

Martina LANDRINO

A Wine-Jar Label in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

in

Crossing Boundaries (ed.), *New Kingdom Hieratic Collections From Around the World*, Vol. 1, Liège, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2024 (= *Ægyptiaca Leodiensia*, 13.1), **p. 139–142.**

DOI 10.25518/978-2-87562-416-1.09

A Wine-Jar Label in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

Martina LANDRINO
Leipzig University

ABSTRACT

The Egyptian collection of the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin holds approximately 3,000 objects. These derive mainly from excavations—forming part of the division of finds from digs conducted by the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society), for instance—or were acquired from Irish travellers to Egypt.¹ Among the museum's holdings, the only item inscribed with hieratic script is an unpublished wine-jar label (E72: 80). Almost no information is available about the find-spot or acquisition history of this pottery sherd, though this contribution will show that the label itself may shed new light on the provenience of the sherd.

1. WINE-JAR E72: 80

1.1. Physical description

The light brown sherd is 12.5 cm high and 11.5 cm wide.² It comes from a Marl D amphora belonging to Aston's (2004: 189) B1-Type.³ The obverse is inscribed with three lines of text in black ink. Approximately 2 cm to the right of the third line, the Roman numeral 36 has been written in pencil; the meaning of this number is unknown (fig. 1).

In modern times, the reverse has been used to detail such information as the inventory number in white ink over a layer of protective polish.

In addition, two small paper notes have been attached to the reverse (fig. 2):

- 1 The older note, positioned in the top left corner, reads: 'Wine of the House of Amenhotep III. The year 39' (handwritten in Latin script with black ink), together with the number 384/9 (handwritten in red ink).
- 2 The second note, positioned towards the centre of the sherd, bears a similar text, typed in black ink: '9 Inscription: "Wine of the House of Amen-hotep III. The year 39" '. This sheet also details the measurements of the sherd: '5 by 4 ½ in., 15-'.

1 See Quirke & Taylor (2007: 43).

2 The thickness of the sherd is unknown to me.

3 My gratitude goes to David Aston who provided me with this information and related bibliography. Furthermore, as Aston (2007: 21) states, during the 18th Dynasty Marl D amphorae of type B1 are commonly used to store wine from the Western Delta.



Fig. 1. E72: 80, obverse (© National Museum of Ireland, Dublin)



Fig. 2. E72: 80, reverse (© National Museum of Ireland, Dublin)

1.2. Text

The text consists of three lines of hieratic that run horizontally from right to left across the sherd. The sherd is broken, and only the beginning of the text is preserved.

- (1) *rn̄p.t-sp* 29 [...]
 - (2) *jr̄p n p̄* [*ḥb-sd*]
 - (3) *tp.y n ḥm=f* 'w.s [...(?)]
- (1) Regnal year 29 [...]
 - (2) Wine for the [*sd*-fest]
 - (3) first of his majesty l.p.h.

Comments

Line 1

Both of the paper notes attached to the reverse of the label mention a 'year 39'. However, if one compares the shape of the numbers 20 and 30 in G. Möller (1927: 56) and in M. Leahy (1978: 62), it is clear that the upper part of the number, which is bent in on itself, more closely resembles the number 20 than the number 30.

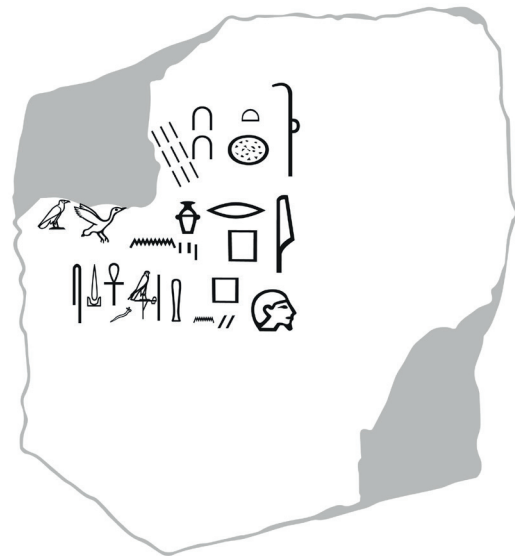


Fig. 3. E72: 80, obverse (hieroglyphic transcription by Martina Landrino)

W. Hayes (1951a: 44–48) lists 89 different types of wine jar label. When regnal years are mentioned in the texts on these labels, they are always followed by the word ‘wine’. In our case, the second line of the label begins with ‘wine’ and it is possible that line 1 is thus preserved in its entirety.

Line 2

The final legible signs are Gardiner signs G41 and G1. These are followed by traces of ink that appear to belong to a tall, narrow sign, possibly Gardiner sign V28 (*h*), which would reinforce the reconstruction of ‘*hb-sd*’ in the lacuna.

Line 3

The adjective ‘first’ at the beginning of the line confirms that ‘*hb-sd*’ is the only word missing from the end of line 2. No further traces of ink can be detected after ‘majesty l.p.h.’ and it is possible that the line ended here and that no text has been lost. If so, the formula on the label would reflect Hayes’ type 13 (1951a: 44).

