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# (Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt

Todd GILLEN (ed.)



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# **(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt**

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## Introduction and overview

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Tradition is central to Egyptology, yet individual traditions in textual, artistic and material production still await critical treatment, and methodological frameworks for analysis are yet to be elaborated. The conceptual space that tradition occupies is more often than not intuitively divined, and could benefit from explicit discussion and problematisation. This volume is intended as a first step in this direction. It collects a broad survey of approaches to tradition in Egyptology, bringing together work on archaeological, art historical and philological material from the Predynastic to the Late Period in the hope of stimulating exploration of the topic. Certainly it has provoked many different responses and resulted in insights from many different points of view, dealing with largely disparate sets of data. The eclectic mix of material in this volume takes us from New Kingdom artists in the Theban foothills to Old Kingdom Abusir, and from changing ideas about literary texts to the visual effects of archaising statuary. With themes of diachrony persisting at the centre, aspects of tradition are approached from a variety of perspectives: as sets of conventions abstracted from the continuity of artefactual forms; as processes of knowledge (and practice) acquisition and transmission; and as relevant to the individuals and groups involved in artefact production.

The concepts of *productivity* and *reproductivity* that link many of the contributions are inspired by the field of text criticism<sup>1</sup> and are used as reference points for describing cultural change and the (dis)continuity of traditions. Briefly put, productive or open traditions are in a state of flux that stands in dialectic relation to shifting social and historical circumstances, while reproductive or closed traditions are frozen at a particular historical moment and their formulations are thereafter faithfully passed down verbatim. While a narrow binary structure may be a little restrictive, a continuum between the two poles of dynamic productivity and static reproductivity is by all means relevant to and useful for the description of various types of symbolisation, and probably all types of cultural production.

The volume is divided into four main sections, the first three of which attempt to reflect the different material foci of the contributions: text, art, and artefacts. The final section collects papers dealing with traditions which span different media. This is chiefly an organisational principle and facilitates specialists finding their relevant material. In doing so, I hope not to have discouraged a curiosity for reading outside one's field, since every paper sheds light on the themes of cultural transmission and (re)production. There is a general thematic trend that begins at the reproductive end of the spectrum and runs to the productive: the opening contributions in Section 1 discuss

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1. For discussion in Egyptology, see Assmann 1995: 6; Quack 1994: 13–23; Kahl 1999: 37–38.

'predominantly reproductive' traditions, and the volume concludes with Section 4, the papers of which address situations of high productivity.

This introduction gives a short, abstract-style overview for each paper, often including comments that localise the paper vis-à-vis the theme of *(re)productivity*. My own editor's comments on the Egyptological approach to tradition close the introduction and I hope inspire some ideas for future directions of study.

### Section 1: text

The Egyptological treatment of textual traditions has a long and successful history and follows broader, pan-disciplinary approaches to reproduction. **Jean Winand** gives an introduction to the text critical method for establishing stemmata that describe reproductive traditions, including notes on its history and basic principles. With discussion of the textual traditions of *The Story of Sinuhe* and *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, he both reviews classic cases of reproduction as well as interrogates instances of productivity in such texts. Moving to a consideration of issues of transmission, Winand proposes of a novel way of understanding the transmission history of *Sinuhe*. This new hypothetical stemma challenges established transmission histories of the text and involves a reconceptualisation of the canon as dynamically alive and engaged in a complex literary interplay with the *Teaching of Amenemhet*. Winand closes his introductory paper with an overview and linguistic illustrations of the phenomenon known as *égyptien de tradition*.

**Daniel Werning** treads similar ground with his meticulous demonstration of the complexities of the 'predominantly reproductive' tradition of the Book of Caverns. He details the evidence that allows us to characterise its different—'reproductive' as well as 'creative'—kinds of reception throughout the centuries: for example, the array of (un)intentional changes that could occur in a text and it still be considered 'reproductive,' including personalising the text or emending it for various reasons—often to improve the reading. The rigor of this analysis enables the differentiation and categorisation of changes made at different stages of the production process: copies made from manuscript or monument sources, and changes made by scribes (as authors) or the artisans who executed the monuments. Werning's very precise work impressively shows at one point (§6.3.2) how the ancient copyists, fully trained in varieties of *égyptien de tradition*, were nonetheless insensitive to the idiosyncratic grammar of the corpus. This contribution is above all significant for its discussion of the means of composition of the texts: Werning has been able to prove certain 'library traditions' and characterises the scribes who entered tombs to copy texts and images as 'archeo-philologists.' This is a rare penetration to the level of everyday practice, a theme that will be taken up again later in the section on art (*cf.* papers of Laboury and esp. Den Doncker).

A focus on the kinds of changes, reworkings, and modifications taking place within the conceptual bounds of a 'predominantly reproductive' tradition is also at the heart of **Marina Sokolova's** analysis of Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts (CT) attested on Hermopolite coffins (modern day Bersheh). She tracks spell sequences ('strings') in order to both determine which are unique to Bersheh, and which are also attested in other regional corpora (*e.g.* Thebes, Assiut, Meir), and also to cross-reference the occurrence of strings with social status, *i.e.* nomarchs *vs.* other high officials *vs.* officials. Based on the results of this thorough analysis, informed attempts are made to reconstruct the nature of the Bersheh tradition and its mode(s) of transmission. Among her numerous detailed conclusions, Sokolova explodes a common misconception, based on weak evidence, that copies of CT spells were stored in

libraries. Rather, most of the evidence from Bersheh suggests the existence of private collections, and that individuals circulated manuscripts privately, mostly within familial, social, or professional milieux. It seems that the CT tradition was introduced to Bersheh and transmitted *reproductively*, where Hermopolitans played the part of “active users, but not generators” of the texts.

These first papers initially begin with cases of reproductivity and problematising them. *Variation* is a key word in this context and it is the interpretive route **Chloé Ragazzoli** takes in exploring transmission and the role of the scribe. Taking the Late Egyptian Miscellanies as a case study, she opens up for study the mind of the scribe by deploying a sensitivity to so-called textual ‘errors’ and viewing them as ‘variants.’ Via diverse analyses she surveys an array of variation—from mechanical faults and the rhythms of reed dipping to compilation and intertextuality—and transforms what is usually considered ‘contamination’ by the text critical approach into a great source of understanding for a corpus often considered unfaithfully reproductive. Drawing on work in textual transmission from classic and medieval studies, Ragazzoli’s work is informed by material philology and collapses the distinction between authors and copyists: she rethinks ‘scribe’ as neither, suggesting instead “textual craftsman.”

Although a focus on reproduction by and large dominates the Egyptological study of text, approaches to productive traditions are nonetheless emerging. There is no standard way of handling such traditions, and ‘productivity’ should be seen as an umbrella term for a variety of kinds of tradition and transmission; the final three papers in this section offer some food for thought in that regard.

**Boyo Ockinga**’s contribution looks at the textual tradition of the *assertions of truthfulness*, using as a springboard the biography of the Ramesside high official Saroy found in Theban Tomb 233. Ockinga collects a corpus of 41 texts and explores the historical circumstances of such claims, their content, and in particular their characteristic lexical items and phrases. Ockinga observes that the formulation of such claims varies considerably and characterises it as a highly productive tradition, with similarities between instances deriving from common elite repertoires of literary and cultural knowledge. The subsequent thought-provoking discussion implies that the route for cultural transmission does not follow the common top-down direction: Ockinga takes up the idea that the original *Sitz im Leben* of such claims is in “formalised oral boasting,” and the evidence indicates that they found entry into the monumental sphere via the biographical inscriptions of the provincial elite of the First Intermediate Period, perhaps progressing to the royal sphere only afterwards. As to Saroy’s particular reasons for including such assertions in his biography, Ockinga reconstructs plausible motivations based on the facts of the high official’s life, bringing a personal perspective to the deployment of such traditions.

**Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert** takes us in a different direction in his discussion of the similarities (syntax, lexicon, argument structure) between many different kinds of textual genres. A comparison of wisdom and medical discourses in particular shows up similar argumentation structures consisting of sequences of conditional statements (*if...then*): the problem or symptom is given in the protasis; the solution or treatment in the apodosis. Such an arrangement never leads to the formulation of a general theory for universal application; rather, representative case studies are intended as points of guidance for the future high official or physician. Fischer-Elfert shrewdly observes that the processes consistently orient around perception and cognition, finding their places in the texts via the lexical items *mꜣꜣ* “see”, *gmi* “find” and *rh* “know.” He comes to similar conclusions about mathematical and oneirological texts and discusses how similar textual forms can nonetheless serve different cultural

functions. In this context of this volume, Fischer-Elfert's wider perspective points out an important limitation to studying text from the perspective of tradition: such correspondences are not simply textual convention, but indicate overarching patterns of thought.

Finally, **Camilla Di-Biase Dyson** takes a fresh interdisciplinary look at the Ramesside *Teaching of Menena* in order to describe a case of maximal productivity in Egyptian literature. That the teaching contains intertextual references to canonical New Kingdom literary texts has for a long while been common knowledge in Egyptology. Di-Biase Dyson extends our understanding of the ways in which the text engages with its textual tradition via a metaphor analysis novel to Egyptology: metaphor usage is analysed at the word level and metaphor distribution at the text level. What initially results is not only the sketch of a method for metaphor analysis, but also a descriptive typology of metaphor patterns. In application, Di-Biase Dyson surveys a number of indirect metaphors in *Menena* that draw on the lexical significations of canonical wisdom texts and create a generic intertextuality. She also identifies text-level patterns of (particularly nautical) imagery used to make analogies for life paths, choices and obstacles. This contribution is a valuable advance in capturing the broad relationships between the expression of ancient Egyptian creativity and literary tradition, and lays the foundation for exciting future results.

## Section 2: art

Section 2 of this volume brings together art historical approaches to tradition, and begins with the reflections of **Whitney Davis** on the Egyptological history of tradition vis-à-vis wider art history. It is a general overview as much as a personal account of his significant contribution to the discussion—in Egyptology and elsewhere—and orienting particularly about the issues of style and canonicity. Pulling apart his own previous work, he supplements a past concern for the *visuality* of Egyptian art with a present preoccupation with *virtuality* (“the construction of pictorial spaces that vary with the beholder’s real standpoint”) and *visibility* (“the ways in which pictures become intelligible in visual space.”) In addition to setting up a coherent, sophisticated and very neat terminology for describing these dimensions of art, Davis goes on to show, in a re-analysis of the third dynasty wood reliefs of Hesy at Saqqara, how illusions of depth and effect can be deliberately orchestrated. It is a significant step in understanding how canonical depiction works from a cognitive point of view, as well as a rare glimpse into aspects of Egyptian artistic traditions that are yet to be fully explored.

**Vanessa Davies** investigates the forms of hieroglyphic signs in 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty inscriptions at Medinet Habu and Luxor temples in a study that deals with the agentive sources of variation. In this respect it parallels to some extent Chloé Ragazzoli’s contribution for texts and scribes. Her micro-observations of monumental palaeography reveal the extent of variation within tradition: attempts to produce a certain sign yield different final results depending on the artist, and a particular artist can also vary his productions from instance to instance. In addition to her conclusions vis-à-vis work organisation, Davies also touches tantalisingly on topics such as the effect of physical environments or even emotional states on the output of artists, and whether the quality of execution of glyphs can be used as an index for the attribution of workmanship to either masters or apprentices. Unfortunately very few of these enticing speculations are provided with definitive illustrations, leaving us with an array of possibilities that await future substantiation. While her general argument against aesthetic judgements of Egyptian workmanship is sound, it remains up for debate whether or not the

“unintentional factors” that Davies discusses—dealt with in other disciplines as *embodiment*, *artistic gesture*, and other terms—should be explored under the already overloaded term ‘style.’

The following five papers are dedicated to the study of private tomb decoration and are particularly interested in describing the mechanisms of productivity. In a well-rounded contribution that situates itself within a larger academic landscapes and ranges over a variety of modern and ancient intellectual reference points, **Dimitri Laboury** frames artistic (re)production in terms of creativity. In part 1 he argues that creativity and tradition, rather than representing polar opposites, are codependent aspects of ancient Egyptian artistic practice. With an emphasis on the performative aspects of art, he goes on in part 2 to discuss the much-debated issue of copying. In a series of remarkably precise and systematic analyses of New Kingdom private tomb decoration, Laboury describes the networks of iconographic correspondences between particular scenes and their inspirations. He goes as far as to sketch some of the personal strategies that the artists used in the process of re-composing traditions and concludes that it is here that our search for creativity should take place. Only in part 3 does Laboury reveal *intericonicity* (akin to *intertextuality*) as a conceptual framework “to describe the various possibilities of interrelations between images, taking into account the questions of forms, styles and supports” as well as questions relating to cognitive aspects of artist engagement. In the final part 4, he reflects on emic (ancient Egyptian) concepts of creativity and returns once more to the links between creation and tradition. It is hoped from this contribution that the terminology and the broad approach (cf. Pieke’s contribution on *interpicturality*) will make an impact on and gain a certain momentum in Egyptological art history.

A parallel focus on transfer processes is used by **Gabriele Pieke** in her discussion of *interpicturality*. She highlights the centrality of tradition, reuse and reference as basic to creation and historicises the notions of originality and authenticity, noting that the Egyptian perspective did not put the artist at the centre of things. With foci of appropriation, revitalisation and citation, she focuses on rare elements of Old Kingdom tomb decoration, whose reproductions are easier to trace and whose significations are often easier to apprehend. In case studies of the *bat* pendant and lotus flower motifs, Pieke traces the *demo(cra)tisation* processes that characterise such traditions, as well their topographic and chronological spread. A final case study of the Teti cemetery at Saqqara demonstrates the complexities of signification in artistic reproduction, and investigates innovations that were too *avant-garde* or “provocative” to be taken up as widespread traditions, so indicating the conservative nature of tomb representation. Nonetheless, within this conservative framework, Pieke observes the attractiveness of fresh motifs for citation and reformulation. In terms of the mechanisms of creativity, we are dealing both with the combination of different motifs as well as the varying of the forms of motifs themselves.

**Tamás Bács** is invested in resisting entrenched negative judgements of Ramesside art as baroque or mannerist, unoriginal, repetitive, and essentially reproductive. He takes as a case study the chief draughtsman of Deir el-Medina, Amenhotep, son of the famous scribe Amunnakhte. By comparing the compositions of tombs that Amenhotep worked on with those in tombs that he visited (attested by graffiti left there), Bács implies that the artist had more to contribute to the composition than merely style and execution. This upsets the commonly held Egyptological belief that design was the domain of the patron and opens for new discussion composition as an artist-patron collaboration. Detailed observations of the construction of the tomb of Ramses IX (KV 6) also demonstrate how practices of extracting or abridging were often adaptive solutions to physical architectural problems. Hence the

final decoration of a tomb was the result of practical factors as well as innovatory impulses, and Ramesside creativity is much more complex than previously assumed.

