

HOW MUCH DID A COFFIN COST?

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF
FUNERARY ARTS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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In ancient Egypt, *things* were essential for the dead. When preparing the dead for burial, the Egyptians made a direct connection between magical-religious power and tangible, material objects. They created innumerable things—tombs, coffins, amulets, figurines, illuminated guidance books—and even preserved the material substance of human bodies through mummification, all for the protection and continued existence of the deceased in the netherworld. Thus, in an early text meant to instruct the younger generation we read the following advice about the material preparations required to live forever:

Make good your dwelling in the graveyard. Make worthy your station in the West. Given that death humbles us, given that life exalts us, the house of death is for life.¹

During mummification rites, opening-of-the-mouth ceremonies, and other protective and transformative rituals, funerary objects received value



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111. Panel from the Coffin of a Woman. From Asyut, Egypt. Middle Kingdom, late Dynasty 11 to early Dynasty 12, circa 2008–1875 B.C.E. Wood, pigment, 17 1/2 x 71 1/2 x 1 1/4 in. (44.5 x 181.6 x 3.2 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 1995.112

Coffins painted with the necessities for the tomb—such as mirrors, sandals, or food—made it possible to omit such paintings from the tomb walls. These paintings provided extra protection for the deceased.

112. Detail of Panel from the Coffin of a Woman

Embalming materials needed to make the body a mummy were stored on a bed, as depicted here on a coffin or in many scenes from tombs. These representations were believed to ensure provision of all that was needed to make a perfect burial.

as religiously charged pieces, surrounding the dead body with active apotropaic spells and images. In the New Kingdom *Book of the Dead*, prosperity and the ability to act in the next world are often linked to the ownership of funerary objects. For instance, an explanation of *The Book of the Dead*, Chapter 72, probably written by a funerary priest, tells us that the religiously activated coffin and the spells written on it allow provisions and transformative powers for the deceased:

As for him who knows this book on earth or it is put in writing on the coffin, it is my word that he shall go out into the day in any shape that he desires and shall go into his place without being turned back, and there shall be given to him bread and beer and portion of meat from upon the altar of Osiris.²

This funerary text tells us that a material object, in this case the coffin, performed multiple functions after the interment of the deceased: it was transformative, allowing the deceased to assume “any shape that he desires”; it was protective, keeping him from “being turned back”—and it granted the dead economic powers as well, ensuring food and drink in the realm of the afterlife. It is both the coffin itself and the writing on the coffin that grant the deceased these powers. We can see this latter concept expressed quite



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clearly on the Middle Kingdom coffin panel of a woman (figure 111) on which are painted a pair of sandals, a fan, oils, stone vessels, and an offering text—all meant magically to provide the woman dwelling inside with everything that she might need in the afterlife. This object could provide the dead not only with sustenance but also with luxury items, so that she could be comfortable in the next life, in accordance with her social and economic status as one who could afford such funerary material. For this reason, Egyptians attempted to prepare for death during their lifetimes. This intense attention to impending death may seem morbid to us, but from their point of view, it was simply a sensible economic and social investment.

The ancient Egyptians also found it useful to buy smaller objects to help the dead in the afterlife, including amulets and figurines. Many *Book of the Dead* spells include instructions in which a specific amulet is required to make a spell efficacious. For example, Chapter 89 includes a spell allowing the *ba* (soul) movement: the soul can ascend to the Sacred Boat of the sun god, and it can also rejoin the corpse in the earthly realm of the necropolis at the end of every day at sundown. *The Book of the Dead* text indicates that the soul seems to require a material object for this spell to be effective:

The Sacred Boat will be joyful and the Great God will proceed in peace when you allow this soul of mine to ascend vindicated to the gods.... May it [the soul] see my corpse, may it rest on my mummy, which will never be destroyed or perish. To be spoken over a human-headed bird of gold inlaid with semiprecious stones and laid on the breast of the deceased.³

This *Book of the Dead* text tells us exactly what material the amulet should be made of. The more precious the amulet, presumably the more powerful: gold was considered the flesh of the gods, and thus an amulet representing the deceased as a winged golden soul (figure 113) would confer upon the corpse the powers of transformation and mobility.

Funerary objects were thought to provide the deceased with magical and superhuman powers in the realm of the tomb and the netherworld—powers that were, so to speak, *embodied* in material objects like coffins and amulets. But we often forget that these objects were also commodities; they had to be commissioned and bought for a particular price. Drawing attention to the fact that ancient individuals had to *pay* for their funerary objects brings new social and economic dynamics into the ongoing Egyptological discussion of funerary religion and rituals. For individuals of

differing rank, access to funerary religion and magic was never equal, because there was not universal access to the commodity objects used in ritual activity. Intense and systematic material preparation for the afterlife mirrors a deep psychological preparation for one's inevitable death; but at the same time it also reveals social and economic agendas, showing how the family of the deceased used this opportunity to display its wealth and status before an audience, both in the context of funerary preparation and in the eventual burial rites.

Simply put, traditional elite funerary practice in ancient Egypt was expensive and exclusionary. But rarely do we consider the social and economic costs of these activities to Egyptian individuals and communities, perhaps because our fascination with belief systems as practiced by the elite has suppressed discussion of more worldly and practical aspects. Yet to reach a fuller understanding of how one prepared to live forever, we must not forgo examination of how the ancient Egyptians chose their funerary objects, how much these objects cost, how they were paid for, and what ultimately were the repercussions of the high-priced burial goods market. These are the themes to be pursued in the following pages.

Purchasing a Coffin

Our best textual information about the construction and exchange of funerary goods comes from western Thebes, in particular the craftsmen's village of Deir el-Medina, where we find a treasure trove of texts involving the production and value of funerary arts.⁴ Egyptologists are often drawn to this New Kingdom village to answer social and economic questions about the ancient Egyptian world because the craftsmen who lived here have left us a rich collection of ostraca (texts written on potsherds or limestone flakes) and papyri dealing with everyday activities: legal documents, letters, receipts, workshop records, official reports, and so on.⁵ This west Theban village housed the artisans and workmen who built and decorated the New Kingdom royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens. As royal artisans, such men received a generous monthly wage from the state and displayed a much higher rate of literacy than the majority of the population. They produced thousands of written records and letters concerning their social, economic, legal, and religious activities. Most of the surviving records come from the Ramesside Period, that is, the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties of the New Kingdom, between 1295 and 1069 B.C.E., extending from the reign of Ramesses I to that of Ramesses XI.

