

True ‘ritual objects’ in Egyptian private tombs?

ABSTRACT: There has been a tendency to apply the term ‘ritual object’ to an artefact of uncertain purpose, ascribing to it an unknown religious function. Some possible true candidates for the term ‘ritual object’ have been discovered in the 18th dynasty burial of Senneferi at Thebes (Theban Tomb 99, University of Cambridge excavations 1992–2002). This paper presents the material, searches for parallels, both three- and two-dimensional, and shows how these implements can be linked with the ritual of the ‘Opening of the Mouth’, an important element of the Book of the Dead.

NOTE TO EDITOR: I USE THE STANDARD LEXIKON ABBREVIATIONS OF PERIODICALS AND SERIES

This study is presented to Irmtraut Munro in respect and gratitude: respect for the work she has done over many years to enhance knowledge of the *Book of the Dead*, and gratitude for the assistance she has rendered to me personally on these texts. She was kind enough to examine a number of photographs of material excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1914–15 from Theban Tomb 297 and identify as much of the text as was humanly possible from such tiny fragments.¹ Following the discovery of hundreds of fragments of papyrus and mummy shrouds bearing texts of the *Book of the Dead* in TT99, Dr Munro kindly acceded to my request to study this material, and her immense industry has meant that she has been the first of the many contributors to the book (including the present writer) to complete her part of the publication, which will appear in the final report on TT99. I hope that this short article will go some way to acknowledging my debt to her.

Among archaeologists, the term ‘ritual object’ has acquired an element of notoriety, as there has been a tendency to apply it to an artefact of uncertain purpose to which an unknown religious function is ascribed. This paper examines some possible true candidates for the term ‘ritual object’, which have been discovered in the 18th dynasty burial of Senneferi in Theban Tomb 99, and compares them to what is known about other such objects, both real and as portrayed in tomb paintings and on papyri.²

The purpose of the objects buried in private tombs is intriguing. Many older publications have assumed that the Egyptians of, for example, the New Kingdom were simply trying to ‘take it with them’, and be buried with all the accoutrements of a comfortable life on earth. While indeed some objects from tombs do show signs of use, other apparently ‘daily life’ objects can be argued to have specific mortuary connotations. The changes seen in funerary equipment from the middle of the New Kingdom onwards suggest that the general move at that time was in the direction of reducing burial goods to those which had a direct bearing on the needs of the dead in the afterlife.³

¹ N. Strudwick, *The tomb of Amenemopet called Tjanefer* (ADAIK 19, Cairo, 2003), 25–8, pl. XVI–XXIX.

² A first version of this paper was presented at the 2007 meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt in Toledo. I wish to thank many colleagues who have provided information and helped in many different ways: Edda Bresciani, Heike Heye, Peter Manuelian, Maarten Raven, Catharine Roehrig, John H. Taylor, Emily Teeter, René van Walsem. I particularly wish to thank Helen Strudwick for reading the paper, for her comments, and for checking a number of references, and also Kelly P. Bozarth for her help with drawings, in particular figure o.

³ See comments on all these remarks in J.H. Taylor and N. Strudwick, *Mummies: Death and the Afterlife* (Exhibition Catalogue, Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana, California, 2005), 163–4.

Three unusual objects from TT99

The original owner of TT99 was Senneferi, an overseer of the seal (*imy-r sDAwty/xtmt*) in the reign of Thutmose III.⁴ He was buried with five other persons, possibly family members, in chambers accessed from the bottom of a deep shaft in the courtyard.⁵ Among the many fragmentary finds were three intriguing fragments of decayed elephant ivory, all of which came from the chamber termed Shaft I room 3, the final room of the Senneferi underground complex (see **figure 0**).

Objects 99.98.0518 and 99.98.0601 (**figures 1–3**) are roughly rectangular in shape, with a flat front, and curved or bevelled top; behind the front the remainder of the object is broken, but it is clear from the broken side that whatever was there before sloped away. There is a small notch in the lower sides of these objects, visible in **figure 3**. Object 99.98.0619 (**figure 4**) is thinner, very broken, but has three smoothed/bevelled sides.⁶

Each object bears some hieroglyphs. 99.98.0601: on a flat surface is the text *nw n 3b wr-ḥk3w rn:f*, ‘an adze of ivory, whose name is *wr-ḥk3w*’. On the beginning of the sloping side is the text *ḥtp di nzwt wsir*, ‘an offering which the king gives (to) Osiris’. 99.98.0518: on the rounded or bevelled side is the text *nw imy-wt*, ‘an adze (called) *imy-wt*’. Also on the beginning of the sloping side is the text *ḥtp di nzwt ws(-ir)*, ‘an offering which the king gives (to) Osiris’. 99.98.0619: on one side is the end of a seated deceased person determinative and parts of the signs *m3r-ḥrw*, ‘true of voice’.

Despite the presence of hieroglyphs on them mentioning the word *nw* ‘adze’, the identity of these objects was something of a mystery to the excavators at the time of their discovery.

Their association with the Opening of the Mouth ritual

The key to the identity of these objects was offered by René van Walsem, who drew my attention to the relatively little-known relief of Merymery in Leiden (Ap. 6) (**figure 6**).⁷ To the right is a standing figure of the deceased, and before him grids of hieroglyphs, obviously lists. Immediately in front of the deceased is a small list of meats and certain requisites, followed by a column of hieroglyphs reading *ddt n ḥry-ḥb m ?ib? n wpt-r* ‘given to the lector priest for the needs? of the Opening of the Mouth’. This text

⁴ A published report on the work at the end of the 1990s will be found in N. Strudwick, ‘The Theban Tomb of Senneferi [TT.99]. An overview of work undertaken from 1992 to 1999’, *Memnonia* 11 (2000), 241–66. The web site <http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/egypt/tt99> is kept reasonably up to date with the progress of research on the tomb since then.

⁵ The identities of these persons and other users of the tomb are considered in N. Strudwick, ‘Use and re-use of tombs in the Theban necropolis: patterns and explanations’, to be published in the proceedings of the 2006 Lille conference ‘Elites et pouvoir en Egypte ancienne’.

⁶ Lengths of objects: 99.98.0518, 6.7 cm; 99.98.0601, 6.3 cm; 99.98.0619, 6.8 cm.

⁷ See PM III², 705. I thank Dr van Walsem for his help, and also Rita Lucarelli, a member of our Theban Mission in 1998, who drew these objects to his attention. Maarten Raven kindly arranged for the acquisition of this image, and granted permission to publish it here, for which I am very grateful.

⁸ The hieroglyph appears to be Gardiner E8 (𓇪); I suggest the translation ‘needs’ by extension of the meaning of the verb *ibi* ‘thirst’ (Wb I, 61).

must describe the large list to the left, consisting of two rows and 48 items total. Items 6–10⁹ in the top row of this list are names of five adzes, the last two of which are the same as those found in TT99:

9: *nw n wʿn dmt-f m bʿz wr-ḥkʿw rn-f*, ‘an adze of *wʿn* wood,¹⁰ its blade of iron, whose name is *wr-ḥkʿw*’

10: *nw n ʿb dmt-f m bʿz imy-wt rn-f*, ‘an adze of ivory, its blade of iron, whose name is *imy-wt*’¹¹

Two basic types of adzes are found in ancient Egypt, those which were real or model examples of the actual woodworking tool, and those of a more stylised type which seem to have been used in rituals where the precise physical form was less important than their actual magical function. The shapes are quite different, and both types can be conveniently illustrated from the foundation deposits of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, which are not far removed in time from the burial of Senneferi.¹² The existence of both in the same group of deposits indeed indicates their separate functions, as the ‘real’ adze with a metal blade presumably represents the role actual woodworking tools played in the temple, while the stylised one represents those used in temple rituals.

The shape of the Senneferi adzes does not seem to follow closely the shape of the ritual adzes of Hatshepsut, or indeed those shown in the tomb paintings and papyri to be considered shortly. I am only aware of one other example of a model adze of this stylised type bearing the name of a private individual, that of the king’s son Nehy in the British Museum (EA 15779, made of wood), also presumably of the New Kingdom.¹³ This important parallel, which also has a much thicker head, is additionally inscribed with the name *wr-ḥkʿw*; it appears to be of the same broad shape as the TT99 examples and has been used as the basis of the suggested reconstruction of those objects presented here (figure 7).

The Senneferi adzes are evidently of the stylised or ‘ritual’ type; this conclusion is largely derived from the inscription and the probable shape, but also from the fact that the ivory objects would be of no obvious practical use. Objects 99.98.0518 and 99.98.0601 are without doubt the heads of two adzes with identifying inscriptions, while 99.98.0619 is probably part of the handle of one of them. This handle evidently bore an offering formula for the owner of the adzes, and although the name is not preserved, we can reasonably assume from its find location that it was that of Senneferi, probably with one or more titles. Could the small notch noted on the lower side of the two adze heads be an indication of the idealised presence of a blade?¹⁴

⁹ The list is written retrograde, and thus my numbering begins at the top left of the photograph.

