

# The Ramesside tomb and the construction of sacred space

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After 36 years of work in Theban tombs, most of them dating from the thirteenth century BC, the time of the Nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt, it seems natural to choose the Ramesside tomb as a topic for this paper, and I am most grateful for this opportunity to sum up some results of our collective efforts. I am indeed reporting on teamwork and can claim no personal copyright for most of the thoughts which I am going to present to you. I am simply sharing a discourse which has continued for more than twenty years in the Ägyptologisches Institut at Heidelberg, focusing on the Ramesside tombs and their various mysteries. I cannot mention here all the team members who had their share in these discussions and will mention only the names of Karl and Friederike Seyfried who played and are still playing a particularly important role in this project.

The reason for choosing the tombs of the Ramesside period for a long-term study was not only determined by the fact that these tombs are most in need of publication, being so many and having been so badly neglected by former Egyptologists, but also because they were so very different from the immediately preceding tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, in terms both of architectural layout and of decoration. What we wanted to find out was how this very fundamental change in the concept of the Theban rock tomb is to be explained. In the pursuit of this project, the concept of 'sacred space' turned out to be of central importance.

I begin with some general remarks concerning the nature of the Egyptian tomb. In ancient Egypt, tomb building was an extremely multifarious activity, stretching from simple graves or pits to monumental constructions comprising hundreds of square meters. Recent research has shown that this gigantic range of varieties was not a continuum, but a structured order, that there existed more or less well-defined classes of tombs, ranging from the lowest through the small, middle, and great, up to monumental, and corresponding roughly to classes within the social hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will be concerned exclusively with great and monumental tombs, the tombs of the upper class. The construction of sacred space in tomb architecture is a rather elitist concern.

Traditionally, an Egyptian tomb serves different purposes and fulfils several functions. The first two functions are almost universal and correspond closely to functions which

are still familiar to us from our own burial customs. One is the function of containing and hiding the coffin with the corpse, the other that of marking the place and showing the name of the deceased. The first one I will call the 'secrecy function', because in ancient Egypt it is invested with notions of secrecy, inaccessibility, seclusion, hiddenness and so on. As I attempt to show later, this function is also the source of sacredness, since in Egypt, the sacred and the secret are very closely related. The other function I will call the 'memory function' or the function of 'biographical representation'. The Egyptian tomb was meant to be visited by posterity. In the history of Egyptian tomb architecture, the memory function is at least as important as the secrecy function. In many respects, however, both functions are opposed one to the other: one function requires accessibility, the other inaccessibility; one requires visibility, the other secrecy. The integration of these antagonistic functions within one construction posed a problem for the Egyptian architect which led to many different solutions in the history of Egyptian tomb building. Together with the memory function, at first indistinctly combined but later clearly distinguished, there emerged the cult function of the tomb. This is a function for which there hardly exists any equivalent in our own mortuary culture. In the context of my topic, the construction of sacred space, the cult function of the tomb is, of course, of utmost importance. Cult is, by definition, holy action, requiring sacred space for its performance. The question is, however, to what degree we are really allowed to speak of a veritable 'cult' rather than mere 'service' of the dead.<sup>2</sup> There is certainly a difference between the worship of the gods and the service of the dead, and it is perhaps questionable to use the same term, 'cult', for both. In Egypt, however, this difference is remarkably small. Many identical rites and spells were used on both sides of this demarcation line. There is a difference, but this difference changed in the course of time, and the dramatic changes between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties seem to have much to do with the cultic function of the tomb.

