

## New lights on the Office of the *w3h mw* (Choachyte) in Thebes in the Late Period

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**Abstract:** The study focuses on the Office of the *w3h mw* (Choachyte) at Thebes during the Late Period, through abnormal hieratic and demotic scripts. While some studies have examined the role of the Choachyte in the Ptolemaic period, research on their role in the Late Period has been inadequate. The choachyte played an important role in social life in ancient Egypt, whether through their work by conducting funeral rites, maintaining burial sites, overseeing the execution of rituals, and performing the libation of water for the soul of the deceased or their prominent appearances in texts related to buying, selling, borrowing, marriage, partnerships, donations, and disputes. In addition, through their participation in group meetings, they (The Choachytes group) endeavor to address and resolve work-related discussions and issues among the members.

The choachyte archives provide a comprehensive view of the social aspects of ancient Egypt. They reveal marriage customs, what happens when disputes between two parties escalate, and the details of buying and selling between individuals. They also provide valuable insights into women's marriage, work, and endowment rights.

This study sheds light on the role of the choachyte through the analysis of abnormal hieratic and demotic texts. It examines the role of women holding the title of Choachyte. It was noted from the texts that a substantial number of women were engaged in this office, whether they held the title of Choachyte or performed the duties of the office without the title.

**Keywords:** Choachyte, *w3h mw*, Abnormal hieratic, Demotic, Late Period.

## أضواء جديدة على وظيفة ألواح مو (الشواشيت) في طيبة في العصر المتأخر

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**المخلص:** تركز الدراسة على وظيفة ألواح مو (الشواشيت) في طيبة في العصر المتأخر من خلال البرديات الهيراطيقية الشاذة والديموطيقية. حاولت بعض الدراسات أن تلقي الضوء على وظيفة الشواشيت في العصر البطلمي، بينما دراسة دوره في العصر المتأخر لم تلقَ العناية الكافية. قد لعب الشواشيت دوراً مهماً في الحياة الاجتماعية في مصر القديمة من خلال ممارستهم لأعمالهم من خلال الشعائر الجنائزية، وصيانة المقابر، والإشراف على أداء الشعائر، وسكب المياه على روح المتوفى، أو من خلال ظهورهم المتكرر في النصوص المتعلقة بالشراء والبيع والاقتراض والزواج، والشراكة، والهبة، والنزاعات. وكذلك من خلال حضورهم اجتماعات الجماعة الخاصة بهم (جماعة الشواشيت) لمحاولة حل مناقشة الأعمال التي تطرأ داخل أعضاء الوظيفة.

تقدم لنا أرشيفات الشواشيت صورة شاملة عن النواحي الاجتماعية في مصر القديمة. تكشف لنا معلومات عن تقاليد الزواج، وما يحدث إذا اشتد نزاع بين طرفين، وتفاصيل البيع والشراء بين الأشخاص. كما قدمت لنا معلومات قيمة عن حقوق المرأة في الزواج، وممارسة العمل، وتقديم الهبات.

تسلط الدراسة الضوء على دور الشواشيت من خلال تحليل البرديات الهيراطيقية الشاذة والديموطيقية، وكذلك محاولة الكشف عن دور المرأة من خلال هذا اللقب، حيث لوحظ العديد من النساء اللاتي انخرطن في هذه الوظيفة، هل حملت النساء لقب الشواشيت أم أدت المهام الوظيفية للقب دون حمله؟

**الكلمات الدالة:** الشواشيت، ألواح مو، البرديات الهيراطيقية الشاذة، البرديات الديموطيقية.

## Introduction:

Many burial workers and officials were responsible for funerary ceremonies in ancient Egypt. Among these, was the title of *w3h mw*<sup>1</sup>. (water pourer)<sup>2</sup>. The Egyptian term *w3h mw* was used to designate a religious ceremony, specifically the “pouring water” in the mortuary cult<sup>3</sup>. The Greek term for *w3h mw*, *χοαχυται* (choachyte), is often used to denote this profession in modern literature. This title has been observed since the Ramesside era<sup>4</sup>. Prayers and offerings to the dead, in particular the offering of water for which the professional title *w3h mw* takes its name, existed as an important aspect of Egyptian funerary ritual that dates to at least the Old Kingdom<sup>5</sup>, and may have been descended from the function of the ka servants (*hm k3*)<sup>6</sup>.

Although none of the archives provide a detailed job description, many responsibilities of *w3h mw* are mentioned indirectly in these sources. The *w3h*

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas Winkler, “On the Longevity of *χοαχυται* in Thebes and Elsewhere”, *JAC* 29 (2014): 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> Water was essential in these funerary cults. In the Old Kingdom (2575–2134 BC), people passing the tombs in the necropolis were called upon by the deceased themselves: “You, who are still living on earth and are passing this grave, pour some water for me!”

Koenraad van Heel, Djekhy, *Son Doing Business in Ancient Egypt*, (Cairo: AUC press, 2012), 58.

<sup>3</sup> Koenraad van Heel, “Use and Meaning of The Egyptian Term *w3h*, in *Village Voices*, edit, Demarée Egberts, (Leiden: Centre of Non-Western Studies, 1992), 19.

<sup>4</sup> The first source **nr.13**, is an unpublished ostrakon in the British Museum from the year of Ramesses IV “ (1) year 5, IV peret 26.this day: coming (2) by city-governor and vizier Neferrpet **to pour water**. (3) he checked the assignment “We have also unpublished text **nr.14**, In it, mention is made of Amonrasonter, crossing the Nile to the west of Thebes **to pour water** “ for the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt : (1) year 5, IV shemu 1 .ferring over to the west of Thebes by Amon, and in Text **nr.15** was written in year 6 of Ramesses IV “ (1) year6, III shemu 16 . Putting Aanakhte to cut stones in the Place of Truth (2) <for> having struck the head of Djaydjay, Payidehu, and Montphapy. (3) **Pouring water** for the kings of upper and Lower Egypt on the day.

(2) Raso[nter] **to pour water** for the kings of upper and Lower Egypt , Van Heel, Use and Meaning of *w3h mw* :21-2.

It is observed that texts from this period utilized the term as a verb rather than as a title assigned to an individual.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Chapman, “The Embalming Ritual of late Period Through Ptolemaic”, (Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 2016), 126.

<sup>6</sup> Servants of the Ka in the Old Kingdom, who used to carry out the material requirements of the dead from primitive family rituals, somewhat represented the role of the eldest son who ensured the continuation and survival of the deceased.

Herman Meulenaere, “Choachyt”, In *LÄ I*, Edited W. Helck and Otto, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975): 957.

The ka was the ‘double’ of the living man or woman, fashioned by the god Khnum of Elephantine on a potter’s wheel together with the person. This ka is often associated with what we would call the soul. Heel, Djekhy, *Son Doing Business*, 60.

The *hm-k3*. Usually known as the *ka*-servant or *ka*-priest, this title is almost omnipresent in Old Kingdom tombs. His main function was to satisfy the necessities of his deceased lord by providing his funerary cult with all kinds of offerings. However, to ensure the proper functioning of the cult and its supply, they also developed functions in the management of the properties allotted to its finances. The service of the *ka* was considered by ancient Egyptians as a communitarian system composed of several members, including women also. This circumstance makes the *hmt-k3* one of the few female ritualists in the Old Kingdom.

Raúl Casado, “Some Notes on The Female Ka Servant in The Old Kingdom”, *PES* XXIII, (2019): 125.

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*mw* acted on behalf of the deceased's relatives to make the funeral arrangements. Their duties typically included delivering the body to an embalmer and purchasing the necessary materials for mummification, as well as obtaining a burial place and transporting mummies to the tomb. After the funeral, the *wꜣḥ mw* maintained the cult of the deceased through regular visits to the burial place to provide offerings such as water, food, and prayers. *wꜣḥ mw* was paid for their services by the relatives of the deceased, and they continued to provide for the mummies until payments stopped<sup>1</sup>.

The *wꜣḥ mw* (choachyte) tended to the deceased after interment by maintaining regular libations and performing other ceremonies for their cult. The ritual was probably enacted regularly with an interval of ten days. The *wꜣḥ mw* (choachytes) were also responsible for the funeral preparations.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of water for the deceased is considered “the discharge of the corpse of Osiris”. Thus, the Egyptians designated water, especially when they offered it to the deceased in the mortuary cult in the form of a libation. Libation was the central rite in the mortuary cult. The choachytes were obliged to offer such a libation every ten days in the tombs of the deceased. In this way, all the deceased buried in the west of Thebes were included in these libations made by Amun of Luxor: May you accept the libations by Amun of Luxor in Djeme on all the first (days of the) decades<sup>3</sup>.

The *wꜣḥ mw* (choachyte) was employed by the family of the deceased, as he took care of the deceased in the cemetery. Perhaps the *wꜣḥ mw* (choachyte) had an office from which he carried out his work, acting as the eldest son to take care of the deceased<sup>4</sup>.

The *wꜣḥ mw* (choachyte) were often paid handsomely for their services. After all, they were responsible for the comfortable and carefree afterlife of their deceased clients by bringing weekly libations<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapman, *The Embalming Ritual*, 127.

<sup>2</sup> Winkler, “The Longevity of *χοαχύται*”, 51.

<sup>3</sup> The libation is intended to bring him the water as a life-endowing substance. The spell is divided into three parts. In the first part, it is stressed that the water is from Horus; the concern is thus the bond between father and son. The water serves here as a sort of cement that is to restore the bond between Osiris and Horus, father and son, that has been torn asunder by death.

The second part calls the water the “Eye of Horus” and states the goal of the libation: the water is supposed to make the heart of the deceased “radiant,” that is, to freshen and revivify it. “Eye of Horus” is the cultic expression for every offering item, not just water.

The third part then explains the water as the discharge that flows out of the deceased himself, a reference to the deceased in his mythic role as Osiris. If the deceased is Osiris, then the water poured out to him has flowed out of himself as Osiris. The water symbolizes life force as a life- fluid that has flowed out of the deceased and is restored to him by means of the libation.

Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, Translated by David Lorton (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 355-57.

<sup>4</sup> Sven Vleeming, “The Office of a Choachyte in the Theban Area”, *P.L. Bat* 27, (1995): 245.

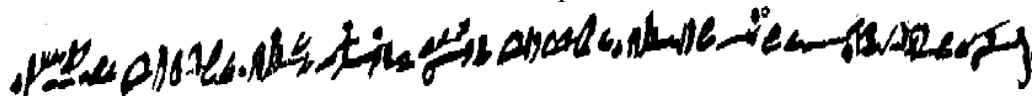
<sup>5</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, *Dealing with The Dead in Ancient Egypt the Funerary Business of Petebaste*, (Cairo: AUC Press, 2021), 19.

The *w3h mw* (choachyte) are frequently mentioned in the abnormal hieratic and demotic documents:

**1-P. Louvre E 2432** (fig.1)

It dates to the reign of King Psamtik I in 635 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 1).

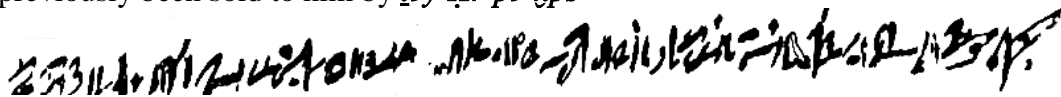
A contract between the *w3h mw t3y-Hr-p3-hpš s3 P3-šr-n-Pth* and a lector priest (*hry hb*) named *P3-di s3 Mnt-ir-di-s*. The contract states that the *w3h mw* is selling a part of his father's tomb in the Theban necropolis to Padi.



"*mntk p3 w3h-mw n p3 1/4 n t3y-is.t n p3 đw i di.k n.i i.bl n t3 st (n) p3 đw P3 hbš-šry-n-Pth*" (line 3)

"You are the choachyte of a quarter of the tomb, now in my possession, which you sold to me, and which is part of the tomb belonging to *P3 hbš-šry-n-Pth*"

Following the sale, *P3-di* transfers to the *w3h mw t3y-Hr-p3-hpš* the revenues of the choachyte's function for a quarter of the tomb in the Theban necropolis, which had previously been sold to him by *t3y-Hr-p3-hpš*



*mr (. i) gr w3h-mw i r.k i rmt.f i t3y(.i) dnyt n t3y(.i) st n p3 đwy ink di(.i) n.k hđ dbn 1 iw mn* (line 6)

"I prefer you than any other Choachyte to attach a part of my tomb, I will give you one Deben of silver for this"

"He has declared that if he chooses another co-owner in the future, he will pay the *w3h mw* a compensation of 1 deben of silver as a penalty". The contract is signed by witnesses and a notary<sup>1</sup>.

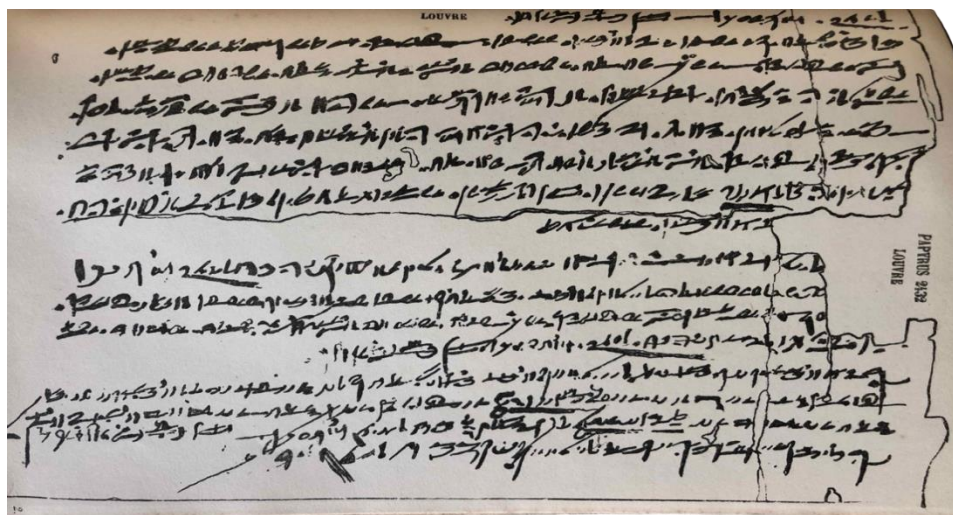


Fig 1. P. Louvre E 2432 Taken from Eugène Revillout, *Quelque textes démotique archaïque* (Paris:1895), 279.

<sup>1</sup> Michel Malinine, *Choix de Texte Juridiques en Hieratique Anormal et en Demotique, première partie* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion,1953), 103; Koenraad Van Heel and Cary Martin, "Dead People Are Money the Abnormal Hieratic Papyrus Louvre N 2432 Revisited", and a Note on The Introduction of Demotic in Sixth Century BC Thebes, *PBSR 37* (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2021):15.

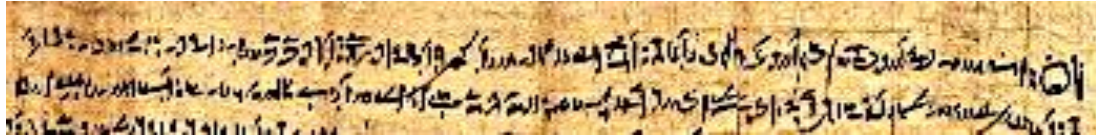
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2-P. Louvre E 9204 (P.Louvre E 9294) (fig.2)

It dates to the reign of King Darius 491 B.C. Demotic (text 2).

