

THE FIRST PAPYRUS RESTORATION PROJECT IN JAPAN: EDUCATING STUDENTS TO BECOME PAPYRUS CONSERVATORS

By KYOKO YAMAHANA

In 2010, the bulk of the late Professor Emeritus Hachishi Suzuki's private collection was donated to Tokai University by his wife, Mrs Sachiko Suzuki. The entire collection comprises 6000 academic books, 6000 archaeological artefacts, and 15,000 photographs/negatives, most of them related to ancient Egypt and the Near East. The collection is now kept in the 文明研究所 (Institute of Civilization Research, abbreviated as ICR, at Tokai University and known as AENET (Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern collection in Tokai University), formerly the Suzuki Collection).

Professor H. Suzuki dedicated his whole life to the archaeology of ancient Egypt. He was born in 1926 in Ibaragi prefecture, Japan, and studied archaeology at Tokyo University. Fortunately, World War II ended before he was required to serve with the military. Soon after he graduated from Tokyo University, he received a government grant to study at Cairo University and arrived in Egypt in 1958. After completing his studies at Cairo University and having become fluent in Arabic, he chose to stay in Cairo for several more years as a cultural attaché at the Japanese embassy.

The papyrus collection

During his stay in Egypt from 1958 to 1968, Professor Suzuki collected various artefacts of archaeological interest, including papyrus fragments. Most of his papyrus collection was kept in a cardboard box (fig. 1) in a desk drawer in his house, while three glass framed papyri (fig. 2) were found in a side cabinet in his university office. The cardboard box was discovered by a librarian who went to Profes Suzuki's house to move all his books to the Tokai University Library. The box lid was labelled "papyrus" in Japanese and contained two sets of glass panes with white-taped frames and a college notebook filled with papyrus fragments in between the facing pages. The box was subsequently handed over to ICR and placed in the AENET collection.



Fig. 1: A cardboard box that contained papyri, now registered as SK116.

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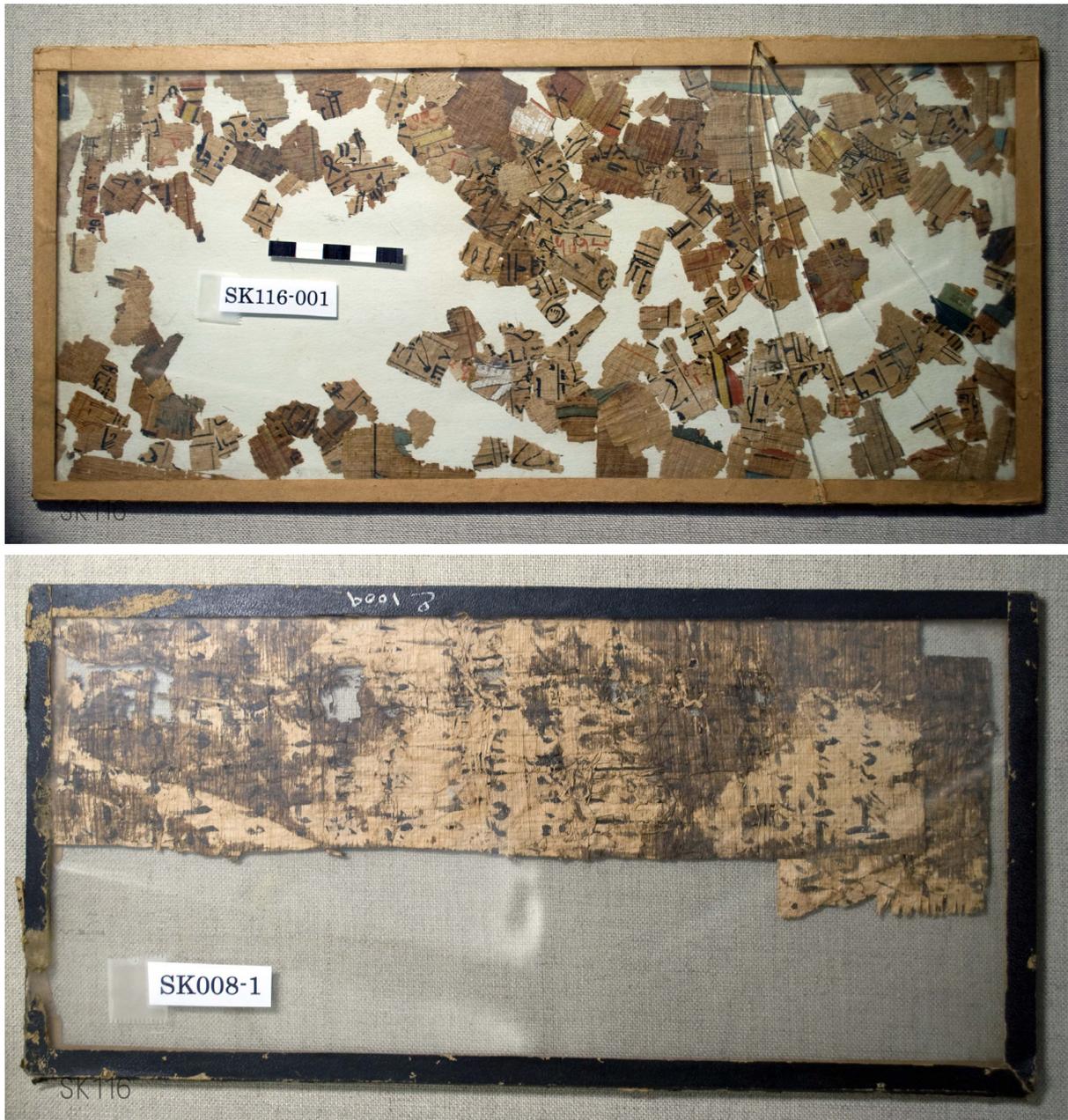