A fourth function of the Egyptian tomb has no equivalent at all in our world. This is the function of providing a passage or an 'interface' for the dead between this world and the other world. There is also the idea of a possible fifth function, for which there are many parallels in other cultures and which has often been postulated also for ancient Egypt:

<sup>1</sup> Engelmann-von Carnap 1999; Alexanian 2000; Kampp 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Assmann 1986.



to prevent the dead from coming back and haunting the living, by sealing the dead within their tomb-chambers, by piling masses of stone on their tombs, by hermetically blocking any channels of contact in order to separate them from the world of the living. I do not think, however, that the Egyptian tomb ever served such a 'blocking function'. Closing and blocking devices serve the secrecy function protecting the corpse from robbery and desecration, but not the function of preventing the deceased from coming back. On the contrary: right from the very start of Egyptian tomb architecture, we observe the development of a rich symbolism counteracting or compensating the blocking effects of the secrecy function. This is the symbolism of 'passage' and 'interface'. The central and classic symbol is the false door. The symbolism of the door appears at every frontier over which the deceased is supposed to pass in order to return to the world of the living. The tomb is not meant as a blockage between the world of the dead and the world of the living, but as an 'interface', and the false door is the most important symbol of this interface aspect. But the passage has two directions and the tomb has also to give shape to the passage from this world to the other world which the deceased is supposed to undertake in the course of the funerary ritual, a rite of passage par excellence. An Egyptian tomb was not built after death, but before death. Therefore, it had to provide an access to the hidden sarcophagus chamber. This access was blocked after burial. I would propose to subsume both the symbolism of the false door and the shafts and passages leading from outside to the burial chamber under the 'passage function' of the tomb.

In the Old Kingdom, a rock tomb is a rather exceptional feature.<sup>3</sup> The ordinary monumental tomb is the so-called 'mastaba' realising the four functions in the following way: the secrecy function is served by the burial chamber, cut into the rock deep below the mastaba. The access to it, serving the passage function, is realised first in the form of a huge staircase leading from the east down into the sunken substructure and the burial chamber. Later (starting in the Third Dynasty), a vertical shaft leads from the roof of the mastaba down to the burial chamber; later still, during the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, a sloping passage is preferred which leads, again from the east and starting in an open courtyard, down into the sarcophagus chamber. But the mastabas of the Old Kingdom show yet another feature which belongs to the sphere of secrecy and seclusion. This is a small room for the statue, the so-called *serdab* (an arabic word meaning 'cellar') left free within the mastaba block but inaccessible from outside.<sup>4</sup> In a considerable number of cases, the *serdab* is connected to the accessible rooms by a pair of small 'apertures'. Nothing appears more strange to us and to our concept of art than the idea of associating tomb sculpture with the secrecy function of the tomb and of hiding it away in a hermetically sealed cell within the massive mastaba block. We associate tomb sculpture with the

memory function but not with the secrecy function. This is a point where we observe a major change in the development of the Egyptian tomb after the Old Kingdom. The *serdab* disappears, together with the mastaba. In the Middle Kingdom, the rock tomb becomes the norm and the statue is no longer shut away in an inaccessible cell but put into a shrine at the inner or westernmost end of the cult chamber. The statue has made the passage from the sphere of secrecy to the cultic sphere.

At first, the cult function and the memory function go together. The place of offering is marked by a niche, later a false door bearing the names and titles of the tomb owner. In the course of the Old Kingdom, however, these two functions develop a life of their own with an independent repertoire of forms, texts and representations.<sup>5</sup> The cult function extends from the false door onto the surrounding walls, showing the production and transportation of the offerings in scenes of agriculture such as ploughing, sowing and harvesting, scenes of shepherding and of raising cattle and birds, scenes of fishing and fowling, the production of bread and beer, long processions of offering bearers and priests performing the mortuary ritual. The memory function extends from the inscription of names and titles to long biographical inscriptions and representations of the tomb owner in various official functions and attires, addresses to the living and to the visitors of the tomb, a display of wealth, power, importance, royal favour, but also, in the so-called 'ideal biography', of justice, charity and other social virtues.

