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The Khoiak Festival

A Glimpse into Ancient Egyptian Festival Practice

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Abbreviations

For the abbreviations of titles of series and journals used here, see B. Mathieu, *Abréviations des périodiques et collections en usage à l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, 8th edition, Cairo 2023. Other frequently used abbreviations are the following.

CDD	Johnson, J. (ed.): *The Demotic Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago 2001.
CT	Buck, A. de: *The Egyptian Coffin Texts* I–VII, OIP 34, 49, 64, 67, 73, 81, 87, Chicago 1935–1961.
Dendara	*Le temple de Dendara*, 15 vols., Cairo 1935–2007; vols. I–V: Chassinat, É.; vols. VI–VIII: Chassinat, É./Daumas, F.; vol. IX: Daumas, F.; vols. X–XV: Cauville, S.
Deir Chelouit	Zivie-Coche, C.: *Le temple de Deir Chelouit*, 4 vols., PIFAO 579, 604, 640, Cairo 1982–1992.
Edfou	*Le temple d'Edfou*, 15 vols., Cairo 1897–1987; vol. I: Le Marquis de Rochemonteix; vols. II–XIV: Chassinat, É.; vol. XV: Cauville, S./Devauchelle, D.; 2nd edition of vols. I–II ed. by Cauville, S./Devauchelle, D.
Esna	Sauneron, S.: *Le temple d'Esna*, 5 vols., Cairo 1963–1975; Sauneron, S.: *Esna* VIII. *L'écriture figurative dans les textes d'Esna*, Cairo 1982.
Kom Ombo	Gutbub, A.: *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo*, 2 vols., BdÉ 47, Cairo 1973.
LGG	Leitz, C. (ed.): *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* I–VIII, OLA 110–116, Leuven 2002–2003.
Opet	Wit, C. de: *Les inscriptions du temple d'Opet, à Karnak*, 3 vols., BAe 11–13, Brussels 1958–68.
Philae	Junker, H.: *Der große Pylon des Tempels der Isis in Philä*, DAWW Sonderband, Vienna 1958; Junker, H./Winter, E./Daum, O.: *Das Geburtshaus des Tempels der Isis in Philä*, DAWW Sonderband, Vienna 1965; Kockelmann, H./Winter, E.: *Philae* III. *Die zweite Ostkolonnade des Tempels der Isis in Philae (CO II und CO IIK)*, 2. vols., DAAW 78, Vienna 2016.

PM	Porter, B./Moss, R.: *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings* I–VII, Oxford 1927–1995.
PT	Sethe, K.: *Die Altägyptischen Pyramidentexte* I–IV, Leipzig 1908–1922.
Urk. I	Sethe, K.: *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* I. *Urkunden des Alten Reichs,* Leipzig 1933.
Urk. II	Sethe, K.: *Hieroglyphische Urkunden der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, Leipzig 1904.
Urk. IV	Sethe, K.: *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* IV. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, Leipzig 1906.
Urk. V	Grapow, H.: *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* V. *Religiöse Urkunden*, Leipzig 1915.
Urk. VI	Schott, S.: *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* VI. *Urkunden mythologischen Inhalts. Erstes Heft: Bücher und Sprüche gegen den Gott Seth*, Leipzig 1929–1939.
Urk. VII	Sethe, K.: *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* VII. *Historisch-Biographische Urkunden des Mittleren Reiches* I, Leipzig 1935.
Wb.	Erman, A./Grapow, H. (eds.): *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 7 vols., Leipzig/Berlin 1926–1963.

Introduction

1. Overview and Aim

> 'Why shall my son Horus be defrauded, seeing that it is I who made you strong, and it is I who made the barley and the emmer to nourish the gods, as well as the herds in the train of the gods, while no god nor any goddess finds himself (able) to do it.'[1]

At the outset, it is important to explain the nomenclature used in this monograph. The investigation is based mainly on two sources: the so-called Dendera Khoiak Inscription and P. Louvre N. 3176 (S). The former is the inscription in the first eastern Osiris chapel on the roof of the Hathor temple at Dendera, referred to in the following as 'Dendera Khoiak Inscription'.[2] The latter will be called 'Louvre Papyrus'.[3] Other sources, such as the *Cuve de Coptos*, are cited frequently, even though not newly edited here. The *editio princeps* of the *Cuve* was presented recently by Herbin/Leitz, *Rituel de la Maison de Chentayt*, 193–450. According to the Dendera Khoiak Inscription, two images representing aspects of Osiris were fashioned each year: These will be referred to in the following as Khentiamentet and Sokar. The former symbolises the vegetal aspects of the deity, the latter represents the dismembered and reassembled body of Osiris. Both figurines were buried temporarily for one year and each year new effigies were fashioned and replaced those of the previous year. The previous year's figures were removed and buried permanently.

