LIBRARIES *before* ALEXANDRIA

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN TRADITIONS

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LIBRARIES BEFORE ALEXANDRIA

Libraries before Alexandria

Ancient Near Eastern Traditions

Edited by
KIM RYHOLT
and
GOJKO BARJAMOVIC

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Preface

This book is conceived as an introduction and reference to libraries in the pre-Classical world of Egypt and Western Asia. It originated from our conviction that a collected presentation, written by specialists, was long overdue, as outlined in Chapter 1. The final product has been much too long in the making. Almost a decade has passed from the first meeting and the lively debates of the authors in Denmark. We are grateful to the contributors for their patience and for their willingness to keep the editorial process going over such a long period of time.

The project on libraries in the pre-Classical Egypt and Western Asia which led to this book was the first of a series of large collaborative efforts initiated by the *Center for Canon and Identity Formation in the Earliest Literate Societies* under the University of Copenhagen Programme of Excellence directed by Kim Ryholt and with Gojko Barjamovic as its Associate Director. We owe our gratitude to the Rector of the University of Copenhagen for funding the research center over a five-year period 2008–2013.

Throughout our work, we have relied on the generosity of many colleagues and friends, with whom we have been privileged to have stimulating discussions and much help and advice. This includes the sixteen colleagues who graciously took out time to serve as anonymous readers of the ten chapters in this book. We are also indebted to numerous friends and colleagues working in archives, on excavations, and in museum collections, for kindly providing valuable images and plans used throughout this volume.

In particular, we are grateful to Haider Almamori, Adel al Tai, and Khalid al Timimi for their kind permission to publish a complete image of the magnificent E'ulmash library for the first time (Fig. 1.10), to Klaus Wagensonner for providing images and his own drawings from the Yale Babylonian Collection for the introductory chapter (Figs 1.5, 1.6, 1.9), to Fikri Kulakoğlu for sharing his unpublished excavation photo (Fig. 1.8), to Andreas Schachner for providing high-resolution plans of Hattusa (Figs 5.1–5.3), to Saad Eskander for his image from Kalhu (Fig. 8.2), to Felix Arnold for the plan of the tower house at Elephantine (Fig. 10.3), to Martin Andreas Stadler for the photograph of the temple library at Edfu (Fig. 10.4), to Luigi Prada for the photograph of the ostraca jars at Narmuthis (Fig. 10.12), and to Jeffrey C. Blossom of the Harvard Center for Geographic Analysis for producing the main map for the volume (pp. xviii–xix).

We are also grateful to Seraina Nett who provided the initial translation of Chapter 5 from German; to Paul Kosmin for valuable comments and criticism; to the remarkable work of Timothy R. Beck (University of Minnesota) during the copy-editing phase of the manuscript; and not least to Georgina Leighton, Kalpana Sagayanathan, Seemadevi Sekar and the Oxford University Press for their flexibility and support in producing this volume.

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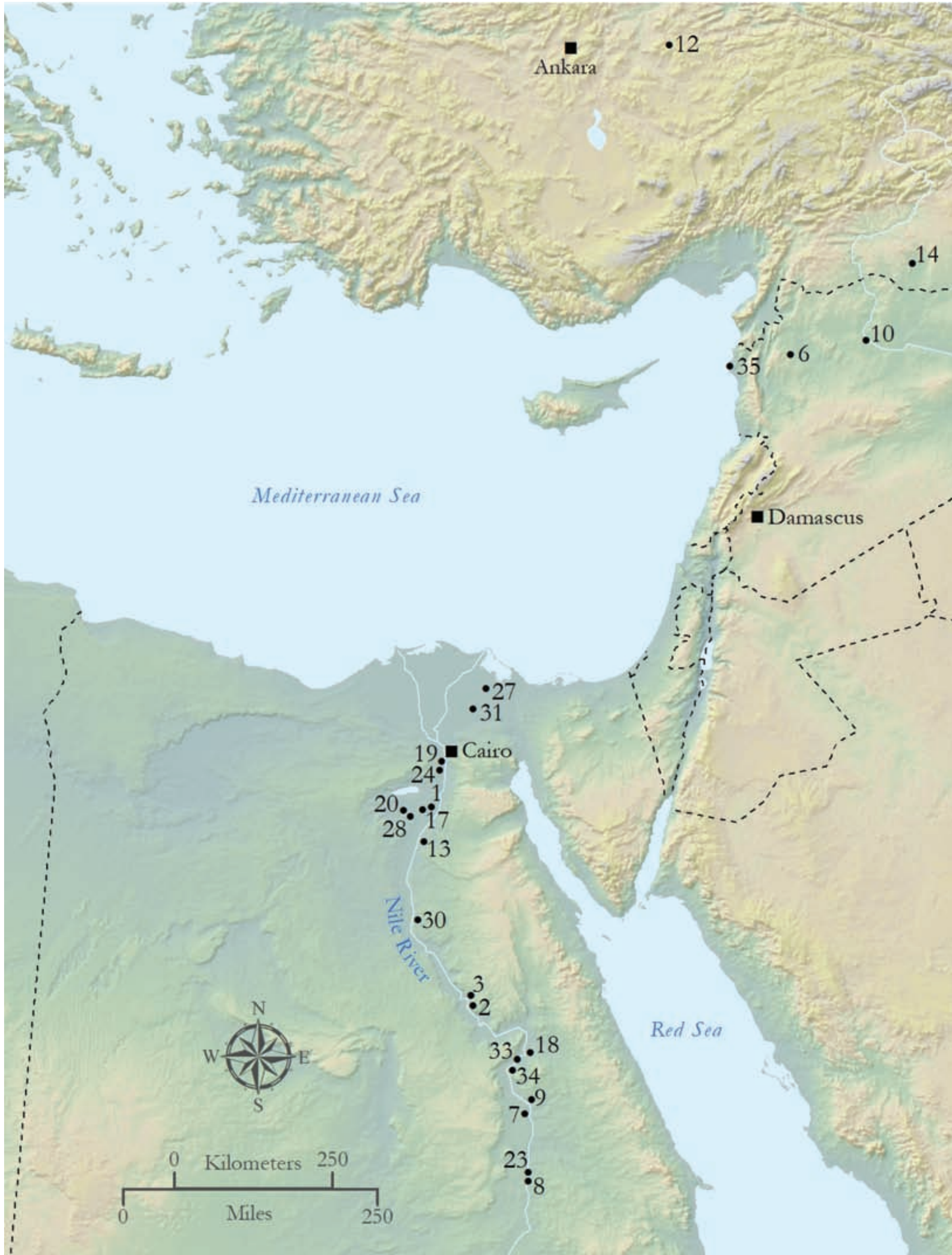

Map 1. Map of Egypt and Western Asia showing the location of libraries and assemblages of literary manuscripts discussed in the book.

Caspian Sea
Tehran
Baghdad
Tigris
Euphrates
Persian Gulf
32
16
21
15
4
26
5
29
22
25
37
36
11
1 - Abusir el-Melek
2 - el-Ahaiwah
3 - Akhmim
4 - Assur
5 - Babylon
6 - Ebla
7 - Edfu
8 - Elephantine
9 - Elkab
10 - Emar
11 - Haft Tepe
12 - Hattusa
13 - el-Hibeh
14 - Huzirina
15 - Kalhu
16 - Khorsabad
17 - Kom Medinet Gurob
18 - Medamud
19 - Memphis
20 - Narmouthis
21 - Nineveh
22 - Nippur
23 - Philae
24 - Saqqara
25 - Shuruppag
26 - Sippar
27 - Tanis
28 - Tebtunis
29 - Tell Abu Salabikh
30 - Tell el-Amarna
31 - Tell Tukh el-Qaramus
32 - Tigunanum?
33 - Thebes
34 - Tod
35 - Ugarit
36 - Ur
37 - Uruk
Map by Jeff Blossom
Center for Geographic Analysis
Harvard University

1

Libraries before Alexandria

Kim Ryholt and Gojko Barjamovic

1.1. THE LIBRARY IN ALEXANDRIA

The creation of the Library of Alexandria is widely regarded as one of the great achievements in the history of humankind—a giant endeavour to amass all known literature and scholarly texts in one central location so as to preserve it and make it available for the public. In turn, this event has been viewed as a historical turning point that separates the ancient world from classical antiquity. Standard works on the library continue to present the idea behind the institution as novel and, at least implicitly, a product of Greek thought.[1]

Yet, although the scale of the collection in Alexandria seems to have been unprecedented, the notion of creating central repositories of knowledge, while perhaps new to Greek tradition, was age-old in the Near East where the building was erected. Here the existence of libraries can be traced back another three millennia, and the creation of the Library in Alexandria was not as much the beginning of an intellectual adventure as the impressive culmination of a long tradition.

Seen in this context, it is no coincidence that the Library of Alexandria was built in Egypt and not in Greece itself. Ptolemy I established for himself a kingdom in a region that had both an ancient tradition of libraries and an outstanding reputation for wisdom in the Mediterranean world. For generations, Greeks philosophers had travelled to Egypt in their quest for knowledge, to the point where it became a recurrent theme or idea in contemporary

[1] Cf. e.g. the optimistic account by El-Abbadi 1990 and his 2016 article for *Encyclopædia Britannica*, as well as Casson 2001: 31f. MacLeod 2004 is slightly more careful regarding the novelty and Greekness of the Library, but also tends to take ancient sources at face value, cf. e.g. pp. 4–5. Even the critical article by Johnston 2014 refers to the 'invention of the library' (*passim*) and claims that for 'the first time we can see a library as an institution', building on a somewhat circular definition of the term 'library' itself (p. 356). A new and more sober approach to the historiography was opened up by Bagnall 2002 with a meticulous dismantling of the written tradition on what he called a 'Library of Dreams'.

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thinking that many of the greatest minds had studied there at one time or another. To give an example, the well-informed author Plutarch in *De Iside et Osiride* 10 claimed that Solon, Thales, Plato, Eudoxus, and Pythagoras all studied with priests in Egypt. While such claims are inherently difficult to prove in the case of individual philosophers, they are sufficiently common to provide evidence of an established tradition.

Ptolemy I would himself have been well aware of the intellectual reputation enjoyed by Egypt in his time. Significant proof of this is that one of his first acts as a ruler was a deliberate retrieval of the corpus of Egyptian temple literature, which had been removed by the Persians during their second occupation of Egypt 343–332 BCE. In fact, this accomplishment was so important in Ptolemy's self-representation that it was given priority even over the foundation of the city of Alexandria on the so-called *Satrap Stele* erected in 311 BCE (Ryholt §10.11). The circumstance that Ptolemy in this inscription explicitly mentioned the return of the Egyptian temple texts underlines a striking contrast to the Library of Alexandria, which is never once referred to in the extant, contemporary documents of the Ptolemaic kings.

It remains uncertain where the texts which Ptolemy claims he retrieved were deposited upon their return, but since Egypt had long attracted Greek philosophers, the idea of creating a designated space where they might undertake their studies in their native tongue seems a reasonable extension of this activity. The costly undertaking was hardly altruistic in nature. In contrast to the constructed narrative of a universal library with the primary purpose of preserving tradition and facilitating scholarship in its own right, the building of the library was more likely an action designed to promote carefully planned political ambitions. Ptolemy had forged a new major kingdom in the context of critical political tension and outright rivalry that followed the death of Alexander the Great, and it was necessary to legitimize such ambitions through various measures, both toward a local Egyptian audience, and to the Hellenistic world at large. Ptolemy's seizure of Alexander's body, and its burial in Egypt, was one of the most dramatic and symbolically laden of these undertakings. But the former general also authored a now lost biography of Alexander, in which he no doubt promoted his own role in relation to the king. The establishment of a large-scale library at the new royal residence in Egypt, and the prospect of generous funding, may be regarded as further means to promote these efforts—essentially creating an object of aristocratic and royal display and propaganda (Johnstone 2014: 349). It made it possible to attract renowned philosophers to the royal residence, and so to set up a royal court that would lend legitimacy to the new dynasty. Whether the idea of building a grand library in Alexandria was conceived already during the lifetime of Ptolemy I, or whether it only appeared by the time of his successor—ancient traditions are in conflict on this point—remains immaterial in this respect. This was a region that had a standing tradition for

libraries and an intellectual reputation. The first ruler of Ptolemaic Egypt chose to engage with this tradition from the outset.

Analogous developments in the other major successor states of Alexander's empire, including the rival Seleucid Empire in modern-day Iraq, point to a common *Zeitgeist* in political thought, but factual details outside of Egypt are vague. Although no individual collection achieved the fame of its Egyptian contender, Seleucid patronage produced great historical writers and scholars (Kurth 1987), who formed the venue of transmission for the Eastern library tradition into the Greek world (Frahm 2005; Goldstein 2010: 201–3). Tracing developments in the East further back, Beaulieu (2006: 28–32) has argued that the exposure of Alexander's generals to the great temple library of Marduk in Babylon and the tradition of Assurbanipal as patron of a royal collection may also have been important stimuli behind the creation of the Library in Alexandria.

Despite the enthusiastic reception of Egyptian and 'Oriental' wisdom in classical and Hellenistic times, there is a limited appreciation in modern scholarship of what central and multi-faceted roles libraries played throughout the Near East already many centuries before the founding of Alexandria. This is true both in respect to the libraries in their contemporary social context, and as a precursor for later traditions (du Toit 2011). This may in part be due to a historical bias—perhaps largely unconscious—that favours Greek and Western traditions. The phenomenon was much more pronounced in the past than it is today, when classical scholars often make great efforts to take the traditions and influence of bordering areas into account. But a more direct cause is the manner in which Near Eastern material has been studied and presented by the scholars who work on it. Much of the evidence for early libraries has been discussed by Assyriologists and Egyptologists primarily in communications aimed at their own scholarly communities, and through specialized publications in a jargon and with an attention to detail that does not facilitate easy access by colleagues from other fields.

It is thus symptomatic that a synthesis of the Near Eastern tradition for the benefit of a broader audience has not previously been attempted. The closest effort to date is the overview of *Libraries in the Ancient World* by Lionel Casson from 2001, which seeks to include Near Eastern material, but fails to use much of the less-accessible secondary literature. As a result, the early part of his volume focuses primarily on the well-known seventh-century BCE Library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, and it omits the evidence from Egypt entirely with the single comment that: 'Though it produced a rich body of writings, both technical and literary, it has nothing to add to the history of libraries. They existed there, to be sure, but we know of them only vaguely and indirectly' (Casson 2001: 15–16).

This brings us to another aspect of the Library of Alexandria—one that contrasts sharply with the earlier evidence from the ancient Near East. As far

as the ancient world is concerned, the Library of Alexandria ranks among its most widely known achievements. What is less well known outside a community of specialists is that our knowledge of that library is highly restricted by the fact that we lack any form of contemporary sources about it. Not a single manuscript from the collection survives, and not a single brick or stone from the building has been positively identified. We have no physical evidence for its location, size, or layout, and all our knowledge about it is based on later secondary and derivative sources.[2] Moreover, later tradition often provides conflicting information, even about such fundamental aspects as the date of creation and scope of the Library in Alexandria. This problematic situation, and a critical assessment of the desperate measures to which scholars have resorted in order to create a detailed history of the institution, are skilfully outlined by Roger Bagnall (2002) in *Alexandria: Library of Dreams*. Despite his caution, however, some scholars still insist on an acceptance of the most inflated figures found in later tradition in relation to the size and contents of the collection.

In contrast to the Library of Alexandria, virtually all evidence for libraries in the ancient Near East presented within this volume derives from primary sources. Above all, it consists of actual manuscripts that were consulted by an ancient audience. In several cases we even have at our disposal the remains of libraries found in their original context, i.e. the physical locations where they were created and used in antiquity. And because so many manuscripts are preserved, we are often in a position to see exactly what the ancient users saw: we can literally hold and study the same physical manuscripts and observe how texts were written, arranged, and organized. We can learn the style of writing and parsing, inspect errors and corrections, and form an impression of the physical properties of the collections. Sometimes we can even ascribe a group of texts to specific individuals on the basis of colophons or distinctive traits in the handwriting. In short, we gain insight into the details of the physical world of library and scribal culture that are rarely available in the Graeco-Roman world outside of Egypt.

1.2. A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO LIBRARIES IN EGYPT AND WESTERN ASIA

This volume draws upon evidence from the entire ancient Near East, examining both the cuneiform cultures of Western Asia and the written traditions

[2] The same holds true for the so-called Library of Pergamum. Its identification within the ruins of the sanctuary of Athena on the acropolis of Pergamum in Asia Minor, proposed in the 1880s and frequently cited ever since, has now been shown to be baseless (Coqueugniot 2013).

of ancient Egypt. The approach is comparative and builds upon material dating to the first three and a half millennia of written human history, *c.*3300 BCE–300 CE. The reason to study the two areas together seems to us as evident as it is uncommon in current scholarly practice. There have been previous attempts to study the literary tradition of the ancient Near East as a whole, often driven by a desire to shed light on the writings of the Hebrew Bible. The early development of script and literacy in Egypt and Western Asia has also received much attention. But there has not yet been a comparative study of the collection and preservation of the literary tradition in the specific sense, in spite of the fact that the Egyptian and cuneiform corpora share important structural similarities, were contemporaneous, and remained in contact throughout history. Modern disciplinary boundaries seem at times to be more difficult to cross than ancient frontiers. The intention in this volume is therefore to compare two closely related traditions, allowing us not only to extract new data and ideas, but also to inspire new sets of questions and produce analytical tools that have a wider application.

The idea for this book goes back to a conference held at St Andrews University in 2008 on Ancient Libraries (König et al. (eds) 2013), which included two papers on the Near East that sought to contextualize the rise of libraries in the classical world. The conference showed that relatively few colleagues outside Assyriology and Egyptology were aware of the existence of the very long tradition and, above all, the abundant physical evidence for libraries in the pre-Hellenistic Near East. It thus exposed a need for an accessible synthesis of the evidence for the earliest libraries, both in their own right, and as a precursor to Graeco-Roman traditions.

In overviews of classical tradition, the Library of Alexandria frequently appears as an embryonic example of what became the major institutional collections of written tradition—often implicitly, and sometimes directly, assumed to have risen *ex nihilo* as a creation of early Hellenistic tradition. It is rarely asked *why* the Library of Alexandria was built in Egypt—and not Greece (or elsewhere in the Hellenistic world)—and how the countless works it contained came into being, if not from an already existing tradition. The writing of an accessible synthesis about library traditions in the ancient Near East thus became a key component in a broader research project devoted to the exploration of the intellectual history of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, conducted at the Center for Canon and Identity Formation in the Earliest Literate Societies as part of the University of Copenhagen Programme of Excellence between 2008 and 2013.

Instead of writing a top-down descriptive volume about the development of libraries in the pre-Hellenistic world, our approach was to engage a group of specialists from various subfields within ancient Near Eastern studies each to work on one given topic and a set task. The present book therefore constitutes a collaboration between scholars who are all expert philologists and historians

with solid experience in working with the particular set of sources that they write about. Each author was asked to present a synthesis of the tradition of libraries in a given area and time period, and then to offer a selection of cases studies for comparison. The intent was for all participants to employ a bottom-up approach, and to draw conclusions based on the surviving material, rather than to form abstract models and then look for evidence that might corroborate it. Our consideration has been to avoid the potential risk of failing to take into account such sources that might not fit the models. The authors were given the freedom to choose the focus of their case study, and the chapters are unequal in length, not as a result of priority being given to one culture or period over another, but as determined by the extent of surviving material and its current state of publication. All chapters have sought to synthesize and provide references to already available discussions and, where necessary, to examine at greater length relevant material that is less well known.

Focus on primary source material means that large parts of each presentation are descriptive in nature. An effort has been made to present the actual material to the reader so as to allow them to form their own impression and draw their own conclusions. Our desire has been to avoid abstract speculations of what might have been, or to present rigid classification schemes, which we believe would have been alien to the ancient actors (compare e.g. Zinn 2007, 2008, 2011 to Robson 2013: 54–5). Presenting and synthesizing this primary source material for the first time allows us to identify structures and define connections that have previously been invisible. On a more concrete level, it has also allowed us to investigate the advent of technologies and development of administrative patterns that led to the formation of libraries, and to examine how these were organized and kept in a physical sense. We can thus add a material dimension to library tradition as it emerged and evolved that is often disregarded in later contexts due to a lack of sources. Finally, the comparative method allows us to explore important social dimensions of libraries, such as literacy, textual transmission, and access and use of knowledge in a broad historical context.

The difference in approach between the individual chapters is revealing in itself. A large preserved material of texts and collections has led to a long tradition of research into the cuneiform libraries of Western Asia (Unger 1938; Weitemeyer 1956; Veenhof 1986; Pedersén 1998; Clancier 2009; Frahm 2011; Robson 2013). In the field of Egyptology, the subject has received less attention. Studies have traditionally focused on evidence dating to the Middle and New Kingdoms, and have drawn upon a relatively closed corpus. The only attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of the Egyptian data is found in Burkard 1980 as an article in *Bibliotheken*, a German libraries' journal. It lies in the nature of his presentation that the bulk of the material could not be discussed in any detail.

Furthermore, neither the formative third-millennium evidence from Mesopotamia (Zand), nor the vast Late Period and Graeco-Roman material from

Egypt (Ryholt) has previously been synthesized. As a result, the authors of the present volume have been obliged to engage with their subjects on different levels of detail. Much relevant information remains to be compiled, and necessitates access to unpublished sources and archival research. It is our hope that the reader will appreciate the progress in this field, marked, we believe, over the last decades. All contributors have sought to incorporate older material and place it in a broader context, as well as to include new or hitherto neglected material into their analysis.

The way in which the volume was designed leads to a certain degree of repetition between individual chapters. Each contribution is written so that one may read it separately or in combination with the others. The book is also structured so as to allow the reader to compare traditions in the neighbouring cultures of the Near East in terms of scribal traditions and library culture from the beginning of history until the building of the Library of Alexandria. For the sake of consistency, both the cuneiform and the Egyptian hieroglyphic tradition are explored until their end. In the case of Mesopotamia, the contributions therefore cover the period from the middle of the third millennium BCE until the first century before the Common Era. The final chapter on the Egyptian evidence continues until the third century of the Common Era, but leaves out collections of texts written exclusively in Greek.

1.3. DEFINING LIBRARIES

What do we understand by the term library? Common reference works show that there is no consensus on the matter, even with regard to its modern definition. In order to facilitate comparison, we have therefore deliberately decided against any attempt to establish a narrow definition or the coining or use of periphrastic terminology. We feel this would be more pedantic than useful. We have instead opted for a more free use of the term, and have allowed authors the liberty to formulate their own personal definition of this and other key terms, such as 'archive', 'literature', 'genre', 'books', etc., as they find best fits the material they discuss. For the purpose of this introduction, the term 'library' is taken to refer to any collection, irrespective of size, of non-documentary or epistolary texts that were deliberately kept together, as well as the places intended for the storage of such collections while they were in use.

There have naturally been several attempts to establish more narrow definitions. One proposal, within an Egyptian context, has been to reserve the term 'library' only for those collections of texts that had 'the aim of handing down the cultural memory of a community or society, and of ensuring the continued availability of its knowledge and skills' (Zinn 2007: 172; 2011: 181). Collections that might meet these criteria include the temple libraries from

Graeco-Roman Egypt, both the manuscripts themselves, and those texts that were monumentally engraved on temple walls, which sought to secure the integrity of a specialized corpus of cultic literature in order to ensure the correct conduct of the various rituals in all perpetuity (Ryholt §10.6.1). However, instances in which patrons or institutions collected texts specifically in order to hand down cultural memory and ensure its availability are on a whole infrequent, and such a definition would exclude most of the examples discussed in the present volume, including the numerous private collections of literary and reference works, most of which had a practical purpose.

In a more recent contribution, Johnstone (2014) defines libraries as 'fundamentally political institutions', concerned with public display and propaganda by rich and powerful men, rather than being repositories of knowledge. Based on this definition, he attributes what he calls 'the invention of the library' to the Greeks and dates it specifically to the second century BCE. In his view, the material he classifies as libraries marks a contrast to 'earlier collections of books—which had been small, vocational, and private'. Such a narrow definition would again exclude what most of us would intuitively understand to be covered by the term, and the chapters in the present volume will show that far from all earlier collections of literary texts were small, vocational, and private.

Recourse to ancient terminology does not help to establish a useful definition of the term, since it is neither defined in the ancient texts themselves, nor used as a classification tool to any great extent. The most common ancient words for libraries include *edubba/bīt ṭuppim* 'tablet house' and *girginakku* 'collection' in Western Asia, and *per medjat* 'the house of the book' in Egypt. None of these terms cover a semantic field that overlaps entirely with current usage, and in all cases, they embrace more than a collection or storage of specifically non-documentary texts. Thus, the term *edubba* can refer specifically to a 'school' (Delnero §4.5) or more generally to any office or bureau, a *girgenna/girginakku* can denote a textual compilation in the literary sense, as well as the physical installation used to store tablets (Richardson 2006; Charpin 2007). Similarly, a *per medjat* can refer to various collections of inscribed papyri, while the frequently cited *per ankh* 'the house of life' appears to have been a cultic institution associated specifically with the god Osiris (Ryholt §10.8). Finally, ancient texts are mostly found in mixed groups that do not clearly distinguish administrative records from literary works (Pedersén 1998; Parkinson §3.1.2) and thus defy clear-cut definitions.

We choose a less rigid approach and use the term 'library' to refer to any collection of non-documentary texts found together, without regard to its purpose, access, and ownership. Such a broad definition in turn leads to the question of how to define non-documentary or 'literary' texts in order to distinguish libraries from archives. Since modern classification matches ancient material only in part, we opt for a definition that allows the introduction of

some degree of flexibility into our comparisons. Accordingly, we take 'literary' texts to include composition that reflects 'broader mental activities' as opposed to a unique event. This would include texts that are not constrained by their date of creation, and possess a broader usefulness, in contrast to documentary records and letters. This includes poetic and narrative literature, wisdom literature, manuals of mathematics, medicine, and divination, sign lists and lexical works, historical, ritual, and cultic texts.

1.4. ADVENT OF WRITING AND FIRST LIBRARIES

The advent of writing allowed knowledge to be shared between individuals without them having to meet face to face. Information could in principle be stored and retrieved indefinitely, and the collection of data could be expanded beyond the mental capacity of any single individual. Writing allowed an accretion of knowledge at a speed and with an accuracy that had not previously been possible. But writing was also an instrument of power—in practical terms through bureaucracy and religion, and in social terms as cultural capital.

The earliest example of semantic and conceptual ordering in Mesopotamia apart from language and the writing system itself comes from lists of words, terms, or signs that were used as reference collections and teaching tools. Such lexical lists turn up alongside the earliest administrative texts and must be linked to the origin of writing itself (Woods 2010: 40–1). In Egypt the process is less easy to follow, but the hieroglyphic script employs a system of so-called determinatives to classify words according to conceptual taxonomies. In both regions, lists and words were from the beginning sorted according to content or nature: designations of professions, personal names, animals, plants, products, toponyms, and so on.

The chapters in this volume indicate a slow progression of gathering texts and structuring them into libraries, beginning with mostly small and scattered collections in the earliest chapters, and ending up with the great libraries of Assurbanipal and Tebtunis. In reality, the picture is much less straightforward and should take into account both periods of political and social collapse, and the questions of preservation and accident of excavation. Already in the opening chapter, we hear of small but frequent groups of non-documentary texts found in the private houses of the Sumerian city of Shuruppag (Zand §2.2). A similar picture is currently emerging from excavations of private houses at the Early Dynastic site of Umm al-Aqarib (Almamori 2014). When archaeologists uncover large exposures in urban settlements, we may assume that what they find is to some extent representative of ancient reality. And thus, when a relatively large proportion of the town houses contain texts that do not have an immediately apparent 'practical' value—being for

instance, part of a poetic composition, or a list of proverbs—it is necessary to consider what this means for the frequency of libraries and the existence of a 'reading audience' as early as the middle of the third millennium BCE.

At first glance it might also be assumed there was a difference between Egypt and Mesopotamia in this respect, since minor private collections of non-utilitarian texts abound in the latter region, but are rare in the former. Often the absence of private collections of texts in early Egypt is taken as an argument (though mostly based on silence) of writing being a tool of the highest elite, and a jealously guarded trade that was reserved for the few. The social status associated with the ability to write in the Old Kingdom is indeed inferred from the numerous scribal statues found in the burials of state officials, and the common presence of writing equipment in the tombs (Fig. 1.1). On the other hand, a similarly high status was explicitly associated with the command of writing also in early Mesopotamia, and yet we find many examples of collections of non-documentary texts in private houses. This is arguably a case where comparison between the two areas help us to raise questions that are not apparent from looking at each region independently.

The question of when the first libraries came into existence cannot be positively answered. There are indications that writing in the first few centuries after its invention was used almost exclusively for purposes of administration and accounting. Yet, in Mesopotamia the archaic lexical lists (Zand §2.1) were used for training as well as for reference since the very beginning of writing, and these can very broadly be regarded as 'literary' in the sense that they were continuously re-copied and in some sense represent attempts to order the world through classification (Veldhuis 2014). The lists were seemingly kept together with administrative records, and not in separate collections, and one may suggest that the first libraries likely grew out of a need to organize texts related to the training of those who managed the early institutional archives.

By the second half of the third millennium BCE we begin to find the first clear examples of collections of non-administrative texts and reference works in both Egypt and Syro-Mesopotamia (Zand §2.1; Parkinson §3.1). Towards the end of the period covered by this volume one gets preserved examples of truly large institutional libraries, with an early example surviving from Bronze Age Anatolia (Dardano §5.1). Most impressive are the collections of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal (668–627 BCE) at Nineveh, which held more than 25,000 tablets (Finkel §9.3). This makes it by far the largest assembly of literary and scholarly works from the ancient world, and indeed the only physical collection comparable to those mentioned in the tradition of the lost resources of Alexandria. With the assumption that perhaps half of what was originally kept in the royal collections at Nineveh has survived, a total size of some 30,000 tablets for the collections seems

Fig. 1.1. Egyptian scribal statue of a high official from the Kushite Period, dating to the late eighth century BCE. By the time the present example was carved, scribal statues had been produced for more than 1500 years. The official is depicted using his right hand to write on a papyrus that is partially rolled out across his lap. The rest of the papyrus, still rolled up and ready for use, is held in his left hand. In real life the scribe would have held a reed pen between his fingers and would have written the text in the hieratic script. But since sculptures like this were placed in temples and tombs, where the individual in question might receive funerary offerings, the papyrus was instead inscribed with a hieroglyphic text to provide the identity of the individual in question. Offering formulas were also often added. Quartzite, height 55 cm. British Museum EA 1514.

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reasonable. This estimate represents the accumulation of a long intellectual tradition that had its roots at least two millennia earlier.

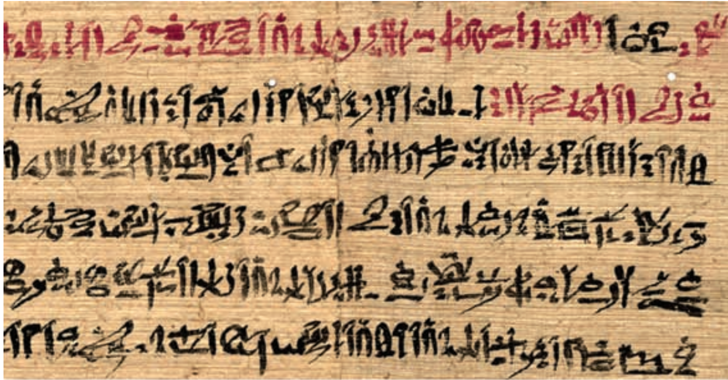
1.5. MATERIALITY AND MANUSCRIPT

Although writing was developed in Egypt and Western Asia around the same time, the associated technology for creating manuscripts differs considerably between the two regions. This led to differences in scribal practices, as well as in the collection and storage of manuscripts. In Western Asia the main writing surface was clay. Signs were shaped and texts written by pressing a sharp or rounded stylus made of reed, bone, or metal into the soft surface. This technology was adapted for writing various scripts and languages, from Iran to Cyprus and the Aegean. In Egypt the preferred medium was papyrus, which was inscribed with a rush dipped in ink (Figs. 1.2, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, and 7.9). Here, the development of writing entailed both the invention of a form of paper and different types of ink. After more than two millennia of use, the technology spread to Greece and Rome, becoming the dominant means of writing and communication in the Mediterranean world. Less commonly preserved media for manuscripts are also known in both areas and through all time periods. These include tablets of stone, metal, wood (sometimes coated with wax), as well as inscribed potsherds and flakes of stone known as *ostraca* (Figs. 1.3 and 7.4).

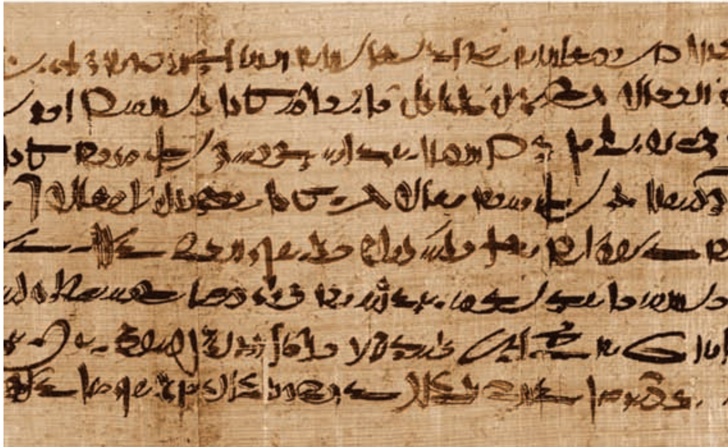
The oldest surviving papyri and ostraca from Egypt both date to the mid-1st Dynasty, *c.*2950 BCE. Leather, wooden tablets, and in some periods also clay tablets were used alongside papyri and ostraca (Parkinson §3.1; Hagen §7.2.1). In Mesopotamia clay tablets appeared around 3300 BCE and continued to be produced until the beginning of the first century of the Common Era (Woods 2010). However, a shift toward Aramaic as the main spoken language across the Near East during the first millennium BCE led to a gradual change in script and the choice of written media. Writing went from being impressed as cuneiform wedges in clay to being written in ink characters on less durable parchment.[3] With the disappearance of the cuneiform script, the amount of written documentation surviving from the region west of Egypt severely diminishes.

The production of papyrus rolls is generally assumed to have been a specialized craft, centralized in a number of workshops (none of which have been identified) and sometimes even monopolized by the state. Papyrus has two sides: the front and the back—or, in papyrological parlance, the recto and verso (Fig. 7.8). Because of the manner in which papyrus was manufactured,

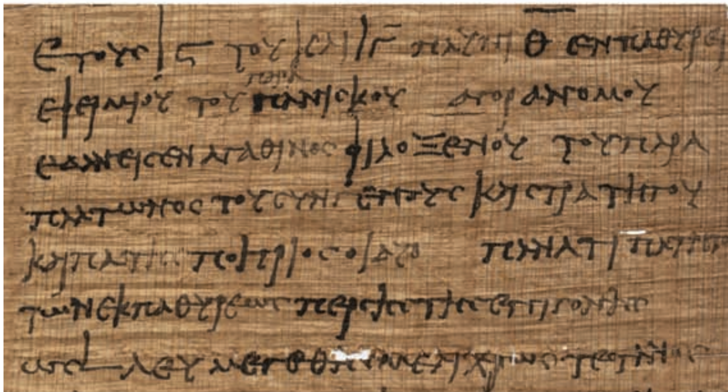
[3] Note e.g. Frahm 2005, who refers to three Babylonian tablets dated to the Hellenistic period that mention copies of cuneiform texts on parchment (*magallatu*).



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig. 1.2. Papyri with samples of different scripts. (a) Hieratic, eleventh century BCE. (b) Demotic, second century BCE. (c) Greek, second century BCE. The two Egyptian texts were written with a rush, while the Greek text was written with a reed.
Images courtesy of the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection.

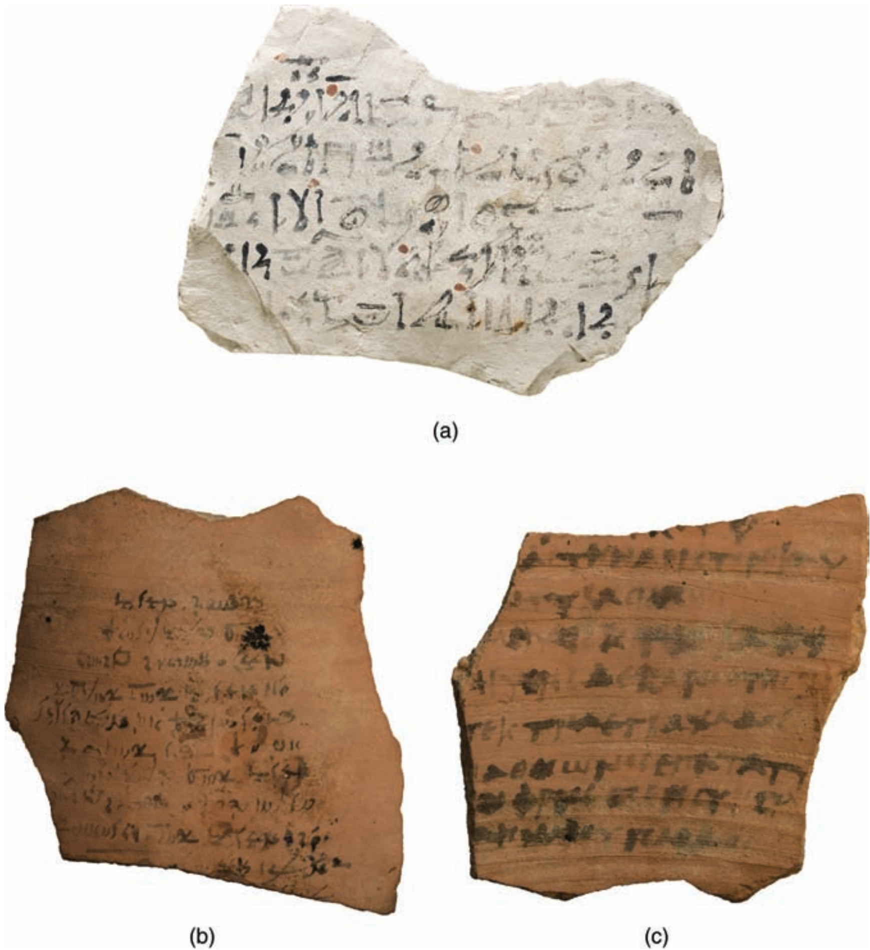


Fig. 1.3. Ostraca with samples of different scripts. (a) Limestone ostracon, inscribed with a hieratic literary text that has been provided with red verse points (O. Copenhagen NM 11677; thirteenth/eleventh century BCE). (b and c) Pottery ostracon, inscribed with records from a prison archive. The text on the outer surface was written in the demotic script. A text in Greek—written upside down in relation to the demotic—was later added to the inner surface (O. Haun. Dem. 2; third/second century BCE).

(a) Image courtesy of the National Museum of Denmark. (b and c) Images courtesy of the Papyrus Hauniensis Collection.

the finished product has the plant fibres horizontally laid on one side (the recto) and vertically on the other (the verso). When writing on a new roll of papyrus, the scribe would normally write along the fibres. Contrary to what was once assumed, this practice is unrelated to the direction of the fibres, but is a result of the manner in which papyrus was rolled. Scrolls were rolled with the vertical fibres on the outer side to put less strain on the horizontal fibres.

It was common for papyri that had outlived their original purpose to be re-used. Sometimes the text on the front was carefully washed away. Manuscripts with original texts that have been erased are referred to by the technical term ‘palimpsest’. Depending on how thorough the cleaning was, the original text is sometimes partly legible, but more often only traces remain. At other times, the blank reverse of the papyrus was used. However, the combination of turning the papyrus ‘inside-out’, and having the horizontal fibres on the outside, means that such ‘verso texts’ are generally less well preserved than those written on the front. Moreover, the fibres on the front were often smoothened with a polishing stone to facilitate writing, while the back was not prepared in such a manner and was therefore coarser. Smaller pieces of papyrus were usually cut from larger rolls, and would typically be folded rather than rolled. In such cases it was irrelevant whether one wrote along or across the fibres, although it would still be preferable to use the original front if the back was not smoothened. Just as full-size papyri might be cut up into smaller rolls or sheets, such smaller pieces could also be easily joined to form longer pieces or whole rolls when required. Cuneiform palimpsests also exist, but given the relative abundance and low material cost of clay, these are less common and mostly occur among documentary records and school texts.

The length of text that one can inscribe on a single clay tablet or papyrus differs markedly. The physical and practical restraints of writing on clay meant that long compositions had to be divided into individual tablets, often of a set length and order. These include literary works, such as the well-known classical version of the Gilgamesh Epic which ran across twelve tablets (George 2003), scholarly treatises like the forty-tablet ‘Diagnostic/Prognostic Handbook’ (Rutz 2011), and the canonical divinatory *barûtu*-series that was divided into more than one hundred tablets (Starr 1992; Robson 2011).

The potential length of a papyrus, on the other hand, is less well defined. The largest intact rolls are Papyrus Greenfield (a copy of the Book of the Dead) and the Great Harris Papyrus (a list of temple donations made by King Ramesses III) which measure *c.*37 and 42 metres respectively (Budge 1912: v; Grandet 1994: 32). These examples are exceptional, but Egyptian literary papyri of several metres in length seem to have been common at all times. An early example is an intact roll inscribed with Coffin Texts (Papyrus Gardiner II), which dates to the late Old Kingdom or the early Middle Kingdom and was about 10 metres long (Parkinson §3.3). Among the late texts, the Tebtunis temple library also offers several examples of very long papyri (Ryholt in preparation). One copy of the Myth of the Sun’s Eye would originally have measured *c.*20 metres in length (122 columns with a width of 17 cm), and one copy of the Inaros Epic written in a minute script would have measured about 8.5 metres (46 columns with a width of 18 cm). A copy of the latter text in regular size would have been much larger, and the library included at least two such copies—unfortunately both are now in a very poor state of preservation.

Next to papyrus, the most common medium for writing in Egypt was the ostracon. The term literally means 'potsherd' in Greek, but is used to refer to both inscribed clay sherds and stone flakes (mainly limestone). In contrast to papyrus, ostraca were by nature without material value. Potsherds were abundant everywhere, while limestone flakes were restricted to specific geological regions and are particularly common around Thebes. In the case of actual potsherds, the texts were usually written on the smooth outer surface. Limestone ostraca, like clay tablets and papyri, could be inscribed on both sides, and were sometimes even re-used by washing away older texts.

The main ink used in Egypt was black and made from soot mixed with gum arabic (Leach and Tait 2000: 238–9; Christiansen 2017). Red ink was commonly used to mark titles, headings, and key words in literary texts, and it also found specialized use in accounting. Egyptian scribal palettes always have two separate hollows for the black and red ink (Fig. 1.4), while some more specialized palettes have additional hollows for other colours used in illustrations. The ink was applied with a rush pen until the Ptolemaic period when the sharper reed pen gradually came to be adopted from Greek practice (Fig. 1.2). At this time, metallic inks also began to emerge.

The material world associated with cuneiform writing was different from that of pen and ink. Clay was an inexpensive, ubiquitous, and easily manipulated material that did not require much training to use for simpler operations (Taylor 2011; Taylor and Cartwright 2011). On the other hand, the level of craftsmanship and calligraphy required to create tablets such as those kept in the Hittite (Dardano) or Assyrian (Finkel) royal collections would have taken years to achieve. Also the reed and wood from which most styluses were cut (metal styluses are known as well) were in abundant supply. The shaping of a clay tablet was fairly straightforward, although quality and craftsmanship would vary significantly according to geography, period, and the importance ascribed to the finished text (Fig. 1.5). Some administrative tablets, business records, or school exercises could be written down fast and sometimes on coarse clay full of impurities, while considerable effort was invested in tablets destined for more permanent collections. Finer clay was made by carefully kneading out impurities and adding water to attain the desired consistency, plasticity, and strength. Unused tablet clay has been found in several excavations, typically associated with training facilities. The soft material was shaped, and the surface carefully smoothed in preparation for writing.

Like papyri, cuneiform tablets have an obverse and a reverse. In addition, they commonly bear writing along the edges. A feature particular to tablets as opposed to papyrus rolls (but shared with later codices) was the fact that they normally carried text on both sides as part of the primary writing process, and not as a result of secondary use. Writing ran from the very top of the tablet and continued across the lower edge onto its back. Any empty area would remain at the bottom of the tablet. Usually one would flip the tablet along the axis

Fig. 1.4. Egyptian scribal palette of wood with rush pens. The palette has two hollows in its upper part which would usually contain cakes of black and red ink, but this particular example appears to have been unused. A central groove, which is inscribed with the name of the owner, extends into a hollow in the bottom half of the palette and was used for the storage of pens. The cartouche with the name of King Amenhotep III at the very top suggests that the palette might have been a royal gift. Early fourteenth century BCE. British Museum EA 5513.

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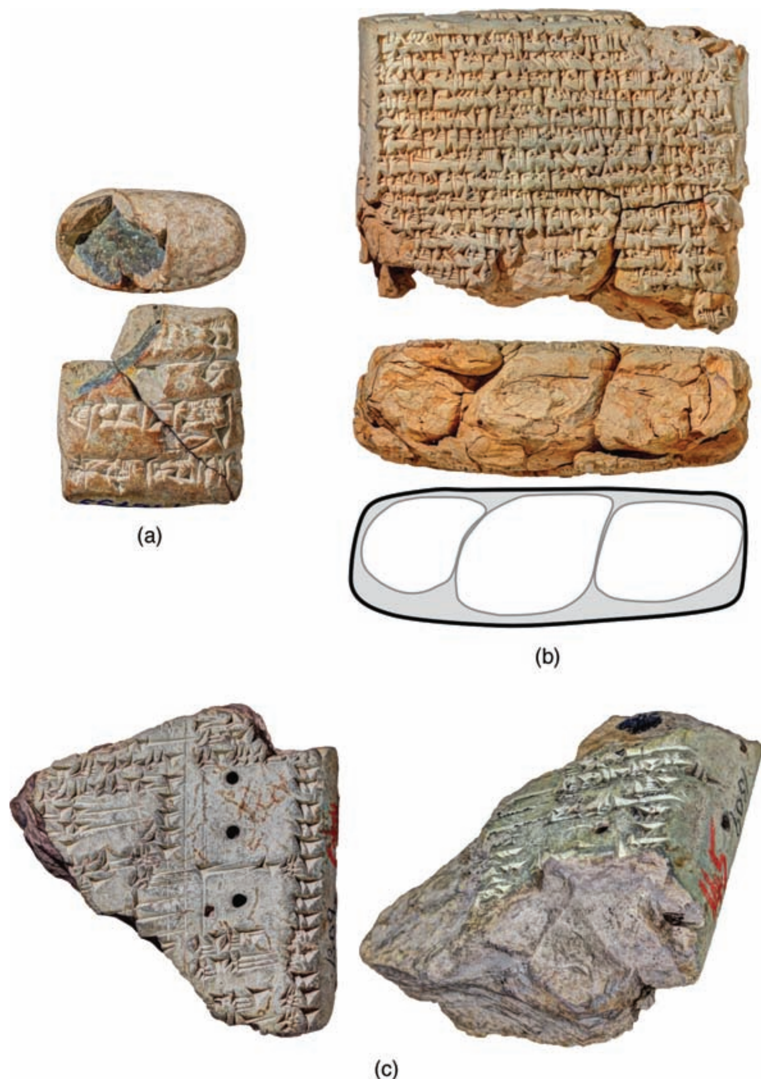


Fig. 1.5. Broken cuneiform tablets that show how objects were prepared for writing. Tablet A (YBC 16733, 29 × 27 × 15 mm, Babylonia) is an administrative record dated to 2046 BCE (Amar-Suen 1) built around a coarse clay core with temper and covered with a finer slip to serve as a writing surface. Tablet B (YBC 8955, 85 × 101 × 34 mm, Babylonia) is dated 153 BCE and consists of a fine slip surrounding three rolled 'sausages' of clay as shown in the schematic drawing. Tablet C (MLC 1309, 51 × 55 × 24 mm, Assyria) dated to the twelfth century BCE is a fine example of a scholarly tablet with circular perforations constructed as a thin slip on a kneaded clay core. The perforations probably served to allow the tablet to keep its exact shape as it dried. The fragment bears parts of the Sumerian-Akkadian lexical list known as 'HAR.RA=hubullu' after its incipient gloss, meaning 'interest-bearing debt'. The canonical version of this composition extends over twenty-four tablets. The bulk of the composition was compiled during early second millennium BCE, with pre-canonical forerunners extending into the late third millennium. The text lists naval and terrestrial vehicles, domestic and wild animals and birds, stones, plants, stars, and much else.

Photos by K. Wagensonner and courtesy of the Yale Babylonian Collection.

of its lower edge, and not from right to left (or vice versa) as in a modern book. Texts vary in size, curvature, thickness, and shape, from tiny rounded lentil-shaped tablets used in school exercises, to square objects the size of the modern-day US Letter or A4 formats or even larger (Fig. 1.6). During some periods, the shape of a tablet would vary according to genre and function (e.g. Radner 1995; Veldhuis 1997; Taylor 2011). Another feature that distinguishes cuneiform writing from Egyptian tradition is the three-dimensional nature of the script. The order and depth at which each wedge was impressed in the clay has no influence on the readings of each sign, but can be helpful in identifying individual scribal hands.

Early on, the writing surface of tablets was divided into 'cases' (i.e. squares or boxes) and arranged in vertical columns that were read from top to bottom. By the late third millennium BCE writing came to be divided into lines that ran from left to right in the same manner as a page written in Greek or Latin. Conversely, Egyptian writing usually ran from right to left in the same manner as the later Hebrew and Arabic scripts. Sometimes cuneiform texts were divided into close-set columns—two, three, or more on each side. Tablets belonging to the same longer work or series could be identified by a colophon or 'catch line' that revealed its position in the sequence. In Egyptian tradition, such physical divisions of the manuscripts were exceptional, since a roll of papyrus could usually be enlarged to fit any length of text by adding an extra section to the end of the roll. Finished clay tablets were usually dried in open air, but could also be baked. Even when dried in the sun, the primary text was more or less final once it had been written, although minor changes could be made by soaking parts of the tablet or incising wedges with a sharp knife. In this way, the production of a text written in clay had to be planned out and conceptualized as part of shaping the object that would carry the inscription, and the process would have to include thoughts on final length and layout. Unlike papyrus, the production of the surface and writing itself thus formed an integrated process and part of scribal composition.

Although enormous quantities of papyrus were consumed in Egypt, extensive re-use seems to have been common during all periods (Fig. 1.7). This may reflect mere practical concerns, as well as issues of supply and distribution. As mentioned above, the original text was sometimes washed away with water to provide blank space. The fact that even ostraca were sometimes washed clean in spite their low material value suggests that the procedure was relatively uncomplicated and that some inks were easily soluble. Also cuneiform tablets could be re-used (cf. e.g. Pedersén 1998: 241), although the practice may have been less common than usually thought (Taylor and Cartwright 2011). In Egypt, re-used manuscripts could be employed for most kinds of texts, including poetical and narrative literature (Parkinson §3.6.2; Hagen §7.5.3–7.5.5; Ryholt §10.2.1.3). The exception is formed by texts destined for use within what we might term 'sacred spaces', i.e. temples and tombs.

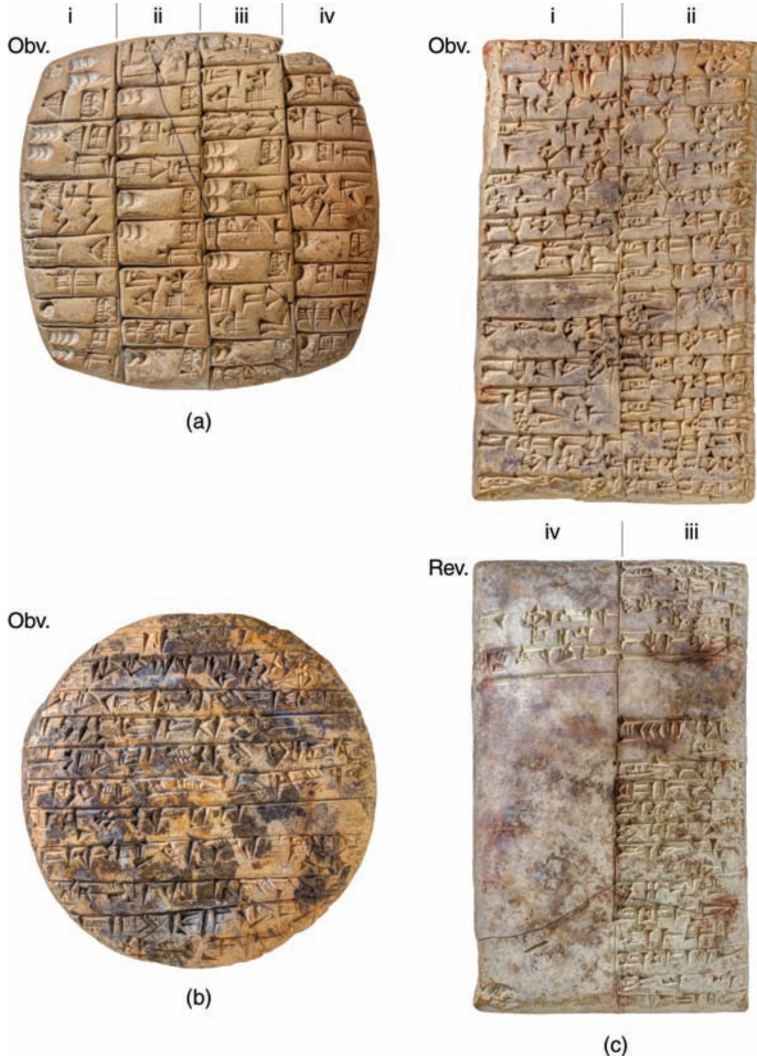


Fig. 1.6. Different tablet types and formats through history. Tablet A (MLC 1505, 84 × 84 × 24 mm) is a multi-column account of sheep and goat skins from Lagash, dated *c.*2600 BCE. It is similar in type to the texts discussed by Zand in Chapter 2. Tablet B (RBC 2000, 83 × 83 × 25 mm, provenience unknown) is a lenticular tablet dated *c.*2250 BCE that carries a short literary text: a prayer about 'the big house'. Based on its round shape, the tablet may have come from a school or other educational setting. Tablet C (YBC 3654, 132 × 79 × 26 mm, provenience unknown) is a multi-columned tablet dated to the second half of the twenty-first century BCE that bears a series of incipits, effectively cataloguing a series of literary compositions. Tablet D (YBC 13523, 155 × 75 × 75 mm, provenience unknown) is a six-sided prism with a perforation through its middle that allows the prism to be mounted on a wooden pole during writing. It bears the so-called 'Hymn A' to the Goddess Nisaba. Laying out and inscribing a prism without sections being cramped or parts of the clay bending or drying up while still in production was an intricate task that required a highly skilled scribe. Tablet E (MLC 1874, 165 × 109 × 19 mm, Uruk) is dated 214 BCE and was once in the possession of

Fig 1.6 Continued

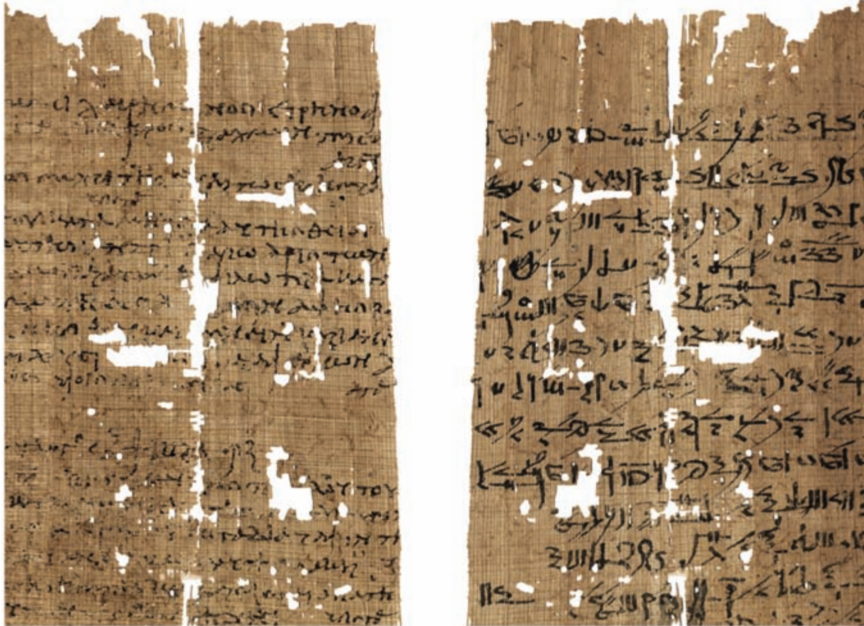
the scholar Nidinti-Anu (discussed by Robson and Stevens in §8.6.1). In addition to its provenience and date, the tablet colophon also states that this is the '55th tablet of the divinatory series *If the Intestine*'. Tablet F (MET 54.117.12a/b, 335 × 160 × 15 mm, Nimrud) recovered from a well in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, these two flat pieces of ivory were used as writing boards. Ridges along one of the long sides of each board mark the attachment points for the hinges that held two or more leaves together. When closed, the smooth outer faces resemble the covers of a book. On the inner sides, between raised edge borders, the coarsened surface was filled with beeswax that could be inscribed with a pointed stylus. Such boards were used to write texts in a variety of

Fig 1.6 Continued

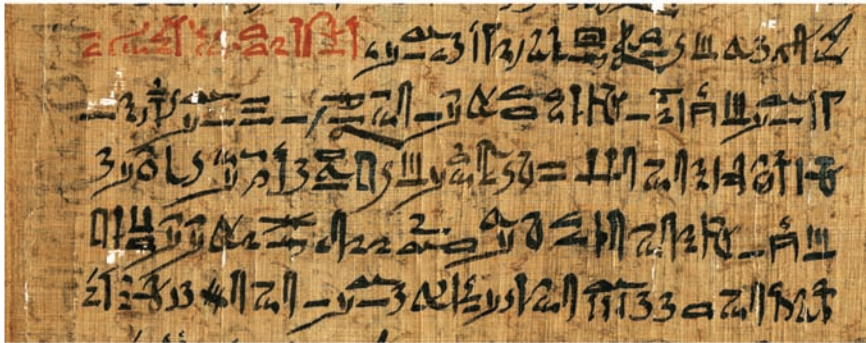
scripts, including syllabic cuneiform and alphabetic Aramaic. Due to their material value, only a few ivory or wooden writing boards survive, but they are known from textual references throughout cuneiform history and were probably fairly common in larger collections of text from the second millennium onwards.

Tablets A–E: photos by K. Wagensonner and courtesy of the Yale Babylonian Collection. Writing board: photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Extensive precaution was taken to ensure that such places were unpolluted, since this could the affect the efficacy of the rituals carried out in relation to the gods or the deceased. Priests therefore underwent rigorous purification rites before entering the inner parts of the temple, and no unclean objects (including materials of foreign origin) could be brought along. For the same



(b) (a)



(c)

Fig. 1.7. Examples of re-used papyri. (a–b) Section of a document in Greek (left), where the blank reverse of the papyrus was later inscribed with a demotic literary text (right) (P. Carlsberg 133, second century CE). (c) Section of a hieratic papyrus inscribed over an older text, after it had been washed out and the papyrus had been turned at a 90° angle. Traces of the original text are clearly visible on the left-hand side. The reverse was never inscribed (P. Carlsberg 6, *c.*thirteenth century BCE).

Images courtesy of the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection.

reason, ritual texts had to be written on clean, previously unused papyrus (Ryholt 2018: 155–61).

1.6. PATTERNS OF PRESERVATION

The fact that clay tablets are chemically analogous to the soil in which they are deposited secures their survival in most contexts (Fig. 1.8). The main exception to this rule is when modern ground water has risen above its ancient levels and inundated earlier strata. In such cases, tablets will often disintegrate

Fig. 1.8. Clay tablet, still in the ground, excavated in 2009 by Prof. Kulakoğlu and his team from Ankara University at the site of Kültepe in Turkey. Ancient clay tablets, sometimes found in groups of hundreds, or even thousands, were rarely fired in antiquity, and can be almost indistinguishable from the surrounding soil. They require the utmost care and precision by the archaeologists to excavate. In this case, the tablet was left to air-dry, and by the time this photo was taken it looks fairly sturdy and ready for removal. Tablets discovered closer to the modern-day water table can have the consistence of soggy biscuits when found. It is therefore a major achievement that so many thousands of tablets have been successfully unearthed from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and elsewhere.

Photo by Fikri Kulakoğlu and courtesy of the Kültepe Excavations.

and their contents will be lost. In special cases tablets were fired to preserve them in antiquity; this process turned them into virtually indestructible terracotta that survives even in wet ground. More often the firing happened accidentally as part of a conflagration that destroyed the environment in which the tablets were kept. Often they would shatter from the heat or as the structure surrounding them collapsed, or they would break when they were discarded or re-used as building material. This means that surviving material may be of a fragmentary nature, but also that careful excavation can in principle recover the fragments, and allow texts to be reassembled. In reality, the crude methods of early archaeologists and countless illicit diggings means that part of the textual record from Mesopotamia is badly damaged.

Nevertheless, the fact that clay was the most common medium for writing in Western Asia for nearly three millennia means that at least 550,000 objects inscribed in cuneiform script have been unearthed and are currently kept in collections around the world. Less than one quarter of them are published. Streck (2010) has provided a basis for comparing the size of ancient text corpora, producing an estimate total number of words preserved in each of the major ancient languages. He calculates the total number of words recorded in cuneiform script in texts that survive today at roughly 14 million; this number exceeds the preserved corpus in classical Latin of some 10 million words. In comparison, the ancient Greek corpus is estimated at 57 million words and the ancient Egyptian at some 6 million. Also, unlike Greek and Roman literature, which mostly exists in secondary copies that have been passed down through tradition, virtually all written sources from ancient Egypt and Western Asia survive in primary copies that have remained in the ground since their time of use. For this reason, their study is characterized by access to an open corpus, to which one can expect a sizeable sample of new texts added from archaeological excavations and museum studies each year, and has led to a distinct disciplinary practice in Assyriology and Egyptology with a focus on the study of context and the use of text (Van De Mieroop 1999).

In comparison to clay tablets, papyrus and ink are much more vulnerable to the environment. Papyri are normally preserved only in arid climates and disintegrate when exposed to humidity. This is why so few of the millions of papyrus documents that once formed part of everyday life in the Mediterranean world survive to this day. On a satellite image of Egypt the entire fertile area that shows up in green colour represents a 'negative space' in terms of recovery—this is the region where no papyrus will survive under normal conditions (Map 1). This includes nearly all of the area where settlements were located. Only places that were deliberately built within the desert zones, such as the Ramesside village at Deir el-Medina (Hagen §7.5.5) and the Graeco-Roman town of Tebtunis (Ryholt §10.2.1), would yield papyri, but such settlements form the exception. Thus, only a few per cent of the area inhabited in ancient times has a climate suitable for the preservation of

papyrus. Moreover, within this limited zone, ancient sites have often been damaged or destroyed by illicit and undocumented excavations, large-scale removal of ancient occupational deposits for use as fertilizer (so-called *sebbakh*), and by modern construction.

While relatively few settlements in Egypt have therefore produced large numbers of papyri, the main exceptions being relatively late sites such as Oxyrhynchus and Tebtunis, many manuscripts have come out of tombs. These were normally built on the desert edge, and the dry, concealed burial chambers offer an ideal environment for preservation. The majority of papyri found in such contexts are funerary in nature, but there are examples of other genres (Parkinson §3.6; Hagen §7.5; Ryholt §10.4). Nearly all large and well-preserved papyri presumably derive from tombs, but this is often difficult to prove, since most of them lack a documented archaeological context (§1.8).

It is difficult to estimate how many papyri and ostraca survive from Egypt, but in rough numbers there are perhaps fragments of half a million papyri alone. The *Trismegistos* on-line catalogue currently lists a total of some 65,000 published papyri (accessed 8 January 2019) dating from the Saïte period, 664 BCE, onwards. This equals roughly 10 per cent of the total of number of papyrus manuscripts, but since scholars have preferred to focus on better-preserved examples, the published percentage in terms of quantity of text is much higher. Literary papyri from the first thousand years of Egyptian history are very rare (Parkinson §3.1). For ostraca, the skew is even more pronounced. The material from the Ramesside settlement of Deir el-Medina at Thebes (*c.*1500–1100 BCE) now kept in various collections around the world has been estimated at about 20,000 pieces, about one quarter of which are published (Hagen 2011: 1, n. 1). This figure represents more than 90 per cent of the total number of ostraca documented for the first two and a half millennia of recorded Egyptian history. This extreme distortion may in part be due to archaeological attention: Thebes has always held a favoured status among excavators due to its large tombs and temples and the dry climate that provides optimal preservation. At the same time, it remains difficult to explain why so few ostraca have been found at a site such as the royal capital of Tell el-Amarna, where conditions are similar to Thebes and where intensive archaeological exploration has been carried out. It remains a possibility that Thebes had a stronger tradition for the use of ostraca than elsewhere.

We find a greater spread of ostraca from the Saïte period onwards. *Trismegistos* reports a total of *c.*21,500 published examples for the period until 300 CE (accessed 8 January 2019). The number of southern sites with ostraca increases significantly compared to earlier periods, but still virtually no ostraca have been found in the Delta north of Memphis. The explanation for this might be sought in the properties of the inks used. Some inks were highly soluble, while others were more resistant to water, but it seems likely

that few will endure centuries of humidity in the Nile Delta. The physical objects onto which the texts were inscribed may survive, but the ink itself has long since dissolved.

The fact that chances of preservation are so slight in the Nile Delta is particularly problematic in light of the possibility that some two-thirds of the ancient population of Egypt probably lived in this part of the country, at least by the Roman era (Bagnall 1993: 19–20). The area also included several of the main intellectual centres, above all Heliopolis and, later on, Alexandria. Fortunately, we are not entirely without sources for the region. A number of papyri that were originally sent from the Delta have been found along the Nile Valley, such as documents from Alexandria discovered at Abusir el-Melek (Salmenkivi 2002: 156–8), and a few larger groups of carbonized papyri have been discovered in the Egyptian Delta (§1.7). Once carbonized, papyri are much less susceptible to damage by humidity, although they become extremely fragile, and are often badly damaged along their edges and outer parts. A large discovery at Tanis is particularly important in this context, since it includes manuscripts that seem to derive from the library of the great temple of Amun. These are the only known literary papyri from the entire Nile Delta and can be taken as an example of the great difference in the underlying conditions of preservation between the Egypt and the cuneiform world of Western Asia that are reflected throughout the chapters of this volume.

1.7. THE DEPOSITION OF MANUSCRIPTS

Under normal circumstances we cannot expect entire libraries and archives from the ancient world to survive. Manuscripts would only be retained until they were no longer considered relevant or they had become too damaged to be of practical use. No collection—however important—was maintained indefinitely. Large quantities of discarded manuscripts were thrown out as rubbish on a regular basis, and such material would typically end up in smaller or larger rubbish dumps. These secondary contexts of deposition preserve only the parts of a collection that had been discarded (Pedersén 1998: 241–2) and form a contrast to the less frequent instances where documents were left behind in the specific place where they were actually used, e.g. within an archive kept in a house or a library stored at a temple or palace. Such primary contexts, in turn, inevitably represent the final stage in the history of the collection in question.

A special type of context that is both primary and secondary in nature is the so-called 'tomb library' attested over a period of at least two millennia in Egypt (Parkinson §3.6 w. Fig. 3.5; Hagen §7.5; Ryholt §10.4). Manuscripts deposited

in tombs would typically be singled out from larger collections belonging to the owner. Such assemblages would have no further earthly use and represent, from this point of view, a secondary context. Yet, at the same time they were deliberately placed in the tomb for the benefit of the dead in the afterlife, and from that point of view they are primary.

An example where it is possible to study manuscripts from the same institution found in both primary and secondary contexts is the Tebtunis temple library in Egypt (Ryholt §10.2.1). The main part of the library, containing an estimated four hundred manuscripts, had been used up until the temple was abandoned and was found in a deposit below a building inside the temple enclosure. Other manuscripts from the library, several generations older, were found in a vast rubbish heap outside the enclosure. They had been discarded after they had become too worn for use, presumably first having been copied onto fresh papyrus. The extensive patching of some of the papyri in the dump bears witness to their perceived value and active use over long periods of time.

The libraries in Hattusa and Nineveh offer similar examples of how the upkeep of a collection was managed, and how texts underwent systematic copying and occasional redaction when the original manuscripts had suffered damage (Dardano §5.2). Copies were sometimes made of originals with illegible passages carefully noted. Colophons were used not only for the internal ordering of manuscripts, but also to trace the source of the manuscript copy and the identity of the copyist (Fig. 1.9). Moreover, texts would frequently be taken out for study, copying, and on loan for shorter or longer periods of time (Robson and Stevens §8.4.3).

As long as manuscripts remained in active use, they had a limited lifespan owing both to wear and the effects of the environment. Papyrus and parchment would gradually lose their flexibility over time and begin to break, and clay was brittle and exposed to the mineral actions of salt and humidity. An active lifespan of a manuscript of much more than a century would likely have been exceptional. The Library of Alexandria in its specific social and environmental setting would likely have been more adversely affected than most other institutions: as a hub of scholarly activity and intense usage, and given its location by the coast of the Mediterranean with fluctuating levels of high humidity, it would by Roman times have included few, if any, of the papyri that had entered the collection three centuries earlier (Bagnall 2002).

In an attempt to understand the variety of ancient libraries and archives, the ideal circumstances from an archaeological point of view are those situations where some factor suddenly disrupted the use of the assemblage and caused it to be permanently abandoned. Such a situation may provide a moment frozen in time, and permit us to study assemblages of material in their actual context of use. Disruptions could be caused by several factors

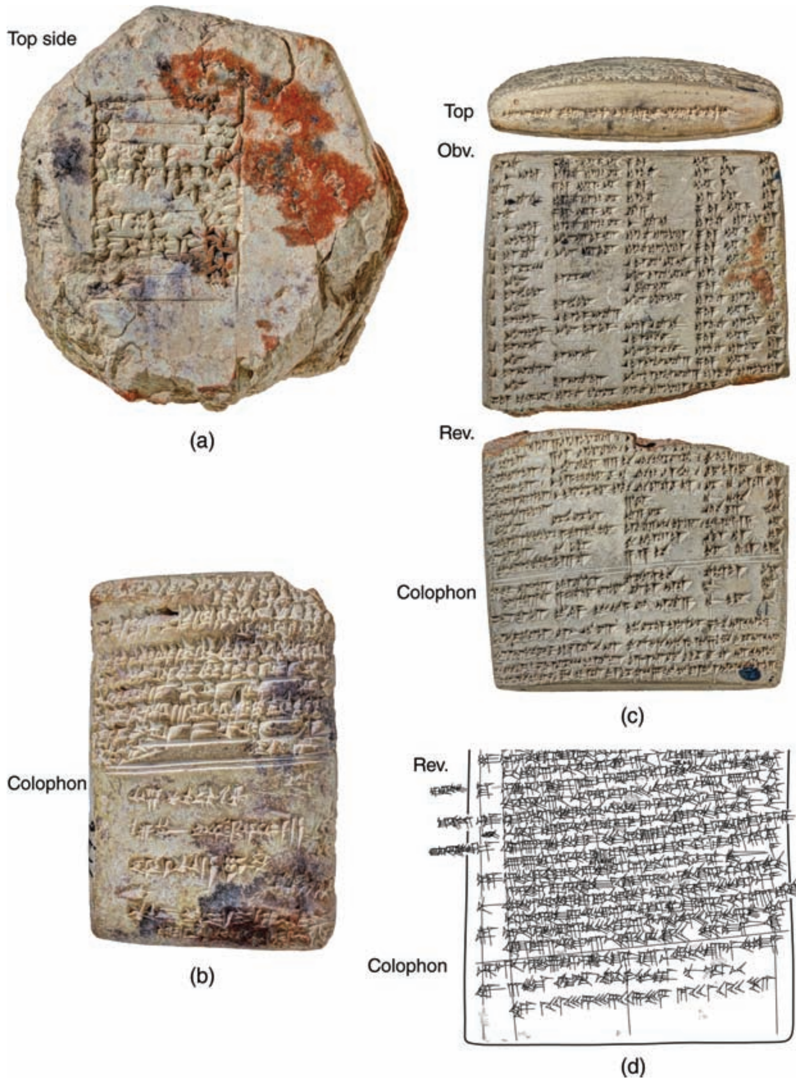


Fig. 1.9. Tablets bearing colophons for identification or collection provenience. Tablet A (NBC 8495, 222 × 83 × 83 mm, *c.*1740 BCE, provenience unknown) is a seven-sided prism bearing a list of personal names. The colophon on the top end bears a dedication to the Goddess Nisaba and the author's name, patronym, and occupation. Tablet B (YBC 7176, 90 × 59 × 25 mm, provenience unknown) is a one-column tablet with an extract from the Sumerian literary text 'The advice of a supervisor to a younger scribe' (Eduba C) and was one of a series of tablets housed in the Yale Babylonian collection that were written during the reign of Samsuiluna (1750–1712 BCE) by the student Qišti-Ea. Tablet C (MLC 1877, 93 × 107 × 31 mm, provenience unknown) dated to 251 BCE is the upper half of a one-column tablet containing a bilingual hymn to the god Anu 'King, God of Heaven and Earth'; according to its colophon, it is the fourth tablet of a series. Tablet D (AO 6458) is a drawing of the lower third of the reverse of a tablet held in the Louvre Museum with a colophon containing the 'cryptographic'

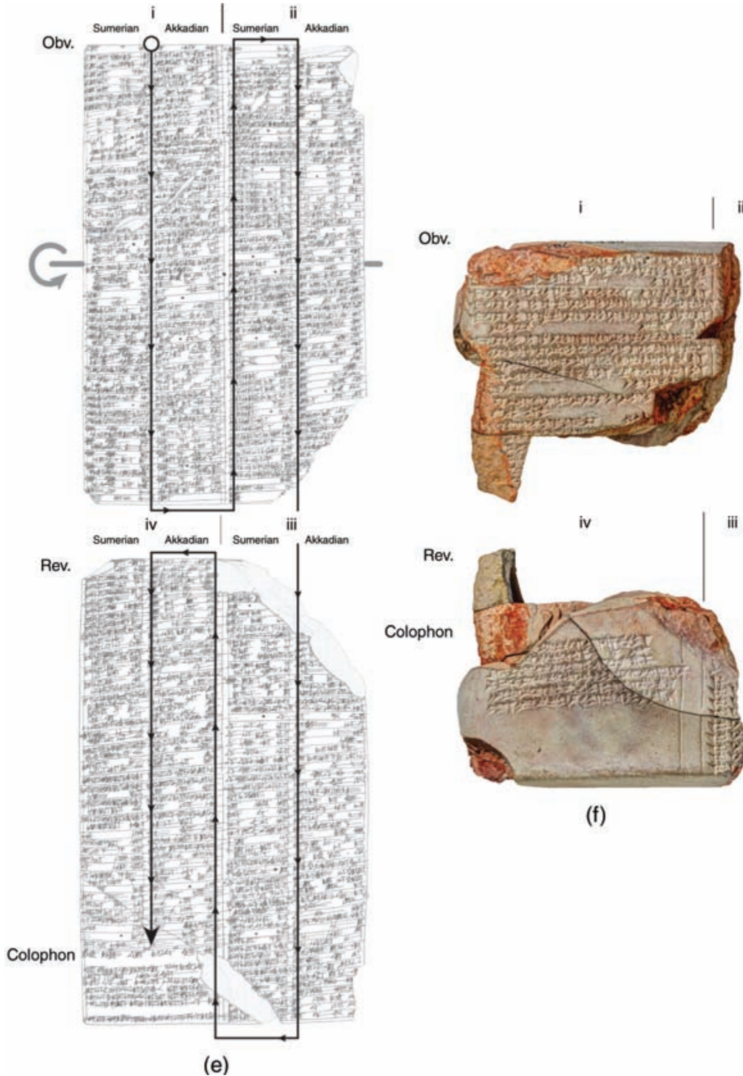


Fig 1.9 Continued

spelling of the scribe's name. Such learned play with the writing system is a common feature in cuneiform scribal culture. Tablet E (VAT 8875, measurements unknown, from Assur) is a drawing of a large four-column manuscript dated to *c.*1200 BCE of the seventh tablet in the great Sumerian-Akkadian dictionary '*ana ittišu*'. This manuscript has a particularly elaborate scribal colophon: '7th tablet of ki-ulutin-bi-šè a-na it-ti-[šu]. In total: 180 are its lines. It is complete. It is checked. Copy from Nippur. Hand of Marduk-balāssu-ēreš, junior scribe, son of Ninurta-uballissu, royal scribe. By the name of Aššur my written name you must not erase!'. Tablet F (YBC 16934, 65 × 45 × 27 mm, provenience unknown) is a fragment of a four-column manuscript carrying the fifteenth tablet of terrestrial omens in the series '*šumma ālu*'. The colophon states that the tablet was produced according to an old 'baked' (i.e. fired) original.

Photos and drawings by K. Wagensonner and courtesy of the Yale Babylonian Collection.

(§1.6), including conflagrations, political and cultural upheaval, and natural disasters. The cuneiform archive from Tell el-Amarna in Egypt and the Hittite royal libraries at Hattusa in Turkey were seemingly left behind when those two capitals were abandoned by the royal court for political reasons in the fourteenth and twelfth centuries BCE (Dardano §5.1; Hagen §7.2.1). Similarly, the papyri from Tebtunis and the ostraca from Narmuthis survive because these temples were abandoned for social and economic reasons during the decline of the third century CE (Ryholt §10.2.1, §10.7). The well-preserved reference library of sixty-one large tablets, perhaps belonging to the diviner Ṭāb-ṣillī-Marduk in Kassite-period Babylon (thirteenth century BCE), were deliberately hidden under the floor of a room of a private house (cf. Pedersén 2011: 56).

More commonly, disruptions were caused by violence and destruction. Much is preserved owing to buildings catching fire, and the present volume provides examples from across Western Asia, including Ebla and Emar in Syria (Rutz §6.1; Zand §2.4), Shuruppag, Ur, and Sippar in southern Iraq (Delnero §4.3, §4.5; Zand §2.2; §2.4) and Tanis in Egypt (Ryholt §10.5.2). Where clay tablets were used as the main medium for writing, conflagrations often served to optimize preservation, both because their firing rendered them more durable (at least up to a point), and because fires often lead to the collapse of the buildings in which the texts were kept, with the debris from the collapse covering the texts and thus protecting and preserving their physical context. In Egypt, on the other hand, fire usually resulted in the complete destruction of papyrus manuscripts, although there are important exceptions. At times the fire would consume all oxygen before the rolls were completely incinerated, and the high temperature would instead cause the scrolls to carbonize. Carbonized papyri, like fired clay tablets, are more resistant to humidity, but at the same time, they become very brittle and fragile (cf. §1.6).

The largest and best-known find of such carbonized manuscripts comes from the ancient town of Herculaneum in Italy, where some 1800 papyri from a library belonging to a luxurious villa were preserved due to the fires caused by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE (Zarmakoupi (ed.) 2010).[4] Substantial groups of carbonized papyri have also been discovered in burnt-down buildings at Bubastos, Tanis, and Thmuis in the Egyptian Delta, among which those from Tanis included a corpus of cultic texts relating to the great temple of Amun at the site.

[4] Of these 1800 papyri some 260 have been published or cited according to the online database *Trismegistos* (accessed on 8 January 2019). Note also the remains of the library from Aï Khanoum in modern-day Afghanistan (Kosmin 2014: 237), a city probably founded by Antiochus I *c.*280 BCE, where the imprint of Greek papyri were found burned onto mudbrick (Lerner 2003).

The vast majority of papyri from Egypt, however, derive from ancient rubbish dumps and, to a lesser extent, from tombs. This holds true for literary and documentary texts alike, and it lies in the nature of such deposits that we rarely, if ever, deal with intact groups of material in the form that they had during their primary phase of use. In most cases what we have at our disposal are those items that had been singled out to be discarded because there were no longer considered relevant, had become too damaged to maintain, or, less frequently, were given to the dead for use in the afterlife.

The disassociation of manuscripts from their original context naturally impedes a broader insight and understanding of their function and significance. Manuscripts that are found together in a dump may well have been discarded at the same time, but in such mixed deposits it can be difficult to prove which texts shared a common origin. Another type of secondary context in which similar considerations may apply is when manuscripts were re-used as material objects. Papyrus was regularly used for the production of cartonnage and clay tablets were recycled as building material. Here too, related documents are often found to have been discarded and re-used together, such as in the case of the 'cartonnage library' discovered at Abusir el-Melek (Ryholt §10.5.3), or the more than fifteen hundred school tablets used as fill in the Temple of *Nabû ša harê* in Babylon (Pedersén 1998: 186).

1.8. EXCAVATIONS AND COLLECTIONS

One of the great challenges in dealing with manuscripts from the ancient Near East is the fact that much of the material lacks a properly recorded archaeological context. In order to put a given text into perspective, and to place it within a broader social and historical context, it is important to know where it was found and where it came from—a palace, temple, house, tomb, dump, or somewhere else. Similarly, it is crucial to know whether it was found as a part of a larger assemblage, and whether the deposit can be dated archaeologically.

Enormous amounts of written material were obtained through large-scale excavations in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when hundreds of workers were sometimes employed to excavate a given site, and only few archaeological records were kept. Frequently no trained specialists were involved. Much material also came from excavations conducted by antiquities dealers and treasure hunters, sometimes with official permits, but more often illicit in nature (Hagen and Ryholt 2016). Such excavations have in common that manuscripts and other objects were disassociated from the physical locations where they had been found, that only certain types of objects were considered worth keeping, and that unrelated material was often mixed together when the

finds were packed. Illicit excavators would often divide the antiquities they found between the parties involved, who would sell their shares to different dealers. The dealers into whose hands they passed would, in turn, frequently sell off smaller or larger parts of such shares separately, and thus groups of manuscripts that originally belonged together are now scattered widely, both in terms of collections and modern geography. When objects reached museums and other established collections, there was still no guarantee that groups of objects would be kept together as they entered a collection, since adequate records were not always kept of what was acquired as a group.

A more recent surge in random and systematic plundering of archaeological sites and museums for the benefit of an illegal market in antiquities has wreaked havoc from Turkey and Egypt to Syria and Iraq. This has led to a large number of ancient manuscripts, and even entire libraries, appearing without concise archaeological provenience on the market. In some instances, archival contexts can be reconstructed on the basis of textual content, but mostly all such data is lost.

Even manuscripts found in controlled excavations by professional scholars sometimes lack a known context when, for one reason or another, those excavations were not adequately published. Sometimes unpublished excavation records are still available, and may be accessible to scholars, but often they have been lost. The latter applies particularly to excavation notes that were kept privately by the excavator or individuals involved in a planned publication. Perhaps inevitably, there are still cases where official excavations are not adequately documented for a proper report. In some instances, the context may be partially retrieved through archival research or internal criteria, and the mere realization that a number of manuscripts belong together as a group can sometimes help place them in a broader setting.

For all these reasons, and as illustrated by several of the chapters of this volume, a substantial effort is oftentimes required for the retrieval and reconstruction of original contexts, based on published records, archival research, and close examination of the texts themselves and other associated objects. Yet, as the authors also show, it is frequently possible to track down information about when and where manuscripts were found or acquired to establish patterns, which, to a greater or lesser extent, helps clarify their archaeological context. One must take into account that some collections are better published and more accessible than others, both in terms of objects and archival records. Access policy differs considerably from institution to institution, and political circumstances also play a role. Most major collections facilitate access, but even at the time of writing, there is important material in major public institutions to which it is difficult to gain access. Such circumstances limit scholars in the endeavour to study texts and to establish groupings and contexts.

1.9. TYPES OF COLLECTIONS

Collections of texts coming from Egypt and Western Asia can broadly be divided into three groups: palace and temple libraries and privately owned manuscripts (cf. Table 1.1).

During most of ancient Near Eastern history, the political elite was centred on royal and local courts that included literate courtiers and officials. State administration also required extensive correspondence and accounting, and some of the dynastic traditions called for the composition and broadcast of decrees and accounts of royal accomplishment. In addition, specialized texts of medical or magical nature ensured the protection and wellbeing of the elite, while divination was employed to predict future events for the benefit of the state. Political leaders themselves were in some cases trained as scholars and had access to potent esoteric knowledge. Narrative and poetic literature was used for education and entertainment at court and beyond. The royal palaces can reasonably be assumed to have held some of the largest institutional libraries. Although a number of such buildings have been excavated across the Near East, most of their collections have inevitably vanished. When palaces were abandoned, their inventory would have been moved to some other location. When they were sacked during invasions and uprisings, valuable collections could be destroyed or taken away as booty or in ransom.

In spite of this, a number of fairly complete and partial palatial collections survive and have been retrieved through excavations. The best-known examples from Western Asia include the archives from the Palace of Ebla in third-millennium Syria (Zand §2.4.2), the royal collections of Hattusa in Turkey from the second millennium (Dardano §5.2), and Assurbanipal's Library from Nineveh in Iraq dated to the first millennium (Finkel §9.4). In all three cases, access to these collections would have been limited to insiders, and given their very nature, there is no indication that their content would have been accessible (or even of interest) to anyone but highly trained scribes and scholars.

We know less about the palace libraries in Egypt, although several royal residences have been excavated. Among the better known are the New Kingdom sites of Kom Medinet Gurob, Malqata, and Tell el-Amarna (Hagen §7.2.1, §7.2.2, §7.3). While palace libraries as such have not yet come to light, a few glimpses of their content are provided by literary fragments found at Kom Medinet Gurob, as well as some book labels inscribed with the name of King Amenhotep III that may have come from his palace at Malqata. The diplomatic archive written on cuneiform tablets found at Tell el-Amarna also include a few literary texts, but these were intended for the training of scribes active in the foreign service. Despite the poor archaeological

record, it can scarcely be doubted that Egyptian palaces too would have housed substantial collections of literature for various purposes, but their scope and extent can currently only be guessed at (Ryholt §10.1).

Palaces are likely to have housed larger libraries than the average temple. The more prominent intellectual centres, such as the temple at Heliopolis in Egypt, may form exceptions, but the majority of temples enjoyed more humble reputations. Nonetheless, they represented the main library-holding institutions in view of their sheer number, which greatly exceeded the number of palaces at any given point in history, and the total volume of the temple collections would have constituted the greatest repository of literature in contemporary society.

The only extant temple library from ancient Egypt of which substantial parts have been preserved comes from Tebtunis in the Fayum Oasis (Ryholt §10.2.1). The main group of some four hundred manuscripts, mainly from the late first and second centuries CE, were deposited in the third century when the temple, along with many others, was abandoned. This effectively marks the end of the ancient Egyptian culture, although the old cults were maintained in isolated places in southernmost Egypt as late as the fifth century CE (Dijkstra 2008).

In Western Asia temple libraries are common and include examples such as the Great Temple at Hattusa in Anatolia (Dardano §5.2), which contained over seven hundred literary texts, and Temple M_1 at Emar in Syria (Rutz §6.4.1), containing just under a thousand literary and archival texts. A virtually complete collection comes from the Temple of E'ulmash in Sippar in southern Iraq (Frahm 2011: 286) where some eight hundred tablets, still standing in pigeonholes in a purpose-built room, were discovered (Fig. 1.10). An early example of a collection that belonged to a temple library or its residential or administrative dependency was found at Tell Abu Salabikh in southern Iraq (Zand §2.3.1) containing hundreds of tablets.

One apparent distinction between the evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia relates to the degree of centralization in schooling and the training of literate personnel. Where the Egyptian material points to the temples themselves as training grounds for a priestly community, the evidence from Western Asia is much broader and includes facilities for the training of professionals in townhouses (cf. e.g. Delnero §4.5; Robson and Stevens §8.5). Whether this discrepancy is an artefact of our sources, or whether it points to a genuine difference in social order is unclear, but it links up with the discussion of literacy and training below (§1.13).

Schools are frequently mentioned in texts, but these were generally not purpose-built structures like Greek gymnasiums. Schooling often seems to have taken the form of apprenticeship; i.e. youth being assigned, or attached to a master or institution, and then receiving relevant teaching on site or—outside

Egypt—in houses or 'schools' that could also include the private home of the head teacher.

Much training took place embedded within larger institutions, such as temples and palaces, and even at different scenes of work. The latter includes the training of young necropolis workers in front of the tomb of the high-ranking Egyptian official Senenmut in Thebes during its construction in the fifteenth century BCE, as evidenced by the literary exercises found on the spot (Hayes 1942).

In southern Mesopotamia, several townhouses that functioned as schools have been uncovered from various periods (Delnero §4.2–3; Gesche 2001; Robson 2001; Zand §2.2.2 'House IXac'), some of them containing more than a thousand tablets spread throughout their rooms and courtyards. Despite the large number of tablets sometimes involved, the range of texts is not generally comparable to the literary collections of temples and palaces. The same composition occurs in several (sometimes a multitude of) copies, often only as an excerpt of the complete text. Furthermore, the texts found in schools will also include model legal contracts, letters, and other non-literary texts. Research into a common 'canon' of the texts taught in these schools during the early second millennium BCE has been discussed elsewhere in great detail (Delnero §4.2.1; Tinney 1999; Veldhuis 1997) and shows a great deal of consistency and some interesting variations (Delnero 2016) between the individual cities of southern Iraq.

Within an Egyptian context, the institution known as the 'House of Life' has often been associated with schooling by modern scholarship. However, at least as far as the Late and Graeco-Roman periods are concerned, this institution was rather focused on the cult of Osiris, which permeated Egyptian religious thought (Ryholt §10.8). Because of the arcane knowledge required for the central activities of the 'House of Life'—the successful resurrection, provision, and protection of Osiris, which enabled him to live on after death—it gained a natural reputation as a place of the highest learning. Its potent magic was relevant to society as a whole and was used for a variety of purposes, including the resurrection of the dead in the afterlife, the protection of the ruling king, the healing of the ill, and the execration of the enemies of the state.

Compared to other types of library collections discussed above, the wide range of texts accessible to students through the educational collections appears to constitute a comprehensive and representative range of existing genres and compositions. Their texts no doubt reflect the cultural and social values of society, and training constitutes both the co-option and indoctrination of students into those values as part of literate society. The Old Babylonian *edubba*-literature (Delnero §4.5) and certain of the so-called Late Egyptian Miscellanies from New Kingdom Egypt (Hagen §7.5.4) about life in school and the education of pupils may provide anecdotal information

about values and self-perceptions of an educated community, although how exactly such texts about education relate to the reality is unknown. In the case of Egypt, Hagen (§7.3) does not see libraries as the culturally central institutions posited, for example, by Burkard (1980) and Zinn (2007), and finds the general dearth of references to these institutions in the New Kingdom significant.

Private individuals could also possess smaller or larger collections that we would refer to as libraries. We may assume that virtually all people who owned literary texts were in fact literate. While illiterate people could amass collections of documents, such as deeds to property and contracts, they are less likely on a whole to collect actual works of literature, which would serve no direct practical purpose. We have no evidence of literature ever being owned by someone illiterate for use by second parties, although this may of course occasionally have been the case. Professional libraries dominate the surviving record. By this we understand collections of texts that relate directly to the occupation of the owner, such as the huge collection of magical texts owned by a family of exorcists in Assur (Maul 2010) or a practitioner of magical protection and healing at Thebes in Egypt (Parkinson §3.6.2.3).

Often there seems to have been no strict divide between 'institutional' and 'private' possession. Many texts that we might seek to classify as institutional may well have been physically kept by individuals attached to the institution, and may even have been regarded as the property of these individuals. This is not to say that they were freely distributed, but in some cases scholarly groups are known to have shared access to special collections containing knowledge key to the performance of their particular professional duties (Robson and Stevens §8.6.1).

In reviewing the ancient Egyptian sources at our disposal, we face a particular problem of representativity in the sense that what survives is indicative neither of the various social strata nor the different historical phases. Prior to the Ramesside period in Egypt (*c.*1300–1170 BCE) we know little about the identity of owners of any group of literary texts, apart from what may be gained from the texts themselves. It has been argued that the material dating to the Middle Kingdom derives entirely from 'the outer circle of literary; no manuscripts of palaces or top-ranking officials survive' (Quirke 1996: 392). Matters are perhaps not quite as bleak. Temples stood at the centre of literacy in later periods and are likely to have occupied a central position already in earlier times. It is hardly without significance that the largest discovery of literary papyri from the Middle Kingdom was made in Lahun, a town founded for the purpose of maintaining the cult of king Senwosret II. The fragmentary manuscripts include hymns, ritual texts, narratives, mathematical and medical manuals, and divination (Parkinson §3.5; Quirke 2015; Contardi 2016), effectively the same range of literature as attested in the better-documented

priestly communities from the Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt (Ryholt §10). Assuming that the literary papyri from Lahun similarly pertained to the priestly community at the site, they could be argued to belong to the very core of the circle of literacy.

1.10. ACCESS AND ACQUISITION

There is no evidence of public libraries in ancient Egypt and Western Asia. Collections were intended for professional use by specific members of an institution or social group. The Library of Alexandria was, in the tradition of its predecessors, also the privilege of a select elite. Although it has been argued that there existed public libraries already in pre-Hellenistic Greece (Too 2010: 88; Müller 2011), any concrete indications that any such collections were openly accessible in the modern sense are lacking.

Later tradition writes of great collections assembled by zealous private individuals, such as the sixth-century tyrant Peisistratus and the fourth-century philosopher Aristotle, and—in the case of the former—opened to public use. But where such sources may reflect the norms of the time that they were written, it is doubtful that they also reflect historical reality. Aristotle was, for instance, said to 'have taught the kings of Egypt how to arrange a library', although he died a generation or two before the founding of the Library of Alexandria.[5] As pointed out by Woolf (2013: 5–6), the notion of public libraries is anachronistic and misleading: building libraries for the public, even in Rome, was about making the people of the city 'feel like aristocrats, not about emancipating the upwardly mobile or educating the masses'.

Access to institutional libraries was restricted in both ancient and classical antiquity, and far from all material was considered appropriate for the common domain. Some texts belonging to specific genres or contexts were explicitly labelled as secret (Baines 1990; Lenzi 2008; Stevens 2013; Parkinson §3.1; Robson and Stevens §8.6; Ryholt §10.8), since command of esoteric tradition gave power to manipulate current and future events in society. And some collections, or at least certain parts of them, were as much a tool for controlling knowledge as disseminating it. Especially the divinatory art had potent military and political uses (Maul 1994; Rochberg 2004). The relation between written and oral tradition, however, was demonstrably complex, and the esoteric

[5] Note, moreover, that even the tradition about Aristotle's personal library must be treated with caution. Strabo's dramatic account of this collection provides what is likely the most quoted evidence for libraries in pre-Hellenistic Greece, and it is often taken at face value (e.g. Jacob 2013: 66–74), but as pointed out by Johnstone (2014: 375–6; cf. also Hendrickson 2014), the tradition betrays later Roman ideas and must be treated as apocryphal.

nature of collections was less related to the manuscripts themselves than to their users as a group.

Literature could be acquired in different manners. Rulers would usually have more resources at their disposal than other individuals, and the active acquisition of materials by kings, such as Assurbanipal in Assyria and the Ptolemies in Egypt, though exceptional in scale, built on established patterns of collection by royal patrons (Potts 2004; Frame and George 2005; Johnstone 2014; Finkel §9.10). There is no evidence of an actual book market prior to the Graeco-Roman period. Examples of mass-produced funerary texts in Egypt, such as the Book of the Dead, with blank spaces where the name of the deceased would be inserted (Lucarelli 2010: 267), are exceptional and have a circumscribed use. The most widespread mode of acquiring literature for private individuals was through professional capacity, social network, and by inheritance. In some communities, the collections were 'itinerant' and shared for copy and reference (Maul 2010; Stevens 2013; Robson and Stevens §8.6.1; Ryholt §10.12).

The ways in which oral transmission interacted with the written collection of canonical texts in such environments is not fully understood, but we know, for instance, that scholars were trained to memorize by heart the entire series of compositions that we have preserved in writing (Finkel 2000; Robson and Stevens §8.5.2). There is therefore good reason to assume that large parts of the texts found in private collections or 'libraries' in Mesopotamia in fact constitute a somewhat random and gradual accumulation of master texts and student copies produced over time by members of professional families as part of their training in rote memorization. There was no need for reference libraries as long as the canonical knowledge was stored in the minds of its users. In other cases, institutions would maintain a number of master copies, such as we know from the temple of Edfu in Egypt (Ryholt §10.6.1), and individuals would then work from copies of such masters. In the case of the Tebtunis temple library, there are many examples of texts preserved in multiple copies, sometimes with a single very elaborate version carefully written in the hieroglyphic script and with detailed drawings, and other versions written in the simpler hieratic script and omitting the drawings (cf. e.g. von Lieven 2007: 205–22). The same library contained close to twenty copies of the fundamental treatise known as the 'Book of the Temple' (Quack 2005: 107), implying the existence of institutional repositories of important texts from which copies could be borrowed or used in priestly training in the temple.

Regional and chronological differences are informative. Many languages and scribal and scholastic traditions intermingled across the region covered in this volume (cf. also Rubio 2009; Pongratz-Leisten 2015). The case of Hattusa in central Anatolia (Dardano §5.1) is of particular importance in this respect, since it shows what aspects of Mesopotamian library culture were adopted into the court at Hattusa, what was rejected, and what local developments were

added. From Hattusa we have access to a library inventory (Dardano §5.3), and thus, even though the collection itself is fragmentary, we gain insight into parts of what was kept in the imperial collections, how it was structured, and how it was managed, preserved, expanded, and used.

Inventory lists are also known from the Assyrian royal library at Nineveh (Parpola 1983; Finkel §9.7), dealing specifically with new acquisitions for the collection. No comparable material on this scale exists from Egypt, although we do have lists of compositions, such as P15779 from New Kingdom Egypt (Hagen §7.4), and partial catalogues, such as the one at Edfu (Ryholt §10.6.1). In addition, we have colophons inscribed on the individual tablets, sometimes containing information on who copied them and what series they belong to. Dockets that were once attached to the individual shelves in the library and served to identify entire groups of tablets are also preserved.

1.11. LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

The languages and scripts represented in the libraries discussed in this volume fall into two general categories divided by geography. The linguistically and culturally homogenous corpus of written evidence coming from Egypt marks a contrast to that of Western Asia, which is characterized by constant cultural and linguistic fragmentation and flux. This is not to say that Egypt saw no change, or that the area to the east was without long-term cultural continuity. One can follow developments and identify clear patterns of tradition in both areas. It is also true that part of the apparent Egyptian uniformity and impermeability is influenced by an explicit royal ideology that strove to represent the state and its ruler as a cosmic principle, eternal and unchanging. Yet, it is noteworthy that literacy in ancient Western Asia is characterized by a cosmopolitan and multilingual reality (Van De Mieroop 2015), whereas Egyptian literary culture essentially remained tied to a single local language and a set of closely related scripts until the introduction of Greek following the conquest by Alexander the Great in the late fourth century BCE.

This situation has in turn led to some important differences in the ways libraries were formed in the two regions, as well as in their contents. In many respects, the situation in Egypt seems closer to what we know from medieval Europe, where collections of manuscripts almost exclusively consisted of Latin text written in Latin characters. The situation in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Levant was fundamentally different, and virtually all known libraries contained texts in more than one language, typically at least in Sumerian and Akkadian for the central Mesopotamian area, with the addition of various other languages in the surrounding territories, depending on the place and period. Private houses in the commercial port of Ugarit on the Syrian coast in

the thirteenth century contained texts written in as many as eight different languages and in five writing systems (Pedersén 1998: 77; Rutz §6.3).

In Mesopotamia, scholarship early on became tied to a mastery of the Sumerian language and the tradition associated with the cuneiform script. Yet, Sumerian died out as a spoken language at some point before 2000 BCE, whence it continued as a written language for as long as the cuneiform script was in use. The pattern was reproduced and enlarged in Syria and Anatolia to include a variety of local and foreign languages and even scripts. The earlier explanatory model of a creative Mesopotamian centre of text and tradition, surrounded by a mostly passive and reproducing periphery has been effectively challenged in recent years, and cities, such as Hattusa, Emar, and Ugarit, should now be taken as loci of both great local creativity and rearrangement of received tradition (George 2013; Van De Mieroop 2015).

The earliest writing systems developed in Iraq and Egypt around 3300 BCE (Schmandt-Besserat 1996; Cooper 2004; Woods 2010; Kahl 2001; Stauder 2010; Piquette 2013). Within less than a century, the concept of writing spread from Mesopotamia to Syria and Iran, where cuneiform scripts became the dominant form of written communication for more than two millennia. For the first thousand years of recorded history most cuneiform texts were written in Sumerian, but unlike Egyptian hieroglyphs, the cuneiform script was from early on also adapted to render other languages, including Elamite, Hittite, Hurrian, and various Semitic dialects. During the following two millennia the greater part of the textual record was written in Akkadian, but corpora in several other languages survive, including Eblaite, Elamite, Hittite, Hurrian, Luwian, Old Persian, Sumerian, Ugaritic, and Urartean. Other scripts were in use in Western Asia during the Bronze Age, including hieroglyphic Luwian, Linear A and B, the Ugaritic alphabet, the Indus Script, and Cypro-Minoan, but no library collections have yet been found, and it seems likely that at least some of these writing systems were context-specific and used only for administrative purposes. The main exception to this pattern was the Aramaic script, which developed gradually as a new consonantal alphabetic system (or 'abjad') during the Early Iron Age, and ultimately became ancestral to many of the scripts used across Central and Western Asia and beyond, including Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Cyrillic, Arabic, Mandaic, Kharosthi, Pahlavi, and Sogdian.

The Akkadian language in particular functioned as the lingua franca for diplomatic interactions throughout Western Asia and Egypt during most of the second millennium BCE (Radner (ed.) 2013). Its wide diffusion meant that it became a key instrument for the regional transmission of intellectual tradition, as texts and the associated scribal culture moved and were appropriated in many local contexts. The socio-political role played by cuneiform writing must have contributed to the formation of libraries across a large area, although it was certainly not the only factor. Egypt, on the other hand,

continued to use its own system of writing associated with an indigenous scribal tradition that existed as a separate but complementary intellectual track, apparently in some level of interaction with the traditions of Western Asia. Examples of libraries from all areas have been included in this volume with an overview presented in Table 1.1. The Egyptian tradition was concentrated mainly within the Egypt proper, with occasional finds coming from the areas of Nubia and the southern Levant under Egyptian control or influence. While no collection of Egyptian literature has yet been found outside of its borders, a number of isolated literary texts have been found in Egyptian settlements in Nubia.

Egyptian manuscripts are usually written in the hieratic or demotic scripts, while the hieroglyphic was mainly used for monuments and either cut, carved, or painted (cf. e.g. Houston, Baines, and Cooper 2003: 435–50). The main exceptions are the Book of the Dead, which is often written in hieroglyphs, and certain texts that are intended as copies of monumental inscriptions. Hieratic, meaning 'sacred' script, is the earlier of the two handwritten scripts. Originally it merely represented handwritten hieroglyphs, but for reasons of speed and ease these became simpler in appearance over time and various ligatures were developed. The designation 'sacred' comes from the fact that the script became confined to priestly communities and temple literature in the course of the first millennium BCE. Demotic, i.e. the script 'of the people', was a much later development, coming into use during the seventh century BCE. It gradually took over much of the domain of hieratic and became the primary script used for letters, documents, accounts, and eventually also much literature.

The main language found in manuscripts and other sources in the three millennia prior to the conquest by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE was ancient Egyptian. The language is remotely related to the Semitic languages of Western Asia. Instead of a dead foreign language, such as Sumerian or Latin (Rubio 2015), the entry marker to advanced scholarship in Egypt after the middle of the second millennium BCE became the mastery of the classical stage of script and language commonly referred to as Middle Egyptian or, in reference to its later usage, *Egyptien de tradition* (Vernus 2016; Engsheden 2016). Both the script and the grammatical structure of this stage of the language were sufficiently different from what followed to be largely unintelligible to the uninitiated, and so the social function held by Sumerian in the East was to a large extent filled by Middle Egyptian in Egypt, where it became the vehicle of an extensive literary tradition.

Many other languages and scripts are attested in Egypt within specific contexts, including Akkadian in the diplomatic correspondence from the royal residences at Tell el-Dab'a, Tell el-Amarna, and Piramesse (Hagen §7.2.1), and Aramaic attested in the military colony at Elephantine and other Jewish communities (Porten and Yardeni 1986–99). While such corpora

are relevant to the present volume, it should be emphasized that they play a less significant role in the overall scheme due to their relative scarcity and circumscribed use. Egyptian libraries rarely contained texts in different languages prior to the Graeco-Roman period, and extant literary texts in Akkadian or Aramaic are so far confined to the specific contexts just mentioned. The scant archaeological record may be deceptive, since there are indications of significant interaction between Aramaic and Egyptian literature in the wake of the Achaemenid invasion, but most of these texts were transmitted in translation (Quack 2011). It is only after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great and the introduction of Greek in the administrative sphere that we begin to find collections of mixed Egyptian and Greek content: for example the Tebtunis temple library (Ryholt §10.2.1), a temple archive from Edfu (Ryholt 2014), and numerous private archives (Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth 2015).

After the Macedonian conquest of both Egypt and Western Asia, and the establishment of predominantly Greek-speaking elites and higher administration, the Greek language quickly gained general use. In the course of the Hellenistic period, state-sponsored literary production in Greek became dominant in both areas (Kosmin 2014: 10), gradually displacing (and sometimes adapting) earlier traditions.

1.12. LITERACY AND READING

Work on literacy has a long history in the field of ancient studies (Havelock 1963; Goody 1977; Larsen 1988; Larsen 1989; Harris 1989; Johnson and Parker (eds) 2009; Veldhuis 2011; Baines 2012; Quirke 2015; Steinkeller 2017), and for the present context it will suffice to underline a few specific points regarding the topic in relation to libraries and their users.

The extent of literacy in early societies is notoriously hard to estimate, although it is commonly regarded as an elite phenomenon that covered a wide range of skilled practitioners—from basic and craft literacy to mastery—according to period and place. It has been estimated that no more than 1 per cent of the population in ancient Egypt and Western Asia was literate (Baines and Eyre 2007: 67; Larsen 1989: 134), and according to Parkinson (§3.1.1) 'even for these happy few, scripts were of varying accessibility'. Yet at the same time, literacy in some specialized communities, such as the later workmen's village at Deir el-Medina in Egypt (Hagen §7.5.5) or the commercial port of Ugarit in Syria (Rutz §6.3), could be relatively high and certainly much above the estimated average. How exceptional such communities were is unclear, and surely their number will have varied over time.

Administration and literacy were closely tied together, not least in the domain of commerce. As in later Ugarit, the Assyrian merchants living at

Kanesh in central Anatolia in the nineteenth century BCE had high functional literacy as a group (Larsen 2015: 56). A large proportion of the community—women and slaves included—was seemingly capable of using a simplified version of the cuneiform script to produce basic accounts and letters. However, this did not lead to the formation of any reading audience at Kanesh. Out of the 23,000 clay tablets found at Kanesh, only a handful carry a literary text. In this case, literacy as a craft was related to a particular domain (in this case, trade and communication) that did not lead to the creation of libraries (Barjamovic 2015). There are other cases—even very early ones—for which arguments in favour of much higher level of literacy in the general population have been proposed. These include Shuruppag in the twenty-seventh century BCE (Zand §2.2.5; Krebernik and Postgate 2009) and the Old Babylonian period in general (Wilcke 2000; Charpin 2004; 2010; Lion 2011).

