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RENATE DEKKER – SOFIE REMIJSEN

DATE CORRECTIONS TO COPTIC DOCUMENTS

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DATE CORRECTIONS TO COPTIC DOCUMENTS

Dated papyri form an important part of the source corpus for the project *Lived Time: Using and Experiencing Time in Late Antique Egypt*, which is currently ongoing at the University of Amsterdam.¹ In the project database, conversions of dating formulae from the editions (which are available in databases of metadata) are automatically checked against extensive chronological tables. This process occasionally brings to light mistakes, some caused by calculation errors (for example in leap years), others because the conversions reflect an outdated understanding of when the indiction year began. Below follows a list of corrections for Coptic documents. Unless otherwise indicated, the incorrect dates were introduced in the editions referred to in the table.

Corrections to days and months

Three of the mistakes below (SB Kopt. 1 578, 582 and 5 2190) are linked to leap years. A leap day is added to the Egyptian calendar as a sixth epagomenal day in the year *before* the Julian leap year. Whereas in the other three years, Thoth 1 can be equated with August 29, in these years one should add an extra day (August 30) until the return to the normal equivalence after Phamenoth 4 or February 29 in the Julian leap year. This additional day is sometimes forgotten, or mistakenly added to dates after February in the Julian leap year. The other mistakes seem to be simple miscalculations.

Text	Date	Conversion in edition	Correction
SB Kopt. 1 578 (TM 101645) ²	Choiak 19, ind. 11, Diocletian year 489	AD 772 Dec 16	AD 772 Dec 15
SB Kopt. 1 582 (TM 101649)	Tybi 1, ind. 4, Diocletian year 497	AD 780 Dec 28	AD 780 Dec 27
SB Kopt. 2 1007 (TM 84985)	Thoth 11, ind. 11	AD 727 Oct 9	AD 727 Sept 9 ³
SB Kopt. 5 2190 (TM 82139) ⁴	Hathyr 19, ind. 2	AD 703 Nov 15	AD 703 Nov 16
O. Crum Add. 66 (TM 83464) ⁵	Choiak 6, ind. 5	AD 721 Nov 30	AD 721 Dec 2
O. Fitz. E.P. 533 (TM 832318) ⁶	Choiak 26, ind. 11	AD 727 Jul 23	AD 727 Dec 23
Florence, Egyptian Museum, inv. 8135 ⁷ (TM 957718)	Pachon 27, ind. 12	AD 728 May 7	AD 728 May 22

¹ This publication is part of the project *Lived Time: Using and Experiencing Time in Late Antique Egypt* (project number VI.Vidi.201.057 of the VIDI research programme), which is financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

² The *editio princeps* by H. Munier, Les stèles coptes du monastère de Saint-Siméon à Assouan, *Aegyptus* 11/4 (1931), 433 and 435, only gave the year (773 for SB Kopt. 1 578 and 781 for SB Kopt. 1 582). The full conversions were supplemented by M. Hasitzka in SB Kopt.

³ The correct Julian month is already mentioned in J. Cromwell, *Recording Village Life: A Coptic Scribe in Early Islamic Egypt*, Ann Arbor 2017, Appendix 3.1.

⁴ The date is taken over by SB Kopt. from the *editio princeps* in J. Cromwell, Coptic Texts in the Archive of Flavius Atias, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 184 (2013), 282–283.

⁵ The edition does not convert the date. The date mentioned here is based on the conversion of Alain Delattre and Jean-Luc Fournet, in P. Stras. Copt., 229 and 320, who accidentally copied the date as Choiak 4, ind. 5.

⁶ Edition in Cromwell, *Recording Village Life*, 241–242, no. 6. She already corrected the mistake in the table in Appendix 3.1 in the same book, but the mistaken date is the one cited on Trismegistos.

⁷ Edition in R. Pintaudi and A. Soldati, Nuovi documenti dall'archivio di Aristofane figli de Giovanni, *Analecta Papyrologica* 30 (2018), 59–60, no. 2.

