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'It Might Come in Useful'

Scavenging Among the Monks from the Hermitage in MMA 1152

Excavations in the hermitage in tomb MMA 1152 produced a group of objects that must have come from other tombs and temples in Thebes located at some distance and their presence in the hermitage was not by chance.[1] These were objects of pharaonic date that were associated with burials (from different periods) made in this tomb and a smaller group that evidently came from outside. The point is that their use in the hermitage was incompatible with their original purpose or function. The question, which this article explores, is how they got to be in this place and what was the purpose for which they could have been used.

MONASTIC DWELLERS OF A PHARAONIC TOMBS

From the archaeological point of view, the site encompassing the tomb MMA 1152 stands out from the rest of the Theban necropolis. This is mainly owing to its location. The tomb, like the neighboring structure MMA 1151, which the Coptic monks used as a chapel perhaps with their hermitage, was cut just below the summit of a rocky hill rising about 160m a.s.l. from the rocky massif of El-Qurn, i.e. *c.* 80m above the contemporary level of cultivated fields. The two Middle Kingdom tombs and a small tomb from the Late Period were the only ones on this hill and the hermitage that was later installed in them functioned on the fringes of the Theban monastic community, but the monks living there were in eye contact with the nearby hermitages on the western slope of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna and the 'monastery' Qurnet Murai. There was no trail or other path that passed directly by the hermitage, hence there is a very limited chance that the objects of interest for the present discussion, that from an archaeological point of view 'disturb' the stratigraphy of the place, were dropped by some passer-by. Therefore, they are there because the monks living in the hermitage had use for them. There is also the other possibility of objects being left behind by all kinds of travelers, treasure hunters and seekers of antiquities in a more recent past, but the few truly modern finds, like a cigarette pack, newspaper and others, which point obviously to modern-day explorers and tourists from the past 100 years or so are so clearly intrusive that they do not cloud the issue of site stratigraphy.

In many other parts of the necropolis the archaeological situation was hardly ever as clear as this with researchers being faced with a challenging task of having to sort out intrusive finds from those that had been in use originally at a given place. Especially in the tombs situated lower down the slope, nearer to the modern village, one could find objects fallen from the archaeological dumps of the tombs/hermitages explored in higher locations, as well as pieces of furniture and vessels discarded by the modern villagers.[2] Accumulations from the past 100 or 150 years, both windblown sand and modern refuse,

[1] Reports on this work are published successively in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* (*PAM*) starting from 2005.

[2] Considering that modern weaving workshops were installed in the courtyards of ancient tombs (see: N. STRUDWICK, Preserving the old with the new: priorities for Theban tombs, [*in*:] G.A. Belova, S.V. Ivanov (Eds), Achievements and Problems of Modern Egyptology. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Moscow on September 29–October 2, 2009, Russian Academy of Sciences, Center for Egyptological Studies, Moscow 2012, p. 377), then other 'accessories' of everyday life in Qurna must have also found their way there, an assumption that a walk through the village even a few years back lent credence to. On the history of the

1. Stratigraphy of modern accumulations next to houses of the village in Qurna dismantled in 2011 (Phot. T. Górecki).

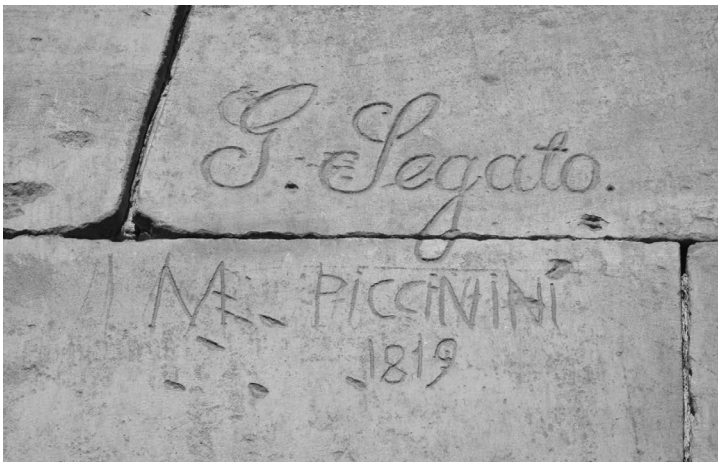
can be observed in many places near the houses in Qurna village (**Fig. 1**) and can also expect to find deposits from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century accumulated on top of early medieval layers, a fact not even noted by archaeologists a hundred years ago, but one which is becoming increasingly appreciated by modern archaeology.

The objects considered in the present article are chronologically incongruous with the sixth through eighth century AD monastic assemblage excavated in the hermitage 1152. They appear to have been introduced from outside and a provisional review indicates that some of them must have obviously been sought out on demand and brought to the hermitage **intentionally** for a specific purpose, whereas others were picked up by the monks or their visitors **unintentionally**, but came in handy at some point. 'Scavenger' is a good term to refer to the monks involved in this process, although 'hoarder' or 'collector' might be just as good to embody these two practical aspects of the scavenging for different things that the monks from the hermitage engaged in.

The dynamics of change in the Theban necropolis have always been considerable with tombs being repeatedly utilized from the moment of their cutting until the early medieval times and then again from the beginning of the nineteenth century until recent years.[3]

village of Qurna and its last days, see: K. van der Spek, The Modern Neighbours of Tutankhamun. History, Life, and Work in the Villages of the Theban West Bank, Cairo, New York 2011 [= Modern Neighbours].

[3] Utilization on one hand, originally for burials and reburials, then hermitages and recently as houses, and 'excavations' in modern times on the other hand, carried out more or less illicitly by 'archaeologists', antiquaries and ordinary tomb robbers in search of antiquities for sale to art marchands, intermediaries and *bone fide* collectors. The last true inhabitants of the tombs in medieval times were the monks (see below, nn. 12, 16); in the nineteenth century, except for Egyptians, inhabitants have included Richard H. Wilkinson, then Robert Hay (in TT 83), Giovanni d'Athanasi (near TT 52), the Italian [M.?] Piccinini (Dra Abu el-Naqa), see: W.R. Dawson,



2. Names of Europeans carved in the nineteenth century on the south wall of the Ptolemaic temple in Deir el-Medineh (Phot. T. Górecki).

It is particularly true of tombs cut in the slopes and at the base of the Sheikh Abd el-Qurna massif. They were always visible and accessible, especially the Middle Kingdom tombs. On the contrary, the well concealed tombs in the Valley of the Kings were accessible only to a limited extent and few have actually revealed the presence of Coptic monks[4] or pilgrims, or evidence of having been penetrated by modern travelers, coming in the form of their names carved 'barbarously' in the walls.[5] Returning to Western Thebes, the existing and easily accessible tombs were willingly reused in all periods (including the Roman one) for the burial of close relatives. It was a purely practical interest and limited to the use of free space for new burials.[6] The dead were buried frequently in adapted tombs, in reused wooden coffins from

Anastasi, Sallier, and Harris and their Papyri, *JEA* 35, 1949, pp. 159–166; C. SIMPSON, Modern Qurna – pieces of an historical jigsaw [= Modern Qurna], [*in*:] N. Strudwick, J.H. Taylor (Eds), The Theban Necropolis. Past, Present and Future, London 2003 [= Theban Necropolis], p. 247; J. THOMPSON, Tomb-Dwelling in 19th Century Thebes, Sir Gardner Wilkinson's House at Sheikh Abd el Qurna, *KMT* 7/2, 1996, pp. 52–59; VAN DER SPEK, Modern Neighbors, pp. 55, 75f., 104, 137; J. ROMER, Valley of the Kings, London 1988 [= Valley], pp. 97, 110f. (on R. Hay arranging the tomb of Ramesses IV in the Valley of the Kings as a temporary dighouse for his mission). After the monks left Qurna, the necropolis was apparently deserted until the post-Napoleonic surge in interest in pharaonic antiquities, but its ongoing destruction (from the twelfth century?) was caused by the demand for mummy powder from ancient mummies considered a potent aphrodisiac in Europe, see: N. STRUDWICK, Modern Robbery in Theban Tombs, *EtudTrav* XXVI, 2013, p. 647; VAN DER SPEK, Modern Neighbors, pp. 75–78, 103–115, 117f.

