Susanne Töpfer

Some Turin Papyri Revisited: A Look at Material Features and Scribal Practices

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss the use and function of texts, while considering not only the textual content but also the features of the writing and the material as support itself. What can the choice of recto or verso tell us about the meaning and function of a text copy? How was a reused papyrus with heterogeneous texts actually used and stored? What do we learn about the 'biography of the object' by studying scribal practices and material features? These aspects will be discussed by presenting various papyrus scrolls with hieratic texts from the Papyrus Collection of Museo Egizio, Turin.

1 Introduction

Museo Egizio in Turin holds one of the world's most significant papyrus collections. The latter is comprised of nearly 900 whole or reassembled manuscripts and more than 20,000 papyrus fragments, documenting over 3,000 years of written material culture in seven scripts and eight languages. The collection houses a number of unique manuscripts from Deir el-Medina that are well-known to the Egyptological community and the general public. The vast majority of the papyrus manuscripts in Museo Egizio date from the Ramesside period (*c.* 1300–1070 BCE) and probably originate from the settlement of Deir el-Medina, which housed the families of the workmen who built the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens in the Theban West. The manuscripts belonged to members of the administration of the royal necropolis. These include the so-called 'Turin King List', also known as the 'Turin Royal Canon': a fragmentary papyrus containing a list of Egyptian kings on the back; the 'Turin Judicial Papyrus': a record of a conspiracy plotted against Pharaoh Ramesses III (*c.* 1187–1157 BCE); the 'Satirical-Erotic Papyrus': giving a glimpse of the humour of the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina; the 'Turin Goldmine Papyrus': the oldest known geological map; and the 'Turin Strike Papyrus', documenting the earliest recorded strikes in world history under Ramesses III.

Precisely these papyrus manuscripts are the most in demand for national and international film documentaries and newspaper reports or non-scientific

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111360805-008

publications. Most of the inquiries addressed to the museum for photos or filming contain the expression 'the famous Turin Papyrus', which gives any curator the greatest difficulty as to which papyrus the request could refer. What is fascinating about the non-scientific requests, is the frequent choice of adjectives, such as 'best-known', 'famous', 'special', 'curious' or 'exciting', referring to the text content or decoration. The manuscripts mentioned above are, without doubt, well-known, even from the time of their purchase by Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852), the French consul in Egypt at the time, and their arrival in Turin in 1824, but it is astonishing that they have hardly ever been studied and that a scientific publication that corresponds to the current philological standard in Egyptology for all the 'famous' papyri mentioned is still a desideratum.[1]

Many aspects of ancient Egyptian scribal culture are still poorly understood; previous research in the field has mostly focused on the content of the texts when striving to reconstruct literary compositions, explain historical events, or describe the administrative and judicial customs. The aim of this paper is to revisit some of the so-called 'famous' Turin papyri from New Kingdom (*c*. 1539–1077 BCE) Deir el-Medina by going beyond their content and philological aspects and instead focusing on their materiality, scribal practice, use/reuse of the manuscripts and the 'biography of the object', in order to discover another side of why these and other Turin manuscripts could be called 'famous', 'special', 'curious' or 'exciting'. The contribution, however, will be condensed without fully exploring the argument. The idea is to provide suggestions and impulses, and to look at the Turin manuscripts from different angles. The in-depth analysis of the individual manuscripts is the subject of ongoing studies.

1 Which, however, is about to change due to the current studies of several researchers, such as Rob Demarée (Leiden), Andreas Dorn (Uppsala), Fredrik Hagen (Copenhagen), Kim Ryholt (Copenhagen), Renaud Pietri (Liege) and Stéphane Polis (Liege). For an overview of scientific publications mentioning the composition of the papyrus collection see the bibliography on the website: <https://collezionepapiri.museoegizio.it/en-GB/section/Papyrus-Collection/History-and-content/History/> (accessed 14 March 2023).

2 New Kingdom Turin papyri

2.1 'Turin King List'

Inv.-No.: Cat. 1874 verso
TPOP Doc ID: 97[2]
Measurements (L × H): 183 × 42 cm
Date: Ramesses II (*c.* 1279–1213 BCE) and later
Script: Hieratic (recto and verso)

The dynasties of the pharaohs are divided in groups of kings united by kinship or their royal residence. A subdivision into thirty dynasties was adopted in Egyptology based on the written sources of Manetho (*c.* 282–246 BCE), a Greek historian and priest who reconstructed the history of ancient Egypt in his study *Aegyptiaca*. In order to write his work (known to us only thanks to later historians), Manetho consulted ancient Egyptian official documents containing lists of pharaohs. Among the examples of these lists, one of the most important is the 'Papyrus of Kings' – also known as 'Turin King List' or 'Royal Canon' – which came to the Museo Egizio due to a purchase made by the consul Bernardino Drovetti around 1820.

