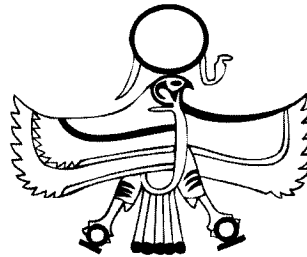


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Private Sector Tomb Robbery and Funerary Arts Reuse according to West Theban Documentation

Kathlyn M. Cooney

This article brings together West Theban texts that address private sector funerary arts reuse in Thebes during the Ramesside Period, and it is connected to my larger research on defensive burial practices at the end of the Bronze Age.¹ The texts in question fall into three categories: 1) the Tomb Robbery Papyri, 2) West Theban disputes about tomb access and violation and 3) West Theban tomb inventory texts.

The Tomb Robbery Papyri suggest that the theft of funerary objects was a highly deviant behavior, that guardians, craftsmen and underling priests were the perpetrators, and that they were all brutally interrogated and punished for their crimes. However, by including inspection and dispute documents from the village of Deir el-Medina in this discussion, we can see a much more complicated, nuanced story of ambivalent ethics and commonplace tomb violations, commodity appropriations, and even suspected, but not clearly punished, tomb robbery. Claudia Näser's work on the "Alltag des Todes" has already pointed to the relative normalcy of such events, and that people of different status levels would have been pulled into this kind of activity.² My interests lie in the social attitudes and behaviors behind theft

1 I first spoke on this topic at the Theban Symposium at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, 2007 (Kathlyn M. Cooney, "Death as Life: Funerary Art as Remnants of Sociopolitical Change"), which I presented in summary at the International Congress of Egyptologists in Rhodes. I recently published an article on 21st Dynasty mummification from the related perspective of defensive burial practices (Cooney 2012). Also see the recently published article Cooney, "Changing Burial Practices at the End of the New Kingdom: Defensive Adaptations in Tomb Commissions, Coffin Commissions, Coffin Decoration, and Mummification" *JARCE* 47 (2011), 3-43 All of this work is part of my 21st Dynasty Coffins Project, formulated to examine evidence of coffin reuse and theft through a database of 21st Dynasty coffins, supported by Faculty Research Grants at the University of California, Los Angeles.

2 Claudia Näser, "Der Alltag des Todes. Archäologische Zeugnisse und Textquellen zu funerären Praktiken und Grabplünderung in Deir el-Medine im Neuen Reich". (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2002, unpublished dissertation). I have been unable to read Näser's dissertation where I know many of these texts have been treated, but see Claudia Näser, "Jenseits von Theben – Objectsammlung, Inszenierung und Fragmentierung in ägyptischen Bestattungen des Neuen Reiches", in *Körperinszenierung - Objectsammlung - Monumentalisierung: Totenritual und Grabkult in frühen Gesellschaften*, ed. Beat Schweizer Christoph Kümmel, Ulrich Veit, Archäologische Quellen in Kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive (Münster Waxman 2008), 445-472.

and reuse, and I am particularly interested in the creative defensive burial adaptations undertaken by people at the end of the Bronze Age.

Tomb robbery papyri

Throughout the Tomb Robbery Papyri,³ theft from non-royal, elite tombs is mentioned, but not to the same extent as the royal spaces. In P. Abbott (P. BM 10221, p. 3 of Peet's *Tomb Robberies*) we learn that the same Theban officials who investigated the ransacking of early New Kingdom royal tombs also inspected elite tombs, including "The tombs of the chantresses of the house of the Divine Adoratrice of Amen-Re, king of the gods" and that two tombs were found intact and two were robbed. In the same text (P. BM 10221, p. 4), we learn that officials were also doing a general investigation of what seem to have been large-scale robberies of elite non-royal tombs in Western Thebes. These are described as "the *m^hywt* tombs and the *isyw* tombs which are of the praised ones of old, the female inhabitants and the men who are resting there in Western Thebes". The text includes the interrogation of perpetrators who admit to dragging the mummified owners from their coffins, their description of the rich gilding on these coffins, the stealing of the funerary equipment in the tombs, and the chiseling of the gold and silver off these high status body containers. It is probably fair to assume that only the violations of high value, i.e. of high status tombs, were investigated and prosecuted during the official procedures recorded in the Tomb Robbery Papyri because these were the same tombs the Theban officials would have had a stake in themselves, both ideologically and economically.

