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رسائل إلى الموتى

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LETTERS TO THE DEAD

رسائل إلى الموتى

Julia Troche

Briefe an die Toten
Lettres aux morts

Letters to the Dead is the contemporary conventional name for a collection of ancient Egyptian texts that petition the recently deceased, typically for assistance with problems of inheritance, illness, or fertility. They are known from the Old Kingdom through the Late Period and have been preserved upon ceramic vessels and figurines, stone stelae, papyrus, and linen. The letters were written by male and female petitioners and are addressed to both male and female dead. Though only a few dozen Letters to the Dead have been identified, they are important artifacts for better understanding interactions between the living and the dead in ancient Egypt. Notably, they illuminate the quotidian, social networks that existed between the living and the dead, help us understand how the ancient Egyptians conceived of and interacted with the dead, and expand upon our knowledge of mortuary culture and popular religious practices in ancient Egypt.

إن "رسائل إلى الموتى" هي الأسم التقليدية المعاصر لمجموعة من النصوص المصرية القديمة التي تقدم التماساً إلى المتوفين حديثاً ، عادةً للمساعدة في مشاكل الميراث أو المرض أو الخصوبة. وهي معروفة منذ عصر الدولة القديمة حتي العصور المتأخرة ، وقد وصلت إلينا مكتوبة ومحفوظة علي الأواني الفخارية والتمائيل الصغيرة ، واللوحات الحجرية ، والبردي ، والكتان. كانت الرسائل تكتب من قبل الملتمسين (الطالبين) الذكور والإناث وتوجه إلى الموتى من الذكور والإناث. وعلى الرغم من أنه تم التعرف على بضع عشرات من الرسائل الموجه إلى الموت ، إلا أنها تعتبر من اللقى الأثرية المهمة التي تساعد في فهم أفضل للعلاقة والتفاعل بين الأحياء والأموات في مصر القديمة. وبشكل خاص ، إنها تسلط الضوء على العلاقات الاجتماعية اليومية ، التي كانت قائمة بين الأحياء والأموات ، وتساعدنا علي فهم كيفية تصور المصريون القدماء وتفاعلهم مع الموتى ، وايضا التوسع في معرفتنا بالثقافة الجنائزية والممارسات الدينية الشعبية في مصر القديمة.

The corpus known as the Letters to the Dead is a collection of texts identified by their similar form (a letter) and/or content (petitions by the living to the dead). The ancient Egyptians engaged the recently deceased because they believed the dead were effective, supernatural intermedi-

aries who possessed agency both within the earthly realm and divine hereafter. These requests were written in two general, non-mutually-exclusive circumstances:

1) when problems arose that could not be fully alleviated through mundane intervention

because they were believed to have supernatural causes (for example, in the Cairo Bowl [see Table 1] a woman named Dedi writes to the deceased priest Intef on behalf of his afflicted maidservant Imau; the letter petitions Intef to protect Imau and “rescue her” from the supernatural entities that could be acting against her, causing her illness);

2) when problems arose that were not necessarily caused by supernatural forces, but involved supernatural actors. Letters that fall into this second category may petition the dead, not because there was no earthly recourse for the petitioner, but because the deceased was believed to be particularly powerful and influential in the matter at hand. For example, in the letters written upon the Qau Bowl (see fig. 1 and Table 1), Shepsi petitions his deceased father and mother because his inheritance (land) is being robbed. Shepsi presumably has additional means of addressing his problem, such as going to court, but he calls upon his parents as the benefactors of his inheritance. He explains that it is their duty to support him in the hereafter because he continues their mortuary rites, implying a sort of social contract exists between them. He even subtly threatens his mother by explaining that if the problematic situation persists, then “who will pour out water for you?”

From these examples we can begin to see how the Letters to the Dead were used in ancient Egypt. Though there is no Egyptian word for the corpus, nor any evidence to suggest the Egyptians considered it a distinct genre of letter writing, discussing these texts together, as a collection, is useful for modern scholarship. The Letters to the Dead offer glimpses of what common interactions between the living and the dead may have looked like (e.g., Harrington 2013). Funerary literature tells us that the dead “went away alive” (Pyramid Texts 213, §134a), and the Letters to the Dead confirm that the dead indeed remained active members of social systems despite their corporeal demise. Furthermore, the letters expand our understanding of “popular” religious practices, social networks, and ancient Egyptian conceptions of the non-royal afterlife.