It is a chronological list written in hieratic dating to the twentieth dynasty (*c.* 1190–1077 BCE), preserving eleven columns of Egyptian rulers. It starts from the primordial mythological period, with the divine kingdoms of Geb, Osiris, Horus, Seth and Maat, up to the end of the Second Intermediate period (*c.* 1650 BCE). The title, name and duration of the reign in years, months and sometimes even days are recorded for each sovereign. The list of kings mentions rulers of great importance, such as Menes-Narmer (*c.* 3150–3125 BCE), the first non-divine ruler listed, and Djoser (*c.* 2592–2566 BCE), the pharaoh who erected the first great pyramid in history, but also includes many kings who are otherwise unknown.

However, the list was written later, on the back (verso) of a scroll used previously. The text on the front (recto) was written in the nineteenth dynasty during the reign of Ramesses II (*c.* 1279–1213 BCE) and presents a list of dues or taxes collected by the state or, rather, the domain of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak. The taxpayers mentioned are groups of people, high authorities, figures of temples and harbours, superintendents of orchards, hunters, fortress super-

2 Reference to the document in the *Turin Papyrus Online Platform*: <https://papyri.museoegizio.it/Login.aspx> (accessed on 14 March 2023) with metadata and images.

visors in Nubia, controllers of wells in desert regions and oases, and *medjayu* personnel.[3] The list is arranged geographically, starting with Fayum and Memphis in the north, going southwards to Thebes, then Aswan and, finally, ending with Nubia and its desert regions.

According to contemporary scholars, the papyrus was purchased by Drovetti in a complete state but became fragmented subsequently during its transport (Fig. 1). However, it is most probable that it was already a mass of fragments when purchased, similar to most of the Deir el-Medina material in Turin's collection.[4] Despite its fragmentary state, the manuscript attracted immediate attention due to the apparent royal names. Jean-François Champollion studied the fragments and undertook the initial sorting of them in Turin in 1824, identifying forty-seven fragments out of around three hundred. He made facsimiles of the verso of each piece as well as of several columns. In 1826, Gustav Seyffarth identified and arranged nearly two hundred fragments. He undertook the first restoration by mounting the fragments on their front side onto '*papier végétal*' (vegetable fibre paper), with the verso side facing up. In 1842, Richard Lepsius's first nearly complete facsimile of the 'List of Kings' followed Seyffarth's arrangement. In 1851, John G. Wilkinson made a new copy of the verso of the papyrus (containing the list) and, for the first time, copied the recto as well, which bears the taxation text.[5] The 'List of Kings' has been the focus of research and, thus, also attracts the attention of laypeople, however, the taxation text has received little attention.

Fig. 1: 'Turin King List' (Cat. 1874 verso) with back light; photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio.

3 *Medjayu* is the ancient Egyptian term for '(desert) policeman' *mḏꜣy* (see Wb II, 186.9–13).

4 For the fragmentary papyrological material in Museo Egizio, see Töpfer 2018.

5 For references, see Wilkinson 1851; Farina 1938; Helck 1956; Gardiner 1959; Ryholt 2000; Ryholt 2004.

It is certain that the text on the back is of Egyptological importance for the study of the history of ancient Egypt. But how important was the text to the Egyptians themselves, given that it was written on recycled papyrus? Instead of using the front of a blank and new papyrus scroll, the back of an administrative manuscript that had lost its fiscal value was used as the writing material. It is not uncommon, though, for New Kingdom manuscripts coming from the highly literate community of Deir el-Medina to bear several texts on the recto and verso belonging to various genres (see Section 2.2),[6] considering the value of papyrus as a writing support. The text on the verso could have served as a template,[7] which was stored in a library or archive to preserve the knowledge of the chronology, as the list itself was probably a copy of an older manuscript.[8] Regarding a template or model text, the material onto which the text is copied is not important; the back of a high-quality papyrus, such as the one in question, is sufficient for the copy of the list. The legibility of the handwriting and the clear delineations made between the columns can be seen as indications of a possible use as a text from which to be copied. Several ancient patches of papyrus on the verso, applied after the taxation text on the recto was written, demonstrate that the scribe took care of the support before copying the 'List of Kings'. The patches (see the dark spots in Fig. 1) are not to fill gaps but rather to reinforce the scroll so it does not break when it is unrolled and rolled up back again, which speaks for a use as a template.

The 'List of Kings' can probably already be considered to have been an important text in ancient times. We could assume that we are dealing with a historical manuscript, which demonstrates the need of the royal or priestly elite to document their own chronology for the purpose of, perhaps, the social and divine affirmation of a king as a legitimate ruler. It might actually be called 'famous' given its possible use as a template; the text might have been used to copy from for similar lists in temples or tombs. However, the text itself was probably copied from a prototype, as indicated by several notations and layout errors.