If the estimated 1 per cent literacy is to serve as a general rule of thumb, then this number corresponds to one individual in fifty of the male population. Evidence for literate women in Egypt is scant and circumstantial. Thus, for instance, letters from women usually provide no indication about who actually wrote them, and a title once translated 'female scribe' was later shown to designate a type of attendants who used pens to apply make-up rather than to write (Posener 1969). We may assume that some women could read, but on the surface of things, female literacy appears to have been limited.

In cuneiform traditions the situation appears different. Priestesses and women coming from elite families took part in literate culture, both as composers of their own works (the priestess Enheduanna commonly being credited as the world's first named author, cf. Hallo and van Dijk 1968) and as political and economic agents (from the traders in Kanesh and the convents of Sippar, to the court of Hattusa and the palaces at Nineveh). As in all pre-modern history, female literacy was usually an elite phenomenon, based on wealth and access to schooling. The biased nature of the surviving written record from Egypt may be hiding a somewhat less uniform picture of gender and writing similar to the one found in Mesopotamia.

Literacy became gradually more widespread, although this was hardly a linear development through time. A model of more complex fluctuation tied to general political and social change provides a more satisfactory picture. During periods of political upheaval and breakdown of institutions, levels of literacy will usually have declined.

1.13. THE ARCHITECTURE OF LIBRARIES

Libraries in the ancient Near East were rarely kept in independent and purpose-built buildings with obvious distinctive architectural features that set them apart from other structures. Instead, most collections were kept in

buildings that served another main purpose, such as a royal palace, a temple, or a private house. The same could easily be claimed for many modern libraries, including university libraries and private academic collections. It is almost impossible to identify the physical location of libraries in the ancient Near East on purely archaeological or architectural grounds, unless direct evidence of storage facilities is preserved or the remains of actual manuscripts have been recovered.

In Egypt, a case in point is the great royal palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata. There would unquestionably have been libraries and archives at the disposal of the royal court at this enormous compound where one area yielded more than one thousand sealings from papyrus documents (Hayes 1951: 165–77). However, not a single manuscript has been found at the site, and no designated space for archives and libraries has yet been positively identified. A few book labels of unknown provenance inscribed with the name of Amenhotep III (1390–1352 BCE) may have come from Malqata (Hagen §7.3), and some of the diplomatic letters from his reign found at Tell el-Amarna could also originally have been kept there, but this remains conjectural.

In Western Asia where conditions of preservation are better, surviving examples of physical structures that held libraries are more common. Institutional collections from the royal palace at Ebla in Syria dated to the mid-third millennium BCE, Hattusa in Turkey from the second half of the second millennium BCE, and the temple library of Nabu in Kalhu in Iraq from the first millennium BCE all provide examples of how texts were organized and stored—on wooden shelves, within niches in the wall, or in chests, pottery vessels, wicker baskets (*pisandubba*), and various other tablet containers (*tamalāku*, *tupšinnu*) (Black and Tait 1995: 2199; Pedersén 1998: 241–4; Richter and Lange 2012: 142–4). Similarly, library inventories and descriptive colophons sometimes allow us to reconstruct parts of the physical environment in which texts were kept (Dardano §5.3). Examples of privately owned libraries, such as those from Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast (Rutz §6.3), or Assur on the Tigris (Robson and Stevens §8.2.1), show that also domestic collections could be kept in purpose-built rooms, and that shelves, chests, baskets, and clay pots were preferred ways of storing the texts.

In Egypt, the main architectural feature that allows us to identify a given room as a library is the presence of embedded book niches or wall decorations in the form of inscriptions and images that refer to the function of the room. Such niches (Ryholt §10.6.1, 10.6.2, 10.6.4; cf. also Parkinson §3.1.2 for a very early example) and inscriptions that explicitly refer to the presence of a library are relatively rare, and are mainly known from the Graeco-Roman temples. The cultic libraries at Edfu and Philae carry inscriptions at their entrance which directly describe their function. Moreover, the libraries of Edfu and Tod have catalogues of books inscribed on their inside walls (Ryholt §10.6.1, §10.6.4). With reference to the examples from Edfu, Tod, and Philae, it is possible to propose the identification of library rooms in specific locations at

other contemporary temples on the basis of their largely standardized architectural layout. From earlier periods, the evidence is slim, and the only well-established example of a physical setting for the storage of texts comes from the palace compound at Tell el-Amarna, which dates to the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 BCE). Here it has been possible to identify 'The House of Life' as well as 'The Place of Documents of Pharaoh' (Hagen §7.2.1, §7.3) on the basis of stamped bricks. The latter still preserved some scant remains of the royal diplomatic archive when archaeologists arrived on the scene.

Most edifices that were built to hold text collections were constructed out of mud-brick, while stone—a much more costly material—was seldom employed. In Egypt stone was mainly reserved for temples and funerary architecture, while other structures, even auxiliary buildings within temple compounds, were built in mud-brick. This presumably includes the vast majority of spaces used for the storage of libraries, although by the Graeco-Roman period many larger temples may have included smaller stone-built cultic libraries, such as those preserved at Edfu, Philae, and Tod. In Western Asia virtually all preserved examples of rooms containing libraries were constructed out of mud-brick, although stone and wood was sometimes employed in western Syria and Anatolia.

One of the best examples of a purpose-built storage for tablets is a suite of two rooms in the royal Palace G at Ebla (Zand §2.4.2). In the main unit, texts were kept on deep wooden shelves running along three sides and in three tiers, as well as in woven baskets standing on the floor (Zand §2.4.3; Fig. 2.5). One can reconstruct in some detail how the individual tablets of the collection were organized, and in which order they were stored, based on the way they had fallen from their shelves. In the adjacent room, a low earthen bench ran along two of the walls. This layout seems to be characteristic of scriptoria in early Mesopotamia in general, and the benches appear to have served multiple purposes as work surfaces, as well as places where scribes could sit down to read and write texts (Veenhof 1986: 6–7). Similar architectural features are preserved in an archival room in the city of Girsu in southern Iraq of roughly the same date.

The small urban temple of E'ulmash in Sippar in southern Mesopotamia dated to the second half of the first millennium BCE contained the most intact purpose-built library found to date (al-Jadir 1991: 194). The room measured 4.4 × 2.7 metres and had fourteen tiers with between forty-four and forty-eight niches of varying sizes set into three sides of the room and containing at least eight hundred tablets (Charpin 2010: 210–11) (Fig. 1.10). On the wall facing the entrance were larger niches made to hold oversized tablets, while thirty-two holes measuring 17 × 30 cm placed in the side walls were fashioned for standard-size texts. All niches in the room were 70 cm deep. Both shelves

Fig. 1.10. The temple library of E'ulmash in Sippar, excavated by Iraqi archaeologists in 1988. The room dates to the first half of the first millennium BCE and was so well-preserved when the archaeologists found it that some eight hundred tablets still stood on their side and in their original position in the alcoves. Similar rooms with alcoves for the storage of tablets have been excavated elsewhere, including the temple of Nabu in the Assyrian royal capital of Dur-Sharruken (cf. Fig. 8.1). The library room at E'ulmash measured 4.4 × 2.7 metres and had fourteen tiers with between forty-four and forty-eight niches of varying sizes set into three sides of the room. The wall facing the entrance had two pairs of larger niches made to hold oversized tablets. Thirty-two smaller alcoves measuring 17 × 30 cm in the side walls were fashioned for standard-size texts. All niches in the room were 70 cm deep.

Photo by Adel al Tai 1988, photo edit by Khalid al Timimi 2018. Used with their courtesy and kind permission.

and partitions were made of mud-brick reinforced with reeds on the inside to serve as an upper lining. Remarkably, the holes in the room still contained literary and scholarly tablets when the archaeologists discovered it in 1985 (Robson and Stevens §8.3.2). In some cases, these were stacked in piles, while others were kept standing upright on their edges as in a filing cabinet. One text was placed on a small podium in a niche near the entrance, perhaps the last tablet to be used before the building collapsed. Many of the niches on the right-hand side of the wall in the room were empty when excavated, and it has since been suggested that they may have contained texts written on perishable materials, such as wax or parchment (Pedersén 1998: 3.2.4.2).

The discovery of the Library of Assurbanipal already in the 1840s (Finkel §9.2) means that its physical features are less well known and that it remains unclear exactly how the collection was stored and organized (Reade 2000: 421–2; Pedersén 1998: 161–3). A large number of texts were found in and around two small rooms that were attached to what may have constituted a royal reception suite, but whether this was their original position is unclear. Some texts may have been stored in a different place altogether, and there is no proof that the library formed a collection tied to just one locale. A similar situation applies to the large royal library of the Hittite court (Pedersén 1998: 47; Dardano §5.1) where some 2500 tablets seem to have fallen from an upper floor of the palace into rooms that were probably basements.

It would appear that the storage of texts on the first floor of large public buildings was a fairly common phenomenon (Pedersén 1998: 243). This may be connected to control and admission as well as access to suitable reading light. In the Assyrian temples, the main tablet room was usually located off the sunlit inner temple courtyard that led into the central shrine (Robson and Stevens §8.4.1). The Temple of Nabu in Dur-Sharrukin had two identically located rooms off the outer and inner courtyards with niches built into their walls. The room associated with the outer courtyard held three tiers of niches, each measuring *c.*25–30 × 40–50 cm in depth and separated by 10 cm partitions. The presence of a few fragmentary texts suggests that the room once held the temple library or archive. The room off the inner courtyard was located opposite the main sanctuary and had two similar tiers of niches on the one side, but it had been emptied of texts in antiquity.

Again, one may suppose that the general preference for placing collections of text in rooms close to a protected inner courtyard in large public buildings is associated with restrictions in access. One also sees a recurring pattern of tablets being kept in fairly small rooms, probably for protection. For instance, in the Babylonian city of Ur, the private library was placed in the most distant

and inaccessible corner of a large domestic house ('House 1' in Woolley 1962: 46–7 and pl. 71), and in thirteenth-century BCE Ugarit in Syria, the so-called 'House of the Hurrian Priest' contained two rooms at opposite ends of the building, both of them located as far away from the street entrance as possible (Bordreuil and Pardee 1989).

The physical size of the structures naturally varied greatly over time and between regions, and was largely dependent upon function or purpose. In Egypt, the rooms that held cultic libraries in the temples dating to the Graeco-Roman period are fairly small, measuring between 2.75 and 10.5 m^2. An exception is the library at Tod, which was located inside the second hall of the temple measuring 56 m^2, but this hall was not reserved for the library and functioned as a shared space for various cultic activities. The tall multi-storied building next to the temple of Elephantine, in which several jars containing papyri were found (Ryholt §10.2.2), is even larger. The ground floor covers 156 m^2, and together with the temple itself it would have represented one of the main landmarks on the island. Again, this was presumably a multi-purpose space, and the specific room in which the jars were found measures just *c.*6 m^2. Similar examples of multi-purpose spaces are the 'House of Life' and the 'Place of Documents of the Pharaoh' at Tell el-Amarna, where the storage of texts was again just one of several functions served by the two buildings (Hagen §7.2.1, §7.3). The House of Life consists of two adjoining buildings of *c.*225 m^2 and 120 m^2 respectively, while the Place of Documents measures nearly 400 m^2.

In Western Asia the same general pattern is repeated, although offices that were used for filing of administrative texts as well as to store or produce library collections seemingly required more work space and tend to be bigger. The 60 m^2 office designated 'ZT 4' in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud had fixed boxes on the floor serving as a storage and sorting system for royal correspondence, but the room contained a few literary texts as well (Pedersén 1998: 147). The library and archive room at Ebla measures about 18 m^2 plus an adjacent work space, and the two library rooms in the Temple of Nabu at Dur-Sharrukin measure about 45 m^2 and 70 m^2 respectively. The 38 m^2 library room 'NT 12' at the Ezida temple of Nabu at Kalhu had an unusually wide west-facing door, presumably to admit light, and in the north-east corner of the room was a narrow well, providing a water source convenient for work on the collection of the almost three hundred tablets stored here (Black 2008: 261). The excavator's field notes refer to a big stone, which had covered the well, but no other archaeological evidence survived of any installations, such as tablet boxes or shelving. The virtually intact library room of E'ulmash at Sippar measured a little under 12 m^2, and the two rooms that may have contained the main part of the Library of Assurbanipal together measure close to 90 m^2. The private collection of 452 tablets found in the Merkes quarter of

Babylon dating to the nineteenth century BCE and seemingly belonging to a schoolmaster came from a room measuring just 4 m^2 (Pedersén 2011: 54f.). The palace archive and library in Ebla was stored on wooden shelves that had burned away and were detectable only by holes set in the floor and in the walls at regular distances (Zand §2.4.3). Each wall bore three shelves 80 cm deep and 50 cm high. Shelves on the east wall were 290 cm long, shelves on the north wall were 315 cm. The fire that destroyed the palace consumed the shelves and the tablets slid down and fell toward the centre of the room. The relative position of the tablets is therefore discernable. Tablets stood with their obverse facing the centre of the room and were stored on their side with the first column of the text being on top in a horizontal position. This allowed a person browsing the collection to identify tablets by flipping them forward like index cards without having to remove them from their shelf. Thematic sections in the collection are discernable both within its administrative and literary parts (Zand §2.4.3). Smaller administrative tablets were found lying on the floor of the room under the shelves in areas rich with ashes. This probably marks the remains of the wicker baskets used to store them. Similar practices of storing commercial records and letters in baskets were used in private archives of the Assyrian trader's settlement at Kanesh, where small notes (*bullae*) identifying the contents of each basket were placed on top for easy identification of its content (Larsen 2010).

1.14. STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE

As noted in the previous section, the physical storage of manuscripts differs little across time and space in the ancient Near East. Collections were stored together on wooden shelves or kept in wall niches, boxes, baskets, or pots, some portable and others large and clearly not intended for transport. Niches and shelves are mainly known from institutional contexts, while the use of boxes, baskets, and pots is common also in private collections. There are exceptions to this pattern, however, and so the large collection of some 650 tablets belonging to the private 'House of Urtēnu' in Ugarit (Rutz §6.3.2) appears mainly to have been stored on shelves. Cuneiform tablets have also sometimes been found in large stationary circular bins of fired brick that may have been associated with the practice of recycling the writing clay (Delnero §4.5).

Texts are often found in mixed groups that do not distinguish administrative records from literary works (Pedersén 1998; Parkinson §3.1.2), but in some instances a clear distinction was made with regard to category or genre.

Thus, for instance, in the royal palace of Ebla in the twenty-fourth century BCE (Zand §2.4.3), texts of different genres were shelved separately. Such collections follow a typical pattern according to which all written material was stored in the same room but kept apart. An example from an early private context is found in twenty-fourth century BCE Shuruppag, where an individual seems to have kept the literary tablets of the house in a small lead box separate from the administrative records (Zand §2.2.3). Examples of collections that contain almost exclusively literary material include a nineteenth-century school collection from Ur in Mesopotamia (Delnero §4.3), an eighteenth-century practitioner's collection from Thebes in Egypt (Parkinson §3.6.2.3), and a fourteenth-century royal collection from Hattusa in Turkey (Dardano §5.2). In the temples of Graeco-Roman Egypt, there are, moreover, examples of cultic libraries kept in boxes, and stored in purpose-built rooms and niches (Ryholt §10.6). A less clear case is the comprehensive temple library found in two small cellars below a building close to the sanctuary at the site of Tebtunis, since those cellars likely represent a secondary deposit (Ryholt §10.2.1).

The fact that literary and documentary texts were often kept together is partially explained by the way scribes were trained and worked. Scribal education was often carried out on-site, whether inside temples, official buildings, or at construction sites (§1.15). Accordingly, we may expect to find both master copies of central literary works and student exercises at most institutions where scribes were present (Rutz §6.4). At the diplomatic archives at 'The Place of the Documents of Pharaoh' in Tell el-Amarna, a number of literary texts and scribal exercises used to train Egyptian scribes to read and write in cuneiform Akkadian were found together with the foreign correspondence (Hagen §7.2.1). The mere fact that documentary and literary texts were kept in the same location as administrative tablets should not be taken to imply that tablets were stored in an unsystematic manner (cf. e.g. Zand §2.4.3); as seen in the example of the private house from Shuruppag mentioned above, many cases where detailed archaeological documentation is available suggest that texts were arranged into different categories and stored apart even in non-institutional contexts that involved no professional scribes. Another example from a private context occurs in a house at the city of Ur in southern Iraq, where literary and administrative texts were kept in different rooms; the literary texts in rooms near the entrance, and the administrative records in the back of the house (Delnero §4.3.1). In other collections, there seems to have been no need for any sophisticated form of arrangement of literary manuscripts, in spite of their owners clearly being literate (Barjamovic 2015).

Some of the principles of organization developed for record keeping and institutional archival practices were presumably transferred to the way in

which also libraries were structured. Most of our direct evidence for this type of ordering is missing, but a recurring tradition across the ancient Near East of producing clearly structured onomastica show that comparable principles of categorization were commonly known and employed since very early times. Manuscripts could also be supplied with colophons or tags that provide bibliographical information concerning the ownership of the text, the scribe who wrote it, the nature or origin of the composition, and its position within a specific series. In Western Asia colophons were also used as an aid for organizing collections of texts according to genre, composition, etc., for easy identification and retrieval (Dardano §5.3; Robson and Stevens §8.1). Colophons in papyrus manuscripts will likewise have aided identification, but were not visible before the papyrus was unrolled. Exterior labelling was infrequent, but there are examples of papyri provided with the title of the texts, either written transversely along the outside of the roll or inscribed on tags or 'book labels' (Hagen §7.6). Dockets that would clearly have been attached to papyrus or leather rolls were found in the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, showing that this was another option used to sort and organize rolls (Layard 1853: 130–3).

On the level of the individual texts, tablets usually contain catch line citations, or other compositional meta-data to allow their identification independently, or label them as part of a particular series or cycle (Rutz §6.3.1; Robson and Stevens §8.5.3; Finkel §9.8). Inventories of collections are also known across the Near East, e.g. in the form of catalogues (Dardano §5.3; Ryholt §10.6.5), lists of texts belonging to the same genre inventories (Delnero §4.2.1), and lists of books acquired as booty (Robson 2013: 56). The particularly well-documented Hittite example shows that the royal collection at Hattusa was carefully curated and ordered. Texts were assigned to individuals for inventory repair or re-copying as required, and a close eye was kept on the whereabouts of the manuscripts (Dardano §5.3). Individual groups of texts could be provided with descriptive labels for easy reference (Dardano §5.3), or stored in labelled boxes (Parkinson §3.1.2) or in labelled niches (Ryholt §10.6.1).

Although there were clearly architectural locations designed to hold collections of texts (§1.9), manuscripts themselves—and even entire collections—would move about, and were not necessarily bound to a given place (Robson and Stevens §8.4.3–8.4.4 on shared or distributed libraries). Tablets and papyri were removed from collections for study, copying, loan, disposal, or destruction, or were brought away as booty, and would leave their usual physical context for shorter or longer periods. This does not change the fact that physical arrangements had to be made for the storage and protection of

large numbers of texts, and that designated spaces that we may refer to as 'libraries' in the physical sense go back into the third millennium BCE.

1.15. CONTENT AND VOLUME

Despite the different nature of the libraries studied in this volume, their overall contents are, generally speaking, comparable in terms of scope across the region and through time. The most common genres represented in the collections of Egypt and Western Asia are:

- religious texts: temple rituals, magic, and compendia of cultic and priestly knowledge;
- scientific texts: manuals relating to divination, medicine, mathematics, astronomy;
- lexical lists (sometimes referred to as onomastica);
- royal and narrative literature: epic, myth, historical texts, poetry, and lamentations;
- wisdom literature, proverbs, school exercises, model texts;
- legal manuals (relatively rare in libraries).

This list is not an attempt to establish a strict and exhaustive typology and it does not indicate the popularity of the individual genres through time. Instead, it aims to provide an overall impression of the types of texts that were kept and copied, thus distinguishing them from documentary evidence. As seen from the chapters in this book, there are practical, chronological, geographical, and cultural reasons for variance between the extant collections, and there are also observable differences between the contents of the private and institutional libraries. It is hard to generalize, but some temple libraries in both Egypt and Western Asia encompassed all of the genres listed above, thus holding a comparable core of texts and genres that may be said to represent a cultural canon of the ancient world in the very broadest sense of the term (cf. e.g. Fincke 2003/4). This may be compared to the later classical tradition whence hardly any actual collections survive. Instead, canon came to be defined by new ideological and religious interests, as well as by the chance of survival. This tradition favoured narrative, philosophical, and other didactic genres, and presumably bears only indirect witness to what the earlier Greek or Roman temple libraries contained. Thus, for instance, later Christian scholars had little interest in pagan cultic literature

and divinatory texts, although they constituted a significant corpus in the earlier cultures of Egypt and Western Asia.

There is a general increase over time in the size and scope of the surviving libraries from Egypt and Western Asia. This trend is not surprising, although some fluctuation must be expected. Material is widely scattered in both time and space, but a general picture emerges: while entirely new works are continuously identified, most, if not all of them, fit into known genres. A modern reader might at first be unimpressed by the size of the ancient collections. However, size is relative, and the long chronological aspect must be taken into account. We are concerned with millennia-old collections; the development of genres and the formation of a textual canon were necessarily gradual in nature. Compared to the more recent libraries held in the monasteries and early universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, many of the collections discussed in the present volume are substantial. According to one inventory, the Monastery of St John on the island of Patmos held a collection of 330 manuscripts that had been acquired over a period of more than a century. This is considered exceptionally large for its time, and it is assumed that early monastic libraries at Constantinople on average held less than a hundred manuscripts (Casson 2001: 142). The later Cambridge University Library still held less than five hundred volumes after substantial donations had been made by bishops and other individuals in 1583 (Leedham-Green and Webber 2008: 4). By contrast, the private house of Urtēnu at Ugarit in Syria contained some 650 tablets and fragments as part of a semi-private collection of texts dating to the thirteenth century BCE (Rutz §6.3.2). Figures are of course not directly comparable, since there is a significant difference in manuscript length; a book can contain more than an average papyrus, and an average papyrus can contain more than an average clay tablet. Nevertheless, the enormity of the palatial collections at Nineveh and Hattusa, or the temple libraries kept at Tebtunis or Sippar, stands out in comparison to the later collections. The Tebtunis temple library, in the condition in which it was found, contained an estimated four hundred manuscripts (Ryholt §10.2.1). These range from single sheets of papyrus up to rolls with a reconstructed length of 10 to 20 metres. We do not know if what has been found represents the totality of its contents, but this single discovery still vastly exceeds the alleged forty-two-volume canon of temple literature mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, or even the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran, which have been taken to represent *grosso modo* the entire Jewish canonical corpus of the first century BCE (Assmann 2001: 47).

1.16. CLOSING REMARKS

This introduction provides an interpretative framework for the rise of early libraries. The following chapters discuss the volume and diversity of the primary sources available for study from individual time periods in more detail and describe developments and levels of complexity in the collection and treatment of texts. Together, they contribute to the early history of science and the sociology of knowledge by presenting and contextualizing a huge and unwieldy material that is largely unknown beyond a limited circle of specialists.

Table 1.1 below compiles the main groups of materials discussed and adds a sample of other significant collections. Owing to the vagaries of preservation, the distribution is uneven in terms of volume, time, and space. An endeavour has been made to include the most representative and important collections known from the ancient Near East and Egypt, while avoiding unnecessary redundancy. It is by no means possible to list all relevant material, and, for instance, much of the material identified and compiled by Pedersén 1998 and 2011 remains to be explored in further detail. A large number of texts kept in collections around the world have yet to be studied and identified, and entirely new works are continuously coming to light. Controlled and well-documented archaeological excavations likewise produce new material at a steady pace. The study of the early libraries is still in its infancy in terms of publication and analysis.

Alongside the publication and philological study of texts, there has been an increasing focus within our disciplines on analysing and synthesizing aspects of library studies, from materiality and storage to social context and textual transmission. It is our hope that the present book and its extensive bibliography will make the role of libraries in the ancient world and the present state of publication and research better known to a wider public and serve as a convenient entry point for broader studies of literacy, libraries, and the organization of knowledge. At a glance, Table 1.1 suggests a gradual progression towards ever larger and more specialized collections of science and literature. In time, these 'libraries before Alexandria' came to encompass and preserve a great multitude of texts and traditions in huge collections whose volume and historical importance are now gradually coming back into the light of history.

Table 1.1. A selection of collections and assemblages of literary texts from Egypt and Western Asia

Place	Date	Approx. size	Type	Reference
Shuruppag, 'Tablet House' and adjacent area, Iraq	27th century BCE	305 tablets including at least 69 administrative records	Unknown	Zand §2.2.1
Shuruppag, House IXa and IXaa, Iraq	27th century BCE	26 tablets including several literary texts	Private (school?)	Zand §2.2.2
Tell Abu Salabikh Area E, Iraq	27th century BCE	556 tablets including 59 administrative records	Temple or palace	Zand §2.3.1
Ebla, Syria	23rd century BCE	2100 tablets including at least 350 non-administrative texts	Palace (mixed)	Zand §2.4.2
Saqqara?, Egypt	*c.*2000 BCE	3 papyri	Unknown	Parkinson §3.3
Ur, 1 Broad St., Iraq	19th century BCE	Probably 1000 tablets	Private (school)	Delnero §4.3.1
Babylon, Find A1, Iraq	19th century BCE	452 tablets	Private (head of school)	Pedersén 2011: 54–5
Nippur, House F, Iraq	18th century BCE	1400 tablets	Private (school)	Delnero §4.2.1
Thebes, Ameny's papyri, Egypt	*c.*1800 BCE	2 papyri	Tomb	Parkinson §3.6.2.1
Thebes, 'Berlin Library', Egypt	*c.*1800 BCE	4 papyri	Tomb	Parkinson §3.6.2.2
Thebes, 'Ramesseum Papyri', Egypt	*c.*1700 BCE	At least 24 papyri	Tomb	Parkinson §3.6.2.3
Tigunānum, Turkey	17th century BCE	At least 600 tablets, including 500 administrative records and state letters	Palace (mixed)	George 2013: 101–3
Unknown provenance, 'Golénischeff Library', Egypt	*c.*1500 BCE	6 papyri, mostly literary	Unknown	Hagen §7.5.1
Memphis?, 'Perunefer Library', Egypt	*c.*1400 BCE	3 papyri	Tomb?	Hagen §7.5.2
Tell el-Amarna, 'The Place of Documents of Pharaoh', Egypt	*c.*1340 BCE	32 cuneiform tablets, a few of them administrative	Archive	Hagen §7.2.1

Hattusa, Building K, Turkey	14th–13th century BCE	Around 200 tablets and fragments	Palace	Pedersén 1998: 48
Hattusa, Building E, Turkey	14th–13th century BCE	At least 2500 tablets and fragments, including some administrative records	Palace	Pedersén 1998: 49
Hattusa, Great Temple (Temple 1), Turkey	14th–13th century BCE	At least 800 tablets and fragments, including *c.*75 administrative records	Temple	Pedersén 1998: 51; Dardano §5.2
Hattusa, 'House on the Slope', Turkey	14th–13th century BCE	At least 500 tablets and fragments	Unknown public	Pedersén 1998: 51; Dardano §5.2
Kom Medinet Gurob, Egypt	14th–12th century BCE	Numerous fragments, some literary	Palace	Hagen §7.2.2
Hattusa, Building A, Turkey	13th century BCE	More than 2000 tablets with a few hundred being legal records and letters	Palace	Pedersén 1998: 46
Thebes, Ramesseum temple, Egypt	13th–12th century BCE	347 ostraca	Mortuary temple of Ramesses II	Hagen §7.3; Barbotin 2013
Babylon, Find M4, Iraq	Middle Babylonian	61 tablets	Private (diviner)	Pedersén 2011: 56
Babylon, Find M6, Iraq	Middle Babylonian	154 tablets and *c.*1000 fragments	Private (school)	Pedersén 2011: 58
Thebes, Library of Qenherkhepeshef, Egypt	13th century BCE	43 papyri	Found beside tomb chapel	Hagen §7.5.5
Saqqara, Egypt	13th century BCE	11 or more papyri	Unknown	Hagen §7.5.3
Saqqara?, Library of Inena, Egypt	*c.*1200 BCE	Unclear	Tomb?	Hagen §7.5.4
Thebes, Ramesseum temple, Egypt	*c.*1200 BCE	Uncertain number of papyri, some literary items	Mortuary temple of Ramesses II	Hagen §7.2.4
Ugarit, Royal Palace, Syria	12th century BCE	25 tablets	Palace	Pedersén 1998: 71
Ugarit, House of High Priest, Syria	12th century BCE	126 tablets	Private (priest)	Rutz §6.3.1
Ugarit, House of Urtenu, Syria	12th century BCE	650 tablets or more	Private	Rutz §6.3.2
Emar, Temple M_1, Syria	12th century BCE	Just under 1000 tablets	Temple	Rutz §6.4.1
Haft Tepe, Terrace Complex, Iran	12th century BCE	Unpublished	Temple? (school?)	Herrero and Glassner 1990

(*Continued*)

Table 1.1. Continued

Place	Date	Approx. size	Type	Reference
el-Hibeh, Egypt	11th–10th century BCE	3 papyri	Unknown	Hagen §7.5.6
el-Ahaiwah, Egypt	*c.*1000 BCE	2000+ fragments, a few might be literary	Fortress	Hagen §7.2.3
Assur, Find Assur 15/N1, Iraq	9th century BCE	c. 300 tablets, incl. min. 125 scholarly ones	Temple	Robson & Stevens §8.2.1
Unknown provenance, 'Library of Djedmontuiufankh', Egypt	*c.*840 BCE	6 papyri	Tomb?	Hagen §7.5.7
Nineveh, Iraq	7th century BCE	26,000–31,000 tablets from various locations on citadel	Palace (and temple)	Finkel §9.3; Frahm 2011: §8.2.4.1
Huzirina, Turkey	7th century BCE	400 tablets	Private (priestly)	Frahm 2011: §8.2.3
Assur, Find Assur 18, Iraq	7th century BCE	65 tablets	Private (scribal)	Pedersén 1998: 134
Assur, Find Assur 19, Iraq	7th century BCE	65 tablets	Private (chief singer)	Pedersén 1998: 134
Assur, Find Assur 20, Iraq	7th century BCE	1200 tablets	Private (exorcist)	Maul 2010; Frahm 2011: §8.2.2.1
Sippar, E'ulmash, Iraq	6th–5th century BCE	800 tablets	Temple	Robson and Stevens §8.3.2, Frahm 2011: §8.3.1.1
Uruk, Eanna, Iraq	6th–5th century BCE	250 tablets	Temple	Frahm 2011: §8.3.2.1
Babylon, Nabu *ša harê*, Iraq	6th century BCE	1500 tablets	Dump in courtyard (votive)	Robson and Stevens §8.3.1
Kalhu, temple of Nabu, Iraq	7th century BCE	280 tablets	Temple	Robson and Stevens §8.3.1; Frahm 2011: §8.2.1.2

Babylon, Find N8, Iraq	Neo-Babylonian	44 tablets	Temple	Pedersén 2011: 61
Babylon, Find N10, Iraq	Neo-Babylonian	36 tablets, some archival	Private	Pedersén 2011: 62
Thebes?, 'Brooklyn Library', Egypt	7th–6th century BCE	At least 12 papyri	Unknown	Ryholt §10.3.1
Elephantine, temple of Khnum, Egypt	7th–3rd century BCE	Unknown	Jars in tower house next to the temple within temple enclosure	Ryholt §10.2.2
Saqqara North, sacred animal necropolis, Egypt	5th–3rd century BCE	*c.*750 papyrus fragments, about 10% literary	Dumps and debris	Ryholt §10.5.1
Thebes?, 'Library of Sminis', Egypt	*c.*300 BCE	Four papyri	Tomb	Ryholt §10.4.1
Babylon, Find N19, Iraq	Hellenistic	60 tablets, some archival	Private	Pedersén 2011: 63
Memphis, Ptolemaios papyri, Egypt	2nd century BCE	*c.*125 papyri, a few literary, both Egyptian and Greek	Unknown	Ryholt §10.3.2
Tebtunis, Egypt	2nd–1st century BCE	Several thousand papyrus fragments, including at least 100 literary texts in Egyptian and an uncertain number in Greek	Dump outside temple	Ryholt §10.2.1.5
Abusir el-Melek, Egypt	1st century BCE	Numerous documentary papyri, including at ten literary manuscripts	Tombs (papyrus re-used for cartonnage)	Ryholt §10.5.3
Tebtunis, temple of Soknebtunis, Egypt	1st–2nd century CE	*c.*400 papyri, mainly Egyptian, some Greek	Deposit within temple enclosure	Ryholt §10.2.1
Narmuthis, Egypt	2nd century CE	*c.*1500 ostraca, many of them apparently scribal exercises	Building within temple enclosure	Ryholt §10.7
Tanis, House 35, Egypt	2nd century CE	*c.*150 papyri, many literary, mainly Egyptian, some Greek	House (waste paper)	Ryholt §10.5.2

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The Rise of Libraries in Western Asia, *c*.2600–2300 BCE

Kamran Vincent Zand

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the earliest known collections of lexical and literary texts in Western Asia and discusses some of the conclusions that scholars draw about the creation of what might be called the first incipient libraries. The earliest collections of literary manuscripts known to us date to the so-called Early Dynastic period, or more precisely, to the tail end of that period, conventionally referred to as Early Dynastic IIIa and IIIb (see Table 2.1 below). The Early Dynastic period covers most of the third millennium BC. It was preceded by the Uruk Period, during which the cuneiform script was developed, and followed by the time of the Akkadian Empire, whose kings for the first time united all of Mesopotamia and parts of the Levant under one rule.[1]

The Mesopotamians themselves did not organize their past into periods in the way we do, but perceived history as chain of successive dynasties broken only by the mythical Flood that was believed to have swept the world long ago. The term Early Dynastic is instead a modern term coined by the American archaeologist Henry Frankfort (1936: 35) and based on the sequence of cities and rulers found in a text known as the 'Sumerian King List'. This is a composition whose oldest manuscript is dated to the time just before 2000 BC and which compiles in a chronological sequence the rulers of various cities in Mesopotamia since the creation of the world.[2] The work is pseudo-historical and

[1] The chronological subdivision of early Mesopotamian history is a highly complex matter and currently under much debate. To simplify matters, the present chapter follows conventional dates and refers to the recent detailed treatment by Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015.

[2] Editions are Jacobsen 1939 and Glassner 2005: 117ff. The oldest known manuscript from the Ur III state in the twenty-first century BCE is in Steinkeller 2003.

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mixes myth and history, listing a number of unverifiable kings and dynasties. Furthermore, it records the ruling lines in strict chronological alternation, one following after the other, although we know from historical sources that some of the kings ruled simultaneously in different parts of Mesopotamia.[3] The composition begins with the descent of kingship from heaven and records the cities and dynasties whose kings reigned for millennia until the Great Flood. Afterwards reigns become progressively shorter until they fit feasible human life spans.[4] The text moves gradually from mythical rulers to genuine historical kings whose names are known from other sources. Our current knowledge of the historical and cultural developments of the Early Dynastic period is mainly based on texts and to a lesser degree from archaeological data.

By the end of the fourth millennium BC, cuneiform script was developed in southern Mesopotamia as an administrative tool to record economic activities (Englund 1998; Woods 2015). In addition to the administrative records, only one other genre is attested among the earliest texts.

Table 2.1. General overview of the major finds of texts and attested textual genres of the Uruk, Early Dynastic (Old Sumerian), and Old Akkadian periods.

Phase	Places	Text Genres
Uruk IV (invention of cuneiform) (*c.*3200–3000 BCE)	Uruk	First cuneiform script, administrative texts, lexical lists
Uruk III (*c.*3000–2900 BCE)	Uruk, various other sites	Administrative texts, lexical lists
Early Dynastic I (*c.*2900–2750 BCE)	Ur	Administrative texts, lexical lists
Early Dynastic II (*c.*2750–2600 BCE)	Various find-spots	Legal documents of land sale/tenure, few short dedicatory inscriptions, 'figure aux plumes'
Early Dynastic IIIa (*c.*2600–2500 BCE)	Shuruppag (Fara), Tell Abu Salabikh	Administrative and literary texts, lexical lists
Early Dynastic IIIb (*c.*2500–2350 BCE)	Lagash-Girsu, Ebla	Lagash-Girsu: administrative texts, royal inscriptions Ebla: administrative and literary texts, lexical lists, letters
Old Akkadian period (*c.*2350–2100 BCE)	Various find-spots	Administrative and literary texts, lexical lists, royal and dedicatory inscriptions, letters

[3] See Michalowski 1983 and Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 98, 114–18. Note also the elaborate discussion on its structure and possible use as source of history in Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015: 13–22 and Marchesi 2015: 139–56.

[4] For the topic of replacing history with myth in Mesopotamia, see Cooper 2010; George 2009: 110–11.

These are the so-called lexical lists, which appear to have been used as comprehensive collections or indices of cuneiform signs, and presumably as a tool for teaching them. From the outset, signs were categorized into lists according to recognizable patterns, such as designations of professions, general nouns, personal names, animals, plants, manufactured products, and place-names (Englund 1998: 90ff.).[5] Some of these lists were copied continuously and with great accuracy from the beginning in the Uruk IV–III period (*c.*3200–2900 BC) to the late Old Babylonian period (*c.*2000–1500 BC) and are found across all of Mesopotamia and beyond.[6]

At the beginning of the Early Dynastic period, cuneiform had already been used for a couple of centuries, and by the end of it for nearly seven hundred years. However, the distribution of texts during this long span of time is highly uneven and our knowledge of the first half of the period is sketchy and defined by archaeological chance.[7] From the Early Dynastic I–II period in particular, only one archive of approximately four hundred texts from the city of Ur gives us some information about the administrative practices of the time.[8] The lexical lists that were part of this archive clearly belong to the earlier Uruk tradition (Englund 1998: 88–9), while the bulk of the records represent a collection of documents of practice and not a repository of texts of tradition. The lexical lists were simply part of the tools of the scriptorium that ran the administration.

A new type of text that begins to emerge during the first half of the Early Dynastic period is the so-called *kudurru*, which is a type of inscription, often carved in stone, that is concerned with the purchase or tenure of land.[9] Some of these *kudurru*s also contain short passages that can be seen as first early steps towards a narrative 'literary' text.[10] Examples include the inscription of the so-called *figure aux plumes*, which provides some background to the

[5] One of these lists, now known as 'Word List C', 'List of Tributes', or 'AD-GI$_4$', is particularly hard to interpret, because a large part of it is made up of exact repetitions. This is highly unusal for lexical lists. Some scholars see it as an educational tool (Veldhuis 2006) or even as the first literary text (Englund 1998: 99–102). The most recent edition (Civil 2013) examines the possibility that the text describes in narrative form the change of settlement from reed-huts to a fully developed city-life with monumental architecture and complex social organization. For a comprehensive study of all lexical lists, their content, transmission, and tradition, cf. Veldhuis 2014b.

[6] See the table in Englund 1998: 88–9; the transmission and later reception of the lists is discussed by Taylor 2005 and Veldhuis 2010. Another manuscript was published by Cohen 2010. A recent analysis of the different traditions of lexical lists, their distribution, and relationship is Veldhuis 2014b.

[7] The definition and subdivision of the Early Dynastic Period is a matter of some debate. For the latest discussion of the archaeological framework, see Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 11–128. See also Andersson 2012: 34–8; Porada et al. 1992: 103–13; and Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015.

[8] Approximately 350 texts and fragments were published in Burrows 1935; sixty-six additional texts kept in the British Museum were published by Lecompte 2013.

[9] The main edition is Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991.

[10] See e.g. col. iii′–iv′ of the *kudurru* MS 2482 in Steinkeller 2011: 214–18.

information it contains. The 'feathered figure' is surrounded by a short passage that praises the god Ninĝirsu, one of the most important deities of the city-state Lagash, and gives the names and sizes of fields belonging to his temple (Wilcke 1996). The 'feathered figure' itself may represent the god or a ruler wearing a floral crown.[11]

A small fragment dated to the ED I–II period and possibly of a literary nature has also been found in Shuruppag, but the text is very broken and only a few phrases can be recognized (Krebernik et al. 2014: 354–5). Better preserved is a recently published stone inscription (Steinkeller 2013) of a similar date, the so-called 'Prisoner Plaque', which lists almost thirty thousand prisoners of war and their allocation to agricultural duties following an armed conflict involving numerous cities. It can be considered the oldest 'historical record' from Mesopotamia (ibid. 131).

In general, our knowledge of the literature of the ED I–II period is incomplete due to the rarity and fragmentary nature of surviving texts, but as pointed out by Krebernik (1998: 317), the nature and distribution of literature during the period that followed implies preliminary stages that we do not yet fully comprehend. Texts from ED IIIa period provide a different and much more detailed picture of history and knowledge about the curation and composition of texts. From the twenty-seventh century BCE onwards we begin to recognize the first deliberate attempts to collect manuscripts and store them according to genre. From two ancient sites in particular large numbers of cuneiform tablets have come to light. These are the city of Shuruppag (modern Fara) and the site of Tell Abu Salabikh, whose ancient name remains unknown. At both places literary Sumerian texts are attested for the first time in great quantities, while administrative texts are found in abundance only in Shuruppag. The two sites and their texts are examined in more detail in §2.2 and §2.3 below.

The cuneiform texts from the following ED IIIb period allow us for the first time to reconstruct the history of actual political events. Our main sources are a genre of dedicatory inscriptions made by rulers of various city-states that gains prominence during this period. The documentation is particularly abundant from the city-state of Lagash, located at the south-easternmost extremity of the Mesopotamian alluvium.[12] Our image of its history is necessarily biased by the political agenda that the rulers wanted to transmit in their inscriptions, but in the case of Lagash, the city-state has also yielded a large archive of documentary records from its main temple that provides some

[11] The artistic convention of identifying gods by their horned crown as known in later times was probably not developed in this early period. On this topic, and the *figure aux plumes* especially, see Braun-Holzinger (2007: 8–10).

[12] The literature on the ED IIIb period is exhaustive. For an overview, see Bauer 1998. The newest edition of the royal inscriptions is Frayne 2007. A recent monograph on the royal statuary (including their inscriptions) is Marchesi and Marchetti 2011.

insight into state administration, as well as a few literary texts. Unfortunately, the archive was excavated at the beginning of the twentieth century and the records kept by the archaeologists are insufficient to ascertain the exact physical context from which it came.[13] A few non-administrative texts have been found in later excavations at the site conducted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Institute of Fine Arts in New York.[14]

Together, the ED IIIb sources paint a picture of the Mesopotamian lowlands as a fragmented and highly competitive political landscape of numerous self-governed city-states that were in constant conflict over territory and access to water. We know, for instance, that the city-state of Lagash was fighting with its neighbour Umma over a particular area of land, known as the Guedena, situated on their shared border. The conflict spanned several generations with the fortunes of war going back and forth until the conflict ultimately ended in favour of Lagash (Bauer 1998: 431–531). The period is also characterized by a seeming progression towards political centralization, with some states and rulers gaining the upper hand in conflict and forming larger territories.

An important source of information on the political and social history of the late Early Dynastic period has come to light since 1964 in the Italian excavations of the ancient city of Ebla located outside of Mesopotamia proper in north-western Syria. Ebla was a powerful independent state that competed with the cities of Mari and Kish over the dominance of the Euphrates valley from Syria to Mesopotamia. The texts from Ebla have greatly enhanced our understanding of the complex political and linguistic situation in Syria, where, like in Mesopotamia, various independent or semi-independent states fought for domination. Ebla was a major actor in this power play, whose political history can be traced in detail through the texts found at the site.[15] The people of Ebla spoke a language related to Akkadian and a continuum of other Semitic dialects spoken during the third millennium across the region between the Mediterranean coast and the Persian Gulf.[16] A large part of the texts from Ebla were composed in this local language using an adapted form of the cuneiform script coming from Mesopotamia. The script was used to compose

[13] Due to its administrative nature, this archive lies outside the scope of the present chapter. On the temple administration, see Bauer 1998: 532–55 and Schrakamp 2013 about the role of the temple.

[14] The texts were published by Biggs (1973; 1976). An exercise belonging to the corpus was edited by Civil (1983). Their classification as 'literary' is far from certain; see Marchesi 1999. They were found in a large structure that has been interpreted variously as an 'administrative building' or a 'workshop' (Huh 2008: 228). Despite the few non-administrative texts that have been found at this locus, the situation in Lagash is comparable to find-spots in Fara, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Ebla—non-administrative and administrative texts are almost always found together (for an analysis see Huh 2008: 228–9).

[15] A new overview on the archaeology of Ebla is Matthiae and Marchetti 2013. See also Archi and Biga 2003; Matthiae 2008; 2010; Matthiae et al. 1995; Archi 2015a; and Biga 2015.

[16] For a detailed discussion about the relationship of Eblaite and Akkadian and further literature see Archi 2006; Edzard 2006; Huehnergard and Woods 2008; and Rubio 2006a.

texts in a variety of genres that include not only administrative records and lexical lists—in this case expanded to include both the traditional Sumerian and their renditions in the local language—but also state treaties, memoranda, and even state letters.

The most significant find of texts made at Ebla came from a suite of rooms designed for the dual purpose of tablet storage and writing in the central palace ('Palace G') of the site. This find contains elements of what may arguably be the first attested example of a 'library' in the sense of a collection of texts of tradition. The find is further explored in §2.4 below.

2.2. SHURUPPAG

The ancient city of Shuruppag, modern Fara, is located in southern Iraq some 45 km south-east of the ancient city of Nippur and 50 km north of Uruk.[17] After a brief survey by Hermann Volrath Hilprecht in 1900, it was first excavated in 1902–3 by Robert Koldewey and Friedrich Delitzsch of the German Oriental Society for eight months.[18] The team conducted a comprehensive investigation of the site and unearthed the remains of ancient architecture, pottery, seals, and many small finds, including nine hundred cuneiform tablets and some small inscribed objects. The intensive search was conducted exactly because the excavatiors were hoping to unearth cuneiform tablets from very early periods. In March and April 1931 a joint team of the American Schools of Oriental Research and the University of Pennsylvania returned to work on the site for six weeks, with Schmidt as director and Samuel Noah Kramer as chief epigraphist. This brief excavation recovered just eighty-seven tablets and fragments. In 1973, a three-day surface survey of the site was conducted by Harriet P. Martin.

The site was founded sometime during the Uruk III period *c.*3000–2900 BC and was inhabited for about a millennium until the end of the Ur III period *c.*2000 BC.[19] The administrative archive dated to the ED IIIa period unearthed at Shuruppag mentioned previously allows a rudimentary reconstruction of the political and economic organization of the city but does not include reference to the names or deeds of its rulers at the time.[20] The texts do reveal that Shuruppag had a 'sovereign' (énsi) and that it was managed by a multitude

[17] Krebernik 1998: 238; Martin 1988: 12–14, see fig. 1. On the dating of the texts, see Sallaberger and Schrakamp (2015: 61–5).

[18] See Martin 1988: 15–17; Krebernik 1998: 244–5; Starzmann 2005: 93–7.

[19] See Krebernik 1998: 241–3; Martin 1988: 125–9; Porada et al. 1992: 103–13.

[20] The most comprehensive studies are Pomponio and Visicato 1994; Visicato 1995; Martin et al. 2001.

of officials (Pomponio and Visicato 1994; Martin et al. 2001: 115–24).[21] Furthermore, they also show that Shuruppag was in league with five other cities in Mesopotamia—Uruk, Adab, Nippur, Lagash, and Umma. The political status of this league is not clear; it may have consisted of five politically independent units, although some administrative records hint that it was under the overall domination of the northern city of Kish, which seems to have controlled most of Mesopotamia during the period.[22]

The format of the administrative texts is hard to interpret, and often the direction of the recorded administrational process is not clear. The later epic of Gilgamesh and Akka, which refers to a military conflict between Kish and Uruk, is sometimes adduced as evidence for the early dominance of Kish. But as pointed out by Cooper (2001) later epics tend not to echo past events in a faithful way and must be used cautiously even when they revolve around seemingly historical characters. All one can say for certain is that some records refer to the common mobilization and supply of soldiers by members of the league. The fact that these texts were found in a stratum that was destroyed in a violent conflagration vaguely hints at a complex political and military history now lost to us.[23]

Following the violent end of Shuruppag in the ED IIIa period the city never seems to have fully recovered. During the time of the Akkadian Empire it is barely mentioned in the records, and the site seems to have been abandoned altogether some time after 2000 BC. But the city retained a place in Mesopotamian cultural memory and played an important role in its mythology. It occupies a prominent place in the Sumerian King List, not for any great military or political achievements, but for being home to the last dynasty ruling Mesopotamia before the Great Flood swept the land. The Sumerian King List exists in different versions that also provide alternative numbers of rulers for the Shuruppag dynasty. One version mentions a ruler named Shuruppag, son of Ubara-Tutu. Another names King Ubara-Tutu and his son, King Ziusudra. The latter character, Ziusudra, is the main protagonist of the Sumerian Flood Story later paralleled in Noah of the Bible. Finally, the Sumerian literary work commonly known as the Instructions of Shuruppag revolves around a sage of that name who gives his son advice on how to behave and live a pious life (Alster 1974; 2005). The text formed part of a core literary tradition that can be traced through ancient Near Eastern literature for at least 1500 years and was translated into several languages. The memory of the city of Shuruppag thus lived on personified in two characters, one as the ruler

[21] For the term *énsi*, see Michalowski 2008: 33 and Andersson 2012: 37–41.

[22] For a discussion of the dominance of Kish and its dating see Frayne 2009; Gelb 1977; 1981; 1992; Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 101–2; Steinkeller 1993: 117ff.; 2013; see also Sallaberger and Schrakamp (2015: 63) and Steible (2015).

[23] For various possibilities of reconstruction, see Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 97–128.

Shuruppag, father or saviour of life on Earth itself, the other as the mythological sage Shuruppag, who laid out the norms of social behaviour.

Over nine hundred tablets have been found in some ninety different locales around the city (Krebernik 1998: 245). Unfortunately most of these cannot be assigned to a specific locus because the excavation numbers have later been lost and can no longer be correlated with the tablets themselves. The find-spot of those tablets that have preserved excavation numbers is certain, however, and previous researchers have in some cases been able to identify the find-spots of additional tablets by recovering data from excavation notes and comparing them to analyses of various text groups.[24] The following paragraph looks at the distribution of texts across this early site.

2.2.1. The So-Called 'Tablet House' (at XVh) and Adjacent 'North of XVh'

This find-spot is located in the south of Shuruppag (Fig. 2.1). It is said in the find-register to be located 'north of XVh' and is sometimes referred to as the 'Tablet House' (Martin 1988: 86). Approximately one third of all tablets found at the site come from this one location, and in no other find-spot from Shuruppag did a greater number of texts come to light. Unfortunately the building in which the tablets were housed cannot be precisely identified. Three different structures are found in the site map drawn by excavation architect Ernst Heinrich (1931), all of which are said to be 'wildly inaccurate' by Martin (1988: 86). None of the structures are designated in the excavation journals as the 'Tablet House' either, which, however, is the nomenclature used by the find-register.[25] It is nevertheless possible to sort tablets by means of contents into different and relatively coherent groups, which are in turn confirmed by the entries in the find-register (cf. Martin 1988, Table 15). A total of 305 tablets came from the locus, 105 of which are identifiable (cf. Martin 1988, Table 16). Detailed references are provided in the chapter Appendix.

Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 show that in these adjacent locations a combination of administrative, lexical, and literary texts were found. The administrative texts comprise the biggest group. The number of personnel, donkeys, and rations that were distributed according to these texts suggest that this group of tablets could not have belonged to a private household (Martin 1988: 89). The assumption is supported by the fact that the administrative texts from XVh

[24] This presentation follows the latest accounts of Krebernik 1998: 245–53; Martin 1988: 85–112; Pomponio and Visicato 1994; Starzmann 2005; Visicato 1995. For the lexical tradition of Shuruppag and southern Babylonia, see Veldhuis 2014b: 62–102 and 116–29. It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss all find-spots of tablets. Assemblages consisting only of administrative records are left out.

[25] See Martin 1988: 86–91 and Starzmann 2005: 150–2 for a summary of the discussion.

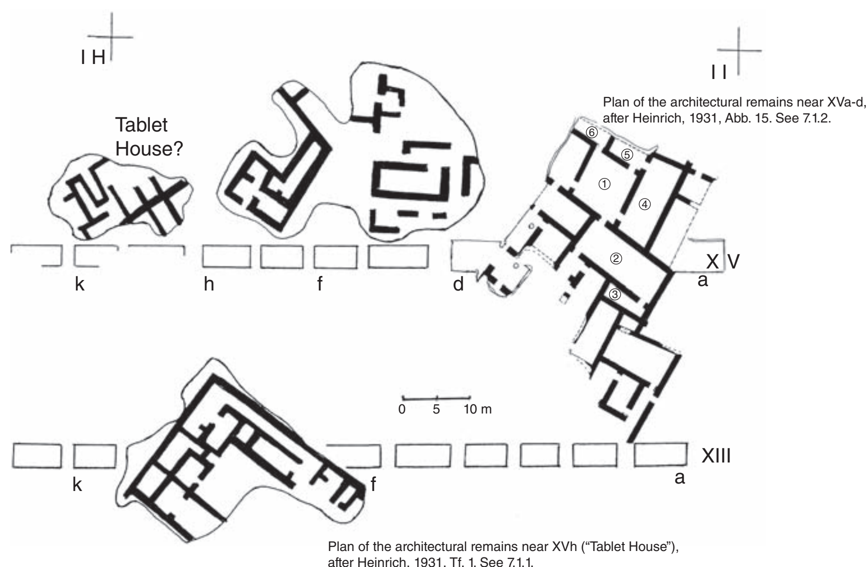


Fig. 2.1. Plan of excavations in the city of Shuruppag (modern Fara) around the so-called Tablet House at XVh and the adjacent area North of XVh.

After Martin 1988: 161.

are closely related to another archive from Shuruppag, that of trench XVIIc,d located in the extreme north of the mound (Pomponio and Visicato 1994: 4). This archive contained only ninety-six administrative texts (twenty-two of them identified) and consists mainly of muster lists and records concerned with the organization of large numbers of people.

The two related archives have been interpreted in two ways (cf. Starzmann 2005: 141–7). Martin (1988) assumes that they came from separate institutions that were working together, and hence classifies the 'Tablet House' as 'possibly either a temple or palace'. Pomponio and Visicato (1994: 4) and Visicato (1995: 88; 2000: 20) instead argue that the archives came from two separate offices that belonged to a greater administrative institution that ruled the economic life of the city through specialized offices. Therefore, by the sheer number of texts from this location, Visicato (1995: 88) sees in the 'Tablet-house' the central administrative archive of the city of Shuruppag.

The details of the civic administration are beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is important to emphasize that lexical and literary texts were found stored together with the administrative records in what seems to be the archive of a major urban office, and that no so-called exercise tablets used in scribal training and easily identified by their circular shape have come from the 'Tablet House'. This stands in contrast to other find-spots at the site. This observation led Martin (1988: 86) to suggest that XVh may have functioned as a 'library' rather than as a school. Rubio (2011: 106) has a more cautious view

Table 2.2. Texts coming from the 'Tablet House' (at XVh)

Administrative Texts	20
Lexical Lists	21
Lexical Lists (in UGN-orthography)[26]	2
Literary Texts	4
Literary Texts (in UGN-orthography)	4
Practical Texts (Incantations)	1

Table 2.3. Texts coming from the locus 'North of XVh'

Administrative Texts	49
Lexical lists	4

and sees in this complex an 'official scriptorium that produced both scholarly texts and economic records for the state'.

Most of the lexical and literary texts found in the locus remain hard to interpret and hence even to classify. Every statement on the non-administrative texts and the possible reasons for their presence at this find-spot must therefore be preliminary. But some observations based on the composition can be made.

The lists of proverbs and the lexical lists found in this locus were prized tools for learning cuneiform; the lexical lists would also serve as a definitive index of cuneiform signs that functioned as references when needed. A similar case is known in Ebla as discussed in §2.4 below. It is probably also not a coincidence that the two tablets SF 36 and SF 40,[27] which are the two long literary mythological texts concerned with Sud, the city-goddess of Shuruppag, were found here, alongside the largest archive of documentary records. They probably represent the accepted and taught traditions about Sud within the purview of the class of urban administrators. Finally, the presence of magical incantations among the texts found at the locus is noteworthy. Incantations were used in the ancient Near East alongside pharmaceutical drugs for medical purposes and the texts therefore have a practical use in spite of their literary format.[28] The tablet carrying the incantations is round like those used in schooling (Krebernik 1998: 318) and may represent an isolated example of a didactic function of the literary tablets found in the locus.

[26] For the 'UGN-orthography', see the Appendix.
[27] SF = Schultexte aus Fara (Deimel 1923), the number indicates the number of the text in the book.
[28] Cf. Cunningham 1997; Edzard 1984; Krebernik 1984; 1998: 318; Michalowski 1994.

2.2.2. House IXac and IXaa Tablets

The building found between the main trenches EG and EH, and extending to the south of IXac, differs in its architecture from other houses in Shuruppag by the abscence of a central courtyard (Fig. 2.2). It is square in plan, with a row of five small and medium-sized rooms in the north-western half. The south-western part of the structure is divided into two groups of two larger rectangular rooms with two possible courtyards. Twenty–six tablets were found in the ashes of the conflagration that destroyed the house, eleven of which can be identified and categorized (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. Texts with an origin from House IXac and IXaa

Administrative Texts	1
Lexical Lists	3
Literary Texts	5
Practical Texts (Incantations)	2

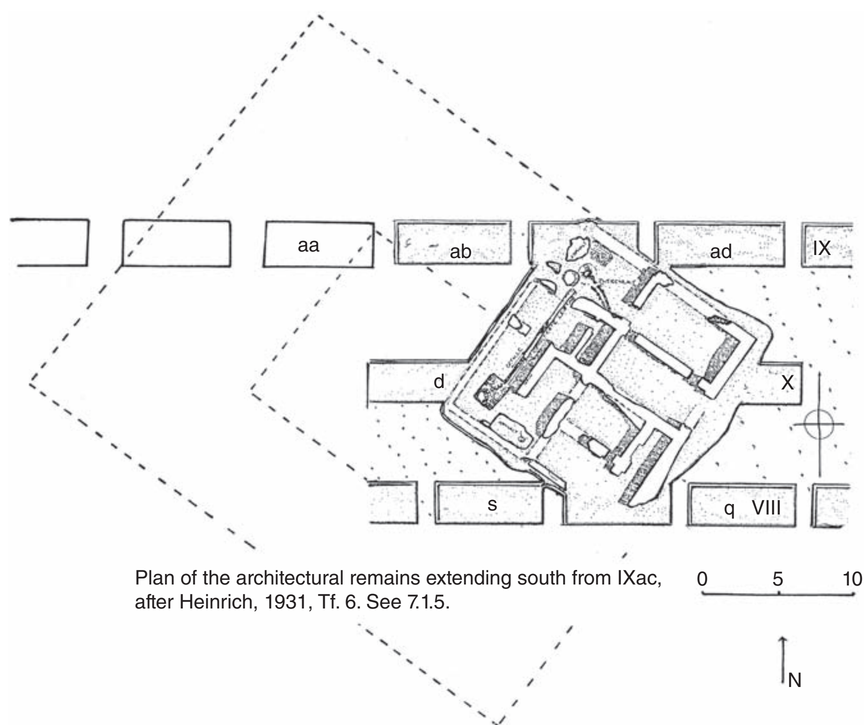


Fig. 2.2. Plan of house IXac and the area of the IXaa tablets.
After Martin 1988: 162.

Its unusual architecture and the fact that the majority of the tablets found in the building are exercises led Martin (1988: 97) to suggest that the building may have been a scribal school, possibly part of an official institution.[29]

2.2.3. House IXf–g

Only fragmentary walls were preserved in this building. Tablet fragments and approximately thirty complete tablets were found, only four of which can be identified (Krebernik 1998: 384). Eleven are reported to have come from a lead box (*Blechkiste*). Unfortunately, no picture or drawing of this box exists. According to Martin (1988: 101) the tablet SF 76 was not found in the lead box, but the find-register definitely locates it there (Krebernik 1998: 384). Outside the box, in IXf, three tablets were found, two of them identifiable as administrative texts. The function of the building is unclear; Martin (1988: 101) describes it as the 'household archives'.

The lexical lists SF 21 and SF 76 both have a duplicate in the 'Tablet House' (SF 20 and SF 33); the literary UGN-text (SF 37) also has a duplicate (SF 38).[30] The distribution shows that the same texts were kept and used in different places in Shuruppag. It is noteworthy that the non-administrative texts were found in a lead box. Metal was a precious commodity in Mesopotamia that always had to be imported. It is known from the later Ur III period that administrative tablets and letters were stored in sealed and tagged leather bags or baskets made of reeds, a resource that is cheap and always available in great quantities in Sumer.[31] Maybe the storage of the literary texts in a lead box is an indicator that they were someones' valued posessions. The fourteen-column literary tablet SF 37 is particularly beautifully written and was definitely the work of an expert scribe.

Table 2.5. Texts with an origin from IXf–g

Administrative Texts	2
Lexical Lists (in lead box)	3
Literary Texts (in lead box, UGN-orthography)	1

[29] Martin 1988 uses the term 'household' for official institutions and offices in contrast to 'private household'.

[30] The find-spot of SF 38 is unknown.

[31] For an analysis of the tags and literature see Sallaberger 1999: 214–16.

Table 2.6. Texts with an origin from HJ–IIi

Lexical Lists	6
Literary Texts	2
(Incantations: 1)	

2.2.4. Trench HJ–IIi

According to Martin (1988, table 16) some twenty-two tablets and fragments were found in trench IIi; the exact the find-spot given as trench IIIad,ae (Martin 1988: 102). Her excavation numbers listed for the tablets are incorrect. The find-register says nothing about architectural remains at the site, only that tablets/fragments were found (Krebernik 1998: 379–80).

The assemblage contained a series of proverbs and an incantation with known duplicates in the 'Tablet House', so although nothing can be said for certain about the find-spot of these tablets, it proves once again that a number of the same compositions were in use in several places different within the city. It seems that trench HJ–IIi yielded exclusively non-administrative texts (Table 2.6), with one exercise tablet suggesting that it might have contained a school or scribal deposit, but the impression may well misleading since sixteen out of the twenty-two tablets and fragments could not be identified.

2.2.5. Minor Find-spots

Across the site solitary lexical lists have been found, often alongside administrative texts (Martin et al. 2001: 3–15). The analysis of the excavations carried out by the University of Pennsylvania showed that a high proportion of the buildings in Shuruppag dated to the late ED II and ED IIIa periods contained a small numbers of written records. This led Martin et al. (2001: 15) to conclude that: 'What does seem beyond question is that Fara, ancient Shuruppag, was dotted with establishments (including many that had no pretensions to a high status) that made use of basic literacy to record simple economic transactions. Literacy appears to have been surprisingly widespread for such an early period.' Krebernik and Postgate (2009: 8) came to a similar conclusion, stating that: 'It seems that the literate inhabitants of Early Dynastic cities did not confine their activities to temples and/or palaces, but kept their documents at home.'

2.3. TELL ABU SALABIKH

The site of Tell Abu Salabikh lies approximately 20 km north-west of the city of Nippur (Hansen 1974: 5, pl. 1). Its ancient name is unknown—proposals

include the ancient cities of Kesh, Eresh, Gišgi, and Tarima[32] but there is no concensus on the matter. The site was excavated by the University of Chicago 1963–5 and the British Archeaological Expedition to Iraq 1975–89 (Krebernik and Postgate 2009). Occupation at the site can be dated by pottery from the Late Uruk period *c.*3200 BC until the Old Akkadian period (Crawford 2004: 38–9). Tablets have only been found on the so-called 'Main Mound', and mostly in a region of the town known as 'Area E'. Smaller groups of tablets have been found in 'Area A', the '6H House', and in 'Trench 6G80'.[33]

2.3.1. Area E

In addition to smaller groups of literary and administrative texts found in Area E (Biggs 1974: 98–109; Krebernik and Postgate 2009: 1–3), most of the literary tablets from Tell Abu Salabikh came from a suite of rooms numbered 12, 13, 21, 26, 27, 31–3, 35, 36, and 42. These rooms were located between the so-called 'Southern unit' and the 'Burnt building' (Fig. 2.3) and were connected to both structures (Hansen 1974: 11), but their function is unclear since nothing except the tablets were found in them to indicate their use.

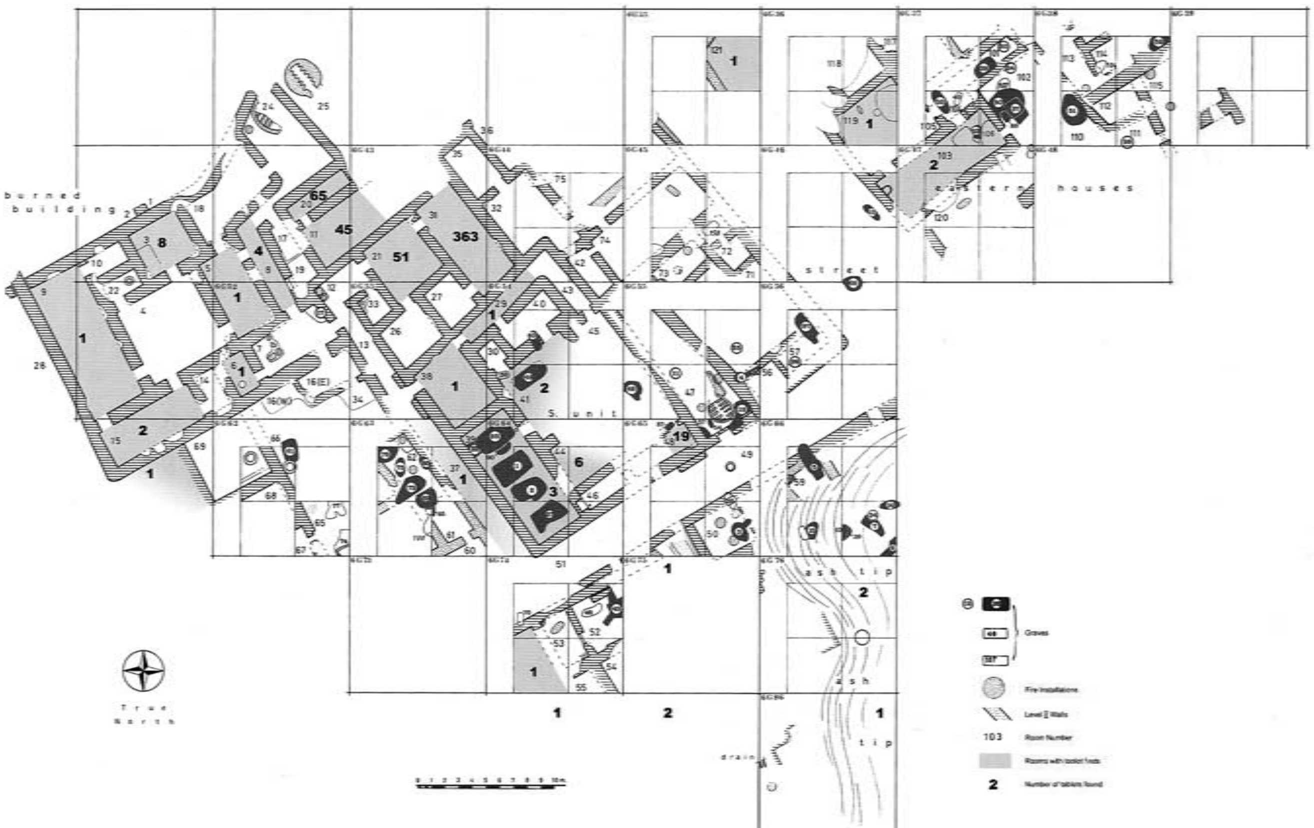
Architecturally the complex can be compared to Early Dynastic temples known from other regions, such as the Temple Oval at Khafadjah or the Temple of Shara in Tell Agrab, leading Hansen (1974: 18) to conclude that: 'Tell Abu Salabikh buildings may be interpreted in a similar fashion. They are probably the residential or administrative dependencies of a temple which is yet to be found in the immediate vicinity of Area E.' Biggs drew the same conclusion, except that he expressed doubt whether the complex should to be seen as a temple or as a palatial archive, and merely stating that it definitively did not belong to a private household (Biggs 1974: 44).

Due to bad preservation, the number of tablets and fragments found in each room vary a little between publications; numbers given here are based on the tables provided by Biggs (1974: 98–109). Tablets can be classified roughly into three categories—'literary', 'lexical',[34] and 'administrative'—but the texts are to a great extent only poorly understood.

[32] Frayne 2009: 53; Krebernik 1998: 254.

[33] The descriptions are based on Hansen 1974 and Krebernik and Postgate 2009. On the dating of the texts see Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015: 61–5.

[34] For the lexical tradition of Tell Abu Salabikh and northern Babylonia, see Veldhuis 2014a; 2014b: 62–102 and 103–16.



Area E and Eastern Houses: distribution of tablets by room. After *Iraq* 42 (1980) 89.

Fig. 2.3. Plan of Tell Abu Salabikh around Area E (the Burned Building and Southern Unit) and the Eastern Houses.
After Krebernik and Postgate 2009: 2.

2.3.1.1. Room 11

There is only sparse information about Room 11 (Table 2.7), since, as Hansen (1974: 13) states: 'Rooms 11, 17, 19, 20, 24 and 25 were not well preserved, and it became difficult to understand the various phases of construction.'

Table 2.7. Texts found in Room 11

Lexical	12 (= 25%)
Literary	27 (= 56%)
Literary (in UGN-orthography)	9 (= 19%)
Total	48

2.3.1.2. Room 20

Room 20 was small and narrow (Table 2.8). A great many of the tablet fragments excavated during the first season of excavation came from the debris in this chamber and the one adjoining it (Hansen 1974: 13).

Table 2.8. Texts found in Room 20

Administrative	1 (= 2%)
Lexical	9 (= 16%)
Literary	19 (= 34%)
Literary (in UGN-orthography)	27 (= 48%)
Total	56

2.3.1.3. Room 21

Hansen (1974: 11) states that: 'Room 21, to the east, was extensively destroyed by large cuts from the surface and from Level I*A*. In one such cut were found most of the tablets discovered during the first season' (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9. Texts found in Room 21

Administrative	2 (= 4%)
Lexical	5 (= 10%)
Literary	26 (= 54%)
Literary (in UGN-orthography)	15 (= 31%)
Total	48

2.3.1.4. Room 31

By far the largest number of tablets and fragments—approximately 360—came from this room (Krebernik and Postgate 2009: 1). They were all found in a large hoard in cuts or fill in Level I*B*, and none were on the preserved floor as seen in the photograph shown in Hansen (1974: fig. 9). The cuts came down from Level I*A* and were almost certainly made in antiquity. The discovery of parts of a burned wooden beam in the fill shows that the room was roofed (Table 2.10).

Table 2.10. Texts from Room 31

Administrative	5 (= 2%)
Lexical	95 (= 27%)
Literary	128 (= 39%)
Literary (in UGN-orthography)	104 (= 31%)
Total	332

The three rooms 11, 21, and 31 were lcated close to one other, and the sheer number of literary texts they contained makes it highly probable that they represent some kind of a scholarly collection (Rubio 2011: 106).

2.3.2. Other Areas

Three additional areas yielded texts at the site. Two administrative tablets and two lexical tablets came from a complex of rooms located to the east of Area E, known as the 'Eastern Houses'. An administrative text came from a pit in Area A, and a cluster of administrative records dealing with prebends came from Room 69 of House 6H (Krebernik and Postgate 2009: 5–8). It is noteworthy that lexical texts are found in the company of administrative records, suggesting that the former may have been used as references in everyday life for the writing or comprehension of the latter, and that their presence therefore does not necessarily always indicate loci of scribal training (cf. Krebernik and Postgate 2009: 8).

2.3.3. Comparisons

The situation in Tell Abu Salabikh resembles the one in Shuruppag. Administrative documents have a wider distribution than literary texts, perhaps suggesting that some scribal activities took place in homes belonging to scribes (Krebernik and Postgate 2009: 8). However, all of the literary texts, and most

of the lexical lists, came from architectural contexts that seem to belong to non-private institutions, probably 'palaces' or temples. Admittedly, the function of the rooms that yielded the literary texts is not clear at Tell Abu Salabikh, but it is clear that in these too, as in Shuruppag, literary and lexical texts are found alongside administrative records. An exception is Room 11 at Tell Abu Salabikh, where only non-administrative texts came to light. Unfortunately, the outline of the room was not defined, and no remains of doors or passages were preserved. Its function, like that of Room 21, remains elusive.

2.4. EBLA

A much stronger case for a designated area for the storage and production of texts comes from the city of Ebla (Fig. 2.4), although in this example the suite of rooms in question was used mainly for documentary records with the addition of a smaller component of texts of tradition.

The site of Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh) is located approximately 60 km south of Aleppo in north-western Syria.[35] It is a large site of about 140 acres (Pettinato 1991: 13) that was under excavation by the University of Rome under the supervision of Paolo Matthiae from 1964 until the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011.

Before its discovery, next to nothing was known about the inhabitants and history of Syria in the third millennium BC, but due to the find of the large royal archive a more detailed picture of the socio-political landscape can now be drawn.[36]

The city of Ebla consists of a central acropolis surrounded by a lower town. On the acropolis the Royal Palace was located, but due to its size, the building has not yet been completely explored. So far, three major sectors have been revealed: a 'Central Complex' with residential quarters, guard quarters, and a storage quarter; an 'Administrative Quarter' with an Audience Court and adjacent rooms for storage of texts and precious goods; and a 'Southern Quarter' probably with administrative functions as well (Matthiae 1986: 54–6).

The palace was destroyed in a violent conflagration, prehaps during the attack of Ishgi-Mari, king of Mari, a few years before Mari itself was conquered by Sargon of Akkad (Archi and Biga 2003: 29–35).

[35] For a recent monograph on the archaeology of Ebla, cf. Matthiae and Marchetti 2013 and see also Archi 2006; 2015a; and Biga 2015. For a comprehensive overview of the culture of Ebla and its archives see Archi 2015b. At only one other Syrian site, Tell Beydar (ancient Nabada), was one Early Dynastic literary text found; cf. Sallaberger 2004.

[36] An overall overview in Italian is Matthiae et al. 1995.

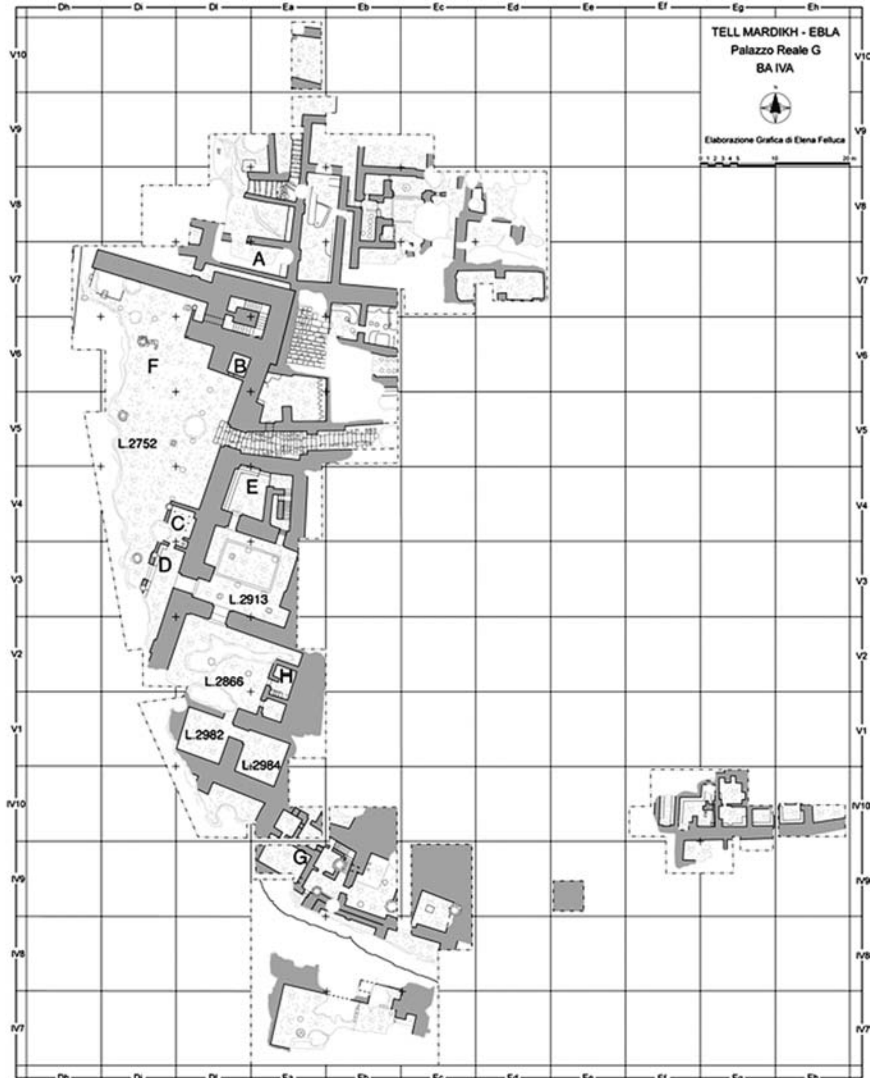


Fig. 2.4. Plan of Palace at Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh) with find spots of the smaller groups marked as A-B and D-E, and the position of the Main Archive marked as C. After Archi 2015: 78.

2.4.1. Smaller Administrative Quarter of the Royal Palace

Only the Administrative Quarter of the palace has been almost completely explored. There were six major find-spots of tablets (designated after Archi 1986: 73 as A–F; Fig. 2.4) in this area, all of them in the immediate vicinity of

the large Audience Court L 2752.[37] The five smaller groups A–B and D–E are listed here prior to discussing the main group C.

The Audience Court contained a raised podium made of mud bricks on which the ruler was seated on his throne. The surrounding archives would thus have been intimately linked to the political and administrative heart of the state and directly reflected its practices. In the Audience Court, food and drink was served to foreign ambassadors and messengers, and state income in gold and silver was delivered and monitored here (Matthiae 1986: 68).

2.4.1.1. L 2586 (A)

Approximately thirty-two small circular administrative tablets and one exercise tablet with seventy-three personal names (Archi 1986: 75–6) were found.

2.4.1.2. L 2712 (B)

Approximately 211 administrative documents were recovered for rations of cereals, bread, oil, and malt spanning over more than a year (Archi 1986: 74).

2.4.1.3. L 2875 (D)

In this small vestibule to the Main Archive (C) a number of circular administrative tablets were found deposited alongside fragments of bone that could be the remains of writing styli and a stone polisher. Situated next to the doors leading into the Main Archive, the lower part of a jar contained lumps of clay, presumably for writing material (Matthiae 1986: 68; Fig. 2.4). The room had low benches built along its walls where the scribes could sit and work, and the Main Archive with its lexical and reference tablets was close at hand.

Tablets in the room appear to reflect current economic activities (Archi 1986: 76). They are likely to have been temporarily deposited here for use before being transferred to the main archives for storage. About thirty chancery documents were found in this location as well (Archi 2003: 19).

2.4.1.4. L 2764 (E)

This smaller archive probably dealt with the agricultural production of the year in progress (Archi 1986: 75). It contained seventeen round tablets recording precious metals, bovines, and draught animals, and some 215 fragments and 960 flakes recording consignments of barley.

[37] L = L(ocus), is the basic abbreviation used by the excavators for numbering different findspots. For a detailed discussion of the administrative archives, their locations, contents, and method of operation see Pettinato 1986; Archi 1986; 2003; and 2006.

2.4.1.5. Wooden Planks in Audience Court L 2752 (F)

Audience Court L 2752 (F) contained twenty-one tablets—one of them round with entries for 8.32 kg of gold, the others being large monthly accounts (Archi 1986: 76). This small group of texts found inside the court room demonstrates the practice of taking out administrative records on wooden planks (like on a tray) to bring them to the place where they were consulted.

2.4.2. Main Archive and Library L 2769 (C)

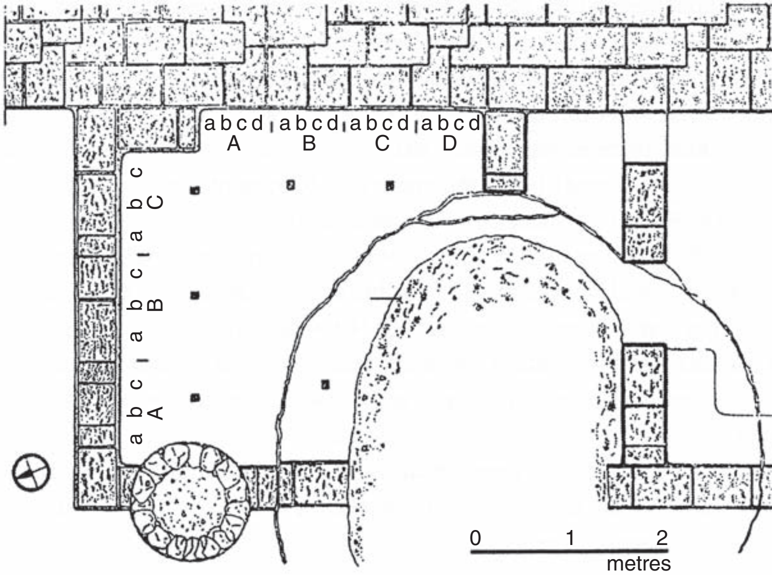
Room L 2769 is one of the rare, fortunate discoveries that enables us to address many of those questions whose answer would have been impossible to know otherwise. The find provides a detailed insight into the storage of administrative records and literary documents, and can therefore tell us a lot about scribal practices and the function of literary and lexical texts in the life of the palace administration.

The Main Archive is situated under the eastern portico of the large Audience Court L 2725 and measures 5.10 × 3.55 m. (Fig. 2.5a). Its south-western wall was seriously damaged by the partial collapse of its stone foundations caused by the heat of the fire that destroyed the palace (Matthiae 1986: 60), and peripheral damage was done to the north-western wall in the Late Persian or Hellenistic period during the digging of a well (Matthiae 1986: 60). But although these disturbances distort the original layout of the room, it is clear that its entrance was located in the south wall (Matthiae 1986: 61). Access to the tablets in the archive and library could therefore only be gained through the vestibule (D), and not directly from the large Audience Court L 2725.

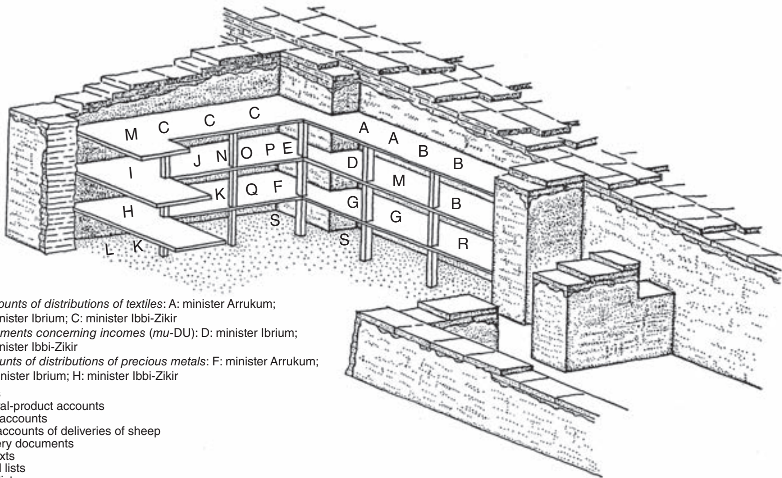
The room contained an enormous number of texts: some 1757 tablets and 4875 fragments plus several thousand 'flakes' were found for a reconstructed total of at least 2100 tablets (Archi 1986: 77–9). This collection of tablets is unique in terms of the administrative quarter of the palace at Ebla because this is the only location where literary texts were found. The archived records are concerned with the last three rulers of Ebla and must comprise a time span of at least thirty years, since that many year names are directly evidenced in the texts (Archi 1986: 79). The texts present a wide range of categories and genres as detailed in the following.

2.4.2.1. Documentary Records

The bulk of the main archive consisted of various kinds of documentary records, stored for later reference by the palace officials. They include various types of administrative texts (cf. Archi 1986: 79–82; 2006: 104–6).



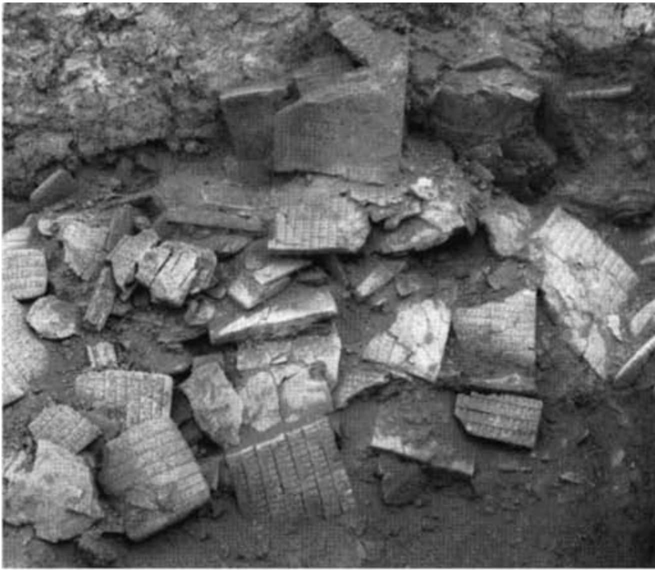
(a)



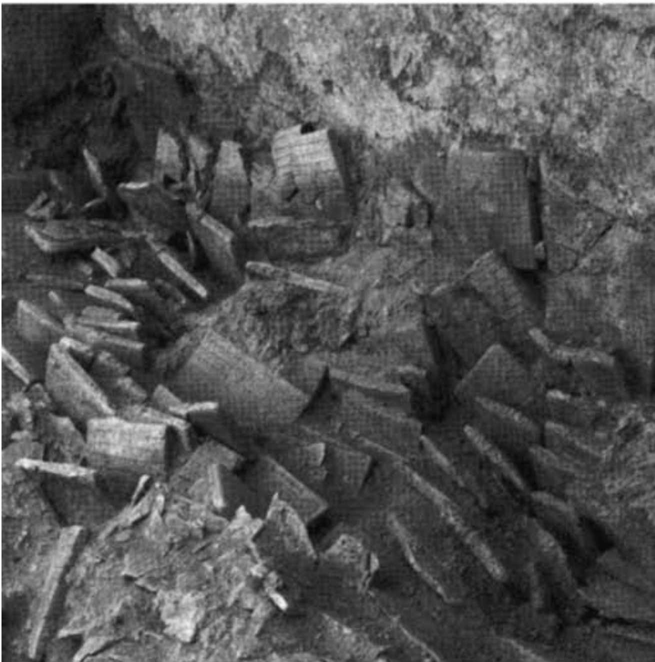
(b)

Fig. 2.5. (a) Plan of the room that contained the main archive C (L 2769) in Palace G at Ebla, and (b) a schematic overview of its original organization as determined by the Italian excavators.

After Archi 2015: 82–3.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 2.6. (a) Image of the lexical tablets as found in heaps from the collapsed shelves along the northern wall, and (b) the northern sector of the eastern wall of L 2769 in Palace G at Ebla. Careful excavation allowed archaeologists to determine their original position and organization on the shelves, cf. Fig. 2.5b.

After Matthiae 1986: 63–5.

- Some 543 documents registering monthly distributions of clothing.
- Five texts concerning clothing and metal products.
- About one hundred small lenticular tablets concerning individual consignments and annual summaries of the production that was stored in the 'Wool House'.
- 311 medium and large-sized tablets and 378 lenticular tablets concerning metals. The administrative process behind these tablets is not always clear.
- 378 lenticular tablets recording individual consignments and annual balances.
- Eighty tablets concerning *mu-du* 'deliveries' of silver and gold.
- Sixty-six medium and small-sized tablets recording cereals.
- Twenty-three tablets with records of sowable lands or olive groves.
- Twenty-one tablets recording 'people'.
- Sixty-four tablets concerning the breeding of animals.
- Twenty-two tablets record the consignment of sheep to the palace.
- Forty-eight tablets of various miscellaneous subjects.
- Fifty-two documents, mostly letters between the ruler and his officials, royal decrees, and international agreements between Ebla and various cities in Syria and Mesopotamia.[38] This group of texts constitutes the most significant source for reconstructing the political history of northern Syria in the third millennium BC.

All documents had been sorted before being archived as discussed in §2.4.3 below.

2.4.2.2. Lexical Lists

The lexical lists found at Ebla can be divided into three groups according to origin: common, regional, and local (Veldhuis 2014b).[39] The lists with a 'common' origin were composed in the late Uruk period and are shared across the region where the cuneiform writing system had been adapted (Fig. 2.6a). The regional lists are the product of the northern 'Kish tradition', and constitute a

[38] Archi 1986: 82; some are published in Catagnoti and Fronzaroli 2010.

[39] For the lists of the Mesopotamian tradition, see Veldhuis 2014b: 62–102. For the lexical tradition of Ebla itself, see Veldhuis 2014b: 132–9. The lists and their transliteration and sources are found online at the Digital Corpus of Cuneiform Lexical Texts (DCCLT): http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt/.

group of lists that is mainly attested in northern Babylonia, is relatively well standardized, and probably was to be read in the Semitic language. Finally there are bilingual lists originating in Ebla itself—they are a self-made tool of local scribes to master the Sumerian language and cuneiform writing.

2.4.2.2.1. Lexical Lists of Common Mesopotamian Origin

As with the literary texts (see below, §2.4.2.3), the scribes at Ebla did not only copy the texts. Sometimes they also reproduced the format and layout of the original Mesopotamian sources in what one might call a 'facsimile' edition. Conventionally, these are large square tablets divided into columns and 'cases' and filled with calligraphic writing (Archi 1992: 2; 2006: 101–3).

- Early Dynastic Lú A:[40] Five tablets of this list have been found. Lú A, which is one of the oldest and most widespread lists, gives names of professions in a fixed order. Originating during the Uruk Period it saw a wide distribution in Early Dynastic times with exemplars found at Ur, Shuruppag, Tell Abu Salabikh, Girsu, and Nippur, as well as one complete manuscript of unknown origin.[41] The text was passed down until the Old Babylonian period.[42] The Ebla scribes made a commentary on parts of the list by writing entries in syllabic Sumerian with Semitic case-endings.[43]
- Early Dynastic Word List C/AD-GI$_4$:[44] Attestated since the Uruk III period and preserved until the Old Babylonian period, this list is unusual due to its introduction, which looks like a literary formula and two long, consecutive passages that duplicate each other exactly. It has been interpreted as the first literary text known to us (Englund 1998: 99–102), but also as a specialized lexical text for teaching administrative terms and numerical systems (Veldhuis 2006). Civil (2013) interprets it as a literary account of how mankind developed architecture, and began to use bricks instead of living in reed-huts. The list is known across a large geographical area (see Civil 2013). The only Eblaite manuscript is a very carefully written, calligraphic reproduction of a Mesopotamian original (Archi 1992: 11).
- List of Metal Objects:[45] One manuscript from Ebla, two from Tell Abu Salabikh, and one from Shuruppag are known of this text. One later (Ur III period) manuscript comes from Kish. The Ebla manuscript has aberrant writings that are also found in the later Kish-manuscript. This shows

[40] Archi 1992: 2; Civil 2010: 193–5; Pettinato 1981: 3–25; Veldhuis 2014b: 72–6.
[41] See Civil 2010: 193 and Englund 1998: 88–9.
[42] Two small round tablets with a few lines are published in Civil 2010: 195.
[43] Archi 1987a; 1992: 15; Pettinato 1981: 187–213. Veldhuis (2014b: 133–5).
[44] Archi 1992: 11–12; Civil 2010: 215–28; Englund 1998: 99–102; Pettinato 1981: 155–8; Veldhuis 2006, Veldhuis 2014b: 39–42. The most recent in depth analysis was again made by Civil (2013).
[45] Archi 1992: 8–9; Pettinato 1981: 37–90; Veldhuis 2014b: 82–3.

that most variants are probably better analyzed chronologically than geographically (Archi 1992: 9).

- List of Domestic Animals/Animals A (Cattle):[46] This list is attested in two manuscripts, one of which (B) is a shortened version in syllabic Sumerian. This list is also attested in Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh.
- Officials A:[47] The list records various officials. It is attested in two closely related versions at Ebla and Shuruppag (Archi 1992: 13).
- List of Fish:[48] This is also one of the oldest lists in Mesopotamia, originating in the Uruk III period (Englund 1998: 94). The list is attested in three manuscripts at Ebla. Manuscript (A) is very neatly written; (C) is written in syllabic Sumerian (Archi 1992: 8).
- List of Birds:[49] This list is attested in two manuscripts at Ebla and one manuscript from Shuruppag. One further manuscript in the private Schøyen Collection in Norway contains parts of the list. Manuscript (A) from Ebla has many syllabic and aberrant variants.
- Early Dynastic Food:[50] This list has four manuscripts in Ebla, one in Tell Abu Salabikh, one in Shuruppag, and is attested in the Old Akkadian period on a prism of unknown origin as well as on two tablets from Susa. The Ebla manuscript (A) is an accurate copy of the Mesopotamian recension; (B), (C), and (D) are small tablets with syllabic Sumerian writings.

2.4.2.2.2. List of the Regional Kish-Tradition

About a dozen tablets belonging to the north Mesopotamian tradition of Kish were kept in the main archives at Ebla.

- Early Dynastic LÚ E:[51] This list of professions is attested on two tablets, known also at Tell Abu Salabikh (six sources).
- Names and Professions List:[52] The list is also attested at Tell Abu Salabikh, but the manuscript from Ebla shows minor variants: the signs are in the correct reading-sequence, signs not common to the Ebla writing-tradition are avoided, and sometimes the scribe interpreted the names. These differences show that native Eblaite-speaking scribes interpreted the Sumerian lists. This list was transmitted at least into the Ur III period (cf. Fales and Krispijn 1979–80).

[46] Archi 1992: 5; Civil: 1982; 1984; Krecher 1983; Pettinato 1981: 47–56; Veldhuis 2014b: 85–6.
[47] Archi 1992: 13; Veldhuis 2014b: 86–8.
[48] Archi 1992: 7–8; Civil 2010: 189–90; Pettinato 1981: 91–104; Veldhuis 2014b: 88–91.
[49] Archi 1992: 8; Civil 2010: 191–2; Pettinato 1981: 105–23; an in-depth analysis was made by Veldhuis 2004; 2014b: 96–8.
[50] Archi 1992: 12; Civil 1982; 1984; 2010: 186–7; Pettinato 1981: 165–75; Veldhuis 2014b: 93–6.
[51] Archi 1992: 3; Pettinato 1981: 27–46; Veldhuis 2014b:105–7.
[52] Archi 1981; 1992: 4; Pettinato 1981: 125–34; Veldhuis 2014b: 107–8.

- List of Geographical Names:[53] Attested on a single tablet at Ebla, it lists the names of different cities. The same text may already be attested at the site of Jamdat Nasr during the Uruk III period in (Englund 1998: 92–4). It is also known in one manuscript from Tell Abu Salabikh, and one ED manuscript of unknown origin which gives only the second half of the list. Like the Eblaite manuscripts of the 'Names and Professions List', the text from Ebla arranges the signs in reading sequence, not in free order, and uses multiple syllabic writings instead of logograms.
- List of Animals/Animals B:[54] This list is attested in Ebla in five manuscripts. Exemplar (A) is possibly an import from Mesopotamia, as its large format suggests (Archi 1992: 6). The list is also attested in two manuscripts at Tell Abu Salabikh.
- Early Dynastic Practical Vocabulary A/Archaic ḪAR-ra A:[55] The list is attested in two manuscripts at Ebla and three at Tell Abu Salabikh (Veldhuis 2014b: 111–12). Manuscript (C) from Ebla is an Eblaite translation of the Sumerian list.
- List of Wooden Objects:[56] A single manuscript is in a very fragmentary state; maybe related to two manuscripts of a list of wooden objects known at Tell Abu Salabikh.
- Early Dynastic Practical Vocabulary D:[57] The list is only attested in one manuscript. Though this list has no standard number of cases per column, and no duplicates from Mesopotamia are known, it may be based on a Mesopotamian source, since the list ends with a sequence of cities located in southern Mesopotamia.

2.4.2.2.3. Local Lists of Eblaitic Origin

At least six lists found at Ebla have no known Mesopotamian parallel (Archi 1992: 13–15). They include three word lists,[58] a word list containing personal names,[59] four abstracts from Word Lists (Pettinato 1981: 257–66; Archi 1992: 15), and the 'Sign List from Ebla' that gives the names of Sumerian signs writen syllabically with a Semitic case-ending.[60]

[53] Archi 1992: 4–5; Civil 2010: 196–202; Pettinato 1981: 217–41; Veldhuis 2014b: 108–9; a complete analysis is Frayne 1992, in excerpt; but more recently Frayne 2009.

[54] Archi 1992: 6–7; Pettinato 1981: 57–72; Veldhuis 2014b: 109–11.

[55] Archi 1992: 10; Pettinato 1981: 143–4; Veldhuis 2014b: 109–11. An in-depth study is Civil 2008.

[56] Archi 1992: 9.

[57] Archi 1992: 11; Civil 2010: 203; Pettinato 1981: 135–43.

[58] Archi 1992: 13–14; Pettinato 1981: 206–12.

[59] Archi 1992: 14; Edzard 1984: 43–5; Pettinato 1981: 243–6, 257–66.

[60] Archi 1987a; 1992: 15; Pettinato 1981: 187–213, Veldhuis 2014b: 133–5.

- The éš-bar kin_5 lists:[61] Another group of lists is called éš-bar kin_5 'to find the right decision' after a common first entry. These lists are thought to be genuine Eblaite creations, which arrange Sumerian words and verb forms acrographically, that is, according to their sign-shape (Archi 1992: 16). The list was found at Ebla in fourteen slightly deviant manuscripts, which demonstrate that no standard text was developed. Five are summaries of the remaining nine manuscripts; only two duplicate each other (Archi 1992: 16). The largest (75.3043+) has over 1500 words arranged in twenty columns of thirty-five cases each on the obverse and twenty columns of forty cases on the reverse (Archi 1992: 18). The lists were arranged according to the shape of the individual cuneiform signs, with similar designs compiled into groups. When cuneiform writing was first invented, it was partially pictographic in nature—for instance, signs might depict the head of a given animal that they refer to—so that similar-looking signs often ended up in the same semantic field (e.g. signs that denote animals). Every list that was organized according to the shape of the signs thus also followed a basic semantic organization. This made the process of learning Sumerian easier for the Eblaite scribes by providing a structured access to the lexicon (Archi 1992: 17). The format of the tablets was different from the format of those of Mesopotamian origin. Although scribes tried to keep the same number of cases per column, they are smaller and the signs in them are written closer together (Archi 1992: 17).
- The 'Vocabulary of Ebla':[62] Five manuscripts of this list are attested. In contrast to the éš-bar kin_5 lists, which have no basic recension, the 'Vocabulary of Ebla' follows the manuscript 75.2422+ of the éš-bar kin_5 list in their representation of different sections of cuneiform signs. Thus the 'Vocabulary' is probably derived from the éš-bar kin_5 lists (Archi 1992: 18). Sumerian nouns and verbs are often, but not always, glossed by their Eblaitic translation. The vocabulary thus represents a systematic bilingual handbook, arranged on the acrographic principle of the éš-bar kin_5 lists. The longest manuscripts of the 'Vocabulary of Ebla' (A) and (C) contain 1089 entries and are elegantly written.[63] This list proves the academic endeavour that the Eblaite scribes undertook with their lexical material.

[61] Archi 1992: 15; Pettinato: 1982; Picchioni: 1997; Sjöberg 2003, Veldhuis 2014b: 135–8.

[62] Archi 1992: 17–9; 2006: 106–9; Pettinato 1982. An in-depth study is Conti 1990, Veldhuis 2014b: 135–8.

[63] Archi 1992: 18; Conti 1990: 3.

2.4.2.3. Literary Texts

The following four literary texts are large and carefully baked, of square shape and without rounded corners.[64] The hand is large and fine and in cases that copy the format of the original sources from Mesopotamia (Archi 1992: 1).

- an Akkadian hymn to Shamash.[65] This text is also attested at Tell Abu Salabikh (IAS 326 + 342) but it is not clear if the tablet found at Tell Abu Salabikh was written there or had been imported (Biggs 1974: 91). The colophon on the manuscript at Ebla states that it was written in Ebla by a local scribe.
- an Akkadian hymn to Nisaba.[66] Because Nisaba is the Sumerian goddess of scribal art, the text may be an Eblaite translation of a Sumerian original. Veldhuis (2014a: 253) points to the possibility that the myth could be part of the 'Kish-tradition'.
- a Sumerian hymn to the god Ama-ushum-gal, attested on two tablets.[67] Like the Shamash-hymn, it originates in Mesopotamia, and is also attested at Tell Abu Salabikh (IAS 278).

In addition, a literary composition tells about a king of Mari, who in order to secure divine support for a voyage or military campaign goes to the temple to undertake sacrifices and get advice (Fronzaroli 1993: 3–52). Finally, the category of literature includes a number of ritual texts concerning the kings of Ebla.[68]

2.4.2.4. Incantations

Twelve tablets with incantations were stored in the Main Archive.[69] Some of them record only a single incantation, while others carry two to eight (Krebernik 1984: 5–6). The verbatim transmission of the original Sumerian text was crucial for their magical effectiveness; therefore some of the incantations are written in syllabic Sumerian to ensure their pronunciation. Whereas the tablets were written in Ebla, the tradition came from Mesopotamia, as proven by the fact that one of the incantations duplicates a text from Shuruppag (Krebernik 1984: 5, no. 1).

[64] Archi 2006: 103–4.

[65] *ARET* V No. 6; cf. Archi 1987b: 128–9; 1992: 1; Edzard 1984 No. 6; Krebernik 1994; 1998: 320; Lambert 1994;Veldhuis 2014b: 112; Wu 2007.

[66] Archi 1992: 1; Edzard 1984 No. 7; Krebernik 1994; Lambert 1994; Veldhuis 2014a: 253.

[67] *ARET* V 20 and 21. Cf. Archi 1992: 1; Edzard 1984 Nos. 20 and 21; transliterated in Krebernik 2003.

[68] Fronzaroli: 1993; 1994; Tonietti 2006.

[69] Civil and Rubio 1999; Cunningham 1997; Edzard 1984; Krebernik 1984; 1998: 318; Michalowski 1994.

2.4.3. Organization of the Collection

Most of the tablets in the Main Archive were stored on wooden shelves that burned away in the fire that detroyed the palace (Fig. 2.6b), some of the administrative tablets were found in a layer of ash along the walls, which may constitute the burnt remains of wicker baskets. The shelves were only detectable by holes set in the floor and walls at regular distances that indicated the presence of vertical supports and horizontal planks (Matthiae 1986: 61–4). The traces show that at least two of the walls in the room carried three shelves 80 cm deep and 50 cm apart in height. The shelves on the eastern wall were 290 cm long and the shelves on the northern wall were 315 cm. A hole for the vertical support was found near the west wall, indicating the presence of a shelf, but only a few tablets were found in this part of the room. The fire that destroyed the palace consumed the shelves entirely and the tablets slipped down and fell towards the centre of the room.

The exact position of the tablets on the shelves cannot be reconstructed, but their relative position was discernable by the way they had slid from their shelves onto the floor (Fig. 2.5b).[70] Tablets were kept with their obverse facing the centre of the room and the reverse towards the wall. They lay on their sides, with the first column on top being in a horizontal position. This allowed a whole row of tablets to be browsed without taking them down from the shelf, but by simply tipping them forward towards the reader (Archi 1988: 68). Both the administrative records and literary and lexical texts were organized thematically, making them easy to access.

Most of the non-administrative tablets, including the incantations, the mythological texts, the unilingual lists of Mesopotamian origin, the bilingual Eblaite lexical lists, the single mathematical text, some texts from the chancery,[71] the ritual for the marriage of King Irkab-Damu, and an abstract manual for a such a ritual were all stored on the northern wall of the archive.[72] Several groups of administrative tablets were also stored there, including the field texts, the agricultural product accounts, the livestock accounts, the accounts of monthly deliveries of sheep, and monthly accounts of the distribution of textiles during the service of minister Ibbi-Zikir. The shelves along the eastern wall held all the remaining administrative tablets (Archi 1986: 86; 2003: 34–5). The only non-administrative tablets were a ritual for the marriage of King Ishar–Damu,[73] and some chancery documents (Archi 1986: 85). The round tablets were all found on the floor of the room in areas rich with ashes, which are probably the remains of the wicker baskets that contained them.[74]

[70] Archi 1986: 83; 2003: 34; Matthiae 1986: 64.
[71] Archi 1986: 83–5; 2003: 34–5; Conti 1990.
[72] Fronzaroli: 1993; 1994; Tonietti 2006.
[73] Fronzaroli: 1993; 1994; Tonietti 2006.
[74] Archi 2003: 34; Matthiae 1986: 64.

Whereas the administrative texts played a crucial role in the economic life of the palace, the literary and lexical texts fulfilled another function. They provided the scribes with the most basic tool of their trade, the script itself. The Mesopotamian lists were the main tools to teach the difficult Sumerian cuneiform script, and they furthermore served as indices. The Sumerian-Eblaite lists had the function of explaining Sumerian terms by Eblaite words, and also show us how the scribes of northern Syria developed their own cuneiform orthographies using sign forms that were different from Mesopotamia, and combining logograms that, although mostly based on Sumerian terms, were alien to Sumerian orthographic traditions.

So far, there is no evidence that scribal training took place within the palace at Ebla; the texts seemed to have functioned mainly as a backup for the scribes who were already employed in the highest positions in the administration. Presumably, basic training took place elsewhere. But the international letters and state treaties found in the Main Archive show that detailed lexical and literary knowledge was indispensable for maintaining Ebla's diplomatic relationships. The room held not only the long-term records of the state treasury. It also contained the reference library necessary for palace officials to record interactions and function as a font of knowledge in planning state policy.

2.4.4. Concluding Remarks

The entire palatial complex at Ebla with its court and accompanying archives is extraordinary and ranks among the most important archaelogical finds from the ancient Near East. It clearly demonstrates that the state archives were situated immediately adjacent to the area in which the recorded activities took place, namely the central Audience Court. The Main Archive held not only the long-term administrative records, but also a large number of lexical lists and some literary texts. It thus seems comparable to the main find-spots of tablets at Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh in the south, both of which show the same mixture of administrative records, and lexical and literary texts. In each case, the officials were not merely in need of recording economic activities; the evidence of Ebla shows the importance of literary texts as a tool that allowed officials to fulfil the function of communication. The lists of words and contexts, and the literary texts with the skill they required to read and comprehend, provided the highly trained scribes the tools needed to compose eloquent letters, precisely worded treaties, or erudite royal inscriptions, so as to master the long-distance communication in time and space that leaders of society expected them to cover.

Located on the periphery of cuneiform culture, the scribes at Ebla accomplished additional intellectual feats. Although they were deeply rooted in the Mesopotamian tradition of lexical and literary texts, they needed to create

their own educational tools to cope with the difficult and to them foreign Sumerian language and script. Literary and lexical texts in syllabic Sumerian, lexical lists of their own making, such as the éš-bar kin$_5$ and the 'Vocabulary of Ebla', and perhaps even Mesopotamian myths in translation, such as the hymn to Nisaba, enabled the Eblaite scribes to master their difficulties. Their work currently represents the oldest known example of text-based bilingual language teaching.[75]

2.5. SCRIBES, TEXTS, AND KNOWLEDGE

Compared to later periods of Mesopotamian history, we know relatively little about literacy and the educated class in general during the Early Dynastic period. We have only sparse information about how scribes were trained, how they saw themselves, how and when they produced literary texts, how they stored them, or how they transmitted them. The following short notes are therefore preliminary.