It is impossible to securely say how many Letters to the Dead are extant, because scholars have yet to agree on their defining characteristics. For example, not all currently identified Letters to the Dead are in the form of a letter, and not all letters that address the dead are unanimously included in the corpus. The letters’ content suggests that they were ideally deposited at or near the tomb of the deceased addressee. However, few have a secure provenance, exceptions being Papyrus Naga el-Deir N 3500, the Qau Bowl, and the Papyrus to Meru (see Table 1). Dating is almost entirely determined by orthographic and paleographic evidence. Rarely can a letter be dated by its archaeological context.

The Letters to the Dead are primarily written in hieratic upon ceramic vessels, favoring either a circular pattern, spiraling from the bowl’s rim to its center, or columns, with the exception of a number of examples written in hieroglyphic script upon figurines—i.e., the Louvre Figurine, Berlin Figurine, and statue of Ahmes-Sapar (see Table 1). Other letters, discovered on stelae, ostraca, papyrus, and also on some figurines, follow epigraphic trends (e.g., favoring columns versus lines, being written from right to left, see fig. 2). Letters to the Dead typically include some combination of the following components, identified here and elaborated upon in the sections below (quotes from the Louvre Bowl are provided as examples):

1. Address: “Oh Mereri, born of Mertil!”

Letters can address male and female dead either directly (calling upon specific dead explicitly) or indirectly, through intermediaries such as coffins. The address may include names, titles, and filiation.

2. Greeting: “Osiris-Khentyamentyw makes for you millions of years....”

When a greeting is present in a letter it takes the form of an offering formula, well-wishing, or other invocation.

3. Statement of problem: “You know he said to me, ‘I will accuse (*smj m*) you and your children.’”



Figure 1. The Qau Bowl: interior and exterior.

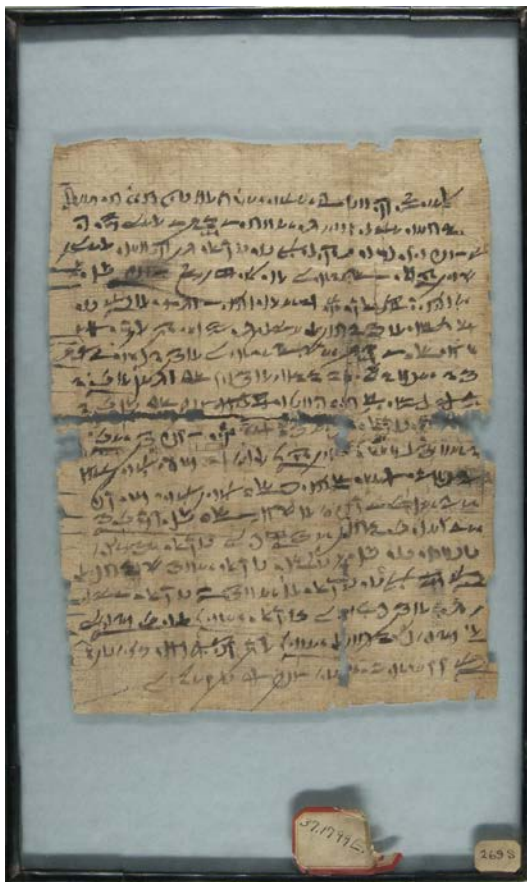


Figure 2. The Brooklyn Papyrus.

Statements are often vague, but are generally concerned with an injustice understood as caused by supernatural forces.

4. Petition and desired outcome: “Report against it [the accusation]! For you are in the place of justification.”

A defining feature of the letters is a plea for the dead to act in response to the stated problem. Sometimes an explicit desired outcome is articulated and the petitioner relates what she/he will (or will not) do in return.