**Alexis Den Doncker** takes up the question of image ‘copies’, deploying Laboury’s concept of *intericonicity* to capture—rather than unidirectional vectors from original to copy—the relationships between the two. Via several case studies of 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty private tombs, Den Doncker shows in great detail how aspects of copying—particularly the conceptual layout and architectural design—can be motivated by prestige to different ends: some tomb owners present themselves as ‘standing in’ the socio-professional sphere of a superior or more well respected member of the community in order to maximise social status; others present themselves as ‘standing out’ in relation to their predecessors in a process Den Doncker characterises, rather than copy, as emulation: “surpassing by means of copying.” He shows in the process how ideas—and in particular images—which were originally deployed for a particular purpose (e.g. Amenemheb’s images as illustration of actual professional achievements) could be received and repurposed according to different needs (e.g. Pehsukher’s redeployment of the images of his superior Amenemheb as illustrations of an idealised profession). Den Doncker’s analysis also reveals mechanisms of the *demo(cra)tisation* of culture: people at each step in the hierarchy have attempted to ‘stand in’ with their superiors, beginning with royalty and passing traditions progressively, over time, down the line.

In terms of this volume, Den Doncker’s work shows how traditions often begin and are continued not out of any abstract sense of tradition, but according to very punctual and social-professional functions/reasons. From this editor’s Peircean semiotic perspective, Den Doncker points to the much-neglected (social) indexical layer of signification in tomb decoration, redressing a much-needed imbalance previously favouring the iconic (= the extent to which it re-presents aspects of reality) and symbolic (= conventionalised) aspects of their signification. The inclusion of particular images only makes sense in the context of their webs of associations with and references to other tombs; they are thus subject to an interpretive multivalence. Den Doncker shows an extraordinary degree of understanding of the emic (what the Egyptians themselves intended) appreciation of these tombs.

**Lubica Hudáková** offers an accurate and comprehensive treatment of the tradition of a particular tomb scene over its life between the Old and Middle Kingdoms: the *m33*-scene, in which the tomb owner is depicted overseeing agricultural or other activities. She presents an exhaustive list of Middle Kingdom *m33*-scenes attested in mostly middle and upper Egypt and gives excellent microanalysis of scenes, tracking the productive nature of the tradition: the Egyptians did not simply reproduce Old Kingdom representations, but ‘modernised’ hairstyles and clothing, played with variations in combinations of accessories, and introduced new poses. Minor figures in particular were open to creative tinkering, and over time there was a substantial increase in the representation of women among these figures. Regionalism is also apparent, but the evidence is provincial and there is a lack of corresponding evidence from cultural centres, making transmission difficult or impossible to trace accurately. Hudáková wisely leaves open the question of whether changes in artistic representation reflect wider socio-cultural changes.

Rounding off this section, **Campbell Price** examines the motivations for deploying archaistic styles in Egyptian statuary of the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> dynasties. He characterises the (Karnak) temple environment in which statues of nobles were erected as competitive for audience engagement (the living, dead, and the gods), and suggests that archaism is effective in this regard because it is ostentatious. Via a case study of the statue of Petamenope, Price observes that the goals of archaism were often to “vaunt access to skilled labour and connoisseurship of past motifs”: Petamenope

designed and commissioned his own statues, and had personal knowledge of old repertoires and redeployed them in overt emulations. Price also points out the interpretive multivalence of such archaisms: Petamenope's standing statue recalls Middle Kingdom styles and 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty emulations of them, and reference could have been intended to similar 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty statues—for example that of Amenhotep son of Hapu—that were also standing within the Karnak precinct at this time. The conclusions are analogous to those of Den Doncker: Petamenophis' use of archaism can be interpreted as an attempt to both 'stand in' and 'stand out.'

### Section 3: artefact

The three papers in this section offer excellent and insightful commentary on traditions with a more material focus. The first treats the concept of a *skeuomorph*, a concept that can be defined in a number of ways, but that usually refers to the transposition of features from one medium to another: where the feature plays a structurally functional role in the original medium, it is carried over to play an aesthetic role in the new medium. **Valérie Angenot** explores the mechanisms, reasons and purposes for such phenomena via a range of case studies. She looks at the artistic imitation of wood on Ramesside shabti boxes and suggests a range of significations and implications, among them issues of cost (e.g. cheaper to imitate wood rather than acquire the genuine article) and prestige. She also discusses the *petrification* or *statuification* of architectural elements; that they preserve the semiotic features of sacredness of their models, as is the case with much of ancient Egyptian temple and tomb architecture. She goes on to discuss the notion of *simulacrum* as the Egyptians might have conceived of it, concluding that the semiotic status of skeuomorphs was one of bringing to life what was represented: "the simulacrum was as valid as its model." Skeuomorphism is potentially a powerful tool for the description of some of the basic aesthetic principles of ancient Egyptian representation. Angenot has shown how the Egyptians' use of the artistic techniques of reproducing an object in another medium can be interpretively multivalent: as a mark of prestige, of authenticity, to maintain habits of usage, or even, on deeper levels, to "maintain the balance of the universe" by preserving the prototypical forms of the past.

An interest in the study of tradition as convention is the theme of **Lucie Jirásková's** paper. She focuses on the slow shifts in the forms and meanings of material culture that happen over the *longue durée*, of which the Egyptian practitioners of traditions may themselves have been unaware. Her case study is the production of model stone vessels at Abusir in the Old Kingdom: she introduces the evidence for the royal cemetery and the cemetery of Abusir South, providing detailed representations (photos and line drawings) of the vessel assemblages. In outlining the rise, peak, and fall of the tradition, she discusses: the uses of the sets of vessels (Opening of the Mouth ceremony); changes in the types of vessels included in a set; the workmanship, drawing conclusions about the craftsmen and workshops involved; and the implications for our interpretations of social history. Importantly, Jirásková points out how changes accumulated in the replication of artefacts could result in 'new' artefacts. She concludes that the evidence from the late Old Kingdom—the fact that vessel forms had become indistinct and indistinguishable from each other—indicates that the tradition had departed a long way from its original meaning, and that the significance of the objects no longer held a strong relationship to their material forms. The paper leaves us wondering to what extent the inclusion of these model vessels in burial assemblages was by pure momentum of tradition.

A similar approach characterises **Carlo Rindi Nuzzolo**'s comprehensive treatment of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures, a tradition in wood that stretches from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period and beyond. Rindi Nuzzolo introduces a corpus of 44 figures deriving from Akhmim and currently situated in various museums around the world. He describes the physical morphologies and decoration of the figures, with illustrations and photographs, and documents the different kinds of inscribed texts and their variations. Outlining the main features of the Akhmimic tradition, he ties them to concepts and religious identities specific to that location, linking them also to features of coffin production at that place during the Ptolemaic period. Conclusions are also drawn about their manufacture, for example that they were mass-produced, or at least made in advance and left blank for the names and texts of potential clients. The most significant interpretation of the paper is the addition to existing typologies of the geographic dimension. In terms of (re)production, Rindi Nuzzolo shows how variations can be geographically based, as well as shaped by the concepts and religious identities specific to that location.

#### **Section 4: traditions across media**

In this section are collected contributions which discuss traditions that span or traverse different media, with a persistent theme of the monumental. Each makes a very unique and hopefully important contribution to the study of monumental traditions. Although studying monumental texts and images is sometimes seen as Egyptologically passé, it is only now and in studies like those below that we are beginning to see the particular significations of monuments, their resonances in other arts and the interactions in which they participated. This is an especially exciting section in the sense that we are often dealing with particularly creative uses of culture.

**Pascal Vernus** offers an important contribution in his treatment of sacralised texts, a category that is emically defined, according ancient Egyptian religious ideas, in particular texts which relate to the creation. He differentiates two categories of text: those reflecting the gods' (and hence the creator's) own words, and texts produced by humans that attempt to integrate significant collective events (via royal monuments and inscriptions) and individuals (via tombs and votive monuments) into the "current state of creation." Vernus goes on to discuss how such texts are made sacred/sacralised, primarily focusing on overt marking: stone support, hieroglyphic script, representations of the divine, language of the primordial time (*égyptien de tradition*), and so forth. Via a range of examples, he shows how different combinations of markers lead to varying degrees of sacredness and are thus made "accretions to the creation." In relation to (re)productivity, two trends are outlined: a *reproductive trend*, in which "past basically functions as prototype," but is nonetheless inevitably (albeit secondarily) influenced by contemporary concerns; and a *productive trend*, in which contemporary concerns are the "dominating attractor" and past models are only appealed to secondarily. Vernus goes on to discuss the ancient Egyptian scribal ethic based on analysis of the scribal and linguistic habits of reproductions. He discusses "punctual modernisation" of texts as well as systematic editorial policies and their relation to (re)productive *égyptien de tradition* and concludes that, in some contexts, reproductivity did not involve verbatim copying. For productive texts, he discusses how they may include reproduced elements, and he focuses particularly on what he calls "stage switching or alternation" of language, a situation that plays on a situation of linguistic diglossia. In the context of this volume, Vernus' paper offers excellent food for thought for reflection on the material existence of

ancient Egyptian texts and the semiotic role of the physical support in the interpretation of their significance.

The second paper in this section is my own (**Todd Gillen**), in which I attempt to foreground the processes of productivity: in dealing with the Triumph Scene—the well-known depiction in which an anthropomorphic deity offers the khepesh sword to the king while the latter smites enemies—, I focus on its emergence as a strong Ramesside tradition at Thebes. More generally, I use it as a case study for illustrating some principles of the way that traditions are formed and come to be consolidated. I assemble the monumental Theban replications of the tradition and propose a way of diagramming this productive tradition that is analogous to the stemmata produced for reproductive traditions. In particular, I am interested in the *fittingness* to (conforming to or diverging from) a generic norm. In part 2, I identify the Triumph Scene as a *thing* in its various aspects: textual, pictorial, material. I attempt to sketch broadly its conditions of possibility, beginning with notes on its larger semiotic contexts and going on to discuss the socio-cultural practices to which the Triumph Scene refers and on which it relies for its meanings. Part 3 handles conceptual precursors to the Ramesside Tradition, while in part 4 I concentrate on the texts of the Triumph Scene: the speech of the god. I locate the Triumph Scene of Seti I on the North Wall of the Hypostyle Hall (Karnak) at the genesis of the Ramesside tradition, and meticulously trace the various monumental inspirations on which it directly draws for its composition. Reviewing the literature as I go, I not only lay out the material comprehensively for the first time and clear up a number of Egyptological misconceptions, but I also go further in offering suggestions for the suitability of those particular selections. What results is, I hope, a stimulating new ‘take’ on the emergence of traditions and their Egyptological treatment.

**Hana Navratilova** continues the theme of reception of monumental texts in her discussion of visitors’ graffiti during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. She reviews the nature of the data, giving as a background the Thutmoside interest in the past (both *Traditions-* and *Geschichtsbewusstsein*), in particular in relation to royal funerary temple architecture. One of the foci of the paper is to determine what we can learn about the motivations for visitors’ graffiti: was it aesthetic appreciation, pure interest in past traditions, or research visits by architects and artists? Her overview of the ways in which knowledge of texts, scenes and architecture was transmitted only concludes that much “remains elusive.” In Navratilova’s more concrete conclusions, she draws fascinating links between the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom architectural and textual material and attempts to establish whether Theban monuments were inspired by those at Memphis. Matching the dates on Memphite graffiti with known dates of building activity in Thebes results in some interesting correlations that speak in favour of her theory. What is clear is that the observed visits and artistic/architectural borrowings were not opportunistic (*i.e.* whatever was accessible) or coincidental. The Thutmosides had particular interests (*e.g.* Senwosret III) and this emerges in their selections. The work has potential for revealing the transmission of monumental forms across dynasties and the resonance of monumental traditions in creative spheres more generally.

**Éva Liptay**’s treatment of Third Intermediate Period traditions traverses royal and non-royal traditions between papyrus and tomb wall. Via three detailed case studies, she gives the impression that each motif of a wall painting, funerary papyrus or sarcophagus has its own unique history, and by tracing the occurrences of each motif we can determine that any entire papyrus or tomb composition is comprised of a myriad of different sources, each with their own significance. Such borrowings are often reinterpreted, and have specific social indexical significations that are contingent on their source. It shows what a period of artistic and conceptual *mélange* the Third Intermediate Period was and gives us some hints as to the complexity of their relationship with their own past. Liptay is also

sensitive to its topographic dependence, with Thebes being a major source, the motifs of particularly its Ramesside tombs reappearing in reinterpreted forms in Tanis and Memphis, among other places. While she traces non-royal borrowings of royal motifs—the sort of social vector of replication that is described as *demo(cra)tisation*—she also gives evidence for the rarer creation of royal motifs based on borrowings from non-royal contexts. Liptay also elucidates the reasons for the shift in supports: the shifting of the focus of ritual space from tomb to coffin; the interconnection and overlapping of temple and funerary rituals and sharing of iconographic and textual material. She locates the source of this creative collage process as originating not among artists or artisans but among “the highest ranking members of the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty Theban clergy of Amun.”

The final paper in this section is **Andreas Dorn**’s study of the multivalent *iri.n* formula in the Deir el Medina community of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties. In this nuanced analysis, Dorn explores the various uses of the formula and traces the expansion of its significations over time. On stelae, he remarks its signature-like character and observes its use as a donation mark, as an acting instruction, and as an image substitute. On other supports (tomb decoration, drawing ostraca, text ostraca and papyri), the uses are even more varied and Dorn highlights the context dependence of its meanings. Of particular interest is its use in graffiti (an appendix gives a full list of attestations of the *iri.n* PN-formula in graffiti of Western Thebes): although its significations become difficult to disentangle clearly, Dorn observes that it is used by village leaders and is often linked with exceptional content or events (e.g. connection with the vizier). In relation to literary texts, its potential scope of reference is especially diverse, and Dorn discusses the complications with particular reference to the debate on pseudepigraphs, authors, copyists and papyrus owners. In the context of (re)production, this paper traces the extension of a tradition which originated in the stela/donation context into an array of increasingly nuanced environments, and so represents the quintessence of what this volume attempts to apprehend.

