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Words of Thieves

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This study¹ deals with the dossier of juridical documents known collectively as the Late Ramesside Tomb Robbery Papyri. These documents, which date to the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, record the proceedings of the interrogation of those prosecuted for robbing the royal tombs and tombs of high officials in western Thebes. In judicial matters, one might expect a maximal trend towards standardization. When variation occurs, it signals what is exceptional (as opposed to common), personal (as opposed to general), or remarkable (as opposed to banal). To sum up, it marks the unexpected. At first glance, in our corpus, the depositions made by the defendants should be the place of choice for free and multifaceted discourse, while the procedural sentences should favour a formalized and rigid phraseology. This assumption is supported by the evidence only up to a certain point. This paper will show that diversity is found where uniformity is expected, while some kind of uniformity is encountered where variation should be the rule.

§1. INTRODUCTION

The Great Tomb Robbery papyri, as Peet felicitously named them,² have been known to Egyptologists for more than eighty years. Very recently, in the 1990s, a new papyrus, P.Rochester, came to light.³ This papyrus is more loosely related

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² This points to the title of Peet's magistral publication, Peet (1930). To this must be added Peet (1920), as well as Capart, Gardiner, and van de Walle (1936). On P.Ambras, see most recently Salah el-Kholy (2006) and Winand (2011b). In this paper, I shall always refer to the whole dossier under the name Late Ramesside Tomb Robbery Papyri, or by the acronym TR.

³ Goelet (1996), with comment from Quack (2000).

I	P.Abbott	y. 16 of Ramses IX	←
	P.Léopold II-Amherst	y. 16 of Ramses IX	
II	P.BM EA 10054	y. 16 (of Ramses IX)	
III	P.BM EA 10068, r°	y. 17 of Ramses IX	
	v° 2–8	y. 12 (<i>whm msw.t</i>)	←
	v° 1	same as v° 2–8 (?)	
	P.BM EA 10053, r°	y. 17 of Ramses IX	
IV	P.BM EA 10053, v°	y. 9 (R. XI or <i>whm-msw.t</i>)	←
	P.BM EA 10383	y. 2 (<i>whm-msw.t</i>)	
V	P.Rochester	y. 1 of <i>whm-msw.t</i>	←
	Abbott Dockets	y. 1 of <i>whm-msw.t</i>	
	P.BM 10052	y. 1 of <i>whm-msw.t</i>	
	P.Mayer A	y. 1 and 2 of <i>whm-msw.t</i>	
	P.BM EA 10403	y. 2 of <i>whm-msw.t</i>	
VI	P.Mayer B	(Ramses IX?)	
VII	P.Ambras	y. 6 of <i>whm-msw.t</i>	

Fig. 6.1. List of the papyri in chronological order

to the Late Ramesside Theban juridical papyri, which of course form the main part of my corpus, as it is not concerned with the thefts committed on the Theban west bank. The papyrus consists of a list of some goods stolen from the Amun temple of Karnak by a chief doorkeeper named Djehutyhotep. This person is well known from other sources, namely the Tomb Robbery papyri, and acts as a link to the general corpus.

The arrows to the right of Figure 6.1 suggest possible regroupings according to the scribe's hand.⁴ P.Abbott and P.Léopold II-Amherst were reportedly written by the same scribe.⁵ The same is generally said for the two long papyri P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A.⁶ It has also been suggested that P.BM EA 10053 v° and P. BM 10403 share some characteristic features with P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A; however, a conclusive identification of the scribe's hand in these two papyri is still pending.⁷ In the second part of this study, I will discuss the problems raised in identifying the scribes based on palaeography.

⁴ The Roman numbers in the first column correspond to the classes made by Peet.

⁵ See Gardiner (1936, 191).

⁶ See Peet (1920, 135), who already unhesitatingly stated, 'It [i.e. P.BM EA 10052] is written the way up on both sides by the same hand as Mayer A.'

⁷ As Peet wrote (1920, 169), the handwriting of P.BM EA 10403 'is remarkably like that of Pap. 10052 and Mayer A, but differences in the forms of certain crucial signs, and variants in spelling... prevent our ascribing 10403 to the same writer as the other two.'

Table 6.1. Classification of the papyri according to their content

Internal report	P.Abbott
Testimonies of thieves	P.Mayer B P.Léopold II-Amherst PBM EA 10053, r ^o and v ^o PBM EA 10383 PBM EA 10052 PBM EA 10403 P.Mayer A
Intermediary documents	PBM EA 10054 P.Rochester
Lists	PBM EA 10068 Abbott Dockets
Journal of the Necropolis	KRI VI, 590–8
Recapitulative list of documents	P.Ambras ⁸

It has long been recognized that the Tomb Robbery papyri belong to more than one genre. In his presentation of the material, Peet grouped together the documents dealing with the same case, in chronological order. In the list shown in Table 6.1, the documents have been rearranged according to their contents. The bulk of the material consists of the testimonies of thieves. Of course, placing a document in a group is no simple matter, as the content of some papyri may be heterogeneous. The list should thus be considered a rough classification.

Recently, the corpus of the Tomb Robbery papyri has been extensively used in fixing the chronology and the history of the transition from the Twentieth to the Twenty-first Dynasty.⁹ The questions I would like to address in this study are directly related to those individuals who wrote the Tomb Robbery papyri, i.e. the scribes. I shall start with a very general question: how did the scribes process the material, starting from the questioning of the accused to the production of the final document? I shall then move on to specific questions related to the process of the writing itself. How did the scribes handle what they heard? This chiefly concerns, of course, the declarations made by the defendants, but also the questions posed by the officials.

§2. PRODUCING AN ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENT

Producing the final report was undoubtedly the achievement of a long and, to be sure, tiresome process. One could guess that it usually involved three steps:

⁸ On this papyrus, see Winand (2011b).
⁹ The bibliography has now become abundant: see Jansen-Winkeln (1992 and 1997) and Thijs (1998–2001, 2007, and 2009).

taking notes during the questioning, making a preliminary draft, and writing down the final document.

In the present state of our documentation, there is no evidence to support the existence of the first step. It is difficult to guess what form it would have taken: more or less loose sentences, names and titles written in full or abbreviated, key words for formulaic parts such as oaths, questions, denials, and so on. One can also only guess what material was used to write it down (e.g. papyrus, tablets, or ostraca).¹⁰

In most cases, going directly from the notes to the final document was hardly possible. Some sort of intermediary document was probably needed. It has been suggested that P.BM EA 10054 and P.Rochester could be examples of precisely that kind of document.¹¹ P.BM EA 10052 also clearly shows that spaces, which are sometimes quite large, had been included by the scribe to allow for insertions that were never made. It is difficult to decide whether this is sufficient grounds to view the papyrus as an intermediary document, or if it was from the outset conceived as the definitive output. The final documents that were produced for the record were sometimes magnificent pieces of elegant writing, as shown by P.Léopold II-Amherst.

Ideally, all steps should be performed by a single scribe, and it was most desirable that not too much time should elapse between the different steps. In the particular case of the Tomb Robbery Papyri, one can guess that this was, in fact, what happened, considering the political implications up to the highest level of the Egyptian state.

Thus, in many cases, an intermediary document was probably needed. We are most often presented with depositions, spoken in an invariably correct and sometimes subtle, if not always elegant, Late Egyptian. It seems clear that the evidence given by the defendants could hardly be well articulated during the trial between two beatings. The confessions, more often than not, were obtained by force. One must also reckon with the low level of literacy of some defendants, with the inevitable slips of memory, the contradictions that are too common in such circumstances, and so on.

