

Jan MOJE

The New Kingdom Hieratic Material in the Ägyptisches Museum & Papyrussammlung in Berlin. A Brief Overview

in

Crossing Boundaries (ed.), *New Kingdom Hieratic Collections From Around the World*, Vol. 1, Liège, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2024 (= *Ægyptiaca Leodiensia*, 13.1), **p. 99–106.**

DOI 10.25518/978-2-87562-416-1.06

The New Kingdom Hieratic Material in the Ägyptisches Museum & Papyrussammlung in Berlin

A Brief Overview

Jan MOJE

Ägyptisches Museum & Papyrussammlung SMB, SPK Berlin

ABSTRACT

In this article, I provide an overview of the New Kingdom Hieratic (NKH) material housed in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin. I begin with a summary of the material's acquisition history, which stretches from 1827 (when the first Hieratic papyrus dating to the New Kingdom entered the Berlin Museum as part of the purchase of Giuseppe Passalacqua's collection) to 1981 (when NKH material was last added to the collection). This is followed by an overview of the NKH materials themselves, in which I detail their quantities, their textual contents, and their provenance and find spots. I also provide a note on the numbering system used by the Berlin Museum.

1. HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION OF NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC TEXTS IN BERLIN

1.1. The Early Period: 1827–1872

The history of the NKH material in Berlin began in 1827 when the Prussian King acquired the Paris collection of Giuseppe Passalacqua (1797–1865).¹ The following year, Passalacqua became the first director of the Egyptian Museum Berlin. Among the more than 1500 objects in his collection were three Ramesside items. One papyrus consists of a set of school exercises from Thebes (P 3034). Two other papyri were found in a vessel in Saqqara and consist of a medical handbook (P 3038) and the protocol from a court hearing (P 3047). A further

object is a dummy canopic jar (ÄM 4727). Some months later, a further papyrus containing writing exercises (P 3043) was purchased from the former collection of the Austrian military officer and diplomat Franz von Koller (1767–1826).

Hieratica have consistently numbered amongst the subsequent additions to the Berlin collection, though at no point were Hieratica sought exclusively as a matter of policy, and further NKH material did not reach Berlin until 1852. In that year, Karl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884) donated objects from the Königlich Preußische Expedition nach Aegypten und Aethiopien led by him. The donation contained nine NKH papyri, including letters and religious and cultic texts,² as

