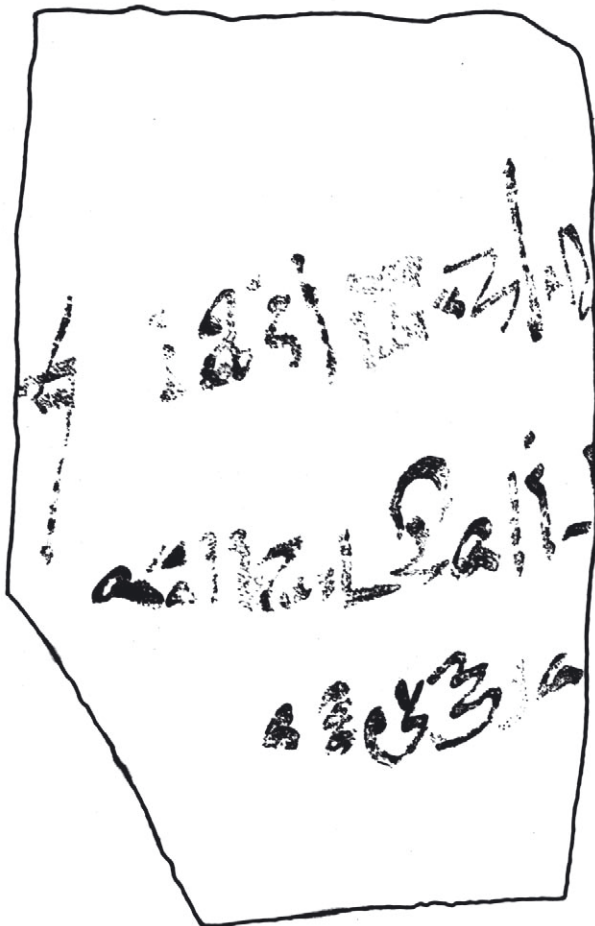


## TWO HIERATIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM QUBUR EL-WALAYDAH

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Dedicated to Hermann Michael Niemann.

Qubur el-Walaydah is a small rural site in south-west Israel that was occupied between the Late Bronze Age II and the end of the 7th century BCE. The site is located on the right bank of the Nahal Bésor (Wadi Ghazze) about 7 km south of Tell Jemmeh and 6 km north of Tell el-Far'a South (map reference on Israeli maps 1011.0827, see map Fig. 1). The name goes back to the Beni Walaydah Bedouin and does not reflect any ancient toponymy.



The site was first registered by the Department of Antiquities of the British Mandate government of Palestine. In 1977 Rudolph Cohen conducted archaeological soundings that lasted one season (COHEN 1978).

Between 2007 and 2011 the site was excavated over four seasons by a joint expedition under the direction of Gunnar Lehmann and Steven A. Rosen, both of Ben-Gurion University (Israel), and co-directors Angelika Berlejung, University of Leipzig (Germany), and Hermann M. Niemann, University of Rostock (Germany).<sup>3</sup>

The excavations in Field 1 at Qubur el-Walaydah exposed the remains of extensive mud-brick architecture consisting of a complex of several buildings with multiple rooms. In the preliminary stratigraphy, these buildings are assigned to the site-stratum level VIII of the overall site stratigraphy, which is equivalent to the field-stratigraphy level 1–5 in Field 1. In the following we will use only the field stratigraphy for Field 1.

The building style of the structures resembles that of so-called “Egyptian Residences” dating from the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. As



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is typical for such buildings, the bricks have no stone foundations, although a foundation surface seems to have been laid down prior to construction. The bricks measure  $52.5 \times 37.5 \times 11.5$  cm, which exactly matches the size of mud-bricks in similar buildings at the nearby site of Tell Jemmeh such as Building JF. In particular, the mud-brick dimensions correspond to Egyptian standards: the measurements equal 1 royal cubit  $\times$  1 remen  $\times$  6 fingers. Unlike other “residency” buildings which have been found buried under meters of later sediments, the structures at Qubur el-Walaydah were found only 40 cm below the present surface, allowing a large scale exposure of this building complex.

The building complex at Qubur el-Walaydah went through three major rebuilding phases corresponding to Field 1 stratigraphy levels 1-5e, 1-5d and 1-5c. Most of the walls remained in continuous use during these three phases, only the floor levels were raised with each new phase. After Phase 1-5c the walls of the building complex 1-5 collapsed. While a few wall stumps were still visible, installations were built into the collapsed remains of the buildings in levels 1-5b and 1-5a.

Two hieratic inscriptions were found in the building complex 1-5. Hieratic inscription 1, Qubur el-Walaydah 13.072–07-S05 is an ostrakon found in room 13.072 of Field 1 level 1-5d at 80.30 m. The ostrakon was found associated with large quantities of pottery sherds, many of which belonged to pithoi. Room 13.072 was apparently used as a storage facility.

