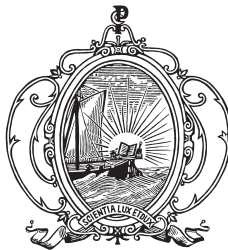


PIPOAC 4

PRATIQUES ADMINISTRATIVES ET  
COMPTABLES AU PROCHE-ORIENT  
À L'ÂGE DU BRONZE

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ROYAL COURT ON A VISIT TO THEBES:  
PALACE OFFICIALS AND LOCAL HOSTS  
IN PAPYRUS BOUFAQ 18

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Papyrus Boufaq 18 is an ancient Egyptian account book from the mid-Thirteenth Dynasty (18<sup>th</sup> century BC). This hieratic document was found in 1860 in the Theban necropolis at the Ramesseum in the tomb of the scribe of the great enclosure Neferhotep (Miniaci & Quirke 2008; Miniaci & Quirke 2009). An official with the same name and titles figures in one of the documents on the papyrus and it is assumed that it was the same person (Franke 1984, no. 319).

The papyrus contains two documents written by two different hands. This paper will focus on the more comprehensible larger manuscript of papyrus Boufaq 18 (Scharff 1922). The so-called smaller manuscript of papyrus Boufaq 18 records people and goods entering and leaving a large estate. As established through indirect evidence by Oleg Berlev, the document most likely concerns the Theban estate of the well-known vizier Ankhu (Berlev 1962; Quirke 1990, 196-197). The larger manuscript also records people coming and leaving, goods received and issued, but these records concern a more important economic entity, and among the recipients of the foodstuff figure the members of the royal family including the king's wife, royal children, and numerous royal siblings. The document also mentions a king, whose name is unintelligible. Thus, the economic entity, to which the document pertained, was a palace where the king and the royal family resided.

The papyrus was found near Thebes and its contents explicitly indicate a Theban setting (like in section 44,<sup>1</sup> which mentions the Nubian warriors "Medjay, who have reached the Southern City..."). This is also implied by the records of trips to Medamud, a sanctuary of Montu eight kilometers northeast of Thebes (in sections 6 and 22).

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<sup>1</sup> Cited after Scharff 1922.

On the balance of available evidence, the royal residence during this period was located at Itjtawy, a settlement in the entrance to the Faiyum oasis, established 450 kilometers north of Thebes by the founder of the Twelfth Dynasty Amenemhat I. One of the sections of papyrus Boulaq 18 (section 14) mentions sending an official to the royal residence (*hnw*), which implies that the residence was indeed located elsewhere and rules out the possibility that some king relocated the main residence to Thebes.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the students of papyrus Boulaq 18 — Oleg Berlev, Anthony Spalinger, and Stephen Quirke — agree that it likely documents an extraordinary situation — the temporary stay of the royal court at Thebes (Berlev 1962; Quirke 1990, 22; Spalinger 1985). The objective of this visit could have been associated with the temple of Montu at Medamoud, mentioned several times in the papyrus. The excavations at the temple of Medamoud have revealed major additions and improvements by several kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty (Eder 2002, 81-131).

Previous scholars used papyrus Boulaq 18 to reconstruct the structure of the royal court (Quirke 1990; Grajetzki, 2006, 159), for it is the only preserved document supposedly enumerating the members of the royal entourage from the first half of the Second Millennium BC. Here is one nuance, which has not been previously addressed. As the papyrus documents the royal court during a visit to Thebes, it can be surmised that it gives an account of a mixed contingent of officials: those who followed the king from the royal residence and the high officials of the Theban administration. Local officials were not inherent to the royal court and they should not be taken into account when one attempts to study the royal entourage based on papyrus Boulaq 18. Hence, a thorough study of the possible origin of the officials figuring in the document is necessary.

First, the contents of the document shall be briefly outlined. The larger manuscript of papyrus Boulaq 18 preserves entries for days in the third regnal year of a king, whose name is destroyed. The early- to mid-Thirteenth Dynasty date can be deduced from the mention of the vizier Ankhu, who was a contemporary of the king Khendjer and several subsequent rulers.

