Two Notes on Egyptian Script

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Possible scripts for the “reformed Egyptian” referred to in the Book of Mormon include abnormal hieratic and carved hieratic.
Two Notes on Egyptian Script

John Gee

Moroni, at the end of his father's record, states, "we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian" (Mormon 9:32). Since the publication of this statement many suggestions have been made concerning the identification of the script. This note is intended to broaden the base of possibilities thus far considered by adding two hitherto unconsidered options.

Abnormal Hieratic

Most discussions of reformed Egyptian deal with demotic. Yet "Demotic is... derived ... from one of two hieratic styles used in Lower Egypt itself." This other style of hieratic script,

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2 A convenient summary of the suggestions is found in William J. Hamblin, "Reformed Egyptian" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995).
abnormal hieratic,⁵ has not received attention and ought at least to be considered in discussions of reformed Egyptian. Michel Malinine, who did the most work toward deciphering and publishing abnormal hieratic documents, did not like the term himself and preferred to call it “cursive thébaine tardive” (late Theban cursive)⁶ while Georg Möller preferred the term “spähieratische Kursive,”⁷ but Griffith’s term, “abnormal hieratic,” is the one that has stuck. “Abnormal hieratic’ represents the final stage of the development of cursive writing in the New Kingdom, which was elaborated and used in the southern half of Egypt and, in particular, at Thebes, and whose progressive changes can actually be followed, almost without interruption, from the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty until the penultimate reign of the Saite Dynasty.”⁸ An adaptation of hieratic characterized by “wild orthography,”⁹ abnormal hieratic in its second phase was used in Egypt mainly for legal and administrative purposes¹⁰ during the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties (727–548 B.C.),¹¹ after

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⁸ Malinine, Choix des textes juridiques, 1:xiv.


¹⁰ Malinine, Choix des textes juridiques, 1:iiv. For the administrative purposes of early demotic, see ibid., 1:xvi.

which time it was replaced by demotic. Though abnormal hieratic is usually thought only to have been used in southern Egypt, it has now been dubiously argued that it was used in northern Egypt as well. Be that as it may, it is yet another modified Egyptian script available in Egypt in Lehi’s day.

**Carved Hieratic**

It is important to realize also that demotic, like hieratic (and abnormal hieratic), was usually written with a brush on papyrus until Ptolemaic times (third century B.C.), when the Greek *kalamos* or reed pen began to be used. Hieratic from the beginning was a script adapted for brush on papyrus; for carving, hieroglyphics were used. After the conquest of Egypt by the Libyans ushered in the Twenty-first Dynasty, hieratic began to be used for carving in stone. During the Twenty-second Dynasty, hieratic stelae containing official royal decrees became common; but hieratic disappeared from official decrees with the archaizing fashion of the Saite Period (Twenty-sixth Dynasty). The ductus

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17 The importance of this for Old Testament history can hardly be understated. Without the problems caused by its western and southern flanks (Libya and Nubia), Egypt would certainly have pursued its traditional course of dominating the Levantine littoral, which would not have allowed either a united or a divided Israelite monarchy; the Israelites would have forever been fighting the Egyptians rather than the Philistines. For Egypt’s foreign policy, see Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), a book unfortunately marred by the author’s obvious hostility toward the Bible and the religions that sprang therefrom.
18 For a recent study of the archaizing tendency of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, see Peter Der Manuelian, *Living in the Past: Studies in Archaism of the Egyptian Twenty-sixth Dynasty* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994). This tendency is normally noted in the art of the period; see Gay Robins, *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 256–57. Although the archaizing tendency of art is normally associated with the
of hieratic (and demotic) that has been engraved is altered from that found on papyrus—carving tends to be more angular,\(^1\) while the brush adapts itself well to rounded forms—which makes it more difficult to read if one is not used to it. When engraved, hieratic and demotic are normally engraved in stone, but there are examples of demotic engraved into metal,\(^2\) including a bronze palette.\(^3\) Though, to my knowledge, no one has raised this objection before, it is worth noting that a tradition of engraving forms of cursive Egyptian is attested by Lehi’s day\(^4\) and that engraved forms of cursive do not necessarily coincide with those forms produced by brush and ink.

What follows are selected lists of documents in abnormal hieratic\(^5\) and carved hieratic\(^6\) and a selected bibliography of works dealing with abnormal hieratic.

