Visual indexicality in the private tomb chapels of the Theban necropolis: on flipping iconographic units as a compositional tool[1]

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ABSTRACT

"Copies" of visual representations are abundant in ancient Egyptian iconographic environments such as the private necropoleis. The intericonic relationship(s) that they share with their model(s) form a wide web that constitutes a large part of the so-called repertoire. While they almost always include variation, their creators sometimes used to flip them during the composition process so that they present as the inverted version of their respective model. From an image reception perspective it could be relevant to examine their possible citational value in terms of either quotative or inferential evidentials, taking into account the beholder's role in the actualisation of such indexical potential. To that end, the article aims to explore the value we, as Egyptologists, confer to these images and balance it with ancient outlooks, particularly that of the audience(s) which the creators targeted (on behalf of patrons and commissioners). The context of the private tomb chapels of the New Kingdom Theban necropolis is an ideal iconographic environment to explore in this regard. Among several concepts which could be easily applied to other iconographic environments and visual cultures, the article proposes to distinguish between usual instantiations of iconographic models, sometimes referred to as standards, and "identifying-copies" (following Den Doncker 2017). As they carry a strong connection to the identity of the model's owner, these identifying-copies were therefore most probably conceived to implement their commissioner's visual rhetoric of self-fashioning.

المؤشرات المرئية بمقاصير مقابر الأفراد بجبانة طيبة: حول إبدال الوحدات التصويرية كأداة تركيبية *

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الملخص

تتوافر «نسخ» من التصاوير المرئية بكثرة بالمناظر المنقوشة على مقابر الأفراد من مصر القديمة. تشكل العلاقة آو العلاقات البينية التى تشترك فيها تلك المناظر فى نموذجها فى شبكة واسعة تشكل جزءاً كبيراً مما يسمى المرجع. وعلى الرغم من أنها

دائماً في معظم الأحيان تتضمن تبايناً، فقد استخدم منشئوها أحياناً طريقة لإبدالها أثناء عملية التصوير بحيث يقدمونها كنسخة معكوسة من نموذجهم الخاص. ومن خلال منظور استقبال الصورة، قد يكون من المناسب دراسة قيمتها الاستدلالية المحتملة من حيث الأدلة الاقتباسية أو الاستنتاجية، مع الأخذ فى الاعتبار دور المتلقى فى تحقيق هذه الإمكانات الفهرسية. وحول هذا الأمر، تهدف تلك المقالة إلى استكشاف القيمة التى نمنحها كعلماء مصريات، لهذه الصور وتوازنها مع النظرات القديمة، لا سيما الجمهور الذى استهدفه المبدعون (نيابة عن أصحاب المقابر أو من ينوب عنهم). يُعد سياق المقاصير الصغيرة الخاصة بمقبرة الدولة الحديثة فى طيبة بيئة تصويرية مثالية للتعمق فى هذا الأمر. من بين العديد من المفاهيم التى يمكن تطبيقها بسهولة على الوسائط التصويرية والثقافات المرئية الأخرى، تقترح المقالة التمييز بين التصاوير المعتادة للنماذج التصويرية، والتي يشار إليها أحياناً بالمعايير، و «تحديد النسخ» (وفقًا لـ Den Doncker 2017)، والتى تحمل علاقة قوية بهوية مالك النموذج، وبالتالى ربما تم تصميمها لتنفيذ الخطاب البصرى للمفوض عن التصميم الشخصى.

الكلمات الدالة

النسخ التصويرية والبرامج – المؤشرات المرئية – استقبال المناظر – طيبة

Egyptologists and tourists visiting ancient Egypt's decorated architecture are generally aware of the tendency of ancient Egyptian art production to be comprised of a large number of similar, if not identical, iconographic units from one monument to another, across the millennia that this visual culture spans. The ancient Egyptian iconographic repertoire can be characterised by a definite number of recurrent themes. These themes, however, fostered typological variation in which, apart from the style of execution, ancient artists found many possibilities to express some sense of creativity and develop their own artistic individuality in certain contexts, as seen from their perspective.[2] Conversely, most likely still under the influence of the Classical heritage that must have conditioned some form of Western "visuality",[3] contemporary beholders are not necessarily used to detecting and appreciating these variations and developments of types from their viewpoint. Commenting on one of the first scientific assessments of ancient Egyptian art – that of Antoine Chrysotome Quatremère de Quincy – a modern scholar's recent discussion (Petridou 2001: 183) on the issue of the Egyptian artists' so-called "defect of imitation" (Quatremère de Quincy 1803: 237) betrays this apparent cultural difficulty to engage with ancient Egypt's visual culture, freed from this substantial heritage: "(…) Cette étape primitive est évidente dans toutes les formes d'art de ce peuple. Elle est dictée aussi par le fait que l'artiste égyptien a choisi, pour des raisons politiques et religieuses, de ne pas améliorer son art".[4]