If we seek the construction of sacred space, we must leave the mastabas and turn to the royal tombs and to the development of the pyramid temple. There, we witness a rather dramatic evolution which starts in the Fourth Dynasty and which after only 100 years of development achieves its classic form in the Fifth Dynasty. It continued more or less unchanged until the late Middle Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Sacred space means here the creation of an east-west axis along which is arranged a series of rooms, corridors, halls and courtyards in more or less symmetrical order. Sacred space means also the formation and separation of two distinct centres of cultic activity: the room with the false door, an oblong room orientated east-west, and a room with five shrines, housing five statues, not a closed 'serdab' but an accessible cult chamber. The principles of this layout may be identified as 'axiality', 'east-west orientation' and 'graded distanciation', mediating between inner and outer in a sequence of zones. If we compare this royal architectural layout to private tomb architecture, the difference is obvious. There is no axiality, little east-west orientation and no identifiable sequence of zones leading from outer to inner. If there is any development in monumental private tomb architecture—and indeed there is, e.g. the tomb of Ptah-Shepses at Abusir<sup>7</sup>—it is clearly influenced by the royal layout. The pyramid temple serves as the model for the construction of sacred space.

Its influence on some exceptional tombs such as the tomb

<sup>3</sup> For the tomb architecture of the Old Kingdom see Reisner 1936; Reisner 1942; Alexanian 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Lehmann 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Harpur 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Ricke 1950.

<sup>7</sup> Verner 1977, Reliefs, fig. 1 on p. 7.



of Ptah-Shepses may be interpreted as a step towards sacralisation. The two most important features which private tomb architecture adopts from the pyramid temple are the oblong east–west orientated offering chapel and the placement of the statue in a shrine instead of a serdab. In the Middle Kingdom, the mastaba-type tomb almost disappeared and the rock tomb became the usual form of the monumental tomb. This transition meant another move in sacralisation. The arrangement of the interior chambers of a Middle Kingdom rock tomb follows the principles of royal temple architecture: axiality and distancing. The rooms are arranged along an east–west axis, and a long corridor or passage distances the inner chapel from the outer world. At the end of the chapel, there is usually a niche for the statue.

This is the starting-point for the Theban tomb of the New Kingdom. The typical ‘T’-shaped ground plan of the Theban Tomb accommodates three functions: the cult function in the chapel and in the false door at the southern end of the transverse hall, the passage function in the ‘passage’ and again in the false door, and the memory function in the stela at the northern end of the transverse hall. The passage function occurs twice because it has two different aspects: one is the passage from this world to the other world, from life to death, and the other is the passage from the netherworld to the upperworld, the way back, the Egyptian ideal of ‘coming forth by day’.<sup>8</sup> The passage between transverse hall and chapel symbolises the first aspect, the passage from death to life. This is made clear by the decoration which regularly shows two typical rites of passage: the funerary procession on its south wall and the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth on its north wall. The false door symbolises the passage back to the upper world and the idea of ‘coming forth by day’. The same idea is also expressed by the decoration of the entrance to the tomb. There, we usually find a representation of the tomb owner, leaving the tomb and greeting the sun on the left or southern thickness, and entering the tomb, sometimes with a hymn to the setting sun or Osiris, on the right or northern thickness.<sup>9</sup> The stela, which fulfils the ‘memory function’, usually contains a self-presentation or autobiographical inscription of the deceased.<sup>10</sup> For the secrecy function, the most common solution is still the vertical shaft which leads to the burial chamber and which was blocked and filled after burial. Only very shortly before the reign of Amenhotep III, other devices appear such as staircases (as in TT96, the famous tomb of Sennefer, time of Thutmose IV) and sloping passages (as in TT93, the tomb of Qenamun, time of Amenhotep II). With Amenhotep III, however, this feature becomes regular for the great tombs of the period.<sup>11</sup>

Let me briefly summarise the type of the Theban pre-Amarna tomb in terms of ‘sacred space’. The tomb, one might say, has to accommodate four different centres of sacredness and at the same time four forms in which the

deceased is present: the statue, the false door, the stela and the mummy. The first three are located in the accessible rooms of the tomb and arranged in a triangular form. Stela and false door occupy the northern and southern ends of the transverse hall, and the statue is placed at the west wall of the chapel. The symmetry of the layout is very obvious and also the principle of distancing is evident: a long passage leads from the transverse hall to the chapel with the statue, in a clear analogy with temple architecture. The ground plan of the tomb reflects a construction of space based on the distinction between inner and outer and a division into three zones: the innermost zone of the chapel, the intermediary zone of the passage and the outer zone of the transverse hall and the entrance. The fourth centre of sacredness, the mummy, is placed in the burial chamber and located on a deeper level, which is typically connected to the accessible part by a shaft ending either in the transverse hall or in the forecourt. The tomb is laid out according to two structural principles, one following the distinction between inner and outer and the other one realising the distinction between upper and lower or accessibility and inaccessibility.

