

# Living and Writing in Deir el-Medine

Socio-historical Embodiment of Deir el-Medine Texts

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(Eds)

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# An Informal Workshop: Textual Evidence for Private Funerary Art Production in the Ramesside Period<sup>1</sup>

Kathlyn M. Cooney

When examining the tombs of Deir el-Medina workmen, the abundance of quality grave goods reinforces the notion that these artisans must have achieved additional income beyond their state rations. Because Deir el-Medina craftsmen were able to purchase so many objects for their own tombs, their income likely exceeded the standard approximated wage of 5 ½ sacks of grain a month.<sup>2</sup> Even if they constructed and decorated these objects themselves, the cost of raw materials must be accounted for. As members of the royal tomb crew, these highly skilled workers even had the reputation and organizational infrastructure to do private sector work in their spare time.

This paper specifically addresses private sector funerary craftwork at Deir el-Medina. Such supplemental work for non-royal buyers is referred to as “on the side” or “moonlighting” in Deir el-Medina scholarship<sup>3</sup> – misleading terms because they imply that this activity was less important economically to craftsmen when compared to their official work. With state grain rations as their primary income, *Sn-nḏm* (i) and his sons *Hnsw* (ii) and *H'-bhnt* (i) almost certainly could not have afforded the funerary art found inside Theban Tomb 1,<sup>4</sup> let alone the tomb itself.<sup>5</sup> Private household production, on the other hand, whether painting coffins or weaving flax into linen,<sup>6</sup> could significantly supplement the salary of Deir el-Medina households, allowing them to save wealth for tomb and funerary goods construction. According to one text, the scribe of the tomb *Hrj-šrj* (i) sold coffins to the Chantress of Amen *T'-nḏm.t* for a total price of 329 *dbn*,<sup>7</sup> about 22 times his monthly grain ration from the state. Even though only a portion of this number would represent profit for the workman, and not all of the earnings would necessarily have been for him alone, the high amount earned was certainly significant and represents a considerable sum for work that traditional scholarship considers to be “on the side”.

To obtain a clearer picture of craft specialization in funerary arts during the New Kingdom, I have collected over 200 Deir el-Medina ostraca and papyri that function as primary evidence for the manufacture, commission, trade, and inheritance of privately produced craft goods. These texts presumably provided protection in the event of a claim or dispute between producer and

buyer, as well as between multiple craftsmen. In Western Thebes, craftwork was mentioned in private transaction texts, in the proceedings of legal disputes, in official journal texts of work at the royal tomb, or in personal letters. This corpus of texts reveals that funerary objects were often commissioned with payment.<sup>8</sup> Other texts suggest it was not unusual for previously completed funerary objects to be traded as part of a larger transaction. In such cases, a coffin or funerary statuette acts as a storage of wealth in the same manner as any other commodity.<sup>9</sup> Most often missing from these texts are the contextual details that tell the reader how this private sector work was organized and how it functioned.

Christopher Eyre accordingly cautions that study of private sector craft specialization at Deir el-Medina is fraught with difficulties:

- 1 This article is an outgrowth of my doctoral dissertation, which I am currently revising for publication with the Egyptologische Uitgaven series, forthcoming 2006. Cooney 2003.
- 2 Černý 1954; Černý 1975; Helck 1963, Teil 4, 604; Helck 1975, 231 f.; Janssen 1975, 455–493.
- 3 Lesko 1994a, 12.
- 4 Bruyère 1959; Shedid/Shedid 1994; Maspero 1886; Toda/Daressy 1920; Daressy 1928.
- 5 This statement is based on a comparison of wages of approximately 11 *dbn* a month with the following average costs from Deir el-Medina textual material: average *wt* coffin cost of 31.57 *dbn*, average *wt* coffin decoration cost of 10.5 *dbn*, the average of *wt* coffin construction of 22.75 *dbn*, the average price of wood for the *wt* coffin at 4.4 *dbn*, the average price for an outer coffin (*wt* '1/mn-'nh) of 37.5 *dbn*, the average price for inner coffin (*wt* šrj) decoration of 16.83 *dbn*, the average cost of the mummy board (*swbt*) of 25.9 *dbn*, and the average price for mummy board decoration of 5 *dbn*. For all of this price information, see Cooney 2003, 181–231.
- 6 Eyre 1998.
- 7 P. Turin Giornale 17B, 7–17.
- 8 For example, see O. Gardiner 296.
- 9 A coffin or other funerary object might be one of the many commodities used as *payment* for a larger object, such as a bull, as in O. BM EA 5649, O. Gardiner 44, and O. Wien H. 2; or for a metal vessel, as in O. DeM 399.

By and large trade scenes from the Old Kingdom seem to show itinerant peddlers: the same 'bag-men', apparently going round trading, and not men waiting at a set market. Such dealings show a juxtaposition with craft work, or the exchange of craft produce with the craftsmen, and illustrate presumably something of the free market in manufactured goods. The question of how to relate such material to the textual record at Deir el-Medina remains unapproached: – what is sideline, and what is professional craft for commerce. The existence of a free market in manufactured goods does not necessarily imply the existence of 'free' craftsmen running purely private enterprises. Nor does the dependence of craftsmen and craft production on institutional structures – temple, king, or the estate of a great lord – exclude them from private marketing. There are too many gaps in the data for satisfactory understanding.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, documentation of funerary art production, as with any documentation from Deir el-Medina, lacks important contextual details. The textual records do not, for example, consistently provide a clear demarcation between craftwork produced for neighbors and friends, perhaps at a significant discount, and goods that might have been produced for a wealthy Theban patron, or even for the open market. Further, the primary documentation does not specifically state whether craftwork performed for high Theban officials brought additional compensation, or whether artisans were encouraged to produce these funerary objects as part of their official employment. Discerning whether some texts represent

commercial activity or, as others imply, exploitation,<sup>11</sup> represents a difficult challenge. This paper uses contextual tools of text genre, artisan title, and village hierarchy to build a circumstantial argument for labor organization in the private sector funerary goods market in Western Thebes. I propose that Deir el-Medina artisans worked within what I call an *informal workshop* – an entity in which they could not only pool their talents, but also work within existing formal hierarchical specializations, using their reputations as members of the official Deir el-Medina crew to gain customers, as well as utilizing their access to materials to make additional income in the private sector, beyond their royal workshop salaries.

For the purposes of this study, the texts that mention funerary art in a social and economic context are classified into six main text categories. Each of these categories suggests a slightly different motive for the individual composing the document: First, the workshop record<sup>12</sup> functioned for the producers, as an organizational tool and protective record. Second, receipts<sup>13</sup> recorded a specific trade of goods, and as such they could protect both sides of the transaction, both purchaser and producer. The main purpose of a receipt was to record all of the commodities given in payment on both sides of the exchange. Third, the multi-transaction receipt<sup>14</sup> has the same function as the normal receipt, but represents a much more complicated document comprising many trades, often between three or more parties. Fourth, letters<sup>15</sup> also include reference to crafted funerary goods. Most letters mentioning craft goods seem to be correspondence amongst artisans, not between buyers and sellers. Fifth, official records<sup>16</sup> were kept by the leaders of

10 Eyre 1998, 176.

11 Bogoslovsky 1980.

12 For workshop records mentioning the private sector funerary arts market, see O. Berlin P 10643, O. Berlin P 10666, O. Berlin P 11260, O. Berlin P 12343, O. Berlin P 12405, O. Berlin P 14222, O. Černý 20, O. CGC 25260, O. CGC 25584, O. DeM 7, O. DeM 31, O. DeM 49, O. DeM 146, O. Gardiner 3 (HO 22,2), O. Gardiner 105 (HO 53,1), O. Gardiner 119, O. Gardiner 134, O. Gardiner 136, O. Gardiner 142, O. Gardiner 151, O. Gardiner 158, O. Gardiner 163 (HO 58,3), O. Gardiner 190, O. IFAO 764, O. Lady Franklyn, O. Liverpool 13625 (HO 63,3), O. Liverpool 13626 (HO 62,3), O. Michaelides 13, O. Nash 11, O. Nims (HO 62,1), O. Petrie 17 (HO 28,2), O. Strasbourg H. 84, O. Turin N. 57040, O. Turin N. 57387, O. Varille 4, O. Varille 13, O. Varille 18, P. Berlin P 10485, P. Turin Giornale 17B vso.

13 For receipts mentioning the private sector funerary arts market, see O. Ashmolean Museum 1945.39 (HO 72,1), O. Berlin P 14256, O. Berlin P 14366, O. BM EA 5649 (HO 86,2), O. CGC 25601, O. DeM 73, O. DeM 198, O. DeM 214, O. DeM 215, O. DeM 223, O. DeM 233, O. DeM 399, O. DeM 553, O. DeM 556, O. DeM 679, O. Gardiner 44 (HO 24,1), O. Gardiner 183, O. Gardiner 252, O. Gardiner 296, O. IFAO 548, O. IFAO 806, O. Turin N. 57248, O. Turin N. 57368, O. Wien H. 2.

