Unpublished Demotic Receipts Concerning Land

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Abstract: The present study contains the publication of four demotic ostraca with receipts concerning land. These texts, which are now kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, were discovered in the Oriental Institute's 1929/30 season of excavation at Medinet Habu, (MH 4071, MH 4076, MH 196, and MH 4318 R&V). Their date can be determined from some interior evidences such as known persons. The first ostracon is dated to the late Ptolemaic period, while the other ones are dated to Roman; one of them belongs to the reign of Augustus. Three receipts of them were issued in money while one text concerns a payment in kind. These receipts concern the delivery of grain, which was always paid in kind and delivered to the granary, and sometimes when the harvest was decreased, the farmer would not be able to deliver the amount of wheat to the granary, so he had to pay its cash value. He could pay either in the year following the year in which the grain was due or even in the same year.

Keywords: Demotic, Receipt, Land, Ptolemaic, Roman.
These receipts concern the delivery of grain which was always paid in kind and delivered to the granary. Sometimes when the harvest was decreased, the farmer would not be able to deliver the amount of wheat to the granary, so he had to pay its cash value, to the bank. He could pay either in the year following the year in which the grain was due, or even in the same year.

The four receipts concerning land come from Thebes. They have the numbers M.H. 4071, 4076, 196 and 4318 R&V and belong to the Oriental Institute's 1929/30 season of excavation at Medinet Habu.

The two receipts nos. 1 and 3 were paid in money, while one receipt no. 4 was paid in kind and the amount is missing in text no. 2. Most of the payers in the texts were men while the receipt was paid by a woman in text no. 3.

Text no. 1 belongs to the late Ptolemaic period and is dated to the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, while the rest of the texts belong to the Roman period, and text 2 is dated to the reign of Augustus.

1) M.H. 4071 Plate I

Potsherd, Brown
6 x 4 cm., thick. 0.5-0.8 cm.

Date: Late Ptolemaic, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II 136 BC.

Description: The text is incomplete as the ostracon is broken partly at the top, at the left side and at the bottom. There is a lacuna which affected the text in the middle of line 1. The handwriting is big, neat and regular.

Transliteration:

1) di 'Pa-Dms \ [ ]
2) irm hṭ 1.t šḥ hṭ ½ \ [ ]
3) 7 ʾḥš ʾḥt kḤ 8 hṭ ʾl \ [ ]
4) ḫṣ.t sp 35 ibt 4 \ [ ]
5) ... \ [ ]

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3 e.g. Lichtheim, *Demotic Ostraca from Medinet Habu*, nos. 96, 106; Wahid El-Din, "Demotic Ostraca from Thebes,” no. 100.


5 Lichtheim, *Demotic Ostraca from Medinet Habu*, 16.
Translation:
1) ṭ.….š has paid [    ]
2) with 1 silver (piece), land ⅓ silver (piece) [    ]
3) 7 ṭ.⅓, 8 ṭ silver kite, ṭ.1⅓ silver (piece) [    ]
4) Year 35, fourth month of[    ]
5) ṭ.…. [    ]

Notes:
This receipt concerns a land and the payment is in money. It seems that from the style of the handwriting that the text belongs to the late Ptolemaic period as the year 35 belongs to the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II.

Year 35 = 136 BC.

L.2. This sign is probably read as šḥ"land" it is similar to 1

L.3. At the end of the line the scribe wrote another word before he corrected it to ḫt and the trace of the old sign still remains.

2) M.H. 4071 Plate II
Potsherd, Brown
10.5 x 7 cm., thick. 0.8-1 cm.

Date: Roman, Augustus, 14 Augustus, 4 AD.

Description: The text is complete. The ink is very faint. The handwriting is straight and compact.

Transliteration:
1) ṭ. di Pa-Dmš šš Ms-wr
2) m Pš-šr-Mnt irm (?) Pšy-kš
3) ḫr pš šḥ.t n ṭšḥ ntr (n) ḫš.t.sp 32
4) ṭ.….šḥ n ḫš.t sp 33 ibt 4 šmw sw 21

Translation:
1) Pa-Dmš son of Ms-wr has paid
2) to Pš-šr-Mnt ṭtogether with(?) Pšy-kš
3) for the corn-seed of god's field (of) year 32
4) ṭ.…. ṭWritten in year 33, Mesore, day 21

Notes:

_Pa-₅ms_ son of _Ms-wr_ has delivered an amount of corn-seed of the god's field in year 33 for the previous year of Augustus.

In the Greco-Roman period the government rented the state land to the farmers and supplied them with amounts of seeds to be planted in specific area of land having certain crops.¹

The farmer of the state land had to pay the rent and to deliver certain amounts of seeds to the state granary, these amounts differed according to the area of the land.

The amount of corn-seed was preserved in the state granary in order to be given to the same farmer—in case that he will continue in cultivating the land—or to another farmer who will cultivate the land in the next season.

This delivery of corn-seed, achieved a guarantee to the state, that the land will be planted for the next year.

