

On Deciphering the Fifth Sign of Line 179 in
The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor:
 Examining the Original Hieratic Papyrus *

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Introduction

Among the literary works written in Middle Egyptian, one copy of *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* is in very good condition and the script is written in a very clean hand. For that reason, it is a manuscript concerning which, on the whole, the number of mistaken readings is rather few. That notwithstanding, let us draw our attention to the following two translations, both differing yet both accepted, of a sentence occurring in lines 178–79 of the papyrus:

- (1) Comparison of 2 versions of translation, ll. 178–79 of *The Shipwrecked Sailor*
 - a. (I was) endowed with serfs of his. (Lichtheim 1973: 214)
 - b. (I was) granted 200 servants. (Simpson 2003: 53)

As can be seen, what Lichtheim reads and translates as “his,” Simpson sees and renders as “200.” This variation is not just a question of translation; rather, it is based upon the reading of a single hieratic sign. In this study, through an examination of the original hieratic text, I would like to attempt to decipher the sign in question.

1 Overview of Previous Studies

1.1 The Writing of Middle Egyptian

It is thought in general that hieratic signs are shorthand versions of hi-

eroglyphs, but this assumption is not adequate. Hieratic is a unique system that is different from Hieroglyphics and that developed in its own way. As Goedicke pointed out, the development of hieratic and Hieroglyphics is not linear but parallel (Goedicke 1988: viii). Thus, the two systems do not correspond to each other on a sign-to-sign basis.

However, in Egyptology, when studying documents that have been written in the hieratic script, it is often the case that texts that have been transliterated into hieroglyphics are used.¹ For example, all of the texts given in *Middle Egyptian Texts: Volume 1. Literary Texts in the Hieratic Script* (Zonhoven 2001) are transliterations into the hieroglyphic writing system, and not even a single hieratic sign appears in the whole volume. As can be seen, the tendency in Egyptology to consider texts transliterated into hieroglyphics “original manuscripts” is quite strong, and, at the same time, there seems to be little interest in original hieratic manuscripts. However, it is necessary for modern Egyptologists to understand that, as Wente has already pointed out, in ancient Egypt “when a scribe wrote a hieratic text, he never thought in terms of the underling hieroglyphs.” (Wente 2001: 208).

1.2 Overview of Transliterated Texts

Although the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* was copied in the hieratic script, as described in 1.1 above, Egyptologists tend to use texts that have been transliterated in hieroglyphics as its original texts. Therefore, to begin with, I would like to examine the contents of the transliterated texts. Especially, I would like to examine the sign in question, the fifth sign in line 179, which I shall call L179-Let05.²

Table 1 lists the differing transliterations of L179-Let05 according to year of publication.³ As is evident from Table 1, L179-Let05 is transcribed into two different hieroglyphs,  and .

Table 1. List of Transliterations of L179-Let05

Publication	Transliterated as:	
	ꜥ	፩
Golénischeff (1906)	✓	
Erman (1906)	✓	
Golénischeff (1912)	✓	
Golénischeff (1913)	✓	
Blackman (1932)	✓	
de Buck (1941)		✓
de Buck (1948)		✓
Foster (1988)		✓
Zonhoven (1992)		✓
Borghouts (1993)		✓
Lapidus (1995)		✓
Hoch (1996)		✓
Foster (1998)		✓
Zonhoven (2001)		✓
Chioffi & Le Guilloux (2003)	✓	
Le Guilloux (2005)		✓
Ockinga (2005)	✓	

The hieratic sign  is identified by the Gardiner's sign code I9, and here it is seen as the 3.m.sg. suffix pronoun, which can be understood as "his." And the sign code for  is V1, and it is used twice (hereafter referred to as V1*2) to represent the number 200. In this way, the different readings of the sign as either I9 or V1*2 led to its being expressed by a different word. Thus, if the reading of I9 is correct, then 7 of the transliterated texts in Table 1 are correct, and the other 10 texts contain a mistake. On the other hand, if V1*2 is correct, then 10 of them are correct, and the other 7 are not.