[4] N. REEVES, R.H. WILKINSON, Das Tal der Könige. Geheimnisvolles Totenreich der Pharaonen, Augsburg 2000, pp. 50f.; ROMER, Valley, pp. 30, 94.

[5] Similarly as hundreds of other names carved on the walls of Theban temples, among others in Deir el-Medineh, where the Italian Piccinini (see above, n. 3) immortalized his name on the southern wall (**Fig. 2**).

[6] N. STRUDWICK, Some aspects of the archaeology of the Theban necropolis in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods [= Some aspects], [*in*:] Strudwick, Taylor (Eds), Theban Necropolis, pp. 179, 182; A.G. NERLICH, A. ZINK, Anthropological and palaeopathological analysis of human remains in the Theban necropolis: a comparative study on three "Tombs of the Nobles", [*in*:] Strudwick, Taylor (Eds), Theban Necropolis, p. 219, Table I (giving the number of burials in each of the tombs: TT 84, 85 and 95 as respectively 53, 147 and 73 individuals), CHR. RIGGS, The Egyptian funerary tradition at Thebes in the Roman Period [= Funerary tradition], [*in*:] *op.cit.*, pp. 174, 177f.; L. KÁKOSY, The Soter Tomb in Thebes, [*in*:] S.P. Vleeming (Ed.), Hundred-Gates Thebes.

which the original cadavers had been removed.[7] This business of reusing tombs and coffins disturbed whatever stratigraphy existed in tombs in many parts of the necropolis. For a few thousand years (from the Middle Kingdom through the twentieth century) different events and processes led to the furnishings of the ancient tombs being displaced from their original stratigraphic position, even to distant places as evinced by the objects from MMA 1152.[8]

In effect, researchers had to separate original burials from those introduced later, especially in the Third Intermediate Period, Late Period and Hellenistic and Roman times. The challenge was even greater had the tomb been robbed in antiquity,[9] especially if it had happened soon after the first burial, and then reused repeatedly until the Roman period, after which it may have been adapted into a hermitage by medieval monks and dug through more recently by mummy dealers and suppliers of the antiquaries market.[10] The necropolis functioned as a cemetery through the end of the Roman period, that is, until the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century(?).[11] Sometime later, most probably in the end of the fifth century at the earliest, monks adapted many of the tombs (the exact number is difficult to determine) into hermitages, dumping the coffins and mummies that they found in them[12] for reasons that were purely practical – clearing a living space that they could adapt

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Acts of a Colloquium on Thebes and the Theban Area in the Graeco-Roman Period (P.L. Bat. 27), Leiden 1995 [= Soter Tomb], pp. 61f. The skeletal material from MMA 1152, examined by R. Mahler, accounts for at least 35 individuals buried in the tomb.

[7] K.M. Cooney, Coffin reuse in the Twenty-First Dynasty. The demands of ritual transformation, *Backdirt. Annual Review of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA* 2012, pp. 22–33 (giving grounds for considering coffin reuse in other periods in similar categories); Strudwick, Some aspects, pp. 174, 177ff.; Riggs, Funerary tradition, p. 190 (occasionally, only a piece of a reused coffin was placed on the body of the deceased, instead of the whole coffin. The conclusion is that a single coffin, divided into the required amount of pieces of appropriate size, could have used for a number of burials). A different form of reuse is the secondary, but still sepulchral use of a funerary stela for another person simply by changing the name on it, see: B.V. Bothmer, The Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art. Catalogue, Cairo 1979, no. 132 (p. 101), Fig. 77: reused stela from tomb TT 192, Eighteenth Dynasty.

[8] For the probable chronological sequence of events, see above, n. 3.

[9] N. Strudwick, Ancient Robbery in Theban Tombs, [*in*:] P.P. Creasman (Ed.), Archaeological Research in the Valley of the Kings & Ancient Thebes. Papers Presented in Honor of Richard H. Wilkinson, Arizona University 2013 [= Ancient Robbery], pp. 333–352. On undisturbed Theban tombs, apart from the known examples from the Valley of the Kings, see: S. Tyson Smith, Intact tombs of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Dynasties from Thebes and the New Kingdom burial system, *MDAIK* 48, 1992, pp. 193–231 and Strudwick, Ancient Robbery, pp. 339–342.

[10] Moreover, it should be noted that some of the earliest explorations were carried out less than professionally, the 'explorers' leaving behind a total mess and objects of 'lesser value'. On the chaos frequently encountered inside tombs prior to the beginning of regular archaeological excavations, see: Strudwick, *EtudTrav* XXVI, 2013, p. 640, where the author refers to 'chaos' in three tombs (TT 41, TT 99 and TT 253) and cites H. Westcar who saw a 'horrid spectacle' in one of the Theban tombs in 1824. On the trade in antiquities, see also van der Spek, Modern Neighbours, pp. 20–23, 103ff., 240f. See also below, n. 25.

[11] See above, n. 6.

[12] In many tombs there is sufficient archaeological evidence of their reuse by the hermits and none in many others, presumably because they never served as a hermitage or the explorations were carried out at a time when no weight was put by objects of Roman, Coptic and Arabic provenience, leaving them unrecorded (for example, in the monastery of Phoibammon installed in the temple of Queen Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari, the churches that were inside the Ramesseum and the temple of Medinet Habu, and many others). An attentive examination

to a new function. The next change of 'users' occurred in the nineteenth–twentieth century when the village of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna encroached on the necropolis that spread to the west of the locality and the villagers occupied the more 'convenient' tombs, incorporating them into their households.[13] Almost without exception these were houses on the gentler eastern slopes looking to the Nile Valley. The corridors and chapels of the tombs were used for domestic and storage purposes. There were practical reasons for this, too, namely, the stable climatic conditions in the rock-cut interiors where no sunlight ever reached.[14] Dwellings were constructed of mud-brick masonry chiefly in the vast tomb courtyards and they had all the features of ordinary houses. It was presumably not without importance that in many instances the ancient tombs could be penetrated straight from the home, allowing the new occupants to remove pieces of reliefs and paintings for sale to dealers living in Qurna and the antiquaries from Luxor.[15]

The intensive and spontaneous monastic movement in Egypt in the Late Antique/Byzantine period flourished in the conducive conditions of the Theban necropolis. Many temples were adapted into churches or monasteries (naturally, new complexes were built as well) and hermitages were arranged in many of the tombs.[16] Monks occupied these hermitages for a number of generations, from the end of the fifth to the early eighth century,[17] at the same time circulating freely and with a frequency that is difficult to estimate throughout the area of monastic settlement within the Theban necropolis. According to the apophthegmata, they would come down from their hermitages to the churches located below to participate in the obligatory Eucharist[18] and go about the daily chores of obtaining food and water,

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of the walls of tombs today reveals traces of inscriptions or painted crosses (e.g. in tomb MMA 803), but these are hardly proof of a monk having lived in the tomb. Substantial evidence of a hermitage consists of considerable quantities of different kinds of domestic pottery found in front of the tomb/hermitage (e.g. in tomb MMA 1105).