In a dissertation recently submitted at Heidelberg, Katharina Brandt was able to show that the false door in Eighteenth Dynasty tombs reflects this structure.<sup>12</sup> Beginning in the Old Kingdom and regularly in the Middle Kingdom, the false door is surrounded by a naos with cornice and torus moulding. This type originated at Saqqara in the Fifth Dynasty and became common in the Sixth Dynasty. The naos frame shows that we are dealing here not just with the representation of a door, but of a whole building belonging to sacred architecture. Torus and cornice are distinctive features of sacredness. In contrast to older types, the Eighteenth Dynasty false door shows a double frame surrounding an inner part with the ‘posts’ and lintel of the door proper. The two frames are inscribed with *htp-dj-njswt* or offering formulae where deities are invoked to give something to the deceased. The deities on the outer frame are usually the sun-god (left) and Osiris (right), and also the sun-god in two forms. The ‘gifts’ consist of receiving offerings and coming forth by day. The sun-god never occurs on the inner frame. Instead, we find Osiris and Anubis. The gifts relate to the ability to leave and to enter the netherworld and happiness in the hereafter. The inscriptions on the posts, the innermost part of the false door, bear formulae that describe the deceased as provided for and protected by the four sons of Horus, the gods of embalming and the usual protectors of the mummy. This part clearly refers to the sarcophagus chamber; the outer frame refers to the entrance of the tomb, to sunlight and offerings that enter the tomb from the outside world, while the inner frame refers to the space between, the accessible cult rooms of the tomb as an interface between here and there, the upper world and the netherworld. The false door is a model of the entire tomb.

<sup>8</sup> For this idea and its increasing importance in the New Kingdom see Assmann 2001, especially chapter 9.

<sup>9</sup> Assmann 1983, xiii–xv.

<sup>10</sup> Hermann 1940.

<sup>11</sup> Assmann 1984; Seyfried 1987a; Seyfried 1987b.

<sup>12</sup> Brandt 2000.



After Amarna, the false door disappears from the Theban Tomb. In its stead, the 'naos stela' takes over. Here, the surrounding naos consists of a frame crowned with a cornice. The traditional combination of cornice and torus moulding has been abandoned. Inside the naos, we find not a door but a stela. If we take the naos frame as a representation of the tomb, its interior structure is symbolised not by a door as a sequence of entrances and passages between inner and outer, but by a stela as a division into an upper and a lower sphere. The stelae usually contain two scenes one above the other. In the upper scene, the deceased is shown in adoration before one or several deities, while in the lower scene he is himself receiving offerings which an officiant presents to him. Out of the two main axes organising the architectural layout of the tomb, the axis inner-outer and the axis upper-lower, it is the vertical axis that is now determining the idea of the tomb as a whole.

This becomes immediately evident as we enter a post-Amarna tomb and cast a glance at the decoration. Here, we frequently observe two sections with scenes, one above the other, sometimes separated by a line of text. The two sections are independent of each other.<sup>13</sup> This principle of wall decoration is a revolutionary innovation; it would never be found in tombs of earlier periods. There, a wall is regularly filled from top to bottom with a coherent tableau which contains several scenes arranged in several 'registers', which, however, are never independent from each other but thematically integrated and, as a rule, bracketed by a larger figure, the tomb owner. The bipartition or tripartition of the wall into two or three horizontal sections is a totally new device, and it is taken from the principle of stela decoration in order to create a vertical axis within the space of the tomb. This vertical axis is immediately related to the construction of sacred space. Usually, the upper section is dedicated to 'sacred' scenes involving representations of gods, and the lower sections to scenes of the funerary cult.

