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COMSt

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The Collector's Heir: Käthe Rehfeld (Previously Grote, Née Hahn)

Peter Tarras, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

In 1922, Käthe Rehfeld (previously Grote, née Hahn) inherited from her deceased husband Friedrich Grote (1861–1922) what was one of the largest and most impressive private collections of Eastern Christian manuscripts. Particularly outstanding about this collection was the fact that most, if not all, of it derived from the library of Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai, Egypt. Grote was one of the main people responsible for the dislocation of manuscripts from this unique archive. The dispersion of Sinaitic manuscripts was continued by Rehfeld (then Grote-Hahn) after the collector's death. His heir, however, appears to have had no interest in his collectibles whatsoever, apart from their monetary value. This affected the biographies (object lives) of a great number of Sinaitic manuscripts that we now find in European public and private collections. Next to nothing has so far been published about Rehfeld's life and the way she handled the Grote collection. The aim of this paper is to provide some basic biographical information on Käthe Rehfeld and describe the way in which she influenced the fate of the collection after Grote's death. This research is based to a large extent on archival sources. It shows how in looking for potential buyers Rehfeld made use of academic and institutional networks established by Grote. Most importantly, it contributes to the largely unexplored provenance history of Sinaitic manuscripts in European collections.

The aim of this communication is to provide some basic biographical information on Käthe Rehfeld, née Hahn, widowed Grote. Rehfeld was the second wife of the collector Friedrich Heinrich Ludwig Grote (1861–1922), who had assembled a huge collection of Eastern Christian manuscripts and manuscript fragments in various languages.¹ Notably, most or all of the so-called Grote collection consisted of dislocated items from the library of Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai, Egypt; Grote had access to the library for several months in 1892 and 1893. The Grote collection as such seems to have formed around the turn of the century, and was dispersed after his death. Through the mediation of antiquaries, Grote's manuscripts reached many private collectors and collecting institutions, and today, the former Grote collection is scattered across over a dozen collections of the Global North (Europe and North America). It is important to note that Grote started dealing in Sinaitic manuscripts in his later years, and among his buyers were well-known (as well as some lesser-known) Oriental scholars, such as Agnes Smith Lewis (1843–1926) and Margaret Dunlop Gibson (1843–1920), Paul Kahle (1875–1965), or Carl August Reinhardt (1856–1903): this means that not all manuscripts whose

1 See Tarras 2020; Tarras 2024; Tarras forthcoming.

provenance history is connected to Grote derive from the dispersal of his collection after his death.

Käthe Rehfeld, who appears in the literature on the Grote collection mostly as Käthe Grote-Hahn, was responsible for this dispersion of the collection. She was a collector's heir rather than a collector like her husband. She appears to have had no interest whatsoever in Grote's collectibles, apart from their monetary value. This stance towards the collection turned out to be decisive for the biography (object life) of a great number of Sinaitic manuscripts that we now find in European public and private collections. In the following, I shall first summarise Käthe Rehfeld's biography and then describe the ways in which she influenced the fate of the collection after the collector's death.²

Biography

Käthe Rehfeld was born as Emmy Marie Käthe Hahn on 28 June 1894 in Schwedt/Oder, Prussia.³ Her mother was Marie Hahn, née Dietrich (d. between 1919 and 1922). Her father, Theodor Hahn jun. (d. 1916), owned a soap factory in Schwedt and also ran a colonial goods store.⁴ The building that housed the main business premises was completed in 1893 and is now one of the city's monuments (corner of Monplaisirstrasse and Chausseestraße, today Bahnhofstraße at Vierradener Platz).⁵ In 1889, the family crest, a rooster (German 'Hahn') above a bar of soap, was attached to it, and is still there today.⁶