14 For multi-transaction receipts mentioning the private sector funerary arts market, see O. Alan Gardiner 73, O. Berlin P 1268, O. BM EA 5633 (HO 86,1), O. BM EA 5643 (HO 85,2), O. BM EA 29555, O. Brooklyn 37.1880 E, O. Brussels E 303, O. Brussels E 6311, O. Cairo prov. No. 181, O. Cairo prov. No. 198, O. CGC 25362, O. CGC 25682, O. DeM 49, O. DeM 112, O. DeM 194, O. DeM 239, O. DeM 299, O. DeM 402, O. DeM 579, O. DeM 1086, O. Gardiner 91 (HO 59,1), O. Gardiner 133, O. Gardiner 139, O. Gardiner 146, O. Gardiner 151, O. Gardiner 157, O. Gardiner 162, O. Gardiner 204 (HO 50,1), O. Gardiner 284, O. Glasgow D. 1925.81, O. IFAO 31, O. IFAO 1017, O. IFAO 1253, O. IFAO 1261, O. Michaelides 14, O. Nash 4 (HO 62,1), O. Petrie 37 (HO 29,3), O. Petrie 42 (HO 28,4), O. Prague H. 21, O. Turin N. 57378, O. Turin N. 57480, P. Turin Cat. 1907+1908.

15 For letters mentioning the private sector funerary arts market, see O. Brussels E 305, O. Černý 19 (HO 54,4), O. DeM 129, O. DeM 246, O. DeM 418, O. Gardiner 34 (HO 20,6), O. IFAO 128, O. Strasbourg H. 174, O. Wien H. 21, P. DeM IX.

16 For official records mentioning the private sector funerary arts market, see O. BM EA 50729, O. CGC 25243, O. CGC 25296, O. CGC 25297, O. CGC 25516, O. CGC 25517, O. CGC 25519, O. CGC 25521, O. CGC 25584, O. DeM 594, O. Glasgow D. 1925.68, O. Turin N. 57388.

the crew as a daily journal of work in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens. Finally, legal texts<sup>17</sup> often include funerary objects as the subject of a dispute. Villagers commonly went before the *qnb*t court or the oracle to decide how much should be paid for a particular funerary object or to force payment from someone who had yet to give the full and promised price.

Some scholars, in particular Christopher Eyre<sup>18</sup>, claim that Deir el-Medina artisans rarely kept records of their private sector activities. According to this view, the Deir el-Medina villagers only recorded purchases. However, among the diverse texts examined here, I have found many documents that appear to function as internal workshop records – records in which artisans did record their work and document their sales. For example, O. Gardiner 136<sup>19</sup> lists the decoration of a workman named *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii):

- (1) The decoration of *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii): the *wt* '3 outer coffin of 'n making 20 (?) [*dbn*], (2) her 2 *wt šrtj* inner coffins making 16 [*dbn*], the *yjrt* funerary object of *Hwtj* making 10 [*dbn*], (3) 4 *wt* coffins of *B<sup>3</sup>k.t[-n]-Stj* making 32 [*dbn*], the 2 *swbt* mummy boards making 6 [*dbn*], (4) the *hrtj* doorjambs of the 'h't tomb making 2 [*dbn*], and the *wt* '3 outer coffin of *B<sup>3</sup>k.t[-n]-Stj* (5) [making] 5 [*dbn*]. (6) Total: 91 [*dbn*].

This text starts with the formulaic line “The painting of *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii)”, followed by a number of funerary objects, the name of their future owner, and a price for the decoration work. Many purchasers are listed, and most of them happen to be female in this document. Because the text lists a number of coffins painted by this one individual, it is most likely a workshop record kept by that artisan. This category of “workshop record” suggests that Deir el-Medina artisans did in fact track their private sector craftwork.

Other workshop records show workmen performing craftwork for fellow workmen, and here it becomes clear that these artisans were not simply performing this private sector craftwork independently, but that they were most likely part of something larger – some form of loosely organized and informal workshop. For example, O. DeM 146<sup>20</sup> states:

- (1) List of all the work which I did (2) for the deputy *Jmn-nht* (xii): (3) 2 *qnjw* seats making 30 [*dbn*], (4) wood: 1 *h'tj* bed making 20 *dbn*, (5) 1 *wt* coffin making 25 *dbn*. The excess thereof: 48 [*dbn*]. (6) Wood: 1 *twt* statue making 15 *dbn*, (7) 1 *kskstj* box making 3 *dbn*. Total 93 copper *dbn*.

The opening formula “List of all the work” is followed by a list of crafted wooden objects with simple prices in copper *dbn*. Again, this one artisan does not name himself in the text, but he is almost certainly keep-

ing track of his own craftwork, presumably for his own records. He crafts wooden objects for another artisan of some rank – in this case a deputy. Interestingly, this text provides no indication of what commodities, if any, might have made up these *dbn* amounts, indicating that the craftwork had not yet been sold. When an object changes hands, moving from a producer to a buyer, a different text type – a receipt – is drawn up, including an itemized list of the various commodities traded, commodities that equaled a certain aggregate amount of copper *dbn*. These commodities could be anything used in the village, such as sacks of grain, animals, vegetable products, or woven items. Keeping this in mind, O. DeM 146 should not be categorized as a receipt. Instead, this text lists a number of crafted items followed by simple prices in copper *dbn*; there are no commodity lists, because internal workshop records such as this one were meant only to tally the amount of craftwork performed by specific artisans. Such documents provided members of a loosely organized workshop – such as the deputy *Jmn-nht* (xii) in this text – with a record of activity.

Workshop records were not meant to track payment but to track the amount and type of craftwork performed. The leader of an informal workshop might want to document that a certain carpenter had done 15 *dbn* worth of woodworking on a specific piece, but the leader would list no commodities because the details of payment would not have become a factor until the object actually changed hands. In fact, many of the prices in the broader Deir el-Medina documentation find their sources in workshop records like this one, meant to keep track of costs and labor for the informal workshop, but not to provide a value for the piece on the consumer market. Importantly, these values recorded in workshop records may not always represent the true prices paid by the actual consumer, as the final price may have included additional profit for the artisan.

17 For legal texts mentioning the private sector funerary arts market, see O. Berlin P 12630, O. Brussels E 6311, O. CGC 25242, O. CGC 25667, O. DeM 112, O. DeM 225, O. DeM 586, O. DeM 663, O. OIM 12073 (HO 77), O. OIM 16987, O. Petrie 16 (HO 21,1), O. Petrie 18, O. Prague H. 10, P. Bulaq 10, P. DeM XXVIA+B, P. Turin Cat. 2070/154.

18 Eyre 1987b, 199.

19 The text dates to mid Dyn. XX. For publication, see Černý/Gardiner 1957, 17 pl. 60,5; KRI V, 586; Allam 1973, 179.

20 The text probably dates to late Dyn. XX. For publication, see Černý 1937a, 9 pl. 18; KRI VI, 664; Allam 1973, 101 f.; McDowell 1999, 80.

On the other hand, receipts served a very different function for the Deir el-Medina craftsmen and for the customers who purchased goods from them, documenting the trade after an object left the artisan's hands. Receipts include a list of the specific commodities given in payment for one or more objects. For example, the *verso* of O. DeM 73<sup>21</sup> includes a simple receipt documenting the exchange of 1 *wt* coffin for a number of commodities, including a pig, some sheep, and some un-worked wood, representing a total value of 25½ *dbn*:

- (1) What was given to him in exchange for the *wt* coffin: (2) 8½ copper *dbn*, also 5 copper *dbn*, (3) 1 pig making 5 *dbn*, 1 sheep/goat making 3 *dbn*, 1 sheep/goat making 2 *dbn*, [and] (4) 2 [pieces of] *nh*<sup>3</sup> sycamore wood making 2 *dbn*. Total: 25½ *dbn*.