Finally, when one looks at the transliterated texts in the light of changes in research history, after the 1906 publication, the sign was most often understood as I9, but after de Buck (1941) published his version, it was basically accepted that L179-Let05 should be read as V1*2. But that is not to say that the opinion that the sign be read as I9 disappeared, because there has been an even split of opinion since 2003. In this way, even though more than

a century has gone by since the first publication of the transliterated text, no definite decision has been made as to what L197-Let05 really represents.

1.3 Overview of Translations

In the previous section, we looked at the various transliterated texts, and next, I would like to look at the translations that are not accompanied by the transliterated texts (Table 2).

Table 2. List of Translations of L179-Let05

Publication	Translated as:	
	“his”	“200”
Golénischeff (1881)	✓	
Erman (1923)	✓	
Brunner-Traut (1965)	✓	
Kaster (1968)		✓
Simpson (1972)		✓
Lichtheim (1973)	✓	
Lefebvre (1976)	✓	
Foster (1992)		✓
Burkard (1993)		✓
Parkinson (1997)		✓
Foster (2001)		✓
Simpson (2003)		✓
Quirke (2004)	✓	

While there was a transition of opinion concerning the transliteration, there was a shift in translation as well from the initial idea that the word be translated “his” to the position that it represents “200.”

2 Examination of the Original Manuscript

2.1 Original Materials used in this Paper

The only publication including photographs of the manuscript is Golénischeff (1913). As its photographs are all black-and-white, the book is not

an ideal source for the purpose of inspecting fine details of the writing of the signs. Therefore, I checked the original manuscript in the State Hermitage Museum and took photographs of it.⁴ The photographs taken in this survey are used below to examine the signs.

2.2 Examining the Form of the Sign in the Original Manuscript

Figure 1 is the picture of L179-Let05. We are going to examine whether this sign should be read as I9 or V1*2, and, in order to have something for comparison, I would like to use the lists that appear in Möller's *Hieratische Paläographie*.



Fig. 1 L179-Let05

Figure 2 shows the Hieratic signs for I9 and V1*2. Gardiner's I9 corresponds to Möller's No. 263 (Fig. 2-1), and V1*2, to No. 633 (Fig. 2-2).⁵

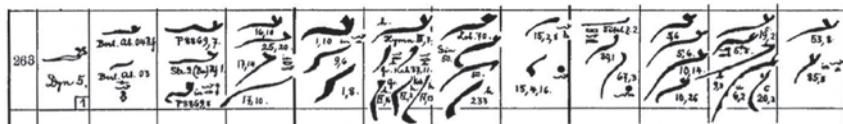


Fig. 2-1. Hieratic Signs for I9 (Möller 1927: No. 263)

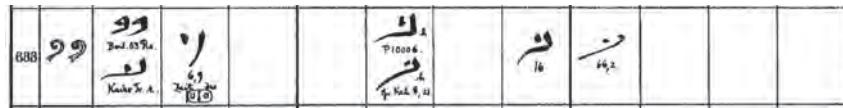


Fig. 2-2. Hieratic Signs for V1*2 (Möller 1927: No. 633)

As is evident by examining the different forms of the signs that appear in Möller (1927), the shapes of No. 263 and No. 633 are very similar, and this has led to the difference in interpretation of L179-Let05. Nevertheless, upon close scrutiny of the two signs, the following differences can be observed:

- (2) Differences in the Hieratic signs for No. 263 and No. 633
- a. If both of the upper strokes tend to lean toward the left, the sign is No. 633, but if the right-hand one leans toward the right, it is No. 263.
 - b. If both of the upper strokes are written large, it is No. 633, but if they appear small, or if the sign is written with a single stroke, it is No. 263.

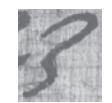
When comparing L179-Let05 with the signs given in Möller (1927), it appears that “both of the upper strokes tend to lean toward the left,” and “both of the upper strokes are written large.” Given those characteristics, it seems reasonable to determine that the sign is No. 633.