Hieratic inscription 2, Qubur el-Walaydah 13.056–01-S01, is a fragment of an inscribed bowl, not an ostrakon. It was found on a floor of the open courtyard 13.056 at ca. 80.70 m. The floor level dates to Field 1 stratigraphy level 1-5c, being later than the first inscription.

A 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE date for building levels 1-5d and 1-5c is suggested by a preliminary analysis of the pottery found on the floors and in the collapsed mud-brick debris overlying the floors. The ceramics associated with levels 1-5d and 1-5c have close parallels at the corresponding “residency” buildings at Tell Jemmeh JF, Tell el-Far’a South and Tel Sera’ Stratum IX. Further comparable assemblages were found at Lachish Stratum VI, Tel Şippor Stratum VI–IV and Ashdod Stratum XV–XIV (for more details see LEHMANN *et al.* 2010). These comparable pottery assemblages date to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE, but an absence of Cypriot and Mycenaean (Late Helladic IIIB)

ceramics in stratified contexts of the building complex 1-5d and 1-5c would seem to date the building later than the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Particularly close similarities with pottery from Tel Sera’ Stratum IX, which is securely dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE, appear to confirm that the building complex at Qubur el-Walaydah also dates from this century. In addition, a still unpublished Late Helladic IIIC bell-shaped bowl with an almost complete profile was found in level 1-5c associated with pottery resembling ceramics at Lachish Stratum VI.

### Hieratic Inscription 1 (QW 13.072–07-S05)

Dimensions:  $11 \times 7.5$  cm.

Pottery (classification): body sherd of a transport or storage jar.

Preservation: Probably complete on top (no traces of ink above line 1), bottom (no traces of ink below line 3) and left, incomplete at the right. The ink is widely faded, the surface rubbed and polluted.

Date: Fluent Ramesside ductus; a number of indications suggest a higher probability for a 20<sup>th</sup> rather than a 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty date (cf. signs X.8:b, V.28:e, U.10/Bb.7:b, U.36:b, D.21:d, A.1:a, G.41:c in WIMMER 1995).



Transcription:

[...] *djw ntj t3 hnq.t jt*

[...] *n(?) hm B-d-n-t-r*

[...*hm*] *M-p-r*

Translation:

[...] provisions which (consist of) bread and beer: barley

[... ] for(?) the slave *B-d-n-t-r*

[... for(?)] the slave *M-p-r*

Notes:

Line 1: Note that due to the bad preservation of the ink, parts of the readings are uncertain.

The term *djw* (provisions) is plausible, *t3* (bread) is a suggestion, *hnq.t* (beer) appears safe.

There are no visible traces in the spatium between *hnq.t* and the grain sign, and the space is probably intentional. Alternatively, a preposition like *m-*, in the sense of “bread and beer in (the form of) barley” could be imagined, but if it existed, it has been entirely rubbed off.

Line 2: The preserved traces at the beginning of line 2 fit the preposition *n-* (for), better than *m-dr.t* (from). The persons named after the preposition here, and consequently also in line 3, where the preposition is not preserved, should therefore be the recipients of the provisions, rather than their distributors. For the personal names (PNs) themselves, see below. Their qualification as *hm* (slave/servant) is clear in line 2 and can be deduced for line 3 as well, where the same determinative and only very scarce remains of the vertical stroke are preserved.

Line 3: There is a puzzling, very faint sign between the personal determinative of *hm* and the personal name, resembling <sup>o</sup> *w* or *m*. Since the personal name is clearly spelled in group writing, neither of these single consonants can plausibly initiate the name. The personal name starts with the following group *m-*, as is corroborated by the fresh dip of ink that the scribe obviously took for writing the name. Perhaps the scribe erroneously started writing the name with a simple *m* (instead of *m-*); rather than overwriting the wrong sign, he may have placed the correct group next to it and perhaps tried to rub off the wrong sign, without entirely succeeding.

#### Personal names:

The personal names in lines 2 and 3 are both spelled in group writing, which can be taken, in the Ramesside era, as a safe indication for non-Egyptian origins. For Southern Canaan the anticipated context is West Semitic. Neither name, however, is familiar from the known onomasticon (cf. SCHNEIDER 1992).

The first PN is composed of five “syllables” (sign groups) and therefore best understood as a composite form. The first “group” *b3-*, is blurred in the lower part but indicative enough for safe identification. It is here actually written as a single sign, without a complementary vertical stroke (*b3*). While the stroke accompanies the sign, especially in Hieratic, in a majority of cases, it is not obligatory. The second group is identified

as *d3-*, in spite of the stretched lower horizontal element. An alternative reading *h3-* should have an additional hook on top, but cannot be excluded. The third group *iii* is clear enough. More problematic is the following group, two blurred vertical elements, which can best be identified as either *pp* or *pl*. The final two small superimposed signs could be *o* or, as we prefer, *o*. Identifying an additional small sign (another *o* or “?”) joining the personal determinative was considered, but on close examination it appears that the latter ends with a very pronounced and elongated stroke to the right.

