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Four Coptic Ostraca from Kharga Museum

In this paper are published and studied the only four Coptic ostraca kept in the Kharga Museum of the Kharga oasis under serial numbers 1123-1126. They are all potsherds and completely unpublished and found in a place called "El-hesn" ("the fortress") which lies about two kilometers north of "Ain Waqfa" at Ezbet "Maks Qibli" (south of El-kharga). The Photographs were taken by me in November 2008.

The preservation numbers, the dimension, the finder, the provenance and the general description of these ostraca are copied here from the registration file of the Museum but I added a description of both content (which was unknown) and script. Also I suggested the date and made paleographical tables of the letters.

Hereunder marks used in both transcription and translation:

[]	Lacuna in the ostrakon.
[ⲁⲃⲣ]	Lacuna with restored text.
(ⲁⲃⲣ)	In transcription: letters erased entirely and suggested.
(abc)	In translation: words not written in the Coptic text.
< >	Letters omitted by the scribe.
{ ⲁⲃⲣ }	Letters incorrectly written by the scribe.
...	Letters which could not be read.
ⲁⲃⲣ	Letters not clear entirely in the text.
?	Uncertain reading.

O. Kharga Mus.1

Serial number: 1123.

Excavator's No.: 2266/3.

Dimension: 14 x 11.5 cm.

Thickness: 8 mm.

Finder: The Egyptian Excavation of Elwadi Elgedeed archaeological site under supervision of Adel Hussen (1986).

Provenance: MAKES QIBLI-ELHESN, east of the fortress- the 2nd level.

Description: A complete ostrakon, brown pottery- ribbed in the outer part, 10 lines on verso with black ink.

Script: large, regular & the letters are long.

Content: A private letter from "Yuhannes" to ask "Martais" to go to a woman in the north and search for a servant for her because she is sick. For this favor "Martais" will receive hire from the sender.

Transcription

Verso

- 1 - ⲡ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ
- 2 - ⲓⲱⲉⲁⲛⲛⲛⲓ(Ϣ)
- 3 - ⲉⲓϢⲉⲓ ⲉⲓⲱ(ⲓⲛⲉ) ⲉⲙⲁⲣ-
- 4 - ⲧⲏϢ ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲙⲛⲧϢⲕⲟⲛ
- 5 - ⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲓⲧⲏⲧ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲉⲡ-
- 6 - ⲧⲱⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲛⲕⲉⲛⲏⲁⲧⲉ
- 7 - ⲙⲙⲟⲛ ⲉϢⲱⲱⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲧⲉ
- 8 - ⲡⲉⲕⲃⲉⲕⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲛⲉⲉ ⲉⲧⲕ
- 9 - ⲟⲩⲁⲱⲩ ⲉϢⲧⲉⲩ ⲛⲉⲙⲁ[ⲓ]
- 10 - ⲉⲁⲧⲏⲛ

Translation

- 1 - ⲡ I
- 2 - "Yuhannes"
- 3 - I write greeting "Mar-
- 4 - tais", do brotherhood
- 5 - and come to north and bring a ser-
- 6 - vant for "Kenaite"
- 7 - for she is ill and I will pay
- 8 - your hire to you in the way which you
- 9 - desire (and) she (will) pay it with [me]
- 10 -

Comment

1.5-6: ⲉⲡⲧⲱⲣⲏⲧⲉ: It is probably the Greek word ὑπηρετης means "servant" because "H. Förster" mentioned this word written in Coptic as ⲉⲡⲧⲱⲣⲉⲧⲏⲧⲉ (Wörterbuch, s.834) and I think that it was written as ⲉⲡⲧⲱⲣⲉⲧⲏⲧⲉ or ⲉⲡⲧⲱⲣⲉⲧⲉ as here.

1.6: ⲕⲉⲛⲏⲁⲧⲉ: It is probably a fem. proper name from the Greek word κενεότης which means "empty space" (see: LSJ, p. 938 a) or perhaps

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equal $\kappa\epsilon\pi\eta$ [(in: Hasitzka, Namen, s.49), anyway it seems to be uncommon in Coptic.

1.7: $\mu\mu\mu\alpha\alpha$ means "for or verily" before tenses & imperative verbs (see: CD, p. 169 a).

$\tau\epsilon = \text{†}$ inf. means "give, pay".

