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Outside the Box

Selected papers from the conference

“Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact”

Liège, 27-29 October 2014

Andreas DORN & Stéphane POLIS (eds.)



Presses Universitaires de Liège

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Deir el-Medina Studies

Current situation and future perspectives

Andreas DORN, Todd J. GILLEN & Stéphane POLIS

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This volume represents the outcome of the Deir el-Medina conference held in Liège in 2014 (October 27–29), which was titled “Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact: Describing the interactions within and outside the community of workmen.” The goal of this conference — supported by the Fund for Scientific Research (Belgium), the BeIPD-COFUND post-doc position of Andreas Dorn (ULiège), the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the Université de Liège, and its Faculty of Philosophy and Letters — was to encourage a wider perspective on Deir el-Medina, bringing together scholars from all egyptological fields and disciplines who are interested in studying the many types of interactions that the ancient community of Deir el-Medina developed both internally and at the broader (supra-)regional level. Most of the articles included here are based directly on lectures given during the conference,¹ but additional papers have also been invited.²

The title of the volume, “Outside the box,” refers (somewhat amusingly) to two important dimensions touched on by the papers of this volume, and thereby encapsulates under a single heading the questions and issues covered. First, it points to the fact that a huge quantity of documents from Deir el-Medina and, more broadly, from the Theban Necropolis has been available for a long time to some restricted academic circles, but are now to be taken *outside the box*: this holds true for the

¹ The following talks are not represented by a contribution in the volume: Laurent BAVAY, ‘Vizier Khay and the community of Deir el-Medina’; Hans-Werner FISCHER-ELFERT, ‘From the hieratic ostraca collection of the Egyptian Museum — Georg Steindorff — at Leipzig University’; Fredrik HAGEN, ‘The Late-Egyptian Miscellanies at Deir el-Medina’; Dimitri LABOURY, ‘On the alleged involvement of Deir el-Medineh crew in the making of elite tombs in the Theban Necropolis during the 18th dynasty. A Reassessment’; Danièle MICHAUX-COLOMBOT, ‘Defining *Md3yw* and *3rw* duties in the Theban Necropolis, facts and fictions’; Essam Mohamed EL SAID, ‘Manifestations of Mut cult at Deir el-Medina’; Miguel Á. MOLINERO POLO, ‘The mummy of Isis, Sennedjem’s granddaughter’; Eric WELLS, ‘Religion, Ritual and Relationships: Votive practice as a community building and networking device at Deir el-Medina.’ We are particularly saddened by the passing away of Jaana TOIVARI-VIITALA[†], a foremost figure in the field who organised and edited the last Deir el-Medina conference (Toivari-Viitala 2014). During the conference, she presented the last results of the Finnish Mission in a lecture entitled ‘Aspects of interaction as seen in the finds of the Finnish Mission from the workmen’s huts in the Theban mountains.’

² Namely those of Khaled HASSAN & Stéphane POLIS (that differs substantially from the lecture entitled ‘The end of palaeography for identification purposes? About scribes and handwritings during the 20th dynasty: Amennakhte, his school and his colleagues’ by Andreas DORN & Stéphane POLIS), of Bernard MATHIEU (who was unable to attend the conference) and of Aurore MOTTE (who initially presented a poster).

publication of papyri and ostraca conserved in many collections across the world, but also for archival material describing the excavations at the site itself, and more broadly for the monuments that are still onsite, but not yet available to scholars or the general public. Second, most of the papers collected in this volume share a common feature, namely their attempt to think *outside the box*, using new theoretical frameworks, cross-disciplinary approaches, or innovative technological solutions.³ Accordingly, “Outside the box,” can be read both as a plea for making the fascinating material from Deir el-Medina more broadly available, and as a shout of admiration regarding the creativity and tireless inventiveness of the scholars working on the — often difficult — sources stemming from this exceptional socio-cultural setting.