A recent comprehensive study of the Letters to the Dead lists nineteen artifacts upon which twenty-one letters are written (Donnat Beauquier 2014). They are grouped in Table 1 by historical period, based on Donnat Beauquier’s dating. Other artifacts cited as possible Letters to the Dead are presented below in Table 2.

Historical Period	Items	Letter to the Dead	Topic of Request
Old Kingdom	2	Cairo Linen (Cairo JdE 25975) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Inheritance
		Papyrus Naga el-Deir N 3500 (Naga el-Deir N 3500; MFA 47.1705) (Goedicke 1972)	Aid/Protection - illness
First Intermediate Period	6	Chicago Jar Stand (Chicago Oriental Institute Museum E 13945) (Gardiner 1930)	Fertility/Sexual Reproduction
		Hu Bowl (Petrie Museum UC 16244) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Aid/Protection
		Papyrus to Meru (Naga el-Deir N 3737; MFA 38.2121) (Simpson 1966)	Aid/Protection
		Qau Bowl: 2 letters (Petrie Museum UC 16163) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Inheritance (interior); Aid/Protection - illness (exterior)
		Wente's Stela: 2 letters (Michael C. Carlos Museum, 2014.033.001) (Wente 1975 – 1976)	Aid/Protection - illness
		Berlin Bowl (Berlin 22573) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Aid/Protection - illness(?)
Middle Kingdom	6	Louvre Bowl (Louvre E61634) (Piankoff and Clère 1934)	Aid/Protection
		Cairo Bowl (Cairo CG 25375) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Aid/Protection - illness
		Berlin Papyrus (Berlin 10.482) (Jürgens 1990; cf. Regulski 2015)	Fertility/Sexual Reproduction
		Louvre Figurine (Louvre E 8000) (Desroches-Noblecourt 1953: 37-40)	Fertility/Sexual Reproduction
		Berlin Figurine (Berlin 14517) (Schott 1930)	Fertility/Sexual Reproduction
		Qubbet el-Hawa Bowl (Cairo JdE 91740) (Edel 2008)	Unclear; Offerings provided as part of contract enabling recently deceased father's burial in previously owned tomb
Second Intermediate Period – New Kingdom	4	Oxford Bowl (Pitt-Rivers 1887.27.1) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Inheritance
		Leiden Papyrus (pLeiden 371) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	Aid/Protection

		Ostrakon Louvre 698 (oLouvre 698) (Goldwasser 1995)	Complaint or Aid/Protection
		Statue of Ahmes-Sapar (Louvre E15682) (Barbotin 2005; 2007a: 32-34; 2007b: 8-15; 2008: 60, 96-97,167-168)	Aid/Protection
Late Period	1	Papyrus Brooklyn 37.1799 E (pBrooklyn 37.1799 E) (Jasnow and Vittmann 1992)	Inheritance

Table 1. Inventory of Letters to the Dead (21 letters on 19 artifacts).

Artifact/Letter	Description	Reason for Debate
Letter to Gef (MFA 13.3791) (Simpson 1981)	Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period ceramic jar-stand with painted hieratic inscription from Sheikh Farag. Stand is broken and text is incomplete.	Simpson suggests this is a Letter to the Dead; however, his identification is based on textual emendations (Simpson 1981) and is therefore not possible to ascertain (Donnat Beauquier 2014: 25-26).
Berlin Papyrus from Assiut (pBerlin 10.481) (Regulski 2015)]	Middle Kingdom hieratic letter from Assiut written to the same individual (Sedekh) mentioned in Papyrus Berlin 10.482 (see Table 1). Papyrus is damaged and text incomplete.	Regulski suggests this is a Letter to the Dead despite “considerable loss of text” (Regulski 2015: 311).
Moscow Bowl (Moscow 3917b) (Gardiner and Sethe 1928)	New Kingdom (18 th Dynasty) red ceramic bowl purchased in Luxor. Text is written in hieratic on interior of bowl.	Unclear if the addressee is actually dead (Gunn 1930: 154; Donnat Beauquier 2014: 24).
Munich Cosmetic Vase (ÄS 4313) (Buchberger 1991)	New Kingdom (18 th Dynasty) ceramic cosmetic vase with hieratic text.	Unclear if the addressee is actually dead (Donnat Beauquier 2014: 24).