The PN in the given form is not attested in the West Semitic onomasticon. In order to deduce a reasonable semantic meaning, the name may be splitted into the elements *B-d-n* and *t-r*. *B-d-n* is a term well known from New Kingdom sources for “stick, rod, cudgel”, perhaps related to the Semitic root *psr* (HOCH 1994: 166f.). More problematic is the element *t-r*. Could it be related to the Semitic root *tyl*, in the sense of “be imposed” etc.? Would this then be a pejorative sobriquet for a slave, meaning something like “the club/cudgel (is) inflicted (on him)”?

The second PN has the familiar format of three groups. The first is without any doubt *m-*. The middle group is best identified as *p3-*, with the bird’s two wings realized as one thick stroke. For *pw-*, such an abrogation of the tripartite top would be unexpected. The final group could graphically be *o*, but *o* is clearly more plausible.

It should be noted that on some photographs the second half of the name is heavily blurred, almost indistinguishable, while on other photographs it appears almost as clear and distinct as the first part.

This PN is also not attested in the West Semitic onomasticon. This may perhaps indicate that again we have another instance of of a “nickname”. Indeed, *M-p-r* might be related to *mfr* (< *pw-r*), “to break (the rules)”, meaning something like “the cumbersome, the trouble-maker”.

Thomas Schneider (personal communication 25.2.2013) opts for regular semantic interpretations rather than derogative nicknames, and suggests as preliminary possibilities: *Be-šinnat -'el*, “In the shelter of god” (cf. Hebr. *šnh*, “shield”) for the first PN, and *Mapeli'*, “(god) acts miraculously” (cf. Hebr. *hpli' > pl'*, “wonder, miracle”).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For the Semitic vocabulary cf. HOFTIIZER and JONGELING 1995.

The length of the name *B-d-n-t-r* raises the possibility that this name may be Indo-European. Although no Luwian name is attested that would directly match the name on the ostrakon, “Natr” occurred as a divine name in Lycian and Carian. The letters *B-d*, however, would be difficult to explain in Luwian and Craig Melchert (personal communication) concludes that the chances of convincingly identifying the name as Luwian are poor.

Another option would be a Greek origin of the name *B-d-n-t-r*. In principle, it is possible to identify *-n-t-r* with Greek *-andros*. Names with */-andros/* are already attested in Mycenaean (José Luis García Ramón personal communication). However, the first part of the name *B-d* is again problematic. It could be Greek *peitho*, from original *\*bheidh-*. Markus Egetmeyer (personal communication) assumes that “bh” as attested in Linear B should be “ph” by the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. According to Grassmann’s law, the aspiration would have changed from */\*Bheidh-/* to */Pheith-/* and */Peith-/* in the post-Mycenaean period. A Greek Name with the two members of compound */Peith-/* or */Pith-/* and */-andros/* is conceivable, but as long as the spelling rules in the transition of Greek names into Egyptian Hieratic of the 12<sup>th</sup> century remain unexplored, it will be impossible to reach any definite conclusions in this question (José Luis García Ramón personal communication). The name could be related to *Peithandros* or *Pithandros*. With the available evidence, a Luwian or Greek origin of the name must remain uncertain.<sup>5</sup>

#### Conclusion:

The text is an account for provisions to be handed out to (at least) two recipients who are qualified as “slaves/servants”. At least one of the names appears to be West Semitic. The other name could be Indo-European, but the origin of the name remains elusive. The provisions consist of barley to be used for bread (probably) and beer. This type of administrative register is well known from Ramesside Egypt. It has not been attested before among Egyptian Hieratic inscriptions from Israel. This sherd is (part of) an ostrakon.

<sup>5</sup> For possible Greek names in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE see REDFORD 2007 and YASUR-LANDAU 2012. For Philistine names in later periods see NAVEH 1985, KEMPINSKI 1987 and MAEIR *et al.* 2008.

#### Hieratic Inscription 2 (QW 13.056–01-S01)

Dimensions: 4 × 4 cm.

Pottery (classification): body sherd of a bowl.

Preservation: Small fragment of a bowl, broken on all sides. The ink in line 1 is sufficiently clear, the remains of a second line are too indistinct to be read. Line 1 might be the original first line of the inscription (see interpretation below).

Date: Fluent hieratic ductus of the New Kingdom. There are no palaeographic indicators for narrowing the date.