---

6 The study of the so-called 'heterogeneous' or 'multiple-text' manuscripts, which bear several texts belonging to various genres (e.g. accounts, poems, hymns and letters) is part of the project between Liège, Basel, and Turin: 'Crossing Boundaries – Understanding Complex Scribal Practices in Ancient Egypt', cf. the project website http://web.philo.ulg.ac.be/x-bound/ (accessed on 23 January 2023).

7 Other ancient lists of Egyptian kings are the so-called Karnak List (eighteenth dynasty), Abydos and Saqqara Lists (nineteenth dynasty), and Ramesseum and Medinet Habu Lists (twentieth dynasty). For references, see above, n. 5.

8 As already proposed by Helck 1956 and later elaborated by Ryholt 1997, 32.

2.2 'Turin Goldmine Papyrus'

Inv.-No.: Cat. 1879+1969+1899+2083/174+2083/182
TPOP Doc ID: 9
Measurements (L × H): 282 × 41 cm
Date: Ramesses IV (*c.* 1155–1150 BCE; map recto); Ramesses IV–Ramesses VI (*c.* 1155–1139 BCE) (texts and drawings verso)
Script: Map with hieratic notes (recto); hieratic and drawings (verso)

The so-called 'Turin Goldmine Papyrus', also known as the 'Turin mine map', is one of the earliest known geographical maps, dating to the Ramesside period (*c.* 1300–1070 BCE). The mountainous region of Wadi Hammamat (an ancient dried-up riverbed that was connected to the Red Sea) is depicted on the front side (recto; Fig. 2a). The mountains on the left side have a pink colour, which indicated the presence of granite and gold deposits, whereas the dark brown mountains on the right side contained sedimentary rock. The mountains are accessible by the several wadis that run through the valley, which are represented as roads on the papyrus. The large white structure on the top left of the map is a chapel of the god Amun, while the smaller white shape highlights the spot where the stela of King Seti I was located; just above it, four small village houses have been drawn. The spotted white and brown track running through the middle of the papyrus represents alluvial deposits. The drawings on the map are surrounded by twenty-eight captions written in hieratic. Most of the annotations state the names of roads or buildings, while the hieratic texts around the mountains indicate where the gold deposits were.

a

b

Fig. 2a–b: 'Turin Goldmine Papyrus' recto and verso; photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio.

This manuscript is, without doubt, the best-known papyrus in Turin's collection and represented by numerous images in scientific and non-scientific publications, articles and on social media. It is the colourful geographical map and its fairly realistic rendering of the wadi that makes the recto so famous. Scholarly attention was also captured by the map, however, the back of the papyrus remains rather unknown. Although the verso of the document is equally rich, it has never been properly published or studied, except for the first two columns.

The verso of the papyrus (Fig. 2b) contains well over a dozen texts, such as hymns to the king, religious compositions, administrative accounts, copies of letters to the king and authorities, as well as drawings of gods and animals, written by several scribes over a long period. It is possible to reconstruct the order in which those texts have been written and identify some scribes at work with a fair degree of certainty, such as Amunnakht, who also wrote the annotations on the recto, as is clear by the handwriting.[9] As such, the detailed examination of this heterogeneous papyrus provides a contextualized glimpse of the 'biography of the object' for over fifteen years, as the back was reused from the time of Ramesses IV until Ramesses VI (*c.* 1155–1139 BCE).

Therefore, when the plan on the front was no longer in use as an actual map of the region of Wadi Hammamat used for the campaigns to quarry stones for statues and extract gold, the back of this long high-quality papyrus was used by scribes who resorted to 'recycled' papyri like this in their daily life. The 'Turin Goldmine Papyrus', as such, gives us an idea of the scribal life of the community of Deir el-Medina.

2.3 'Turin Strike Papyrus'

Inv.-No.: Cat. 1880
TPOP Doc ID: 131
Measurements (L × H): 95 × 45 cm
Date: Ramesses III (*c.* 1187–1157 BCE) (recto and verso)
Script: Hieratic (recto and verso)

9 A complete edition of recto and verso is under preparation by Andreas Dorn (Uppsala) and Stéphane Polis (Liège), see, for now, Dorn and Polis 2017. There is a temptation in research to attribute the drawing of the map to Amunnakht as well, but to be sure, the two authors will examine the 'captions' to the map in particular paleographically in order to make a better statement (personal note by Andreas Dorn).