Similarly, O. Brooklyn 37.1880 E<sup>22</sup> falls into the multi-transaction receipt category and contains a very complicated exchange:

- recto*: (1) The workman *Jmn[-m]-jp.t* to the carpenter *Mry-R'* (v)/(vi) (2) in exchange for the *h'tj* bed: 20 [pieces of] tamarisk wood, 1 [piece of] *mnq* wood, (3) 1 *kbs* basket with 2 *jpt* [of grain] making 1 *h'ir* and 3 bundles of vegetables. (4) What was given to him: 1 sheep/goat making 1 *h'ir*. What was given to him for his *h'nw* hut: (5) 5 bundles of vegetables. What was given to (?) his mother saying, "Cause the completion [of the total price]": (6) 2 [pieces of] clothing of green (*w'ds*) and *h'w* (?). What was given to him: 1 *mrht* sieve and (7) 1 *h'nw* of sesame oil making 1 (?) *h'ir* of emmer wheat. (8) What was given for his *h'tj* bed: 5 [pieces of] wood. What was given to him: (9) also from *P'-hry-pdt*, 5 [pieces of] wood and (10) 1 [piece of] *nh*<sup>3</sup> sycamore wood making 1 copper *dbn* (?), (11) as well as 1 [piece of] *mnq* wood, total 12 [pieces]. *verso*: (1) What was given to him<sup>23</sup> for the 2 *twt* statues of Seth: (2) ½ *h'ir* of barley, 3 bundles of vegetables, 1 item of fowl, (3) 1 *mnqm* + 1 *nqr* sieve. Total: 2 [*dbn*]. (4) *mnq* wood: And I went down to the riverbank and I caused that it was brought, (5) and I [caused that] the carpenter *S'-W'd.t* see it, and he (6) said, "It is good for a *h'ir* of barley". I gave it to his (7) father, and he did 1 month of days with it.<sup>24</sup> (8) What was given to him in exchange for the *hnty jmntt* (?): (9) 3 bundles of vegetables. What was given to him in exchange for (10) the small *hdmw* footstool: 3 bundles of vegetables.

In this text, all of the commodities exchanged as payment for a bed – including unworked pieces of wood, basketry, vegetables, and grain are listed in the first three lines of the *recto*. Then, in line 4, a counter exchange is recorded, and we read *rdyt n.f*<sup>25</sup> "What was given to him"

followed by a sheep worth 1 sack of grain. We have no real idea who "him" refers to – perhaps the buyer of the bed *Jmn-m-jp.t*? Or is it the seller *Mry-R'* (v)/(vi)? Receipts, and especially multi-transaction receipts like this one, are often ambiguous and complex in some respects, but they always carefully list the many objects given in exchange for grave goods or any other crafted object, thus providing a means of tallying what each party has given the other.

Crafted goods were also mentioned in letters and official texts at Western Thebes, but to understand these texts, a discussion of the artisans themselves is necessary. Traditionally in Deir el-Medina scholarship, the roles of village artisans have been defined and examined only within the context of attachment to the royal workshop.<sup>25</sup> However, by reexamining the artisanal titles of the craftsmen as they relate to additional functions in private sector craft production, it becomes evident that the organizational system is much more complex than has been previously assumed.

In private fiscal documents, the title of an artisan usually corresponded to the type of work the man performed, and in most cases, the title that he used in private fiscal texts was the same title he used as a member of the official work crew. So, it follows that in the textual material, painting and decoration is almost always done by men titled *s'-qd*, "draftsman", or *s'*, "scribe".<sup>26</sup> Sometimes we see a *rm-t-jst*, or "workman", painting funerary objects too,<sup>27</sup> but a man with this title could also work on

- 21 The text dates to year 20 of the reign of Ramses III, Dyn. XX. For publication, see Černý 1937a, 20 pl. 50; KRI V, 472 f.; Allam 1973, 88 f.; Helck 1963, Teil 3, 499.
- 22 This text probably dates to late Dyn. XIX. For publication, see KRI VII, 310 f.; McDowell 1999, 84 f.
- 23 The carpenter *Mry-R'* (v)/(vi).
- 24 Perhaps this means that he worked with the wood for this period of time.
- 25 Černý 1973a; Davies 1999; Keller 1981; Keller 1991; Bogoslovsky 1980.
- 26 For draftsmen active doing painting work in the private sector funerary market, see O. Berlin P 14222, O. Berlin P 14256, O. CGC 25362, O. DeM 49, O. DeM 215, O. DeM 233, O. DeM 553, O. DeM 594, O. DeM 679, O. Gardiner 133, O. Gardiner 151, O. Michaelides 13, O. Michaelides 14, O. Prague H. 10, O. Varille 4, P. Turin Giornale 17B. For scribes, although not necessarily "scribes of the tomb" doing painting work in the private sector, see O. DeM 225, O. Turin N. 57368, O. Turin N. 57387. The new transliteration of *zh'* or *sh'* for "scribe" is not chosen here, so as to be consistent with Deir el-Medina scholarship and its terms.
- 27 For workmen active performing decoration work in the private sector funerary art market, see O. Berlin P 12343, O. Gardiner 134, O. Gardiner 136, O. DeM 198, O. Strasbourg H. 84.



carpentry projects.<sup>28</sup> The title *rmt-jst*, or “man of the crew”, is of course very general. It would seem to mark a workman of lower rank among his peers, one who had not yet earned a specialization and the title of *sš-qd*, or “draftsman”. At the pharaoh’s tomb, he was probably still made to do some of the unwanted tasks that draftsmen could avoid. In the private sector, the texts indicate that he executed both painting and carpentry.

With the title *hmuw*, the situation becomes much more complicated. The title is translated generally as “craftsman”, but during the Ramesside period it takes on the more specific meaning of “carpenter”. The title *hmuw* is entirely absent in the official records of crew members,<sup>29</sup> and appears only rarely in the official journal of work for pharaoh’s tomb. This title *hmuw* actually finds its context in fiscal texts from the private sector. Simply put, many men dropped their official title *rmt-jst*, or “workman”, instead adopting the unofficial title *hmuw*, or “carpenter”, for their work in the private sector. This suggests that the title *hmuw*, or “carpenter”, must have been more useful than the title *rmt-jst*, or “man of the crew”, in finding work, building a reputation, and thus attracting customers in the private sector. Circumstantially, this situation probably indicates that titles connected with a specific craft specialization were a sign of higher status, better reputation, and greater experience. If a man of the crew wanted to be profitable in the private sector, he would need to take on a specialization. He could not simply claim to be a draftsman – this was an official title of the work crew, and most likely only conferred in official capacity. Thus he could claim merely to be a carpenter, a title not actually associated with the official crew.

In the Deir el-Medina documents, a man with the title *hmuw* constructs and carves objects of wood; he is almost never recorded as painting. In fact, only one text – P. DeM IX<sup>30</sup> of the late Twentieth Dynasty – records a carpenter performing the work of a draftsman:

(1) [Chief] carpenter of the Lord of the Two Lands *M<sup>33</sup>-nht.w=f*(iii) to the scribe *Jmn-ms* (2) of the vizier. To the effect that: I wish to hear of your condition a thousand times a day (3) [because] you did not come in the year. (4) Look, I am painting the *wt* (5) *šrj* inner coffin together with the *wšt* mask.<sup>31</sup> The incense (6) which you brought has decreased greatly. (7) Please may you have incense, *mny* pistacia pitch,<sup>32</sup> and *mnh* wax sent (8) so that I may varnish. When ‘*i-nht.w* (i)/(iv)/(v)? (unfinished)

In this letter, the well-known “Chief Carpenter of the Lord of the Two Lands” *M<sup>33</sup>-nht.w=f*(iii), informs a superior, in this case the scribe of the vizier, that he is painting and varnishing a coffin. It is of great interest that the Chief Carpenter *M<sup>33</sup>-nht.w=f*(iii) is communicating with the scribe of the vizier about private sector

craftwork. Circumstantially, this connection indicates that this highly placed scribe was active in the informal workshop as well. Again, *M<sup>33</sup>-nht.w=f*s (iii) title “Chief Carpenter of the Two Lands” was not associated with the official crew. When *M<sup>33</sup>-nht.w=f* (iii) worked in the crew, he was only a *rmt-jst*, a normal workman. But in the private sector he took on the rather impressive title of “Chief Carpenter of the Two Lands”. Did he grant himself this title to bolster his reputation in the private sector? Was it given to him by superiors in an informal workshop? The texts do not address these details of title conferral, but it is true that *M<sup>33</sup>-nht.w=f*(iii) is the only documented *hmuw*, or “carpenter”, said to be painting anything in the private sector funerary craft market of Deir el-Medina.

The opposite also seems true: a scribe or draftsman is never documented in the West Theban Ramesside textual material as specifically having done carpentry-work.<sup>33</sup> This is not to imply that some Deir el-Medina craftsmen were unable to produce entire coffins from start to finish, just that they usually did not. In fact, the texts provide circumstantial evidence that artisans did not work alone in crafting one piece from start to finish. For example, in O. Berlin P 12343<sup>34</sup>, a workshop record, the workman named *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii), who is also mentioned in O. Gardiner 136 above, does both carpentry and painting-work, but he seems to perform this craftwork in the context of what I call the “informal workshop”:

*recto*: (1) The decoration work which is from the workman *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii): the *yjt* funerary object (2) of *Mwt[-...]* making 12 *dbn*, the *mn-‘nh* outer coffin of ‘*n* making 20 *dbn*, (3) the *wt šrj* inner coffin of ‘*n* making 10 *dbn*. One gave to the builder *P<sup>3</sup>-‘i-m-jn.t*: also (4) doing for her another making 10 *dbn*. The *wt* coffin that he gave in exchange for the *d<sup>3</sup>yt* cloak in town<sup>35</sup>

28 For workmen active doing carpentry work, see O. Berlin P 10643, O. BM EA 50729, O. Glasgow D. 1925.68.

29 Černý 1973a; Davies 1999.