A Contract of Sale: The Revenues of the *w3h mw* (Choachyte) Function

The lady Tamenkhawaset is selling the revenues of the *w3h mw* (choachyte) function, which was part of her inheritance from her mother, to the *w3h mw* (choachyte) Pherbes. She declared:



(1) *h3t sp 31 3bd 2 šmw n pr 3 T3rywš dd šhmt t3-šmn-hr w3st s3t sbt n pr šmn(n) t3y m3c hw-s-n-mn mwt.s rwrw n w3h mw n t3 inyt n t3 imnt*

(2)(n) *w3st p3 hr bs s3 ns-šmn-h3p mwt.f irtw-rw dj.k mtš h3tj(i) n p3 h3d t3j.n dnj.t n šht h3t-ntr p3 dmj kw n Wsr s.t n p3 dw.*

(1) Year 31, month 2, season of Shemu of King Darius. The lady *t3-šmn-hr w3st* daughter of the clothes waver of the Temple of Amun in Djeme, *t3y m3c hw-s-n-mn*, her mother *rwrw*, said to the Choachyte of the Valley in the west (2) of Thebes, *hr bs*, son of *ns-šmn-h3p*, his mother *irtw-rw*: You have satisfied my heart with the money for our share in the field, temple, and the city: Osiris ration, tomb. and that she had received an amount of money that was not specifically mentioned<sup>1</sup>.

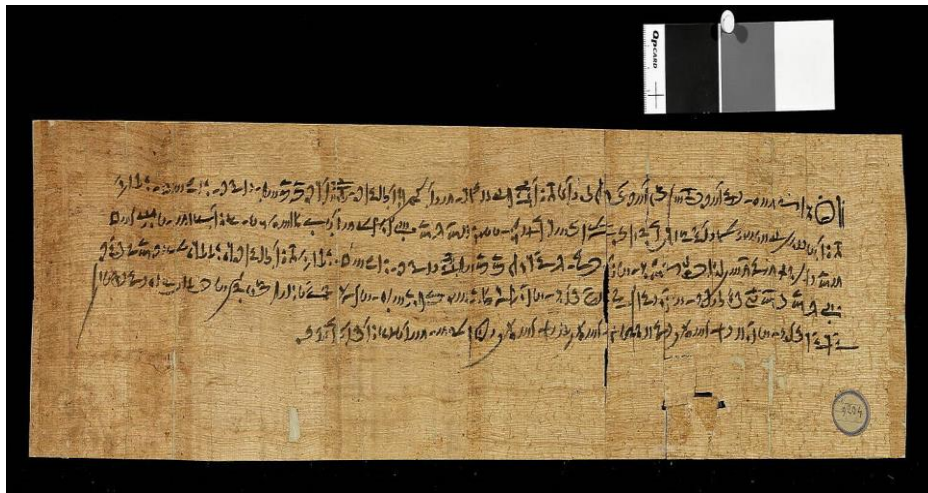


Fig.2 P. Louvre E 9204 (P. Louvre E 9294) Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes

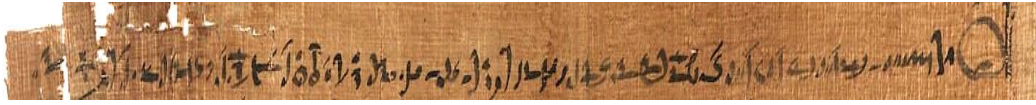
(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003486>

3- P. Louvre E10935 (fig. 3)

It dates to the reign of King Amasis 553 B.C. Demotic (text 3).

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, 113.

This contract pertains to a funerary endowment established for Lady Tsenhor by her son, Psammetek-menkh, in collaboration with the *w3h mw* (Choachyte) Nesmin, who is tasked with the upkeep of Tsenhor's tomb. Psammetek-menkh declared:



(1) *h3t-sp 15 ibd 3 3ht n Pr 3 Th-ms dd P3-s-n-mtk-mnh-ib s3 Hr-(w)d3 mwt.f T3-sn-n-Hr n w3h-mw t3 imn(.t) W3s.t Ns-Min s3 H3c=w-s- Wsir mwt.f Sp-B3st.t*

(1) year 15, the third month of the Akhet season, under Pharaoh Amasis *P3-s-n-mtk-mnh-ib*, son of *Hr-(w)d3*, and whose mother is *T3-sn-n-Hr*, said to the choachyte of the West of Thebes, *Ns-Min*, son of *H3c=w-s- Wsir*, and whose mother is *Sp-B3st.t*



(2) *dj(=j) n.k t3j st3 10 3h k3j nmhw(n) htp i r3 T3-sn-n-Hr t3j(=j) mwt hw st3 1 dmd st3 11 3h ntj hr pr Imn n t3 kh Gbt n p3 imn(t) m h.t st3 2[2]3h.*

(2) I have given you these 10 elevated and free aroures of fields as a foundation for the mouth of *T3-sn-n-Hr*, my mother, plus an additional aroure, making a total of 11 aroures of fields located in the domain of Amon in the district of *kh Gbt*, in the West, taken from a plot of 22 aroures of fields<sup>1</sup>.

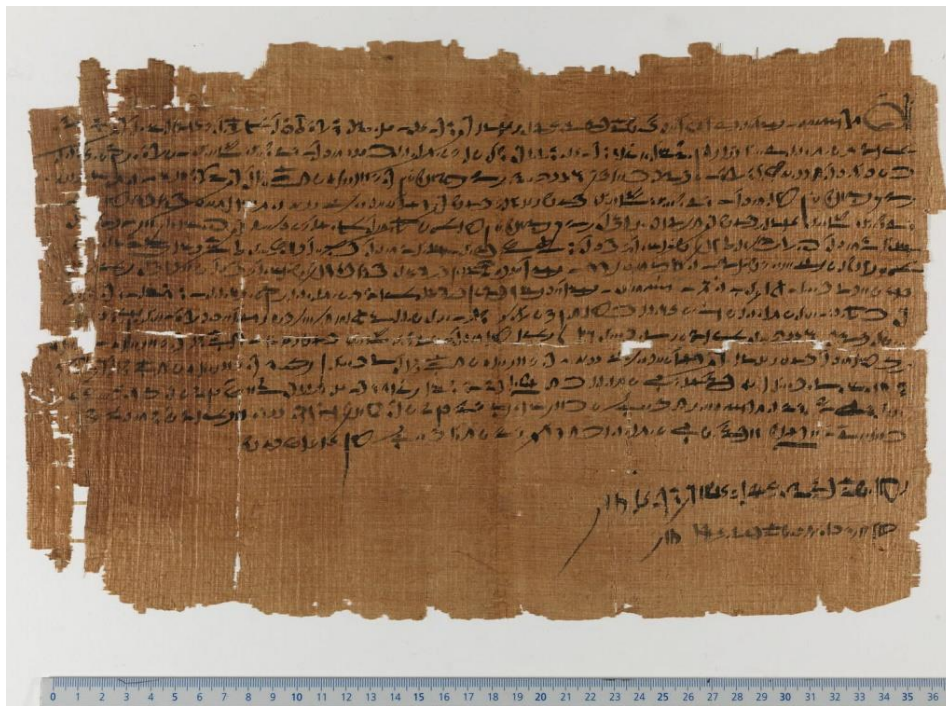


Fig.3 P.Louvre E10935 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes  
(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003520>

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, 126.

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4- P. Louvre E 7836 (fig. 4)

It dates to the reign of King Amasis 535 B.C. Demotic (text 4).

A contract to share the revenues of the *wšḥ mw* (Choachyte) function between the cultivator of the Dominion of Month, Petemonth, and the Choachyte, Ietouroz. Petemonth declared:



“*šḥn.k n.i pꜣj.k ꜣḥ ḥtp.*” (line 2)

“You rented to me your foundation field.”



“*in-īw šmw ḥpr iw.n ir*(line 5)



*pr.t nb sm ntj iw.w ḥpr ḥr-ḥ.t.f n dnj.t 2.*” (line 6)

The forthcoming harvest shall be equitably distributed between the two contracting parties. As outlined in the agreement, Upon the commencement of the harvest season, all cereals and herbs yielded shall be divided into two equal portions<sup>1</sup>.

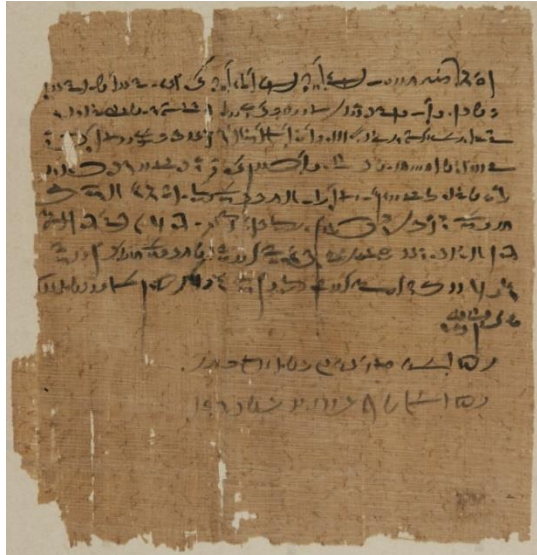


Fig.4 P.Louvre E 7836 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002685>

5- P.Louvre E 7843 (fig.5)

It dates to the reign of King Amasis 535 B.C. Demotic (text 5).

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, 95.

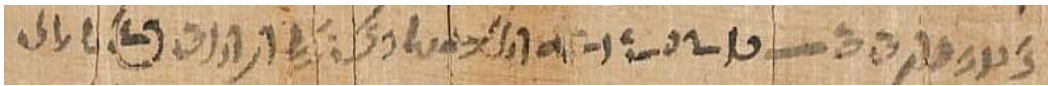


In a partnership contract concerning two tombs, the *w3ḥ mw* (Choachyte) Chaousenmout declared his colleague, the *w3ḥ mw* (Choachyte) Ietourodj, as his co-owner of the two tombs located in the Theban necropolis. The revenues generated from these tombs will be equally divided between them. As stated,



(1) *ḥst sp 35 zbd 4 šmw n pr-ḫ Tḥ-ms dd w3ḥ mw n t3 int ḥ3w-w-s n mwt s3*

(1) Year 35, Month 4, season of *šmw* of King Amasis. The choachyte of the Valley, *ḥ3w-w-s n mwt*, son of



(2) *dd ḥr mwt.f Rwrw n w3ḥ mw n t3 int irtw-rṯ s3 ddḥy mwt.f irtw-r-w mwtk p3y-i*

(2) *ddḥr*, his mother *Rwrw*, said to the Choachyte of the Valley, *irtw-rṯ*, son of *ddḥy*, his mother *irtw-r-w*: You are



(3) *iri-pš n t3 st n p3 ḏw rdī-n n it-nṯr p3-dī-īmn-ns-w-t3.wī s3*

(3) co-owner with me of the tomb in the place of the mountain, which we have given to the god's father *p3-dī-īmn-ns-w-t3.wī*<sup>1</sup>.

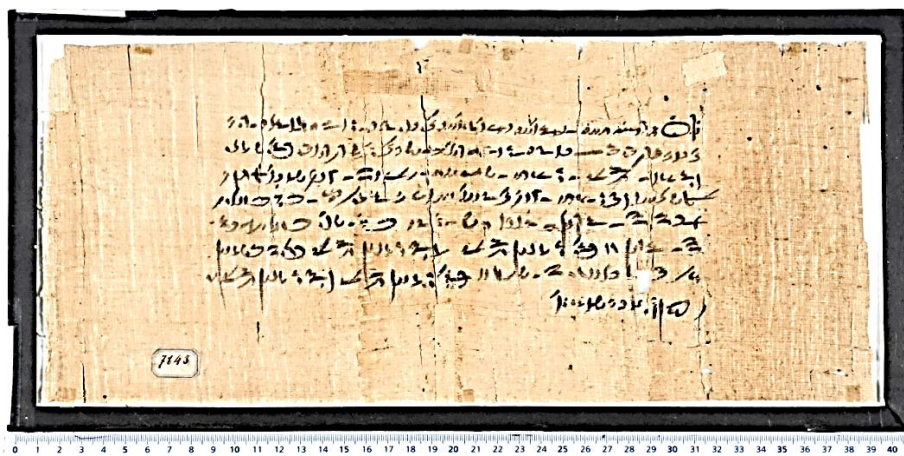


Fig.5 P.Louvre E 7843 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002692>

### 6- P.Louvre E 7128(fig.6)

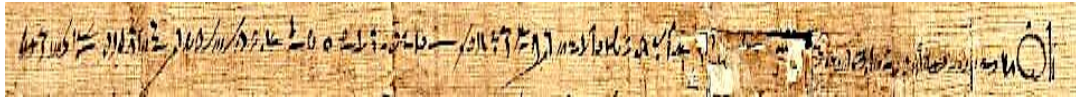
It dates to the reign of King Darius 511 B.C. Demotic (text 6).

The document under consideration is a contract delineating the sale of a plot of land. Under this contract, Teouteoutoi, the supervisor of the necropolis in the western region of Thebes, transfers the ownership of the land to Pesenese, a choachyte from

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, I,108.

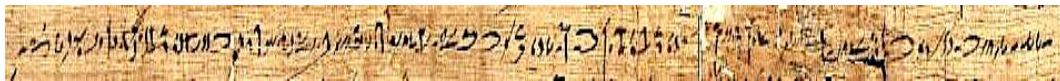
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the valley. Although the precise sum of exchanged money is not specified in the text, it is noted that Teouteoutoi received a satisfactory amount. He expressed his contentment by stating,



(1) *ḥst-sp 12 ibd 2 ʒḥt n pr ʿ3 Trjwš ḏd mr ḥʒs.t n t3[imn.t] n Wʒs Tʒj=w tʒj=w dnj sʒ p3-dj-Imn-İp mwt.f Stʒ-ir.t-bin n wʒḥ-mw n t3 in P3-šr-n-İst sʒ Ḥrjrm mwt.f Bn-İw=w-th.t-s dj.k mtr ḥʒ.t(j)*

(1) Year 12, the second month of the Akhet season under Pharaoh Darius. The overseer of the necropolis in the West of Thebes, *Tʒj=w tʒj=w dnj*, son of *p3-dj-Imn-İp*, and whose mother is *Stʒ-ir.t-bin*, said to the choachyte of the valley, *P3-šr-n-İst*, son of *Ḥrjrm*, and whose mother is *Bn-İw=w-th.t-s*: “You have satisfied my heart ”.



(2) *n p3 ḥd n pʒj pr ntj n İwrh ntj n t3 ḥ.t n Pr ʿ3 Wsir-tn ntj ḥr t3 imn.(t) Wʒs ntj n ḥ.t n P3 ḥf ntj İr mḥ n İtn 5 İ ḥd 500 İ mḥ (n)İtn 5 ʿn ntj-İw (pʒj). f rsj mj.t İmn Pʒj.f mḥt p3 sp n*

(2) With the money from this plot of land, which is undeveloped and located in the tomb of Pharaoh Osorkon in the West of Thebes; (the plot) situated in the destroyed area *ḥf*, measuring 5 cubits of ground, or 500 square cubits, with 5 cubits of ground to the south of which lies the property of Amun and to the north of which it remains.

“You have satisfied my heart with the money (equivalent to the price) of this place”<sup>1</sup>.