### Final thoughts

If I can field one broad criticism of the volume it is the general dearth of conceptual sophistication. With a few obvious exceptions, there is little mention—or profitable use made—of theoretical, conceptual, or methodological reference points that are central to the study of tradition in other fields. Where, for example, were the citations of art historical takes on survival such as Aby Warburg’s *Nachleben*?<sup>2</sup> What of significant conceptual frameworks closer to home, such as offered by Whitney Davis’ treatise *Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis*, in which he tries to account in a sophisticated way for the kinds of reproductions that fill this volume? In the numerous discussions of artists, why wasn’t Ernst Gombrich mentioned, an art historian (among many) who said it all with his famous introduction to *The Story of Art*: “There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists.”<sup>3</sup>

In the more general domain of culture, the classic volume edited by Hobsbawm and Granger on the *Invention of Tradition* is only mentioned once (in a footnote) in the whole volume, and the role of memory in our account of traditions—along with Assmann’s influential work on cultural and collective memory—has slipped almost completely off the radar. And what about biological modeling of cultural transmission—cultural phylogenies, reticulation and the like—, and Richard Dawkins’

2. Didi-Huberman 2003.

3. Gombrich 1950.

concept of the *meme*,<sup>4</sup> which has found the public spotlight and could have been an excellent point of departure for almost any of the contributions in this volume? Related is the very fertile idea from evolution studies—touched on by Valérie Angenot—of cultural *exaptation*: something that originally served a certain function comes over time to be co-opted for another.<sup>5</sup> We might take our lead from parallel processes in linguistics which have been labelled *refunctionalisation*.<sup>6</sup> Much could be made of this, with a little work.

For the study of text, I have offered my own adaptation of the stemmatic method tailored to productive traditions and taking into account material aspects of the tradition. Yet the general impression is a lack of Egyptological interest in the emergence of complex cultural forms: take for example the unique glimpses that the evidence from ancient Egypt offers us into the formation of literature, a classic and classical subject of study. I am thinking here of Todorov and the *Origin of Genres*, and of Yuri Lotman and his *Ausgangstyp* (the idea that literature stems from non-literary text types), signalled by Assmann<sup>7</sup> and not really deeply explored by Egyptologists. Scholars in other fields discussing such 'big' issues seem unaware of the Egyptian evidence,<sup>8</sup> and it seems to me that it could have a significant impact on the topic. In short, analyses of the emergence of literature in Egypt could historicise the general topic in a unique way, changing the face of literature studies!

I could go on but the main point is this: Egyptologists are not availing themselves of the conceptual richness of a broad academic landscape and as a consequence struggle to frame their topics and their studies in ways relevant to today's academic and social concerns. If, as Egyptologists, we want to be germane to wider academic pursuits, attractive to funding bodies, and interesting to the general public, then we have to engage current issues, interests and problems. We have to read more widely and discover what we can add to the discussion.

It was an aim of the *(Re)productive Traditions* conference and this volume to investigate common parameters for talking about the production of material, artistic and textual culture in ancient Egypt. However, rather than a collaborative meditation on the nature of tradition(s), cultural transmission and historical methodologies, the result is mostly a hotchpotch of conceptually diverse investigations on even more diverse subject matters. I feel that while the volume contains valuable and important individual contributions, little more than the sum of its parts can be gleaned. My suggestion of *(re)production* as a common point of reference—although featuring consistently among the papers—has remained elusively multivalent, and the use of the term in a wide range of senses suggests a kind of conceptual opportunism among contributors. Nonetheless in the time between the conference and this publication, I have noticed the phrase 'reproductive tradition' appear in several papers<sup>9</sup> as well as woven into the premise of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Young Egyptologists (ICYE). I suppose from these small indications that it has found a certain resonance in Egyptology and I hope at the very least that it inspires new ways of thinking about the evidence.

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4. Dawkins 1976.

5. Gould & Vrba 1982.

6. For the first application of exaptation in linguistics: Lass 1990.

7. Assmann 1999: 2.

8. Anecdotally, though importantly, I'm sure I'm not the only Egyptologist who is a little tired of hearing the history of nearly everything traced back uniquely to classical (ancient Greek and Roman) cultures.

9. E.g. Vernus 2016.

If there is a flip side to the Egyptological conceptual conservatism, it is the enthusiasm people have demonstrated for this topic. Tradition continues to be a vital point of contact for diverse approaches to the past and a convenient umbrella term for cultural continuity in a variety of domains. Such common reference points are rare in a field increasingly fractured by progressive specialisation, and this volume demonstrates a willingness to collaborate that I hope will persist in future Egyptological endeavours.

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# Tradition and Creativity

## Toward a Study of Intericonicity in Ancient Egyptian Art

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### 1. THE ISSUE OF TRADITION AND CREATIVITY IN THE WESTERN RECEPTION OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART

Although a key concept in Art historical discourse and reasoning,<sup>1</sup> creativity has almost always been avoided as an issue in the discussion of Ancient Egyptian Art. This surprising phenomenon has obviously deep roots in the Western vision of Ancient Egyptian Art (and civilisation).<sup>2</sup> So, for instance, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Egyptology was still emerging as a new scientific discipline, the famous French novelist Gustave Flaubert expressed his deep weariness of Ancient Egyptian Art (“*l’art égyptien m’ennuie profondément*”), for, as his friend and partner in their trip to the Middle East, Maxime Du Camp, explained, “Les temples (égyptiens) lui paraissaient toujours les mêmes,”<sup>3</sup> so, in other words, because those monuments failed to display any creativity in his eyes. Almost one century earlier, the founding father of Ancient Art History, Johan Joachim Winckelmann conveyed the same opinion when he started—and concluded—the chapter devoted to the characterisation of “Art among the Egyptians” in his renowned and seminal *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) with the following words:

Die Ägypter haben sich nicht weit von ihrem ältesten Stil in der Kunst entfernt, und dieselbe konnte unter ihnen nicht leicht zu der Höhe aufsteigen, zu welcher sie unter den Griechen gelangt ist [...] Die Geschichte der Kunst der Ägypter ist, nach Art des Landes derselben, wie eine große verödete Ebene, welche man aber von zwei oder drei Türmen übersehen kann.

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1. For a synthesis discussion of the subject, see the philosopher’s comments of Alpers 2005.
  2. In this respect, it is noteworthy that there is no entry for creativity in an encyclopaedic compendium like the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, as if the concept was irrelevant in the context of Ancient Egypt, or, to be more precise, in the Egyptological perception of Ancient Egypt. There are, of course, a few—but actually very few—exceptions to this general tendency, such as Robins 1998, or also Galan 2014 (although using the word “creativity” without addressing the concept in its cultural setting). For the justification of the use of the notion of art—and consequently of artist—in the discussion of monumental and figural productions of Ancient Egypt, see Laboury 2013a and 2016.
  3. See Gothot-Mersch 1991: 185. At that moment, Flaubert had nevertheless already read and annotated the works of G.W.F. Hegel on art and aesthetics (Séginger 2005), in which the German philosopher considered Ancient Egyptian Art as true Art, describing Ancient Egyptians as “unter den bisherigen Völkern das eigentliche Volk der Kunst” (Hegel 1842: 445).

One of his main sources, still extremely influential in our modern perception of Ancient Egyptian Art, the Greek philosopher Plato, already wrote in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. that, “long ago [...]”, Ancient Egyptians “prescribed in detail and posted up the patterns of” the different forms of art (as expressions of virtue) “in their temples; and outside this official list it was, and still is, forbidden to painters and all other producers of postures and representations to introduce any innovation or invention, whether in such productions or in any other branch of music, over and above the traditional forms. And if you look there, you will find that the things depicted or graven there 10,000 years ago (I mean what I say, not loosely but literally 10,000) are no whit better or worse than the productions of today, but wrought with the same art” (*Laws* II, 656d–657a).<sup>4</sup>

As can be seen through those three milestones in the history of the Western reception of Ancient Egyptian Art, the issue (or non-issue) of creativity in this artistic production has almost always been tangled and even confused with that of tradition, in the long-lasting preconceived idea of the so-called immutability of Ancient Egyptian Art. So, to refer to the title of the conference, according to this—standard—theory, the tradition of Ancient Egyptian Art in its fundamentally reproductive dimension would have been the source of the—alleged—total absence of creativity in this figural and monumental production, which could, at best, be considered and described as an art of reproduction, of self-repetition, if not the art of reproduction *par excellence*. Although nowadays every Egyptologist is—supposedly—trained to be able to date Ancient Egyptian artistic pieces according to style, *i.e.* to their evolution, this monolithic view of Ancient Egyptian art is still surprisingly strong and vivid, even within the Egyptological discipline.

Such a misconception, that actually prolongs—often unconsciously—the Ancient Greek discourse about Egyptians and their civilization (including their art), is based on an error of reasoning that consists in mixing—or failing to distinguish—types and tokens, to use the concepts of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies.<sup>5</sup> So, in other words, the forms of expression, the iconographic types and formulae, the conventions that structure, shape and define Ancient Egyptian Art are so coherent and consistent that they might engender an impression of immutability, although every instantiation of them is, in fact, unique (as will be emphasised here below).

This notable formal identity of Ancient Egyptian Art, which characterises so neatly the latter in its Western reception,<sup>6</sup> was the subject of an important monograph published by Whitney M. Davis in

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4. Quoted from the classic translation of R.G. Bury (on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper>). On Plato and Egyptian Art, see Davis 1979. On the way Plato viewed and made use of Egypt in his philosophical and political discourse, see Brisson 2000: 151–167.

5. According to texts like the so-called monument of Memphite Theology or Shabaka stone (BM EA 498; following the philosophical reading of Assmann 1995: 171–174 and others) or the Ancient Egyptian equivalents of our modern dictionaries and encyclopaedias, *i.e.* the onomasiological lists of *realia* (or, rather, tokens) we are in the habit of calling *onomastica* (Gardiner 1947; Osing 1998), this fundamental distinction between types and tokens is far from being irrelevant in the context of Ancient Egyptian epistemology. In this respect, see also the comments of Allen 1988: 53–54, or the epistemological conclusions one may draw from the analysis of Meeks 2012, who showed that taxonomical characteristics in Ancient Egyptian classification of living creatures are, at the same time, singular and collective, in the sense that each one of those characteristics “*est propre à l’individu mais appartient en commun à une collectivité qui l’inclut*” (Meeks, 2012: 542).

6. On the way art criticism and history dealt with the interpretation of this compelling ‘sameness’ or formal consistency of Ancient Egyptian Art during the last century, see Davis 1983. One has to note here that this vision of Ancient Egyptian Art remains extremely influenced by the context in which it was formed, *i.e.* in a contrastive view with classical Art and its offspring (in this respect, the use of the concept of ‘*vorgriechisch*’ by Schäfer 1919 is very telling).

1989. In the vein of the pioneering work of Heinrich Schäfer (1919), he analysed there the fundamentals of what he proposed to define as the “Canonical tradition” of Ancient Egyptian Art. By using the very concept of tradition, which involves in itself a diachronic and thus a dynamic dimension, Davis also decided to consider this Ancient Egyptian artistic canon from an evolutionary perspective, investigating its origins and emergence at the predynastic and early dynastic dawn of pharaonic civilization, as well as its dynamic vitality (or dynamicity) in historical times, through its capability to reinterpret and re-explore its own principles and iconographic repertoire, a phenomenon that the author illustrated with a few selected examples.<sup>7</sup>

More recently, Dorothea Arnold suggested considering Ancient Egyptian Art as “a performing art,” such as music or theatre, *i.e.* artistic productions in which the performer(s) can be regarded as true creative artist(s) as much as the original composer(s) or inventor(s) of the work. In order to substantiate this imaginative and stimulating idea, which also clearly shifts the traditional Western perspective on Ancient Egyptian Art, she presented a thorough and exemplary analysis of an early Middle Kingdom relief block from Lisht (MMA 15.3.1164) that displays a reinterpretation of two different iconographic traditions of the Old Kingdom, concluding that “if thus all representational artistic work in ancient Egypt can be understood to a certain extent as “performance,” the creative re-enactment of the Lisht artists differs only by its more deliberate approach from the ones of the Old Kingdom” (Arnold 2008: 8–9).<sup>8</sup>

So, as a matter of fact, despite a very old Western discourse—or should I say tradition—on the supposed changelessness of Ancient Egyptian Art, the two concepts involved, tradition, on the one hand, and creativity, on the other, actually do not contradict nor exclude one another, but, on the contrary, articulate with each other. Just as nothing can be considered new if it is not compared to something older, tradition does not impede creativity but constitutes the necessary background for its development,<sup>9</sup> in Ancient Egyptian artistic practices and thinking, just like in any other art form or tradition.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. COPIES AT ISSUE IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART HISTORY

As underlined above, the long history of the Western reception of Ancient Egyptian Art has deeply rooted the pervasive idea that this artistic production could be considered the paragon of arts of

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In the context of the Ancient Near Eastern artistic traditions, for instance, Ancient Egyptian Art does not appear so unusual and singularly monolithic and immutable.

7. Notably Davis 1989: 116–191 (chapter 6) and 38–93 (chapters 3–4) respectively. Needless to say that he also addressed the issue of the invariance of Ancient Egyptian Art and its possible explanation(s), especially in his last chapter (7): Davis 1989: 192–224. For an interpretation of the rejection of perspective (and of the aesthetics of mimesis to which perspectival depiction actually belongs) characteristic of Ancient Egyptian Art as a cultural ‘symbolic form’ (Panofsky 1991), see Laboury 1998b. For the demonstration that this is the result of a conscious decision and not of an inability, at least from the New Kingdom on, see Laboury 2008.
8. She also came back to the subject in Arnold 2012: 118–122.
9. And vice versa: tradition, as a dynamic phenomenon, develops, lives on, and is nurtured and renewed by creativity.
10. In general Art History (*i.e.* outside the strict perimeter of Egyptology), this is of course a very well known and given fact, amply demonstrated by so many studies for more than a century, among which one cannot fail to cite the legacy of A. Warburg, E. Panofsky and H. Gombrich (notably in Warburg 2010; Panofsky 1939 and 1960; Gombrich 1960). For more recent discussions of the subject in the perspective of the relation between creativity and tradition (with a special focus on Roman art), see Perry 2005 and Gazda 2002.

reproduction or the best example of what a purely reproductive tradition is (or would be, if any).<sup>11</sup> In spite of this strong reputation of repetitiveness, there are not so many cases of true copies—in the narrow sense of the word—in Ancient Egyptian Art and the latter actually never brought forth two truly identical monuments.

