

A NEW DEMOTIC PRIVATE LETTER FROM DĀR AL-KUTUB AL-MISRĪYA (P. INV. NO. 3141 AND 3140)

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ABSTRACT:

The subject of this paper is a papyrus document that belongs to a collection containing various papyri and fragments housed now in Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīya. This collection was formed by Bernhardt Moritz², director of the Egyptian National Library (Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīya), formerly known as Bibliothèque Khédiviale from 1896 to 1911. The document bears the inventory numbers 3140 and 3141. It seems that this papyrus was moved between 1973 and 1977 among thousands of papyri housed in the Bab al-Khalq facilities to the Egyptian National Library's new facilities on the Corniche el-Nil in Ramlet Boulak. The majority of Dār al-Kutub collection are Arabic, Greek and Coptic papyri, in addition to a few demotic papyri.

KEYWORDS:

Demotic- Papyrus- Private Letter- Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīya- Ptolemaic period.

¹ I would like to thank Professor Mahmoud Ebeid and Prof. Cary J. Martin for giving useful suggestions in the reading of this letter. Also, I want to thank Prof. J. F. Quack for correcting a word in line 11, R^o during presenting a lecture about this letter in the 12th International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo 2019. I am also so grateful to Dr. Belal Abou el-Ala head of papyri department at Dār al-Kutub for facilitation photographing the demotic materials.

² Moritz, the first director of Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīya was a German Orientalist. One of his valuable contributions is the first catalog of Arabic manuscripts of Dār al-Kutub which was published in 1905. The Arabic manuscripts that were collected by him were sold in 1910 to the University of Pennsylvania and in 1929 to the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute.

المخلص العربي:

تُمثّل هذه الوثيقة الديموطيقية -التي هي موضوع هذا المقال- خطاباً شخصياً عَنَر عليه الباحث أثناء فحص مجموعة صغيرة من البرديات الديموطيقية ضمن مجموعة البردي المحفوظة بدار الكتب المصرية، والتي أغلبها برديات عربية، ويونانية، وقبطية قام على جمعها المستشرق الألماني "برنارد موريتز" وقت توليه إدارة دار الكتب المصرية في الفترة من 1896 حتى 1911. أيضاً أُضيفَ إلى تلك المجموعة آلاف البرديات نقلت من دار الوثائق بباب الخلق إلى دار الكتب المصرية بكورنيش النيل في الفترة من 1973 حتى 1977.

وهذا الخطاب مكتوب على كلتا وجهي قطعة مستطيلة من ورق البردي محفوظة تحت رقم 3140 (الظهر)، 3141 (الوجه). وتبلغ مقاييسه 16 سم إرتفاعاً، 6 سم عرضاً بدون الهوامش من الجوانب الأربعة، والموضحة مقاييسها بالبحث.

يؤرخ هذا الخطاب من حيث السمات الخطية، والصيغ الواردة به بالعصر البطلمي، أما عن مكان العثور عليه فغير معروف، ولكن يرجح الباحث للعديد من الأسباب المذكورة بالبحث

أنه من منف. وقد أرسل الخطاب من شخص يدعي "حور-ماع-خرو" **حور-ماع-خرو** ابن $Hr-m^3c-hrw$ "آمون-إير-تي-س" **آمون-إير-تي-س** إلى شخص يدعي "پا-تي-حور-خوتي" **پا-تي-حور-خوتي** المرسل كان من سكان منف، وأن المرسل إليه كان مقيماً في الجنوب؛ كما يتضح مما ذكر في الخطاب في السطور الخامس، العاشر، الحادي عشر.

وقد احتوى وجه الخطاب على خمسة عشر سطرًا، واستكمل المرسل على الظهر بسبعة أسطر أخرى، بالإضافة إلى سطر عنوان الخطاب الذي كتب في أسفل الظهر؛ حيث عند طي الخطاب بعد الفراغ من كتابته، يكون هذا السطر هو الظاهر، ويدون عليه اسم المرسل إليه.

الكلمات الدالة:

ديموطيقي- بردي- خطاب شخطي- دار الكتب المصرية- العصر البطلمي.

**P. DĀR AL-KUTUB AL-MISRĪYA INV. NO. 314
(RECTO)& INV. NO. 3140 (VERSO):**

PROVENANCE:

The provenance of the majority of Dār al-Kutub documents is unknown. This letter could be from Memphis based on some possible reasons: first is what was mentioned in line number 10, where the sender asked the addressee to wait until he come south. This indicates that he probably was living in the north. Second according to the Palaeographical grounds, the style of writing is similar to the Memphite scribal school³.

