

A Label for Opening of the Mouth Implements from the Burial of Senneferi (TT99) and Remarks on the Ritual

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Abstract: In 2009, Nigel Strudwick published a paper drawing attention to a number of objects found in TT99 which seem to have been used in the Opening of the Mouth ritual. In 2015 an hieratic label from the same burial was identified as possibly belonging to a bag or box in which these items were kept. This paper presents a full edition of the label, and offers further comments on the context where the objects were found, and also indicates lines of research for further study of the Opening of the Mouth ritual.

Keywords: Senneferi, TT99, Thebes, tomb, Opening of the Mouth, hieratic label, ritual, Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt

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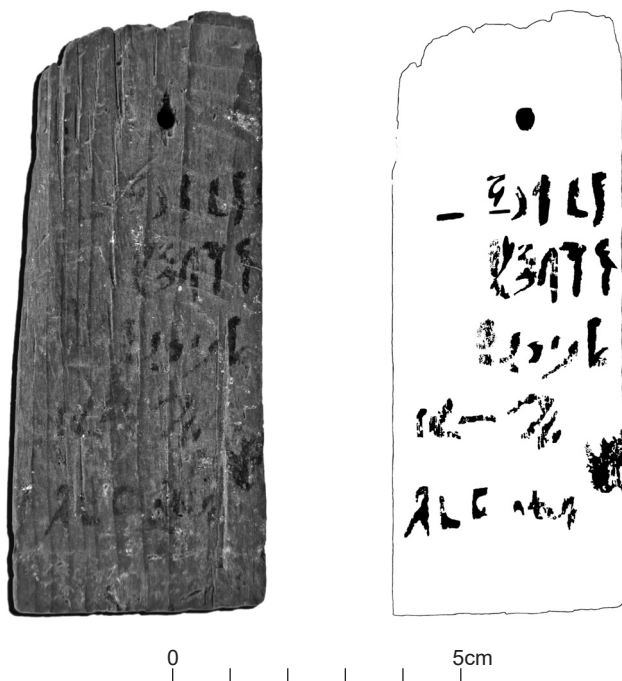
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In 2009, Nigel Strudwick published a paper in the *Festschrift* for Irmtraut Munro¹ in which he identified a number of unusual finds as elements of a set of implements for the performance of the Opening of the Mouth ritual which was placed in the burial chamber of the tomb of Senneferi at Thebes (TT99).² Such objects have never been previously identified at Thebes, the only parallels coming from the Late period tomb of Tjanenhebu at Saqqara. Further possible objects have been identified in post-excavation research since 2009, the most important of which is the label forming the subject of the present paper.³

¹ Strudwick 2009.

² The New Kingdom elements of the tomb of Senneferi are now published as Strudwick (Ed.) 2016. The web site *Fitz Museum* can be consulted for further information.

³ Bohleke is responsible for the first section ('The hieratic label') of this paper; Strudwick, as the excavator, recognised the connection with the other Opening of the Mouth items found in TT99. He is responsible for all of the remaining sections, with the exception of that entitled 'To what was the label attached?', contributed by Bohleke. Both authors take overall responsibility for the whole paper.



1. Photo and facsimile of the hieratic label, exc. no. 99.98.0622 (Phot. A. Middleton © N. Strudwick; facsimile by B. Bohleke).

THE HIERATIC LABEL (EXC. NO. 99.98.0622) (Fig. 1)

DESCRIPTION

A wooden object measuring approximately 3.6cm wide (maximum) by 9.0cm high, with a thickness of 0.4cm, was found among disturbed and fragmented burial goods in Shaft I Room 3 of TT99. The top is intentionally rounded, and this arc is preserved through deterioration of the edge that conforms to the approximate original curve. A 2mm diameter hole has been drilled 1cm from the top and seemingly to the right of the current centre, either to avoid the vertical raised ridge present there or because it had been centred. The right edge of the label has split off at some time after the hole's creation, but if a sliver of wood has actually been lost at the right, little to no inked text accompanied the slim section. It appears, indeed, that all the lines begin well in from the right side of the label.

The inscribed surface was prepared with an adze, planing from the top left downward along the grain. As the artisan moved the instrument to the right, the adze overlapped its preceding column, diminishing the width of each of the previous columns. The second to the last column remains the widest, clearly retaining the horizontal gouges of the blade as it met opposition and the craftsman had to provide another staccato stroke to continue his work. The final column has dug deepest into the wood, and the tilted blade of the adze

may have been the cause of the theoretical right edge splitting off prior to the application of any ink.

Horizontal gouges and vertical ridges and valleys provided an uneven surface for the scribe to add five short and hasty lines of text in black ink. The palaeography conforms to that of the reign of Thutmose III. The strokes are thick and dark, yet the ink of some hieratic signs has flaked or has been abraded. The *verso* of the tag remained blank and the surface of each side received no other treatment.

No contemporary labels seem to exist; other Eighteenth Dynasty parallels in purpose and chronology derive from the tomb of Amenhotep III⁴ and the tomb of Tutankhamun, of which the latter are the more important. Černý did not identify the species of tree from which Tutankhamun's labels originated, choosing instead the generic term 'wood' for each. It is most plausible that the material for Senneferi's and Tutankhamun's labels come from acacia or sycamore fig trees, both of which were common in Egypt and produce low grade wood. The preparation of Tutankhamun's labels has their surface appearing very similar to that of the label currently under study.⁵

HIEROGLYPHIC TRANSCRIPTION



TRANSLITERATION

ḥbs.w n
ḥs.w
i(w)f twt
psd n hbny
nw imy-wt 3bw

TRANSLATION

*Implements for
 the funerary ritual
 (and) meat – assembled together.
 Nine (items) of ebony (and)
 the adze (named) Imy-wt, (of) ivory.*




⁴ These came to our attention very late, see: Yoshimura 2011: Figs 42–43 (236–238). These three labels mention 'best *b3kt* oil', perhaps moringa, although the definitive assignment of the species to this oil has yet to be proved (Serpico, White 2000: 394–396).