This is even true with serial production, like statues made in series and meant to be displayed as such. Among many examples, the very clear case of the famous triads of Menkaura may be cited here: whereas each figure of those group statues, whether the king, the goddess Hathor or the personification of a nome, plainly shows the very same physiognomy, *i.e.* the easily recognizable official portrait of Menkaura, every preserved triad, as their discoverer rightly noticed (Reisner 1931: 108–129, pl. 36–45), is characterised by slight stylistic—or rendering—variations, which allow them to be differentiated, but are also absolutely consistent on the three faces of the same sculpture, denoting a single individual hand (or sculptor) behind—at least the finishing—of each piece (fig. 1). The nature and distribution of these stylistic differences and, at the same time, the strong coherence of the royal physiognomy point to a very well-controlled facial model of the king, which was dispatched among the sculptor workshops in order to be faithfully copied, despite a few inevitable faint alterations caused by the technical and human circumstances of such artistic productions (Laboury 2009: 180–181; Laboury 2010: 4–5). And the same holds true for every statue series in Ancient Egyptian Art,<sup>12</sup> as is perfectly exemplified, for instance, by the well-known set of sculptures of Senwosret III erected on the latter's command in the funerary complex of Montuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari, where the rendering of the given type varies in the reproduction of the king's facial model, but also in the size of the different statues (Navelle 1913: 11, 20, pl. 2; fig. 2). Such variations, due to manufacture methods and thus—at least mainly—unintentional, demonstrate that, contrary to the opinion of Flaubert, Winckelmann or Plato, even when duplication was intended, Ancient Egyptian Art never produced two exact copies.

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11. As noted in the previous page, about the canonical tradition, by essence, the very concept of tradition implies diachrony, evolution, dynamicity and thus a productive, rather than a reproductive dimension. And practically, every tradition is dynamic and productive. What is often designated as a reproductive tradition actually relates to duplication and canonization. On this issue, in an Egyptological perspective, see the comments of Vernus in this volume.
  12. For a few examples, see Dohrmann 2004 (Senwosret I); Tefnin 1979 (Hatshepsut); Laboury 1998a (Thutmose III); or Manniche 2010 (Amenhotep IV).



Fig. 1. Comparison of the three faces on Menkaura's triads Cairo JE 46499 (top) and 40678 (bottom) (author's photographs).



Fig. 2. Variations among statues of Senwosret III from the same series (from left to right): Cairo RT 18/4/22/4 (after Saleh & Sourouzian 1987: no. 98), London BM EA 686, 685 (author's photographs; detail of the bust of London BM EA 686, after Polz 1995: pl. 48a) and 684 (after Russmann 2001: 103; detail of the bust, after Polz 1995: pl. 48b) from the temple of Montuhotep II at Deir el-Bahari.

Of course, the Art of Ancient Egypt—like any other Art—is full of intentional imitations of past works. From a heuristic point of view, the less usual the imitated motif, the easier to detect the copying process. A very clear case has recently been pointed out by Alexis Den Doncker (Den Doncker 2010: 81–87; Den Doncker 2012: 30–31; and in this volume), who drew attention to “an uncommon scene of dance” in the tomb chapel of the steward of the Vizier Useramun, Amenemhat, owner of the Theban Tomb 82 (TT 82), obviously imitating a similar composition painted in nearby TT 60, made in the name of the early 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty Vizier Antefiqer for the latter’s mother, Senet (fig. 3). The imitation process that links the two images is evidenced by the extreme rareness of the very kinetic depiction of the dancer leaping into the air, but also by a graffito that Amenemhat left on a wall of the Middle Kingdom monument, just a couple of meters from the TT 60 inspiring motif, proving that the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty tomb owner undoubtedly visited the funerary chapel commissioned by his boss’ predecessor, Antefiqer.<sup>13</sup> But, as A. Den Doncker perfectly pointed out, the close comparison between the model and the imitation reveals that the latter modified and reinterpreted the former:

It is very difficult not to notice a process of *re-composition*. The artist indeed changed the right-hand priest into a priestess, while the female dancers who clap their hands have become male musicians playing clappers. The motif of the female dancer has moved to the right side of the scene in order to replace the original priest. This somehow reveals, in regard to the artist, an absolutely free use of iconographical elements within the representation and an ability to change the context. While the model in TT 60 is connected to agricultural scenes, the artist in fact placed his copy within the context of a specific Hathoric feast. He therefore seems to have retained the main shape and contents of the representation more than its proper symbolic meaning. These *adaptations* to the new iconographical context are relevant. Furthermore, the clothes of the two central male dancers whom the artist certainly focused on should be noted. The dress of the original central handclapping dancer went to the jumper and vice-versa, while, as we have just seen, the female dancer went through the same *inversion*. These processes of inversions might be related to a certain purpose of refashioning whole representations and specific iconographical motifs. (Den Doncker 2012: 31).

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13. A. Den Doncker (2010: 84; 2012: 30, and in this volume) convincingly suggested that it is probably during the performance of his task of supervising the work in the neighbouring tomb of Useramun TT 61 that Amenemhat visited TT 60, only 10 meters away. One has to note here that the copy or, better, the inspiration from TT 60 for the decoration of TT 82 was certainly not restricted to this unique motif, as is suggested, for example, by the comparison of the old-fashioned scene of the pilgrimage to Abydos in TT 82 (Davies & Gardiner 1915: pl. 12) and its equivalent in TT 60 (Davies 1920: pl. 17–20), where the above mentioned graffito of Amenemhat was written.



Fig. 3. Dance scene in TT 60 and its adapted imitation in TT 82 (after Davies 1920: pl. 15; and Davies & Gardiner 1915: pl. 20).

Another conspicuous instance of deliberate imitation within the Theban Necropolis of the New Kingdom deserves to be mentioned here: the—again—exceptional motif or sub-scene of a worker jumping on a rod in order to compress the crops in an overfilled bag of cereals elegantly depicted in the middle of agricultural scenes of the famous tomb of the horologer priest Nakht, TT 52, that reappeared in the nearby and almost contemporaneous funerary chapel of the “director of the double granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt” Khaemhat, TT 57, under the reign of Amenhotep III.<sup>14</sup> In this case, it seems possible to propose a tentative history of the motif and its transmission (fig. 4).

The iconographic concept of a harvesting worker jumping on a rod in order to close the lid of a bag brimful of grains can, in the current state of our documentation, be tracked down to the tomb of the “scribe accountant of bread in Upper and Lower Egypt”, “substitute of the (royal) herald” Userhat,

14. Laboury 1997: 57. Less than 300 meters separate the two tombs. Other details from the paintings of TT 52 directly inspired the designer of TT 57’s relief decoration (Laboury 1997: 56; and here below, fig. 5). Regarding the fame of TT 52 during the late 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, see the remarks of Gathy 2013: 93, n. 444, who noticed in her previous research on musicians and dancers in the decoration of Theban Tombs of the New Kingdom that the nowadays well-known female orchestra of the tomb of Nakht was copied in different funerary monuments, like TT 175 and 249, or on the limestone relief MFA 1972.651, in the name of the royal cup-bearer Tjawy. On the modern renown of the tomb, mainly for the same reasons, it seems, see Davies 1917: 35–36.

TT 56, and thus hypothetically ascribed to one of the three painters responsible for the decoration of this funerary chapel of the time of Amenhotep II, just next to the future TT 57.<sup>15</sup> More or less one generation later, the painter hired to decorate the tomb of the horologer priest Nakht provided his own formal (re-)interpretation of the same concept or theme, with an antithetic composition confronting two different ways of expressing visually the same action, *i.e.* the effort of the workers to fasten the bag: on the one hand, through a perceptual representation (with a kind of snapshot capturing a man in the course of his jump into the air), and, on the other, through a conceptual ‘signification,’ in the etymological sense of the word, *i.e.* production of or expression through sign(s) (with a fellow worker depicted in a conventional pose directly derived from the hieroglyphic classifier for effort and violent actions [Gardiner sign A24], both arms projected in front of the chest, in a totally un-naturalistic gesture).<sup>16</sup> The formula was obviously deemed aesthetically effective as it elicited emulation among colleagues. Hence, the motif was soon copied in the so-called ‘lost tombs’<sup>17</sup> TT E2 (in Dra Abu el-Naga, more than 1 km north) and TT C4 (just a few dozen meters higher on the hill of Sheikh Abd el-Gurna) (Manniche 1988: 106, 148, pl. 34, 48–49),<sup>18</sup> but, once again, nevertheless, re-adapted. Although the scenes are now very fragmentary, there is no doubt that the two copies appeared in the same iconographic or syntactic environment, *i.e.* connected to a female gleaner and directly next to a group of male reapers depicted in a paratactic way, slightly shifted from one another on the background of a high row of matured cereals, with a sickle in one hand and the other arm raised in front of them (Parkinson 2008: 112; Manniche 1988: pl. 34). But there are also differences: from the model to the copies, as well as between the two imitations. While the jumping worker was rendered in a less fluid and less kinetic position in TT E2, due to a modification of the angle between the two legs, he was positioned much higher in the equivalent scene of TT C4, reducing the naturalistic effect of the capture in motion.<sup>19</sup> Besides, according to these changes, the bending figure of the female gleaner filling the space left under the legs of the leaper was raised in a vertical position in TT E2 (and transformed into a beverage bringer), whereas it was doubled in TT C4. And, moreover,

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15. For the study of the painters involved in the decoration of this tomb, see the art-historical analysis in Beinlich-Seeber & Shedid 1987: 114–146, and more specifically 139–142; for this scene as the precursor or prototype of its equivalent in TT 52, see Beinlich-Seeber & Shedid 1987: 48.
  16. This stylistic strategy of confronting perceptual representation and conceptual signification (comparable with the AC/DC opposition suggested by W. Davis in this volume) was reused elsewhere in the only decorated room of the small TT 52 and thus seems to correspond to the painter’s own artistic choices and practices: see Laboury 1997: 54–55, 80–81. In itself, such a composition is a perfect example of a productive (or creative) use of what was clearly felt at that time as the tradition of Ancient Egyptian Art, with forms and conventions of depiction inherited from an immemorial past. On the painter of this tomb chapel and the fact that he was alone responsible for its decoration (without mentioning the pragmatic argument of the exiguity of the space, that would only allow for the work of one single painter, at least at a time), see Shedid & Seidel 1991: 29–30; and Laboury 1997: 80–81. If we take into account the quality of the paintings of TT 52, both in terms of conception and facture, and the artist’s involvement this implies, but also the social status of the horologer priest, which was obviously far from predestining him to have a tomb of his own in the elite Theban Necropolis, there is a very high probability that, in this case—like, actually, in many others (see below, n. 26)—, the patron and his artist were personally connected.
  17. *I.e.* tomb chapels mentioned by early travellers or Egyptologists but whose location was eventually lost.
  18. The composition of the ploughing scene in TT C4 provides further evidence for the idea of an inspiration derived from TT 52, at least for some anecdotal and well artistically managed details; compare Manniche 1988: pl. 26 (44) with Davies 1917: pl. 18, or Shedid & Seidel 1991: 34–35 (for a colour picture).
  19. One also has to note, in terms of differences from the model or formal reinterpretation, that this jumping worker wears sandals in TT E2, C4 (Manniche 1988: 106, 148, pl. 34, 49) and 57, whereas he was depicted barefoot in TT 52.

the whole composition was inverted in this latter tomb chapel.<sup>20</sup> Regarding those alterations of the image invented by the painter of TT 52, it is interesting to note that the solution adopted by the designer of the relief decoration of the tomb of Khaemhat (TT 57) borrowed from both versions: with the doubled gleaner of TT C4 (and in the same orientation as the scene in this tomb), and, at the same time, with the raised female figure of TT E2 (on the other side of the sub-scene and turned around), complemented by an additional clone woman, again bending toward the floor. Therefore, although the copy or inspiration process appears unavoidable in this kind of *stemma imaginum*, one must equally admit that there is a formal reinterpretation of the motif at every single step of the process of transmission. In other words, none of these images are slavish copies, but, instead, they reveal themselves as productive copies or, better, creative borrowings.

If we now consider the entire composition of the harvest scenes in TT 57 and its possible sources of inspiration (or at least some of them),<sup>21</sup> there appears a rather complex network (fig. 5), which demonstrates, by its own intricacy, the invalidity of the over-simplified hypothesis of direct and purely reproductive copies. Exceptional details, just like more usual or traditional motifs, occur from one monument to another, creating a reticular structure of cross-references. All together, these picture units form a—virtual—common iconographical thesaurus, which is never attested as a whole, nor closed to modifications and additions (as is shown, for instance, by the abovementioned case of the theme of the workers endeavouring to close an overfilled bag of cereals). On the contrary, it is systematically reinterpreted by each artist, who makes his own selection within this—open—range of possibilities and gives his personal interpretation of it.<sup>22</sup> And, hence, it is clearly within this process of re-composition, or formal interpretation of a corpus inherited from the tradition(s), that the artist's creativity operates and is therefore to be sought and analysed.

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20. Throughout art history, inversion is one of the most frequent strategies used to dissimulate or simply introduce variations in a copy. In late medieval and early modern paintings, it even led to the development of widespread techniques of *carta lucida*, i.e. transparent supports that facilitate the inversion of a motif or scene. On this, see Currie & Allart 2012: 947–948; and, in general, on transference techniques of the time, Bambach 1999.

21. For instance, in order to simplify the representation of these influences from tomb to tomb and keep it visualisable in figure 5, the case of TT C4, just discussed, has been omitted.

