

Graphic Variations in the Valley of the Kings

Case of the Annexe of Ramesses IV (KV2)

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Abstract. Most of 20th dynasty royal tombs from Valley of the Kings have not been properly finished, due to different reasons. The major consequence of this lack of time is that several parts of those tombs have been painted straight on the wall without being carved to give to the tomb a finished appearance. It gave to the painters a larger liberty to interpret the scribe's instructions written in the wall, and the short time remaining sometimes prompted painters to abandon their 'academic' style in favour of their 'personal' touch. The scribe's preliminary work is also mostly visible/readable under the painted signs. It gives us a wonderful opportunity to study the different stages of work in those tombs from preliminary work (which tells a lot about the way in which the layout of the texts has been designed) to final colouring (which is sometimes temporary but has become permanent). The value of this study lies in the fact that it is compared with the emic data available for these periods, with the aim of explaining who worked in these tombs, when and how, and why they were never completed.

Keywords: Valley of the Kings ; 20th dynasty ; palaeography ; Ramesses IV.

Ramesses IV reigned for a little less than eight years, from 1154 to 1148 BC. It is known that the construction of his tomb began more than a year after his accession to the throne, in particular because of the disturbances linked to the plot against him and his father Ramses III,¹ and that, perhaps to compensate for this delay and the life expectancy of the new king, who was already in his forties, the number of workers increased from 40 to 120.² We indeed have some documents from this period, mostly from the beginning of Ramesses IV reign relating Ramesses III burials, several strikes, late payments, works

¹ Hornung 1990: 23.

² Valbelle 1985: 197.

done elsewhere than in the Valley... The last document about this tomb is dated from the first year of Ramesses V, reporting some details about the burial of Ramesses IV³.

This tomb has three corridors, an antechamber and a burial chamber, extended by an annex (fig. 1). The annex has three small appendages (about 10m³) probably intended to accommodate funerary furniture and originally seemed to be closed if we rely on the traces of door leaves on the ceiling (pl. I) and the papyrus P. Turin cat. 1885. The particularity of this annex is that it is entirely (and only) painted, unlike the rest of the tomb, which is engraved and then painted. The main space of the annex has hardly any scenes, but only text from the Book of Caverns written in polychrome hieroglyphic columns.

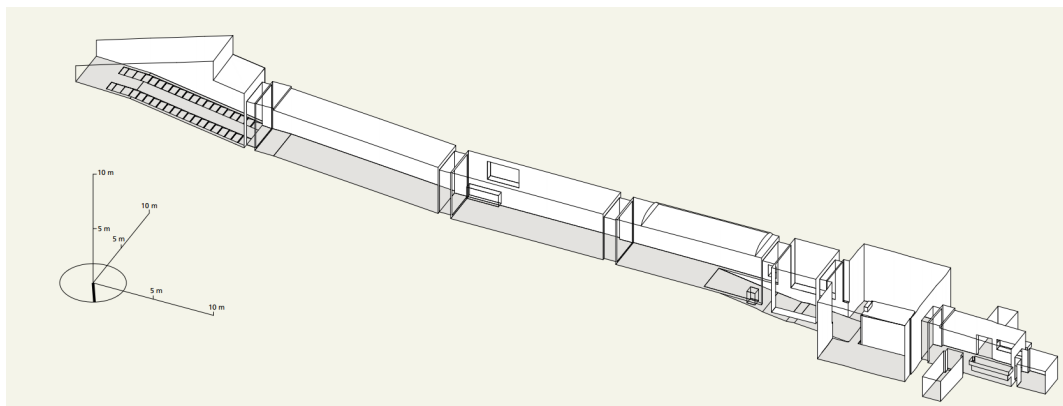


Fig. 1: Axonometric plan of KV2 © Theban Mapping Project

The main space of the annex has very few scenes, but only text from the Book of Caverns written in polychrome hieroglyphic columns. Two of the appendices contain mummiform representations of the king accompanied by his names (pl. II-III), while the third contains only representations of funerary furniture (and Drovetti's autograph, pl. IV). Each side of the annexe have also an alcove, on east side, with deities in shrines and offerings above. For the ceiling, it is a starry sky with the three names of Horus, Nesou-bity and Master of the Crowns of Ramses IV in its centre, painted in monumental hieroglyphics.

The text of the main space is taken from the first cave of the Book of Caverns. The two right and left walls begin at the very beginning of the first register of the first cavern. On the right wall (fig. 2), the text stops at the third register of the first cavern, while the text on the left wall (fig. 3) stops at the second register of the same cavern.⁴ This is explained by the fact that on the right wall, the columns seem to be interrupted by the appendix and

³ P. Turin cat. 2044 verso and P. Turin cat. 2002 verso. See Valbelle 1985: 36.

⁴ Werning 2011: II, 2–26.

the niche: the text at the beginning of each column does not correspond to the immediate continuation of the previous column. The latter seems to be repeated as if the columns ended at ground level, and this is easily verified by comparing the text on the left, which is continuous. The text is therefore more extensive on the right wall than on the left wall, but almost half of it is missing. This suggests that the cavities were not foreseen when the text on the right was written.

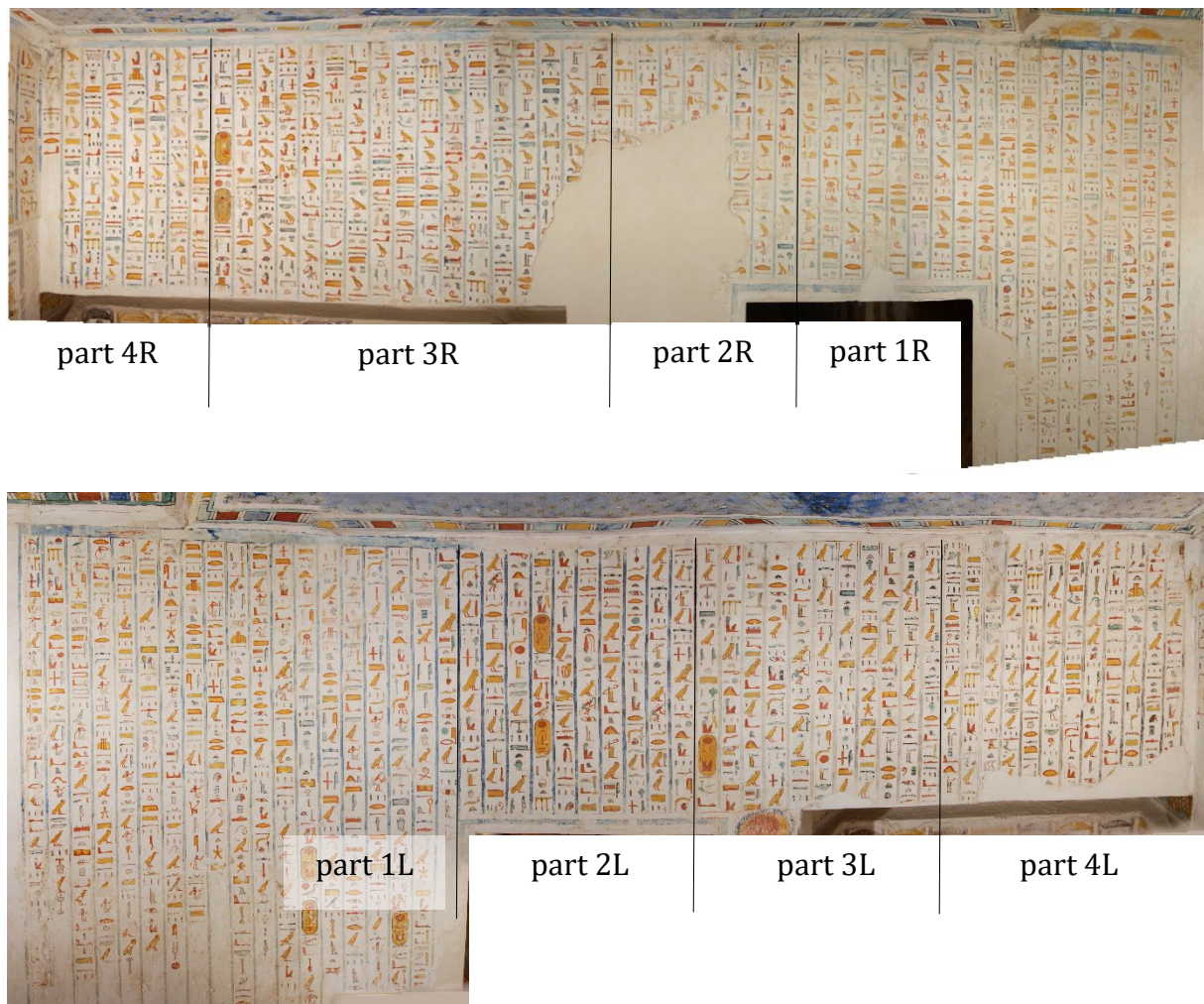


Fig. 2 & Fig. 3: right (above) and left (below) wall of the KV2's annexe © Theban Mapping Project

The objective of this study is to list the many palaeographic variants to derive a systemic analysis, with comparisons within each wall, and between the two walls. The advantage of this piece is that in most cases, the preparatory work is always visible, which makes it possible to distinguish the latter's work from the painter's work. As Dimitry Laboury and Cathleen Keller have demonstrated on several occasions⁵, the painting work is not simply a preliminary drawing by the scribe and then the application of pigments by the painter

⁵ Keller 2001; Laboury 2016.

following the scribe's instructions. If there were illiterate painters⁶, most of those in Deir el-Medina probably knew how to read and perhaps compose the texts on some walls themselves. For practical reasons, I use the term "scribes" here to refer to the authors of the preparatory drawing, and "painters" to refer to the people who put the signs in colours, knowing that they may be partly the same people. Also, to distinguish the right wall from the left wall, I've divided the first one in "parts xR" for right parts and "parts xL" for left parts.

1. Right wall

1.1. Scribes (fig. 4 to 7)

There is a first scribe from column 1 to 18:

- who paints A1  in the "classic" way (fig. 4).
- he also paints the A14A  in a classic way: crouched (two legs visible), feet in tension, but with an adze instead of an axe (fig. 5).

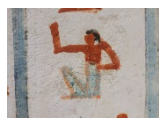


Fig. 4: A1, part 1R

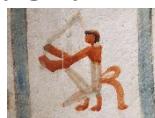


Fig. 5: A14A, part 1R

A second scribe intervenes from column 19 to column 53⁷:

- he systematically paints variants of A1B  instead of A1 , looking like U39K, but in the opposite direction of the other signs (fig. 6).
- the A14A  signs are still painted with an adze instead of the axe (fig. 7), but with few variations like arms and legs angle, thickness of the line.
- he wrote from column 19 to 24 the columns 12 to 17, but not in retrograde writing.



Fig. 6: U39K, part 3R



Fig. 7: A14A, part 2R

1.2. Painters of shapes

About painters of shapes, I counted two.

⁶ Laboury 2016: 381-383.

⁷ Columns 52 and 53 are painted on the back (east) wall, on the south side, following the columns on the right (south) wall.

The first covers the entire part of the first scribe, columns 1 to 18, then columns 37 to 43. The second covers columns 19 to 36, and 44 to 53.

Indeed, in the first part are, for example, the signs representing birds and snakes, most often with a red and/or black outline and black details on the body (fig. 8). However, from column 19 to column 26, these same signs have only a very slight or even non-existent outline, nor any detail (fig. 9). From column 27, these details and contours are again clearly present up to column 43 (fig. 10). From column 44 to 53 (the last one), these same features fade or disappear again for birds and the N14 ★ sign, as between columns 19 and 26 (fig. 11).



Fig. 8: part 1R

Fig. 9: part 2R

Fig. 10: part 3R

Fig. 11: part 4R

We can also note the sign D2 ☐ which is painted several times with a yellow background and red details (fig. 12), and once simply with a red background in the first part. It is found in the third part with a yellow background and black details, with sometimes a first detail in red under the black paint (fig. 13). It is also present once it is painted entirely red. In the second part, on the other hand, this sign is painted entirely in yellow without detail on two occasions (fig. 14). This sign is absent from the fourth part.



Fig. 12: part 1R

Fig. 13: part 3R

Fig. 14: part 2R

The N35 𐀓 signs are also clearly characterized. In the first and third parts, the black ink is clearly visible (fig. 15 and 16). The sign is painted with a frank and straight initial attack

followed by tight oblique dots connected to each other by a fluid movement of the brush slightly raised from the wall. In the second part, the N35  are drawn irregularly: either in spaced dots, or so erased that the sign can only be seen by its preliminary line (fig. 17). In the fourth part, they are as visible as those in the third part, but the points are narrower and have no curved movement (fig. 18).



Fig. 15: part 1R



Fig. 16: part 3R



Fig. 17: part 2R



Fig. 18: part 4R

The sign A1B  is painted in a rather similar way on the entire wall, in the manner of the sign U39K  (fig. 19). It can also be pointed out that the A1B  signs of the fourth part have all been painted yellow in their center, unlike the others which are just painted on the contours, in light to dark blue. Only the examples of columns 42 and 43 are painted black, without the feather on the "arm", the end of which is nevertheless curved.



Fig. 19: examples of U39K on right wall.

In the first and third parts, the A40 signs have a black beard, while those in the second and fourth parts have a beard that is either blue or left in a preliminary state. Finally, we can note an incident along the way in the fourth part: traces of black paint probably due to a brush falling against the wall.

2. Left wall

As far as the left wall is concerned, the different areas are less easily distinguishable.

2.1. Scribes

As for the scribes, it seems *a priori* that a first wrote the provisional text of columns 1 to 18, then a second would then have written the rest of the text (still provisional). The most

visible difference is the use of a variant of the U39K 𐎛 sign from column 19 onwards, as on the right wall. However, from columns 26 to 29, the scribe noted “classical” A1B 𐎛, without feather, more reminiscent of the hieratic shape of the A1 𐎛 (fig. 20).



Fig. 20: examples of A1B/U39K on left wall.

The main characteristics that distinguish the two scribes are:

- As mentioned above, the use of the classic A1 𐎛 sign from column 1 to 18, while the A1B 𐎛 and its variant U39K 𐎛 is used from column 19 to 54.⁸
- The first scribe painted the N3B 𐎛 sign as a classifier of the word *kkw*, while the second painted a variant of it three times without the second small jamb (fig. 21).
- As a classifier of the word *shd* (to illuminate), the first scribe uses the sign of the radiant solar disk N8 𐎛, while the second uses the sign N5 𐎛 (simple solar disk) (fig. 22).
- A14A 𐎛 sign is drawn in such a way by the first scribe that the axe is above and near the head of the figure, whose two legs are visible. On the other hand, the second scribe has traced the figure with his head in front of or far from the axe, in a crouching position (three times out of four), while the painter has painted the enemy in the same position as in the first columns, so that the provisional outline is very clearly visible (fig. 23).



Fig. 21: N3B, parts 1 & 2-3L



Fig. 22: N8/ N5, parts 1 & 2-3L



Fig. 23: A14A, parts 1 & 2L

2.2. Painters of shapes

⁸ Columns 53 and 54 are located on the back wall (east wall), north side, following the columns on the left (north) wall.

As for the painters, their exact number is uncertain, but I like to identify four parts. The first painted area runs from column 1 to column 18, the second from column 19 to 30, a third area includes columns 31 to 41, while the fourth occupies columns 42 to 54 (fig. 3).

Several elements of comparison allowed me to define these different areas, starting with the signs of the birds:

- In the first part, most of these signs were formed with a black line for their back outline before a thin layer of yellow paint was applied covering these same contours. It is often the case that the provisional route is seen in transparency. A red line was then applied to form their front outline, red details lined with black were sometimes added. In some cases, the painter has drawn the entire outline in red before adding a black line for the back outline. Some signs, especially in the lower part, seem to have had black details of which only sometimes minute traces remain. Overall, this painter used very little black paint in favor of a light blue, sometimes enhanced with dark blue, which characterizes this area (fig. 24).
- In the second part, yellow paint was applied first, followed by a red front outline and beak (although in some cases the front outline was omitted), and then black back outline and plumage. As far as these signs are concerned, the black paint is very faded over the entire area and can sometimes only be seen very closely (fig. 25).
- In the third part, the preparatory layout was first covered in yellow paint before receiving a black rear outline and a red front contour and legs. The wings and feathers were exclusively painted black, the beaks were most often painted red when they protrude from the silhouette, or systematically black for the G17  owls. The contours are also characterized by the sharpness of their colors (fig. 26).
- As for the fourth part, the signs have only few outlines. Yellow paint was applied first, then the very light black details were traced. The details differ from other areas (such as the G17  which has flat eyebrows and eyes), and in several cases the G43  wings protrude from the yellow silhouette (which does not happen in the previous areas). When the yellow paint was applied a little too coarsely, the painter added a red line to better define/refine the front outline (which then protrudes from the yellow paint). These signs are therefore noticeable by their almost absence of outline and the faded black details (fig. 27).



Fig. 24: part 1L



Fig. 25: part 2L



Fig. 26: part 3L



Fig. 27: part 4L

The A14A  sign also has strong differences about its painting:

- In the first part, the examples of this sign were painted following the model of the scribe, with the head at the lower left corner of the axe (without touching it). The loincloth, back knot and axe are painted light blue. The hair is painted black over the reddish-brown head (fig. 23, left image).
- In the second part, this sign is painted with the differences that the loincloth was first painted red (in the continuity of the torso) and then blue. Also, the hair is painted black around the head and not directly on the red paint, and its volume is accentuated to come into contact with the axe. This is true for the three cases in this area (fig. 23, right image).
- In the third part, this sign is also painted with the red and then blue loincloth, but the hair is like that of the specimens in the first part. On the other hand, the face is missing (fig. 28).
- There is no occurrence of this sign in the fourth part.

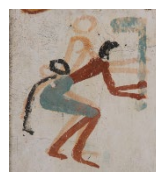


Fig. 28: A14A, part 3L

The star sign N14  has a few design variants. In the first area, it is first painted yellow (except for one that has been left blank), then in most cases framed in red whose outline forms an inverted "Y" to which the two lateral branches are attached. In the fourth part, the red box follows the outline of the whole, without intersecting the side branches.



Fig. 29: N14, part 1L (twice) and part 4L

Comparing the profile of Maat and her feather, we see that the royal cartouches of the second part were painted by the same person, and those of the first part by another (fig. 30).



Fig. 30: Maat in part 1L (left) and 2 (middle and right)

The W17A  sign is painted with a red top horizontal bar in parts 1L and 3L, while this bar is black with a red median duplicate in the part 4L (fig. 31). This sign is absent from the second part.



Fig. 31: W17A, part 1L, part 1L, part 3L and part 4L

Few isolated data:

- The X1  sign is painted blue in the first area, most often following the scribe's line, then black in the other areas without respecting the limits of the preliminary line.

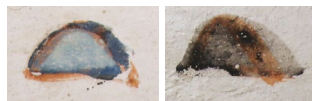


Fig. 32: X1, parts 1L and 2L

- The top half of the N9  sign is painted red in the first area, but it is left blank in the other areas (fig. 33).



Fig. 33: N9, parts 1L and 2L

Given the different elements of comparison mentioned above, it seems that parts 2L and 3L were painted by the same person(s). It appears that the different layers of superimposed paint did not mix, and therefore that the colouring was done in several stages, not purely sign by sign but colour by colour. This hypothesis is all the truer when an outline rectifies the yellow background of a sign (fig. 34). This suggests a team work in more or less this order: preliminary drawing of the “scribe” → application of the yellow paint → contours drawing, then black and red details → application of blue if necessary.



Fig. 34: Contours rectifications on left wall

What about differences and similarities between right and left walls?

Both walls have these common points:

- They have four distinct areas and seem to have been composed by two scribes each, using classic A1 sign from column 1 to 18/19 (parts 1R/1L), and then U39K variation to the end.
- They contain the same text.
- Dominance of a light blue colour on the first area (parts 1R/1L)

But differences appear:

- The A17A sign is written (and painted) with an adze on right wall, but with an axe on left wall. Also, those on right wall are all kneeled, while some on left wall stand leaning.
- U39K on left wall are in the same direction than the other signs (east), but on the opposite way on right wall (they look at west).