113. Amulet Representing the Soul as a Human-Head Falcon. From Saqqara, Egypt. Late Period, 664–332 B.C.E. Gold, $\frac{7}{8} \times 1 \frac{5}{8} \times \frac{1}{4}$ in. (2.2 x 4.2 x 0.6 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.805E

Gold amulets were the most powerful, since gold was the flesh of the gods.



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Because Deir el-Medina was a likely place for many wealthy Egyptians to have purchased their coffins, it provides the best evidence for funerary arts creation and commercial exchange in the New Kingdom.⁶

The most vital piece of equipment for the corpse—the coffin—had to be purchased and paid for. The late Eighteenth Dynasty coffin of the Deir el-Medina craftsman Teti (figure 114) shows us the color and style of many wooden coffins produced later in the Ramesside Period: red, black, white, blue, and green figural decoration was covered with a translucent varnish that turned the white background color a light yellow. Such coffins were constructed from costly materials like wood, pigments, and varnish, and these materials had prices, many of which are preserved in Ramesside commercial texts from Deir el-Medina and associated west Theban worksites. The price of a coffin was determined by a number of variables, some clearly expressed in the textual material, some not, including the cost of materials like wood and paint, the cost of the craftsman's time, the reputation and skill level of the maker, the length and quality of the religious texts to be included, the types of scenes painted on the coffin, and the quality level of the craftsmanship.

The records of coffin prices from Deir el-Medina provide an understanding of the pieces' exchange value. The Deir el-Medina corpus preserves 168 prices for different coffin types, which represent a huge range in the perceived value of funerary objects. Most prices for coffins were recorded in copper *deben*—that is, 91 grams, equivalent to the cost of about 10 loaves of bread. In New Kingdom Egypt, 5 *deben* could buy you a goat or a pair of sandals or a woven linen shirt.⁷ In general, 25 *deben* could buy you a decent-quality anthropoid (or person-shaped) coffin made of wood and decorated with figural designs. Table 1 (page 118) shows the average price, the median (or most common) price, and the high and low prices for different types of coffins, including the standard anthropoid coffin (*wet* in Egyptian), the outer coffin (*men-ankh / wet a'a* in Egyptian), the inner coffin (*wet sheri*), and the mummy board (*sukhet*), a wooden cover that fit over the mummy inside of the anthropoid coffin. Some of these records are not well preserved and are difficult to read, resulting in some insecure prices. The “secure” prices are therefore averaged separately to check the data. The “average” price in this chart represents the total amount of money divided by the number of prices. The “median” price represents the most common one in a series of prices. The “average without high and low” does not include the most expensive nor the cheapest prices of a particular coffin type.

114. *Anthropoid Coffin of the Servant of the Great Place, Teti* (see also figure 34). From Thebes, Egypt. New Kingdom, mid- to late Dynasty 18, circa 1339–1307 B.C.E. Wood, painted, 33 ¼ x 18 13/16 x 81 ½ in. (84.5 x 47.8 x 207 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.14E.

Coffins painted with red, black, white, blue, and green were varnished, turning the background yellow. Such coffins became typical in the Nineteenth Dynasty. This is a very early example of the type.

Object Category	Average of All Prices	Average of Secure Prices	Median of All Prices	High Price(s)	Low Price(s)	Average without High and Low
wet (mummiform coffin)	31.57	29.67	25	220 (-x?) & 145	4 (?) & 8	24.61
wet decoration	10.5	12.14	10	65	2 & 2.5	9.38
wet construction	22.75	35.66	10.25	80	9 (?)	11.87
wet carving	4	2.5	2	10 (?)	1	3
wet wood	4.4	5	5	5	1 (?)	5
men-ankh / wet a'a (outer coffin)	37.5	40.8	32.5	95	15 (?)	31.6
men-ankh / wet a'a decoration	16.31	16.25	17.5	35	5	15.08
wet sheri (inner coffin) decoration	16.83	21.25	9	60	5	9
sukhet (mummy board)	25.9	25.9	22.5	34	15	26.25
sukhet decoration	5	6.5	5	14	3 (?)	4.64

Table 1. Average prices for coffins (in *deben*) according to Deir el-Medina textual material

An item's price provides only a limited understanding of its value as a funerary object, but it is a useful beginning. For example, in one Ramesside text, Ostrakon Deir el-Medina 146,⁸ we read:

List of all the work which I did for the deputy Amennakht: 2 *qeniu* seats making 30 (*deben*), wood: 1 *Hati* bed making 20 *deben*, 1 *wet* coffin making 25 *deben*. The excess thereof: 48 (*deben*). Wood: 1 *tut* statue making 15 *deben*, 1 *kesekesti* box making 3 *deben*. Total 93 copper *deben*.

This workshop record seems to have been written by an unnamed craftsman (probably a carpenter) to record a completed commission ordered by the deputy Amennakht for wooden objects, including a chair, a bed, a coffin, and a statue, for a total of 93 *deben*—a very large sum of copper for a craftsman who earned about 11 *deben* a month.⁹

In another text dating to the reign of Ramesses III (Ostrakon Ashmolean Museum HO 183),¹⁰ we learn a great deal of information about the value of expensive pigments when used in funerary arts:

To inform about all the commissions which the workman Prehotep did for Amenem-di-raneb: 1 *wet* coffin, varnished, its *qenekh* body part (?) being green and its *neshi* body part (?) being yellow

orpiment, making 40 *deben*, precious wood: [...], 1 *sukhet* mummy board, varnished and decorated, making 25 *deben*.

The price for a finished *wet* coffin in this text is 40 *deben*, about 15 *deben* higher than the most common (median) price for this funerary object type (average 31.57 *deben*; median 25 *deben*). The text notes green and yellow orpiment paint specifically, both expensive pigments, suggesting that these materials may have been part of the reason for the higher price.

Commercial texts from Deir el-Medina tell us about the material value of crafted objects, including what type of object is being sold, what materials it is made of, who made it, and how much it costs. Just like our modern supermarket receipt, these ancient commercial texts record only particular sorts of information: the manufacturer (in this case the craftsmen), the price (here usually in the form of copper *deben*), the details of the exchange (if specific commodities changed hands to make payment), and the names of the buyers. The means of production and exchange are the focus in these texts; the material nature of the commodities changing hands is carefully recorded in terms of price, type, and maker. But contextual details about why a particular purchase was made, how much discussion the purchase required, how a particular craftsman was chosen by the buyer, or the quality level of craftsmanship are not mentioned in any of these texts. Non-contextualized information like names and prices provides only a vague indication of the quality of a particular piece of funerary art because we are not part of this ancient commercial system. The name and title of a specific craftsman may have been a key measure for locals to judge his reputation and the perceived quality of the commissioned funerary piece, but we, as modern outsiders, have little insight into the real-world details of order, production, and exchange. To draw a loose analogy: essentially, we are trying to understand ancient craft specialization and value from a small collection of torn and fragmented supermarket receipts supplemented by a few memos left to us by store managers.

