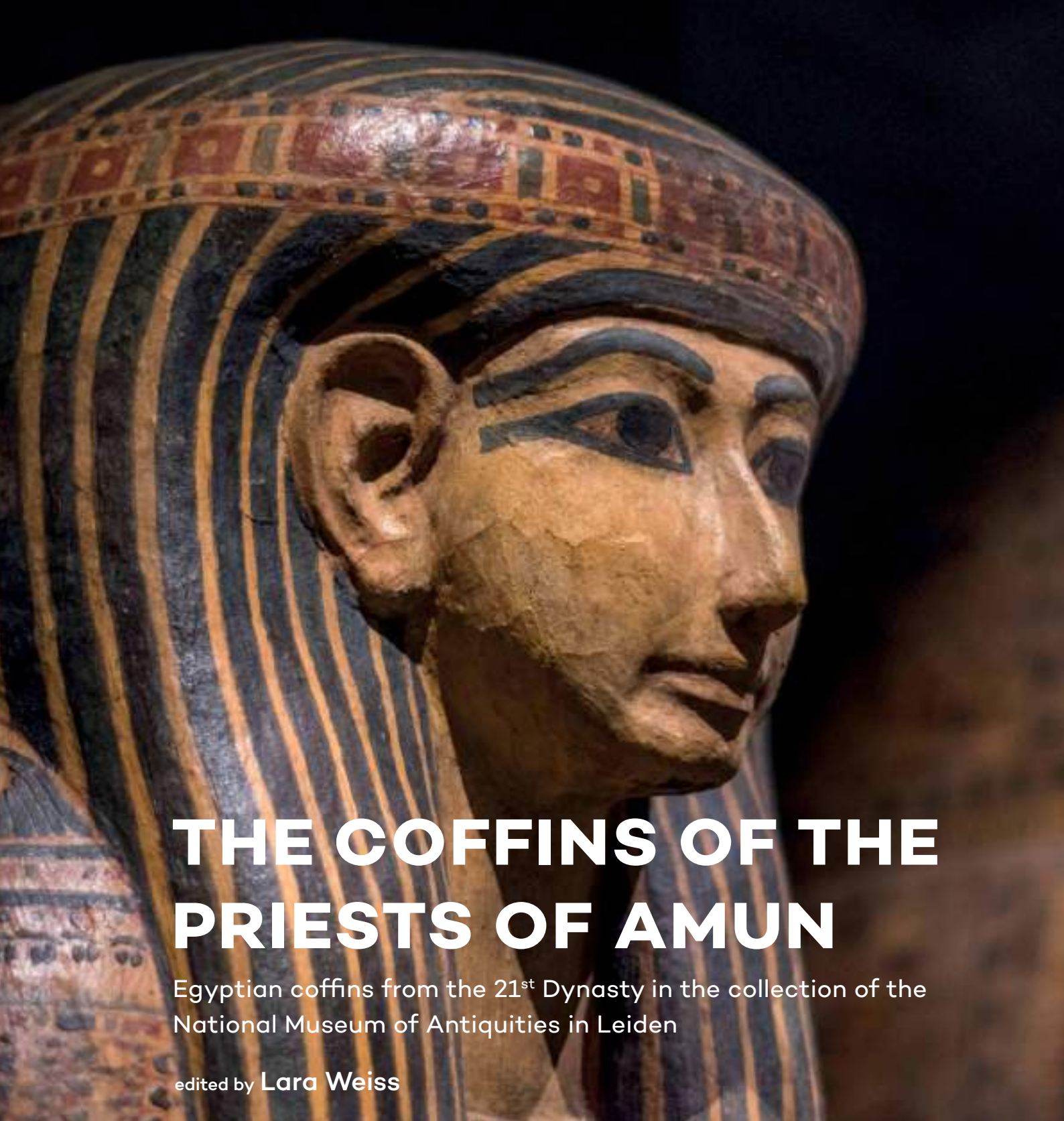




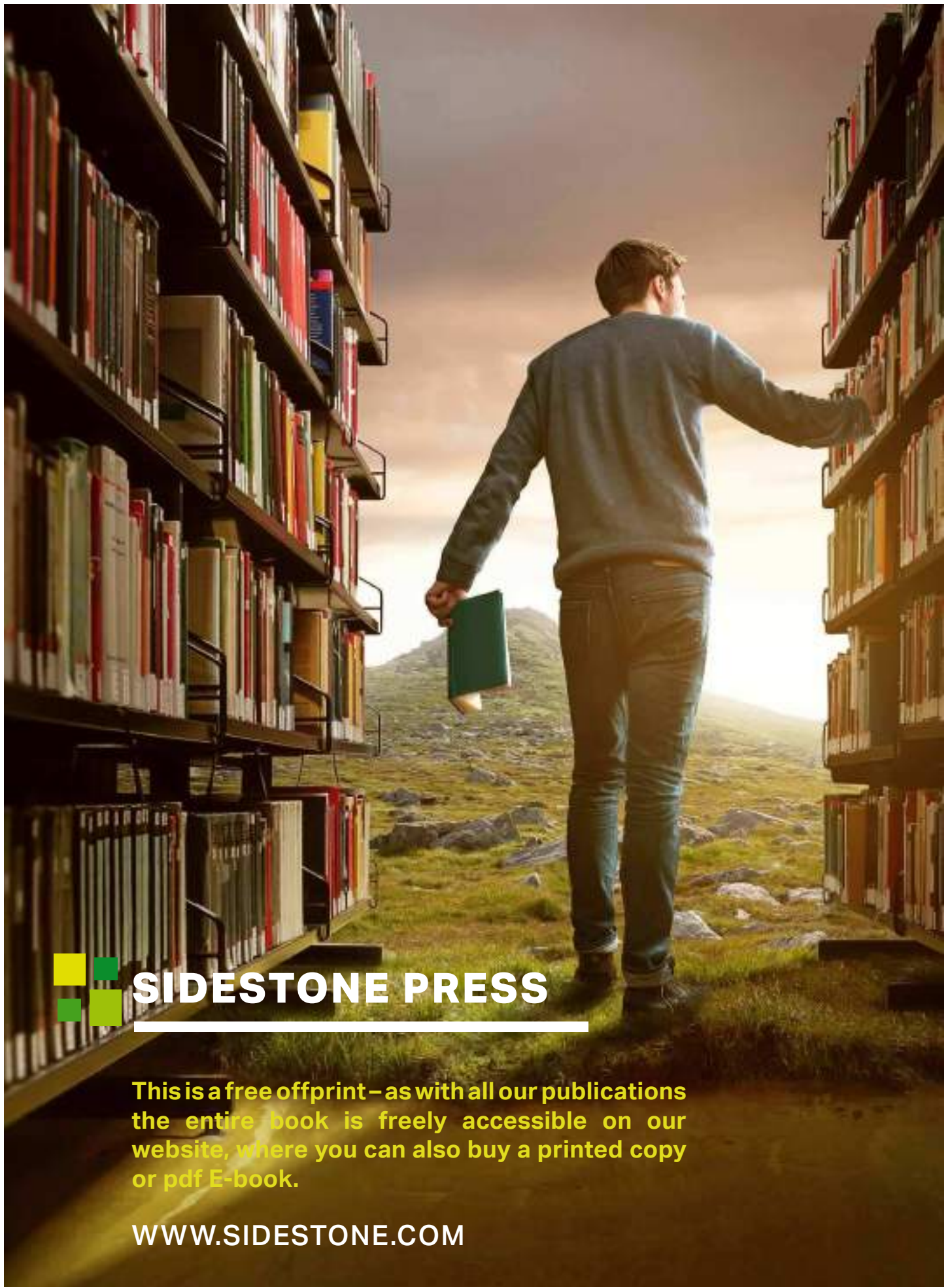
THE COFFINS OF THE PRIESTS OF AMUN

Egyptian coffins from the 21st Dynasty in the collection of the
National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden

edited by **Lara Weiss**

Source reference:

Weiss, L., (ed) 2017: *The Coffins of the Priests of Amun. Egyptian coffins from the 21st Dynasty in the collection of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden*, Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities 17, Leiden (Sidestone Press).



SIDESTONE PRESS

This is a free offprint – as with all our publications the entire book is freely accessible on our website, where you can also buy a printed copy or pdf E-book.

WWW.SIDESTONE.COM

THE COFFINS OF THE PRIESTS OF AMUN

Egyptian coffins from the 21st Dynasty in the collection
of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden

edited by
Lara Weiss

© 2018 Rijksmuseum van Oudheden; The individual authors

PALMA: Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities (volume 17)

Published by Sidestone Press, Leiden
www.sidestone.com

Imprint: Sidestone Press

Lay-out & cover design: Sidestone Press

Photograph cover:

Anonymous coffin, Thebes, *Bab el-Gasus*, 22^e Dynasty (?)
(ca. 950-900 BCE), in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities,
photo: Karsten Wentink

ISBN 978-90-8890-492-9 (softcover)

ISBN 978-90-8890-493-6 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-90-8890-494-3 (PDF e-book)

ISSN 2034-550X



Contents

Preface	7
<i>Lara Weiss</i>	
1 The Vatican Coffin Project	9
<i>Alessia Amenta, Christian Greco, Ulderico Santamaria, and Lara Weiss</i>	
2 The 21st Dynasty: The Theocracy of Amun, and the Position of the Theban Priestly Families	13
<i>Gerard P.F. Broekman</i>	
3 The Tomb of the Priests of Amun at Thebes: The History of the Find	21
<i>Rogério Sousa</i>	
4 The Coffins in Leiden	35
<i>Liliane Mann, Christian Greco, and Lara Weiss</i>	
5 Painting Techniques of the Leiden Coffins	49
<i>Elsbeth Geldhof</i>	
6 Coffin Reuse in the 21st Dynasty: A Case Study of the Coffins in the <i>Rijksmuseum van Oudheden</i>	69
<i>Kathlyn M. Cooney</i>	
Bibliography	97



The Tomb of the Priests of Amun at Thebes: The History of the Find

Rogério Sousa

3.1 Introduction