¹⁰ Possibly juniper, see P.T. Nicholson and I. Shaw (eds), *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge 2000), 351.

¹¹ The other three adzes in the list are nTrty (written $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$, GARDINER HIEROGLYPHS R8 + 021 of ivory with an iron blade); *nwʿ* (or *nwʿ-inpw*, of *mrw* wood with an iron blade); and *dwn-ʿ* (of ivory with an iron blade). See also E. Otto, *Das altägyptische Mundöffnungsritual* (ÄA 3, 1960), II, 22.

¹² C. Roehrig, (ed.), *Hatshepsut: from Queen to Pharaoh* (New York 2005), 144–5 (76 e, 76 k).

¹³ W. Seipel, *Ägypten. Götter, Gräber und die Kunst. 4000 Jahre Jenseitsglaube I* (Linz 1989), 225 (295a). The object is unprovenanced, and was purchased for the museum in 1882 by the Rev. Greville Chester.

¹⁴ While the stylised adze of Hatshepsut mentioned in note 12 did not have a blade, many of the two-dimensional adzes to be considered further below are represented with blades (for example, figures 12, 14, 16).

The Merymery relief clearly points to the Opening of the Mouth ritual to enable these objects to be understood. This ritual, and the role of the adze in it, is well-known to readers.¹⁵ The context which most concerns this paper is the sequence of elements as proposed by Otto in which a range of implements are employed, for which one of the principal sources is the tomb of Rekhmire (TT100),¹⁶ which I consider particularly relevant to objects coming from a private tomb context. Another context is Spell 23 of the *Book of the Dead*, ‘Spell for opening the mouth of N’; this is frequently illustrated in New Kingdom papyri, usually as a simple scene of a priest holding an adze before a standing (sometimes mummiform) or seated figure of the deceased.¹⁷

Adzes are used to open the mouth in the tomb of Rekhmire in Otto scenes 26 and 46,¹⁸ and in scene 27 the *wr-ḥkꜣw* tool serves the same function (**figure 8**).¹⁹ The following is the translation of the relevant part of the associated text from scene 27 in TT100:

“Osiris Rekhmire: Horus has opened your mouth especially for you; he has opened your two eyes especially for you (with) the *nṯrty* implement, with the *wr-ḥkꜣw* implement, (with) the Opening of the Mouth of every god therein”.²⁰

The iconography of the *wr-ḥkꜣw* is somewhat variable, as it is sometimes depicted as or called an adze (as on the TT99 object, in TT93,²¹ the Leiden list, and the Nehy adze in the British Museum), but more frequently it is represented as a wand with the head of a serpent, (the TT100 depictions, most examples in Table 1 below, and the actual example from the 26th dynasty tomb of Tjaenhebu [see below]). This real 26th dynasty example of a *wr-ḥkꜣw* is made of wood (specifically ebony), and indeed the Merymery text describes it as made of *wꜥn* wood, although it is there called an adze; the TT99 example is of ivory. I can only speculate about the reasons behind these variations in the manner of description and depiction of the *wr-ḥkꜣw*. It is evident that the *wr-ḥkꜣw* was used in the ritual at a similar point to the adzes in the

¹⁵ The principal treatment of this ritual is Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual*. The ritual over the course of Egyptian history is summarised by A.M. Roth in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (New York 2001) II, 605–9; J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca 2005), 310–17 is an excellent summary of the episodes of the ritual, based on the depiction in TT183, for which see also his article in N. Strudwick and J.H. Taylor, *The Theban Necropolis: past, present and future* (London 2003), 53–60; a recent re-presentation of one of the major sources for the ritual is M.F. Ayad, ‘The selection and layout of the Opening of the Mouth scenes in the chapel of Amenirdis I at Medinet Habu’, *JARCE* 41 (2004), 113–33.

¹⁶ Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual*; N. de G. Davies, *The tomb of Rekh-mi-re at Thebes* (PMMA 11. 1943), pl. XCVII–CII, CIV–CVII. Otto further divides the types of tomb depictions into four classes (ibid, 29–30).

¹⁷ I. Munro, *Untersuchungen zu den Totenbuch-Papyri der 18. Dynastie. Kriterien ihrer Datierung* (London and New York 1988), 69–70; H. Milde, *The Vignettes in the Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet* (Leiden 1991), 222–3. The spell is translated in T.G. Allen, *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day. Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in their own Terms* (SAOC 37, 1974), 36 and R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London 1985), 51–2. Irmtraut Munro (personal communication) has not identified Spell 23 among the fragments of Book of the Dead papyri and shrouds in TT99. See M. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den thebanischen Beamtengräbern des Neuen Reiches. Texte und Vignetten* (AV 46, 1984), 24–5 for examples of this spell in Theban tombs of the Ramesside Period.

¹⁸ Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* I, 55–64, 104–110; II, 80–4, 106–8.

¹⁹ Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* I, 64–72; II, 84–7.

²⁰ Davies, *Rekh-mi-re*, pl. CVI–CVII.

²¹ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Ken-Amun at Thebes* (PMMA 5, 1930), pl. LXI (F). This adze, although of the stylised type, unusually shows a metal blade attached to the head.

Rekhmire scene just described (**figure 8**), and both adzes and the ram-headed *wr-ḥkꜣw* appear together in the depictions to be discussed later in this paper (for example, in **figures 11, 12 and 16**), and it thus is quite possible that there were even two co-existing schools of thought as to the nature or iconography of the instrument.

While it should not automatically be assumed that these scenes are accurate representations of the rituals, the images of adzes do take the form of the stylised and not ‘real’ type. Nonetheless, caution should be exercised about taking these depictions at face value, as (for example) the heads of these stylised adzes in the Opening of the Mouth scenes are always shown parallel to the ground, regardless of the angles at which the shaft is shown, indicating that it is the principle depicted which is more important than the precise detail.

Although individual examples of the Opening of the Mouth ritual do not name all the Merymery adzes, the ritual as synthesised by Otto names all the adzes in the Leiden list with the exception of the *imy-wt*.²² The non-appearance of the *imy-wt* adze in any other source than the Merymery relief is somewhat puzzling. Otto observed in his treatment of this list (in which he seems to have overlooked *imy-wt*) that a number of items in it do not appear in his treatment of the ritual, and he attempts to explain some of them away, not always convincingly. He perhaps made insufficient allowance for the apparently unique nature of the Merymery list, as its significance or why the tomb owner should have used it cannot be judged from the lack of parallels. Additionally, it does come from Saqqara, and most of the other sources for the ritual are Theban,²³ so a local variation cannot be excluded. However, there may have been even more adzes in use, as an unlabelled depiction of adzes, in a list from TT 57 to be considered further below (**figure 12**), has no fewer than seven, including the *wr-ḥkꜣw*. This suggests that the number is variable, although the issue of the appearance of the *imy-wt* in only TT99 and the Merymery relief remains mysterious. The painted scenes which show several unnamed adzes (see further below) represent these in different colours, varying between white, black, red/pink and yellow (**for example, figures 11, 13, 16**), and these variations may be intended to represent the different materials of which the adzes were made—those in the Merymery list are, as has been noted, of ivory, mrw wood and wan wood. At the risk of over-interpretation of the paintings, it may even be possible to detect subtle differences in some examples of the shape of the different adzes (**for example figure 13**).

Function and context

What is the function of these objects? Although the only parallels so far adduced with archaeological contexts come from foundation deposits, the location of these objects in the burial chamber of Senneferi would seem to argue against that explanation.²⁴

²² Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* I, 80.


²³ His list of principal sources is in *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 173.

²⁴ The only known private tomb foundation deposits in Thebes are those of TT71, P.F. Dorman, *The Tombs of Senenmut. The Architecture and Decoration of Tombs 71 and 353* (PMMA 24, 1991), 149–58, and only one further example appears to be known outside that city, actually at Sidi Oweis el Qurani in Nubia (see Dorman, op. cit, 149, n. 427). The Senmut deposits are anyway not within TT71 itself (Dorman, op. cit, 149).