- On right wall, the columns are written as if the wall was uninterrupted, so nearly half of the text is missing. On left wall columns are written considering the appendice and alcove, so the text is continuous.

I think, to conclude, that the right wall has been composed first but the appendice and alcove have been made after the preliminary work (at least), so the left wall has been composed with the same text but continuously. There are at least two teams per wall working on four areas. As right and left walls have probably not been done at exact same time, it is possible that right and left teams are the same.

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Plates



Burial
chamber

Annexe

Entrance of the annexe, ceiling with door traces (©Zacharie Cochin)



A



B

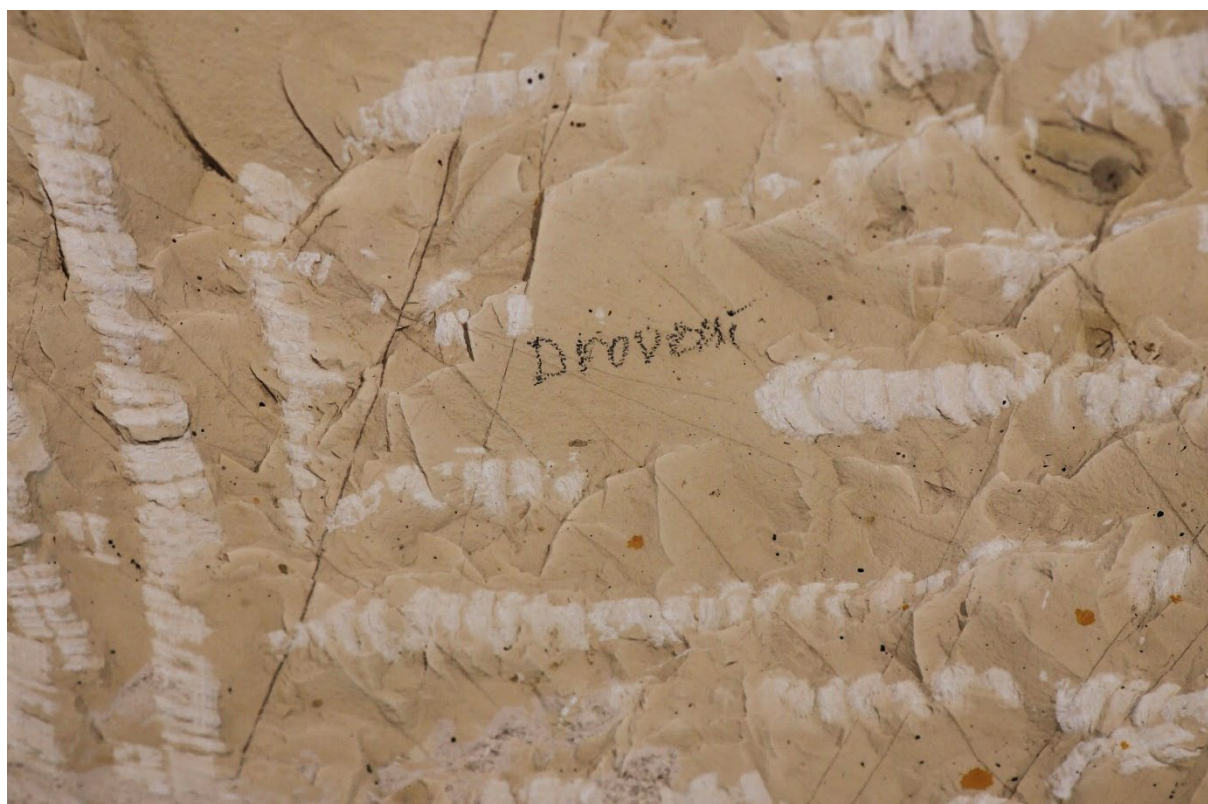
Left (A) and right (B) appendices of the annexe (©Zacharie Cochin)



Mumiform kings, right appendice (@Zacharie Cochin)



A



B

Painting of funerary furnitures (A), Drovetti's signature (B), middle appendice (©Zacharie Cochin)