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# New Kingdom Hieratic Texts in Danish Collections

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## ABSTRACT

The paper presents an overview of the New Kingdom hieratic texts held in collections in Denmark as well as a short account of how they came to be there. It amounts to eight texts, five written on papyri and three ostraca. Among the texts are three medical papyri, one copy of the *Teaching for King Merikare*, a Ramesside letter, an administrative text, a magical or funerary spell, and a fragmented text of perhaps literary character.

## 1. HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION OF NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC TEXTS

In Denmark, two collections contain hieratic texts dating to the New Kingdom: the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection and the National Museum of Denmark. The number of such texts in both collections is relatively modest; the former contains five texts inscribed on four papyri, and the latter contains three ostraca (see further below). Of the two collections, the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection constitutes the largest assemblage of texts by far, comprising papyri written in the hieratic and demotic scripts, as well as several hieroglyphic, Coptic and Greek documents. Significantly, the collection includes the bulk of the material recovered from the Tebtunis temple library, dating from the 1st century BCE to the 3rd century CE, an overview of which is provided by K. Ryholt (2005; 2019: 392–400).

The presence of ancient Egyptian texts in Denmark—and the formation of two papyrus

collections in Copenhagen, the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection and the Papyrus Hauniensis Collection—is largely thanks to the Danish Egyptologist Prof. H(ans) O(stenfeld) Lange (for a detailed account of Lange’s professional life, see Hagen & Ryholt 2016: 164–182). Lange’s passion for Egypt led to two lengthy stays in the country (1899–1900 and 1929–1930). Due to limited funds, his first visit resulted only in a few acquisitions. Following his return from Egypt, Lange was appointed Head Librarian of the Royal Danish Library in 1901, a capacity in which he served until 1924. During this time, Lange was not able to travel to Egypt himself though he continued to seek out papyri through intermediaries such as Ludwig Borchardt and Valdemar Schmidt. In 1920, with funds from the Carlsberg Foundation, he succeeded in acquiring a number of Greek papyri in addition to a few papyri written in Coptic, Arabic, Demotic, hieratic and Latin; in 1922, the foundation donated the papyri to the University of Copenhagen, thus forming the Papyrus Hauniensis Collection.<sup>1</sup>

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1 The Papyrus Hauniensis Collection was further expanded by additional acquisitions in the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

In 1924, a graduate program in Egyptology was established at the University of Copenhagen, and Lange retired from the Royal Library in order to take up a position as a lecturer at the newly established Egyptological Institute. Only in 1929 did he have the opportunity to travel to Egypt once again, this time with much better funding. It was during this visit that he acquired two of the three New Kingdom hieratic ostraca that he later bequeathed to the National Museum. He purchased these on the Theban west bank on two separate occasions. The third ostrakon cannot readily be identified with any of the objects mentioned by Lange in his diaries or correspondence (Hagen 2015: 87–94).

During his second visit to Egypt, Lange also purchased a hieratic papyrus for the sizeable sum of £200. The papyrus, which eventually became part of the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection, has since disappeared, but the price indicates that it was of substantial size. It was most likely inventoried as P. Carlsberg 10 or 11 and may have contained texts of a magico-religious character. The dealer who sold the papyrus, G. Loukianoff, suspected that it was part of the New Kingdom papyrus P. Leiden I 348 (Borghouts 1971). The missing papyrus was the subject of E. Iversen's original doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Copenhagen, though he regrettably withdrew this thesis in 1952 and replaced it with one concerning Egyptian art. Because the original thesis was never archived, the contents of the missing papyrus remain unknown (Hagen & Ryholt 2016: 173). The papyrus was perhaps still in the possession of Iversen when he died in 2001 and therefore may have ended up as part of his estate.

The bulk of Lange's acquisitions were accomplished in the period 1931–1938 after his return from Egypt, when batches of papyri from the Tebtunis temple library were continuously appearing on the antiquities market. The purchases were made possible by the Carlsberg Foundation, which repeatedly provided the funds necessary to acquire the material that came to Lange's attention.