Beyond the fact that this statement today seems clearly off base, the correlation between formal reproductivity and seeming traditionalism is worth examination. Moreover, as it has been recently well demonstrated that in terms of patterns apparently reproductive traditions

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2   For a recent examination of the global issue of image transmission in ancient Egyptian funerary art production, see Pieke (2022). On iconographic themes, types, scenes, motifs, *etc.*, see Arnst – Schulz (2021).

3   Defined by Whitney Davis as the "culturality of vision", that is, the cultural part of vision and the visual part of culture (Davis 2011: 8).

4   "(…) This primitive stage is obvious in any form of art of this civilisation. It is also determined by the fact that the Egyptian artist chose, for political and religious reasons, not to improve his art."

did involve productivity in several respects (Gillen [ed.] 2017), one may wonder how to approach the evidence – that is, what glasses should we wear to perceive changes in iconographic traditions and appreciate their productive aspects? Not only for our pleasure, dealing with this methodological problem can help account for dynamics that, as will be discussed here, were stimulated and justified ideologically, thus challenging the very definition of traditionalism as conservatism, two concepts often associated with ancient Egypt.

Such a reception process always depends on the perspective we adopt, not only as a scholar conscious of what can be at stake epistemologically, but also simply and precisely as a mere beholder when it comes to discussing art and visual representations. What do we know of an image aside its form and iconicity? What agency and meaning do we then possibly confer to it? In terms of forms, as types are to some extent exceptionally recurrent, what value should we assign to images that appear to emulate others, which are therefore considered as models? Can we somehow absolutely assess that an image is the actual copy of some model? Tackling this issue theoretically, under the prism of some sort of formalistic approach, we might indeed not exclude that, in sole respect of types, the statue of the Osiris-Antinous from Hadrian's villa in Tivoli could be a copy of the serdab statue of Djoser from Saqqara. Or we could conclude that the designer of the representation of Ptolemy XII smiting the enemies on the first pylon of the temple of Horus in Edfu modelled it on an ivory jar label of Den. For all intents and purposes, as concerns the ancient Egyptian repertoire, the very notion of *copy* quickly flies in the face of formality and representation codes, and, most importantly, the system of artistic creation and composition.[5]

INVERTED ICONOGRAPHIC UNITS: CREATORS AND BEHOLDERS

The emic value of the concept of iconographic types, as components of the ancient Egyptian repertoire, is particularly significant if we think of the artists not only as creators or designers, but also as upstream beholders facing models, namely mental images but also actual representations (on monumental supports) with *indexical potential*.[6] Taken out of context, that is,

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5   See Old to New Kingdom case studies in Pieke (2022).

6   On the notion of index as sign value – briefly, a "sign whose presence implies the occurrence of some other event or objet (…), thus bringing indications that were not meant to signify at first, but finally do" (Angenot 2015: 106) – I refer to Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory (Hartshorne – Weiss – Burks [eds.] 1965). On the use of semiotics as a method in art history, the reader could refer, among others, to Bal – Bryson (1991); Groupe μ (1994); Pfisterer (ed.) (2011: 408–414). For the application of Peirce's theory to ancient Egyptian images, see Gillen (*forthcoming*). For a broader methodological application of semiotics to ancient Egyptian art, see notably Tefnin (1991); Angenot (2015; including an overview of semiotically oriented studies in Egyptology). Depending upon the beholder who may or not activate it through recognition, the indexical potential of an image could be defined as the capacity of this representation to refer inter alia to its original model, thereby pointing to the latter's possible social significance to the extent that it is embedded in an individual's visual commemorative setting. Of course, references to other external objects, regarding for example the material/technical aspect of the representation, can be intentionally conveyed, then possibly recognised. In any case, the index remains potentiality until a certain beholder considers it