As already noted, it has been suggested that two papyri, P.BM EA 10054 and P.Rochester, could be such intermediary documents. Goelet observed that the names of the officials were not recorded in the latter papyrus. He also pointed to a lack of certain details that are expected in this kind of document, but this

¹⁰ The way proceedings were reported in Greek and Latin judicial systems (*oratio obliqua* vs *oratio recta*; *verbatim* or *non-verbatim*) is still debated. As observed by Coles (1966, 16), the scribes did not need to make a complete version during the hearings; they simply could have recorded in note form what was essential: 'in drafting his finished version the scribe would have put his condensed speeches back into colloquial language and arranged the whole in an *Oratio Recta* quasi-verbatim form.' I thank the anonymous OUP reviewer for pointing out this reference to me.

¹¹ Thijs (1998, 105, n. 42).

may be subjective.¹² As noted by Quack, recapitulative sums are lacking at the end of the document, which ends rather abruptly.¹³ As regards P.BM EA 10054, Thijs suggested that the arrangements of the different parts of the writing on the papyrus might reveal a work in progress.¹⁴ In his opinion, it is a sign that the scribe was still waiting for some piece of information before completing the final report. The potential use of drafts in scribal work has already been studied, more particularly in connection with the material of Deir el-Medina.¹⁵ The Tomb Robbery papyri probably give us a rare opportunity to see how the scribes rearranged the raw material they collected during the trials in order to produce a document that could eventually be presented to the highest authorities before being stored in the archives.

§3. STANDARDIZING THE DOCUMENTS

In legal documents, some sort of uniformity is only to be expected. This can be observed in every culture where there is an administration. Uniformity can manifest itself in:

- the lexicon
- spellings
- morphosyntax
- phraseology and style
- the general layout of the document

The documents dealing with interrogations of the suspects unmistakably share an air of familiarity. This can be observed in:

- the expository sections
- the questions posed by the officials
- the answers given by the defendants

As regards the last two points (the discourse sections), it is generally assumed that some kind of rephrasing took place. Before going into the details, an important preliminary issue is the identification of the scribes' hands. According to our present knowledge, some papyri are considered to have been written by the same scribe (see Table 6.1). P.Abbott and P.Léopold II constitute the first group; the P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A, a second group to which one should

¹² Goelet (1996, 119) curiously writes that the papyrus 'reads as if it were an abridged edition of a more carefully executed and complete document', which seems very unlikely.

¹³ Quack (2000, 229–30). ¹⁴ Thijs (1998).

¹⁵ Donker van Heel and Haring (2003, ch. 1–2).

perhaps attach P.BM EA 10053 and 10403. In what follows, I shall examine some issues, taking the whole corpus into consideration. In the second part, I shall focus more thoroughly on two closely related papyri, namely P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A.

As already noted, in documents like the Tomb Robbery papyri, some kind of standardization is unavoidable, at least in the narrative sections. A first case is what can be labelled an adaptation to the administrative style. For instance, at the end of a deposition, it is common to find a list of the stolen items as reported by the accused. It seems very unlikely that what has been recorded corresponds to what was actually said, as, to be sure, nobody ever spoke like that in Egypt.

1. P.Léopold II 2.19–3.1

iw 20 n dbn n nbw h3y r.n n z nb m p3 8 rmt ir n nbw dbn 160

‘and twenty *deben* of gold fell to us, for each one, that is the eight people, which makes 160 *deben* of gold.’

2. P.BM EA 10053 v° 3.15

iw.n di.t n.f nbw kd.t 1 gs, dmd i.dy.t n A : nbw kd.t 4 gs

‘and we gave him one and a half *kite* of gold, the total of what has been given to A: four and a half *kite* of gold.’

3. P.BM EA 10054 r° 1.7

iw nbw kd.t 4 h3y m z nb p3 5 rmt w° nb 4 ir n nbw dbn 8

‘and four *kite* of gold fell to each of the five men, which means four (*kite*) for each, that is eight *deben* of gold.’

These three examples demonstrate distinctive marks of administrative language: the absence of articles, the word order used, the use of the archaic passive participle, the recapitulative sum at the end, and so on. The following example shows what was probably nearer to the colloquial language, as shown by the syntax of the numerals:

4. P.BM EA 10403 2.1

iw 3° p3y-sr it3y p3y.i 10 n dbn n hmw iw 3° hr-m-w3s.t... it3y p3 10 n dbn n hmw n X

‘and the foreigner Payser took my ten *deben* of copper, and the foreigner Horem-waset... took the ten *deben* of copper of X.’

One can also suppose that the scribe sometimes needed to add some information that could hardly have been uttered by the accused when questioned. In the next example (5), Amenpanufer admits that he committed his thefts with a fellow named Hapy-wer:

5. P.Léopold II-Amherst, 1.16–17

iw.i hpr [t3] w.t [m n3 m°] h°. w m d[wn zp 2 i] rm hrty-ntr h°py-wr s3 mr-n-pt3n t3 hw.t wsr-m3°. t-r° mri-immn, ‘nh3, wd3, snb r-ht sm ns-immn n pr pnhr ir hsb.t 13 [n pr-°3] ‘nh3, wd3, snb p3y.n [nb] ‘nh3, wd3, snb hpr 4 rnp.t r t3y...

‘and I began to steal [in the to]mbs ve[ry regularly w]ith the necropolis worker Hapy-wer, son of Merenptah, who belongs to the temple Usermaatre-Meriamun, life, prosperity, health, under the *sem*-priest Nesamon of this estate; and in year 13 [of Pharaoh], life, prosperity, health, our [lord], that is four years from now...’

It is very doubtful that Amunpanufer actually recited the whole curriculum vitae of Hapy-wer. He probably did not say more than his name and patronym. The affiliation of Hapy-wer and the name of his superior were most likely added later by the scribe. It is equally improbable that the epithets ‘*nb*, *wꜥꜥ*, *snb* (‘*w.s.*), followed by *pꜣy.n nb* ‘*w.s.*, were pronounced by the defendant during his trial. It is also possible, albeit very difficult to prove, that the phrase *hꜣpr 4 rnp.t r tꜣy*, ‘that is four years from now’, was actually a gloss added by the scribe. That is, unless one prefers to consider it in the reverse perspective, taking *hꜣpr 4 rnp.t r tꜣy* as the original phrase and the opening phrase *hr ir ḥsb.t 13*, ‘and in year 13’ as the gloss added by the scribe. In a way, this would even make better sense, since it is highly disputable that everybody would have been fully aware of the official calendar.

§4. REWRITING THE DEPOSITIONS

Although it is perhaps less palpable, there was also some kind of rewriting of the lengthy depositions made by the accused. It seems that the scribes more or less conformed to what can be called a storyline when faced with certain matters. For instance, a complete declaration on the robbing of a tomb usually follows certain steps presented in a relatively fixed order following a logical and temporal line, and using a fixed phraseology:¹⁶

- entering the tomb
- finding the coffins
- tearing them to pieces
- setting them on fire
- stripping them of their gold and silver
- stealing the gold and silver
- parcelling out the booty

Now, in some cases, one has the distinctive feeling that the report includes some kind of verbatim quotations.¹⁷ This happens more frequently in some environments such as:

¹⁶ The best example of this is probably P.Léopold II-Amherst II 2.4–3.6, but consider also PBM EA 10052 r° 3.5–7; r° 6.1–6; PBM EA 10053 v° 2.11–14; v° 3.7–10; v° 3.12–17; PBM EA 10054 r° 1.3–11; r° 2.13–16; PBM EA 10403 1.11–2.3.