The so-called 'Strike Papyrus' (Fig. 3) is a hieratic administrative papyrus written by Amunnakht and reports the news of a strike that took place during the last years of the reign of Ramesses III (*c.* 1187–1157 BCE). The political and economic difficulties during this time resulted in the suspension of rations for the workmen, which triggered a lengthy conflict between the villagers of Deir el-Medina and government authorities. The workmen first ceased their work in November and spent several days in the necropolis of Thebes, and later in the temple of Thutmose III (*c.* 1478–1425 BCE) and in that of Ramesses II, while requesting the authorities to deliver the grain rations that had not been paid to them that month. The authorities paid the due amount of grain to the workmen, but several days later they went on strike again, this time seeking refuge in the temple of Seti I. The authorities ordered the return of the workmen to the village, but they refused, saying that they wanted to complain directly to the pharaoh about their poor working conditions.

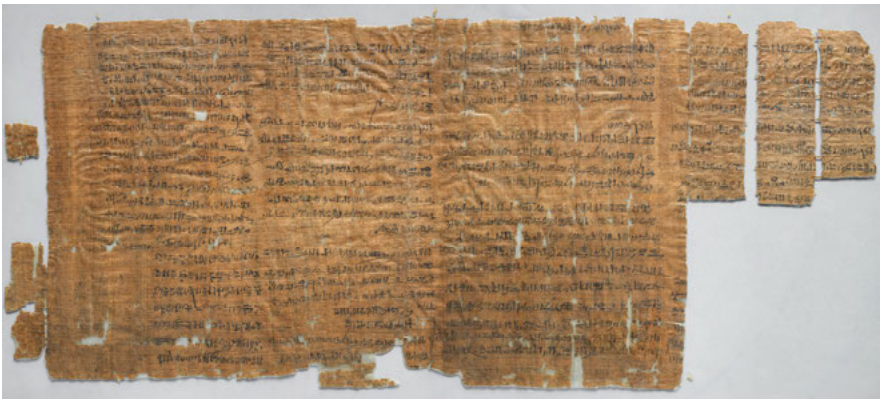

Fig. 3: 'Turin Strike Papyrus' recto; photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio.

This manuscript is famous for good reason, since it documents one of the first organised strikes in history. It is noteworthy that the text sections describing the events on the recto are not in complete order in terms of the dates of the event, and are instead combined with and 'interrupted' by legal and juridical sections.[10] The verso contains several sections belonging to the report of the strike, such as lists of service personnel and delivery of goods. The rest of the papyrus

10 For the distribution, see TPOP Doc ID 131 and Gardiner 1958, ix.

records the statement of a workman regarding the crimes of three other workmen, a small memorandum about the death of a scribe from the village, an attendance sheet, an account of items given by a man to his former wife, and several oaths. All sections are written by Amunnakht,[11] but he added different notes and texts as they happened in time, and not all are directly linked to the strike. The memorandum about the death of a scribe, for example, is written in one line above the second column on the recto, above the report of the events of the strike which took place in November of year 29, whereas the death of the scribe is dated to February of year 29. The fourth strike event, taking place in November of year 29, is written upside-down at the end of the recto in column four, under the statement of a workman regarding the crimes of three other workmen, which is dated to February of year 29. The list of personnel and deliveries on the verso is quite often distributed between columns and 'interrupted' by texts, such as oaths. A report relating to the later stage of the strike is written on the verso at the end of the preserved scroll, after the lists.

It can be assumed that Amunnakht used the papyrus scroll as a kind of notebook, documenting various events, not all related to the strike but as they happened in Deir el-Medina. The 'chaotic' way in which the texts are written might show that the manuscript was only used by Amunnakht (not like the 'Goldmine Papyrus', which was reused later by several scribes), perhaps serving as a source for writing letters with a detailed description of the events to the authorities. However, even if the layout appears a bit confusing, Amunnakht had his own method of clarity, as can be seen by the text written upside-down on the recto at the end of the column and, therefore, the end of the papyrus scroll: the scribe seems to 'finish' the 'page' in that way.

2.4 'Turin Conspiracy Papyrus'

Inv.-No.: Cat. 1875
TPOP Doc ID: 391
Measurements (L × H): 534 × 44 cm
Date: Ramesses III–Ramesses IV (*c.* 1187–1150 BCE)
Script: Hieratic (recto)

11 The identification is based in palaeography, traces of his name and other manuscripts from that time documenting him as 'Scribe of the Tomb', which means Amunnakht had the highest position a scribe could have, which enabled him to document the strike as an important event.

The history of ancient Egypt has been reconstructed through documents such as the 'Turin King List' (see Section 2.1), enabling scholars to establish a reliable chronology of ancient Egypt. Numerous surviving texts provide information about events that the Egyptian state wanted to remember, such as the 'Turin Strike Papyrus' (see Section 2.3), or the punishment of individuals responsible for an attempt on the pharaoh's life in the 'Turin Conspiracy Papyrus' (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: 'Turin Conspiracy Papyrus' recto; photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio.