[13] SIMPSON, Modern Qurna, pp. 244–246; VAN DER SPEK, Modern Neighbors, pp. 93–97, 157–169.

[14] On the climatic conditions of houses using rock-cut interiors in Qurna, see: VAN DER SPEK, Modern Neighbors, pp. 93, 162. Experimental measurement of temperatures by the author in tomb MMA 1152 has shown that temperature fluctuation in the chapel were just a few degrees, compared to several degrees in the front part of the corridor where the sun reached in.

[15] SIMPSON, Modern Qurna, p. 247 (among others, Giovanni d'Athanasi [Yanni], and the collector [M.?] Piccinini). Was the illicit removal of objects truly necessary considering that excavations were practically official? See, for instance, KÁKOSY, Soter Tomb, pp. 62f., on the 'archaeological' activities of Antonio Lebolo, and STRUDWICK, Some aspects, p. 171, on Giovanni B. Belzoni.

[16] See, among others: H.E. WINLOCK, W.E. CRUM, H.G. EVELYN WHITE, The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes I–II, New York 1926 [= Epiphanius] (TT 103); T. BÁCS, The So-Called "Monastery of Cyriacus" at Thebes, *EgArch* 17, 2000, pp. 34–36 (TT 65); R. TEFNIN, A Coptic Workshop in a Pharaonic Tomb, *EgArch* 20, 2002, p. 6 (TT 29); A. BOUD'HORS, CH. HEURTEL, Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29. Autour du moine Frangé, Bruxelles 2010 (TT 29); H. BEHLMER, Christian use of Pharaonic space in Western Thebes, [*in*:] P.F. Dorman, B.M. Bryan (Eds), Sacred Space and Sacred Function in Ancient Egypt, Occasional Proceeding of the Theban Workshop. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, *SAOC* 61, Chicago, Il. 2007, pp. 163–175 (TT 85 and TT 87).

[17] The earliest pottery in hermitage 1152 is from the end of the fifth century, the latest from the early eighth century. The author's observation of surface collections of pottery from around the monasteries of Epiphanius, Deir el-Roumi, Deir el-Bakhit and other monastic sites in Thebes (conducted in 1993 and 2000) have led to similar conclusions.

[18] WINLOCK, CRUM, EVELYN WHITE, Epiphanius, pp. 129 and 153ff.; L. REGNAULT, The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt, Petersham, Mass. 1999 [= Day-to-Day Life], pp. 162–168.

raw materials for whatever industries they were engaged in, delivering letters, selling their goods or products, and taking care of business with monks in other hermitages or monasteries.[19] Some would have exchanged their hermitages during the fast for the more isolated and modest rock-cut cells situated especially to the southwest of Valley of the Queens.[20]

THE SEARCH FOR THE 'HOARDS'

Whatever their reasons, whether religious, social or economic, the circulating monks must have passed by various pharaonic tombs and temples. Curiosity or at least a desire to get out of the sun for a rest must have led them to penetrate these places and then presumably to contemplate the interiors.[21] Inside the tombs, in their courtyards and on the paths leading up to them, they must have found things they could put to use back in their hermitages.[22] Even without penetrating the tombs, they could have found things on their way from one place to another. On the other hand, they could have very well gone in search of specific material which they needed, such as, building material in the shape of mud bricks from unused or dismantled pharaonic structures.

'Hoarding' or accidental finding of bricks was out of the question whenever there was need for a large supply. Extensive construction over a short period of time from a large number of bricks would not have been possible without organized transport, which could have been arranged for at the monks' request by someone from the village

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[19] On the different reasons for the monks circulating in and around Thebes, see: Winlock, Crum, Evelyn White, Epiphanius, pp. 164–183. Generally, on this subject based on the apophthegmata: Regnault, Day-to-Day Life, pp. 139–161; L. Aït-Kaci, A. Boud'hors, Ch. Heurtel, Aller au nord, aller au sud, traverse le fleuve. Circulation et échanges au VIII^{e} siècle dans la region thébaine, [*in*:] E. Warmenbol, V. Angenot (Eds), Thèbes aux 101 portes. Mélanges à la mémoire de Roland Tefnin, *MonAeg* XII, Turnhout 2010, pp. 1–9.

[20] In the author's opinion, some of the rock-cut rooms in this region are so simple and modest that they could be provisional places of isolation used during the fast. Similar views have been expressed by A. Delattre, G. Lecuyot, C. Thirard, L'occupation chrétienne de la Montagne Thébaine : première approche, [*in*:] A. Boud'hors, C. Louis (Eds), *Études coptes* X. Douzième journée d'études (Lyon, 19–21 mai 2005), Paris 2008, p. 125; G. Lecuyot, C. Thirard, La montagne thébaine à l'époque copte à travers ses vestiges archéologiques, [*in*:] « Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages… ». Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistiques, romaine et byzantine, *PapBrux* 34, Bruxelles 2008, p. 138.

[21] On a certain aspect of the monks' interest in their pharaonic surroundings, see: T. Górecki, E. Kopp, Hieroglyphic signs scratched on a sherd of an Egyptian Late Roman transport amphora, *EtudTrav* XXVI, 2013, pp. 237–243. Other examples of the same type can be cited. A small fragment of a Roman faience vessel (unpublished), decorated with a moulded relief floral wreath ornament on the body, was found in hermitage 89 in Deir el-Naqlun near Fayum. The nearest source where a piece of this kind could have been picked up by a wandering monk were Lahun or Hawara. Other examples are provided by a coin of Trajan obviously brought 'from the world' by some monk (cf. Ph. Bridel, D. Sierro (Eds), Explorations aux Qouçoûr Hégeila et Éreima lors des campagnes 1987, 1988 et 1989, Leuven 2003, p. 122), as well as bronze figurine of Venus Anadyomene (cf. D. Weidmann, Kellia. Kôm Qouçoûr `Îsâ 1. Fouilles de 1965 à 1978, Leuven 2013, p. 40, Fig. 4). One needs to keep in mind the fair distance separating Naqlun and Kellia from any sites which could have been the source of such objects; obviously, the above-mentioned objects must have been brought from a far. Instances of such finds are rare and can easily be overlooked by the relevant researchers in charge.

[22] Less valuable objects could have been left behind by the monks in already abandoned hermitages.

nearby.[23] In no case were the bricks arduously 'collected' by the monks and carried one by one to the hermitage. On the other hand, a few stone elements of different provenience found in the hermitage could have been the result of a special expedition in quest of stone building material or a chance find. Two limestone 'tiles' of similar size, a reused stele of Pahery (Deir el-Medineh) and a fragment of a block with a relief image of a seated deity,[24] can be assigned to the objects that were picked up with the express purpose of filling a specific building or interior-furnishing idea. Another fragment of stele, that of Amenmose (**TT 9**), of which only a fragment with the name has been preserved, was not found in place in the hermitage, hence it is impossible to say whether only a broken piece or the whole stele had been picked up and brought back.