Table 2. Artifacts often cited as Letters to the Dead but whose identification remains contentious.

Textual Analysis

Petitioners and recipients

Both men and women could be petitioners and recipients of Letters to the Dead, women being represented in the majority of letters. The dead are invoked either indirectly through an intermediary such as coffins, or directly as *akhm*, “spirits” (singular *akh*). Five texts make this explicit (see Table 1): the Chicago Jar Stand, the Hu Bowl, Wente’s Stela, Berlin Papyrus 10.482, and the Leiden Papyrus. The

Leiden Papyrus, for example, begins the letter with the address *n ʒh.t jqr(.t) ʿnh-jrj* “To the useful, effective spirit Ankhiry.” The recipients are usually identified by name and are described as mothers, fathers, brothers/husbands, sisters/wives, and in one instance, upon the Louvre Bowl, the recipient is identified as the petitioner’s son. The variability of meaning of these familial terms (“brother,” for example, can also be used to refer to a husband or close friend), coupled with a general lack of archaeological contexts, makes

it difficult to accurately discern many of the relationships expressed in these letters. Despite this ambiguity, it is clear that the letters address recently deceased individuals who were once close to the petitioner.

The level of literacy of the petitioners and recipients is difficult to ascertain. Petitioners could have hired professional scribes to write the letters, so literacy of the petitioners cannot be assumed. The recipient's ability to read during life is unknowable without definitive evidence. Their transfigured state as deceased individuals, however, may have been perceived by the living as enabling them to read the letters, if only symbolically. Furthermore, it is likely that the Letters to the Dead were recited aloud before deposition (Baines 1991: 153-155; Verhoeven 2003: 35). The Brooklyn Papyrus (see fig. 2) includes a line that makes explicit the act of reading the letter at the tomb of the recipient: *Hr-s3-js.t (s3) Tnhm (s3) Nht-t3-mw.t* [..?..] *š sw <hr=> r3=f (n) t3 h.t Tnhm*, “Hersaiset, son of Tenhem, son of Nakhttamut [..?..], recite it before him at the tomb of Tenhem” (Jasnow and Vittmann 1992 – 1993: 27; Donnat Beauquier 2014: 82). Additionally, at least two letters, the Papyrus to Meru and Wente's Stela, confirm the practice of incubation, which would empower the dead to “speak” or “act” through dreams.

Topics of request

The Letters to the Dead generally request assistance in resolving problems regarding:

1. Inheritance

For example, in the Qau Bowl, Shepsi writes to his father about his inheritance: “You said to me, your son, ‘All my property shall belong to my son Shepsi.’ Behold, my fields are being robbed.”

2. Aid for, or protection against, harm, illness, haunting, or some undefined threat

For example, in Wente's Stela, Merirtyfy requests that his wife, Nebetiotef, “remove the infirmity from my body.”

3. Fertility/sexual reproduction

For example, on the Chicago Jar Stand, a son asks of his father, “Moreover, may you cause that a healthy male child be born to me . . .

Moreover, I request a second healthy male child for your daughter.”

Petitioners implored the effective dead because their problems either bore absent or contradictory witness, or because the cause of their difficulties was believed to have been supernatural, and thus outside the scope of other means of resolution.

Object Analysis

Archaeological contexts

We do not know much about the original archaeological contexts of the Letters to the Dead, as most are unprovenanced. Some have been found in cemeteries, but for others we can only hypothesize a site or region of origin based on orthographic and grammatical patterns, and the location of purchase in modern times. Internal evidence can sometimes indicate the location of a letter's original deposition: Berlin Papyrus 10.482, for example, makes reference to the heretofore-unidentified tomb of a man named Sedekh at Assiut (Donnat Beauquier 2014: 63).