The most important nomenclature is that of the celebrations for the god Osiris in the month of Khoiak, usually referred to in the literature as Khoiak festival or the mysteries of Osiris in the month of Khoiak. First, we should have a look at what the ancient Egyptians themselves called these rites. The Dendera Khoiak Inscription does not mention a title, and it seems likely that some text is missing before the first column. The texts relating to the Khoiak festival on P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) are completely preserved and refer to the composition in columns 5 and 6 as *nꜣ mdw.w ntj jw p(ꜣ) sšw mḏꜣ.t-nṯr* (*r*) *jrj=w n ꜣbd 4 ꜣḫ.t*, 'the words which the scribe of the divine book should recite in the 4th month of the *ꜣḫ.t*-season' (P. Louvre 3176 (S), 5/1). If there was an actual name for the Khoiak festival, one would assume it would have been written down in one of these two sources.

Hence, there does not seem to be a name or title given by the ancient Egyptians to the Khoiak festival. In the past, *kꜣ-ḥr-kꜣ*, the name of the fourth month of the inundation season, has been understood by Egyptologists to be the name of the Khoiak festival of Osiris as well.[4]

---

1 The Contendings of Horus and Seth, P. Chester Beatty I, recto 14/11–12 (letter of Osiris to the Master of the Universe [*nb r-ḏr*; scil. the sun god] together with the Ennead); Gardiner, *Library of A. Chester Beatty*, 24–25, plates 14A and 14; see also Blackman, in *Studia Aegyptiaca* I, 1–3, for this passage and similar ones in Ptolemaic temple inscriptions, highlighting that the concept of Osiris creating the corn from the water that is within him in order to nourish gods and people was well-established in Graeco-Roman times.

2 *Dendara* X/1, 26, 5–50, 10; X/2, plates 3–5, 25–30.

3 Cf. Plates 1–9.

4 As already noted by Chassinat, *Khoiak* I, 36. See also Kucharek, *Klagelieder,* 634–635.

However, none of the sources mentioning that name supports this idea.[5] Rather, it seems that it is a generic term denoting any festival celebrated in that month, including those held in honour of other deities.[6] So, perhaps we should refrain from saying 'Khoiak festival'. But for the sake of convenience and to avoid referring to the festival in question as the 'festival for Osiris in the fourth month of the inundation season in the Graeco-Roman Period', I will continue to call it the 'Khoiak festival' in this monograph. That being said, I would like to emphasise that I do not refer to earlier celebrations for Osiris, for instance, the so-called mysteries of Osiris in the Middle Kingdom by this title. I reserve the designation 'Khoiak festival' strictly for the celebrations in the month of Khoiak in the Graeco-Roman Period.

The dates of the Khoiak festival were no coincidence. It took place in the fourth and last month of the inundation season, when the land had just been fertilised with the alluvium the Nile left behind. The sprouting of the corn Osiris figure, the Khentiamentet effigy, produced during the festival, coincided with the sowing of the new crops. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, par. 64–65, expressed this the following way: 'For by one general process of reasoning do we come to the conclusion that these gods have been assigned to preside over every portion of what is good; and whatever there is in nature that is fair and good exists entirely because of them, inasmuch as Osiris contributes the origins, and Isis receives them and distributes them. In this way we shall undertake to deal with the numerous and tiresome people, whether they be such as take pleasure in associating theological problems with the seasonal changes in the surrounding atmosphere, or with the growth of the crops and seed-times and ploughing; and also those who say that Osiris is being buried at the time when the grain is sown and covered in the earth and that he comes to life and reappears when plants begin to sprout.'[7]

