tasks have to be performed. As we can see, the last nine days of the month have been left empty as if the workers were all off duty.

We can imagine that every scroll of the archives would start in the same similar way: date of the document, subject of the scroll and the organisation of the table (date of the service, statements of tasks, titles of men on duty). On the left of the table, the days of the month were indicated, at the top, the tasks and, across from days and tasks, the name of the person in charge is indicated.

B. M. 10735 frame 7 recto. [verso see pl. 40-41]

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
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Fig. 6 Abusir papyrus. Detail of a duty-table. After Posener-Kriéger 1968, pl. IIIa

From the corpus of documents, we know that the records in the temple archives included the following for each month:

- One duty table in which all the tasks of the temple staff on duty were noted.
- Daily records of income, as well as account notes from which they were compiled.
- One monthly account table.
- One monthly food distribution account.
- Expenditure accounts.

Red and black ink was used. In the various monthly tables, a single or double red line separates the spaces where the headings of the tables were entered from the spaces allotted to the days of the month. The use of red ink is not restricted to the lines of the various grids. It is also used in the headings of duty tables, both for specifying a particular duty and for indicating the time and place of performance; and in the monthly accounts, when specifying the origin or quality of the deliveries. In the inventories, the material from which objects are made may be written in red, and, also, records of the objects which have been damaged. In the accounts, numerals are written in both red and black. The sums and the total numbers of objects of one kind are generally written in red. Instead of clarifying things, this excessive use of red ink is quite confusing.

“NEW” ABUSIR PAPYRI

Regardless of the number of differences in details, the character of Ranefereref's papyrus archive does not differ in a substantial way from Neferirkare's. Therefore the documents will be not dealt with here (see Posener-Krieger, Verner, Vymazalova 2006).

4.2.f The Reisner Papyri¹¹⁰

P. Reisner I and III (P. Reisner II and IV will not be investigated here) concern the organisation of a work project. Accounts of manpower, occasionally listed by institution, with summaries for each individual month as well as longer periods of time, and occasional notes on mustering and the absence of workers are included. The year, the month and the indication of the date introduce each entry of the daily account like in a journal. Some numbers are struck out in red and there are calculation aids in the form of multiplication tables inserted in the tables (both for the number eight, which is frequently used as a multiplier, and both written upside-down in relation to the rest of the text)¹¹¹. Section A of Papyrus Reisner I records daily notes (122 consecutive days) of the number of workmen assigned to a particular task, while in section C the work force is divided into a number of separate gangs, like it happens for the workforce in Deir el-Medina.

The documents were discovered by G.A. Reisner during the excavations in 1901-1904 in Nag' ed-Deir in southern Egypt. Four papyrus rolls were found in a wooden coffin in a tomb. The texts provide great insight into the composition of accounts at the beginning of the 12th Dynasty, and contain records of wages, contracts, projects and work. They probably date to the reign of Sesostri¹¹². Only the relevant documents and sections will be shown here.

P. REISNER I

This is an account papyrus dating probably to the second reign of the 12th Dynasty (Sesostri¹¹³). It was found during the excavations conducted by G.A. Reisner on behalf of the University of California at Nag' ed-Deir, a site opposite Girgeh in Upper Egypt¹¹⁴. The papyrus was one of four rolls discovered lying on one of the three wooden coffins in tomb N 408 (N 406 on the basis of a renumbering of the tombs apparently conducted by the excavators¹¹⁵). The document is now at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston bearing the number 38.2062.

In common with many of the account papyri of the Old and Middle Kingdom (Abusir Papyri, Illahun Papyri), there are ruled guidelines, most likely to assist the scribe in

¹¹⁰ For an overview of the documents see Simpson 1963, 1965, 1969, 1986 and Wente 1972.

¹¹¹ Hagen 2018, 124.

¹¹² The dating of the papyri is still debated.

¹¹³ For a discussion about the date of the papyrus, see Simpson 1963, 19-21.

¹¹⁴ 1901-1904; 1912 and 1923-1924 (the last excavation on behalf of Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston).

¹¹⁵ Simpson 1986, 7.

aligning his writing and to make the account clearer, and several headings are dated with the year, month and day.

For practical convenience, the papyrus has been cut and the different sections of the document have been assigned a letter. The sections relevant to our argument are:

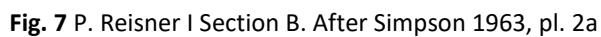
Section A: an account and summation of the number of workdays spent on a certain unspecified project and a calculation of the number of bread rations involved. The document supplies information about the daily record of the number of workmen assigned to a particular task. The number of men does not vary widely from day to day (22 to 38 men).

The section is arranged in tabular form with the lines closely spaced. Horizontally ruled lines have been drawn at regular intervals so that five lines of text are ordinarily included in each ruled space. As an aid to the proper alignment of the columns, five vertical lines are also used. Three provide a ruled edge for the columns indicating the days of the month, and two provide a similar margin for the figures representing the number of enlistees and the number of different loaves of bread.

The year and its numeral are written in black with the month and day of the month in red. There is a list of 122 consecutive days of the year and the number of labourers who reported for work on each of these days. The list of days with the enumeration of the workers and new enlistees is interrupted only by the figures for the totals at the end of each month or partial month.

The document could represent a sort of ration or pay sheet which recorded the total amount of compensation for the workmen. This record may have been prepared for a disbursing or fiscal agency of the Pharaonic government to serve as a supporting document for the expenditure of rations in the form of loaves of bread.

Section B: a record of the number of days each man was present. A list of men who performed the work with indications of the days they were present or absent. Each entry bears the name of the individual in the form X's son Y.



Section C provides a list of 134 men and 15 leaders, arranged in 16 crews or gangs, who were assigned to work on the *hbsw*-lands in charge of the steward Anhur-hotpe.

Section C is interesting because of the manner in which the work force is divided into a number of separate gangs. It warrants attention since the system is not reflected in the name lists in sections B, P or D. A similar system is instead followed in sections E and F. The work force of section C consists of 16 subdivisions and each group is indicated by the name and title of the foreman (written in red ink). Below the name of the foreman is a list of the subordinate members of his gang, written in black, and at the end of each gang, the figure for the total number of men in the gang is written in red.

Sections G, H, I, J, K are records of the construction of a temple: lists, with measurements, of blocks of stone, calculations about different materials, list of the assignment of the labour force, water transport etc.

The final result is a record of the total number of man-hours spent on the undertaking during the period involved. The purpose of the account is the calculation of the expense of labour necessary, allowable or spent on this portion of the project. Numerous checkmarks are present, showing that it was a working document.

P. REISNER III¹¹⁶

The subject matter is essentially the same as that of P. Reisner I and concerns the organisation of a work project for the construction of a temple or other religious structure. The document is now at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (number 38.2119).

Horizontal guidelines are also used here extensively to aid in alignment.

The regnal years must be assigned to Amenemhat I or his successor and co-regent, Sesostri I.

Sections A, B, C and D: the register is a daily summary of the number of workmen employed or assigned to the miscellaneous tasks specified by the headings. The year, the month and the indication of the date introduce each entry of the daily account.

Section B reflects a daily account for 177 days. After the heading indicating the year, the month and the day, the subject of the account follows: "Number of *mny*-laborers who are in This". A summary closes the section.

Sections F, G, K, and L: in these accounts, foremen who are responsible for work on a building project and who have been assigned crews of labourers are listed.

The framework is the list of consecutive days with a heading consisting of a proper name and different labels for the other columns. Each entry line refers to a single day.

¹¹⁶ For general information about the discovery, see P. Reisner I above.

Section K consists of a heading, now lost, and five paragraphs or subsections. The column headings can be restored as follows: enrolled men (days of work per man); the second column figures are the multiples of 10 units per day of work per man, possibly hours or else volume or sum; the third column figures represent the work completed; and the fourth column the remainder.

Sections E, H, and J deal with a work project and part of the operations involve a temple. Also, here, we have the date and a general heading followed by column headings.

4.2.g The Illahun archives¹¹⁷

These texts present dated entries in red and black ink organized by year-month-day, and record events and accounts related to a group of workmen engaged in a specific task. We therefore expect to see similarities with the Deir el-Medina journal. Petrie, in *Illahun, Kahun and Gurob* (1891, 48), when referring to the different kinds of papyri found, mentions, “accounts kept journal-fashion”. “These accounts are lists of superintendents and workmen engaged in dragging stone [...] kept by a scribe of the royal treasury [...] contains for each day concise and formal notes of the occasions for which several drafts or payments were made, together with names of persons and lists of things paid out or received. At the end of the day the clerk drew up his balance sheet”.

El-Lahun or Kahun is the name of the workers' village in Fayyum associated with the pyramid of Sesostri II. Between 1889 and 1899, el-Lahun yielded the largest haul of surviving Middle Kingdom papyri, a collection of ancient Egyptian texts concerning administrative, mathematical and medical topics.

The archive of el-Lahun is one of the most important temple archives and dates from the second half of the 12th Dynasty (covering a period of 50 years, from year 5 of Sesostri II to year 36 of Amenemhat III). The find is divided into two parts that were found ten years apart, in 1889-90 and 1899, at the excavations of Flinders Petrie. The first part is now at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at University College London, the second one almost completely in the State Museum of Berlin.

The London papyri are said to have been discovered in the funerary temple of Sesostri II by Flinders Petrie, while the Berlin papyri were bought by Ludwig Borchardt for the Egyptian Museum in Berlin in 1899. Inspired by the discovery of new papyri, Borchardt conducted a small-scale excavation around the temple area and found an additional corpus of hieratic manuscripts. The Berlin find comprises documents of daily

¹¹⁷ For a general introduction about the documents, see Collier-Quirke 2002, 2004 and 2006, Griffith 1898, Horváth 2009, Petrie 1891, Luft 1992a and 1992b, Luft 2006, Kóthay 2015.

worship in the mortuary temple of King Sesostri II such as letters, temple diaries, supply and festival lists. The significance of the Berlin papyri is made even greater by the fact that the date of the Heliacal Rise of Sirius is recorded in the temple diary of year 7 of King Sesostri III. The London papyri comprise items of a more individual character such as legal documents, household lists, contracts, and even literary pieces.

Different kinds of papyri were found at Kahun between 1889 and 1899. The texts span a variety of topics (literary, medical, veterinari, mathematical, legal, letters), but only the account papyri are interesting to our work, and amongst them, those called official journal in Griffith 1898, 55¹¹⁸. The following illustration shows some of these fragments. III.1. A. page 3 recto (Griffith 1898, pl. XXII, ll. 1-9 = UC 32190+frs 32315). This is an abstract of a communication and the reply written in guidelines. The subject of the communication seems to be workers who stay home instead of coming to work. The writer requests instructions on how to proceed and promises compliance. The other fragments contain accounts with total and remainder (III.1. A. page 4 recto, Griffith 1898, pl. XXII, ll. 10-16 = UC 32190+frs 32315), dates and figures recording the daily consumption, or output, or receipt of materials (III.1. D. recto, Griffith 1898, pl. XXII, ll. 25-36 = UC 32190+frs 32315), rations which are given to an attendant, division of the plots of land (III.1. C. recto, Griffith 1898, pl. XXII, ll. 37-48 = UC 32190+frs 32315), and numbers of men employed (III.1. B. verso, Griffith 1898, pl. XXII, ll. 49-61 = UC 32190+frs 32315).

¹¹⁸ Griffith 1898, 55, calls fragments A, C, and D “official journal” as if he would like to identify a specific typology of administrative documents, unfortunately no explanation is given there, nor any criteria for their identification.

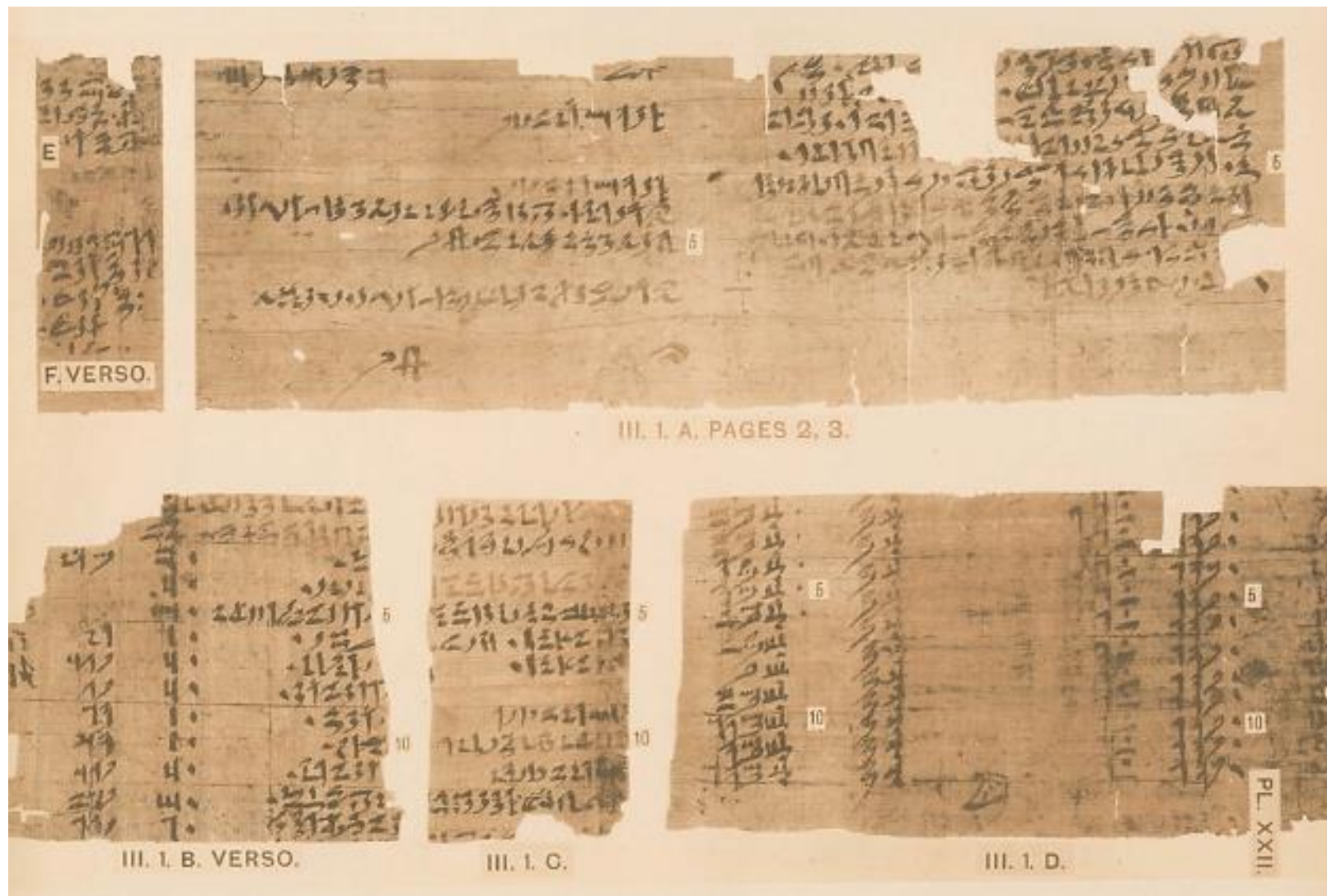


Fig. 8 Illahun papyrus. Fragments of journal. UC 32190. After Griffith 1898, pl. XXII

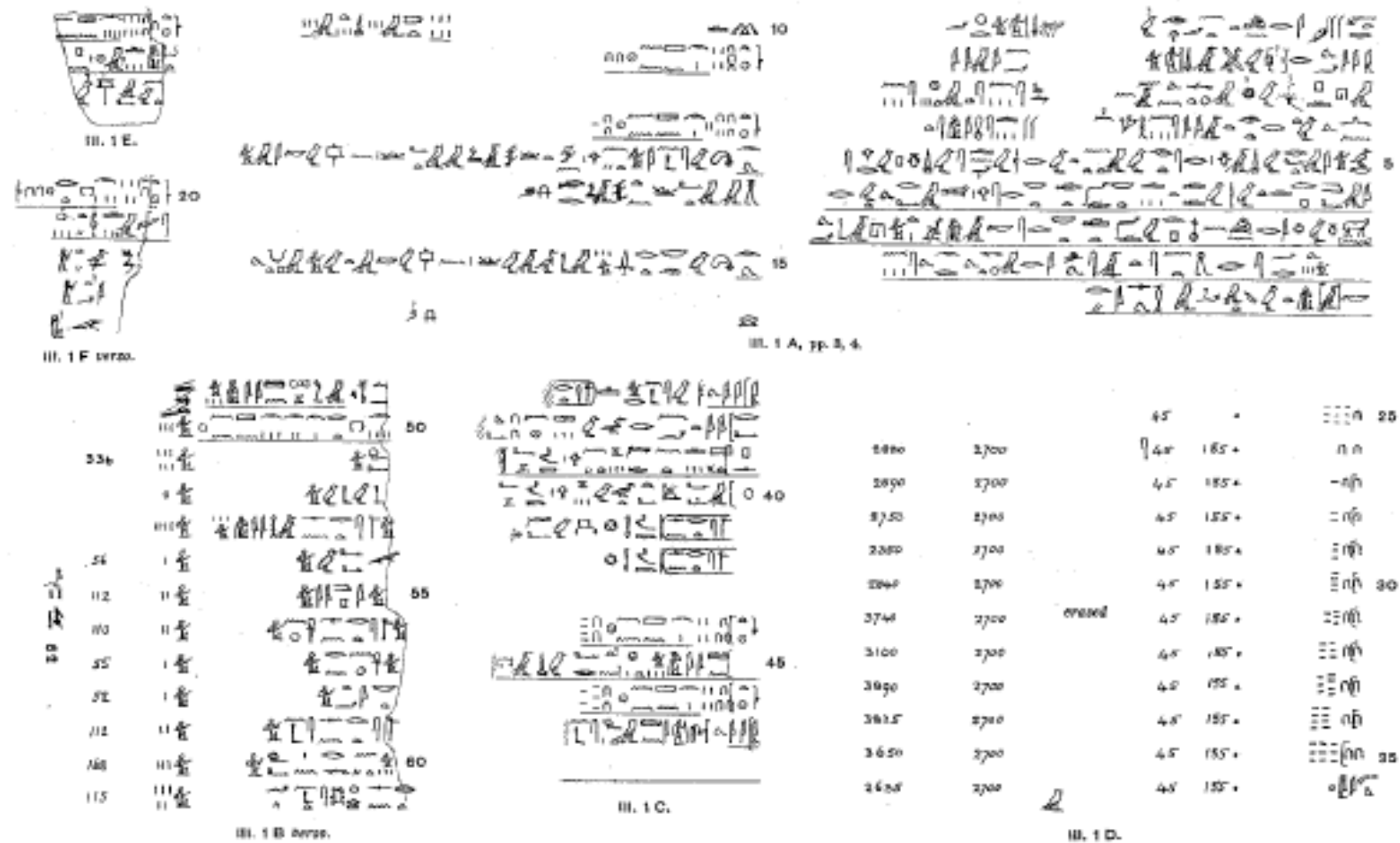


Fig. 9 Illahun papyrus. Fragments of journal. UC 32190. After Griffith 1898, pl. XXII

The following illustration again shows some of the fragments (UC 32190) which are called journals in Griffith 1898. In III.1. D. verso (Griffith 1898, pl. XXIII, ll. 1-7) we probably have part of a record of daily attendance for a month, while in III.1. C. verso (Griffith 1898, pl. XXIII, ll. 8-10) some soldiers are named, probably for an expedition to the quarries. III.1. A. verso (Griffith 1898, pl. XXIII, ll. 12-22) includes amounts paid and allocation of plots and III.1. A. recto (Griffith 1898, pl. XXIII, ll. 24-40) contains figures in four columns (the third column may indicate aruras or cubits) and accounts of bricks. Horizontal lines divide single sections of the document.