Before proceeding with a description of the main areas to which this volume contributes, we would like to thank warmly two egyptological institutions that host collections related to Deir el-Medina and allowed us to use and reproduce high quality images without any financial requirements: the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology (Cairo) and the Museo Egizio (Turin).

1. THE SOURCES

The amount of artifacts — in the broadest sense, i.e., including objects, archaeological structures, as well as archival material — that derive from (or are related to) Deir el-Medina is enormous. As such, the publication of primary sources will definitely be a part of Deir el-Medina studies for generations to come. There is a great deal of analysis of the Deir el-Medina evidence going on (see §2), and such studies are definitely needed. Yet, their conclusions rely quantitatively on (very roughly) only 35% of the available body of evidence — even if, qualitatively speaking, this might admittedly amount to approximately 80% of it (Polis 2017: 78–82). Let’s look at an example for the sake of illustration: despite the steady rate of publication of the documentary ostraca kept at the IFAO⁴ by J. Černý and P. Grandet, out of the 8126 items listed on the website of the Archives of the Institute,⁵ only 1405 have been published so far (Grandet 2017), which means that there are nearly 7000 more to go — and this situation is not exceptional in various collections worldwide.⁶ Furthermore, new related material from the nearby mortuary temples⁷ and various tomb sites⁸ is regularly published (or announced for publication), which adds up to the quantity of documents relevant for studying Deir el-Medina in its broader socio-geographical context. Consequently, interpretive conclusions risk being inaccurate (statistically, at least), and on a global scale, we would argue that it makes sense to finish the main meal before moving onto the dessert, so to speak. Otherwise studies risk becoming out-dated as new evidence becomes available. We are still in a golden age of primary publishing and archaeological investigations and the contributions below clearly demonstrate how further steps can be taken in this field.

³ Freed from academic constraints, Donker van Heel (2016) also directly contributes to this ‘outside the box’ thinking.

⁴ For the literary ostraca, see Gasse (2005).

⁵ See <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/archives/ostraca/> (last accessed 2018.08.10).

⁶ The ongoing publication of Deir el-Bahri and Deir el-Medina related ostraca stored in the Egyptian Museum (Cairo) by Hassan (2013; 2014; 2014–2015; 2016a; 2016b) is worth mentioning here in this respect. Similarly see Hudson (2014a; 2014b; 2015) for the Ashmolean Museum ostraca.

⁷ For the Ramesseum, see Barbotin (2013), and for the temple of Merenptah, see Müller (2014).

⁸ See for instance Cilli (2014) for the ostraca of the Valley of the Kings (KV 47).

1.1. Primary publications

The newly published texts chiefly fall into two categories. On the one hand, we have the expected material, namely new examples of well-known text types (which nonetheless regularly display intriguing peculiarities). These are of course of paramount importance for quantitative analysis as well as for confirming or emending past results by making new content accessible. In his paper, Pierre GRANDET (*Ostraca Hiéراتiques documentaires de l'IFAO : quelques points notables*) shows clearly how every single new text adds to our palaeographical, lexical and phraseological knowledge, with new hieratic signs, lexemes or expressions occurring in the material from the IFAO. He further demonstrates how modern digital techniques can be used so as to get faint traces of hieratic readable again, and to correct (or improve) readings that were suggested by J. Černý in his *Notebooks*. The study of Rob DEMARÉE (*A Late Ramesside Ship's Log. Papyrus Turin 2098+2100/306 verso*), on the other hand, illustrates the second category, namely the unexpected (or less-expected) documents. The ship's log that Rob Demarée discovered in what he likes to call his 'papyradise' of the Museo Egizio in Turin, is not a common text category; additionally, this piece displays several striking peculiarities: his scribe can be identified as Dhutmose (the famous author of several *Late Ramesside Letters*) and it informs us about 'Theban' activities pertaining to the collection of grain during the reign of Ramesses XI far north in Middle Egypt.