2.5.1. Education

There are no literary texts like the later Old Babylonian Sumerian *edubba*-literature (see Delnero §4.5) about life at school and the education of pupils to tell us how the scribes saw themselves or their work during the third millennium. Only very preliminary statements can be made about the scribal curriculum in Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh through an analysis of the exercise tablets, which are easy to recognize based on their round format.[76] However, the fragmentary state of many of the tablets requires us to be cautious.

As in later periods, lexical lists played an important role in teaching. The three sites discussed in this chapter, Shuruppag, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Ebla, were all deeply embedded in the Mesopotamian lexical tradition and took part in the transmission of lists that were composed already during the Uruk period (Englund 1998: 88–9; Veldhuis 2014a: 258). But surviving manuscripts of these lists are mostly large tablets (or fragments of them) that would have rendered a great part or even the entire list. Until now, the only lists of the earlier Uruk tradition that are known from shorter excerpts on the exercise

[75] See the Cagni 1984; Rubio 2006c; Waetzold 1986: 42–5.

[76] Further literature about the Old Babylonian school-texts is in Vanstiphout 1997 and Veldhuis 2014b: 143–225. Overviews of the schools of the ancient Near East are Waetzold 1986; 1989; and Michalowski 2003. A general overview with many examples of school-texts published in photograph is Wilson 2008; and see Chapter 4 in the present volume.

tablets so typical to educational contexts in later periods is the so-called 'Early Dynastic Word List C'/AD-GI_4 (formerly known as 'List of Tributes') found on four small fragments at Tell Abu Salabikh.[77]

All other lexical lists on exercise tablets seem to have been compiled at the moment of their need for educational purposes without being transmitted further (Krebernik 1998: 315 Type 3). Examples include the two lists of fish-eating gods from Shuruppag SF 5, 6 and a list of birds from Tell Abu Salabikh IAS 321—not the canonical bird-list. Literary texts can also be found on exercise tablets, although the criteria for specific choices are not discernable. Interestingly all texts concerning the god Ama-ushum-gal are found on exercise-tablets at Shuruppag (SF 30, 31, 50, 51, 78), whereas at Tell Abu Salabikh (IAS 278) and Ebla (ARET V 5, 6) they are on normal-sized ones. At Tell Abu Salabikh, a literary text written in standard orthography concerning the Epic of King Lugalbanda (IAS 327, Lugalbanda and Ninsun) can be found on an exercise tablet, but there are also texts in the UGN-orthography (IAS 253, 320).

On the reverse of some tablets, one occasionally finds drawings of plants, animals, or geometric patterns.[78] Some of these drawings seem to have a mythological character (Mander 1995: 22) and it is not clear if they might be part of education, or whether they were just made for fun by the pupils; in later periods such drawings do not appear (Waetzold 1989: 34).

We have no information about the length of education or where it took place. A colophon on a tablet from Ebla gives an interesting hint (Archi 1992: 29): 'In the days when the young (scribes) came up from Mari.' This suggests that some young scribes may have been sent off to the city of Mari for educational purposes and that they were now returning to Ebla.[79] The role of Mari, itself situated on the middle Euphrates, and closer to the densely populated cities of southern Mesopotamia than Ebla, in the distribution of cuneiform script, is not clear (Archi 1992: 23). The city of Kish, in northern Babylonia, predominantly inhabited by people who spoke a Semitic language,[80] must have played a crucial role in the transmission of cuneiform knowledge to the north.[81] Proof of the links between Ebla and Kish is confirmed by a colophon on a manuscript of the 'Names and Professions List' held in the Main Archive at Ebla praising Zababa, the city-god of Kish (Archi 1992: 22). In the Early Dynastic period the learning of cuneiform was clearly still closely bound to learning the Sumerian language; using it to write in Semitic languages, like Akkadian or Eblaite, was still in its infancy.

77 IAS 332, 386, 402; AbS 2545. Civil 2010: 215–28; 2013; Veldhuis 2006.

78 Mander 1995; Waetzold 1989: 35.

79 Archi 1987b: 129; 1992: 20; Veldhuis 2014a: 253; Waetzold 1986: 47.

80 For the 'Kish civilization' and its orthography see: Archi 1987b; Cooper 1999; Gelb 1977; 1981; 1992. Steinkeller 1993: 116–29; 2013; Veldhuis 2014b: 103–5.

81 A math-teacher from Kish is attested in Ebla (Waetzold 1986: 43); see also Archi 1987b; Veldhuis 2014b: 103–5.

2.5.2. The Scribes

We do not know much about curricula taught as part of learning the scribal art or at which point someone was considered to be qualified as a 'scribe'. Furthermore, an exact definition of the profession of the 'scribe' eludes us, and it is unknown how it may have been differentiated from other professions that also made extensive use of writing, for example priests. Visicato (2000: 13–51) has been able to show that 'scribes' occupied important positions in the highest offices of Shuruppag, but was reluctant to give a clear-cut definition: 'We do not know whether the title dub-sar connotes the specific function of "scribe" or whether, in some cases, it is a generic description for an official. Certainly, however, this title, clearly an indication of importance, seems to have been a prerequisite for entry into the administration and the highest levels of state bureaucracy' (Visicato 2000: 50).

It is therefore not surprising that there are scribes attested in Shuruppag that were connected with more than one administrative office and probably fulfilled a supervisory role (Visicato 2000: 48). Scribes themselves were probably under the authority of a *dub-sar maḫ* or 'chief scribe' (Visicato 2000: 47). Maybe the fact that the scribes were predominantly employed by the administration is the reason why we get no large great private libraries, but mostly find small collections of administrative texts and lexical lists, as pointed out by Krebernik and Postgate (2009: 8). Colophons on tablets from Tell Abu Salabikh and Ebla show that there seem to have been subdivisions within the scribal group.[82] Some are classified as *lú dub zu zu* 'men who know (many) tablets', or simply *dub zu zu* 'tablet-expert',[83] while some are classified as *um-mi-a* 'experts/masters'. The classification is still disputed because in some instances the putative title could also be a personal name.[84]

The colophons of the literary tablets from Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh show some peculiarities. In contrast to later periods, they not only give the name of the scribe who actually *wrote* the tablet (in the formula *PN dub mu-sar* = 'PN wrote the tablet'), but also sometimes give additional names, from one name on IAS 255 and up to eighteen names on SF 39. It is not clear what the function of these other individuals was, yet it can be seen that certain names occur only in combination with others (Mander 1984: 339–57). Interestingly the people listed in these colophons are not qualified by the common term *dub-sar* 'scribe' that often occurs in the administrative texts, but are classified by the sign šɪᴅ. This sign can be read either as *saĝa* 'saĝa-priest/ accountant' or *umbisaĝ* 'administrator'. Father Deimel in 1923 took it to mean 'saĝa-priest' and saw the production of early literary texts as taking place in a

[82] A general description of the colophons can be found in Mander 1984.
[83] Mander 1984: 346; Waetzold 1986: 45.
[84] Mander 1984: 345–6; Waetzold 1986: 45.

religious context. Similarly Wilcke (2006: 206) saw the reason for the use of the designation šid as based on the homophony of the sign ka_9 (ŠID) and the epithet *nu-ka* of Nisaba, the goddess of scribal art. But Visicato (2000: 3) showed that in the Uruk III period the *saĝa* had many of the same functions that were later fulfilled by the *dub-sar* (scribe), and so the reference to scribes using the sign ŠID (probably with the reading *saĝa*) in the colophons of the literary texts seems to be a more archaic, and therefore probably more prestigious, term for 'scribe'.

2.5.3. The Production of Texts

As stated above, a colophons may tell us who wrote a given tablet with the phrase *PN dub mu-sar* 'PN wrote the tablet'. Additional information about their production is sometimes given by the phrase *dub šu mu-(na)-ĝál*. The meaning of this is not entirely clear. Wilcke (2006: 207) saw the addendum in analogy to colophons from later times: *šu-šè al-ĝá-ĝá* 'he prepared[?] himself the tablet by his (own) hand' or made it 'ready to use'. Krebernik (1998: 314, 329) instead translated the phrase 'he let the tablet be in (his) hand', meaning that one scribe wrote the tablet whereas another one held the tablet for him during the process.

Aside from this, our knowledge of the enviroment of tablet production is very limited. One exercise tablet from Lagash gives sign values and readings of signs and probably shows that we miss a lot of oral teachings that were given in the process of writing (Civil 1983: 560). Part of being a scribe was not only the ability to write accurately, but also the capacity to create an aesthetically pleasing tablet. The right clay had to be chosen and kneaded. The tablet had to be shaped in a regular way or according to the format required. The tablet had to be divided into equal columns and the script had to be distributed equally on its surface. The scribes of Shuruppag acquired highly artistic skills in this respect. The tablet SF 55, for example, is absolutely flat on the obverse and divided into ten columns with twenty-seven 'cases' each. The reverse has a slight curvature culminating in a small height right in the centre of the tablet. The clay of the uninscribed parts of the reverse is burnished to the point that it looks as if it were glazed, and the tablet itself has a weight of nearly eight kilograms. The tablet as a physical object shows us the high degree of craftsmanship that was necessary for the scribes to produce a manuscript of high literature. The effort to produce such artefacts is exceptional and may have had a religious motivation. Some literary texts from Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh end with a doxology to Nisaba, the goddess of scribal art.[85]

[85] A compilation of all variants is found in Krebernik 1998: 323.

Unfortunately much remains unclear about these early scribes, but we can at least see that, as in later times, the scribes produced literary works, sometimes on tablets of extraordinary beauty, and praised the goddess of writing at the end of the text.

2.6. CONCLUSIONS

Did 'libraries' exist in the third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia? The contexts in which literary texts have been found in Shuruppag, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Ebla show a number of close similarities, but most striking is the fact that literary texts are almost always found alongside administrative documents. Excavators seem hesitant to term such contexts 'libraries', but rather refer to them as 'archives'. The existence of early libraries thus to some extent depends on the definition of the term itself. If a 'library' is simply defined by being a collection of texts that reflect 'broader mental activities' (see Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.1.3) and that are not bound to a unique event, have a formal and structured corpus, and play a role in the transmission and canonization of knowledge, then the conclusion would be that libraries were in existance already by the mid-third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia.

The corpora from Shuruppag, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Ebla include texts that are clearly concerned with the 'broader mental activities' of humankind, for example god-lists that organize the pantheon (Rubio 2011: 97–101), wisdom literature, and myths. Nor are the literary texts bound to a unique event and thus constrained in time and space; they are universally applicable. It is difficult to discern, however, if collections were structured in any way. We find no direct textual evidence for a systematic structure, but the physical arrangement of the tablets found in Ebla shows us that educational works were kept beside literary texts and apart from the administrative records.

It can also be argued that these collections played a crucial role in the transmission and canonization of knowledge. We see that in Shuruppag different manuscripts of the same literary works and lexical lists were found in several different places, proving their use in many locations across town. The continued uniformity of the lexical lists that originated already in the fourth millennium, and their wide distribution over Mesopotamia and Syria, also speaks for a high level of standardization or canon in the scribal education. This uniformity and a high degree of standardization of literary material is confirmed by the high number of duplicate texts found in Shuruppag, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Ebla. Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh share several literary works in both standard

and UGN-orthography. And both places are connected to Ebla through the lexical lists. Ebla also shows that the core texts could be used to generate new lexical materials to suit local educational requirements.

The corpora of Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh have yielded the earliest significant numbers of literary texts, and so to us they stand at the beginning of Sumerian literature. But it has to be kept in mind that in the ED IIIa period cuneiform script had already been in use for at least six hundred years. During this half of a millennium, writing—formerly only a tool of administration—was transformed into a new form of craft and art, and alongside it, the scribal profession evolved to be a path to the highest positions in society.

Appendix: An Overview of Find-Spots

The following tables (Tables 2.11 to 2.16) use technical terms to refer to specific literary and lexical compositions. They trace individual tablets to their find-spot and provide an overview of their spatial dstribution at Shuruppag and Tell Abu Salabikh. The material has not previously been compiled.

Abbreviations:

IAS = Inscriptions from Tell Abu Salabikh, published by Biggs (1974).

SF = Schultexte aus Fāra. The literary texts from Shuruppag, published by Deimel (1923).

UGN = UD.GAL.NUN-orthography; represents an entirely separate orthography used by Mesopotamian scribes during Early Dynastic times mainly to write myths, although a few lexical lists are known as well and probably served to teach the orthography. The scribes used the same repertoire of signs as the standard orthography, but with entirely different values. This would in some sense be comparable to a system in our alphabetic script where we assign a new (though not arbitrary) value to each sign in our system. It is named after the often occuring sign-combination 'UD.GAL.NUN' which is the writing used for the name of the supreme god of the Sumerian pantheon, usually read Enlil. The swapping of signs essentially encodes the text. Connections between the standard-orthographic signs and its UGN-orthographic equivalent are based on word-play, homonomy, and shape. The exact purpose of the UGN-orthography is unknown. In most cases the texts are meticulously written in a calligraphic handwriting. The tablets are mostly very large and proof of great workmanship and scribal skill. Their wide distribution speaks against encryption as motivation, but seems to hint that it was considered a special erudite way of writing.

WF = Wirtschaftstexte aus Fara. The administrative documents from Shuruppag, published by Deimel (1924).

Table 2.11. The 'Tablet House' (at XVh) in Shuruppag

Administrative records about		
Donkeys	7	WF 1, WF 4, WF 9, WF 15, WF 19, WF 20, WF 27
Personnel	2	WF 42 (list of witnesses), WF 108
Grain	9	WF 61, WF 64, WF 66, WF 67, WF 68, WF 70, WF 61 (*Sammeltafel* of WF 106), WF 77, WF 78
Small cattle	1	WF 126
Copper and textiles	1	WF 137
Total	20	
Lexical lists		
God-lists	1	SF 1, SF 5 (list of fish-eating gods)
Vessels	1	SF 64
ED Lú A (list of professions)	2	SF 33, SF 75
Tribute (word-list C)	2	SF 12, SF 13
Cattle A	1	SF 81
Fish	1	SF 10
Grain	2	SF 15, SF 16
Archaic ḪAR-ra A	1	SF 20
Archaic ḪAR-ra B	1	SF 43
Cultic personnel	1	SF 57
Mixed	4	SF 9 (fish/metal), SF 23 (gods/cities), SF 29 (professions/ personal names), SF 58 (plants/birds)
Not in a tradition/ content unknown	4	SF 7, SF 41, SF 42, SF 69
Unknown (contains UGN-orthography)	2	SF 18 (reverse), SF 19
Total	23	
Literary texts		
Proverbs	2	SF 26, SF 27
About the city-goddess Sud	2	SF 36, SF 40
UGN-orthography	4	SF 18 (obverse: hymn, praising Inana), SF 55 (hymn praising Uruk), SF 56 (hymn, praising Inana), SF 60 (hymn, mentions the building of a temple)
Total	8	
Practical texts		
Incantations	1	SF 54
Total	1	

Table 2.12. Tablets found in Shuruppag North of XVh

Administrative records about		
Donkeys	16	WF 3, WF 5, WF 6, WF 7, WF 11, WF 12, WF 13, WF 14, WF 16, WF 18, WF 22, WF 23, WF 24, WF 25, WF 26, WF 28,
Personnel	6	WF 106, WF 107, WF 109, WF 119, WF 120, WF 121
Grain	8	WF 55, WF 69, WF 71, WF 72, WF 74, WF 75, WF 78, WF 91
Copper	1	WF 148
Fields	14	WF 43, WF 44, WF 45, WF 48, WF 49, WF 50, WF 51, WF 52, WF 55, WF 56, WF 57, WF 58, WF 59, WF 60

Oil	1	WF 140
Classification uncertain	1	WF 124 (donkeys?)
Total	49	
Lexical lists		
God-lists	1	SF 6 (list of fish-eating gods),
Officials A	1	SF 59
Not in a tradition/ content unknown	2	SF 63, SF 72 (list of rivers?)
Total	4	

Table 2.13. Tablets found in Shuruppag in House IXac and IXaa

Administrative texts		
Grain/copper	1	WF 63
Lexical lists		
God-list (theophoric PN)	1	SF 2 (exercise text?)
ED LÚ C (professions)	1	SF 47
Word list D	1	SF 48 (exercise text)
Literary texts		
Ama-ushum-gal	3	SF 31 (exercise text), SF 50 (exercise text), SF 51 (exercise text)
Literary/unknown	2	SF 49* (exercise text), SF 45 (exercise text)
Practical texts		
Incantations	2	SF 30 (exercise text), SF 50* (exercise text, duplicate to SF 30)

Table 2.14. Tablets found in Shuruppag in House IXf–g

Administrative texts		
Personnel	1	WF 117
Grain (offering-list)	1	WF 153
Lexical lists (lead-box)		
Archaic ḪAR-ra B	1	SF 21
ED Lú A (professions)	1	SF 76 (exercise text)
Mixed	1	SF 24 (cities/gods)
Literary text(s)		
UGN-orthography	1	SF 37 (mythological text elevating the Sun-god Utu)

Table 2.15. Tablets found in Shuruppag in Trench HJ–IIi

Administrative records about		
List of PN and professions	2	SF 28, SF 44 (exercise text)
Unknown	4	SF 49, SF 61, SF 62, SF 66
Literary texts		
Proverbs	1	SF 65
Practical texts		
Incantations	1	SF 46

Table 2.16. Tablets found at Tell Abu Salabikh, Area E Rooms 11, 20, 21, and 31

Room 11		
Lexical	12 (= 25%)	IAS 1, 8, 15, 16, 45, 32, 36, 85, 93, 97, 324, 505
Literary	27 (= 56%)	IAS 195, 196, 337, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 351, 352, 353, 355, 390, 473, 474, 480, 486, 489
Literary, in UGN-orthography	9 (= 19%)	IAS 192, 180, 181, 183, 197, 198, 207, 212, 385
Total	48	
Room 20		
Administrative	1 (= 2%)	IAS 501
Lexical	9 (= 16%)	IAS 100, 101, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111
Literary	19 (= 34%)	IAS 195, 196, 337, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 351, 352, 353, 355, 390, 473, 474, 480, 486, 489
Literary, in UGN-orthography	27 (= 48%)	IAS 125, 127, 189, 191, 202, 216, 224, 227, 235, 236, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 455
Total	56	
Room 21		
Administrative	2 (= 4%)	IAS 510, 506
Lexical	5 (= 10%)	IAS 1, 34, 35, 57, 445
Literary	26 (= 54%)	IAS: 302, 309, 310, 316, 320 (ST), 343, 354, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 369, 370, 380, 387, 441, 446, 447
Literary, UGN-orthography	15 (= 31%)	112, 143, 145, 159, 160, 161, 182, 185, 188, 190, 193, 213, 225, 356, 367
Total	48	
Room 31		
Administrative	5 (= 2%)	IAS 508, 511, 512, 513, 514
Lexical	95 (= 27%)	IAS: 1 (r. 1+r11), 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 61, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 214, 330, 312, 383, 404, 410, 419, 431, 459, 461, 462, 463, 465, 466, 483, 487
Literary	128 (= 39%)	IAS 231, 250, 255, 256, 25, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 282, 283, 287, 289, 281, 284, 285, 286, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 298, 300, 301, 303, 304, 305, 307, 308, 311, 312, 314, 315, 317, 322, 323, 326, 327, 328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 340, 341, 342, 350, 381, 384, 386, 388, 389, 398, 401, 402, 403, 405, 407, 408, 409, 411, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 428, 430, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 450, 452, 453, 454, 456, 457, 458, 467, 470, 472, 476, 479, 481, 482, 484, 485, 488
Literary, in UGN-orthography	104 (= 31%)	IAS 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 138, 140, 141, 142, 144, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 184, 186, 187, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206, 208, 209, 211, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 226, 228, 229, 230, 232, 233, 234, 237, 248, 249, 251, 252, 253, 254, 299, 306, 318, 325, 338, 339, 399, 406, 412, 451
Total	332	

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3

Libraries in Ancient Egypt, *c.*2600–1600 BCE

R. B. Parkinson

'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.

[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.

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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.

[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.

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.

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.

[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.

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.

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 may have been fuzzy and flexible. The hierarchy of script types was probably always to some

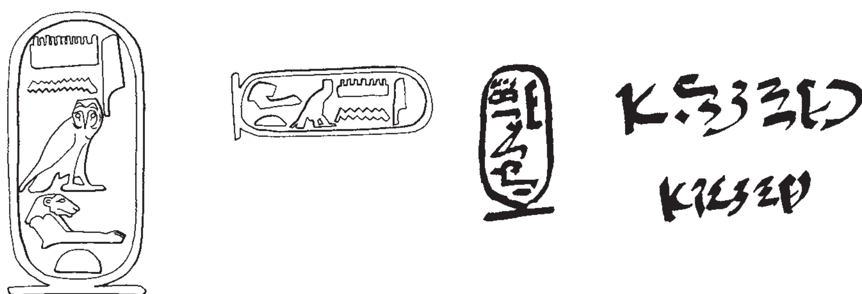

Fig. 3.1. The name 'Amenemhat' in the different types of script in use in the Middle Kingdom: (a) elaborately carved hieroglyphs from a royal monument (BM EA 1072); (b) hieroglyphs carved in sunk relief from a private stela (without cartouche, Louvre C2); (c) linear hieroglyphs from a ritual text (P. Ramesseum 6); (d) literary hieratic (P. Ramesseum D); (e) administrative hieratic (P. Brooklyn).

Drawing by R. B. Parkinson.

[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.

extent a continuum. By the Middle Kingdom, it seems that the linear script was often reserved for religious, 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 discussing the possible contexts of surviving manuscripts, I assume that a choice of re-used papyrus

[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).

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 (*hn n-sš*)', and one spell from the 'Ramesseum papyri' accuses a sacrilegious being of 'taking away the box (*hn*) 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). 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 Kingdom.[15] It was perhaps quite a specialized form of

[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.

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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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).

The 'Ramesseum papyri' were discovered in a wooden box (now unlocated) 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).

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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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, some traces of specialized

[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).

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 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 survival is partly because these temples lacked valley temples; this factor would explain why these archives

[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.

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).

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 north-west corner of the pyramid temple, together with some in rooms that lay off the pillared hall facing this area. These storerooms 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 in a rock-cut magazine (Tallet 2014).

[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.

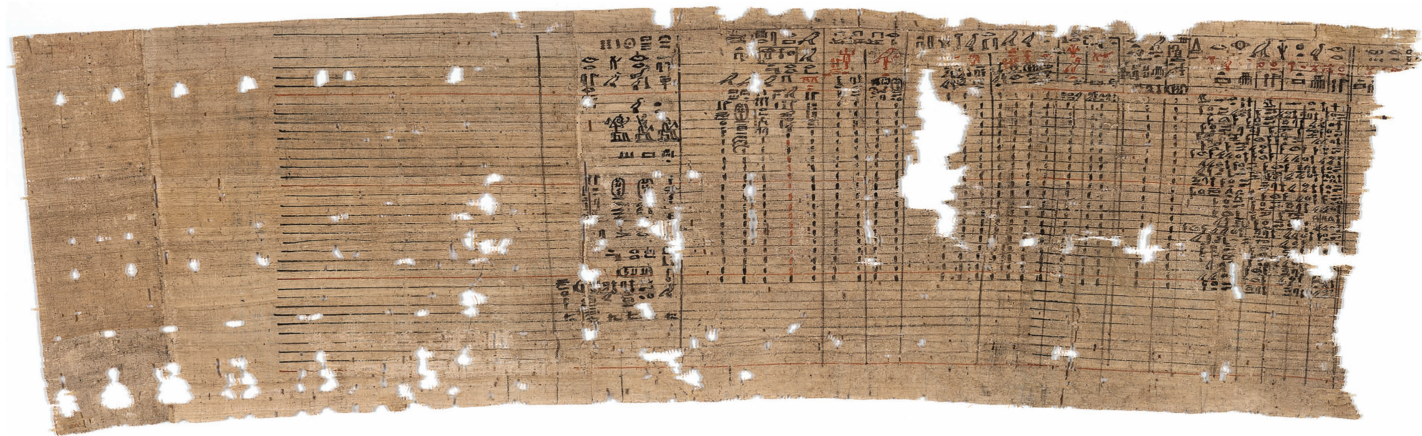

Fig. 3.4. A papyrus from the archive of Neferirkare at Abusir, with duty rosters laid out in tables on ruled guide-lines on a full-height roll. H. 21.0 cm. P. British Museum EA 10735.7 front.

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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 letters, administrative documents, despatches, and reports, and were accidentally preserved under a

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

[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.

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 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). Performative ritual texts were also transferred into

[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.

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 the problems out in hieratic 'according to the writings of old made in the time [of the Dual King Ni]

[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.

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.

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, circulated, and consulted in drawing up these inscriptions: the

[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.

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 and local diversity. The distribution of the texts is strongly regionalized, is not country-wide, and seems closely associated with the nomarchal

[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.

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 altered for one Nebimes, and included in his burial

[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.

(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 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 administrative overtones in some instances, such as when the texts in the archives of King Neferirkare

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

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, to whom all holy things were revealed'.[38] In one

[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).

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 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.

[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.

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' and 'library' are not so clear cut, although the emphasis on

[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).

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.

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 falls within what is known of the textual world of the lector priest and seems a

[45] In this narrative, 'proceed (*wḏꜣ*)' 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).

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 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

[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.

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.

- 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

[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.

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 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 officeholder or of an office.[51]

[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.

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 apparently concerned the palatial mansions (including the second northern mansion) of the elite sector

[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.

[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.

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 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.

[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.

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.

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 literary manuscripts,[59] and the practice also occurred with administrative texts. Such tomb deposits of

[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.

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 two papyri have a documented provenance in a tomb whose owner is named in surviving objects, it is

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

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).

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.

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] The smaller manuscript is a list of entries about

[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).

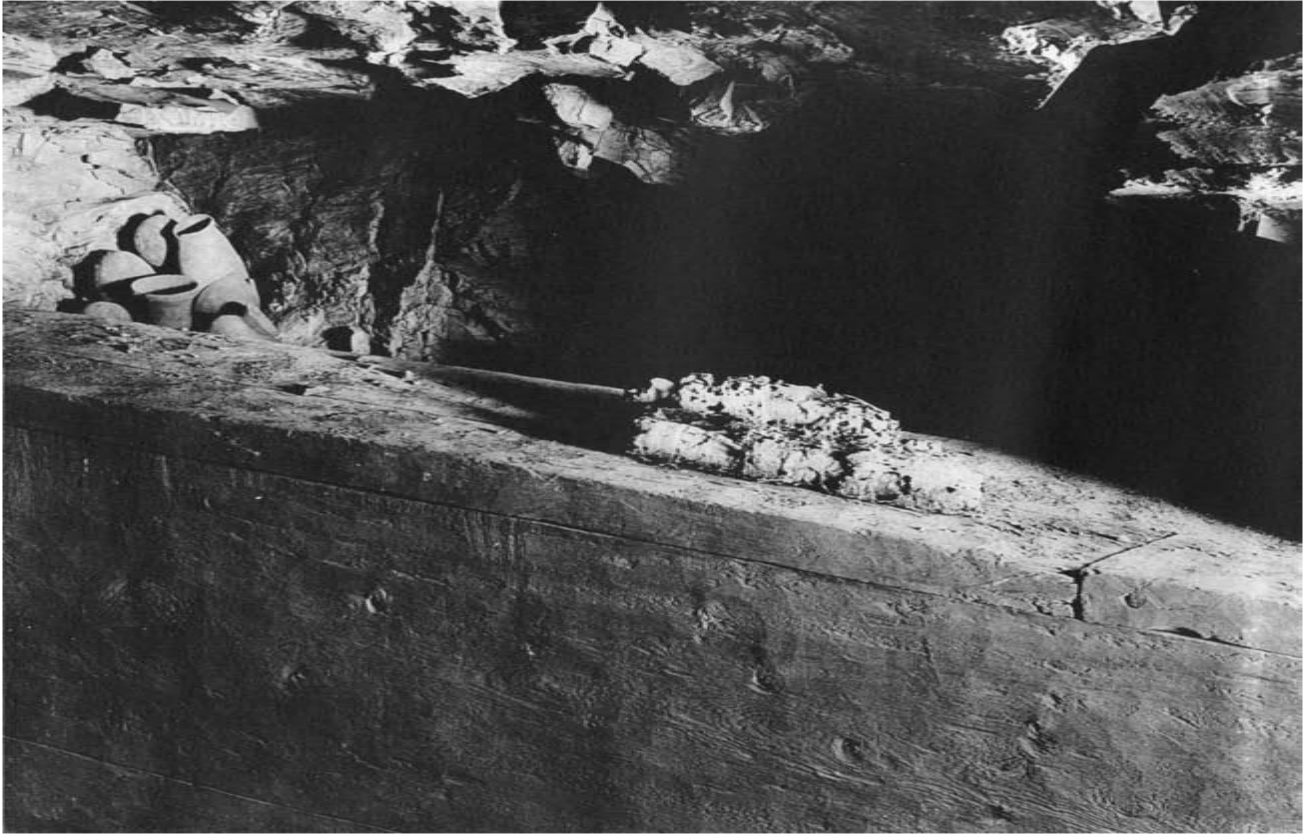

Fig. 3.5. Four rolls deposited on lid of a coffin in an early 12th Dynasty burial chamber: P. Reisner I–IV as discovered in Tomb N 408/406 at Naga el-Deir. Each roll is around 30 cm long. Behind the coffin are offering vessels.

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

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.

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.

[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).

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

[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.

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 the roll, he wrote on the second part of the back. The surface was poorer here, and

[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]).

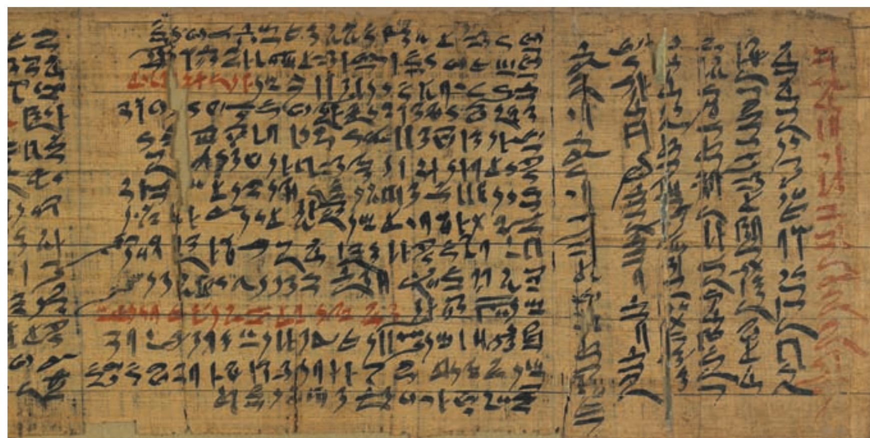

Fig. 3.6. A half-height roll with *The Tale of the Peasant* (B1 146–166) written in literary hieratic in a mixture of vertical and horizontal formats. The copyist's hand is much more elegant and legible when writing vertical. The manuscript is re-used and traces of account guide-lines are visible, which were only partly erased. H. 15.8 cm. P. Berlin P 3023.

Courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin.

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 a roll that is closely similar in manufacture,

[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).

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 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.

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.

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 un-located 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 surviving fragments suggest that they originally totalled at

[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.

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).

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 his professional contacts (see above). Some of

[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.

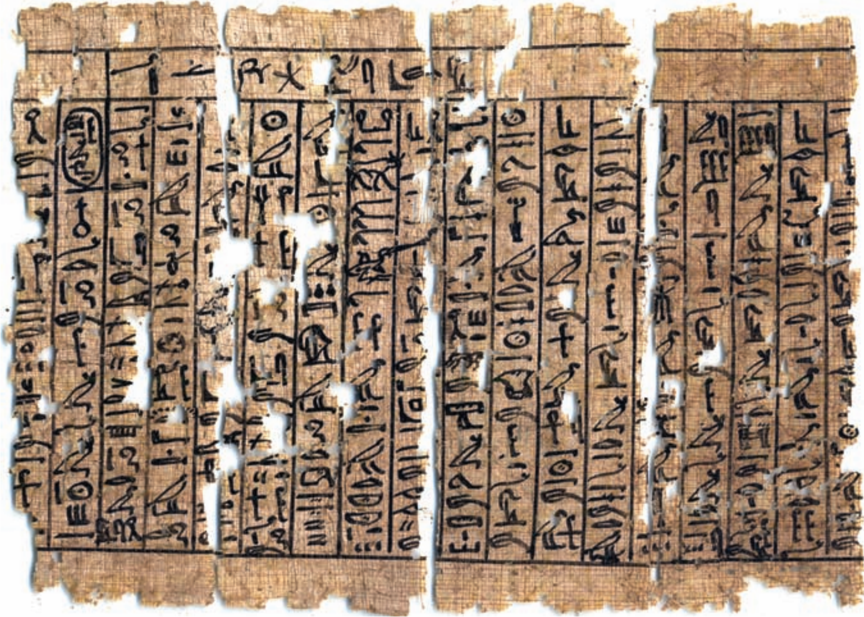

Fig. 3.7. P. Ramesseum 6 with *Hymns to Sobek* (l. 40–58). A half-height roll in linear script; the hymns are written retrograde, in vertical lines, with a horizontal title. H. 12.9 cm. P. British Museum EA 10579.3.

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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:

- 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 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. Ramesseum C, 18: = P. BM EA 10752, 10771).[76] Both are written in pages of horizontal lines.

[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.

- 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: 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).
- A half-height rolls with healing texts (?) on the front and back (P. Ramesseum 14 = P. BM EA 10767).

[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.

- 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 it may be

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

because such poems were already part of a transmitted canon of written high culture along with 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.

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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4

Archives and Libraries in the Old Babylonian Period, *c.*1900–1600 BCE

Paul Delnero

4.1. INTRODUCTION

4.1.1. The Written Record

There are few historical eras in the ancient Near East which are as rich in textual documentation as the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia, i.e. roughly the first four centuries of the second millennium BCE. Many aspects of its political, cultural, and social history can be reconstructed in vivid detail from an abundance of written records dating to these years. While the precise number is difficult to determine with certainty, well over 50,000 cuneiform tablets have been unearthed in modern Iraq, Syria, and south-east Turkey—the region corresponding to greater Mesopotamia—since excavations began there in the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to the spectacular discoveries at Mari, a major political centre on the Middle Euphrates, and Kanesh, an Assyrian merchant colony in southern Anatolia, each of which has yielded more than 20,000 tablets, a substantial number of cuneiform documents have also been found at many other sites throughout this area. In southern Mesopotamia, over 5000 tablets were found at Sippar and Larsa, and medium-sized groups of between 2000 and 5000 tablets were found at Ur, Nippur, Kish, Uruk, and Babylon. Smaller groups of between 100 and 2000 tablets have also been discovered e.g. at Eshnunna, Shaduppum, and Meturan in the Diyala region, as well as further to the north and north-west at Shushara, Qattara, and Shubat-Enlil, in Upper or northern Mesopotamia, to name only a few of the cities where written documents have come to light.

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4.1.2. Letters

Many of the texts from the Old Babylonian period are administrative or legal in nature, but the textual record from this time is also characterized by the first appearance of large numbers of letters.[1] Letters discovered in the palace of Zimri-Lim at Mari, which were written to and from rulers and high officials of the city in the eighteenth century BCE, have enabled historians to reconstruct, in almost forensic detail, the years culminating in the fall of Shamshi-Adad of Ekallatum and Hammurabi of Babylon's rise to power and subsequent conquest of nearly all of southern and northern Mesopotamia.[2] Moreover, similar letters from other sites like Shushara and Sippar describe some of the same events, filling in gaps in the historical narrative, and sometimes even providing the rare possibility of examining these events from more than one perspective. Similarly, the numerous archives of letters found in the private homes of merchants from Assyria living in Kanesh, a city in south-east Turkey, shed invaluable light on a long-distance trading network at the beginning of the second millennium, as well as private life in more general terms. These letters offer an intimate glimpse into the trials and tribulations of enterprising merchants traveling back and forth between the distant cities of Assur and Kanesh to trade tin and textiles for profit, and residing for long periods of time away from their families.[3] Although letters are attested as early as the middle of the third millennium at Ebla, the widespread proliferation of texts of this type at the beginning of the second millennium has been cited as one of the primary indications of the growing importance of writing and written communication during this period.

[1] A detailed description and summary of the numbers of surviving cuneiform texts of different types (administrative, literary, legal, historiographic, etc.) is provided by Van De Mieroop 1999: 9–38. In Van De Mieroop's tabulated comparison of the number of extant letters from different periods (Van De Mieroop 1999: 12), he notes that the number of letters increases from under one hundred in the preceding Ur III period (*c.*2112–2004) to just over one hundred in the Old Babylonian period. If the 20,000 letters from Mari and the 20,000 letters from Kanesh are included in this total, however, Van De Mieroop's grouping of OB letters as 'common' ('more than 100') is a substantial understatement, and the letters should be grouped instead in his category 'abundant' ('more than 5000'). For an excellent overview of letter writing and its importance during the Old Babylonian period, see in particular Charpin 2010: 115–53.

[2] For a comprehensive description of the political history of the Old Babylonian period that draws extensively from the abundant textual evidence from this period, see the magisterial treatment of the topic in Charpin 2004. For translations of selected letters from Mari in English see Heimpel 2003, which includes a concise description of the political history of the Old Babylonian period, particularly during the reign of the Mari ruler Zimri-lim (*c.*1775–1762 BCE).

[3] A detailed overview of the Old Assyrian period, which serves as an excellent introduction to this period for both specialists and non-specialists, has been published by Larsen 2015. For a substantially condensed summary of some of the same material see Veenhof 2010.

4.1.3. Literature and Language

Another innovation of the Old Babylonian period is the emergence of works of literature in much greater numbers than are attested in earlier periods in Mesopotamia. Copies of over four hundred mythological narratives, dialogues, liturgical texts, hymns, and other compositions with literary features are attested from this time, frequently in multiple duplicates. Although compositions that can be classified more broadly as literature begin to appear near the middle of the third millennium at Shuruppag, Tell Abu Salabikh, and Ebla (cf. Zand §2.1), and again in slightly larger numbers during the Ur III period approximately three centuries later, the extent to which texts of this type were copied at the beginning of the second millennium suggests that a literary tradition, consisting of a more or less fixed group of both older and more recent works, was established for the first time during this period.[4]

The primary written and spoken language at this time was Akkadian, which belongs to the Semitic language family, and is related to modern Arabic and Amharic, and the ancient languages Ugaritic, Aramaic, and biblical Hebrew. Texts written in Akkadian begin to appear in growing numbers during the Old Akkadian period (2350–2200 BCE), when a dynasty of rulers founded by Sargon established a large territorial state based at the northern Babylonian city Akkad. This empire, which united northern and southern Mesopotamia, extended as far as the city of Nagar on the Habur plain in north-eastern Syria. However, Akkadian was probably spoken from at least as early as the end of the fourth millennium, as evidenced by Semitic loanwords and personal names in texts from the beginning of the Early Dynastic period. Additionally, a large archive of tablets dating to just before the Old Akkadian period, written in a dialect of Akkadian called Eblaite, was found at the city of Ebla in western Syria, and smaller archives of Akkadian texts from roughly the same time were discovered at Tell Beydar and Mari.

Although administrative texts and letters were written in Akkadian, with the exception of a small group of Akkadian literary narratives, including forerunners to the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Myth of the Anzu Bird, and literary legends about the Old Akkadian rulers Sargon and Naram-Suen, most of the literary compositions copied during the Old Babylonian period were composed in Sumerian. Sumerian is a language isolate and it is unrelated to any other known language, living or dead. The cuneiform writing system, which appears for the first time in late fourth-millennium texts from the city of Uruk, was invented for the purpose of writing Sumerian, and was later adapted to write Akkadian, Hurrian, Hittite, and nearly all other languages besides

[4] For a descriptive history of Mesopotamian literature from the third to the mid-second millennia BCE, see Rubio 2009. For Mesopotamian literature during the Early Dynastic period (*c.*2800–2350 BCE) in particular, see Krebernik 1998.

Egyptian that were spoken and written in the Near East up to and following the invention of alphabetic scripts at the end of the second millennium. Unlike Akkadian, which was associated with the north, Sumerian was the primary language used to write texts from urban centres in southern Mesopotamia like Nippur, Ur, and Uruk. After the collapse of the Old Akkadian dynasty, Sumerian was revived in Mesopotamia during the Ur III period at the end of the third millennium. While the exact date at which Sumerian died out as a spoken language is still disputed, a passage in a royal hymn in praise of the Ur III ruler Shulgi, in which the king boasts of learning a group of languages which includes Sumerian, Elamite, and Hurrian, but not Akkadian, has been cited as evidence that his native language was Akkadian, and that Sumerian was no longer spoken during this period. Nonetheless, literary texts written in Sumerian were composed and transmitted during the Old Babylonian period, and continued to be copied to a lesser extent until the end of the first millennium.

4.1.4. Education and the Context of Literature

Old Babylonian copies of Sumerian literary works have been discovered at most of the major urban centres in southern Mesopotamia, including Nippur, Ur, Babylon, Isin, Sippar, Kish, Larsa, and Uruk. But the presence of collections of Sumerian literature outside the so-called heartland of Mesopotamia, further north in the Diyala region at Meturan, and to the north-west at Mari, demonstrates that the copying of these texts was not limited to the south. Unlike the literary texts in archives and libraries from later periods, like the first millennium collections of Assurbanipal found at Nineveh (Finkel §9.4), which were intended to serve as master copies, most if not all of the Sumerian literary sources from the beginning of the second millennium were copied as scribal exercises by pupils learning to read and write Sumerian. Since Akkadian had already replaced Sumerian as a spoken language by this period, formal training in Sumerian had both a practical and an ideological function. The pupils who were taught Sumerian were being trained to work as scribes for the temple or palace, official institutions controlled by the state. Practically, this required learning the cuneiform writing system, which could be mastered by copying lists and texts composed in Sumerian. Copying mythological works, which typically involve central deities in the national pantheon, like Inana, Enlil, and Enki, or hymns of praise to rulers of past periods, like Shulgi and Lipit-Ishtar, may have promoted the belief for a small circle of elites that they shared a common history and religion.[5] The importance of creating the

[5] For this assessment of the ideological function of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum and a discussion of the supporting evidence see Veldhuis 2004: 66–80.

sense of a unified cultural heritage was all the more urgent during the Old Babylonian period, which was characterized by political fragmentation and social change that threatened to sever the connection to the traditions of the past.

4.1.5. Historical Background and Dating

The third millennium came to an end with the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur, a dynasty of five rulers who established a strong centralized state based at the city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia.[6] Adopting some of the innovations of the preceding Old Akkadian dynasty, like the practice of self-deification and territorial expansion achieved by means of nearly continuous military campaigning, the Ur III kings nonetheless adhered to the Sumerian religious and cultural traditions that had been practised in the south since as early as the end of the fourth millennium. They built and restored temples for worshiping deities in the Sumerian pantheon, and, in contrast to the Akkadian-speaking Old Akkadian rulers, revived Sumerian as the official written, if not spoken, language. This period came to an abrupt end when Ishbi-Erra, a general of the last Ur III ruler Ibbi-Suen, sacked Ur and founded a new dynasty at the city of Isin. However, even though relatively little literature compiled and copied during the Ur III period survives beyond a few isolated duplicates copied in later periods, such as the *Curse of Agade* and the *Collection of Sumerian Temple Hymns*, the many compositions known from Old Babylonian copies pertaining to rulers of the Ur III period like Ur-Namma and Shulgi makes it evident that a substantial portion of known Sumerian literature originated during this period. After a relatively brief period of uncontested rule, Ishbi-Erra's dynasty was challenged by the rulers of another southern Mesopotamian city, Larsa. The ensuing struggle for control in which Larsa eventually triumphed was the first of many power struggles between rival cities which took place throughout greater Mesopotamia during this period. Around the same time that Larsa began to assume control of the south toward the middle of the eighteenth century, a ruler named Shamshi-Adad rose to power and established a territorial state in northern Mesopotamia, which he, with the help of his sons Yasmah-Addu and Ishme-Dagan, ruled from the cities Shubat-Enlil, Mari, and Ekallatum. After Shamshi-Adad's death the north-west portion of his kingdom was taken over by Zimri-Lim of Mari, and some of his north-eastern holdings were lost to the city of Eshnunna. Larsa, which

[6] An excellent and comprehensive summary of the economic and political history of the Ur III period and all aspects of Mesopotamian society, culture, and administrative practices during this period can be found in Sallaberger 1999.

had reached its apex under Rim-Suen, was in turn conquered, along with Mari and Eshnunna, by Hammurabi of Babylon, who through a combination of shrewd diplomacy and bold military action succeeded in establishing a territorial state that briefly united most of northern and southern Mesopotamia. Much of this control was lost by his successor, Samsuiluna, who was unable to prevent the important southern Mesopotamian cities Ur and Nippur from revolting and acquiring their independence during his reign. In 1595, a little over a century later, Babylon was sacked by the Hittite ruler Mursilis I, putting a decisive end to Hammurabi's empire, and bringing the Old Babylonian period to a close.

Against this backdrop of shifting hegemony, it is probably not accidental that most of the copies of Sumerian literary works that survive from this period were produced during the reign of Samsuiluna, when the brief semblance of stability that had been achieved by Hammurabi was about to be permanently lost. The need to create a contrived sense of unity would have been particularly strongly felt in the face of the immanent threat of its opposite. When Samsuiluna lost control of Nippur and Ur, many of the houses in these cities were abandoned, resulting in the survival of the literary works that were in the houses at the time. Moreover, unlike the rulers of the Ur III state who had a direct connection to Sumerian traditions most of the rulers who gained power during this period were of north-west Semitic, or Amorite descent. When these rulers took over the south, they had to confront the difficult challenge of legitimizing their presence in a region in which Sumerian cultural and religious practices were still deeply rooted. One means of doing so would have been by honouring and preserving these traditions.

4.1.6. Purpose

In this chapter, two assemblages of literary compositions dating to the Old Babylonian period will be discussed: a group of sources found in a house at Nippur known as House F, and a second group of roughly contemporary sources from a house at Ur known as No. 1 Broad Street. Although it would be inaccurate to refer to these textual assemblages as archives or libraries in the strict sense of either term, the extent to which each group of texts comprises compositions that are known from other sources of evidence such as Old Babylonian incipit lists and catch-lines connecting individual texts in sequence justifies considering them as 'archives' or 'libraries' in the more abstract sense of textual groupings that were conceived at the time to comprise coherent groups. Since the sources discovered in these locations are collections of school exercises that have only been preserved accidentally, it is difficult to characterize them as archives in the strict sense of the term. If, however, they constitute a more or less representative group of

exercises copied as part of a standardized curricular program, it could be argued that they, like the texts in other archives and libraries, constitute meaningful collections. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of this issue that will include a comparison of the literary sources from Nippur and Ur with a third group of contemporaneous scribal exercises from Ur-Utu's house at Sippar.

4.2. CASE-STUDY: HOUSE F AT NIPPUR

One of the largest assemblages of Sumerian literary tablets was discovered in a private house at Nippur, the religious centre of Mesopotamia during the third and second millennia. This structure, which the excavators labeled House F (Fig. 4.1), was excavated by a team from the universities of Pennsylvania and Chicago in 1952, and yielded over 1400 tablets and fragments.[7] Over 90 per cent of these tablets are either copies of Sumerian literary works, or lists and exercises associated with scribal training. Additionally, eighteen Akkadian letters, which may have been scribal exercises, and one source for the Akkadian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, were discovered. A small group of administrative documents, comprising less than 5 per cent of the texts in the house, were also found. Archaeological evidence indicates that the house was occupied for around eighty years, from the beginning of the eighteenth century BCE until about 1721 BCE, when the house was abandoned during the middle of the reign of the ruler Samsuiluna (*c.*1749–1712 BCE); but dated documents discovered in the house suggest that the tablets from the house were probably produced during a much shorter period of time, around 1740 BCE, Samsuiluna's tenth regnal year.[8]

House F was located in a neighbourhood of similar houses on 'Tablet Hill', a mound in the eastern part of the city, a few hundred metres south of the ziggurat complex and the temples of Enlil and Inana. The mound received its name from a team of archaeologists led by Hermann Hilprecht and John Peters, who unearthed over 50,000 tablets there at the end of the nineteenth century. This spectacular find, the discovery of over half the Old Babylonian literary sources that are currently known, led Hilprecht incorrectly to conclude that the tablets belonged to a temple library. When Tablet Hill was re- excavated in the 1950s, the archaeologists Donald McCowan and Richard Haines, hoping to find more tablets, opened two excavation areas near the

[7] House F and the cuneiform tablets that were discovered there have been treated at length by Robson 2001, which includes references to previous literature.

[8] Robson 2002: 326–7.

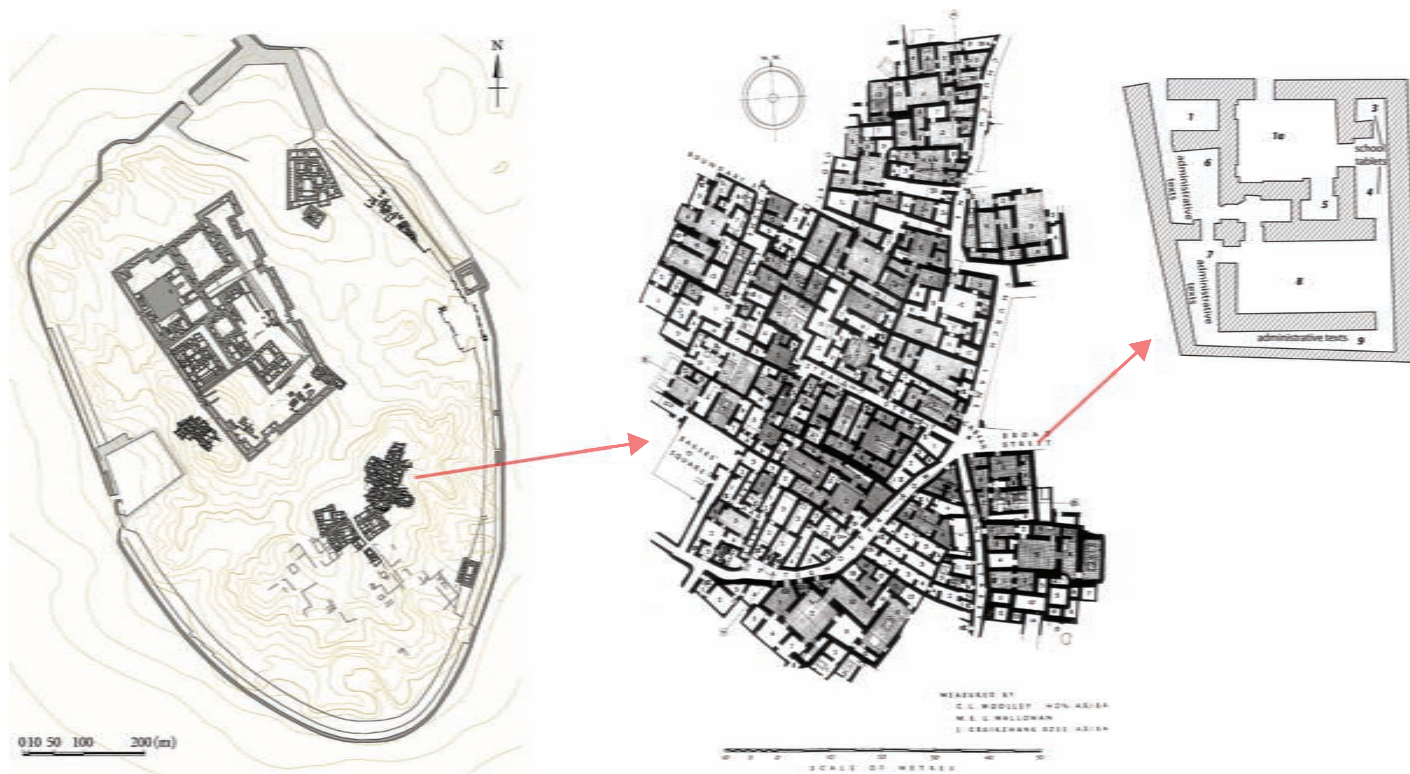

Fig. 4.1. Left: plan of the city of Ur drawn by F. Ghio with numbers removed (Creative Commons License 3.0). Middle: Plan of Ur neighborhood area AH. After C. E. Woolley and M. E. L. Mallowan, The Old Babylonian Period, Ur Excavations 7 [London: British Museum, 1976], fig. 124. Right: Plan of No. 1 Broad Street, drawn by author.

Image courtesy of McGuire Gibson and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

place on the mound where the initial discovery had taken place.[9] Using modern excavation techniques, they discovered that these areas, which they called TA and TB, were once a private residential quarter, and not the location of a temple or palace.

House F was excavated in area TA, along with seven neighbouring houses that were similar in size and construction. It occupied a surface area of approximately 45 m^2, and had several rooms, an entrance chamber, and possibly a large open-air courtyard. Though smaller groups of fewer than twenty tablets were found at the neighbouring houses G and H, as well as elsewhere in areas TA and TB, the majority of tablets from this section of the mound were discovered in House F. The tablets in House F were found in at least six different lots, but the largest group, comprising almost a thousand tablets, comes from Locus 205, which was either a large back room or an open-air courtyard. Some of the tablets in this area were used in the construction of a bench, while others were built directly into the floor and walls. Three boxes, constructed of baked-brick, which may have been used to soak and reshape clay tablets for re-use, were also found here. Although some of the tablets in House F were used as building material, the presence of similar recycling boxes in connection with scribal training at Ur-Utu's house in Sippar from the same period may indicate that House F was at one time a school, and that many of the tablets in the house were produced by apprentice scribes who were educated here.

4.2.1. Contents and Curricula

A more direct indication that scribes were trained in House F, however, is the content of the tablets. In a detailed study, Eleanor Robson (2001) observed that of the 1400 tablets from this house, 718, or over 50 per cent, contain literary compositions, and an additional 591, or approximately 42 per cent, contain lexical lists, syllabaries, and other types of scribal exercises. The distribution of texts in House F corresponds almost exactly to the content and sequence of exercises learned by apprentice scribes at different stages in their education as reconstructed by Niek Veldhuis (1997: 40–66) and others in recent studies of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum.[10] According to this reconstruction, listed in its entirety in Table 4.1, scribal training began with

[9] McCown and Haines 1967: 64–6. For a comprehensive (re-)examination of the houses around and including House F, see also Stone 1987. Gibson et al. 1998–2001 provides an excellent overview of the excavation history of Nippur, including the post-war excavation of the site by McCown and Haines.

[10] Additional reconstructions of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum which build on Veldhuis's initial reconstruction include Tinney 1999; Robson 2001; and Veldhuis 2004: 62–6. For a more sceptical assessment of the evidence for reconstructing the sequence of exercises in

Table 4.1. The sequence of the elementary scribal curriculum at Nippur.

Group One: Elementary Exercises
1. Sign Elements.
2. Syllable Alphabet B.
3. TU-TA-TI.
4. Lists of names.

Group Two: Thematic Lists ('ur$_5$-ra')
1. List of trees and wooden objects.
2. Lists of reed and reed objects, vessels and clay, hides and leather objects, and metals and metal objects.
3. Lists of domestic animals, wild animals, and meat cuts.
4. Lists of stones and plants, fish and birds, and clothing.
5. Lists of geographical names and terms, and stars.
6. List of foodstuffs.

Group Three: Advanced Lists
1. Metrological tables.
2. Proto-Ea.
3. Proto-Lu.
4. Proto-Izi, Proto-Kagal, and Nigga.
5. Proto-Diri.
6. Mathematical tables.

Group Four: Model Texts and Proverbs
1. Collections of model contracts.
2. Collections of proverbs.

texts that we refer to as the *Syllable Alphabet B* and *Tu-ta-ti*, lists which taught basic cuneiform signs and their phonetic values, and continued with thematic lexical lists, model contracts, and short Sumerian proverbs, which would have been useful for learning vocabulary, syntax, and simple grammatical constructions.

In the second or advanced phase of the curriculum, literary compositions were copied to introduce apprentice scribes to more complex grammar and longer, continuous texts. While the precise sequence of compositions that were learned in this phase is difficult to determine with certainty, it seems to have included most of the narratives, hymns, and other types of literature that are known from the period.

The proposed reconstruction of the scribal curriculum is largely based on correlations between the physical format of scribal exercise tablets and the types of exercises they contain. Examining the shape and function of school tablets from Nippur, Veldhuis (1997) observed that elementary exercises are frequently copied on two distinct tablet types: small, lenticular-shaped tablets with extracts of one to four lines, and larger tablets with longer extracts of ten

the scribal curriculum, particularly during the second or 'advanced' phase of education when Sumerian literary works were copied, see Delnero 2010 and 2011.

to twenty lines. Following the typology established by Miguel Civil (1969: 27–38 and 1979: 5) for classifying different tablet formats, school lentils are referred to as Type IV tablets and the other format as Type II tablets. The extracts on both types are copied twice; once as a model, and again in an inferior hand by a pupil imitating it. In contrast to Type IV tablets, which contain only a short extract, Type II tablets contain two different types of exercises. The obverse, which is divided into two columns, contains a model extract in the left column which was copied again by the pupil in the right column. Often the content of these right columns was erased so that the exercise in the left column could be recopied multiple times. The reverse, however, usually contains only a single extract, without a model, from either a different text or a different section of the same text copied on the obverse. Since the extracts on the reverses of Type II tablets were typically learned earlier in the curriculum than the extract on the obverse, it is possible to identify not only the exercises that were learned in the elementary phase, but also the sequence in which they were copied.

The tablets discovered in House F are consistent with the reconstructed sequence of the Old Babylonian curriculum in both content and form. There are numerous copies of nearly all of the lists and exercises that have been assigned to the elementary phase of scribal training. These include seventy copies of the so-called *Syllable Alphabet B* and eighty-two copies of personal names lists, which were both taught early in the curriculum. There are also multiple duplicates of different thematic lexical lists, such as the lists of wooden objects, animals, garments, and geographic names, which were learned in the middle of this phase. Finally, copies of advanced lists, like the compositions we call *Proto-Lu* and *Proto-Ea*, as well as multiplication tables, model contracts, and proverbs, copied at the end of elementary education, were also found in large numbers. Moreover, the format of the tablets containing these exercises corresponds to the expected distribution for texts learned during the first phase of the curriculum. Though only a few Type IV lentils were discovered, nearly 42 per cent, or 248 of the 591 surviving elementary exercises from House F occur on Type II tablets.

Sumerian literary compositions, which were copied during the second, or advanced phase of the scribal curriculum, are also well attested at House F. Numerous copies of works of literature were found, such as the *Instructions of Shuruppag*, *Dumuzi's Dream*, *The Farmer's Instructions*, *The Curse of Agade*, the *Ur Lament*, and *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*, which were also copied extensively at other sites in southern Mesopotamia during this period. Furthermore, a group of ten literary compositions, called the Decad—which comprises the texts *Shulgi A*, *Lipit-Ishtar A*, *Song of the Hoe*, *The Exaltation of Inana* (Inana B), *Enlil in the Ekur*, *the Kesh Temple Hymn*, *Enki's Journey to Nibru*, *Inana and Ebih*, the *Nungal Hymn*, and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (Version A)—is particularly well represented. Since the texts in

the Decad are connected on collective tablets and by catch-lines at the end of sources in the same order in which they are listed in two Old Babylonian literary catalogues, Steve Tinney (1999) proposed that these ten compositions, along with another group of four compositions he called the Tetrad, were the first texts to be learned after the completion of the elementary phase of scribal training. The compositions in the Decad are the most well-attested texts in House F. At least nine copies of each of the ten compositions were found, and for at least five of these texts over twenty duplicates are preserved, providing further evidence that House F may have served as a school, and that its texts form a coherent group.

4.3. CASE STUDY: NO. 1 BROAD STREET, AT UR

The second largest assemblage of Old Babylonian Sumerian literature that has been discovered to date comes from a house at the city of Ur known as No. 1 Broad Street (Fig. 4.2). Like House F, this house was also relatively small and was located in a neighbourhood. The house and the residential quarter in which it was situated were excavated in the 1920s by an expedition led by Sir Leonard Woolley, who gave the streets and houses names based on the street names at Oxford University. The tablets found there include a large number of Sumerian literary compositions and elementary exercises, which were discovered together with administrative documents and a small group of Akkadian letters. The excavators initially reported finding close to 2000 tablets, but this number seems to have been exaggerated, and the actual number is probably less than half this figure. In the catalogue published in the final excavation report of the Old Babylonian levels at Ur, only 382 tablets are listed as coming from No. 1 Broad Street. Although more tablets were undoubtedly found in the house, many of the tablets from Woolley's field seasons were not given inventory numbers until after they had been baked. Since it is not possible to determine the precise find spots of the unnumbered tablets, it is difficult to estimate how many more tablets might have been inside the house.

4.3.1. Sources and Dates

Over nine hundred literary tablets and school exercises from Woolley's excavations have been published in the three parts of *Ur Excavations: Texts, Volume Six*. If the forty-six tablets from No. 7 Quiet Street, the other house at Ur where an assemblage of literary tablets was discovered, are subtracted, along with the small number of sources from other find spots, nearly eight

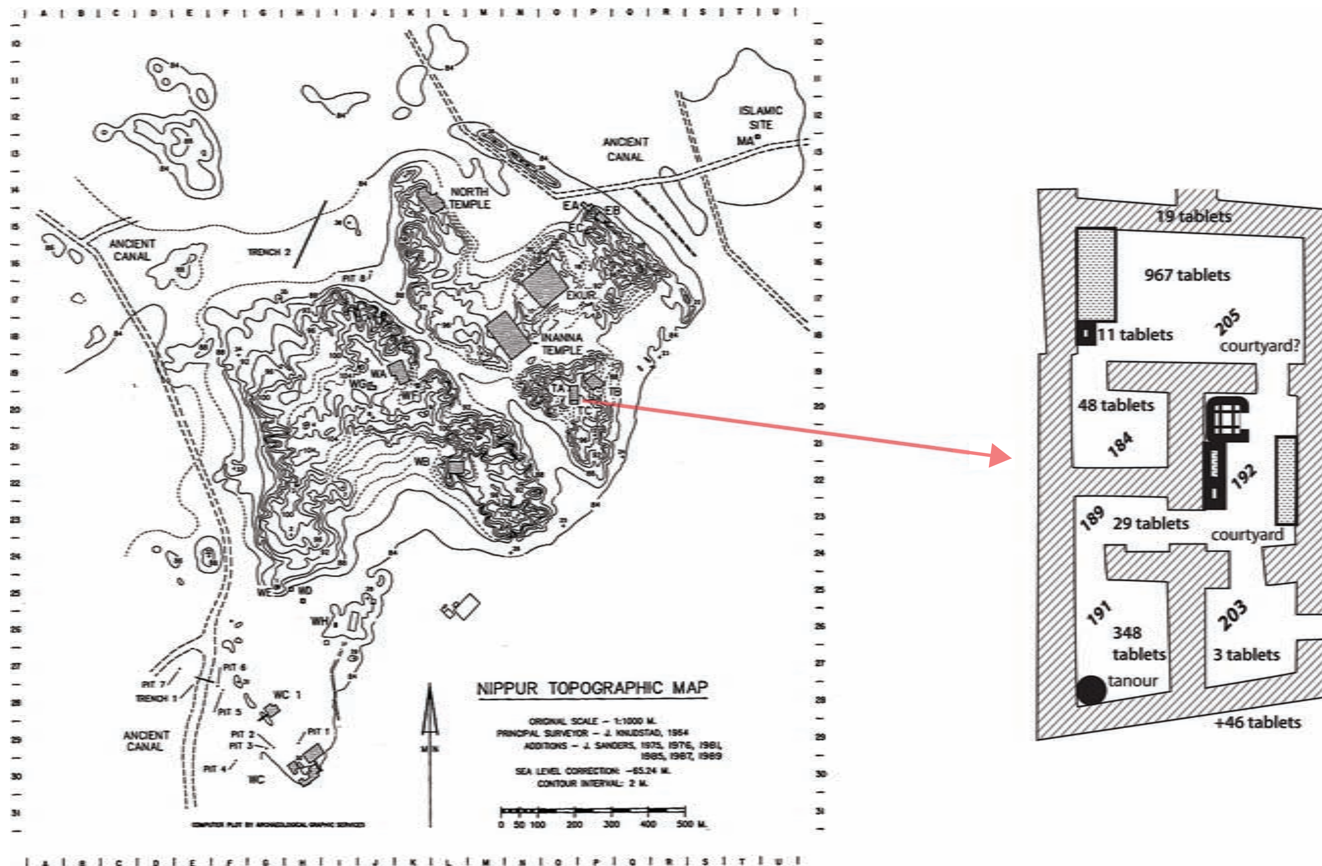

Fig. 4.2. Left: General plan of the city of Nippur with the location of 'House F' marked in the lower right corner of 'Trench A' 172. Image courtesy of McGuire Gibson and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Right: Composite excavation plan of House F, Level 10 redrawn after Robson 2001.

Image courtesy of Fabrizio Ghio (ResearchGate) and the Penn Museum Ur Digitization Project.

hundred tablets could be from this house. Adding the other unpublished fragments, particularly of lexical lists, noted by Shaffer (2006), would bring the total close to a thousand tablets.

No. 1 Broad Street was excavated in an area Woolley called AH, located to the south-east of the Nanna temple complex near the centre of the city. In both area AH, and another area called EM, bordering directly on the south-east side of the temple complex, large numbers of private houses were discovered. In addition to sixteen houses found in area EM, another forty houses of similar size and construction were found in area AH. Like the houses in Nippur, the houses in area AH were packed together in a large residential quarter. No. 1 Broad Street, which was located at the corner of the streets the excavators called Broad and Store, contained nine rooms. Woolley and Mallowan (1976: 137) claimed that the tablets come from two separate lots discovered in different parts of the house. The administrative texts seem to have been found together in rooms six, seven, and nine at the back of the house, and the literary texts and school exercises allegedly come from rooms three and four, near the entrance. The administrative texts from the first lot date to two different periods. The older group, consisting of business documents dating to the Ur III period, includes tablets recording deliveries of silver and other items by a person named Ur-Guedina, who may have been an earlier inhabitant of the house. The other group dates to the reigns of Warad-Suen (1834–1823 BCE) and Rim-Suen (1822–1763 BCE), the rulers of Larsa who controlled Ur before the city was conquered by Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE) near the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, a duplicate of Lipit-Ishtar A, a Sumerian literary composition which was being copied in the house, contains a date formula indicating that is was written in either year 11 of Hammurabi or year 15 of Samsuiluna (1749–1712 BCE) was found together with the literary tablets in rooms three and four. The presence of a source with this date among the other texts in the same assemblage suggests that the house must have still been in use after the reign of Rim-Suen. Since most of the houses in area AH were occupied until 1738 BCE, when the quarter was destroyed during the eleventh regnal year of Samsuiluna, it is possible that the house was not abandoned until this time. If this is the case, then No. 1 Broad Street would be exactly contemporary with House F at Nippur, which was also occupied during the early years of Samsuiluna until it was abandoned in Samsuiluna's tenth regnal year.

4.3.2. Contents and Curricula

The distribution of sources from rooms three and four is similar in a number of significant respects to the distribution of tablets from House F. Among the tablets that can be securely identified as coming from No. 1 Broad Street is at

least one extract from the early beginning exercise Syllable Alphabet B. About sixty mathematical texts and numerous tablets containing Sumerian proverbs, both of which are thought to have been learned toward the end of the elementary phase of the curriculum, were also present in this group. Moreover, large numbers of so-called Type IV school lentils, a round tablet type associated primarily with elementary education, were found in the house. The content of these lentils is consistent with the types of exercises that were learned during the first stages of scribal training at House F. The Type IV tablets copied in Shaffer (2006) include extracts from syllabaries, lists of personal names, thematic lexical lists, and more advanced lists, like the lists of divine names and professions. While most of these school lentils were not given inventory numbers and can therefore not be traced with certainty to No. 1 Broad Street, it is probable that many of them are from there.

In addition to the same elementary exercises, many of the compositions from the advanced phase of the curriculum that are well represented at House F are also attested in multiple duplicates at No. 1 Broad Street. A complete list of the compositions that were copied at the two locations is provided in Table 4.2.

There are a total of forty-two texts that are present at both houses, including the *Instructions of Shuruppag*, the *Curse of Agade*, *Ewe and Wheat, Father and Son*, *The Deeds and Exploits of Ninurta*, and *Two Women*. Furthermore, the ten compositions in the Decad, which were copied extensively at House F, and were learned as a group at the beginning of the advanced phase of scribal training, are also preserved in numerous sources from No. 1 Broad Street. With the exception of the *Nungal Hymn*, which is only attested in one source,

Table 4.2. Compositions attested at both House F and No. 1 Broad Street.

The Decad: 1. Shulgi A (19 copies from House F; 3 copies from No. 1 Broad Street); 2. Lipit-Ishtar A (13 House F; 5 No. 1 Broad Street); 3. Song of the Hoe (24; 4); 4. The Exaltation of Inana (Inana B) (36; 6); 5. Enlil in the Ekur (24; 3); 6. The Kesh Temple Hymn (23; 6); 7. Enki's Journey to Nibru (11; 5); 8. Inana and Ebih (18; 6); 9. The Nungal Hymn (19; 1); 10. Gilgamesh and Huwawa (Version A) (23; 9)

Other Compositions: Ishbi-Erra E (1 source from House F; 1 source from No. 1 Broad Street); Ewe and Wheat (20; 5); The Curse of Agade (17; 3); Dumuzi's Dream (20; 8); The Instructions of Shuruppag (21; 6); Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld (17; 13); Hoe and Plough (27; 3); Shulgi B (17; 4); Tree and Reed (1; 1); Summer and Winter (4; 3); The Ur Lament (17; 7); The Nippur Lament (8; 1); The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (3; 14); Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave (8; 2); Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird (8; 1); Inana's Descent to the Netherworld (3; 6); Inana and Shukaletuda (1; 2); Dialogue between Two Scribes (Dialogue 1) (21; 5); Father and Son (Eduba B) (12; 5); Two Women (Dialogue 5) (9; 8); Enkihegal and Enkitalu (Dialogue 2) (4; 6); Enkimansum and Girni-isag (Dialogue 3) (3; 2); The Deeds and Exploits of Ninurta (5; 9); Inana Hymn C (9; 2); Ninurta's Return to Nibru (10; 1); Ishme-Dagan A (2; 5); Bird and Fish (2; 5); The Tummal Inscription (2; 3); Enlil-Bani A (2; 1); Lisin's Song (1; 1)

there are between three to nine sources for each of the compositions in this group, a significantly higher number than the average of one to three sources for most of the other texts copied in the house.

4.4. COMPARING CURRICULA: TABLET COLLECTIONS IN UR AND NIPPUR

There are approximately four hundred currently known Sumerian texts copied during the Old Babylonian period that can be classified as literary works. Nearly 90 per cent of the sources for these texts come from Nippur, the religious centre of Sumer in the third and second millennia. Furthermore, as many as 25 to 50 per cent of the extant duplicates for many of the individual compositions of this type come from House F.[11] Nippur was undoubtedly a major centre for scribal education, and the thousands of tablets it has yielded provide the most evidence for reconstructing the scribal curriculum. But it is not the only place where scribal training was conducted. School tablets containing both exercises from the elementary and advanced stages of the curriculum, including the compositions in the Decad, have been found at Ur, Babylon, Sippar, Isin, Uruk, Kish, Larsa, and other Mesopotamian cities. While the fact that many of the same texts were copied throughout Mesopotamia during this period is evident from the existence of duplicates of many of the same literary compositions at all these sites, and in particular from the number of identical compositions that were copied at both House F and No. 1 Broad Street, there are also a number of important differences. One way of assessing these differences is by comparing the compositions that were copied at House F with those that are preserved from No. 1 Broad Street.

In addition to the similarities discussed above, there are important differences in the distribution of literary works at the two houses. At House F there are copies of twenty-one compositions (listed in Table 4.3) that are not attested at No. 1 Broad Street.

Table 4.3. Compositions only attested at House F.

Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven (4 copies); Gilgamesh and Akka (1); Enlil and Ninlil (4); Nanshe A (5); Heron and the Turtle (2); Enmerkar and Ensuhkeshdana (2); Enki and the World Order (3); Inana Hymn D (1); Schooldays (Eduba A) (19); Supervisor to the Scribe (13); The Farmer's Instructions (21); Lipit-Ishtar B (3); Iddin-Dagan A (1); The Death of Ur-Namma (1); Enlil and Namzitara (1); Nintinugga's Dog (1); The Axe of Nergal (3); The Fowler and His Wife (1); Nignam (1); Minor Composition 1 (1); Minor Composition 4 (1)

[11] Robson 2001: 54.

The group of texts that are attested exclusively at House F includes *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, *The Farmer's Instructions*, *Schooldays*, and *Nanshe A*. Similarly, there is also a group of thirty-three texts (listed in Table 4.4) found at No. 1 Broad Street, but not at House F.

The group of texts that are attested exclusively at No. 1 Broad Street includes the compositions *Nisaba A*, *Man and His God*, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, *Ninurta and the Turtle*, and the *Collection of Temple Hymns*. Moreover, whereas Akkadian literature is only represented by one tablet from House F, at least six different Akkadian literary compositions, including a myth about Enki and an incantation, were found at No. 1 Broad Street. In addition, there are twelve letters written in Akkadian addressed to a person named Igmil-Suen and other recipients, which—if Dominique Charpin (1986: 460–5) is correct in identifying them as fictitious letters—could be added to the number of Akkadian literary works found in the house.

Another significant difference between the tablets from No. 1 Broad Street and House F is the manner in which literary compositions were copied. In contrast to the elementary phase of the curriculum, in which Type II and IV sources were the preferred formats, tablets containing longer extracts from a single composition, or Type III sources, were the primary tablet format used during advanced training. Type III sources generally outnumber the second most common format used at this stage—multi-column tablets or Type I sources—by an average of four to one. This ratio suggests that literary compositions were initially copied in shorter sections on a series of Type III tablets, before being copied in their entirety on a Type I source. Most of the duplicates of Sumerian literary works from No. 1 Broad Street are copied on Type III tablets. At Ur, these sources typically contain extracts of twenty to seventy lines. In many instances entire compositions were written on a connected series of extract tablets. In these groups, the last line of one extract is frequently the same as the first line of the next tablet in the series. The entire text of the composition known as *Ewe and Wheat* is written on a group of three tablets with lines 1 through 62, 63 to 123, and 124 to 190 of this composition. Groups of extract tablets are also preserved for the *Kesh Temple*

Table 4.4. Compositions only attested at No. 1 Broad Street.

Nisaba A (7 copies); The Sumerian King List (2); Nanna's Journey to Nibru (1); Home of the Fish (3); Eridu Lament (1); Uruk Lament (4); Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta (2); The Collection of Temple Hymns (8); Scribal Activities (Eduba D) (1); The Eduba Regulations (2); Man and His God (3); Ninurta and the Turtle (2); Ningishzida and Ninazimua (1); Ningishzida and Damu (1); Ur-Namma D (2); Shulgi S (3); Amar-Suen and Enki's Temple (2); Iddin-Dagan B (1); Lipit-Ishtar E (2); Sin-iddinam A (1); Sin-iddinam B (1); Crane and Raven (1); The Old Woman from Girsu (1); Minor Composition 2 (1); Bau Hymn A (1); Dumuzi-Inana E (1); Dumuzi-Inana G (2); Nanna Hymn E (1); Nanna Hymn F (1); Ningishzida B (1); Ningishzida E (1); Ninisina D (1); Eduba E (2)

Hymn, *Inana and Ebih*, the *Ur Lament*, the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, and *Bird and Fish*. For each of these compositions there are at least two Type III sources with extracts connected by the first and last lines. Furthermore, colophons and the so-called 'catch-lines', which give the first line of the next extract, indicate that other literary compositions from this house were also copied on a series of Type III sources. The Sumerian term for extract tablets is *im-gid*$_2$*-da* or 'long tablet'. One of the duplicates of Inana's Descent to the Netherworld is identified in a colophon as the third in a series of three *im-gid*$_2$*-da*s. Colophons with extract numbers or catch-lines are also attested for *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, *Dialogue between two Scribes*, *Shulgi S*, and *Enkimansum and Girni-isag*.

Additional series of extract tablets can be identified on the basis of the number of Type III sources that are preserved for individual compositions. An average of three to five extract tablets are attested for most of the texts discovered at No. 1 Broad Street, and there are only two compositions with more than ten copies. Since the Type III sources from this house frequently contain different sections, and an average of four extract tablets were needed to copy a complete composition, it is likely that most of the tablets in this house were produced by no more than one or two scribes. This assumption is consistent with the number of scribes named in the colophons of sources from this house. In addition to Damqi-Ilishu, who is identified as the scribe who copied extracts of at least four texts, only one other scribe, whose name is broken but contains the theophoric Ningishzida is explicitly named.

The nature and number of Type III sources at No. 1 Broad Street contrast sharply with House F at Nippur. As at Ur, most of the literary compositions from House F were copied on extract tablets. However, House F yielded almost twice the number of literary sources that were discovered at No. 1 Broad Street. Furthermore, very few of the Type III tablets from House F are part of a connected series. With the exception of a group of sources for the *Kesh Temple Hymn* with extracts of all but one of the text's eight sections or 'houses', no other tablets which are connected by the first and last line, or which have colophons or catch-lines indicating that they belong to a series, could be identified. By contrast, there are frequently multiple extracts from the same or nearly the same section of a composition. For the *Song of the Hoe* there are five extracts from House F from the first quarter of the composition, as well as six from the second quarter, four from the third quarter, and four from the last quarter. Since similar groups of three to six extracts per section are attested for many other compositions, including *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (Version A) and *The Farmer's Instructions*, it seems likely that the tablets from House F were the work of at least four or five different scribes, instead of only one or two. While it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions from these differences, the larger number of extracts from House F from different sections of the same composition, on the one hand, and the absence of connected

extracts, on the other, seem to suggest that the tablets at House F reflect a greater number of less complete groups of exercises. By contrast, the collection of tablets found at No. 1 Broad Street is more coherent and may represent a more complete series of exercises produced by fewer pupils.

4.5. WERE THERE LITERARY ARCHIVES?

The literary sources from House F at Nippur and No. 1 Broad Street at Ur are the largest groups of Old Babylonian works of literature that have been discovered to date. While it is certainly possible that true archives or libraries may still be found, they are also the only known assemblages of literature from this period that seem to reflect meaningful groupings. Although the groups of sources from Ur and Nippur cannot be defined as archival in the strict sense of collections of texts arranged according to recognizable ordering principles and intentionally kept together for reference, legal, or other purposes, it could nonetheless be argued that they are the products of a structured scribal curriculum.

One indication that the literary compositions from House F and No. 1 Broad Street were learned in an established sequence is the distribution of sources. Many of the same texts and exercises from the elementary and advanced phases of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum were copied in both places. Thematic lexical lists and *Syllable Alphabet B*, associated with the beginning stages of learning, and the ten literary compositions in the Decad, a curricular grouping copied during the advanced phase, are particularly well represented. Finally, the consistent use of Type II or Type IV sources for elementary exercises, and Type I and Type III sources for literary compositions, demonstrates that the pupils in the two houses were trained using similar methods.

Another indication that the tablets from House F and No. 1 Broad Street reflect meaningful groupings is the extent to which they were probably copied by the same scribe or scribes within a single period of time. Some of the extract tablets from No. 1 Broad Street form a series of connected sources containing an entire composition. Complete or partial groups of connected extracts are also attested for most of the literary compositions preserved there. Furthermore, the number of groups of extract sources for individual texts and colophons naming the copyist suggest that the literary tablets from this house were the work of just one or two scribes. At House F, the fewer number of connected extracts, and the relatively large number of overlapping extracts, may reflect a more disparate assemblage of less complete groups of exercises produced by a larger number of scribes.

Despite these arguments, one line of evidence for the coherency of the literary groupings from the two houses that is problematic is their archaeological context. Some of the school exercises and literary tablets in the courtyard of House F were built into the walls and floors, and others had apparently been used as material to construct a bench and a box. The discovery of these tablets in a secondary context may indicate that they were not produced inside the house, but instead brought in from somewhere else to be re-used for construction purposes. One argument that has been cited against this theory is the presence of at least three baked-brick boxes that had been used as bins for soaking and reshaping tablets. However, this argument is not decisive. While the boxes certainly suggest that tablets had been recycled for re-use within the building over an extended period of time, the reason why the tablets were recycled is uncertain. It is not necessary to assume that they were soaked and reshaped to create fresh clay for school exercises, since the secondary usage of the tablets in the house already indicates that they could have also been re-used as building material.

The provenience of the tablets in No. 1 Broad Street is similarly open to question. Although Woolley (1931: 366) claimed the house had served as a school, Charpin (1986: 485) challenged this assertion by noting the absence of archaeological evidence that the tablets in the building had been found *in situ* (i.e. in their original context of use or disposal). Furthermore, the rooms in which the school exercises and literary tablets were discovered were probably roofed, and would not have received the amount of light sufficient for training scribes that an open-air courtyard, where scribal training was normally conducted, would provide. Finally, the absence of recycling bins of any type could be an additional indication that the tablets in the house were brought from elsewhere and dumped in as fill.

The limitations of the available archaeological evidence for determining the function and context of groups of Old Babylonian literary compositions are best illustrated by another find from the period whose provenience can be identified with more certainty. A group of around sixty exercise tablets were discovered in the courtyard of a private house at Sippar-Amnanum, one of the two mounds associated with the ancient city of Sippar in northern Babylonia. Contracts and letters from other rooms, which provide details about the history of the house and the activities of its occupants, indicate that this group of tablets dates to between the thirtieth year of Ammiditana and the seventeenth year of Ammisaduqa (1655–1630 BCE), over a century after the tablets in House F and No. 1 Broad Street were compiled. During this time the house was occupied by a person named Ur-Utu, a *gala-mah* priest in the temple of the goddess Annunitum.[12] Ur-Utu inherited the

[12] For a description and discussion of *gala* priests and their responsibilities, which included the singing of liturgical hymns and laments during cultic rituals, see Löhnert 2009: 62–82.

house from his father Inana-Mansum and was still living there in 1629, when the house was destroyed by a fire and had to be hastily abandoned. The tablets in the courtyard of Ur-Utu's house were found in two groups. One group, consisting of approximately twenty-seven tablets, was discovered *in situ* on the floor. The other group was found inside a baked-brick box sunk into the courtyard, where approximately thirty-four tablets were in the process of being reshaped for re-use. Nearly all of the tablets in and around the box contained exercises and lists from the first phase of scribal education. However, at least one unidentifiable literary text and one copy of a royal inscription, as well as seven letters and two administrative documents were also found with these tablets. While the number of texts of types other than elementary exercises is not large enough to suggest that anything beyond primary education was conducted at the house, the fact that they appear in the same context at all is almost certainly indicative of the wide range of scribal activities beyond elementary scribal training in which the inhabitants of the house engaged.

The content of the brick-box and its similarity in shape and function to the boxes at House F in Nippur indicates clearly that such boxes were used to recycle school exercises. But once again it is uncertain whether the exercises being reshaped were originally copied inside the building. In addition to the tablets in the courtyard, almost two thousand tablets, nearly all of which are administrative, were discovered in Ur-Utu's house. A person named Shumun-lisi, who uses the title *dub-sar* or 'scribe', is attested over 151 times in these documents. Michel Tanret (2001) has convincingly argued, on the basis of the frequent attestations of his name, that this scribe was commissioned to write many of the documents found in the house. If this is the case, given the number of tablets that were discovered throughout Ur-Utu's residence, it is not improbable that the tablets in the courtyard were being recycled to produce clay for Shumun-lisi's administrative activities, and not necessarily for making new exercise tablets. Moreover, even if Shumun-lisi did occasionally train apprentice scribes, as his occasional title *dumu edubba* 'educated scribe' seems to imply, it is not possible to determine, on the basis of such a small group of exercise tablets, whether he conducted this training inside Ur-Utu's house. If clay were sufficiently in demand, it is not inconceivable that tablets from other locations could have been brought to the house to be recycled for re-use.

This leads to one of the more perplexing unresolved questions concerning scribal education during this period. A group of literary compositions that were copied at this time depict the daily life and activities of apprentice scribes. In these compositions the term *e$_2$-dub-ba-a*, which means literally either 'tablet house' or 'house in which tablets are distributed', is the word for the place in which scribal education was conducted. The allusions to the *edubba* in all of these texts suggest that it was a large central place in which

multiple scribes were trained as a group. The Sumerian literary composition 'Schooldays' even describes the *ebubba* as having no less than ten different school personnel, including a 'headmaster', a 'supervisor', a 'doorperson', a 'person in charge of felted cloths', a 'person in charge of keeping silence', and a 'person in charge of drawing signs'. The depiction of the *ebubba* as a large institution which could accommodate so many employees stands in sharp opposition to the archaeological evidence from the period, which suggests that scribes were trained in small groups in the courtyards of private houses by only one person.

One explanation for this discrepancy is that the literary descriptions of scribal education are idealized and exaggerated. Although this is undoubtedly true to a certain extent, it nonetheless seems improbable that an entirely different institution could have been invented with such specificity if a place like this had never existed in some form or another. This leaves two possibilities. Andrew George (2005) has proposed that the *edubba* compositions describe scribal training at least a century earlier, during the Ur III period. Since only a few scribal exercises from this period are currently known and Ur III schools have yet to be discovered, as discussed above, this proposal is merely speculative. The other possibility, which arises from the ambiguity of the archaeological data from House F, No. 1 Broad Street, and Ur-Utu's house at Sippar, is that large schools did in fact exist, and that a fraction of the tablet production that went on in them may have survived in the fill from these houses. This, however, is a topic for another study.

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5

The Tablet Collections of the Hittite State, *c.*1650–1080 BCE

Paola Dardano

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Like many such generalizations, the often-repeated saying that Anatolia forms the bridge between Europe and Asia is both accurate and inaccurate. Due to its position between the two continents, it has been a conduit of exchange between cultures and traditions of the eastern Mediterranean through the millennia. On the other hand, the Hittite elite culture *c.*1650–1080 BCE that produced the libraries discussed in the present chapter was influenced mainly by Mesopotamian prototypes. Hittite as a language was itself written using a cuneiform script that had been adopted from northern Syria and Mesopotamia, and the Anatolians took over numerous political, intellectual, and religious elements from the more urban and densely populated regions to the south-east. On the other hand, local indigenous traditions always remained strong and interacted with extraneous influences to form the cultural amalgam distinctive to elite identity in the Hittite state (Klinger 2007).

Already Emil Forrer (1922) just seven years after the decipherment of the Hittite language pointed out that the texts from the Hittite capital contain material in no less than eight different languages: Hittite, Hattic, cuneiform Luwian, hieroglyphic Luwian, Palaic, Hurrian, Babylonian Akkadian, and Sumerian. The literate culture of the Hittite state was therefore a hybrid that drew elements from many languages and peoples (see also Rutz §6.1). In addition, the cuneiform script adopted by the Hittites was itself a vehicle of cultural transmission and integration. This writing system was based on a combination of logograms and syllabograms that was adjusted through time to render about a dozen typologically quite different languages throughout the Near East (Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.11). The structural flexibility of the system allowed the Hittites to adapt it to their own language, but by borrowing

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the technology, they also took on an extensive Babylonian literary and scholarly tradition that formed part of its institutional and cultural basis. This effectively included Anatolia into a cuneiform cultural sphere (Radner and Robson 2011).

Yet, cuneiform literacy in Anatolia would never penetrate society to the same extent as in Mesopotamia proper and was to remain a technology concentrated around the royal administration. By far the largest number of cuneiform tablets written by the Hittites comes from the site of the capital of Hattusa, *c.*200 km east of Ankara (Bittel 1986; Neve 1996). Significant finds have also been made at Maşat Höyük (ancient Tapikka; Alp 1991; van den Hout 2007), Kuşaklı (ancient Sarrissa; Wilhelm 1997), and Ortaköy (ancient Šapinuwa) in central and eastern Anatolia, but unlike Hattusa, those texts came mainly out of administrative archives, and do not constitute libraries proper, although all three sites yielded some cultic inventories and other texts that are usually deemed literary according to the broader definition of the term (Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.1.3).

5.2. TABLET COLLECTIONS AND SCRIBAL SCHOOLS IN HATTUSA

The tablet collections discovered in the Hittite capital of Hattusa came from several buildings that may be considered to represent archives and libraries (Fig. 5.1). Texts were typically stored on wooden shelves equipped with clay labels. So far, nearly thirty thousand fragments and—more rarely—complete cuneiform tablets have been excavated at the site, most often within the remains of large official buildings (Košak 2007).[1] The majority of these finds are now kept in the Ankara Museum, with smaller groups of tablets in Istanbul, Berlin, Paris, and elsewhere. A large number of tablets come from the very earliest excavations, conducted at the site by German scholars prior to 1931, and their exact find-spot is often unknown. However, we can identify three primary locations where the largest tablet collections in the capital appear to have been stored. These are the so-called 'Building A' on the citadel of Büyükkale (Fig. 5.2), the storerooms around the 'Great Temple' (also known as Temple 1; Fig. 5.3) in the Lower Town, and the so-called 'House on the Slope', located between the two. Smaller collections came from 'Building K' in the immediate vicinity of 'Building A', 'Building E', and Temples 15 and 16.[2]

[1] For a complete inventory of Hittite texts, see S. Košak, *Konkordanz der hethitischen Keilschrifttafeln* at http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk.

[2] For the tablet collections from Hattusa, see Alaura 1998; 2001; Francia 1996; Güterbock 1991–2; van den Hout 2005; 2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; Košak 1995; 2007; Laroche 1949; Otten 1986.

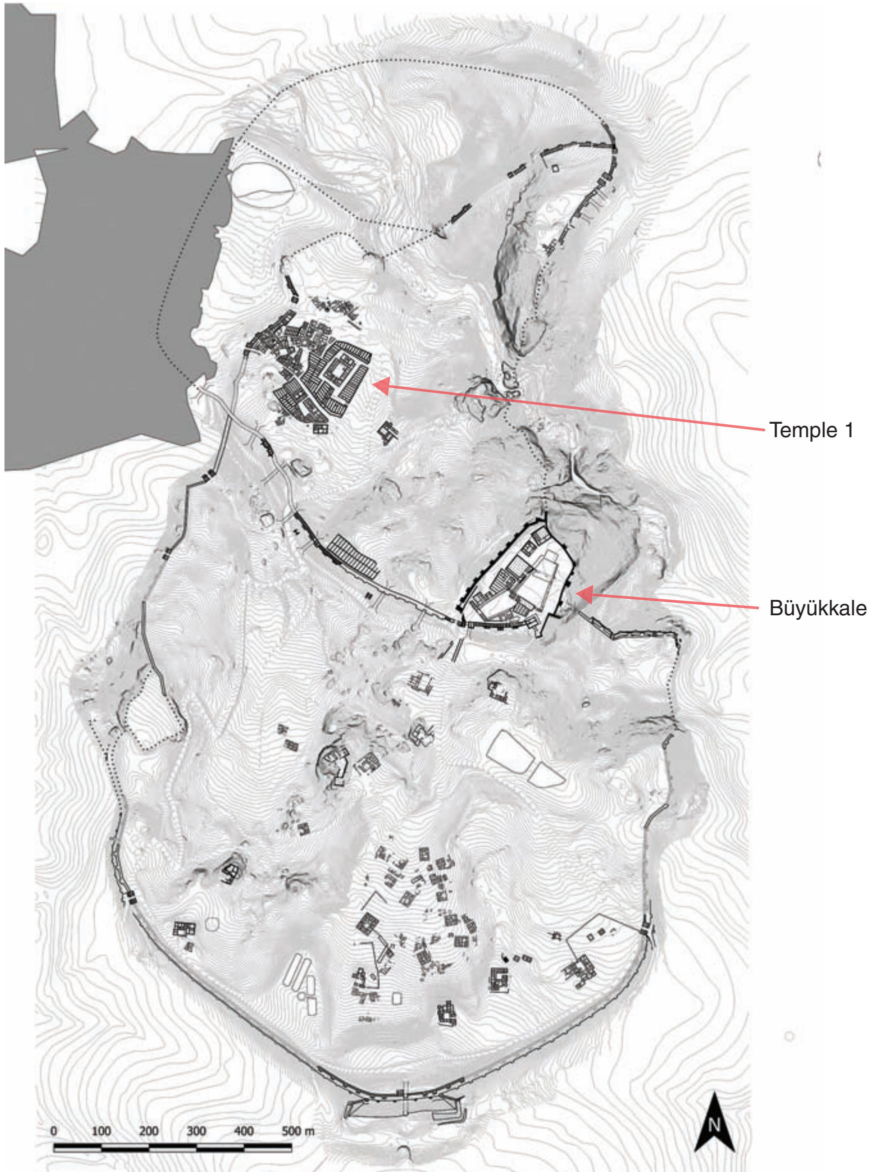

Fig. 5.1. General plan of Hattusa, the capital of the Hittite State.
Image courtesy of Andreas Schachner.

Fig. 5.2. Plan of Büyükkale, the royal citadel of the capital Hattusa with an outline of the main palatial buildings and fortifications.
Image courtesy of Andreas Schachner.

It is important to discuss, at this point, a traditional institution of cuneiform culture, the É DUB.BA, or 'tablet house' (Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.3). The *edubba* was not just a locus of scribal education, but also the setting for the redaction of new compositions, and—maybe to an even greater degree—the location where older texts were transmitted by copying and new texts were compiled from older precursors (cf. Gordin 2010a; 2010b; 2015). Such activities took place through a collective process: authors of individual literary texts are unknown to us, as are the writers of the royal annals or comparable texts. All Hittite compositions are essentially anonymous, with the exception of certain magic rituals which are sometimes ascribed to particular individual. Such authorship, however, concerns the ritual itself, and not the surrounding composition. In addition, the process of transmitting texts in cuneiform culture does not merely focus on preserving an 'original text', but rather it consists of its regular updating: scribes made changes to texts while copying,

Fig. 5.3. Plan of the Great Temple (also known as Temple 1) at Hattusa with surrounding storehouses.
Image courtesy of Andreas Schachner.

updating orthography, language, and even content—for example, when they did not consider the original composition adequate anymore, or they simply failed to understand the text correctly. The scribal schools in the capital, in which Hittite written culture was transmitted alongside that of Akkadian and Sumerian, thus became central venues for the production, reception, and transmission of cultural identity through literature. The term 'literature' in this context is used to describe a wider range of concepts and encompasses

everything within the scope of a well-educated scribe. It also, however, implies that formal aspects, such as literary quality in terms of elaborate language, style, and other formal means of expression, are not necessarily part of these considerations; they are features that can be found in various texts, but are not in themselves necessary criteria (cf. George 2005).

The Hittite language text corpus spans a period of almost four centuries, lasting from the beginning of the written tradition in Hattusa during the reign of Hattusili I in the middle of the seventeenth century to the end of the archives one or two decades after the beginning of the twelfth century BCE. Hittitologists conventionally differentiate between Old, Middle, and New Hittite manuscripts, according to their palaeographic and linguistic features.[3] Graphic, orthographic, and linguistic features nowadays allow for an even more precise dating of Hittite texts. This permits us to distinguish between older and younger manuscripts, and to identify originals from later copies. It can now be demonstrated that the tablet collections in the capital preserved older manuscripts until the end of the Empire period, and that older tablets were used as a basis for the production of new copies. Specimens from all periods (i.e. Old, Middle, and New Hittite) were kept together in almost all the collections in Hattusa (including 'Building A', the storerooms of the 'Great Temple', and the 'House on the Slope'). In other words, the older texts were not part of an earlier archaeological phase, but came from the same assemblages as the younger tablets. However, the spread of tablets dating to the three periods outlined above is uneven when it comes to individual deposits. Table 5.1 lists the chronological distribution of texts in the three largest tablet collections found at Hattusa.[4]

The older tablets were seemingly kept mostly in Building A, whereas the younger texts and copies were stored in the House on the Slope and in the storerooms around the Great Temple. In addition, the overall content of the three collections appears to have been different. The House on the Slope and the storerooms around the Great Temple were key repositories for inventories and various documents of practice, and therefore probably house some of the main administrative offices of the capital. According to a suggestion by Torri (2008; 2009; 2010), the House on the Slope may also have

Table 5.1. Date of the texts in relation to their find-spots.

	Old and Middle Hittite	New Hittite
Building A	42.5%	57.5%
House on the Slope	5.9%	94.1%
Great Temple Storerooms	9.2%	90.8%

[3] Old Hittite *c.*1650–1450 BCE, Middle Hittite 1450–1350 BCE, New Hittite (or Empire period) 1350–1175 BCE.

[4] Following van den Hout (2008a: 217).

functioned as a scriptorium, a locus dedicated not only to the copying and storage of the texts, but also to the education and training of scribes (on the Hittite scribes see also Karasu 1995). The older collections in Building A may have represented a more conventional library.

The content of the Hittite-language tablets found in various locations at the capital covers a broad range of genres. Numerically speaking, religious texts in the widest sense of the word form the majority of the assemblage, especially so-called festival texts, which are descriptions of cultic festivals and sacrifices for the various gods of the Hittite pantheon. They also include incantations, hymns, and prayers. Political and legal texts relating to the royal administration are also well attested, including annals, edicts, instructions, laws, but also diplomatic correspondence and international treaties. An important role is also played by the so-called mantic texts: omens and oracles are attested in various forms that include extispicy texts and astronomical omens. Mesopotamian literary texts are also well-attested (Archi 1995; Haas 2006; 2008) and include copies of the famous epics of Gilgamesh and Atramhasīs, and Sargonic legends, such as *šar tamhāri* and the narratives of the Akkadian king Naram-Suen. In terms of genre, the large collections of the capital show a similar (and regular) distribution—most types of texts are attested at all of the find-spots.

5.3. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TABLET COLLECTIONS: COLOPHONS, LABELS, AND CATALOGUES

An important aspect of the Hittite evidence is the information it provides on how tablet collections, including libraries, were organized and managed. No material offers a comparable amount of detail combined with scale anywhere in the ancient world. Of particular significance for the proper identification of a given Hittite text in a given collection was its colophon or 'tablet credentials'. A colophon was regularly added to a text, usually but not necessarily at the end, giving details about it including its title, or more properly its incipit, and the order of the given tablet within a longer series or composition. The position of the tablet at the end or middle of a series would be marked by adding the words *QA-TI* 'finished' or TIL.LA 'complete', and *Ú-UL QA-TI* 'unfinished' or NU.TIL 'incomplete'. Other information might include a brief paraphrase of the content, the writing process (i.e. a note about the original that had been used for copying the text), or even the name of the scribe and his genealogy (cf. Karasu 1996; 2001; Otten 1981; Torri 2011; Waal 2015).

In what follows, a number of colophons from a number of tablets belonging to different genres are given as examples of this conduct. They come from (1) a festival (Fig. 5.4), (2) a ritual, (3) a treaty, (4) the Hittite Laws, (5) instructions, (6) royal annals, and (7) a mythological text.

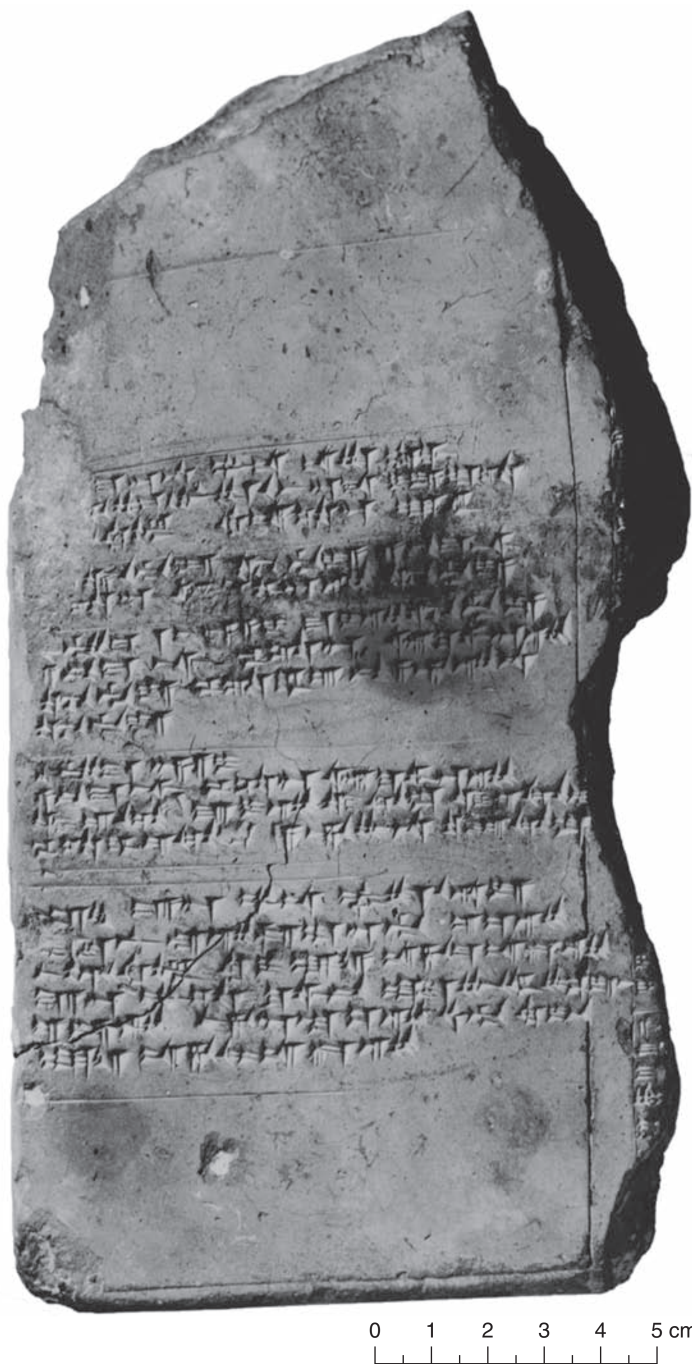

Fig. 5.4. Extensive colophon on library tablet KBo 23.103 from Hattusa. The colophon states ‘First tablet: when the king comes to Ziplanta for the regular festival, then the girls sing these songs. But when the king celebrates the *purulli*-festival anywhere, then they sing these songs on the first day.’

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(1) 'First tablet: when the king comes to Ziplanta for the regular festival, then the girls sing these songs. But when the king celebrates the *purulli*-festival anywhere, then they sing these songs on the first day.'

(2) 'First [tab]let of the *šarrašši*-ritual: When Tuthaliya, son of Arnuwanda, the Great King, sat on his father's throne, then this *šarrašši*-ritual was performed. Unfinished. Tablet of the city of Hattusa. Hand of Hanikkuili, son of NN.'

(3) 'First tablet of the treaty of [Manapa-Tarhunta].'

(4) 'Second tablet. (The text is) finished. "If a man". By the father of the Sun.'

(5) 'First tablet of the instruction […].'

(6) 'Third tablet. (The text is) unfinished. Deeds of Suppiluliuma, the Great King, the hero. Hand of NN.'

(7) 'I (the scribe) have been reverential in this matter and I told it (the dictation) thus (truthfully). One tablet: (the text is) finished. The words of Kella, the priest. Pihaziti, the scribe, wrote it (the tablet) before Walwaziti, the chief scribe.'[5]

A special type of clay document known as 'labels' served to identify tablets in groups (Fig. 5.5a). Such labels are oval in shape and contain nothing but the

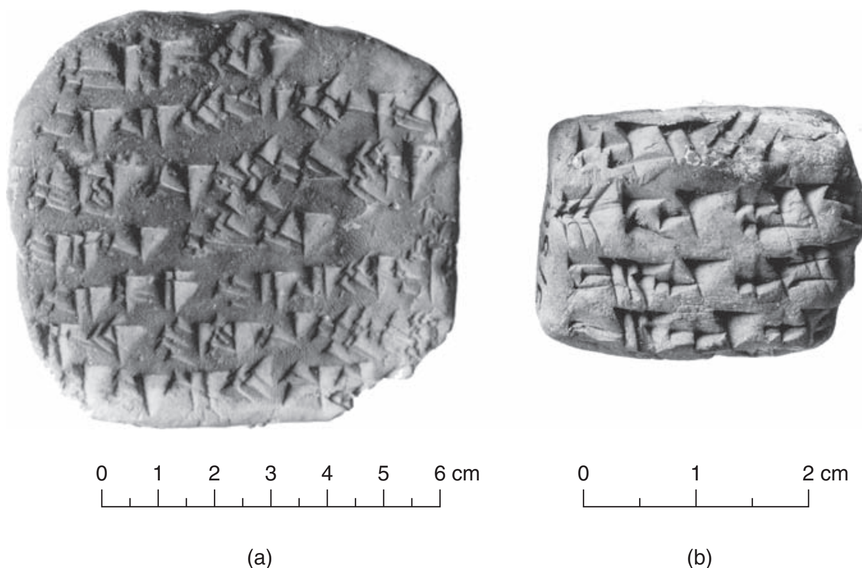

Fig. 5.5. (a) Tablet label KBo 13.90 from Hattusa. The label reads: 'Tablets of Zippalanda, the AN.TAḪ.ŠUM festival: When the king goes from Ḫattuša to Zippalanda for the AN.TAḪ.ŠUM festival. Finished.' (b) Tablet label KBo 31.33 from Hattusa.

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[5] (1) KBo 23.103 obv. IV 14′–19′ [CTH 741.2; Bk A] (2) KBo 10.34 obv. IV 10′–16′ [CTH 700.1; Bk K] (3) KUB 19.49++ obv. IV 51′–52′ [CTH 69.A] (4) KBo 6.6 IV 1–2 [CTH 291.II.C.

title of a series. Each label only mentions the title of one series, and does not indicate the total number of tablets in the series. They are quite small and were probably placed alongside the corresponding tablets of the series to allow for quick identification, and perhaps to differentiate between sections. The lables are never pierced and could therefore not be suspended as tags as known in other periods and places. They would presumably have been positioned on the shelves (if that is indeed how tablets were stored), either lying flat in front of the tablets or leaning against them. One may also imagine that series could be stored in boxes or baskets with labels placed on top.

The following list gives the labels of (8) Muwattalli's oracle texts, (9) the Annals of Mursili, and (10) the Spring Festival:

(8) 'Tablets of the oracle reports of Muwattalli.'
(9) 'Tablets concerning the deeds of Mursili.'
(10) 'Tablets of the AN.TAH.ŠUM-festival from the city of Zippalanda. If the king goes from Arinna to Zippalanda for the AN.TAH.ŠUM festival.'[6]

In addition to the colophons and labels, one other important class of documents provides crucial information about the efforts of the Hittite archivists and librarians. These texts are the so-called 'tablet catalogues', or 'shelf lists' (Hoffner 2002; Dardano 2006; 2007), which basically consist of a list of texts with each entry based on a title, given by its incipit or a paraphrase of the content. Often, but not always, the catalogue also lists information on the total number of tablets contained in a given series, or the number of one specific tablet within the series. Information about the author or editor, the condition of the text (complete or incomplete), or the accessibility of the text is not mandatory, but is sometimes provided. Some types of information found in the colophons is rarely, if ever, found in the catalogues. This includes remarks about the scribes and their genealogies and information about the writing process itself. The format of the catalogues is heterogeneous and suggests that there was no standard way of inventorizing a collection. Tablets with three, two, or even a single column have been preserved, the latter being so small that they only have room for four or five entries. Paragraph lines usually separate individual entries:

(11)

1 One tablet: the song of conciliation of the men of Ištanuwa. Finished. []

---

2 One tablet: when the people of Ištanuwa educate. Finished.

A. find-spot unknown] (5) KUB 40.57++ IV 10′ [CTH 261.C; T.I] (6) KUB 19.10 obv. IV x+1–4′ [CTH 40.II.2.E; T. 1] (7) KBo 3.7 IV 26–32 [CTH 321.A; find-spot unknown].