Bab el-Gasus, also known as the Tomb of the Priests of Amun, is located outside the north-eastern corner of the Hatshepsut temple-precinct. This site, the largest undisturbed tomb ever found in Egypt, was discovered in 1891, just ten years after the ‘Royal Cache’ (1881). Given this association, the site came to be known in Egyptology literature by several designations, such as ‘*Deuxieme Trouvaille de Deir el-Bahari*’ or even the ‘Cache of the Priests’. These names had been translated by the local workmen into the Arabic dialect used in Gurnah and may have resulted in the designation of the tomb as Bab el-Gaswasa, meaning the ‘Gate of the Priests’, later wrongly interpreted by archaeologists as *Bab el-Gasus* or *Bab el-Gusus*, both corrupted versions of the original expression.⁵² For the sake of commodity we will keep using in this text the expression *Bab el-Gasus*, the commonly accepted designation of the tomb.

The site was first spotted by Mohammed Ahmed Abd el-Rassul.⁵³ In January 1891 Eugène Grébaut was the head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, replacing Gaston Maspero, who had returned to France shortly before, in 1886. At that time, when Grébaut was involved in the clearance of the uppermost part of the Hatshepsut temple in Deir el-Bahari, Rassul revealed to him his suspicions about the existence of a previously unnoticed tomb in the area next to the first courtyard of Hatshepsut’s temple.⁵⁴

Following his advice Grébaut started to clear the area and it soon became evident that Rassul’s instinct had proved correct. The reason that the tomb was not discovered earlier lies in its efficient blocking system. The entrance to the tomb had been sealed with a multi-layered system of large stones protruding from the surface and concealing an asymmetrically arranged pavement of limestone slabs. Under these slabs a thick layer of mud bricks covered yet another stone pavement sealing the top of the shaft, which was

52 We owe this information to our colleague, Dr. Eltayeb Abbas, who inquired the inhabitants of the village concerning the local toponymy of the site. We arrived to the same conclusion during our field season in 2009.

53 This famous villager from Gurnah also revealed the existence of the so-called ‘Royal Cache’ in 1881 (TT 320). In G. Daressy, ‘Les sépultures des prêtres d’Ammon à Deir el-Bahari’, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte* 1 (1900), p. 142.

54 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte* 1, p. 142.