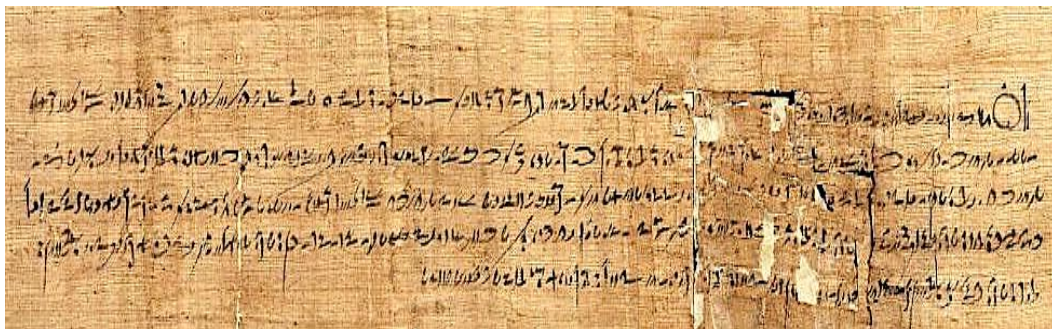


Fig.6 P.Louvre E 7128 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes  
(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003413>

7- P.Louvre E 7839 (fig.7)

It dates to the reign of King Amasis 533 B.C. Demotic (text 7).

The document represents a lease agreement in which the beekeeper associated with the Montu estate leases a parcel of land from the choachyte of the valley. The agreement stipulates that the revenue generated from the harvest will be equally divided between the two parties. The beekeeper of the Montu estate stated,

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, 85.



“*shn.k n.i p3j.k 3h htp*” (line 3)<sup>1</sup>.

“You have leased to me your foundation field”.



*rdi-w n.k r-r(n) tz hwt hm-ntr imn dd-hy sz Bs-mwt.* (line 4)

which was given to you for the tomb of the prophet of Amon, *dd-hy* son of *Bs-mwt*

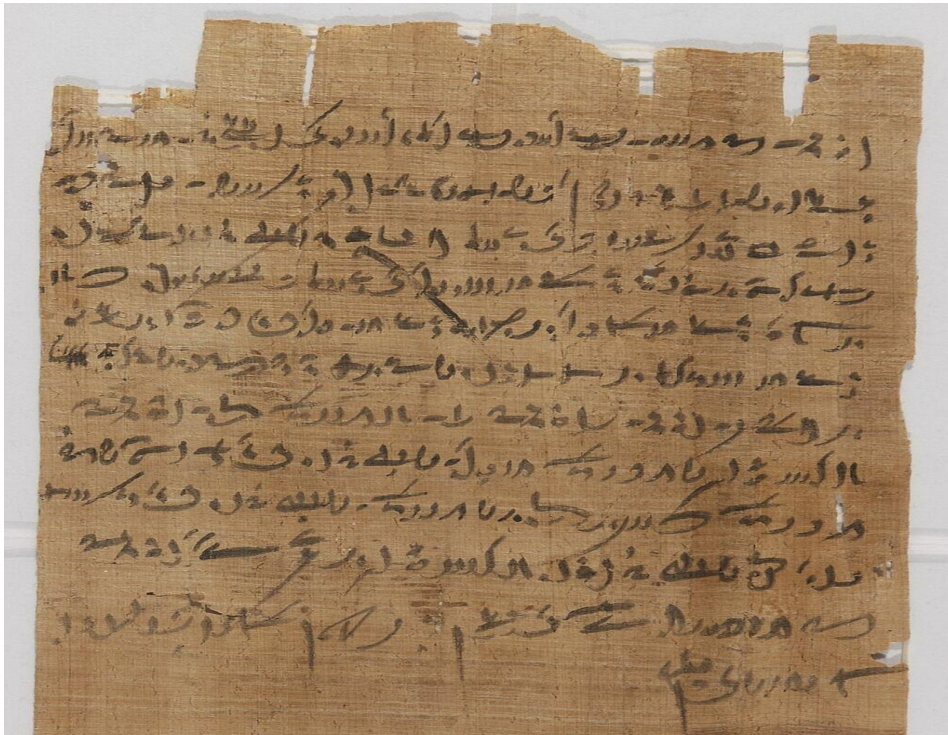


Fig.7 P.Louvre E 7839 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002688>

**8- P.Louvre E3228 Étiq .B Carton E (fig.8)**

It probably dates to the reign of Taharqa year 13 (704 B.C) Abnormal hieratic (text 8).

The borrowing contract details that the Choachyte, *P3-di-B3st.t*, son of *P3-di-Imn-Ip*, borrows 22 1/2 sacks of emmer corn from *Ns-Hnsw-wn-nh*, the priest of the god Amon and scribe of the royal correspondence. *P3-di-B3st.t* commits to repaying the borrowed amount within one month and four days.

<sup>1</sup> George Hughes, *Saite Demotic Land Leases*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1952), 71.

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“*ink dj.t n.k p3 22 gs... bdt(n) t3 (j.k)ip.t n pr . “dj(.i) st n.k iw mn-dj mdt”* . (line 2)

"I will give you the 22 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> sacks of emmer corn measured with your *ipt-n-pr*(measure)".



[ *Ns-hnsw-wn-nh s3 n dd- hr*] *ink dit n.k p3(h3r) 22 gs bdt(n t3y.k) ipt (n)h3t-sp 13 ibd 4 3ht rḳ* (line 3)

[ *Ns-hnsw-wn-nh*, son of *dd-hr*] I will give you 22.5 ardeb of wheat with your measure *ipt* in the thirteenth year, the fourth month of the season of Akhet, on the thirtieth day.



*iw.w...[.ir iw.w h]wš i p3 ssw iw hpri sw msy n t3i*(line 4)

[And] if the specified payment date is breached, it will incur an initial interest increase on the mentioned amount<sup>1</sup>.

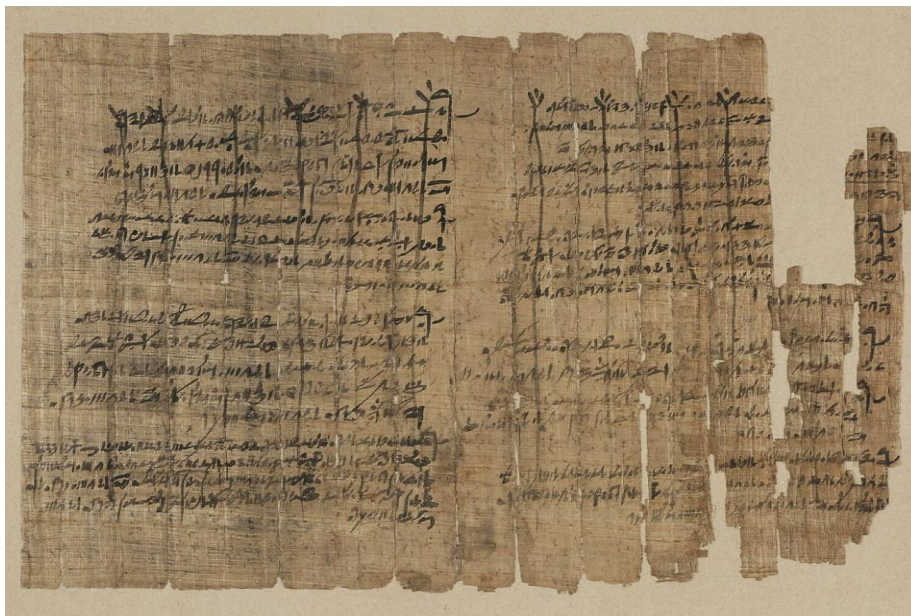


Fig.8 P.Louvre E3228 Étiqu .B Carton E Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003134>

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, 3.

9- P.British 10113 (fig.9)

It dates to the reign of King Apries 596 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 9).

Borrowing Contract

Hepiy has formally acknowledged the receipt of one Deben of silver from the choachyte Taint. He is contractually obligated to repay this amount within six months.



“šp (j) n.k p3 ḥd dbn 1 pr ḥd Nīw.t. “(line 2)

I received from you a deben of silver from the Treasury of Thebes.



tm dīt sw n.k (n) ḥst-sp 21 ibd 4 zḥt iw.w ḥpr i ir msy ḳd 1/3 n p3 1 dbn ḥd n p3 ibd iw bn irw ḥc (line 4)

If I do not repay you in the twenty-first year, the fourth month of the Akhet season, interest will accrue at a rate of 1/3 of the two Deben per month without interruption<sup>1</sup>.



n ms n ibd nb rnpt nb nty iw.w irw irw n.i i.irw m-s3(.i) i.d3d3 n (n3) iw3.w(line 5)

Throughout each month(or)for the year that you will remain with me, you can request guarantees from me<sup>2</sup>.

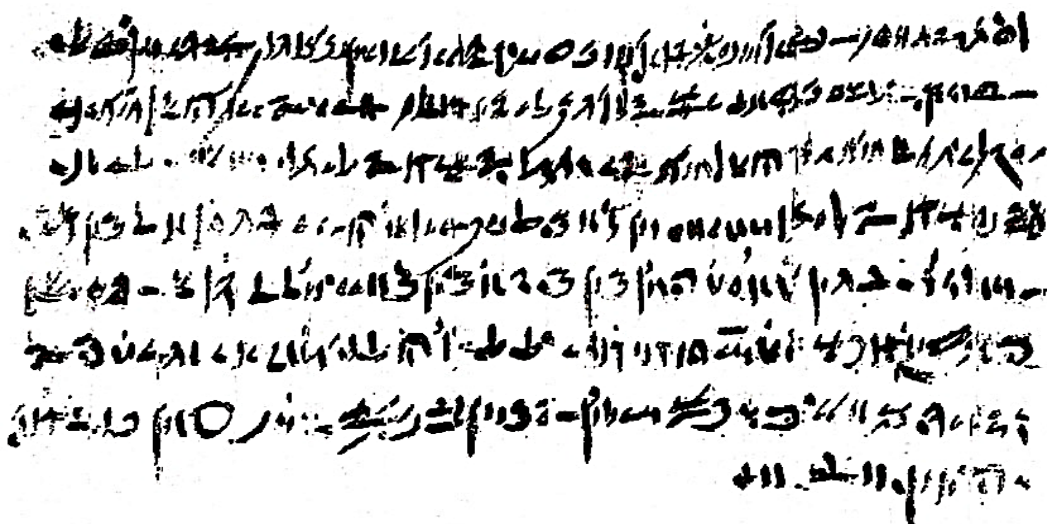


Fig.9 P.British 10113, Koenraad Van Heel, An Abnormal Hieratic Reading book facile I, Leiden, 2013, 12.

<sup>1</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, *Abnormal Hieratic and Early Demotic Texts collected by the ban Choachytes in The Regin of Amasis*, (PhD.diss., University of Leiden, 1995), 232.

<sup>2</sup> Van Heel, 229-30

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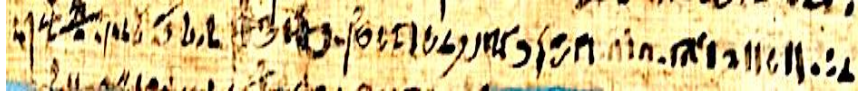
**10- P.Louvre E3228 Étiq.E Carton D (fig.10)**

It dates to the reign of King Shabaka 707 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 10).

The lady Tayfiuiu, daughter of Paytjau, hereby declares the sale of her slave, Montirdis, to the choachyte Petoubaste. The transaction is conducted in exchange for two Deben 2 1/2 kite of silver.



(line 2)

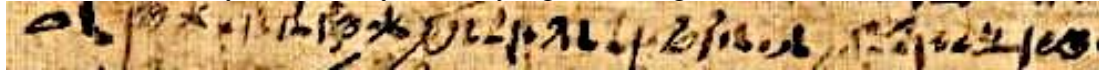


(line 3)

*šp (j) n.k p3 (line 2) dbn 2 kd.t 2 gs ḥd n pr Ḥry-šf r.ḏb3.t.f (line 3)*

I received from you 2 Deben, 2 and a half kites of silver from the Treasury of Thebes.

This contract is solemnly affirmed under a strict oath, ensuring no individual can contest its validity. The notary has duly signed the agreement<sup>1</sup>.



*ḏd.s ḥnh Ḥmn ḥnh Pr-3 snb.f dit n.f Ḥmn p3 kn bn st m dit(.i) šry šrt (line 7)*

She declared, By the life of Amun and the life of the king, who is in good health, and by the right of Amun who grants him victory, I have neither son nor daughter.



*sn snt rmt nb n p3 t3 ḏr.f iw.w rh mdw n-īm.f ḏw3 ḥr-s3 ḏw3 ir (line 8)*

Brother, sister, and no one in the entire land (is able) to dispute this matter from Now

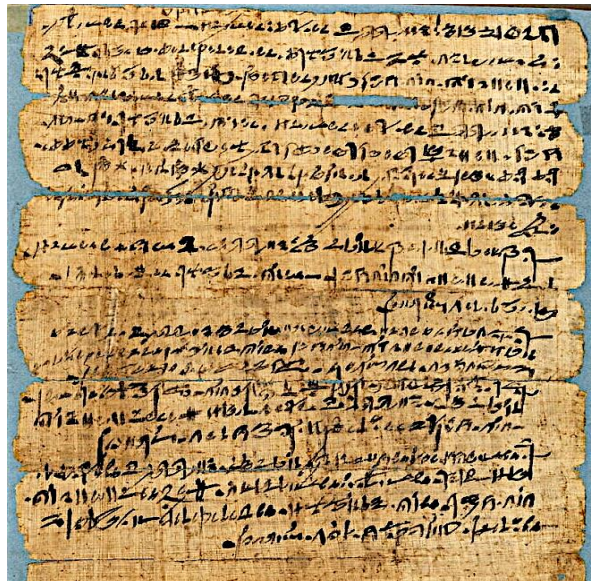


Fig.10 P.Louvre E3228 Étiq.E Carton D Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003411>

<sup>1</sup> Bernadette Menu, “les Rapports de Dépendance en Egypte à l’Époque Saïte et Perse”, *Rev. hist. droit fr. étrang* 55 (1977): 397; Malinine, Choix, I, 36.

11- P.Louvre E 7848 (fig.11)

It dates to the reign of King Amasis 559 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 11).

The document in question is a papyrus detailing the resolution of a conflict concerning a tomb within the Theban necropolis. This dispute involved two groups of choachytes, each consisting of three individuals.

The matter was ultimately resolved through an oath sworn before the lunar deity, Khonso.



(line 7)

[ 'Irt-w] 'Ir.f st3.f i(w).f 'rk .n.n mn(line 6) di md i.hr=sw n-t3y p3 hrw r- hry Bn st m-di.n sn snt hry hryt [rm]t nb n p3 t3 dr.f iw=w rh ii i = (line 7)

If he withdraws himself, he will swear for us: I do not have a word concerning it, from today onward, they are not with us, brother, sister, master, mistress, any man on the entire earth they are being able to come to you<sup>1</sup>.