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\(^3\) Cairo CG 30691 (Roman period), in Spiegelberg, *Die demotischen Denkmäler*, 1:80-82 and Tafel XXVI. This document is a temple inventory; for other examples see Jasnow, “The Hieratic Wooden Tablet Varille,” 99-112, and bibliography in p. 100 n. 10.


\(^5\) In 1953 Malinine knew of about 150 documents in early demotic and abnormal hieratic, of which about thirty at most had been published; Malinine, *Choix des textes juridiques*, 1:iv. He said there were about forty texts in abnormal hieratic; ibid., 1:i:h.

\(^6\) This does not include incised hieratic ostraca that came to my attention too late to be included.
Selected Chronological List of Abnormal Hieratic Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Egyptian Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P. Berlin 3063</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin “Grundbuch”</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Berlin 10459</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Ermitage 2969</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Vienne 12011a</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Vienne 12011b</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Vienne 12011c</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Vienne 12013</td>
<td>21–22 Dyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Brit Mus 10800</td>
<td>22 Dyn</td>
<td>14.2.iht.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Berlin 3048</td>
<td>833 B.C.</td>
<td>Takelot II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Leiden F 1942/5.15</td>
<td>728 B.C.</td>
<td>Py</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican (10.574) 2038 c</td>
<td>726 B.C.</td>
<td>Py</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 Conversion of the dates to our calendar here, and generally through the article follow those of Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.),* 2nd ed. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986). The format for the Egyptian date where given is taken from the Egyptian date formula of the documents themselves, using Egyptian format. Thus the date 17.1.5mw.13 Psammeticus I means: year 17, first month of harvest (summer), day 13 of Psammetichus I. Restorations are in brackets.

26 First eight items unpublished, see Malinine, “L’hiératique anormal,” 1:32.


30 Michel Malinine, “Une vente d’esclave à l’époque de Psammétique Ier (papyrus de Vatican 10574, en hiératique «anormal»),” *Revue d’Egyptologie* 5 (1946): 119–31; Parker, “King Py, a Historical Problem,” 111–14; Malinine,
Papyrus Louvre E 3228 e 707 B.C. 10.4.šmw.ṯqy Shabaka
Papyrus Louvre E 3228 b 706 B.C. 13.3.ḥt.24 [Shabaka]
Papyrus Louvre E 3228 d 688 B.C. 3.1.pr.t.10 Taharqa
MMA 35.3.318 verso 688 B.C. 3.1.šmw.11 [Taharqa]
MMA 35.3.318 recto 686 B.C. 5.1.šmw.2 [Taharqa]
Papyrus Cairo 30884 686 B.C. 5.1.šmw.16 [Taharqa]
Papyrus Louvre E 3228 f 686 B.C. 5.3.šmw.19 [Taharqa]
Papyrus Louvre E 3228 c 685 B.C. 6.2.šmw.6 Taharqa
Papyrus Cairo 30841 686 B.C. 7.4.[x] Taharqa
Papyrus Cairo 30886 680 B.C. 13.2.šmw.29 [Taharqa]
Papyrus Louvre 3168 [10] Taharqa
Cairo CG 30907 + 30909 669 B.C. 22 Taharqa