As for 'foreign' objects (from different periods), which do not seem to part of the burial furnishings from tomb MMA 1152, three groups can be distinguished: I) those that came from the tomb itself; II) those that came from a different tomb and/or temple or other place; and III) minor objects found in deposits outside the hermitage. There can be no doubt as to their secondary use by the monks from the hermitage.

I. **Objects possibly from the same tomb**, found with the burials in the tomb or brought from the adjacent tomb, adapted by the monks when installing the hermitage, presumably during the earliest phase:

1) Hellenistic oil lamp;
2) Roman incense burner;
3) pottery bowl (Hellenistic?);
4) pot stand or offering table (Roman or Coptic?);
5) bookmark made of bone.

I.1. A fragmentary Hellenistic oil lamp was discovered in a layer accumulated just above the floor in the hermitage corridor (**Fig. 3**). It is not clear whether the monks found it in the tomb or brought it from outside and whether it was left by monks or abandoned during undocumented 'excavations' presumably at the beginning of the twentieth century.[25]

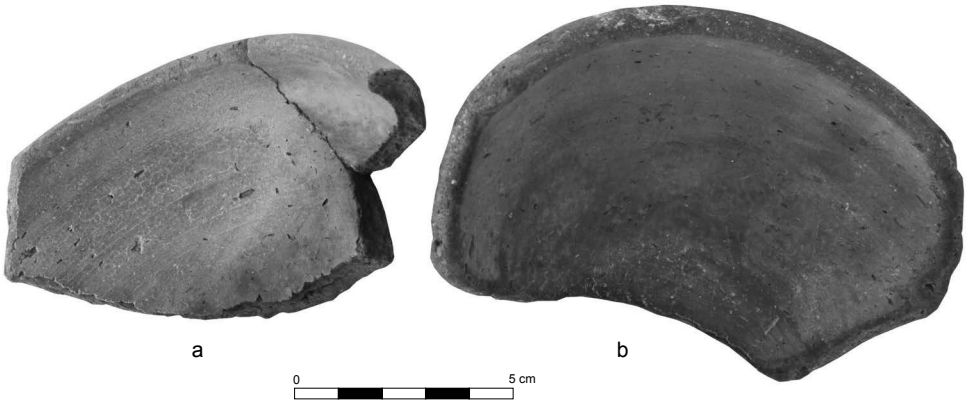
Oil lamps with ideologically neutral imagery in the decoration could have easily been used by the monks. Longer reuse is attested by two different knots found inside the lamp: one short and almost burnt through, the other longer, still in the wick hole. The former appears to have been made professionally, the latter is just a barely twisted piece of textile. Such twisted strips of fabric have been found in the hermitage and within the precinct of

[23] The author's calculations have shown that some 8000 bricks, weighing a total of 120 tons, were used in the construction of the tower/keep in front of the hermitage. The brick, as well as the clay and water necessary to mix the mortar, all had to be transported in, most probably on camelback. See below, point II.1.

[24] T. GÓRECKI, Sheikh Abd el-Gurna. Hermitage in Tomb 1152 and Chapel in Tomb 1151, *PAM* XIX (Reports 2007), 2010, Figs 6 and 7.

[25] Some notes made by H. Winlock in his journal kept in the MMA archives suggest that Emil Baraize may have carried out some work in MMA 1152, especially in the chapel and shaft (A. Ćwiek, personal communication). The appearance of the tomb in 2003, at the beginning of the present project, is illustrated by a photo of the situation in the corridor after two seasons of work, see: E. SZPAKOWSKA, Preliminary remarks on the Ancient Egyptian material from Tomb 1152 in Sheikh Abd el-Gurna, *PAM* XVII (Reports 2005), 2007, Fig. 1, and n. 10, above.

3. Oil lamp with two different wicks. Lamp length – 8.4cm (Phot. T. Górecki).



4. Two parts of a Hellenistic(?) bowl (Phot. D. Dąbkowski).

the monastery of Phoibamon in Deir el-Bahari (a tied bundle of a dozen wicks).[26] They were surely torn from bigger fragments of old textiles.

I.2. Incompletely preserved Roman incense burner, but showing the full form and decoration, as well as the place where incense was burned.[27] It may have belonged to a Roman burial, although so far there has been no evidence of a burial from this period inside the tomb, but more likely it was brought from outside. The monks may have used it as an incense burner or a stand for an oil lamp or small vessel.

I.3. Two parts of a shattered bowl of Hellenistic(?) date. After it had been broken (intentionally?), one part was not used leaving the edges of the break sharp (**Fig. 4a**), whereas

[26] T. Górecki, The hermitage in Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (West Thebes). Excavation, Studies and Conservation in 2009 and 2010/2011, *PAM* XXII (Research 2010), 2013, Fig. 13.

[27] T. Górecki, Roman ceramic *thymiaterion* from a Coptic hermitage in Thebes, [*in*:] H. Meyza, I. Zych (Eds), Classica Orientalia. Essays presented to Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski on his 75th birthday, Warsaw 2011, pp. 199–207.

the other part was employed as a tool, for scraping away rubbish or polishing perhaps, the edges becoming nicely rounded in the process (**Fig. 4b**).[28] The bowl could have been found in the tomb or brought from outside.

I.4. Pot stand or offering table(?) (**Fig. 5**), it could have been associated with the Roman(?) burials in the tomb or was simply reused (broken in two pieces) as convenient building material for a wall that narrowed the corridor of the tomb, passing into the deeper-lying chambers (**Fig. 6**).[29] It could have also been brought from outside, although it would have been more practical presumably to bring a few bricks as building material from a nearby dismantled building (see below, II.1). It is possible then, that it had been used for some different use before being mounted into the wall after it went broken. Judging by its form, which is somewhat like the Late Roman pot stands, it may have been used for a while in the hermitage as a stand for three vessels with rounded bottoms. Perhaps it was originally a simple 'Coptic' undecorated pot stand, a few examples of which were once in the collection of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Two of these are strikingly similar (disregarding the decoration) to the object from the hermitage. They have similar, rather shallow depressions, connected by a narrow channel lengthwise between them.[30] Such a stand would have been essential in a large hermitage and would have rather been brought from outside. It may have been used in the hermitage until it broke, when it was pragmatically reused in the construction of a wall inside the tomb corridor.

I.5. Bookmark made of bone (**Fig. 7**),[31] either a new piece or reworked from an older bone object, the latter idea encouraged by some similarity of the decoration to bone hand-clappers, fragments of which were found in the hermitage (**Fig. 8**).[32] The hand-clappers may either have been broken fragments left by the early 'excavators' or discarded waste

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[28] For a similar view on reused pottery sherds, see: STRUDWICK, *EtudTrav* XXVI, 2013, p. 642.

[29] P. Chudzik agrees with the identification of this object as an offering table from the Roman Period.

[30] See J. STRZYGOWSKI, Koptische Kunst. Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, Vienna 1904 [= Koptische Kunst], nos 7376, 7377, especially no. 7385 (stand almost a meter long for five vessels, the hollows connected by a narrow channel) and a similar one, but fragmentary, no. 7386, as well as ceramic stands for three vessels each, nos 1592–1594. Similar stone pot stands were found in private house, leaving no doubt as to their utilitarian nature, see: U. HÖLSCHER, Post-Ramessid Remains. The Excavation of Medinet Habu I, Chicago 1954, pp. 46, 59f. and Pl. 36 (B 1–7); J. KOŚCIUK, Late Roman Housing in the Area of the Luxor Temple, *BSAC* L, 2011, pp. 37–74, Pl. XIIb: waterjug-stands; Pl. XIIb,3: stand for two large vessels and three smaller ones, all interconnected by channels; Pl. XIIb,5: stand for three vessels.

