

New Demotic Temple Oaths from Gebelen*

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In her comprehensive study of Demotic temple oaths, Ursula K. Heckel¹ set that Upper Egypt was the source of such texts in the Graeco - Roman period, where Thebes and Gebelen were the two main sites² which provided us with that kind of oath³. The majority of the texts came from Thebes⁴ while Gebelen contributed with twenty text only, later on nine texts were added⁵.

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¹ Ursula K. Heckel, *Die Demotische Tempeleide*, Wiesbaden 1963; Id, "Eid " in *LÄ1*, col. 1200 -1204.

² Only one text was obtained from Dendara , See Ursula K. Heckel , *Tempeleide* , Nr. 208 , p 335-6

³ The other distinct type of oaths known in this Period was the king's oath, where it was sworn by the king and the gods. It was written on papyri and its main source was Lower Egypt. See E.A.E Reymond , *Catalogue of Demotic Pap. In the Ashmolean museum ,Oxford 1973 ,vol. 1 p. 126ff* ; G. Mattha , *Demotic legal code of Hermopolis West* , B d E X L V, Le Caire , 1975 , IV , V , VII , IX ; E. Seidel *Der Eid in Ptolemaischen Recht. Munchen 1929* ; for further references see Ursula K. Heckel, *LA 1* , col. 1202 -3 , (nos.1 - 14).

⁴ In addition to those texts which Ursula K. Heckel studied , some more texts have been published see, Nur el-Din, *The Demotic Ostraca in the National museum at Leiden* , leiden 1974 , Nos. 278 - 332 , p.221-56 ; Ursula K. Heckel, in *Forschungen und Berichte 10* , p. 135 ff ; S.P. Vleeming , *Ostraca Varia*, Brill 1994, Nr. 57, p. 129-35 ; O. EL Aguizy , "Two new Demotic Temple Oaths on Ostraca" in *BIFAO 96*, Le Caire 1996 , p. 1-11 ; see also Ursula K. Heckel , *LÄ 1* , col. 1203-4.

⁵ Id , " Pathyris" in *Enchoria 21* , 1994 , p. 25 - 45. Nos. 37-45.

In general, Demotic temple oaths were written on ostraca (potsherds - limestone flakes), except few cases were written on papyri⁶ or wood⁷, in addition to those texts which were registered on graffiti⁸.

Temple oath was stage or part of a legal procedure which befell between two parties i.e the plaintiff and the defendant. It had to be performed in front of a certain gate of temple of the local god⁹. This gate was called *rwtj dj m3c.t* "gate of giving justice" or " gate where justice is given"¹⁰. It seems that a third party was involved in the procedure of performing the oath , he was an official employee in the temple as cited in some texts:

mtw=f st3t r tm ir=f mtw=f ij

iir-ḥr p3 rd¹¹ (or p3 šms.)¹²

" if he refuses to make it (oath) , he will come before the steward (or the attendant)

⁶ Griffith, Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the J. Rylands library , Manchester 1939 , vol. III, pap. XXXVI , p. 161 ; Sethe & Partsch , DUB , URK 15, p. 385- 409 ; Ursula K. Heckel , Tempeleide Nos. 28-30 , 67 , 172 a,b

⁷ Id , Enchoria 21 , Nr. 42.

⁸ Griffith , Catalogue of Demotic graffiti of the dodekaschoenus I, II, Oxford 1935- 1937.

⁹ In Theban texts , it was sworn by Mantou , khonsu and Amon , while The gods Sbk and Hathor were invoked in Gebelen Texts..

¹⁰ S. Sauneron , " La justice a la Porte des temples" in BIFAO 54 , Le Caire 1954 , p.116-27 ; EL Aguizy, op. cit, p.2.

¹¹ Ursula K. Heckel , Tempeleide , Nr. 147 / 7.

¹² Ibid , Nr. 119 / 7 , see also Nur el- din , op. cit Nr. 278 / 10.

Moreover, the oath had to be given to this official (*rd* or *šms*, as one reads :-
*tw p3 ʿnh r dr.t N. p3 rd*¹³ (or *p3 šms*)¹⁴

" the oath was given to the hand of N. the steward (or the attendant). These persons may have played an important part in arranging the agreement between the two parties , and their subsequent task was possibly to supervise the fulfillment of the obligations upon which the parties had agreed¹⁵.

The present paper deals with some Demotic temple oaths acquired from Gebelen in 1898¹⁶. They constitute part of various group of ostraca in Cairo-museum which laid (placed) on the 3rd. floor , P.23 East , and has the special register number 18953¹⁷. Unfortunately nothing is known about its era. It is worth noting from the palaeographical point of view that the handwriting is well formed neat compact and this style is common in documents of late Ptolemaic period¹⁸.

¹³ Ursula K. Hechel , op. cit Nr. 149 / 10 b-a ; Vleeming , op. cit , Nr 157 / 13 ; see also G. Mattha , " The Demotic Oath , its legal formulae and their Greek counterpart" in Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, vol. XIII . II , Cairo 1951 , p. 6.

¹⁴ Ursula K. Heckel , op. cit., Nos 129 / 10 ; 145 / 10.

¹⁵ Vleeming , op. cit , p. 135 (nn) ; Mattha , op. cit p. 7-8

¹⁶ As a scrap of paper in a wooden box contained the ostraca told us.

¹⁷ This group of ostraca will be classified and dealt with in a volume of Catalogue Generale , forthcoming .

