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Transforming Images as Sophisticated Reuse of Cultic SPACES IN THE NEW KINGDOM THEBAN NECROPOLIS ALEXIS DEN DONCKER - UNIVERSITY OF BASEL

1. Tomb Reuse Including Image Alteration

In the Theban necropolis, around fifty tombs provide evidence for "positive" image alteration (Kampp 1996: 123-125; Polz 1990) generally occurring in the context of the reuse of tombs as funerary monuments, thereby focused above all on the underground facilities. Addition, restoration, transformation as well as retouching of inscriptions and/or various iconographic units of the original decorative programme of the chapel (negative actions like image defacement being here excluded) all seem to be part of the systemic use of these monuments almost no tomb being exclusively tied to a single inhumation (Guksch 1995). This very small group of tombs can be considered as rather sophisticatedly reused places for cult performance.

Apparently, their new occupants had means, or deemedimportant, to (also?) benefit from a decorative setting adapted to their identity, introducing a new self-presentation visual rhetoric in the monument.

Itmustbestressedthatinmostcasesnoarchaeological evidence (i.e. funerary material, identified human remains, etc.) can be linked to these alterations of image. In this respect, chapel and burial chamber should be clearly distinguished. Although this sounds rather unlikely, it cannot be fully excluded that some individuals only reused the chapel as a personal place for memorial and cultic activities and may have been buried elsewhere.

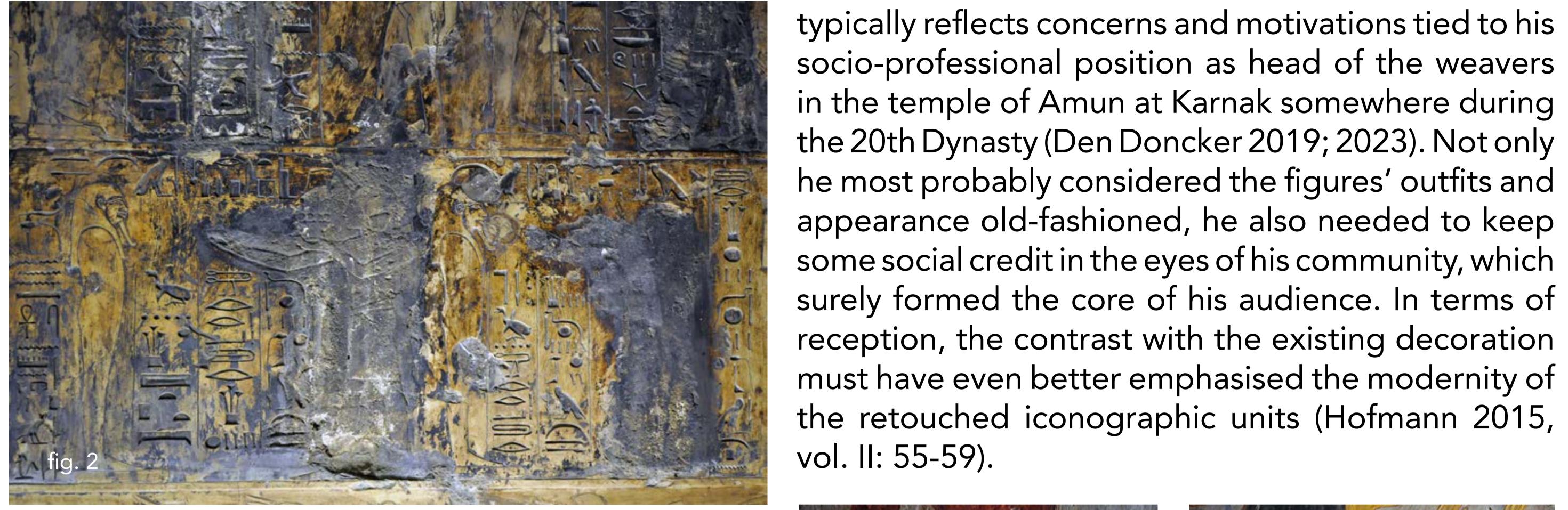


2. Patterns and Regulation in Private Tomb and/ or Chapel Reuse:

Aside from Deir el-Medina cemetery, which had some specific status, it remains unclear how tomb reuse procedures were actually ruled out as concerns the rest of the private necropolis. Was tomb reuse "legal", "permitted", "tolerated", "expected" (see Guksch 1995: 36)? Was this issue as significant in ancient times as it has long been for the Egyptologists (e.g. Polz 1990: 301-303; Eaton-Krauss 2015: 99)?

