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ABSTRACT

The Egyptian Collection of the University of Leipzig houses about 110 hieratic, cursive-hieroglyphic, and hieroglyphic ostraca, mainly of the New Kingdom. Georg Steindorff was able to acquire them either through purchases in Egypt or the mediation of colleagues. Most of the pieces belong to the environment of Deir el-Medina, its administration and the tradition and creation of literature there in the sense of *belles-lettres* as well as magical-religious compositions. A few pieces were lost during World War II. A catalog of the collection is in the process of being completed.

1. HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION OF NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC TEXTS

The Leipzig University New Kingdom Hieratica were purchased by Georg Steindorff during his tenure at the university between 1893 and 1934. Before World War II, the Ägyptisches Museum der Universität Leipzig (ÄMUL) housed approximately 110 hieratic, hieroglyphic and figured ostraca, including illustrated ostraca accompanied by either hieroglyphic or hieratic inscriptions. Some of these ostraca were lost during World War II, and their exact number is still to be re-established.

The ‘Historische Vorlesungsverzeichnisse der Universität Leipzig’ lists the following seminars that Georg Steindorff devoted to hieratic between 1897 and 1914:

- summer 1897 *Aegyptologisches Seminar. Erklärung neuägyptischer Handschriften*
- winter 1900 *Neuägyptische Grammatik und Lektüre kursiver Handschriften*

- winter 1902 *Neuägyptische Texte und Einführung in das Hieratische*
- winter 1909 *Übungen im Lesen und Erklären hieratischer Texte*
- summer 1910 *Übungen im Lesen hieratischer Texte des neuen Reiches (2x gelistet)*
- summer 1911 *Einführung in das Neuägyptische und Erklärung hieratischer Texte*

It is not known whether Steindorff incorporated any of the hieratic ostraca located in his ‘Studiensammlung’ into his seminars between 1897 and 1911 or whether he worked simply with texts that had already been published.

A large number of the ÄMUL ostraca were acquired by Steindorff in the year 1929, following Bruyère’s excavations at Deir el-Medina in the neighborhood of TT 290 (Iry-nefer), close to the so-called ‘Trou Schiaparelli’. Seven ostraca from this area were included in the first fascicle of vol. I of J. Černý’s *Ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el Médineh* a few years later (Černý 1935; for the exact findspot, see Dorn 2011b: 39). All seven

of these ostraca date to the reign of Seti I, and they clearly derive from Bruyère's discoveries around TT 290.

Twenty-two years after the first fascicle in the IFAO-series was published, J. Černý and A.H. Gardiner selected a further 29 pieces for facsimile, transcription and brief description in their joint publication *Hieratic Ostraca: Volume I* (Černý & Gardiner 1957: 32). All but six of these pieces are presented in full facsimile, though without accompanying photographs. Prior to their catalog, both Černý and Gardiner had begun hieroglyphic transcriptions of this assemblage of Leipzig ostraca in their personal notebooks (detailed references can be found in the DeM database).

Most—if not all—of the ÄMUL specimens have entered academic discussion since, but many still await detailed study and publication. Robert J. Demarée has begun studying the administrative ostraca that can be attributed to the village of Deir el-Medina and the administration of the Valley of the Kings, and which thus pertain to what the ancients called *p³-hr*—‘the administration of the Royal Tomb (under construction)’ in the widest sense of this term. The other ostraca—literary, religious and illustrated—will be published by the present author and will accompany Demarée's contribution to a forthcoming volume of the *Katalog ägyptischer Sammlungen in Leipzig*.