[31] See: B. VAN REGEMORTER, Some early bindings from Egypt in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin 1958, Pl. 10; M.-H. RUTSCHOWSCAYA, D. BÉNAZETH, L'art copte en Égypte. 2000 ans de christianisme. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du monde arabe, Paris du 15 mai au 3 septembre 2000 et au musée de l'Éphèbe au Cap d'Agde du 30 septembre au 7 janvier 2001, Paris 2000, no. 44; STRZYGOWSKI, Koptische Kunst, no. 8929; O. WULFF, Altchristliche und mittelalterliche, byzantinische und italienische Bildwerke I: Altchristliche Bildwerke, Berlin 1909 [= Bildwerke], Taf. XXIV–XXV: nos 556, 557, 583, 584; L. TÖRÖK, Coptic antiquities I. Stone sculpture; bronze objects; ceramic coffin lids and vessels; terracotta statuettes, bone, wood, and glass artefacts, Roma 1993, Pls XCVIII: Q3, Q4; XCIX: Q9 (identified by the author as a bone plaque of unknown function).

[32] Decoration in the form of multiple concentric circles on wooden and bone objects is very common in Coptic art, see: WULFF, Bildwerke, Taf. IX–XI, XXIV–XXV; E. DOETSCH-AMBERGER, Ägyptische Sammlung II, Köln 1992, no. 337 (Coptic hand-clappers), but is also present on pharaonic objects, e.g. W. Seipel (Ed.), Ägypten. Götter, Gräber und die Kunst 4000 Jahre Jenseitsglaube I, Linz 2011, no. 88, p. 122 (box with bone fittings decorated in this way, Middle Kingdom).

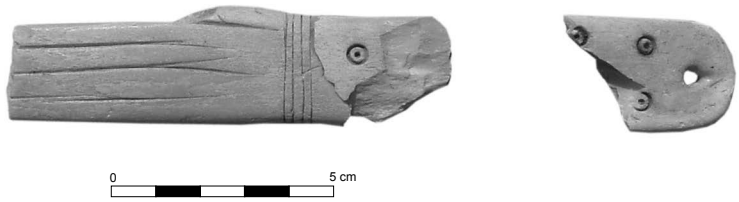
5. Pot stand(?), view from above. Stand length – 90cm (Phot. T. Górecki).

6. Two parts of a pot stand(?) as found *in situ* (Phot. T. Górecki).

from the production of bookmarks by the monks from such fragments (some modifications of a hand-clapper, like cutting off the carved elements of the hands, smoothening and decorating of the edges, etc., sufficed to turn it into a bookmark).[33]

[33] Parallels for hand-clappers: W.M.F. Petrie, Objects of Daily Use, Warminster-Encino 1974 (repr.), Pls XXXV, LI; A.M. Donadoni Roveri, Egyptian Civilization. Daily Life, Milan 1988 [= Daily Life], Fig. 334; E. Brunner-Traut, H. Brunner, J. Zick-Nissen, Osiris, Kreuz, Halbmond. Die drei Religionen Ägyptens, Mainz a/Rhein 1984, no. 47, p. 60; W.C. Hayes, The Scepter of Egypt. A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art II, New York 1990 [= Scepter of Egypt II], pp. 26, 200.

7. Bookmark made of bone (Phot. Z. Doliński).



8. Fragments of bone hand-clappers (Phot. T. Górecki).

II. Objects from outside, brought to the hermitage for a specific purpose (like building activity):

1) mud bricks;
2) stele of the Pahery family;
3) relief depicting a deity;
4) fragment of a stele of Amenmose from **TT 9**.

II.1. Many of the mud bricks (measuring 13 x 18 x 40cm) bear stamps and the most legibly impressed ones are cartouches of Thutmose IV. Thus, we can be sure that the tower/keep and other masonry walls from the precinct of the hermitage were made of bricks carried from the temple of this pharaoh lying opposite the hermitage on the plain.[34] The bricks could have come from different parts of the temple, which was slowly disassembled in antiquity: the brick pylons and the walls on the western side of the temple. Some of the bricks could have also come from the temple of Siptah (Nineteenth Dynasty),[35] adjoining the temple of Thutmose IV from the south, or from the neighboring Ramesseum, assuming it bears no identifying stamp.[36]

II.2. Funerary stele of Pahery from the New Kingdom.[37] The name of the stele's owner, that is, the first person seated in a row, can be read as Pahery despite the

[34] Bricks with the name of Thutmose IV were found in his temple by R.C. Lepsius, cf. L*D Text* III, pp. 138f.; L*D* V, Pl. 69b, c; his name on bricks used in tomb MMA 1152 were identified by SZPAKOWSKA, *PAM* XVII (Reports 2005), 2007, pp. 275–277.

[35] Suggestion of P. Chudzik, based on a partly preserved impression of a stamp with the presumed name of King Siptah.

[36] On monks using in the eighth century mud bricks to build sections of their hermitages and on inhabitants of Qurna constructing their houses in the nineteenth century using pharaonic stone architectural elements, see: VAN DER SPEK, Modern Neighbors, p. 156.

[37] Similar family steles, see: G. Andreu (Ed.), Les artistes de Pharaon. Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois, Paris 2002, no. 58 – family stele of Arinefer, Nineteenth Dynasty, 1280–1270; no. 152 – stele of Karo, Nineteenth Dynasty, 1297–1186 BC.

9. Lower part of a stele of Pahery *in situ*, before dismantling of the wall rising on top of it (Phot. T. Górecki).

10. Stele and fragment of a limestone block with relief decoration used as floor paving slabs (Phot. T. Górecki).

missing upper register and the general wear of the surface due to the slab being used as a floor tile.[38]

This Ramesside stele could have been brought from Deir el-Medineh(?), but regardless of the actual source, it was brought together with the relief slab (see below, II.3) with apparent purpose of being used as a floor tile; it was discovered lying face up when the decoration on a fragment projecting from under the brick masonry, built against a shorter older wall, was revealed during the present excavation (**Fig. 9**). The decorated blocks were deliberately placed face up, because the decorated surfaces were flatter than the back ones. The 'pagan' images were obviously of no importance whatsoever.

[38] Identification and partial translation of the inscription on the stele by A. Ćwiek, who is studying the pharaonic material from this site together with P. Chudzik. The place of burial appears to have been Deir el-Medineh, however, as suggested by the reference to the 'Place of Truth' in the text, noted by A. Ćwiek.

II.3. Relief slab, cut from a bigger wall block and used as a floor tile, next to the mastaba standing behind the wall, presumably for greater convenience in stepping up to the mastaba.[39] It, too, lay with the relief side to the top (**Fig. 10**). The slab was not damaged as it lay off the beaten track inside the tomb. The image presents a seated deity (most probably Anubis) holding the *ankh*-sign in his right hand and a floral bouquet in the left. The fragment was once cut from a big limestone block. It is impossible to ascertain which temple this block could have come from.