The foundation officially donated the collection to the University of Copenhagen in 1938, when it became the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection.

In the same period, Lange acquired a New Kingdom hieratic text, now inventoried as P. Carlsberg 6, again with funds supplied by the Carlsberg Foundation. The papyrus contains a well-preserved section of the *Teaching for King Merikare*, which Ludwig Borchardt offered for sale to Lange in 1937. Borchardt had acquired the papyrus some years before but decided to sell it after his hopes of finding a German scholar of Jewish or Semitic descent to publish the manuscript were dashed, as had been his intention following the *Berufsverbot* and the increasing anti-Semitism in Germany at this time (Hagen & Ryholt 2016: 181–182).

The Papyrus Carlsberg Collection has gradually been enlarged since the primary acquisitions in the 1930s, most notably by A. Volten in 1954 with funds provided by the Carlsberg Foundation. Acquisitions for the collection also continue today. The most recent major acquisition took place in 2012 with funds from the Augustinus Foundation and the Carlsberg Foundation, consisting of 53 documents—the so-called Adler papyri—constituting the family archive of the mercenary Horos, who was stationed at Pathyris in the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE. The most recent addition of New Kingdom material to the Carlsberg Collection is P. Carlsberg 917, which consists of two sections of a hieratic medical papyrus; it was acquired in 2015 with funding from the Augustinus Foundation and the Carlsberg Foundation.

## 2. THE NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC MATERIAL

### 2.1. Number of texts

The Papyrus Carlsberg Collection contains five New Kingdom hieratic texts, all of which are recorded on papyrus: P. Carlsberg 6, P. Carlsberg 8 r°, P. Carlsberg 8 v°, P. Carlsberg 326, and P. Carlsberg 917. The collection of New Kingdom

hieratic texts in the National Museum constitutes three ostraca: O. NM 11677, O. NM 11678, and O. NM 11679.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2. Provenance

As noted above, all the New Kingdom hieratic papyri in the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection were purchased on the antiquities market, and their provenience is not known. In the case of P. Carlsberg 326, however, the findspot can perhaps be identified. Christiansen & Olsen (2015: 330) have argued that the document belongs within Černý's corpus of late Ramesside letters from Deir el-Medina and that it might have been obtained by Qurnah locals in 1933—either through illegal excavations

or theft—after which it ended up on the antiquities market in Cairo. If this argument is correct, the papyrus was perhaps mixed with the Tebtunis material in Cairo and ended up in Copenhagen as part of one of the Tebtunis lots acquired by Lange.

As to P. Carlsberg 6, it was purchased by Borchardt in the early 1930s, regrettably with no information as to its provenience. In this respect, Borchardt (1933: 45) noted: *‘Für die bei solchen Stücken naheliegende Vermutung, daß er irgendwo auf der Westseite von Theben gefunden worden sei, habe ich bisher keinen Anhalt.’* The provenience of P. Carlsberg 8 is likewise unknown, and nothing in the text itself provides any clues to its geographical origins. Even the acquisition history