Funerary equipment from the Old Kingdom includes sets of objects associated with the Opening of the Mouth as practiced at that time;²⁵ although clearly the same ritual in essence, it developed considerably from the 6th dynasty onwards. Nonetheless, actual Opening of the Mouth objects are more common from the Old Kingdom than at any subsequent date; the excavations of Reisner at Giza uncovered many examples in both site debris and tomb chambers.²⁶

A discovery from the turn of the 20th century AD provides better parallels. In 1899, the Service des Antiquités, under the direction of Barsanti and Maspero, began excavation of the so-called ‘Persian shaft tombs’ to the south of the pyramid of Unas at Saqqara. Over the course of four years they uncovered three intact tombs.²⁷ Relevant to the present study are objects from the first of these three, the tomb of Tjaenhebu, dating to the reign of Amasis in the late 26th dynasty.²⁸ Many spectacular objects were found in this excavation, including jewellery, shabtis and canopic jars, all now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Most important for the present study was a box with two compartments one above the other in which were stored a number of what can only be described as ‘ritual objects’ (figures 9–10).²⁹

The box contained the following (the references in parentheses are to the plates in the Bresciani publication). The two layers or compartments are termed ‘Sez. A’ and ‘Sez. B’ in the publication. All objects are made of wood unless otherwise indicated.³⁰

Upper compartment (Sez. A)	Lower compartment (Sez. B)
Two serpent-headed wands with gold uraeus (Tav. XLVI–XLVII)	Two flails (Tav. LII)
A  sceptre HIEROGLYPH GARDINER S42	Two Anubis fetishes (Tav. LII)
Two groups of four vessels on bases, green-blue faience (Tav. XLV upper)	Two wAs sceptres
Four rectangular blocks of Egyptian alabaster (Tav. XLVIII lower)	A possible model bow
Four ox-legs (Tav. XLVIII upper)	A long cylindrical object
Fourteen Egyptian alabaster model vessels (Tav. XLV lower)	Three maces (Tav. IL)

²⁵ There is a list of examples of these items in R. van Walsem, ‘The ps-kf. An investigation of an Ancient Egyptian funerary instrument’, *OMRO* 59–60 (1978–1979), 224–5; see also note 26 below. See also A.M. Roth, ‘The *ps-kf* and the “Opening of the Mouth” Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth’, *JEA* 78 (1992), 113–47, and id., ‘Fingers, Stars, and the “Opening of the Mouth”: the Nature and Function of the nTrwj-blades’, *JEA* 79 (1993), 57–79.


²⁶ From a search for ‘pesesh’ in <http://www.gizapyramids.org> on 10 February 2008; a set of examples from mixed provenances at Giza is published in S. D’Auria, P. Lacovara, C.H. Roehrig, *Mummies & Magic. The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt*, (Boston 1988), 80–1 (11).

²⁷ PM III², 648–9.

²⁸ Barsanti and Maspero produced only preliminary reports on the work; a publication of the tomb was completed by the University of Pisa Mission to Saqqara in 1977 under the direction of Edda Bresciani (E. Bresciani, S. Pernigotti, M.P. Giangeri Silvis, *La tomba di Ciennehebu, capo della flotta del Re* (Pisa 1977)).

²⁹ Bresciani et al., *La tomba di Ciennehebu*, 68–72, Tav. XXV–XXVI, XLV–LIV. The discovery of the box is related in A. Barsanti and G. Maspero, ‘Fouilles autour de la pyramide d’Ounas (1899–1900)’, *ASAE* 1 (1900), 263–4.

³⁰ Journal d’Entrée numbers will be found in Bresciani et al., *La tomba di Ciennehebu*, 86 n. 8 (Sez. A) and 87 n. 23 (Sez. B). In addition, and not shown on the drawing used as the basis for this description, seems to have been a case of arrows (ibid, 71–2, Tav. L).

Two model bottles of crystal (Tav. XLVIII middle right)	Seven further sticks, staves or sceptres
Two models of bags (Tav. XLVIII middle left)	Two uncertain cylindrical objects (Tav. LIII lower)
	Item perhaps in the shape of the hieroglyph  (Tav. LIV lower) HIEROGLYPH GARDINER Aa2o
	A plaque (?) of Egyptian alabaster (Tav. LII) ³¹

The initial clue as to the identity of many of these objects is given by the serpent-headed *wr-hk3w* sceptre, which, as discussed above, is usually a central feature of depictions of the Opening of the Mouth. A number of other objects can also be identified from further depictions which show this ritual, or which show objects from it as part of a larger scene. These depictions (see Table 1 below, at the end of which references to publications will be found) can be grouped into types as follows.

1. Opening of the Mouth scenes in which the administering priest is accompanied by a selection of implements, often on a table; the best example is that in the *Book of the Dead* of Hunefer (**figure 11**), but it appears in a number of tomb paintings. The classic form, as exemplified here by the 19th dynasty Hunefer papyrus, develops in the mid-18th dynasty, at the same time as the scene of Opening the Mouth begins to appear with mummies in front of the tomb (**figure 16**). One of the earliest examples, in which the 'classic' form has not quite been attained, is an unpublished scene in TT85 (**figure 13**).

2. Depictions of Opening the Mouth equipment among funerary equipment being inspected, as shown in TT79, TT85 (**figure 14**)³² and TT99 (**figure 15**)³³;


3. A list of Opening the Mouth equipment beneath a purification scene, as found by the entrance to TT57 (**figure 12**);

4. The list of equipment from this ritual in the tomb of Merymery (**figure 6**, see further above)

In identifying the Tjaenhebu objects, reference will be made to the relevant sections of the Opening of the Mouth Ritual as divided up by Otto.

Upper compartment (Sez. A):

The snake-headed *wr-hk3w* is found in many scenes, and has been considered above. The reason for the presence of two examples is unclear, unless these do duty for the other adzes

A  sceptre is shown with Opening of the Mouth items in TT79 and TT85; this instrument is held by a priest in the slaughtering episode (Otto scenes 23 and 43). Merymery item 13, a Hw of Dam gold, has a sceptre-like determinative. Otto regards the latter as a chisel;³⁴ see further below for further consideration of the shape of chisels in these scenes.

³¹ The author believes that this might have come from the upper layer (Bresciani et al., *La tomba di Ciennehebu*, 87 n. 21).

³² I am indebted to Catharine Roehrig for giving me permission to use this image and for providing me with this scan.

³³ Heike Heye permits me to mention that she suspects from fragments she found that there was also one such scene in TT87, the tomb of Menkheperresoneb's father Minnakht.

³⁴ He erroneously gives the  **HIEROGLYPH GARDINER U24** determinative for it (Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 23).

The two sets of four vessels on bases are evidently, from their different shapes, the nmst and dSrt vessels commonly placed on mats in the tomb scenes; these form Otto scenes 2 and 3, and are Merymery items 1 and 2. The canonical number of four is presumably related to the four parts of the libation formula as found in the texts.³⁵

The four rectangular blocks are without doubt the four *ꜥbt* blocks of Otto scene 35/36 and Merymery item 14,³⁶ shown frequently in the tomb scenes.

The ox-legs represent the frequently depicted *hps*; it appears in Otto scene 25, although it is apparently absent from the Merymery list. Why Tjanenhebu should have had four of these is uncertain.

The two bags perhaps represent the green and black eye cosmetics represented in some depictions which form Otto scene 56, and Merymery items 37 and 38.

The small vessels cannot be immediately identified with specific items, but probably relate to the general requirements for substances needed for the ritual, exemplified by the lists of items in the two bottom sub-registers of the TT57 scene.

Lower compartment (Sez. B):

This selection of objects cannot immediately be associated with implements used in the Otto divisions of the ritual, nor are they evident in the TT57 or Merymery lists. However, similar items are seen in the three scenes of receiving funerary equipment in TT79, TT86 and TT99—such as a mace, *w3s*, *ꜣms* and *ꜥwt* sceptres—while bows and arrows form part of the nearby equipment in all three scenes. These objects do not actually appear to form a direct component of the Opening of the Mouth ritual, but have important associations with funerary equipment and are shown in close proximity to Opening of the Mouth objects.³⁷ All these sceptres, staves, and weapons form part of the object friezes so common on Middle Kingdom coffins,³⁸ indicating that some objects from that tradition continued to be used, or at least depicted, through the New Kingdom and into the Late Period.

From the above brief analysis of the contents of Tjaenhebu's box, it appears to have been divided into two parts by function of the objects: the upper layer (Sez. A) contains objects actually used in the Opening of the Mouth ritual, while those in Sez. B were important elements of ritual tomb equipment, but held perhaps more disparate functions than those in the layer above, and hence were placed in a separate compartment.

While this appears to be the only real box of what may conveniently be referred to as 'ritual equipment' recovered from an Egyptian tomb, there is pictorial evidence for containers used for the Opening of the Mouth equipment from at least the Middle Kingdom: Jéquier published a sketch of such a box accompanied by ritual items on a coffin in Cairo,³⁹ a black chest appears below the arms of a priest

³⁵ Of Horus, Seth, Thoth and *dwn-ꜥnwj*; for example Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 37.

³⁶ See further Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 20–1.

³⁷ Note that a flail appears with other Opening of the Mouth objects in the second scene in TT85 (figure 13; P. Virey, *Sept tombeaux thébaines de la XVIIIe dynastie* (MMAF 5, 1891), 268, fig. 9).