Guillemette ANDREU-LANOË & Jacques PELEGRIN (*La fabrique des ostraca en calcaire. Comment scribes et dessinateurs se procuraient-ils ces supports ?*) draw the attention of the scholarly community to an aspect that shall inevitably become central when publishing limestone ostraca.⁹ Following a wider trend towards studying the materiality of writing, they show that limestone ostraca were not hastily picked up on the ground of the Necropolis, but carefully chosen and deliberately shaped artefacts. This aspect of the description of the text-bearing objects has been neglected so far, but one can anticipate that it will soon become a standard in our publications, and will assuredly open the way to *ostracology* as a sub-discipline that parallels papyrology.

1.2. Archival material

During their work on the Mycenaean and Aegean pottery (cf. Schiller 2018) in the Theban Necropolis, Massimo CULTRARO & Federica FACCHETTI (*A Foreign Market revisited. New Evidence of Mycenaean and Aegean-related pottery from Schiaparelli's campaigns [1905–1909] at Deir el Medina*) found an old (and so far unknown) manuscript of Ernesto Schiaparelli on the topic and were able to identify the potsherds and vessels that he excavated at the beginning of the 20th century and are now stored in the Egyptian Museum of Turin. These potsherds illustrate the fact that transfer of knowledge (immaterial goods) between the north and this southern community monitored by the royal administration (that can be ascertained based on literary texts like the *Teaching of a man for his son*¹⁰) is paralleled by transfer of luxury goods, like imported pottery from the Mediterranean.

Since the reopening of the Museo Egizio in Turin (2015), access to its tantalizing material objects is much easier than it used to be, which brings to light a variety of exciting new documents, as

⁹ See further Pelegrin *et al.* (2016).

¹⁰ See Fischer-Elfert (1998) with the British Museum papyri from Kom Medinet Gurob dating to late 18th dynasty/early 19th dynasty, when the copy of literary texts in Deir el-Medina is not yet attested. It often proves difficult to find clues about the precise places in which literary texts were composed, but it can be shown that they were transmitted and used countrywide (even in Nubia; see for example Parkinson & Spencer 2017 for the *Teaching of Amenemhat*).

illustrated by the studies of Rob Demarée and Massimo Cultraro & Federica Facchetti cited above, as well as by the curators Paolo DEL VESCO & Federico POOLE (*Deir el-Medina in the Egyptian Museum of Turin. An Overview, and the Way Forward*) who strive to contextualise archeologically the Museum's objects that originate from Deir el-Medina and arrived at the museum between the 1820's (acquisitions from Drovetti) and the beginning of the 20th century (excavations by Schiaparelli). They resort to all available data (their own archives, but also the material resulting from the subsequent French digs in Deir el-Medina) in order to connect the Museum's objects with a precise archaeological context and, ultimately, their owners and producers among the members of the crew. Their results open up for fascinating new micro-historical perspectives on Deir el-Medina and its inhabitants.

In the same vein, Cédric GOBEIL (*Archaeology in the archives. A zir-area at Deir el-Medina and its implications for the location of the khetem*) presents stimulating results based on the notebooks of Bernard Bruyère kept at the IFAO and ancient textual sources. While preparing for future archaeological missions (see §1.3), he identified, next to the north-eastern corner of the Ptolemaic temple, a *zir*-area at Deir el-Medina that is similar to the one found in Amarna. Although later excavations (March 2017) showed that these structures are to be connected to the front part of the temple of Amun of Ramesses II, his new interpretation of P. Turin Cat. 1923 (r° 2–8) strongly suggests that the *khetem* must be located in close vicinity, as argued by Christopher Eyre some years ago.

1.3. Onsite archeological work

This case study shows that studies of the archives and of the available ancient sources should still be paralleled by onsite archaeological excavations: despite the quality of Bernard Bruyère's work, methods have evolved and our present knowledge of the village life will inevitably lead to new interpretations of archaeological structures. In this respect, the scholarly community can be grateful to the IFAO for resuming actual archaeological surveys (next to the restoration and preservation of the site, and to the publication of the excavated material).