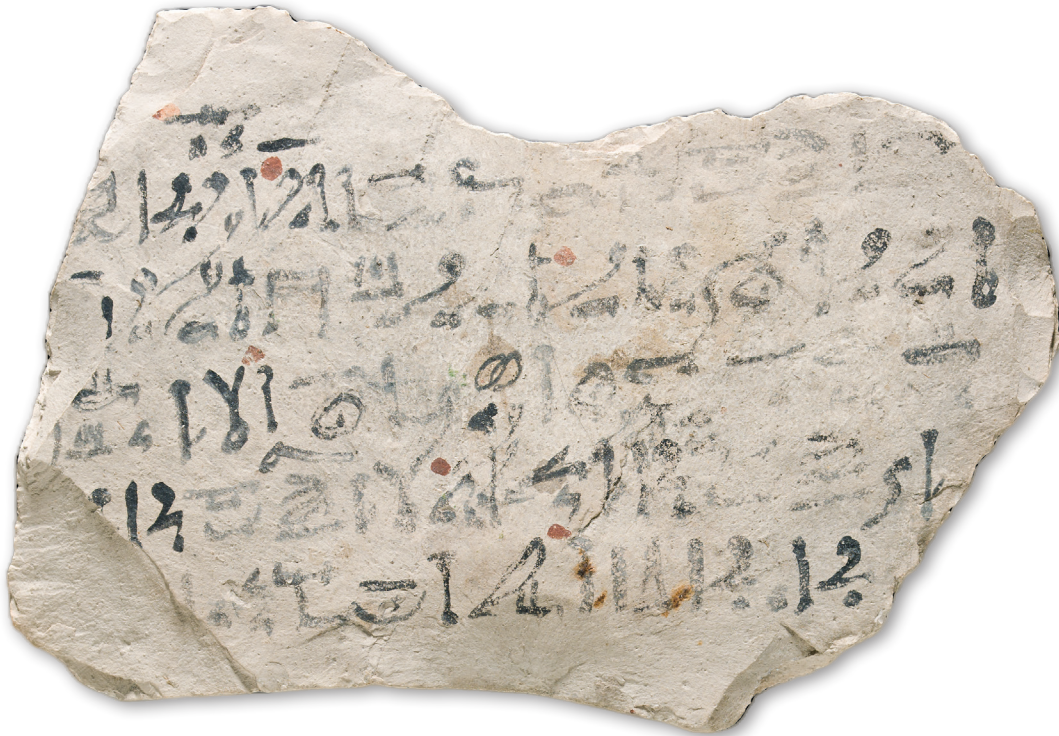


Fig. 1. The magical or funerary O. NM 11677  
(© The National Museum of Denmark)

<sup>2</sup> To these should be added the fake papyrus roll P. Copenhagen NM AAÆ 6, which consists of a stick with affixed fragments inscribed with cursive hieroglyphs, one of which contains the owner's (fragmented) name in hieratic (*p<sup>3</sup>* [...]) (Christiansen & Ryholt 2016: 21, pl. 93). It was dated to the Ramesside Period by Christiansen & Ryholt 'based on the cursive hieroglyphs and the colored border-lines with four lines and three bars' (2016: 21).



of this papyrus is unclear as none of Lange's notes or letters can be recognized as referring to the manuscript.

The more recent acquisition P. Carlsberg 917 is also of unknown provenience. It was previously in the possession of a French private collector, a Philippe Brossellet, who purchased the manuscript from Joseph Khawam et Cie. in Cairo in 1974 and brought it to France. Upon Brossellet's death, the papyrus was sold on behalf of the estate by the Khawam company to the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection in 2015. Some years after the acquisition of P. Carlsberg 917, T. Bardin (2018) published a preliminary translation of P. Louvre E 32847, a medical papyrus that has been in the Louvre Museum's collection since 2006. His publication confirmed what had previously been suspected, namely that P. Carlsberg 917 forms part of P. Louvre E 32847. Together, they comprise a papyrus measuring just over six meters in length, thus constituting the second longest medical text preserved from ancient Egypt (surpassed only by the 18-meter-long P. Ebers). Like P. Carlsberg 917, P. Louvre E 32847 was privately owned before

being incorporated into the Louvre collection; it was first purchased by a French private collector in Cairo in 1953 and brought to France. The state of preservation of P. Louvre-Carlsberg suggests that it might have come from a tomb, but it is impossible to determine its provenience with any certainty.

With respect to the three National Museum ostraca, at least two were purchased by Lange during his second stay in Egypt. Both purchases took place on the Theban west bank: O. NM 11678 was bought from a dealer in Dra Abu el-Naga and O. NM 11679 from a seller in Qurnah. The third ostrakon may derive from Lange's first visit to Egypt, though it may equally have been purchased after his second visit when he had several dealers seeking out ostraca on his behalf (Hagen 2015: 90–94). All three of the ostraca most likely originate in Deir el-Medina. This is suggested by the place of acquisition of two of them as well as the typical provenience of Ramesside ostraca, though it is possible that the 18th Dynasty O. NM 11679 may have come from the area around Deir el-Bahri (Hagen 2015: 87, 101).