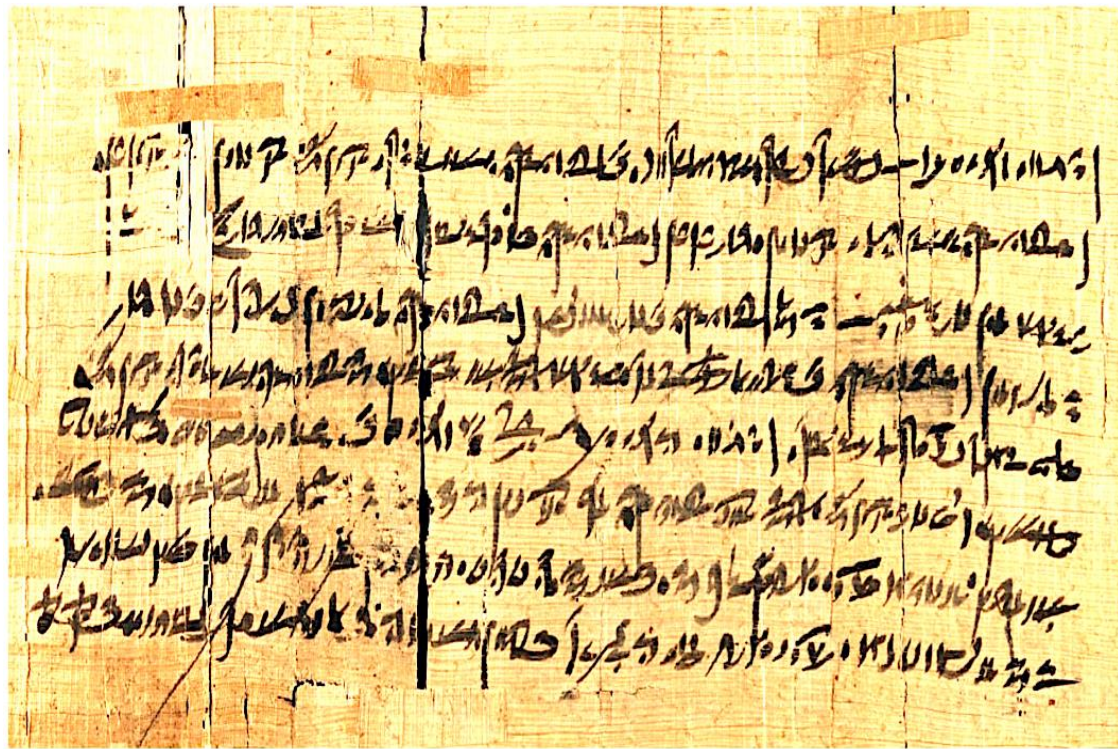


Fig.11 P.Louvre E 7848 Koenraad Van Heel, *An Abnormal Hieratic Reading book facile II*, Leiden, 2013, 10.

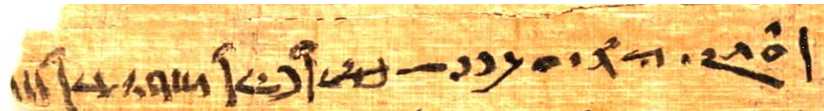
<sup>1</sup> Van Heel, *Abnormal Hieratic*, 93; Damien Labordère, "The Saite Period the Emergence of a Mediterranean Power", In *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, edit Juan García, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1023.

New lights on the Office of the *wšh mw* (Choachyte) in Thebes in the Late Period

12- P.Louvre E 7847 (fig.12)

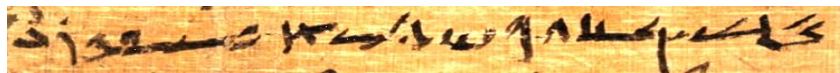
It dates to the reign of King Amasis 552 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 12).

The papyrus documents the resolution of a dispute concerning the delayed payment of proceeds from a piece of land. The land was shared between the Choachyte, Djekhy, son of Testmont, who was exploiting the plot owned by Pakharkhonsu in exchange for a specified amount of harvest. Due to Djekhy's delay in payment, a conflict ensued. The matter was resolved when Djekhy paid the agreed-upon amount of harvest. As proof of payment, Pakharkhonsu declared:



(1) *hst-sp 19 ibd 2 šmw (sw)25 n Pr-š Tḥ-ms*

(1) Year 19, 2<sup>nd</sup> month of the *šmw*-season(day) 25 under Pharaon Amasis



(2) *ḏd sdm st mš(.t) P3-Hr-Hnsw s3 N3-mnh-Imn*

(2) Has said the servant of the place of Truth *P3-Hr-Hnsw* son of *N3-mnh-Imn*



(3) *Ip mwt.f Htp Imn n wšh-mw ḏd-hy*

(3) *Ip*, his mother being Hetepamon, to the choachyte *ḏd-hy*



(4) *s3 dj-s-Mnt dj.k mtr h3.t(j) n t3j(j) dnj.t*

(4) Son of *dj-s-Mnt* You have caused my heart to be satisfied with my share of a partner for my land<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Van Heel, *Abnormal Hieratic*, 120.



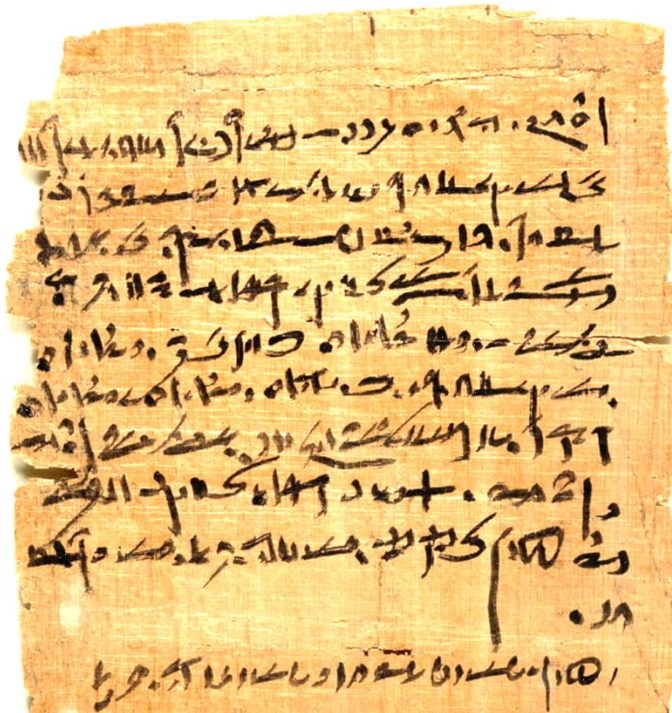


Fig.12 P.Louvre E 7847 Van Heel, Abnormal Hieratic Reading Book facile II, 8.

**13- P.Cairo 30657 (fig.13)**

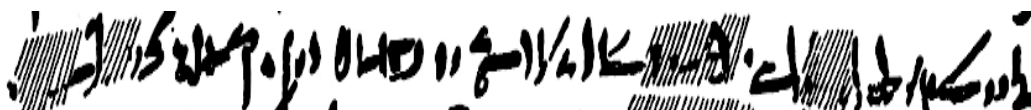
It dates to the reign of King Amasis 547 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 13).

The papyrus documents the resolution of a dispute between the Choachyte, Peteamonip, and his colleague, Rery. Peteamonip had deposited certain goods with Rery for a specified period. Upon requesting the return of his goods, Peteamonip was denied by Rery, leading to a conflict between the two parties. They decided to seek the intervention of the adult council of Choachytes in Thebes, of which they were members, before approaching the court. The council adjudicated in favor of Peteamonip, affirming his right to the goods and mandating their return by Rery. Additionally, the council recommended that Peteamonip documents the settlement on a papyrus to preclude any future disputes from Rery or his descendants. Peteamonip subsequently declared:



*dj.k mtr h3t(j) n nkt.t nb dd n.k.* (line 2)<sup>1</sup>.

You have caused my heart to be satisfied with all the commodities.



<sup>1</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, “Zag Pap Dat Nieuwe Schrift is Echt een stuk Handiger”, *Ta Mery* (2014 /2015): 10 and “The Lost Battle of Peteamonip Son Petehorresne”, *Egitto e Vivino Oriente* 17, (1994): 117.

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*bn iw rh šry šrt m ii r.k iw r-db3 tw h3ty(-i) mty n.im-w* (line 4)

My sons and daughters will not be able to come forth (to make a protest) against you, and my heart is content with that.

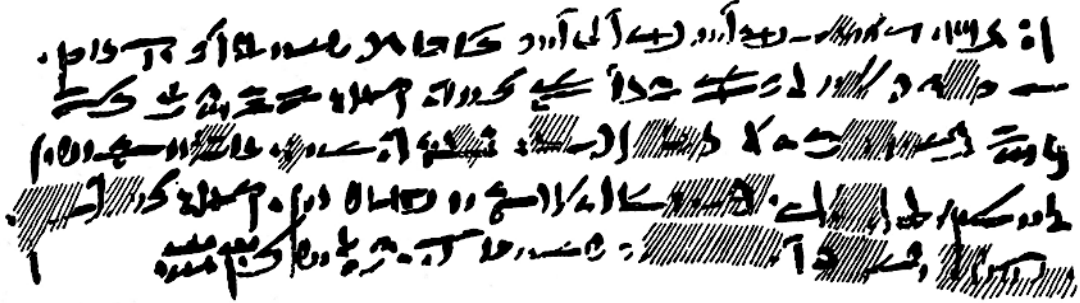


Fig.13 P.Cairo 30657, Van heel, zeg pap dat nieuwe schrift, 106.

14- P.Louvre E 7861(Fig.14)

It dates to the reign of King Amasis 568 B.C, Abnormal hieratic (text 14).

The Papyrus of Settlement of a Dispute:

The choachyte Ousirtais had entrusted certain commodities to the choachyte Djechy, son of Testmont, for safekeeping over a specified period. Upon requesting the return of his goods, Ousirtais was met with a denial from Djechy, leading to a dispute between the two parties. The conflict was ultimately resolved through an oath sworn by Djechy before the lunar deity Chonsemwasetneferhotep, affirming that he no longer possessed the commodities claimed by Ousirtais.

Ousirtais subsequently declared,



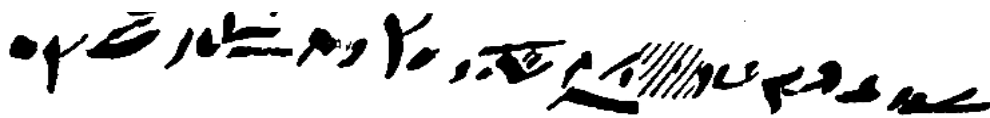
*rk.k n.i m-b3h Hnsw-m-w3st-Nfr-*(line 5)

You have sworn to me in the presence of Chonsemwasetneferhotep



*h3p r db3.t.w dd t3y.w st mn*(line 6)

regarding these items, asserting that they were taken



*dj(j) md i hr.k n t3y.w p3 hrw r-hrj Bn -iw rh*". (line 7)

Henceforth, I hold no grievance against you<sup>1</sup>.

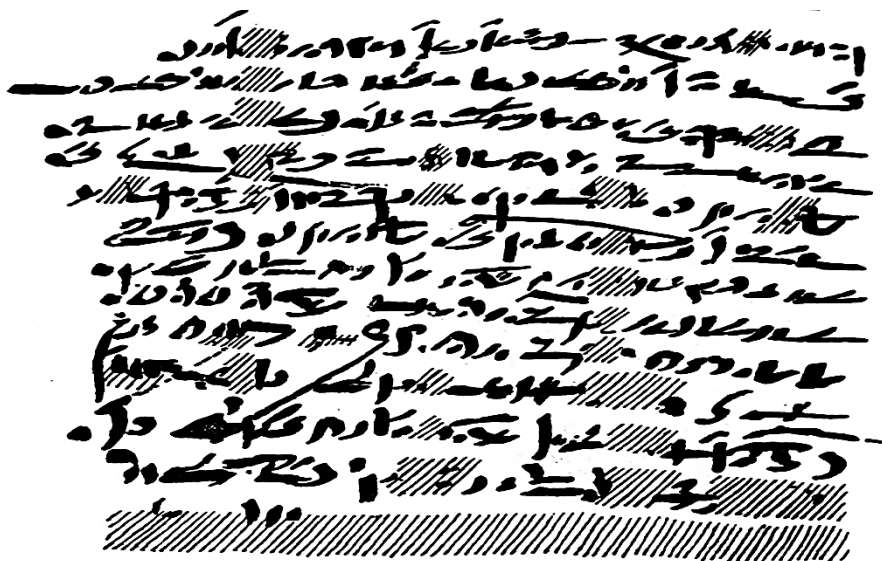


Fig.14 P.Louvre E 7861, Malinine, Deux documents Égyptiens, 222.

15- P.Louvre 7849 (fig.15)

It dates to the reign of King Psamtik II, Abnormal hieratic (text 15).

**Marriage papyrus**

The choachyte Chaousaest joined in matrimony with the daughter of the choachyte Ba wr..., son of NaMankh Imm. As part of this union, Chaousaest declared a dowry for the bride amounting to two deben of silver. He solemnly swore by the life of Amon and the king that, should he divorce his wife or commit a grave sin against her—whether by abandoning her or loving another woman more than her (excluding the crime of adultery)—he would compensate her with an additional two deben of silver. Furthermore, he pledged to transfer all gains accrued during their marriage, along with the property of his father and mother, for the benefit of the children born from this union.



*p3 nkt r.dd.f iw.j r tj.t s n.s šp s.hmt ht 2 bt 50 ʿnh ʿImn ʿnh pr-ʿ3* (line 4)

Of the possessions that he said I will give you.... for the woman (it will be) 2 deben of silver, 50 corn of emmer. He said: as surely as Amun's life and as surely as the king's life.

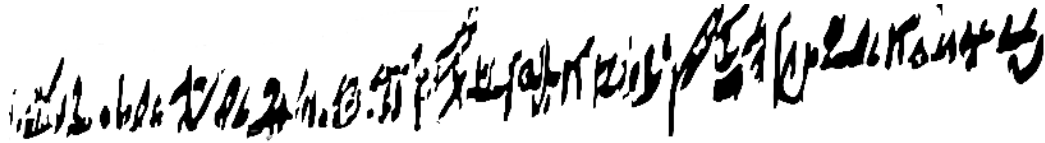


*snb.f tj n.f ʿImn p3 knw ir iw(j) h3ʿ s.hm.t .... Mw.t.s .... t3.j sn.t ntj ink s* (line 5)

<sup>1</sup> Michel Malinine, “Deux Documents Égyptiens Relatifs au Dépôt”, *MDAIK* 16, (1958): 223; Van Heel, *Abnormal Hieratic*, 76.

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Who is in good health and, by the right of Amun who gives him victory, if I divorce the lady..  
. whose mother... my sister who is mine.



*m-tj tj.t t3y.s p3 hn ins mr h3c.s m-r3 pw mr k.t s.hm.t r.r.s p3 bnr p3 bt3* (line 6)

If I committed a grave sin against her, abandoned her, or loved another woman more than he  
r, except for the major crime (i.e., the indecency that my wife might fall into).



*3 ntj iw.w gm.f n s.hm.t ink tj.t n.s p3 2 tbn ht hnc p3 h3r 50 .... Bt ntj it sh hrj p3  
bnr* (line 7)

which is in any woman, so I will give her 2 deben of silver 50 bedt, as mentioned above.



*md3 nb shpr nb ntj iw.i r ir.w irm.s hnc 3h.t itf mwt.j r rn n3j.s hrt.w ntj iw.s .* (line 8)

In addition to every gain, I have made with her, and the property of my father and  
mother, for the benefit of the children I will have by her .