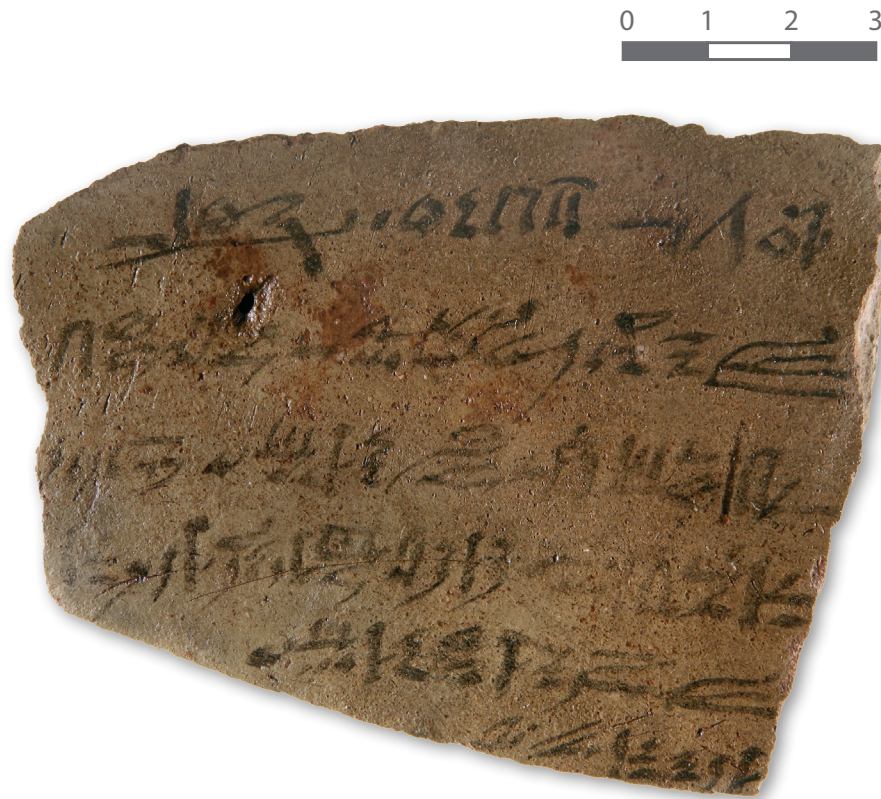


Fig. 1. ÄMUL 1892 (old no.: 2). Complaint about a bogus oiipe-measure—Ramesses III, year 17
(© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)¹

¹ Publ.: Černý & Gardiner (1957: 32 & pl. XXXIV.4/A); Kitchen (1983: 467–468); Studies: Pommerening (2005: 42 [T2.05]).



Fig. 2. ÄMUL 3966. Delivery of fire-wood—Reign of Seti I
(© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)²

² Publ.: Černý (1935: 3, no. 9 & pl. 3A, 3); Studies: Helck (1964: 848–851); Dorn (2011b: 39); Gabler (2018: 78–80).

2. THE NEW KINGDOM HIERATIC MATERIAL

2.1. Number of papyri (+ fragments), ostraca, and tablets

The number of hieratic ostraca in the Leipzig collection before World War II consisted of approximately 110 items. The Egyptian Museum does not possess any New Kingdom hieratic papyri.