It was also through the Nile that the limbs of the dismembered deity, symbolised in the Khoiak festival by the Sokar effigy, were spread throughout the country. As a result, different places throughout Egypt each claimed to possess a limb of the deity. A hymn to Osiris in the second western Osiris chapel at Dendera, for instance, says: *twt.w=k jrj.w m nb spꜣ.wt*, 'All your images/likenesses are the lord(s) of the nomes.'[8] This aspect is frequently addressed in the works of classical authors. Section 21 of the first book of the *Universal History* of Diodorus Siculus, for instance, says: 'Now Isis recovered all the pieces of the body except the privates, and wishing that the burial-place of her husband should remain secret and yet be honoured by all the inhabitants of Egypt, she fulfilled her purpose in somewhat the following manner. Over each piece of the body, as the account goes, she fashioned out of spices and wax a human figure about the size of Osiris; then summoning the priests group by group, she required all of them an oath that they would reveal to no one the trust which she was going to confide to them, and taking each group of them apart privately she said that she was consigning to them alone the burial of the body, and after reminding them of the benefactions of Osiris she exhorted them to bury his body in their district and pay honours to him as to a god.'[9] Another prominent passage can be found in Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, par. 18: 'The traditional result of Osiris's dismemberment is that there are many so-called tombs of Osiris in Egypt; for Isis held a funeral

5 *Wb.* V, 93: 'Name eines Festes, dann auch als Monatsname'. See also the list of attestations in the TLA: https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/163150 (last accessed 6 February 2025).

6 See also Daumas, *LÄ* I, 958–960; Parker, *RdÉ* 11, 104–106.

7 https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Isis_and_Osiris*/D.html (last accessed 16 November 2024).

8 *Dendara* X/1, 320, 13; see also Herbin/Leitz, *Rituel de la Maison de Chentayt*, 336.

9 https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/1A*.html (last accessed 21 August 2024).

for each part when she had found it. Others deny this and assert that she caused effigies of him to be made and these she distributed among the several cities, pretending that she was giving them his body, in order that he might receive divine honours in a greater number of cities, and also that, if Typhon should succeed in overpowering Horus, he might despair of ever finding the true tomb when so many were pointed out to him, all of them called the tomb of Osiris.'[10]

The Khoiak festival was thus a highly complex and multifaceted celebration, attested in numerous local and regional variations throughout Egypt. The Dendera Khoiak Inscription in particular shows that the rites of the Khoiak festival were not performed in exactly the same way in every cult centre of Osiris, as it records numerous local and regional forms. However, no matter the number of local variations, they all shared the same fundamental premise: only the successful performance of the festival's procedures would ensure the awakening of nature, thus preserving its life-sustaining cycles, and at the same time safeguard the political stability of the Egyptian state and hence guarantee its survival.

It cannot be the aim of this investigation to address every aspect of the Khoiak festival and to consider everything that has ever been published on that feast. The aim is rather to create a model of how the Khoiak festival may have looked in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, and to see whether we can apply this model to places in Egypt that we know celebrated the Khoiak festival. Although the Dendera Khoiak Inscription provides information on local traditions, it is not linked to a specific temple (except for the final book which describes the tradition at Dendera itself). The Louvre Papyrus, on the other hand, is connected specifically to the Karnak temple. So we can establish a model according to the Karnak version of the festival and try to apply this to other temples. The temple of Philae with the Abaton, the tomb of Osiris, on Bigga will serve as a case study for a possible reconstruction of the processional routes and ritual actions performed there according to the pattern developed with the help of the Dendera Khoiak Inscription and the Louvre Papyrus.

Other important questions to be investigated on the basis of the study of these two major sources in conjunction are the following. At what point in history was the Khoiak festival as recorded in these late sources established? Was there an extensive festival for Osiris, or even something remotely comparable, in the month of Khoiak, prior to the Ptolemaic Period, or do we merely have a number of distinct festivals, for example, one devoted to rites performed for the corn effigy and another devoted to Sokar? Were these only combined subsequently into a single all-encompassing Osiris festival, lasting 19 days in total (from 12 to 30 Khoiak), and if so, when and why?

2. Sources

2.1 P. Louvre N. 3176 (S)

P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) preserves two texts. The first is the Procession of Sokar, which occupies columns 1–4. The second composition is entitled 'the words which the scribe of the divine book should recite in the 4th month of the *ꜣḫ.t*-season', which is inscribed in columns 5–6. The first text, the Procession of Sokar, has a parallel among the Asasif papyri, P. Asasif 14 (P.

10 https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Isis_and_Osiris*/A.html (last accessed 21 August 2024).