³⁸ See G. Jéquier, *Les frises d'objets des sarcophages du Moyen Empire* (MIFAO 47, 1921), in particular pp 159–91.

³⁹ Jéquier, *Les frises d'objets*, 325, fig. 839.

performing an Opening of the Mouth in TT139 (**figure 16**), and there is a chest in close proximity to the scene from the papyrus of Hunefer (**figure 11**).

Presently unpublished material from other Saite tombs at Saqqara suggests that further burials of the period might have contained such equipment. Thus another ram-headed sceptre and set of model vases on a base were found among objects in the tomb of Wahibremer, while other examples of vessels on bases came from other tombs.⁴⁰ Museum collections also hold further examples of these vessel groups, suggesting that they could have been relatively common at that date. For example, three sets of such vessels are in the Oriental Institute in Chicago,⁴¹ and there are two examples in faience at the British Museum.⁴² Although many of these are unprovenanced, none seem to have been recorded from sites other than Saqqara. By implication, it is possible that chests of ritual equipment were a part of Saite tombs, at Saqqara at least.

From an earlier period at Saqqara come some objects which might parallel one of the classes of object from the tomb of Tjaenhebu. Raven has tentatively identified some rectangular items found in the burial of Maya and Merit as possible Opening of the Mouth objects (doubtless the *ꜥbt* from other parallels in Leiden).⁴³ Further examination of museum storerooms might reveal other material of this kind, presently not recognised for what it is. Although excluded from this study, many of the Old Kingdom precursors to these implements mentioned in notes 25–26 above were found in tomb contexts.

I now return to TT99, to investigate whether a box such as that depicted in TT139 might have also been placed in an actual burial assemblage.

Further objects from TT99

After the recognition of the purpose of the three ivory fragments, the other material from the burial of Senneferi was re-examined in case it contained other objects which might fall into this category, objects which had remained mysterious or had been misunderstood. Thus far four possible related objects have been located.

Objects 99.98.0608–9 are two (now joined) wooden fragments which form a small model of the leg of an ox (a *ḥpš*: **figure 17**, length 26.7 cm). Initially it had been considered that this might be a model of a food offering,⁴⁴ although the remains of food containers among the TT99 material indicates that real food was placed in the tomb rather than models.⁴⁵ The Tjaenhebu material suggests that this is rather a model of a item used in the Opening of the Mouth ritual.

⁴⁰ Bresciani et al., *La tomba di Ciennehebu*, 87 n. 20. Further objects are also mentioned.

⁴¹ OIM 11309, 11310, 11311, unpublished; no provenance, acquired in 1920. I am very grateful to Emily Teeter for drawing them to my attention and for providing this information.

⁴² EA 5537 (blue faience, unprovenanced, ex Sams Collection, acquired 1834), and EA 5546 (green-blue faience, unprovenanced, ex Bonomi/Lane Collections, acquired 1842). Both are unpublished; I thank John H. Taylor for checking for other examples for me.

⁴³ In M. Raven et al., *The Tomb of Maya and Meryt II: Objects and Skeletal Remains* (Excavation Memoir 65, 2001), 71 (Cat. 397a–c), pl. 42 (397).

⁴⁴ As with a faience example from Aniba, Leipzig 6140: *Ägyptens Aufstieg zur Weltmacht* (Exhibition Catalogue, Mainz 1987), 219 (149).

⁴⁵ One of these containers is illustrated at <http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/egypt/tt99/finds/foodcontainer.html>

Object 99.98.0648 is a long finger of wood, with the fingernail clearly indicated (**figure 18**, length 15.5 cm). This object cannot have come from a coffin, since it is disproportionately long and has no evidence of attachment. A finger makes two appearances in the Opening of the Mouth Ritual,⁴⁶ the little finger of the priest in Otto scene 14/33, and (of far more relevance) the ‘finger of gold/electrum’ (*ḏbꜥ n ḏꜥm*) is presented to the deceased in Otto Scene 32, which scene combines its use with that of the *mdft* implement, as in TT100.⁴⁷ An object which is clearly a long finger is found in the tomb depictions and the Hunefer papyrus, and it is item 12 in the Merymery list.

Object 99.98.0640, a piece of plain wood with a wide rounded end which tapers in a curved shape to the other; the whole object is ribbed (**figure 19**, length 8.5 cm). It would appear to be part of a tool of some sort. In view of the possibility that other uncertain objects could be from the Opening of the Mouth, I consider this object to be the handle of a chisel or similar implement. Chisel-like objects appear in several tomb depictions and the Hunefer papyrus.⁴⁸ Particularly important is the observation that the determinatives to the *mdft* and *myt-r* implements in the Merymery list (nos 11 and 17) are this shape, and that of the *mdst* (no. 36) is not dissimilar;⁴⁹ it seems possible that this object could have been the companion to the finger just discussed. Other chisel-like objects in the Merymery list, but not mentioned in the full ritual, include the *mnḥ* chisel itself (no. 34). The *mdft* implement is part of Otto scene 32, along with the ‘finger of gold/electrum’ (see above).

Object 99.98.0650, a wooden object, one end of which is shaped like a papyrus umbel, from which a hand extends (**figure 20**, length 12 cm). On the underside are lines indicating the fingers, and on the upper side is a hole in the middle of the palm of the hand. Some green traces suggest the original presence of copper, and I suggest that this is part of the end of a censer, with the hole for attachment of the copper incense-burner. Such objects appear in the list of TT57, and one is shown being used in the Hunefer papyrus. In the TT100 ritual, bowls of burning incense are shown in preference to conventional censers,⁵⁰ but this is probably simply a convention used in that tomb, as contemporary examples showing the arm-shaped censer are also known.⁵¹

These are the only three-dimensional objects which can be identified with any reasonable certainty.⁵² However, an intriguing ostrakon from the burial chambers of Senneferi may shed light on the ritual for TT99 (**figure 21**). This object has been partially reassembled from a number of fragments; on both sides it bears the remains of two registers of sketched scenes of men before standing mummies, the most

⁴⁶ Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 20.

⁴⁷ Davies, *Rekh-mi-re*, pl. CVII (top left).

⁴⁸ Real chisels are also shown in this shape in drawings, for example in TT217 (N. de G. Davies, ‘The work of the Tytus Memorial Fund’, *BMMA* part II, December 1920, 33, fig. 22).

⁴⁹ Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 20; this is also the case with the determinative to *mdft* in TT100 (Davies, *Rekh-mi-re*, pl. CVII (top left)).

⁵⁰ Davies, *Rekh-mi-re*, pl. CVI.

⁵¹ For example: TT95, W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte I* (Leipzig 1923), 59a.

⁵² A shaped piece of wood (99.98.0665) which cannot be otherwise assigned to an object could be a further such item.

common form of the Opening of the Mouth on the walls of 18th dynasty Theban tombs.⁵³ Episodes which have survived on it include the presentation of the *hps* (Otto 24/25 44/45), the introduction of ‘the son who loves’ (Otto 31), possibly the preparation of offerings (Otto 65), and other scenes in which indistinct items are held up to the mouth of the mummy, which would probably include some of those considered above.

This might be a sketch for a scene in the tomb chapel, since such a scene exists in the rear room, but it rather stretches the imagination for this ostrakon to have found its way by chance down the 15 m deep shaft and then 20 m further underground. Thus I tentatively suggest that this ostrakon depicting the ritual was deliberately placed in the burial, perhaps as a guide to the ritual for which the associated implements were used.

All the items from TT99 just described were found in the debris from the badly broken-up burial of Senneferi and his family members. Numerous wooden fragments from boxes in the burial have been identified, but none can be specifically associated with a container for these Opening of the Mouth implements. One group of fragments of thinner wood bearing part of a *htp di nzw* formula and the name and title of Senneferi was noted (**figure 22**),⁵⁴ and I draw attention to these only as the handle of one of the adzes also bore such a formula and a name.

There seem to be at least two reasons why these sets of objects were buried in these tombs. The first is that they were there to confirm that the Opening of the Mouth ritual had taken place, and to ensure its continued efficacy, rather in the manner of the painted and carved depictions on tomb walls. Secondly, as they seem to have borne his name, they were perhaps made specifically for his funeral and were thus always intended to be interred with him.

Conclusion: Theban burial kits?

Does the existence of these items in TT99 imply that Opening of the Mouth burial kits were interred in some Theban tombs of the New Kingdom, rather as in some Saite tombs at Saqqara? I have presently been unable to locate any other comparable three-dimensional examples in a Theban context. The only contemporary parallel, that of Nehy in the British Museum (see note 12), while probably of the 18th dynasty, has no provenance, although its acquisition by the Rev. Chester makes a Theban origin not implausible. The thorough ransacking of intact burials of this period in Thebes means that relatively small items such as these implements could have gone unnoticed in more recent examination of debris, or else they could be waiting to be discovered in museum storerooms; from the personal experience of discovering the Senneferi adze fragments, the nature of such objects might not immediately be recognised.