In another Twentieth Dynasty text dating to the reign of Ramesses V (Ostrakon Ashmolean Museum HO 163),¹¹ we have a simple receipt recording how a priest paid a carpenter for his coffin:

List of all the property which the *wab* priest Neferhotep paid to the carpenter Meryre being the silver of his *wet* coffin: 3 *khar* sacks of emmer wheat, 1 braided *kesekeser* basket (making) 1 *khar*,

115. *Canopic Jar and Lid (Depicting a Hawk)*. From Egypt, Late Period, Dynasty 26 (or later), 664–525 B.C.E. or later. Limestone, 10 ¼ in. (26 cm) high x 4 ½ in. (11.4 cm) diameter. Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.895Ea–b

Documents from Deir el-Medina suggest that canopic jars were part of the equipment needed for an elite burial.

1 smooth *meses* shirt making 5 *deben*, 2 braided *kebes* baskets making 2 *oipe*, 1 *tema* mat (and) 1 *deni* basket.

It is clear from these texts that the ancient Egyptians were not using money per se but were nonetheless thinking in monetary terms. The word meaning *silver* in this text is translated literally here, but it could just as easily have been translated as *money*. This text lists, essentially, the *money* that was paid for the coffin, and it takes the form of a collection of objects. That is to say, the ancient Egyptians were trading commodities for other commodities: coffins were traded for baskets, mats, and even livestock. But each commodity was set equal to an amount of copper *deben* or sacks of grain (*khar*), and we therefore read that a given object is said to be “making X amount of copper,” that is, each object is worth this much money. The ancient Egyptians set their commodities equal to amounts of copper or grain, creating prices, allowing them to equalize their commercial exchanges. If we add up the prices for all the commodities paid in exchange for the coffin in the above text, we see that the carpenter Meryre received grain, basketry, and linen in the amount of 20 *deben*, more or less, from the *wab* priest. Comparatively, this is not an expensive coffin, but since the man was paying a carpenter, it is possible that he was paying only for an undecorated and unfinished funerary object.

A number of letters from ancient Thebes also mention funerary craftwork, and they provide some of the most interesting real-world details about craft production. For instance, in Papyrus Deir el-Medina 9, also dating to the Twentieth Dynasty,¹² we see a carpenter writing to a man of higher status, a scribe of the vizier:

(Chief) carpenter of the Lord of the Two Lands Maa-nakhtuef to the scribe Amenmesu of the vizier. Note that I wish to hear of your condition a thousand times a day (because) you did not come within the year. Look, I am painting the *wet sheri* inner coffin together with the *wat* mummy mask. The incense which you brought has almost run out. Please have someone send incense, pistacia pitch, and wax so that I can varnish (it).

The recipient of the letter is Amenmesu, the scribe of the vizier, and he seems to be supplying materials such as incense, pitch, and wax to the carpenter so that the latter can varnish an inner coffin with translucent yellow pistacia resins. As scribe of the vizier, his contacts in the elite bureaucracy would be far-reaching. If this is the case, this scribe could



have been supplying the so-called chief carpenter at Deir el-Medina as part of an informal workshop for the production of private-sector funerary arts of which he seems to be the main organizer.¹³ The carpenter was dependent on the scribe for materials to finish his commission, even though he was not making the coffin as part of his work for the royal workshop in the Valley of the Kings.

Another Nineteenth Dynasty letter (Ostrakon Černý 19)¹⁴ tells us how Deir el-Medina artisans purchased craft goods and raw materials from different workshops, even for the burial of their own family members:

Communication of the draftsman Pay to his son the draftsman
Pre-em-heb: Please make plans to find the two hearts of faience
about which I told you I would pay their price to their owner, namely
anything he will ask as their price. And make plans to search out
this fresh incense that I told you about in order to varnish the *wet*
coffin of your mother. I gave its price [to] its owner. . . . Do not be
neglectful about all that I have told you, yourself.

In this text, a son is instructed to buy two heart amulets from a workshop specializing in faience, presumably heart scarabs similar to a later example made of steatite and gold (see figures 19, 20). The son is also told by his father to fetch incense resins so that they can apply the translucent yellow varnish to the coffin of his own mother. It is not known whether his mother was dead at this point, but it seems unlikely. Because the ancient Egyptians created their burial equipment far in advance if they could afford funerary arts, it is probable that the man was making a coffin for his wife while she was still alive. In the Egyptian mindset, this behavior was not macabre, but simply practical. Preparing for death required economic investment in crafted material goods.

Other texts from western Thebes are legal in nature and involve court proceedings concerning the purchase of burial goods. In Ostrakon Deir el-Medina 225 of the mid-Twentieth Dynasty,¹⁵ we read about a woman named Iy who was brought before the local court:

Legal contendings of the workman Ameneminet with the lady Iy,
the wife of Huy who is deceased. And she said, "I will make a *wet*
coffin for my husband, and I will bury him," so she said. And she
said to the scribe Amennakht, "I will make a *wet* coffin for Huy
and you will take for yourself his hut."

In this text, a woman is taken to court because she did not provide burial equipment for her dead husband, although she presumably received his inheritance, a legal problem if she did not pay for his burial.¹⁶ Although she promises to make (*iri*) the coffin herself, she is in fact promising to pay for it, asking the scribe Amennakht to make it, and in payment she is giving him a hut, or small dwelling (*at* in Egyptian), once belonging to her dead husband.

Purchasing Other Funerary Equipment

Deir el-Medina commercial texts also tell us about the purchase of other burial equipment, such as *shabty* figurines that were thought to labor for the deceased in the afterlife, most of them probably similar to the painted New Kingdom wooden *shabty* of Amunemhat (figure 90). In Ostrakon IFAO 764 of the mid-Twentieth Dynasty,¹⁷ we learn that it was possible for an ancient Egyptian during the Ramesside Period to buy a set of forty such *shabty* figurines, presumably one for each day of the thirty-day month with additional foremen and overseers to make sure they did their work:

The decoration of the chief workman Nekhemut [. . .]: 40 *shabties*
making 1 *deben* (and) making 15 *deben* (for) the *wet* coffin and the
yetit funerary object [. . .]