The origin of this new principle of wall decoration in the stela can be proven. TT41 dates from the transitional period between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties when the older principle of wall-filling tableau had already been abandoned, but the new principle of dividing the wall into superimposed horizontal sections had not yet been developed.<sup>14</sup> The abolition of the old scheme is shown by the manner in which scenes continue beyond a corner on another wall—an absolutely impossible feature in pre-Amarna tombs. The scene of the funeral procession fills the western part of the south wall and continues on the west wall, but the corner marks the borderline between what is going on at the tomb and beyond the tomb, in the hereafter. This is the only example I know where the parallelism of events here and events there is expressed by horizontal juxtaposition, with a corner marking the borderline in between.

This tomb contains no less than five examples of the new type of false door stela, all of which are vertically divided into an upper scene, showing the deceased before a deity,

and a lower scene with the deceased receiving offerings. Here, the parallelism between here and there is expressed by vertical superposition. The abundance of stelae in this tomb is a clear attempt to realise the vertical axis. In later tombs, the horizontal partition of the wall is introduced for the same purpose of expressing the parallelism of upper and lower, of the world of the gods and the world of the cult in the tomb.

With the introduction of the vertical axis into the tomb decoration, a new function is added to the traditional four: secrecy, passage, cult and memory: the temple function. The temple function is not just another word for or aspect of what I have called 'cult function', because it is not about serving or worshipping the tomb owner, but about worshipping the gods. The tomb now acquires the aspect of a sacred place where the deceased worships the gods.

The deceased worshipping the gods is a subject that is totally absent from tomb decoration in the Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom and which only appears in the New Kingdom. In pre-Amarna tombs, its location within the decoration is restricted to lintels above doors including the false door, and near the western end of the passage or the chapel, as the goal towards which the funeral procession is heading. The gods represented on lintels are the sun god, Osiris and Anubis, the same deities that are invoked on the false door stela. The gods receiving the funeral procession are Osiris, Anubis and the Western goddess. After Amarna, the number of gods represented in tombs increases drastically and they may be represented everywhere, but preferably in the upper section of the walls. Besides the sun-god in his various forms, Osiris and Anubis, we meet with Ptah, Sekhmet, Sokar, Thoth, Isis, Horus, Hathor, the deified couple Amen-hotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari and many other deities.

The dead in closest proximity to the gods is a motif that is new only in the wall decoration of private tombs, but well attested in other contexts and genres. One might think of naophorous and theophorous statues which appear in the early Eighteenth Dynasty, in the time of Hatshepsut. These statues were probably erected in temples, as a royal favour conceded to very high officials in the hierarchy such as Senenmut. But the institution of the temple statue also realises the idea of being close to god without the representation of a specific deity, simply by being placed in a temple. This institution dates back to the Middle Kingdom. In the funerary sphere, however, this longing for divine presence or closeness to god is expressed rather by inscriptional than by representational means. We find it in inscriptions on sarcophagi, especially in forms of speeches addressed to the dead by deities assuring him of their protection, above all the mother goddess Nut who greets the dead as her son and encloses him in her embrace.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, we find it expressed in many texts belonging to what we are accustomed to call 'funerary literature'. These texts were written inside the coffins during the Middle Kingdom<sup>16</sup> and on papyrus scrolls during the New Kingdom, forming the so-

<sup>13</sup> Assmann 1987.

<sup>14</sup> Assmann 1991.

<sup>15</sup> Rusch 1922.

<sup>16</sup> Faulkner 1973–8.



called Book of the Dead.<sup>17</sup> Common to all these realisations of divine presence is that they belong to the secrecy function, to that part of the tomb which was hermetically sealed and absolutely inaccessible. Funerary literature emerged in the Old Kingdom in form of the Pyramid texts that were inscribed on the walls of the sarcophagus chamber and adjacent rooms.<sup>18</sup> Here, in the hidden sphere of the secrecy function, a whole universe of concepts, forms, genres, and images develops over the centuries, centred around the general idea of the dead enjoying the most intimate intercourse with the divine sphere into which he is integrated or initiated during the ritual of embalmment and mummification. The mummy, the coffin, the burial chamber and the whole textual, symbolic and material equipment of the secret part of the tomb must be understood as the eternalisation of the status which the deceased has reached by means of the ritual. If we interpret the ritual of 'transfiguration' or *s-akhu*, of transforming the dead into a transfigured ancestor spirit, 'akh', as an initiation into secrecy, the secrecy function of the tomb may be interpreted as the realisation of divine presence.