¹⁷ Of course, even in these cases, some kind of rewriting could have taken place.

1. exceptional tales that do not conform to the habitual pattern
2. reported speech within a declaration
3. exceptional grammatical constructions
4. the use of slang

The first two points do not require much discussion, so I will focus mainly on the last two.

§5. VERBATIM QUOTATIONS

§5.1. Exceptional Constructions

The Tomb Robbery corpus sometimes shows constructions that are either exceptional with regard to the body of Late Egyptian texts or completely unparalleled. In such cases, one is greatly tempted to admit that the scribe faithfully reproduced what was actually spoken by the defendants. Consider the following example, where *hpr* ‘to become’ is used as an aspectual auxiliary of inchoativity:

6. P.BM EA 10052 8,9

iw.w hpr ‘h’ sdd r-dd ‘and they began to quarrel(, saying)’

The presence of *hpr* in a complex aspectual construction is already attested, albeit rarely and sporadically, in the Nineteenth Dynasty, always co-occurring with an Old Perfective.¹⁸ It can also be used to add an inchoative meaning to an aspectually neutral construction, as in the following example:

7. RAD 77.5

sh3 r p3 hpr i.ir A tttt irm B ‘report concerning the fact that A began to have a row with B’¹⁹

In a sequential construction, which naturally gives an inchoative meaning to atelic verbs,²⁰ using *hpr* is a kind of redundant encoding. Compare in this respect how people weep in the Late Egyptian Tales, an exceedingly common attitude.²¹ In the Two Brothers, one finds the simplex *iw.f(hr) rm* (Two Brothers 13.3),²² but a complex construction, using one of the posture auxiliaries ‘*h’*, *hmsi* or *sdr* before an infinitive, is also attested without any notable nuance:

¹⁸ Cf. Battle of Kadesh (KRI II, 88,8), or the instance on an ostrakon written in the time of Ramses II (KRI III, 542,12).

¹⁹ One will note the presence of the verb *tttt*, whose meaning is very close to that of *sdd* in the preceding example.

²⁰ See Winand (2006, 180–2, 325–9).

²¹ This, of course, is reminiscent of the Homeric poems where mortal and divine characters alike come to tears very quickly.

²² LES 10–30.

8. *Two Brothers* 8.1

iw.f hr 'h' hr rmy.t n.f k3 'and he began to weep loudly because of him'

This complex pattern surfaces again in Horus and Seth,²³ a tale composed in the Twentieth Dynasty:

9. *Horus and Seth* 8.11

'h'.n 3s.t hms hr rm 'and Isis began to weep'

One must wait until the Tale of Wenamun,²⁴ well into the Twenty-first Dynasty,²⁵ to encounter an example of the double complex pattern in a literary piece. However, it remains exceptional even in this tale, as witnessed by the more common pattern *hpr* + infinitive:

10. *Tale of Wenamun* 2.64

iw.i hpr hms.tw rm 'and I began to weep'

11. *Tale of Wenamun* 2.67

iw p3 wr hpr rm m-di n3 md.t i.dd.w n.f

'and the prince began to weep because of the words that were told to him'

These examples, taken from the literary corpus, show the gradual introduction of *hpr* to express inchoativity in narrative patterns. Of course, one could argue that the literary texts and the documentary texts do not reflect exactly the same level of Late Egyptian. In this case, the construction under discussion does not appear, in the literary corpus, before the Tale of Wenamun, a text which can be considered linguistically closer to the non-literary corpus than the New Kingdom compositions. Thus, the appearance of *hpr* as an auxiliary of inchoativity in the Tomb Robbery corpus can be regarded as an innovative trait.

The use of *hpr* in contexts where it was usually absent before can again be observed in the contrastive pair appearing in P.Mayer A:²⁶

12. P.Mayer A 6.23

hr ir tw.i m iy r-hry, iw.i gm w'b t33-šri

'as I was coming down, I found the wab-priest Tjata-sheri'

13. P.Mayer A 2.7

iw.i hpr m iy.t r-hry, iw.i sdm hrw <n> n3 rmt iw.w m-hnw p3y r-hd

'and I began to come down, and I heard the voice of the men who were inside this treasury'

²³ LES 37–60.

²⁴ LES 61–75.

²⁵ See most recently Winand (2011a).

²⁶ One can also note the use of *hpr* in a deposition found in P.BM EA 10403 (3, 5–6 : *hr hpr.i hms.kwi hkr.tw hr n3 nh3, mtw hpr n3 rmt ir.t šw.t n hmw, iw.n hms.wyn hkr.wyn, i.n.i n.f*) '“and it happened that I was sitting hungry under the sycamores, when people started trading copper as we were sitting hungry,” I said to him’, with an inchoative force in the narrative conjunctive (on this, see Winand 2001), but with a different sense in the opening line, where it means something like ‘it happened that’.

to some idea of normativity in linguistic use and as substandard in terms of use of linguistic register. Use of slang is common in some parts of society. Ancient Egypt seems to conform to well-known patterns in its use of slang in matters related to sex and crime. The following examples illustrate some possible uses:

16. P.BM EA 10052 1.8

iw.s dd n.i gm nh3 rmt w' šsp n 'k.w hn.n wnm.k sw irm.w – in.s n.i

‘and she said to me, “Some men have found a haul of dough. Let’s go so that you can wolf it down with them.” So said she to me.’³⁰

17. P.BM EA 10052 3.5

my r-bnr hn.n in.n p3y 'nh3-‘k <r> wnm

‘come out! Let’s go, we will bring this piece (?) of dough <to> wolf it down’

18a. P.BM EA 10052 8.11

sh3.k <wi> m p3 h3d ‘you conned <me> out of the silver’

18b. P.Mayer A 9.20

sh3.k wi hr.f m w' n p3y.firy ‘you conned me, so they kept saying to one another’

19. P.Mayer A 1.21

s3m(.i) r-dd n3 rmt hn r ir.t h3w m p3y pr-n-st3

‘(I) heard that the men went to do their business with the portable shrine’

§6. VARIATION WITHIN STANDARDIZATION

Administrative records are, of course, the first candidates where strict standardization can be expected. However, even there, scribes can offer variation in formulae that one could be tempted to see as completely frozen. In what follows, the field of investigation has been restricted to P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A.

- a) Curiously enough, the well-known formula ‘he was interrogated with the stick’ has a different look in the two papyri. In P.BM EA 10052, the formula in the first ten columns is invariably the periphrastic passive *ir smtr.f m b3n*. From col. 11 onwards, the passive construction is sometimes replaced by the Present I *sw smtr m b3n*. In P.Mayer A, the formula is always *sw smtr m kn3n m b3n*, which is the second formula found in P.BM EA 10052, with the insertion of *m kn3n* ‘by beating’ (Table 6.2).³¹ This kind of variation between the two documents is not at all exceptional, as will be made clear in the following sections.

³⁰ See already Peet’s comment (1920, 158 n. 4).

³¹ One will note here that the practice of P.BM EA 10403 reflects that of P.Mayer A.