- 2 The following is a more detailed presentation of information I also provide in Tarras 2024; 2023. This information derives from the following archival sources (abbreviation in parentheses): Stadtarchiv Bad Tölz (B), Evangelischer Zentralfriedhof Regensburg (EZ), Archiv der Universität Greifswald (G), Stadtarchiv Bad Homburg vor der Höhe (H), Stadtarchiv Leutkirch/Allgäu (L), Stadtarchiv Regensburg (R), Stadtarchiv Schwedt/Oder (S). I would like to thank the following archivists for their help: Martin Baumer, Folker Förtsch, Barbara Günther, Nicole Holm, Sebastian Lindmeyr, Andreas Mengel, Susanne Rieck, Marianne Schumann, Ulrich Seemüller, and Nicola Siegloch.
- 3 B, Register of deaths, no. 178; H, resident's registration card; L, family register, vol. VII, 304; R, family group sheet; S, register of births, no. 171.
- 4 L, family register, vol. VII, 304; R, family group sheet; S, Register of births, no. 171. Stadt Schwedt/Oder 2012, 96.
- 5 Stadt Schwedt/Oder 2012, 96.
- 6 Borriß 1935, 19. Images of the building and the crest can be viewed on the city's homepage, <https://www.schwedt.eu/de/land_bb_boa_01.c.166040.de/> (accessed 8 March 2023).

The family moved to Berlin, probably in 1912, and Theodor Hahn died in 1916.⁷ He had the rank of a military officer ('Offizier' or 'Hauptmann') and probably fought in World War I.⁸ Rehfeld first attended the local secondary school (Lyzeum) of Schwedt and then two girls' schools in Berlin (Viktoria Luisenschule, Wilmersdorf; Dörstlingersche Höhere Mädchenschule, Schöneberg).⁹ In 1918, however, she did not take her Abitur (higher education entrance qualification) in Berlin, but at the Realgymnasium in Ulm, Württemberg;¹⁰ she was perhaps staying there with relatives at the time, with the final exams very likely having been delayed due to the war. In any event, it was in Ulm where she met her future husband Friedrich Grote, who was 33 years her senior.¹¹ He seems to have prepared her privately for her exams.¹²

The couple married around Christmas 1918 (on 21 or 23 December) in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.¹³ Käthe officially took Grote's name, but both corresponded under the double name Grote-Hahn. In early 1919, the Grotes moved to Leutkirch, Württemberg, where they had an apartment in Bahnhofstraße 417 (today Poststraße 30).¹⁴ Grote worked for a short period as a teacher ('Oberlehrer') at the local Reformschule, which was founded in 1917 by the archaeologist, writer, and pedagogue Gustav Adolf Müller (1866–1928).¹⁵

7 R, family group sheet. Theodor Hahn's building in Schwedt was bought by the Märkische Reisstärkefabrik GmbH in 1912; again, see <https://www.schwedt.eu/de/land_bb_boa_01.c.166040.de/>. Hence, it appears likely that the family left the city around that time.

8 R, family group sheet. Grote-Hahn 1930, curriculum vitae [n. p.].

9 Grote-Hahn 1930, curriculum vitae [n. p.].

10 G, Martikel Sommersemester 1928; see also Grote-Hahn 1930, curriculum vitae [n. p.].

11 L, resident's registration sheet. No archival records related to Grote are held by the municipal archive of Ulm. The register of residents was completely destroyed in the air raid of 17 December 1944. Ulrich Seemüller, deputy head of the archive, informed me on 20 December 2022 that there is no entry for Grote in the address books from 1919 to 1921. There is also no entry in the civil family register. Klaus-Hinrich Stumpff, Friedrich Grote's grandnephew and biographer of Grote's father Ludwig Grote (1825–1887), communicated on 10 January 2020 the following personal information: 'Later he [Grote] lived in Berlin for a longer period where he married his second wife Käthe Hahn, his former student' ('Später lebte er [Grote] längere Zeit in Berlin, wo er seine zweite Frau Käthe Hahn ehelichte, seine frühere Schülerin').