II.4. Fragment of a stele of Amenmose from Deir el-Medineh (**Fig. 11**). The deceased is depicted kneeling in prayer. His name can be read as Amenmose, perhaps son of Pashedu. It is very likely that the stele comes from Deir el-Medineh, from **TT 9** of the New Kingdom.[40]

The fragment may have been salvaged to be used as a floor tile, because it was flat. None of the original edges have been preserved. The question to consider is whether the monks brought the entire stele or just a fragment of it (no other fragments of it have been discovered in the hermitage contexts).

III. Minor objects found outside the hermitage 1152 and used on the spot, on a whim or out of need:

1) funerary cone of Ramose from **TT 132**;
2) funerary cones of Padineith from **TT 197**;
3) papyrus of Wedjahor from **TT 99**;
4) granite grinder;
5) iron ending of a spear/cross;
6) pointer or game wand for a pharaonic game;
7) wooden parts of coffins used as fuel.

III.1. The funerary cone of Ramose, great scribe of the king, supervisor of the treasury of Taharka, had to be brought from his tomb (**TT 132**) or its environs.[41] It is shorter and smaller than many other funerary cones, and therefore constitutes a good fit as a stopper for a narrow-mouthed vessel, such as an amphora of the LR7 type. The context supports this secondary function of the cone as it was found among the shattered remains of an amphora of this type (**Fig. 12**).

III.2. The faces of these two funerary cones were disfigured before firing and are fairly irregular, as well as damaged. The top parts have been preserved, the lower endings are missing. It cannot be said whether the cones were found already so mutilated or were intentionally cut short by the monks. The titles are legible in the key places and the ending of the name of the father can be read, reducing at the start the number of individuals that

[39] GÓRECKI, *PAM* XIX (Reports 2007), 2010, Fig. 7.

[40] The name of Amenmes and the localization of his tomb is given according to A. Ćwiek (unpublished report), and to E. Kopp (personal communication), to whom I am grateful for undertaking the task of researching the provenience of this fragment.

[41] Identified as a cone of Ramose by E. Szpakowska; for its photo see: T. GÓRECKI, Archaeological research in the hermitage in Tomb 1152 in Sheikh Abd el-Gurna (West Thebes), *PAM* XX (Research 2008), 2011, Fig. 6 and n. 2.

11. Fragment of a stele of Amenmose (Phot. J. Śliwa).

12. Funerary cone of Ramose found among sherds of a shattered LRA 7 amphora (Phot. T. Górecki).

could be taken into account as the owners. According to Edyta Kopp, both cones belonged to Padineith, majordomos of the divine consorts of Amun (Twenty-sixth Dynasty), who was buried in tomb **TT 197** in Asasif.[42]

Assuming the cones were used as stoppers (as in the case of the cone of Ramose) and there are few other possibilities, then these two cones, being bigger, can be associated with amphoras that had wider necks and mouths, approximately 8–9cm in diameter. The hermitage produced some 20 amphoras of globular body and no foot and with neck diameters between 7cm and 10cm. A monk returning from Asasif, the monastery of St. Phoibamon, Deir el-Bahit, the Valley of the Kings or some hermitage on the slope north of Asasif[43] could have picked up these cones from the said tomb.

III.3. Fragments of a two-sided papyrus document from the Twenty-fifth–Twenty-sixth Dynasty, bearing the name of Wedjahor, fourth priest of Amun, on the recto (**Fig. 13**).[44]

The papyrus was found in a cavity under the floor paving slabs, hence it could not have gotten there by chance, for instance, a scrap brought in by the wind. The monks must have brought it there themselves, perhaps for the purposes of making a palimpsest, that is, writing a new text in Coptic once the old ink had been removed. It was a regular practice in all periods to reuse written papyrus when blank writing material was lacking.[45] The other and more prosaic explanation was the practice of using waste papyri to stiffen the binding of book codices. Fragments of papyrus of all formats, blank and written on, were found, for example, in the covers of the manuscripts found in Qurna. Until these pieces are separated by conservators we shall not know whether the papyrus used for this purpose came from Greek, Coptic or pharaonic documents. The practice seems fairly common and it is possible that the monks from the hermitage in tomb 1152, where some evidence of bookbinding and repairing of codex covers on the spot has been observed, actually picked up waste scraps of papyrus documents on their wanderings to use in their industry.[46]

III.4. Granite grinder. The granite grinder was used in the hermitage as a kind of pounder held in the palm of the hand by the thicker end.[47] The old grinding surface is completely

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[42] See: E. KOPP, Two Funerary Cones of Padineith from the Theban Tomb 1152, in this volume, pp. 195–199.

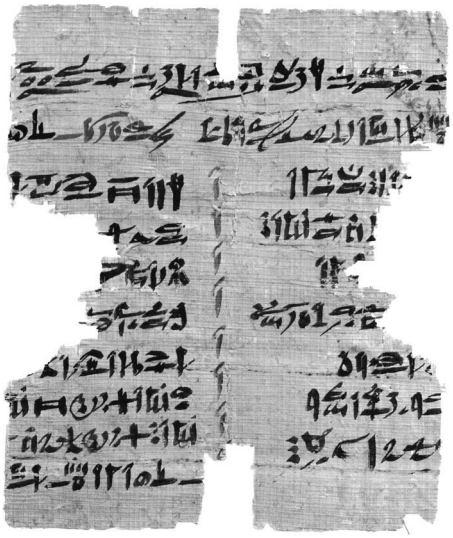
[43] WINLOCK, CRUM, EVELYN WHITE, Epiphanius, the map on plate I shows the location of hermitages (sites XX–XXII) that are presently impossible to trace in the field. Winlock supposedly thought about some tombs from the group MMA 508–517.

[44] The hieratic text on the recto is under study by Edyta Kopp. According to her, the text leaves no doubt that it originated from TT 99, the burial place of Wedjahor. The text on the verso in abnormal hieratic (studied by G. Vittman) is secondary and later. The monks could have taken it from the original tomb, but they could have also well found it reused elsewhere.

[45] On different aspects of secondary reuse of papyrus as a material, see: R.A. CAMINOS, Some Comments on the reuse of papyrus, [*in*:] M.L. Bierbier (Ed.), Papyrus: Structure and Usage, London 1986, pp. 43–50.

[46] On book binding by the monks, see: A. MARAVELA-SOLBAKK, Monastic book production in Christian Egypt, [*in*:] H. Froschauer, C.E. Römer (Eds), Spätantike Bibliotheken. Leben und Lesen in den frühen Klöstern Ägyptens, Wien 2008, pp. 34–37.

[47] DONADONI-ROVERI, Daily Life, Fig. 10: grinder; L.H. BERMAN, K.J. BOHAČ, Catalogue of Egyptian Art. The Cleveland Museum of Art, New York 1999, no. 103 (p. 164): palette and grinder, Twelfth–Thirteenth Dynasty; R.E. Freed (Ed.), Egypt's Golden Age: The Art of Living in the New Kingdom 1558–1085 B.C. Cata-



13. Fragment of the papyrus with the name of Wedjahor, recto (Phot. T. Górecki).

14. Granite grinder in the position in which it was reused as a kind of hammer (Phot. Z. Doliński).

16. Pointer (or game wand?) made of wood (Phot. Z. Doliński).

15. Iron ending of a cross or spear(?) (Phot. Z. Doliński).

patinated, whereas the narrower end features minor chips of lighter color testifying to its later use in reversed position. These secondary traces are too meager to suggest what purpose the tool had been used for by the monks – perhaps as a hammer(?) for processing or repairing minor objects in view of the small surface of its end (**Fig. 14**).