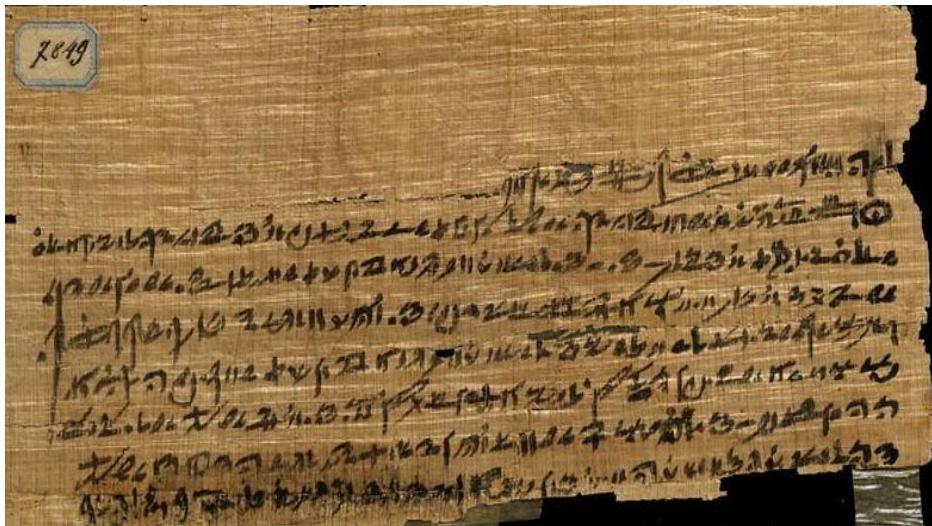


Fig.15 P.Louvre 7849 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

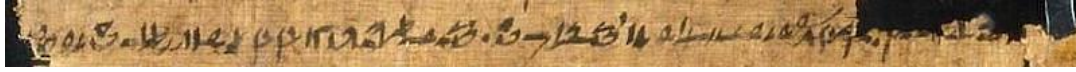
(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002693>

<sup>1</sup> Erich Lüddeckens, *Ägyptische Eheverträge*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1960), 12; Eugène Revillout, *Corpus Papyrorum Aegypti Papyrus Démotique du Louvre*, Troisième Fascicule, (Paris: Parisii, 1893), 32.

16- P.Louvre 7846

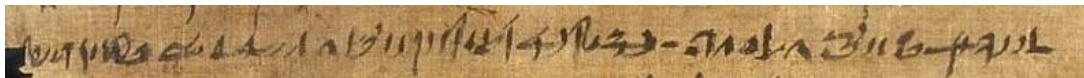
It dates to the reign of King Amasis 549 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 16).

In this document, the husband, Itourodj, a choachyte and son of Peteêsi, declares the invalidity of the marriage papyrus he established seven years ago/ earlier, *t3 šrt*. Consequently, he issues a new marriage papyrus



[ *i.ir w3h-mw*] *Irtw s3 n P3-di-Ist i irw s3t.f n hmt n s.hmt T3-šr(t)-n- mwt.s Rwrw t3y(.f)šr(t) n hmt p3 hrw* (line 2)

[ By the Choachyte] *Irtw* son of *P3-di-Ist* to make a papyrus document the woman *t3 šrt.*, whose mother is *Rwrw*, as his daughter's wife today.



*dm̄ n hm̄.t i.irw nt h3t-sp 15 n Pr-ε3 Th-ms εnh.wd3.snb i.dd n.i iw.f 3k. m-sš it-ntr Imn* (line 9)

“My papyrus document for the wife that I made for you in the fifteenth year of the reign of King Ahmose (Amasis), which you told me was invalid, was written by the priest of Amun”.

The marriage itself remains unaffected by the previous papyrus. However, the renewal likely serves to reaffirm the wife's rights, possibly due to the deterioration of the original document<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Van Heel, *Abnormal Hieratic*, 125; Günter Vittmann, “Der stand der Erforschung des Kursivhieratischen”, *AdW-Mainz* 14, (2015): 392; Francis Griffith, *The Earliest Egyptian Marriage Contacts*, *PSBA*, (1909): 217.

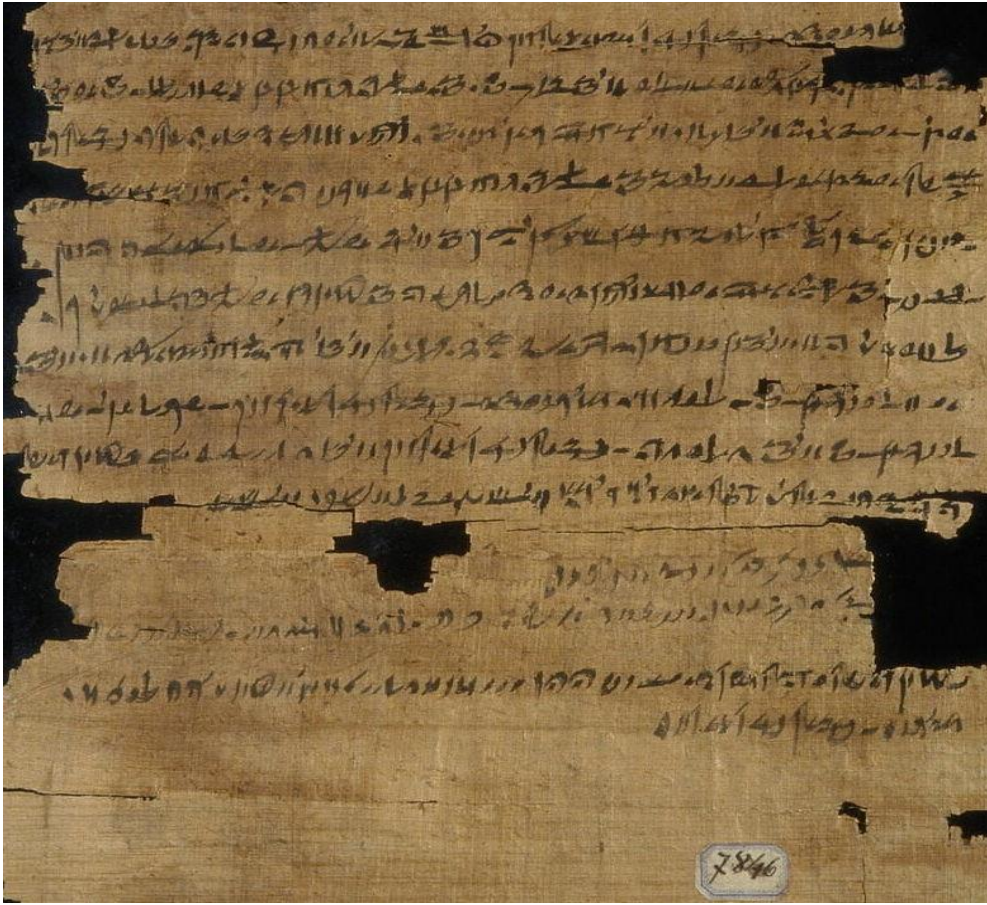


Fig.16 P.Louvre 7846 Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.  
<https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003337> (Accessed 1-10-2024)

17- P.Turin 248 (fig.17)

It dates to the reign of King Psamtik I 617 B.C. Abnormal hieratic (text 17).

The lady Peteese, wife of the priest of Amon and ruler of Thebes, established a charitable endowment for the temple of Osiris in Abydos. This endowment comprised 10 auroras of land, entrusted to the choachyte, Pefherihesi, along with his slaves and children. They were likely tasked with overseeing the funeral cult services and maintaining Peteese's tomb.



(2) *h3 pn dd s-hmt Rr s3t n Hm-Hnsw t3 hmt hm-ntr Imn h3t-p-3 Nwt mr hmw ntr dnj 3b.t p(3)-dj-Is.t s3 n Wn-Imn*

(2) On this day, declared Lady Rer, daughter of *Hm-Hnsw*, wife of the prophet of Amon, Prince of Thebes, chief of the prophets of Abydos Thinite, *p(3)-dj-Is.t*, son of *Wn-Imn*



(5) *hmk.n n.k t3 10 st3.t 3h k3y nmh.w ntj hr Pr-Imn t3 st3-rsj-Nwt.t ntj t3 k3j Twn-Mntw.*

We have donated 10 aroures of privately owned sharaki fields located in the Domain of Amun of the province of Tchetreuiout in the elevated terrain of Hermonthis<sup>1</sup>.

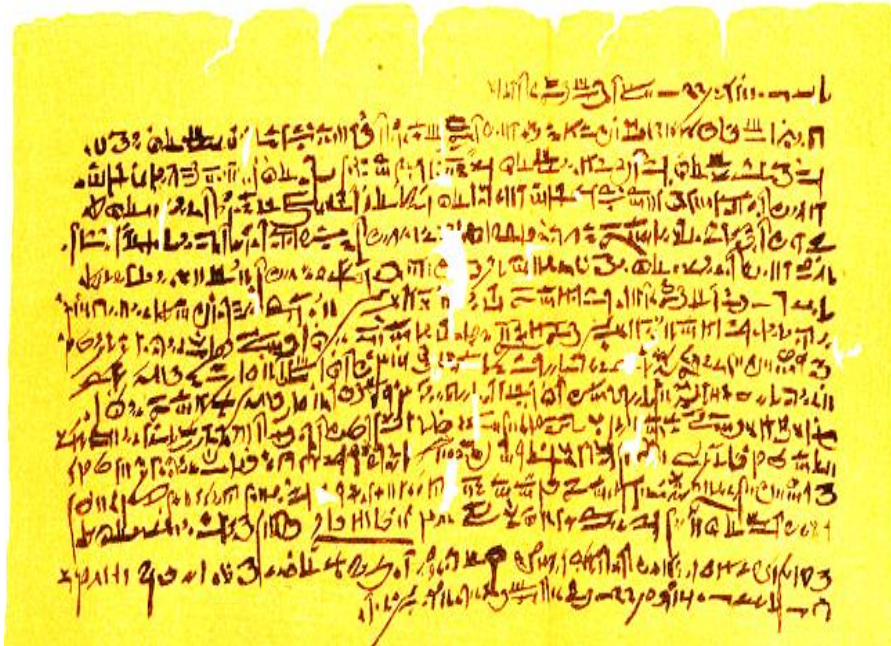
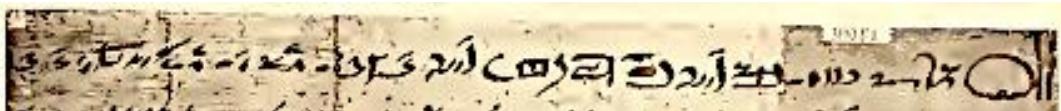


Fig.17 P.Turin 248 Brugsch, H. : grammaire démotique , Berlin , 1855, pl.II.

**18- P.Berlin N 3110**

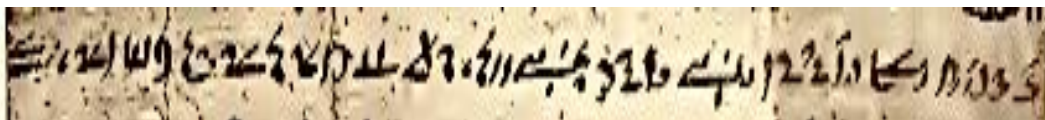
It dates to the reign of King Darius 498 B.C. Demotic (text 18).

This document delineates the terms of an agreement between the farmer, *dd-hr*, and the choachyte, *Ns-hr*. According to this contract, *dd-hr* is obligated to castrate a bull in exchange for a compensation amount that is not specified within the text. In the event of the bull's death, *dd-hr* must either replace the bull with another of the same size and type or compensate *Ns-hr* with five kites of silver. *dd-hr* declared:



(1) *h3t-sp 35 ibd 2 3ht n pr 3 Triwš dd 3m n t3 n T3-šdy-rsi dd-hr s3 n Rrj mwt.f H3<sup>c</sup>. w-s-n-<sup>m</sup>Ist n hm Hr-wn- n.f Ns-hr s3 n P3-dy-Hr ink i.ir(.i) di.t gmi*

(1) Year 35, Month 2, season of Akhet of the King Darius. The farmer of the province of Teschtores, *dd-hr*, Son of Rrj, His mother *H3<sup>c</sup>. w-s-n-<sup>m</sup>Ist* said to the priest of Horwennef, *Ns-hr* son of *P3-dy-Hr* I will ensure that

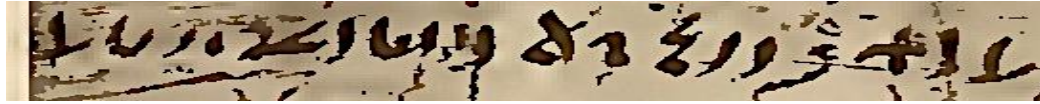


<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix*, I ,117; Christopher Eyre, *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 166; Ariodante Fabretti, *Catalogo Generale dei Musei di Antichita*, Vol. 1, (Rome: Paravia, 1882), 281.

New lights on the Office of the *wšh mw* (Choachyte) in Thebes in the Late Period

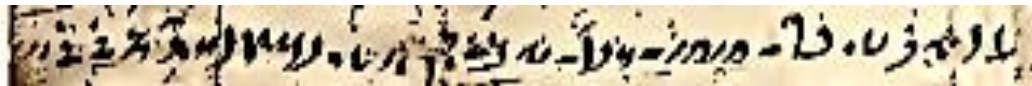
(2) *dd-hr s3 Ns-Imn-htp p3y.k wšh-mw t3y.k ih.t šhm.t bhg km sk3 r di.k n.f nti mtn rn.k r:di n.i dd-hr p3y.k wšh-mw r mn=s iw(.i) di.t wd3-s*

(2) *dd-hr* son of *Ns-Imn-htp* your choachyte, finds your female, spotted, black plow cow that you give him (and) that is marked with your name, *dd-hr* your choachyte, gave me a gaze, ensuring its safety.



(4) *n p3 ʿwi sw3.t=s I iri=w šc h3t-sp 35 3bd 3 3ht(sw) 20 iw(=i) (r)di.t n.f ih(t) šhmt sk3 r p3y=s smd n ih(.t) šc h3t-sp 35 3bd 3 3h.t (sw)20 iw(.i) tm dj.t n.f ih.t-s.hm.t i p3y.s smt n ih.t*

(4) At the altar,) the cow underwent castration) , until the year 35, month 3, the season of Akhet, (day) 20, I will give him a female plow cow according to the type of her cow, until the year 35, month 3, the season of Akhet, (Day) 20. If I don't give him A cow, classified according to her breed.



(5) *iw(.i) dj.t n.f h3 kd.t 5 n pr-h3 n Pth n h3 wd3 r h3 kd.t 4 2/3 1/6 1/10 1/30 1/60 1/60 r h3 kd.t 5 n pr h3 n pth wd3 ʿn šc h3t-sp 35 3bd 3ht ʿrky iw(.i) tm di.t n.f p3i h3.*

(5) until year 35, month 3, season of Akhet, (Day) 20, I will give him 5 silver kites from the treasury of Ptah in full silver, equaling 4 2/3 1/6 1/10 1/30 1/60 1/60 silver kites, equaling again 5 silver kites from the treasury of Ptah in full silver, until year 35, month 3, season of Akhet, last day of the month. If I do not give him these 5 deben of silvers<sup>1</sup>.

The practice of castrating bulls is likely motivated by the desire to enhance their weight, as bulls tend to gain more weight post-castration. Additionally, castration facilitates easier management of the animals, as it renders them more docile.