Fig. 2: Two sets of framed papyri, as they were found.

The Tokai University Papyrus Project

An initial general assessment of the papyri was conducted by Professor Richard Jasnow of Johns Hopkins University and Professor Joseph Manning of Yale University in the autumn of 2012. Based on their examination, most of the Suzuki papyri were dated to the Late Period and the first half of the Ptolemaic Period. Both Professors Jasnow and Manning recognized the importance of the AENET papyri, indicating they deserved to be published, particularly because of the possibility of joins between the larger fragments. The texts could also contribute to a better understanding of ancient society in a broader context.

Thus, a proposal for the 'Restoration, Conservation and Decipherment of Papyri in the Tokai University Collection with an International collaboration' ('The Papyrus Project') was drawn up. A three-year (2013-2015) grant was generously provided by the Tokai University

Research Promotion Committee.¹ The project was the first of its kind in a Far Eastern country, and was unique in the way that it provided an opportunity for undergraduate students to learn papyrus restoration and conservation in Japan.

Ms Krutzsch's course

The first task of the project was to register, clean and conserve the fragments before placing them into the hands of philologists. There are, however, no professional papyrus conservators in Japan, nor is there a tradition of papyrus conservation in the country. Accordingly, Ms Myriam Krutzsch, papyrus conservator of the papyrology collection of the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection of Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), was invited to give lessons to undergraduate students who were interested in restoring papyrus. Although this project was planned outside of the university curriculum and offered no academic credits, as many as 25 students signed up. Twelve were selected at the beginning of the first project year before Ms Krutzsch came to Tokai University.

Ms Krutzsch arrived in Japan at the end of October 2013 and stayed until the end of November of the same year. Her first session was a lecture on material analysis of ancient papyrus. Mr Masahiko Takashima, a professional Japanese paper conservator at the Historiographical Institute, University of Tokyo, was also invited to speak about the structure of Japanese paper and give a demonstration of its restoration. The audience of the first lecture comprised students as well as museum curators and librarians from different institutions. This was the first time that a comparative study between ancient papyrus and Japanese paper was presented in Japan.



Fig. 3: Ms Krutzsch teaching the students about the structure of papyrus.

¹ We are grateful to Professor Yoshiaki Matsumae, the President of Tokai University Educational System, and to Professor Kiyoshi Yamada, the Chancellor of Tokai University for their whole-hearted support of this international project to promote the conservation of cultural heritage.

The second session included a series of lectures delivered by Ms Krutzsch and demonstrations using modern papyrus (fig. 3). Students were taught to count the number of fibres in a centimetre square, because the quality of papyrus could be confirmed by the number of fibre/cm², density, friability, and thickness. The lesson focused not only on papyrus restoration, but also on the importance of thorough observation to detect the characteristics of papyrus manufacture. Learning the skills of papyrus restoration was the next step in the programme. The procedure was complicated and required concentration; however, with great enthusiasm, the students spent long hours learning from Ms Krutzsch every day. Toward the end the course, both teacher and students had got to know each other very well, and they were able to communicate despite the language barrier. Ms Krutzsch trusted students to work on authentic papyri in the AENET collection and her encouraging words motivated the students to work even harder. One of the students later commented, “It was a scary experience to put my hand on the real papyrus thousands of years old, but I was also very proud of myself to be able to perform restoration”.²

