

Royal bank of Thebes

TM Arch 205. Version I (2022)

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Place
Date
Language
Material
Number of texts
Type
Collections
Find/Acquisition

Diospolis Megale (Theban East bank)
134-130 BC

Greek, three of which endorsed with Demotic subscription
Papyrus

34 certain, 1 related

Official archive

Berlin, Staatliche Museen; London, British Library; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; Paris, Louvre
Acquired between 1828-1857 (by Johann d'Anastasi) and 1830-1831 (by John G. Wilkinson). Some papyri have been traded in Paris

Bibliography

E. SEIDL, *Ptolemäische Rechtsgeschichte*, Glückstadt, 1962, p. 45 no. 35.

O. MONTEVECCHI, *La papirologia*, Milano, 1988, p. 250 no. 13f; 13h; 13i.

R. Bogaert, 'Un cas de faux en écriture à la Banque Royale thébaine en 131 avant J.-C.', *Chronique d'Égypte* 63 (1988), p. 145-154.

K. Geens, 'Financial archives of Graeco-Roman Egypt', in K. Verboven, K. Vandorpe and V. Chankowski, *Pistoi dia tèn technèn. Bankers, loans and archives in the Ancient World* (Studia Hellenistica 44), Leuven, 2007, p. 133-151.

A. Veïsse, 'L' "ennemi des dieux" Harsiësis', in A. Jördens and J. F. Quack (eds.), *Ägypten zwischen innerem Zwist und äusserem Druck. Die Zeit Ptolemaios' VI. bis VIII* ((Philippika. Marburger Altertumskundliche Abhandlungen 45), Heidelberg, 2011, p. 92-97.

E. Lanciers, 'The Civil War between Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra II (132-124): Possible Causes and Key Events', in G. Gorre and S. Wackenier (eds.), *Quand la fortune du royaume ne dépend pas de la vertu du prince: Un renforcement de la monarchie lagide de Ptolémée VI à Ptolémée X (169-88 av. J.-C.)?* (Studia Hellenistica 59), Leuven, 2020, p. 21-44.

L. Dogaer and K. Vandorpe, 'Amun's Userhat boat and its Role in the Theban Festivals. Data from the Theban Royal Bank Archive Contextualized', in preparation.

The numbers in **bold** refer to *UPZ II*.

Description

The papyri of the Theban bank archive are dispersed over four collections. 25 papyri in the Berlin museum, having inventory numbers between 1372-1384 and 1388Ro/Vo-1389Ro/Vo,¹ were bought by R. Lepsius in Paris in 1857 from Johann d'Anastasi, Swedish-Norwegian Consul-General in Egypt from 1828 until his death in 1860 (**199, 200, 201, 205, 206, 207, 214, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 226, 227**, *BGU* 10 1925, 1926). Eight of these Berlin texts² were joined to fragments in the British Library with the inventory numbers 15(1-10, 14Ro/Vo); one of these (15[14Vo], see **200**) was acquired by the British Museum through John G. Wilkinson probably in 1834 and in any case before 1839 (date of its first publication *P. Forshall* 30); we know Wilkinson was in Thebes in 1830-1831.³ Further sixteen papyri are part of the Louvre collection (**198, 202,**

¹ <https://berlpap.smb.museum>, consulted on 28/11/2020.

² **200, 206, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221**, *BGU* 10 1926.

³ Sir John Gardner Wilkinson was a British traveller and writer (1797-1875). His first journey to Egypt lasted 12 years (1821-1833). He went back for a second time in 1841 (and three more times after that). Wilkinson was in Thebes in 1830-1831, so he could have obtained the papyrus then. He donated a large number of objects (ostraca, papyri, sandals, etc.) from the Theban area to the British museum in 1834. His sketches and notes are kept in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. He published, amongst others, "The Topography of Thebes and General View of Egypt" (London 1835) and "Modern Egypt and Thebes: being a Description of Egypt; including the information required for travellers in that country" (London 1943). See <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/who-was-john-gardner-wilkinson> and <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG56655?id=BIOG56655&page=3>.