6 (8) KBo 14.71 [CTH 283.9; Bk A] (9) KUB 30.75 [CTH 61.III.6; Bk A] (10) KBo 13.90 [CTH 607: House on the Slope].

3 One tablet: word of Annana, the magician. When the Storm God
4 is invoked. Unfinished.

---

5 Thirty-two tablets about the *purulli*-festival
6 of Nerik. Finished,
7 but the first tablet regarding libation is unassigned.

---

8 One tablet: concerning fine oil, (composed by) Azzari, the Hurrian doctor.
9 When a man leads troops anywhere
10 to battle in a foreign city,
11 the army commander who precedes the troops
12 how she invokes the fine oil and anoints the commander
13 and his horses and his chariot
14 and the entire military equipment. Finished.

---

15 One tablet. Solar omens. Finished.

---

16 Two tablets. Solar omens. Signs of *šanega* (are)
17 listed on it. Finished.

---

18 One tablet: incantation of locusts. Finished.[7]

The relationship between labels and tablet catalogues is usually not straighforward, since it is rare that both the catalogue entry and the corresponding label are preserved. An especially fortunate case revolves around a number of tablets related to festivals of the goddess Ishtar, where not only the festival itself, but also the catalogue entry (12a) and the label (12b) survive:

(12a) '[…tablet(s): wh]en [(for Šawuška of the Amanus mountain the festival of the doves,) the festival] of wai[(ling and the festival of procreation) are celebrated]'

(12b) 'The tablets concerning the festivals of the lady of Nineveh.'[8]

A similar situation is presented by catalogue entries (13a) mentioning the festivals of the Tutelary Deity and its corresponding label (13b) (Fig. 5.5b). Both the catalogue and the label were found in Building A, but the corresponding rituals have not yet been indentified among the excavated tablets:

(13a) '[…tablet(s): when they celebrate the festival of the Tutelary De]ity *lulimmi*'

[7] (11) KBo 31.8 + KUB 30.42 rev. I 1–18—CTH 276.1; Bk A.
[8] (12a) KUB 30.51++ rev. II x+1–2′; (12b) KUB 30.76 1–2.

'One tablet: Word of Anna, the woman from Irhašša. When the Tutelary Deity of the Hunting Bag is called from somewhere and I invoke him.'

(13b) 'Two tablets, one of which: when one invokes theTutelary Deity of the Hunting Bag, when one invokes the Tutelary Deity *lulimmi*.'[9]

5.4. THE FUNCTION OF THE CATALOGUES

The majority of the catalogues come from the royal acropolis of the capital at Büyükkale, mainly from Building A, and to a lesser extent also from Buildings B, C, D, E, K, and M. Tablet catalogues from the Great Temple and the House on the Slope are rare. The exact find-spots of catalogues discovered prior to 1931 were not noted down and are therefore unknown, but it seems they were found with virtually all collections of tablets in the capital. The existence of catalogues does not seem confined to one particular find-spot, but appears to more or less proportionally reflect the quantitative distribution of epigraphic finds in the different buildings. Their existence thus poses a number of questions, primarily related to their function, i.e. the reasoning behind their compilation.

An overall assessment of the quantitative data of tablet finds as well as the content and find-spots of the catalogues themselves can contribute to an understanding of their function. Despite the chance of textual transmission, the simple quantitative basis (i.e. the numerical relation between the number of catalogues and the total number of texts found at Hattusa) renders an interpretation of the tablet catalogues as 'library catalogues', i.e. complete and exhaustive inventories of the tablet collections, highly unlikely. Rather, they seem to have a different, more practical function: the catalogues seem to be inventories of certain sections of the tablet collections. This hypothesis not only seems obvious based on the total number of tablet catalogues found to date, but is also confirmed by clues found in the catalogues themselves.

A number of the catalogues contain information on the condition and availability of tablets. Next to the notes about texts being 'finished' and 'unfinished' (meaning that more tablets in the series follow), one finds comments such as 'the tablet is not present', 'the tablet is incomplete', 'we have not found the tablet', 'the tablet is unavailable', or 'the tablet is missing'.[10] The contents, and especially the types of texts mentioned in the catalogues, further corroborate the hypothesis that the inventories were never intended to be exhaustive registers of text collections. It is particularly noteworthy that the great majority of catalogue entries focus on ritual texts. A large number of these rituals are yet unattested as actual tablets; however, no class or genre of

[9] (13a) KBo 31.5++ rev. II 4 and rev. II 7–8; (13b) KBo 31.33.

[10] Cf. e.g. KUB 30.43 rev. II 22′; KUB 8.72 rev. 10′; KBo 31.8+ obv. IV 10–11; KUB 30.43 rev. III x+1; KUB 8.69 rev. III 12–13.

text appears in the catalogues that is entirely unknown from actual surviving tablets. The catalogue entries list a total of *c.*650 compositions, 430 of the entires being preserved well enough to identify their content and text type. Only a little more than eighty of these entries can be identified with a known composition (Dardano 2006: 5–7).

In addition to the rituals, the catalogues list, in order of frequency, festival texts, mythological texts, and compendia of omens. Medical texts are not prominent, and political texts only play a very minor role. With the exception of a number of royal decrees, instructions, and treaties, hardly any political and legal texts are listed in the catalogues. The laws, for example, are never mentioned. Other genres that are absent in the catalogues, but known from actual texts, include state and private letters, inventories, court depositions, lexical texts, school texts, hippological texts, and administrative documents. The systematic absence of certain types of texts is best explained by the specific function of the catalogues, rather than by chance of archaeological discovery.

5.5. COLLECTION MAINTENANCE

The presence or absence of certain types of texts in the catalogues must stand in direct relation to the processes of copying tablets and collection maintenance, since most of the texts listed in the catalogues belong to genres in which the individual compositions come down to us in several duplicates. The missing genres, on the other hand, tend to include texts for which we may expect that only one copy ever existed. These include letters, inventories, and court transcripts. The catalogues from Hattusa represent inventories of texts that were intended to be preserved for a longer period of time, and which were therefore continuously monitored and copied, and, in the course of time, manipulated in various ways. The catalogues were not complete and exhaustive registers of tablet collections, but records of preservation and availability of certain sectors of such collections for the purpose of their management.

Theo van den Hout (2002) has identified two main categories of texts: texts with a prescriptive function and texts that primarily have a descriptive function. The former usually exist in more than one duplicate, the latter normally only in a single copy (Table 5.2).

This distinction is not so much related to the practical use of the two groups of texts as to the timespan of their preservation. Only the prescriptive texts have a usage spanning a longer period of time. The texts with a descriptive function were predominantly of a short-lived use: letters, economic and religious administration, and documents for legal proceedings. Among the Type A documents,

Table 5.2. Texts with prescriptive and descriptive function (based on van den Hout 2002).

Type A	Type B
Texts with prescriptive function	Texts with descriptive function
More than one copy	Only one copy
A. *Texts with duplicates*: historiography, treaties, edicts; instructions; laws; celestial oracle theory; hymns and prayers; festivals; rituals; mythology (Anatolian and non-Anatolian); Hattic, Palaic, Luwian, Hurrian texts; lexical lists; Sumerian and Akkadian compositions	B. '*unica*': letters; title deeds; hippological texts; court depositions; non-celestial oracle theory and oracle practice; vows; administrative texts
Texts listed in the catalogues	Texts not listed in the catalogues

on the other hand, we find numerous tablets that were retained and carefully maintained despite being several centuries old. Hymns and prayers, festivals, and rituals with their mythological background were copied, while always also keeping any older manuscripts. The prescriptive nature of the compositions listed in the catalogues indicates that they were inventories specifically for texts that were to be preserved for a longer period of time and that were recopied and reanalysed over the course of time in a scholastic environment.

5.6. ARCHIVES OR LIBRARIES?

This observation leads to the question of the nature of the tablet collections found at Hattusa. Some scholars do not differentiate between 'archives' and 'libraries', while others seem to prefer distinctions along the lines of 'archive' and 'living archive'. The difference between the use of these terms is usually predicated upon the nature of the texts gathered in the collection—the term 'library' normally being used to designate a collection of literary texts, whereas an 'archive' is reserved for collections of evidentiary texts and documents of practice (cf. Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.3). There are, however, other factors in play in the differentiation, including the presence of only one or of several exemplars of a given work and its length of preservation within a collection. Whereas the documents contained within an archive tend to be unique and are discarded and/or updated after a certain period, texts contained in a library have an agency of their own, and often are preserved in several copies and (at least in the ideal world) indefinitely.[11]

[11] In addition to the existence of multiple copies for use in different places at different times, libraries may be said to consist of the texts of tradition. Often our mental categories are

Table 5.3. Typology of the tablet collections.

	Library		Archive
Type of texts collected	Literary texts	↔	Administrative texts
Number of copies preserved	Several copies	↔	Only one original
Typical duration of collection	No time limit	↔	Documents are updated
	Type A	↔	Type B

The distinction proposed by van den Hout (2002: 863–70) between prescriptive and descriptive texts in the surviving corpus of Hittite texts can thus be linked to actual scribal pratices at Hattusa by reference to the catalogues. The former group, which appears in the catalogues, is typically found in the libraries where more than one duplicate of each text is preserved. The latter corresponds to texts from archives, which do not occur in the catalogues, and where only one version of the text usually exists. This difference does not so much relate to the practical use of the texts as to their intended preservation (cf. Table 5.3).

In this regard, the archaeological context of the tablets found at Hattusa is especially noteworthy. Even a cursory analysis of the find-spots suggests that texts belonging to both groups—Type A and B—were found within the same collections.[12] The observation that both types of material were kept in the same buildings suggests that any distinction between archives and libraries was of no great consequence in the case in question and that any notional categories of genre reflected in the catalogues were not maintained in practice.

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overlapping, and often a few library texts are found in an archive, or a few archival texts in a library; cf. Pedersén 1998: 3. On the same topic, see also Black-Tait 1995; Brosius 2003; Otten 1955; Posner 1972; and Veenhof 1986.

[12] For the archival material found in Building A (including one land grant, inventories, and a number of omens), cf. Košak 1995: 178. The sealed clay bullae found in two different buildings (Building D on Büyükkale and in the Western Building on Nişantepe) constitute a special case; cf. Pedersén 1998: 49–50; Herbordt 2005. These can be interpreted as archives *stricto sensu*.

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6

Libraries in Syria and the Levant in the Late Bronze Age, *c.*1450–1100 BCE

Matthew Rutz

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Any description and analysis of ancient libraries in Syria and the Levant must contend with two problems from the outset, one conceptual, the other empirical.[1] The conceptual problem is one that is inherent to the very program of studying collections of ancient texts as libraries: it is often unclear how and why ancient textual materials were collected and used, whether for educational purposes or professional reference, due to emotional attachments or socio-cultural pressures, or because of some combination of these and other practical and ideological factors. An ancient library can be thought of as occupying both notional and physical space. In the Near East the archaeological record preserves certain kinds of written remains well enough to suggest that specific, physical places functioned as repositories of culturally valued textual material. However, the notional role of the 'library' is not developed in any explicit or systematic way in the early textual sources, leaving modern scholars to build and deploy the terminology as they see fit (Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.3). The linked (and murky) categories 'literature' and 'genre' ought to be involved in determining the elements that comprise an ancient 'library', and all of these terms come with modern associations and thus require considerable elasticity if they are to remain useful for looking at the premodern world. The empirical challenges to the study of ancient libraries in the region under consideration are

[1] I am extremely grateful to the editors and anonymous referees for their suggestions and critical comments. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the generosity of Uwe Finkbeiner, Ferhan Sakal, and Marguerite Yon, who kindly provided me with the plans of Emar and Ugarit that are reproduced here. I submitted the final manuscript in 2012 and have been unable to incorporate subsequent literature systematically.

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more specific, namely, the precise geographic boundaries of Syria and the Levant, on the one hand, and the great variety and diachronic scope of the data from the region, stretching from the Early Bronze Age into the Roman period, on the other. The sources include recognizable *belles-lettres* along with liturgical and religious literature, treatises on divination and medicine, collections of incantations, and educational tools, among others, all of which were written in a handful of different languages (e.g. Akkadian, Sumerian, Hurrian), on a number of different media, using several different scripts (e.g. Babylonian cuneiform, Luwian hieroglyphs, Ugaritic cuneiform).[2] More generally, modern scholarship is left with the task of having to use static archaeological remains to infer the dynamics that animated ancient libraries in the past.

Before considering the principal case studies from ancient Syria and the Levant—cuneiform libraries from the north Syrian sites of Ugarit and Emar dating to the last centuries of the second millennium BCE—this survey will give an overview of the archaeological distribution of what modern scholarship has termed 'libraries' and consider the chronological, geographic, and textual depth of the data from the region as a whole. It is worth wondering at the outset if there is anything coherent about Syria and the Levant as a region, be it in terms of physical, socio-political, or cultural geography. In other words, why treat this region as a discrete entity, even if only as a convenient descriptive or heuristic entity? The region's present-day political geography is quite varied, including parts of south-eastern Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and the Sinai peninsula in Egypt. In diachronic perspective, at least part of this region's significance has been as a geographic intermediary on land routes that connect the Arabian peninsula, Mesopotamia, and points east with Anatolia, north Africa, and the wider Mediterranean to the west. From prehistory down through late antiquity, anyone moving between Mesopotamia and Egypt would have passed through Syria and Palestine, and there is a correspondingly long and richly attested archaeological sequence (e.g. Akkermans and Schwartz 2003; Mazar 1990; Sartre 2005). Syria and the Levant also acted as an often-contested buffer zone between major political actors in north Syria, Anatolia and Egypt, Mesopotamia and Egypt, and Persia and the Mediterranean.

The major Bronze Age towns located in Syria offer the first glimpses of library formation, but the evidence is as uneven as it is tantalizing. Recent excavations at sites such as Ebla (Tell Mardikh), Urkesh (Tell Mozan), Nagar (Tell Brak), and Nabada (Tell Beydar) have clarified the picture of city-states on the Syrian landscape in the Early Bronze Age (mid-third millennium BCE), but the only early candidate for a library in Syria is that of Royal Palace G in

[2] Cogent summaries of what is known about each of the languages and scripts attested in ancient Syria and the Levant can be found in Woodard 2004.

Ebla (Archi 2006; Zand §2.3.3).[3] Similarly, for most of the second millennium, the major polities in Syria are known only in uneven and oblique ways: for very different reasons, major collections of written records have yet to be recovered from the kingdoms of Yamḫad in the early second millennium and Mitanni in the later second millennium. The capital of Yamḫad, Aleppo, has been the site of such extensive continuous occupation up to the present that large-scale excavations will never be possible, and the capital of Mitanni, Waššukanni, has yet to be identified.

There are some important exceptions, particularly in the early second millennium BCE. In the palace of the Old Babylonian king Zimri-Lim (*c.*1775–1762 BCE) at Mari (Tell Hariri) archaeologists have found a handful of literary and religious texts (Delnero §4.1.2). For example, in Room 108 of the palace Parrot (1958: 102) uncovered thirty-two clay liver models and one spleen model used for divination (Meyer 1987; 1993) along with about a thousand fragments of clay tablets that included letters, contracts, accounts, incantations in the Hurrian language (Wegner 2007: 26), and a tablet with a monumental inscription (Frayne 1990: 623–4, E.4.6.12.1). The tablets appear to have been sealed in a storage room with antiquarian connections (Malamat 1986: 162–5), but the interpretation of the whole is complicated by the realization that tablets found in separate rooms may have been accidentally mixed after excavation (Margueron 1986: 145–8). Other literary texts are known from Mari, including the Epic of Zimri-Lim, but in general these texts are rather isolated, and their find-spots have not been widely discussed (e.g. Charpin 1992; Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 12; Guichard 2014). In addition to the finds from the palace, a significant but unpublished cache of cuneiform literature has recently been identified in a building in Area K in Mari, and this corpus almost certainly belongs with a discussion of the literature of the Old Babylonian *edubba*, sometimes glossed as 'school' (cf. Delnero §4.5 and Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.3).[4] Finally, moving to the southern Levant, though interesting and suggestive of connections with wider Mesopotamia, the few inscribed clay liver models from Middle Bronze Age Hazor in modern-day Israel hardly constitute a library.[5] Thus, there are major gaps in the earliest periods during which libraries of some kind certainly existed.

The more recent and well-known sources of evidence are equally problematic. The Iron Age (from *c.*1050 BCE onwards) polities in Syria and the Levant left little direct evidence other than a modest body of monumental inscriptions in hieroglyphic Luwian, Aramaic, and North-West Semitic languages such as

[3] At present only one cuneiform tablet inscribed with a literary text is known from Tell Beydar (Sallaberger 2004).

[4] The cuneiform tablets from Mari Area K are to be published by A. Cavigneaux and M. Jaques.

[5] The liver models are edited with previous bibliography by Horowitz et al. 2006. An additional inscribed liver model was found in 2007 (Horowitz et al. 2010).

Moabite and Hebrew. This state of affairs is likely an accident of preservation and discovery, since a sizeable cuneiform library was uncovered in the Assyrian settlement of Huzirina (Sultantepe) not far to the east (Lloyd and Gökçe 1953; Pedersén 1998: 178–80; Robson and Stevens §8.2.3). Clay tablets were not the preferred medium for writing local literature in local scripts in this region in the Iron Age, the exception being a modest corpus of clay documents (mostly legal) incised with Aramaic inscriptions (Lemaire 2010). Be that as it may, there is only one extensive 'literary' document that can be associated with the Iron Age polities of the southern Levant: the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Tanakh or Old Testament.

The place of the Bible (from Greek *biblion* 'book') in the Western canon can easily distort modern reconstructions of ancient repositories of the Near East's literary traditions. Starting in the early modern period and continuing into the present, discourses on textual transmission, libraries, canonization, and late antique and medieval manuscript culture have tended to skew the discussion, giving disproportionate attention to the written remains concerned with the modest Iron Age states and subsequent populations of the Levant and Syria. Unlike the much larger and more varied library traditions of Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Bible as we have it is the result of an unbroken chain of transmission—a textual 'curated artefact' of the later first millennium BCE that aspires to hoary antiquity (Dever 1990: 10–11; Tov 1992). The script in which the Hebrew Bible was written, the alphabet, was itself a successful and adaptable technology in long-term historical perspective, but the ancient scribes, who wrote in alphabetic scripts, typically used highly perishable media such as parchment and papyrus. The fact remains that so far archaeological research has not recovered any Iron Age or Persian period libraries in the Levant.

Biblical scholars have plausibly hypothesized the existence of a temple library in Jerusalem (van der Toorn 2006; 2007: 236–44), but in that case the evidence is essentially literary and comparative, not archaeological. That is to say, references to textual repositories are few in the Bible itself, and thus any serious discussion of that evidence must be built on appeals to ancient analogues from the wider Near East, especially greater Mesopotamia and Egypt. Discussions of the Hellenistic temple library in Jerusalem are mostly concerned with the relationship between the canonization of the Hebrew Bible and the 'library' or archival repository (Greek *bibliothēkē*), which, according to tradition, Nehemiah had established in the Achaemenid period in Jerusalem (Lange 2007). The only archaeologically provenanced library from the southern Levant is the so-called Qumran library, which archaeologists uncovered in various caves in the West Bank near the Dead Sea between 1947 and the late 1950s. With the project to publish the Dead Sea Scrolls nearing completion (Tov 2002; 2010), it has become possible to evaluate the significance of this corpus of over eight hundred fragments of papyrus and parchment bearing

Jewish texts written in alphabetic Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek dating from the late second century BCE to the first century CE. However, despite the secure archaeological context of most of this text corpus, there is still much debate about who produced, used, and deposited the texts as well as the nature of the relationship between the documents, the caves in which they were found, and nearby the site of Khirbet Qumran (e.g. Lange 2006; Pfann 2007).

In sum the sites associated with the city-states and aspiring regional powers of the Early and Middle Bronze Age and the major seats of the petty dynasts of the Iron Age have left both a lot and a little—significant finds, to be sure (Ebla, Palace G; Mari, palace and Area K), and a weighty tradition (the Bible), but too little is presently known from across the region to engage in a synchronic and comparative discussion in any period but the final decades of the Bronze Age.[6] But before looking at the documentation from the Late Bronze Age sites Ugarit and Emar, it will be helpful to survey what is known about the distribution of cuneiform libraries in the latter half of the second millennium BCE.

6.2. A SYNCHRONIC OVERVIEW OF CUNEIFORM LIBRARIES IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE

Recent decades have seen the publication of a number of general treatments of cuneiform libraries (Black 2004; Black and Tait 1995; Michalowski 2003) alongside more detailed case studies of specific sites and periods (Pedersén 1998; 2005; Veenhof 1986). Looking in specific at the latter half of the second millennium BCE, cuneiform libraries are known from a widely distributed array of Late Bronze Age sites in the Near East. In this period cuneiform libraries have been excavated at major sites, from Egypt (Akhetaten) and Hittite Anatolia (Hattusa) in the west to Assyria (Assur) and Babylonia (Babylon, Nippur) further east, with a handful of stray literary texts coming from important Late Bronze Age sites like Susa and Haft Tepe in Elam (modern-day Iran) and Nuzi in the orbit of Mitanni's influence.[7]

[6] The discussion of Ebla and Mari belong properly to the study of libraries in the Early Dynastic and Old Babylonian periods of the Mesopotamian sequence, for which see Zand §2.3.3 and Delnero §4.2–3.

[7] Recent research on these cuneiform libraries is summarized in Pedersén 1998: 13–125 and Sassmannshausen 2008. Additional works include: Izre'el 1997 and the contribution by Hagen §7.2.1 (Tell el-Amarna); van den Hout 2005 and the contribution by Dardano §5.2 (Hattusa); Pedersén 2005: 67–108 and Bartelmus 2016 (Babylon, catalogued but mostly unpublished); cf. Rochberg-Halton 1988: 271 and Rutz 2006b (Susa and Haft Tepe). The manuscripts of literary texts from the latter half of the second millennium BCE in Nippur were generally excavated in such a way that nothing can be said about their archaeological provenance, and a systematic study of this corpus is still wanting.

Turning our attention to the documentation from Syria and the Levant, the textual finds from north Syria are by far the richest, though what might be called literary texts are represented in some way across the whole region. Ugarit and Emar stand out in particular and are the subject of more detailed consideration below (§6.3–4). Some of the more modest finds include a small but important library that was found near the Level IV palace in Alalakh (Tell Atçana). Seven fragments from what was presumably a scholar's library include incantations, omen collections, and bilingual hymns (von Dassow 2005: 33, 40, 48). This library may have originally come from the palace itself or from an adjoining suite of rooms. Perhaps these scholarly tablets can be associated with dossier of Kabiya, a cult functionary (*šangû*) attested in the palace archives (von Dassow 2008: 272–7, 292–4, with n. 82).[8] In 2004 literary, religious, and divinatory texts were recovered at Tell Sabi Abyad in the Balikh River valley, though these remain unpublished. Isolated literary texts have been found at other sites as well, such as the collection of lunar eclipse omens from Qatna in Syria (Rochberg-Halton 1988: 271–2) and an excerpt from the Babylonian Gilgamesh literature found at Megiddo in Palestine, which appears to have been copied locally (Goren et al. 2009; Horowitz et al. 2006). Isolated school tablets with lexical texts are likewise known from a small handful of sites in the region, such as Ekalte on the Euphrates (Mayer 2001) as well as Aphek, Ashkelon, Beth Shemesh (abecedary), and Hazor in Palestine (Horowitz et al. 2006).

It is worth noting that these sites are distributed across different regimes of socio-political organization, including the Hittite, Egyptian, and Assyrian spheres of influence. The broader historical events of the mid-second millennium provide a useful framework for seeing how this state of affairs came to be as well as for dividing the Bronze Age archaeological sequence in Syria. The Hittite sack of both Yamḫad in Syria and the Old Babylonian state in southern Mesopotamia (*c.*1595 BCE) furnishes a functional terminus for the Middle Bronze Age. Subsequent centuries witnessed international competition across Syria among Mitanni in north Syria, the Hittite Empire based in Anatolia, New Kingdom Egypt (Dynasties 18–20), the long-lived Kassite dynasty in Babylonia, and eventually the Middle Assyrian state in northern Mesopotamia and the Middle Elamite kings in south-western Iran (Van De Mieroop 2007). This competition, and the relationships and conflicts it produced, made an impact on the cultural landscape and settlement patterns in Syria. Cuneiform writing was the preferred communication technology in this period, especially over long distances, and this socio-political role played by writing must have contributed to the formation of cuneiform libraries, though it was certainly not the only factor. Regardless, coastal Syria and the Middle Euphrates, where

[8] Three other lexical tablets were found in Levels I–III and may date to either the Mitannian or Hittite periods (von Dassow 2005: 19, AT 18, AT 19, and ATT 47/25). A lexical tablet found on the surface in 2003 probably dates to the Late Bronze Age as well (Lauinger 2005).

Ugarit and Emar are located, were situated such that they fell in a contentious area that was strategically significant to the main political actors of the Late Bronze Age. Early on in this period, both Ugarit and Emar may have been subsumed under Mitanni's sphere of influence, but so far no records directly confirm this hypothesis, and ample Egyptian material culture has been found at Ugarit in particular. The libraries from Ugarit and Emar were maintained during the period of Hittite domination of the region following the Syrian campaigns of Suppiluliuma I in the fourteenth century BCE, and the ensuing political arrangements are fairly well documented in the textual finds from both the Hittite capital and its subservient Syrian territories. Destruction layers at Ugarit and Emar suggest that these sites were subject to the violent conflagrations that convulsed a number of urban centres in the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Bronze Age. Both sites were finally abandoned probably sometime in the first half of the twelfth century BCE and only resettled in late antiquity or in the Islamic period, if at all.

6.3. UGARIT (RAS SHAMRA)

Located near the Syrian coast just north of Latakia, Tell Ras Shamra was a site of human habitation from the Neolithic period (mid-eighth millennium BCE) down to the end of the Bronze Age (around the early twelfth century BCE). The archaeological investigation of Ras Shamra began in 1928 during the period of the French mandate, and, like so many other great and serendipitous archaeological discoveries, the first finds were made by a local villager. Claude F.-A. Schaeffer was subsequently chosen to direct the first expedition to the site in 1929, and on-going excavations of the French mission have continued into the twenty-first century, more than eighty years later.

On 14 May 1929, five days after the start of excavations, the first cuneiform tablet was found (RS 1.001 = *CAT* 1.39; Pardee 2002: 67–9, no. 17), a complete tablet that is now known to contain an Ugaritic ritual text written in the cuneiform alphabetic script. The discovery of cuneiform documents in this region was hardly surprising. The Amarna tablets had come to light in Egypt some thirty years earlier (*c.*1887; see Moran 1992; Mynářová 2007; Hagen §7.2.1), and by the late 1920s there were already clear indications of the existence of cuneiform culture along the northern Levantine coast in the fourteenth century BCE. In fact, the place-name Ugarit had been identified in the vassal correspondence found at Tell el-Amarna (EA 98 from Byblos; Moran 1992: 171), and Tell Ras Shamra was quickly identified as ancient Ugarit (suggested in 1930–1 and confirmed by 1932).

At that time, several decades had already elapsed since the pioneering, mid-nineteenth-century decipherment of the logo-syllabic cuneiform or

'wedge-shaped' writing system from Mesopotamia, so it came as a surprise when some of the tablets from Ugarit confronted epigraphers with a new type of cuneiform script (Fig. 6.1). A preliminary assessment of this variant script revealed it to be obviously much simpler than what is known from Mesopotamia—only thirty graphemes in all—and thus more suggestive of an alphabet than a syllabary. The occurrence of the same sequence of characters on five bronze tools and in the first line of one of the tablets (all found in 1929) was also a boon. The rapid publication of the first epigraphic finds (Virolleaud 1929) made it possible for scholars to decipher the unknown cuneiform alphabetic script and to identify a previously unknown West Semitic language, now referred to as Ugaritic (Bordreuil and Pardee 2009; Kogan 2010; Lemaire 2008; Pardee 2007; Watson and Wyatt 1999).

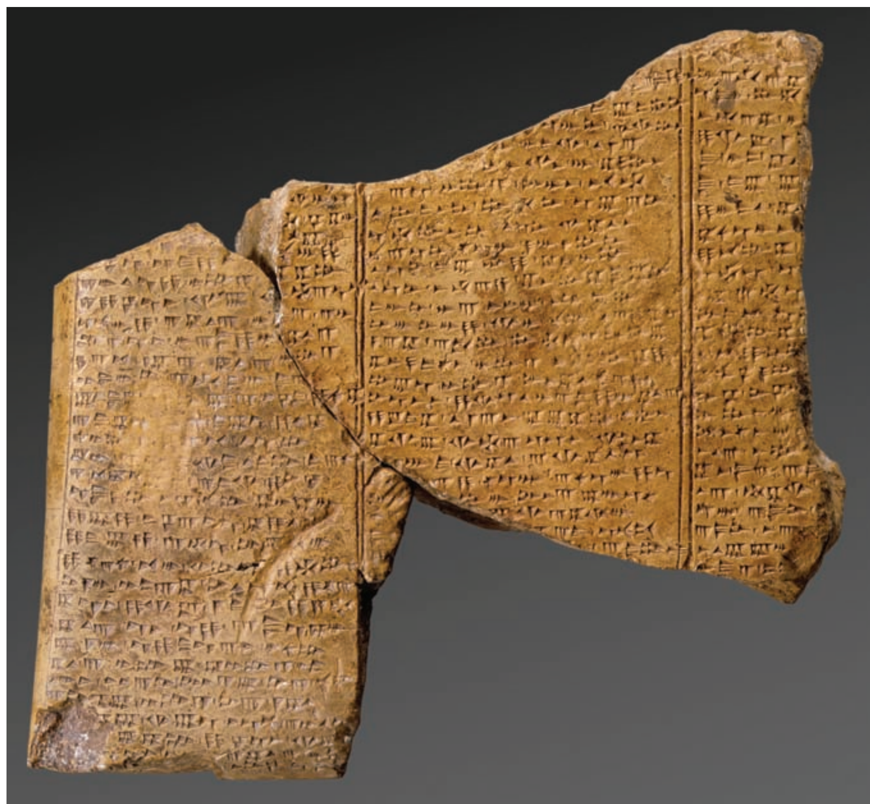

Fig. 6.1. Clay tablet inscribed with Ugaritic Baal Cycle (RS 2.[022] + RS 3.[565] reverse, AO 16.641 + AO 16.642, *CAT* 1.5; 150 × 155 × 130 mm) from the 'House of the High Priest' in Ugarit, cf. Dietrich et al. 2013: 24–7.

Photo courtesy of Les frères Chuzeville, © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

Written records from Ugarit are so far known only from the last gasp of its long occupation. Perhaps the most surprising dimension of the written residue of the Late Bronze Age in Ugarit is its manifest and robust multilingualism or, more appropriately, the use of multiple, coextensive scripts (Malbran-Labat 2000; 2002). A total of seven languages are attested in five different scripts: the logo-syllabic cuneiform writing system was used to write Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, Hittite, and possibly Ugaritic (*CAT* 10.1), while alphabetic cuneiform was used to write Ugaritic, Hurrian, and possibly Akkadian. A complex relationship existed between the logo-syllabic and alphabetic cuneiform scripts (Roche 2008b; van Soldt 2010a; 2010b): for example, an abecedary from the so-called 'south-west archive' in the palace gives syllabic equivalents of the alphabetic repertoire of characters (*CAT* 5.14; cf. Hawley 2008a); and there exists a whole class of administrative documents that employ both scripts (Roche 2008a), implying that at least some scribes were competent in both systems (van Soldt 1995). Bi- and multilingual documents are also known, especially in the genre known as lexical lists (e.g. Huehnergard 2008). Hieroglyphic Egyptian is present in inscriptions from statuary as well as on scarabs, but these appear to be frozen texts, that is, in most cases imported and not produced locally (Lagarce 2008; cf. Feldman 2002; Yon and Arnaud 2001: 239–48, no. 1). The still-undeciphered Cypro-Minoan syllabary is also attested, albeit sparsely, though it remains unclear whether it would have been intelligible to even literate elite local populations. Some personal names and titles appear in Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions on seals (also known as Luwian hieroglyphs), which was a common practice in the Hittite orbit of influence in the Late Bronze Age. Some of the best documentation of this practice comes from the Hittite-style seals in use further inland at Emar (Beyer 2001).

In Ugarit written records were found both in monumental and domestic structures, including several archives in the palace as well as archives and libraries in a number of houses. The domestic tablet collections have been given designations based on the study of the prosopography and/or textual genres represented in a particular corpus (van Soldt 1991: 47–231; 1994; 2000): 'House of Yabninu' (or 'Southern Palace'), 'House of Rašap-abu', 'House of the Lettré', 'House of Rap'ānu', 'Tablet House', 'House of the Hurrian Priest', 'House of (the text dealing with) Lamaštu', 'House of the High Priest', and 'House of Urtēnu'. The oldest documents from the site date to the fourteenth century BCE,[9] and the epigraphic record extends until the end of Ugarit's Bronze Age occupation.

[9] A few salient examples include (see I. Singer in Watson and Wyatt 1999; Beckman 1999): the treaty (*c.*1360 BCE) concluded between Niqmaddu III (formerly II) and Aziru of Amurru (RS 19.068), who is known from the Tell el-Amarna correspondence (Moran 1992: 380); a treaty between Suppiluliuma I and Niqmaddu III (RS 17.340; RS 17.369A); and a treaty between Mursili II and Niqmepa VI (RS 17.338+).

Within this time period a great number of documents were produced, and it is often difficult to date a specific tablet with a fine level of precision. The thirteenth-century documentation is somewhat clearer in terms of chronology: the aftermath of the Battle of Kadesh (1275 BCE) and subsequent treaty between Ramesside Egypt and Hittite Anatolia positioned Ugarit squarely within the Hittite zone of influence. The majority of the text corpus from Ugarit was probably written close to, and was thus preserved by, the destruction of the site toward the beginning of the twelfth century BCE. However, before the events of that period deposited epigraphic sources in the archaeological record, the durability of even unbaked clay tablets made it possible for Ugarit's ancient inhabitants to preserve older materials, either intentionally or by chance. The intentional preservation of literary (or non-administrative) texts may be one of the better criteria for assessing a particular tablet collection as an ancient library.

Since the start of excavations at Ugarit, the majority of alphabetic documents have been published and studied, first in the journal *Syria* and later on also in series like Ugaritica, Ras Shamra–Ougarit, the journal *Ugarit-Forschungen*, and elsewhere (Dietrich et al. 1995; 2013; cf. Bordreuil and Pardee 2008). A number of text publications have focused on a particular genre, contributing substantially to research on the Ugaritic literary (Parker 1997), religious (Pardee 2002), and economic texts (McGeough 2011). Great strides have likewise been made in publishing the logo-syllabic cuneiform documents (e.g. Arnaud 2007), though a sizeable number of texts remain unpublished, especially in the corpus of Mesopotamian lexical lists found at Ugarit. Both alphabetic and logo-syllabic cuneiform tablets are routinely published (or re-edited) in the French project's series Ras Shamra–Ougarit.

Space does not permit treatment of all of the libraries found at Ugarit, but their multiplicity is significant in and of itself, pointing to diffuse, productive, and perhaps varied levels of literacy at the site. In any case, a proper study of that kind will only be possible after the text corpus is published in its entirety and a consensus has been reached on the interpretation of the site's architecture and the often fraught or complex associations between buildings and the epigraphic data found in and around them. The following remarks are limited to surveys of the first library discovered at the site in the 'House of the High Priest', and the most recent library discovered, the library from the so-called 'House of Urtēnu', the publication of which is still a work in progress.

6.3.1. 'House of the High Priest'

The acropolis in the north-eastern quadrant of the city mound is the location of two major temples, the so-called Temples of Baal (in the west) and Dagan (in the east) (Callot 2011). Between these two monumental structures are

several Late Bronze Age buildings, among them the so-called 'House of the High Priest' (Yon 2006: 106–15).[10] The excavators' published presentation of the tablet finds gives the impression that inscribed materials were found in three distinct locations during the course of the four campaigns devoted to the building (Fig. 6.2): in Room 1 in 1929 and 1932; in Room 10 in 1930; and in Room 7 in 1931. However, a less tidy picture has emerged in subsequent studies (Bordreuil and Pardee 1989: 15–34, plan on p. 25 fig. 7; Cunchillos 1989). According to the excavator, different genres of tablets were found in different rooms, but because of the state of the published excavation records, a precise correlation is difficult to determine. For example, van Soldt (1991: 217 n. 304)

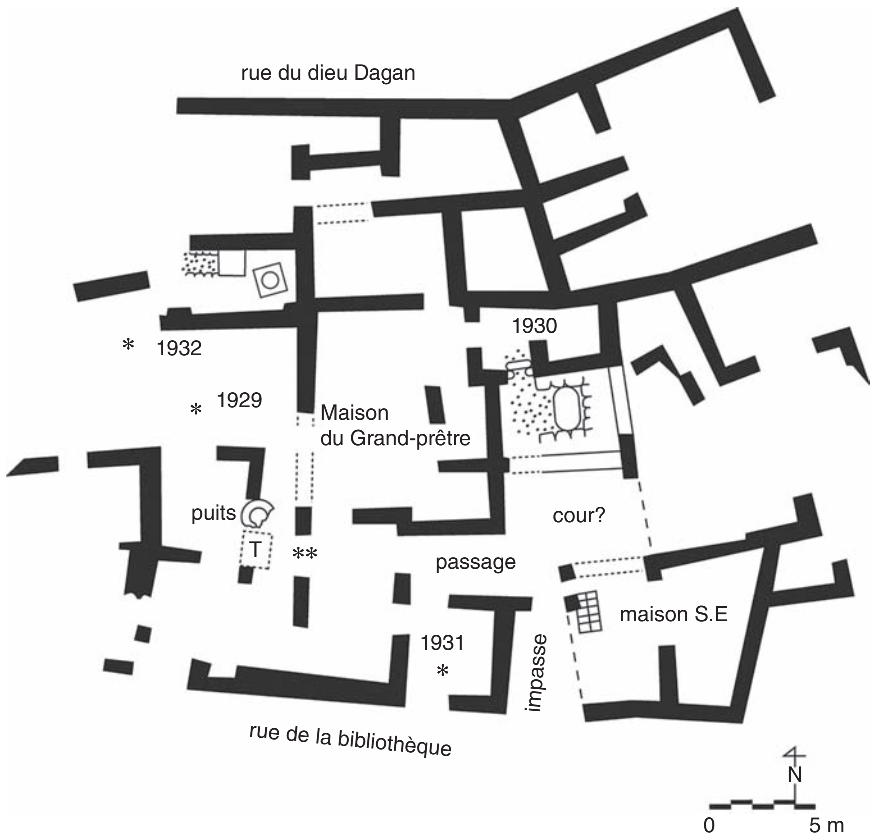

Fig. 6.2. Plan of the 'House of the High Priest' (*Maison du Grand-prêtre*) in Ugarit.
Illustration courtesy of M. Yon, after Saadé 2011: 280, fig. 88a.

[10] This building is frequently referred to as GP, which is an abbreviation of the French designation 'Maison du Grand Prêtre'.

suggests that the few Mesopotamian lexical tablets may have been found in the rooms designated 6, 7, or 10.

An overview of that first season of excavations illustrates the variety and number of materials uncovered. The first tablets were recovered in 1929 in what excavators later referred to as the '*nid de tablettes*' (Bordreuil and Pardee 1989: 16–23) found in Room 1 located on the western side of the building, and a horde of bronzes were found buried beneath the doorway connecting Rooms 3 and 6. The collection of tablets from Room 1 contained eight letters (two logo-syllabic, six alphabetic, one of which was to the high priest), eleven fragmentary administrative texts (all alphabetic), as well as a number of alphabetic religious texts (fifteen ritual texts and one sacrifice list in Ugaritic, three hymns/incantations in Hurrian, nine fragments in Hurrian and one in Ugaritic). The pedagogical texts from this collection consist of four alphabetic exercises and six lexical texts: *ur$_5$-ra* = *ḫubullu* (first read by scholars as *ḪAR-ra* = *ḫubullu* and still commonly abbreviated Hh), including Hh 1 (two unilingual Sumerian copies); Hh 2 (one unilingual copy); Hh 3–5a (two unilingual copies); and a copy of the so-called Weidner God List, which was a common teaching tool in Mesopotamia (one possibly unilingual copy). The other major epigraphic find of the 1929 season (the cache of seventy-four bronze objects) included four bronze axe heads bearing an alphabetic inscription to the high priest (*rb khnm* = *rabbu kāhinīma*; cf. Roche 2005), one of which gives his name, read Ḫurāṣānu or the like (*CAT* 6.6–10). The major Ugaritic literary texts found in this structure came from the second and third campaigns in 1930 and 1931. The tablets were primarily found in Room 7, though one Ugaritic literary tablet was found in Room 1 (Birth of the Beautiful Gods, *CAT* 1.23).

A total of 126 tablets and fragments were found in the building plus five inscribed bronze tools and one inscribed silver bowl (Table 6.1). Over 80 per cent

Table 6.1 Cuneiform tablets and artefacts from the 'House of the High Priest', Ugarit.

Genre	Alphabetic Cuneiform	Logo-syllabic Cuneiform
Administrative	20 (Ugaritic)	—
Legal	—	—
International letters	—	1 (Akkadian)
Letters	9 (Ugaritic)	1 (Akkadian)
Lexical/exercises	4 (Ugaritic)	15 (1 Sumerian-Hurrian)
Literary	24 (Ugaritic)	—
Divinatory	—	—
Religious	31 (17 Ugaritic, 14 Hurrian)	—
Dedicatory	5 (bronze tools, Ugaritic)	—
Uncertain	19	2
TOTAL	88 tablets 19 fragments 5 tools	17 tablets 2 fragments

of the collection is written in alphabetic cuneiform with the remainder written in logo-syllabic cuneiform. Logo-syllabic cuneiform appears in this collection only in letters (two) and with the lexical lists (fifteen), the latter being typical artefacts of scribal education in the Mesopotamian writing system (van Soldt 1995; Delnero §4.4). Ugaritic literary compositions (Parker 1997) from the House of the High Priest include the so-called Baal Cycle (*CAT* 1.1–1.6; Smith and Pitard 2009) and associated narratives (*CAT* 1.8, 1.10–1.12), the tales of Kirta (*CAT* 1.14–1.16) and Aqhat (*CAT* 1.17–1.19), the so-called Rapiʾūma texts (*CAT* 1.20–22; Pardee 2011), the Birth of the Beautiful Gods (*CAT* 1.23; Smith 2006), and a few fragmentary texts. The fullest form of the colophon to the Baal Cycle (*CAT* 1.6) refers to one Ili-malku (also known as Ili-milku): 'The scribe is Ili-malku (*ilmlk*), the Shubanite, student of Attenu, the diviner (*prln*), high priest (*rb khnm*), head shepherd, the *ṯʿy*-priest[11] of Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit, lord of Yargub, master of Tharmanu' (Smith and Pitard 2009: 725–30). Shorter versions are found on tablets with the Baal Cycle (*CAT* 1.4), Kirta (*CAT* 1.16), and Aqhat (*CAT* 1.17). This colophon suggests a connection between certain religious roles such as 'diviner' and 'high priest' and one of the kings by the name Niqmaddu, either mid-fourteenth-century Niqmaddu III (formerly II) or late thirteenth-century Niqmaddu IV (formerly III) (Smith and Pitard 2009: 730). While these texts are hardly royal literature per se, the inclusion of the local king's name is significant, if only for the purposes of dating and establishing connections between the producers of literature and political elites. However, the colophon found on a tablet from the 'House of Urtēnu' (Yon and Arnaud 2001: 393–405, no. 53) throws into doubt an overly specific association between Ilimalku and the 'House of the High Priest', which cannot be simply viewed as the 'House of Ilimalku'. In addition, a certain Rabbānu signed his copies of two of the lexical tablets from the 'House of the High Priest', but he does not appear anywhere else in the tablets from that building (van Soldt 1995: 209). He may have produced the tablets while a student in the 'House of the High Priest', brought the tablets home while living in the house, or donated or lost the tablets for some unknown reason. The point is that archaeological context relates these rudimentary lexical tablets with the great works of Ugaritic literature and Hurrian religious texts, but the precise meaning of that relationship remains elusive.

In sum, the library of the 'House of the High Priest' is essentially published in its entirety (a small handful of pieces remain unpublished or unaccounted for), and this state of affairs stands in contrast to the partial publication of the finds from more recent seasons of excavation at the site (especially among the

[11] An example of the possible function of the *ṯʿy*-priest is found in an Ugaritic incantation from the nearby site of Ras ibn Hani (RIH 78/20; Pardee 2002: 160, no. 49: 2). There the voice of this functionary (*ql ṯʿy*) seems to describe the one reciting the incantation.

lexical tablets). The architectural layout of the 'House of the High Priest' suggests that this building was an elite residence, and its position between the monumental temples on the acropolis along with the sizeable number of alphabetic texts associated with ritual and cult have led scholars to infer that the house was occupied by a cultic functionary or administrator of some kind. The title *rb khnm* 'high priest' is found on the dedicatory inscriptions, and it also appears as the addressee of one of the alphabetic letters (*CAT* 2.4). Together these bits of evidence may suggest some correlation between this title and the building's occupants. However, it must be noted that there are no legal documents of any kind from this structure, and, more significantly, there is no prosopographic unity across the genres. The Ugaritic mythological or literary texts from this building are unique twice over: none of them is known outside the site, and none is attested in more than one copy. These compositions are privileged as the great compositions in the Ugaritic language, due to their length and sophistication, their resonance with some genres of biblical literature, and because they were among the first found. Often not appreciated is that archaeological context dictates that these works of Ugaritic mythology and religious literature ought to be read alongside the Mesopotamian lexical texts and the Hurrian religious texts from the same building (on the latter, see Lam 2011; Watson and Wyatt 1999: 59–60). It is also worth bearing in mind that some of the ritual texts from the 'House of the High Priest' have duplicates, or near duplicates, that were found elsewhere across the site: *CAT* 1.40 (Pardee 2002: 77–83), 1.41 (Pardee 2002: 56–65), and 1.47 (Pardee 2002: 11–16). The 'House of the High Priest' was not the only building associated with cultic literature and texts that document public rituals. Ultimately, why were any of these library texts copied and kept? Since the literary texts in particular are at present unique, we are limited in our ability to see their reach across the site's cultural landscape. However, in contrast to the many Mesopotamian compositions found in this period, the character of the literary texts from the 'House of the High Priest' is manifestly local.

6.3.2. 'House of Urtēnu'

While the 'House of the High Priest' was the first library excavated in Ugarit, the most recent library was discovered at the site in the South Central district of the city, where another elite residence was uncovered, the so-called 'House of Urtēnu' (Yon 2006: 87–8). As with the 'House of the High Priest', the exploration of this area began with a chance find. A modern Syrian military bunker had been built on this part of the site around 1970, and the dump (*tas de déblais*) from their foundation trench (12 × 7 m, *c.*2 m deep) was found to contain cuneiform tablets and fragments that were subsequently published as 'a library in the south end of town' (Bordreuil and Pardee 1989: 341–51; 2012;

Bordreuil 1991; Malbran-Labat 2008; Yon and Arnaud 2001: 235–407). In 1986 the bunker was taken down, allowing for the area to be properly studied, and French teams excavated in this sector for several seasons until 2002. Clearing a sizeable area undisturbed by the modern building project, the French team uncovered a large, well-appointed elite residence with a carefully made stone burial chamber that had been built at the same time as the house (Fig. 6.3). The final publication of the excavations in this area has yet to appear, but there is a reasonably well-detailed preliminary description of the 'House of Urtēnu' (Yon 1995: 433–43). Elite material culture found in the building included a ceramic assemblage with international connections, prestigious late Mycenaean wares known from elite contexts across the site and throughout much of the Levant, Egypt, and Anatolia, though not inland at sites like Emar. Other objects included a cylinder seal, clay tags with short inscriptions in the Cypro-Minoan script, and alabaster chariot pommels or bosses similar to those found elsewhere in the Levant and Mesopotamia (e.g. Nippur and Elam) in the Late Bronze Age (Feldman and Sauvage 2010).

The campaigns in 1986, 1988, and 1992 unearthed a substantial number of alphabetic and logo-syllabic cuneiform tablets, which were strewn across several different rooms, some even on the tops of walls. The published elevations and distribution of the tablets reveal that most of the tablets were found well above the last floor (Lombard 1995). Only one tablet, a copy of the Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual literary text, the fable referred to as 'The Hyena

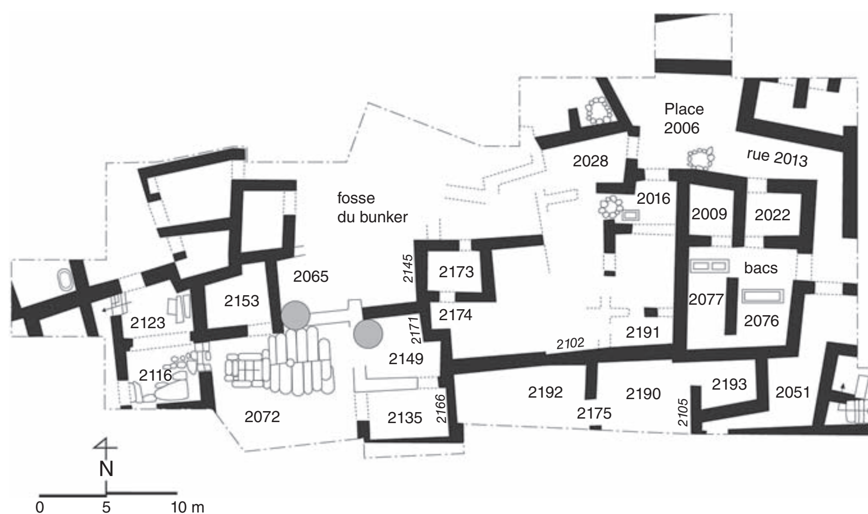

Fig. 6.3. Plan of the 'House of Urtēnu' in Ugarit.
Illustration courtesy of M. Yon, after Saadé 2011: 241, fig. 79a.

and the Fox' (Yon and Arnaud 2001: no. 29), and one small, unidentifiable fragment were found deposited beneath the last floor. This led excavators to infer that the majority of tablets had originally been kept on an upper story whose collapse would account for the tablets' dispersal throughout the building.

In 1994 excavations to the east of the tomb cleared a room (Room 2135) that contained most of the tablets found during that season (Yon 1995: 438–9). A precise reckoning is still forthcoming, and I am not aware of a published account of precisely where in the building subsequent epigraphic finds were made (see Lackenbacher and Malbran-Labat 2016: 244–5). Regardless, what appear to be built-in shelves were found on the south wall of Room 2135, leading excavators to infer that the tablets may have been stored there, falling to the floor during the catastrophe that destroyed the house. A variety of literary texts were found in Room 2135, including a polyglot lexical list (Sumerian-Akkadian-Hurrian), as well as at least two abecedaries that preserve two different traditional orders of the letters, the standard West Semitic order alongside the South Semitic order, which is also known from an abecedary found at Beth Shemesh (Hawley 2008a). This is where the extracts from the Epic of Gilgamesh were found (George 2007), along with another literary extract (Arnaud 2007: no. 65; Dietrich 2007; Durand and Marti 2008; George 2007: 254), the Instructions of Šupe-ameli (Sallaberger 2010), two compendia of teratological omens (*Šumma Izbu*),[12] a handful of Mesopotamian-style incantations and hymns (Arnaud 2007: nos. 5, 6, 49, 65), and a list of divinized kings of Ugarit (Arnaud 1999). Educational materials such as lexical texts are well attested in the 'House of Urtēnu', but these texts still await systematic treatment (provisionally see André-Salvini 2004; Bordreuil 1991: 105–26; Rutz 2007; Yon and Arnaud 2001: 237–8).[13] About 450 tablets and fragments inscribed in cuneiform characters have been identified in published catalogues; however, the total number of tablets catalogued and/or published thus far is necessarily provisional and will change as the rest of the text corpus is properly published and analyzed. By the most recent reckoning, the final number of tablets and fragments should be closer to 650 (Yon in Bordreuil and Pardee 2012: 7–8).

[12] Besnier (2015) discusses the versions of this text that circulated in the Late Bronze Age. It is interesting to note that Ugaritic-language versions of *izbu*-like texts were found in the so-called 'House of the Hurrian Priest' (*CAT* 1.103 + 1.145, 1.140; see Pardee 2002: 135–42).

[13] For RS 94.2273 rev. (Syllable Alphabet A; the obv. has an alphabetic model letter from one Abny to Ur-Tešab), see Hawley 2008b: 63–4. I suggest that the two unidentified fragments RS 34.180,33 + ?48 (Bordreuil 1991: nos. 76 + ? 75) should join and that together they constitute an extract of the Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual version of Hh 19 that is a duplicate of RS 20.032:23–43, the published unilingual version known from the 'House of Rapʾānu' (van Soldt 1995: 202).

Table 6.2. Cuneiform tablets from the 'House of Urtēnu', Ugarit.

Genre	Alphabetic Cuneiform (Ugaritic)	Logo-syllabic Cuneiform
Administrative	69	46
Legal	2	12 (3 treaties)
International Letters	5	153
Letters	12	86
Lexical/Exercises	(3)	(46) (14 extracts)
Literary	—	8 (2 extracts)
Divinatory	—	4
Religious	3	20 (2 Hittite)
Dedicatory	—	1
Uncertain/Fragments	—/5	4/16
TOTAL	88 tablets* 5 fragments*	356 tablets* 16 fragments*

* The final number of tablets/fragments will be much larger, upwards of 650 in total.

Looking only at the sources that have been published or catalogued, roughly 80 per cent of the tablets from the 'House of Urtēnu' were written in logo-syllabic cuneiform and 20 per cent in alphabetic cuneiform, specifically Ugaritic; so far this building has not yielded any Hurrian tablets in alphabetic script. Because of the large number of administrative (e.g. Malbran-Labat and Roche 2008), legal, and epistolary documents from the 'House of Urtēnu', it is very difficult to isolate a single dossier that can be clearly associated with the occupants of the house. Literate elites with ties to the local state apparatus frequently retained copies of state documents in their domestic archives, a phenomenon that accounts for the large number of international records found in the building.

Work on the material excavated since 1986 had led the epigraphers in charge of the cuneiform alphabetic texts to conclude that this house belonged to one Urtēnu (*urtn*), who appeared as the addressee in some seventeen letters and for whom an Ugaritic incantation had been written (Bordreuil and Pardee 1999–2000; Yon and Arnaud 2001: 374–5, 390). However, more recently Malbran-Labat and Roche (2007) have questioned this identification of the proprietor of the house, noting that one Ur-Tešab (*urtṯb*, more conventionally read Ur-Tešub) is attested in another dossier from the tablet collection as well. The question must remain open until all the epigraphic finds have been published and analyzed, and even then decisive evidence may still be wanting.

Active connections between the 'House of Urtēnu' and Emar are well known on account of several Akkadian letters sent from Emar that were found in the *tas de déblais*. These connections are all the more interesting because of the discovery of the diviners' library from Late Bronze Age Emar, the third and final case study.

6.4. EMAR (ESKI MESKENE)

The site of Eski Meskene, medieval Bālis, ancient Emar or Imar, is located on the west bank of the Euphrates, slightly south of where the river turns to the east. A handful of texts from second-millennium Babylonia tell us that Emar was the beginning of the land route from the Euphrates west to Aleppo (ancient Ḫalab) and then on south to centres such as Qatna and Hazor. In late antique and medieval times, the site continued in its function as the first port on the Euphrates in Syria until the river was no longer navigable.

The early twentieth-century archaeological investigations of Meskene were prompted not by the Bronze Age remains but rather by the architectural surface remains of the site's Byzantine and Islamic occupations, but the modern archaeological investigation of Emar began in 1970 under the aegis of the Tabqa Dam salvage excavations (Fig. 6.4). Between 1972 and 1976, Jean-Claude Margueron led a series of six campaigns to investigate the Late Bronze Age occupation levels at the site. In subsequent decades excavations by Syrian (1992–5) and German-Syrian (1996–2002) teams have identified both Middle Bronze Age and Early Bronze Age remains despite the fact that much of the site is now flooded (Finkbeiner and Sakal 2010). Epigraphic finds are known only from the Late Bronze Age, and it was the French excavations that unearthed a substantial cuneiform library in the Lower Town in the 1970s.

Margueron's team opened trenches in twenty-four areas, primarily across the western half of the site. The work revealed several domestic quarters and at least three temples (two of which were located side by side on the western promontory). A deep sounding in the eastern half of the site confirmed that extensive Bronze Age remains were sealed under medieval Bālis, which is itself now all but submerged under the waters of Lake Assad. In the autumn of 1973, excavators working on a large medieval necropolis just west of Bālis uncovered material culture dating to the Late Bronze Age. Though disturbed by the burials, the small area investigated revealed some 150 cuneiform tablets and fragments and other still unpublished artefacts.

6.4.1. 'Temple' M_1

Further investigations of the area, later deemed Area M, uncovered a building, 'Temple' M_1, that was found to contain a total of more than 1700 cuneiform tablets and fragments, over 90 per cent of epigraphic finds from the site. This tablet collection contained Sumerian and Sumerian-Akkadian lexical lists, literary narratives and incantations, Akkadian and Hurrian omen collections (Fig. 6.5), Hittite divination reports, Akkadian texts dealing with public rituals and the local cult, Akkadian legal and economic texts, and a handful of letters

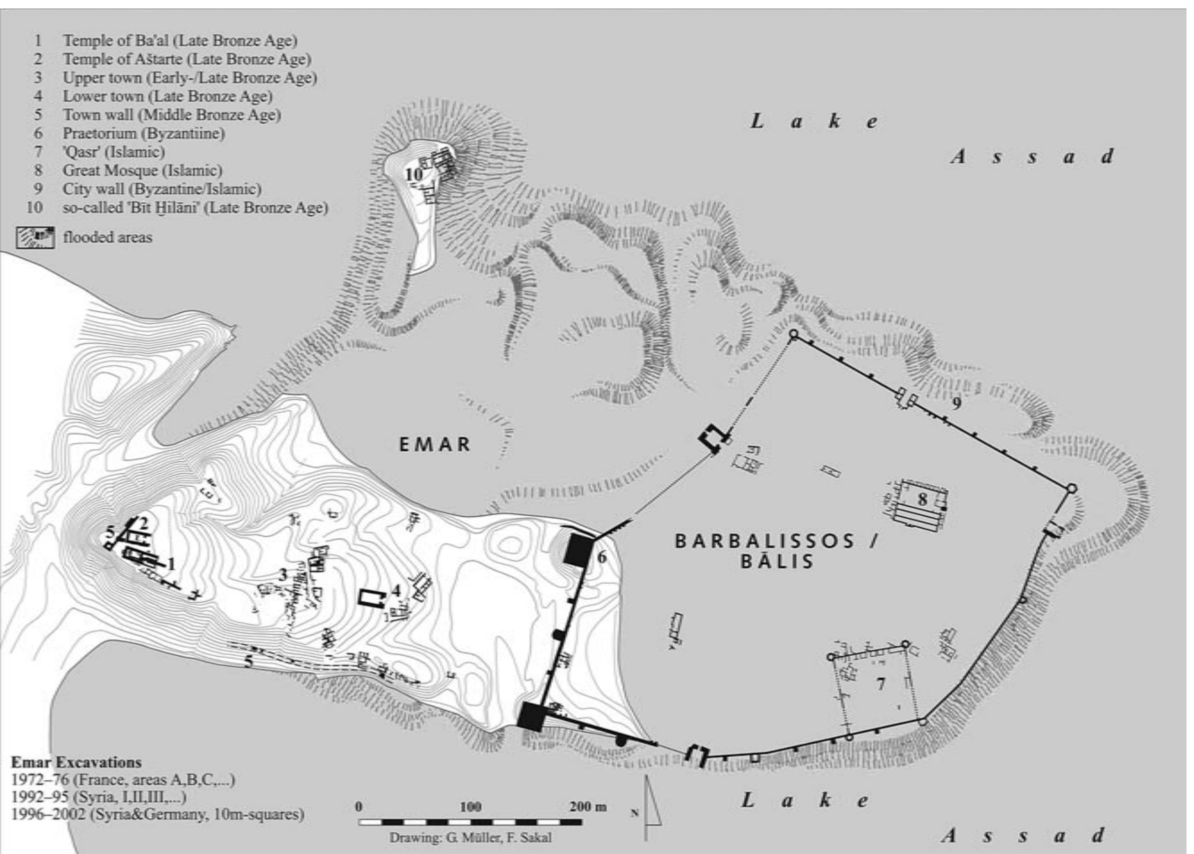

Fig. 6.4. Plan of the city of Emar-Bālis.

Illustration courtesy of U. Finkbeiner and F. Sakal.

Fig. 6.5. Clay model of a sheep's liver with Akkadian cuneiform inscription (Msk 7430; 108 × 110 × 41 mm) from 'Temple M_1' in Emar, cf. Arnaud 1985: 174, Arnaud 1987: 283, no. 667, Rutz 2013: 227–9.

Photo courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

in Akkadian and Hittite. In contrast to the situation at Ugarit to the west, there are only a few scant traces of the local linguistic substrate, which remains very poorly known. Most of the text corpus was published about a decade after its discovery, thanks to the work of the excavation epigrapher Daniel Arnaud, who copied almost all of the inscriptions (Arnaud 1985) and edited many of them (Arnaud 1986; 1987). Active looting at the site since the 1970s has flooded the antiquities market with cuneiform tablets that are said to be from the site as a whole, and some of these probably came from 'Temple' M_1. Both scribal colophons and legal documents attest to a family of diviners who were associated with the structure in some way. As the preliminary decipherment of the textual finds proceeded, the structure was declared to be a temple that contained a temple library (Arnaud 1980).

A growing body of work has accumulated over the last two decades, bearing witness to the significance of this discovery (e.g. Cohen et al. 2008; Cohen 2009; Faist et al. 2009; Rutz 2013). However, a number of questions still remain. There is still no final report of the French excavations, but the preliminary field reports have made it possible to reconstruct and critique

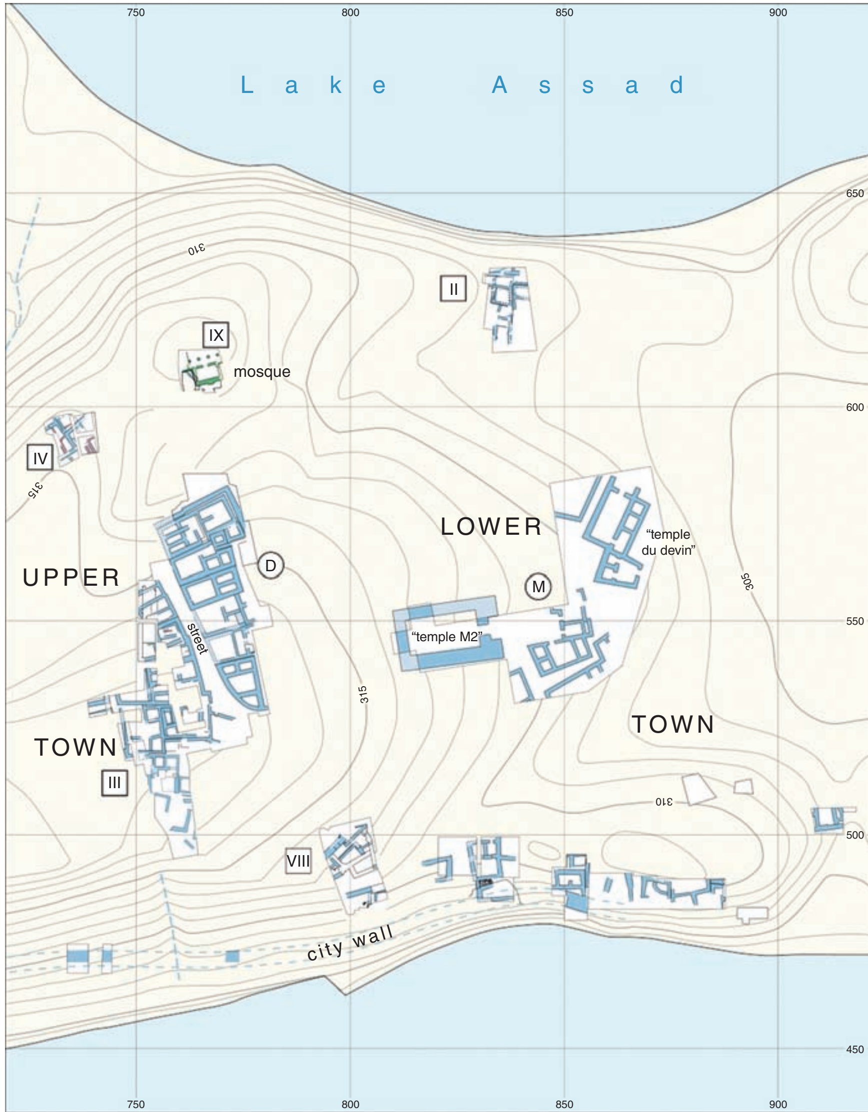

Fig. 6.6. Plan of the Lower Town with 'Temple M_1' (*temple du devin*) in Emar. Illustration courtesy of U. Finkbeiner and F. Sakal.

the excavators' strategies, methods, and interpretations of 'Temple' M_1 and its tablet collection.

The interpretation of the architecture of 'Temple' M_1 has proven to be a contentious topic (Fig. 6.6). Examination of the sacred and domestic building styles of Late Bronze Age Syria has established the architecture and artefacts

expected with each. So-called *in antis* temples, like the twin temples or Temple M_2 at Late Bronze Age Emar and Middle Bronze Age Temple D at Ebla, were free-standing monumental structures with thick walls, diagnostic entryways, and no adjoining side rooms of any kind. In contrast, Late Bronze Age houses are known from a number of sites, and a sizeable number of these domestic structures have layouts analogous to that of 'Temple' M_1, such as House O at Ekalte to the north. In addition, at least a dozen houses of this kind are now known from salvage excavations at another nearby site, Tell Bazi, probably ancient Baṣīru. Both the architecture of 'Temple' M_1 and the artefacts found in it suggest that this structure was probably an urban elite residence, not a temple, though both the size of 'Temple' M_1 and its assemblage are decidedly more modest than the domestic structures excavated in Ugarit.

Only vague find-spot information was published for the inscribed material from Emar, making it difficult to get a handle on the archaeological distribution of tablets within various structures, including 'Temple' M_1. However, a tentative reconstruction of the original excavation units of 'Temple' M_1 makes it possible to loosely correlate the tablets and fragments with various rooms in the building (Rutz 2013; cf. Pedersén 1998). The large group of tablets and fragments from Room 1, the large main room, was especially important. The western corner is where excavators found the majority of administrative and literary tablets. Room 3, the southern-most side room, appears to have housed most of the legal tablets, especially property sales and testaments, which are unusually well represented in the Middle Euphrates region. Unfortunately, in some instances, it is still unclear in which room a particular tablet was found: i.e. in Rooms 2 or 3, in Rooms 1 or 3, or in Rooms 1 or 2.

A total of at least 1707 individual pieces inscribed in cuneiform characters were found in 'Temple' M_1 (Table 6.3). By examining and identifying each piece and accounting for a large number of possible joins between pieces, that number can be reduced considerably: at least 298 discrete tablets, many of which are still quite fragmentary, and at least 1066 remaining fragments that could not be identified as discrete manuscripts or joined to an existing tablet. These numbers establish approximate minimum and maximum bounds for the likely number of tablets that were housed in 'Temple' M_1 at the time of the catastrophe that created the deposit. Within the text corpus at least two local styles are represented, the so-called Syrian and Syro-Hittite types, which are readily differentiated by physical features and layout, palaeography, orthography and grammar, and glyptic styles and practices (Beyer 2001; Cohen et al. 2008; Cohen 2009; Fleming and Démare-Lafont 2009). The older Syrian-type documents most resemble the Old Babylonian (or early second-millennium) style with the text written perpendicular to the long axis of the tablet (cf. Delnero §4.2.1); the Syro-Hittite-type documents most resemble the contemporary Middle Babylonian (or late second-millennium) style, with the text written parallel to the long axis of the tablet. The different tablet

Table 6.3. Cuneiform tablets from 'Temple' M_1, Emar. Syrian (S), Syro-Hittite (SH), and uncertain (?) scribal traditions.

Genre	Tablets					Fragments				
	S	SH	?	Total	%	S	SH	?	Total	%
Administrative	0	44	9	53	18	0	11	30	41	4
Legal	30	33	0	63	21	21	24	10	55	5
Letters	0	13	3	16	5	0	0	1	1	0
Lexical	15	55	15	85	29	3	57	277	337	32
Literary	0	11	1	12	4	0	8	17	25	2
Divinatory	7	16	12	35*	12*	4	26	121	151*	14*
Religious	2	25	7	34	11	1	35	148	188	17
Uncertain	0	0	0	0	0	2	14	256	272	26
TOTAL	54	197	47	298*	100	31	175	860	1066*	100
%	18	66	16	100		3	16	81	100	

* The Hurrian tablets and fragments have now been published (Salvini 2015), but it has not been possible to incorporate those data here.

types were written by different groups of scribes, and no scribe wrote in both the Syrian and the Syro-Hittite style.

The 'Temple' M_1 library consists of lexical, literary, divinatory, and religious texts. Lexical texts are properly construed as a core element in scribal education, and as such they represent one strand of received canonical written knowledge from Babylonia and Assyria to the east. Some lexical tablets represent educational ephemera that were not intentionally preserved, and such tablets were often either discarded in antiquity (e.g. dumped in fill) or preserved in destruction layers. However, there are a few lexical tablets that were found in 'Temple' M_1 that were written well before its final destruction and abandonment, including copies of the acrographic vocabulary referred to as Sag and the palaeographic sign lists (e.g. Cohen 2009; Rutz 2006a). These tablets were retained in the building long after they were copied, in one case unambiguously preserved after the death of the copyist. Literary texts are written in Akkadian and Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual formats, including Mesopotamian compositions like Gilgamesh, as well as texts commonly referred to as Mesopotamian wisdom literature, also known from Ugarit. It is interesting to note that none of the *belles-lettres* were written in the older Syrian style. Divinatory literature is also represented, including inscribed clay models of a sheep's liver, collections of omens taken from the internal organs of a sacrificial animals, events in the sky (appearance and movement of the moon, sun, constellations and planets, thunder), good and bad days in the standard Babylonian calendar (as opposed to the local calendar), birth defects, and an ill person's symptoms, to name a few. There are also a handful of omen reports written in Hittite (Salvini and Trémouille 2003), and these were likely written elsewhere and sent to Emar. The religious literature consists of two

main groups: public rituals and incantations. The public rituals consist of laconic descriptive accounts in Akkadian of local religious festivals and rites of passage, specific ritual events not known from elsewhere in the ancient Near East (Fleming 2000). The incantations are therapeutic recitations in Sumerian and Akkadian that are based on originals, which probably originated in or were inspired by Babylonian tradition.

An analysis of the dossiers that occur in the archive show a number of individuals who bore the title 'diviner', written in several different ways in administrative documents and scribal colophons appended to lexical, divinatory, and literary texts. The most prominent dossier is that of the Zū-Baʿla family, who were probably the proprietors of the house. This stands in stark contrast to the persistent problems confronting attempts to correlate texts, prosopography, and architecture at Ugarit to the west. Nothing is known about Zū-Baʿla's father, Šuršu, other than his name, and even that is not agreed on by all scholars. Zū-Baʿla enjoyed a very privileged status with respect to Emar's overlord, the Hittite king in Anatolia and his regional viceroy, a member of the Hittite royal family who was stationed in Carchemish north of Emar. Both Zū-Baʿla and his son Baʿl-qarrad acquired real estate and debt slaves, adopted sons, and stipulated their successors as 'scribe and diviner of the gods of the city Emar'. Incidentally, one of Zū-Baʿla's other sons, named Kāpī-Dagān, also bore the title 'diviner' and was an important local figure, who at one point tried to wrest the more prestigious role from his nephews, Šaggar-abu and Baʿl-mālik (see Cohen 2009). The evidence suggests that the brothers Šaggar-abu and Baʿl-mālik were the expert scribes who were responsible for producing master copies of the most advanced compositions written in the Syro-Hittite style, including lexical lists, omen compendia, and Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual literary texts. The tablet collection from 'Temple' M_1 appears to have taken its final form during the lifetime of Baʿl-mālik, and it does not appear that 'Temple' M_1 housed any of Šaggar-abu's personal practical records at all. Šaggar-abu's name appears almost solely in the colophons of lexical, literary, and omen texts. After his death (which is noted in the text corpus) these tablets were retained as prestige pieces, heirlooms, or teaching tools in what was primarily his brother Baʿl-mālik's collection, which seems to have come to an end before either of Baʿl-mālik's sons, Zuzu and Ipqi-Dagān, could take over the title of diviner or produce a substantial body of work.

In contrast to the Zū-Baʿla family tree, which can be reconstructed in some detail, the other diviners who appear as scribes in a handful of colophons are still rather poorly known, such as Rībi-Dagān, Baʿl-bēlu, Išmaʿ-Dagān, Baʿl-bārû and Mašru-hamiṣ. There are a few hints that these characters may have been connected on some level with the Zū-Baʿla clan, but none of the explanations offered so far is particularly satisfying. All of these figures copied lexical tablets in the Syrian style, which is thought to be slightly older than the

Syro-Hittite style used by scribes like Šaggar-abu and Baʿl-mālik. It appears that Baʿl-mālik may have inherited or otherwise appropriated some of the reference works and teaching tools of an earlier family of diviners, whose literary output is known only from a few scant remains.

6.5. CONCLUSION

Archaeological research across Syria and in the southern Levant has revealed a long and rich epigraphic tradition that was rediscovered only in the last century. Excavated written remains stretching from the Bronze Age (Ebla, Mari, Alalakh, Ugarit, and Emar) down into the Roman period (Qumran) provide ample evidence for the collecting of literary texts, broadly conceived, and the formation of ancient libraries. Since my focus has been on three distinct libraries from Ugarit and Emar, I will conclude with a few general remarks about cuneiform libraries in Late Bronze Age Syria.

First, education and literacy in cuneiform were an unusual and isolating social bond. Like all successful scripts promulgated by a succession of hegemons, the spread of cuneiform writing was generally not terribly kind to local languages and scripts. At Emar quite a smattering of vocabulary is attested in the Syrian vernacular, and the personal names found in the region are distinctive. However, on the Middle Euphrates the local dialect is barely detectable. Even at Ugarit, where the local language and literary traditions are well documented, the influence of cuneiform scribal culture can be seen in the creative adaptation of the cuneiform script to an alphabetic system. Looking at the Mesopotamian literature found in Syria, how should modern scholarship account for the persistence of scribal traditions in what were already arcane foreign languages, such as Sumerian and Akkadian? I think scribes generated meaning out of the received tradition by recourse to a creative friction: the friction between the past contexts of the tradition and its changing contexts of re-use. Usually, as in Emar and Ugarit, at least two foreign languages were being learned, Sumerian and Akkadian. Sumerian words and phrases must have stood out as truly esoteric, while the language and contents of certain Akkadian compositions were at once culturally specific and malleable enough to remain significant and intelligible outside of Babylonia and Assyria to the east. In these new contexts, prestige probably accrued to those with mastery of both local and imported scripts and texts.

Second, it is import to recognize not all of the tablets found in the libraries of 'House of the High Priest', the 'House of Urtēnu', and 'Temple' M_1 were merely by-products of scribal training. A handful of colophons indicate that the copyists were students, but these generally occur on copies of lexical lists at both sites and a handful of Ugaritic literary compositions from the 'House of

the High Priest'. Other types of works, such as omen collections and literary narratives, probably did not have a purely pedagogical function.

Third, copies of different texts occur in many different scribal hands. For example, in Emar some do not conform to the Syrian/Syro-Hittite typology and may be imports, and in Ugarit the use of different cuneiform scripts (logo-syllabic and alphabetic) makes it difficult to readily identify just how many scribes produced the text corpus. While it is not possible to tell how every manuscript made its way into the various collections found at Emar and Ugarit, the sources were copied by several individuals and families, whose education, identity, and received traditions must have varied in considerable ways.

Fourth, the places that we label as 'libraries' or, better, the buildings that contained 'libraries' represent sites of storage, whether temporary or long term. They do not appear to have been public sites of performance that were accessible to a large number of individuals; rather they were collections in the possession of a family or relatively small social group. A general collecting impulse is at work here, but it is difficult to know how to best interpret it. A representative array is found for each literary genre present in these libraries, sometimes just a tablet or two of a longer composition (for example, the manuscripts of the Akkadian Gilgamesh epic found at Ugarit and Emar). Completeness does not appear to have been an ancient obsession.

Fifth, some texts found in these libraries were already in a relatively stable form that would have been recognizable to a scribe centuries later, while other texts took a different route in later tradition. In both cases, it is invaluable to have a group of texts from a fixed and discernable place and time with which to compare, and in some instances there appear to have been analogous traditions in circulation at different sites in the Late Bronze Age.

Finally, some information about ancient libraries comes only from archaeological provenance. The most fundamental point suggested by the manuscripts' shared provenance is that there is some totality to reconstruct. The practical dimension of this observation is that physical joins and connections can be made within a discrete text corpus. After having pieced the puzzle together as much as possible, the size and scope of the provenanced text corpus prompts more holistic questions, such as how, why, and by whom it was produced. In contrast, without the associations made possible by archaeological context, there would be few, if any, relationships among most of the texts that were found together. Moreover, archaeological provenance creates a natural means of exclusion, as well as inclusion. Without the library's archaeological provenance it would still be possible to use personal names to organize the dossiers of Emar's various diviners or the dossier of Urtēnu/Ur-Tešab; however, it would be impossible to exclude texts as well, since the criteria for inclusion or exclusion would necessarily be dictated by internal contents rather than by shared context (for some of the problems caused by such uncertain provenance, cf. e.g. Finkel §9.4). None of the Akkadian or

Sumerian literature would be easily associated with alphabetic texts in Ugaritic or Hurrian in Ugarit, and there would be even less of a basis for associating the Syrian and Syro-Hittite scribal traditions in Emar. In Emar this is particularly significant for understanding the genres attested only in the Syro-Hittite tradition (literary texts, administrative records, letters, certain types of omen compendia) versus text types that are known in both (lexical lists, certain types of omen compendia, rituals and religious texts, legal texts) as well as for appreciating the chronological depth of the library's holdings.

Cuneiform tablets (and textual remains more generally) are still commonly published separately, segregated out from pottery, small finds, and other material culture and dissociated from their archaeological context, architecture, and stratigraphy. While this state of affairs is understandable given the practical constraints on research and publication, the unfortunate result is that considerable work and expertise are still needed to piece together and contextualize any one of the libraries from Bronze Age Syria, including those found in the 'House of the High Priest' and the 'House of Urtēnu' in Ugarit or 'Temple' M_1 in Emar.

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7

Libraries in Ancient Egypt, *c.*1600–800 BCE

Fredrik Hagen

7.1. INTRODUCTION

From an archaeological perspective, one of the most striking differences in the material contexts of the textual traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia is the near-absence of surviving libraries and archives in the former and the comparable richness of such data from the latter.[1] This is largely a result of the survival of the evidence and not a difference in cultural practices, but it forces historians of literature, and above all those interested in its social context, to adopt rather different approaches. Despite the limited amount of material remains from Egyptian libraries and archives before the Graeco-Roman period—including the difficulties related to the identification of relevant space within the archaeology of state institutions—references in texts demonstrate the existence of such resources in connection with temples and palaces. Private individuals also had collections of textual material at their disposal, and the line between institutional and personal collections of literary material is often difficult to draw because of the funerary (and therefore secondary) context of so many manuscripts. Administrative papyri that originally would have belonged to institutions have been found in private tombs, and this raises questions concerning the possible non-funerary contexts of literary manuscripts found in similar circumstances; it may be impossible to establish whether they originated in a private or an institutional context.

Archaeologists have been looking for libraries in Egypt for a long time, particularly in connection with temples, but with little luck: James E. Quibell remarked in his excavation report on the mortuary temple of Ramesses II at Thebes that 'the chance of finding some library of the priests made the site

[1] I am grateful to Richard Parkinson and Chris Eyre for reading an early draft of this paper. Both made a number of valuable comments, as did the two anonymous referees. All dates are taken from the *Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Shaw 2000: 484–6) and are approximate.

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attractive' (1898), and although a few papyrus fragments came to light, the find hardly lived up to his initial expectations.[2] Although there is a general lack of surviving institutional libraries from pharaonic Egypt, their existence has long been recognized, and there is a considerable body of research devoted to them (e.g. Zinn 2007; 2011; Black and Tait 1995; Burkard 1980; Otto and Schott 1970; Wessetzky 1973; 1972; 1959). For the purposes of this chapter I use a deliberately broad definition of 'library', based on the presence or absence of literary material in a group of manuscripts (Vandorp 2009: 218). This is not an unproblematic approach in that the line between libraries and archives (as collections of non-literary material) is often blurred, and it can be misleading to apply such modern criteria of classification to ancient categories that were never absolute (compare the discussion of the 'Place of Documents of Pharaoh' at Amarna, §7.2.1). Nonetheless it serves as a starting point for a discussion of how literary texts were stored and transmitted in New Kingdom Egypt, and it has the advantage of allowing for the inclusion of private collections of material as part of the definition of a 'library'; ownership of a collection of manuscripts (i.e. private or institutional) is hardly a key issue in the Egyptian context.[3] Libraries will have consisted primarily of texts on papyrus rolls, but because the material properties of papyrus leave it vulnerable to decay, it survives only in exceptional circumstances (Leach and Tait 2000: 239; cf. also Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.3). In Egypt this is restricted to dry areas outside the main zones of habitation along the Nile, in practice either mortuary contexts or—rarely—as finds from planned settlements on the desert edge (e.g. Deir el-Medina, Kom Medinet Gurob, or Lahun). This explains, to a large extent, the lack of surviving literary manuscripts as physical remains of libraries; even many administrative papyri which can be shown to have originated within institutional archives have generally been found in private tombs (Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 51; Hagen 2017).

7.2. INSTITUTIONAL LIBRARIES

The existence of institutional libraries in ancient Egypt in the period *c.*1600–800 BCE is uncontroversial, but the direct evidence is limited, as it is for most aspects of written culture. The situation is analogous to that of institutional archives of administrative documents from the same period,

[2] For the papyrus fragments found in the brick chambers within the temple precinct, see §7.2.4; Quibell himself explicitly described these as 'the tiny remnants of the Ramesseum library' (Quibell 1898: 2).

[3] Here I differ in my definition from Burkard (1980: 81), who to my mind underestimates the overlap between 'private' and 'institutional'; these are not mutually exclusive categories in the Egyptian context, and the border is permeable.

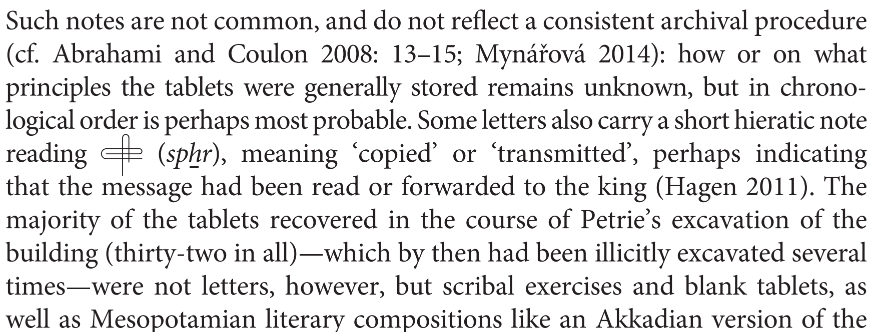
where there are numerous individual papyrus rolls that presumably originated in an archive—and which survive because they were extracted from this context in antiquity and deposited in tombs—but where there are relatively few surviving examples of archives as such (Hagen 2017).

7.2.1. The 'Place of Documents' at Tell el-Amarna

The most famous example of a preserved archive from New Kingdom Egypt is the collection of cuneiform tablets from the royal city of Amarna, containing the diplomatic correspondence between the pharaohs Amenhotep III and Akhenaten and their vassals and other kings in neighbouring countries (Moran 1992). Most were found by local villagers in an area that, by the time Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie and J. D. S. Pendlebury excavated it (in 1891–2 and 1928–31, respectively), had been repeatedly turned over in search of more tablets, but enough was left of the original structure to establish its function and official designation: 'The Place of Documents of Pharaoh' (Figs 7.1 and 7.2; cf. Pendlebury 1951: I, 114–15, II, pls XIX–XX, LXXXIII no. v; Kemp 2012: 125–8). The state of preservation meant that few details could be recovered regarding the production and storage of the correspondence (Abrahami and Coulon 2008: 1–26; Mynářová 2007: 33–9; 2014: 15–19; 2015: 38–39; Izre'el 1997: 4–9). However, a handful of the close to four hundred cuneiform tablets occasionally reveal glimpses of archival practices in the form of additional lines of text in hieratic (in black ink), inserted by Egyptian scribes below the cuneiform message, or on the edge of the tablet (Fig. 7.3). These note the date of arrival of the message, and occasionally contain details about who brought them:

> Year 36, 4th month of winter, day 1. One (i.e. the king) was in the southern villa The House of Rejoicing. (EA 23; Moran 1992: 62)

> Year 2, first month of winter, [day . . .]. One was in the southern city, in the palace Haemakhet. Copy of the Naharin letter that the messenger Pirissi and the messenger [. . .] brought. (EA 27; Moran 1992: 90)

Such notes are not common, and do not reflect a consistent archival procedure (cf. Abrahami and Coulon 2008: 13–15; Mynářová 2014): how or on what principles the tablets were generally stored remains unknown, but in chronological order is perhaps most probable. Some letters also carry a short hieratic note reading  (*spẖr*), meaning 'copied' or 'transmitted', perhaps indicating that the message had been read or forwarded to the king (Hagen 2011). The majority of the tablets recovered in the course of Petrie's excavation of the building (thirty-two in all)—which by then had been illicitly excavated several times—were not letters, however, but scribal exercises and blank tablets, as well as Mesopotamian literary compositions like an Akkadian version of the

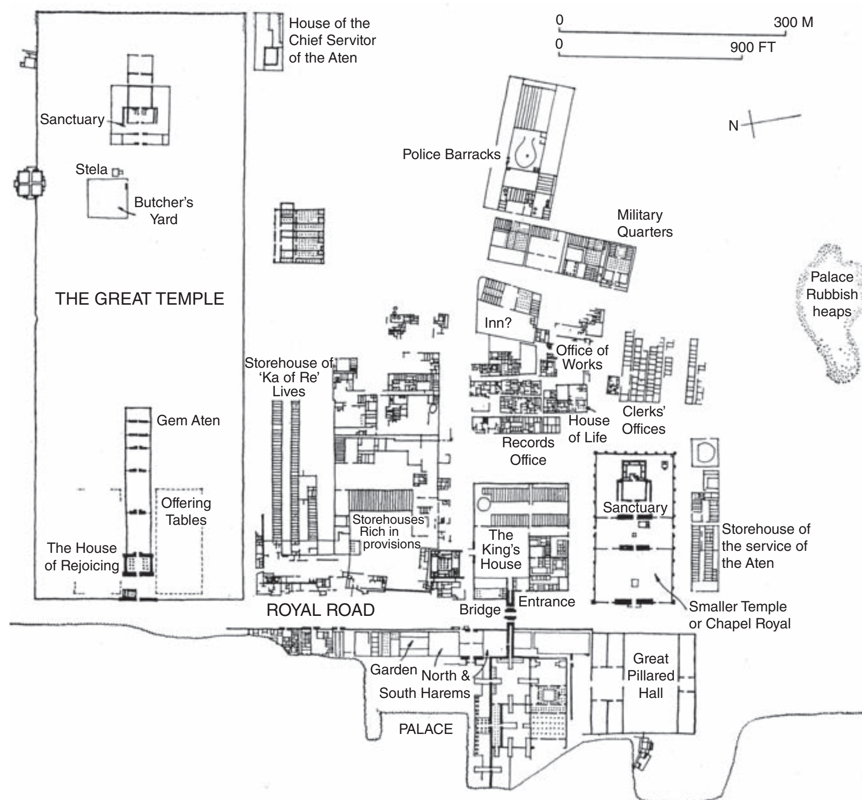


Fig. 7.1. Map of the central quarter of Tell el-Amarna, showing the location of the 'House of Life' and the 'Records Office' ('Place of Documents of Pharaoh' where the cuneiform letters and literary texts were found).

After Stevenson Smith (1998: 184), courtesy of Yale University Press.

Hurrian Tale of Keššì, The Myth of Adapa and the South Wind, The Myth of Nergal and Ereškigal, and others (Artzi 1986: 210–12; Izre'el 1997: 4–9). Significantly, several of the literary tablets have dots in red ink ('verse-points') above the cuneiform, indicating that they were read by Egyptian rather than Mesopotamian scribes at Amarna (Izre'el 2001: 81–90); this practice is completely unknown in Mesopotamia itself. The tablet with The Myth of Adapa and the South Wind had been imported, perhaps from Babylon, but the scribal exercises had been made using local Egyptian clay (Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2004: 77–87), suggesting that training and education in cuneiform script, language, and culture took place at Amarna, and that this was a significant aspect of the practices associated with the 'Place of Documents of Pharaoh' (Izre'el 2001: 54; Mynářová 2014). The literary texts read here seem to have been compositions central to the Mesopotamian literary tradition. Adapa and the South Wind, for example, is also attested in a Sumerian version from

Fig. 7.2. Map detail with the 'Place of Documents of Pharaoh' (= Q.42.21) and the 'House of Life' (Q.42.19 and Q.42.20) at Tell el-Amarna.
From Pendlebury 1951: II, pl. 19.

the Old Babylonian period (Tell Haddad), as well as in five separate copies from the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, some seven centuries after the Amarna period (Izre'el 2001: 5). Similarly, although the Amarna tablet is so far the earliest copy of Nergal and Ereškigal, there are multiple later copies, including an eighth-century BCE tablet from Sultantepe and a Neo-Babylonian (*c.*600 BCE) tablet from Uruk (Foster 2005: 506, 524). The Mesopotamian literary texts found at Amarna were in other words widely circulated both geographically and chronologically, and their function at the Egyptian capital around 1340 BCE presumably went beyond basic training in cuneiform for Egyptian scribes; despite the lack of information about their accessibility to, and use by, people associated with the royal court, they represent one of the few archaeological finds of literary texts in the context of a royal institution.

The Amarna 'archive', with its inclusion of literary and educational texts, illustrates the dangers of applying a rigid methodological framework to the evidence: absolute categories are inappropriate, and collections of texts which we might interpret as primarily administrative must be related to complex

Fig. 7.3. (a) A letter sent from the king of Mitanni to the king of Egypt, with a reception note in Egyptian written in black ink underneath the cuneiform message. British Museum E29793 = EA 23. (b) A letter from the king of Mitanni to the king of Egypt, with a reception note in Egyptian written in black ink on the side of the cuneiform tablet (from Winckler 1889: 19). VAT 233 + 2197 + 2193 = EA 27.

(a) © Trustees of the British Museum. (b) © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

social realities that would have been unrestrained by the classification systems we seek to impose (*pace* Burkard 1980: 81). Despite the uniqueness of the find of cuneiform tablets at Amarna, both in size and in importance, it is unlikely to have been exceptional in nature. The lack of clear parallels elsewhere is due to the survival of the evidence, and further excavation is likely to bring more sources to light: recently fragments of cuneiform tablets have been discovered

at Piramesse, the Delta capital of Ramesses II (Pusch and Jacob 2003; Breyer 2011), and at Tell el-Dab'a, the capital of Lower Egypt under the Hyksos kings (Bietak and Forstner-Müller 2009; Bietak 2011). The former post-dates and the latter pre-dates the Amarna archive by about two hundred years, thus covering a total period of just over four hundred years; this suggests that one should envisage substantial collections of similar material, as well as similar cultural practices, from at least *c.*1550–1150 BCE.

7.2.2. The Palace Library from Kom Medinet Gurob

A second archaeological find of an institutional archive from New Kingdom Egypt is from the palace at Kom Medinet Gurob, excavated by Sir W. M. F. Petrie in 1889–90 (Petrie 1890; 1891; Thomas 1981). The archaeology of the site is poorly understood, partly because of the very brief excavation reports, but the presence of a palace there from the beginning of the 18th Dynasty to the end of the Ramesside period is uncontroversial (Kemp 1978; Serpico 2008). Among the papyri which Petrie found there—the precise archaeological context of which was not recorded—are numerous fragments of the palace archive recording its day-to-day activities, including copies of letters sent from the palace, records of the arrival and departure of officials, the administration of agricultural lands belonging to the palace, and the provision of high-quality cloth to a Hittite princess married to Ramesses II (Gardiner 1948: 14–35). Several fragments of literary texts were also found at the site, including such classics as The Instruction of a Man for His Son and The Instruction of Khety (Fischer-Elfert 1998), The Hymn to the Nile (unpublished), as well as a hymn to Amun (Gardiner 1935: I, 119–21); these manuscripts are perhaps the closest one gets to the physical remains of a palace library in New Kingdom Egypt.[4]

7.2.3. The So-Called 'el-Hibeh' Archive or Library

A significant but largely unpublished archive or library is the so-called 'el-Hibeh' papyri from around 1000 BCE (Müller 2009). This is a group of over two thousand fragments found during the final decade of the nineteenth century, and today spread all over the world (Aberdeen, Berlin, Boston, Cairo, Leiden, London, Moscow, Paris, and Strasbourg). The majority (85 per cent) of the fragments stem from letters, many written by or to priests and temple

[4] The lack of a recorded archaeological context for the papyrus find(s) at Gurob means that they cannot be securely linked to the palace itself (cf. Petrie 1890: 36), but this seems the most plausible interpretation: their poor state of preservation probably excludes a funerary context, and with the exception of parts of the surrounding necropolis, Petrie concentrated his efforts on the palace area.

scribes of 'Horus-of-the-camp'. Administrative documents dealing with fields and cattle account for about 10 per cent of the corpus, and there is a small number of oracle petitions as well as a handful of fragments from what may be literary texts.[5] The provenance of the papyri is difficult to establish: they were originally thought to be from a provincial temple at el-Hibeh (Lefèvre 2008: 109–10), but this is not certain, and one of the editors has more cautiously suggested somewhere in the region between the 8th and 10th Upper Egyptian Nome, with el-Ahaiwah, south of Naga el-Deir (opposite Girga) as the most likely location (Müller 2009: 260–1). Any reconstruction of the original context of these fragments is necessarily tenuous. The oracular decrees of 'Horus-of-the-camp' may suggest that the find represents an archive or library belonging to a temple of that god (Lefèvre 2008: 115), and the high proportion of letters naming two scribes who were both 'god's father'-priests and 'scribes of the temple' (Müller 2009: 253–4), could support this interpretation. The archaeological context could equally well have been a private tomb, however, in which case the distinction between 'private' and 'institutional' again becomes blurred (see Ryholt §10.3 for later 'institutional' libraries that may have been distributed amongst private individuals).

7.2.4. The New Kingdom 'Library' from the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses II

Excavation work in and around the Ramesseum at Thebes in 1895–6 uncovered papyrus fragments from literary, administrative, and perhaps religious manuscripts (Spiegelberg 1898: pls XLII–XLVII); in addition to a number of unidentified fragments, this included at least one roll with a composition reminiscent of the Late Egyptian Miscellanies-genre, fragments of one or more accounts papyri, as well as a copy of the well-known Onomasticon of Amenemope, the latter said to be 'a more correct and earlier text than any other of our sources' (Gardiner 1947: 33–4). These all appear to be roughly contemporary with activity at the temple: Spiegelberg and Gardiner dated the fragments, based on the palaeography, from the late 19th Dynasty (for the literary fragments) to 21st–25th Dynasty (for the administrative fragments). The original archaeological context is not known—the excavation report does not mention the find apart from the preface (Quibell 1898: 1–2)—but the heading on the plates where the fragments were reproduced

[5] It is not certain whether the three famous 21st Dynasty manuscripts in Moscow (Wenamun, the Golénischeff onomasticon, and A Tale of Woe) were part of the same archive or library: if so, the literary component will have been more significant than that suggested by the fragments of literary rolls so far identified (cf. Lefèvre 2008: 112 n. 16; Müller 2009: 258). For these papyri, see §7.5.6 below.

(in a separate monograph on the textual finds), states that they came from 'the brick chambers near the Ramesseum' (Spiegelberg 1898: XLII), i.e. from the mud-brick administrative buildings that surround the stone temple.[6] The find could perhaps be interpreted as papyri from a temple library in the adjacent mud-brick structures.[7]

7.3. THE 'HOUSE OF LIFE' AND 'HOUSE OF BOOKS'

In effect, few temple or palace libraries survive from New Kingdom Egypt, although indirect references to them suggest that this is simply a result of chance. Two institutions in particular are often presented as the physical context of such libraries in Egyptological literature: these are the 'House of Life' and the 'House of Books', both of which figure intermittently in Egyptian texts (Eyre 2013: 309–15; Burkard 1980: 85–91; Gardiner 1938; Volten 1942: 17–44; Parkinson §3.4; Ryholt §10.8). The following discussion is based on New Kingdom sources, which are few and contain limited information; they do not indicate if, or to what extent, these two institutions overlapped in function, operation, or organization. Nor do the sources allow for an evaluation of the relative importance of these institutions in terms of the wider issue of textual transmission; the House of Life, for example, was certainly not the only setting in which manuscripts were copied or stored, nor was it necessarily as central as is sometimes thought.

Most of the material mentioning the House of Life and the House of Books post-dates the New Kingdom by half a millennium or more, and it would be speculative to project later evidence backwards because of the distinctly different cultural milieu. The only known archaeological example of a House of Life was found at Amarna, where it was identified on the basis of mud-bricks stamped with the hieroglyphs 𓉐𓋹𓉐 (*pr-ʿnḫ*, 'House of Life'; Kemp 2012: 126). It consisted of a modestly-sized set of mud-brick buildings (*c.*15 × 15 m) situated behind the heart of royal administration in the city, the 'King's House', and close to the Small Aten Temple (Pendlebury 1951: I, 115, II, pl. XIX; Kemp and Garfi 1993: sheet 5 sector Q42, nos. 19 and 20; Figs 7.1 and 7.2).

No texts were found here, nor any other objects that would have identified the function of the complex in the absence of the stamped mud-bricks

[6] For the term 'brick chambers' (written 'brick tombs' in the actual heading) see the *erratum* included under the 'List of plates' at the beginning of the book.

[7] As suggested by Quibell (1898: 1). As with the Gurob papyri, the lack of a recorded archaeological context is acute, and it is not certain that all the papyri were found together, or even in the same part of the temple compound: areas covered by mud-brick structures surround the temple on three sides.

mentioned above, but in one area ('Q.42.20') some fragments of a painted papyrus were discovered (Pendlebury 1951: I, 115, 120 no. 33/293; Kemp and Garfi 1993: 61). These depict a row of individuals, including bound prisoners and at least one figure dressed in a blue kilt, as well as various fragments that may belong to a chariot (Parkinson 2011).[8] This is the only surviving papyrus from the New Kingdom that can be securely linked to a House of Life, and although its fragmentary state and unique subject matter makes it difficult to interpret, it seems unlikely to have been a funerary manuscript as has sometimes been claimed (e.g. Gardiner 1938: 161)—a more plausible interpretation is that it depicts a triumphal procession. Pendlebury (1934: 134) reported that in a similar building ('Q.42.22') immediately to the north of the House of Life and perhaps part of the same complex, he had found several ostraca with lists of royal scribes, some of which he conjectured might have been attached to this institution, but these were never published (cf. Pendlebury 1951: 120, *sub* 'Q.42.22').[9]

The House of Life seems to have been an institution at the centre of textual transmission in Egypt, and as such has appealed to scholars seeking to locate the source of Egyptian high culture. It has sometimes been thought of as the ancient equivalent of a university, staffed by individuals sympathetically sharing modern Egyptologists' interests in history and old papyrus rolls: John D. S. Pendlebury, the excavator of the House of Life at Amarna, remarked of one of its buildings that 'It resembles most the rooms of a don in an Oxford or Cambridge college' (1951: 115), and described the House of Life in his initial report as a 'university' with 'lecturers' (1934: 134). In reality little is known about its social structure, or even function (Gardiner 1938: 177). They had scribes attached to them, and individuals bearing the title 'scribe of the House of Life' appear in the textual record from the Middle Kingdom (*c.*2000–1800 BCE) onwards, although the institution is known from as far back as the Old Kingdom (*c.*2280 BCE; Gardiner 1938: 160), and by the Second Intermediate period (*c.*1650–1550 BCE) it occurs in literary texts (Parkinson 1999b: 190–3). One New Kingdom example is Amenwahsu, who in his tomb at Thebes (no. 111, *c.*1250 BCE) boasted that he himself 'copied' (*spẖr*) a hymn on its walls, presumably wanting to demonstrate his knowledge

[8] The fragments are currently in the British Museum on loan from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, for conservation and investigation pending their publication. My thanks are due to Richard Parkinson for providing a photograph of them, and to Chris Naunton of the Egypt Exploration Society for help in tracking down archival material related to their discovery.

[9] I have been unable to determine the current whereabouts of these ostraca; they do not appear to be among the Amarna ostraca preserved at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, nor in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (R. J. Demarée, pers. comm.). Perhaps Pendlebury was simply misremembering, or was thinking of the small boundary stones found nearby: these had inscriptions in hieratic (in black ink), with one mentioning a 'royal scribe Ra-apy', and another mentioning a 'royal scribe Ahmose', and were found in the same general area (Kemp 2012: 125–6).

of religious literature to the reader (Amer 2000: 1–5; Porter and Moss 1960: 229). His other titles indicate a man with priestly duties, with a particular responsibility for the copying of religious compositions in a House of Life (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 302.12–305.7). The only genre mentioned explicitly by Amunwahsu is 'the annals (*gnwt*) of the gods and goddesses in the House of Life' (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 305.7).[10] In the same tomb, one of his sons and a grandson, Didi and Khaemope (II), are also described as 'scribes of the House of Life', and another son, Khaemope (I), was similarly involved in the transmission of religious literature in the House of Life: on a stela he lists his titles as a 'royal scribe', a 'scribe of the divine books of the Lord of the Two Lands (i.e. the king)', 'who wrote the annals (*gnwt*) of all the gods in the House of Life', while working as a 'god's-father-priest of Re-Atum in the House of Life' (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 305.8–306).

The offices of priest and scribe in the House of Life are thus often linked, and when details about activities within the institution are provided, this tends to point to the transmission of religious or magico-medical literature: one magical text (P. BM EA 10042) famously describes itself as 'a true secret of the House of Life' (Leitz 1999: 39). This association between the writings of the House of Life and secrecy, more widely attested in later periods, is present already in the New Kingdom (Ritner 1993: 203–5), but it is not clear to what extent such claims should be interpreted literally. It is unlikely that scribes in the House of Life restricted themselves to these genres, and there is circumstantial evidence that the institution was seen as a place of learning outside the sphere of religious and magical literature. A more general type of knowledge is implied in an inscription where the leaders of an expedition to Wadi Hammamat to bring back stone for royal monuments are said to have included a 'scribe of the House of Life' (Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 13.14–15). The wording of the passage is obscure, but as part of the preliminary activity (before setting off for the quarries), the 'scribe of the House of Life' seems to have been charged with investigating standing monuments in the Theban necropolis made from the same stone that they were about to bring back (Gardiner 1938: 162–3). This is similar to the story in the much later Bentresh stela, which purports to relate events during the reign of Ramesses II, where staff from the House of Life were summoned to the king along with the council (*ḳnbt*) of the palace, to advise on a medical emergency (Kitchen 1975–89: II, 284–7; further literature in Simpson 2003: 362–6, 550). Scribes from this institution were despatched on royal commissions, and occasionally left graffiti in outlying areas of Egypt in connection with their work; in addition to the Wadi Hammamat inscription cited above, this includes two examples from the island of Sehel south of Elephantine (SEH 410 and 413; Gasse and

[10] On these 'annals', see Schott (1990: 379–81).

Rondot 2007: 254, 257). That individuals linked to this institution were associated with learning and knowledge is not surprising, and it is significant that the famous Onomasticon of Amenemope, a text whose purpose was to 'teach the ignorant, to learn everything that exists' (Gardiner 1947: I, 1*), was said to have been composed by a 'scribe of the divine books in the House of Life'. The text itself consists of lists of words, loosely grouped in categories like elements of nature, people and their occupations, buildings and their constituent parts, etc., associating the House of Life with the categorization and ordering of secular knowledge. In the Onomasticon itself, the title 'scribe of the House of Life' is included, grouped between the title 'royal scribe and lector priest' and various high-ranking priestly titles like the high-priests of Amun (Thebes), Re-Atum (Heliopolis), and Ptah (Memphis), perhaps suggesting a culturally prestigious institution. Its function as a repository for knowledge is also evident in an inscription from Abydos, where Ramesses IV mentions the '[annals] of Thoth which are in the House of Life', apparently in the context of a consultation before constructing a temple (Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 22.5), echoing the narrative of the late Middle Kingdom inscription of Neferhotep I (cf. Parkinson §3.4.1). On a more general level, the education and wisdom of the king could be expressed by describing him as 'one who is outstanding in learning like Thoth, having understood the annals like the one who wrote them, having seen the writings of the House of Life' (Kitchen 1975–89: VI, 10.15–16), a phraseology which is partly paralleled for private individuals (cf. P. Anastasi I, 1.7; Fischer-Elfert 1992: 26).

As institutions they could presumably be attached to both temples and palaces, but examples are rare—most references to a House of Life do not specify an associated institution (and not all need have been affiliated with a temple or palace: compare the Amarna example discussed above). References to New Kingdom examples are few and far between. There is no direct evidence of a House of Life associated with the largest Egyptian temple of the New Kingdom, the Karnak temple of Amun-Re at Thebes, although one has to assume that one existed: it is difficult to imagine such a vast institution without a library and an extensive archive, but the only surviving reference to storage of texts there is a passing mention that some campaign records of Tuthmose III were kept 'on a roll of leather in the temple of Amun(?)' (Sethe 1906–9: I, 662.5; the god's name was restored by the editor). The scribe of the House of Life Amenwahsu, mentioned above, was also a 'scribe of the divine books in the House of Amun', suggesting perhaps that the House of Life he belonged to also was associated with the Karnak temple, although this is never explicitly stated (Kitchen 1975–89, 303.7–8; cf. 304.5).[11]

[11] He is also said to be the one 'who inscribed the great name of the perfect god (= Ramesses II) in the Ramesseum, which is under the authority of the House of Amun on the West of Thebes'

It has also been argued that the temple of the cat-goddess Bastet in the Delta included both a House of Life and a House of Books, based on two divine epithets found on private monuments probably originating from that area ('Atum Lord of the House of Life' and 'Sakhmet-Bastet Mistress of the House of Books'). The owner of the monuments was a chief lector priest and chief *wab*-priest of Sakhmet who was active under Ramesses III, and his evocation of these specific forms of Atum and Sakhmet-Bastet might be interpreted as particularly meaningful in the local context if such institutions had existed there. Another priest of Sakhmet and Bastet from Bubastis carried the additional title 'Royal Scribe and Chief of the House of Life', but again the evidence is circumstantial as the text makes no mention of which House of Life is referred to (Habachi and Ghalioungui 1971). Similarly circumstantial is a dedicatory inscription of Merenptah from Hermopolis where a hymn to Thoth mentions a House of Life in a broken context ('Your purifications have been carried out in the House of Life; look, the House of Life is [passage missing]'); this has been interpreted as evidence of a House of Life associated with the local temple (Burkard 1980: 99; Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 28.8). All of these examples are tenuous at best.

