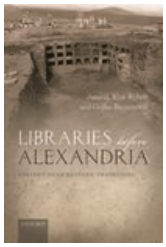

Libraries before Alexandria: Ancient Near Eastern Traditions

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CHAPTER

3 Libraries in Ancient Egypt, *c.*2600–1600 bce

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Abstract

This chapter surveys the textual and archaeological evidence for libraries in ancient Egypt *c.*2600–1600 BCE, discussing surviving administrative 'archives' as models for how literary texts could have been circulated and stored. The implications of the material form of surviving manuscripts for issues of manufacture and storage are discussed. Possible evidence for extensively centralized systems of circulation and storage is reviewed, together with specific case studies of private archives form the town of el-Lahun and examples of Middle Kingdom tomb-libraries—collections of manuscripts deposited in private individual's burial chambers as displays of culture and prestige.

Keywords: ancient Egypt, Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, hieroglyphs, hieratic, cursive scripts, papyrus, archive, literature, literacy

Subject: Classical Literature, Regional and National History, Classical History

> 'My heart longs to see the writings of primeval times.'
>
> The inscription of King Neferhotep I l. 2

3.1. Introduction: Questions of Evidence and Survival

For the earliest periods of Egyptian history there is remarkably little direct evidence for how texts were transmitted and stored.[1] Organic materials survive poorly in most circumstances in the Egyptian environment, and so any assessment is a matter of reading between the lines of what evidence we have. The principle writing surfaces were rolls of papyrus and rolls of leather; leather was probably more prestigious, but survives even more poorly.[2] Wooden boards were also used, but only as temporary surfaces for texts, as were flakes of stone and pottery sherds, now known as 'ostraca'. In some more extreme environments, such as the oasis of Dakhla, mud tablets were also used in the absence of other surfaces.[3] Texts could also be inscribed, incised, or painted on most surfaces that were used for decoration, including monumental stone architecture.

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p. 116 When manuscripts survive at all, most are highly fragmentary. Egyptologists have often neglected fragments in favour of more complete texts, distorting any overall analysis of the range and preservation of the written corpus as a whole. For extant papyri, there is often a lack of any adequately recorded archaeological context, and early scholars paid little attention to the precise find-spots of such texts. Find-spots can be secondary placements, and fragments of papyrus in particular are highly mobile artefacts—they can even have been wind-blown—so that even a precisely documented modern find-spot may not correspond to an intentional place of deposit in antiquity. Among so many contingencies, one fact is clear: almost all substantially intact manuscripts have been preserved in the dry desert areas of the country, namely in cemeteries or in planned desert settlements, such as el-Lahun. This was a town beyond the edge of the cultivated valley that was founded under King Senwosret II and was inhabited through the 13th Dynasty (overview: Quirke 2005). Inevitably, these preserved instances are not necessarily representative of the society as a whole and, in the case of cemeteries, are often secondary usages of manuscripts that were determined by specifically funerary cultural factors.

A general lack of direct evidence for institutional or private libraries is therefore unsurprising, and this lack cannot be taken to imply that no such buildings or collections existed. The extent of what has been lost is hard to quantify but must be vast; for example, from the Middle Kingdom royal Residence city of Itj-tawi (modern el-Lisht), which undoubtedly mobilized considerable amounts of bureaucratic documents, only four small fragmentary papyri are currently known from its cemetery and desert suburb areas.[4] In addition, as Stephen Quirke has noted, 'our sources derive from the outer circle of literacy; no manuscripts of palaces or top-ranking officials survive' (1996: 392). How collections of writings were conceptualized and organized is uncertain, and it is difficult (perhaps even inappropriate) to distinguish (either practically or conceptually) between 'libraries' and 'archives' (see e.g. Blumenthal 2011: 55–7; Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.3). Ancient texts prioritize the unified nature of writings as a whole, rather than emphasizing any dichotomy between administrative and literary works. For example, in the poetic *Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All*, the fictional sage Ipuwer laments how chaos is engulfing the land and its government:

> O, but the sacred hall, its writings are taken away;
> the Place of secrets and sanctuary are stripped bare.
> O, but magical spells are stripped bare,
> omens and divination spells are dangerous
> because they are recalled by people.
>
> p. 117 ↳ O, but the office<s> are opened and the<ir> inventories are taken away;
> people who were serfs have become lords of [serf]s.
> O, but [the scribes] are killed, and their writings taken away;
> how bad it is for me, because of the misery of their time!
> O, but the scribes of the land-register, their writings are got rid of;
> the foodstuff of Egypt is a free-for-all.
> O, but the laws of the Labour Enclosure
> are thrown outside …[5]

These verses present a non-specific vision of the land in chaos; implicit in this is that administrative records, legal texts, and spells are all parts of state culture, ensuring order and good government. They are all artefacts that are associated with the elite (as opposed to 'serfs'), they are all ideally held in official locations ('the sacred hall', 'offices'), and as such access to them is usually restricted. This poetic vision parallels the archaeologically known location of a late Old Kingdom archive at Saqqara, whose storage space inside the earlier pyramid enclosure of Djoser is described by Kim Ryholt as having being 'well protected and in absolute seclusion' (Ryholt forthcoming a). In the poem, the destruction of order is synonymous with the removal of writings from their proper, privileged locations.

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I concentrate my discussion here on the Middle Kingdom, since the data from this period is in many ways more extensive than from earlier periods, and on material aspects and practicalities, since more abstract treatments can run the risk of mapping our own assumptions about institutional practices onto very fragmentary evidence embodying different cultural priorities. As one example of this difference, many surviving monumental texts were inscribed in places of limited access, and for many sacred texts secrecy was an important aspect;[6] this feature suggests that the ethos of the ancient Egyptian storage and transmission of texts ran counter to the 'currently predominant definitions of library, which focus on its service function' (Zinn 2011: 181). I will attempt to prioritize the material evidence of the manuscripts themselves, considering issues such as size, format, script, and the new or re-used nature of the writing surfaces as indications of the original context(s). Such factors can provide evidence even when the texts are highly fragmentary, but have often been under-played in earlier studies. I survey the archival context and the possible means of storage and transmission, before considering the evidence for possible institutions. I conclude with some case studies of groups of papyri that can be considered to be possible 'libraries'. I do not attempt a comprehensive review of the data, but only a sketch of possibilities.

p. 118

3.1.1. Material Aspects of Script and Layout

Literacy levels are impossible to calculate accurately, but are generally agreed to have been very low in the early periods of Egyptian history, and even for these happy few, scripts were of varying accessibility.[7] A hierarchy of types and styles of script existed (Fig. 3.1). Drawn, painted, or carved signs—'god's words', later termed 'hieroglyphs'—were used in monumental, formal, and decorative contexts, while an everyday cursive script, later termed 'hieratic', was used for documents such as letters and administrative texts.[8] A third script was an intermediate form: an abbreviated, cursive drawn form of hieroglyphs that retained its pictorial character, here termed 'linear script';[9] all types of script could vary in terms of detail and elaborateness of execution.

Fig. 3.1.

The name 'Amenemhat' in the different types of script in use in the Middle Kingdom: (a) elaborately carved hieroglyphs from a royal monument (BM EA 1072); (b) hieroglyphs carved in sunk relief from a private stela (without cartouche, Louvre C2); (c) linear hieroglyphs from a ritual text (P. Ramesseum 6); (d) literary hieratic (P. Ramesseum D); (e) administrative hieratic (P. Brooklyn).

Drawing by R. B. Parkinson.

No Middle Kingdom terminology is attested for script forms apart from 'god's words', and it is unclear how exclusively this referred to the hieroglyphic script as opposed to other forms. It could apparently be used of texts in linear script: on one coffin a depiction of objects includes a writing board with linear script which is labeled 'a writing board of god's words' (BM EA 30842; Parkinson 2012b: 384).

The linear script may have been part of a triad of scripts from the early Old Kingdom, as John Baines has suggested (2007: 140–1), but the boundaries between early hieratic and linear script are hard to assess, and
p. 119 may have been fuzzy and flexible. The hierarchy of script types was probably always to some ↳ extent a continuum. By the Middle Kingdom, it seems that the linear script was often reserved for religious,

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liturgical, and funerary texts that were connected with the temple and cultic sphere; culturally related technical texts such as medical compositions were also written in both hieratic and linear script during this period.[10] The linear script was by its nature more formal, and as such it was perhaps considered inherently suitable for these specialized and prestigious texts, as opposed to accounts, letters, and administrative records.[11] Different styles of linear script could be used, of varying degree of elaborateness, but in general it was written in columns between ruled lines (like hieroglyphs but unlike hieratic). By the 12th Dynasty there were two styles of hieratic, one used for administrative and practical texts, and a less cursive one used for broadly 'literary' texts, including technical treatises, such as onomastica (encyclopaedic word-lists). The Middle Kingdom saw a general increase in the uses of writing. Written poetic 'literature' in a narrow sense was apparently a product of the 12th Dynasty, and it was (almost) invariably written in hieratic (cf. Hagen §7.4 for the few known exceptions). With hieratic, vertical lines seem to have been the older and more prestigious layout for continuous texts, but the later Middle Kingdom saw an increased usage of horizontal layouts, which are inherently more economical with space. Like linguistic registers, the range and distribution of script types shifted over time, and had many subtle variations (e.g. Baines 2012). The pattern of script usage shows that the existing range of textual genres was embodied in a range of material forms, and I assume that the storage of the different types of text could likewise have been embodied in a parallel range of organizational practices for transmission and storage.

In a similar manner, full-height rolls of papyri were apparently the most prestigious format, as opposed to half- or quarter-height rolls. The heights of sheets of papyrus were dependent on the manufacturing process, and varied over time, but in the Middle Kingdom a normal full-height roll seems to have been *c.*30 cm (Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 16). In the Old Kingdom, however, the standard full-height of a roll seems to have been 20–2 cm tall (Posener-Kriéger 1986: 25), although this might represent the half height of a sheet as manufactured (as suggested by e.g. Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 16). Usage was also determined by generic factors since some texts, such as tabulated accounts, suit a full-height format by their nature. In
p. 120 discussing the possible contexts of surviving manuscripts, I assume that a choice of re-used papyrus ↳ indicated a lesser status for the copy than did a new roll (although if a roll was well cleaned it can be hard to be sure that it is palimpsest),[12] and that these features will have implications for the manufacture and storage of such documents. In general, there was a strong preference in the Middle Kingdom for writing non-administrative texts on only the front of the roll where possible, and so I assume that writing on the back also indicates a secondary usage; this can imply a less primary status for a text on the back or simply a re-use of the papyrus. Such material features are inevitably highly contingent on practical circumstances, and each manuscript is in some sense a separate case. Any concept of libraries was fashioned within and by this framework of material practices.

3.1.2. Means of Storage

Wooden boxes were apparently the preferred means of storing groups of manuscripts, as with many other types of commodities.[13] And as with other commodities, other containers are attested, such as jars, sacks, and baskets (Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.14; Hagen §7.6; Ryholt §10.9; Ryholt forthcoming b). A fragment from the temple archives of King Neferirkare mentions something 'written…in a box of writing (*ḥn n-sš*)', and one spell from the 'Ramesseum papyri' accuses a sacrilegious being of 'taking away the box (*ḥn*) containing the Counsels from within the Embalming place of Osiris'.[14]

Few examples of such boxes have been found intact together with their contents, and it has been plausibly suggested that when such archives fell into disuse, the wooden boxes would often be taken by robbers, who would leave the less valuable papyri behind (e.g. Posener-Kriéger 1986: 30; Posener-Kriéger, Verner, and Vymalazová 2006: 23). A 4th Dynasty archive of five rolls with administrative accounts was discovered in 1936 deposited in a tomb at Gebelein. These were laid flat in a box measuring 26.5 × 55 × 8 cm, together with some reed-pens and cakes of ink (Posener-Kriéger 1975: 211–12, in general: Posener-Kriéger 1975; 2004).

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The lid would have been held in place with a set of strings, and this flat portfolio-like box is of a type that is often shown as a characteristic part of scribal equipment in scenes of scribes at work during the Old
p. 121 Kingdom.[15] It was perhaps quite a specialized form of ↳ container. The archives of the governor's palace at Balat survive sufficiently to show that at least some of them, although written on mud tablets, were stored in stuccoed boxes (Pantalacci 1998: 304; Soukiassian et al. 1990: 355). One Middle Kingdom funerary model of scribal equipment gives us a glimpse of a box full of rolls, which are laid horizontally and lengthways inside a standard rectangular box (BM EA 35878: Parkinson 1999a: 143; Fig. 3.2).

Fig. 3.2.

A funerary model of a scribe's chest with the lid open, showing rolls laid out lengthways and horizontally. On the open lid is laid the scribe's palette (pen-case). H. 3.1 cm, W. 4.7 cm, D 9.1 cm. British Museum EA 35878.