⁵ Černý 1965: 15–16, 27–28, Pls IX–X (nos 61–75).

COMMENTARY




LINE 1

There appears to be a blob of ink at the current right edge of the text, but this is most likely a small crevice in the wood which is dark to the observer because of the shadow its pit creates. It is doubtful that any signs preceded those that are now present, and in ensuing lines there are no partial signs that would parallel the position of the one here.

The  is dissimilar to the more ornate equivalent sign directly below it. The top bulge may have been thwarted by the boundary made by the raised ridge to the immediate left of the sign. The  sign has also been confined by its parallel raised ridge, though some faint ink marking the shorter fold of the sign is barely visible to the left of the ridge, securing the reading. The writing of the large 9 curve for the  sign is unparalleled in the remainder of the text, the scribe using the more usual cursory elongated-s instead for the w-coil.

The first word is determined by  or , either option being equally legitimate to the reader because they would refer respectively to the material essence or bundled nature of contents of the chest to which the label was originally attached, yielding the sense of ‘implements’, ‘accessories’, or ‘instruments’ in sundry material media. The signs below and after the determinative are faint but legible. The  is either the genitive, treating *hbsw* as a masculine collective singular (e.g. ‘kit’), or the immutable dative ‘for’.

LINE 2

The fourth sign from the right is interpreted – from among several choices – . This would place the strokes prior to  instead of under or after it. Although odd, it conveniently forms a boxed ‘group’ of signs, leaving  to carry the central meaning of the word to avoid confusion that there might be plural ceremonies. The present author has chosen to interpret this word as a generic term for the ritual for which the implements were assembled. The ritual is otherwise known specifically as the ‘Opening of the Mouth’, the word *hs.w* therefore being the catch-all for the actions, singing, chanting, dancing, and presenting done comprehensively to prepare for the burial of those important enough to afford the proverbial bells and whistles of the final rites.

The amorphous vertical stroke which seems to follow the seated man is a shadow along the vertical ridge, and on the other side a darkened ‘rut’ multiplies the effect.

LINE 3

It is difficult to believe that *i(w)f* refers to anything other than the wooden model of the ox-haunch, the remains of which were found in the tomb (exc. nos 99.98.0608–99.98.0609),⁶ although this concern would have been moot had it been referred to as the *hps̄* instead of merely being documented in the label as ‘meat’/‘flesh’. It is untenable that real flesh would have been included with the chest of implements, for the perishable substance would

⁶ Strudwick 2009: 230–231, Fig. 17; Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 263, Fig. 221.

otherwise have been provided fresh ‘on the hoof’ at the ceremony itself. Senneferi’s tomb does contain real food, and it was packaged separately.⁷

An alternate interpretation of the line is to reconstruct it as *iw.f twt(.w)* ‘which is complete’, a virtual relative clause with qualitative. It is unlikely that the contents of the box would be construed grammatically as undefined, and orthographic emendations would be required. It is preferable to trust the scribe to write what he meant precisely and not leave the reader to ‘interpret’. Instead, the author understands *twt* as a passive participle referring to the double subject ‘accoutrements’ and ‘flesh’, and to be translated as ‘which are assembled’, ‘kitted out’, or ‘boxed up’. Similarly, the word could be nominalised and used to look forward to the next two lines, the translation then being, ‘That which is assembled together: ...’, a heading referring to the tally of lines 4 and 5.

LINE 4

This line either commences a specific list of lines 4 and 5, or might continue ‘... completed (with) ...’, though a preposition would be expected after *twt*. The tally of ‘9’ must act as a noun and refer to the tools in general. If *twt* were to be interpreted as ‘images’, one would expect the ‘9’ to follow it directly since there is room before the left edge of the label for the indication of quantity to fit nicely.

Note that the hieratic sign is indented as is line 5 directly below it. This phenomenon may indicate that these two lines are seen as the tally of the boxed kit or that the scribe thought the initial hieratic sign was too ‘bulky’ to write in the left margin and would have been awkwardly bisected by the vertical ridge.

The second sign group is difficult to discern because it appears initially to be a cone-shape of pen swirls. But close inspection in false colour enhancement reveals that only the bottom line and perhaps the shorter one above it are caused by ink, thus a genitive *n* or feminine *n.t*. Other ‘false ink strokes’ appear throughout the label, and are abrasions, nicks, and imperfections on the surface of the wood mimicking intentional text. The cone-shaped swirls might have occurred from the scribe trying to rub down the raised ridge on the undulating surface so he could make a long vertical sign more easily and recognisably.

The ensuing sign is rejected as *hm(.t)* ‘bronze’ or *ph* ‘end’.⁸ Because it is assumed to be *hbny*, in contrast with *3bw* on the next line,⁹ one would expect a second ‘handle’ of the plough on the hieratic sign¹⁰ as well as an *n* underneath the plough, the reason for the absences being perhaps that the scribe was practicing an economy of strokes for his crude label, defining the word by means of a simple stroke. Otherwise, long horizontal signs are nearly absent in the label due to its vertical raised ridges and undulating surface.

⁷ Strudwick 2009: 30. Food containers and a bovid leg bone were found in the burial chambers (Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 277–279).

⁸ Merymery’s tomb list (Leiden RMO AP. 6: Strudwick 2009: Fig. 6; Otto 1960: Fig. 14 [vol. II]) of Opening of the Mouth equipment mentions a *iw.f n ph*, but this cannot be what the scribe of the current label has intended.

⁹ *Wb* II, 487(10).

¹⁰ Möller 1927: 42 sign 468 (giving no examples for the Eighteenth Dynasty).

The identification of all nine items of ebony that were once contained in the kit to which the label was attached cannot be attempted from the remains the excavators found strewn in the tomb. Other implements for Senneferi's Opening of the Mouth ritual may have been included in a second box, for the finger (exc. no. 99.98.0648), censer handle (exc. no. 99.98.0650), the haunch (exc. nos 99.98.0608–99.98.0609), and two objects of unknown affinity (exc. nos 99.98.0640 and 99.98.0665; for the latter, see further below and **Fig. 5**) are of wood that the excavators have not identified, but does not, with the possible exception of exc. no. 99.98.0665, appear to be ebony.