Table 6.2. The beating formulae in P.BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

	Passive	Present I
P.BM EA 10052	<i>ir s[?] bdn</i> (34 times, without exception until 11.15)	<i>sw smtr m bdn</i> (sometimes from 11.16 on)
P.Mayer A		<i>sw smtr m knkn m bdn</i>

- b) Another interesting instance of variation can be observed when the defendant tells the officials to bring a witness to charge him. Such an invitation can happen as part of an oath or as the concluding sentence of a deposition. In the examples below, O stands for oath and D for deposition:

20. P.BM EA 10052 10.16

O: *imy in.tw p3y-nh...iry.f s'h'.s*

'let Payankh be brought so that he may accuse her'

21. P.BM EA 10052 13.8

D: *imy in.tw nfw ns-immn iry.f s'h'.i*

'let the sailor Nesamun be brought, so that he may accuse'

22. P.BM EA 10052 12.27; 15.8

D: *imy in.tw p3 nty i[w.f s]h'.i mtw.f s'h'.i*

'let the one who will accuse me be brought and let him accuse me'

23. P.Mayer 8.24

O: *imy in.tw rmt r s'h'.i*

'let someone be brought to accuse me'

24. P.BM EA 10052 14.5

D: *imy in.tw rmt r s'h'.i*

'let someone be brought to accuse me'³²

The recurrent formula *imy in.tw* X can be followed by a subjunctive, *iry.f s'h'.i/f*, by a conjunctive, *mtw.f s'h'.i*, or by a prepositional phrase, *r s'h'.i*. Interestingly enough, P. Mayer A always sticks to the PrepP, which is also known to P.BM EA 10052. In the latter one, however, the subjunctive and the conjunctive are more common.³³

- c) Another striking difference in formulae can be observed in the opening statement of the accused when the question is resumed after a beating. In

³² Cf. P.Mayer A 4.14.

³³ As was pointed out to me by Stéphane Polis, the alternation of the subjunctive (*iry.f s'h'.i*) vs *r* + infinitive (*r s'h'.i*) should perhaps be explained by the position of the subject of *in.tw* on the animacy scale: the subjunctive seems to be preferred when the witness is higher on the scale. In exx. 20 and 21, the subject is a proper name, whereas in exx. 23 and 24, it is the generic noun *rmt* 'somebody'. In the first case, the subjunctive is used, but in the second one, *r* + infinitive has been preferred. This, of course, requires further investigation.

P.BM EA 10052, the suspect usually says *i.wʒh, dd.i* ‘stop! I’ll speak!’,³⁴ an exclamation never found in P.Mayer A. The formula of denial *wʒ r.i, wʒ r hʿ.t.i* ‘far from me! far from myself!’ which occurs six times in P.BM EA 10052,³⁵ never appears in P.Mayer A. In four cases, the same defendant appears in both documents: Nesparai (P.BM EA 10052 11.2 and P. Mayer A 8.10), Ankhefenamun (P.BM EA 10052 11.11 and P. Mayer A 8.15), Pa’irsekheru (P.BM EA 10052 11.15 and P. Mayer A 9.24), and Ahautynefer (P.BM EA 10052 15.22 and P. Mayer A 10.9). It is thus difficult to understand why there is such a difference in formulation.

d) The question posed by an official on the *modus operandi* of the thieves can take different forms, as shown by the four following groups:³⁶

1. The *i.dd (n.i)* group

i.dd n.i rmt nb i.wn irm.k m nʒ s.wt ʒ.t ‘Tell me all the people who were with you in the great places’ (P. BM EA 10052 1.7, 3.1, 5.11, 7.15)

i.dd pʒ shr n šm i.ir.k r ph nʒ s.wt ʒ.t šps.t ‘Tell how you managed to reach the great and venerable places’ (P. BM EA 10052 1.14, 3.23, 5.5, 12.14; P. Mayer A 2.11, 2.18, 8.4, 8.17, 8.20)

i.dd pʒ i.ir.k // i.dd pʒ shr i.ir.k ‘Tell what you did // tell how you did it’ (P. BM EA 10052 1.17)

i.dd my n.i in bwpw.k šm r tʒ s.t ‘Tell me please if you did not go to the place’ (P. BM EA 10052, 4.2)

i.dd n.i rmt nb i.sdm.k i.ptr.k ‘Tell me all the people you heard and saw’ (P. BM EA 10052 4.3)

i.dd n.i rmt nb rdy n.w hdm pʒy hdm ‘Tell me all the people that were given silver from this silver-hoard’ (P. BM EA 10052 5.18)

i.dd pʒ shr n pʒ hdm i.ptr.k m-di A ‘Tell how you saw the silver in the possession of A’

(P. BM EA 10052 7.5; P. Mayer A 8.11)

i.dd my + NP ‘Tell please + NP’ (P. Mayer A 4.2, 4.4, 5.3)

2. The *ih pʒ shr n + infinitive* group

ih pʒ shr n šm i.ir.f (irm A) ‘How did he go (with A)?’ (P. BM EA 10052 4.6, 4.16; P. Mayer A 1.9, 2.2, 3.3, 3.20)

ih pʒ shr n šm i.ir.f r nʒ s.wt ‘How did he go the places?’ (P. BM EA 10052 8.18)

ih pʒ shr n šm i.ir.f r ph nʒ s.wt ‘How did he manage to reach the places?’ (P. BM EA 10052 8.3, 11.15, 14.12, 16.18)

ih pʒ shr n šm i.ir.f r VB ‘How did he + VB?’ (P. Mayer A 1.22)

ih pʒ shr n VB i.ir.f ‘How did he + VB?’ (P. BM 10052 10.14, 11.5, 13.2; P. Mayer A 1.14, 5.10)

ih pʒ shr n pʒy hdm i.in X ‘What is the matter of the silver that X brought?’ (P. BM EA 10052 10.13, 10.17, 11.7v)

³⁴ P. BM EA 10052 1.13, 1.17, 3.17, 4.1, 4.18, 5.9, 5.13, 5.15, 5.17, 7.16, 8.14, 11.16, 12.16.

³⁵ P. BM EA 10052 4.8, 8.4, 11.2, 11.11, 11.15, 15.22.

³⁶ In each group, the formulae are subject to variation as regards their lexical components. They are only intended to give an idea of the different patterns that can be found.

3. The *ih hr.k* + NP³⁷

ih hr.k t3 md.t n + NP ‘What would you say concerning the matter of + NP?’
(P. BM 10052 7.10, 10.3, 11.20, 13.11, 14.2, 15.5)

ih hr.k p3y shr n ph i.ir.k... (P. BM 10052 11.10)

ih hr.t p3y hd i.in X (P. BM 10052 11.5, 12.25v; P. Mayer A 10.2, 10.18)

ih hr.k + NP (P. BM 10052 13.15, 15.1, 15.20; P. Mayer A 4.16, 4.18, 6.14, 7.1, 8.23)

4. The *ih hr.k* group ‘What would you say?’

P. BM EA 10052 10.17, 11.2, 11.18, 13.9, 13.23; P. Mayer A 3.23, 3.25, 9.1, 9.6, 9.10, 9.13, 9.15, 9.16, 9.22, 10.10, 10.25).

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 provide the statistics of use for the two papyri. The numbers along the top of the columns indicate the sheets of the papyrus, and the numbers in the columns the number of occurrences of each example. The formulae have been arranged according to decreasing degree of complexity.

