

Changing Burial Practices at the End of the New Kingdom: Defensive Adaptations in Tomb Commissions, Coffin Commissions, Coffin Decoration, and Mummification

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Abstract

This article examines how social adaptations might be visible in surviving funerary arts from ancient Egypt. The focus of the study is Thebes during the political and economic upheavals of the Bronze–Iron Age transition. Adjustments to crisis are visible in late Ramesside and early Twenty First Dynasty Theban innovations vis-à-vis tombs, coffins, and mummification. Because of a lack of new tomb building, Theban elites shifted towards group burials in older or reused tombs. They also adapted to the lack of tomb decoration by demanding more richly decorated coffins. At the same time, the scarcity of supplies to build new coffins increased coffin reuse and theft, even among Theban elites. Finally, the increase in coffin reuse seems to have encouraged the wealthiest of Thebans to focus funerary investment on the embalmed corpse.

Much of the funerary material to which I devoted my book *The Cost of Death*¹ was created during one of the most profound shifts in the ancient world—the social turmoil that rocked the Mediterranean region at the end of the Bronze Age. During this crisis Egypt saw mass migrations, incursions of Sea Peoples and Libyans, the loss of the Syria-Palestinian empire, and the decline or closure of gold mines and rock quarries. Politically, Egypt dodged the total collapse that hit the Mycenaean and Hittite states, but its system of rule suffered from widespread decentralization and fracture. The Egyptian king effectively ruled only parts of the Nile Delta, leaving the south in the hands of the High Priesthood of Amen, an influential set of families whose political and religious base was the city of Thebes. Economically, disruptions in trade routes limited access to metal, stone, wood, and other luxury goods. During the most fragile moments of this crisis, the price of grain skyrocketed and rations for many laborers went unpaid. In Thebes, Egyptians were forced to move from well-endowed systems of monolithic political and religious institutions and turn towards different strategies of rule, tactics that were based on decentralization, flexibility, and a newly formulated reliance on family connections and local community.²

¹ K. M. Cooney, *The Cost of Death: The Social and Economic Value of Ancient Egyptian Funerary Art in the Ramesside Period* (Leiden, 2007).

² K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Warminster, 1986); G. P. F. Broekman, R. J. Demarée, and O. E. Kaper, eds., *The Libyan Period in Egypt: Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st–24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25–27 October 2007* (Leiden, 2009); R. K. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period* (Atlanta, 2009); J. H. Taylor, “The Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 BC),” in I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2000), 330–68.

In this article, I want to examine if adaptations to these social circumstances are visible in the surviving funerary arts at Thebes.³ I am looking for local accommodations to crisis by focusing on late Rameside and early 21st Dynasty Theban innovations vis-à-vis tombs, coffins, and mummification.

I argue that elite Thebans developed a new set of funerary values.⁴ Instead of commissioning sprawling tomb complexes decorated with statuary, stelae, and paintings and whose burial chambers were stuffed with a variety of quotidian and funerary objects, Thebans increasingly valued a space-efficient burial which focused on the minimal essentials for rebirth. By the same token, instead of valuing coffins with rich gilding and inlay of precious materials, Thebans began to eschew conspicuous decoration on their funerary goods. In addition, many Thebans seem to have shifted their ethical values with regards to funerary arts, given the high rates of theft and reuse.⁵ Thus it follows that, instead of openly displaying wealth in large and bombastic tomb complexes, Theban elites quickly saw the value of secret group burials and understated funerary arts. Despite all of this, these wealthy individuals saw in their funerary arts the ability to manifest social power by means of high-status display. However, social circumstances now demanded that they show their status through unusual coffin decoration and extraordinary innovations in mummification technique, not by means of monumental tombs and gilded treasures. These value shifts are part of a series of defensive strategies that characterize funerary arts during the Bronze-Iron Age transition in ancient Egypt.

Late Bronze and early Iron Age funerary arts preserve traces of a very complex negotiation between two opposing forces: on the one hand, the extreme economic, political, and social instability of the late New Kingdom, and on the other hand, the pervasive social demand that elite families spend large amounts of their income on funerary materials for display in public, or semi-public, burial ceremonies. Late Rameside Theban elites seem to have possessed ample disposable income, but the instability of the times did not allow them to spend it in the same way as their ancestors had in Dynasties 18 or 19. In other words, an elite individual of Dynasty 20 could not be as ostentatious in his or her funerary equipment and architecture as one could before. Theban funerary arts of the late Rameside Period and Dynasty 21 are remnants of innovative solutions to a variety of socioeconomic problems within a complex and fluid landscape. Essentially, elites were facing the question, how does one spend good money on grave goods while everyone is out robbing tombs?

No matter how difficult the social crisis was during the Bronze-Iron Age transition, funerary arts innovations occurred within accepted stylistic norms and traditions in ancient Egypt.⁶ There was no discernable trend to abandon the creation of coffins, or to move towards less materialist burial practices, no matter how bad the economy and political situation became. Instead, adaptations in Dynasty 20

³ I first presented much of this material at the Theban Symposium at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 2007, and I gave a short version at the International Congress of Egyptologists at Rhodes in 2008. I presented other aspects of this work at the annual meetings of the American Research Center in Egypt in 2009 and 2011. A more in-depth examination on mummification will appear in 2012, in "Objectifying the Body: The Increased Value of the Ancient Egyptian Mummy during the Socioeconomic Crisis of Dynasty Twenty-one," in J. Papadopoulos and G. Urton, eds., *The Construction of Value in the Ancient World* (Los Angeles, forthcoming). A fuller discussion of the textual evidence for robbery and re-commodification from private tombs at the end of the New Kingdom will appear in "Private Sector Tomb Robbery and Funerary Arts Reuse according to West Theban Documentation," in J. Toivari-Viitala, ed., *Deir el Medina Studies: Helsinki, Finland 24th–26th of June 2010* (Helsinki University, forthcoming).

⁴ D. Graeber's work, e.g., *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York, 2001), has been helpful in examining shifting values.

⁵ For tomb robbery as a part of necropolis activity, see C. Näser, "Der Alltag des Todes. Archäologische Zeugnisse und Textquellen zu funerären Praktiken und Grabplünderung in Deir el-Medine im Neuen Reich" (Ph.D. diss., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2001); idem, "Jensites von Theben—Objectsammlung, Inszenierung und Fragmentierung in ägyptischen Bestattungen des Neuen Reiches," in C. Kümmel, B. Schweizer, and U. Veit, eds., *Körperinszenierung—Objectsammlung—Monumentalisierung: Totenritual und Grabkult in frühen Gesellschaften, archäologische Quellen in Kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive* (Münster, 2008), 445–72.

⁶ Many of my ideas about materiality and value are influenced by A. Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 32.

used the same basic funerary materials—tombs, coffins, and mummies—but turned them into a *defensive unit*. We therefore see a shift in values—beginning in Dynasty 20—towards rendering the coffin as a densely decorated, discrete, miniature tomb for the individual.

In *The Cost of Death*, I examined west Theban texts and funerary arts synchronically, mainly looking for overall trends of value and labor organization within the Ramesside Period as a whole. In this article, I want to tackle some of the same material diachronically to ascertain any discernable trends in funerary behaviors and deposition practices as Egypt moved to the close of the Ramesside Period as the political and economic conditions worsened. My evidence comes from Dynasties 19, 20, and 21 and includes 1) Theban funerary architecture, 2) Theban coffins, and 3) Theban mummies.

Evidence Part I: Theban Funerary Architecture

Ramesside west Theban textual material mentions a number of different tomb types, namely 1) the $\text{ḥ}^{\text{c}}(t)$ or $(m)\text{ḥ}^{\text{c}}t$ tomb chapel which was accessible, above ground and, ideally, decorated, 2) the $\text{š}t\text{ḏ}yt$ burial chamber, which was inaccessible, below ground, and usually undecorated (although Deir el Medina burial chambers were an exception), and 3) the $\text{st-ḥ}rs$, literally meaning “place of burial.” Other words connected to funerary architecture are the mr “pyramid” or “pyramidion” and the $w\text{ḏ}$ “stela,” but these will not be the focus of discussion here as I look to words that describe the larger tomb space.

Table 1 includes all Dynasty 19 Theban texts that mention tomb commissions in the form of construction or decoration work, prices, and any other information about tomb economy.

These nine texts indicate that during Dynasty 19, elites were building and decorating tombs in reasonable numbers, both ḥ^{c} tomb chapels and $\text{š}t\text{ḏ}yt$ burial chambers.⁷ This textual material is corroborated by archaeological evidence that shows high numbers of Dynasty 19 elite tombs having been constructed and decorated in western Thebes.⁸ In other words, Dynasty 19 elites were able to commission and purchase tomb chapels, burial chambers, mr pyramids, and a number of other funerary structures.

But as we move into Dynasty 20, the situation reflected in the ancient texts and archaeological evidence looks very different. By the late New Kingdom, it seems that most Theban elites cannot (or will not) commission tomb chapels (ḥ^{c}) or even burial chambers ($\text{š}t\text{ḏ}yt$). Table 2 summarizes the Dynasty 20 primary documentation about tomb economy, including tomb commissions, tomb decoration, legal wrangling over tombs, and inheritance of tombs.

The textual record indicates that by Dynasty 20, most people could not afford to commission tomb chapels or burial chambers. Table 2 lists very few Dynasty 20 texts with any evidence of tomb commissions, amazing given that, on the whole, most surviving west Theban socioeconomic texts date to Dynasty 20, not to Dynasty 19. One Dynasty 20 document for tomb building is a graffito written on the walls of the tomb of Ramses VI.⁹ The text is dated to the reign of Ramses IX, suggesting that the tomb of Ramses VI was open and probably stripped of valuables at this time. The graffito itself contains a rare mention of decoration work on a private tomb chapel by Deir el Medina crew members. The graffito reads:

⁷ For more on the topic of tomb commissions in the Ramesside Period, see K. 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.

⁸ F. Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole: Zum Wandel des Grabgedankens von der XVIII bis zur XX Dynastie*, 2 vols. (Mainz am Rhein, 1996).

⁹ C. A. Keller, “How Many Draughtsmen Named Amenhotep? A Study of Some Deir el-Medina Painters,” *JARCE* 21 (1984), 124; A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (Oxford, 1999), 242; W. Spiegelberg, *Ägyptische und andere Graffiti aus der thebanischen Nekropolis* (Heidelberg, 1921), 92.

Table 1. Dynasty 19 West Theban Texts Mentioning Tomb Creation

Text	Date	Text Type	Owner	Buyer	Seller	Price (dbn)	Price in Text	Work Done	Details
O. Ashmolean HO 183, 1-2 vs.	D. 19	receipt (?)	<i>Imn-m-di-i-hrw-nb (?)</i>	<i>Imn-m-di-i-hrw-nb (?)</i>	<i>rm-t-ist P3- r^c-hpt (?)</i>	240 (?)	4 dbn of silver	decoration only	4 dbn, <i>ḥt</i>
O. Cairo 25517, 9	D. 19, yr. 6 Seti II	journal record			<i>ḥpwy</i>	*			<i>ḥpwy irt t3 ḥt</i> , official work for work on a tomb
O. Cairo 25521, 6 vs.	D. 19, yr. 1-2 Siptah	journal record	<i>ḥry-ist P3-nb</i>			*			absent to work in <i>ḥt</i> tomb
O. DeM 112, 2 vs.	D. 19	transaction receipt, legal, inheritance		<i>T3-s3kt</i> (inheritor)		*			inheritance of <i>ḥt</i> tomb
O. DeM 198, 1-3 vs.	D. 19	receipt (?)		<i>ḥ3-nht</i>	<i>Mry-sḥmt</i>	31	6 <i>snw</i> and 2 <i>ipt</i>	decoration only	<i>p3 s3 n t3y:f š3y</i> ; the painting of his burial chamber
O. DeM 215, 3-4	D. 19, yr. 1 Seti II or Siptah	receipt (?)		<i>rm-t-ist Nb-[. . .]</i>	<i>sš-ḳd Bw-rḥ-[inw].f</i>	18.5 (?)	commodities worth 17-20 (+x) dbn	decoration only	<i>mtw n p3y:f mr</i> ; recompense for his pyramid(ion)
O. IFAO 881	Rameside	receipt			<i>W^c[-. . .]</i>	*			<i>iw.tw dit t3 š3yt [n] W^c[-. . .]</i> ; one (is) selling the burial chamber to Wa[-. . .]
O. Strasbourg H. 174, 1-3 rt.	Rameside	letter	"mayor of the town"	"mayor of the town"	<i>sš Bn-g3 (?)</i>	*			<i>p3 b3kw m t3 ḥt p3 h3it^c n niwt</i> ; the work in the tomb chapel of the mayor
O. Turin 57378, 4-7	D. 19	transaction receipt				11-14 (?)	1 <i>snw</i> + 2 <i>ipt</i> + (1 <i>h3r</i> + 2 <i>ipt</i>) + 1 <i>snw</i>		<i>rdyt n.f r mtw n t3 ḥt</i> ; Giving to him for the payment of the tomb chapel

Table 2. Dynasty 20 West Theban Texts Mentioning Tombs or Burial Space

Text	Date	Text Type	Tomb for	Buyer	Seller	Details
O. Cairo 25243, 8 rt.	Rameside D. 20	journal record	High priest of Amen			ꜥꜥ tomb chapel
O. DeM 586, 8	D. 20	legal record		<i>T3-wr-htp</i> (inheritor)		<i>ir p3 mr nty hr ꜥꜥ n Imn-n-ipt ny-sw T3-wr-htp</i> ; doing the pyramid(ion) which is upon the tomb chapel of Amenemipet belonging to Tawerhotep.
O. DeM 964, 5	D. 20	inheritance				<i>sb3 I m t33yt r3yt</i> ; I door in the right / south- ern burial chamber
O. Petrie 18, 8 rt.	D. 20	legal record				man leaves his <i>st-krs</i> to his son
O. DeM 789	D. 20	letter			<i>Mry-sjmt</i>	<i>ih di.k kd Mry-sjmt t3 s[t3]yt wnw t srit</i> ; Please may you cause Merysekhet to build the burial chamber (in) few hours.
P. Bulaq X / P. Cairo 58092, 2 rt.	D. 20	legal record	ꜥꜥ- <i>n-niwt</i> <i>T3-[gmy]</i>			<i>t3yf mwt st-krs I</i> , his mother: I place of burial
P. Bulaq X / P. Cairo 58092, 2 rt.	D. 20	legal record	<i>Hwy-nfr</i> , father of <i>Hwy</i>			<i>iryf st-krs</i> , his making a place of burial
P. Bulaq X / P. Cairo 58092, 2 rt.	D. 20	legal record	<i>ss Rꜥ-msw-k3h3</i>			<i>p3 mr</i> , the pyramid; will give property to children
P. Bulaq X vs.	D. 20	inheritance				<i>t3 t nt r-gs p3 hmw n Mntw-p3-htꜥpy . . . htꜥ t33st</i> <i>s[t3]yt</i> ; the room next to the chapel of Monthu- pahapy . . . together with her burial chamber.
P. Turin 2070 / 154, 5-6, col. II, vs.	D. 20, RVII	legal record		"her daughter" (inheritor)	<i>Nht-mini</i> (beneficiary)	<i>mr, ꜥꜥt</i> , inheritance text mentioning a pyramid and tomb chapel
Graffito, KV 9	D. 20, RIX	administra- tive record	<i>Ty-m-sb3</i>			Regarding ꜥꜥ Theban Tomb 65, belonging to the overseer of the scribes of the Temple of the Estate of Amen-Re. <i>hwwt m3ꜥꜥw</i> 3.5 months to decorate ꜥꜥ tomb
Graffito, TT 113 of <i>Ky-nbw</i>	D. 20, RVIII	administra- tive record	<i>Ky-nbw</i>			
Graffito, TT 291 of Nakhtmin, DeM	D. 20 / 21	religious text	<i>Bw-th3-imn</i>			Mentions that Butehamen has arrived in the West at an old age and that none will harm his tomb.

I should note that the word *qd* can also mean 'to sketch' or 'to draw,' not just build. Thanks to Robert J. Demarée for pointing this out.

O. DeM 789 should be dated to late D. 19 acc.to Robert J. Demarée

Furthermore, I should add to this list P. Milan 09.40126+09.40128, from Robert J. Demarée's article on Milan Rameside texts in JEOL 42 (2010), 56-57ff, dating to year 4 Ramses IX.