30 This text dates mid to late Dyn. XX. For publication see Černý 1978, 21 f. pl. 25; KRI VI, 672; Wente 1990, 168 f.

31 For the possible identification of the *wšt* funerary object with the mummy mask, see Cooney 2003, 34–36.

32 This word *mny* has been linked to black varnish, more specifically to pistacia pitch. Serpico/White 2001, 36 f.

33 Only in two texts – O. Turin N. 57368 and P. Turin Giornale 17B – is it suggested that a scribe constructed a coffin from start to finish, but only because that scribe sells complete objects. He may have sold them, but it is in no way clear how much of the work he actually did.

34 This text dates to mid Dyn. XX. For publication see KRI VI, 164 f.; HPB III, pl. 34.

35 *m njwt*, “in Thebes”. See McDowell 1999, 82.

making 10 *dbn*, (5) its *swbt* mummy board making 4 *dbn*, the 2 decorated *sb*<sup>3</sup> doors of the *st-qrs* burial place making 6 *dbn*, (6) [...] 2 *wt* coffins and the *swbt* mummy board of *B<sup>3</sup>k.t[-n]-Stj* making 24 *dbn*. (7) [...] 2 [...] (8) [...] which is [the one there] [...] (9) the man of [...] killed (10) 92 [making] 30 *dbn*.

*verso*: (1) The carpentry work which the workman *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii) gave to (2) the [drafts]man *Hrj-šrj* (i): wood: 1 plastered *dbt* box making 8 *dbn*, 1 *'fdt* box making 2 *dbn*, 1 *wt* coffin (3) making 15 *dbn*, and the wood belongs to me [...]. (4) Wood: 1 small *h<sup>4</sup>tj* bed making 15 *dbn*, and the wood belongs to me. Wood: 1 *h<sup>4</sup>tj* bed making 20 *dbn*, and the wood belongs to me, but the ebony belongs to me from his son (5) *Nb-nfr* (x). Wood: 1 *t<sup>3</sup>y* container making 2 *dbn*. From him: 1 *wt* coffin. Wood: 1 *m<sup>3</sup>wđ* carrying pole (?) making [...] of barley. (6) 1 [braided *kskst* basket (?) making 4 (?) *dbn*, while it belongs to me as regards [the wood], the *wt* coffin [...] (7) Total 52 [*dbn*].

This workshop record records the workman *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii) performing both painting and carpentry. On the *recto* he paints a number of objects, and on the *verso* he provides carpentry-work specifically for the draftsman *Hrj-šrj* (i). Most importantly, this workshop record does not document *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr*'s (vii) carpentry and painting-work on the *same* objects from start to finish, but rather his decoration work *or* carpentry-work on different objects. Why would a workman engage in piece-meal work such as this unless he was operating in the context of something larger – in a loosely organized cooperation of some kind? In the carpentry exchange on the *verso*, it seems that the draftsman *Hrj-šrj* (i) even provides a portion of wood to the workman *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii) for the construction of objects without any cost to the workman personally, providing even more circumstantial evidence that the informal workshop may have carried the costs of materials collectively. In the text on the *verso*, the draftsman *Hrj-šrj* (i) demands only labor and skill from *B<sup>3</sup>k-n-wrnr* (vii), who is therefore not required to provide any capital for materials. This text is just one of many<sup>36</sup> that suggest it was unusual for a craftsman to create funerary objects from start to finish, even when individuals were certainly capable of it, because they were part of something larger – *the informal workshop*, a collective group of artisans that functioned in the private sector of the Western Theban funerary arts market, providing a variety of skills as well as capital for materials.

Several texts from Western Thebes do seem to suggest the opposite – that coffins could be made by only one craftsman. However these texts must be carefully exam-

ined according to their text type to truly understand their purpose. For example, O. DeM 553<sup>37</sup> reads:

(1) [...] What was given to the draftsman *Jmn-nbt* (v) in exchange for the *wt* '3 outer coffin: (2) a smooth *ms* shirt making 1 *snju*, (3) 1 *h<sup>3</sup>r* of emmer wheat and 4 *tm<sup>3</sup>* mats making 1 *snju*, (4) wood: 1 *sb<sup>3</sup>* door frame making 1 *snju*, (5) 1 *sdr-tm<sup>3</sup>* sleeping pallet, (6) 3 *h<sup>3</sup>w* fat making 1 *snju*. (7) Total: 5 *snju*, having come to completion. (8) What was given to him for (9) a *jsbt* folding stool of a woman making 1 *snju*: (10) 2 [*dbn*]. That which is with him in surplus, (11) 1 *t<sup>3</sup>y* container making 1 *snju*, (12) and 1 *kbs* basket [making] 1 *h<sup>3</sup>r* (?).

The opening formula of this text is followed by a list of commodities that were given in exchange for an outer coffin, totaling 5 *snju*, which is the silver equivalent of about 25 copper *dbn*. The 25 *dbn* that the draftsman trades for this piece is about 15 *dbn* lower than the average price for an outer coffin.<sup>38</sup> It might appear that the draftsman mentioned in the text completed all of the work himself, but this text is a receipt, which includes the necessary list of commodities, not a workshop record, which details how craft labor was organized. Nowhere does the draftsman *Jmn-nbt* (v) state that he actually performed the work, as might appear in a workshop record; he only records the sale of the entire outer coffin for a particular price. At first glance, it may seem that this draftsman *Jmn-nbt* (v) did perform all of the craft labor on the coffin; he *is* the one selling it. However, this man is also a draftsman, and as already stated, no texts among a corpus of over 200 definitively support the possibility of a draftsman doing carpentry work. It remains quite possible that this draftsman was responsible for the painting of the coffin, but one cannot infer that he also constructed it.

36 For example, 12 workshop records document the decoration only of *wt* coffins, providing indirect evidence that other individuals constructed these objects. See O. Berlin P 11260 rto., O. Berlin P 12343 rto., O. Černý 20 rto., O. Gardiner 105, O. Gardiner 119, O. Gardiner 134 rto., O. Gardiner 136, O. Gardiner 151 vso., O. Gardiner 190 vso., O. Lady Franklyn. Other workshop records point to artisans performing only carving work on the *wt* coffin (O. Gardiner 105 rto., O. IFAO 1017 rto., O. Petrie 17). The same separation of labor exists for the outer coffin, inner coffin, mummy board, and other funerary objects.

37 The text dates to Dyn. XX, perhaps in the early reign of Ramses III. For publication see Sauneron 1959, 2 pl. 2; KRI V, 658 f.; Allam 1973, 127 f.

38 The average of all known *wt* '3/*mn*-*nh* outer coffin prices is 37.5 *dbn*. The average of all secure prices for the outer coffin is 40.8 *dbn*.

On the whole, the Ramesside documentation from Western Thebes suggests a situation in which craftsmen pooled their skills to collectively complete crafted funerary goods and domestic furniture. Under such a system, their specialization occurs in the setting of what I call an informal workshop. The documentation provides more contextual and circumstantial evidence for such an organization of craftwork within the community than it does for artisans working alone. Nonetheless, even if these workmen pooled their abilities, the informal workshop would not have been a traditional atelier consisting of craftsmen located in a centralized location and organized in a formal hierarchical manner. That is, the informal workshop does not represent any actual place where artisans of different specializations and skill levels came together to craft funerary art. The formal workshop – with its strict organization into two sides of the crew, each side with draftsmen, a scribe of the tomb, and a chief workman – was the setting of art production for the king. Private sector work, however, functioned within different, less controlled, and therefore more complex, variable, and looser organizational structures. When state employed artisans were not working for the king, in their spare time, however much they may have had of it,<sup>39</sup> they still combined their talents, but much more informally. These craftsmen were not required to labor together in the same location, but they did need to combine their resources of materials, skill, reputation, access, and social connections.

Of course, it might be expected that these craftsmen retained a good deal of the formal social hierarchy employed in the state workshop setting in the Valley of the Kings, even when laboring in the private sector. Therefore, it should not be surprising that many texts suggest that crew leaders – especially scribes of the tomb – were the individuals contacted by wealthy Theban families to broker important and lucrative commissions,<sup>40</sup> and who then doled out tasks to fellow crew members. It also should not be unexpected that leaders of the official Deir el-Medina work crew – including scribes of the tomb – occur in the same texts and in the same transactions in which the most expensive funerary objects are recorded. Their status in the official crew provided them with leadership roles and social connections that were of great benefit to private sector production. This tendency for highly ranked Deir el-Medina officials to take a leading role in the informal workshop does not mean that the official hierarchy was rigidly followed in private sector craft specialization. The textual records clearly indicate that it was not; this is another reason why I have called this workshop “informal”. In fact, many draftsmen and carpenters seem to have obtained commissions without any help from scribes of the tomb or crew leaders.<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless, some texts hint that commissions for private sector craftwork could be delegated to fellow

crewmembers by superiors. For example, on the reverse of O. DeM 240<sup>42</sup> we read:

(1) Their commissions (*wꜣꜣꜣ*) which are in the hand of the draftsman *P<sup>3</sup>/jy* (i). (2) Giving one to *P<sup>3</sup>-m-bb* [...] (3) Giving one in order to bring *P<sup>3</sup>-t<sup>3</sup>r-bw*: 2 (?) (4) [...] (5) Total which are in the hand of the draftsman *P<sup>3</sup>/jy* (i): 4.