Given the lack of actual objects, the principal evidence consists of the three categories of depictions already noted of Opening of the Mouth objects which pertain to Thebes (the Merymery list is omitted as it is from Saqqara): 1. Priests performing the ritual before the tomb (e.g. **figure 11**); 2. Scenes of receiving funerary equipment (e.g. **figures 14–15**); 3. The list of TT57 (**figure 12**). **Table 1** summarises the

⁵³ Otto scene type 1, conveniently illustrated by an example in TT53 (Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, 29, Abb. 2a–c).

⁵⁴ These are objects 99.98.0361, 99.98.0651 and 99.98.0656. The full range of box fragments will be noted in the final tomb report.

principal objects from these categories, correlating them with depictions in the tombs, and including the principal identifiable Otto scene numbers for comparison, using mainly the Rekhmire sequence.⁵⁵

Without a doubt the most common type of depiction is the first, as categories two and three encompass only four certain tombs. It is impossible to ascertain from any of these depictions (and indeed the Merymery list) whether they relate to actual physical goods placed in the tomb, or rather to idealised lists of items; compare again the Middle Kingdom object friezes, which seem to have been almost totally symbolic. The contents of contemporary intact burials indicate that Opening of the Mouth items were not a normal part of burial equipment,⁵⁶ and it would seem unlikely that such implements were removed in the minor disturbances which these burials suffered not long after interment—gold, oils and other precious items seem to have been the principal targets of robbers. Thus it is more likely that these depictions represent objects used ideally in the funerary ritual, shown on walls or papyrus to ensure the efficacy and continuous nature of the rites.

However, the new Senneferi material contradicts this analysis to some extent, since it does indicate the presence of real ritual objects in at least one New Kingdom burial. Why should Senneferi have been interred with these items? It is not simply a matter of status and opulence in the burial, as otherwise such remarkable intact assemblages as those of Kha and Merit from Deir el-Medina or Maherpri or Yuya and Tjuya from the Valley of the Kings might have been expected to have contained them as well. Perhaps it was a feature of the earlier 18th dynasty, or perhaps it was a particular wish of Senneferi and those who carried out his burial, although it is impossible to substantiate either of these suggestions. Senneferi also unusually possessed *Book of the Dead* texts both on a papyrus and on a burial shroud,⁵⁷ otherwise known only from the burial of Hatnefer, the mother of Senmut.⁵⁸ Could it be associated with the elaborate depiction of his burial equipment considered above, known from only two or three other tombs? Perhaps the practice of interring these items was as short-lived as the duration of this scene type, although the burial assemblages of the other two or three tombs in which this scene was depicted (TT79, TT85 and perhaps even TT87) were too destroyed to reveal any useful evidence.

From Table 1 it is clear that while not every implement is shown in every source, the objects in the paintings which are the most common are those of the types which explicitly played a part in the full ritual, notably as shown in TT100. These objects are the *dsrt* and *nmst* vessels, bags of cosmetics, the *hps*, the adzes (including the *wr-hkw*), the finger, chisel, *bt*, *ps-kf* and the feather. These objects also equate with those which appear in Otto's episodes of the ritual. The other items (from the leopard skin on) seem to be less frequent—many of them appear only in the small group of tombs which depict the presenting of funerary equipment—or are (like the leopard skin and the censer) essential ritual equipment, or indeed form part of the earlier object friezes. The less common objects were evidently seen as less essential, and this is supported to a considerable degree by their distribution between the two layers of the box of

⁵⁵ Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual* II, Abb. 1.

⁵⁶ None appear in the burials surveyed in S.T. Smith, 'Intact Tombs of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Dynasties from Thebes and the New Kingdom Burial System', *MDAIK* 48 (1992), 193–231. Royal tombs show no signs of any such equipment; thus no box of such items was found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, although several true adzes (or models thereof) were found (Carter nos 044p, 044v, 100c 106a, 402; see the Tutankhamun database in Oxford <http://griffith.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/gri/4tut.html>).

⁵⁷ Strudwick, *Memnonia* 11 (2000), 250–1.

⁵⁸ A. Lansing and W.C. Hayes, 'The tomb of Ra-mose and Hat-nufer', *BMAA* (1937), section II, 20.

Tjaenhebu as considered above. Senneferi clearly also included examples of both these groupings in his burial.

However, as the Merymery relief in Leiden indicates, there were probably many more objects associated with the ritual than are seen in the classic Theban depictions. The objects discovered in the smashed burial of Senneferi indicate how much more is still to be learned about Egyptian funerary practices, and their recovery shows that much is to be gained from careful excavation, analysis and study of what initially appears to be unpromising contexts.

Table 1—two dimensional depictions of Opening of the Mouth implements from Thebes

The objects in rows are arranged beginning with those in the Otto numbering of the Opening of the Mouth ritual; the sources in columns are arranged in approximate date order. The italic numbers beneath the sources indicate to which of the four main scene groups discussed in the text they are assigned; these are:

1. Priests performing the ritual before the tomb;
2. The scenes of receiving funerary equipment;
3. The list of TT57;
4. The list of Merymery.

THE ACTUAL TABLE IS IN A SEPARATE DOCUMENT DUE TO ORIENTATION

Sources

TT99: unpublished, see **figure 15**;

TT79: H. Guksch, *Die Gräber des Nacht-Min und des Men-cheper-Ra-seneb Theben Nr. 87 und 79* (AV 34, 1995), 164–5, Taf. 40–1;

TT85 (1) and (2) presently unpublished, see **figure 14** (scene 1) and **figure 13** (scene 2). Some elements of 1) are reproduced in Virey, *Sept tombeaux thébaines*, 263, fig. 6, and of 2) in *ibid*, 268, fig. 9;

TT139: see **figure 16**; cf A. Hermann, *Die Stelen der thebanischen Felsgräber der 18. Dynastie* (ÄF 11, 1940), Taf. 11a;

TT175: L. Manniche, *The Wall Decoration of Three Theban Tombs (TT 77, 175, and 249)* (CNI Publications 4, Copenhagen 1988), 41, fig. 41;

TT57: see **figure 12**; a drawing of the implements will be found in Jéquier, *Les frises d'objets*, 323, fig. 836, but the whole scene is still incompletely published (cf Hermann, *Die Stelen der thebanischen Felsgräber der 18. Dynastie*, Taf 12d);

Hunefer: see **figure 11**; frequently reproduced in part; Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 311, fig. 5 reproduces Naville's original drawing of the whole scene;

TT30: Wreszinski, *Atlas I*, 127;

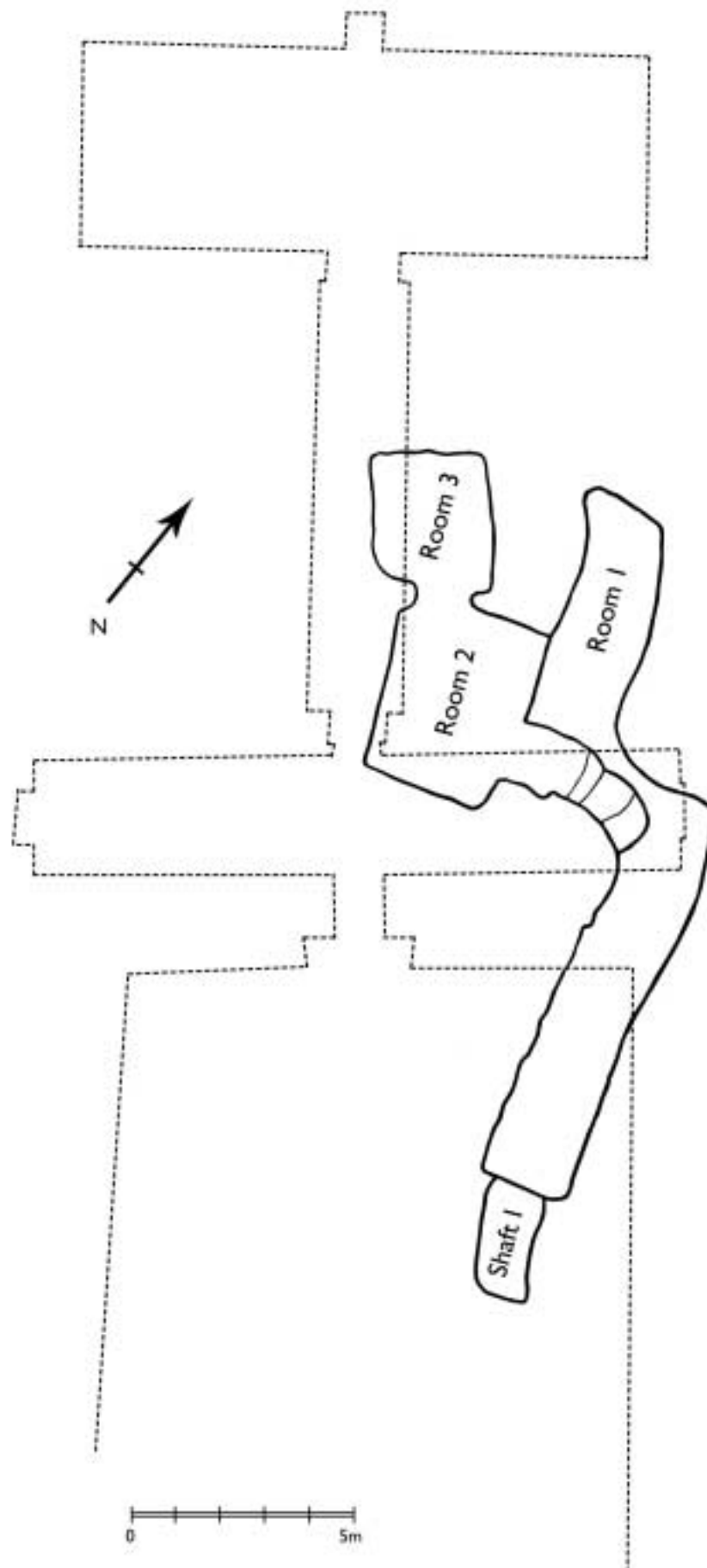
TT31: N. de G. Davies, *Seven Private Tombs at Kurneh* (MET 2, 1948), pl. XVI;