203, 204, 208, 210, 211, 212, 213, 216, 222, 223a, 223b, O. Métrologie p. 321-322 + **224, 225, 229**);⁴ one of these (**198**) was previously kept in Alexandria as part of the private collection of the above-mentioned d'Anastasi.⁵ Finally, **228** belonging to the collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (P. Mon. gr. inv. no. 143), was bought from J. Rosenthal in 1917, who himself had purchased the papyrus at a Paris auction.⁶

So, most papyri can be traced back to intermediaries who may have acquired the papyri in the period 1828-1857 (Johann d'Anastasi) and 1830-1831 (John G. Wilkinson). Some of the papyri have been traded in Paris (the Berlin papyri in 1857, the Munich papyrus at an auction in or before 1917). The Berlin text **209** with inventory number 5849 + P. 5850,⁷ acquired by Edward Thomas Rogers in Cairo in 1881, is rather not part of this archive, but a related text.

The Theban bankers and the bank accounts

This official archive contains papers of a public bank, administering the account of the royal treasury (*basilikon*). At least five royal bank archives from the Ptolemaic Period are known.⁸ Royal banks received tax payments through the tax farming system and were responsible for the payment (of e.g. the wages) of soldiers, civil servants and certain priestly offices. They could also administer private accounts. The papers of the Theban Bank Archive register transactions involving civil servants (**227-229**), the priests of Amonrasother in Karnak (**198-203**), military staff & soldiers active in the Theban area (**204-208, 210-217**) and the sale of state property (**218-223, BGU 10 1925 and 1926**).

Royal banks were headed by bankers (*trapezitai*), subordinated to the *oikonomos* or financial head of the district (*nomos*) and, on a higher level, to the *dioiketes* or minister of finances. The staff of the bank of Thebes (Diospolis Megale) also received orders from the vice-thebarch. In the Theban Bank Archive the following bankers were active:

- Apollonios (III; 133 BC),⁹ head of the Theban bank,
- Diogenes, head of the Theban bank and once found as banker of the Perithebas district (134 and 131-130 BC),¹⁰
- Herakleides (131-130 BC),¹¹ head of the Theban bank,
- Hermias (130 BC),¹² banker of the entire Thebaid.

Most documents are dealt with by Herakleides. All archival papyri are written in Greek, in three¹³ cases endorsed with a Demotic autograph subscription amongst others by the *oikonomos* Herakleides (to be distinguished from the homonymous banker).

⁴ Louvre inventory numbers 10627, 10629-30, 10632, 10228, E7387; the other inventory numbers are unknown.

⁵ See the introduction to *UPZ II* 198.

⁶ See München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: Catalogus Papyrorum - BSB Cbm Cat. 46, to be consulted at <https://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/0010/bsb00108194/images/index.html?id=00108194&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=234>. J. Rosenthal (1867–1927), born in Beirut and moved early in his youth to Alexandria, helped founding the Egyptian Socialist Party.

⁷ <https://berlpap.smb.museum/01622/>, consulted on 28/11/2020.

⁸ Geens 2007; TM Arch 376: The archive of Python, royal banker at Krokodilopolis; TM Arch 153: The archive of Nikanor, banker; TM Arch 121: The archive of Kleitarchos, banker; TM Arch 372: The archive of Hermias, banker, and TM Arch 205: The archive of the royal bank of Thebes. To be added are now: Bookkeeping of a Herakleopolite bank; TM Arch 552, and the Dionysios banker archive; TM Arch 527. Also bank archives labelled in Geens' article as private, may rather be royal bank archives, as private banks probably did no longer exist in the Ptolemaic period after 259 BC, see F. Lerouxel, *Histoire de l'économie monétaire romaine*, HDR, unpublished, 2021.

⁹ *Pros. Ptol.* 1151a et add; TM People 16307; R. Bogaert, 'Liste chronologique des banquiers royaux thébains 255-84 avant J.-C', *ZPE* 75 (1988), p. 130.