2. FINAL REMARKS

Wine jar labels dating to the New Kingdom have been found in large numbers at various archaeological sites, including Deir el-Medina, Malqata, and Tell el-Amarna, and are now scattered around different museum collections. The labels held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York are of particular interest, as they share a number of similarities with the label in Dublin, both in terms of their content and structure.⁴

The pottery sherds in New York, excavated at Malqata between 1910 and 1920 during campaigns conducted by the Egyptian Expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, date to the

reign of Amenhotep III. They were published by W. Hayes in 1951 in a series of three articles, then republished by M. Leahy (1978).⁵ The texts of these labels exhibit a clear structure.⁶ This structure was detailed by W. Hayes (1951b: 82) as follows:

- 1 Regnal year of production and packaging; the inclusion of the season, month, and day was not necessary for wine—only for more perishable goods;
- 2 Content of the jar;
- 3 Quality;
- 4 Quantity;
- 5 Occasion for which the substance was delivered;
- 6 Origin of the commodity;
- 7 Name and title of the official who contributed;
- 8 Name and title of the specialist who produced the commodity.

Details of the type (1), (2), and (3) appear on the Dublin label, conforming with Hayes’ type 13 (1951a: fig. 4).

The year to which the Dublin label is dated is of interest, as the wine held in its jar was produced for the first jubilee of an unnamed king. This was celebrated on the occasion of a ruler’s 30th regnal year, though festivities typically began already in the 29th year. Not many jar labels dated to regnal year 29 have been discovered, however. M. Leahy (1978: 13) lists only three such labels, while W. Hayes (1951a: 56, fig. 16) lists only two. Few New Kingdom pharaohs ruled for 29 years or more, and even fewer had their names associated with a jubilee. In his chronology of New Kingdom rulers, E. Hornung (2006: 198–209) lists only Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep III as celebrating such a jubilee. The dates of these pharaohs are compatible with the palaeography of our label, though the palaeographic evidence does not

⁴ A search of the online catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art using the term ‘wine label’ returns 134 results. See <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?department=10&q=wine+label> (accessed 10.01.2023).

⁵ A new publication is in preparation by Niv Allon.

⁶ Hayes (1951b: 82) notes that the Malqata sherds are inscribed with a larger variety of formulae than the Amarna sherds. See Bouvier (2003: 31–40) for further analysis of the phraseology on wine-jar labels from the Ramesside period.

permit us to assign the label more specifically to the reign of one of these rulers.⁷

The Dublin label does not include the name of a king, a house, or a domain, though the second paper note attached to the reverse of the object reads ‘Wine of the House of Amen-Hotep III’. Two explanations for this discrepancy are possible: the sherd was originally larger and a part of it has gone missing, or the person who wrote the paper note provided an interpretation of the label rather than a literal translation of its text. The first explanation is most unlikely, however, as the measurements given after the translation of the label correspond to the object’s current dimensions. The author of the note, whoever they were and whenever they wrote it, was clearly convinced that

the label dated to the reign of Amenhotep III and that it was most probably found at Malqata. In support of this interpretation, the present author would point to the similarities between the Dublin label and the Malqata material. It would seem that the Dublin label indeed dates to the reign of Amenhotep III and it was presumably discovered in the area of his palace in Western Thebes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the National Museum of Ireland for granting me permission to publish this object and for providing me with pictures and related information.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ASTON, David A. 2004. Amphorae in New Kingdom Egypt, *AuL* 14, 175–213.
- . 2007. A Taste of Honey, *mnt-* and *mdqt*-vessel in the Late Eighteenth Dynasty, in Thomas SCHNEIDER & Kasia SZPAKOWSKA (eds.), *Egyptian Stories*, Münster (=AOAT 347), 13–31.
- BOUVIER, Guillaume. 2003. *Les Étiquettes de jarres hiératiques de l’Institut d’Égyptologie de Strasbourg*, Caire (=DFIFAO 43).
- GRIFFITH, Francis Ll. 1894. The Jar Inscriptions, in William M.F. PETRIE, *Tell el-Amarna*, London, 32–34.
- HAYES, William C. 1951a. Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III, *JNES* 10 (1), 35–56.
- . 1951b. Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III, *JNES* 10 (2), 82–111.
- . 1951c. Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III, *JNES* 10 (3), 156–183.
- HORNUNG, Erik. 2006. The New Kingdom, in Erik HORNUNG, Rolf KRAUSS & David A. WARBURTON (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, Leiden (=HdO 83), 197–217.
- KOENIG, Yvan. 1979. *Catalogue des étiquettes de jarres hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh*, Caire (=DFIFAO 21/1 & 21/2).
- LEAHY, Meredyth A. 1978. *Excavations at Malkata and the Birket Habu 1971–1974: The Inscriptions*, Warminster (=EgToday 2, IV).
- MCGOVERN, Patrick E. 1997. Wine of Egypt’s Golden Age: An Archaeochemical Perspective, *JEA* 83, 69–108.
- MÖLLER, Georg. 1909. *Hieratische Paläographie. Die aegyptische Buchschrift in ihrer Entwicklung von der fünften Dynastie bis zur römischen Kaiserzeit. Zweiter Band. Von der Zeit Thutmosis’ III bis zum Ende der einundzwanzigsten Dynastie*, Leipzig.
- QUIRKE, Stephen & TAYLOR, John. 2007. Ancient Egypt, in *Guide to the National Museum of Ireland: Archaeology*, 43–46.
- VAN SICLEN, Charles C. III. 1973. The Accession Date of Amenhotep III and the Jubilee, *JNES* 32/3, 290–300.
- VALBELLE, Dominique. 1985. ‘Les ouvriers de la Tombe’ *Deir el-Médineh à l’époque Ramesside*, Caire (=BdE 96).

⁷ The ductus and shape of the signs are typical of the 18th Dynasty, e.g., Gardiner signs Q3 (Möller 1927: 34), W23 (Möller 1927: 44), and U36 (Möller 1927: 43).