This manuscript contains a judicial text that recounts a trial that (possibly) took place against a group of conspirators for having attempted to kill Pharaoh Ramesses III (*c.* 1187–1157 BCE). The instigator was Queen Tiye, who, together with other women from the pharaoh's harem and several people with high positions in government, tried to place Tiye's son Pentaweret on the throne instead of the appointed heir. Although the death of Ramesses III is not explicitly mentioned in the papyrus, the assassination seemed to have been successful, as a recent examination of the mummy of Ramesses III proved that a deep cut in the throat was the cause of his death. However, the appointed heir still managed to ascend the throne instead of Pentaweret. He assumed the name Ramesses IV and the culprits were arrested and put on trial. The papyrus describes the crime with which each individual conspirator was charged and the punishment they received. The death sentence was imposed on most of those plotting against the pharaoh, but they were not killed directly by the followers of Ramesses IV. Instead, the accused were allowed to take their own lives.

Unlike the manuscripts mentioned previously, the 'Conspiracy Papyrus' is not a reused papyrus: the documentary text was written in an elegant hand in large calligraphy on the front of a very high-quality papyrus, leaving the reverse blank. A total of six columns are preserved, the beginning is lost but not much of the text is thought to be missing regarding the fact that the entire description

of the crime and court case is preserved. The text has been largely written across the papyrus, each column has a different length and range of lines: the layout here is clearly determined by the contents of the columns, which each document different aspects of the court case. Columns 4 and 5, for example, are the most detailed, giving one line to each criminal who was involved in the conspiracy, introducing him, describing how he was involved and establishing his guilt. A visual subdivision is made by constantly repeating formula, such as *ḫrw ꜥ?* 'great criminal NN', and the subdivision of sections by phrases written in red ink, such as *in.tu=f* 'he was brought (to appear)'. The calligraphic handwriting, spacious distribution and clear delineations made between the columns and sections indicate the use of the papyrus scroll as a documentary manuscript with the purpose of being stored in a library or archive to preserve the record of the trials surrounding that historical event. This was not a papyrus that was permitted to be reused, despite the free space on the recto and verso, due to its character as an archival document.

Looking at the condition of the papyrus scroll and how it is preserved today, it becomes clear that it was rolled up from left to right: the manuscript is damaged on the right side, because this part was on the outside of the scroll. The holes/lacunae in the lower half of the first part of the manuscript become smaller from right to left and the distance between them decreases. Those holes were caused by insects when the scroll was rolled up, and having no traces of them on the second part (left) of the manuscript indicates that this section was more protected due to being on the inside of the scroll; the insects have eaten their way in from the outside (right) to about the middle. Furthermore, the larger damaged areas on the first preserved column and the size of the lacunae underline the hypothesis that not much of the text is missing, because the first sheet was almost certainly more damaged as it was more susceptible to such by being exposed on the outside.

2.5 'Ritual of Amenophis I'

Inv.-No.: Suppl. 10125/1
TPOP Doc ID: 296
Measurements (L × H): 344 × 31 cm
Date: Ramesses II (*c.* 1279–1213 BCE)
Script: Hieratic (recto)

This long manuscript (Fig. 5) bears fourteen columns of hieratic text on the recto, which contains the so-called 'Ritual of Amenophis I'. Amenophis I Djeserkara (*c.* 1514–1494 BCE), king of the eighteenth dynasty, founded the vil-

lage of Deir el-Medina, where the workmen who constructed and decorated the royal tombs lived. After his death, he was deified and worshipped by the inhabitants of the village.

Fig. 5: 'Ritual of Amenophis I' recto; scan by Museo Egizio.

The manuscript dates to the period of Ramesses II (*c.* 1279–1213 BCE). Found in 1906 by Ernesto Schiaparelli on-site in Deir el-Medina, the papyrus was apparently stolen shortly afterwards from the excavation and was repurchased by Schiaparelli himself in 1909 at the antiquities market in Cairo. The Turin manuscript is a fragment of the papyrus scroll of which its upper part is currently in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 58030).[12] It can be assumed that the manuscript had been cut right after it was stolen from the excavation site in order to sell more parts of it at the market.

The text is a kind of ceremonial manual recording a variety of offerings and cultic activities. The ritual's structure is rather complex; it consists of several activities, such as purification, and offering food and different items, which were presented in the temple to statues of deities or the pharaoh by a priest, accompanied by 'magical' formulae. The aim of the ritual was generally to preserve the religious order of Egypt by pacifying the divine ruler.

The offering ritual is addressed to Amun and to the Pharaoh Amenophis I. Depending on the sections, the latter is mentioned as the beneficiary or donor of the offerings. Consequently, an assimilation of the god Amun with the pharaoh seems to be performed within that ritual, resulting in the adjustment of Amun's traditional cult to the local cult of Amenophis I, as deified in Western Thebes.