Much later sources occasionally refer to New Kingdom examples of a House of Life or a House of Books, but these too are difficult to interpret. One famous example from the Ptolemaic period claims that a text was found 'on a papyrus roll in the time of king Tuthmose and the time of king Amenhotep, in the House of Books of the temple of Osiris at Abydos' (Schott 1990: 40 no. 65, 371 no. 1621), but this cannot be used to reconstruct historical reality: such find-notes are simply employing a literary *topos* common in texts from genres concerned with establishing a fictional historical authority for themselves (Vernus 1995: 112–14; Hagen 2013; *pace* Burkard 1980: 91; Eyre 2013: 277–93). Many magical spells and funerary papyri are equipped with so-called 'find-notes' detailing their discovery as a means of increasing their authority and perceived age (although some go back to the Pyramid Texts, and so can claim genuine antiquity; Assmann 2008: 232–4), and these are occasionally linked to institutional libraries or archives. Examples include compositions said to have been found 'in an ancient House of Books of a temple' (Gardiner 1935: I, 68, II, pl. 40), 'in the House of Books of the rear-house of the Ennead' (Leitz 1994: 11–18), 'in a chest of secrets . . . in the temple of Wenut, Mistress of Hermopolis' (Lapp 1997: pl. 78 cols 37–9; 2004: 71 cols 23–5), or 'in the temple of Amun-Ra, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands in Tanis' (Lesko 1999: 258). The Book of the Temple, a priestly manual widely copied in the Graeco-Roman period (*c.*100 BCE–200 CE), refers to a royal

(Kitchen 1975–89: 304.1), perhaps also suggesting that he belonged to the main temple of Amun which had administrative responsibility for the Ramesseum.

decree having been found in the temple of Atum in Heliopolis some 2500 years earlier 'when one was searching for writings in the House of the Book, in a ruined chamber (?) inscribed with the name of Neferkasokar. It was copied anew in order to preserve it in the House of the Book in the name of the Dual King Khufu, by the skilled prince Hordedef' (Quack 1999: 274; cf. Ryholt §10.6). Despite their fictional nature such accounts illustrate the conceptual understanding of these institutions in ancient times, showing that they were seen as plausible settings where 'ancient writings' could be discovered.

Because they were primarily built in mud-brick, libraries rarely survive archaeologically (cf. the House of Life from Amarna discussed above), but some attempts have been made to identify relevant space within New Kingdom temple precincts (compare Ryholt §10.6), including the Ramesseum, the mortuary temple of Ramesses II at Thebes. Excavations there in the late nineteenth century turned up a number of literary ostraca (Fig. 7.4) in the

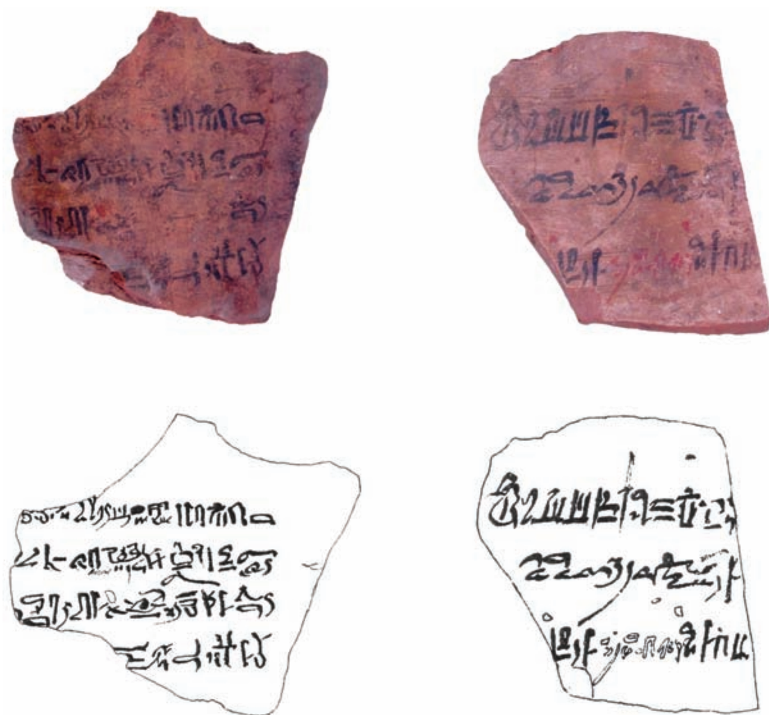


Fig. 7.4. Hieratic ostraca from an area of the Ramesseum which has been interpreted as a 'school' or a 'House of Life'. Ostracon UC32981 (= 'O. Ramesseum 61', left) and ostracon UC33020 (= 'O. Ramesseum 102', right) preserve, respectively, four and three lines of hieratic from *The Instruction of Amenemhat* (§VIa–f and §XIb–XIIa), a classic wisdom poem frequently copied by Egyptian scribes as part of their training.

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south-west area of the temple enclosure, and this was initially interpreted as a temple school (Spiegelberg 1898: 1–2; Brunner 1984: 742).

More recently, continued excavations at the site uncovered a further 140 ostraca close to where the original find was made, and many of these too are literary (including excerpts from The Instruction of Khety, The Instruction of Amenemhat, and The Hymn to the Nile). Christian Leblanc (2004) has argued that the ostraca and their archaeological context, combined with textual evidence which suggests the existence of a House of Life at the temple, are sufficient to identify this area as a 'school', and that in a temple context this can be equated with a House of Life. A degree of caution is in order, however, as no material from the area mentions the institution by name, and even attempts to identify 'schools' in such concentrations of literary texts on ostraca are potentially problematic because we know little about the transmission of literary texts in general (Quirke 1996: 393). The simplistic interpretation of all literary ostraca as 'scribal exercises' does not do justice to the range and variety of functions associated with that medium (Hagen 2012: 70–81; Parkinson 2009: 174; Quack 2005: 247),[12] and there is no evidence that the House of Life ever functioned as a school (Gardiner 1938: 175). In fact, there are no contemporary references to a House of Life, a school or a library at the Ramesseum,[13] although it does not seem unlikely that such an institution may have existed there, as well as elsewhere at Thebes.[14] Later classical tradition also preserve the memory of a library at the site (Diodorus Siculus 1.47.9), but this account has proved difficult to reconcile with the evidence and is perhaps best

[12] The same methodological problems are relevant to Annie Gasse's (2000) attempt to identify a school in the 'K2' area at Deir el-Medina based on the concentration of literary ostraca there. The archaeology simply identifies this as one area in which literary manuscripts were copied, and in the absence of clear indications of transmission patterns of literature, both within and outside a didactic context, it seems reductive to me to label all such areas 'schools'.

[13] I have been unable to verify the claims of Leblanc (2004: 93) based on the sources he refers to. The passages of P. BM EA 10068 (Leblanc 2004: 99 n. 4) simply show that the Ramesseum was still active under Ramesses IX, as noted by Brunner (1991: 18); they do not mention a House of Life. The tomb of Amenwahsu (TT 111; cited by Leblanc 2004: 99 n. 5) remains unpublished, but none of the sources I have consulted provide any link between the offices held by him and his relatives—scribes of the House of Life—and the Ramesseum (e.g. Amer 2000; Kitchen 1975–89: III, 303.12–307.13, *Das Digitale Schott-Archiv*, available at http://www.schott.uni-trier.de, accessed 22 June 2011, photos nos. 8122–4). There is to my knowledge only one tangential mention of a 'House of Books' at the Ramesseum, and this is as part of an epithet of Seshat, goddess of writing ('Mistress of the House of Books') on one of the columns (Kitchen 1975–89: II, 655.1), but this is a common epithet for that goddess and not a reference to the function of the surrounding structures.

[14] Graffiti in Theban hills on the West Bank, left by scribes associated with institutions in the area, include a certain Paneferemdjed, 'scribe of the House of Life', whose father Amennakhte was also a 'scribe of the House of Life' (Černý and Sadek 1970: nos. 1904, 2173); neither specify which temple or palace in the area they were associated with. On the papyrus fragments found at the Ramesseum, see §7.2.4.

viewed as an imaginative reconstruction,[15] much like the modern memory of the library of Alexandria (cf. Bagnall 2002; Ryholt and Barjamovic §1.1).

The House of Life appears to have functioned as a *scriptorium*, a place where Egyptian scribes and priests copied primarily religious compositions, but perhaps also literary texts and scientific treaties; this presupposes access to, and probably institutional storage of, collections of manuscripts that would correspond to most definitions of a library. The role played by such institutions in ancient Egyptian society, in particular as concerns the transmission and storage of texts, is difficult to pin down. There are indirect sources that hint at a more central role for Egyptian libraries than the scarce archaeological records might suggest: for example, although no palace library survives, and no such institution has been identified archaeologically within royal building complexes, there are sources mentioning a 'House of Life of the Lord of the Two Lands' (Ferry 1883: 142), 'divine books of the Lord of the Two Lands' (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 305.11), and a title 'Chief Keeper of the Writings of the Lord of the Two Lands' (Parkinson 1999c: 166, no. 78), indicating that royal libraries did exist (cf. Ryholt §10.1).

The question of what such libraries would have contained is not easily answered. Presumably they would have included ritual rolls with protective spells for the king, as well as execration spells against his enemies (see Ryholt §10.1). There is some indirect evidence for this in the records of a conspiracy against Ramesses III, where one of the conspirators acquired a roll of magical spells belonging to the king to assist them in their attack: 'he gave to him the writing of the rolls of Ramesses III' (Ritner 1993: 195–6, plausibly interpreting the roll as containing execration texts). Although it is difficult to identify papyrus manuscripts that belonged to royal libraries, there are some associated objects which stem from these institutions: these are the book-labels of Amenhotep III. The best-preserved one, now in the British Museum, is a light blue glazed faïence label with hieroglyphs inlaid in dark blue (EA 22878; Fig. 7.5a), bearing two registers of text: 'The perfect god, Nebmaatre (Amenhotep III), given life; Beloved of Ptah, King of the Two Lands; the king's wife, Tiye, may she live', and, below: 'The Book of the Moringa Tree'.[16] The provenance of the label was most probably the palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata (Thebes)—not Amarna as has sometimes been thought (Parkinson 1999a; *pace* Burkard 1980: 94)—and it seems to have been originally attached to a chest or other container of papyrus rolls to identify the contents (Parkinson 1999a: 52–3; Aufrère 1999: 219 fig. 1). A similar label now in Yale (Yale University Art Gallery 1936.100; Fig. 7.5b) must have been employed in the

[15] The different analyses are summarized by Burkard (1980: 102–4), based on the work of Helck (1969), Derchain (1965), and Wessetzky (1972).

[16] The reading of the name of the tree is contested. I follow Parkinson (1999a: 53); an older interpretation was 'Book of the Sycomore and the Moringa Tree'; cf. Aufrère (1999: 220–1).

(a)

(b)

Fig. 7.5. (a) A faïence label for a container for a papyrus roll belonging to King Amenhotep III; 'Book of the Moringa Tree'. British Museum EA 22878. (b) A faïence label for a container for a papyrus roll belonging to King Amenhotep III; 'Book of the Pomegranate'. Yale Art Gallery 1936.100.

(a) © Trustees of the British Museum. (b) © Yale University Art Gallery.

same manner, and this identified 'The Book of the Pomegranate' (Aufrère 1999: 221, figs 3–4); another faïence label in the Louvre (E 3043), also naming Amenhotep III, has been interpreted as a book label, although there the name of the book was not included (Friedman 1998: 80, 184 no. 24).[17] All three objects

[17] Other objects that were previously thought to represent similar royal book labels have since been reinterpreted, e.g. BM EA 22879 (Amenemhat IV; Parkinson 1999a: 53), and an

would have required considerable technical skill to produce compared to labels generally attached to commodities, even in royal contexts, and the contrast with the rough wooden labels from the tomb of Tutankhamun is striking.[18] The elaborate nature of the labels, as well as their highly worked form and the mentions of the name of Amenhotep III and his queen, suggest royal ownership of papyrus rolls, perhaps most plausibly in the context of a palace library of that king at Malqata. The inscriptions on the labels indicate that the rolls they were associated with both concerned different types of trees, and although there are no surviving contemporary compositions of a similar nature, there are treaties on snakes and plants from later periods of Egyptian history that may be comparable (Parkinson 1999a: 53). Significantly, the formulas and structures of presentation found in these later herbals match precisely that of the presentation of similar material in earlier medical texts, suggesting that the perceived absence of herbals in the New Kingdom is simply an accident of survival (Ryholt 2019: 378).

Another set of objects that might, in a sense, correspond to a royal library, are a group of model papyrus rolls in faïence discovered in the tomb of Tuthmose IV.[19] At least twenty-six of these objects were found, five of which bore the name of the king in hieroglyphs. There is some variation in size and appearance, but most are about 9–14 cm in height, with a diameter of 2–3 cm. They are not uniform in appearance, with some exhibiting more elaborate design details than others: examples include coiled black lines on the ends to indicate the rolled-up layers of papyrus, black lines to represent bands of string tied around the papyrus, or a ridge along the length of the cylinder to suggest the edge of the roll. Similarly, the five inscribed examples contain at least four distinct variants of the king's name and epithets, demonstrating that this is not simply a set of twenty-six mass-produced models. How this 'tomb-library' should be interpreted is not clear. It was not standard practice at the time to include this category of model objects in a funerary deposit—much

unnumbered object in a private collection (Akhenaten; Parkinson 1999a: 55 n. 14). It has also been suggested that Berlin 2045 (Akhenaten) may have been a book label (Weber 1969: 219 n. 735, accepted by Friedman 1998: 184 n. 39), although there is nothing on the label itself to suggest an association with books (Krauss 1994: 106–7).

[18] These wooden labels consist of roughly worked wood with hieratic text in black ink to identify the goods in the containers to which they were attached; examples include various types of linen, sandals, etc. (Černý 1965: pls IX–XI).

[19] Published in the *Catalogue Général* by Carter and Newberry (1904: 114–18, pl. 25), sixteen of the faïence papyrus rolls bear the numbers CGC 46419–46436, and another eight, also described in the same volume, are labelled 'Davis Collection'. This refers to the excavator, Theodore M. Davis, who soon after donated at least some of the latter to various museums like the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (inv. no. 03.1095), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (inv. nos. 30.8.32; 30.8.33; 30.8.34). The precise find-spot in the tomb is not recorded. I am grateful to Kim Ryholt and Thomas Christiansen who first mentioned the objects to me, and who kindly supplied photographs of the ones on display in Cairo.

less as real objects—so there is little contextual evidence to go on. The inclusion of a Book of the Dead was relatively common amongst those with access to the necessary resources, including royalty, but rarely as more than a single copy, so it seems unlikely that the models are meant as a substitute for funerary manuscripts.[20] The most plausible explanation seems to be that we are looking at an attempt to incorporate a library in a royal mortuary assemblage, but this too would be without a known parallel.[21]

7.4. INDIRECT EVIDENCE: TRANSMISSION PATTERNS, SCRIPTS, AND REFERENCE COPIES

Indirect evidence for the existence of temple libraries can be found in the transmission patterns for funerary literature, both in monumental and manuscript form. At Assiut, Jochem Kahl (1999: 291–8) has argued, based on the tomb inscriptions in the local necropolis, that local priests had access to a temple library with various funerary and ritualistic compositions, as well as astronomical texts and architectural works. The patterns of transmission of funerary manuscripts has been interpreted in the same way: a colophon in an 18th Dynasty Book of the Dead manuscript, for example, claims that it had been 'finished, from its beginning to its end, like (it) was found in writing, copied, illustrated, collated and checked sign for sign' (Naville 1908: pl. 33), suggesting that master-copies were available for collation, presumably in temple libraries. The quality of a copy—in terms of its legibility—would depend on the quality of the master-copy, and one of the least corrupt copies

[20] The potential range of types of mortuary manuscripts available for inclusion in high-status burial assemblages of the New Kingdom, beyond the common Book of the Dead rolls, is not easy to narrow down, however, and I know of no survey of papyri with religious compositions found in tombs of this period. The range of mortuary literature found on tomb walls, stelae, and coffins of the period is considerable (Assmann, Bommas, and Kucharek 2005), but how this textual tradition might relate to papyrus manuscripts in tomb contexts is unclear. A tantalizing example of an 18th Dynasty papyrus which probably comes from a tomb, based on its excellent state of preservation, is BM EA 10819 (unpublished). The papyrus consists of a collection of spells which were prepared for the burial rites of the scribe Pa-aa son of Rahotep, and the topics of the spells include libation offerings, the offering of bread, wine, meat, and incense, as well as rituals for festivals, for lighting the torch and the ka-chapel, and for spells connected with the reversion of offerings (Assmann, Bommas, and Kucharek 2005: 152–3, and *passim*); in short the kind of rituals appropriate for a burial ceremony. Whether it was deposited in the tomb of the deceased named in the rituals is not known, and it could perhaps also be interpreted as a functional ritual roll, read out by the priest responsible for the ceremony and ultimately deposited in another tomb than that of Pa-aa himself. I am grateful to Alexandra von Lieven for discussion of this material.

[21] In a pre-industrialized society a lack of uniformity in both shape and decoration is easily over-interpreted, but the range of different types among the faïence models may be of relevance to the nature of the deposit, perhaps suggesting a deliberate attempt at expressing variety.

of the Book of the Dead to survive (BM EA 9900) belonged to a Nebseni, 'Copyist in the Temples of the North and South' at Memphis (Lapp 2004: 23–8), suggesting a person with 'access to master copies of the temple libraries' (Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 60). Such a master copy may survive in the form of BM EA 10281, a leather roll with Book of the Dead spells from the 18th Dynasty (Quirke 1993: 46 no. 123): in this manuscript the original text simply had the word 'a man' where a regular copy would have had the name and titles of the owner. It was subsequently adapted to private use, however, and a scribe then went over the text and added the name of the new owner Nebimose, simultaneously changing the pronouns of the text from the first person to the name 'Nebimose' (Shorter 1934: 33–4). This leather roll would presumably have been a reference work which was copied in a temple workshop or library,[22] but at some point it was acquired by Nebimose and, in all likelihood, deposited in his tomb.[23]

Another category of evidence that may perhaps be used to posit links between manuscripts and temple libraries is the use of the linear hieroglyphic script, an archaic-looking script written vertically and commonly employed for funerary and ritualistic literature. Richard Parkinson (2009: 148; cf. Parkinson §3.1.1) has argued that manuscripts written in this script probably originated in temple contexts, or are copies of manuscripts which stemmed from such

[22] Leather rolls rarely survive in the archaeological record (list of New Kingdom manuscripts in Möller 1905: 4; cf. LÄ IV, 936–7), but were probably much more widely used than the survival pattern would indicate (Gestermann 1984: 701), not least because of their material properties; although limited in terms of size they were seen as more durable (Weber 1969: 13–17). The amount of work involved in their preparation (and re-use) meant that they were inherently more prestigious than papyrus manuscripts, and they may have been used predominantly in correspondingly high-status contexts: copies of literary texts like The Instruction of a Man for His Son (BM 10258) or The Instruction of Amenemhat (Louvre 4920) could perhaps also represent library copies (either private or institutional; neither have a recorded provenance), as could the mathematical roll in the British Museum (BM EA 10250). However, they were also used to record administrative texts that do not seem to have been particularly prestigious, indicating that they were not necessarily luxurious objects per se: the famous Berlin Leather Roll (de Buck 1938; Piccato 1997) has a 'literary' building inscription of Senwosret I on the front (palimpsest), but the back of the roll has a judicial text relating to a sculptor and some accounting notes relating to quantities of wood (Müller 2011). Crucially, the accounts are preserved on the final page of the front as well, where the building inscription has been written around the administrative text, showing that the latter was already there when the 'literary' text was copied (Goedicke 1974: pl. 9)—the roll was in other words used much like a regular papyrus manuscript. Along similar lines, a large Ramesside roll, consisting of separate pieces of leather stiched together, contained a range of administrative notes (name-lists, lists of grain, reeds and planks, brick deliveries, and a letter), as well as a list of five administrative (?) documents held by some 'governors' (*ḥꜣty-ʿ*), all of which were in turn explicitly said to be leather rolls (Kitchen 1975–89: II, 789–99). In later periods of Egyptian history, leather rolls seem to be associated with temples and libraries to a greater extent than in the earlier periods (Weber 1969: 14–15): see Ryholt §10.10, for a discussion.

[23] The archaeological provenance of the roll is unknown: it came to the British Museum from the sale of the second collection of Giovanni Anastasi (Bierbrier 2012: 19–20) in 1839 (Quirke 1993: 3, 46).

contexts, and that those copies found in private hands reflect a pattern of transmission whereby temple libraries were utilized by personnel associated with the temple, or individuals with indirect ties to such institutions. This may offer an explanation for a curious set of literary texts written in this way. The best-preserved one is part of a limestone writing tablet from Deir el-Medina where The Instruction of Amenemhat had been copied in vertical columns using the linear hieroglyphic script, between red dividing lines (O. LACMA M80.203.204 = O. Michaelides 50; Goedicke and Wente 1962: pls 1–2). Out of the thousands of literary ostraca, only two other examples of literary texts written like this are known to me, both with copies of Middle Kingdom wisdom instructions: ostracon Deir el-Medina 1175 with The Instruction of Khety on the front and Amenemhat on the back (Posener 1951—1952—1972: pl. 26 + 26a), and ostracon Deir el-Medina 1346, also with Amenemhat (Posener 1977: pl. 8). The suggestion that they may represent copies made from a master-copy from a temple library presupposes the presence of these types of literary texts in such collections, but this is not implausible, even in the absence of surviving libraries. A Ramesside papyrus in Berlin (P 15779) contains a list of books, the majority of which are religious and ritualistic in nature, judging by their titles, and so presumably related to a temple context (Fischer-Elfert 2016). Among the books listed there is a damaged entry reading 'Instruction of [. . .]' (*sbꜣyt ỉr.n* [. . .]), clearly indicating the presence of one composition from the wisdom instruction genre, and suggesting that literary texts in a broader sense could be included in a New Kingdom temple library.[24]

One of the most central literary texts in the New Kingdom scribal tradition, copied and read by students and experienced scribes in both Upper and Lower Egypt, is the Satirical Letter of Hori (= P. Anastasi I; Fischer-Elfert 1986; 1992). It professes to be written by a senior scribe in response to an ill-phrased and ill-informed letter from a colleague, Amenemope, berating the latter for his lack of knowledge of grammar, epistolographic formulae, geography, literature, and mathematics; in short, all the aspects of intellectual culture that an Egyptian scribe should be versed in. In a passage where Amenemope is derided for his lack of knowledge about the classical literature—he has quoted a maxim from The Instruction of Hordedef but seems to have misunderstood its meaning—Hori elaborates on his shortcomings regarding this important aspect of scribal identity: 'you are supposed to be a scribe at the head of his colleagues, with the wisdom instructions engraved upon your heart.'

[24] The books are listed under a heading of which only traces are preserved and the key word is missing in a lacuna; the line is perhaps to be read 'List of [papyrus rolls in] the chests (*ꜥfdw*) of the [. . .]'. Divine names mentioned in the titles include Amun, Thoth, Hathor, and Horus, and there are several 'hymns' (*dwꜣ.w*) among the compositions, as well as more narrowly ritualistic titles.

The paragraph immediately following concerns a library (*pr-mḏꜣt*) which is said to be 'hidden' (*ḥꜣp*) from the addressee, and although the context is partially broken, the rhetorical point made by Hori seems to be that his addressee is too dependent on this library, rather than relying on his own acquired knowledge (Fischer-Elfert 1992: 98–9; Wente 1990: 103).[25] The nature of the library referred to here is not clear, although the mentioning of 'its ennead of gods' and 'hieroglyphs' (*mdw nṯr*) later on in the text may suggest an institutional collection of material that included religious works written in (linear?) hieroglyphs, but there is nothing in Amenemope's title, 'scribe of recruits', that would indicate a temple context per se. The passage illustrates the concept of the library as a repository of information, available for consultation, but also suggests that the ideal, for a scribe 'at the head of his colleagues', was to not have to constantly consult it.

7.5. PRIVATE LIBRARIES

There are few excavated groups of literary papyri from the New Kingdom that can be said to have constituted a private library, as in earlier periods (Morenz 1996: 154–8), but those that survive reveal patterns of transmission and processes of canonization of 'classical' literary works. One example is the library of Qenherkhepshef and his family from Deir el-Medina, discussed in detail below (§7.5.5), but there are also a number of other cases where one can plausibly reconstruct collections of manuscripts that might be interpreted as personal libraries, despite the lack of an archaeological context.[26]

7.5.1. The 18th Dynasty Library Bought by Golénischeff

A group of 18th Dynasty (*c.*1500 BCE) literary manuscripts in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Art in Moscow (Caminos 1956; Quack 1992: 10–11; Quirke 2004: 17), bought in Thebes as a single lot by the Russian Orientalist Wladimir Golénischeff on one of his trips to Egypt (Golénischeff 1913: 4), constitute one of the earliest New Kingdom private libraries. The rolls are very fragmentary

[25] For the sense of the passage, compare the earlier lines in the text where Hori expresses his disgust with Amenemope's reliance on advisors for his letter-writing: 'Knowing your character, I thought you would answer it (i.e. the letter) yourself, but your advisors stand behind you . . . while one suggests praises (*ḥsy*) and two suggest insults (*sḥwr*), another stands by instructing them about the appropriate structure (*tp-rd*)' (Fischer-Elfert 1986: 59–62; 1992: 60–3).

[26] I have deliberately excluded a discussion of the Late Ramesside Letters and the administrative and literary material which may or may not be associated with them: for an overview and a discussion of the problems of interpretation, see Demarée (2008).

and the original find seems to have been broken up, because the main part of one of the rolls (P. BM EA 10509, with The Instruction of Ptahhotep) was purchased by the British Museum through an agent in Egypt in 1899. The fact that the Russian fragments were bought together, can be dated to the same period on palaeographical grounds, and contain two or more rolls in the same hand, provides strong circumstantial evidence that they were originally found as a group. The most likely find-spot is probably Thebes (Parkinson 2002: 311), but Saqqara has also been suggested (Quirke 1996: 390; 2004: 17). The group consisted, as far as can be reconstructed, of at least six separate rolls (Table 7.1), most of which were literary (Quirke 2004: 17).

With the possible exception of P. Moscow 167 these are Middle Kingdom compositions (Parkinson 2002: 311; but cf. Quack 2004a: 359), with an

Table 7.1. A list of manuscripts and compositions belonging to a private library of the 18th Dynasty.

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. BM EA 10509 + Moscow frags. (now in British Museum)	The Instruction of Ptahhotep	Blank	Five full pages and substantial parts of a further three preserved, *c.*24 × 210 cm; each column has 16–17 lines of hieratic, with rubrics and verse-points	Budge (1910: pls 34–8); Caminos (1956: pls 28–30)
P. Moscow 4657 (Pushkin Museum)	The Story of Sinuhe	Blank?	Fragmentary roll, with an estimated page height of *c.*25 cm; each column has *c.*16 lines of hieratic, with rubrics and verse-points	Caminos (1956: 24–5); Maspero (1908: 11–12)
P. Moscow, unnumbered (Pushkin Museum)	Fishing and Fowling	Blank	Fragmentary, *c.*25 cm in height; each column of text has 18–19 lines of hieratic, with rubrics but no verse-points	Caminos (1956: 22–39: pls 8–16)
P. Moscow, unnumbered (Pushkin Museum)	The Sporting King	Blank	Fragmentary, *c.*25 cm in height; each column of text has 15–16 lines of hieratic, with rubrics and verse-points; some corrections	Caminos (1956: 1–21; pls 1–7)
P. Moscow 4658 (Pushkin Museum)	The Instruction for Merikare	Blank?	Fragmentary; with rubrics and verse-points; superlinear additions and corrections in same hand	Caminos (1956: pls 26–7); Golénischeff (1913: pls suppl. A–C); Quack (1992 : 10–11)
P. Moscow 167 (Pushkin Museum)	A mythological story	Blank	Too fragmentary for measurements, with rubrics and verse-points; some corrections	Caminos (1956: 40–50; pls 17–23); Korostovtsev (1960a)

emphasis on classical works like The Instruction of Ptahhotep, The Story of Sinuhe, and The Instruction for Merikare; these would have been several hundred years old by the time they were copied onto these rolls. No palimpsest traces were noted by the editors, and the back of every roll appears to be empty, perhaps suggesting that the owners and copyists procured the papyrus rolls specifically for the purpose of having literary texts inscribed on them (cf. the Chester Beatty papyri discussed in §7.5.5). Some of the manuscripts appear to have been written by the same hand (Fishing and Fowling, and Merikare; Caminos 1956: 1), and the quality both of the hand and of the text is noteworthy; 'extremely good . . . singularly free from errors and textual corruptions' (Caminos 1956: 3). The other papyri are of a similar quality, characterized by elegant and competent hands, and the scribe responsible for The Sporting King, like his colleague who wrote Fishing and Fowling, has taken care to lay out the text in such a way that the writing does not cross joins (Caminos 1956: 1, 22),[27] and there are corrections by the copyist himself in several manuscripts, showing a concern for legibility and accuracy (Caminos 1956: 1, 22, 40). The presence of separate hands may indicate a gradual process of accumulation of literary material over time, but the range appears narrower than that of comparable collections of such material, such as the Ramesseum library (Parkinson §3.6.2.3) and the library of Qenherkhepshef and his family (discussed §7.5.3). Because the group was broken up after it was found, the original extent of the library is impossible to reconstruct, and it is likely that there are other extant literary and non-literary papyrus fragments belonging to this group, but in the absence of direct joins these cannot be identified. Although the state of preservation of many of the rolls—all except the copy of Ptahhotep consist of fragments only—are comparable to that of the New Kingdom literary papyri discovered during the excavation of brick chambers near the Ramesseum (Quibell 1898: pls XLII–XLVII, discussed under §7.2.4 above), the state of preservation of P. BM EA 10509 (with Ptahhotep) seems incompatible with such an archaeological context, so perhaps the rolls should be interpreted as a personal library deposited in a tomb (Quirke 1996: 388).

7.5.2. The Perunefer Library

There is another group of 18th Dynasty papyri, now in St Petersburg and London, that has been interpreted as a single find, probably from a tomb in the vicinity of Memphis (Quack 1992: 10; Pasquali 2007; Table 7.2).

[27] I have followed the traditional classification of Fishing and Fowling and The Sporting King as distinct compositions (Parkinson 2002: 226–32, 311–12), but it has been suggested that despite the physical separation on two seemingly separate rolls they should in fact be considered parts of a single composition (Quirke 2004: 206).

Table 7.2. A list of manuscripts and compositions belonging to a private library from Perunefer, dated to the 18th Dynasty.

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Leningrad 1116A (Hermitage Museum)	Accounts: quantities of grain in various locations	The Instruction for King Merikare	Eighteen (recto) and thirteen (verso) columns; *c.*18 × 235 cm; rubrics and verse-points throughout verso	Golénischeff (1913)
P. Leningrad 1116B (Hermitage Museum)	Accounts: the production of timber, mostly decorative, some in connection with 'the estate of the king' (*pr-nswt*); also various other wooden objects (some architectural)	The Prophecy of Neferti	*c.*16 × 123 cm	Golénischeff (1913)
P. BM EA 10056 (British Museum)	Accounts (in two different hands): records of a royal dockyard with timber provided for various ships and captains	Accounts: records of the royal dockyard with timber provided for various ships and captains	Eighteen (recto) and sixteen (verso) columns; *c.*17 × 299 cm; use of red ink in headings, totals, etc.	Glanville (1931; 1933)

In terms of format the two St Petersburg papyri were originally full-height rolls (36 cm or higher) when the administrative texts on the front were written, and then subsequently halved before the literary texts on the back were copied (Černý 1977: 22). Glanville (1931: 108) thought that these two half-rolls were originally a single roll (P. Leningrad 1116B being the top half, and 1116A the bottom one), but he admitted that the texts dealt with different materials, and even noted that two different scribes seem to have been responsible (e.g. Glanville 1931: 107; cf. Gardiner 1914: 20–1).

That the three papyri seem to have originated as a single group has been recognized for some time (Glanville 1931: 107). One argument in favour of this is the hands involved: the person who wrote the administrative text on the front of P. Leningrad 1116B may also have been responsible for P. BM EA 10056.[28]

[28] This is 'hand A' in Glanville's analysis (1931: 107). Note that his reference to the 'verso' of P. Leningrad 1116B, adopted from Golénischeff's original publication (1913), is actually the

Another is the subject matter. The administrative text on the front of BM EA 10056 deals with quantities of timber being issued for ships (and captains), and mentions crews of craftsmen that are working in the royal dockyard in Perunefer over a period of eight months. The work is partly overseen by the king's son Amenhotep, presumably the same individual who later became King Amenhotep II (Glanville 1931: 106). The administrative text on the front of Leningrad 1116B similarly deals with quantities of wood (mainly decorative, like ebony; also some ivory), in some cases explicitly said to be for ships; both papyri also refer to provision for the royal barge (P. Leningrad 1116B, line 56; P. BM EA 10056, verso, col. 9 line 11). Leningrad 1116B is, however, broader in scope than the British Museum papyrus, and may relate to the management of a palace storehouse rather than the same dockyard. Finally, both BM EA 10056 and Leningrad 1116A mention the rare place-name Perunefer, which in the former (Glanville 1931: 7*, col. 9 line 12) is the site where the royal barge is being built, and in the latter it forms part of the name of a local form of Seth in connection with the provision of offerings (Golénischeff 1913: pl. 16, line 42). The evidence is thus circumstantial, but it does suggest a common archaeological context for these three rolls: that context is likely to have been a tomb, based on the state of preservation.

The location of Perunefer has been much debated with both Memphis (Jeffreys 2006) and Tell el-Dab'a (Bietak 2005; 2009) being suggested. Whatever the case may be, the owner of the rolls was presumably someone who was in a position to acquire documents from the institutions to which the administrative accounts pertain. The clearest indication of ownership of the papyri is found on P. Leningrad 1116A, where an exceptionally long and detailed colophon names both the copyist and his brother:

> It has come to a good end, as found in writing, as what was written by the scribe [Kha]emwaset for himself, the truly silent one, good of character, patient of heart, beloved by people, who did not stand in the eye of another, who did not speak badly of a servant to his master, a scribe of accounts, skilled one in the work of Thoth, the scribe Khaemwaset, and for his brother, his beloved of heart, the truly silent one, good of character, skilled one in the work of Thoth, the scribe Mahu, son of [blank].
>
> (translated from Gólenischeff 1913: pl. 14; cf. Quack 1992: 10)

The statement that the literary text had been copied for the scribe's own use is unusual, but the practice it describes must have been common. Unfortunately the titles and epithets of the owners are largely honorific, and do not allow for a further reconstruction of their status, place of work, or background. The fragmentary remains of the colophon on the other St Petersburg papyrus (1116 B, *Neferti*) does not preserve the name of the copyist (Golénischeff 1913: pl. xxv).

recto (cf. Gardiner 1914: 20), and that the correct labelling has been used in table 2 (the literary texts are written on the back or verso of the rolls, i.e. across the fibres running vertically).

7.5.3. The Saqqara Library

Another possible private library is a group of papyri which seem to have been found together at Saqqara in the first decades of the eighteenth century (Table 7.3). All were bought in 1828 from the antiquities collection of Giovanni Anastasi (1780–1860), the Swedish-Norwegian consul to Egypt (Bierbrier 2012: 19–20). The arguments for the group constituting a single original find are discussed by Enmarch (2005: 2–5), and can be summarized as follows: (1) they were all acquired by Anastasi, who claimed they all came from Saqqara; (2) some of the rolls exhibit strikingly similar patterns of damage; (3) many seem to be dated to the reign of Ramesses II;[29] and (4) many of them relate to individuals or institutions associated with prince Khaemwaset. In particular the ship's log of P. Leiden 350, dated to year 52 of Ramesses II, refers throughout to his son, Prince Khaemwaset, as the high priest of Ptah at Memphis, suggesting that the ship belonged either to him personally or to the temple.[30] Several of the letters of P. Leiden 360–368 also relate to people known to be associated with Khaemwaset (Janssen 1961: 6), and P. Leiden 368 is addressed to Khaemwaset himself: primarily concerned with the apprehension of some messengers and their accomplices, the letter also mentions the temple of Ptah and a harvest (Janssen 1960: 45).[31] The letters on the back of P. Leiden I 348, designated—I think wrongly—as a Late Egyptian Miscellany by Gardiner (1937: 132),[32] similarly deal with the temple of Ptah at Memphis: here Kawiser notifies Bakenptah that a statue of the king has been delivered for

[29] The date of the literary manuscripts is based on palaeography, an inexact science at the best of times (Hagen 2008: 31–2, with references), and some manuscripts have been thought to date to different periods: P. Leiden I 344, for example, was described as 'broadly Ramesside' (Enmarch 2005: 10), while P. Leiden I 346, was ascribed to the middle of the 18th Dynasty (Bommas 1999: 6–7). Any analysis of the palaeography has restricted validity because of the paucity of securely datable literary manuscripts of the 18th Dynasty from Saqqara: without a statistically useful dataset against which to compare the Leiden manuscripts the dating question cannot be resolved based on palaeography alone. The variation in hands among the manuscripts is not a convincing argument against the interpretation of them as having been found together—other known libraries show that they could be built up over generations, which would explain the presence of manuscripts written 100–150 years apart.

[30] The log-book, which covers a period of fourteen days during which the boat travelled southwards from the capital Piramesse to Heliopolis, mentions letters being despatched from the ship to the high priest (*sm*) at semi-regular intervals (roughly every two days). It also describes some of the crew as 'people of the high priest (*sm*) of Ptah, Khaemwaset' (col. IV, line 4; Janssen 1961: 6, 39).

[31] There is a striking focus on Ptah in the opening greeting formulas in the letters of P. Leiden I 360–8; this supports the Saqqara provenance given for the papyri by Anastasi (Janssen 1960: 31).

[32] The designation, which implies that the letters should be seen as model letters, rests primarily on the presence of a literary *topos* in the fragmentary first letter ('the inundation, possessor of fish, plentiful of birds, overflows the mountains') which is used in another Late Egyptian Miscellanies manuscript (P. Anastasi IV = BM EA 10249, col. 10, line 7). However, as Caminos (1957: 175) noted, the *topos* is attested in other contexts, and I do not see why its use in P. Leiden 348 would imply that the letter is a model letter, instead of a copy of a genuine message written by Kawiser (or Bakenptah).

Table 7.3. A list of manuscripts possibly found together in a tomb at Saqqara (*c.*1200 BCE).

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Leiden I 343 +345 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Various magico-medical texts translated from a Semitic language	Various magico-medical texts (partly duplicating the recto but occasionally with more modern grammar)	Twenty-eight (recto) and twenty-five (verso) columns; *c.*495 cm long [height not given]; some verse-points and rubrics; verso partly palimpsest	Massart (1954)
P. Leiden I 344 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	The Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All	Hymn(s) to Amun (copied after the text on the recto)	Seventeen (recto) and twelve (verso) columns; *c.*18 × 375 cm; rubrics but no verse-points	Enmarch (2005; 2008); Zandee (1992)
P. Leiden I 346 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Magical texts against epagomenal days, and for the production of a linen amulet	A few illegible signs (mounted on paper)	Three columns; *c.*16.5 × 73 cm; verse-points and rubrics	Stricker (1948); Bommas (1999)
P. Leiden I 347 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Magical texts, including spells for the production of a protective amulet of linen	Blank	Thirteen columns; *c.*16 x 222 cm; verse-points and rubrics	Massy (1885); Müller (2008: 265–74)
P. Leiden I 348 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Magical texts against 'fears' (palimpsest: accounts)	A (model?) letter (col. 1); magical texts (cols 2–3); two titularies of Ramesses II in large uncial characters, written perpendicular to each other (cols 4–5); a letter from the scribe Kawiser to the scribe Bakenptah (cols 6–9); a letter from Bakenptah to the scribe Kawiser (cols 9–10)	Twelve (recto) and thirteen (verso) columns; *c.*18 x 350 cm; some rubrics	Borghouts (1971); Gardiner (1937)
P. Leiden I 349 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Magical texts against scorpions	Titulary of Ramesses II; (model ?) letter from the scribe Qenamun to the charioteer Huy of the stable of Ramesses II, mentioning some soldiers south of Memphis	Three columns (recto; verso written perpendicularly); *c.*22.5 x 61 cm; rubrics and verse-points on the recto	de Buck and Stricker (1940); Wente (1990: 123–4 no. 145)

(*continued*)

Table 7.3. Continued

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
PROBABLY BELONGING TO THE SAME LIBRARY:				
P. Leiden I 350 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Hymn to Amun	A log book (written after the hymns on the recto) from a ship associated with the temple of Ptah at Memphis; a final column of the hymn from the recto (col. 6)	Recto text written perpendicularly; six columns on the verso; *c.*38 x 89 cm; rubrics and verse-points throughout recto	Zandee (1948); Janssen (1961)
P. Leiden I 351 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Journal with daily entries from months 2 and 3 of Peret (commodities given to various men and women)	A few administrative notes (commodities and sums)	*c.*20 × 19 cm	Facsimile in Leemans (1842–88: Vol. II, pl. clxviii); otherwise unpublished (pace Enmarch 2005: 5)
P. Leiden I 352 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Empty	List of property stolen by a female servant of the charioteer Pekhari (various bronze vessels and textile pieces)	*c.*17 × 20 cm	Černý (1937)
P. Leiden I 360 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the servant Meresyotef to the chantress of Isis Tenro	Address	*c.*22 × 20.5 cm	Janssen (1960: 40, pls 3–4); Wente (1990: 33–4 no. 28)
P. Leiden I 361 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the servant Shemsenptah to the servant Petersuemhab (greeting formula mentioning Ptah)	Address	*c.*11.5 × 21 cm	Janssen (1960: 40–1, pl. 4); Wente (1990: 34 no. 30)
P. Leiden I 362 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the singer Pentaweret and the singer Paukhed to the princess Isisnofret (a daughter of Ramesses II; greeting formula mentioning Ptah)	Blank (no address)	*c.*16 × 19.5 cm	Janssen (1960: 41–2, pl. 5); Wente (1990: 33 no. 27)

P. Leiden I 363 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the servant Meresyotef to the servant Sebtyemptah (greeting formula mentioning Ptah)	Address	*c.*14.5 × 20 cm	Janssen (1960: 42, pl. 6); Wente (1990: 34 no. 29)
P. Leiden I 364 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the servant Mermaat to the chantress of Amun Hathor (greeting formula mentioning Ptah and Re-Horakhty)	Address	*c.*30.5 × 20 cm	Janssen (1960: 42, pls 7–8); Wente (1990: 33 no. 26)
P. Leiden I 365 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the [servant] Meryiotef to the [servant] Rudefneheh and some chantresses of Amun (greeting formula mentioning Amun-Re)	Letter continued; address	*c.*26 × 20.5 cm	Janssen (1960: 42–3, pls 9–10); Wente (1990: 32–3 no. 25)
P. Leiden I 366 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the servant Meryiotef to the chantress of Amun Ernute (greeting formula mentioning Amun-Re and Re-Horakhty)	Letter continued; address	*c.*28 × 20 cm	Janssen (1960: 44, pls 11–12); Wente (1990: 32 no. 24)
P. Leiden I 367 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the servant Meryiotef to prince Ramesses Maatptah	Address	*c.*27 × 20 cm	Janssen (1960: 44–5, pls 8, 13); Wente (1990: 31–2 no. 23)
P. Leiden I 368 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)	Letter from the overseer of cattle Sunero to the high priest (*sm*) of Ptah, prince Khaemwaset mentioning the temple of Ptah, a harvest, and the search for some individuals	Blank (no address)	*c.*31 × 20 cm	Janssen (1960: 45–6, pl. 14); Wente (1990: 31 no. 22)

installation 'in the temple of Ptah, South-of-his-Wall, Lord of Ankhtawy' (Caminos 1954: 492), and that he himself intended to 'wait for the ships which ferry the harvest-tax of the temple of Ptah under the authority of my lord'. The evidence is circumstantial but it seems, on balance, plausible that the group of manuscripts originated as a single group of texts, probably found in a tomb at Saqqara.

The composition of the library—if the interpretation of the rolls as one group is accepted—is comparable to the roughly contemporary library of Qenher-khepshef and his family from Deir el-Medina (Table 7.5). Literary texts are relatively few (The Dialogue of Ipuwer; several hymns to Amun, one of which, unusually, occupies a full-height roll: Černý 1977: 16), with the majority of the group consisting of magico-medical texts (against various illnesses, scorpions and 'fears', and for the production of amulets); the apparent absence of classical literary compositions is difficult to interpret because the current list of manuscripts is unlikely to be complete. The collection also includes an administrative document (a re-used literary roll which was inscribed with the ship's log) and a collection of letters. One is an official dispatch dealing with the tracking down of staff belonging to the estate of the high priest, and the remaining eight letters (six of which were found still sealed) are essentially social in content and were presumably sent along with the official message for convenience. The letters appear, then, to be a set of messages sent from the capital Piramesse to recipients in the Saqqara area. There is otherwise little information to go on regarding the social context of the Saqqara library: many of the letters are written by, or addressed to, people with titles like 'servant' (*sḏmw*), 'singer' (*ḥsy*), 'chantress' (*šmʿy*), as well as an 'overseer of cattle', but these are not very informative in terms of status because their hierarchical positions are dependent on the institutions or individuals to which they were attached (which is never stated in the letters). More tellingly, several of the letters address or mention high-ranking individuals, including Prince Ramesses-Maatptah, Prince Merenptah (who later became King Merenptah), Princess Isisnofret, and Prince Khaemwaset; the impression—and it cannot be put more strongly than that—is that of a library belonging to a fairly high-ranking individual with links to both the temple of Ptah at Memphis and to the royal family.

7.5.4. The Library of Inena

Another case where a personal library of this period can be partly reconstructed is that of the scribe Inena (Quirke 1996: 391; 2004: 17–18). Inena was a scribe who appears to have worked as an assistant to a 'scribe of the Treasury' called Kagebu during the reigns of Merenptah and Seti II (*c.*1213–1200 BCE), and Inena himself seems to have had ties with that institution: on the back of

one of the rolls is a list of nine scribes belonging to the same department (Gardiner 1937: 55). He mentioned his superior in several (model) letters on some of the rolls, but there is otherwise little internal evidence regarding his life or career, and he is not known from any external source (Ragazzoli 2012). The papyrus rolls that can be attributed to him are listed in Table 7.4.

In general the manuscripts are well preserved, suggesting they were found in a funerary context, and they display a highly accomplished hand. The numerous corrections are the result of a conscientious scribe at work, and the trials of rare or complicated signs in the margin show a concern for calligraphy: these manuscripts are not 'school exercises' (*Schülerhandschriften*) as has sometimes been claimed (Hagen 2006, against Erman 1925 and Quack 2010). One noteworthy aspect of the papyri is the general primacy of the literary compositions: there are very few notes on the back of these rolls, and although many (all?) are palimpsest, they have been carefully washed and prepared for re-use. In terms of content there is, as in the 18th Dynasty library discussed above (§7.5.2), an emphasis on canonical Middle Kingdom literature: The Hymn to the Nile, as well as the wisdom instructions Amenemhat and Khety, belong to the classics of the age and were copied and read, at least ideally, by every literate person. The presence of multiple complete copies in this collection, in Inena's own hand, is curious, and is perhaps best explained by this centrality of the compositions in the literary tradition. The collection also includes a literary text in a more contemporary linguistic register, The Tale of the Two Brothers, of which this papyrus is the only extant copy. The other three manuscripts contain texts from the genre known to Egyptologists as Late Egyptian Miscellanies, a genre-label partly based on ancient Egyptian terminology (*sbꜣyt šꜥ.wt*, 'Instruction of documents'), which conceals a range of very diverse compositions. They include letters, some written with tell-tale verse-points indicating that they are model letters, interspersed with short literary compositions, often on the superiority of the scribal profession, or the inferiority of others (e.g. soldiers), as well as brief religious compositions like prayers or hymns, descriptions of lazy students, and long flowery formulas of flattery for superiors. Their function seems to have been partly as a 'note-book' for scribes, kept as reference works for letter-writing, but also as repositories of a wide range of shorter literary texts, and they were copied and kept by scribes throughout their lives and careers (Hagen 2006). What we see in the collection of texts in the library of Inena is a selection of the types of manuscripts and literary compositions that formed the core of the scribal tradition of New Kingdom Egypt.[33]

[33] The relationship of this group to contemporary Memphite manuscripts, including other copies of the Late Egyptian Miscellanies, is not clear, and they could perhaps come from a single find, as suggested by Stephen Quirke (1996: 391; 2004: 18). In that case one would be looking at a more complex collection of manuscripts, involving more individuals over a longer period of time, but in the absence of an archaeological context this is perhaps overly speculative (but cf. Spalinger 2002: 106–33).

Table 7.4. A list of manuscripts belonging to the library of Inena, a scribe associated with the royal treasury (*c.*1200 BCE).

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Anastasi IV (British Museum, P. BM EA 10249)	Late-Egyptian Miscellany	Various short notes including a list of treasury scribes; mention of the king being in Piramesse; a letter on progress of work	Eighteen columns, many largely intact; *c.*27 × 493 cm; the front is palimpsest throughout; some use of verse-points and 'pause'-signs between sections; some corrections	Gardiner (1937: 34–56); Birch (1841–60: pls LXXXII–XCVIII)
P. Anastasi VI (British Museum, P. BM EA 10245)	Late-Egyptian Miscellany	Short notes, including a date	88 lines, *c.*24 × 208 cm; written across the horizontal fibres; some verse-points and corrections	Gardiner (1937: 72–8); Birch (1841–60: pls CXXII–CXXVII)
P. Anastasi VII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10222)	The Instruction of Khety; colophon; The Hymn to the Nile; colophon	A sketch of a lion; administrative entries; beginning of a letter from Inena to 'his lord'; remains of administrative notes	Twelve columns preserved; *c.*24 × 490 cm; rubrics, verse-points and corrections	Birch (1841–60: pls CXXVIII–CXXXIX)
P. d'Orbiney (British Museum, P. BM EA 10183)	The Story of the Two Brothers; colophon	Short administrative notes mentioning 'rations	Twenty columns, complete at end; *c.*20 × 550 cm; rubrics and verse-points	Gardiner (1932: 9–30); Birch (1841–60: pls IX–XVIII)
P. Sallier II (British Museum, P. BM EA 10182)	The Instruction of Amenemhat; colophon; The Instruction of Khety; colophon; The Hymn to the Nile; colophon	Blank	Fourteen columns, complete at end; *c.*21 × 462 cm; verse-points and rubrics	Budge (1923: pls LXIII–LXXVI)
P. Koller (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, P. Berlin 3043)	Late-Egyptian Miscellany (four model letters)	A drawing of a crown; short hieratic inscription	Five columns; *c.*21 × 136 cm; no verse-points or rubrics; two 'pause'-signs	Gardiner (1932: 116–20); Ragazzoli (forthcoming)

7.5.5. The Library of Qenherkhepshef and His Family

On Monday, 20 February 1928, the French archaeologist Bernard Bruyère was excavating in the necropolis of the ancient village Deir el-Medina at Thebes, where the workers on the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings were buried, and he discovered a cache of papyri (Bruyère 1929: 120). The find was made to the west of the village itself, south of tomb chapel no. 1166 and east of no. 250, in a trapezoid space formed by the wall of an unnumbered chapel on the north side and the side of a small pyramid to the south (Figs 7.6 and 7.7).

Not much is known about the archaeological context apart from the location—in his journal Bruyère simply noted that the papyri were found during clearing work (Černý 1978: vii; cf. Koenig 1981).[34] The day after the discovery, three of his workers stole major parts of the find, and the papyri were dispersed and sold on the market, in time making their way to collections in Cairo, Geneva, London, Oxford, and Dublin. In 1982, Pieter W. Pestman published an article where he attempted to reconstruct the original find, and the following summary of the history and contents of the papyri owes much to his pioneering efforts (Pestman 1982). Pestman was able to establish the general contents of the library (Table 7.5), which comprised texts from a wide variety of genres but with an emphasis on magico-medical literature that echoes the earlier Middle Kingdom library found beneath the Ramesseum (cf. Parkinson §3.6.2.3).

Of forty-three individual manuscripts ascribed to the original find, twelve are primarily magico-medical in content and structure,[35] while four others have such texts on the back.[36] One papyrus (P. Chester Beatty IX) contains the Daily Offering Ritual, a ritual text for use in the daily cult ceremonies of the deified Amenhotep I, the 'patron saint' of the Deir el-Medina community (Černý 1927; Tacke 2003; 2013; Rose 2008). This text is paralleled in at least two other manuscripts from the site, one papyrus and one ostracon (Cooney and McClain 2005),[37] and the presence of a copy in this personal library suggests that one or more of the owners took part in, and perhaps personally conducted, the religious ceremonies connected with that cult. The roll shows

[34] The excavation diaries of Bruyére are now conveniently available on the website of the IFAO: http://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/bruyere/ (accessed 10 January 2012).

[35] P. Chester Beatty VI; VII; VIII; X; XI; XII; XIII; XIV; XV; XVI; P. Geneva MAH 15274.

[36] P. Chester Beatty V; IX; XVIII; P. DeM I.

[37] It is occasionally stated that this parallel papyrus manuscript was found at Deir el-Medina in 1908, more specifically in a chapel dedicated to Amenhotep I and Nefertari (e.g. Cooney and McClain 2005: 44; Valbelle 1985: 338–9; Gardiner 1935; I, 79), which would make it the only known example of a ritual roll having being found *in situ* near its place of use. This seems to be based on an original suggestion made by Botti (1923: 161–3) and then Černý (1927: 196 n. 2), but it is unlikely to be true: Roccati (1984: 15) reported, based on archival work at the Egyptian Museum in Turin, that Ernesto Schiaparelli, the supposed excavator, had in fact bought the roll in Thebes.

signs of heavy use and was mended at least once by its owners (Gardiner 1935: 78), one of whom—perhaps significantly—carried a priestly title ('Priest of Amun-of-the-good-encounter'; Bruyère 1939: 351).

The library also contained a range of letters, the majority of which belong to the final stages of the collection. These were mostly written by or to a carpenter called Maanakhtef, a descendant of Qenherkhepshef, and the letters often deal with the production of, or payment for, boxes, beds, and other wooden objects (Pestman 1982: 162).

Eight of the rolls are primarily literary in nature: the front of these include the mythological story The Contendings of Horus and Seth and some love songs (P. Chester Beatty I), The Story of Truth and Falsehood (P. Chester Beatty II), a collection of hymns (P. Chester Beatty IV), The Instruction of Ani (P. Deir el-Medina I), a Late Egyptian Miscellany-type roll on the superiority of the scribal profession (P. Chester Beatty XVIII), a copy of the Satirical Letter of Hori (P. Chester Beatty XVII), and two rolls with the Middle Kingdom classics The Hymn to the Nile (P. Chester Beatty V) and The Instruction of Khety (P. Chester Beatty XIX). These are written on the front of the papyrus, i.e. with the fibres running horizontally, showing that the literary compositions were seen as the primary texts when they were copied. In some cases the back was similarly used for literary texts,[38] but only rarely does a roll have a literary text on the back with the front being occupied by a non-literary text.[39] Instead, the back of literary manuscripts was frequently used, at least in part, for administrative notes (P. Chester Beatty I, II), and this is true also for those rolls with magico-medical texts on the front (P. Chester Beatty XI; XVI; P. Geneva MAH 15274). The longest and best-preserved roll, P. Chester Beatty I, exemplifies the practice (Figs 7.8a and 7.8b).

This papyrus is just over five metres long, and with a height of *c.*21 cm corresponds to the usual 'half-roll' format of the New Kingdom (Černý 1977: 16).[40] The roll was used and re-used several times, but it is impossible to reconstruct its previous stages of existence based on the scant traces left.

[38] e.g. P. Chester Beatty I, (with various texts including a hymn to a Theban god, some love songs and a royal eulogy); P. Chester Beatty IV (with a wisdom instruction and Late Egyptian Miscellany-type texts).

[39] e.g. Chester Beatty III with a dream interpretation manual on the front, and The Kadesh Poem on the back; P. Chester Beatty XI with magico-medical texts on the front and various texts including a hymn to Amun on the back.

[40] The majority of the rolls in the library was cut from such 'half-rolls' (disregarding letters and legal documents which were cut roughly to size), with only a few exceptions: P. Chester Beatty III (with the dream interpretation manual on the front) is the tallest of the literary and magico-medical documents at 35 cm; P. Chester Beatty II (with the Story of Truth and Falsehood on the front) is a 'quarter-roll' only *c.*10 cm tall; P. Chester Beatty VII (with magico-medical texts on the front) and P. DeM I (with The Instruction of Ani on the front) are 14 and 16 cm in height, respectively. The only 'full-size' roll in the collection is P. Ashmolean 1945.97 (with the will of Niutnakht) which measures 43 × 192 cm.

Fig. 7.6. Map of the village of Deir el-Medina with the find-spot of the family library of Qenherkhepshef.

After Castel 1980: plan no. 1; courtesy of the IFAO, Cairo.

Fig. 7.7. Photograph of the find spot of the library of Qenherkhepshef (marked by arrow); taken while looking north-west, with the western village wall a few metres behind the camera.
Courtesy of Richard Parkinson.

As it is currently preserved, the front of the papyrus was first inscribed with a mythological narrative known to Egyptologists as The Contendings of Horus and Seth (front 1.1–16.8), and the scribe followed this by a colophon assuring the reader of the completeness of the copy, and noting its place of production: 'It has been completed (*ỉw=s pw*) in Thebes, the place of *tb*' (front 16.8;

Table 7.5. A list of manuscripts belonging to the library of Qenherkhepshef and his family from Deir el-Medina (*c.*1240–1120 BCE).

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Chester Beatty I (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin)	Contendings of Horus and Seth; love songs	Part of a hymn to a Theban god; a eulogy to Ramesses V (written perpendicularly); love songs (two separate entries); a note regarding the purchase of a bull; various administrative notes (upside-down)	*c.*21 × 502 cm	Gardiner (1931)
P. Chester Beatty II (British Museum, P. BM EA 10682)	The Story of Truth and Falsehood (or The Blinding of Truth)	The Story of Truth and Falsehood (continued), followed by a colophon and after a vertical dividing line some administrative notes (upside-down: not published)	*c.*10 × 139 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 2–6; II, pls 1–4)
P. Chester Beatty III (British Museum, P. BM EA 10683)	Dream Interpretation Manual; spell protecting against bad dreams; colophon (added later by Amennakht); characterization of 'Seth-men' and manual for interpreting their dreams	The Kadesh Poem (two duplicates of same passage, §§1–60, copied by Qenherkhepshef); a letter from Qenherkhepshef to vizier Panehsy; final part of dream texts on recto (upside-down)	*c.*35 × 172 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 7–27; II, pls 5–12A)
P. Chester Beatty IV (British Museum, P. BM EA 10684)	Religious hymn; colophon (for Horus, Re and 'draughtsman of Amun, Mersakhmet'); hymn to Amun-Re-Atum-Horakhty	Miscellaneous literary texts (wisdom poetry, including the 'Eulogy of Dead Writers'; praise of the scribal profession; model letter in a lexicographic style from the scribe Ptahemwia to the scribe Amenher)	*c.*21 × 240 cm (end torn in antiquity?)	Gardiner (1935: I, 28–44; II, pls 13–22)
P. Chester Beatty V (British Museum, P. BM EA 10685)	Hymn to the Nile; admonitions to be a scribe; model letters	Model letters (continued from recto); medical spells (against scorpions and headaches) with a vignette	*c.*21 × 185 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 45–52; II, pls 23–9)
P. Chester Beatty VI (British Museum, P. BM EA 10686)	Medical prescriptions (bowels and rectum)	Medical spells and recipes, including a vignette	*c.*21 × 135 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 53–4; II, pls 30–32A); Jonckheere (1947)
P. Chester Beatty VII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10687)	Spells to ward off scorpions and treat their poisonous bite	Spells from front continued; later addition of spells and recipes for amulets against fever, with vignettes	*c.*14 × 190 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 55–65; pls 33–38A)

(*continued*)

Table 7.5. Continued

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Chester Beatty VIII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10688)	Various magico- religious texts: adaptations from the Book of the Dead; a composition labelled 'The Book of Daytime' (paralleled in P. Chester Beatty IX); spells for protecting different parts of the body	Later additions of protective spells: domestic protection (seat, room, bed); two 'Books of Banishing the Enemy'; hymns to the uraeus of Ramesses II (adapted as spells); spells of protection for the body	*c*.21 × 350 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 66–77; II, pls 39–49)
P. Chester Beatty IX (British Museum, P. BM EA 10689)	Daily Offering Ritual (for Amenhotep I; ritualistic instructions and invocations)	Ritual of Amenhotep I continued; a colophon mentioning a lector priest of Amun (name erased); a magical text; the 'Book of Daytime' (paralleled in P. Chester Beatty VIII); a book of protective spells	*c*.19 × 400 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 78–113; II, pls 50–61)
P. Chester Beatty X (British Museum, P. BM EA 10690)	Magico-medical texts, apparently for addressing sexual impotence	Magico-medical texts from front continued	*c*.20 × 30 cm	Gardiner (1935: I, 114–15; II, pls 62–3)
P. Chester Beatty XI (British Museum, P. BM EA 10691)	Magico-medical texts, including a narrative about Isis and Re (paralleled in a papyrus in Turin)	End of magical texts from the front; administrative accounts (reign of Setnakht); a hymn to Amun (paralleled in P. UC 32793 from Gurob); various magico-medical texts[41]	*c*.20 cm tall (very fragmentary)	Gardiner (1935: I, 116–21; II, pls 64–8)
P. Chester Beatty XII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10692)	Magico-medical text with allusions to various myths	Blank	*c*.17 cm tall (single fragmentary page)	Gardiner (1935: I, 122; II, pl. 69)
P. Chester Beatty XIII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10693)	Magico-medical text (perhaps similar to P. Chester Beatty X in content)	Blank	*c*.22 cm tall (single fragmentary page)	Gardiner (1935: I, 123; II, pl. 69)
P. Chester Beatty XIV (British Museum, P. BM EA 10694)	Religious text mentioning various gods	Blank	*c*.10 × 18 cm (fragmentary)	Gardiner (1935: I, 124; II, pl. 69)

P. Chester Beatty XV (British Museum, P. BM EA 10695)	Magico-medical texts protecting against death and thirst (?), with indirect references to gods ('enigmatic writing')	Blank	*c.*20 cm tall (fragmentary)	Gardiner (1935: I, 125–6; II, pls 70–70A)
P. Chester Beatty XVI (British Museum, P. BM EA 10696)	Magical text (purification spells)	Administrative accounts (deliveries from gardeners; mention of arrears in delivery of grain rations to the village workers)	*c.*21 cm tall (fragmentary)	Gardiner (1935: I, 127–9; II, pl. 71)
P. Chester Beatty XVII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10697)	The Satirical Letter of Hori (also known as P. Anastasi I)	Blank	Three small fragments only	Gardiner (1935: I, 131; II, pl. 72)
P. Chester Beatty XVIII (British Museum, P. BM EA 10698)	Fragments of a Miscellany-text on the superiority of the scribe (include one part paralleled in P. Chester Beatty V)	Medical recipes	Fragments only	Gardiner (1935: I, 131; II, pl. 72)
P. Chester Beatty XIX (British Museum, P. BM EA 10699)	The Instruction of Khety	Blank	Fragments only	Gardiner (1935: 132, pl. 72)
P. Deir el-Medina I (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	The Instruction of Ani (with dates in margin)	End of a magical text with a vignette; a colophon; a magico-medical text treating patients who are dying due to the influence of Re, Ptah, Osiris or Thoth; a 'Book of treating *nsy*-disease' with vignette (eight seated gods); another magico-medical text with vignette (row of gods and goddesses); magico-medical text against headache (same as in P. Chester Beatty V, with dates in margin)	*c.*16 × 190 cm	Černý (1978: 1–12, pls 1–16a)
P. Deir el-Medina II (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Administrative notes regarding delivery of grain, oil, bread, etc., in connection with New Year's Festival, 'by the hand of' several workmen, to an unnamed woman	Same text continued, with supplies of bread, rations and cakes for various personal feasts ('her feast of Amen[hotep I]', 'Taweret', etc.)	*c.*14 × 21 cm	Černý (1978: 12, pls 17–17a)
P. Deir el-Medina III (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from the workman Hay to the scribe Iyemseba about the manufacture of a bed	Traces of final line of the same letter ('[. . .] be well')	*c.*23 × 21 cm	Černý (1978: 13–15, pls 18–18a)

(*continued*)

Table 7.5. Continued

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Deir el-Medina IV (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from the scribe Nakhtsobek to the workman Amennakht about the status of their friendship	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*30 × 22 cm	Černý (1978: 15–17, pls 19–20a)
P. Deir el-Medina V (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Another letter from the scribe Nakhtsobek to the workman Amennakht about their friendship and some unguent	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*19 × 21 cm	Černý (1978: 18–19, pls 21–21a)
P. Deir el-Medina VI (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from the scribe Nakhtsobek to the workman Amennakht about the provision of unguent for a lady	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*17 × 22 cm	Černý (1978: 19, pls 22–22a)
P. Deir el-Medina VII (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	List of value (in *deben*) of animals slaughtered, and various foodstuffs	Anonymous letter about someone's reputation in the village	*c.*18 × 22 cm	Černý (1978: 19, pls 23–23a)[42]
P. Deir el-Medina VIII (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Anonymous letter about some furniture and a bed	Unfinished letter from the scribe Amenmose to the carpenter Maanakhtef	*c.*16 × 18 cm	Černý (1978: 20, pls 24–24a)
P. Deir el-Medina IX (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Unfinished letter from the carpenter Maanakhtef to the scribe Amenmose about the manufacture of a coffin	Empty (but palimpsest traces of an address)	*c.*20 × 15 cm	Černý (1978: 21, pls 25–25a)
P. Deir el-Medina X (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Fragmentary letter from the carpenter Maanakhtef to the scribe Amenmose about various business transactions	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*22 × 15 cm	Černý (1978: 22–3, pls 26–27a)
P. Deir el-Medina XI (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from the scribe Maanakhtef to the scribe Amennakht about some business transactions	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*14 × 15 cm	Černý (1978: 23–4, pls 26–27a)
P. Deir el-Medina XII (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from an anonymous sender to the carpenter Maanakhtef about some people sent to him	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*17 × 21 cm	Černý (1978: 24–5, pls 28–28a)

P. Deir el-Medina XIII (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Fragmentary letter from Maanakhtef to the vizier Nebmaatrenakht	Accounting notes recording the value (in *deben*) of various commodities (donkey, oil, grain)	*c.*8 × 12 cm	Černý (1978: 25–6, pls 29–29a)
P. Deir el-Medina XIV (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Beginning of a letter to Anynakht, the father of the (anonymous) writer	Illegible traces only	*c.*6 × 14 cm	Černý (1978: 26, pls 29–29a)
P. Deir el-Medina XV (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	A short and playful (?) note from the carpenter Khonsu to his mother, asking forgiveness for having eaten a piece of meat when he swore he wouldn't	Empty	*c.*5 × 34 cm	Černý (1978: 26, pls 30–30a); Wente (1990: 140 no. 179)
P. Deir el-Medina XVI (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from the draughtsman Hormin mentioning a chapel (*ẖnw*)	Continuation of the letter on the front	*c.*6 × 11 cm	Černý (1978: 27, pls 30–30a)[43]
P. Deir el-Medina XVII (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	List of metallic objects with some values in *deben*	Empty except for some palimpsest traces	*c.*11 × 9 cm	Černý (1978: 27, pls 30–30a)[44]
P. Deir el-Medina XVIII (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Letter from the scribe Amenmose the carpenter Maa[nakhtef] about some furniture	End of letter; address	*c.*20 × 20 cm	Černý (1986: 1, pls 1–1a)
P. Deir el-Medina XXIII (= Naunakhte II, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Part of the legal dossier of Niutnakht (list of division of property between descendants)	Continuation of the legal document	*c.*21 × 12 cm	Černý (1986: 2, pls 7–8a; 1945)
P. Deir el-Medina XXIV[45] (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	An administrative note concerning complaints about rations made to the vizier Neferrenpet	Empty	*c.*17 × 32 cm (?)	Černý (1986: 3, pls 9–9a); Eyre (1987)
P. Deir el-Medina XXV[46] (= Naunakhte III, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo)	Part of the legal dossier of Niutnakht (list of division of property between descendants)	Continuation of the legal document	*c.*23 × 9 cm	Černý (1986: 3, pls 10–11a; 1945)

(*continued*)

Table 7.5. Continued

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.95 (= Naunakhte IV)	Part of the legal dossier of Niutnakht (concerning the transfer of a copper bowl, dated to year 3 of Ramesses V or VI)	Continuation of the legal document	*c.*21 × 43 cm	Černý (1945: 39–42, pl. 12)
P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.97 (= Naunakhte I)	Part of the legal dossier of Niutnakht (her will presented to local juridical body in the presence of witnesses; later note by Khaemnun to not contest the division)	Continuation of the legal document	*c.*43 × 192 cm	Černý (1945: 29–36, pls 8a–9)
P. Geneva MAH 15274 (+ P. Turin CGT 54063?)[47] (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva)	Magico-medical texts against the poison of scorpions and serpents with allusions to the story of Isis and Horus; colophon in honour of (?) Montumose, but the name of the copyist is lost	Various later administrative notes with dates (blunt copper chisels handed over to the royal administration; delivery of a 'spell for catching poison' by one scribe to another; punishment of a workman for violence; delivery of writing materials by one scribe 'to me'); magico-medical text against scorpions; a journal entry mentioning poison	*c.*21 × 159 cm (Geneva papyrus only)	Massart (1957)[48]

[41] Only the front of fragments E-L were published by Gardiner (1935). The back of these contain traces of at least two more columns, clearly also magico-medical in nature (including vignettes with four serpents and five ibises).

[42] No translations of the texts on P. DeM VII were included by Černý (1978). For the message on the back, see Wente (1990: 152–3); I know of no published translation of the administrative notes on the front, which seem to have been written over the beginning of the letter still preserved on the back; such a re-use of papyrus is common in the archive (see §7.5.5).

[43] I know of no published translation of this text.

[44] I know of no published translation of this text.

[45] The association of this manuscript with the library is not certain; for a discussion of the archaeological context, see Quirke (1990: 240–2).

[46] P. DeM XXVI A–B was wrongly associated with the same legal dossier in the original catalogue (Černý 1986: 4); cf. the remarks by Koenig (1989: 194).

[47] For the possibility of these two manuscripts being part of a single roll, see Roccati (1982: 93–4); only the contents of the Geneva fragments are summarized in the table as the Turin papyrus has yet to be published.

[48] Photographs of the back were never published.

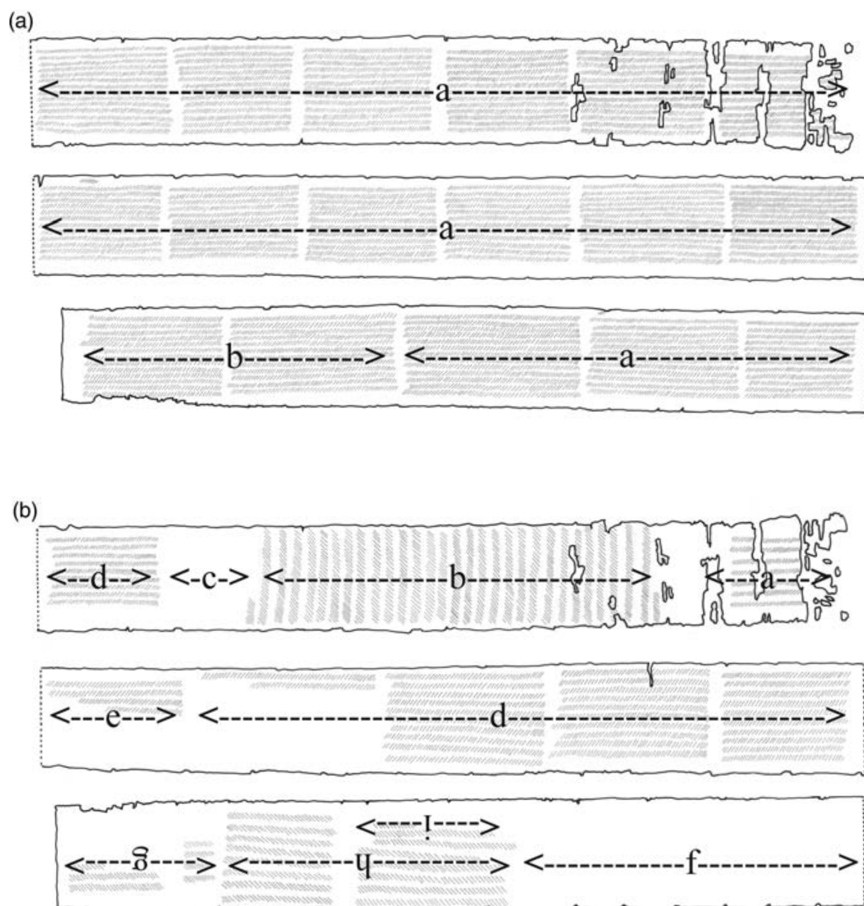

Fig. 7.8. (a) A schematic drawing of the front of Papyrus Chester Beatty I.
a. *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* b. Love songs (I)

(b) A schematic drawing of the back of papyrus Chester Beatty I.
a. Hymn to a god b. Praise of Ramesses V c. Erased area d. Love songs (II) e. Administrative note (about payment for a bull) f. Erased area g. Administrative notes (about a box) h. Love songs (III) i. Administrative notes (about herdsmen) Drawings by Fredrik Hagen.

Gardiner 1931: 26).[49] The same scribe then continued, perhaps immediately, on the line below with a series of love poems (front 16.9–17.13), signalling the start of this new section by a rubric reading 'BEGINNING OF THE SWEET VERSES found while picking up a papyrus roll.'[50] This was then followed by a short note or colophon giving the name of the copyist as one 'Nakhtsobek, Scribe of

[49] The reading *tb* seems certain, but is otherwise unattested as a toponym of the region: perhaps it is best emended into the common phrase 'place of Truth', as Gardiner (1931: 26) suggested (but cf. Verhoeven 1996: 360–3).

[50] Text written in red ink in the original manuscript is translated using small capitals, following Egyptological conventions.

the Tomb'. Regardless of the historicity of the statement 'found while picking up a papyrus roll' (*gmyt m ṯ3y drf*), it suggests possible patterns of transmission for such collections of material. In this case the name of the individual said to be responsible for the text, the scribe of the tomb Nakhtsobek, has been inserted into the manuscript by erasing a line (Fig. 7.9a). The modern editor of the text, Sir Alan H. Gardiner, thought this was 'an impudent usurpation' by Nakhtsobek (Gardiner 1931: 36 n. 2), but the erased signs are largely illegible so the circumstances of the change cannot be established, and it is not the only example of such a practice in this library (cf. P. Chester Beatty II; Gardiner 1935: I, 8). The end of the erased line is just visible between the final sign of Nakhtsobek's title and the beginning of the first stanza of the poem (Fig. 7.9b), and this can plausibly be read 'life, prosperity, health', as suggested by Gardiner (1935; II, pl. XVIa, n. d–e; Fig. 7.9b).

(a)

(b)

Fig. 7.9. (a) An example of a papyrus from a private library of the New Kingdom: column five of P. Chester Beatty I, from the library of Qenherkhepshef (*c.*1300–1200 BCE). In line 9 the name and titles of the original copyist have been erased, and the words 'made by Nakhtsobek, scribe of the Necropolis' have been inserted. (b) Detail from papyrus Chester Beatty I (column 16, line 9), showing the erased title and name of the original copyist and the insertion of the words 'made by Nakhtsobek, scribe of the Necropolis'. The traces of the erased title visible on the left suggest that the original owner was associated with a royal palace or mortuary temple.

© The Chester Beatty Library.

This honorific epithet is most frequently attached to the names of royal mortuary temples or administrative departments of the palace, and may suggest that the manuscript was originally copied by someone associated with such an institution.[51] The texts on the front of the manuscript were copied by a single scribe, competent and careful, who corrected several of his mistakes by either erasing and rewriting the offending word(s),[52] or, where words and phrases had been omitted, by inserting interlinear or marginal notes,[53] occasionally indicating their appropriate position in the text by marking it with an 'X' (Gardiner 1935: II, pl. XII, line 2; cf. Caminos 1956: 22). The back of the papyrus contains various texts written by several different people, the sequence of which is not clear. It is evident that, as preserved, the love songs towards the end of the front of the roll were not continued on the back, and yet a different hand from that on the front copied another two sets of love songs on the back. Two different individuals thus copied three different sets of love songs onto the papyrus, revealing a particular interest in this newly emerged literary genre,[54] as well as a desire to retain a thematic focus in the literary texts copied onto a single roll. But the back of the papyrus was also inscribed with several other literary texts, including a hymn to an unnamed Theban god and a eulogy to Ramesses V, and like many of the other literary rolls in the library, P. Chester Beatty I contains administrative notes on the back. The lay-out of both the literary and the administrative texts on the back show less concern with uniformity that those on the front. The two sections with love songs are written up-side down in relation to each other, the eulogy to Ramesses V is written perpendicularly to all the other texts, and the administrative notes too are written up-side down in relation to each other. The administrative notes are diverse, and by their nature record only a minimum of information that is often difficult to interpret. One preserves information about the purchase of a bull from a scribe called Penanuket (the buyer is not named), an individual not otherwise attested at the village (unless the title 'scribe' is merely an indicator of literacy here; cf. Davies 1999: 39), while others concern some herdsmen belonging to a Theban temple, but again there is no immediate link to the known owners of the papyrus. Two rather mysterious entries deal with the handing over of a 'box' on two separate occasions, exactly

[51] One of the administrative notes on the back of the papyrus concerns herdsmen of a temple of Ramesses III, and palimpsest traces of various business memoranda include the mention of a 'treasury' (*pr-ḥḏ*) and a 'domain' (*ḥwt*), but these notes could post-date the literary text on the front (Gardiner 1935: I, 43, 45).

[52] Gardiner (1935: II, pl. VI, lines 3, 8, 11; VIII, line 5; XIV, line 10; XV, line 4; XVI, lines 11, 12; XVII, line 5).

[53] Gardiner (1935: II, pl. II, line 13; IV, lines 7, 9, 13; VII, line 9; VIII, lines 1, 4; IX, line 7; XI, lines 3, 6; XII, line 1; XIII, line 9; XIV, lines 1, 9; XV, line 7; XVI, lines 2, 11).

[54] Love songs are a strictly Ramesside phenomenon, judging by the surviving manuscripts: no earlier or later copies have been found (Guglielmi 1996: 338–40).

four months apart to the day: on both occasions the box is given to a scribe of the tempel of Amun, Patjaudiamun, and a general of the war office of pharaoh, Mery-re. This has been thought to refer to some reporting procedure whereby the scribes at Deir el-Medina would hand over the monthly accounts (Gardiner 1935: I, 45), or, less plausibly, to a ritualistic performance of some of the literary texts on this papyrus roll in connection with the accession of Ramesses V (Verhoeven 1996: 361–2; but compare Quack 2009: 299–301).

The library contains some examples of what may be termed duplicates where a single composition, or part of such, has been copied twice. On the back of P. Chester Beatty III, the scribe Qenherkhepshef copied the same part of the famous Kadesh Poem twice, once in a slightly smaller hand (back 1), and then immediately after it he copied the same passage again in a somewhat bolder hand (back 2). What motivated this is impossible to say; only the ends of the lines of the former copy are preserved. A magico-medical composition labelled 'Book of the last day of the lunar month' (cf. Quack 2004b: 472) in P. Chester Beatty VIII (front 5.4–9.9) can also be found in P. Chester Beatty IX (back 1.6–11.3), and a spell against headaches occurs in both P. Chester Beatty V (back 4.10–6.4) and P. DeM I (back 7.5–8.8). A similar overlap can be found in copies of short texts describing the superiority of the scribal profession, where part of the text is duplicated elsewhere in the archive (compare e.g. P. Chester Beatty IV, back 3.11–13 and V, front 7.9–12; V, front 6.7 and XVIII, front A.1–2; IV, back 4.3–4 and XVIII, front A.3), and even in short excerpts from known literary texts (P. Chester Beatty V, verso 2.6–10, with extract from The Instruction of Ani: cf. Quack 1994: 10–11). The question of the range of texts available to the library owner(s) and the means of access to further material is highly relevant here, but the data is not extensive enough to analyse in any meaningful way. The overlaps seem accidental, and in a library built up over several generations, with more than forty-three rolls, each perhaps up to 5 m in length, the eventual accumulation of duplicate copies of short passages or sections is not surprising.

Scribes are visible in the material in terms of both the appearance and forms of the papyri, as well as in internal references to production. Individual manuscripts show signs of usage: the above-mentioned P. Chester Beatty IX (cf. §7.5.5), a ritual text for the local cult of the deified Amenhotep I, was mended on at least one occasion and finally broke into three separate rolls in antiquity, presumably because of wear (Gardiner 1935: 78; cf. Pestman 1982: 169 n. 12). A sense of priority on behalf of the ancient owners is difficult to establish. On the one hand several of the rolls containing literary texts appear to have been specifically chosen for this purpose: administrative notes and memoranda, where present, tend to be written on the back of the papyri.[55]

[55] In accordance with Egyptological practice I use the terms 'front' and 'back' to designate the side of the roll where the fibres are running respectively in a horizontal and vertical direction in respect to the length of the roll.

When P. Chester Beatty I was published, the editor noted the lack of palimpsest traces associated with the literary texts on the papyrus, and concluded that the owner(s) had 'attached considerable importance' to these compositions in their efforts to avoid administrative re-use of those areas of the roll (Gardiner 1935: I, 5). Not all the literary manuscripts were preserved from re-use, however, and some of them were subsequently cut and re-inscribed (Gardiner 1935: I, 7, 66, 78). Pestman lamented the actions of the individual(s) who so 'barbarously amputated the rolls' (1982: 163), but these patterns of recycling also serve to document the pragmatic social environment to which the library belonged; they show a collection of papyrus rolls being used and re-used over generations of owners.

As far as the internal chronology of the manuscripts can be reconstructed, partly based on external evidence relating to the lives of the individuals mentioned in the letters and legal documents, and partly based on palaeography, the earliest known phase of the library is when the first named individual associated with it, the scribe Qenherkhepshef, came into possession of a roll on how to interpret dreams (P. Chester Beatty III), sometime during the reign of Ramesses II (*c.*1279–1213 BCE). What other rolls may have been in his possession at this stage is not known, but it could have included most of the literary manuscripts (Pestman 1982: 160). The library presumably then passed to his young widow, Niutnakhte, and then, for a brief period of time, to her second husband, Khaemnun, but the evidence for their involvement is limited. The presence of letters in the archive addressed to Amennakhte, a son of Niutnakhte and Khaemnun, indicates that he had inherited the collection of papyrus rolls upon the death of his father. Amennakhte was outlived by his brother Maanakhtef, who seems to have taken over the library: a letter written by him (P. DeM X) was cut off a roll containing a literary text, and this was then washed off to make way for the missive (which was never sent—perhaps it represents a draft or copy). Unlike their mother's first husband, none of the later owners were ever appointed to the position of scribe in the village, but both could evidently read and write and were in possession of a substantial collection of manuscripts. It is not certain when P. Chester Beatty I, the longest and best preserved roll in the collection, became part of the library, but circumstantial evidence suggests it may have been while it was with Maanakhtef.[56] In any case the roll provides a rare example of the transmission of a literary manuscript through various hands: first the original copyist, then Nakhtsobek, and finally, perhaps via his friend Maanakhtef, into the family library of Qenherkhepshef's descendants. Maanakhtef, the final (?) owner of the library, is attested as late as Ramesses IX (*c.*1126–1108 BCE),

[56] The original copyist of the roll remains anonymous, but an individual by the name Nakhtsobek inserted his own name into the colophon at some later stage, and as he is known from other sources to have been a close friend of Maanakhtef, he may have been the one who gave him the roll; Pestman (1982: 162).

suggesting a period of *c.*80–120 years for the transmission of the library (Pestman 1982: 163).

We do not know the circumstances that led to the papyri being deposited where Bruyère found them in 1928. In a letter (P. BM EA 10326) written by one of the later scribes of the community, Djehutymose, he mentions some 'documents which are deposited [in] the room of . . . (illegible word) upon which the rain had poured in the house of the scribe Horsheri my <grandfather>'. They were then brought out and found to have retained the ink, and were subsequently dried and then deposited 'in the tomb of Amennakhte, my (great-grand)father' (Wente 1990: 191 no. 313 = *LRL* no. 9). This has been taken as a reference to the library of Qenherkhepshef (Koenig 1981), but it could equally well be a reference to the famous letter-archive Late Ramesside Letters, to which the letter itself belongs (Donker van Heel and Haring 2003: 8).

7.5.5.1. Excursus: The Scribe Qenherkhepshef, a Library Owner

Ancient Egyptian literary manuscripts can rarely be connected to specific individuals, but one of the exceptions is the library of Qenherkhepshef and his descendants described above (§7.5.5).[57] Qenherkhepshef himself is linked to the collection by a dual copy of a passage from the Kadesh Poem, a famous narrative based on the military exploits of Ramesses II at Kadesh, written in his own hand on the back of a manual for interpreting dreams (P. Chester Beatty III), along with a draft letter from himself addressed to a vizier. We know little about his origins, but he seems to have been appointed to the administration of Deir el-Medina from outside—his father Panakht does not appear in the extensive textual records from the village, nor does his mother Senetnofret (Bruyère 1930: 21 fig. 2 no. 1, 67; Bierbrier 1975: 27; Edwards 1968: 158, pl. XXIV). Towards the end of his long career Qenherkhepshef married Niutnakhte, who was at least forty years his junior, but the couple appear to have remained childless until his death, perhaps in his early seventies (Černý 1973: 333; Bierbrier 1975: 28). His young widow then inherited his property and real estate, presumably including the library, and later remarried the workman Khaemnun, with whom she had at least eight children (Fig. 7.10). Her last will and testament survives, and this deals with the division of inheritance between these descendants (Černý 1945), one of whom, a certain Maanakhtef, is the last individual who can be linked to the library by name (Pestman 1982: 162; cf. Dorn 2006).

Qenherkhepshef's earliest appearance is in an ostracon (O. BM EA 5634) dated to year 40 of Ramesses II, where he is already a man of some authority

[57] The following portrait of his life builds on the work done by Černý (1973: 329–37); Donker van Heel and Haring (2003: 41–8); Davies (1999: 84–6); and Bierbrier (1975: 26–9).

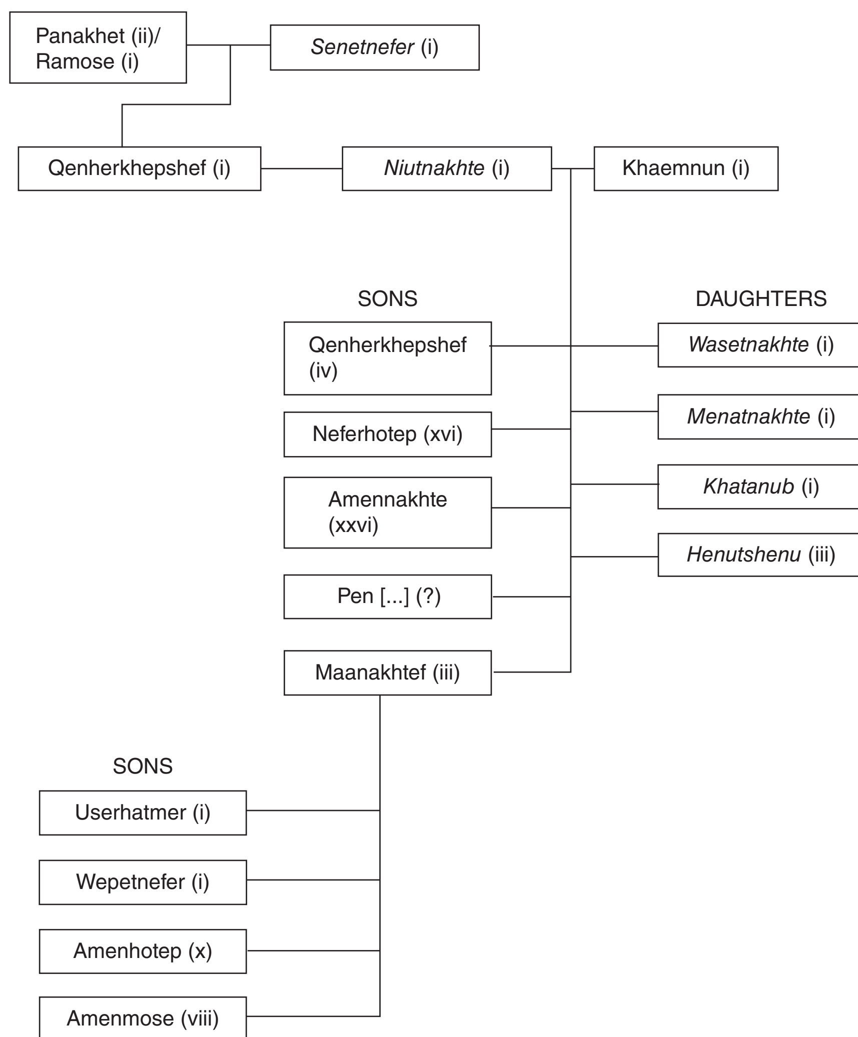

Fig. 7.10. The family of the scribe Qenherkhepshef. Names in italics indicate females; the numbers in brackets are those traditionally used to distinguish between individuals with the same name in Deir el-Medina studies.

After Pestman 1980: 160 and Davies 1999: chart 25.

(Demarée 2002: 18, pls 25–8; Kitchen 1975–89: III, 515–25). His official title was 'Scribe of the (Royal) Tomb', and as such he was one of the two scribes directing and recording work on the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings (Černý 1973: 191). He lived in the village of Deir el-Medina, about half an hour's walk from the royal necropolis over the Deir el-Bahri cliffs, amongst the

other workmen, and although his house in the village has not been identified, his tomb was clearly one of the largest ones in the local necropolis (no. 1126).[58] It consists of a ramp leading up to a courtyard, from which one enters a corridor cut into the hillside, which in turn leads into a cruciform chapel with painted walls and remains of cult statues. Towards the back of the chapel is a niche, in front of which a pit was dug, leading into the burial chambers (Bruyère 1928: 28). Although little remains of his funerary equipment, his headrest and a shabti-figure in the British Museum were presumably originally interred with him here (Parkinson 1999c: 156 nos. 69–70, pl. 27). He was a man of relative wealth with considerable resources at his disposal, and he constructed several structures outside the village itself. About halfway between his home and his workplace in the Valley of the Kings, on top of the cliff separating the two sites, he had a small hut built for himself, alongside similar ones set up by colleagues. These generally consisted of one or two small rectangular rooms with a bench against the rear wall, and occasionally a stone seat outside with the owner's titles and names (Bruyère 1939: III, 345–54). The purpose of these buildings is not clear—perhaps accommodation for the workers during the week (McDowell 1999: 17)—but his was certainly the largest one, and, according to the excavator, 'plus luxueuse que les autres' (Bruyère 1939: 349). It included flagstones and other architectural elements of limestone, as well as a limestone seat inscribed with his own name and that of his 'father' Ramose: 'Made by their son who makes their names live . . . a good seat on the Western side, in the necropolis-region of the Eternal City, for the soul of the honoured one. [. . .], made by his son who makes his name live, Qenherkhepshef, the justified. Royal scribe in the Place of Truth to the West of Thebes, Qenherkhepshef . . . for the soul of the royal scribe in the Place of Truth, Ramose, the justified' (Kitchen 1975–89: II, 640; Bruyère 1939: 354, pl. 39). Qenherkhepshef may also have had a votive chapel somewhere near the village, judging by several disarticulated door-jambs bearing his name, a limestone naos, and a libation basin inscribed in his honour mentioning 'Amun-Re, King of the Gods' (Bruyère 1926: 195; 1930: 21 fig. 2 no. 1, 67; 1952: 146 no. 403; 1953: 78 no. D, pl. 12 no. 18). To build these structures he frequently used the workmen under his command, whose absence from work was duly noted by his colleagues on several occasions: one entry has a 'list of the people who are with the scribe Qenherkhepshef, he being absent from the work of Pharaoh, while making them carry stones up on the

[58] First suggested by Černý (1973: 331 and n. 5), the identification is based on the find of fragments of a double seated statue (man and wife) in the chapel of the tomb, which preserved the name Qenherkhepshef in hieroglyphs on the kilt of the man (Bruyère 1928: 30). The excavator assigned tomb 1126 to the foreman Qaha (i), simply on the grounds of its proximity to the tomb of his son, Inherkhau (i) (Theban Tomb no. 299), but this seems, on balance, unlikely.

hillside at midday' (Černý 1951: pl. 13).[59] As part of his job he would have supervised the workers on-site in the Valley of the Kings, and near one of the tombs on which they worked, that of Merenptah (KV 8), a small niche in the mountainside, in a shaded area, bears the inscription 'sitting-place of the scribe Qenherkhepshef' (Černý 1973: 334). He may also have had a small shrine built nearby, as a limestone door lintel with his name was found in the valley (Černý 1973: 331 n. 7). His duties included the recording of work done on the tomb, absence amongst the workmen, the consumption of resources such as wicks and oil during the work, as well as recording deliveries of consumables like fish, bread, and firewood to the workers (Donker van Heel and Haring 2003: 41–2). Two main groups of such documents written by him have been found in the Valley of the Kings, one in a little valley between the tomb of Ramesses II (KV 7) and Ramesses VI (KV 9), and another beside the entrance to the latter tomb; these may be areas in which he 'kept office' (Donker van Heel and Haring 2003: 43–4; Reeves 1990: 325, 328, 331).

Scholars have tried to reconstruct the character of Qenherkhepshef based on the available sources, but these attempts are marred both by modern preconceptions and the incompleteness of the evidence—the number of sources is moderate, considering they were produced during a career that lasted over forty years (Donker van Heel and Haring 2003: 42). It has been suggested that he was an unsympathetic character, partly based on his use of state resources for his own ends, but also based on texts complaining about his behaviour towards fellow villagers, and his involvement in the famously corrupt legal proceedings against Paneb (e.g. Černý 1973: 336–67; Hornung 2003: 139–40).[60] He has been said to be 'autocratic', 'self-assertive', and 'self-confident' based on his unusually direct letters to superiors, and his numerous graffiti in the Theban hills have been viewed as evidence of a 'vain' personality.[61] Such characterizations are problematic because they disregard the limits of our understanding of cultural norms and ideals. Leaving graffiti in New Kingdom Egypt was never a sign of a 'vain' personality, and Qenherkhepshef's are often

[59] For other documents mentioning the absence of workers said to be 'with' him, see Černý (1973: 330); on the scribe of O. Cairo 25779–80 and 25782–5; cf. Donker van Heel and Haring (2003: 49–52).

[60] For the personal complaint, see Kitchen (1975–89: III, 534) and Wente (1990: 149 no. 204). This is a letter where the draftsman Prahotep complains to Qenherkhepshef about 'this bad way which you behave towards me'. The legal proceedings are recorded in P. BM EA 10055, 1.18 (= P. Salt 124), where he is accused of accepting a bribe to save the notorious foreman Paneb (Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 410.5); compare el-Saady (1998: 300–1), but note that his interpretation of the consequences for Qenherkhepshef is misinformed. For a further possible case, see O. Ashmolean Museum 197, back 3–6 (= O. Gardiner 197; Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 159), but the sense of the passage is obscure.

[61] For the letters to his superiors, both of which are copies, see O. Cairo 25832 (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 44, Wente 1990: 47 no. 50) and P. Chester Beatty III, back 4–5 (Gardiner 1935: I, 24–6, II, pls 11–12a; Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 85–8; Wente 1990: 48–9 no. 52). The graffiti are numerous; see e.g. Peden (2001: 157, esp. n. 134) and Kitchen (1975–89: II, 644–5, IV, 185–8).

found in areas where he worked, like those of other scribes, and in several cases he included the names of colleagues (Peden 2001: 157 n. 136; Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 185). The amount of greeting formulae in letters is hardly solid ground on which to build a psychological profile, and as Richard Parkinson has warned, even Qenherkhepshef's use of state workmen to construct structures of his own 'will not have had the same significance for his contemporaries that they may have for us' (1999c: 154); it was a practice commonly associated with anyone in a position of power (Eyre 2011: 703–4; Müller-Wollerman 2004: 133–4; Vernus 1993: 101–21). The alleged bribery in the court-case against Paneb must likewise be evaluated against the reality of culture-specific patterns of such behaviour, as opposed to the ideals expressed in literary texts and autobiographical inscriptions.[62]

Qenherkhepshef has often been credited with an interest in history and literature (McDowell 1992: 96–9; von der Way 1984: 42–3; Černý 1973: 334). He certainly copied the opening section of the famous literary narrative of the battle of Kadesh, describing Ramesses II's 'victory' over the Hittites, then about half a century in the past (Gardiner 1935: I, 23–4, II, pls 9–10A; McDowell 1992: 96). This was not copied from inscriptions on the walls of the Ramesseum or any other Theban temple, as is sometimes claimed (e.g. Davies 1999: 86): the orthography, grammar, and textual variants show that it was copied from another hieratic manuscript.[63] Further possible sources for his antiquarian interests have been identified in the non-administrative texts he copied on ostraca, one of which contains a list of sons of Ramesses II (O. Carnarvon 301 = Cairo JdÉ 72503; Samie 2010: 55–6). Another has a list of twelve New Kingdom pharaohs on the front, headed by the name of the contemporary King Ramesses II, and then, in chronological order, the throne-names of Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Tuthmose I, Tuthmose II, Tuthmose III, Amenhotep II, Tuthmose IV, Amenhotep III, Horemheb, Ramesses I, and Seti I. On the back are two vertically written cartouches of Horemheb and Mentuhotep II, under two dated administrative notes concerning the delivery

[62] The issue is complex and deserves a fuller treatment than that possible here, but I would see such 'abuse' of power as a regular and widespread feature of ancient Egyptian society: the emphasis on denial of such behaviour in autobiographical inscriptions is symptomatic (Eyre 2011: 708–9). The exceptional nature of sources mentioning the use of state resources for personal gain is irrelevant, and simply highlights the conflict between ideology and social reality implicit in the surviving material. Treatments of the subject are few and largely concerned with official rhetoric, not social history (Müller-Wollerman 2004: 129–49; el-Saady 1998: 295–304; Helck 1982).

[63] This *Vorlage* would have been similar but not identical to P. Sallier III (Kitchen 1975–89: II, 2–22). For a list of variations in both P. Chester Beatty III and P. Sallier III compared to the monumental copies, see Spalinger (2002: 2–11), although I think he underestimates the significance of the differences.

of *bìꜣ*-cakes and firewood (O. Cairo 25646; Kitchen 1975–89: III, 700; cf. Černý 1935: II, pl. 64). This ostracon, as well as two other ones where he listed various administrative titles according to type (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 642–3) have been interpreted both as exercises set by Qenherkhepshef for his students, and as more personal attempts at ordering his historical and social knowledge, but their true purpose and function remains unknown (the list of royal names is an almost exact parallel to that found in the Daily Offering Ritual, a version of which was in his library: Rose 2008: 315–16, 322). Another king-list is preserved on an offering table where Qenherkhepshef is shown adoring the cartouches of various kings of the 19th and 20th Dynasties (Kitchen 1975–89: III, 640.10–14; Nelson 1978: 60–1), perhaps reinforcing the impression of a man of culture with historical interests. But as Donald B. Redford (1986: 43–54) and Andrea G. McDowell (1992: 96–100) have pointed out, such lists are well attested at Deir el-Medina, and seem to be specifically associated with the cult of the relevant kings, not historical interest per se. However, not all the kings mentioned can be linked to local cults, to the list of kings in the Daily Offering Ritual (see §7.5.5 above), or to Theban mortuary temples—i.e. implicitly to public festivals—and the inclusion of historically obscure kings like Senakhtenre Ahmose (17th Dynasty: predecessor to Seqenenre Tao) suggests access to, and awareness of, historical knowledge above and beyond that provided by the monumental and cultic landscape of contemporary Thebes (McDowell 1992: 98–9).

Scholars have also remarked upon Qenherkhepshef's apparent interest in dreams, partly based on the presence of a dream interpretation manual in his library, but also because of a prophylactic papyrus amulet (Edwards 1968), written for himself in his own hand and mentioning a demon called Sehakek, as well as his funerary headrest containing a prayer for 'a good sleep in the West', beside the depiction of a demon (Bierbrier and Parkinson 1993: 15, pls 42–3; Kitchen 1975–89: VII, 200). Certainly, his writing on the back of the dream interpretation manual shows it was part of the library when he owned it, but it does not demonstrate that he himself actively acquired it; the papyrus amulet is meant to protect against a demon who comes in the night, not specifically against nightmares (Edwards 1968: 158 n. g; Kitchen 1975–89: 181–4; but cf. Fischer-Elfert 2002); and finally the headrest, both in its iconography and its wishes for a 'good sleep', conforms to the standardized forms and phraseology of such objects (Schott 1958: 141–4).

Despite our lack of knowledge regarding his motivations and personality, Qenherkhepshef remains one of the few ancient Egyptian individuals who can be linked to a personal library. Unlike the anonymous mass of literate people, he can be situated in a community, his daily work can be traced in the documentary evidence he left behind, and the outlines of his family history can be pieced together: this provides a rare glimpse of the social context of Egyptian literature.

7.5.6. The 21st Dynasty Library from el-Hibeh

Three 21st Dynasty manuscripts bought as a group in Egypt by the Russian Orientalist Wladimir Golénischeff, mentioned above (§7.2.3, n. 5), may constitute another personal library. As the rolls were bought on the antiquities market rather than excavated, their archaeological context remains unknown, but Golénischeff recorded the circumstances of their discovery as it had been related to him: 'shortly before my arrival in Egypt in the autumn of 1891, some *fellahin* near the settlement of el-Hiba facing the town of Fashn in Upper Egypt found a large pottery vessel containing several ancient Egyptian papyrus rolls' (transl. Quirke 2004: 19; cf. Gardiner 1947: I, 28). The alleged find of these rolls in a jar mirrors both archaeological finds and ancient textual descriptions of storage (see §7.6, below), and is not implausible, but there is no further information about the find-spot—it could have been in a tomb, or even within a settlement. The find may have contained further material, and was partly divided before Golénischeff bought it: one fragment made its way to Berlin, where Heinrich Brugsch recognized it as belonging to one of the el-Hibeh rolls, and forwarded it to Golénischeff in 1892 (Schipper 2005: 5). The group (Table 7.6) consisted of one roll with a word-list (The Onomasticon of Amenemope; Gardiner 1947), and two rolls with literary compositions, both written in Late Egyptian, and otherwise unknown: The Tale of Wenamun (Gardiner 1932: 61–76; Korostovtsev 1960b) and A Tale of Woe (Caminos 1977).

There are no internal indications of the identity of the owner of the manuscripts, and they may have passed through the hands of several individuals; the literary notes on the back of the roll with A Tale of Woe appear to be in a different hand to the text on the front (Caminos 1977: 73). The back of the roll containing The Onomasticon of Amenemope is blank, with the exception of a few words which are a parallel to a passage on the front (5.13), but both sides appear to have been written by the same individual, who may also have been responsible for The Tale of Wenamun on the other literary roll (Gardiner 1947: I, 28; compare however Caminos 1977: 3 n. 3). The latter roll has a single administrative note on the back, partly erased, mentioning goods delivered by an individual called Naher [. . .] (Gardiner 1932: 76); there is otherwise no information about the individuals involved in the production of the manuscripts, or about those responsible for their collection.

7.5.7. The Library of Djedmontuiufankh

A final case of a private library from this period consists of six papyrus rolls now in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung in Berlin which were

Table 7.6. A list of manuscripts belonging to a private library of the 21st Dynasty (*c.*1000 BCE), probably found at el-Hibeh.

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes	Primary publication
P. Moscow 128 (Pushkin Museum)	The Onomasticon of Amenemope (rubrics throughout)	Blank, except for a single line duplicating parts of recto 5.13	Seven columns on the recto; *c.*23 × 153 cm; rubrics throughout	Gardiner (1947: Vol. I, 27–9; Vol. III, pls vii–xiii, xxi)
P. Moscow 120 (Pushkin Museum)	A brief administrative note (one and a half line)	The Story of Wenamun (sic: written across the fibres)	Two separate fragments of respectively 59 and 83 lines each; *c.*23 × 235 cm; rubrics throughout	Gardiner (1932: xi–xii, 61–76); Korostovtsev (1960b)
P. Moscow 127 (Pushkin Museum)	A Tale of Woe	Three notes: (1) a duplicate of opening line of the text on the recto; (2) literary jottings; (3) extract from an unknown literary text	Five columns on the recto; *c.*22 × 120 cm; rubrics and some verse-points	Caminos (1977)

acquired by Lepsius in Luxor in 1845 (P. Berlin 3048, 3049, 3050, 3053+3014, 3055, and 3056). The similarity of the manuscripts in appearance, preservation, size, palaeography, and date, as well as the fact that they were bought as a group from a single dealer,[64] suggest that they were originally found together (Gülden 2001: xiv), perhaps in a tomb. Based on the mention of a King Takelot (Dyn. 22) in one of the rolls (P. Berlin 3048), the group has been dated to *c.*840 BCE[65] and are known in the literature as 'the Takelothis papyri' (Table 7.7).

The group contains several ritual rolls (Daily Ritual of Mut, Daily Ritual of Amun), as well as hymns to Ptah, Amun, Rehorakhty, and Khonsu, and prayers or supplications addressed to Amun and Thoth (The Words of Heliopolis). Parallel lines to some of the hymns can be found in texts going back to the Ramesside period, and these have been interpreted as composed based on a variety of sources from different periods (Knigge 2006: 140–1;

[64] The papyri were bought from the Greek consul E. Triantophyllos by Lepsius (Möller 1901: Einleitung; Bierbrier 2012: 544; note that this appears to be the same individual as 'Hawaga Werdi', listed by Bierbrier on p. 568; cf. Polz 2007: 33 with no. 125).

[65] On the dates of the documents, particularly P. Berlin 3048, see Donker van Heel (2002: 142) and Payraudeau (2009: 295; cf. the remarks made by K. Jansen-Winkeln in the same volume: Broekman et al. 2009: 443).

Table 7.7. A list of manuscripts from a library belonging to (?) Djedmontuiufankh, a priest of Amun-Re and overseer of the royal treasury.

Manuscript	Recto	Verso	Notes[66]	Primary publication[67]
P. Berlin 3048 (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)	Hymn to Ptah with an intercessory prayer for Ramesses IX (col. I); another hymn to Ptah (cols II–XII)	37 administrative notes (e.g. accounts, loan contract, marriage contract, sale of a house); drawings (e.g. falcon, jackals, human heads); hymn to Rehorakhty (col. IX: 2 lines only)	*c.*25 × 304 cm	Lepsius (1849: pls 118–20); Möller (1905: pls 35–47); Wolf (1929); Sauneron (1953); Donker van Heel (2002)
P. Berlin 3049 (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)	Hymn to Ptah with an intercessory prayer for Ramesses IX (cols I–II); morning hymn to Amun-Re (cols. II–XVII); decree of Tuthmose III related to healing (cols XVIII–XIX)	Various lists and administrative notes (some apparently in Demotic: Gülden 2001: pl. xvi)	*c.*26 × 287 cm	Lepsius (1849: pl. 117b–c); Möller (1905: pls 10–26); Vernus (1979); Gülden (2001); Knigge (2006: 141–56)
P. Berlin 3050 (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)	Morning hymn to Rehorakhty (parallel to P. Berlin 3056)	Blank?	*c.*25 × 276 cm	Lepsius (1849: pls 115–117a); Möller (1905: pls 1–9); Sauneron (1953); Knigge (2006: 156–8)
P. Berlin 3053 + 3014 (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)	Daily ritual for Mut	Daily ritual for Mut	*c.*25 × 341 cm	Möller (1901: pls 38–66); Van Dijk (1983); Kausen (1991)
P. Berlin 3055 (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)	Daily ritual for Amun	Daily ritual for Amun	*c.*24 × 561 cm	Möller (1901: pls 1–37); Kausen (1991); Guglielmi and Buroh (1997)
P. Berlin 3056 (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)	Hymn to Amun (cols I–III); hymn to Rehorakhty (cols IV–V); hymn to Amun (col. VII.1–6); hymn to Khonsu (cols VII.7–VIII.3); copy of 'Words from Heliopolis' (cols VIII.4–IX.1), two prayers addressed to Amun and Thoth, said to have be found on the walls of the temple of Senwosret I at Karnak	Administrative notes (2 cols)	*c.*25 × 127 cm	Lepsius (1849: pl. 121e); Möller (1905: pls 27–34); Sauneron (1953); Osing (1983); Osing (1991); Sitzler (1995: 53–60)

[66] The measurements for the papyri are approximate; most are taken from Kaplony-Heckel (1986: 27–31, nos. 34–41) with minor modifications (cf. Gülden 2001: xvii–xviii; Donker van Heel 2002: 140), and several smaller fragments have been omitted.