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The 'Ramesseum papyri' were discovered in a wooden box (now un-located) that measured 45.75 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm; it was 'covered with white plaster, and on the lid was roughly drawn in black ink the figure of a jackal' (Quibell 1898: 3; see below §3.6.2.3). This is a standard storage box of the period; some from el-Lahun are very similar in colour and dimensions, such as one example that was found buried beside the pyramid complex with offerings inside (Manchester Museum 6198: Petrie et al. 1923: 12, pls 13–14; similarly BM EA 53942b: Fig. 3.3).

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Fig. 3.3.

A Middle Kingdom storage box, similar to that in which the 'Ramesseum papyri' were discovered. The box is wood, covered with white gesso. Dimensions: H. 24 cm, W. 44 cm, D. 34 cm. From el-Lahun. British Museum EA 53942b.

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p. 122 Such boxes could be made secure with string and seals, and could be labelled on the outer surfaces.[16] There is little indication that boxes for the long-term storage of rolls were necessarily distinctive, although like any type of box they might have been elaborately decorated in certain prestigious contexts: part of a 'small' box, which was discovered near the find-spot of the archives of the temple of Khentkaues, was decorated with a scene of a standing king or god (Verner 1995: 24, fig. 21 [dimensions not recorded]; 2002: 146).

Such boxes are inherently mobile, and are represented accompanying scribes who are working away from their offices, as in the much later scenes of officials assessing farmers in the tomb-chapel of the 18th Dynasty accountant Nebamun (e.g. Parkinson 2008: 92–109). This method of storage is thus very different from keeping rolls on shelves, since any designated storage space for boxes of texts need not be architecturally or archaeologically distinctive from any other storage space. Ancient room-usage patterns were often more flexible than modern expectations of dedicated spaces (as dwellings reveal: e.g. Parkinson 2009: 9): they could be socially and seasonally defined rather than architecturally or functionally. However,

p. 123 some traces of specialized ↳ arrangements for archives do exist. In the late Old Kingdom, a structure was built in mud brick inside the earlier temple complex of Djoser, in an open corridor surrounding the building known as 'Temple T' or the 'Building with three fluted columns' (Posener-Kriéger 1986: 31; Ryholt forthcoming a). This narrow magazine-like structure consisted of a central walkway flanked by twenty-six mud brick niches (*c.*51 cm deep and 102 cm wide), capable of storing boxes. Fragments of administrative papyri were found in several of the niche-spaces, suggesting that the space had been designed for storing manuscripts systematically, with an estimated capacity for several thousand papyri. Likewise, the governor's palace at Balat had a porticoed court which was an administrative centre, where the archives (written on mud tablets) seem to have been stored in boxes which were placed on a low podium or dais (1.75 × 3.5 m) occupying part of the portico (Posener-Kriéger 1989: 292–6; Eyre 2013: 255–6). This space is notably similar in general architectural terms to the much later representation of the 'Place of writings' in the tomb-chapel of Tjay (Hagen §7.6, Fig. 7.11).

Given these options, 'libraries' were not necessarily distinctive spaces that were unlike other storerooms, offices, workspaces, or archives. All of these were probably rooms with boxes; only the functions exercised in them differed, and these were not necessarily exclusive activities. In addition, spaces for storing texts

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need not have been official spaces, since 'libraries' of non-administrative texts could also be owned by individuals: one fictional example is that of the commoner Djedi in *The Tale of King Kheops' Court*, who requests a boat to bring '<my> children and my writings' with him when summoned by King Kheops; from the context these are presumably his magical texts (P. Westcar 8.3–4: Blackman 1988: 10 l. 2–3). There was certainly a variety of storage possibilities.

3.2. Archival and Inscribed Contexts as Models for Libraries

I briefly review some cases of early archival practices in order to provide a context for the discussion of libraries and to model the possible scope of library practices. During the Old Kingdom, the potential density of administrative archives is suggested by the surviving papyri from the funerary cults in the pyramid complexes of the 5th Dynasty royals Neferirkare, Reneferef, and Khentkaues at Abusir.[17] Their exceptional
p. 124 survival is partly because these temples lacked valley temples; this factor would explain why these archives
↳ were kept in the pyramid temples built on the desert plateau. Other similar archives were perhaps usually kept in the valley temples on the edge of the cultivation, and so were exposed to damper conditions that have prevented them surviving (Posener-Kriéger 1986: 30–1; Verner 2002: 151). These records include highly detailed logs of day to day activities, deliveries, duty-lists, and inventories compiled on a monthly basis. Although one papyrus contains images and descriptions of statues, even this is probably an inventory of temple equipment (as status reports), rather than a permanent reference work.[18] The texts are mostly written in early hieratic, but many titles and headings are in more elaborate linear hieroglyphs, as befitting the headings of the formal records of a royal temple complex (Fig. 3.4).

Fig. 3.4.

A papyrus from the archive of Neferirkare at Abusir, with duty rosters laid out in tables on ruled guide-lines on a full-height roll. H. 21.0 cm. P. British Museum EA 10735.7 front.

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There is a variety of layouts, but the rolls are often quite tall (*c.*24 cm, apparently a full-height roll at this period). As one might expect from such royal institutions, they reveal 'extreme care and refinement' and are 'superbly made' (Posener Kriéger 1986: 27); nevertheless, many of the papyri are palimpsest (e.g. Verner 2002: 148). The records were presumably in use from the foundation of the temple cult through to the period immediately before the temples were abandoned, and seem in the case of King Neferirkare to span a period of about one and a half centuries (e.g. Posener-Kriéger 1976: I, ix). The fact that such working papers were kept over a considerable period allows the loose use of the term 'archive' (Quirke 1996: 379–80). The original storage places, however, are not fully known. It is probable that they were stored in boxes (see above §3.1.2), of which the temples are known to have had large numbers: one papyrus lists 142 boxes (Posener-Kriéger 1986: 30, 32 n. 29). The papyri from the cult of King Neferirkare were apparently found in the 1890s in store- and other rooms in the innermost part of the temple complex, mostly in magazines at the base of the pyramid. This early find is poorly documented, unlike the more recent excavations in the temple of King Reneferef from the 1980s. Here, papyrus fragments were uncovered in magazines in the

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north-west corner of the pyramid temple, together with some in rooms that lay off the pillared hall facing this area. These store-rooms still had objects in them, and although it is unclear whether the papyri were originally placed in one room or several rooms, they seem to have been functionally linked with a practical storage place (assuming that the find-spot corresponds to any intentional ancient placement).[19] Similarly the 4th Dynasty administrative papyri at the port of Wadi el-Jarf were apparently deposited in a textile bag
p. 125 in a rock-cut magazine (Tallet 2014). ↳

p. 126 The level of detail in the exceptionally surviving examples of admistrative papyri from the Old Kingdom royal temples is not unique. The impression that other administrative archives were extremely extensive is supported by other indications. Oleg Berlev noted that a 13th Dynasty inventory of the household of the lector priest Sneferu from el-Lahun included the number '947' after the lector's name, which might imply a reference numbering system in a (very sizeable) local archive.[20] Such archives could contain prestigious documents even when not located in royal temples: one of the few surviving leather rolls from the period is the 13th Dynasty Berlin P 10470 with an official record in hieratic of the transfer of a servant-woman, summarizing various earlier documents that had passed between officials in Elephantine and the Vizier's bureau in Thebes (Smither 1948; Porten 1996: 35–40). The nature of this text suggests that it comes from an official archive, and the expensive material presumably embodies its status as a (local) governmental record.

Another revealing example from a slightly different cultural context is the late 12th Dynasty collection of 'Semna Despatches'. These comprise parts of at least eight military letters from the Nubian fortresses, which report news rather than material goods. They concern events covering only a period of some twelve days in regnal year 3 of a king, probably King Amenemhat III, months 3–4 of the season of Peret, but indicate a continual process of highly detailed reporting and recording. They were written in administrative hieratic, and were despatched 'as fortress sending to fortress', and sometimes in multiple copies to several addressees (P. Ramesseum C 5.x+11–13). They survive only because a papyrus copy of them was re-used a generation or so later for a copy of magical texts that were later buried in a tomb at Thebes (among the 'Ramesseum papyri', see below §3.6.2.3). From this find-spot, it seems that this copy must have been kept at Thebes at some point, presumably as official records in what was the local administrative capital of the southern provinces.[21] At some point before the magical texts were written, this old roll had been patched with a small piece of papyrus from a set of accounts, again suggesting that the roll was circulating in the administrative sphere for some time.[22] Actual fragments of such administrative records survive *in situ* at the Middle Kingdom fortress of Buhen, where they were discovered in Block A, apparently 'the residence and headquarters of the commandant of the fortress' (Smith et al. 1979: 9). The fragments include a range of
p. 127 letters, administrative documents, despatches, and reports, and were accidentally preserved under a ↳ later floor of a small room under a stairway off the main central pillared hall, although this room need not represent their original storage space.[23]

It is hard to quantify how long any of these papers were kept in use or kept archived for reference purposes: the Theban copy of the 'Semna Despatches' was clearly not retained indefinitely, but was re-used within a few generations, while the longer lasting archives of the temple complexes and fortresses seem to have been discarded only when the buildings were abandoned or reconfigured, or when storage space ran out. In Balat, however, there is some archaeological evidence for a regular clearing out and disposal of archival documents written on (un-reusable) mud tablets (Pantalacci 2008: 142).

The late 12th Dynasty P. Brooklyn 35.1446 suggests more precisely for how long a single administrative roll might have been kept in use. This papyrus is a register of fugitives from labour duty in 'the Great enclosure' which was compiled in regnal year 36 of King Amenemhat III. It was drawn up on the front of a full-height papyrus with ruled guide-lines (Hayes 1955; Quirke 1990: 127–54). About sixty years later, a scribe inserted two royal letters on related topics to the Vizier Ankhu that had been 'brought to the Office of the Reporter of the Southern city (Thebes)'.[24] A generation later still, a list of servants was added on the back as an

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apparently private record from procedures in regnal years 1–2 of King Sobekhotep III. These procedures are also associated with the 'Office of the Reporter of the Southern city'. These records were thus kept in use for over half a century; they then shifted to a more 'private' sphere connected with personnel. The fact that this papyrus is unusually well preserved suggests that it must have been buried in a cemetery, presumably in the tomb of the last owner or the copyist of the latest document.

These two examples of re-used papyri suggest that archival stores were extremely extensive and highly centralized, but were not necessarily conceptualized as ultimately permanent repositories. Commemorative tomb and temple inscriptions, in contrast, embody texts in a monumental form that was intended to last for 'eternity'; the choice of non-organic media has of course proved a well-founded strategy for preservation, and what survives in stone has implications for what once existed on more perishable media. Some of these monumental texts are themselves quite explicitly copies of administrative documents, such as royal decrees, chancellery documents (e.g. Baud 2003: 286–97), or contracts to do with funerary provisions (such as the funerary cult contracts in honour of the nomarch Hapdjefai at Assiut: e.g. Griffith 1889: pls 6–8).
p. 128 Performative ritual texts were also transferred into ↳ commemorative inscriptions, sometimes retaining a linear script form more appropriate to a manuscript (e.g. Morenz 1996: 58–70). In the Old Kingdom, liturgical compositions, now known as the 'Pyramid Texts', were inscribed in hieroglyphs on the walls of the chambers inside royal pyramids by the late 5th Dynasty. These represent a substantial corpus of highly sophisticated compositions. Written and consultable sources must have been used during the process of adapting these texts to be carved,[25] and this process was almost certainly complex. There is some evidence to suggest that other encyclopaedic texts were also kept, consulted, and utilized in preparing monuments during this period, and that such processes were not limited to these royal funerary liturgies (Baines 2004: 21–6). Such resources need not only have been textual, and the elaborate decorative programs of state monuments probably imply that visual records also existed. Occasional monumental references to other types of text include one in a fragmentary tomb autobiography of the Vizier Washptah. He was suddenly taken ill at court in the presence of King Neferirkare; the king summoned officials including 'lector priests and physicians' and 'then his Majesty had a box of writings brought'. This passing reference to what were presumably a group of technical texts of magic and healing suggests an accessible store of such texts in the vicinity of the court.[26] Other genres of text display a similar, but less explicit, transferability between organic and non-organic media: the poetic *The Teaching of Kaires* was apparently adapted for the memorial stela at Abydos of the high-ranking official Sehotepibre, a member of the royal court of King Amenemhat III.[27] The existence of such inscribed copies of non-administrative texts implies the existence of collections of manuscripts of which no contemporaneous physical traces survive.

Attitudes towards the age of texts provide another indication about transmission. With many of these types of high cultural texts, antiquity was regarded as giving them authority and value, and such a strategy of legitimization is compatible with an ethos of preserving and storing texts over long periods of time.[28] One example of this phenomenon is the 15th Dynasty mathematical papyrus from the reign of King Apepi (P. Rhind: P. BM EA 10057–8), whose good state of preservation implies that it must have been placed in its owner's tomb. On this the copyist (and tomb-owner?), a scribe named Ahmose, claimed that he had copied
p. 129 the problems out in hieratic 'according to the writings of old made in the time [of the Dual King Ni] ↳ maat[re]', that is some 250 years earlier.[29] If his claim is taken literally, it implies that he had directly accessed such an old manuscript or a continuous manuscript tradition. If not, it shows that this genre was conceptualized—albeit perhaps idealistically—as belonging to a cultural stream that was transmitted and stored over many generations. Both of these options presuppose an institutionalized practice of storage and transmission for such texts.