1 A biography of G. Passalacqua and a catalogue of his collection is currently under preparation by J. Moje as editor.

2 Pap. Berlin P 3019–21, P 3050, P 3065–67, P 5509, P 7519.

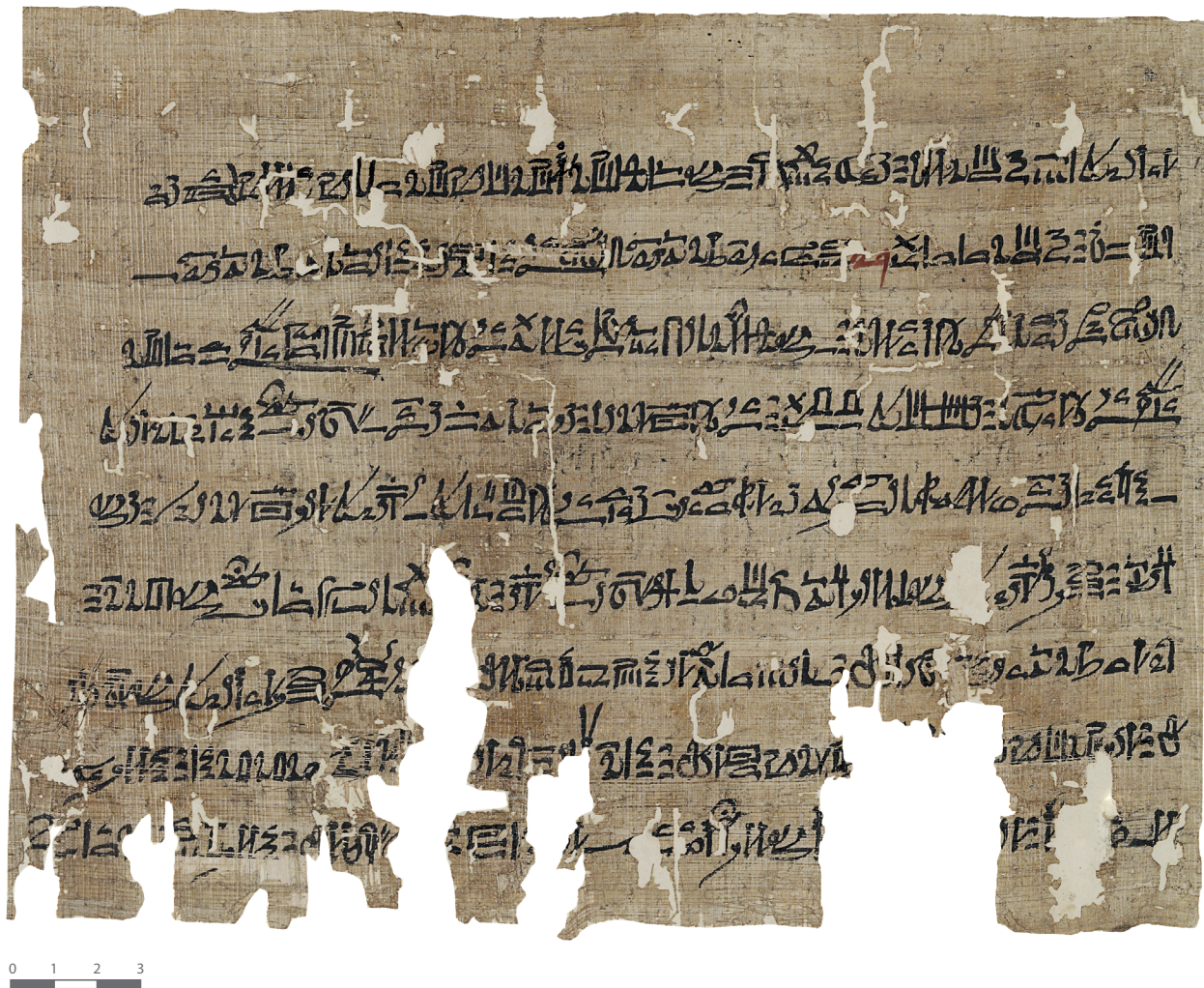


Fig. 1. Pap. Berlin P 3043 Pl. B with a Miscellany text—the so-called 'Papyrus Koller'
(© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, photo: S. Steiß)

well as one shabti (ÄM 963) and the canopic lid of a mayor with the name Heru-nefer (ÄM 7210). A small hieratic stela (ÄM 2091) was subsequently auctioned by Lepsius in Paris in the summer of 1857 from the collection of Giovanni d'Anastasi.

The Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1894) was the Berlin collection's next sponsor. In 1859, he donated an ostrakon (P 1002), a *Book of*

the Dead (P 3072), a leather roll (P 3029) containing a text on temple building, a set of accounts and a complaint protocol, as well as a shabti (ÄM 512) and two wooden labels (ÄM 2145–46). All of these objects came from his own collection and had presumably been purchased in Egypt. Some years later, in December 1872, he donated a further *Book of the Dead* (P 3134 for Ta-renenutet).

1.2. The fruitful period before WWI: 1872–1914

In the years until 1914, acquisitions and donations took place regularly. In this respect, the most important player in general was the diplomat and dragoman Carl August Reinhardt (1856–1903) of the Imperial General consulate in Cairo; he was responsible for the purchase and transfer of many items to the museum. With respect to NKH material, however, his purchases consisted only of 13 NK papyri and one shabti for the museum in 1887–1888, 1896 and 1899, all from different locations.³ Other individuals rank higher in the statistics, such as the Egyptologists Kurt Sethe (1869–1934; 40 ostraca in 1905),⁴ Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938; 98 items, mainly ostraca, but also 19 magical plates and 4 different vessels between 1897 and 1912),⁵ Georg Möller (1876–1921; 10 ostraca in 1903),⁶ Sir Alan H. Gardiner (1879–1963; 11 pieces between 1905 and 1910),⁷ and Walter Wreszinski (1880–1935; 18 ostraca in 1909–1910).⁸ All these items were purchased in Thebes. In 1881, six more NKH ostraca formed part of a larger donation by Lepsius. These pieces had been stored in Lepsius's house, though he was no longer certain of their provenance.⁹ James Simon (1851–1932), the well-known patron of

the Royal Museum and former owner of the Nefertiti bust, played a small role in the pre-1914 history of Berlin's NKH materials, donating seven ostraca around 1899–1900 amongst several larger donations.¹⁰