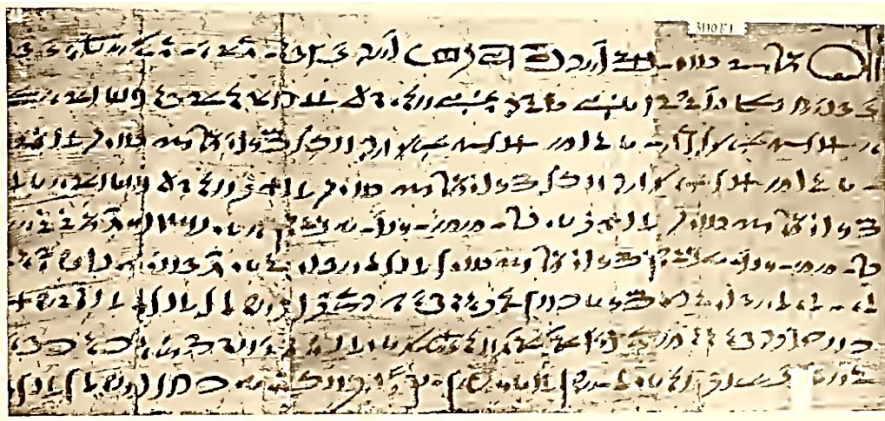


Fig.18 P.Berlin N 3110 Wilhelm Spiegelberg, Demotische Papyrus Aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin (Berlin: Giesecke Devrient, 1902), Pl.I.

19- P.Louvre 3228 G (Fig.19)

Undated, year 3-4 It dates to the reign of King Taharqa. Abnormal hieratic (text 19).

<sup>1</sup> Malinine, *Choix* , 30.



The division of two houses and their appurtenances was conducted among four individuals, three of whom remain unidentified. The name of only one individual is fully preserved: *wšh-mw ḥšw-sw-(n) Ḳs.t sš Pš-di-Ḳnsw*. The division was made with the choachyte Petebaste, son of Pe[teamunip], concerning the house of *N.N.sš...* [...*mw*], our father. The property was divided into four shares, with one share allocated to you<sup>1</sup>.



(4) *pš.n Ḳrm.k n pš pr n* we have divided with you the house of



(5) [*N.N.sš..*] *Mwt pšy.n Ḳt Ḳw.f S dnit Ḳw mntk wᶜ* [N.N.son of...] mut, our father, it being four shares, one belonging to you



(6) [*dnit n.Ḳmw..ḥ*] *nᶜp ʒ šḥš ḥmt Ḳ-hn-Ḳ pš..ᶜʒ*. [share of them..a]nd the copper *šḥš* up to the large.



Fig.19 P.Louvre 3228 G Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.  
(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003331>

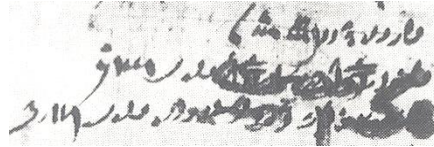
<sup>1</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, “The Archive of the Theban Choachyte Petebaste Son of Peteamunip”, *P.L.Bat* 38, (Leiden: Boston, 2021), 64.

New lights on the Office of the *wšh mw* (Choachyte) in Thebes in the Late Period

**20- P. Louvre E 7840 (Fig.20)**

dated, year 542-538 B.C. Demotic (text 20).

This document is an account papyrus of a cult guild, the Association of Theban Choachytes of the Saite period. United in this association, they met at regular intervals, such as in the first month of the Axt season, which was the beginning of a new year<sup>1</sup>.



Col.II.Line 2-4

*p3i-ḥḏ(n)n3i ms(.w)wp-st* This Silver of these revenues; specification

*p3i-dī-mn s3 Ns-Mn ḥḏ kḏt 4 1/4.* *p3-dī-mn*, son of Esmin: 4 1/4 kite.

*p3-dī-Ḥsir s3 ir.t=w-rt ḥḏ kḏt 3 kḏt*

1/3 Petosiris, son of Itourodj: 3 1/3 silver kites.

The papyrus measures twenty-six by fifty-eight centimeters, which is rather large for a documentary papyrus, and it contains some of the records of the Association of Theban Choachytes between 542 and 538 BC. It records the income of the Association, about 160 grams of silver, with one kite being the tenth of the approximately ninety-one-gram Deben<sup>2</sup>.

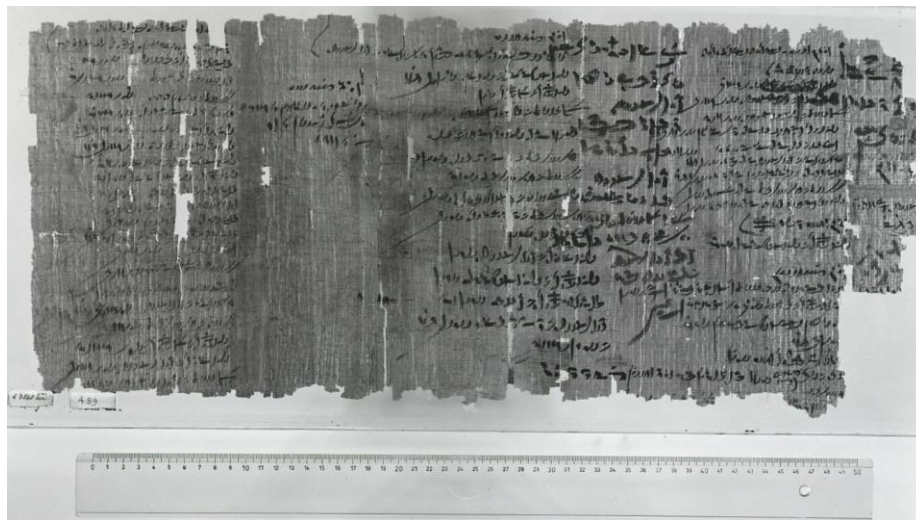


Fig.20 P. Louvre E 7840 musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.  
(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002689>

**21- P. Louvre E3231A**

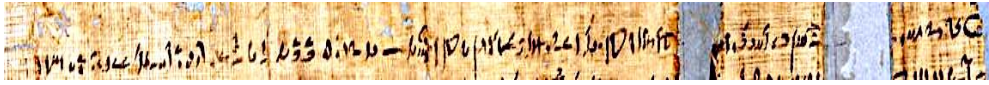
21 September–20 October 497 B.C. Demotic (text 21).

A contractual agreement was established between Ankhefenkhonsu, a scribe of Amun, and Ruru, a female choachyte (*wšh-mw s.ḥmt*), for the performance of funeral

<sup>1</sup> Van Heel, *Abnormal Hieratic*, 144.

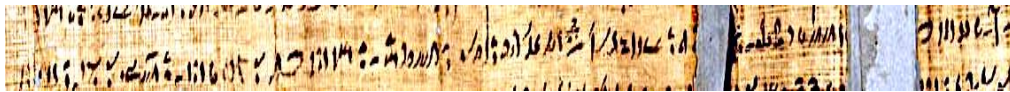
<sup>2</sup> Van Heel, *Djekhy, Son Doing Business*, 118-119.

services for a woman named Tadyipwer. The remuneration for these services comprised four aruras of agricultural land, which included several trees<sup>1</sup>.



(1)[h3t]-sp 25 ibd 2 šmw n[ Pr-3|Trjwš dd [it]ntr [hm-ntr 'Imn-R<sup>c</sup>] -nsw-ntrw šh n 'Imn 'nh=f-n Hnsw s3 Ns-p3j=w-t3.wj p3 šh m3.t-ntr n w3h-mw s.hm.t Rwrw t3 P3-šr-n-Ist mw.t-s T3-sn.t-n-Hr dj(-j)n=t t t3 st3(.t) 4 3h

(1) Year 25, the second month of the season šmw, under Pharaoh Darius. The divine father and divine servant of 'Imn-R<sup>c</sup>, the scribe of Amon 'nh=f-n Hnsw, son of Ns-p3j=w-t3.wj, the scribe of the sacred book, said to the woman-choachyte Rwrw, daughter of P3-šr-n-Ist and T3-sn.t-n-Hr: "I have given you 4 arouras of field."



(2)[ntj] n h.t n P3j(=j) 3h ntj [n t3 k3y p3]ih(j) p3 mhn 'Imn n t3 [h3p n] šhm.t T3-whr s3.t n it ntr Hr mw.t-s T3-whr n3 hjn.w n t3(st3.t) 4 3h ntj hrj p3j=w rsj p3 3h n t3 nšj p3j=w mh3t n3j(=j) 3h(.w)

(2) located within my fields and on the elevated ground of the stable of the milk pot of Amon as a foundation for the woman T3-whr, daughter of the divine father Hr, and whose mother is T3-whr. The neighbors of the 4 arouras above of fields are: to their south, the field of the hairdresser, to their north: my fields<sup>2</sup>.

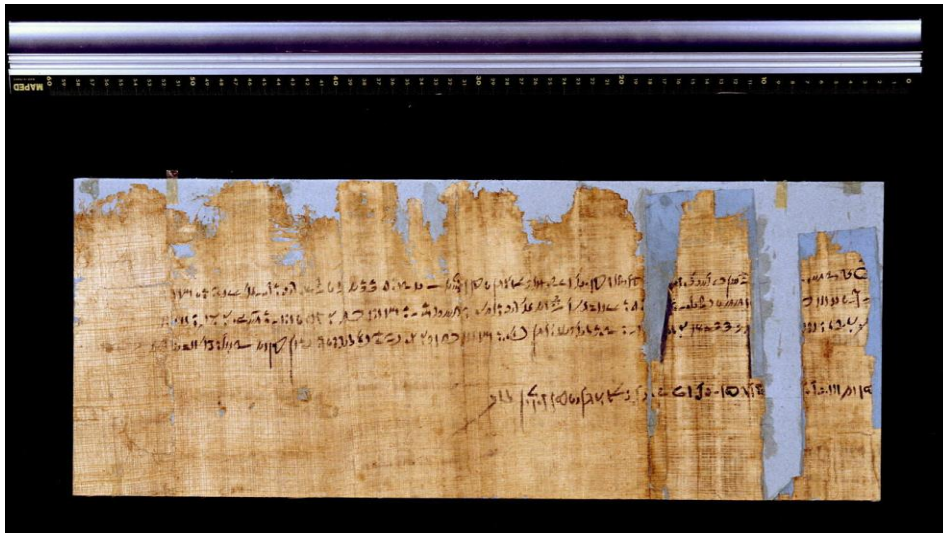


Fig.21 P. Louvre E 3231A musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003409>

<sup>1</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, *Mrs. Tsenhor A Female Entrepreneur in Ancient Egypt*, (Cairo: AUC Press, 2014), 197-98.

<sup>2</sup> Pieter Pestman and Sven Vleeming, *Les papyrus Démotique de Tsenhor, Les archives privées d'une femme égyptienne du temps de Darius I*, Vol I (Leuven: Afdibus Peeters, 1994), 83.

New lights on the Office of the *wšh mw* (Choachyte) in Thebes in the Late Period

22- P. Louvre E 7858 609 B.C. (fig.22)

during the reign of Nekau II Abnormal hieratic (text 22).

A contract between Petiese, son of Paystjenef, and *wšh-mw s.hmt*, the female choachyte Mrs Ituru, daughter of the choachyte Peteamunip, received five aruras of land as a mortuary endowment for his mother, to take care of the needs of Petiese's mother's in the hereafter<sup>1</sup>.

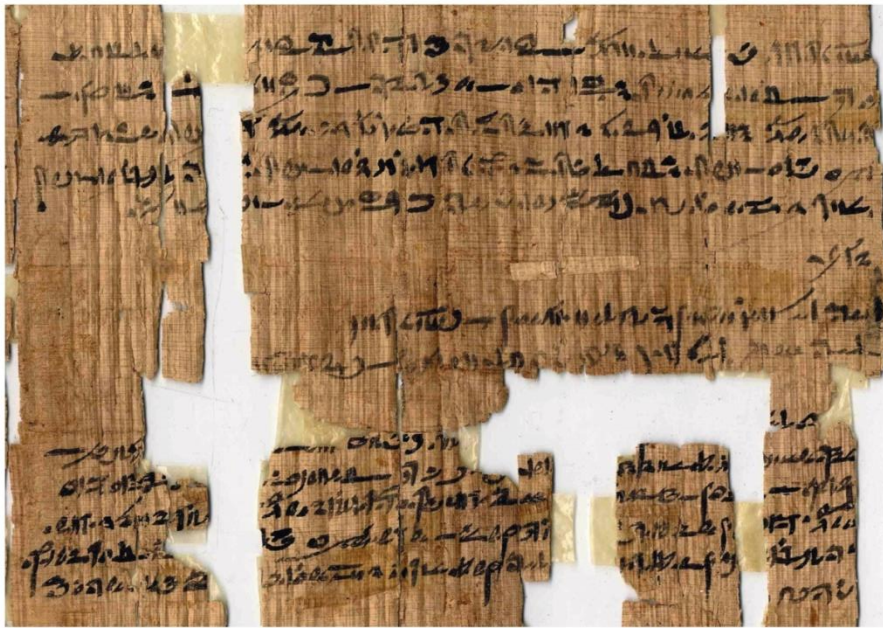


Fig.22 P. Louvre E 7858 Koenraad Van Heel, “P.Louvre E 7858 Another Abnormal Hieratic Puzzle, 48.

23- P. Louvre E 7856 (fig.23)

672 B.C. It dates back to the reign of King Taharka Abnormal hieratic (text 23).

The choachyte Arenamun, son of Herysnef, engaged in a discourse with five individuals, some of whom were his peers, regarding a plot of endowment land allocated to the six of them for cultivation. The identity of the lessor remains uncertain; he could either be a private individual or an official associated with the domain of Amun. Arenamun proclaimed,



(line 5)



(line 6)

“*dī=w n=n pzy šh-[ht]p i skz r=w i p3 nty iw=f(n)*”.

<sup>1</sup> Pestman and Vleeming, 201 ;Koenraad Van Heel, “P.Louvre E 7858 Another Abnormal Hieratic Puzzle”, In *The Workman’s Progress*, Edited by Haring Kaper and Van Walsem (Leuven: Peeters Leuven, Leiden, 2014), 45; Eugène Revillout, *Corpus Papyrorum Aegypti A Revillout et Eisenlohr editum*, papyrus Démotiques du Louvre (Paris: Parisiis, 1885), N.XXIV.

They have bestowed upon us this endowment field to plow... for what it will yield as surplus<sup>1</sup>.

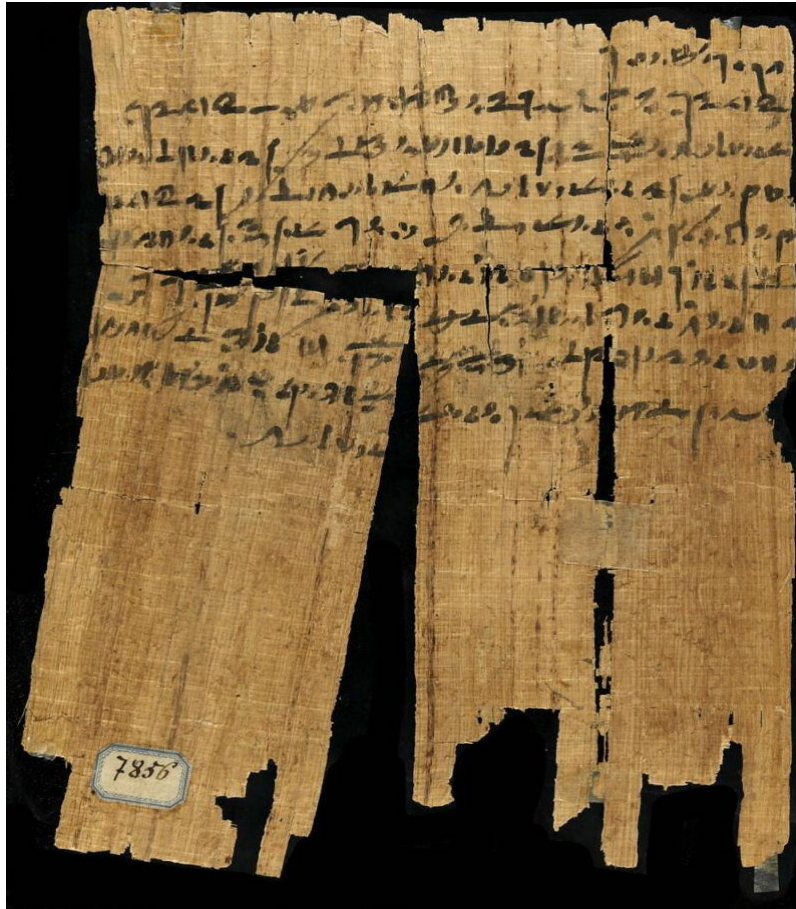
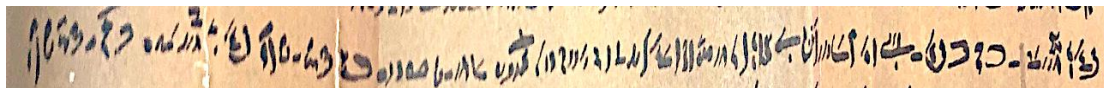


Fig.23 P. Louvre E 7856 Koenraad Van Heel, *An Abnormal Hieratic Reading Book*, (Leiden: Het Leids Papyrologisch Instituut, 2013), 20.