The records were kept on a daily basis. The accounts concern raw and processed food, and valuables such as incense and cosmetic products. A daily entry in the papyrus includes copies of orders or reports concerning supplies and expenditures. Each daily record is concluded with a day

<sup>2</sup> One may still suggest that there was a permanent second royal residence at Thebes (Grajetzki 2009, 111, 261).

summary account, which sums up all the daily income and expenditure. Among income records there are standing orders for the daily supply of the palace from different sources. Expenditure records include orders for everyday supply of certain groups of people as well as singular acts of withdrawal of goods from the storerooms.

The royal court had to rely on local food-producers. The principal suppliers of the royal court were three major economic structures: the sector of the Southern Upper Egypt (*w'rt tp-rsj*), the bureau of issuing people (*h3 n dd rmt*) and the treasury (*pr-hd*). These bureaux had their food processing facilities at Thebes that could be mobilized for the royal court. The facilities of the temple of Amun were also employed (as in sections 12, 25, 41, 58), either because the food for the king had to be produced under the same conditions as the god's food, as Stephen Quirke (1999, 69) suggests, or because the capacity of other structures was not sufficient.

This food was redistributed to the cupbearers of the Outer Palace (*hntj*), the provisioning sector (*šn'*) supplying the house of nurses, and provisioning sectors supplying ordinary visitors. The house of nurses was responsible for providing food to all women including wives, mothers, sisters, and children of officials (section 18).

Most accounts concern with people receiving rewards and participating in festive meals. The document mentions 209 persons including the members of the royal family, officials, and their relatives. The total number of male officials is 140. Some of them occur repeatedly in different accounts, while most are attested only once or twice.

Unlike most other preserved Egyptian administrative documents, the data from Boulaq 18 may be directly juxtaposed with epigraphic evidence owing to the interplay of two factors. On the one hand, people figuring in its lists belong to the upper class of Egyptian society (whereas a number of other economic papyri of the Middle Kingdom list workmen), and on the other, the Late Middle Kingdom was the heyday in the production of memorial monuments for mid- and top-ranking officials. Hence, chances are high to meet some of the persons figuring in the feast lists of Boulaq 18 among the owners of preserved stelae and statues of that period. And indeed several officials mentioned in the papyrus are also likely known from the monuments they set up at the votive zone of Abydos or at Thebes. Among them are the vizier Ankhu (Franke 1984, no. 173), the mouth of Nekhen Titi (Franke 1984, no. 730), the great steward Aabmai (Franke 1984, no. 167 or Aabni, UC 80200 and Garstang Mus. E.32), and the elder of the portal Montunakht (Franke 1984, no. 260).

The origin of officials can be deduced from their names and titles. Judging from the historical context of the papyrus, most officials should belong to one of the two groups: the palace officials, who followed the kings on his trip from the residence of Itjtawy to Thebes, and local officials, who host the royal court and assist in carrying out the mission at Medamoud. One has to label each official as belonging to one of the two groups and to analyze these groups as a whole.

The author's previous research on region-specific personal names in Late Middle Kingdom Egypt has allowed defining a number of personal names pertaining either to the Memphite area including the royal residence Itjtawy (or the wider Northern Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt) or to the Theban region (or the wider Southern Upper Egypt). This resulted from a survey of about four thousand personal names in 861 Late Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasty sources attributable to any region through direct or indirect indices. Such names can be used as indicators of the origin of officials (Ilin-Tomich 2012).<sup>3</sup> Further analysis of documents attributable to Thebes on the basis of personal names has allowed to pinpoint certain administrative titles attested predominantly in Southern Upper Egypt and absent from the northern sources, and vice versa (Ilin-Tomich 2015). Among the titles used predominantly in Theban and Upper Egyptian administration were the three unspecific titles "chief of tens of Upper Egypt," "*sab*, mouth of Nekhen," "elder of the portal," diverse administrative titles such as "director of the broad court," "master of the *tm*," "scribe of the nome," and several security and naval offices, primarily "security official estate guard" and "treasury captain." Among the titles used predominantly by officials and servants at the royal residence and absent from the Theban sources are numerous titles referring to different parts of the palace. Attached to the palace were also the officials bearing the title "interior overseer"; whereas they were often used for royal missions to distant areas they are almost never attested in the regional administration. Here also belongs the numerous staff of the provisioning sector: people responsible for storage and preparation of foods for the royal family and courtiers.

One may apply these results for the study of papyrus Boulaq 18. Among 209 persons mentioned in the papyrus, 16 people bear characteristic Theban and Southern Upper Egyptian names (Table 1), and five persons bear names characteristic of the Memphite region or the wider Northern Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt (Table 2). The origin of these persons suggested by their names is generally in line with their titles.