In another tomb robbery papyrus (P. BM 10054 rt. p. 1, lines 1–12), we learn that valuable coffins were sometimes taken to certain "safe" locations for further processing. The text mentions a burial with gold, and the thief describes what the gang of thieves did in the tomb of Tjawnefer, a 3rd high priest of Amen:

And we opened it and we brought his coffins outside, and we took his mummy and we threw it in a corner of his tomb. And we took his coffins to this boat with the rest to the island of Imenemipet. And we set fire to them in the night.

The text goes on to say how the robbers used copper chisels to strip other coffins of gold and silver. The tomb robbers burned the coffins presumably to get rid of any evidence, as well as to make sure that they collected

3 T. E. Peet, *The Great Tomb-Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty, being a Critical Study with Translations and Commentaries of the Papyri in which they are Recorded*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

all the gold. If the coffins were burned, we can probably assume that the targeted commodities were precious metals.

On P. British Museum 10054, lines 14–16, the robbers tell investigators that they ransacked the tomb of Amenkhau, a keeper of the Treasury and a Fanbearer in the Temple of Amen. We understand that they found a stone sarcophagus, which they broke open. They removed the anthropoid wooden *wṯ* coffin, threw the body out of it, and removed any gilding with chisels. They do not say if they appropriated the coffin itself.

In another Tomb Robbery text, P. BM 10052 (p. 10), we read about an accused man who tells the interrogators that his father went to this island of Amenemipet, the same unknown location mentioned before, where he saw a stolen coffin. He says that his father ferried over to the island and saw an *wṯ* coffin in the possession of two *wᶜḫ* priests of the chapel of King Menheperre. The men said to his father: “This *wṯ* coffin is ours. It belonged to some great person (*rmṯ ʿ3yt*).” This text therefore indicates that some coffins were taken from the tomb in their entirety, perhaps to be refashioned and sold.

The Tomb Robbery Papyri record that other stolen materials were reused to create funerary objects. Interrogations in P. BM 10053 vs. p. 4 reveal that four boards of cedar belonging to the so-called “silver floor of King Usermaatre Setepenre, the great god” were taken by a priest in an inside job and then transferred among a number of different people, all presumably with a stake in reusing this material for new funerary objects. The wood was moved from a scribe of the temple of Usermaatre, who organized its theft, to a west Theban woman who was married to a God’s father. The woman then transferred the wood to a carpenter, who used the boards to construct an *wṯ* coffin for the same woman – either for her own use or, more probably, to sell.

On the next page of this same papyrus (P. BM 10053, p. 5), we see documentation claiming that other expensive wood from this same temple made its way to the *niwt*, that is, to the east bank of Thebes, where it was sold for “a price”. Although this is not stated, it is possible that some of this wood was used to make funerary arts, which could ostensibly have been sold for a very high price.⁴

4 For example, the Turin Giornale papyrus from year 17B (G. Botti and T. E. Peet, *Il giornale della necropoli di Tebe* (Turin: 1928); K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical* (Oxford: 1975–1990), VI, 570–594; A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (Oxford: 1999), 198, 211.) records a number of expensive coffin commissions made of specific woods from the same approximate time period in the 20th Dynasty. In fact, in the Giornale text, materials are particularly mentioned, and these coffins are the most expensive on record for the

The Tomb Robbery Papyri indicate that theft from most private tombs went unrecorded, suggesting it was instead investigated and punished through much less formal and more factional channels, as shown in the dispute texts which we will examine next.

Disputes about tomb violation

Disputes about tomb violation suggest wide scale tomb and coffin reuse, and further, that funerary items were increasingly valuable and scarce as the New Kingdom drew to a close. The fragmentary P. DeM 26,⁵ for instance, includes a collection of miscellaneous disputes heard at one time. One of these includes tantalizing details of coffins that were “taken”, and “places,” presumably funerary places (*st krs*), under dispute. Oaths were taken in front of the *knbt* court, but the text is too fragmentary for us to know how the dispute was resolved. What we can say is that such disputes suggest that funerary items and tomb space were both increasingly scarce during the 20th Dynasty.