DIMENSIONS:

H. 16 cm × w. 6 cm the margins are 1.6 cm at the top of the recto and 3.2 cm at the top of the verso; 2.9 cm at the bottom of the recto and 2.3 cm at the bottom of the verso (below the address); Almost, there is no margin on the right side of the recto, also there is no margin on the left side of the recto; 0.2 cm (max.) on the right side of the verso, and 0.2 cm on the left side of the verso. The space on the verso between the last line of the text and the address is approx. 8.5 cm.

DESCRIPTION:

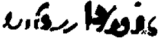
The papyrus is dark brown colored and in a bad state of preservation. It takes the form of a long narrow strip—the so-called ‘high format’—in which the height far exceeds the width of the

³ Based on the article of Martin C. J., “Memphite Palaeography: some observations on texts from the Ptolemaic Period” in W. Clarysse and S.P. Vleeming (eds.), *Aspects of Demotic Orthography Acts of an International Colloquium held in Trier, 8 November 2010, PEETERSLEUVEN–PARIS–WALPOLE, MA 2013*, pp. 41-62, that shows similarity in the writing of the relative adjective *nty*, the word *sʒ* and number 2...etc., and comparing with other letters from Memphis.

letter, and the text is written in many short lines.⁴ The letter is not totally complete. On the recto (Inv. no. 1341) there are 15 lines, written horizontally along the fibres; then the writer turned the papyrus upside-down and wrote a further 7 lines on the verso (Inv. no. 3140) across the fibres, plus a one-line address. The left portion of the papyrus has suffered some big wormholes, in addition to many small wormholes spread via the text. The demotic handwriting is bold and handsome; the signs and groups are well-formed and clearly written.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Unpublished

CONTENT: A private letter

CORRESPONDENTS: The sender/The writer:  Hr-
m3^c-hrw Son of *Imn-i.ir-tj-s*

THE ADDRESSEE:  P3-tj-hr-hw[*f*]

DATE: Based on handwriting, the Ptolemaic period might be suggested. The format of this letter ‘high format’ becomes standard in the course of the 3rd century BC and continues to be so until the early Roman period⁵. Furthermore, the introductory formula (A *p3 nty dd n B*) began to appear in the demotic letters from the Ptolemaic period onwards as stated by Depauw.⁶

⁴ Depauw, M. (2006), *The Demotic Letter: A Study of Epistolographic Scribal Traditions against their intra- and intercultural Background*, Demotische Studien ; 14, Sommerhausen:Gizela Zauzich Verlag, p. 73.

⁵ Depauw, *The Demotic Letter*, p. 73.

⁶ Depauw, *The Demotic Letter*, p. 145.

TRANSLITERATION**RECTO**

- L.1. *Hr-m3^c-hrw s3 Tmn-i.ir-tj-s p3 nty dd*
- L.2. *tw=j ir n3 sm3^c.w n P3-tj-hr-hw[t]*
- L.3. *m-b3h Wsir p3 ntr 3 (irm) n3 ntrw (nt) htpw*
- L.4. *nty iw=w tj.t nw=[j¹] i.ir-hr=k [iw mn¹]*
- L.5. *d3 Twtw iy (r) [rsy¹] my*
- L.6. *ti=w (tj) n=f ky hd 2 r.r=k*
- L.7. *tw=[k¹] ir-rh=s dd(=k) ir hd n=j 20?*
- L.8. *iw=j (r) ir nb tb^c r-db3=k*
- L.9. *m-ir tj.t ir=w wp.t ...*
- L.10. *s^c tw=j iy r rsy ...*
- L.11. *bn-iw=j wr r rsy tpj pr.t*
- L.12. *gr iw=f hpr iw bn iw=j h^c*
- L.13. *r n3y m-ir mh n-tr.t [...]*
- L.14. *db^c n.im=w r n3/t3 nty ir=k hry?*
- L.15. *(n) p3 kp*

VERSO

- L.16. *m-ir tj.t [hd¹] (n) p3 [shn¹]?*
- L.17. *t3 g3.t i.ir=j smj*
- L.18. *iw=w (r) tj.t p3y=[j¹] hd ...*
- L.19. *h^c.(t) iw bn-pw=w ir=f n in-[nw¹]?*
- L.20. *iw=j (r) hb i.ir-hr=k n3y iw=f hpr*

