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Archives in Ancient Egypt, 2500–1000 BCE

Abstract: The article gathers and describes the evidence relating to archives in ancient Egypt in the period *c.*2500–1000 BCE, and discusses its importance for our understanding of archival practices and functions. The material, which consists primarily of papyri, ostraca and, in some extraordinary cases, of clay tablets, is invariably fragmentary, widely distributed both chronologically and geographically, and in many cases largely unpublished. The article provides a convenient overview of the contents of the surviving archives with a notable focus on types of documents and their uses, as well as archaeological context and the materiality of manuscripts. Contextual material is only occasionally cited, and the emphasis throughout is on the physical documents as remains of archival holdings.

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1 Egyptological histories of archives

My aim in this article is to present the main groups of material relating to archives in ancient Egypt *c.*2500–1000 BCE, and—to a lesser extent—to look at the interpretation of this evidence, and its implications for our understanding of Egyptian culture and history. The lengthy descriptive introduction to the material is necessary because many of the largest and most important groups remain unpublished, and there is no good overview readily accessible, neither to scholars in general nor to specialists. The final part deals briefly with the vexed question of the extent to which the archives can be said to have been used.

As a philologist working with papyri and ostraca, many of them from archives, my focus is materially bound in a literal way: I am more concerned with case studies than generalisations. Definitions and terminology are not dealt with at length, in favour of a presentation of material and the processes it represents. That is not a value-judgment on the importance of such lexicographic aspects, but rather an admission that the ancient evidence for these aspects is severely limited, and its potential rather modest.[1]

This article is largely a work of synthesis, and thus owes much to the previous work of others; this will be clear from the references supplied in the text. For economy of space I have had to be selective in providing bibliographical information for individual sources, and not all relevant discussions are cited. I have drawn on a substantial amount of unpublished material, both my own (3.2.3, 3.3.2) and that of others, and I am grateful to the following colleagues for material, assistance and advice: Hratch Papazian and Paolo del Vesco on the Gebelein archive (3.1), Kim Ryholt on the Djoser archive (3.1), and Jürgen Osing and Matthias Müller on the Lahun archive (3.2.2). In presentations of ancient texts I follow Egyptological conventions (e.g. in the use of small capitals to indicate red ink in the original document). Translations are loose and aim to convey the sense of the Egyptian, and I have avoided overburdening the text with transliterated words and passages on the grounds that specialists will be able to check the originals with no difficulty, while the non-specialist would only be distracted by this level of detail.

Postscript: Brian Muhs' monograph on the economy of ancient Egypt (Muhs 2016) appeared too late to take into account here, but readers should be aware of a degree of overlap in the material we discuss, albeit from rather different perspectives.

1 Studies of Egyptian words that might be translated as 'archive' or 'library' have not made much progress in understanding the ancient institutions they denote; see e.g. Trapani 2008. There is also a fundamental methodological problem in trying to map essentially modern categories and concepts onto the ancient evidence in the way suggested by Zinn 2007.

As the papers at the conference from which this book stems made clear, there are many definitions of archive, not all of which can be pursued within the limits of a single article. The focus on administrative archives in this contribution excludes many aspects that are inextricably linked to the notion of archive and archival thinking. For example, in his lecture Dietmar Schenk, an archivist and archival scholar, emphasised the archive as 'an institution, in which the authentic evidence of the past is preserved in the long term'. This function, represented perhaps most paradigmatically in Egypt by the preservation of king-lists over several millennia,[2] is less relevant to administrative archives which tend not to be long-lived and do not seem to have been conceived of—or at least not consciously so—as repositories of cultural knowledge.

Archives from the earlier periods of Egyptian history are rarely discussed outside Egyptology,[3] perhaps mainly because of the various informal constellations of scholars (and their impact on conference line-ups), rather than any implicit disciplinary bias. The topic is not a new one, however, and different scholars have had different views on both the definition and nature of archives in the Egyptian context.[4] Christopher Eyre's *Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt* (2013) represents the most recent in-depth analysis of the functioning of documents and recording as a social process—inextricably linked to the notion of archive—and my interpretative framework for the material outlined below is influenced in part by that work, even if some of my underlying assumptions about the nature and function of archives may be more traditionalist.

It is worth noting at the outset that the importance of archives for the writing of Egyptian history is itself a thorny issue. On the one hand, an inestimable amount of information has been lost because so few archives survive, but on the other Egypt was at all times and in all places primarily an oral culture: 'The use of writing... remained the tool of small and inefficient government, in a society where personal, face-to-face interaction and oral witness held primacy.'[5] This was true even for a village like Deir el-Medina, which arguably had the highest literacy rate of any community in the country; here too writing was the exception

2 The literature on this topic is vast, but see Baines 2008; Ryholt 2006; Redford 1986.

3 See e.g. the conference proceedings volumes edited by Brosius 2003 and Faraguna 2013.

4 There is no recent synthesis but various aspects are discussed by Donker van Heel/Haring 2003; Haring 2007; Allam 2009, with references to earlier work. Other key contributions include Quirke 1996, who focused on groups of literary manuscripts rather than administrative documents, and Helck 1975 who was mainly concerned with lexicographic and organisational aspects.

5 Eyre 2013, 349.

and not the rule.[6] However, this view of the role of writing, and implicitly also of archives, should not be interpreted as making them peripheral to the reconstruction of Egyptian history. For example, if not for the survival of temple archives (3.2) our knowledge about how temples operated as economic institutions would be greatly diminished, or—an even more extreme example—if not for the survival of parts of the private archive of the mortuary priest Hekanakhte we would know much less about how agricultural estates were managed.[7] Simplifying somewhat one could say that archives are particularly useful in the case of Egypt because modern history writing has relied to a large extent on material that is heavily influenced by ideology—temple and tomb walls, for instance—whereas archives offer the historian an opportunity to observe social practices rather than just social ideals.

2 The nature of the evidence

The archaeological history of papyri in Egypt is essentially a history of loss. The physical properties of papyrus ensure that it can survive for thousands of years under appropriate conditions; however, these conditions are very rarely met in Egypt itself. The vast majority of the population in Egypt in all periods lived on or near arable land, and the great Nile Delta for example is traditionally assumed to have been home to two thirds of the population. There are almost no papyri from such sites due to the presence of moisture: the papyrus rolls have simply rotted away. Survival, then, is the exception, and there are few settlement sites that have yielded substantial papyrus finds, and those are in practice restricted to exceptional cases where the state established towns and temples on the desert edge.

Most of the well-preserved papyri from the pharaonic period were found in tombs—placed in the desert they provide conditions conducive to survival—including, perhaps surprisingly, significant numbers of administrative papyri.

6 Haring 2003.
7 Allen 2002.

Fig. 1: The Reisner papyri, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, as found in tomb no. N 408/406 at Naga ed-Deir in Egypt around 1903. The papyri consist of two rolls with records relating to the construction of a building (nos I and III), one roll dealing with the management of resources at the royal dockyards at This (no. II), and one roll with name-lists and rations (no. IV). Image © The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The presence of administrative papyri in tombs is partly explained as an identity marker for the deceased, but in any case the nature of such deposits means that only a small number of rolls are normally found, not entire archives, so that even in the case of large, well-preserved manuscripts, these represent just one document from what will have been much more comprehensive archives. How much of the papyrus material from these early periods of Egyptian history is lost is impossible to say, but if the surviving fragments discussed below are indicative of the general level of scribal activity then they represent only a tiny fraction.

3 Overview of the main corpora

I present a number of case studies below that shed light, in different ways, on Egyptian archives as institutions and on archiving as a social process, but the list is not exhaustive and I have refrained, for reasons of space, from including many indirect sources that would have been of relevance, such as letters, inscriptions, literary texts, etc. Similarly, I do not explore the titles relating to archival activities in detail,

although this offers one alternative way to assess the evidence: for example, individuals such as the 'chief guardian of the writings of the department of the granary of Pharaoh in Memphis' would have been responsible for recording and presumably—to the degree that it occurred—for facilitating consultation of the archives of the state administration of agricultural taxation.[8] I do not believe that the documents presented below would have been exceptional or unrepresentative in their original context, but today they are certainly both in the sense that they survive at all.

3.1 Early archives: Wadi el-Jarf, Gebelein, Balat and Saqqara

There are relatively few papyri from the early periods of Egyptian history. The earliest archive of administrative papyri consists of the papers of an official called Merer who was involved in the building of the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza (4th Dynasty, *c.*2580 BCE).[9] These papyri were recently discovered at Wadi el-Jarf on the Red Sea coast, a harbour site complete with a quay and several hundred anchors, as well as man-made underground galleries for the storage of boats and supplies. The papyri had been deposited, presumably deliberately, in-between some large boulders which had been placed in front of the underground galleries. The full publication of the material is still pending but the preliminary reports indicate that in terms of contents tabular accounts are numerous, including deliveries—daily or monthly—of food, and that many of the other fragments—perhaps from three rolls covering about two months each—come from a journal where the daily activities of Merer and his team of workers are recorded. Much of the work described in the daybook consists of bringing limestone blocks by boat from the quarries at Tura to the building site, and it regularly notes the location of the boat when spending the night or day somewhere. The journey between quarry and work-site, a distance of some 20 km downstream, normally took about two days with a fully loaded boat, and one day less when returning upstream with an empty boat. The documents provide welcome evidence of the administrative structures surrounding the building project, and demonstrate among other things that the king's half-brother and vizier Ankhaef, known from other sources to have carried the title 'chief of all works of the king', was the official in charge of the work, at least towards the end of Khufu's reign.[10]

8 For the title, see Caminos 1954, 454.

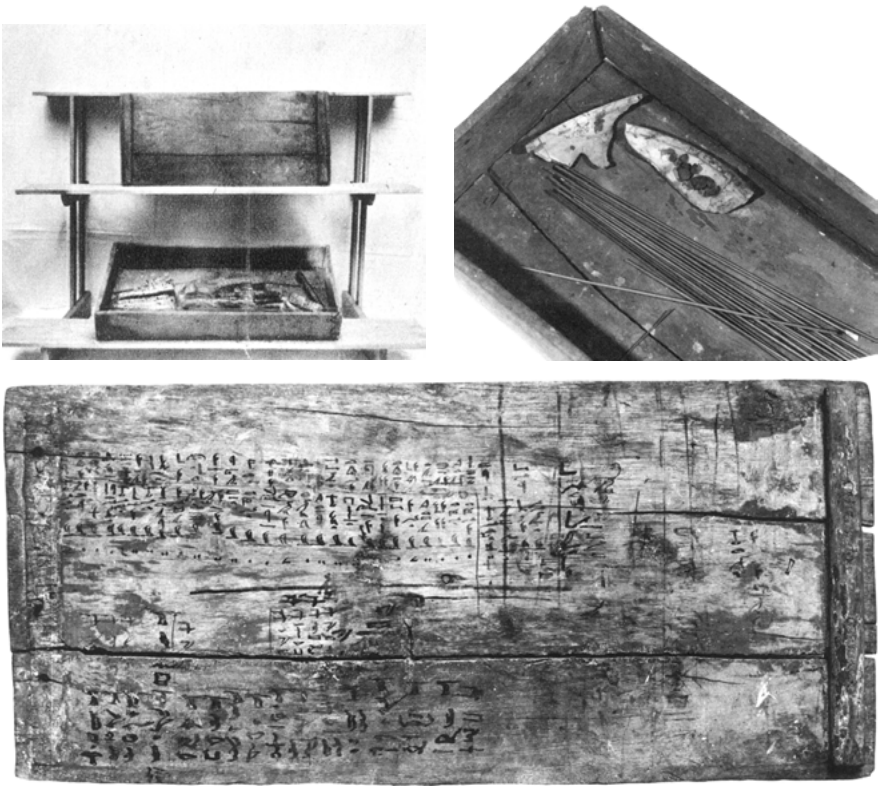
9 All dates cited are from Shaw 2000 and are approximate only.

10 Tallet 2014a, 2014b.

Another Old Kingdom archive is a group of papyri from Gebelein which probably belonged to a scribe and administrator of a rural estate; here, as in so many cases, the line between a private professional archive and an institutional archive becomes blurred.[11] There were about twelve separate rolls originally, but only five survive in a substantial form. They were found together with a number of reed pens, ink cakes and pieces of a small vessel (for mixing the ink?), all lying in a rectangular wooden box (Fig. 2a); this had been deposited in a tomb as part of the burial equipment of the tomb owner.[12] The identity of this individual is not known with certainty, nor is that of any of the copyists involved in the archive, but it has been suggested that the scribe Sobekaa, who appears in the name-lists and who seems to have 'signed' roll IV, might have been the tomb owner and responsible for at least some of the documents.[13]

Several types of documents are attested in the archive, most of which are in the full roll format of the time (*c*.20–22 cm in height): these include lists of personnel organised by village, perhaps in connection with various work projects (one has a heading mentioning a temple of King Snefru); accounts listing individuals and the grain they received on different dates, as well as outstanding amounts; the delivery of grain from Aswan, some 200 km further down the Nile; linen and cloth accounts, etc. There are also two extraordinary documents relating to the sale of houses, one of which explicitly mentions the village of Inertyinpu which figures prominently in the accounts and name-lists too. Both these texts were copied on the back of rolls containing accounts.[14] The house sales may have been relevant to the management of the estate in some way, or were of personal interest to the scribe writing the accounts—it is not uncommon to find private notes inserted in uninscribed areas of documents related to institutions.[15] The wooden box itself had also been written on, effectively turning the lid into a writing board (Fig. 2b); this contained name-lists and a grain account similar to those of the papyri.[16] This practice of using the lids of boxes as writing boards is attested in at least one other instance from the same site and in the same period, where it was also used for copying textile accounts.[17]

11 Posener-Kriéger 2004, edited posthumously by Sara Demichelis.
12 Posener-Kriéger 1986.
13 Papazian forthcoming.
14 Posener-Kriéger 1979, 321.
15 Menu 1985.
16 Posener-Kriéger 1994.
17 Roccati 1970.



Figs 2a–c: A wooden box found in an anonymous tomb at Gebelein (Cairo JE 66844, *c.* 55 × 26 × 8 cm) which contained a papyrus archive of twelve fragmentary rolls and some writing equipment, perhaps from around 2500 BCE. Top left: This is the only known photograph of the box while the papyri were still inside (Farina 1937, 345). Top right: a close-up photo of the inside after the removal of the papyri but with the reed pens and ink cakes still visible (Posener-Kriéger 1994, Fig. 2). Bottom: the lid of the box which had been used as a notebook by the scribe for the same kind of texts that he copied on the papyrus rolls (Posener-Kriéger 1994, Fig. 5).

It is impossible to date the archive precisely, and although suggestions based on the palaeography have placed it in the 4th Dynasty, there is little comparative material to confirm this; in any case it has to be later than King Snefru as a temple of his is mentioned in one of the papyri. There are several different years in dated entries—cattle counts nos 2, 3, and 11 of an unnamed king—suggesting that the archive was in use for at least 22 years.

In the Dakhla oasis, some 350 km to the west of Thebes, French excavations over the last thirty years have resulted in the discovery of over 500 clay tablets.[18] Here the distance from the oasis to the Nile valley meant that it was not easy to ensure a regular supply of papyrus, which in turn led to the use of clay tablets for writing administrative accounts and letters: hieratic writing on such tablets is a material practice otherwise unattested for Egypt in any period. In this oasis, towards the end of the Old Kingdom and the beginning of the First Intermediate Period (*c.*2200–2000 BCE), small rectangular tablets of wet clay were inscribed using a bone stylus, and some of the tablets have holes punched through them, potentially allowing them to be strung together into dossiers.[19]

Most of the clay tablets found to date came from the Ayn Asil area where the residence of the local governors was situated.[20] The editor has identified two main groups of active archives (*archives vivantes*) in the archaeological deposits, one in the northern part of the site and one in the palace area, as well as an inactive archive (*une archive morte*) of discarded material found outside the northern enclosure wall of the palace.[21]

The active northern archive (*sondage nord*) consisted of some 40 tablets, mostly administrative documents but with relatively few letters, and is rather fragmentary in nature. The other active archive was found in the palace area, in three lots, and had been fired when the palace burned down: one near the western gate of the compound, one at the north-western entrance to the palace building, and one in the columned courtyard of the apartment of the governor. The lot from the gatehouse area had a concentration of letters relating to matters internal to the administration of the oasis, perhaps suggesting that messages on such matters were received and handled separately, in what has been described as a type of porters' lodge (*une sorte de conciergerie*).[22] The lot from the apartment of the governor is particularly interesting from an archaeological point of view in that the tablets were found in or on a wooden cupboard or podium between two columns, where copper nails were found along with stucco-covered bits of wood, perhaps the remains of boxes for the storage of the tablets. Far from all tablets would have been stored separately like this, however, and many were kept in storerooms, presumably near the goods they mentioned, rather than in dedicated archival

18 Pantalacci 2013; 2008.
19 Pantalacci 2013, 207.
20 Pantalacci 2008, 142.
21 Pantalacci 2013, 198; 2008, 142.
22 Pantalacci 2008, 147.

rooms.[23] This palace archive was in other words found *in situ*, unlike so many others. How long the tablets were archived for, and what the criteria for eventual disposal may have been remains largely unknown: the editor has suggested a relatively short period of archiving, ranging from a few months to perhaps a year. The basis for this estimate is partly due to the discovery of an inactive archive with several hundred discarded clay tablets in an area north-east of the palace (*sondage o*). The discarded tablets from this area, all of which relate to the official business of the governors of the palace as representatives of the Egyptian government at Memphis, demonstrate a periodic process of disposal of tablets because the stratigraphy clearly shows layers of tablets interspersed with natural layers of sand and dirt. It has been suggested that the discarding of the tablets is linked to the transfer of the information they contained to papyrus, thus rendering them superfluous, although there are few surviving traces of the use of papyrus at the site.[24]

Not all the tablets have been published but a series of preliminary reports show that the range of texts attested is comparable to that of papyrus archives: letters, lists of people, accounts for grain and rations, inventories, and distribution lists.[25] Letters were occasionally copied in duplicate, allowing the sender to keep an archival copy of the correspondence, and one extant letter explicitly asks the addressee to make a copy.[26] This is a practice well attested in institutional archives of all periods (see below). A single event, such as the issuing of goods from a palace storeroom, may have involved several types of written records: a letter ordering the issuing, two clay seals (one broken when the room or container was opened, another produced when it was re-sealed), and a writing or updating of the relevant inventory.[27]

The provincial nature of the find, as well as its unique material form, its quantity and its secure archaeological context, make it one of the most important groups of material for reconstructing the socio-economic history of the period, such as record-keeping and organisation of work, the relationship between the state and local government, writing and literacy, and communication networks.[28] The importance of the tablet archives notwithstanding, they are only part of the puzzle, and even within the restricted group of literates there is much variation in the ability to read

23 Pantalacci 2013, 206–207.
24 Pantalacci 2013, 197, 206.
25 See in general Pantalacci 2013, with references to earlier publications.
26 Pantalacci 2008, 147.
27 Pantalacci 2013, 198, 208, n. 3.
28 Pantalacci 2010, 2001, 1998, 1996.

and write; many of the tablets were found alongside inscribed clay seals, a reminder that archives of written texts were only a part of the wider organisational and accounting practices at the site.[29]

In the late Old Kingdom the necropolis of Saqqara, adjacent to the capital at Memphis, was an active hub of state administration in relation to the building of a number of royal pyramids there, and not surprisingly there have been finds of papyrus archives at the site. Several groups of papyrus from the area are known, and a volume dedicated to the material, based on a recent conference, is in preparation by Pierre Tallet and Philippe Collombert, but what all the groups have in common is that the circumstances of their discovery and their archaeological context are obscure. One exception to this is the archive of an administrative unit situated within the step pyramid complex of Djoser.[30] There were two separate finds of papyrus fragments within the area known as 'Temple T', but only one of these can be related to a specific location within the structure itself. The first group, which has no specific find-spot, includes a dozen or so fragments, of which about half have been published: these include a letter about a crew of quarry workers and the issuing of textiles, as well as some accounts mentioning work on the pyramids of King Neferirkare and King Merenre.[31] The second group is entirely unpublished to date, and although the archaeological report referred to them as being extremely fragmentary, it also stated that they, like the previously mentioned fragments from the same structure, were related to the construction of the royal pyramids of the 5th and 6th Dynasties.[32] It seems clear that the old temple building was being re-used, some 250 years after its construction, as an administrative centre for the scribes involved in the construction work, although an exact date for its conversion and its period of operation cannot be established with certainty. The value of the find lies partly in the fact that it has a recorded archaeological context. The second group of fragments were found in a corridor at the back of the temple that had been converted into a storage facility by the division of the space into a series of niches, presumably originally with shelves and chests, by the addition of various mudbrick architectural elements.[33] These architectural changes were not restricted to the storage space itself, and other storerooms as well as several guard huts or porter's lodges

29 Pinarello 2015, 101–115; cf. Hayes 1951 for the evidence of papyrus sealings from Malqata in relation to archival practices at a royal palace of the New Kingdom.

30 Ryholt forthcoming a.

31 For the letter, see Wente 1990, 42; for the accounts see Posener-Kriéger 1980.

32 Firth/Quibell 1935, I, 13.

33 Ryholt forthcoming a.

were erected inside the old temple. It is noteworthy that the construction of the latter emphasised security, resulting in a layout where all points of entry were controlled by line of sight: the archive would have been almost impossible to access by unauthorised personnel. The archival space itself was not preserved beyond a height of four or five courses of mudbricks, so precisely what the storage would have looked like is not known, but the extremely limited width of the 'walkway' down the middle of the corridor after the construction of the mudbrick niches on either side (*c.* 30 cm) would have complicated any use of material stored there after it had been archived. Moving around and searching for papyrus rolls in the dark and cramped space would have been extremely difficult, and it is obvious that it was not constructed with such concerns in mind.

3.2 Temple archives: Abusir, Lahun and Thebes

Archaeologically speaking, temples survive relatively well in Egypt, but as with most categories of material they are, as a general rule, fewer and less well preserved the further back in time one goes. Paradoxically the opposite is true of temple archives: those of the late Old Kingdom from Abusir (*c.*2470–2440 BCE) are more numerous than the single Middle Kingdom one from Lahun (*c.*1850–1825 BCE), and the one New Kingdom temple archive from Thebes (*c.* 1350 BCE) is smaller and more fragmentary than any of these earlier groups. This is simply an accident of survival. In addition to the main groups of material outlined in this section, there are several extant documents that must have originated in temple archives but which lack a recorded archaeological context and/or consist of an isolated papyrus roll, and some of these are discussed briefly below (3.4–3.7).

3.2.1 Old Kingdom temple archives from Abusir

The oldest extensive institutional archives from pharaonic Egypt are those of the memorial temples of the 5th and 6th Dynasty kings at Abusir (*c.*2470–2440 BCE). Here, the temples dedicated to the royal cult of the deceased kings and queens, erected next to their pyramids, yielded significant numbers of papyri, most of which were administrative in nature. Three separate archives have survived: that of the temple of King Raneferef, that of King Neferirkare Kakai, and that of Queen

Khentkawes.[34] Of these the former two are the most extensive, and the first is particularly interesting in that it has a well-documented archaeological context, having been excavated relatively recently.[35] The main groups of fragments were found in the western row of storerooms north of the inner temple, with some other groups from the storerooms to the south of the hypostyle hall (Fig. 3):

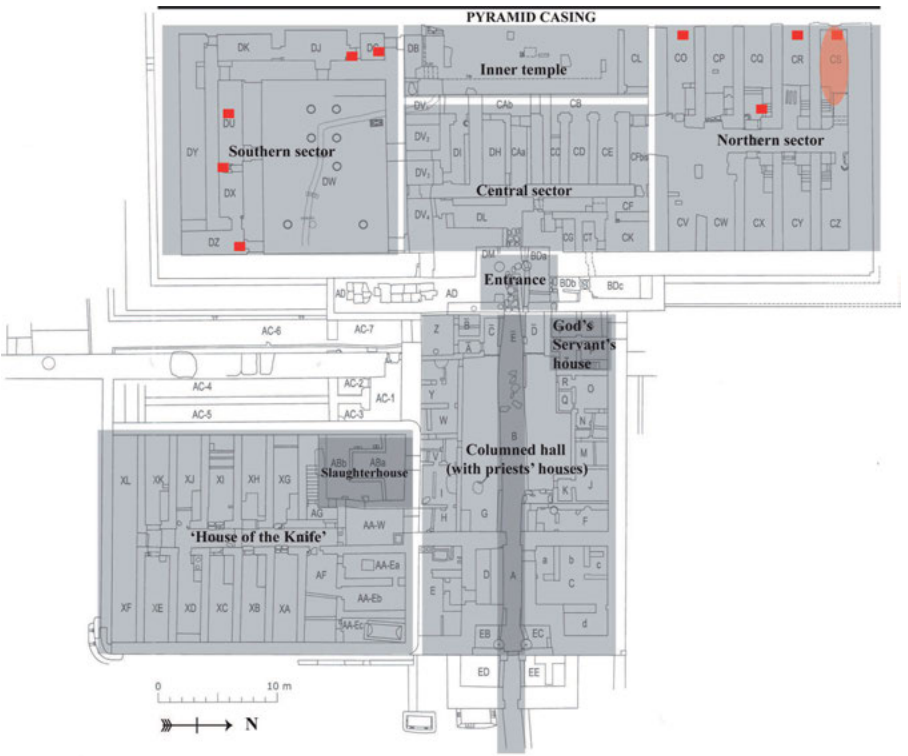


Fig. 3: A schematic map showing where the papyrus fragments from the mortuary temple of Raneferef were found, adapted from Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová (2006, 24) with the addition of captions and location markers for papyrus finds (red squares). The fragments were discovered in storerooms to the north and south of the inner temple area, and in the case of the northern sector the excavators suggested that they were originally stored in room CS (upper right hand corner, red ellipse).

34 For the Raneferef archive see Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová 2006; for the Neferirkare archive see Posener-Kriéger/De Cenival 1968, and Posener-Kriéger 1976, and for the Khentkawes archive, by far the smallest of the three, see Verner 2001.

35 Verner et al. 2006.

The Raneferef papyri were in other words found in several locations in and around the temple, although in the case of the storerooms to the north the greater concentration of fragments in room CS suggested to the excavators that this was the location of one original archive, perhaps stored in wooden chests.[36] As with the material from Balat, numerous clay seals were found next to the papyri, as were various types of cult equipment and other objects (model instruments, vessels, faience inlays and beads, flint knives, sandals, etc.), so it seems reasonably clear that there was not a single room dedicated exclusively to the storage of the papyrus archive.

Documents from these archives can be divided into several types.[37] Duty tables or duty rosters note the presence of individual priests, and their duties, and although they vary a little in form they describe the basic template for temple service that survived for most of Egyptian history: groups (called *phyles* in the Egyptological literature) who were in service for one month at a time. One example has a monthly duty table that lists temple staff according to area of service and responsibility: those involved in the morning and evening rituals, those who should receive the cultic papyrus roll after the rituals had been carried out (here for the royal mother Khentkawes), those on duty at the gates, or on the roof, or guarding the entrance to the magazines, as well as those responsible for dressing, purifying and adorning the royal cult statues, those who provide incense in the presence of the ritual priest, and so on.[38] The main physical focus for the royal mortuary cults were statues of the deceased, of which the temples had many: the Khentkawes temple, which was the smallest of the three, had at least fourteen,[39] and in the Raneferef temple the excavators found fragments of numerous royal statues of wood, basalt, diorite, granite, travertine, quartzite and limestone.[40] These statues were also mentioned in the papyrus documents, sometimes with accompanying drawings (Fig. 4).

36 Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová 2006, 21–23.
37 Posener-Kriéger 1968, xiii–xv.
38 Posener-Kriéger 1968, plates 3–4; 1976, 14–57, table II.
39 Verner 2001, 134, 172.
40 Verner 2006, 430–437.

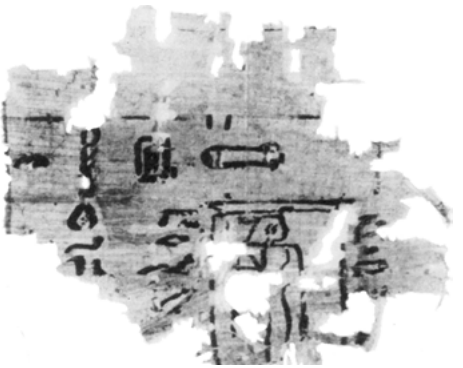


Fig. 4a (left): A papyrus fragment with a drawing of a cult statue of Queen Khentkawes from her mortuary temple at Abusir (Verner 2001, plate 27 no. A; image courtesy of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, Faculty of Arts of Charles University). The statue is depicted standing within a protective shrine or chapel under a heading reading 'chapel' (*ṯpḥt*), with vertical bands of text mentioning the walls of the shrine and indicating that it had door rings (*ḏbꜥ*) made of copper. The fragment would have formed part of an inventory of such statues and shrines, and there are several similar fragments in the same archive.

Fig. 4b (right): Detail from a duty list showing three seated statues of King Neferirkare Kakai, from his mortuary temple at Abusir (P.BM EA 10735, image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum). The king is shown in the form of Osiris (left), and with the Red Crown of Lower Egypt (middle) and the White Crown of Upper Egypt (right). The heading reads 'Second month of the Shomu season, day 18. Clothing, purifying, dressing and providing incense for the statues', followed by the three drawings and—not included here—a list of the personnel assigned to these tasks (Posener-Kriéger 1968, plate IV; 1976, 52–57, table II).

The Abusir archives also include rare examples of royal decrees or edicts on papyrus, a genre of text that otherwise survives primarily as monumental inscriptions.[41] There are numerous copies in the Raneferef archive, as well as some in the Neferirkare archive, which deal, as far as can be established, with rights to temple income, often relating to individuals of rather low rank.[42] The sheer number of such documents, explicitly said to have been 'signed in the presence of the king himself', suggests relatively frequent communication between the king and the temples, and—notably—that this communication was not limited to letters announcing royal bequests and

41 Vernus 2013, 294–300; Eyre 2013, 89–94.

42 Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová 2006, 234–240; Posener-Kriéger 1976, 472–478.

privileges to the temple and its priesthood as a whole which is what many of the monumentally inscribed examples are concerned with. The layout of the papyrus decrees is identical to those of monumental copies, but despite their origin in a high-status context, some were written on re-used papyrus.[43] They appear to be the original letters sent from the king rather than secondary copies made locally for the archive. That such documents should be preserved in the archive is no surprise, and the practice is echoed in later periods: an original (?) royal decree on papyrus, sent from King Ramesses IX (*c.*1125 BCE) to the High Priest of Amun-Re, was pasted into an archival roll from the temple of Karnak along with other letters and an account.[44]

Another type of document that occurs frequently in the Abusir archives are inventories of objects belonging to the temple. These are often organised based on material, with tables listing individual objects of silver, hematite, silex, quartz, or different types of wood. In one example the silver section includes many different types of cups, saucers and plates, as well as offering tables (big and small), and each object is described in terms of integrity and damage: a cup may be 'dented', its rim noted as 'cracked', or a libation vessel might be 'repaired in its pouring area, twice'.[45] Many of these objects would have been used in the daily cult rituals, and the documents record the presence and condition of more or less valuable cult equipment.

It was not only movable objects that were inventoried and checked. For example, a fragment from the Raneferef archive lists eight rooms of the temple being 'inspected' and the relevant seals 'checked', including the treasury, the storeroom for fat and oil, the store room for textiles, and the house of the statues, amongst others.[46] Architectural elements could also be inspected, such as divine barques, and lintels and columns of wood or stone: in one case an inventory records of a lintel that '[t]here are no more stones on it: the wall fell. It happened during the service of the group of priests called Menunefer'.[47] In theory such detailed inventories might be used to establish responsibility and to assign blame in case of problems, but there is no evidence for the actual use of the archival records for this purpose.

The economic life of the institution was the primary focus for scribal activity, with all deliveries to and from the temples noted down on a daily basis, and these daily accounts could then be assembled into monthly accounts. A typical example of the latter has a tabular structure with one line for each day and a set of columns with commodities delivered (Fig. 5):

43 Posener-Kriéger 1985.
44 Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 517.1–522.15; Wente 1990, 37–39.
45 Posener-Kriéger 1968, plates 20–21; 1976, 134–136, fig. III.
46 Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová 2006, 262–264, plate 45.
47 Posener-Kriéger 1968, plate 31; 1976, 430.

Divine offerings delivered to (the mortuary temple) Bakakai

That which was brought

	(1) from the royal residence						(2) from the sun-temple Setibre		
	Hetjat-bread			*Pes*-bread			*Pat*-bread		
Day	Due	Delivered	Outstanding	Due	Delivered	Outstanding	Due	Delivered	Outstanding
1	4	4	0	2	0	2	14		14
2	4	4	0	2	0	2	14		14
3	4	4	0	2	0	2	14		14
4	[4]	4	0	2	0	2	14		14
5	[4]	[lost]	[lost]	2	[lost]	[lost]	[14]	70	[lost]
6	[4]	[lost]	[lost]	[2]	[0]	2	[14]		14
7	[4]	[lost]	[lost]	[2]	0	2	14		[14]
8	[4]	[lost]	[lost]	[2]	0	2	14		14
9	[4]	[lost]	[lost]	[2]	0	[2]	[14]		14
10	[4]	[lost]	[lost]	2	0	2	14		14
11	4	[lost]	[lost]	2	0	2	14		14
12	4	4	0	2	0	2	14	14	0

Fig. 5: Stylised representation of the beginning of a tabular account showing deliveries of bread to the mortuary temple of King Neferirkare Kakai from the royal residence and from the sun-temple Setibre, over 12 days. The table has been adapted from Posener-Kriéger (1968, plates 33–34), with minor modifications and omissions (the complete table covers an entire 30-day month period, with several more institutions and types of commodities). The careful recording of actual deliveries against the amount due is striking, with separate columns noting the outstanding amount for each type of bread, allowing for the quick compilation of summary accounts of deficits. Patterns in delivery can be traced, such as the arrival in bulk of *pat*-bread (70 pieces) from the sun-temple Setibre on day five, which on day 12 onwards was mainly delivered daily in the correct amount (14 pieces), and the special delivery of 'good things, bread and beer' which was restricted to the weekend, i.e. days nine and ten of the Egyptian week (not shown in the above table).

The tabular accounts are amongst the most common type of document and record information about the revenues of the temple, such as the institutions from which deliveries were made, the name and title of the person delivering, and the actual amounts delivered compared to what was expected (and consequently what was outstanding). These rather dry tables are of the first importance for reconstructing the frequently complex economic relationship between different institutions:

the royal residence supplied a large proportion of the daily income—and was good at delivering on time—whereas deliveries from other neighbouring temples (meat was normally brought from the sun-temple Setibre, for example) or palaces were often less reliable. The accounts show that the actual exchange of goods was not always in line with the agreed or expected quotas, but to what extent the arrears noted in the documents were ever used as grounds for complaint or redress is less clear. One document from the Raneferef archive shows a summary of monthly deliveries of over 3,000 loaves of bread (?), with arrears, but this may be related to the division of the revenues amongst the priesthood.[48] This division was recorded in writing, with the number of shares dependent on the office held: examples from both the Neferirkare and the Raneferef archive show that the number of rations allocated to higher-ranking priests were considerably higher than those of regular priests.[49]

The temple archives also contain letters, perhaps both locally produced copies of letters received at, or sent from, the temple, as well as original letters. Certainly both types are found in the archive of the royal memorial temple of Senwosret II at Lahun, some 600 years later (3.2.2). Letters in the Abusir archives are remarkably few, however, in comparison with the later Middle Kingdom archive, with only two certain examples from the Neferirkare group.[50]

The period of use of these archives is frequently difficult to pin down based on internal evidence, but combined with the archaeology of the sites where they were found it seems that they were in use over several generations. In the case of Raneferef the excavators concluded that the mortuary cult of the king gradually declined until it was discontinued early in the reign of King Pepi I (*c.* 2320 BCE), so approximately one hundred years after the building of the temple,[51] but many of the dated documents have been ascribed to the reign of King Djedkare some fifty years before this final stage.[52] The Khentkawes archive was perhaps in use over a similar period but the fragmentary nature of the papyri make this impossible to establish with any certainty.[53]

The archives of the memorial temples of the late Old Kingdom paint a detailed picture of administrative processes in a medium-sized temple of the period, and are a useful tool when modelling the operations of such institutions. They

48 Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová 2006, 393–394.
49 Vymazalová 2013, 186, 192.
50 Posener-Kriéger 1976, II, 451–472.
51 Verner 2006, 109–110.
52 Posener-Kriéger/Verner/Vymazalová 2006, 335.
53 Verner 2001, 172.

form a base-line against which the later and more fragmentary temple archives from the Middle and New Kingdom can be measured (see below), both in terms of the range of different document types available and the mechanics of operation (e.g. in the hand-over of responsibility between the monthly service staff when entering or leaving the temple). They are also important for the study of institutional economics, allowing scholars to reconstruct the complex relationship between different temples in the area as well as between the temples and the royal administration.[54]

3.2.2 A Middle Kingdom temple archive from Lahun

The Lahun archive, most of which dates to the late Middle Kingdom (*c.*1850–1750 BCE), was not found as a result of archaeological excavations, unlike the Abusir archives of Raneferef and Khentkawes. The papyri were looted and then dispersed on the antiquities market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the German Egyptologist Ludwig Borchardt acquired most of the material for the Berlin museum.[55] He surmised based on their content and date that they probably came from Lahun, and subsequent exploration of the site allowed him to pin-point the most likely find-spot as a rubbish dump to the north of the Valley temple of Senwosret II, a location where he managed to find some more fragments of the archive (Fig. 6).[56] The papyri were, in other words, found discarded outside the temple proper, like those from the archive of the memorial temple of Thutmose III (3.2.3), rather than in the location where they were originally copied and stored.

54 Vymazalová 2013; Posener-Kriéger 1990.

55 Borchardt 1899.

56 On the context see Quirke 2005, 31–32, and for examples of papyri found by Borchardt, see Luft 1992b, 101–105.

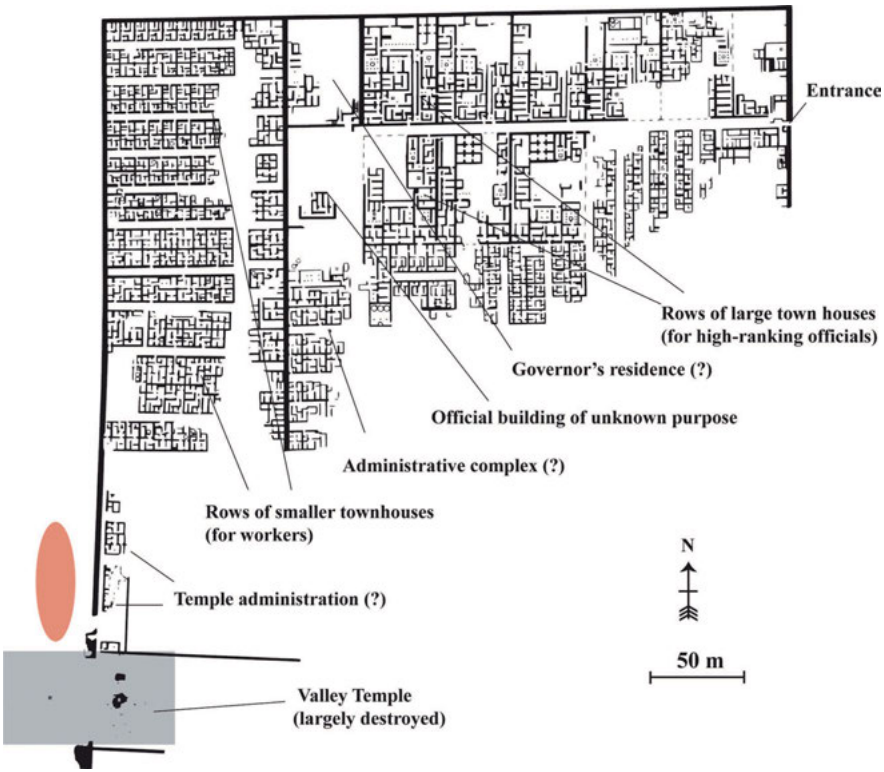


Fig. 6: Map of the town of Lahun, at the entrance of the Fayum oasis, showing the find-spot of the temple archive (adapted from Kemp 2006, 212; Petrie/Brunton/Murray 1923, plate 33; Borchardt 1899, 89). There was almost nothing left of the temple itself but its location is indicated on the map by the grey square at the south-west corner of the site. Borchardt's excavations, carried out over two weeks in June 1899, aimed at discovering the origin of the papyri that had appeared on the antiquities market. He eventually found a number of additional fragments, clearly belonging to the same group, in an area suggested by local inhabitants as the most likely location: a rubbish heap to the north of the temple and outside the enclosure wall of the town (red ellipse).

Like the Abusir temples, the temple of Senwosret II at Lahun was an institution dedicated to the maintenance of the royal mortuary cult, and the administration of the temple and its archival practice is broadly similar to those earlier examples. The priesthood consisted of two types of positions, permanent and temporary. The permanent members of staff were the administrative manager ('overseer of the temple') who was also the local mayor, as well as the temple scribe and the

chief ritualist ('chief lector priest'), and various lower-ranking servants and labourers. The temporary priesthood consisted of a variety of other types of priests who served for one month at a time, on a rotational basis, and who were divided up into four groups or *phyles*.

Unlike the situation at Abusir, however, the royal memorial temple at Lahun was almost entirely destroyed,[57] so that it is not possible to link, say, the topographical terminology of the documents (names of rooms etc.) with the archaeological monument itself.[58] Despite the close similarity with earlier and later archives the nature of the Lahun find as an institutional archive has been debated, with some scholars preferring to see part of it mainly as a collection of personal 'business files' belonging to the temple scribe who figures so prominently in the correspondence, Horemsaf,[59] but in the absence of more detailed information about the archaeological context it is difficult to evaluate to what extent the material might represent one or more groups of fragments as originally found. Due to the present state of publication a detailed overview is impossible, but the following is an attempt to synthesise the available material. [60]

In terms of quantity there are just over 200 frames of glass, most *c.* 25 × 40 cm in size, plus some other fragments still not conserved, most of which are in Berlin. Borchardt's preliminary assignment of the fragments to different categories of documents may have to be revised when publication is completed, but they are—in order of frequency—temple accounts, letters to temple staff, daybook fragments, lists of festivals, and lists of priests, although admittedly there is a substantial set of frames (26, plus 6 'pappartige Konglomerate') still unassigned.[61]

The journal of the temple, known as the 'day-roll' (*hryt*) in Egyptian, appears to have been written continuously, as a series of papyrus rolls, and perhaps filed at the end of each year: one letter refers explicitly to 'the day-roll of year 2'.[62] In these daybook fragments there is a strong sense of a journal in the restricted sense

57 Petrie/Brunton/Murray 1923, 39–40.

58 Luft 2006, 109–112.

59 Quirke 1996, 379, followed by Kóthay 2015, 763.

60 The modern history of the material has hindered evaluation of the internal coherence (or otherwise), not least because a large part of the fragments demonstrably belonging to the institutional daybook have remained unpublished for several generations; these are now being prepared for publication by Jürgen Osing in Berlin and should appear in the foreseeable future. The letters of the archive have fared better, with many of the more substantial pieces available in transcription and translation. See in general Kaplony-Heckel 1971, x–xi (overview); Borchardt 1903; Luft 1992a; 1992b; 2006; Scharff 1924.

61 Borchardt 1899, 90.

62 Scharff 1924, 43.

of a day-to-day jotting down of events, accounts and communications. The extract reproduced in Fig. 7 is a representative example of the manner in which information is structured. It starts off with a copy of a presumably written message that had been delivered to the temple about providing leather for a sandal maker—and the need to record the transaction in writing—and then continues with another entry for the following day. It moves on to the assignment of consumables and incense in relation to festivals, one of which mentions a mortuary priest of a queen, before documenting the hand-over of administrative responsibility for the temple from one group of priests to the next.

This monthly transfer of responsibility is a recurring topic in the daybook,[63] and involved an inspection of the temple and its stores in the presence of both groups. The duty-period of the priests entering their service on the first day of the first month of the Shomu season starts with a list of their names being entered into the journal. The range of topics covered on a single page is typical of such institutional journals, and other fragments expand the range considerably. The monthly inspection of the temple when a new group of priests took over is noted in distinctly formulaic terms ('all your affairs are safe and sound') that do not reveal much of the associated activities, but other texts in the archive show that such occasions could be accompanied by written reports detailing the inspection, room by room, with objects of gold, silver, bronze, and wood dutifully listed, along with textiles, myrrh, etc. Inventories of cult statues, as in the Abusir archives, are also attested, albeit without illustrations: in addition to the material being recorded—various types of wood, stone, and ivory—the Lahun inventories also list the vestments of the statues.[64]

In addition to the daily entries there are also a number of accounts, some dealing with extended periods of time. These may note offerings on successive days over several weeks or more: one papyrus has an 'Account of the provisions brought from the temple of Hathor from month 2 of Akhet day 9 up to month 3 of Akhet day 7', i.e. a period of about a month.[65] Other examples cover longer periods of time: one has a '[c]alculation of earth almonds and honey for one year', followed by a tabulated list of various leading priests with relevant quantities of these commodities next to their names, while another document records the allocation of offerings for the temple of Anubis at Lahun for almost an entire year;[66] the latter may be compared with P.Berlin 10055 which has a summary account of fowl deliveries over a similar period.[67]

63 For a list of this in the material, see Kaplony-Heckel 1971, 274.
64 Luft 1992, 31; Kaplony-Heckel 1971, plate 1.
65 Luft 1992b, 43.
66 Luft 1992b, 74–77, 44.
67 Kaplony-Heckel 1971, 25.

Copy of the letter brought from Hetep-Senwosret-Maakheru,

which the sandal-maker Werenptah son of Sankhptah, brought:

Let a cow-skin or, alternatively, a goat-skin be brought.

It is to the sandal-maker Werenptah that you should give it, putting it in writing.

A cow-skin has been given to this sandal-maker.

Year 6, month 4 of Peret, day 27. The libationer Dedusobek son of Senwosret.

Year 6, month 4 of Peret, day 28. The royal *wab*-priest Mentuhotep son of Senwosret.

Bringing of the *khenty-esh* of year 5, month 3 of Shomu, day 22.

Sobekhotep son of Ky.

Beer, *des*-jars:	3
Various bread:	[lost]
Mereret-loaves:	3
White bread:	3

[Year 6,] month 4 of Peret, day 29. The royal *wab*-priest Senwosret son of Nofret.

[Year 6,] month 4 of Peret, last day. The embalmer Ameny son of Ipi.

[...] festivals conducted accordingly by the chief of the *phyle*, and fixed for him monthly:

[Various bread?]	350
[Beer, *des*-jars?]	3
[*Mereret*-loaves?]	3
[White bread:]	3

[...] embalmer who is on duty monthly.

[...] incense, *padj*-pellets: 15

[...] mortuary priest of the Queen and King's Mother Khenemetneferhedjet the elder.

[...] incense, crushed: [...]

Report of the *phyle* of month 4 of Peret which is on duty this month (to) the *phyle* of month 1 [of Shomu],

To wit: all your affairs are safe and sound. We have made an inspection of [all the] things

of the *phyle* which is entering its monthly service, and they are safe and sound.

Report of the *phyle* which is entering its monthly service.

To wit: all your affairs are safe and sound. We have made an inspection for [this ?] *phyle*

of the temple and of that which is under their authority and it is safe and sound.

Year 6, month 1 of Shomu, day 1. [...] son of Hetepet.

Name-list of the *phyle* which is entering its monthly service:

The chief of the *phyle* Senwosret son of Senwosret.

The scribe of the temple <?> son of Inpy.

The regular lector priest Senwosret son of Sasopdu.

The embalmer <?> son of Hetep.

The *imiseta*-priest Senwosret son of Sahathor.

The libationer Senwosret son of Senet.

[...] Ameny, son of Sat [...]

[...] Khenty-Senwosret, son of Khety

The royal wab-priest Ameny, son of Sobekemsaes.

Senwosret, son of Senet.

The overseer of the district and the temple Ahahotep, son of Netjeru (?).

The doorkeeper of the temple Ameny, son of Senet.

Ameny, son of [...]wy

[...], son of Hetepu.

Ankhkhety, son of Satrenenutet.

Senwosret [...]

Fig. 7: Translation of a page from the daybook of the mortuary temple of Senwosret II at Lahun (P.Berlin 10050), dated to a year 6 of an unknown king, but probably Senwosret III (Luft 1992a, 65–66). The layout mirrors that of the original document. Much of the text is previously unpublished, with the exception of the transfer protocol in the second column, and the first entry relating to the sandal maker. The latter passage was included in a modern reading book (Sethe 1928) and has been widely read by undergraduate students of Egyptology for generations. I am grateful to Jürgen Osing for permission to use his unpublished material on the Lahun archive as a basis for the translation, and for the possibility to contextualise this well-known extract here. The back of the fragment contains a table, as well as a copy of a report dealing with what seems to be a break-in at the temple (Kaplony-Heckel 1971, 24; Scharff 1924, 48–49, plates 11–12).

One of the entries in the daybook of a year 11 of an unnamed king is a list of cattle supplied as offerings by various leading priests ('chiefs of *phyles*') in years 8 and 11 presumably of the same king, so going back about three years in time, i.e. medium- to long-term record-keeping.[68] Although the heading to that list makes it clear that it has been compiled in order to have it 'brought… in writing', and as such may represent an extraordinary accounting procedure, it still demonstrates access to relevant information in the archive over a three-year period.

Historical events of relevance to the running of the temple are mentioned in the documents, but only in passing: in addition to regular festivals this included isolated events like burials of members of the royal family, as in year 6 of an unnamed king when the temple took delivery of quantities of grain in connection with the burial of the king's sister.[69]

Provisions for festivals are mentioned repeatedly, and accounts provide convenient lists of festivals celebrated at the temple, as well as the offerings associated with them.[70] Lists of priests seem mainly to document the presence of personnel on certain days and during certain festivals, rather than distribution patterns of consumables, for example.[71] One of the most substantial published documents of this kind of attendance record is a yearly overview from year 35 of Amenemhat III, with a table of dates and festivals with the dancers and singers hired on the relevant occasions, although this was seemingly found in the adjacent town rather than among the other fragments of the temple archive.[72] The famous list of temple staff with their corresponding share in temple offerings is also relevant here,[73] although

68 Luft 1992b, 70–73.
69 Luft 1992b, 128.
70 Luft 1992b, 215–223.
71 Luft 1992b, 19: 'Anwesenheitslisten'.
72 Collier and Quirke 2006, 92–95.
73 Borchardt 1903.

it deals with offices and not with individuals.[74] That document contains a tabulated list of both the permanent staff of the temple (the overseer of the temple, the chief lector priest, and various guards and manual labourers) and the group of priests on monthly duty (the chief of the *phyle*, the scribe of the temple, the regular lector priest, the embalmer, the *imiseta*-priest, the 3 libationers, the 2 royal *wab*-priests), along with their shares in the daily temple income of bread and beer. The value of the papyrus for the reconstruction of the administrative structure of the temple is considerable,[75] but it is noteworthy that a relatively small proportion of the income is divided between these people: they received only 70 out of a total of 410 loaves of bread, for example, with the vast majority of the daily income being handed over directly to the mortuary priests, a category of priest which is often conspicuously absent in lists of priests in the temple.[76] Another conspicuous absence is the lack of any direct state involvement in the funding of the cult, and the overall impression is that of a local institution interacting with state level administration only rarely, leading Stephen Quirke to suggest that its organisation should be compared to the great estate of an official, with the deified deceased king in place of a lord: 'Like any other landowner, the deity is served by men who cultivate and manage his estates, supervise supplies and expenditure, prepare his meals, and guard and maintain his properties'.[77]

Name-lists of priests were important for the distribution of offerings, but for other categories of personnel they could also have a different use: one extraordinary papyrus refers to the 'law of registering singers', and makes clear that singers who were absent from their duties were liable to be whipped, with the number of lashes being dependent on the number of days they failed to turn up (10 lashes for 1–10 days, 30 for 11 days, 50 for 12, etc.).[78] Name-lists were also compiled of manual labourers in connection with the organisation of extra-mural construction work,[79] and letters make frequent reference to temple officials recruiting, assigning or releasing workers.[80]

The detailed records of temple income in the form of offerings were used to keep track of missing deliveries, and one message, copied into the daybook of the temple for future reference, complained that 45 days had passed in months 2 and

74 Luft 1982, 146–149.
75 Kóthay 2015.
76 Luft 1986, 135, 147–148.
77 Quirke 1990, 162.
78 P.Berlin 10001A, unpublished but see Kaplony-Heckel 1971, 1. I am grateful to Jürgen Osing for sharing information about this and other unpublished documents with me.
79 Quirke 1990, 162–163.
80 Kóthay 2015; Luft 2006, 97–99.

3 of Akhet without certain commodities having been supplied from a temple of Sobek, despite the matter having been raised 'a multitude of times' in previous letters. The troubles with deliveries from the Sobek temple did not end there, and the scribe goes on to state that there had been no sign of the deliveries for the entire period 'from month 1 of Peret day 14 and up to this day'.[81]

Correspondence arriving at the temple, like the message about the sandal maker (Fig. 7), might be entered into the journal on the relevant day it was received and could include various types of letters: the most famous example is probably a letter from the overseer of the temple of Amenemhat II informing the chief lector priest at Lahun about the predicted occurrence of a celestial phenomenon (the heliacal rising of the star Sothis). The information in the letter, which arrived some 22 days before the event was to take place, has been important for modern reconstructions of ancient Egyptian chronology.[82] There are other, similar letters regarding the date of various festivals in the material,[83] or reporting that a festival list has been drawn up,[84] as well as entries recording the arrival of other types of written messages, suggesting a considerable network of communication through which temples could, *inter alia*, coordinate their cult calendars. It is not surprising to find documents related to the liturgical year in a temple archive, and there are also a number of lists of festivals among the fragments, some of which are provided with dates.[85]

In addition to the copies of letters in the daybook, there is a substantial number of original letters in the material from Lahun,[86] easily identified by the presence of the titles and names of the addressee on the back, sometimes accompanied by the name and title of the messenger bringing the letter. Many of these letters make reference to other (now lost) letters having been sent or received, indicating that written communication was not unusual or rare in this context. The original letters could be written in either columns or lines, or both, whereas letters copied into the daybook were normally transcribed into a linear format. Not all letters were recorded in the daybook, perhaps partly because it was not

81 P.Berlin 10056A recto; this is unpublished but see Luft 1992b, 70–78 and Kaplony-Heckel 1971, 26; the entry itself is dated to month 2 of Peret day 21.

82 Krauss 2006; Luft 1992b, 54–57.

83 Luft 1992b, 50, 63, 89.

84 P.Berlin 10066: Luft 1992a.

85 Luft 1992b, 78–81, 85–86, 93–95, 98–103.

86 Luft 1992a; 2006.

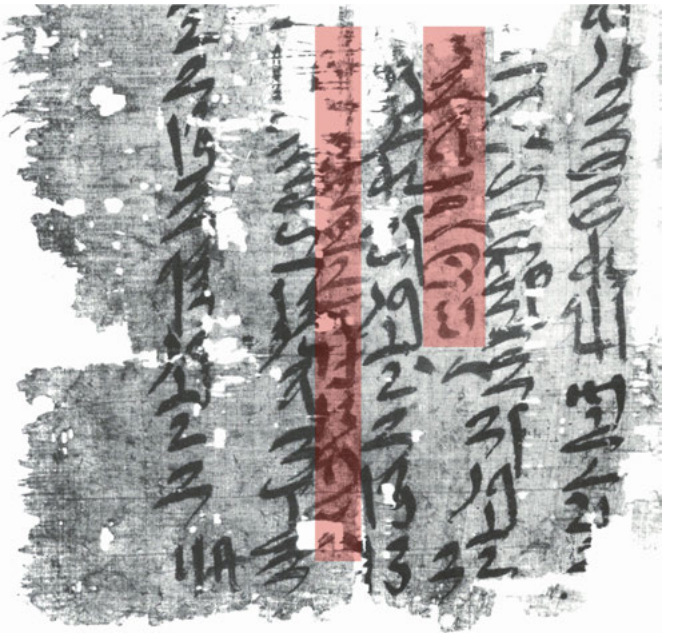


Fig. 8: Detail from a photograph of P.Berlin 10023B, a letter where the temple scribe of Lahun, Horemsaf, wrote to ask a superior for wine, grain, earth almonds and fowl for the offering rituals. The answer was inserted, in red ink (highlighted on the photograph), between the columns of the original letter, and confirmed that the goods he asked for had been sent. © Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

always necessary: a good number of letters were returned to the temple after they had been received by the addressee, with the answer simply written on the original letter itself, inserted in red ink between the columns of the first text (Fig. 8).

The letters were presumably archived with the daybook rolls and accounts. The physical delivery of written documents was not restricted to letters, and one entry in the Lahun temple daybook refers to 'the papyrus roll with the daybook of the temple of Sobek, Lord of Rasehui' being 'given' by a scribe whose name is lost.[87] The context is unfortunately obscure, but it does suggest that even an essentially archival type of document like a daybook would sometimes be circulated and consulted.

87 Luft 1992b, 81–82.

The topics covered by the letters are diverse, from concerns about individuals being taken for labour duties and unspecified grievances between superiors and their subordinates, to the celebration of private cult ceremonies, the recruitment of musicians, and the arrangement of deliveries to the temple. Information from the letters frequently complement that of other archival documents like accounts. To what extent the accounts of the temple were checked or inspected is apparent only rarely in the daybook or in the documents themselves, but the letters shed some light on the procedures involved. One mentions the addressee having 'given him the accounts' in connection with some wrongdoing,[88] while another records a subordinate informing his superior that the 'surplus' of a given day has been recorded (?) and that he should send him the final account, because 'today is the day that my lord views the documents, one after the other', with a further mention of four account documents that had been sent.[89] The practice of keeping yearly records reappears in a letter where the local governor seems to be asking the administrative chief of the temple to assemble the accounts relating to both offerings and different categories of personnel, but the relevant passage contains technical terminology and grammatical oddities which hinders a detailed analysis.[90] Another letter talks of an inspection, implicitly of accounts, relating to a period of time described as 'from year 30 to the present day' (the letter is itself undated), when the writer was obstructed in his work by a refusal to hand over the relevant material,[91] and there is a reference in a fragmentary message at the end of another letter where an 'inspection' had been carried out, but where the record of this could not subsequently be 'found'.[92] The purpose of the accounting was partly to keep a record of obligations fulfilled (or otherwise), and it is clear from both the accounts themselves and the letters that certain individuals—presumably *ex officio*—had a responsibility to provide deliveries for the divine offerings as 'dues', and that failure to deliver was duly noted by the temple scribes. One particularly revealing letter complains that a number of offerings, including cattle, had not been delivered for a given festival, and the scribe of the temple informed the addressee that 'accounts had been made of the shortcomings (? *snb*?) of the royal *wab*-priest Senwosret son of Senwosret'.[93] It seems that due to

88 P.Berlin 10038A; Luft 1992a.
89 P.Berlin 10038C; Luft 1992a.
90 Luft 2006, 119–128; Brose 2014, 316 no. 511, 381 no. 101, 402 no. 234.
91 P.Berlin 10074; Luft 1992a.
92 Luft 2006, 59–62.
93 Luft 2006, 35–41.

some confusion in the record-keeping, the checking of the accounts was becoming difficult, although the reply to the letter indicates that the matter was eventually resolved.

Many of the letters are not easy to translate accurately, not least because of the technical vocabulary,[94] but what emerges is a clear sense of both auditing and the circulation of written accounts. The frequency of such use of the archival material, or even the circumstances under which it was likely to take place, remain elusive.

3.2.3 A New Kingdom temple archive from Thebes

With the exception of the few fragments of papyrus from the memorial temple of Ramesses II at Thebes,[95] the only surviving temple archive from the New Kingdom is that of Thutmose III of the 18th Dynasty (*c.*1350 BCE) which—like the archive of the royal memorial temple of Senwosret II at Lahun—was found in the rubbish dumps of the temple, outside the enclosure wall (Fig. 9).

The papyri were recently discovered by the Spanish-Egyptian mission working at the site, directed by Myriam Alvarez-Seco, and the following preliminary description is based on my initial examination of the material in November 2016. The archaeological context of the find is a secondary deposit, but there is no doubt that the majority of the papyri stem from the official archive of the temple. There are perhaps around a thousand fragments of varying size, many no bigger than a stamp, and they are currently mounted in 14 frames of glass. The vast majority of the fragments are administrative in nature, and these stem, for the most part, from a daybook roll. It is organised chronologically with headings in red ink for each day, often simply followed by a list of offerings. The extremely fragmentary state of the papyri means complete headings are only rarely preserved, but extant examples include a date in year 10 of Amenhotep III, that is to say some two or three generations after the founding of the temple by Thutmose III. Some of the lists have a heading reading '[t]hat which was brought from the temple of Amun', indicating that at least a portion of the offerings were delivered from the large Karnak temple complex across the river. The formula used here is identical to that in the Abusir temple accounts a thousand years earlier. Occasionally offerings are said to come from elsewhere, with one example listing 'offerings of the great royal wife' (perhaps Queen Tiye if the fragment is also from the reign of Amenhotep III, but the name is unfortunately lost). There are many mentions of

94 Quirke 1998.

95 Spiegelberg 1898; cf. Hagen forthcoming.

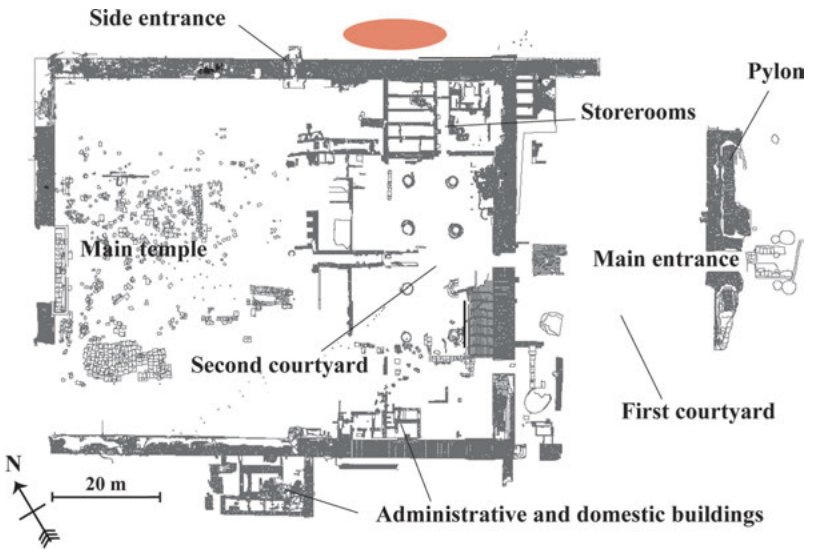


Fig. 9: A map of the mortuary temple of Thutmose III at Thebes (courtesy of Myriam Alvarez-Seco) indicating the find-spot of the papyrus archive (red ellipse) in the rubbish dumps outside the northern enclosure wall. The material was deposited here by temple staff using the small side-entrance in this wall; most of the papyri were found mixed in with general debris a short distance to the right of the gate. The only location inside the temple proper where papyrus fragments have been found is in a production area (bakery?) to the north-east of the main temple where a handful of tiny fragments of an account were discovered in November 2016 (not indicated on the map).

different festivals, including a coronation festival ('festival of the appearance of the king'), the well-known Nehebkau-festival, and an otherwise unattested 'festival of Amun during Khoiak', among others. Once the material has been processed a comparison with existing festival calendars on contemporary temple walls, with their accompanying donation records for offerings, may shed light on the ritual activities of the memorial temple.

The offerings themselves are listed, with amounts, either line-by-line or as continuous text (different scribes may have had different preferences for the format). A range of bread and cakes is attested every day, as is beer and wine, incense, honey, fruit, dates and milk, whereas other commodities appear more irregularly: textiles, fowl, cattle, etc.[96]

96 The daily amounts are generally modest; a few jars of beer, wine, or milk, and rarely more than a handful of bread and cakes. The commodities being offered in the temple are remarkably

The detailed records of the offerings were presumably kept to document the deliveries made, and to keep track of temple income in relation to the redistribution of offerings to the priests and officials associated with the temple, but there are surprisingly few mentions of outstanding amounts, a feature which is otherwise common in the accounts from the Abusir temple archives. One isolated fragment has the phrase 'remainder (i.e. outstanding) up to year [X]', but such references are rare.

The daybook dominates the archive as it survives, but there are other types of documents. One fragment is from an inventory list of different types of silver vessels, similar to those known from Abusir and Lahun, and there are several fragments of letters. Whether the latter are original letters or copies made for the archive (as is common in daybook type documents) is not clear. There are also isolated notes that deal with the organisation of labour but which seem not to belong to the daybook: one has a list of rations provided to various stone masons (literally 'necropolis-men').

Most of the fragments from the rubbish dump came from the temple archive, but perhaps not all of them. In addition to the administrative documents there are also a few literary fragments, notably from a hymn, from one or more papyrus rolls in cursive hieroglyphs, and from an illustrated magical or mythological roll with illustrations of the serpent Apophis. These need not have been stored with the administrative archival material originally, and may have come from a temple library instead.

3.3 Archives from royal palaces: Thebes, Gurob and Memphis

Royal palaces, like temples, were organisationally complex institutions that required detailed record-keeping and accounting procedures, but few such archives have survived. Individual documents that would have originated in these contexts exist, and they are suggestive, but the lack of a recorded archaeological context frequently impedes a full understanding.

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homogenous over the course of days and months, suggesting that the aforementioned donation records known from contemporary temple walls and stelae are, to an extent, real historical records that were used as a basis for the cult operations of the temples themselves. The temple archive of Thutmose III is the only extant source that allows for an evaluation of the extensive monumental records in this way.

3.3.1 A late Middle Kingdom palace archive from Thebes

The earliest examples of administrative documents from a palace archive are known collectively as Papyrus Boulaq 18, and consist of two rolls that were found in a tomb belonging to a scribe in a state department called Neferhotep;[97] one of the Amherst fragments (no. X) has also been thought to come from the same document.[98] The tomb owner may have been the writer responsible for the larger of the two rolls (they are in different hands), and their presence in a funerary context is presumably to be explained as a symbol of the social identity of the deceased.

The document is still not fully published, despite having been available in facsimile for almost 150 years,[99] and there is to date no full published translation of the text, although the incomplete transcription and commentary of Scharff provides a starting point for analysis;[100] the following summary is based on this work as well as on that of Quirke.[101] The larger roll is a daybook recording the visit of the court of a late 13th-Dynasty king, perhaps Sobekhotep II (*c*.1760 BCE), to a palace at Thebes, and covers a period of twelve days. It was inscribed on both sides with the daybook, and although the precise relationship between the two sides is debated—a period of eleven days is missing between the last entry on the front and the first on the back—it would seem that at least part of the back was used also for drawing up preliminary versions of some of the entries on the front.[102]

Papyrus Boulaq 18 is the longest and most complete example of a daybook to survive. Like all daybooks it is organised chronologically with a dated heading for each day, and it records a wide range of activities which Quirke has classified as belonging to four basic types of entries: (1) statements of accounts, (2) orders for provision, (3) expenditure of valuable commodities, and (4) official reports and documents.

Entries of type (1) reflect the main concern of the document which is the regular palace income and expenditure,[103] and these note daily deliveries etc., along with the origin of the goods. The issuing of consumables took the form of tabular lists of individuals (title and name) with columns for e.g. beer, meat, vegetables, dates and various types of bread. There were different types of income, from the

97 Miniaci/Quirke 2009; 2008.
98 Newberry 1899, 48.
99 Mariette 1872.
100 Scharff 1922.
101 Quirke 1990.
102 Spalinger 1986a, 227, 239; Quirke 1990, 17–21.
103 Spalinger 1985; 1986a.

regular deliveries of 'ordinary provisions' (*ꜥḳw*) to 'extraordinary deliveries' (*inw*) that would cover 'extraordinary provisions' (*fḳꜣw*).

Entries of type (2) include supplies for crews of workers not normally provided with regular provisions,[104] and orders to provide officials with goods in connection with journeys away from the palace, or visits to the palace, with copies of the written orders as well as the oral commands being duly entered into the archive, along with short notes asserting that the orders had been fulfilled ('One has acted according to this order'), followed by the relevant information on goods provided ('Various bread: 30 loaves. Beer jars: 3. Jar of meat: 1').

The entry for month 2 of Akhet, day 28 is fairly typical: after the date this starts with a heading explaining that an official had issued an order to prepare 'extraordinary provisions' for another palace official who was travelling to the temple of Montu at Medamud, some 8 km to the north: it includes the details of the food issued, and a statement that the order had been completed. Then another order was dealt with, this one about providing bread, beer and meat to a group of craftsmen, again with details of the 'extraordinary provisions' issued and an assertion that the order had been carried out. A section recording the issuing of incense for the same temple of Montu from the 'strongroom' (*ḫtm*) follows. Finally, the scribe entered a detailed account of the income and expenditure for the day: for the category 'various types of bread' this was listed as 1680 loaves 'of the king', plus 200 as a remainder carried over from the previous day, plus 100 loaves delivered from the nearby temple of Amun, for a total of 1,980 loaves. A list of expenditure was then drawn up, with various departments and groups of personnel getting their share, to a total of 1,780; the remainder of 200 loaves were carried over to the next day.[105] Whether these numbers represent actual loaves of bread (and jars of beer, bundles of vegetables, etc.) or simply standardised numbers for book-keeping that note the shares of income and expenditure that the different institutions and departments were entitled to receive, or obliged to supply, is debated.[106] As with the palace archives from Gurob (3.3.2) and Memphis (3.3.3), the income at the Theban palace appears to be coming from the local administrative area ('The District Head-of-the-South'),[107] and the absence of institutions like the state treasury is noteworthy.[108] The different parts of the palace that received provisions were (1) the palace proper, that is to say the

104 Quirke 1990, 106–107.
105 Scharff 1922, plates 7–8.
106 Quirke 1990, 112.
107 Spalinger 1985, 190.
108 Spalinger 1986a, 209–210; Quirke 1990, 51.

administrative staff of the court; (2) the 'household of the nurses', effectively the royal family and their dependents (when present), and (3) the 'regular clients' or support staff of the palace (servants, guards, etc.). It has been noted that the king is not generally mentioned in the papyrus, unlike the king's wife, the king's children (one son, three daughters), the king's brothers and his nine sisters,[109] but whether this is a matter of decorum or an indication of his absence is unclear. The groups of individuals that belonged to the different parts of the palace can be subdivided into ranking blocks, with rank inferred based on the amount of provisions allocated.[110]

The provision lists show fluctuations in the amounts consumed, and these changes can sometimes be linked to specific events at the palace:[111] one of the clearest examples is a feast in honour of the god Montu where a long list of consumables issued is accompanied by a 'Name-list of the officials admitted to eat in the audience hall on this day', including high-ranking individuals like the vizier Ankhu and the general and royal seal-bearer Iaib.[112] Another illustrative example is the arrival of a group of five or six *medjay*-bedouins at the palace on day 2 of Akhet, for whom provisions then had to be issued following a written order to that effect. The order, which included information about the amount of bread and beer to be issued, as well as the institutions or departments which were going to be responsible for the 'extraordinary provisions', was copied into the daybook. This entry was followed by a formulaic statement about the order having been received and carried out. The first time these visitors are mentioned they are described as '*medjay* who came in obeisance', and although there is no further information about the purpose of the visit in the document,[113] the delegation included two 'chiefs' who were treated well: they were, for example, provided with dates, a commodity which at the aforementioned feast was only given to the two highest-ranking Egyptian officials present.

Entries of type (3) often deal with more valuable commodities like incense, wood, galena, different types of wine, sesame oil, honey, etc., and this is issued or withdrawn from the 'strongroom', mainly for individuals but also for the temple of Montu as divine offerings on an occasion when the divine statue returned to the temple.[114] Such luxury items were not part of the regular provisions, and

109 Quirke 1990, 120–121; Spalinger 1985, 235.
110 Quirke 1990, 74–76.
111 Spalinger 1985, 193; Quirke 1990, 108.
112 Scharff 1922, plate 18.
113 Spalinger 1985, 220–222.
114 Spalinger 1985, 230–234.

were issued ad hoc: the queen herself was on one occasion supplied with eye-paint, wine, and an ebony box.[115]

In terms of the use of this particular archival document it is noteworthy that despite the short period of time covered by the daybook, there are several mentions of written messages being circulated and copied,[116] so that it represents only a small part of the original textual material produced at the palace. Notwithstanding the fact that the document is an exceptionally rich source for the reconstruction of the administrative structure of the court in the late Middle Kingdom, as well as for various aspects of socio-economic history, it was a functional accounting document with a relatively narrow focus: it dealt with income and expenditure of the palace. The arrival or departure of officials or delegations, as noted above, is only mentioned in those cases where provisions are affected. In this sense the document is much more restricted than the daybook of the temple of Lahun, for example: it is not a daybook of the entire royal palace but rather a daybook for the administrative section of the palace dealing with the provision of food and drink (and occasionally other commodities from the 'strongroom'). The purpose of the papyrus seems obvious, and the attention to deficits of goods delivered,[117] so common in these types of documents, hints at its potential as a reference point in case of trouble with deliveries, as so clearly illustrated by the letters from the slightly earlier Lahun temple archive.

3.3.2 A New Kingdom palace archive from Gurob

During the late nineteenth century excavation of a royal palace at Kom Medinet Gurob, Sir Flinders Petrie—who at the same time was excavating the settlement of Lahun where a temple archive of an earlier period was found (3.2.2)—discovered a set of papyrus fragments.[118] Many of them were from the palace archive, but the excavation was poorly documented, even according to the standards of the time, and how many separate find-spots were involved is unknown: the presence of a number of literary fragments in the material need not suggest that material from the palace library was mixed with the administrative documents from the palace archive in its original context.[119]

115 Spalinger 1986a, 223–225.
116 Quirke 1990, 105–106.
117 Quirke 1990, 112.
118 Petrie 1890, 36; Griffith 1898.
119 Hagen forthcoming; cf. Fischer-Elfert 1998.

The majority of the papyri from the site are Ramesside in date (*c.*1250–1200 BCE), as shown by a number of dates and regnal years in the headings, including in some cases a notation of where the king is—a feature common to many administrative documents relating to the royal court.[120] Although there is a group of private legal documents of the 18th Dynasty sometimes said to be from here, the actual provenance of these could equally well have been Lahun.[121] As is the case with several other archives, the Gurob palace papyri were never fully published, and although there are transcriptions of some of the fragments available,[122] only a few select pieces have been translated.[123]

The fragmentary nature of the material means that it is challenging to evaluate archival practices at the site in any detail, but many of the papyri can be assigned to the daybook-genre. The best-preserved page from this daily palace journal, dated to year 2 of Seti II and written on the usual large-scale format roll with a height of *c.*42 cm, displays a range of topics and types of entries:

1. Copy of a letter sent from the palace to the king, where a woman thanks him for having sent foreign workers in connection with an unnamed project. It ends with a date which is presumably the date the actual letter was sent.
2. Dated entry with the heading for a list of personnel of the palace (the list itself was never included).
3. Dated entry recording the delivery of fish from the local governor.
4. A tabular account recording the daily payment of wages, in oil, to workers and their overseers for half a month.
5. Dated entry recording the delivery of fish, mats and loaves of bread.
6. Dated entry recording the delivery of fish from the governor through various fishermen.
7. Dated entry recording the delivery of fish from the governor, as well as provisions of bread and beer from the overseer of the king's household.
8. Dated entry (incomplete) of the extraction of goods from the storehouse of the palace for a doorkeeper.

The broad range of entries echoes that of daybooks from temple archives (see Fig. 7 above); accounts of deliveries received, goods distributed, letters sent, etc.

Other fragments from the palace daybook are diverse to say the least, but the management of resources is a recurring theme. A copy of a letter from a Theban

120 Hagen 2016a.

121 Compare the accounts of Griffith 1898, 19, 91–92, Petrie 1890, 50 and Gardiner 1906, 27; 1957, 23.

122 Gardiner 1948, 14–35.

123 Griffith 1898; Gardiner 1953; Helck 1961–1969.

official deals with the branding of various cattle with the mark of the Gurob palace, followed by a list of 38–40 cows grouped according to age and colour.[124] The palace received income through the collection of the harvest tax, and this was also noted in the daybook: one passage deals with the tax in the very last year of the reign of Ramesses II and the first year of his successor Merenptah, and despite its fragmentary state it shows that in this case the grain is received from the local governor rather than collected directly.[125] The dependence on local governors for supplies is well documented in the archive and is directly comparable to the provisions supplied to the palace of Seti I at Memphis by the local governor there (see 3.3.3 below). The palace presumably also collected harvest tax directly from its own fields, as seems to be the case in another daybook fragment that mentions the harvest tax of specific individuals, including 'cultivators'.[126]

Precious materials issued from storerooms were also recorded in the daybook, such as one case where deliveries (of lapis lazuli and malachite, as well as linen) were sent to 'the place where the king is'.[127] Other high-value commodities like textiles were issued perhaps primarily in connection with specific events such as festivals,[128] but only rarely are names or titles of recipients preserved. The most famous example records a foreign princess and wife of Ramesses II who was issued two large rolls of high-quality cloth (*c.* 14 × 1 m and 7 × 1 m in size, respectively), presumably for the preparation of suitable garments, but there is another fragment that has garments being supplied to a member of the royal family too, perhaps to the king's son.[129]

Other events at the palace were also recorded in the daybook, but there are few examples in the surviving material. The departure and arrival of officials was registered in a manner similar to that known from the contemporary archives of the royal tomb construction projects from Deir el-Medina (3.8): one entry reads 'Day 27: Arrival of the royal scribe Mahu at the palace [...]'.[130]

The organisation of labour is not as prominent in the surviving archival material from Gurob as it is in the Lahun temple archive, but this may partly be explained by its fragmentary nature and partly by the fact that there were few large-scale building programmes in the area of Gurob that would be comparable to the

124 Gardiner 1948, 18–19.
125 Gardiner 1948, 30.
126 Gardiner 1948, 33.
127 Gardiner 1948, 21.
128 See Gardiner 1948, 20–21 for a substantial range of garments issued on the occasion of a New Year festival.
129 Gardiner 1948, 22–23.
130 Gardiner 1948, 24.

construction of the royal pyramids at the time the Lahun archive was in use. However, a single fragment from the daybook with a list of builders, coppersmiths and sandalmakers delivering some 39 000 bricks (as their work quota?) shows that large-scale construction work certainly took place intermittently.[131] One unpublished fragment has as a list of personnel belonging to the palace that are being sent out to work 'in the northern region', including 'servants' and 'washermen'; the work is presumably related to cultivation as they are collectively referred to as 'cultivators' despite their titles in the list.[132] The workers are divided up into two groups, each under the supervision of an official (one is an 'agent', *rwḏw*), and it seems to be forced labour because one man is said to have 'run away', two were excused on the grounds that they were dead, and three had already been drafted as soldiers and so could not be sent out with the others. The list includes a significant proportion of foreign names.

There are other name-lists of people associated with the palace, with many different titles attested: priests, 'citizenesses', shepherds, guards, and so on, but due to their fragmentary nature there is little contextual information to go on.[133]

As with the Lahun material there is at least one original letter, this one sent to a chief of guards called Raia from one of his colleagues whose name is lost, and dealing with various deliveries and problems of communication. The presence of an address on the back shows that it is an original letter, rather than an archival copy from the daybook.[134]

Archival usage, beyond the production of the documents themselves, is rarely attested in this material. There is a single reference to a 'report of year 61' that had been 'put onto a papyrus roll',[135] but the context is broken. The fragmentary nature and only limited publication of the material notwithstanding, the content and form of the Gurob archive echo that of other institutional archives, including the daybook format with the copying of correspondence sent out from the palace as a record of official communication. The mix of letters, tabular accounts, and dated entries recording income and expenditure, is very similar to that found in the other archives discussed above, and demonstrates a remarkable longevity of format and administrative practice over well over a thousand years.

131 Gardiner 1948, 34.

132 P.BM EA 10776; this is perhaps a loose sheet rather than a fragment of the daybook although it is from a similar full-size roll.

133 E.g. the unpublished P.BM EA 10777.

134 P.BM EA 10779; also unpublished.

135 Gardiner 1948, 27.

3.3.3 A New Kingdom palace archive from Memphis

A roughly contemporary group of papyri from Memphis, the precise archaeological context of which is not known, stems from a palace archive from the second and third regnal years of King Seti I. Having been acquired on the antiquities market in the first half of the 1800s—Champollion had seen some with a dealer in Cairo as early as 1828—they eventually made their way to Paris, where the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) bought them from the dealer Rollin in 1846. Although some pieces were gradually made accessible for study it was not until 1896 that Wilhelm Spiegelberg collected and published a full edition of the material. The state of preservation of the papyri suggests a find-spot in a tomb, probably somewhere in the Saqqara necropolis. The date of the archive is fixed by a number of full dating formulas in the headings, many of which also note the whereabouts of the king, and these can be used to build up an overview of the travels of the royal court.[136] To the manuscripts in Paris should probably be added the following three groups (1) three papyri acquired in Egypt in the early 1890s by Lord Warkworth,[137] (2) two fragments in the Amherst collection,[138] and (3) perhaps—although less probable—some fragments in the Egyptian Museum in Turin.[139]

Group (1) consists of exceptionally well preserved papyri that must also have come from a tomb; one of them is a baking account very similar to the BnF documents and is dated to precisely the same regnal year of the same king, Seti I.[140] Another includes an intriguing literary text with a eulogy in honour of Seti I on the front, and then on the back a curious text relating to the weighing of the heart ceremony,[141] while the last one is a letter written by a scribe working at Memphis.[142] This could be a coincidence but it is more plausible to interpret it as coming from the same find as the Paris papyri.

Group (2) could well belong to the material, and although their fragmentary state makes this difficult to confirm it is noteworthy that both collections also included fragments of a single literary manuscript from the same period (*The Story of Astarte and the Insatiable Sea*), and that the dealer who sold both this literary manuscript and the administrative material to the BnF, Camille Rollin, had assigned the former the shop catalogue number 1886 and the first of the latter

136 Hagen 2016a.
137 Barns 1948.
138 Newberry 1899, 48 no. XI, plate 21 nos IV and V.
139 Kitchen 1993a, 185.
140 P.BM EA 73668.
141 P.BM EA 73667.
142 P.BM EA 73666.

(P.BnF 203) the number 1887. There is relatively little evidence about the provenance of either group but on balance I am inclined to believe they may have come from the same original find.[143]

Group (3) consists of two fragments of accounts dealing with grain, one of which mentions King Seti I, but there is little else to tie the fragments to the Memphis archive and they could equally well belong to a Theban find.[144]

Over all the material can be divided into two types of papyri where one is characterised by a quickly-written and rather cursive hieratic and the other by a more careful and formal register of hieratic that has been described as 'calligraphic'.[145] The latter papyri are invariably written only on the front of the roll (i.e. where the papyrus fibres run horizontally) and are laid out in a more considered manner. The impression is that one is seeing two distinct stages of archival practice, one initial stage where preliminary accounts are drawn up, perhaps on the spot as deliveries are made, and one secondary stage where preliminary accounts are written 'clean' onto a final roll that is destined for the archive; this may be compared with the daily accounts compiled into monthly accounts in the temple archives from Abusir and Lahun (3.2.1 and 3.2.2).

The Memphis archive has not been fully published in modern photographs, and some of the inscribed areas have been cut up and pasted onto cardboard in modern times, and this obstructs an assessment of the materiality of the group as a whole. However, a particularly striking physical feature of the documents left intact is the extravagant use of papyrus. Papyrus BnF 204 (Fig. 10) is a case in point: in this papyrus, which is one of the finely written archival copies, the hieratic text has been distributed on the page with no concern about the efficient use of space, but this is not always obvious from the published photographs and facsimile drawings. Combined with the format of the document—the regular full format height of 42 cm—and the uncial handwriting, the visual aspects alone signal the exceptional status of its original institutional context.

143 Cf. Collombert/Coulon 2000, 195–199.

144 See Kitchen 1993a, 185.

145 Spiegelberg 1896, 5. BnF 203–208 are hastily written, while BnF 209–213 are 'calligraphic' in style.

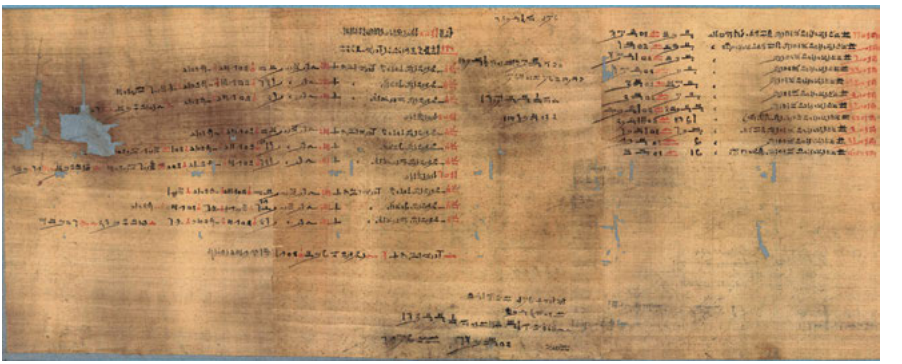

Fig. 10: Photograph of P.BnF 204, an administrative document recording the receipt of bread at the storehouse of the royal residence at Memphis. The bread had been delivered from the bakery of the local mayor, who in turn had been issued the grain from the royal granary, and the amounts were considerable: the summary at the bottom mentions 112 090 small loaves. The extravagant use of space is unusual and shows that economic factors like the cost of papyrus were irrelevant to the scribe drawing up the accounts. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The papyri are occasionally referred to as 'the baking accounts of Seti I' in Egyptological literature, but the contents are more diverse than this label suggests: only about a third of the papyri deals with the organisation of bread production and delivery. The largest group of papyri is in fact a set of accounts dealing with the 'requisitioning' (*nḫm*) of timber in various city districts of Memphis by house or institution.[146] Despite the general lack of contextual information in the headings of the timber accounts it seems plausible that the main purpose was to survey material for use in shipbuilding. In one account 'carpentry timber' is mentioned, and many of the officials supplying this specific type of timber held nautical titles; in general a high proportion of the timber can be identified as ship's parts.[147] Precisely why or how the state could lay claim to the timber possessed by all these individuals and institutions is a matter of debate,[148] but it illustrates the problems involved when historians try to distinguish between Egyptian private property and resources to which an individual had access through the holding of an office. The officials listed include a variety of high- and mid-

146 Kitchen 1993b.
147 Kitchen 1993a, 178–179.
148 Kitchen 1993a, 176–177.

ranking titles, and the institutions mentioned range from the estates of the king and of the queen to various other religious institutions and estates.

The second largest group of papyri is the baking accounts, a term that encompasses several different types of documents. The first type relates to the delivery of grain, explicitly said to be for baking, from the royal granary in Memphis to the bakeries run by the local governor, typically around 180 sacks (*c*.13,500 litres) at a time. The second type are accounts detailing the deliveries to the palace of the bread itself every few days, where the number of bread loaves is entered against the names of various individuals, along with the type and weight of the bread. A third type, also an account of bread baked, lists the bakers responsible each day, normally four, and the amount of flour they had been issued, and how many loaves of bread they had baked from it.

The number of bread baked fluctuates, but the accounts do not generally give any reason for the changes. It seems obvious that the differences are due to the presence or absence of certain groups of people, or perhaps the celebration of festivals—the whereabouts of the king is mentioned in many dating lines, for example, although it is not possible to correlate this with production levels. One document includes a comment to the effect that the Chief of the Granary changed the volume of grain issued, but the reason is not given.[149]

The average size of a loaf was about 300 g, and the number of loaves per entry ranged mostly from around 1,000 to 6,000, but how many people were fed from this is impossible to say—somewhere in the region of 500 individuals has been suggested but there are too many unknown factors for reliable estimates.[150] The baking accounts note the amount of flour issued to individual bakers, and the bread they baked from it each day (often around 350 loaves each), by number and by weight, and the calculations include a set rate of 10% loss of weight as a result of the baking process. The detailed records facilitate control over production levels (at least one calculation on the back of a document is a preliminary estimate of needs),[151] but were presumably also intended as a measure to avoid or discourage theft. Some bakers delivered less bread by weight than the accepted rates for the flour they had received, and this was duly noted by the scribes as a deficit: one example involved the baker Khuru who had delivered about five loaves too little one day, and this was duly recorded in the account. The latter is important because it shows that the deliveries were actually weighed—it was not just a standard formula that was filled in automatically. There are no indications in the

149 Kitchen 1975, 218.

150 See in general the comments by Kitchen 1993a, 165.

151 Spalinger 1986b, 316.

archive of sanctions based on the deficits, but these particular accounting documents may not have been the obvious place to record it. Certainly patterns in deficits relating to specific individuals are apparent even to modern eyes, and the baker Khuru often delivers less than he should, leading one scholar to label him 'light-fingered'.[152]

One account (BnF 203) deals with the delivery of fowl under the heading 'Account of the handing over of fowl to the fowl-yard of Seti I', that is to say a record of the delivery of living fowl either bred or captured elsewhere and brought to suitable structures at the residence, but the numbers of birds involved are unfortunately lost. Contemporary texts and reliefs show that both palaces and temples could have fowl-yards of considerable size, and although the figures quoted sometimes seem unrealistic—one ostracon mentions 22 530 people overseeing some 34 230 birds each—the sector certainly played an important part in providing food for these institutions.[153] The document lists the deliveries made each day, as well as who is bringing the birds, but there is no mention of which office or department is involved.

The commodities are dealt with mainly in separate accounts, and the overall range of goods is in practice relatively narrow: grain, bread, fowl, reeds, timber, leather and textiles. There are many categories of resources not mentioned in the archive as it survives, although undoubtedly they too would have been administered at the palace, including precious metals like gold, silver and copper, minerals, eye-paint and perfume. The implication of the absence of such records in the surviving material is not clear: they could have been issued by a separate department, perhaps responsible for a 'strongroom' as in the Theban palace of the late Middle Kingdom (3.3.1), or they could simply be lost.

The above-mentioned letter (P.BM EA 73666) which may be associated with the archive includes a glimpse of the informal economy of institutional provisions that only rarely appears in the accounts themselves. In an aside about treating the bearer of the letter with respect, the writer accuses the addressee of having kept half of the rations allocated to the writer (presumably by the hosting institution) during a previous visit, explicitly in order to sell the ill-gotten grain for silver.[154] Such misuse of institutional resources must have been widespread.

In terms of archival processes the material provides parallels but also differences when compared to other archives. As with the Abusir and Lahun archives there are both daily accounts and summary accounts in the Memphis papyri. The

152 Kitchen 1993a, 167.
153 Kitchen 1993a, 160–161.
154 Barns 1948, 38.

longest period covered by a single account are the 8 months summarised in BnF 205, where three deliveries per month (every ten days) are listed from month 4 of Akhet to month 3 of Shomu, and another document covers just over four months (BnF 206).[155]

One of the striking characteristics of the Memphis material is the fact that the subject matter is often restricted on a single 'page', so that one does not get the mixture of event, deliveries, letters, etc. that characterises daybooks. The Memphis accounts are more specialised in nature, but even here there are some examples of a single roll used for multiple types of entries, albeit not in a daybook format. The most informative example is BnF 209 which on the front has one column dealing with grain delivery from various women and the issuing of the same to bakers, followed by four columns listing the 'remainder' of wood in the southern quarter of Memphis.[156] The back of the roll was used for an even wider range of notes and jottings: the issuing of grain (including to 'those who were sick'), a list of work done by various bakers on certain days and the bread received from the bakeries, notes regarding the delivery of textiles by women (written upside-down in relation to the other texts on this side), and a name-list of Nubians 'brought from the settlement'. The impression is that the back of the roll was used effectively as a notebook by the scribe, perhaps for a limited time because all the recorded dates (relating to three of the independent sections listed above) fall within a period of nine days in month 2 of Peret.

The exceptional state of preservation of many of the Memphis accounts allow for an analysis of the stages of use of individual documents. In several papyri there are marginal signs and check marks (dots and thin oblique strokes), as well as corrections or crossing out of numbers, mainly in red ink.[157] This is not a practice unique to the Memphis archive,[158] but it seems to be more widely used in this material than in any of the other archives of the same period, although the poor state of preservation of the latter may in part explain this. As in both literary and administrative texts a missing or left-out part of the text can be added, for example above the line: one of the timber accounts has the phrase 'for work on the door' added in this way, specifying the eventual destination of the timber. There are also marked 'ticking off' entries, in red and black ink, for example in a name

155 Note that the 'sheet' as published by Spiegelberg (1896, plate IV) consists of three separate fragments whose original position relative to each other is unknown; consequently we do not here have evidence of a daily account next to a summary account.

156 Spiegelberg 1896, plate IX.

157 Kitchen 1975.

158 Helck 1974, 61–62.

list, as well as numbers that are crossed out.[159] It is readily apparent that most of these signs of use are found in the documents with a less formal register of hieratic, but significantly they are also found in the stylised formal accounts,[160] so the distinction is not absolute.

The question naturally arises as to which government or palace department the material originally belonged. Assuming that the find-spot was a single tomb—which although plausible cannot be proven—the archive was in any case deposited away from its original location. What the papyri have in common is that they deal with royal, that is to say state property, including the daily provisioning of food. The central department in the baking accounts is the storehouse of the royal residence, which acts as a nexus that oversees the grain sent from the royal granary (under the authority of the king) to the bakeries (under the authority of the mayor of Memphis) which eventually supplies bread back to the palace. Perhaps all the papyri would have been produced and kept at this storehouse, which would then have overseen and organised resource collection and expenditure along similar lines as the office responsible for provisioning in Papyrus Boulaq 18 (3.3.1). Whatever the case may be, the department operated in a slightly different way, with a more stringent division of account types on separate rolls, and an extravagant use of papyrus.

3.4 Military archives

There are few fragments from military archives from pharaonic Egypt, although it is clear that they existed. The army had its own hierarchy of scribes, and they would have kept records in connection with their duties: conscription, keeping track of rations, equipment, and the spoils of war, etc.[161] Expeditionary troops had army scribes with them, so for instance in the case of five thousand men sent out to quarry stone in the Wadi Hammamat under Ramesses IV the list of personnel includes 'twenty army scribes'.[162] Such scribes would have been responsible for both logistics and the keeping of records of various activities, and the extensive lists of loot from the military victories in the Levant under Thutmose III will have been derived from their field-notes.[163] Some of the original journals recording these campaigns were written by the army scribe Tjanuni (owner of Theban Tomb no. 74),

159 Spiegelberg 1896, plates XI–XV; Goelet 2015, 353–354; Kitchen 1975, 207.
160 Kitchen 1975, 212, 215.
161 Schulman 1964, 62–66.
162 Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 14.4.
163 Redford 2003, 4–5, 58–59; 1985, 151.

who in his tomb claims that '[i]t was I who wrote down the victories he (i.e. king Thutmose III) won in every foreign land, they being made in writing according to what he had done',[164] suggesting involvement with other types of records than simply army accounts. A model letter from *c*.1280 BCE (*The Satirical Letter of Hori*) lists areas of knowledge expected of a New Kingdom scribe—within a semi-literary framework—including that of an army scribe. One part of the text concerns the problem of provisioning for a group of five thousand soldiers: 'The number of men is too large for you (to calculate), and the provisions are insufficient for them... The troops are ready and all set, so you must divide the provision up into portions, one for each man'.[165] Such logistical challenges would have been met by extensive use of accounts papyri, and although these rarely survive there are some fragments that preserve relevant material. One document is a sort of daybook from the Karnak temple, dated to the reign of Ramesses IX (*c*.1125 BCE), that includes an archival copy of a letter to some Nubian soldiers sent out to guard the temple's gold-washers somewhere on the Red Sea coast. The Nubian troops had defeated local Bedouins who were attacking the mining operation, and the letter instructs the troops to stay put and be on guard for further trouble. Along with the letter the daybook also has a copy (*mỉtt*) of a list of provisions that is being shipped to the soldiers,[166] but despite dealing with military personnel the document itself stems, strictly speaking, from a temple archive.

The only extensive remains of a military archive are the fragments known in the Egyptological literature as the Semna Dispatches.[167] These texts were written on the front of a full-format papyrus roll with an estimated original height of perhaps 21–27 cm. The back of the roll was then subsequently used to copy a magical text, perhaps an execration ritual—and it has been suggested that this text on the back may also have been copied on-site at the Nubian fortress of Semna—before it made its way over 500 km northwards. The Semna Dispatches were in fact found, along with a number of other papyri, in a box in a late Middle Kingdom tomb (*c*.1820 BCE) at Thebes, together with various objects like reed pens, fertility figures, model faience vessels, ritual objects of ivory (including wands and 'clappers'), a bronze serpent wand, and a small wooden figurine of a female holding two bronze serpent wands. There was a definite focus on medico-magical compositions in the collection of papyrus material in the box (along with literary narratives, wisdom poetry

164 Sethe 1906–1909, 1004.9–10.

165 Fischer-Elfert 1986, 121; Wente 1990, 106.

166 P.BM EA 10752 = P.Ramesseum C; Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 519.12–521.11; Wente 1990, 38–39. The provisions include textiles, metal cups, knives and axes, bread, livestock, and spices.

167 Smither 1945.

and hymns) and this, along with the other objects found, have led scholars to believe that the owner was a priest or ritual practitioner.[168] Whoever the owner was there is no information available as to how this document, originally from a military archive, made its way to Thebes and into the box where it was found.[169] The box also contained another document related to the administration of the Nubian forts, but this appears to have been written in Thebes, perhaps at the local office of the vizier who was formally in charge of the forts, rather than at Semna.[170] This second papyrus, which consists of two fragments that do not join directly, contains copies of letters dealing with the external administration (here *sỉp*, 'inspection') of the forts, and so differs also in content from the Semna Dispatches, even if they deal with the same institutions.

A sense of the original archival context of the Semna Dispatches can be gained by a comparison with papyrus fragments found at other contemporary forts guarding the Nubian border. The forts at Buhen, Uronarti, and Shalfak have all yielded hieratic documents, albeit very fragmentary ones; the finds appear to include letters, accounts, and perhaps a daybook type document, although their poor state of preservation means the identification of text types is often uncertain.[171] The exact find-spots were recorded, so in most cases the material can be plotted onto maps of the site, an example of which is given in Fig. 11.

The data show a wide dispersal of fragments that do not readily lend themselves to an identification of an archive in the physical sense of a single location for the storage of administrative documents: at Uronarti the fragments came from 'block II', an area which 'may well have housed administrative offices', but also—and in greater numbers and higher concentrations—from 'block III' and 'block VIII', areas which were identified as barrack rooms by the excavators.[172] At Buhen, the papyrus fragments were found in the residence and headquarters of the commander of the fortress ('block A'), in what was believed to be a secondary context: effectively 'a closet under the stairs'.[173] The excavator thought they might have been deliberately swept in from the adjoining 'Painted Hall' (room 4), an audience chamber with 15 pillars and a brick pavement, when that room was being refurbished in the early New Kingdom.[174] There is no further information about the original storage conditions available.

168 Parkinson 2009, 138–172; Quirke 2016.
169 Kraemer/Liszka 2016, 56.
170 P.BM EA 10771 = P.Ramesseum 18; Liszka/Kraemer 2016, 185.
171 Smith 1976, 31–38, plates 61–68; Dunham 1967, 89–108.
172 Dunham 1967, 37–56.
173 Room 12: Emery et al. 1979, 9, 47.
174 Emery et al. 1979, 47–51, plate 16; Smith 1976, 31.

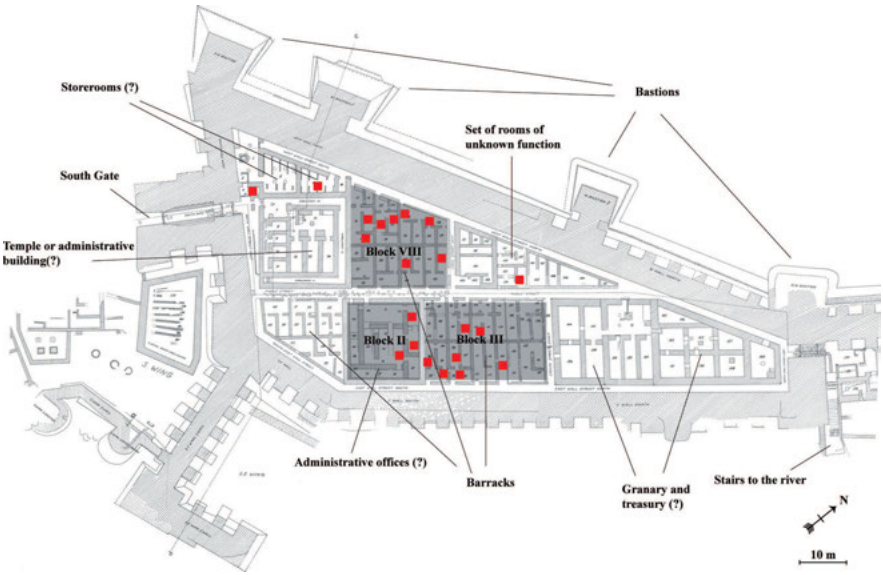

Fig. 11: A map of the central area of the fortress at Uronarti, indicating the find-spots of papyrus fragments (red squares). The identification of function and purpose of some areas are debated, but block II was thought by the excavators to contain the administrative offices of the fort, partly due to the papyri found here, while blocks III and VIII were thought to be living quarters for the soldiers. Adapted from Dunham (1967, map no. III).

The Semna Dispatches consist of a daybook roll recording events that took place over a period of three weeks (but with the actual entries perhaps copied over the course of a single day), written by a single scribe, in the third year of king Amenemhat III (*c.*1828 BCE). In contrast with many other daybooks of both the Middle and the New Kingdom, this particular daybook is exclusively concerned with outgoing and incoming letters: there are no accounts, lists of personnel or deliveries.[175] The roll was simply a record of communication between a series of forts along a stretch of the Nile that marked the border between Egypt and Nubia.[176] The Egyptian term for the letters is literally 'that which fortress sends to fortress', and the reports focus on the movement of desert-dwelling *medjay*-people and other Nubians (called Nehesy) in the border area, and only secondarily their trading activities which are known to have been policed by the Egyptian state. The

175 Kraemer/Liszka 2016, 30.
176 Kemp 2006, 231–244.

main concern is the number and identity of people travelling, where they come from, and where they are going:

> Another letter which was brought to him, one which was brought by the Overseer of the Storehouse Sobekwer, who is in Mirgissa fort, as that which fortress sends to fortress:
> It is a letter to your scribe, may he live, be prosperous, and be healthy, about the fact that those two guards and seventy *medjay*-people who went following that track in month 4 of Peret day 4, came to report to me on this day in evening, while bringing three *medjay*-men and [...], saying: 'We found them on the southern edge of the desert, below the inscription of Shomu, along with three women', so they said. Then I questioned these *medjay*-people, saying 'Where have you come from?', and then they said, 'It is from the well of Ibhyt that we have come'...
> ...
> Copy of a document which was brought to him, being one brought from the fortress of Elephantine, as that which fortress sends to fortress:
> Take note, while being healthy and alive, of the fact that two *medjay*-men, three *medjay*-women, and two youths (?) came down from the desert in year 3, month 3 of Peret day 27. They said: 'It is to serve Pharaoh, may he live, be prosperous and healthy, that we have come!'. A question was then asked regarding the situation in the desert. Then they said: 'We have not heard anything, but the desert is dying of hunger', so they said. Then this servant of yours had them dismissed to their desert on this day...[177]

This is not the place to explore the wider historical importance of the document, but in terms of the archival activities taking place—most of which have left no trace outside this papyrus roll—one of the key implications is the transmission of information, in written form, as missives being circulated not just between individual forts but (in several copies?) between a whole chain of forts. The recording is limited to letters, and the administrative documents from Buhen show that this was only a small part of the records that were produced in the forts; it seems likely that the Semna Dispatches papyrus formed part of the archive of the official responsible for monitoring the movement of people in the border region of this one fort, perhaps in an 'Office of reporting' as attested in the fort at Uronarti.[178]

This level of recording may or may not have been representative for border control during periods of strong central government. The slightly later text known as *The Duties of the Vizier*, which lays out the duties associated with the highest civil office in the state administration, indicates that the vizier's office would receive reports—presumably in writing ('to him is reported the state of fortresses of the south

177 Smither 1945, 7–9.
178 Kraemer/Liszka 2016, 28, 36, 40.

and the north')[179]—but this need not have been detailed reports of the kind represented by the Semna Dispatches.

The extensive fortifications along the Egyptian border in the Nile Delta region have not yielded material of a similar nature, primarily because local conditions here at Egypt's northern border do not favour the survival of papyrus. The impressive New Kingdom fortifications are comparable to the Nubian forts in the south, of the Middle Kingdom, in terms of infrastructure,[180] and it is reasonable to assume that similar archives would have existed there. A Ramesside letter explicitly states that written records detailing the movement of Bedouins in the border area in the north were being circulated, and a copy of a couple of pages from such a border journal exists.[181] The surviving extract was copied into a papyrus roll alongside various literary compositions and so is not an archival copy *stricto sensu*:

> Regnal year 3, MONTH 1 OF SHOMU, DAY 15. Going up by the retainer Barry son of Djapur, of Gaza. That which was with him for Syria: 2 dispatches (*wḫ3*). Specifically: One dispatch for the Overseer of the Garrison, Khay; one dispatch for the Chief of Tyre, Barremgu.
>
> Regnal year 3, MONTH 1 OF SHOMU, DAY 17. Arriving by the Troop Commanders of the Wells of Merenptah-Hetephermaat, may he live, prosper, and be healthy, which are in the hills, in order to investigate matters in the fortress (*ḫtm*) of Tjaru.
>
> Regnal year 3, MONTH 1 OF SHOMU, DAY 22. Coming by the retainer Djehuti son of Tjakaruma, of Gaza (?), Matjaduti son of Shamabar, ditto (of Gaza), Sethmose son of Aperdegar, ditto (of Gaza). That which was with him for the place in which One (= the king) is: Tribute and one dispatch for the Overseer of the Garrison, Khay...[182]

The copy of the daybook covers two sheets of the papyrus roll, and it retains the layout of actual daybooks with new dates and new consecutive entries noted in red ink on separate lines. Judging by the contents it would have originated at a border outpost on the Eastern edge of the Delta, perhaps the fortress of Tjaru (Tell el-Hebua I) along the main route between Egypt and the Levant known in Egyptian as the Ways of Horus,[183] and its entries record the movements, over a period of ten days, of various officials. Many carry letters while 'going up' to different locations in the Syria-Palestine area, or bring letters back from the foreign territories when 'returning' to Egypt (Fig. 12):

179 Quirke 2004, 19.

180 Overview by Morris 2005; recent work in the area is published by Snape and Wilson 2007 and Hoffmeier 2014.

181 Caminos 1954, 293.

182 Gardiner 1937, 31; Caminos 1954, 108–113.

183 Morris 2005, 478–486.

Date of Arrival (verb used)	Origin	Destination	Purpose
I Shomu 15 (*ṯs*, 'going up')	Egypt	Syria-Palestine (*Kharu*)	Delivery of letters to (1) the garrison commander Khay, and (2) the Chief of Tyre Bartermegu
I Shomu 17 (*spr*, 'arriving')	Syria-Palestine (*Wells of King Merenptah*)	Egyptian border	To 'investigate' (*smtr*) matters at the fortress of Tjaru
I Shomu 22 (*ỉỉ* 'returning')	Syria (*Kharu*)	Egypt	Delivery of tribute (?) and a letter (for the king) from the garrison commander Khay
(*ṯs*, 'going up')	Egypt	Syria-Palestine (*Kharu*)	Delivery of letters to (1) the garrison commander Penamun, and (2) the steward 'of this town' Ramessenakhte
(*ỉỉ*, 'returning')	Syria-Palestine	Egypt	Delivery of letters to (1) the garrison commander Preemheb, and (2) the deputy Preemheb
I Shomu 25 (*ṯs*, 'going up')	Egypt	Syria-Palestine	Not stated

Fig. 12: An overview of the movement of travellers recorded in a daybook from a border official during the reign of Merenptah (P.BM EA 10246 = P.Anastasi III, *c*.1210 BCE) over a period of ten days. The Egyptian terms for the different places mentioned are given in brackets; for a discussion of the geography see Morris 2005, 480–489. The site where the journal was originally written cannot be identified with certainty but it may well have been kept in the fortress-town of Tjaru (Tell el-Hebua I) itself, despite the reservations of Morris (p. 480), and such complexes could be denoted by both 'town' (*dmit*) and 'fortress' (*ḫtm*) in Egyptian. On this interpretation the *ḫtm* in the entry for day 17 and the *dmit* in the entry for day 22 would refer to, respectively, the fortress and town at Tjaru.

The focus is, as with the Semna Dispatches, on registering the movement of people, and the fact that many of the entries deal with messengers carrying letters is due to the high frequency of that type of traffic.[184] The material form and language of the letters is not known, but at least some may have been clay tablets with

184 It is not a 'postal register' as posited by Smithers 1939, 103.

cuneiform inscriptions—in Akkadian, the 'lingua franca' of the time—such as the letter to the 'Chief of Tyre', rather than papyrus letters written in Egyptian. For the slightly earlier comparative material from the state archive of diplomatic correspondence from Amarna, see below (3.6).

3.5 Archives relating to shipping, taxation and trade

The complex infrastructure of the Egyptian state and its various departments is rarely visible in the papyrus record, and we do not have a full archive from any single government department—nor of any government official—dealing with key areas of activity for a national bureaucracy like state organisation or taxation. There are individual documents that would presumably have formed part of such archives, but they are from secondary archaeological contexts. In this section I outline some of the most important groups of documents, but the list is not exhaustive and is simply meant to give an impression of the types of documents that would have been produced for, and stored in, archives relating to state departments dealing with infrastructure and resource management.

A papyrus produced by the administration of the royal shipyard at This from the early 12th Dynasty (*c*.1920 BCE), known as Papyrus Reisner II, was found deposited in a tomb at Naga ed-Deir along with three other administrative papyri (see Fig. 1 above).[185] The roll itself is almost 1.7 m long and with the Middle Kingdom full-format height of *c*.33 cm, and contains entries relating to the management of the institution, with considerable diversity in terms of types of entries:

Section A: account of deliveries of copper tools and leather (five columns).
Section B: account of deliveries of equipment for boats, including oars. Copy of a message to the shipyard about sending personnel and a boat to Thebes after a refit. Deliveries of copper tools and wood (continuation of Section A).
Section C: a table with a name-list of shipyard personnel that is concerned with types of copper tools that were to be sent southwards for re-casting. The names are

185 Published by Simpson 1963, 1965, 1969, 1986. The dates in the material as a whole relate to a period of nine or ten years (regnal years 16 to 25 of an unnamed king of the early 12th Dynasty, either Amenemhat I or Senwosret I), but the specific shipyard account covers three years and five months. Despite the fact that the reading of several of the dates is problematic it seems clear that not all entries follow each other chronologically as one would expect (the table in Section C, for example, contains the latest date in the entire document despite its physical location in the middle of the roll): Simpson 1965, 16–17.

grouped according to geographical locations, probably indicating where the operation was to take place.[186]

Section D: a letter to the stewards of the palace from the vizier, with orders to provide some wooden implements and crewmen, to be sent by boat. The letter was delivered by a messenger called Intef from the boat Saagerteb. Copied in vertical columns (probably mimicking the layout of the original letter), under a horizontally written date line.

Section E: another letter to the stewards from the vizier, dated to a day later than the previous letter (and delivered by different messengers arriving by the same boat), with orders to supply grain, bread, and perhaps a serving girl to the capital. Copied in vertical columns under a horizontally written date line, as above.

Section F: account of deliveries of copper tools to the shipyard.

Section G: another letter to the stewards from the vizier. The message is in two parts, one dealing with some previous complaint about the recruitment of workers for the shipyard, the other dealing with the provisioning of wood for some work on boats in connection with a festival. Copied in vertical columns under a horizontally written date line, like the other letters, but this one was explicitly labelled a 'copy'.

Section H: an unfinished name-list, followed by an account of copper tools handed over to a coppersmith.

(Section I is a blank area, perhaps originally meant for the name-list of Section H above.)

Section J: an account of deliveries of copper tools to the shipyard from various locations.

Section K: a summary account covering five pages, unfortunately with many of the column headings missing. The account covers a period of nine months, with one day per line and monthly tallies, and appears to list labour resources (in man-days) relating to the shipyard. At the end there are calculations of bread and beer based on the labour listed in the main body of the account.

Section L: an account of copper tools.

Section M: a similar account of copper tools.

Fragments: various accounts of grain, mats, timber, leather and pottery vessels.

The three other rolls found with the shipyard account were:

(1) Papyrus Reisner I: an accounting roll relating to the administration of manpower in connection with one or more building projects (including a temple), with tables detailing both man-days and attendance. Most entries are divided up into groups of workmen under a supervisor, and these groups are sometimes linked in the headings to certain localities. The work includes moving rubble, stone and sand, and the making of bricks in relation to different elements of the temple, the installation of architectural elements like doorways, but also other parts of the building operations like the delivery of wood and plant fibre.[187] There are numerous checkmarks, showing that it is a working document.

186 Simpson 1965, 31.

187 Simpson 1963, 52–63.

(2) Papyrus Reisner III: a roll with an account of manpower, occasionally listed by institution, with summaries for each individual month as well as longer periods of time, and occasional notes on mustering and the absence of workers. The headings, where preserved, do not explain what type of work the personnel is involved in, but as the second half of the roll deals with construction work on various parts of a temple (including work with bricks, stone and wood, the transport of straw, etc.), perhaps the entire roll relates to building works. Some numbers are struck out in red, again indicating a working document, and there are calculation aids in the form of multiplication tables inserted in the tables (both for the number eight, which is frequently used as a multiplier, and both written upside-down in relation to the rest of the text). There are several mistakes in various sums, so that 'a meticulous accounting is severely compromised by [the] errors';[188] this is worth bearing in mind when modelling the potential use of the documents in antiquity.[189]
(3) Papyrus Reisner IV: a roll relating to the administration of manpower, with workers organised in crews under various officials; the lack of preserved headings means that the project(s) that they worked on cannot be identified. This roll was a palimpsest papyrus that had originally been used in an earlier period for various accounts relating to the delivery and distribution of textiles.

One of the most prominent administrators in the papyri is Sefkhy son of Intef, and it has been suggested that he was the copyist responsible for most of the accounts, and that the coffin on which they were found belonged to him.[190] The fact that the shipyard accounting roll was found in a private tomb along with three other papyri dealing with other institutions and projects raises questions about the nature of archival practices at the shipyard, and about the demarcation of private versus institutional ownership of administrative documents. In particular, the lack of a thematic cohesion among papyrus rolls that were demonstrably found together suggest that the common denominator is the scribe responsible for the documents, who like any administrator would have had a wide range of responsibilities and would have been associated with many different institutions over the course of his career. The documents show evidence of being working accounts with calculations including numbers that were crossed out, as well as a number of marginal notes related to their use.[191]

A somewhat later document from the 18th Dynasty sheds some light on another shipyard at a location called Perunefer, perhaps near Memphis. The papyrus was written in the reign of Thutmose III and is a half-format roll of about 3 m in length.[192] The text deals with the building of, and repair work on, a number of

188 Simpson 1969, 18, 26.
189 On the (in)accuracies in later New Kingdom documents, see Janssen 2005.
190 Simpson 1980, 728.
191 Helck 1974, 61–62.
192 P.BM EA 10056; Glanville 1931, 1933; for the date see also Pasquali 2007.

ships in the Egyptian navy, including the royal barge. The document is chronological in nature, with entries for each day: the typical format consists of a dateline, followed by information on the type and amount of wood and timber issued from a place or institution, under whose authority the transaction occurred, and to whom the material was delivered. The destination of the materials is normally noted as being a captain in charge of re-fitting his ship, simply the name of the ship in question, or, in some cases, the name of the shipwright in charge of the project. The concern is, again, that of tracking the movement of goods.

The roll is inscribed on both sides, but how it has been used is not entirely clear. The text on the front, distributed over eighteen columns, contains dates that cover only five days in a single month, in other words it records quite a lot of activity for each day. The text on the back, in contrast, covers a much longer period (roughly four months) in a total of twelve columns, with a similar level of detail as the entries on the front. However, there are three major gaps in the entries: one gap of 72 days between the last entry on the front to the first on the back (which could in part be explained by the missing beginning and end of the papyrus), and two gaps of 45 and 47 days between some of the dates on the back. Unless the entire shipyard was inactive for these periods, which is unlikely, then the document would appear to be an incomplete record for the period it covers, and would, implicitly, be an attempt to summarise information from daily or monthly accounts that have not survived. Further, this papyrus represents only one type of record—the issue of materials—but in view of the range of documents preserved in other institutional archives there would presumably have been many others. A shipyard, which is focused on production through manual labour, might also have wished to keep track of work and levels of production, for example. A later literary text contains a passage where an individual with the same title as the shipwrights in the dockyard account ('craftsman') is involved in a conflict over work quotas—he has effectively tried to present the work done the day before as current work.[193] Presumably the administration of the Perunefer dockyard was also concerned with keeping track of work done beyond simply recording what materials were used.

Two papyri in St. Petersburg have frequently been thought to have been found with the dockyard papyrus described above (nos 1116A and B). These two rolls were perhaps originally a single administrative roll, cut in two in order to receive the two literary texts now written on the back,[194] but in terms of contents they are rather different from the dockyard account. The first (1116A) has a set of

193 Caminos 1954, 384.

194 Helck 1961–1969, 424–437; Griffith 1931, 108; cf. Gardiner 1914, 20–21.

accounts, arranged chronologically with date-lines in red ink as in other daybooks, that primarily deal with the weekly issuing of grain to a number of storehouses (one line mentions 60 of them) that supply the royal administration with bread and beer. In addition to regular deliveries there are a number of instances where the purpose of the grain is explained in more detail: this includes (1) additional resources issued for visits by the king and the royal children; (2) provisions for offerings of food and beer for various festivals—amongst others a temple of Seth at Perunefer, and one of a royal statue in a private chapel, as well as a king who reigned some four or five generations previously; (3) daily and monthly rations for certain personnel; and (4) beer and grain for visiting messengers, some from foreign lands. There are also mentions of providing fodder for cattle in several instances, and here, notably, deliveries are made on a monthly rather than weekly basis. The amounts are added up in a running account which occasionally notes the 'excess' both in relation to offerings and storehouse delivery, and the amounts circulated are considerable: one total speaks of over 8,000 sacks of grain (1 sack = 76 litres), with emmer generally accounting for 2–4 times as much—by volume—as barley.

The institutional context of the document seems to be that of a state department: the two most prominent departments in the account are the 'household of the overseer of the treasury' and the 'household of the Adoratrice' (i.e. the Queen). The connection to the dockyard account is thus not obvious, beyond the fact that both relate to state departments, and that the site Perunefer is mentioned in both, if only tangentially in the present document.

The second papyrus (1116B) would appear to have more in common with the dockyard account in that it deals mainly with the issue of wood—most frequently ebony, but also other exotic commodities like ivory and feathers—to carpenters, sculptors, and even some Syrians (with Egyptian names) 'working in the household of his majesty' for different purposes. Arranged chronologically with dated entries like a daybook, the document also includes a letter copied into one of the daily entries, after a list of wood issued, where some scribes write to 'the scribe of the treasury in the royal palace, Hututu' about ebony required for the decoration of a room (lintels, doorposts, columns, and other architectural elements). A link with the dockyard of Perunefer has been suggested based on the mention of ebony and ivory issued for work on the royal barge in one of the entries (lines 56–59), but looking at the document as a whole it seems to belong to a palace storehouse for exotic materials that supplied craftsmen working for the king, rather than a dockyard: there is only one entry dealing with a ship, and the work seems to be exclusively decorative unlike the structural work at the dockyard.

This is not to say that the three papyri were not found together—if anything the Reisner papyri would provide a good parallel for a similar range of texts deposited as a single group—but strictly speaking only one of them relates to the operation of the dockyard itself. What survives of the archive of that institution is then, again, reduced to a single roll of papyrus whose existence is a result of it being removed from this primary context and deposited in a tomb in antiquity.

The logistical challenges of shipping, especially in the case of large transportation vessels, also gave rise to detailed record-keeping. The earliest examples seem to be a pair of ship logs in Brooklyn, perhaps from the reign of Seti I (*c.*1290 BCE). Like other documents of this genre they have the form of a list of dates, under which is listed each harbour visited by the ship, and the transactions that took place there. On one side of the largest roll the ancient scribe noted deliveries of goods due to the institution (perhaps a temple) it represented—textiles, silver and honey—and the names and identities of the people delivering, most of which were women. On the other side of the roll the scribe recorded transactions, in the same locations and on the same dates as on the front of the roll, involving other and less valuable commodities, including consumables like grapes, vegetables and bread. The criteria for the division of entries on the front and the back seem to relate to the nature of the transactions with the high-value ones being linked to temple dues and the others to the upkeep of the crew and boat as it sailed on the Nile. A separate account was kept of outstanding amounts of honey and textiles from the previous year, implying that there would have been an annual quota of work involved, and that information about previous deliveries would have been accessible to the scribes drawing up the accounts for the present year, perhaps having been retrieved from the institutional archive before departure.

A slightly later ship log, this one in Leiden and dated to year 52 of Ramesses II, represents a rare case of a literary manuscript—with a hymn to the god Amun—having been reused for an administrative text.[195] The papyrus in question is a large-format roll (89 × 38 cm), and was bought by the Leiden Museum of Antiquities in 1828 along with a number of other papyri, some of which may have originally been found together.[196] In addition to the ship log, this group would appear to consist of:

(1) A group of nine letters written by officials in the capital Piramesse and dispatched to recipients at Memphis.[197] The impetus for the communication seems to be an official letter about tracking down some personnel (no. 368) in relation to the estate of the prince and High Priest of Ptah, Khaemwaset, whereas the other eight

195 P.Leiden I 350 verso; Janssen 1961, 2–52.
196 Enmarch 2005, 2–5.
197 Janssen 1960; Wente 1990, 31–34.

messages are essentially social in nature. The most obvious explanation is that the occasion of sending a business letter prompted a group of individuals to write between one and three letters each to other recipients, to be sent as a group to the same location: of the latter, five were found still sealed (by the writer) and with an address written on the outside.

(2) Two short papyri of administrative character, one with a list of stolen property (no. 352), the other a journal recording the distribution or delivery of various commodities to or by individuals (no. 351).[198]

A second group of papyri in Leiden that arrived from the same sale could originally also have been found with the administrative material: this is a group of literary manuscripts with a wisdom poem (*Ipuwer*, with a hymn to Amun on the back), some model letters, and no less than five magico-medical rolls.[199] If all of the above papyri do stem from a single original find—and this can be no more than a hypothesis—then this assemblage is perhaps also best explained, in view of their state of preservation, as a group of papyri deposited in the tomb of one of the scribes responsible for the documents, perhaps in the necropolis of Memphis.

The Leiden ship log belonged to a ship of the High Priest of Ptah at Memphis, more specifically the well-known Khaemwaset, son of Ramesses II, and contains the records of a journey over some nine days as it sailed in the area around the capital Piramesse and Heliopolis. Arranged chronologically, the entries generally start with a date-line and a note giving the location of the ship ('Year 52, month 2 of Peret, day 6: In Piramesse'), followed by information on the issuing of consumables to the crew, the receipt of deliveries from various individuals, and other events. A notable feature of the latter is the semi-regular departure of a messenger carrying a letter, sent to the High Priest at Memphis, every two or three days, presumably with updates on the mission of the ship. Although the text provides a good example of a type of working document that may have been ubiquitous on board grain barges and trading vessels, details on archival practices in the text itself are few.

Another similar papyrus in Turin contains the log of a ship under the authority of the High Priest of Amun-Re, this one too sailing in Lower Egypt, in the area around Memphis, and covers a period of about sixteen days.[200] The format is the same as that of other ship logs, with the exception that the scribe has added, after the regular dating formula, a note of how long it has been since the ship left Thebes in the south (about two months earlier). In addition to information on the move-

198 Černý 1937; the latter is unpublished but cf. Hagen forthcoming.
199 Enmarch 2005, 5.
200 P.Turin 2008+2016; Janssen 1961, 53–95.

ments of the ship, the log was used for keeping accounts relating to various transactions of commodities and the occasional extraordinary issue of grain for officials departing on specific missions. There are preliminary accounts inserted between the regular columns, and several of the main accounts have headings preserved: one on the back reads 'List of the freight which is in the boat of the High Priest of Amun Ramessesnakhte, under the authority of', followed by the names and titles of three officials (a scribe of the treasury, a regular scribe, and a guard), and then a list of various goods in three columns. The headings suggest that one of the most important types of transactions was the exchange of textiles belonging to the High Priest and presumably originally brought from Thebes, for consumables like sesame oil, grain and vegetables. The impression is that of a ship bringing capital in the form of storable products from the temple and exchanging this for consumables which are then returned to the temple—one passage even notes textiles having been left behind, presumably against future deliveries. From an archival perspective it seems reasonable to infer that, for example, the latter information from the ship log would have been stored by the temple in some form, perhaps in a 'clean' summary account based on the working document represented by the Turin log.

The date of the Turin ship log, as far as can be established, falls in the reign of Ramesses VIII and mentions the highest administrative official of the temple of Amun at the time, the High Steward Ramessesnakhte, by name.[201] Coincidentally, this individual also seems to be mentioned in another papyrus relating to a fleet of ships which records the journey of 21 grain barges from the great temple of Amun-Re at Thebes.[202] The full-format roll (*c.*250 × 42 cm) seems to have been found at Assiut, probably in a tomb, and it was divided in two by the modern looters before it was sold on.[203] The front of the roll has accounts of grain collected, listed by ship and location, with a short note about the institution and the individual responsible. It ends with a summary account for all the grain collected by the different ships, but listed by the institutions supplying the grain, apparently listed in order of foundation. The overlaps in locations between the separate ship accounts suggest that this side of the papyrus is a compilation or 'clean' copy, not a working document filled out sequentially during the journey. The back of the papyrus, on the other hand, appears to have been used slightly differently, and at least in part as a notepad: a similar grain collection account to those on the front, but dealing with much smaller quantities; an account of textiles brought from seven different villages; a working account of grain delivery, organised first by ship and then as a summary

201 Janssen 1961, 55–56.

202 P.Baldwin + Amiens; Janssen 2004.

203 On this practice see Hagen and Ryholt 2016, 131, n. 348.

account by institution; a separate calculation of the rations of the same ships; a record of grain inspected at various locations (granary, magazine, storerooms, roof of the temple, etc.) within a single settlement. The range of topics is broader, the types of accounts more diverse, and although some of the texts on the back may in turn have been copied from other draft accounts it conforms to the common practice of using the reverse side of 'clean-copy' documents for less tightly structured texts.[204]

Although the two documents may be roughly contemporary and relate to the same institution, the Turin log certainly did not belong to one of the 21 ships in the grain fleet of the temple whose activities are detailed in the grain account of P.Baldwin + Amiens. However, they clearly represent the different types of accounts that might be produced during such missions: an overall account of the grain collected by the expedition as a whole, or a detailed log-book for an individual ship where the daily business of that particular ship was recorded.

Finally, a recently discovered ship log written by the famous scribe Djehutymose, one of the best-known scribes from the community of the royal tomb builders at Thebes, was presented by Robert Demarée at a conference in Liège in October 2014. This appears similar in format to the other examples, but seems to have been kept by Djehutymes himself, perhaps among his other letters and business papers (3.8).

The detailed log-books described above are generally short on contextualising detail, and we know little about where they would have been kept or deposited, or to what extent they would have been consulted after the ships returned home. It seems reasonable to assume that in the case of ships representing institutions like temples or palaces there would have been a need to keep track of the collection of grain as rent or taxes from individuals, in addition to the many transactions of other commodities outlined in the papyri, but how or in what form they were archived in the respective institutions, and what processes of checking and accounting might take place at that stage, remains largely unknowable.[205]

Part of the taxation process involved the surveying of (inundated) land to establish tax liability, a task inextricably linked to land ownership and land use, and this part of the state administration would have relied in part on the production and storage of documents recording agricultural data. Some of these documents survive, but again there is no single archive that would allow for an in-depth analysis of the archival process. An indication of what has been lost is the fragment of a

204 Janssen 2004, 69.
205 Janssen 1961, 4–5.

daybook belonging to a team of field surveyors, from the late Middle Kingdom, consisting of two scribes and a messenger, as well as two assistants who did the physical surveying of fields with a rope (Fig. 13).[206] The fragmentary part of the journal that survives deals not with the actual surveying, however, but with the recording of their findings in registers and accounts back in the office of the 'department of fields' in the presence of their superior, the 'royal sealbearer and overseer of fields of the northern district'; in practice the archiving process resulting from their fieldwork.

What such registers might look like is most clearly seen in the later document known as Papyrus Wilbour, a large roll (1030 × 42 cm) that surveys some 2,800 fields in a stretch of land in Middle Egypt, together with their holders and cultivators, noting the institutions they owe tax to.[207] The calculations of tax follow standard rates based on the size of the plots, and although not all aspects are fully understood, it seems that the document was the result of a survey, and that it would have functioned as the basis for the actual collection and transport of the tax: the very same activities documented in the papyrus discussed above (P.Baldwin + Amiens) for the grain fleet of Karnak temple. Fragments of similar documents exist, both relating to surveying and the actual collection of tax, albeit less well preserved.[208]

Such documents would have been used and updated as the need arose, and would presumably have been kept accessible in an institutional archive for future consultation, either for further revenue assessment or to settle disputes about liability. That is not to say that we are looking at a vast and all-encompassing bureaucratic system capable of surveying and assessing all land-holdings in Egypt in a systematic manner, but neither are there grounds for doubting that the few fragmentary texts we have are representative of the general approach of temple and state departments in their work to assess and collect revenue on their lands.[209] The taxation of grain production necessitated a considerable administrative apparatus with correspondingly extensive archival holdings, but none of these archives have survived.

206 Smither 1941.

207 Katary 1989; Gardiner 1941–1952.

208 Convenient overview by Katary 1989, 169–224; cf. Haring 1997, 283–345; Gardiner 1941.

209 Haring 2005; 2010, 229–231.

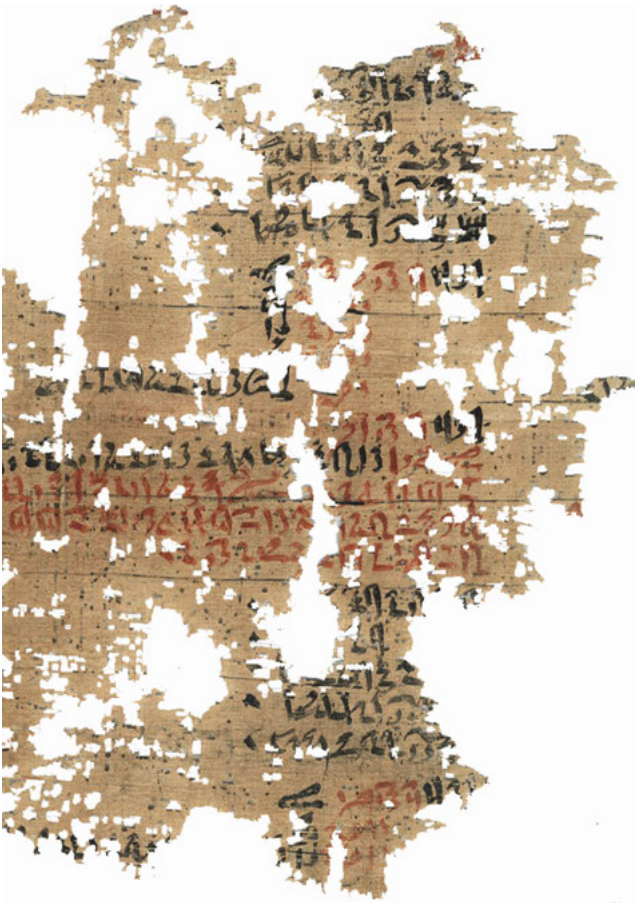

Fig. 13: A page from the journal of a team of field surveyors working to assess taxable land, from the late Middle Kingdom (P.Harageh 3 = UC 32775). The entry in red ink in the middle explains how the team was in the office of a royal official to 'register' their tax assessments based on their fieldwork, presumably to be stored in the archive belonging to the 'Office of Land of the Northern District' mentioned in the heading. Courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London.

The management of other types of resources by temples and state departments, either by trade or by the collecting of goods due, would also have involved an extensive use of administrative documents, but here the surviving record is even more patchy, and it reveals relatively little of the archival process as opposed to the accounting procedures. One example of this is a well-preserved papyrus from the royal granary under Thutmose III which has two sets of accounts (for grain

and date deliveries) that were copied for two separate groups of workers by two different scribes from the same institution.[210] It was initially suggested that the papyrus was a copy of an original account,[211] but a more detailed analysis argued that it represents a working document, drawn up as and when the transactions took place.[212] This conclusion was partly based on infrared photography which revealed that the scribes had jotted down preliminary calculations in the margins during the process of putting together the account as it survives today.[213] Whatever stage of the accounting procedure the papyrus represents—and it is clearly a compilation of information that has been and/or is processed—it remains unclear if it should be seen as a fair copy destined for the archives of the royal granary, and if so, where it might have been stored or how (or if) it might have been retrieved from the hundreds or thousands of identical-looking rolls in the same archive.

Another example which deals with other types of commodities that are being collected as taxes is a papyrus in the British Museum from the Ramesside Period which has a 'list of objects brought by the Chief Taxing-Master' from six temples in Upper Egypt, including gold, copper, textiles, fruits, millstones, cattle, and bread.[214] Despite its obvious historical interest the document does not shed much light on archives and their functions beyond illustrating another activity that was recorded in writing in great detail. The hieratic hand is exceptionally clear and deliberate for an administrative papyrus, and one can only assume that it was drawn up on the basis of various preliminary accounts, but where it might have been kept, or whether it was envisaged that it would have been consulted after archiving, cannot be established. Further examples could be adduced, but the paucity of recorded archaeological contexts, the probable secondary contexts of most well-preserved documents even when known, as well as the acute lack of substantial and coherent groups of documents relating to these spheres of activity, means that they would not necessarily add much to our understanding of Egyptian archives.

210 P.Louvre E. 3226; Megally 1971.
211 Helck 1961–1969, 774–775.
212 Megally 1977a, 57, 68–69; 1977b, 22.
213 Megally 1977a, 156, 193–194; 1977b, 49–50.
214 P.BM EA 10401; Janssen 1991.

3.6 A state diplomatic archive: the Amarna tablets (*c.*1300–1400 BCE)

Arguably the most famous example of an archive from ancient Egypt is the state archive of diplomatic correspondence between King Akhenaten and various powerful rulers in the Levant that was found at the site of Tell el-Amarna in the late nineteenth century.[215] Since its discovery it has been extensively discussed and so it is treated only briefly here: the reader is referred to the literature cited for more details.

Although a large proportion of the material was found through illicit looting, subsequent archaeological excavation established where the archive had been found: a set of mudbrick buildings labelled 'The Office of Pharaoh's Correspondence' in Egyptian.[216] This was an administrative structure where just under 400 cuneiform tablets, written in the 'lingua franca' of the Ancient Near East, Akkadian, had been stored. Whether this was in boxes, on shelves, or a combination of the two, is not entirely clear due to the looting of the area, and the precise methods employed in the processing and cataloguing of the correspondence (chronologically, by sender?) are not now recoverable.[217] A small number of the cuneiform tablets received processing notes in black ink, in the Egyptian hieratic script, on arrival, noting the date of reception and in some cases the location of the king, as well as the names of the messengers who brought the message, or simply a single hieratic sign reading 'copied'.[218] Such annotations do not represent a standardised archival practice: rather, they are the exception and were only used in situations where it was important to preserve this information, in practice perhaps restricted to occasions when the king was absent from the capital.

Despite the lack of detailed information about the storage of the archive, its location (Fig. 14) does reveal something about the environment in which it was compiled and kept. The building in which it was housed was part of an administrative quarter in the central city that also included a 'House of Life', an institution closely linked to the transmission of religious texts and knowledge. The administrative quarter was effectively boxed in by various monumental buildings: the King's House and the Main Palace to the West, the great Aten temple to the North, the small Aten temple to the South, and to the East a set of buildings that may have housed military personnel, including chariots.

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215 The standard reference work on this material, with translation of, and commentary on, the entire corpus, is now Rainey 2015, and cf. the widely available English translations by Moran 1992. There is also an Italian translation by Liverani 1998–1999.

216 Pendlebury 1951, I, 114–115; II, plates XIX–XX, LXXXIII no. v.

217 Abrahami and Coulon 2008, 1–26, Mynářová 2007, 33–39; 2014, 15–19; 2015, 38–39.

218 Hagen 2011; forthcoming.

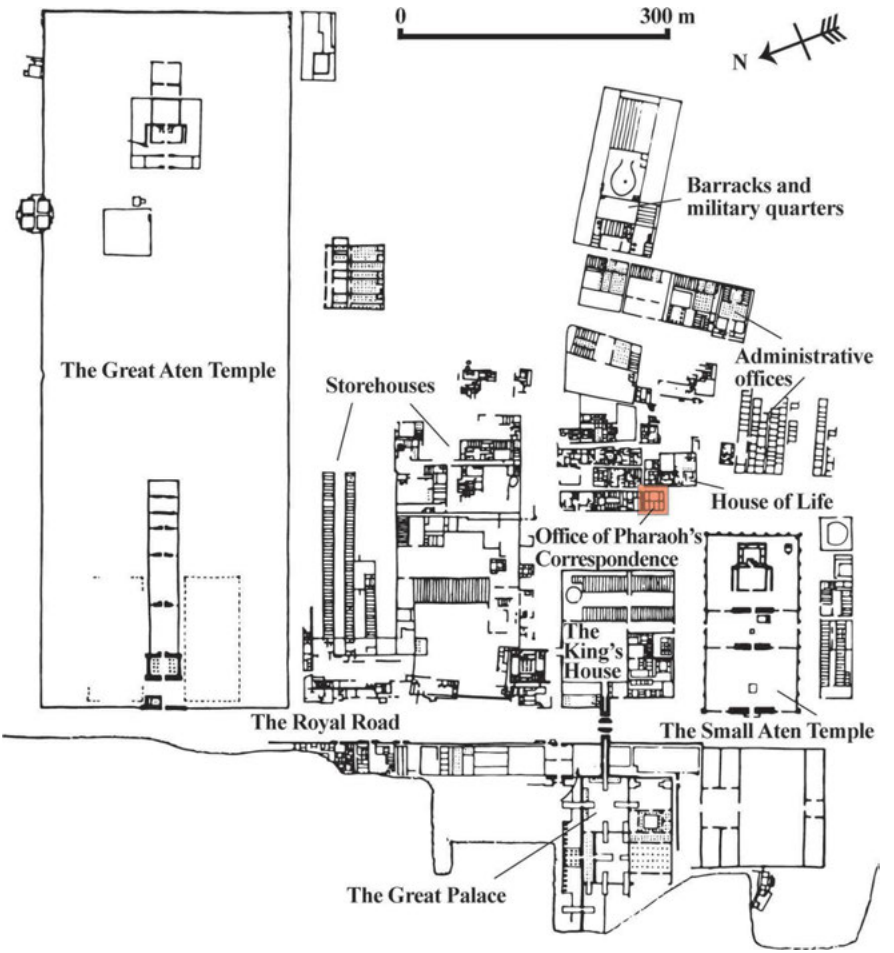

Fig. 14: A map showing the location of 'The Office of Pharaoh's Correspondence' (red square) at the heart of the administrative district of the capital city of Amarna, where an archive with state correspondence between Egypt and various rulers in the Levant was found. Based on a drawing by H. W. Fairman, published by W. Stevenson Smith (1958), *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 195 fig. 65.

As such the archive was stored at the heart of the capital city, near to the premises where the king and the court conducted state business: the King's House in particular has been thought to be the administrative palace of Akhenaten,[219] and may

219 Kemp 2012, 125–135.

have been the venue where he received the messengers delivering the cuneiform tablets.

The correspondence appears to date to a period of about twenty years, mainly during the reign of Akhenaten. However, parts of the archive had been moved to the new capital at Amarna when this was established in the reign of King Akhenaten, perhaps from Malqata near Thebes, as shown by some letters dated to the reign of his father, Amenhotep III, who was not alive when the new city was founded. How much was moved is impossible to say because although only a few tablets are demonstrably from the earlier reign, some may also have been brought away again when the city was abandoned. In any case it demonstrates medium-term storage of state correspondence across different reigns of kings, and similar archives presumably existed for much of the New Kingdom, even if they rarely survive. Stray finds of fragments of clay tablets from the capitals of both earlier and later periods (at Tell el-Daba and Piramesse, respectively) prove that the Amarna archive was not unique, and that comparable archives would have been kept from around 1550 BCE until at least 1150 BCE.[220]

The Amarna archive has been important not just for our understanding of the political landscape of the Ancient Near East, but also for mapping the transfer of linguistic knowledge, and the communication networks that existed at the time: analysis of the physical properties of the clay tablets, for example, have enabled scholars to identify those which were produced locally (with two types of clay, one for low status texts and one for official state correspondence) and those which had been sent from outside Egypt.[221]

3.7 Conscription and census documents

One of the key areas of institutional organisation, from the perspective of large-scale infrastructure, was the management of people. This management often manifested itself in the written record, and name-lists and other documents relating to the recruitment and assignment of people are numerous in corpora of administrative material.[222] However, there is a danger in over-stating the importance of this sector—a sensitive area where the personal political views of scholars sometimes shine through—and I should state that I am not advocating a model of Egyptian society where the state effectively (or efficiently) controlled the population at large. There

220 Pusch/Jacob 2003, Breyer 2011; Bietak/Forstner-Müller 2009, Bietak 2011.
221 Mynářová 2014, 26; Goren, Finkelstein/Na'aman 2004.
222 Eyre 2013, 208–212.

is no evidence for nationwide census operations in the period under discussion, only local and relatively small-scale management of specific groups of people, but even in this context the role played by written documents and archival holdings was significant.[223] It seems clear that in both Lahun and at Deir el-Medina the state kept records of inhabitants by household, and in the latter village in particular there was clearly an archive of such documents that were updated as circumstances demanded: the surviving fragments come from five or six documents produced over a period of 30–40 years.[224] These two settlements are unusual, however, in that they were founded by the state, and cannot be interpreted as representative of state control over the population as a whole.

Individual institutions like temples, as well as officials operating on royal authority, recruited labourers for both regular and ad hoc work, and it is symptomatic that the control and management of people is a prominent concern in several of the documents and archives already discussed (e.g. at Lahun, 3.2.2). As with so many government departments we do not have an archive of the 'office for assigning people', for example, although again individual documents that may have formed part of such archives survive. One late Middle Kingdom papyrus, originally used to keep track of individuals who had run away from forced labour service, relates to an institution known as the 'Great Enclosure' (perhaps a work-camp rather than a prison), and preserves some 80 entries with detailed information on the people who had run away.[225] A selection of some typical entries can be seen in Fig. 15 below.

Interpretation of the Brooklyn work-camp register is not straightforward, and although it provides one example of how the challenge of keeping track of personnel was met by the Egyptian bureaucracy, it does not suggest that Middle Kingdom Egypt was a 'police state', as has been argued.[226] The document was presumably originally archived by the institution to which the original table of fugitives pertains, but it had a relatively long period of use. Some 65 years after the last entries of the table were composed it was re-used, first to copy a letter and two royal decrees addressed to the vizier, and then finally for another set of accounts on the back relating to the personnel of a private estate of a high-ranking woman. In other words, here too is a document extracted from its original archival context and reused for a private purpose.

223 Overview by Kraus 2004; see also Demarée/Valbelle 2011, 85–103, and the review of the latter by Hagen 2016b.

224 Demarée/Valbelle 2011, 78.

225 Hayes 1955; Quirke 1990, 127–154; Menu 2010, 177–181.

226 Assmann 2002, 139.

Status	Name	Title / origin	Gender	Legal order	Location	Statement
Case closed	Sobekhotep, son of Senib	Cultivator	Male	Issued to the Great Enclosure… [in order to activate against him the law of those who run away from the Great Enclosure]	Here	Statement by the scribe of the vizier Dedamun: 'It is closed'
Case closed	Nakhti, son of Inher	of This	Male	[Issued to the Great Enclosure… in order to activate against him the law of those who run away from the Great Enclosure]	Here	Statement by the scribe of the vizier, Nakht: 'It is closed'
Case closed	Minhotep, son of Mermin	Man of […]	Male	Issued to the Great Enclosure… (an order) to release his people in the law-court, in order to activate against him the law of one who is absent for six months.	Here	Statement by the scribe of the vizier Dedamun: 'It is closed'
Case closed	Mentuhotep, son of Sabes	of the Wabkhet[…]	Male	Issued to the Great Enclosure… (an order to) assign (him) to the ploughlands together with his people forever, [according] to the court's order.	Here	Statement by the scribe of the vizier Dedamun: 'It is closed'
Case closed	Teti, daughter of Sainher	of the scribe of fields of This	Female	Issued to the Great Enclosure… (an order) to release (her people) in the law-court, in order to execute against her the law pertaining to one who runs away without performing his service.	Here	Statement by the scribe of the vizier Dedamun: 'It is closed'

Fig. 15: A selection of entries (lines 6, 32, 55, 57, and 63) from a register of fugitives (P.Brooklyn 35.1446) that once belonged to the 'Great Enclosure', a work-camp at Thebes in the late Middle Kingdom. Each line of the document contains the name and filiation of the fugitive, his or her title and/or place of origin, and a determinative showing whether it was a man or a woman. It goes on to mention the order from the court relating to their case, followed by a checkmark or note on the present whereabouts of the individual. In front of each line is a single sign showing the status of the case, which in almost all examples is 'case closed'.

The most obvious common denominator of the entries is the fact that all cases relate to either not turning up for labour duty or running away from it,[227] but it seems unlikely that the document preserves the complete records of such cases over the 21 years that the table covers. Instead it probably contains a review of specific cases, although the criteria for inclusion are not obvious beyond the fact

227 Quirke 1990, 130–135.

that all preserved entries are said to be 'closed' cases. In any case the notations of the final columns of each entry demonstrate (by way of the variety of hands), that different scribes were responsible for the final updating as cases were processed and closed, so that we have here another working document and not a 'fair copy' that was simply drawn up and then left in the archives.[228] This process implies access to and use of archival material beyond the initial drawing-up of the table, even if the precise dates for the later updating of the document cannot be known.

3.8 The archives of the tomb-builders of Deir el-Medina (by Daniel Soliman)

The work on the tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, and the lives of the necropolis workmen who constructed them, are particularly well documented thanks to the many texts that were written on papyri and ostraca in this area and in the village of Deir el-Medina. This settlement was founded behind the hill of Qurnet Murai in the early 18th Dynasty, presumably during the reign of Thutmose I (*c.*1504–1492 BCE), to house the crew of royal necropolis workmen and their families. At Deir el-Medina, the workmen's living quarters, cult chapels, and tombs have been preserved relatively well, and the community provides a unique insight into various aspects of life in New Kingdom Egypt. Although much of the archaeological material from Deir el-Medina was discovered through excavations, texts from the site have also been found during uncontrolled or illicit digs. Via the antiquities trade, such finds made their way to modern collections around the world, obscuring some of our understanding of their original context.

Scholars have studied the texts from Deir el-Medina for over a century, but the majority of the documentary texts from the village still remain unpublished. Research has focused mostly on the socio-historical aspects of the texts, and besides a few studies, the materiality of the documents has not been examined in great detail.[229] Complete ostraca, written on ceramic shards or flakes of limestone, vary in size from not more than a few square centimetres to exceptionally large pieces with a height of over 40 cm. The papyri from Deir el-Medina are mostly

228 Hayes 1955, 43–44, 63, 66.

229 The recent contribution by Pelegrin/Andreu-Lanoë/Pariselle 2016 is a notable exception which stresses the material process of production of limestone ostraca.

incompletely preserved, and are reconstructed from several fragments. They generally had an original height of around 20 or 40 cm. The practice of reusing ostraca and papyri to add a different inscription, sometimes of a completely different genre, was common, and several of the documentary texts are palimpsests.

Most of the evidence for the administration of the tomb builders stems from the Ramesside Period (*c.*1295–1069 BCE).[230] In contrast, very little is known about the organisation and administration of work on the royal tombs during the 18th Dynasty (*c.*1550–1069 BCE), but it is generally assumed that these matters were rather different from Ramesside times. It has been suggested that the work on the royal tombs was entirely reorganised during the reign of Horemheb. From the reign of this king onwards we possess increasingly more documentary texts from Deir el-Medina. Hieratic records that may be related to work on 18th Dynasty royal tombs, on the other hand, are very rare.[231] It seems unlikely that the 18th Dynasty texts have not survived at the Theban necropolis, because we do find non-textual ostraca of an administrative nature from that period. These ostraca are composed with identity marks, and their exact meaning is very difficult to grasp.[232] Still, it is reasonable to assume that, during the 18th Dynasty, scribes attached to the crew of workmen occasionally documented the construction process, because scribal titles are attested on objects from Deir el-Medina dating to the 18th Dynasty. Apparently, their documents, or copies of those documents, were not kept at Deir el-Medina, as opposed to the Ramesside records.

The published documentary texts from Ramesside times, all written in hieratic script, are unevenly spread throughout the period. From the reign of Seti I onwards, an increase in the amount of written administrative documents can be detected, leading to a peak under the reign of Ramesses III, and Ramesses IV (*c.*1153–1147 BCE). We possess fewer documents from the subsequent period, but towards the end of the 20th Dynasty the amount of documentary texts, particularly those written on papyrus, grows again. At the end of the 20th Dynasty, a number, if not all, of the necropolis workmen moved to the temple of Medinet Habu, and during the 21st Dynasty (*c.*1069–945 BCE) the Theban necropolis was abandoned as a royal necropolis.[233]

The Ramesside documentation informs us of the structure of the organisation of the crew of necropolis workmen. In these records, the crew is often called the 'Gang of the Tomb'. The workforce was divided into two halves, referred to as the

230 Lesko 1994.
231 Haring 2006, 107–108; Koenig 1988, 122–123, 128–129.
232 Soliman 2013.
233 Haring 2006, 111–112.

right 'side' and the left 'side'. Each 'side' was led by a foreman and his deputy, and the collective administration of the work was the responsibility of a single senior scribe, referred to as the 'Scribe of the Tomb'. This senior scribe was assisted by several other workmen who doubled as scribes, some of whom appear to have been tasked with specific administrative duties. For example, each 'side' of the crew had a scribe who monitored and recorded the daily deliveries of commodities to the crew.[234]

The administrative documents drawn up by the Ramesside necropolis scribes are relatively varied, and it is difficult to classify the texts. The scribes themselves employed a limited number of denominatives to differentiate between texts. Some terms, such as 'writing' (*r-ꜥ-sš*), are very general, while the word 'copy' (*mi̯.t.y*) refers to the function of the text. Other denominatives were used for very specific types of texts, and include 'memorandum' (*sḫꜣ.w*), 'name-list' (*i̯m.y-rn=f*), 'property-deed' (*i̯m.y.t-pr*), and 'dated record'/ 'dated document' (*hry.t*). To the same category belong 'account' (*ḥsb*) and 'list' / 'account' (*snn*), and, although the words have similar meanings, the latter seems to refer exclusively to records from the collective necropolis administration.[235]

Most of the document types can be recognised in the administration, and as opposed to the texts in most other pharaonic archives, denominatives of document types are occasionally preserved at the head of Deir el-Medina records. An example is found on the reverse of a papyrus that was inscribed at the beginning of the reign of Ramesses X (*c*.1108–1099 BCE). After the name and titles of the king we read:

> [...] name-list of the people of the great and noble Tomb of millions of years of Pharaoh (may he live, prosper, and be healthy) on the West of Thebes, <who are with> the High Priest of Amun-Re, king of the gods, [...] the Overseer of the Royal Treasury, the Royal Butler, and (the foreman) Amenhotep [...][236]

Based on their content, the documentary texts from the Ramesside necropolis fall into three general categories: collective necropolis administration, private administration and letters, and judicial documents.[237] The records of the collective administration include lists of workmen who were absent or present at the worksite. Less frequent are progress reports that document how far the workmen had advanced in the tomb under construction. Beside work related records, there

234 Davies 1999, 90–91; 101; 123–142.
235 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 85–123.
236 P.Turin Cat. 1932 + P.Turin Cat. 1939, verso, 2–3; Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 686.2–5.
237 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 124–188.

are numerous accounts that deal with deficits, delivery, division, and distribution of rations and supplies. Private accounts document personal transactions, and the payments and outstanding debts involved. There are also records of the division of personal property. One particular type of text records necropolis workmen hiring out a donkey in their possession, to a member of the external service personnel that was responsible for the delivery of commodities to the village. Judicial documents record events that took place in the local court, such as depositions and the taking of oaths, but there also are brief texts with questions that were submitted to an oracle deity.

Particularly in the domain of the collective tomb administration we find evidence for systematic production of records, and quite possibly of purposeful storage of such texts. This is well illustrated by a specific type of account, which was kept during the first half of the 20th Dynasty (*c.*1186–1143 BCE). These texts are journal notes written on ostraca, which are primarily concerned with listing workmen who had the daily task of receiving deliveries of various commodities to the village, the specifics of these deliveries, and occasionally the deficits of commodities. Such details were usually noted down very summarily, but the scribe sometimes supplemented the day entries with notes of events he believed to be important. I say 'the scribe', because the subject matter and the layout of the texts, and the palaeographic peculiarities of the handwriting, indicate that it was indeed a single scribe who created these journal notes. The fact that almost all of the ostraca were discovered together at a dumpsite just south of the living quarters of Deir el-Medina, is a strong indication that the records were kept together before they were collectively discarded.[238] It is unclear where the scribe originally kept these journal notes, but evidently he was regularly occupied with this administration.

This follows from the great amount of journal notes that have been discovered. The scribe of the accounts made a point of composing his documents in such a way that all 30 days of one month fitted on a single ostracon. A great number of such monthly reports date to the last years of the reign of Ramesses III and the first two years of the reign of Ramesses IV, and we can follow the scribe's notes throughout the years. An instructive example is a document which records the first month of Shomu in the first year of the reign of Ramesses IV. The text first lists the entries for days 1 through 27, and then continues with the final three days of the month:

238 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 72–76.

> [...]
> (Month 1 of Shomu,) day 28: (on duty:) Anuynakht; (delivered) by (the woodcutter) Ptahmose: 300 units of wood; (delivered) by Usimarenakht for the deficit of 130: 153 units of wood; 2 *ds* jars of beer; 1 unit of dates for the left side (of the crew); 8 units of vegetables. On this day: the officials came to hand over the silver of the crew to them at the Enclosure (*ḫtm*).
> Month 1 of Shomu, day 29: (on duty:) Neferher; (delivered:) 24 units of *psn* bread; 8 units of *bi.t* cake; (delivered) by the woodcutter Ptahmose: 300 units of wood.
> Month 1 of Shomu, last day of the month: (on duty:) Amenemone; (delivered) by (the woodcutter) Ptahmose: 150 units of wood; (delivered) by the woodcutter Amenhotep: 150 units of wood; the deficit: 350; deficit of the plaster: [...][239]

The text ends with the last day of the month. The records for the subsequent month were recorded by the same scribe on a different ostracon, the first three entries of which read as follows:

> Year 1, month 2 of Shomu, day 1: (on duty:) Nesamun; (delivered:) 1 unit of dates for the left side (of the crew); (delivered) by (the woodcutter) Amenhotep: 150 units of wood; they were of the last day of month 1 of Shomu, to complete the 300 units; the deficit: 200 units.
> Month 2 of Shomu, day 2: (on duty:) Khaemnun.
> Month 2 of Shomu, day 3: (on duty:) Hori; he was in the stead of Khaemnun; (delivered:) 7 *ds* jars of beer for the right side (of the crew); 3 units of dates for the left side of the crew; 8 units of vegetables...[240]

Essentially, the record of month 2 takes off at the point where the record of month 1 ends. What is more, the first day entry of month 2 refers to a deficit of wood, noted for the last day of the previous month. It has previously been suggested that this detail shows that Deir el-Medina scribes consulted older texts when they were working on the text at hand,[241] and, by extension, that there existed an archive where these texts were stored and could be accessed.

The situation may in fact be more complicated, because there is another group of ostraca that record the same deliveries as noted in the monthly journal notes, but are composed with identity marks rather than in hieratic script. These non-textual documents have been deciphered, and, like the contemporaneous hieratic journal notes, they seem to have been created by a single individual. His inexperienced handwriting, his disorganised layout, and his spelling mistakes made in the few hieratic sign groups he used in combination with the marks, indicate that he was not a trained scribe. In a few instances, the documents created with marks display

239 O.DeM 40 + O.Strasbourg H. 42, reverse 1–10; Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 107.4–10.
240 O.DeM 41 + O.Berlin 12626, obverse 1–6; Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 107.12–15.
241 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 76.

additions in a different, very neat handwriting, seemingly made by a professional scribe. It is assumed that these additions were made by the scribe of the hieratic journal notes, who checked the marks ostraca, subsequently copied them into hieratic, and amplified the hieratic records by adding notes on important events. It therefore seems more likely that the hieratic scribe consulted the marks ostracon of month 2, rather than the hieratic document of month 1, to write his own record of month 2.[242] Some support for this reconstruction is found in the fact that the hieratic records for month 1 and month 2 were written on two pottery shards that belong to the same vessel,[243] and are thus likely to have been written on the same day.

Despite the abundance of documentary texts from the Theban royal necropolis, many questions about administrative practices at this location remain unanswered. To begin, the purpose of the records is not fully understood. Černý assumed that the scribes first wrote down notes on ostraca of limestone chips or ceramic shards, which they then copied onto a neat daybook written on papyrus, after which the ostraca were discarded.[244] A copy of the papyrus document is thought to have been subsequently sent to the office of the vizier. This interpretation of the documents has been criticised, *inter alia* by Allam,[245] because there are numerous examples of hieratic ostraca that were not meant to be drafts, but are documents in their own right. Nevertheless, it is fair to assume that at least some of the documentation written by the scribes of Deir el-Medina was intended for the administrators of Thebes. It is evident that, to some extent, these dignitaries monitored the work on the royal tombs, and several Ramesside texts from Deir el-Medina record a visit to the necropolis by officials such as the Royal Butler, the Overseer of Treasury, the High Priest of Amun, and the Vizier.[246] Officials from Thebes came to the necropolis at crucial moments in the construction process. An ostracon from the reign of Merneptah (*c.* 1213–1203 BCE) demonstrates that dignitaries were present to supervise the transportation of statues and coffins for the royal burial:

> Year 7, month 3 of Shomu, day 23. On this day, the statues (*nṯr.w*) of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt [Baenre-]meryamen (Merneptah) were dragged to their places under the supervision of the governor of the city, vizier Panehsy. [...] Year 7, month 4 of Shomu, day 14. On this day, the (Royal) Butler Ramessesemperre and the scribe Penpaiu came together with the

242 Soliman in press.
243 Černý 1935, 10.
244 Černý 2001, 226–227.
245 Allam 1968.
246 Janssen 1997, 147–173.

> vizier Panehsy to the Field, to let the coffins of Pharaoh (may he live, prosper, and be healthy) descend to their places.[247]

The vizier occasionally came to 'receive the work' (*šsp bꜣk.w*), which probably meant that he inspected the advancement of the tomb under construction. The vizier Hori, for example, came to inspect the recently commenced tomb of Merneptah:

> Year 1, month 2 of Shomu, day 12. Day of receiving the work by the governor of the city, the vizier Hori. The progression was 13 cubits. What was done in progression in it after the vizier had received the work: [...] cubits.[248]

Additionally, there is circumstantial written evidence of the correspondence between the administrators of the necropolis and Theban dignitaries. According to a letter from the 20th Dynasty, the vizier Neferronpet had received 'memoranda' (*sḫꜣ.w*) from the foreman of the crew, and brought them to the attention of Pharaoh.[249] Similarly, P.Abbott VI informs us that members of the crew of necropolis workmen travelled to the vizier with their memoranda, and notes on P.Chester Beatty I mention the handing over of a box, perhaps containing administrative accounts, on two separate occasions.[250] The records of Deir el-Medina also sporadically mention the arrival of letters from the vizier to the necropolis administrators,[251] and actual (copies of) letters sent to the vizier,[252] and sent by the vizier have survived as well.[253]

Similar to the debatable purposes of the necropolis administration, the storage of the documentation remains a problematic topic. This is partly due to the fact that the archaeological context of many documents, and of the papyri in particular, was never accurately recorded. Generally speaking, there is a clear difference between the documents from the work sites near the royal tombs in the Theban valleys, and the documents from the village and its vicinity. Unsurprisingly, the former relate mostly to the on-going work on the tombs, while the latter deal

247 O.Cairo CG 25504, obverse 6; 9–10; Kitchen 1975–89, IV, 155.13–15; 156.4–6.
248 O.Cairo CG 25536, obverse 1–3; Kitchen 1975–89, IV, 402.11–14.
249 P.DeM 28; Eyre 1987, 18.
250 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 9–10.
251 E.g. O.Cairo CG 25308, obverse 4; Kitchen 1975–89, VII, 313.14–15; and O.Cairo CG 25515, reverse IV.4; Kitchen 1975–89, IV, 382.9–10.
252 E.g. P.BM EA 10683 verso IV and V; Kitchen 1975–89, IV, 85–88.
253 E.g. P.Louvre N 3169; Kitchen 1975–89, VI, 523.

primarily with private matters and the delivery and distribution of commodities.[254] An approximate provenance is often known for the ostraca that were discovered at the village of Deir el-Medina, but unfortunately it is usually not very telling, because the find spots tend to be dump sites on the outskirts of the living quarters. These ostraca were discarded at an undefined point in time, and therefore they are hardly informative of usage and storage of administrative documents. Still, there is evidence that related ostraca were thrown away as a group, as has already been noted for the journal notes recording the deliveries that took place during a single month. Similar groups of ostraca demonstrate that the case of the delivery accounts is not exceptional. One group of documents dealing with the distribution of grain rations, from the first half of the 20th Dynasty, was found together in a large dump site called the Great Pit.[255] Likewise, a group of accounts from the reign of Seti I (*c.*1294–1279 BCE), which record the delivery of pottery, firewood and dung, can be attributed to a single scribe. The provenance of most of the ostraca in this group is known, and these were all found in or near the village dump site called *Kom 2*.[256] Finds outside of the village too demonstrate that assemblages of administrative ostraca covering an extended period of time were written and kept by individual scribes. Between the tomb of Ramesses II and Ramesses V/VI in the Valley of the Kings, a group of administrative texts attributable to the scribe Qenhirkhopshef were found, some of which record the amounts of lamps used during work on the royal tomb.[257] Likewise, various accounts of work, and of the delivery and distribution of goods from years 22–26 of Ramesses III, all argued to have been composed by the scribe Wennefer, were found in the Valley of the Queens.[258] A final group of ostraca may in fact have been found in their original context. The ostraca in question are six journal notes recording labour activities and the absence of workmen during years 3 and 4 of the reign of Amenmesse (*c.*1203–1200 BCE), all written by a single scribe. It can be surmised from the brief notes of the excavator of these ostraca that the documents were wrapped in a mat placed on a shelf that was cut in the rock near the tomb of Siptah. Against the rock face, a number of workmen's huts were built. Apart from the ostraca, two limestone 'desks' were found in the vicinity of the hut, so the spot may have been an abandoned office of a scribe.[259]

254 Eyre 2013, 235.
255 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 23–25.
256 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 13–14.
257 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 41–44.
258 Van den Berg/Donker van Heel 2000.
259 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 49–51.

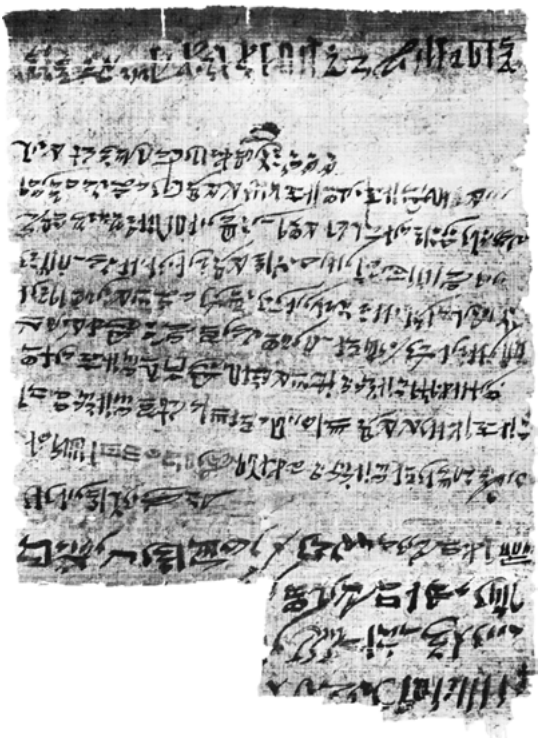

Fig. 16: Papyrus Berlin P.10496 (reproduced from Allam 1973, plate 82). The text describes two different disputes that concern the tomb of the necropolis workman Amenemope, dated three years apart. A docket is written in large handwriting along the lower edge of the verso of the papyrus. The docket is written at 180 degrees in respect to the main text, and would have been visible when the papyrus was rolled up. It reads: 'The dated record of the tomb about which the guardian Penmennefer made a statement'. A handful of similar dockets are known from the papyri from Deir el-Medina, and they have been interpreted as evidence for the storage and the need for retrieval of documents in an archive.

These small groups of ostraca were probably kept by the scribes who wrote them, but it is unclear how the many other administrative ostraca and papyri from Deir el-Medina were kept. The corpus is oftentimes referred to as a singular 'archive', but there is no consensus about its existence or its nature. The debate revolves around

the interpretation of the data, and scholars have taken a minimalist[260] or a maximalist[261] stance on the matter. Those in favour of the latter approach argue that the sheer amount of records at the royal necropolis confirms the existence of a central archive, and they have found supporting data for it in various ways. It has been pointed out that there are yearly accounts and administrative documents with entries that were written at different points in time, both of which could have only been composed using earlier documentation, corroborating their view that records were kept to be accessible at a later stage in the administration process. Further evidence was found in a small number of Deir el-Medina documents that make mention of older records kept somewhere at the site, as well as of boxes in which papyri were stored. Additionally, they interpreted the handful of recorded instances of dockets on documents as proof that the records were stored to be consulted at a later moment (Fig. 16).

There certainly is evidence of the duplication of information in the necropolis administration.[262] The yearly accounts brought forward by Koenraad Donker van Heel are indeed an indication that scribes compiled overviews that must have been based on previously recorded data. This is exemplified by an account that was probably written in year 30 of the reign of Ramesses III.[263] The text lists the rations that were brought to the crew through year 28 (month 4 of Shomu – month 4 of Peret), year 29, and the first three months of year 30. The reason for this summation clearly was to calculate the outstanding deficits in the supplies, and it may be presumed that the six known ostraca recording occasions on which rations were delivered in year 29, were consulted by the scribe of this account.

In addition, there are several examples of scribes who copied data from an earlier document onto a new record. The documents in question never date far apart in time, and the overlap between two documents typically is a few days, or a single month. To the latter group belong weekly or monthly reports of a specific subject matter, which were copied into more detailed monthly reports. As mentioned above, administrative documents created with identity marks sometimes played a role in the transmission of administrative details as well. There is one remarkable case from the very end of the reign of Ramesses III, which demonstrates that a monthly duty and delivery record composed with identity marks was copied onto a hieratic ostracon by a professional scribe, augmenting the text with notes of particular events. The hieratic ostracon, in turn, was most likely

260 Eyre 2013, 238–239, 242.

261 Allam 2009; Donker van Heel/Haring 2003.

262 Most of the evidence has been compiled by Donker van Heel/Haring 2003.

263 O.Turin 57072; Kitchen 1975–89, V, 535–536.

consulted to compose parts of a large daybook written on papyrus (Fig. 17).[264] As revealing as such instances of duplication might be, the documents contain several discrepancies in the recorded amounts, which remain difficult to explain. The differences may be the result of additional deliveries that were made between two stages in the copying process. On the other hand, they may be copying mistakes, illustrating Eyre's interpretation of the Deir el-Medina documentation as limited in its functionality.[265]

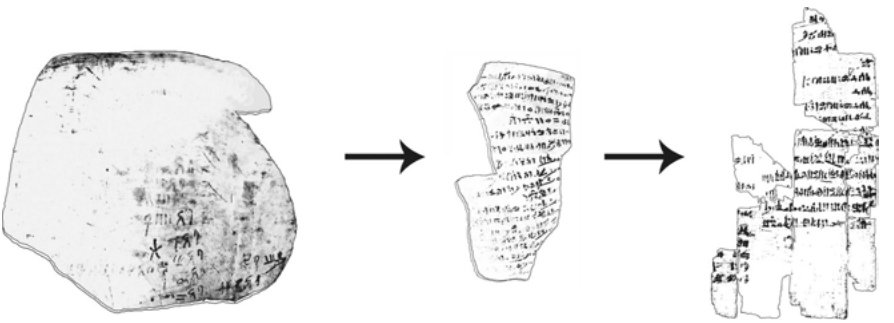

Fig. 17: The deliveries brought to the village of Deir el-Medina in month 3 of Shomu of year 30 in the reign of Ramesses III were recorded with non-textual workmen's marks on ostracon IFAO ONL 318 + 325 (left). The record was copied into hieratic on ostracon DeM 39 + 174 (centre) by a fully literate scribe, who inserted additional information in the text. The hieratic ostracon was subsequently used to compose the hieratic daybook written on papyrus Turin Cat. 1946 + 1949 (right).

With these instances of duplication in mind, advocates of a central archive in the community of necropolis workmen presuppose that there once stood a building in which the archive was housed, while arguing against the storage of administrative documents in private houses, where they would not have been accessible at all times for consultation.[266] Such a building is often thought to have been the structure that is referred to in the documentation of Deir el-Medina as the 'Enclosure' (*ḥtm*). Although this building has not been securely identified in the archaeological record, it undoubtedly existed somewhere in the vicinity of the village of Deir el-Medina, most probably to the east of Deir el-Medina's temple site. Textual sources relate that the 'Enclosure' was used for sessions of the local judicial court,

264 Donker van Heel/Haring 2003, 35–37; Soliman in press.
265 Eyre 2009.
266 Allam 2009, 66.

and to receive visiting officials. On a daily basis, the 'Enclosure' was the place where a workman stood guard to collect the deliveries of commodities and tools, transferred to the community by members of an external service personnel. All such events were recorded with some regularity in the administration of the necropolis, and therefore it has been suggested that these texts themselves were both composed and stored at the 'Enclosure'.

In opposition to this, Eyre has rightly remarked that the Deir el-Medina documentation never mentions the storage of any records at the 'Enclosure', nor are there any references to an 'office' (*ḥ3*) at this location.[267] Eyre also contested the view that the necropolis records were created in order to be accessible for reviewing or auditing. He stressed the impracticality of retrieving data from ostraca and papyri heaped up at a single location. Instead, he interpreted the texts as the output of administrative processes, maintaining that the motivation for the creation of documents was much more the assertion of the authority of the scribes, than the functionality of the bureaucratic process. Therefore, the documents could well have been kept in the possession of the scribe who wrote them.[268]

This brings us to the private library of the family members of a necropolis scribe called Qenhirkhopshef. The precise provenance of a large portion of this group of papyri is known, as it was found during controlled excavations. The other papyri were stolen from the site of Deir el-Medina, but must have belonged to the same find. The group was discovered in 1928 in a tomb chapel in the middle of the Western Cemetery, and contains a variety of genres that include a dream book, literary texts, hymns, medical texts, letters, records of depositions made in court, and private accounts.[269] The content of the documents indicates that the oldest documents belonged to the scribe Qenhirkhopshef himself, who had passed on his library to family members of his, who in turn added texts to the archive. The recovered corpus of papyri had been in use for over a century. Qenhirkhopshef's family library does not contain any texts that deal with the collective administration of the necropolis and it is therefore not an archive, but still something can be said in favour of Eyre's suggestion that this group of texts is exemplary of the way the Deir el-Medina scribes kept their documents: in their own possession, with the possibility to pass them on to family members.[270]

In support of that theory is the interpretation of another, much larger group of papyri. The majority of these papyri are now in the Egyptian Museum of Turin,

267 Eyre 2009, 18.
268 Eyre 2013, 234–235.
269 Convenient overview by Hagen forthcoming; cf. Pestman 1982.
270 Eyre 2009, 21.

brought there in 1823 as part of the first batch of antiquities offered to the museum by the diplomat and antiquities collector Bernardino Drovetti. Unfortunately there is no record of where exactly Drovetti's agents discovered the papyri, but they appear to have been found together. Further papyri from Deir el-Medina in other collections, such as those in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris or those in the British Museum in London, were acquired around the same time as the Turin papyri, and could have been part of the same Drovetti collection.[271] Like the Qenhirkhopshef library, the Deir el-Medina papyri that reached Europe around 1823 contain court proceedings, private accounts, so-called love songs, hymns and ritual texts, and several letters. Most of the texts, however, concern the collective tomb administration, which are almost exclusively datable between the reign of Ramesses III and the beginning of the 21st Dynasty.

As it happens, this period coincides with a local dynasty of Scribes of the Tomb, which originates with Amennakht, son of Ipuy, who was appointed by the vizier Ta in the reign of Ramesses III. After his death, the office of senior scribe was passed on from father to son, and his descendants would hold the position until the beginning of the 21st Dynasty. It is therefore theoretically possible that the aforementioned corpus of papyri was entirely written by members of the family of Amennakht, who passed on the archive through the generations, as the descendants of Qenhirkhopshef and his wife had done. Indeed, several papyri have been ascribed to the hand of one of the members of Amennakht's family. He himself has been proposed as the author of famous texts such as the Strike Papyrus, the Mining Papyrus, and perhaps the papyrus with the tomb plan of Ramesses IV. At least two papyrus documents have been attributed to the scribe Djehutymose, a descendant of Amennakht. Additionally, there is a dossier of about 60 letters commonly known as the Late Ramesside Letters. These papyri, written by and to the aforementioned Djehutymose, and his son, the scribe Butehamun, provide a unique insight in historical events of the end of the 20th Dynasty and the beginning of the 21st Dynasty. They demonstrate that, as the Theban valleys ceased to be used as a royal necropolis, the scribes were sent beyond the Theban region, to supervise the administration of tax collection and of an expedition in Nubia.[272]

An indication that this body of papyri from Deir el-Medina was indeed kept in the possession of the family of Amennakht is found in one of these letters. The letter is Djehutymose's reply to a letter written by his son Butehamun, in which the former refers to documents, which they end up storing in the tomb of their ancestor, Amennakht, son of Ipuy:

271 Rocatti 1984.
272 Demarée 2008, 51–52.

> Now as for the documents onto which the sky rained in the hut (ʿ.*t*) of the scribe Harshire, my (grand)father, you brought them out, and we found that (they) had not become erased. I said to you: 'I will unbind them again'. You brought/will bring them down below, and we deposited/will deposit (them) in the tomb of Amennakht, my (great-grand)father.[273]

We learn from this communication that the documents had previously been stored in a structure referred to as an ʿ.*t* (hut). Demarée has pointed out that such as place does not designate a house, but rather a workplace or an office.[274] It can, however, be argued that at the time the letter was written, Djehutymose and his son had already moved to the temple of Medinet Habu, possibly together with other necropolis workmen.[275] The old house of Harshire, son of Amennakht and grandfather of Djehutymose, could thus have been abandoned quite a while ago, and was therefore used as a storage room. The fact that Butehamun had to rescue the documents from the ʿ.*t* fits this reconstruction of events. Since the old house was no longer in use, Djehutymose may have chosen to describe it as an ʿ.*t*. At any rate, the documents of which Djehutymose speaks, eventually seem to have been deposited in the tomb of Amennakht. This way of storing a family archive is not only similar to what happened to Qenhirkhopshef's library, but there are also reasons to take Djehutymose's statement at face value, and even though the nature of the documents is not specified in Djehutymose's correspondence, they may have been the papyri that were found by the agents of Drovetti.

This is suggested by the find of snippets of papyri in and near Deir el-Medina tomb 1340, which has been attributed to Amennakht son of Ipuy on the basis of vessel fragments inscribed with his name, as well as graffiti left by his descendants.[276] One of the papyrus fragments reportedly is a part, or a copy, of Amennakht's plan of the tomb of Ramesses IV in Turin, suggesting a connection between the Drovetti papyri and Amennakht's tomb. It could therefore be this very tomb where Drovetti's agents stumbled upon the papyrus archive. Although this cannot be proven, it is clear that his agents had been active near the tomb, because several funerary figures of Amennakht were part of the Drovetti collection.[277] Additionally, one of the door jambs from the tomb's chapel ended up in the Turin Museum,[278] and it could well belong to the same collection, since several stelae from the vicinity were found by Drovetti's agents.

273 P.BM EA 10326; cf. Demarée 2006, 62.
274 Demarée 2006, 65–66.
275 Haring 2006, 111–112.
276 Bruyère 1937, 75–82; Černý 2001, 349–350.
277 Černý 2001, 76.
278 Tosi/Roccatti 1972, 192.

It would thus seem that in the community of Deir el-Medina, the distinction between private administration, collective administration, and judicial administration can only be made on the basis of the content of the accounts themselves. There is no unambiguous evidence that these categories of documents were stored separately from each other. This does not mean that the documentary texts from Deir el-Medina served no meaningful purpose. Some administrative accounts were certainly written to inform Theban authorities about events related to the community of tomb builders and their work, and the scribes of Deir el-Medina were to some extent concerned with duplicating and summarising data in overviews. Still, there are no clear indications that there existed a single archive where the collective administration of the necropolis was stored and could be accessed for revision. On the contrary, there are several series of administrative ostraca, which were systematically written, kept, and finally discarded or abandoned by a single scribe, and even parts of the large group of late 20th Dynasty daybooks may have belonged to the private collection of papyri of the Amennakht family.

4 Patterns of use

As the outline of the main groups of archival material above makes clear, very few archives have been found in their original context, so that aspects such as the physical storage of the papyrus rolls, for example, is difficult to reconstruct.[279] It is similarly difficult to address the use of archives beyond the initial copying and storing of documents, partly because the very act of accessing and retrieving information has left few traces in the archival material itself. This has led to some scholars suggesting that this would in practice have been a rare occurrence,[280] while others suggest that such consulting would have been a key function of archives.[281]

The evidence, such as it is, comes mainly from legal contexts where archival information is accessed in order to provide evidence in court cases, but such examples are rare and may represent unusual cases. The most famous example, illustrative of the ways in which archives could be consulted, as well as of situations where it might be necessary, is the tomb inscription of Mose, an official

279 Eyre 2013, 298–303; Ryholt forthcoming b.
280 Eyre 2013, *passim*.
281 Allam 2009.

under Ramesses II. In the inscriptions on his tomb walls at Saqqara he relates, in a series of episodes, how ownership of some ancestral family land was contested in court on several occasions over the course of almost 300 years.[282]

As part of the legal proceedings in the time of Mose's grandmother, the part of the family that disputed her ownership of the land presented documents from their personal archive that sought to demonstrate their claims, but this was dismissed by the court as being unreliable and potentially biased because it belonged to one of the parties in the case. Mose's grandmother then asked, in the High Court, for the land-register of the state treasury to be brought, as well as that of the granary department (which dealt with taxation) to support her claims. This clearly involved an elaborate process: first a journey to the capital where the archives were held, then a search in both the treasury and the granary office, and finally the retrieval of the relevant papyrus rolls from the right period. The two land-registers were then presented in court, but they are said to have been 'wrong' or 'false' (the Egyptian is ambiguous), and she lost the case. Mose himself later challenged the decision, claiming again that the archival documents cited previously were wrong or false, and suggesting that the dispute be settled by recourse to witnesses from the village where the land was held. The outcome is not recorded but must have been in Mose's favour as he had the texts, including copies of some of the actual legal documents, inscribed in his tomb for posterity.

The case is noteworthy for its implications of procedure. Firstly, it demonstrates that the archives of state departments—in this case no less than two archives covering the same physical plot of land at some distance from the capital—existed and were accessible for consultation, and that this was in fact done, if only in exceptional cases. It does not follow that such central archives contained records relating to all land in Egypt: the land in Mose's family may have been a royal reward and so could belong to a special category of land. Secondly, it suggests that the oral testimony of witnesses (who could identify who had farmed the land and paid tax on it) weighed more heavily as evidence than a written document that could be wrong or false, and it hints at a basically sceptical attitude towards documents produced by one of the parties in a case—a powerful reminder of the limitations of written evidence in a predominantly oral culture.

Court cases would themselves produce documents which would have been kept—in practice archived—primarily by the litigants themselves, as in the case of Mose, but perhaps also in some cases by the court. A possible example of this is the Turin Indictment Papyrus from the reign of Ramesses V (*c.* 1145 BCE) which records a long list of accusations against various individuals associated with the

282 Cf. the recent discussion by Eyre 2013, 155–162, with references.

temple of Khnum at Elephantine.[283] One section of the document deals with a certain Khnumnakht, who worked as a ship's captain and transported grain to the temple from properties along the Nile. Khnumnakht had allied himself with temple scribes, inspectors and cultivators in order to embezzle more than 6,000 sacks of grain (almost half a million litres) over a period of ten years, and he and his accomplices simply divided the grain between their families instead of entering it into the temple granaries. Important for the question of the use of archives is that in the charges, the delivery record of Khnumnakht is listed year by year, as if the scribe had access to records of grain deliveries going back through the reigns of two if not three kings. The document may be more than a simple record of historical reality—for one thing some of the figures cited look standardised—but there seems to be an implicit suggestion that such information could realistically have been retrieved from the temple archives.

Underlying any such use of archives is the practicalities of storage, and the methods of identifying relevant papyrus rolls. The former is rarely recoverable for Egyptian material, and the latter is only exceptionally detectable in the form of labels or dockets that might have allowed for a reasonably efficient retrieval of documents. A notable example of legal documents kept together (at one point in a couple of jars), with a single sheet containing an inventory of the other documents, are the famous tomb robbery papyri, to which Papyrus Ambras may have served as a list of contents.[284] The latter is a papyrus sheet that contains a statement about the legal documents, largely records of the interrogation of people accused of stealing from the royal tombs, which had somehow been removed from the archival holdings of the temple of Medinet Habu, and which were subsequently bought back by the 'chief taxing master' from 'the people of the land'. The precise circumstances of the original removal of the documents from the archive are not known (who, when or why they were removed), nor are the circumstances of recovery (how they were offered for sale, and by whom) beyond the simple statement that they were 'bought' back, but there was obviously a desire to preserve these archival records as part of the temple holdings. The extraordinary contents—a high-profile criminal investigation of the theft of state property—may account for this interest; in any case the documents in the jars were presumably deposited again in the archive upon their return. Papyrus Ambras contains a list of these legal documents, although it is perhaps better classified as a report on their recovery rather than an inventory *per se*.[285] This method of

283 Vittmann 2011.
284 Peet 1930, 177–182.
285 Eyre 2013, 306–307.

cataloguing is rarely attested, especially for administrative documents, but one might perhaps compare a Ramesside list of some literary rolls that were evidently kept together in a chest.[286] Despite the evidence for extensive archives in pharaonic Egypt, it is clear that modern scholars' reconstructions of the degree and frequency of use remain to a large extent a matter of conjecture.

5 Conclusions

The methodological challenges facing scholars studying Egyptian archives of the Pharaonic period are essentially the same as those studying the archives of the Greek or Roman periods.[287] The lack of an archaeological context, the problems involved in reconstructing archives rather than dossiers, and the blurred line between private and institutional, make analysis difficult. The problem in distinguishing private from institutional arises primarily because documents relating to institutional administration were sometimes kept by the individual scribes responsible for the paperwork. Apart from the examples of the official Merer (3.1), the scribe Neferhotep (3.3.1), or the anonymous owner of the Reisner papyri (3.5), there are several other private archives from Egypt of a more obvious personal nature,[288] and other collections that are less easy to classify,[289] which it has not been possible to discuss here for reasons of space. Of the examples included, a significant proportion consists of individual papyrus rolls that would—or so I assume—originally have been part of an archive but which were, for various reasons, extracted from this primary context in antiquity and then deposited in tombs.[290] Although such isolated documents are important when attempting to outline the types of archives that may have existed, they are by their nature less useful when analysing archival practice because they cannot be related to the rest of the material with which they would originally have been stored.

286 Fischer-Elfert 2016.

287 Vandorpe 2011; Depauw 2013.

288 See for example the famous Hekanakhte letters and accounts: Allen 2002.

289 The most important being the 'El-Hibeh' archive, see Müller 2009; Lefèvre 2008, and the daybook and letters of a scribe responsible for building a tomb at Saqqara, see Kitchen 1975–89, VII, 263.4–273.7.

290 This assumption about the original social context of administrative rolls found in tombs cannot be proven, and it would be possible to argue that many of them originally belonged in a private context instead (i.e. that we are dealing with papers related to institutional operations but privately held). I think this is a less likely interpretation in view of the archaeological contexts of temple archives in particular, but it remains an assumption on my part.

The amount of material listed above may seem impressive for such a distant past, but the period dealt with covers more than fifteen hundred years and so the density of evidence is limited. Actual examples of substantial archives are relatively rare in the archaeological record, but they survive across considerable spans of time, and from different locations within Egypt, so that the archival practices of royal memorial temples, for example, can be compared over a period of well over a thousand years. Here, striking similarities in archival procedures are observable, for example relating to the handing over of responsibility from one group of priests to another, when entering or leaving their monthly duty period, or the detailed inventories of temple equipment (and its condition). The redistribution of offerings to temple personnel, and the clear hierarchies implicit in the shares allocated, is evident across time, even if some of the individual titles as well as the organisational structure may differ (e.g. the use of five monthly *phyles* in the Old Kingdom, as compared to four in the Middle Kingdom). Lists of divine cult statues are also found several hundred years apart, both at Abusir and at Lahun, even if there are minor differences in how they are listed. The daybooks from royal palaces also show similarities over hundreds of years in the way they organise information, and in the management of resources where separate departments are responsible for daily consumables (like bread and beer) and for more exotic or valuable commodities (like eye-paint, precious metals, and textiles).

There are also differences in archival practices, for example in the types of accounts drawn up, and for which commodities, and here the evidence from Deir el-Medina is particularly important because it suggests (3.8) that this may be more due to the personal preferences of individual scribes than to institutional tradition. The temple archive at Lahun includes many letters to and from the temple, which interestingly is not paralleled to the same extent in the Old and New Kingdom examples. Whether this is due to a different practice (less use of written documents for communication), a different archival procedure (letters stored separately, for example), or simply an accident of survival, is not easy to establish. In any case the Lahun letters provide welcome evidence of the use of archives, in particular the preservation, consultation and even circulation of accounts.

The archetypical format of an archival document from ancient Egypt was the daybook, a set of records, organised chronologically, that detailed the activities of any given institution: the arrival of goods and people, the issuing of resources, letters sent out or received, etc. They were used in a wide range of institutions, including royal palaces, military installations, temples, and on ships, but not all

were all-encompassing and certain daybooks appear to restrict themselves thematically, as with the border journals which are mainly concerned with tracking the movement of people. Alongside daybooks, and sometimes incorporated within them, were accounts: daily, monthly and in rare cases also yearly summaries of income and expenditure, and the discrepancies between them. As a genre of document they make up, along with daybooks and letters, one of the main components of institutional archives, and they are particularly useful for observing the scribe at work. Careful reading of the archival material reveal that some of it—notably monthly and yearly accounts—rely on information already stored, implying access to, and use of, earlier documents with pertinent data. Most archives demonstrate short- to medium-term use, and only rarely anything beyond a couple of years. Periodic clean-ups of material are sometimes observable, as at Balat (3.1), and the archaeological context of at least two major temple archives (3.2.2, 3.2.3), both found in rubbish dumps outside the enclosure wall, also implies a disposal process whereby accumulated material was removed once its reference value diminished. Exceptionally some cases show or at least suggest access to archival records over a longer period of time. A list of fugitives from a work-camp archive (3.7) includes cases spanning 21 years, and a judicial document (4) seems to draw on records of grain delivery to a temple that covers ten years. The life span of any given archive would have been dependent on a number of factors (nature, scope, purpose, storage space, personal preferences of archive personnel, etc.), but it is clear that most archival documents had limited relevance in the long term.

The wider use of archives, as in the Mose case where state archives were consulted in the course of a legal battle, is not often documented, but then this type of activity would not normally have been recorded in a durable form, if at all. There is a real dearth of evidence, but a minimalist—and to my mind plausible—interpretation would be that this happened relatively rarely in practice. The creation of archives may simply be a predictable consequence of the social process of writing and recording, rather than an expression of a desire to store massive amounts of data for later retrieval as a means in and of itself. On this interpretation the establishment of archives is comparable to the adoption of writing as a symbol of authority and status, where scribal activity can be as much about performance as about practical organisation and resource management.[291]

Egyptian sources do not shed much light on this aspect of archives, but the central role of the notion of archive in terms of Egyptian (elite) cultural identity, for example, can occasionally be seen in literary references. A good example of

291 On this topic see the analysis by Eyre 2013.

this is a poem from *c.*2000 BCE, called *The Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All*, which contains a description of a world turned upside-down, where the rich have become poor, women cannot conceive, and 'the land is spinning as does a potter's wheel'.[292] As part of the evocative imagery used in the description, writing in its many forms is thematised, and closely linked to social control:[293]

> Oh, but the sacred stronghold, its writings are taken away;
> the place of secrets which existed there is stripped bare.
>
> Oh, but magic is stripped bare;
> omens and divination spells are dangerous
> because they are recalled by people.
>
> Oh, but offices are opened and their lists are taken away,
> people who were serfs have become lords of serfs.
>
> Oh, but scribes are killed, and their writings taken away;
> how bad it is for me, because of the misery of their time!
>
> Oh, but the scribes of the land register, their writings are got rid of;
> the foodstuff of Egypt is a free-for-all.[294]

The fate of writing, both in terms of ritual texts and administrative documents (lists of people, land registers), becomes another symptom of this topsy-turvy state of affairs. There is naturally a self-serving dimension to the poem in that the composer and copyists were themselves scribes who may well have felt that social stability and cohesion was in a sense predicated on their own offices, but it is nonetheless a powerful indication of the role that the storage of writing, including in archives, played in the construction of the self-image of Egyptian elite society: a world without archives would be a world without order.

292 Parkinson 1997, 172; Enmarch 2008, 222–223.
293 Eyre 2013, 73.
294 Parkinson 1997, 177.

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