¹⁰ *Pros. Ptol.* 1177 et add; TM People 7115; Bogaert 1988, p. 128-130. Diogenes is also attested outside the Theban Bank Archive, see TM People 7115.

¹¹ *Pros. Ptol.* 1220 et add; TM People 8554; Bogaert 1988, p. 126-127. Herakleides is also attested outside the Theban Bank Archive and was active in the period 150-129 BC, see TM People 8554.

¹² *Pros. Ptol.* 1201 et add; TM People 7876; Bogaert 1988, p. 130.

¹³ **202, 207, O. Métrologie** p. 321-322 + **224**.

Importance of the archive

The Theban royal bank archive has become well known because it testifies to money fraud by the vice-thebarch, which led to his dismissal, as discussed by R. Bogaert (1988) in his article “Un cas de faux en écriture à la Banque Royale thébaine en 131 avant J.-C” (see also Dogaer and Vandorpe, in preparation). One of the protagonists in this unsavory story, Harsiesis, has for a long time wrongly been identified as a rebel king, but he is nothing more than a “historiographical myth” (Veisse 2011). The archive also plays a crucial role in the reconstruction of the chronology of the dynastic troubles between Ptolemy VIII and his sister-wife Cleopatra II in the period 132-130 BC, most recently reviewed by E. Lanciers (2020). Finally, the archive provides (often neglected) information about the great Theban festivals (the Opet and the Valley Festival) and the Userhat, the divine riverine vessel carrying the holy barge of Amun during the Nile crossings (Dogaer and Vandorpe, in preparation).

Document types in the Theban bank archive

Compare the classification of Geens 2007, p. 138-146.

(1) orders for payment addressed to one of the Theban bankers by a superior: either the vice-thebarch (whose orders were endorsed by the royal scribe or his representative) or the *oikonomos* (whose orders were endorsed by the *topogrammateus*).

- **198:** order for payment of *syntaxis* to the Amun priests, with notes in the margin of the recto and address on the verso; the order was endorsed by the royal scribe.
- **200:** order for repayment to the Amun priests; the order by the vice-thebarch was endorsed by a representative of the royal scribe.
- **202:** order for payment of the price of two iron anchors to the Amun priests, including a summary and the address on the verso, a copy of a letter by the *dioiketes* and a report on the market price of the iron anchors by a certain Panas. The order by the vice-thebarch was probably endorsed by a representative of the royal scribe (see *Fragm. II*, ll. 11-13). The document also contains some traces of Demotic. The original document (*Fragm. I* and *II*) as well as a duplicate (*Fragm. Ia* and *Ia*) are fragmentarily preserved.
- **203:** order for payment of maintenance costs of the Userhat to the Amun priests, including a summary and the address on the verso; the order by the vice-thebarch was endorsed by a representative of the royal scribe.
- **204:** order for payment and order for the delivery of lamp oil and wicks to the soldiers of Boethos, the *epistrategos* and *strategos* of the Thebaid.
- **205:** order for payment of salary and of money for the purchase of corn to soldiers of the Theban area. The order for payment was probably given by the *oikonomos* (see the following texts), at the request of the secretary of the troops; a copy of this request is attached.
- **206:** order for payment of salary, of money for the purchase of corn and for the purchase of horse fodder to five cavalymen posted from Hermonthis to Thebes. The order for payment was given by the *oikonomos*, at the request of the secretary of the Theban cavalymen (a copy of the latter's request is attached). The order was endorsed by the *topogrammateus*. The verso has the address (name of the banker).
- **207:** order for payment of salary and of money for the purchase of corn to an officer posted from Ptolemais to Thebes. The order for payment was given by the *oikonomos* (who signed in Demotic!) at the request of the secretary of the Theban cavalymen, who acted at the request of the royal scribe; a copy of both requests is attached. The order was endorsed by the *topogrammateus*.
- **208:** order for payment of an extra allowance to soldiers recruited for and billeted at the Memnoneia (Theban West bank). The order for payment was given by the vice-thebarch (representing the thebarch) at the request of the *strategos* of the Thebaid (a copy of the latter's request is attached). The order was endorsed by the royal scribe.