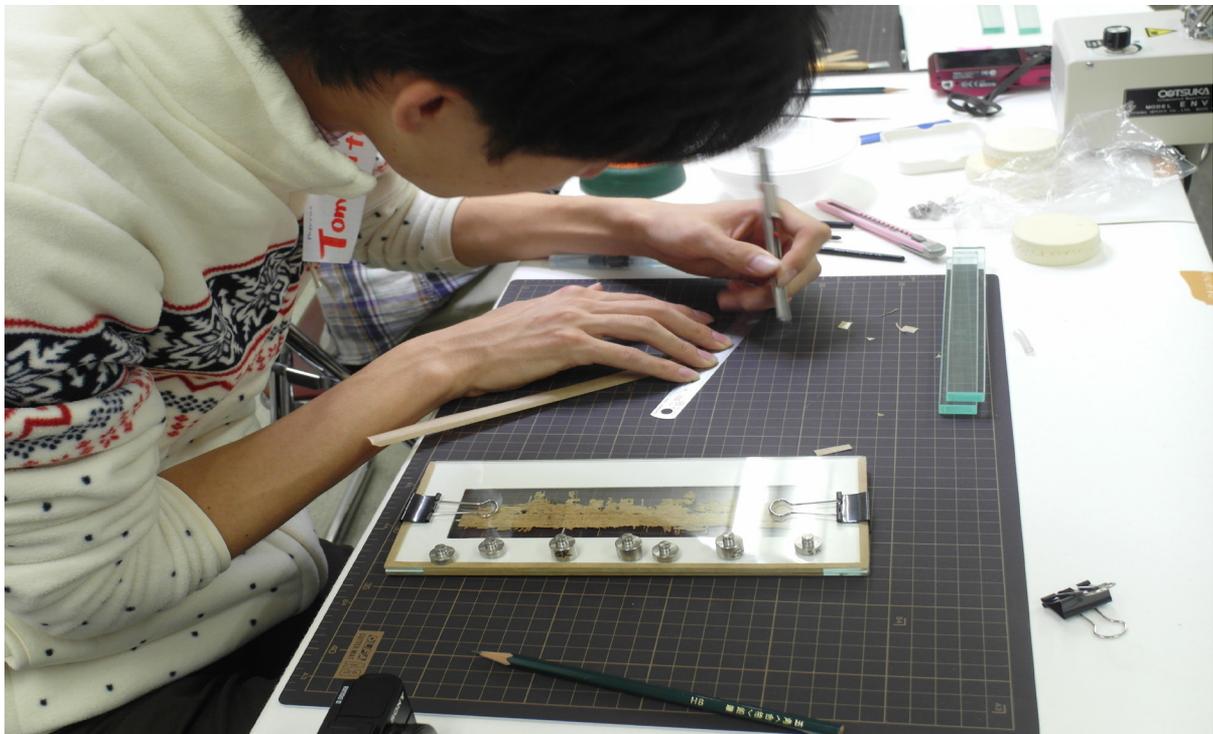


Fig. 4: A student encasing the papyrus he restored in a new glass frame.

The last stage of the course was the mounting the restored papyri in glass frames, providing valuable experience for students who prepared a set of glass casings by cutting a large sheet of window glass themselves. Students were used to ready-made items; however, it was essential to learn how to customize the material by hand. Students were also given the opportunity to discuss the best way to keep their papyri ventilated after being encased. An idea to develop a new device, an original frame able to cope with the high humidity of Japan, came out of this discussion. A sheet of blotting paper was inserted in between the glass casings and the centre cut out to accommodate the papyrus fragment (fig. 4).

The workshop given by Ms Krutzsch also gave us an excellent opportunity to re-evaluate Japanese traditional methods of conservation. During the hands-on lessons, it was discovered

² Ms Kayoko Kijima commented during an interview by a media crew, July 2014.

that many Japanese traditional tools could be used for papyrus restoration. For example, the use of Japanese 和紙 *washi* paper is now well-known in the world of conservation.³ It is frequently used in conservation projects worldwide due to its durability and acid-free properties. Besides *washi*, bamboo tools such as thin skewers or spatulas can be recommended for their smoothness and static-free aspects. Persimmon tannin, a traditional dye used for the restoration of many Japanese artefacts, can be useful as well. It has waterproof, insect repellent, and preservative properties that many Japanese paper conservators still use today. Since the ideas of restoration and conservation came from the western world during the period of modernization of Japan around 1900, there is a tendency to think that all methods and tools should be westernized. However, the group realised that some Japanese traditional tools and methods meet the high criteria of global standards of conservation.

Internships in Michigan and Berlin

Some students pursued their interests further and visited the University of Michigan to learn additional conservation techniques under Ms Leyla Lau-Lamb and the Papyrology Collection staff at the Hatcher Graduate Library (fig. 5). Ms Lau-Lamb volunteered to teach a week-long course, mainly focussed on restoration techniques. Advanced-level skills taught included the restoration of much-damaged papyri and the unfolding of a rolled papyrus in a humidity chamber. This was a challenging experience for students who had never travelled outside of Japan: they followed courses taught in English and immersed themselves a different culture and language. However, they finished the course with newly gained confidence.



Fig. 5: Ms Lau-Lamb giving instructions to a student.

The group also travelled during their summer vacation to Berlin to train once again under the supervision of Ms Myriam Krutzsch. This time, the students were not escorted by the author. With Ms Krutzsch's warm guidance, they were able to assist in her work on the

³ For a few examples of using *washi* for paper conservation, see Maggen 1997: 153-161; Menei 1995: 189-221; Masuda, K., "World-wide Spread of Conservation Using Japanese Paper," http://www.archives.go.jp/english/news/pdf/ica2016_04.pdf; "Paper conservation by using Japanese paper, *washi*," The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, <https://www.ifla.org/node/93078>.

long sheets of papyri. The students' interest in papyrus restoration and conservation grew further thanks to this experience. These internships allowed the students not only to become confident in their skills but also to learn about professionalism and the importance of self-management. The training abroad contributed significantly toward the students' personal development.

After returning from Berlin, they were keen to share their knowledge and skill with a younger generation. They imparted to other undergraduate students the importance of conserving cultural heritage as well as the knowledge of restoration techniques. By the end of 2015, most of the papyri in the AENET collection had been thoroughly restored by those student conservators as well as newly recruited students (fig. 6).

SK116-017-003r



Fig. 6: SK116-017-003 before and after the restoration conducted by student conservator, Mr Tomohito Ono.

Overall, the Papyrus Project was very successful. It was featured in many broadcasting programs and newspaper articles, and raised people's interest in the Tokai University-led project. As a result, this also increased the students' confidences and self-esteem (fig. 7).

Publication

After restoration, the papyri were handed over to the philologists. Professor Jasnow and Dr Katherine Davis⁴ of Johns Hopkins University as well as Yale University doctoral students, Andrew Hogan⁵ and François Gerardin,⁶ joined the project in November 2014 to join papyrus fragments and decipher them. The work continued into 2015 when Professors Manning and Jasnow, Dr Davis, and Ms Krutzsch gathered once again at Tokai University to continue joining, collating, and analysing the papyri. Professor Manning and his students worked mainly on the

⁴ Now an Assistant Professor in Egyptology at the University of Michigan

⁵ Now a Postdoctoral Scholar at UC Berkley.

⁶ Now a Postdoctoral Assistant at the University of Basel.

Greek documents, while Professor Jasnow and his student worked on the Demotic documents that comprise the bulk of our collection. Ms Krutzsch took the lead in the restoration and alignment of pieces as well as conducting the material analysis of the papyri. Student conservators Mr Tomohito Ono, Mr Kazuki Fujinuma, and Ms Chiaki Wadayama volunteered to help Ms Krutzsch whenever possible.

Finally, the publication *The Demotic and Hieratic Papyri in the Suzuki collection of Tokai University*,⁷ appeared in 2016 as a successful outcome of the Papyrus Project. In the same year, the web site for the Papyrus Project was also launched (<http://papyrus.pr.tokai.ac.jp/english.html>). The author would like to express sincere gratitude and praise for everyone's painstaking efforts to bring the AENET papyri to publication.



Fig. 7: Ms Krutzsch and her students.

Epilogue

The Papyrus Project officially ended in fiscal year 2015 (i.e., 31 March 2016). All students who participated in the project have graduated. Many of them took jobs in other fields, but two of them pursued graduate studies in materials conservation. They ultimately succeeded in finding positions as a Japanese paper conservator and as a bookbinder. Both have now fulfilled their dreams of working in the world of conservation.

Even after the completion of the project, our undergraduate students are still carrying on the tradition of offering small-scale workshops of papyrus restoration whenever possible. The workshops have been popular among high school students and are an ideal way of encouraging new students entering Tokai University to learn more about preserving cultural heritage.

⁷ Jasnow, Manning, Yamahana, and Krutzsch 2016.

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