24- P.Bibl.Nat .216 (P.Tsenhor 5)

It dates to the reign of King Darius (516 B.C). Demotic (text 24).

An inheritance division contract from the choachyte (*wšh-mw*) *t3-snt-n-hr*, daughter of the choachyte of the valley *Ns-Mn*, addressed to her eldest son, the choachyte of the valley *P3-dī-Imn-htp*, states:



*mtw.k t3 pš n nty nb nty mtw.i s šht hwt-ntr p3 dmy pr.w 3h b3k.w ḥd ḥmt ḥbs it bdt*  
*ih ʿ3 st n p3 ḏw nty nb nkt (n) p3 t3 .*

<sup>1</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, “Papyrus Louvre E 7856 And recto, Leasing Land in the Reign of Taharka”, *RDE* 49 (1998): 92.

New lights on the Office of the *wšḥ mw* (Choachyte) in Thebes in the Late Period

To you belongs half of everything that belongs to me in the field, in the temple, and the town, including houses, fields, servants, silver, copper, clothing, wheat, emmer, cattle, asses, places in the mountain, and any other property in the land<sup>1</sup>.

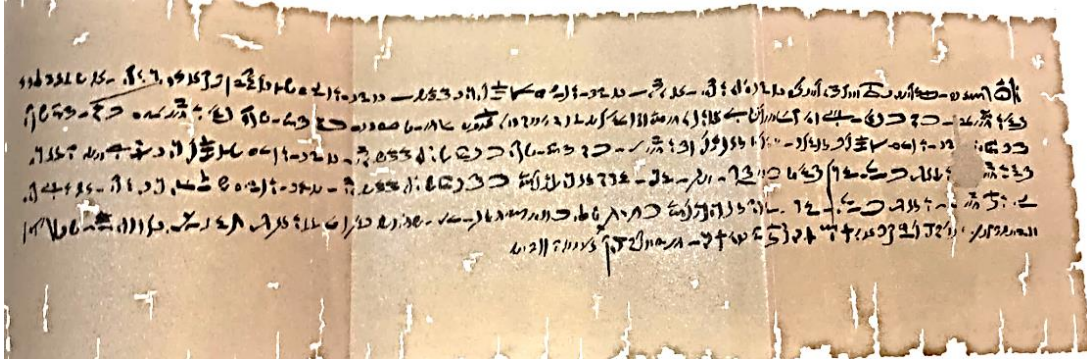


Fig.24 P.Bibl.Nat .216(P.Tsenhor 5) Heinrich Brugsch, Grammaire démotique contenant les principes généraux de la langue et de l'écriture populaires des

Anciens égyptiens, (Berlin: Ferd Dümmler, 1855), 200, pl. III.

25- P.Bibl.Nat .217(P.Tsenhor 5)

It dates to the reign of King Darius (516 B.C). Demotic (text 25).

This document records an inheritance division contract between *wšḥ-mw s.ḥmt*, a female choachyte, and *t3-snt-n-ḥr*, the daughter of *Ns-Mn*, choachyte of the valley. The contract stipulates the following bequest to Rwrw, the daughter of *t3-snt-n-ḥr* and a female choachyte:



*mtw.k t3 pš n nty nb nty mtw.ī s šht ḥwt-ntṛ p3 dmy pr.w šḥ bšk.w ḥd ḥmt ḥbs it bdt  
ih ʿ3 st n p3 ḏw nty nb nkt (n) p3 t3*

To you belongs half of everything which belongs to me in the field, in the temple, and the town: houses, fields, servants, silver, copper, clothing, wheat, emmer, cattle, asses, a place in the mountain, and any other property in the land<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cruz Uribe, “A transfer of property during the Reign of Darius I (P.Bibl.Nat.216 and 217)”, *Enchoria* 9 (1979): 33.

<sup>2</sup> Uribe, “A tranfer of property” :35.

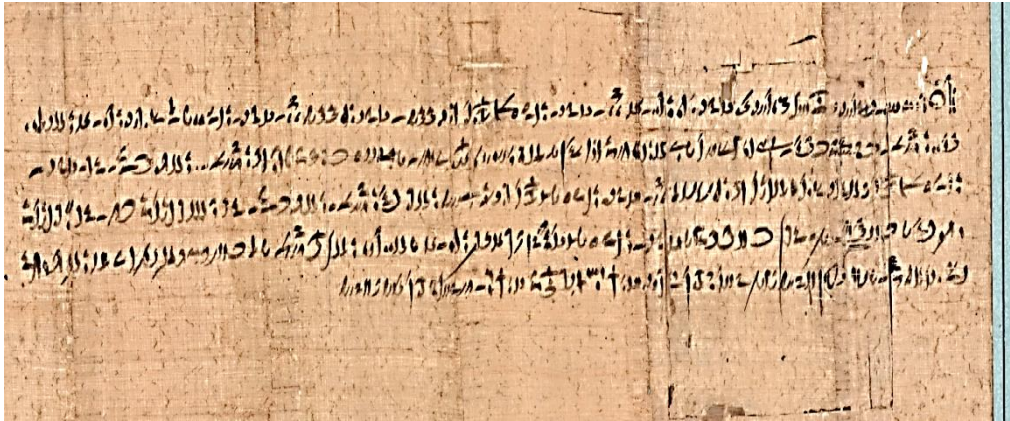


Fig.25 P.Bibl.Nat. 217(P.Tsenhor 6) reside in the bibliothèque Nationale in Paris BNF.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc78079k>

### 26- P. Louvre E 3228 Étiq.F Carton B

It dates to the reign of King Taharqa Year 5. Abnormal hieratic (text 26).

The papyrus of settled accounts details the financial transactions conducted by *P3-di-Hnmw*, son of *Tr.t Hr-r=w*, who acknowledges various payments made by the choachyte *P3-di-B3st.t*, son of *P3-di-Imn-Ipt*, in connection with the burial of his grandparents (*P3-di-Hnmw*). The document states:



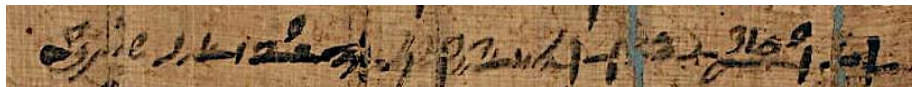
(1) *h3.t-sp 5 ibd 3 šmw(sw)19.*

(1) Regnal year,third month of shemu,(day)19.



(2) *dd P3-di-Hnmw s3 Trt Hr.r=w n w3h-mw P3-di B3st.t s3 P3-di-Imn Ipt*

(2) Has said *P3-di-Hnmw* son *Trt Hr.r=w* to the choachyte *P3-di B3st.t* son of *P3-di-Imn Ipt*



(3) *Ipt(=I) irm-k n3 rmt(.w) n St3-Imn-gw hnc Htp-Is.t t3y.f hm.t.*

(3) I have settled the account with you regarding the people of *St3-Imn-gw* and his wife, *Htp-Is.t*.

This statement is further elaborated as:

The account includes work performed by several individuals, some of whom are noted to have originated from the estate of *St3-Imn-gw* and his wife, *Htp-Is.t* Among these individuals is *Wd3-Hr*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Van Heel, *The Archive of The Theban Choachyte*, 72.

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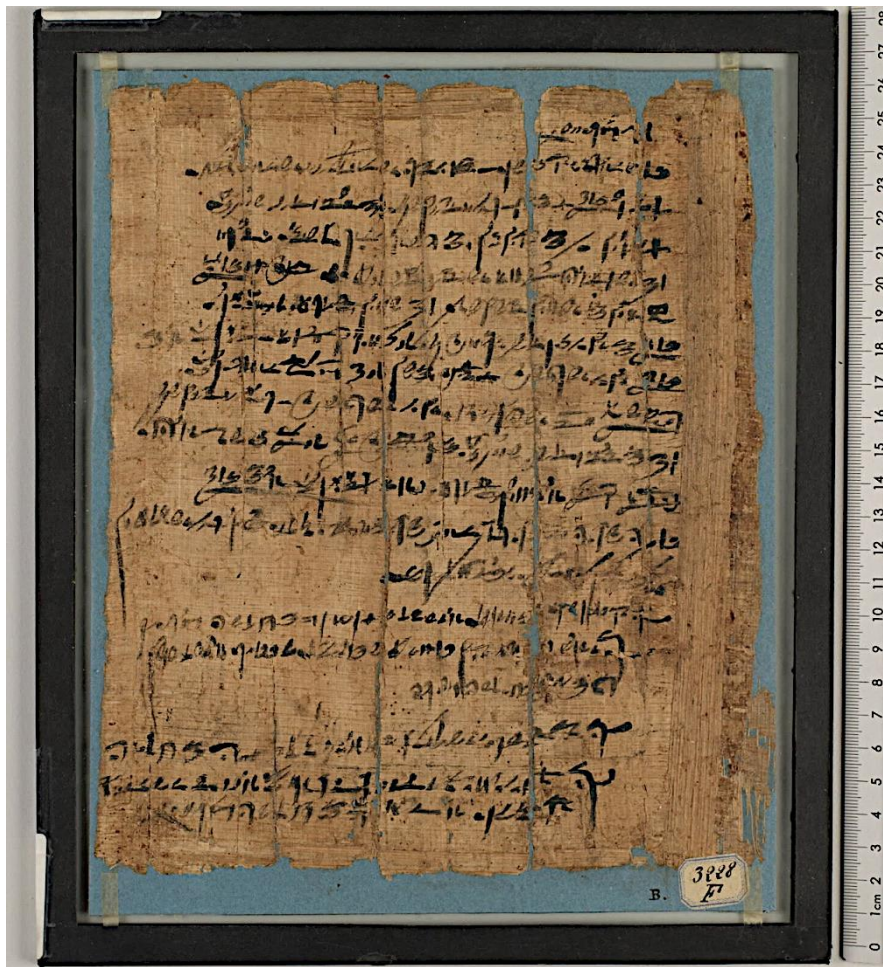


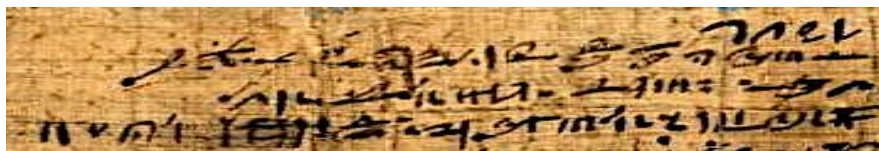
Fig.26 P. Louvre E 3228 Étiq.F Carton B musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003412>

27- P. Louvre E 3228 Étiq.A Carton F (fig.27)

It probably dates to the reign of Taharqa year 15. Abnormal hieratic (text 27)

This document details an account made by *P3-di-B3st.t* concerning the final stage of the embalming process for *T3-pr.t*, daughter of *Ibes*. The account appears to include a private enactment of elements from the Khoiak festival. The record specifies:



*H3.t -sp 15 n3 h3(.w) nty ir hr wšh-mw p3-di-B3st.t s.hmt T3-pr.t mw.t.t-s Ibs* (line 1-3)

Regnal year 15: the costs that were made under the choachyte *p3-di-B3st.t*: (to wit) the woman *T3-pr.t*, her mother being *Ibs*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Van Heel, *The Archive of The Theban Choachyte*, 107.



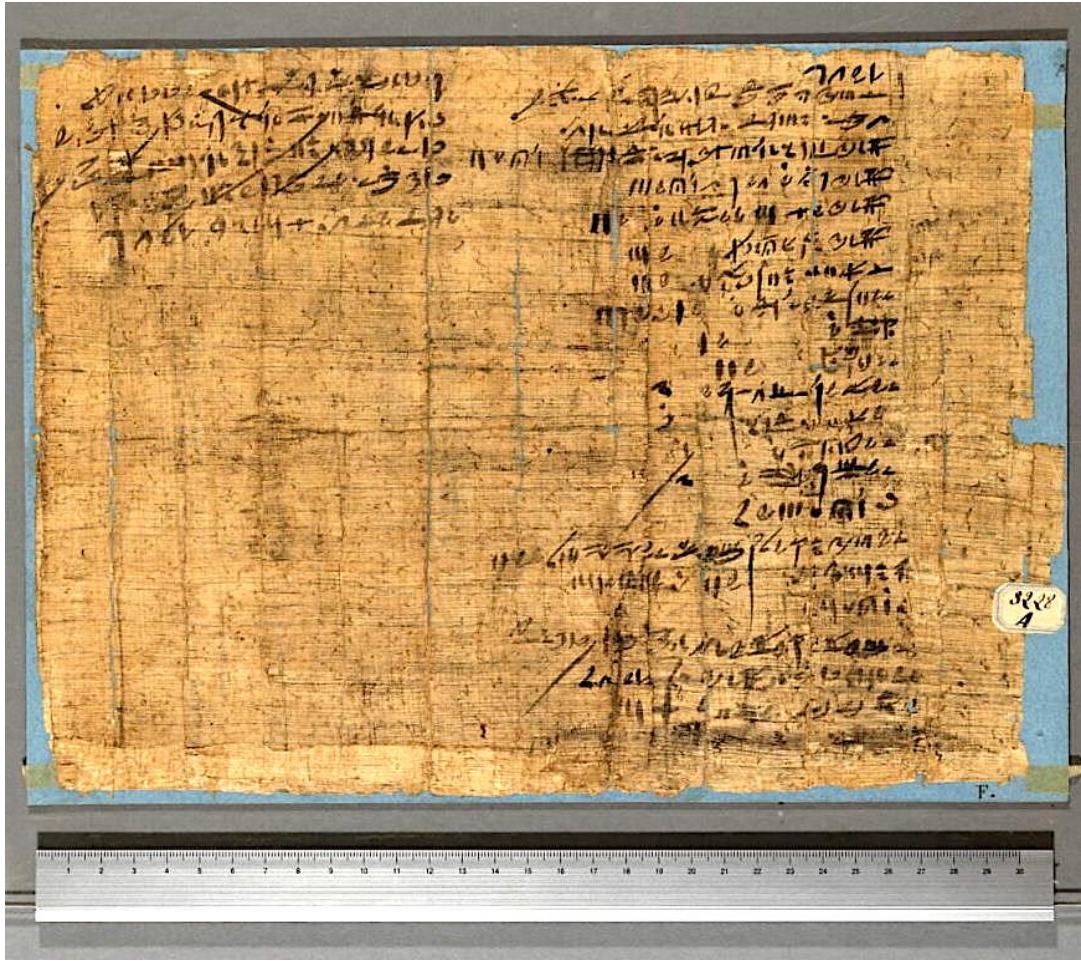


Fig.27 P. Louvre E 3228 Étiq.A Carton F musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes.