Because the text is so broken, there are many problems with the translation. Nonetheless, it may record the doling out of commissions – work to be done – by a draftsman to various workmen, presumably in the context of an informal workshop.

Another text, O. Michaelides 33 rto. (= O. LACMA M. 80.203.191)<sup>43</sup> mentions the scribe of the tomb *Hrj* and “the commissions of the carpenters” (*n<sup>3</sup> wꜣꜣꜣ hmww*) that were perhaps meant for “the riverbank” (*r mryt*). Because objects are being sent to the riverbank,<sup>44</sup> a known market place, this text may even suggest tangentially that the informal workshop could sell un-commissioned objects to unknown purchasers, on an open, private sector market. O. Michaelides 33 is actually part of an official journal of the royal tomb. Despite the fact that *hmww* carpenters had absolutely no place in the official crew, here they appear as entries in an official journal of the royal tomb. This suggests private sector craftwork created with official organization, and, if Jaroslav Černý’s reading is correct, the products are destined for a well-known marketplace. Such production for strangers on the open market can be a possible reading in only a few texts, indicated by the delivery of objects to the *mryt*

39 For example, Christopher Eyre has estimated that only two-thirds of the workday were occupied with labor in royal tombs: Eyre 1987b, 176.

40 For example, see the receipt O. Turin N. 57368 where the scribe of the tomb *Hrj* sells expensive coffin pieces as well as P. Turin Giornale 17B, an informal workshop record found in the tomb journal, where the scribe of the tomb *Hrj-šrj* (i) seems to be responsible for putting together a complex craft commission involving three craftsmen and a number of very expensive coffins for the Chantress of Amen *T<sup>3</sup>-ndm.t*.

41 For example, see O. CGC 25362 in which the draftsman *Jmn-hꜣꜣ* sold and perhaps decorated *wꜣ* coffin(s) worth 25 *dbn*. Also see O. Berlin P 12343, already mentioned above, in which the draftsman *Hrj-šrj* (i) purchased carpentry-work from a workman, having provided the wood.

42 The text dates to the reign of Ramses II, Dyn. XIX. For publication, see Černý 1935b, 13 pl. 23–24; KRI III, 570 f.

43 For publication of this text, see Goedicke/Wente 1962, pl. 67. Jaroslav Černý mistakenly refers to this ostrakon as O. Michaelides 24, but he corrects the transcription by Goedicke/Wente 1962, reading *mryt* in line 11. Černý 1973a, 96 n. 6. The text is now owned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and has the accession number M. 80.203.191.

44 For two *wꜣ* coffins that are sent to the riverbank, see O. Michaelides 13 rto. 3–4, now O. LACMA M. 80.203.193.

– the “riverbank” – or to the *njw* – the “town”, “Thebes” and “the East Bank”.<sup>45</sup> Because this activity appears in a tomb journal, the text implies, first, that Deir el-Medina artisans could work on private commissions at their daily place of official work, and second, that the official work hierarchy must have affected the informal workshop system. The context of this craftwork, controlled by a superior and doled out to a number of underling carpenters, does imply the possibility of coercion in the informal workshop, an issue that will be addressed below.

Examination of the records provides for a hypothetical reconstruction of the actual steps of production, from raw materials to finished products within this informal workshop. When a private individual sought to order a coffin from a craftsman, the first necessary acquisition was wood. In fact, many commissions began with a delivery of wood by the purchaser. Wood appears in a huge number of texts, so it does not seem to have been in short supply, even in this desert community. The most common varieties were acacia and sycamore,<sup>46</sup> and wood for a normal anthropoid coffin usually cost about 5 copper *dbn*<sup>47</sup> – which I’ve determined elsewhere was roughly 16–17% of the average total price for the coffin.<sup>48</sup> The *recto* of O. Turin N. 57040<sup>49</sup> documents just such a delivery of wood by the person wishing to order a coffin.

(1) Year 22 (?), month 3 of *pwt*, day 10. (2) That which was brought by the policeman *Pn-jw-m-jtrw*: (3) wood: 2 large pieces of *nh*’ sycamore wood for *Nfr-htp*, while saying, “Cause [that one make] (4) for me a *wt* coffin”. Also the delivery by *Pn-jw-m-jtrw* of *sw*’*d* [...] (5) *Mry-R*’ (v)?, while he gave 2 *jpt* [...] to the [...] (6) 1 *h*’*r* and 2 *jpt* from him. Year 23 [...]

In this text, the policeman *Pn-jw-m-jtrw* brought wood to a craftsman named *Nfr-htp* so that the artisan would create a coffin for him. Therefore, in this case, the commission of the piece was initiated by the delivery of wood by the purchaser.

The next step in the workshop process involved the actual construction of the coffin from these raw materials. It has already been established that carpentry was done by men who used the titles *hmuw* “carpenter” or *rmt-jst* “workman”. Many of these men kept records of their craft activity and sales in workshop records and receipts. They probably worked alone in their homes in the village or in their *t* huts in the hills above the Valley of the Kings.<sup>50</sup> Additional labor may have been provided by their sons, who they would naturally be training. O. Berlin P 12405<sup>51</sup> is such a record kept by a carpenter:

*recto*: (1) List of all that which the herdsman *Jrj-nfr* gave to (2) the [carpenter] *P*’-*sny-ndm* (i): (3) 1 female donkey making 40 *dbn*, 1 ox making

30 *dbn*, and 3 copper *dbn*. Total copper 73 (4) in exchange for his *wt* coffins: the *wt* coffin of *h*’*wtw* (?) [making ...], and 1 *swht* mummy board making 30 *dbn*. (5) List of all that which the policeman *Jmn-htp* gave to the carpenter *P*’-*sny-ndm* (i) in exchange: (6) 4 *h*’*r* barley as barley making 8 *dbn*, 1 *h*’*r* of emmer wheat making 2 *dbn*, 1 pig making 7 *dbn*, (7) [...] making 4 [...] in exchange for the sycamore wood, 5 *dbn* [...] *verso*: (1) List of all that which the carpenter *P*’-*sny-ndm* (i) gave to the herdsman: (2) 2 *h*’*tj* beds

45 For a *wt* coffin traded for a *d*’*yt* cloak in “town”, see O. Berlin P 12343 vso. 4. Also see the letter P. DeM XI vso. 3 for the sale of a *h*’*tj* bed in the town.

46 West Theban texts of the Ramesside Period rarely mention different types of wood in reference to coffins, unless they are of very high value. O. Turin N. 57368 rto. 2–3 mentions an expensive coffin built of tamarisk (*jsy*), an expensive native wood. O. Berlin P 14366, 1–5 records that an expensive coffin is built of Christ’s Thorn (*nbsj*) wood. O. Lady Franklyn, 2 mentions an expensive outer coffin made of *psdt* wood. Of the known Ramesside coffins preserved in the archaeological record, tamarisk was definitively found in only one place – in the inner coffin of the high value set of *Hnw.t-mhyt* in the British Museum. The vast majority of Ramesside coffins were built of common local woods, in particular acacia and sycamore.

47 Prices for wood are preserved in the following texts: O. Berlin P 10643 vso. 1–2, O. Cairo {181}, 3, O. DeM 49 rto. 2, O. Gardiner 146, 10–11, O. Petrie 42 (HO 28,4) rto. 2, O. Varille 4 rto. 4. The average price for wood is 4.4 *dbn*. The average of all secure prices is 5 *dbn*. For this price information see Cooney 2003, 210.

48 The average price of the complete *wt* coffin is 31.57 *dbn*. Separate prices for *wt* decoration alone are 10.5 *dbn* on average. Simple subtraction reveals that the rest of the cost is an average of 21.07 *dbn*. When the cost of wood (4.4 *dbn* average) is subtracted from this number, it leaves an average of 16.67 *dbn* for the economic value of labor for construction. Cooney 2003, 221.