It is precisely this borderline between the inner sphere of secrecy, where the initiated dead enjoys permanently divine presence and even a kind of *unio mystica*, having become Osiris and having returned into the maternal womb of the mother goddess,<sup>19</sup> and the outer spheres of passage, cult and memory, which is drastically redefined and changed after Amarna. Now, the concept of divine presence invades the outer parts of the tomb and dramatically changes both its decoration and its architectural layout.

The most dramatic of these changes concerns the form in which the traditional sphere of secrecy, the burial chamber, is connected to—or separated from—the accessible part of the tomb.<sup>20</sup> The vertical shaft, filled and sealed after burial, gives way to a sloping passage, starting in the chapel or in the transverse hall, but always on the southern side, and leading after several turns, ideally describing a full circle, to the sarcophagus chamber, or, rather, to a chamber or a spot in front of it, because the burial chamber itself seems to have been blocked after burial. It took us several years to realise that in the Ramesside period, this comfortable form of reaching the burial chamber had become the normal one and had completely replaced the traditional shaft. This change seems to have occurred already in the time of Amenhotep III; in Amarna, all the tombs already show the new type. We started our work at Thebes in the tomb of Nefersekheru (TT296), later published by Erika Feucht.<sup>21</sup> There, a doorway leads from the cult chapel to the sloping passage. At first, it seemed to us incredible that this could have been the original function of the doorway. To think that instead of having to re-excavate a filled shaft in order to get to the burial chamber, which would have been the traditional way of access, one had only to open a wooden door and to

descend very comfortably a winding staircase—this, at first, seemed to us impossible. But later, we found many similar solutions.

The first association that came to my mind was the description of the rites for the Sokar festival in TT50, where we are told that the burial chamber has to be opened for a period of 8 days:

Month 4, *Akhet*, Day 18

The day of moistening barley

To open the burial chamber (*hnky.t*) for Osiris NN starting from this day until day 25, altogether 8 days.

Spell to recite for the burial chamber

(Follows BD spell 169 = CT spell 1).<sup>22</sup>

I was always intrigued by this strange prescription. How could it have been possible to annually reopen the burial chamber at the bottom of a shaft filled with rubbish? The new feature of the sloping passage seemed the solution of this problem.

Admittedly, the words *ss hnky.t* also permit another translation. The group *ss* can be read *sn* 'to open' and *ss* 'to spread'. *hnky.t* can mean the 'bier of embalmment'. Thus we may also translate the passage as 'spreading out the bier of embalmment for NN' instead of 'opening the burial chamber of NN'. In any event, however, the prescription refers to the fabrication and subsequent burial of a 'corn mummy', and the sloping passage and the lower chambers would provide a perfect stage for such celebrations. The replacement of the filled shaft with the sloping passage and subterranean chambers enlarges the layout of the tomb by a lower level, a 'crypt' and one cannot help thinking of the Sokar rites at Saqqara or *R3-st3w* 'the ending of the sloping passages', in the *st3y.t* or 'secret place' which could very well have been such a crypt.

Karl Seyfried proposed a different interpretation.<sup>23</sup> He sees in the sloping passage a symbolic representation of the netherworld, especially the Sokar section as shown in hours 4 and 5 of *Amduat*. It did not occur to us then that our interpretations converge in the decisive point, that is, Sokar and the *Shetyt*. The *Shetyt* could very well have been a symbolic representation of the correspondent section of the netherworld and any imitation of the *Shetyt* in a private tomb as well. The cavern of Sokar is the crypt of the netherworld. Thus, the sloping passage in Ramesside tombs could very well be both a stage for the performance of the rites of the Sokar festival and a symbolic representation of the Sokar cavern in the netherworld.