Cairo JdE 97249, papyrus 14), dating to the 30th dynasty.[11] It is, however, very fragmentary. No parallels are known for the second composition.

2.1.1 Previous work on the texts

The first and still only complete publication of P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) is that of Paul Barguet in 1962.[12] In 2020, Claude Carrier provided a new study of the second text, 'The words which the scribe of the divine book should recite in the 4th month of the *ꜣḫ.t*-season'.[13] However, the work by Carrier is merely a reprint of Barguet's study, without any new insights into the text. After the *editio princeps* by Barguet, the first of the two texts, the Procession of Sokar, was translated again by Burkard in 1995, who provided a commentary on its content as well.[14] Apart from that, however, it has not received any further detailed attention in the literature, but merely a mention here and there. The situation is slightly different for the second composition. Even though this one has not been studied again in its entirety since Barguet's treatment, it is nevertheless referred to frequently in the literature.

2.1.2 Provenance, date, and owner

The dating of P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) has been a matter of some debate. Barguet, *Louvre 3176*, VIII, suggested a date contemporaneous to P. Bremner-Rhind, i.e. 332–30 BCE.[15] Smith, *Following Osiris*, 494; Coulon/Gabolde, *RdÉ* 55, 9; and Coulon, *RdÉ* 57, 24, date the papyrus to the beginning of the Roman Period. Osing, *Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis* I, 28 note 70, and 29 note 71, suggests a time around the second century CE on palaeographical grounds, referring especially to the forms of  'mit doppeltem Querstrich',  'mit doppeltem separaten Diagonalstrich', and written in ligature.[16] Klotz, *City of Amun*, 384 note 14, dates it to the first two centuries CE. The online database of the Louvre provides a rather wide range: 'époque ptolémaïque (?) ; époque romaine (attribution d'après style) (-332 – 395)'.[17] According to Quack, the papyrus should be dated to the 1st to 2nd century CE, on the basis of the palaeography and the use of a reed pen (kalamos).[18] However, Quack has also argued that the process whereby the kalamos replaced the rush had already begun in the Ptolemaic Period, more precisely at the end of the second century BCE, contra previous assumptions that the kalamos was only introduced as a writing instrument around the middle of the first century CE.[19]

To provide a more precise date for P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) based on the palaeography, it is of importance to use securely dated papyri for analysis. A detailed comparison with papyri dating to the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods revealed three documents that show the closest resemblances to the Louvre Papyrus. One of these is P. Berlin P. 3135, a Book of Breathing

11 Burkard, *Grabung im Asasif*, 55–59 and plates 44a and b; Burkard, *Osiris-Liturgien*, 17–19 and 206–227.
12 Barguet, *Louvre 3176*.
13 Carrier, *Rituel osirien*.
14 Burkard, *Osiris-Liturgien*, 206–227.
15 Note, however, that we know now that P. Bremner-Rhind is dated to 305 BCE and not as late as 30 BCE; cf. amongst others Gill/Smith, *Glorification Spells*, 19.
16 Osing, *Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis* I, 29 note 71, 37 with note 116. However, the *nfr*-sign in this form is already attested at the end of the Ptolemaic Period/beginning of the Roman Period; cf. the discussion of the palaeography of the Louvre Papyrus below.
17 https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002212 (last accessed 20 December 2024).
18 See Quack, *RdÉ* 49, 255, with note 2. Cf. also idem, in *"Binsen"-Weisheiten I–II*, 436–437.
19 Quack, in *"Binsen"-Weisheiten I–II*, 444–445. See also Birk, *Türöffner des Himmels*, 184.

that can be dated securely to the middle of the first century BCE, i.e. to the very late Ptolemaic Period, due to the well-known owner's family.[20] The other papyri used here that show close resemblances to the writings on P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) are the two Rhind papyri. The owner of P. Rhind I lived from 69 to 9 BCE, that of P. Rhind II from 62 to 9 BCE,[21] and hence these documents are also dated securely. Under the label 'P. Rhind', Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, uses both Rhind papyri in his palaeography, clarifying with the Roman numbers 'I' and 'II' which one he is referring to.

A detailed compilation of the hieratic signs occurring in P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) is provided in the palaeography. Comparison of these shows that the person who wrote the Khoiak text (columns 5–6) is not the one who wrote the earlier composition (columns 1–4). The colophon in column 4 was added by yet a third person. This is explained in more detail below.