In addition to the forty *shabties* mentioned in this text, this craftsman also decorated an entire set of funerary equipment, including an anthropoid coffin and a funerary object that may have been some form of mummy board (*yetit* in Egyptian).¹⁸ The *shabty* figurines are the least expensive part of this funerary equipment by far, costing only 1 *deben* to paint them, compared to 15 *deben* to paint the larger body containers. The *shabty* figurines are important, but the body containers take precedence; at least this is what the prices tell us.

Another Twentieth Dynasty receipt (Ostrakon Liverpool 13626)¹⁹ lists a *shabty* box among a number of other burial items. The painted box meant to contain the *shabty* figurines was probably similar to the Eighteenth Dynasty example of Amunemhat in shape (figure 91) and, at only 2 *deben*, was quite inexpensive compared to the total price of 112 *deben* for all the craftwork listed in this text:

1 large *men-ankh* outer coffin making [. . .] *deben*, wood:
1 woman's *men-ankh* outer coffin making [. . .] *deben*, a *wet sheri*



inner coffin on which I did *seger.ef* (?) work on its arms (?) and *mesha* work strengthening i[ts] front of the feet together with its *ama'a* body part (?) [making] 5 (*deben*), wood: 2 *sheger* containers making 3 *deben*, wood: 1 *iter shabty* box making 2 *deben*, 1 braided *kebes* basket making 1 *deben*, 1 *tema* mat and 1 *merekh* sieve making 1 *deben*, 3 sacks of good blue pigment, 1 *wet* coffin, sawn wood prepared (?) for its *gati* canopic chest. Total of all the work which I did for [him]: 112 (*deben*).

In other texts, we learn that Ramesside individuals could buy canopic jars (the funerary containers that held the liver, lungs, intestines, and stomach of the mummified deceased) and the wooden canopic chests that held these jars. The Twentieth Dynasty Ostrakon Deir el-Medina 679²⁰ tells of the sale of canopic jars along with an entire set of funerary equipment, including an inner and outer coffin, indicating that the mummification and the associated viscera containers were part of an elite burial:

What the draftsman Menna sold to the Songstress of Amen Henutwati: 1 painted *wet a'a* outer coffin, 4 canopic jars, and 1 painted *wet sheri* inner coffin.

Unfortunately, no prices are listed in this document, but it does tell us that Theban purchasers came to the village of Deir el-Medina to buy entire sets of coffins as well as containers for mummified internal organs. These canopic jars would have resembled the Late Period example seen in figure 115, at least in form, but they would have been made of wood and painted with bright colors, in accordance with Ramesside west Theban styles.

Another text, Papyrus Berlin P 10485,²¹ tells of the sale of canopic jars and a canopic chest to contain them, among a number of other wooden craft items:

This day of noting all that I sold to[... That] which I gave to him: my *qebou-en-wet* canopic jars making 5 *deben*, 1 *gaut* canopic chest

116. *The Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet.* From Thebes, Egypt. New Kingdom, Dynasty 19, circa 1295–1185 B.C.E. Painted papyrus, 17 ½ x 48 ½ in. (44.5 x 123.2 cm). Gift of Theodora Wilbour, 35.1448a–d and 35.1464

A painted papyrus such as this became more widely available to a priest and scribe like Neferrenpet during the Nineteenth Dynasty. Previously such information was restricted to the royal circle.



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117. *Sun on the Horizon*. Detail from *The Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet*. The sun on the horizon, depicted between two mountain peaks, is the hieroglyphic writing for part of Re-Horakhty's name. This god is the form the sun takes when it rises and when it sets.

making 10 *deben*, wood: 1 *khati* bed making 20 *deben*, wood: 1 *qeniu* seat making 20 *deben*, (1) *had* footstool [making] 1 *deben*, 2 smooth *daiu* garments making 20 *deben*, wood: 1 *gaut* chest making [10?] *deben* [...] 1 *masha* object [making 15 (?) *deben*] [...] making 120 *deben*.

All of these objects are said to be crafted of wood. The canopic jars are said to cost 5 *deben*, while the accompanying canopic chest cost 10 *deben*, both lower than the median price for the anthropoid coffin at 25 *deben* (see Table 1). Proportionally, then, the coffin seems to have been the most expensive and the most important funerary investment for the deceased, according to this textual material. Consumers always paid more for their coffin than they did for accessories like *shabties* and canopic jars.

It was also the practice of wealthy Egyptians to purchase *Book of the Dead* papyri, according to the commercial Deir el-Medina texts, and they probably looked very similar to the Nineteenth Dynasty fragmentary example of Neferrenpet (figures 116–118). The economic texts tell us there was a wide range in prices, and presumably aesthetic value. One document dating to the thirty-sixth year of Ramesses II of the Nineteenth Dynasty (Ostrakon Ashmolean Museum HO 133)²² mentions the exchange of two *Books of the Dead*, one illuminated with polychrome scenes and the other undecorated:

What was paid by Neferabet to the draftsman Rahotep in exchange for the *khenu* chapel: 1 fine, thin *ifed* sheet making 3 (?) *seniu*, 1 decorated *Book of the Dead* papyrus making 1 *deben* (of silver)



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118. *Priest in a White Garment*. Detail from *The Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet*. The priest, nearest the stern of the boat, is accompanied by mourners and officials, all in white linen garments.

and 3 *heneu* sesame oil... What is given to him in exchange for the *wet* coffin of the guard Khawy: a papyrus roll of *The Book of the Dead* of Amenmesu making 3 *seniu*.

All of the prices in this Nineteenth Dynasty text are in silver (measured in *deben*, weighing 91 grams, and *seniu*, weighing 7.6 grams)²³ rather than copper, and the price of the illuminated *Book of the Dead* text mentioned in this receipt is 1 silver *deben*, about 60 to 100 copper *deben* (depending on the exchange rate between copper and silver), an extraordinarily high price given that the monthly salary of the Deir el-Medina craftsman was about 11 copper *deben*. The second *Book of the Dead*, said to belong to Amenmesu, is not described as painted, and it is therefore priced at only 3 *seniu*, or about 15 copper *deben*. This text provides us with a good idea of the economic value of a draftsman's skill and time: *The Book of the Dead* illuminated with colorful scenes of afterlife existence is four to six times more expensive than the version with only text. In other words, the cost of the draftsman's effort was much more expensive than either the papyrus material or the scribe's text. Only the very wealthy consumer could afford such an illuminated papyrus; other individuals had to make do with only the magical text.