There was one particular ongoing dispute about a violated tomb that is preserved in great detail. This 20th Dynasty disagreement tells us a great deal about the social systems in place when tomb ownership and security systems were compromised. These extraordinary texts are highly suggestive of tomb robbery in the village of Deir el-Medina itself, even if most of the language about this fact is rather veiled.

In O. BM 5624,⁶ an unnamed speaker, who is probably the workman Amenemipet, goes to a great deal of trouble to prove his familial connection to a particular tomb, going back to year 7 of the reign of Horemheb when the tomb fell to his ancestor *H3y* through an official order. He also states that this tomb had fallen into ruin (*hprw h3c*). The speaker’s claim to the late 18th Dynasty tomb of *H3y* was corroborated by the oracle of Amenhotep I. The tomb was then officially given to the speaker in writing. After the speaker’s claim to the tomb was fully justified, he tells us how he came to know about

entire New Kingdom (Kathlyn M. Cooney, *The Cost of Death: The Social and Economic Value of Ancient Egyptian Funerary Art in the Ramesside Period* (Leiden: Egyptologische Uitgaven, 2007). Furthermore, some of the men mentioned in the Giornale papyrus can be linked with high-level tomb robbers in the Tomb Robbery Papyri (Christopher Eyre, personal communication 2008).

5 J. Černý, *Papyrus hiératiques de Deir el-Medineh*, nos. XVIII–XXXIV, ed. Yvan Koenig, vol. 22, DFIFAO (Cairo: 1986); Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions* V, 461–466.

6 S. Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit* (Tübingen: 1973), 43–45; A. L. Blackman, “Oracles in Ancient Egypt II”, *JEA* 12 (1926): 176–185; Robert J. Demarée, *Ramesside Ostraca* (London: British Museum Press, 2002), 15–16, pls. 7–8; W. Helck, *Materialien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Neuen Reiches*, vol. 6, Akademie der Wissenschaftlichen und der Literatur (Wiesbaden: 1961–1969) III, 346–348; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions* V, 475–476; McDowell, *Village Life*, 68–69.

a tunnel which opened into the burial chamber:

I was standing with Hori son of Huynefer and the workman Bakienwerner, and I did not know the place where the tunnel (*3h n hwt*) in my tomb was. The scribe Amennakht found the tunnel, saying “Come down! See the place which opens to the tomb of Khaemnun!”

The *3h n hwt*, probably some kind of “robber’s tunnel”⁷ was made between the burial chamber of Amenemipet and that of Khaemnun. The text does not state who made the tunnel, nor is it known why and when it was made, but it is understood as a threat to the viability of Amenemipet’s burial chamber and the funerary goods therein, something that had to be investigated.

O. Florence 2621,⁸ also written by the workman Amenemipet, gives us some information of the steps he took with regard to the mysterious tunnel. It starts with a broken list of authorities and interested parties who are there to assess the situation, after which Amenemipet speaks:

(I) climbed down together with the deputy Kha, Bakienwerner, Hori son of Huynefer, and I said to them: “As for the [...] which were opened in the place in [...] They spoke to me, saying: “Now, as for the place of Khaemnun, which [...] to the northern pillar of your tomb, open the mouth of the tunnel (*3h m hwt*). And I opened (it), and (I) took a lamp, and I inspected the place in the presence of many witnesses. (I) found one coffin therein of one chisel-bearer. And it was not (at) all equipped therein.

So, not only are suspicions raised by this unexpected tunnel, but now there are also more problems to deal with. – The coffin of a chisel bearer was the only item found inside the previously unknown chamber, but there is no other funerary equipment. Thus, more authorities – including the scribe of the tomb Akhpet and two chiefs of the medjay – were brought in to interrogate a particular guardian of the necropolis, who we must assume was suspected of creating the tunnel and possibly of stealing the funerary objects which should have been there (though theft is not explicitly stated). According to Amenemipet, the interrogation happened like this:

And I went with the chief of police of the Necropolis into the tomb, and I caused that the (other) chief of police Monthumes climb down to the tunnel, and he inspected (it). And he said to them: “A coffin alone is that which is in the tomb of Amenemipet, and one brought the guardian Penmenefer, and one said to him: “Were you in this place? Did you see it?” And he said, “I was, and (I) caused [...] be done [...] in the presence of everyone there.”

