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do this via the relatively new medium of an electronic book (e-book), thus creating the illusion of a 'virtual workshop'. This review is based on the printed version, however. All the authors were asked to follow the same basic pattern — an explanation in brief of their approach, followed by a discussion of three preselected decoration programmes. There was also the option to discuss a fourth tomb of their choice that may better illustrate their approach.

The three tombs were chosen because they are well published and are spread out in time. They are, in chronological order, the chapel of Seshathotep, Giza 5150, the chapel of Kaiemnofret in Saqqara and the chapel of Kaihep Tjeti Iker, el-Hawawish H26. All authors were asked to deal with two main aspects of the decoration — the purpose/sense, and the factual information that can be derived from the decoration. There are a total of 8 articles, presented in alphabetical order, preceded by an introductory article, and all have a brief summary in two languages in the front of the book. Four of the articles are in English, one is in French and three are in German, as are the Foreword and the introductory article.

The contributions by individual authors are preceded by an introductory essay by Martin Fitzenreiter which may be summarized as follows. The essay starts with a brief paragraph on what gathering together eight different articles might achieve — we would expect eight similar essays if the authors are all 'right', but are those who maintain something different 'wrong'? Does an approach like this open the door to 'trivial Egyptology' and 'anything goes'? An examination of the meaning of 'methodology' and 'interpretation' may help answer this dilemma.

The basic question behind all archaeology is 'why', but the answer must of necessity remain subjective. Discoveries that interpretations from the past can be wrong is undermining our trust in 'theory' and resulting in an over-reliance on 'fact' without interpretation. Methodology is an escape, theories are too often statements, or schools of thought, subject to political correctness. We are also victims of the 'foul seed' of the exact sciences — facts cannot lie, only their interpretation. Cartesian methodology suggests that mistakes are the result of mistaken work — there is therefore no room for interpretation. However, the articles collected here, says Fitzenreiter, are probably only interesting precisely because their interpretations differ. The most interesting aspect is the highlighting of completely new, previously unsuspected aspects. When different methodological approaches to the same thing are gathered together, the theoretically infinite potential can be uncovered. There is not one single correct methodology. What is interesting is not who interpreted something first or loudest, but which conditions lie behind that act of interpretation. Archaeology is never black and white and relies on interpretations to move forward — facts may be easy to judge, but results based on widely differing premises are less so, as the example of the dating of Old Kingdom tombs with Cherpion on one side and most other scholars on the other shows. Such uncertainties only increase when interpretations involve, for example, daily life scenes as symbols or genres. The battle for correct or false interpretation is a battle for cultural and material capital. Research is ruled by conditions — history is a 'something' that we distil from an endless number of events. Finds are always capable of many interpretations — even excavation reports. They can be affected by subsequent finds and new publications. Things are not right or wrong — interpretation is advanced by academic practice.

**FARAONISCH EGYPTE**

FITZENREITER, M. und M. HERB (Hrsg.) — Dekorierte Grabanlagen im Alten Reich. Methodik und Interpretation. (IBAES Vol. VI). Golden House Publications, London, 2006. (29.5 cm, X, 334, 28 pls.). ISBN 0-9950256-8-0. £ 45.00, \$ 70.00.

This book is an interesting one for people studying Old Kingdom tomb decoration, with the possibility of new insights and understanding. The foreword explains that the idea for the book was born at the ACACIA conference in 2003. The editors say that the aim is not to present one all-encompassing approach, but to illustrate the wide range of approaches and highlight their strong points. They decided to

If we recognize the limitations of knowledge as a product of our time and the possibility that it could be negated tomorrow, then we can allow ourselves to realize that our own individual interpretations are also relevant only today. Alternative interpretations can enable other insights. Scholarly 'good practice' is the only deciding factor between right and wrong — once various interpretations are placed next to each other, as in this book, a concentric testing and discussion is made possible and we can expand our knowledge. However, this knowledge is temporal, governed by our 'today'.

The first article in the body of the book is by Hartwig Altenmüller and is a joy to read. The author knows exactly what he wants to say and does so clearly and succinctly. His main aim is to answer the question 'What is the basic conception of the afterlife at different times?' He sets his methodology out clearly and comes to the conclusion that the three decoration programmes are difficult to compare because each tomb is a representative of its own tradition, related to time and space. However, the similarities demonstrate that there was a coherent relief cycle in the Old Kingdom that transcended local traditions and time constraints.

The next article, by Andrey O. Bolshakov, starts with a brief outline of two main approaches — the detailed approach, with Junker and Harpur as the main exponents, and the bird's eye view, with himself as the main exponent. Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, and taken together they form a good introduction to the examination of an Old Kingdom tomb. The three tombs are then examined in turn and Bolshakov concludes that although they all differ radically in the detail, there are also basic similarities. He points out that scholars tend to draw attention to the presence of something strange or different rather than to the absence of something usual. He suggests that such absence may be due to space restrictions, but also may not, without committing himself to either possibility. Another interesting point raised is that studying 'pairs' of tombs, i.e. tombs with closely related programmes, may well reveal interesting aspects. He concludes that the limitations placed on tomb decoration were more strict around the capital than in the provinces.

The next article, by Martin Fitzenreiter, is not easy to summarize. The first 14 pages are devoted to creating a 'model' which can be used to analyse the three chosen tombs. Fitzenreiter first defines his terminology: a tomb is a 'magical object', constituting a number of 'installations' in which 'decoration' can play a role. Certain motifs ('icons') play a role in the 'repertoire'. Image and text have equal status when determining function; the more lavish the tomb, the clearer the aesthetic aspects; unfinished tombs enable us to see what was considered the most important and what could be left out. The first thing to strike the reader about the application of the resulting model to the three tombs is that none of them actually fit it. Fitzenreiter constantly emphasizes the need for a standard to understand the deviations, but even Seshathotep, from what he calls the 'strict residence phase', diverges from his model. In order to explain the divergence, the author tends to make what seem to be assumptions. In the tomb of Kaemnofret, for example, with an archetypical Dynasty V/VI decoration according to Fitzenreiter, the celebratory icon is south of the false door and the offering table icon north (i.e. the 'wrong' way around). This is explained by 'reasons of symmetry'. Perhaps there would have been fewer 'discrepancies' if the model had been adjusted after application to the tombs and then tested again.

With a length of over 100 pages, the next article, by Michael Herb, is almost a monograph by itself. The author states that his article will discuss the field of tension between an archaeological find and the intellectual landscape of which it forms a part. Although it is important to measure something, this does not mean that something that cannot be measured is unimportant. The article discusses three main statements, space, time and life, all with reference to a particular tomb owner. He goes on to discuss the fact that many authors come to different conclusions based on the same material and praises lexicons and encyclopaedias for their ability to be succinct. Internet is an opportunity to abandon old-fashioned ways, like footnotes (there are only eight footnotes in the entire article!), and he calls for freedom of information. He points out that many tombs are anepigraphic, but no less important for that. He discusses the *hṯp-dī-nzw* formula as an expression of the fundamental right of the tomb owner to have a tomb, ponders on sun temples, gods, titles and autobiographies and the problem of dating — why there are so many similarities between tombs that could be 200 years apart. Eventually, after 24 pages, we reach the discussion of the first tomb. This, however, is not the first chronologically, but that of Kaemnofret at Saqqara. A massive 35 pages are devoted to this tomb. Herb speculates on its shape, and even suggests that it might not be a tomb at all as there are no underground chambers. The strict scenarios he has been trying to create up till now collapse when applied to the themes — 'these and similar details indicate another principle at work'. Unfortunately this other principle is not defined or discussed further. One interesting aspect is the 'cycle technique' Herb discusses. The procedure is staggeringly simple — a certain productive action is analysed down to steps in time and reproduced in a certain number of steps or stations. The most common stations depicted are the start and finish of the process; sometimes in-between stations are depicted.

Much of the information in the section on Kaihep Tjeti Iker is based on information provided in Kanawati's publication of the tomb. In this same section [p. 179] Herb also states categorically that he is not going to discuss at length the various similarities and dissimilarities in Old Kingdom tomb decoration programmes, as he feels that words like 'copy' are used too loosely and not enough attention is paid to small differences. He then proceeds, however, to make numerous comparisons with the tomb of Kaemnofret. The last tomb he examines is that of Seshathotep — chronologically the oldest. However, once again there is an excursus, this time on the *raison d'être* of a tomb. In this section Herb falls into a trap he warns us against earlier in the article — he uses a younger tomb (Kaihep Tjeti Iker) to explain aspects of an older one (Seshathotep).

The next article is by Juan Carlos Moreno Garcia who proposes interpretive models to help us decode the conventions at play in a decoration programme. Among the elements he touches on is the importance of the family. Also, a tomb is a place of collective memories where the aim is to preserve and maintain Ma'at. According to Moreno Garcia, mastabas were products of the state and subject to strict controls where room for individual alterations was very limited. The provinces were characterized by the importance of prestigious lineage. Tombs in Memphis emphasized a world dominated by the king, those in the provinces the local dominance of the nomarchs. In the discussion of the tombs, Moreno Garcia also starts with the middle one in date and ends with the oldest.

In addition, he entirely follows the dates proposed by Cherpion without even mentioning alternatives. These alternatives are considered by many Egyptologists to be more likely for a variety of reasons admirably explained elsewhere, and even by fellow contributors to this volume. Interesting points in the tomb discussions include the observation that the strange new events that appear at el-Hawawish concern *southern* pastimes (e.g. bullfighting), and exclusively *northern* pastimes (e.g. hunting in the marshes) are omitted. The birds and animals are also more specifically localized. In addition, an interesting point in the tomb of Seshathotep is that there is a depiction of a purchased slave.

Ann Macy Roth in her contribution first sets out her view of how to explain scenes of daily life. They are highly selective and many basic aspects of life (sex, visiting the doctor, defecating, building homes) are left out. Only selected stereotyped scenes appear with restricted dramatis personae — no friends, no superiors, no equals. These scenes were selected and distorted for a purpose, a purpose that is nowhere made explicit. We have to deduce it. Often the scenes are metaphorical, and these can only be deciphered if parallel examples are collected so that all the variations can be assessed in terms of the proposed meaning. Roth takes carrying chairs as an example of a metaphorical scene that also contains a message. Before the horse and chariot, a carrying chair was the only mode of land transportation for the elite, other than walking. Roth examines the carrying chair scenes in all three tombs and notes that a metaphorical meaning appears to be present right from the start. The scene is used as an indicator of status, and this is particularly strong in the provinces. The variety of possible interpretations of this one scene in three tombs is an indication of the richness and variety of the decoration of meaning encoded in Old Kingdom tomb chapels.

Deborah Vischak's article concentrates on agency — a view that centres on and amplifies the role of the people (agents) who created objects of material culture. The analysis centres on 'recognizing the knowledgeable, thinking people responsible for not simply the existence but also the specific forms of material culture'. Iconographic analysis facilitates other kinds of interpretations that draw out additional layers of meaning. An interesting point is whether the passion that individuals can feel about their religion, social standing, change or tradition is expressed in the material culture. And would we recognize it if we saw it? Agency develops in response to the environment and functions within and upon it — the location in which a tomb owner created his tomb and the time period in which he did so are significant to the meanings of the programme of texts and images. Vischak's discussion of the three tombs concentrates on the kinds of questions and perspectives brought out by an agency-based approach, including gender. She also discusses the tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa as her extra contribution.

René van Walsem's article starts with a summary of the aim of the book, including a quote from the original invitation e-mail. He goes on to define the methodological concepts he will use. Van Walsem is obviously a fan of applying concepts from other sciences to Egyptology, up to and including quantum mechanics, or at least their terminology, but some of the terms he defines do not seem to recur in the article in the form he implies. Van Walsem then moves on to explain the MastaBase project. The MastaBase project provides all interested parties with unparalleled access to facts

about mastabas and their decoration. It reveals which scene appears where and how often within a tomb, and in which tombs it appears. However it deliberately does not venture into interpretation. This is also clear in Van Walsem's discussion of the three tombs, preceded by an analysis of a fourth, on which the categorization in MastaBase is based. The interpretative parts of the discussion are references to the discussions of others. Van Walsem's list of conclusions is thus very general and is rounded off with a balancing of the terms 'sense' and 'sensitivity', and a caution about using one's common sense. It is particularly unfortunate that the internal page references in this article were not coordinated before publication.

So has this volume of articles achieved its stated aim? In many cases the answer is yes. Most of the authors have closely followed the instructions and produced well-presented, coherent examinations of the tombs based on the approach that has their personal preference. There are, however, a couple of exceptions, and the lack of attention to some aspects has been by no means compensated for by copious detail in other areas. The inevitable problems created by working with three languages have also resulted in some serious editorial oversights (poor translations of the summaries, hyphenation not being switched to the relevant language, linguistic errors starting on the front cover, etc.), most of which would have been avoided if native speakers had read the articles in advance of publication. There is also a lack of coordination of internal page references in some articles, and the almost unbelievable omission of the (capital) 'S' in transcriptions throughout the whole book — despite an erratum slip this remains a major problem. It resulted in the names of one of the main tomb owners and other important characters being misspelled throughout the entire volume (e.g. Seshathotep became shathotep, Seni became ni).

For readers interested in Old Kingdom relief interpretation, many articles in this book are well worth reading, although it has to be said that sometimes too few currents are well hidden in a rather stodgy pudding. The aim of presenting and comparing many approaches has, however, only partially been achieved — the information is presented, but the lack of a comparative 'umbrella' article is to be regretted. And this reviewer must confess that in the case of some contributions she could not help feeling that the authors were indeed attempting, to paraphrase Herb (p. 128), to write a history of Old Kingdom tomb decoration and starting their exposé with the Big Bang — not necessarily wrong, but not particularly helpful either.

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Julia HARVEY

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