It can be assumed no strict legal frame really existed, for no regular patterns pointing towards institutionalised regulation have been revealed so far. Nonetheless, it is possible that certain connections between the new tomb occupant and the original owner facilitated access and motivated the reuse procedure (Polz 1990: 335).

For example, in the case of the tomb of Djehuty reused byDjehutyemheb(TT45), one can legitimately suggest that the correspondence of name and professional affiliation was indeed at stake (figs. 3-5). In these lower ranking elite communities, people must have known of socially significant professional/familial figures such like Djehuty and therefore possibly maintained cultic activities over long periods. It could be argued that the monument was simply updated in terms of iconographic content, yet the name was preserved (as well as a scene especially dedicated to the original owner).



In other cases, some fictious filiation could be established so as to presumably legitimate the introduction of the new occupant as the "son vivifying the name (= the memory)" (sanh.w rn.f) of the original owner (Grallert 2001: 84-108). This was the case of the tomb of Senemiah reused by Piay (TT 127) (fig. 1). It can be wondered whether the total abandonment of a funerary monument (either as a place for cult performance and/or as a place for inhumation) enabled people to actually make "free" use of it, provided no claim arouse—first come first served.

3. Socio-professional "Visualities" Conditioning Image Reception and Conception

In some interesting cases like the reuse of TT 45 and TT 127, the way the new occupant transformed the decoration of the tomb chapel reflects how he engaged with the images when he initially entered the monument. In terms of image reception, these alterations respond to the agency he conferred to the original decorative setting. Besides, as compared to most cases of tomb-chapel reuse where only a name was added, it seems clear that the new occupant's endeavour reveals some particularly high sensitivity. As the transformations materialise the reception pattern, they clearly reveal individual comprehension, expectations and projections in