22. The same conclusion may be drawn from the analysis of duplicated scenes in 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty mastabas, by Merzeban 2014: 342–345, fig. 1–3, especially when she emphasises that “*Il existe de nombreux parallèles dans d'autres tombes, mais l'ordre des éléments iconographiques y est très différent*” (Merzeban 2014: 342) and “*Durant le processus de copie, des variantes mineures ont été introduites sous la forme d'inclusion ou d'omission de quelques motifs iconographiques qui ne bouleversent nullement la séquence et l'uniformité de l'ensemble de la composition*” (Merzeban 2014: 343). So, here again, the copying process is productive since the version of Seshemnefer III was inspired by both the mastaba of the latter's father, Seshemnefer II, and the tomb of his relative Iymery. Similar cases, including the one of Pahery, discussed here below, are treated by the author in the rest of her article. As Vernus 2010: 108 concluded, about yet other pieces of evidence, “*il arrive qu'on s'inspire, voire qu'on copie le décor d'une chapelle antérieure, mais, en général, il y a adaptation; le psittacisme aveugle est exceptionnel.*”

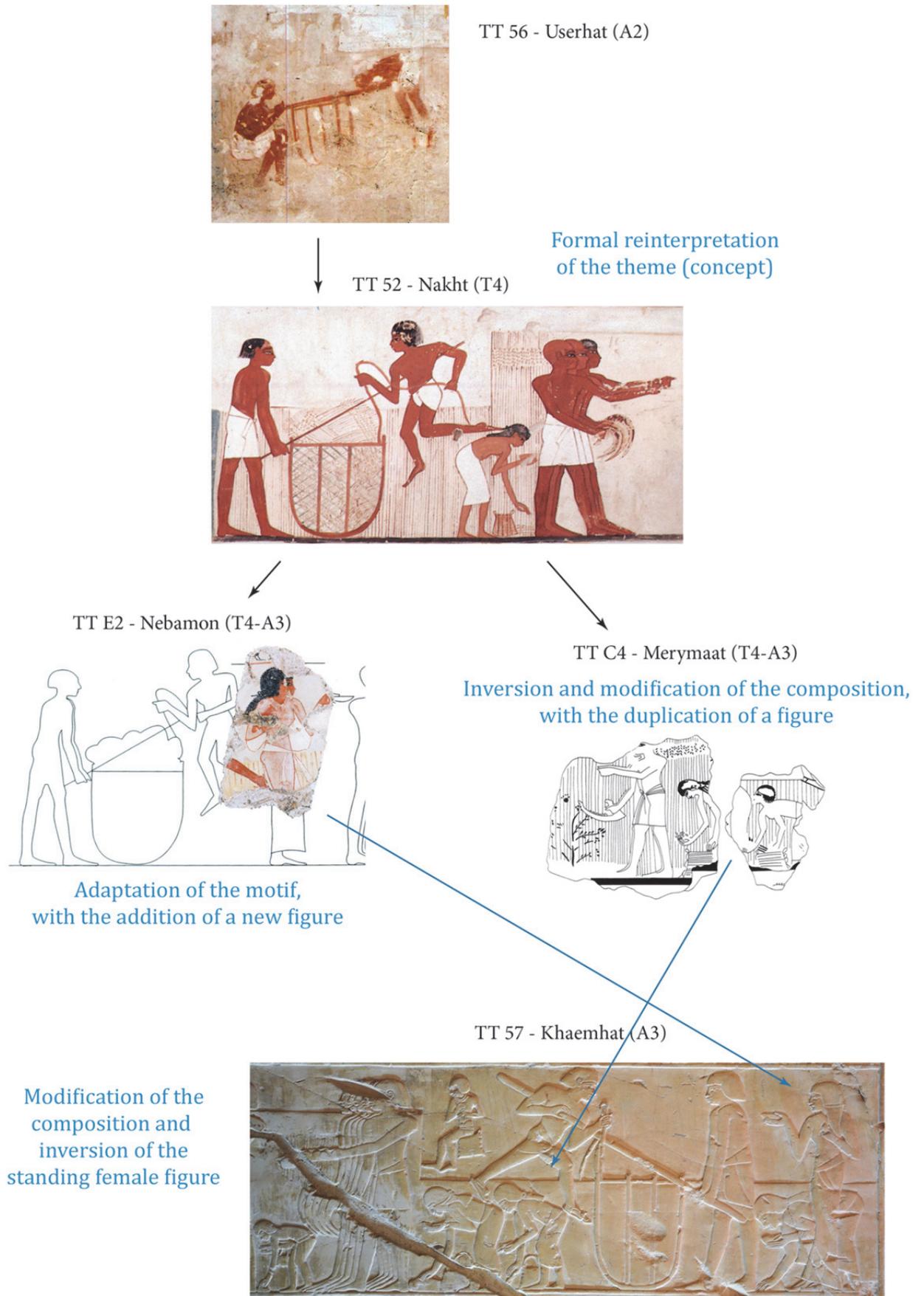


Fig. 4. Transmission of the motif of the harvest worker jumping to close an overfilled bag of cereals in TT 56 (Beinlich-Seeber & Shedid 1987: pl. 25e), TT 52 (Shedid & Seidel 1991: 35), TT E2 (Parkinson 2008: 6, 112), TT C4 (Manniche 1988: pl. 34) and TT 57 (author's photograph).

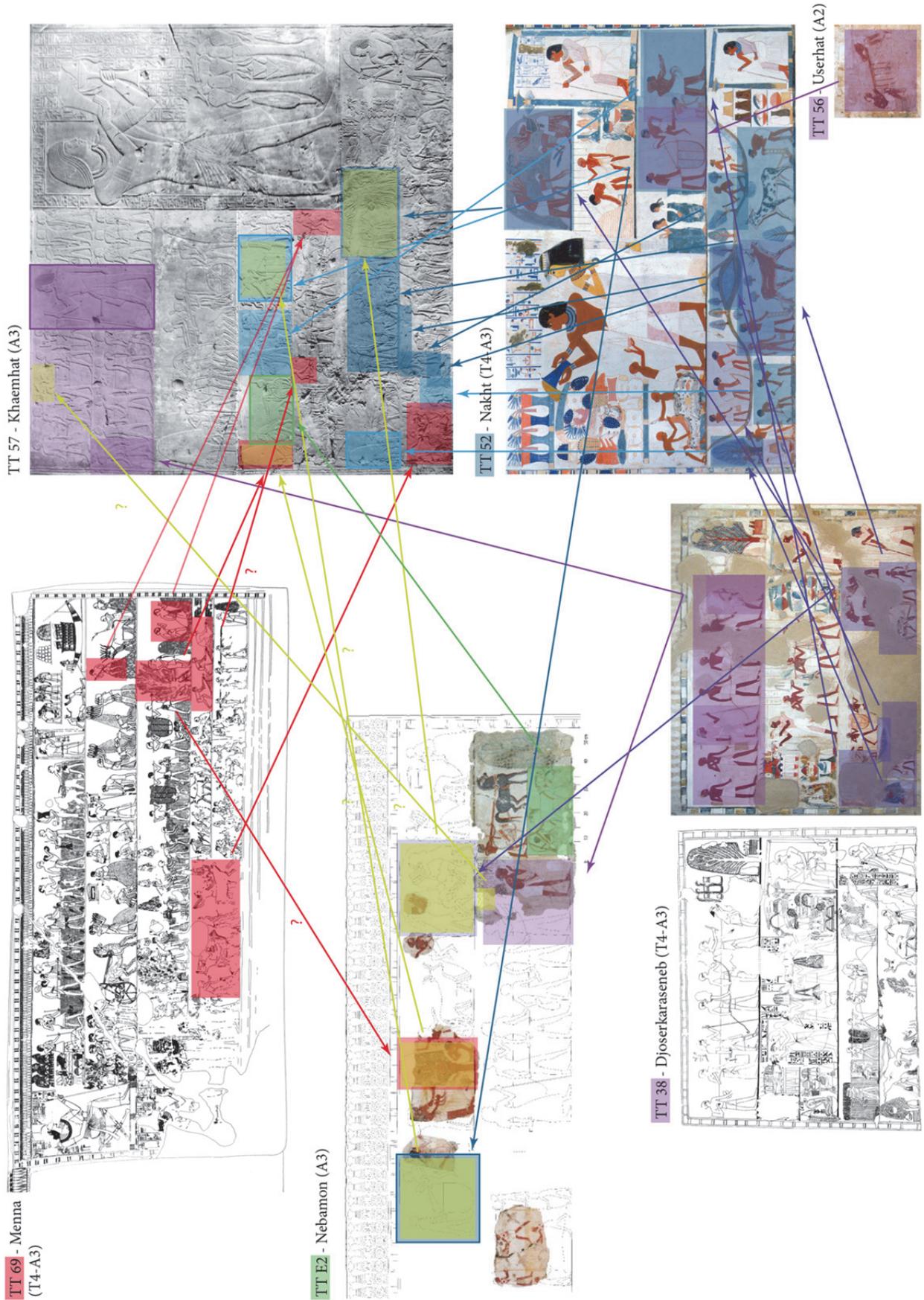


Fig. 5. Network of iconographic correspondences and possible sources of inspiration between the motifs used in the composition of agricultural scenes in TT 57 and some neighbouring and slightly earlier Theban Tombs.

One more case of copying in 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty tomb decoration needs to be examined in the perspective developed here. In her fundamental study of the so-called ‘lost tombs’ of the Theban Necropolis, Lise Manniche highlighted the fact that “part of the wall-decoration” of TT A4, in the name of the scribe accountant of grains Wensu, “has an unusually close parallel in another tomb,” namely the famous tomb of Pahery, governor of Elkab and Esna (T Elkab 3; Tylor and Griffith 1894), some 80 kms further south, but also datable to the reign of Thutmose III (fig. 6–8; Manniche 1988: 62–87). These iconographic correspondences between the two monuments had actually already been noticed by early travellers since at least 1801, when the British antiquarian and diplomat William Hamilton wrote that the tomb of Wensu displayed “nearly the same details as at Eleithias [*sc.* El-kâb]” (quoted after Manniche 1988: 64). First copied during Bonaparte’s *Expedition de l’Égypte* and Egyptologically published as early as 1894, the tomb of Pahery in Elkab, because of its excellent state of preservation and, moreover, due to the profusion of anecdotal details in its decoration, with many dialogues and captions between the depicted figures,<sup>23</sup> indeed plainly attracted the curiosity and attention of visitors, as is amply demonstrated by the modern graffiti that nowadays mark its walls (Tylor and Griffith 1894: 3–4). And the same probably held true in Antiquity,—in all likelihood for the same reasons, *i.e.* unusual and eye-catching details, like those discussed in the previous examples,—as is suggested by an unfinished graffito scratched by an anonymous painter (*zš-ḳd n* [...]) in one of the focal scenes of the tomb (*i.e.* the presentation of the great funerary offering to the deceased couple),<sup>24</sup> as well as the fact that its iconographic scheme was very faithfully copied, with only few adaptations and some updates (notably for the garments), more than three centuries later, in the tomb of the high priest of the local goddess Nekhbet, Setau (T Elkab 4), just a few meters away (Kruchten and Delvaux 2010; Laboury 2016). But the single chamber tomb chapel of Pahery also has other clear connections with Theban funerary traditions, for large sections of the so-called autobiographical inscription on its rear wall have exact parallels, often word for word (though not always with the same orthographic details), in two almost contemporary tombs of Thebes, *i.e.* TT 24, of Nebamun, and TT 127, of Senemiah,<sup>25</sup> Regarding the iconographic relation with the tomb of Wensu, Lise Manniche concluded in 1988:

To revert to the very close similarity between the tomb of Wensu and that of Paheri at el-Kâb it is impossible to establish any definite link between the two persons, such as a family relationship or acquaintance resulting in one being depicted in the tomb of the other. One of Paheri’s duties, as scribe of the grain, extended as far north as Het-Hathor (presumably Dendara) and thus may have included the Theban area, and the two men must by virtue of their office have been acquainted, though what caused their tombs, about 82km apart, to be so similar is puzzling. It is even difficult to establish if one of them was the prototype of the other. [...] There can be no doubt about the fact that they were decorated about the same time. [...] Similarities in Egyptian tomb decoration have sometimes been

23. On these inscriptions, see the comments of Vernus 2010.

24. According to epigraphic standards of the time, it was not transcribed in the drawings of Tylor & Griffith 1894: pl. 6 (nor noted in Porter & Moss 1937: 180), but is nevertheless clearly visible on plate 10 of Tylor 1895. The analysis of visitors’ graffiti undertaken by Alexis Den Doncker in the context of his doctoral research on the perception of Ancient Egyptian Art by Ancient Egyptians themselves led him to the very interesting conclusion that many of those inscriptions were made by the two categories of actors involved in artistic production, *i.e.* the patrons and the artists.

25. As was carefully noted by Sethe 1906: 145–152, 494–512. For a good parallel example of funerary stela text reproduced in different—more or less contemporary—tombs (this time seven occurrences from at least three different sites), see Helck 1956: 1515–1539.

pointed out by scholars [...]. But, in the case of the tombs of Wensu and Pahery more than similarity is involved: apart from the fact that the one tomb is painted, the other is in relief, a great number of individual figures are absolutely identical. Either one was copied from the other, or they both copied the same original. (Manniche 1988: 85–86).

Recent research undertaken by the British Museum’s epigraphic project in the rock-necropolis of Elkab provided clues that allow us to explain this intriguing case of copy from one monument to another. In his new publication of the tomb of Ahmose son of Ibana, T Elkab 5 (a few metres away from T Elkab 3 and 4, just mentioned), W. Vivian Davies re-analysed the genealogy of the tomb owner and was able to demonstrate that the grandson of the deceased, the “son of his daughter, who directed the works in this tomb as the one who causes to live the name of the father of his mother, the painter of Amun, Pahery, justified,” was none other than our governor Pahery,—future—owner of Elkab 3, and, at that moment of his career, was also—and already—“[confidant of] the treasurer and scribe accountant of grains in the southern district” (Davies 2009). So, in other words, before being in charge of the area of Esna to Elkab, the governor Pahery was a Theban painter (*zš-ḳd n ’Imn*), responsible for the “works in the tomb” of his grandfather, but also, at the same time, already an important member of the agricultural administration of the “southern district.” In such circumstances, and considering the exceptional iconographic convergence between T Elkab 3 and TT A4, it is extremely likely that this “painter of Amun” Pahery, from Elkab, knew his colleague the “scribe accountant of grain of the domain of Amun” (Manniche 1998: 84–85) Wensu and decorated the latter’s tomb;<sup>26</sup> later on, when he became governor of Elkab and Esna, Pahery reused his own compositions in order to design the decoration of his personal funerary monument in his home town of Elkab.<sup>27</sup>