36 Wilhelm Spiegelberg, Die demotischen Denkmäler, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Druglin, 1904; Strassburg: Fischbach, 1906; Strassburg: Schauberg, 1908; Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1932), 2.1:194, 2.2:plate LXVII.
39 Spiegelberg, Demotischen Denkmäler, 2.1:190; 2.2:plate LXV.
40 Ibid., 2.1:194; 2.2:plate LXVII.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papyrus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairo 30878</td>
<td>668 B.C.</td>
<td>23 [Taharqa]</td>
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<td>Cairo 30865</td>
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<td>[Taharqa]</td>
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<td>Louvre E 3228 g</td>
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<td>[Taharqa]</td>
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<tr>
<td>CG 50012</td>
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<td>[Taharqa]</td>
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<td>Cairo 30894</td>
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<td>[Taharqa]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairo 30906</td>
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<td>[Taharqa]</td>
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<td>Louvre 12004</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Psammetichus I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stele C 101</td>
<td>656 B.C.</td>
<td>8.2:jht Psammetichus I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brooklyn 47.218.3</td>
<td>650 B.C.</td>
<td>14 Psammetichus I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wien 12003</td>
<td>647 B.C.</td>
<td>17.1:smw.13 Psammetichus I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican XL</td>
<td>643 B.C.</td>
<td>21.3:jht.12 Psammetichus I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wien 12002</td>
<td>639 B.C.</td>
<td>25 Psammetichus I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42 Spiegelberg, Demotischen Denkmäler, 2.1:196, 2.2:plate LXIX; Lüdeckens, Ägyptische Eheverträge, 12-13; Malinine, “L’hieratique anormal,” 34 (dating to year 12? of Taharqa); Vleeming, “Sale of a Slave,” 5 (dating to year 227 of Taharqa); Thissen, “Frühdemotische Papyri,” 107 (dating to year 13 of Taharqa). Möller, Zwei ägyptische Eheverträge, 7-16 and Tafel III.
43 Spiegelberg, Demotischen Denkmäler, 2.1:194, 2.2:plate LXVII; Thissen, “Frühdemotische Papyri,” 107-8 (perhaps date to Psammetichus I).
45 Malinine, “Quatre textes du Musée du Louvre,” 96-97 and plate 5.
46 Spiegelberg, Demotischen Denkmäler, 2.1:329-32, 2.2:plate CXLIII.
47 Ibid., 2.1:195; 2.2:plate LXVIII.
48 Ibid., 2.1:196; 2.2:plate LXVIII; Thissen, “Frühdemotische Papyri,” 107.
54 Parker, Saite Oracle Papyrus, 24; Thissen, “Frühdemotische Papyri,” 108.
<table>
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<th>Papyrus Turin no.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>(246) 2118</td>
<td>634 B.C.</td>
<td>30.4.smw.5</td>
<td>Psammetichus 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyrus Turin no. 2118 verso</td>
<td>633 B.C.</td>
<td>31.1.smw.12</td>
<td>Psammetichus 157</td>
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<tr>
<td>(244) 2119</td>
<td>33–42</td>
<td>Psammetichus 158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(247) 2120</td>
<td>619 B.C.</td>
<td>45.1.prt.5</td>
<td>Psammetichus 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(248) 2121</td>
<td>617 B.C.</td>
<td>47.3.smw.18</td>
<td>Psammetichus 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyrus Louvre E 7858</td>
<td>609 B.C.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Necho II 61</td>
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<td>Papyrus Louvre E 7849</td>
<td>591 B.C.</td>
<td>5.4.smw.21</td>
<td>Psammetichus II 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyrus Brit Mus 10113</td>
<td>568 B.C.</td>
<td>20.2.smw.10</td>
<td>Apries 63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papyrus Louvre E 7861</td>
<td>567 B.C.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Amasis 64</td>
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<td>Papyrus Louvre E 7848</td>
<td>558 B.C.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Amasis 65</td>
</tr>
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<td>Leiden I 431</td>
<td>556 B.C.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Amasis 66</td>
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<td>Papyrus Brit Mus 10432</td>
<td>555 B.C.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Amasis 67</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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65 Thissen, "Frühdemotische Papyri," 110.
Papyrus Louvre E 7845 553 B.C. 17 Amasis
Papyrus Louvre E 7846 548 B.C. 22.3.smw.5 Amasis
Cairo CG 30657 546 B.C. 24 Amasis
Papyrus Louvre E 3168 ? 16.1.smw.26 ?
Papyrus Brooklyn 37.1799 E ? ? ?

Select Annotated Bibliography on Abnormal Hieratic

Bakir, Abd el-Mohsen. Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt. Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1952. The standard discussion of Egyptian slavery, it is also the first publication of several abnormal hieratic slave transactions.


Griffith, F. Ll. "The Earliest Egyptian Marriage Contracts." *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 31 (1909): 212–20. The publication of the transcriptions of two marriage contracts in abnormal hieratic. Griffith had the uncanny ability to crack texts that no one else could; he here demonstrates it by the first transcription of abnormal hieratic texts.


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Malinine, Michel. "Une jugement rendu à Thèbes sous la XXVe dynastie (pap. Louvre E. 3228c)." *Revue d'Égyptologie* 6 (1951): 157–78. Publication of a court case over the ownership of a slave in abnormal hieratic, with an analysis of the legal processes involved in the slave trade in Egypt.


Malinine, Michel. “Vente de tombes à l’époque saïte.” *Revue d’Egyptologie* 27 (1975): 164–74. The publication of two Saite period stelae containing the sale of tombs, one of which (Louvre C101) was thought to be in abnormal hieratic, which Malinine denies.


Möller, Georg. *Zwei ägyptische Eheverträge aus vorsaißischer Zeit*. Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918. General overview of all Egyptian marriage documents, but based on two abnormal hieratic documents, as the earliest examples of the genre.