12 See Grote-Hahn 1930, curriculum vitae [n.p.].

13 L, family register, vol. VII, 304; R, Familienbogen. See also Stumpff 2018, [600].

14 L, resident's registration sheet.

15 L, family register, vol. VII, 304. Georg Graf calls Grote 'Oberschullehrer' in a letter to Emil Gratzl from 25 July 1919 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 3). I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Dr. Hubert Kaufhold

For reasons of space the school was moved to Crailsheim in early 1919, and Grote's employment ended then.¹⁶ It was possibly for this reason that he started selling more manuscripts. For instance, one Arabic codex (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.arab. 1065) was acquired from Grote on 22 June 1919 by the Bavarian State Library for 500 marks.¹⁷ However, he also seems to have used close friends and relatives as intermediaries for his sales. On 16 December 1920, the British Museum acquired an Arabic manuscript (London, British Library, Oriental 8681) from a certain Oskar Volk who, as it turns out, ran the local cinema in Leutkirch,¹⁸ and was a book printer by trade.¹⁹ Like Müller, he certainly belonged to the circle of acquaintances of the Grotes in Leutkirch.

In Leutkirch, Rehfeld gave birth to her only child, Heinz Friedrich Ludwig Theodor, on 2 July 1920.²⁰ Tragically, like Grote's first child from his first marriage (Henriette, born 5 November 1900, died 5 June 1902),²¹ the boy died at the age of two, on 10 July 1922. At that time, Grote's registered place of residence was Regensburg, Bavaria,²² but his resident's registration card records that the rest of the family still resided in Leutkirch. As his job title he gives 'Privatbeamter', which was a common term for commercial employees.²³ It is probably no coincidence that his death, which occurred on 15 August 1922, was reported by the pharmacist and publisher Johannes Sonntag (1863–1945).²⁴ Sonntag's pharmacy (Engelapotheke) was on Regensburg's Neupfarrplatz (E 29) in the immediate vicinity of Grote's apartment (Neup-

who supported me by transcribing some of Graf's letters among Gratzl's papers. In a personal communication on 10 January 2020, Klaus-Hinrich Stumpff told me: 'Later he [Grote] was deputy principal at the Gymnasium in Leutkirch' ('Später war er [Grote] stellvertretender Direktor am Gymnasium in Leutkirch'). On Gustav Adolf Müller, see Dennert 2012; Förtsch 2009.

16 Förtsch 2009, 45–46. L, resident's registration sheet.

17 Sobieroj 2007, 10; Tarras 2020, 75, n. 3; Tarras forthcoming.

18 See Cottrell 2020, 346, n. 68; Siegloch 2021.

19 Volk does not seem to have owned a printing press, but rather worked with various local printers. He had moved to Leutkirch in 1914 and finally left the city in 1922. Interestingly, his registration card records Geneva as his last place of residence. Grote's family had lived in Geneva until 1884 and he retained contacts in Switzerland until the end of his life. Unfortunately, Volk's birthdate is not recorded. But it cannot be ruled out that Grote knew Volk previously, and that the latter, in some way or other, actually occasioned the Grotes to move to Leutkirch.

20 L, family register, vol. VII, 304; R, family group sheet.

21 R, family group sheet.

22 R, resident's registration card.

23 R, resident's registration card.

24 R, Register of deaths, no. 707.

farrplatz 12)—although Grote died in a tram car near Kasernplatz 1²⁵—and Grote may have been intending to work in the new factory for homeopathic medicines (ISO-Werk KG) that Sonntag was about to open.²⁶ In any event, Rehfeld never moved to Regensburg. Her deceased husband was buried on 18 August 1922 at the Protestant Central Cemetery in Regensburg.²⁷ The tomb or burial site (grave no. XVIII) no longer exists today.²⁸

Rehfeld was registered in Leutkirch until 1924.²⁹ However, she had moved back to Berlin at the latest in 1923.³⁰ At the University of Berlin she began studying political sciences ('Staatswissenschaft').³¹ From 1928 until 1930, she continued her studies at the University of Greifswald. During that time she lived in close vicinity to the university (Karlsplatz 8, renamed Karl-Marx-Platz in 1946).³² In 1930, she graduated from the University of Greifswald with a doctorate in political sciences.³³ When the National Socialists came to power, Rehfeld was apparently an open supporter of the regime. From April 1934 onwards, she was the second secretary of *Die Deutsche Frau* (from 1935, *Die deutsche Landfrau*), a publication of the Ring Nationaler Frauen, a group close to the National Socialist Party.³⁴ During World War II, Rehfeld lived in Berlin-Wilmersdorf (Hildegardstraße 14/II). Georg Graf (1875–1955) reports that when Russian forces occupied Berlin in 1945, parts of the Grote collection were destroyed or taken away.³⁵

In 1948, Rehfeld moved to Bad Homburg vor der Höhe in Hesse, part of the American occupation zone.³⁶ She had taken the remainder of the collection with her, which was finally sold in 1953 or 1954 (see below). In 1962, Käthe married her second husband, the engineer Walter (Hans August Karl Friedrich Berthold) Rehfeld (born 9 November 1881 in Osterdorf-Jägerhof,

25 R, Register of deaths, no. 707. Huhle-Kreutzer 1989, 331–332; Blessing 2010, 40–42.

26 Sonntag 1948.

27 EZ, death register, 1922, no. 41.

28 Personal communication of Martin Baumer, 5 December 2022.

29 L, resident's registration card.

30 For example, there is a letter of hers dispatched from Berlin on 6 March 1923, which is quoted in Fedeli 2019, 239, n. 55. See also Grote-Hahn 1923, 423, which is signed 'Käthe Grote-Hahn Wilmersdorf'; Bees 1924, 45.

31 Grote-Hahn 1930, curriculum vitae [n.p.].

32 Amtliche Verzeichnisse der Studierenden der Preussischen Universität zu Greifswald, Sommersemester 1928–Wintersemester 1929/30, <<https://www.digitale-bibliothek-mv.de/viewer/toc/PPN770030130/1/>> (accessed 9 May 2023).

33 Grote-Hahn 1930.

34 Streubel 2006, 172.

35 Graf 1954, 125.

36 H, resident's registration card.

Mecklenburg, died 30 July 1974 in Bad Homburg).³⁷ After his death in 1974, she stayed for a short time in the spa town of Bad Tölz, Bavaria, probably for health reasons, and died in the local hospital on 12 May 1975.³⁸

The Grote Collection

At Grote's death in 1922, Käthe Rehfeld (then Grote-Hahn) inherited what was one of the largest and most impressive private collections of Eastern Christian manuscripts, consisting at that point of hundreds of fragments and some more or less complete codices. One of the very first offers to sell items was made to Cambridge University's Westminster College only half a year after the collector had died. An extract from the written communication was published by Alba Fedeli.³⁹ It clearly shows that Rehfeld was well informed about at least some of the fragments of Sinaitic manuscripts and their respective parent codices, which Grote had sold to other collectors earlier on, and in my view, this suggests that he consciously bequeathed her his collection as a financial reserve. It is also notable that Rehfeld more than once turned to buyers who already owned Grote manuscripts—she appears to have been using the academic and institutional networks established by her deceased husband.

The collector's widow granted access to the collection from the 1920s through the 1950s. One of the first to see the collection in Berlin-Wilmersdorf was the Byzantinist Nikos Bees (1883–1953).⁴⁰ Bees mentions Sinaitic prayer books ('Brevien'), which he dates to the seventeenth century CE.⁴¹ These are possibly identical to the Greek liturgical manuscripts that later formed part of the collection of Walther Adam (1881–1964) and are now owned by the Norwegian private collector Martin Schøyen;⁴² Adam might have acquired them

37 H, resident's registration card; H, register of deaths, no. 598; B, register of deaths, no. 178.

38 B, register of deaths, no. 178.

39 Fedeli 2019, 239, n. 55. Apparently, the primary addressee of Rehfeld's offer was John Wood Oman (1860–1939), then the principal of Westminster College. Rehfeld had sent him a postcard, dispatched from Berlin and dated 6 March 1923, writing: 'I have the quire of your Lectionary which has disappeared and I wish to know if you are interested in it and if you would buy it and at which price'. The postcard (shelfmark: 1475/6/1/38) is today kept with the lectionary. See Müller-Kessler 2022, 25, n. 14.

40 Notably, Bees and Rehfeld lived less than 400 metres away from each other, Bees in Weimarer Straße 19, Rehfeld in Hildegardstraße 14. Rehfeld also contributed to the *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*, edited and published by Bees. See Grote-Hahn 1923.

41 Bees 1924, 45.

42 The manuscripts are described in Dörfling 1987, 21–22.

around 1925.⁴³ Adam was supported in building up his collection—which was publicly displayed in Goslar, Lower Saxony, until 1979—by the Semitist Hugo Duensing (1877–1961),⁴⁴ who had been familiar with the Grote collection from the turn of the century and had published on its Christian Palestinian Aramaic fragments from 1906 onwards.⁴⁵ Indeed, he himself had managed to acquire several fragments, first from Grote and later from Rehfeld, which he donated to the State and University Library in Göttingen.⁴⁶

At the end of 1929, the Kartvelologist Grigol Peradze (1899–1942) visited Rehfeld in her apartment in Berlin. He inspected several Georgian manuscripts, among which was a palimpsest with Christian Palestinian Aramaic *scriptio inferior* that had already been edited by Duensing in 1906. Even though Peradze remarked ‘Since the lady is selling these manuscripts, I have no right to publish my notes on these manuscripts’,⁴⁷ he made an important discovery, which was published in 1933.⁴⁸ Peradze realised that the palimpsest had already been described by Alek’sandre C’agareli in his 1888 catalogue of the Georgian manuscripts of the Sinai monastery (manuscript no. 81).⁴⁹

Rehfeld did, in fact, sell this specific manuscript in the 1930s, when it was bought by the Leiden-based antiquarian Erik von Scherling (1907–1956).⁵⁰ Together with it and some further Georgian fragments, she also sold this manuscript dealer a huge number of Arabic and Syriac manuscripts, which now make up the Sinai manuscripts in the collection of Alphonse Mingana (1878–1937) in the Cadbury Research Library of the University of Birmingham. An important implication of this is that, although Mingana had visited the Sinai himself in 1929, it is not the case that he obtained manuscripts at the local monastery, as is sometimes suggested.⁵¹ Equally, Mingana’s Sinaitic manuscripts do not go back to Constantin von Tischendorf (1815–1874), as he himself publicly proclaimed⁵²—he seems to have said this to deflect well-founded suspicions that at least part of what he had obtained from the former Grote

43 Adam mentions this date in a letter to Julius Aßfalg dated 14 October 1961. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Dr. Hubert Kaufhold for giving me access to Aßfalg’s papers.

44 See Strothmann 1977a, 281.

45 Duensing 1906; Duensing 1938; Duensing 1944; Duensing 1955.

46 Duensing 1938, 44; Duensing 1944, 215. See also Albrecht 2012, col. 310; Albrecht 2013, 270–271.

47 Peradze 1999, 209, Anm. 30: ‘Da die Dame diese Handschriften verkauft, habe ich kein Recht, meine Notizen über diese Handschriften zu edieren’.

48 Peradze 1933, 191.

49 C’agareli 1888, 233.

50 See Tarras 2020, 82. On Scherling, see Kidd 2015.

51 E.g. Samir 1990, 35; Géhin 2017, 12.

52 See Heal 2015, 29–30; Fedeli 2019, 230–231.

collection had been illicitly removed from Saint Catherine's Monastery. The items in the Mingana collection that go back to the Grote collection comprise eight Georgian manuscripts (shelfmarks Georg. 1–8), 88 Christian Arabic manuscripts (shelfmarks Chr. Ar. 93, 94, and Chr. Ar. Add. 123–208), and 40 Syriac manuscripts (shelfmarks Syr. 623–662).⁵³ There are possibly a few more Sinaitic manuscripts in the collection, but further provenance research would be required to identify them.

Georg Graf—who later indicated that part of the Grote collection was lost at the end of World War II, as noted above—was first contacted by Grote in 1919, but had already unknowingly dealt with at least one of Grote's manuscripts, in 1914.⁵⁴ The Grote collection was a recurrent topic in the correspondence between Graf and Emil Gratzl (1877–1957),⁵⁵ who was in charge of the acquisition of Oriental manuscripts for the Bavarian State Library in Munich until 1939. In 1921, Graf was successful in arranging for the library to purchase six Christian Arabic manuscripts from Grote. Then in May 1924, after Grote's death, Graf suggested that the Bavarian State Library should buy the remainder of the Grote collection.⁵⁶ At the end of the same year, he obtained from the widow an inventory of the collection.⁵⁷ To Gratzl he wrote: 'I have no doubt that, if not all, at least most of Grote's [sic] Mss fragments derive from the Sinai monastery'.⁵⁸ Further, he adds:

As for the possibility of acquisition, the prospects seem unfortunately low. Mrs. Grote writes that, in her opinion, the Bavarian State Library probably does not have the means for purchasing it [the Grote collection], since not even the Berlin library could pay the price.⁵⁹

In fact, the Bavarian State Library did not buy a single further fragment. The topic of the Grote collection was taken up again by Graf after World War II. In September 1950, Graf returned from the eleventh German Congress of Orientalists (Deutscher Orientalistentag) in Marburg and paid Rehfeld a visit in Bad Homburg. One year later, Graf wrote to Gratzl: 'Last year, I received from the widow Mrs. Grote who lives in Bad Homburg a larger part of

53 Garitte 1960; Géhin 2010; Heal 2015, 34–36; Fedeli 2019, 229–232.

54 Graf 1915; Graf 1925; Tarras 2024.

55 See Tarras 2020.

56 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 12.

57 This list seems to be preserved neither in Gratzl's nor in Graf's papers.

58 My English translation quoted from Tarras 2020, 78.

59 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 14 (2 November 1924): 'Was die Möglichkeit der Erwerbung betrifft, so scheinen die Aussichten leider gering. Denn Frau Grote schreibt, dass nach Ihrer Ansicht die Bayerische Staatsbibliothek wahrscheinlich nicht die Mittel zu ihrem Ankauf aufbringen werde, da nicht einmal die Berliner Bibliothek den Preis bezahlen konnte'.

Arabic manuscripts for inspection and evaluation and, upon my return from the Orientalist Congress in Marburg, I visited her and saw even more manuscripts—unfortunately all fragments’.⁶⁰ Graf informed Gratzl that Rehfeld had offered the collection to the Vatican Library and that Cardinal Giovanni Mercati (1866–1957), prefect of the Vatican Library, was inclined to purchase it. Importantly, from Graf’s letter we also learn that the collection had already been sent to the Vatican in 1950. The purchase then took place at the end of 1953 or the beginning of 1954. In February 1954, Graf told Gratzl: ‘Dr. Kathi [sic] Grote in Bad Homburg succeeded in the end in selling all the rest of the manuscript collection to the Vatican Library. Neither she nor the Vatican Library informed me of the price.’⁶¹

Until the Vatican Library eventually bought ‘all the rest of the manuscript collection’, the price had been the main stumbling block. Another letter from Graf to Gratzl, from 15 May 1952, is quite revealing in this respect. First of all, Graf points out that the year-long negotiations with the Vatican Library had been unsuccessful (hence, the price must have been adjusted later). Then he reports that René Draguet (1896–1980), at the time the general secretary of the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* in Louvain, also declined with the following explanation:

Regarding the offer for the purchase of the Grote collection, I received from Mrs. Grote a letter offering the collection for 23,000 D[eutsche]M[ark]. I have not thought it useful to send the offer to the Library of Louvain, because I know that the Librarian cannot devote such sums to the purchase of manuscripts. For my part, I consider this matter to be over. Have the kindness to inform Mrs. Grote when you have the opportunity. It is moreover only because of you that I have considered this matter.⁶²

60 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 66 (29 September 1951): ‘Voriges Jahr erhielt ich von der Witwe Frau Dr. Grote, die in Bad Homburg lebt, einen größeren Teil arabischer Hss. zur Einsicht und Wertung und bei meiner Rückkehr vom Orientalistenkongress in Marburg besuchte ich sie auch und sah noch mehr Hss.—leider lauter Fragmente’.

61 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 71 (21 February 1954): ‘[...] hat die Frau Dr. Kathi [sic] Grote in Bad Homburg doch noch den Ankauf des ganzen Restes der Hss.-Sammlung durch die Vatikan. Bibliothek erreicht. Über den Preis hat weder sie noch die Vat. Bibliothek mir Mitteilung gemacht.’