III.5. Iron spike from a spear or cross(?) (**Fig. 15**), long but not pointed at the end, sufficiently narrowed however to be stuck into something. The ferrule-like upper part holds a fragment of cedar wood, possibly from the staff of a processional cross or a weapon like a spear.[48] In this case, after the staff had been broken off, whether accidentally or intentionally, the spiky ending was used as a peg inserted into a narrow crevice in the rock wall or floor either to hang or tie something to it. The top end with the remnants of cedar wood is heavily flattened by hammering and the spike is crooked in two places, as if it had resisted driving into a hard surface.

III.6. Game wand or casting stick from a pharaonic game, possibly reused by the monks as a pointer (**Fig. 16**). It could actually be a pointer that only looks like a pharaonic game wand.

This object of palm wood has the characteristic shape combined with cross-like decoration (Greek letter Chi)[49] that got it classified from the beginning as a monk's pointer for keeping the place in the text or teaching the letters. It fits well in the hand and is of appropriate length. It does, however, resemble pharaonic game wands, the best preserved of which were made of bone or a hard noble wood.[50] The resemblance may be purely accidental, but it could just as well be an adapted wand, cut to be semicircular on one side. If the latter, then it could have been found in the tomb as much as brought by the monks from some other place.

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logue of the Exhibition. Museum of Fine Art, Boston, February 3 – May 2, 1982, Meriden, Conn. 1982, p. 285: grinder no. 393.

[48] Crosses of different types, mounted on wooden staffs ending in a long metal spike at the bottom, can be seen in many wall-paintings (tenth–eleventh century) from the cathedral in Pachoras (Faras). These are both long and short portative crosses, see: K. MICHAŁOWSKI, Faras. Wall Paintings in the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw 1974, nos 35 and 46. Processional crosses with sharp spikes at the bottom end of the staff are also to be seen on a twelfth century miniature in the The Madrid Chronicle of John Skylitzes, cf. H.C. Evans, W.D. Wixom (Eds), The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843–1261, New York 1997, illustration on page 11. On the Roman spear, see: J. KROMAYER, G. VEITH, Heerwesen und Kriegsführung der Griechen und Römer, München 1963, pp. 278f., 326, Abb. 124. The small diameter of the opening in our object speaks against the spear idea (spear shafts were usually 3–4cm in diameter).

[49] Fairly common decoration apparently, found on some iron objects, see: D. BÉNAZETH, L'art du métal au début de l'ère chrétienne. Musée du Louvre. Catalogue du département des antiquités égyptiennes, Paris 1992, pp. 255 (AF 1396), 256 (AF 1398), and on a handle of a Byzantine key: G. VIKAN, J. NESBITT, Security in Byzantium: Locking, Sealing, Weighing, *DOByzColl. Phls* 2, Washington 1980, figure on the inner side of the back cover. U. HORAK, H. HARRAUER, Die Kopten – Nachbarn das Sudan. Katalog zur Ausstellung der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek im NORDICO – Museum der Stadt Linz 1. April bis 19. August 2001, Linz 2001, no. 6 (necklace with chisel marks).

[50] J. VANDIER, Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne IV. Bas-reliefs et peintures. Scènes de la vie quotidienne, Paris 1964, p. 506, Pl. XXV; HAYES, Scepter of Egypt II, pp. 26, 200, Fig. 114; A. Niwiński (Ed.), Papyri, mummies and gold… Michał Tyszkiewicz and the 150th anniversary of the first Polish and Lithuanian excavations in Egypt. Exhibition State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, 12 December 2011 – 31 May 2012, Warsaw 2011, Fig. 4 on p. 74 (two playing bone sticks (E.3675 and E.3676) from the Louvre Museum collection); R.A. Lunsingh Scheurleer (Ed.), Egypte: eender en anders, Amsterdam 1984, no. 180.

III.7. A few dozen, usually small fragments of wooden coffins, with diverse decoration, were recorded in the course of the excavations. Some could have come from the coffins that the monks threw out of the tomb MMA 1152 when it was adapted into a hermitage, but they could have also been collected by the monks during their sojourns around Qurna. A few fragments had charred endings; some of them, found in the top layers, may have been used by modern mummy and treasure hunters for cooking meals on the spot or even by the Qurna inhabitants.[51] But they could have also well been pieces of coffins that had been burned already in antiquity, this being the easiest and quickest way to remove the gold covering some parts of the surface.[52]

CONCLUSIONS

The objects presented in brief above are a varied group from different tombs scattered across the Theban necropolis. Brought to the hermitage 1152, they were put to practical use, suggesting that such adaptation of objects to new function was in force in the monastic sphere. Most likely, only a narrow margin of the most characteristic artifacts were identified archaeologically as 'imports', chiefly thanks to the surviving texts. A part, the quantity of which is difficult to estimate, may have escaped our attention, being too utilitarian in nature, like domestic pottery.

The process of scavenging and hoarding all kinds of objects described in this article is a curiosity illustrating the prosaic aspects of everyday life in a monastic environment and it has seldom been noted sufficiently, if at all, by modern excavators. A straightforward consequence of this process is a heavily disturbed stratigraphy on different archaeological sites (chiefly tombs) which had been in use for a long time, for multiple internments and over several generations. For the monastic archaeologists (here in the context of a hermitage installed in a pharaonic tomb) it is particularly misleading and fraught with error to assume that all pharaonic objects found in the area came from that particular tomb. For instance, charred coffin fragments are proof only of any scrap of wood available being used in a place where fuel was scarce to begin with. It need not mean that the coffins came from the particular tomb in which the monk resided. Finding an object near a tomb does not necessitate its provenience from that particular tomb. Provisional conclusions on the chronology and function of a given spot may be verified in the course of further specialist research, which can lead to: a) changed dating of a place where such a 'foreign' object was found, b) identification of the provenance of a piece, c) supplementary data on the tomb, for instance, from which the object was salvaged. The identification of 'foreign' pharaonic objects is of little importance for the study of the hermitage itself.

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[51] See: Strudwick, *EtudTrav* XXVI, 2013, p. 646 (citing mentions of E.W. Lane's or G. d'Athanasi's workers or servants using fragments of decorated coffins in the kitchen as fuel got making the fire to prepare meals); van der Spek, Modern Neighbors, pp. 108f. During the current project at the MMA 1152 the workers made their tea on a fire of (non-historic!) pieces of wood, planks, palm leaf midribs and anything else suitable that they had collected on their way to work.

[52] Strudwick, Ancient Robbery, pp. 341–345.