In the following, I would like to point out the most striking points of resemblance between the Louvre Papyrus and the documents used for comparison. The form of sign A53[22] () in columns 5 and 6 looks almost identical to the writing of that sign on P. Berlin P. 3135 (, ).[23] Note the similar writing of A311 () in P. Rhind without the horns and with the two feathers split ().[24] A24 () is comparable to the form on P. Berlin P. 3135 (, ).[25] A1 () in P. Berlin P. 3135 is also written with dots and small diagonal strokes ().[26] The pointed form of D1 () in columns 5–6 is identical to the writing in P. Rhind (), while the very round form in columns 1–4 is close to P. Berlin P. 3135 ().[27] The very long horizontal lines in writings of D19 () are attested in P. Rhind () and P. Berlin P. 3135 () as well.[28] The form of E34 () with the ears curled in opposite directions can be found on P. Rhind (, ) too.[29] The writing of F31 () is close to the one on P. Berlin P. 3135 (,).[30] The writing of F35 () with two horizontal strokes instead of one is attested on P. Rhind () and P. Berlin P. 3135 ().[31] The writing of G1 () with a separately attached upper diagonal stroke can be found on P. Rhind () as well.[32] The writing of M1 () with three diagonal strokes is attested on P. Rhind ().[33] N28 () can be found in that same form

20 See Birk, *Türöffner des Himmels*, 184, 214, 224. For information on the papyrus and photographs, see also the Book of the Dead database: *Totenbuchprojekt Bonn, TM 57732, <totenbuch.awk.nrw.de/objekt/tm57732>* (last accessed 9 February 2025).

21 See Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 303 and 336. For information on both papyri and photographs, see also https://www.nms.ac.uk/search-our-collections/collection-search-results?entry=304841 (last accessed 9 February 2025), for P. Rhind I (P. Edinburgh NMS A.1956.313), and https://www.nms.ac.uk/search-our-collections/collection-search-results?entry=300691 (last accessed 9 February 2025), for P. Rhind II (P. Edinburgh NMS A.1956.314).

22 The numbers follow the *Manuel de Codage*.

23 See the examples in Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 1 (no. 10).

24 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 2 (no. 12 bis).

25 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 2 (no. 15).

26 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 8 (no. 33).

27 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 6 (no. 79).

28 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 8 (no. 90).

29 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 12 (no. 132).

30 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 39 (no. 408).

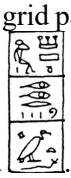
31 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 16 (no. 180).

32 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 17 (no. 192).

33 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 25 (no. 266).

on P. Rhind ().[34] For N16 () with a triangle below the horizontal line, see P. Rhind () and P. Berlin P. 3135 ().[35] Y3 () with two diagonal strokes is also attested on P. Rhind ().[36]

Thus, the palaeography suggests a dating to the end of the Ptolemaic or the beginning of the Roman Period. A closer look at the person who wrote the colophon and his family helps to secure this dating. P. Louvre N. 3176 (S) belonged to a certain Pakherkhonsu, who added his titles and filiation at the end of column 4: *jt-nṯr ḥɜp m Jp.t-s.wt Pɜ-ḫr-Ḫnsw sɜ n Šɜšnḳ Jr.tj-r=w rn n mw.t=f*, 'the god's father, the *ḥɜp*-priest in the temple of Karnak, Pakherkhonsu, son of Sheshonq, whose mother's name is Irtyru'.[37] As I have noted above, this colophon was not written by either of the scribes responsible for the other compositions preserved on the papyrus, the Procession of Sokar and the second Khoiak festival text, since the signs look different. Note especially the writing of Pakherkhonsu's seated man with a dot on top, which the scribe of the first four columns never adds. This sign in the writing of the scribe of columns 5–6 looks entirely different.[38] We may assume with some certainty that the colophon was written by a third person, Pakherkhonsu himself.

Barguet, *Louvre 3176*, 57–58, already connected a sandstone block found in the eastern colonnade of the temple of Karnak with the Pakherkhonsu of the Louvre Papyrus.[39] The layout of the inscription on the front is rather unusual as it structures the text into a grid pattern, which allows more than one reading in several cases. Reference is made there to a .[40] According to Coulon, *RdÉ* 57, 24, the block could have been part of a priest's seat.