2.3 Examining Sign No. 263 in the Original Manuscript

In section 2.2, I determined of what L19-Let05 represents based upon the list given in Möller (1927). By basing the decision on the fact that “both of the upper strokes tend to lean toward the left” and also by making comparisons with the signs in Figure 2-1, it was possible to make a decision, but by also adding the criterion that “both of the upper strokes are written large,” and comparing L179-Let05 with several forms of No. 263, it seemed evident that the sign in question was No. 633. Now, through examining all the different forms of No. 263 as they appear in the original manuscript of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, I will show that the sign in question cannot be identified with No. 263.⁶

The sign No. 263 portrays a horned viper and is divided into two parts: (1) the section that starts at the upper right and extends to the lower left, making the head and body of the snake, and (2) a short stroke from the upper left to indicate the horns. Among these shapes, the No. 263 can be classified into those in which the body itself is relatively straight (A) or curved/bent (B), or neither (C) (Table 3).

Table 3. Classification of Forms of No. 263

Type A: The body is not curved/bent.			
A1	The horns are written.		L018-Let05
A2	The horns are not written.		L188-Let14
Type B: The body is bent/curved.			
B1	The horns are not written.		L126-Let06
B2	The sign constitutes a ligature with the preceding sign, or the head of the snake overlaps with part of the preceding sign.		L176-Let09
Type C: Neither A nor B.			L182-Let08

Within this classification, in the Type A signs whose body portion is not curved/bent, the head is distinctly drawn (especially in type A1), and, conversely, in the Type B signs in which the body is bent/curved, the head portion is often left out (especially in type B1). The No. 633 is written with what would be a large head, and that head portion can clearly be seen to be written with two strokes. In comparing this with the forms of No. 263, one should give special notice to type A1.

Now, the sign No. 263 could be found in the original manuscript to be used within the following words. The types of words using No. 263 are the following:

- (3) Words containing No. 263
 - a. Words containing suffix pronoun
 - Suffix pronoun, 3.m.sg.:
 - =f (he) [69 examples]
 - Allomorph of above:
 - =fy (he) [3 examples]
 - Particle:
 - r=f (then) [6 examples]

b. Words other than suffix pronoun

Demonstrative adjectives:

pf (that) [1 example: L152-Let09]

tf (that) [1 example: L154-Let27]

Prepositions:

hft-hr (before) [2 examples: L144-Let06, L176-Let13].

Verbs:

wdf (to be late) [1 example: L070-Let12]

f3i (to pick up) [2 examples: L034-Let08, L103-Let12]

sft (to give) [2 examples: L144-Let25, L185-Let14]

kf (to reveal) [1 example: L060-Let12]

Nouns:

gwf (monkey) [1 example: L165-Let15]

nf (mistake) [1 example: L149-Let22]

nrf.t (good thing) [1 example: L116-Let09]

hf3w (snake) [2 examples: L061-Let09, L127-Let16]

Adjective:

nfr (good) [4 examples: L134-Let13, L159-Let17, L165-Let30, L182-Let08]

In the analysis of L179-Let05, the problem is whether or not L179-Let05 is used as No. 263, the 3.m.sg. suffix pronoun (*=f*, or “his”) or as No. 633, the number 200. That being the case, the 69 examples of the suffix pronoun *=f* serve as a basis for comparison. But, in terms of the difficulty of confirming the shape of the signs, I decided that it was also necessary to examine the instances of No. 263 when it appears in words other than as the suffix pronoun as well.

Table 4 shows the classification of instances of No. 263 according to the shape of the sign and the type of word.⁷ However, all cases in which the sign is not used as a suffix pronoun are grouped together under “Other Words.” Looking at Table 4, and remembering that Type A1 of sign No. 263 is the closest in shape to No. 633, we have for comparison mainly 48 cases of No. 263 used as the 3.m.sg. suffix pronoun, *=f*; 3 cases as an allomorph of the

3.m.sg. suffix pronoun, *=fy*; 1 case as the particle *r=f*; and 10 cases as other words—for a total of 62 cases of Type A1.