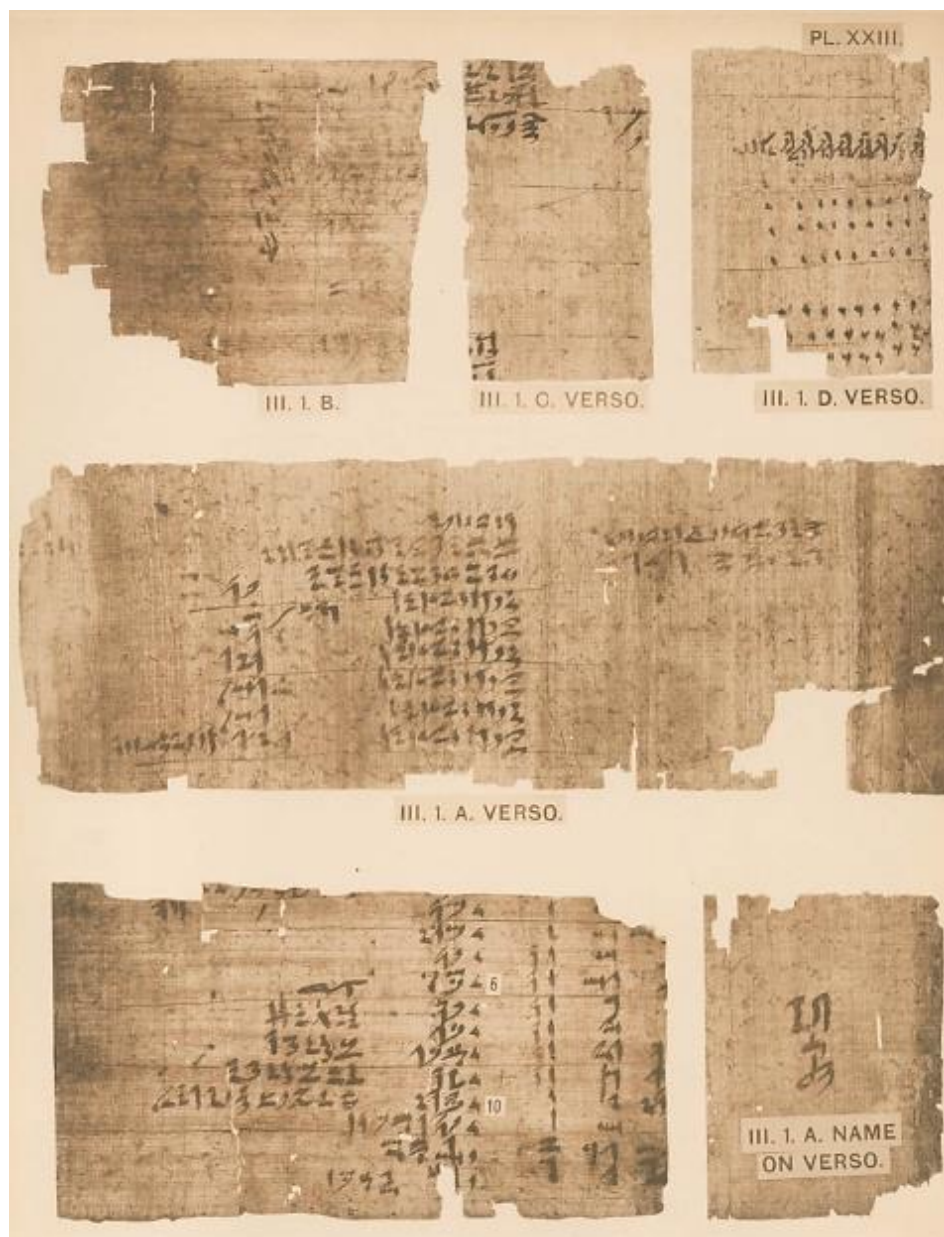


Fig. 10 Illahun papyrus. Fragments of journal. UC 32190. After Griffith 1898, pl. XXIII

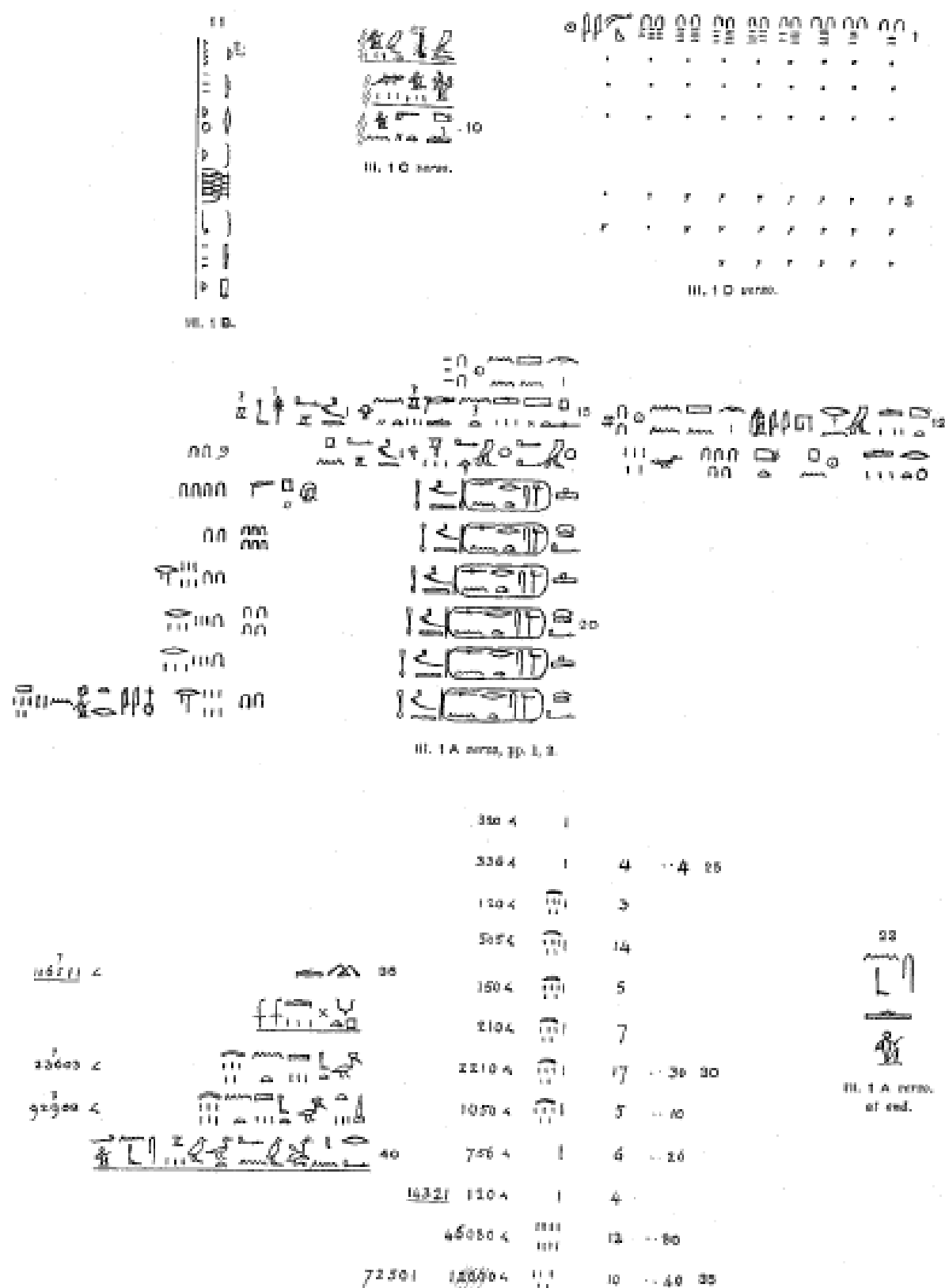


Fig. 11 Illahun papyrus. Fragments of journal. UC 32190. After Griffith 1898, pl. XXIII

The previous illustrations are fragments from one or more papyrus rolls containing what is called in Griffith 1898 an 'official journal' with hieratic entries in red and black by year-month-day, recording events and accounts in year 34 of Amenemhat III, in medium-sized, thick, clear signs over guidelines on both sides. As we can clearly see, these documents differ from the previous Old Kingdom papyri. The documentation is still dominated by an analytical spirit and by a purely geometric appearance resembling the offering lists, but the previous grid is reduced gradually and only labels and sum lines still remain in some instances. Red ink is not used as much as in the previous period.

4.2.h The Annals of Amenemhat II

In 1974 Sami Farag (Director of Egyptian Antiquities in Memphis and Saqqara) raised a large inscribed granite block found under the base of a colossal statue of Ramses II near the Ptah temple in Memphis. It contained the remains of 41 columns describing events in the reign of king Amenemhat II. Most of these events concern offerings made to different deities and temples all around the country. However, there are also records of military enterprises. A smaller fragment was already discovered by Flinders Petrie in 1908 and this contained a similar annals text from another period of Amenemhat II's reign. Although the two fragments do not physically join, they clearly belong to the same inscription.

The two fragments of the inscription form an extremely important source for the political history of Egypt at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. Both report numerous foundations of Pharaoh for the gods of Egypt, the large fragment describes the reception of delegations of foreign powers from Nubia and Asia and names the composition of the tributes. It is not known where these annals were originally placed; it seems possible that they once decorated the funerary temple of Amenemhat II's pyramid at Dahshur¹¹⁹.

An analysis of the texts shows that the events of the annals are not systematized according to subject groups, but in a chronological sequence (though without specifying month and year dates). This is particularly clear in the first part of the Farag-block, where the chronological arrangement is best observed¹²⁰.

The formal structure of these annals fits in the tradition of the annalistic texts of the Old Kingdom. They follow in the overall system the old model, which best-known representatives are the annals preserved in the fragments of the 1st to 5th dynasty of the Palermo/Cairo stone. Nonetheless, even if the events are sequentially recorded, they

¹¹⁹ Altenmüller 2015, 282-283.

¹²⁰ Altenmüller 2015, 283-284.

are not, as in the annals of the Old Kingdom, summarized in annual blocks within a graphically outlined annual field. Over the two year fields of the Farag-fragment, an upper horizontal line was probably present, which probably contained the name of the reigning King Amenemhat II and the well-known dedication formula *ir.n=f m mnw=f*. The original state of the annals text could be reconstructed as follows: (a) the upper boundary of the annals text probably formed a horizontal line with the name of the ruler. In this line the dedicatory formula *ir.n=f m mnw=f* would be present. It is uncertain whether the consecration formula was written year by year over the annual fields or whether it was used selectively; (b) the main text is written in vertical lines from right to left, with the records of the foundations and the individual events following each other directly. The annals in the main text are brief and contain the description of the foundations for each year (for the gods and kings, introduced by the dative-*n*, e.g.: AnnM x+9 end "...for Montu in Armant, Asian copper: 1 *ds-jug*"; AnnM x+10 end "...for Montu in El-Tod, Asian copper: 1 *ds-jug*",) and the outstanding events, introduced by a verb in the infinitive form (e.g.: AnnM x+13 "...Arrival (*spr*) of the expeditionary army that had been sent out to the Turquoise Terrace = Sinai. They brought:...[follows list of minerals]")¹²¹.

¹²¹ Altenmüller 2015, 243-244.

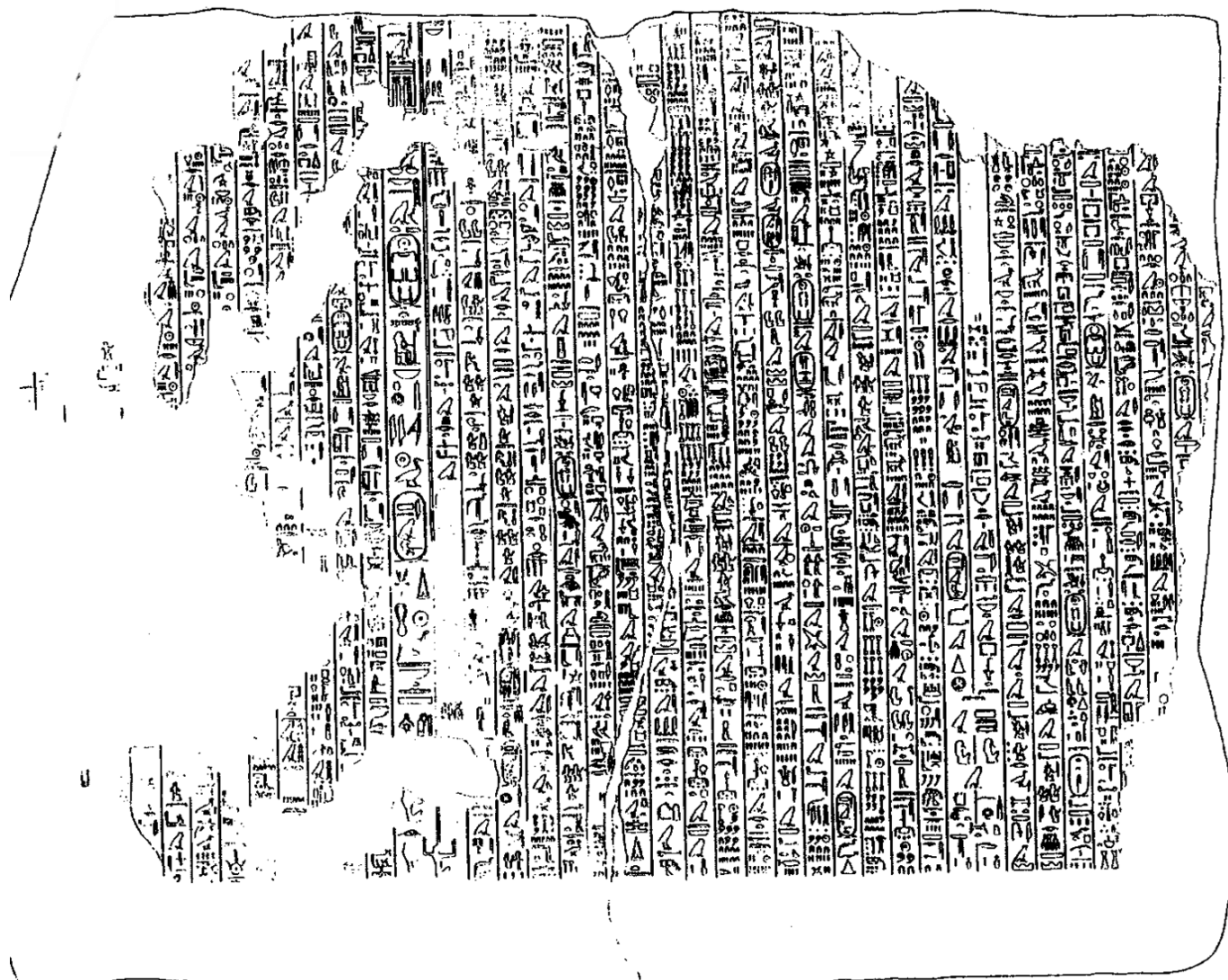


Fig. 12 Annals of Amenemhat II, Farag-block. After Altenmüller 2015, Falttafel

4.2.i The Ramesseum Papyri¹²²

The following documents are mentioned here since they offer a series of daily dated events or diaries recording consecutive days. Concerning the Semnah dispatches, they are included here because from these letters one may conclude that the frontier post kept a kind of “border journal”¹²³. In the letters there are indeed references to events on certain days.

¹²² For more information on the discovery and the content of the papyri, see Barns 1956, Gardiner 1955, Quibell 1896, Smither 1945, Spiegelberg 1898a, Parkinson 2011 and Hagen forthcoming.

¹²³ Same style as later in Papyrus Anastasi III verso VI, (EA10246, 1) dated to year 3 of Merenptah. See Caminos 1954, 108-113. The text provides an overview of the movement of travellers recorded in a daybook from a border official over a period of ten days.

In 1895-96, Flinders Petrie discovered a plundered tomb shaft as he and James Quibell excavated the funerary temple of Ramesses II, the Ramesseum. In the north-west corner of the temple complex, there was a shaft, on an angle to the wall of one of the chambers of the later temple's brick storeroom and running under it. At the bottom of the shaft, two small chambers opened. They were cleared and found to be empty. Lastly, the heap left in the middle of the shaft was removed and in it the excavators discovered a group of objects, apparently, the remains of burial goods that had been removed from one of the burial chambers. There was a wooden box containing papyri, surrounded by a mass of other material. The papyri and objects that were discovered were divided between several institutions. Many fragments of the papyri were lost or disintegrated over the years through the process of mounting them on glass smeared with beeswax. In regard to dating the documents, the reign of Amenemhat III provides a *terminus a quo*. The date is conventionally given as the 13th Dynasty. The majority of the papyri are at the British Museum.

The corpus includes literary papyri, ritual and magical texts, hymns, mythological spells, mathematical texts, the Ramesseum Onomasticon, funerary texts, wisdom texts and fragments of accounts.

The documents of interest for this work are the following:

- **P. Ram. C (BM EA 10752.1-6) and P. Ram. 19 (BM EA 10772.2) Semna Dispatches** (Smither 1945, Gardiner 1955, 8, 11, Quirke 1990, 191-3, Vogel 2004, 61-3, 78-87, Parkinson 2011, Kraemer-Liszka 2016)

The papyrus contains, on the *recto*, copies of a number of dispatches sent from the fortress of Semna called “Khakawre (=Sesostris III) is mighty” or from elsewhere.

The papyrus was found at Thebes, but the texts were copied at Semna West and later travelled to Thebes in one papyrus (Kraemer-Liszka 2016, 48-49 against Smither 1945, 4). The dispatches would be received in ordinary letter form and then copied into a 'journal' or book of letters as a permanent record. The *verso* of the papyrus is covered with magical texts, and it is probably for the sake of these alone that the papyrus was preserved and travelled to Thebes.

The dispatches deal with the comings and goings of Nubians, who came to Semna to trade their wares, and the Medjay people, and mention more than once the steps taken to keep track of the movements of these southerners in the desert.

Fortunately, it seems possible to date the dispatches fairly accurately. The many dates mentioned, all in year 3 of an unnamed king, afford no clue, but the Simontu referred to was identified by Smither (1944), doubtless correctly, as the man of the same name and titles who left records of himself on the rocks at Semna dated to the years 6 and 9 of Amenemhat III, i.e. about 1844 and 1841 B.C. Since this king reigned for about half a century, and since in the name of the Semna fortress, Sesostris III, his predecessor, is referred to as *m³-hrw* we may quite safely ascribe the papyrus to his reign.

As an example, only page five of the Semna Dispatches is shown below.