[67] Due to the fact that the library of Djedmontuiufankh has been published piecemeal over many years—there is no single edition of the group as a whole—the bibliography is more extensive than that provided for the other libraries discussed in this chapter, although it should by no means be considered exhaustive. I am grateful to Kim Ryholt for sharing some of his notes on the material with me.

cf. Quack 2007). There is some overlap between the different rolls, in that P. Berlin 3048, 3050, and 3056 all have a copy of a certain hymn to Ptah.

In view of the religious focus and the predominance of ritual texts and hymns, it seems likely that the rolls stem from a temple context, and perhaps more specifically from the temples at Karnak. Although this may have been the original context, the administrative notes on the back of some of the rolls (P. Berlin 3048, 3049, and 3056) demonstrate that they had also been used to record transactions of an inherently private nature (including a marriage contract and a loan agreement; cf. Lüddeckens 1960: 10–11; Möller 1918; 1921), and it is difficult to see how a continued cultic role would be compatible with this later use; at some stage, then, they passed from a temple library into private hands.

Donker van Heel (2002) has argued that the back of P. Berlin 3048 became a 'scribbling-pad' for one of the individuals mentioned several times on the back of the same roll, a certain Djedmontuiufankh son of Aaefenmut. He was a priest of Amun-Re of Karnak and an 'overseer of the royal treasury', and in one text he traces back his lineage for a full nine generations (Payraudeau 2009: 295)—the theophorous names of these forefathers (constructed using Isis, Khonsu, Mut, and Montu) suggest that they too were based at Thebes. Some of the administrative notes provide additional information about the social context of the papyri. The list of witnesses for a loan arrangement ('text 5'), for example, includes a number of priests of Amun-Re of Karnak, and here the son of Djedmontuiufankh appears, alongside his father, with the title 'scribe'. The text itself concerns a loan between some colleagues of Djedmontuiufankh—one of the parties is also a priest of Amun and overseer of the royal treasury—and there appear to be family ties between several of the witnesses (Donker van Heel 2002: 143), confirming the impression of a social milieu associated with the great temples on the Theban East Bank. The note concerning the sale of a house ('text no. 35') likewise concerns a priest of Amun, and the still unpublished witness list may also add some details about the social relationships of the owners of the papyri. Most of the administrative texts on the back of this roll have yet to be published (they are fragmentarily preserved and written in a particularly difficult and cursive hieratic), but they are varied and include, in addition to the marriage contract, and the contract for the sale of a house mentioned above, some accounts, name-lists, and figures, notes about carpentry work, building works, and several dates (Donker van Heel 2002: 144–5).

In conclusion, the groups of papyri discussed above clearly represent private ownership of collections of literary material, but in most cases there is very little contextual information: we rarely know who copied the texts, who brought them together, or how many hands they passed through.

7.6. STORAGE

There is a serious lack of archaeological data documenting the storage of collections of literary material (Eyre 2013: 298–303), but it probably consisted primarily of wooden chests with papyrus rolls laid down horizontally inside (Parkinson and Quirke 1995: 57–64; Ryholt forthcoming; cf. Parkinson §3.1.2). New Kingdom evidence is primarily iconographic, as shown in a depiction of a building described as 'The Place of Documents of Pharaoh' belonging to the royal administration at Piramesse (Fig. 7.11; cf. §7.2.1, above), from the tomb of Tjay at Thebes (Theban tomb no. 23, temp. Merenptah, *c.*1213–1203 BCE; Porter and Moss 1960: 38 no. 4; Eyre 2013: 254, fig. 7.1a & b). This contains a drawing of two columned halls preceding an entrance-hall that in turn leads into a tripartite structure, the middle room of which is a chapel to Thoth. On either side are two rooms, both labelled 'Place of Writings'; these have chests, presumably with papyrus rolls, lining the walls. There are no scribes depicted in these rooms—they seem primarily to have been used for storage—but the preceding rooms have rows of secretaries sitting on stools or chairs with papyrus rolls across their knees (Borchardt 1907: 59–61; cf. Roth 2006: 96–7; Kitchen 1975–89: IV, 107–19; Helck 1958: 277–8).

The association between a cultic space for Thoth and secular collections of documents is not surprising, as his New Kingdom epithets include 'the one who is in the House of Books' (Gardiner 1935: I, 108 n. 4, II, pl. 41, 59), 'Lord of Writings in the House of Books' (James 1974: no. 425) and 'Head of the House of Books' (Calverley and Gardiner 1958: pl. 18). Contemporary sources show a range of other gods and goddesses with epithets linking them to both the House of Books and the House of Life (Leitz 2002: III, 40, 42), but

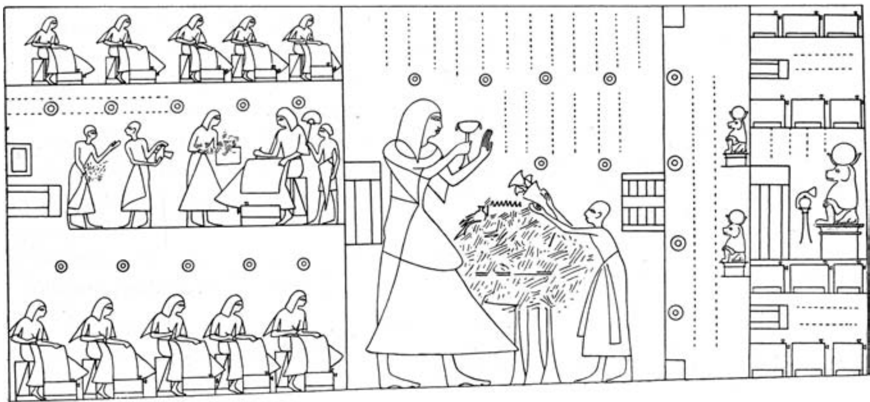

Fig. 7.11. A depiction of the 'Place of Documents of Pharaoh' in Piramesse, from Theban Tomb no. 23.
After Borchardt 1907: 59 fig. 1.

to what extent this reflects the reality of cult practice, as opposed to the religious ideology of writing, is not clear. The Deir el-Medina library discussed above (§7.5.5.1), one of the few private libraries from the New Kingdom, was not found stored in a chest, but that find reflects extraordinary circumstances outside its primary context of daily life. Certainly other texts from Deir el-Medina refer to papyrus documents being kept in 'chests' (*ʿfdt*; Donker van Heel and Haring 2003: 9), and a much later stela from Akhmim describes its owner as one 'learned in every chest (*hnw*) of the House of Life', using 'chest' as a metaphor for the knowledge contained in the library (Gardiner 1938: 173). The elaborate label mentioning a 'Book of the Moringa Tree' from the palace of Amenhotep III, discussed above (§7.3), probably stems from a similar context, i.e. as a label for a chest or container.

Papyrus rolls could also be stored in jars, for which there is both good archaeological and textual evidence (compare Ryholt §10.9; Ryholt forthcoming). A collection of 18th Dynasty legal documents were found buried in a jar during Sir William M. F. Petrie's excavations of a planned Middle Kingdom settlement at Lahun, presumably left there by someone living nearby, long after the town itself was abandoned (Quirke 2005: 116). These circumstances are paralleled in written descriptions of the storage of papyrus rolls. P. Vienna ÄS 3876 (= 'P. Ambras'), for example, contains a list of legal documents which are reported as having been found, in antiquity, in two jars:

> Year six of the Renaissance. Examination of the documents of objects which the chief tax master bought (*ỉn m swnw*) from the people of the land, which were in the jars (*ḳb*): [here follows a list of papyrus rolls]. Total of papyrus rolls which were in the jar: nine documents. The documents concerning the thieves which were in the other jar: [here follows another list of rolls].
>
> (el-Kholi 2006: 15–23)

By chance, many of the documents listed on this papyrus survive to the present day; these are the famous tomb-robbery papyri of the 20th Dynasty (Peet 1930). The documents had presumably been stolen from the archive of the 'mortuary' temple of Ramesses III at Thebes, Medinet Habu, and were important enough that the state or the temple wanted them recovered. There is no indication of whether the documents were originally stored in jars in the temple, but they were certainly deposited that way when found in antiquity, showing that in private contexts at least, papyrus rolls were occasionally stored in jars.

7.7. CONCLUSIONS

The study of Egyptian libraries in the New Kingdom is largely dependent on indirect categories of evidence, often fragmentary in nature, which leaves

any reconstruction particularly vulnerable to the preconceptions and prejudices of the historian involved. The outline given above represents one such personal attempt at analysing the material, and although I have tried to give a grounded view of the subject, readers will find other treatments which differ substantially from mine in both approaches and in the conclusions reached. Although I assign libraries an important role in the transmission of texts, I do so primarily in the context of religious compositions, and do not see them as the culturally central institutions posited by Burkard (1980) and Zinn (2007), nor do the survival patterns of the material suggest, to me, a systematic storage and reproduction like that often assumed by Western scholars (cf. the critical remarks on the use of written documents in administration by Eyre 2013: 1–15). The situation in later periods of Egyptian history, where temples and temple libraries demonstrably become bastions of Egyptian language and intellectual culture vis-à-vis Greek, cannot be projected backwards into the very different socio-historical context of the New Kingdom. The relatively low number of examples of individuals claiming to have been associated with a House of Life or a House of Books, as well as the general dearth of references to these institutions in the New Kingdom, may itself be significant.

From a more positivist perspective, New Kingdom Egypt provides definite evidence for the existence of both private and institutional libraries. In terms of institutional libraries, these can only exceptionally be identified archaeologically, such as the House of Life and 'Place of Documents of Pharaoh' at Amarna, but when they have been found they challenge Western attempts to classify collections of written material according to the presence or absence of literary material ('library' vs. 'archive'): written culture in Egypt was probably never strictly compartmentalized according to these modern categories. More often than not these institutions have left little more than a cultural imprint behind, a vague outline visible today only through indirect textual references to libraries and their staff. They feature as conceptual settings for the transmission histories of religious and literary compositions, both in ancient texts and in modern scholarly literature, but the objects themselves—the physical manuscripts—are frequently all that survives. In the absence of archaeological evidence not much can be deduced about the physical context of libraries, although storage of papyrus rolls in chests and jars is well documented. The picture that emerges is one of libraries attached to some major temples, perhaps primarily serving as repositories and scriptoria for religious literature, but also secular compositions; and as part of palaces, although here their function (and content) is less well understood. Personal libraries are comparably well attested, with several surviving examples, and papyrus rolls from these (cf. the Chester Beatty group and the 18th Dynasty library now in Moscow) are often high-quality manuscripts which—contrary to what is often stated in the literature—have not been used

for other types of writing previously: they are not palimpsest, and the literary texts are written on the front. Carefully copied and collated, they represent prestige objects in their own right, suggesting a considerable degree of care and concern for the appearance of the manuscripts by the copyists and owners. The most extensive surviving library belonged to a scribe and his descendants at Deir el-Medina, and was built up over generations. Its contents ranged from literary compositions (fiction, historical and mythological literature, wisdom poetry) to magico-medical texts, legal documents and letters, offering a pretty comprehensive overview of textual genres in circulation in New Kingdom Egypt. Owners of libraries generally remain anonymous, with a notable exception in the case of Qenherkhepshef who was responsible for the administration of work on the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. His life and career can be partially reconstructed, within the limits of the fragmentary evidence, and although little can be said about the individual and his personality, an interest in history and classical literature is reflected in the collection. Such examples bring a sense of immediacy to the study of private libraries, serving as a reminder that the library as an institution can never be disassociated from the people involved in its construction and operation. Every roll was copied and collected by a literate individual with experience, priorities, and agendas—the ancient Egyptian library cannot be reduced to simply shelves, chests, and jars of papyrus rolls.

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8

Scholarly Tablet Collections in First-Millennium Assyria and Babylonia, *c*.700–200 BCE

Eleanor Robson and Kathryn Stevens

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The half-millennium 700–200 BCE was the heyday of the cuneiform 'library': Pedersén (1998) counts nearly forty of them from that period in his foundational *Libraries and Archives in the Ancient Near East*. Yet there have been surprisingly few studies of cuneiform libraries per se (e.g. Michalowski 2003; Black 2004; Clancier 2009; 2010; Robson 2013). In this chapter we first summarize, update, and evaluate Pedersén's survey, then use a selection of this impressive array of evidence to explore some questions, raised in our respective recent work, about the functions of 'libraries' in first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia. We focus on three case studies which examine the relationships between Mesopotamian 'libraries' and two other notoriously complex Mesopotamian institutions: the temple and the scribal school.

Libraries and Archives (Pedersén 1998) is an essential starting point for any discussion of libraries in first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia. Political circumstances in modern-day Syria and Iraq have, of course, meant that there has been little significant archaeological activity in either region since the book was published, so that its listing of excavated assemblages of tablets is still more or less complete (and we shall in general only cite works of secondary literature that are not given by Pedersén). We can add a few tablet collections whose contents and original context(s) can be reconstructed to some extent from museological evidence as well as internal, paratextual evidence on the tablets themselves, such as colophons (see the Tables throughout this chapter). Yet, as will become clear, these paratexts can be unreliable witnesses to the composition and disposition of individual collections, as tablets could—and often did—travel from place to place.

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Pedersén's definition of a cuneiform 'library' is a simple, archaeological one (1998: 2–3): an excavated assemblage of tablets bearing 'the texts of tradition'—essentially, not an archive—and/or a room in which such tablets were stored. Some sort of archaeological context, whether primary or secondary, is a prerequisite. The quantity of tablets actually found in the find-spot is irrelevant, so that at least one of his 'libraries' was discovered as an empty room. In this way he counts sixteen libraries from first-millennium Assyria and thirteen from Babylonia.

Pedersén's approach is a valuable survey of the evidence, but does not begin to address how such collections came to be, how they actually functioned, and how they fell into disuse. And there is also the underlying question of whether, or to what extent, they deserve the label 'library' at all (Robson 2013). First there is the fundamental problem that the closest Akkadian equivalent for 'library', *gerginakku*, is only sporadically attested, mostly in the Neo-Assyrian period. If we were to restrict our study to self-defined *gerkinakku*s we would be dealing with just three of them, in Kalhu, Nineveh, and Huzirina (Robson 2013). Second, modern terms such as 'Bibliothek' and 'library' derive from ancient Greek *bibliotheca* and Latin *librarium*, not just etymologically but also in their semantic range. They originate in ancient cultures of literacy that were significantly different from those of first-millennium Mesopotamia (Too 2010). Third, Pedersén's definition of a library's contents as 'the texts of tradition' simply begs the question of what might constitute the 'tradition' (Robson 2011a). We shall take it to mean works of Assyrian and Babylonian scholarship, whether written on clay, writing board, parchment, papyrus, or other media. We understand this to include not only manuscripts of standard compositions (whether literary narratives such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, incantations and ritual series such as *Maqlû*, or omen compendia such as *Enūma Anu Ellil*) but also ad hoc compositions such as commentaries on, or compilations of extracts from, those standard works; entirely novel creations which survive in unique exemplars; and self-declared transcriptions of the 'oral traditions' of scholarly experts. Fourth, it is imperative to maintain a fourfold distinction between buildings (temples, palaces, houses); the book-like objects housed in them (tablets, plus now long-perished writing boards, papyri, and leather rolls); the scholarly compositions written on those media; and the groups who created and used them.

But did works of cuneiform scholarship really function like (modern) library books? How do we identify such functionality in the archaeological record? How reliably can we even reconstruct assemblages of scholarly tablets? As our first case study will demonstrate, the fragility and mobility of ancient writing media create problems here. Then there is the relationship of cuneiform 'libraries' and their contents to education: should elementary educational exercises be included in our definition of 'books' in a cuneiform 'library', as Pedersén (1998) implies? We shall return to this question in our second case

study, where it will become apparent that the relationship between acquiring tablets and acquiring scholarly knowledge is an interesting and complex one. A further question concerns user communities more broadly: which particular portions of society had access to cuneiform scholarship, and how and by whom was that access controlled? Our third case study will consider this issue in more detail.

But first let us briefly survey the archaeological and museological evidence for scholarly tablet collections from first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia.

8.2. THE EVIDENCE FROM ASSYRIA

We begin with Assyria, the great empire that ruled much of the Near East from its heartland on the northern Tigris for most of the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. The Assyrian kings each occupied several residences, moving the court from one city to another in the Assyrian heartland; all these cities have been excavated to some extent, especially the royal citadels, but there has been relatively little archaeological work on the non-royal cities of the northern Iraqi heartland. Since the early 1990s excavation has necessarily focused on the provincial Assyrian towns of Syria, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurdistan but—with two exceptions—the provinces have produced almost nothing by way of scholarly writings. First we shall take the capital cities in order of occupation, and then turn briefly to the provinces.

8.2.1. Assur, the Ancestral City

The city of Assur was the ancestral home of the Assyrians, occupied from the mid-third millennium BCE and homonymous with the patron deity of the empire (though modern typographical convention usefully distinguishes between Assur the city and Aššur the god). Assur was excavated extensively by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft between 1903 and 1913, and then again sporadically from the late 1980s (cf. http://www.assur.de). The site has also been dug, on and off, by Iraqi excavators since the 1970s. The archives and libraries of Assur were very usefully surveyed by Pedersén (1985–6) and a (re-)publication of the scholarly tablets from Assur is the subject of a long-term project at the University of Heidelberg (Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 2015; see also Maul and Heeßel 2010; Renger 2011). However, reconstruction of the archaeological record of Assur is, like so many early excavations, badly hampered by the post-excavation loss of records, photographs, and tablets through the vicissitudes of two world wars (see e.g. Grayson 1983; Klengel-Brandt 1995).

The early twentieth-century excavation included east-west trenches dug at 100-metre intervals right across the site within the confines of the city walls. This programme yielded an informative and sizeable sample of domestic dwellings and gives us a unique insight into the degree of high-level literacy in major urban centres. For as well as the remains of substantial 'libraries' in the god Aššur's temple (Pedersén 1985–6: archive N 1) and in the so-called Prince's Palace (N 5), no less than six domestic collections of scholarly tablets were found (N 2–4, N 6–8), from trenches all over the city (Table 8.1; Pedersén 1998: 132–6). Whether the smaller assemblages (N 6–8) were really deliberately

Table 8.1. Scholarly tablet collections found in first-millennium Assur (after Pedersén 1985–6; 1998: 132–43).

Name and location	Dating	Tablets	Central persons
N 1/Assur 15 (Aššur's temple)	9th century	300+ total, including at least *c.*100 Middle Assyrian, 8 Middle Babylonian, and 15 Neo-Assyrian scholarly; 1 archival (Faist 2007: no. 1); remainder unidentified or missing	senior officials of the temple, including a high priest and a steward
N 3/Assur 19 (family dwelling in city centre)	mid-8th to late 7th century	58 scholarly/school; 12 archival (Faist 2007: nos. 20–31); 177 unidentified or missing	family of chief musicians (*nargallu*), including brothers Aššur-šum-iškun and Nabu-šezibanni plus Aššur-šum-šuklil
N 8/Assur 23 (family dwelling in west of city)	late 8th century?	7 scholarly/school; 1 archival (Faist 2007: no. 36)	none identifiable
N 5/Assur 16 (royal palace on Tigris river bank)	early 7th century	18 scholarly/school; 2 archival (Faist 2007: nos. 32–3); *c.*67 unidentified or missing	no clear central persons but the palace belonged to Sennacherib's younger son Aššur-muballissu
N 2/Assur 18 (family dwelling near ziggurat)	mid-7th century	24 scholarly/school; 19 archival (Faist 2007: nos. 2–19, 113); 35 unidentified or missing	family of scribes (*ṭupšarru*), including Nabu-ah-iddin and his son Šumma-balaṭ
N 7/Assur 22 (in west of city)	mid-7th century?	*c.*10 scholarly/school; 1 archival (Faist 2007: no. 35); 14 unidentified	none identifiable
N 4/Assur 20 (family dwelling in city centre)	late 7th century	575 scholarly/school; 56 archival; *c.*170 unidentified or missing	family of healers (*āšipu*), including Kiṣir-Aššur and his nephew Kiṣir-Nabu
N 6/Assur 21 (family dwelling in south of city)	late 7th century	17 scholarly/school (Köcher 1957–8); 1 archival (Faist 2007: no. 34)	none identifiable

assembled 'collections', however, is a moot point, especially N 8 which is simply a small cache of elementary school exercises. We shall return to this question in our Case Study Two.

8.2.2. Kalhu, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh, the Royal Capitals

In the early ninth century BCE King Assurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 BCE) founded a new residence complex at Kalhu (modern Nimrud) about 65 km upriver from Assur. British excavations in the period 1949–63 uncovered many large buildings on the royal citadel, including parts of the main (Northwest) palace and, several hundred metres away, a temple dedicated to Nabu, the god of writing and wisdom (see Oates and Oates 2001; Curtis et al. 2008). Some 260 scholarly tablets were discovered in a room immediately opposite Nabu's shrine (Pedersén 1998: Kalhu 14; Black 2008; http://www.oracc.org/cams/gkab/kalhu), with a few colophons dating from the late ninth, early eighth, and early seventh centuries (Black 2008: 263; Robson 2012). Pedersén (1998: 150, Kalhu 10) usefully points out that a cache of up to thirty wooden and ivory writing-boards found down a well in the Northwest Palace should also be treated as the remains of a 'library'. We shall return to both assemblages in our first case study, where it will be pertinent that the many archival tablets discovered at Kalhu date mostly to two periods: shortly before the relocation of the capital from Kalhu to Dur-Sharrukin in the late eighth century; and just before the fall of the empire in the late seventh century (Pedersén 1998: 144). Small numbers of scholarly tablets were also scattered amongst the palace's archival records (Black 2008: 261–2).

Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad) was Sargon II's (r. 721–705 BCE) splendid new foundation, some 45 km due north of Kalhu, which he started in 717 BCE and occupied a decade later. However, it was abandoned as a royal residence very soon afterward, following the king's unpropitious death in battle, and the buildings of the citadel were systematically cleared of their contents. An American archaeological expedition, which ran from 1928 to 1935, thus found very few portable objects there (Loud and Altman 1938: 95–9). However, the excavators did discover fragments of about thirty scholarly and administrative tablets scattered throughout the temple of the god Nabu, adjacent to the royal palace (Loud and Altman 1938: 104–5). Two rooms of the temple were lined with storage niches, now empty, but which most likely originally served as tablet stores of some sort (Fig. 8.1; Loud and Altman 1938: 56–64; Pedersén 1998: 155–8, Dur-Sharrukin 1–2). Almost all of the tablet fragments were in corridors or doorways, as if they had been dropped during the evacuation. Unfortunately the Dur-Sharrukin tablets, which are now being prepared for systematic publication, have long since

Fig. 8.1. Pigeon-holes for tablets in Room 5 of Nabu's temple in Dur-Sharrukin, *c.*705 BCE.

After Loud & Altman 1938: pl. 19c, courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

been separated from their excavation numbers, so we may never know exactly what was found where (J.A. Brinkman, pers. comm., August 2010). We shall return to this building in Case Study One.

Sargon's son and successor, Sennacherib (r. 705–681 BCE) in turn relocated the royal court to the city of Nineveh, an ancient Assyrian city on the Tigris between Kalhu and Dur-Sharrukin. It was to remain the imperial centre until the end of empire in 612 BCE. The royal citadel, often known by its modern name Kuyunjik, was first explored by Europeans in the 1840s, long before the advent of stratigraphic archaeology. It was both a blessing and a curse that the largest ever find of tablets was made there: a blessing because these *c.*31,000 beautifully written tablets and fragments kick-started the discipline of Assyriology; and a curse because the exact contextual disposition of the objects on their discovery has been lost forever, despite the best efforts of recent generations of British Museum curators to reconstruct possible find-spots.

Irving Finkel in the following chapter deals with Nineveh in more detail than we can here, but suffice it to say that the famous King Assurbanipal's Library in fact comprises several discrete tablet assemblages from the seventh century BCE. These derive mostly from the late eighth-century Southwest Palace, but also from the later North Palace and the nearby temples of Nabu

and Ishtar (Reade 1986a; Table 8.2, Nineveh 1, 5, and [6]), which were all destroyed by fire (and the tablets serendipitously baked) when the Medes and Babylonians sacked Nineveh in 612 BCE. About 4500 tablets of the 'Library' are in fact archival, and are now published in the State Archives of Assyria series. Taking joins between fragments into account, Reade (1998–2001: 421) estimates that around 15,000–20,000 scholarly tablets have survived in some form or another. They have all been digitized and catalogued, and high-quality images are publicly available on the British Museum's online research database (http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx).

Table 8.2. Scholarly tablet collections found in Neo-Assyrian Kalhu, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh (after Pedersén 1998: 143–78).

Name and location	Dating	Tablets	Central persons
Kalhu 10 (well in Room AB of Northwest Palace)	late 8th century	*c.*30 scholarly writing-boards	(none)
Kalhu 14 (Room NT 4 of Ezida temple)	9th to late 7th century	*c.*255 scholarly/school	several generations of royal scholars, including chief scribe Nabu-zuqup-kenu and his descendants
Dur-Sharrukin 1–2 (scattered throughout Ezida temple)	late 8th century	12 scholarly; 6 archival; 12 unidentified	(none)
Nineveh 1 (Rooms XL, XLI and adjacent areas of Southwest Palace)	late 8th to late 7th century	many thousands of scholarly tablets and some archival ones (excavation largely unrecorded)	several generations of royal scholars, including chief scribe Nabu-zuqup-kenu and his descendants
Nineveh 5 (southern corners of North Palace)	mid- to late 7th century	many scholarly tablets (excavation largely unrecorded)	king Assurbanipal and several generations of royal scholars, including chief scribe Nabu-zuqup-kenu and his descendants
Nineveh [6] (Ezida temple)	8th to late 7th century	at least 41 scholarly tablets: 27 on archaeological grounds (Lambert and Millard 1966: 91–2); 14 from colophon evidence (King 1912; Lambert and Millard 1966; Hunger 1932668)	Nabu-kabti-ahhešu, king Sargon's palace scribe; prince Assurbanipal
Nineveh [7] (Ishtar's temple)	7th century	18 on archaeological grounds (Lambert and Millard 1966: 91–2)	none

Table 8.3. Scholarly tablet collections found in western provincial towns of the Assyrian Empire (after Pedersén 1998: 178–81; Robson et al. 2007–; Harrison 2012).

Name and location	Dating	Tablets	Central persons
Huzirina 1 (cache hidden outside house on citadel)	7th century	*c.*360 scholarly; 4 archival; 28 unidentified	Qurdi-Nergal, *šangû*-priest of Zababa and Bau, and his associates and descendants
Kullania (inner chamber of Temple XVI)	7th century	9 scholarly; 1 legal; 1 administrative	(unknown)

8.2.3. Huzirina and Kullania, Western Provincial Towns

The residential areas of Nineveh, Kalhu, and Dur-Sharrukin have never been excavated but it is reasonable to suppose that, as at Assur, at least some of their inhabitants kept collections of scholarly writings. The fact that such a collection has been excavated from Huzirina, a small town near the provincial capital Harran, suggests that such intellectual interests were widespread. Huzirina (modern Sultantepe), located some 400 km west of Nineveh on the modern Syrian-Turkish border, was excavated for two short seasons by an Anglo-Turkish team in the early 1950s (Lloyd and Gökçe 1953). Near the central cultic precinct the archaeologists discovered a cache of about 400 scholarly tablets that had been carefully buried just outside the main door of a substantial house, which probably belonged to a multi-generational family of priests (Pedersén 1998: 187–1; Robson 2012; http://www.oracc.org/cams/gkab/huzirina/).

Even further west, in the coastal provincial capital of Kullania, Kunulua, or Kinaliya (modern Tell Tayinat), in 2009 a Canadian team unearthed a small cache of tablets in the inner cella of the main temple, including nine fragments of the calendar of ominous days, *Iqqur Īpuš*, in tabular format; one Sumerian-Akkadian lexical text; and a large loyalty treaty to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon and his heir Assurbanipal. At least some of these tablets were pierced in order to be displayed on the wall rather than closely read in the hand; the meaning of their presence in the temple remains an enigma (Harrison 2011; 2012; Lauinger 2011; 2016).

8.3. THE EVIDENCE FROM BABYLONIA

Babylonia had been a troubled and troublesome part of the Neo-Assyrian state, with the city of Babylon as a particular focus of political and cultural

resistance (Frame 2008). In the late seventh century a Babylonian-Median alliance brought down the Assyrian Empire and Babylon claimed its independence. But just a few decades later, in 539 BCE, Babylonia became a satrapy of the Persian Empire—and once more a centre of rebellion. In 410 BCE, in response to local revolts, the Persian king Xerxes purged northern Babylonia of its most prominent and politically active families, thereby dramatically curtailing cuneiform literacy in the region (Waerzeggers 2003/4; Robson 2017). This rupture is often referred to as 'the end of archives', as several—but not all—major institutions such as the Ebabbar temple in Sippar and the Eanna in Uruk disappear from the historical record at about this point, as well as a number of prominent families (Kessler 2004; Baker 2008). The 'end of archives' thus serves as a useful chronological dividing line between the so-called Neo-Babylonian period (namely, the seventh–fifth centuries BCE) and the subsequent Late Babylonian period. In 331 BCE Babylonia was conquered once again, by Alexander the Great, inaugurating nearly two centuries of Greco-Macedonian rule and settlement in the region. After Alexander's death (in Babylon) in 323, his successors fought for control over his vast conquests, carving out territories and founding dynasties; Babylonia eventually fell under the control of Alexander's former general Seleucus and became a political centre of the Seleucid Empire. Cuneiform scholarship hung on in some cities, including Babylon itself, through yet another invasion—of the Arsacid Parthians from Iran—in 141 BCE, before it finally petered out definitively in the mid-first century BCE (Westenholz 2007; Brown 2008).

Many of the great cities of first-millennium Babylonia have been formally excavated: Babylon itself of course, as well as Kish, Nippur, Sippar, Ur, and Uruk. All of these sites, as well as others, such as Borsippa, have also been subject to more informal diggings, whether to directly furnish Victorian museum collections with tablets or to supply the antiquities market in the nineteenth century and beyond. In this survey we focus first on Babylon, then in turn the other cities of northern and southern Babylonia.

8.3.1. Babylon

Babylon has been excavated on and off since the early nineteenth century but was subject to particularly intensive investigation in 1899–1917, by a team led by Robert Koldewey for the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft. Here, as at Assur, many 'libraries' in Pedersén's sense—that is, assemblages of scholarly tablets—were unearthed across the city during large-scale excavations of sacred precincts and residential quarters. And again as at Assur, much vital data and material was lost in twentieth-century conflicts, meaning that full reconstruction of those assemblages is now often impossible (Pedersén 2005: 2–8). A detailed survey of the German work is given by Pedersén (2005)

with a more recent study, based on it, by Clancier (2009: 105–214, 409–70). Iraqi restoration and excavation projects since the 1970s have also yielded relevant finds.

In our view, there are just five excavated assemblages of scholarly tablets from Babylon of meaningful size and archaeological coherence, all of which comprise only a few dozen pieces, plus two collections that are reconstructible from museum records on the circumstances of their discovery and/or acquisition (Table 8.4). Of the five excavated assemblages, two (Babylon 17/N 10 and Babylon 11/N 14) are pre-Achaemenid, one found in a private house in the Merkes area of the city and associated with an archive belonging to the Šigua family, the other in Ehursagtila, the temple of Ninurta, in Išin-Aswad. A third, found in Ishtar's temple Emašdari in Merkes (N 8), runs into the early Achaemenid period, and thus is also Neo-Babylonian by the definition given above.

By contrast, just one assemblage, found in a house some 70m west of Išhara's temple (Babylon 20/N 19), survived the 'end of archives' and functioned well into the Seleucid period, as witnessed not only by the dates on

Table 8.4. Scholarly tablet collections found in Neo- and Late Babylonian Babylon (after Pedersén 1998: 183–91; 2005: 188–283 *passim*).

Name and location	Dating	Tablets	Central persons
Babylon 17/N 10: House VI (Merkes area)	early 7th–early 6th cent.	14 archival; 8 scholarly; 13 unidentified	Silim-Bel and his son Marduk-šum-uṣur of the Šigua family (archive)
Babylon 11/N 14: Ninurta's temple (Išin-Aswad area)	late 7th–mid-6th cent.	15 scholarly; 17 school; 330+ archival; 19 unidentified	Ṭabiya (archive)
N 8, in and beside Ishtar's temple (Merkes area)	late 6th cent.	22 scholarly; 27 archival; 5 unidentified	none identified
Babylon 20/N 19: west of Išhara's temple (Amran area)	mid-6th–mid-2nd cent.	29 scholarly; 14 administrative; 16 unidentified	none identified
Tanittu-Bel's tablets, reconstructed museologically (Finkel 1991)	late 4th cent.	14 scholarly	Tanittu-Bel
Nanna-utu family's tablets, reconstructed museologically (Reisner 1896; Robson 2018)	late 2nd–early 1st cent.	90 scholarly	5 generations of the Nanna-utu family
Trench 31, lower levels of Babylon 18/N 15: 40 m northeast of Ninurta's temple (Išin-Aswad area)	unknown	49 scholarly and school; 13 archival; *c.*18 unidentified	unknown

the tablets but also by the inclusion in the assemblage of ten works of mathematical astronomy, a genre which began only in the late fourth century. As Clancier (2009: 180–2) usefully points out, the area now known as Amran, where Babylon 20/N 19 was located, is also likely to be the source of the British Museum's copious quantities of Late Babylonian tablets that bear colophons of scholars associated with Marduk's temple Esaggil (listed in Clancier 2009: 409–70). They were acquired by informal excavation and purchase from the 1880s onwards, presumably having been found in houses much like that of Babylon 20/N 19. Perhaps surprisingly, only one possible scholarly tablet (and half a dozen tablets of other types) was found in Esaggil itself (Pedersén 2005: N 20). However, as Pedersén (2005: 283) notes, this is because the excavation was conducted by tunnelling along the walls rather than by uncovering the floor surfaces of the rooms. Any 'library' there might have been in Marduk's temple therefore remains to be discovered.

Two museologically reconstructed tablet collections can also be assigned to Seleucid and Parthian Babylon. First, Finkel (1991) has identified fourteen tablets of incantations and associated scholarly works, written and owned by one Tanittu-Bel in the 320s BCE, as deriving from Hormuzd Rassam's excavations for the British Museum in early 1881. Second, some ninety tablets of bilingual hymns, now housed in the Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin, were copied out *ana zamāri*, 'for singing', by five generations of the Nanna-utu family in late second and early first-century Babylon (Reisner 1896; Hunger 1968: 18–19, no. 147). A further twenty or more tablets of omen commentary, mathematical astronomy, and Akkadian literature can also be attributed to this family or their close associates from the Egiba-tila and Mušezib families, at least some of whom were *kalû*-lamenters of the god Marduk (Robson 2018).

Finally, two of the 'libraries' identified by Pedersén (1998: Babylon 18–19; 2005: N 15, N 18) are in fact, as he acknowledges, convenient labels for mostly very small groups of tablets found in long trenches which the excavators dug systematically across large areas of domestic dwellings in the Išin-Aswad area of the site. The N 15 finds include a large cluster of scholarly and administrative tablets excavated in and around Trench 31, which appears to have been a small street or alley. The tablets were discovered at various depths from the surface but seem to be part of a single assemblage, although it is difficult to delimit or date it precisely on the evidence available.

We should also mention here the enormous cache of some 1500 elementary school tablets buried in the foundations of Nabu *ša harê*'s temple, and the neighbouring shrine of the goddess Ašratu, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II in the early sixth century BCE (Cavigneaux 1981). While Pedersén (1998: 186, Babylon 10) treats this find as a 'library'—in the sense of an excavated assemblage of non-archival tablets—as we shall see in our second case study, from a functional point of view it is clearly rather a votive deposit (George 1986: 12–16; Clancier 2009: 152–6).

8.3.2. Northern Babylonia

The vast majority of Neo- and Late Babylonian scholarly tablets from other cities in northern Babylonia are from informal and illicit excavations. In due course it may be possible to partially reconstruct some assemblages retrospectively through internal means of identification such as colophons, but such reconstructions will necessarily always fall short. Not every tablet was given a colophon in antiquity, not every colophon survives, and—as we shall see in the case studies below—the find-spots of excavated tablets often belie the provenance information given on colophons. Nevertheless, some reconstructions have already been made, using the catalogues of the 'Babylon' and 'Sippar' collections of the British Museum, (now increasingly accessible online), which are particularly important sources of information about such tablets (Figulla 1961; Sigrist et al. 1996; 2006; Leichty 1986; Leichty and Grayson 1987; Leichty et al. 1988). For instance, the well-known 'archive of Bel-remanni' has been reconstructed by Michael Jursa (1999) and Irving Finkel (2000), starting with the 1881-7-1 lot of the British Museum and working outwards into other collections. It is also known as Šangu-Šamaš A, after the ancestral name of the family (Jursa 2005: 127–8). This enormous family archive from Achaemenid Sippar, which we shall briefly revisit in our second case study, includes about 90 tablets that seem to have been written by one or more medical apprentices and many dozens more that may be the outcome of on-the-job training in archival documentation (Jursa 1999: 12–31).

There are also three (partially) recorded archaeological finds of scholarly tablet assemblages from the region (Table 8.5), two of which are not listed by Pedersén (1998). First, in 1879 Hormuzd Rassam, excavating Nabu's temple Ezida in Borsippa for the British Museum, discovered an unspecified quantity

Table 8.5. Scholarly tablet collections found in northern Babylonian cities of the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods.

Name and location	Dating	Tablets	Publication
Kish, Mound W	late 8th–7th cent.	at least 62 scholarly; at least 150 school	Robson (2004: 46–62); Gesche (2001: 781–8)
Sippar, Shamash's temple Ebabbar	6th cent.	*c.*800 scholarly	Anonymous (1987: 248–9); Fadhil and Hilgert (2008: 183)
Borsippa, Nabu's temple Ezida, Room C1	mid-5th or early 4th cent.	at least 30 scholarly	Reade (1986a: 107–9); Hunger (1968: nos. 124–32); Leichty et al. (1988: 370)
Sippar, 'Šangu-Šamaš A' or 'Bel-remanni archive', reconstructed museologically	late 6th–early 5th cent.	At least 90 scholarly; *c.*200 archival, including 55 apprentice pieces	Jursa (1999: 12–31; 2005: 127–8); Finkel (2000)

of tablets in Room C1, an antechamber to a *cella* in the southeast of the building. Julian Reade (1986b: 107–8) suggests they may have included the tablets BM 93043–93064, which were 'written with a distinctive fine script [on a] smooth slipped surface' (Leichty et al. 1988: 370). One of the tablets bears a colophon of Nabu-kuṣuršu from the Huṣabu family of prebendary brewers, enabling a linkage with several other scholarly tablets of his (Hunger 1968: nos. 124–32) which likewise date to the reign of Artaxerxes I or II (454–453 or 394–393 BCE). According to Waerzeggers (2010: 169) the Huṣabu family was the only line of Nabu's prebendary brewers to survive the 'end of archives'. Many, perhaps hundreds, more scholarly tablets now in the British Museum and elsewhere may also come from this temple, perhaps from as late as the mid-second century BCE (e.g. Hunger 1968: nos. 133–40).

Second, in 1923–4 Stephen Langdon, working for the Oxford-Field Museum Expedition to Kish, uncovered a first-millennium 'library' on Mound W in the centre of the city (Langdon 1924: 87, pls 23, 27). Langdon's records are so scanty that the building's location, layout and contents are unknown, but Moorey (1978: 49–50) deduces from Langdon's notes that scholarly and elementary school tablets were stored within large jars in several rooms of the building, which was probably built in the seventh century and abandoned by the Achaemenid period. Robson (2004: 46–9) reconstructed the core of the scholarly collection, a total of seventy-two tablets, on the basis of typological and museological evidence, while Gesche (2001: 781–8) catalogued over 150 of the school tablets (see also Robson 2004: 49–62 for the mathematical and metrological exercises), though many more remain unpublished in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Third, in the mid-1980s an Iraqi team excavating the city of Sippar found about four hundred scholarly tablets in the small temple E'ulmash, which was dedicated to the goddess Annunitu (Pedersén 1998: 194–8; Hilgert 2013: 145). The tablets were discovered still in their pigeonholes in a small storage room of the temple, which was annexed to the much larger Ebabbar temple, dedicated to the sun-god Shamash, Annunitu's divine consort. Although only about thirty tablets have published so far, their colophons contain dates ranging from the mid-to-late sixth century BCE and feature *kalû*-lamenters, *āšipu*-healers, and a trainee *bārû*-diviner from several different families (provisionally, see Anonymous 1987: 248–9 and pl. XLVII; Fadhil and Hilgert 2008: 183 with full bibliography; Hilgert 2013). Ebabbar ceased to function in the early fifth century, wound down by Persian king Darius about a decade before Xerxes' 'end of archives' suppression (Waerzeggers 2003/4; Robson 2017: 465).

8.3.3. Southern Babylonia

Then there are seven excavated assemblages of scholarly tablets from the cities of southern Babylonia, where cuneiform culture survived the 'end of archives'

much better than in the north (Table 8.6). Once again though, known scholarly tablets from this area are preponderantly from informal and/or illicit excavations rather than formal, recorded expeditions.

One assemblage is the so-called Absummu archive from late Achaemenid Nippur, which shows scholarly activity around Enlil's temple Ekur until at least the early fourth century BCE (Hunger 1968: nos. 119–23; Joannès 1992; Jursa 2005: 111–12; Robson 2018).

At Ur, Pedersén (1998: 204) notes a Neo- or Late Babylonian house in the south of the city, known as House 1, excavated by Leonard Woolley in 1933–4. Here an unrecorded number of school and/or scholarly tablets were

Table 8.6. Scholarly tablet collections found in southern Babylonian cities of the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods (after Pedersén 1998: 206–12).

Name and location	Dating	Tablets	Central persons
Nippur 'Absummu archive' or 'Ninurta-ahhe-bulliṭ archive', reconstructed museologically	late 5th–early 4th cent.	*c.*35 archival; *c.*40 scholarly	the Absummu family of prebendary brewers (Joannès 1992)
Ur 6: 'House 1' in the south of the city	uncertain	uncertain	unknown
Uruk 1: Ishtar temple Eanna, rooms to the north of court A2	late 7th–late 6th cent.	*c.*10,000 archival; *c.*250 scholarly	various (Falkenstein 1934; Hunger 1968: nos. 74–86)
Uruk 9: level 4 of house in area Ue XVIII	early 5th cent.	at least 145 scholarly; 3 school; 23 archival; 10 unidentified	the Šangu-Ninurta family of *āšipu*-healers
Uruk 10: levels 2–3 of house in area Ue XVIII	early 4th cent.	At least 210 scholarly; 3 school; 10 archival; 13 unidentified	the Ekur-zakir family of *āšipu*-healers
Uruk 4: Anu's temple Reš, room by east entrance	early 3rd–mid-2nd cent.	61 scholarly; 28 archival; 52 unidentified; plus earlier illicit excavations	Anu-belšunu the elder, of the Sin-leqi-unninni family of *kalû*-lamenters
Uruk 2: Ishtar's temple Irigal (or Ešgal), room near west entrance	mid-2nd cent.	55, including 'a few' scholarly; plus earlier illicit excavations	none known
Uruk 11: house in area Oa/b XV3/4 in north-west of city	7th century or later	18 scholarly; 2 archival	none

found, 'an overflow from the little cupboard chamber 22, where the floor was covered with such; they were very largely school tablets, syllabaries, etc.' (Woolley 1962: 47). It is now impossible to identify these tablets with any certainty, as they do not appear to have been given excavation numbers, but candidates include the twenty-seven elementary school tablets published in *UET* 7 (Gurney 1974) and catalogued by Gesche (2001: 788–90) and/or some of the little medical and lexical tablets of *UET* 4 (Figulla 1949: nos. 146–57, 208).

At Uruk, the evidential situation is both clearer and richer, thanks—once again—to long-term German excavations at the site. Pedersén (1998: 205–10, 212), amplified by Clancier (2009: 25–103, 387–409), identifies six Neo- and Late Babylonian scholarly assemblages: three stemming from the great temples Eanna, Irigal, and Reš, and three from private houses. The earliest and largest is that found in the goddess Ishtar's temple Eanna (Uruk 1), forcibly shut down by Darius (Kessler 2004). Some 250-odd Neo-Babylonian scholarly tablets, comprising the most legible half of the finds, were published by Falkenstein (1934) but have never been subject to historical analysis. Next in chronological sequence (and size) are two collections which were found in different levels of the same house and owned by two families of *āšipu*-healers (Uruk 9, Uruk 10). On stratigraphic and internal grounds about 160 tablets can be assigned to the late fifth-century Šangu-Ninurta family—the main focus of our second case study—and around 240 to members of the Ekur-zakir family who occupied the house in the late fourth century; around seventy-five tablets could belong to either group (http://www.oracc.org/cams/gkab/aszipus).

The two surviving Seleucid assemblages are much smaller, but both are from temple store-rooms in Anu's temple Reš, and Ishtar's temple Irigal (or Ešgal), which had been subject to earlier looting (Uruk 2, Uruk 4). Many market-acquired tablets from Late Babylonian Uruk are also likely to have come from these same locations, meaning that the two temple's scholarly holdings were probably far larger than the fifty to sixty pieces each that were discovered *in situ* by archaeologists. We shall return to these (re)constructed collections in our third case study. Finally, a small private house very close to the temple precincts, and only partially published, yielded about twenty scholarly tablets of known Neo- or Late Babylonian date (Uruk 11).

8.4. CASE STUDY ONE: TABLET COLLECTIONS IN NEO-ASSYRIAN ROYAL TEMPLES

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, archaeologists and Assyriologists, even recently, have tended to treat excavated cuneiform tablet collections as though they were an immovable part of a building's fixtures, implicitly

analogous to the 'chained libraries' of medieval and early modern Europe in which books were fixed to the shelves (Blades 1892; Clark 1901; Streeter 1931; Crawford 2003). But the aim of that arrangement was to provide maximum accessibility to an increasingly public readership (Summit 2008: 235–9), a concern that would have undoubtedly been alien, if not anathema, to the cuneiform-literate scholars of Assyria and Babylonia. A more useful model might be the modern academic's relationship with books, which circulate quite freely between university library, office, and home, and which are often more informally lent to students and colleagues. Some may be borrowed from much further afield on interlibrary loan. Amongst the scholarly tablets from the *āšipu*s' house in Late Babylonian Uruk are two which according to their colophons were written in Der, in north-eastern Babylonia, or by men from that city, and even one tablet which stems from Assurbanipal's long-perished collection in Nineveh (SpTU 4: 125, 185; SpTU 2: 46). In other words, both books and tablets are inherently mobile, and we do well to remember that fact in examining the archaeological record. In this section, we explore the relationship between building, community, and collection in the case of Neo-Assyrian court scholarship.

8.4.1. Royal Temples of Scholarship

There were temples dedicated to Nabu, god of wisdom, in all Assyrian royal cities in the first millennium BCE (Menzel 1981; Pomponio 1998–2001: 19–20; Seidl 1998–2001: 28). The first was founded at Kalhu under Assurnasirpal (r. 883–859). Just a few decades later, Adad-nerari III (r. 810–783) built a second in Nineveh, while carrying out major renovations to the original—or allowing the governor of Kalhu to do so. Then in the late eighth century Sargon commissioned a third, on the short-lived royal citadel of Dur-Sharrukin, and also carried out repairs to those at Kalhu and Nineveh. Although Sargon's son and successor Sennacherib was not a devotee of Nabu, his own descendants Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal revived and maintained the temples at both Kalhu and Nineveh. Even the weaker kings of the later seventh century, Aššur-etel-ilani and Sin-šar-iškun, invested in building work at the Kalhu temple, while the latter also restored the shrine at Nineveh and founded a brand new temple to Nabu at Assur, inventing an ancient genealogy for it (Robson 2019: ch. 3).

The Kalhu and Nineveh temples were named Ezida, Sumerian 'true house', after the original Ezida in Borsippa, which had been founded in the second millennium BCE (George 1993: 160). No distinctive name is attested for the others—they are referred to simply as *bēt Nabû*, 'Nabu's house'—but it seems reasonable to suppose that they too occasionally bore the epithet Ezida.

The ground plans of the Nineveh temples do not survive, but the three that remain, at Kalhu, Dur-Sharrukin, and Assur, are all very similar. Their unique core feature is a pair of east-facing shrines, for the statues of Nabu and his consort Tašmetu (Akkadian, 'the listening, attentive one'), accessed via antechambers from an inner courtyard (Heinrich 1982: II Abb. 349, 354–6, 371). When the doors were open, the deities' statues could be seen directly from the courtyard—and, at Kalhu, from the tablet storeroom immediately opposite (Fig. 8.2). At Dur-Sharrukin the inner tablet room was also in the same courtyard as the shrines; at Assur no such room has been identified. Postgate (1974) points out that both the Kalhu and Dur-Sharrukin versions also have a secondary pair of shrines built into them, accessed from a separate courtyard, off which there is also a throne room. He argues convincingly that the deities' statues moved here whenever the king came to visit. And in Kalhu, it was in the Ezida's throne room that the famous 'succession treaties' of Esarhaddon were found, smashed on the floor amongst the debris of the sumptuous ivory fittings with which the room had been furnished (Oates and Oates 2001: 199). They had clearly been a particular target of the invaders' rage when Kalhu fell in 614 BCE.

At Kalhu—and presumably also at Dur-Sharrukin—the secondary shrines next to the throne room were known as the *bēt akiāte*, the *akītu*-room(s).[1]

Fig. 8.2. The view from the tablet room into Nabu's shrine in the Ezida temple, Kalhu.
Photo by Saad Eskander, 2017.

[1] Note that this was a rather different event to the famous Babylonian *akītu*-festival, which took place a month earlier in Babylon and focused on the god Marduk's renewal of the king's right to rule at the start of the new year. Confusingly, perhaps, Nabu also participated in this rite. We distinguish here between the Assyrian *akītu*-ceremony and the Babylonian *akītu*-festival

Letters, administrative records, and literary texts show that it was here that Nabu and Tašmetu performed an annual marriage ceremony, lasting eight days in the second month of the year (in late spring). Offerings made to the divine couple during this time were designed to prolong the life of the king and all of his descendants (Postgate 1974; Matsushima 1987). Even if the king were unable to attend, the *hazannu* (literally, 'mayor') of Ezida was present throughout, to make offerings on the king's behalf.

In short, Nabu and his temple played a central role in Neo-Assyrian royal life, especially from the late eighth century BCE. As the buildings in which his statues were housed all served essentially the same function, they were constructed in essentially similar configurations.

8.4.2. Tablets and Scholars in Nabu's Temples

Scholarly personnel and scholarly tablet collections were central to the identity and function of Nabu's royal temples, at least in Kalhu, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh; no evidence survives for Assur.

Although a comprehensive survey of the scholarly tablets from Nineveh is lacking, and while it is mostly impossible to determine those tablets' find-spots, it is nevertheless possible to make a provisional comparison with those from Kalhu (Robson 2013). In the Kalhu Ezida, the genres best represented are hymns, incantations, and rituals; omens; followed by lexical lists; and medical recipes. Likewise, the most preponderant genres amongst the forty or so tablets that are identifiably from the Nineveh Ezida are incantations and rituals; omens; lexical lists; and hymns. Together they reflect the overarching functions of the collections, and of the scholars themselves: to protect and enhance the king's relationship with the gods, to decipher their messages to help guide his decision-making, and to ensure his physical and emotional well-being (Radner 2011).

But the tablets in Kalhu and Nineveh did not simply serve similar purposes: they were used by the same community and probably moved quite freely between the two cities. It has long been known that there are several tablets bearing Kalhu colophons amongst the British Museum's 'Kouyunjik' collection. Most prominent amongst them are the eighty or so tablets written by Sargon's scholar Nabu-zuqup-kenu, about half of which explicitly state that they were written in Kalhu (Hunger 1968: nos. 293A–S, 294A–U, 297A–D, 205; Baker 2001; Frahm 2011: 265–7). Hunger (1972: 101) suggests that

(which was temporarily transferred to Assur by Sennacherib in the 680s, after his conquest of Babylon: see most recently Fincke 2010: 59–61).

Nabu-zuqup-kenu worked exclusively at Kalhu, and the tablets were moved to Nineveh only after his death, perhaps by his son Adad-šumu-uṣur, for he himself is never mentioned in the Nineveh courtly correspondence.

However, with the publication of the scholarly tablets from the Kalhu Ezida and the systematic reading of their colophons (Robson 2012; see already Hunger 1972; Black 2008), it is now clear that Nabu-zuqup-kenu's offspring remained active in Kalhu as well as in Nineveh, at least until the mid-seventh century. It was therefore not simply a matter of a single, wholesale move from the old capital to the new.

Nabu-zuqup-kenu's son Adad-šumu-uṣur, chief *āšipu* of King Esarhaddon, owned a tablet from the terrestrial omen series *Šumma Ālu* found in the Kalhu Ezida. Adad-šumu-uṣur is also documented in action there, performing a ritual against two types of fungi that had infested the temple (CTN 4: 45; SAA 13: 71). But he appears much more frequently in the royal correspondence of Nineveh—alone; with brother Nabu-zeru-lešir, Esarhaddon's chief scribe; and in collaboration with Esarhaddon's chief lamenter Urad-Ea and other colleagues (Luppert-Bernard 1998).

A son (whose name is now missing) of Nabu-zuqup-kenu's other son Nabu-zeru-lešir—who inherited his father's role as chief scribe—was copyist of a calendar of ominous days 'for the prolongation of his (own) life' (CTN 4: 59). His identity is not certain, but he is likely to have been Šumaya rather than his brother Issar-šumu-ereš, the next chief scribe (on whom see Pearce 2000). Šumaya is attested as an *āšipu* at Nineveh late in Esarhaddon's reign (SAA 10: 257, 291; Luukko 2011). Some time in 671–669 BCE he petitioned the then crown prince Assurbanipal to let him take over his dead father's scholarly work at Kalhu, having established himself in a similar role in Tarbiṣu (SAA 16: 34). He and his uncle Adad-šumu-uṣur witnessed a legal document together in the northern Assyrian town of Išpallure in 666 BCE: they were in close contact (SAA 6: 314). Lastly, the previously unattested Nabu-le'i—son of Adad-šumu-uṣur's close associate Urad-Ea, mentioned above—was scribe of a hitherto unidentified ritual at Kalhu, which he 'copied like its original for him (i.e. a colleague or teacher) to see' (CTN 4: 187).

All this adds up to strong evidence for the Assyrian royal scholars' movement between, and continued scholarly activity within, the Ezidas of both Kalhu and Nineveh at least until the reign of Assurbanipal. In particular, it looks as though the descendants of Nabu-zuqup-kenu who also inherited his post of chief scribe—namely Nabu-zeru-lešir and then his son Issar-šumu-ereš—tended to work mostly in Nineveh. Other family members who became royal *āšipus*, however—Adad-šumu-uṣur and his nephew Šumaya—moved more freely between the new capital and the old. They thus continued a tradition of Kalhu *āšipūtu* attested from the first days of the Ezida there, when Assurnasirpal's chief *āšipu* wrote tablets for the temple in the early ninth century (CTN 4: 58).

8.4.3. Mobile Libraries?

In this light we can now better understand the lack of tablets in Nabu's abandoned temple at Dur-Sharrukin. Sargon had endowed the temple with 4000 homers of land, regular offerings of sheep, and daily provisions of bread and beer for an *āšipu* as well as a *lahhinu* ('temple steward'), so it is clear that he intended scholarly activity to take place there (SAA 1: 106, 128–9). At least one set of new writing boards was commissioned for the palace, containing sixteen leaves bearing the celestial omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil*. It was later abandoned down a well in Kalhu's Northwest Palace along with a few dozen others, perhaps because it bore the ill-fated name of deceased King Sargon and his city on the cover (Wiseman 1955; Oates and Oates 2001: 97–9, 104 fig. 62). Some scholarly tablets were moved to Dur-Sharrukin from Arbaʾil (Gelb 1954: 222; Hunger 1968: no. 350) and maybe also from Kalhu and/or Nineveh. Yet Nabu-zuqup-kenu's colophons show us that Kalhu remained a scholarly centre—Wiseman (1955: 9) even hints that Nabu-zuqup-kenu may have been responsible for the discarded *Enūma Anu Ellil* writing board. However that may be, when Dur-Sharrukin was summarily abandoned by the court on Sargon's inauspicious death, the temple was hurriedly emptied, and tablets dropped at doorways and thresholds in the rush to leave. Of the thirty tablets the excavators discovered in Nabu's temple, twelve were found in corridors and staircases, ten in gateways and doorways, five in courtyards and only three inside rooms (Loud and Altman 1938: 104–5).[2] The surviving tablets were presumably taken back to the Ezidas of Kalhu and/or Nineveh (see already Loud and Altman 1938: 103), where scholarly business resumed or continued, more or less as before.

However, it was not quite as before. While—as we have seen—Nabu's temple in Kalhu remained an intellectual centre until at least the reign of Assurbanipal, and continued its cultic functions until the very end of empire (SAA 12: 92–6), Nineveh now became the primary locus of scholarly activity (Robson and Radner 2007–11). Before he became king, Assurbanipal dedicated tablets to Nabu in the Ezida there, apparently in his own hand (Lieberman 1990; Livingstone 2007). To our knowledge he is not only the sole first-millennium prince who contributed directly to the production of scholarly tablets, but also amongst the earliest known writers of dedicatory colophons to Nabu (on which see Case Study Two). Letters from this period give the impression of a great influx of newcomers to courtly circles: introductory petitions suggest that as many as twenty scholars at a time may have been considered for appointment (e.g. SAA 10: 160), although

[2] Compare 'Ur-Utu's house' in sixteenth-century Sippar, where a basket of important archival tablets was dropped on the threshold of a courtyard during a rescue attempt, while the house was being evacuated during a major fire (Gasche 1989: 42).

there is no reason to suppose that all of these petitions were successful. There were certainly a few dozen royal scholars in attendance at any one time, some of whom were from beyond the empire's borders, as well as a correspondence network of celestial observers across the heartland of Assyria and Babylonia (Koch-Westenholz 1995: 59–73). But Nabu-zuqup-kenu's family and their close associates retained their monopoly on the highest-status scholarly posts at court, and their foothold in the Kalhu Ezida, at least until the documentation for courtly scholarship peters out in the 640s BCE, during Assurbanipal's reign.

8.4.4. Conclusions

It appears that the 'library' found by British archaeologists in Nabu's temple at Kalhu in the 1950s was in not in any sense 'complete'. This was not necessarily because its contents had been removed wholesale in antiquity—whether to stock a collection in Nineveh, or perhaps to rescue them before the city's sack—and neither was it entirely due to the long-term decay of tablets and writing boards in the millennia between abandonment and excavation. Rather, it was primarily because those contents were always in a state of flux. Their creators and owners moved them, and themselves, from temple to temple (and presumably also palace to palace and house to house) within the network of royal cities, following their kingly and divine patrons. As the Dur-Sharrukin writing board suggests, some works were even written in one place expressly for use in another. But however far afield the constituent parts of the collection travelled, they remained within the purview of just a few elite scholars, whose roles were primarily hereditary, and who thus saw little distinction between family, profession, and courtly status. In other words, the tablets found in the Kalhu Ezida do not constitute its 'library' in a fixed sense, but rather represent the remains of whichever scholarly works happened to be *in situ* when the building was destroyed in 614. Some of the rest of the collection was certainly in the Nineveh Ezida at that point, and other parts perhaps in the homes of some of Nabu-zuqup-kenu's descendants, wherever they may have lived. A different destruction date would have given us a different set of scholarly finds.

To our knowledge it was Maul (2010), in a wide-ranging study of the *āšipus* of seventh-century Assur, who first clearly articulated the notion of a community collection of scholarly works, stored in several different locations. In this section we aim to have shown that this phenomenon, which we propose to call the distributed library, is not limited to domestic settings but also pertains to institutional contexts. Further, in the following case studies it will, we hope, become clear that the distributed library was not a peculiarity of the Neo-Assyrian period but a widespread feature of first-millennium Babylonian scholarship too.

8.5. CASE STUDY TWO: SCHOOLING AND SCHOLARSHIP IN BABYLONIAN TABLET COLLECTIONS

The relationship between schooling and scholarship is at first sight rather confusing. In the tablet collection from Neo-Assyrian Huzirina, for instance, some twenty-five *šamallû* 'apprentices' are attested, while from contemporaneous Kalhu there is just one. Yet in neither place are there more than a handful of elementary school tablets, as defined by Gesche (2001; explained further below). By contrast, the *āšipu*s' house in Late Babylonian Uruk has yielded nearly sixty such exercises, although no scribe known from that findspot uses the title *šamallû*. Five men with the title *mašmaššu ṣehru* 'junior incantation-priest' wrote out compositions in the Uruk house—but none of them put their names to those elementary school exercises, which are all unsigned. The 'library' tablets from both Kish and Ur appear to have been mixed with elementary exercises (though in both cases the finds were recorded so vaguely that it is impossible to say for sure), while the huge deposit at the temple of Nabu *ša harê* in Babylon consists exclusively of school tablets. At what point did schooling end and scholarship begin? Why were school tablets 'collected'—if indeed they were? What functions did tablet collections play in first-millennium scholarly pedagogy? In this section we explore these questions further, especially through the writings of the Šangu-Ninurta family of *āšipu*s in Achaemenid Uruk.

8.5.1. Elementary Scribal Schooling in the Neo-Babylonian Period

As Gesche (2001) showed in her monumental study of Neo-Babylonian scribal exercise tablets from the cities of northern Babylonia, plus Uruk and Ur in the south, in the mid-first millennium BCE elementary training in cuneiform typically took place in two phases. During the first phase students concentrated on learning how to write the basic wedges that comprise cuneiform script, plus several long core texts in their entirety (Gesche 2001: 44–8):

- The signs DIŠ+BAD (i.e. a vertical, horizontal, and diagonal wedge) repeated;
- The sign A repeated;
- Two lists of Akkadian syllables and words now called Syllabary A (S^a) and Syllable Vocabulary B (S^b);
- A list of deities, now known as the Weidner God List;
- Tablets I–III of the bilingual thematic noun list called UR$_5$.RA = *hubullu* 'interest-bearing loan', after its first line.

In Babylon in particular, the large, square multi-column tablets on which these exercises were written could first be dedicated to Nabu (sometimes as Nabu *ša harê* 'of the sanctuary(?)', or Nabu *ša nikkassī* 'of accounts'), by means of colophons on the reverse, pre-prepared for beginners by the teacher or a more advanced trainee (Fig. 8.3; Gesche 2001: 153–7). The student then wrote out short or long extracts from these elementary works, often combining them with brief passages from ad hoc and 'non-canonical' lists—for instance metrology, personal names, place names, professional designations—and/or lexical lists, literary works, proverbs, and administrative formulae.

In the second phase long single-column tablets were preferred, with the month and day of writing replacing the votive colophon. Students continued to copy S^a and S^b, plus short excerpts from incantations, hymns, literary works, and more complex lexical lists, with up to four different compositions on a single tablet (Gesche 2001: 48–52).

In Babylon over 1500 first-phase tablets were offered as votives to Nabu *ša harê* in special *gunnu*-receptacles in his temple, perhaps at an appropriate point in the new year's *akītu*-festival or the winter *kislīmu*-festival (Maul 1998: xvi). There are no clues as to where they were written, except that the clay for some of them came from a particular 'holy place' (*ašru ellu*) in Marduk's sanctuary Esaggil (Maul 1998: xv). They were, then, no ordinary school tablets. Further, whereas almost all cuneiform tablets turn top-to-bottom—that is, the text on the reverse is upside down in relation to the obverse—many of these were written so that they turned left-to-right like a book. Gesche (2001: 157)

Fig. 8.3. School tablet BM 77665 obverse and reverse bearing a colophon dedicated to Nabu, northern Babylonia, *c.*550 BCE.

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suggests that this enabled them to be displayed and read on both sides. When Nabu *ša harê*'s temple was reconstructed during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562), the tablets, as sacred objects (which must have been accumulating over a long period of time), could not be thrown away so were re-used as fill for the foundations (Cavigneaux 1980; George 1986: 12–16). Thus although the tablets were collected, and some at least may have been read—or perhaps, rather, admired by proud family members—in a relatively public place, on special occasions, they were kept not for the knowledge or ideas they contained, but as evidence of personal piety and reminders to Nabu of the prayers he must answer.

In other, more mundane contexts, elementary exercise tablets were routinely thrown away or recycled, as well-conducted excavations reveal (e.g. Faivre 1995; Tanret 2002: 143–53). That certainly seems have been the case for the sixty-odd elementary tablets from the *āšipu*s' house in Late Babylonian Uruk, which was rebuilt at least twice in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The stratigraphy was badly disturbed by Parthian-period graves dug down into the house, but nevertheless coherent find contexts can be reconstructed in many cases. When the house was renovated after the Šangu-Ninurta family moved out in the late fifth century, around eighty tablets were left in large storage jars in a small room in the north wing of the house. Most of these were scholarly works written out by members of the Šangu-Ninurta family, plus a few out-of-date legal documents; only five elementary exercises can be identified amongst them. Conversely, elementary scribal exercises (along with expired legal contracts) comprise the majority of the tablets found in the next level up. They had been dumped during late fourth-century building works, along with unused tablet clay and bone writing styluses, in two areas on the periphery of the house whose floors had been waterproofed with bitumen to provide facilities for making and re-using tablets. The Ekur-zakir family's scholarly writings were found in the succeeding level, as well as (in entirely separate areas) a much smaller number of school exercises. The latter were discovered in two discrete locations, one of which was apparently a rubbish pit of some sort.[3] Allowing for problematic post-occupation disturbances, it seems that, in this house at least, the by-products of elementary scribal education were in general stored and disposed of quite separately from more learned works.

[3] This analysis is based on excavation data in Schmidt et al. (1979), combined with the descriptions of tablets in SpTU 1–5 and the authors' own identification of compositions from this house. For a preliminary analysis, focusing on mathematical production in the house, see Robson (2008a: 227–40); a related discussion will be is given in Robson (2019: ch. 6). Cf. also Clancier (2009: 387–400), whose statistics differ from ours.

8.5.2. Specialist Scholarly Training

There is, of course, a large intellectual gap between being able to copy and recall snippets of the 'great works' of Babylonian scholarship—as typified in phase two of scribal education—and the mastery of a wide-ranging and sophisticated body of work typically found in the larger tablet collections. Specialized training, Gesche's *Fachausbildung* (2001: 213–18), has often been hard to identify in the written record. Perhaps the best known evidence is from the so-called Bel-remanni archive from Achaemenid Sippar, reconstructed museologically by Jursa (1999: 12–31) and Finkel (2000). The majority of the medical texts in that collection—mostly recipes and incantations—are error-prone short extracts, written in rough handwriting and for the most part without colophons. Significantly too, several are attested in multiple copies, the ephemeral by-products of the pedagogical process:

> No doubt [. . .] individual recipes were copied and recopied many times, until they were learned by heart and their orthography mastered. Individual, high-quality manuscripts would be removed from the premises by students for safe-keeping. The examples that have come down to us therefore will probably represent tablets that were kept for recycling after use or were simply lying about the building, rather than a part of a carefully preserved personal reference archive in themselves. (Finkel 2000: 143)

One set of three manuscripts in that collection, for a recipe to cure rashes, is marked *ina pî šaṭir,* literally 'written from the mouth', i.e. by dictation. Another three manuscripts in more competent hands, containing an incantation against witchcraft-induced phlegm, are *ina pî lēʾî gabari Babili šaṭir*, 'written according to (lit. from the mouth of) a wooden writing board, a copy from Babylon' (Finkel 2000: nos. 1A–C, 48A–C). As might be expected, then, works could be learned from both oral and textual sources.

We can see this pattern in much more detail amongst the tablet collection of the Šangu-Ninurta family of *āšipu*s who lived in Achaemenid Uruk.[4] Almost all of the Šangu-Ninurtas' scholarly tablets originally bore colophons of some sort. Only around a third of them now survive, but they provide crucial information about the circumstances of textual production. Roughly 30 per cent of those colophons feature the words and phrases 'word-commentary' (*ṣâtu*), 'oral tradition' (*šūt pî*), 'reading' or 'lesson' (*malsûtu*), and '(questioning) of an expert('s speech)' ((*mašʾaltu*) *ša* (*pî*) *ummâni*) in various combinations (Frahm 2010; 2011: 41–57), phrases which are often taken as indicators of a pedagogical context (e.g. Gesche 2001: 214). For instance:

[4] Although they are conventionally referred to as *āšipu*s, the Šangu-Ninurta men preferred to describe themselves with the (apparent) synonym *mašmaššu*; we use the first word in general descriptive contexts and the latter when reflecting their own usage.

> Word-commentary and oral tradition of an expert's speech of '(If) a patient's tongue is red'. Lesson of Anu-ikṣur, son of Šamaš-iddin, descendant of Šangu-Ninurta, junior *mašmaššu*, Urukean. (SpTU 1: 33)
>
> Word-commentary, oral tradition, and questioning of an expert of '(If) a chameleon's head is located'. Lesson of Anu-ikṣur, son of Šamaš-iddin, descendant of Šangu-Ninurta. (SpTU 1: 83)

As the colophons suggest, these tablets contain detailed line-by-line analyses of scholarly works, most often omen series, giving explanations of difficult logograms and obscure words, and interpreting the relationships between different parts of the text. Two-thirds are attributed to Anu-ikṣur. The other commentaries in the Šangu-Ninurta collection may also have been by him, but without legible colophons their author's identity is uncertain.

As Frahm (2011: 292) notes, 'the commentaries from Anu-ikṣur's library, especially those written by Anu-ikṣur himself, stand out through their particularly sophisticated explanations, which are frequently based on etymology or etymography'.[5] Independently, Geller (2010: 137–40) deduces that Anu-ikṣur himself is the 'expert' the colophons refer to, and that the commentaries are the work of his students, 'transcribing and recording [his] lecture notes'. In the absence of any other evidence this might seem a plausible interpretation. However, Anu-ikṣur must in fact be the student, albeit a highly gifted one—or with a particularly demanding mentor (see also Hunger 1976: 13; Gesche 2001: 214; Frahm 2010: 168; Stevens 2013: 220 n. 51). For when Anu-ikṣur uses the title *mašmaššu* in commentary colophons he almost always adds *ṣehru*, 'junior'. Further, if the tablets had been written by someone else, such as a putative student, we might expect the phrase *qāt PN* 'hand of PN', as we see so often on tablets produced by young scholars for their elders (e.g. SpTU 4: 151). It is also striking that all of these commentaries appear to be fresh compositions: their colophons never state that they have been copied from earlier originals, and they have no known precursors—so far—amongst their predecessors (Frahm 2011: 290–6).

It seems to us, then, that the Šangu-Ninurta family used commentary as a means of gaining a personal understanding of often complex, sophisticated, and obscure scholarly compositions and the oral traditions that surrounded them. Most of this work was done by younger men but, at least in Anu-ikṣur's case, good habits continued even once he had lost his 'junior' status. That is not to say that *no* commentaries were ever copied. For instance, there are four copied commentaries from the Ekur-zakirs' scholarly collection, which was put together in the house formerly occupied by the Šangu-Ninurtas about a hundred years afterwards in the late fourth century BCE (SpTU 1: 90; SpTU

[5] The graphemic analogue to etymology: see Frahm (2011: 70–6).

2: 38; SpTU 3: 101; SpTU 4: 162). Clearly different families and individuals used commentaries in different ways.

8.5.3. Copying Tablets

Together the pedagogical commentaries comprise some 20 per cent of the Šangu-Ninurta family's scholarly tablets, and a further 5 per cent is accounted for by nine discarded elementary exercises. What was in the remaining three-quarters of their collection? Recall that about 30 per cent of the Šangu-Ninurta family's tablets have surviving colophons. Over half of these explicitly state that they record copies of an earlier manuscript and over a quarter definitely do not state that they are copies. Most of these tablets without copying-statements are amongst those with clear pedagogical functionality discussed in §8.5.2 above, while the remaining two seem to be ad hoc compilations of medical recipes. Allowing for the problems of small-sample statistics, it seems reasonable to estimate that about two-thirds of the colophons originally mentioned copying and one-third did not. Almost all of the non-copied tablets carry explicitly pedagogical labels; but does that mean that copied tablets, which comprise the majority of the Šangu-Ninurta family's collection, were not related to teaching?

The thirty 'copied' tablets, plus a further four which must also have been copied, include seven extracts from well-known series of incantations and rituals, such as *Lamaštu*, *Bīt Rimki*, and *Bīt Mēseri*, and seven chapters from the big omen series like *Sakikkû*, *Šumma Ālu*, and *Šumma Izbu*, while the remaining twenty are all medical, lexical, mathematical, and astrological. These trends are also broadly reflective of the eighty or so tablets without surviving colophons. These, in other words, are the core works which trainee scholars such as Anu-ikṣur learned to comment on. It would thus be wrong to argue that they were not part of the educational process too. Indeed, just as Anu-ikṣur primarily refers to himself as a 'junior incantation priest' (*mašmaššu ṣehru*) on his 'pedagogical' tablets, on the 'copied' tablets he does so about as frequently as using *mašmaššu* alone.

Likewise we find the terms *mašmaššu* and *mašmaššu ṣehru* (and no others) used with equal frequency amongst the professional designations of the other men who copied or owned tablets in the Šangu-Ninurta family's collection. Who were those men, and what was their relationship to Anu-ikṣur?

Most obviously, there is his immediate family: his father Šamaš-iddin, *mašmaššu* (*ṣehru*), writer of nine scholarly tablets (seven copied works and two commentaries) and owner of four more, copied for him by Anu-ikṣur; his brother Rimut-Anu, also a *mašmaššu* and copyist of three standard works; and Anu-ikṣur's son Anu-ušallim, who copied two omen series tablets for him. So far so good: we have sons producing texts for their fathers, perhaps as part of

their familial education.[6] But we also find Bel-kaṣir, son of Balaṭu, and one Nadin, copying tablets for Rimut-Anu, and their relationship to him is unclear (SpTU 1: 43; SpTU 4: 174). Were they his apprentices, learning to write tablets as part of their training; or his colleagues, generously making copies of works for him that he needed? On present evidence we cannot tell.[7]

A further five tablets, which are probably to be associated with this tablet collection on stratigraphic grounds, bear colophons of men who cannot be directly linked to members of the Šangu-Ninurta family, but at least two of whom also go by the title *mašmaššu* (*ṣehru*). Three of these tablets are copied works (SpTU 3: 47A, 67, 80), and two are commentaries (SpTU 1: 39, 84). Whether these tablets were produced in the Šangu-Ninurta family's house or elsewhere, it is clear from their contents, and from the professions of their producers, that they were kept or acquired because they were all directly relevant to the family's core intellectual interests (and presumably livelihood), namely healing and purification.

Where did the sources for their copies come from? The colophons tell us that nine of the Šangu-Ninurtas' originals were writing boards and that a further three were tablets, but in most cases the medium is not mentioned. Does this mean that writing boards outnumbered tablets three to one in late Achaemenid Uruk, or rather that clay originals were otherwise unremarkable? This second alternative seems more likely, as one of the three tablet originals specified in the colophons is further marked as special, being from Meslam, the god Nergal's temple at Kutha. In either case, it is clear that substantial quantities of scholarly writings were on perishable media that are lost to us forever.

Looking in more detail at the original sources, we see that they include two writing-boards belonging to the defunct Eanna temple in Uruk; a 'Babylonian copy' of a writing-board; the 'tablet from among the old tablets of Meslam'; and three 'Urukean copies'. At least 10 per cent of the originals thus come from outside Uruk, but we do not know how they moved: did scholars travel with their tablets and writing-boards? Were collections dispersed—sold, even?—on a scholar's death or penury? Were tablets commercially valuable? Was copying a time-consuming business or relatively speedy? Did apprentice scholars travel in order to copy? Or were these tablets copied from manuscripts that were themselves made in Uruk, with an original from somewhere else far back in the chain of transmission? It is noteworthy too that three of the originals—again about 10 per cent—come

[6] Maul (2010: 208–10) has likewise traced four generations of a family of *āšipu*s in seventh-century Assur, each gaining increasingly senior titles as they are taught by their fathers and uncles.

[7] Both types of relationship are attested amongst the *āšipu*s of seventh-century Assur (Maul 2010: 212, 216).

from temple collections, reminding us once again of the fluidity of the boundaries between institutions and the families that comprised them.

8.5.4. Conclusions

It seems that the products of Neo-Babylonian elementary education were mostly ephemera, as they had also been in earlier times (Delnero §4.5): generally thrown away or recycled, with perhaps only the best copies kept as reference works or proof of prowess. Large archaeological finds of school tablets should not therefore be generally labelled as 'libraries'. In later stages of scholarly training, however, it is difficult and perhaps even inappropriate to draw a clear distinction between pedagogy and collection. Budding scholars accrued knowledge of texts through copying and written commentary, under the guidance of a mentor, as much as they did through reading and discussion. Textual production, both copying and commentary, must also have continued throughout individual scholars' lives, as they came into contact with new works and new ideas.[8] Thus collections accrued over several generations of a family. Much must have been learned by heart, but tablets (and writing boards) were retained as back-up when memory failed, as status symbols of the family's professional identity, and—as has already been hinted at—a shared resource on which other members of their scholarly community could draw.[9] We explore this idea further now in our final case study.

8.6. CASE STUDY THREE: SECRET LIBRARIES? PROTECTED TABLET COLLECTIONS IN SELEUCID URUK

Cuneiform scholarship had always been the preserve of a small intellectual elite, but by the Seleucid period this was more the case than ever. Akkadian was no longer anyone's mother tongue, and administration under the foreign powers who now controlled Babylonia was carried out largely in Aramaic, under the Persians, and later in Greek, after the Macedonian conquest. Scholarly activity, and scholarly tablet collections, were increasingly restricted to the temples and the intellectual communities they supported (e.g. Rochberg 1993: 33), which were often dominated by a few families (Beaulieu 2006: 19;

[8] The Assyrian scholar Nabu-zuqup-kenu's intellectual development over his career has been traced particularly closely by Lieberman (1987); for a brief update see Frahm (2011: 265–7).

[9] Maul (2010) comes to very similar conclusions for the *āšipu* Kiṣir-Aššur and his family in seventh-century Assur.

Robson 2007a; 2017). One way in which these families maintained their monopoly on scholarly positions was by controlling the educational route towards them. The scribal craft, like other types of expert knowledge in Mesopotamia, was typically passed on from father to son, and scholarly specialisms were no exception. As we have seen in Case Study Two, advanced professional training in *āšipūtu* in Achaemenid Uruk functioned largely through apprenticeships within a familial environment, with only a few outsiders penetrating an effectively closed network. The same pattern of training is visible at Uruk in the Seleucid period for both *āšipu*s (now represented by the Ekur-zakir family) and *kalû*s—lamentation priests from the Sin-leqi-unninni family. Scholarly families, then, could exercise considerable control over the selection and training of future generations of scholars. But what about textual resources? How did 'libraries' function within these tight-knit and competitive intellectual circles? Who had access to scholarly tablets, and what did such access entail? How, and within what limits, was scholarly knowledge disseminated within the community? Were all tablets treated the same way, or is there evidence that some types of knowledge were more restricted, and hence more highly valued, than others? In this section we explore these questions using the tablets of the Ekur-zakir and Sin-leqi-unninni families from Seleucid Uruk.

The scholarly tablets belonging to these men comprise a mixture of provenanced and unprovenanced material. Although it is likely that most of the illicitly excavated tablets are from the Reš temple (Fig. 8.4), only one group of Sin-leqi-unninni tablets came from an archaeologically excavated assemblage there (Uruk 4; see Table 8.6). However, similarities in the content and

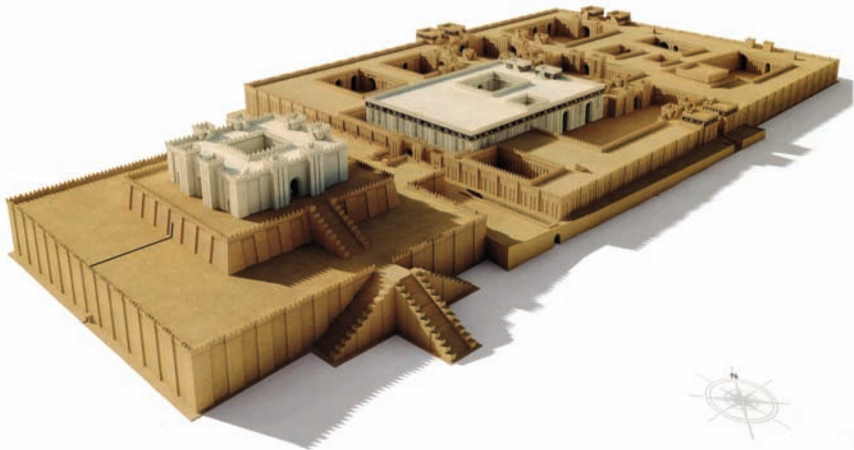

Fig. 8.4. A 3D reconstruction of the Reš temple in Seleucid Uruk, with Anu's ziggurat in the foreground.

© artefacts-berlin.de; Material: German Archaeological Institute.

structure of the tablets belonging to each familial and professional group, as well as the fact that they are owned and written by the same individuals within the same date range, make it justifiable to treat them as two coherent scholarly collections. These are 'libraries' in the broadest sense, without any implication that the surviving tablets ever constituted two discrete formal collections in antiquity.

The lack of contextual information means that we can say very little about where most of the tablets were originally kept and how they were arranged. We can say more, however, about how they were used and conceptualized, thanks to their colophons, which provide insights into how the scholars organized, and protected, their intellectual activity.

8.6.1. Borrowing Rules

The colophons of some of the two families' scholarly tablets include protective formulae which warn against destruction, theft, or unauthorized viewing of the tablet, invoking divine agents to promote adherence to these instructions and punish those who transgress them. A typical example, from an astronomical tablet owned by the *kalû* Anu-aba-uter, runs as follows:

> Whoever fears (the gods) Anu and Antu, he shall not take it (the tablet) away by theft. Whoever steals it, may Adad and Šala steal him away. (TCL 6: 25)

Sometimes the protective formulae are more elaborate. The colophon of another astronomical tablet, written by Anu-aba-uter for his father Anu-belšunu, not only prohibits removal of the tablet, but goes on to specify that the contents of the tablet are 'a secret', *pirištu*, and that only someone with an appropriate level of knowledge may be given access to it:

> Whoever reveres (the gods) Anu, Ellil and Ea shall not [take it away] by theft. Ephemeris, wisdom of the god Anu, secret of the [great go]ds, wisdom of the scholars. The one who knows may show [the one who knows]; the one who does not know may not [see. Restriction] of Anu, Ellil and [Ea, the great gods].
>
> (TCL 6: 24+)

Although only the second colophon explicitly mentions secrecy and restricted access to the knowledge contained in the tablet, we regard both the secrecy formulae and the apparently more practical injunctions against theft or damage, which occur far more frequently, as part of a range of protective measures which all share the same objective: to protect the contents of the tablet and prevent them from being disseminated beyond the proper circles.[10]

[10] On 'secret knowledge' in Mesopotamia and the so-called *Geheimwissen* colophons see Borger (1964); Lenzi (2008); Stevens (2013); Robson (2018). In including protective formulae

In fact, further clauses in some of the protective colophons may explain why the Uruk scholars seem to be so concerned about the material well-being of their tablets. Here is the colophon of one of the *āšipu*s' tablets, which contained various omens from the series called *Šumma Izbu*, about ominous births (Fig. 8.5):

> [. . . Uruke]an. Hand of Nidinti-Anu, son of Anu-bel[šunu, descendant of Ekur-za]kir, incantation priest of Anu and Antu, Urukean. [. . . Whoever reveres Anu] and Antu shall guard and preserve it; he shall not [take it away] by theft, shall not deliberately let it be dropped. He shall [return it] on the second day to the house of its owner. [Whoever takes it away,] may Adad and Šala take him away. U[ruk, month x, day] 7(?), year 90, Anti[ochus king.] (TCL 6: 10)

Here, as well as the prohibition against theft and breakage, we find a time restriction which indicates that tablets *were* in fact taken out of collections temporarily—borrowed by other scholars. Similar phrases in tablets belonging to other collections indicate comparable lending arrangements going back to at least the Achaemenid period (e.g. SpTU 2: 6; SpTU 3: 97). Nidinti-Anu's tablet is unusually generous in allowing the borrower two days; many surviving instructions are to return the tablet by the same evening. This was exclusively a 'short loan' system, at least in theory. We may even see its results in various tablets which state in the colophon that they were *hanṭiš nasih*, 'excerpted in a hurry', as Maul (2010: 213) has argued in the case of the Assur *āšipu*s. At all events, these 'borrowing rules' show us that scholarly tablets did move, for copying or consultation, between various private houses. They also seem to have travelled, more permanently, from private houses to the temple: the colophons of several unprovenanced Uruk tablets which are probably from the Reš state that the tablet should be returned to the owner's house, suggesting that they originated in a private collection but had ended up in the temple (RA 12: 75; TCL 6: 1, 10). The opposite direction of travel occurred in the case of an Ekur-zakir tablet which contains a chronicle about the treatment of Uruk by the ancient kings of Ur (SpTU 1: 2): its colophon states that the tablet was dedicated in the Reš for the owner's good health and success, but it was found together with other Ekur-zakir tablets at the *āšipu*s' house.

However, the various nodes in this intellectual network were not necessarily equal, and tablets may not have circulated freely between them all. To our knowledge, no tablet from Seleucid Uruk contains a borrowing formula in the colophon which requests that the tablet be returned to the temple. Nor does any tablet which states that it was deposited in the Reš temple contain a

concerned with theft and destruction in our study of protected knowledge we take a broader definition of intellectual protection than Borger and Lenzi, who focus only on formulae explicitly connected with 'secrecy'.

Fig. 8.5. The cuneiform tablet TCL 6: 10 (AO 6466), obverse and reverse, written by Nidinti-Anu in Uruk in 222 BCE.

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borrowing formula of any type; if a protective formula appears on these tablets it is usually a clause forbidding theft. It is possible, then, that at least some of the tablets (and works on other media, such as writing boards) kept in the temple could be consulted and copied only within its walls—perhaps because they were votive objects (as explicitly stated in some of the colophons), which would lose their consecrated status if removed from the sanctuary.

In short, we can see in Seleucid Uruk one or more local versions of the 'distributed library' we have reconstructed for the Neo-Assyrian royal court and temples, with tablets moving between institutional and private contexts. Within an intellectual environment characterized by mobility, however restricted, it is not surprising that theft and damage were frequently uppermost in the minds of tablet owners and scribes—though their ultimate concern was always the *intellectual* loss entailed by the disappearance or destruction of the tablet. But were they equally concerned to protect all their intellectual property? We do not believe so. A closer look at the tablets to which the Uruk *āšipu*s and *kalû*s chose to add protective colophons, and those they left unprotected, sheds further light not only on the nature of the Uruk libraries but also on the intellectual world within and for which they were constructed and maintained.

8.6.2. 'Special Collections': Protected Knowledge and Professional Identity

Collectively, the Ekur-zakirs and the Sin-leqi-unninnis each owned about thirty surviving tablets with colophons sufficiently well preserved to deduce whether or not they originally included protective formulae; protected tablets constitute between a quarter and a third of each group. At first, it seems as if the two families applied protective formulae rather inconsistently. Protected and unprotected manuscripts appear in all the major genres—rituals, omen series, astronomy, and astrology—with no immediately discernible logic. However, a closer look at the protected compositions in each group's tablet collection reveals a coherent pattern.[11]

This pattern can be seen clearly if we examine the distribution of protective formulae on tablets connected with ritual practice—rituals, hymns, prayers, and lamentations. Among the protected ritual tablets belonging to the Ekur-zakir *āšipu*s are a manuscript of New Year rituals for the Uruk *akītu* festival and a copy of a hymn to Anu, while another set of New Year rituals and a hymn to the moon-god Sin were left without protective formulae (BRM 4: 7, 8; TCL 6: 39; UVB 15: 37). What the protected tablets have in common, and the unprotected tablets do not share, is a close link with the specialized professional activities of the owner, as *āšipu*. Although both the Ekur-zakirs' ritual tablets relate to the New Year festival, the one which contains a protective formula in the colophon describes a part of the proceedings in which the *āšipu*s feature very prominently, whereas in the rituals described on the unprotected tablet they appear only occasionally, with other cultic personnel playing a more

[11] A fuller version of the argument in this section, with additional examples from the other scholarly families in Uruk, can be found in Stevens (2013).

significant role. Similarly, the hymn to Anu was obviously of greater relevance to the Ekur-zakirs' role as priests of his temple than the hymn to Sin.

Turning to the ritual tablets of the Sin-leqi-unninni *kalû*s, we find again that the compositions of the greatest relevance to the family's professional specialism attract the protective formulae. Here too a hymn to Anu was protected, but not one to Ellil—the tablet with the closer link to the *kalû*s' cultic context is safeguarded (TCL 6: 48, 54). The Sin-leqi-unninnis also protected two tablets of rituals for the making of a kettledrum, which would be used during lunar eclipse rituals (TCL 6: 44; BagM Beih 2: 5). These relate to a core part of their specialist cultic activity: performing ritual laments to ward off the inauspicious omens portended by eclipses was an important part of *kalûtu*.

The other unprotected ritual tablets owned by the *kalû*s seem at first to contradict the link between protected knowledge and professional activity, since they too contain material highly relevant to *kalûtu*: three manuscripts of temple-building rituals performed by the *kalû*s. However, it is likely that these tablets were all written by junior scribes in the early stages of their specialist professional training (Gesche's *Fachausbildung*, above). One (TCL 6: 46) is the earliest scholarly tablet attributable to Anu-belšunu, who identifies himself as 'junior *kalû*' in the colophon, while the second (BagM Beih 2: 12), a partial duplicate of the first, is the earliest datable scholarly tablet written by his son, Anu-aba-uter, some thirty years later. Both state in the colophon that they were written for the scribes' fathers and thus fit within the context of apprenticeship. The third tablet (TCL 6: 45) is undated, and has been placed with Anu-belšunu's latest writings (Pearce and Doty 2000: 332), but his lack of a professional title suggests that it could equally be early within his scholarly career. None of the three tablets contains a copying statement, which, as we have seen in Case Study Two, is often indicative of a pedagogical context. If this is the case, they were probably never intended to be permanently retained, or used for further copying; they were to be proof of the competence of trainees rather than resources for cultic practice, and thus did not require protective injunctions. However, as Case Study Two has shown, the line between pedagogy and professional activity was often blurred, and so perhaps these tablets were ultimately judged sufficiently well executed to be added to the temple collection after all.

Looking at other categories of tablets in the collections of the Ekur-zakir *āšipu*s and Sin-leqi-unninni *kalû*s further strengthens the hypothesis that protective formulae were only applied to texts within a collection that had a strong connection with the owner and/or scribe's professional practice.[12] The *āšipu*s protected two tablets from traditional omen series associated with their

[12] On the question of whether the owner or scribe's specialism was the relevant factor in the application of protective formulae, see Stevens (2013: 224–6).

discipline: omens from *Šumma Izbu*, and a catalogue of the celestial omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil* (TCL 6: 10, 15+). Meanwhile, all but one of their unprotected omen tablets contain material from the extispicy series *Bārûtu*. This series seems to have become obsolete for practical purposes, but still attracted scholarly interest during the Hellenistic period. Nevertheless, it had never been, and never became, central to *āšipūtu*, which explains the Ekur-zakirs' failure to apply protective formulae to their copies and commentaries. Both *āšipus*' and *kalû*s' collections also contain unprotected mathematical, literary, and lexical tablets; these genres were peripheral to both groups' specialized professional activities, and in any case some of these tablets may be pedagogical.

Within Seleucid Uruk, then, each scholarly group had 'special collections' of tablets containing knowledge key to the performance of their particular professional duties, which they sought to protect more closely than the rest of their scholarly tablets. Those allowed to borrow or consult such protected tablets, we may imagine, were a very restricted group—we are a long way from the user profile and lending policies of the modern library. There is undoubtedly further progress to be made in understanding the nature and purposes of the protective formulae used by cuneiform scholars. For example, although specialist ritual or therapeutic compositions could certainly be restricted to one professional group or another, it is less clear to what extent the major divination series such as *Šumma Ālu* could ever be monopolized by one set of disciplinary specialists; what, then, was the point in 'protecting' them, and from whom? There is also the question of how far the prohibitions were ever intended to be enforced; perhaps in some cases the 'protective' formulae are as much a claim to intellectual status as a 'practical' mechanism. Differences in the use of protective formulae over time and between different intellectual communities in Assyria and Babylonia also invite us to consider how the wider political and intellectual contexts affected cuneiform scholars' attitudes to the transmission or control of knowledge and their motivations for and means of safeguarding it (Robson 2018). Nonetheless, it is clear that, alongside careful selection to apprenticeships, restricting or forbidding the circulation of tablets containing key disciplinary knowledge was another way for the *āšipus* and *kalû*s to maintain disciplinary boundaries, and in turn for the Ekur-zakir and Sin-leqi-unninni families to maintain the monopoly they had on their respective scholarly professions and their associated social and intellectual prestige.

8.6.3. A Boundary-Crossing Genre

It is not quite the case, however, that specialist knowledge and the tablets which carried it never crossed professional or familial boundaries. A small sub-group of scholars whose main scholarly affiliation was *āšipu* or *kalû*

developed a secondary specialism that also served their primary professional interests: expertise in the new celestial sciences, mathematical astronomy and zodiacal astrology. These men bore the title of *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*, 'scribe of (the series) *Enūma Anu Ellil*', in reference to the astrological omen series which had traditionally formed the cornerstone of celestial scholarship. By the Seleucid period, however, celestial *ṭupšarrūtu* increasingly entailed mastery of complex mathematics and new theoretical systems (Rochberg 2000: 367; Beaulieu 2006: 17–18)—highly specialized knowledge which a few Ekur-zakirs and Sin-leqi-unninnis collaborated across familial and professional lines to pass on to each new generation, with older members of one family teaching junior scribes from the other (Robson 2008a: 221–7; 2008b; Ossendrijver 2011a; 2011b).

Mathematical astronomy, and to a lesser extent zodiacal astrology, formed a significant part of both the *kalû*s' and *āšipu*s' tablet collections. The vast majority of such tablets so far known from Hellenistic Uruk were owned and/or written by just three men from successive generations of the two families, who were all 'scribes of *Enūma Anu Ellil*': Anu-aha-ušabši and Šamaš-eṭir from the Ekur-zakir family, and Anu-aba-uter from the Sin-leqi-unninnis. These celestial specialists are also the only ones who applied protective formulae to tablets with astronomical or astrological content (Stevens 2013: 226–30), showing once again the close and specific link between the type of tablets which are protected and the professional identity of the owner and/or scribe.

But that is not all. The scribes of *Enūma Anu Ellil* did not append colophons with protective formulae to all their tablets relating to celestial scholarship, but rather to those most relevant to their primary occupation. Thus, Anu-aha-ušabši protected copies of an astrological calendar text which contained ritual instructions relevant to his role as *āšipu* and high priest of the Reš temple (K. 3753), and (if his name is correctly restored), a catalogue of *Enūma Anu Ellil* which was written for another *āšipu* (TCL 6: 15+), but left unprotected tablets containing astrological weather forecasts and a lunar ephemeris, where any connection with *āšipūtu* is less obvious (TCL 6: 19; ACT 101). Similarly, all the protected tablets Anu-aba-uter owned himself or wrote for other *kalû*s share a focus on the moon, and particularly on lunar eclipses—perhaps the key celestial phenomenon with which lamentation priests had to contend (Stevens 2013: 229–31). Beaulieu (2000; 7–8, 12; see also Robson 2008a: 260) has persuasively argued that the *kalû*s' interest in mathematical astronomy arose from their cultic duties—that they sought to refine their predictive models for celestial phenomena so as to be able to time rituals more correctly. Their protected astronomical tablets confirm and extend this insight, enabling us to see a hierarchy or at least differentiation of knowledge within the secondary area of interest which correlates precisely with its relevance to the primary discipline.

8.6.4. Conclusions

The colophons of the Uruk scholars' tablets enable us to reconstruct something of the way in which their 'libraries' were used and conceptualized. The scholarly collections created and used by these Seleucid *āšipu*s and *kalû*s, like those of their Neo-Assyrian predecessors, were a distributed and somewhat mobile resource. Tablets were lent and borrowed among specialists, and the collections kept in the temple and in the scholars' homes were complementary and to some extent transferable; a sharp distinction between 'private' and 'institutional' libraries is not appropriate here. Nor is a stark divide between scholarly training and professional practice. Just as library tablets functioned as base texts for pedagogical commentary, so high-quality copies made by skilled apprentices might ultimately be retained to renew permanent collections. But the scholars themselves made other distinctions between their tablets. The *āšipu*s and *kalû*s used protective formulae to mark and safeguard tablets containing texts closely connected with their respective professional specialisms, and hence to articulate and protect their control over those professions and their own intellectual status. This shows us both that cuneiform libraries could contain special collections of material considered particularly precious by their users and therefore marked as restricted, and also that this restricted or 'secret' knowledge was not a fixed corpus but varied according to the professional identity of the libraries' owners and users.

The celestial sciences reveal a more collaborative side to Hellenistic scholarship in Uruk—a sub-discipline, and associated tablet collection, in which both *āšipu*s and *kalû*s invested in order to facilitate, and perhaps improve, their respective professional performance. However, this was collaboration within a strictly demarcated in-group and involved only a few individuals—in a way the ultimate in intellectual exclusivity. The protected collections of *āšipūtu*, *kalûtu*, and celestial scholarship highlight the fact that cuneiform libraries, or at least certain parts of them, could be as much a tool for controlling knowledge as disseminating it.

8.7. SUMMARY

At the very start of this discussion we distinguished between static buildings and their mobile contents: both objects and people come and go from the spaces they are designed to inhabit. To define the cuneiform library in terms of the building where scholarly tablets were kept is therefore only partially satisfactory, as it reduces the complex motivations, needs, and interests of the 'library's' users to universal concerns about storage, and leads to a

one-dimensional typology of tablet collections. We should thus no longer be thinking in simplistic terms about a tripartite division between temple, palace, and private libraries whose functions and contents remained essentially stable throughout the first millennium (e.g. Clancier 2010).[13] Rather, we should be studying the collections of individuals, professions, and social groups on a case-by-case basis, always alert to the significance of their tablets' contents, and the means by which they acquired, stored, shared, and protected them. The pattern of evidence from Neo-Assyrian Assur, for instance, is not always replicated in Seleucid Uruk, nor even between contemporary groups of scholars in the same city, and we must be careful not to over-generalize from individual case studies. However, there are some useful overarching conclusions to be drawn.

First, 'libraries' as collections of artefacts were much more mobile—within the scholarly community—than many have acknowledged. Single archaeological find-spots will rarely reveal an intact collection, even assuming perfect conditions of preservation. Scholarly professions tended to run in families, and both families and professions tended to be associated with particular institutions: both sacred *and* profane in the case of the Neo-Assyrian royal *āšipu*s. Scholarly tablets thus moved frequently between the buildings—homes, temples, palaces, clients' dwellings—where the scholars worked, albeit subject to a variety of safeguards. They were a shared resource, a library distributed across several sites, that community members could draw on. However, as we have seen, membership of those scholarly communities was carefully controlled, by sex (for every single one of the attested scholars is male), family membership, and social status as well as by intellectual capability.

Second, the sharing of written knowledge, even within a given intellectual community, was not a free-for-all. Tablets could be borrowed from domestic settings, it seems, but temple property, sometimes at least, had to be copied *in situ*.[14] Individual scholars considered some works particularly worthy of protection, depending on their own professional interests and identities. And those professions—and thus their specialist works—by and large remained firmly within family circles. Further, most prior studies have been predicated on the assumption of an economy of abundance; that is, that scholars had no difficulty in accessing the materials they needed. But in fact scholarly

[13] We have not discussed palace tablet collections in any detail here because, as will be obvious from the Tables, none from this period is sufficiently well preserved or well published to analyse in this manner.

[14] What happened to a temple's tablet collection after deconsecration or abandonment is another matter, at present unanswerable; tablets with votive colophons, suggesting that they were originally made for temple deposit, are occasionally found in private contexts (e.g. STT 1: 56; 2: 199).

knowledge seems to have operated in an economy of relative scarcity—that in fact, outside the privileged community of royal scholars, it was not always possible to access texts that one wanted. Jean (2007: 165–7), for instance, has shown that over the course of the first millennium fewer and fewer of the works listed in the so-called *Āšipu*s' *Handbook*—which Assyriologists tend to treat as the standard compendium of *āšipūtu*—were actually available. So in seventh-century Assur, Kiṣir-Aššur owned only about half of the hundred or so compositions listed there; in fifth-century Uruk Anu-ikṣur and his family had about half that number again. The missing works are not generally attested amongst other Late Babylonian tablets either.

Third, while we do not consider elementary education to have been part of 'library' culture—basic literacy was developed by writing and rewriting exercises that were never meant to be kept—at a more advanced level pedagogy and scholarship were inextricably intertwined. Written knowledge could be accrued over a lifetime, by both copying and commentary, as Nabu-zuqup-kenu's and Anu-ikṣur's tablets show. Thus tablet collections accumulated over two, three, or more generations. The ideal may have been that most expert knowledge was learned by heart, for, as Brian Stock (1990: 144) reminds us, 'literates can do without actual texts and yet remain part of the world of reading and writing. Literates do not carry libraries with them; they transform a lot of what they know into procedural memory, so that actions based ultimately on texts appear to be automatic.' However, tablet collections served a range of functions throughout and beyond the intellectually active life of the individual. As well as being the resource which supported fledgling scribes' mastery of their professional specialism, cuneiform 'libraries' provided an essential reference system for established scholars, by which large amounts of data could be accumulated (as in the case of astronomical calculations and records), and knowledge could be retrieved when memory failed or new needs or interests arose. Finally, as the intersection between the transmitted learning of countless previous scholars and the new knowledge and interpretations of the current generation, such tablet collections played a key role in the construction and maintenance of disciplinary integrity and intellectual identity.[15]

[15] Eleanor Robson's work on this article was carried out as part of the AHRC-funded research project, *The Geography of Knowledge in Assyria and Babylonia, 700–200 BC* (Cambridge, 2007–12, AH/E509258/1) and much of it written in Heidelberg in late 2011, as the recipient of a Bessel Forschungspreis of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, generously hosted by Stefan Maul. Kathryn Stevens' work on it was supported by an AHRC-funded PhD studentship, and benefited from insightful comments and questions from the members of the Centre for Identity and Canon Formation on a paper given there in November 2011. For more detailed analyses of Case Studies One–Two and Case Study Three see Robson (2019: chs. 3–4; 2018) and Stevens (2013). We are grateful to Heather D. Baker for her kind help in trying to trace the tablets from Neo-Babylonian Ur and to the anonymous referees for their suggestions and improvements.

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BRM 4	Clay 1923; selected online editions at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/brm_4/
CTN 4	Wiseman and Black 1996; selected online editions at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/ctn_4/
RA	*Revue d'Assyriologie*; selected online editions of pertinent texts at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/ra/
SAA	*State Archives of Assyria*, nineteen volumes to date; complete editions online at http://oracc.org/saao/
SpTU 1–5	Hunger 1976; von Weiher 1982; 1988; 1993; 1998; selected online editions at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/sptu/
STT 1–2	Gurney and Finkelstein 1957; Gurney and Hulin 1964; selected online editions at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/stt/
TCL 6	Thureau-Dangin 1922; selected online editions at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/tcl_6/
UVB 15	Falkenstein 1959; selected online editions at http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/uvb_15/

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9

Assurbanipal's Library

An Overview

Irving Finkel

9.1. INTRODUCTION

Within the field of Assyriology the royal cuneiform libraries of Kuyunjik (ancient Nineveh), the Assyrian capital city, have no parallel for size, breadth, or document quality.[1] It was of incalculable good fortune for the nascent discipline of cuneiform studies that tablets from Nineveh were to be the principal resources for those who worked to achieve decipherment and initial understanding. The bulk of the library material had been put together at royal bequest with the specific intention of housing, editing, and recopying the traditional written expressions of Mesopotamian culture in, as far as possible, a complete state. Assurbanipal's long reign (668–*c.*627 BCE) in character was one of stability and affluence and there was ample opportunity for the pursuit and accumulation of manuscripts in abundance. Thus it fell to Austen Henry Layard and those who came after him to uncover what was in essence a 'state-of-the-art' royal library, whose underlying conception constitutes the only rival to the lost resources of Alexandria that the ancient world can provide.[2]

[1] Julian Reade has published an overview of Nineveh, covering archaeology and inscriptions alike, in his article Ninive (Nineveh) in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (Reade 2000), which is essential reading and can be neither emulated nor rivalled here. See also Reade 1986 and Parpola 1986 for other surveys of the Nineveh libraries. Much information on the Babylonian component of the libraries is collected and analysed in Fincke 2003/4. For the development of post-Nineveh libraries down to Alexandria see Clancier 2009: 255–97.

[2] A pre-Alexandrian library on clay is the only kind of library in which *fire* can possibly be of *benefit*; for intentional and unintentional baking of the tablets at Kuyunjik, see Reade 2000: 421–2.

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9.2. DISCOVERY

Layard, whose experiences will ever after be envied by any Mesopotamian archaeologist, found a substantial proportion of the king's tablets in Room 40 and 41 of the North Palace at Kuyunjik, as he describes in the following passage that merits repeating (Layard 1853: 344–7):

> I shall call these chambers 'the chambers of records', or, like 'the house of the rolls', or records, which Darius ordered to be searched for the decree of Cyrus, concerning the building of the temple of Jerusalem, they appear to have contained the decrees of the Assyrian kings as well as the archives of the empire . . .
>
> The chambers I am describing appear to have been a depository in the palace of Nineveh for such documents. To the height of a foot or more from the floor they were entirely filled with them; some entire, but the greater part broken into many fragments, probably by the falling in of the upper part of the building. They were of different seizes; the largest tablets were flat, and measured about 9 inches by 6½ inches; the smaller were slightly convex, and some were not more than an inch long, with but one or two lines of writing. The cuneiform characters on most of them were singularly sharp and well defined, but so minute in some instances as to be almost illegible without a magnifying glass. Many are historical letters of wars, and distant expeditions undertaken by the Assyrians; some seem to be royal decrees, and are stamped with the name of a king, the son of Esarhaddon; others again, divided into parallel columns by horizontal lines, contain lists of the gods, and probably a register of offerings made in their temples. On one Dr. Hincks has detected a table of the value of certain cuneiform letters, expressed by different alphabetical signs, according to various modes of using them; a most important discovery: on another, apparently a list of the sacred days in each month; and on a third, what seems to be a calendar. It is highly probable that a record of astronomical observations may exist among them, for we know from ancient writers, that the Babylonians inscribed such things upon burnt bricks. As we find from the Bavian inscriptions, that the Assyrians kept a very accurate computation of time, we may reasonably expect to obtain valuable chronological tables and some information as to their method of dividing the year, and even the day. Many are sealed with seals, and may prove to be legal contracts or conveyances of land. Others bear rolled impressions of those engraved cylinders so frequently found in Babylonia and Assyria, by some believed to be amulets. The characters appear to have been formed by a very delicate instrument before the clay was hardened by fire, and the process of accurately making letters so minute and complicated must have required considerable ingenuity and experience. On some tablets are found Phoenician, or cursive Assyrian characters and other signs.
>
> The adjoining chambers contained similar relics, but in far smaller numbers. Many cases were filled with these tablets before I left Assyria, and a vast number of them have been found, I understand, since my departure. A large collection of them is already deposited in the British Museum. We cannot overrate their value. They furnish us with materials for the complete decipherment of the cuneiform character, for restoring the language and history of Assyria, and for enquiring

> into the customs, sciences, and, we may perhaps even add, literature of its people. The documents that have thus been discovered at Nineveh probably exceed all that have been afforded by the monuments of Egypt. But years must elapse before the innumerable fragments can be put together, and the inscriptions transcribed for the use of those in England and elsewhere may engage in the study of the cuneiform character.