For a handful of letters, an original context can be approximated. Papyrus N 3500 was found in or around a tomb in cemetery N 3500 at Naga el-Deir in the first decade of the twentieth century (Simpson 1970: 58). Unfortunately, neither the tomb assemblage nor the tomb's location on the excavator's map can be identified. Furthermore, the two recipients of the letter, Pepi-seneb and Hetep-nebi, cannot be conclusively associated with any tomb in the area. Simpson proposes that its lack of identification within the site's excavation report may suggest that it was a surface find, since surface finds did not receive find-spot designations (Simpson 1970: 58).

Also known from this cemetery is the Papyrus to Meru. This letter was found in a pit that contained two possibly intrusive burials in the courtyard of the tomb of an individual named Meru (Naga el-Deir N 3737) (Simpson 1966). The letter may have been deposited concomitantly with the burials, though that cannot be stated with certainty. Neither do we know when these burials were added or what

their occupants' relationship was, if any, to Meru, who was buried within the tomb. (Kroenke 2010: 93). Nevertheless, the author of this Letter to the Dead took the breaking of the ground for the subsequent burials as an opportunity to deposit a letter to the dead Meru.

Two additional letters have secure find-spots: the Qubbet el-Hawa Bowl and the Qau Bowl. The Qubbet el-Hawa Bowl was discovered in the burial chamber of the undecorated tomb 30b at the cemetery of Qubbet el-Hawa (Edel 2008: 407-408, pl. 30b/16; Donnat Beauquier 2014: 67). The Qau Bowl (fig. 1) was also found in a burial chamber, specifically behind the skull of a male skeleton lying on his side in Qau el-Kebir tomb 7695 (Brunton 1927: 37; Gardiner and Sethe 1928: 3-5, 17-19; Donnat Beauquier 2014: 35-41). This bowl's find-spot is the most precise of all the known Letters to the Dead. Upon the Qau Bowl are two letters from a son, Shepsi, to his parents. A letter to Shepsi's father, Inkhenmet, is written on the interior of the bowl, while a letter to his mother, Iy, is on the bowl's exterior. Unfortunately, we cannot corroborate the information on the bowl because the name of the tomb owner behind whose head the bowl was placed is not known. There is, furthermore, only the one body buried in this tomb, and Brunton reported that "there was no trace of, nor was there room in the chamber for, a second body" (Brunton 1927: 37). If the deceased was Shepsi's father, it is not inconceivable that Shepsi's mother received her own plot somewhere else, or was buried with her family, if Shepsi's family tomb had not yet been completed. Alternatively, as may have been the case with the Papyrus to Meru, the bowl may not have been buried with the intended recipient(s) due to the belief that the very act of burying the letters enabled them to possess a dual existence on earth and in the divine hereafter, thus increasing their communicative potency. An open tomb was perhaps simply an opportunity for the deposition of Letters to the Dead.

Material properties

Letters to the Dead are attested on ceramic, papyrus, linen, and stone. The most common material is ceramic (with a preference for red ceramic produced either by firing or by added slip). The most common form is a bowl. Logically, it is probable that water, beer, or food may have been deposited in these bowls as offerings, but no scientific analysis has yet confirmed this hypothesis. The bowls were in themselves offerings and accordingly the letters upon them were similarly being offered. Bowl letters were typically written on the vessel's interior, with a few notable exceptions: the Oxford Bowl, the Louvre Bowl, and the Qau Bowl, discussed above. The Oxford Bowl more closely resembles a cup, however, being rather narrow. The location of its text on the vessel's exterior could be explained practically by the narrowness of the vessel. The Louvre Bowl has red paint applied on the interior of the vessel, perhaps restricting the letter to its exterior. Whether the letter was written on the inside or outside of the bowl could also, of course, reflect stylistic choice, individual preference, or even social position. The Qau Bowl, for instance, displayed Shepsi's letter to his mother on the exterior of the bowl, while the letter to his father was given privileged placement on the interior, presumably by virtue of the father's status as head of the family.

