New Demotic Temple Oaths from Gebelen*

Soad S. Abdel Aal, Cairo University

In her comprehensive study of Demotic temple oaths, Ursula K. Heckel\(^1\) set that Upper Egypt was the source of such texts in the Graeco-Roman period, where Thebes and Gebelen were the two main sites\(^2\) which provided us with that kind of oath\(^3\). The majority of the texts came from Thebes\(^4\) while Gebelen contributed with twenty text only, later on nine texts were added\(^5\).

---

* I would like to thank Mrs. S. Abd el Samee, Miss. A. Abd el Aleem as well as Mr. L. Abd el Hameed in the Cairo – museum for making these ostraca available to study.

1 Ursula K. Heckel, Die Demotische Tempeleide, Wiesbaden 1963; Id, "Eid " in LĀ1, 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. Matthä, 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. Munich 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, LĀ 1, col. 1203-4.

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 gats was called rwtj dj m3רג 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:

\[mtw=f \ st3t \ r \ tm \ ir=r \ mtw=f \ ij\]
\[ilr- \ hr \ p3 \ rd¹¹ \ (or \ p3 \ 8ms.)¹²\]

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

---

⁷ Id., Enchoria 21, Nr. 42.
⁹ In Theban texts, it was sworn by Mantou, khonsu and Amon, while The gods Sbk and Hathor were invoked in Gebelen Texts.
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 ḫnh r qfr.t N. p3 rd¹³ (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
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 Aguizy, 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 $nb\ b hn.t$ "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 $3mwr$ in demotic documents. It was about 14 kilometer north Pathyris. Both towns were in Gebelen.\textsuperscript{19}

Text Nr. 1, plate I
DO Cairo 19 / 18953
Potsherds, reddish
6.4 cm x 8 cm
late Ptolemaic
the ostracaon is broken at the bottom and at the left side. There is a vertical crack begins from the first to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} line.

Transliteration:-

1- $hp^3\ cnh\ nty\ iir\ Pa-t3 - st\ (?) - [3t ]$
2- $s3\ p3\ mr\ ih.t\ r\ ir= fn\ hwt\ ntr\ nb\ bh\ n.t.$
3- $n\ h3t - sp\ 51\ , ibd\ 4\ s\ mw\ sw\ 3\ (?)\ n\ Pa - tw\ s3\ Pa - wn$
4- $cnh\ sbk\ nty\ htp\ dj\ irm\ ntr\ nb$
5- $nty\ htp\ irm =f\ p3j\ rdb\ sw\ 7\ l2\ l4\ ( nty\ iw = k\ md\ irm = j\ r-db3ty$

\textsuperscript{19} Gardiner, AEO II, P. 274 – 5; Griffith, Rylands III, p. 130.
Translation:

1. Text of the oath which pa – t3 – st (?) [ "3t ]
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 7¼ artab of wheat ( which you
   speak with me concerning them )
6. they were left to you in

Notes:

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

L.1: h p3 'nh 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 epe A eaaq 21

20 Spiegelberg , Demotische Grammatik, Heidelberg 1925, § 544, where he translated the
mentioned formula "der Eid, den N. leisten wird" ; Matthia , op. cit. , p. 4-5 ; Sethe , DUB ,
p. 390 2 compare also the same opening formula in Tempeleide texts.
:- For first part of the plaintiff's name, it suggests to be Pa - t3 - s.t ( t3.t )

L. 2: n h.t ntr nb bhn.t : here The word bhn.t is feminine means " pylon" 22, and h.t ntr nb bhn.t " temple of master of the pylon" was a designation of the god Sbk in his temple of Crocodilopolis 23, 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 Gebelen 26

L. 4-5 : n b 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 sware 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
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. Brovarski, " Sobek" in LÁ V, Coll. 1011 - 14
Potsherds, yellow
9.7 x 9 cm, thick . 4-6 cm

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

Transliteration :-

X + 1 –  noreferrer
X + 2 –  noreferrer
X + 3 –  noreferrer
X + 4 –  noreferrer
X + 5 –  noreferrer
X + 6 –  noreferrer
X + 7 –  noreferrer
X + 8 –  noreferrer

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
X + 8 -6 artab of wheat. the oath was given to the hand of P3 - dj - Wsir the steward (?)

Notes:

Here, remains the sworn statement and the subject matter which concerns 6 artab of wheat.

L.X + 3 Here n - im = w is more likely instead of r - db3.ty = w

L.X + 6-8 the hand writing becomes smaller and more cursive or abbreviated.