As a conclusion, one can see that the distribution is roughly the same in both papyri. As (t)he(y) approach(es) the end of the papyrus, the scribe(s) show(s) a strong tendency to favour shorter formulae, leaving aside the most complex ones. In P.BM EA 10052, the *i.dd* group is prominent in the first seven columns; it disappears thereafter, with an exception in col. 12. The *ih hr.k r* NP group and the *ih hr.k* group, the shortest one, are totally absent before col. 7. P.Mayer A offers the same general profile. In the last five columns of the papyrus, the two *ih hr.k* groups appear fourteen times, while the *i.dd* group, which was no longer present since col. 6, occurs four times in col. 8.

This tendency towards abbreviation can also be observed in the spellings. Figure 6.2 shows the different writings of the pervasive word *smtr* ‘testimony’ in

Table 6.3. Introduction of a question: P.BM EA 10052

P.BM EA 10052	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<i>i.dd</i>	3		2	2	4		2					1				
<i>ih p3 shr</i>				2				2	1	3	4		1	1		1
<i>ih hr.k r</i> NP							1			1	3	1	2	1	3	
<i>ih hr.k</i>										1	2		2			

Table 6.4. Introduction of a question: P.Mayer A

P.Mayer A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>i.dd</i>		2		2	1			4		
<i>ih p3 shr</i>	3	1	2		1					
<i>ih hr.k r</i> NP				2		1	1	1		2
<i>ih hr.k</i>			2						7	2

³⁷ On the meaning of *hr.k* in this case, see Winand (forthcoming a).

𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓	𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓
III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
2	7	1	21	21	2	2	1	1

Fig. 6.2. Spellings of *smtr* P.BM EA 10052

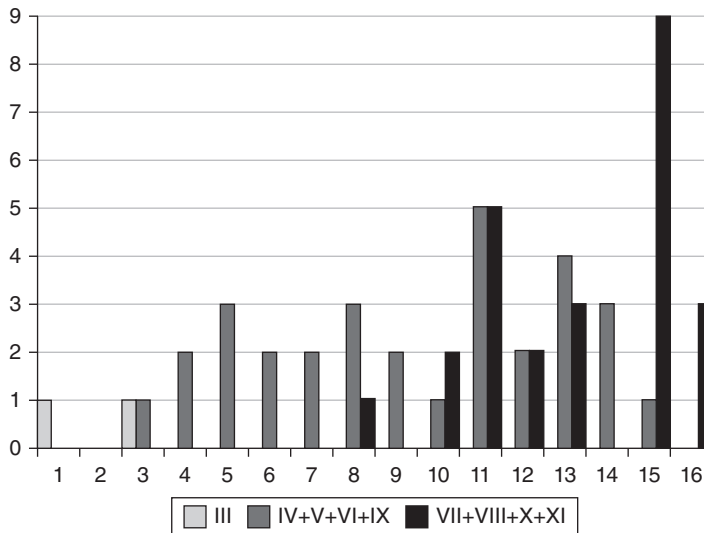


Fig. 6.3. Distribution of the spellings of *smtr* P.BM EA 10052

P.BM EA 10052 and the P.Mayer A. In P.BM EA 10052, there are nine different spellings, which can be grouped into three sections (as shown by the shadings) according to an increasing degree of simplification.³⁸

In the first group, *smtr* has been written in full; in the second group, some abbreviations occur but the group *mt* is still written; in the third and last group, the word is fully abbreviated (with some differences in the choice of classifier). The distribution of the data (Figure 6.3) shows a striking succession of the three groups.

The full written form (III) is present only at the beginning of the papyrus, and the last group (VII+VIII+X+XI) is increasingly used from the second part of the papyrus onwards. In P.Mayer A, the difference is even stronger. The full written form (𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓) is present only once, in the very first line of the papyrus. The abbreviated form (𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓) is the only one used (forty-five times) in the rest of the document, with one minor exception in col. 8.19 (𐤌𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤓).

³⁸ The first group starts with III, and not I. The reason for this is that the first two classes, which represent other spellings, are not attested in this papyrus. The order of the spellings reflects their first occurrence in the text. This explains the position of spelling IX, which belongs to the second group, in the middle of the third group.

Table 6.5. The spellings of *bdn* P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A

<i>bdn</i>				
BM 10052			36	
Mayer A	25/1	4	2	2

Table 6.6. The spellings of *mnn* P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A

<i>mnn</i>			
BM 10052	11		
Mayer A		5	3

Another striking difference between the two papyri is offered by the words *bdn* ‘stick’ and *mnn*, another kind of instrument of torture, perhaps a device for twisting the limbs. Tables 6.5 and 6.6 show the distribution of the two words in the two papyri. Again, P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A seem to operate according to different choices.

If P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A sometimes behave differently, they also display some features that are not shared with the rest of the Tomb Robbery papyri. Here are some examples, both at the lexical and the graphic level.

In the corpus of the Tomb Robbery papyri, there are two verbs closely related in meaning: *wšwš* and *kḳ*. Both are used to describe the stripping off of precious metals from wooden equipment. However, the two verbs consider the process from opposite angles: *kḳ* takes the point of view of the metal (*iw.w kḳ nbw m n3 ḥtr.w* ‘they stripped off some gold from the doorjambs’),³⁹ whereas *wšwš* considers the process from the point of view of the equipment (*iw.w wšwš n3 wt.w* ‘they broke the coffins into pieces’). In this case, the metal is not mentioned, but it is clear from the context that the process of *wšwš* is in direct connection with the stripping of the gold and silver that were plated on the furniture, as is clear from the following example:

25. P.Mayer A 3.4

iw.f wšwš p3 pr-n-st3 iw.f in n3 ḥmw im.f

‘and he broke the portable shrine into pieces, and he carried the copper parts out of it’

kḳ does not seem to be attested outside the Tomb Robbery corpus, but *wšwš* is known elsewhere.⁴⁰ Table 6.7 shows the distribution of both words in the corpus




³⁹ *kḳ* is still attested in Ptolemaic times with the meaning of ‘to peel off’. It is also known in Coptic (ⲕⲟⲕ) with the same meaning; see Crum (1939, 100b–101a). The demotic *ḳwḳe* that appears in P.Magical London–Leiden 3.21 in the expression *ḳwḳe n swḥ.t n msh* ‘crocodile egg shell’ is possibly linked to the same root.

⁴⁰ In describing some kind of beating: P.Anastasi III 5.8–9; P.Anastasi IV 9.7; P.Anastasi. V 10.7; P.Sallier I 3.9; P.Chester Beatty IV v^o 6.1; in the Necropolis Journal, in a section dealing

Table 6.7. *wšwš* and *kk* in the TR corpus

	<i>wšwš</i>	<i>kk</i>
P.BM EA 10052	3	
P.BM EA 10053		6
P.BM EA 10054	2	6
P.Mayer A	1	

Table 6.8. The spellings of *iṯy* 'thief' in the TR

			
P.Abbott	16		
P.Ambras			3
P.BM EA 10052	2		18
P.BM EA 10053		11	
P.BM EA 10054		3	
P.BM EA 10068	13		
P.BM EA 10403	1	1	3
P.Léopold II-Amherst	11		
P.Mayer A	1		24
Total	44	15	48

of the TR. Some strong tendencies appear: P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A use only *wšwš*, whereas P.BM EA 10053 exclusively favours *kk*. P.BM EA 10054 is the sole document that uses both words.⁴¹

Significant differences in spellings also appear throughout the corpus. Although the variations may sometimes seem very slight, they gain significance because they bear upon nouns that are used extensively. Two examples will suffice here.