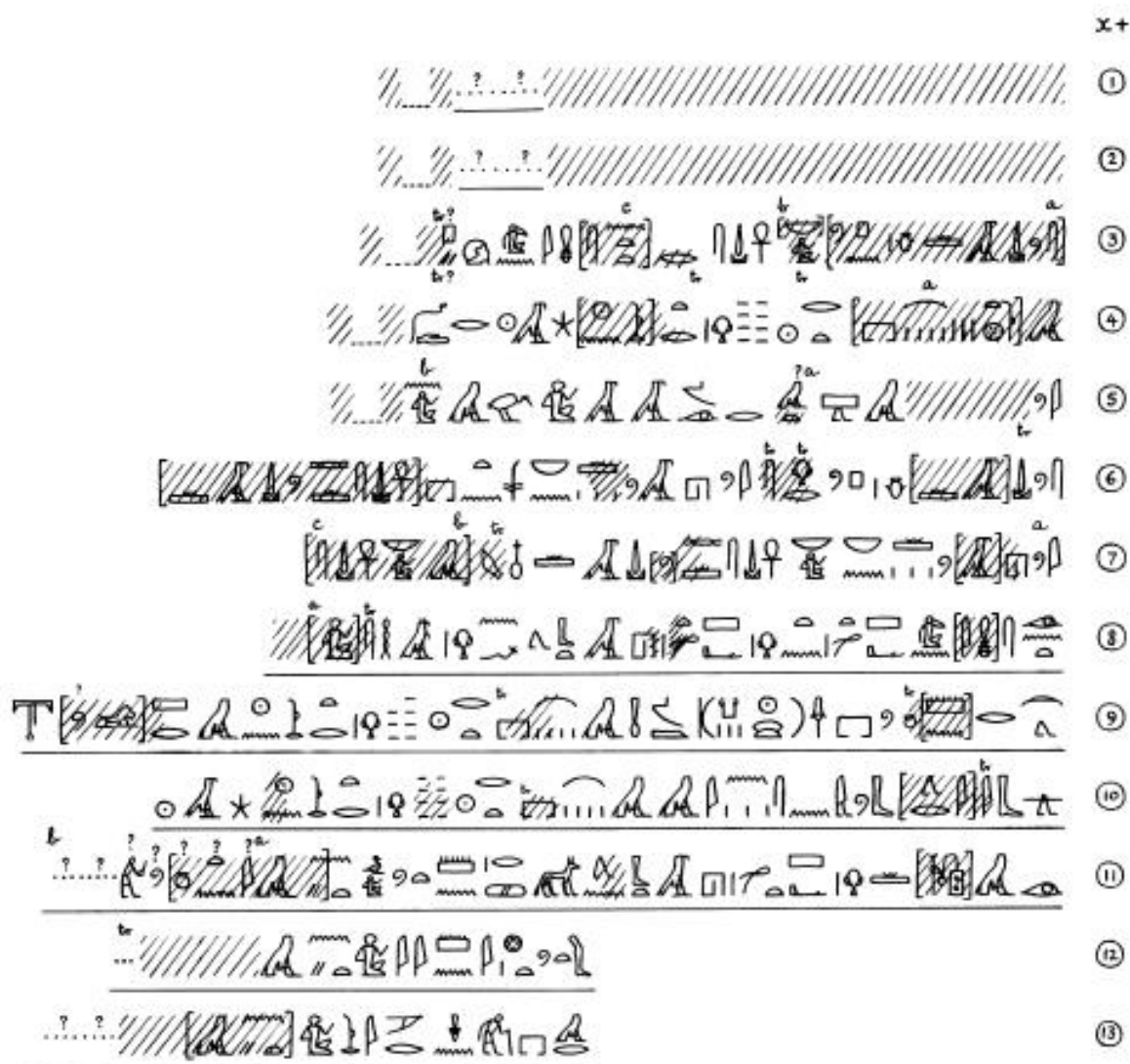


Fig. 13 Page five of Semna Dispatches. After Smither 1945, pl. VIa

- **P. Ram. III verso (BM EA 10756)** (Gardiner 1955, 9, 17, pl. 7, 9, pl. 63 verso, Barns 1956, 15-23, pl. 12, B 1-4, pl. 13, B 19-28, pl. 24-25 verso, Quirke 1990, 188-9)

Accounts with ruled lines. The text is written in vertical lines. Gardiner proposes that “the subject is deliveries of various kinds of grain to the Residence, to a storehouse (*mhr*), and to the houses of certain individual persons, and that these transactions are dated in the sixth year of some king unknown”¹²⁴. The accounts concern distribution of a variety of commodities including oil, vegetables, and bread.

¹²⁴ Gardiner 1955, 17.

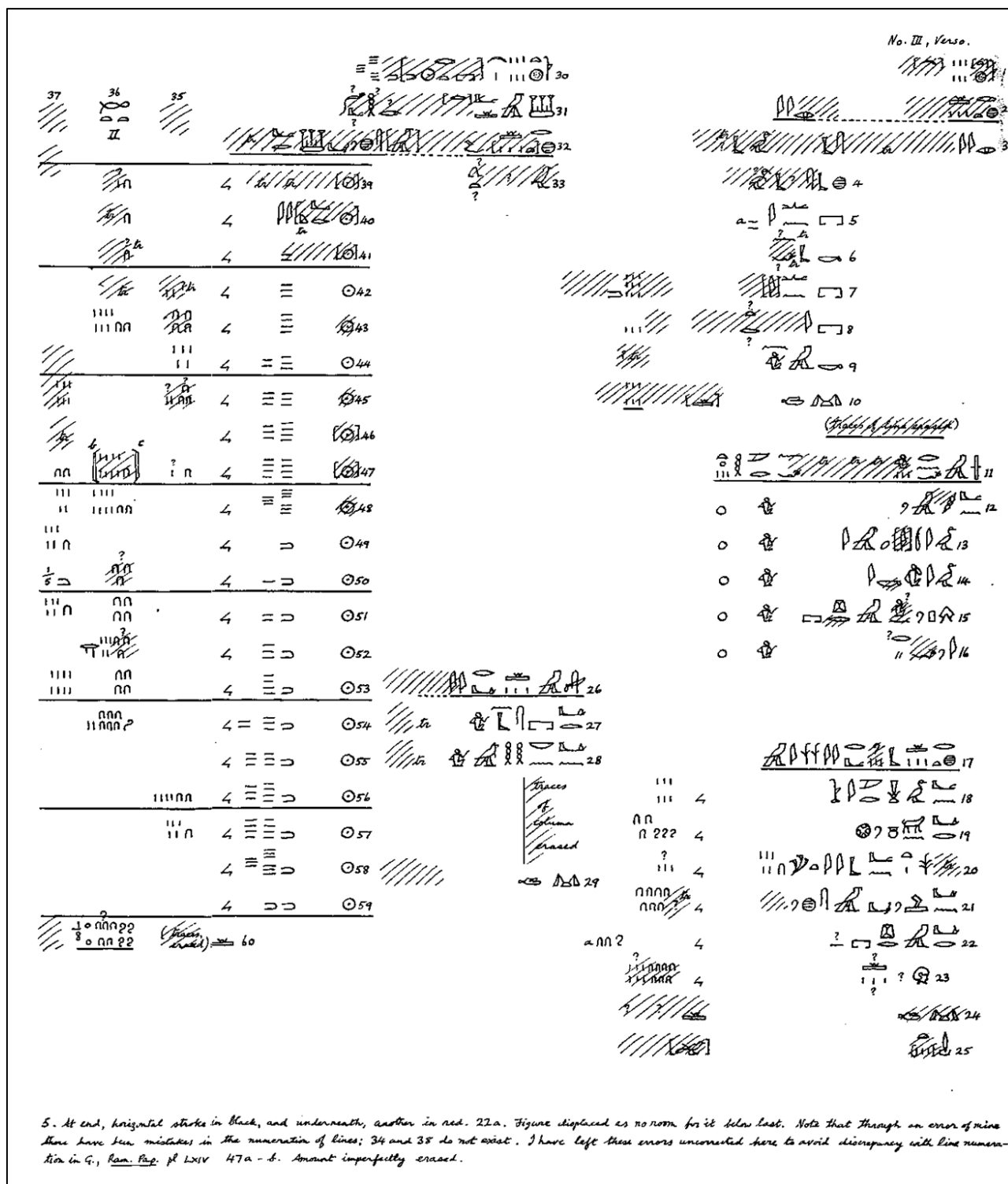


Fig. 14 Accounts, P. Ram. III verso. After Barns 1956, pl. 24

- **P. Ram. XIII verso (BM EA 10766)** (Gardiner 1955, 14-15, Quirke 1990, 187, Parkinson 2011)

A diary of an embalment with ruled lines recording 77 consecutive days in vertical columns divided into seven-day periods, written against the last day of each is

the sign for “total”, *dmd*, followed by the word for “purification” (*w^cbt*). It appears to be a checklist of embalming days, perhaps for general guidance.



Fig. 15 Papyrus Ram. XIII verso. After www.britishmuseum.org

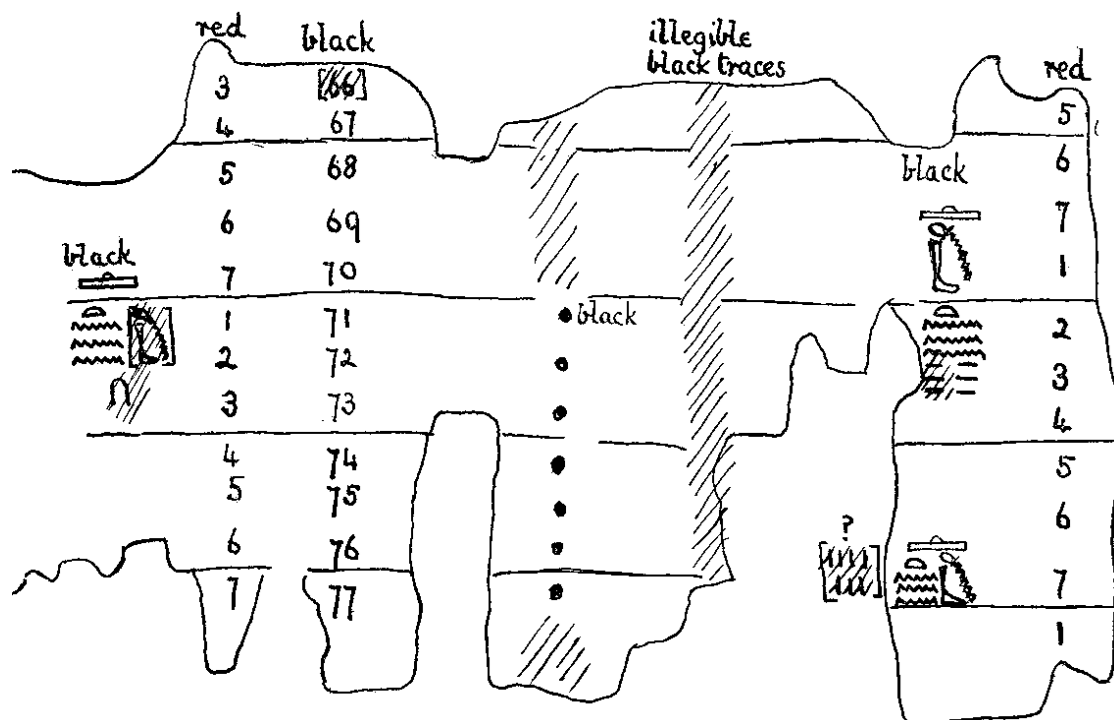


Fig. 16 Papyrus Ram. XIII verso. After Gardiner 1955, fig. 1

4.2.j The Middle Kingdom Tax Assessor's Day-book¹²⁵

This fragment of a diary of the scribe of the revenue department, records brief dated entries of how the scribe spent his business hours and the names of those who worked with him. It is likely enough that officials who travelled on government business were required to submit a report to the central office of how they spent their time. The format of this diary, with its brevity of style and mentioning what happened for each recorded day, offers a good example of a day-book, in which daily events are noted.

This document, together with other fragments, was discovered on a site close to the Fayyum, at Harageh (thus known as P. Harageh 3, now kept at the Petrie Museum as papyrus UC 32775) by the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, under the archaeologist Reginald Engelbach, during the excavations on the Gebel Abusir in the winter of 1913-1914.

The document shown here is a very worm-eaten page from the diary of a scribe of the revenue department and it was found "in the surface rubbish, and in the filling of some of the tombs"¹²⁶.

The palaeography closely resembles that of the papyri from Illahun, a few miles away, and must be of the same period (end of the 12th, beginning of the 13th Dynasties). The scribe has written vertically the beginning of l. 12, to show that it is to be read after each of lines 7-11. The same device is used again in l. 26. At the beginning of a line, a blank space serves as the equivalent of ditto marks.

The page shown here (fig. 17) is a list of staff (probably on day 14).

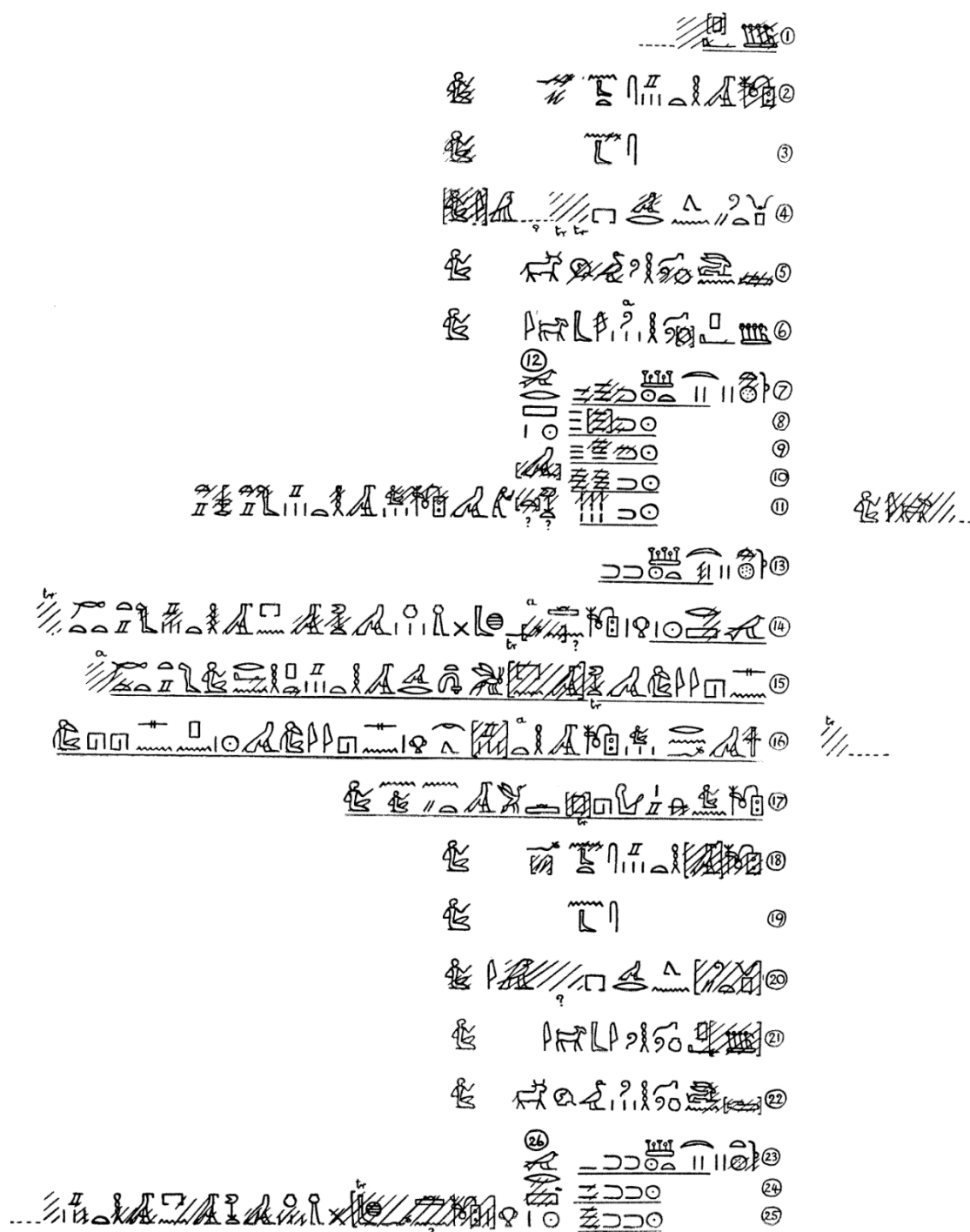
Days 15 until 19 were spent on an enquiry in the bureau of fields, southern(?) section, while day 20 was spent recording the assessment of income due in the bureau of fields, northern section, and "assembly before the national overseer of fields Redianptah, northern section. List of staff assembled by the Scribe of the Mat, keeper of regulations, Paentieni".

Days 21 until 23 were spent "in the bureau of fields".

Red ink is here used for the date, but also for entire sentences, while, instead of the grid, we find horizontal lines dividing different sections.

¹²⁵ See Engelbach-Gunn 1923, Grajetzki 2004 and Smither 1941.

¹²⁶ Engelbach-Gunn 1923.



3, 6^a Different from ? in l. 5; similarly below l. 22. 3, 14^a The trace seems only to suit —*.

3, 15^a Probably nothing lost. 3, 16^a on a small piece now folded under.

Fig. 17 Papyrus Harageh 3. After Smither 1941, pl. IXa

4.2.k Papyrus Boulaq 18¹²⁷

Papyrus Boulaq 18 consists of two fragments written in hieratic during the 13th Dynasty and found by Mariette in 1860 in the Theban Necropolis, at Dra Abu el-Naga in the tomb of the “scribe of the great enclosure”, Neferhotep, next to a *rishi* coffin. The documents are now at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 58069).

The papyrus contains accounts of the expenses of the royal palace during a visit to Thebes, dates to the 13th Dynasty (around 1750 BC) and lists the palace officials and the daily rations they received. For each day the income and expenditure, as well as the total and the remainder, are indicated, comparable to what happens in many Deir el-Medina texts. It also reports on the journey of the king to the temple at Medamud and on the arrival of a delegation of Nubians.

The exact dating of the document is debated. The name of the king is heavily damaged. The fragments are commonly attributed to Sobekhotep II.

The largest fragment of Papyrus Boulaq 18 contains the daily accounts of **income** and **expenditure** in the palace of Thebes during a period of 12 days, in the second and third month of the flood, year 3. Between the last date of the recto and the first of the verso, there is an interval of 11 days, but it is unclear if there were originally records also for these 11 days. The recto has a different character from the verso and is characterised by the absence of the royal family. It is therefore likely that the original ended about where it ends today, and so little has been lost. From what we can see, the accounts represent the financial records of a royal visit to Thebes at the initiation or completion of the monuments to Montu at Medamud.

Day summary lists follow the more detailed accounts for each day. The document's layout is similar to the other documents of this kind and shows in two instances horizontal guidelines in black ink dividing the data and different headings for different types of food (kinds of bread, dates, beer, vegetables, meat, etc.). For each day, the **account revenue** (input) and the **debit** (output) is indicated, as well as the total and the remainder.

The **account revenue** consists of three sections: the total revenue entered in for the Pharaoh; the daily dues from the temple of Amun; and the remainder from the previous day.

¹²⁷ For further discussion, see Griffith 1891, Mariette 1872, Scharff 1922, Spalinger 1985 and 1986, Miniaci-Quirke 2009.

The structure of the summaries of the daily accounts divides the usual beneficiaries of the palace into three groups: the *pr-ʿ3* (palace), the private quarters of the palace, and the servants.