This is a perspicacious assessment for 1853. The result of Layard's exertions and those of Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, Hormuzd Rassam, and their successors meant that almost all of the known Kuyunjik tablets did in fact end up in the British Museum, where they came to be the bedrock of the whole science of Assyriology.[3]

9.3. NUMBERS

Conventionally the total number of tablets, pieces, and fragments from Nineveh are put at about 31,000 items:

> The British Museum pieces are widely known as the K Collection since the majority bear number K 1-22,247 (assigned between 1854 and October 1997), the prefix standing for Kuyunjik; an additional; 9,102 are numbered in other ways.[4] Nearly all items in the K Collection are tablets certainly found or excavated at Nineveh, though some items are not tablets, and a few derive from elsewhere and are not considered here; there must be other unidentified strays. Most of the tablets from Nineveh are broken and often very small fragments. So far 5,351 physical joins between them have been made [as of January 2012: 5672], and many indirect joins established; undoubtedly many joins have not yet been identified, so the total number of tablets represented in the collection is far below 31,000. Altogether there are about 5,500 administrative and legal tablets (Parpola 1986: 224); Weidner's estimate for the number of scholarly tablets was 5,000 (Weidner 1953: 198), and there are perhaps 1,000 historical. (Reade 2000: 421 §17)[5]

[3] For Kuyunjik tablets that did not reach the British Museum see Bezold 1899 (vol. 5): xv; Reade 2000: 421; Fincke 2003/4: 112 n. A remarkable Kuyunjik theological tablet with Assurbanipal colophon (owned during the 1920s by Professor Charles Whiting of Durham University) surfaced as late as 1995 and was presented to the British Museum by M. Wilson; it is now numbered BM 141781.

[4] 'K' stands for Kuyunjik, but there are other prefixes, such as accession date by year-month-day (1848 onwards), or the abbreviations Sm = Smith, Rm = Rassam, and DT = Daily Telegraph, the newspaper who once paid for a Nineveh trip for George Smith to find the rest of his Flood Tablet.

[5] For a more recent assessment of the number of different tablet types see Frahm 2011a: 276. For a recent summary of the library and the genres of texts it contained, cf. Fincke 2017.

The range of subject matter subsumed under this total is remarkable. A much-quoted appraisal of the library in context was given by Oppenheim (1977: 15–18), but the intervening decades have seen Kuyunjik studies in general and archival studies in particular lifted on to a new level, especially by the Assyriological team from Helsinki led by Simo Parpola.[6] A useful approach is to distinguish between 'library texts', 'divination reports', and 'archival texts' (as, for example, do Pedersén 1998 and Fincke, 2003/4: 129–30) in attempting any form of overview, although divination reports are perhaps better classed within archival texts:

Library or scholarly texts: these include divination, religious, lexical, medical, magical, ritual, epic and mythological, historical, and mathematical texts. All or any of these might be attested in multiple copies, in some cases up to six. The bulk of these are written in Standard Babylonian Akkadian, far smaller numbers are in Assyrian Akkadian, Sumerian, or Sumero-Akkadian bilinguals. The majority of such materials are formed into tightly structured and often unwieldy series. Such texts are permanently stored for reference, consideration, and multifarious uses. They are the very core of cuneiform culture.[7]

Archival texts, governmental and private: these include letters, reports, census-surveys, contracts, and administrative texts. In normal circumstances such documents do not exist in multiple copies. Often they will be written in Assyrian Akkadian. Storage for reference or checking is shorter term, and rather enables the settling of disputes over ownership, obligations, or debt.[8]

Oracular queries and divination reports: these are positioned between the two preceding categories, being reports and interpretations of ominous events which depend on library divination resources, but are largely one-off writings that cover one occasion, and are thus closer to the second than the first category. They are likewise stored for reference.

Despite heroic labour by many scholars there remain many as yet unidentified pieces and fragments, but it seems so far that few first-millennium Akkadian literary compositions at least are without a counterpart at Nineveh. This perspective is encouraging for the modern Assyriologist troubled by the uncertainty of how representative his materials, surviving at hazard, might really be.[9] Increasingly, however, we see that Akkadian literary texts from the Old and Middle Babylonian periods are not always represented in Assurbanipal's library, as is recently underlined by the texts in George 2009.

[6] The first volume appeared in 1987, and the series is ongoing.
[7] On the Kuyunjik Gilgamesh tablets in particular see George 2003: 381–91.
[8] On Nineveh archival resources see Fales 2003: 199–207.
[9] Oppenheim 1977: 15–20 reckoned that some 25 per cent of the total body of traditional Mesopotamian learning survives at Nineveh.

9.4. FIND-SPOTS AND DISTRIBUTION

The Nineveh tablets were not all found together, but in four or more different buildings in the great mound of Kuyunjik, namely the Southwest Palace, the North Palace, the areas of the Ishtar temple, and the Nabu Temple, with other additional find-spots (Fig. 9.1).[10]

The Southwest Palace and North Palace scholarly archives: the bulk of what is generally thought of as the Kuyunjik Library, in seventh-century script or slightly earlier; many bear Assurbanipal colophons (Reade 2000: 422 §17.3) The majority was broken into pieces, ultimately the result of the sacking of the city by the Medes and the Babylonians in 612 BCE. The majority of the tablets were found in the Southwest Palace, as indicated by Layard. Layard believed that the building had collapsed on them but later fragments from non-connected rooms were found to join, showing that the tablets had originally been housed on an upper storey.

The Southwest Palace and North Palace government archives: these include royal grants and decrees, both original and copies, treaty material and eponym lists, general administrative texts and military letters, and other texts; also royal letters, oracle reports (Reade 2000: 422 §17.4).

The Southwest Palace and North Palace private archives: purchases of land and people; loans (Reade 2000: 422 §17.5).

The Ishtar Temple archives: included earlier records from Uruk, Old Babylonian texts; Middle Assyrian documents including the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and other literary tablets (Reade 2000: 422–3 §17.1; Dalley 2001).

The Nabu Temple archives: began with founder Adad-nārāri III; includes pre-Assurbanipal texts as well as many presented, judging by the colophons, by the latter (Reade 2000: 422 §17.2).

Review Palace archives: administrative, legal and omen texts, and others (Reade 2000: 426 §17.6).

9.5. ASSURBANIPAL THE LIBRARIAN

Assurbanipal was born into an environment where the presence and importance of cuneiform writings were taken for granted, but this was only the

[10] For such recoverable details of Kuyunjik find-spots and distribution as exist see primarily the survey in Reade 2000: 421–7, who notes that 'records kept before the 1920s often indicate broadly where tablets were being found, but do not distinguish adequately between sites, particularly between the Southwest and North Palaces. The scarce records of the provenances of specific tablets, in the form of field reports, field inventories, museum inventories and published books, are sometimes liable to confusion by error . . . As studies advance, such archaeological data as do exist will mostly be superseded by internal criteria.' Summary discussions also in Pedersén 1998: 158–65; Fincke 2003/4: 114–15.

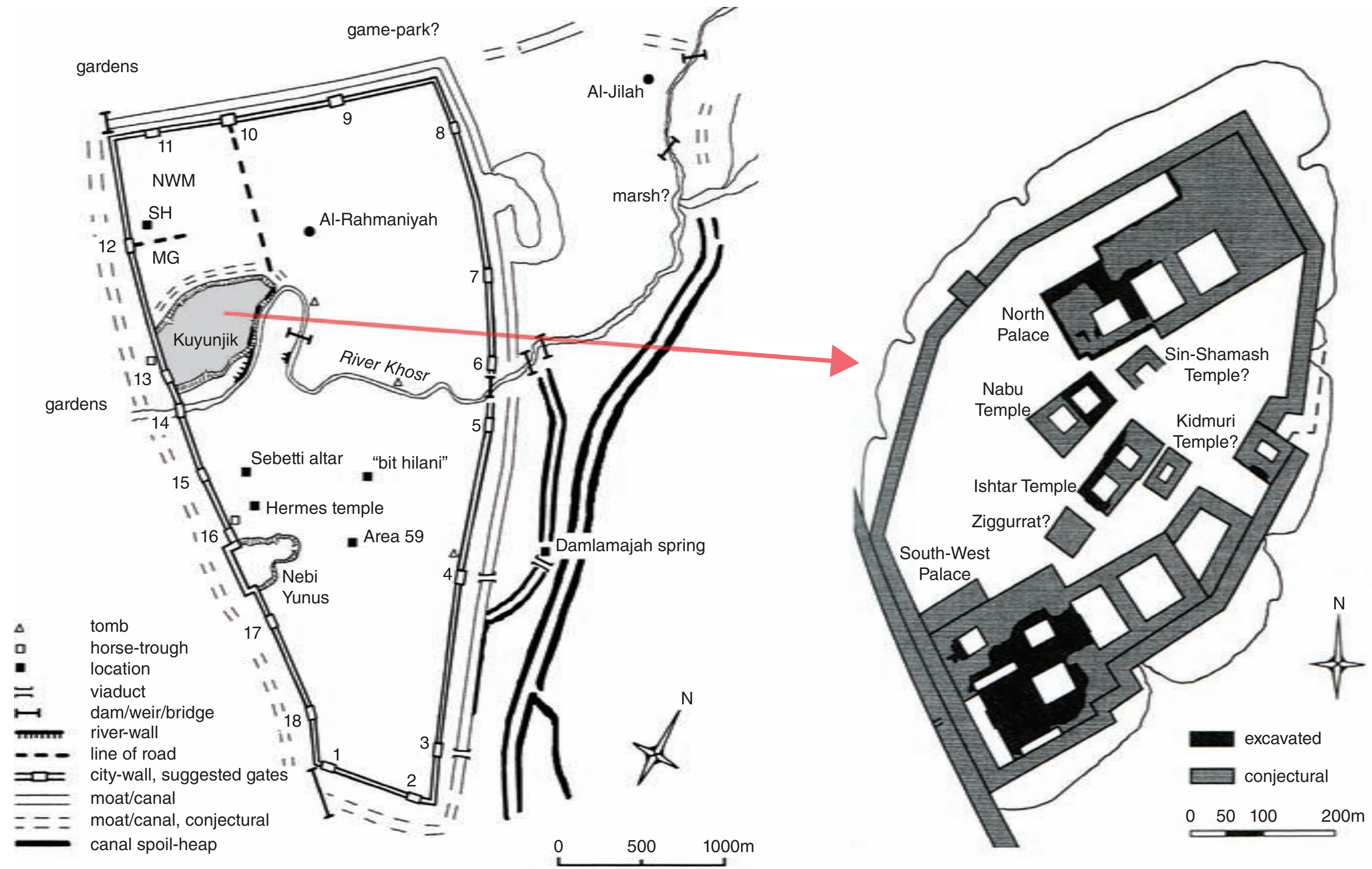

Fig. 9.1. Sketch-map to show the principal sites at Kuyunjik.
After Reade 2000: 192 fig. 2.

beginning of the story. As a man Assurbanipal laid claim to major accomplishments in literature and scholarship, distinguishing himself thereby from the kings who had preceded him.[11] These claims have become well known and are often referred to in print.[12] They derive partly from the colophons to his library possessions, but especially from the following passage, which is quoted from the tablet known as 'L^4', which was written out as a draft for a stela inscription commemorating the return of the Marduk statue to Babylon in 668 BCE (Fig. 9.2):

> Marduk, the sage of the gods, gave me wide understanding and broad perceptions as a gift. Nabû, the scribe of the universe, bestowed on me the acquisition of all his wisdom as a present. Ninurta and Nergal gave me physical fitness, manhood and unparalleled strength. I learnt the lore of the wise sage Adapa, the hidden secret, the whole of the scribal craft. I can discern celestial and terrestrial portents and deliberate in the assembly of the experts. I am able to discuss the series 'If the liver is the mirror image of the sky' with capable scholars. I can solve convoluted reciprocals and calculations that do not come out evenly. I have read cunningly written text in Sumerian, dark Akkadian, the interpretation of which is difficult. I have examined stone inscriptions from before the flood, which are sealed, stopped up, mixed up.[13]

It has been argued with conviction by Alasdair Livingstone that Assurbanipal, with the other young royals of the court, was tutored in cuneiform as a boy and

[11] For a more realistic assessment of literacy among the kings of Mesopotamia see Frahm 2011b.

[12] The only other king who makes comparable claims to cultured and proficient literacy is the Sumerian Ur III ruler Shulgi (2029–1982 BCE), who is vociferous on the subject.

[13] Translation after Livingstone 2007: 100–1, where earlier translations of the passage are evaluated; see also Zamazalová 2011: 314–17. With regard to the king's examining 'stone inscriptions from before the flood', nothing of the kind has yet been found at Nineveh, but certain points can be made. Assurbanipal's claim implies, if not demands, that somewhere in Kuyunjik is an undiscovered room containing a collection of truly ancient inscriptions, many of which of course would be on stone. It is not beyond belief that chance findings of ancient writings (always likely with deep diggings in long-inhabited locations) were, as a matter of course, to be delivered up to the Palace. There study of them would naturally generate in the first instance a sign list, whereby each ancient sign could be explained by its 'modern' equivalent. Such lists exist! They were known at Kuyunjik (and Nimrud); the earliest types of proto-cuneiform signs were juxtaposed with their contemporary, evolved forms according to the sequence in a standard sign list. Despite the dismissal of Daniels 1992, most of these equations are correct, rational, or at least intelligible enough, and are the fruit of substantial collecting and analysing of old inscriptions; no doubt the best cuneiform brains had got to work on them. They reflect a profound interest in ancient writings 'from before the flood' and are not remotely whimsical, let alone the work of scribes 'having fun'. An additional by-product of these 'ancient sign lists' was the possibility of creating ancient-looking royal inscriptions using third-millennium-type signs, and one Late Assyrian fragment of such actually occurs at Nimrud (Finkel 1997/1) In the same way, the scholars who later prepared Nebuchadnezzar II's archaic-looking royal inscriptions must have had a reverse sign list that enabled them to find a given complex 'Hammurabi-type' lapidary sign form at a moment's notice. This whole topic needs reinvestigation on its own terms.

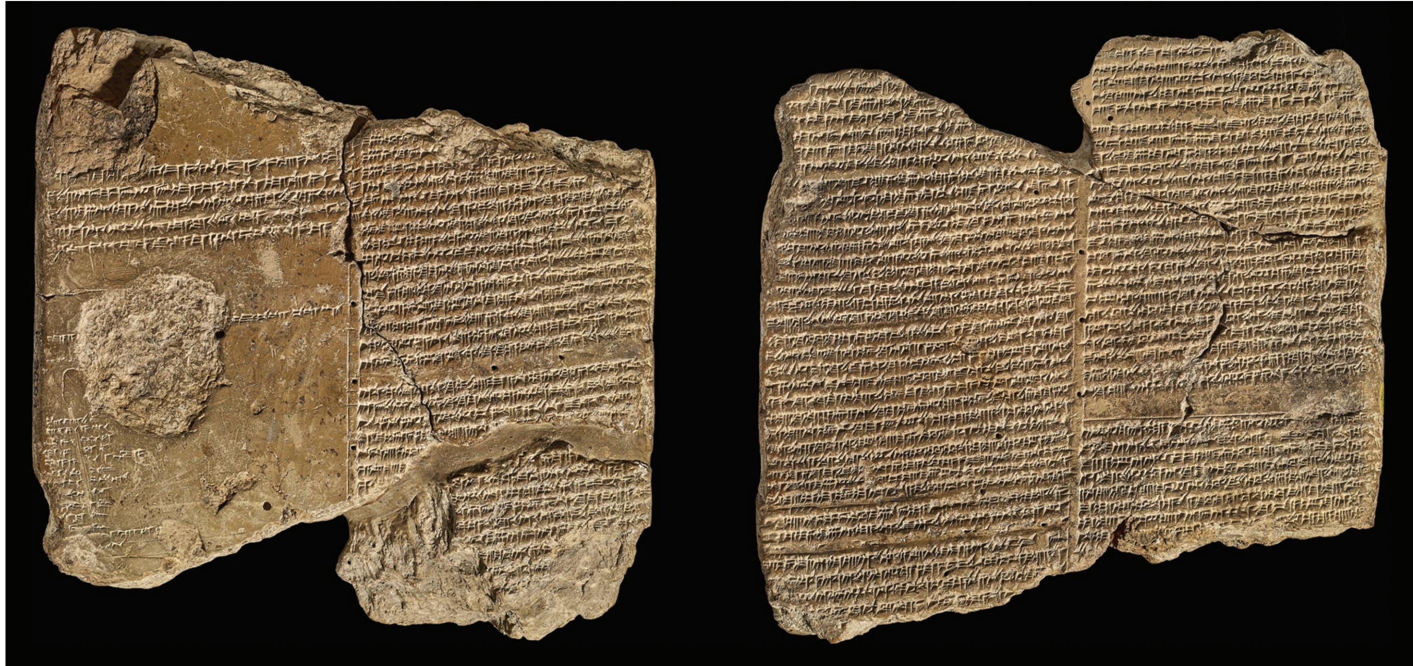

Fig. 9.2. Assurbanipal's inscription L[4] (K 2694+3050), which includes the clearest statement of his scholarly abilities.
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expected to be able to read and write his own tablets (Livingstone 2007). A celebrated letter from the scholar Balasî thanks Assurbanipal's father Esarhaddon for appointing him as the young prince's tutor:

> To whom indeed has the king done such a favour as to me whom you have appointed to the service of the crown prince, to be his master, that I read with him his exercise?[14]

One or two Nineveh tablets have been plausibly identified as having been prepared for use by Assurbanipal at this time, with others, unprofessionally formed or of negligible content, likely to be the work of the young prince himself. It seems probable that Assurbanipal exhibited a flair for cuneatics from the beginning and that the study of many kinds of inscriptions absorbed him—whenever he had the opportunity—for the rest of his life.

9.6. ACQUISITION

Archives at Nineveh cover the reigns of Sargon II, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal; Sennacherib's are lacking for one or another reason. Assurbanipal was not the first ruler at Nineveh to make a collection of cuneiform tablets and the final inventory of tablets amassed under his eye at Nineveh will have consisted of materials inherited from his forbears (see Frame and George 2005: 279–80), but enriched immeasurably by a policy of steadfast acquisition. Where tablets were missing, unrepresented, or their existence suspected, reliable originals were needed for Nineveh. So where did Assurbanipal procure his additions?

Interestingly, there is no evidence that Assurbanipal systematically rounded up tablets from the nearby cities of Assyria, even though there were substantial libraries at Assur and Nimrud and formerly, too, at Sargon's Dur-Sharrukin.[15] Although many Assurbanipal colophons do claim that the scribes used 'tablets from Assyria', respect for established Assyrian institutions and cult inhibited wholesale appropriations; but there was always a tendency to rate Babylonian scholarship and tradition more highly.

As a result the bibliophile looked to the south, and we are fortunate to have a trio of inscriptions that give information about how the acquisition process could work. One approach was essentially *find and take*. This is exemplified in two copies of an order despatched to an agent named Šadûnu in Borsippa.

[14] See Parpola 1993: 30; Livingstone 2007: 101–2.

[15] See, conveniently, Pedersén 1998: 132–58; and for Dur-Sharrukin, Robson and Stevens §8.2.2. There are Middle Assyrian and sundry other earlier Assyrian tablets at Nineveh (Reade 2000: 422 §17.1), but they are not a major component. One does not encounter the recognizable 'Assur' script or clay, for example.

They are undated, but would be convincingly placed during Assurbanipal's reign after he had uncontested access to Babylonia in 648 BCE. These two tablets are exact textual duplicates and should therefore be interpreted as student copies rather than 'real' letters (Lieberman 1990: 310).[16] It is not surprising that the original message from the Assyrian court found a place in the scribal curriculum at Borsippa because it drew on important events in the scholarly life of the city and its most learned inhabitants.

Šadûnu is authorized to impound compositions that were not available on the king's library shelves at Nineveh at the time of writing:

> The command of the king to Šadūnu: 'I am well, you should be happy.
>
> 'The day you read this tablet, take in your company Šumāya son of Šum-ukīn, his brother Bēl-ēṭir, Aplāya son of Arkāt-ilī and the scholars of Borsippa whom you know, and collect whatever tablets are in their houses, and whatever tablets are kept in the Ezida. Search out for me:
>
> amulet tablets for the king; for crossing(?) rivers, (tablets) to do with days (i.e. hemerologies), (menologies/rituals) of Nisannu, stone amulets for (crossing?) rivers, (menologies/rituals) for the month Tašrītu, (tablets) of (the ritual) for the House-of-Water-Sprinkling, {stone amulets for (crossing?) rivers}, for (success in?) lawsuits, "Day", sets of four stone amulets for the head of the king's bed and the foot of the king's (bed); the (ritual) Wand of *E'ru*-Wood for the head of the king's bed, the incantation "Let Ea and Asalluhi use wisdom in full for me!", (tablets of) "Mustering" (the army?), series to do with war, as many as there are, including their additional tablets, as many as there are, (the ritual) So that in Battle Arrows do not Come Near a Man, (the series) Travelling through the Country, (the series) Entering the Palace,[17] (medical?) rituals, *šuilla*-prayers, inscriptions on stone amulets and those that are good for kingship, (the ritual) Purification of the City, (spells against) Dizziness, (The medical text?) "Out of Concern"
>
> and any texts that might be needed in the palace, as many as there are, also rare tablets that are known to you do not exist in Assyria and send them to me.
>
> 'Now, I have written to the temple-steward and the governor; in the houses where you set to work nobody will withhold tablets from you (sg.). And if, furthermore, you (pl.) come across any tablet or ritual which I myself have

[16] The tablets originate at Borsippa, and were acquired by the British Museum by purchase in 1898 together with other sources from Borsippa. Lieberman seems to have doubted that they stemmed from Assurbanipal's reign, but that they reflect the world of Assurbanipal's literary activities seems inescapable to me, and their message, whatever the nature and date of these individual documents, is surely to be to be taken at face value. Frame and George 2005: 281–2 consider that, given the subject matter of the sought-after texts, the Šadûnu letter would fit equally within the reign of the notoriously sickly Esarhaddon.

[17] The present writer has been collecting material to reconstruct the particular series 'Entering the Palace', largely attested in sources from Assur and Babylon, for some time. It concerns magic spells and rituals to secure a favourable reception for an individual who has to face high officials at court, or the king himself, with some legal complaint. It is interesting, in view of the Šadûnu letter, that there is only one small scrap of this material so far identified at Kuyunjik, but one could readily imagine why the king wished to be fully up to speed on such magic: it would be practised on him!

not mentioned to you (pl.) and it is beneficial to my governance, take it too and send it to me.'[18]

The emphasis on what is needed for the good of the palace and its royal occupant is explicit in this list of desiderata; in fact the compositions en bloc are restricted to the lore of the exorcists, and stand in strong contrast to the catholic range of the library records discussed below. This, as already argued in Oppenheim 1977: 20, reflects the core preoccupation of the library's contents: to assemble the fullest possible collection of material to avert or exorcise evil from the king's person and entity.

Issuing licences to appropriate tablets was not the only available technique, however. Two texts in much later copies, from Babylon and Borsippa respectively, are probably responses to requests that certainly came from Assurbanipal for copies of many important scholarly and well-known documents (see Frame and George 2005; Frahm 2005: 43 reckons that one is a request from Assurbanipal).[19] That from Borsippa reveals that the agreed local answer was copied out on an alabaster tablet (or tablets, perhaps) before sending it off to Nineveh and shown to all the scholars involved. This laborious procedure indicates the importance of the whole matter at Borsippa, and in turn explains why and how the surviving tablet copy could have been written many hundred years after the event; by this time this tablet episode too had entered the scribal curriculum and the historic account on stone was presumably still locally available for study.

Assurbanipal is quoted as having written to Borsippa: 'Write out all the scribal learning in the property of Nabû and send it to me. Complete the instruction!' The Borsippans reply that they are not shirkers like the scholars at Babylon, but are busily engaged in writing everything out on boards of *sissoo*-wood. One particular Sumerian lexical text that had been asked for was simply not available in Borsippa; the king was to pursue it in Babylon. Their counterparts at Babylon produced a similar but longer letter that listed many of the requested compositions; this response was the work of a coterie of twelve named top scholars who are credited with vast learning and implicitly acknowledge Assurbanipal's learned abilities in return. Here the range of documents was much broader, including whole omen series, and here too the support was wooden writing boards rather than tablets.

What we cannot assess is whether the use of wooden supports as opposed to clay was preferred practice in assembling material for recopying at Nineveh, and therefore imposed by the Assyrians, or whether the Borsippa and Babylon scholars were reluctant to part with venerable originals and expected the king

[18] Quoted after Frame and George 2005: 281. For previous treatments see Lieberman 1990: 310; Fincke 2003/4: 123–4; and Frame and George 2005: 280–1.

[19] Note that recently it has been argued that these late tablets were not faithful copies of a document contemporary to Assurbanipal, but a later creation; see Goldstein 2010.

to be content with specially produced new drafts. Wooden writing boards will have been much easier to transport than clay, which is surprisingly heavy, especially in bulk, and requires fussy transporting. In any case we know that writing boards of wood were a major component of the Nineveh library catalogues to which we must now turn.

9.7. LIBRARY RECORDS

In 1983 Simo Parpola published an important group of administrative records that offers a breakdown of tablets transferred from certain Babylonian libraries to Nineveh, an activity that took place soon after the failed revolt of Šamaš-šum-ukīn in 648 BCE. These systematic lists include a wide range of textual genres, of which the most plentiful were exorcists' lore, astrological omens, teratological omens, terrestrial omens, medical recipes, dream omens, and haruspical omens. In addition there were menologies, funerary offerings, commentaries, lamentations and anti-witchcraft rituals, and many other works (see Parpola 1983; Fales and Postgate 1992: 49–56). Three points about these Library Records are of extreme interest. One is that the Babylonian provenances or the original owners[20] of the consignments are recorded. The second is that, following Parpola's analysis, the tablets were more probably donated than commandeered, although Frame and George (2005: 277–8) argue that the tablets represented war reparations. Thirdly, the records distinguish in careful terminology the formats exhibited by the incoming inscriptions: clay tablets, on the one hand, can be full-size, divided into two or more columns, or small, single-column tablets; wooden writing boards on the other hand can be one single leaf, a hinged diptych, a triptych, or a polyptych. It has usually been assumed that these plentiful writing boards were of the framed type with the inset filled with wax known from Nimrud, although it is equally possible that the boards, or at least some of them, were prepared surfaces inscribed in cuneiform in ink.[21] As Parpola (1983: 4–6) elucidates, the numbers involved were considerable:

> The most striking fact . . . is the great number of tablets and writing boards listed in the Records. Despite the fact that all of them are badly broken, they can be shown with certainty to have registered a minimum of 1,441 clay tablets and 69

[20] One contributor was Assurbanipal's brother Assur-mukīn-palēʾa, no doubt a fellow pupil in earlier years, whose tablets were surely in Assyrian rather than Babylonian script.

[21] On ink see n. 27 below. What is sobering is that no single leaf of these writing boards survives from Nineveh (although some earlier examples were found in the well at Nimrud). We are thus forced to admit the loss of a major component of the Kuyunjik library, a consideration which, prior to Parpola's study, was virtually unacknowledged.

> polyptychs, the majority of which consisted of more than four boards. Taking the breaks into consideration, the original tablet-totals can be placed at about 2,000 and the writing-board total somewhere in the vicinity of 300. In view of the fact that the total number of tablets and fragments (including the smallest ones) in Nineveh does not exceed 30,000, and taking further into consideration that a substantial portion of these 30,000 (about one-fifth) are non-literary texts (letters, legal and administrative texts, reports etc.). The tablets recorded in the present lists must have represented a major acquisition to the library.

Manuscripts from the south, in Babylonian script, thus arrived at the capital at various *times*, in considerable *quantities*, and in a variety of *formats* (see Frame and George 2005: 281–3).[22] There is no reason to think that the preceding accounts represent the only acquisitions that took place in Assurbanipal's time. On reaching Nineveh, as a general rule, these tablets were recopied in Assyrian characters by specialized staff. For the modern cuneiformist Kuyunjik Assyrian is often easier to read than contemporary Babylonian, but it is improbable that the same factor carried weight among ancient scholars or with Assurbanipal himself. Perhaps the prevailing aesthetic demanded that the king's personal library should be dressed in 'house style', although the Assyrian recopying programme pursued in the chancery would have involved editorial checking and allowed control before incoming sources were incorporated into the royal collection. One might conclude that Babylonian literary sources among the library's possessions were imports that had not yet been 'done into Assyrian', although it is equally possible that some were generated by Babylonian scribes in Nineveh (Fig. 9.3). There is a lack of colophons specifying that a tablet was written in Babylonia. Those that were finished with could have been returned to their bereft owners but were more probably deposited in some yet-to-be-found cuneiform *genizah* at Nineveh. Specially demanded transcripts on wood would in any case not warrant returning after recopying, and could equally well have been stored with clay tablets in the library. Although we cannot prove that fresh library tablets were produced in Babylonian script at Nineveh many newly created oracular questions and other archive documents were (see, for example, Starr 1990).

We are now well informed as to these resulting Nineveh holdings in Babylonian script, thanks to research undertaken and published by Jeanette Fincke (2003/4; see especially 128–36). At the time of her report (2003), the 'total number of Babylonian texts and fragments from Kuyunjik was 3594, less than 1/7 [or rather, perhaps, nearly 1/7!] of the complete British Museum's Nineveh tablet collection.'

[22] Two and a half millennia later, cuneiform tablets and fragments arrived in a fashion rather similar to this at the British Museum.

Fig. 9.3. This much-travelled tablet (K 6073 + Bu. 91-5-9, 132.) contains a powerful spell addressed to the Sun god to banish ghosts, in conspicuously large, clear, even 'textbook' Neo-Babylonian script. It presents an unusual appearance for a Kuyunjik tablet, and is far too thin by normal standards. The one-line colophon reads: 'A copy from Assyria. Swiftly written out for making a . . . ' This particular tablet is therefore a copy or an extract made by a scribe in Babylonia from an Assyrian exemplar, transposed into Babylonian script in the process. Later this same tablet must have been collected on a library-raiding trip somewhere in Babylonia and removed to Kuyunjik for incorporation into Assurbanipal's holdings. Such a history suggests that this particular exorcistic ritual was known of and prized, and that reliable manuscripts of it were hard to obtain. Duplicate copies from Assur and Uruk have cryptographic writings and other highly unusual features (including drawings!) that support this.

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Text genre	Number
Library texts	1594
Archival texts	645
Divination reports	1085
Not classified	270
Total	3494

Literary and scientific texts include: divination (746), religious (585), medical (81), lexical (56), historical (27), mathematical (1), epics and myths (17), varia (21), and unidentified (60).

These 3,594 break down into the following proportions:

Archival texts include: letters, contracts and related texts, administrative texts, or other archival genres.

Divination reports include: astrological, oracle enquiries, extispicy, and terrestrial omens.

This investigation has allowed for the first time a comparison to be made between the Babylonian sources attested in the Library Records and the tablet actually found in the Nineveh libraries. This is Fincke's conclusion:

> Both groups indicate the same priority, namely the assembly of a large collection of divination texts for the recognition and correct interpretation of omens, and of tablets from the exorcists' lore which provide instructions for rituals, which were vital to protect king and country from misfortune predicted by omens. In addition, medical texts with therapies for the health of the king and his relatives, and lexical texts for learning the vocabulary of the scholarly texts were of major concern for the collection.
>
> The difference in the number of texts in question, for example in the different methods of divination, partly depends on the fragmentary state of the data and is partly due to the fact that the library records refer to both Assyrian and Babylonian texts. It might be pure coincidence that the rather small number of Babylonian terrestrial omens was completed by a rather high number of texts from private scholars, while, *vice versa*, the high number of astrological omen texts—the largest group within the Babylonian divination texts—was completed by a rather small number of tablets from private scholars. However the large percentage of divination and exorcists' texts also reflects the main intention of Ashurbanipal's order for collecting Babylonian tablets.

9.8. LIBRARY PRACTICES: CATCH LINES AND COLOPHONS

Assurbanipal's library tablets are a librarian's dream. They are highly disciplined and consistent in nature, first-class productions on best quality clay, and, at the same time, they are startlingly legible.[23] Vertical rulings were produced with a straight edge or a twisted string, sections were ruled across, and errors were rare. Complementing the formal qualities of the manuscripts is their systematic internal organization; tablets of traditional content come to the modern reader in neatly arranged series, each tablet (in optimal conditions) quoting its tablet number within that series, and the *incipit* of the subsequent tablet as a *catch line*:

'Today, had I only left the ball in the carpenter's workshop'

Tablet XI, 'He who saw the Deep', series of Gilgameš.
Written and checked according to its original.
Palace of Assurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria[24]

[23] As remarked above, it was fortuitous that the earliest Assyriologists were presented from the outset with Assurbanipal's admirable tablets to work on. Had their first exposure been to 30,000 cursive Late Old Babylonian house sales or 30,000 sloppy Achaemenid contracts, what progress could they have made? Assurbanipal's scribes were calligraphers, and their best work merits assessment *qua* calligraphy. Certain seasoned scholars have referred to 'Script A' and 'Script B' at Kuyunjik, although as far as the present writer knows the distinguishing characteristics have never been itemized in print, nor is it clear that, say, a putative 'Script C' has to be excluded. A further advantage in the mid-nineteenth century was that there were so many highly informative lexical texts, which could be put to excellent use by the decipherers in much the same way as by their compilers.

[24] See George 2003: 736.

Data of this sort has been of incalculable value to modern scholarship in the lengthy process of identifying and joining fragments of tablets, and ultimately reconstructing complete manuscripts within a complete series sequence.

Many of the tablets in Assurbanipal's library bear a *colophon*, written after the end of the inscription (with or without catch line), at the bottom of the reverse (or, in larger tablets, after the final column).[25] Long colophons (for example Hunger 1968: 97–8, Typ b–e) tell us in explicit terms that tablets were written for the personal use of the king in his palace: 'for my review in reading', 'for my royal review', 'for study in his reviewing', 'for study in his reading', and 'for my examining'. Such phrases do much to bolster the reputation of the king as scholar (Livingstone 2007: 98–9; Lieberman 1990: 317–19):

> Palace of Assurbanipal, the great king, king of the world, king of Assyria,
> Son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria,
> Son of Sennacherib, king of Assyria,
> In accordance with clay tablets and writing boards
> I have written, collated and checked this tablet in a gathering of experts,
> and placed it in my Palace for my royal review.
> Whoever erases my written name and writes his own (instead)
> May Nabû, the universal scribe, erase his name!

Other colophons indicate official copying without such clauses.

A number of royal tablets (such as the Gilgamesh manuscript quoted above) carry a succinct library tag (Hunger 1968: 317 Typ a, called by Bezold in 1889 the 'official note') added after the inscription proper before the clay was too dry to take stylus impressions. These labels are written in larger and shallower characters,[26] and conceivably were added by someone other than the copyist-scribe of the tablet, who looked over the new manuscript and authorized it for incorporation on the library shelves (Fig. 9.4).

The two known ink colophons from Kuyunjik (Reade 1986: 219 fig. 3) were probably also applied to home-produced tablets that were already too dry to inscribe.[27] Conclusions might be drawn from studying this group of short-colophons as a whole; what does seem certain is that they must have been added locally and quickly, without moistening the clay. It seems doubtful

[25] See Streck 1916: 355–75; Hunger 1968: nos. 317–49.

[26] The shape of the sign DU_3 (within the king's name) in particular is archaizing and Babylonian in form and distinct from the conventional Late Assyrian of the sign as it would be used in the text itself. Bezold describes the signs as 'engraved afterwards' and others have described them as 'scratched', or even produced with a stamp, but the signs are impressed in the clay in the normal way. It is possible, if the clay was nearly dry, that a metal stylus was used.

[27] These two ink scraps are possessed of huge and under-appreciated significance. The character of impressed wedges as found on clay is conveyed by the inked nib with perfect confidence and accuracy, implying that *cuneiform was often written in ink* at Kuyunjik, with equal convenience if not greater speed. See also Clancier 2009: 241–2, n. 1030. Aside from clay, oracular queries to the sun god written on papyrus were surely in ink (for passages see Starr 1990: 343 sub *niāru*), and inked cuneiform on papyrus must always be reckoned a possible alternative to Aramaic, as with the dockets from the Southwest Palace (Pedersén 1998: 161–2). See n. 14 above.

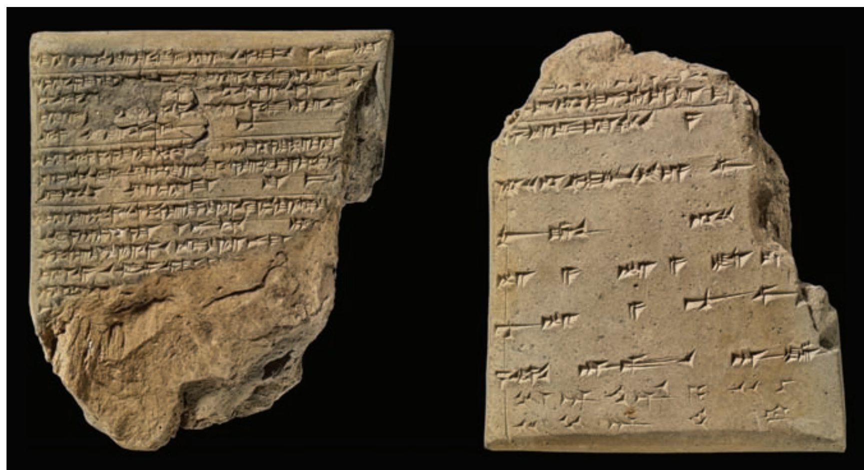

Fig. 9.4. This tablet, K 8289, was written for the Nabu Temple tablet collection, as is clear from the longer and widely spaced colophon. The second, shorter colophon, of the type described above, which was certainly added later, states that the tablet belongs to the Palace of Assurbanipal.

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that any 'wetting' operation could be carried out invisibly, and so we can rule out that such tablets had been written a long time before or even brought to Nineveh from outside as a finished item (*pace* Reade 1986: 220).

Other tablets found at Nineveh reveal that they had formerly been the property of other owners, such as the famous scholar Nabû-zuqup-kenu, who had been working at Nimrud from 716–694; see Hunger 1968: 91–5; Frahm 2011a: 265–7.

9.9. LIBRARY ACTIVITY: EDITING AND COPYING

Nineveh letters bear on all aspects of court life, and real characters emerge from them, as well encapsulating their professional expertise and the interpretation of the cuneiform traditions at their disposal. Here are to be recommended especially the Helsinki edition and translation series *State Archives of Assyria*. The remarkable letter Parpola 1993 no. 160, for example, recommends twenty capable scholars to the king, including astrologers, diviners, exorcists, physicians, and lamentation chanters, listing their specialities. An inner group at Nineveh, of some seventeen individuals, engage in direct and regular correspondence about ominous happenings and other matters with the king. Included are letters that cast light on Assurbanipal and his library; some examples are quoted:

> [Concerning] the tablets of [the series . . . and] the non-canonical tablets [. . . of which] I s[poke] to the king, my lord, they have now been brought. [If] it pleases [the king], m[y lord], let them b[ring them in and let the king, my lord,] have a look.

> Later [I shall collect] the Akkadian [writing-b]oards [. . . . . .] and the Assyrian [writing board]s, and I shall write the tablets [. . .] . . . . [And concerning what the k]ing, my lord, wrote to me]: 'Let [*all the omens*] be *e*[*xtracted*]'—should I at the same time [copy] the [tab]let of non-canonical [omens of wh]ich I spoke? Or should I write them] on a secondary tablet? [Wh]at is it that the king, my lord, [orders?].
>
> Akkullanu to Assurbanipal, about 665 BCE
> (Parpola 1993: no. 101; cf. no. 102)

> Concerning the tab[let] of *Šumma Izbu* (ominous unnatural births) [about which] the king, my lord, wrote to me: 'Look (at it)! [Who would] write [. . .] in *Šumma Izbu*?'—there is a particular tablet [in] which the [. . .]s are written, and I am now sending it to the king. The king should have a look. Maybe the scribe who reads to the king did not understand. *Šumma Izbu* is difficult to interpret. The first time that I come before the king, my lord, I shall (personally) show, with this tablet that I am sending to the king, my lord, how the omen is written. Really, [the one] who has not had the meaning pointed out to him cannot possibly understand it. Balasî to Assurbanipal (Parpola 1993: no. 60)

> The tablet which the king is using is [defe]ctive and not whole. Now then I have written and fetched from Babylon an ancient tablet made by King Hammurapi and an inscription from before King Hammurapi. [Let] the king [. . .] the ritual according to [. . .]. Ašaredu the Younger to Assurbanipal (Parpola 1993: no. 155)

> The series should be revised. Let the king command: two 'long' tablets containing explanations of antiquated words should be removed, and two tablets of the haruspices' corpus should be put (instead).
>
> Marduk-šum-usur, Nasiru, and Tabnî to
> Assurbanipal (Parpola 1993: no. 177)

Records distinguish between *ahû* and non-*ahû* sources, conventionally translated as 'canonical' and 'non-canonical'.[28]

9.10. THE NATURE OF THE LIBRARY

There has been discussion as to whether Assurbanipal's library was in any way an 'official' library, and whether the motive behind its assembly can be accurately gauged. The term 'official' seems greatly out of place in this context; the moderate and informal claim of Oppenheim, that 'Ashurbanipal himself decided which tablets were to be put into the library and which to be omitted' (Oppenheim 1977: 244), seems to embody the right sort of approach. Important here is part of a letter from Ninurta-ah-iddina, in Babylonian script, in Parpola's more recent translation:

> Let me read the tablets in the presence of the king, my lord, and let me put down on them whatever is agreeable to the king; whatever is not acceptable to the king,

[28] See on this Rochberg(-Halton) 1984; Lieberman 1990; Elman 1975.

I shall remove from them. The tablets I am speaking about are worth preserving until far-off days. Ninurta-ah-iddina to Assurbanipal (Parpola 1993: no. 373)

The Library Records establish that great swathes of—inter alia—omen and exorcistic literature arrived from Babylonia. In general these overlap both with the library records and with Assyrian Nineveh tablets with Assurbanipal colophons. It is not, however, always clear in regard to, say, divination activities reflected in the court correspondence, which texts quoted and referred to were the property of the individual experts, and which were documents that reposed in Assurbanipal's collections.

Incoming compositions in Babylonian script probably arrived in the structured and finished form in which we know them from Assurbanipal's Assyrian copies. The vast editorial work of ordering of the multi-tablet omen series with their thousands of lines, the systematic stockpiling of medical recipes from head to foot into medical encyclopaedias with the right incantations, or the establishing of the vast lexical collections—the process known as 'canonization'—had largely been carried out long before, by the end of the second millennium.[29] Sometimes we do glimpse later work; Assurbanipal himself boasts of having re-edited a plant list (Frahm 2011a: 332), but such instances are rare.

The classical series tablets that represent so important a chunk of our cuneiform knowledge were, therefore, probably not constructed and ordered at Nineveh. The task of the chancery scribes was to convert the incoming sets—be they Gilgamesh, heavyweight dictionary compilations, or monster fortune-telling series—into standard Assyrian format and script. Excerpts, digests, and new collections could always be engendered, interpretations and explanations would no doubt always be forthcoming, but if and how regularly variant manuscripts were juxtaposed and harmonized at Nineveh into a 'best text for the library' can only be guessed at.

Certain texts, medical recipes, for example, inset variant readings as a gloss, but while such work could represent chancery input deriving from compared sources, it can equally well have already occurred in imported source materials. Texts, many from Nineveh, can carefully indicate with the small-script supralinear gloss 'a new "it-was-broken"', that they were copied from an incomplete forerunner, or that a forerunner was itself based on a fragmentary original, but unfired tablets chip easily, and one cannot conclude from this practice that unmarked restorations were never made by people for whom Akkadian was the native language and who were masters of the script and its literature in its entirety.[30] This remains true despite the fact that the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-

[29] See, for example, Finkel 1988, on the SA.GIG medical omens. On canonization in this context see Lieberman 1990.

[30] This scribal phenomenon of recording levels of damage within a manuscript chain is worth a study in itself. Sometimes the annotation is made when even a modern reader can see what must be supplied, suggesting that scribes were trained to record things as they found them and not make restorations themselves, but that may not have been an invariable rule. It is also worth pointing out

Babylonian vernaculars of the scribes were quite different from the Standard Babylonian language used in literature and scholarship.

There can be no doubt that Assurbanipal's involvement in the assembling of his tablet resources was both personal and consistent. The royal collector cannot, however, in any way be envisioned as some dreamy connoisseur of letters always on the look-out for a rare text or a fine edition. On the contrary, the driving stimulus for the activity, as emerges from the professional scholarly correspondence that swirled around the Assyrian court, was different, and, at root, practical. The king was surrounded by numerous experts such as diviners, exorcists, astrologers, and doctors, many no doubt clever and powerful individuals in their own right and each with his own compendious written authorities, who could run rings around any king who was illiterate and unable to meet them on their own terms. Lieberman 1990: 327 (with further discussion) summarized the situation as follows:

> Assurbanipal collected his tablets in order to remove power from the hands of such consultants and retain it himself. His ability to check prevented advisors from choosing between variant traditions in order to affect royal decisions or wilfully misrepresenting the scholarly tradition, and it therefore gave him independence from whims and plots in the court.

There may be truth in this, but it is hardly the whole story.

Assurbanipal's library collections, for all the striving for completeness and accuracy, can be characterized as conservative, if not backward-looking. The overriding theme was the procurement of high-quality traditional source material and the careful copying and preservation of its contents for practical employment. Skilful philology could wrest new meaning out of an obscure passage or restore an old break with a new copy, but no piece of clay in Assurbanipal's library can be classified as truly innovative or experimental.[31] Admittedly there is a corpus of native Assyrian literature that owes little to Babylonian example (edited in Livingstone 1989), but in terms of the intellectual disciplines of grammar and lexicography, predicting the future, curing sickness, and averting trouble on many levels, the praxis—which was indisputably trusted and utilized by all concerned—in the main embodied the thinking of an earlier age. This, however, reflects no 'lukewarm' mind. It is possible that there was a general reluctance to use cuneiform on clay for innovation or speculation or non-conformist writing. Perhaps, if such writings ever saw the light of day at Nineveh, it was in ink on parchment, or scratched

that Assyriologists today are unavoidably conditioned to think of cuneiform tablets as damaged, broken, mutilated, or downright illegible. In antiquity this daily drawback in a cuneiformist's life never applied. The shelves of Assurbanipal's library were no doubt full of *complete sets of complete tablets*!

[31] Perhaps the theoretical and explanatory omen treatise discussed in Oppenheim 1974 is an example.

in the wax among the uncounted thousands of wooden tablets that have perished forever. This we will probably never know. But Assurbanipal's timeless achievement was to bequeath us the inherited cuneiform lore of untold generations of scholars—despite the destruction at Nineveh caused by the Medes and the Babylonians in 612 BCE (Reade 2000: 427)—in the smartest possible style and the proudest possible fashion.[32]

9.11. AFTERWORD

The unrivalled riches of the Kuyunjik library materials have meant that scholarly work on them has proceeded almost uninterruptedly in the British Museum since the tablets first entered the collection one hundred and sixty years ago, with cataloguing, copying, translating, and the triumphant joining of even the smallest fragments.[33] Within recent times Assyriology has lost two of its greatest Kuyunjik champions, in the passing of Professors Rykle Borger (1929–2010) and W. G. Lambert (1926–2011), both of whom contributed a lifetime's industry to the elucidation and explication of Assurbanipal's miraculous *Nachlass* with wonderful results. As this book goes to press, great new work on the K tablets is well under way in the form of the British Museum *Assurbanipal Library Project*.[34] The present stage of the programme involves digital imaging of the entire Nineveh collection, tablet by tablet, for publication on the British Museum website, and, supplementing the brave start in King 1914, Leichty 1964, Lambert and Millard 1968, Lambert 1992, each of Assurbanipal's tablets will have its pedigree of publication history, hand-copies, transliterations, and translations.[35] The fruits of this undertaking will allow new levels of understanding of what the library has to offer, and facilitate the investigation of many fascinating questions that have previously been beyond practical compass.

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[32] Not everything in the library was buried there; compare the Assurbanipal library tablet in Iqisha's library at Uruk (see e.g. Clancier 2009: 260–2).

[33] Walker 1987 gives a historical sketch of Kuyunjik work, and see further Borger 1991.

[34] See Fincke 2003/4: 111–13.

[35] For project progress, partners, goals and funding, cf. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/ashurbanipal_library_phase_1.aspx.

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10

Libraries from Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt, *c.*800 BCE–250 CE

Kim Ryholt

10.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the last millennium of the ancient Egyptian culture, which followed the so-called Libyan Anarchy (*c.*1069–664 BCE). More specifically, it is concerned with the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods, stretching from the gradual reunification and reorganization of Egypt, which began during Kushite rule and was completed in the reign of Psammetichus I (664–610 BCE), and until the abandonment of the ancient, native writing systems from ordinary use in the mid-third century CE (Table 10.1). During this period, Egypt saw native rule for about two centuries, and non-native for about eight centuries.

Access to Egyptian literature from the period under discussion is facilitated by a number of recent surveys (Quack 2009a; Ryholt 2010a) and anthologies with translations of literary narratives, prophecies, wisdom instructions, and poetry (Hoffmann and Quack 2007), funerary literature (Smith 2009), and divinatory texts (Quack 2008). A considerable amount of temple literature (rituals, hymns, compendia of religious knowledge, etc.), and also some scientific literature—above all the medical—still remains to be edited. It should be noted that the term 'literary' is used here in a broad sense to cover all of the aforementioned genres.

There is a rather more substantial documentation on libraries and archives from the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods than from any earlier periods in Egypt (cf. the contributions by Hagen §7; Parkinson §3). This need cause little surprise since the older the material, the greater the chance that the archaeological context will be disturbed or the environment will have taken its toll.

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Table 10.1. Chronological chart

Kushite rule (25th Dynasty)	747–656 BCE
Egyptian kings at Saïs (26th Dynasty)	664–526 BCE
Persian rule, first occupation (27th Dynasty)	526–404 BCE
Egyptian kings at Saïs and Mendes (28th–29th Dynasty)	404–380 BCE
Egyptian kings at Sebennytos (30th Dynasty)	380–343 BCE
Persian rule, second occupation (31st Dynasty)	343–332 BCE
Macedonian rule	332–305 BCE
Ptolemaic rule from Alexandria	305–30 BCE
Roman rule	30 BCE–395 CE

The available source material is diverse in nature, but can be divided into three main categories:

(1) actual papyri found in a primary context (where they were used and stored) or a secondary context (usually where they were discarded);

(2) buildings with inscriptions that identify them as libraries or buildings without inscriptions that can be identified as libraries on other grounds;

(3) references to libraries and books through professional titles, book catalogues, information in colophons, and other textual sources.

The sources document a range of both institutional and private libraries. As in modern society, large-scale libraries seem mainly to have been associated with institutions. Virtually all the testimony on institutional libraries concerns temples, and it seems quite probable that the temples throughout the country housed the vast majority of literary texts in absolute numbers. Egyptian literary texts in private ownership seem, from the surviving evidence, to have been primarily based on professional necessity, and the amount of *belles lettres* or leisure literature that can be ascribed to private individuals is limited (for Greek texts, see van Minnen 1998).

Absent from the archaeological record are palace or court libraries. In the case of native rulers, we must assume that such libraries would have existed. These may be envisioned to have provided protection for the person of the king (magical and medical texts), guidelines for proper conduct in relation to the formal activities in which he engaged (court sessions etc.) and royal hymns, documentation of royal affairs (record-keeping, annals), as well as materials for teaching and entertainment purposes. We may further speculate that at least part of these libraries would have been itinerant, since many of the aforementioned texts would have been no less relevant when the king travelled around Egypt or went on foreign campaigns. Lacking proper sources, and thus

being confined to speculation about their nature, size, and scope, the matter of court libraries will not be pursued beyond these brief considerations.

10.2. TEMPLE LIBRARIES

In so far as temple libraries reflect the role and function of the temples in society, it is important to observe how the temples differ from modern churches, mosques, or synagogues. The Egyptians had no sacred writing comparable to the Bible, Koran, or Torah, which may be recited or interpreted for the public. The daily rituals were not aimed at mass congregations, and there were no sermons for the masses. The worship instead aimed at pleasing the god through offerings and adoration, and the most crucial texts were those that provided the instructions for the daily rituals, as well as the religious festivals and the associated rituals, and those that contained the purification and protection rituals for the officiating priest. Pharaoh was responsible for the conduct of the cult everywhere in Egypt and hence it was his exclusive prerogative to be depicted on temple walls offering before the gods, such as we find everywhere in Egypt. In everyday life, he was necessarily deputized by a large number of priests all over the country. Each officiating priest assumed the role of pharaoh while performing the rituals, and the royal purification and protection rituals were performed on their behalf all over Egypt whenever the divine services took place. In addition to the rituals, a further array of texts preserved various forms of knowledge about the temple, the cult, and other religious matters.

The only extant, large-scale institutional library from ancient Egyptian with a known archaeological context is the Tebtunis temple library (§10.2.1). A considerable number of literary texts have also been discovered at Elephantine in the far south of Egypt, and at Soknopaiou Nesos, modern Dime, in the northern Fayum. There is as yet no detailed survey of either of these two groups. The former is discussed below (§10.2.2), while the latter is in many respects similar to the better documented and contemporary case of Tebtunis and therefore will not be further discussed here. Suffice to say that the bulk of the Soknopaiou Nesos papyri were discovered in the late nineteenth century, and that they comprise much the same content as those from Tebtunis, including cultic texts, scientific literature such as medicine and divination, wisdom instructions, and historical narratives (cf. Stadler 2015). One significant difference is the fact that the Hieratic script seems to be used to a much lesser extent there, as compared to Tebtunis, a circumstance which may well indicate different scribal training (Quack 2018; Ryholt 2018b). Little is known about the archaeological context of the Soknopaiou Nesos papyri and it is therefore difficult to determine whether they derive from institutional storage, priestly dwellings, or perhaps rubbish dumps.

10.2.1. The Tebtunis Temple Library (First–Second Century CE)

10.2.1.1. The Site of Tebtunis

The ancient town of Tebtunis, modern Umm el-Breigat, was founded *c.*300 BCE. It is located in the southernmost part of the Fayum Oasis. Like so many other towns in this region it was dedicated to the crocodile god Sobek (Greek Suchos), who was here called Soknebtunis or 'Sobek, lord of Tebtunis'. The archaeology of the site is very rich, above all because the town was located in the arid desert zone, away from the area of cultivation, and also at some distance from modern habitation. In addition to two brief excavations in 1899–1900 and 1902 by British-American and German missions, large-scale excavations have been conducted in 1929–36 by an Italian mission, and since 1988 by a Franco-Italian mission (Gallazzi and Hadji-Minaglou 2000: 3–34; Gallazzi and Hadji-Minaglou (eds) 2019).

The excavations have brought to light a large well-planned provincial town (Fig. 10.1). A large *dromos* or processional way that was originally more than thirty metres wide led straight north from the main temple, that of Soknebtunis, and toward the fertile lands. Two secondary processional ways led east to a temple of Osiris and west to another now completely lost temple. Along the main processional route are a smaller chapel of the grain-goddess Thermuthis, several *deinepteria* (dining halls), blocks of private houses with smaller streets between them, and even shops. West of the entrance to the temple of Soknebtunis were located the *thesauros* (a secured storage facility) and the baths, while on the east was the enclosure of the desert guard.

10.2.1.2. The Archaeological Context

The temple library only came to light gradually over three decades. The first two discoveries were made during official missions led by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt in 1899 on behalf of the University of California and by Otto Rubensohn on behalf of the *Deutsche Papyruskartell* in 1902, neither of whom provided detailed accounts of their fieldwork, and a third during illicit excavations in 1930. The numerous papyri found during the latter were soon sold on the antiquities market. Some months later, in 1931, an Italian mission that had gained concession of the area two years earlier, and was now directed by Carlo Anti, located the source and cleared out the substantial remains. Although this latter excavation was conducted by archaeologists, the material was removed with haste—the whole operation took just eight and a half hours!—and again no report on the archaeological context was published. We therefore lack a proper description of the archaeological circumstances in which this unique discovery was made.

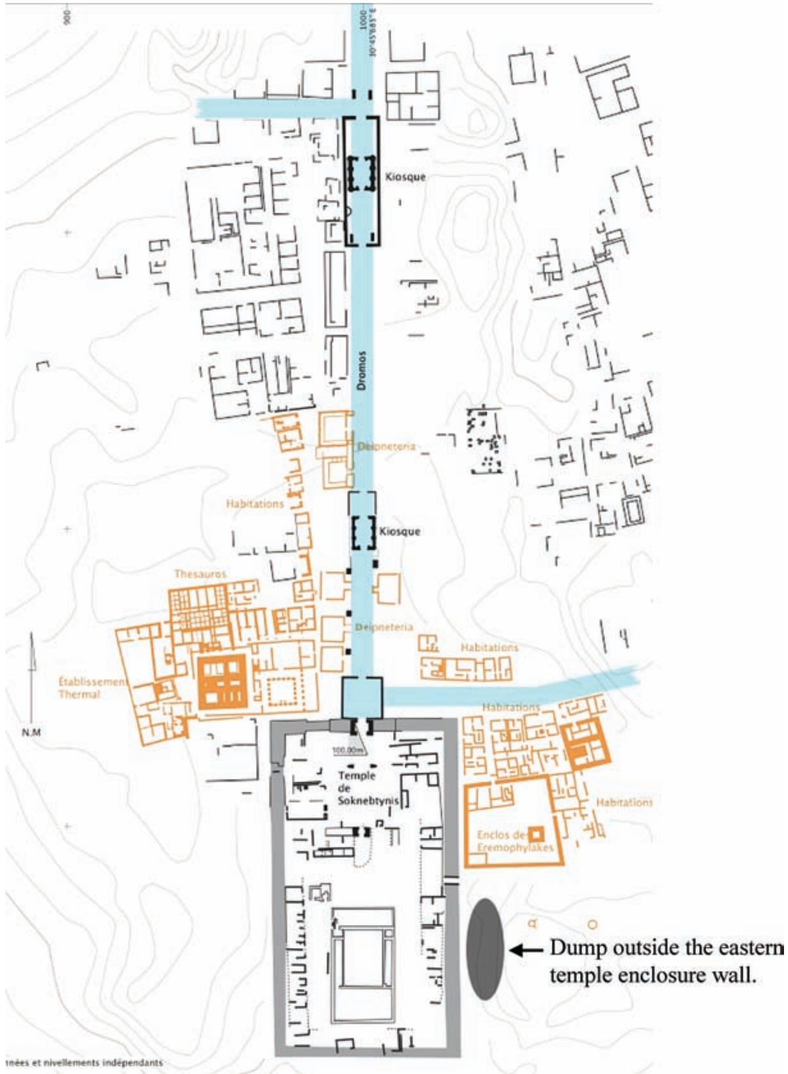


Fig. 10.1. General plan of the town of Tebtunis.
After Rondot 2004: plan 2; courtesy of Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

A number of reports on the papyri from the 1930s mention that the papyri were found in two small adjoining cellars within a building located on the inside of the enclosure wall on the east side of the temple (Anti 1931: 391; Vitelli and Norsa 1932: 51; Botti 1936: 217–19; cf. also Begg 1998: 189). The exact location of the building escaped identification until the publication in 2018 of recently discovered diary entries and a photograph among Anti's

Table 10.2. Building 32 measurements

Ground floor	Cellars
Outer dimensions: 3.3 × 6,8 m, 22.5 m² Inner dimensions –Outer room: 2.3 × 2.8 m, 5.0 m² –Inner room: 2.3 × 3.2 m, 7.4 m² –Storage: 0.6 × 1.35 m, 0.8 m² Total area *c.*13.2 m²	Cellar F: 2.1 × 1.2 m, 2.5 m²; height 1.1 m Cellar G: 2.1 × 1.3 m, 2.75 m²; height 1.25 m Total area *c.*5.25 m²

papers; these reveal that the main source of the papyri was Cellars F and G in Building 32 (Gallazzi 2018; Fig. 10.2).[1] The cellars are unlikely to represent a location where scribal activities might have taken place. They are situated below the inner room of the building and have a height of only 1.25–1.30 m (Table 10.2). It would have been both inconvenient and uncomfortable to crawl down into the dark spaces, where a person cannot stand up, and in general scribal activities are likely to have taken place outside in the light. Accordingly, it seems apparent that we are dealing with a deposit of some kind.

The question remains whether this deposit was primary or secondary in nature; had the papyri been deliberately stored in this location when they were still in use or were they only deposited after they were no longer required? The total floor space of the two cellars, some 5.25 m², falls within the range attested by the monumental libraries at the temples of Edfu and Philae which is 2.75 m² and 7.25 m² respectively (Table 10.10). However, the nature of the papyri is significantly different in some respects. The monumental libraries seem to have been intended for the safe-keeping of master copies. The papyri from the deposit similarly include manuscripts that are likely to represent master copies, but there are also many examples of texts written on re-used papyrus, which would not have been brought into the temple proper, as well as incomplete texts that were likely the result of scribal training. The range of material is also much broader than that recorded in the catalogues from the monumental libraries (§10.6.5) and includes scientific as well as narrative literature. These circumstances, combined with the inconvenience of the location, suggest that the cellars were a secondary deposit.

The possibility that they might represent genizah-like deposits has been raised (Tait 1992: 306–7). This phenomenon is not otherwise attested in relation to ancient Egyptian documents and two critical points speak against this interpretation: numerous religious papyri were discarded in the rubbish

[1] The find-spot had earlier been identified with Building 36, Room A (Rondot (2004: 31) and Building 27A-B, Room B (Gallazzi and Hadji-Minaglou 2012: 72–3).

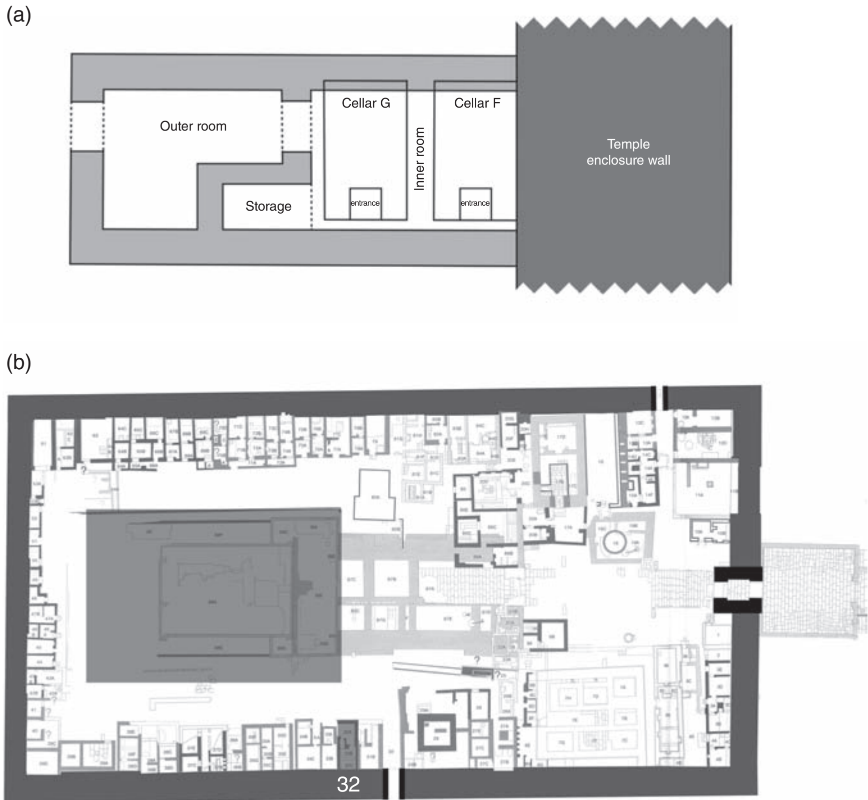


Fig. 10.2. (a) Schematic of Building 32, partially reconstructed, with indication of the two cellars in which the temple library deposit was discovered. Adapted from Gallazzi 2018: 142–3, figs 7 and 12. (b) The temple of Soknebtunis with the inner part of the temple and Building 32 marked with grey shading.

After Rondot 2004: plan 2; courtesy of Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

dumps outside the temple, which demonstrates that these texts were not viewed with sanctity as material objects, and the cellars also seem to have included Greek documentary texts and even blank papyri to which no sanctity could apply.

On the balance, it seems more probable that the papyri were deposited in the two cellars when the cult was discontinued. The seemingly organized deposition, in a building within the temple enclosure, may have been grounded in the hope that the temple might one day reopen—we know little about the circumstances of its closure—and so represent a form of safe-keeping, or it may have been done for magical reasons in the sense that their presence within the temple area might ensure the continuation of the cult in the same manner

as the monumental inscriptions and depictions of ritual acts and texts within the temples. The latest recorded date among the papyri from the cellars is 211 CE and no later texts pertaining to the cult of Soknebtunis are known. On the assumption the papyri were deposited when the temple was abandoned, this event will have taken place in the third century CE, and with time the whole area was buried deep beneath the desert sand.

10.2.1.3. The Nature of the Deposit

The deposit is estimated to have included some four hundred literary papyri. It is not currently possible to establish an exact number owing to their very poor state of preservation. The papyri have broken into literally thousands of mostly very small fragments which, because of the complex excavation history, are divided between more than a dozen collections in Egypt, Europe, and the United States. The preservation of full pages of text is exceptional, and the task of establishing what fragments belong together and identifying texts is still ongoing nearly ninety years after the final clearance.

The fragmentary state of the manuscripts, apart from their brittle condition, may well be the result of scavenging at the site of the temple after its abandonment. As in modern times, deserted buildings would inevitably have been searched for anything of value, and it is easy to envisage a situation where the cellars were entered and the fragile papyri were tossed aside and trampled underfoot. Whatever objects were stored in the cellars, such as the containers that might have held the papyri, may also have been brought out into the light for closer examination, leading to further damage and scattering of the papyri. Cellars will have been a particularly attractive target for such activity, inasmuch as caches of coins and other valuables are sometimes uncovered there during modern excavations, deliberately hidden away and later forgotten.[2]

The nature of the deposit has been subject to some discussion. In view of their contents, it seems evident that the bulk of the texts belonged to the temple and the individuals in charge of the cult, i.e. members of the priesthood, and in this respect it can be said to represent a temple library. This interpretation is supported by the homogeneity of the numerous papyri, which represent the largest single assemblage of literary texts ever found in Egypt and plainly was no random collection. Thus, for instance, there are multiple copies of a series of the most important texts in relation to the temple. Two examples are the Book of the Temple, a treatise on the ideal organization of the temple (Quack 2004; cf. further Quack 2007a with refs. and §10.6 below), of which

[2] As an example, three large amphorae discovered in a cellar at Bacchias contained more than 4400 coins deposited in the second century CE (Grenfell, Hunt, and Hogarth 1900: 65).

some twenty copies have been identified, and the guidelines for the Daily Ritual (Osing forthcoming), which is attested by some eighteen copies. Equally important is the fact that a large number of the texts were written by a limited group of scribes with distinct hands (Quack 2018; Ryholt 2018b). This is exactly what might be expected from a temple library that spans two centuries, in the course of which a number of scribes would have been involved in the copying of manuscripts.

A small number of Greek documentary texts and some blank sheets of papyrus are said to have been found among the Egyptian papyri (Vitelli and Norsa 1932: 52). The possible presence of texts unrelated to the temple has prompted the suggestion that the deposit might represent mixed wastepaper to be used as fuel, perhaps specifically for a nearby furnace for coin production (Gallazzi 2018: 146). Apart from the fact that papyrus hardly has sufficient energy content to melt metal, the nature of the association remains uncertain, since we have no proper description of the archaeological context and might be dealing with intrusive items. The papyri found in the cellars and elsewhere in the surrounding area were originally kept separate, according to where they were found, but this information seems to have been lost when they were removed from the containers used for their shipment.[3] As a consequence it is no longer known exactly which papyri derive from the cellars or elsewhere on the site. Equally important, a large number of the Egyptian texts were in fact inscribed on the back of discarded Greek documents (§10.5) and it is therefore clear that a supply of such documents was kept at hand.

The possibility that the assemblage represents deposited material carries important implications. Above all, it means that we do not necessarily have a complete or fully representative temple library at our disposal, but only those papyri it was decided to leave behind, such as papyri that would serve no purpose outside the temple or that were not felt important enough to retain for other reasons. It must also be taken into account that texts may have been deposited or stored in more than one location. We know from other temples that master copies of the most important texts, sometimes written on leather rolls, were kept hidden away and protected in special rooms (§§10.6.1, 10.6.2, 10.10). Since some compositions are preserved in numerous papyri, it is also worth considering whether some of them might represent personal copies belonging to individual priests that were privately kept before being collected and deposited. However this may be, the Tebtunis assemblage provides us with the most detailed insight into what an ancient Egyptian temple library might have contained towards the end of the Pharaonic culture.

[3] Thus, for instance, Botti (1936: 218) notes that Suitcase A, one of the three suitcases and eight tin boxes filled with papyri from the cellars, only contained papyri from Cellar F.

10.2.1.4. Contents of the Temple Library

The estimated four hundred papyrus manuscripts from the temple library deposit span a period of more than two centuries. The bulk of them date between the late first and late second century CE, and the average life-span of a papyrus in active use will hardly have exceeded a century. The individual manuscripts varied considerably in size, ranging from a few columns to exceptionally large compositions with a reconstructed length of more than a hundred columns. There have been several recent surveys of the texts (general description in Ryholt 2005; religious texts in von Lieven 2005 and Quack 2006; cf. further Quack and Ryholt 2019).[4] In brief, they may be divided into three main groups: (1) cultic texts, in particular manuals relating to rituals and compendia of important cultic and priestly knowledge; (2) scientific texts, above all manuals relating to divination (mostly astrology and dream interpretation) and medicine; and (3) historical narratives. The library also included a number of texts relating to the priestly training in the classical stage of the language, Middle Egyptian, and a limited amount of wisdom literature. As already mentioned, many compositions are preserved in multiple copies: not just texts relating to the cult, but also some of the scientific texts and historical narratives and one of the wisdom instructions.

The medical and divinatory manuals provide insight into the scope of the activities of the personnel of Egyptian temples at the time, and probably represent services that were also offered to the public for a fee. We learn from the Book of the Temple that divination and medicine belong to the second tier of priestly training which was restricted to the children of prophets (Quack 2002).

The presence of a substantial amount of narrative literature is more surprising, but the fact that it all concerns renowned historical individuals indicates that it may have been kept as some form of historical records (Ryholt 2004; 2009b). Especially well represented is a whole cycle of stories related to the clan of prince Inaros I of Athribis and the traumatic Assyrian invasion of Egypt (Ryholt 2004). Some of the better preserved Inaros stories can be seen to be particularly relevant in a temple context, inasmuch as they describe the disruption of the cults of Osiris and Amun who were worshiped nationwide (Ryholt 2012: 80–1). There are also stories about the legendary king Sesostris (Widmer 2002), the sage king Nechepsos (Ryholt 2011), and the most important sage of all, Imhotep (Ryholt 2009a). The latter—usually designated ‘Imhotep the Great, son of Ptah’—came to be regarded as the archetypal chief lector-priest. By the Graeco-Roman period his cult had spread

[4] The survey by El-Aguizy (2010) cites none of the more recent literature.

throughout Egypt and he was intimately associated with much temple literature (cf. e.g. §§10.6.1, 10.6.4, 10.6.5, 10.7).

No examples have been identified of manuals of temple decoration (such as the manual from Tanis, §10.5.2), or texts relating to kingship, such as king-lists, annals, or copies of contemporary royal decrees or inscriptions. This, however, does not necessary imply that the temple had no such material at its disposal, since we are apparently dealing with a collection of deposited material that may not be representative in all respects.

In addition to texts written in Egyptian, the library also included a number of Greek literary texts. The extent remains difficult to gauge because the Greek material have become disassociated from the Egyptian in modern times. They seem to have comprised mainly scientific works (astrology and medicine), but also included at least one copy of Homer (Ryholt 2013b).

10.2.1.5. Literary Papyri from the Rubbish Dump East of the Temple

In addition to the papyri from the temple library found in Building 32, fragments of around one hundred other literary papyri have been uncovered in the rubbish dump outside the eastern enclosure wall of the temple (surveys in Di Cerbo 2004: 118; Guermeur 2008; Guermeur 2015a; Ryholt 2018a; Fig. 10.1). The far more numerous documentary papyri from the dump mainly relate to the temple and its personnel, and most of them were presumably dumped from within the temple through its eastern side entrance. This circumstance also provides a possible origin and context for the literary texts, and it is therefore significant that they represent exactly the same categories as those found inside the temple and sometimes even preserve identical copies. Examples include fundamental texts such as the guidelines for the Daily Ritual and the Ritual of Opening the Mouth, as well as a morning hymn to be recited before the god. It seems an inescapable conclusion that most of the literary papyri once had belonged to the temple or its personel.

The bulk of the papyri from the dump are Ptolemaic in date and predominantly from the second century BCE. They are thus, on average, some 250–300 years older that those from the temple library deposit. In the case of the literary papyri, it seems safe to assume that the aged manuscripts were discarded when they became too damaged for practical use and new copies had been made and put into use in their place. Occasionally these manuscripts even preserve evidence of patching. It is by no means impossible that some of them may represent the originals from which the later copies preserved to us descended.

10.2.2. The 'Elephantine Temple Library' (Seventh–Third Century BCE)

Between 1906 and 1908 the *Deutsche Papyruskartell* conducted three campaigns of excavation on the Island of Elephantine, the first two led by Otto Rubensohn and the third by Friedrich Zucker. In the course of these excavations tens of thousands of papyrus fragments were found, the majority of which have still not been sorted and inventoried. An archaeological report was published in 1909 (Honroth, Rubensohn, and Zucker 1909) and more detailed excavation diaries have been published in a transcript by Wolfgang Müller (1980; 1982). The fragments, which are mostly very small or even mere scraps, are now in Berlin. Brief descriptions of the inventoried items are available in the form of a register from the collection (Burkard and Fischer-Elfert 1994; there is no specific section on Elephantine and the items are scattered throughout the list).

The majority of the Hieratic papyri date to the second half of the first millennium BCE. A large group of these is literary and their contents include hymns and rituals for Khnum, the main deity at Elephantine, scientific literature, such as medicine and divination, narrative literature, including mythology, and wisdom instructions. The scope of the texts falls within the same spectrum as attested at the Tebtunis temple library, and it has been suggested that they belonged to the library of the local temple of Khnum on the island (Burkard 1980: 96–8; Quack 2017). While it seems plain that many of the texts are associated with the temple and its priestly community, it is perhaps questionable to what extent they derive from a specific library rather than the possession of a number of priests. The Elephantine material poses the all too frequent challenge that the association between specific papyri and their archaeological context is often lost.[5] Fortunately, there are exceptions and these are crucial to the understanding of the complex situation. None of the text editions published to date (cf. Table 10.3) comments on the archaeological context of the individual texts, nor have any general surveys have yet been undertaken, but a preliminary investigation into the available evidence provides some idea of the situation at hand.

To take an example, a papyrus inscribed with the Teaching of Amenemhat and the Teaching of Khety and another inscribed with a commentary on the Ritual of Opening the Mouth have both been ascribed to the temple library (Quack 2017; Table 10.3, nos. 1 and 7). However, the former was found on

[5] The information is mostly lost in those cases where papyri were removed from their original tin boxes and placed under glass without making a record of whence they were taken. Much of the material is still kept in original boxes individually inscribed with the date of discovery, and the material therefore retains a high research potential in spite of its fragmentary state.

30 December 1906,[6] while the latter was only found some five weeks later, together with a magical papyrus, on 3 February 1907 (Burkard and Fischer-Elfert 1994: nos. 177, 220, 247). The second date is not directly covered by the diary and hence the context remains unknown, but owing to the speed and intensity of the excavation (i.e. the amount of physical matter displaced on a daily basis), it is clear that two cannot have shared the same archaeological context.

The description of the excavation provided by the diaries suggests that the vast number of papyri were found in rubbish. Likely confirmation of this impression is the discovery of religious papyri of a personal nature that would have had no place in a temple library. On 31 December 1906 fragments of a Book of the Dead (Burkard and Fischer-Elfert 1994: no. 219) were found at the northern excavation zone within a 'vaulted house' (cf. Müller 1980: 82) and three weeks later on 22 January 1907 a pair of amulets (Burkard 2006) for the protection of two children were found in a different part of the same zone, still tightly rolled and tied with a string (cf. Müller 1980: 85). Since there is no indication that either find-spot represents a tomb, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that these were discarded papyri. This would also explain why papyri found in the same locations sometimes cover a period of several centuries. Thus, for instance, the discoveries on 31 December 1906 included not just the above-mentioned Book of the Dead, which has been attributed to the 30th Dynasty, but also at least two further Hieratic papyri, one of which is a copy of the Book of the Temple dating to the Roman period (Burkard and Fischer-Elfert 1994: nos. 163, 234).[7] Moreover, the above-mentioned papyri inscribed with the two teachings have been dated to the Saïte Period and were found just the day before (Burkard and Fischer-Elfert 1994: no. 177).

In going through the excavation diaries there are two noteworthy exceptions where papyri seem to have been stored together deliberately. On 19 November 1907, a group of nine jars were found piled on top of each other against the wall of a room inside a larger building (Honroth, Rubensohn, and Zucker 1909: 50; cf. Müller 1982: 22–3; Fig. 10.3). We have no other information about the jars than a note to the effect that they were 'mostly very tall' which suggests that they had a large capacity. One jar was found intact and another three had cracked, while the remaining five were damaged, two of them nearly destroyed. The first four still preserved papyri. These were all badly

[6] The diary records for this day: 'Little was found in the southern excavation zone, a few bits of Demotic and Greek, entirely without value. In the northern excavation zone, a number of good Greek ostraca were found, and in a house a larger number of Demotic fragments, so once again a bad day' (translated from Müller 1980: 82). Rubensohn does not specifically mention the small Hieratic fragment, but this is immaterial since he often had difficulty distinguishing Hieratic and Demotic.

[7] I owe the identification of P. Berlin 23091 as a copy of the Book of the Temple to J. F. Quack.

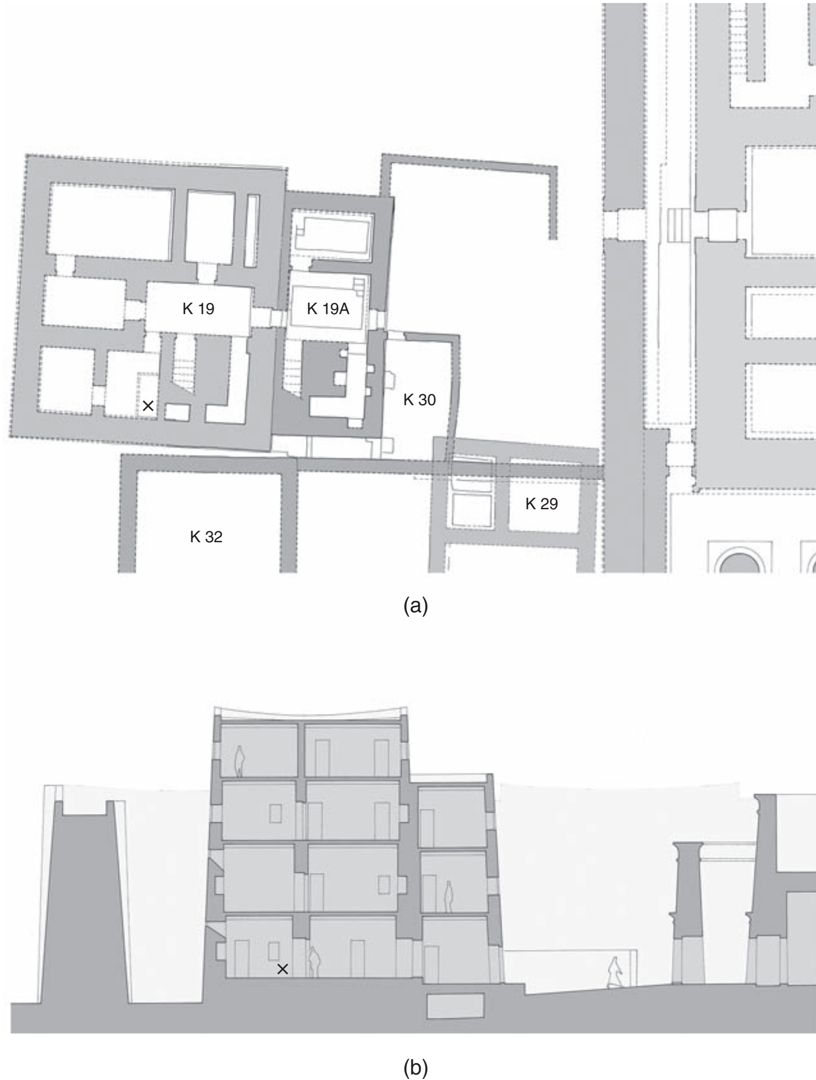


Fig. 10.3. Ground plan (a) and profile (b) of tower house K 19, next to the temple of Khnum at Elephantine, where several jars full of papyri were found *in situ*. The find spot is marked with a cross. The profile shows the temple on the right and the enclosure wall on the left of the tower house, which presumably stood taller than either of these structures.

Courtesy of Felix Arnold.

damaged because rodents had nested in the jars and evidently chewed up the papyri in the process. Because of the manner in which the jars were arranged, and because fragments were found to have spilled out from some of them, it seems plausible that all nine jars had originally contained

papyri. The script is described as Hieratic and several papyri had passages in red ink which is typical of literary texts. Significantly, some of the texts were written on the reverse of re-used Demotic documents, which suggests a later date than the bulk of the Hieratic papyri from Elephantine, and this is confirmed by the archaeological context.

The building in which the papyri were found (designated both 'House μ' and 'House K 19'; Arnold 2008) is significant for a number of reasons. It was located next to the western part of the temple enclosure wall and its thick walls and design reveal that it was a prominent multi-storied building, a so-called Tower House or *pyrgos*. It dates to the first half of the Ptolemaic period and the older buildings in the area were levelled by the time of its construction so that it originally stood free of the mass of buildings that had earlier cluttered the vicinity. Its doorway faces the side entrance to the inner part of the temple at a distance of less than 15 m. Since this entrance gave direct access to the offering hall and the central part of the temple, where most of the fundamental rituals were carried out, the building may well have included the permanent storage of a temple library. The ground floor of the building originally measured about 12 × 13 m, or 156 m^2, and was later expanded toward the east ('K 19A'). The specific room in which the jars were stored measured *c.*2 × 3 m, or 6 m^2.

Another group of Hieratic papyri was discovered on 19 December 1907 in the middle excavation zone (Honroth, Rubensohn, and Zucker 1909: 44–5;

Table 10.3. Published literary papyri from the German excavations at Elephantine 1906–8. Nos. 1–12 have been assigned to the Saïte period and no. 13 to the early Ptolemaic period, while no. 14 cannot be precisely dated

	Text and papyrus inventory number	Primary publication
1	The Teaching of Khety and The Teaching of Amenemhat (P. Berlin 23045)	Quack 2003
2	The Contendings of Horus and Seth (P. Berlin 23068)	Quack 2012b
3	Medical text (P. Berlin 10456)	Westendorf 1974
4	Dream interpretation (P. Berlin 29009)	Quack 2010
5	Astronomical text (P. Berlin 23050)	Unpublished; cf. Quack 2009b: 359
6	Hymn to Khnum (P. Berlin 23054)	Salis and Müller 2012
7	Invocations to Osiris; from royal protection ritual? (P. Berlin 23026)	Quack 2012a
8	Commentary on the Ritual of Opening the Mouth (P. Berlin 23070)	Quack 2017
9	List of minerals (P. Berlin 23055)	Quack 2009b
10	Amuletic text (P. Berlin 23030)	Burkard 2006
11	Amuletic text (P. Berlin 23031)	Burkard 2006
12	Amuletic text (P. Berlin 23051)	Burkard 2006
13	Complaint over the destruction of a temple (P. Berlin 23040)	Burkard 2003
14	Artistic manual; illustration on grid (P. Berlin 13558)	Erman 1909

cf. Müller 1982: 45). These were found at a depth of *c.*1.5 m inside what is described as one of a number of 'large brick-built containers' (*einer der großen gemauerten Behälter*). Many of the papyri again contained passages in red ink and some of them are said to have been 'stately'. The most impressive papyrus, as described by the excavator, was a partially preserved roll still wrapped in cloth for protection. He adds that although the papyri were badly decayed, it seemed clear that they had been deposited as rolls and had only disintegrated with time.

Summing up, it is evident that the literary papyri from Elephantine derive from different archaeological contexts. Those found in the above-mentioned jars and the brick-built container seem to represent contexts where smaller groups of documents were deliberately stored together and later, for some reason, abandoned. Regrettably, none of the papyri from these two archaeological contexts, which seem to be literary in nature, has yet been identified and studied. Most of the other literary fragments seem to derive from various rubbish heaps.

10.3. PRIVATE LIBRARIES

Literary texts that can be ascribed with certainty to the private libraries of specific individuals are few and far between for the millennium here under discussion. Admittedly, the vast majority of the papyri at our disposal lack a recorded archaeological context, but a survey of the known private archives indicates that most of them did not contain any literature.[8] This observation seems to be borne out by the fact that relatively few literary papyri are attested in general; the vast majority of the known literary papyri belong to a few large assemblages.[9]

If compelled to draw any conclusion from the limited evidence at hand, it may be ventured to speculate that literary texts in private possession would predominantly have been professional in nature and served a practical function. This is suggested by the two cases discussed below (§§10.3.2, 10.4.1). A third example is afforded by a priest named Satabus from Soknopaiou Nesos whose private archive included a single papyrus inscribed with a collection of hymns to the local gods (Schentuleit 2007). Incidentally it may be noted that this papyrus had earlier been in the possession by another individual, perhaps his predecessor in office, whose name Satabus had replaced with his own.

[8] A selection of archives are described in Depauw 1997: 154–9; Vandorpe et al. 2015. Many more can now be found through Trismegistos (http://www.trismegistos.org).

[9] I am here excluding mortuary papyri, which served a very specific purpose, and which would not have been kept in private archives.

This brings us to the question of the phenomenon of distributed libraries (Robson and Stevens §8.4.4). Texts relevant or even essential to an institution may not always have been centrally stored, but might have been kept by various individuals professionally responsible for specific tasks within the institution. It cannot be taken for granted that there would always be a central all-inclusive library with copies of all relevant texts. Moreover, the possibility must be considered that texts associated with specific functions might have been handed from one incumbent to another. Under such circumstances it becomes difficult to determine whether material lacking a properly recorded or clear archaeological context belongs to a private or institutional library. The Brooklyn Library (§10.3.1) provides a good example of the problem.

Wisdom instructions and literary narratives in private ownership seems to have been less common than works of a professional nature, and it is not inconceivable that literature for the purposes of entertainment was mainly oral in nature. Such literature also seems to have played a limited role in scribal training (cf. survey in Ryholt 2010b: 434–6). Wisdom instructions for their part might be viewed as practical in nature, but they were scarcely professional. Some examples of instructions and narrative literature in private ownership are afforded by the Akhmim tomb libraries (§10.4.2) and the archive of Ptolemaios and Apollonios (§10.3.2).

10.3.1. The Brooklyn Library (Seventh–Sixth Century BCE)

The 'Brooklyn Library' consists of an important group of large and relatively well-preserved papyri from the Saïte Period. The papyri were donated to the Brooklyn Museum in 1947 by the family of C. E. Wilbour along with 'several hundred small boxes and envelopes containing approximately 100,000 fragments acquired at the same time as the rolls' (Sauneron 1966–7; 1968–9; Jasnow 1992: 1). While most of the papyri have now been edited, no survey of the whole group has yet been undertaken.

The material consists of at least a dozen papyri. The individual papyri were earlier loosely dated between the tenth and the fourth century BCE, but it has since been argued that the entire group falls within a period spanning roughly one century from the mid-seventh to the mid-sixth century BCE (Verhoeven 2001: 19, 29–60, 304–28). The Saïte Oracle Papyrus (Table 10.4, no. 1) preserves the only explicit date, 651 BCE, which falls in the reign of Psammetichus I (664–610 BCE). The name Psammetichus also occurs repeatedly in a ritual for the protection of pharaoh, which must date to the reign of the king in question, presumably Psammetichus I (Table 10.4, no. 3). Apart from the date of papyri, the group has so many features in common (content, high-quality papyrus, use of *rubra*, no patches) that it has long been supposed that the papyri belong together; hence their common designation as a library.

The papyri belong to the large collection of Egyptian antiquities formed by C. E. Wilbour during his travels in Egypt between 1880 and 1896. This provides an indication of when they were discovered, but they lack a recorded archaeological context and it has been a matter of conjecture where in Egypt they were acquired. It has generally been supposed that they had a northern origin, more specifically Heliopolis (Sauneron 1970: viii–ix; Goyon 1972: 13–16; Meeks 2006: 1; cf. also Burkard 1980: 98–9), although Elephantine in the south has also been suggested (Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 230, 361; O'Rourke 2015: 17). The significance of the Saïte Oracle Papyrus described below seems to have been overlooked in this relation: this papyrus was certainly written at Thebes and this indicates that the group rather comes from Western Thebes where numerous other well-preserved papyri have been discovered, above all among the tombs.

It is even possible that we can trace some details about the acquisition of the papyri. In one of his travel letters from Egypt, dated 22 January 1886 (Capart 1936: 351), Wilbour mentions that he acquired in Luxor the day before 'a mess of costly papyrus'.[10] This would be a fitting description of the rolls and the mass of broken-away fragments that represent the Brooklyn Library. It is the only large-scale acquisition of papyri recorded in his letters, and it is significant that the papyri are said to be 'costly', since Wilbour normally refrained from acquiring expensive papyri. Moreover, Wilbour provides a brief description of one of the papyri, and this was evidently a particularly well-preserved roll: 'Of one piece I have great hopes when it shall be unrolled in Paris by Penelli. It lacks the beginning but from the glimpse I took at the risk of tearing it, I believe it to be a tale. I dare not speak of it to anybody until it shall be unrolled.'[11] His description would match several of the papyri here under discussion, including a cult-topographical manual which was one of the largest rolls. It should also be stressed that apart from the Brooklyn Library, there are

[10] Wilbour mentions in his letter that he acquired papyri on that day from both Abd el-Megid and Mohammed Mohassib, two of the main dealers in Luxor. The shorthand entry in his diary (kept at the Brooklyn Museum, Wilbour Archival Collection, Notebooks, 2G, p. 39; scans were kindly provided by Ed Bleiberg and Angie Park) indicates that the group of papyri in question was acquired specifically from Mohassib. It seems appropriate here to mention the fact that larger groups of papyri were very often split up by the original discoverers, or subsequently by the dealers (cf. §§10.2.1, 10.4.1, 10.4.2, as well as examples discussed by Parkinson §3.6.2.1, and Hagen §§7.2.2, 7.2.3, 7.5.1, 7.5.2, 7.5.3, 7.5.5). Accordingly, there is some likelihood that further parts of the same original group of papyri may lie lurking in some collection. One possible candidate is Papyrus British Museum EA 10474, which shares a number of characteristics with the Brooklyn papyri: it can be dated around the reign of Psammetichus I (Verhoeven 2001: 290–303), it was acquired in 1888, it is well-preserved, and it is inscribed with texts of a similar nature, viz. the Teaching of Amenemope on the front and the Calendar of Lucky and Unlucky Days on its back.

[11] Enrico Penelli, a restorer at the Louvre Museum, is described by the German Egyptologist August Eisenlohr (1875: 41 n. 1) as 'der bekannte Künstler im Papyrusaufrollen'. He is also reputed to have forged Egyptian antiquities with his brother Piero Penelli.

few papyri from his collection that may be described as rolls, except the great Wilbour Papyrus (Gardiner 1941–52) and perhaps the so-called Late Middle Kingdom Papyrus (Hayes 1955), both administrative texts that could hardly be mistaken for a narrative. Nor are there any other texts that might easily have been mistaken for a tale. In other words, it is only within the Brooklyn Library that we find substantial papyri that include long narrative passages.

The oldest papyrus in the group seems to be so-called Saïte Oracle Papyrus (Table 10.4, no. 1). It is an exceptionally elaborate personal document which affirms the installation of a certain individual in a priestly office at Thebes through the oracle of Amun at Karnak and in the presence of fifty prominent witnesses. It is dated to the reign of Psammetichus I, more specifically 4 October 651 BCE. What is so remarkable about the papyrus is a combination of two circumstances. First, it begins with a large and beautiful colour illustration of the installation of the owner in front of the god Amun and some of the most prominent witnesses. This was drawn on a sheet of papyrus about 120 cm long that had clearly been prepared independently by an expert craftsman. Vignettes are very rare in non-literary papyri, and an illustration of this size is quite exceptional. Second, the papyrus contains the statements and signatures of fifty witnesses, which is quite extraordinary. At least forty of them have the title of either 'Prophet' or 'God's Father'. The first witnesses to sign the document were two prophets who were both Scribe of Oracles of the House of Amun and hence administratively responsible for recording the procedure. First among the following witnesses is Monthemhet, who is described in the annals of King Esarhaddon as the (*de facto*) king of Thebes during the Assyrian invasion of Egypt. All in all, some fifty of the most important men in Thebes signed the very elaborate document, and there might be political circumstances at play which are not presently understood. Significantly the document does not appear to be unique. Some years ago, a small papyrus fragment with a painted vignette remarkably similar to that of the Saïte Oracle Papyrus was excavated at Qasr Ibrim in Nubia (Rose 2004: 34, fig. 4). It was discovered at a settlement from the 25th Dynasty, located next to a temple, and it seems to be almost contemporary in date with the Saïte Oracle Papyrus.

The remaining texts all belong to genres well attested at the Tebtunis temple library. The remains of a cult-topographical manual preserve mythological information about the Delta (Table 10.4, no. 2), while an intact and detailed ritual text describes step for step the prescribed route and actions of the king within an unidentified temple (no. 3). Most of the texts, however, concern magical and medical protection and healing (nos. 4–10), some of them for the benefit of the king within a specifically cultic context. The group also includes a single wisdom instruction (no. 11), but apparently no narrative literature nor any scientific texts. The emphasis on protection and healing may provide a tentative clue as to the identity of the owner of the papyri.

Table 10.4. The 'Brooklyn Library' (list of the published or cited papyri)

No.	Papyrus
1	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.3 (= Saïte Oracle Papyrus)** Document affirming the installation of a priest through an oracle with fifty witnesses. Measurements: 29.0^{+} cm tall, est. 564 cm long (vignette 120 cm, main text 444 cm). Primary publication: Parker (1962).
2	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.84** Cult-topographical manual, 17 columns preserved. Measurements: 16.5 cm tall, 426^{+} cm long. Beginning and end of roll damaged. Primary publication: Meeks (2006).
3	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.50** Confirmation of royal power, 20 columns preserved. Measurements: 24 cm tall, 194 cm long. Intact document. Primary publication: Goyon (1972; 1974).
4	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.49** Book of royal protection, 14 columns preserved. Measurements: 21^{+} cm tall, 221^{+} cm long. Beginning of roll and margins damaged. Primary publication: O'Rourke (2015).
5	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.87** Book of royal protection. Numerous small fragments from the bottom of a roll. Unpublished; cf. O'Rourke (2015: 25, 30, 34).
6	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.156** Magical protection by the Seven- and Nine-Headed Bes, 6 columns and 2 vignettes. Measurements: 12.5 cm tall, 214^{+} cm long. The beginning is damaged. Size: Six columns of text and two vignettes. Primary publication: Sauneron (1970).
7	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.2** Medico-magical treatise for the protection of the expectant mother, 8 columns preserved. Measurements: 24.0^{+} cm tall, 243^{+} cm long. Unpublished; cf. Sauneron (1966–7: 100–1), Guermeur (2012; 2013; 2015b; 2015–16; 2016).
8	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.75+86** Medical text on front dealing with ailments of the back and anus. Numerous fragments, both smaller and larger. Text in different and bolder hand on reverse. Unpublished; cf. Sauneron (1968–9: 109); O'Rourke (2015: 25).
9	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.138** Compendium of magical formulas against reptiles, 16 columns preserved. Measurements: 22.5^{+} cm tall. Beginning of roll lost. A few jottings on reverse. Primary publication: Goyon (2014).
10	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.48+85** Manual on snakes and snake-bites, 6 columns preserved. Measurements: 27 cm tall, 175^{+} cm long. Beginning and end of roll damaged. Primary publication: Sauneron (1989).
11	**P. Brooklyn 47.218.135** Wisdom instruction (the 'Brooklyn Wisdom text'). Six columns. Measurements: 20^{+} cm tall, 132.5^{+} cm long. Beginning and end of roll / margins damaged. Primary publication: Jasnow (1992).

All the published papyri have in common the fact that they were written by well-trained hands on fresh papyrus, and that none of them bear evidence of later re-use for other purposes. Apart from the Saïte Oracle Papyrus, which is a documentary text, all the published texts use red ink for *rubra*. The published texts are written in several different hands, but this does not exclude private ownership, since the practitioner may not have copied out the texts personally (for another example, cf. §10.4.1). While the attribution of the texts to private ownership is admittedly tentative, it would explain both the presence of the private legal document and the limited scope of literary texts, which points to a specialized practitioner.

10.3.2. The Archive of Ptolemaios and Apollonios (Second Century BCE)

One of the most fascinating archives to survive from ancient Egypt are the papers of the recluse (*katochos*) Ptolemaios son of Glaukias and his younger brother Apollonios dating to the second century BCE. The brothers lived in the Serapeum at Memphis and seem to have had a special interest in dream-interpretation and philosophy to judge from the contents of their papers. About 125 papyri have been attributed to this archive, the majority Greek but also including some Demotic material. The archive has been subject to numerous studies (most recently Legras 2011 and Thompson 2012: 197–246; cf. also Ray 2002: 130–47; Agut-Labordère 2011a: 65–72; 2011b). It has not least received attention because of the dramatic and highly emotional personal history it recounts. Ptolemaios took under his protection a couple of young Egyptian twin girls named Taues and Taous, who had suffered a tragic destiny. Their mother had an affair with a soldier and the adulterous couple attempted to kill the girls' father, who fled south and died away from his home. The sisters were subsequently evicted by the mother who sold their home. This, however, was not the end of their ordeal, despite Ptolemaios' efforts to help them. A dramatization of the life of the twins forms the subject of an episode entitled *The Twins* in the TV-series *Ancient Egyptians* from 2003.

As regards the literary papyri from the archive, suffice it to say that they include at least three Demotic wisdom instructions, while the Greek texts include a partial translation of the Prophecy of Petesis (also known as Nectanebo's Dream), the beginning of Euripides' *Telephos*, and an illustrated astronomical study. The Demotic texts were all re-used for Greek accounts, and the extent to which the family had an interest in their original contents at any point remains debatable, but the younger brother Apollonios apparently knew how to write Demotic. The archive presents a good example of a private assemblage of papyri that included a few literary texts among a far greater number

of documentary records and it also illustrates some of the problems faced by the scholar.

It may be noted in this connection that the scant literary content is typical of the surviving Greek archives. Like the Egyptian archives, most of them include no literary texts at all. Even the famous archive of Zenon from Philadelphia (mid-third century BCE), who was the minister of finance (*dioiketes*) in the reign of Ptolemy II, included hardly any texts that may be classified as literary (Pestman 1981: 189). More than 1800 papyri have been ascribed to this archive. Other examples of Greek archives that included literary texts—but again in very modest amounts—are those of the family of the cavalry officer Dryton from Pathyris from the second century BCE (Esposito 2005), and the tax collector Socrates from Karanis from the second century CE (van Minnen 1994: 243–4). While it is not inconceivable that literary texts might have been kept apart from business papers or private legal documents, the fact that such texts were sometimes found together suggests there was by no means always a clear distinction.

10.4. TOMB LIBRARIES

The term 'tomb library' seems first to have been used by Wilhelm Spiegelberg (1916: 71 n. 5) in reference to the papyri from the tomb of Phibis at Akhmim (§10.4.2), and has slowly gained general use. It has been objected that papyri deposited in tombs are to be regarded as burial goods, and that the term is therefore inappropriate (Burkard 1980: 81, 92). This argument is not entirely compelling, since the very purpose of their presence was that they might to be used by—or on behalf of—the deceased, and the texts would thus continue to serve a very real and practical purpose in the afterlife.

Tomb libraries are attested at least since the early second millennium (e.g. Parkinson §3.6.1). They are usually very modest in size with less than a handful of papyri. Most papyri found in tombs are mortuary in nature, but occasionally other types of literature are encountered. The archaeological context of the vast majority of papyri remains unrecorded, but many of the large well-preserved rolls that have evidently been shielded against the environment are likely to have been found in tombs. This includes well-known texts, such as the two rolls inscribed with the stories of Khamwase and Naneferkaptah and Khamwase and Siosiris (Ritner in Simpson 2003: 453–89).

10.4.1. The Sminis Tomb Library (Late Fourth Century BCE)

A good example of a tomb library consisting of several funerary papyri is that of Sminis, whose parents were named Petemestus and 'Ithorôs also called

Table 10.5. Tomb library of Sminis son of Petemestus and Ithorôs called Sentaës

1	**P. Detroit Institute of Arts 1988.10** Text: Book of the Dead. Measurements: 35 cm tall, more than 1100 cm long. Size: information not available. Unpublished; cf. Peck (2000) with references.
2	**P. BM EA 10188 (= Papyrus Bremner-Rhind)** Texts: (1) The Stanzas of the Festival of the Two Kites. Texts: (2) The Ritual of Bringing in Sokar. Texts: (3) The Book of Overthrowing Apophis. Texts: (4) The Names of Apophis Which Shall Not Be. Measurements: 24 cm tall, 512 cm long. Size: 33 columns of writing with the last two at the very end of the reverse. Primary publication: Budge (1910); Faulkner (1933; 1936; 1937a; 1937b; 1938); cf. Smith (2009: 96–123) with refs.
3	**P. BM EA 10208** Text: The Ceremony of Glorifying Osiris in the God's Domain. Measurements: 35 cm tall, 145^{+} cm long (with half of the first column lost). Size: 5 columns of writing. NB: A palimpsest, the Hieratic text is written over an earlier Demotic contract. Primary publication: Haikal (1970–2).
4	**P. BM EA 10209** Text: Extract from the Ritual Book of The Feast of the Valley. Measurements: 35–36.5 cm tall, 112 cm long. Size: 5 columns of writing. NB: A palimpsest, the Hieratic text is written over an earlier Demotic contract. Primary publication: Haikal (1970–2); cf. Assmann (2008: 499–544); Smith (2009: 178–92) with refs.

Sentaës'. Sminis lived at the end of the fourth century BCE and served as a priest for various deities in the Karnak temple precinct at Thebes as well as the town of Hutsekhem to the north. Details about his date and career emerge from an exceptionally long colophon—thirty-nine lines!—inscribed in one of his papyri, which is dated to 305 BCE. To date, four Hieratic funerary papyri inscribed with his name are known (cf. Smith 2009: 96–7; Table 10.5).

We have no recorded details about the provenance of these papyri, but they are likely to have been discovered in the tomb of Sminis, especially since one of them contains an instruction to the effect that it should be placed within his mummy wrappings. Sminis was presumably interred somewhere in Thebes, which was the main location of his professional duties. It may also be significant that at least three of the papyri—those in the British Museum—were previously in the possession of Alexander Henry Rhind (1833–63), who is known to have excavated and acquired a series of papyri at Thebes.[12]

[12] The Sminis papyri are, unfortunately, not mentioned in the account of his excavations (Rhind 1862). According to Budge (1910: xiii) the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus was given to

Leaving aside the Book of the Dead, the remaining texts represent temple rituals in favour of the god Osiris that have been secondarily adapted for private use for the benefit of the deceased (Assmann 2008: 15–35; Smith 2009: 61–5). Their purpose was to secure the continued existence of the deceased by restoring him to life and providing him with sustenance and protection. One of the fundamental questions in relation to the funerary papyri inscribed with Osirian rituals concerns access to and choice of specific texts. That the source for the texts belonging to Sminis should be located in Thebes seems clear enough. The Feast of the Valley was a specific Theban phenomenon, and the Book of Overthrowing Apophis in Papyrus Bremner-Rhind is said to be 'performed daily in the temple of Amun-Re . . . who dwells in Karnak' (Faulkner 1937b: 167). How the texts passed into his personal possession is a more complex question. Were they appropriated or copied from the writings used professionally by Sminis and his colleagues, perhaps kept in a temple library, or might there have existed workshops where copies were kept for the specific purpose of producing funerary papyri?

In the case of Papyrus Bremner-Rhind, which contains the above-mentioned colophon, it is evident that the main text and the colophon represent two distinct hands (Faulkner 1933: viii–ix). The main text is written in a clear hand and the scribe has carefully gone over it and made many corrections in order to ensure an accurate text. The colophon, by contrast, is written in a less neat hand. Assuming that Sminis inscribed the colophon himself (which is not necessarily the case), he might have appropriated the papyrus from the library of one of the institutions in which he served, or the text may have been copied out for him by a third party.

The latter is almost certainly the case with the papyrus inscribed with the offerings liturgies for The Feast of the Valley. This papyrus contains a short instruction, written in the Demotic script, just before the first column (Martin and Ryholt 2006; Smith 2009: 178, n. 4). It reads:

> Let a text be written for me (for inclusion) within the coffin of pine wood in which I will be placed. Let the papyrus roll be inserted within my mummy wrappings. Signed Sminis.

The instruction seems to imply that a blank papyrus was made available by Sminis and that it was to be inscribed with *any* appropriate funerary text and to be placed within his coffin at his funeral. The use of the first-person pronoun and the signature reveals that Sminis personally wrote the Demotic note. The note further implies that he did not himself copy the Hieratic text.

Alexander Rhind by the British Consul in Luxor, Mustafa Agha, and derived from the cache of royal mummies at Deir el-Bahri. The second part of this information cannot be correct. Little seems to be known about the previous whereabouts of the fourth papyrus, which is now in Detroit, except that it was acquired in 1988 on the New York art market (Peck 2000).

To whom he entrusted that task we cannot know, but evidently the papyrus was duly inscribed and given back to him. The text selected for the papyrus is described at the beginning of the first column as an 'Extract from the ritual book of the Feast of the Valley'. Although it is just five columns long, it represents the work of two scribes to judge from the handwriting; one wrote the first three columns and the other the final two (Quack 2000: 76).