Transcription:

[...] *ntj jm-s* [...]  
[... traces ...]

Translation:

[...] which is in it [...]  
[...]

#### Commentary:

The small sherd preserves only a tiny text fragment. Yet, the brief sequence ... *ntj jm-s*... “... which is in it ...”, can be safely read, and is sufficiently distinct to relate it to a text formula characteristic for hieratic bowls from sites in southern Canaan (such as Tel Sera’ and Lachish). These inscriptions follow a standard register by the Egyptian Ramesside administration for recording grain deliveries collected by local institutions (such as, e. g., estates affiliated with the temple of Amun in Gaza). They are introduced by the expression: “The *b-r-t*, which is in it: ...”, the Canaanite word *b-r-t* (*b<sup>e</sup>rit*) being a technical term for a symbolic token amount of “covenant” dues which was placed in the bowl (“in it”). The full text formula written on “*b<sup>e</sup>rit*-bowls” was composed of the introduction *b-r-t ntj jm=s*, followed by a date, the type and quantity of grain, the place of origin of the delivery and the name of the scribe responsible for its registration.<sup>6</sup>

Since this sherd was part of an inscribed bowl, it is *not* an ostrakon.

<sup>6</sup> A detailed study on the text formulae of “*b<sup>e</sup>rit*-bowls” is forthcoming in a re-edition of the Tel Sera’ Hieratic inscriptions by Stefan Jakob Wimmer



*Conclusions:*

The building complex of level 1-5 in Field 1 at Qubur el-Walaydah has to be evaluated in the context of the increasing Egyptian building activities in Palestine that began with the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. This is not the place to discuss the architectural traditions in detail, but it appears that among the Egyptian buildings in Palestine of this period there is more than just one type of structure and to subsume this variety under one label as “governor’s residences” is misleading (contra OREN 1984). Some of the structures classified as “governor’s residences” may indeed have been residences of officials. Others, however, appear to be fortified buildings and small forts (for recent studies of Egyptian buildings in Late Bronze Age Palestine see HIGGINBOTHAM 1996; HIGGINBOTHAM 2000; MORRIS 2005). Fortifications have not so far been discovered at Qubur el-Walaydah and we assume that the building complex was an agricultural estate with an extended built-up area of 0.6 hectares.

Discoveries of substantial numbers of storage and transport jars, installations, a composite sickle with flint blades and individual flint sickle inserts link building complex 1-5 to agricultural activities. In this context, the two Hieratic inscriptions mentioning provisions for a workforce and grain deliveries provide further support for the hypothesis of a (temple) estate at Qubur el-Walaydah.

The massive character of the architecture suggests an imperial Egyptian building program conducted by a powerful and capable institution and/or government, most probably the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasties of Egypt that built similar structures at nearby Deir el-Balah, Tell Jemmeh, Tell el-Far’ah South and Tell esh-Shari’a. Agricultural activities at Qubur el-Walaydah were not a private enterprise, but apparently managed by an official institution.

The fact that there is now evidence for Egyptian public building activity at several sites along the Nahal Bésor, located in close proximity to one another, demonstrates intensive Egyptian settlement. Deir el-Balah, Tell Jemmeh, Qubur el-Walaydah, Tell el-Far’ah South are all 6–10 km apart from each other. At least some of the building activities in the area may be connected with temple estates of the Amun temple at Gaza (KATZENSTEIN 1982; UEHLINGER 1988; WEIPPERT 2010: 173–174).

The appearance of Semitic names in an Egyptian administrative context underlines the Egyptian dominance and the dependent status of the local “Canaanite” population in the area. West Semitic names also appeared on a previously discovered ostrakon at Qubur el-Walaydah, excavated in 1977 by Rudolph Cohen and published by Frank M. Cross (CROSS 1980). Our recent research at the site was able to identify the find spot and stratigraphic context of this ostrakon. The text, a “Proto-Canaanite” (or “Old Canaanite”) inscription, was incised on the sherd (BERLEJUNG 2010). It was found in a pit that dates from the time of the Egyptian presence at Qubur el-Walaydah. The pit contained only Late Bronze Age pottery, contrary to the statement by R. Cohen published by B. Sass (SASS 1988: 70, 152). Our preliminary stratigraphic analysis suggests that the pit with the ostrakon published by Cross predates the building complex in Field 1 level 1-5, where the texts discussed here were found.

The epigraphic evidence as well as the material culture at Tell Jemmeh, Qubur el-Walaydah and Tell el-Far’ah South during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE is characterized by a particular “provincial” appearance in this part of the Egyptian New Kingdom with a mixture of local “Canaanite” and Egyptian influences. This interaction between a local population and a dominant imperial Egyptian presence is further underlined by the Hieratic texts published here.

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