LINE 5

The large blob between lines 4 and 5 appears under false colour enhancement to be some damage and shadowing as well as a substantial amount of ink. Perhaps the scribe wrote a sign in an attempt to commence line 5 in the right furrow only to realise that it would not continue contiguously across the pronounced ridge and then inked it out or tried to rub off the ink. In any case, the blob is now illegible, and the first sign on line 5 does require more horizontal space than the furrow at the right edge would allow.

The first signs on this line are written on a rough surface and have been damaged or worn but indicate unequivocally the presence of the *imy-wt* adze, one of the tools explicitly used in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony and attested by at least one fragment of its handle (exc. no. 99.98.0518) in TT99.

The hieratic sign beginning the word *3b* looks to be the 'standard' 𓆎^{11} rather than the 'chisel' 𓆏 , but this is, in any case, an attested alternative writing.

The last group mimics clearly the hieratic for '20', but it must be that the tooth sign was written diagonally instead of horizontally above the stroke. This modification is again because of the troughs and ridges on the surface that do not favour the standard writing of long horizontal signs.

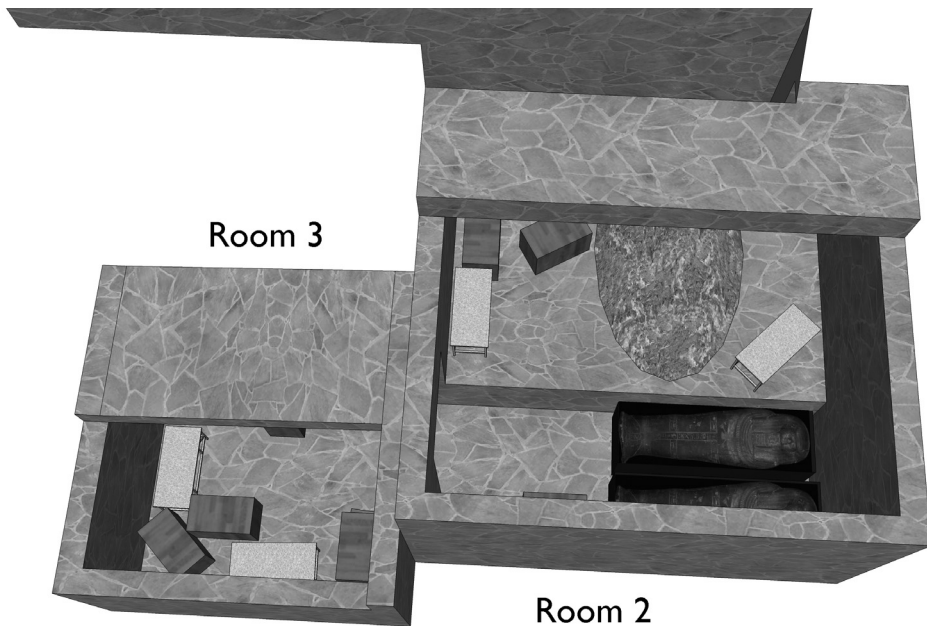
Whereas a fragment of a *wr-hk3.w* adze (exc. no. 99.98.0601), a putative member of the ceremonial kit, was found in the tomb, it is not recorded on the label. Since the inclusion of such a precious item could hardly have been forgotten, it is better to presume that it was packed separately.

CONTEXT AND DISCUSSION OF THE LABEL AND THE RITUAL

There can be little doubt that the recognition of the text on this label goes a considerable way to rounding off the speculation in Strudwick's article that a collection of ritual implements was buried with Senneferi. Again, this *shows that much is to be gained from careful excavation, analysis and study of what initially appears to be unpromising contexts*.¹² A few outstanding points remain to be considered.

¹¹ Möller 1927: 52 sign 578 (giving no examples for the early Eighteenth Dynasty).

¹² Strudwick 2009: 236.



2. Schematic 3D model of TT99 Shaft I burial chambers, Rooms 2 and 3 (© H. Strudwick).

THE CONTEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE LABEL TO THE REST OF THE ASSEMBLAGE

As indicated, the label was found in Room 3 of Shaft I. Shaft I is the deep vertical shaft in the courtyard of TT99 from which leads one long corridor (Corridor 1), a short corridor turning to the left (Corridor 2), at the end of which is a room (Room 1). In the floor of Corridor 2 was cut a small rough shaft which was termed the ‘Staircase shaft’ as its rough-hewn appearance initially suggested it might have been intended as a short stairway. At the bottom was a roughly square room (Room 2), in the floor of which lay an intriguing depression leading into Room 3.¹³ A very schematic 3D diagram of the latter two chambers will be found as **Fig. 2**.¹⁴

No item has yet been found away from the spill from the emptying and refilling of the main shaft which cannot be attributed to the Eighteenth Dynasty and many of the fragments found bore the name or titles of Senneferi, so there is no doubt that he was buried here. Helen and Nigel Strudwick have reconstructed the burials in these chambers to include those of Senneferi, his wife Taiamu, his parents Haydjehuty and Satdjhuty, and possibly a young daughter(?).¹⁵ Most of the different categories of object, including the remarkable ceramic assemblage,¹⁶ were predominantly found in Rooms 2 and 3, suggesting that they

¹³ See sketch plan, Strudwick 2009: 215, Fig. 1.

¹⁴ Note that the positioning of objects in the chambers is purely illustrative.

¹⁵ See: Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 77–83, for a summary of the history and construction sequence and usage of the chambers.

¹⁶ An overview of this forms part of Rose 2003, with full detail in Rose 2016.

were where Senneferi was buried; most likely, due to size, Room 2 was the location of the coffins, and Room 3 was a storeroom.

The specific locations of the objects that have been associated with the Opening of the Mouth ritual are given in **Table 1** below.