Corrections to years

The first group of corrections to the year is linked to the beginning of the indiction year. In most of the Roman Empire, the indiction started in September (Thot). As harvesting started earlier in Egypt than in the rest of the Empire, however, the start of the indiction was moved to Pachon (May), so that the whole harvest would fall in the same fiscal year. As the Roman administration could not publish the official tax schedule for the year (*delegatio*) in time for Egypt, it published a preliminary tax schedule (*praedelegatio*) for this province before the 1st of May (Pachon 6), and the official schedule followed in Epeiph, which is therefore also occasionally taken as the starting point of the indiction. For all three different ways of counting the indiction (the actual fiscal year starting in Pachon, the official fiscal year starting in Epeiph, and the empire-wide indiction that coincided with the Egyptian civil year from Thot) there is evidence in the papyri. Roger Bagnall and Klaas Worp have made important contributions to our understanding of the indiction by establishing all options and by identifying patterns in regional preferences and in document types.⁸ Conversion tables do not allow for this variety, however, and often equate the indiction with the Egyptian year beginning in Thot.⁹ This means that documents with a date between Pachon and Thot are sometimes assigned to the wrong year, i.e. are dated one year too late. This is the case for the first six texts in the table below, all contracts from the Theban area, for which the Pachon indiction is well established.¹⁰

As for the last text, a tombstone found at the Monastery of Apa Hatre near Aswan, the corrected date is a year later than the one proposed in the re-edition. Henri Munier's original date of 851¹¹ was corrected by Monica Hasitzka to 850. The latter suggestion is only possible if the writer not only used the Pachon indiction, but also assimilated the year according to the Diocletian era (which normally started in Thot) to this Pachon indiction. Although such assimilations have been documented for the professional scribes of administrative papyri, this practice has not been proven for the commissioners of tombstones, so the standard count from Thot should be preferred for the era years. The indiction year and the year according to the Diocletian era mentioned on this tombstone and several other ones from Aswan are only consistent if the commissioners used the Thot indiction. This would be odd in an administrative context, but is more understandable in the case of tombstones, where the use of the indiction is purely chronological.¹²

Text	Date	Conversion in edition ¹³	Correction
SB 1 5592 + P. KRU 71 (TM 23212)	Pachon 13, ind. 3	AD 765 May 8	AD 764 May 8
SB 1 5594 + P. KRU 81 (TM 23214)	Pauni 1, ind. 9	AD 771 May 26	AD 770 May 26
SB 1 5596 + P. KRU 84 (TM 23216)	Pauni 1, ind. 8	AD 770 May 26	AD 769 May 26
SB 1 5605 + P. KRU 96 (TM 23225)	Mesore 26, ind. 13	AD 775 Aug 19	AD 774 Aug 19
P. KRU 102 (TM 86003)	Epeiph 8, ind. 15	AD 762 Jun 2	AD 761 Jul 2

⁸ R. S. Bagnall and K. A. Worp, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt. Second Edition*, Leiden 2004, 22–35.

⁹ E.g. W. C. Till, *Datierung und Prosopographie der koptischen Urkunden aus Theben*, Wien 1962, 237–239. Online tools such as the otherwise excellent <https://www.aoi.uzh.ch/de/islamwissenschaft/hilfsmittel/tools/kalenderumrechnung/coptic.html> have the same problem. <https://www.trismegistos.org/time/> incorporates the chronological tables in use by this project and will give you two indiction years (counting from Pachon and from Thot), but is not yet practical to use as a converter.

¹⁰ We do not correct SB 1 5576 + P. KRU 41 (TM 23195, AD 749), dated Pachon 4, as the indiction technically started only on Pachon 6 (May 1), certainly in the eighth century (cf. Bagnall and Worp, *Chronological Systems*, 28). In practice, Pachon and May were sometimes equated, however, so a date in AD 748 is certainly possible for this text.

¹¹ Munier, *Les stèles coptes*, 448–449, no. 110.

¹² See Bagnall and Worp, *Chronological Systems*, 66–67 for the assimilation of the era year to the indiction, and for the lack of proof for this practice in inscriptions. Other examples of tombstones from Aswan that are only congruent with a Thot indiction are SB Kopt. 1 553 (Pauni 18, ind. 9, Diocletian year 442; AD 726 June 12) and 561 (Mesore 2, ind. 13, Diocletian year 446; AD 730 July 26). For SB Kopt. 2 1143, again a tombstone, the use of the Thot indiction can be ascertained on the basis of the double date referring to the Islamic era: Mesore 1, ind. 4, AH 164. This tombstone comes from Memphis, another area where the Pachon indiction was normally used in administrative contexts.

¹³ P. KRU did not include dates in the editions. These were added by Till, *Datierung und Prosopographie*, 27–39.