the iconographic repertoire as substantiated in sacred architecture's decorative programmes, the words of the Eleventh Dynasty scribe and sculptor Irtysen on this matter obviously validate the aforementioned notion of *imitation* (see Laboury 2017: 252–253).[7] Nevertheless, this imitation is not presented as a defect, but as a highly valuable competence a master has to possess: "(…) I am an artist skilled in his art, a master in his knowledge. I know the walking of a man's statue, the gait of a woman's statue, the postures of eleven birds, the inclination of the one who strikes a single captive, the gaze of a man (turned) towards his fellow, the expression of fear of the (defeated) leaders, the carriage of the arms of one who harpoons the hippopotamus, the gait of one who runs (…)" (translation adapted from Mathieu 2016: 10–11).

In many rich iconographic environments, such as the Theban and Memphite private necropoleis, it is not surprising to come across iconographic units that present as nearly exact inverted replications of others (figs. 1–2). It could well be argued that these inversions – which assumedly link a copy to a model – are just purely instantiations of iconographic types stemming from the aforesaid repertoire that the painters accessed through memory and experience, as implied in Irtysen's statement. However, it seems that in several cases the formal connections are sufficiently numerous, the type relatively uncommon, and, above all, the *intericonic* context, or web, suitably limited to render the presumed connection between a copy and a model highly plausible (Laboury 2017: 236–239), if not intentional or deliberately conspicuous in the eyes of

Fig. 1   Tomb of Puyemre (TT 39); Hatshepsut – Thutmose III. Fowling scene: giving the signal for pulling the net (after Davies 1922: pl. XV)

meaningful (and efficient in terms of visual performance). Furthermore, it can be wondered whether the commissioner and/or creator of the representation consciously elaborated such a potential. Or does it only belong to the beholder's own reception?

7   Stela Louvre C 14.

Fig. 2 Tomb of Nebenkemet (TT 256); Amenhotep II. Fowling scene: giving the signal for pulling the net (photo A. Den Doncker, H. Tavier, © University of Liège)

certain initiated visitors to the funerary chapels.[8] Although it is possible to prove through art historical analysis that such intericonic connection does exist, and might have therefore been intentionally suggested by the artist (involving or not the commissioner), it is in effect only the actual beholder who eventually acknowledges, and thereby determines in terms of meaning, a certain indexical value to the copy – and the Egyptologist is no different in this respect.

Hence, we should take care to avoid any methodological confusion between 1) the creator's intentions and the consequent intentionality of the work (especially as pointing implicitly to some model that – it is to be expected – a certain knowledgeable audience would be able to recognise), 2) a passive *theoretical* beholder who, allegedly, the image is meant to orient somehow autonomously towards the meaning it conveys through perception (Verbovsek 2015: 141–149 based on Funch 1997),[9] and 3) the manifold audience that would be actually facing the representation in question and engage with it in a variety of ways, according, *inevitably*, to

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8   On the concept of intericonicity and its use in art history, see also Busch (1977); Zuschlag (2005); Pfisterer (ed.) (2011: 208–211); Isekenmeier (2013); Arrivé (2015); Arnst (2021).

9   On such immanent and almost de-individualised beholder, and the idea that the work of art (thus the artist) is somehow able to *determine* any aesthetical reception, see also Verbovsek (2005 and 2011); Fitzenreiter (2011: 7); Müller (2006: 47). On the methodology of the aesthetic of reception in art history, see Kemp (1998). For a clearer distinction between, on the one hand, the owner/user (= commissioner) working with the conceptor/creator of the image (= artist), and, on the other hand, its various recipients as the interpreters, see Schulz (2014); Angenot (2015: 116–117).

a large number of parameters tied to individuality and unpredictable contingencies.[10] We may thus gauge the intentionality of such assumedly inverted replications in terms of reception and attempt to approach the artist's (hereinafter referred to as the "painter"), or the commissioner's, possible underlying intentions in consideration of a certain targeted audience capable of noticing and giving meaning to them.