In this period, some further individuals either donated or sold single NK sources to the Museum: the Imperial vice-consul in Egypt, Gustav Travers (1839–1892; P 3207); the art historian Franz Bock (1823–1899; ÄM 10339, P 3208); and the Egyptologists Johannes Dümichen (1833–1894; P 1121), Friedrich W. von Bissing (1873–1956; ÄM 14000–05) and Ludwig Stern (1846–1911; P 1100). A shabti box (ÄM 11989) was donated in 1893 by the Cairo Egyptian Museum. The Berlin museum's director Adolf Erman (1854–1937) purchased officially many objects during his stay in Egypt during 1885–1886, including three NK ostraca, one jar with a label and one papyrus.¹¹ His successor Heinrich Schäfer (1868–1957) also purchased two ostraca and one papyrus in 1909.¹² Local Egyptian antiquities dealers are mentioned for eleven additional NKH pieces, though not the name of the European buyer; these pieces were purchased from Todrus Bulos (1856–1898) in 1886,¹³ Abd el-Megid Hussein Aga (1850–1915) in 1886,¹⁴ Mohareb Todrus (c. 1847–1937) in

3 ÄM 10288. P 2288–91, 3063, 8528, 8553, 8556, 9024–27, 23075, 23223. For the person see Köpstein (1994).

4 P 10638–76, 10850.

5 ÄM 15011–24, 15283, 15748–9, 17294–8, 19293, 21679. P 8694, 8722, 8735–39, 9784–5, 10005, 10488–9, 10613–22, 10626–45, 10848, 11235–76, 11285–6, 11288–95, 10610, 11298, 11300, 11305, 12901.

6 P 9895–903, 9907.

7 P 10494–5, 12337, 12340, 12342–3, 12366–8, 12370.

8 P 11302–4, 12283–97.

9 P 1120, 1122–24, 1268–69, 3042. See Inventarium VII–Fortsetzung 1865–1888 (Berlin, Zentralarchiv SMB, file I/ÄM 100, sub no. 1173–1208): *‘Die Herkunft dieser seit vielen Jahren in seinem Hause befindlich gewesen Sammlung von Ostraka war dem Herrn Donator nicht mehr erinnerlich.’*

10 P 9408–13, 9721.

11 ÄM 12422/001–/134. P 461, 12391, 14424, 14612.

12 P 10496, 12335–6.

13 P 1677, 3040. On Egyptian antiquities dealers and markets, see Hagen & Ryholt (2016).

14 ÄM 9506.

1889–1890 and 1903¹⁵ and Mohammed Abdallah in 1908.¹⁶

Further NKH materials from excavations run by the Royal Museum of Berlin reached the museum during the official division of finds between Cairo and Berlin. However, despite the large number of texts in Berlin, Hieratica dating to the New Kingdom that derive from excavations are exceedingly rare. The following should be mentioned in this respect: W.M. Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) 1893 from Amarna (ÄM 12268), Borchardt 1899 from Illahun (P 9285), 1903–1904 and 1910 from Abusir (ÄM 1908–10, P 9921, P 10486), and 1912 from Thebes (P 10487); as well as Otto Rubensohn (1867–1964) and Friedrich Zucker (1881–1973) 1906–1908 from Elephantine (ÄM 18471, and several papyri).¹⁷

The museum's largest accession took place in 1913, when the results of Georg Möller's excavations in and around Deir el-Medina 1911–1913 were officially divided between Cairo and Berlin. At least 246 pieces from this archaeological dig are Hieratic ostraca; most contain administrative texts or private communications reflecting the daily life of the workmen. Five jar labels and part of a shabti box should also be noted.¹⁸