P. KRU 109 = O. Lips. Copt. 2.1 p. 131–133 (TM 86010)	Pauni 3, ind. 9	AD 771 May 28	AD 770 May 28
SB Kopt. 1 608 (TM 101675)	Mesore 30, ind. 14, Diocletian year 567	AD 850 Aug 23	AD 851 Aug 23

The following dates result from other types of miscalculations.

Text	Date	Conversion in edition	Correction
SB Kopt. 1 563 (TM 101630)	Choiak 2, ind. 1, Diocletian year 499	AD 733 Feb 28	AD 732 Nov 28
SB Kopt. 1 564 (TM 101631)	Pachon 2, ind. 15, Diocletian year 499	AD 733 May 10	AD 732 or 733 April 27 ¹⁴
SB Kopt. 1 569 (TM 101636)	Hathyr 3, ind. 13, Diocletian year 461	AD 745 Oct 30	AD 744 Oct 30
SB Kopt. 1 608 (TM 101675)	Mesore 30, ind. 14, Diocletian year 567	AD 850 Aug 23	AD 851 Aug 23
SB Kopt. 3 1620 (TM 111014) ¹⁵	Mecheir 12, ind. 10, Diocletian year 458	AD 743 Feb 6	AD 742 Feb 6
SB Kopt. 3 1641 (TM 111035)	Phaophi 6, ind. 11, ¹⁶ Diocletian year 519	AD 803 Oct 3	AD 802 Oct 3
SB Kopt. 4 1953 (TM 901159) ¹⁷	Epeiph 12, Diocletian year 586	AD 869 Jul 6	AD 870 Jul 6
P. Christ. Musl. 17 (TM 976559)	Phamenoth 25, ind. 1	AD 762 Mar 21	AD 763 Mar 21 ¹⁸

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¹⁴ Ll. 7–9. Μ(ΗΝΟΣ) Β ΠΑΧΩΝ ΙΕ ΨΤΗ/ (for ΙΝΔΙΚΤΙΟΝΟΣ) ΔΠΟ ΔΙΟΚ(ΛΗΤΙΔΝΟΥ) ΥΜΘ. In SB Kopt. the number ΙΕ was interpreted as the day of the month, which normally follows the name of the month (hence May 10), but this leaves the Β unexplained and the indiction unidentified. As the Β can only refer to Μ(ΗΝΟΣ) and ΠΑΧΩΝ, the number ΙΕ must logically be the indiction number. The indiction number and year according to the Diocletian era do not match up. Assuming an indiction beginning in Thot for this tombstone from Aswan (see above), year 449 (AD 733) coincides with the first indiction, whereas the fifteenth indiction coincides with year 448 (AD 732). (Postulating a Pachon indiction would not solve this problem, as this creates a discrepancy of two years.) In cases of such a discrepancy, the indiction number is most likely the correct one, as it was used more frequently in daily life. This makes AD 732 the best option for this text. Cf. Bagnall and Worp, *Chronological Systems*, 30: the indiction had a “dominant role in reckoning of time”.

¹⁵ The date was first proposed by W. Brunsch, *Koptische und griechische Inschriften aus Alexandria*, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 84 (1994), 18 (A 11751) and accepted in SB Kopt. 3 1620.

¹⁶ Brunsch, *Koptische und griechische Inschriften*, 31 (A 25067) and SB Kopt. 3 1261 both read ΙΝΔΙΚΤΙΟΝΟΣ Ι, but the image published by Brunsch seems to show the outline of an Δ directly after it, smaller and less deeply carved than the rest of the text. The resulting new reading, ΙΝΔΙΚΤΙΟΝΟΣ ΙΔ, corresponds with the date according to the Diocletian era.

¹⁷ The date was first proposed by H. Munier, *Stèle funéraire du moine Mîna*, *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 16 (1916), 253–254 and accepted in SB Kopt. 4 1953.

¹⁸ This text was published in E. Garel and N. Vanthieghem, *Nouveaux textes sur les pagarches du Fayoum au VIIIe siècle*, in: L. Berkes (ed.), *Christians and Muslims in Early Islamic Egypt*, Durham, NC 2022, 87–125, esp. 111–112. The date for P. Christ. Musl. 18, from the following indiction year (AD 763 Oct 23, Phaophi 25, ind. 2), is correct, which suggests that the year was counted back from this text, without taking into account that the indiction year starts in the middle of Christian era year. Because of this mistake, the known term of office of Maymūn b. Ka'b as pagarch (discussed on p. 90) has to be shortened.