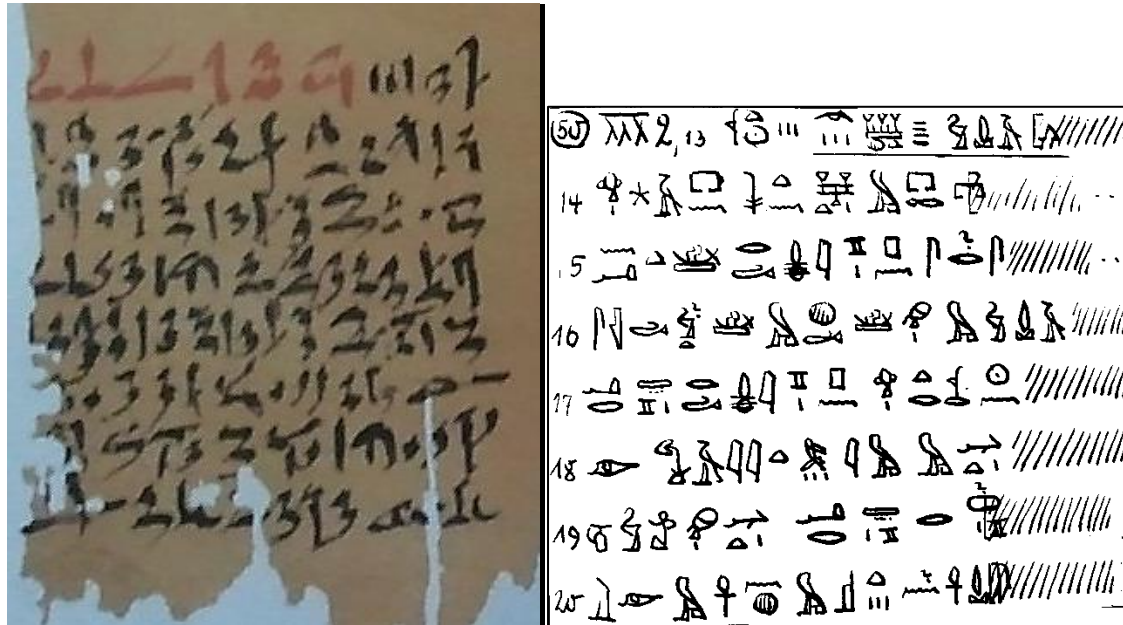


Fig. 18 Papyrus Boulaq 18, detail of event text on year 3. After Mariette 1872, pl. 30. Transcription after Scharff 1922, pl. 15**

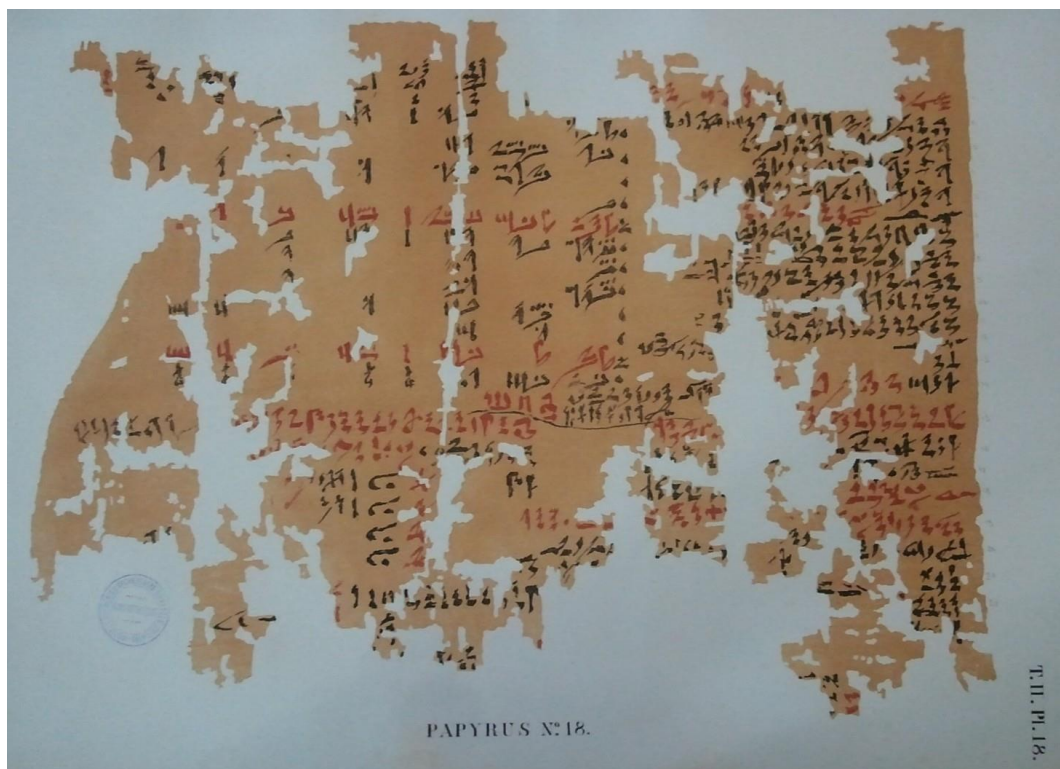


Fig. 19 Papyrus Boulaq 18. Column 12. Balance sheet. After Mariette 1872, pl. 18

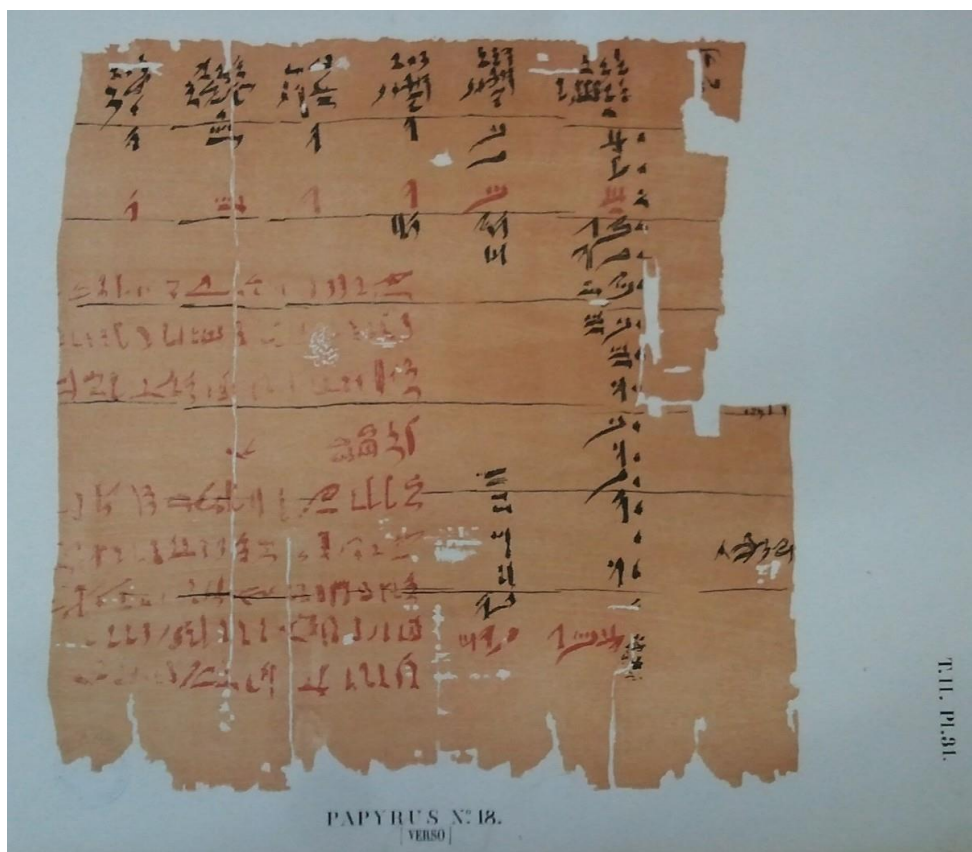


Fig. 20 Papyrus Boulaq 18 column 51. Black horizontal guidelines dividing the data. After Mariette 1872, pl. 31

4.2.1 Papyrus Louvre E. 3226¹²⁸

Papyrus E. 3226 is an account document belonging to the reign of Thutmose III. The papyrus counts 61 pages and deals with the accounting transactions and the delivery of grain and dates to two parallel teams of workmen made over seven years (years 28-35 of Thutmose III). The recall to the two “sides” of the gang of workmen in Deir el-Medina is clear.

The document actually consists of two large pieces (called fragment A and fragment B) measuring 2.21 and 2.23 metres respectively. They both belonged to the same roll which probably comes from Thebes.

In the accounts, there are two main elements: the **lists** of deliveries (analysis, classification and recording of data), and the **balances** of the accounts (the synthesis).

All four texts present a simple and homogeneous appearance and the transactions recorded follow a clear chronological order. Each page contains a limited number of lines

¹²⁸ For an overview of the document see Megally 1971a-b and Megally 1977a-b.

and the space is never overloaded. This clarity facilitates verifying the accounts and reading them easily. The accounts are both concise and complete.

Normally, an account is started on a new page and usually has the following characteristics: the full date with the year in black and the month and the day in red; the opening formula (*rdyt hr-s3 ḥsb* and *šsp hr-s3 ḥsb*= “what has been given after the account” and “what has been received after account”); the statement of the nature of the delivery (grain or dates); the units of measure.

The balances of the accounts, which follow the transactions, provide a summary of all the accounts of the said period, and give the precise results. The balances are generally started on a new page detached from the body of the accounts for the sake of clarity.

Megally hypothesizes (1977b, Conclusions) that to develop this set of accounts, the accounting person probably had to use other documents: brief accounting documents (e.g. ostraca) on which he noted one or more transactions; some sort of journal where all daily transactions were recorded. From these documents, he could establish the accounts included in this papyrus. Indeed, if we look at the layout of the document, very neat and clear, we can imagine it was copied from a previous draft, even if mistakes and corrections are still present in the text.

Below, some examples of the accounts:

- Recto VII: account of date suppliers from the year 29 until year 31.

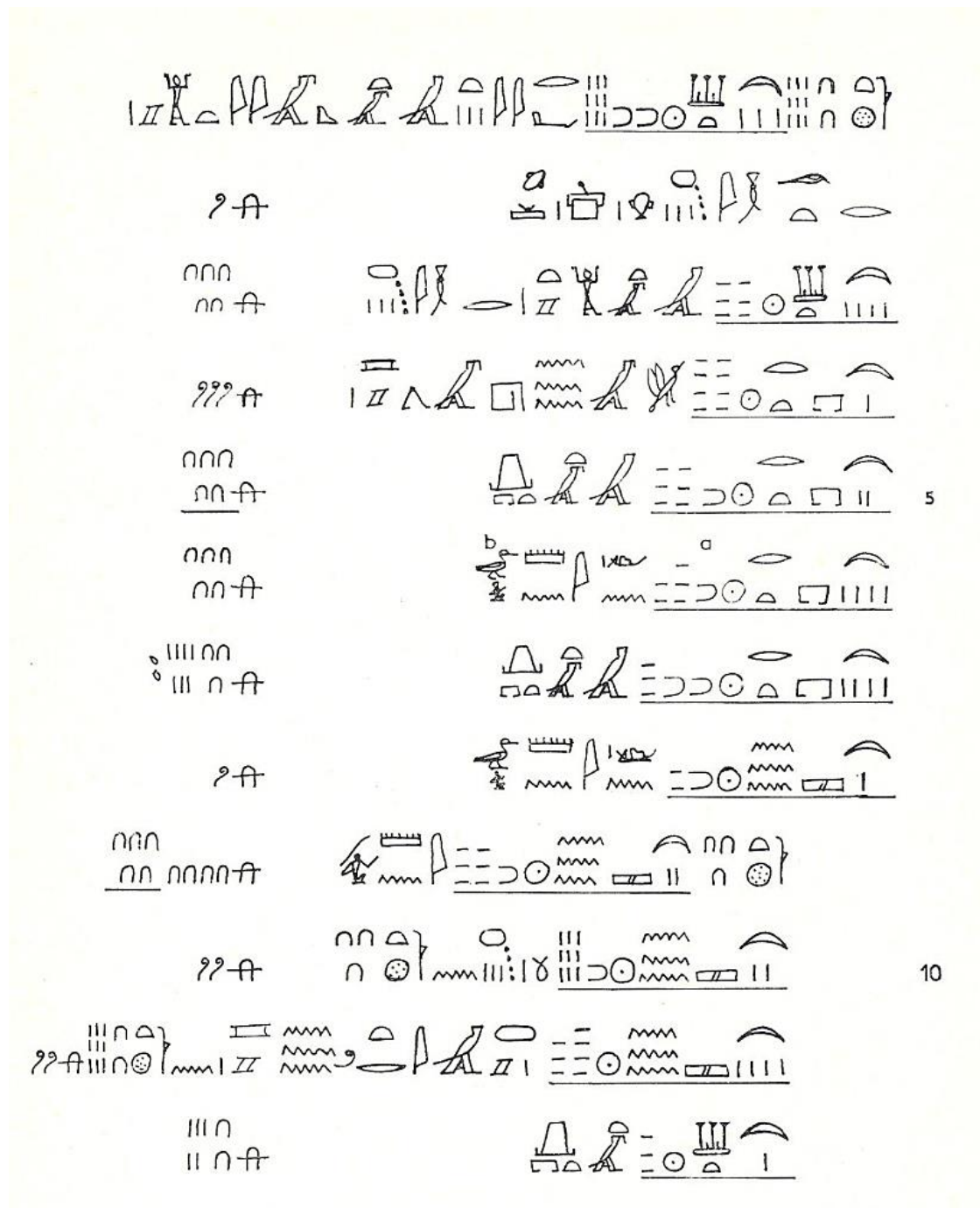


Fig. 21 Papyrus Louvre E. 3226. Frag. A recto IV. After Megally 1971b, pl. IV

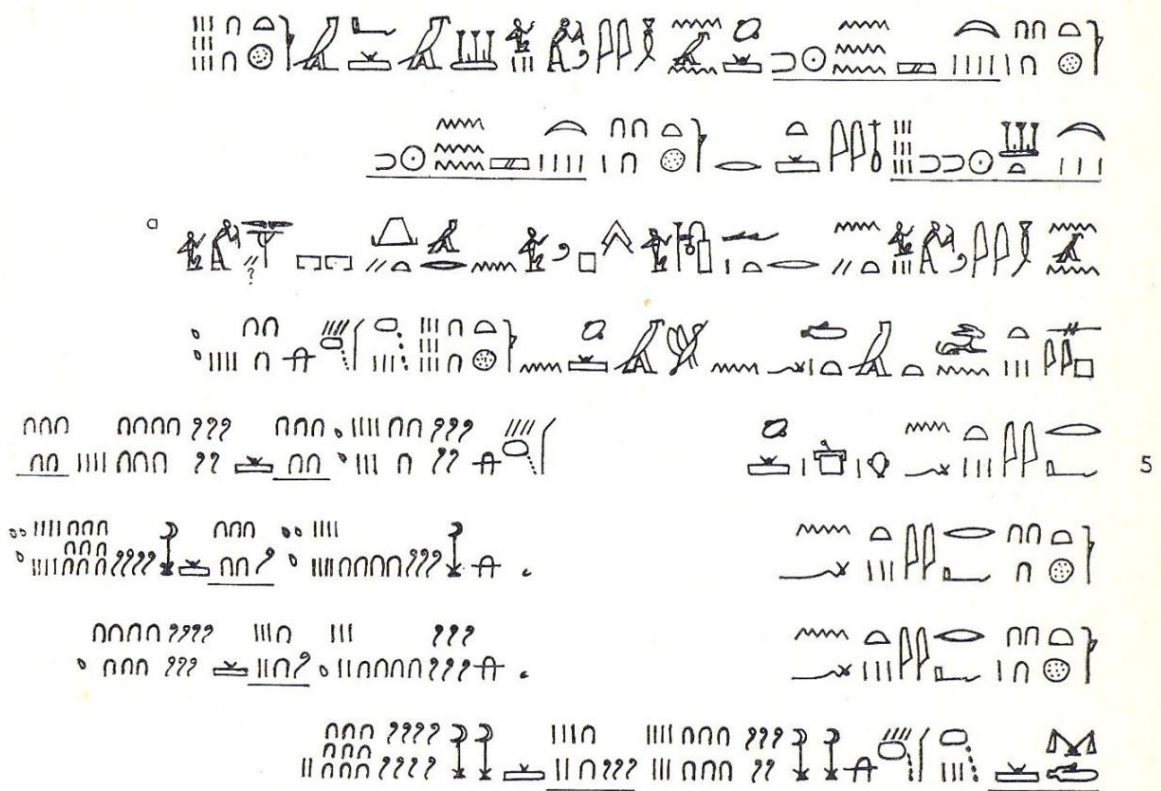


Fig. 22 Papyrus Louvre E. 3226. Frag. A recto VII. After Megally 1971b, pl. VII

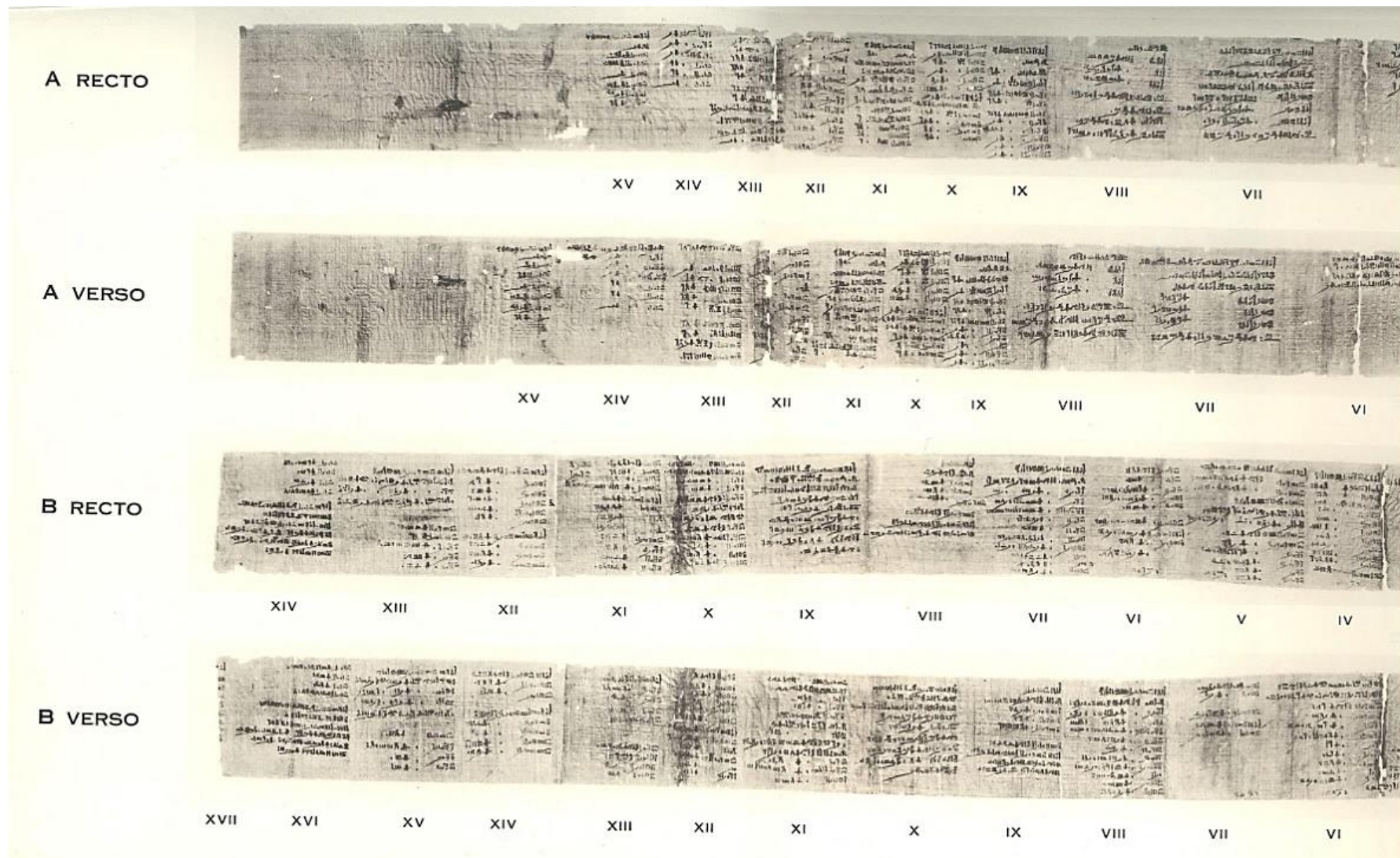


Fig. 23 Papyrus Louvre E. 3226. General plan, left part of Megally's plate. After Megally 1971b, pl. LXIIa