L.21. *iw=k hb n=j \p3 hrw' bn iw=j wrr*

L.22. *r.r=k*

(Space)

THE ADDRESS LINE:

L.23. *i.ir hr 'iw=f? ...¹* (Space) *'P3¹-tj-hr-'hw_x¹*

TRANSLATION:

L.1. *Hr-m3^c-hrw* son of *'Imn-i.ir-tj-s* is the one who says:

L.2. I bless and offer for *P3-tj-hr-hw[f]*

L.3. before Osiris, the great god (and) the gods who are at rest,

L.4. who will cause that I look upon you, while nothing is

L.5. wrong. Totoes Came south.

L.6. another two deben were given to him for you ...

L.7. you know that you said: money to me 20 (pieces).

L.8. I will make the gold (coins) which you seek.

L.9. Don't let him do work ..

L.10. until I come south ...

L.11. I will not delay (to come) south till the first month of *Peret* (Tybi)

L.12. or if it happens that, I shall not be able to wait/stand

L.13. there. Do not let ... be paid by [...]

L.14. seal in it to those you rule

L.15. (in) the secret

VERSO

L.16. Do not give the lease fee

- L.17. (because of) the rival, I bring a complaint
 L.18. they will give my money ...
 L.19. last, they did not do it for now
 L.20. I will write to you about these. If it happens that,
 L.21. you write to me today; I will not delay
 L.22. (writing) to you
 (Space)

THE ADDRESS LINE:

L.23. To ... (Space) $\text{P}^3\text{-tj-hr-}^{\text{hwt}}\text{f}^1$

TEXTUAL NOTES:

Recto

Lines 1-3:

-The name $\text{Hr-m}^3\text{-hrw}$ ‘Αρμαχορος’ $\text{Hr-m}^3\text{-hrw}$ is attested since the Middle and New kingdoms as $m^3\text{-hrw Hr}(\text{.w})$ or $\text{Hr}(\text{.w})\text{-m-m}^3\text{-hrw}$, see Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen* 144, 22; XXIII; II 359. Also, it is attested in the *demotische Namenbuch*, p. 817.

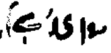
-In the name Imn-i.ir-tj-s , the god Dhwty could also be possible instead of Imn^7 .

-The interior address or the introductory formula in this letter runs according to the common formula (A $\text{p}^3\text{nty dd n B m-b}^3\text{h G}$), while A is the sender ($\text{Hr-m}^3\text{-hrw}$ son of Imn-i.ir-tj-s), B is the addressee

⁷ I owe this suggestion to my Professor Ebeid: *Personal communication*, Nov. 2019.

(*P3-tj-ḥr-ḥw*[*t*]) and G is the god (*Wsir*), without any titles for the two parties.

-The god *wsir* is one of the common gods who were mentioned in the introductory formula after *m-b3ḥ*. Generally, the choice of the god mentioned in this formula is determined by the place from which the letter was sent, see Depauw, *The Demotic Letters*, p. 177.

-The name  *P3-tj-ḥr-ḥw*[*t*] is not attested in the *Demotische Namenbuch*. The word *ḥw*[*t*] here is as an epithet to Horus with the meaning “Protector/savior” where the verb *ḥwt* means “to protect”, see Erichsen, *Glossar*, p. 352.


Lines 4-5:



L. 4. *nty iw=w tj.t nw=ʿjʿ i.ir-ḥr=k ʿiw mnʿ* L.5. *d3* ‘who will cause that I look upon you, while nothing is wrong’, this formula is a pious wish for the future. Concerning the other variations of it, see Depauw, *The Demotic Letters*, p. 183-186.

- Although faded the writing *iw mn* is certain.

- The papyrus is badly damaged at the end of lines five and six.




Line 6:

-The reading  *r.r=k* could also be read *r-bnr?*, and then this line could be translated as “another two deben were given to him outside your budget”.

-Also compare the writing of the same construction that was mentioned in line 22 on the verso. The later has the same form to a large extent but with a superfluous dot at the end . This dot was noticed in another example from Memphis i.e., Pap. Paris BN 215, x+V.11 .

Line 9:

-*ir wp.t* “to do work” especially work of land, see Erichsen, Glossar, 86; CDD, Letter w, p. 68 ff.