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26. For other cases of personal connections between the patron and his artist(s), in addition to the one of T Elkab 5, just mentioned, see Davies & Gardiner 1915: 5, pl. 8 (TT 82: “the chief of the works [in this tomb], the scribe Amenemhat,” son of the tomb owner); Hill & Schorsch 2007: 18–21 (copper statuette of Hepu, Athens National Museum 3365: “by his brother, the goldsmith Tjenena”); Keller 2001 (TT 359 of the chief workman of Deir el-Medina Inherkhawy, by two members of his crew, the brothers Horimin and Nebnefer); Laboury 2015 (TT 75 of the second high priest of Amun Amenhotep Sise, by his subordinate, “the painter of Amun Userhat”); or the numerous examples of artists described as *mḥnk* of the tomb owner in Old Kingdom tombs gathered by Junker 1959. Furthermore, the personal involvement of the painter in the decoration of TT A4 is noteworthy, with very unusual scenes (like a market and redistribution scene under the supervision of the governor of Thebes or the depiction of a street of this city), most of them related to the professional activities of Wensu (Manniche 1988: 64–85, pl. 7–19). For an exactly parallel case, see Laboury 2013b: 39–40, about the TT 161, of the chief gardener of Amun Nakht.
27. Other features in the decoration of the two tombs hint at a transmission from TT A4 to T Elkab 3: with respect to the wall itself, the composition of agricultural scenes (discussed here below), slightly simpler in the tomb chapel of Wensu, was very homogeneous and well balanced in this monument, occupying the entire width of the wall, whereas it appears more heterogeneous, almost as if it had been forced within a more complex decoration scheme in the tomb of Pahery (fig. 6); moreover, the captions and spoken words between the harvest workers (the so-called *Arbeiterreden*) seem to have been composed on the spot in TT A4, with some signs or words (notably in the ploughing scene) displaced out of the lines or columns of inscriptions, due to an evident lack of space (fig. 8), while they are very well calibrated in regular panels in the tomb of Elkab. Wensu was originally depicted sitting on a simple geometric white chair, later repainted as a classic black seat with theriomorphic legs; in T Elkab 3, Pahery appears standing, but in the lower register, just below, he sits on the rather unusual white chair of Wensu, an iconographic detail that might suggest that the recording of the scene in TT A4 by Pahery was made before he happened to modify the seat of the tomb owner. Cases of artists retaining a copy of their own compositions for later reuse are, of course, very frequent in art history; for a thoroughly analyzed model example, see Curie & Allart 2012; and, in general, for that same context in early modern times Bambach 1999. In his notes, Robert Hay suggested a stylistic parallel between TT A4 and TT 155 (Manniche 1988: 62). Despite a few differences in the colour palette used in this last tomb (with a play on

The tomb of Wensu is now almost completely lost,—after a rather systematic robbing of its paintings in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Manniche 1988: 62–64),—but large fragments of the scene depicting the tomb owner “inspecting the season of *shemu*, the season of *peret* and all the occupations performed in the fields” are preserved in the Louvre Museum (N 1430–1431, N 2311, N 3318 A–D; Manniche 1988: 68–72, pl. 9) and their comparison with the corresponding tableau in the tomb of Pahery allows us to investigate the (self-)copying process between the two tombs (fig. 6–8).<sup>28</sup> As underscored by Lise Manniche (Manniche 1988: 69–71), the faithfulness of the copy linking the two scenes is really striking: “more than similarity is involved” (quote here above) indeed, from the whole composition of the registers and the very sequence of the figures to the words attributed to those depicted agricultural workers or peculiar iconographic details, such as the emaciated bare chest black skinned female gleaner arguing with her workmate: “give me a hand (or), see, we might come (back) in the evening. Stop the cattinesses of yesterday and be quiet today” (fig. 7).<sup>29</sup> Such accuracy, well beyond the reproduction of the general iconographic concept,<sup>30</sup> cannot be achieved from memory alone and certainly implies the use of a copying medium.

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more pinkish ochres in a couple of sub-scenes), some stylistic details, like the specific shape of the face of small size figures, with a very large eye, and a clear taste for compositions with anecdotal, narrative and lively details, with funny captions or dialogues (see, for instance, the scene with the drunken cellar door-keeper awakened and pretending “I don’t sleep of a (real) sleep”; Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 18, pl. 15; Vernus 2010: 107), are indeed common to TT 155, TT A4 and T Elkab 3. So it is not at all impossible that the “painter of Amun Pahery” also took part in the decoration of TT 155, belonging to the first royal herald and mayor of This, Antef, a very important member of the same economic administration of the region in the early reign of Thutmose III (Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 11–21). Lastly, I wish to mention here that Alisée Devillers is currently studying these issues in her Master thesis in Ancient Egyptian Art History at the University of Liège, on the network of artistic copies connected to the tomb of Pahery at Elkab.

28. The reconstitution of the wall, *i.e.* the organization of the fragments, proposed here differs from the one currently on display in the Museum. It takes into account the parallelism with T Elkab 3, the coherence and continuity of texts as well as lines in the composition (like the shaft of the plough or the contour of the shape of bovine and human bodies), and the dimensions of the original wall, noted by H. Burton around 1824 (Manniche 1988: 67). The theme depicted here, as it is labelled and structured (*i.e.* according to the seasons of *shemu* and *peret*), is actually very rare and only attested, to my knowledge, in two other slightly more recent Theban tombs of the reign of Thutmose III, namely TT 53 (with a composition that suggests an inspiration from TT A4; Porter & Moss 1960: 103 [4]) and TT 88 (Porter & Moss 1960: 180 [1]; since this last tomb was copied from or inspired by the close-by TT 85 [Eisermann 1995], the latter is likely to have also displayed another occurrence of the scene, but the relevant part of the wall is now severely damaged). So the tomb chapel of Wensu and the work of its presumed painter, Pahery of Elkab, might have enjoyed some fame in the Theban Necropolis of the time. For this unusual scene, Pahery could have found inspiration in T Elkab 7 of Reneny, as he later did for his own tomb chapel on the same terrace of Elkab necropolis (Tylor 1900: 1–2; I thank A. Devillers for calling my attention to this observation). Note that other sections of the decoration of TT A4 re-appeared in T Elkab 3, as perfectly underlined by Manniche 1988: 62–86.
29. The squabbles between female gleaners in harvest scenes is a *topos* in that kind of iconography but it received here a special elaboration, not visually conveyed or encoded, as it is usually the case (see the famous example in the tomb of Menna, TT 69, duplicated in the tomb of Montuemhat, TT 34, some seven centuries later; Der Manuelian 1994: 20–21), but here interestingly textualised, according to a decorative strategy that Pahery seems to have particularly enjoyed (see the comments on the tomb in Vernus 2010).
30. Like in TT 53, 88, and probably also 85; see the two notes above.

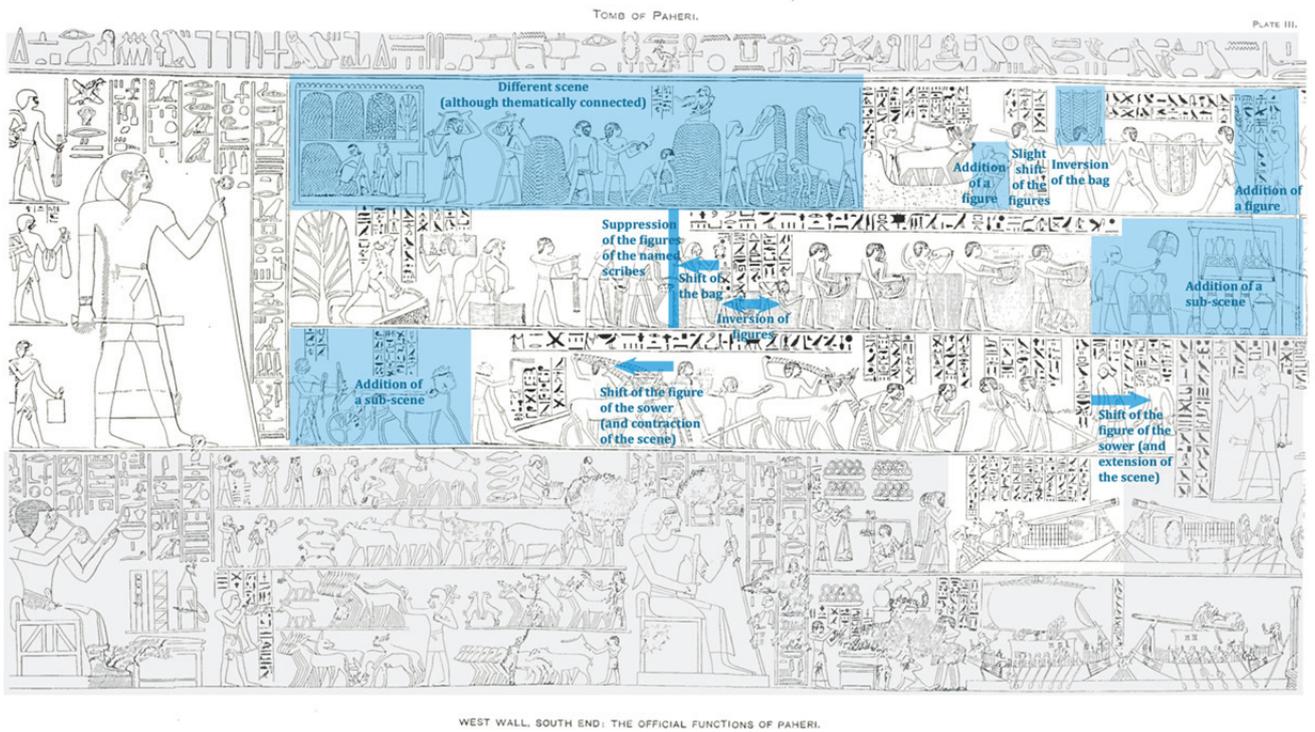
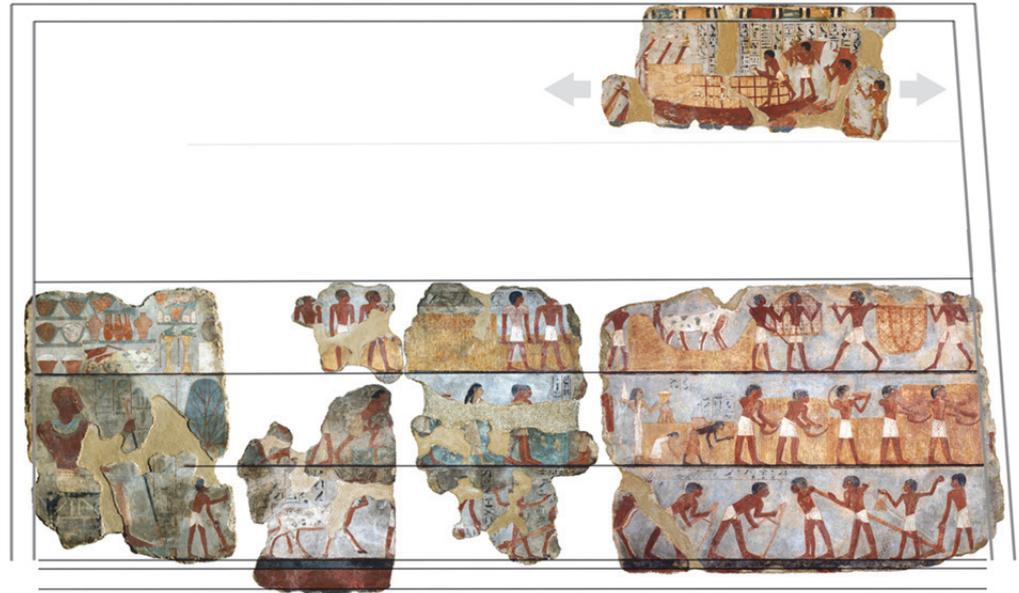


Fig. 6. Comparison between the agricultural scenes in TT A4 (author’s reconstitution with Louvre N 1430, N 1431, N 2311, N 3318 A–D; courtesy of the Louvre Museum © Musée du Louvre/Christian Décamps) and T Elkab 3 (irrelevant scenes in this comparison shaded in grey in order to facilitate the reading of the figure, and modifications from the first to the second version enhanced in blue).

In this respect, it is particularly interesting to note that if registers are very scrupulously reproduced, they appear vertically de-aligned from Wensu's to Pahery's tomb chapel: in the latter, the second register starts indeed further to the left than the first one (with the addition, to its right, of a small sub-scene, absent in the former composition), whereas the third one is more on the right (again with a new sub-scene, added on the left, this time), although its right-hand limit is also no more aligned with the right extremity of the first register (as it was in TT A4), allowing the insertion of a standing figure of the tomb owner inspecting the loading of boats on the sub-register below (fig. 6).<sup>31</sup> This reorganisation register by register strongly suggests that the copying medium took the form of separated strips, like papyrus rolls—or long pieces of leather, textile or any other recording material<sup>32</sup>— with very detailed reproductions of the scenes, including the so-called *Arbeiterreden* and minute features, such as the baskets held by gleaners. But, precisely, the examination of those details shows, once again, a clear process of re-composition: for instance, in the tableau of the gleaners, just evoked (fig. 7), the woven large bottom basket hanging in the foreground of the standing figure in TT A4 was placed in her other hand in the tomb of Pahery, while the two bowing women in front of her, one dressed in white, the other emaciated, bare chest and black skinned, were inverted, although they keep holding the same baskets, in the same order and positions.



Fig. 7. Comparison between the gleaners' scenes in TT A4 (Louvre N 1431; courtesy of the Louvre Museum © Musée du Louvre/Christian Décamps) and T Elkab 3.

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31. Note that this scene of loading boats with cereals was situated—and inverted—on the top register in Wensu's tomb wall, as implies the band of coloured rectangles at its upper edge (fig. 6).
32. Papyri like pBM EA 74100 (Parkinson & Schofield 1995), for instance, demonstrate that figural compositions could be copied and kept on papyrus scrolls. For another comparable case of copy from a tomb to another, register by register, see Merzeban 2014, 345–350.