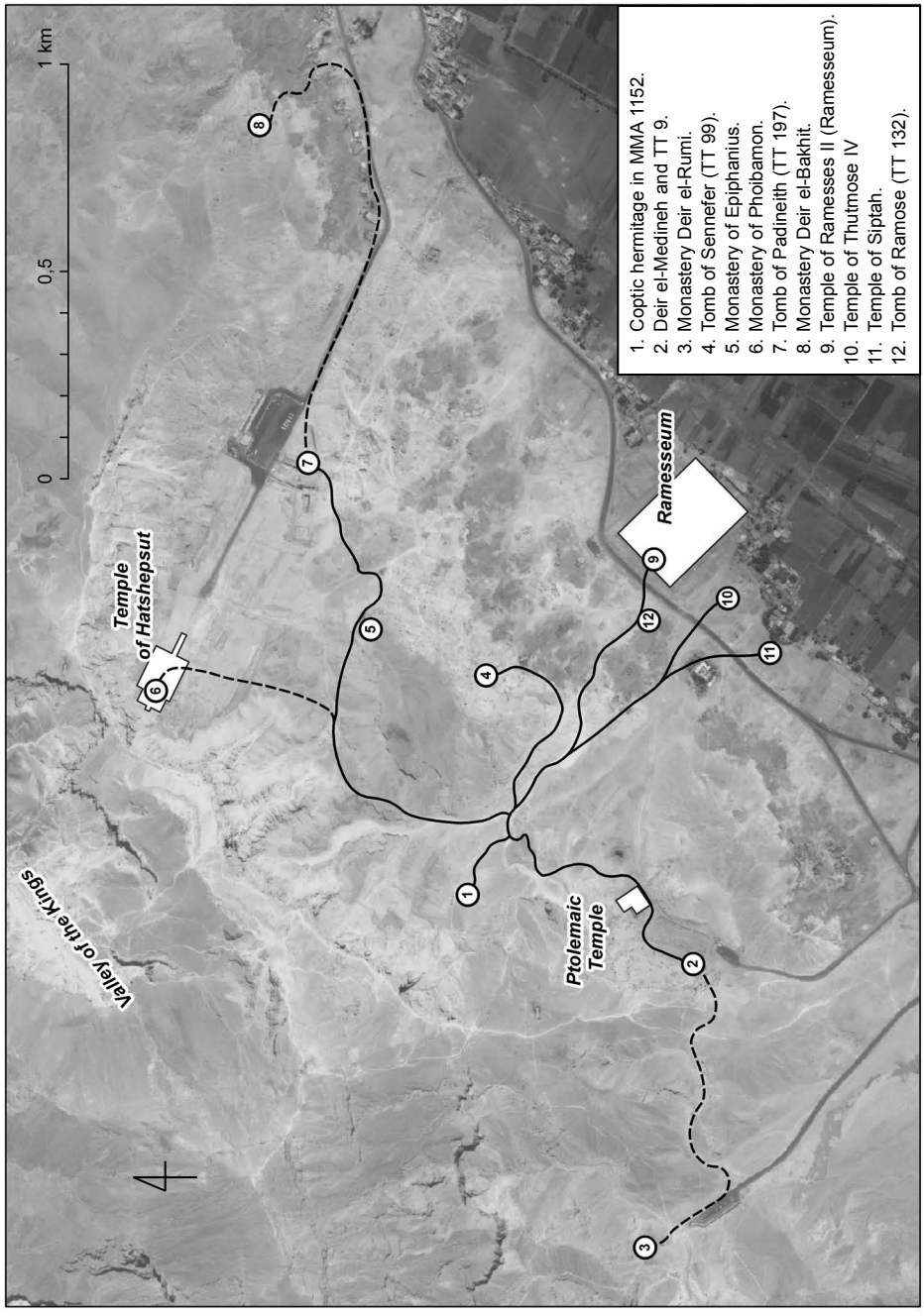
Conclusions from this research are more likely to fill gaps in the knowledge of the Theban necropolis as such.

The analysis in our case contributes interesting data on the Theban necropolis, not only in terms of which tombs were open/accessible in pre-monastic times, which was a factor of their being penetrated in antiquity (and later by the monks), but also the network of paths that connected the places attended by the monks, how and which way they moved, which monasteries they visited and which were their preferred or enforced trails.

The monks must have intuitively chosen the most convenient and tested trails, moving along paths walked already by pharaonic subjects. Modern visitor follow the same paths. Therefore, based on the finds from hermitage 1152 we can try to reconstruct the directions taken by the monks rather than the goals of their expeditions (**Fig. 17**). Going south they moved to Deir el-Medineh or further still to Deir el-Rumi at the entrance to the Valley of the Queens (see II.2; II.4). Going south-east, they headed for the church in the Ramesseum, but also for the neighborhood of the temples of Thutmose IV and Siptah, in order to manage the delivery of mud brick necessary to enlarge the hermitage (see II.1; III.1–2?). To the north-east they would have gone to the monastery of St. Phoibamon (Deir el-Bahari), to Deir el-Bakhit passing TT 197 (see III.2) or simply to one of the hermitages in that region (see III.1; III.3). Walking there, through the Valley of the Eagle, they would have had to pass the hermitages in some tombs (MMA 1104–1100) on the western slope of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna and the monastery of St. Epiphanius, whereas moving along the eastern slope they could have stopped by tomb TT 99 (see III.3) and other tombs/hermitages or the lower-lying TT 132 (see III.1). These could have been, as said above, journeys to other churches, monasteries and other hermitages in order to pass on oral messages, for example, or letters on papyrus and ostraka. The monks also expedited the supply of raw materials, water and food required in the monastery and contracted business deals, for instance, for the textiles, basketry and books that they copied and bound, and the ocher that they collected, which they sold or gave to monasteries where these goods were needed.

Identifying objects that are 'foreign' in the hermitage context is not that much of a difficulty with regard to pharaonic finds, but becomes complicated when the context suggests that contemporary objects (sixth–eighth century) were also picked up and hoarded. There is nothing in these objects, the pottery especially, to argue in favor or against their local provenance, hence the difficulty in determining which objects were used at the hermitage and which were used only after they had been brought to the hermitage from outside. This concerns primarily whole pots, as well as individual sherds which appeared to be good material for writing a letter, better than that found in the rubbish around tomb MMA 1152, as well as potsherds used as a tool in the hermitage. Finds of this type could have given a false idea of the date of the site. Similarly fragments of waste papyrus from older or expired documents introduce a margin of error in the dating. These papyri (from pharaonic through Greek to Coptic) could have been used a palimpsests or, after gluing, as a form of *papier mâché* to stiffen book covers.

One wonders what made these fairly ordinary objects exceptional enough for the monks to bring them back to their hermitage. Were they difficult to obtain perhaps? Or especially



17. Map of Thebes (processing: Z. Górecka).

valuable on the 'secondary market' of the day because they were useful? It actually seems that there was no shortage of objects of this kind: steles, fragments of decorated blocks, especially funerary cones, which could be strewn around the tombs. Was it poverty that caused monks (or visitors) to pick up things they found on their way? I should think this was rather marginal motivation. Collecting things that they had a need for, to use to repair a vessel or reuse with some other objects, to transform into a different object for different use or purpose, evinced a sense of practicality – the monks were simply a resourceful lot, capable of perceiving the hidden usefulness of a discarded object, and to turn it to their own good.

The remarks presented above are meant primarily as a warning to the overzealous archaeologist, who may be determined to attribute each and every object recorded from the excavated layers as belonging to the place where it was found. One should keep in mind all the human vagaries of things lost, discarded, adapted in the past or simply disturbed in recent times when the necropolis in Qurna was slowly overrun by the village and the area modernized for the purposes of the new settlement.

The other important objective of these remarks is to reconstruct a certain aspect of the monk's daily activities. Archaeological proof may support in essence conclusions made on the grounds of literary, normative and economic documents from the Coptic period. Just as texts on ostraka can verify our views deriving from a reading of the apophthegmata and lives of Coptic saints, so some apparently secondary archaeological details could complement the substance of our view of monastic life coming from the written sources. For instance, they give us a picture of the monk as a devout man and industrious craftsman, but also a resourceful and inventive individual.

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