The text breaks off, and we do not know to what the guardian actually admits. The suspicious party – Penmenefer – was then questioned by the

7 This must be the meaning of the word because it describes something which opens from one tomb to another. This word only appears in these dispute texts (Robert Demarée, personal communication 2009).

8 Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri*, 148–149, pls. 36–39; Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions V*, 478–480.

scribe of the tomb Amennakht, and the guardian claims that whatever he did in this burial chamber and in this tunnel, which no one previously knew about, he did it in full knowledge of witnesses, a fact which seems to be under continued suspicion. I would imagine that the owners of these tombs were especially mistrustful of the fact that only one coffin was found in the old burial chamber and that there was no other funerary equipment in them at all. This, in and of itself, was probably suggestive of tomb robbery. In a crowded and complicated necropolis like Deir el-Medina, where burial chambers were built right next to one another and tombs often served as entrances to other tombs, the possibility of finding older chambers or breaking through to another tomb chamber to steal funerary objects would not only have been possible, but it would also have taken some time for anyone to enter the chamber and notice the occurrence.

The case comes to a kind of conclusion in P. Berlin P. 10496⁹, which describes the inspection of the tomb in front of a number of administrators. Amenemipet then recounts his testimony of the events again. In this text, the coffin is not said to belong to a chisel bearer, but it is still claimed that no one knows the coffin owner. The text corroborates that there were no tomb goods left in the burial chamber after the tunnel had been opened except for this coffin. There is also no mention of any mummies in this burial chamber, another important point, because the lack of bodies could also have been suggestive of tomb robbery to those carrying out the inspection.¹⁰ The text continues with an oath, presumably given by Penmener, that he should not engage in this kind of activity again, under pain of disfigurement.

This same Berlin papyrus includes a record of another complaint which was brought up three years later, in year 24 of Ramses III, by the same workman Amenemipet before the *knbt* court. In this complaint he claims that:

“the *hnw* chapel of Amenmesi belongs to me (*m-dl.i*), and his tomb (likewise). The *shnw* building of Bak belongs to me also. He threw my mistress outside of the tomb of my father.”

The details are not clear, but the statement that a body was tossed out of a tomb is interesting because it may be an accusation of tomb robbery from his family's burial chamber. Claudia Näser doubts that we should take this accusation literally, and she suggests that this is a dramatic way of saying

9 Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri*, 277–280, pls. 80–83; Blackman, “Oracles in Ancient Egypt II”, 177–181, Helck, *Materialien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte* III, 348–349; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions* V, 476–478.

10 Although it is possible that the mention of mummies might have been omitted for religious reasons, I find this suspect. Other tomb robbery texts mention mummies and/or corpses.

that the tomb is in dispute, not that a mummy was actually removed.¹¹ I, however, favor a more exact reading. After all, a literal tossing aside of the mummy and/or coffin seems a valid accusation if Amenemipet was accusing Penmennefer of misusing his tomb space. The text continues with another oath by Penmennefer, the suspected guilty party.

The verso of P. Milan RAN E 0.9.40126 + P. Milan RAN E 0.9.40128, recently published by Robert Demarée¹² includes a 20th Dynasty text on the verso with accusations of robbery in a funerary context. We see charges of theft, the erasure of the names of the owners of tombs, and the names of the involved parties, including the workman who loaded the boat, ostensibly to ship funerary items away for sale. In vs. x+4 we read, “Charge concerning the saying that (one) did that (he) erased the name of a steward of Menra l.p.h. on the tomb and he gave (it) to the temple-scribe of Pen-Amun(??),” ostensibly profiting from the reassignment of an older tomb. We even see the accusation that the scribe of the Necropolis Hori took tomb owners out of their tomb - presumably the mummies - and burned them. The charges clearly fall into the realm of tomb robbery and recommodification. In addition, Demarée has demonstrated that many of the accused also appear in the tomb robbery papyri in years 13 and 17 of Ramses IX.

Interestingly, the details of these disputes are quite veiled, but they suggest a number of things. First, tomb robbery was probably happening in the village of Deir el-Medina in the 20th Dynasty. Second, the suspected parties were often not punished,¹³ ostensibly because their positions within west Theban society could shield them from it. There is also another important point: by the 20th Dynasty the people in charge of defending these tombs – the s3w guardians, like Penmennefer – are the very ones engaged in tomb robbery. While this is not surprising, given the access and knowledge these men must have had, I wonder if someone of higher status was behind the activities of someone like Penmennefer.

Tomb inventory texts

West Theban documents indicate that burial space was becoming increasingly scarce during the 20th Dynasty.¹⁴ It is at this same time period that we

11 Näser, “Jenseits von Theben” (2008).

12 R. Demarée, “Ramesside Administrative Papyri in the Civiche Raccolte Archeologiche e Numismatiche di Milano,” *JEOL* 42 (2010): 56-60.

13 Ibid.

14 For all commission texts and receipts for West Theban tombs, see Kathlyn M. Cooney, “Profit or Exploitation? The Production of Private Ramesside Tombs within the West Theban Funerary Economy,” *Journal of Egyptian History* 1 (2008): 79–115. While many

start to see a new type of text at Deir el-Medina – documenting the inspection and inventory of older burial chambers. One well-known text, O. DeM 828 + O. Vienna H.1,¹⁵ records the opening of a “ruined” tomb in the village of Deir el Medina, a list of all of the contents therein and the witnesses there to see it. The text reads:

Year 25, first month of summer, day 9. List of the inspection of everything found in the ruined tomb across from the *st-krs* burial place of the scribe Amennakht (son of) Ipuw:

1 coffin of god’s stone, 1 sarcophagus with a linen (?) pall, 1 coffin with a linen (?) pall, 1 ebony folding stool with ducks’ heads, mended, 2 couches, 1 box of papyrus, 3 headrests, 1 *irks*-basket filled with rags [...], 2 pairs of sandals, 1 scribal palette, 1 bronze bowl, 1 water bag, 1 box (contents: 1 knife, 1 pin, 1 metal dish, 1 juglet, 1 razor case, 1 razor, 1 scraping razor), granite vessels: 5 *mnt* jars, 1 metal dish, 1 pot, 1 staff, a food basket (with) bread, 1 wooden *krrn* (unknown object), 1 alabaster *kbw* jar, 2 wooden *nšl* containers of medicine, 1 box (contents: 1 faience amulet, 1 alabaster *kbw* jar, 1 pot of ointment, 10 [...]), 1 box (contents: 1 alabaster *kb* jar, 1 comb, 1 tweezer), 1 alabaster *mnt* vessel, 2 *hšr* (of grain), 2 pieces of scenting material. The foreman Khonsu, the foreman Khay (Inherkhau), the police inspector Neferhotep, the police inspector Khaemipet, the guardian Penmenefer, Khaemnun, Userhat, Aanakht, Irsu, Huynefer, Neferher, and the scribe Amennakht. [It was closed again and sealed] with a seal.¹⁶

This document tells us that the tomb (*ḥ3t*) was *r-w3si* or ‘ruined’ and thus not in use at the time. Nonetheless we can conclude that the tomb was valuable, so much so that the Deir el-Medina workforce brought in both their foremen, the scribe of the tomb, district officers, a guardian of the necropolis, as well as a number of Deir el-Medina workmen to witness the inventory.

Many objects are listed: coffins, metal objects, boxes with various goods, linens – all of which are objects that other scholars like Zonhoven¹⁷ and McDowell have said to be suggestive of an 18th Dynasty burial. The document ends with a mention that the chamber was closed again and sealed. However, I suspect that all of these objects had to be removed from the tomb and laid out before the men to get such a specific and witnessed count. There is no mention of putting any of these objects back into the tomb or of reas-

tombs were commissioned during the 19th Dynasty, very few were ordered during the 20th Dynasty. It was during this latter dynasty that we also see mention of the *st-krs*, ‘place of burial’, probably referring to a space in an already existing family or village tomb. In addition, Theban tombs produced during the 20th Dynasty only belonged to members of the influential Amen priesthood.

15 H. Goedicke, “Hieratische Ostraka in Wien”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 59/60 (1963/64): 2, pl. I; P. Grandet, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el-Médinéh, nos. 706–830*, Documents de fouilles de l’IFAO 39 (Cairo: 2000), VIII, 11, 76, 212; Kitchen, *Ramesseid Inscriptions* V, 504–505, McDowell, *Village Life*, 69–72.

16 The translation is adapted from McDowell, *Village Life*. The added Egyptian words in parentheses are my own addition.

17 L. J. Zonhoven, “The Inspection of a Tomb at Deir el-Medina (O. Wien Aeg. 1)”, *JEA* 65 (1979): 89–98.

signing this burial chamber. Furthermore, the inventory does not mention any mummies or foodstuffs, which the tomb almost certainly contained.

I argue that this is not an inventory of *what was actually in the tomb*, but an inventory of fungible commodities, things that had value within the community. Furthermore, all of these commodities are listed as they would be if used for payment in a receipt or if they were listed in an inheritance text. I have argued elsewhere that commodities are only listed like this in the west Theban documentation when they are valuable, contested, transferred, or used as payment.¹⁸

The metal objects in the list have obvious value, but what about some of the other items? A coffin could clearly have been replastered and repainted, and there are many examples of this type of coffin reuse. For example, out of the seven known 20th Dynasty coffins, at least one is clearly a reused 19th Dynasty piece.¹⁹ As for the linen palls and other garments in the inventory, these could have been reused as well, even if only for mummy bandages or shrouds. The sandals may still have been in working order even after a few hundred years of burial. If not, the leather could have been put to another use as cord-ties. As for the ointments and medicines, I wonder how fatty substances could retain any value after being buried for such a long time, but I suggest that these organic materials could have been easily cooked down by the craftsmen for paints or varnishes. Interestingly, there is no food listed in this inventory, even though it was important to include bread and beer in 18th Dynasty tombs, and I suggest that the reason for this is that they no longer had any value when the tomb was opened. No mummies are listed either, presumably because they were left in the tomb or transferred to a cache of uncoffined bodies, which was also common in west Thebes.²⁰ Even though the text does not discuss any details of distribution, I believe that the circumstances are highly suggestive of the reappropriation of many of these objects.

Another inspection text, O. Madrid 16.243,²¹ also from the 20th Dynasty, tells of an ḥꜥt tomb previously said to belong to a long-dead guardian named Amenemipet for whom there is evidence from the reign of Ramses II. Ostensibly, no one from this man's family survived to claim the tomb because the text reads: "This day of inspecting the tomb of the guardian Amenemipet by the three captains of the [Necropolis] in order to hand [it] over [to] the workman Menna. [List] of everything that was in it: A cof-

18 Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, 51.

19 The coffin of Muthotep from the British Museum. See *Ibid.* 464–466.

20 Näser, "Jenseits von Theben" (2008).

21 Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, VII, 335–336; McDowell, *Village Life*, 71–73.

fin [...]”. Following this account, there are perhaps five more lines which are lost, including the inventory of the tomb items. Despite the break, here we have another, old unclaimed tomb whose contexts were inspected and itemized. This tomb was then handed over to the workman Menna by the necropolis administration for unstated reasons. What happened to the burial equipment inside is anybody’s guess. Did it transfer to Menna? Or was it inventoried, so that it could be distributed among the men of the village before Menna took ownership of the tomb?

Claudia Näser claims that these inspections are testament to the ubiquity of tomb robbery and the subsequent protections put in place.²² This is undoubtedly one way of reading these inventory texts. Alternatively, if we take into account the types of objects mentioned, the method of listing them as commodities, the catalog of witnesses, and the economic context, we can build a circumstantial argument that the inspections themselves are evidence of the removal and reuse of older tomb goods. If such reappropriations were happening in older tombs with no clear family claim, I suspect that thousands of funerary arts in family tombs were recommodified by people who *owned* the tomb spaces.

Conclusion

The Tomb Robbery Papyri were official documents recording outright theft. The disputes, on the other hand, suggest a different, more clandestine, kind of tomb robbery happening between Deir el-Medina villagers. The inventory texts suggest that the contents of tombs of unknown ownership had to be witnessed by the entire community, possibly so that they could be fairly distributed. These examples are extraordinary, and they suggest to me that most cases of funerary object reuse were not recorded at all. No one rummaging through the family tomb looking for coffins to resell and metal objects to trade would need or want to write it down in detail. Instead, these funerary objects would have simply entered economic trade and, consequently, some economic texts as normal commodities.