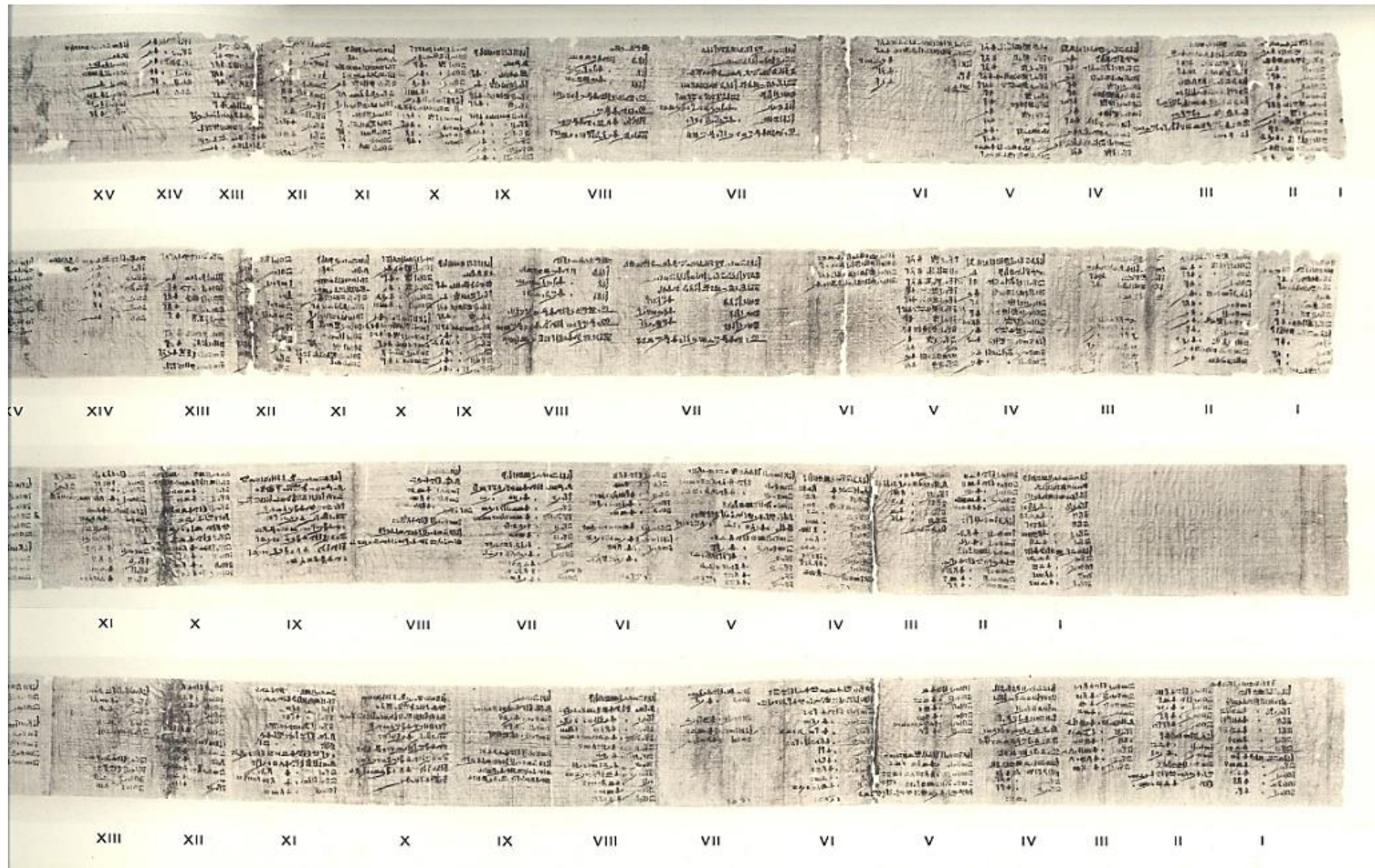


Fig. 24 Papyrus Louvre E. 3226. General plan, right part of Megally's plate. After Megally 1971b, pl. LXIb

4.2.m The Annals of Thutmose III¹²⁹

These records mainly derive from entries in a day-book kept during the campaigns and from a leather role preserved within the temple of Amun¹³⁰. The name of these texts is in fact poorly chosen, because they do not represent annals in the strict sense as “yearly records of memorable events”¹³¹. Rather, they are almost all summaries of annual military campaigns to Syria-Palestine during some twenty regnal years of this monarch. These summaries only contain the main goal of the campaign and the most important results in terms of victories and booty. Yet, the record of the first campaign is an exception because this is introduced by a brief war diary, beginning with the starting date: “Year 22, month IV of Peret, day 25. His Majesty crossed the (border) fortress of Tjaru on the first campaign of victory, to overthrow that vile enemy and to extend the boundaries of Egypt in accordance with the command of his father Amen-Re” (Urk. IV, 647). Then follow dated notes recording on year 23, month I of Shemu, day 3 the coronation day spent in Gaza, day 5 departure from Gaza, day 16 war council in *Ṭḥm*, day 19 reaching the city of Aruna, and finally day 21 the battle of Megiddo. After this short series of dated events follow lists of booty.

The texts of the Annals are located behind the Sixth Pylon on the inside walls of the chamber housing the “holy of holies” and known as the “Annals room” at the great Karnak Temple and the room measures 25 metres in length and 12 metres wide. The style is clear and succinct, in third-person narration; the main source of information for the Annals were military field reports (*hrwy t nt mšꜥ*) that were systematically kept from day-to-day.

General structure of the annals:

- An opening section is common to all the year sections in the form: “Lo, his majesty was in X upon his Y campaign of *nḥtw*”. Where X is a foreign land and Y the number of the campaign.
- The day-book summaries.
- The list for the complete year.

¹²⁹ See Grapow 1949, Spalinger 1977 and Redford 2003.

¹³⁰ Allusion within the Annals (Col. 94) refers to this original document.

¹³¹ See also Grapow 1949, 7: “Diese von uns “Annalen” genannten Texte sind eben offenbar im ägyptischen Sinne keine “Annalen”, keine *gnw.t*: die Nichtanwendung dieser Bezeichnung wird schon ihren guten Grund haben”.



Fig. 25 Thutmose III Annals, cols. 1-13, the beginning of the first campaign. After Redford 2003, fig. 1

Somewhat similar to the annals of Thutmose III is an embedded annalistic text on two stelae of his successor Amenhotep II¹³². One stela was found in Memphis and the other in Karnak. The text contains the record of the first and second campaigns of this king in Syria¹³³. The main attention is focussed on the personal exploits of the Pharaoh himself, as in the later campaign records of Sethi I, Ramesses II and Ramesses III (Libyan Wars) which have much in common with earlier Annals.

¹³² See Urk. IV, 1302.1–5 and 1310.10–16.

¹³³ Van Seters 1997, 150-151

4.2.n The Papyri Brooklyn 35.1453 A and B

The papyri were acquired in Egypt in the late 19th century by Charles E. Wilbour and given to the Brooklyn Museum in 1935 by his daughter. Their provenance is unfortunately unknown. They can be dated to the late 18th Dynasty, or, according to Condon, to the Amarna period, in view of the personal names composed with the element Aten¹³⁴. Janssen prefers a date in the early 19th Dynasty¹³⁵.

The text of fragment A contains a kind of ship's log or day-book with dated entries, names of ports and lists of women, with their parents and the indication of their origin, followed by specific quantities of products (mainly garments and honey). According to Condon the text may record the distribution of payments by a temple to temple-workers, in the form of rations¹³⁶. Janssen thinks that the text concerns the journey of a ship along the river, travelling from port to port collecting goods from retail dealers¹³⁷. The lay-out of the document is arranged in horizontal lines without a grid or dividing lines.

The use of red ink is reduced and has a more effective role in the distinction of accounting transactions. Red ink is indeed used to indicate "delivery", dates and numbers when they are used to indicate the *hin* as a measure of honey. The text of fragment B only preserves a date where the delivery and income of certain quantities of products are recorded. Red ink is here used only for the date, "arrival", "deficit" and never for the quantities.

¹³⁴ Condon 1984, 57.

¹³⁵ For a wider discussion about the disagreement on the contents and dating of the documents, see Janssen 1985 and Condon 1986.

¹³⁶ Condon 1984, 58.

¹³⁷ Janssen 1985.

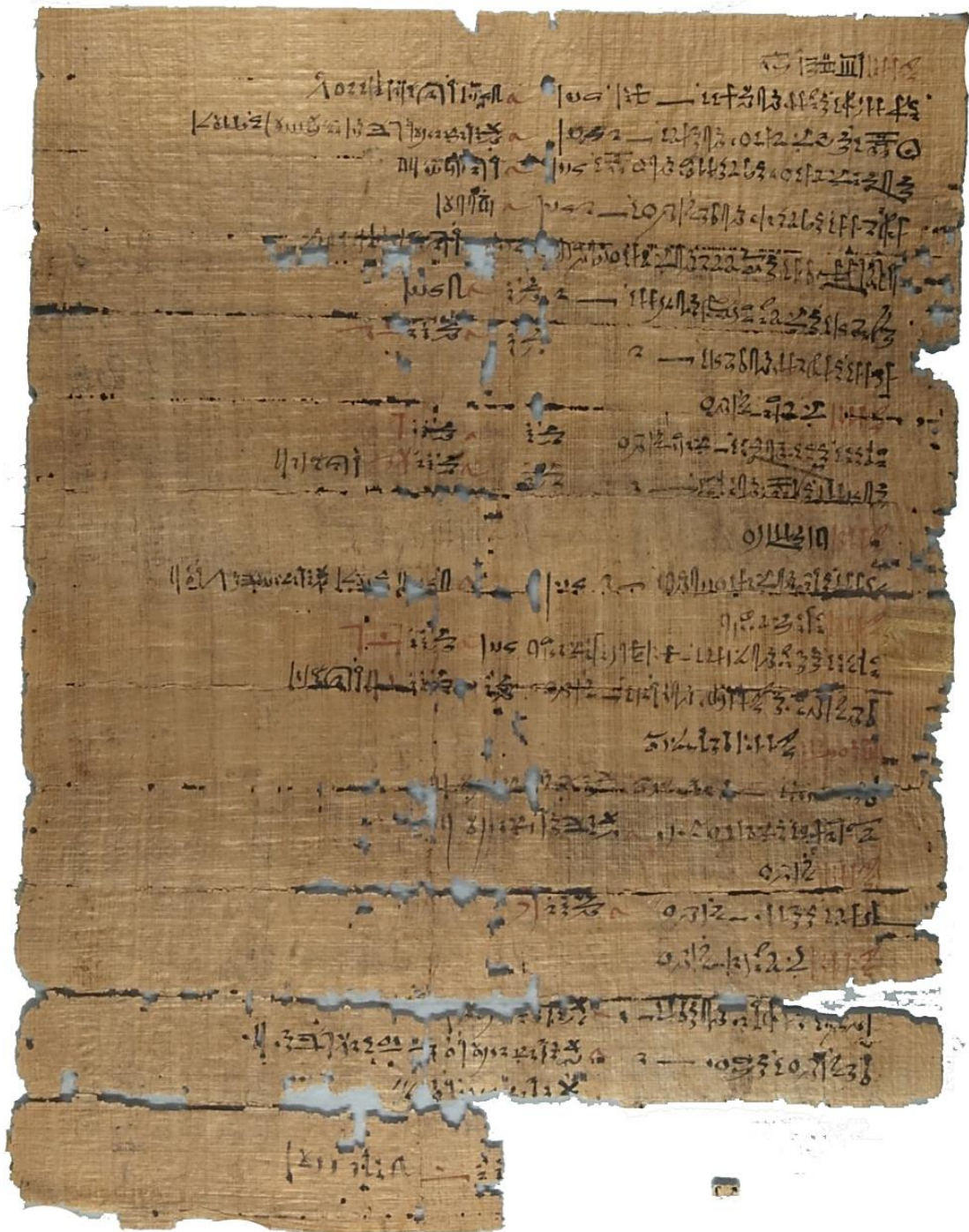


Fig. 26 Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1453 A recto, after

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/45059/Fragment>

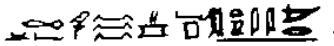
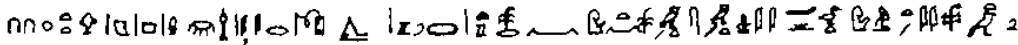
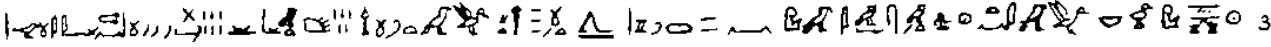
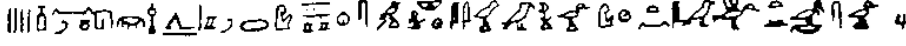
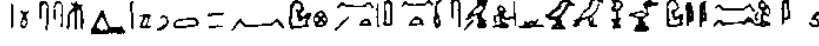
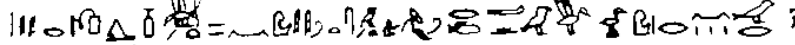
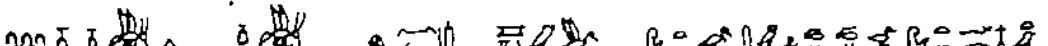
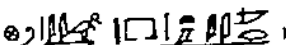
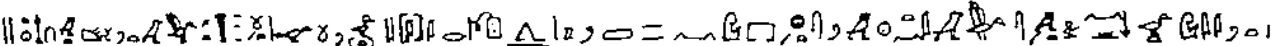
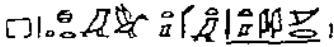
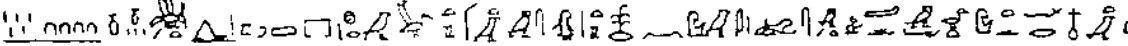
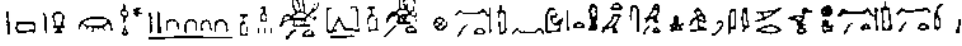
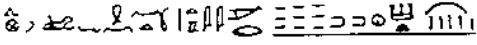
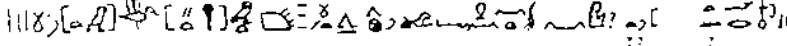
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Fig. 27 Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1453 A recto, after Condon 1984, 60-61

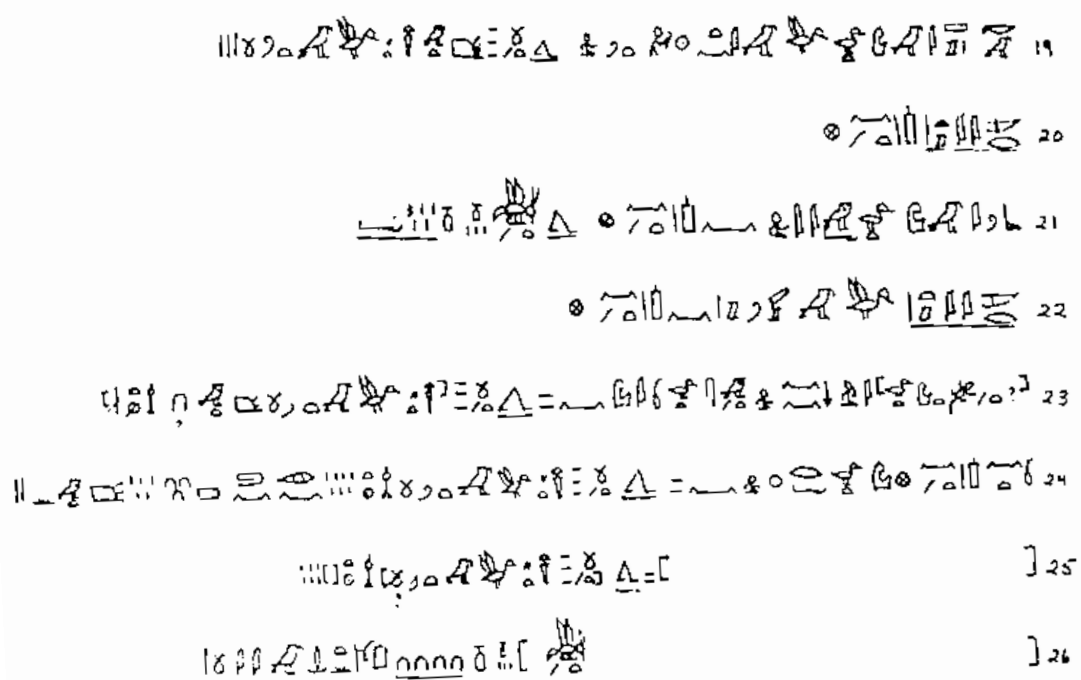


Fig. 28 Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1453 A recto, after Condon 1984, 62

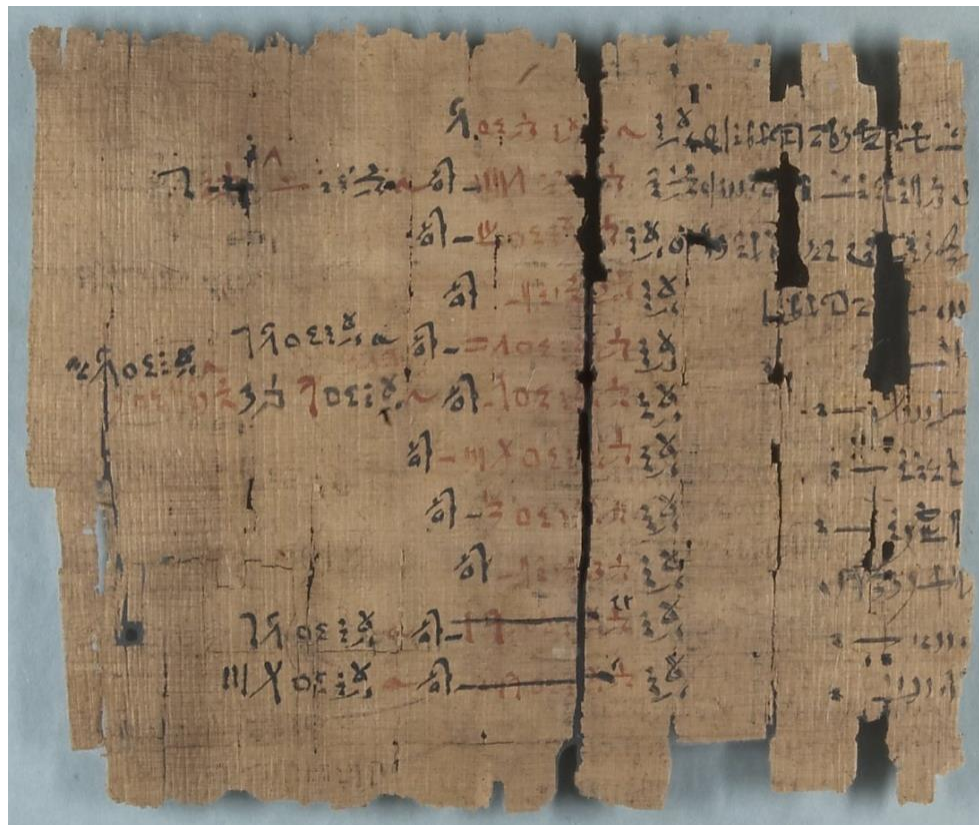


Fig. 29 Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1453 B recto, after

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/45059/Fragment>

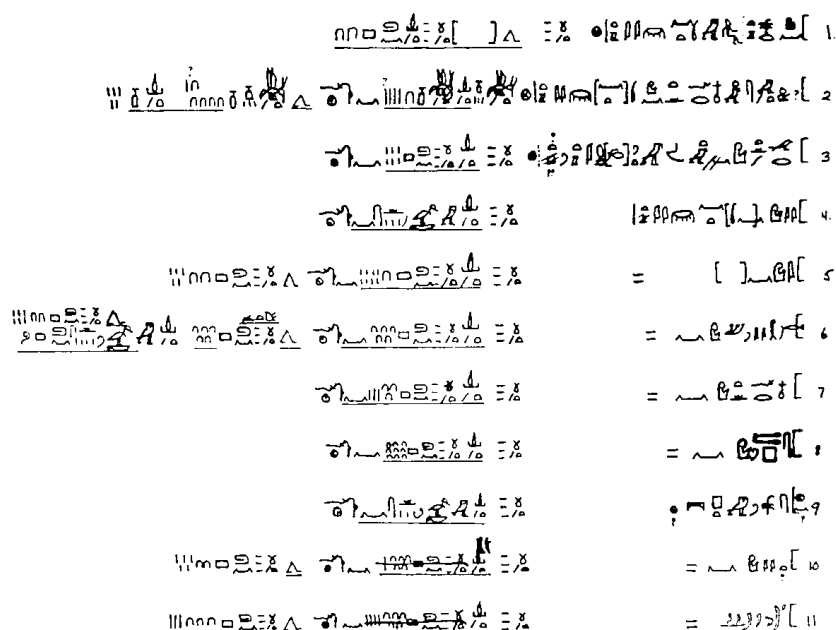


Fig. 30 Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1453 B recto, after Condon 1984, 77

4.2.o The Rollin Papyri (accounts of Sethi I)¹³⁸

The Rollin papyri are kept in the Collection des Monuments égyptiens of the National Library in Paris. They contain accounts of wood (papyrus Rollin 1882 and 1883), grain, flour and bread provided for the supply of one of the residences of Sethi I. The Rollin Papyri are numbered from 1882 to 1889 and they all contain administrative matters, except numbers 1887 and 1888, which contain a hymn and a legal document, respectively.

From the following illustrations, we can see that the layout of the documents is simplified: abandoning the use of grids and only notation in horizontal lines makes reading the pages easier. The use of red ink is not excessive and has a more effective role in the distinction of accounting transactions. The accounts are no longer bristled with titles, subtitles and tracks marked in red.

