

Notes on Some Scribal Faults in Abbott Papyrus

Mohamed Hassan Ismaeel

Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, Egypt

M.hasan@alexu.edu.eg

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.

ملاحظات على بعض أخطاء الكتابة في بردية أبوت

محمد حسن إسماعيل

كلية الآداب، جامعة الإسكندرية، مصر

M.hasan@alexu.edu.eg

المخلص: تعد بردية أبوت واحدة من أهم المصادر التاريخية التي تناولت قضية سرقات المقابر في نهاية الأسرة العشرين، وهي المصدر الوحيد الذي يتحدث عن كل المقابر المفحوصة التي فحصتها الحكومة — الموجودة في منطقة الطارف والدير البحري ودراع أبو النجا ووادي الملكات — بعد أن وصل لها خبر بوقوع أحداث سرقة. كما أنها أعطت الكثير من المعلومات عن موظفي الجهاز الإداري الملكي، وعلى رأسه حقيبة الوزارة التي تغير المعين بها أكثر من مرة خلال حكم رمسيس التاسع والحادي عشر، كما أن بها إشارات عديدة تفيد بتواطئ بعض موظفي الدولة في تلك السرقات. ورغم أهمية هذا المصدر إلا إنه يعتريه العديد من الأخطاء، وما يعنينا في هذه الورقة البحثية هو بعض الأخطاء الكتابية التي تثير الكثير من الجدل مثلما سنرى، ومما يزيد التعقيد أن ما ورد من معلومات في البردية غير مذكور في مصدر آخر كي نتأكد من صحته لتأكيد. ولعل أهم تلك الأخطاء وأكثرها لفتاً للانتباه هو أسماء الملوك أصحاب المقابر المفحوصة أو الخطأ في توصيف المقابر/الأهرامات لتحديد أماكنها.

الكلمات الدالة: بردية أبوت، سرقات المقابر، أمنحتب الأول، إنتف الثاني، أحمس سابائير.

Introduction: Abbott papyrus is one of a series of papyri that deals with tomb robberies¹, 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.² While the verso goes back to year 1 (of *wḥm mswt*³) 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 nḥḥ*⁴ of *Dsr-k3-<R<*’ L.P.H. son of Re *Imn-ḥtp* L.P.H.’⁵ The scribe wrote the first cartouche as (𓆎𓆏𓆐), 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 𓆎𓆏𓆐𓆑𓆒𓆓𓆔𓆕 *sw gmy wd3* ‘It was

¹ All published in T.E. Peet, *The Great Tomb Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty*, 2 vols (Oxford: The clarendon press, 1930); and T.E. Peet, *The Mayer Papyri A & B* (London: William Clowes, 1920). The investigations took place under Ramesses IX and XI. A good contribution to list them in their normal chronological order in A. Thijs, “Some Observations on the Tomb-Robbery Papyri”, *Ägypten und Altes Testament* 87 (2018): 523-4, 526-8.

² All were found intact except the pyramid of Sekhemre-shedtowy 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.

⁵ For the omission of Re, cf. J. Von Beckerath, *Handbuch der Ägyptischen Königsnamen* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999): 133.

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 text³ mentioned that the inspectors checked out the pyramid of a king called (⊙|⊠×[Ⓜ]Ⓜ) Skn-n-Rc (⊙|⊠|⊠|⊠|⊠) T-ꜥꜥ, 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 T-ꜥꜥ but never T-ꜥꜥ-ꜥꜥ.⁴ One may suggest two possibilities of scribal faults to solve this issue as follows:

- 1- Seqenenre T-ꜥꜥ 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 ꜥꜥ.⁵

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 T-ꜥꜥ-ꜥꜥ, the phrase ⊙|⊠×[Ⓜ]Ⓜ(⊙|⊠|⊠|⊠|⊠) r mh nsw T-ꜥꜥ 'another king called Tao', a clear hint from the scribe that he is not the king Seqenenre.
- b. In a sequent part in the text⁶, 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 T-ꜥꜥ, so the error must be in the name Skn-n-Rc.⁷ The scribe may have made a fault by transcribing the part |⊠×[Ⓜ]Ⓜ Skn-n instead of ⊙|⊠|⊠|⊠|⊠ Snht, and so the king meant here is Senakhtenre (Tao I), the father of king Seqenenre.⁸

¹ A.H. Gardiner and A. Weigall, *A Topographical Catalogue of the Private Tombs of Thebes* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1913): 16. But holding the title 'Chief of the brazier-bearers of Amun',

² D. Polz, and A. Seiler, *Die Pyramidenanlage des Königs Nub-Cheper-Re Intef in Dra' Abu El-Naga* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2003): 3.

³ Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 10-11 (= KRI VI: 472, 1-3)

⁴ Von Beckerath, *Königsnamen*: 129-31.


⁵ Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 8-9 (= KRI VI: 471, 15-16).

⁶ Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 15-16 (= KRI VI: 472, 10-13).

⁷ M. Burchardt, "König Seqen-en-rea TeAaoA", *ZÄS* 47 (1912): 120-1; Winlock, *JEA* 10: 243-5.

⁸ Von Beckerath, *Königsnamen*: 129.

King Ahmose Sapair:

The text¹ mentioned that the inspector visited  *p3 mr n nswt Tḥ-ms-s3-p3-ir* ‘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 dynasty², 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 *hk3* scepter and the flail.³ That led some schoolers such as Wiedmann⁴ and Heffernan⁵ 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’.⁶ 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.⁷

In the list of *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:⁸

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

¹ Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 13 (= KRI VI: 472, 6-7).

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.

³ C. Vandersleyen, “L’Identite d’Ahmes Sapair”, *SAK* 10 (1983): 311-3.

⁴ Winlock, *JEA* 10: 222, footnote 3.

⁵ G. Heffernan, *Royal Images in Private Tombs at Thebes in the Early Ramesside Period* (Unpublished MA. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2010): 162, Appendix 15a.

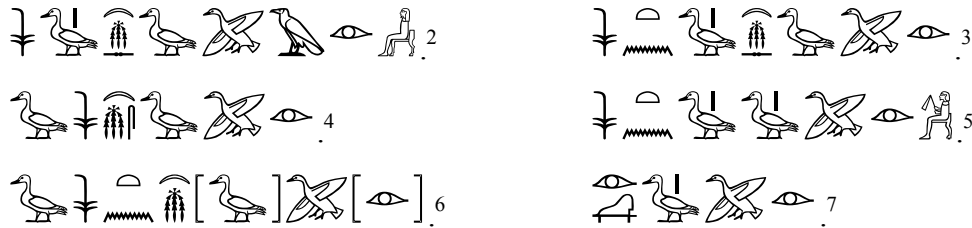
⁶ Namely TT2 - TT4 - TT7 - TT10 in Deir el-Medina, TT19 - TT306 in Dra’ Abu El-Naga and tomb C6 in Al-Qurna. For more details see Heffernan, *Royal Images in Private Tombs*: 31 ff.


⁷ M.G. Daressy, “Les Listes des Princes du Commencement de la XVIII Dynastie à Deir El-Médineh”, In: *Recueil d’Études Égyptologiques Dédiées à la Mémoire de Jean-François Champollion* (Paris: Librairie honoré champion, 1922): 283.


⁸ L. D. III: 2, a; D.B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists: Annals and Day-Books* (Mississauga: Benben publications, 1986): 48.

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 ‘*T^ch-ms*’ appeared only nine times in his name¹, Further, his name was written in different shapes, more often with the title ‘*s3-nsw*’ as shown below:



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 scene⁸, but Maspero believed that he is a son of the king Ahmose I —because he bears the segment  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 I¹⁰, 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  to the title [*s3*]-*nswt* ‘the king’s son’.

¹ Vandersleyen, *SAK* 10: 318. And for more see *GLR* 2: 188-9.

² CG34004.

³ CG34005.

⁴ CG34029.

⁵ L. D. III: 2, d.

⁶ CG34036.

⁷ L. D. III: 2, a.

⁸ Vandersleyen, *SAK* 10: 313.



⁹ G. Maspero, “Les Momies Royales de Déir el-Bahari”, *MMAF* 1 (4): 630.

¹⁰ A. Dodson and D. Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004): 129.

The Pyramid of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II:

Another issue for a demolished pyramid occurred, the text¹ 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  *dmd mrw n n3 nswwt tpyw-c* ‘total: pyramids of the ancestral kings’.⁴ The next line tells us that nine pyramids were found intact, and one pyramid found violated⁵, and so  *dmd 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:

	king	his tomb in Abbott	real status
1	Amenhotep I	Tomb (<i>3ht nhh</i>)	tomb
2	Intef II	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	<i>Saff</i> -tomb
3	Nubkheperre Intef VI	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
4	Sekhemre-wepmaat Intef V	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
5	Sekhemre-shedtowy Sobekemsaf II	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
6	Seqenenre Tao II	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
7	Senakhtenre (?) Tao I	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
8	Kamose	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
9	Sapair	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	Pyramid
10	Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II	Pyramid (<i>mr</i>)	<i>Saff</i> tomb/temple-tomb

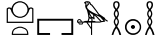

¹ Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 14 (= KRI VI: 472, 8).

² Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids*: 166.

³ The *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache* gives a meaning of ‘Königsgrab’ for *mr*, see *Wb* II: 94, 14.

⁴ Pap. Abbott, rec. 3, 15; Peden, *Historical Inscriptions*: 233.

⁵ Which is no. 5 in the table.

In no. 1 The scribe called the tomb of Amenhotep I  *3ht 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 *mr*, the scribe contradicted himself by using these two different terms, each must have a certain significance, and the word *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  *mr*.¹ As for cases nos. 2 and 10, *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.

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.
- GLR* H. Gauthier, *Le Livre des Rois d'Égypte*, 5 Tomes (Le Caire: IFAO, 1912).
- JARCE* Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt.
- JEA* Journal of the Egyptian Archaeology, London.
- KRI* K.A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969-1990).
- L. D.* K.R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849-1859).
- MMAF* Mémoires Publiés par les Membres de la Mission Archéologique Française, Le Caire.
- SAK* Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur, Hambourg.
- Wb* A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache*, 5 Bde. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971).
- ZÄS* Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde, Leipzig – Berlin.

II- References:

- Badawy, A., *A History of Egyptian Architecture the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period* (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California press, 1966).
- Burchardt, M., "König Seḳen-en-re^c Te³o³", *ZÄS* 47 (1912): 120-121.
- Carter, H., "Report on the Tomb of Zeser-Ka-Ra Amenhetep I, Discovered by the Earl of Carnarvon in 1914", *JEA* 3 (1916): 147-154.
- Daressy, M.G., "Les Listes des Princes du Commencement de la XVIII Dynastie à Deir El-Médineh", In: *Recueil d'Études Égyptologiques Dédiées à la Mémoire de Jean-François Champollion* (Paris: Librairie honoré champion, 1922): 283-296.

Dodson A. and Hilton, D., *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

- Gardiner, A.H. and Weigall, A., *A Topographical Catalogue of the Private Tombs of Thebes* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1913).
- Goedicke, H., “Gräber des Alten und Mittleren Reiches in el-Tarif by Dieter Arnold”, *JARCE* 15 (1978): 133.
- Kossmann, M., “The Names of King Antef’s Dogs”, *Berber studies* 33 (2011): 79-84.
- Lehner, M., *The Complete Pyramids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001).
- Lesko, L.H., *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian I* (Providence: B.C. scribe publications, 2002).
- Mariette, A., *Monuments Divers Recueillis en Égypte et en Nubie*, 2 vols (Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1889).
- Maspero, G., “Les Momies Royales de Déir el-Bahari”, *MMAF* 1 (4): 511-787.
- Möller, G., *Hieratische Paläographie II* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1965).
- Peden, A.J., *Egyptian Historical Inscriptions of the Twentieth Dynasty* (Jonsered: Paul Åströms förlag, 1994).
- Peet, T.E., *The Mayer Papyri A & B* (London: William Clowes, 1920).
- Peet, T.E., *The Great Tomb Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty*, 2 vols (Oxford: The clarendon press, 1930).
- Polz, D. and Seiler, A., *Die Pyramidenanlage des Königs Nub-Cheper-Re Intef in Drac Abu El-Naga* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2003).
- Polz, D., “The Location of the Tomb of Amenhotep I: A Reconsideration” in: R.H. Wilkson (ed.), *Valley of the Sun Kings: New Explorations in the Tombs of the Pharaohs* (Arizona: UAEE, 1995): 8-21.
- Redford, D.B., *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books* (Mississauga: Benben publications, 1986).

- Reeves, C.N., *Valley of the kings: The Decline of a Royal Necropolis* (London: Kegan Paul international, 1990).
- Thijs, A., “Some Observations on the Tomb-Robbery Papyri”, *Ägypten und Altes Testament* 87 (2018): 519-536.
- Vandersleyen, C., “L’Identite d’Ahmes Sapair”, *SAK* 10 (1983): 311-324.
- Von Beckerath, J., *Handbuch der Ägyptischen Königsnamen* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999).
- Von Beckerath, J., “Bemerkungen zur Chronologie der Grabräuberpapyri”, *ZÄS* 127 (2000): 111-116.
- Weigall, A., “Miscellaneous Notes”, *ASAE* 11 (1911): 170-176.
- Winlock, H.E., “The Tombs of the Kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty at Thebes”, *JEA* 10 (1924): 217-277.

III- Dissertations:

- G. Heffernan, “Royal Images in Private Tombs at Thebes in the Early Ramesside Period” (Unpublished MA. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2010).