49 This text dates to year 22 of Ramses III, Dyn. XX. For publication, see López 1978, 54 pl. 87.

50 O. CGC 25260 provides a possible place of purchase for funerary arts – in this case, the stairwell or roof of a *t* hut, perhaps referring to one of the small dwellings in the hills where the artisans lived during the work week. Jac. Janssen mentions a number of texts (O. Alan Gardiner 32 vso. 7, O. CGC 25506, 10, O. CGC 25513, 6, O. CGC 25519 vso. 22, O. CGC 25523, 6–7, O. CGC 25526, II, 4, O. CGC 25781, 2–8, O. Gardiner 37 [HO 26,3] vso. 6, O. Turin N. 57030, 3, O. Turin N. 57056, 5, O. Varille 6, 6) that record a common but vague reason for an absence from work with the official crew, including that of *m* *t*’*y*’*f*’*t*, or “in his hut”. Janssen 1980, 150. It is quite possible that during such absences, men were not ill, because they would have been described as *mr*, but are instead in their huts active in craftwork for the private market. In fact, the distance of these huts from the village may have necessitated the many letters asking that materials be sent for craftwork, such as P. DeM IX, O. Brussels E 305, O. DeM 129, O. DeM 418.

51 The text dates to late Dyn. XX. The text is unpublished. Translation after Černý, notebooks.

making 7 [dbn], (3) 1 *kh*[...] object (?) making 1 [dbn], (4) 6 *mdqt* containers of beer making 6 copper *dbn*.

The title of *P<sup>3</sup>-sny-ndm* (i) is lost in this text, but the name is unusual enough that “carpenter” can be restored with some confidence.<sup>52</sup> The text is partly a receipt and partly a workshop record. It records numerous sales, all involving the carpenter *P<sup>3</sup>-sny-ndm* (i), and it therefore follows that the text belonged to him as a record of his craft activity. In this text, O. Berlin P 12405, he also includes lists of commodities, suggesting that he occasionally sold his carpentry work directly, perhaps to the patron, rather than handing it off to another member of the informal workshop. In the end, this carpenter receives a large amount of wealth, in the form of animals and actual copper, in exchange for a set of *wt* anthropoid coffins and a mummy board. The names of the recipients of the work were also recorded, the chief one being the herdsman *Jrj-nfr*, who is providing payment.

After construction, the next step in the coffin production process was decoration, and this skill was a particular specialization of Deir el-Medina craftsman. Because prices and records for *painting* and *decoration* are much more numerous than those documenting carpentry and construction,<sup>53</sup> the Ramesside textual documentation makes it quite clear that Deir el-Medina craftsmen excelled in this niche of funerary art production. This specialization implies circumstantially that many funerary objects were initially built at other locations, by other craftsmen with other state workshop associations. The West Theban textual archive is highly problematic and cannot be used to build effective models of craftwork in the entire region, given that the vast majority of texts are intimately connected solely with the artisans’ village of Deir el-Medina. Unfortunately there are no other craft archives that can be examined for comparison. We have only the mention, in Deir el-Medina texts, of other workshops at temple locations in the inundation lands.<sup>54</sup> Given these references to other workshops in the archive and considering the high concentration of decoration work among Deir el-Medina villagers, one could argue that other workshops at temples in inundation lands would have been better located for access to the raw materials and large planks of wood, as opposed to the remote desert site of Deir el-Medina, leading to a different but complementary specialization in these other villages.

If it is documented that Deir el-Medina artisans acquired most of their extra income by selling their painting skills, what of their pigment sources? Up to now, it has been assumed by Egyptologists such as Evgeni Bogoslovsky<sup>55</sup> and Leonard Lesko<sup>56</sup> that craftsmen simply dipped into the official supply of pigments provided by the vizier – ostensibly the same pigments meant for the tombs of the king and his family. It is quite possible that

they were able to use *some* of these pigments for private sector purposes, but one might also imagine that craftsmen could not just take whatever they needed for private sector craft production, given the record keeping associated with pigment supply and use. In opposition to traditional views, I argue that the Deir el-Medina artisans’ pigment supply was not a matter of unrestricted state stores, but rather ease of access: their state work provided them with the best possible avenues to commercial pigment supplies. In fact, more than a few texts,<sup>57</sup> including O. DeM 183<sup>58</sup>, make it quite clear that draftsmen sometimes had to purchase pigments:

(1) What the workman *Jmn-m-jp.t* (x)? gave to the draftsman [...]: (2) 1 sheep/goat making 2 *h<sup>3</sup>r*, (3) the weaving of a *d<sup>3</sup>ju* garment, making 2 *h<sup>3</sup>r*, (4) 1 pair of sandals making 1 *h<sup>3</sup>r*, 2 *hnu* of *qmj* gum, (5) the *sdr* sleeping pallet of *jrw* wood (?) and its 1 *tm<sup>3</sup>* mat making 2 *jpt*, (6) 10 *dbn* of *br* pigment, 1 *hnu* of *sty* ochreous pigments for work (?) (7) [...] *Jmn-m-jp.t* (x)? 2 *tm<sup>3</sup>* mats making 2 *jpt*.

Line 4 of this text mentions gum – resinous material used to bind the pigments and make paint. In line 6, the draftsman buys soft, naturally occurring pigments,

52 Janssen 1975, 26; Davies 1999, 231.

53 For example, there are 37 prices for *wt* coffin decoration, compared to only 6 prices for *wt* coffin construction. Similarly, there are 8 prices for *wt<sup>3</sup>* outer coffin decoration and only 1 for construction. The documentation preserves 6 prices for *wt šrj* inner coffin decoration, compared to only 1 for construction of an inner coffin. There are 17 prices for the *swbt* mummy board decoration, versus only 1 price for *swbt* construction. See Cooney 2003, 206–217.

54 For example, two texts provide evidence for the purchase of crafted funerary objects from other workshops outside of Deir el-Medina by village artisans; namely O. Černý 19, a letter dealing with the purchase of heart amulets, presumably of faience from a faience workshop; and O. DeM 246, a letter in which stela decoration seems to have been ordered from a separate workshop. The non-Deir el-Medina title of one particular contributing craftsmen in P. Turin Giornale 17B – Scribe of the House of the Divine Adoratrice of Amen – may indicate that when high-quality funerary goods were ordered for high-status individuals, more than one state workshop could be involved in an informal network of production throughout the West Bank Theban area.

55 Bogoslovsky 1980, 101.

56 Lesko 1994a, 12.

57 For the private purchase of paints and pigments, see O. DeM 183, 6, O. DeM 198 rto. col. II, 3, O. Gardiner 134 vso. 3, O. Liverpool 13626, O. Michaelides 13 vso. 6, O. Nims vso. 6, O. Strasbourg H. 41, 1–9, O. Wien H. 3, 2, P. Turin Giornale 17B vso. 31. O. Černý 19 and P. DeM IX are letters asking that varnishing materials be sent.

58 The text dates to the reigns of Ramses III or IV, Dyn. XX. For publication, see Černý 1937a, 21 pl. 51; Allam 1973, 102; KRI VI, 166.

such as red and yellow ochres. This draftsman obviously had to trade commodities in order to have pigments on hand for private sector craft projects.

If a draftsman has access to pigments, it follows that he would wish to acquire craft objects – which he probably did not construct himself – to paint. The Ramesseid West Theban documentation indicates that draftsmen often set up symbiotic relationships with carpenters. This draftsman-carpenter relationship is yet another facet of the informal workshop function. In several texts, we see the exchange of a carpenter's unpainted wooden items for a draftsman's decoration.<sup>59</sup> How these men were actually paid for their work is not completely clear, but circumstantial evidence in the form of receipts suggests that both the carpenter and the draftsman would receive payment for their work later when the items were sold to their final owners.

The *recto* of O. Berlin P 11260<sup>60</sup> represents exactly such a trade between carpenter and draftsman:

(1) [List of the] decoration which *Hr-Mnw* (i) did for *Q<sup>3</sup>h<sup>7</sup>* (iii)/(iv)/(v)?: (2) [1 *wt* coffin?]<sup>61</sup>, its *swht* mummy board, inside of it the head of wood (3) From *Q<sup>3</sup>h<sup>7</sup>* (iii)/(iv)/(v)?: 1 *qnjw* seat and 1 *hdmw rduwy* footstool making 13 *dbn*, (4) 1 [*ʿfjdt* box making 1 *dbn*, (5) 1 *šqr* furniture object making 2 *dbn*, (6) 1 *bs* wooden container making 3 *dbn*, (7) That which is from him, namely the work of the *htrj* doorjambs of its lintel (8) making 4 *dbn*, wood: 1 *t<sup>3</sup>ty* wooden object making [...] barley (9) and 2 *jpt* of emmer wheat.

Lines 1–2 of O. Berlin P 11260, record a draftsman named *Hr-Mnw* (i) as having done decoration work for a man named *Q<sup>3</sup>h<sup>7</sup>* (iii)/(iv)/(v)?, who performs carpentry work in exchange, in lines 3–6. They have therefore set up and documented the perfect symbiotic relationship, functioning within the context of an informal workshop. These craftsmen did not work together in the same space, but they pooled their unique skills to effectively create an extra income in the private sector.

