Notes on Some Scribal Faults in Abbott Papyrus

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Abstract: The Abbott Papyrus is one of the most important historical sources that records the great tomb robberies at the end of the 20th dynasty, and it is the only source that reviews all examined tombs that were inspected by the government — in El-Taref, Deir el-Bahari, Dra’ Abu el-Naga, and the Valley of the Queens — After discovering the theft, and also, it has many indications that some state employees were complicit in these thefts. Despite the importance of this source, it suffers from many scribal errors. This research paper aims at discussing some writing errors that raise a lot of problems, as well as displaying their complexity because the contained information in the papyrus wasn’t mentioned in another source to verify its authenticity. The most noticeable errors are with the names of the kings who own the tombs which were examined, or the description of the tombs/pyramids to mark their locations.

Keywords: Abbott Papyrus, tomb robberies, Amenhotep I, Intef II, Ahmose Sapair.
Introduction: Abbott papyrus is one of a series of papyri that deals with tomb robberies, which reached the peak at the end of the Twentieth dynasty, namely the reign of Ramesses IX and the investigations continued till the reign of Ramesses XI. Abbott papyrus is preserved in the British Museum no. 10221. The recto dating back to the 16th year of the reign of Ramesses IX, consists of seven columns, which recount the investigation events for ten royal tombs by a gathering of dignitaries. While the verso goes back to year 1 (of whm mswt) equivalent to the 19th regnal year of Ramesses XI, the text was only written in two columns on the back of the sixth and the seventh columns of the recto, the verso is called ‘Abbott Dockets’ there were lists of accused men.

On the recto, the scribe started the text with big, clear, and standard handwriting, and also, he paid attention to line spacing. The signs were getting gradually small to be very small and complicated in the last two columns. The lines are not aligned, but the scribe did his best to keep the straightness. However, the main characteristic feature of the handwriting is clarity and elegance.

Disregarding the scribe’s writing skills, he had a serious problem with the proper names specially, the names of royals. In this paper, I will discuss the problematic character caused by the scribal faults and negligence.

The Tomb of Amenhotep I:

The first exanimated tomb was ‘the 3ḥt nhḥ of Dsr-k3-<Rc> L.P.H. son of Re Imn-Htp L.P.H.’. The scribe wrote the first cartouche as, despite the fame and importance of this divinized patrons of the community of Deir el-Medina he omitted Re which was supposed to be in the outset of the name.

A very confusing sentence occurred at the end of this paragraph, which concerned the investigation of this tomb, and it is sw gmy wd3 ‘It was

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2 All were found intact except the pyramid of Sekhemre-shedtawy Sobekemsaf II, in Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 1-7 = KRI VI: 471, 6-14; A.J. Peden, Egyptian Historical Inscriptions of the Twentieth Dynasty (Jonsered: Paul Åströms förlag, 1994): 231— Detailed account for this robbery in Pap. Leopold II-Amherst VI, which may have been written by the same scribe of Pap. Abbott—and in addition to the royal tombs the inspectors found two intact tombs for chantress of the divine adoratrice of Amun and another two for them are violated together with the tombs of the citizens of Thebes, in Pap. Abbott, rec. 4, 1-4 = KRI VI: 472, 16-473, 5; Peden, Historical Inscriptions: 233.

3 For further details and discussions about this date, the reasons behind and the tomb robberies through it see J. Von Beckerath, “Bemerkungen zur Chronologie der Grabräuberpapyri”, ZÄS 127 (2000): 111 ff.

4 Lit. ‘eternal horizon’, for the meaning of tomb see *Wb* I: 17, 21.

found intact’. In a previous line, it was recorded that the tomb which ‘measures 120 cubits in distance from its ḫry (which called) p3 ḫ-k3’, The ḫry is a building that was attached to the tomb probably. However, the inspector just gave the distance of this tomb from the outside to the innermost part which made 120 cubits and the tomb ‘was found intact’. Intact means that it was closed and hidden, it is hard to believe that the inspectors broke into a sealed tomb to confirm that it was unrobed! I really don’t know what the scribe is trying to say in this contrariety.

After all, Pap. Abbott is the only source that talks about the tomb of Amenhotep I and its location. Weigall suggested that this tomb is KV39— it was partly uncovered in his time— and the ḫry was the workmen huts upon the mountain and the distance between the mountain top and the tomb entrance is the 120 cubits. While Carter found a tomb in Dra’ Abu el-Naga and held the number AN B, and also, he suggested that it was the one mentioned in Abbott papyrus of Amenhotep I. It’s obvious, it had been plundered in the antiquity. A lot of pottery, stone vessels, and ostraca were found in this tomb, an ostracon held the name of the king of the Hyksos s-wsr-R (Apophis), three ostraca held the name of Ahmose I, nine held the name of Amenhotep I and eight held the name of queen Ahmose Nefertari.