Fig. 2. P. Carlsberg 6, the *Teachings for King Merikare* (© Papyrus Carlsberg Collection)



### 2.3. Distribution according to genre

In addition to the *Teaching for King Merikare* (P. Carlsberg 6), the assemblage of New Kingdom hieratic texts in Danish collections appears to include another highly fragmentary literary text (O. NM 11678). Among the non-literary sources are three medical treatises (P. Carlsberg 8 r<sup>o</sup>, P. Carlsberg 8 v<sup>o</sup>, P. Carlsberg 917), a Ramesside letter (P. Carlsberg 326), a magical or funerary spell (O. NM 11677) and an administrative text (O. NM 11679).

The *Teaching* represents a piece of instructional literature set in a royal context (Quack 1992). In addition to P. Carlsberg 6, the text is recorded on two other papyri, P. St. Petersburg 1116A v<sup>o</sup> and P. Moscow 4658, as well as a fragmented ostrakon, O. DM 1476. The Carlsberg copy covers parts of the final six columns of the *Teaching* and measures c. 19 cm in height and 85 cm in length. The manuscript is a palimpsest and most likely dates to the late 18th to early 19th Dynasty.

The highly fragmented O. NM 11678 measures c. 7.5 × 9 cm and contains traces of three lines

on the front and four lines on the back, all in black ink. Due to the illegibility of the text, the genre is difficult to identify, but Hagen (2015: 98) has suggested that it is literary.

As noted above, the non-literary material includes three medical treatises, all of which are recorded in neat bookhands, two dating to the 18th Dynasty (P. Carlsberg 8 r<sup>o</sup>, P. Carlsberg 917) and one dating to the 19th Dynasty (P. Carlsberg 8 v<sup>o</sup>). P. Carlsberg 8 r<sup>o</sup> contains an ophthalmological treatise, while the verso, which was recorded some generations after the recto, contains a gynaecological treatise. Common to both the recto and verso texts is a long transmission history, with several of the treatments and practices described in the texts continuing in use over thousands of years into premodern European folk medicine (Iversen 1939; Schiødt, in preparation). The papyrus is regrettably fragmented and measures only some 45 cm in length divided over several fragments. The height is not known but it presumably measured 30–34 cm judging from the dimensions of the extant corpus of scientific papyri from the 18th Dynasty.





Fig. 3. Overview of the placeable fragments of P. Carlsberg 8 r°, an 18th Dynasty medical treatise on diseases of the eye (© Papyrus Carlsberg Collection)

As to P. Louvre-Carlsberg (P. Louvre E 32847 + P. Carlsberg 917), it measures just over six meters in length. At least one, perhaps two, sections of text are currently missing; each of these sections are presumably 1 meter or more in length, as the papyrus was cut into pieces of this length in modern times, meaning that the original manuscript was at least seven meters long. The height of the papyrus is not known but it is estimated at around 34 cm. The manuscript covers a wide variety of topics within the medical sphere and beyond and includes treatises of unique content (see case study below).

As noted above, the late Ramesside letter P. Carlsberg 326 might have originated in Deir el-Medina. The document measures 19.6 cm in height and only 12.5 cm in width; both the right and left sides of the papyrus are broken off. Judging from the standard dimensions of letters from this period, the original papyrus was presumably some 21–22 cm wide. The document, which appears to

concern some kind of dispute, is a palimpsest consisting of 10 lines of text on the recto and traces of the address on the verso (Christiansen & Olsen 2015).

As to the Ramesside ostrakon O. NM 11677, it measures c. 12 × 18.5 cm and contains five lines of text on the front in black ink with red verse points. It is titled “Spell for opening the road before the feet of a man” and is either magical or funerary in character, though it is perhaps more likely to belong to the world of the living (Hagen 2015: 94–98).