Buying within One's Price Range

Few individuals in ancient Egypt could afford the ideal set of coffins and funerary equipment—consisting of three nesting coffins, a mummy mask, canopic jars, a canopic chest, and *shabty* figurines. Only the very rich could

afford gold; most of the elite made do with wood and some gilding. Even King Tutankhamun benefited from solid-gold construction only in his mask and inner coffin; among his other, gilded-wood pieces, his second coffin may actually have been usurped from another ruler and redecorated for him.²⁴ Lack of funds and unexpected circumstances necessitated negotiation and adaptation by every ancient Egyptian. Buyers negotiated their desire for religiously charged objects (among them a body transformed through mummification, a coffin, a tomb, canopic jars, and figurines) with their ability to pay for them, resulting in funerary arts spanning a range of prices and quality levels. Some funerary objects were carefully made with high-quality materials; others were produced with cheap materials by artisans who lacked high-level training in the palace workshops, sponsored by the king and temples. Comparing two objects in the exhibition illustrates this contrast. The Brooklyn Museum's coffin of Pa-seba-khai-en-ipet (figure 94) is a high-cost Twenty-first Dynasty coffin painted by a skilled draftsman with detailed scenes using generous amounts of expensive blue and green paints; it is the outermost in a three-piece coffin set of two coffins and a mummy board. The craftsman responsible was probably state-trained, and the buyer was a part of the Egyptian elite. On the other hand, individuals who were not able to afford such expensive objects might purchase something like the exhibition's late Sixth Dynasty funerary statuette of limestone (figure 119), which is very simply carved and painted by an unskilled craftsman with cheap red, black, and white paints.

The situation was the same with mummification. It is well known to forensic scientists that there was a wide range of quality in body preparation in ancient Egypt: some corpses were fully embalmed, such as the Roman Period body of a man named Demetrios (figure 17), in contrast to others that were simply washed and wrapped. The Greek historian Herodotus described the mummification methods of the ancient Egyptians within the context of the marketplace, discussing differing qualities and expenses:

Mummification is a distinct profession. The embalmers, when a body is brought to them, produce specimen models in wood, painted to resemble nature, and graded in quality; the best and most expensive kind is said to represent a being whose name I shrink from mentioning in this connection; the next best is somewhat inferior and cheaper, while the third sort is cheapest of all. After pointing out these differences in quality, they ask which of the



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three is required, and the kinsmen of the dead man, having agreed upon a price, go away and leave the embalmers to their work.²⁵

Although Herodotus wrote this description of commercial activity a millennium after the New Kingdom, the process of coffin commission and production in Deir el-Medina was probably not very different. Ostensibly, prospective clients made contact with craftsmen, discussed the different funerary objects and quality levels available to them, communicated what they could afford, and, we should assume, after a great deal of haggling, agreed on a price.

119. *Statuette of a Striding Man*. Provenance not known. Old Kingdom, late Dynasty 6, circa 2288–2170 B.C.E. Limestone, painted, 6 ⁵/₁₆ x 3 ¹/₁₆ x 1 ³/₄ in. (16.9 x 7.7 x 4.4 cm). Gift of Evangeline Wilbour Blashfield, Theodora Wilbour, and Victor Wilbour honoring the wishes of their mother, Charlotte Beebe Wilbour, as a memorial to their father, Charles Edwin Wilbour, 16.238

Limestone statues such as this one were easier to carve and were often less expensive than statues of harder stone such as granite.

120. Sarcophagus Lid of Pa-di-Djehuti. From cemetery at el-Tarmakiya, near Hardai (Kynopolis), Egypt. Ptolemaic Period, circa 305–30 B.C.E. Limestone, 80 3/16 x 22 13/16 x 13 3/8 in. (204 x 58 x 34 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 34.1221

The burial of the sarcophagus was the last act of the funeral. A heavy stone example like this one would have been transported on a sledge.



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121. Head and Bust of an Official in a Double Wig. Provenance not known. New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, reign of Amunhotep III, circa 1390–1353 B.C.E. Granodiorite, 4 1/2 x 4 9/16 x 3 3/4 in. (11.4 x 11.6 x 9.6 cm). Gift of the Ernest Erickson Foundation, Inc., 86.226.28

Granodiorite was a rare stone available only to the elite for statues used in the tomb.

Some families could afford to spend a great deal on funerary equipment; others made do with very little. Some Deir el-Medina texts, such as Ostrakon Turin 57368²⁶ of the mid- to late Twentieth Dynasty, document the purchase of very expensive coffins:

List of the silver which the scribe of the tomb Hori sold: 1 *wet* coffin of *isy* tamarisk wood making 80 (*deben*), the decoration and that which was varnished making 65 copper *deben*, a *sukhet* mummy board [...] making 20 (*deben*). Receiving from him (as payment):²⁷ 1 ox making 100 *deben*. Receiving from him: another ox making 100 (+x?) *deben*, 1 smooth *dayet* cloak making 20 (*deben*), making 43 *deben*, a smooth *ifet* sheet making 8 (*deben*), the *sukhet* mummy board making 15 (*deben*).

In this text, the cost for a *wet* coffin is 145 *deben*—a very high price. The construction of this *wet* coffin cost 80 *deben*, a substantial investment for a piece without any decoration or finishing; part of the cost must be accounted for in the mention of tamarisk. The fact that tamarisk was noted for a coffin of such expense indicates that this type of wood was economically valued by those commissioning the work and that they specifically asked

that this expensive wood be used. Wealthy individuals could afford to demand high-quality materials.

Other texts document the sale of much cheaper anthropoid coffins, often purchased by individuals who could afford only one coffin and maybe also a mummy mask. For example, Ostrakon Cairo 25601 of the Twentieth Dynasty²⁸ reads:

1 wet coffin making 10 (*deben*), a wet wa mummy mask (?) 4 (*deben*),
1 wet coffin making 8 (*deben*), a wet wa mummy mask (?) 3 (*deben*),
a wet wa mummy mask (?) 3 (*deben*). Total copper: 28 *deben*.

In this text, one anthropoid coffin costs only 10 *deben* and another only 8 *deben*, much lower than the median price of 25 *deben* for this same type of coffin (see Table 1), and there is nothing in this text to suggest that only decoration or construction is meant. Many people could pay only low prices for their funerary arts, and they were actually the lucky ones: most ancient Egyptians could afford only to wrap their dead family members in a textile of some sort, like a palm rib mat, and inter them in a communal grave.