Two members of the IFAO mission (resp. Cédric Gobeil) illustrate the potentialities of this site. Anne AUSTIN (*Living and dying at Deir el-Medina: An osteological analysis of the TT 290 assemblage*) gives us long overdue analyses of osteological material combined with textual cross-analysis in her discussion of illness, filling a neglected gap of Deir el-Medina studies in the archaeological approach to that site. Detailed knowledge about living and working conditions — food delivered, physical work, and punishment — transmitted by the texts originating in masses from Deir el-Medina can now be looked at from the resulting physical evidence on the bones of the inhabitants buried in the nearby necropolis: bioarchaeological research will contribute substantially to our understanding of daily life in the village. The epigraphic project of Chloé RAGAZZOLI in Deir el-Medina (*Graffiti and secondary epigraphy in Deir el-Medina. A progress report*), on the other hand, yields new insights regarding the interaction between the scribes and their surrounding environment, showing that, far from being subversive, the graffiti were socially accepted and organic to the field of literacy. Moreover, she resorts to these graffiti in order to identify the social function of specific buildings, like the fellowship chapel no. 1211, which is likely to be a place for scribal meeting and possibly training.

Recent onsite investigations of the Graffiti de la Montagne Thébaine by Andreas DORN (*Graffiti de la Montagne Thébaine [GMT] 2012/2013: Old and new graffiti from Western Thebes. Report on the 1st campaign of the "Graffiti in the Valleys of Western Thebes Project"*) reveal that many kinds of human traces, including all forms of scratches and inscriptions, may be found on the walls of the Theban

mountains. In his paper, he offers a selection of newly discovered graffiti in order to give an idea of what can be expected in the future. He shows that the graffiti are inscribed on carefully chosen walls and that they should consequently be analyzed and interpreted in relation to the landscape in order to understand fully the social dynamics underpinning writing in remote spaces.

2. THE LIFE OF A COMMUNITY OF WORKMEN

As hinted at by the papers just discussed, social practices cannot be disentangled from the spatial environment in which they take place (§2.1). Written sources, especially the abundant documentary texts, are of course instrumental for studying such questions, but the Deir el-Medina community is further characterized by a level of literacy that also strongly promotes the literary realms (§2.2). Our knowledge of the community as a whole allows a degree of contextualization of scribal practices that is hardly paralleled for other periods and times in ancient Egypt (and beyond), so that specific (and even individual) scribal habits can be studied (§2.3).

2.1. *Spatial environment and social practices*

At the crossroads of geography, anthropology and sociology, Anne-Claire SALMAS (*Space and society at Deir el-Medina. Delineating the territory of a specific 'social group'*) demonstrates that the notion of 'territory,' as conceptualized by the social sciences, is most fruitful when it comes to understanding the physical and symbolic construction of different types of boundaries within the Theban necropolis and to grasping how the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina developed a sense of belonging to the delineated territories. Directly connected to this issue is the origin and functioning of the service personnel (*smd.t*) that supplied the workmen with different types of goods coming from outside. Kathrin GABLER (*Can I stay or must I go? Relations between the Deir el-Medina Community and their Service Personnel*) makes significant progress regarding these service members,¹¹ as she manages to unveil a social structure within this personnel and to evidence a promotion system among woodcutters, water carriers, doorkeepers, etc. that can be correlated with age groups and socio-economic status. The question of space, landscape, and mobility is also central in Patricia BERG's contribution (*Textual references to mobility in necropolis journals and notes from Deir el-Medina*). Based on a non-literary corpus, she discusses mobility within and around the village, and observes that there are conventionalized types of movements that are expressed in the texts by dedicated verbs and expressions. As such, she argues that there was not only a right way to move around within the familiar landscape, but also a right way to express motion in the administrative texts. She further notes that the workmen moved slightly less outside the necropolis during the 19th dynasty than during the 20th dynasty, and explains this difference by a more efficient central administration during the 19th dynasty, with less need for the members of the community to move outside.