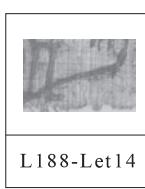
Table 4. The Form of No. 263 in Words Containing No. 263

Words Containing No. 263	The Form of No. 263					Total
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C	
Suffix pronoun 3. m.sg: <i>=f</i>	48	1	7	13		69
Allomorph of above: <i>=fy</i>	3					3
Particle: <i>r=f</i>	1	1		4		6
Other words	10		7	1	1	19
Total	62	2	14	18	1	97

Now, let us take a look at all 97 examples of the use of No. 263 in this papyrus.⁸

L006-Let20	L018-Let05	L019-Let02	L019-Let04	L019-Let10
L032-Let09	L035-Let02	L036-Let03	L052-Let11	L062-Let05
L063-Let10	L064-Let09	L067-Let07	L067-Let10	L068-Let14
L069-Let03	L073-Let13	L076-Let12	L077-Let04	L077-Let08

L077-Let15	L079-Let02	L081-Let07	L081-Let10	L082-Let14
L083-Let07	L087-Let02	L088-Let08	L088-Let13	L098-Let06
L098-Let16	L099-Let15	L100-Let08	L100-Let16	L104-Let04
L105-Let03	L111-Let05	L113-Let16	L114-Let07	L115-Let16
L116-Let03	L143-Let15	L149-Let10	L150-Let03	L162-Let07
L183A-Let07	L186-Let03	L186-Let15		

Fig. 3-1: *f*, Type A1

L188-Let14

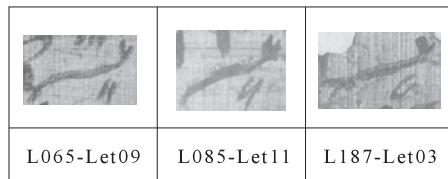
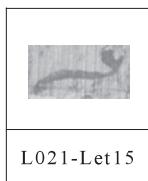
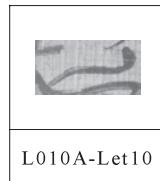
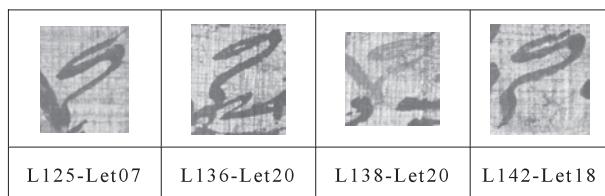
Fig. 3-2: *f*, Type A2

L126-Let06	L135-Let16	L142-Let12	L144-Let24	L149-Let27
L176-Let30	L186-Let09			

Fig. 3-3: $\Rightarrow f$, Type B1

L124-Let17	L130-Let17	L138-Let15	L139-Let20	L152-Let17
L155-Let13	L158-Let07	L161-Let31	L167-Let07	L167-Let14
L174-Let14	L175-Let08	L176-Let09		

Fig. 3-4: $\Rightarrow f$, Type B2

Fig. 4-1: *=f*, Type A1Fig. 5-1: *r=f*, Type A1Fig. 5-2: *r=f*, Type A2Fig. 5-3: *r=f*, Type B2

L034-Let08	L060-Let12	L061-Let09	L070-Let12	L103-Let12
L116-Let09	L144-Let25	L149-Let22	L159-Let17	L165-Let30

Fig. 6-1: Other Words, Type A1

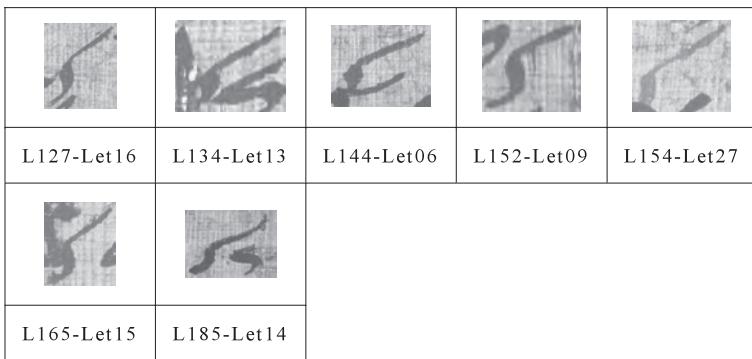


Fig. 6-2: Other Words, Type B1

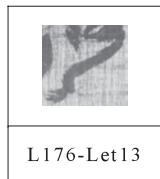


Fig. 6-3: Other Words, Type B2

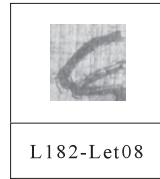


Fig. 6-4: Other Words, Type C

Among all the photos given above, those in Figures 3-1, 4-1, 5-1, and 6-1 are all Type A1 cases of the use of No. 263. By comparing all 62 of them with Figure 1 (L179-Let05), it is possible to determine whether or not L179-Let05 is an example of No. 263.