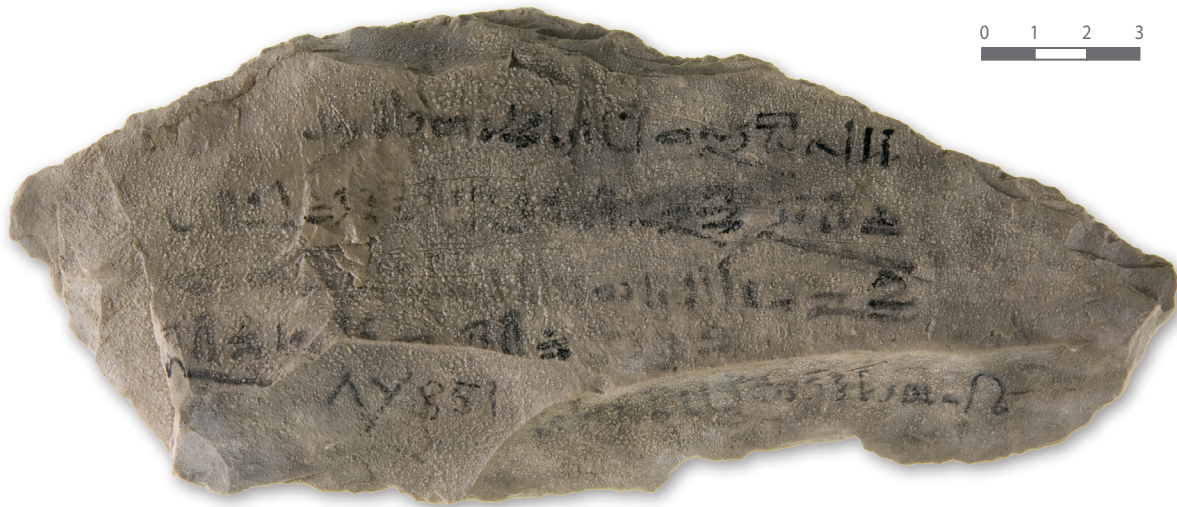


Fig. 3. ÄMUL 1619 (old no.: 8). Banishing the Hot-Mouth to the East
(© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)³

2.2. Provenance and provenience⁴

Of all the ostraca in the Leipzig collection, only one can be connected to a precise findspot on the Theban Westbank. This is ÄMUL 3788, a three line-text written by a scribe called Pay and discovered by G. Steindorff at Qaw el-Kebir during his archaeological activities there in 1913: *'gefunden am Ostabhang des Gräberberges'* (as indicated on the index card). Other provenienced items discovered in the area of the 'Trou Schiaparelli' are discussed above. The remaining ostraca may be provenanced to three main areas:

1. the precinct in front of the Mentuhotep-, Thutmose III- and Hatshepsut-temple complex, plus the area stretching east of the complex and including Khokha and the Asasif. The ostraca from this part of the Theban necropolis share a distinctive 18th Dynasty paleography, as well as similarities in their onomastics, vocabulary, grammar, etc.
2. The bulk of hieratic and hieroglyphic potsherds and limestone ostraca in the Leipzig collection reflect an intimate connection with

³ Publ.: Černý & Gardiner (1957: 32 & pl. VII.5/A); Studies: Fischer-Elfert (1986: 8–12).

⁴ I differentiate between the terms 'provenance' and 'provenience' as proposed by the archaeologist K. Lapatin (2003: 16), according to whom 'provenience' describes a 'precise origin' or 'archaeological findspot' that is well-documented, whereas 'provenance' is a 'term often used in the art world' that denotes 'the history of an object, that is to say, through whose hands it passed.'

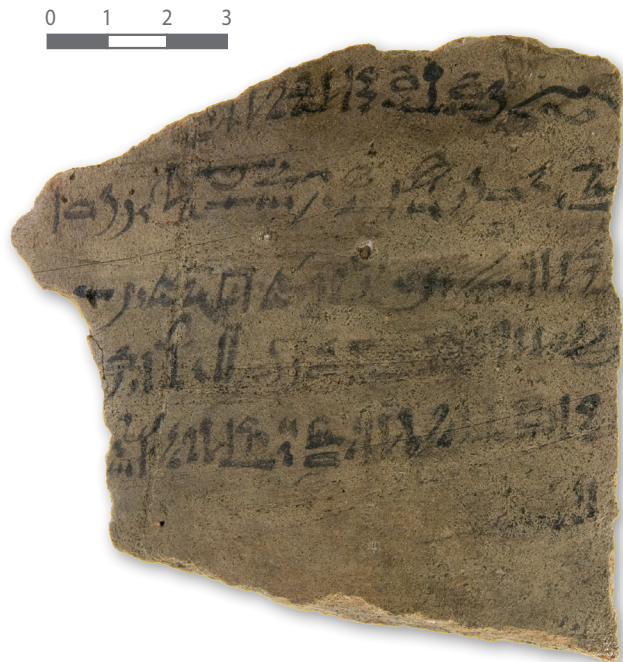


Fig. 4. ÄMUL 1896 (old no.: 6). Stanza from a love song
(© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)⁵

the community of Deir el-Medina between the 19th and 20th Dynasties. This connection is reflected in their onomastics, as well as the details of the communications inscribed on these ostraca and potsherds, including exchanges between members of the village as well as administrative communications concerned with jurisdictional issues, food supply, etc.