The spatial environment and social practices of the workmen can be studied based on internal evidence, but a contrastive view can also be very informative. This is the tantalizing perspective taken by Hana NAVRATILOVA (*An elusive community: Traces of necropolis workmen in Memphis?*), who discusses scant evidence of a community of workmen in Memphis during the New Kingdom, and concludes that a workforce similar to the one of Deir el-Medina is unlikely in Memphis, but that qualified workmen with a similar social background were likely to appear in the necropoleis of both cities. From geographical to temporal contrast, Anne BOUD'HORS (*Moines et laïcs dans la nécropole*

¹¹ See further Gabler (2018).

thébaïne [VII^e–VIII^e siècles]. Frontières et interactions entre deux modes de vie) reminds us that the life of the village and of the necropolis extends beyond the Pharaonic period, and that there is much to be learned in parallels with the later Coptic material. Based on the rich epistolary correspondence of Frange, she is able to reconstruct his large social network and to sketch the boundaries between monks and secular people on the one hand, but also to show that those did not prevent many interactions, both material and spiritual, between these social categories.

Many (economic, judicial, religious, etc.) aspects of daily life in Deir el-Medina are still poorly understood and three studies of the volume contribute to filling significant gaps.¹² Deborah SWEENEY (*Cattle at Deir el-Medîna*) used documentary texts to build a comprehensive overview of cattle culture (economic and logistic aspects right down to the sociological), covering pedigrees, branding, cost, names of animals, feeding, herding, calving, as well as how their produce and work during their lifetime, and meat and body parts after their deaths, benefited their owners. Such descriptions are fundamental to our understanding of the way of life of the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina, and likewise the paper of Christine HUE-ARCÉ (*The legal treatment of interpersonal violence in Deir el-Medina*) gives us a unique window into the mechanisms of regulation of violent behaviour in Deir el-Medina, mostly based on complaints to officials and reports of the local court. Such documentary texts are obviously not the only keys to studying social structures, and Julia TROCHE (*The Living Dead at Deir el-Medina*) analyses the living-dead interactions in the framework of an investigation of local religious practices, focusing on the *ꜣḥ ikr n R^c* stelae and anthropoid busts. She suggests that it is productive to think about these artifacts not so much as objects of ancestor veneration, but rather as participating in the socio-religious phenomenon in which certain local dead are marked as unique from ‘average’ dead through their emplacement along a scale of distinction that ranged from *akh iqr* to *netjer*.

2.2. Deir el-Medina’s written production

As we have seen above, written sources can be used as ancillary material for studying broader questions, but they of course deserve to be studied for themselves. Pascal VERNUS (*The circulation of “literary” texts in the Deir el-Medina community. Two opposite cases*) discusses two special cases of circulation of literary texts (*sensu lato*) in the scribal environment of Deir el-Medina: (a) he shrewdly describes the adaptation on a hieroglyphic ostrakon from the Valley of the Kings of the literary statement of the king’s capacity as a lord of war found on a stela of Ramses III engraved in one of the rock chapels located between the village and the Valley of the Queens; (b) he analyses how Amennakhte, son of Nebmaakheru, drew on a stock of thematic and phraseological material pertaining to the topic of the cackling of the primordial gander for two personal inscriptions on statues. Such discussion of literature in the wide sense and its manipulation and appropriation between supports are revealing of the local webs of meaning created by the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina, and both cases demonstrate the ability of the scribes of Deir el-Medina to interact with the elite culture textual for creating original literary compositions. In this respect, Aurore MOTTE (*Observations on the Reden und Rufe in the workmen’s tombs of Deir el-Medina*) interestingly shows that the workmen’s speeches that are found in the daily life scenes of the tombs in Deir el-Medina

¹² Overall, economy and religion are not well represented in the present volume, but monographs on these topics appeared recently, e.g., Mandeville (2014) and Weiss (2015).

during the 19th dynasty have no parallels in the speech captions of other private tombs, which appears to point to the same conclusion.