Tab. 1. Opening of the Mouth objects from TT99 Shaft I

	Find spot	References	Otto scene ¹⁷	Merymery item ¹⁸
Adzes (various)	Room 3	Strudwick 2009: 214–218, Figs 2–5	26, 27, 46	15–19
Finger	Room 3	Strudwick 2009: 230–231, Fig. 18	14, 32, 33	13
Model ox leg (<i>hps</i>)	Room 2/3 (join)	Strudwick 2009: 230–231, Fig. 17	24, 45	In preamble
Censer	Room 3	Strudwick 2009: 232–233, Fig. 20	6, 47, 59A, 60, 61, 64, 66, 71	20–22
Uncertain items	Room 3	1. Strudwick 2009: 231–232, Fig. 19 2. see: Appendix		
Ostraka	Room 2/3, Staircase shaft and Corridor	Strudwick 2009: 233–234, Fig. 21		
Label	Room 3	see above		
Box H fragment	Room 3	see: Appendix		
Box A (possible)	Room 3, Corridor	Strudwick 2009: 234, Fig. 22		

It is evident from this that the bulk were found in Room 3, logical if it were a storeroom. The possibility cannot be excluded that their container was in Room 2 and cast into Room 3 after ransacking by robbers. As ever, we are hampered by the lack of intact comparable tombs and by the lack of parallels to these objects, although some indication of the layout might be given by the bipartite division of the burial chamber of Yuya and Tjuya, with the coffins in the main chamber (which would be our Room 2) and the ceramics mainly at the far end, with some other burial goods.¹⁹

TO WHAT WAS THE LABEL ATTACHED?

Could the label have been attached to a box in the assemblage? None of the fifteen comparable labels in the tomb of Tutankhamun published by Černý were still attached

¹⁷ Following Otto 1960. These include every possible related scene (thus every adze and every possible chisel), and not just the specific ones noted in Strudwick 2009.

¹⁸ Leiden RMO AP.5. See: Strudwick 2009: Fig. 6; Otto 1960: Fig. 14 (vol. II).

¹⁹ Reeves, Wilkinson 1996: plan on p. 176.

to a container, but were rather ‘[f]ound scattered all over the floor of the tomb’.²⁰ As observed above, no contemporary examples are known to us from private tombs.²¹ The location of the Tutankhamun examples apart from their boxes can be explained by their having been tied to a knob on the lid of a chest or the corresponding knob located on the side of the box. When the box was secured, string ran from one knob to the other and would have borne a clay or wax seal to keep the string from being tampered with. The label would have been attached by the same string or a loop of another string to one of the knobs. The rapid and opportunistic robberies in the tomb no doubt explain their find spots.²² When the robbers cut the string or roughly ripped the lid apart, the label would have been jettisoned. While the priests tidying up Tutankhamun’s Annexe hurriedly re-stuffed boxes, they wrote the contents of the boxes in ink on the lids and usually near the securing knobs, where the information would be expected. In fact, a sixteenth round-topped label is described in Carter’s index cards with the words ‘This came from the knob at one end of the chest.’²³

Three box knobs were found in TT99.²⁴ A possibility for the original location of the TT99 label is that it was hanging from the string that may have wrapped around the lid and side knobs on the exterior of a chest, the remains of which are now either Box H or Box A in the table above (and Appendix below for Box H).²⁵

The excavators record that pieces of other boxes were also found, though none of these other fragments or boxes bear any indication that they were made specifically to contain ritual items for the Opening of the Mouth ceremony.

The label refers to a set of ten objects, nine of ebony (not further specified) and specifically the *imy-wt* adze; the next section of the present paper comments to some extent about the other items which might have been there, none of the surviving ones of which is clearly made of ebony. It seems that Senneferi’s Opening the Mouth tools may have come in multiple packages, which might have included items later stolen from the tomb. Another option is that the extant label was attached to a cloth bag with a subset of items, and it might have been that this and any other such bags were placed inside a box as discussed above.²⁶ A possible bag of kohl is shown inside a box or basket in TT217 (**Fig. 3**), and four somewhat cryptic references among the hieratic inscriptions in the tomb of Tutankhamun refer to boxes, the contents of which included *tnfy.t hm.f ʿnh(.w) wd3(.w) snb(.w) ti sw*

²⁰ Černý 1965: 15.

²¹ Peter F. Dorman has assured Strudwick (personal communication) that no similar items are known from the tomb of Ramose and Hatnefer, the parents of Senenmut. A number of wooden labels seemingly of the Eighteenth Dynasty have recently come to light in KV40, but these appear to be name labels rather than those indicating contents of boxes or jars (Bickel, Paulin-Grothe 2014).

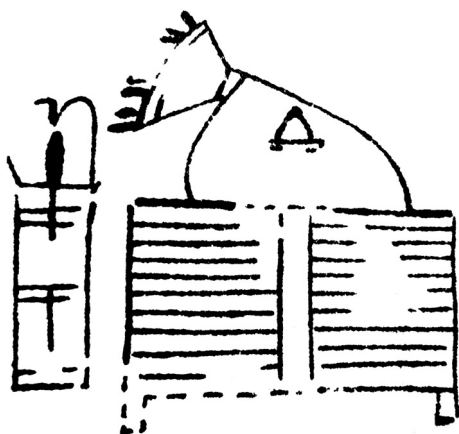
²² Reeves, Wilkinson 1996: 68.

²³ Černý 1965: 10 § 51.

²⁴ Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 283, Figs 253–254.

²⁵ An illustration of Box A is to be found in Strudwick 2009: 234, Fig. 22 and in Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: Fig. 245.

²⁶ A possible bag of Middle Kingdom tools seems to have been found in an unclear context at Deir Dronka (Kamal 1916: 95 (110)).



3. Detail of bag inside a box or basket
(Davies 1927: Pl. XXXVII).

m inpw, perhaps ‘bag of his majesty *lph* when he was a youth’.²⁷ It seems reasonably clear that *tnfy.t* refers to a bag or similar; one is shown in the tomb of Ay at Amarna,²⁸ and some sort of sack or sacking, termed *tnfy.t*, is brought to the luckless soldier in Papyrus Lansing.²⁹

It is noteworthy that the *imy-wt* adze appears specifically on the TT99 label (and in Merymery’s list), but not in Otto’s synthesis of the Opening of the Mouth ritual.³⁰ Was it kept separate (in TT99’s case) from the other Opening of the Mouth instruments for some reason? Or is it just an accident of preservation? Some further remarks are made in the next section of the present paper.

SOME COMMENTS ON THE OPENING OF THE MOUTH RITUAL OF SENNEFERI

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE FROM TT99

The tomb of Senneferi contains a wider range of local references to the ritual than most, perhaps all, tombs of the early part of the Eighteenth Dynasty. These fall into four sub-groups.

- A. The objects from the burial are considered above and in a previous publication.³¹
- B. Wall 16, the rear room or shrine of the tomb, north-west wall, shows the deceased and his wife Taiamu receiving libations, and is described as ‘Creating (*mst*) the Opening of the Mouth in the mansion of gold (*hwt nwb*)’ (Fig. 4).³² The actual words then spoken are the common libation formula to Horus, Seth, Thoth and Dunanwy, the origins of

²⁷ Černý 1965: 9–10 (50), 13 (57), 14 (59), 15 (63); the first three are on boxes, the fourth on one of the wooden labels. The word *tnfy.t* will be found in *Wb* V, 380–381 and is considered on Černý 1965: 10.

²⁸ Davies 1908: 23, Pl. XXX (lower right).

²⁹ pLansing 10,8; Gardiner 1937: 109.

³⁰ As noted in Strudwick 2009: 222.

³¹ Strudwick 2009.

³² Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 137–138, Pl. 37, Colour Pls 27B, 28A.

which go back to the *Pyramid Texts*. The other half of the same scene shows another priest making a *hṭp-di-nswt*-offering.³³

- C. The remains of the Opening of the Mouth ritual in the more usual form of ‘Rites before mummies’ are evident in at least two sub-registers on the same wall.³⁴
- D. A scene showing Senneferi receiving his funerary equipment, amongst which are a number of items that may have been used for this particular ritual, is depicted on the south wall of the passage (Wall 9). In particular there are a number of staves and sceptres, and also *nms.t-* and *dšr.t-*vessels.³⁵

Of the above, A. is presently unknown elsewhere in Thebes, while C. is rather common. D. is only known in two other tombs, TT79³⁶ and TT85,³⁷ and B. seems to have no exact parallel in a Theban tomb of the first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty, although there is also an individual scene of a priest performing the ritual in TT85, albeit with empty text columns.³⁸

WHAT WAS THE ROLE OF THE PHYSICAL OBJECTS?

Stylised adzes and wooden ox-legs make it evident that the Opening of the Mouth objects found in the burial of Senneferi are not simply ‘everyday’ items transferred into a funerary context.³⁹ Were they the actual objects used in the full ritual, later buried with the deceased, or were they specially made to be placed in the burial chamber to ensure the effective continuation of the ritual (or possibly even a combination of both)?

The wooden ox-leg is obviously a model or imitation⁴⁰ with a symbolic role to represent an item in the ritual. With slaughtering scenes and the presentation of ox-legs playing a prominent role in the Opening of the Mouth,⁴¹ it seems quite possible that a real ox might have met its demise in the ceremony, and so it is cautiously suggested that this item might have been primarily intended for burial, where its form would not be affected by the passage of time.⁴²

³³ The location of these scenes on Wall 16 is unusual for tombs of this date (Engelmann-von Carnap 1999: 229).

³⁴ Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 140–141, Pl. 35C-D, Colour Pl. 29A-B.

³⁵ Strudwick 2009: 225, Fig. 15 and table on p. 238; PM I², 205 (8); Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 118–120, Pl. 31A, Colour Pl. 19B.

³⁶ Guksch 1995: 164–165.

³⁷ Strudwick 2009: Fig. 14.

³⁸ Strudwick 2009: Fig. 13.

³⁹ Strudwick 2009: 219–220.

⁴⁰ Various terms can be used by scholars to refer to any objects that they consider as either smaller than ‘everyday’ items or have a role other than that which might have been envisaged for the supposed ‘everyday’ originals. The four that come to mind are ‘model’, ‘miniature’, ‘imitation’ and ‘dummy’, each with its own range of meaning. Without entering into what would surely be a tedious discussion of the similarities and differences, caution should be exercised as to how these terms are applied.

⁴¹ Assmann 2001: 314–326, including the later scene of removal of the foreleg of a calf.

⁴² Note that a real bovid bone was found in the burial chamber of TT99 (Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 279, Fig. 241).



4. TT99, Wall 16, couple receiving libation (Phot. A. Middleton © N. Strudwick).

The stylised adzes, however, long before diverged from their ‘real’ counterparts,⁴³ and if Strudwick’s reconstruction of the TT99 adzes is correct, estimated as having a length of about 26.5cm,⁴⁴ then there is every possibility that they could have been actually used in the ritual as well as being buried for their magical powers, although, since it is an object used for its symbolic power, the size actually does not matter.

The finger of electrum is again symbolic, and could be both used and then buried, and it would seem that the censer was likewise large enough to have held a copper bowl in which incense could have easily been burned. On balance, there is no reason to assume that the objects found in TT99 could not have been used for the ceremonies before burial and then interred with the deceased.

It is intriguing how relatively few Opening of the Mouth objects there are from TT99 when compared to those in the Saqqara list of Merymery (Leiden RMO AP.6).⁴⁵ Even

⁴³ Roehrig, Dreyfus, Keller (Eds) 2005: 141–146, especially compare Cat. 76e with 76k on pp. 144–145. Both types are evident in Middle Kingdom object friezes (Jéquier 1921: 274).

⁴⁴ Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 262–263; this makes it similar in size to the objects just noted in Roehrig, Dreyfus, Keller (Eds) 2005.