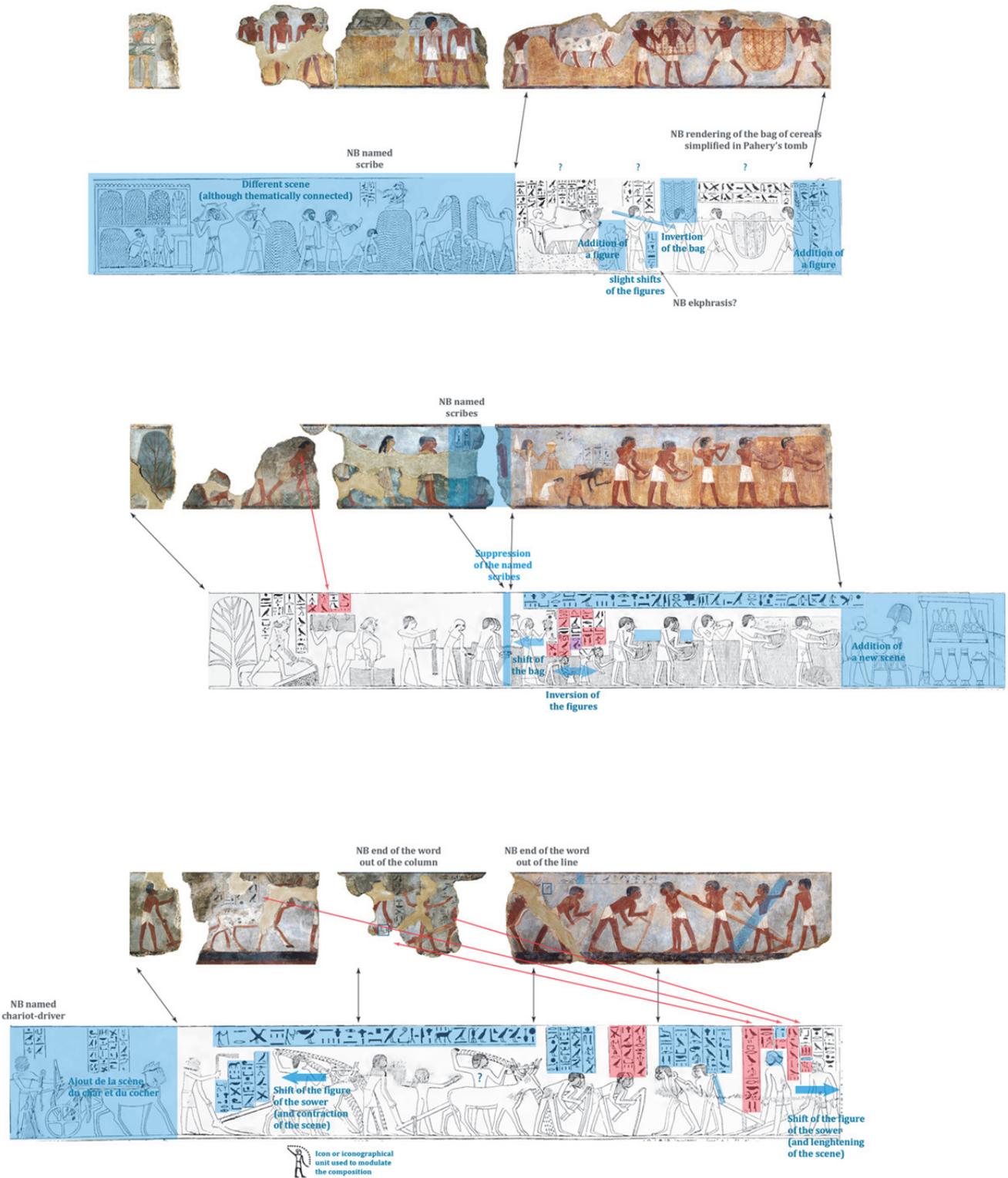


Fig. 8. Comparison between the agricultural scenes in TT A4 (author's reconstitution with Louvre N 1431, N 2311, N 3318 A–D; courtesy of the Louvre Museum © Musée du Louvre/Christian Décamps) and T Elkab 3, register by register (modifications from the first to the second version again enhanced in blue, and reproduced texts in red, with arrows indicating when the inscriptions have been shifted to another place in the scene).

This re-composition or reinterpretation of the model actually applies to the entire set of copied scenes. The systematic analysis of those variations (very similar to the game of spotting the differences) (fig. 8) allows determining the personal iconographic strategies and tricks used by the artist in order to improve his former composition and adapt it for his new creation, in this case, in his own tomb:<sup>33</sup> addition or insertion of new sub-scenes thematically connected to the depicted tableau, shifting discrete figures and iconographic units to contract or, conversely, to extend scenes (such as the double figure of the sower in the ploughing scene), playing with the captions and speeches of the figures<sup>34</sup> by adding new ones or re-attributing some to other characters, or simply modifying minor details (see for instance fig. 7 above).<sup>35</sup>

So, even in the exceptional case of an author copying himself, *i.e.* reproducing and reusing his own work,<sup>36</sup> there is a clear and indisputable process of reinterpretation and re-composition that makes his new work unique. Therefore, even such self-copies are not purely reproductive but, on the contrary, productive or creative.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. THE VANTAGE POINT OF INTERICONICITY

The above discussed cases of copies or—better—transmission of specific motifs (or sets of motifs) plainly reveal the inappropriateness in the context of Ancient Egyptian Art of the descriptive and analytical model of the *stemma* or cladogram, inherited from Karl Lachmann's philology<sup>38</sup> and the study of classical and medieval duplication of manuscripts (*i.e.* the copy/paste technology before the invention of printing), and inspired by biological phylogenesis representation. Stemmatology is indeed based on transmission errors, used to reconstruct the history of the corruption of an *Ur-Text* or original source. But the variations described in the previous pages cannot be regarded as mistakes, since, in addition to being systematic, they were obviously intentional, and actually sources and expressions of creativity. Furthermore, the observed phenomena of transmission are clearly not linear but they rather developed according to a reticular dynamic, *i.e.* within a complex and open network of

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33. In the hypothesis developed here above that the governor of Elkab and Esna Pahery reused his own composition, made when he was active as “painter of Amun” in the tomb of his colleague Wensu, I assume that, given his career, professional abilities and apparently strong personality, Pahery designed himself the very special, attractive and eventually well known decorative scheme of his funerary monument in Elkab. Of course, the reliefs he likely drew himself were most probably cut by somebody else (taking into account his new status) and one cannot completely rule out the possibility that he relied on another artist to actualize his iconographic concept and composition on the walls of his tomb when he had been promoted to governor. But, in any case, he must have given at least his consent to these adaptations.
34. The variations of these short inscriptions between the two monuments were recently re-analyzed by Merzeban 2014: 350–354. As noted above (n. 23, 27 and 29), the play with such captions, very vivid and functioning as subtitles animating the scenes, seems to have been particularly enjoyed by Pahery and, hence, seems to correspond to his artistic personality or profile.
35. Those choices of Pahery range within the possibilities of iconographic variations and innovations in Ancient Egyptian Art history listed by Davis 1989: 64–93.
36. For other parallel examples, see Kanawati & Woods 2009: 6–10 (with previous bibliography); and Laboury 2015.
37. Once again, this is a very well attested fact in broader Art history; see, for instance, Bambach 1999.
38. On Lachmann's *stemmata* methodology, see the classic work of Timpanaro 2005. On the issue of its application in Egyptology, and more specifically to the study of the transmission of Ancient Egyptian textual material, see the contributions of Winand, but also Werning and Vernus in this volume.

references. This is why the concept of intericonicity is particularly relevant in the—combined—analysis of traditions, transmissions and creativity in Ancient Egyptian Art.

Derived from the better known notion of intertextuality, intericonicity—sometimes also called interpictoriality (or *Interbildlichkeit* in German)<sup>39</sup>—can be defined as the shaping of an image’s meaning or form by another image, acknowledging the fact that any image exists within a network of other images, with which it has diverse forms of relations that determine its meaning and form, as well as its very existence. As Christoph Zuschlag puts it: “*Kein Kunstwerk ist eine von Raum und Zeit, Produzenten und Rezipienten losgelöste “creatio ex nihilo.” [...] Jedes Kunstwerk situiert sich in einem schon vorhandenen Universum der Kunstwerke, ob sein Urheber dies beabsichtigt oder nicht.*” (Zuschlag 2006: 89).<sup>40</sup> This means that, intrinsically, art is all about traditions and their productivity—rather than their supposedly reproductive dimension.

The concept of intericonicity was first invented to address phenomena of imitation, copy, quotation, allusion, plagiarism, parody, inversion, etc., especially in contemporary art. But as Mathilde Arrivé perfectly noted:

Si le terme lui-même n’a été lexicalisé que récemment, l’intericonicité n’est pas neuve. Bien que souvent associée à l’art contemporain et à la vague des revivals, reduces, mashups et autres reprises, elle n’est pas née avec la postmodernité, mais désigne en fait une pratique « vernaculaire », largement transhistorique, faisant partie du langage ordinaire des images, dont elle serait le mode d’existence privilégié, voire une condition de possibilité. D’ailleurs, « l’apprentissage par la copie » traverse toute l’histoire des pratiques et des pédagogies artistiques, bien avant l’âge de la reproduction mécanique : la copie a été et demeure la principale propédeutique de l’apprenti artiste. On pourrait même avancer que l’intericonicité est inhérente à la fabrication d’images et qu’elle est certainement aussi ancienne qu’elle, même si le traitement des médiations intericoniques a quant à lui pu varier au cours du temps. [...]

Sans toujours trouver à se dire, les relations entre les images hantent toute la discipline (sc. Art History) et lui fournissent ses grands récits fondateurs. L’histoire de l’art est en effet traversée de part en part par des phénomènes de renouveaux : renovatio carolingienne, renaissances médiévales, « renaissances » humanistes, « restaurations » néo-classiques, etc. Chez les premiers historiens de l’art tels que Vasari, puis Winckelmann, et jusqu’à une date assez récente, les relations entre images furent appréhendées sous l’angle d’héritages et d’influences formelles réglés, servant à assigner les images dans des catégories de styles, de genres et d’écoles et à bâtir une téléologie de l’œuvre, articulée autour

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39. When I started to investigate the issues of traditions, transmissions and creativity in Ancient Egyptian Art—in the context of my project “Painters and Painting in the Theban Necropolis during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty,” funded by a Research Incentive Grant of the F.R.S.-FNRS and focused on the societal identity, employability and practices of Ancient Egyptian artists—with the concept of intertextuality in mind, it seemed to me necessary to create a neologism based on this last notion, before I realised that the term I naturally imagined had in fact already been introduced into the analysis of contemporary art, theories of intermediality and visual studies, and is now spreading in other fields of Art History. See Horstkotte & Leonhard 2006: 1–15; Zuschlag 2006; Isekenmeier 2013; Arrivé 2015. I wish to thank here G. Pieke for providing me several of these references.

40. This statement, of course, echoes—or is in a relation of intertextuality to—the foundational axiom of the theory of intertextuality, that any text is an intertext, *i.e.* it is inter-connected with other texts that influence its form, meaning and reception (Kristeva 1967; Kristeva 1969; Barthes 1973; Genette 1982). Although it is actually a very common observation in meta-discourses on literature throughout human history, one should probably notice here that this idea that every text is (inter)related to other texts and textual productions is very similar to the conception of literary writings implicitly developed by the author of the *Words of Khakheperreseneb* in the introduction of his famous teaching; see the translation and comments of Winand in this volume.

du vocabulaire scientifique et biologique de l'évolution et du progrès (mais aussi du déclin, de la décadence, de la corruption ou de la réaction). Les circulations graphiques furent appréhendées principalement en termes de successions linéaires, tandis que la méthode intericonique consistait avant tout à classer, comparer, organiser les images en fonction d'un modèle. Les rapports entre images étaient donc largement étudiés dès les premiers temps de la discipline, mais envisagés de manière statique, voire mécanique, souvent déterministe et qualifiante (ou disqualifiante), pour une intericonicité horizontale à sens unique, pourrait-on dire. (Arrivé 2015).

The—modern—notion of intericonicity involves and provides a large palette of taxonomic vocabulary to describe the various possibilities of interrelations between images, taking into account the questions of forms, styles and supports, as well as the levels of consciousness, the intention(s) and the agency of the different actors in the production of images (artists or makers, but also patrons and beholders or receivers). As such, it offers an appropriate conceptual framework to characterise and think, within a single and common system, simple to complex cases of transmission or transformation of images, like, for instance, a creative borrowing (fig. 3–8), a personal re-interpretation and reuse of an iconographic concept (see above, fig. 4, from TT 56 to TT 52), the diverse instantiations of a given type or *topos* (fig. 5), the fusion or combination of different traditions or sources of inspiration,<sup>41</sup> the re-categorisation of an image, shifted from one genre or category of expression to another, including the change of medium,<sup>42</sup> variations on a given type,<sup>43</sup> or the conversion into images of a concept initially developed in texts.<sup>44</sup> And, more importantly in the perspective of this contribution, from the vantage point of intericonicity, variations in the transmission of an image, *i.e.* within an iconographic tradition, are not errors in a duplication process but can be considered much more positively as tokens of creativity, and consequently as a probe to analysing the latter.

Let us just take one (more) example. The late 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty private statues Berlin 15700, of the steward Nemtyhotep, British Museum EA 1785, of the governor (of Abydos) Rekhuanekh, and Metropolitan Museum of Art 66.123.1, of an anonymous owner, represent the same typically Middle Kingdom iconographic type or *topos*: the dignitary wearing a large wig and a long cloak that he holds with his right hand, whereas his left one emerges out of the garment, resting on his chest (fig. 9).<sup>45</sup> The

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41. See, for example, the cases discussed by Arnold 2008 or Sourouzzian 1991.

42. See, for instance, the history of the image of the king sitting in a kiosk for official audiences and promulgation of royal decisions in temple wall decoration, copied in an homage scene of TT 60 in the early 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, then reused, since the time of Hatshepsut, in high elite tomb imagery to evoke a personal audience granted by Pharaoh to the tomb owner, often for his induction into his office, and eventually transformed into a depiction of seated Osiris in TT 65 of the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty (Bács 2006). Another good example is the one treated by Collombert 2008, where satirical scenes with animals behaving like humans were transferred from ostraca and papyri to temple wall decoration.

43. See, for example, the Aegean vases brought by the so-called *keftiu* tribute bearers as they are depicted in Theban Tombs of the time of Thutmose III, where more than half of them are actually Egyptian wares disguised with additional elements (like extra-handles or foreign-like decoration) in order to give them an exotic look, according to modalities and preferences specific to each artist (Laboury 1990).

44. See, for instance, the Atenist motif of the sun disk whose rays end with hands, attested in texts much before the reign of Amenhotep IV—Akhenaten (Hornung 1971). The scene of the Vizier doing justice in his office, which accompanies the text of the so-called *Duties of the Vizier* in Theban Tombs, is also a transposition into images of the description, in the introduction of this text, of the dignitary sitting in his audience room; for this text, see van den Boorn 1988.