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3.3. Textual Circulation in the Middle Kingdom

It is unclear by what means, or how widely, texts were circulated in the court-dominated culture of Old and Middle Kingdom Egypt. The existence at Thebes of the copy of the 'Semna Despatches' from Nubia implies a centralized concern with keeping records across all the areas governed by the state, and the circulation of administrative texts is explicitly mentioned in an apparently later composition that describes the duties of the Vizier. There, 'it is he (the Vizier) who dispatches everyone who will circulate all the orders of the King's House'.[30] There were clearly mechanisms for the distribution of large quantities of administrative records, and similar mechanisms presumably could have been used for other types of elite writings.

Royal commemorative compositions survive in inscribed hieroglyphic form, and all 'monumental discourse' was, as noted above, presumably drafted, circulated, and stored in manuscript form. It seems inherently probable that all such texts were issued from the circle of the court, which was at least in theory, if not always in practice, the prime generator of texts, just as it was for administrative decrees and royal letters. In the considerable body of rhetorical records that concern the king, there are occasional examples of closely duplicate inscriptions, such as those of King Senwosret III from the Nubian fortresses of Semna and Uronarti, which presuppose a copy that was circulated from the place of composition (see e.g. Eyre 1990).

Likewise, fragments of royal annals survive, such as those of the 12th Dynasty kings Senwosret I and Amenemhat II and earlier examples from the 5th–6th Dynasties. These show that highly detailed annals were inscribed on temple walls, and the existence of these inscriptions presupposes records that were kept,
p. 130 circulated, and consulted in drawing up these inscriptions: the ↳ annals do not, for example, record only information local to their place of inscription.[31] Such a manuscript source is much later explicitly mentioned in the annals of King Tuthmose III inscribed on the temple walls of Karnak. The king's victories abroad '[are] established on a roll of leather in the temple of [Amun] on (i.e. to) this day' (Sethe 1906–9: IV, 662 ll. 5–6). The mention of 'leather' here probably implies an element of prestige and cost, as would be appropriate for a temple record of royal deeds and donations.

Evidence from other types of composition that are less explicitly centred on the court also suggests complex and flexible practices of textual transmission. Surviving fragments show that slightly different versions of some fictional poems existed contemporaneously both throughout the country and also within single locations such as Thebes; these variations embody a reproductive attitude towards textual transmission of works designed for performance, but they are nevertheless relatively minor adaptations (e.g. Parkinson 2009: 119–26). It seems likely that the scribes had access to—if not master documents—good originals of compositions that were being circulated throughout the country. It is unclear whether the originals that the scribes made these copies from were acquired through private exchange of manuscripts or by the copyists having access to institutions where master-copies were kept and officially distributed. The attestation of some poems throughout the country might imply that they would have been programmatically circulated under the instructions of the ruling group and royal court, or alternately that they could have been transmitted independently through members of the governing classes interested in *belles lettres*.[32] However, since the literate elite was a small body and had strong institutional ties, these two alternatives are not exclusive; any proposed dichotomy between institutional and individual spheres may be culturally inappropriate. In terms of intertextuality, the body of written high culture was in many ways highly unified: quotations and allusions occur between poetic texts, royal inscriptions, letters, decrees, annals, hymns, and liturgies.[33]

In the Middle Kingdom, funerary texts are again the best-preserved corpus, and these imply a broadly similar picture of varied practices. The selection of funerary liturgical texts in linear script on coffins (the 'Coffin Texts') from different centres varies, suggesting a degree of flexibility between central uniformity

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and local diversity. The distribution of the texts is strongly regionalized, is not country-wide, and seems
p. 131 closely associated with the nomarchal ↳ courts (overview: e.g. Willems 2008: 172–89). The range of surviving copies again presupposes a complex process of storage, circulation, and transmission, which was most probably in part an institutionalized and centrally sanctioned practice and therefore was possibly closely parallel to the system used for administrative documents. The extent and uniformity of this centralization was arguably dependent on political factors and local concerns.[34] As with the earlier royal Pyramid Texts, the use of these compositions on decorated coffins was in many respects a secondary usage, and Middle Kingdom coffins and inscriptions also contained copies of the Pyramid Texts that were apparently taken from master copies in hieratic or the linear script (as opposed to the monumentally inscribed versions). In one case, on the coffin of the Steward Neferi from el-Bersha (temp. King Senwosret II–III), the spells are apparently taken from a copy that had been specifically intended for royal use for the Herakleopolitan king Wahkare Khety (Allen 1976: esp. 28–9). This need not have been an exceptional case.

A few papyrus copies of the Coffin Texts do survive, including a roll apparently from Saqqara (P. Gardiner II = P. BM EA 10676: Quirke in Bourriau 1988: 81–3; Gestermann 2003). This seems from modern archival accounts of its acquisition to have been part of a group with two other rolls of similar content and layout (P. Gardiner III–IV).[35] They all probably date from the late Old Kingdom or the very early Middle Kingdom. P. Gardiner II is a standard height roll for the Old Kingdom (21 cm), and was written on both the front and back in a very formal hieratic hand, without ligatures, and tending towards the linear script; this may reflect not only the early date, but also the type of text and the nature of the copy. Given their state of preservation, the rolls were presumably placed together in a tomb at some point. P. Gardiner II is a collection of some seventy-three spells, grouped thematically and presented by the deceased speaker of the spells in the first person. There is no name of any specific tomb-owner, and it could have been made as an institutional master copy in some sense, as Stephen Quirke has plausibly suggested (in Bourriau 1988: 82; see also Gestermann 2003: 204; Buchberger 1993: 64), perhaps even for a ritual performer to recite from. If so, it was apparently appropriated and re-used for a secondary and specific funerary purpose. Such individual appropriation of institutional copies seems to be a constant feature of Egyptian written culture: one leather New Kingdom manuscript of the Book of the Dead appears to be a generalized manuscript that was later
p. 132 altered for one Nebimes, and included in his burial ↳ (P. BM EA 10281: Shorter 1934). Much later, examples of temple compositions were re-copied in order to be deposited in a priest's tomb, and temple manuscripts were even placed secondarily in such tombs, perhaps when they were no longer needed in the original temple (e.g. Verhoeven 2001: 75–81; Quack 2002: 59–61; 2006: 74–5; Ryholt §10.4.1). As will be discussed further below, the placement of manuscripts embodied their relevance to the tomb-owner's identity or status for eternity, but the placement also removed these manuscripts from any usage (including library or archival storage) by the living. For copies to be considered disposable in this way, it seems likely that the living must have had no further interest in the text or (more probably) that they had access to other copies. Collections of non-administrative texts were clearly not inviolable or permanent.

Sometimes there are explicit formulations of attitudes towards acquiring/copying texts. Occasional colophons refer to the process of copying non-administrative texts to mark them as complete (e.g. Lenzo Marchese 2004). In late 12th Dynasty Theban manuscripts of poems, the colophon reads in its long form 'it is come from beginning to end, as found in writing' (e.g. Parkinson 2002: 75). In the Middle Kingdom such colophons (often in a slightly shorter form) conclude poetic texts, funerary spells, and technical treatises, and later are found with a wide range of written culture.[36] The colophon could have arisen in the funerary context, whose influence pervades the written forms of poetic literature, but it may have been normal in other institutionalized practices. In its full form, it significantly describes the copied poem as not just 'like what was in writing', but as being '*found* in writing'; this word later occurs in descriptions of how rare and old texts were discovered (Hagen §7.3). The authority of a copy is asserted not in terms of authorship, performance, or institution, but through manuscript research—possibly in some sort of archive or library. This is of course a legitimizing motif, and cannot be taken literally, but it suggests not only the central

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importance of writing as a means of transmission but also that the original audiences expected that such written culture had to be looked for and 'found'. But where?

3.4. Institutions: Buildings and Titles

A few Old Kingdom officials have titles that refer to the 'House of the book (*pr-mḏꜣt*)' which is normally taken as designating a 'library' as distinct from an 'archive'. However, even this designation may have
p. 133 administrative overtones in some instances, such as when the texts in the archives of King Neferirkare ↳ mention titles connected with that place (e.g. Trapani 2009: 106–7). References to this and similar buildings need not demonstrate that these structures were institutions which were the sole means of collecting and transmitting texts and shaping canons (although this has often been a tempting hypothesis for modern academics, who are themselves often highly institutionalized). The 'House of the book' is primarily a term for a location, and was not necessarily an abstract term—a temple's or a person's 'library' could be simply termed their 'writings'. 'House' could imply a separate building, rather than a single chamber within a larger building (such as it designates in some later temples: Ryholt §10.6), but it could well have been used for smaller (or larger) units at all periods. In the Middle Kingdom, all examples of the 'House of the book' seem to relate to the sacred sphere: one early Middle Kingdom hieroglyphic text on the nomarch Djehutynakht's outer coffin from el-Bersha refers to a god 'performing a ritual for you (the deceased) according to this writing of hieroglyphs which Thoth (the god of writing) made in the House of the book' (Terrace 1968: pls 10–11; Freed et al. 2009: 116). The personification of writing, the goddess Seshat, is often 'Foremost of the House of the god's book' in the Middle Kingdom (Budde 2000: 303 [no. 414]). There are, more significantly, no attested Middle Kingdom official titles to do with the 'House of the book'. There is the well-attested 'Scribe of the god's book' which is a temple-related title, and which appears so often beside—or interchangeably with—'lector priest' that the two seem inextricably connected (Ward 1982: 161 no. 1388; M. Marée pers. comm. 2009).

A related location or institution is the more symbolically entitled 'House of life (*pr-ʿnḫ*)', which was apparently at least partly cultic in function. It also apparently served in part as a scriptorium and an institution of advanced learning that was attached to temples, but it was also associated with palaces and courts.[37] It is unclear to what extent, or how, it was distinct from the 'House of the book', but it was clearly prestigious. Among very high officials, the early 12th Dynasty Vizier Montuhotep was 'Master of the secrets of the House of life', and the Overseer of royal apartments Iha was 'Overseer of writing in the House of life,
p. 134 to whom all holy things were revealed'.[38] In one ↳ late Middle Kingdom fictional narrative, 'the House of life in its entirety' is also mentioned, together with the royal apartments and a temple (P. BM EA 10475 vso x+4.1, x+5.1–2: Parkinson 1999c: 190–3).

Another social practice or institution that may have been involved in the transmission and storage of texts was the school, but there are few references to this, even in the poetic teachings. In *The Teaching of Khety*, a provincial sage…

> journeys south to the Residence
>
> to place (his son) in the scribal school (lit. teaching-room of writings),
>
> in the midst of the children of the officials
>
> and as the foremost of the Residence.[39]

This suggests a distinctive location for training the young, but educational practices may have been fluid, as later evidence suggests (e.g. Parkinson 2009: 190–2). Although later apprentice scribes were apparently a

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major source of copies of literary texts, no literary manuscript can be reliably identified as a training exercise in the Middle Kingdom (e.g. Parkinson 2002: 53–4, 235–6). Nevertheless, this passage with its emphasis on the location in the royal Residence does imply a highly centralized control over education in 'writings' for the children of the elite.

As noted above, textual transmission may have been effected though individual offices as well as these institutions. The day-to-day activities implied by the title 'lector priest' (literally 'holder of the festival roll')[40] remain uncertain, but Middle Kingdom lector priests were often attached to particular cults of either gods or deceased kings. The title with which 'lector priest' was most often combined is 'Scribe of the god's book', and most combined titles refer to other religious posts. Some, however, indicate that senior lector priests were employed also in the royal court, and so sometimes worked in institutions other than temples, such as the early 13th Dynasty Theban official Nebhepetre who was 'Great lector in the King's house'.[41] Title-combinations and other evidence indicate that lectors could also act as composers of inscriptions, 'artists', archivists, and 'copyists', as well as liturgical practitioners (e.g. Morenz 1996: 72–3). Institutionalized mechanisms, either central or local, were not necessarily the only means for transmitting and storing written high culture.

p. 135

3.4.1. An Account of a 'House of the Book' from Abydos (*c*.1700 BCE)

Despite the preceding qualifications, the 'House of the book' could have been a highly significant institution. The most revealing mention of it is in the (now lost) mid-13th Dynasty sandstone stela of King Neferhotep I which concerns the royal renovation of the cult in Abydos, where the inscription was erected.[42] In this fictionalized narrative, the king is on his throne 'in the palace', and he declares his desire to see the 'writings of primeval times of Atum (the creator god). Open (them) for me, for a great inventory (*r-sjpt-wr*)!' (ll. 2–4). He wishes to know the original forms of divine statues so that he can 'fashion him (the god) like his former state' (l. 4). He is answered by the officials (ll. 6–7):

> 'May your Majesty proceed to the Houses of writings (*prw nw-sšw*), and see the god's words!'.[43]
>
> His Majesty proceeded to the House of the book.
>
> And then his Majesty was opening the writings with these Friends.
>
> Then his Majesty found the writings of the House of Osiris Foremost of Westerners.