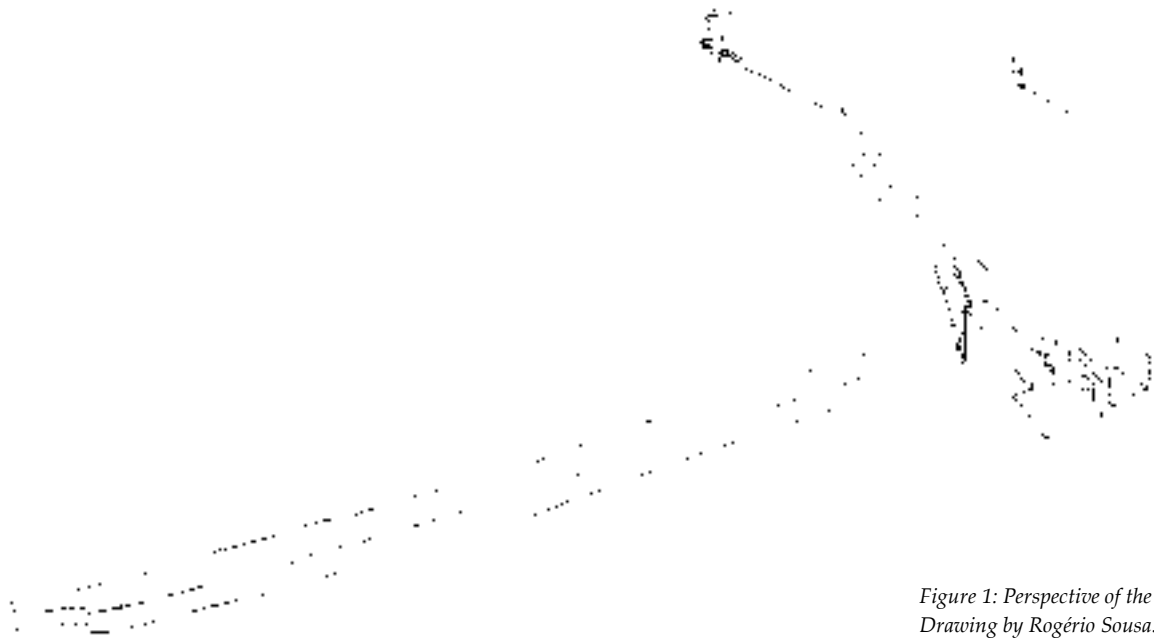


Figure 1: Perspective of the tomb.
Drawing by Rogério Sousa.

filled with rock debris to a depth of about eight meters. At this level, a small side-chamber was found, carved into the northern wall. The entrance to this room was blocked with tree branches, chunks of stone and pieces of broken coffins.⁵⁵

Below this chamber, a false pavement consisting of reed mats and tree trunks concealed the way down to the bottom of the shaft, located eleven meters below the surface and filled with large stones and sand. Here, the excavators found a doorway in the southern wall sealed with mud bricks.⁵⁶

At this stage, Grébaut called his younger colleague Georges Daressy, who was then working at the Luxor Temple, to assist him in exploring the tomb. The involvement of Georges Daressy, a diligent and meticulous scholar, in this process was quite providential since his records, later published in the *Annales du Service des Antiquités d'Égypte*,⁵⁷ remained the only available source for the original composition of the find.

3.2 The Opening of the Tomb

The impressions recorded by Daressy provide a vivid account of his exploration of the tomb. The doorway was opened on 4 February 1891. It revealed a long undecorated corridor hewn out of the rock, 1.70 to 1.90 meters wide, and of a similar height (Fig. 1). It was immediately clear that this was a collective burial ground holding a vast number of individuals. The corridor was filled with scores of anthropoid coffins, most heading south. When Daressy entered the tomb, the heat was stifling but – he states – “it did not smell bad”.⁵⁸ The style of decoration on the coffins suggested that this tomb dated from the end of the 21st Dynasty (1069-945 BCE). The tomb had provided excellent conditions for the preservation of the burial sets for almost 3000 years and the objects were

⁵⁵ Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 142.

⁵⁶ Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 142. We have seen (chapter 2) that the 21st Dynasty was a period that witnessed frequent tomb robberies and the Priests of Amun took great – and indeed successful – measures to save their burials from disturbances.

⁵⁷ Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, pp. 141-148.

⁵⁸ Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 142.



Figure 2: View of the main corridor with the burial chambers on the background. Photograph by the Egyptian expedition, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1924. Copyright: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

in perfect condition.⁵⁹ Each mummy was buried within a coffin set normally composed of an outer coffin which held within an inner coffin and a mummycover, besides a variable number of other small funerary artefacts. The coffin sets have been arranged against the walls, usually in pairs, with one coffin set over the other, leaving a space in between for easy access to the innermost areas of the tomb. However, next to the entrance, barriers were formed by putting three sets of coffins side by side and three others on top of them.⁶⁰ Four barriers of this kind were created in this way shortly before the definitive sealing of the tomb, which suggests that the coffins themselves were used as part of the tomb's blocking system. Between the coffin sets, in no apparent order, there were wooden Osiris statues, vessels and canopic jars. The floor was littered with the remains of floral garlands and fruit,

broken *shabtis* and fragments of coffins. *Shabti*-boxes with one or two compartments were located randomly in the galleries, sometimes far from the original burial assemblage. Some collections of *shabtis* were found in baskets, while others had simply been left on the floor.⁶¹

The main corridor was 93 meters long and led south, where two adjoining square chambers of roughly equal size were found. Along this gallery, seven niches were cut into the east wall for lamps. These niches were carved at 1.50 m intervals from the floor and still presented vestiges of white wax which had melted and run down the wall.

At a short distance from the end chambers (76.2 meters from the entrance) Daressy found a second, nearly perpendicular passage. It was carved at a lower level, two meters below the floor of the main gallery and was nearly 52.4 meters long and 1.50 meters wide. Four niches were cut into the north wall of this gallery for lamps. This transversal gallery was left unfinished but it is possible that a burial chamber might have been planned for this corridor.⁶²

However, reaching the transversal gallery was not exempt from dangers. On approaching the southern funerary chambers, Daressy found a stairway which abruptly narrowed to half its width, creating a deep shaft on the right-hand side (Fig. 2). Next to the rear wall the stairway veers west leaving a single square slab at the turning point.

It was clear that this unusual stairway was designed to elude potential intruders and keep the burial chambers out of sight, thus forming a sophisticated defensive system.⁶³ Because of that, the large number of burials found in the two funerary chambers necessarily had to be moved up using ladders and ropes.

Despite the care involved in increasing the security of the tomb, Daressy noticed intriguing clues suggesting that a methodical plunder of the burials took place even before its definitive sealing. While removing the coffin sets from the tomb, Daressy and his team opened the burial assemblages and pulled up separately the outer coffins and the inner coffins. While doing so he remarked that the exterior coffins of the double sets were often found unlocked, whereas the inner coffins remained sealed. Such pattern resulted from the method used by the Egyptian priests themselves: they had opened up the burial sets and lowered the inner and outer coffins down separately. Perhaps deliberately, when they placed the burial sets in their final location in the tomb the ancient undertakers

59 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 145. However, when the ancient sealed site was opened, the fresh air caused the gesso covering of many of the coffins to crack, a phenomenon caused by sudden atmospheric changes.