1.3. The period between the two wars: 1918–1939

Between the two World Wars, only seven NK pieces (5 ostraca and 2 papyri, all from Thebes) reached the collection—each as individual donations. In 1925 and 1929, director Schäfer bought two pieces from the Theban antiquities dealer Todrus,¹⁹ while Borchardt purchased three ostraca in Thebes from an undisclosed source.²⁰ In 1928 and 1935, the Coptologist Carl Schmidt (1868–1938) donated two further Hieratica (complementing an ostrakon he donated in 1895).²¹ Additionally, Simon donated 39 amphorae or parts of amphorae from Borchardt's Amarna excavations—these bear hieratic labels indicating contents or provenance;²² their accession did not take place before 1920.

1.4. The period after WWII: 1945–today

Between 1945 and the present, only two accessions of NKH material have taken place. In 1967, the private collection of the former papyrus restorer Rolf Ibscher (1906–1967, son of the famous papyrus restorer Hugo Ibscher) was acquired by the East Berlin Museum. Among the 59 pieces in the collection were 12 NK papyri.²³ Finally, the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR transferred one ostrakon and one papyrus to the

¹⁵ ÄM 10747, P 6025, 9906, 30490.

¹⁶ P 10484.

¹⁷ All of the Elephantine sources were analysed as part of the Berlin ERC project 'Elephantine' 2015–2022 led by V.M. Lepper: See already Lepper (2012) and the project website <https://elephantine.smb.museum/index.html>.

¹⁸ ÄM 21437, 21454, 21497, 21575, 23834, 23928, 23967–8, 34461. P 12408–12, 12623–57, 14124, 14164, 14168, 14201–53, 14258, 14260, 14264–370, 14607, 14610–1, 14613–17, 14624, 14626, 14631, 14632, 14634, 14636, 14639–40, 14648–9, 14659–60, 14666, 14669–70, 14680–7, 14690–2, 14696, 14841–4, 14855, 14865, 14882, 14909, 14914, 15292, 15320, 12379. The ostraca have been published by G. Burkard in Deir el-Medine Online, see <https://dem-online.gwi.uni-muenchen.de> (last accessed 30.08.2022). For the excavation itself, see the preliminary report Anthes (1943: 1–68, pl. 1–18).

¹⁹ P 10464, 14200.

²⁰ P 14254–6.

²¹ P 8380, 14257, 10463.

²² ÄM 22142, 22160–1, 22228, 22313, 22322, 24427–39, 24443–6, 25483–90, 25495–6, 25499, 29201, 29208, 29299, 29426, 29874, 29881, 36102, 37391–2.

²³ P 15338, 15733–35, 15738–39, 15742–46, 15749.