We often assume that all Egyptians prepared a coffin of some kind for their body, but the textual and archaeological evidence proves that only very few could afford to do so. High costs for materials and labor prohibited most from participating fully in elite funerary culture. The real-world costs of enacting complex belief systems with purchased funerary equipment meant that all individuals were limited in their preparations for the afterlife by the burial goods they could afford. In death and the afterlife, all were not treated as equals.

Funerary Arts and Social Inequality

Spending by the elite on funerary arts not only protected the soul in the afterlife, but could also serve as a form of political and socio-economic maintenance for the deceased's family, showing publicly who belonged to which status groups and why. Some high elite funerary equipment, particularly large stone objects, such as the two Ptolemaic limestone sarcophagi belonging to Pa-di-Inpw and Pa-di-Djehuti (figures 36, 120), were heavy and difficult to maneuver, and they showed the ability of these men to marshal skilled labor and unwieldy materials. Elite tomb chapels also made socio-political statements: officials had their numerous titles and family connections as well as their most illustrious achievements inscribed on



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the walls of these chapels, linking themselves to wealthy state institutions and to higher members of society, particularly the royal family. Materials, too, held social significance: a New Kingdom head (figure 121), perhaps once belonging to a funerary statue of a nobleman, is made of granodiorite—a stone available exclusively through the royal quarrying monopoly. This object may have been a gift from the king himself, and it was probably displayed for the social and economic benefit of family members.

Many elites displayed their funerary wealth ostentatiously, making an obvious statement to those watching the funerary rituals in which masks

122. *Head and Chest from a Sarcophagus.* From Egypt. Roman Period, 4th century C.E. Terracotta, painted, 17 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 4 1/2 in. (44.5 x 44.5 x 11.4 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 83.29

Terracotta sarcophagi could be hand modeled and quite individual, not following any established portrait style.

123. *Mummy Cartonnage of a Woman*. From Hawara, Egypt. Roman Period, 1st century C.E. Linen, gilded gesso, glass, faience, 22 1/16 x 14 5/8 x 7 1/2 in. (57.6 x 37.2 x 19 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 69.35

Some Roman Period mummy masks drew largely on classical style.

and coffins took the primary role. For example, the cartonnage mummy cover of a Roman woman of the first century C.E. (figure 123) visibly showcases her elite status through opulent gilding and glass inlay. The mummy mask of a man from the same century (figure 106) indicates that other individuals could not afford so much gilding. Other elites of the same period chose not to be as ostentatious in their funerary styles, selecting a more naturalistic painted death portrait, although they still made sure to include as much gold as they could, as on the encaustic painting of the man Demetrios of the Roman Period (figure 16).

As these various objects suggest, Egyptian funerary art is a key illustration of social inequality and limited choice within a complex society. The mere fact that most of the body containers in this book are painted, varnished, and even gilded clearly indicates that the high elite are tremendously over-represented in our modern museum collections. To put it simply: the vast majority of ancient Egyptians had *no* coffin or other funerary objects to speak of. Their own corpse was meant to provide them with a material existence after death and a vessel for their soul. Whether an individual could afford a richly made coffin, a modest body container, or only a simply prepared corpse, each of these different vessels provided the deceased with a material understanding of, and expectations for, the quality of his or her own afterlife. Many individuals unable to afford the real thing therefore included miniature or imitation versions of elite funerary materials, hoping for the same carryover of wealth in the afterlife, as seen in the New Kingdom pottery vessel painted to resemble expensive red granite (figure 92), presumably granting the dead owners more wealth in death than they had in life;²⁹ such objects were not only necessary to maintain one's socio-economic status in the afterlife, but might also have served to elevate it. Other Egyptians, however, made do with cheap pottery coffins, some of substandard craftsmanship (figure 122), because they could not afford wood, a commodity of some expense in ancient Egypt.

Usurpation and Reuse of Burial Goods

The demand for funerary arts had some ongoing consequences throughout the millennia. Most notably, the usurpation and reuse of burial goods was inevitable, given how important coffins, mummy masks, and canopic jars were to owners and family members—not only for the proper survival of the corpse, but also as a display of status within the funerary ritual. Coffins and other funerary arts were not freely available to all who wanted them.



124. Coffin of the Lady of the House, Weretwahset, Reinscribed for Bensusipet. From Deir el-Medina, Egypt. New Kingdom, early Dynasty 19, circa 1292–1190 B.C.E. Wood, painted, 24 13/16 x 12 13/16 x 76 3/16 in. (63 x 32.5 x 193.5 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.47Ea–b

This coffin combines the mummy board in "everyday dress" with the lid of the inner coffin, usually a separate piece, thus saving considerable effort and resources. More expensive sets included a separate mummy board that rested on top of the mummy and inside the coffin.



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HOW MUCH DID A COFFIN COST?



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125. Side view of Coffin of the Lady of the House, Weretwahset, Reinscribed for Bensusipet



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126. Detail of Coffin of the Lady of the House, Weretwahset, Reinscribed for Bensusipet

The name Bensusipet is written in black hieroglyphs contrasting with the green, blue, and red hieroglyphs visible underneath the black ones that spell Weretwahset's name. Adding the name of the second user of a reused coffin was essential for preserving the deceased in the netherworld. The details of how a coffin came to be reused are unclear, but reuse could have been the result of tomb robbery.

Even during times of prosperity, most Egyptians had no chance of saving up the necessary amount, and in times of economic scarcity, the competition to acquire a coffin was fierce, driving many to usurp and reuse the coffins of the buried dead.³⁰

The usurpation of a coffin blurred the distinction between economic and religious functions by taking the religiously charged object out of the sphere of the sacred burial chamber and placing it back in the sphere of the commodity. Tomb robbery was an ancient profession in ancient Egypt, mentioned in instructional texts and pessimistic literature long before the New Kingdom.³¹

Coffin reuse was quite common during the Third Intermediate Period,³² but the usurpation of funerary goods was already happening at the end of the New Kingdom, to which the Theban coffin of Weretwahset attests (figure 124). This Nineteenth Dynasty coffin was repainted for another woman, named Bensusipet, at either the end of the Twentieth Dynasty or the beginning of the Twenty-first. It is unknown how this kind of coffin reuse actually took place: were old coffins *sold* by Egyptian family members after exhuming them from common burial spaces generations after the death of the owner? Or were objects simply stolen, after socially supported tomb protection systems broke down, and then turned into commodities again? Usurpation was adaptive and innovative, probably relying on a variety of techniques to return a buried coffin to the commodity state.³³ In the Third Intermediate Period, even kings usurped and reused the funerary objects of much wealthier kings who had died before them,³⁴ indicating that usurpation involved a negotiation between theft and positive reassociation—essentially, an innovative conciliation between the principles of *ma'at*, or justice, and the need to incorporate religious powers into funerary objects.

