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Final Report on a Research Stay in Paris (9-23 Aug. 2026)

The travel grant awarded to me by the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (DMG) in the summer of 2026 was of great importance for the continuation of my research project, which I began in 2025. The grant enabled me to undertake a research stay in Paris from 9 to 23 August 2026, during which I had the opportunity to examine and study original Egyptian Hieratic papyri preserved in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). This research represented an essential stage in my ongoing work on the administrative archive of King Seti I and allowed me to examine the original papyri, providing information that could not be obtained from digital reproductions alone.

I am very grateful to the DMG for its generous support, which made this research possible. The opportunity to work directly with the original manuscripts was particularly valuable for the study of handwriting, palaeography, textual features, and the physical characteristics of the papyri. The following report summarizes the aims, activities, and results of my research stay.

1. Project Overview and Background

My current research project, “The Archive of Seti I: Administrative Hieratic Documents from Memphis,” aims to publish, analyze, and provide historical context for the complete archive of administrative documents from the reign of Seti I at Memphis. The inspiration for this project stems from my Ph.D. Which focused on publishing Papyrus No. EA 10204, housed in the British Museum. This is an unpublished and unstudied administrative Hieratic papyrus, and its provenance is unknown.

Through detailed study, it has been determined that Papyrus EA. 10204 belongs to the palace archive of King Seti I. The archive consists of 17 documents, currently held in four major museums: 10 at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Rollin Papyri), 5 at the British Museum, 1 at Cambridge University Library, and 1 at the Morgan Library & Museum.

2. Previous Research and the Importance of Paris Stay

The research stays in Paris followed an earlier research trip to London in 2025, supported by the Robert Anderson Trust. During that trip, I examined several documents belonging to the same archive in the collections of the British Museum and Cambridge University Library, including Papyrus EA 10204, EA 10400, EA 10189, EA 73668, EA 10333, EA 10401, and Cambridge University Library MS Add. 4167.

The comparison of these manuscripts has demonstrated the importance of palaeographical analysis for reconstructing the archive. Several of the documents appear to have been written by the same scribes or display closely related handwriting characteristics. Papyrus EA 10204 itself was written by several scribes, making the identification and comparison of individual hands an important element of the project.

The research trip to France was therefore a necessary next step. The Rollin Papyri preserved at the BnF constitutes a particularly important part of the archive, yet they have not previously been studied comprehensively through direct examination of the original manuscripts. Previous research has relied to a significant extent on the facsimile publication of Spiegelberg¹. Furthermore, the BnF's online resources currently provide original photographs for only a limited number of the papyri, namely BnF 203–206. Consequently, a substantial part of the group remains insufficiently documented, and the handwriting and physical characteristics of these manuscripts cannot be adequately assessed from the available published material alone.

The direct examination of the originals in Paris was therefore essential for advancing the project.

3. Research Activities at the Bibliothèque nationale de France

During my stay in Paris, I conducted several days of research at the Département des Manuscrits of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where I examined the Rollin Papyri belonging to the archive of Seti I. My work focused particularly on the original manuscripts and included the examination of their handwriting, palaeographical characteristics, textual layout, and physical condition.

Studying the original papyri provided information that cannot always be obtained from photographs or facsimiles. The examination of the original documents allowed me to observe the characteristics of individual signs, the ductus of the scribes, corrections and additions, the arrangement of the text on the surface of the papyrus, and other palaeographical details. These observations are particularly important for distinguishing individual scribal hands and for establishing relationships between documents within the archive.

The opportunity to compare the BnF papyri directly with the manuscripts I had previously examined in London was especially valuable. Such comparisons provide an important basis for identifying similarities and differences in handwriting and for determining whether documents were produced by the same scribes or within the same scribal environment. The results of this comparative work will contribute directly to the palaeographical and historical reconstruction of the archive.

The research conducted at the BnF also allowed me to assess the manuscripts from a material perspective and to identify details requiring further documentation and analysis. These observations will be incorporated into future editions of the individual documents.

¹ Spiegelberg, W., *Rechnungen aus der Zeit Setis I* (Strasburg, 1896).

4. Research at the Louvre

In addition to my work at the BnF, I visited the Musée du Louvre during the research stay and examined two further administrative Hieratic papyri from the New Kingdom. This additional research was useful for placing the Seti I documents within the broader context of New Kingdom administrative writing.

The examination of these manuscripts provided further comparative material for my study of handwriting and administrative practices. Comparing documents from different collections is an important component of my research methodology, as it makes it possible to assess palaeographical similarities, scribal practices, and documentary conventions across different administrative contexts.

5. Results and Significance of the Research Stay

The research stay in Paris has made a significant contribution to the progress of my project. Most importantly, it enabled me to examine original manuscripts that had previously been accessible to me only through published facsimiles or limited photographic documentation. The direct examination of the original papyri provided new palaeographical and material evidence and has strengthened the comparative basis of my study.

The research carried out in Paris also confirmed the importance of treating the documents preserved in different institutions as components of a connected administrative archive rather than as isolated manuscripts. The comparison between the Rollin Papyri and the documents examined previously in London has opened new possibilities for identifying scribal relationships and reconstructing aspects of the administrative and scribal environment of Seti I's Memphis.

The observations and documentation obtained during the stay will form an important part of the subsequent stages of the project, particularly the preparation of transliterations, translations, palaeographical analyses, and historical commentary. They will also contribute to the eventual publication of the archive as a coherent corpus.