62 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 68: ‘En ce qui concerne l’offre pour l’achat de la collection Grote, j’ai reçu, de Mme Grote, une lettre proposant la collection pour DM 23000. Je n’ai pas cru utile de transmettre l’offre à la Bibliothèque de Louvain, car je sais que le Bibliothécaire ne peut consacrer de pareilles sommes à l’achat de MSS. De mon côté je considère cette affaire comme terminée; ayez la bonté d’en informer Mme Grote, lorsque vous en

Unlike Cardinal Mercati, Draguet did not seem to have been inclined at all to even try to make the purchase. Notably, some of Grote's manuscripts had already been bought by the library of the Catholic University of Louvain after World War I, but had been destroyed when the library was set on fire (for the second time in its history) by German troops in 1940.⁶³ It is unclear if any earlier negotiations with Grote played a role in Draguet's decision. Be that as it may, Graf was at his wit's end. Still, Rehfeld apparently wished for his further help in selling the collection, and in his letter to Gratzl, Graf quotes the following paragraph from one of her letters:

I would be particularly grateful if you would send me your⁶⁴ price offer. As a matter of fact it's quite difficult for me to determine the value of such a manuscript collection ... Considering Louvain's answer, I think it is absolutely necessary that one clarifies what the real market value of these manuscripts could be. It's not decisive what value these manuscripts have in the sense of a theoretical estimate, but what amount is usually paid for such a manuscript collection. Naturally, I'm clear that such a price is problematic in and of itself. But it should be possible to name a sum at which you, for example, would offer the manuscripts ...⁶⁵

In what follows this quote, Graf again emphasises to Gratzl that 'all pieces come from the Sinai monastery' ('sämtliche Stücke stammen aus dem Sinai-kloster'). He asked Gratzl for a realistic price estimate, and the latter complied.⁶⁶ However, Graf was anything but optimistic that the Bavarian State Library would buy the collection. After all, as Graf himself pointed out, the library was still restocking its own holdings to make up for what was lost during the war.

aurez l'occasion. C'est d'ailleurs uniquement en considération de vous-même que j'avais donné suite à cette affaire'.

63 See Strothmann 1977b, 292, n. 33. See also Tarras forthcoming.

64 Underlining in the original.

65 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 68: 'Ich wäre Ihnen besonders dankbar, wenn Sie mir Ihren Preisvorschlag machen würden. Es ist ja so, daß es für mich ziemlich schwierig ist, den Wert einer solchen Handschriftensammlung festzulegen ... In Anbetracht der Antwort von Loewen halte ich es zunächst für unbedingt notwendig, daß man klärt, welches der reale Marktwert dieser Hss. sein könnte. Das Entscheidende ist ja nicht, was für einen Wert diese Hss. im Sinne einer theoretischen Schätzung hat, sondern was für ein Betrag üblicherweise für so eine Hss.-Sammlung normalerweise gezahlt wird. Mir ist natürlich auch klar, daß so ein Preis an und für sich problematisch ist. Es wird aber doch möglich sein, eine Summe zu nennen, zu der z.B. Sie die Hss. anbieten würden ...'.

66 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 69 (10 June 1952). Graf, however, does not indicate the price estimate itself in this document.

In her letter to Graf, Rehfeld admitted that 'it's quite difficult for me to determine the value of such a manuscript collection'. The way she talked about it would seem to show that she never really considered it *her* collection. Indeed, shortly after Grote's death, everything was stored in sealed cases,⁶⁷ and later on, some of the manuscripts that were considered more valuable (which Graf assumed were exclusively Syriac manuscripts) were kept in a bank safe.⁶⁸ For the owner of the collection, though, the manuscripts were not valuable as cultural artefacts, but solely as objects of sale. As Graf put it in one of his letters to Gratzl: 'Mrs. Grote wants to, or rather, has to sell her entire collection (for her own livelihood)'.⁶⁹ All that the heir to this collection cared about was how best to monetise it.

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- 68 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 68.
- 69 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Gratzliana, G. Graf, Georg, no. 66: 'Frau Dr. Grote will bzw. muß (zu ihrem Unterhalt) ihre ganze Sammlung verkaufen'.

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