- **Papyrus Rollin 1884** (Pleyte 1868 Pl. V-IX) year 2 of Sethi I: the text concerns an account of people with the title “baker”. The lists of accounts begin with the

¹³⁸ See Chabas 1869, Eisenlohr 1897, Pleyte 1868 and Spiegelberg 1896.

name of the baker and the quantity of flour delivered and, perhaps, the bread produced(?).

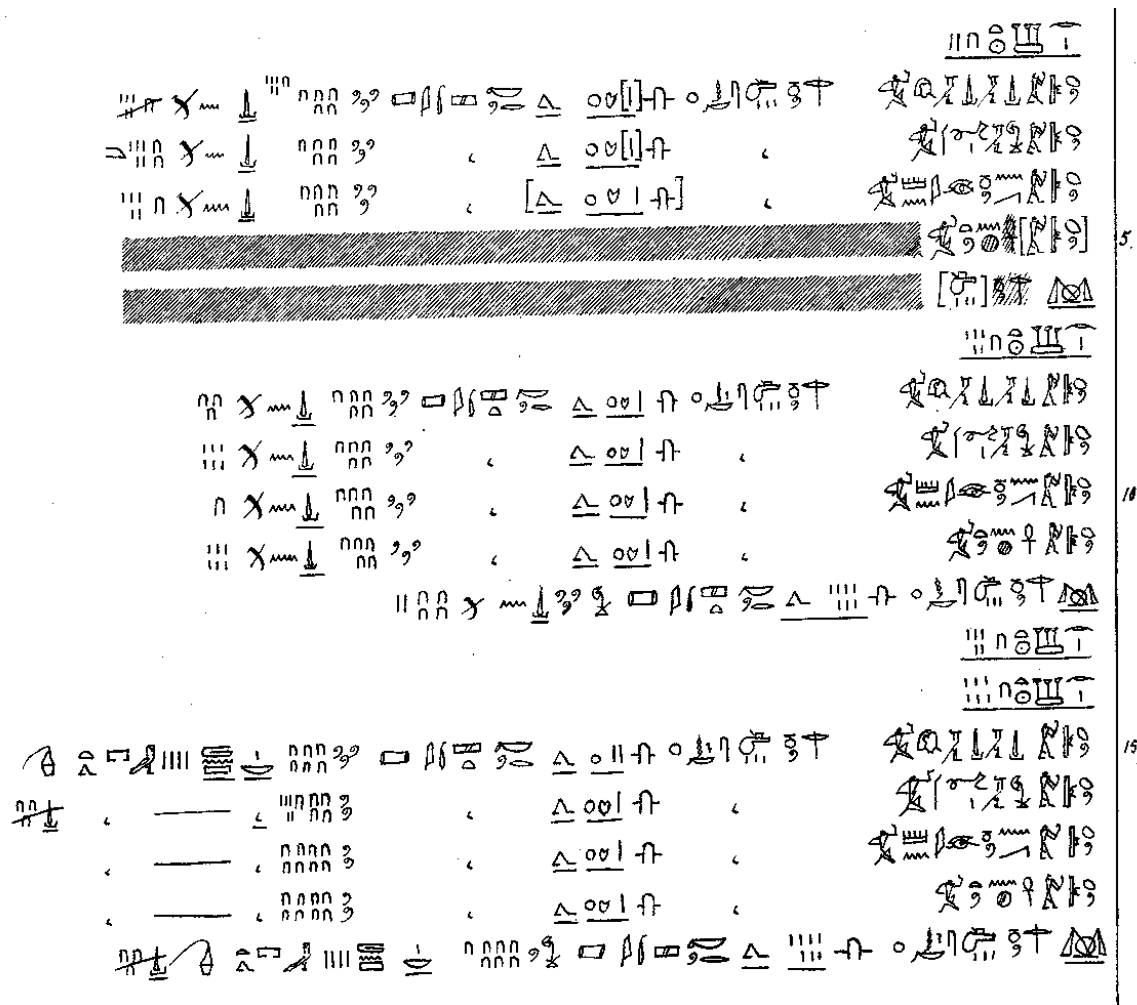


Fig. 31 Papyrus Rollin 1884. After Spiegelberg 1896, pl. VIIa, corresponding to Pleyte 1868 Pl. VII

- **Papyrus Rollin 1885** (Pleyte 1868 Pl. X-XIV) year 2 of Sethi I: the document is composed of two sheets, 1885A and 1885B. The first contains three columns of which the first notes the number of *kršt* loaves received in the storage area by different scribes on several dates. We find here the indication of the month and the day and then “received in the magazine of the palace from the scribe X” and the quantity of loaves stored. Then follows the account of receipt from the bakers, first (Pl. XII) of large loaves, then of large (XIII, 3) and small loaves (XIII, 4-23; X) in the storage area of the royal court.
- **Papyrus Rollin 1886** (not in Pleyte 1868) year 3 of Sethi I: a small fragment which does not contain baking accounts but the account of amounts of poultry supplied to the court of Sethi I by the scribe Pai.

- **Papyrus 1889** (Pleyte 1868 Pl. XVII-XX) year 2 of Sethi I: the text contains dated accounts of grain and flour and the distribution of flour to the bakers.

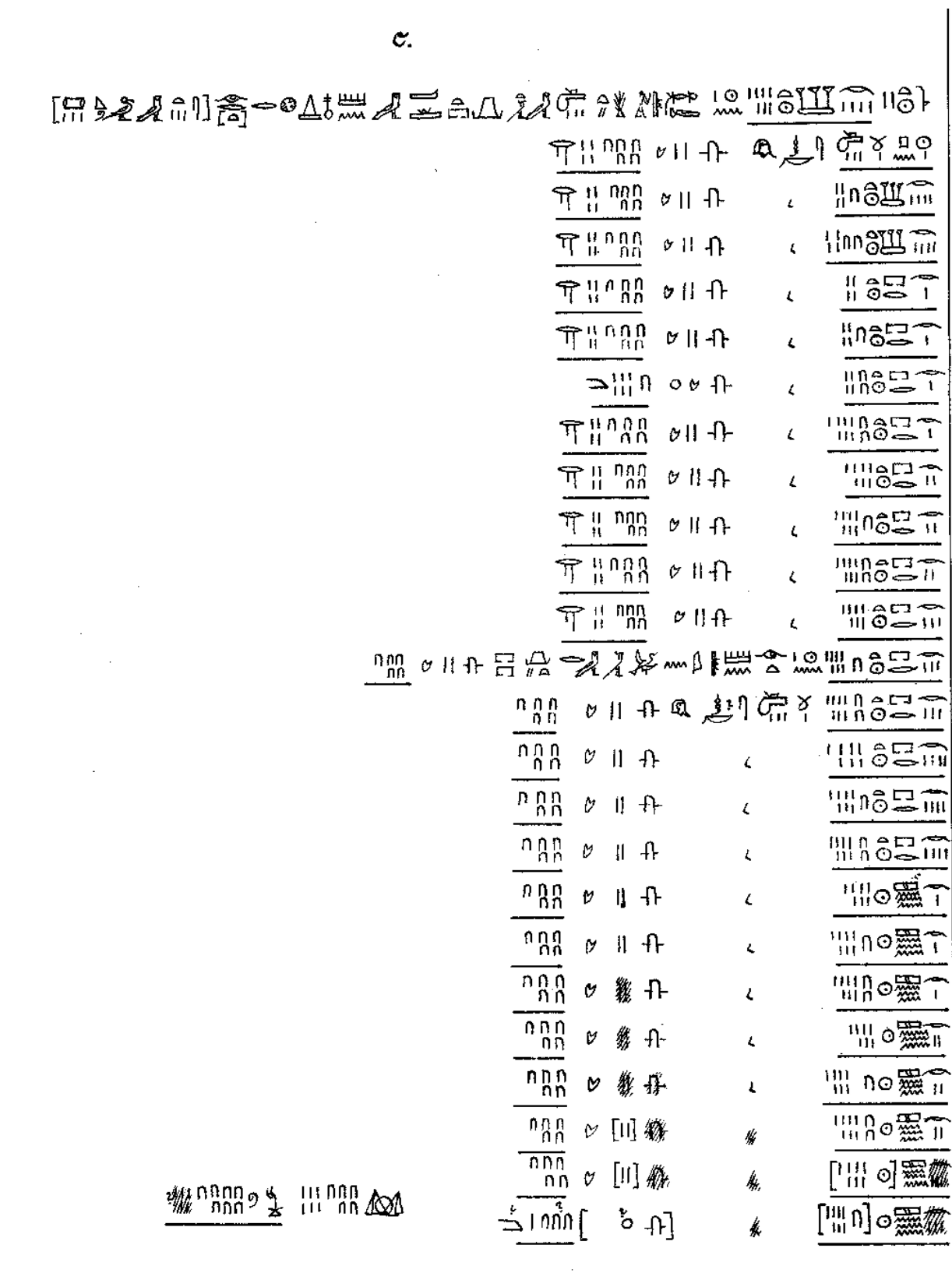


Fig. 32 Papyrus 1889. After Spiegelberg 1896, Pl. IVb, corresponding to Pleyte 1868 Pl. XVII-XX

4.2.p The Ship's log of Leiden I 350 verso and Papyrus Turin 2008+2016¹³⁹

Two papyri from the Ramesside Period contain daily records on the journey of a ship.

PAPYRUS LEIDEN I 350 VERSO

Papyrus Leiden I 350 is part of the large collection of Giovanni Anastasi acquired in 1829 for the National Museum of Antiquities. The *recto* of the papyrus contains a Hymn to Amun. The *verso*, however, was used by a scribe to make daily notes about the events aboard a ship: a ship's log.

The document measures 89x38 cm and the text is arranged over six rather small columns. It is dated to year 52 of Ramesses II and probably comes from Memphis. The writing is cursive and very difficult to read because of the many ligatures (combinations of signs). According to Janssen 1961, 4-5 *"[The scribe] intended to make a copy in uncial script when the journey was finished, and these were only his working notes, and if so this would explain why he used the verso of a papyrus with a religious text and once even wrote in between the lines of it (col. V, 21)"*.

The text concerns the daily rations of food distributed to the crew of the ship, from II *prt*, day 25, to III *prt*, day 4.

¹³⁹ See Janssen 1961.

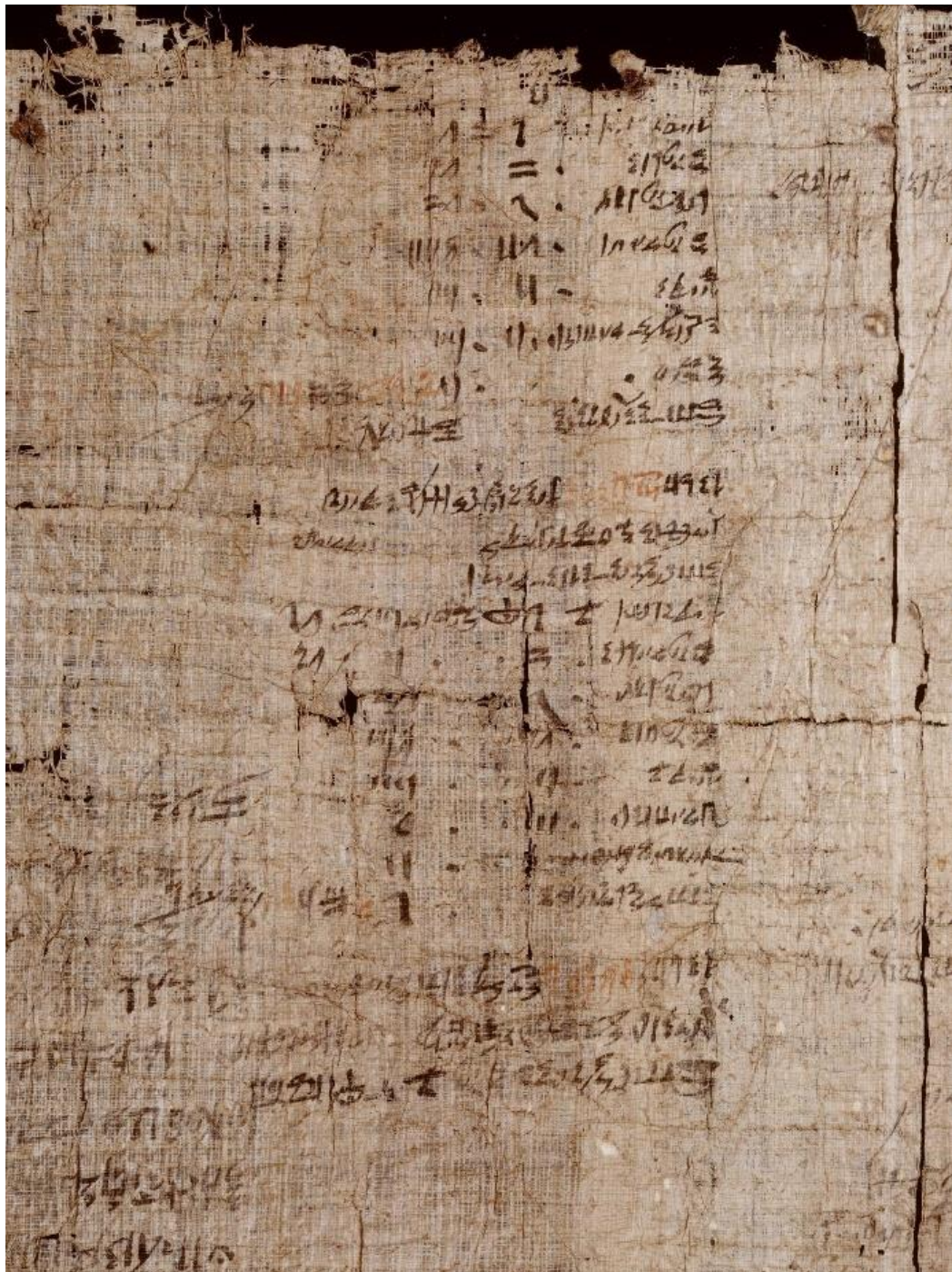


Fig. 33 Papyrus Leiden I 350 verso, detail of col V. After www.rmo.nl/collectie/

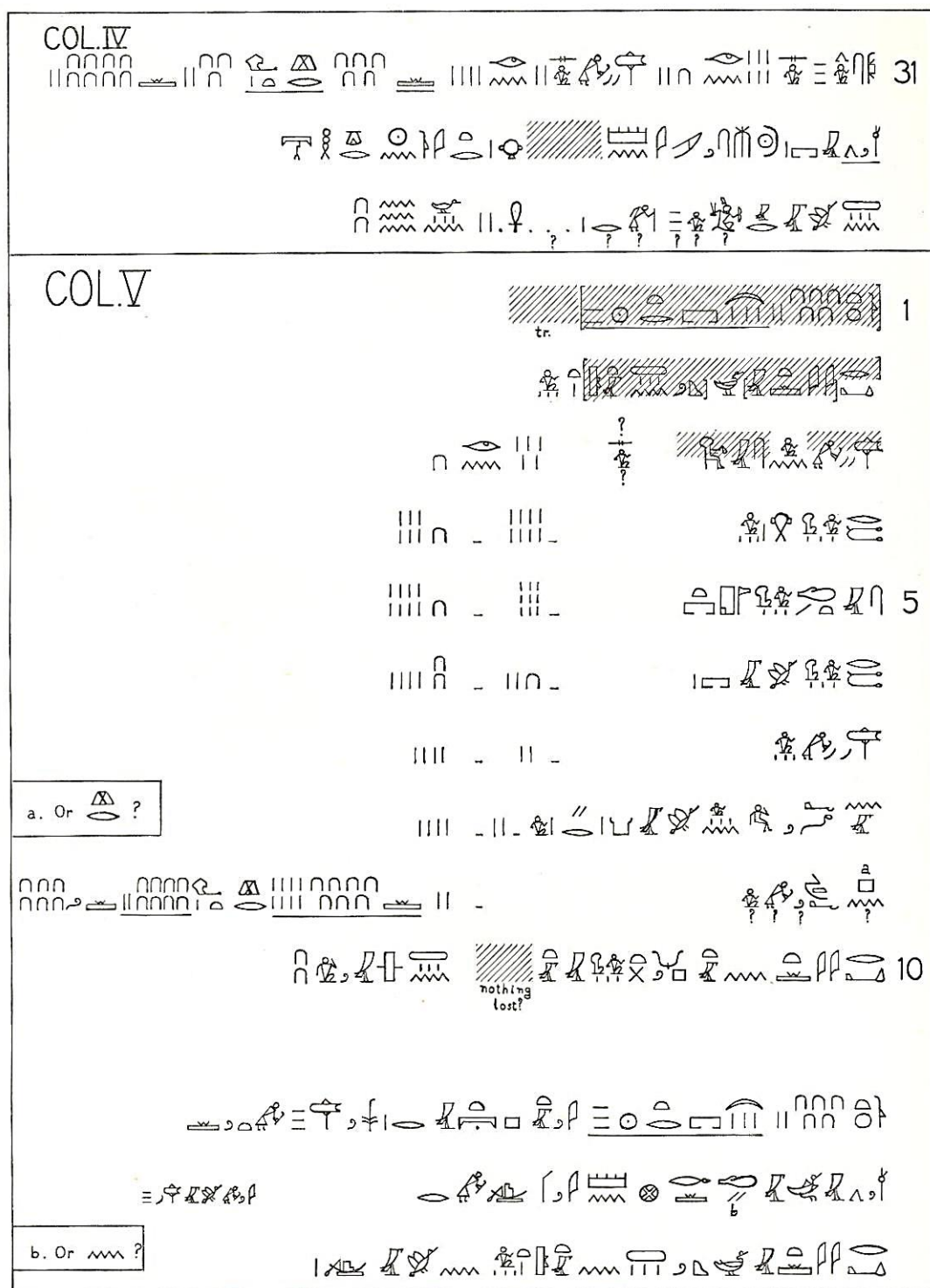


Fig. 34 Papyrus Leiden I 350 verso, detail. After Janssen 1961

Following each date first details about the wind and the movement of the ship are mentioned. The members of the crew are always listed in four categories: the people of the regiment, the personnel of the temple, the sailors, and the people of the house (of prince Ramesse). Red ink is used in the dates, in the headings of the *inw*-entries and in the calculations of the daily rations. Different from the rations of the artisans in Deir el-

Medina, the crew of this ship mainly receives a daily bread ration (but it could also be that other deliveries were noted on other documents that have not yet been discovered or that haven't been preserved, or that other goods were delivered before the departure to each crew member).

PAPYRUS TURIN 2008+2016

The exact provenance of this papyrus is unknown. It was bought, together with other papyri from the collection of Drovetti, in 1824 by the king of Sardinia for the Museum in Turin.

Both on the *recto* and the *verso*, three columns remain. Originally the roll was longer than it is now; the measurements of the papyrus in its present conditions are 45x38 cm. *Recto* and *verso* are written by the same hand. The writing has a very cursive character. Also here, red ink is always used to indicate month and day and sometimes for the words *hrw n*, *h3w*, and *mn*. The dating of the text is still under discussion. The text concerns the same subject as Papyrus Leiden I, 350: transport of goods and the daily rations of food to the crew of the ship.