This day of the arriving by the scribe Amenhotep together with his son the scribe and deputy of the scribes of the tomb Amennakht in order to inspect the Enclosure of Two Truths. Meanwhile they were painting in the *mḥt* tomb [of] the overseer of scribes of the temple of the Estate of Amen-Re *Iy-mi-sb* [. . .] And they came, and they saw [. . .]

The tomb chapel is said to belong to the overseer of the scribes of the Temple of the Estate of Amen-Re, Iyemseba, and so it is likely that Theban Tomb 65 is referenced here.¹⁰ No prices or spatial details of the painting work are mentioned, but a graffito would be unlikely to contain such information. The graffito's location in the Valley of the Kings tells us the commissioner probably had links to high level Theban bureaucracy and to the clearance work in the king's tombs at this time.¹¹ In addition, Iyemseba's title provides an obvious connection to the Amen-Re priesthood, indicating why he may have had disposable income to spend as these were the *de facto* rulers of Thebes. Tellingly, this particular tomb is known to have been reused from an older Dynasty 18 chapel.¹² In typical Dynasty 20 fashion, Iyemseba cut corners and reused an older tomb, rather than commissioning a new structure.

Another Dynasty 20 graffito provides more detailed evidence about tomb painting. This particular graffito was found in the same tomb to which it refers, Theban Tomb 113.¹³ It tells of the decoration of a modest tomb chapel for Theban priest Kynebu, who functioned in the mortuary temple of Thutmose IV during the reign of Ramses VIII.¹⁴ It tells us that craft work began in the: "First (month) of Inundation, day 13" and ended in the "First (month) of Winter, day 2." The text was probably written by a Deir el Medina crewman, and it records that it required about three and a half months from start to finish for the decoration work on the small tomb chapel. There is no indication that this tomb was reused, but it is possible that the tomb was an undecorated New Kingdom complex taken over by Kynebu. As for the owner, his father Bakenamen was a *wab* priest of Amen and he himself would have been connected to the network of mortuary temples on the west bank and thus closely allied with the powerful high priests of Amen at Karnak.

Another piece of evidence for tomb building at the end of the Bronze Age, and another graffito, suggests that the necropolis scribe Butehamen was buried in the reused burial chamber of the 18th Dynasty craftsman Nakhtmin (Theban Tomb 291),¹⁵ long after the village itself had been abandoned. The text dates to early Dynasty 21 and was found in the village necropolis of Deir el Medina. It reads:

The West is yours, ready for you. All praised-ones are hidden within it; wrongdoers will not enter it, nor any guilty persons. The scribe Butehamun has moored there after an old age, his body sound and intact. Made by the scribe of the Necropolis Ankhefenamen.¹⁶

¹⁰ Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole*, 285–87.

¹¹ For arguments that the High Priesthood of Amen funded systematic clearance of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings in order to fund their own regimes, see N. Reeves, *Valley of the Kings. The Decline of a Royal Necropolis* (London, 1990); K. Jansen-Winkel, "Die Plünderung der Königsgräber des Neuen Reiches," *ZÄS* 122 (1995), 62–78; J. H. Taylor, "Aspects of the History of the Valley of the Kings in the Third Intermediate Period," in N. Reeves, ed., *After Tut'ankhamun. Research and Excavation in the Royal Necropolis at Thebes* (London, 1992), 186–206.

¹² T. A. Bacs, "First Preliminary Report on the Work of the Hungarian Mission in Thebes in Theban Tomb No. 65 (Nebamun/Imiseba)," *MDAIK* 54 (1998), 49–64.

¹³ Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole*, 394–95.

¹⁴ A. Amer, "A Unique Theban Tomb Inscription under Ramesses VIII," *GM* 49 (1981), 9–12. The translations used here are Amer's.

¹⁵ Bruyère-Kuentz, *Tombes thébaines*.

¹⁶ McDowell, *Village Life*, 73. The translation is after McDowell.

This religious text provides no real economic information. It does communicate that Butehamen did not cut a new burial chamber of his own, but that he was interred in a reused or family tomb in his ancestral village long after people had ceased living there.

Another text tells us about tomb construction. Ostrakon Cairo 25243¹⁷ was once part of the official journal of the royal tomb kept by Deir el Medina craftsmen. This ostrakon was found in KV 6 of Rameses IX, and it lists the daily occurrences of the royal work crew. In one line, we read about the creation of a tomb, perhaps for the high priest of Amen himself. Line 8 of the recto reads, “Day 14, cutting the tomb of the high priest.” The text indicates that very powerful men, like the High Priest of Amen, were indeed able to commission new tombs for themselves and their families. The word used is *ḥꜥ*, and thus it does seem that a tomb chapel was meant, not a burial chamber.

If we look at mentions of the word *šꜥꜣꜣ* or “burial chamber” in west Theban texts of Dynasty 20 date, we see only three occurrences, twice in a legal context (O. DeM 964 and P. Bulaq X) and once as a commission (O. DeM. 789). The latter text is a letter in which the ‘builder’ *Mry-shmt* is asked to excavate a *šꜥꜣꜣ* burial chamber. The former two texts mention the burial chamber as part of an inheritance, passing an already existing construction down to the next generation. This suggests that many people were reusing the burial chambers of their ancestors, only rarely building new ones at the end of the New Kingdom.¹⁸

Overall, when we compare Dynasty 19 Theban documentation with that of Dynasty 20, the impression is of fewer tomb commissions and increased reuse of older structures. In other words, burial space would likely have been at a premium. Interestingly, during Dynasty 20 we see a new tomb type in the Theban textual record—the *st-ḳrs*—mentioned in P. Bulaq X and O. Petrie 18. The compound word *st-ḳrs* literally means: ‘place of burial’ and probably connotes a space within an already existing family tomb chamber or some other undecorated installation. I suggest it means a place of interment with others in a burial chamber. Essentially, the *st-ḳrs* was a place for the body within an existing group burial. For example, in Papyrus Bulaq X (P. Cairo 58092)¹⁹ a son provides a *st-ḳrs* for both his mother and father, an act which grants him ownership of their property after their deaths. A *st-ḳrs* does not seem to have been an actual piece of property that could be built, bought, or sold, but rather a reserved place within a larger burial property. No socioeconomic texts refer to the construction or decoration of a *st-ḳrs* burial place. In fact, the occurrence of the word *st-ḳrs* seems to coincide with an increasing number of legal suits with regards to tombs and burial places filed by west Thebans in Dynasty 20. The word suggests that many individuals in western Thebes were worried about who would take on the financial responsibility of burying the dead and where. Individuals had to resort to legal record keeping and lawsuits to gain burial spaces in an increasingly cash strapped and tomb strapped economy, and many people were not, in fact, buried according to the expectations of the previous generation, a situation reflected in the legal suit in P. Bulaq X.

On the whole, Dynasty 20 text documentation (Table 2) indicates that most Thebans were not commissioning new tombs, and were instead doing quite a bit of legal maneuvering trying to maintain ownership over the tombs that already existed in the community. In addition, most of the records for tomb building during Dynasty 20 were written in the tomb journal or as graffiti—that is, in officially sanctioned records kept by the Deir el Medina craftsmen. If we look back at Dynasty 19 texts in Table 1, we see that the documentation of tomb commission and purchase was found in a wide variety of text genres connected to private commerce—letters, receipts, or workshop records. But in Dynasty 20 (see

¹⁷ G. Daressy, *CG 25001–25385*, 62–63; *KRI VI*, 870–72.

¹⁸ For the textual evidence of tomb reuse, see the soon to be published Kathlyn M. Cooney, “Private Sector Tomb Robbery.”

¹⁹ J. J. Janssen and P. W. Pestman, “Burial and Inheritance in the Community of Necropolis Workmen at Thebes (Pap. Boulaq X and O. Petrie 16),” *JESHO* 11 (1968), 137–70.

Table 2), *ḥr* tomb chapels were only mentioned in the *bureaucratic* and official *tomb journal* texts, suggesting that the private sector for tomb building was closing down and that this luxury was now only available to a limited few men at the very top of the social ladder, men with direct access to necropolis bureaucratic structures.

The titles mentioned in Dynasty 20 texts are also instructive. Most of the individuals mentioned in the textual documentation have some kind of connection to the Amen priesthood. In fact, the creation of new funerary structures in western Thebes seems to have been firmly in the control of these men, men who in turn were the real employers of the Deir el Medina craftsmen.²⁰

The archaeological record in western Thebes corroborates the lack of tomb building activity in Dynasty 20 texts. John Romer's analysis tells us that only ten decorated tombs were constructed during Dynasty 20, compared to forty-nine decorated tombs for Dynasty 19.²¹ Friederike Kampp's analysis shows similar numbers, although broken down differently. She lists forty-eight tombs dated to a specific reign in Dynasty 19, but only eleven tombs dated to a specific reign in Dynasty 20.²² Tamas Bacs says that out of the seventy-five tombs attributable to a specific reign, only two can be dated to the last third of Dynasty 20.²³ In addition, Kampp provides the meaningful analysis that Dynasty 20 was the peak for tomb reuse out of the entire New Kingdom.²⁴

In short, new Dynasty 20 tombs were scarce. After the reign of Ramses III, they were even scarcer, with most families reusing older family sepulchers.²⁵ One exception was the massive and newly discovered funerary monument of Ramsesnakht and his son Amenhotep, commissioned by the tremendously powerful High Priests of Amen who died in the *whm mswt* "Repeating of Births" period in the reign of Ramses XI.²⁶ There is no textual documentation for the commission of this tomb complex, but the archaeological evidence gathered by Daniel Polz is clear. These men were able to build massive funerary chapels in Dra abu el Naga by reusing a preexisting Middle Kingdom or Dynasty 18 structure. More to the point here, the excavations found no evidence of actual burial—no mummies, coffin fragments, mummy bandages, or shabtis. Polz therefore suggests the tomb was not ever used for the burial of mummies, but only for funerary rituals. Indeed, it is quite possible that Ramsesnakht and his family did not trust the security of the west Theban necropolis for their burials, opting only to create a grand tomb chapel for ritual performances, but not to inter the corpses of their family. These may have been placed in a hidden location.

The archaeological evidence specifically from Deir el Medina suggests the same situation. There are many tombs dating to Dynasty 19, but very few from Dynasty 20. Some Dynasty 20 crewmen were able to commission painted tomb chapels and burial chambers, but most of these sepulchers were built during the reign of Ramses III before the social crisis had really settled. Theban Tombs 299 and 359 both belonged to the Foreman in the Place of Truth Inherkhau who lived during the reigns of Ram-

²⁰ For the Amen priesthood at the end of the New Kingdom, see D. Polz, "The Ramsesnakht Dynasty and the Fall of the New Kingdom: A New Monument in Thebes," *SAK* 25 (1998), 257–93. In addition, numerous Dynasty 20 texts testify to the instability of the state salary for the Necropolis workmen of Deir el Medina, and a greater dependency on the Amen priesthood, which often stepped into the breach to pay salaries. See C. J. Eyre, *Employment and Labour Relations in the Theban Necropolis in the Ramesside Period* (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1980); idem, "Work and Organization of Work in the New Kingdom," in M. A. Powell, ed., *Labor in the Ancient Near East*, AO Series 68 (New Haven, 1987), 167–221.

²¹ J. Romer, "Who Made the Private Tombs of Thebes?" in B. Bryan and D. Lorton, eds., *Essays Goedicke* (San Antonio, 1988), 230.

²² Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole*, 14.

²³ Bacs, "First Preliminary Report on the Work of the Hungarian Mission in Thebes in Theban Tomb No. 65 (Nebamun/Imiseba)," *MDAIK* 54 (1998), 49–64.

²⁴ Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole*, 127–28, tables 70 and 73.

²⁵ D. A. Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25. Chronology–Typology–Developments*, Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 21 (Vienna, 2009), 411.

²⁶ Polz, "The Ramsesnakht Dynasty."

ses III and IV. Theban Tomb 267 belonged to a Dynasty 20 man named Hay with the title Officer of the Workmen in the Place of Truth and Fashioner of the Images of All the Gods in the House of Gold.²⁷ Theban Tomb 328 belonged to another man named Hay, but his title is the generic Servant in the Place of Truth.²⁸ Tellingly, some of these tombs were clearly reused. Theban Tomb 359 of Inherkhau shows traces of original Dynasty 19 elements. Even if these Dynasty 20 tombs were all original without any reuse, a comparison of these few tombs to the fifty or so Dynasty 19 decorated tombs is illustrative.

So who was able to build a tomb during Dynasty 20 at Thebes? By the second half of Dynasty 20, it seems that most tomb building, particularly of visible tomb chapels, took place only in the context of particular communities—specifically Deir el Medina craftsmen, on the one hand, and the Amen priesthood, on the other. During the Bronze-Iron age transition when funerary architecture and tomb goods were unattainable for most people, there seems to have existed a mutually beneficial situation for these two communities. It is no surprise that these two groups represent those most able to benefit from funerary arts recommodification, reuse, and theft. The artisans of Deir el Medina lived at ground zero for these activities, either in the necropolis itself or during times of political unrest, in the west Theban walled temple complex of Medinet Habu. Because of both their formal work in the Valley of the Kings as well as their informal work for elites in the western necropolis,²⁹ these craftsmen held stores of logistical knowledge going back generations about who was buried where and with what. The high priests at Karnak were more than aware of this familiarity, and they probably used their political impunity to systematically loot the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and thus to fund their regimes at the end of the New Kingdom and into Dynasty 21.

This brings us to another late New Kingdom / Dynasty 21 adaptation in funerary behavior that has haunted this discussion: the practices of reuse, recommodification, and theft.³⁰ The reuse of funerary arts was inevitable during economic and political downturns.³¹ Tombs and coffins were not freely available to all who wanted them; even during times of prosperity, most Egyptians had no chance of saving the necessary amount even for one coffin, and in times of increased economic and material scarcity, the competition to acquire these funerary arts was fierce, driving many to take and reuse the things of the buried dead. The reuse of a tomb or a coffin effectively broke the link between economic and religious functions by taking the religiously charged object out of the sphere of the sacred and placing it back into the sphere of the commodity.³²

But what is the textual evidence for theft and reuse in the Egyptian necropolis? After all, it is not the kind of thing that the ancient Egyptians would have willingly written down if it reflected poorly on the writer or was somehow ethically charged. Not surprisingly, Thebans only openly recorded instances of theft and reuse when it was in opposition to the perpetrators, as something to be investigated and/or prosecuted. Table 3 includes instances of theft from private tombs in the *Tomb Robbery Papyri*, official legal documentation that records how non-royal tombs were the targets of bands of criminals during the reigns of Rameses IX and Rameses XI.

The harsh interrogations, trials, and punishments recounted in the *Tomb Robbery Papyri* give the impression that these kinds of activities were unusual and socially aberrant. However, other texts suggest

²⁷ Cerný, *Community*, 140; B. G. Davies, *Who's Who at Deir el-Medina: A Prosopographic Study of the Royal Workmen's Community* (Leiden, 1999), 69.

²⁸ There is some confusion and disagreement with this tomb. Although the tomb is suggested by some to be Dynasty 20 (Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole*, 577), this particular Hay is said to date to the reign of Ramses II (Davies, *Who's Who*, 272.)

²⁹ Cooney, *The Cost of Death*.

³⁰ For discussion of these terms, see Daniel Polz, "Bemerkungen zur Grabbenutzung in der thebanischen Nekropole," *MDAIK* 46 (1990), 301–36. The term 'usurpation' should be used carefully, as Polz has defined its legal nature. The word 'reuse' is preferred in this article.

³¹ Näser, "Alltag des Todes"; idem, "Jensites von Theben."

³² Evidence for tomb robbery goes back to the Predynastic. See J. Baines and P. Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead in Ancient Egyptian Society," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2, no. 1 (2002), 5–36.

