

Save Ancient Studies Alliance

Summer 2023 Texts-in-Translation Reading Group

Tomb Robberies in Ancient Egypt: Prevention, Persecution, and Punishment

The Theban western desert is clustered with hundreds of individual's and kings' tombs. Among them is the famous tomb of Tutankhamun, which has been one of only two known unrobed kings' tombs of Ancient Egypt – the other being the tomb of Psusennes I. However, whereas the tombs in the Kings' Valley astonish the modern visitor with splendid preserved wall decorations and astonishing architectural structures, other kings' tombs are so badly preserved that their owner's identification is not inherently clear. Most of these tombs are located in the necropolis at Dra Abu el-Naga, which is being investigated by German, Egyptian, Italian, and Spanish missions.

During the end of the New Kingdom, a systematic robbery of kings' and privates' tombs has occurred. This is well documented in a series of juridical documents that have been partly preserved. They do not only reveal that the very people to build and protect these tombs have turned into their main plunderers. They also offer a rare status report on the tomb's status in this specific moment of time. Due to the immanent writing process of notes during the monitoring of the tombs' status, it is furthermore possible to identify some kings' tombs that have no names preserved.

This Reading Group aims to explore tomb robberies in the Theban Area with a special focus on the New Kingdom, committed by both common people and the political elite in Ancient Egypt. The case of Dra Abu el-Naga will furthermore allow to bring textual and archaeological sources together and shed light on their owners.

Participants will get an insight into a special case within Egyptology, which allows to draw from both textual and archaeological sources. They will dig into the tomb robbery business during the late New Kingdom and investigate the questions "Who? Where? Why? How?". Doing so, they will puzzle together the remaining evidence and follow the investigators' path along the tombs of the kings at Thebes.

This examination will allow to shed some light on the general functioning of the Theban landscape, the funerary practices at the beginning of the New Kingdom, and the juridical system

concerning tomb robberies around the time of the Late New Kingdom (i.e. XXth Dynasty). Through the possibility of discussions and freely shared opinions – any questions are welcome – the participants will receive an Egyptological perspective on this particular time and will be offered a methodological insight into archaeological and philological work.

Your SASA Educational Ambassador:

My name is Julian Posch and I am a PhD-candidate of Egyptology at the University of Vienna. I mainly focus on historical chronology (first intermediate period – second intermediate period), ostraca as well as royal family.

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[Session Recordings Playlist - Youtube \(Private\)](#)

[Reading Group Folder Link](#)

Week 1 (The Theban Landscape and Tomb Robbery)

What to expect/discuss:

- Short introduction to the overall topic
 - How to protect your tomb from robbery?
- What does one expect when talking about robbery in ancient Egypt?
- What types of texts do we have? What may they tell us about its perception in Ancient Egypt?

Readings (pdf's will be uploaded at least one week before the reading group takes place):

- File: [Different Curses Tomb-Robbery](#) (excerpts from S.L. Colledge 2015. The Process of Cursing in Ancient Egypt)
 - (A02 in File): Tomb of Ankhtifi – First Intermediate Period at Mo'alla
 - (A07 in File): Tomb of Hetepherakhty – Fifth Dynasty at Saqqara
 - (A08 in File): Tomb of Inti – Sixth Dynasty at Deshasha

- (A10 in File): Tomb of Khuiwer – Fifth Dynasty at Giza
- File: Stela KairoJE85647 translation (excerpt from S.L. Colledge 2015. The Process of Cursing in Ancient Egypt)
 - Kairo JE 85647

Additional links:

<http://thebanmappingproject.com/>

Week 2 (The Tomb Robbery Papyri)

What to expect/discuss:

- We will unfold the timeline of events concerning the tomb robberies during the late New Kingdom
- Where did this set of papyri come from?
- What makes them so unique?
- What juridical information can we draw from them?

Readings[s1] :

- File: Tomb robbery papyri
 - pBM 10221, pAmherst and pLeopold II, pBM 10054, pBM 10053 recto, pBM 10068 as well as parts of the necropolis book

Week 3 (Papyrus Abbott and the Theban Necropolis of Dra Abu el-Naga / Discussion)

What to expect/discuss:

- Can we bring archaeology and inscriptions together?
- Where have the described robberies taken place?
- Who were the robbers?
- Benefits from robbery

Readings:

- File: Abbott (excerpts from Peet 1930. The Great Tomb Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty)
 - pBM 10221
 - File: RamessesVI
 - pMayer B
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