Bernard MATHIEU (*Les « Caractères » : un genre littéraire de l'époque ramesside*) resorts extensively to the literary sources of Deir el-Medina in order to identify a literary genre typical of the Ramesside period¹³ that he christened 'les Caractères' (after Theophrastus and La Bruyère): in a fictitious letter, a man addresses his superior and targets a specific character flaw of his addressee. In the cultural environment of Deir el-Medina, the success of this genre that questions authority (and is accordingly opposed to traditional teachings) must be assessed in combination with other attestations of similar attitudes (for instance on figured ostraca) towards hierarchy.

From the literary to the linguistic realm, Jean WINAND (*Dialectal, sociolectal and idiolectal variations in the Late Egyptian texts from Deir el-Medineh and the Theban area*) tackles the vexed questions of identifying dialects in the Late Egyptian language of the sources from the Theban area in general and from Deir el-Medina in particular (cf. Loprieno 2006: 67–70; Winand 2015). Having identified possible traces of dialectal features at the phonological, morphological, syntactical and lexical levels, he turns to sociolectal and idiolectal features specific to Deir el-Medina and calls for a careful methodology when addressing variationist issues (Polis 2017): many factors such as generations, family ties, differences in education or culture, etc. can account for differences across texts of the same place and time, and many future insights might result from a careful analysis of these factors.

2.3. *Scribal and artistic practices*

The village of Deir el-Medina is a treasure-trove for studying specific scribal and artistic practices, both at the level of the community as a whole and at the individual level.

At the community level, Ben HARING (*Popular, but unique? The early history of the royal necropolis workmen's marks*) investigates the early developments of the system of identity marks that is unique to Deir el-Medina (cf. Haring 2017). He convincingly suggests that, in the early 18th Dynasty (when literacy in the workmen's community must have been very low), older marking systems such as the team marks used in building projects during the Old and Middle Kingdoms must have been a source of inspiration for the development of this original local system of notation. In the artistic domain, Paolo MARINI's paper (*Shabti-boxes and their representation on wall paintings in tombs at Deir el-Medina*) rethinks in a creative manner the possible relationships between funerary objects and their representations in the wall paintings of Theban tombs. He identifies a local *shabti*-box type (yellow and black), so far not attested outside the Deir el-Medina community and probably produced in so-called informal workshops. The choice of colours might have been motivated by economic reasons (availability) and could further indicate that the same craftsmen were in charge of the decoration of the tombs in Deir el-Medina (where the same colours are abundantly used).

At the individual level, Stephanie MCCLAIN (*Authorship and attribution. Who wrote the twentieth dynasty journal of the necropolis?*) resorts to palaeographic analysis in order to isolate handwritings in the 20th dynasty journal texts on ostraca, and suggests that no less than 10 different scribes possibly wrote such texts during the reign of Ramesses III to V. This study opens up entirely new avenues for studying and understanding the division of labour between the scribes (more or less officially) in charge of different aspects of the administration of the Tomb. Finally, Khaled HASSAN & Stéphane POLIS (*Extending the corpus of Amennakhte's literary compositions: Palaeographical and textual*

¹³ Similarly, see the *Laus Urbis* (Ragazzoli 2008, with Quack 2010).

connections between two ostraca [O. BM EA 21282 + O. Cairo HO 425]) also use palaeographical features, in combination with phraseological and thematic clues, for connecting independent witnesses of two literary texts composed by the scribe Amennakhte, thereby enriching the corpus of texts presumably composed by this prolific scribe during the first part of the 20th dynasty. Both studies illustrate the huge potential of the material coming from the village for exploring individual practices and contrasting them with the surrounding social norm.