⁴⁵ Strudwick 2009: Fig. 6; Otto 1960: Fig. 14 (vol. II).

when the Leiden list is contrasted with the better-preserved Twenty-sixth Dynasty set of Tjaenhebu,⁴⁶ there are still considerably more items in the Merymery relief, especially when it is considered that the Saite find included a number of staffs and sceptres which are not in the Leiden list. However, the Leiden list seems to be unique, and there are many elements in it that cannot be equated with known elements of the ritual as depicted in the long sequences in, for example, the tomb of Rekhmire or that of Sety I, used by Otto in his presentation and interpretation of the whole ritual.⁴⁷ Some of these elements could easily have been present and either stolen, destroyed or decayed and thus not recognised as such in TT99 by the excavator.

The label forming the principal subject of this paper refers to nine items of ebony, although objects made of that wood have not yet been identified from the surviving material. The uncertain item in the Appendix below (exc. no. 99.98.0665) could, however, be one of these. The Merymery list only mentions one item made of ebony (*hbny*), the *md3.t*,⁴⁸ which bears a chisel image at the bottom of its list compartment, and no certain such object has yet been identified from TT99.⁴⁹ Attention was drawn above (see p. 113) to the singular mention of the *imy-wt* adze on the wooden label without a corresponding reference to the other adze found in TT99, the *wr-ḥk3w*. These were the only two adzes found, and such large elaborate ivory objects were surely expensive. Perhaps there was also a second bag or box of Opening the Mouth items of which the *wr-ḥk3w* was the principal item?

The Merymery list clearly needs further study, but the Senneferi material has much more in common in its scope with the usual repertoire of Opening of the Mouth items, as they appear in scenes in tomb decoration and papyri.

HOW WERE ITEMS POSITIONED IN THE BURIAL?

Evidence is somewhat limited for ritual objects that were actually buried with the dead and that can be directly linked with any of the many rituals which may have been enacted in the course of Egyptian history.⁵⁰ However, these few examples cover much of the span of Egyptian history, although the finds from TT99 are the sole clear evidence from an Eighteenth Dynasty private tomb.⁵¹

Miniature or model ceramic vessels have been found in the entrance to burial chambers of Old Kingdom mastabas, suggesting that elements of the offering ritual were enacted there

⁴⁶ Strudwick 2009: 223–225, referring to Bresciani *et al.* 1977: 68–74.

⁴⁷ Otto presents the elements of the Merymery list with equations to his scene list in Otto 1960: 22–26 (vol. II), and emphasises the problems that this creates. The principal equivalences are tabulated in Strudwick 2009: 236–238.

⁴⁸ Otto 1960: 20, 25, 164 (vol. II); the latter page quotes *Coffin Texts* CT III, 299, where it is made of copper (*bi3*).

⁴⁹ Strudwick 2009: 231–232, Fig. 19 identified object exc. no. 99.98.0665 as a possible chisel handle, but, following a discussion with Geoffrey Killen in March 2016, that identification seems unlikely.

⁵⁰ See Assmann 2001: Part II for an overview of the textual evidence for the range of rituals known; it cannot of course be determined with any certainty how many of these were performed in an particular instance.

⁵¹ Note however two possible *ḥbt* objects from the tomb of Maya and Merit at Saqqara (Strudwick 2009: 228–230).

in addition to those that may have taken place on top of the mastabas themselves.⁵² Evidence of a series of more clearly recognisable rituals was found in 2012–2013 in a burial chamber in the tomb of Djehutynakht (I?) at el-Bersha,⁵³ where the excavator has identified several distinct phases, including offering and libation rituals and, most relevant here, a form of the Opening of the Mouth.⁵⁴ Coming from the reign of Amasis in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty is the remarkable find of Opening of the Mouth equipment in the tomb of Tjaenhebu (noted above). These objects, which range from adzes, through model vessels of stone, to a range of sceptres and wands, were found in a box blocking the doorway at the entrance to the sarcophagus chamber at the bottom of one of the vertical shafts so characteristic of this date.⁵⁵

From this very limited range of sources, it seems that, where space was available in the burial chamber, as seen in the Old and Middle Kingdom tombs, ritual objects were certainly placed near the entrance of the burial chamber. In the case of the tomb of Djehutynakht (I?), objects were laid out from the chamber entrance to the end of the coffin. Moving later, Tjaenhebu's burial party probably had little choice but to leave his box of Opening of the Mouth equipment in the entrance to the chamber as space in these Saite and Persian shaft burials was very limited.

Model or miniature ritual objects were clearly the rule from these examples, all later or earlier than the New Kingdom. Is it significant that excavators have not reported finding miniature ceramics of any description in these burials after the Old Kingdom? The same is true of TT99,⁵⁶ where there are also no signs of any miniature vessels of any type. Strudwick has searched carefully through the other funerary goods preserved in fragments in the burial chambers of TT99 and nothing is immediately apparent. Senneferi was buried with a number of full-size stone vessels, but these actually contained oils;⁵⁷ similarly, the pottery discovered is of the storage type, containing, at a minimum, wine and various seeds and nuts to judge from both the labels on some vessels and the sheer size of many of them.⁵⁸

⁵² Alexanian 1998, with evidence for the rituals at the entrance to the burial chambers on pp. 11–18; see: Alexanian 1999: 110–114, Figs 47–48 for a specific example.

⁵³ Willems 2016. I would like to thank Harco Willems for permitting me to see a copy of this paper in advance of publication, and for discussing it with me after two lectures in Cambridge and Cairo.

⁵⁴ Willems 2016: 162–168. In particular, his identification of model tools in the burial chamber as indicative of the later stylised adzes in the Opening of the Mouth ritual is new; he compares them with the better-preserved box of Ankhef in the Metropolitan Museum (Hayes 1953: 288, Fig. 189). Given how it is speculated above that some of the items in TT99 might have been placed in a bag, the mention of a bag of tools from a possible Middle Kingdom context at Deir Dronka is intriguing (Kamal 1916: 95 (110)).