Usurpation also reveals that Egyptian society as a whole placed more emphasis on the use of funerary materials in ritual and display contexts than it did on the permanent burial of those funerary objects with the dead.³⁵ Funerary objects were manipulated within ritual contexts to change the deceased into a form that could traverse the passage into the afterlife. Burial goods also provided the soul of the deceased with a material vessel—an earthly shape that could be pulled into the worldly sphere by living family members—so that they could offer to, and communicate with, the dead. For example, some statues found in the village of Deir el-Medina represent deceased family members; these ancestor busts were not placed in tombs, but rather in homes, in order to provide a material means of bringing the soul of the dead into the world of the living (see figures 127, 128). If material objects were thought necessary, even to some degree, to make transformation of the dead, and communication with the dead, possible, then usurpation became inevitable when the necessary objects could not be obtained in any other way.

The Social and Economic Meaning of Funerary Art

To use a very loose analogy, the Egyptian funeral can be compared to a modern wedding. A wedding is, among other things, a public display in



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which the wealth and social position of a family can be shown to relatives, friends, and acquaintances by material means.³⁶ A wedding functions on many different levels. The ritual binds the couple together in the eyes of the community. But at the same time, the communal nature of the ritual also allows social and political networking to take place through shared meals and gift giving. And, of course, lavish displays of clothing, food, and drink traditionally associated with the wedding ritual communicate the economic capability and status of the bride's and groom's families.

127. *Female Ancestral Bust*. From Deir el-Medina, Egypt. New Kingdom, Dynasty 18 to Dynasty 19, circa 1539–1190 B.C.E. Pottery, painted, 6 ⁵/₁₆ x 3 x 2 ⁵/₁₆ in. (16 x 7.6 x 5.8 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 61.49

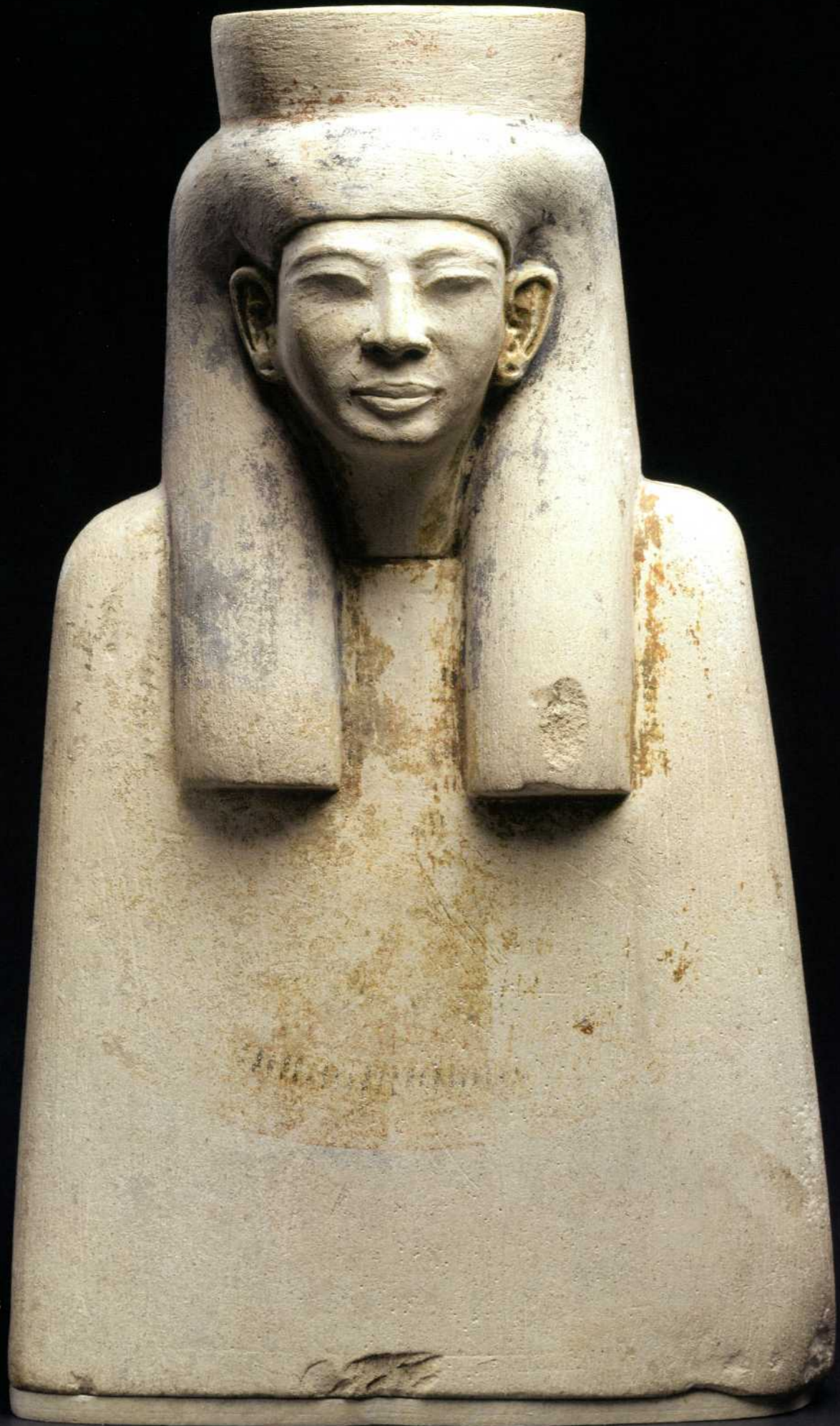
Pottery ancestral busts were cheaper and easier to manufacture than limestone examples such as figure 128.

In the same way, the Egyptian funeral functioned on many different levels: social, economic, and religious. Egyptology usually focuses on the religious aspects of death, in particular the traditional funerary beliefs and practices of the elites. However, by examining the real-world functionality of the funerary objects themselves, as in this essay, we can expose additional layers of meaning.

The underlying reality is that every funerary object in this exhibition was once commissioned, produced, and sold for a price before it became a part of any burial ceremony. Some of these funerary arts were even taken out of the burial context, recommoditized, and reused for other individuals because the demand for the object could not be met by any other means. Most funerary objects were at the center of public ritual displays, granting prestige and status to surviving family members as well as to the deceased in the next life. The socio-economic functions of funerary objects and their more familiar religious purposes were by no means mutually exclusive. It remains true, however, that social and economic factors dictated the quality, size, materials, and style of every funerary object produced in ancient Egypt, among them the prized artworks featured in this exhibition.