The word for thief, *iṯy*, is well attested for obvious reasons. In the Tomb Robbery corpus, it appears 112 times (although only 109 occurrences can be used due to lacunae). The spellings can be sorted into three classes according to what is written just before the two classifiers: Ø, *-y* or *-w*. The choice of the spelling has nothing to do with the number: each one can be used for singular and plural. As is clear from Table 6.8, each papyrus tends to favour one spelling. One will note here that the scribe of P.BM EA 10053, which is sometimes said to be very close to that of P.BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A, did not choose the same option for the writing of *iṯy*.

with a tomb robbery during the reign of Ramses IX (KRI VI, 579,8–9 and 11); and in P.Anastasi I 26.1, for describing a chariot broken to pieces. See also P.Anastasi I 19.9, in a damaged context. The verb is still known in Coptic (ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲟⲩⲥⲁⲩ), where it means something like 'to trash'; see Crum (1939, 504b).

⁴¹ It can be shown that this has something to do with an empiric linguistic tendency I have elsewhere termed the Principle of Thematic Continuity, which makes the prediction that, if one is given the choice between two differently oriented processes, one tends to select the verb that has the thematic entity as its direct object (Winand 2012).

Table 6.9. The spellings of *bwpw*, the negative marker in the TR

<i>bwpw</i> (and var.)	P.Abbott (6)
	P.Léopold II-Amherst (1)
	P.BM EA 10053 (1)
	P.BM EA 10403 (1)
	P.BM EA 10052 (48)
	P.BM EA 10403 (6)
	P.Mayer A (24)
	P.Mayer A (1)

Another good example is provided by the spellings of the negative marker *bwpw*, which appears eighty-eight times in the corpus. As shown in Table 6.9, its spellings can easily be sorted into two groups: the *bwp-* group and the *bp-* group,⁴² which nicely match the chronological ordering of the manuscripts (see Figure 6.1).

§7. HANDLING A CASE: SOME INTERESTING ISSUES

In the Tomb Robbery corpus, a single case is sometimes dealt with in several documents. This gives us the rare opportunity to get an idea of how the scribes handled the testimonies. A case can be presented twice, in the same document or in two different ones. The testimony can be given by a single defendant, but it can also be presented by two different ones. Parallel wording can also occur with completely distinct cases implying unrelated defendants. In what follows, these possibilities are examined.

§7.1. One Case, Two Witnesses, and One Papyrus

This category can be illustrated by a case reported twice in P.BM EA 10052 by two witnesses:

26. P.BM EA 10052 r^o 3.20–21: Deposition of the incense-burner Shedsukhonsu
sdm.ı r-dd w^c ksk.s.t iw.s mḥ.ti m nbw m-di ḥry-ꜣ dhwtj-ḥtp iw ns-sw pꜣ ḥr

‘I heard that one basket full of gold is in the possession of the doorkeeper Djehutyhotep, although it belongs to the Tomb.’

27. P.BM EA 10052 r^o 4.4–5: Deposition of the trumpeter Perypatjau
sdm.ı r-dd w^c ksk.s.t m-di ḥry-ꜣ dhwtj-ḥtp iw.s mḥ.ti m nbw iw ns-sw pꜣ ḥr

⁴² On the spellings of the negative *bwpw*, see Winand (1992, 202–8).

‘I heard that one basket is in the possession of the doorkeeper Djehutyhotep, being full of gold, although it belongs to the Tomb.’

The two depositions differ in one point only: the position of the phrase *m-di hry-3 dhwti-htp*, ‘is in the possession of Djehutyhotep’. In the second deposition (only a few lines later), the scribe undoubtedly intended to reproduce what he had written in the first one. In doing so, he probably relied too confidently on his memory. As a result, he cut *w^c ksk.s.t*, ‘one basket’, from its expansion *iw.s mh.ti m nbw*, ‘full of gold’. These two passages strongly suggest that the second deposition is a mere copy-and-paste reproduction of the first one. The odds that the second witness reproduced exactly the same phrasing seem rather weak.

§7.2. One Case, One Witness, and Two Papyri

In the second category, a case is reported by a single witness. In exx. 28 and 29, it seems that the defendant was interrogated about the same case on two different occasions. The two testimonies share a striking air of similarity, but there are differences, too, which can be explained in different ways. It is possible, and actually very probable, that Sekhahatyamun confessed more or less the same facts, but it is debatable, to say the least, that he chose exactly the same words in the same order. In fact, what is truly surprising is the fact that the two depositions are so close. It is difficult to escape the feeling that the latter deposition is an adaptation of the former one:

28. PBM EA 10052 8.6–11

^a *di.i nh3-n it n rmt-ist p3-nfr* ^b *iw.f di.t n.i kd.t 2 n hdd^c iw.i gm.t.w^d iw.w bin^e iw.i sm r h3^f.w n.fⁱ iw mniw ihy-mh, p3y sn n iw.f-n-imn, iy n-bnr^g iw.w dd n.i^h hn.k r-hnwⁱ iw.<w> di.t ‘k.i r B [s.t-]hms n p3y.w pr^j iw.w hpr ‘h^c sdd r-dd^k sh3.k (wi) m p3 hdd hr.f m w^c dd n p3y.firy im.w^l iw ink i.di ptr.k p3 hr i.n.f m p3 sri n p3-nfr p3y rmt-ist n mniw ihy-mh*

‘^a I gave some barley to the workman Panefer, ^b and he gave me two *kite* of silver, ^c but I found ^d that they were bad,⁴³ ^e and I went to give them back to him. ^f The herdsman Ihumeh, the brother of Iuefenamen, then came out, ^g and they said to me ^h ‘Come inside!’, ⁱ and <they> let me into the living [room] of their house. ^j Then they began quarrelling:⁴⁴ ^k ‘you conned (me) out of the silver’, so they kept saying to one another,⁴⁵ ^l although it is me that showed you the tomb, so said he the son of Panefer, the workman, to the herdsman Ihumeh.’

⁴³ As already noted by Peet, the intended meaning of *bin* cannot be precisely defined: either it has to do with the quality of the silver (some problem with the fineness of the metal?), or it alludes to the illicit provenance thereof.

⁴⁴ It is difficult to assess the syntactic status of this phrase: it may be circumstantial (as they were starting to quarrel) or sequential. The presence of the inchoative auxiliary *hpr* makes the first option less attractive.

⁴⁵ On the meaning of *hr* in reported speech, see Winand (forthcoming a).

29. P.Mayer A 9.17

^a *dī.ī nh3 it 4 h3r n hmwty p3-nfr n p3 hr* ^b *iw.f dī.t n.ī hđ kđ.t 2^c iw.ī it3.w n.f r-đđ^d bin*
^e *iw.ī tm gm.t.f^f iw mniw ihy-mh iy r-bnr^g iw.w dī.t k.ī r w^h šn^c h iw.ī sđm m-dī.wⁱ*
iw.w h^c tttt hr w^c hđ r-đđ^j sh3.k wī hr.f m w^c n p3 n p3y.f iry

^a I gave some barley (four *khar*) to the coppersmith of the Tomb, Panefer, ^b and he gave me two *kite* of silver. ^c I took them for him (i.e. to return them to him?) thinking ^d (they were) bad, ^e but I did not find him. ^f Then the herdsman Ihumeh came out ^g and they made me enter a storehouse. ^h I then could hear them ⁴⁶ ⁱ as they were having a row over a quantity of silver ^j “you conned me,” so they were saying to one another.^j

The version in P.Mayer A is obviously an abridged version of that in P.BM EA 10052. Some sentences of P BM EA 10052 (e, f, g, h, and l), are missing in P.Mayer A. There are also differences that are purely lexical, such as sentence (j) of P.BM EA 10052 and (i) of P. Mayer A, which have *sđđ* and *tttt*, respectively, two verbs that are semantically very close. In the opening sentence of Mayer A, there is information on the quantity of grain that has been given, which is absent from the version in P.BM EA 10052. This could well be a new piece of evidence given by Sekhahatyamun during the second interrogation.⁴⁷ More significantly, however, sentences (c–e) of P.BM EA 10052 have been obviously misunderstood in P. Mayer A, with the last one missing. This is, in my opinion, a strong argument in favour of a dependence of P. Mayer A’s redaction on the version offered by the P.BM EA 10052.