Barguet, *Louvre 3176*, 58, originally assumed that the Sheshonq mentioned on the Karnak block was the father of Pakherkhonsu, the owner of P. Louvre N. 3176 (S). However, Colin, *Les Libyens en Egypte*, 83, convincingly argued that the person who dedicated this seat was the brother of our Pakherkhonsu, named Sheshonq the younger after his father and identified as such by the seated child. Colin, *Les Libyens en Egypte*, 83, further draws attention to a demotic graffito that is painted in red ink on the Ptolemaic pylon of the small temple at Medinet Habu. In this list of libation pourers, we find a person called Pakherkhonsu, son of Sheshonq, who is said to be 16 years of age, and a certain Sheshonq, son of Sheshonq (*sp 2*).[41] These could be the two brothers Sheshonq and Pakherkhonsu, the latter being the owner of the Louvre Papyrus.[42]

Colin, *Les Libyens en Egypte*, 81, following Derchain-Urtel, dates the block from the Karnak temple to the very end of the Ptolemaic Period, or the first century of the Roman

34 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 28 (no. 307).
35 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 29 (no. 317).
36 Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* III, 52 (no. 537).
37 See the commentary on 4/28–30 of the Louvre Papyrus for further information on the colophon.
38 See the palaeography.
39 The block is published in Barguet, *Louvre 3176*, plate 4; Coulon, *RdÉ* 57, 24, plate 6b; Colin, *Les Libyens en Egypte*, 81–84. The object itself appears to be lost nowadays; cf. Coulon, *RdÉ* 57, 24.
40 Barguet, *Louvre 3176*, plate 4.
41 Thissen, *Graffiti von Medinet Habu*, 92–93 (no. 121, lines 6–7 and 18); see also Colin, *Les Libyens en Egypte*, 84–85.
42 Colin, *Les Libyens en Egypte*, 83–84.

Period, based on the palaeography. This would agree well with the above suggested date of the Louvre Papyrus to the end of the Ptolemaic Period/beginning of the Roman Period and support the data from the palaeographic analysis.

In addition to the colophon at the end of column 4, a demotic note at the end of column 6 instructs '(To be placed) at his head, according to the regulation.'[43] This suggests that the roll was used as a burial object and placed with the mummy of its owner, in our case most likely Pakherkhonsu who added the colophon at the end of column 4. Other similar notes exist, in which the deceased expresses his wish to have a specific manuscript buried close to his mummy. Compare, for instance, the colophon on P. Bremner-Rhind (P. BM EA 10188), where the owner, the Theban priest Nesmin, well-known for his rather prominent number of Osirian liturgical papyri, puts a precautionary curse on anyone who might remove the papyrus from his possession: *jr sj nb n ḫɜs.wt nb n Nḥs Kš Ḫɜr mnmn šfd pn rwj=f-sw ḥnˁ=j nn ˁb.tw ḫɜ.t=sn nn šsp=sn ḳbḥ nn ssn{.tw}<=w> snṯr nn ˁḥˁ n=w sɜ sɜ.t r stj n=w mw nn sḫɜ.tw rn=sn tp tɜ r ɜw=f nn mɜɜ=w stw.t jtn*, 'As for any man of any foreign country, whether Nubia, Kush or Syria, who displaces this papyrus roll in order that he might remove it from my possession, their corpses will not be interred, they will not receive libations, they shall not smell incense, no son or daughter will attend upon them so as to pour out water for them, their names will not be remembered anywhere on earth, and they will not behold the rays of the solar disc.'[44] On another manuscript of his (P. BM EA 10209), he enjoins in a short demotic text: *my sḫ=w n=y sḫ r-ḫn-n pɜ ḥnw n ḳty nt-jw=w r tj.ṯ=y r-ḫn=f my tw=w pɜ ḏmˁ r-ḫn tɜy=y ḳs sḫ Ns-Mn*, 'Let a text be written for me in the receptacle of pine wood into which I will be placed. Let the papyrus roll be inserted within my mummy wrappings. Nesmin has written.'[45]

The place where the Louvre Papyrus is to be deposited reminds us of the title of the First Letter for Breathing which provides a similar indication: 'The First Letter for Breathing which is to be placed under the head of the god (scil. the deceased)'. Other scribes added this information in shorter forms like 'head', 'his head', or 'under his head' in demotic or Greek on the verso of these manuscripts. Another indicator of where to place this Letter for Breathing was the drawing of a human head on the verso of the papyrus.[46]

According to the database of the museum, the papyrus was donated by Louis Joseph Batissier and has been in the collection of the Louvre since 1855.[47] There is no further information on where and from whom Batissier had acquired it. Nevertheless, the content of the texts leaves no doubt that the manuscript originates from Thebes.