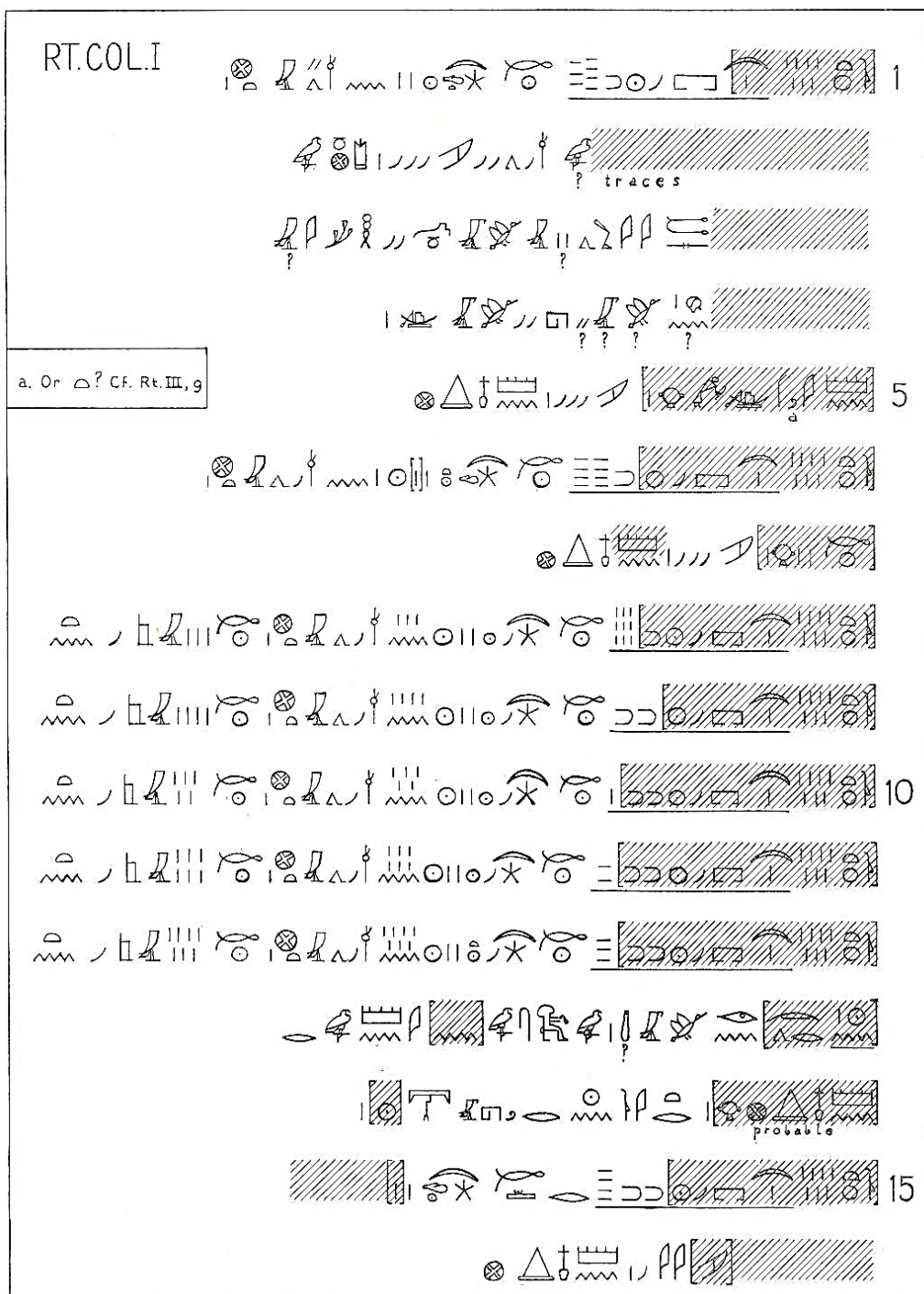


Fig. 35 Papyrus Turin 2008+2016 recto, details. After Janssen 1961

The text on the *recto* is a straightforward ship's log, noting the daily progress of the boat since its departure. Seeing that the *verso*, which is clearly by the same hand as the *recto*, begins with a list of the "freight which is in the boat of the high priest of Amun", it would seem a fairly safe assumption that we are dealing with the same ship's log. The document is dated to year 7 of an unknown king (it was probably written in the title, now lost). The ship was on a voyage, which, in part at least, had a commercial goal.

Both texts record the transport of different kinds of goods. Papyrus Turin 2008+2016 contains a list of the cargo of the ship (verso col. I), which shows that this consisted of a great variety of foodstuffs and materials, while for papyrus Leiden I 350 verso, such a list is not available, even if from the *inw*-entries we may conclude that the cargo of the ship was similar. The “Turin ship” was concerned with the trading of garments, the “Leiden ship” with the collection and distribution of food.

4.2.g Tomb construction journal of Saggara¹⁴⁰

Papyri JE 52002, JE 52003, JE 52004 and MMA 3569 + Vienna 3934/3937 + 9352 concern the details of a tomb construction project at Saqqara, a report drawn up by the scribe Buqentef, responsible for the construction of the funeral monument for a high functionary in the years 15-16 of Ramesses III, May. The papyri that are now in Cairo (JE 52002-3-4) were found in 1927 by Cecile Firth in one of the smaller rooms in the mastaba of the 6th Dynasty vizier Ni'ankhba, along the north side of the Unas causeway at Saqqara, while for the other two, now in Vienna and New York, the provenance is unknown.

The papyri preserve the daily notes of the construction project, recording everything from Buqentef's initial arrival at Memphis and his delivery of the necessary documents and permits, to his assembly of a crew of workers, and then the gradual progress of the building work. The scribe writes these daily notes starting with year 15, IV month of *pr.t* day 6 and they cover about eight months. He introduces the notes with a heading: *“Document [r-^c-sš.w] of all the commissioned works which are to be executed on the construction site of the Place of Eternity (i.e. the tomb) of the royal scribe and general May, which is being made to the west of Memphis by the workmen under the authority of the scribe Buqentef”* (line 4 of JE 52002, recto, see fig. below).

¹⁴⁰ See: KRI VII, 263: 4-273: 7; Posener-Kriéger 1981, 47-58; Posener-Kriéger 1996, 655-664; Van Dijk 1993, 24-25; Demarée 2008, 7-10; Hagen 2016, 155-181.

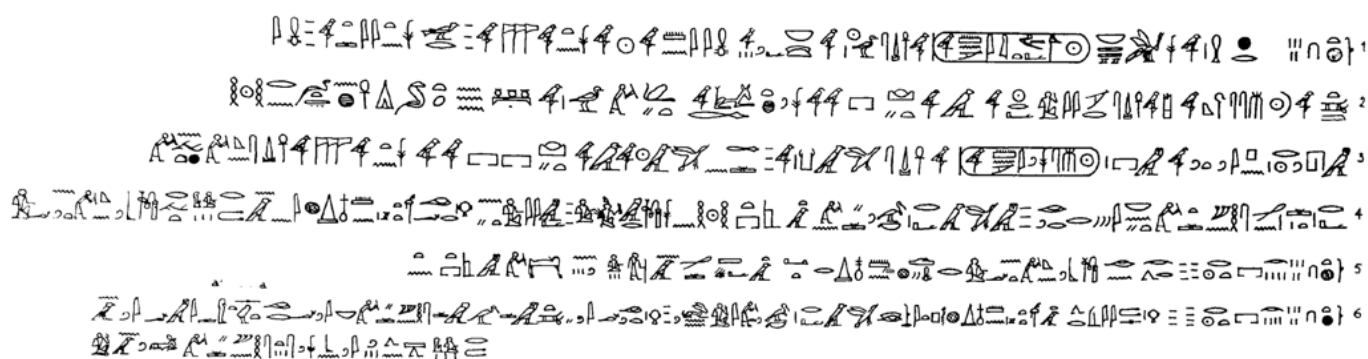


Fig. 36 Part of papyrus JE 52002, recto. After Posener-Kriéger 1981, 48

4.3 Similarities and differences

The first and main research question of this study is to **determine whether the notes of the so-called *journals* would be considered as such according to the ancient Egyptian point of view**, i.e., if the concept of a Necropolis journal existed. To this end, the concept of journal in a broader Egyptian perspective has therefore been researched. Now, this material will be examined in order to **identify common features and differences between these records and the so-called Necropolis journal** and to **draw conclusions in the form of criteria to identify a Necropolis journal**.

A first observation we can make is that, amongst the documents discussed in this chapter, we can distinguish three main types:

- **Annals**

In the annals, engraved on stone, the regnal years of each ruler are listed, plus important events occurred during these reigns, like the height of the Nile flood, festivals, etc. This information is formatted as a chronological **table** in which each year, designated by a separate compartment, begins on New Year's Day, the first day of the first month of the inundation (Palermo Stone and South Saqqara Stone). Mostly they use the typical formula *nswt-bity* + cartouche + *jr.n=f m mnw=f n* and the typical narrative infinitive. With the annals of Amenemhat II, the chronological arrangement of the events is presented in **columns**, with the upper boundary probably forming a horizontal line with the name of the ruler. The Annals of Thutmose III, also in **columns**, include an exception, because the records of the first

campaign are introduced by a brief war diary with a short series of dated events in years 22 and 23.

- **Account journals**

Account journals, all written on papyrus, are those documents which usually record monthly or daily deliveries, working lists, inventories, registers of income and expenses, list of objects or products, etc. They are either organized in **grids** with a strong geometric appearance (some of the documents of Wadi el-Jarf papyri, Gebelein Papyri, Abusir Papyri), or arranged in tabular form with **horizontal ruled lines** (Reisner Papyri, Illahun archives, Papyrus Boulaq 18, Papyrus Louvre E. 3226, Rollin Papyri).

- **Event journals**

Event journals, also only written on papyrus, record series of daily activities which can be very different, like a ships' log (Wadi el-Jarf papyri ships' log, Papyri Brooklyn 35.1453 A and B, Leiden I 350 verso and Papyrus Turin 2008+2016), a border journal (Semna dispatches), a diary of the scribe of the revenue department (Middle Kingdom Tax Assessor's Day-book), or a tomb construction journal (Papyri JE 52002, JE 52003, JE 52004 and MMA 3569 + Vienna 3934/3937+ 9352). The arrangement of the data is in **horizontal** lines, except for the ship's log of Wadi el-Jarf (the oldest document) which is in **columns**: below a short horizontal line indicating each day, two vertical columns contain the progress report about the activity of the crew on that specific day.

The distinction between account journals and event journals must be stressed, since this aspect is of primary importance in order to understand our Deir el-Medina texts. Account journals are all those day-to-day notes that record mainly **lists** (of food deliveries, tools, income and expenditure), while event journals register the **activities**, the events happening. **Both** record these notes daily, in a mostly respected **chronological order**, and both are journals, nonetheless they describe different aspects.

The main point in our working definition of *journal* (see Introduction) is that a Necropolis journal should present a series of day-to-day entries recording events. we will therefore concentrate on event journals. Amongst the selected material the texts more similar to Deir el-Medina journal are those recording activities, the event

journals (Wadi el-Jarf papyri¹⁴¹ and other ship's logs, the Middle Kingdom Tax Assessor's Day-book, and the tomb construction journal of Saqqara), and it is therefore here that we have to look more closely for the features that will allow us to formulate precise criteria.

A further feature observed, which might not be immediately relevant to the notion of 'journal', is the gradual change in time in the format of the recording technique of the selected material of this chapter, from the presence of grids to the reduction to guidelines and finally their absence. Although this is a feature observed in the documents earlier than the Necropolis journal of Deir el-Medina, it deserves attention. This background might be the base for the brief and concise style and the use of recurrent formulas found in the Deir el-Medina journals, and it is therefore useful to summarize here its development.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECORDING TECHNIQUES IN ANCIENT EGYPT:

From the overview of documents such as annals and day-books presented, it is clear that during the **Old Kingdom**, data were mostly included in **grids composed of horizontal and vertical lines**, and written in red or black ink. This documentation is dominated by an analytical attitude and by a purely geometric appearance resembling the offering lists as for example in the Palermo Stone, where the text formatted as a table shows how this analytical mindset was present since the beginning of Egyptian history, and in the Abusir Papyri and the Gebelein Papyrus III recto, where the accounts have been arranged within a grid. The accounts of the Wadi el-Jarf papyri are also organized in grids, whereas the ships' log is recorded in columns, with the indication of the day at the top of the page horizontally, and below it two columns registering the events. In the following periods, in the administrative texts written on papyrus we can observe a gradual change in the pattern, an evolution from a layout in columns to one in horizontal lines. Religious texts, literary texts and letters show a different development. Most of the first category (on papyrus, wood or linen, like Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead, Amduat, etcetera) continue to be written in the old pattern, with headings in horizontal lines and text in columns below. Literary texts and letters were also written in vertical lines until the end of the Middle Kingdom.

The layout of texts on stone follows instead a different pattern. Early texts like the Pyramid Texts are arranged in columns, as also the royal decrees (texts containing royal

¹⁴¹ For the category of documents containing the ships' log that records the progress report corresponding to the activity of the crew on that specific day.

commands, *wd-nswt*¹⁴², written with an introductory horizontal line and a series of vertical columns below this). In temple texts and many other texts on stone this pattern is preserved until the very end of the Egyptian history¹⁴³.

Another typical feature observed in the Old Kingdom documents presented, is that **red ink was used extensively** in texts written on papyri. In the various monthly tables, a single or double red line separates the spaces in which the headings of the tables were entered from the spaces allotted to the days of the month. However, the use of red ink is not restricted to the lines of the grids. It is also used in the headings of duty tables, and in the monthly accounts, when specifying the origin or quality of the deliveries. In the inventories, the material from which objects are made may be written in red and also the records of the objects which have been damaged. In the accounts, numerals are written in both red and black. The sums and the total numbers of objects of one kind in the inventories are generally written in red. Instead of clarifying things, this excessive use of red ink results in a rather confusing document (to the modern reader at least).

Throughout the **Middle Kingdom**, this system remained in use, although slightly different: **the grid is gradually reduced** even if labels and sum lines still intersect on a rather large page and **the use of red ink is reduced**. P. Reisner I and III, e.g. include sections arranged in tabular form with the lines closely spaced. Horizontally, ruled lines have been drawn at regular intervals so that usually five lines of text are included in each ruled space. As an aid to the proper alignment of the columns, five vertical lines are also used. The year and its numeral are written in black with the month and day in red. The lines, horizontal and vertical, are used for the obvious purpose of aligning the figures in columns with their respective entries to the right. Also in the Illahun documents, the previous grid is reduced gradually and red ink is not used as much as in the previous period.

Some documents among the Ramesseum Papyri show accounts with ruled lines (e.g. P. Ram. XIII verso: a diary of an embalming process with ruled lines recording in vertical columns 77 consecutive days divided into seven-day periods) as also appear the Middle Kingdom Tax Assessor's Day-book and Papyrus Boulaq 18.

During the **New Kingdom**, the account documents are simplified. We see a gradual **abandonment of grids**, which facilitates reading of the pages. The scribe can now make the most of the surface format of the papyrus, avoiding the need to leave blank spaces and unused spaces within the grids. The **horizontal line** becomes

¹⁴² Vernus 1991, 239 and Vernus 2013.

¹⁴³ In a demotic text on ostrakon (O. Strasbourg D 283) with measures of the daily level of the Nile and dated to 221 BC, the text is arranged in columns organized below a horizontal line (Kaplony-Heckel 2010, 257-260).

standard and the **use of red ink is moderate**. The accounts are no longer bristling with titles, subtitles and tracks marked in red. All this leads to a simplified arrangement. The red ink has a more effective role in the distinction of accounting transactions; its usage is more limited but more effective. For example, in Papyrus Louvre E. 3226 all four texts present a simple and homogeneous appearance and the transactions recorded follow a clear chronological order. Each page contains a limited number of lines and the space is never overloaded. This clarity results in easy reading and verification. The accounts are both concise and complete and the resulting layout of the document is neat and clear. Also in Papyri Brooklyn 35.1453 A and B, even if the content it is still a matter of debate, the grids and the horizontal lines are abandoned, just as in the Rollin Papyri, where the absence of the grids and the use of horizontal lines facilitates reading and red ink is used more moderately.

Finally, in The Ship's logs of Leiden I 350 verso and Papyrus Turin 2008+2016 and the tomb construction journal of Saqqara, the daily notes are organized in horizontal lines and red ink is used only in the dates, the headings of the *inw*-entries and in the calculations of the daily rations.

PURPOSE AND FORMAT

After having outlined the development in time of the recording techniques, it is also interesting to investigate if documents that fulfill a similar purpose also follow a similar format. Does the content and the final use of the text determine its format? A first clear distinction we need to mark is between texts inscribed on durable materials (annals like Palermo and South Saqqara stone, the annals of Amenemhat II and those of Thutmose III) and those written on papyrus. The purpose of annals is indeed very different from other kinds of day-books: they record on stone, and narrate to people -probably as a royal propaganda more than as an objective historical record¹⁴⁴-, events which took place under a king's reign, and they are intended to be visible forever. With day-books written on papyrus, instead, we are in front of an administrative process of recording an ongoing project, an activity, where certain information has to be most probably retrievable later on.

Among the day-books written on papyrus listed in this chapter, we can identify four main types according to purpose:

¹⁴⁴ Eyre 1996, 416; Hoffmeier 1993, 291-299.

- 1- Texts accounting the activities of a team of workmen involved in a **construction project** of a temple, a tomb, etc. (papyri of Wadi el-Jarf, Gebelein papyri, Reisner papyri, tomb construction journal of Saqqara). We mostly find here a number of workdays, daily or monthly deliveries of food with amounts, expenditures and remainders. These records may have been prepared for a spending or fiscal department of the Pharaonic government to serve as a supporting document for the expenditure of rations.
- 2- Texts known as **ship's logs** (ships' log of Wadi el-Jarf, Papyri Brooklyn 35.1453 A and B, Ship's log of Leiden I 350 verso and Papyrus Turin 2008+2016), recording in chronological order daily movements of ships, the nature of their cargo, crew rations with deliveries and calculations. We know little about where they would have been kept or deposited, or to what extent they would have been consulted after the ships returned home. It seems reasonable to assume that in the case of ships belonging to institutions this would have happened, yet, "what processes of checking and accounting might take place at that stage, remains largely unknowable¹⁴⁵".
- 3- Texts related to the **daily affairs of the temple** or the **granaries** (Abusir Papyri, Illahun archives, Papyrus Louvre E. 3226), including duty rosters, lists of people involved, inventories, registers of income and expenses, records of inspections, a series of notes which were probably required by the central administration, in order to document the daily routine of a temple or a granary.
- 4- Texts dealing with the **expenses of the royal palace** (Papyrus Boulaq 18, Rollin Papyri), consisting mainly of accounts of income and expenditure, with totals and remainders, of the deliveries provided for the supply of the residences.

Observing the four groups here gathered and considering the summary given above on the development of the recording techniques, it is clear that the content and the final use of the text did not necessarily determine its format. We can indeed observe that the format or layout including tables, grids or horizontal guidelines, is only following a chronological development and it is not caused by a different purpose of the document. For example, the accounts found among the papyri of Wadi el-Jarf and those in the Reisner Papyri do not show the same format even if both fulfilled a very similar purpose,

¹⁴⁵ Hagen-Soliman 2018, 130.

the organisation of a work project. In the first, we have both accounts data inserted in a table and a ships' log, while for the second only guidelines are used. It seems therefore that the chronological development observable concerning the format most certainly applies to scribal tradition in general and does not follow the purpose of the texts.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, where the criteria for the selection of the Deir el-Medina Necropolis journals will be listed, the main features of all the analysed documents and the similarities between them and the so-called Necropolis journal will now be presented together in a table for a general summary.