The text contains a 'famous' offering ritual that is attested in several copies ranging from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman period on papyri, ostraca and

12 Golénischeff 1927, 134–156, pl. XXIV–XXVII; Bacchi 1942.

temple walls.[13] Regarding the Turin manuscript, the question arises as to whether the papyrus scroll was actually used in ritual processes. It can be assumed that the text is an actually performed temple ritual, but this does not necessarily mean the copy had a practical use in the temple; it could have served as a template or back-up copy for memorising, which was stored in the temple library or archive to preserve the priestly knowledge of the ritual. There is no clear answer to this question as both utilisations are possible; nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to look at the material and the layout more closely with such a question in mind.

The text is written on the recto in a neat hand and filigree calligraphy, leaving the reverse blank,[14] while the beginning of new spells and sections are written in red ink. It would be suitable for recitation due to the legibility and the clear delineations made between the spells. However, compared to parallels, the text has some misspellings, omissions and errors. This might present difficulties in a recitation but could be recognised by an attentive copyist from an archival copy. It is noteworthy that the manuscript has only a few or slightly evident folds, which suggests that the scroll was not rolled up and closed very often, consequently, it could have been used as a template. This theory is reinforced by the fact that the scroll was rolled up from right to left, as can be seen from the destruction at the bottom of the left half of the manuscript. The beginning of the text was, therefore, inside the scroll, which is not exactly handy for the priest in a liturgical recitation – and not for the copyist either – because he would first have to unroll the scroll from the back to start reading.

2.6 'Book of the Dead of Kha'

Inv.-No.: Suppl. 8438
TPOP Doc ID: 439
Measurements (L × H): 138 × 34 cm
Date: Amenhotep III (*c.* 1390–1353 BCE)
Script: Cursive hieroglyphs

13 Nelson 1949; Tacke 2013.

14 A 'pure' – not reused – papyrus roll is actually essential for the virtue of the spells for some ritual or funerary texts. There is even an Egyptian word *šw* meaning 'blank sheet of papyrus' (Wb IV, 428.5–12) which has an apotropaic use in funerary and religious texts. Another designation for a new papyrus found in Egyptian and Demotic texts would be *ḏmꜣ n mꜣj* (Wb V, 574.3–9; Erichsen 1954, 679–680).

The final single manuscript I would like to focus on is the 'Book of the Dead' manuscript of Kha, who was superintendent of works in the royal necropolis during the reigns of Amenhotep II and Amenhotep III (*c.* 1425–1353 BCE) in the middle of the eighteenth dynasty. In 1906, Schiaparelli opened Tomb 8 (Theban Tomb 8) in the necropolis at Deir el-Medina and found the papyrus in a perfect state of preservation laying on the second/intermediate coffin of Kha, which was almost entirely hidden beneath it.[15] The long papyrus written in cursive hieroglyphs contains – starting from left to right – thirty-three formulae from the so-called 'Book of the Dead',[16] a funerary compilation of several formulae for the guidance, protection and resurrection of the deceased in the afterlife.

The manuscript of Kha is indeed one of the best preserved New Kingdom 'Book of the Dead' copies (Fig. 6), written by a scribe with a neat hand who copied the texts carefully since mistakes are barely recognisable. The individual formulae are easy to identify, even if one cannot read the text: they are separated by double lines filled with yellow, so are the excellently drawn colour vignettes. Traces of red lines are evident beneath the images. Those are guiding lines for the illustrator. Furthermore, there are black dots visible on top of some the images, indicating the beginning of the column lines for the texts.

The name of the owner of the papyrus who is the beneficiary of the spells occurs frequently. He is mentioned usually after the title, introduced by the phrase 'words spoken by' and 'he says', or at the end of the spells. In formulae 13 and 17, however, the space after the titles is empty. Thus, it appears that the 'Book of the Dead of Kha' was pre-manufactured and the space for the name of the subsequent owner has been left blank. When the manuscript was adapted for Kha, his name was inserted, however, not in each space. The fact that the name was added later becomes obvious in the second column of formula 1: the titles and names of Kha and his wife Merit are spaced widely apart, probably because the scribe had to fill in the whole column (Fig. 6). Furthermore, multispectral imaging shows that the names are written here over an erased text; some traces of ink and even signs are still visible. Erasures are apparent only in this column. This suggests that the manuscript was intended for somebody else,

15 Kha was buried in three coffins, which were placed one inside the other (external, intermediate and internal). See furthermore Töpfer 2019.

16 The title 'Book of the Dead' is a modern designation given by the German scholar Richard Lepsius in 1842 to a corpus which is known from the late seventeenth dynasty (*c.* 1550 BCE) to the early Roman period (first century BCE and CE). He chose the title to emphasise the use of the manuscript, which was buried along with the deceased, as a type of 'passport' into the afterlife. The ancient Egyptian title of the corpus, however, is 'Going out in Daylight' or rather 'Beginning of the Spells for Going out in Daylight'.

whose name was initially written but erased later in order to reuse the manuscript for Kha instead.