60 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 143.

61 Sometimes several types of *shabtis* were found in the same container, but in other cases it was not possible to match the name on the objects to their original burial assemblage. See Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 8, p. 12.

62 Niwiński, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 70, p. 74.

63 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 142.



Figure 3: Coffin set of Hory (A.143), at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 29619). Photo: Rogério Sousa.



Figure 4: Outer coffin of Hory (detail of the head-board and upper section). Photo: Rogério Sousa.



Figure 5: Third coffin of Hory (detail of the head-board and upper section). Photo: Rogério Sousa.

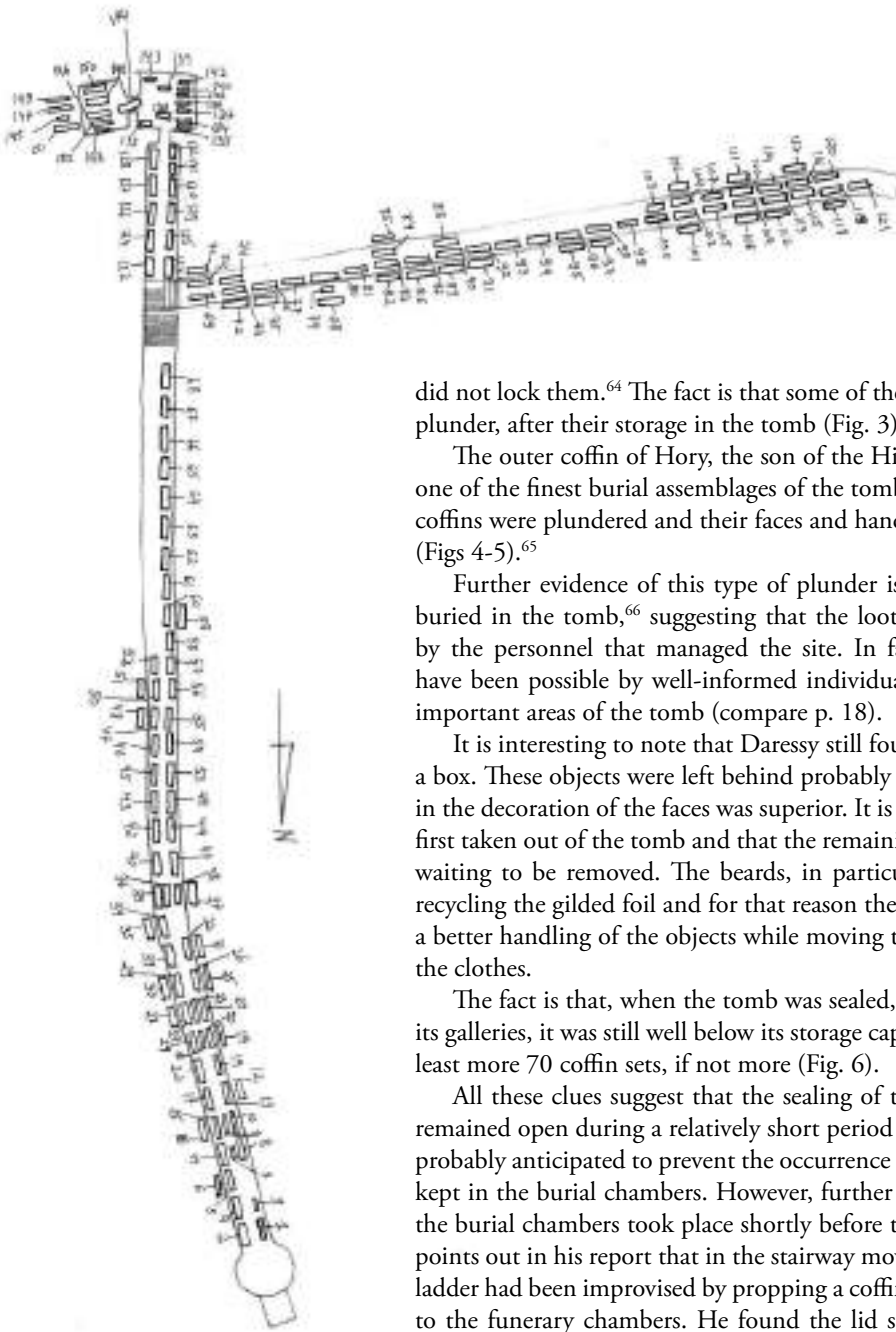


Figure 6: Plan of the tomb with the original position of the burial sets. Drawing by the author after Niwiński, 21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes, table 1. The present drawing includes the original burial chamber located in the shaft and the reviewed position of the burials, according to the notes published by Daressy (Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, pp. 147-148).

did not lock them.⁶⁴ The fact is that some of the coffin sets reveal intriguing traces of plunder, after their storage in the tomb (Fig. 3).

The outer coffin of Hory, the son of the High Priest Menkheperre and owner of one of the finest burial assemblages of the tomb, was left undisturbed, but the inner coffins were plundered and their faces and hands were ripped off to remove the gold (Figs 4-5).⁶⁵

Further evidence of this type of plunder is found in the most splendid coffins buried in the tomb,⁶⁶ suggesting that the looting of *Bab el-Gasus*, was carried out by the personnel that managed the site. In fact, the selective looting could only have been possible by well-informed individuals that had plain access to the most important areas of the tomb (compare p. 18).

It is interesting to note that Daressy still found fragments of beards and hands in a box. These objects were left behind probably because the amount of gold involved in the decoration of the faces was superior. It is thus possible that the faces have been first taken out of the tomb and that the remaining objects were kept in a safe deposit waiting to be removed. The beards, in particular, were almost useless in terms of recycling the gilded foil and for that reason they were reaped off the faces to provide a better handling of the objects while moving them outside, probably hidden under the clothes.

The fact is that, when the tomb was sealed, with its 153 coffin sets buried inside its galleries, it was still well below its storage capacity, which could have easily held at least more 70 coffin sets, if not more (Fig. 6).

All these clues suggest that the sealing of the tomb was unexpected and that it remained open during a relatively short period of time. The closure of the tomb was probably anticipated to prevent the occurrence of further damage to the main burials kept in the burial chambers. However, further evidence suggests that a 'last visit' to the burial chambers took place shortly before the final closure of the tomb. Daressy points out in his report that in the stairway moving down to the transversal gallery, a ladder had been improvised by propping a coffin lid against the wall to provide access to the funerary chambers. He found the lid still in position, with the foot-board, hands and face scratched from having served as a stairway.⁶⁷ This piece of evidence once again suggests that not only the sealing of the tomb was unexpected as the personnel involved in the storage of the coffins inside the tomb somehow 'mapped' the potential resources provided by the burials and carried out a selective plunder.