45. On those statues, with a recent bibliography and commentary, see Oppenheim *et al.* 2015: 128–130, 132–133, 146–148. For the statue of Nemtyhotep, more precisely, see Connor 2015.

three statues almost certainly do not derive directly from one another but are intericonically related, in the sense that they instantiate the same typological model. Within this interconnection, the variations between them allow us to assess quite easily the different choices made by each tandem of patron and artist responsible for the making of those sculptures. Stylistically, the three pieces have been convincingly dated to the end of the Middle Kingdom, with reference to the art of the reign of Amenemhat III. The statues of Nemtyhotep and Rekhuanekh have almost the same size (respectively 76.5 cm and 75 cm in height) and are made in quartzite (or silicified sandstone), a highly prized material.<sup>46</sup> Those two characteristics, *i.e.* dimensions and material, function(ed) as a clear index of the prestige and social status of the two dignitaries. But, in this same strategy of social self-definition (or self-advertisement), they made very different aesthetic choices: on the one hand, Rekhuanekh and his sculptor opted for monumentality (even if the statue is smaller than lifesize), with proportions emphasising the width of the figure when seen from the front, very geometrical forms, and an almost royal-like display of long columns of hieroglyphic inscriptions in the name of the model on the front part of the statue—on the seat as well as on an artificially created central band on the mantle. On the other hand, the statue of Nemtyhotep provides a more perceptual presence to the depicted elite member, through a very restrained general composition (without any inscription visible and distracting when facing the sculpture)<sup>47</sup> and a subtly more naturalistic rendering of the cloaked body, the (more) sophisticated wavy wig and the cloth pleat grasped in the right hand. As for the statuette of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, of a comparable late 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty style, it bears no inscription that would allow the identification of the model with a name or a title.<sup>48</sup> But the size of the piece (26.6 cm high), *i.e.* almost one third of the two previous ones, and its material, a yellowish kind of limestone, point to a lower ranking position in Middle Kingdom society. In this respect, the choice of this particular tone of stone, instead of the more usual white limestone, hints at some sort of an emulation of elite statuary made in more typically ochre stone, *i.e.* quartzite or silicified sandstone, but with a less expensive material. And, in any case, the patron and the sculptor he hired decided to vary the usual elite iconographic type by depicting the figure as no longer sitting, but striding, a pose that conveys some majesty to the statuette despite its small size.

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46. In his not yet published PhD thesis, Simon Connor has assessed the values of statuary materials through a systematic and statistical analysis of their uses in Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period sculpture production, showing notably the high prestige associated to quartzite or silicified sandstone, a stone very hard to sculpt (Connor 2014: 260–3; Connor forthcoming).

47. The only inscription of the statue is an almost scratched out single line on the right side of the seat (Connor 2015: 76, fig. 3). S. Connor (2015: 57 and 68) suggests that it might have been just a notation of the patron's identity before the carving of proper inscriptions, which were never made

48. One cannot exclude, of course, that this little statuette was initially intended to be inserted in an inscribed base or a more complex setting, like the famous group statue with offering table of the steward Senpu and his family, Louvre E 11573 (Oppenheim *et al.* 2015: 195), who chose the same typology and the same stone for his depiction.



Fig. 9. Comparison between the Middle Kingdom statues Berlin 15700 (Nemtyhotep), British Museum EA 1785 (Rekhuankh), and MMA 66.123.1 (unknown), at the same scale, after Oppenheim *et al.* 2015: 129, 132, 148.

This brief example,<sup>49</sup> just like the cases of TT 52 and TT A4 discussed above, plainly illustrates the high potentialities of using the notional framework and apparatus of intericonicity in order to assess the creativity of an Ancient Egyptian Art work in its engagement with the tradition, up to the individual level of personal choices and interpretation(s) of the tradition(s) made by the artist (alongside his order-giving patron, of course), thus even allowing some kind of an artistic profiling of the image maker(s).<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY

The practices of creativity observed so far and the very fact that the conceptual frame of intericonicity is so suitable to describe and comprehend them imply a certain definition of the notion of creativity in the Ancient Egyptians' mind, a definition—or conceptualization—that can actually be confirmed by the analysis of contemporary—or culturally systemic—textualised claims for innovation and originality in art or monumental production. I aimed at addressing precisely this issue in the

49. The comparison could, of course, be extended to other variations of the type, like the group of Senpu referred to in the previous note, or later reinterpretations of it in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty (such as Copenhagen Gl ÆIN 74 and 655A; Jørgensen 1998: 58–59 and 108–109), with adaptations to the style of the time, but, for the sake of the demonstration, this seems far from being necessary.

50. See notably notes 16, 23, 27, 29 and 34.

conclusion of a recent article devoted to the characterization of forms and functions of the uses of Middle Kingdom Art in royal and court productions during the Thutmosid Period, as a special case study for analysing the relationship between creativity and archaism in Ancient Egyptian culture from a more theoretical point of view, *i.e.* a topic particularly relevant and connected to the subject of this contribution and this conference (Laboury 2013c).<sup>51</sup>

The study of the artistic renaissance of the early 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty and of the neoclassicism of the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III in their relation to Middle Kingdom art inevitably leads to the conclusion that, as always in Ancient Egyptian Art history, there is an entangled link between archaism (which *per se* implies tradition)<sup>52</sup> and creativity. Indeed, any period of Ancient Egyptian history that expressed a strong will for innovation is proportionally marked by archaism, by the study of models of the past and inspiration taken from them. The fact has actually often been noticed, though generally as a contradiction, based on an—alleged—opposition between the two concepts of archaism and innovation.<sup>53</sup> In classical Antiquity—and, later on, during the Renaissance and its aftermath, that aimed at fostering the same values and vision—the question of artistic creation had been theorised through a series of interconnected concepts: *inventio*, that proceeds from *imitatio*, *translatio*, *interpretatio* or *aemulatio*.<sup>54</sup> In Ancient Egypt, *inventio* appears to have been conceived on a very similar model, as it is systematically defined in relation to previous reference(s), clearly felt and often claimed as such. This can be deduced from textualised assertions of innovation, which present, in most cases, the invention as an emulation of the past and its forms of expression, but also, sometimes, as a pure imitation of them, although, in practice, it is always nothing else than an interpretation of selected inspiring ancient models (Laboury 2013c: 16–17). Interestingly, in those texts, the verb *sni* occurs quite prominently. This verb of motion can be constructed transitively or not, and its signification varies accordingly: with a direct object, it means to pass, overpass or surpass something (physically or metaphorically); while used with the preposition *r* and an indirect object, especially in the expression *m sni r*, “in conformity with,” it refers to the idea of passing through and following the path or the model of something or someone.<sup>55</sup> The semantic spectrum of this verbal

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51. What follows regarding the Ancient Egyptian conception of creativity is directly reproduced from that reference, itself derived from a paper delivered at the University of Basel in May 2008, for a workshop untitled “Umgang mit Zäsuren: Strategien des Vergangenheitsbezugs in der 18. Dynastie.” For a more recent and thorough analysis of the Old and Middle Kingdom traditions in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, see now Cwiek 2014.
  52. Archaism is a category as frequently used in Egyptology as it is poorly defined. On the need for a more refined taxonomy of the different kinds of reuses of forms of expressions of the past in the Egyptological discourse, see Laboury 2013c (and more specifically p. 11 and 23–24). I use the term here as a generic reference to any form of deliberate reuse of earlier models.
  53. See, for instance, the comments of Hourig Sourouzian in her remarkable study of the iconography of *Heb Sed* statues, noting about the innovative depictions introduced during the reign of Amenhotep III: “*la créativité artistique va pourtant de pair avec le retour à des usages archaïques*” (Sourouzian 1994: 499). On the relation between the two concepts, see also the remarks at the end of the first section of this article.
  54. See, notably, Reiff 1959; Flashar 1979; Bompaire 2000; Gazda 2002; Perry 2005; on Renaissance theories of imitation, see Bambach 1999; Muller 1982 (and particularly the bibliography he gathered on the subject on p. 229, n. 6). Naturally, the precise meaning of these words has generated much debate and discussion among theoreticians throughout Western history.
  55. Once again (Laboury 2013c: 17, n. 93), I want to express here my gratitude to Stephane Polis for the very stimulating discussions we had about the meaning of the verb *sni*, with and without the preposition *r*, that truly helped to improve my understanding of this key expression in the Ancient Egyptian notional domain of *inventio*.

root, so often used in statements of innovation, encompasses both ideas of imitation and emulation, thus revealing a clear interrelation between the two concepts in the Ancient Egyptian mentality, even on an unconscious cultural level encoded in the vocabulary. In this conception, there is an unbreakable notional link between reproducing the existing and producing something new out of it, by surpassing or improving it.<sup>56</sup>

So, both Ancient Egyptian practices (notably in art) and discourses plainly establish an inextricable link between innovation, on the one hand, and the reuse, study and (re)interpretation of previous forms of expression, *i.e.* tradition(s), on the other hand. They hence converge to define creativity as a process of creative copy or creation through (at least partial) imitation and (re)interpretation.<sup>57</sup> And, since creativity operates within such a procedure of reinterpreting earlier works and their tradition, the copying phenomenon was actually integral to the creative process itself in Ancient Egyptian Art, just like in so many—actually most of—other artistic traditions. In this respect, and to cite just one example here, the case of the Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) is particularly interesting, because his work is very well known and documented and, as Jeffrey M. Muller pointed out:

“Rubens kept a notebook on theory which, lost in its original form, survives in several transcriptions and fragments” [...] and “comments on the theory of art are scattered through the painter’s correspondence.” (Muller 1982: 229).

In a remarkable study of this exceptionally rich material, Muller was able to demonstrate that Rubens, famous until the present day for his creativity and very recognizable personal style, recommended, in perfect accordance with the theories of his time, the imitation and competition with the works of predecessors, through copying them, in order to learn, improve and eventually find out one’s own manner and style, as he did himself, as many copies by his hand after other artists testify (Muller 1982). And Muller to conclude:

The theory of artistic imitation was a focal point in Rubens’s practice of art. It was here that future confronted past, art was balanced with nature, and personal style was reconciled with tradition and verisimilitude. (Muller 1982: 247).

The concern for nature and verisimilitude is of course specific to the aesthetics of mimesis that applied in that post-Renaissance era, but the parallel shows that creativity performed through imitation, interpretation and emulation of predecessors’ works is certainly no exception in the broad

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56. The fundamental meaning of the verb *gmi*, “to discover,” as an operation of uncovering something that was already there before but had not yet been noticed (on this verb, see Vernus 2015) is perfectly coherent and in line with the very same conception of *inventio*. As underlined in Laboury 2013c: 16, n. 87, and given the principle referred to at the end of the first section of this article, that nothing can be considered new if it is not compared to something older, this idea of innovation through reinterpretation of the past and the tradition inherited from the latter is far from being logically groundless. And, of course, it is directly connected to different cultural representations of Ancient Egyptian civilization, such as the conception of history (Vernus 1995), for instance, that were probably strongly influenced by this very basic and foundational notion of newness versus oldness, that determines concepts like evolution, progress, degradation, etc. Finally, in this cultural context (and next to ideas of pure duplication or iteration; on this, see Verhoeven 2015: 138–142), one may wonder if the opposition between productive and reproductive traditions is not just an etic—modern Egyptological—concern, with no real emic pertinence for Ancient Egyptians.

57. This definition, induced from the analysis of iconographic and textual practices, is perfectly compatible with the idea of Dorothea Arnold, who suggested considering Ancient Egyptian Art as a performing art; see the first section of this article.

history of artistic practices and theories, including in our own modern Western tradition, just like what Mathilde Arrivé designated as “l’apprentissage par la copie” (in her quotation here above).<sup>58</sup> In Ancient Egyptian Art, as well as in any other kinds of art, creativity is the art of engaging, dealing and—in the end—playing with the tradition(s).

Acknowledging this artistic fact and understanding the Ancient Egyptian conception of innovation allow us to address properly—instead of continuing to skirt around—the issue of creativity in the Art of Pharaonic civilisation, despite the strength of its tradition that shaped and maintained it through millennia.<sup>59</sup> Precisely because of this strong tradition, Ancient Egyptian Art is actually hyper-intericonical or was practiced in a hyper-intericonical mode, and, for that very reason, intericonicity, as a particularly subtle and versatile notion to describe complex relations between invariance and variability, certainly appears to be an ideal conceptual tool to investigate creativity and the dynamics of the Art of Ancient Egypt.

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58. This was also clearly the main learning method for Ancient Egyptian Art (Laboury 2013a: 32–33). For a very clever analysis of the issue of ostraca in this perspective, see Dorn 2013.

59. We have to keep in mind that the strength of a tradition does not, in itself, hinder creativity, for, as the American artist Wayne Higby rightly stressed, “Limits are essential to the creative process because they trigger reaction and focus energy.” (Higby 1993).

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## Errata sheet

Page 240, upper right, should say

'Reproduced by permission of the American Research Center in Egypt, Inc. (ARCE), from M. Hartwig (ed.) *The Tomb Chapel of Menna: The Art, Culture, and Science of Painting in an Egyptian Tomb*, American Research Center in Egypt Conservation Series 5 (Cairo & New York 2013), pp. 28-29, Figure 2.3b. Black & White drawing by Pieter Collet

# COLLECTION

ÆGYPTIACA LEODIENSIA

La collection *Ægyptiaca Leodiensia* — dirigée par Dimitri Laboury, Stéphane Polis et Jean Winand — a pour vocation de publier des travaux d'égyptologie dans les domaines les plus divers. Elle accueille en son sein des monographies ainsi que des volumes collectifs thématiques.

Tradition is central to Egyptology, and this volume discusses and problematises the concept by bringing together the most recent work on archaeological, art historical and philological material from the Predynastic to the Late Period. The eclectic mix of material in this volume takes us from New Kingdom artists in the Theban foothills to Old Kingdom Abusir, and from changing ideas about literary texts to the visual effects of archaising statuary. With themes of diachrony persisting at the centre, aspects of tradition are approached from a variety of perspectives: as sets of conventions abstracted from the continuity of artefactual forms; as processes of knowledge (and practice) acquisition and transmission; and as relevant to the individuals and groups involved in artefact production. The volume is divided into four main sections, the first three of which attempt to reflect the different material foci of the contributions: text, art, and artefacts. The final section collects papers dealing with traditions which span different media. The concepts of cultural *productivity* and *reproductivity* are inspired by the field of text criticism and form common reference points for describing cultural change across contributions

discussing disparate kinds of data. Briefly put, productive or open traditions are in a state of flux that stands in dialectic relation to shifting social and historical circumstances, while reproductive or closed traditions are frozen at a particular historical moment and their formulations are thereafter faithfully passed down verbatim. The scholars in this volume agree that a binary categorisation is restrictive, and that a continuum between the two poles of dynamic productivity and static reproductivity is by all means relevant to and useful for the description of various types of cultural production.

This volume represents an interdisciplinary collaboration around a topic of perennial interest, a rarity in a field increasingly fractured by progressive specialisation.

**Todd GILLEN** earned his PhD in Egyptology from Macquarie University, Sydney, and worked as a postdoctoral fellow for the Ramses project at the University of Liège. He has published on a variety of topics relating to ancient Egyptian text and culture of the New Kingdom. He is currently pursuing a career in psychology and counselling.

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