Table 3. Mentions of Theft from Private Tombs in the Tomb Robbery Papyri

Text	Date	Details
P. Abbott BM 10221, p. 3, line 17	Dyn. 20, year 16 RIX	The tombs of the chantresses of the house of the Divine Adoratrice of Amen-Re, king of the gods: Found intact: 2; Found sacked and robbed: 2, total 4.
P. Abbott BM 10221, p. 4, lines 1-4	Dyn. 20, year 16 RIX	Violated tombs in west Thebes. Owners dragged out of their coffins, funerary equipment stolen, gilding stolen.
P. BM 10054, vs. 1	Dyn. 20, RXI	Examination of thieves of private tombs in west Thebes. Coffin of priest of Amen brought to Island of Amenemipet.
P. BM 10054, rt. pp. 1-2 (2 slides)	Dyn. 20, RXI	Examination of thieves of private tombs of high officials in west Thebes. Discussion of removing bodies, taking coffins and removing gold and silver.
P. BM 10053, vs. p. 4	Dyn. 20, year 17 RIX	Theft of 4 cedar boards from Ramesseum and admittance that they were sold to a carpenter attached to a temple who made them into a coffin for a woman.
P. BM 10053, p. 5	Dyn. 20, year 17 RIX	Scribe of Ramesseum stole wood and sold it in Thebes for a price.
P. BM 10052, p. 10	Dyn. 20, RIX	Examination of thieves who stole from private tombs. Said to have gone to the "Island of Amenemipet" where he saw a coffin in possession of a priest of TIII chapel. They told him it was theirs and it had belonged to a great person (<i>rmt ʕyt</i>).

that the Amen priesthood funded its own crews to open and recommodify elite tombs. The *Late Ramesside Letters* (see Table 4) are perhaps our best source as they include a well-known letter from the High Priest of Amen and General Piankh to the necropolis scribes Djehutymose and Butehamen (P. British Museum 10375) in which the High Priest demands that the necropolis workmen uncover an old tomb and leave it sealed until the High Priest can arrive on the scene, presumably so that he could benefit economically from what was inside. The oblique way in which the letter was written clouds what actually happened, but many agree that the High Priesthood of Amen and the Deir el Medina community joined forces to benefit from valuable goods buried in the necropolis grounds.³³ The veiled language in the *Late Ramesside Letters* indicates that these kinds of commissions were not entirely condoned by the Theban community and that secrecy was demanded. In fact, there are suggestions of hush-ups and retribution inflicted when some wanted a cut of the action, because there is talk in some letters of killing Medjay policemen, putting them into baskets and throwing them into the river in the middle of the night (P. Berlin 10487, P. Berlin 10488, P. Berlin 10489). Other *Late Ramesside Letters* include disguised communications between the necropolis scribes Djehutymose and Butehamen—about certain objects, gold, and secret commissions, all discussed in indirect phraseology, but suggestive nonetheless of tomb recommodification. All excerpts of interest in the *Late Ramesside Letters*³⁴ are listed in Table 4 below.

The village of Deir el Medina provides us with a more local and personal example of possible tomb robbery at the end of the New Kingdom. A group of texts deals with an ongoing dispute over the tomb of a Deir el Medina man named Amenemipet (see Table 5). He claims that there was an opening to his burial chamber from another tomb, and that only one coffin was found in his tomb, belonging to

³³ Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy*, 104-9; Jansen-Winkeln, "Die Plünderung der Königsgräber des Neuen Reiches."

³⁴ E. F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta, 1990); idem, *LRL*, SAOC 33 (Chicago, 1967).

Table 4. Texts of Interest in the Late Ramesside Letters

Text	Date	Text Type	Details
P. BM 10375	Late Dyn. 20	<i>LRL</i> to the general and HPA Piankh from the captains of the necropolis	The necropolis workmen are charged with looking for a marker, perhaps a physical marker of a tomb. They ask that the scribe of the necropolis be sent back to assist. They are charged “to open a tomb among the ancestral tombs (<i>wn w^c st m n³ swt h³tyw</i>)” and that they preserve the seal until the HPA arrives (Ritner, <i>Libyan Anarchy</i> , 108).
P. Berlin 10487	Late Dyn. 20	<i>LRL</i> from the general (Piankh) to the scribe of the necropolis Tjaroy	Reference is made to two Medjay policemen: “Have these two Medjay brought to this house and get to the bottom of their words in short order. If they find out that (it is) true, you shall place them (in) two baskets and (they) shall be thrown (into) this water by night. But do not let anybody of the land find out.” This matter is not specifically linked to tomb robbery / clearance (Wente, <i>LRL</i> , 53).
P. Berlin 10488	Late Dyn. 20	<i>LRL</i> from the general (Piankh) to the controller Paysheuben	The general tells Paysheuben that he has noted the situation with the two Medjay.
P. Berlin 10489	Late Dyn. 20	<i>LRL</i> from the general of the pharaoh (Piankh) to the principal of the harem of Amen-Re Nodjmet	The general tells Nodjmet he has noted the situation with the two Medjay.
P. Bib. Nat. 199, 5–9 + 196 + 198	Late Dyn. 20	<i>LRL</i> from the scribe Djehutymose to the scribe Butehamen	“Now as for the matter of the two kite of gold which [I] told [you] to put into the pit, you did not put them there. Indeed I returned to . . . , and I did not find them. This which you have done is not good” (Wente, <i>LRL</i> , 22).
P. BM 10326	Late Dyn. 20	<i>LRL</i> from the scribe Djehutymose to the scribe Butehamen	“Now I have spoken with Hor-amen-penaf concerning the commission of your superior. Let him also speak with you, (but) you (two) shall hold it secret from me. And do not speak in the presence of another, for it is because of your not speaking with one who comes that you shall rejoice” (Wente, <i>LRL</i> , 38).
O. Cairo CG 25672	Dyn. 20	Letter	In this short ostrakon of 4 lines, the sender asks whether seals are intact and that they be entrusted to their “keepers” (<i>iryw</i>) the next morning. The meaning is not clear. However, the text does mention seals, and it was found in the Valley of the Kings.
P. Geneva D 407	Late Dyn. 20	Letter from the scribe Djehutymose to the scribe Butehamen	The letter includes the strange and intriguing request about an object which is referenced by the red crown hieroglyph: “Now as for your having written to me about the matter of this ‘Red Crown’, ‘Do you not have it? Or has it become lost?’ you said. It has not become lost; I have it.”

Table 5. Dispute Texts of Tombs of Amenemipet and Khaemnun

Text	Date	Text Type	Details
O. BM 5624	Dyn. 20 (yrs. 21–22 RIII)	Deposition	Statement by unnamed person (probably <i>rmt-ist Imn-m-ipt</i>) about assignment of a tomb to his ancestor <i>H3y</i> during reign of Horemheb. The oracle assigned the same tomb to speaker. One year later, <i>H^c-m-nwn</i> found tunnel(?) connecting their tombs while speaker not there. Then scribe <i>Imn-nht</i> called in to confirm the tunnel(?) to tomb of <i>H^c-m-nwn</i> .
O. Florence 2621	Dyn. 20 (yr. 21 RIII)	Inspection record	Speaker (<i>rmt-ist Imn-m-ipt</i>) related inspection of his tomb and connecting tunnel to <i>H^c-m-nwn</i> by Necropolis administration, workmen and himself. A coffin of a “chisel bearer” was found, but no other equipment. Guardian <i>Pn-mn-nfr</i> questioned by scribe of tomb <i>Imn-nht</i> . <i>Pn-mn-nfr</i> says that tomb opens to tomb of <i>H^c-m-nwn</i> . Speaker <i>Imn-m-ipt</i> questioned by scribe <i>h-pt</i> while necropolis scribe <i>Imn-nht</i> inspects tomb. Later inspection by chief policeman <i>Mntw-ms</i> confirmed only one coffin in tomb of <i>Imn-m-ipt</i> . <i>Pn-mn-nfr</i> questioned again.
P. Berlin P. 10496	Dyn. 20 (yr. 21 RIII; yr. 24 RIII)	Dispute, inspection record, oath	Inspection of tomb of <i>H^c-m-nwn</i> . Revealed it connected to tomb of <i>Imn-m-ipt</i> . <i>Imn-m-ipt</i> 's tomb opened by foremen and scribe of tomb, found coffin belonging to no one “in the entire land” and no other mummies. Scribe of the vizier brought in to confirm. Ends with an oath, maybe by guardian <i>Pn-mn-nfr</i> to not go into the tomb again. Next <i>knbt</i> proceedings: workman <i>Imn-m-ipt</i> claims <i>hnw</i> chapel and <i>h^c</i> tomb of <i>Imn-ms</i> as his own. Then claims that someone threw the mummy of one of his female ancestors out of his tomb. That person (<i>Pn-mn-nfr</i> or <i>Imn-msw??</i>) performs an oath he will never enter this tomb again.

a man he never knew. The connections between the tombs are suggestive of tomb robbery to me and the reason for the tomb inspection.³⁵

There are more Deir el Medina texts which I suggest are the remnants of tomb reuse, in particular inventories of tomb contents (see Table 6).³⁶ Scholars have noted that the inventories listed in these texts are suggestive of the kinds of things interred with the dead during Dynasty 18, including coffins, sandals, metal objects, and linens. Missing, however, is any mention of food, like bread and beer, or

³⁵ Cf. Polz, “Bemerkungen zur Grabbenutzung in der thebanischen Nekropole,” 335–36. Polz suggests that the lack of appropriately inscribed tomb goods (i.e., they did not have the expected family names) meant that Amenemipet had to continually defend his legal right to the tomb. Polz does not remark upon the tunnel connecting the tombs as the legal issue of interest and the reason that the investigation was required. To him, the investigation of the burial chamber was meant to substantiate Amenemipet's claim to the tomb in the first place. However, I read this text not as a legal defense, but as an investigation into suspected tomb robbery initiated on behalf of the tomb owner Amenemipet. I suggest that the coffin found in the tomb raised suspicions 1) about the overall lack of tomb goods that should have been there, and 2) about the caching of tomb goods that did not belong in the tomb in the first place. This is not to say that Amenemipet's claim to the tomb was disputed. Perhaps it was, and this may have been the reason his tomb was singled out for theft.

³⁶ For a more thorough discussion on these texts see K. Cooney, “Private Sector Tomb Robbery.”

of the bodies of the dead themselves. In my estimation, these inventory texts are not meant to be an actual list of what was found in the tomb, but a list of fungible commodities from which people could have benefited in the village of Deir el Medina. The inspection texts in Table 6 seem to deal with tombs of contested ownership, tombs that everyone in the village wanted to witness because many would have a claim to the objects found inside. Their contested ownership is the reason why I suggest these tomb inventories were written down in the first place.

Here it is important to note that most funerary reuse in the Deir el Medina necropolis, or in any necropolis for that matter, would have gone unrecorded. We cannot expect that tomb owners felt the need to record such activities when they cleared objects out of their own family tombs, but it is highly likely that people would have wanted to witness any such activity if it occurred in a contested tomb in which they might claim a share. I suggest that most families did reuse and recommodify older funerary objects in their own tombs without any textual record to document it. In fact, it is possible that the “intact” tomb of Sennedjem (Theban Tomb 1)³⁷ is not an untouched picture of Dynasty 19 depositions at all, but is rather a Dynasty 20 end result following the clearance and reuse of many of the grave goods inside over generations.³⁸ This hypothesis suggests that many of the thirteen bodies found without coffins by archaeologists (out of twenty two total bodies) may have *originally* been buried with containers and that they had since been removed from them by family members who wanted to reuse or sell those containers.³⁹ I find it very likely that the family of Sennedjem left the funerary objects of their patriarchs Sennedjem and Khonsu, as well as those of their wives Tamaket and Iyeferty, intact out of respect, while removing the funerary objects of less important family members. Another hypothesis is that these thirteen poorer family members could not afford body containers, a hypothesis which I have discussed elsewhere.⁴⁰ However, I now think it likely that many of the uncoffined bodies in Theban Tomb 1 were not originally buried in this state. Unfortunately, it is impossible to examine these uncoffined bodies themselves for information on dating or quality of embalming, as their current location is unknown.⁴¹

Having gone through all of this evidence, what do dispute and inspection texts from Deir el Medina have to do with private funerary architecture and defensive burial strategies at the end of the New Kingdom? Overall, the available evidence indicates that the socioeconomic situation at the end of the Bronze Age was bleak enough to encourage many people in western Thebes to secretly break into tombs in order to take funerary objects or to recommodify the funerary objects of lesser known ancestors in their own family tombs. The *Tomb Robbery Papyri* and *Late Ramesside Letters* together suggest that

³⁷ A. G. Shedid and Anneliese Shedit, *Das Grab des Sennedjem: Ein Künstlergrab der 19. Dynastie in Deir el Medineh* (Mainz am Rhein, 1994); W. Wettengel, “Die Sargkammer des Sennedjem: Arbeiten an der Kopie eines altägyptischen Grabes,” *Antike Welt* 25 (1994), 172–74; B. Bruyère, *La tombe no. 1 de Sennedjem à Deir el Médineh* (Cairo, 1959).

³⁸ For instance, Andreas Dorn has found a text that indicates that Theban Tomb 1 was open during the late New Kingdom and that it was used to store the pyramidia of Sennedjem and Khonsu. See J. Toivari-Viitala, *Arbeiterhütten im Tal der Könige. Ein Beitrag zur altägyptischen Sozialgeschichte aufgrund von neuem Quellenmaterial aus der Mitte der 20. Dynastie (ca. 1150 v. Chr.)* (Helsinki, 2011).

³⁹ However, cf. Näser, “Alltag des Todes”; idem, “Jensites von Theben.” Näser suggests that while Theban Tomb 1 was used over a few generations, only the outer sarcophagi of Khonsu and Sennedjem might have been reused in other burials. They were not redecored or reinscribed, but both were 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 found in tombs of the elite or craftsman levels may actually have been removed from their original body containers, which were then redecored and reused by other individuals in Dynasty 20 or later. The discovery by Dorn of a Dynasty 20 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 tomb objects.

⁴⁰ Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, ch. 8.

⁴¹ Shedid and Shedit, *Das Grab des Sennedjem: Ein Künstlergrab der 19. Dynastie in Deir el Medineh*, 15–16.

Table 6. Tomb Inspection Texts from Western Thebes

Text	Date	Text Type	Details
O. DeM 828 + O. Vienna H. 01	Dyn. 20 (yr. 25 RIII)	Inspection record	List of the inspection of everything which was found in the ruined (<i>r-w3si</i>) tomb across from the burial place (<i>st-krs</i>) of the scribe <i>Imn-nht</i> son of <i>Ipwy</i> . List of objects, including coffins, metal objects. Objects witnessed and tomb closed in presence of foremen <i>Hnsw</i> and <i>H^cy</i> (<i>In-hr-h^cw</i>), district officer <i>Nfr-htp</i> , district officer <i>H^c-m-ipt</i> , the guardian <i>Pn-mn-nfr</i> , <i>H^c-m-nwn</i> , <i>Wsr-h3t</i> , <i>3-nht</i> , <i>Irsw</i> , <i>Hwy-nfr</i> , <i>Nfr-hr</i> , and scribe <i>Imn-nht</i> .
O. Madrid 16.243	Dyn. 20 (yr. 4 RIV)	Inspection record	Tomb handed over to <i>rm-t-ist Mnn3</i> by necropolis adm. Followed by list of items in the tomb (lost). “This day, inspecting the tomb of the guardian <i>Imn-m-ipt</i> by the three captains of the [Necropolis] in order to hand [it] over [to] the workman <i>Mnn3</i> . [List] of everything that was in it: A coffin [. . .]” (perhaps five more lines lost).
P. DeM 26	Dyn. 20 (yr. 16 RIII)	Legal text	Collection of disputes heard in one proceeding. One dispute involves coffins that were “taken” and “places” under dispute. Oaths are taken, <i>knbt</i> court.

necropolis security had almost completely broken down. Bands of opportunistic men roved the necropolis at night looking for funerary objects to steal, while those in charge of the security of western Thebes—the High Priesthood of Amen—were systematically repurposing the treasures of the Theban necropolis and asking that older elite tombs be opened by the Deir el Medina crew for this purpose. The crew likely had no choice but to comply, but more significantly, they were probably amply rewarded for their work (neither of which we have any direct evidence for, of course). It is interesting to note that even the rape of the Theban necropolis functioned with a system of rules: the *Tomb Robbery Papyri* suggest that Deir el Medina crewmen or mortuary priests who acted on their own were harshly punished for going around upper hierarchies, just like a modern mafia group would harshly punish anyone who took the entire haul and ignored established communication systems and tiered allotments of profit.⁴²

In short, necropolis security had broken down, and as a result few people were willing to trust the West Bank community with their burial goods. By late Dynasty 20, most elites stopped building obvious tomb chapels altogether, choosing unmarked locations for burial. Those people who were able to commission tombs were the same ones who controlled western Thebes politically and economically. As time went on, even these powerful High Priests realized that their tombs were not safe, and by Dynasty 21, wealthy Thebans relied on secret burial chambers meant to be invisible from the landscape. Some Theban elites relied on large group burials meant to be used for multiple interments of multi-generational communities⁴³ (see Table 7). These burial chambers were usually found in older Middle

⁴² R. T. Anderson, “From Mafia to Cosa Nostra,” *American Journal of Sociology* 71, no. 3 (1965), 302–10; R. Catanzaro, “Enforcers, Entrepreneurs, and Survivors: How the Mafia Has Adapted to Change,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 1 (1985), 34–57. For such informal systems acting without and around formal systems, see G. Helmke and S. Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004), 725–40, and C. Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back* (Cambridge, 1985), 169–87.

⁴³ For terms, see J. H. Taylor, “Changes in the Afterlife,” in W. Wendrich, ed., *Egyptian Archaeology* (Oxford, 2010), 229. Taylor argues convincingly that Egyptologists should use the term “group burial” to describe Third Intermediate Period interments of many individuals, as opposed to “cache burials,” which were formed at one moment after a reorganization of many burials, or “mass burials,” which buried many in one place at one time. Taylor also follows Niwinski that the cache burials of Deir el Bahari

Table 7. Known 21st Dynasty Group Burials at Thebes

Tomb	Excavation	Date	Location	Occupants
TT 320; DB 320; “The Royal Cache” ⁱ	Antiquities Service, 1881, discovered 1871 by Abd el Rassul family	Dyn. 21, rule of HPA Pidedjem II and later	First valley south of Deir el Bahari, Dyn. 18 reused rock cut tomb	11 Burials of the family of Pinedjem II, later burials from Amen Priesthood, the burials of 10 New Kingdom kings
Bab el Gassus; “Second Cache” ⁱⁱ	Antiquities Service, 1891	Dyn. 21	Deir el Bahari, courtyard of Hatshepsut temple	153 burials belonging to High Priests and Chantresses of Amen, plus multiple unidentified mummies
MMA tomb 59 ⁱⁱⁱ	American excavation sponsored by the MMA, excavator H. E. Winlock, 1911–1931	Dyn. 21	Deir el Bahari, reused Dyn. 18 rock cut tomb of Minmose	Burial of Henatawy F
MMA 60; “Tomb of Three Princesses” ^{iv}	American excavation sponsored by the MMA, excavator H. E. Winlock, 1911–1931	Dyn. 21, rule of HPA Menkheperre or later	Deir el Bahari, reused Dyn. 18 rock cut tomb	Burial of Henatawy B, Djedmutesankh A, Henatawy C, Menkheperre C, Tabakenmut, Nesitiset, Tiye, Gautseshen
MMA 65; TT 358: Tomb of Queen Ahmose-Merytamen ^v	American excavation sponsored by the MMA, excavator H. E. Winlock, 1911–1931	Dyn. 21	Deir el Bahari, near first court of Hatshepsut’s temple	Burial of Nauny
Tomb Pit 1016; Mond tomb no. 8 ^{vi}	American excavation sponsored by the MMA, excavator H. E. Winlock, 1911–1931		Deir el Bahari, “third valley” near the unfinished Dyn. 11 temple	Burial of the Charioteer Itefamen

ⁱ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 220–31.

ⁱⁱ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 164–98.

ⁱⁱⁱ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 198–99; H. E. Winlock, “Tombs of Kings of Seventeenth Dynasty at Thebes,” *JEA* 10 (1924), 217–77.

^{iv} Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*: 199–202; H. E. Winlock, “The Museum’s Excavations at Thebes,” *BMMA* 19, no. 2 (December, 1924); idem, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri, 1911–1931* (New York, 1942).

^v H. E. Winlock, *The Tomb of Queen Meryet-Amun at Thebes*, *PMMAEE* 6 (New York, 1932), 53–56, 69–82; Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 202; Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri, 1911–1931*, 178–79, 194–200.

^{vi} Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 232; Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri, 1911–1931*.

or New Kingdom rock cut shafts, sometimes reused with no modifications, sometimes with added rooms.⁴⁴ Visible markers on the tomb were eschewed, and secrecy was highly valued. The discrete family tomb was a thing of the past for just about every Theban elite in Dynasty 20.

Archaeological evidence from Dynasty 21 indicates that grave goods were kept to an absolute minimum. Elites usually included only what could fit into a nesting coffin set. Practical items of daily life,

were formed later in Dynasty 21 and do not represent the original burial of many of these persons, A. Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins from Thebes: Chronological and Typological Studies* (Mainz am Rhein, 1988), 26–29.

⁴⁴ W. Grajetzki, *Burial Customs in Ancient Egypt: Life in Death for Rich and Poor* (London, 2003), 103.

like linens, wine jars, furniture, wigs, and toiletries were abandoned, not only because of the lack of space, but because their value as commodities created a threat to the dead.⁴⁵ Only the religious necessities were placed in the tomb—mummy, coffins, funerary texts, shabtis. Anything that might threaten the existence of the mummies and bodies inside by drawing tomb robbers was dispensed with. Defensive burial was of the utmost value now, and for some in Thebes, this was a highly successful adaptation. The High Priesthood of Amen created tombs so hidden that they survived into the late nineteenth century.⁴⁶

In many ways, the Dynasty 21 burial assemblage represents an extension of the social adaptations that were made in the latter part of the New Kingdom. Funerary strategies emphasized the coffin set as the discrete dwelling place for an individual within a larger community in a group burial, rather than emphasizing the decorated tomb complex that was previously individualized for the patriarch and his nuclear family. The visible family tomb was an essential part of understanding family hierarchies within the centralized hegemony of Dynasty 19 Thebes. The Dynasty 21 system, on the other hand, followed decentralized political systems, and the defensive nature of secret, group burial encouraged interment as an individual among dozens of other peers within a larger community, not as a member of a family.

Poor individuals in ancient Egypt had relied on the shared value of group burial for some time,⁴⁷ but this adaptation became a near universal standard by the Third Intermediate Period,⁴⁸ even including the royal family buried in the Delta at Tanis, who chose a secure burial location within temple walls.⁴⁹ Group burial is one adaptation that moved from the *lower* strata of society *up*, in response to tomb robbery in an insecure west Theban necropolis.

Lack of security and lack of visible tomb chapels demanded that Thebans develop a new reliance on temples as community funerary chapels.⁵⁰ Otherwise, where was one supposed to commune with the dead? Where was one meant to perform the Opening of the Mouth ceremony so as not to give away the location of the group burial? Families placed statues of deceased individuals in temple spaces, and they used Medinet Habu and other west Theban temples as generalized places to deposit offerings for the dead. This adaptation intimately connected funerary rituals with temple festivals and daily rituals. Community wide funerary ceremonies probably happened during the Valley festival and may have led to profound developments, including the inception of the Decade Festival, now just starting to gain importance.⁵¹ It is possible that festival changes at Medinet Habu and in western Thebes as a whole can be directly connected to the evolving funerary needs of Egyptian families. The Dynasty 18 kings had long ago moved their mortuary temples away from their tombs to keep their treasures safe. Now the Theban elite was following that same precedent: burying their dead in unmarked group tombs, while providing cult service to their afterlife incarnations in a separate temple space. This funerary shift must have required changes in festivals and festival space, but that discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

⁴⁵ However, see Grajetzki, *Burial Customs in Ancient Egypt*, 90, where he suggests that utilitarian grave goods were left out of the tomb because of a change in religious beliefs. While I do not discount this interpretation, I do believe that more practical and economic reasons were at the core of the transition.

⁴⁶ Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 20–35.

⁴⁷ M. Raven, *The Tomb of Iuruf: A Memphite Official in the Reign of Ramesses II* (London and Leiden, 1991); Grajetzki, *Burial Customs in Ancient Egypt*, 97; Baines and Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead."

⁴⁸ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 398–99.

⁴⁹ P. Montet, *Tanis II* (Paris, 1951).

⁵⁰ Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 29.

⁵¹ For the Decade Festival, see M. Doresse, "Le dieu voilé dans sa châsse et la fête du début de la décade," *RdÉ* 23 (1971), 113–36. In addition see two more articles of the same title in *RdÉ* 25 (1973), 92–135 and *RdÉ* 31 (1979), 36–65. Also see K. M. Cooney, "The Edifice of Taharqa by the Sacred Lake: Ritual Function and the Role of the King," *JARCE* 37 (2000), 34–37, esp. nn. 129, 130.

The adaptation towards secret group burials had three advantages, as I see it. First, these interments were unmarked and as such provided no clues to tomb robbers about the richness of the burial underneath. Second, burial with dozens of other people encouraged investment in secrecy among more people. Third, the burial community could invest in security as a group, paying guards to watch over one tomb, rather than dozens. Group burial did have some obvious drawbacks, however. One was the lack of space. Even rich individuals had to dispense with large rectangular sarcophagi, opting instead for a set of anthropoid coffins that fit within one another in a space efficient manner. And furthermore, the group burial's security advantage could be turned into a disadvantage: it was only as strong as its weakest member, and in a large group there was always someone willing to steal during times of uncertainty. For example, the mummy boards and inner coffins of a given coffin set were especially vulnerable in a group burial because they could be violated by peers when depositing a new burial without anyone knowing about it later. If thieves left the outer coffin untouched, there was no way for anyone to know that someone had removed the gilded hands and face from the coffins on the inside of the set,⁵² unless systematic checks were performed to open each coffin in a nesting set by interested family members.⁵³

Group burial changed the very nature of the New Kingdom elite tomb and the three zones which it constituted—the superstructure (such as the pyramid structure often found atop the tomb chapel), the mid section of the tomb (where cult activity occurred, including the open court and the interior tomb chapel), and the lower structure (the burial chamber for deposition of the body).⁵⁴ In Dynasty 19 the elite dead were placed within tombs that had multiple levels, in which the deceased's movement from the solar to the Osirian and back again was represented architecturally. Imagery depicted the deceased in multiple settings (at work, at home, in the tomb, in the afterlife) and in various forms (as living man, mummy, awakened *akh* spirit, etc.). The tomb complex created an extended social and accessible space of transformation. Such architectural complexes were believed to facilitate dwelling in a home-like tomb, allowing movement in and out of the underworld, into the tomb, out to see the sun, and into communion with the living who visited the dead through paintings, stelae or statuary.

By Dynasty 21, however, most dead were relegated to just one zone, the burial chamber, profoundly changing the way the ancient Egyptians elites conceived of interment. The burial was condensed into a nesting coffin set, a set of shabti figurines to labor for the deceased in the next life, and if the dead person could afford it, one or two papyrus rolls placed into the coffin. The mummy itself was carefully embalmed, and there was a profusion of amulets in the wrappings, not of gold, but of faience⁵⁵—materials that lacked gold's fungible's qualities. In one case, a valuable amulet was actually placed *inside* of the mummy's chest cavity,⁵⁶ which could be seen not only as a literal understanding of the heart

⁵² Many Dynasty 21 coffins are missing the hands and face, particularly of the inner pieces. It is presumed that these coffin elements were gilded and that is why they were taken. In the Royal Cache at Deir el Bahari 320, the coffin sets of Masaharta (CG 61027), Maatkare (CG 61028), Nesikhonsu (CG 61030), and Isetemkheb (CG 61031) all have intact gilded hands and face on the outer coffins, while the same was removed from both the inner coffin and the mummy board (see G. Daressy, *CG 61001–61044*).

⁵³ The BM mummy board EA 15659 bears a restitution inscription suggesting that the object was in fact taken from the tomb, recognized at some point by people familiar with the mummy board, and then returned to the coffin set with the restoration inscription. See Taylor, "Aspects of the History of the Valley of the Kings in the Third Intermediate Period." This suggests either that some family members may have checked on the inner pieces in the coffin sets of their family, perhaps by entering the tomb and opening the coffin set itself, or that the piece was recognized at a workshop or market where it was to be recommodified.

⁵⁴ K. J. Seyfried, "Entwicklung in der Grabarchitektur des neuen Reiches als eine weitere Quelle für theologische Konzeptionen der Ramessidenzeit," in J. Assmann, G. Burkard, and V. Davies, eds., *Problems and Priorities in Egyptian Archaeology* (London, 1987), 219–53.

⁵⁵ Taylor, "Changes in the Afterlife," 236–37.

⁵⁶ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 385.

scarab, but also as a defensive adaptation. A thief would have had to crack open the mummy itself to find its treasures.

According to Taylor, Dynasty 21 funerary strategies represent a “minimalization in burial customs” and that “[t]he decline of the elite tomb as the principal focus of the mortuary cult and the reduction in the range of grave goods seem to reflect a change in the significance attached to funerary provision, rather than a simple response to economic pressure.”⁵⁷ In other words, these changes were not just about the money. There was a real shift in values. Elite Thebans were not abandoning the tomb chapel just because they could no longer afford it or because materials were scarce. These supply issues certainly played a role, but necropolis insecurity likewise played a role. The secret, group tomb, to which people turned, lacked space and thus elites were forced to condense their tomb goods down to one nesting coffin set. Space was not the only issue. The ample tomb goods of Dynasties 18–19 were too much of a draw to tomb robbers, and this threat caused people to leave out any objects that were non-funerary or that could be easily recommodified. Finally, the lack of tomb markers forced people to move statuary and stelae of their dead into communal spaces where they had not previously been, creating a decentralized connection between funerary ritual, contact with the dead, and the interment of the body itself. In the end, Social crisis created a domino effect of adaptations, resulting in a new form of burial that relied, in large part, on a densely decorated coffin set.

Evidence Part II: Late Ramesside and Early Dynasty 21 Coffins from Thebes

And this brings our discussion to the coffins of the Bronze-Iron Age transition. The late New Kingdom and Dynasty 21 burial focused on the body’s discrete self sufficiency within an unmarked tomb shared by many people. Thus the coffin’s part in the burial was essential. Without painted tomb walls, statues, or carved pyramidia, the body container was the chief means of providing the elite dead with personal identification, magical protection, and transformative ability. At this time, the coffin was the chief funerary element that named and pictured the dead, thus allowing him or her some kind of physical presence in the world of the living. For example, a Dynasty 21 letter to the dead was addressed to the coffin of the deceased, not to the deceased herself, ostensibly because the religiously charged object was believed to make contact with the dead and connect her to her living husband.⁵⁸ At the end of the New Kingdom and into Dynasty 21, there can be no doubt that the coffin was the second-most important element of the burial (the first being the mummy itself).

As the tomb changed at the end of the New Kingdom, the coffin began a parallel development, taking on more tomb chapel functions. I do not mean to suggest that the late Ramesside coffin became a one-to-one substitute for the decorated tomb chapel, containing iconography once inscribed on tomb walls.⁵⁹ Instead, it seems that the coffin was modified to fulfill many of the same religious and social *functions* once maintained by the New Kingdom tomb complex, including the open solar court, the

⁵⁷ Taylor, “Changes in the Afterlife,” 237.

⁵⁸ The letter to the dead is O. IFAO 698 in which a husband contacts his dead wife by means of the *fdt* “chest,” or “coffin” containing his deceased wife. The materiality of her coffin may have been seen as essential for contacting someone in the next life, a human detail which adds more significance to the scale of coffin reuse happening at this time period. See P. J. Frandsen, “The Letter to Ikhtay’s Coffin: O. ~~Leiden~~ Inv. No. 698,” in R. J. Demarée and A. Egberts, eds., *Village Voices* (Leiden, 1992), 31–50.

⁵⁹ A. Niwinski, *Studies on the Illustrated Theban Funerary Papyri of the 11th and 10th Centuries B.C.*, OBO 86 (Freiburg, 1989), 34–36, and idem, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 15, 18, indicates that the function of tomb decoration was taken over by papyrus and coffin decoration. However, see others who note that most scenes on Dynasty 20–21 coffins are very different from scenes in a Ramesside tomb, including R. van Walsem, *The Coffin of Djedmonthuiufankh in the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden* (Leiden, 1997), 359–61; Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 399, n. 3135. Also see Taylor, “Changes in the Afterlife,” 234. I think if we take a less literal approach, however, and move towards a functional equivalency, it is possible to see coffin decoration stepping in for tomb complex architecture and decoration as a whole.

This should be O. Louvre 698. I am grateful to Robert J. Demarée for pointing out this error.

painted walls of the chapel, statuary of the deceased, and the solar superstructure in the shape of a pyramid or topped by a solar stela. A desire for multi-functionality may explain why so much Dynasty 20–21 coffin decoration combines the solar and the Osirian in new ways.⁶⁰ Essentially, it could be argued that, without a tomb chapel in the funerary complex, the coffin now had to function not only as the burial place, but also as an ersatz *cult place* for the deceased’s well-being, performed *by the deceased* him or herself. Indeed, many scenes on the coffin exterior show the dead person performing ritual before gods, censuring, purifying and offering, as if they are chief priest in his or her own discrete temple space. The lid and case sides of Dynasty 21 coffins are often broken up into rectangular scenes, many of them showing the dead in the company of Osiris and the sun god. Other common scenes show transformational moments, such as the weighing of the heart before Osiris, or the raising of the *djed* pillar or Nut vaulted over the earth god Geb. Scenes of the funeral appear on coffins and recall festival images from Medinet Habu’s inner courtyards in type if not subject matter.⁶¹ Repeated bird figures with outstretched wings on later Dynasty 21 coffin lids might even be seen as reminiscent of New Kingdom temple ceilings.⁶² In short, the coffin was the only discrete element of burial for the elite of the Bronze-Iron Age transition.

