

The Archive of a Family of Moneylenders from Jême¹

On the 20th of December 1929, thirty Coptic ostraca were found in the cellar of a Coptic house by the University of Chicago Oriental Institute's Architectural Survey. This discovery was made during the course of the Oriental Institute's excavation of the remains of the Coptic town of Jême at Medinet Habu. Twenty of these ostraca were subsequently published, along with many others from the excavation, by Elizabeth Stefanski and Miriam Lichtheim. Taken as published, these twenty ostraca are important individual documents for the study of money-lending in Jême. Although connections between a few of these ostraca have been previously noted, neither the editors of the texts nor the reviewers of their publication realized that all of the published ostraca from this find make up an archive of documents referring to the business transactions of a single family over at least three generations. Together with the unpublished texts from the find, these ostraca form the business archive of a woman named Kolôje and her family.

The Coptic town of Jême was built on and around the remains of the mortuary temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu. The site was cleared by the Oriental Institute's Architectural Survey in the 1920's and 1930's, in conjunction with the Epigraphic Survey's recording and publication of the temple. In addition to earlier remains, the Architectural Survey excavated and planned over 100 Coptic houses, most of which were subsequently destroyed to get to the pharaonic remains underneath. During the course of this work, thousands of ostraca, mostly Coptic and Greek, and thousands of artifacts were found. Unfortunately, the excavator's notes on the precise findspots of the discoveries were destroyed in Germany during World War II before they could be

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