EVOLVING ICONOGRAPHIC TRADITIONS: INTERICONIC WEBS AND THE DETERMINATION OF THEIR COMPONENTS IN TERMS OF EVIDENTIALS

Coming back to the notion of limited intericonic contexts, within which Dimitri Laboury (2017) was able to define intericonic connections between a so-far relatively small number of iconographic units sharing clear formal similarities, the example of the scene of pulling flax as a minor theme of the broad category of agricultural scenes, well illustrates the issue of intentionality with respect to replications, or rather copies.[11] In this regard, whereas the following paragraphs might seem a bit stodgy, the Theban tradition of the scene is worth examining in some detail. While Laboury is right to plead for intericonicity as regards the ancient Egyptian mode of iconographic composition *par excellence*, it is indeed still tempting to look, as he suggests, for citational relationships in such contexts (Laboury 2017: 251–254). As concerns apparently simple stemmata[12] like that of the scene of pulling flax, the concepts of *quotative* and *inferential* evidentials, borrowed from linguistic terminology for methodological purpose, can help sort out the intericonic relationships and assume moreover some artistic intentionality and indexical value to apparent copies.[13]

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10 The diversity of these visitors, from highly literate scribes and priests to illiterate workers, is well attested in the corpus of the Appeals to the living, for example in that of Nefersekheru (Zawyet Sultan), dated to the reign of Ramesses II: "(…) repeat the writings so that the illiterates and the workers know what is written on the walls of his tomb (…)" (Osing 1992: 43–52). In addition, those visitors included the professional milieu involved in tomb commissioning (future tomb owners and subordinates) and production (executants and patrons).

11 It is not easy to find the appropriate term in this respect. To some extent, exact replications are very rarely attested among the ancient Egyptian iconographic repertoire (Vernus 2010: 108; quoted by Laboury 2017: 238, footnote 22). The question will be raised again here below, as in some cases the primary intention of the draughtsman involved in the technical procedure of copying was the exact replication of the model.

12 Understand *stemma imaginum* as the "genealogical" classification of iconographic units within a certain repertoire defining an iconographic tradition. For the relevance of this terminology to the study of the transmission of iconographic units, see Laboury (2017: 247).

13 For an introduction to evidentiality in linguistics, I refer to Aikhenvald (2004), whose typology is of course largely adapted to our simpler subject. Evidentiality is a grammatical category "whose primary meaning is information source": in many languages, any form of statement has to "specify the type of source on which it is based – for example, whether the speaker saw it, or heard it, or inferred it from indirect evidence, or learnt it from someone else" (Aikhenvald 2004: 1). An indirect evidential can be described as "quotative" as soon as the reported information comprises an explicit mention of the source. It remains "inferential" when the conclusion is only based

Basically, the question is: did the painter intend to quote the model he used and, thereby, its original author, or owner (= commissioner) according to the eponymous nature of the ancient Egyptian image (Assmann 1991: 139)? If he did, then what audience did he expect to detect the definite model and appreciate the *quotation* as a valuable asset of the decorative programme (= the index)? Who was the targeted beholder? Incidentally, it is clear that the professional milieu engaged actively in image production (above all draughtsmen and painters), especially in the same iconographic environment, that is, the Theban necropolis, was capable of spotting artistic individualities among the tomb chapel decorations (via calculated or accidental idiosyncratic stylistic features such as technical signatures, compositional habits, use of colours, distinctive iconographic details, *etc.*)[14] much more than any other person browsing their decorated walls. Obviously, Egyptologists working in such iconographic environments should be aware of their own experience and knowledge, inevitably increasing their tendency to recognise, as we will see, quotative instead of inferential evidentials. In some cases, it has indeed to be assumed that the painter wanted to refer explicitly to a determined model, yet somehow addressing *only* the members of his own restricted community, or perhaps some of his colleagues, through their very specific socio-professional *visuality*.[15]

If not, did the painter use some indefinite model, either stemming from his own iconographic memory or mental repertoire like Irtysen, or, taken from an actual monumental support which he did not want to refer to explicitly? In this case of instantiation of iconographic standards (still allowing variation), although such a model might have been identifiable by some of the aforementioned knowledgeable professionals, we could rather speak of *inferential* evidentials when discussing the intericonic relation between some iconographic unit (rather than a *copy* as seen from the painter's standpoint) and its model: just as the painter did not provide the source of the iconographic statement he produced, their relationship is not stated explicitly. Even though the latter existed somewhere, not as a mental construction, but as an actual model on a concrete monumental support, it was simply not conveyed.