Coffin Price

One might expect that during times of political and economic instability, people would order coffins of lower material and aesthetic quality. However, the text information from the end of the New Kingdom seems to tell a different story. People with disposable income in Dynasty 20 were spending *more* on their coffins than ever seen before in Dynasty 19. In fact, Table 8 shows that the highest coffin prices in the entire Ramesside data set find their origin in Dynasty 20, including P. Turin *Giornale* 17B, P. Turin 1907/8, and O. Turin 57368, in which coffins are said to cost as much as twenty times the yearly salary of a Deir el Medina craftsmen.

However, the rise in coffin price is not due to the few extraordinarily expensive coffins purchased by Theban elite.⁶³ Instead, Table 9 shows that the median price—the most common price in the data set—was also going up over time. In other words, if someone could afford a coffin, they were generally paying more for it by the end of the New Kingdom. Thus, even if we remove Table 8’s extraordinarily high prices from our analysis, the overall cost of coffins was still increasing. According to the Theban textual evidence, as the Ramesside Period progressed there was a consistent and significant rise in the amount spent on *wt* anthropoid coffins—from a median of 20 *dbn* to a median of 25 *dbn*–5 *dbn* or 25%, a rise which started in mid Dynasty 20 and continuing into late Dynasty 20. Most of the prices were listed in copper *dbn* which was reasonably stable, removing inflation as a prime mover for the rise in price. If we revalued the prices in *h³r* of grain, the chief commodity showing inflation at this time, then the prices would have been even higher in real, practical terms, not less. Overall, people who could afford coffins were spending more on their sets.

⁶⁰ See A. Nawiński, “The Solar-Osirian Unity as Principle of the Theology of the ‘State of Amen’ in Thebes in the 21st Dynasty,” *JEOL* 30 (1987–1988), 89–107.

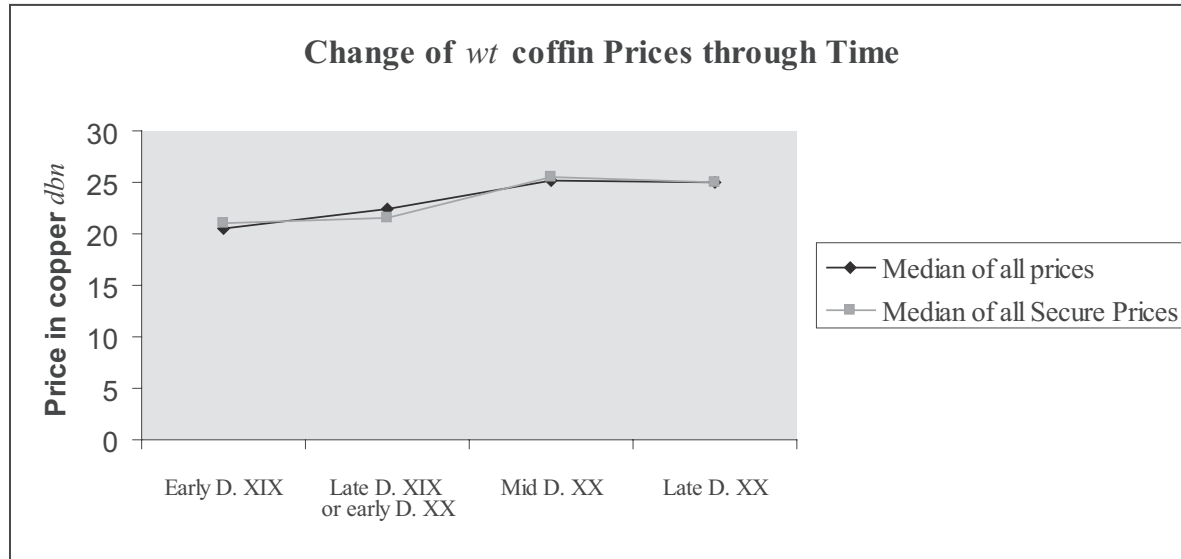
⁶¹ For example, see the funerary scene on the left case side of a stola coffin in the Vatican Museums, Inv. no. 25008.2.1/2. A. Gasse, *Les sarcophages de la troisième période intermédiaire du Museo Gregoriano Egizio* (Vatican City, 1996).

⁶² For example, see the coffin set AE 10 in the Bern Historisches Museum in H. Schlögl, ed., *Geschenk des Nils. Ägyptische Kunstwerke aus Schweizer Besitz: eine Ausstellung des Ägyptologischen Seminars der Universität Basel in Zusarb. mit dem Schweizerischen Bankverein* (Basel, 1978).

⁶³ It is also interesting to note the individuals mentioned selling expensive coffins in the *Giornale* papyrus, like Horisheru, are the same mentioned in the *Tomb Robbery Papyri*. I would like to thank Chris Eyre for pointing this out (pers. comm., Helsinki, 2009). It is unknown whether these expensive coffins were somehow connected with illicit profits from tomb robbery, but it is suspicious.

Table 8. Some of the Highest Prices for Coffins from the West Theban Documentation

Text	Date	Text Type	Buyer	Seller	Price (<i>dbn</i>)	Price As Written	Details
O. Turin 57368, 2-3 rt.	Dyn. 20, RIII	Receipt (?)		<i>ss n p3 hr Hri</i>	145	80 <i>dbn</i> (const) + 65 <i>dbn</i> (dec)	<i>isy, p3 ss, irt</i> <i>mrhw</i>
P. Turin 1907/8	Dyn. 20, RVI	Trans-action receipt		scribe of treasury <i>P3-bs</i>	395-x (?)	1 <i>rpyt</i> + 1 <i>wt</i> = 395 <i>dbn</i>	<i>ss</i>
P. Turin, Giornale 17 B, 7-8 vs.	Dyn. 20, yr. 17, RIX	Workshop record	<i>smc n imm T3-ndm</i>	<i>ss Hri-sri n p3 hr, ss</i> <i>Hc-m-[. . .], ss M33-nhs</i>	95	95 <i>dbn</i> = constr. (60) + dec. (35)	<i>wpwt imntt, wt</i> <i>3 outer coffin</i>
P. Turin, Giornale 17B, 9-11 vs.	Dyn. 20, yr. 17, RIX	Workshop record	<i>smc n imm T3-ndm</i>	<i>ss Hri-sri n p3 hr, ss</i> <i>Hc-m-[. . .], ss M33-nhs</i>	200	200 <i>dbn</i> = constr. (140) + dec. (60)	<i>wt sri inner</i> coffin

Table 9. Change of *wt*-coffin Prices through Time (after Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, 116).

This rise in median coffin prices in Dynasty 20 may seem contradictory in a time of economic crisis, but if viewed holistically, the trend provides excellent evidence that people were creatively negotiating a difficult situation of 1) economic recession in combination with, 2) religious beliefs that demanded funerary materiality, 3) social demands that elites buy and display fashionable and rich funerary arts; and 4) increased tomb robbery and funerary arts reuse. In other words, how did the rich invest in high-cost funerary materiality despite the scarcity of resources and in light of the risk of theft and reuse? As we have already seen, one solution to tomb robbery was to stop building decorated tomb chapels, which not only cut costs for individual families, but also provided secrecy to family interments during insecure times. This adaptation meant that wealthy people could afford to spend more on their coffins, which they could display in public funerary rituals and then hide away in a burial chamber. Furthermore, higher prices might suggest that some people actually had more income to spend on funerary arts, perhaps (and ironically) because of an influx of wealth from tomb robbery and grave good recommodification in Thebes, particularly in the circles of Deir el Medina workmen and the Amen priesthood.

Coffin Style

How did socioeconomic crisis affect the style of the late Ramesside coffins? If we look more closely at the coffins from Dynasty 20, we see material, iconographic, and layout changes that could find their origins in a variety of social, economic, and religious negotiations. Stylistic changes, including denser layouts, flexibility in scene choice, increased nesting, and a wider variety of paint colors, are already well known.⁶⁴ I want to put these changes into their social and economic context and to examine them as defensive adaptations. The coffin is essentially a remnant of strategies by Egyptian elites

⁶⁴ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*; A. Niwinski, “Sarg NR- SpZt,” *LdÄ V*, 434–68; idem, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*; van Walsem, *The Coffin of Djedmonthuiufankh in the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden*; van Walsem, “Deir el Medina as the Place of Origin of the Coffin of Anet in the Vatican (Inv.: XIII.2.1, XIII.2.2),” in R. J. Demarée and A. Egberts, eds., *Deir el Medina in the Third Millennium AD*; Taylor, “Changes in the Afterlife”; J. H. Taylor, *The Development of Theban Coffins during the Third Intermediate Period: A Typological Study* (Ph.D. diss., Birmingham University, 1985); J. H. Taylor, *Egyptian Coffins* (Aylesbury, 1989); J. H. Taylor,



Fig. 1. Coffin of Nakht (photograph courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum).

who adapted to changing burial behaviors, scarce resources and the likelihood that others, maybe their own relatives, would attempt to take and re-use their funerary materials.

From Dynasty 20 to 21, there was a shift towards making the coffin ensemble an increasingly self sufficient package. Elites now favored contained burials, rather than spreading themselves too broadly throughout external objects so common in the first part of the New Kingdom. The canopic chest, for example, kept integral parts of the body away from the mummy in a separate location, demanding magical spells to protect the organs and then return them to the body. At the end of the Bronze Age, however, internal organs, which were

still mummified separately, were returned to the body and the protective limits of the coffin. Articles with the name of the deceased, like cosmetic chests, tools, and furniture that had been placed around the bodies of elite dead were abandoned by Dynasty 20. Without them, there was perhaps little need for the magical bricks which had created a sacred perimeter along the four walls of the burial chamber. Essentially, the iconography on the coffin walls performed that protective function for each individual burial. All in all, the burial of the elite individual was condensed down into a self reliant package that fit with the economic constraints of the times.⁶⁵ An examination of Dynasty 20 coffins will be illustrative of some of the style changes that fit with these defensive adaptations.

There are only a few surviving Dynasty 20 coffins. Out of about seventy total Ramesside coffins, only seven are definitely Dynasty 20 stylistically.⁶⁶ Only one constitutes a coffin set of inner coffin and mummy board. The findspots of these coffins are not all known, but all probably belong to the Theban region or at least southern Egypt. For more information on these coffins, see the appendix at the end of this article.

- 1) One of the earliest Dynasty 20 examples is the coffin of Nakht who was a member of a weaving workshop during the reign of Seti I and which is now in the Royal Ontario Museum (see fig. 1).⁶⁷
- 2) The coffin of Muthotep in the British Museum lists the title of the female owner as Chantress of Amen, indicating her Theban origins. Only the coffin lid survives. A break in the plaster on the left side reveals Dynasty 19 decoration of the deceased wearing the white garment of an *akh* soul, indicating that the coffin of Muthotep was made from a reused Dynasty 19 coffin (see fig. 2).
- 3) The coffin of Padiamen is located in the Cairo Museum. The title of the deceased is broken, but it ends with *-imn*, suggesting a Theban priestly bureaucratic position. This coffin was found reused in

"Patterns of Colouring on Ancient Egyptian Coffins from the New Kingdom to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty: An Overview," in W. V. Davies, ed., *Colour and Painting in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2001).

⁶⁵ Taylor, "Changes in the Afterlife."

⁶⁶ Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, 462–84. It should be noted that there is disagreement about the dating of some of these coffins. Anders Bettum in his recent dissertation (*Faces within Faces: The Symbolic Function of Nested Yellow Coffins in Ancient Egypt*, University of Oslo, Norway, 2011) has argued that the coffins of Sosekhnofre, Anet, Mutnofret, and Khnumensanapekhsu belong to the mid Dynasty 21 and that the only reason their lids include modeled arms is because of archaization. I disagree with the dating, but I do contend that the reuse and redecoration of many of these objects may have created a melange of styles, rather than the unified intended style of the first time the coffin was painted.

⁶⁷ For publication of this piece, see R. David and R. Archbold, *Conversations with Mummies: New Light on the Lives of Ancient Egyptians* (New York, 2000), 96–97; P. Lewin et al., "Nakht: A Weaver of Thebes," *Rotunda: The Magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum* 7, no. 4 (1974), 15–19.



Fig. 2a. Coffin of Muthotep, b. Coffin of Muthotep detail of reuse.



Fig. 3. Coffin of Padiamen.

the Dynasty 21 royal cache in Deir el Bahari, and the name of the owner was removed, indicating it was reused for a different person (see fig. 3).

- 4) The coffin of Sosekhnofru, now in Copenhagen, is said to come from Thebes. His title is *it ntri n Ist n B hnryt* “God’s Father of Isis-of-Takheneret.” This coffin was later usurped by the *wab* priest Pa-aaenkah, according to text inscriptions (see fig. 4).
- 5) The coffin of Nysuamen is currently in Leeds. His titles are extensive and undoubtedly connected to the Theban region: *sš hwt-ntr n Mntw-Rc nb w3st* (scribe of the temple of Monthu-Re, lord of Thebes) and *imy-r k3w n pr Imn-Rc* (overseer of the offerings of the house of Amen-Re). Although his coffin may date to mid Dynasty 20, the mummy braces on his body are dated to the reign of Ramses XI (see fig. 5).
- 6) The coffin of the Lady Anet is now in the Vatican Museums. The lady has no discernable title, but her coffin is perhaps Theban in origin. In addition, texts with the prices for this particular coffin’s decoration have been identified by van Walsem (see fig. 6).⁶⁸
- 7) The coffin of Khnumensanapekhsu is in Berlin. The owner was overseer of cattle at a Min temple, and he could have been from Akhmim. The coffin seems to fit with a Theben style, but it has also been called “provincial” in the Egyptological literature. The case sides display very unusual imagery for a coffin of this time, including a scene of Anubis tending the polychrome wrappings of a mummy. Another unusual scene shows Isis embracing an elaborate *djed* pillar (see fig. 7).

If these coffins are correctly dated, then Dynasty 20 coffins are different from those of Dynasty 19 in a number of ways. They have the same yellow background color, but the variety of color hues has increased. The coffin of Anet, for example, shows two colors of green, which is not known in Dynasty 19. Draftsmen and commissioners seemed interested in a creative use of color, and there may have been

⁶⁸ Walsem, “Deir el Medina as the Place of Origin of the Coffin of Anet in the Vatican (Inv.: XIII.2.1, XIII.2.2),” 337–49. For examination of price in relation to coffin quality see Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, 252–53.



Fig. 4. Coffin of Soseknofru.



Fig. 5a. Coffin of Nysuamen, b. Mummy board of Nysuamen (photograph courtesy of Anders Bettum).



Fig. 6. Coffin of Anet.



Fig. 7. Coffin of Khnumensanapeksu.

social competition over color. In fact, the increase in color hues is focused on blues and greens, the more expensive colors in the palette, which may have been to make up for the lack of gilding or inlay. The Dynasty 20 coffins left to us in the archaeological record show no gilding at all, which is very different from the elite Dynasty 19 coffins when the hands and face often have an application of gold leaf.

As we move into Dynasty 21, there is more evidence of gilding, but it coincides with evidence for something less pleasant—theft. Much of the gold applied to elite coffins of Dynasty 21 was removed, probably within a few generations after burial if not immediately, usually by means of a chisel. Many Dynasty 21 coffins survive with hands and face ripped from their wooden bodies, a reality that people buying a coffin would have wanted to avoid for their own eternal forms. Thinking defensively, buyers would have been very interested in, and initiated, a number of strategies to make coffin decoration less attractive to the opportunist. The first step was to abandon gilding, even, I can imagine, if the buyer could afford it. Only three Dynasty 21 coffins show complete gilding, and these among the richest people in all of Thebes who were buried in the Royal Cache. The gilding on all three was chiseled away.⁶⁹ In fact, it was carefully removed so as not to harm the name of the deceased or any religious imagery,⁷⁰ a technique which documents that the same people who cared about the dead also stole from them. As the dynasty progressed, the use of full gilding was quickly abandoned. Some elites still included gilded hands and faces, but seeing these parts ripped off of their relative's or friend's coffin surfaces (or doing it oneself) seemed to have caused many elites to content themselves with expensive pigments instead, like Egyptian blue, green, and yellow orpiment. Expensive paints were visible to all, but they could not be reused and recommodified like gold once they had been applied.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 62; Daressy, *CG 61001–61044*.

