Necropolis journal: daily records of events in an ancient Egyptian artisans' community
Morfini, I.

Citation
Morfini, I. (2019, February 21). *Necropolis journal: daily records of events in an ancient Egyptian artisans' community*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68810

Cover Page

Author: Morfini, I.
Title: Necropolis journal: daily records of events in an ancient Egyptian artisans' community
Issue Date: 2019-02-21

3. Methodology

Amongst the multitude of documents preserved, produced in Deir el-Medina during the Ramesside period (over 10.000 ostraca and more than 200 papyri, whose number is lately increasing due to the re-discovery of many unpublished documents held in Turin Museum), some can be fairly clearly defined, like letters, oracles, oaths, etc., while others are less clearly identifiable[58]. Belonging to this last group are all kinds of lists, accounts, dated events, inventories, deliveries, and journals. As illustrated in the introduction (chapter 1.1), the so-called Necropolis journals have always been considered such, the question as to whether there really was one such document was mostly neglected and the existence of this genre was taken for granted[59]. The word "journal" was never deeply investigated and clear criteria to identify this genre, if it existed, were never provided. "The Ramesside village of Deir el-Medina provides the one administration in Pharaonic Egypt for which a reasonable overview of the practice of scribal administration is possible"[60]. Would the notes they kept for administration have been considered to be journals from an ancient Egyptian point of view[61]?

In order to answer the main research questions and analyse the numerous aspects and queries arising from that, we consider it necessary to provide an historical overview of Egyptian texts like annals and day-books from the Old Kingdom until the Ramesside Period, and draw then conclusions in the form of criteria that will be used to select journal documents.

The different objectives of the present study will now be listed and broken down into steps.

3.1 A journal in Ancient Egypt

The first objective is to determine if the collected notes so-called *journals* would be considered as such according to an ancient Egyptian point of view, i.e. if the concept of

---

[58] For a detailed classification of Egyptian texts by taking Egyptian terminology (i.e. to establish what types of records were distinguished by the Egyptian scribes), see Donker van Heel-Haring 2003, part II.

[59] Eyre (1980a, chapter 1) sees the necessity of "some attempt… to make classification of the texts" stating "The term daybook will be used here, in the contexts of the documents of the Tomb, to refer to the long series of *ostraca* recording the daily receipts of the Tomb".

[60] Eyre 2013, 233

[61] We know that ancient Egyptians had terms or words for day-books: *ḥrw.yt*, *hꜣy*, *ꜣhꜣry*, or *h(ꜣ)r*, or the circumlocution *ꜥr(t) hꜣw*, "roll of days". (see chapter 4.1).

Necropolis journal existed. To do that we will analyse what a journal would look like according to Egyptian notions.

Step 1. An overview of documents such as annals and day-books (material from the Old Kingdom until the New Kingdom) will follow. Comparative material will be used to identify common features and differences between these records and the so-called Necropolis journals[62]:

- Papyri of Wadi el-Jarf

- Palermo Stone

- South Saqqara Stone

- Gebelein Papyri

- Abusir Papyri and the "new" Abusir Papyri

- Reisner Papyri

- Illahun archives

- Annals of Amenemhat II

- Ramesseum Papyri

- Middle Kingdom Tax Assessor's Day-book

- Papyrus Boulaq 18

- Papyrus Louvre E. 3226

- Annals of Thutmose III

- Papyri Brooklyn 35.1453 A and B

- Rollin Papyri (accounts of Sethi I)

- Ship's log of Leiden I 350 verso and Papyrus Turin 2008+2016

- Tomb construction journal of Saqqara

Step 2. Similarities between the analysed documents (day-books, ship's logs, annals, etc.) and the so-called Necropolis journal will be discussed. Common features will be

---

[62] The names of the documents are those which are most commonly used.

indicated and explained. For the purposes of study and to allow for easier comparison, useful features will be presented in an organised table.

3.2 The corpus of documents

The creation of a new list of journals from Deir el-Medina, including new unpublished material, is also part of the first objective.

Step 1. Each document (either ostracon or papyrus) in the compiled list will be examined, if possible directly from the photos of the original or using the available transcriptions. According to specific criteria (see chapter 5.1), which document belongs in the new list and which does not will be assessed. Unpublished material from Deir el Medina will also be added.

Step 2. For each document, photo(s) or facsimile, transcription, translation and bibliography will be provided. The purpose of the present work is not a philological study and therefore no transliterations or notes to the translations will be offered.

Step 3. Based on this list of documents, the type of notes the administrators kept will be defined and whether these are, according to our definition, journals, will be determined.

3.3 Who was reading a Necropolis journal?

The second objective is to identify, if possible, the audience and the intended readership of the so-called Necropolis journals from the study of their appearance and layout. This may provide information about the use of such documents and if they were for internal use or meant to be submitted to a possible higher authority. A purely hypothetical scenario, but a possible one.

Step 1. All available photos or facsimiles of the documents will be collected and the layout of the text or sections of the documents will be checked.

Step 2. In order to try to understand for whom journals were written, the way the content -of some of the records used as examples- is organized, will provide the starting point.

Step 3. If possible, conclusions will be drawn about a possible audit of the day-books and their purpose.

<u>3.4 Variety of journals</u>

If these records can be called journals, the third objective is to attempt a classification identifying how many types of journals are there and study the differences. As there are a great number of documents, it can be useful to identify smaller subgroups, if only for purposes of study.

Step 1. The documents in the new list or database of dated texts from Deir el-Medina will be classified into subgroups according to the type of information and content of the texts.

Step 2. Each subgroup will receive a name and its characteristics will be described.

Step 3. The data obtained will be shown in charts.

<u>3.5 The future of the journals</u>

The fourth and last objective is to make use of the research, organizing the work as a useful updatable tool available to all scholars interested in the subject.

Step 1. Updating a database with new unpublished documents from Deir el-Medina.

Step 2. The new list or database will be published online.

Step 3. The database will be accessible, once assigned a password, to any interested scholar. It will also be possible, upon verification, to add new documents considered to be journals to the list.