(Accessed 1-10-2024) <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010003133>

### From P. Louvre E 2432 (text 1)

The current agreement stipulates that the *wšḥ mw tꜣy-Ḥr-pꜣ-ḥpš sꜣ Pꜣ-šr-n-Pth* received half of the tomb known as The Place of the Mountain as an inheritance from his father *Pꜣ-šr-n-Pth*, subsequently, he sold this portion to *Pꜣ-dī sꜣ Mnt-ir-dī-s* and *Pꜣ-dy*, in turn, resold it to its original owner the *wšḥ mw tꜣy-Ḥr-pꜣ-ḥpš*. Additionally, he shares the revenues for the office of the choachyte with him.

It is evident that, from at least the early reign of Psammetichus I, individuals could own portions of the necropolis. Concurrently, it appears that a fee was required from anyone wishing to be interred in this specific section of the cemetery<sup>1</sup>.

In P. Louvre E 9204 (text 2), it is observed that the lady *tꜣ-imm-ḥr wꜣst* had the right to sell the revenues of the office of *wšḥ mw* (choachyte), despite not holding the title herself. Conversely, in P. Louvre E 3231A (text 21), the lady Ruru is explicitly identified with the title of *wšḥ mw* (choachyte) above her name, indicating

<sup>1</sup> David Aston, "The Saqqara Embalmers Caches Reconsidered Typology and Chronology", *OIA* 204, (2011): 47.

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that some women, like Ruru, did indeed hold this title. This is further corroborated by P. Louvre E 7858 (text 22), where Mrs. Ituru is also designated as a *w3ḥ mw* (choachyte) above her name. Similarly, in P. Bibl. Nat. 216 (text 24) and P. Bibl. Nat. 217 (text 25), the title *w3ḥ mw* (choachyte) is attributed to women, such as *t3-snt-n-ḥr*, confirming that women could and did hold this office.


This evidence collectively suggests that while not all women involved in the choachyte office held the title, there were notable exceptions where women were formally recognized as *w3ḥ mw* (choachytes).

This has been confirmed by the Ostraca from early Ptolemaic O.Berlin P.9699 (254-3 B.C.). It records a payment by the female choachyte *t3 Ḳst t3 w3ḥ mw*, who paid half a kite to Nesmin, son of Hor.<sup>1</sup> We have another example of a female choachyte in P.Louvre E 3266, a division of family property from 197 B.C. In line 8, we read:

*ḥnꜥ t3y=t dni.t 1/3 n n3 sꜥnh.w.. nty iwi w=s s.ḥm.t w3ḥ mw tꜥ-n3 s3.t t3-n-im=w*  
 “With your  $\frac{1}{3}$  shares of the revenues belonging to the women and choachyte Tana, daughter of Tjaenimou<sup>2</sup>. This provides evidence that women occasionally acted as mortuary priests.

*ḥkw n Wsr*

This expression is the input count assigned to the *w3ḥ-mw* function.

**In P. Louvre E10935 (text 3) *Ḳ3j nmḥ.w*:** 

This term means "orphan" a person of lower status, depicted by a child with finger in their mouth. Its earliest appearance was in Pyramid texts and appeared in the texts of the Eleventh dynasty through the Hatnub Graffito: "I protect the widow without a husband and rescue the orphan without a father. It also appeared in literature, such as in "The Complaints of the Eloquent Peasant": You are the father of the orphan, husband of the widow, brother of the divorced, and cloth of the one without a mother. From the eleventh dynasty onward, this term came to represent anyone needing protection due to weakness. It was mentioned in Amarna texts in the tomb of Pahehy: "He who made me strong after I was weak<sup>3</sup>. Later, the term "*nmḥ*" transformed to mean an ordinary person with property rights, not necessarily weak. In the Late period, "*nmḥ*" came to mean a private or free person. Therefore, in the text, it refers to free land, over which the owner has the right to sell.

<sup>1</sup> Girgis Mattha, *Demotic Ostraka*, (Cairo: IFAO, 1945), 112; Brian Muhs, "Tax Receipts, Taxpayers and Taxes in Early Ptolemaic Thebes", *OIP 126* (Chicago: 2005):127.

<sup>2</sup> Meijerink Hogenboom, "Women's Involvement in Choachyte", In *The Archive of Theban Choachyte* Petebaste Son Peteamunip, edit by Koenraad Van Heel, *P.L.Bat 38* :19; Françoise Cénival, "Un Acte de Renonciation Consécutif À un Partage de Revenus Liturgiques Memphites (P. Louvre E 3266)", *BIFAO 71*(1972): 25.

<sup>3</sup> Arlette David, "The *nmḥ* and the paradox of the voiceless in the Eloquent peasant", *JEA*, vol. 97, (2011): 73-85.

**In P.Louvre E 7843 (text 5)**, it is noted that the role of the *w3h mw* (choachyte) was often shared among multiple individuals. This arrangement likely arose because a single choachyte might not have been able to fulfill all the responsibilities associated with the position, particularly when tasked with overseeing multiple tombs simultaneously. Some of these tombs contained up to five hundred mummies, indicating that the workload was substantial enough to necessitate the involvement of more than one choachyte. Consequently, the choachytes would collaborate, sharing the duties and dividing the revenue generated from their efforts.

**In P.Louvre E 7839 (text 7)**, it appears that the beekeeper contributes his efforts towards the exploitation of the land. This involvement is likely due to the choachyte's inability to manage the land personally, possibly owing to time constraints.

**In P.Louvre E3228 Étiq .B Carton E. (text 8).**

By comparing the contract's writing date, *ḥst-sp 13 ibd 3 3ḥt sw 25*, with the repayment date, *ḥst-sp 13 ibd 4 3ḥt ḥrk*, it becomes clear that the borrowing period was one month and four days. Consequently, the specified amount will accrue interest starting the day after the agreed repayment date, the first day of the Peret season, if the repayment date is not adhered to

*"iw.w ...].ir iw.w h[ wš i p3 ssw iw ḥpny sw msy n t3i"* (line:4)-

“[If] the specified date (for payment) is violated, interest will begin to accrue (on the amount mentioned above) starting...”

Similarly, in the British Museum Papyrus No. 10113: *tm dit sw n.k (n) ḥst-sp 21 ibd 4 3ḥt iw.w ḥpr i ir msy kd 1/3 n p3 1 dbnhd n p3 ibd iw bn irw ḥc n ms n i bd nb rnpt nb nty iw.w irw irw n.i* (lines 3-5)

"And if I do not repay you in the twenty-first year, the fourth month of the *3ḥt* interest will begin at the rate of 1/3 the two debts per month without interruption during each month (or)for the year that you will remain with me", the interest terms were specified, ensuring that any delay in repayment would have financial repercussions. Michel Malinne believes that the loan was granted without any interest until the repayment date specified in the contract, and he asserts that this is quite certain, unlike some contracts that include interest. The researcher finds the text less clear regarding whether there is any interest beyond the late payment interest, which is not mentioned in the text. The researcher questions whether the lender provided the loan without interest, suggesting there might have been an agreed-upon loan rate not mentioned in the text.

**In P.Louvre E3228 Étiq.E Carton D (text 10)**

We find that the oath was a prerequisite for the legal procedure and the foundation of the legal relationship in the sale of slaves. It ensured both parties' rights in the event of disputes and prevented any third party from claiming rights over the slave.

**The document P.Louvre E 7848 (text 11)** suggests that the oath served as an expedient resolution mechanism for conflicts between individuals and groups, circumventing the protracted processes of the judicial system. This practice

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underscores the profound religiosity of ancient Egyptians and their intrinsic connection to their religion and deities.

**Based on texts P.Cairo 30657 (text 13)**


Dispute resolution texts included important phrases such as:

“You have caused my heart to be satisfied with all the commodities”.

They also included guarantee clauses to ensure that neither party nor any member of their families, would act against the other

“My sons and daughters will not be able to come forth (to make a protest) against you, and my heart is satisfied with that”. Also, from **Cairo 30657 and P. Louvre E 7840 (text 20)**, it can be posited that the choachytes had a formal association for its members, playing a significant role in mediating disputes between individuals and groups as an alternative to court proceedings. According to the archive of Djekhy & Son, they participated in the meetings of the Association of Theban Choachytes, such as those held on New Year’s Day. They were responsible for managing legal affairs and conflicts among choachytes, collecting the necropolis tax, and performing various other tasks. Towards the end of Amasis’s reign, there were several candidates involved in these activities<sup>1</sup>.

**Referencing the documents P.Louvre E 7847 (text 12) and P.Louvre E 7861 (text 14)**, the Choachyte Djekhy, son of Testmont, is mentioned in the context of delayed payments to his colleague Pakharkhonsu. Additionally, **in text 14**, Djekhy is noted for denying the goods that his colleague, the Choachyte Ousirtais, had deposited with him. These instances suggest that Djekhy, son of Testmont, may have had a questionable reputation in business dealings.

**From P.Louvre 7849 (Text 15)** -  *hmt sšp s*

The gift received by the wife for her virginity here consists of 2 deben (182 grams) of silver and fifty bags of corn (4000 liters). Sometimes, it appears as a sum of money and other times as a grain quantity. This value seems comparable, for instance, to the price of buying a slave in that era. This is not the bride price paid to the father, nor the value received by the wife now that the husband made this statement. Rather, it might be mentioned as a guarantee for the woman that she will be able to support herself and her children in the event of divorce. The price mentioned here, 2 deben and 50 bags of corn, seems reasonable as the wife and her children could likely live comfortably for a year or more with this amount.

If the husband decides to divorce his wife, he must provide her with properties categorized into three distinct groups:

1- Received marriage gift for her virginity *ir iw ḥꜣ s.hmt... ink dit n.s pꜣ 2 dbn* in case of divorce, I am responsible for paying 2 debens.

2- *mꜣꜣ nb st ḥpr iw nb ntt iw.i irw irm..s*



Every profit that has been gained while she is with him.

3- *ꜣḥt it.i mwt.i*

<sup>1</sup> Koenraad Van Heel, “P. Louvre E 7856 C: A Possible Memorandum about Tax Payment from the Eisenlohr Lot”, ZÄS (2019): 31.

A portion of my father's and mother's properties, inherited from their parents, belong to their children in the event of a divorce with children involved. This is their rightful inheritance after their father's death.

Similarly to contemporary practices in Egypt -perhaps inherited from our ancestors -the writing of the dowry "Mu'akhar" is common. The groom pays the dowry only in the case of divorce. Some families also add a certain amount of gold as a guarantee for the bride in case of divorce, especially if the bride's parents have passed away. Some families stipulate dowries ranging from 100.000 to 200.000 EGP, while others include 100 to 300 grams of gold. These traditions are widespread in rural Egypt and among families in Cairo with rural origins or some affluent individuals who see it as a matter of pride and prestige.

**From P. Louvre 7846**   *iw.f 3k* (text 16)

"The previous papyrus" implies that the earlier papyrus was destroyed. Van Heel suggests that it might have become invalid, citing the fact that the previous papyrus was annulled and replaced with a new one after seven years. He also proposes that this might indicate a seven-year trial period for partners to decide whether they wish to continue together. This hypothesis is more likely in this context, where the text was renewed with the birth of new children. However, the researcher completely disagrees with this view, which seems foreign to the conservative Egyptian environment, far removed from the idea of trial periods that might be prevalent in various European circles. The Eastern mindset, both ancient and modern, differs significantly from the Western mindset. The Ancient Egyptians, when approaching marriage, saw in their wives a sphere of homeland, security, and stability, and did not view the marriage as a trial period, whether it succeeded or failed.

**Based on the analysis of (texts 15 and 16),** it is evident that the choachytes exhibited a marked preference for endogamous marriages, choosing to marry within their community. This practice likely served to reinforce social cohesion and maintain the integrity of their cultural and familial ties.

**In Turin 248 (text 17).**

The endowment discussed in the current contract undoubtedly includes responsibilities related to funerary rituals. The land is offered as an endowment to the god under the jurisdiction available to *w3h mw*, and these responsibilities certainly consist of funerary rituals. Van Heel Donker suggests that Pady\_ist might not have been alive at the time of the current transaction, contrary to Griffith's belief that this person was still alive. If Pady-Ist were alive at the time of the current transaction, it would be impossible to understand why the endowment was made through the lady and her children rather than by Pady-Ist, the sole owner of the land. This makes Griffith's interpretation unacceptable.

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**Conclusion:**

By examining the *w3h mw* archives, we can conclude that their role expanded and flourished significantly beyond the traditional function of the *hm k3*, which operated within a limited scope in the tomb. In contrast, *w3h mw* 's activities extended to several tombs and included numerous partnerships with other colleagues. The more ambitious among them invested in private tombs for sale, making profits even while at home. This led to an increase in their wealth and established their trustworthiness to the extent that some individuals entrusted their goods to them during their travels.

During the Late Period, the office of the choachyte experienced significant growth and the individuals holding this position engaged extensively in their professional duties. Choachytes were involved in various economic activities such as buying, selling, lending, and forming partnerships. They were also entrusted with goods, indicating a high level of trust and responsibility. Some choachytes accumulated substantial property and wealth, establishing businesses that generated income even in their absence by sharing revenues with others in exchange for their labor. This evidence suggests that choachytes belonged to the middle class, reflecting their economic stability and social standing.

Women also held the title of choachyte, and some participated in revenue-sharing arrangements. Even those without the title were involved in the function, which had its cult guild. This guild organized their activities and convened regularly, such as during the first month of the *3ht* season, marking the start of the new year, to discuss business matters and address issues.

The legal and financial transactions contained crucial clauses, notably in purchase and sale contracts, where the phrase "of my free will" was essential. The seller had to declare their voluntary agreement to the sale and acknowledge receiving the agreed-upon sum. Additionally, the texts highlighted the role of the oath in safeguarding the buyer's rights, ensuring that the seller or any member of the seller's family could not later contest the terms. The meticulous attention to legal and procedural detail in these ancient texts is a testament to their sophisticated societal structures.

The texts reveal the deep religiosity of the Ancient Egyptians and the importance of the oaths, which were sufficient to resolve disputes between two or more parties. This indicates the profound role of religion in their lives. Oaths were taken in temples, representing customary law, like the role of a village headman or local chief in resolving disputes quickly, avoiding the lengthy and costly legal processes we see today.

By examining the marriage texts, it becomes clear how much the Ancient Egyptians valued women's rights, especially in the event of divorce. The wife would receive her dowry, declared by her husband from the beginning, and all the profit gained by the husband while she was with him. This demonstrates a deep appreciation for the wife's role in acquiring wealth. Furthermore, children's rights were safeguarded by ensuring they received the properties of the husband's parents, reflecting the Ancient Egyptian society's high regard for family and children, and its commitment to protecting their rights. The Ancient Egyptian's meticulous approach

to family and property rights is truly impressive. It shows a society that deeply values justice and fairness.

The texts highlight women's rights to present an endowment on behalf of her husband, showcasing the Ancient Egyptian society's deep appreciation and respect for her. This right exemplifies the significant role women played in maintaining social and familial bonds, and it speaks volumes about their influence and status within their communities.

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