⁷⁰ Taylor, "Aspects of the History of the Valley of the Kings in the Third Intermediate Period."

⁷¹ For example, the coffins of Nodjmet (CG 61024), Pinedjem I (CG 61025), and Henatawy (CG 61026) found in the Deir el Bahari 320 Royal Cache were all once gilded on almost all exterior surfaces; however that gilding was chiseled away in ancient times, almost certainly during Dynasty 21 itself. As the dynasty progressed, the high elites buried in Deir el Bahari 320 chose to abandon

There is much more flexibility in coffin scenes beginning with Dynasty 20. Instead of depicting the standardized images of Thoth, Anubis, and the sons of Horus separated by Book of the Dead chapters 151 and 161 texts on the case sides, the Dynasty 21 coffin began to show more agency in scene choice than was *de rigueur* in Dynasty 19. In fact, elites abandoned a great deal of decorative standardization at the end of the New Kingdom. The coffin of Khnumensanapekhsu, for example, includes an unusual scene of a goddess embracing a *djed* pillar. The coffin of Muthotep includes inventive iconography from the Amduat on the coffin lid—specifically a scarab beetle pushing the sundisk to its rebirth partially underneath the crossed arms of the deceased woman. The coffin of Nysuamen shows the deceased worshipping a large-scale ram on one side of the lid and a hawk on the other. The crossed arms of this coffin were painted with a series of kneeling gods, another figural innovation. The evidence for creativity in scene depictions only increases with Dynasty 21.

It seems that decorative flexibility and innovation were increasingly valued. Perhaps this creativity played a part in the defensive adaptations towards burial. In other words, if the tomb owner was not able to display decorated tomb walls, he could still show a variety of innovatively placed religious iconography on his coffin. Perhaps the commissioner of a coffin was interested in the social prestige he might receive from displaying something different in the funerary ceremonies. In Dynasty 19, tomb chapel paintings probably served the role of allowing competition with one's peers, providing prestige to the owner with unusual scenes and techniques never scene before. Now that tomb chapel painting was defunct, perhaps the coffin was meant to fill this very social role of conspicuous funerary consumption by means of fresh and exceptional imagery for social consumption.

There is evidence for another innovation on Dynasty 20 coffins that is difficult to explain. The use of text as a magical protective medium decreased in favor of iconography, figures, and scenes.⁷² The reasons for this are not clear. It is possible that we are dealing with a less literate population, but this is unlikely. Most of these coffins belonged to people with connections to the educated Amen priesthood. Furthermore, the trend towards less text continues into Dynasty 21 and amongst social groups of learned High Priests of Amen—men who seem to have competed with their knowledge and innovative use of obscure funerary books imagery. The decrease in text on the coffin (and on funerary papyri for that matter⁷³) is probably not a marker of increased illiteracy, but of something functional. Perhaps the miniaturization of the elite burial—from a decorated tomb complex replete with statuary and stelae to a nesting coffin set—demanded the use of iconography over text. Not only was iconography space efficient, but it functioned on many levels of meaning simultaneously. Miniaturization demanded abstraction and thus flexibility of meaning.⁷⁴ Perhaps then, people decided that images could act for the deceased with a greater flexibility in a way that texts could not provide. Furthermore, I suspect that iconographic depictions were easier to recognize and remark upon during funerary rituals, thus providing social prestige that was more easily communicated. Throughout the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, for instance, it would have been easier to identify images of the beetle pushing the sun as being from the Amduat, as opposed to identifying it from the text alone, something that would have demanded an up-close and time consuming reading. Whatever the exact reasoning behind this choice for more iconography as opposed to text, the end result is that by Dynasty 21 we see coffins with a *horror vacui* in which every available field is covered with symbolic imagery.

full gilding, opting only for gilded hands and face (see Taylor, "Aspects of the History"). Evidence from the Bab el Gassus cache (Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 164–98) suggests that many high elites abandoned gilded hands and face, opting only for yellow paint and varnish to provide the golden flesh of the sun god.

⁷² J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca-London, 2005), 251; Taylor, "Changes in the Afterlife," 235.

⁷³ Niwiński, *Studies on the Illustrated Theban Funerary Papyri of the 11th and 10th Centuries B.C.*

⁷⁴ See Niwiński, "The Solar-Osirian Unity."

Dynasty 20 was also the first time we see figural decoration on the coffin interior, an important innovation that blossoms in Dynasty 21. Out of all of the Dynasty 20 examples, only the coffin of Sesekhnofru has a polychrome image of the hawk-headed god Sokar⁷⁵ on the backboard of the case interior, and this coffin is probably the latest example in the group. Most of the other Dynasty 20 coffins show bare wood on the coffin interior, which is still a significant difference from before because consumers have abandoned the thick black resin which was fashionable during Dynasty 19 and representative of the underworld. The obvious reason for the lack of black resin and the later addition of painted interior scenes is that pistacia resin had become increasingly scarce, demanding an alternative treatment of the interior space. It is highly likely that Dynasty 20 was a transitional period for the coffin interior, at the very end of which painted decoration was deemed an appropriate substitute for the resin. Likely, red and yellow ochre, Egyptian blue, green, whites, and blacks were much cheaper than the thick, concentrated, black pistacia resin. Furthermore, this innovation fit with the demand that every additional inch of coffin space now be used because tomb walls were no longer decorated.

The adoption of painted coffin interiors certainly had some kind of religious functionality linking the deceased's mummy with Osiris' image (or Amenhotep I's, or placing the dead into the arms of the goddess of the West, or whatever large-scale image was painted on the inside of the coffin). In Dynasty 19, the black pitch essentially served the purpose of melding the deceased with the god of the earth, or placing the corpse into the duat underworld. In Dynasty 20, it sufficed to paint an image of a deity onto the coffin case interior so that the ritual act of placing the deceased upon that depiction had religiously functional repercussions. Without more information about funerary rituals at this time period, the exact reasoning for the additional interior decoration is difficult to pin down.

What about changes in the coffin set at the end of the New Kingdom? Only the body containers of Nysuamen preserve any kind of coffin set (as inner coffin plus mummy board), and we have no way of knowing if this represents his complete set. Still most of the seven Dynasty 20 coffins are clearly inner or outer pieces and thus were once part of a larger set. Dynasty 19 is well known for nesting coffin sets, so this space-efficiency is nothing new. What is new is that elites of Dynasty 20 had now abandoned the rectangular sarcophagus of stone or wood that was so popular for the highest ranking males in discrete family tombs of Dynasties 18 and 19. The possible reasons are many: 1) group burials were short on space, and there was no room for such a large object; 2) group burials were meant to stay secret, and as such they often occupied tombs in cliff faces or on the side of hills. Getting such a large object into a secret space, maybe in the middle of the night, would have been a needlessly risky task, possibly drawing attention to a burial; and 3) access to that much stone or wood was simply not possible during this economic crisis.

By Dynasty 21, the standardized coffin sets for the elite were made up of an outer coffin, an inner coffin, and a mummy board, essentially a condensed version of what we saw earlier in the New Kingdom. Limited burial space demanded that an elite Theban make a social statement about his or her status in a space efficient manner, with nesting anthropoid coffins that could fit into a hidden group tomb already crowded with dozens of other coffins. During funerary rituals, when each piece was set side by side, the display would have been communicative of great wealth and status to the audience, but it also fit together into a small package that could be transported easily into a secret group tomb. Interestingly, the rectangular sarcophagus returns once again to the Egyptian funerary ensemble in Dynasty 25 (seventh century BCE) when elites were once again able to commission monumental tomb complexes in a secure necropolis.

⁷⁵ For the growing popularity of Sokar at this time period, see Taylor, "Changes in the Afterlife," 226.

Coffin Reuse

There is one more innovation from the end of the New Kingdom that is vital to our discussion: coffin reuse. Four out of the seven Dynasty 20 coffins suggest some kind of reuse, either by means of changing the name of the deceased to incorporate another coffin owner (as in Padiamen's and Sesekhnefru's coffins), or repainting and probably also remodeling the entire wooden object to create a different coffin (as with Muthotep's coffin), or possibly by modifying the decoration of a woman's coffin to fit that of a man (Khnumensanapekhsu). Padiamen's and Sesekhnefru's coffins were probably reused in early Dynasty 21, but the coffin of Muthotep shows that reuse was happening already in Dynasty 20. Niwinski has argued that few coffins are preserved from Dynasties 19 and 20 (only about seventy) because many of them were broken down or repainted to create coffins of Dynasty 21, which number more than 700 surviving coffins.⁷⁶ There is evidence for coffin reuse at the highest levels of Egyptian society—including the royal family at Tanis,⁷⁷ the High Priesthood of Amen buried in the Royal Cache of DeB 320,⁷⁸ and the high priesthood buried in the Bab el Gassus cache.

I have begun a systematic examination of coffin reuse during Dynasty 21,⁷⁹ and my evidence thus far suggests a reuse rate as high as 61.5%.⁸⁰ Some coffins even seem to have been reused two or even three times. Rather than injecting moral weight into this behavior, I would prefer to see this kind of reuse as adaptive and innovative during a time of great economic and social crisis. The action of removing a mummy from its coffin and taking that coffin out of the tomb restored a religious item to the commodity state.⁸¹ Having said that, there were almost certainly magical rituals to make sure that the dead person being removed could not visit the living violators with any kind of menace, but we have almost no evidence of such steps in the reuse process.⁸² At the end of the New Kingdom, high status individuals reused the funerary objects of those who had died before them, indicating that at the base of reuse was a negotiation between theft and reassociation, essentially an innovative conciliation between the principles of *m3ʕt* and the practical need for funerary materials in a time of scarcity.

Reuse also reveals changes in how the elite Egyptians interacted with funeral materiality. It indicates that, as the Ramesside Period drew to a close, Thebans placed more emphasis on the use of funerary materials in short-term, *ritual* contexts than they did on the *permanent* burial of those funerary objects with the dead. When times got tough, fewer people valued the permanent use of grave goods.

⁷⁶ Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 13.

⁷⁷ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 397.

⁷⁸ Aston, *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25*, 220–31.

⁷⁹ My ongoing research includes Dynasty 21 coffins in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Turin, Florence, Rome, Cortona, Paris, Vienna, and Leiden, most of which are probably from the Second Cache.

⁸⁰ Some have doubted Niwinski's statements about the widespread nature of the reuse of older coffins, in particular the plastering over of older decoration for newer decoration (Taylor, "Aspects of the History of the Valley of the Kings in the Third Intermediate Period," n. 30), but my initial research seems to substantiate Niwinski's claims.

⁸¹ Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," 3–63.

⁸² I am intrigued by the text of *Khonsuemheb and the Ghost* in which a High Priest of Amen is visited by an unhappy *akh* spirit of the Middle Kingdom whose tomb has been lost. The High Priest promises to rebuild his tomb, commission a coffin of gold and precious wood and to renew his offering cult. See McDowell, *Village Life*: 149–52; J. von Beckerath, "Zur Geschichte von Chonsemhab und dem Geist," *ZÄS* 119 (1992), 90–107. This fiction may find its origin in the burial crisis at the end of the New Kingdom and suggests that the repercussions of tomb and coffin reuse were on the minds of those perpetrating the actions. In this regard, the enigmatic scene painted over the patched wall in KV 9 is also interesting. Workers in the tomb of Ramses VI accidentally broke into neighboring tomb KV 12. They closed the hole, plastered it, and drew a unique and magical scene showing the destruction of enemies. This action suggests that Egyptians felt it necessary to perform magical spells to ward off any malice from the king whose tomb had been disturbed. E. Hornung, "Zum Schulzbild im Grabe Ramses VI," in H. van Voss, M. Sybrand, and H. Gerard, eds., *Funerary symbols and religion: essays dedicated to professor M.S.H.G. Heerma van Voss*, (Kampen, Netherlands, 1988). I suspect that similar rituals would have been done when tombs and coffins were reused at the end of the Bronze Age, but we will likely not find any permanent, art historical record of their performance.



Fig. 8. Coffin Florencec 8527 (photograph courtesy of Neil Crawford).

Instead, these objects were opportunistically used for whomever needed them next, whenever they were needed. This change in attitude represents a kind of paradigm shift for the elite at the end of the Ramesside Period and Dynasty 21 with regards to funerary behavior.⁸³

Elites of this time period were dealing with real religious and economic problems, in particular that their need for coffins coincided with a real crisis in acquiring the material resources to build them. Trade routes to the north were practically shut down, forcing elites who might have used imported cedar or fir to look for other sources of wood and resins. The civil war skirmishes that punctuated the end of Dynasty 20 probably channeled local woods and resins towards marshal uses like weapons, ship-building, and transportation, rather than funerary uses. In other words, wood was in short supply, but the demand for carefully crafted coffin sets of two or more pieces was at an all time high.

The coffin lid of Muthotep is the best example of reuse during Dynasty 20. The coffin is originally Dynasty 19 in style, visible in the painted white pleated garment underneath the broken plaster on the lid's surface. This coffin was redecorated in the mid Dynasty 20, about 150 years after its initial production, indicating that at least seven generations had passed before the coffin was taken out of the tomb, recommoditized, and then put back into ritual use. We have no way of knowing if this coffin was reused in a "legal" way, by those who owned the family tomb, or illegally, by tomb robbers who took the object by force. Assuming that most coffin reuse in Egypt happened "legally"—that is the clearing out of old objects by men who had some kind of claim to a given tomb or who were accessing tombs with no claim on them—it is likely that after the passing of seven generations there would be no one left to perform communicative and offering rituals for a particular individual.

After as little as three generations, it is likely that few people remembered the individual buried inside of a family tomb. Many instances of reuse in Dynasty 21 indicate that much less time had passed

⁸³ See Baines and Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead," 15. They state, "From an early period, symbolic approaches and interpretations could bridge the gap between aspiration and reality. It is as if the outward appearance of mortuary ritual and provision could be more important than the provision itself."



Fig. 9. Coffin Florence 7450 (photograph courtesy of Remy Hiramoto).

before a coffin was used again for another owner. A selection of coffins from museums in Italy is illustrative of this point. Florence 8527⁸⁴ used to be a man's coffin, but it was redecorated for a woman (see fig. 8). Interestingly, the two-dimensional images of the Dynasty 21 man for whom this coffin was originally made were not erased when this coffin was refashioned. The craftsmen only added earrings, changed the surface of the wig, and changed the hands, adding the flat hands of a woman (now lost) and taking away the fisted hands of a man. The rest of the piece remained as it was before. Even the original owner's masculine titles were left the same.

⁸⁴ Catalogue information about this and the following Museo Archeologico Firenze coffins are published in Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 139–40; however, his information does not always match the Florence coffin in question.



Fig. 10. Detail of Coffin Florence 8524 (photograph courtesy of Neil Crawford).

Florence 7450, an inner coffin of a *wab* priest of Amen named Pasuemipet, shows clear reuse (see fig. 9). The case sides are clearly Dynasty 19 decoration including the four sons of Horus, Thoth, and Anubis and Chapter 161 of the Book of the Dead, rather than Dynasty 21 type scenes, but the lid's decoration is in Dynasty 21 fashion. The interior of this coffin is covered with thick black pitch, typical of the Ramesside period and something rarely seen in Dynasty 21. The hieroglyphs on the case sides and the lid are clearly in different scribal hands, suggesting someone has repainted the lid

of this Dynasty 19 coffin, but not the case sides. Finally, there is a raised relief lotus flower on the forehead on the coffin lid, just as you would see on a Ramesside coffin, but it has been partially painted over. There are no remnants of older decoration underneath broken plaster on the coffin lid, suggesting that the lid was scrubbed down before the new decoration was added in Dynasty 21.

Florence 8524 is an outer coffin of a woman (see fig. 10). Older painted decoration is visible on the back of the head on the lid's left side about 1 cm underneath the surface—specifically the blue and white stripes of earlier coffin decoration. In this instance, the craftsmen changed the headdress and earrings with plaster and paint while keeping most of the original collar of the coffin. They smoothed a new layer of plaster around the collar, thinly scraping it to the outer edges and matching the existing decoration. Some of the later plaster has cracked, and the decoration underneath is visible. Thus, craftsmen were trying to avoid repainting the entire piece by matching older decoration where they could. Interestingly, the space for the name of the new owner was left blank. The central text inscription reads *Wsir ____ mꜣt hrw dd.s hꜣ mwt(.i) Nwt. . .*, “the Osiris _____, true of voice, she says, Oh my mother Nut . . .” So the craftsmen intended the coffin for a woman, and it was redecorated as such, but no one ever wrote in an actual name. This suggests a gap of some kind between the people redoing the coffin and the purchaser using the coffin. Or the name was inscribed in ink over varnish and is now lost.