TT217: Wreszinski, *Atlas I*, 369.

Table 1

	TT99	TT79	TT85(1)	TT85(2)	TT139	TT175	TT57	Hunefer	TT30	TT31	TT217	Otto	Merymery
Scene Group	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1		4
<i>Nmst</i> vessel	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	?	2	1
<i>qstt</i> vessel	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	?	3	2
Two small bags							X	X	X	?		56	37 38
<i>bps</i> *		X	X		X		X	X		X	?	24 25 44 45	
Adzes *			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	26 46	6 7 8 10
<i>wr-hkzw</i> *		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	27	9
Finger *		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	?	32	12
Chisel *	X	X	X				X	X	X		X	32	11 17
<i>cbt</i>			X		?		X	?	X	X		36	14
<i>ps-kf</i>		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	37	16
Feather				X			X		X		X	39	18
Leopard skin		X	X				X	X					20
Flail or <i>ymt</i>	X			X				X		X	X		
Censer *							X			X			
† (S42)		X	X										13?
Mace		X	X						X	X			
Other sceptres	X												
Other			X										

* represents an object actually found in TT99. The scenes in TT99 and TT175 are damaged or incomplete



0. Plan of burial chambers of Senneferi in courtyard of TT99. Drawing by Kelly P. Bozarth based on the original plan by Günter Heindl.



1. Objects 99.98.0518 (left) and 99.98.0601 (right) from TT99, three-quarter view. © Anthony Middleton.
2. Objects 99.98.0518 (left) and 99.98.0601 (right) from TT99, rear view. © Anthony Middleton.



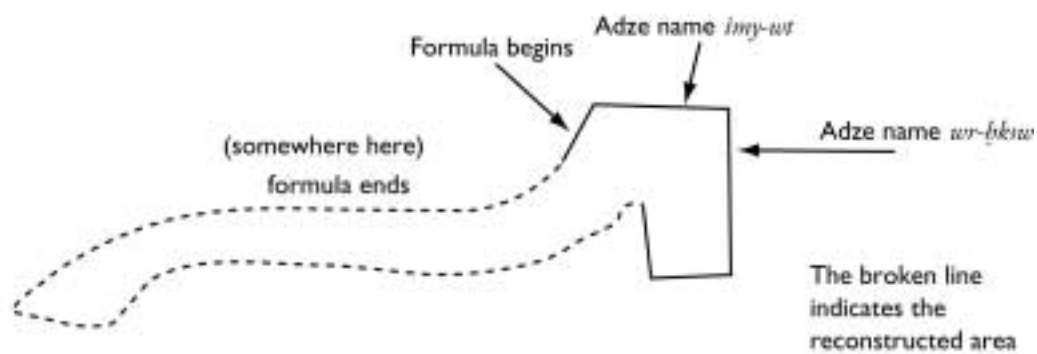
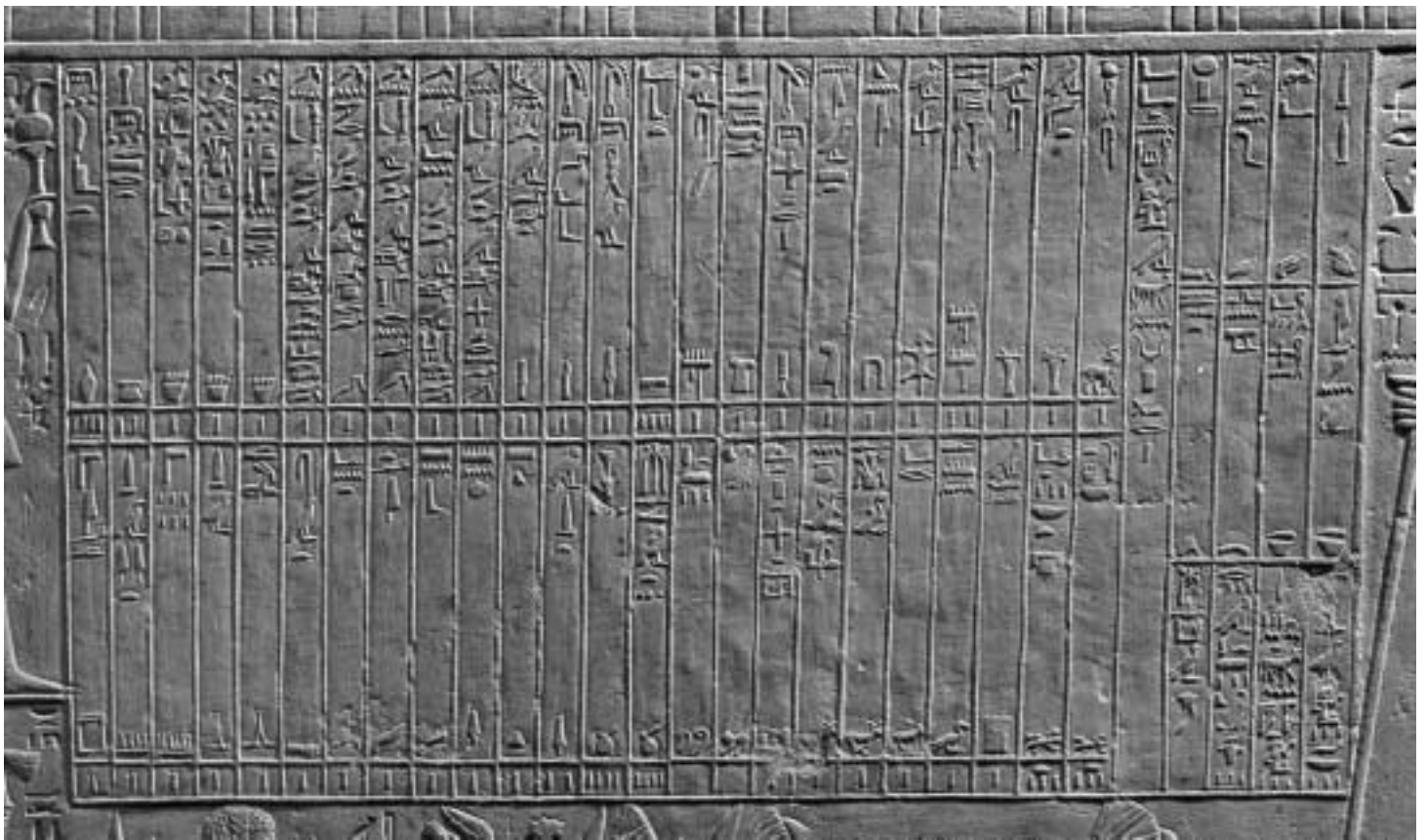
99.98.0518