128. *Ancestral Bust of a Woman.* From Egypt. New Kingdom, late Dynasty 18 to early Dynasty 19, circa 1336–1279 B.C.E. Limestone, painted, 10 ¼ x 6 ⅛ x 3 ¾ in. (26 x 15.6 x 9.5 cm). Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 54.1

Busts of ancestors were kept in many homes as a memorial but also possibly to aid direct intervention by the spirit of the dead in the land of the living.



Notes to "How Much Did a Coffin Cost?"

1. For this translation of the Instruction of Hardjedef, see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 1: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1975), p. 58.
2. R. O. Faulkner and O. Goelt, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day; The First Authentic Presentation of the Complete Papyrus of Ani* (San Francisco: James Wasserman, 1994), pl. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, pl. 17.
4. M. L. Bierbrier, *The Tomb Builders of the Pharaohs* (London: British Museum Publications, 1982); Jaroslav Černý, *Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1973); Dominique Valbelle, *Les Ouvriers de la tombe: Deir el-Médineh à l'époque Ramesside* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1985).
5. A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
6. Kathlyn M. Cooney, *The Cost of Death: The Social and Economic Value of Ancient Egyptian Funerary Art in the Ramesside Period* (Leiden: Egyptologische Uitgaven, 2007).
7. Jac. J. Janssen, *Commodity Prices from the Ramessid Period: An Economic Study of the Village of Necropolis Workmen at Thebes* (Leiden: Brill, 1975).
8. S. Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 101–02; Jaroslav Černý, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el Médineh*, 6 vols. (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1937–70), vol. 2, p. 9, pl. 18; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1969–90), vol. 6, p. 664; McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 80.
9. Deir el-Medina craftsmen were paid 5.5 *khar* sacks of grain a month, more or less, which is equivalent to 11 *deben*. Jaroslav Černý, "Prices and Wages in Egypt in the Ramesside Period," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, vol. 1 (1954), pp. 903–21; Janssen, *Commodity Prices*; Jac. J. Janssen, "Rations with Riddles II," *Göttinger Miszellen*, vol. 128 (1992), pp. 831–94.
10. Unpublished, after Černý Notebooks 45.85 and 107.16, with permission of the Griffith Institute, Oxford.
11. Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, pp. 182–83; Jaroslav Černý and Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), p. 17, pl. 58, #3; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 6, pp. 255–56.
12. Jaroslav Černý and Georges Posener, *Papyrus hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh, Nos. I–XVII, Documents de fouilles*, 8 vols. (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1978–86), vol. 1, pp. 21–22, pl. 25; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 6, p. 672; E. F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 168–69.
13. Kathlyn M. Cooney, "An Informal Workshop: Textual Evidence for Private Funerary Art Production in the Ramesside Period," in A. Dorn and T. Hofmann, eds., *Living and Writing in Deir el-Medine: Socio-Historical Embodiment of Deir el-Medine Texts* [University of Basel, July 2004]; *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 19 (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2006).
14. Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, pp. 72–73; Černý and Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, p. 16, pl. 54, #4; Wolfgang Helck, *Materialien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Neuen Reiches*, 6 vols. (Wiesbaden: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz, 1961–69), vol. 5, p. 938; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 3, pp. 533–34; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated*, 3 vols. to date (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994–2003), vol. 3, p. 373; McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 75; Jaana Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina: A Study of the Status and Roles of the Female Inhabitants in the Workmen's Community during the Ramesside Period* (Leiden: Netherlands Institute for the Near East, 2001), p. 116; Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, p. 153.
15. Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, pp. 105–06; Černý, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el Médineh*, vol. 3, p. 9, pl. 16; Helck, *Materialien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Neuen Reiches*, vol. 3, p. 342;

16. Jac. J. Janssen and P. W. Pestman, "Burial and Inheritance in the Community of Necropolis Workmen at Thebes (Pap. Boulaq X and O. Petrie 16)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 11 (1968), pp. 137–70.
17. Unpublished, after Černý, with kind permission of the Griffith Institute, Oxford.
18. Cooney, *The Cost of Death*.
19. Allam, *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*, pp. 201–02; Černý and Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, p. 18, pl. 62, #3; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 4, pp. 162–63.
20. Černý, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el Médineh*, vol. 5, p. 13, pl. 21; Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 5, pp. 593–94; Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, p. 128.
21. Unpublished, after Černý, with kind permission of the Griffith Institute, Oxford.
22. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 7, pp. 182–83.
23. Janssen, *Commodity Prices from the Ramessid Period*, p. 102, n. 6.
24. Nicholas Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, the Tomb, the Royal Treasure* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990).
25. Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. John Marincola (London: Penguin, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 85–89.
26. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. 7, p. 322; Jesus Lopez, *Ostraca ieratici, Catalogo del Museo egizio di Torino* (Milan: Cisalpino-La Goliardica, 1978–84), vol. 3, p. 23, pl. 114.
27. From the buyer of the coffin.
28. Jaroslav Černý, *Ostraca hiératiques, Nos. 25501–25832: Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1935), pp. 58, pl. 50.
29. John Baines and Peter Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead in Ancient Egypt," *Journal of Social Archaeology*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2002), pp. 5–36.
30. Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 240–44; John H. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 178–82.
31. Evidence for tomb robbery goes back to the Predynastic Period. See Baines and Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead in Ancient Egypt Society."
32. Andrzej Niwinski, *Twenty-first Dynasty Coffins from Thebes: Chronological and Typological Studies* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1988), p. 57; Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, p. 181. About 450 coffins dating to the Twenty-first
- or very early Twenty-second Dynasty have been identified by Niwinski, a time period only about 125 years in length. When this is compared to the number of known Ramesside coffins, which is just over 60, usurpation is the likely culprit.
33. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
34. See in particular the reuse of Ramesside royal coffins and sarcophagi by the Third Intermediate royal family at Tanis; J. P. M. Montet, *La Nécropole royale de Tanis*, 3 vols. (Paris: Commission des Fouilles de la Direction Général des Relations Culturelles, 1947–60).
35. Cooney, *The Cost of Death*. For this same idea, see Baines and Lacovara, "Burial and the Dead in Ancient Egyptian Society," p. 15: "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."
36. See Vicki Howard, *Brides, Inc.: American Weddings and the Business of Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).