§7.3. Two Cases, Two Witnesses, and One Papyrus

The next pair of examples illustrates a parallel wording found in two different cases reported by two distinct witnesses (Sekhahatyamun and Ankhefenamun) in the same papyrus (P.BM EA 10052). The last sentence of both depositions follows a very similar pattern, even if small differences can be identified. It is very close to a modern bureaucratic form, in which one only has to complete what is changing: ‘If you want to kill me for (blank) such or such reason, it is (blank) him or them that did it.’ Once again, there is some suspicion that the scribe reused a formula he had already written for the second deposition. It is, of course, impossible to decide whether this formula was actually produced by the former witness and taken over by the scribe for the second deposition, or if it was part of the phraseological stock of the scribe.

⁴⁶ The indirect construction, *sđm m-dī* NP, instead of *sđm* + SN, suggests that the witness could not hear directly what was said, because not all of the protagonists were in the same room, hence my translation with ‘can’.

⁴⁷ The precise stating of the function of Panefer’s role—he is said to be a coppersmith—might be an addition by the scribe.

30. P.BM EA 10052 8.4

ḏḏ n.f ḏty

Q: *iḥ p3 šyr <n> šm i.ir.k <r> pḥ n3 s.wt ʿy irm n3 rmṯ wn {i.wn} irm.k*
ḏḏ.f

A: *w3 r.i, w3 r ḥʿ.t.i n3 sw.t ʿy inn iw.tw ḥdb.i ḥr n3 mʿḥʿ.w n iw-mr-itrw mntw n3*
wn.i im

‘The vizier said to him:

Q: “How did you manage <to> reach great places with the men who were with you?”

He said:

A: “Far be it from me! Far be it from myself, these great places! If I have to be killed on account of the tombs of Iumiteru, then they are the ones I have been in.”⁴⁸

31. P.BM EA 10052 11.12

didī.tw n.f ʿnh n nb ʿnh, wḏ, snb ʿnh, wḏ, snbr-ḏḏ

O: *mtw.i ḏḏ ʿḏ iw.f ḥšb, didī.tw <r> kš*
ḏḏ.tw n.f

Q: *iḥ ḥr.k p3y šyr <n> pḥ i.ir.k n3 s.wt ʿy.t irm X*
ḏḏ.f

A: *w3 r.i w3 r ḥʿ.t.i bw rḥ.i n3 mʿḥʿ (i)n n3y.i rmṯ <n3> nty <m> imnt.t ḥr ḥn r p3 ḥr*
inn iw.tw ḥdb<.i> ḥr rmṯ mntf ḏy.i ḏw.t

‘He was given an oath by the Lord, life, prosperity, health life, prosperity, health:

O: “If I say something false, I’ll be mutilated and deported <to> Nubia.”

It was said to him:

Q: “What’s about how you reached the great places with A.”

He said:

A: “Far be it from me! Far be it from myself! I do not know the tombs. It is my men who are <in> the West,⁴⁹ and also who went to the Tomb. If <I> have to be killed because of someone, my crime is his!”⁵⁰

§7.4. Two Cases, Two Witnesses, and Two Papyri

In my last example, we have exactly the same wording for two different cases, concerning two different witnesses and recorded on two different papyri.

32. P.BM EA 10052 12.18

bwpyw.i ptr inn iw.k ḏḏ i.g3, g3y.i

‘I did not see (anything). If you say, “Lie!”, I will lie.’⁵¹

⁴⁸ See most recently Collier (2006, 183, ex. 3).

⁴⁹ This sentence is usually translated with a past (‘who were in the West’), *pace* Peet (1920, 153). In this case, one would rather expect a past converter (cf. *mntw n3 i.wn.i im*: P.BM EA 10052 8.5, cf. ex. 30 above). I prefer to understand it as a present; the accused is probably making a general statement here.

⁵⁰ Cf. Collier (2006, 192, ex. 18).

⁵¹ Cf. Collier (2006, 192, ex. 19).

33. P.Mayer A 8.8

bwpwy.i ptr inn iw.tn dd i.g, g'y.i

'I did not see (anything). If you say, "Lie!", I will lie.'

Once again, one must not discount the possibility that the two witnesses wanted to show their good faith, but the odds that they both used the same colourful expression, making the same allusion to a possible obligation of lying, seem very low. The verb *gʒi* 'lie' is found elsewhere, in different phraseological contexts:

34. P.BM EA 10052 11.21

m ir gʒ, bn mʒ' iwnʒ 'Do not lie, it is absolutely not true.'⁵²

35. P.BM EA 10052 14.17

m ir <di.t> gʒ.i, bwpw.i ptr 'Do not <make> me lie. I did not see (anything).'

36. P.Mayer A 9.4

iry.tw.f <mi> ih, ink m ir <di.t> gʒ.i

'How could it be done? As for me, do not <make> me lie!'

§8. CONCLUSION

The study of the Tomb Robbery material opens an exceptional window into the work of the scribes while dealing with their administrative business. The complexity of the issues, as well as the number of defendants and witnesses, undoubtedly forced the scribes to handle the cases very methodically. To be sure, the Pharaonic administration had the necessary expertise to handle such difficulties. The mysterious ways that preside over the preservation of the documentary evidence in ancient Egypt have brought to light the dossier of an assassination attempt on Ramses III, a major case in judicial history that was not so remote in time (about seventy years) from the Tomb Robbery proceedings.

Immediately following the first edition of the Tomb Robbery corpus, scholars could hardly believe that the written records were verbatim reports of the witnesses' declarations. Gardiner wondered if the depositions were not simply faked.⁵³ A more nuanced approach was taken by Wainwright. For him, the depositions needed to be partly rewritten to gain the internal coherence they would have otherwise lacked:⁵⁴ 'The papyrus is of course not a verbatim report

⁵² The spelling of *gʒi* prevents the same reading as in the next two examples. In the two last examples, I inserted the causative *rdi* because *gʒi* does not seem to have a factitive meaning (to make someone lie), judging by the evidence provided by the two papyri. Except for a disputable instance in the Wisdom of Amenemope (XII, 4), the word does not appear outside these two papyri.

⁵³ Gardiner (1936, 187).

⁵⁴ See also more recently Thijs' opinion (see above, n. 9).

of the proceedings, but a *précis* giving the gist of the endless cross questions and crooked answers by which some approximation to some facts got into writing. For instance, no man comes into court and states boldly “I committed this, that, and the other crime”. Nor does he call himself a thief; that, of course, is the clerk’s designation of the accused.⁵⁵

The opinion of these distinguished scholars was more an assumption than the result of a clear and neat demonstration. The present study shows that the reality is more subtle.