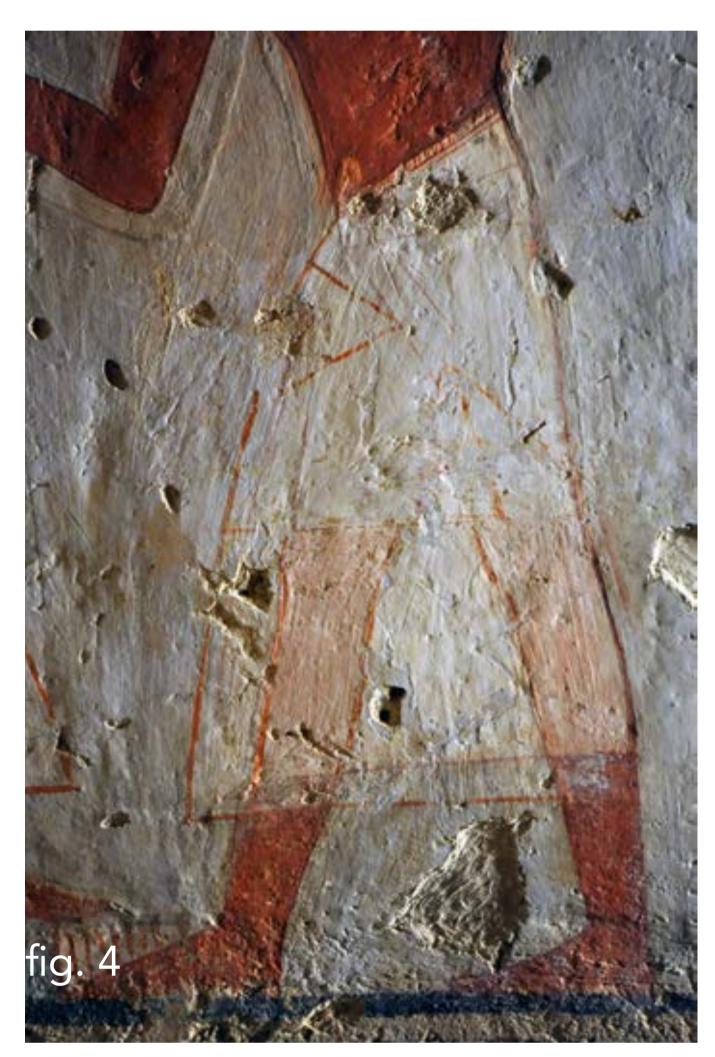


regard to the decoration. In this respect, Piay's like Sheny in TT 17, team working on the visually smart integration of chose to rather focus on inscriptions and restoration of defaced figures in TT a single more elaborated 127 provide evidence for clear stylistic awareness in representation terms of aesthetic reception (fig. 2).

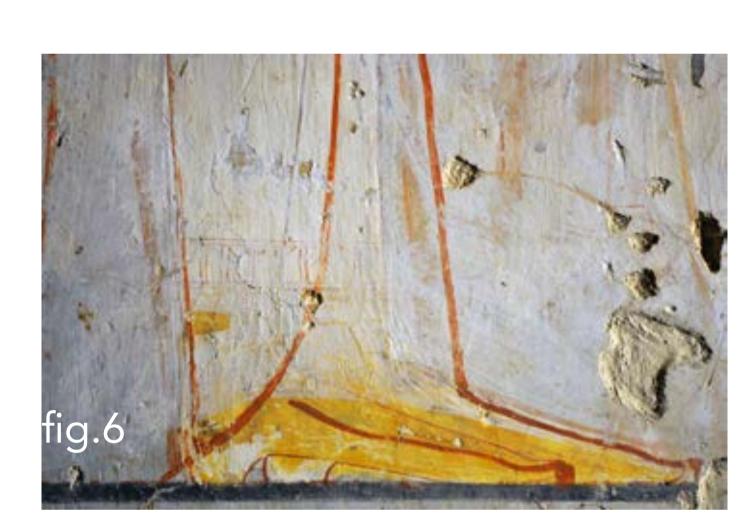
It seems possible to relate the reaction to the image to the new occupant's visuality (on this concept, see Davis 2011:8), that is built on some socio-professional predispositions and conditioning towards visual elite funerary culture. In simpler terms, one presents himself according to the social group to which he belongs and whom he is targeting as the audience sharing the same visuality (Den Doncker 2023).

The best example of such reception pattern is the reuse of the tomb of Djehuty by Djehutyemheb (TT 45). In this case, the new occupant's focus on completing and refashioning (paint retouching), among others, the clothing and hairdresses of the female and male figures of the iconographic programme (figs. 3-6)

socio-professional position as head of the weavers in the temple of Amun at Karnak somewhere during the 20th Dynasty (Den Doncker 2019; 2023). Not only he most probably considered the figures' outfits and appearance old-fashioned, he also needed to keep some social credit in the eyes of his community, which surely formed the core of his audience. In terms of reception, the contrast with the existing decoration must have even better emphasised the modernity of the retouched iconographic units (Hofmann 2015, vol. II: 55-59).