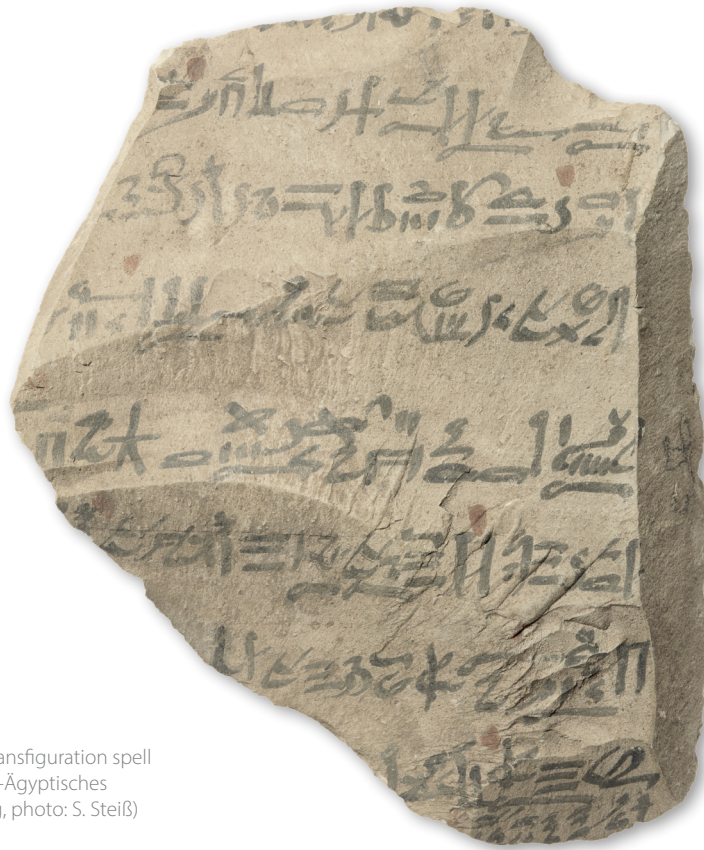


Fig. 2. O. Berlin P 15314 with a transfiguration spell
(© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Ägyptisches
Museum und Papyrussammlung, photo: S. Steiß)

museum in 1981; the former whereabouts of these items are unknown.²⁴

A curious story should be reported here from this last period in the Berlin collection's acquisition of NK materials. Due to the outbreak of war in 1939, all of the ostraca that had been on display in the permanent exhibition in the Neues Museum were placed in a wooden box for transport to salt mines outside of Berlin (while all of the museum's other ostraca remained in the ruined museum building until 1958). This box became part of the material brought by British and US forces to Celle

and Wiesbaden after the end of the war. Sometime during the beginning of the 1960s, it seems to have found its way back to West Berlin, though it failed to enter the West Berlin Egyptian collection. Only in 1976 was this box found in the magazine of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin-Dahlem.²⁵

Finally, a quantity of about 440 NKH items, mainly belonging to the old stock acquired at the beginning of the 20th century, are not provided with any accession information in the Berlin inventories.²⁶

²⁴ P. Berlin P 15339, O. Berlin P 14603.

²⁵ See Moje (2018–2019: 118–119). I am indebted to K.-H. Prieser† for further information.

²⁶ ÄM 37379–404, 37406–19. P 9513–6, 9982, 10099, 10170, 10460, 10471, 10485, 12362, 12364–5, 12371–7, 12380–9, 12392–407, 13384, 14001, 14116–23, 14126–71, 14245–8, 14252, 14259, 14261–3, 14371–6, 14379, 14382–3, 14385, 14388–9, 14394–7, 14432–3, 14449, 14485, 14492, 14608–9, 14618–30, 14633, 14635, 14637–8, 14641–7, 14650–8, 14661–8, 14671–9, 14686, 14688–9, 14693–9, 14831–40, 14843–936, 15287–300, 15312–22, 15760, 15770, 15783, 15786, 20026, 21009, 23007,

1.5. A note on the Berlin inventory numbers

From 1828 onwards, the museum's director Passalacqua created a new inventory of the entire Egyptian collection using a letter system such as A, GY, AX, EX or F followed by a number. He arranged the collection into four categories: cultic, funerary and daily objects, as well as miscellanea.²⁷ New inventories (still valid today) were established after Erman took office in 1884; and later Wilhelm Schubart (1873–1960), his colleague in the papyrus collection, also established new inventories. All pieces belonging to the Ägyptisches Museum (for the NKH material, e.g., complete jars with labels and Hieratic stelae) were given the label 'ÄM' or numbered ÄM 1 and upwards, while items in the papyrus collection (text carriers such as papyri, parchment, paper, leather, textual ostraca, etc.) were assigned the label 'P' and numbered from P 1 and upwards. In many publications, Berlin objects are unfortunately still referred to as 'Berlin 12345' and the like without any prefix. This can make it difficult to identify objects, as the same number may appear twice, once as ÄM 12345 and once as P 12345. Further to this point, although the museum's exhibits are on display in the building known as the Neues Museum, the objects should not be referred to as 'Neues Museum 12345' or similar. For items in the Papyrussammlung, for instance, Pap. Berlin P 12345, Ostr. Berlin P 12345 or Le. Berlin P 12345 are preferred for papyri, ostraca or leather. (*For the sake of uniformity across the volume, we deliberately just used O. and P. also in the present paper* [the volume editors].)