Other texts document only the painting work of one scribe or draftsman, with no indication of a trade. The *recto* of O. Černý 20<sup>62</sup> is a good example of such a document recording one man's craftwork:

(1) 2 *dbn*, 1 painted *wt* coffin making 10 *dbn*. *ʿny-nht* (i): (2) 2 *dbn*. My wood: 2 *dbn*. Total copper: 18 [*dbn*]. (3) The painting of this *pnqt* (?)<sup>63</sup> *ytjt* funerary object making 10 [*dbn*] in order to give to me 1 *tbt* box making 8 [*dbn*]. (4) The painting which is the *db<sup>3</sup>t* sarcophagus of *Rš-ptr=f* (i): in order to give to me 1 *d<sup>3</sup>ju* garment making 19 [*dbn*]. (5) 1 *jfd* sheet making 10 [*dbn*], 2 *mss* shirts make 10 [*dbn*], [blank] 1, 2 *dbn*. Total copper: 41 [*dbn*]. (6) *Nb-nht*: 1 door jamb of stone [making] (7) 5 [*dbn*], 5 *hmy*

food objects. Its remainder being [...] *M<sup>33</sup>-nht*. *w=f* (iii). (8) 1 painted *wt* coffin making 10 [*dbn*], 1 *ytjt* funerary object making 10 [*dbn*], 1 *bry-mrb* tomb equipment object [making] 2 [*dbn*]. (9) Received: 1 *mss* shirt making 5 [*dbn*], 2 [pieces of] copper, (10) this stone *htrj* doorjamb [making] 5 [*dbn*], 2 rolls of papyrus [making] 4 *dbn*. (11) Total 10 [+ 6 ...]. Remainder of copper: 5 *dbn*. Received from *ʿ<sup>3</sup>p<sup>3</sup>-t<sup>3</sup>w* [...] (i)/(ii)?: (12) 1 *škr* basket, 2 *dbn* ...

This is a complicated text including a number of crafted items, many of them followed by a personal name, presumably of the future owner, and a price in either copper *dbn* alone – to indicate how much the decoration work was worth to the unnamed draftsman – or with a list of commodities, to document how much he was actually paid upon its sale. This text seems to fall into the category of workshop record, because this unnamed draftsman appears to be keeping track of his own commissions, but it also fulfills some of the functions of a receipt. In lines 4–5, there is mention of a *db<sup>3</sup>t* sarcophagus – the rectangular object into which the anthropoid coffins were placed. The draftsman writes that he painted it, that it belonged to a man named *Rš-ptr=f* (i) and that he received linens, including a sheet, 2 shirts, and an expensive tunic, worth a total of 41 *dbn* in exchange for the painting.

After painting and decoration, the final step in coffin production was varnishing with translucent pistacia resins and oils, giving the coffin its characteristic yellow background color. The *recto* of O. DeM 233<sup>64</sup> preserves information about varnishing:

(1) Year [...] of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt *Wsr-m<sup>3</sup>t-r<sup>3</sup> stp-n-r<sup>3</sup>* (2) Copy of the prop-

59 O. Berlin P 11260, O. CGC 25362, in which only the scribe is named, while the other party sells wooden objects; O. Gardiner 119, O. Gardiner 133, which is a complicated transaction receipt that includes decoration work traded for carpentry-work; O. Gardiner 134, O. Michaelides 13, in which decoration work is traded for ostensibly undecorated wooden objects without accompanying prices or equivalencies.

60 This text dates to mid Dyn. XX. For publication, see Burkard/Goecke-Bauer/Wimmer 2002c. Also see Černý, notebooks.

61 In this notebook, Jaroslav Černý writes, "*wt?*" in the lacuna: Černý, notebooks.

62 The text dates to mid Dyn. XX. For publication, see KRI VII, 343. The *verso* mentions another decorated *db<sup>3</sup>t* sarcophagus.

63 The meaning of this word is unknown. But for the meaning of "schöpfen", see Wb I, 510 f.

64 This text dates to the reign of Ramses II, Dyn. XIX. For publication, see Černý 1937a, 11 pl. 20; KRI III, 844; Allam 1973, 108.

erty which the officer [of the crew] *Dhwtj-br-m'ktw.f(i)?* gave (3) to the draftsman *P'y(i)* towards the recompense for (4) the *db't* sarcophagus which was varnished: (5) 2 small *kbs* baskets, (6) 5 small, white [loaves of] bread, [...] gateway, (7) 5 [loaves of] sunbaked '*kk*t bread, (8) thread (?) of the *jsb'* garment (?) [...] (9) He gave [them] towards the [recompense] (10) of the *db't* sarcophagus.

This text tells us that an officer of the crew gave at least 2 *dbn* worth of commodities to the draftsman *P'y(i)* as payment for the varnishing of his sarcophagus.<sup>65</sup>

Outlined above is a clear production path for funerary material construction in the informal workshop, from the initial delivery of wood to the application of the final varnish, all derived entirely from the corpus of Rameside West Theban textual material. Each man seems to perform his specialty, often exchanging craftwork for craftwork from artisan to artisan, until the object was finished and ready for sale to the individual who commissioned the piece. This type of labor organization could be referred to as “down-the-line” production. Each artisan performs his specialization – carpentry, decoration, varnishing, etc. – before selling it or trading it in exchange for craftwork down the line to the next craftsman. The final artisan – usually a scribe or draftsman – performs the final sale transaction with the object's eventual owner. It is most often at this final step that a receipt is produced, with a list of the commodities given in exchange for the funerary object. This method of trading labor meant that an object changed hands several times before it was finally sold to the individual who wished to use it for burial. Along the way, the texts indicate quite clearly that craftsmen kept track of their own work, as well as their sales and purchases, probably for their own legal and economic protection, within an informal workshop organization.

One text – O. Turin N. 57368<sup>66</sup> – may illustrate the end result of informal workshop activity:

*recto*: (1) List of the wealth which the scribe of the tomb *Hrj* gave: (2) 1 *wt* coffin of tamarisk wood making 80 [*dbn*], the decoration and the (3) varnishing making 65 copper *dbn*, a *swht* mummy board [...] (4) making 20 [*dbn*]. Receiving from him: 1 ox making 100 *dbn*. (5) Receiving from him: another ox making 100 [+x?] *dbn*, (6) 1 smooth *d'yt* cloak making 20 [*dbn*]. Making 43 *dbn*. (7) A smooth *jfd* sheet making 8 [*dbn*], (8) the *swht* mummy board making 15 [*dbn*],

*verso*: (1) [...] (2) a smooth *jfd* sheet [...], (3) 1 thin *jdj* kerchief (?) [...] [making] 9 *dbn* (?)

O. Turin N. 57368 is a receipt, and thus includes a list of commodities and records that the funerary objects

were transferred to their final owners. The seller is a highly placed Deir el-Medina artisan – the scribe of the tomb *Hrj*. The buyer is unfortunately unnamed. The scribe of the tomb *Hrj* clearly sold this set of coffins, but he may also have been the individual who set up the commission and completed the transaction, acting as an agent for the larger informal workshop. The anthropoid coffin that the scribe of the tomb *Hrj* sells in the first three lines is quite expensive. Built of tamarisk wood, which is of higher value than sycamore or acacia,<sup>67</sup> the wood and construction alone cost an incredible 80 *dbn*. An additional 65 *dbn* was added for decoration, making this one of the most expensive *wt* coffins known from the Western Theban archives at 145 *dbn*.<sup>68</sup>

In this text, the scribe of the tomb *Hrj* makes no mention of work that he himself performed, as workshop records would clearly state; rather, he only records the sale of the coffin, because the text is a receipt. But circumstantial clues suggest that the scribe of the tomb *Hrj* is selling the communal product of multiple craftsmen. First, he is quite highly placed as the scribe of the tomb. Nowhere has a man of such status definitively been documented as performing carpentry work in the West Theban textual material. Second, as has already been demonstrated, there are numerous texts that record the symbiotic relationship between carpenters and draftsmen. In these texts, carpenters are recorded as having produced crafted wooden objects that are traded to draftsmen or scribes, such as *Hrj*. Finally, the scribe of the tomb would have been the most appropriate person for an elite buyer to contact, as his rank would have made him the natural leader of a group of artisans working together to create crafted funerary objects for the private sector. Workmen in higher positions of authority and reputation would probably have been the ones approached

65 The varnish in this text is described as '*mrht*, perhaps referring to the black pistacia pitch applied to the insides and undersides of coffins and sarcophagi. See Aufrère 1991, 329–347. The price for this varnishing includes 2 small *kbs* baskets worth about 1 *dbn* each or less and 10 loaves of bread worth about 1 *dbn* total. For these prices, see Janssen 1975, 134, 427.

66 This text dates mid to late Dyn. XX. For publication, see López 1982, 23 pl. 114; KRI VII, 322.

67 For example, only the coffin set of *Hnw.t-mbyt* in the British Museum includes tamarisk, and it is the coffin set of the highest value in the entire group of surviving Rameside coffins.