The Pyramid of Intef II:

After inspecting the tomb of Amenhotep I, The Inspectors went to check out the m n nswt Ini-it.f ‘The pyramid of king Intef I’. The early Theban local nomarchs of the 11th dynasty i.e., the Intefs had been buried in tombs which have a style that is known as Saff-tombs basically in El-Tarif. The interesting part is the absence of the pyramid from the style of these funeral

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1 Pap. Abbott, rec. 2, 7 (=KRI VI: 470, 3-4.); Noteworthy that in Pap. Abbott, rec. 5, 9 the texts have been very variably translated, the text mentioned a great celebration after making sure that the tombs in the valley of the queens (tś st nfrw) are intact. Most likely, this joy was due to the tomb of Amenhotep I was found intact. Although they found a violated pyramid of a less important king. See: Peet, Tomb Robberies I: 44.

2 Peet translated it as ‘stela (?)’, see: Peet, Tomb Robberies I: 38. I don’t believe so due to the absence of the determinatives and for ‘stela’ in L.H. Lesko, A Dictionary of Late Egyptian I (Providence: B.C. scribe publications, 2002): 76; and ‘tombstone’ in Wb I: 221, 11.


5 H. Carter, “Report on the Tomb of Zeser-Ka-Ra Amenhetep I, Discovered by the Earl of Carnarvon in 1914”, JEA 3 (1916): 147 ff. Interestingly that he used the 120 cubits from the papyrus to affirm the ownership of Amenhotep I to this tomb, he made a table of measurements for every chamber and corridor in the tomb and they made almost 120 cubits. The only unbelievable thing in his theory is counting the depth of the well twice and adding them to the full measurement of the tomb, the inspectors or the scribe didn’t do that for sure.


7 Pap. Abbott, rec. 2, 8-11 (= KRI VI: 470, 5-10).
complexes. There is no evidence that the Intefs’ tombs were surmounted by pyramids at all.¹

The texts continued and told us nty pʃyf mr dr hr.f ‘Whose pyramid has been removed from it’, this complex may had a chapel in the form of a pyramid in the front of the real tomb, in its runes Mariette found the famous ‘Dogs stela’ of this king which mentioned in the text.² Arnold was able to uncover a cult place at the eastern face of the Saff-tomb, which may wrongly take as Intef’s tomb³, error from the inspectors transferred to the scribe, or that mr by the late Ramesside period —of the Abbott papyrus— might have been used as a general term for ‘tomb’.⁴

The So-called Iuroy/Shuroy:

The text⁵ gives us very important information about the location of the pyramid of the king Nubkheperre Intef VI, which ‘It was found (to be) in the process of being tunnelled into by the thieves, they having progressed 2 1/2 cubits in tunnelling into its north side from the outer court of the tomb-(chapel) of the Overseer of Offering-Bearers (Hry msw wdnw) of the Estate of Amun, Iuroy’.⁶ which means that this pyramid is so adjacent to Iuroy’s tomb, whereas the thieves tried to penetrate into the pyramid through it.

Mariette and Winlock proposed to re-examine the tombs’ location of the kings of the 17th dynasty, and the tomb of Nubkheperre Intef VI in particular. It was supposed that the tomb of Iuroy should be the starting point to find this pyramid. There was no tomb owner called Iuroy, but they believed that Shuroy is the same character who was mentioned in the papyrus⁷, hence, the scribe must have made an error while he was transcribing the text; he replaced the sign ^ by f.⁸ ‘Swry’ is the owner

³ concerning the dog stela, it was accurately described in the same paragraph of Intef II’s pyramid, and it says that the king was depicted and his dog at his legs and called Bhkí. It is possible that the stela was partly uncovered at this time, whereas the scribe did not note the other four dogs, for more information, see M. Kossmann, “The Names of King Antef’s Dogs”, Berber studies 33 (2011): 79. The upper part of this stela is missing and the lower one is preserved in the Egyptian museum No. CG20512, 75. A. Mariette, Monuments Divers Recueillis en Égypte et en Nubie I (Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1889): 19 and vol. II pl. 49.
⁶ Peden, Historical Inscriptions: 229.
⁷ Winlock, JEA 10: 228 ff.
of TT13 in Dra’ Abu el-Naga.\(^1\) Polz completely uncovered this pyramid which was located near to TT13 during the DAI archaeological excavation mission in 2001-2002.\(^2\)

### King Seqenenre Tao-ao:

The text\(^3\) mentioned that the inspectors checked out the pyramid of a king called \(\text{Skn-}n-R\)\(^4\) \(\text{Tao-}\text{a} \text{a}\), these two names were never cited for one king in any source but Abbott papyrus. In fact, Seqenenre is the father of the king Ahmose I, named \(\text{Tao}\) but never \(\text{Tao-}\text{a} \text{a}\).\(^5\) One may suggest two possibilities of scribal faults to solve this issue as follows:

1. Seqenenre \(\text{Tao-}\text{a} \text{a}\) is an anonymous king.

2. The scribe repeated the last paragraph concerning the inspection of the pyramid of king Seqenenre Tao unintentionally with a redundant \(\text{a} \text{a}\).\(^6\)

First, it is hard to believe that he is an unknown king according to one source written by a neglectful scribe, who made a lot of frequent faults in private and royal names in the same text likewise. Second, he cannot be king Seqenenre for two reasons:

a. After the cartouche of \(\text{Tao-}\text{a} \text{a}\), the phrase \(\text{r} \text{mH} \text{nsw} \text{Tao}\)\(^7\) ‘another king called Tao’, a clear hint from the scribe that he is not the king Seqenenre.

b. In a sequent part in the text\(^8\), specifically in the part of the inspection result the scribe designate that, the inspectors found nine intact pyramids, in addition to one pyramid violated of a total of ten.

According to the above, it must refer to two pyramids for two different kings. Whereas the scribe focused on both kings, who held the name \(\text{Tao}\), so the error must be in the name \(\text{Skn-n-R}\)\(^9\). The scribe may have made a fault by transcribing the part \(\text{Skn-n}\) instead of \(\text{Snht}\), and so the king meant here is Senakhtenre (Tao I), the father of king Seqenenre.\(^10\)

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King Ahmose Sapair:

The text mentioned that the inspector visited ‘The pyramid of king Ahmose Sapair’, it is confusing that there is no king known to us with this name. Sapair is a royal character belonging to the line of the 17th dynasty, and we have got about twenty monuments recording his name and figure, he also appeared in the royal celebration lists in the Ramesside private tombs, he held the \( \text{hk3} \) scepter and the flail. That led some schoolers such as Wiedmann and Heffernan to believe that he was a king.

There are seven tombs were used to reach some conclusions about the order of some royal figures in chronological alignment in the Necropolis of the Thebaid containing the termed ‘king-lists’. Most of these lists back to the 19th dynasty and they are considered a very important historical source which sheds the light on the 18th dynasty and slightly earlier. In which depictions of the royal ancestors getting honoured by the tombs’ owners who were presenting offerings and censing before them.

In the list of \( \text{tt2} \), we can see the owner presents the offering for two lines of kings, queens, princes, and princesses, Sapair is represented as the last figure in the first line as shown in the following order:

- King Amenhotep I.
- Queen Ahmose Nefertari.
- King Seqenenre.
- Queen Ahhotep.
- nine queens.
- Prince (\( s3\)-nswt) Sapair.

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2 His mummy is preserved in the Egyptian Museum No. CG61064 and was found in his 18th dynasty style coffin —in the Egyptian museum No. CG61007/JE26221— in Deir el-Bahari cache DB320. See C.N. Reeves, Valley of the kings: The Decline of a Royal Necropolis (London: Kegan Paul international, 1990): 212, 253.


4 Winlock, JEA 10: 222, footnote 3.


6 Namely TT2 - TT4 - TT7 - TT10 in Deir el-Medina, TT19 - TT306 in Dra’ Abu El-Naga and tomb C6 in Al-Qurna. For more details see Heffernan, Royal Images in Private Tombs: 31 ff.


One can simply note that Prince Sapair is the only person whose name does not appear in a cartouche, unlike all the characters in the scene, whether they are in the first or second register.

Back to the name of Sapair, the segment ‘IaH-ms’ appeared only nine times in his name\(^1\). Further, his name was written in different shapes, more often with the title ‘s\(\text{-}nsw\)’ as shown below:

\[
\text{Image of hieroglyphs related to Sapair's name.}
\]

In TT161, we find a scene for Sapair, who is seated behind king Amenhotep I directly, so he may be his son. The early schoolers Champollion, Rosellini, and Lepsius were supporters of this scene\(^8\), but Maspero believed that he is a son of the king Ahmose I—because he bears the segment [\(\text{I}\)] in his name—from his wife Ahmose Nefertari and was his successor, but he died before his father and his brother Amenhotep I, who inherited his right to the throne.\(^9\) Or he may be a Probable son of Tao II, his prominence has suggested that he may be the unknown father of Thutmose I\(^10\), who became the king after Amenhotep I because he did not have a male heir. Therefore, the absence of the descendants for Amenhotep pushed Prince Thutmose I to the fore.

After this discussion, Sapair was not a ‘king’ as called in Abbott papyrus for sure, we must be dealing here with another scribal fault. It looks like the scribe missed out adding the segment [\(\text{I}\)] to the title [\(s\(\text{-}\)nswt ‘the king’s son’].