1.9: $\sigma\upsilon\alpha\omega\varsigma$: the writer wrote σ instead of ω as a mistake but he corrected it.

1.7-9: $\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\tau\epsilon\ \bar{\eta}\kappa\epsilon\beta\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\ \bar{\eta}\alpha\kappa\ \bar{\eta}\theta\epsilon\ \epsilon\tau\alpha\sigma\upsilon\alpha\omega\varsigma$ means "I will pay your hire to you in the way which you like" namely he will give the hire to him personally or send it to him.

1.10 $\sigma\alpha\tau\eta\eta$: There are more than one probability for the meaning of this word here as either var. of $\sigma\iota\tau\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\eta$ - "beside, next", $\sigma\alpha\chi\epsilon\eta$ - "before" (of time) and $\alpha\tau\chi\epsilon\eta$ - "without" (see: DI, 91, CD, 444b, 758a, 25b) or $\sigma\alpha(\sigma)\tau\eta\eta$;as compound preposition plus suffix pronoun means "with/ beside us" (Layton CG, p.169).

O. Kharga Mus.2

Serial number: 1124.

Excavator's No.: 2281/18.

Dimension: 18 x10 cm.

Thickness: 1.3 cm.

Finder: The Egyptian Excavation of Elwadi Elgedeed archaeological site under supervision of Adel Hussen (1986).

Provenance: MAKs QIBLI-ELHESN, the western chamber – the 3rd level.

Description: An ostrakon was divided into 4 parts then it was restored, pottery, a part of bowl - orange color - 6 lines on recto & 8 lines on verso written with black ink.

Script: Regular, large and thick.

Content: A non-complete private letter sent from two persons called "Psumenais" and "Kanh" to a man seems to be a monk; his name is "Phibamon" and lived in "Tamoi". On verso where the text is starting, the senders inform the recipient that don't send the golden piece, called tremession, by someone (I read his name as "Ounoum") as they deal before because they don't confide in him and they ask to send by another person called "Thomas", also they mentioned that (on recto) they will give the tremession? to a man called "Praeiske" at south.

Verso

1124

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1124

The bottom part of verso

1124

The left side of recto

1124

The middle part of recto

1124

The right side of recto

Transcription

Verso

- 1 - ⲕⲁⲛⲟⲛ ϣⲟϣⲙⲏⲛⲏⲥ ⲙⲛⲃⲁⲛⲁⲛ ⲉⲛ(C2-)
- 2 - ⲁⲓ ⲉⲛⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲛⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛⲥⲟⲛ ⲁ(ⲓ)ⲁ ϣⲓⲃⲁⲙⲱⲛ
- 3 - ⲛⲧⲁⲙⲟⲓ ϣⲉ ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲕⲥⲟⲟϣⲛ ϣⲉ ⲱⲁⲕ-
- 4 - ⲧⲛⲛⲟⲟϣ ⲡⲧⲉⲣⲟⲙⲏⲥⲓⲟⲛ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲓⲧⲛ
- 5 - ⲟϣⲛⲟϣⲙ ⲙⲁⲥ ⲧⲛⲛⲟⲟϣⲥ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲓ-
- 6 - ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ ⲛⲑⲱⲙⲁⲥ ϣ[ⲉ ⲉⲡⲓⲁⲏ?] ⲧⲛ
- 7 - [ⲡ]ⲛⲟⲧ ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲛⲉⲧ[
- 8 - ⲙⲙⲟ[ⲛ ⲙⲡⲓⲣⲧⲛⲛⲟϣ ⲡⲧⲉⲣⲟⲙⲏⲥⲓ-]

Recto

- 1 - ⲟⲛ ⲙⲧⲟⲟⲧⲥ ⲉⲥ ⲱⲟⲙⲧ
- 2 - ⲛⲥⲟⲡ ⲁⲓⲧⲛⲛⲟϣ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉⲛⲟϣ.[
- 3 - ⲡⲟⲟϣ ⲡⲉϣ[ⲉⲥ] ⲁⲕⲁⲙⲁⲛⲧⲉ ⲙⲧⲁⲉⲟϣ ⲛⲁ-
- 4 - ⲣⲟⲥ ⲙⲙⲟⲛ ⲧⲛⲛⲟϣ [ⲡⲧⲉⲣⲟⲙⲏⲥⲓⲟⲛ? ⲛ]ⲧⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲏⲥ ⲧⲛ-
- 5 - ⲧⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲡⲓⲣⲁⲉ[ⲓⲕⲉ] ⲉⲕⲱⲁⲛ ⲧⲛⲛⲟϣ
- 6 - .. ⲧⲣⲙ(ⲏ)ⲥⲓⲟⲛ []ⲁⲕ ⲁⲓⲧ