Finally a coffin in the Museo Egizio in Turin also suggests reuse (see fig. 11). The coffin has been described by Niwinski as an archaizing example because it shows the contours of the woman's body under the dense decoration.⁸⁵ I suggest, however, that instead of archaization, we are dealing with reuse. This was originally a Dynasty 19 coffin that depicted an effective *akh* soul of a woman wearing the white pleated garment that clung to the body, one arm over the body and the other extending down, and bare feet carved into the footboard.⁸⁶ In Dynasty 21 this decoration was covered with new plaster

⁸⁵ Museo Egizio 2228; Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 172, no. 384; idem, *Sarcofagi della XXI Dinastia (CGT 10101–10122)*, Catalogo del Museo Egizio di Torino, Serie Seconda—collezioni X (Turin, 2004), 124–25.

⁸⁶ For a similar piece, see the coffin of Iset from Theban Tomb I from Deir el Medina. Cooney, *The Cost of Death*, 435–37.



Fig. 11. Coffin Turin 2228 (photograph courtesy of Remy Hiramoto).

and repainted. In fact, the whole surface of the lid is covered with a layer of linen before the plaster application, perhaps to cover up relief work used to create the pleating of the garment. None of the Dynasty 19 decoration is actually visible as far as I can see, but the characteristic female shape of body is undoubtedly Ramesside. Actually, the overt body contours seem incongruous with the Dynasty 21 decoration applied to it by the reusers. The craftsmen have even painted sandals onto the bare feet, a very clever and unusual adaptation.⁸⁷ The arms are left in their original Dynasty 19 position, which

⁸⁷ Instead of covering the sculpted feet in plaster as they did on a coffin in Copenhagen 3912. That Copenhagen coffin has already been identified by Niwinski as reused. The feet had been plastered over for different decoration. Furthermore, both

looks quite odd because Dynasty 21 coffins are meant to have crossed arms. On the left side of the case, an erasure of the name is visible (with remnants of a *mn* sign), suggesting this coffin could have been used twice after its Dynasty 19 existence.

These few examples of coffin reuse suggest that some Dynasty 21 coffins are a product of their construction methods and thus a *mélange* of dates and styles, opportunistically cobbled together by craftsman trying to recommodify older pieces. Coffin reuse must have carried with it a certain moral ambiguity, but it undoubtedly happened throughout Egyptian history, a consequence of funerary materialism driving the desire for ritual objects within a context of sociopolitical insecurity and/or economic deficiency.

Evidence Part III: Mummification Techniques at Thebes

Our third and final piece of evidence in my argument about defensive burial is the mummy. The mummified corpse was the object at the very center of ancient Egyptian funerary materiality, and I suggest we treat the mummy as another funerary commodity which could be adapted to the changing social climate.⁸⁸ For most of Egyptian history, elites spent much more on the funerary objects *surrounding* the body, as opposed to the cost of embalming itself.⁸⁹ This balance probably never changed, but as we move from Dynasty 20 into Dynasty 21, elites were indeed spending more on mummification techniques, probably as part of defensive burial adaptations.

Dynasty 21 is known to Egyptology as the apex of mummification technique for a reason. Body preservation and manipulation exceeded anything we have seen previously in Egyptian history. We have few Dynasty 20 mummies from the archaeological record to tell us when the intensification of embalming began. The Dynasty 20 body of Nakht was not embalmed. The higher status mummy of Nesyamen dating to the reign of Ramses XI shows some of the adaptations of the highest Theban elites in later Dynasty 21, but not all. For instance, the embalmed organs of Nesyamen were returned to the body cavity. There is no evidence of subcutaneous packing in Nesyamen's mummy, but investigators report that facial cavities were filled with sawdust.⁹⁰

I am thus relying on the Dynasty 21 mummies from the Deir el Bahari 320 cache for this discussion. These bodies belonged to the highest elite of Thebes at the close of the Bronze Age, people who opted for intensified embalming when it became the norm to return internal organs to the body after preservation, rather than interring them in separate canopic jars and chests.⁹¹ These elites developed an interest in the preserved body's discrete self-sufficiency.⁹² There were a number of other innova-

shoulders are heavily plastered, probably to hide the fact that the arms were not crossed over the chest but held one at the side and one over the midbody, as normal in coffins of women dressed as an *akh*. I suspect that the Dynasty 20 coffin lid of Muthotep was also resculpted and plastered to create crossed arms.

⁸⁸ For a more detailed examination of the increasing value of the mummy in Dynasty 21, see K. M. Cooney, "Objectifying the Body."

⁸⁹ There are no prices for mummification from the New Kingdom or Third Intermediate Period, but there are many prices for tombs, coffins, and other funerary objects from the Ramesside Period. Nonetheless, I think it safe to say that, proportionally, the cost of mummification was a smaller part of the overall burial ensemble during the Ramesside period compared to Dynasty 21. In addition, it is clear that the quality of mummification during the Ramesside period is lower than that of Dynasty 21 elites. If we could estimate the average cost of embalming labor, plus the cost of resins, waxes, natron and other embalming materials required for elite Ramesside period mummies, perhaps it would compare to the cost of one or two nesting coffins of the period. This statement is quite hypothetical, but the point remains. Out of the entire burial ensemble, the cost of mummification would not have been the most expensive element. During Dynasty 21, however, the proportional cost of embalming probably reached its highest point.

⁹⁰ A. Rosalie David and E. Tapp, *The Mummy's Tale: The Scientific and Medical Investigation of Natsef-Amun, Priest in the Temple at Karnak* (London, 1992).

⁹¹ S. Ikram and A. Dodson, *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt: Equipping the Dead for Eternity* (London, 1998), 124–28, 289–90.

⁹² G. Elliot Smith, *CG 61051–61100*, 95; Taylor, "Changes in the Afterlife."



Fig. 12. Mummy of Nodjmet.

tions. The natural and full appearance of the body might be restored. The mummy of Nodjmet,⁹³ for example, a Dynasty 21 high elite woman, has packing under her cheeks to restore the fullness of the face, as well as external padding on the body to restore the lifelike quality of torso and limbs (see fig. 12). Previously, in the New Kingdom, the mummy's skin had been left slack and drawn, allowing desiccated flesh to sink into the bones. Now, a more lifelike face was desired. Embalmers also repaired defects in the body and skin. They painstakingly repaired tears with leather patches and plaster, and they even fixed anatomical problems with additional limbs of wood. The skin of the mummy was finished with a coating of plaster plus red or yellow paint, depending on the sex of the deceased. The mummy of the woman Maatkare, for instance, is plastered and painted with a mixture of yellow ochre and gum, and powdered resins were applied to her face. Her fingers even show deep marks from the string once tied around the nails to hold them in place during the embalming process.⁹⁴ We see significant hair

extensions on these mummies—realistic wigs of human or artificial hair. The mummy of Hennataway, for example, has a wig of spirals made of black string, parted in the middle. Embalmers stuffed her cheeks and her right foot with what is described as a “curious cheese-like mixture of fat (? butter) and soda.” Hennataway's eyes were inlaid with stone. Her face was painted yellow, and her lips red.⁹⁵

Embalmers of this time period were interested in making the deceased look alive. The mummy of Djedptahiefankh, for example, has lifelike eyes made of white stone with a circle of black, inserted under half-closed lids.⁹⁶ Egyptologists have suggested that this new treatment of the eyes was meant to represent the embalmed body as if it were a funerary statue or mummy mask,⁹⁷ aware and ready to interact with the world. By placing realistic artificial eyes into empty sockets, craftsmen were, in fact, making the mummy look *awake*, a critical shift from previous dynasties when the custom was to present the embalmed individual as if asleep, with closed eyes.

There are no preserved prices for mummification—from this period or any other—but the Dynasty 21 mummified body was now subject to the application of more expensive materials, like resins and oils, and more time consuming techniques than ever seen before. Although all of these characteristics of Dynasty 21 embalming are well known to Egyptology, if we put these innovations into a context of economic and religious adaptation during a time of crisis, one could argue that elites were manipulating the flesh of the dead to act as stand-alone funerary objects, capable of functioning without

⁹³ Smith, *CG* 61051–61100, 94–98.

⁹⁴ Smith, *CG* 61051–61100, 99–101.

⁹⁵ Smith, *CG* 61051–61100, 103.

⁹⁶ Smith, *CG* 61051–61100, 114.

⁹⁷ Smith, *CG* 61051–61100, 95; Taylor, “Changes in the Afterlife,” 232.

protective coffins if body containers were removed by later opportunists. If we examine the mummy art historically and economically—as something that could be manufactured and conformed to high elite demands—then it is also possible to see this dead flesh and bone as a commodity, one that was crafted within a defensive funerary preparation to be religiously and socially functional for its owner in a time of crisis.

The coffin is actually an abstraction of the deceased's body. It remade the corpse into an Osirianized and solarized version of itself—represented as fully awake and activated in the next life with open eyes, idealized facial features, and crossed arms—all in a wooden package covered with religious iconography, scenes, and Book of the Dead texts. For most of ancient Egyptian history, the coffin was meant to be a better, more ideal representation of the mummy inside,⁹⁸ and in the New Kingdom, elites likely spent much more on their coffin sets than they did on the mummification of their corpses.

The coffin was believed to be a highly functional funerary object,⁹⁹ but in times of economic and political uncertainty, relying primarily on the coffin to transform the deceased became a serious drawback. As an abstraction, the coffin could be *reassigned* much too easily. The name of the previous owner could be wiped away to make room for a new one, or the entire coffin might be replastered and redecorated in a different style for another person.

Because of such commonplace coffin reuse, by Dynasty 21 elite Theban families chose to invent intensified and expensive treatments for the preserved human corpse. When the body was worked into an imperishable coffin-like object depicting the idealized deceased, it was not an abstraction. Instead, it was the body that the dead had used in daily life, not only manufactured into a form that would not decay, but also fashioned into a youthful and perfected manifestation of the deceased with open eyes, lifelike full features and limbs, and full and lustrous hair.

At this point in time, elites were investing more wealth in their mummies than ever before, but the reasons for this increase in value have not been fully formed yet.¹⁰⁰ One obvious reason that the mummy's value shot up during this time of crisis was because it was not an exchangeable object. Although one could embellish the corpse with valuable materials, like resins and oils, human hair, plaster and paint, these commodities could not be recycled after application. In a way, the mummy absorbed them, took them into itself, making them impossible to re Commodify.

The increasing value of the mummy was, therefore, inherently *defensive*. Any investments in mummification could not be recycled or returned to the economy, thus removing many of the risks to the viability of the body. This economic reasoning is not mutually exclusive to more abstract religious-ritual motivations, because investments in mummification also provided a new *psychological* security, within the very flesh of the deceased perfectly preserved.

The mummy's most vulnerable feature was also its most defensive characteristic: it was irreplaceable to its owner. It was inherently unique to the person who inhabited it and could not be abstracted and occupied by another dead soul. It was of value to one individual and one individual only—which made it the perfect element of focus during a time of socio-economic insecurity and funerary innovation. During times of prosperity like the Dynasties 18 and 19 many elites may have assumed their burial goods would serve them for eternity, but elites of Dynasties 20 and 21 had no such misconceptions. As insecure political and economic conditions descended, careful embalming of the body was one of the

⁹⁸ Taylor, *Egyptian Coffins*, 11.

⁹⁹ Taylor, *Egyptian Coffins*, 7–11.

¹⁰⁰ Taylor is one of the few scholars to really attempt some kind of reasoning for Dynasty 21 mummification intensification: “[t]he motivations for these changes are not immediately apparent from written sources, and can only be speculated on. Was the greater self-sufficiency given to the dead a measure of compensation for the decline in the practice of mortuary ritual at the tomb? Was there also a practical reason for the placing of all crucial organs within the body—to prevent their loss in the event of the mummy being transferred from one resting place to another, a phenomenon characteristic of the time? Taylor, “Changes in the Afterlife,” 232.

cleverest ways to ensure that some kind of container for the soul would be present with the deceased over time. Theban elites transformed the mummy into something coffin-like that they believed could stand on its own as the primary religious vessel for its owner for all eternity, bypassing many risks associated with theft and reuse.

It is important to remember that all instances of such enhanced embalming come from one particular social group: the High Priesthood of Amen at Thebes, an intermarried, highly competitive group of Egyptian-Libyan families. This kind of mummification set these elites apart, not only from the rest of the Egyptian population, but from other elites with social aspirations (like Nysuamen, perhaps). Only highly placed individuals would have had access to the knowledge and skilled labor to have such mummies commissioned, and likely only they had the privileged access to view the carefully preserved bodies of their peer elites up close.

This access created a knowledge base that allowed comparisons to be made between mummies, even though they were surely separately displayed at each funeral, opening up discourses of evaluation and competition between elites. We can only guess at the details of these social interactions. Who viewed the unwrapped mummies and where? How were they compared? How did such elite competition manifest? In the end, I think we can at least conclude from the archaeological evidence that small, exclusive groups of elite Thebans of Dynasty 21 felt a profound need to participate in the new intensified mummification. They did so not just for defensive reasons, not just for economic reasons, and not just because it provided a new religious functionality in a time of crisis, but because it also allowed them to compete with fellow elites in an exclusive arena of comparative display.¹⁰¹

The reasons for more intense mummification in Dynasty 21 become even more complicated when we take into account what a short period of activity this represents. These embalming techniques did not last long beyond early Dynasty 22 among Theban elites, even though most of the same economic, social, and political conditions prevailed. From mid Dynasty 22, it became common for elites to have their family members' bodies treated in a more perfunctory way. Organs were still removed, and the body was still dried out in natron; however, there was no interest in creating a realistic and lifelike corpse with inlaid eyes, stuffed face and limbs, and painted features.¹⁰² Instead, Dynasty 22 elites were primarily interested in a corpse that would not rot. This is a return to the norm: a body that evaded decomposition was the standard for elites throughout most of ancient Egyptian history, particularly during times of prosperity like Dynasties 18 and 19.

Curiously, the early Third Intermediate Period remains the only time period in all of ancient Egyptian history when mummification intensification held such economic, aesthetic, religious, and social value. If there were such clear economic, religious, and social reasons for the increased value of the mummy, why then did these techniques not last? It is important to remember that these Dynasty 21 mummies are currently unwrapped only because twentieth century archaeologists performed intense examinations of the Deir el Bahari 320 cache, leaving the bodies naked and exposed.¹⁰³ In ancient times, access to the unwrapped mummy would ostensibly have been allowed only for a very short period of time in the embalming workshop before the body was enclosed in linen bandages and shrouds. The perceived vulnerability of the mummy disallowed an intimate view of the body tissues or facial features of any given corpse by the public. Instead, the susceptible mummy needed to be carefully wrapped for any larger displays during the funerary rites.

Ritual scenes do not show mummies on display during funeral ceremonies without outer protection, like wrappings, a mask, or a coffin. Dynasty 21 *unwrapped* mummies were likely only viewed by family members or close associates who may have been invited to the embalming workshop before the bodies

¹⁰¹ Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of our own Dreams*, 76–78.

¹⁰² Ikram and Dodson, *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt*, 128.

¹⁰³ Smith, *CG 61051–61100*.

were bandaged and shrouded. Thus, elite Thebans would not have been able to show expensive mummification treatments publicly. In other words, elites could not have benefited from the display of the crafted corpse, into which they had invested so much money, to a larger audience.

Thus, mummification intensification only worked as tool of social display for a very small, more inward-looking society of elites. It may have been an ideal competitive platform for the extended family groups and complicated kinship lines of the High Priesthood of Amen, but it was a non-starter if one wanted to make a larger, more public statement. A large investment in funerary materiality was meant to be displayed in some way, even if only for a short period of time. The intensification of the Dynasty 21 mummy was a creative way of defensively reacting to risk when engaging in *exclusive* social competition, but this innovation could not create *broader* social display-value for elite Egyptians.