Fig. 6: 'Book of the Dead of Kha' recto, details; photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/Museo Egizio.

Although the Turin 'Book of the Dead of Kha' was probably not specifically written for Kha, it was clearly meant for a high official. The quality of the papyrus material, the writing and the colourful images are evidence of this. That it was subsequently used for an official such as Kha, because of his important position as superintendent of works in the royal necropolis, is hardly surprising. Despite its high quality, the manuscript, or rather its ornamentation, seems to be unfinished. The text columns are framed by three bordering lines filled in with red and white coloured ochre. But the colours were used only for the first half of the manuscript and not for the second (Fig. 6). The middle border was subsequently filled in with ochre and the inner border at the end of the manuscript in yellow. However, it is uncertain what caused that change of style. One

might suggest that the draughtsman ran out of colour and that he or his colleague finished the frame later. Another suggestion might be that the layout was revised when the papyrus was reused for Kha. Revisions are not only visible within the framing but also in the opening illustration.

The opening scene with Osiris depicted in mummiform from the chest downward is common in most of the 'Book of the Dead' papyri from the New Kingdom. However, a closer look reveals a pattern under the white paint: the body of the god was originally covered with feathers (Fig. 6). But why feathers? The underlying concept is the protection of Osiris by his mother the sky goddess Nut or his sisters Isis and Nephthys, all of them having wings instead of arms in several depictions. Therefore, the feathers are an icon of protection and rebirth. It remains unclear why the feathers were covered later with white. A change of taste in connection with the reuse of the papyrus for Kha is highly likely. The illustration to formula 74 is unfinished and was not coloured; only a draft is depicted (Fig. 6). The draughtsman perhaps merely forgot to colour in that vignette because of its position at the bottom. In fact, this is the only illustration beneath the text and the only one without colour.

3 Patchwork papyri

Museo Egizio houses numerous funerary papyri that have been restored in the past, as can be seen by the disparity of their materiality. The papyri in question are mainly 'Amduat' (e.g. Cat. 1786;[17] Fig. 7a) or 'Book of the Dead' manuscripts, which came to Turin in 1824 as part of the Bernardino Drovetti collection and were subsequently mounted on cardboard. Since 2017, a restoration project has been focusing on detaching all funerary papyri from the acidic cardboard material. After the restorers detached the cardboard, inscribed papyrus fragments were revealed (Fig. 7b), used as patches to fill the lacunae. The texts on these fragments are of administrative, literary and magical nature, the majority dating to the Ramesside period. They are quite similar in content and script to the thousands of fragments that were stored in cardboard folders.[18] Therefore, it can be suggested that they are related to the Deir el-Medina manuscripts.

17 TPOP Doc ID 347.

18 See the report by Töpfer 2018.

a

b

Fig. 7a–b: 'Patchwork' papyrus Cat. 1786 recto and verso; scan by Museo Egizio.

It remains rather uncertain whether the patches were attached to the papyri by the antiquity dealers in Luxor in order to increase the value – a complete papyrus roll is easier to sell than a roll full of holes – or if this happened in Italy during the nineteenth century. The second consideration is supported by the fact

that other 'patchwork' papyri such as ours do not exist in the papyrus collections in the British Museum, the Louvre, in Leiden or Berlin. If this 'restoration' happened in Egypt, one would expect to find such papyri in other European collections, since Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852), Frédéric Cailliaud (1787–1868), Henry Salt (1780–1827), Heinrich Menu von Minutoli (1772–1846) and Giovanni d'Athanasi (1798–1854) all mainly purchased items from the same dealers for the museums mentioned above. Moreover, we can find 'reconstructed' funerary manuscripts with fragments of other papyri among the papyrological material in the Egyptian department of the Vatican Museums.[19] Such data undoubtedly supports the theory that there was a certain 'restoration technique' used on papyri in Italy during the nineteenth century.

So, how should we handle those fragments? Each fragment will be recorded in the museum's database with complete metadata, which will hopefully help in the future to allocate them virtually to original documents. We will not, however, detach the fragments from the funerary papyri for two main reasons: firstly, they are adhesively attached to the manuscript, and we would damage both documents irreversibly; we would lose more than we gain. Secondly, regarding the ethics of conservation practice: museum collections are repositories of communication and cultural memory, and, therefore, conservation is a practice that focuses on the preservation of the cultural knowledge of objects. In the nineteenth century, restorers were being accused of falsification and, therefore, fabrication of truth; either by making old things look beautiful and new, or making new things look old and valuable, according to taste. An aesthetic and philosophical shift of values started to occur in the middle of the twentieth century, resulting in conservators becoming more concerned with not altering the meaning of objects. Conservation, thus, as a 'new' profession developed the aim to preserve and not alter, to secure and not change, and to maintain rather than recreate. Of course, there are a multitude of views coming from the various stakeholders involved (Egyptologists, philologists, conservators, curators and the general public) whether the fragments attached to the manuscripts could or should be removed, stored and displayed separately.