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\(^1\) Vandersleyen, \textit{SAK} 10: 318. And for more see \textit{GLR} 2: 188-9.
\(^2\) CG34004.
\(^3\) CG34005.
\(^4\) CG34029.
\(^5\) L. \textit{D. III}: 2, d.
\(^6\) CG34036.
\(^7\) L. \textit{D. III}: 2, a.
\(^8\) Vandersleyen, \textit{SAK} 10: 313.
The Pyramid of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II:

Another issue for a demolished pyramid occurred, the text\(^1\) named a *mr* ‘pyramid’ for the king Mentuhotep II. Although it is known that the king had a rock-cut tomb in the rear of his temple in Deir el-Bahari, His tomb complex was a gigantic *Saff*-tomb, larger than those of the Intefs. As for what was mentioned in the papyrus, this complex was reconstructed with a pyramid or podium for a pyramid at least. According to Arnold, there was no pyramid above Intef's tomb, the walls of Mentuhotep's edifice would not bear the weight of a pyramid and no cover blocks with the angled face of a pyramid were found.\(^2\) It is possible that the scribe made fault when he mentioned the term *mr* ‘pyramid’, or that by the late Ramesside period —of the Abbott papyrus— *mr* was a general term for ‘tomb’ as set above.\(^3\)

The Issue of the Ten Pyramids:

Once more, another problem occurred by the term *mr* ‘pyramid’. The scribe wrote the result of the \(\text{dm} \text{D} \text{ mrw n nA nswwt tpyw-a} \) ‘total: pyramids of the ancestral kings’.\(^4\) The next line tells us that nine pyramids were found intact, and one pyramid found violated, and so \(\text{dm} \text{D} 10\) ‘the total is 10’. Another negligence on the part of the author as he called three characteristic types of tombs by one term *i.e.*, *mr* as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>king</th>
<th>his tomb in Abbott</th>
<th>real status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Amenhotep I</td>
<td>Tomb (<em>ḫt nḥḥ</em>)</td>
<td>tomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Intef II</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td><em>Saff</em>-tomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nubkheperre Intef VI</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sekhemre-wepmaat Intef V</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Sekhemre-shedtawy Sobekemsaf II</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Seqenenre Tao II</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Senakhtenre (?) Tao I</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Kamose</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sapair</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td>Pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II</td>
<td>Pyramid (<em>mr</em>)</td>
<td><em>Saff</em> tomb/temple-tomb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 14 (= KRI VI: 472, 8).
\(^2\) Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids*: 166.
\(^3\) *The Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache* gives a meaning of ‘Königsgrab’ for *mr*, see *Wb* II: 94, 14.
\(^5\) Which is no. 5 in the table.
In no. 1 The scribe called the tomb of Amenhotep I \[\text{Axt nHH}\] (lit. horizon of eternity) which refers to rock-cut tomb specially those of the valley of the kings, the end of the report is confusing because he considered it as a \text{mr}, the scribe contradicted himself by using these two different terms, each must have a certain significance, and the word \text{mr} may mean a tomb in general, this idea is no longer acceptable specially in this case, due to the absence of the pyramid shape from this tomb, which is clear in term \[\text{mr}\].\text{1} As for cases nos. 2 and 10, \text{i.e.}, the Saff-tomb of the Intefs were discussed above already, it might not have pyramids at all. And for no. 9 the case of prince Sapair, the scribe insisted that he was a king since the preface of the paragraph came with a total of the examined pyramids of ‘ancestral kings’. Whereas the total is ten pyramids, so Sapair is included.

Conclusion: As we have seen the scribe’s negligence led to very complicated issues, he made serious errors, which should not be made by a skilled scribe. He has a real problem with the names, whether the individual or royal ones. I believe that the scribe did not attend in the inspection procedures, and the text of this papyrus was written based on someone’s dictation and this explains the frequent misspellings. Moreover, the palaeographic features of the text may indicate that the text was written at once. This is evident from the clarity of the signs in the first column and gradually increasing in complexity until it reaches the climax on the last one, although the text is basically an account for four days of investigation activities in the royal necropolis.

\text{1 Cf. ‘Pyramid’ or ‘pyramid tomb’ in Lesko, Dictionary of Late Egyptian I: 192.}
Bibliography

I- Abbreviations:

**ASAE**  Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte, Le Caire.

**CG**  Catalogue Général du Musée du Caire.


**JARCE**  Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt.

**JEA**  Journal of the Egyptian Archaeology, London.


**MMAF**  Mémoires Publiés par les Membres de la Mission Archéologique Française, Le Caire.

**SAK**  Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur, Hambourg.


II- References:


Mohamed Hassan Ismaeel, Notes on Some Scribal Faults in Abbott Papyrus


III- Dissertations: