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Herausgegeben von
Jochem Kahl und
Nicole Kloth



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Graffiti Marking Access to Precious Pictorial Goods

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Abstract

This article explores New Kingdom graffiti as secondary epigraphy interacting with existing monumental visual settings. The authors examine how ancient visitors to private tomb chapels and ancient royal funerary sites engaged and marked these monuments, integrating their identities within the pictorial environment. By identifying patterns of interaction with *images-as-objects* and *images-as-subjects*, they introduce the concept of “pictorial goods”—iconographic models, religious figures or valuable items—that graffitists accessed and appropriated through their inscriptions, as conditioned by visualities structuring the reception and productive engagement with the decorations. Drawing on case studies from Thebes and Memphis, the study highlights the socio-cultural significance of graffiti as both a personal and communal practice and its role in establishing the memory contract between the living and the deceased as a form of cultural communication within the monumental landscape. The discussion incorporates theoretical perspectives on linguistic landscapes, actor-network theory, and image reception to analyse the cognitive and social dimensions of this phenomenon.

1 Introduction

Graffiti, also known as “secondary epigraphy”, became appreciated by epigraphers and historians as a source for social and cultural history, understood by the modern analysts to involve more social groups than, for example, formal expressions of written and visual culture.¹ With increasing (or more visible) attention in history writing given to communication, mediality and mobility, and to the networks joining ancient individuals, communities, and places, they offer a unique insight into the ancient world. They can affirm or subvert cultural narratives² and were written or drawn by diverse ancient actors, especially when, again, compared to the more restricted range of actors involved in monumental culture.³ Yet, to believe that graffiti were “free of social restraint”⁴ seems to capture only one facet of their function, as in many

¹ J. A. Baird/C. Taylor, *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, Routledge Studies in Ancient History 2, New York 2011, contributed explicitly to identifying graffiti as a rich resource for visual and written culture, not limited to marginalised or subversive messaging, but straddling communities and groups, reflecting discourses in ancient societies, and implying diverse levels of communication among literate and illiterate in antiquity. They summarised their contribution in J. A. Baird/C. Taylor, in: *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, 2016, s.v. Ancient Graffiti, 17–26, in context of graffiti studies from different historical periods. For a recent review of graffiti as a productive primary source see also L. Mascia et al., *Graffiti Scratched, Scrawled, Sprayed: Towards a Cross-Cultural Understanding*, *Studies in Manuscript Cultures* 35, Berlin 2023.

² See discussions in C. Ragazzoli et al., *Scribbling through History: Graffiti, Places and People from Antiquity to Modernity*, London 2018.

³ P. Keegan, *Graffiti in Antiquity*, London 2014; Baird/Taylor, in: *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, 2016, 21–23.

⁴ As suggested by A. Peden, *The Scope and Roles of Hieroglyphic and Hieratic Graffiti in Ancient Egypt and Nubia: Textual Graffiti in the Hieroglyphic and Hieratic Scripts from the Pharaonic Era: Dynasties I–XXXI* (PhD diss., University of Liverpool), Liverpool 1997, xii, reprised in A. Peden, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt: Scope and Roles of Informal Writings* (c. 3100–332 B.C.), *Probleme der Ägyptologie* 17, Leiden 2001, and following earlier work of sociologists E. Abel/B. Buckley, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Toward a Sociology and Psychology of Graffiti*, *Contributions in Sociology* 27, Westport, CT 1977, which, however, was mostly concerned with categories of sexually motivated and scatological secondary epigraphy. For an overview of the formulaic contents of different ancient Egyptian graffiti categories, and their social significance, see C. Ragazzoli, *Leaving One's Name: Visitors' Inscriptions in the Theban Tombs*, in: C. Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt: A Companion to Secondary Epigraphy*, *Bibliothèque d'étude* 182, Cairo 2023, 256–257.

cases they resulted from activities firmly embedded in or structured by socio-professional contexts. Egyptian textual graffiti also followed normative elements of written culture, such as the choices and transpositions of graphic registers.⁵ Understanding the diversity of graffiti functions is an ongoing effort and a part of a wider interest in how cultural norms and expectations were articulated and transmitted by individual and group action in ancient societies.⁶ The paradigm shift in graffiti research in recent decades means that we do not see them as an intrusive afterthought⁷ but increasingly as an integral part of the visual and written communication of their time.

In this contribution, the authors focus on New Kingdom dipinti (secondary epigraphy executed by an additive technique with an ink and a brush) interacting with existing visual culture, visited and marked by their audience, who labelled figures, repeated patterns of behaviour, and established their participation in meaningful, well-targeted places, such as funerary chapels. Using this material, we identify who was looking and, also, who wanted to be seen interacting with the primary decoration of extant monuments.

Disentangling the ancient reception of visual culture is a complicated task, and this view on the traces of direct interaction raises questions of both the physical accessibility and

⁵ See C. Ragazzoli/F. Albert, Introduction. Forms and Spaces of Writing: Approaches and Methodology for the Study of Egyptian Scriptuality, in: F. Albert/C. Ragazzoli (eds), *Questions sur la scripturalité égyptienne: des registres graphiques aux espaces d'écriture*, Cairo 2025, 23–43; and a case study in Old Kingdom tombs at Meir: K. Hassan/C. Ragazzoli, The Survey of Secondary Epigraphy in the Private Necropoleis of Middle Egypt: The Case of Meir, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 217–238.

⁶ See Ragazzoli et al., *Scribbling through History*, 2018; Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; C. Ragazzoli, Epigraphic Interaction with the Theban Tombs' Decoration: The Case of Graffiti and Visitors' Inscriptions, in: B. M. Bryan/P. F. Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis: Papers from the Theban Workshop 2016*, Studies in Ancient Cultures 2, Chicago 2023, 139–157. The fluid boundary between primary and secondary epigraphy that might have appeared in some Ramesside tombs was investigated by M. Sartori, Hieratic in the Tomb of Amenemhet (TT 277): Epigraphic Survey and Comparisons among the Script Typologies Present in the Tomb, in: S. Gülden et al. (eds), *Ägyptologische "Binsen"-Weisheiten IV: Hieratisch des Neuen Reiches. Akteure, Formen und Funktionen. Akten der internationalen Tagung in der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz im Dezember 2019*, Stuttgart 2022, 455–478; and forthcoming work by Julia Hamilton (see also J. C. F. Hamilton, The Sacredness of the Royal Name in Old Kingdom Inscriptions: Palimpsests in the Chapel of Merytet Meri at Saqqara, in: M. Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2020*, Prague 2021, 107–120). For earlier material see Hassan/Ragazzoli in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023—some secondary texts in the tombs at Meir might have been added during the burial or during later offering rites. On a different note, graffiti that appeared in context of staff presence on site, yet had a commemorative aspect are widely discussed for Thebes, in both built and natural environment (for instance M. Barwik, Graffiti of the Scribes of the Royal Necropolis of the 21st Dynasty from the Hatshepsut Temple at Deir el-Bahari, in: ZÄS 147, no. 2, 2020, 131–140; A. Dorn, Von Graffiti und Königsgräbern des Neuen Reiches, in: B. J. J. Haring et al. (eds), *The Workman's Progress: Studies in the Village of Deir el-Medina and Other Documents from Western Thebes in Honour of Rob Demarée*, Egyptologische Uitgaven 28, Leuven 2014, 57–71; A. Dorn, Graffiti in Western Thebes Left by the Members of the Community of Workmen and Others: Past Research, Future Perspectives and a Recently Identified Eighteenth Dynasty Graffiti, in: B. G. Davies (ed.), *Dispatches from Deir el-Medina*, Wallasey 2023, 92–108; M. R. Ragab, The Workmen's Graffiti in the Valley of the Kings: The Impact of Landscape and Social Networks on Graffiti-Making, with a Focus on the Unpublished Graffiti Discovered by Howard Carter in 1915–1918, Uppsala Studies in Egyptology 7, Uppsala 2024). The Theban Mountain corpus was extensively mapped by W. Spiegelberg, *Ägyptische und andere Graffiti (Inschriften und Zeichnungen) aus der thebanischen Nekropolis*, Heidelberg 1921; J. Černý, *Graffiti hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques de la nécropole thébaine: N^{os} 1060 à 1405*, Documents de fouilles de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale 9, Cairo 1956; and the Graffiti de la Montagne Thébaine team.

⁷ As put by Baird/Taylor, in: *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, 2016, 19.

conceptual approachability of images that the ancient visitor was looking at—or vice versa, a question of the visual and textual literacy of the visitor. The visitors' inscriptions appear to offer privileged access to the ancient *milieu*,⁸ as they articulate explicitly that the visitors “came to see”, thematising the actions of coming (investing an effort in mobility⁹) and seeing (interacting with the object along with the related decorative setting or *picscape*¹⁰, possibly implying some intellectual effort¹¹). They suggest that we can access the subjective meaning of the place and the process of interaction.¹²

The texts then go on to articulate the properly *social* reaction stimulated by the monument. It was a collectively lived and socially framed experience,¹³ as well as an individual one. The graffiti are also located (except in the case of fragmented walls) in the same position as when they were made, which is suggestive of the spatial and visual experience that the ancient audience must have had and allows an investigation of spatial relationships, lines of visibility, and other aspects. At the same time, we need to factor in historical changes of the built environment, as well as the uncertainties of dating secondary texts, and particularly secondary images.¹⁴

1.1 Aims

Using examples from Memphis and Thebes, the paper addresses the visual environment reception articulated in secondary epigraphy, identifying access to precious/valuable pictorial goods as a major factor. Moreover, it aims to define the productive aspect of such practices by tackling the issue of the actual value of these images with respect to the visitor's visuality and intentions. We address data about secondary epigraphy qualitatively, using a combination of

⁸ Used here as a label for social, but also material environment. The term itself is intensely debated due to its incarnations in transnational intellectual history (W. Feuerhahn, *A Specter Is Haunting Germany—The French Specter of Milieu. Nomadicity and Nationality of Cultural Vocabularies*, in: *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 9, no. 2, 2014, 33–50).

⁹ *iw.t*, in some Ramesside examples *swtw.t* (TLA: *swtw.t* “sich ergehen; reisen” (Wb IV, 77.12–78.1; FCD 218; Lesko, *Dictionary*, III, 27) (lemma-no. 130890) in texts nearly always linked to an element of positive experience and enjoyment:

- tOIC 13539, Neferkare and Sasetet (line [4]) – [šm.t] [pw] jri.n (j)m(j)-r mšc z3-sn.t r {sm.t} <swtw.t> r sđ3 jb; tDeM 1214 is similar.
- pHarris 500 = pBM EA 10060, Recto 7–8: (line [7,9]) – s.t nfr.t n.t swtw.t = {j} jw dr.t = k = {j} hr dr.t = j
- pHarris 500 = pBM EA 10060, Recto 4–6: (line [5,7]) – jr = j swtw.t = {j} [5,8] jw = j hn = {j} <t> m s.t nb(.t) nfr.t = {t}

¹⁰ As Andreas Dorn put it during a discussion at the conference “Making and Experiencing Graffiti in Ancient and Late Antique Egypt and Sudan” organised by Julia C. F. Hamilton at Leiden University, December 2021.

¹¹ As induced in the recurrent expression *sđ3y-hr*, as suggested by Y. Volokhine, *Une façon égyptienne de prendre du plaisir*, in: P. Collombert et al. (eds), *Aere Perennius: Mélanges égyptologiques en l'honneur de Pascal Vernus*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 242, Leuven 2016, 837–859.

¹² A process articulated in a geosemiotic approach by R. Scollon/S. Scollon, *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World*, London 2003, 5–16.

¹³ A. Den Doncker, *Reactions to Images in the Theban Necropolis: Towards Socio-Professional Visualities*, in: O. el-Aguizy/B. Kasparian (eds), *ICE XII: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Egyptologists*, 3rd–8th November 2019, Cairo, Egypt, I, *Bibliothèque générale* 71, Cairo 2023, 383–391.

¹⁴ N. Staring, *Memphite New Kingdom Graffiti Corpus in Tomb Contexts*, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 301; N. Staring, *The Saqqara Necropolis through the New Kingdom: Biography of an Ancient Egyptian Cultural Landscape, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East* 131, Leiden 2023.

theoretical approaches framed by the linguistic landscape concept, which uses geosemiotics¹⁵ and which is in turn influenced by actor-network theory, where Bruno Latour “argued against an ontological separation of the material and the semiotic.”¹⁶ We also build on the recent increased availability of both qualitative and quantitative data on secondary epigraphy in ancient Egypt.¹⁷

Are we dealing with opportunistic interactions with images taking place as by-products of broader socio-professional activities? Or, contrariwise, were these visits planned beforehand with possible expectations regarding the iconographic potential of the monument?

This paper aims specifically at defining different patterns of interaction with iconography as they were captured in secondary epigraphy, targeting well-selected iconographic units rather than broad visual environments approached as a whole.¹⁸ Reception of iconography is an aspect of the relationship that the Egyptians had with their visual culture, and alongside it we would like to emphasise that other aspects of interaction were showcased by secondary epigraphy, such as the social space aspect,¹⁹ or the devotional aspect,²⁰ both well-attested in the Memphite and Theban necropoleis. One example from the Memphite region will provide a contrast, highlighting the reception of space that was devoid of explicit iconography, but not of meaning.

The aspects are diversified by us as modern observers for analytical purposes, splitting the ancient experience and behaviour into manageable units that we can describe, but they should not be taken as mutually exclusive, but as parts of cultural communication whose different components might have had a very individual weight for each actor. The factor that appears as particularly influential is the memory contract established in Egyptian cultural communication and embodied in the funerary architecture, visual and written culture, and

¹⁵ As defined by Scollon/Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 2003.

¹⁶ As put by social scientists S. Brinkmann/S. Kvale, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Los Angeles 2025, 120, in the context of interviewing and analysing data from subjects of contemporary social sciences.

¹⁷ See an overview in Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; also P. L. Polkowski, *Stone Canvas: Towards a Better Integration of “Rock Art” and “Graffiti” Studies in Egypt and Sudan*, Bibliothèque d’étude 183, Cairo 2023; and J. C. F. Hamilton (ed.), *Making and Experiencing Graffiti in Ancient and Late Antique Egypt and Sudan: Proceedings of the Leiden Conference, December 2021*, forthcoming.

¹⁸ On this reception pattern, see U. Verhoeven, *The New Kingdom Graffiti in Tomb N13.1: An Overview*, in: M. El-Khadragy et al. (eds.), *Seven Seasons at Asyut: First Results of the Egyptian-German Cooperation in Archaeological Fieldwork. Proceedings of an International Conference at the University of Sohag, 10th–11th of October, 2009*, Wiesbaden 2012, 47–58; C. Ragazzoli, *The Social Creation of a Scribal Place: The Visitors’ Inscriptions in the Tomb Attributed to Antefiqer (TT 60) (with Newly Recorded Graffiti)*, in: SAK 42, 2013, 269–323; K. Hassan, *The Visitor’s Graffiti in Two Tombs of Beni Hassan (Ameny and Khnumhotep II)*, in: JARCE 52, 2016, 33–52; H. Navratilova, *Memphite New Kingdom Graffiti Corpus in Pyramid Precincts*, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 275–296 (for the perception of broad monumental spaces); A. Den Doncker, *Réactions aux images: Pour une réception des images en Égypte ancienne*. *Swiss Egyptological Studies*, Basel forthcoming.

¹⁹ Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013; Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023.

²⁰ C. Ragazzoli, *La grotte des scribes à Deir el-Bahari: la tombe MMA 504 et ses graffiti*, *Mémoires publiés par les membres de l’Institut français d’archéologie Orientale* 135, Cairo 2017; A. Den Doncker, *In Hathor’s Womb. Shifting Agency of Iconographic Environments: The Private Tombs of the Theban Necropolis under the Prism of Cultural Geography*, in: N. Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion: Practices – Transmission – Landscape*, *Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities* 21, Leiden 2019, 173–189.

practices. The second aim of the paper is therefore to accentuate the interlinked character of aspects of cultural communication.²¹

1.2 *Theory for graffiti as interlocutors of visual culture*

The earlier Egyptologists looked to the texts discovered as additions on the walls, inserted in the monumental record, with expectations to discover an informal or spontaneous response.²² An implied reception of visual as well as written culture was noted in later studies, but it was articulated largely as high-level, without a detailed analysis.²³ In Egypt, as in other parts of the ancient world, the issue was that “graffiti have not fitted neatly within disciplinary boundaries carved out by ancient history, philology, art history and archaeology.”²⁴ This changed as approaches to ancient material started to include graffiti on a more systematic basis, crossing the established disciplinary boundaries and adding anthropology to the mix. In Egyptology, this process has been helped by the plurality of approaches that the discipline is already

²¹ Most eloquently J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*. Translated by David Lorton, Ithaca 2005, 39–63, on death as social isolation. Note Man and his *bꜣ* (J. P. Allen, *The Debate Between a Man and His Soul: A Masterpiece of Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Leiden 2011), death parting man from society (as institution), and thus from human company (as emotional, social and cultural need).

²² See H. Navratilova, *Gardiner and Graffiti*, *Egyptian & Egyptological Documents, Archives, Libraries* 2, 2010, 171–186; A. Den Doncker, *Theban Tomb Graffiti during the New Kingdom: Research on the Reception of Ancient Egyptian Images by Ancient Egyptians*, in: K. A. Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society: Ancient and Modern Contexts of Egyptian Art: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest*, 13–15 May 2010, Budapest 2012, 27–28.

²³ Mainly the response to place and memory was noted by H. W. Helck, *Die Bedeutung der ägyptischen Besucherinschriften*, in: *ZDMG* 102, 1952, 39–46; D. Wildung, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewußtsein ihrer Nachwelt. Teil I: Posthume Quellen über die Könige der ersten vier Dynastien*, *Münchener Ägyptologische Studien* 17, Berlin 1969, 65–74; D. Wildung, *LÄ I*, 766–767, s.v. *Besucherinschriften*. The references to the reception of visual culture articulated to secondary epigraphy are limited, and appear more recently: M. K. Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes, 1419–1372 BCE*, *Monumenta Aegyptiaca* 10, Turnhout/Brussels 2004, 43–49; T. A. Bács, *The Tip of a Horn: The Possible Origin of an Iconographic Theme in the Elite Tombs of New Kingdom Thebes*, in: *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 46, 2006, 3–16; A. Den Doncker, *Prélude à une étude de la réception de l’image égyptienne par les anciens Égyptiens*, in: E. Warmenbol/V. Angenot (eds), *Thèbes aux 101 portes: mélanges à la mémoire de Roland Tefnin*, *Monumenta Aegyptiaca* 12, Turnhout/Brussels 2010, 79–89; Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012; Ragazzoli, in: *SAK* 42, 2013. See also M. K. Hartwig, in: M. K. Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, Oxford, 2015, 39–59, s.v. *Style*; A. Verbovsek, *Grenzen eines Travelling Term: warum die Ägypter keinen “Bilderstreit” kannten*, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 67, no. 2, 2011, 131–152; A. Verbovsek, in: Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, 2015, 141–154, s.v. *Reception and Perception*, with comprehensive bibliography on image reception studies applied to ancient Egyptian visual culture. One epistemological trap in dealing with image reception issues in ancient visual cultures is not only to get rid of our modern perceptions and understanding but also of potentially unconscious expectations towards images. Interestingly, with regards to the three large-scale female figures depicted in front of Amenhotep II seated on his nurse’s lap in TT 93 (see Fig. 2), Kenneth A. Kitchen translated the *ir nfr* formula of a graffito attributed to the vizier Paser placed next to them, into “very beautiful”. For the sake of reception studies, we can’t fail to appreciate how the Egyptologist must have, to some extent, projected his own reception of the female figures to that of the ancient vizier (K. A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II, King of Egypt*, II, Warminster 1982, 148; for the graffito in question, see N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Ken-Amūn at Thebes*, *PMMA* 5, New York 1930, 22, pls IX, LXVIII A; Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 183–186; C. Ragazzoli, *Secondary Epigraphy in the North-Asasif Tombs: The “Restoration Label” of Paser in Khety’s Tomb TT 311, Year 17 of Ramesses II*, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, 2021, 229–232).

²⁴ Baird/Taylor, *Ancient Graffiti*, 2011, 6.

accustomed to using, even though this plurality is often a more tacit knowledge than an expressly articulated one.²⁵

Increasingly, a large part of graffiti research, even though it may have started with a hypothesis (such as mapping historical awareness or personal piety),²⁶ has developed using an approach similar to grounded theory (mostly without explicitly defining the research process as such): a collection of data was analysed or “coded” to identify patterns of behaviour or interaction, with further hypotheses emerging from the data.²⁷ The graffiti contents, or “data”: text contents or visual motifs, were “coded” first. Yet, it is also the graffiti “metadata”—location and spatial relations,²⁸ script register,²⁹ spatial connection to iconographic units used as visual supports,³⁰ contextual association with other anthropogenic responses to the same monument³¹—that have garnered more and more attention, as they proved essential for interpreting ancient interaction with the places marked as meaningful by secondary epigraphy.³²

²⁵ See D. Wengrow, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Egyptology*, 48–64, s.v. Egyptology and Cognate Disciplines.

²⁶ Helck, in: ZDMG 102, 1952; Wildung, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige*, 1969, 65–74; H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Representations of the Past in New Kingdom Literature*, in: J. Tait (ed.), “Never Had the Like Occurred”: Egypt’s View of its Past, Encounters with Ancient Egypt, London 2003, 131–133; H. Navratilova, *The Visitors’ Graffiti of Dynasties XVIII and XIX in Abusir and Saqqara*, *The Visitors’ Graffiti 1*, Prague 2007. See also Gardiner’s early comments on the TT 60 corpus in N. de G. Davies, *The tomb of Antefoker, Vizier of Sesostri I, and of His Wife, Senet* (No. 60), TTS 2, London 1920, 27–29, discussed in Navratilova, *Egyptian & Egyptological Documents*, Archives, Libraries 2.

²⁷ Helck, in: ZDMG 102, 1952; H. Navratilova, *The Phraseology of the Visitors’ Graffiti: A Preliminary Report of the Graffiti Database*, in: M. Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2005: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Prague (June 27 – July 5, 2005)*, Prague 2006, 83–107.

²⁸ An overview in Baird/Taylor, in: *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, 22; H. Navratilova, *Graffiti Spaces*, in: L. Bareš et al. (eds), *Egypt in Transition: Social and Religious Development of Egypt in the First Millennium BCE*. Proceedings of an International Conference, Prague, September 1–4, 2009, Prague 2010, 305–332.

²⁹ Ragazzoli, *La grotte des scribes à Deir el-Bahari*, 2017; U. Verhoeven, *Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut*, *The Asyut Project 15*, Wiesbaden 2020.

³⁰ Den Doncker, in: Warmenbol/Angenot (eds), *Thèbes aux 101 portes*, 2010; Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012; Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013; Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; and Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023. Compare with Dorn, in: Davies (ed.), *Dispatches from Deir el-Medina*, 2023; J. Auenmüller, *Epigraphic Dialogues with the Landscape: New Kingdom Rock Inscriptions in Upper Nubia*, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 191–206; M. Brown, *Agents of Construction: Ancient Egyptian Rock Inscriptions as Tools of Site Formation and Modern Functional Parallels*, in: *Journal of Egyptian History* 10, no. 2, 2017, 153–211, on rock inscriptions interacting with natural elements used as visual support.

³¹ A. Den Doncker, *Identifying-Copies in the Private Theban Necropolis: Tradition as Reception under the Influence of Self-Fashioning Processes*, in: T. J. Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the Conference Held at the University of Liège, 6th–8th February 2013*, Liège 2017, 333–370; Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019; Den Doncker, in: el-Aguizy/Kasparian (eds), *ICE XII*, 2023; A. Oppenheim, *The Early Life of Pharaoh: Divine Birth and Adolescence Scenes in the Causeway of Senwosret III at Dahshur*, in: M. Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010*, Prague 2011, 171–188, on elements from Dahshur being possibly replicated in New Kingdom reliefs. On coordination of graffiti dates and Thutmoside building activity, see H. Navratilova, *Thutmoside Graffiti and Thutmoside Traditions: A View from Memphis*, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 537–561.

³² This is seen throughout in Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023.

Because of the articulate, if formulaic, response to the locations, secondary epigraphy has been analysed as a place-making exercise. Especially for the 18th Dynasty, this is very convincing, as the active elements of place making were both qualified and quantified.³³

An interest in providing a more explicit, articulate theoretical background in Egyptology enhanced also the interest in graffiti,³⁴ which are seen as a cross-culturally comparable phenomenon.³⁵ Spatiality, visual culture studies and memory studies, as well as intertextuality, have all contributed to enable Egyptologists to ask new questions. The graffiti “data” and “metadata”, although not yet fully aggregated from across their many locations in Egypt, have led the way to establishing this multilevel interpretation. Eventually, the view on graffiti became more involved with cognitive aspects: “what each graffito does, and how it works socially and psychologically, rather than simply asking what it is (a question that would tend to yield lexical equivalents).”³⁶ Or, as put by Chloé Ragazzoli, it is an analysis that includes the material and social context of writing, allowing to move “à une archéologie – au sens littéral – du texte avant de procéder à l’approche philologique et à une archéologie heuristique au sens foucaldien.”³⁷

Based on this approach, graffiti came to be understood not as necessarily random or spontaneous, but as systematic tools of communication, as a way of giving a response adjusted to space and audience, and sitting largely outside the formal, monumental, expressions but in relation to them,³⁸ and in reflection of the virtual textual and visual “archive”³⁹ of their makers.

Among the graffiti metadata, the context of tombs and temples is a major factor in the interpretation of secondary epigraphy, as the places themselves articulate cultural values, political messages, and collective and individual memories. As a social act expressing a discourse, leaving a graffito, just as any other performance of visual and written culture, was a combination of “the interaction order, visual semiotics, and ‘place’ semiotics.”⁴⁰

The location, or artefacts in it, are shown having culturally conditioned agency of their own, presumably active before the graffiti came to express, shape and witness the next layer of interactions. From this perspective, it is worth considering the difference between the ancient royal monuments of the Memphite necropoleis and the private Theban tomb chapels, as

³³ Navratilova, in: Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2005, 2006*; Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013. The research design in these papers was partly implicit, not fully explicit.

³⁴ As seen in studies collected by Ragazzoli et al., *Scribbling through History*, 2018; and Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023. Rock inscriptions research develops in parallel—see a recent overview in Polkowski, *Stone Canvas*, 2023.

³⁵ As shown by Ragazzoli et al., *Scribbling through History*, 2018.

³⁶ Keegan, *Graffiti in Antiquity*, 2014, 3.

³⁷ Ragazzoli/Albert, *Introduction. Forms and Spaces of Writing*, 2025.

³⁸ See Old Kingdom examples presented by Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; and K. Hassan/C. Ragazzoli, *Secondary Epigraphy and Members of the Funerary Cult Staff: The Graffito of the Dining-Hall Administrator (*hrp-sh*) Kai-Hersetef in Tomb Hammamyia A2 (with Graffiti from Meir)*, in: *NeHeT* 8, 2024, 29–41.

³⁹ *Au sens foucaldien*, see also S. Quirke, *Archive*, in: A. Loprieno (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, *Probleme der Ägyptologie* 10, Leiden/Cologne/New York, 1996, 379–401 (the intellectual “archive”); C. Ragazzoli, *Scribes: Les artisans du texte de l’Égypte ancienne, 1550–1000*, Paris 2019 (genealogies of knowledge of Egyptian literati).

⁴⁰ Scollon/Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 2003, 8.

in several respects we are dealing with almost opposite contexts of social interactions with images, though analogous reception/behaviour patterns arise in both sites. Apart from the range of the monuments' varying social significances, as being mainly determined by their owner's identity—from a famous 12th Dynasty king to a contemporary Theban gardener, the question of the monument's physical accessibility must be addressed. In theory, private funerary chapels were open to every passer-by, while royal temples were not. Visitors were part of the tomb chapel's commemorative functioning as they were supposed to witness a cleverly constructed decorative setting, somehow like in a playact: no audience, no commemoration.⁴¹ The more visitors there were, the greater were the tomb owner's chances of surviving in the collective memory. Presumably, royal monuments did not entail such large exposure, although several parts of their decoration must have operated along with a certain audience.⁴² It can be assumed that their access was initially restricted to individuals involved in the cult or in the temple's maintenance and was open to larger groups of people only on certain occasions. In secondary epigraphy, we see the aspect of response to the place, induced by its character and contents. There is an evident interaction that covers the agency of visitors and visited alike; in this interaction, the place-making effort appropriates the space alongside the recognition of the place's impact. This is supported by multiple visitor inscriptions where recognising the name of the monument's owner appears to have been one of the key factors in triggering aesthetic pleasure as a potential part of the whole reception process.⁴³ In these cases, the scribe's logical articulation of formulae evoking precisely the aesthetic appearance of the visited place linked to the owner's identity, as expressed by his name, shows that such an impact mostly relied on the conjunction of an intellectual preconception (e.g. the sense of the past and history, some social standing or professional achievement) and the physiological perception of harmonious forms spatially associated with it.

In addition, it may be crucial to stress that the ancient Egyptian visuality differed from ours in one essential respect: the world was globally far less visual and, accordingly, the image viewer's brain less accustomed to dealing with profuse iconographic environments or engaging somehow passively with surrounding pictures. On the one hand, almost unlimited photographic data today directly impact on the Egyptological perception and comprehension of temple and tomb decorations,⁴⁴ whereas in ancient times pictures fixed in their landscape and architectural setting always depended on a unique physical support. On the other hand,

⁴¹ See M. K. Hartwig, *Style and Visual Rhetoric in Theban Tomb Painting*, in: L. Pinch Brock/Z. Hawass (eds), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists*, Cairo, 2000, Cairo/New York 2003; D. Arnold, *Egyptian Art—A Performing Art?*, in: S. H. D'Auria (ed.), *Servant of Mut: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Fazzini*, *Probleme der Ägyptologie* 28, Leiden/Boston 2008, 8–9.

⁴² See for instance F. Rogner, *Bildliche Narrativität, Erzählen mit Bildern: Rezeption und Verwendung figürlicher Darstellungen im ägyptischen Neuen Reich*, *Swiss Egyptological Studies* 3, Basel 2022.

⁴³ Den Doncker, *Réactions aux images*, forthcoming.

⁴⁴ For example, concepts like intertextuality or intericonicity (see note 65) necessarily arise from such a privileged access to visual data, with today's scholars' capacity to quickly overview corpora and run through extremely large databases (see A. Den Doncker, *Visual Indexicality in the Private Tomb Chapels of the Theban Necropolis: On Flipping Iconographic Units as a Compositional Tool*, in: *Pražské Egyptologické Studie / Prague Egyptological Studies* 29, 2022, 43–73). This pattern of image reception occurs in total contrast with the ancient spatio-temporal determination, i.e. the physical conditions under which images were perceived, including the range of images accessible to an ancient individual in their usual action radius.

it can be presumed that complex figurative two-dimensional imagery, such as temple and tomb decorations, did not much occur in secular buildings, perhaps apart from palaces. Notwithstanding the clear lack of evidence in this regard, as for the 18th Dynasty, the relative scarcity of the proper workforce (sufficiently skilled draughtsmen and painters), which the extremely high number of unfinished parts of tomb decorations seems to indicate (along with limited prosopographical data), could lead to the assumption that, in general, public space was free from such elaborated decorative settings. Contrastingly, in these circumstances, the visual impact that rich colourful temple decorations and private tomb chapels may have had on occasional viewers must have been particularly strong, implying some kind of vibrant attractiveness as they stood out of the overall “chromatic” range of the daily life’s cultural landscape.

Furthermore, an attempt at characterising in detail the conditions of image reception, as well as the actual beholders themselves, may contribute to a neater definition of the relationship between the visitors and the visited monuments. By dispensing with the model of a universal viewer—as being somehow theoretically enclosed in the image construction and whom images would have the power to control as image reception studies based on the aesthetics of reception presume,⁴⁵ it seems possible to analyse distinct groups of individuals, and intents respectively, as well as the conditions surrounding the interactions with the funerary environment.⁴⁶ As regards the discussion on the theoretical modelling of the beholder, there are several aspects. Starting from the standpoint of the image *vis-à-vis* the beholder (i.e., the designer’s perspective, or *visuality*) rather than that of a beholder facing the image (thus considered as a real individual), Alexandra Verbovsek considerably reduces

⁴⁵ As for theoretical observers being included in the very conception of ancient Egyptian figurative artworks, see G. Pieke, *Principles of Decoration: Concept and Style in the Mastaba of Mereruka at Saqqara*, in: P. Kousoulis/N. Lazaridis (eds), *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists: University of the Aegean, Rhodes, 22–29 May 2008*, II, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 241, Leuven 2015, 1791–1806; Rogner, *Bildliche Narrativität, Erzählen mit Bildern*, 2022, 153; see also R. Betbeze, *Représenter les morts, captiver les vivants: les façades décorées des tombes memphites à l’Ancien Empire. Formes, fonctions, réception*, *Swiss Egyptological Studies* 4, Basel 2024, 19, in reference to the work of W. Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1983; W. Kemp, *Der Betrachter ist im Bild: Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik*, Berlin 1992. On such an “immanent” beholder, see also Verbovsek, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 67, no. 2, 2011, 131–152; Verbovsek, in: Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, 2015; M. Fitzenreiter, *Totenverehrung und soziale Repräsentation im thebanischen Beamtengrab der 18. Dynastie*, in: SAK 22, 1995, 95–130; with nuanced views by R. Schulz, *Kommunikationsmedium Bild. Auf der Suche nach dem Rezipienten*, in: G. Neunert et al. (eds), *Bild: Ästhetik – Medium – Kommunikation. Beiträge des dritten Münchner Arbeitskreises Junge Ägyptologie (MAJA 3). 7 bis 9.12.2012*, Wiesbaden 2014, 35–41.

⁴⁶ The temple environment is a parallel highly intriguing area. On Karnak and Luxor, see C. Salvador, *Graffiti and Sacred Space: New Kingdom Expressions of Individuality in the Court of the Seventh Pylon at Karnak*, in: M. Ullmann (ed.), *10. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Ägyptische Tempel zwischen Normierung und Individualität*, München, 29.–31. August 2014, *Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen* 3,5, Wiesbaden 2016, 111–128; C. Salvador, *Repopulating the Court of the Seventh Pylon at Karnak* (PhD diss., University of Oxford), Oxford 2019; C. Salvador, *Graffiti at the South-East Door of the Court of the Tenth Pylon at Karnak: Staff only beyond this Point?*, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 355–376; E. Frood, *Egyptian Temple Graffiti and the Gods: Appropriation and Ritualization in Karnak and Luxor*, in: D. Ragavan (ed.), *Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual, and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World*, *Oriental Institute Seminars* 9, Chicago 2013, 285–318. On Abydos, see H. Navratilova, *Textual and Figural Secondary Epigraphy*, in: S. Iskander/O. Goelet (eds), *The Temple of Ramesses II in Abydos, III: Architectural and Inscriptional Features*, Atlanta 2021, 407–421.

the constructive part played by the actual viewer in the aesthetic and creative process of an artwork. This theoretical stance suggests that every artwork contains the specific signs and meanings intended to *direct* the viewer *autonomously* towards the message of the image. In applying the aesthetics of reception to ancient Egyptian art, such an “immanent” beholder⁴⁷ thus appears to be entirely de-individualised. It presents itself as a generic figure (re)acting in full accordance with what the image dictates, whose codes it may possess based on the variable socio-cultural background.⁴⁸ What does this position practically imply? To what extent can images concretely control the reception process not only regardless of the beholder’s socio-cultural background but also, and above all, his individual singularity and present mindset? In this respect, the models of the aesthetics of reception seem to offer only limited theoretical solutions. By distinguishing between physiological perception and cognitive reception, yet without clearly addressing their relationship—what Whitney Davis does with his revision of the concept of “visuality” as the “culturality of vision”,⁴⁹ Verbovsek succeeds in removing the conceptual part of perception taken in its literal sense. This can be accepted without difficulty on a theoretical level—and undoubtedly contributes in a significant and productive way to a better understanding of the very functioning and conception of the ancient Egyptian image, but this view needs to be expanded if we accept the individuality of the beholder. How can a human being engage with the world solely through their eyes (i.e., through perception), without their prior knowledge of the world shaping that perception or their emotional mindset influencing their response to it?⁵⁰ In this regard, Frederik Rogner is right to emphasise that each recipient of the visual message would have been conditioned to see something as significant for their culture, society, or specific community, but may have also had individual variant interest.⁵¹ A visual artist would have brought in a different practice and viewpoint compared to an administrator, and the visitors’ texts provide examples of people claiming both statuses. We could go as far as to basically argue that a starving viewer, gazing at a lavish offering table, would perceive the image in a fundamentally different way than one who has just eaten. All in all, striving for a clear distinction between physiological perception and cognitive reception, with consideration for their relationship, as the two main

⁴⁷ Verbovsek, in: Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, 2015, 148; also M. Müller, *Die Königsplastik des Mittleren Reiches und ihre Schöpfer: Reden über Statuen – Wenn Statuen reden*, in: *Imago Aegypti* 1, 2006, 47.

⁴⁸ Verbovsek, in: Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, 2015, 144–145; A. Verbovsek, “Ihre Finger sind wie Lotusblüten...”: Schönheit und Vollkommenheit im Wandel der Zeit, in: K. Lembke and B. Schmitz (eds), *Schönheit im Alten Ägypten: Sehnsucht nach Vollkommenheit*, Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim, 25. November 2006 bis 1. Juli 2007; Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, 28. Juli 2007 bis 27. Januar 2008, Hildesheim 2006, 145–155; Schulz, in: Neunert et al. (eds), *Bild: Ästhetik – Medium – Kommunikation*, 2014, 36–40, discussing the role of real and ideal recipients of ancient Egyptian artworks within the framework of their impact-oriented communicative mediality. Whereas the specific structures of images require a specific mode of reception, the author nonetheless acknowledges that they emerge within historical and cultural contexts, are perceived within them, and are subjectively shaped by both their creators and their recipients.

⁴⁹ W. Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, Princeton 2011, 8, seeks to provide “biological, psychological, social, and historical substance” to the concept of visuality—a central notion in visual culture studies, as it captures the intricate articulations between vision and the visible.

⁵⁰ As put by Hegel, “no one can escape from the substance of his time any more than he can jump out of his skin” (in T. M. Knox/A. V. Miller (eds), *G.W.F. Hegel: The Oxford University Press Translations*, Charlottesville 2000, 112).

⁵¹ Rogner, *Bildliche Narrativität, Erzählen mit Bildern*, 2022, 46–49.

channels of the image reception process, seems of foremost importance to approach the issue of the reception of image more empirically from a factual perspective.⁵²

The analysis of ancient Egyptian iconography and its message, impact, and engagement with the viewer⁵³ addresses the other side of the communication in detail: the agency of the visited, and the encoding of the messages that were there to be seen/read.⁵⁴ For a rich iconographic environment, such as tomb chapel, we postulate an expectation of exchange, perhaps definable in short as the exchange of cultural and social capital, of precious goods, tangible and intangible, between the different actors, all involved in the “art nexus” as referred to in Gell’s terminology, namely the multiple relationships between the artist (or image-maker), index, prototype and recipient, all considered both as *patient* and *agent*.⁵⁵ Late versions of the Appeal to the Living provide an emic perspective to the assumption of the exchange of such a capital, thus working as an implicit communication between the tomb owner and the graffitist by means of the image—the *pictorial good*. Benefits for both parties were indeed clearly stated—in that case, the access to iconographic resources that can be used as models imbued with social prestige, for which several study cases provide evidence.⁵⁶ It can be presumed that this statement reflected actual practices, which, specifically concerning the 26th Dynasty, had eventually been normalised. For our purpose, it should be noted that great importance

⁵² We may add that also textual material has been addressed in terms of the three intentions: of the author/maker, work itself, and the reader/listener (Umberto Eco’s *intentio auctoris, operis* and *lectoris*). As far as the *intention* of a work is called upon, be it that of a text or an image, it is worth considering Davis’s important epistemological caveat, applied to the image’s alleged intentionality (Davis, *Visual Culture*, 2011, 184–185; W. Davis, *Abducting the Agency of Art*, in: R. Osborne/J. Tanner (eds), *Art’s Agency and Art History*, Oxford 2007) and largely based on extrapolations of Alfred Gell’s aestheticizing rhetoric of his anthropological theory of the agency of art (for example, W. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago 2005). In sum, the image does not *want* anything and has no intrinsic agency. The latter can only be conferred upon by the beholder. In fact, human beings would *naturally* attribute power to images because they *naturally* seek to imitate what they perceive (J. Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven 2008, referring to D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago 1989). For Egyptian texts, see R. Parkinson, *Reading Ancient Egyptian Poetry among Other Histories*, Chichester 2009, using also the potential of material philology, which sensitises the modern reader to the “the excitement and richness of material philology grounded in the direct study of literary works or texts of all kinds considered directly in their historical condition, as ... artifacts unmediated by modern editions,” as put by Stephen G. Nichols for medieval manuscripts (S. G. Nichols, *Why Material Philology?*, in: H. Tervooren/H. Wenzel (eds), *Philologie als Textwissenschaft: Alte und neue Horizonte*, Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie 116. Sonderheft, Berlin 1997, 12), also perfectly aligning with the power of agency as conferred by the viewer. See recent discussion on the global anthropological turn of art history and its methodological impact in visual culture studies in E. Alloa (ed.), *Penser l’image, II: Anthropologies du visuel*, Dijon 2015.

⁵³ Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity*, 2004; Müller, in: *Imago Aegypti* 1, 2006, 27–78, Verbovsek in: Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, 2015; Rogner, *Bildliche Narrativität, Erzählen mit Bildern*, 2022, 152–173.

⁵⁴ Rogner, *Bildliche Narrativität, Erzählen mit Bildern*, 2022. See also J. Assmann, *Hierotaxis: Textkonstitution und Bildkomposition in der altägyptischen Kunst und Literatur*, in: G. Dreyer/J. Osing (eds), *Form und Mass: Beiträge zur Literatur, Sprache und Kunst des alten Ägypten. Festschrift für Gerhard Fecht zum 65. Geburtstag am 6. Februar 1987*, Wiesbaden 1987, for the tomb as a place of self-fashioning (that presupposes audience).

⁵⁵ A. Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford 1998, 29.

⁵⁶ On this procedure, see Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017. On the appeals and graffiti as two sides of a functional exchange see also C. Salvador, “Socializing” the Sacred Space: Graffiti and Appeals to the Living in New Kingdom Karnak, in: N. Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion, II: The Making of a Cultural Geography*, Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities 27, Leiden 2022, 29–38.

was given to labels, also referred to as scene captions, allowing accurate identification of all possible characters, animals, and things of the decorative programme:

“(...) as you immerse yourself in the chapel of this tomb, you will penetrate the writings that are inside, you will see the formulas of glorification of the venerable (ancestors) above their place—it is not possible to surpass the richness of it. May you hear the clamour of those who share words with one another. May you hear the song of the musicians, the murmur of the mourners. May you find the name of each of them (= of each man) above their heads in all functions, herds, trees, plants, their names above (...). May you copy what you want/love in it onto a blank papyrus so that (my) name will come out afterwards. What you like in it, you (may) write on a blank papyrus so that a mouth may repeat it exactly, without fail.”⁵⁷

Based on theoretical approaches taken from the anthropology of space and place and image reception studies respectively, the following discussion will try to bring new insights into the cultural and aesthetic appreciation of decorative settings by contemporary or later communities of people that, for multiple reasons still to be clarified, had the opportunity to access them in a their original cultural context.⁵⁸ In triangulating our approaches for graffiti research, both quantitative and qualitative methods for analysing graffiti data and metadata are productive, especially if applied in a convergent or concurrent parallel design. However, due to a select data sample, the approach in this paper is qualitative, inviting further mixed methods approaches to follow.

1.3 Data samples

In this study, we use data samples from select Theban tomb chapels,⁵⁹ mostly New Kingdom texts responding to Middle Kingdom or New Kingdom primary epigraphy, and from the pyramid precincts in the Memphite necropolis, specifically from Dahshur, where the Middle Kingdom complex of Senwosret III⁶⁰ invited interaction with New Kingdom visitors responding to its rich iconographic environment. The data samples have parallels in other locations in Egypt, as temples and tombs often hosted secondary epigraphy with some degree of interaction with the primary epigraphy.

⁵⁷ Tomb of Ibi (TT 36), dated to the 26th Dynasty. See K. Kuhlmann/W. Schenkel, *Das Grab des Ibi, Obergutsverwalters der Gottesgemahlin des Amun. Thebanisches Grab Nr. 36, I: Beschreibung der unterirdischen Kult- und Bestattungsanlage*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 15, Mainz 1983, 71–73, quoted by C. Ragazzoli, “The Pen Promoted My Station”: Scholarship and Distinction in New Kingdom Biographies, in: K. Ryholt/G. Barjamovic (eds), *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, Copenhagen 2016, 161–162.

⁵⁸ See D. Polz, *Excavation and Recording of a Theban Tomb: Some Remarks on Recording Methods*, in: J. Assmann et al. (eds), *Problems and Priorities in Egyptian Archaeology*, London/New York 1987, 123–124, based on M. Schiffer, *Archaeological Context and Systemic Context*, in: *American Antiquity* 37, 1972, 156–165.

⁵⁹ For an overview including quantification and distribution of the corpus of secondary epigraphy in Theban tombs see Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023; and Ragazzoli’s forthcoming work on Theban tomb graffiti.

⁶⁰ The conventional form of this royal name has been used in this contribution, although there is an ongoing discussion about its relevance: J. F. Quack, *Sesostris in der klassischen Literatur des Mittleren Reiches und der späteren ägyptischen Tradition: Die hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Zeugnisse*, in: S. Schoske and F. Hoffmann (eds), *Sesostris – Scheschonq – Sesonchosis*, Leiden 2024, 135–192, esp. 135, n. 1.

The case studies below include Theban tombs TT 60, TT 93, TT 192, TT 178, and TT C1. As a comparand, we have included the Saqqara and Dahshur pyramid precincts of Netjerikhet Djoser (with the focus on the *Maison du Sud* and *Maison du Nord*) and Senwosret III (with the focus on the Pyramid Temple and the North Chapel). For the pyramid complexes of Sahure at Abusir and Pepi I and II in Saqqara, the available records do not provide enough material to analyse the interaction of primary and secondary epigraphy, but such an interaction must have been present originally. The complex of Djoser serves as a counterexample to Senwosret III at Dahshur as Djoser's superstructures did not have any preserved decoration that the graffiti writers would interact with, so they responded to the space rather than to the images.

2 Case studies

2.1 Theban tomb chapels

The main premise of the following study is that decorated monuments such as ancient royal temples or contemporary private tomb chapels (the access to both being presumably easy as compared with other sacred monuments) potentially enclosed valuable *capital*: Such a capital can be defined in terms of relatively precious pictorial goods, which, considering the performativity of ancient Egyptian images, must have been deemed usable, therefore appropriate, not only as representations but also, and above all, as actual goods. For clarification, although the graffiti almost always express the author's involvement (many consist of the author's name and title(s)), we propose that a typological distinction can be made between:

1. "iconographic" goods as models to collect for further replication by image makers in the context of monumental decorative works (*image-as-object*)—in association with copy-grids and/or clearly identified replications;
2. "religious" goods, i.e. divine figures potentially inhabited by deities (Assmann's *Einwohnung* of images (*ḥm*))⁶¹ to which a close/proximate contact can be established in the context of individual devotional practices and other *gm*-religious experiences (tomb chapels or royal temples as interfaces providing direct access to the divine world);
3. "magical/performative" goods (*image-as-subject*) (food, prestigious items/materials, etc.)

In the frame of these *productive* modes of image reception, it is therefore the object of reception that is considered in view of defining typologically the reception pattern and the functioning of the graffiti accordingly as part of the image's agency. Correlations can often be made between the individual who left his name and the object/figure next to which he decided to do it.

⁶¹ J. Assmann, Totenglauben und Menschenbild im Alten Ägypten, Siegfried-Morenz-Gedächtnis-Vorlesung 12, Leipzig 2001, 40–43; J. Assmann, Altägyptische Bildpraxen und ihre impliziten Theorien, in: K. Sachs-Hombach (ed.), Bildtheorien: Anthropologische und kulturelle Grundlagen des Visualistic Turn, Frankfurt 2009, 74–103 (as regards *Bildpraxis*).

2.1.1 Iconographic goods as models to collect for further replication by image makers in the context of monumental decorative works – image-as-object

One of the most often asked questions in graffiti studies is whether we are dealing with by-products of visits with definite goals and intents that were predefined beforehand or if we should assume graffiti were themselves the very premeditated action, with all the social dimension of their performance, particularly concerning group visits, with self-fashioning processes being at stake.⁶² While distinguishing between the primary motivation of the visit and its different by-products often remains problematic⁶³, in certain cases it seems possible to associate graffiti making with other types of human reactions to the visited environments, that is, in those cases, monumental decorations.

In the Theban private necropolis as well as in Memphite royal monuments, and equally in provincial necropoleis, several cases of image replication or possible intent at replication can be directly associated with graffiti,⁶⁴ then potentially work as clues to define model-copy relationships between the visited monument and the new monumental support of the copied iconographic unit. This is of particular importance, as, with regard to image replication, the intrinsic development of ancient Egyptian art—especially in the production of two-

⁶² E. Cruz-Urbe, in: W. Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2008, s.v. Graffiti (Figural); Navratilova, *The Visitors' Graffiti*, 2007, 144.

⁶³ Approaching the materiality of the graffiti could be a partial solution to that problem. Compare for instance Amenhotep's roughly incised hieroglyphic graffiti in the tomb of Thutmose III (KV 34), commenting on the beauty of a *twt*-image and obviously not premeditated (J. Romer, *The Tomb of Tuthmosis III*, in: *MDAIK* 31, 1975, 349; Peden, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt*, 2001, 207; T. A. Bács, "... Like Heaven in Its Interior": Late Rameside Painters in Theban Tomb 65, in: T. A. Bács et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Theban Archaeology at the Supreme Council of Antiquities*, November 5, 2009, Cairo 2011, 33–41; T. A. Bács, *Traditions Old and New: Artistic Production of the Late Ramesside Period*, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 305–332) with probably the same individual's carefully written hieratic graffiti left in Ramesses VI's tomb (KV 9), referring to works of decoration being carried out in the tomb chapel of Iymiseba (TT 65) (Bács, *Late Ramesside Painters*, 2011, 33–34; Bács, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 312; E. Brock, *Some Observations on the Valley of the Kings in the Twentieth Dynasty*, in: P. Creasman (ed.), *Archaeological Research in the Valley of the Kings and Ancient Thebes: Papers Presented in Honor of Richard H. Wilkinson*, *Wilkinson Egyptology Series 1*, Tucson 2013, 115–116). In the former case, Amenhotep likely picked up the first sufficiently blunt stone that came his way—and one may still wonder to whom such a badly executed inscription would have been addressed; probably no one, which would align with the unreflective nature of his act. In the latter case, it can be presumed that the visit was prearranged, prompting Amenhotep to bring writing and copying tools in anticipation—perhaps foreseeing the chance to trace a beautiful inscription in a tomb that, at the time, exemplified the ideal decorative programme for a "complete" royal tomb (see Bács, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 317).

⁶⁴ See examples in Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012; Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017; A. Diego Espinel, *Play and Display in Egyptian High Culture: The Cryptographic Texts of Djehuty (TT 11) and their Sociocultural Contexts*, in: J. M. Galán et al. (eds), *Creativity and Innovation in the Reign of Hatshepsut: Papers from the Theban Workshop 2010*, *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* 69, Chicago 2014, 320; Navratilova, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; Hassan, in: *JARCE* 52, 2016; A. Stupko-Lubczyńska, *What an Artist Saw: Tracing a Local Iconographic Tradition for the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari*, in: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, *Special Studies – Deir el-Bahari Studies* 3, 2021, 187–214; U. Verhoeven, *A Step Back into the Past: New Kingdom Scribal Activities in the Necropolis of Asyut*, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 239–254; and U. Verhoeven, *Writing Wherever Possible and Meaningful: Graffiti Culture in Ancient Egypt. Context, Terminology, Documentation*, in: O. Škrabal et al. (eds), *Graffiti Scratched, Scrawled, Sprayed: Towards a Cross-cultural Understanding*, *Studies in Manuscript Cultures* 35, Berlin 2023, 47–76.

dimensional monumental decorations—can be understood as a bulwark against the intellectual validity of the notion of “copy,” insofar as intericonicity is not incidental but arises directly from the compositional strategies of the designers of such decorations.⁶⁵ As soon as the direct relationship between the model located in the visited monument and the copy, associated to some extent with the graffiti maker, can be ascertained, approaching the notion of “productive” reception is simply the next step towards getting a clearer idea of what *concretely* graffiti makers did during these visits, i.e., how they merely engaged with the iconographic environment they targeted.

While substantial effort is currently ongoing with respect to the role and practical involvement of certain high officials in the conception and creation of royal monumental decoration, it is often possible to correlate visits to ancient monuments for copying purposes and royal monumental works occurring right at the same time. While the few dates which the Memphite graffiti corpus provides match with royal monumental works,⁶⁶ broader contextual evidence suggests that the same occurred in Thebes at the same time as well as in later periods. There, the boundaries between commissions carried out on behalf of the court and private undertakings merge, as we are dealing precisely with the same individuals (commissioners/clients along with close subalterns and executants). This leads to the assumption that high officials orchestrated the whole works, as they were also possibly involved in the very conception of the decoration⁶⁷ and could therefore utilise the workforce they mobilised somehow officially (i.e., on behalf of the court) for their own private purposes, namely, their own funerary monument.⁶⁸

This must have been the case of some of the closest circles of the Thutmoside kingship from at least the time of Thutmose I, when major royal works in the immediate vicinity of the private necropolis started on the Theban west bank, especially at Deir el-Bahari.⁶⁹ While textual data (autobiographical texts or work ostraca) of early Thutmoside high officials like Ineni (TT 81), Djehuty (TT 11), Senenmut (TT 71, TT 353), Hapuseneb (TT 67), Puyemre (TT 39), Duayneheh (TT 125) then shortly later Rekhmire (TT 100), provide evidence for these individuals’ direct involvement in royal works, therefore explaining iconographical and even possible stylistic connections between royal and private decorative programmes, some Theban tomb graffiti may actually reflect visits carried out in this context of the 18th Dynasty development of the whole cultural and visual landscape of Western Thebes. Notwithstanding

⁶⁵ See D. Laboury, *Traditions and Creativity: Toward a Study of Intericonicity in Ancient Egyptian Art*, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 229–258; Den Doncker, in: *Prague Egyptological Studies* 29, 2022.

⁶⁶ Navratilova, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 553.

⁶⁷ See A. Stupko-Lubczyńska, *The Author Takes a Bow: A Self-Portrait in Assistenza in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari*, in: *Arts* 13, 2024, 142; A. Stupko-Lubczyńska, *The Chapel of Hatshepsut as an Inspiration for the Theban Tombs Decoration: The Case of TT 39 (Puyemre)*, in: *Études et Travaux* 26, 2013, 654–662.

⁶⁸ A. Den Doncker, *Forging Artistic Traditions: A Painting Workshop at Deir el-Bahari and the Theban Necropolis during the Time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III*, in: J. K. Paksi (ed.), *Textual Production and Textual Transmission in the Eighteenth Dynasty Theban Necropolis*, Wallasey, forthcoming.

⁶⁹ Stupko-Lubczyńska, in: *Arts* 13, 2024.

a real distinction between the royal and private spheres, the same deciding individuals and related workforce were involved.⁷⁰

Ancient monuments like the well-known 12th Dynasty tomb chapel of the vizier Antefiqer and Senet (TT 60), known for its significant corpus of 67 graffiti,⁷¹ then provided large amounts of iconographical resources. We can trace back some of these images in nearby private and royal contexts.⁷² Key individuals like the steward of vizier Useramun, Amenemhat, the owner of TT 82, who is so far the only individual whose identity has been identified with certainty in the secondary epigraphy of TT 60,⁷³ must have operated as actual fieldman of the vizierate in the necropolis, most probably at Deir el-Bahari and to some larger extent in the whole Theban area up to Gebel es-Silsila.⁷⁴ While in the graffiti he left in TT 60 (G.60.33)⁷⁵, he claimed clear ties to the highest literate elite by properly introducing himself as a *sš*, namely a literate man, a *literatus* or—some would say—a *persona di cultura*, we know from a stela in TT 82 that he carried out several works on behalf of the vizier. These works included, among others, the supervision of the making of royal statues as well as the construction and decoration of the tomb of his superior, the vizier Useramun (TT 61 and TT 131).⁷⁶ As a matter of fact, one can detect clear typological parallels between several statues of Hatshepsut, notably from Deir el-Bahari, and Senet's cult statue (still in place in TT 60).⁷⁷ This statue must have stood for some exceptionally high-standing Middle Kingdom female statuary model in the context of Hatshepsut's emulation of the 12th Dynasty.⁷⁸ Furthermore, its reception can be related to the interesting mistaken identification of TT 60 as the tomb of Queen Sobekneferu,

⁷⁰ The exchange between royal and private architecture, distinct but in communication, is a feature attested at least since the Old Kingdom, see outline in M. Bárta, *Journey to the West: The World of the Old Kingdom Tombs in Ancient Egypt*, Prague 2011.

⁷¹ Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013.

⁷² Bács, in: *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 46, 2006; Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012; Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017; more recently, J. M. Serrano, *Figured Ostraca with Ritual Scenes from around the Tombs of Djehuty (TT 11) and Hery (TT 12)*, Paper Presented at the XIIIth International Congress of Egyptologists, Leiden, 2023.

⁷³ Davies, *The Tomb of Antefoker*, 27.

⁷⁴ On several occasions Amenemhat presents himself as a follower of his master, the vizier Useramun, which, according to Johannes Auenmüller, can be interpreted not only as the expression of professional allegiance but also as concrete proximity in the field. On the stela he left near Useramun's shrine at Gebel es-Silsila (Shrine 17), he claims that he accompanied his master in his steps (*šms nb ꜣf r nmt ꜣf*) (Urk. IV, 1053, 16, quoted by J. Auenmüller, *Die Territorialität der ägyptischen Elite(n) des Neuen Reiches: Eine Studie zu Raum und räumlichen Relationen im textlichen Diskurs, anhand prosopografischer Daten und im archäologischen Record* (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin), 2013, 163).

⁷⁵ Davies, *The Tomb of Antefoker*, 7–8, 27, 29, pls XXXVII–XXXVIA; Den Doncker, in: Warmenbol/Angenot (eds), *Thèbes aux 101 portes*, 2010, 81–82; Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013.

⁷⁶ N. de G. Davies/A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhêt (No. 82)*, Theban Tombs Series 1, London 1915, 70–72; E. Dziobek, *Die Gräber des Vezirs User-Amun: Theben Nr. 61 und 131*, *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 84, Mainz 1994, 61; Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 343–346; Den Doncker, in: Paksi (ed.), *Textual Production and Textual Transmission*, forthcoming.

⁷⁷ D. Laboury, *Citations et usages de l'art du Moyen Empire à l'époque thoutmoside*, in: S. Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Studien zum historischen Bewusstsein in der Thutmosidenzeit*, *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 22, Basel 2014, 11–28.

⁷⁸ For a thorough examination of the emulation of the Middle Kingdom in the context of the ideological, political, cultural developments of the Thutmoside kingship, see Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, 2014; for the artistic aspects, Laboury, in: Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, 2014.

the sister and successor of Amenemhat IV, by the authors of G.60.2 and G.60.3.⁷⁹ Now, the latter's statuary and royal names also provide quite significant typological parallels with that of Hatshepsut's early reign.⁸⁰ In addition, a certain number of iconographical elements from the decoration of TT 60 appear in the tombs of Useramun, especially in the neighbouring TT 61, as well as in the tomb chapel of Amenemhat (TT 82) proper, both consisting of a reused 12th Dynasty corridor tomb⁸¹ (Fig. 1).

Directing image-makers associated with the vizierate, and possibly with some royal monuments, and having them decorating his own tomb (with recurrent obvious idiosyncratic iconographic formulae and hand style),⁸² must have been worthy enough in terms of social prestige to be translated as key assets of individual distinction into Amenemhat's visual rhetoric in TT 82, as is clearly summarised by the offering to the painters and sculptors who decorated his tomb.⁸³ All in all, these very specific decorative features would have efficiently targeted contemporary highest elite members, namely a limited yet topmost audience who could surely have appreciated them as such, in terms of *image-as-object*, as soon as scene composition/adaptation and execution style were precisely at issue. In this case, it can be indeed moreover presumed that most of this targeted audience knew of TT 60 and could therefore immediately spot the connections to its decoration. It is even possible that TT 60 remained open while these visitors would enter TT 82, so that all the reception process took place in a particularly close topographic environment. It can be presumed that such visits occurred on different occasions, from official work commissions to religious events, including especially festive activities like the Beautiful Feast of the Valley, when members of these small socio-professional communities along with family, relatives and subalterns gathered between Deir el-Bahari and their respective monuments in the neighbouring necropolis.

⁷⁹ Den Doncker, in: el-Aguizy/Kasparian (eds), ICE XII, 2023, 385–386; Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis, 2023, 260.

⁸⁰ R. Tefnin, La statuaire d'Hatshepsout à Deir el-Bahari: Portrait royal et politique sous la 18^e dynastie, Monumenta Aegyptiaca 4, Brussels 1979, 1–36; E. Staehelin, Zum Ornat an Statuen regierender Königinnen, in: Bulletin de la Société d'Égyptologie de Genève 13, 1989, 145–156; V. Callender, The Innovations of Hatshepsut's Reign, in: The Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology 13, 2002, 29–46; Laboury, in: Bickel (ed.), Vergangenheit und Zukunft, 2014, 19–21; for names see also G. Robins, The Names of Hatshepsut as King, in: JEA 85, 1999, 106.

⁸¹ Dziobek, Die Gräber des Vezirs User-Amun, 1994, 16–17, 22–24; B. Engelmann-von Carnap, Die Struktur des thebanischen Beamtenfriedhofs in der ersten Hälfte der 18. Dynastie: Analyse von Position, Grundrißgestaltung und Bildprogramm der Gräber, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Ägyptologische Reihe 15, Berlin 1999, 21–27.

⁸² Detailed analysis in Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), (Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt, 2017, 340–343.

⁸³ Davies/Gardiner, The Tomb of Amenemhêt, 1915, 5, pl. VIII; Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), (Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt, 2017, 343.

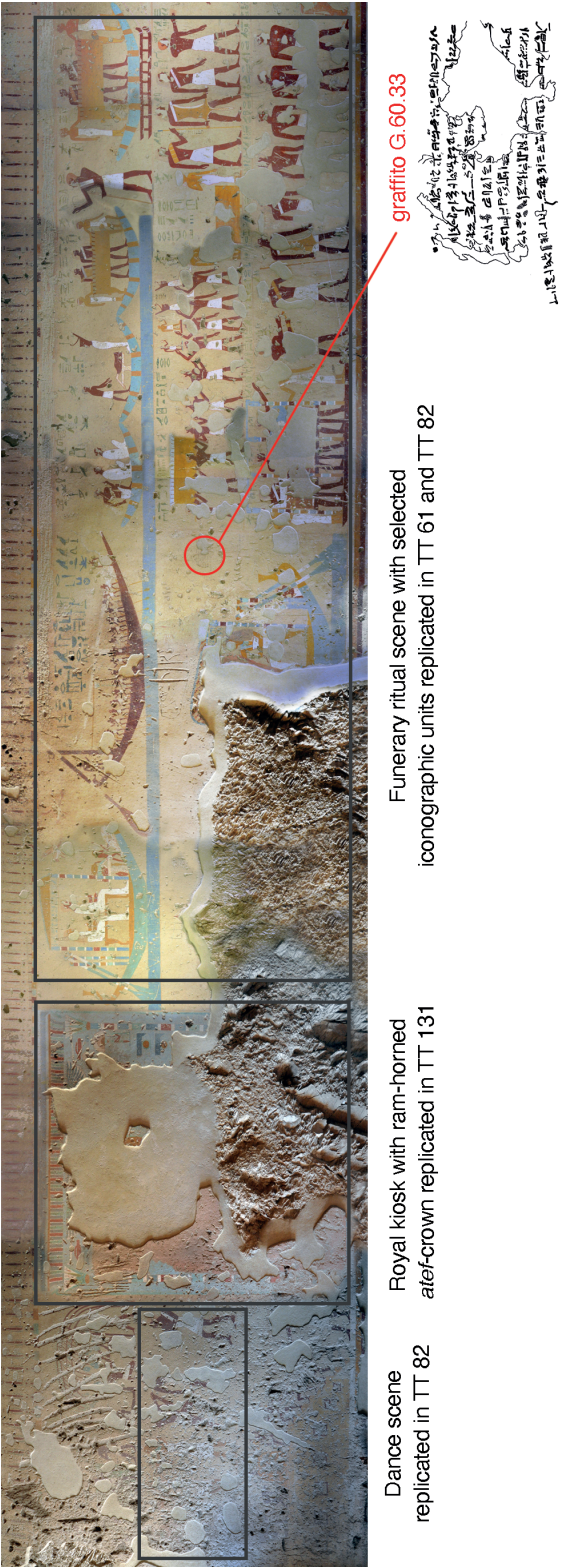


Fig. 1: TT 60: Position of Amenemhat's graffito (G.60.33) alongside iconographic units used as models for replication in TT 82, TT 61 and TT 131.
© Laboury/Den Doncker—MANT/ULiège. Outline drawing of the graffito after Davies 1920, pl. XXXVII.

This pattern of image reception with productive outcomes spreading in a “cascade” in both royal and private contexts is surely indicative of this approach to ancient monumental decoration as a source for valuable iconographic models,⁸⁴ also considered for their material form, namely as *image-as-object*, that is also in accordance with their physical aspect and steerability regardless of any dependence to another “icon”⁸⁵. In this respect, it is surely telling that the dance scene of TT 60 which Amenemhat ordered to be copied in TT 82 was inserted into a totally new thematic setting, that is a Hathoric feast in the context of the funerary procession to the tomb, although it originated from the almost opposite position in TT 60 where it was part of a three-register agricultural scene.⁸⁶ Whether these copies were imbued by the designers with some quotative intent—therefore targeting a certain audience capable of recognising and appreciating the quote—or resulted from the simple convenience of access (considering obvious topographic proximity) to the visited monument providing iconographical resources, is a question that needs to be addressed so as to reconstruct the image reception process from the viewer’s perspective.⁸⁷

Individuals like Amenemhat being concretely involved in art production and commissioning must have existed in virtually all the periods of ancient Egyptian history. It can be assumed that transitional times such as the beginning of the 18th Dynasty and the corresponding discovery and recreation of iconographic tradition, meant to establish continuity with the past in terms of visibility, must have favoured the development of such characters as seen from a socio-cultural perspective. It is therefore worth mentioning equally the case of the vizier Paser, who can be compared in many respects with Amenemhat, or the Treasurer Djehuty

⁸⁴ For other evidence of the use of monumental decorations as a source for iconographic models, see among others G. Pieke, *Lost in Transformation: Artistic Creation between Permanence and Change*, in: Gillen (ed.), *Reproductive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 259–304; G. Pieke, *Finding a New Balance: Non-Royal Tombs of the Post-Amarna Period in Western Thebes*, in: F. Coppens (ed.), *Continuity, Discontinuity and Change: Perspectives from the New Kingdom to the Roman Era*, Prague 2021, 109–191; D. Laboury, *Designers and Makers of Ancient Egyptian Monumental Epigraphy*, in: V. Davies/D. Laboury (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Egyptian Epigraphy and Paleography*, Oxford 2020, 90–91, highlighting the didactic role of archival copies of iconographic motifs on papyri; also Laboury, in: Gillen (ed.), *Reproductive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017; Bács, in: Gillen (ed.), *Reproductive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, 311–312, who likewise provides a nuanced perspective on the assumption that tomb decoration was “based overwhelmingly on papyrus models or ‘pattern books,’” while still acknowledging the role such papyri played in the decorating process, with reference to the work of D. A. Werning, *An Interpretation of the Stemmata of the Books of the Netherworld in the New Kingdom—Tomb Decoration and the Text Additions for Osiris NN*, in: J.-C. Goyon/C. Cardin (eds), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists, Grenoble, 6–12 September 2004*, II, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 150, Leuven 2007, 1935–1949. For further insights, see the complete review of Gillen (ed.), *Reproductive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017, by J. F. Quack, in: *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 75 (3/4), 2018, 295–304. While papyri could serve as sources for models, the term “pattern books” may be somewhat misleading, as it often implies a structured catalogue of iconographic motifs or texts explicitly designed for selection in decorative schemes. Rather, it can be argued that such papyri were primarily tools for individuals involved in the production of texts and images, rather than resources intended for the patrons who commissioned them. On this issue—examined through the lens of image transformation via the mobility of visual culture practitioners within the monumental landscape—see the authors’ contribution to N. Staring (ed.), *Intericonicity, Motifs Circulation & Artist Mobility*, International Workshop, 10–11 October 2024, University of Liège, forthcoming.

⁸⁵ As Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity*, 2004, defines the thematic units in Theban tomb decorative programmes.

⁸⁶ Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012, 30–31.

⁸⁷ See examples in Den Doncker, in: *Prague Egyptological Studies* 29, 2022, including the case of Amenemhat.

whose role as a decoration designer in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari has been recently reassessed by Anastasiia Stupko-Lubczyńska with compelling evidence.⁸⁸ However, Paser's visit to the tomb of Qenamun (TT 93) points to combining reception of iconographic and "religious" goods.⁸⁹

2.1.2 "Religious" goods, i.e. divine figures potentially inhabited – from image-as-object to image-as-subject

Paser is attested twice in the corpus of the Theban tomb graffiti. It has been suggested that his visits to ancient private tombs took place in the context of official "tomb inspections", as is attested in Deir el-Medina.⁹⁰ In both cases, his activity in the visited tomb chapel does not appear to be related to the actual cult of the original owner. In fact, there is evidence that individual cultic activities there had already been abandoned for a long time by then, contrary to better known tomb inspection procedures such as that of the royal scribe Maya in the tomb of Thutmose IV (KV 43) during the reign of Horemheb, whose graffiti refers to "repeating the burial"⁹¹. In the first case, graffiti G.311.1 bears witness to Paser's inspection and possible restoration of the 11th Dynasty tomb of the vizier Khety (TT 311), showing interest in the status of this individual as a Middle Kingdom homologue, namely, an "illustrious" ancient professional.⁹² This venture on the northern slope of Deir el-Bahari may also have followed the tomb's clear prominence in the local landscape, as it also shares clear "interspatial" relationships with other particularly visible monuments surrounding the natural circus such as the temples of Mentuhotep II and Hatshepsut and the tomb of Senenmut (TT 71).⁹³ In the second case, it is likely that the good visibility and impressive dimensions of the tomb of Qenamun (TT 93) atop the southern slope of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna hill, as well as the inner space of the tomb chapel resembling a grotto, providing direct access to the divine realm of the Theban Mountain, must have had some particular agency on further visitors regardless of the (most probably forgotten) identity of the original tomb owner who had indeed suffered from a *damnatio memoriae* already by the end of the reign of Amenhotep II.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Ragazzoli suggested that Paser may also have included Qenamun as an 18th Dynasty predecessor of his symbolic lineage,⁹⁵ as they shared some significant titles related to monumental works on behalf of the court, among which, again, was the supervision of the Treasury and royal works. Interestingly, Paser's engagement with the tomb chapel's iconographic environment

⁸⁸ Stupko-Lubczyńska, in: Arts 13, 2024.

⁸⁹ On the connection between secondary epigraphy and the use of tomb chapels for religious purposes, see in detail C. Ragazzoli, *Présence divine et obscurité de la tombe au Nouvel Empire. À propos des graffiti des tombes thébaines TT 139 et TT 112 à Thèbes (avec édition et commentaire)*, in: BIFAO 117, 2018, 357–407; also Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023, 155–156.

⁹⁰ B. Claus, *Les chapelles funéraires des favorisés/no(ta)bles (nꜥ mꜥḥꜥ. wt n nꜥ ḥsy. w/wr. w) : une désignation de la "Vallée des Nobles" sous la XX^e dynastie?*, in: Warmenbol/Angenot (eds), *Thèbes aux 101 portes*, 2010, for 20th Dynasty textual evidence. Tomb inspections were the responsibility of the vizierate and the Treasury since at least the time of Horemheb as witnessed by Maya's inscription in KV 43.

⁹¹ Peden, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt*, 2001, 142–143.

⁹² Ragazzoli, in: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, 2021, 222–229.

⁹³ Stupko-Lubczyńska, in: Paksi (ed.), *Textual Production and Textual Transmission*, forthcoming.

⁹⁴ Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 187; A. Den Doncker, *Image Defacement as Score Settling in the Theban Necropolis: A Reception Perspective*, in: V. E. Allen/S. Connor (eds), *Altering Images: Iconoclasm in Egypt, Ægyptiaca Leodiensia* 14, Liège 2025, 191–194.

⁹⁵ Ragazzoli, in: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, 2021, 232.

seems to have relied on two distinct, yet non-opposite motivations, that is, 1) benefiting from prime proximity to a deity through certain depictions imbued with new agency, 2) collecting iconographic models with a view to replicating them in other decorative settings in both royal and private monuments.

Concretely, Paser's graffito (G.93.1), which consists of a repetition of his most usual titles written in the hieroglyphic script, is neatly aligned with squaring-up lines traced over a representation of three female figures, including a well-preserved lutenist⁹⁶ (Figs 2–3). Considering that textual evidence for the role of Paser as overseer of the works of decoration in various early 19th Dynasty temples on behalf of Seti I and Ramesses II, including that of Abydos⁹⁷ and, moreover, some close parallels between specific iconographic units in this temple and in TT 93, it can be suggested that Paser ordered the copy grids in TT 93. The nursing scene located in the second hypostyle hall between the chapels of Osiris and Amun-Re in the temple of Seti I at Abydos shows some clear similarities with that of TT 93 placed right next to the depiction of the three female figures. The scene was equally squared-up (Fig. 4). Paser may thus have found in TT 93 a source for rather unusual mid-18th Dynasty iconographic goods, which, owing to professional expertise,⁹⁸ he might have dealt with for their aesthetic qualities with predetermined intents as to their replication, thereby again inducing an approach to *image-as-object* largely based on a certain experience in art commissioning and production.

However, it is likely that his visit to TT 93 prompted the further reception of the tomb chapel as a privileged place for intimate divine intercession.⁹⁹ Almost all the other graffiti found in the tomb are either comprised of *ir nfr* formula and/or located in close spatial relationship to divine figures. On the back wall of the transverse hall, they relate to Hathor—appearing in her anthropomorphic form under a kiosk, as well as, through the lutenist, the maidservants and badly preserved acrobatic dancers performing in front of the royal kiosk.¹⁰⁰ In the innermost shrine of the chapel, they were written around the figure of Osiris, also using the divine image as a means for proximate interaction with deities. Among these graffiti, G.93.3 was left by an overseer of the Treasury, which might be attributed to Paser as well.¹⁰¹ Besides, Stupko-Lubczyńska has recently demonstrated the connection of this title with professional activities associated with the supervision of royal works, including the conception

⁹⁶ Davies, *The Tomb of Ken-Amūn at Thebes*, 1930, 22, pls IX, LXVIII A; Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 182–184, fig. 11.7; Ragazzoli, in: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, 2021, 229–231.

⁹⁷ P. Brand, *The Monuments of Seti I: Epigraphic, Historical and Art Historical Analysis*, *Probleme der Ägyptologie* 16, Leiden 2000, 341.

⁹⁸ Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 188. On Paser's expertise and possible teaching activities, see J. Assmann, *Ein Gespräch im Goldhaus über Kunst und andere Gegenstände*, in: I. Gamer-Wallert/W. Helck (eds), *Gegengabe: Festschrift für Emma Brunner-Traut*, Tübingen 1992, 46–48; Ragazzoli, in: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, 2021, 234–236.

⁹⁹ Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 185; Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023, 155.

¹⁰⁰ Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 186–187. Illustration of the whole wall in Davies, *The Tomb of Ken-Amūn at Thebes*, 1930, pl. IX. On the Hathoric meaning of these dances, see E. Morris, *Paddle Dolls and Performance*, in: *JARCE* 47, 2011, 85–86.

¹⁰¹ C. Raedler, *Die Wesire Ramses' II.: Netzwerke der Macht*, in: R. Gundlach/A. Klug (eds), *Das ägyptische Königtum im Spannungsfeld zwischen Innen- und Außenpolitik im 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr., Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen* 1, Wiesbaden 2004, 315–316, 326, 400.

of decorative programmes.¹⁰² It could even be more tentatively suggested that the scribe Pa- [...] who authored G.93.4 written over Hathor's posterior on the same wall,¹⁰³ was none other than the Pa'iry who accompanied Paser in the aforesaid inspection of Khety's tomb (TT 311) at Deir el-Bahari.¹⁰⁴

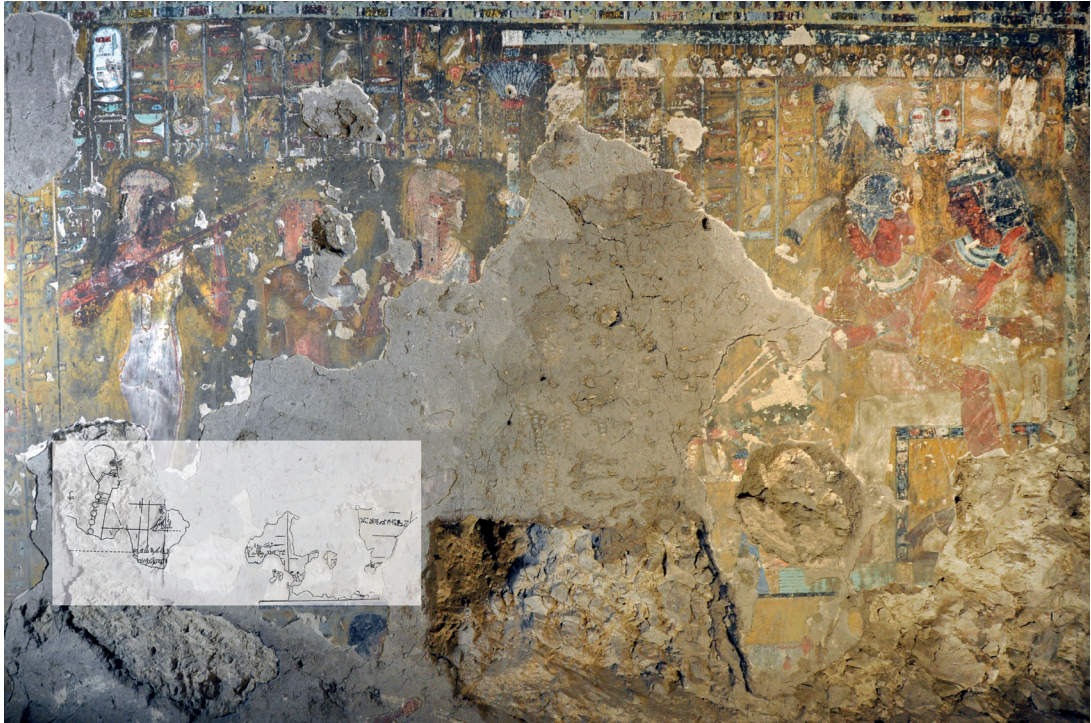


Fig. 2: TT 93: Position of Paser's graffito (G.93.1), along with G.93.2 and G.93.3, all aligned with squaring-up lines traced over iconographic units used as models. © Den Doncker/Tavier—MANT/ULiège. Outline drawing of graffiti after Davies 1930, pl. LXVIII A.

The productive reception of TT 93 in the early Ramesside period shows that potentially in the same context of tomb discovery and re-functionalisation, a small group of visitors was engaged with definite elements of the original decoration, yet adopting various perspectives as they were driven by different stimuli. It should not be excluded that Paser did himself take part in this search for divine presence, more exactly in the rediscovery of the tomb and its religious contents. In such a dark environment as that of TT 93, cleaning the whitewash that was covering most of the iconographic units that he ordered to be copied under the poor vibrating light of a few torches must have conditioned a certain phenomenological experience in terms of image reception, as seen from a mere sensory standpoint. Sensing divine presence

¹⁰² Stupko-Lubczyńska, in: Arts 13, 2024. On the connection between the Treasury, the workshops and building programmes related to the estate of Amun, see also S. S. Eichler, *Die Verwaltung des „Hauses des Amun“* in der 18. Dynastie, *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur, Beihefte* 7, Hamburg 2000, 151–152, 159.

¹⁰³ Den Doncker, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion*, 2019, 186.

¹⁰⁴ Ragazzoli, in: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30/1, 2021, 221–222.

in such intimate “contact zones”,¹⁰⁵ and approaching them as “religious goods”, namely aesthetically appealing figures potentially inhabited by deities,¹⁰⁶ might even have motivated their use as iconographic goods, from which we could theoretically consider a totally distinct perspective, as the agency of these *images-as-subject* shifted to that of *images-as-object*, yet regardless of any ontological barriers or contradictions. Contrarily, it could be assumed that Paser’s first motivation was indeed the search for ancient iconographic models, and that only subsequently his involvement in the cleaning of the tomb chapel’s decoration gave rise to reusing the abandoned monument as a place for divine intercession. In either case, although interactions with divine images are to be expected in the Theban necropolis, as Ragazzoli gathered a number of interesting cases of the use of secondary epigraphy in relation to definite “contact zones” and/or divine figures, the re-functionalisation of TT 93 shows how potentially intertwined were interactions with images within the same iconographic environment and limited audience.



Fig. 3: TT 93: Squaring-up lines (i.e., copy grids) traced over the figure of the female lutenist.

© Den Doncker/Tavier—MANT/ULiège.

¹⁰⁵ Ragazzoli, in: BIFAO 117, 2018, 358–365; Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 269–271; Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023, 155–156.

¹⁰⁶ Assmann, *Totenglauben und Menschenbild im Alten Ägypten*, 2001, 40–43; Assmann, in: K. Sachs-Hombach (ed.), *Bildtheorien*, 2009.



Fig. 4: TT 93: Squaring-up lines (i.e., copy grids) traced over the figure of Amenhotep II seated on his nurse's lap, possibly replicated in the temple of Seti I at Abydos. © Den Doncker/Tavier—MANT/ULiège.

A second case study supports the idea of mixed patterns of productive image reception possibly involving the same beholders in a single spatio-temporal context. Dated to the Ramesside period, based on formulaic, stylistic and onomastic criteria, the corpus of graffiti from the tomb of Kheruef (TT 192)—the steward of Queen Tiy during the reign of Amenhotep III and the first years of Amenhotep IV—comprise of at least eight inscriptions. They are concentrated in the badly preserved transverse hall, in the passage leading to the first columned hall and in that columned hall, which correspond to the best-preserved and still accessible part of this imposing, large-scale private monument. Considering the important Ramesside activity that took place in the courtyard and inside the funerary complex, it can be assumed that this corpus originated in the same context of reuse.¹⁰⁷ It might therefore be contemporary to the installation of the chapels and funerary facilities dating to the reign of Ramesses II. Besides, some of the graffitists share the same institutional affiliations as most of these new tombs' occupants, that is, the estate of Amun, especially the Treasury.¹⁰⁸ This corpus is particularly relevant to our study because all the graffitists were both wab-priests and draughtsmen,

¹⁰⁷ C. Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192*, Oriental Institute Publications 102, Chicago 1980, 13–16. Contrasting views in Peden, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt*, 2001, 274–275, who dates the visits to the 21st Dynasty based on the tomb's later reuse and probably following L. Habachi, *Clearance of the Tomb of Kheruef at Thebes (1957–1958)*, in: *ASAE* 55, 1958, 350. The style of the figural graffiti left on the two door-jambs leading to the first columned hall rather indicates an earlier dating to the 19th Dynasty.

¹⁰⁸ See the list of tomb owners with titles in Habachi, in: *ASAE* 55, 1958, 349; also Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 16, nn. 56–57.

reflecting the frequent association between low-ranking priestly titles and individuals involved in image production within the Theban graffiti corpus.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, still in terms of productive reception, the graffitists responded to well-targeted iconographic units, selecting them as models and replicating them on the same wall for didactic purposes. Among these actors, some likewise approached the sacred space according to a different, explicitly religious reception mode, oriented toward the pursuit of divine benevolence and protection, as expressed in the *ir nfr* formula.



Fig. 5: TT 192: Position of Ashaikhut's graffito (G.192.3) alongside a figural graffito of a man in adoration, placed among figures of female dancers. © Den Doncker/Tavier.

Graffito G.192.3 is located on the southern side of the transverse hall's west wall.¹¹⁰ It is likely that its author, the draughtsman Ashaikhut, also executed the large figural graffito showing a man raising his hands in adoration, that was placed amidst the extremely finely cut figures of female dancers celebrating Amenhotep III's jubilee (Fig. 5). Although the figure's execution may seem a little clumsy, the style and level of technical mastery doubtless point to a professional draughtsman and the depiction was placed very close to G.192.3. Ashaikhut introduces himself as an Osiris and gives the names of his parents, both justified. The funerary component

¹⁰⁹ Among fourteen wab-priests, six also identified as draughtsmen, see Den Doncker, *Réactions aux images*, forthcoming. See also Stupko-Lubczyńska, in: *Arts* 13, 2024, 21–24, for evidence of lector-priests' involvement in decorating the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari and their connection to image-makers through access to restricted knowledge.

¹¹⁰ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 15, 76, pls 33–38; also A. Fakhry, *A Note on the Tomb of Kheruef at Thebes*, in: *ASAE* 42, 1943, 498.

of his inscription most probably reflects his intent to integrate the sacred space according to the few personal requirements that he could fulfil as he had the opportunity to access the monument and benefit from parts of its decoration, namely: a hieroglyphic inscription referring to his status as a justified dead—and pointing out that his maternal grandmother was a god's wife—plus a personal depiction showing religious devotion (possibly addressed to Amenhotep III) combined with a more particular sensibility to fine art production as supported by the placement and interaction of his textual and figural graffiti with the primary decoration.

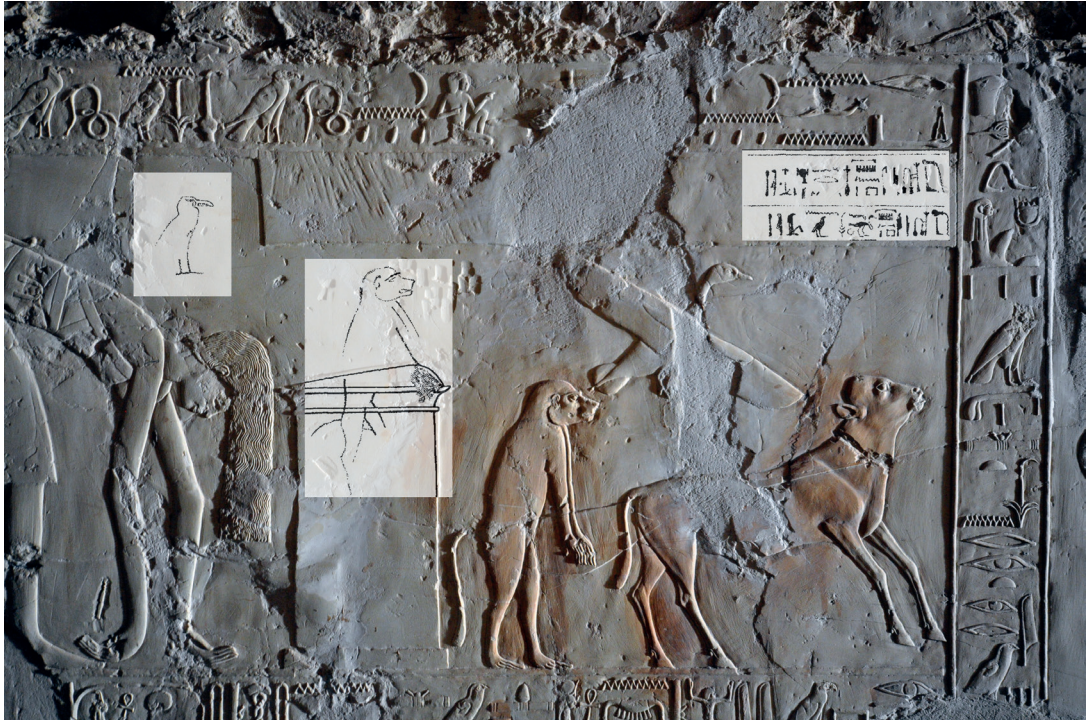


Fig. 6: TT 192: Position of Neferenher's and Bakenkhonsu's graffiti (G.192.1 and G.192.2) alongside figural graffiti replicating the figure of a monkey and hieroglyph *A*. © Den Doncker/Tavier.

Outline drawings after Nims et al. 1980, pls 33–34.

A little further on the same wall, two other wab-priests and draughtsmen from the House of Amun, Neferenher and Bakenkhonsu, left their name and titles, which they very aptly placed within an unfinished blank space ready to receive an inscription (G.192.1 and G.192.2).¹¹¹ Near to them, two faded figural graffiti can be observed.¹¹² The first replicates a standing monkey depicted right next to it, while the second is a hieroglyphic *A* sign (Gardiner G1) directly modelled on a same-scaled aleph sign from the text right above it (Fig. 6). Then, on either reveal of the doorway into the first columned hall two figural graffiti were traced, both depicting a man in adoration.¹¹³ Their style and quality of execution again indicate professional mastery.

¹¹¹ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 15, 76, pls 33–34; also Fakhry, in: *ASAE* 42, 1943, 498.

¹¹² Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, pls 33–34.

¹¹³ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 15, pl. 81.

On the northern front wall of the first columned hall, that is adjacent to the passage walls, two groups of graffiti can be distinguished.¹¹⁴ The first includes G.192.4 and G.192.5.¹¹⁵ These were left by the wab-priest and draughtsman of the House of Hathor, Lady of Iunet (i.e., the temple of Dendera), Sematawy, who provided the names of his parents: his father, the nobleman (*sꜣb*), the wab-priest of Hathor, Lady of Iunet, Neferhotep and his mother Nebuminet. This is so far the only textual evidence for travelling draughtsmen (*sš.w-ḳd.wt*) to the New Kingdom Theban necropolis.¹¹⁶ G.192.5 seems unfinished as it just consists of the title of another wab-priest from the House of Amun.



Fig. 7: TT 192: Position of Khafemipet's and Ashaikhut's graffiti (G.192.6 and G.192.7–8) captioning a large-scale figural graffiti of a man in adoration (after Nims et al. 1980, pl. 82).

¹¹⁴ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 15.

¹¹⁵ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 76–77, pl. 81C.

¹¹⁶ See M. Römer, *Die Ostraka der frühen 18. Dynastie aus Deir el-Bahri und dem Asasif*, II, *Bibliothèque Générale* 73, Cairo 2023, 295, 490–509, esp. 492, 507, for textual evidence on travelling workforce to Deir el-Bahri, notably some isolated groups of draughtsmen and sculptors.

To the left, a figural graffito associated with two distinct textual graffiti (G.192.6 and the group G.192.7–8) is showing another man in adoration (Fig. 7).¹¹⁷ It is likely that it was commanded by the scribe Khafemipet mentioned in G.192.7, then executed by the draughtsman Ashaikhut whose name reappears in G.192.8. Although they can be assigned two different numbers as they refer to two distinct individuals, G.192.7 and G.192.8 were written by the same individual at the same time, possibly by Ashaikhut as the script is very similar to that of G.192.1. Labib Habachi suggested Khafemipet could be the son of Ashaikhut,¹¹⁸ probably considering their grouped layout on the same wall location. In addition, another graffito (G.192.6) was placed right next to the two raised arms of the figure making the adoration gesture.¹¹⁹ It comprises of an *ir nfr* formula to Osiris followed by the name of its author, most probably the same scribe Kha(f)emipet: “Do good Osiris, do good and let him reach (home) being intact, made by the scribe Kha(f)emipet.”¹²⁰

It is the only hieratic inscription of the TT 192 corpus, which is surely telling of the constructed relationships between content and script: names and titles to be monumentalised in hieroglyphs, direct discourse in hieratic. Moreover, it can be assumed that the scribe and the draughtsman cooperated in this whole secondary epigraphy setting. While Ashaikhut traced the figure and the hieroglyphic inscription, Khafemipet wrote the hieratic address to Osiris, both benefiting from the figure’s agency within the sacred space—the “contact zone”. It may be wondered, however, whether some hierarchical relationship existed between the two men. In terms of religious benefits, considering G.192.6 only provided the name of the scribe, it could be tentatively assumed that he actually ordered the draughtsman to properly label the figure with the hieroglyphic inscription also including his name, thereby following (and enjoying) basic decorum prerequisites, whereas contrarily, the draughtsman did not have his name included in the *ir nfr* formula, somehow in return. As for the uncomplete figure to the right, it was most probably a first attempt at the little tableau, since the style is very similar to that of the complete one.