O. NM 11679 is the only administrative text of the lot. It measures c. 9 × 5 cm and contains four lines of text on the front in black ink. The text almost directly parallels O. Berlin P 11253. Both texts presumably date to the 18th Dynasty and record either absence from work or a delay of work (Hagen 2015: 98–102).





Fig. 4. P. Carlsberg 326, a late Ramesside letter  
(© Papyrus Carlsberg Collection)

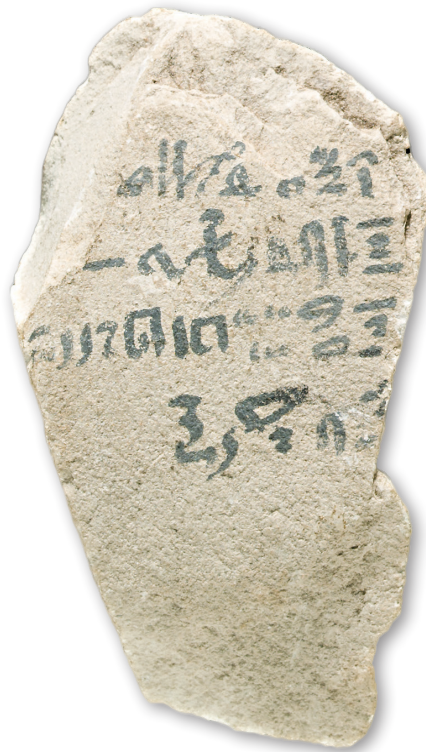


Fig. 5. O. NM 11679, a small administrative text  
(© The National Museum of Denmark)

#### 2.4. Published and unpublished material

All of the texts discussed above are published except for two of the three medical treatises—P. Carlsberg 8 r° and P. Carlsberg 917—which are currently being prepared for publication by the present author. A preliminary text edition of P. Carlsberg 917 (and parts of P. Louvre E 32847) is available in Schiødt (2020). A re-edition of P. Carlsberg 8 v° is also being prepared by the present author, as the original edition does not include all the fragments of the papyrus. All of these texts will be made available in *The Carlsberg Papyri* series. As for the already published texts, note the following editions:

1. **P. Carlsberg 6:** Borchardt (1933), Volten (1945), Helck (1977), Quack (1992).
2. **P. Carlsberg 8 v°:** Iversen (1939), Grapow (1958), von Deines et al. (1958).
3. **P. Carlsberg 326:** Christiansen & Olsen (2015).
4. **O. NM 11677, O. NM 11678, O. NM 11679:** Hagen (2015).

#### 3. CASE STUDY: P. LOUVRE-CARLSBERG

As noted above, the six-meter-long P. Louvre-Carlsberg (P. Louvre E 32847 + P. Carlsberg 917) makes up the second longest surviving medical text from ancient Egypt. P. Louvre E 32847 consists largely of the uppermost sections of the manuscript, while P. Carlsberg 917 consists of parts of the bottom. The manuscript is not only singular in its size but also in its content. Several of the treatises included in the manuscript are entirely unique; this is extraordinary in light of the rest of the medical corpus, which displays a remarkable degree of standardization.

P. Louvre-Carlsberg is divided into five sections. Two of these sections list *phr.t*-recipes with wide-ranging goals; one is a herbal treatise on the divine *snw-p.t*-plant and its seed, the *‘nh-imi*; another concerns various types of swellings of the body; and another is an embalming manual that provides instructions on the mummification process.



The sections listing various forms of *phr.t*-recipes (a succinct recipe type) conform to what might be expected of an Egyptian medical text; indeed, almost half of the recipes are paralleled once or more elsewhere. By contrast, the other three treatises contain hardly any duplicate recipes.

The treatise on the divine *snw-p.t*-plant and *nh-imi*-seed includes sections that conform to the standard format of herbal entries as attested in later herbal collections. As such, it can be defined as a *specialized herbal*, representing a separate branch of the herbal genre that is otherwise unattested and which—instead of listing the appearance, habitat, and properties of many different herbs—is confined to outlining this information on a single herb. In addition to supplying information about the medical properties of the plant and seed, the treatise also describes their uses in the funerary sphere and includes elaborate mythological narratives that serve to underline their divine origins and magical properties (Schiødt, in press).