While only one letter written upon linen and two upon limestone (i.e., Wente's Stela and Ostrakon Louvre 698) are known, five Letters to the Dead written on papyrus have been identified. This is not unexpected, since ceramic and papyrus would also have been the most common material for letters of any type in ancient Egypt. Limestone, papyrus, and linen were also common materials found in mortuary contexts, making their use in addressing the effective dead unsurprising as media that already possessed potential for supernatural efficacy. Linen, for example, often touched the body or organs of the deceased, this intimacy rendering it a potent medium for a Letter to the Dead.

Images in the letters

Three artifacts upon which letters are written include associated images: the two letters on Wente's Stela are painted on the back of the stela, while the front bears an offering scene in which a woman is portrayed; the Oxford Bowl features an image of a coffin below the letter; and the Berlin Bowl bears an image of a seated female figure. Though the role of these images is not entirely clear, it is possible that they represent the intended recipient or an intermediary. The Berlin Bowl letter was written by an unnamed husband to his unnamed wife. The image of a woman upon the bowl could logically be understood to be a depiction of this female recipient. In the case of Wente's Stela this theory is confirmed: the recipient of the two letters on the verso is the same woman (cf. Wente 1975 – 1976) who is shown in the offering scene on the front. The offering stela possibly became a locus for the continued, posthumous relationships this woman shared with her brother and husband, who would later choose this charged artifact upon which to write their letters. The coffin depicted on the Oxford Bowl, on the other hand, possibly served as an intermediary for the intended recipient, Meniupu. This interpretation is supported by the Ostrakon Louvre 698 letter, which is addressed, not to the deceased woman Ikhtay directly, but to the noble coffin in which she rests (Goldwasser 1995). In the oLouvre letter, Ikhtay's husband, Butehamon, speaks to the august coffin (*fdt špss*) and requests that it hear him and send his letter to Ikhtay. Cooney convincingly explains, "This man used his wife's coffin as a communicative tool in his letter because it had been ritually charged in funerary ceremonies . . . the ritually charged thing could therefore be understood as a channel between the world of the living and the realm of the dead" (Cooney 2007: 276). Much like the tomb, the coffin possessed a liminal status co-existing within the earthly realm and the divine hereafter. The image, then, of the coffin on the Oxford Bowl can be understood as a visual stand-in for the recipient, Meniupu.

General Trends and Interpretations

Due to a small, mostly unprovenanced dataset, spread out over approximately two thousand years, it is difficult to interpret the significance of observable trends pertaining to the Letters to the Dead. Indeed, there seem to be no discernable patterns between the topics of request, media, and historical period of the letters. Three trends, however, are identifiable:

1. The majority of letters are written on ceramic (particularly bowls) and papyrus.

This is likely due to the fact that ceramic and papyrus were, as stated above, the most common media for letters of any type in ancient Egypt. This deliberate choice of media could also be a reflection of the letters' ritual function, which is addressed below.

2. The Letters to the Dead become more numerous in the First Intermediate Period.

Archaeologically, the First Intermediate Period is a period of material paucity, compared to the Old and Middle Kingdoms. However, it is during this period that an increase in the number of Letters to the Dead is observable. Donnat Beauquier (2014) has suggested this trend is associated with shifts in social, political, and religious structures—namely, growing regionalism, the earliest extant evidence of a cult to the deified dead (i.e., Djedi of Dynasty V), and the abating centrality of the king as mortuary facilitator (Bussmann 2010; Müller-Wollermann 2014). The First Intermediate Period was thus a period in which power structures shifted away from the gods and the king in favor of local elite. These shifts, coupled with the intimacy of the letters' topics of request (e.g., family matters, fertility), perhaps explain why letter petitioners may have favored appeals directed at family members or the local, recently deceased, rather than toward other powerful supernatural actors, such as the gods or king.

3. The Letters to the Dead seem to decrease in popularity by the end of the New Kingdom.

Twelve Letters to the Dead are known from the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom, while only four letters date to the Second Intermediate Period and New

Kingdom. No letters are known from the Third Intermediate Period and only one can be dated to the Late Period. A possible explanation for this trend is that Letters to the Dead were eventually supplanted by other preferred forms of supernatural engagement, such as votive stelae, cults to local gods and deified dead, or letters to the gods.

