

The production of natural papyrus



After cutting, the papyrus stems are separated from the umbel-like flower head and tied into a bundle of 25 stems. These bundles are placed in a basin with water to keep them fresh until they are needed for further processing. The lower part of the stem, which is the most suitable part for papyrus production, is cut with a knife.

After the outer, green bark has been peeled off, the exposed, white pith of the stem is placed in a second basin of water. This inner white pulp is cut into thin strips, which are laid on top of each other horizontally and vertically. The resulting leaf is wrapped in a layer of cotton fabric. About 40 of these are placed on top of each other.



The whole block is clamped in a press and then left in it for 12 hours under constant pressure. During this process, the individual strips are joined together by the remaining sugar to form the papyrus sheet. After the pressing process, the sheets are again placed between drying felts to remove the remaining water. The sheets are also put back into the press for about 12 hours.



The production of antique papyrus



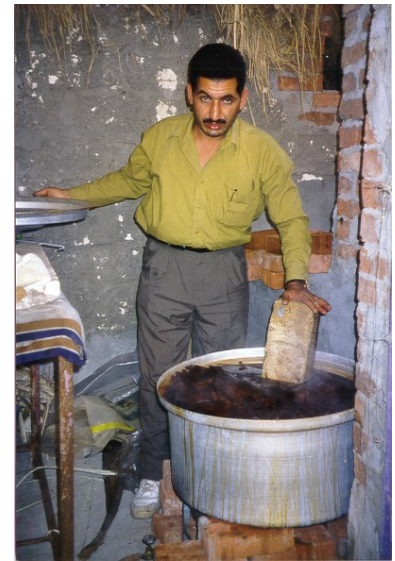
Antique papyrus is the name for very dark papyrus sheets. It is produced in today's Egypt under particularly elaborate conditions. The production of antique papyrus differs fundamentally from the production of light-coloured natural papyrus.

The papyrus stems are first cut into pieces. These pieces are not cut into longitudinal strips, as is the case with light-coloured natural papyrus, but are bundled and fermented in airtight bags. The high sugar content causes the papyrus pieces to begin a light fermentation process.

Before further processing, the individual bundles must be checked. Pieces that have become too dark or show signs of frass from pests are sorted out.

As in the production of light-coloured natural papyrus, each production process is done by hand. The bundles with the stem pieces are placed in large aluminium pots with boiling water.

The papyrus stems darken shortly after they have been immersed in the hot water. To achieve the necessary consistency for further processing, they are boiled for about 12 hours. If possible, all bundles must remain under water in order to extract the starch and sugar from the fibres.



There are no artificial chemical additives in the water. The dark colour is produced exclusively by the cooking process and the preceding fermentation. In terms of consistency, the papyrus pieces can now be compared to cooked asparagus.



In contrast to the production of natural papyrus, the cooked pieces are now beaten flat with wooden mallets or hammers. For this reason, more raw material is required for the production of antique papyrus. In order to avoid mutual sticking, the individual sheets are placed on air- and waterproof foils and then pressed.

This process gives them an astonishingly smooth surface for a natural product. In contrast to the production of light-coloured natural papyrus, protruding fibres at the edges are trimmed a little at the edges. However, it is still recognisable that this is a single sheet production and not a cut product.

The described production method creates a material that captivates with its originality and uniqueness.