STUDY CASE 1. THE SCENE OF PULLING FLAX IN THE TOMB OF NAKHT (TT 52): CONCEPTION AND RECEPTION

As for the scene of pulling flax, showing "a harvesting worker jumping on a rod in order to close the lid of a bag brimful of grains" (Laboury 2017: 236), the difficulty lies precisely in 1) the distinction of either quotative or inferential evidentials, and 2) the definition of models and copies within the stemma, namely, the direction of their apparently direct filiation, as it seems clear in any event that the painters at issue indeed made use of actual models in this

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on visual or tangible evidence, which fits our subject (Aikhenvald 2004: 63–64). Of course, in our case, knowledge and reasoning also play a large part in the qualification of the evidence, that is, the recognition of the index. To that extent, another type of evidential, namely the "assumptive" evidential, could be combined with inference into a single type.

14 See for example the study case of the painter of the vizier Amenemopet (TT 29) by Laboury – Tavier (2016); Laboury (2012). For analogous analyses of painterly practices on Old Kingdom material, see Pieke (2021).

15 See footnote 3. For other expressions of socio-professional visualities, see Den Doncker (*forthcoming*).

case since formal similarities between tiny specific details are significantly striking. As Lise Manniche aptly addressed in her discussion on the very close similarity between the agricultural scene of the tomb of Wensu (TT A4) (some fragments thereof are preserved in the Louvre; see also Laboury 2017: 241–247) and the tomb of Pahery at Elkab (T Elkab 3), it remains problematic to identify between two similar representations which is the model and which is the copy, in addition to being confronted with the issue of the missing data: "(…) though what caused their tombs, about 82 km apart, to be similar is puzzling. It is even difficult to establish if one of them was the prototype of the other (…). Apart from the fact that one tomb is painted, the other is in relief, a great number of individual figures are absolutely identical. Either one was copied from the other, or they both copied the same original" (Manniche 1988: 85–86).

Copy or model? About such attribution and resulting interpretations

As the second issue, the definition of models and copies within their respective stemma should be first discussed in order to introduce properly the principle of iconographic inversion leading seemingly to flipped representations – again as seen from a particular category of beholder: an Egyptologist who has spent hours in these tomb chapels and whose visual memory and knowledge doubtless rely on a large photographic database. In the case of Wensu and Pahery, the actual distance between the two monuments is indeed instantly shortened as their decorations come into sight jointly on a computer screen.

Laboury's demonstration of the intericonic relationships between the different versions of the scene of pulling flax in the context of the Theban necropolis is based on the identification of distinctive transformations (including inversion) of formal elements, adding to contextual data (Laboury 2017: 236–239, fig. 4). It begins with the now famous version of the tomb of Nakht (TT 52), dated to the time of Thutmose IV on stylistic grounds (fig. 3) (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 99 (2) II).[16] According to the author, who follows Christine Beinlich-Seeber and Abdel Ghaffar

Fig. 3   Tomb of Nakht (TT 52); Thutmose IV – Amenhotep III. Scene of pulling flax (after Shedid – Seidel 1996: 35)

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16 Some scenes of TT 52 are stylistically closer to tomb chapel decorations dated to the reign of Amenhotep III, for example TT 78 (long hall), TT 139 or TT 161, see Hartwig (2004: 201). For a descriptive analysis of the scene in question, see Shedid – Seidel (1996: 23–25).

Shedid's art-historical analysis of the scene in question (Beinlich-Seeber – Shedid 1987: 48), Nakht's version, which includes the distinctive motif of the jumping worker, can be tracked down to the earlier tomb of Userhat (TT 56), dated to the reign of Amenhotep II (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 111 (3) V). While the formal reinterpretation of the same theme in TT 52 presents some artistic qualities (or "improvements" considering TT 56 as the direct model), which can be "objectively" defined from a scientific perspective, Laboury argues that this particularly sophisticated formula "was deemed aesthetically effective as it elicited emulation among colleagues" (Laboury 2017: 237).