3. At least one of the illustrated and inscribed ostraca (ÄMUL 1654) can now be joined (virtually) to a fragment found by A. Dorn next to the workmen's huts in the Valley of the Kings and dating to the end of the 20th Dynasty (Dorn 2011b; 2014). This 'join', accomplished long after G. Steindorff's purchase of the Leipzig fragment from an antiquities dealer in Luxor, allows the archaeological

attribution of the Leipzig fragment to the area close to the royal tomb KV 18 (Ramesses X). It is thus now possible to attribute a precise provenience to this item.

In sum, only one of the pieces in the Leipzig collection appears to have been excavated by a Leipzig mission (ÄMUL 3788). The rest were acquired for teaching purposes on the antiquities market in Luxor, primarily by Georg Steindorff, the former director of the Institute and Museum from 1893–1934, between the *fin de siècle* and 1932. A number of index cards related to these ostraca include remarks to the effect that the items in question were either 'Von Georg Steindorff Anfang 1929 in Qurna erworben' or 'durch Vermittlung Dr. Karl Schmidts 1895 in Ägypten erworben.'

2.3. Distribution according to genre

Almost 50 % of the pieces are administrative in nature; they include letters, different kinds of accounts, scribal exercises, lists of commodities, lists of personal names, name stones, one *r-rd.t-rh.tw-* and one *sh³ n-*document, extracts from construction site reports, etc.

Some 25 % of the pieces consist of literary and religious texts, including magical, hymnic and liturgical texts. 'Classical' literature is represented by fragments of the *Teachings of Amenemhat*, *Khety*, *Kairsu* and the *Kemyt*, as well as a fragment of the *The Hymn to the Nile* (van der Plas 1986).

The final 25 % comprise illustrated religious ostraca, many of them accompanied by either a hieroglyphic or hieratic inscription and belonging to the field of so-called personal or practical piety.

2.4. Material published vs. unpublished

A mix of texts reflecting all the above-mentioned genres and consisting of 29 specimens in total were published by J. Černý and A.H. Gardiner in their volume *Hieratic Ostraca* 1.

⁵ Publ.: Černý & Gardiner (1957: 32 & pl. VII.4/A); Studies: Landgráfová & Navrátilová. (2009: 208 #78).

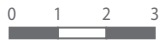


Fig. 5a. ÄMUL 1657 recto. Qenherchepeshef (iv) praying in front of Amun-Re in his form of a barbery sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*) (© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)⁶



Fig. 5b. ÄMUL 1657 verso. List of items with numbers (© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)⁷

⁶ Publ.: Brunner-Traut (1956: 79, no. 78, pl. XXIX); Studies: Brunner-Traut (1956: 79, no. 78); Drawing: Nicola & Tosi (2003: 74); Description: Rickal (2013: 140, fig. 13).

⁷ Publ.: Onasch (1997: 98, fig. 80).



Fig. 6. ÄMUL 1654. Nephthys sitting on a throne looking left with accompanying recitation (© Marion Wenzel/Leipzig University)⁸

3. ONGOING PUBLICATIONS AND PROJECTS (CASE STUDY)

ÄMUL 3957, a limestone fragment that preserves substantial parts of a hymn to Thoth on both sides—amounting after reconstruction to 32 verses—will be published in a Festschrift for Richard Jasnow in 2023. Parts of this hymn are already known from parallels in the IFAO/Cairo alongside an as yet unpublished variant in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. This hymn was previously classified as a royal hymn (Fischer-Elfert 1997: 58–64), but then correctly identified as a hymn to Thoth (Gasse

2005: 49–50). This piece may be employed as a case-study, as the commentary on the text clearly exceeds the size of a regular collection catalog.

The overall catalog of the Leipzig hieratic ostraca is still *in statu nascendi*, though some 90 items have been described, transcribed, transliterated, translated and assigned metadata as of spring 2022.

⁸ Publ.: Brunner-Traut (1956: 29, no. 15, pl. VII,15); Studies: Brunner-Traut (1956: 29); Dorn (2011a: 105–106, pl. 222–223, including the ‘join’ from the Valley of the Kings).

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