As for the dozens of other Deir el-Medina tombs at the end of the 20th Dynasty, their contents were ostensibly in the possession of that family, and they could do what they wanted with them, even if that meant removing objects and reusing coffins. There are no surviving documents suggesting inspections or inventories of *claimed* tombs, nor should we expect to find them. It is high-

22 Näser, “Jenseits von Theben” (2008).

ly probable that many bodies of long-deceased family members were legally, but quietly, removed from their coffins by the owners of family tombs, who were able to recommodify their funerary goods.

One could, by extension, argue that the contents of Theban Tomb 1, which has so often been assumed to have been found intact and untouched, are not representative of the 19th Dynasty situation at all, but of the end result in the 20th Dynasty. In other words, some of the 13 (out of 22 total) bodies found without coffins may have originally been buried with containers.²³ This argument is admittedly circumstantial, but many other sources of evidence point to the reuse of funerary arts at the end of the 20th Dynasty. As already stated, only seven 20th Dynasty coffins survive in the archaeological record, an incredibly small number, compared to over 700 21st Dynasty coffins.²⁴ Niwinski notes that dozens of these 21st Dynasty coffins show evidence of reuse. My current examination suggests that many more may be products of reuse.²⁵

Egyptologists like Nicholas Reeves and John Taylor have already marshaled convincing cases that the tomb robbery of the royal tombs and Theban necropolis was not only widespread but also systematically perpetrated by high ranking officials.²⁶ In light of this, the tomb robbery texts collected

23 Näser (ibid.) suggests that Theban Tomb 1 was used over a few generations and that the outer sarcophagi of Khonsu and Sennedjem may have been reused in other burials. They were both found dismantled in a corner of the tomb. She argues that the uncoffined bodies in Theban Tomb 1 belonged to poorer family members who benefited from burial with richer family members. Although I used to agree with this reconstruction of Theban Tomb 1 (Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, 278), I now suggest that mummies without coffins may actually have been removed from their original body containers, which were then redecorated and reused by other individuals in Dynasty 20 or later. The discovery by Andreas Dorn of a 20th Dynasty ostrakon detailing the storage of pyramidia of Khonsu and Sennedjem in their tombs is evidence that Theban Tomb 1 was entered by family members at this time and that they were documenting tombobjects. See A. Dorn, *Arbeiterütten im Tal der Könige* (Basel: Schwabe, 2011), 429–431.

24 Cooney, *The Cost of Death*; A. Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins from Thebes: Chronological and Typological Studies* (Mainz am Rhein: Phillip von Zabern, 1988).

25 I have started just such an analysis of coffin reuse and usurpation using a database of 21st Dynasty coffins in which plaster breaks and inscriptions will be examined for prior decoration.

26 Nicholas Reeves, *Valley of the Kings. The Decline of a Royal Necropolis* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1990); John H. Taylor, "Aspects of the History of the Valley of the Kings in the Third Intermediate Period" in *After Tut'ankhamun. Research and Excavation in the Royal Necropolis at Thebes*, ed. Nicholas Reeves (London: Kegan Paul International, 1992); John .H. Taylor, "Changes in the Afterlife", in *Egyptian Archaeology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 220–240.

The Late Ramesside letters suggest that as the economic situation declined, tomb robbery was ordered by high level administrators in the face of decreasing resources. For example, P. BM EA 10375 is a letter between the general of the pharaoh Piankhy and Deir el-Medina officials, including two foremen, the scribe of the tomb and a guardian. The main point of the letter is asking that necropolis workers obey the general's orders and perform particular commissions, specifically finding an old tomb and asking that a scribe be sent to assist. See Robert K. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from*

by Peet and others could be seen as evidence of a crackdown on opportunistic individuals acting on their own accord without the blessing of the High Priesthood of Amen. Tomb inventories and disputes are part of the wider picture of an unsustainable funerary arts market, in which a variety of people were resorting to the reappropriation and reuse of funerary objects and spaces at the end of the New Kingdom.

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