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# THE JOURNAL OF EGYPTOLOGICAL STUDIES

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## **SOME NOTES ON THE DECORATION AND LOCATION OF IMAGES FROM PRIVATE TOMBS IN THEBAN NECROPOLIS IN THE TIME OF XVIII EGYPTIAN DYNASTY**

*Silviya Kremenska*

The tomb is a monument of the deceased. Each scene from the Egyptian tomb has its own aim and function. The place, on the other side, ranges within certain limits depending on the relief of the rock and the space in the tomb itself. In the present paper we will examine part of the tombs from the time of the XVIII Egypt dynasty in the context of their place in the tomb and their connection to the scenes around them.

The tomb is the means through which the owner may show the most important part of his life – his work in service of the king. He is not only the most important person in the life of the deceased, but in the whole country the figure of the king is always the largest of all. Part of the scenes shows the relationship of the deceased with the king. Usually the image of the king is situated in the most visible place of the wall – on both side of the entrance leading from the transverse hall toward the inner rooms of the tomb, most commonly in symmetrical images, seated with his back to the entrance. This way he is illuminated by the light coming from outside. Facing toward him stands the owner of the tomb and pays his respects.

Other parts of them depict the everyday duties of a person and the activities for which he was responsible during his life – those connected to his profession. The decoration in the tomb serves two purposes – to honor and preserve the memory of the deceased and to assure a successful transition and existence in the Afterlife.

Before starting with the description of the scenes and their place we should probably say a little bit about the shape and architecture of the tombs from the XVIII Egyptian dynasty. This dynasty spans from the reign of king Ahmose to that of Horemheb. The Theban tombs from that time all have similar shape, which distinguishes them from the tombs from different periods and places. The architecture may vary but the basic requirements are the same for most of the tombs from the period. The most common tomb from the period is the so-called T-shaped

tomb. A certain change in the architectural plan and in the decoration may be seen in the time of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and for some short time after it. In its ideal version it consists of three elements<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) a forecourt – partly cut in the rock and partly built of mudbrick with a gate;
- 2) upper rock-cut chambers: a hall, a passage and inner room with a niche for statues;
- 3) a shaft and a subterranean burial chamber.

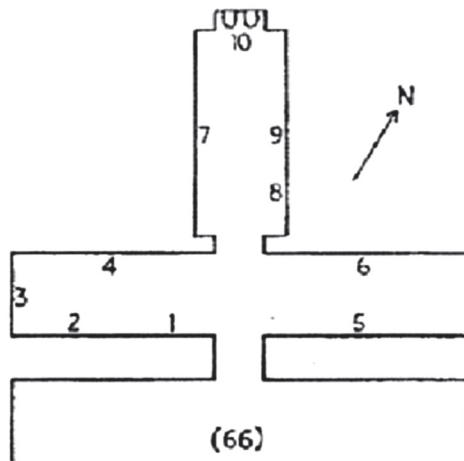


Fig. 1 Plan of tomb TT 66 of Hepu. Classical T-shaped tomb.

see Porter B., Moss R. *Topographical bibliography of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs, and paintings, Volume I: The Theban Necropolis Part 1. Private tombs*. Griffith Institute Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1994, p.124.

In accordance with the profession of a person the scenes range within certain borders. The vizier, for instance, is depicted receiving tribute on behalf of his king. Foreigners from different parts of the world come to Egypt with their goods. These things are being recorded and taken to the palace. Another duty of the vizier that is depicted on the walls is oversee the work of different craftsmen carpenters, potters, leather workers, jewel makers etc. Military officials wanted in their tombs to be find scenes of how they command the army or receive collars of gold in a pub-

<sup>1</sup> Manniche, Lise. *The tombs of the nobles at Luxor*. The American University in Cairo Press, London, 1987, p.30.



lic ceremony. A granary official's tombs there are depicted scenes of agriculture, planting the grain and harvesting the crops.

These scenes, connected to the profession of the deceased in most cases are situated in the transverse hall of the T-shaped tomb or in the part of the tomb nearest the entrance. On each side of the entrance, often in front of the image of the king, the owner of the tomb is depicted making offerings or libations to the gods, that are not depicted, but only mentioned in the accompanying text. The figure of the deceased, since it is located close to the seated ruler, is always smaller in size. The deceased is facing the entrance and presents offering to the gods. Smaller scene with people bringing offerings and butchers is often found below. Until the middle of the XVIII dynasty the wife of the deceased, or rarely his mother, is along his side during the ritual.

Scenes of fishing and hunting birds, which are always symmetrical, usually come together. In the center there is a papyrus plant and on both sides are depicted birds and insects or the deceased standing in a canoe spearing two fish or hitting a bird with a throw stick. Members of his family are in the boat with him. The river is full of fish and the sky – with birds. These, so called hunting scenes are located either in the hall or in the passage.



Fig. 2 Hunting scene from the tomb of Nebamun, reign of Amenhotep III. The image is currently in the British museum. The location of the tomb nowadays is unknown.

Killing a hippopotamus is incorporated in the hunting scene in the first half of the dynasty, but is all too often a separate image, requiring a third figure of the deceased. Other way of depicting a hunting scene is out of the river – in the desert or in his chariot, along with his servants, who carry trophies from the hunt. Sometimes this scene is located on a tall narrow wall – the end walls of the transverse hall. We may find it, in most cases, on the right wall of the passage, close to

the entrance sharing a wall with funerary rituals. The motif with the hippo was most popular from the time of Thutmose III.

Scenes of vintage are to be found in the right part of the tomb, presumably in the hall and are very often sub-scenes or fishing and bird hunting.

After the so called everyday scenes it is time to examine a little bit of the ritual scenes. One of the scenes that have never been omitted is the one with the funeral procession. It is always heading for the inner rooms most commonly on the left wall of the elongated passage in the T-shaped tomb or on the corresponding wall in the other kinds of tombs. Most figures face to the right. The main elements of the funeral procession are going toward the embalming house, the dragging of the coffin to the tomb, mourners in front of the tomb and the wife the deceased embracing the mummy of her husband or his sarcophagus.

The voyage to Abydos is the most symbolic representation in the tomb. One must pay respects to the traditional burial place of Osiris. A boat with the deceased couple, because the wife is always with her husband, followed by another with a coffin enshrouded with cloth go downstream toward Abydos. They are also depicted to sail upstream with their mission completed. The scene is often placed in connection with the funeral procession as a sub-scene or in a register on the same height.

Among the most important rituals in Ancient Egypt is that of Opening of the mouth of the deceased. This way the mummy of deceased may feed and talk again. The whole ritual consists of series of episodes, but inside the tombs only a few are depicted. Sometimes only one scene can be found combining in several episodes of the ritual. During the first half of the dynasty this is more commonly found. In many cases this image is symmetrically arranged with the scenes of the funeral procession on the opposite wall of the passage. As a rule the mummy or the statue faces the entrance and the priests follow it toward the inner chambers. The rite should also be depicted on a northern wall.

Some of the most delightful scenes found in the tombs of the XVIII dynasty are so-called banquet scenes. People in them are smiling, drinking, playing musical instruments. In these scenes the lotus flower is found very often – people hold it in their hands; it decorates the diadems and pendants of women. It is a symbol of reborn – the sun god is born in one. Banquet scenes are frequently depicted close to episodes of the Beautiful Festival of the Valley<sup>2</sup>.

The earliest tombs from the dynasty are found in Dra abu el-Naga. The most common shape from the time of Thutmose I until Thutmose IV is the T-shaped, which we have already mentioned and explained, with several basic variations.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Festival see Emil Vuzov. *Сред богове и пирамиди. Всекидневният живот в Древен Египт. Изток-Запад, София. 2016, стр. 195.*

Good examples of this kind of tombs are these of Menkheperraseneb (TT 86), Menkheperraseneb (TT 79), Djehuty (TT 45), Userhat (56), Thutnefer (TT 80), Tjenuny (TT 74), Amenhotep Sise (TT 75), Hepu (TT 66), Menna (TT 69), Nebamun (TT 90), Neferrenpet (TT 249), and tombs TT 91 and TT 116, where we do not have names.

Several tombs from the beginning of the dynasty are a combination between a T-shaped and a *saff* tomb. Tomb of Ineni (TT 81), for instance, in its basis is a *saff* tomb, which has been tuned into a T-shaped tomb. In his tomb (TT 71) Senenmut puts a row of pillars in the transverse hall, and this way divides the room into different parts, each has different decoration on the ceiling. Other examples of combined tombs are: TT 83 of Aamtju Ahmose, TT 88 of Pehsukher Tjenenu, TT 29 of Amenemopet Paury and TT 367 of Paser.

Some T-shaped tombs, especially from the time of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II have extra chambers. In the tomb of Puyemre (TT 39) the long passage was turned into a square chamber with a small cult chamber at the back and two more chambers, both accessible from the transverse hall. The subterranean chambers are entered through a shaft in the north end of the transverse hall. The tomb of the commander of the soldiers Amenemheb (TT 85) has an extra transverse hall, adored with columns, Suemniut (TT 92) also made extra pillared chamber. Tomb TT 96 of Sennefer is one of the few tombs from the time of the XVIII dynasty, where the burial chamber has been decorated.

Tombs of the elite from the time of Amenhotep III are unique – each of them has different architectural plan. In some cases elements were taken from the T-shaped tombs and *saff* tombs, but they also have a part of the features of the „temple tombs“ at Saqqara, modeled on the temples of the gods.

As already mentioned one of the most important rituals in Ancient Egypt is the ritual of Opening of the mouth. It has been depicted in a big part of the tombs dating to the time of the XVIII dynasty, but now can be seen in few of them<sup>3</sup>:

**TT 48 Amenemhat/Surero** – el-Khokha, Amenhotep III. It can be seen in the portico, front wall, southern part, bottom register.

**TT 56 Userhat** – Sheikh abd el-Qurna, Amenhotep II.

The image is situated in the hall– Scene 4 – Stele (false door), the right side – lector performs the rite of Opening of the mouth.

**TT 82 Amenemhat** – Sheikh abd el-Qurna, Thutmose III.

Texts of the rite are in the passage – Scene 12 – register 4–5.

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<sup>3</sup> All of the information, given is from Porter B., Moss R. Topographical bibliography of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs, and paintings, Volume I: The Theban Necropolis Part 1. Private tombs.

**TT 100 Rehmire** – Sheikh abd el-Qurna, Thutmose III – Amenhotep II. The fullest version of the rite in Egyptian tomb – north wall of the passage – Scene 19 – Register 1–7 – Opening of the mouth in 51 scenes.

**TT295 Thutmose Paroy** – el-Khokha, Thutmose IV – Amenhotep III.

Hall – Scene 5 – Register 2 – Two rows of rites in before mummies, including two „sleeping“ and „waking“ priests – part of the ritual.

**TT 343 Benia Paheqamen** – Sheih abd el-Qurna, beginning of the XVIII dynasty. Hall – Scene 12 – Register 1–3 – Rituals in front of the mummy.

**TT 17 Nebamun** – Dra abu el-Naga, Amenhotep II (?).

Inner room – Scene 12 – Register 1–3 – Rituals in front of the mummy.

Some of the scenes that are found interesting as well are those of the king Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose Nefertary who are considered to be patrons of the necropolis long after their deaths. Ahmose Nefertary is also thought to be mother of the whole XVIII dynasty. Here are the tombs from that time that have images of them together.

**TT 15 Tetiky** – king’s son, Mayor in the Southern City. Beginning of the dynasty, Dra abu el-Naga. The image is in the chapel: tympanum, double scene (right part is destroyed), queen Ahmose Nefertary, followed by attendants, libation before the goddess Hathor as a cow. Here the queen was depicted during her lifetime, before she was venerated.

**TT 49 Neferhotep** – chief scribe of Amun, Ay, el-Hoha.

Pillar C – Deceased with his wife offering and the texts mentions Amenhotep I and Ahmose Nefertary. In the lower scene the deceased offers bouquets to both of them.

**TT 181 Nebamun** – head sculptor of the Lord of the Two Lands and **Ipuky** – sculptor of the Lord of the Two Lands, Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV. Khokha. The image is in the hall, southeast wall, upper register, left scene – Nebamun adores Amenhotep I and Ahmose Nefertary.

The king is depicted wearing the blue crown *khepesh*, with a uraeus<sup>4</sup>. Similar to Nebamun he is wearing different wrist bands and upper arm bands. With his right hand he is holding an *anh*, his left hand is folded across his chest holding the *heqa* scepter. In front of his face there were cartouches with his names (now erased). This representation is based on the one of Amenhotep III from the end of his reign and this is an additional proof that these images are not portraits. The queen<sup>5</sup>, hugging his son, is depicted with an entirely black skin.

<sup>4</sup> Description and image from the Osirisnet site <https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes>.

<sup>5</sup> The upper part of the image of the Ahmose Nefertary is now in the museum in Hanover.



Fig. 3 Image from the tomb of Nebamun and Ipouky TT 181. Nebamun adores Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose Nefertary. Hall, south-east wall, right of the entrance, upper register. (from [https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nebamun\\_ipouky181/e\\_nebamun\\_ipouky\\_04.htm](https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nebamun_ipouky181/e_nebamun_ipouky_04.htm))

The tombs from the time of the XVIII dynasty in Deir el-Medina are six. The most well-known is TT 8 of the architect Kha, chief in the Great Place (Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III). Others are TT 291 of Nu and Nakhtmin, servants in the Place of Truth (late XVII dynasty); TT 340 of Amenemhat, servant in the Place of Truth (early XVIII dynasty).

In Qurnet Murai are also six with one particularly interesting – TT 40 of Amenhotep/Huy, Viceroy of Kush from the time of Amenhotep IV to Tutankhamun. It is from the time of late Amarna period– large heads, prominent lips and eyes, rounded chins and supple limbs. One of the walls of the tomb shows Huy, receiving tribute from Nubia on behalf of his king. There are some new details such as a Nubian princess being led before the king in a vehicle drawn by oxen, with a large fan.

In Sheih abd el-Qurna there are 110 tombs from that time. The hunting scene in the tomb of Userhat (TT 56) (reign of Amenhotep II) is particularly interesting– there is a fox trapped in a tree.



Fig. 4 A fox, trapped in a tree from the tomb of Userhat – TT 56

One of the most fascinating tombs in the necropolis is that of the vizier Ramose (TT 55). That is because of the fact that he lived in the reign of Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV. During the time of the so called heretic ruler the art in Egypt went through some big changes. The hall of the tomb is extremely large for its time and its ceiling was supported by papyri columns, that did not survived for us to see in their original condition (now reconstructed). He chose the most durable decoration for the time being – colored relief. Unfortunately for us, the reliefs were made, but there was no time for them to be colored. During the time of the making of the decoration the ruler changed and with him – new ways of decoration and reliefs. Thereby in his tomb one may find both of the styles typical for the XVIII Egyptian dynasty.

Another tomb, so important for its decoration is that of Rekhmire (TT 100) – a vizier who lived in the time of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. Unlike most tombs from the period, which become smaller and smaller as you go in the inner room, this one is quite the opposite. The ceiling of the passage becomes higher c достигане the end of the tomb. The quality of the images is among the best in the necropolis, the rite of Opening of the mouth is depicted in its most complete version among all tombs from all periods of the Egyptian history.

The tomb of Amenemhat (TT 85) is to be noted. The plan is that of a T-shaped tomb, but before the transverse hall there is another, even bigger hall with four square pillars. The most interesting image in the tomb is situated in this room – the inner face of the lintel uniting the two central pillars. One can see there a landscape rarely depicted in tombs – hunting in the dessert. The owner of the tomb is depicted fighting a hyena in a dessert full of strangest plants.

In Asasif there are 2 tombs dated to the XVIII dynasty. The tomb of Kheruef (TT 192) contains an image of Amenhotep IV, but everything else inside is made in a traditional style. He lived at the same time as Ramose. Given that it is an extremely interesting tomb. In el-Khokha 32 tombs are from the XVIII dynasty.

In Dra abu el-Naga tombs are 48, but some of them are no more due to broken ceilings, destruction of the decoration or the sands had swallowed them and their place is no longer known.

The tomb of Neferhotep in el-Khokha (TT 49) is one of the two tombs decorated in the time of Ay. It is now open to visitors now, because there was a family that lived there and almost destroyed it. It is among the interesting ones from the period in question. Thanks to older publications from the beginning of the XX century we know how it used to look like. No place else in the whole necropolis we see images of the owner visiting the garden of the temple of Amun in Karnak and presenting a bouquet of flowers to his wife. (Fig.5) There are two more unique for the necropolis images – the occasion of returning home and the garden party where one lady wanders out of the gate with a jug of wine in her hand.



Fig. 5 Scene from the tomb of Neferhotep (TT 49) Image from Norman de Garis Davies

The great number of tombs in the Theban necropolis dated to the XVIII dynasty does not permit them all to be examined in a single paper. It is a subject of a dissertation that is a work in progress and shall give detailed information on the subject.

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