My point of view is that, nearly two hundred years ago, the fragments and the funerary manuscript became one object, which needs to be preserved as such. The database will enable us to recreate the archaeological context, recompose dispersed corpora, preserving the complete biography of the object(s) and adding different layers of Egyptological interpretation. But we also have to

19 For the Vatican papyri, see Albert 2012; Albert 2017; Albert 2018.

keep evidence of past knowledge and practice for conservation methods at Museo Egizio, and the means by which these maybe transmitted into the future.

4 Conclusion

Most of the visitors to Museo Egizio pass by cursive hieroglyphic and hieratic manuscripts on display on the walls, hardly taking any notice of them. They only stop to look at papyri bearing colour illustrations, or those that are prominently displayed in the middle of the rooms, such as the manuscripts discussed here. These manuscripts are, beyond doubt, among the most important written sources that have come down to us from ancient Egypt about the history, economy and socio-cultural structure of Ramesside Egypt (*c.* 1300–1070 BCE), but their historical significance becomes obvious only in the context in which the manuscript was produced. The study of fragmentary or damaged manuscripts as presented here is a difficult and sometimes discouraging task because it consists mostly of hypotheses. However, one is forced to investigate every detail, whether it concerns the layout, the quality of the hand or the writing material. Hence, one has to look beyond the text content, with a contextualized approach to writing that takes into account the papyrological data and the individual habits of scribes. In doing so, the most interesting features are revealed, which – in the field of philology – would not receive much attention in the case of a complete manuscript but are certainly of importance for the study of material culture. More interpretations regarding the cases of use and reuse described will be the theme of upcoming research monographes on the individual manuscripts.

Abbreviations

Wb = Hermann Grapow and Adolf Erman (eds), *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache*, 6 vols, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1926–1961.

TPOP = *Turin Papyrus Online Platform* <https://papyri.museoegizio.it/Login.aspx> (accessed on 23 January 2023).

References

Albert, Florence (2012), 'Le papyrus Vatican 38603: un Livre des morts original dans la collection du Museo Gregoriano Egizio', *Bollettino dei Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie*, 29: 7–16.

Albert, Florence (2017), 'Le papyrus Vatican 38567 et les documents hiéroglyphiques de la collection égyptienne des Musées du Vatican', *Bollettino dei Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie*, 34: 59–75.

Albert, Florence (2018), 'Une reconstitution du papyrus Vatican 38602 dans le cadre du Progetto Orazio Marucchi', *Bollettino dei Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie*, 35: 9–21.

Bacchi, Ernesta (1942), *Il Rituale di Amenhotpe I* (Pubblicazioni egittologiche del R. Museo di Torino, 6), Turin: Museo Egizio.

Dorn, Andreas and Stéphane Polis (2017), 'Nouveaux textes littéraires du scribe Amennakhte (et autres ostraca relatifs au scribe de la Tombe)', *Le Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 116: 57–96.

Erichsen, Wolja (1954), *Demotisches Glossar*, Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard.

Farina, Giulio (1938), *Il papiro dei Re*, Rome: G. Bardi.

Gardiner, Alan H. (1958), *Ramesside Administrative Documents*, London: Oxford Univ. Press.

Gardiner, Alan H. (1959), *The Royal Canon of Turin*, Oxford: V. Ridler.

Golénischeff, Wladimir (1927), *Papyrus hiératiques: Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, Cairo: Institut Français.

Helck, Wolfgang (1956), *Untersuchungen zu Manetho und den ägyptischen Königslisten* (Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens, 18), Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Nelson, Harold H. (1949), 'Certain Reliefs at Karnak and Medinet Habu and the Ritual of Amenophis I', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 8/3: 201–232.

Ryholt, Kim (1997), *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Ryholt, Kim (2000), 'The Late Old Kingdom in the Turin King-list and the Identity of Nitocris', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, 127: 87–100.

Ryholt, Kim (2004), 'The Turin King-list', *Ägypten und Levante*, 14: 135–155.

Tacke, Nikolas (2013), *Das Opferritual des ägyptischen Neuen Reiches* (Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta, 222), Leuven: Peeters.

Töpfer, Susanne (2018), 'The Turin Papyrus Online Platform (TPOP): An Introduction', *Rivista del Museo Egizio*, 2 <doi.org/10.29353/rime.2018.1916>.

Töpfer, Susanne (2019), *Il Libro dei Morti di Kha*, Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini.

Wilkinson, John G. (1851), *The Fragments of the Hieratic Papyrus at Turin: Containing the Names of Egyptian Kings, with the Hieratic Inscription at the Back*, London: T. Richards.