All in all, the corpus of TT 192 perfectly illustrates the inter-penetrability of various secondary epigraphy patterns in this context of tomb visiting. The copies were executed right next to the models¹²¹ as if the wall was used as a mere teaching board or *Musterbuch*. It could be argued that the first motivation of the graffitists was the search for iconographic models for these didactic purposes, as in terms of assets the artistic features of TT 192 (oversized architecture, atypical and varied iconographic contents, and extremely sophisticated style) may have stood out more than its purely religious potential and significance—besides, the first columned hall where half of the corpus is concentrated had no decoration. Whether the graffiti bear witness to a single event is hard to assess. Based on their great homogeneity (authors’ titles, style and format of the inscriptions), it can be nevertheless suggested that during a possible field training a single group of draughtsmen found the opportunity to leave

¹¹⁷ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980: pl. 82; Fakhry, in: *ASAE* 42, 1943, 498.

¹¹⁸ Habachi, in: *ASAE* 55, 1958, 350.

¹¹⁹ Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, 77, pl. 82.

¹²⁰ English translation adapted from Edward F. Wente’s in Nims et al., *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 1980, p. 77.

¹²¹ Which can be compared with graffito G.60.26A being a replication of the figure of a fox from the desert hunt scene in TT 60 (Ragazzoli, in: *SAK* 42, 2013, 310). On the use of wall decoration as “pattern books”, see note 84 for further references.

their names in an estimated monument which they initially came to study. Then, possibly experiencing divine proximity, which could mean engaging just with a particularly unusual sacred space—similarly to abovementioned TT 93, most of them had the skills to depict themselves in adoration as a response to such an experience. As Khafemipet was obviously (only) a scribe, the *ir nfr* address that he left might simply be the textual expression of this same inspiration.

2.1.3 Towards targeting precious pictorial goods as isolated “magical/performative” good – image-as-subject

In secondary epigraphy, the location and placement of simple private signatures within private tomb chapel decorations is often relevant, perhaps even more significant than more elaborate formulaic graffiti like the visitors’ inscriptions. The main reason for that is that this practice goes hand and hand with appropriation procedures, either of the whole monument in compliance with its primary function—a private cultic and burial place—or perhaps, as we shall see here, of only well-selected iconographic units. It is commonly acknowledged that in the ancient Egyptian mindset one’s name inscribed along with one’s professional titles in these sacred environments can substitute for the individual’s actual presence.¹²² This is usually demonstrated by the clearly intended spatial proximity of the graffiti with, for instance, deity figures; what could be considered religious opportunities associated with private tomb reuse, especially in the Ramesside period.¹²³ The most relevant case is perhaps that of the wab-priest Pehtynakht in the tomb of Ameneminet (TT 277), where the graffitist managed to reduce the length of his graffiti by purposefully compressing the script not to overrun the god’s figure outline.¹²⁴ It can be therefore safely assumed in general that such a spatial relationship between graffiti and iconographic units were intended and sought after. This process of adding captions to already named or unnamed figures in order to integrate one’s identity within the iconographic syntax of the scene was largely in use since the Old Kingdom.¹²⁵ It became, to some extent, part of the full *Grabsemantik* as decorative programmes grew increasingly elaborate in terms of iconographic content, thereby enhancing their visual appeal. Ragazzoli has recently introduced the notion of “figure re-captioning” (French: *relégendation*) to refer to this practice. She applied it mainly to scenes of cultic performances, the

¹²² P. Vernus, Comment l’élite se donne à voir dans le programme décoratif de ses chapelles funéraires. Stratégie d’épure, stratégie d’appogiature et le frémissement du littéraire, in: J. C. Moreno García (ed.), *Élites et pouvoir en Égypte ancienne. Actes du colloque Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille 3, 7 et 8 Juillet 2006*, Cahiers de Recherches de l’Institut de Papyrologie et d’Égyptologie de Lille 28, Lille 2009–2010, 67–115.

¹²³ Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012, 24–30; Ragazzoli, in: BIFAO 117, 2018; similar behaviours were observed in temples, see Navratilova, in: Iskander/Goelet (eds), *The Temple of Ramesses II in Abydos*, 2021.

¹²⁴ J. Vandier d’Abbadie, Deux tombes ramessides à Gournet Mourraï, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l’Institut français d’archéologie Orientale 87, Cairo 1954, 26, pls 22, 38; Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012, 24; Ragazzoli, in: BIFAO 117, 2018, 363–364, with coloured photograph.

¹²⁵ See among others G. Pieke, “Lass deinen Namen hervorkommen”: Zur Appropriation von Einzelmotiven der Grabdekoration in Sakkara, in: B. Magen (ed.), “... Denn das eigentliche Studium der Menschheit ist der Mensch”: Festschrift für Alfred Grimm, Wiesbaden, 2018, 275–309; J. C. F. Hamilton, “That His Perfect Name May Be Remembered”: Added Inscriptions in the Tomb of Vizier Kagemni at Saqqara, in: C. Alvarez et al. (eds), *Current Research in Egyptology 2015: Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Symposium. University of Oxford 2015, Oxford 2016*, 50–61; N. Beaux, Secondary Inscriptions in the Tomb of Ti, in: Allen/Connor (eds), *Altering Images*, 2025, 163–173.

graffito being either placed next to a figure interacting with the deceased as an agent, or next to the figure of the deceased interceding with a deity.¹²⁶ Following Nico Staring and Paul van Pelt, who detected similar practices in 18th Dynasty private tombs of the Memphite necropolis,¹²⁷ she suggested that these graffiti were left by members of the deceased's community, therefore possibly occurring as part of some cultic activity consecutive to the burial, that is, corresponding to the first phase of use, then presumably excluding the notion of "reuse" as the practice rather corresponds to some kind of completion of the textual content of the decoration. In TT 161 and TT 277, the titles of the visitors correspond indeed to those of the original tomb owner.¹²⁸ We are then most probably dealing with small communities of relatives engaging productively and somehow legitimately with selected iconographic contents of the chapel. In the 18th Dynasty, these additions of private signatures thus seem to function in compliance with the primary cultic function of the private tomb chapel, namely the cult of the deceased (see the corpus of TT 161 with clear cult-related formulae being included in several graffiti¹²⁹). However, in the Ramesside period, they were obviously motivated by a clear religious purpose deeply rooted in Ramesside religiosity¹³⁰ and built above all upon the introduction of divine figures in private sacred spaces. This is clearly exemplified in the corpus of TT 277. The personal relationship with the deceased may have still played a role, especially when the boundary between primary and secondary epigraphy becomes fluid. This is evident in the New Kingdom, where tomb makers or individuals close to the deceased actively engaged with the decoration,¹³¹ adding their signatures.

However, apart from such epigraphic cultic performances, several cases of re-captioning deserve to be mentioned, for they show clear interest in very specific iconographic units, yet outside any image-production-related goals. We might, therefore, be dealing with passing visitors who seized the opportunity to associate their names with carefully selected pictorial goods, seeking a lasting benefit from their magical/performative efficacy—an approach fully aligned with the notion of *image-as-subject* and extending beyond any perception of the image as a material form.

¹²⁶ Ragazzoli, in: BIFAO 117, 2018: 362–364; Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Incriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 266–267; Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023, 147–149.

¹²⁷ W. P. van Pelt/N. Staring, *Interpreting Graffiti in the Saqqara New Kingdom Necropolis as Expressions of Popular Customs and Beliefs*, in: *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 3, 2019, 1–49.

¹²⁸ S. Quirke, *The Hieratic Texts in the Tomb of Nakht the Gardener*, in: *JEA* 72, 1986, 79–90; Vandier d'Abbadie, *Deux tombes ramessides à Gournet Mourraï*, 1954.

¹²⁹ Quirke, in: *JEA* 72, 1986, 79–90; Den Doncker, in: Kóthay (ed.), *Art and Society*, 2012, 24–30; also Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023, 149–150, discussing the notion of epigraphic gift.

¹³⁰ See among others J. Assmann, *Geheimnis, Gedächtnis und Gottesnähe: Zum Strukturwandel der Grabsemantik und der Diesseits-Jenseitsbeziehungen im Neuen Reich*, in: J. Assmann et al. (eds), *Thebanische Beamtennekropolen: Neue Perspektiven archäologischer Forschung. Internationales Symposium, Heidelberg, 9. – 13.6.1993, Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Ägyptens 12*, Heidelberg 1995, 281–293; J. Assmann, *Theological Responses to Amarna*, in: G. N. Knoppers/A. Hirsch (eds), *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford*, Leiden 2004, 179–191.

¹³¹ Sartori, in: S. Gülden et al. (eds), *Ägyptologische "Binsen"-Weisheiten IV: Hieratisch des Neuen Reiches*, 2022; H. Heye, *Die Gräber des Amenemhab und des Pehsucher – Theben Nr. 85 und 88: Die Dekoration der Innenräume*, *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 138, Wiesbaden 2023, 232–233.

2.1.3.1 Wine for life

This was most likely the case of three scribes who once visited the tomb chapel of Neferrenpet (TT 178) as they focused their attention on a scene of storing provisions in the Treasury of Amun.¹³² They inscribed their names (G.178.1–3), which are barely discernible today, alongside three small-scale male figures carrying wine amphorae (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8: TT 178: Position of graffiti naming three scribes (G.178.1–3) next to male figures carrying wine amphorae. © Den Doncker.

Considering the significant gap between the graffitists' titles and the depicted action, we are not dealing with the recurring pattern of figure appropriation used as individual representations, namely as (ready-made) portraits.¹³³ As distinct from most cases of recaptioning, the figure is not reused as a depiction that is meant to be identified in terms of iconography. From a semiotic perspective, it only serves as a visual support that sets the graffitist into the iconographic syntax of the scene by establishing a syntagmatic relationship between the action, or predicate (storing), the object (wine) and him as simply a new agent or subject, thereby granting permanent access to the precious good: the wine from the Treasury of Amun. These scribes should indeed have been depicted as scribes to ensure they were recognisable as

¹³² E. Hofmann, *Das Grab des Neferrenpet, gen. Kenro (TT 178), Theben 2*, Mainz 1995: 163–175, pl. XL; commented on by Ragazzoli, in: *BIFAO* 117, 2018, 362–363, fig. 4; Peden, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt*, 2001, 105. For the names of the scribes, see *KRI* III, 331, 2–4.

¹³³ On this matter, see A. Den Doncker, *From Graffiti to Ready-made Portraits: Perception of Self in Tomb Decoration*, in: C. Agar/H. Navratilova (eds), *Graffiti Quest*, Leiden forthcoming.

such.¹³⁴ It thus seems that only the actual *outcome* of the scene in terms of capital was the target of this assignation procedure. By adding his name within the scene frame, the individual would redirect its object on a performative level—we might think of the principle of reversion of offerings applied to image alteration. Whether by means of such a procedure these graffitists aimed to take part in the funerary cult of the tomb owner cannot be firmly concluded.¹³⁵ In this case, the wine amphorae were not intended for the deceased but for the god and their storage is occurring under his supervision as the scribe of the Treasury. The scene does not thematise the production of offerings for the cult of the deceased but the latter's professional/religious commitment to Amun. It could therefore be inferred that the three scribes associated themselves with the god's service rather than that of the tomb owner, as the private chapel's decoration offered access to religious practicalities and valuable goods that were, in reality, confined to the temple's precincts.

2.1.3.2 *Gold rush*

Finally, it is worth mentioning what could be equally considered a textbook case of the search for precious pictorial goods in private tomb chapels. It involves the wab-priest and head draughtsman Amenemheb (G.C1.1), and the scribe of Amun Nebnefer (G.C1.4), who both left their names in the now-lost tomb of the overseer of the craftsmen of Amun, Amenhotep (TT C1), with whom they shared professional connection.¹³⁶ It can be suggested that they were aware of the tomb owner and, to some extent, deliberately planned their visit. In his comments on the tomb chapel decoration, Victor Loret recorded four graffiti and provided a brief description of the scene which the visitors obviously targeted, namely a scene of a workshop in the temple of Amun, with special focus on the vignettes showing the production of golden and lapis lazuli items, the weighing of gold, the melting of electrum, and the making of royal statues in precious woods and stones.¹³⁷ Interestingly, Amenemheb placed his name written in hieroglyphs quite visibly next to the first figure of the upper register. Loret described the figure as holding a gilded sceptre with a god standing between two *djed*-pillars, both surmounted by a figure of Re-Horakhty.¹³⁸ As for Nebnefer, he left his name above the figure of a scribe supervising the melting of electrum in the lower register (Fig. 9). Unlike Amenemheb, he incised his name with a sharpened tool, possibly a stone that he had just

¹³⁴ Compare with the scribe Sennu and his three colleagues—likely involved in the decoration of the tomb chapel—who inscribed their names in hieratic above the figures of male banqueters in the tomb chapel of another Neferrenpet (TT 43), seemingly as a way to identify with them, see M. K. Hartwig, *Scribal Captions and Painting in the Tomb Chapel of Neferrenpet* (TT 43), in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023, 87–98. On this process of figure appropriation, reused as individual representation, see Den Doncker, in: Agar/Navratilova, *Graffiti Quest*, forthcoming.

¹³⁵ Contrasting views in Ragazzoli, in: BIFAO 117, 2018, 363.

¹³⁶ For the tomb, see L. Manniche, *Lost Tombs: A Study of Certain Eighteenth Dynasty Monuments in the Theban Necropolis*, London 1988, 57.

¹³⁷ Corresponding respectively to PM F, 1: 456 (3) i (left) and ii (right), as based on V. Loret, *Le tombeau de l'am-ḫent Amen-hotep*, *Mémoire publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire* 1/1, Paris 1884, 27–29, 31, pl. II, figs 1, 5–7. Whereas the lower register is clearly identifiable in terms of iconography, the upper one remains somewhat unclear. It is questionable whether the six figures in the row, as referenced by Loret, all depict the tomb owner adorned with prestigious, royal-like ornaments. It can be presumed the scene rather showed him supervising the production of these items in the temple of Amun, thus watching over six subalterns bringing the precious goods.

¹³⁸ Loret, *Le tombeau de l'am-ḫent Amen-hotep*, 1884, 28.

picked up from the ground. This strengthens the idea that he had not intended to write his graffiti in advance. In both cases, it can be argued that the two visitors identified with the depictions and appropriated the figures by simply captioning them. Thereby, they were able to benefit from representation in a sacred space, linked to the tomb owner with whom they shared the same socio-professional community—namely, the workshops of Amun, which were engaged in the production of religious and royal prestigious items. Nevertheless, here again, it turns out that the very proximity to iconographic motifs representing precious goods and materials was clearly an issue, as they obviously both chose particularly valuable contents. Hence, it can be wondered to what extent these two visitors appropriated the figures properly as individual depictions, that is somehow in correspondence with their actual tasks in the temple of Amun, or if they simply chose them for their mere *preciousness*. Either way, although they might have been in close contact with such objects in their daily life, privileged access to pictorial equivalents in such rich iconographic environments may have been equally considered a good alternative for their afterlife's existence.

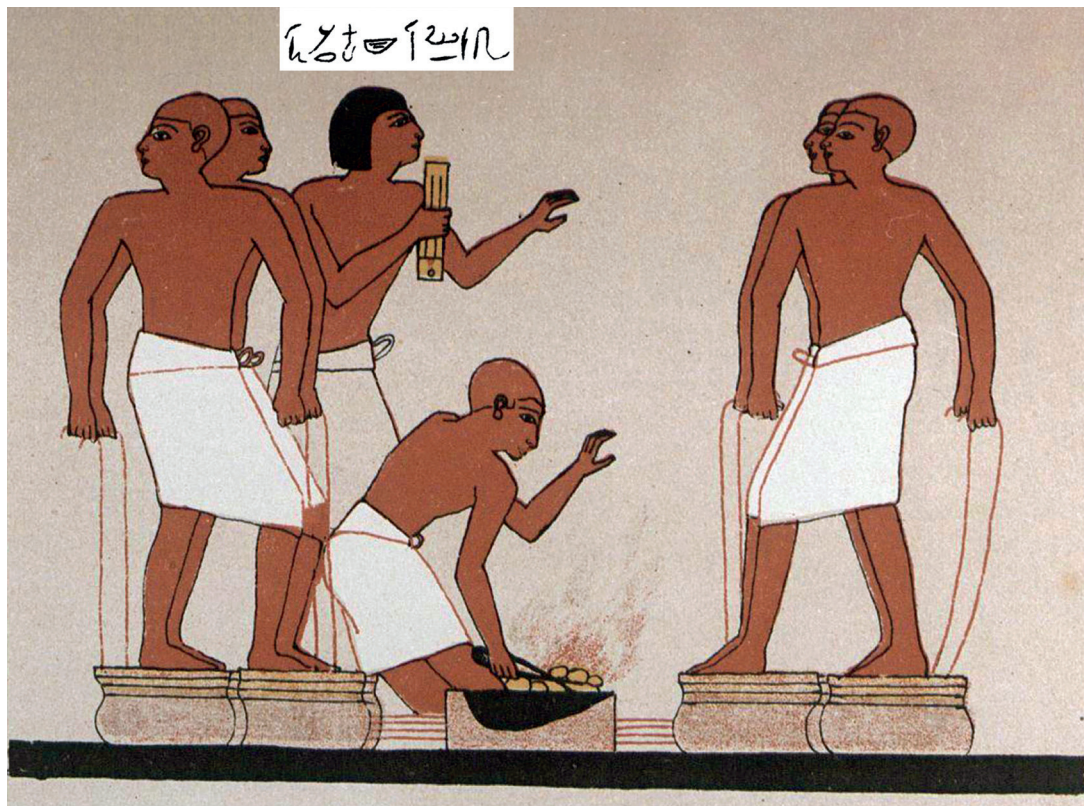


Fig. 9: Reconstructed position of Nebnefer's incised graffiti (G.C1.4) above the figure of the scribe supervising the melting of electrum. After Loret 1884, pl. II, figs 1, 7. © Den Doncker.