(2) Receipts (*antisumbola*) addressed by the recipients to the bank.

- **210:** receipt issued to the bank by the secretary of the troops for money he received for the purchase of hay for the horses of the *epistrategos* Boethos; the verso has a summary of the

transaction. A second text, issued two days later, is written on the same papyrus, registering the receipt of money for the needs of a royal delegate.

- **211**: receipt issued to the bank by Herakleios son of Archonides for money he received for the purchase of old wine probably for officers or soldiers who would consume the wine in their tent; the verso has a summary of the transaction.
- **212** and **213**: receipts issued to the bank for the salaries of the soldiers who accompanied the king.
- **214**: receipt issued to the bank by the paymaster of the troops recruited for the Theban area for the salaries he received for these troops.
- **227**: receipt issued to the bank by an interpreter of the Trogodytai (Ethiopian people), who was apparently in the service of the Crown.
- **228**: receipt issued to the bank by the head of the local oil factory, for transport costs of oil.
- **229**: receipt issued to the bank by four men for *syntaxis* (salary) for a period of 10 days.

(3) *diagraphai*, “authorizations” providing an official description of goods sold by the Crown and an assignment to the bank to collect the sales price:

- **218-224, 226**: *diagraphai* relating to the public auction of state property (218, 219, 220 = 221, 223a-b), liturgical services (219), and tax farming (224, ?225, 226) (...). They were issued by the vice-thebarch Dionysios and included copies of letters from the bidder (e.g. 222), the *topogrammateus* and the village secretary; they were endorsed by the royal scribe, the *oikonomos* and/or the *topogrammateus*. 224 contains a Demotic subscription by the *oikonomos* Herakleides.
- **225**: this letter of the royal scribe to the *oikonomos* was probably an attachment to a *diagraphē* that is not preserved. The letter relates to problems that arose because the lease of the 25%-fisher tax was not assigned to the highest bidder.

(4) administrative letters, reports and orders (except orders for payment, see above)

- **199**: copy of a letter of the vice-thebarch to the banker on the verso of an older bank document
- **201**: copy of a report (*anaphora*) of the banker to a superior (the banker of the Thebaid and probably also to the *strategos* of the Thebaid); the report includes copies of other letters and a note in the margin.
- **215**: letter of Proitos (whose rank is unknown) to the paymaster of the Theban troops regarding soldiers who have been recruited without his knowledge and in contradiction with the orders of the *strategos*. Proitos orders the paymaster to hold the recruitment until the vice-*strategos* has given a decision on the case. The letter is probably part of the Bank Archive because the Theban royal bank was responsible for the payment of the salaries of the Theban troops.
- **216**: fragmentary letter of Proitos (see the previous letter).
- **217**: royal oath of an individual to act as surety for a Ptolemaios who was appointed secretary of one of the Theban troops. The reason why this “Amtskaution” was kept in the royal bank, has been explained by Wilcken as follows: “Wie die Verpflichtungserklärungen der Bürgen der Steuerpächter auf der Kgl. Bank deponiert werden mußten (s. *UPZ* I 112 II 2ff.), so mag auch unsere Urkunde dort deponiert worden sein.”
- See also 202, 205, 225 (above).

(5) Varia (lists, reports, accounts, diaries):

- *BGU* 10 1925: list of sold state property, including the sale price and transfer tax to be paid to the bank; this document is not an internal document, but rather information provided by the vice-thebarch to the bank, as is the case for *BGU* 10 1926.
- *BGU* 10 1926: list of sold state property, including the sales price and transfer tax to be paid to the bank; this document is not an internal document, but contains information provided by the vice-thebarch to the bank (see l. 1).

Archive texts

UPZ II 198-208, 210-222, 223a and b, 224 + *O. Métrologie* p. 321-322, *UPZ* II 225-229, *BGU* 10 1925-1926. Related: *UPZ* II 209.

Text types

See above.