This leads us to a possible explanation for the shift *away* from mummification intensification—that the audience for determining prestige became larger, broader, and more public by Dynasty 22. In Dynasty 22, the potential audience in Thebes must have changed, making new demands on elites with regards to visibility and the display of their funerary arts.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

Theban Egyptians faced political decentralization and economic crises through a number of adaptations. They developed burials within secret, unmarked, group burials based on the security of community. Coffin decoration and nesting created a space-efficient, self sufficiency. As a result of tomb robbery and reuse, Theban elite had to develop defensive strategies to deter others from stealing what they themselves had stolen. Expensive materials were likely used and displayed at elite funerals, but perhaps such treasures were no longer placed into the tomb. Defensive strategies encouraged the use of non reusable, items, including the liberal use of expensive paints in a wider variety of hues instead of extensive gilding. Elites also invested in mummification materials like resins and the skilled labor used in embalming. The individual was no longer buried within the context of the nuclear family, but within a larger society, with one's peers in a community burial space, not in a discrete and decorated family tomb. In fact, many of these late New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period group tombs still survive because these families knew what they were doing: they understood tomb robbery better than anyone, and thus they understood how to keep others from desecrating their graves. Elites of this period were buried in hidden, crypt-like spaces, demanding new developments for funerary cult activity, the constructions of which became an increasingly significant part of the larger Theban landscape.

Building solar funerary spaces was expensive for individual families in Dynasties 18 and 19, because it demanded open sun courts, pylons, pyramids, gilding, and precious stones. It also demanded sound security to protect the funerary materials buried in tomb shafts. In Dynasties 20 and 21 when security systems broke down, we see a new Osirianization of the solar, within tomb spaces, within the funerary equipment, and within funerary papyri, a trend which depended in large part on a privileged understanding of underworld books.¹⁰⁵ From the height of the solar cult of the New Kingdom, Thebans developed an innovative, condensed, and defensive Osirianization of the solar burial in late Ramesside and Dynasty 21 burial chamber spaces.

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¹⁰⁴ The makeup of the Theban high-elite changed in Dynasty 22 when King Sheshonq I at Tanis appointed his own son as the High Priest of Amen at Thebes, interrupting the patrilineal hereditary succession that was the norm for the Amen priesthood during Dynasty 21. See Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period*.

¹⁰⁵ Nawiński, "The Solar-Osirian Unity."

Appendix–Dynasty 20 Coffins

1. *Nht*, coffin–Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, ROM 910.4.1, 2 (see fig. 1)¹⁰⁶

	Details
Title	<i>sh̄t n p3 kni n wsir-h̄w-r̄</i>
Provenance	Naville’s excavations at Deir el Bahari, temple of Mentuhotep II, under the floor of the NE side of upper colonnade.
Date	Dyn. 20, reign of Sethnakht.
Dimensions	L. 185.55 cm; W. 48.9 cm.
Description	This coffin’s lid is quite damaged but decoration is visible: striped headdress in blue and yellow, crossed arms modeled in the wood with detailed decoration, winged Nut on the abdomen. It has a series of complementary scenes in superimposed registers. Most scenes are a series of mummiform gods before offering tables. The upper scenes show the deceased in white garment before the god. Case sides show standing mummiform Thoth before an offering table, followed by a series of the four sons of Horus standing mummiform in shrines on one side. On the other side Thoth is censuring before Anubis upon a shrine. Unusually, the back of head also has a mummiform god in a shrine. Bottom of feet show goddess with no inscription above three <i>tit</i> knots with sun disks.
Coffin Set Components	The coffin was found with a mummy board and mummy. The mummy board is not published to my knowledge. The mummy shows no actual embalming, only natural desiccation.
Hieroglyphs	Hieroglyphs polychrome without any raised relief. Very abbreviated invocations. Back of head has inscription to Nephthys, but there is no inscription to Isis on bottom of feet. Lid invocation to Nut very hard to read due to poor preservation. Unusually, case sides preserve many instances of the name and title of the deceased in conjunction with abbreviated invocations by the four sons of Horus, Thoth, and Anubis.

2. *Mwt-h̄tp*, reused coffin lid–British Museum EA 29579 (see fig. 2)¹⁰⁷

	Details
Title	<i>šm̄yt n imn</i>
Provenance	Unknown. Purchased in 1898 from R. Moss.
Date	Dyn. 19, reused mid to late Dyn. 20.
Dimensions	L. 181 cm; W. at shoulders 53.8 cm; W. at feet 26.6.
Description	Reused and replastered lid of coffin. Case lost. Originally created early Dyn. 19, but reused in mid to late Dyn. 20. Along edges of lid, plaster and paint applied in Dyn. 20 flaked away revealing garment of original owner: ruled red lines, white paint, and varnish. Original painting on coffin lid represented deceased as a pure soul. Design of <i>wsh</i> collar, figure of Nut on abdomen, and texts and scenes on lower legs all point towards mid to late Ramesside period. Design has much in common with coffin of <i>ʿnt</i> in Vatican—dated by van Walsem to mid to late Dyn. 20 using parallels. ¹⁰⁸ Niwinski places this coffin in middle of Dyn. 21, and he did not notice reuse. He believes carved feet and Ramesside layout of lid to be archaization. Construction of coffin and draftsmanship not performed at same time. Depicts deceased with hands folded over <i>wsh</i> collar. Crowded decoration includes winged Nut on abdomen and two superimposed registers of scene pairs on either side of central vertical text column. First pair depicts deceased before Osiris and Isis or Nephthys. Second pair shows her worshipping standing figure of Osiris or Re-Horakhty. On feet are mourning figures of goddesses. Bottom of feet includes <i>dd</i> pillar.

¹⁰⁶ Lewin et al., “Nakht: A Weaver of Thebes.”

¹⁰⁷ Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 153; W. Budge, *British Museum: A Guide to the First, Second and Third Egyptian Rooms* (London, 1924), 57.

Hieroglyphs	Later texts—Vertical column of text on lid is abbreviated Nut invocation. Transverse bands <i>dd mdw im3hy hr</i> X texts. Bottom of feet—two very short texts, <i>dd mdw in ʿIst hnwt</i> [. . .] and <i>dd mdw in ʿIst wr ntrw nb</i> .
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3. *P3-di-immn*, coffin—Cairo JE 26220 / CG 61011 (see fig. 3)¹⁰⁹

	Details
Title	[. . .]- <i>immn</i>
Provenance	Reused in royal cache, Bab el Gusus, Deir el Bahari 1881.
Date	Dyn. 20.
Dimensions	L. 176 cm; W. at shoulders 49 cm; W. at feet 27 cm.
Description	Anthropoid coffin depicts Ramesside man with striped headdress and detailed decoration. Hands of deceased folded over <i>wsh</i> collar. Figure of Nut on abdomen. On legs three superimposed registers of scene pairs on either side of central vertical inscription. First shows Osiris before offering table, second goddesses, and third a winged cobra and <i>w3t</i> eyes. Feet of lid lost. Case sides each depict false door with winged <i>w3t</i> eye near head and standing figures of Thoth and sons of Horus. Re-used in royal cachette of Deir el Bahari for reburial of Dyn.18 prince. No decoration on bottom of feet, but back of head depicts <i>tit</i> knot with lotus flowers.
Coffin Set Components	Unknown if part of set originally because it was found reused. Niwinski believes it to be inner coffin due to small size.
Hieroglyphs	More texts than normal on lid—three vertical columns. Central is traditional invocation to Nut. Right column is invocation to Re-Horakhty. Left column is invocation to Ptah-sokar. Six captions, also polychrome of only slightly smaller scale than normal text. Central vertical inscription includes large area where name rubbed out when coffin reused. Texts on case sides—6–7 <i>dd mdw in</i> X by various deities, including Thoth, Ptah, and sons of Horus. More abbreviated than normal. Back of head includes two more texts.

4. *Ssh-nfrw*, coffin—Copenhagen Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek AEIN 62 (see fig. 4)¹¹⁰

	Details
Title	<i>it ntri n ʿIst n t3 hnryt</i> “God’s Father of Isis-of-Takheneret,” reused by the <i>wcb</i> priest <i>P3-ʿ3-n-k3h</i>
Provenance	Coffin purchased by Carl Jacobsen in Beirut via Trieste in 1884 by intermediary J. Loytved, consul of Beirut. Said to be from Thebes.
Date	Mid to late Dyn. 20 according to van Walsem. Radio-carbon dates done by Jørgensen provide a date between 1110–1050 BCE, just at the end of Dyn. 20 and the beginning of Dyn. 21.
Dimensions	L. 190 cm; W. at shoulders 54 cm; W. at feet 31 cm. Thickness of boards is about 4 cm.
Description	Deceased depicted with striped headcloth and arms crossed over <i>wsh</i> collar. Figure of winged Nut is depicted on abdomen. Below are four superimposed registers of scene pairs on either side of central vertical text column. First pair shows deceased before Osiris and Isis. Second before Sons of Horus. Third depicts solar rams. Fourth winged cobras. On feet are Anubis standards. Case sides have larger scenes, common on coffins of Dyn. 20 and later. Right case side includes following scenes: deceased before enthroned Osiris, Isis and Nephthys on either side of <i>dd</i> pillar, and enshrined four Sons of Horus worshipped by deceased. Left case side depicts deceased before Osiris, Anubis tending mummy, and four sons of Horus standing atop lotus blossom. Bottom of feet depict <i>w3s</i> signs on either side of central <i>ʿnh</i> . Coffin was reused by <i>P3-ʿ3-n-k3h</i> in later Third Intermediate Period. Built for its original owner in mid to late Ramesside Period. Niwinski calls “provincial style.”

¹⁰⁸ Van Walsem, “Deir el Medina as the Place of Origin of the Coffin of Anet in the Vatican (Inv.: XIII.2.1, XIII.2.2)”

¹⁰⁹ Daressy, *CG 61001–61044*: 12–17, pl. 12; Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*, 117; V. Schmidt, *Sarkofager, Mumiekister, og Mumiehylstre i det gamle Aegypten. Typologisk Atlas* (Copenhagen, 1919), 536–37.

¹¹⁰ M. Jørgensen, *Catalogue Egypt III. Coffins, Mummy Adornments and Mummies From the Third Intermediate, Late, Ptolemaic and the Roman Periods (1080 BC–AD 400)* (Copenhagen, 2001), 56–90; O. Koefoed-Petersen, “Cercueil de la Momie de Sesekh-Nofru: Ny Carlsberg AE.I.N.62,” in *From the Collections of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek 1942* (Copenhagen, 1942).

Hieroglyphs	Only one column of polychrome text on lid and some monochrome, smaller captions above pertinent scenes. Central inscription is Nut invocation. Case sides do not include much text. Very abbreviated texts in favor of larger scenes.
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5. *Ny-sw-ımn*, coffin and mummy board—Leeds City Museum D. 426–426a.1960 (see fig. 5)¹¹¹

	Details
Title	<i>sš hwt-ntr n Mntw-R^c nb w3st; sš w3h htpw n ntrw nbw šmw rsw; sš hsb imy-r k3w n pr ımn-R^c nswt ntrwt Hnsw</i>
Provenance	Unknown
Date	Mummy braces date to reign of Ramses XI, indicating that mummy buried at this time. Construction of coffin may predate his reign, into mid Dyn. 20.
Description	This coffin set includes coffin and enclosing mummy board. Mummy board severely damaged in 1941 bomb blast. Coffin depicts deceased with duplex wig covered with head garland and lotus on forehead. Chest covered with <i>wsh</i> collar, and arms depicted crossing over this collar. On abdomen is depiction of Nut with outstretched wings. On legs are four complementary scenes in superimposed registers on either side of central, three column, vertical inscription. Uppermost depicts Osiris and Isis adored by deceased. Next three registers show deceased worshipping variety of deities. Two complementary scenes on feet depict mourning goddesses. Case sides depict variety of deities, including Osiris and Maat before Thoth and seven enshrined deities. Back of head depicts winged figure of Isis. Bottom of feet represent figure of Nephthys seated on sign for gold, and below, Isis and Nephthys touching <i>dd</i> pillar. Interior undecorated. Mummy wrapped in leather braces inscribed with name of Ramses XI.
Hieroglyphs	Central vertical texts of three columns. Central text contains standard and less abbreviated invocation to Nut. Lid contains twelve more invocations of <i>dd mdw im3hy hr</i> X type. Case sides contain long, complex Book of Dead excerpts from Chapter 151 and 161 of <i>dd mdw im3hy hr</i> X variety.

6. *ḥnt*, coffin—Vatican Monumenti Musei, Rome XIII.2.1–.3 (see fig. 6)¹¹²

	Details
Provenance	Unknown but “probably Thebes.”
Date	Ramesside period, most likely mid to late Dyn. 20, according to van Walsem. Gasse, however, dates coffin to Dyn. 22.
Dimensions	L.185 cm; W. at elbows 52 cm; W. at ankles 33 cm.
Description	Lid depicts female deceased with hands crossed over collar. Below winged Nut on abdomen are pairs of scenes on either side of central vertical inscription grouped in super-imposed registers. Uppermost shows deceased offering to Osiris and Isis. Other scenes in lower four registers depict variety of deities standing before offering tables, often before deceased or another god. Feet depict two mourning goddesses with green skin. Case sides include large scenes involving Osiris and standard depictions of four sons of Horus. Top of head includes winged figure. No decoration on bottom of feet.
Coffin Set Components	No archaeological evidence of other pieces in set belonging to this woman. However, textual evidence (O. Berlin P 12343 and O. Ashmolean Museum HO 136) that this woman <i>ḥn(t)</i> may have had complete set including <i>mn-ḥnh</i> outer coffin and two <i>wt šri</i> inner coffins.
Hieroglyphs	Text on lid consists of abbreviated vertical inscription and twenty six small captions identifying deities. Vertical text is invocation to Nut and only full length text of any kind. Case sides have short texts, generally of <i>dd mdw in</i> X formula with few or no epithets following name of deity. Texts very short and almost iconographic—only bare minimum of a spell laid out.

¹¹¹ David and Tapp, *The Mummy's Tale: The Scientific and Medical Investigation of Natséf-Amun, Priest in the Temple at Karnak*.

¹¹² The piece is on permanent loan from Dépôt du Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Roma. For publication of this coffin, see Gasse, *Les sarcophages de la troisième période intermédiaire du Museo Gregoriano Egizio*: 148–55, pls. 33–34; Walsem, “Deir el Medina as the Place of Origin of the Coffin of Anet in the Vatican (Inv.: XIII.2.1, XIII.2.2).”

7. *Hnm-n-s3-n3-phsw*, coffin—Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung,
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin nos. 8505–8506 (see fig. 7)¹¹³

	Details
Title	<i>imy-r k3w n pr Minty</i>
Provenance	Unknown, said to be 'from Akhmim'. Acquired 1884.
Date	Redated by van Walsem to mid Dyn. 20 (Dyn. 21, according to Niwinski).
Dimensions	L. 186 cm; W. 49 cm at shoulders.
Description	Late Ramesside coffin described by Niwinski as “provincial,” but according to van Walsem, has much in common with coffin of <i>nt</i> . Deceased depicted with hands crossed over <i>wsh</i> collar. Female wig lappets, although name and figural depictions make it clear this coffin was meant for a man. Below winged Nut on abdomen are five registers of super-imposed scene pairs, grouped on either side of central vertical inscription. Upper two registers include scenes depicting Osiris and offerings. Third pair of scenes depicts <i>dd</i> pillar. Fourth depicts four sons of Horus. Fifth pair shows seated king before offering stand. On feet are mourning goddesses. Back of head depicts winged figure with Anubis on either side. Bottom of feet has depiction of Anubis on standard before offering tables. Case sides include longer scenes characteristic of Dynasty 21. Coffin’s right side includes following scenes: Horus libating before Osiris and Isis, deceased worshipping Osiris and Isis, Anubis preparing mummy, and four sons of Horus. Left side includes: deceased offering to Osiris and Isis, weighing of heart, and Re-Horakhty in sun bark receiving praise from Isis and three baboons.
Hieroglyphs	Lid has only one central vertical inscription—instead of standard Nut invocation, simple <i>htp di nsw</i> prayer for offerings. Lid—nine captions, those above figure of Nut quite long. Texts on case sides either <i>htp di nsw</i> offering prayers or <i>dd mdw</i> texts, latter abbreviated to barest essential, such as “Words spoken by Duwamutef and Qebhsenef” with nothing following. Case sides show preference for image over text. Nine invocations on each case side. Short text at head of case.

¹¹³ For publication of this coffin, see Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins*: 109; van Walsem, “Deir el Medina as the Place of Origin of the Coffin of Anet in the Vatican (Inv.: XIII.2.1, XIII.2.2).”