And he declares his intention to 'fashion (the god) and his ennead like that which my Majesty has seen in his writings' (l. 8). As suggested in some colophons to manuscripts, 'finding' is what one did to texts, and the word implies an ethos of archival research. The king has to search through the writings by 'opening' them, suggesting incidentally that there was no catalogue and no real labelling on any containers: he has to unroll the manuscripts to identify their contents, although this may read too literally a narrative device that emphasized royal initiative and achievement. The 'great inventory' he seeks seems to be a listing of divine forms, to judge by a much later parallel in an inscription of Ramses II at Abydos which refers to the god's 'forms which Ptah created, as the writings of Thoth about their bodies, belonging to the great inventory (*sjptj-wr*), which is in the House of the book'.[44] A similar search occurs as a light-hearted parody in *The Tale of King Kheops' Court*, where the king seeks a secret that is in a 'casket, of flint, in a room, called Inventory, in Heliopolis' (P. Westcar 9.4–5: Blackman 1988: 11 ll. 11–12; see Parkinson 2002: 97–8). Perhaps significantly, 'inventory' is an administrative term, and Neferhotep's document recalls the papyrus from the temple archive of Khentkaues with its descriptions of statues. Even here, the borders between 'archive'

p. 136

and 'library' are not so clear cut, although the emphasis on ↳ antiquity and long-term storage and preservation is significant. The 'writings of primeval times' is perhaps a phrase that represents one way in which the contents of this 'House of the book' were conceptualized.

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This narrative implies that the 'House of the book' is a separate location from the palace, but it is not a unique one, since it is apparently among 'the Houses of writings'. This might suggest that it was a distinct and separate institution among other (similar?) ones; in this respect the description recalls the location of the 'House of life' at el-Amarna, which was a building beside another records office (Hagen §7.3). It is notably not explicitly associated with any temple building, although its contents concern temples. Although its geographical location is not specified, the subsequent narrative makes it clear that this 'House of the book' is not in Abydos itself, but further north, and so presumably it was to be imagined to be in the royal Residence city of Itj-tawi (el-Lisht) itself.[45] Nevertheless, it contains the ancient writings of the 'House of Osiris Foremost of Westerners' i.e. the temple of Osiris at Abydos, some 400 km further south. This suggests that a record of this southern temple's cult statues could be stored in the northern Residence, and while this narrative is a highly fictionalized reworking of reality in order to present and legitimize royal actions, it implies a recognized concept of a centralized library that could (albeit ideally) record written culture from across the country over vast periods of time. This is not an inherently implausible concept, given the probable extent of administrative archives that can be inferred from surviving data. The claim to have records from 'primordial times' is of course inherently hyperbolistic, but it reflects the reality of known textual preservation: copies of the Middle Kingdom autobiographies inscribed on the nomarchs' tombs in Assiut were kept in the library at Tebtunis some *two millennia* later (Ryholt §10.2.1; Osing and Rosati 1998: 55–100; Kahl 1999); these are not just copies of the texts themselves but also record their layout on the walls. These surviving fragments match the claim of King Neferhotep's 'House of the book' to contain texts that are temporarily and geographical remote, and suggest that some reality may have underlain this fictionalized account of royal initiative.

Any generic range for the holdings of King Neferhotep's 'House of the book' cannot be estimated from the narrative, which mentions only texts directly relevant to the topic of cultic practice as opposed to specifying a broader range of written high culture. Jochem Kahl, however, has attempted to posit the contents of a temple library at Assiut from indirect sources, and suggested that it included a range of written culture including technical texts, liturgies, autobiographies, and copies of tomb inscriptions (1999: 293). All of this
p. 137 falls within what is known of the textual world of the lector priest and seems a ↳ plausible estimate.[46] Thus the extant evidence, together with the fictionalized royal account, suggests that such institutions could have been a possibility for the storage and transmission of written high culture in a highly centralized manner, as well as for administrative documents.

3.4.2. A Possible Temple Library at Saqqara (*c*.1800 BCE)

There is one group of fragments of late Middle Kingdom non-administrative papyri which may be a surviving example of such a 'House of the book' within a temple. These were discovered within the pyramid complex of Pepy I in a room close to the junction of the inner and outer parts of the pyramid temple. The room lies between the outer wall of the temple and the east inner enclosure wall of the satellite pyramid; it is a direct extension of a transverse corridor separating the inner and outer parts of the pyramid temple. The room is 17.29 × 2.10 m, and is shaped like a magazine; in it were found fragments of statues and the remains of many Middle Kingdom seals, apparently from either sealing the door to the room, or more probably from boxes that had originally contained the documents, although no traces of boxes were discovered (Leclant and Clerc 1987: 317–18, fig. 32; Berger-el-Naggar 1999; 2004). It has been suggested that the boxes were continually sealed and re-sealed until the cult was discontinued in late Middle Kingdom (Berger-el-Naggar 1999: 30); it seems likely that when the temple itself was definitively abandoned in the early New Kingdom the wooden boxes were removed, and the comparatively worthless papyri were emptied out and left behind.[47] The room may not have been the primary storage space.

The content of the papyri is entirely distinct from the administrative archives known from other funerary temples. The surviving fragments belong to at least four papyri, all of which are cultic. Three are in linear

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script and one is in hieratic. They comprise:

- A copy of some Pyramid Text spells in an exquisitely drawn linear script on a half-height roll (Berger-el-Naggar 2004); this had been patched with another older more cursively written papyrus of Pyramid Texts. Although it is not fully clear which was the patch and which was the patched manuscript (2004: 86), this shows that there were several rolls with the spells in the temple and that some were discarded and re-used to preserve others. The text is a master copy which refers not to any specific king but ↳ to 'the Osiris X'. The elegant and spacious layout of the text may indicate that it was not used in the performance of rituals (Baines 2012: 56–7) but that it was a copy for reference.

p. 138

- A 'spell to enter the temple' in linear script, with a title written horizontally in retrograde script. This was apparently a smaller roll (the surviving fragment is 9.5 cm tall: Leclant and Clerc 1987: 317–18).
- A ritual text for the presentation of textiles, written in linear script in vertical lines in retrograde, with vignettes, on a full-height roll. This includes the name of King Senwosret III (Leclant and Clerc 1987: 317–18).
- A liturgical papyrus in late 12th Dynasty hieratic on a full-height roll (C. Berger-el-Naggar, pers. comm. 2005).

Some of these manuscripts must be at least around four hundred years later than the king commemorated in the cult, suggesting that this temple's 'library' was being actively increased while the temple complex still functioned. The collection displays a mixture of the linear and hieratic scripts, and the papyri show that care was being taken to repair manuscripts, and also that multiple copies of the same corpus existed in the institution, some of which came to be regarded as disposable. A copy of the Pyramid Text spells is very appropriate to the immediate cultic context, and these papyri seem to have comprised a narrow and functionally specific collection of texts. These fragments from a funerary temple of course need not reflect the full range of material that could have been attested in other places, such as the apparently centralized and comprehensive 'House of the book' in King Neferhotep's royal Residence city.

Although the general location is similar to that of the administrative archives of the Abusir temple complexes, the exclusively religious nature of the texts, together with the converse exclusive nature of the archives from the Abusir temples, implies that liturgical and administrative texts may have occupied separate spaces in this temple.[48] Different members of staff would have needed different texts, and access to magical texts could well have been less open than administrative records: 'texts for initiates might not be kept together with more public pieces' (Baines 2004: 30). Nevertheless, the dividing line between administrative records, private papers, and literary texts was perhaps highly permeable. Generic divisions are never entirely fixed, just as different types of text could end up being written on the same roll of papyrus, as with P. Ramesseum C where a copy of military despatches was later re-used for magical texts. One can perhaps intuit a major categorizing distinction as one of intended permanence: while administrative records were kept for a few generations while they were still relevant, other 'cultural' texts seem to ↳ have been valued as more enduring. However, this is perhaps a question of perspective only, and not an absolute categorization: supposedly impermanent archives can be preserved over centuries, and supposedly permanent libraries can be dismantled and buried in tombs. The manuscript recording Tuthmose III's victories has similar overtones of permanence as his monumental inscriptions, and the erasure of someone's name as *damnatio memoriae* could occur on both stone and organic surfaces: in a decree of King Nubkheperre Intef, it is said of someone who rebels that his name 'should not be remembered in this temple…drive off his writings in the temple of Min and in the treasury, from upon every roll likewise' (Sethe 1928b: 98 ll. 13–16). From this reference, with its implications of permanence, it is impossible to assign these 'writings' and 'rolls' to either a short-term 'archive' or a long-term 'library'. One further factor is relevant: it is safe to assume that the canon of transmitted written culture was always

p. 139

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much smaller than the body of contemporaneous administrative records. As such, it may have been easier to make more permanent, or at least on a longer time-scale of retention.

3.5. Private Papers in This World: El-Lahun (*c*.1870–1770 BCE)

Extant groups of papyri from settlement sites demonstrate how contingent the definitions of these categories can be in quotidian experience. The desert settlement of el-Lahun (see above §3.1) has preserved considerable numbers of fragmentary papyri. Two major groups were excavated at different times, and are now in Berlin, Cairo, and London.[49] The papyri in Berlin (and Cairo) seem to be from a temple archive of papers, mostly from the reigns of King Senwosret III and King Amenemhat III. These appeared on the antiquities market at the end of the nineteenth century, and the find-spot has been suggested to be a rubbish mound just north of the valley temple on the west wall of the town (e.g. Horváth 2009: 195 n. 171, 198). They include 'daybooks', and one papyrus mentions of 'the roll of the daybook of the temple'.[50] The presumed find-spot suggests that these records were at some point systematically disposed of. Most, if not all, are associated with a temple accountant Horemsaef, and might represent a discarded archive of an individual office-holder or of an office.[51]

p. 140 Other papyri were excavated by Flinders Petrie from inside the settlement's walls in 1889, and are now in the Petrie Museum, University College London.[52] Since these do not come from a rubbish mound, some of them may potentially derive from closer to their original locations; they are, in contrast, 'a miscellaneous assortment of isolated documents and vague groups of papyri' (Quirke 1990: 164). They are, in some sense, only the discarded remains of any collections of texts that happened to be left behind when the buildings were abandoned.

Unfortunately, the precise provenance of these finds is unrecorded except in passing remarks in Petrie's journals, notebooks, diaries, and letters, and in the 'lot' numbers assigned to them by their first editor F. Ll. Griffiths (e.g. Collier 2009). The types of text include most known written genres of the period, and it is immediately apparent that the amount of literary texts is very small compared with the administrative material. Where the find-spots can be reconstructed, it seems that many papyri were excavated not in the great mansions in the town, but in middle-ranking houses such as in 'Rank N'.[53] The contents of one lot from a middle-ranking house are suggestive of the owner being a lector priest: this is Lot IV which comprises a household inventory, two mathematical texts fragments, a letter, and a grain account fragment.[54] The largest documented group is Lot VI, which was found apparently in 'Rank B' in the western sector (e.g. Horváth 2009: 195). This group contains a wide range: texts for the treatment of pregnant women, six letters, accounts of cattle herds, a commodity list, the literary *Tale of Horus and Seth* (which had later been re-used for a grain account), two name-lists, eight accounts, a memorandum about stores, and a long administrative text. It is a mixed group of apparently personal or household papers.[55]

3.5.1. A Case Study from el-Lahun: Lot LV

A more detailed description of Lot LV demonstrates the difficulties of contextualizing such a group of papers. This lot seems to have been excavated in the week of 8–14 November 1889, when the digging
p. 141 apparently concerned the palatial mansions (including the second northern mansion) of the elite sector ↳ along the northern edge of the town, and also the rows of houses further south in 'Rank N'.[56] In Petrie's journal, the papyri are mentioned between sentences on the finds in the mansions and on the finds to the south in 'Rank N' 'over the cellar used for the XXth dyn. Tomb'. The papyri date to the late 12th Dynasty or later and comprise the following manuscripts:

- LV.1 is a full-height roll with a poetic cycle of hymns to King Senwosret III written in hieratic on the

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front; on back is a copy of a literary narrative, the so-called *Tale of Hay* (P. UCL 32157: Collier and Quirke 2004: 16–19, 44–7). It is likely that this tale was copied onto the back after the hymns. The hymns are laid out neatly in vertical and horizontal lines, but under them are traces of partly erased ruled guide-lines suggesting that it is an accounts roll that was subsequently cleaned and re-used for the hymns. This might suggest that the roll was not an official temple manuscript that was re-used for a literary narrative, but that the hymns were themselves a non-institutional copy of the temple's hymns by an individual. The tale on the back is written in pages of horizontal lines.