From this brief examination of graffiti associated with the productive use of definite iconographic units, a series of questions consequently remains and would surely deserve further investigation. If the private tomb chapels of the Theban necropolis were indeed known to

potentially hold so many valuable goods at anyone's disposal, why was the production of such graffiti so limited in time and space? Could we go as far as to ask ourselves why we don't simply see *more* graffiti on the chapels' decorated walls? Should we assume that private funerary monuments were not as accessible as they should theoretically be—i.e., according to the Appeals to the Living's scope? Were the audiences much more controlled/restricted to the closest circles of relatives, without abandoned chapels remaining unoccupied for long periods of time? Should we take into consideration that actual valuable funerary items were basically more coveted while, to a certain extent, still easily accessible to plunderers? Moreover, did common visitors really regard the so-called performative power of images and their related usefulness in terms of *akh*-efficacy as *image-as-subject*—was it simply always the point? At the end of the day, could we not be just dealing in most cases with audiences closely or remotely linked to image commissioning and production and aware of their potentialities?

2.2 Pyramid precinct chapels

The samples of secondary epigraphy from the precincts of Netjerikhet Djoser (central Saqqara) and Senwosret III (north-eastern Dahshur) involve two very different iconographic environments. In terms of spatial structure, they are both multi-part, elaborate compounds using traditional as well as experimental approaches to funerary architecture.¹³⁹ However, whilst the spaces marked with secondary epigraphy in Djoser's precinct (and similarly in the pyramid temple of Sneferu at Meidum)¹⁴⁰ do not carry texts and images, those of Senwosret III contain a very rich iconographic environment, and in that respect resemble the Theban tomb chapels in terms of current visual experience—and possibly in terms of their ancient interpretation and experience.

Would this imply that they could be framed differently as resources, or “goods”? The visual difference may also suggest that a different response was elicited from their audiences, with precious pictorial goods being experienced and appreciated specifically. We might expect similar levels of interest for the rich iconographic environment as in Western Thebes: participation in the displayed actions and in the values that these actions represent, claiming the prestige that is embodied in the primary decoration, accessing the proximity of gods and the deceased. The pyramid precinct material nonetheless implies further nuances, and we discuss aspects of the interaction with them in a sequence that differs from the analysis of the private tomb chapels, beginning with religious goods in a meaningful place (devotional aspect), followed by iconographic goods (visual culture aspect), and finally the performative aspect involving the visitor, both individually and as a member of their community.

2.2.1 The meaningful place – religious goods?

In the complex of Djoser, most recorded dipinti were identified in the so-called North and South chapels next to the Sed-festival complex along the south and east sides of the Step Pyramid.

¹³⁹ Regarding the precinct of Djoser, see summary in M. Verner, *The Pyramids: The Archaeology and History of Egypt's Iconic Monuments*, Cairo 2020, 19–44. As for Senwosret III, see D. Arnold et al., *The Pyramid Complex of Senwosret III at Dahshur: Architectural Studies*, Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition 26, New York 2002; D. Arnold et al., *Ein Kulttempel Sesostris' III. in Dahschur*, in: *Sokar* 36, 2018, 42–55; D. Arnold/A. Oppenheim, *Der Pyramidenbezirk Sesostris' III. in Dahschur: Grabungen im Herbst 2019*, in: *Sokar* 39, 2020, 80–89.

¹⁴⁰ F. Ll. Griffith, in: W. M. F. Petrie et al., *Medum*, London 1892, 40–41.

The chapel walls are smooth limestone, and it does not appear that the dipinti writers could have witnessed any decoration that would have subsequently disappeared. Their interest, identity, and roles were described in the standard visitors' formula for the 18th Dynasty. This formula, known by its incipit *iw.t pw ir.n sš*, articulates coming and seeing as the first part of the interaction, followed by identifying the monument and responding to it in a culturally and socially adequate manner, i.e. by declaring one's own position and by performing an offering formula for the benefit of the tomb owner.¹⁴¹ The Egyptian original differentiates each action also grammatically, *iw.t pw ir.n* is a deliberate action setting the scene, *r m33* is the first step in encountering the location and addressing it by one's perception (and cultural authority), *gm.n ɛf* states a result of these actions as a next step in the interaction order, and the following *dd* of the offering formula defines the response. The formulae were not always written out in full. Shorter versions had appeared but they may represent, by their location and direct contact with elements of architecture or decoration, any and all of the above responses.

By the 19th Dynasty, the structure and contents of the texts changed, and did not articulate the direct interaction of the visitor with the built environment, but instead refocused more explicitly on the value of the entire necropolis as a sacred landscape and more specifically on the deities that could intervene on behalf of the visitor.¹⁴² The framing of the site was then dominated by its role as an interface with the divine, sought by visitors from a transregional catchment area.¹⁴³

For an interaction with the location, the 18th Dynasty texts in the pyramid precincts may be more explicit, but here the survival bias undoubtedly influences the interpretation.¹⁴⁴ The 18th Dynasty texts do refer to the symbolic value of the location and convey also an impression of its *nfr*: beauty, perfection. There are no formulae that would have compared the temples of Djoser to any other location. This juxtaposition is included in the texts in the pyramid precinct of Senwosret III.¹⁴⁵

Here, the situation could not be more different from the precinct of Djoser in terms of the visual culture impact. The walls were covered by polychrome reliefs, and 18th Dynasty dipinti appeared in liminal places, such as doorways, on dados, but also in the direct vicinity of figures and texts in the relief decoration. It is these last two instances that are particularly interesting as examples of rich iconographic environments. If the precinct of Djoser would have been read as an important *space*, in Dahshur the *iconographic environment* would have

¹⁴¹ The narrative composition of this formula was analysed by Ragazzoli, in SAK 42, 2013, 269–323; and J. P. Allen et al., New Kingdom Graffiti in Dahshur, Pyramid Complex of Senwosret III: Preliminary Report. Graffiti Uncovered in Seasons 1992–2010, in: JARCE 49, 2013, 113–141. See analysis and overview of variants in Verhoeven, Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut, 2020, 224.

¹⁴² Navratilova, in: Bárta et al. (eds), Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2005, 2006; and H. Navratilova, Visitors' Graffiti: Traces of a Re-Appropriation of Sacred Spaces and a Demonstration of Literacy in the Landscape, in: M. Bárta/J. Janák (eds), Profane Landscapes, Sacred Spaces: Urban Development in the Bronze Age Southern Levant, New Directions in Anthropological Archaeology, Sheffield/Bristol, CT 2020, 141–157. The shift probably began in the Amarna period, compare Ragazzoli, in: BIFAO 117, 2018, 357–407.

¹⁴³ H. Navratilova, Does a Monument Have a Catchment Area? Secondary Epigraphy, Mobility and Identities, in: Hamilton (ed.), Making and Experiencing Graffiti, forthcoming.

¹⁴⁴ Navratilova, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt, Cairo 2023, on the incomplete Memphite corpus.

¹⁴⁵ See Allen et al. in: JARCE 49, 2013; as well as an overview of *iw.t pw* variants by Verhoeven, Dipinti von Besuchern Des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut, 2020, 277–278.

been impossible to miss. And yet, we notice that a significant part of the socially and culturally conditioned response in secondary epigraphy, a response that the Egyptians would have been conditioned to accept, is identical! This identical part consists of the textual contents of the 18th Dynasty dipinti: in both pyramid precincts, there are *iw.t pw* texts thematising the *coming* and *seeing*.¹⁴⁶ In that sense, the role of the royal funerary precincts as *interfaces* providing direct access to the deceased king and to the divine world must have been shared irrespective of their iconographic contents.

Was their role recognised as functional royal equivalents of private funerary chapels? What could have been seen as a royal equivalent of a private tomb chapel, if anything?¹⁴⁷ Although we cannot address this issue in detail, the functional development of a royal temple in the New Kingdom, including the concept of the “temples of millions of years”,¹⁴⁸ following the earlier *hw.t-kz*, must have been relevant. These extensive royal establishments, focused, as Martina Ullmann has shown, on the veneration of kingship and a still living monarch, and not exclusively on one (deceased) king, were strictly speaking neither “funerary” nor “memorial” temples. Yet, their character had a different nuance compared to a divine temple, and this was reflected where the non-royal presence in the temple decoration was concerned: “the existence of identified non-royal men in primary temple decoration seems restricted to buildings with a strong emphasis on the cult of the pharaoh.”¹⁴⁹ Their predecessors, chapels and temples in the pyramid precincts, were much closer to the expected burial site of a king and were at once buildings with that strong emphasis on royal cult *and* standing in a material position that made them like a private funerary chapel. Although we cannot develop this excursus further at this point, we would like to highlight the issue of the perception of a New Kingdom royal temple as a factor in the reception history of earlier royal pyramid precincts as meaningful places and in the formation of their status in the New Kingdom.

We have already noted the “comparative” formula deployed in the precinct of Senwosret III, but to fully appreciate the differences of impact of the two pyramid precincts we need to look beyond text contents and focus on the *cadre pariétal*.¹⁵⁰ The survival bias¹⁵¹ does influence the interpretation significantly, but even within its limits the *cadre pariétal* remains a noticeable factor. Which elements of the decoration are targeted? Do they indicate which aspect, iconographic, religious, or “pictorial”, was prevalent? Or is a co-presence of these aspects more likely?

¹⁴⁶ A review of the Memphite corpus recently by Navratilova in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023.

¹⁴⁷ Note the division of royal and nonroyal funerary architecture that starts early in Egyptian history, summary in Bárta, *Journey to the West*, 2011.

¹⁴⁸ See M. Ullmann, *König für die Ewigkeit – Die Häuser der Millionen von Jahren: Eine Untersuchung zu Königskult und Tempeltypologie in Ägypten*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 51, Wiesbaden 2002, 671–676.

¹⁴⁹ S. Bickel, *Die Zäsur im Weltbild und die Interpretation der Geschichte*, in: Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, 2014, 211.

¹⁵⁰ Terminology by Annie Gasse. See her analysis in A. Gasse, *Red Ink in the Quarries: Some New Lights on the Graffiti of the Wadi Hammamat*, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 63–75.

¹⁵¹ According to Adela Oppenheim (personal communication), the walls of Senwosret III’s temples and chapels were broken into hundreds of thousands of pieces, with tens of thousands preserving portions of relief decoration; however, most of the wall decoration is lost.

2.2.2 Iconographic goods for image-makers at work

One example suggests that the visitors noticed not only the main precinct owner (referred to as Khakaura in the evidence), but also other members of the royal family. Visitors' signatures appeared in the queens' pyramid chapels, on the chapel tympana, which carried the titles of the royal women.¹⁵² Getting the signatures high up the wall where the tympana were located¹⁵³ required some effort, even if we expect the rooms to contain some level of sand on the floor.¹⁵⁴

What could induce a New Kingdom administrator, literatus, or artist, to be interested in Middle Kingdom queens so that he would look up at their titles high on a chapel tympanum? Interestingly, these titles were among the few clear indications of the status of these royal women in their relatively small chapels.¹⁵⁵

Several visitors across the pyramid fields came in the joint reign of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut and, although there is no unequivocally dated example at Dahshur from this period, it is probable that this Thutmoside interest in royal women also had a "political topicality," not unlike the mistaken identification of Sobekneferu in TT 60 (see above). It is less straightforward to identify New Kingdom direct copies of royal motifs; however, inspirations based on earlier texts and images are plausible.¹⁵⁶

The interest in the presentation of royal women may have been tied to a specific moment in the history of the 18th Dynasty, the era of Hatshepsut, queen and king drawing on several models of royal legitimation.¹⁵⁷ However, a focused interest in royal legitimation and presentation would be shared across the dynasty and, correspondingly, the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II registered several secondary inscriptions in the precinct (albeit not all of them as clearly linked to any significant element of the primary decoration as the texts in the queens' tympana).

In that case, the primary decoration was an object of interest for conceptual reasons, or indeed as *image-as-object*, of intrinsic interest to image makers of the Thutmoside period as material that they could possibly replicate. Although *stricto sensu* not iconographic, these texts were likely to become precious goods in a professional repertoire, especially as the private funerary monuments in Thebes suggest that such study practice was not alien to Egyptian craftsmen and artists.

The developing analysis of Middle Kingdom royal iconography¹⁵⁸ also confirms that scenes involving royal birth and adolescence, as well as other aspects of kingship, were

¹⁵² On the decoration of the chapels see I. Stünkel, *The Relief Decoration of the Cult Chapels of Royal Women in the Pyramid Complex of Senusret III at Dahshur*, in: Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2005*, 2006, 147–166.

¹⁵³ Stünkel, in: Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2005*, 2006; and personal communication.

¹⁵⁴ On the material access to the walls see Verhoeven, *Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut*, 2020, 320–321; Allen et al. in: *JARCE* 49, 2013; and Navratilova, in: Bareš et al. (eds), *Egypt in Transition*, 2010.

¹⁵⁵ Arnold et al., *The Pyramid Complex of Senwosret III at Dahshur*, 2002, 146.

¹⁵⁶ See Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ C. H. Roehrig et al., *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*, New York 2005. For further references, see notes 78 and 80.

¹⁵⁸ Oppenheim, in: Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010*, 2011; A. Oppenheim, *Offering Bearers in the Pyramid Complexes of Senwosret I and Senwosret III*, in: M. Bárta et al. (eds), *Guardian of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honor of Zahi Hawass*, II, Prague 2020, 1157–1171.

represented in the complex and would have been of interest to the Thutmoside image makers as well as to literati.

The visitors, as mentioned, most often identify as literati, people of culture, as they do in the Theban environment.¹⁵⁹ However, on occasion they prefer to claim a different professional allegiance: *sš-ḳd.wt* (as yet not known in Dahshur, but attested in Meidum), or *ḥmw.w* (Dahshur, Pyramid Temple of Senwosret III). This is a factor in assessing the dipinti as a trace of professional engagement by a community of practice intimately linked with the production of precious iconographic goods for their own time.

2.2.3 Precious pictorial goods as “magical/performative” goods

The interest in the titles of royal persons appears as specific and focused, even though the fragmentary survival of the chapel decoration reminds us that there may have been many more visitors’ texts in the chapel space, targeting other images and texts. The North Chapel adjacent to the pyramid of Senwosret III suggests what these other elements might have been. Like cult scenes in private tombs, discussed also above,¹⁶⁰ the offering scenes in the North Chapel were marked with dipinti. The relabelling affected both larger figures of offering bearers in the scene¹⁶¹ and smaller kneeling offering bearers within the grid-form offering list located in front of the king.¹⁶² Similarly to the tympanum of one of the queens, the grid list was located high on the wall, and the captions added next to the offering bearers are small and precisely inserted next to relatively small figures, indicating again a specific interest.

The visual appeal of the entire scene and possible professional interest in the iconography cannot be excluded, yet in this case it was the contents and the action that apparently motivated the writers. The offering act was undoubtedly read as important,¹⁶³ but the graffiti imply also what specific aspects of it were important. First, the *action* of materially bringing the varied offerings probably attracted interest, which may explain the labels near the larger figures in the lower registers. This type of action was targeted also by much earlier writers of secondary labels in Old Kingdom tombs¹⁶⁴ and by later New Kingdom writers in Saqqara and Thebes.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Or in Asyut and elsewhere, see Verhoeven, *Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut*, 2020.

¹⁶⁰ See also Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; and Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: NeHeT 8, 2024.

¹⁶¹ 04.747(1) and 07.306, joined fragments.

¹⁶² H. Navratilova, *Choice Cuts for Khakaura*, in: JEA 110 (1–2), 2024, 223–236.

¹⁶³ As is shown also in private Old and Middle Kingdom tombs in Beni Hasan, Meir and Deir el-Gebrawi, see C. Ragazzoli/K. Hassan, *Un compte hiératique de grains exposé dans la chapelle de Pépyânkh-Hénikem (A2) à Meir*, in: P. Collombert/P. Tallet (eds), *Les archives administratives de l’Ancien Empire, Orient & Méditerranée* 37, Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT 2021, 281–296; Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; and Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: NeHeT 8, 2024, with a wide range of secondary material starting with secondary epigraphy that followed soon after the finishing touches on primary decoration, compare also Asyut in Verhoeven, *Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut*, 2020; and the small corpus of TT 161 published by Quirke, in: JEA 72, 1986; also Den Doncker, in: Agar/Navratilova (eds), *Graffiti Quest*, forthcoming, along with further comparands.

¹⁶⁴ Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; and Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: NeHeT 8, 2024; Hamilton, in: Alvarez et al. (eds), *Current Research in Egyptology* 2015, 2016; and Hamilton, in: Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2020*, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ As noted by W. P. van Pelt/N. Staring, *The Graffiti*, in: M. Raven (ed.), *The Tombs of Ptahepwia and Sethnakht, Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities* 22, Leiden 2020, 146, for the tomb of Maya at Saqqara, Den Doncker, in: Agar/Navratilova (eds), *Graffiti Quest*, forthcoming.

Second, specific offerings in the grid-like list were selected for attention and their offering bearers labelled. There are two options for how to interpret this series of rather fragmentary labels. The first one interprets the labels as four different names, all preceded by the scribal title. The second interprets the damaged “labels” as the name of one single scribe, Djehuty, or Djehutymes.¹⁶⁶ In both options, the choice of offerings must have been significant. Although the offering list is fragmentary, its reconstitution suggests that the labelled offering bearers carried pieces of meat, that is luxurious food. The relevance of selecting them would be equal for a group of visitors and for a single visitor, who would in this way claim that he was bringing four different “choice cuts” to Senwosret III.¹⁶⁷

In both cases, the visitor(s) must have been able to read the hieroglyphic texts to be able to single out that selection. And in both cases, the “*this-is-me*” element of graffiti performance would be relevant. These writers were not direct dependants of Senwosret III, as earlier Old Kingdom retainers leaving graffiti had been,¹⁶⁸ but rather appropriated that role at another time, another historical moment, when the Middle Kingdom sovereign was a salient figure in their own *milieu*.¹⁶⁹ It is possibly a re-functionalisation, working on more than one level, grasping the value of the place as an iconographic resource and a devotional “contact zone.” The religious and pictorial aspect likely operated simultaneously.

Precious, prestigious, food appears to be positioned as the centre of attention. The conspicuous consumption of offerings was probably highlighted also by another, very different caption applied to a relief with offerings in the Pyramid Temple. The composition of goods is accompanied by a label written in a column that says *hrw nfr*, “perfect day.”¹⁷⁰ This brief caption invites speculation as to whether it referenced a funerary feast, a festival day visit by the writer (visits on festival/special days are attested in the precinct),¹⁷¹ or gave a more

¹⁶⁶ This was suggested to the authors by Rob Demarée, and gratefully acknowledged.

¹⁶⁷ Comparable evidence appears in the Chapel of Hatshepsut on the third terrace of her temple at Deir el-Bahari. Unlike other distinct titles that correspond directly to the offering presented, a figure carrying a piece of meat with ribs bears the title of Overseer of the Treasury (here as the primary epigraphy), presumably referring to Djehuty (owner of TT 11). As suggested by Stupko-Lubczyńska, this points toward the figure serving as a self-portrait *in assistenza*, implicitly highlighting his role in supervising the design and decoration of the chapel, as well as in symbolically participating in the funerary cult of the queen (Stupko-Lubczyńska, in: Arts 13, 2024, 11–12). For the significance of the prevalence of meat in the scene—which may have influenced Djehuty’s selection of the figure, given its value as pictorial goods—see A. Stupko-Lubczyńska, Reading the Offering Procession in the Chapel of Hatshepsut, in: SAK 46, 2017, 230–232.

¹⁶⁸ Hassan/Ragazzoli, in: NeHeT 8, 2024, 40–41.

¹⁶⁹ For compelling perspectives on the significance of the 12th Dynasty, including the figure of Senwosret III, during the first half of the 18th Dynasty, see Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, 2014. C. Vogel, From Power to Reputation and Vice Versa: The Relationship between Thutmose III and Senusret III Reconsidered, in: T. A. Bács and H. Beinlich (eds), *Constructing Authority: Prestige, Reputation and the Perception of Power in Egyptian Kingship*, Budapest, May 12–14, 2016. 8. Symposium zur ägyptischen Königsideologie / 8th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology, Wiesbaden 2017, 267–280.

¹⁷⁰ In detail see H. Navratilova, “Hail Thee, Festival Day”: Interaction of Primary and Secondary Epigraphy in the Pyramid Temple of Senwosret III, in: S. Gülden et al. (eds), *Schöne Denkmäler sind entstanden: Studien zu Ehren von Ursula Verhoeven*, Heidelberg 2023, 457–485.

¹⁷¹ Such as on an epagomenal day (birthday of Isis) on column 6 in the South Temple of Senwosret III. Brief presentation by Navratilova, in: Gülden et al. (eds), *Schöne Denkmäler sind entstanden*, 2023, 475–478; full publication forthcoming. Yet, it is far from clear if Dahshur was involved in the direct orbit of any of the festivals taking place in the Memphite necropolis during the New Kingdom (about the feasts see recently Staring, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; Staring, *The Saqqara Necropolis*

abstract reference to the concept of beautiful days in this life and the next. It must have been the abundance of goods that attracted attention in the first place, as befits the Theban comparands where high-value objects and commodities (wine and gold in TT 178 and TT C1 respectively) appear as specific targets. It may have indexed the framing (festivity, burial attendance), and/or the interaction with the visual culture on site. Yet again, it is possible that this iconographic material was precious for both conceptual reasons (scene that could be replicated/calqued) and for reasons of devotional and cultural value, heightened by the exquisite commodities involved, for the observer, in a way comparable to Theban tombs.

3 *Material and conceptual accessibility*

This section looks at the practical and conceptual accessibility of the funerary monuments where the rich iconographic environment was marked by figural and written witnesses of interaction. Both aspects are important for attempting an adequate discussion of the access to precious pictorial goods and of the role of this access in the Egyptian culture and society of the New Kingdom.

Arguably, we mostly see elite or sub-elite access and conceptualisation; whilst selective, this approach is still relevant for an insight into these more or less exceptional practices of daily life that led to a sense of cultural cohesion, and in which “objects merge with people.”¹⁷² In the following discussion about material and conceptual accessibility, we present an outline, taking into consideration that individual examples, as well as the change that affected visitors’ behaviour during the New Kingdom,¹⁷³ need further nuancing.

First, the presence of secondary epigraphy marks both pyramid precincts (exemplified by Dahshur) and the Theban tomb chapels as accessible places for precious cultural goods. Does the alleged, large accessibility of Theban tomb chapels explain the presence of graffiti there? Or are we mixing cause and effect? Conversely, does the presence of graffiti in Dahshur prove new conditions of accessibility?

The material access (I can physically enter this space and there is enough light/I am carrying a light source) is only one aspect of the process. It is accompanied by framing, which is a part of the interaction order, an organization of experience according to previous knowledge. More accurately, the visual images work “together with salience and framing,”¹⁷⁴ as the beholder processes them in context of earlier knowledge and experience as well as expectations and projections.

We follow the line of interpretation that foregrounds the memory contract, and thus assume that there were parts of funerary precincts/tombs that were actively intended to be accessible—they were framed as zones of contact between the living, dead, and divine. If we assume that tombs had zones of access to enable that contact (the tomb chapel was meant to

through the New Kingdom, 2023; A. Herzberg-Beiersdorf, *Prosopographia Memphitica: Individuelle Identitäten und kollektive Biographien einer königlichen Residenzstadt des Neuen Reichs*, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde – Beihefte* 15, Berlin 2023, 260–268).

¹⁷² To borrow the words of L. Meskell, *Archaeologies of Social Life: Age, Sex, Class et Cetera in Ancient Egypt*, Oxford 1999, 181.

¹⁷³ Navratilova, in: Bárta et al. (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2005, 2006. Review and useful Theban summary by Ragazzoli*, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023.

¹⁷⁴ Scollon/Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 2003, 92.

be accessed regularly as opposed to the burial chamber), the funerary precincts of the pyramid owners must have been conceptualised as a royal version of these spaces, yet conceptually related also to the memorial temples of the coeval kings. The former aspect is suggested by the graffiti, the latter by the *ḥw.t ntr* designation prevalently used for pyramid precincts. Not only were these spaces framed as salient, but they were also salient on more than one level.

Second, other systemic aspects of the practice appear to include the tomb owner and their visitors/interlocutors in a close alliance: appropriating goods for oneself, which may not have been fully contradictory with taking part in the cult of the original owner of these goods: in TT 161, the figures of the offering-bearers are appropriated in a direct connection (as part of the scene syntax) with the cult of the deceased.¹⁷⁵ In TT 79, the graffito probably reads: “receive from the temple of Karnak” while in the frame of wine production scene.¹⁷⁶ Its author benefitted from the proximity to valuable goods, being represented as taking part in the cultic activities.

Third, the interlocutors come from a community of literate people knowing about the richness of these iconographic environments as surrounding the elite who were in their possession/control. Some may be defined as creating a sub-elite culture. Among them, image makers were fully aware of what was at stake in terms of 1) contents (e.g. the distinct representations of different pieces of meat or the pure “artistic” value of a representation (cf. the sculptor Nebnefer working on the transformation of the decoration of TT 127 on behalf of its new occupant¹⁷⁷ or G.60.16 consisting of a *ḥtp-di-nsw* for the author and not the tomb owner within the scene of fishing and fowling,¹⁷⁸ G.60.28 along the bow in the hunting scene¹⁷⁹)) but also 2) indexicality (the value of the *image-as-object* replicated from a certain prestigious model possibly charged with a significant individual identity¹⁸⁰ or stemming from a well-identified context, i.e. the royal temple of that king Senwosret III, and not an unidentified ancient king).

Fourth, we consider the very magical aspect of the image that is appropriated in order to be actually beneficial to the author: the specificity of iconographic support. We presume the authors clearly believed in the effectiveness of their scriptural action when the selection of its iconographic support/frame seems conscious (or even smartly strategic). Theban material can be used as to confirm that in Dahshur the scribes are not simply appropriating offerings as New Kingdom cult performers. The idea was to obtain valuable, precious, luxury (or royal) goods in the context of access to the site/monument.

¹⁷⁵ Particularly graffiti G.161.3 and G.161.4, see Quirke, in: JEA 72, 1986, 81–83; Den Doncker, in: Agar/Navratilova (eds), *Graffiti Quest*, forthcoming.

¹⁷⁶ H. Guksch, *Die Gräber des Nacht-Min und des Men-cheper-Ra-Seneb*: Theben Nr. 87 und 79, *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 34, Mainz 1995, 175, fig. 77, pl. 39a.

¹⁷⁷ Den Doncker, *Réactions aux images*, forthcoming.

¹⁷⁸ Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013, 306.

¹⁷⁹ Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013, 311.

¹⁸⁰ Den Doncker, in: Gillen (ed.), *(Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt*, 2017; Den Doncker, in: *Prague Egyptological Studies* 29, 2022.

4 *Rich iconographic environments and meaningful places*

The walls of temples and tombs covered by primary epigraphy (the planned decoration in a monumental register) constitute rich and valuable iconographic environments, or “picscapes” (Dorn’s term). Although we know secondary epigraphy from well-preserved and “important” monuments best, due to the preservation and research attention bias, it is additionally likely that the ancient visitors also were selective and preferred some monuments to others. Reasons for their choice are likely to involve both previous knowledge, specifically in the case of local visitors,¹⁸¹ and information or experience mediated to those who visited from afar.

We assume that a monument could be selected for its overall importance (based on the ownership and/or location)—as must have been the case for the precinct of Djoser—or for its rich iconography—as must have been the case in Theban tombs (and other tombs with rich decoration, including Beni Hassan, Deir el-Gebrawi, Elkab or Asyut) and in some pyramid precincts like Senwosret III. A combination of these factors also must have played a role: tomb N13.1 in Asyut displays responses to its iconographic environment (expressed by images or location of texts next to a primary feature), as well as explicit textual references to temples in the Asyuti region, which defines the location *per se* as relevant.

This proposition is based on the following:

1. *Social prestige* gained from *integrating one’s identity* into a certain monument with visible social capital, especially Old and Middle Kingdom royal funerary temples (like the Memphite necropolis) or in the case of local/ “historical” figures like the 12th Dynasty vizier Antefiqer in TT 60, or Iti-ibi-iqer in Asyut’s N.13.1. Decorations are appreciated along with their conceptual/constructed value. Images, through the perception of aesthetics, stimulate/activate the beholder’s reception in relation to his intellectual access to the contents (even if on occasion wrongly assessed, as in TT 60). This constitutes an agentive work by the beholder. The exchange of social/cultural capital can be established by means of the image agency (thus conferred by the visitors). In this respect, the beholder is in control of the tomb owner’s memory and fulfils the memory contract. This memory contract is made explicit when the tomb owner deploys also an Appeal to the Living. The visitor is also fully integrated into the functioning of the image as regards the commemorative functioning of the funerary monument (in other respects, images can be considered self-sufficient).
2. *Equally*, simply benefiting from *precious goods* appearing in the form of images (this productive use of iconographic settings is not necessarily bound with the social/identity-related visitor inscription). Whereas images are designed to guide the beholder (as noted by Verbovsek), visitors do as they see fit according to needs and opportunities, also apparently considering the abundance of these pictorial goods which they can benefit from by integrating their names and titles next to them (productive patterns of image reception). Could this form of appropriation reflect in some way the principle of the reversion of offerings? We are indeed dealing with the same ranks of people in contact with

¹⁸¹ Local allegiance was claimed by scribe Amenemhat from Mennefer, in the precinct of Djoser, for example.

such goods in real life (scribes, priests, religious image makers), sometimes referred to as sub-elite communities.

3. Joining 1) and 2), *participating in an action* that assures prestige and (symbolic) access to goods would explain why certain scenes and figures are labelled in many tombs and funerary chapels. The action could have been seen as much as a material and embodied practice (*coming, seeing, reciting... and writing*) and as a repetition of the expected or required ritual, expressed also by the preferential choice of hieratic texts for those dipinti that contain this ritualistic subtext.¹⁸² Hieratic is not only the literati's script¹⁸³, it is also the script of ritual texts,¹⁸⁴ as well as of the everyday writing use. The widespread use of hieratic in texts concerned with the visited seems in an opposition to some ritual actions targeting specifically the visitor—like *hṯp-di-nsw* formulae in TT MMA 504, which may be written in hieroglyphs.¹⁸⁵ The rules of script register, however, are open to a more nuanced, perhaps individual choice: the offering bearers in the tomb of Maya at Saqqara were relabelled in hieroglyphs,¹⁸⁶ the offering bearers of Senwosret III in hieratic.¹⁸⁷

The rich iconographic environment offers a more extensive opportunity to integrate one's actions with the site and with the patterns of visual and written communication established as appropriate. We observe a major underlying motivation again, the memory contract. The rich iconographic environment, however, also carries evidence for its multi-level, nuanced reception, not limited by selective perception to one pattern of behaviour.¹⁸⁸

5 To conclude: precious pictorial goods and the memory contract

Varied in individual implementation, ancient Egyptian graffiti production was a vital part of the cultural transmission, social interactions, and an embodiment of the memory contract—in brief, a strategy for cultural communication whose practices diversified over time or adapted to the location. Fulfilling the deceased's wish to be remembered, to be someone for eternity, the visitors entered into a memory contract that was meant to benefit both parties involved in it. The visitors also wanted to be someone for eternity, playing the role of a cult participant, ritualist, competent person in the necropolis. Secondary epigraphy embodied a social interaction that we need to see in all its complexity. This kind of discourse has been discussed for both Memphite and Theban private tombs and for tombs outside the capital zones,¹⁸⁹ and our

¹⁸² P. Vernus, Form, Layout, and Specific Potentialities of the Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Script, in: Davies/Laboury (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Egyptian Epigraphy and Paleography*, 2020, 13–30, explicating the specific use of hieroglyphs as the “creation” script; hieratic could occupy the “ritual” role, see S. Donnat Beauquier, *Écrire à ses morts: enquête sur un usage rituel de l'écrit dans l'Égypte pharaonique*, Grenoble 2014.

¹⁸³ See Ragazzoli, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023; and Ragazzoli, in: Bryan/Dorman (eds), *Mural Decoration in the Theban Necropolis*, 2023.

¹⁸⁴ Donnat Beauquier, *Écrire à ses morts*, 2014, 232–233 about the possibility of a script continuum.

¹⁸⁵ Ragazzoli, *La grotte des scribes à Deir el-Bahari*, 2017, 42–44, 87–98.

¹⁸⁶ Staring, in: Ragazzoli et al. (eds), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt*, 2023, 308; Staring, *The Saqqara Necropolis through the New Kingdom*, 2023.

¹⁸⁷ See H. Navratilova, Script Combinations in Dipinti: Memphite/‘Capital Zone’ Cases, Binsén-Weisheit-en V, forthcoming.

¹⁸⁸ A correspondingly multi-level interpretation in Egyptology took time to develop; summary by Verhoeven, in: Škrabal et al. (eds), *Graffiti Scratched, Scrawled, Sprayed*, 2023, 56–66.

¹⁸⁹ Ragazzoli/Hassan, in: Tallet/Collombert (eds), *Les archives administratives de l'Ancien Empire*, 2021; Verhoeven, *Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut*, 2020.

analysis offers a confirmation including all three factors that sociolinguists propose as essential for the interaction: social interaction order, visual semiotics, and semiotics of a place.¹⁹⁰

The tomb becomes the site of an exchange of both social and a cultural capital, at least for those, who—as the Appeals to the Living clearly state—have the sensitivity to detect and the capability to process this capital and partake in the performative exchange. The participation in this precious performance involved also an inevitable experience of texts and visual culture on the tomb walls: the pictorial goods. It was an elite privilege, a memory contract with possibilities and limitations given by the media used in its promulgation. These goods co-establish the memory contract in situ, but they also gain a currency outside the tomb—an artist can use them for inspiration, while a visitor to a meaningful place can carry their prestigious experience with them.

The concept of a memory contract was used in private tombs with eloquence, and it was extended to other locations of memory, including the royal funerary complexes. Concerning Old or Middle Kingdom royal mortuary temples, such as that of Senwosret III at Dahshur, secondary epigraphy was not part of the primary use of the monument as a place for cultic performances, as seems for example to have been the case at Deir el-Bahari in the early 19th Dynasty, when at some point cultic activities and graffiti practices intertwined.¹⁹¹

Although in both royal and private contexts, the monuments' agency shifted along with the visitor's personal engagement and socio-professional conditioning, and to that extent remained potentially uncontrolled,¹⁹² it seems likely that the secondary use of the temple of Senwosret III during the New Kingdom does not match with its original function in the same way as the corpus of the early 18th Dynasty visitor inscriptions in the 12th Dynasty tomb chapel of Antefiqer and Senet (TT 60).¹⁹³ The level of interaction with the royal precincts developed to a new dimension in the 18th Dynasty, most likely in context of the literate culture that invested in “gathering compendia of knowledge and models from the past.”¹⁹⁴ Yet, the royal precincts were not desacralized, implying that this reconceptualization or extension of their purpose operated *at the same time* along the lines known from the graffiti production in New Kingdom temples, where the presence of secondary epigraphy does not subvert the connotation of the temple setting,¹⁹⁵ and along with the earlier concept of a tomb chapel as a social place, which had been adopted since the Old Kingdom.

¹⁹⁰ See Scollon/Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 2003.

¹⁹¹ See M. Dolińska, *Temples at Deir el-Bahari in the New Kingdom*, in: B. Haring/A. Klug (eds), 6. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Funktion und Gebrauch altägyptischer Tempelräume, Leiden, 4.–7. September 2002, Wiesbaden 2007, 67–82.

¹⁹² Although in terms of the aesthetic of reception, images were purposefully conceived to guide the viewers, see Verbovsek, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 67, no. 2, 2011, 131–152; Verbovsek, in: Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, 2015, 141–154; but also Schulz, in: Neunert et al. (eds), *Bild: Ästhetik – Medium – Kommunikation*, 2014.

¹⁹³ See Ragazzoli, in: SAK 42, 2013, emphasising the “social creation” of a place.

¹⁹⁴ Ragazzoli, in: Ryholt/Barjamovic (eds), *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, 2016, 173.

¹⁹⁵ Frood, in: Ragavan (ed.), *Heaven on Earth*, 2013; and E. Frood, *Temple Lives: Devotion, Piety, and the Divine*, in: P. Giovetti/D. Picchi (eds), *Egypt: Millenary Splendour. The Leiden Collection in Bologna*, Milan 2016, 316–323, conceptualizing a biography of a temple; Salvador, in: Ullmann (ed.), 10. Ägyptologische

The portrait of graffiti culture as a vital part of the cultural transmission, social interactions, and an embodiment of the memory contract invites, however, another question: If the tomb chapels, and even pyramid precinct chapels, were so accessible, why aren't there, indeed, more graffiti in the vast ensemble of the private tomb chapels in Memphis and Thebes? Why did visitors not take more advantage of such rich iconographic environments? Or were they, as noted, selective on purpose? Precious pictorial goods must have been to the advantage of the tomb or chapel owner. Yet, other motivations also led visitors to the "empty" walls of Djoser's chapels, indicating that the owner's status (or other locally conditioned factors) were also important. Finally, our observation bias or incomplete record of ancient evidence may further complicate the picture.

Tempeltagung, 2016; and Salvador, in: Staring et al. (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion II*, 2022, in the latter contribution working explicitly and productively with the concept of socialising the temple space.