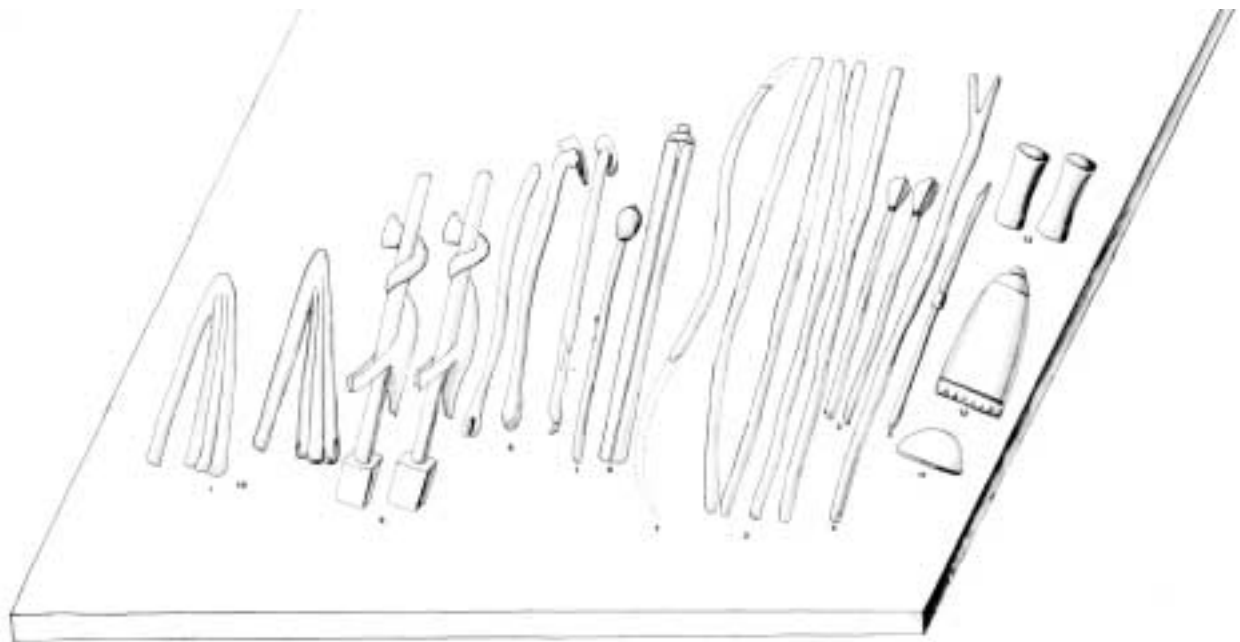
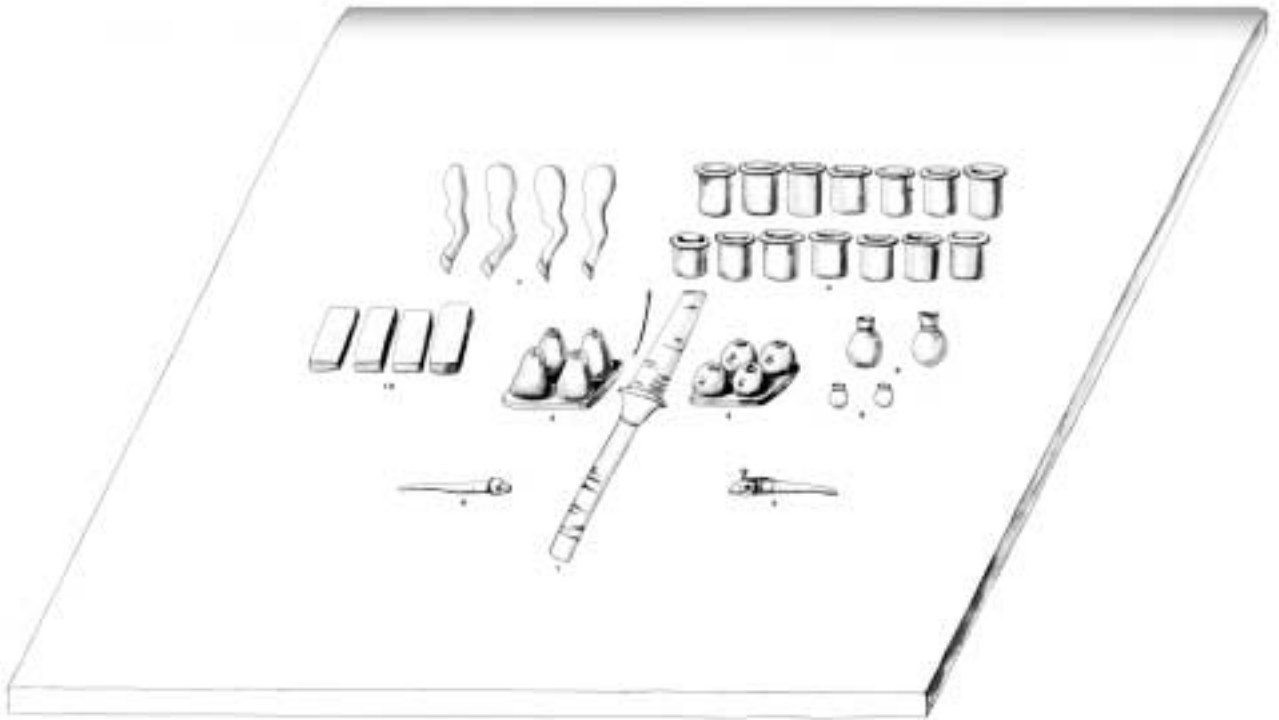
99.98.0601



3. Object 99.98.0601 from TT99, profile. © Anthony Middleton.
4. Object 99.98.0619. © Anthony Middleton.
5. The hieroglyphs on objects 99.98.0518 and 99.98.0601.

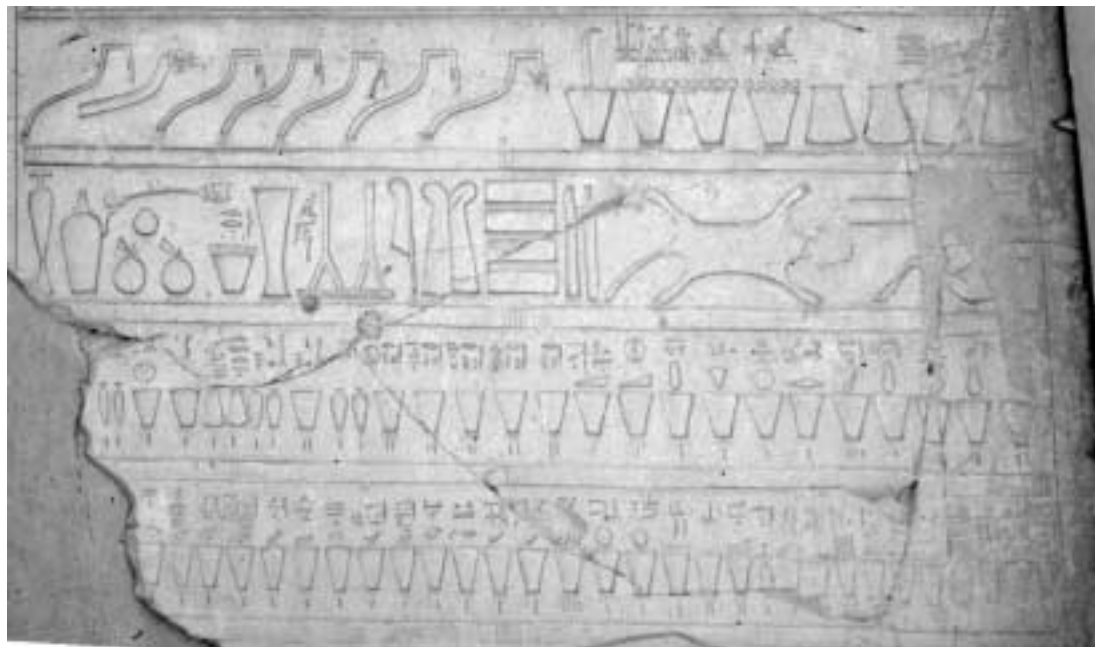
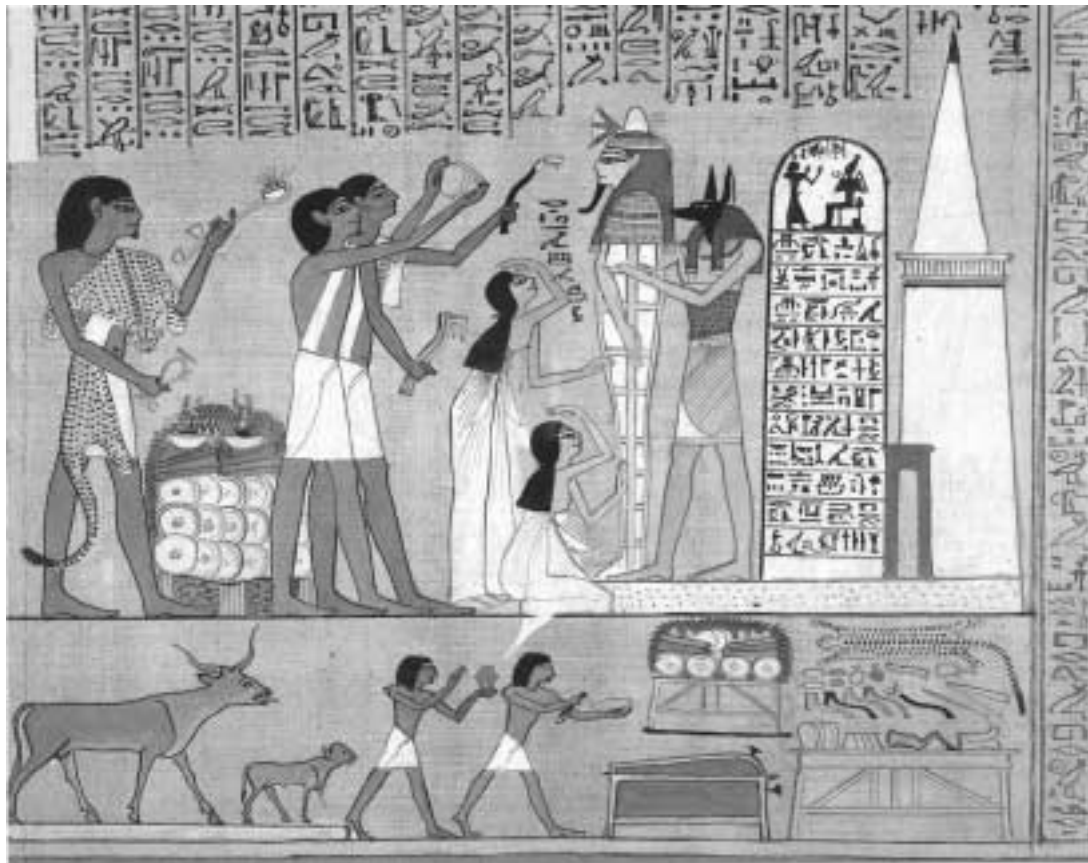