It is the author's opinion that Figure 1 shows a sign for which "both of the upper strokes tend to lean toward the left" and "both of the upper strokes are written large," characteristics that are not found in the Type A1 versions of No. 263 found in Figures 3-1, 4-1, 5-1, or 6-1. Therefore, based upon the shape of the sign, there are positively no grounds for reading the sign as No. 263. That being so, as noted in section 2.2 above, it is reasonable to read L179-Let05 as No. 633.

3 Examining Some Similar Examples

In section 2, I expressed the opinion that, based upon the shape of the sign, there are grounds for reading L179-Let05 as No. 633. Additionally, in this section, I would like to supplement the validity of interpreting the shape of the sign by pointing out similar expressions in other texts.

The sentence that contains L179-Let05 begins on line 178, and I would like to look at it here:

- (4) *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, ll. 178-79

<i>sʒh-kw</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>tp</i>	<i>200⁹</i>
was endowed-I	with	people	200
I was endowed with 200 people [as servants].			

The spelling of the word *tp* in this sentence is D1-A1-B1-Z2¹⁰. Among these, D1 indicates the pronunciation, and the rest, A1-B1-D1, are determinatives.¹¹ D1 expresses the basic meaning of *tp* as “head” (Hannig 2006: 2665), but it later underwent semantic expansion to include the meaning of “person.” In ancient Egyptian, the usual words used for person were *s* (Hannig 2006: 2025) and *rmf* (Hannig 2006: 1417), but when *tp* is used, the number of cases in which the noun is followed by a cardinal number is great. Below, I would like to introduce some examples of occurrences of “*tp* + cardinal number.”¹²

- (5) The Biographical Inscription of Admiral Iahmes (Sethe 1907: 4, 12)

<i>dmd-r</i>	<i>tp</i>	<i>4</i>
total	person (D1)	four
A total of four people.		

- (6) The Biographical Inscription of Admiral Iahmes (Sethe 1907: 6, 7)

<i>wn-in</i>	<i>=tw</i>	<i>ḥr-rdi.t</i>	<i>n=i</i>	<i>tp</i>	<i>5</i>
past tense	one	to give	to me	person (D1-A1)	five
One gave to me five people. (I was given five people.)					

- (7) The Biographical Inscription of Admiral Iahmes (Sethe 1907: 6, 15)

q̥h^c-n *rdi* *n=i* *tp* 3
then given to me person (D1-A1) three
Then three people were given to me.

- (8) Expeditionary Inscription of Tuthmose III (Sethe 1907: 731, 2)

tp 691
person (D1-Z1-A1-B1) 691
691 people

- (9) Inscription of Rekhmire (Sethe 1907: 1102, 13)

inn.w-m *tp* 3
brought person (D1-Z1) three
Three people were brought.

- (10) *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* (Lepsius 1859: B1, 113, l. 11 = Parkinson 1991: B2, 136)

q̥h^c-n *gm-n* *=f* *tp* 6
then found he person (D1-Z1-A1-B1-Z2) six
Then he found six people.

Among these, both (6) and (7) describe how people were given by His Majesty (*hm=f*) as slaves, and this is very similar to the situation in ll. 178–79, seen in (4) of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*. Also, among these examples, (5)–(9) are written in hieroglyphics, while (10) is written in the hieratic script, and the spelling of the word in (10), or D1-Z1-A1-B1-Z2, is very similar to the spelling in (4), or D1-A1-B1-Z2.

Although the six examples (5)–(10) do not qualify as full proof concerning the reading of “*tp* + cardinal number” in the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, the fact that there exist several similar examples supports the opinion of this paper.