Although such assessment seems to be influenced not only by the admitted artistic quality of the motif but also by the modern celebrity and singularity of TT 52, owing to the excellent state of preservation of its paintings, the fact that Nakht's version would have already been exceptionally valued for its aesthetical qualities in the Eighteenth Dynasty can in fact only be assumed in regard to the stemma it seemingly generated as a consequence (see here below) in more or less nearby tomb chapels of the necropolis. This is to say that epistemologically, it is worth taking into account the very gap that is at stake between the etic and the emic outlooks on the representation, respectively the scientific art-historical analyses of the artistic quality of TT 52 version as compared to that of TT 56 and the ancient reception of it as, presumably, only substantiated implicitly in the later versions of the same scene which form the whole stemma. Considering the apparent "success" of a supposed iconographic prototype, it could still be asked who, in ancient times, was able, or expected, to notice it.

Supporting his idea that the tomb of Nakht (TT 52) (or its unknown painter) was famous in ancient times, Laboury mentions the relief of the royal cup-bearer Tjawy preserved in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts,[17] on which anyone now acquainted with Theban tomb chapel decorations would indeed recognise the three "well-known" female musicians of TT 52 (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 100 (3) IV; illustrated in *e.g.* Davies 1917: 57–59, pl. XV; Shedid – Seidel 1996: 17, 21, 28–29, 52; Hartwig 2004: 103). This parallel, however, does not establish any citational intention from the sculptor or commissioner of the relief and neither does it indicate the consequently alleged celebrity of TT 52. Such assumption rather takes it for granted, also bypassing the problem of the missing data. On the one hand, the alleged celebrity of the tomb chapel is used to subsume the indexical value of the motif on Tjawy's relief. On the other, the iconographic parallel is considered to point out this celebrity. Besides, what if these three musicians did simply not originate from TT 52?

In the same line of reasoning, Valérie Angenot (2012) has discussed the iconographic and stylistic similarity of the three musicians to a possible inverted model in the nearby tomb of Djeserkareseneb (TT 38) (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 70 (6) II; Davies 1963: 6–7, pl. VI), also dated to the time of Thutmose IV, so that no chronological indication can be used to support the assessment. She presumes that: "In this specific context, however, the styles of both tombs are so similar that it is impossible to determine exactly which of these contemporaneous works inspired the other. However, the accomplished and perfected character of the painting of Nakht

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17 MFA 1972.651, dated to late Eighteenth or early Nineteenth Dynasty, perhaps coming from Abydos (Simpson 1972: 69). Equally, the same group of female musicians can be observed, although in another order, on a block from the tomb of Ptahmay at Giza, dated to the reign of Akhenaten (see Zivie 1975: 291–292, pl. 51).

suggests it is the latest. The version of Nakht was also probably recognized as a masterpiece by its creator or by the artist's peer, as it was covered with a varnish in antiquity" (Angenot 2012: 53).

The author utilised the same somewhat fuzzy notion of improvement to define the direction of the filiation, in this case the paternity of TT 52 to be found in TT 38 version. Similarly, Laboury already argued that the style of TT 38 was "still paratactic" (Laboury 1997: 64).[18] To balance such a view, it might in fact be equally considered that the TT 38 version was simply executed by a less experienced painter, perhaps from the same workshop or group of painters, who tried to mimic TT 52 version as best he could.[19] In this sense, the addition of the figure of the little girl dancing between the lute player and the flutist could be well understood (or meant to be appreciated) as an iconographic improvement of the model (see here below).

As for the varnish applied on the three musicians, it cannot properly serve as evidence pointing to their celebrity as "masterpiece", to the extent that it was almost certainly applied by the painter himself,[20] as already suggested by Norman de Garis Davies, who raised the idea that the painter varnished the motif because "he regarded it with especial pride" (Davies 1917: 57, footnote 4). Moreover, beyond the fact that such assumption, again, carries glaring modern projections onto the figures' significance, it seems likely that in such a case the scented resin-based varnish instead imparted an olfactory dimension to the depiction of these anointed female figures, while visually evoking the resulting glossy aspect of their wigs and complexions (Den Doncker – Tavier 2018: 18).