If the farmer could not deliver the amounts of seeds because of the shortage of the harvest, he had to pay the value of it in money to the bank.²

L.1. _Pa-₅ms_ son of _Ms-wr_ was already known from other receipts concerning wheat, two texts are datable to year 26 and 32 of Augustus³ and in a receipt for rent is dated to the Roman period.⁴

L.2. It seems that both _Pṣ-r-Mnt_ and _Pṣ-y-kḥ_ are the tax collectors.

L.3. _ḥr pṣ šḥ.t n ʿṣḥī nṯr"_ for the corn-seed of god's field", it was a land dedicated to a specific god and sometimes exempted from paying taxes in the Ptolemaic period, while in the Roman period it enjoyed all its privileges.⁵

L.4. The amount which _Pa-₅ms_ son of _Ms-wr_ has delivered for the corn-seed is written at the beginning of this line and it is washed out.

3) M.H. 196 Plate III

Potsherd, Brown

7x 9.5 cm., thick. 0.8-1 cm.

Date: Roman

¹ Maha Akeel, "Taxes in Egypt During the Ptolemaic Rule, Through the Texts and Some Demotic Documents (ostraca) from the Collections of the Egyptian Museum – Cairo" (MA diss., University of Cairo, 2003), 8f.

² Mattha, _Demotic Ostraca_, 50; Nur El-Din, _O.Leiden_, 47.

³ Lichtheim, _Demotic Ostraca from Medinet Habu_, nos. 75,100.


Description: The text is incomplete as the ostracon is broken at the left side and at the bottom. There are some scratches which affected the text. The handwriting is big, neat and elegant.

Transliteration:

1) \textit{r.dl} Ta-nw\# t\# rmt.t n\'Pa-iry\" [ ]
2) \textit{n ibt} 4 \textit{\$h.t} sw 7 \textit{sttr} [ ]
3) \textit{\'n bt \$t 12 \'n bt \$t \'x[ ]}
4) \textit{\'n bt kt 6 bt n \textquoteleft Ta-\textasciitilde{h}s(?)} [ ]

Translation:

1) \textit{Ta-nw\#} the wife of \textit{\textasciitilde{P}a-iry\"} has paid [ ]
2) in Choiak, day 7 [ ] stater
3) again emmer 12 silver (pieces), again emmer \textit{\'x\"} silver (piece)
4) again emmer makes 6 kites, emmer of \textquoteleft Ta-\textasciitilde{h}s(?)} [ ]

Notes:

This receipt was issued to a woman called \textit{Ta-nw\#}, she paid in money for a land cultivated with emmer. It seems from lines 2-3 that the payments are in installments.

4) M.H. 4318 R\&V Plate IV \& V.

Potsherd, Brown

6 x 7.5 cm., thick. 0.9-1 cm.

Date: Roman

Description: The text is written on both Recto and Verso and it is incomplete. The Recto the ostracon is broken at the bottom, while it is broken at the left side on the Verso. There is a big space between lines 2 and 3 on the Recto. The ink is faint on the Recto while it is refilled on the Verso. The handwriting is straight and regular.

Transliteration:

Recto:

1) \textit{r.dl} P\#-\textit{\$r-\textasciitilde{H}nsw}
2) \textit{Pa-Dms} s\# \textit{\textasciitilde{T}hwty-i.ir-ti=s}
3) \textit{sw} 2\textasciitilde{2}\textasciitilde{1} (?) \textit{P\#-ti-\textasciitilde{S}bk}
4) [ ] \textquoteleft ......\textquoteright [ ]

Verso:

1) \textit{Hry=\$w} s\# \textquoteleft \textasciitilde{c}3-\textasciitilde{phf}\textquoteright [ ]
2) \textit{Ta-p\#-\$y t\#} [ ]

Translation:

Recto:
1-2) Pz-šr-Ḥnwsw and Pa-Dm3 son of Ṭḥwty-i. ir-ṭi=s have paid
3) 2½(?) (artabas of) wheat Pš-tl-Sbk
4) [ ] 「……」[ ]

Verso:
1) Ḥry=ḥ son of Ṭz-phṭn [ ]
2) Ta-ps-šy the [ ]

Notes:
There are two men who paid this receipt Pz-šr-Ḥnwsw and Pa-Dm3 son of Ṭḥwty-i. ir-ṭi=s. The text on both the Recto and the Verso mentioned some proper names of another man and a woman.

Recto:
It is not clear why the scribe left that big space between the first two lines and the rest of the lines of the text.

Verso:
L.2. word rmt.t n "wife of" is expected to be written after the name of the woman and the definite article t3.

Conclusion:
Both men and women who paid the receipts concerning land could pay them in money and in kind and they could pay either in the year following the year in which the grain was due, or even in the same year.
Plate I

4071

No 1

223
Palate II

4076

No. 2
Plate V

No. 4 Verso
Bibliography

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Dissertations:

- Akeel, Maha, "Taxes in Egypt During the Ptolemaic Rule, Through the Texts and Some Demotic Documents (ostraca) from the Collections of the Egyptian Museum – Cairo", MA diss., University of Cairo, 2003.