6. Relief of Merymery, Leiden RMO AP. 6. Photo Courtesy of Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden.
7. A composite reconstruction of both adzes showing likely shape and the location of hieroglyphs.
8. Opening of the mouth scene with the wr-HkAw in TT I00. Adapted from Davies, The Tomb of Rekh-mi-re II, pl. CVI-CVII.



9. Contents of box of Tjaenhebu, Sez. A. Bresciani, Pernigotti, Silvis, La tomba di Ciennehebu, Tav. XXV. Reproduced by kind permission of Edda Bresciani.

10. Contents of box of Tjaenhebu, Sez. B. Bresciani, Pernigotti, Silvis, La tomba di Ciennehebu, Tav. XXVI. Reproduced by permission of Edda Bresciani.

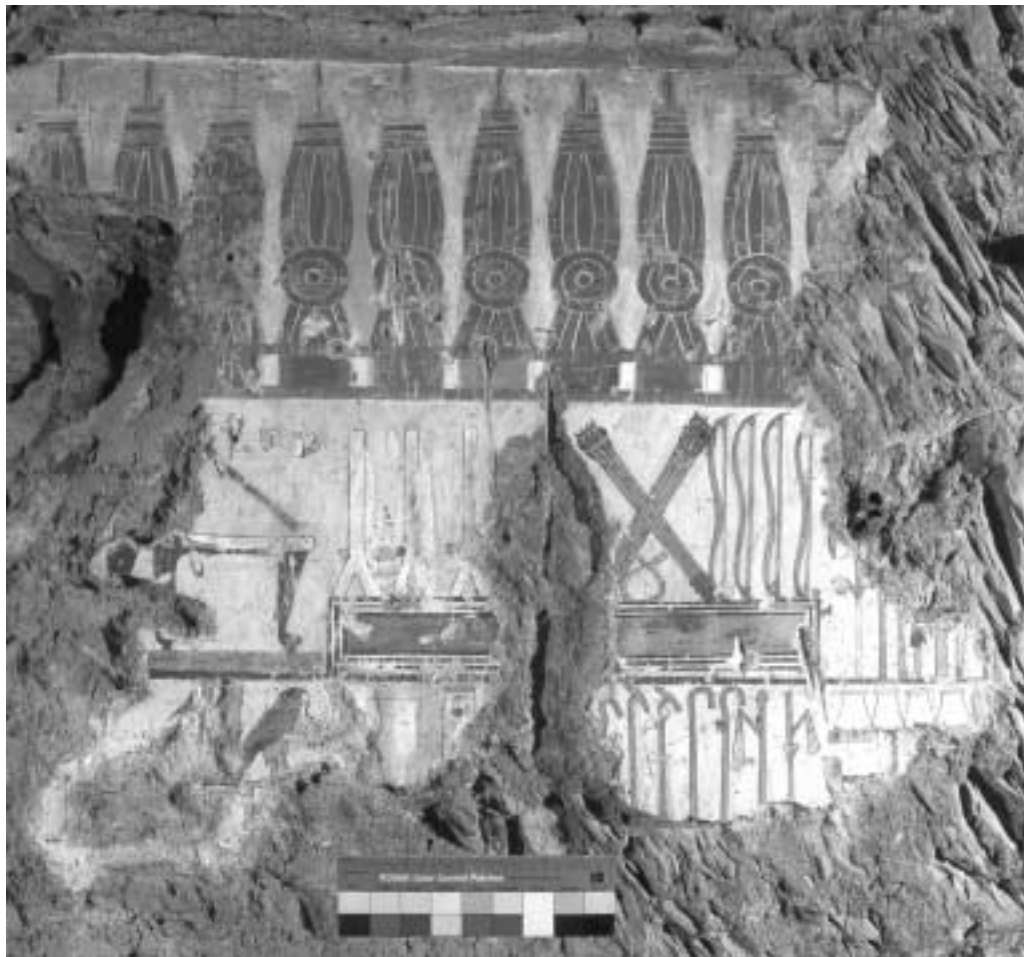


11. Scene from the papyrus of Hunefer (British Museum EA 9901 sheet 5). © Trustees of the British Museum.
12. The Opening of the Mouth list outside TT57. © Nigel Strudwick.



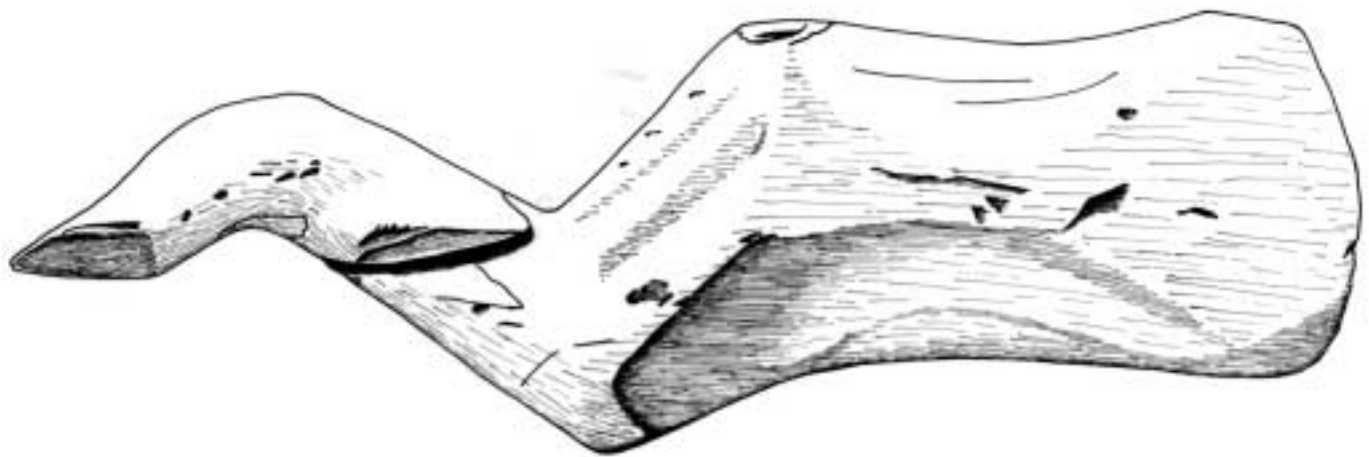
13. Detail of Opening of the Mouth scene in TT85. © Nigel Strudwick.

14. Detail of funerary equipment from TT85. From MMA photo T2601. Photograph by Harry Burton, Archives of the Department of Egyptian Art, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



15. Remains of scene of funerary equipment in TT99. © Anthony Middleton.

16. Wall in TT139 with Opening of the Mouth scene in the second register from bottom. © Nigel Strudwick.



17. Wooden model ox leg, object 99.98.0608-9. Drawing by Helen Strudwick.
18. Wooden finger, object 99.98.0648. Drawing by Helen Strudwick.
19. Wooden object, possibly chisel handle, object 99.98.0640. Drawing by Helen Strudwick.
20. Part of wooden censer, object 99.98.0650. Drawing by Helen Strudwick.



21. Two sides of a reconstructed ostrakon bearing Opening of the Mouth episodes from TT99. © Nigel Strudwick.
22. Box fragments with offering formula from TT99. © Anthony Middleton.