-The vetitive⁸ *m-ir* occurs three times within the letter, two on the recto  L.9;  L. 13 and one on the verso  L. 1.





- The papyrus is badly damaged at the end of lines nine and ten.





Line 10:

-^š *tw=j iy*: terminative ^š(*m*)*tw=f sdm*.

Line 11:

-*bn-iw=j wrr*: the negation of Future.

-  *wrr*⁹ or *hrr*¹⁰ (*εποϋρ*)¹¹    “to lag, to delay; (with negation:) to hurry”. The various forms of the word remained largely unchanged, except the determinative of the man sinking to ground from fatigue which has represented by the following forms:

In the Early demotic, two forms of the determinative were attested: first  of the word  ¹², and second  of the word  that occurs in P. Kairo CG 50068, 2 from Memphis, it dates to 599-525 BC.








⁸ “An element of language expressing a wish that something will not happen”, see: <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vetitive>







⁹ Based on QUACK, J.F., ‘Beiträge zum Peripherdemotischen.’ In A Tribute to Excellence: Studies Offered in Honor of Ernő Gaál, Ulrich Luft, László Török (Studia Aegyptiaca 17, 2002), edited by T.A. Bács, 393–403. Budapest: La Chaire d’Égyptologie de l’Université Eötvös Loránd de Budapest.

¹⁰ Erichsen, *Glossar*, p. 328; CDD, Letter *h* (30 July 2009), p. 236.


¹¹ CED, p. 295; Crum, CD, p. 704 a.

¹² CDD, Letter *h* (30 July 2009), p. 237.



In the Ptolemaic period, two main forms were noticed: first  of the word  that lies in P. BM EA 10508, IV.x+6 from Panopolis (Akhmim), and dates to the first century BC. A similar form of the determinative was attested in Erichsen, *Glossar* e.g., ; . Second  of the word  that occurs in P. Kairo CG 30646 (= Setne I), Kol.III.25 from Thebes, and dates to 200-150 BC. Another form from the Roman period attested in Erichsen, *Glossar*¹³ i.e.,  is similar to this form.

While other two forms from the Roman period¹⁴ are different from the above-mentioned forms as:  of the word  and  of the word . In addition to  of the word  which occurs in P. Berlin 13588, 2/9.

Line 12:

-  gr: conjunctive particle means “or”, see Erichsen, *Glossar*, p. 582-83; Wb, 5, p. 177.

Line 13:

-The plural demonstrative pronoun *n3y* occurs twice within the letter, one in this line as , and the second in line 20 of the verso as .

-The papyrus is badly damaged at the end of line thirteen.

Verso

Line 16:

-Due to three wormholes that are spreading across the line, the reading of this line is very uncertain, especially the word *hd*. Also,

¹³ Erichsen, *Glossar*, p. 328.

¹⁴ Erichsen, *Glossar*, p. 328.

the word $\text{ʿ}shn\text{ʿ}$? could be read $\text{ʿ}swn.t\text{ʿ}$? to be translated as “Don’t give the money of the (purchase) price”.

Line 19:

-bn-pw=w ir: the negative past tense bn-pw=f sdm.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

The letter was sent by Harma'kheru Son of Amenortaisis to Peteharkhuti. No titles were mentioned for both the sender or the addressee. After greeting, the sender told the addressee that a person called Totoes came to the south. And another two deben were given to Totoes for him. It is not clear if this money was given by the sender himself or by another one. Then, the sender promised the addressee that he will give him the twenty gold coins that he asked for previously. Then he asked him not to let someone do work (he did not mention the nature of that work) until he come south and said that he will not delay (to come) south till Tybi. It is difficult to follow the sequence of events in the last three lines of the recto due to the missing parts and the uncertain readings of some words. On the verso, Harma'kheru continued asking Peteharkhuti not to give the lease fee (?). Apparent from the context that there was rivalry between the sender and another party, so he lodged a complaint. He was also predicted to receive money from some people, but this did not happen till the time of writing the letter. Finally, he told him that he will write to him about this matter and asked him also to write to him if something happened immediately and he will not delay writing to him as well.