64 G. Daressy, 'Contribution à l'étude de la XXI Dynastie Égyptienne', *Revue Archéologique*, 3 (1896), p. 73.

65 Unlike most of the coffins sets dating from this period, the burial assemblage of Hory (A.143) included three coffins. The information provided by Daressy is surprisingly scarce about this coffin set and its equipment. See Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 8, pp. 36-37.

66 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 143. These coffins used gilded foil with symbolic purposes, especially in the decoration of the face and hands, where it suggested the association of the deceased with the immortal light of the sun god.

67 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 142.



Figure 7: The removal of the coffins from Bab el-Gasus. Illustration by Émile Bayard published on the cover of the n° 2510 of *L'Illustration* on 4 April 1891 (with thanks to Dik van Bommel). Eugène Grébaut is depicted below the tent leaning against the balustrade. Georges Daressy is recording the objects.

The definitive proof of this methodical activity was eventually given by the mummies themselves. When, later on, Daressy and his assistants examined the mummies, it became obvious that a selective looting had affected the most important mummies⁶⁸ before the final sealing of the tomb.

3.3 The Removal of the Coffins and Burial Equipment from the Tomb

On 5 February 1891 the archaeologists started to clear the tomb by removing the funerary goods outside. This process was performed in two steps. Inside the galleries, Daressy numbered the coffin sets with labels glued to the headboard (the numbers form

⁶⁸ A.130, A.132 and A.143.



Figure 8: Procession of bearers carrying the coffins towards the steamer. Illustration by Émile Bayard published on the n° 2510 of *L'Illustration* on 4 April 1891 (with thanks to Dik van Bommel).

the later A-list⁶⁹) according to the position they occupied in the tomb, beginning with the ones closest to the entrance.

Outside, a gang of workmen lifted the finds up from the shaft, under the supervision of Eugène Grébaut and Urbain Bouriant, the Director of the *Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* (Fig. 7). When receiving the objects, Bouriant assigned a serial number to each one (the later B-list⁷⁰). The clearance of the tomb took only nine days (from 5 to 13 February 1891).

In a third step, the objects were loaded onto a Giza Museum steamer anchored on the banks of the Nile. Twice a day, a procession of bearers carried the finds across the flood plain, to be loaded onto the steamer. Émile Bayard, a French traveller visiting the site – and the only outsider allowed to enter the tomb⁷¹ – witnessed the impressive cortege of 200 men carrying 30 lavishly decorated coffins (Fig. 8).

Clad in their traditional garments or naked, these men sang to accompany their steps as they journeyed all the way down to the Nile,⁷² forming – in his words – an “unforgettable vision.”⁷³ With part of the objects kept in the steamer and the other remaining in the tomb, Grébaut had to assure the protection of both. He thus employed armed guards as well as the crew of the steamer to assure the safety of the find. Daressy himself took

69 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 8, p. 3.

70 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 8, p. 3.

71 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 143.

72 E. Bayard, ‘Les découvertes de Louqsor’, *L'Illustration* 49 (1891), p. 304.

73 Bayard, *L'Illustration* 49, p. 304.

personal care of the security of the tomb and, during this period, he slept in a tent near the entrance to the shaft.⁷⁴

The final list of objects cleared from the tomb and brought on board included:

- 254 coffins (153 coffin sets, 101 of which included two coffins whilst 52 had single coffins)⁷⁵
- 110 *shabti*-boxes
- 77 wooden statuettes of Osiris. Most of them were hollow and contained a papyrus scroll
- 8 wooden stelae
- 2 large wooden statuettes of Isis and Nephthys
- 16 canopic jars
- 1 mat
- 10 baskets of reeds
- 5 round baskets
- 2 fans
- 5 pairs of sandals
- 11 baskets with food (meat, fruits, etc.)
- 6 baskets with floral garlands
- 5 large vases
- 5 pots
- 1 box with wooden hands and divine beards ripped from the coffins

With its precious cargo finally secure on board, the vessel could then set off downriver to Cairo, arriving at the Giza Museum in the beginning of May. Here, the material was registered in the *Journal d'Entrée*, creating a third serial list of numbers (i.e. the JE-numbers).⁷⁶

3.4 Unwrapping of the *Bab el-Gasus* Mummies

The mummies brought from *Bab el-Gasus* were unwrapped in two stages. Most of the mummies were unwrapped between 1891 and 1892,⁷⁷ in the premises of the Giza Museum, but this process would only be completed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, from 1903 on. During this period, the methods used in the examination of the mummies evolved considerably and the records published by Daressy and his assistants witness to this transformation, beginning with the unwrapping process focused on the inventory of objects found within each mummy. By the turn of the 20th century, this process involved a considerable greater attention to the study of the medical aspects involving the corpses.

74 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 1, p. 144.

75 The number of mummycovers was not estimated by Daressy and its exact number is still uncertain but at least 60 mummycovers have been identified until now.

76 Once in the Museum, the objects would receive a fourth serial number, the *Catalogue Général* numbers.

77 Daressy, *Révue Archéologique* 3, p. 73.

3.4.1 The Early Years 1891-1892: Unwrappings at the Giza Museum

Almost immediately after the arrival of the find, Daniel M. Fouquet – a French physician who had first examined the TT 320 royal mummies – began to unwrap the human remains, under Daressy's supervision.⁷⁸

Taking place in the magnificent premises of the Giza Museum – namely at the monumental northern balcony – the examination of the mummies became an important social event attended by prestigious visitors⁷⁹ and archaeologists, including Maspero, Grébaut and Émile Brugsch (former assistant curator at the Bulak Museum) (Figs 9 and 10).

