

Observations on the *Reden und Rufe* in the workmen's tombs of Deir el-Medina

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Abstract. In this paper, I study the workers' speeches ("*Reden und Rufe*") in the 19th Dynasty tombs of Deir el-Medina. For this period, such texts are preserved in three tombs in Deir el-Medina (TT 212, TT 217, and TT 266), four in the Theban necropolis (TT 16, TT 19, TT 31, and TT 106), and possibly one in the oasis of Bahariya (the tomb of Amenhotep, called Huy). The goal of this paper is twofold. First, it aims at showing that, although a few workmen in Deir el-Medina added the so-called daily life scenes in the decorative program of their tombs, the speeches that are found within these have no parallels in the other known speech captions in private tombs. The second goal is to determine what kind of language is used in 19th Dynasty workers' speeches, since this literary genre is sometimes thought to be written in the vernacular. Following Vernus (2010: 319, n. 31), I argue that it is a mimetic language, "*à-la-manière-de*," more than an actual colloquial language. Regarding this question, the tombs of Ipuw (TT 217) and Amennakht (TT 266) lead to a dead-end because of the absence of text in prepared columns. The tomb of Ramose (TT 212) and the tomb of Panehsy and his wife Tarenu (TT 16), on the other hand, reveal Late Egyptian linguistic features. Some of these features might suggest a reinterpretation of the rules proper to the literary genre of these speeches (possible diaphasic variation).