⁵⁵ Barsanti 1900: 263; Bresciani *et al.* 1977: 68.

⁵⁶ There is at present little evidence for miniature vessels, stone or pottery, in any New Kingdom burials at Thebes. Almost all those that have been clearly identified come from foundation deposits in temples or royal tombs, and are ceramic (for example, deposits of Hatshepsut (Carnarvon, Carter 1912: 31, Pl. XXII), in the tomb of Amenhotep III (Reeves, Wilkinson 1996: 28) and the tomb of the Three Princesses, (Lilyquist 2003: 62, Fig. 28). The one published exception to this is a selection from the German Archaeological Institute excavations in two shaft tombs in the 'lower class' cemetery at Dra Abul Naga, where the author groups them with cult ceramics (Seiler 1995: 187, 196–198 and Fig. 5, referring to finds in tombs K 91.5 and K 91.7). No information about their exact location is yet available in the preliminary reports (Polz 1993: 231–232, Figs 3–4).

⁵⁷ Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 273–276.

⁵⁸ This material is studied in: Bohleke 2016.

AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Senneferi's wall scenes include one of the relatively few tomb depictions of a rite of Opening of the Mouth in the *hwt nwb*, usually regarded as part of the craftsmen's workshop, where rituals were performed on a statue.⁵⁹ The exact context of this particular scene needs further clarification as to whether this is indeed a statue or tomb ritual (or both),⁶⁰ and whether the term *hwt nwb* holds any further significance.⁶¹

The term *wshyt* also merits further examination. Tomb scenes and papyri later than TT99, beginning around the reign of Amenhotep III, appear to show the Opening of the Mouth taking place in the tomb courtyard with the expressed need to expose the mummy to the sun.⁶² Much depends here on the use of *wshyt*, the term applied to the location where the ritual takes place in these later texts. It can refer both to a hall (usually enclosed) and a court (usually not).⁶³ No real work has been done to ascertain exactly what *wshyt* indicates in a tomb, as opposed to a temple context,⁶⁴ but there are clear cases where it is applied to a room in a tomb.⁶⁵ It should also be remembered that the conventions of Egyptian two-dimensional art would make it very difficult to distinguish a ritual taking place inside a tomb from one outside.

So far, Senneferi's Opening of the Mouth equipment is the only set known from a tomb in the Theban Necropolis. Was his desire to be buried with these objects unique – was it his own preference, a passing fashion, or is it again an accident of preservation?

APPENDIX: TWO FURTHER POSSIBLE OPENING OF THE MOUTH ITEMS FROM TT99

UNCERTAIN WOODEN ITEM (EXC. NO. 99.98.0665) (**Fig. 5**)⁶⁶

Dimensions: L 16.5cm, W 4.5cm, Th 3.5cm.

A shaped piece of hard wood, which tapers and has a round end. Its purpose is uncertain, but as well as being part of a regular piece of furniture, on the basis of the presence of the fragments mentioned in Strudwick 2009, it could be another object associated with the Opening of the Mouth ritual. The suggestion is made in the text above that it could have been made of ebony, but further analysis would be needed to confirm this. After

⁵⁹ Otto 1960: 3, 5 (vol. II).

⁶⁰ Otto 1960: 29–39 (Type 3) (vol. II).

⁶¹ Gardiner raised the possibility, which he ultimately rejected, that *hwt nwb* might also refer to a shrine or cult centre in a tomb (Davies, Gardiner 1915: 57–58 with p. 58 n. 1).

⁶² See Assmann 2001: 299–329, with the Opening of the Mouth elements on pp. 310–329. More detail of many of the sources will be found in Bartelmeß 1992: 93–113.

⁶³ *Wb* I, 366.

⁶⁴ Its use in temple terminology covers both covered and uncovered areas, although the halls are usually of the pillared type (Spencer 1984: 71–80, 88, 89).

⁶⁵ Such as in the break-in to the tomb of Sebekemzaf described in the pAbbott (Peet 1930: Pl. II (Abbott 3, l. 3) or in the Turin plan of the tomb of Ramesses IV (Carter, Gardiner 1917: 138, Pls XXIX–XXX).

⁶⁶ Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 263, Fig. 225.



5. Uncertain wooden item, exc. no. 99.98.0665 (Phot. © N. Strudwick).

a photograph of this object was examined by Geoffrey Killen, he suggested that the large rounded end and tapered other end might indicate it was a handle for an object, perhaps even one of the ivory adzes mentioned above.⁶⁷

PROBABLE WOODEN BOX FRAGMENT (EXC. NO. 99.98.0658) (**Fig. 6**)⁶⁸

This fragment is termed part of ‘Box H’. Dimensions: L 4.6cm, W 2.4cm, Th 0.7cm.

Small fragment of box with carved sunk hieroglyphs filled with blue paint. The surviving signs read: ... *.k r.k* and ... *z3.k*. The wood is thinner and more delicate than that used for the others in the tomb. Such thin walls are characteristic of small boxes, used for jewellery or toilette items,⁶⁹ or may just be thinner wood used for a lid.

⁶⁷ Personal communication, March 2016.



⁶⁸ Strudwick (Ed.) 2016: 268, Fig. 228.

⁶⁹ Such as MMA 36.3.199 and University of Pennsylvania E 14198 (Roehrig, Dreyfus, Keller (Eds) 2005: 254–255 (187–188)) or two boxes found in the Carnarvon excavations in Thebes (Carnarvon, Carter 1912: 53,



6. Probable wooden box fragment, exc. no. 99.98.0658 (Phot. A. Middleton © N. Strudwick).

0 2cm

The fragmentary texts perhaps suggest the purpose of this box. *r.k*, ‘your mouth’, in the first column evokes the Opening of the Mouth ritual, and it is most likely that the traces above the  are the bottom of the  sign, giving ‘opening for you your mouth’, found ubiquitously throughout the ritual. The reference to *z3.k* in the other column will, following the same line, be a reference to the son of the deceased – or otherwise ‘the beloved son’ – whose role, when not taken by other priests, is an essential one in the ritual.⁷⁰ No parallels to this fragment have so far been noted.