2. THE NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC MATERIAL

2.1. Number of texts

The collection of NKH material in the Berlin Ägyptisches Museum & Papyrussammlung consists of 956 inventory numbers that can—at the present time!—be securely dated to the New Kingdom. These items comprise 714 ostraca, 124 (fragments of) vessels with content or transport labels, 1 dish, 75 papyri, 2 mummy linen bandages, 1 leather roll, 19 magical bricks from tombs with spell BD 151, 4 shabtis and 2 fragments of shabti boxes, 3 canopic jars as well as fragments of such, 2 scribal palettes (reused for Hieratic notes and accounts), 5 stone weights, 2 small wooden plates and 1 pebble (each bearing names), and 1 stela.

The NKH material in the 'Ägyptisches Museum' section (ÄM numbers) is mainly recorded in the current inventory already. However, there are also several boxes in the 'Papyrussammlung' section (P numbers) that contain thousands of papyrus fragments from several find spots. These fragments, which are often tiny and frequently unstudied, cannot be ascribed to NKH at the moment, though ascriptions may prove possible in the future. Researchers on the ERC project 'Elephantine,' for example, were able to identify several NKH fragments among the contents of the boxes.²⁸

2.2. Find spots and general provenance

By far the largest amount of NKH material in Berlin comes from the wider Theban area, including Deir el-Bahari, Karnak, Luxor, Medinet Habu,

23063, 23220–2, 23227, 23240–3, 23256, 23258, 23300–1, 23303, 23400–18, 29001–5, 29015–21, 29028–32, 29036–49, 29052–63, 30487–8.

²⁷ Moje (2020: 555).

²⁸ On the ERC Project 'Elephantine,' see Lepper (2012); the researchers on the project responsible for Hieratic were V.M. Lepper, M. Grünhagen, and D. Härtel.

the Ramesseum, Sheikh Abd el-Gurna and the general 'Thebes-West' area: 257 NKH items were found during Möller's excavations around Deir el-Medina in 1911–1913, and 385 further pieces were purchased from local West and East Bank dealers by the Egyptologists Brugsch, Erman, Schmidt, Dümichen, Lepsius, Stern, Sethe, Wreszinski, Borchardt, Schäfer, and Gardiner, as well as the famous patron Simon and the papyrus conservator R. Ibscher. To these may be added many more pieces that are surely from this area but for which we possess no records of their previous owners. A further piece was unearthed already by Passalacqua, and a shabti box from the second Cachette in Deir el-Bahari came to Berlin as an official donation from the Cairo Museum.

All NKH papyri coming from Saqqara were early acquisitions by Passalacqua (P 3038, 3047), von Koller (P 3043) and Brugsch (P 3072). The activities of Petrie, von Bissing and Borchardt in Amarna resulted in a further 46 items entering the museum via donations and the Borchardt/Simon find partage. The Rubensohn and Zucker excavations in Elephantine in 1906–1908 also unearthed some NKH materials. Finally, some 14 pieces derive from other locations: six from Borchardt's Abusir excavations in 1903/4; six from the Fayum; one from Hermopolis magna; and three that were purchased by Borchardt in Qena.

Unfortunately, some 330 further NKH items in Berlin lack any details with respect to their original provenance. Of these, 69 were donations by Lepsius, Erman, Reinhardt, Bock, Möller, Brugsch, Schäfer, Simon, Borchardt, R. Ibscher and Gardiner, who either purchased pieces on the Cairo antiquities market for the museum or donated items from their own unprovenanced collections. As to the other items, which belong to the old pre-war stock too, no accession data exists for them in the Berlin archives.

2.3. Distribution according to genre

Most of the Berlin NKH material derives from an administrative context. The bulk of this material is from Deir el-Medina, including (fragments of) jars with labels indicating wine, fat, oil or ointment, as well as many ostraca that shed light on the administration of the workmen's village.²⁹ Deir el-Medina is also the source of five stone weights that refer to defined quantities of such items as chisels or fish (which the weights were used to measure). These items should be seen within the wider context of this village's trade and supply processes.