- LV.2 is a half-height roll with a veterinary text written in linear script in vertical lines with horizontal titles (P. UCL 32036: Collier and Quirke 2004: 54–7). This is thus highly prestigious in form, despite the handy size of the roll, and the script might suggest that it was copied in, or derived from, a temple institution.
- LV.3 is a mathematical text in hieratic on a half-height roll (P. UCL 32134A: Collier and Quirke 2004: 74–7).
- LV.4 is a mathematical text in hieratic entitled in a vertical line in red 'Method of calculating matters of account (lit. cases of writings)' (P. UCL 32162: Collier and Quirke 2004: 78–83; quote: l. 1). This is also a half-height roll, but is apparently distinct from the preceding. Both are collections of problems in horizontal lines, laid out with guide-lines.[57]
- LV.5–7 cannot now be identified among the extant papyri (Collier and Quirke 2002: xii).
- LV.8 is a full-height administrative roll in horizonal lines. On the front is a list of produce brought by various officials, including priests and a 'cattle accountant', in regnal year 2 of an unnamed king, month 4 of the season of Peret, day 10 and following days. On the back are accounts of supplies for months 3–4 of the season of Shemu, including barley and emmer (P. UCL 32194: Collier and Quirke 2006: 100–3). This seems to be an institutional roll.

p. 142

The texts range through liturgies, entertainment narratives, healing, practical administrative records, and compendia of technical expertise. It is a highly learned group of texts and, as Stephen Quirke has noted, it is significant both that priests feature in the accounts and also that the veterinary papyrus would have been relevant to the cattle that priests would offer to the gods in the temple cult (Bourriau 1988: 83). The manuscripts are thus perhaps derived from a temple context or from the papers of a priest. If some look to be institutional administrative records, these could have been appropriated by an individual for intended re-use for other purposes (as had happened with the accounts roll that was re-used for the royal hymns). Alternately, the papers could also have been part of an institution's holdings that were distributed between various office-holders. Although the archaeological provenance is partly documented, it is insufficient to confirm whether these are an individual's papers or an institution's: the find might belong to the domestic middle rank houses, but it is conceivable that it could derive from the palatial mansions, and in recent decades, a building in this area—between 'Rank N' and the mayor's palace (the 'acropolis')—that had previously been considered a 'guardshouse' has been re-excavated and is now identified as a temple.[58]

Whatever the historical problems concerning the archaeological context of this group, it shows that in practice any distinctions between 'archive' and 'library', 'institutional' and 'individual' are often fluid in a collection of manuscripts. I think here of the cluttered mass of books and papers in my office in the institution that employs me: some are 'administrative' and some 'literary'; some are my personal property, some are institutional material, and many are a mixture of both that will probably only be separated out and categorized when I leave (the) office. Such contingent factors are not exclusively modern.

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3.6. Individual's Papers for the Other World: Tomb Libraries

Papyri survive best when they were placed in sealed burials in desert cemeteries. The deposition of literary manuscripts in individual's tombs is a moderately well-attested practice in the late 12th Dynasty, but it is not common even then, and is not attested before this period (later examples are discussed by Hagen §7.5 and Ryholt §10.4). There are nine reasonably secure examples where tombs were arguably the find-spot of
p. 143 literary manuscripts,[59] and the practice also occurred with administrative texts. Such tomb deposits of ↳ artefacts were arguably chosen to provide images of the dead which were often strongly marked in terms of gender and associated ideas of authority (e.g. Seidlmayer 2001: 231–40). These 'tomb libraries' are often poorly documented discoveries, but the phenomenon can be described in outline. All the surviving examples are presumably from the elite, who could afford burials elaborate enough to include such material, but they are probably not from the very highest levels, being (with one exception) far away from the cemetery of the royal court of the period. This apparent social range may be due to the chances of preservation or to differing choices of burial equipment in differing levels of elite society: the highest officials probably used other means to commemorate and display their status. As far as can be told, these deposits of manuscripts are generically exclusive and internally consistent: when a deposit contains several manuscripts, these are apparently only from a single type of text, either literary or administrative, suggesting that there had been a generically conscious process of selection before burial, presumably by the deceased's heir. All are secondary uses of manuscripts, and are therefore only indirect evidence for the living practices of libraries; none of them will represent the tomb-owner's entire textual world or library.

It is uncertain how far the specific contents of such papyri were relevant for the deposit. Inclusion in the tomb could conceivably have been due to their generalized written aspect. Wooden writing boards have been found in 12th Dynasty burials with copies of parts of letters and funerary texts (e.g. Parkinson 2009: 127–8 n. 29), and both the material—a re-usable board—and the choice of texts such as letters seem to emphasize the process of writing rather than the contents of what is written; sometimes the board is even blank. Scribal equipment including rolls and writing boards featured in the friezes of objects painted on Middle Kingdom coffins; these friezes include many objects that were not only placed in a burial but had also been ceremonially presented to the deceased in funerary rituals.[60] Such deposited scribal items may relate in part to the otherworldly aspiration of the deceased in several of the period's funerary spells to become 'scribe of beautiful speech' for the gods (e.g. Coffin Text spell 533: Quirke 1990: 11). The placement of either bureaucratic or literary texts was probably, like these, a conscious celebration of the tomb-owner's participation in the literate world of elite power. Literary manuscripts would be displays of culture, rank, and leisured status (parallel to the scenes and models of entertainment in tombs), while administrative papyri would display a closely similar official and professional status. The choice of the types of texts may have been specific to the tomb-owner's individual sense of cultural self-definition: in the only case where
p. 144 two papyri have a documented provenance in a tomb whose owner is named in surviving objects, it is ↳ significant that a personal link can be established between them and the tomb-owner (see below §3.6.1). A single roll can be, or represent, a 'library', but I here discuss only cases where more than one manuscript was discovered.

3.6.1. Tomb Deposits of Administrative Texts (*c*.1950 BCE and 1770 BCE)

Two moderately well-documented tomb deposits of administrative texts are known from the Middle Kingdom.[61] The well-preserved P. Brooklyn (see above §3.2) must have been deposited in a tomb, and so presumably represents a third instance of a tomb deposit. Old Kingdom examples include the Gebelein papyri, although their archaeological context is unrecorded in any detail (see above §3.1.2).

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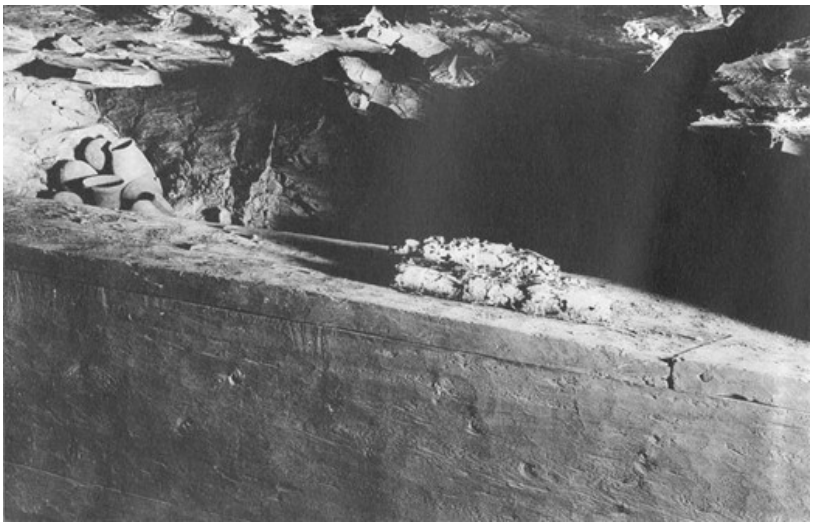
The very early 12th Dynasty P. Reisner I–IV from the tomb N 408/406 at Naga el-Deir are records of personnel and administration to do with building works and a dockyard workshop.[62] They are full-height rolls, laid out with ruled guide-lines, and the accounts cover a period at least ten years; one roll covers almost three and a half years (P. Reisner II; Simpson 1982: 729). They are written in hieratic on front and back, and only one of the rolls (P. Reisner IV) has clearly been re-used: the others have no noted traces of palimpsest (Simpson 1986 9–10). These rolls were found placed on the lid of a single (un-inscribed) coffin (Fig. 3.5), a common place for signs of status, such as bows or staffs, at this period. Such a group of manuscripts would have been an effective display of the tomb-owner's office, as is attested earlier with the Gebelein tomb deposit. As a record of day-to-day activities, they might have been disposed of or re-used in the normal course of events at some point, but were instead placed in a tomb.

Fig. 3.5.



Four rolls deposited on lid of a coffin in an early 12th Dynasty burial chamber: P. Reisner I–IV as discovered in Tomb N 408/406 at Naga el-Deir. Each roll is around 30 cm long. Behind the coffin are offering vessels.

After W. K. Simpson 1963a: [frontispiece]. Photograph courtesy of Museum of Fine Art, Boston.

Fragments of two hieratic administrative documents from the late 13th Dynasty (P. Bulaq 18, Cairo CG 58069) were recovered from an intact but damaged tomb at Dra Abu el-Naga, possibly in the main northern hill, belonging to the 'Scribe of the Great enclosure Neferhotep'.[63] Some of the tomb goods were inscribed for the owner. The larger manuscript was a diary of income and expenditure at the palace during a visit of the court to Thebes, dated to one of the immediate predecessors of Sekhemreswadjtawi Sobekhotep III.[64]

p. 145 The smaller manuscript is a list of entries about ↳

p. 146 ↳

expenditure to do with baking and brewing made by the scribe Neferhotep (Quirke 1990: 196–7). Neferhotep was apparently connected with the administration of the royal court when it was in Thebes, and had strong links with the vizier's office and estate; the smaller manuscript may have been compiled for him by a subordinate and the larger one may have been written by him acting under a superior (Quirke 1990: 11–12). To judge by the apparent length of time that some other documents were often kept in archives, it seems likely that these would have been placed in Neferhotep's tomb before they normally would have been disposed of, i.e. within the same generation when they were written.

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3.6.2. Tomb Deposits of Literary Texts

Three tomb deposits of non-administrative manuscripts are known, of which two consist exclusively of poetic works (§3.6.2.1–2). Poetic manuscripts are not attested earlier in the 12th Dynasty, and these tomb deposits or libraries may embody a particularly central position in official culture for literary creation and appreciation at this particular period.

3.6.2.1. Ameny's Papyri, Thebes (c.1800 BCE)

One tomb-group is particularly notable as it refers to a named copyist; it consists of two hieratic manuscripts, now in St Petersburg (P. Leningrad 1115) and Paris (P. Prisse). The find is reconstructed on the close similarity of the handwriting, which indicates that both were copied by the same scribe (von Bomhard 1999; Parkinson 2002: 70–1, 313; 2009: 134–5). The colophon to one roll describes the text as being 'a writing of the scribe with clever fingers Ameny son of Amenyaa (l. p. h.)' (P. Leningrad 1115, ll. 188–9: Golénischeff 1913: pl. 8). There is some evidence that the other manuscript was found in the cemetery at Dra Abu el-Naga, Thebes (summary: Parkinson 2002: 313; see now Ragazzoli 2011: 89–90), suggesting that this might have been the location of the owner's tomb, in which both manuscripts had been placed. The name in the colophon might be that of a copyist rather than that of an owner, but the copyist and owner could be the same individual.[65] The tomb-owner was clearly wealthy enough to have had a tomb, but he was not a member of the northern royal court. The designation 'scribe' in the colophon need not represent Ameny's highest office, but may have been chosen to indicate his role as copyist and literate/educated person. The papyri are usually dated to the late 12th Dynasty by their orthography.

p. 147

- P. Prisse (P. BN Égyptien 183–94: Jéquier 1911) is a half-height roll that was re-used (although it had been very well cleaned). On the front of this, Ameny copied *The Teaching for Kagemni* with a short colophon, then another composition ending in a colophon, and then *The Teaching of Ptahhotep* with a long colophon (Hagen 2012: 134–42). The handwriting is assured and careful, and it reveals numerous re-touchings of signs. All the texts were written in horizontal lines, and the style of the hieratic is slightly odd, as is the spacing. This is apparently due to copying the texts from a manuscript that was written in vertical lines.[66] The papyrus was very cramped when it was first copied, suggesting that Ameny was concerned about space and that this made him chose a horizontal format. One might not expect such a level of concern if these copies were being made in a wealthy state institution, but this assumption may well be unfounded and/or naive. It is noticeable that he preferred to write in a tightly spaced manner than to use the back of the roll. At some point after the three works were copied, the middle one was erased, leaving the papyrus blank apart from a few traces (traces of the colophon are legible, but the erased composition has not yet been identified). The erasure of the middle text shows a major re-configuration of the manuscript that presumably reflected a change in the owner's priorities at some point before the manuscript was buried.[67] Both of the surviving poems are poetic teachings, and both are set in the Old Kingdom, suggesting that the contents of the roll might have been chosen with a consideration of factors such as genre, setting, and contents.

- *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (P. Leningrad 1115: Golénischeff 1913: pls 1–8) is a quarter-height roll with the text varying between vertical and horizontal layouts. The scribe Ameny began and ended in vertical lines, and thus shows a preference for this format for the most important parts of the copy; the middle section was written in horizontal lines. This variation is attested in other manuscripts (see below §3.6.2.2), and seems to indicate that the copyist was concerned over the lack of space on the roll as he copied (e.g. Parkinson 2009: 93). Ameny shows here the same habits as on P. Prisse. The poem is a different genre from the teachings there, but it also has didactic and moralistic aspects. Unlike them, however, it has no specific historical period as a naturalistic setting, being a timeless tale of adventure

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involving a mystical island. Although different in style, it is from a comparably high register of literature.

p. 148

3.6.2.2. Four Poetic Papyri, Thebes (c.1800 BCE)

Closely contemporaneous with these manuscripts are four late 12th Dynasty hieratic papyri, usually considered to date from the reign of King Amenemhat III, now in the Berlin Museum (P. Berlin P 3022–5).[68] Their exact provenance is unknown, but they were described together in a sale catalogue of 1837 as being from the cemetery at Thebes. A plausible area and social context for the find is in the Asassif, an area occupied by 12th Dynasty local officials such as the Steward Montuhotep (Parkinson 2009: 77–83, 113–14). The four manuscripts comprise copies of three poems, and like Ameny's rolls are exceptionally well-preserved apart from the start. The pen-dippings and palimpsest traces are unusually clear, which allows the copyists' engagement with their texts to be charted. All are re-used half-height rolls, and in three cases, each roll was made up of full-height account manuscripts that had been cut down, cleaned, adopted, and adapted. These features suggest that poetic rolls were products not of institutionalized scriptoria, but more individual practices that were fluid, idiosyncratic, and contingent.

- *The Tale of Sinuhe* (P. Berlin P 3022)[69] is written on a half-height roll made up of re-used administrative documents that were originally full-height rolls. The poem is written on the front in a mixture of vertical and horizontal formats (see above §3.6.2.1). The roll as originally manufactured was not quite long enough, and an extra short sheet was added to provide room for the final lines of the poem. There are numerous corrections made while writing, especially in the horizontal lines, but some slips were left uncorrected. The hand is highly professional, if swift; the copyist seems to have been scanning the verse of the poem as he wrote, since his pen-dippings often correspond to the starts of metrical lines of verse. The scribe's other idiosyncrasies include the fact that he almost invariably used red ink in order to mark new stanzas only when he was writing in horizontal lines.

- *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* (P. Berlin P 3023; Fig. 3.6)[70] is written by the same scribe as *Sinuhe*, with the same format, preferences, and idiosyncrasies. The half-height roll had been assembled from re-used accounts, and the ruled guide-lines from these are still visible in many places. He reached the end of the front of his roll around 70 per cent of the way through the poem, and then rather than extending
p. 149 the roll, he wrote on the second part of the back. The surface was poorer here, and ↳ the quality of his writing deteriorated partly because of this. He returned to a vertical format for the final part of the roll, and abandoned his copy at the end of the eighth petition, lacking space to fit the remaining 10 per cent or so of the poem onto this roll.

- The group contained a second manuscript of the same poem (P. Berlin P 3025).[71] This is a roll by a different hand in vertical lines. It is written spaciously and neatly, on a re-used roll, but one that has been so well cleaned that it is impossible to detect any legible traces of earlier text. It seems that this was adapted to provide a copy of the rest of *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* for the copyist of the first manuscript; it was apparently cut down from a complete manuscript, at a point near the place where the other copy ends on its front, as if the copyist or owner was dissatisfied with the badly written copy on the back of P. Berlin P 3023. It is a slightly different version of the poem, showing a flexible attitude towards textuality.

- The fourth roll (P. Berlin P 3024)[72] contains *The Dialogue of a Man and His Ba*. This poem was written on
p. 150 a roll that is closely similar in manufacture, ↳ and made up from re-used administrative documents. The roll also includes part of a re-used roll that had previously been used for another poem, *The Tale of the Herdsman*. This was apparently partly cleaned and added to the roll, possibly shortly before *The Dialogue* was written, but this extra piece was not re-used. Without any constraints of space, the

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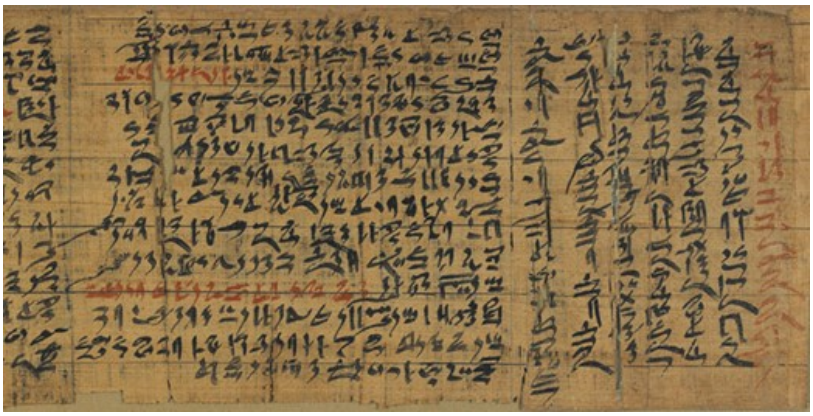
copyist kept to a vertical format throughout. The hand is very similar to that of *Sinuhe* and *The Eloquent Peasant* (P. Berlin P 3022–3), but belongs to a different individual.

Fig. 3.6.



A half-height roll with *The Tale of the Peasant* (B1 146–166) written in literary hieratic in a mixture of vertical and horizontal formats. The copyist's hand is much more elegant and legible when writing vertical. The manuscript is re-used and traces of account guide-lines are visible, which were only partly erased. H. 15.8 cm. P. Berlin P 3023.

Courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin.

These apparently represent the full extent of a single tomb deposit, which is a library of three purely poetic works. Nothing is known about the owner, except what can be deduced from the manuscripts. If the poems represent a personal choice by him, they reflect a highly cultured and sophisticated taste, to judge by the assessment of these poems by modern scholars. Two are tales, although that of *The Eloquent Peasant* is mostly a wisdom discourse, and *The Dialogue* is generically very closely similar to this. It is thus a highly unified group in terms of genre and register, and is redolent of the highest levels of literary culture, like Ameny's rolls, but with a significant emphasis on the darker aspects of the poetic corpus that is known from Thebes at this period (for a speculative assessment of his 'interior world' see Parkinson 2009: 127–37). The sophisticated and discriminating choice has been often judged to be at odds with the scribe's apparently hasty copying of his two manuscripts. The increase in slips towards the ends of the manuscripts suggests that they may well have been written in a single sweep (Allen 2011: 14), and they are to varying degrees swiftly written, with corrections made while the ink was still wet; P. Berlin P 3025 is the most neatly and carefully executed manuscript. The speed might suggest that the main copyists only had access to the originals that they were making their own copies from for a short space of time (Parkinson 2009: 90–2). One can only speculate where these originals might have come from. In two cases (P. Berlin P 3022 and 3023), there is evidence that his sources were vertically written, as with P. Prisse, suggesting that he was also copying from a manuscript in an older format (Parkinson 2009: 120), but this does not mean it was necessarily a better or institutionally stored master copy. The collection shows that a copyist could regard copies (by other hands at least) as in part disposable (*The Tale of the Herdsman*) or adaptable (*The Eloquent Peasant* on P. Berlin P 3025). This latter roll, which was apparently acquired and adapted by cutting it down, might represent the kind of manuscript that he was copying from in other instances, in which case the originals would be very similar in nature to his own copies. We can only speculate about how he accessed these poems: perhaps these manuscripts were borrowed from other colleagues. Such literary works may have been distributed officially like royal decrees, but like luxury leisure goods they were probably also accessed in a less formal manner, through individual initiative ↳ and personal contacts. There is nothing to suggest that any direct contact with an institutional library was necessary to copy and collect these manuscripts, but we cannot be sure.

p. 151

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3.6.2.3. The ‘Ramesseum Papyri’, Thebes (c.1700 BCE)

The most extensive and best documented of all Middle Kingdom tomb libraries is the ‘Ramesseum papyri’. This is a collection of manuscripts, apparently ranging over about a century (e.g. Gardiner 1947: 6), from a plundered 13th Dynasty burial in the late Middle Kingdom cemetery at Thebes. This cemetery was later covered by with the funerary temple complex of Ramses II dated to the 13th century BCE, the so-called ‘Ramesseum’, hence the somewhat misleading designation the ‘Ramesseum papyri’.[73]

The papyri were found stored in a box with a very large bundle of reeds intended for use as pens. When discovered, some items of magical equipment were scattered around the box together with funerary artefacts at the base of a tomb-shaft. These items and the box seem to have been removed from a burial chamber by robbers and then discarded as being of little worth (Parkinson 2009: 170–1). The box is now unlocated and it was not drawn or photographed when excavated, but from the brief published description it was apparently a standard storage box (see above §3.1.2). On the lid, a jackal was roughly drawn; this was perhaps a funerary symbol added to the box when it was placed in the tomb, or it might have been connected with the priestly title ‘Master of secrets’, which can be written with the hieroglyph of a jackal. The range of papyri and artefacts probably come from a single burial, and taken together they suggest that the tomb-owner was of priestly office, possibly a lector priest or some other sort of priest. He was certainly wealthy enough to have a household or estate that used accounts, and some circumstantial evidence suggests that he might well have been connected with the local court (Parkinson 2009: 150–60).[74] He was presumably provincial, and not a member of the royal court in the north (but see Quack 2006: 75).

The papyri are highly damaged, due partly to the tomb having been plundered, but mostly due to slight dampness in the burial shaft and unsuccessful attempts at conservation shortly after their discovery. The original investigators found it hard to distinguish distinct manuscripts from the mass of material, but the
p. 152 surviving fragments suggest that they originally totalled at ↳ least twenty-four separate rolls.[75] Some are substantially complete, some survive only as a single fragment, and some further rolls may have been completely lost. The papyrus was ‘the finest quality throughout’ and unfortunately thin, increasing the damage (Gardiner 1955a: 18; Leach 2006). Given the poor state of preservation it is often impossible to say whether the rolls are palimpsest or not, but the texts are usually written only on the front. Three of the rolls are liturgical texts in linear hieroglyphs, in a variety of formats, comprising:

- A full-height roll with a dramatic festival ritual for King Senwosret I with vignettes (P. Ramesseum B = P. BM EA 10610: Sethe 1928a: pls 1–22; Quack 2006; Lorand 2009; Geisen 2018). This is similar to one of the manuscripts from the temple complex of Pepy I (see above §3.4.2). The vignettes are drawn in a ‘stick-men’ style that simplifies fully drawn visual representations in a manner parallel to that in which the linear script simplifies fully executed pictorial hieroglyphs.
- A half-height funerary liturgy for ceremonies at a mastaba (P. Ramesseum E = P. BM EA10753: Gardiner 1955b; Helck 1981; Alexanian 1998: 9–10).
- A short half-height roll with a cycle of hymns to the crocodile god Sobek, naming King Amenemhat III (P. Ramesseum 6 = P. BM EA10759: Gardiner 1957; Fig. 3.7).

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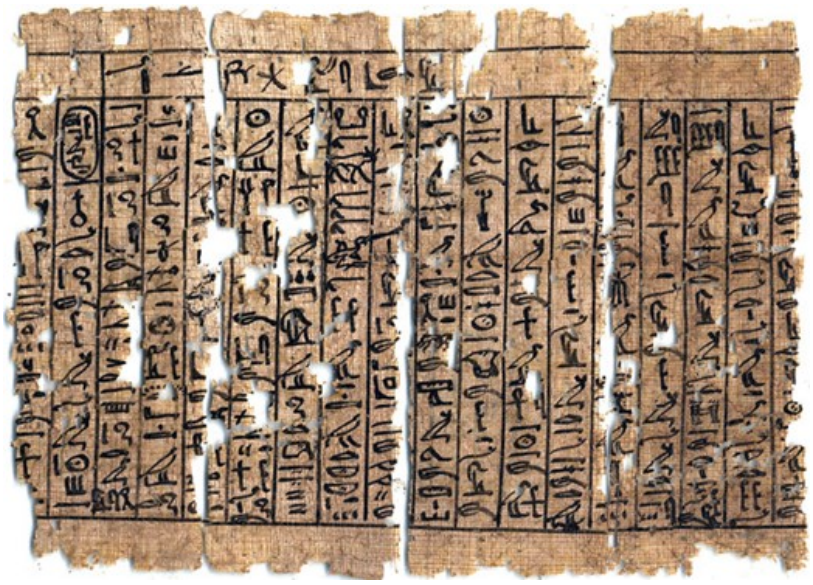
Fig. 3.7.



P. Ramesseum 6 with *Hymns to Sobek* (l. 40–58). A half-height roll in linear script; the hymns are written retrograde, in vertical lines, with a horizontal title. H. 12.9 cm. P. British Museum EA 10579.3.

© Trustees of the British Museum.

The majority of the manuscripts are texts of healing and protection, mostly in hieratic, but with two in linear hieroglyphs:

- A half-height roll of prescriptions in a tabulated format to do with bodily 'vessels', perhaps against stiffness, in linear script (P. Ramesseum 5 = P. BM EA10758: Barns 1956: 30–4, pls 21–3; Westendorf 1999: 6–8).
- A half-height roll of mythological spells for gaining respect from men (?) (P. Ramesseum 7 = P. BM EA 10760).

These rolls are laid out in vertical lines between column lines (with the exception of P. Ramesseum E), with ruled margins, and sometimes with separate horizontal columns for section titles. All are written on fine quality papyrus, on the front, and apparently none are written on re-used rolls. Of these texts, the dramatic ritual and the hymns to Sobek concerned kingship, and named specific kings, while the archaic funerary liturgy is written for 'this Osiris X' (ll. 18, 19, 91). It is clearly a generic master copy in some sense. It is possible that one of the owners acquired these rolls from a temple library or scriptorium, perhaps through
p. 153 his professional contacts (see above). Some of ↳ the hieratic magical texts in the tomb box could also ultimately have had a similar source, given a later description of such texts as deriving from a 'House of life' (in P. BM EA 10042 6.10: Ritner 1993: 203; Leitz 1999: 39), but the collection as a whole could well derive from a variety of sources and different processes of acquisition. However, the damage is incidental and does not suggest that they were discarded by an institution at any point of their active history because they were worn (Ritner 1993: 232 n. 1077; Parkinson 2002: 71 n. 9) or because a temple had been plundered (Morenz 1996: 146–54): like other manuscripts they could have been appropriated by an individual, as was apparently standard practice (see above §3.3).

The linear script is hard to date, but these rolls could all be from the late 12th Dynasty. The other manuscripts in hieratic show a range of different styles, which offers the possibility of relative dating. A survey—albeit highly schematic—suggests that they can be grouped chronologically into three phases, ranging from the reign of King Amenemhat III to the late 13th Dynasty. The oldest are all poetic:

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- A finely written full-height roll with a pessimistic wisdom poem, *The Discourse of Sasobek* (P. Ramesseum 1 = P. BM EA10754: Barns 1956: 1–10, pls 1–6; Quirke 2004: 192–6). It is finely written on
p. 154 the front in vertical ↳ lines, and would be, if it were not so damaged, 'one of the most handsome literary papyri in existence' (Barns 1956: 1).

- A quarter-height roll with maxims, roughly written in horizontal lines on front and back that were copied out in differing layouts, which is suggestive of a less systematic collection or copying process than most other literary manuscripts (P. Ramesseum 2 = P. BM EA 10755: Barns 1956: 11–14, pls 7–9; Quirke 2004: 187–9).

- A small fragment of a wisdom poem, apparently distinct from any other manuscript and thus the remains of another literary manuscript (= P. BM EA 10754.D: Parkinson 2002: 310–11). It is written in vertical lines on the front only.

The second phase of the hieratic group comprises a mixture of poetic texts and texts of healing:

- A quarter-height roll with *The Eloquent Peasant* on the front and *Sinuhe* on the back (P. Ramesseum A = P. Berlin 10499: Gardiner 1909: pls 1–4bis; Vogelsang and Gardiner 1908: pls 1–4bis). These two poems are written by the same scribe in pages of horizontal lines (with a few vertical ones) in a very neat and accomplished style. The versions of the poems are different from the earlier 'Berlin papyri'; the association of the two poems in two such collections is a remarkable coincidence, and may reflect a common tradition about the poems, for example that they were considered to be linked together in some way (Parkinson 2009: 161). The copyist was aware of the content as he wrote, but was less intensely engaged with the contents than the earlier copies of the same poems: it looks like a more professional and less idiosyncratic manner of writing. The hand is very similar to that of P. Ramesseum 9, 10 and 19.

- A half-height roll with an onomasticon in a good literary hand on the front, written in columns of horizontal lines with the determinatives of each word in a separate sub-column (P. Ramesseum D = P. Berlin P 10495: Gardiner 1947: 6–23, pls 1–6).

- A full-height (?) roll with a set of magical texts on the back, including an execration text or incantation against ghosts, written on a re-used roll of earlier military despatches (the 'Semna Despatches', P.
p. 155 Ramesseum C, 18: = P. BM EA 10752, 10771).[76] Both are written in pages of horizontal lines. ↳

- A full-height roll of magico-medical texts for mother and child, and also about eyes, written in vertical lines on the front (P. Ramesseum 3 = P. BM EA 10756: Barns 1956: 15–23, pls 10–15, 24–5; Westendorf 1999: 11–15; Jean and Loyrette 2002; 2004).

- A full-height roll of magico-medical texts, written in vertical lines on the front, to do with pregnancy, birth, and the care of mother and child (P. Ramesseum 4 = P. BM EA 10757: Barns 1956: 24–9, pls 16–20, 25).[77]

- A full-height roll with rituals to protect a house from magic, ghosts, and serpents, written in pages of horizontal lines on the front (P. Ramesseum 9 = P. BM EA 10762).

- A half-height roll with spells, written in pages of horizontal lines on the front and continuing on the back, with a well-known 'Spell for the protection of the limbs against any male and female serpent' (P. Ramesseum 10 = P. BM EA 10763; quotation from 1.1). This spell also occurs in P. Ramesseum 16 (7a.5–8.7), so the collection contained duplicates; the spell is known in other copies up to the Late Period (Altenmüller 1979).

- A half-height roll with love-spells addressed to a man on the front (P. Ramesseum 11 = P. BM EA 10764:

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Posener 1986). This, like the subsequent papyri, is written in pages of horizontal lines.

- A half-height roll of spells to protect the body on the front and back (P. Ramesseum 15 = P. BM EA 10768).
- A half-height (?) roll of magical/religious texts on front and back (P. Ramesseum 19 = P. BM EA 10772).[78]

The third phase of the hieratic group is entirely texts of healing or protection:

- A half-height roll entitled *The* [...] *Banquet of Hedjhotep*, a text against headaches (P. Ramesseum 8 = P. BM EA 10761: Meyrat 2002). This is written on the front in pages of horizontal lines.
- A full-height (?) roll of invocations to demons against fever on the front (P. Ramesseum 12 = P. BM EA 10765).
- A half-height rolls with healing texts (?) on the front (P. Ramesseum 13 = P. BM EA 10766).

p. 156

- A half-height rolls with healing texts (?) on the front and back (P. Ramesseum 14 = P. BM EA 10767). ↳
- A half-height roll of spells for protection on the front, which continues on the back. The spells include ones against snakes and evil dreams (P. Ramesseum 16 = P. BM EA 10769).
- A half-height roll for protection for the epagomenal days at the turn of the year and other matters, written on the front and back (P. Ramesseum 17 = P. BM EA 10770). This was probably written by the same scribe as P. Ramesseum 8.

This large collection was probably built up from diverse sources, perhaps including a temple institution. Several rolls (including both literary and healing texts) have the remains of ruled guide-lines from a previous administrative usage, especially—but not exclusively—the rolls that can be dated early in the group. On one roll the first administrative text remains largely un-erased (P. Ramesseum C). This is a set of official 'Semna' despatches from the Nubian fortresses: these had been written on the front of a roll, and then magical texts of healing were later copied onto parts of the blank back.[79] The papyrus with despatches seems to have come from an administrative archive; this might be suggestive of an individual priest making individual copies, rather than copyists in a temple scriptorium, but such scriptoria could also have re-used papyri from local administrative offices (as with the palimpsest Abusir papyri). There is an almost total exclusion of administrative texts, unlike for example the el-Lahun lots. All the administrative texts in the collection are only incidentally present, as texts that were re-used or as administrative records that their owner(s) jotted onto the back of rolls that retained their primary purpose (Quirke 1990: 187–95; Parkinson 2009: 150–7). The collection, as placed in the tomb, was very much a library exclusively of textual high culture rather than a working set of administrative papers.

It is uncertain whether the twenty-four rolls were gradually acquired by one person from diverse sources of different dates or were built up by a sequence of people from contemporaneous sources. If the latter, probably three generations suffice, and some of the manuscripts could well have been written by the various successive owners. The magical equipment buried with the manuscripts shows signs of repeated repair and extensive usage (Parkinson 2009: 145), perhaps suggesting a sequence of owners who passed both texts and artefacts from generation to generation. The presence of the magical objects, and particularly the unused reed-pens in the box, suggest that this assemblage was made to display an almost professional status for the tomb-owner throughout eternity (as with the Gebelein tomb deposit). The inclusion of poetic manuscripts in such a collection is perhaps due to their being part of performative culture, in which the work of a lector priest may have run closely parallel to that of the literary reciter and composer (see §3.4). Or

p. 157

it may be ↳ because such poems were already part of a transmitted canon of written high culture along with

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hymns and liturgical texts. In later periods, such texts would be parts of scribal training, but this was apparently not yet the case (e.g. Parkinson 2002: 53–4, 235–6). The rolls are a substantial quantity of manuscripts to dispose of in a tomb, and this might imply that other copies of these texts were available for the living colleagues or heirs of the deceased, although the circumstances can only be guessed at. Overall, it is perhaps the closest we can get to an individual office holder's 'library', and if the owner was a priest of some sort, it might even reflect on an individual level the range of an institutional temple library at this period.

3.7. Conclusion: Observations and Implications

All written manuscripts were very much artefacts of elite culture; as such they could be to varying degrees valuable, prestigious, and tools of governmental power, which were to be preserved, kept secure, and also conspicuously displayed in this world and the next. How literary forms of writing in the broadest sense were stored and circulated within this cultural context remains imponderable. With so little preserved data, any absolute distinctions between the practices used for works of literature and administrative records are hard to draw. This is partly due to the fragmentary nature of the evidence and the circumstances of preservation, but it may reflect a less fully institutionalized and segregated culture than that of modern academia. However, different types of documents were formalized and conceptualized differently; one clear example is the use of the distinctive linear script for certain types of composition. Administrative records were perhaps conceived of as ultimately disposable, as opposed to the transmitted high culture that comprised a more permanently preserved stream of tradition, but they were apparently stored and transmitted by the same people and in broadly the same material forms. The meagre material evidence suggests that there was a huge quantity of copying and storing, of which literary texts were always a very small part: written high culture was probably not as distinct or autonomous as it can seem to modern viewers. The limited available evidence implies that numerous flexible and permeable distinctions within written culture were possible, and that these were shaped by a range of functions and practices, and not by any simple absolute categorizations of 'library' versus 'archive' or 'institutional' versus 'individual' levels. Practices were demonstrably complex and varied, albeit irrecoverable in detail and subtlety.

p. 158

Among surviving literary groups, the 'Ramesseum papyri', although a secondary funerary usage of a collection of manuscripts, shows the range of written high culture that could have been owned by an individual office holder, and they might even reflect to some extent the contents of temple libraries around 1700 BCE. The roughly contemporaneous royal inscription of King Neferhotep, although a fictionalized account, suggests that the possible extent of centralized collections of texts should not be underestimated. As with archival practice, the efficiency and extent of such libraries will have fallen short of the actors' idealized aspirations to permanence (e.g. Eyre 2009), but the 'House of the book' could clearly aim to be a comprehensive collection of written culture both geographically and chronologically. At least during the late 12th Dynasty, individual libraries in tomb deposits reveal a parallel concern among individuals with copying and owning old literary works as eternal displays of cultural status. A mastery of written culture was an integral aspect to individual as well as state identity over the long term.

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Notes

1 My thanks are due to Kim Ryholt and Fredrik Hagen for many collaborative discussions, and particularly to Fredrik for allowing me to consult a version of his paper while completing mine. I warmly appreciate the editors' patience with my lack of time, and also the comments of the referees who were exposed to a deplorably early draft. The text remains the same as originally submitted to the editors a while ago, with some recent publications added to the references.

2 For papyrus see Leach and Tait 2000; Eyre 2013: 22–7; for leather see e.g. Gestermann 1984: 701; Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 22–3; Eyre 2013: 31–2; Hagen §7.4.

3 On alternatives to papyrus in general see Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 19–23; Eyre 2013: 28–32. For the documents incised onto mud see e.g. Pantalacci 1998; 2008.

4 P. Lythgoe (P. MMA 09.180.535): see Simpson 1960. Three other (unpublished) papyri are administrative: Simpson 1960: 66 (P. MMA 09.180.531–3); Quirke 1990: 176.

5 P. Leiden I 344 recto 6.5–10. Text: Enmarch 2005: 37; discussion and translation: Enmarch 2008: 116–20.

6 Compare Morenz 1996: 78–87; in general see Baines 1990.

7 A much disputed, but fundamentally important, assessment is Baines 2007: 61–94.

8 For an illustrated overview of the material forms of script see e.g. Parkinson 1999a.

9 This is often termed 'cursive hieroglyphic' script.

10 See e.g. Morenz 1996: 62, 70–1; Parkinson 1999a: 88–92. The literary model-letter called *Kemit* was in part used to training scribes in this script, possibly as early as the Middle Kingdom (Parkinson 2002: 322–5).

11 A specialized variant of the writing system that apparently derived from the linear script was the 'retrograde' style of writing which was often, if not invariably, associated with arcane texts (e.g. Parkinson 1999a: 57).

12 See in general e.g. Caminos 1986; Eyre 2013: 33–5.

13 e.g. Morenz 1996: 144 n. 622; Parkinson 1999c: 52. Compare the title 'Scribe of the box': Ward 1982: 161 no. 1397. For the term 'box (*hn*)' see e.g. Posener-Kriéger 1976: L I, 176 (B11).

14 Archive Fragment 73E: Posener-Kriéger and Cenival 1968: pl. 73; Posener-Kriéger 1976: II, 479. Spell from P. Ramesseum C vso 3.11: Gardiner 1955a: pl. 31. I am grateful to P. Meyrat for this reference.

15 Posener-Kriéger 1986: 25; for an image of the box see Posener-Kriéger 1986: 33.

16 See Hagen §7.3 for New Kingdom examples of such labels. One supposed Middle Kingdom 'bookplate' is in fact only a miniature casket (BM EA 22879: Parkinson 1999c: 53–4).

17 Posener-Kriéger and Cenival 1968; Posener-Kriéger 1976 (Neferirkare); Posener-Kriéger et al. 2006 (Raneferref); Posener-Kriéger 1995 (Khentkaues). Overview: Verner 2002: 136–51. For other Old Kingdom archives including finds from Gebelein (see above §3.1.2), Elephantine, Saqqara, and the mud tablets of Balat see e.g. Collombert 2011, esp. 19; Ryholt forthcoming a.

18 Posener-Kriéger 1995; 1997: 18–20; on the administrative nature of the roll see 1995: 133–4.

19 Verner 2002: 138; Posener-Kriéger, Verner, and Vymazalová 2006: 20–4. The greatest number are from rooms CO, CP, CQ, CR. The papyri from the cult of Khentkaues were found in one of the much later dwellings in the central area of the temple (Verner 1995: 23–4). For the placement of the archives from Balat see Pantalacci 2008: 142.

20 P. UCL 32166 (Lot IV.1) 1.3: Collier and Quirke 2004: 116–17; see also Quirke 1996: 395.

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21 For P. Ramesseum C see Smither 1945; Quirke 1990: 191–3. The association of the texts with their Theban find-spot has been disputed by e.g. Quack 2006: 75.

22 The patch is between verso x+2 and x+3, not on a sheet-join: see Gardiner 1955a: pl. 30a.

23 Smith et al. 1976: 31–7, pls 61–8. For the find-spot (Room 12, off Room 4), see Smith et al. 1979: 8–9, pl. 16. As at Balat, this space is notably similar to the much later representation of the 'Place of writings' in the tomb-chapel of Tjay: Hagen §7.6, Fig. 7.11. Similar material was found at Uronarti in various find-spots: Durham 1967: 89–108.

24 Insertions B and C = Texts 3–4: Quirke 1990: 140–6; for the time spans see also Parkinson 2009: 155–6.

25 See discussion by Baines 2004; for one example of such issues see Alvarez 2016. For a sense of the possible full extent of the corpus see the translation of Allen 2005.

26 Sethe 1906–9: I, 40–5; translation: Strudwick 2005: 318–20. For a similar situation in Syria, cf. Zand §3.3, with the archive located immmediately adjecent to the throne room.

27 Cairo stela CG 20538: Sethe 1928b: 68–9; see Parkinson 2002: 318–19; Verhoeven 2009; Stauder 2013: 283–8.

28 For an overview of attitudes and uses of the past see e.g. Baines 2007: 179–201.

29 P. BM EA 10057 ll. 2–3: e.g. Morenz 1996: 190–1; text: Chace 1979: 85.

30 Sethe 1906–9: IV, 1112 l. 6; see van den Boorn 1988: 202–7.

31 Overview of Old Kingdom examples: Baud 2003 with references; Middle Kingdom: Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Postel and Régen 2005: 232–76 (referring to another surviving example: 274 n. 262); Altenmüller 2015.

32 For one later example suggesting a highly centralized control over even the orthography of such poems see Parkinson 2009: 186–7.

33 The inscription of King Neferhotep I, for example, may allude to a passage of *The Teaching of Kaires* 1.5–7: Helck 1983: 23 l. 10. Overview: Parkinson 2002: 60–3.

34 However, some accounts of how the textual stream of tradition was fragmented in periods of political regionalism seem to me to underestimate the number of manuscripts that have been lost (e.g. Morenz 1996: 159–204).

35 See Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 174–5. P. Gardiner III is P. Oriental Institute Museum Chicago 14059–87, and IV is P. Louvre E. 14703.

36 See Parkinson 1991: 95 for details; see also Morenz 1996: 14–15 n. 59.

37 Classic account: Gardiner 1938. See also the discussion of Nordh (1996: 106–84, 193–215); Eyre (2013: 311–15); and Hagen §7.3 on later evidence and the general difficulties in assessing the exact nature of this institution. In later periods it seem to be predominantly cultic in function (Ryholt §10.8).

38 Montuhotep: Ward 1982: 120 no. 1013. For Iha see Willems 2007: 67, pl. 54 ll. 5–6; the title is listed as Ward 1982: 45 no. 354. Compare 'Overseer of writing in the Great house' and similar titles (Ward 1982: 45–6 no. 353, 355–6). Other titles are less impressive, such as 'scribe of the House of life' (Ward 1982: 160 no. 1380; Gardiner 1938: 160). Other Middle Kingdom titles comprise 'Gracious of arm in the House of life' (Ward 1982: 9 no. 22), 'Chamberlain of the House of life' (16 no. 83), 'Teacher (?) of the House of life' (149 no. 1282).

39 *Khety* 1c–d. Text: Jäger 2004: 5–304, i–xciv. The dating of this text is controversial, and a composition in the early New Kingdom has been suggested (see e.g. Stauder 2013: 469–76).

40 See examples listed in Ward 1982: 140–2 nos. 1202–24; Parkinson 2009: 157–9.

41 On his statue, British Musuem EA 83921 (formerly Art Institute of Chicago 10.239): T. G. Allen 1923: 51, Marée 2015; I owe this reference and the previous discussion to M. Marée.

42 For bibliography see PM V, 44. Edition: Helck 1983: 21–9; the reading of the text is problematic in many places, but not in the passages discussed here.

43 The term here need not refer to a particular type of script: see above §3.1.1.

44 Kitchen 1975–89: II, 532 l. 1–2 (see also Hagen §7.3 for another similar inscription).

45 In this narrative, 'proceed (*wḏ*)' implies a short journey (l. 6), compared to the manner in which the official is despatched to execute the work at Abydos itself: 'go southwards' (l. 13).

46 Even though some of his assumptions and methods are disputable in detail (e.g. Morenz 2002).

47 As has also been hypothesized for the Reneferef papyri (Verner 2002: 147), and the Khentkaues papyri (Verner 1995: 24, fig. 21; 2002: 146); see above §3.1.2. I am very grateful to C. Berger-el-Naggar for a discussion of these papyri.

48 The location in the pyramid temple may contrast with the supposed usual location of administrative archives in the valley temple of the complex (see above §3.2), but this is perhaps too schematic a view.

49 For the discovery see now Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 166.

50 P. Berlin P 10161b: Kaplony-Heckel 1971: 102; Quirke 1990: 160, 178–9 n. 14; see now Osing 2012.

51 Quirke 1990: 157–63; 2005: 31–7. The Berlin material is listed in Kaplony-Heckel 1971; publications under way by Luft (e.g. 1991); see Kóthay 2009.

52 Griffith 1898; Collier and Quirke 2002; 2004; 2006.

53 Gallorini 1998; on the types of housing in el-Lahun see e.g. Kemp 2006: 149–57; F. Arnold 1989: 75–93.

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54 P. UCL 32166 (IV.1), 32159–60 (IV.2–3), 32197 (IV.4), 32195 (IV.5).

55 P. UCL 32057 (VI.1), 32181 (VI.2), 32201 (VI.4), 32213 (VI.5), 32202 (VI.6), 32128 (VI.7), 32204 (VI.8), 32211 (VI.9), 32179 (VI.10), 32183 (VI.11), 32158 (VI.12), 32174 (VI.13), 32170 (VI.14), 32182 (VI.15), 32121 (VI.17), 32130 (VI.18), 32169 (VI.19), 32178 (VI.20), 32168+32269 (VI.21), 32180 (VI.22), 32188 (VI.24), 32129A (VI.25), 32125 (VI.26); Lot numbers 3, 16, and 23 have not been identified: Collier and Quirke 2002: x–xi.

56 Collier and Quirke 2006: 4; Gallorini 1998: 50–1.

57 These lines do not indicate that these texts, unlike with the hymns, are a secondary usage of a manuscript, but they reflect the common concern with layout and tabulation between mathematical problems and accounts.

58 See discussion by Frey and Knutstad 2008: 58–63; Horváth 2009: 190–1.

59 The 'Berlin' library, the Ramesseum Papyri, and seven examples listed in Parkinson 2009: 127 n. 28. In general see Parkinson 2009: 127–9.

60 e.g. Jéquier 1921: 263–7; Willems 1988: 200–29.

61 I exclude the find of the Heqanakht papyri, since these were apparently the accidental deposit of a bundle of papers that were unintentionally sealed in the tomb while they were being worked on (Allen 2002).

62 Simpson 1963; 1965; 1969; 1986; on find-spot: 1963: 17, frontispiece in Simpson 1963. Overview: Simpson 1982.

63 Mariette 1872: 6–8; Quirke 1990: 9–21, 196–7; Miniaci and Quirke 2008; 2009.

64 Quirke 1990: 17–21; 1999: 68–70. On date: Ryholt 1997: 222, 243–4, 319; previously dated to Sobekhotep II (Quirke 1990: 10–13; 1999: 68–70).

65 As is shown by later manuscripts with colophons: the Ramessid P. D'Orbiney (*The Tale of the Two Brothers*) is dedicated to the apprentice scribe's master Qageb, but was 'made by the scribe Inena, the owner of this manuscript' (P. BM EA 10183 19.7–10: Gardiner 1932: 29).

66 Parkinson 2009: 120 n. 13; there is no need to suggest that the style of script is archaizing.

67 The start of the roll, containing the first part of *Kagemni* has been lost; the outer ends of rolls usually suffer most damage and this is probably damage that occurred after burial. The fact that the other roll seems also to have lost its initial margin might suggest that both rolls suffered similar damage or trimming post-excavation.

68 Often known as the 'Berlin papyri' or 'Berlin library'. See Parkinson and Baylis 2012. Description in Parkinson 2009: 84–112. Here an abbreviated and reference-less account is given.

69 Gardiner 1909: pls 5–15; Parkinson and Baylis 2012; fragments are P. Amherst 4 = Pierpont Morgan Amherst Egyptian Papyri 4 (Newberry 1899: pl. 1[m–q]).

70 Vogelsang and Gardiner 1908: pls 5–17; Parkinson and Baylis 2012; fragments are P. Amherst 1 = Pierpont Morgan Amherst Egyptian Papyri 1 (Newberry 1899: pl. 1[a–e]).

71 Vogelsang and Gardiner 1908: pls 18–23; Parkinson and Baylis 2012; fragments are P. Amherst 2 = Pierpont Morgan Amherst Egyptian Papyri 2 (Newberry 1899: pl. 1[f–g]).

72 Allen 2011; Parkinson and Baylis 2012; for the *Herdsman* see Gardiner 1909: pls 16–17. Other fragments are P. Amherst 3 = Pierpont Morgan Amherst Egyptian Papyri 3 (Parkinson 2003) and P. Mallorca I and II (Escolano-Poveda 2017).

73 The find is described by Quibell 1898: 3–4, pls 1–3. See Parkinson 2009: 141–60; Lorand 2009: 9–44; Gnirs 2009. The papyri are now in London and Berlin, and the artefacts are in Cambridge, Manchester, and Philadelphia (Parkinson 2012a).

74 It is unlikely that the tomb-owner was female nurse, as has been recently suggested (Gnirs 2009). Healing and caring for women is only one aspect of the group of texts, and what is known of literacy levels makes such ownership of the papyri contextually improbable.

75 See Gardiner 1955a; Parkinson 2012a for photographs and full bibliography; for a more detailed listing see Parkinson 2009: 146–7, 151–3 = table 6.1. I here provide references only for publications other than the general surveys of Gardiner 1955a; Parkinson 2012a; for the magical texts see Meyrat 2011.

76 These two separately numbered papyri might possibly have been parts of a single roll. The major part of this manuscript is mounted as P. Ramesseum C in five frames, and a fragment is mounted in a frame of P. Ramesseum 19 (EA 10772.2); other parts of the same or a closely similar manuscript are mounted as P. Ramesseum 18 in two frames (see Parkinson 2012a). See, however, Kraemer and Liszka 2016; Liszka and Kraemer 2016.

77 Although the hand is similar, the format is distinct from P. Ramesseum 3; Westendorf 1999: 11–15.

78 On the numbering see Leach 2006: 240.

79 For the use of the roll before the despatches see Smither 1945: pl. 5a n. 5f. See above §3.2.

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