The crypt, as just mentioned, adds a second level to the accessible part of the tomb. This is another device to introduce and to emphasise the vertical axis. In addition to the axis of inner and outer, there is now the axis of upper and lower which organises not only the decoration, but also the

<sup>17</sup> Faulkner 1985.

<sup>18</sup> Faulkner 1969.

<sup>19</sup> Assmann 1989.

<sup>20</sup> Assmann 1984; Seyfried 1987a; Seyfried 1987b.

<sup>21</sup> Feucht 1985.

<sup>22</sup> Hari 1985, 41 ff., pl. XXXIII, ll. 104–8.

<sup>23</sup> See n. 11 above.



architecture of the tomb. There is even a third level added, not below but above the traditional chapel. This is the pyramid on top of the tomb, which now becomes a regular feature of the monumental rock tomb. This has been shown convincingly by Friederike Seyfried (then Kampp) who left no stone unturned in investigating the Theban necropolis and her pyramid hunting.<sup>24</sup> Karl Seyfried aptly coined the term 'tomb with three levels' (Drei-Ebenen-Grab) for the Theban rock tomb of the Ramesside era. The upper level consists of the pyramid and any kind of superstructure, including pylons and courts outside the tomb; to the second level belong the rooms forming the traditional 'T'-shaped chapel; and the third level is formed by the sloping passage and the subterranean rooms including the burial chamber, the 'crypt' of the tomb.

Such a fundamental change in the concept of the tomb cannot proceed without corresponding changes in the funerary beliefs and ideas about the hereafter. If we look in the texts for anything that could correspond to this new orientation, away from the world of the living and directed towards the world of the gods, we experience a great surprise. In the funerary texts, the wish to 'go forth by day' and to return to the world of the living becomes more and more dominant. Are we confronted with a strange kind of dialectics? The more 'that-worldly' orientated the tomb architecture and decoration, the more 'this-worldly' orientated seem the texts which speak of this world and the ways to return there.

The deceased wishes to return especially to four places in this world: to the *tomb* in order to receive the offerings, to his *town house* in order to see again his wife and children, to his *garden* in order to recreate himself in the shadow of his sycamores and to certain *feasts* such as the feast of Osiris at Abydos, the Sokar feast at Memphis, the Feast of the Valley at Thebes and the feast of erecting the *djed* pillar at Busiris. In a more general sense, he wishes to return every day to see the sun god. The return to earth fulfils not only the desire for drink and food, light, air and company, but also for the sight of the gods, of the sun god every day and of other gods on the occasion of their festivals. The dead person wants to return to the earth in order to follow the gods and to worship them. And this is precisely what the tomb decoration is about. The tomb provides for him a place on earth where he can worship the gods and be close to them.

This concept of a life after death, spent on earth rather than in the hereafter, corresponds closely to what the texts in the Amarna tombs tell us about the funerary beliefs during this period of revolutionary monotheism.<sup>25</sup> In Amarna, the idea of a hereafter, a netherworld and a transcendent sphere of divine presence is totally rejected. The dead do not pass into another world, but remain in this one, sleeping in their tombs and going forth by day visiting the temples and gardens. All these tombs replace the shaft with the sloping passage. There are neither false doors nor stelae in the Amarna tombs, only statues. The Amarna tomb is certainly

not conceived of as a place where the dead worship the gods, because there are no gods in Amarna except the sun god who can be worshipped only in the light outside the tomb. The tomb is no place of divine presence. But it is a place of the deceased's presence; he is supposed to leave it every morning and to return there every evening much in the same way as in the tombs at Thebes. In the Amarna tombs, the deceased, inside the tomb, is close to the king who is the main personage in the decoration, and in the Theban tombs, the deceased is close to the gods.