Acknowledgments

Nigel Strudwick would like to thank Geoffrey Killen for his thoughts on some of the wooden objects, Hans-Hubertus Münch for drawing the labels in KV22 to our attention, and especially to Helen Strudwick for reading multiple drafts of his part of the manuscript and for creating the 3D schematic model of the burial chambers.

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Pls XLV (1), XLVI (1)). Such small boxes do not typically bear hieroglyphs; one example which does, but is probably a different type to those mentioned previously as it contained a loincloth, is that of Maherpri, Boston MFA 03.1036ab (Roehrig, Dreyfus, Keller (Eds) 2005: 74).

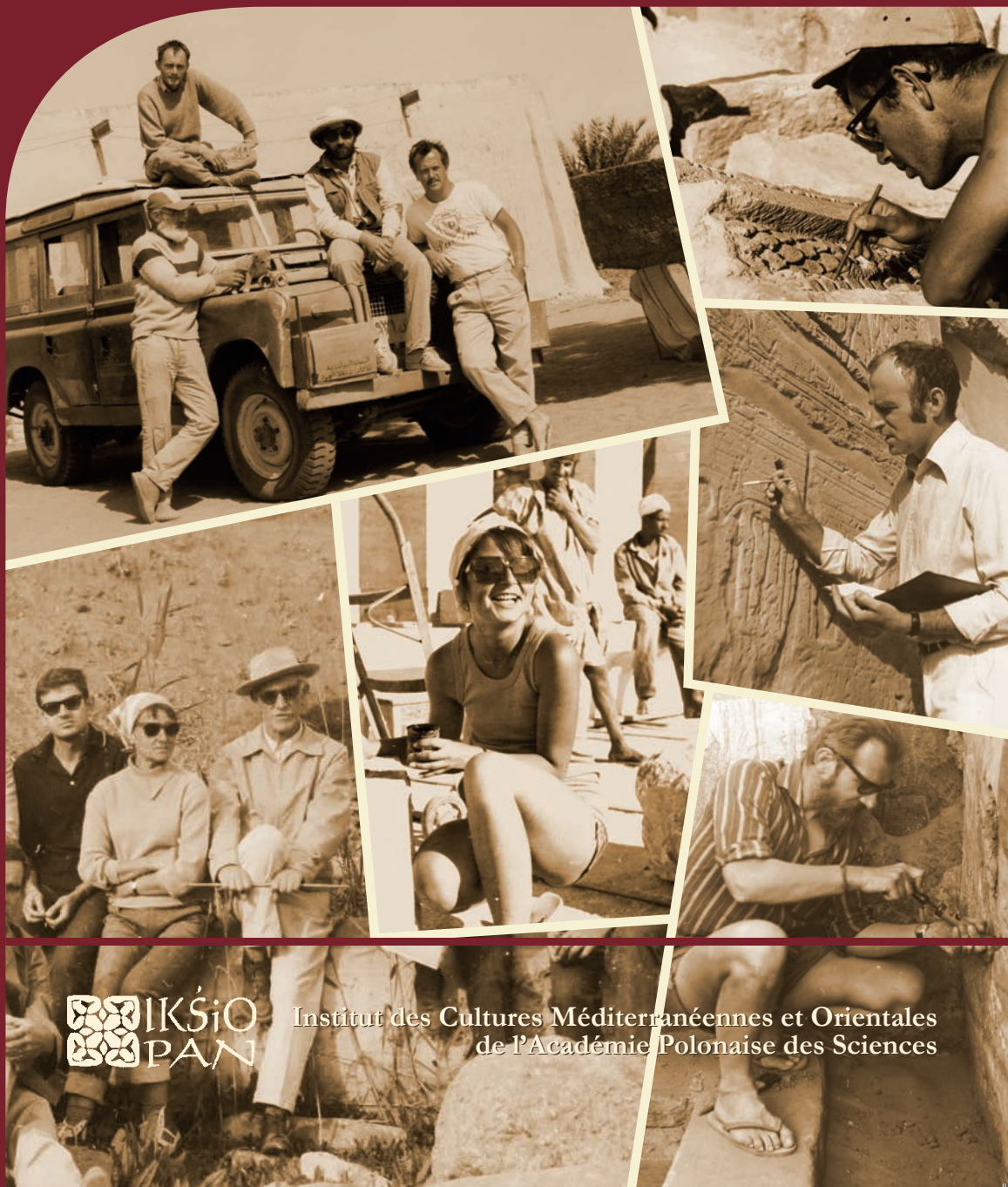
⁷⁰ Otto 1960: 36 [Spell 14c], 103 [Spell 45c] (vol. I); 13, 65–66 [Spell 14c], 106 [Spell 45c] (vol. II). Note in particular the expressions *wp/mdj.n.i n.k r.k*, *I have opened/cleft your mouth for you* and *ink z3.k mrr.k*, *I am your beloved son*. In each scene the lector priest is reading while the *sem*-priest either uses his small finger or the *khepesh*-leg to open the mouth.

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VARSOVIE
2017

Publication scientifique financée dans le cadre du programme
du Ministre de la Science et de l'Éducation Supérieure
« Programme National de Développement de l'Humanistique » pour les années 2016–2021
(projet n° 3bH 15 0099 83)



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Warszawa 2017

ISSN 2084-6762
(avant 2011 : 0079-3566)
e-ISSN 2449-9579

Version première en papier, imprimée en Pologne – 150 copies
Version électronique accessible sur
<http://www.etudsettravaux.iksiopan.pl>

Édition: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne et Wydawnictwo Neriton, Warszawa

Conception générale de couverture : J. Iwaszczuk

Photos de couverture : En haut, à gauche. Vieille Dongola 1991, S. Jakobielski
(debout à gauche), K. Pluskota (debout à droite), B. Żurawski (assis sur le camion)
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