A further indication that neither The Extract from the Ritual Book of the Feast of the Valley nor The Ceremony of Glorifying Osiris in the God's Domain were appropriated from an institution is the fact that they are palimpsests, i.e. they replace older texts. Both papyri were originally inscribed with personal contracts in the Demotic script. As it was customary, they consisted of a main text on the front and a list of witnesses on the reverse. These texts were subsequently washed out before the papyri were re-inscribed with the Osirian ritual texts. Whether or not the two contracts belonged to Sminis' personal archive, and whether or not he cleaned the papyri himself, it was certainly he who wrote the short Demotic instruction discussed above.

The colophon added to Papyrus Bremner-Rhind ends with a threat against those who might appropriate the manuscript. Hidden away within a rolled-up papyrus, the threat could only have been read by someone who would actually take the trouble to open the papyrus and study it. Moreover, the threat is specifically aimed at foreigners.

> As for any man of any foreign country, whether Nubia, Kush or Syria, who displaces this papyrus roll in order that he might remove it from my possession, their corpses will not be interred, they will not receive libations, nor son or daughter will attend upon them so as to pour out water for them, their names will not be remembered anywhere on earth, and they will not behold the rays of the solar disc. (Smith 2009: 123)

It is therefore more likely to concern the dissemination of the text than to represent a preventive measure against tomb robbery as such (although the original owner, A. H. Rhind, did die at the age of just thirty, soon after the acquisition of the papyri). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the text includes execration rites which would be potentially harmful, were they to fall into the wrong hands. A similar notion is found in a contemporary description of the House of Life, which also warns against revealing the protective spells in favour of Osiris, especially to foreigners (§10.8). This, in turn, could be taken to imply that texts such as these were not in the public domain and that they were not generally obtainable at funerary workshops. It is therefore a distinct possibility that the private use of the temple rituals in favour of Osiris were the prerogative of priests who had access to them in their professional capacity.

Even more complex is the question of what motivated the choice of one text over the other, not least since the instruction discussed above suggests that

Sminis did not have a specific text in mind to be inscribed on that particular papyrus. A closer analysis of the Sminis papyri in combination with other similar groups of funerary papyri from the Graeco-Roman period, including the often-neglected technical aspects of the documents (their 'materiality'), might shed some light on the issue of how the liturgical texts in question circulated, but that study has yet to be undertaken.

10.4.2. Akhmim Tomb Libraries (First Century BCE)

Around 1895, or perhaps a short time before that, a discovery was made of a group of well-preserved demotic literary papyri during illicit excavations in what must have been a vast cemetery in the region of Akhmim, ancient Panopolis (Agut-Labordère 2011a: 15–21). Owing to the circumstances of their discovery, we have no direct details about their archaeological context. However, in view of their remarkable preservation, and the fact that one of the papyri is a mortuary text, it seems relatively certain that they came from one or more tombs. These papyri represent another example of tomb libraries and the complex situation so often faced by the modern scholar in relation to papyri without a properly recorded context.

The papyri were sold in two groups, one consisting of the Insinger and Spiegelberg Papyri, the other of the Chasheshonqy and Horos Papyri (cf. Table 10.6).

The earliest documentation pertaining to the modern history of the collection concerns the Insinger Papyrus (Pleyte and Boeser 1899: 3; Giron 1908). It was first offered to the Louvre Museum and was sent to the Ministry of Education in Paris for evaluation. There it was examined by E. Revillout, who recommended the acquisition, judging the papyrus to be both intact and of importance. The offer was nonetheless rejected, since an exorbitant price of 25,000 francs was apparently demanded, and the papyrus was returned to Egypt. It was subsequently acquired for the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, in the spring of 1895, at the much-reduced price of 4000 francs through the Dutchman J. H. Insinger in whose honour it was subsequently named. The owner at this point in time was the French miller and consular agent at Akhmim, Auguste Frénay, who supplemented his income by dealing with antiquities and who had known Insinger for many years. It was presumably also Frénay who had attempted to sell the papyrus to the Louvre, since he had acted as an agent for this museum for several years and as a resident of Akhmim he may well have purchased the papyrus directly from its discoverers. While the papyrus was reportedly intact when it was first offered to the Louvre, this was no longer the case when it arrived in Leiden; by this time around nine columns were missing from the beginning of the long papyrus roll.

Table 10.6. Akhmim tomb libraries

1	**Insinger Papyrus**: The so-called *Insinger Wisdom Text*, belonging to Phibis son of *Ḏd-ḥr-pꜣ-ꜥꜥn* Measurements: 30 cm tall, an estimated *c.*770 cm long. Size: *c.*44 columns estimated; the main section preserves 35 columns / 613 cm. Primary publication: Pleyte and Boeser 1899; Holwerda 1905; Lexa 1926; fragments; cf. Agut-Labordère 2009 with references. Collections: Leiden (main section) with fragments in Cairo, Heidelberg, Paris, and Philadelphia.
2	**Spiegelberg Papyrus**: Narrative known as The Contest for the Benefice of Amun Measurements: 25 cm tall, an estimated *c.*550 cm long. Size: *c.*31 columns estimated; the main section preserves 18 columns and 317 cm. Primary publication: Spiegelberg 1910; fragments; cf. Hoffmann 1995; Agut-Labordère 2004–5; Ryholt 2014 with references. Collections: Strasbourg (main section) with fragments in Cairo, Copenhagen, Paris, and Philadelphia.
3	**Chasheshonqy Papyrus**: The Teaching of Chasheshonqy (aka Onch-Sheshonqy) Measurements: 21.5 cm tall, *c.*460 cm long. Size: 28 columns of writing. Primary publication: Glanville 1955. Collection: London (British Museum).
4	**Horos Papyrus**: Mortuary texts in honor of Horos son of Peteminis Measurements: 27 cm tall, *c.*180 cm long. Size: 12 columns of writing. Primary publication: Smith 1987a. Collection: London (British Museum).

The main section of the Spiegelberg Papyrus, another substantial roll, was acquired about ten years later in 1904 by Wilhelm Spiegelberg (Spiegelberg 1910). It was then in the hands of Ali Abd el-Haj, one of the main dealers in the Cairo region (Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 192–5). Spiegelberg, who was not himself in Egypt at the time, had been alerted to the papyrus by Otto Rubensohn and Ludwig Borchardt. The latter is said to have seen the papyrus before it had been entirely unrolled, and Spiegelberg states that he unrolled the papyrus personally. However, since both the inner and outer parts of this papyrus were missing at the time, and are now known to have been sold separately, it is clear that the papyrus had been re-rolled for the purpose of the sale. This larger section of the papyrus is now in Strasbourg (Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire).

As for the missing parts of the Insinger and Spiegelberg Papyri, several batches of them mixed together were sold to various parties and ended up in Cairo (National Library), Paris (Institut de France), and Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania Museum), while a few further fragments reached Copenhagen (Papyrus Carlsberg Collection) and Heidelberg (Institut für Papyrologie). The Parisian fragments were purchased through Seymour de

Ricci in 1905 (de Ricci 1905) and the Philadelphia fragments through Max Müller from another collector in 1910 (Abercrombie 1985: 12; Houser Wegner 1998), while details concerning the other acquisitions are so far lacking.

The mixed-up fragments from the outer parts of the two papyri are indicative of two circumstances. First, the unfortunate but inescapable habit of the dealers both to pry open the first columns of papyri themselves, and also to allow potential buyers to do so, in order to ascertain the nature of the papyrus in question. The vast majority of intact papyri were Books of the Dead and, unless finely illustrated, they were worth a lot less than a rare well-preserved literary or even documentary papyrus. The partial unrolling of papyri by non-experts often resulted in the other parts breaking apart. Second, and more important, it indicates that the two papyri had shared a common journey. The relationship of the two papyri is confirmed by the fact that they are written in an identical hand and perhaps by the same scribe.

As for the ancient owner of the papyri, the Insinger Papyrus was secondarily inscribed, in direct continuation of the wisdom instruction, with a short funerary text in honour of a certain Phibis son of *Ḏd-ḥr-pꜥ-ꜥꜥn*. It seems reasonable to assume that this was done on the occasion of his burial, and we may therefore assume that the two papyri derive from his tomb. Unfortunately, his identity is recorded without any titles, which would have provided an indication of his social status.

The last two papyri were purchased by E. A. Wallis Budge at Akhmim in January 1896. In his initial report on the acquisition from February 1896 he mentions only one papyrus (whereas in a fuller report from March 1896 he mentions two), and the possibility has been raised that the two papyri might have been found rolled up together (Smith 1994: 294–5). However, the fact that the upper and lower margins of the shorter wisdom papyrus (21 cm tall) have suffered much damage, while those of the taller mortuary papyrus (27 cm tall) are intact, indicates that this is not the case. The wisdom papyrus is also much longer than the mortuary papyrus and, if rolled up together, the outer parts of the latter would have had more than 2 m of the former rolled up around it. This is significant because the beginning of both papyri is damaged; the first columns of the Chasheshonqy Papyrus have broken apart (like those of the Insinger and Spiegelberg Papyri), while the protective sheet of the Horos Papyrus has broken off along the sheet-join and is now lost.

The Horos Papyrus is inscribed with mortuary texts in honour of a certain Horos son of Peteminis (Smith 1987b: 63 n. 15). As with the above-mentioned Phibis, no titles are recorded. The mummy case of a like-named individual without recorded titles, similarly from the region of Akhmim and acquired in 1897, is now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin; it presumably belongs to the same person and will accordingly have derived from the same tomb as the papyrus (Smith 1994: 300).

The handwriting of the two papyri acquired by Budge is very similar to that of the Insinger and Spiegelberg Papyri, and it clearly belongs to the same scribal tradition. The style of the hand can be attributed to the mid-first century BCE (Hoffmann 1995: 38–9). Whether the two London papyri were also found together is no longer possible to determine. However, the fact that we have literary papyri from at least two burials shows that the inclusion of literary papyri in burials at Akhmim was not an isolated phenomenon at this time.

It is noteworthy that at least two individuals were provided with wisdom instructions for the afterlife (cf. also Stadler 2003: 187–9). Significantly, it can be shown that neither of these papyri was produced just for inclusion in the burial. The Insinger Papyrus had been used to the extent that it was patched in antiquity (Worp 1982). The Chasheshonqy Papyrus similarly shows clear traces of use, since it has an additional protective sheet, cut from a previously used papyrus, added to the original one (Ryholt 2010a: 711). Whether the latter was also patched in antiquity cannot now be determined, since the papyrus has been glued onto a modern backing. It has been suggested that Akhmim might have been a centre for the composition or copying of wisdom literature (Smith 2002: 237–8), but the very scant surviving material and chances of preservation do not allow us to draw any firm conclusions.

A further point of note concerning this group from Akhmim is the fact that the two wisdom instructions and the narrative, which belongs to the cycle of Inaros Stories (cf. §10.2.1.4), are all well-attested at the temple of Tebtunis where several copies of each text have been identified (Insinger text: Volten 1940; Botti and Volten 1960; Chasheshonqy text: Ryholt 2000 and §10.2.1.5; Inaros text: Tait 2000). This is hardly a coincidence, but rather suggests that we are dealing with a priestly environment. This may be corroborated by the fact that most of the Books of the Dead from Akhmim pertain to priests attached to the temple of Min. Hence, while the Akhmim papyri derive from a different archaeological context than the papyri from Tebtunis, it seems likely that they belong to the same social context.

Among the Books of the Dead that can be ascribed to Akhmim, one group can be attributed to a distinct local tradition (Mosher 2001; 2002); these are all written in the Hieroglyphic script arranged in retrograde vertical columns, which seems to be a unique and characteristic trait of this tradition, and they display considerable textual corruption. Since these papyri are argued to date from the first century BCE, it is in principle possible that such funerary manuscripts may have been deposited in the same tombs as the Demotic papyri discussed here. However, it has so far not been possible to establish any positive links between the two groups of material, and the fact that at least some of these Books of the Dead were acquired prior to 1890 might suggest that they derive from another group of tombs.

10.5. DISCARDED LITERARY TEXTS AND LIBRARIES

When literary papyri no longer served a purpose, they might suffer different fates. The majority were simply thrown away and ended up in ancient rubbish dumps and debris. Others were retained or collected by third parties for different types of re-use or re-cycling. If the back of the papyrus was blank, it might be inscribed. This is the case with many of the texts from the Tebtunis temple library; some were written on the reverse of Greek tax accounts, others on the reverse of documents of private nature. The entire papyrus or sections of it could also be washed clean and re-inscribed. Some papyri were cut up and the smaller pieces could be used for shorter texts or even as patches when repaired damaged documents. The Tebtunis temple library also offers many examples of this practice (Ryholt 2018b: 175–7). Last but not least papyrus might be used as raw material. Numerous papyri were re-used for the production of mummies, mostly in the form of cartonnage and less often for their stuffing or wrapping.[13]

Three examples of different secondary contexts are provided in the following. These archaeological assemblages have in common that it cannot be taken for granted that papyri found together had necessarily shared the same origin, but sometimes careful analysis can bring valuable insights.

10.5.1. Papyri from the Rubbish Dumps of Saqqara

The sites of Saqqara and Tebtunis provide good examples of Egyptian literary papyri found in rubbish dumps associated with temples. In the case of Tebtunis, which has been described above (§10.2.1), it seems very likely that most of the literary texts discovered in the dump outside the temple enclosure had been discarded from the area inside and had belonged either to individual priests or to the temple library.

The situation is more complicated in relation to the large groups of papyri found in dumps and debris during the excavation of the Main Temple Enclosure at North Saqqara. This enclosure provided access to the three subterranean galleries in which the sacred baboons, hawks, and the mothers of the Apis bulls were buried (Smith, Davies, and Frazer 2006). During the excavations, some 762 Demotic and eighteen Hieratic papyrus fragments were brought to light in addition to much other material; this number has subsequently been slightly reduced by the effectuation of a number of joins between

[13] I am not aware of any groups of literary papyri that have been re-used for the wrapping or stuffing of mummies, but certain groups of mummies have produced remains of larger archives. Two examples are institutional in the sense that they pertain to a village scribe (Verhoogt 1998) and to a bilingual *grapheion* or record office (Muhs 2010).

fragments (Smith 1974; Smith, Davies, and Frazer 2006: 119–20). On the basis of preserved dates and the archaeological context, the material from the North Courtyard, roughly two-thirds of the total, has been assigned to the late fifth through the first half of the third centuries BCE (Martin 2013: 59–60). These papyri were found in 1966/7 by W. B. Emery, with the largest concentrations within the northern and western walls of the courtyard, among organic and domestic material and other rubbish. The remaining third were found by G. T. Martin at the Southern Dependencies of the temple enclosure (Sector 7) in 1971/2 and 1972/3. All the Hieratic texts are said to come from religious, funerary, and magical works. None of them have yet been published. Among the Demotic texts, the literary material represents about 10 per cent with some eighty papyrus fragments. Twenty-seven papyri, some consisting of joined fragments, have so far been edited (Smith and Tait 1983); these are nearly all narrative in nature, but they also include what seems to be a didactic text describing the Alphabetic Birds—each sound of the language was associated with a bird, probably as a mnemonic aid—in verses of alliteration. The extent to which any of the literary papyri may have shared a common origin with other papyri, such as a temple library or a private collection of papers, remains difficult to establish.

10.5.2. Waste Paper Library from Tanis

An example of discarded papyri collected for re-use is provided by one of the rarely documented discoveries of carbonized papyri in Egypt (detailed survey in Ryholt forthcoming b). The papyri were excavated by Petrie at Tanis in 1884 among the remains of a private house, known as House 35, that burnt down in the second century CE. They were found in six plaited baskets, kept in a niche under the stairway leading to the cellar of the house. Although the fire had entirely destroyed many of the papyri, which had been burnt to white ashes, others were preserved in a state of carbonization, and Petrie was able to rescue more than 150 chunks of smaller and larger rolls. They are now in Oxford (the Bodleian Library) and London (British Museum, British Library).

The papyri include Demotic, Hieratic, Hieroglyphic, and Greek texts. Although most of them are documentary, there are also a substantial number of literary texts. As one would expect at this late date, the hieroglyphic and hieratic texts all relate to cultic and priestly matters. They include a hymn to Amun-Re, ritual manuals, a cult-topographical treatise, an extensive manual on temple decoration, and a Hieroglyphic dictionary. The Demotic texts include several astrological manuals, some narratives, a mathematic manual, and a legal manual. There are also a few texts in Greek literary hands, including the *Iliad*. Only the cult-topographical treatise, the Hieroglyphic

manual (Griffith and Petrie 1889) and the *Iliad* fragments (Salomons 1996: 159) have yet been published.

There can hardly be doubt that the majority of the literary papyri from Tanis, and perhaps even the whole group, derives from a temple environment in view of their contents and the close similarity to those from Tebtunis (§10.2.1). Whether they might have formed part of a temple library or been in the possession of one or more individuals priest remains to be explored. Further study and publication of the texts may help to determine whether some of them might have been written by the same individuals or share other relevant features.

10.5.3. Cartonnage Library from Abusir el-Melek (First Century BCE)

During the Graeco-Roman period, it became common practice to produce cartonnage from papyrus, an early kind of *papier mâché*. The use of cartonnage is best attested as a cheap substitute for various elements of mummy casings, such as funerary masks (replacing wood) or the breast collars (replacing jewellery), and the practice is documented from the third century BCE through to the first century CE (Salmenkivi 2002: 9). Fortunately for modern researchers, it is usually an uncomplicated task to dissolve the ancient cartonnage and extract the papyri. A substantial number of papyri have thus been preserved in this recycled form at various cemeteries in arid zones around Egypt.

While the cartonnage itself helps to preserve embedded papyri, they all represent discarded documents and some of them were evidently already worn and tattered in ancient times. Moreover, most papyri were cut up before use, and it is not uncommon to find several pieces of a single manuscript within the same piece of cartonnage. At the same time, a single piece of cartonnage might include pieces from several papyri, sometimes spanning more than a century in date (Lippert 2008: 166–7). Naturally, any papyrus would be suitable for the production of cartonnage and hence most text genres are represented among those that have been extracted in modern times. The surviving texts display the expected proportion with a majority of documentary texts and fewer literary ones.

Perhaps the best example of what might be termed a ‘cartonnage library’ derives from the cemetery at Abusir el-Melek. In ancient times, the town was known as Busiris, like so many other cult centres of Osiris, but with the additional appellation ‘the Abydos of Lower Egypt’, which described it as a northern counterpart of the most important cult centre of this deity. The cartonnage was found during German excavations from 1902 to 1905

(Salmenkivi 2002). It includes a large number of Greek papyri from two major sources; the Heracleopolite nome, where Abusir el-Melek was located, and the royal city of Alexandria. The most famous document from the second group is a royal ordinance which preserves the signature 'make it so!', either in the hand of Cleopatra VII herself or a high-ranking official on her behalf (van Minnen 2000).

A third group of manuscripts, which have not previously been discussed as a distinct assemblage, consists of Egyptian literary texts (Table 10.7). These preserve fragments—some substantial, some smaller—of a ritual for the purification of pharaoh and a temple inventory in the Hieratic script, as well as two astronomical handbooks, a horoscope, a medical manual, a legal manual,

Table 10.7. Egyptian literary papyri from the Abusir el-Melek cartonnages

	Manuscript	Text
1	P. Berlin 13242	**Purification of pharaoh (Hieratic)** Primary publication: Schott (1957)
2	P. Berlin 10472A+14400	**Temple inventory (Hieratic)** Primary publication: Cauville (1995); cf. also Hoffmann (2012)
3	P. Berlin 13603+15506	**Narrative, including the so-called 'Memphite theology' (Demotic)** Primary publication: 13603 published by Erichsen and Schott (1954); 15506 unpublished (Zauzich 1996)
4	P. Berlin 13588	**Narrative about King Nechepsos (Demotic)** Primary publication: Erichsen (1956); cf. further Ryholt (2011)
5a	P. Berlin 13146+13147	**Astronomical text (Demotic)**—written on the front Primary publication: Neugebauer, Parker, and Zauzich (1981)
5b		**Astronomical text (Demotic)**—written on the back Primary publication: Parker and Zauzich (1981)
6	P. Berlin 13149	**Horoscope (Greek / Demotic)** Unpublished; cf. Salmenkivi (2002: 158)
7	P. Berlin 13589+13591 +23756a–c	**Dream interpretation (Demotic)** Unpublished: cf. Prada (2014: 64–92, IV–XXI; Prada forthcoming)
8	P. Berlin 13602+13602B	**Magic concerning control of women's sex life (Demotic)** Primary publication: von Lieven and Quack 2018
9a	P. Berlin 23757	**Legal manual (Demotic)**—written on the front Primary publication: Lippert (2004)
9b		**Literary letters (Demotic)**—written on the back Unpublished; cf. Lippert (2004: 18–19)
10	P. Berlin 11775	**Artistic manual; image of sphinx on a grid** (with Demotic numerals giving correct proportions) Primary publication: Borchardt (1918)

literary letters, and two narratives written in the Demotic script.[14] Based on the style of writing, most of the texts have been attributed to the first century BCE. Two exceptions are the legal manual and the temple inventory for which dates in the mid-third and fourth centuries BCE has been suggested (Cauville 1995: 38; Lippert 2004: 15–7). This seems to indicate that the papyri were somewhat older than the rest when they were discarded. Alternatively, in view of the very wide date-range originally supposed for the Brooklyn Library discussed above, it is possible the palaeographical dating also requires adjustment with respect to these papyri.

Texts such as the royal purification ritual and the temple inventory leave little doubt that they once belonged within a temple context. As described above, the purification ritual was performed every day all over Egypt on behalf of the officiating priests (§10.2). Accordingly, guidelines for the proper conduct of this ritual must have been present at every temple, and it is therefore not surprising that the present text finds a parallel within the Tebtunis temple library (Quack 2006: 4). The scientific texts, which relate to astrology and medicine, and the religious and historical narratives all similarly find a natural setting within a temple environment, as demonstrated by the Tebtunis temple library (§10.2.1) and the fact that the teaching of divination and medicine was restricted to the children of prophets (§10.2.1.4). As for the Nechepsos Story, this particular narrative is also preserved among the Tebtunis papyri (Ryholt 2011).

In view of the date, nature, and archaeological context of the Abusir el-Melek papyri discussed here, it seems likely that they shared a common origin, especially since literary texts are otherwise poorly represented in cartonnage. Whether they originated from a temple library or the personal possession of one or more individual priests is difficult to assess. As regards their origin, it is significant that the majority of the Greek documents found in this cartonnage derive from just two sources, the Heracleopolite nome and Alexandria. While it seems likely that the Egyptian papyri might have derived from a local Heracleopolite temple, Alexandria must be regarded as a rather less likely possibility. It has also been suggested that the Egyptian papyri could have derived from Memphis (Salmenkivi 2002: 38–9). It is regrettable that no colophons are preserved, since they might have provided clues to the ownership and the origin of the papyri.

[14] It cannot be excluded that the unpublished papyri from Abusir el-Melek may include further manuscripts belonging to this group, and the list presented here makes no claim to be complete.

10.6. MONUMENTAL TEMPLE LIBRARIES AND THE HOUSE OF THE BOOK

Monumental library architecture survives only in association with temples and is generally of relatively modest size. There are no examples of the grand and sumptuous architecture familiar to us from the libraries of Roman emperors and wealthy citizens which have been unearthed in the imperial capital as well as Athens, Ephesus, and Timgad (Casson 2001). The extant examples of monumental libraries in Egypt pertain to large-scale temples, where they form integrated structures and were designed for the storage of the literature central to the cult. Two such libraries are preserved intact at Edfu and Philae and can be identified through their inscriptions, as can the remains of a third library at Tod that was later partially dismantled. A few others can be tentatively identified through their physical position. The extant libraries are all located near to the offering hall and the sanctuary where the officiating priest would perform his main tasks.

It should be emphasized that these monumental buildings were not a form of scriptoria where everyday scribal activities took place. Such activities will have been carried out elsewhere. There would, moreover, certainly have existed other buildings where a wider range of texts might be stored, such as those discovered at Tebtunis (§10.2.1). For the most part, these will have been modest mud-brick structures, but occasionally they were more prominent, such as the Tower House at Elephantine (§10.2.2).

The monumental libraries at Philae and Edfu were both designated the 'House of the Book' (Egyptian *pr-mḏꜣt*). This designation is attested in relation to temple libraries in various other texts, such as those concerning Abydos discussed below (§10.6.2). Two further examples may be singled out. The first occurs in the story of Khamwase and Siosiris, where the magician Horus-son-of-the-Wolf is told in a dream:

> When the morning for the next day occurs, you should go into the House of the Book of the temple of Hermopolis. You will discover a locked and sealed chamber. Open it. You will discover a chest in the same chamber with a papyrus book in it, the one that I wrote with my own hand. Pick it up, take a copy of it, and set it down in its place again. Its name is the *Book of Magic*. It has protected me from the enemies, and it is what will protect Pharaoh and save him from the sorceries of the Kushites. (Ritner in Simpson 2003: 483)

Here we find the notion of the well-protected temple library. Although we are dealing with a story and the description undoubtedly is intended to create an idea of the importance of the magical book in question, the library at Edfu confirms the reality of such security measures. This library is not just located deep within the temple enclosure, behind several gates that would be shut and sealed, but even the room itself was once protected by a door that could be secured. The description of how the book should be treated is also noteworthy. It is to be

Fig. 10.4. The entrance to the temple library at the temple of Horus at Edfu.
Courtesy of the Horus Behedety Project of the Julius Maximilian University Würzburg, 2018.

taken up from the chest and copied, and then immediately returned. This too matches the inscriptions at Edfu, according to which the library contained chests with master versions of important texts. Copies would be made from these documents, but the originals would be preserved for posterity within the library.

The second example occurs in the so-called Book of the Temple, which was one of the most important temple texts in the Graeco-Roman period (§10.2.1.3). It claims to be a '[Copy of a text of] the Dual King Neferkasokar, which was found in an ancient decree in the House of the Book of the Dual King Cheops', and the introduction provides a detailed description of its alleged history of transmission (Quack 1999: 274; 2004: 12). It begins with an outline of the historical circumstances behind the royal decree, which concerns the (re-)organization of the Egyptian temples, and then relates that:

> This text was found in the temple of Atum, Lord of Heliopolis, when one sought for texts in the House of the Book in a ruined chamber(?), which was inscribed with the name of Neferkasokar. It was copied anew, in order to let it endure in the House of the Book, in the name of the Dual King Cheops by the skilled King's Son Hardjedef. (after Quack 1999: 274)

The pedigree is exceptionally elaborate: the text is claimed both to derive from a decree issued by Neferkasokar and to have been found in a House of the Book inscribed with his name. The king-list tradition affords Neferkasokar with a position in the late 2nd Dynasty, around 2700 BCE, nearly three millennia before most of the extant copies, but no king by this name is attested in contemporary sources and he may well be fictitious. The text is then said to have been re-discovered by prince Hardjedef, a renowned sage in literary tradition, and to have been deposited in another House of the Book associated with his father King Cheops (*c.*2589–2566 BCE). The House of the Book is once again portrayed both as a depository for arcane knowledge and as the primary vehicle for its transmission.

10.6.1. The Temple of Horus at Edfu

When the great temple of Horus at Edfu was cleared out in the 1860s by Auguste Mariette, one of the smaller yet spectacular structures brought to light was the library building (Fig. 10.4). Although it and its texts—especially its catalogue of writings—are frequently cited, the actual building has received very little attention, and still remains to be fully documented; only a schematic illustration of the building and a typeset copy of its inscriptions has yet been published (Chassinat 1928: 339–51; 1929b: pls 59, 82; translation Kurth 1994: 140–7). Lacking a detailed published description, an overview of the basic dimensions are provided here:[15]

[15] These measurements were kindly made on my behalf by Hratch Papazian during his work at Edfu in 2011.

The building was decorated in the reign of Ptolemy VIII (170–116 BCE) and is located on the eastern side of the outer hypostyle hall, just behind the great open court (Fig. 10.5). The façade is decorated with texts and reliefs directly related to its function. The room is designated 'The House of the Book' and the upper band of text states that the library was intended for the sacred books to

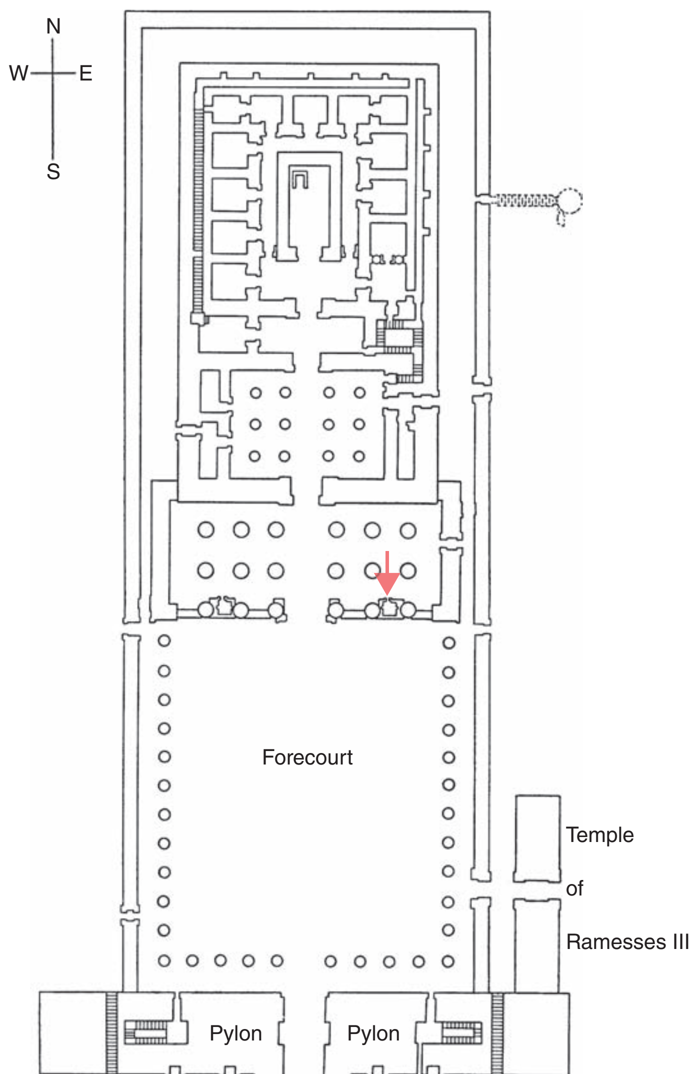


Fig. 10.5. Plan of the temple of Horus at Edfu; the arrow marks the location of the temple library.

After Porter/Moss 1939: 120.

be used by the Chief Lector-Priest and the Scribe of the Sacred Book on a daily basis. Engraved into the stone lintel above the doorway is the depiction of a large-scale scribal palette, which symbolizes the function of the room. On the right side of the doorway is a scene depicting the king before Re, while on the left 'the Chief Lector-Priest Imhotep the Great, son of Ptah' is depicted before Re in a symmetrical arrangement. The great sage Imhotep was the archetypal Chief Lector-Priest and his cult had spread throughout Egypt by the Graeco-Roman period (§10.2.1.4).

The small library room measures 1.67 × 1.72 m and covers barely 3 m^2 (Table 10.10) The inscriptions inside relate that Ptolemy VIII provided the temple with 'numerous book chests containing great books and rolls of pure leather'. It is noteworthy that the texts included in the royal gift were written on rolls of 'pure leather' rather than papyrus. This was evidently considered a more prestigious material and the phenomenon of using leather for master copies of texts is attested by other sources (§10.10). The description of the royal gift matches two symmetrically arranged scenes engraved on the rear wall of the library, across from the entrance, which depict the king before Horus with three book chests between them (Chassinat 1929b: pl. 82; Fig. 10.6).

The walls on the right and left upon entering the library each contain a niche for the shelving of papyrus rolls (Fig. 10.7a; Table 10.8). They are part of the same register of decoration that depicts the king and the book chests. It may seem an obvious assumption that their purpose would have been to facilitate easy access to the more commonly used texts relevant to the daily operation of the temple, but this is not necessarily the case. The depth of the niches (28.5 and 29 cm respectively) falls short of the standard height of 30.5 cm which is attested for the cultic papyri from the Tebtunis temple library and which corresponds to the measure of four palms designated 'sacred' (Egyptian *ḏsr*). Contemporary documentary papyri are also rarely shorter than 30 cm (Depauw 2002), and there seems no obvious reason to assume that an otherwise unattested smaller standard format should have existed in Ptolemaic Edfu. Hence, if stored directly inside the niches, the ends of the papyrus rolls would have protruded an inch or so, which would scarcely have facilitated their preservation. It seems more likely that the papyri were kept in chests

Table 10.8. Measurements of the library at the temple of Horus at Edfu

Doorway to library	Niche on right upon entering (west)
Width: 68.0 cm	Width: 35.5 cm
Height: 164.0 cm	Height: 36.5 cm
Thickness: 20.0 cm	Depth: 28.5 cm
Library room (inside measurements)	Niche on left upon entering (east)
Width: 167.0 cm	Width: 35.5 cm
Depth: 172.0 cm	Height: 36.0 cm
Height: 261.0 cm	Depth: 29.0 cm

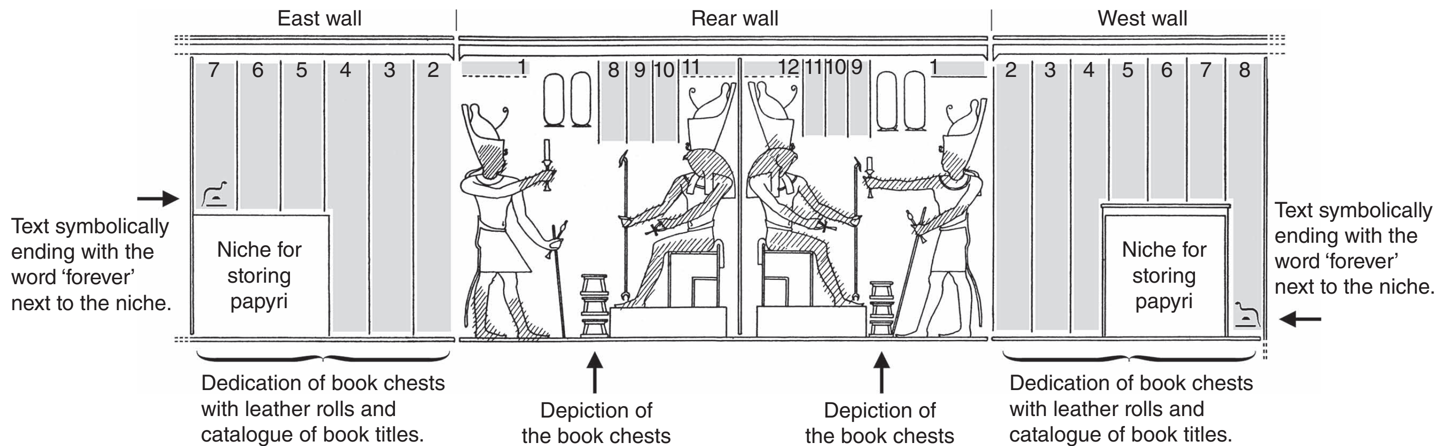


Fig. 10.6. Relief depicting Ptolemy VIII presenting book chests with leather rolls to the falcon-headed Horus of Edfu.
Adapted from Chassinat 1929: pl. 82.

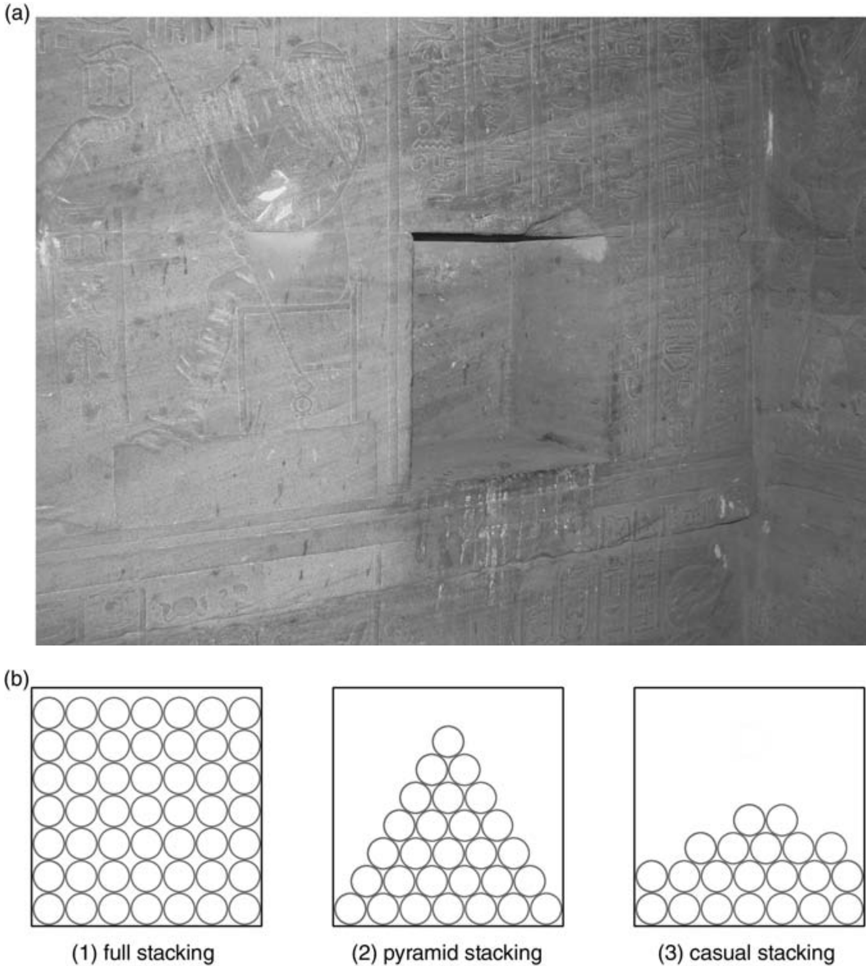


Fig. 10.7. (a) Niche for storing papyri on the east wall inside the temple library at the temple of Horus at Edfu. (b) Theoretical stacking of papyri with the Edfu library niches.

(a) Courtesy of Kim Ryholt, 2007. (b) Drawing by Kim Ryholt.

placed sideways in the niches. This would accommodate normal-sized rolls, since the niches are 35.5 cm wide. A similar conclusion may be reached in relation to the book niche at Tod (§10.6.4). While that niche is deep enough to accommodate standard-sized papyrus, its tall format—with a height that is two-thirds greater than the width—would seem impractical for the direct storage of papyrus rolls, and again be more suitable for chests.

As for the capacity of the niches, it is possible to arrive at some theoretical figures as to how many rolls they would accommodate (Fig. 10.7b). We will

assume that the rolls, whether papyrus or leather, had an average thickness of *c.*5 cm. The direct storing of rolls inside the niches would allow for the greatest capacity. Each niche could then contain seven rolls, side-by-side in a single layer. In principle, it would be possible to stack the papyri in seven layers and to cram in seven times seven rolls into both niches, i.e. a total of ninety-eight rolls, but this would be somewhat impractical. Alternative possibilities would be a pyramid-shaped or more casual stacking which would allow for perhaps twenty to thirty papyri within each niche. If by contrast the rolls were kept in book chests, which seems more likely, the capacity of the niches is further reduced. Each niche would be able to accommodate one large or two smaller chests. It would not be possible to place more than four papyri side by side in a single layer within such chests, and a single large chest could have at most five layers, while two smaller chests could not have had more than two layers each. A large chest could therefore have been filled with about twenty papyri or two smaller ones with eight each or sixteen in total. Hence if chests were used and filled to their maximum capacity, the two niches could hardly have held more than forty rolls.

A catalogue of books is inscribed next to each of the niches. The titles indicate that the books in question were cultic texts of a general nature (§10.6.5). Eleven titles are recorded next to the left niche, and another twenty next to the right one. The total of thirty-one titles could easily be accommodated within the niches, regardless of whether the rolls were stored in chests or not.[16] Assuming that the niches were in fact used for book chests, the possibility remains that they originally contained the chests donated by Ptolemy VIII, in which the more important documents or master copies would be carefully kept to be copied for perpetuity, and that their contents might have matched the catalogues inscribed on the walls next to them. This does not preclude the possibility that the library included many more manuscripts. Further papyrus rolls could have been stored on the floor of the room in other chests, or even in baskets or jars.

The monumental libraries built in imperishable stone and provided with book chests and costly leather editions of fundamental texts were more than mere repositories. It is explicitly stated that the purpose of the temple library at Edfu was to preserve the integrity of the temple and the daily cult for posterity. In one scene pharaoh is depicted offering a scribal palette and ink before Thoth, the god of wisdom, thus symbolically ensuring the perpetual maintenance of the texts. In practical terms, this amounts to an ongoing process of transferring texts from old worn manuscripts or from the master copies onto new fresh ones. This process is well-illustrated at Tebtunis by the many texts from the temple that are preserved in multiple copies (§10.2.1).

[16] Grimm (1988: 161) tallies forty-one titles, but this number is based on a partial misinterpretation of the text.

The captions that accompany the two scenes of the king presenting the book chests before Horus provide a description of the purpose of the library. The text on the left reads: 'I bring to you the (book) chests with the excellent secrets, being a selection of the Emanations of Re.' The 'Emanations of Re' is a designation for the sacred writings; variant and less common designations are 'Emanations of Horus-Re' or 'Emanations of the Gods'. Two texts that relate directly to the book catalogues, and which are graphically arranged around two sides of each book niche, provide further detail:

> Left niche: 'All inventories containing your secret image and all the secret (images) of your associated gods (lit. ennead), are inscribed from today in your temple, every day, each one (i.e. of the text copies) after the other, so that the Emanations of the Gods (i.e. the sacred writings) will endure before your place, without being distant from your temple, forever.'
>
> Right niche: 'All rituals of causing the procession of your majesty out of your temple during your festivals are inscribed anew in your place, every day, one (i.e. text copy) refreshing the other, so that the festival texts will remain and the rituals will be solid without cease in your house, forever.'

The two texts are symmetrically phrased, just as they are symmetrically placed on the walls, and both stress the fact that the texts should be continuously copied so that they will never be lost. The scribe cleverly ends both texts with the word 'forever', which is graphically positioned right next to the book niches and the papyri they would have contained, thus stressing the eternal nature and function of the library.

Another fundamental aspect of the library at Edfu is the fact that it is surrounded by protective texts and decoration (Derchain 1965: 58–61; Goyon 1985: 138–9; Cauville 1987: 133–4; Kurth 1992). The need for such extensive protection again serves to emphasize the fundamental importance of the library; it was not only essential continuously to copy and preserve the temple literature, in order to maintain the cult according to the correct procedures, but also to protect it from external influences. Cauville (1987: 133–4) has aptly described the library as 'une forteresse défensive, dépôt des rites de protection'. A particularly noteworthy dimension of the protective scheme is the fact that it brings the library into relation with the House of Life, two central aspects of which were the protection of Osiris and the execration of his enemies (§10.8). Within the temple library at Edfu, Horus-*imishenut* is depicted in the process of burning four enemy prisoners in a brazier. This particular form of Horus is known to have been associated with the House of Life since the Ramesside Period (Gardiner 1938: 164; further attested in Goyon 1972: 68–9, 105), and another scene inside the library depicts Osiris with the epithets 'the great god, the lord of Abydos, who initiated the House of Life in the work of its lord'.

Mention must also be made of a room that stands in an intimate relationship to the library, namely the so-called 'House of the Morning' (Eg. *pr-dwꜣt*). At the temple of Edfu, this room—in fact a small building of its own—was situated symmetrically across the library in the opposite half of the outer hypostyle hall (Kurth 1994: 136–40), while in most other temples, it seems to have been located right next to the library. Its function was vaguely similar to that of a church sacristy: more specifically, it was the toilet chamber where the king—in the daily operation deputized by the officiating priest—was prepared for his ceremonial duties through various rites and the furnishing of his ceremonial garments (Blackman 1918). The rites included purification and magical protection of the king, which were prescribed in manuals kept at the library. The library further included manuals that were fundamental to the daily ritual and other cultic activities. The proximity of the library and the toilet chamber was therefore a practical arrangement.

10.6.2. The Temple of Isis at Philae

The library in the Philae Temple, also designated the 'House of the Book', was located in the Second Court in the last of the small rooms behind the colonnade on the right side (Room IV; Fig. 10.8), adjacent to the 'House of the Morning' (Room III), and against the eastern part of the temple enclosure wall. The proximity of the two rooms and their designations match the situation in the temple of Edfu. However, the location is slightly different; also at Edfu the two border the forecourt, but access is gained through the outer hypostyle hall. The eastern colonnade of the Second Court was built by Ptolemy VIII (Minas 1997: 104–5). The decoration of the façade of the rooms was undertaken by Ptolemy XII (80–51 BCE), while the inside of the library was only decorated during the reign of Augustus. These circumstances are noteworthy, since they indicate that the interior decoration of the library was of lower priority in the overall scheme of the temple decoration. At the same time, it may be noted that none of the other rooms located here—including the House of the Morning—were decorated on the inside, and so the library seems to have had a higher status within this group.

The room measures approximately 2.2 × 3.3 m or 7.25 m² (Table 10.10). It contains a single niche, carved into the left wall, measuring 60 cm width, 68 cm height, and 68 cm depth.[17] Notches in the upper and lower front corners indicate that the niche was provided with a façade which might have included a pair of doors. Inside the niche, a pair horizontal grooves have been

[17] I am grateful to Holger Kockelmann providing me with these measurements in April 2013.

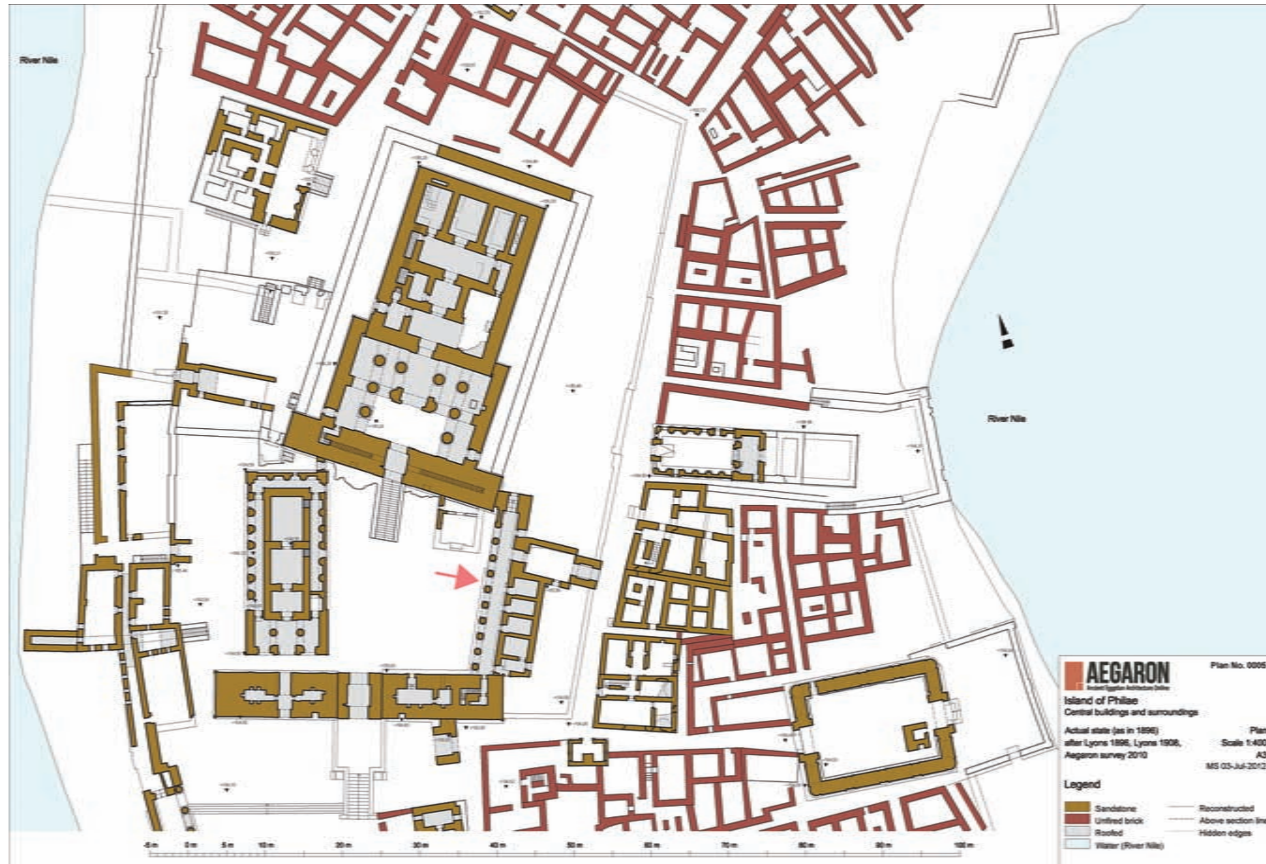


Fig. 10.8. Plan of the temple of Isis at Philae; the arrow marks the location of the temple library behind the colonnade.
Courtesy of Ancient Egyptian Architecture Online (Aegaron): Philae, Central Buildings and Surroundings, no. 0005.

cut into the side wall at a height of 43 cm; they are 28 cm long and extend from the rear wall. They may have supported a shelf, but it is not clear if they represent an original feature or a later addition. If papyri were stored directly within the niche, it might in principle have contained as much as 156 rolls (thirteen layers of twelve rolls), in contrast to ninety-eight rolls for the two niches at Edfu (§10.6.1). Yet as already mentioned, it seems more likely that these niches were used for the storage of book chests. Given its dimensions, the niche can hardly have accommodated more than two chests with, say, thirty-two rolls (four layers of eight rolls) each, while single large chest might allow for a few more rolls. If the above-mentioned pair of grooves do represent an original shelf, the room for one or two boxes would be somewhat smaller.

The texts and decoration of the library has only recently been published (Kockelmann and Winter 2016: xx–xxii, 136–48, pls 53–9; cf. also Hölbl 2004: 56–9 for colour images). Next to the niche, the goddess Maat presents a scribal palette to Thoth (the god of wisdom), who is followed by Tefnut (the daughter of the sun-god) and Seshat (the goddess of wisdom), thus equating the maintenance of the temple texts with the concept of *maat* or cosmic order. This image encapsulates the textual description of the function of these temple libraries, which was discussed above in relation to Edfu (§10.6.1). The actual process of continuous re-copying is further symbolized by the depiction below the niche of a baboon—the sacred animal of Thoth—writing with a pen upon papyrus. The text next to the baboon reads 'I inscribe the annals . . . '. No catalogue of books is associated with the niche.

The texts on the right and left jambs of the façade describe the purpose of the room. The right one commences with the words 'This is the House of the Book', while the left has a slight variation in the terminology 'This is the Place of the Book'. Concerning the library, the texts further state that:

> Every papyrus is there, which the entire House of Life encompasses in its entirety, and likewise the *Inventory of this Nome*, upon rolls of pure leather, and all royal decrees that come from Memphis.

The reference to the House of Life is significant. If the passage is taken literally, it implies that a relatively small building of just 7.25 m^2 would accommodate the entire book holding of this renowned institution. By contrast, the House of Life excavated at Tell el-Amarna comprises two adjoining buildings of *c.*225 m^2 and 120 m^2 respectively. But these buildings would presumably also have included materials necessary for the many activities of the institution, such as workshops and various forms of equipment, and not just papyri. Another question which can hardly be answered is whether the description here cited is concerned with the House of Life in general or perhaps a local House of Life, but this is perhaps of little consequence.

The emphasis on one particular text in the passage cited, the Inventory of this Nome, indicates that it held a special status. Its title and context imply

that it was a compendium of cult-topographical knowledge. At the temple of Edfu there is likewise reference to an Inventory of the Nome, in accordance with which certain divine images in the rooms surrounding the sanctuary were depicted (Chassinat 1929a: 5, 6; Baum 2007: 119). It may be a work of the same nature that is referred to as the Great Inventory of this Town at the temple of Dendera (Chassinat and Daumas 1965: 152; Schott 1990: 351). It is said to have been inscribed *in toto*—literally 'without adding or subtracting from it'—on a specific temple wall alongside the Great Foundation of Dendera (for which see §10.10). In two much earlier royal inscriptions, the kings are similarly said to have consulted a text referred to as the Great Inventory at the House of the Book in Abydos for the purpose of fashioning divine images (Parkinson §3.4.1). The earlier text dates to the reign of Neferhotep I, *c.*1740–1730 BCE (Pieper 1929: 8, 14; Helck 1983: 21–2), and the later to the reign of Ramesses IV, *c.*1153–1147 BCE (Kitchen 1979: 532, 1–2; 1996: 532). And when Cheops seeks information about the sanctuary of Thoth in the Tale of King Cheops' Court, preserved in a papyrus dating around 1600 BCE (Simpson 2003: 13–24), he is told that the information may be found in a chest kept in a room designated the Inventory in Heliopolis—a designation presumably derived from the name of the most important text preserved within. It would thus appear that the Inventory or Great Inventory was a generic designation of some form of fundamental cult-topographical treatises, containing information about gods and their sanctuaries and cults, and that such treatises had a history spanning at least a millennium and a half.

10.6.3. The Temples of Month at Medamud and Nekhbet at Elkab

On the basis of the architectural layout of the Philae temple, there is some probability that the libraries and toilet chambers at other temples may be identified. The temple of Month at Medamud has four rooms in the same position as those at Philae (Fig. 11a; Table 10.9a). Only the foundations are preserved; the walls and the decoration they may once have contained are entirely lost. Yet the close similarity suggests that Room XXII was the library and Room XXIII was the toilet chamber. The size of the hypothetical library is 2.5 × 4.2 m or 10.5 m² (cf. Bisson de la Roque 1927: 11, pl. 1; Table 10.10). The date is difficult to determine, but the architraves of the portico in front were decorated by Ptolemy VIII (Minas 1996: 59–60).

The temple of Nekhbet at Elkab also displays a similar arrangement to the examples discussed above, with three rooms positioned behind the colonnade on the right side of the Second Court and between the Second and Third Pylons (Fig. 11b; Table 10.9b). Again only the foundations are preserved, so the exact position of the doorway and the possible existence of inscriptions

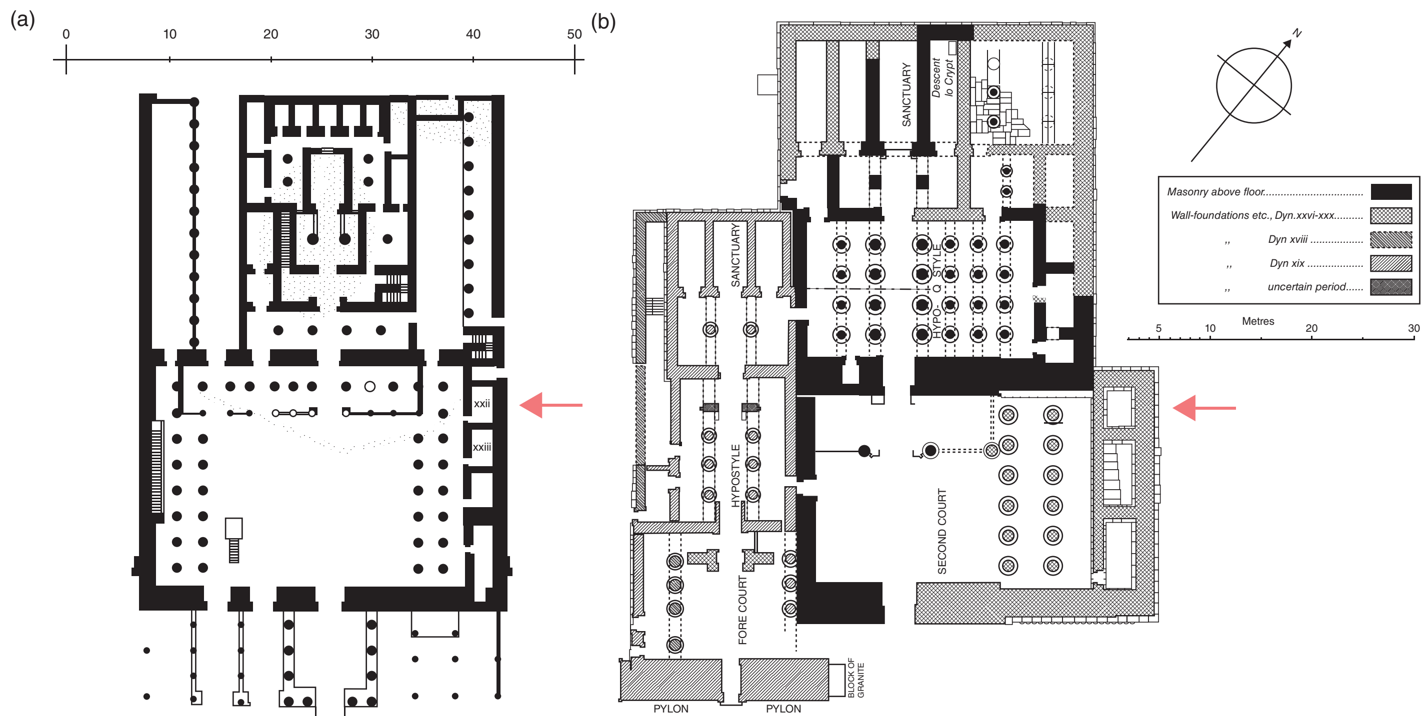


Fig. 10.9. (a) Inner part of the temple of Month at Medamud with the possible location of the temple library marked by the arrow. (b) Inner part of the temple of Nekhbet at el-Kab with the possible location of the temple library marked by the arrow.

(a) Adapted from Bisson de la Roque 1927: pl. 1. (b) Adapted from Clarke 1922: pl. 6.

and niches cannot be determined. Once more it may be proposed that the last room contained the library, and that the room before that was the toilet chamber, as at Philae. This proposed library room measures 2.8 × 3.8 or 10.5 m^2 (cf. Clarke 1922: 35, pl. 6; Table 10.10). The date of the second court, which is a later addition to the temple, remains uncertain. It may have been built in the reign of Nectanebo II, whose name has been found on blocks in the temple (cf. Porter and Moss 1937: 173).

10.6.4. The Temple of Month at Tod

The temple of Month at Tod also once included a library inside the temple and the fragments of seven blocks inscribed with an extensive catalogue of books (§10.6.5) survive. The catalogue was evidently intended as a permanent record of the most important texts relating to the local cult-specific festivals, and the extant fragments preserve some forty-seven titles (§10.6.5). The blocks belong to a wall from the Ptolemaic period, which was dismantled sometime after the temple had fallen out of use, and they were all found re-used in the near vicinity. The original location of the wall can be identified with some probability. In the reign of Ptolemy VIII a hypostyle and a second hall were added to the ancient temple, which had been built in the early Middle Kingdom. The inner wall of the second hall contains two niches, symmetrically arranged on either side of the entrance (Bisson de la Roque 1937: 33, pls 1, 3, 12; Thiers 2004: 556; Table 10.9; Fig. 10.10a). The arrangement is similar to the position of the House of the Book and the House of the Morning at the temple of Edfu (§10.6.1) and it seems likely that these niches represent more modest versions of those two structures.

Table 10.9. Measurements of the two niches at the temple of Month at Tod[18]

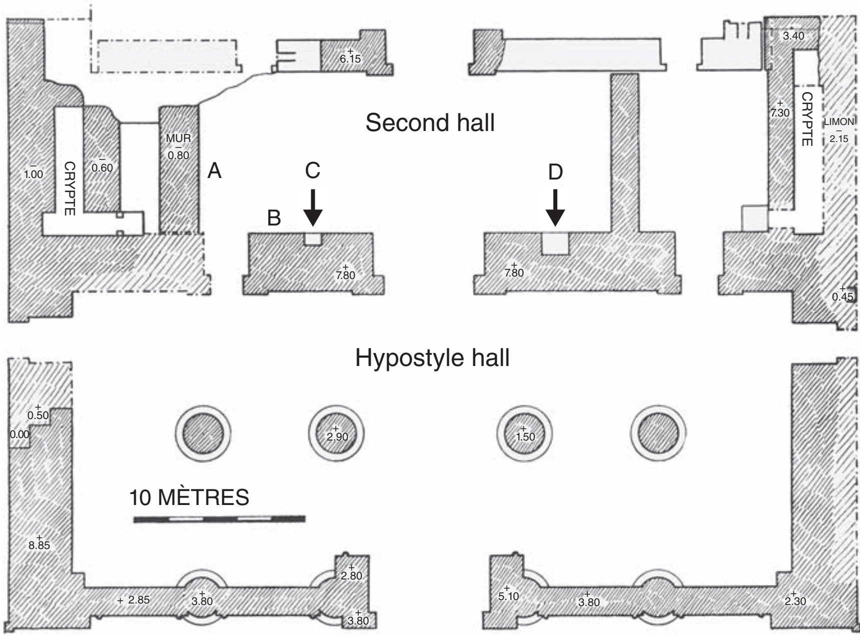
Southern niche (prob. cultic utensils)	**Northern niche** (prob. cultic books)
Width: 47.0 cm	Width: 36.5 cm
Height: 81.0 cm	Height: 60.5 cm
Depth: 60.0 cm	Depth: 36.5 cm

The southern niche (Thiers 2003b: 148; 2003a: 202–4) is exceptionally elaborate and seems to have had an inlaid façade, perhaps in metal or metal-plated wood. It was originally equipped with a door, and it is likely to have housed the valuable metal utensils used for the daily service. The northern niche (Wildung 1977: 241–4, pl. 62; Thiers 2003b: 153; 2003a: 113–15;

[18] I am very grateful to Christophe Thiers for taking these measurements on my behalf in May 2012.

(a)

A: probable original location of book catalogue.
B: depiction of Imhotep and Amenhotep son of Hapu.
C: northern niche. D: southern niche.



(b)

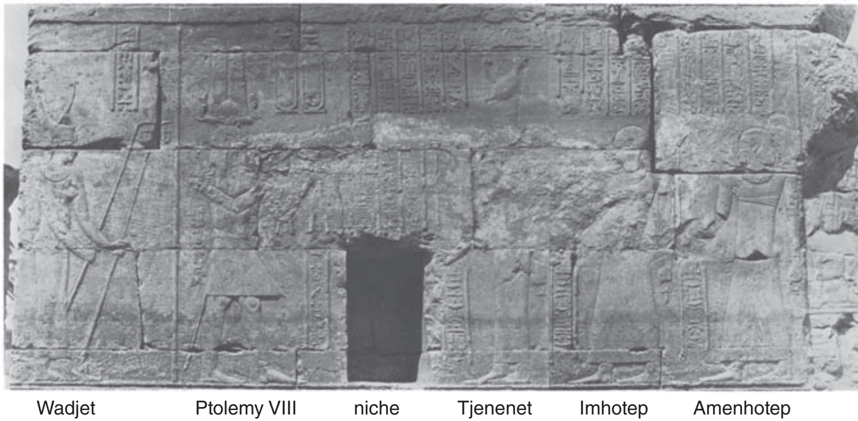


Fig. 10.10. (a) The Ptolemaic addition to the temple of Month at Tod. (b) The northern niche at the temple of Month at Tod.

(a) Adapted from Bisson de la Roque 1937: pl. 1. (b) Courtesy of Dietrich Wildung.

Fig. 10.10b) is slightly smaller, and, significantly, it was built into a scene which depicts Ptolemy VIII presenting offerings to the god Tjenenet accompanied by deified Imhotep and Amenhotep son of Hapu. The presence of Imhotep provides a further parallel to Edfu, and the combination of the two most renowned sages associated with writing suggests that this second niche was intended for book storage. This also provides a clue to the original position of the above-mentioned blocks inscribed with the extensive book catalogue. The wall behind the two sages had been dismantled in antiquity, and it seems an obvious possibility that this was in fact the origin of the blocks in question; the book catalogue would then have been directly associated with the two sages and the book niche. Whether the wall might have contained one or more additional niches we cannot know.

If our interpretation is correct, the temple of Tod would not have had separate rooms for those functions that were carried out in the House of the Book and the House of the Morning in the much larger temple of Edfu, but instead have performed them inside the second hall. This hall was, in other words, a form of shared space. The hall as a whole measures about 4.7 × 12 m or some 56 m^2, so there is ample space, although it is much smaller than the corresponding structure at Edfu.

As regards the size of the book niche at Tod, it has nearly 10 per cent more volume than both niches at Edfu combined, because of its greater depth and height. This does not translate into a greater capacity in practical terms. With direct stacking, it could in principle accommodate a maximum of eighty-four rolls (twelve layers of seven rolls), in contrast to ninety-eight rolls for the two niches at Edfu (§10.6.1), but again the use of book chests is more probable. The niche could hardly have contained more than one larger or two smaller chests, and the latter option would allow for four layers of five rolls in each. Hence this niche would have had a capacity of forty rolls, which matches the estimate presented for the two niches at Edfu. While this number is smaller than the

Table 10.10. Locations and sizes of temple libraries (the asterisk marks conjectured identifications)

Edfu, temple of Horus	Located in the hypostyle hall, right side, behind columns. Size: 2.75 m^2 (1.7 × 1.7 m). Decoration by Ptolemy VIII.
Philae, temple of Isis	Located in the forecourt, right side, behind colonnade. Size: 7.25 m^2 (2.2 × 3.3 m). Decoration by Ptolemy XII / Augustus.
Medamud, temple of Month	Located in the forecourt, right side, behind eastern colonnade.* Size: 10.5 m^2 (2.5 × 4.2 m). No decoration preserved.
Elkab, temple of Nekhbet	Located in the forecourt, right side, behind eastern colonnade.* Size: 10.5 m^2 (2.8 × 3.8 m). No decoration preserved.
Tod, temple of Month	Partially dismantled; seven blocks found in secondary contexts. Probably part of the second hall. Decoration by Ptolemy VIII.

number of titles inscribed in the catalogue, it must be kept in mind that a single roll may have included more than one text, and that further rolls might have been stored in containers placed on the floor of the room.

10.6.5. Book Catalogues from Temples

It is now time to address the nature of the above-mentioned book catalogues from Edfu and Tod. The two catalogues from Edfu are intact and contain a total of thirty-one titles, whereas the remains of the catalogue from Tod include at least forty-seven. There is a fundamental difference between them (Grimm 1988; Thiers 2004). The extant remains of the more comprehensive one from Tod are exclusively devoted to texts that relate to cult-specific festivals, which were carried out in the course of the year. By contrast, the book catalogues from Edfu record general purification and protective rituals, as well as compendia of cultic information. Accordingly, the Tod and Edfu catalogues do not share a single title.

The extent to which the catalogues reflect the full scope of the libraries is debatable. Inscriptions elsewhere in the vast temple of Edfu in fact refer to various texts related to cult-specific festivals, and it seems unquestionable that these will have been present at the temple, although they are not mentioned in the book catalogues. By the same token, the temple of Tod will surely have included the fundamental works of general nature such as the ritual guidelines for the purification and protection of pharaoh. Taking into account the contents of the Tebtunis temple library, it seems a reasonable assumption that all temple libraries would include both general and cult-specific texts. Accordingly, the different focus of the catalogues from Edfu and Tod is likely to represent little more than a *pars pro toto* choice for the purposes of the decoration of the buildings. In the case of Philae, it was decided not to include any catalogue at all in the fully decorated library room, so it was evidently not essential for any texts to be specifically mentioned.

To judge from the book catalogues preserved at Edfu and Tod, the buildings were designed not to store a whole temple library like the one from Tebtunis, but only texts directly relevant to the cult. The catalogues include no scientific literature, no wisdom instructions, no texts aimed at the training of priests, nor any historical narratives—all groups that are well-represented at Tebtunis. Surely such texts were also available at Edfu and Tod, but they were kept elsewhere.

In addition to the book catalogue from Edfu and Tod, the Tebtunis temple library includes at least two papyri inscribed in Hieratic with the titles pertaining to temple literature. One contains just four titles (Ryholt 2006). The other papyrus, which was identified more recently (Ryholt in Quack and Ryholt 2019: 151–9), is inscribed with a longer list of at least twenty titles, which

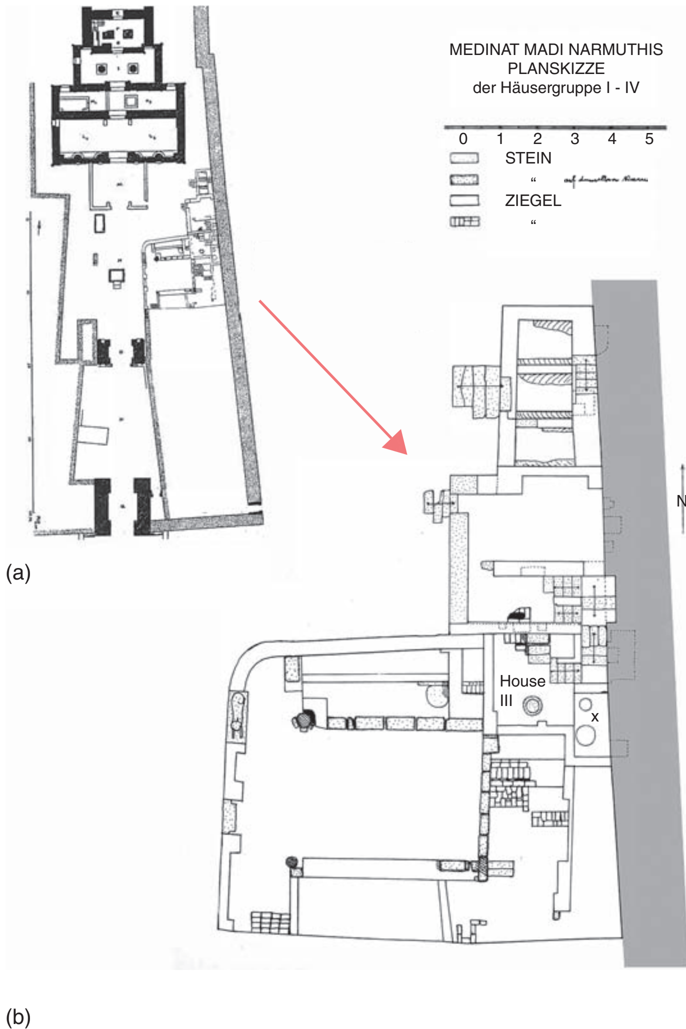


Fig. 10.11. (a) Plan of the temple of Renenutet at Narmuthis. (b) Cluster of buildings designated House I–IV built against the inside of the eastern temenos wall. The two jars with the 1300 ostraca were found in the niche off the south-eastern corner of House III, marked x.

Adapted from Bresciani 2003: fig. 10; courtesy of Edda Bresciani.

are all written in red ink. Its purpose is not certain, but possibly all the titles refer to general cultic texts. It includes some well-known compositions, such as the Purification of Pharaoh, and also certain texts listed in the Edfu catalogues, viz. the Protection of the Year, the Protection of the Bed, and the Guiding of the Temple. The latter text is said to have been authored by no less than 'the Chief

Lector-Priest Imhotep the great, son of Ptah' in an inscription from Edfu (Chassinat 1929c; Blackman and Fairman 1942; Wildung 1977: 144–6).

10.7. THE NARMUTHIS SCHOOL

In 1938 Achille Vogliano made a spectacular discovery during his excavations at Narmuthis, modern Medinet Madi. In a building located against the inside of the eastern enclosure wall, and subsequently designated 'House III', two large jars containing a staggering 1300 ostraca were unearthed (Bresciani 2003: 216, fig. 10; Fig. 10.11–12). They were stored side by side inside a recess of about 1.5 m², behind a small room with a single column measuring *c.*2.5 × 2.5 m. No description or illustration of the jars has been published, but the architectural plan indicates that they measured about 30 and 50 cm in diameter or slightly more. They are not likely to have been portable; a pottery ostracon easily weighs 100 g, and the combined weight of the two jars is likely to have exceed 100 kg. Although there are some similarities with regard to size,

Fig. 10.12. The larger of the two ostraca jars at Narmuthis *in situ* but now much damaged.

Courtesy of Luigi Prada, 2011.

design, and location, the nature of the texts makes it clear that the collection served a very different scribal function than the monumental temple libraries or the Tebtunis temple library.

Altogether the area contained about 1500 pottery ostraca, with about 40 per cent written in Demotic, 40 per cent in Greek, and 20 per cent in a combination of the two scripts (Gallo 1997: xli–xliii). There are also a few that contain a mixture of Hieratic and Old Coptic. The bulk of the material dates to the second century CE. It includes texts that may be classified as literary in the form of scribal exercises (Pintaudi and Sijpesteijn 1989; Menchetti 1999–2000; 2003; Giannotti and Gorini 2006; Giannotti 2008), as well as horoscopes (Ross 2006) and various types of documentary records. It has been argued that this massive assemblage of ostraca represents the work of apprentice priests, and that, as such, they demonstrate the broad scribal training undergone by priests as late as the Roman period (Gallo 1997: xliv–xlvii). Given the location of the building inside the temple enclosure, it would seem a natural assumption that the training was performed in the area where the ostraca were actually found, without claiming that this was its sole function or conjuring up images of modern class-room teaching.

An interesting example of the training is a large group of documents written by a scribe named Phatres son of Hormeinos (Menchetti 2005a; 2010: 65–7). Here we find that the individual ostraca are provided with sequential protocol numbers, which range from 1 to 154. The numbers were written on the very top of each ostracon, often with a black line below the number, and sometimes redrawn with red ink to facilitate quick identification. Moreover, a series of the ostraca contains words in cipher (Menchetti 2005b). The ciphers consist of numbers written in Demotic, which correspond to the Greek letter with the same numerical value; 1 = alpha, 2 = beta, 10 = iota, 20 = kappa, etc. Many of the words written in cipher were in common use and the reason for its use remains uncertain; perhaps the main purpose was simply that of scribal training.

10.8. THE HOUSE OF LIFE AND THE CULT OF OSIRIS

The so-called 'House of Life' has received much attention in discussions about ancient Egyptian wisdom and literary traditions, and it has become commonplace to regard it as an institution that served a broad and general purpose.[19]

[19] The main sources on the House of Life were collected by Gardiner (1938) and Volten (1942: 17–44), cf. also Nordh (1996: 106–216). Only a limited number of analytically significant attestations have since been published or discussed. The more important relate to Papyrus Salt 825 (Derchain 1965: 48–61, 96–101), Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.50 (Goyon 1972: 38–41), the

Much like modern visions of the Library of Alexandria (Bagnall 2002), the House of Life has sometimes been viewed in enthusiastic terms as a comprehensive repository of knowledge, or even a predecessor of modern universities (cf. Burkard 1980: 88). Yet already Gardiner (1938) demonstrated in a comprehensive survey that the institution is never associated with any form of teaching, but the notion still lingers on.[20] At the same time, it would be far too reductive to view the House of Life as a mere scriptorium.

The House of Life is best attested for the period following the Libyan Anarchy, i.e. the period under discussion here. A review of the available sources indicates that it served a more specific purpose than generally assumed. The topic cannot be explored in detail here, but there are many indications that the House of Life was intimately related to the cult of Osiris. Osiris, it must be recalled, played a central and dominating role in contemporary Egyptian religion, which largely centred on his death, resurrection, provision, and protection. These aspects touch upon the very nerve of Egyptian mythology and religious thought, and they all lie at the heart of the House of Life.

The most detailed contemporary description of the House of Life is *Papyrus Salt 825* of the Ptolemaic period (Derchain 1965; Herbin 1988) from which an excerpt of some analytically relevant parts may be quoted (6.5–7.7):

> As for the House of Life . . . It shall be very hidden, very much. It shall not be known, nor shall it be seen, but the sun (alone) shall look upon its mystery. The people who enter into it are the staff of Re and the scribes of the House of Life . . . The Scribe of the Sacred Book is Thoth, and it is he who will recite the glorifications in the course of every day, unseen and unheard . . . No Asiatic shall enter into it; he shall not see it . . . The books that are in it are the Emanations of Re (i.e. the sacred writings) wherewith to keep alive this god (sc. Osiris) and to overthrow his enemies (Gardiner 1938: 167–8).

We may draw two important conclusions from this description: (1) the primary purpose of the House of Life was to keep alive and protect Osiris through the preservation and recitation of the relevant sacred writings, and (2) it was imperative to keep secret and guard the very powerful magic this involved, not least against foreigners. The latter is also demonstrated by several warnings against disclosure of the specific ritual, entitled Finishing the Work, which is inscribed in the papyrus:

Book of the Fayum (Beinlich 1991: 356 s.v. Lebenshaus), and the Book of Thoth (Jasnow and Zauzich 2005: 33–6; cf. also Quack 2007b: esp. 258; 2007c: esp. 282, 284).

[20] This does, of course, does not exclude the possibility that personnel employed at this institution may have been training its own apprentices, but that type of incidental activity would represent an entirely different matter.

> It is a secret book roll, which overturns magical charms, which binds binding-spells, which blocks binding-spells, which intimidates the whole universe. Life is in it; death is in it. Do not reveal it, because he who reveals it will die by a sudden death or by an immediate killing. You must be distant from it. Life is in it; death is in it. It is a scribe of the staff, whose name (i.e. identity) pertains to the House of Life, who shall recite it. (Dieleman 2005: 82, omitting the last line)

As for the designation of the institution, which is conventionally translated as the 'House of Life' (also—for practical reasons—in this contribution), the text explicitly understands the crucial word *ankh* not in the sense of 'life' but as 'the living one' in clear reference to the resurrected Osiris: 'As for the *ankhy*, he is Osiris.' In other words, the institution was understood as the 'House of the Living One', and there is some probability that this was in fact the original and sole meaning.

The resurrection, provision, and protection of Osiris, where not least glorification spells play a significant role, are all well-attested features in relation to the House of Life. Compare, for instance, the stela of a prophet of Neith from Hawara, which contains an address to Osiris: 'Your glorifications are in the House of Life, and your name shall be pronounced by the staff of the House of Life in reading its glorifications' (Gardiner 1938: 169). Amosis son of Smendes, who held many priestly titles, refers to himself in the capacity of his function as prophet of Sokar-Osiris with the words 'I am the Master of Secrets in the House of the Living of Form who revivifies Osiris in the House of Gold' (Fairman 1920: 3).[21] The Chief Physician and Chief Steward Peftjawaneit, who restored the House of Life in Abydos during the reign of King Apries, describes the event as follows: 'I renewed the House of Life after its ruin. I established the sustenance of Osiris. I put all its procedures in order' (Lichtheim 1980: 33–6; Heise 2007: 229–33). Regarding protective spells, a telling example is found in connection with the Book of Overthrowing Apophis in the aforementioned Papyrus Bremner-Rhind: 'It is a secret book in the House of Life, which no eye shall see, the secret book of overthrowing Apophis' (Gardiner 1938: 169).

The direct relationship between the House of Life and the cult of Osiris sheds light on several noteworthy attestations of the term. The above-cited inscription from the library at the temple of Isis at Philae claims to include 'all the papyri . . . which the House of Life encompasses' (§10.6.2). The goddess Isis plays a crucial role in both the resurrection and burial of Osiris, her husband, and hence the texts relating to his cult were centrally important to her cult as well. She is explicitly related to the House of Life through the epithets 'the lady

[21] The 'House of the Living of Form' appear to be a simply variant of the 'House of the Living One'. An Osirian chapel designated the House of Gold is preserved on the roof of the temple of Dendera. It was presumably in a similar chapel that Amosis performed the ritual in question.

of the House of Life' and 'the lady of the House of Embalmment', employed side by side, or by the two combined as 'the lady of the House of Life who dwells in the House of Embalmment'. The two first titles are also attested for her sister Nephthys, and both goddesses are similarly associated with the House of Life in Papyrus Salt 825 (Gardiner 1938: 165, 168, 178).

An episode in the story of 'Khamwase and Siosiris' also provides an interesting perspective. In this story, an Egyptian magician from ancient times is reincarnated as Siosiris (meaning 'the son of Osiris') in order that he may defeat foreign sorcerers that threaten Egypt. Already as a child 'it came to pass that [he] began to recite writings with the scribe of the House of Life' (Ritner in Simpson 2003: 472). The context of this description makes it clear that it does not refer to schooling, but is a portrayal of Siosiris as child prodigy, knowledgeable on a par with a scribe of the House of Life about the powerful magic constituted by the spells for the protection of Osiris, precisely the type of spells that should be closely guarded from foreigners as we have seen above (§10.4.1). And in the end, not surprisingly, Siosiris manages to protect pharaoh and to overcome the foreign sorcerers through his magic powers.

Thus, the House of Life was neither a mere scriptorium or library, nor an educational institution. It was a religious institution with a practical objective focused on the maintenance of the cult of Osiris with the wider implication of maintaining the cults in Egypt in general. As such it evidently *contained* a library, just as temples did, and the religious texts kept in the House of Life, as well as those kept in the House of the Book at the temples, were referred to as the 'Emanations of Re'. The two institutions were both associated with wisdom and are mentioned side by side already from the New Kingdom onwards (cf. Gardiner 1938: 164, 169, 172–3).

Since the cult of Osiris permeates Egyptian religion, the institution of the House of Life may well have existed in many places. We do not find actual references to a wide distribution, but this may well owe to the relatively limited sources at our disposal. One prominent centre outside Abydos seems to have been Hermopolis, the seat of Thoth, the god of wisdom. The so-called Famine Stela (Ritner in Simpson 2003: 386–91), a monumental inscription of Ptolemaic date which purports to date to the reign of Netjerkhet of the 3rd Dynasty, relates that the king once consulted the sage Imhotep on obscure matters. Imhotep answers the king:

> I shall proceed to the sanctuary of Thoth at Hermopolis . . . I shall enter into the House of Life. I shall spread out the Emanations of Re (i.e. the sacred writings), and I shall be guided by them.

Similarly, we find that it is to the temple of Hermopolis that the great magician Horus-son-of-the-Wolf turns, when he needs powerful magic in order to protect pharaoh from the foreigners who threaten Egypt (§10.6). The

prominence of the House of Life in Hermopolis is likely to be linked with the role of Thoth as the Scribe of the Sacred Book at the House of Life.

Whether the Osirian focus of the House of Life dates back to its very inception cannot be positively answered at this time. Yet it is noteworthy that both the association with Osiris and magic that must not be divulged are attested already in the New Kingdom. A Ramesside Scribe of the Sacred Book also held the title of Scribe of the House of Life and describes one of his functions or achievements as 'conducting the festival of Osiris' (Gardiner 1938: 164), and a magical spell of the same date includes the warning 'Do not reveal it to others, a true secret of the House of Life' (Leitz 1999: 39). The possibility that the House of Life included execration spells already at this date also provides for a better understanding of the conspiracy against King Ramesses III, where malicious magic is known to have been used (Ritner 1997: 192–214) and where two of the men condemned for their participation were in fact scribes of the House of Life (Gardiner 1938: 161). Also involved in this conspiracy was a chief lector-priest and priest of Sakhmet who similarly seems to have been associated with the House of Life (Habachi and Ghalioungui 1971).

The House of Life is sometimes found attached to the person of the king. Unfortunately, none of the sources in question provide much information about the nature of this association, but plausibly they attest to the use of Osirian protective spells and magic for the benefit of the living king. This might also have been the function of the only physically identified House of Life which is located at Tell el-Amarna, the royal residence of King Akhenaten (Hagen §7.3). It is perhaps no mere coincidence that it was located literally across the street from the records office, where the royal foreign correspondence—and hence information about foreign affairs—was kept. Might not the powerful Osirian execration rituals, so carefully guarded from foreigners, have been directed against the hostile foreign princes? The phenomenon of ritual execration of foreign enemies by the state is well-attested in Egypt since the Old Kingdom (Koenig 1994: 131–85; Ritner 1997: 111–90).

10.9. PAPYRUS STORAGE

The storage of papyrus has not yet been subject to systematic research, although a considerable source material is available in the form of both preserved architecture and containers, pictorial representations, and textual references. Some general remarks will be offered in the following (a more extensive survey covering *c.*3000 BCE–1000 CE is provided in Ryholt forthcoming a).

Examples of purpose-built architecture from the Graeco-Roman is so far confined to monumental libraries within larger temples which had built-in

niches for the storage of manuscripts (§10.6). The assemblage of texts from House 35 at Tanis (§10.5.2) was similarly stored in a niche. The phenomenon was probably widespread, since niches are ubiquitous in contemporary houses, and it is by no means impossible that the niches in the monumental libraries were adopted from mud-brick architecture. Record offices may also have included purpose-built features such as niches or shelves, but no examples from the Late or Graeco-Roman Periods have yet come to light (an Old Kingdom example is described in Parkinson §3.1.2).

To judge from pictorial evidence from earlier periods, it was probably just as common—if not more—to store papyri in containers placed on the ground. The usual means of storage were wooden chests and boxes, pottery jars, and perhaps also baskets. Although few excavated examples of chests and boxes are documented, such containers are frequently referred to in literary contexts, not least in relation to temple libraries. Examples from Edfu (§10.6.1) and Hermopolis (§10.6) have already been cited. Royal donations, like the chests presented by King Ptolemy VIII to the temple of Edfu, were presumably high-quality items, perhaps with inlay or plating. Other boxes were more plain, and a group of nine Greek literary papyri are said to have been found in a 'painted cartonnage box' in a tomb near Meir.

Pottery jars were available at low cost everywhere in the country. Many examples have been discovered with papyri still preserved *in situ*, but very few have been adequately published. The largest discovery of what might be loosely defined as literary texts is the collection of school texts on ostraca from Narmuthis which, it is worth noting, comes from an institutional context (§10.7). Another substantial collection of what seems to have been literary papyri in the Hieratic script were stored in a group of jars at Elephantine (§10.2.2). An example of a literary papyrus found on its own within a jar dates to the third century BCE. It is inscribed with a legal manual on the front (ten columns) and mathematical problems on the reverse (nineteen columns), and it is said to have been 'found in a partially broken jar in the debris of a ruined building opposite the room of mummification and believed to be one of the temple archives' (Mattha and Hughes 1975: xi).

Baskets represent another low-cost storage option. They were presumably also common, but being organic objects, they are far less likely to survive than jars, and few efforts will have been made to preserve such fragile material by excavators owing to their non-sensational nature. Among the few documented examples are seven baskets from Tanis. One basket with the remains of at least thirty or forty papyri and a pen-case was found on the floor of 'House 44', while another six baskets with the remains of more than 150 papyri were found in a niche under the stairway leading to the cellar of 'House 35' (§10.5.2). A basket discovered at Oxyrhynchus contained the remains of twelve Greek literary papyri (Grenfell and Hunt 1905–6; 2007; cf. further Ryholt forthcoming a).

Sometimes papyri were kept in the cellars below private houses. Then as now, basements could be used both for the safe-keeping of important material and for stowing away the less important. Not all houses had cellars and some owners found other solutions and hid away documents in places such as disused ovens or bins or below thresholds. There are also examples of documents—mainly of financial nature—that were buried in jars, presumably to reduce the risk of theft and fire. None of these examples include literary texts.

10.10. LEATHER MASTER COPIES

Master copies of important texts were sometimes recorded on leather scrolls and deposited in libraries. Examples in relation to the libraries of Edfu (§10.6.1) and Philae (§10.6.2) have already been discussed. While the Edfu inscription does not specify the titles of the texts in question (unless, by implication, they correspond to the whole series of titles inscribed in the two catalogues on the walls), the Philae inscription explicitly states that the so-called 'Inventory of this Nome' was recorded on a leather roll (Burkard 1980: 85). The latter finds a close parallel in an inscription from the contemporary temple of Dendera, which relates how its foundation document was copied from a leather roll from the earliest times which had been discovered in the palace of Pepy I (*c.*2321–2287 BCE):

> The *Great Foundation in Dendera* was found in the ancient writings which were written upon a very great scroll of leather from the time of the Followers of Horus (i.e. mythic times) which had been found inside the . . . wall of the palace from the time of the Dual King [Pepy I].
>
> (Chassinat and Daumas 1965: 158–9, pl. 583; Schott 1990: 351; cf. translations Luft 1973: 112; Daumas 1953: 166–8)[22]

Another reference from a temple context is found in a Hieroglyphic dictionary from the Tebtunis temple library. According to its preface, the text derives from 'a roll of leather from the temple of Osiris' in Abydos (Iversen 1958: 13; corrected Schott 1990: 307). Abydos enjoyed a special reputation as one of the most ancient sites in Egypt and the main cult centre of Osiris. It is therefore not surprising to see it described as the alleged source for ancient texts. Reference to another leather roll from this temple is found in two funerary papyri, Papyrus Berlin 3057 (aka 'Papyrus Schmitt': Möller 1900: 3) and

[22] The titles and names of the king have here been shortened to 'Pepy I'. The word that seems to qualify the noun 'wall' remains obscure.

Papyrus British Museum EA 10081 (aka 'Papyrus Malcolm': Birch 1871: 104; Schott 1990: 40). Both are inscribed with glorification texts and share a certain spell from the Pyramid Texts, which is said to have been found in an ancient leather roll in the library of the Osiris temple in Abydos from the time of King Marres, i.e. the deified Amenemhat III, *c.*1831–1786 BCE (Widmer 2002: 380–1).[23]

The claim that the above-mentioned leather rolls from Abydos and Dendera were very ancient can be dismissed as a fiction for the purely practical reason that leather will not have remained flexible and intact for so many centuries. This type of claim is very common and it is intended to lend the texts in question authority through their antiquity.[24] More credible is the notion that the large temples had libraries where important texts were preserved and copied through the ages and from which they were sometimes disseminated. The inscriptions in the library at the temple of Edfu (§10.6.1) provide strong support for this notion; the purpose of the building is explicitly said to be to secure the integrity of the temple and the daily cult for posterity, i.e. through the preservation of the texts that provided the necessary knowledge.

The recording of important texts on leather rolls to serve as master copies was an old tradition and it may in principle have extended back to the earliest historical times. As it is, the first surviving examples of leather copies of fundamental texts derive from the New Kingdom. One of the earliest extant leather rolls, dating to the early 18th Dynasty, in fact preserves a copy of a building inscription in the name of Senwosret I (Müller 2011; Hagen §7.4). Although that text was secondarily inscribed on a roll that had earlier been used for accounts, it might have been royal texts of this general nature to which later inscriptions refer, such as the Dendera text cited above or another text from the same temple:

> The *Great Foundation in Dendera* is the restoration of a monument which was made by the Dual King [Tuthmose III] after it had been found in old writings from the time of king Cheops.
>
> (text Chassinat and Daumas 1965: 173; Schott 1990: 351; cf. translations Daumas 1953: 165; Wildung 1969: 189–90)[25]

This second text claims that the Ptolemaic temple was modelled on an earlier temple built by Tuthmose III (*c.*1479–1425 BCE), which, in turn, was based on ancient records dating to the reign of Cheops. The latter information may well be connected to the notion that the treatise on the ideal organization of the

[23] The name has sometimes been emended to <Neb>maatre (e.g. Assmann 2008: 232), i.e. the prenomen of Amenhotep III, but the Hieratic writing is identical to the common Demotic rendering of the royal name Marres and the emendation is unwarranted.

[24] The phenomenon of attaching to certain texts such 'find-notes' that provide a (fictional) historical authority is rather common; cf. Hagen §7.3.

[25] The titles and names of the king have here been shortened to 'Tuthmose III'.

temple known as the 'Book of the Temple', according to its preface, had been discovered and saved for posterity during the reign of Cheops (§10.6).

10.11. ABDUCTION OF EGYPTIAN LIBRARIES

Temples played a multi-faceted role in society which, in times of unrest, made them strategic targets. With their sturdy enclosure walls, they could be used as strongholds from which an area might be dominated or defended. The larger temples also contained substantial treasures in the form of divine images, utensils for cultic use, and many other items made from precious materials, most of which would usually have been donated by the crown. Last, but certainly not least, the temples were perceived to represent a vital source for the potency of the crown, and the country as a whole, as channels of communication with the gods; by rituals and offerings one might hope to appease the gods and gain their support. In the ancient Near East, it was therefore not an uncommon phenomenon to carry off divine images when a territory was conquered (Holloway 2002: 193–7). Without these images, the rituals could not be carried out, the communication with the gods would be severed, and the territory and its people were left impotent and demoralized in the sense they could not rely on divine support. Egypt was no exception to this rule, and one of the great national traumas during the period here under discussion was the memory of how Assyrian and Persian conquerors had carried off divine images from Egyptian temples (Huss 1994: 46; Winnicki 1994).

Along with the divine images, also the temple libraries were a high-risk category, since they formed a vital element in the successful communication with the gods. They provided the necessary information to understand the divine, ranging from accounts of the creation to the correct layout of temples, the fashioning of divine images, and the conduct of rituals. At the same time, the libraries contained highly important scientific texts, above all concerning divination and medicine. Divination played a fundamental role in contemporary society, and some manuals provided the potential to predict good crops, the right time to launch a military campaign, and the likelihood of rebellions against the crown. It is also well-known that Egyptian medical expertise was held in high regard abroad and that Egyptian doctors sometimes served foreign rulers (Vittmann 2006: 143–7). However, even within Egypt there are indications that teaching of medicine and divination was restricted to a specific class and not knowledge to be freely disseminated (§10.2.1). Foreign interest in these areas of expertise is evidenced by the fact that when the Assyrians conquered Egypt in the seventh century BCE, they sought out and brought back Egyptian scholars, including experts on medicine and divination, who entered the service of the Assyrian king (Radner 2009).

A telling example of the crucial role played by temple libraries is the proclamation of the so-called Satrap Stela of Ptolemy I (Ritner in Simpson 2003: 392–7; Schäfer 2011). The text was set up in 311 BCE, when he was officially still just viceroy of Egypt on behalf of the king of Macedon, although he had long been the *de facto* ruler. It describes how Ptolemy retrieved and returned to their original locations in Egypt a number of divine images and the sacred writings that had been abducted by the Persians (Ryholt 2013a: 24–5). It is also noteworthy that this accomplishment was mentioned first in the text and thus given priority over the announcement that Alexandria henceforth was to be the royal residence and other proclamations. This illustrates with all clarity the fundamental importance of the divine images and the sacred writings, and it would be a fallacy to assume that this was merely a rouse to rally the support of the Egyptians. The sacred writings to which Ptolemy refers must have been carried off during the Second Persian Occupation (343–332 BCE), but the event is not attributed to any specific ruler. Diodorus (16.51.2) states that many cult images and sacred writings were carried off after the invasion of Egypt by Artaxerxes III in 343 BCE (Sherlan 1952: 381–2). For what it is worth, these objects are said to have been returned to Egypt through the payment of a heavy ransom to the powerful eunuch Bagoas.

10.11.1. The Temple Library of Tell Tukh el-Qaramus?

Since temple treasuries and temple libraries were at high risk during civil unrest and foreign invasions, their holdings would sometimes be carefully hidden away at times of trouble. An intriguing example is provided by the temple of Tell Tukh el-Qaramus which is located in the eastern Delta near Abu Kebir, 35 km downstream from Bubastis. The site has not been subject to systematic exploration until recently (Ghazala, El-Mahmoudi, and Abdallatif 2003; cf. also Pernigotti 2003), and the only plan of its temple, which was apparently founded by Philip Arrhidaeus (323–316 BCE), is a rough draft made by F. Ll. Griffith and E. Naville during some brief work in 1887 (Griffith 1890: 53–6, pl. 9; Fig. 10.13). This is all the more regrettable, since the site gained a reputation for being one of the best sources for antiquities in the region and therefore was subject to extensive illicit diggings.

The illicit activity led to the discovery of a large hoard of gold and silver objects in 1905 (Edgar 1906; 1907; James 2001: 141–4). In April of the following year, the chief inspector of Lower Egypt, C. C. Edgar, went to the spot where the treasure had been uncovered to see 'whether there might not be other things of value in the adjoining ground'. The source of the hoard turned out to be a building already partly excavated by Naville; he had cleared Rooms 6 and 7 but

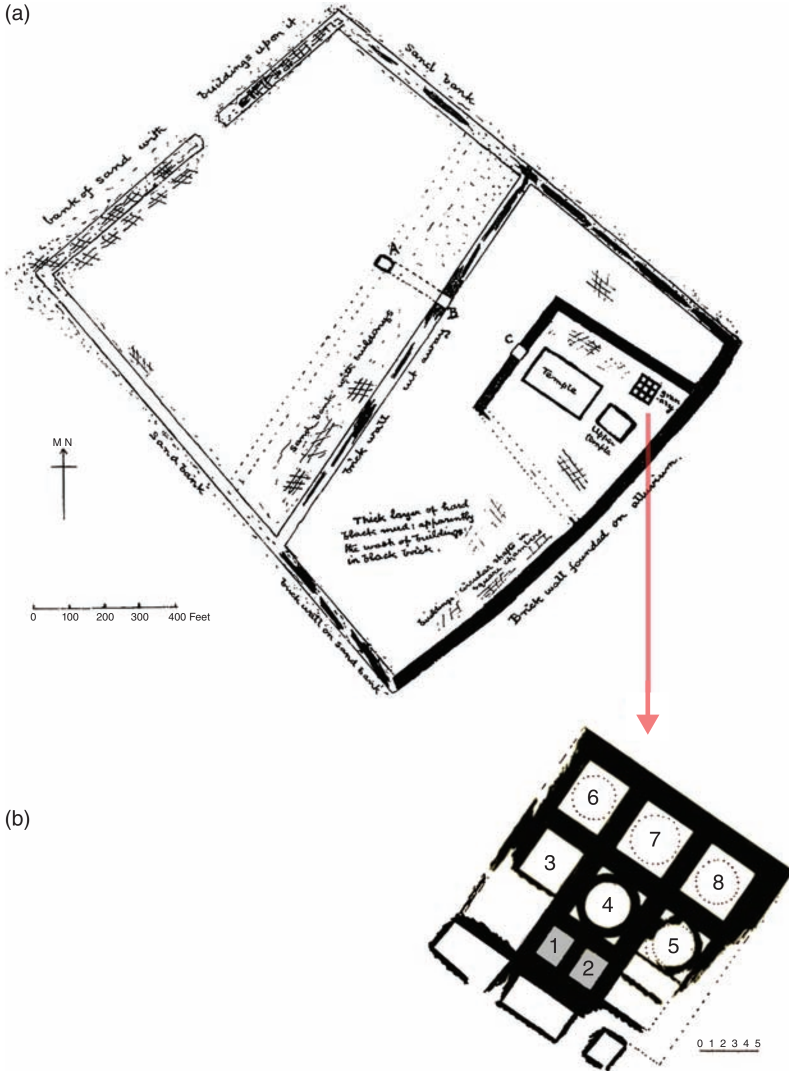


Fig. 10.13. (a) Sketch of the temple compound at Tell Tukh el-Qaramus. (b) Insert: the building in which the treasure and papyri were found. The find spot of the papyri, Rooms 1 and 2, is marked in grey.

(a) Adapted from Naville/Griffith 1890: pl. 9. (b) Adapted from Edgar 1907: 207.

stopped the work before reaching Rooms 1 and 2 which was the location of the treasure. Edgar found Room 1 empty, but Room 2 had not yet been entirely dug out. Among the material that remained were further objects of gold, silver, and bronze, and—more importantly in the present context—the sad remains of what must have been a considerable collection of papyri. In Edgar's words:

> In the ground S. E. of chamber 2, quite low down, we came upon a stratum of burned pottery and other rubbish, amid which lay a mass of some white fibrous substance, rotten and powdery. This, as we learned from subsequent experience at Tell Timai, was the remains of papyrus documents, burned to a white ash and rotted by the damp. (Edgar 1906: 210)

The hoard of precious metal objects is believed to have belonged to the temple and to have been carefully hidden away sometime in the first half of the third century BCE. Whatever violent situation was anticipated by those responsible for the concealment of the temple treasure and the papyri would seem to have come about, since the building was destroyed by fire and since there was apparently no one in a position to retrieve the valuable objects afterwards. Perhaps the people responsible for hiding the treasure were killed when the destruction took place, or were forced to leave the area and unable to return. It is mind boggling to imagine what this collection of papyri, which was so carefully hidden away with the invaluable temple treasures, might have contained. The association would suggest a temple library, but the material was so thoroughly burned and rotted that not a trace of the original writing was preserved.

10.12. ACQUISITION OF LITERATURE

A final question to be addressed is how a private person might go about acquiring or collecting literary texts. The predominant mode of acquisition seems to have been centred on social networks—above all colleagues, friends, and acquaintances, whose texts might be borrowed or copied *in situ*.[26]

The most detailed contemporary description of an individual in the process of seeking copies of specific literary compositions for his collection derives from a Greek letter from Oxyrhynchus dating to the second century CE (Hatzilambrou 2007). Although it concerns Greek literature, which is likely to have been more accessible because of the higher level of Greek literacy and the broader social contexts in which it will have circulated, the letter is nonetheless worth citing. The relevant section reads:

> Make and send me copies of Books 6 and 7 of Hypsicrates' *Characters in Comedy*. For Harpocration says they are among Polion's books. But it is likely that others too have got them. He also has prose epitomes of Thersagoras' *Myths of Tragedy*, 71(?). [*In a different hand*:] According to Harpocration Demetrius the bookseller has got them. I have instructed Apollonios to send me some of my books, which you will hear about from him. And of Seleucus' work on the *Tenses* make copies

[26] The same has been argued in the case of Greek literature in Egypt during the Roman period (Johnson 2004: 157–60; 2010: 180–5) and also for earlier Egypt (Hagen 2012: 120–3).

> and send me as many (books) as you find, apart from those I possess. Diodorus (and his circle?) also have some that I do not possess . . . (—here the letter breaks off).

In addition to the evident interaction within a social network, the letter preserves the rare mention of an actual book-dealer. It remains uncertain where he was based, whether at Oxyrhynchus or elsewhere. It may also be noted that the second half of this excerpt is written in a different hand and could represent a response to the request in the first half.

As far as Egyptian literature is concerned, the highest level of literacy during the Graeco-Roman period—where the Egyptian scripts were not used for state administration outside the temples—is likely to have existed in the priestly communities. It is therefore perhaps no coincidence that the limited references to acquisition of literature pertain mainly to these communities. Two examples are found in letters from Tebtunis dating to the second century BCE (Zauzich 2000). One is a message written to a Prophet: 'I have let Horos son of Marres, my brother, bring to you this medical papyrus and the book of the jar, a total of two papyri, which you gave to me earlier.' The writer then apologizes for not having returned the papyri earlier, but he had been unable to find a trustworthy messenger. The genitive 'of the jar' implies that the two papyri had been taken from a specific jar; such storage was quite common (§10.9).[27] The other letter is addressed to a Scribe of the Sacred Book. The writer mentions a copy of some text, which the addressee seeks, and also asks about a papyrus, perhaps requesting a blank one on which to write the text.

Depending of their nature, some texts will have been more accessible than others, and not everything was in free circulation. It is necessary here to distinguish between different types of literature within the broad definition of the term. Various sources indicate that there was restricted access to cultic and scientific texts, at least to some extent, and accessibility is likely to have been determined by profession. Thus, for instance, the Book of the Temple indicates that the teaching of medicine and divination was restricted to the children of prophets (§10.2.1); and, as argued above with reference to the Sminis tomb library (§10.4.1), the private use of Osirian rituals may have been restricted to priests who had access to them in their professional capacity.

Yet there were exceptions to this rule, and even sacred writings—'the Emanations of Re'—might be copied for private monuments in public or semi-public display. A noteworthy example is provided by an exceptionally fine healing statue found at Athribis in the Egyptian Delta (Jelínková-Reymond 1956). The statue was erected during the reign of Philip Arrhidaeus (323–317 BCE) by the chief door-keeper at the temple of the local deity. According to its inscriptions, it was one of a pair; this one was presumably

[27] The editor reads here a book-title, the 'Book of the Jar', but it remains unclear what kind of work this would constitute, and the use of the definite article would also be unexpected in that case.

set up in a temple, while the other—which has also been discovered (Sherman 1981)—was placed in the local necropolis. The texts inscribed on the statue were provided by a priest named Uaphres, who gives the following account of their background and nature:

> I placed the writings on this statue in accordance with writings excerpted from the Emanations of Re (i.e. the sacred writings), all being works of the Scorpion Charmer (i.e. a specialized priestly title) . . .

The explicit mention of who provided the texts for the monument is unusual. However, in view of the chief door-keeper's relatively low status (in spite of the fact that he had the resources to set up several high-quality monuments!), it is possible that he was himself illiterate and it seems unlikely that he would have had access to the part of the temple where the sacred writings were kept; hence he had to make recourse to one of the priests at the temple.

As far as Egyptian texts are concerned, there is little evidence of any professional book trade with the notable exception of funerary literature. Standard works, such as the Book of the Dead, are likely to have been obtained from specific workshops, presumably the same that produced other funerary items. The existence of such workshops is indicated by the distinct similarities between groups of funerary papyri—including identical layout, choice of texts, style of vignettes, handwriting, and even patterns of textual corruptions (e.g. Mosher 2002; Backes 2010). The workshops are likely to have been attached to temples, since funerary papyri required craftsmen who could write out the hieroglyphic or hieratic texts and draw the religious vignettes. Moreover, by the Ptolemaic Period, Books of the Dead were almost exclusively used by members of the clergy. Unfortunately, we rarely find any direct evidence as to who prepared them. The repositories of texts at such workshops are likely to have been quite limited in both scope and quantity, although one may expect them to have included different master copies of the Book of the Dead and similar funerary texts in order to meet demand for both more luxurious and less costly copies. More specialized texts, such as the Osirian rituals, are, as already mentioned, more likely to have been restricted to specific privileged classes.

10.13. CONCLUSIONS

The temples may be seen as the primary vehicle for the transmission of Egyptian literature during the millennium covered in the present chapter, from the eighth century BCE to the third century CE. The rich contents of the temple library of even a provincial town such as Tebtunis, and the range of texts attested in other temple communities, point to the existence of substantial libraries with hundreds of manuscripts and a professional class of temple scribes in charge of maintenance, study, and dissemination. Cultic and

scientific literature is likely to have been created and transmitted more or less exclusively within a temple context. Even narrative literature would seem to have become a phenomenon mainly associated with temple communities in the course of the Graeco-Roman period with the gradual decline of the Demotic script in secular society. This view is only reinforced by the probability that much of the narrative literature circulating in manuscript form was regarded as historiographical in nature, relating to historical individuals and matters of religious concern. In earlier periods when the whole administration was carried out in Egyptian, and perhaps especially in the periods with an indigenous royal court, there is likely to have been a greater diversity and spread of literature.

In view of these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that we find only limited evidence of literary texts in private contexts, apart from texts that can be related to the professional capacity of the owners. Literature for the purpose of leisure seems to have been a relatively rare phenomenon. Most archives are entirely devoid of literature, and if we disregard professional texts, not a single assemblage of documents from the period here under consideration—in Egyptian, Greek, or any other script—qualifies for the designation of a private library proper. There are, however, a few caveats. Many archives are modern reconstructions based on the occurrence of personal names and other details that a literary text would usually lack, so even if a literary text had formed part of an archive it would be far more difficult and often impossible to establish. As for those archives that have survived intact, most of them represent financial papers that were deliberately hidden away for safe-keeping. These archives do not represent the full range of documents belonging to the owner, and literary texts would naturally not be included with such material.

It remains to be noted that nearly all the material presented in this chapter was discovered several generations ago and much of it has been known for more than a century. Many of the individual texts have been subject to detailed philological study and some of them have been frequently cited. Yet for the most part, the material has not previously been gathered and discussed within a broader framework with focus on archaeological and social context. Many text editions have shown little interest in provenance and materiality, but the value of such contextual information can hardly be overestimated, especially since we are—for the most part—struggling with an already scant and uneven source material. The fact that even controlled excavations often remain poorly documented or published has not made the situation any easier. Fortunately, important information is in many cases preserved in archives, and the potential for archival research is considerable, both in relation to the material selected for the present chapter and other relevant material that still await any comprehensive analysis. As such studies proceed, alongside new and better documented archaeological discoveries, we will undoubtedly be in a position to significantly improve our understanding of the role and nature of libraries in ancient Egyptian society.

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