¹⁸ O.EL Aguzy , A palaeographical study of Demotic papyri in the Cairo museum from the Reign of king Taharka to the End of the Ptolemaic Period, le Caire 1994 , p. 232 - 3

As mentioned in the texts, the god Sobek was invoked as *nb bh̄n.t* "master of the pylon". The oath was sworn at the gate of his temple as he was the local deity of crocodilopolis, the ancient town *iw m itrw*, which mentioned as *šmwr* in demotic documents. It was about 14 kilometer north Pathyris. Both towns were in Gebelen.¹⁹

Text Nr. 1, plate I

DO Cairo 19 / 18953

Potsherd, reddish

6.4 cm x 8 cm

late Ptolemaic

the ostrakon is broken at the bottom and at the left side There is a vertical crack begins from the first to the 3rd line.

Transliteration:-

- 1- *h̄ p̄3 ʿnh̄ nty iir Pa- t̄3 - st (?) - [ʿ3t]*
- 2- *s̄3 p̄3 mr ih.t r ir = f n h̄wt ntr nb bh̄ n.t.*
- 3- *n h̄3t - sp 51, ibd 4 šmw sw 3 (?) n Pa - tw s̄3 Pa - wn*
- 4- *ʿnh̄ sbk nty h̄tp dj irm ntr nb*
- 5- *nty h̄tp irm = f p̄3j rdb sw 7 1/2 1/4 (nty iw = k md irm = j r-db3ty = f*

¹⁹ Gardiner, AEO II, P. 274 - 5 ; Griffith, Rylands III, p. 130.

6- iw = w sp r=k hn ////

Translation :-

- 1- Text of the oath which pa - t3 - st (?) [ʕ3t]
- 2- son of p3 mr - ih.t should do in temple of master of the pylon
- 3- in the year 51 , Mesore , day 3 (?) to Pa - tw son of Pa - wn
- 4- By Sobek who rests here together with every god
- 5- who rests with him, this 7^{1/2} 1/4 artab of wheat (which you speak with me concerning them)
- 6- they were left to you in /////

Notes :

Although the incompleteness of the text, one can conclude that the dispute concerned a fixed amount of wheat.

L.1: *h p3 ʕnh nty iir A* (the of name the plaintiff) is the general opening formula of the oath regardless its region. Here the first word *h* is very faint.

:- For the Relative Future tense : *nty iir A r ir-f* " which A must (has to) or should do ". the 3rd future implies compulsion rather than a simple future²⁰. Compare in Coptic *ετερε A ελλο*²¹

²⁰ Spiegelberg , Demotische Grammatik, Heidelberg 1925, § 544, where he translated the mentioned formula "der Eid, den N. leisten wird" ; Mattha , op. cit , p. 4-5 ; Sethe , DUB , p. 390 2 compare also the same opening formula in Tempeleide texts.

²¹ Thomas O.Lambdin, Introduction to Sahidic Coptic, Mercer University press 1983 , p. 114-5

:- For first part of the plaintiff's name, it suggests to be *Pa - t3 - s.t* (٣.t)

L. 2: *n h.t ntr nb bh.t* : here The word *bh.t* is feminine means " pylon" ²², and *h.t ntr nb bh.t* " temple of master of the pylon" was a designation of the god Sbk in his temple of Crocodilopolis²³ , where the oath was performed.

L. 3 : The day is just trace of a horizontal sign which suggests day3 ²⁴

Year 51 ranged between years 120 - 119 B.C ²⁵

:- The proper name *Pa - t3wy* was familiar in the texts acquired from Gebelen²⁶

L. 4-5 : *nh sbk nty htp dj irm ntr nb nty htp irm=f*

" By sbk who rests here together with every god who rests with him "

Here begins the sworn statement which precedes the subject matter. The oath was by Sbk not only as the local god of the area, but he was also considered as the god of the universe and *wr m psd.t* ²⁷ so every god of his ennead rests with him.

Text Nr. 2, plate I

²² Gardiner, AEO II , means " castle, villa" see WbI , 471 (6-8) , Lesiko, A Dictionary of Late Egyptian I, p. 161

²³ Seethe & Partsch, DUB , p. 390 7 ; Griffith, op. cit, p. 161

²⁴ Erichsen, Demotische Glossar , Kopenhagen 1954 , p. 707.

²⁵ Compare the same date nos. 45, 89, Tempeleide , p.19, p. 107-9,p. 6-5.

²⁶ Luddeckens , DNB I , lieferung 6, p. 420

²⁷ E. Brovovski , " Sobek" in LÄ V , Coll. 1011 - 14

DO Cairo 69 / 18953

Potsherd, yellow

97 x 9 cm, thick . 4- 6 cm

The text is incomplete. The ostrakon is broken at the top and at the left side
The handwriting changed in the last three lines.

Transliteration :-

X + 1 - $\text{nh sbk nty htp dj irm ntr nb] nty htp}$

X + 2 - $\text{irm} = f p^3 j rdb sw 6 nty iw = k mdt$

X + 3 - $\text{irm} = j r - db^3 tj = w bn pw = k djt = s$

X + 4 - $n = j bn pw = k djt = s gr rmt nb$

X + 5 - $= j dd = w bn pw = j (djt) t^3 dnj.t rn = s$

X + 6 - $iw = f ir p^3 nh mtw = f dj rdb sw 6$

X + 7 - $iw = f st 3t) r tm iw = f ir t^3 dnj.t nty iw = j \dots mtw = f mh$

X + 8 - $rdb sw 6 tw p^3 nh r dr.t p^3 - dj W sir p^3 rd (?)$

Translation :-

X + 1 - By Sbk who rests here together with every god] who rests

X + 2 - with him , this 6 artab of wheat which you spoke

X + 3 - with me concerning them , you did not give them

X + 4- to me , you did not gives them to anyone

X + 5 - to me , they said that I did not (give) the same share

X + 6 - if he swear the oath , he will give the six artab of wheat

X + 7- if he refuses that he gives the share which I he will pay