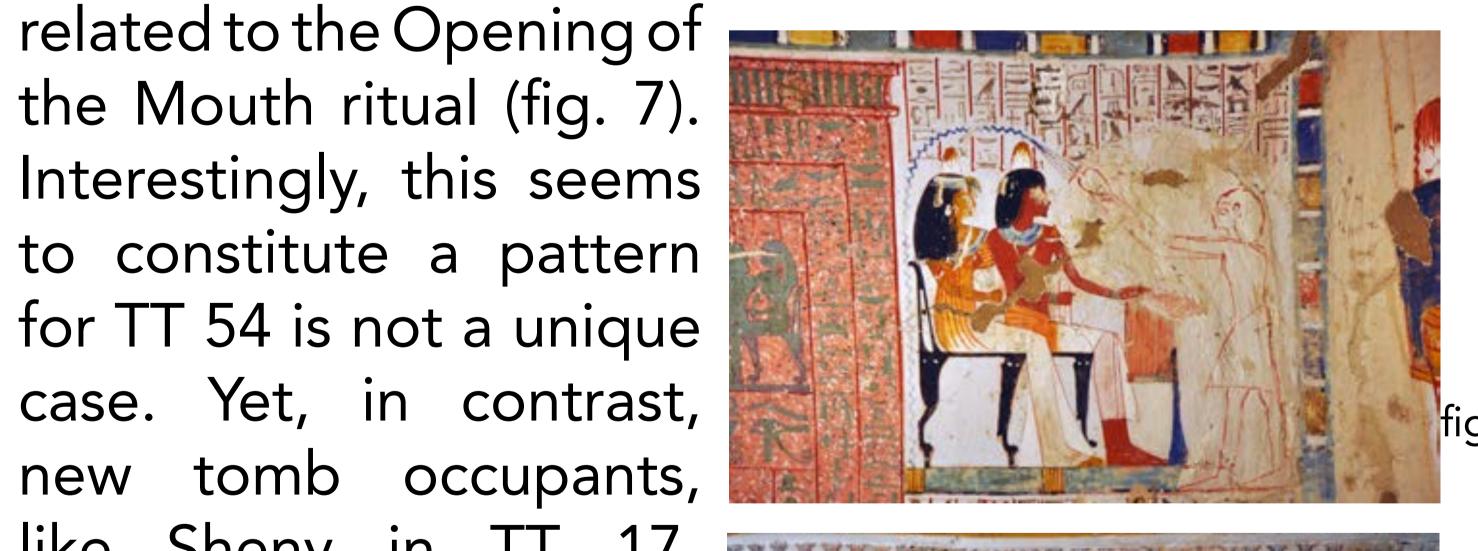
4. Restoration of sem-priests in the context of tomb reuse

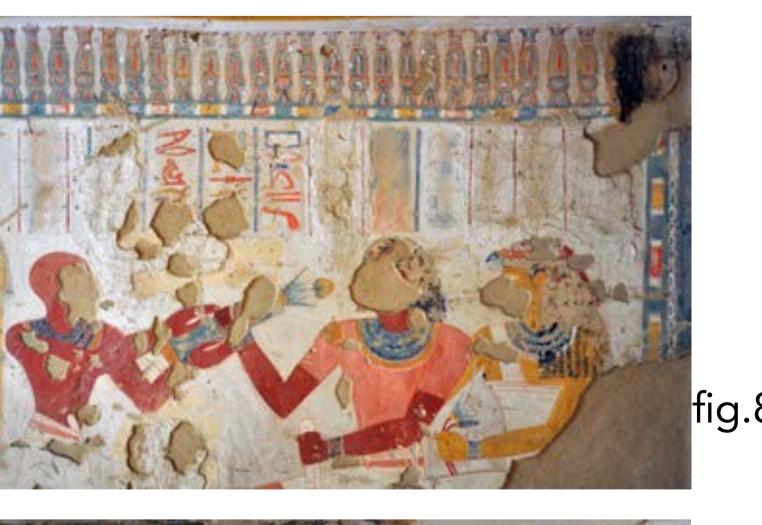
In other cases, the reuse of the decorative programme did not undergo such elaborated transformation programme. A relatively large amount of tomb chapels only show a few roughly restored iconographic units, especially figures of sem-priests performing the funerary cult (Den Doncker in press). This procedure did not require much means (workforce, material, etc.).

This is for example the case of the tomb of Huy (TT 54), whose son Kel completed the decorative programme and restored figures of sem-priests after the Amarna period (Polz 1997: 38-48). As it happens, it is one of the very few cases where funerary material belonging to the new occupant provide archaeological evidence for the reuse of the complete monument. The completely hacked figures were replastered and replaced by barely sketched figures of simple officiating men performing actions

the Mouth ritual (fig. 7). Interestingly, this seems to constitute a pattern for TT 54 is not a unique case. Yet, in contrast, tomb occupants,

introducing them more visually into the original decorative setting, while apparently leaving, in this case, the restoration damaged scenes unfinished (Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 23-25) (figs. 8-9).







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T. Säve-Söderbergh, Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs, PTT 1, Oxford, 1957 © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège