Old Kingdom, New Perspectives

Egyptian Art and Archaeology

2750–2150 BC

edited by
Nigel Strudwick and Helen Strudwick
OLD KINGDOM, NEW PERSPECTIVES
Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750–2150 BC

edited by
Nigel Strudwick and Helen Strudwick

OXBOW BOOKS
Oxford and Oakville
Contents

Foreword
Timothy Potts v

Introduction
Nigel Strudwick and Helen Strudwick vii

1 Recent work in the tomb of Nebkaubor at Saqqara
Abdou el-Kerety 1

2 A new Old Kingdom rock-cut tomb from Abusir and its Abusir-Saqqara context
Miroslav Bártta 9

3 Mastaba core structure: new data from fourth dynasty elite tombs at Abu Rawash
Michel Baud and Eric Guerrier 22

4 The art of Egyptian hieroglyphs as seen by the Akhmim painters
V.G. Callender 33

5 Two cemeteries for one provincial capital? Deir el-Bersha and el-Sheikh Said in the fifteenth Upper Egyptian nome during the Old Kingdom
Marleen De Meyer 42

6 Blocks from the Unas causeway recorded in Černý’s notebooks at the Griffith Institute, Oxford
Andrés Diego Espinel 50

7 A spatial metaphor for chronology in the secondary cemeteries at Giza
May Farouk 71

8 The decorative programmes of the pyramid complexes of Khufu and Khafre at Giza
Laurel Flentye 77

9 Reading the Menkaure Triads: Part II (Multi-directionality)
Florence Dunn Friedman 93

10 The death of the Democratisation of the Afterlife
Harold M. Hays 115

11 A new specific tomb type in Abusir?
Jaromir Krejčí 131

12 An afterworld for Netjerykhet
Kamil O. Kuraszkiewicz 139
13 Re-examining the Khentkaues Town
Mark Lehner, Daniel Jones, Lisa Yeomans, Hanan Mahmoud and Kasia Olchowska 143

14 Searching for an undistorted template (digital epigraphy in action)
Jolana Malatkova 192

15 The ‘Reserve Heads’: some remarks on their function and meaning
Massimiliano Nuzzolo 200

16 The evidence of images: art and working techniques in the mastaba of Mereruka
Gabriele Pieke 216

17 The concept of hprr in Old Kingdom religious texts
Joanna Popielska-Grzybowska 229

18 Twisted Kilts: variations in aspective representation in Old Kingdom mastaba chapels
Ann Macy Roth 234

19 And where are the viscera...? Reassessing the function of Old Kingdom canopic recesses and pits
Teodozja I. Rzeuska 244

20 Fixed rules or personal choice? On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs
Nico Staring 256

21 Village, town and barracks: a fourth dynasty settlement at Heit el-Ghurab, Giza
Ana Tavares 270

22 An Old Kingdom bakery at Sheikh Said South: preliminary report on the pottery corpus
Stefanie Vereecken 278

23 Why was the Fifth Dynasty cemetery founded at Abusir?
Miroslav Verner and Vladimír Brůna 286

24 The economic connection between the royal cult in the pyramid temples and the sun temples in Abusir
Hana Vymazalová 295

25 The Ancient Egypt Research Associates settlement site at Giza: the Old Kingdom ceramic distribution
Anna Wodzińska 304

26 zīš wḏ scenes of the Old Kingdom revisited
Alexandra Woods 314
Foreword

There can be no academic subject for which the general public has such an inexhaustible appetite as Egyptology, and no period more so than the age of the pyramids. But the popular writings in this area are notoriously variable. While there is no shortage of reliable and accessible surveys by leading scholars in the field, neither does one have to look far on book lists to find an abundance of 'pyramidology' and other nonsense which also finds a wide audience. It was therefore a very welcome opportunity that arose when Helen Strudwick proposed that the 2009 Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology conference be held at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge so as to coincide with our annual Glanville Lecture on Egyptology, thus bringing the fruits of recent excavation and research by leading scholars to a wide general audience. The resulting event, held on 20-23 May 2009, consisted of a three-day meeting of specialist researchers, followed by a day of talks by some of the foremost experts in the Old Kingdom, to which the public was also invited, all culminating that evening in the Glanville Lecture delivered by Dr Jaromir Malek on 'A city on the move: Egypt's capital in the Old Kingdom'. This volume publishes all but three of the twenty-seven papers presented at the conference, plus one additional offering.

The Fitzwilliam Museum is fortunate to have one of the most important collections of Egyptian antiquities in the UK and thus provides a very appropriate setting for the OKAA conference. The earliest Egyptian object to arrive—a very fine Third Intermediate Period coffin set—was given in 1822, only six years after the bequest of Viscount Fitzwilliam created the museum, and a quarter century before the building erected to house its collections first opened its doors. Since then the Museum's Egyptian collection has grown to nearly 17,000 objects, of which some one thousand are on display. The Egyptian galleries were refurbished in 2006 and remain the most popular in the museum.

Stephen Glanville, after whom the lecture is named, was Professor of Egyptology at Cambridge (1946–1956), as well as being Chairman of the Fitzwilliam's Syndicate and Honorary Keeper of Antiquities. Glanville saw it as essential that the Museum's Egyptian collections were actively used in teaching—as is still the case today—and that they continue to grow through acquisition. His commitment to engaging the public in the fascinating discoveries of professional Egyptologists has been continued by the Museum by the holding of a lecture bearing his name since 1977. We were delighted that Jaromir Malek accepted the invitation to give the 2009 lecture; and that so many distinguished scholars of Old Kingdom Egypt were able to attend the conference with which it was paired.

Special thanks are due to Helen Strudwick, at the time Senior Assistant Keeper, Antiquities, and Nigel Strudwick, the organisers of the conference, who have also edited the papers published here.

Timothy Potts
Director
The Fitzwilliam Museum
Cambridge
Introduction

This volume presents twenty-five of the twenty-seven papers presented at the 2009 Conference Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology, generously hosted by the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. The history of these Old Kingdom meetings was admirably summarised by Miroslav Bárta in his Foreword to the proceedings of the 2004 conference, held in Prague, and it would be superfluous to repeat it here. The contents of the present volume show the wide range of subjects which this research group now embraces, from the Pyramid Texts through site reports, from the analysis of statue orientation to attempts to study the spatial arrangement of Old Kingdom cemeteries. Some of the papers are substantially the same as those presented at the meeting, but the editors have encouraged authors, where they feel it is necessary, to expand upon their ideas and to take them beyond the limited range of material which can be presented in a twenty-minute talk. One further paper which could not be presented at the conference is also included.

We were delighted to welcome to Cambridge colleagues from all over the Egyptological world, and they fairly represent where the Old Kingdom is studied most. We are delighted to be able to include the paper from Abdou el-Kerety (better known to his friends and colleagues as Hatem); visa problems meant that he was regrettably unable to be present at the conference, despite our best efforts with the UK authorities, but his contribution was read and appreciated in his absence. The paper of Gabriele Pieke could not be presented at the conference but we are happy to be able to include it. The longest paper presented here is by Mark Lehner and his co-authors and is a report on progress of his excavations at Giza; this has turned into a substantial publication and analysis and it is a great pleasure to be able to include it in this volume.

The final day of the conference was open to the public, focusing more particularly on papers relating to the archaeology and monuments of the Memphite region. This, and indeed the conference as a whole, formed a precursor to the thirty-third Stephen Glanville Memorial Lecture. This annual event, hosted by the Fitzwilliam Museum, has been an important fixture in the Cambridge and UK Egyptological calendar since 1977. In 2009, the Lecture was given by Dr Jaromir Malek on the subject 'A city on the move: Egypt's capital in the Old Kingdom'.

The editors would like to thank many persons without whose help and assistance the 2009 Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology meeting could not have taken place. First and foremost, we are deeply indebted to Dr Timothy Potts and all the staff of the Fitzwilliam Museum for enabling the events to take place so successfully, and for ensuring the efficient operation of everything from computer projectors through to the teas and coffees which sustained us. We also thank our colleagues whose enlightening papers and discussion made the meeting the success it was, and we acknowledge their efforts in enabling the completion of the manuscript just over two years since the meeting.

We are delighted to acknowledge the help and assistance offered by Oxbow Books in taking this publication into their archaeological series. To our editor, Clare Litt, and the head of production, Val Lamb, go our profound thanks for their advice and support.

Nigel Strudwick
Helen Strudwick
Fixed rules or personal choice?
On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs

Nico Staring

The tombs built for the elite during Egypt’s so-called pyramid age exhibit a wide variety of decorative programmes within their accessible parts of their superstructures. These so-called mastaba tombs, which in fact incorporate various tomb types, were commissioned by members of the elite section of the strictly hierarchically Old Kingdom society. The aim of the present paper is to contextualise the elite tomb’s decoration within its architectural setting, thereby analysing the diachronic development and local variations through the representational content of a selected number of iconographic themes. This study is, however, not an attempt to analyse the meaning, or changing meaning, of the tomb’s decoration. Rather than studying isolated, individual daily life scenes, it is their coherency, together with a consideration of other architectural elements, which is the focus of the present study. Emphasis is laid on the arrangement of iconographic themes within the context of the tomb’s superstructure. The key figure in this analysis is the person of the tomb owner and his responsibility as composer of the decoration in his own funerary monument. Whether the composition and arrangement of the iconographic programmes followed more or less fixed rules (or rather conventions), or whether these were susceptible to a certain degree of personal choice (preference) will be the subject of the discussion below.

Fixed rules versus personal choice: theory and practice

Let us first consider the tomb owner’s motive and (theoretical) capacity to distinguish his or her tomb from that of any other individual from the same hierarchical group, in our case the elite segment of Old Kingdom society. Bolshakov already noticed the heterogeneous character of elite tombs, when stating that ‘Every Egyptian tomb is unique as concerns its architecture and decoration, and unique is its decoration as regards the selection of represented topics, with a consideration of other architectural elements, which is the focus of the present study’. Emphasis is laid on the arrangement of iconographic themes within the context of the tomb’s superstructure. The key figure in this analysis is the person of the tomb owner and his responsibility as composer of the decoration in his own funerary monument. Whether the composition and arrangement of the iconographic programmes followed more or less fixed rules (or rather conventions), or whether these were susceptible to a certain degree of personal choice (preference) will be the subject of the discussion below.

Such an holistic approach towards studying the tomb as one coherent unit is in accordance with the approach utilised by Vischak. Her tomb-as-object approach considers the tomb as a single, integrated unit, within which the formal and functional interdependence of the elements within this structure are emphasised. D. Vischak, ‘Common ground between pyramid texts and Old Kingdom tomb design: the case of Ankhmahor’, JARCE 40 (2003), 133–134. The elite population should, however, certainly not be considered a homogeneous entity, but rather stratified, as was Egyptian society as a whole. Within the scope of the present research, no further subdivision is attempted.
their treatment and their arrangement. To Van Walsem, this 'astounding variation' raised the question of individual 'pluriformity' behind and in relation to the collective 'uniformity' of the overall collection of tombs in the various elite cemeteries of the Memphite region. Here, according to Van Walsem, we touch upon a sharply contrasting pair of concepts as characteristics of ancient Egyptian culture, that is, the individual versus the collective, or society. The elite tomb is the result of various steps of realisation. Decoration represents only one such step. The others concern the location and their construction, externally as well as internally. The rationale behind these steps of realisation is not always made explicit by the data at our disposal. We are confronted only with the end result, or at least with what is left of it. Thus, we are trying to reconstruct ancient thought processes through highly incomplete data, unaware even of the degree to which these data are incomplete. In any case, the potential elaborateness of the decoration of an individual's tomb chapel was constrained quite simply by the overall available wall surface. This applies principally to the interior walls. Thus, the larger the chapel in terms of rooms and consequently wall surface, the more possibilities existed for variation in relation to the execution of the iconographic programme. With the link between tomb size and the potential space available for the application of decoration, we necessarily and inevitably arrive at the discussion of the apparent direct relationship between tomb size and rank. Concurrently, this discussion relates to the issue of status and wealth of the tomb owner in connection to the degree of appropriation of wealth for the construction of an individual's tomb. What parameters determined the size of a tomb? According to Strudwick, the appropriation of a person's wealth for the construction of a tomb was a personal choice. Direct textual evidence appears to confirm the hypothesis that the tomb owner himself, depending on his own wealth, was responsible for the execution of his tomb, thus delimiting the potential size of his funerary chapel. That an official was nevertheless restricted in his freedom to choose the dimensions of his tomb (that is, delimiting its maximum size) is proposed by Alexanian, who argues that the size of a tomb was regulated officially, with the king eventually assuming the responsibility of drafting a royal decree. Similarly, Chauvet argues that the absence of ' [...] some form of central royal institution overseeing the organization of the Memphite necropolis' is something hard to imagine, because of the ' [...] nature and the central role of the administration in the Old Kingdom society [...]'. Nevertheless, she concludes that, based on inscriptive evidence hinting at the royal involvement in private tomb building, the central administration, not necessarily the king in person, was rarely involved directly in private tomb building. Tomb size, however, is not the only indicator of the social status of a tomb owner, nor the only indicator of the costs of its construction. Traditionally, several key indicators for the tomb owner's status have been accepted, including the position of the tomb in the cemetery, the total area the tomb occupied, its architectural layout, decoration, equipment, and the burial ceremony. Setting aside the

9 ibid, 5.
10 The exterior walls are not, except for the facade near and around the entrance doorway, as a rule employed for the application of decoration.
11 A direct relation between tomb size and wealth has been argued by N. Kanawati, *The Egyptian administration in the Old Kingdom: evidence on its economic decline* (Warminster 1977). He analysed the trend in the wealth of Old Kingdom officials on the principle that the costliness of their tombs reflects their wealth (ibid, 1). This presupposes a one-to-one relation between wealth and tomb size. According to Kanawati, it was the official himself who paid for the construction of the tomb, based on two inscriptions in which the tomb owner states that he paid the artisans (Meru-ka and Remnu-ka called Imy).
13 V. Chauvet, 'Royal involvement in the construction of private tombs in the late Old Kingdom', in J.-C. Goyon and C. Cardin (eds), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists = Actes du neuvième Congrès international des égyptologues, Grenoble 6–12 September 2004* (OLA 150: Leuven 2007), 1, 313–321. In order to study royal involvement in private tomb construction during the Old Kingdom, Chauvet analysed documents mentioning or referring to their construction. She inventoried 150 such statements, dating to the fifth and sixth dynasties. Only seventeen documents indicate the presence of royal involvement. She concludes that the central administration (not necessarily the king in person) was rarely involved directly in private tomb building (ibid, 315). However unusual the provision of a complete tomb to an official might be, there is inscriptive evidence for such provisions (e.g. Mer- khu/Debeh; Kanawati, *Administration, 2*). Building materials (e.g. Weni/Djaw; Kanawati, *Administration, 2*), and particularly sarcophagi (e.g. Hetep-her-akhti; H.T. Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-Her-Akhti: study on an Egyptian tomb chapel in the Museum of Antiquities Leiden* (Leiden 1943), 35) are more commonly cited as gifts from the king.
15 Chauvet, in Goyon and Cardin (eds), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists, 315*.
16 ibid.
17 Alexanian, in Bárra (ed.), *Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology, 1*. 
question of a direct correlation between these indicators and social status, our understanding of several of these indicators themselves is rather poor. The social status of an elite member of Old Kingdom society might nevertheless have implications towards certain expectancies regarding tomb size and/or execution. This is well illustrated in the autobiography of Hesi, who was vizier during the reign of Teti and who constructed his tomb near the pyramid of that king in Saqqara. The tomb he 'ordered' consisted of only a single room, cruciform chapel. This is obviously much smaller than one might expect from a person of his stature and indeed exceptionally modest when compared with his near-contemporaries Kagemni and Mereruka. Hesi seems to have been aware of this discrepancy between tomb size and social position when he states that he 'caused that a single chamber be made' in his tomb, although he was 'capable of constructing it in multiple chambers'. For whatever reason this passage was included by Hesi in his tomb chapel, and whether he indeed did have the choice to have a larger tomb constructed, either financially or in accordance with his rank and social status, it nevertheless demonstrates a theoretical self-determination.

In her article, Alexanian tempers this apparent direct correlation, practiced in Egyptology by, for example, A. M. Roth, A Cemetery of Palace Attendants (Giza Mastabas 6; Boston 1995), 50. Adopted from Post-Processual and Contextual Archaeology, social status is said to be represented in a tomb with a symbolic code. In order for this symbolic code to be understood, it is recommended, according to Alexanian, that Egyptian texts, which can provide an insight view of Old Kingdom society, are studied.

For example, the original burial equipment is rarely found intact. The burial ceremony is even less well known. For a study of the activities in the mastaba tomb during and after the burial ceremony, see N. Alexanian, 'Ritualrelökte am Mastabagräbern des Alten Reiches', in H. Gulsch and D. Polz (eds), Stationen. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Ägyptens. Rainer Stadelmann Gewidmet (Mainz 1998), 3–22.


20 Silverman, JARCE 37 (2000), 13. Several reasons could be put forward for Hesi's construction of such a modest tomb. Alexanian (in Bärta (ed.), The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology, 6) suggested motives such as insufficient available space in that part of the cemetery, the building (and finishing) of the tomb before his promotion to vizier, or the wish to construct his tomb in close proximity to the pyramid of the king under whom he served. The private cemetery surrounding the complex of Teti had been designed in conjunction with his pyramid. Viziers predating Hesi had taken the spaces closest to the pyramid (Chauvet, in Goyon and Cardin (eds), Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists, 319), which thus left Hesi with the choice of building a large tomb a distance away or a smaller tomb at a more prominent plot, where there was little space for a large tomb. He apparently chose the latter option.

Since the tomb owner started building the tomb during his or her lifetime, the tomb, with its architecture, equipment, decoration and texts, according to Alexanian, presented an ideal place for its owner's self-representation. The tomb functions as a medium to display the status of the owner during his lifetime. After death, it commemorates the status achieved by the deceased tomb owner. The tomb had thus evolved from its primary raison d'etre of simply marking a burial into an integrated monument, the goal of which was both functional and expressive, emphasizing its communicative character. Van Walsem even considers the tomb and its decoration programme as a kind of 'portraiture' of its owner, expressing his individuality. The tomb owner thus potentially appears to have had plenty of possibilities to personalise his tomb. The question is, as Van Walsem argues, whether the steps in the realisation of a tomb actually do reflect the choices made by the tomb owner, or whether these, to speak in Baines' words, are led by 'rules of decorum'. The wide variety of tomb construction, primarily internal, and the unique arrangement and composition of the iconographic programmes displayed by the available tombs, seem to imply that the opportunities for personal choice regarding the composition of the decorative programme was infinite. Such a view contrasts with the observation that only a restricted number of themes (of daily life scenes) can be identified. This seems to imply that personal choice was rather restricted, which in turn suggests the existence of certain rules to which the composer (either the tomb owner or the artist executing the design) had to conform. Baines states that the essential form of display for the early elite was architecture and only much later was this supplemented with representation or writing, that is, with an iconographic programme. The subject matter of the private and royal sphere differ considerably, with the latter stressing a degree of exclusivity.

21 Alexanian, in Bärta (ed.), The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology, 1–2.

22 Van Walsem, Iconography, 2.


25 J. Baines, 'Restricted knowledge, hierarchy, and decorum: modern perceptions and ancient institutions', JARCE 27 (1990), 17–21. Baines (op. cit., 20) refers to (the rules of) decorum as '[... a set of rules and practices defining what may be represented pictorially with captions, displayed, and written down, in which context and in what form'.


27 Baines, Antiquity 63 (1989), 476. The thematic content of the iconographic programmes of private tombs and royal funerary complexes differ considerably. Compare for example A. Cieś, Relief decoration in the royal funerary complexes of the Old Kingdom. Studies in the development, scene content and iconography (PhD Thesis; Warsaw
Fixed rules or personal choice? On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs

Table 1: Overview of studied data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Desert hunt</th>
<th>Offering procession</th>
<th>Care for desert cattle</th>
<th>Slaughtering</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tombs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registers</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saqqara</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahshur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynasty 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynasty 5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynasty 5/6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynasty 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals of course include some tombs which contain more than one of these scene types.

A small selection of this larger potential. Some themes were present right from the start of the fourth dynasty, others were introduced later, some ceased to be included while others reappeared again at later stages. Allowing for 426 years of Old Kingdom elite tomb building, which has resulted in 337 identified tombs, the number of themes and sub-themes appears to be rather small. Only one theme is certainly ubiquitous: the tomb owner seated behind an offering table. This scene was considered necessary for his well-being in the afterlife, and thus appears to have been the only certain prerequisite for a sound decorative programme. It seems that any of the other themes could be included or excluded.

University 2003), 152–271, and R. Walsem, ‘Sense and Sensibility. On the analysis and interpretation of the iconography programmes of four Old Kingdom elite tombs’, IBAES 6 (2006), Appendix 2. The thematic subdivision of the iconography programmes of either sphere is, however, largely dependent on the scholar making the subdivision. Compare, for example, the subdivision of the iconographic programmes of Memphite Old Kingdom elite tombs produced by Müller (L. Müller, ‘Die Ausgestaltung der Kultkammern in den Gräbern des Alten Reiches in Giza und Saqqara’, FaB 16 (1974), 79–96), and Harpur [Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom: studies in orientation and scene content (London 1987) 175], and Van Walsem (IBAES 6 (2006), Appendix 2).


29 Such a development is the subject of Harpur’s 1987 study, referred to by the author as a ‘[...] practical study of the developments and innovations which have altered the composition of scenes [...]’. Harpur, Decoration, 1.

30 For the present paper, the chronology of E. Hornung, R. Krauss and D.A. Warburton (eds), Ancient Egyptian chronology (Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1. The Near and Middle East 83; Leiden 2006), 490–491, has been applied.

31 This is the number of tombs identified and entered into the mastaba database of the Leiden Mastaba Project (Van Walsem, MastaBase). This amount does not necessarily equal the number of all elite tombs ever constructed during this time frame. The total number of tombs constructed during the Old Kingdom and the number thereof which are (fully) published is separated by a gap of unknown proportions. This discrepancy between original number and currently identified tombs has been illustrated appositely by Van Walsem, Iconography, 44, scheme A.
excluded according to the will of whoever was responsible for the tomb’s execution.

Data and research methodology

Selected (sub-)themes

The vast quantity of available data (recorded iconographic scenes) renders an all-encompassing study impossible. For the purpose of the present study, a sample of four sub-themes has been extracted from this larger collection. The selection is based on the depiction of desert cattle as their main subject: desert hunt, offering procession, slaughtering and care for desert cattle (Table 1). Through a detailed analysis of these scenes, the extent to which iconographic themes in general were liable to fixed rules, regarding their composition and arrangement, will be assessed. Although the selection represents only 2.3% of the total available sub-themes (172) attested in Memphite Old Kingdom elite tombs, the relatively modest size of the dataset does not detract from its representative nature. The data derive from a fixed dataset, which encompasses a substantial part of the published elite tombs, a wide time span covering the total length of the Old Kingdom, and a distribution over all the cemeteries of the Memphite region.

Dataset: quantitative versus qualitative

For the present study, each single scene is analysed quantitatively on two levels. The first level of analysis looks at the context of the scene or theme within the larger iconographic programme. This larger programme is likewise considered within the spatial context of the tomb’s structure. In addition to this contextualising approach, the representational content of each scene is analysed. The meaning or message that is integrated in these representations – the qualitative aspects – will not be examined. Only the objectively observable and quantitatively researchable content will be taken into consideration.

External aspects

The external aspects refer to the arrangement of scenes in the total iconographic programme of a tomb, or collection of tombs, and an understanding of a scene’s location within the architectural unity of the tomb’s superstructure. These define the place of a certain scene or theme within the tomb’s architectural context. As noted above, we do not yet clearly understand the inter-dependability of all factors that influence the eventual establishment, composition and design of the iconographic programme. It should also be stressed that the aspects selected for the present research do not necessarily include all the factors that were influential on their inclusion/exclusion and distribution within the tomb chapel. With these limitations in mind, several external aspects have been identified and analysed. These include the relative tomb size, distribution of scenes over the tomb’s architectural features, their position on walls (including relative height and physical orientation), and the mutual coherence of scenes. Each of these aspects has been surveyed and analysed for every single scene. The outcome eventually describes the sub-theme’s disposition within the architectural unity of the tomb chapel. An outcome that inclines towards consistency, either with regard to orientation, connection with certain space unities, architectural elements and so on, might present an indication on the existence of certain ‘rules’. On the other hand, randomness repudiates any correlation and therefore might indicate a rather freer, individual interpretation by the tomb owner regarding the inclusion or exclusion of themes, composition and disposition of the iconographic programme.

Relative tomb size

For the purpose of the present study, chapels encountered in the selection of tombs are divided into four main types. Classification is according to the relative size measured through the number of rooms represented: single room;
Fixed rules or personal choice? On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs

Müller, Attendants, the larger tomb complexes. On the pillared court, Bolshakov (A. O. 13-15. The purpose of this division is twofold: to pursue an analysis of the relation between tomb size and incidence of a certain scene, and to analyse the scene’s exact position within the architectural context through its arrangement over different architectural elements.

Architectural features
Following the division of tombs according to their relative size, measured by means of the number of internal rooms, the next step is to establish the possible locations for the application of decoration in order to examine the complex correspondence between architectural elements and tomb decoration. A further refinement of these features, such as attributing functions to the rooms, is possible, but has not been pursued here. The present research mainly concerns 'rock-cut chapels decorated in more than one room' with some sub-divisions (Reisner, Giza Necropolis I, 191-218). Its present use also includes Reisner types (2), (3) and (5), differentiating, for example, between interior and exterior stone chapels. Harpur in her classification divided the L-shaped tombs according to the number of false doors in each (Harpur, Decoration, 63).

40 The type is described by Reisner as the two niched chapels of type (4a) (Reisner, Giza Necropolis I, 214-218). Its present use also includes Reisner types (2), (3) and (5), differentiating, for example, between interior and exterior stone chapels. Harpur in her classification divided the L-shaped tombs according to the number of false doors in each (Harpur, Decoration, 63).

41 Including Reisner type (5) Rock-cut chapels at Giza, with some sub-divisions (Reisner, Giza Necropolis I, 219-247). Harpur makes no distinction between double-room and multi-room, although she includes 'rock-cut chapels decorated in more than one room' with the latter (Harpur, Decoration, 104). Some tombs present a secondary reformation from L-shaped into double roomed, where one finds an artificial dividing wall between the entrance chamber and the chapel proper, built up of limestone blocks. The reorientation and alteration of the original plan of mastaba chapels is commonly observed in the Giza West Field Cemetery. See for example A. M. Roth, Palace Attendants, 13-15.

42 Corresponding to, for example, Reisner's complex chapels of type (12) (Reisner, Giza Necropolis I, 288-291).

43 Only the superstructures of tombs have been taken into consideration. The subterranean structure, which initially consisted of the plain burial chamber, received decoration only in the course of the later Old Kingdom (sixth dynasty). The subject matter of the decoration is very distinct from that in the superstructure. The superstructure presents the accessible part of the chapel, not only for priests carrying out rituals for the cult of the deceased, but also for family members and other visitors. The burial chamber, on the other hand, was at no point accessible. Since the superstructure thus exclusively had a communicative function, only this part is taken into consideration for the present research.

44 There is still debate on the functions of different rooms within the larger tomb complexes. On the pillared court, Bolshakov (A. O. differentiates between cult chapel (the room where the false door is located) and other rooms. Since the cult chapel is the focus for offerings made for the deceased tomb owner, and is where the false door served as a means to communicate directly to the burial chamber, the room served as the structure’s most important spatial unit. The dispensability of all rooms except for the cult chapel has already been demonstrated in the example of Hesi. Thus, one could presume that this restricted space was reserved for a core group of scenes, displaying the most important iconographic themes. The architectural elements selected for this research furthermore include the facade, entrance portico, long corridor, pillared court and doorway(s).

Internal aspects
The internal aspects relate to the dynamics within the scene’s representation (Fig. 1). The aim of the analysis is to arrive at an indication as to what extent the compositional execution of iconographic themes was susceptible to fixed rules. The analysis focuses on what is represented, how it is represented, how many times and in what combinations. In order to answer these questions objectively, the available data are analysed quantitatively.

The representational content of scenes appears to have been well defined during the period under consideration. Scenes of daily life were not attestations of unique events. These could rather be characterised as displaying generic actions. According to Müller, generic actions could be ordered into thematic cycles. The composition of thematic cycles is awkward, since these have hardly been attested...
in their entirety.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, they do not appear in a canonical sequence: their distribution is rather free. The fact that we are dealing with generic representations, implying restricted possibilities for variation, contrasts sharply with the actual data at our disposal. Indeed no two scenes are exactly identical, suggesting room for (personal) variation. Were there, nevertheless, basic requirements and/or possible 'obligatory' or indispensable features to which a scene of a certain theme had to conform? And to what extent could the artist or tomb owner personalise the theme, distinguish his or her representations from other examples without losing the (ascribed) value of the generic theme? Despite belonging to the same sub-theme, scenes can differ widely in their representational content. One is confronted with the choices made by the artist when executing a scene. This area of research is thus concerned with the (in)consistency in the depiction of scenes, analysed systematically in their representational content. The outcome might be indicative of the degree of standardisation regarding the representations of certain activities or themes. Furthermore, one could question whether there is a development (enlargement vs reduction) observable through time. These questions all relate to the awareness of the complexity of these internal features. A study of their (in)(ter)dependency and (in)consistency of inclusion/exclusion is being pursued.

\textit{Contextualising tomb decoration: the architectural setting}

The study of the relationship between iconographic programme and tomb architecture reveals preferences for

\begin{tabular}{c}
\textsuperscript{49} Müller even wonders whether the Egyptians (patrons and artists) conceived of canonically established sequences of actions at all (in Zaccone G. M., and T. R. di Netro (eds), \textit{Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egitologia Atti II}, 339). \\
\textsuperscript{51} Van Walsem, \textit{MastaBase}.
\end{tabular}
Fixed rules or personal choice? On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs

Table 2: Relation tomb type : architectural elements for 'slaughtering of desert cattle'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural Elements</th>
<th>Cruciform</th>
<th>L-shaped</th>
<th>Double room</th>
<th>Multi room</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cult chapel</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Distribution of all themes over architectural elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural Elements</th>
<th>Desert hunt</th>
<th>Offering procession</th>
<th>Care for desert cattle</th>
<th>Slaughtering desert cattle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facade</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance portico</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doorway</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>16.89%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long corridor</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columned court</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cult chapel</td>
<td>43.75%</td>
<td>57.43%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>91.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other room</td>
<td>43.75%</td>
<td>17.56%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.70%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

complexes, it would also not be included outside the cult chapel, even though wall surface would have been largely available. Both this preference and the scene's exclusiveness indicate that the theme could only be represented within a limited architectural setting, in this case only in a single specific spatial unit.

Based on four themes only (Table 3) it is difficult to decide whether the restricted choice of location of these themes is due to certain connotations of the theme relating it exclusively to this spatial unit (as in the case of slaughtering of desert cattle restricted to the cult chapel). It is even more difficult to determine whether this close correlation is attributable to the existence of certain 'rules'. It does seem, however, that when one theme was included in the decorative programme, other themes were necessarily excluded. This is certainly true for the slaughtering of desert cattle; occurrences of this theme outside the cult chapel are almost nil. When other themes were chosen to decorate the cult chapel, the theme 'slaughtering of desert cattle' initially had to be excluded, since there was simply no more available

wall space. This necessarily resulted in its exclusion from the complete tomb, perhaps because the theme would lose its cultic or symbolic meaning when applied elsewhere. The tomb owner's personal choice is thus evidenced in the selection of themes included into the overall tomb programme. This choice is less evident in the location he allocated for that particular theme. Some themes seem to have had (a) specific location(s) where they could be applied. The selection of one particular theme, therefore, could result in the necessary exclusion of another, not only from that locality, but indeed from the complete iconographic programme. There are however also themes that were applicable over a multitude of locations, such as 'offering procession of desert cattle' (Table 3). Such themes appear not to have been confined to one particular spatial unit, although Table 3 indicates the existence of preferences. It should be noted that the themes under consideration already present an indication of personal choice, since only a limited number of tomb owners included these themes in their iconographic programmes in the first place. Second, no two tombs exhibit the same architectural form or construction, which also suggests there were no allusions to a strict, well defined, and eventually predetermined concoction and distribution of this programme.

The same conclusions are arrived at in relation to the distribution of themes over walls and their orientation. The slaughtering of desert cattle, for example, in 92% of all cases had been placed on the lower part of a wall. Such a high number clearly indicates a strong preference for its use at this location. When addressing the same theme's

52 Only in one tomb is the 'slaughtering of desert cattle' scene found outside the cult chapel. In the tomb of Mehu (Saqara, sixth dynasty), two such scenes are found in the antechamber ('Mittelraum') to the cult chapel; H. Altenmüller, Die Wanddarstellungen im Grab des Mehu in Saqqara (AV 42; Mainz am Rhein 1998), 156–162, fig. 12, pl. 48–51. Moreover, the chapel actually contains three separate scenes of the slaughtering of desert cattle; Altenmüller, Grab des Mehu, 193–198, fig. 19, pl. 72–74. Thus the tomb of Mehu is not completely deviant. If the scene was selected to be part of a tomb's iconographic programme, it was at least applied in the cult chapel. Mehu opted for a more elaborate execution of the scene and, perhaps due to the restricted availability of wall surface, he chose the room next door for a further two scenes.

53 Staring, in Gashe and Finch (eds), Current Research in Egyptology 2008, fig. 6.
Table 4: Occupations distinguished of human figures attested in ‘slaughtering of desert cattle’ scenes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Maidum</th>
<th>Giza</th>
<th>Saqqara</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bringing animal to slaughtering area</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharpening knife</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing vessel / bowl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tying animal’s legs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasping animal’s leg</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting off (fore)leg</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decapitating animal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing animal’s heart</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying away choice cuts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variation versus uniformity: an analysis of internal aspects

Since Giza and Saqqara contributed the majority of data to the present research, the forthcoming analysis mainly concentrates on both these two cemetery sites. It is also between these sites that prolific (diachronic) differences emerge regarding the level of detail in the execution of the scenes. The geographical aspect will be touched upon first. Several results from the analysis of the sub-theme ‘slaughtering of desert cattle’ will illustrate the results of the research.

Animal species

The 24 slaughtering scenes studied yielded a total number of 47 depicted animals. These could be ascribed to five different species on the basis of visual examination: 27 oryx (*Oryx gazella dammah*), two addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), five dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas dorcas*), one hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus busephalus*), and nine Nubian ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*). The majority of scenes (17) are of only one animal. Scenes with two animals are encountered in seven tombs, while only three scenes are composed of more than two animals (viz. four, five, and six animals). When considering the geographical distribution of species, the difference between Giza and Saqqara is striking (Fig. 2). Scenes from Giza include only oryx, while five different species are observed in scenes from Saqqara. Such a contrast of variation versus uniformity appears not to be coincidental.

Representation of human figures

The slaughtering scenes studied accounted for 110 representations of human figures. The majority of scenes depict three men, with a maximum number of sixteen human figures observed in the tomb of Ti. Human figures are represented while participating in various stages of the slaughtering process. Eleven such occupations are distinguished. In Table 4 their geographical distribution is illustrated. Again, the dissimilarity between Giza and Saqqara is noteworthy. Human figures in scenes from Saqqara present ten different occupations. Those from Giza yielded only six. Although modestly represented, Maidum deserves special attention. The butchers depicted in the tomb of Ti (Saqqara, fifth dynasty; H. Wild, *Le Tombeau de Ti*, III, pl. CLXIII).
Fixed rules or personal choice? On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs

On the composition and arrangement of daily life scenes in Old Kingdom elite tombs, the author explores the role of fixed rules versus personal choices. The focus is on the depiction of animal slaughtering scenes in tombs, particularly in the context of elite tombs.

Tombs of Nefermaat and Atet are unique in depicting the beheading of their animals. The 'model' composition involving a butcher cutting off the foreleg of a recumbent animal is first observed in the tomb of Kaemsekhem in Giza. This presents a fundamental change in the development of the iconographic theme 'slaughtering of desert cattle'.

**Textual additions: dialogues**

Let us finally consider the textual additions to the scenes. 52% of slaughtering scenes have text. Scenes from Saqqara (82%) appear to have included text more frequently than those derived from Giza (24%). Three text types are discerned, classified as identifying, descriptive, and

---

59 W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Medum* (London 1892), pl. XVIII [right].
61 For a discussion on these scenes, see: S. Ikram, *Choice Cuts: meat production in Ancient Egypt* (OLA 69; Leuven 1995), 53–54.
62 LD II, 32. This first attestation applies only to desert cattle studied for the present research. The first attestation for domestic cattle is in the tomb of Rahotep (A. Eggebrecht, *Schlachtungsbräuche im alten Ägypten und ihre Wiedergabe im Flachbild bis zum Ende des mittleren Reiches* (München 1973), pl. IB).
63 When considering all desert animal-related scenes analysed in the present research, 59% include text. This figure might be somewhat different to the 'real' ratio, since not all scenes considered here were completely preserved. It may be that text was originally included in a
dialogue. Identifying text phrases are typically associated with animals (identifying the species) and human figures (including names and titles). Descriptive or explanatory texts elucidate the activity represented. The third textual category is generally considered as resembling the 'language of the people' or colloquial, as opposed to the more formal language employed in, for example, official documents and religious contexts. The human figures encountered in desert animal-related scenes often hold priestly titles, the majority of which involve the most common priestly office of ka servant, implying those responsible for the daily services for the cult of the deceased tomb owner.

Within the framework of the present research, 33 colloquial phrases have been identified. The restricted application of these phrases is emphasised by the fact that only 5% of all represented human figures are provided with such utterances (33 out of 651 represented human figures). Its application is confined almost exclusively to Saqqara. In 32 examples in this study, the majority is attested at that site. In Giza only one such example is known.

The addition of text characterises scenes from Saqqara as dynamic, while scenes from Giza are more static. Saqqara scenes not only exhibit a higher proportion of textual additions, but the choice of text type (dialogues) creates a more lively result. These additions complete scenes and indeed are a reflection of the originality of an individual's tomb, enhancing a tomb's unique appearance. It thus is an important contrivance to personalise the iconographic programme of an otherwise well known, and often repeated, set of themes.

The attested difference in the complexity of execution of scenes observed when comparing Giza and Saqqara is well illustrated by Fig. 3 and Fig. 4. Both slaughtering scenes are included in the decoration programme of the cult chapel. Fig. 3 depicts a scene from the L-shaped tomb chapel of Kaemsekhem in Giza, dated to the fourth dynasty, around the reign of Khafre. Fig. 4 depicts the same sub-theme in the multi-room chapel of Prabhetep II from Saqqara, dated around the reign of Djedkare Izeti of the fifth dynasty. The scene from the chapel of Kaemsekhem depicts the abbreviated, most basic implementation of the theme: one animal (oryx) and two human figures: the butcher and his assistant. While the latter person grasps the animal's foreleg, the butcher cuts it off. As such, the scene contains the most elementary features of which a slaughtering scene involving desert cattle should be composed. The scene in Fig. 4 was much more ornately executed. The scene not only displays the slaughtering of two different species (oryx and Nubian ibex), it also depicts an additional number of functions and variations as exemplified by the human

larger number of cases. This drawback obviously applies to all aspects studied, whether internal or external.

My translation of Erman's phrase 'Sprache des niedrigen Volkes' (A. Erman, Reden, Rufe und Lieder auf Gräberbilder des Alten Reiches (Berlin 1919), 4). A more comprehensive study of these phrases is presented by W. Guglielmi, Reden, Rufe und Lieder auf altägyptische Darstellungen der Landwirtschaft, Viehzucht, des Fisch- und Vogelfangs vom Mittleren Reich bis zur Spätzeit (TÄB 1; Bonn 1973).


Tomb of Senedjem-ib: Mehi (fifth dynasty; Giza): offering procession scene (east side of south wall of antechamber). LD II, pl. 74b.

We know of 24 scenes in which a butcher is observed cutting off a leg. In 23 cases this concerns the foreleg, while only two scenes depict the hind leg being cut off: Prabhetep II (Fig. 4) and in the tomb of Idut (R. Macramallah, Le Mastaba d'Idout (Cairo 1925), pl. XX). In the latter scene the butcher is occupied with the hind leg only: the foreleg of the oryx has already been cut off.
figures. Apart from those figures participating actively in the scene, there is also one figure depicted standing passively, while inspecting the blood offered to him by the person to his left (mni snf pn; 'see this blood'). The scene has also been provided with a considerable amount of text. Eight short phrases can be subdivided into three different types: identifying, descriptive and dialogue.

These two scenes illustrate the different choices made by those responsible for the execution of scenes. Each displays its own interpretation of this iconographic daily-life sub-theme. However highly individualistic (since no exact similar example (copy) exists), both scenes demonstrate the same basic form. Every scene contains at least two human figures (a butcher and his assistant) engaged in the act of butchering a recumbent desert animal. At a guess it seems that this basic composition was judged sufficient for Kaemsekhem. It is however clear that the L-shaped single-room chapel offered limited wall surface, which delimits the degree to which a scene could be expanded. The more richly executed scene of Ptahhetep however also derives from a chapel consisting of one single chamber. Wall surface should therefore not simply be considered the deciding factor. The degree of complexity moreover is dependent on the wishes, and choices made by the tomb owner. These wishes and choices are not led by prescribed rules, but rather appear to be led by common principles. These common principles furthermore appear to be embedded in a site-specific tradition. Scenes from Saqqara generally, although not necessarily, incline towards variation, while those from Giza generally, but again not necessarily, remain rather austere and conservative. What has caused these two distinct traditions is difficult to ascertain. An analysis on the diachronic development of the elaboration of execution might provide us with an indication.

**Diachronic development**

A comparably balanced result is arrived at when analysing the development of scenes in the Memphite region diachronically. Roughly five demarcated developmental stages could be discerned in relation to the alternation of variation and conservatism. Fig. 5 illustrates the attested variety of animal species depicted in the desert cattle offering procession scenes. The few scenes from Maidum display a surprisingly large number of different species. This variety is all the more striking when compared to the results from the remaining length of the fourth dynasty and the first half of the fifth. With some minor exceptions, the variety of scene content is initially low. The situation starts changing towards the end of the fifth dynasty, culminating around the time of Niuserre to Djedkare Izezi. For the remaining length of the Old Kingdom variation diminishes somewhat, although not returning to the situation attested before.
A similar development is observed when analysing the variation of occupations exhibited by the human figures included in desert cattle offering procession scenes (Fig. 6). Again there is an obvious contrast between early and late Old Kingdom. The trend illustrated by these two graphs is recurrent throughout the research conducted.

The variety of aspects attested within the internal dynamics of scenes, such as different animal species, functions of the human figures, and so forth, proved to be relatively high at the beginning of the fourth dynasty. Tombs from Mâidum represent the initial stage in the emergence of a tradition, already entrenched before the fourth dynasty of tomb decoration with an iconographic programme that evolved over the next few centuries of the Old Kingdom. Three chapels from the otherwise modest elite necropolis contained any of the four themes under consideration. The variety of aspects attested within the representational content is however surprisingly high. As we observed in Fig. 5, the variety of animal species in desert cattle offering procession scenes is only superseded in tombs dating towards the end of the Old Kingdom, around the reign of Djedkare Izezi. The reason for this deviating result might be due to the fact that these scenes present the initial stage of tomb decoration. It seems that the composition of scenes had yet to be defined and formalised.

With the royal move to Giza, private tomb construction began at this previously unused plateau. The organisation of the mastaba fields into a grid-like pattern is without precedent. This break with tradition might well have had consequences for the decoration of tomb chapels. The layout of these mastaba fields, governed by 'strict hierarchy' and 'uniform geometry', finds its equal in the decoration of individual tombs. The elaboration of tomb scenes during the remaining length of the fourth dynasty, notably in Giza, is characterised by uniformity rather than by singularity. The relatively homogeneous nature of tomb construction at the site, furthermore characterised by small,

---

69 The Giza plateau had, however, already been employed as a necropolis during the early dynastic period (G.T. Martin, "Covington's Tomb" and Related Early Monuments at Giza", in C. Berger and B. Mathieu (eds), *Etudes sur l'Ancien Empire et la nécropole de Saqqâra dédiées à Jean-Philippe Lauer* (Montpellier 1997), 279–288), including a presumably royal tomb from the third dynasty, the so-called Covington's tomb (P. Jânosi, *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit* (Mainz am Rhein 2006), 19–21).

70 The onset of a systematically organised private necropolis in the vicinity of the royal funerary complex is, however, already observed in fourth dynasty Dahshur (N. Alexanian and S.J. Seidlmayer, "Die Nekropole von Dahschur. Forschungsgeschichte und Perspektiven", in M. Bárá (ed.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000* (Prague 2000), 292).

single-room tomb chapels, might well have been a factor in the inclination towards less elaboration. The restricted wall surface placed limitations on the potential quantity of scenes to be included, and/or had a restraining effect on the extent of these scenes.

Around the time of the reign of Userkaf, who commissioned his pyramid at Saqqara, scenes began to display more variation, although on an unassuming scale. One might have expected that the royal abandonment of Giza would have provided an impulse towards innovation for those who persisted in constructing elite tombs at that site. However, their decoration remained conventional. Data from Saqqara reveal a deviant trend, although the inclination towards variation was still at a low level at this point. Subsequent kings left Saqqara to erect their funerary complexes at Abusir. Irrespective of this royal move, the majority of elite tombs featuring in the present dataset derive from near-by Saqqara and Giza. The increased physical distance between royal and private tombs does not seem to have had a profound impact on the dynamics within the tombs' decoration.

The situation changed significantly around the time of the reigns of Neferirkare to Niuserre continuing until that of Djedkare Izezi. No previous period of the Old Kingdom had witnessed such a level of variation. The move towards increasing self-representation through one's tomb and its decoration is evident. This trend is not confined to tombs that were built at a distance from the royal monuments. The tomb of Ptahshepses, almost literally built up against the pyramid of his father-in-law Niuserre, was not only the largest private tomb built during the entire Old Kingdom, but it also rivaled the royal funerary monuments of the period in terms of size and complexity. During that same period, tombs continued to be constructed at Giza. Increasing diversity was, however, confined remarkably primarily to Saqqara tombs. Unique features within the representations of scenes (internal aspects) are for example most often attested at Saqqara. With the return to the nucleus area of Saqqara by king Unas, the first king to include pyramid texts in his funerary monument, the trend subsides. Every king of the remainder of the Old Kingdom continued to construct his pyramid on the (larger) Saqqara plateau. Tombs of those belonging to the highest levels of society were once again built in close proximity to the monuments of their monarch, as had been observed during the reigns of Unas and Teti. Although the variation in the different representational aspects of scenes reverted somewhat to earlier levels, it did not return to the restricted level witnessed before the time of Niuserre.

**Conclusion**

Regarding the opposition of 'fixed rules' and 'personal choice', the analysis of the scene's internal and external aspects revealed a rather equivocal view. The selected themes indeed indicate a certain degree of homogeneity regarding their inclusion and disposition over the tomb chapel. None of the indicators, however, tend towards complete randomness or restrictedness. This ambiguous result leaves one to conclude that the 'rules' applied to private tomb decoration offered a set of possibilities, subject to certain conventions, instead of one definite choice. Strict rules could not be observed. It remains the tomb owner who decided in the first place what theme(s) to include. It is especially the less common themes that offered an excellent tool to personalise one's tomb superstructure.

The analysis of the internal aspects of scenes has acknowledged that there is no such thing as strict standardisation. Scenes of similar sub-themes can differ considerably with regard to their representational content. In addition, the compositional development through time is not linear. Aspects within the internal dynamics of scenes, whether they are animals, human figures or text, are added continuously throughout the Old Kingdom. At the same time, other aspects are abandoned, some to re-appear again at later stages. The scenes do not unequivocally increase or decrease in elaborateness of execution. The dependence of scenes on the available wall surface is also not self-evident.

The study has revealed a clear dichotomy between Giza and Saqqara. Scenes from Saqqara tombs can be characterized as dynamic, displaying variation, whereas those from Giza can generally be characterised as static, conformist, displaying a lower degree of variation. When set in a diachronic perspective, a similar development can be detected. A uniform interplay of variation and austerity surfaced when studying the internal features of the scenes' representations. This trend has tentatively been related to the (changing) political situation and the (changing choice of) location for the royal funerary complexes. The exact rationale behind these trends, that is, the antithesis of Giza and Saqqara and the observed chronological development, is however another question. What exactly has caused these results should still be investigated further.

---

72 The same applies for the architectural development of tombs during these kings' reigns, cf M. Báta, 'Architectural Innovations in the Development of the Non-Royal Tomb during the Reign of Nyuserra', in Jánosi (ed.), Structure and Significance, 105-130.
Addresses of authors

Abdou el-Kerety
Supreme Council of Antiquities
Saqqara
Egypt
m.kelk@edu.giza.eg

Miroslav Bárta
Czech Institute of Egyptology
Faculty of Arts, Charles University
nám. Jana Palacha 2
116 38 Prague 1
Czech Republic
miroslav.barta@ff.cuni.cz

Michel Baud
Département des antiquités égyptiennes
Musée du Louvre
Porte des Arts
75058 Paris cedex 01
France
michel.baud@louvre.fr

V. G. Callender
7 Beresford Road
Thornleigh
New South Wales,
Australia 2120
vgcallender@yahoo.com.au

Marleen De Meyer
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Faculteit Letteren, Oude Nabije Oosten
Blijde-Inkomststraat 21 – bus 3318
BE-3000 Leuven
Belgium
Marleen.DeMeyer@arts.kuleuven.be

Andrés Diego Espinel
Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales-CSIC
C/ Albásanz 26-28
28037 Madrid
Spain
andres.diego@cchs.csic.es

May Farouk
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels
Sadat city
Egypt
mayfarouk21@yahoo.com

Laurel Flentte
Chicago
USA
LaurieatGiza@gmail.com

Florence Friedman
Rhode Island
USA
ffriedman@verizon.net

H.M. Hays
Oude Culturen van de Mediteranne Wereld
Universiteit Leiden
postbus 9515
2500 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
H.M.Hays@bum.leidenuniv.nl

Jaromír Krejčí
Czech Institute of Egyptology
(see Bárta for full address)
Jaromir.Krejci@ff.cuni.cz

Kamil O. Kuraszkiwicz
Department of Egyptian and Nubian Archaeology
Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw
ul. Krakowskie Przedmiescie 26/28
00-927 Warszawa
Poland
k.o.kuraszkiwicz@uw.edu.pl

Mark Lehner
Ancient Egypt Research Associates, Inc.
P.O. Box 382608
Cambridge, MA 02238-2608
USA
marklehner@aol.com

Jana Malatkova
Czech Institute of Egyptology
(see Bárta for full address)
Jaromir.Krejci@ff.cuni.cz

Massimiliano Nuzzolo
Massimiliano Nuzzolo
University of Naples “L'Orientale”
Pza S. Domenico Maggiore 12
80134 Napoli - Italy
massimiliano.nuzzolo@libero.it

Gabriele Pieke
Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin
Germany
g.pieke@gmail.com

Joanna Popielska-Grzybowska
Institute of Anthropology and Archaeology
The Pułtusk Academy of Humanijties
17, Darszyńskiego st.
06-100 Pułtusk
joannapopolaskag@hotmail.com

Ann Macy Roth
New York University
New York
USA
ann.macy.roth@nyu.edu

Teodozja I. Rzeuska
Institute for Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences
Warsaw
Poland
teodozjarzeuska@wp.pl

Nico Staring
Leiden University
Zamenhofstraat 22
2312 NV Leiden
The Netherlands
n.t.b.staring@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Ana Tavares
Ancient Egypt Research Associates, Inc.
(see Lehner for full address)
tavares.ana.2008@gmail.com

Stefanie Verecken
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
(see De Meyer for full address)
Stefanie.Verecken@arts.kuleuven.be

Miroslav Verner
Czech Institute of Egyptology
(see Bárta for full address)
faromir.krejci@ff.cuni.cz

Hana Vymazalová
Czech Institute of Egyptology
(see Bárta for full address)
Jaromir.Krejci@ff.cuni.cz

Anna Wodzińska
Department of Egyptian and Nubian Archaeology
(see Kuraszkiewicz for full address)
annawodzinska@uw.edu.pl

Dr. Alexandra Woods,
Department of Ancient History,
Faculty of Arts,
Macquarie University
Sydney
Australia
alex.woods@mq.edu.au
Recent research on all aspects of the Old Kingdom in Egypt is presented in this volume, ranging through the Pyramid Texts, tomb architecture, ceramics, scene choice and layout, field reports, cemetery layout, tomb and temple statuary. The contributions also show how Egyptology is not stuck in its venerable traditions but that newer forms of technology are being used to great effect by Egyptologists. For example, two papers show how GIS technology can shed light on cemetery arrangement and how 3D scanners can be employed in the process of producing facsimile drawings of reliefs and inscriptions.

The authors cover a wide range of sites and monuments. A large part of the work presented deals with material from the great cemeteries of Saqqara and Giza of the Old Kingdom capital city of Memphis but all the smaller sites are discussed. The book also includes a paper on the architecture of mastabas from the lesser-known site of Abu Roasch. The provinces are by no means overlooked, with articles on material from Deir el-Bersha, el-Sheikh Said and Akhmim. Between them, the authors discuss material from the milieu of the king right down to that which concerned the tomb workmen and those who supplied their basic needs, such as bakers, brewers and potters.


Helen Strudwick currently works at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Nigel Strudwick has worked at the British Museum and is presently teaching at the University of Memphis. They have carried out fieldwork together at Luxor since 1984 and are the authors of *Thebes in Egypt.*