

	<b>The threshold papyri of Karanis</b>	ArchID 251. Version I (2013) W. Graham Claytor
Place	Arsinoites (Fayum), meris of Herakleides, Karanis	
Date	AD 68-115/116	
Language	Greek	
Material	Papyrus	
Number of texts	7 (on multiple rolls)	
Type	Official archive	
Collections	Ann Arbor, University of Michigan	
Find/Acquisition	Found during the Michigan excavations in Kom Aushim (Karanis) in 1925 in structure 5026D-C	

**Bibliography** P.W. PESTMAN *et al.*, *Familiearchieven uit het land van Pharao*, Zutphen, 1989, p. 80-82.

**Description** The image of papyrus rolls lying *in situ* nestled within a wooden threshold has become one of the most familiar images from Karanis, despite the fact that the contents of the papyri themselves are little known. This is due both to an error in the excavation reports that has understandably mislead and confused scholars,<sup>1</sup> and to the fact that only two texts have been published to date. This description addresses the need to clarify which texts belong to the Karanis threshold find and provides an overview of their contents in anticipation of more detailed discussion in future publications.

The contents of the archive have long been obscured by a simple error. The published excavation report devotes only a sentence to the threshold papyri, with the footnote telling us that these are P. Mich inv. 4388-91.<sup>2</sup> In the Karanis Record of Objects, however, under field number 5026D-C, we read: ‘Papyri rolls in threshold between D and E’, followed by a handwritten note in red ink giving the inventory numbers 4382-88 and 4390-91.<sup>3</sup> The internal coherence of these texts, recognized already by the editors of the two published papyri from the threshold,<sup>4</sup> confirms the accuracy of the Record of Objects entry.

Turning to the contents, the versos of all inventory numbers except one bear columns of a single account drawn up in the *grapheion* of Karanis in or shortly after the year AD 115/116. The rolls for this account were patched together from an assortment of older papyri, including three different reports of land inspection, a different account of the same type, and a collection

<sup>1</sup> “De documentatie is niet geheel perfect!” Pestman exclaimed (Pestman *et al.* 1989, p. 81, n. 3), while H. Cuvigny observed that ‘layer indications are contradictory’: H. Cuvigny, ‘The Finds of Papyri: the Archaeology of Papyrology’, in R.S. Bagnall (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, Oxford, 2009, p. 39, Fig. 2.3.

<sup>2</sup> In house 5026, ‘the outer threshold beam of the door between rooms D and E has been hollowed out and in that space had been concealed several papyrus documents of the first half of the second century.’ E.M. Husseleman, *Karanis Excavations of the University of Michigan in Egypt, 1928-1935. Topography and Architecture. A Summary of the Reports of the Director, Enoch E. Peterson*, Michigan, 1979, p. 15 (with n. 20). This identification of the threshold papyri is already found in the unpublished *Interim Karanis Excavation Report* (p. 100 and 865), prepared by the lead excavator E.E. Peterson, copies of which are held in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology and the University of Michigan Papyrology Collection.

<sup>3</sup> The Record of Objects was drawn up year-by-year as the excavation progressed, and later annotated with additional information, such as the inventory numbers and publication information. The correct identification of the threshold papyri was already made by P. Deloria in an undergraduate honors thesis, a published summary of which is available: P. Deloria, ‘Document Security Anxieties and a Curious Context for Papyri’, *Kelsey Museum Newsletter* (Spring 2005), p. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> See H. Sanders’ remarks in the introduction to *P. Mich.* VII 430 and those of O.M. Pearl in *P. Congr.* XV 15.

of Latin sayings. One of these can be dated to the reign of Galba and another to ca. AD 80, giving indications of the time between original and secondary use. Since the old rolls were chosen for their suitability as writing material, we should not posit a relationship between the recto and verso texts without internal confirmation.<sup>5</sup> The one outlier is a magical or astronomical text (P. Mich. inv. 4388), but the fact that its recto was washed clean may suggest that it too was prepared for reuse.

The account on the verso is of the kind known as an ἀναγραφή (register) because it resembles the day-by-day registers of contracts that *grapheion* managers had to prepare along with other documents for the nome archives.<sup>6</sup> This type of ἀναγραφή, however, includes all types of documents prepared in the *grapheion* for which the γραμματικόν (writing fee) was paid or still due. Its purpose was therefore financial, not archival, and the *grapheion* manager used it to help ensure his office was run profitably.

The best parallel for the Karanis ἀναγραφή is P. Mich. II 123 *recto*, which covers receipts of the writing fee in Tebtynis' *grapheion* in AD 45/46, with an account of expenditures on the other side. The Karanis text, however, incorporates expenditures into the structure of the register itself and diligently balances these expenditures against receipts of γραμματικόν on a daily and periodic basis. It can thus be seen as a hybrid and streamlined version of the Tebtynis roll.

The ἀναγραφή covers a period of almost four months, from early Hathyr to late Mecheir, although there are some lacunas. In the list of texts below, the inventory numbers are ordered according to their position in the ἀναγραφή.

Archive texts

Inv. #	Verso	Recto
4390	Karanis ἀναγραφή	Latin sayings (P. Mich. VII 430 = LDAB 4480)
4385	Karanis ἀναγραφή	Latin sayings / επίσκεψις (Psenhyris, P. Congr. XV 15)
4383	Karanis ἀναγραφή	ἐπίσκεψις (anonymous) / ἐπίσκεψις (Andrianton)
4391+4386	Karanis ἀναγραφή	ἐπίσκεψις (Andrianton)
4384	Karanis ἀναγραφή	ἐπίσκεψις (Andrianton)
4382	Karanis ἀναγραφή	ἀναγραφή (anonymous)
4387	Karanis ἀναγραφή	ἀναγραφή (anonymous)
4388	Magical / astronomical text	washed clean (for reuse?)

<sup>5</sup> Pace O.M. Pearl, P. Congr. XV 15, p. 77, where he concludes that the ἐπίσκεψις from Psenhyris 'was the work of the village clerk of Karanis' and that Psenhyris somehow lay under the jurisdiction of Karanis, basing his conclusions on the provenance of the roll and the contents of the verso.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of *grapheion* procedures, see E.M. Huxelman, 'Procedures of the record office of Tebtynis in the first century A.D', *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Papyrology, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 12-17 August 1968*, Toronto, 1970, p. 223-238.

**Text types** A *grapheion* register (ἀναγραφή) written on reused rolls of heterogeneous nature (literature, three different ἐπισκέψεις, and another ἀναγραφή); one magical / astronomical text whose relationship to the others is not certain.

**Appendix**



The papyri *in situ* in the threshold between rooms D and E of house 5026 (KM 5.1790) (Image published courtesy of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor, MI).