3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Two main trends characterize the present volume. (1) *Contextualization*, an orientation of the field that Loprieno (2006) already identified and labeled ‘Towards a detailed perspective on Deir el-Medina’: the artefacts, representations and texts are no longer seen in isolation from their archeological contexts, from their producers (the workmen, craftsmen, draftsmen and scribes seen as social agents), and from their socio-cultural functions, and in-depth research in the archives as well as onsite field work provide new interpretative clues regarding these complementary aspects. We indeed seem to be less and less interested in *what* the inhabitants did *per se*, that is to say, their decontextualized output. Rather, we are now more and more interested in understanding *how* and *why* they did it, which means that time is ripe for assembling the numerous fragments of the past into a global picture uniting the *what*, *how*, and *why*. (2) *Pluri-disciplinary frameworks*, which operate both at the technical (e.g., when resorting to new digital visualization tools or bioarchaeological techniques) and methodological levels (when concepts and frameworks from other fields such as economy, anthropology, and sociology are fruitfully applied to Deir el-Medina material). This combination of disciplines is partly the corollary of a contextualized approach, which requires different fields to concur with the study of a specific object, but the current trend is likely to be deeper, since scholars in egyptology seem to be more and more aware that new insights do not result only from new material, but also from new points of view on this material.

This being said, the overview of the volume provided here evidently shows that great tasks lie ahead of us regarding the primary sources, and we consider as urgent for the field to focus on:

- (1) the publication of the excavated material, which is stored in museums worldwide or still *in situ* (tombs and artifacts in magazines);
- (2) the exploration of the archives in combination with additional onsite archaeological surveys;
- (3) the development of databases (such as the Deir el-Medina database) and of online corpora (e.g., Ramses Online and the Thesaurus Lingua Aegyptiae) that greatly facilitates searches of the material.

In a digital age, the results of these three axes should be fully available online, with open access for scholars to consult and research.¹⁴ Ideally, an effort should be made to standardize our data models (Polis & Razanajao 2016), to share our metadata,¹⁵ and to interconnect the different initiatives as linked open data. We live in the future; why not take advantage of it?

¹⁴ See in this respect the publications of ostraca on Deir el Medine Online.

¹⁵ See now the Thot project (<http://thot.philo.ulg.ac.be>, Thesauri & Ontology for documenting Ancient Egyptian Resources).

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COLLECTION
ÆGYPTIACA LEODIENSIA

La collection *Ægyptiaca Leodiensia* — dirigée par Dimitri Laboury, Stéphane Polis et Jean Winand — a pour vocation de publier des travaux d'égyptologie dans les domaines les plus divers. Elle accueille en son sein des monographies ainsi que des volumes collectifs thématiques.

This volume represents the outcome of the conference “Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact: Describing the interactions within and outside the community of workmen” held in Liège in 2014 (27-29 October). The goal of this conference was to encourage a wider perspective on Deir el-Medina, bringing together scholars from all egyptological fields and disciplines who are interested in studying the many types of interactions that the ancient community of Deir el-Medina developed both internally and at the broader (supra-)regional level.

The title of the volume, “Outside the box,” refers to two important dimensions touched on by the papers in this volume. First, it points to the fact that a vast quantity of documents from Deir el-Medina and, more broadly, from the Theban Necropolis has been available for a long time to some restricted academic circles, but are now to be taken *outside the box*: this holds true not only for the publication of papyri and ostraca preserved in many collections across the world, but also for archival material describing the excavations at the site itself, and more broadly for the monuments that remain there still, but are not available to scholars or the general public. Second, most of the papers collected in this volume share a common feature, namely their attempt to think *outside the box*, using new theoretical frameworks, cross-disciplinary approaches, or inno-

vative technological solutions. Accordingly, “Outside the box,” can be read both as a plea for making the fascinating material from Deir el-Medina more broadly available, and as a shout of admiration regarding the creativity and tireless inventiveness of scholars working on the sources stemming from this exceptional socio-cultural setting.

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