<sup>3</sup> A more detailed account of this study was subsequently presented in the present author's book "From Workshop to Sanctuary: The Production of Late Middle Kingdom Memorial Stelae."

Among the officials with Theban names (Table 1), four bear the title “chief of tens of Upper Egypt” virtually unattested outside the Southern Upper Egypt (Ilin-Tomich 2015) and other officials bear the titles well represented in the Theban administration: “reporter,” “controller of scribes,” and “scribe of the great enclosure” (Ilin-Tomich 2015). The rest of these persons bear titles of more general use, all attested in Thebes according to the epigraphic evidence. Only the title “general” is uncommon for Thebes suggesting that this was probably a court official despite his Upper Egyptian name.

Of the five persons bearing northern names (Table 2), three bear titles that are best represented in sources from the Memphis-Faiyum region and rarely occur in Southern Upper Egypt (“scribe of the Outer Palace,” “interior-overseer of the Inner Palace,” “chamber-keeper of the watchmen”). Only one title is markedly Southern Upper Egyptian (“elder of the portal”).

Table 1. Bearers of Theban and Southern Upper Egyptian epichoric names in papyrus Boulaq 18.

Section	Title	Name
60	<i>wr mḏw šm'w</i> “chief of tens of Upper Egypt”	Siamun
74	<i>wr mḏw šm'w</i> “chief of tens of Upper Egypt”	Senebmiu-Iaib
11	<i>wr mḏw šm'w</i> “chief of tens of Upper Egypt”	Senebankhef
11, 27, 38	<i>wr mḏw šm'w</i> “chief of tens of Upper Egypt”	Dedusobek
11, 60	<i>sš n ḥnrt wr</i> “scribe of the great enclosure”	Ibia
11, 27	<i>šḥd sšw</i> “controller of scribes”	Neferhotep
74	<i>wḥmw</i> “reporter”	Yuya
11, 22, 55, 60, 74	<i>sš' n nsw n ḥft-ḥr</i> “scribe of royal documents of the Presence”	Yuya
36	<i>šṯw '3 n njwt</i> “commander-in-chief of the city regiment”	Yuya
60	<i>šṯw '3 n njwt</i> “commander-in-chief of the city regiment”	Qeni, son of Siamun
74	<i>šṯw '3 n njwt</i> “commander-in-chief of the city regiment”	Neferhotep
11, 60, 74	<i>šṯw n tt ḥq3</i> “commander of the crew of the ruler”	Siamun
60, 76	<i>šḥd šmsw</i> “controller of the guards”	Dedusobek
75	<i>šḥm-'</i> “powerful arm”	Yuya
11, 60, 74	<i>jmj-r3 qnw</i> “overseer of braves”	Siamun
11, 55, 60, 74	<i>jmj-r3 mš'</i> “general”	Ibia



The overview of evidence derived from personal names suggests that the majority of persons mentioned in the papyrus were local official and only a small group of people accompanied the king on his route from Itjtawy to Thebes. This impression is reinforced by administrative titles.

Table 2. Bearers of Memphite, Northern Upper Egyptian, and Lower Egyptian epichoric names in papyrus Boulaq 18.

Section	Title	Name
1, 11, 38	ʿt <sup>4</sup>	Senbi
1, 11, 38, 60, 74	<i>smsw h3jyt</i> “elder of the portal”	Senbi
27, 71	<i>sš n hntj</i> “scribe of the Outer Palace”	Senbi
1, 11, 12, 22, 48	<i>jmj-r3 hnwty n k3p</i> “interior-overseer of the Inner Palace”	Keki
45	<i>jrj-ʿt n wršw</i> “chamber-keeper of the watchmen”	Keki

#### LOCAL OFFICIALS

The most common titles among the officials figuring in the papyrus betray their Theban origin: the four best-represented titles (“chief of tens of Upper Egypt,” “security official estate guard,” “elder of the portal,” and “scribe of the great enclosure”) are those used only in the administration of Thebes and the wider Southern Upper Egypt. Further Theban titles occurring in the papyrus are “bowman” and “mouth of Nekhen.”