68 145 *dbn* is the highest secure price for a *wt* coffin. However, O. Berlin P 14366 rto. 1 preserves a price of 220 (-x?) *dbn* for a *wt* coffin described as *nbsj* “of Christ's Thorn”. The price for the coffin is lost, but the total at the end of the document lists 5 silver *dbn*.

by the Theban elite for high-cost commissions for which the informal workshop system and its efficient network of specialization and skill were indispensable because of their connections to the vizierate and elite bureaucracy.

Other texts provide more indirect information about this hypothetical informal workshop. Some documents actually indicate that official superiors may have been keeping track of the private sector work of their subordinates. For instance, in lines 1 and 2 of O. Berlin P 14222<sup>69</sup> we can see immediately that this is a list of decoration work that the draftsman *H'y* (ix), in line 2, did “for me”, in line 1.

(1) List of all the commissions which (2) the draftsman *H'y* (ix) did for me: (3) He painted for me 1 *mn-nh* outer coffin of *Hrj*. (4) He painted for me 1 *mn-nh* outer coffin of *T'-ndm-h<sup>3</sup>b.t*. (5) He [painted] for me a *wt šrj* inner coffin of *Jwnt-m-hb*. (6) He [painted] for me 1 female *rpyt* statue of [the same].<sup>70</sup> (7) He [painted] for me a *w<sup>3</sup>wt wt* mummy mask of *Hrj*. (8) [... 1 wooden object?] of *H'y* (xi) son of *Sb<sup>3</sup>* (iv).

In the body of this workshop text, a number of objects are listed with the names of their respective owners, but no prices are given. This lack of prices suggests that this is not a trade between equal craftsmen. In previously discussed texts of that kind, both the carpenter and the draftsman were careful to note the worth of each object, ensuring it was an equal trade. The absence of price information here actually suggests that whoever wrote this text – whoever “me” is – might have been the leader of an informal workshop keeping track of a particular draftsman’s production. This text provides no indication of how the lower craftsman was ultimately paid for the work, if he was paid at all.

In the same vein, lines 1 and 2 of the *verso* of O. Liverpool 13625<sup>71</sup> record the “work of my three young men” (*b<sup>3</sup>kw n p<sup>3</sup>y.j<sup>3</sup> d<sup>3</sup>w*).

(1) The work of my 3 (2) young men in month 2 of day 1:<sup>72</sup> (3) 2 *šbjw* necklaces of *šbnw* various materials (4) copper: 1 *š<sup>3</sup>q<sup>3</sup>w* ring of *šbnw* materials, ½ jar *smj* cream (?), (5) 3 *šh<sup>3</sup>* amulets of green (?),<sup>73</sup> *mrb* oil (?). (6) He gave one *h<sup>3</sup>tj* bed which was near *H'y* (vii)/(xiv)?. (7) and he finished with it. He gave it to *Jnpw-m-hb* (i), (8) and he sawed (?) for him one large [piece of] wood of a *wt* coffin (9) with his son.

These young men could have been the man’s sons, as is alluded to with coffin craftwork in line 9, or they could have been adolescent boys belonging to his co-workers, apprenticed to the informal workshop in some way. Whoever they were, they did craftwork on jewelry, amulets, and they prepared wooden boards for a coffin. Again, there are no prices in this text, suggesting some kind of hierarchical relationship in a workshop context.

Other texts broaden the scope, suggesting that the informal workshop functioned not only in the village, away from official work, but in the Valley of the Kings itself, at the actual site of daily activity for the king. In one official text from the royal tomb journal – O. CGC 25250<sup>74</sup> – we see a list of artisans’ names followed by crafted wooden objects such as *g<sup>3</sup>wt* boxes or *m<sup>3</sup>šr* boxes. No funerary materials are mentioned. The text records the name of a man, then an object such as a large *fdt* box or *h<sup>3</sup>tj* bed. Some of the lines are crossed out, suggesting that the work had been completed. No prices are mentioned, but the text implies that smaller scale craft production occurred and was recorded at the official work site in the Valley of the Kings where this text was found. O. CGC 25243<sup>75</sup> goes even further and suggests that the crew sometimes performed private sector craft production as a group. This ostrakon is a journal of the tomb, and line 8 of the *recto* reads, “Day 14, cutting the tomb of the high priest”. At first glance, this seems to mean that much of this private sector tomb commission was done during work hours. However, in this case, we see no indication that this tomb work really is private sector work, and there is no mention of payment. It could easily be assumed, given the title of the tomb owner, that this labor was commission by the king for a high-ranking official, and that the workers would receive no payment in addition to their regular salaries. Clearly, official documents like these create a great deal of confusion when trying to decide whether craft labor belonged to the public or private sector; in such examples, the lines between the two are often blurred.

Line II, 6 on the *verso* of P. Turin Cat. 1906+1939+2047<sup>76</sup>, another official text, records a workman spending three days’ work on the *db<sup>3</sup>t* sarcophagus of a *hm-ntr* priest. As with the last text, there are no indications that the man was paid. What remains unclear in such official documents is whether these men were reimbursed in any way for this craftwork, or if these are simply official tasks of the crew. However, based on the evidence for the in-

69 The text dates to mid Dyn. XX. For publication, see KRI VI, 167; Allam 1973, 39 f. pl. 20–21.

70 A straight line is used as a ditto sign, indicating that the work was for the same woman as above.

71 This text dates to Dyn. XIX. For publication, see Černý/Gardiner 1957, 18 pl. 63,3; KRI IV, 162 f.

72 Lines 1, 2, 6, and 7 are crossed through in red.

73 *wd<sup>3</sup>t*. Perhaps referring to green faience.

74 The text probably dates to late Dyn. XX. For publication, see Daressy 1901, 65 pl. 53.

75 The text dates to late Dyn. XX. For publication, see KRI VII, 462 f.; Daressy 1901, 62 f. pl. 52.

76 For publication, see KRI VI, 624–630.



formal workshop, it must remain at least *possible* that crew leaders organized commissions for highly placed patrons – like a high priest of Amen – and that they were paid for this activity in some way, even if the payment was not equated to copper *dbn*. The body of evidence in favor of an informal workshop suggests that crew leaders recorded the activity in the tomb journal so that workmen could be properly paid in some way for their additional labor. On the other hand, traditional interpretations are quite different. Evgeni Bogoslovsky, for example, maintains that such work was institutionalized exploitation,<sup>77</sup> but the two assessments are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Inevitably, the informal workshop would have had one foot in each arena – in both the public and private sectors – and thus would have dealt easily with private sector work utilizing public sector workers and perhaps even, partly, public sector funds. Thus, one could call this organizational structure a semi-attached, informal workshop.

In conclusion, this holistic and genre based analysis sheds light on a number of issues associated with private sector craft specialization. The funerary arts market provided individual artisans with an additional income from the private sector – an income that I argue elsewhere is proportionally higher than their state salaries.<sup>78</sup> Still, even when employed in the private sector, texts clearly indicate that craftsmen were never independent beings, but instead relied on their state training, official access to raw materials, on their co-workers in the official Deir el-Medina crew, as well as on craftsmen and patrons beyond the borders of the village to facilitate private sector earnings. The Deir el-Medina craftsmen were attached to the state when working in the Valley of the Kings and semi-attached when they labored in the private sector. This flexible labor structure implies that the state actually supported private craftwork by training artisans and giving them an organizational infrastructure from which to work. In the end, the line between public and private sectors is quite difficult to draw, but there are gradated distinctions in organization and practice between the two. Christopher Eyre, for example, doubts the existence

of art production completely free from institutional control,<sup>79</sup> and this is technically true according to the textual material. In fact, all identifiable artisans responsible for crafting funerary objects in the private sector were also members of the royal Deir el-Medina crew or another Theban workshop.<sup>80</sup> Those who remain unidentified have common names and were probably Deir el-Medina crew members, or at least craftsmen from other royal or temple workshops. If it was possible for an artisan to produce funerary art for the private market with no attachment to or support from a state institution, there is no written documentation of the practice. Therefore, if such craft activity existed, it was probably of low quality and carried out by craftsmen with only rudimentary scribal and drafting skills, supported by much less wealthy consumers, neither of whom would have used or required textual documentation of economic transactions. Nonetheless, the possibility always remains that the records of labor activity free from state institutions have not yet been found.<sup>81</sup> What we do have is a large body of textual material from Western Thebes dating to the Ramesside Period, which, if analyzed using the contextual tools of text genre, artisan title, and village hierarchy, support an argument for labor organization in the private sector funerary goods market organized according to an *informal workshop model* – a semi attached craft specialist entity in which artisans could not only pool their talents, but also work within existing formal hierarchical specializations.

77 Bogoslovsky 1980. Also see McDowell 1990, 210.

78 Cooney 2003, 243–246. Also see Keller 1991, 59 f.

79 Eyre 1998, 176.

80 Cooney 2003, 232–242.

81 As a comparison, craft activity by completely unattached and mobile craftsmen has been documented in the Ancient Near East, but it should be stressed that this was not considered an ideal livelihood but a way of making a living until permanent institutional employment could be found. Zaccagnini 1983.