2.1.3 Material description, description of writing, and layout

The beginning of the roll is lost, so its original extent is unknown. The text starts in the middle of the composition called the Procession of Sokar. In its current state, the papyrus measures 23.5 cm (height) by 49 cm (length).[48] The height of 23.5 cm is typical for the Roman Period,

43 Kucharek, *Klagelieder*, 15, translates 'An seinen Kopf, dem Gesetz gemäß'.

44 P. BM EA 10188, colophon, lines 33–38 (Faulkner, *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind*, 34). See the translations by Faulkner, *JEA* 23, 11 and 12; Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 123.

45 Haikal, *Papyri of Nesmin* II, 10–11, and Martin/Ryholt, *JEA* 92, 270–274. The reading and translation follow Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 178 note 4.

46 For more information on these instructions regarding the First Letter for Breathing, see Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 503; Herbin, *Books of Breathing*, 2–3; Martin/Ryholt, *JEA* 92, 274.

47 https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010002212 (last accessed 8 January 2025).

48 Compare the entry in the online database of the museum: https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010002212 (last accessed 20 December 2024).

when the height of funerary papyri ranged from around 21 cm to 27 cm.[49] The surface of the papyrus is of light brown colour.

Two joins are visible. The distance of the first from the right-hand edge varies from 15.5 cm (in the upper section) to 14.5 cm (in the lower section);[50] the second join is visible 17 cm to 17.5 cm from the first and is 17 cm to 17.5 cm from the left-hand edge.[51] The overlap is right sheet over left sheet in both cases. The first join is of good quality and is nearly invisible. The second join looks rather crude. It is frayed, rather thick, and very broad (around 2 cm). It is also not made as skilfully as the first.

The colour of the last sheet of the papyrus is slightly lighter than that of the preceding ones and the horizontal fibres alternate from light to slightly darker shades of brown. This and the fringed edges of the second join suggest that the final sheet was added subsequently to an already existing papyrus roll. Originally, this was supposed to end with the Procession of Sokar. The Khoiak text was thus added subsequently, and by another scribe, who had to extend the roll, since there was not enough space left for the new text. It appears that he himself glued a further sheet of papyrus to the roll and that this extension was not professionally made in a workshop producing such rolls. But at what precise point the Khoiak text was added to the original roll – whether shortly after the papyrus was inscribed or after a certain period of time – cannot be deduced from the evidence at hand.

No traces of bitumen are visible on the recto, but the blackish discoloured area in 5/1–5 appears to be the result of bitumen having soaked through from the verso. However, the papyrus is glued on a blue paper backing nowadays, rendering its verso inaccessible.

The columns of the first composition (columns 1–4) have been separated from each other with black double-lined borders. The final two columns have no borders. Double lines are frequently used as borders for columns in the Roman Period.[52] Typically, these lines were drawn by using a thread that was moistened with ink, with the upper and lower ends marked beforehand with short strokes.[53] The columns of the final composition are not separated by strokes. There, the kollesis served to separate the two columns.

The Procession of Sokar is written in stichic form with one sentence or epithet per line. The short instructions, such as *m-ḫt nn jrj.t*, ‘After this: Performing’, in 3/19 are rubricised. Otherwise, black ink is used. The Khoiak text in the final two columns is written in scriptio continua in black ink throughout. There is no space between the introductory line with the title ‘The words which the scribe of the divine book should recite in the month of Khoiak’ and the ensuing lines.

49 See Gill/Smith, *Transforming the Dead*, 2, for further details and literature on the heights of papyri at this time.

50 This variation is due to the fact that more of the upper section of the papyrus is preserved to the right of the join.

51 These are typical data for the Roman Period, when the distances between joins were approximately 16–20 cm; cf. Osing, *Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis* I, 28.

52 See Gill/Smith, *Transforming the Dead*, 8–9. Cf. also Quack, in *“Binsen”-Weisheiten I–II*, 445–450.

53 See Gill/Smith, *Transforming the Dead*, 9, for more details and further literature.