As to the treatise on swellings and related skin lesions, it is the lengthiest treatise in the manuscript, covering just over 27 columns. A large part of it consists of *šš.w*-recipes (a much more elaborate recipe type than the *phr.t*-recipe), which provide relatively detailed descriptions of the physical manifestations of the skin lesions under discussion. The rest of the treatise consists of spells that

project the diseases into the divine sphere, from which underlying disease conceptions can be gleaned. The treatise centers on the moon god Khonsu, who was perceived as the sender of swellings and related skin diseases (Schiødt 2023).

Lastly, P. Louvre-Carlsberg also contains an embalming manual that provides instructions concerning various manual actions performed during mummification, serving to underline the close association between medical practice and embalming. The manual represents one of just three embalming treatises known from ancient Egypt and predates the other texts by around 1500 years. Although it covers only three columns, the manual provides entirely new information on the practice of embalming and facilitates reconstruction of the 70-day process. Several of the instructions refer to four-day intervals, which appear to form the basis of the mummification procedure, so that each manual action was undertaken according to this interval until the mummy was finished on day 68, after which resurrection rites were performed on day 69 and burial took place on day 70.

P. Louvre E 32847 is available in a preliminary translation by T. Bardinet (2018), while a preliminary edition of P. Carlsberg 917 alongside substantial parts of the Louvre papyrus can be found in Schiødt (2020).

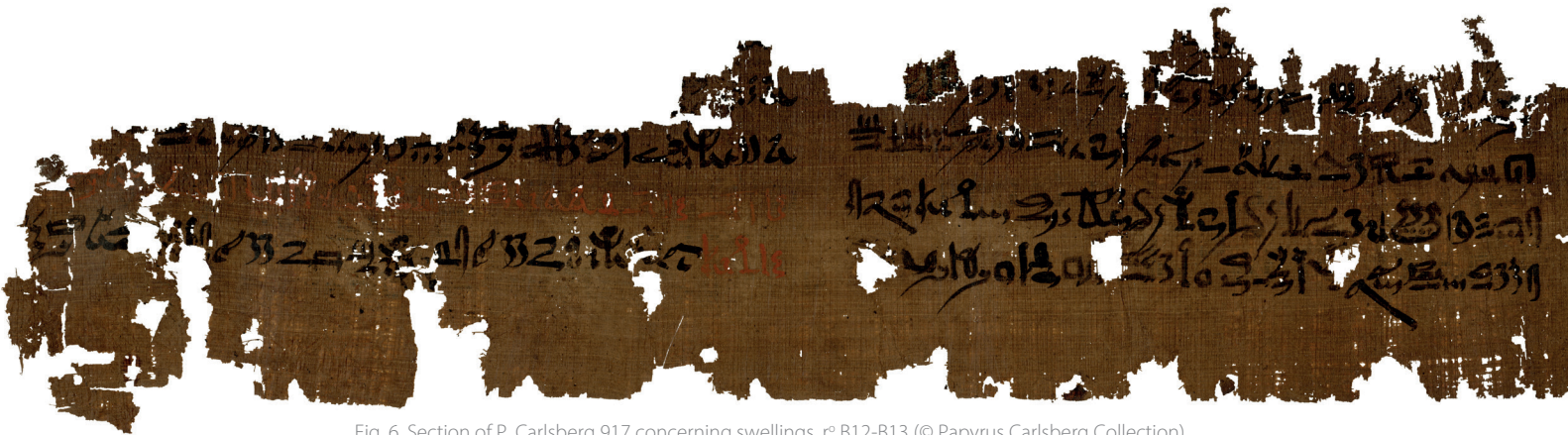


Fig. 6. Section of P. Carlsberg 917 concerning swellings, r<sup>o</sup> B12-B13 (© Papyrus Carlsberg Collection)

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