Stephen Quirke outlined several clusters of officials that occur grouped together in different lists of papyrus Boulaq 18 (Quirke 1990, 74-84). One of such lists (Quirke’s block 3) includes a reporter, a great scribe of the vizier, and a controller of scribes. These offices were among the topmost offices in the Late Middle Kingdom administration of Thebes (Ilin-Tomich 2015), however since these titles are well attested in other regions, some external evidence is required to consider these officials named in the papyrus Boulaq 18 to be local. Their co-presence in one cluster with a chief of tens of Upper Egypt provides one supporting point. Another point is provided by the occurrence of the great scribe of the vizier Ressenab in this cluster; this official also occurs in the smaller manuscript of Papyrus Boulaq 18 (Quirke 1990, 196-197), which makes his Theban affiliation more than likely. Lastly, one of the reporters holds the local name Yuya and one of the controllers of scribes — the Upper

<sup>4</sup> For this obscure designation, see Quirke 1990, 89-90.

Egyptian name Neferhotep. Hence, it is likely that all members of Quirke's block 3 were high Theban officials.

One may suggest that beside the abovementioned great scribe of the vizier another scribe of a high official of the central administration attested in the papyrus could also be a Theban official, namely the great scribe of the treasurer Neferhotep. The Theban origin is suggested by his name, and the holder of the same title is attested on one Theban stela (Chiddingstone EDECC:01.2882).

It is also likely that most security officials appearing in papyrus Boulaq 18 were locals. This primarily concerns the commanders of the city regiment. Out of seven holders of this title in the papyrus, three bear characteristic Theban names.

The accounts of papyrus Boulaq 18 record provisions not only for officials, but also for a number of their female relatives and children (Quirke 1990, 90-94). While female recipients are listed separately from male, their kinsmen may in some cases be decisively identified among the officials figuring in the accounts. In other cases their kinsmen, who are referred to only by name, may be equated with one of the several namesake officials. The four officials unequivocally identifiable with their family members were all Thebans, as suggested by their titles ("security official estate guard," "elder of the portal," "the mouth of Nekhen," "chief of tens of Upper Egypt"). Not a single official among the possible kinsmen of mentioned females bears a title excluding his Theban affiliation. This evidence can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, as Theban officials are by far the most numerous group of officials in these accounts, it is logical that they dominate the group of officials with families either. On the other hand, it seems likely that officials from Itjtawy were not travelling with their families; hence, all officials whose family members are mentioned were Thebans.

#### THE OFFICIALS FROM THE RESIDENCE

Among the people who came from the Northern residence should be those bearing the following titles: "interior-overseer of the Inner Palace," "chamber-keeper of the watchmen," "scribe of the Outer Palace," and "cup-bearer of the Outer Palace." These titles were common in the Memphis-Faiyum region and almost completely unattested in Theban documentation. The three former titles were borne by persons with characteristic Memphite names (Table 2).

It turns out that in the document, which was long considered a register of palace officials, only a few officials were indeed courtiers from the royal residence who arrived to Thebes with the king. However, these officials play the most prominent role in the papyrus. They are not just inarticulate recipients of the royal donations, but they were given orders for the redistribution of goods.

The two officials most often referred to in the accounts of papyrus Boulaq 18 were the interior-overseers of the Inner Palace Renefemib and Keki. Renefemib was responsible for the orders concerning food-donations and Keki was twice sent to Medamoud with some missions. Judging from the contemporary epigraphic sources, the interior-overseers of the Inner Palace were often participating in diverse royal expeditions sent to Nubia or to Sinai. Otherwise, they are attested in sources pertaining to the royal residence.

As demonstrated by Oleg Berlev, the title “chamber-keeper of the watchmen” was used exclusively by the employees of the royal palace (Berlev 1978, 258). These officials were controlling the people entering and leaving the palace. Two such chamber-keepers of the watchmen are attested in papyrus Boulaq 18, and one of them bears a characteristic Memphite name. Out of 14 attestations of the title in contemporary epigraphic sources, 10 are attributable to the royal residence based on other administrative titles, artistic style, or personal names.

Stephen Quirke (1990, 73-84) attempted to divide the officials figuring in the papyrus into two groups: those belonging to the Inner Palace and those belonging to the Outer Palace. The division into Theban and court officials appears more fundamental and challenges the interpretation of the papyrus by Quirke and other scholars. Altogether a half of 140 officials may be attributed to Thebes based on their names or titles, and only six may be securely attributed to the Memphis region.

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