When reworking the rough data taken during the trials, the scribes undoubtedly proceeded towards some kind of standardization. This process is manifested in the lists, especially in the lists of the stolen items, or the lists of the thieves, where an administrative tone was adopted. They also had the opportunity to add some missing information, such as the father’s name, the institutional affiliation, and so on.

Standardization also occurred in phraseology. In the narrative, but also in the questions asked and in the answers that were given, there is an air of familiarity, a feeling of *déjà vu*. This strongly suggests that a certain degree of rephrasing took place at some point. For lengthier depositions, it is even possible to speak of a restyling, as the scribes tried to follow a storyline in the presentation of the facts. This, of course, implies that drafts were sometimes produced from notes taken between the time of the trial and the final writing of the document. The purpose of this was to bring some coherency to the document. It also made it easier to compare the depositions when looking for factual evidence. This reminds me of a personal experience of mine. Some time ago, I was asked to provide evidence before a court. I made my deposition before a judge, who did not take any notes while I was speaking. He then dictated to his clerk (his scribe) what would eventually become my deposition. He condensed my ten-minute speech into a one-page declaration. He slightly modified the order of the sentences, sometimes keeping my own words, sometimes adding his own. The result was a masterpiece of clarity and logic. I put my signature at the bottom of the page, and it thus instantly became my declaration (I must make it clear that it was written as an oral statement in the first person).

When dealing with a case reported by several witnesses, the scribes somewhat inevitably came across the same formulations. When dealing with the same case twice, they were also tempted to shorten the second version. In some instances, they probably relied too confidently on their memory, which can explain certain oddities in the redaction.

Now, the scribes obviously did not have a modern approach to standardization in the sense that it did not mean for them an exact reproduction *ne varietur*. The evidence shows that a fair degree of variation was acceptable. The scribes did not work with copy and paste. This is, of course, to be expected if the scribes

⁵⁵ Wainwright (1938, 59).

were different, but it also happened with a single scribe. The scribes undoubtedly had their idiosyncrasies, and they could even change their habits as they proceeded to the end of their work.

The Tomb Robbery papyri fall into different categories as regards the choice or the spellings of certain words. In some cases (*iḥi*, *bḏn*, *mnn*, *bwpw*) this neatly supports the conclusion drawn from the palaeographical evidence. Nevertheless, there are also notable differences. The study of two such closely related papyri as P.BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A reveals some interesting points. The main results are tabulated in Table 6.10.

Comparison of the two documents leads to the following observations:

- Generally speaking, P.Mayer A did not bother with details that are present in P.BM EA 10052;
- Some formulae that are present in P.BM EA 10052 are absent in P. Mayer A;
- The spellings of common words in P.Mayer A are generally abbreviated, much more so than in P.BM EA 10052;
- The scribe who wrote P.Mayer A probably had P.BM EA 10052 relatively close to him, but was sometimes too confident about his memory, which inevitably led to some inaccuracies;
- The tendency in any single document was to abbreviate phraseology (*i.ḏḏ* > *iḥ ḥr.k*) or spellings (*smtr*). This is a very common trend across cultures. The questions asked by the official could take different forms: from a long and articulated sentence to something very brief, such as *iḥ ḥr.k*, which corresponds more or less to modern Egyptian Arabic ‘*eh da?*’. In P.BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A, a change from the most elaborate to the simplest formulae can be observed throughout the papyrus. The scribe gradually abandoned the longer expressions as he approached the end. The choice of

Table 6.10. Comparison of certain formulae in P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A

		P.BM EA 10052	P.Mayer A
<i>i.w3ḥ, ḏḏ.i</i>	‘stop! I’ll speak!’	x	---
<i>w3 r.i, w3 r ḥ.t.i</i>	‘far from me! far from myself!’	x	---
<i>ir smtr.f m bḏn</i>	‘he was interrogated with a stick’	x	---
<i>sw smtr m bḏn</i>	‘he has been interrogated with a stick’	x	---
<i>sw smtr m knḏn m bḏn</i>	‘he has been interrogated with a beating by a stick’	---	x
<i>... i ry.f s’ḥ.i</i>	‘so that he accuses me’	x	---
<i>... mtw.f s’ḥ.i</i>	‘and he will accuse me’	x	---
<i>... r s’ḥ.f</i>	‘to accuses him’	(x)	x
<i>mn</i>	‘torturing’	x	---
<i>mnn</i>	‘torturing’	---	x
<i>bḏn</i>	‘stick’	x	---
<i>bḏr</i>	‘stick’	---	x

formula has nothing to do with the official rank of the person asking the question. Anyone involved in the procedure is treated equally, whether vizier, royal butler, priest, or scribe;

- More disturbingly, some differences between P.BM EA 10052 and P.Mayer A have been noted that would be difficult to explain if both documents were written by the same hand. Here, I have essentially in mind the different choices that were made at the lexical level, because this was probably deeply rooted in the scribe's consciousness.

When comparing two documents, similarities are less interesting than differences. Similarity is not sameness, for similarities can be explained variously. As a last example, I would like to briefly discuss a sentence that is found in P.BM EA 10052:

37. P.BM EA 10052 3.16

p3 3w šš, bin 3y.f 3w.t ir iw.k hdb.tw, iw.k h3c.tw r p3 mw iw nim wh3.k

‘O doddering old man,⁵⁶ how bad is his old age. If you are killed and thrown into the water, who will search after you?’

A nearly exact parallel can be read in the *Tale of Wenamun*.⁵⁷

38. LES 66, 14–67,1

in i.ir.f hn.k n p3y hry-mnš drdr r di.t hdb.f tw mtw.w h3c.k r p3 ym, wn i.ir.w wh3 p3 ntr m-di nim, mntk m-r- i.ir.w wh3.k m-di nim m-r-^c

‘If he entrusted you to this barbarian ship's captain, is it not to have him kill you and have them throw you into the sea? From whom would one then seek the god? And also you, from whom would one seek you?’⁵⁸

It would, of course, be very odd to explain the passage in the *Tale of Wenamun* as a conscious citation of P.BM EA 10052. This would be a very strange case of intertextuality. One is probably on safer ground if one views it as a shared phraseology. The association of killing someone and throwing him into the water is also found in three letters belonging to the Late Ramesside Letters corpus, which are almost contemporary with the Tomb Robbery documents:⁵⁹

39. P.Berlin 10488 r^o 6–v^o 1

...mtw.k hdb(.w) mtw.k h3c.w <r> p3 mw m grh iw m dy ‘m rmt <n> p3 t3 im.w

‘...and kill (them), and throw them <into> the water at night without letting anyone <on> earth have knowledge of them.’

⁵⁶ See Peet (1920, 146 and n. 22) for the translation of š(3)š(3).

⁵⁷ See Winand (2011a).

⁵⁸ See Grossman (2007).

⁵⁹ Cf. P.Berlin 10487 7; 10489 v^o 1–2 wing something into the water at night in order to escape someone's notice is also known from the *Tale of Horus and Seth* (LES 55 1–2). See also O.Caire CG 25761 2, a love poem; however, the text is very badly damaged.

The final sentence is an indirect echo of the last part of the expressions found in P.BM EA 10052 and the Tale of Wenamun: it is made perfectly clear that nobody would be able to search for the poor wretches who were probably involved in some state secrets.⁶⁰

This shows that much caution is needed. A similarity of expression in two documents does not imply common authorship. The natural conclusion of this is that it would be of the utmost interest to have a reappraisal of the palaeography of these two eminently interesting documents.

⁶⁰ On this, see Jansen-Winkel (1995b).