Some 44 jars with labels derive from the Amarna excavations, while others derive from Abusir, Qena, the Ramesseum and Elephantine; there are no provenance records for a further 37 jars. A further 33 pieces, mainly ostraca, contain scribal training exercises. Most of these are excerpts from the scribal training book *Kemyt*, while the others contain exercises in the writing of royal names, letters, numbers and dates, for example, as well as some model letters. Worth mentioning is O. Berlin P 14320 which consists of a draft inscription for (or from?) a tomb and which includes the cartouches of Ramesses IV. Also of note are two scribal palettes that were reused for Hieratic notes and accounts (ÄM 10339, 10747).

Amongst the 50 letters on ostraca and papyri in the collection, some relate to deliveries of papyri or copper (P 10628, P 11239) as well as other items; another relates to a sick donkey (P 12398). The most important letters are those of the general Piye to different individuals (P 10487–89) regarding secret betrayals by two policemen. In these letters, Piye demands that the disagreeable witnesses be killed.

Only 22 NKH items are funerary objects in the larger sense, consisting of papyri and mummy linen with *Book of the Dead* spells, shabtis, canopic

29 See G. Burkard in Deir el-Medine Online, <https://dem-online.gwi.uni-muenchen.de> (last accessed 30.08.2022).

jars, small ointment jars and a dedicatory stela. A further 42 texts refer to religious/cultic affairs, and include hymns to different deities, liturgies, eulogies, and lists of deities. Of note is an amulet that consists of two small papyrus strips that are folded and bound with a string (P 30490). Other texts contain medical and/or magical materials (32), possess juridical content like the protocols of court sessions and trials (10), or are literary excerpts of wisdom literature, *Sinuhe*, satirical letters or love songs (44). Of 19 magical bricks, the majority contain the BD spell 151; nearly all derive from the Theban antiquities trade. Finally, 411 ostraca are faded and illegible, have been lost since 1945, or remain unpublished.

2.4. Published and unpublished material

Due to the large number of inscribed hieratic objects in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin and the long history of the collection, the publication status of the items in the collection is extremely varied. Pieces of broader interest were published early and have sometimes been published more than once; many other pieces still await study. The first of the Berlin NKH materials to be published was the medical text Pap. Berlin P 3038 from Passalacqua's collection: Brugsch wrote an article about it in 1853 entitled 'Ueber die medicinischen Kenntnisse der alten Ägypter und über ein altmedizinisches Manuscript im Königl. Museum zu Berlin,' in which he provides an initial attempt at a translation of the text, as well as an analysis of ancient Egyptian Medicine.³⁰

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ANTHES, Rudolf. 1943. Die deutschen Grabungen auf der Westseite von Theben in den Jahren 1911 und 1913, *MDAIK* 12, 1–68.
- BRUGSCH, Heinrich. 1853. Ueber die medicinischen Kenntnisse der alten Ägypter und über ein altmedizinisches Manuscript im Königl. Museum zu Berlin, *Allgemeine Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft und Literatur* 1853, 44–56.
- HAGEN, Frederik & RYHOLT, Kim. 2016. *The Antiquities Trade in Egypt 1880–1930. The H.O. Lange Papers*, Copenhagen (= ScDan, Series H, Humanistica 4, vol. 8).
- KÖPSTEIN, Silvia. 1994. *Das Abklatscharchiv beim Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache. Teil 1*, Berlin (= Mitteilungen aus der Arbeit am Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache 3).
- LEPPER, Verena M. 2012. Die ägyptische und orientalische 'Rubensohn-Bibliothek' von Elephantine. 4000 Jahre Kulturgeschichte einer altägyptischen Insel, in Verena M. LEPPER (ed.), *Forschung in der Papyrussammlung. Eine Festgabe für das Neue Museum*, Berlin (= ÄOPH 1), 497–508.
- MOJE, Jan. 2018–2019. Eine weitere *r.rh=w*-Urkunde aus Theben-Ost in der Berliner Papyrussammlung (Ostr. Berlin P. 9462), *Enchoria* 36, 117–127, pl. 10.
- . 2020. Die Publikationen von Giuseppe (Josef) Passalacqua, dem ersten Direktor des Ägyptischen Museums Berlin, und ihre Stellung in der zeitgenössischen Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft, *Aegyptiaca* 5, 528–564.

³⁰ Brugsch (1853).