

## Middle Persian Papyri, Ostraca and Parchments

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Middle Persian papyri, ostraca and parchments are important economic documents from the sixth and seventh centuries CE. They have mainly been found from the Sasanian Persian occupation of Egypt (609-619 CE) mainly from Fayoum (Hansen 1938; 9), during the rule of Xusrō II (590-628 CE). They contain list of food supply, personal names, ranks, military organizations, and dates. They are also instructive in understanding the manner in which letters were written and the way in which the dignitaries were addressed. Thanks to Guity Azarpay a collection of Middle Persian documents comprising 260 silk and leather manuscripts have been gathered and placed at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. As to the nature of the documents, they appear to be mainly economic and 82 of them still have the clay bullae attached to them. Based on the carbon-14 dating they appear to be either from 600-888 CE or from 651 to 776 CE. These documents are to be published by Ph. Gignoux and R. Gyselen and digitized for the Bancroft Library website (Azarpay 2003; vol. 123).

The major corpus of the Middle Persian Papyri came to light with the work of O. Hansen (1938), who published the various collections kept in European museums and universities. This was followed by the work of P. J. de Menasce (de Menasce 1953; 185-196) who published the corpus (de Menasce 1957). Since the late 1960s D. Weber has been at the forefront of papyrological as well as ostraca studies (Weber 1969; 32-38), and with further studies in 1970s (Weber 1973; 83-88 : 1974; 227-233) and major works in 1980s and 1990s (Weber 1983; 215-228 : 1984 25-43 : 1991; 228-236). The surviving documents along with those published by D. Weber (Weber 1992), which included 199 ostraca, and 125 Papyri from the various holdings in museums and universities have given us a window into the day to day business of the Sasanians (Huyse 1995; 357-367). In the former Soviet Union several important works have also contributed to this end which are the result of excavations, mainly in Central Asia (Perikhanian 1961; 78-93 : Nikitin 1992a; 103-129 : 1992b; 95-101). Beside the papyri and ostraca a series of documents and parchments have also been studied by Ph. Gignoux (Gignoux 1991; 783-800 : 1996; 63-72), and a brief review of the material at hand presented (Gignoux 1999; 24-25).

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