Translation

Verso:

- 1 - ⲛ We "Psumainais" and "Kanh" we wri-
- 2 - te we greet our dear brother Apa "Phibamwn"
- 3 - of "Tamoi": if you know that you will
- 4 - send the tremession to us by
- 5 - "Ounoum" give it (and) send it to us
- 6 - by "Thomas" [whereas ?] we
- 7 - fear to confide [in him?
- 8 - veril[y don't send the tremessi-]

Recto:

- 1 - on by his hand see! Three
- 2 - times I sent (and) agree upon them (with him)
- 3 - Today, it is him (that) sa[ys] (that) you seized the wage ,for
- 4 - him verily send [the tremession?] and we will come south (and) we
(will)
- 5 - give (or pay) it to "Prae[-iske"] if you want to send
- 6 - ... tremession []... ..

Comment

Verso

- 1.1: ⲡⲟⲩⲙⲏⲛⲏⲥ is a proper name (masc.) and equal to ⲡⲉⲙⲓⲛⲓⲥ (in Greek) of an Egyptian origin means "the son of Min" (see: DN, p. 246) and I think that it was uncommon in Coptic.
- 1.2 ⲁⲛⲁ: it was written above the line and ⲛ is missing.
- 1.3 ⲧⲁⲙⲟⲓ seems to be the ancient name of the place of "El-hesn" but I ignore that if this region included "Ain Waqfa" in Antiquity or not especially this name is similar to ⲧⲙⲟⲩⲙⲓ which means "spring" (CD, p.198b), in Arabic "Ain" .There is a reference to a place name as ⲧⲁⲙ[...] which may refer to ⲧⲁⲙⲟⲓ (see: Hall , p.122).
- 1.5: ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲙ: I think that it was the Egyptian personal name *wnmi* (Ägy. PN, s.79 (16), this word means "right/ right side/ right hand" and known

in Coptic as ΟΥΝΑΜ (Wb I ,s.322) , "Crum" mentioned ΟΥΝΟΜ as one of the Saihidic dialect forms of this word (CD, p. 483b) so ΟΥΝΟΜ> ΟΥΝΟΥΜ here (with addition of the letter γ only). Until now in Egypt, there is the masculine personal name "Ayman" means "right" (as adjective of the masculine words) also the feminine personal name "Yumna" means "right" (as adjective of the feminine words).

Recto

- 1.1: ΕC = ΕΙC (CD, p. 85 a), it is equal the word "bos" which is said until now in Egypt to pay attention before the information (O. Cairo Mus., p. 18).
- 1.2: ΕΜΑΤΕΝΟΥ: consisting of Ε+ΜΑΤΕΝ+ΟΥ {Preposition+ infinitive + suffix pronoun (Plural)}, this infinitive means "rest" or "agree upon" & the Preposition Ε written usually when there is another infinitive written before it (see: CD, p. 195b), ΜΑΤΕΝ was written here in a dialect is similar to ΜΟΤΕΝ in B & ΜΑΤΝ in F, it was probably a dialect associated with the Kharga oasis in the case of the senders lived in this oasis.
- 1.3: ΤΑΕΟΥ: I think that the writer means here the word ΤΟΥ(Ε)ΙΟ which means also "wage" (see :CD, p.444b).
- 1.3-4 : ΖΑΡΟΥ : Equal here two expressions are said by the Egyptians until now as "ashan khatroh" means "for his sake" or "ashan keda" means "for that" which are proceeded always by a reason, like this text.
- 1.5: Ν is not assimilated to Μ before Π,
ΠΡΑΕΙСКЕ: A proper name is mentioned in: PN , s. 102.
- 1.6: there are some letters (about 5 letters) written under the word ΤΡΗΝCΙΟΝ, they are not clear and represent a word difficult to read.

O. Kharga Mus.3

Serial number: 1125.

Excavator's No.: 2282/19.

Dimension: 13.3 x13.1 cm.

Thickness: 1.3 cm.