Parker, Richard A. “King Py, a Historical Problem.” *Zentralblatt für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 93 (1966): 111–14. The discussion of the date in P. Leiden F 1942/5.15. This article forced a rereading of Shabako’s predecessor’s name from Pianchi/Piankhy to Py or Piye.


Spiegelberg, Wilhelm. *Die demotischen Denkmäler*, 3 vols. Leipzig: Druglin, 1904; Strassburg: Fischbach, 1906; Strassburg: Schauberg, 1908; Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1932. Part of the *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, this important corpus of demotic material includes several papyri in abnormal hieratic. (There are three
volumes, volume two comes in two parts; all parts have been published by different publishers.)


**Selected Chronological List of Carved Hieratic Documents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monument</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brit Mus 138</td>
<td>21st Dyn74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strasbourg 1588</td>
<td>22nd Dyn75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caves IFAO n de séquestre 14456</td>
<td>22nd Dyn77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leningrad Ermitage 5630</td>
<td>c. 935 B.C. (year 10 of Sheshonq I)78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York MMA 10.176.42</td>
<td>c. 918 B.C. (year 6 of Osorkon I)79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago OIM 10511</td>
<td>823 B.C. (year 3 of Sheshonq III)80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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75 Georg Möller, *Hieratische Lesestücke für den akademischen Gebrauch*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1910–27), 3:33–34. The text, according to Möller, is a Twenty-first Dynasty forgery; it purports to be from the Middle Kingdom.
78 Ibid., 666 # 22.1.10; Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, 291 n. 278.
80 Meeks, “Les donations aux temples,” 668 # 22.8.3.
Glyptotheque Ny–Carlsberg
E. 917 818–793 B.C. (reign of Pedubast I)
Louvre E 20905 808 B.C. (year 18 of Sheshonq III)
Brooklyn Mus 67–118 804 B.C. (year 22 of Sheshonq III)
Berlin 7344 798 B.C. (year 28 of Sheshonq III)
Strasbourg 1379 796 B.C. (year 30 of Sheshonq III)
Moscow I a 5647 795 B.C. (year 31 of Sheshonq III)
Cairo 21/3/25/15 794 B.C. (year 32 of Sheshonq III)
location unknown 784 B.C. (year 21 of Iuput I)
Moscow I a 5648 c. 825–773 B.C. (Sheshonq III)
British Mus 73965 761 B.C. (year 7 of Sheshonq V)
location unknown 760 B.C. (year 8 of Sheshonq V)
Brooklyn Mus 67–119 753 B.C. (year 15 of Sheshonq V)
Cairo JdE 30972 749 B.C. (year 19 of Sheshonq V)
Farouk collection 732 B.C. (year 36 of Sheshonq V)

82 Ibid., 668 # 22.8.18.
83 Ibid., 668 # 22.8.22.
86 Ibid., 669 # 22.8.31; Yoyotte, “Un étrange titre d'époque libyenne,” 97.
89 Ibid., 681 # B 4.
92 Ibid., 670 # 22.10.15; Kitchen, Third Intermediate Period, 351 n. 609.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Date/Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairo JdE 45549</td>
<td>788 or 730 B.C. (year 38 of unnamed king, Sheshonq III, V?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo JdE 85647</td>
<td>c. 767–730 B.C. (Sheshonq V)</td>
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<td>Louvre IM 3305</td>
<td>22nd Dyn.</td>
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<td>Louvre IM 19</td>
<td>22nd Dyn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairo 27/6/24/3</td>
<td>22nd Dyn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashmolean Mus 1894–107b</td>
<td>100 720 B.C. (year 8 of Tefnakht)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athens G3, 409</td>
<td>720 B.C. (year 8 of Tefnakht)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stela Zagazig</td>
<td>714 B.C. (year 3 of Shabako)</td>
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<td>New York MMA 55.144.6</td>
<td>711 B.C. (year 6 of Shabako)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairo JdE 28731</td>
<td>(year 6 of unnamed king)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stela Suez</td>
<td>646 B.C. (year 19 of Psammetichus I)</td>
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<td>Cairo CG 31086</td>
<td>Saite/Persian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairo CG 31094 (JdE 27145)</td>
<td>Ptolemaic/Roman</td>
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95 Ibid., 681 # B 3.
96 Ibid., 669 # 22.10.00a.
98 Ibid., 1:87, 2:plate XXV 87.
105 Ibid., 674 # 26.1.19.
106 Spiegelberg, *Demotischen Denkmäler*, 1:12, Tafel I.
107 Ibid., 1:25, Tafel V.