A vast number of objects were cleared from the mummy wrappings, thus extending considerably the collection of antiquities found in *Bab el-Gasus*. The report published by Daressy in 1907 provides a vast list of objects found during the examination of the mummies, which is still the most valuable tool for understanding the original composition of the burial assemblages. Daressy and Fouquet started their examination by opening the coffins, where they sometimes found a variety of objects, including sandals⁸⁰ and shoes,⁸¹ garments,⁸² cloths, and wigs.⁸³ Also in this context, Daressy found a whip⁸⁴ and a box containing magical objects.⁸⁵

The mummies were usually wrapped in a shroud decorated with a large sketch depicting Osiris and bearing the name and titles of the deceased, or even a reference to the High Priest or the king under whose orders the mummification had been executed or restored. The mummy braces, either found bend over the mummy itself or on its outer wrappings, are also precious sources for this kind of historical information. Nearly 50 mummies provided this type of historical reference. High Priest Pinedjem II is the most frequently quoted (23 mummies), followed by Menkheperre (11 mummies) and Psusennes (10

78 See Daressy, *Révue Archéologique* 3, pp. 72-73.

79 On the occasion of the examination of the mummy from A.91, on 14 February 1902 Daressy reports several prestigious visitors, including Mr. and Mrs. Keatinge, Sir Frederick Treves and Lady Treves, Major Ratcliffe, Mr. Ruffer and M. E. Naville (G. Daressy, 'Procès verbal d'ouverture de la momie n° 29707', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 3 (1902), p. 151). Later, in the premises of the Cairo Egyptian Museum, Sir Eldon Gorst and Miss Gorst, S.E. Pinching, Professor Keatinge and his wife, Professor Elliot Smith and his wife, Dr. Fouquet and his wife, M.P. Lacau, Madame Kramer and her daughter were present at the examination which took place on 12 May 1903 (G. Daressy, 'Ouverture des momies provenant de la Seconde Trouvaille de Deir el-Bahari', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 4 (1903), p. 150).

80 A.50, A.72, A.127, A.129.

81 A.66, A.72, A.83.

82 A.72.

83 A.72, A.17, A.116.

84 A.24.

85 A.83, A.127.



Figure 9: Examination of a Mummy of the Priestess of Ammon (1891). Oil on canvas, by Paul Dominique Philippoteaux. Photo credit: Peter Nahum at The Leicester Gallery, London. Fouquet is depicted at the centre, with Grébaud at his right and Daressy on his left, taking notes. Other Egyptologists witness to the examination: Brugsch, Bazil, Barois and Bouriant.

mummies). The Tanite kings Siamon and Psusennes II were both mentioned only once.⁸⁶ This finding demonstrates once again the relative political independence of the High Priests at Thebes, following their own genealogy rather than that of the kings from Tanis. 46 coffins contained a papyrus scroll with funerary texts. These were usually placed between the legs of the mummy and sometimes on the chest,⁸⁷ around the abdomen,⁸⁸ or legs.⁸⁹ One coffin revealed three papyri, an exceptional find.⁹⁰ The amulets found in the mummies varied considerably. In the simplest burials, the mummy was merely equipped with a wax tablet decorated with the *udjat*-eye⁹¹ and the



Figure 10: Examination of a mummy by Fouquet. Grébaud is standing at his left and Daressy figures on the top of the table, taking notes.

86 See R. Sousa, 'O Portal dos Sacerdotes: Uma leitura compreensiva do espólio de Bab el-Gassus', *Cadmo* 21 (2011), p. 85.

87 A.81, A.98, A.127.

88 A.113, A.127, A.150.

89 A.152.

90 A.127.

91 *Udjat*-plaques were found in nearly 45 mummies. See Sousa, *Cadmo* 21, p. 85.



Figure 11: Showcase with a sample of unwrapped mummies from Bab el-Gasus at the Giza Museum (Room 85/86).

heart scarab.⁹² Other items were included in more luxuriously equipped burials, such as the heart amulet,⁹³ a falcon-shaped pectoral (usually in gilded bronze or copper),⁹⁴ sacred cobras,⁹⁵ golden necklaces, gilded pectorals,⁹⁶ bracelets,⁹⁷ golden rings,⁹⁸ and earrings.⁹⁹ Small collections of amulets were sometimes found on the throat.¹⁰⁰

At least 18 mummies were equipped with wax figurines depicting the four Sons of Horus. Sometimes the researchers also found *shabtis* inside the mummy.¹⁰¹

92 Heart scarabs were found in nearly 43 mummies. See Sousa, *Cadmo* 21, p. 85.

93 Heart amulets were found in at least nine mummies. Sousa, *Cadmo* 21, p. 85.

94 This type of pectoral was found in 19 mummies. Sousa, *Cadmo* 21, p. 85.

95 Three occurrences were reported, normally on the forehead (A.85, A.98, A.127 e A.151).

96 Two occurrences were reported (A.50, A.139), one with golden beads (A.50) and the other composed of small amulets (A.139).

97 Three occurrences were reported (A.50, A.133, A.139).

98 A.50, A.83.

99 A.50.

100 A.65, A.84, A.125.

101 In A.32. See E. Smith, 'An account of the mummy of a priestess of Amen supposed to be Ta-user-t-em-suten-pa', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 7 (1906), pp. 155-160.

In addition, a large number of floral garlands were recorded by Daressy¹⁰² and most interestingly bulbs under the feet and hands.¹⁰³ He also reported the use of mud sprinkled with seeds,¹⁰⁴ possibly resulting from a regeneration ritual comparable to the concept of corn mummies, and wax, as a sealing mainly of the eye-lids.¹⁰⁵

On the mummies themselves, Daressy supplies little information (Fig. 11). We know from his registers that many of them were reduced to a skeleton.¹⁰⁶ According to his records, elderly people were rare in the community buried in *Bab el-Gasus*. Only one old woman is explicitly referred to in his report,¹⁰⁷ as well as a hunchback man.¹⁰⁸

Among the mummies found in *Bab el-Gasus*, many of them revealed a premature death, usually before the age of twenty,¹⁰⁹ some even as children.¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note the occurrence of a dual burial of a woman and her child (A.83), which is an exceptional occurrence in the Egyptian archaeology, where the autonomy of the burials is strictly observed, with the corpses kept in separate coffins.

3.4.2 After 1903 – Unwrappings at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo

A report dating from 1902 makes clear that the examination of the mummies was still in progress in the Giza Museum.¹¹¹ However, after the first examination in Giza, the mummies were now sent to the Medical School in Cairo¹¹² to complete the process. By 1903, the examination of the mummies carried out by Daressy and G. Elliot Smith was already taking place in the new premises of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.¹¹³ The increasing input of medical knowledge is clear from these reports.¹¹⁴ The examination of the mummies produced by Elliot Smith is much more detailed in terms of the mummification procedures and anatomical considerations.¹¹⁵ Thanks to him,

we now know that

*“there is no uniformity in the treatment of the viscera nor in the placing of the organs or the wax figures. Sometimes the organs are wrapped up; in other cases they are uncovered; in some cases the intestines are rolled together in one mass, in other cases they are cut into long straight pieces the ends of which are tied with string; each organ may be placed in any situation: the wax or pottery figures may be with the viscera or may be placed apart; and finally the figures are not associated with the same viscera in different mummies.”*¹¹⁶

The picture provided by the examination of the mummies reveals that the community of individuals buried in *Bab el-Gasus*, the elite of the Theban society of this period, was very heterogeneous, including both humble and luxury burials, most of them youngsters. Unfortunately, the location of these mummies is now lost. The massive removal of antiquities from the Giza Palace to the Egyptian Museum at Kasr el-Nil played another part in the increasing uncertainty surrounding the current location of the mummies. Recent research carried out by Salima Ikram has located a large amount of human remains in the storerooms of the Egyptian Museum, most of them reduced to bones and packed together, which are likely to belong to the mummies found in *Bab el-Gasus*. A few unwrapped mummies have also been located.