Finder: The Egyptian Excavation of Elwadi Elgedeed archaeological site under supervision of Adel Hussen (1986).

Provenance: MAKs QIBLI-ELHESN, eastern north corner - the 3rd level.

Description: An ostracon was divided into two parts then it was restored, pottery, light brown color, 11 lines with black ink.

Script: Regular, thin and large (except the letter o written very small also sometimes p and c).

Content: A list of men's names maybe of some villagers, 18 names still remaining, the names of the fathers are also given but some father's names are missing.

1125

Transcription

Recto

- 1 - 2ΗΛΙΑC
- 2 - ΟΥΟΝΟCΡΕ Ν2ΔΔ
- 3 - ΚΟΛΘΕ
- 4 - ΓΕΩΡΓΕ Ν2ΟΟΥ
- 5 - ΜΑΚΑΡΕ
- 6 - ΨΑΤΕ
- 7 - ΙΕ]Ρ[Η]ΜΑC ΜΠΕΤΡΟC
- 8 - ΖΑΧΑΡΙΑ ΜΙΑΚ/
- 9 - ΠΕΤΡΟC ΜΠΕΦ[
- 10 - ΠΕΤΡΟC ΜΙΩ2[ΑΝΝΗC ?
- 11 - ΦΙΒΑΜΩΝ <N> ΖΑΚΑΡ[ΙΑ

Translation

Recto:

- 1 - Helias
- 2 - Un-nefer (son) of Hal
- 3 - Colthe
- 4 - Gewrge (son) of Hoou
- 5 - Makare
- 6 - Psate
- 7 - E]r[e]mas (son) of Petros
- 8 - Zacharia (son) of Iakwb
- 9 - Petros (son) of Peph[ani?
- 10 - Petros (son) of Yuh[annes?
- 11 - Phibamwn (son) < of > Zachar[ia

Comment

The origin of the proper names is various between native Egyptian (pagan), Greek and Hebrew especially associated with Christianity. And the majority is known in the Thebaide Nome and Elephantine.

1.2: ουνονορε "Unnefer", an epithet of "Osiris" (Hall, p. 110).

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1.7, 9: the letter ς is written closed, similar to the $\omicron$

1.8: "Iakwb" is written abbreviated.

1.11: the letter ϕ is written with an open circle. The writer omitted genitival κ because the name written before it ended with the letter κ and this matter was remarkable in the lists of names.

O. Kharga Mus.4

Serial number: 1126.

Excavator's No.: 2286/23.

Dimension: 6.4x5.4 cm.

Thickness: 1 cm.

Finder: The Egyptian Excavation of Elwadi Elgedeed archaeological site under supervision of Adel Hussen (1986).

Provenance: MAKS QIBLI -ELHESN, eastern north of the site.

Description: A part from an ostracon, pottery, reddish brown color, remains of 8 lines on both recto & verso (the text is more destroyed on verso) written with black ink.

Script: Large, thick and regular.

Content: A small fragment difficult to determine its topic (maybe a part of a letter or a business text or perhaps a legal). The writers are more than one person.

Recto

1126

Verso

1126

Transcription

Recto

- 1 - Ο]ΡΓΑΝΟΝ? Ν[
- 2 -]ΤΟΟΤΗ ΝΝΟ.[
- 3 -]Ω ΠΕΚ' .[
- 4 - Ε]ΝΩΔΗ Ν[
- 5 -]Β ΝΚΑΤΑ[
- 6 -]. ΤΝΤΑ[
- 7 -]ΤΝ†[
- 8 -] [

Verso

- 1 -]. ΕΩΧΕ? [
- 2 -]ΝΑ [
- 3 -]Ν [
- 4 -] [
- 5 -] [
- 6 -] [

7 -]ΝϞ. [

8 -]Μ [

Translation

Recto

1 - o]rganon? of[

2 -] the hand of us to... [

3 -] your?[

4 -] if we want to..[

5 -] [

6 -] [

7 -] [

8 -] [

There is no suggested translation for verso.

Comment

Recto

1.1 I read the first word as ΟΡΓΑΝΟΝ which is a Greek measure οργον or οργανον as a dry measure also for cheese and wine (WS, p. 25) , it is written here unusually in the same form of the Greek οργανον. I think that η was followed here by either a number or the measured object or an adjective like ηος to describe the measure (see: Wörterbuch, ss. 586-587).