An oft-cited interpretation of the Letters to the Dead is that the letters had a ritual function (Gardiner and Sethe 1928; Willems 2001: 255, 348-350; Moreno García 2010; Harrington 2013; Donnat Beauquier 2014). Evidence that speaks to this use includes the tendency of the letters to be written upon red vessels (commonly used in ritual activities, such as funerary, execration, and purification rites) whose form, moreover, identifies them primarily as offering vessels, and the utilization of visual intermediaries such as the Oxford Bowl's depiction of a coffin. That Letters to the Dead tended to be written on whole vessels is perhaps the best evidence in support of their ritual function. As Gardiner and Sethe explain, "whenever a text is written, not merely on a potsherd, but on an entire pot there is ipso facto presumptive evidence of its votive character" (Gardiner and Sethe 1928: 27).

In addition to their votive character, the Letters to the Dead reflect quotidian social contracts that existed between the living and the dead, as *akbw*. Such a social contract is best exemplified by the Hu Bowl, upon which one reads: *jrr.t(w) prt-hrw n sh hr sbt hry tp t3*

"Voice offerings are made for the *akb* because of the watching over the one who is upon earth." A similar sentiment is echoed in the letter found on Wente's Stela, in which a husband promises his wife offerings in return for her helping him with his illness. The Letters to the Dead belong to the larger sphere of interaction between the living and the dead—including, but not limited to, the Appeals to the Living, which give voice to the dead and help to further articulate expected social behavior, as well as Coffin Text spell 38, which is similar in content to a Letter to the Dead (De Jong 1995; Willems 2014: 184-190). Within this sphere of interaction, the living and the dead participated in a dynamic and intangible social network. The Letters to the Dead help us understand the displacement and transformation caused by the reassembling of these two social nodes—the living and the *akbw* as representatives of the dead. Although the dead are factually immobile, existing only in the memories of the living, in ancient Egypt they were nevertheless perceived as possessing agency. The objects upon which the letters were written, and through which interactions between the living and the dead were conducted, were also endowed with potency. The Letters to the Dead were thus effective social contracts that confirmed and negotiated relationships between the living ancient Egyptians and the deceased, who did not go away dead, but went away alive.

Bibliographic Notes

The first monograph to consider the Letters to the Dead as a corpus is Gardiner and Sethe's (1928) compilation of seven letters: Cairo Linen, Hu Bowl, Qau Bowl, Berlin Bowl, Cairo Bowl, Oxford Bowl, and Leiden Papyrus. The remaining letters have been edited in individual articles (e.g., Gardiner 1930; Schott 1930; Piankoff and Clère 1934; Desroches-Noblecourt 1953). The most recent comprehensive study is Donnat Beauquier (2014). Over a dozen articles discuss specific letters, or the corpus as a whole, as evidence for ancient Egyptian religious behaviors: for example, Baines (1987 and 1991); Cooney (2007); Guilmo (1966); Gunn (1930); el-Leithy (2003); O'Donoghue (1999). Some letters have received greater attention than others: the two letters from Naga el-Deir have been discussed by Simpson (1966 and 1970) and Goedicke (1972). Goedicke (1988) has also discussed the Qubbet el-Hawa Bowl, as have Edel (1987 and 2008) and Seidlmayer (2006). The Berlin Papyrus has received a fair amount of coverage (Grapow 1915; Jürgens 1990;

Willems 2001), and the Ostrakon Louvre 698 has been the focus of works by Frandsen (1992) and Goldwasser (1995). The latest addition to the corpus was discovered in the Brooklyn Museum (Jasnow and Vittmann 1992 – 1993), inspiring others to re-consider previously published inscriptions and artifacts in museum storerooms. For example, Barbotin has published a number of studies on the Statue of Ahmes-Sapar, first referenced by Gardiner in his aforementioned article of 1930 (Barbotin 2005; 2007a and b; 2008).

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Figure 1. The Qau Bowl: interior and exterior. UC 16163. Courtesy of The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London.

Figure 2. The Brooklyn Papyrus. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.1799E (Photo: Brooklyn Museum, CUR.37.1799E_recto_IMLS_PS5.jpg).