It is also quite possible that a good number of the currently unallocated artefacts were sold by the authorities during the period from 1904 to 1909 and it is likely that some of them are yet to be discovered in private and museum collections. The mummy and case in the Albany Institute of History and Art is one example of this, having arrived from Egypt in 1909.¹¹⁷

All in all, the report published in 1907 by Daressy contains the results of the examination of 93 coffin sets. However, Daressy does not provide any explanation of why the findings in the missing 60 burial assemblages were never reported.

Moreover, Daressy's notes include discreet yet disturbing mention of the conditions surrounding the unwrapping of the mummies. When listing the results of the examination of the mummy of Hory (A.143), he states that *“le démaillotement n'a pas été terminé”*, without referring to the reasons for such an unexpected and awkward occurrence.¹¹⁸ Apparently, the archaeologist's work was conditioned by the interference of the authorities and

102 A.66, A.72, A.77, A.116, A.127, A.134, A.148, A.151.

103 A.82, A.120, A.151, A.127.

104 A.129.

105 A.133.

106 A.6, A.25.

107 A.133.

108 A.35.

109 A.20, A.50, A.127.

110 A.3, A.7, A.129, A.145, A.153.

111 The mummy under examination belonged to the coffin set A.91 but by that time the coffins had already been expedited to Berlin (Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 3, p. 151).

112 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 3, p. 153. This procedure might explain the current difficulty in discovering the location of most of the mummies.

113 E. Smith, 'Report on the four mummies', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 4 (1903), pp. 156-160.

114 Smith, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 7, pp. 156-182.

115 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 4, pp. 150-155; Smith, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 7, pp. 155-182.

116 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 4, pp. 159-160.

117 Case of Ankhefenmut (Albany Institute of History & Art, Gift of Samuel W. Brown, 1909.18.1b). See P. Lacovara and S. D'Auria, *The Mystery of the Albany Mummies*, Albany 2016.

118 Daressy, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 8, pp. 36-37.

this factor perhaps explains not only the disappearance of some objects as the confusing management of the data concerning this find.¹¹⁹

3.5 The Dispersal of the Find

In 1892, Jacques de Morgan was appointed Director of the Service of Antiquities, replacing Eugène Grébaut, who was forced to resign following numerous complaints from both political and diplomatic quarters as well as from scholars.¹²⁰ The appointment of De Morgan, an engineer – instead of an Egyptologist – was a political compromise, aiming to keep the French Directorate of the Service of Antiquities under the British occupation of Egypt.¹²¹

At this moment, the diplomatic agenda of the period would play a decisive role in the ultimate fate of the antiquities found in *Bab el-Gasus*, namely during the coronation feast for the Khedive Abbas II Hilmy. The crowded conditions at the Giza Museum – bearing in mind that this wonderful palace now contained 254 newly arrived coffins just one year after its opening in 1890 – was the pretext for offering a portion of this find to the representatives of the diplomatic missions present in Cairo for the festivities.¹²² As a result, a selection of the *Bab el-Gasus* coffins was retained for the Giza Museum and the rest of the objects were divided into groups each containing 4 or 5 coffins, nearly 90 *shabtis* and one or two *shabti*-boxes. The ambassadors then drew lots to determine who would be awarded which group of coffins.¹²³

In the Giza Museum the preparation for shipment of the lots seems to have occurred without a qualified supervision and a number of mistakes occurred. As a result, objects from the same coffin set became separated. In other cases, last minute changes meant that objects that were supposed to stay in Cairo were included in the lots offered to the diplomats, such as the burial assemblage of Djedmutiuesankh (A.110) which, for unknown reasons, was sent to Lisbon instead.

In 1893 these lots were sent to the 17 countries involved in this diplomatic operation, including the Netherlands (see also chapter 4).¹²⁴ During the year 1893, the Foreign Lots reached their destinations. Originally seventeen museums profited from the Khedive's gift, but subsequently the coffins were reallocated. Once more, diplomacy would play an important role in the further dispersal of the collection, with these antiquities being used to reinforce political alliances or display the power of a particular regime. In Scandinavia, for instance, king Oscar II decided to divide Lot XIV between Sweden and Norway, which were still joined in a political union.¹²⁵ Lot VI would be drastically dispersed throughout the vast territory of the URSS.¹²⁶ In the Swiss territory, Lot IX was divided to allow several cantons an equal share of the collection.¹²⁷ The French Lot is also one of the most scattered of the find. Today at least 35 museums are known to house objects from *Bab el-Gasus*.

For more than a century, the dispersed find of *Bab el-Gasus* witnessed the changing political and historical circumstances that affected most of the nations involved in this diplomatic operation. The collapse of the colonial empires, the two World Wars and the Cold War redefined the political map of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. This rapid succession of events played a major part in ensuring that collections lay forgotten, in most cases consigned to storerooms. It would take more than a century before this scattered collection began to be recognised as one of the major achievements of the Egyptian archaeology.

3.6 The Future of the Find

It is fair to acknowledge the tenacious effort by Georges Daressy in the patient documentation of the find under unbelievably difficult circumstances. With all its errors and mistakes, the records published by Daressy not only prevented its complete oblivion as became the fundamental basis for the modern reconstruction of the find. The

119 Another intriguing fact pointed out by Andrzej Niwiński is that three of the most important burial assemblages were never given Catalogue General numbers (see J. Lipinska, 'Bab el-Gasus: Cache-tomb of the priests & priestesses of Amen', *KMT* 4 (1993-1994), pp. 48-60). They were the cases of Hory (A.143), his sister Gatseshen, and an anonymous priestess, the daughter of a high-priest. In the latter case, only the outer lid has been preserved, while the outer coffer and the inner coffer and cover are missing. See Lipinska, *KMT* 4, pp. 48-60.