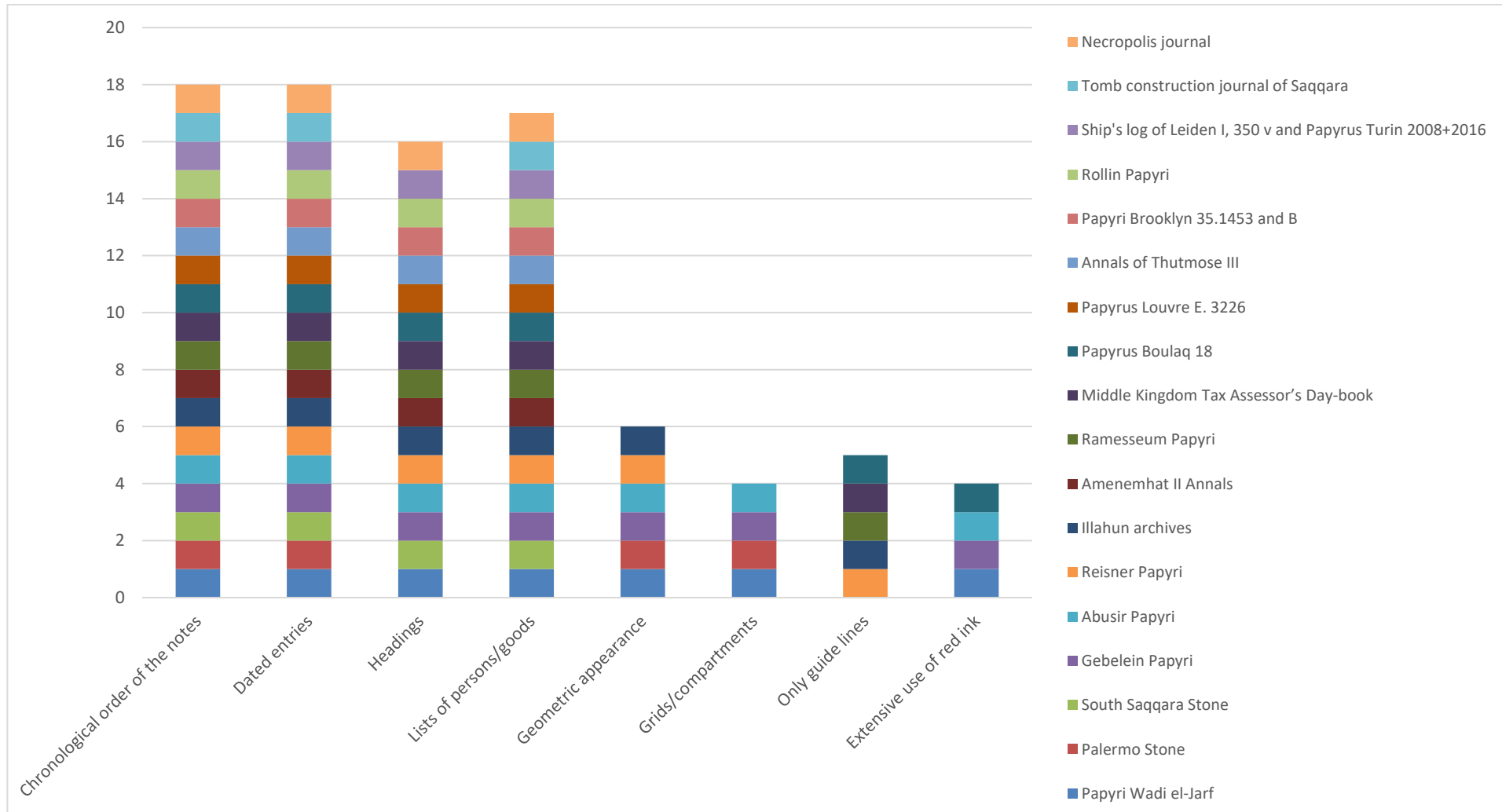
TABLE AND CHART OF THE FEATURES PRESENT IN THE ANNALS AND DAY-BOOKS ANALYZED

FEATURES DOCUMENTS	CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE NOTES ¹⁴⁶	DATED ENTRIES	HEADINGS ¹⁴⁷	LISTS OF PERSONS/GOODS	GEOMETRIC APPEARANCE	GRIDS/ COMPARTMENTS	ONLY GUIDE LINES	EXTENSIVE USE OF RED INK
Papyri of Wadi el-Jarf	X	X	X?	X	X	X		X
Palermo Stone	X	X			X	X		
South Saqqara Stone	X	X	X	X				
Gebelein Papyri	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Abusir Papyri	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Reisner Papyri	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Illahun archives	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Amenemhat II Annals	X	X	X	X				
Ramesseum Papyri	X	X	?	X			X	
Middle Kingdom Tax Assessor's Day-book	X	X	?	X			X	
Papyrus Boulaq 18	X	X	X	X			X	X
Papyrus Louvre E. 3226	X	X	X	X				
Thutmose III Annals	X	X	(partial)	X				
Papyri Brooklyn 35.1453 A and B	X	X	X	X				
Rollin Papyri	X	X	X	X				
Ship's logs of Leiden I 350 v° and of Papyrus Turin 2008+2016	X	X	X	X				
Tomb construction journal of Saqqara	X	X	X	X				
Necropolis journal	X	X	X	X				

From the above table and following bar-chart, it is clear that some changes occurred over the years. The changes were probably due to the development of accounting techniques, with the main features remaining the same over the whole period. As we have seen, the geometric appearance of the layout of the first period, with grids and compartments or horizontal guidelines, gradually disappeared just like the extensive use of red ink in the day-books. What remains the same during the whole period analysed is what can be defined as the main feature: a chronological order of the notes and the inclination to dated entries. This is also the main characteristic of Necropolis journals: a collection of dated notes organised in chronological order, recording a variety of events and activities of an institution.

¹⁴⁶ Yearly or daily.

¹⁴⁷ With the term "headings", we mean title, section or even formula.



Summing up: **what do the different kinds of annals and day-books have in common with the so-called Necropolis journal? What features are similar?**

As can be seen from the table and from the chart, what can be defined as the main feature in common is a **chronological order** of the notes and generally **dated entries**; thus a collection of dated notes organised in chronological order, recording a variety of events and activities of an institution.

In the Necropolis journal, there are different practices: sometimes the year is in black with the month and day in red, sometimes all are in black - which perhaps depended on the whim of the scribe¹⁴⁸.

With respect to the **contents**, what never changes in the course of time is the fact that the notes contain various lists (of persons, food, goods) and events/activities and always include headings, titles for the sections or standardised formulas. The notes can obviously vary depending on the institution that keeps them, but we find a sort of standard form both in the layout and in the syntax. In general, we can say that the day-books and annals of the previous period share the main features with the so-called Necropolis journal and they can therefore be compared.

Concerning the contents, it seems self evident to note that a Necropolis journal is most similar to documents related to activities comparable with the work and necessities of the Deir el-Medina community. The recently discovered administrative papyri of Wadi el-Jarf, for example, with both the monthly account reports of the deliveries and the ships' log recording the activities of the number of workmen operating in the harbour, is most likely very close to the conception of Necropolis journal (a complete publication is not yet available), as are the other ship's logs (Papyrus Leiden I 350 verso and Papyrus Turin 2008+2016) recording the daily notes about the events aboard a ship, the transport of different kinds of goods, and crew rations, recalling the distribution of grains and goods to the workmen of the Village of Deir el-Medina¹⁴⁹.

According to the ancient Egyptian point of view, a journal, with all its variants depending on the institution that produced it, would look like a document which records **a series of events and activities** through chronologically ordered entries. The fact that

¹⁴⁸ Even in the small notes about a few days, the normal *routine* is followed: the date indicating the day and the simple grammatical construction (i. a. see the Strike Papyrus dated to Ramesses III).

¹⁴⁹ It is worth noting that the Taxation Papyrus of the reign of Ramesses XI (P. Turin 1895 + P. Turin 2006) also shows elements of a ship's log.

the word “day” is the base from which the term is derived (both in our language and in ancient Egyptian) underscores the importance of the calendric notation.

On a daily basis, the scribe would first observe the facts of a given situation and then write these down in the form of dated entries. To make it easier to retrieve the notes, he would add headings to entitle each different section. Syntactically, in this type of document defined as “day-book”, there is constant recourse to the “absolute” use of the infinitive¹⁵⁰, i.e. the narrative infinitive, a general brevity of style, a preference for unintroduced prepositional phrases, and the use of recurrent formulas and terms. The common terminology found in annals and day-books is also present in the texts from the Deir el-Medina community (account and event journals).

Here follows a list of the most frequent ones:

FROM EARLIER DOCUMENTS

- *ḥ* quantity, amount, number (Papyri Reisner, Papyrus Boulaq 18)
- *dmḏ* total (Abusir Papyri, Gebelein Papyri, Papyri Reisner, Kahun Papyri, Papyrus Boulaq 18)
- *ḥry-ḥ* arrears, refers to the remainder to be paid (Abusir Papyri, Kahun Papyri. In the form *ḥryt-ḥ* in Papyrus Boulaq 18)
- *ḥsb.w* account
- *im.y-rn=f* name-list
- *int* to bring (Papyri Reisner)
- *mn* balance due (Papyrus Louvre E 3226, Papyrus Leiden I 350 verso)
- *pr* expenses (Abusir Papyri, Gebelein Papyri, Kahun Papyri, Papyrus Boulaq 18)
- *rḥt* list, anticipated amount, refers to the quantity that should have been delivered (Abusir Papyri, Gebelein Papyri, Papyri Reisner, Kahun Papyri, Papyrus Boulaq 18)
- *snn* list/account
- *sh3.w* memorandum
- *wḏ3t* remainder, the rest left after a transaction has been carried out (Abusir Papyri, Gebelein Papyri, Papyri Reisner, Kahun Papyri, Papyrus Boulaq 18, Papyrus Louvre E 3226)

¹⁵⁰Gardiner 1957, §306. The infinitive may be used as the equivalent of a sentence, i.e. as significant and complete in itself. It often occurs in headings, titles and the like.

FROM NECROPOLIS JOURNAL

Some of the most used terms and formulas (not including all the variants):

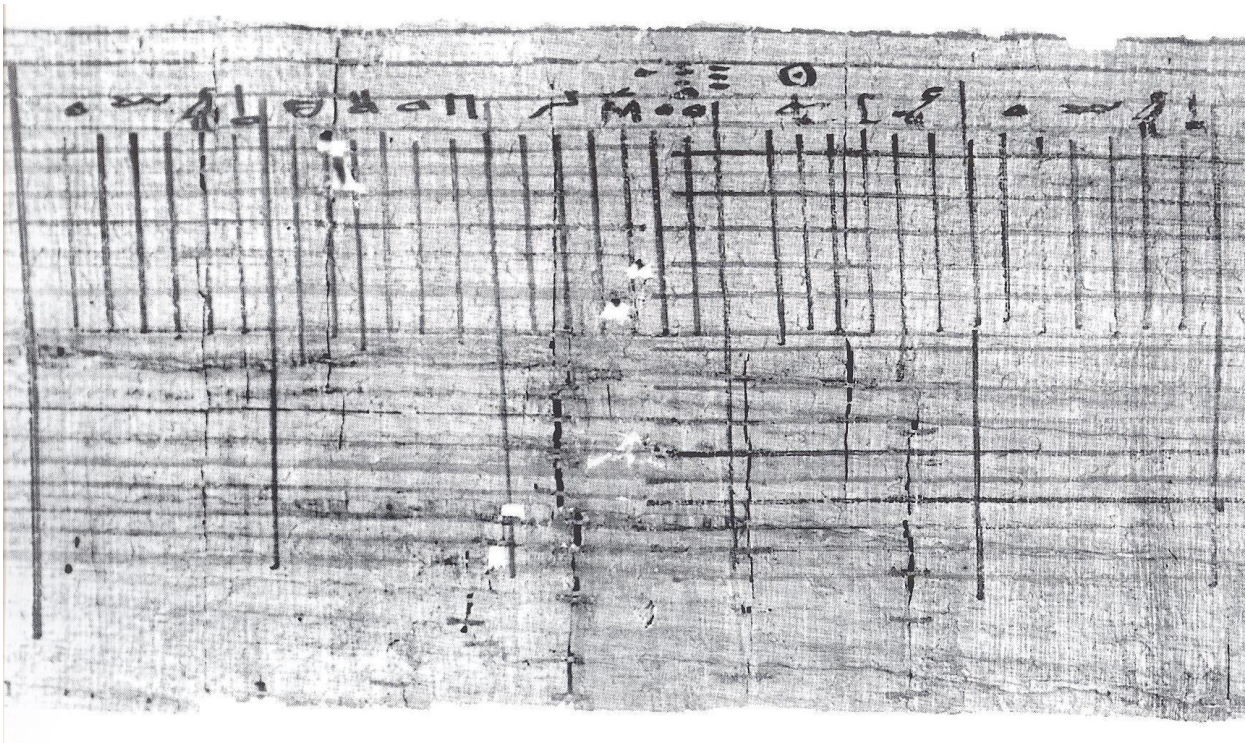
- *ḥ* quantity, amount, number
- *ḥkw* regular supplies
- *bḥkw* when they worked
- date + *šsp m dr.t NN* ...received from NN
- *di.t di.w n 3bd x* giving grain rations of month x
- *diw* indicated the first payment of rations, while *dni* indicated each additional one
- *dmd* total
- *ḥsb.w* account, can be of grain rations, of deliveries of vegetables, etc.
- *ḥtri* deliveries
- *inw* supplementary deliveries
- *im.y-rn=f* name-list
- *ini* to bring
- *iw m dr.t NN* entered from NN, recording deliveries of various commodities
- *mkw* rewards, for special occasions to high authorities consisting of salt, oil, meat, natron, garments, sandals, etc.
- *mn* balance due
- *snn* list/account, series of numbers/calculations; introduces lists of names or series of items and numbers, with calculations of totals and deficits
- *sh3.w* memorandum; used either as checkmark next to journal entries (often in red or larger in size), or used in expressions such as “memorandum/charge concerning”, “memorandum of deficit”, “memorandum of deliveries”
- *wḏ3t* remainder
- *wrš* they were on duty
- *wšf* they did not work

Before concluding this section, a few more points should be mentioned. First of all, the conclusions drawn by Redford 1986 do not consider the background of the day-book documents overviewed, nor their origin. It is quite clear that the habit of writing day-books and journals did not start in the New Kingdom *ex nihilo*. Redford states that it was in the Middle Kingdom, in the 12th Dynasty, when “day-books of various institutions, both governmental and private, make their first appearance” (p. 334), but we now know that there are several earlier documents to be considered as well: the papyri of Wadi el-Jarf, the Abusir and Gebelein Papyri. We obviously have to bear in mind that Redford

published his book in 1986, when these earlier documents were not yet available, or not fully available.

Additionally, what do all these types of day-books tell us about their background? Looking at their layout, a question arises spontaneously: how were they composed? There must have been a common background of knowledge. Perhaps not in the form of guidelines from a proper business school, but there must have been some sort of tradition and background to record keeping. The scribe who sat down and started writing needed to have a basic idea, a scheme to make use of. There was most likely a common knowledge, from some original source, that was transmitted over the years as a basic standard to follow.

What if -at least at the beginning- it was the administration who provided the sheets already laid out with the grids? It is obvious that the grids were drawn before the text was included (see illustration below). This would also explain why the text is often either too squeezed or there is much blank space left, or again, some entire columns are left blank, as if the person who drew the grid was not aware of the real space needed and just sketched a standard grid. At least initially, this system could have provided a standard, and then, after having learned the scheme to follow (or according to a different administration system required), the scribe found the grid to be no longer of use and a more brief and concise style of recording data remained.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
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2								
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Fig. 37 Papyrus Gebelein III, after Posener-Kriéger 2004, recto (Pl. 22) above and a modern empty Excel sheet below. If we compare the grid made on the ancient papyrus with the Excel page, a modern spreadsheet for calculation and organisation of data, we can see many similarities. The space is divided into grids by means of columns and lines and usually headings are written at top of the page in order to organise the information.

4.3.a Other scribal traditions

A short paragraph should be devoted to a brief and not exhaustive overview on other scribal traditions, namely, how *journals/annals/day-books* look like in other cultures and if similarities are to be seen.

The **Hittite royal Annals**, those of Muršili II of *Hatti*, for example, demonstrates some similarities with the Annals of Thutmose III. Both have a prologue and epilogue stating that the annals contain the campaigns conducted within a certain period of years, even if the Egyptian Annals are then more specific about dating to the day, month and year of the king's reign than the Hittite ones. Both sovereigns were concerned with publishing their brave or divine deeds for posterity, and the annalistic style arose in both cases as one way of doing this¹⁵¹.

Babylonian chronicles are a series of tablets in cuneiform script compiled by scribes recording chronologically noteworthy political and religious events in Babylonian history. The corpus includes about forty-five Chronicles, written from the reign of Nabonassar up to the Parthian Period¹⁵². The Babylonian chronicles thus narrate a period of more than 2000 years. Even if the genre is ill-defined ("there is no consensus about the combination of stylistic, thematic, functional, or redactional characteristics that should set the chronicles apart as a genre from other types of historiography written in first-millennium Babylonia, such as annals, king lists, and epics"¹⁵³), the Babylonian chronicles -as well as Assyrian Chronicles¹⁵⁴- mainly contains notes about political, military, judicial, and religious events that happened in the recent or distant past and that were often, though not always, arranged in chronological order. It seems that, as source of the Babylonian Chronicles, were the astronomical diaries, day-books containing systematic records of astronomical observations and political events, as well as predictions based on astronomical observations¹⁵⁵. Neither Babylonian nor Assyrian chronicles can stand the comparison with Roman Annals and later medieval annals, which have a much broader spectrum of events.

Amongst the many **Roman Annales**, we will mention those written by the Roman historian Titus Livy and by the historian and senator Publius Tacitus.

Livy wrote a monumental history of Rome, covering the period from the earliest legends of the City before its foundation in 753 BC through the reign of Augustus.

¹⁵¹ Van Seters 1997, 150-151.

¹⁵² Waerzeggers 2012, 285-298.

¹⁵³ Waerzeggers 2012, 287.

¹⁵⁴ Olmstead 1915, 344-368.

¹⁵⁵ Geller 1990 and Rochberg-Halton, 1991.

Nowadays we usually refer to this history of Rome as *Ab Urbe Condita*, even if Livy himself called his work *Annales*. The form of Livy's history follows indeed the annalistic tradition. Livy's style alternates between historical chronology and narration, often interrupting the story to announce the election of a new consul. This was in fact the system used by the Romans to take account of the years. Livy bases his chronology on pontifical chronicles, called *Annales Maximi*, in which the most important events of the year were recorded and which played a central role in shaping the form of the Roman annalistic tradition. "From the time when the pontifical records were published,...the history of the Roman Republic rested upon an authoritative collection of material, set in a chronological framework, that imposed its tradition upon Roman historiography" (McDonald 1957, 155).

Tacitus traces the history of the Roman Empire from the reign of Tiberius to that of Nero (14-68 AC). Even if today those 16 books are known as *Annals* from their year-by-year structure, their original title was *Ab Excessu divi Augusti*. The style is far removed from the one of Egyptian annals or day-books. The books are written in a narrative, very descriptive style, filled with commentaries and frequent political observations. What Tacitus describes is a tragic historiography, full of dramatic events. The style he adopts is complex, with intricate expressions, rare grammatical forms, and frequent omissions.

On a completely different side, archaeological excavations in **China** since the 1970s have produced many examples of a type of manuscript called *rishu* 日書 "**day-book**" ¹⁵⁶, present in the Chinese cultural sphere of the late Warring States, Qin, and Western Han periods (ca. 3rd-1st centuries BC). They describe practical methods of selecting auspicious times and places for a variety of activities in daily life (travel, marriage, planting crops, seeking an audience, or burying the dead), but they also incorporate a range of other miscellaneous subjects with the result that no two daybooks are exactly alike¹⁵⁷.

Clearly, Chinese day-books, even if organized chronologically, belong to a very different category than our journals/day-books: in the last mentioned events which happened have been recorded, while the *rishu* are closer to the idea of almanac¹⁵⁸. Their main

¹⁵⁶ The term is taken from the title that appears on one of the day-books discovered in 1976 at Shuihudi, tomb 11 (ca. 217 BC). Lagerwey-Kalinowski 2008, 386.

¹⁵⁷ Harper-Kalinowski 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Almanacs are still present in Italian popular tradition, as the religious one of Frate Indovino, printed since 1945, in which we find for every day of the year the appropriate saints, feasts, meteorological forecasts, lunar phases, and practical advice for farmers and housewives. The popularity of almanacs in Italy was such that between 1976 and 1994 Rai 1 (Italian national TV channel) produced a television broadcast called *Almanacco del giorno dopo* which provided indication of the position and movement of celestial bodies, a brief biography of the saint of the day and a TV-column called 'Tomorrow happened', with historical films, dedicated to an event that happened in the past the day after.

content concerns hemerology or “knowledge of favourable and unfavourable days”¹⁵⁹, and are intended for everyday use. They show a connection to almanacs still popular in Chinese communities today as well as to hemerological literature in medieval Europe and ancient Babylon when tables were produced in order to predict lunar and planetary phenomena¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁹ In this respect they remind us of the ancient Egyptian Calendars of Lucky and Unlucky Days.

¹⁶⁰ Glick-Livesey-Wallis 2005, 29.