The Amarna tombs show the sloping passage, but neither pyramids nor the closed, sometimes sunken courts (which seem already excluded by the topographical situation). At Thebes, the court seems particularly important. Some tombs even show rich sculptural decoration. TT41, dating from the transitional time between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, has pillars with mummiform figures of the deceased placed in niches. TT183 has similar pillars with statues of the deceased, not mummiform but in his normal appearance, and TT106 shows the tomb owner in his attire of a vizier. Texts and representations show the court of the tomb as the place where the mummy of the deceased is 'dressed before Re', i.e. exposed to the sunlight, and where the ritual of opening the mouth is performed. The court is the place of transition and initiation, purification and consecration. The rites in the court prepare the deceased to enter the tomb as a sacred place in complete purity. This is also the reason why the scenes of the funerary rites and of the passage into the other world are now located in the outer part of the tomb. The court has now become the place of transition and of the passage into the other world, which begins already on the threshold to the inner rooms.

It is the temple function of the tomb that requires a court. A temple must be 'prefaced' by a closed court, serving as an intermediary zone between the divine apartment and the outer world and providing a place for rites to be performed in open air such as the 'erection of the mummy before Re', a rite frequently represented in the scenes and sometimes mentioned in the texts, and the preparation of a corn mummy during the Khoiak rites of the Sokar festival. However, the tomb serves as a temple for the deceased, not as an object, but as a subject of worship. It is conceived of as a place where he worships the gods and not as a place where he receives god-like worship. Some tombs even go so far as to place statues of gods in the chapel but this seems to be rather exceptional during the New Kingdom and only becomes a regular feature in the tombs of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties, where the idea of the tomb as a sacred place reaches its most extreme and elaborate realisation.<sup>26</sup>

In the light of this reconstruction of the development of the Egyptian tomb in the New Kingdom, the 'tomb palaces' of the Late Period lose much of their isolated position in the history of Egyptian tomb architecture and appear as the logical climax of a continuous development. The Ramesside

<sup>24</sup> Kampp 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Hornung 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Eigner 1984.



tomb now appears as a type of its own, serving as an intermediary between the tomb of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the 'tomb palace' of the Late Period. It is as far removed from the Eighteenth Dynasty type as from the Late Period type. Its greatest innovation, when compared with the pre-Amarna tomb, is the temple function and the introduction of a crypt and a closed court. The Late Period tomb adopts and elaborates both the temple function and the features of crypt and court, where one or two pylons now become regular elements. Its decisive innovation is a new kind of court not before but within the tomb, in addition to the one or two upper courts. The temple aspect of the tomb is restricted to the rooms behind the inner court. This clear differentiation between an outer and an inner part of the tomb allows for a reintroduction of biographical representation into the outer part of the tomb, which plays a very important role in the tombs of the Late Period. In the Ramesside tombs, as we have seen, this aspect of tomb decoration is almost absent.

We are dealing here with a fundamental morphological shift in the history of Egyptian tomb architecture and decoration, a shift of paradigm, so to speak, not on the plane of knowledge and scientific thought for which Thomas Kuhn had coined that term, but on the plane of architecture and iconography. We have explained these changes in terms of a general 'sacralisation' of the tomb. The Ramesside tomb is now understood first of all as a sacred place where the

deceased enjoys the proximity of the gods. The deceased was always believed to enjoy divine presence in the hereafter, but the symbolisation of this idea in terms of iconic and textual articulation had always been restricted to the secluded sphere of the burial chamber. Divine presence lay beyond every accessible space within the tomb. After Amarna, it is turning outside. Themes that were restricted to the burial chamber, to the Book of the Dead placed with the mummy in the coffin, now occur on the walls and sometimes on the ceilings of the chapel. Not only the burial chamber but the whole chapel of the tomb, comprising one, two, three or more rooms, is now conceived as a place of divine presence where the deceased worships the gods. This explains the new importance of the court: the court is now the place of transition, purification, consecration and initiation into the temple which is the tomb. Especially where the court is closed on the east side by a pylon, the temple symbolism is obvious.

It is to the great benefit of Egyptology that it permits this kind of 'morphological interpretation', combining and integrating observations on the plane of architecture, decoration, ritual and texts. The fact that Egyptian monuments are decorated with scenes and inscriptions makes them readable in a quite unique way. Architecture in Egypt is a 'discourse' which can be read and reconstructed. This paper has presented a 'reading' of the discourse of tomb architecture in one of its most crucial and revelatory phases.

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