120 C. Orsenigo, 'Turning Points in Egyptian Archaeology (1850-1950)', in: P. Piacentini (ed.), *Egypt and the Pharaohs: From the Sand to the Library – Pharaonic Egypt in the Archives and Libraries of the Università degli Studi di Milano*, Milan 2010, p. 132.

121 Orsenigo, 'Turning Points', p. 132.

122 Lipinska, *KMT* 4, pp. 48-60.

123 Lipinska, *KMT* 4, pp. 48-60.

124 Lot I (France), Lot II (Austria), Lot III (Turkey), Lot IV (United Kingdom), Lot V (Italy), Lot VI (Russia), Lot VII (Germany), Lot VIII (Portugal), Lot IX (Switzerland), Lot X (USA), Lot XI (Netherlands), Lot XII (Greece), Lot XIII (Spain), Lot XIV (Sweden-Norway), Lot XV (Belgium), Lot XVI (Denmark), Lot XVII (Vatican).

125 A. Bettum, 'Lot XIV from Bab el-Gasus (Sweden and Norway): The modern history of the collection and a reconstruction of the ensembles', in: R. Sousa (ed.), *Body, Cosmos and Eternity: New Research Trends in the Iconography and Symbolism of Ancient Egyptian Coffins*, Oxford 2014, pp. 167-186.

126 M. Tarasenko, 'The Third Intermediate Period coffins in the museums of Ukraine', A. Amenta and H. Guichard (eds), *Proceedings of the First Vatican Coffin Conference*, Rome 2017, pp. 529-540.

127 A. Küffer and R. Siegman, *Unter dem Schutz der Himmelsgöttin: Ägyptische Särge, Mumien und Masken in der Schweiz*, Zürich 2007.

systematic study of the extraordinary documental corpus found in *Bab el-Gasus* is revealing outstanding insights into one of the most obscure periods of the Egyptian history. Modern examination of these antiquities reveals that a fair amount of its 153 burials were previously kept in other funerary grounds of the necropolis and were later on taken to *Bab el-Gasus*,¹²⁸ involving, as Kathlyn Cooney has been thoroughly demonstrating, the intensive and unprecedented re-use of funerary goods¹²⁹ (see also chapter 6). The burials of 153 priests and priestesses of Amun found in *Bab el-Gasus* are thus dated from different moments of the 21st Dynasty and provide a transversal coop on the community of the priests of Amun, the Theban elite of this period, which is an exceptional circumstance in the Egyptian archaeology.¹³⁰

Besides the find, the tomb itself has known a similar story of oblivion and neglect. In fact, after the clearance of the Amun priests' tomb was completed in February 1891, the shaft was again filled up with the debris Grébaut had removed and it remained inaccessible until reopened in 1924 by Herbert Winlock of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Winlock subsequently used the empty corridors of the tomb as a magazine for the storage of artifacts found during in the excavations he directed at Deir el-Bahari.¹³¹

Later on the shaft became refilled with debris and it was not until 1969 that the Polish Mission at Deir el-Bahari opened the tomb once more. Ten years later, in 1979, the Egyptian Antiquities Organization granted the Polish Mission permission to use the empty tomb for storing finds being made in the thoroughly ruined Thutmose III temple at Deir el-Bahari.¹³² At that time a plan was made by the architect Rafal Czedner, which is so far the most updated plan of the tomb,¹³³ which remains inaccessible for visitors and researchers.

The undecorated character of the tomb, certainly played a major role in the almost complete neglect of its exceptional features. After all, it was built after a long period of intensive recycling and re-use of funerary structures and it reveals a turning point in the pattern of occupation of the Theban necropolis. Until the pontificate

of the High Priest Pinedjem II (990-969 BCE), the necropolis was used as a network of small caches installed in re-used tombs managed by the priesthood of Amun. With *Bab el-Gasus* a totally different phenomenon emerges: the excavation of a new funerary site designed from the start to be used as a collective burial ground of the priesthood of Amun (see also chapter 2). The historical antecedent of this type of funerary site is to be found in the tomb of the sons of Ramesses II (KV 5),¹³⁴ which literally held the brotherhood of the sons of the king. It is therefore interesting to relate the creation of this new type of burial ground with a new ideological definition of the status and identity of the priests of Amun. As a collective tomb, *Bab el-Gasus* reveals a new understanding of this community as a ritual 'brotherhood' of men and women serving under the theocratic rule of Amun, the 'king of gods'.¹³⁵ More clues of these representations can actually be detected in coffin decoration dating from this period. The stylistic heterogeneity of the coffins reveals the use of sophisticated methods by the Theban workshops aiming to produce complex objects conveying a multi-layered system of messages that encoded representations of status, religious beliefs and ritual knowledge that were nuclear to the collective identity of the priesthood of Amun.¹³⁶ Despite the hazardous circumstances that surrounded this discovery and its subsequent dispersion, *Bab el-Gasus* presents unrivalled opportunities and challenges our global civilization to use scientific and technological resources to overcome the obstacles created by its dispersion. With outstanding documental corpora yet largely to be explored, *Bab el-Gasus* undoubtedly figures as one of the most important landmarks of the Egyptian archaeology.

128 Niwiński, *21st Dynasty Coffins*, p. 26.

129 E.g. K. Cooney, 'Ancient Egyptian funerary arts as social documents: social place, reuse, and working towards a new typology of 21st Dynasty coffins', in: R. Sousa (ed.), *Body, Cosmos and Eternity: New Research Trends in the Iconography and Symbolism of Ancient Egyptian Coffins*, Oxford 2014, pp. 45-66.

130 The burial chambers hold the most important funerary assemblages, those of the members of the families of the high-priests of Amun. The transversal gallery seems to have been used to hold the priests of higher rank while the main gallery seems to have been filled in with visibly humble burials, most of them used as part of the blocking system itself.

131 Lipinska, *KMT* 4, p. 56.

132 Lipinska, *KMT* 4, p. 56.

133 Lipinska, *KMT* 4, pp. 52-53.

134 K. Weeks, *The Lost Tomb: The Greatest Discovery at the Valley of the Kings Since Tutankhamun*, London 1999, pp. 240-241.

135 R. Sousa, 'Spread your wings over me: Iconography, symbolism and meaning of the central panel on yellow coffins', in: R. Sousa (ed.), *Body, Cosmos and Eternity: New Research Trends in the Iconography and Symbolism of Ancient Egyptian Coffins*, Oxford 2014, p. 107.

136 Sousa, 'Spread your wings', p. 107.