4 Conclusion

As for the reading of the fifth sign in line 179 of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, it still presents a problem now, more than a century after the publication of the transliterated text. In this paper, in order to solve this problem, I examined the original hieratic manuscript, and have come to the opinion that the fifth sign in line 179 of the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* is No. 633 (= 200).

In linguistic research within the field of Egyptology, there is a pronounced trend to use as “original material” texts that have been transliterated from the hieratic script into hieroglyphics. However, through a thorough investigation, this paper also shows the dangers of using transliterated texts. It is essential to utilize the original manuscript in the study of ancient documents.

Notes

* This paper is a revised English version of my paper in Japanese, “*Nampashita Suifu no Monogatari* no 79-gyoome no 5-banme no Moji no Handokuan (On the Fifth Sign of Line Line 179 in “The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor”). *Gengogaku-Ronso. JŌO Hakutarō Kyouju Taishoku Kinen Ronbunshuu (Tsukuba Working Papers in Linguistics. Special Issue Dedicated to Professor Hakutarō JŌO)*. 95-116. University of Tsukuba. 2009. I would like to express my special thanks to my colleague, Mr. Stephen Comee, who checked and corrected my English, and gave me much useful advice.

- 1 *Transliteration* is the term used to describe “A one-to-one conversion of the graphemes of one writing system into those of another writing system” (Coulmas 1999: 510).
- 2 That is to say, L = line number, and Let = number of the letter/sign when counted from the beginning of the line. Thus, L001-Let01 means the first letter of the first line, and L186-Let16 means the 16th letter of the 186th line.
- 3 Among those sources listed in Table 1, Hoch 1996, Foster 1998, and Ockinga 2005 only contain abbreviated and incomplete versions of the transliterated text.
- 4 This survey was conducted on 17 May 2006. I am grateful for Dr. Andrey O. Borshakov for permitting me to do my research and take pictures of the manuscript.
- 5 Although No. 633 is written in hieroglyphics by repeating the same sign twice

- (V1*2) except for one case from Old Kingdom, in hieratic it is written with a single sign (see Fig. 2-2).
- 6 Within the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, the only appearance of sign No. 633 is L179-Let05; therefore, it is not possible to compare the sign in question with other examples of No. 633 within the same text.
 - 7 The only case of Type C was in the word *nfr* (good; Fig. 6-4). Although it does seem to show a special characteristic, the method of writing *nfr* in the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* can also be found elsewhere (Lepsius 1859: B1. 113, line 9 = Parkinson 1991: B2, 131).
 - 8 Note that in order to make the signs almost the same size for better comparison, the photos could not all be reduced or enlarged by the same ratio.
 - 9 The phrase *tp 200* is in the form of “noun + cardinal number,” and this is the same order in which it is written in the hieratic text. The traditional understanding of the notational convention for cardinal numbers is that the order in which the signs are read is the same as the order in which the signs are written (e.g., see Gardiner 1927: 192). But on the other hand, there is also the theory that the signs are not read in the notational order but as “cardinal number + noun” (e.g., see Allen 2000: 100, Grandet & Mathieu 1997: 231–33). Although it appears that there is a need to examine this difference of opinion concerning the word order in the notation of cardinal numbers, I shall read in the order of “noun + cardinal number” in this paper for the sake of convenience.
 - 10 In this section, I use Gardiner’s sign code for representing the spelling of the word *tp*.
 - 11 I shall read the signs D1-A1-B1-Z2 as the singular form of the noun *tp*. That is, I shall consider A1-B1-Z2 to be added in order to construct a collective noun. However, it is also possible to read this word in the plural form, *tp.w*. Indeed, Chioffi & Le Guilloux 2003: 66, Quirke 2004: 75, and Zonhoven 1992: 234 all take it as a plural noun. Note, however, that Borghouts (1993) reads it both as *tp* (I: 51; II: 288) and as *tp.w* (II: 286).
 - 12 As stated in previous note, there are differing interpretations of whether *tp* is singular or plural. Thus, for the examples given, how *tp* is written is given in Gardiner’s sign codes.

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