1.2: ΤΟΟΤΗ may be ΕΥΤΟΟΤΗ means "these are in the hand of us" as an expression of possession (O. Cairo Mus., p. 49) or ΗΤΟΟΤΗ or ΣΙΤΟΟΤΗ mean "by us".

1.5: ΚΑΤΑ may be the Greek conjunction ΚΑΤΑ or beginning of a Greek word (see: Wörterbuch, ss. 384-396).

Verso

1.1 It can be read as ΕΩΧΕ means "if".

The date

It is unknown, but I estimate to be the Islamic period between the 7th century and the beginning of the 9th century AD according to the following matters:

O. Kharga Mus. 1:

- * The preface formula (combined with the greeting) and the monogram ⲫ were written in the Coptic letters between the 4th and the 8th century (see: Briefformular, s. 44 & O. Cairo Mus., p. 15).
- * The begging formula ⲁⲣⲓ ⲧⲙⲛⲧⲥⲟⲛ which was known in the 7th / 8th century (Briefformular, ss. 34-35).
- * The paleography can be dated from the 8th century especially the ⲉ letter (Stegmann, ss. 12-13).

It means that this text may be ascribed to the 7th / 8th c. or the 8th century.

O. Kharga Mus. 2:

- * The "tremession" is written in the Coptic texts in similar forms to ⲧⲣⲟⲙⲛⲥⲟⲛ, written here, from the 7th or the 7th / 8th or the 8th century (see: Wörterbuch, ss. 820-822).
- * The red – slip wares were extant in 695 AD – the 9th century (Rodziewicz, p. 74).
- * The paleography of many letters such as ⲁ, ⲉ, ⲛ, ⲟ, ⲣ, ⲥ, ⲣ, ⲥ can be ascribed to the 8th century (see: Stegmann, ss. 11-13) also the impenetrable ⲟ can be dated from the 7th / 8th or the 8th century (see: O. Cairo Mus., nos. 1, 9) and the ligatures with ⲉ was so common in the 8th century texts from Djeme (Green, p. 62). All these matters can ascribe the text to the 7th / 8th - 9th century.

O. Kharga Mus. 3:

- * Most of the names written in this list are mentioned in the collection that studied by "Hall" and he said that they were in vogue in the 7th and the 8th century (Hall, p.x).
- * The forms of the proper names as ΖΑΧΑΡΙΑ, ΚΟΖΘΕ, ΜΑΚΑΡΕ, ΠΕΤΡΟΣ and ΦΙΒΑΛΛΩΝ are mentioned in lists of names ascribed to the end of the 8th century (see: Hall, pp.18-19).
- * The paleography of some letters such as α, β, κ, λ, π, ρ can be ascribed to the 8th century (Stegmann, ss.11-13).

It means that this text can be ascribed to the 7th- 8th century.

O. Kharga Mus. 4:

- * The Greek measure οργον was used in the Coptic texts between the 6th / 7th - the 8th century (Wörterbuch , ss.586-587)
- * The raised apostrophe written after the letter κ in the 3rd line (on recto) which is written in the official Greek correspondence of the 7th century (see: Green, p. 111).

So this text can be ascribed to the 7th -8th century.

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The paleographical tables (the 7th -9th century AD):

الحرف The letter	أشكاله المتعددة The multiple forms
ⲁ
Ⲃ
Ⲅ

الحرف The letter	أشكاله المتعددة The multiple forms
ⲉ	<p>Ligatures of ⲉ with the letters ⲓ, ⲙ, ⲕ, ⲡ, ⲛ, ⲣ, ⲥ and ⲧ.</p>
ⲓ
ⲙ
ⲛ
ⲣ

الحرف The letter	أشكاله المتعددة The multiple forms
Κ
λ
μ
π

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The letter الحرف	The multiple forms أشكاله المتعددة
o
π
ρ
c

Four Coptic Ostraca from Kharga Museum

الحرف The letter	أشكاله المتعددة The multiple forms
ⲧ
ϣ
ⲭ
ⲭ
ⲭ
ω

Four Coptic Ostraca from Kharga Museum

الحرف The letter	أشكاله المتعددة The multiple forms
ϣ	ϣ ϣ ϣ ϣ ϣ
ϥ	ϥ ϥ ϥ ϥ
ϧ	ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ ϧ
Ϩ	Ϩ Ϩ
ϩ	ϩ