It differs from the previous lines.

L.X + 8 A small space was available for the proper name and his title, so it was written above the line in a small area.

Text. Nr. 3, plate II
DO Cairo 96 / 18953
Potsherd, red
8 x 12.5 cm, thick .4 - .6 cm
late Ptolemaic

The text is incomplete as the ostracon is broken at the bottom and at the left side. The writing is rubbed off in the middle of the first three lines. The lower part of the right side turned to dark as if it was charred.

Transliteration:

1- ḥp3 cnh nty iir Pa - nb ( bhn.t ) s 3 Wn mfr (?)

2- r ir =fn h.t ntr nb bhn.t n h3t - sp 12 ibd 3 3h.t sw//
3- n T 3 šr.t Mnt , źnḥ Sbk nty htp dj irm ntr nb
4- nty htp irm =f p3 j šḥ (?) rdb sw 8 nty iw=t
5- md irm=j r- dbšty =f w3ḥ=j mḥ
6- (awn) =w irm p3 ḥy (?) //
7- iw = j wj r-r =f

Translation:

1- Text of the oath which Pa-nb (ḫn.t ) son of Wn nfr ?
2- must ( should ) do in the temple of master of the pylon in the
   year 12 Athyr , day//
3- to T3 šr.t Mnt By Sbk who rests here together with every god
4- who rests with him , this 8 artab of wheat which
5- spoke with me concerning it , I have paid ...... I'm far from it
6- its price with the excess

Notes :

The subject matter is about the price of 6 artab of wheat the first party had
paid.

L.1 : The first name of the defendant 1st party suggests L.1 \( \frac{\mbox{Pā-nb}}{\frac{\mbox{ḫn.t}}{\mbox{b}}} \)

: For the second part of the same name is more likely to be wā-n nfr ²⁹

L.2 : Considering the date : hšt sp12 ibd 3 šḥ.t , it ranges between the late
Ptolemaic and the beginning of the Roman period.²⁰

²⁸ Luddeckens , DNB lieferung 5 , p. 386 , for the variation of the name see , Pestman
²⁹ "L'impot \( (\zeta \upsilon \gamma \kappa \upsilon \kappa \lambda \omega) \) a Pathyris et krokodiloplis " in Pap. Lugduno Batava 19 , Leiden
   1978 , p. 221 not (b) ; Oising , Nominalbildung , Mainz 1976 , p. 832
³⁰ Compare the same writing in DNB 1, lieferung 2, p. 118
Text Nr. 4, plate II
DO Cairo 249 / 18953
Potsherds, brown
6.5 x 11 cm, thick .4 - .6 cm

Transliteration:

1- ḥ p3 ʿnḥ nty iir Wn nfr s3 p3 šr Min r - ir = f
2- n ḥ.t ntr nb bḥn.t n ḥ3t sp 25 ṣbd4 šmw sw
3- n N3 ṣḥt = f s3 Pa - tw ʿnḥ Sbk nty ḥtp dj ir (m ntr nb)
4- nty ḥtpš rm= f r ir t3 šrt Min t3y = k rm.t.t
5- (~ sm r p3 r3 N3) ntrw i1r- hr = j r-qd3///
6- ///// p3 šp

Translation:

1- Text of the oath which Wn nfr son of p3 šr Min should do
2- in the temple of master of the pylon in the year 25 mesore, day
3- to N3 ṣḥt = f son of Pa - tw. By Sbk who rests here together with
   every god who
   4- rests with him what T3 š r. t Min your wife has done
5- (~ went to the gats of ) the gods against me concerning ///
6- ///// the remainder

Notes:

30 Compare, Tempeleide, Nos. 15, 111.
Unfortunately, the subject matter of the oath is not complete owing to the incompleteness of the ostracon. It concerns the wife of $N3 \ nht = f$ and paying a sum of money.

L. 2: the text dated to Ptolemy X, year 101 / 100 B.C.\textsuperscript{31}

L. 4: $\text{t3y}=k\ \text{rm t.t} " your wife ". Here, the word $\text{rmt.t}$ means " wife"\textsuperscript{32}. This term occurred in the Ptolemaic Period especially on ostracas.

\textsuperscript{31} Compare the date in Tempeleid Nr. 163, see also Nr. 47

\textsuperscript{32} Pestman ,Marriage and Matrimonial property in Ancient Egypt, Brill 196, p. 11 note 53; Tempeleide p. 468.