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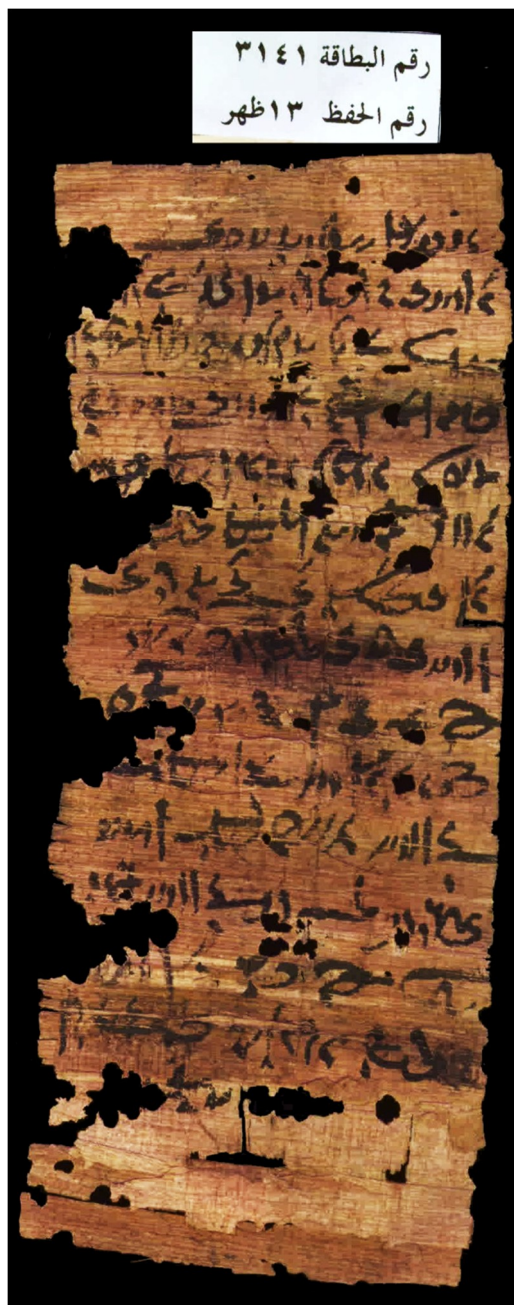


Plate 1: P. Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīya
Inv. No. 3141
(Recto)

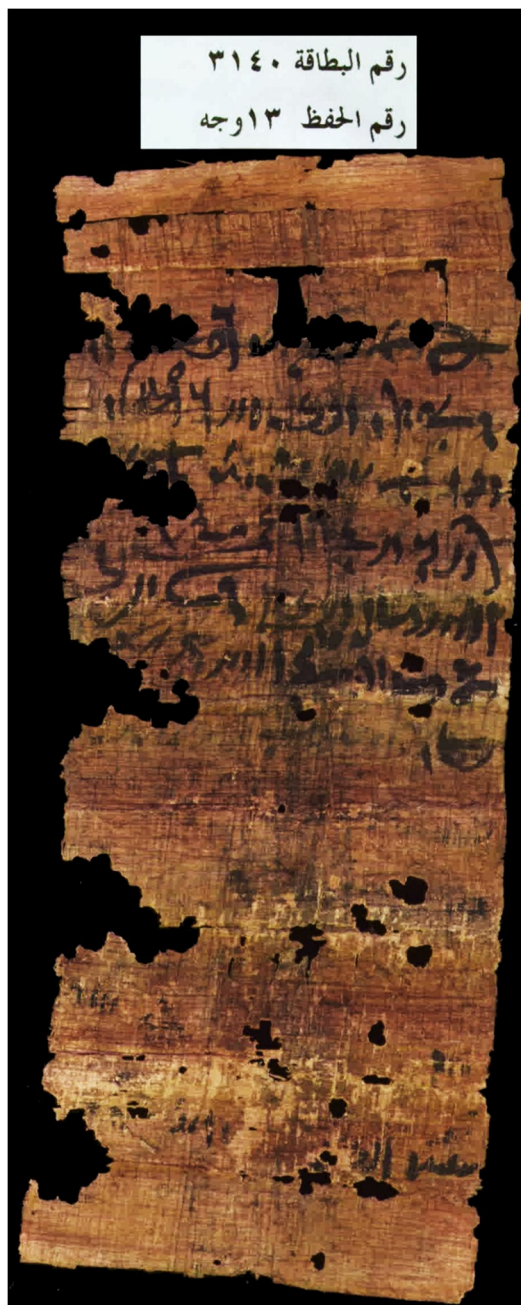


Plate 2: P. Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīya
Inv. No. 3140
(Verso)