To return to the scene of pulling flax, while defined upon a priori reliable art-historical criteria (Laboury 2017: 237–239), the intericonic relationships between the TT 52 version and its presumed copies appear hitherto to be valid, despite the difficulties stemming from the inefficient chronological boundaries within the suggested reconstruction of the stemma (the absence of cartouche and vague stylistic dating, particularly the frequent label "Thutmose IV – Amenhotep III"). Therefore, regarding form as the only evidence, it seems that the painters basically proceeded with recurring adaptive transformation formulae, namely, addition, duplication, slight modifications, and inversion of iconographic elements (Den Doncker 2012: 31; Laboury 2017: 239, fig. 4). As seemingly elaborating on the TT 52 version with some idea of development or expansion, no exact copy of the latter has been identified up till now within the repertoire. However, the formal connections are quite clear, especially if the tomb chapel containing the copy lies in the direct vicinity of TT 52, which is at least the case of the tomb of Khaemhat (TT 57) (and of TT 38 as well).

Contextualising copies: topography and audiences
Intericonic compositional processes leading to iconographic patchworks occur preferably in relatively limited areas. This either suggests that the neighbouring monumental landscape was used through convenience and opportunity as a source of archives (see for example Kruchten –

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18 Relating to *parataxis*, namely, the fact that the elements of the composition are set down successively with no clear indication of their spatial relationship.

19 It is tempting to recall Whitney Davis's important methodological reminder: "To date a picture does not show whether the picture presumes and solicits an archaic, a classical, or a modern temporality or significance". On such difficulties, see Davis (2003: 31–33).

20 As evidenced notably in the tomb of Qenamun (TT 93) (see Den Doncker 2019: 181–183).
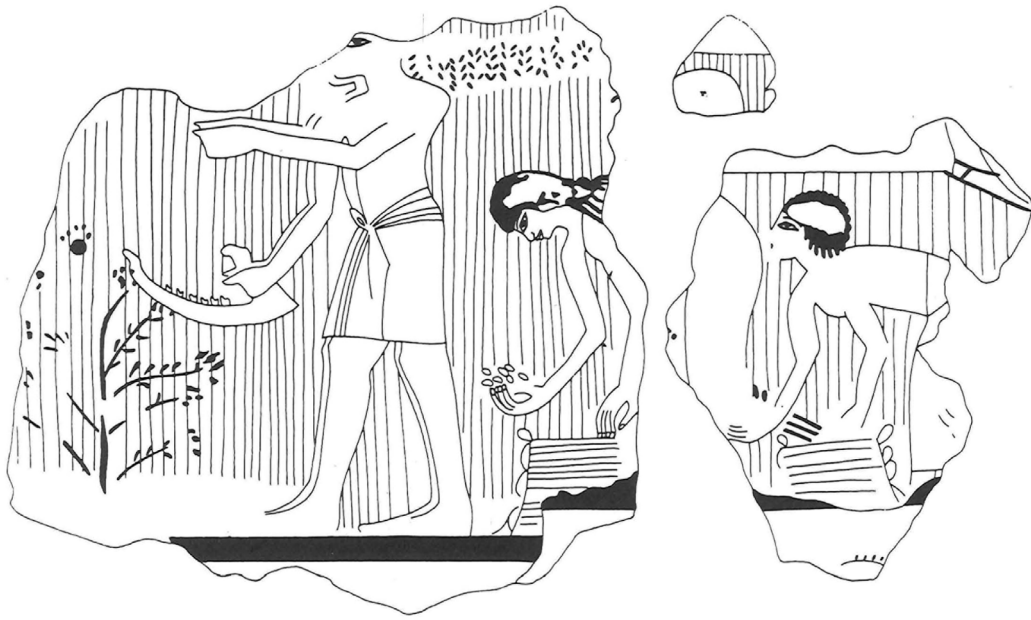
Fig. 4 Tomb of Merymaat (TT C4); Thutmose IV – Amenhotep III. Scene of pulling flax (after Manniche 1988: pl. 34)

Delvaux 2010; Bács 2011: 14; Laboury 2016), or that the same (groups of) contemporaneous painters were active there and developed different versions of a same iconographic model, preserved on a transportable support or in their memory.

On more stylishly elaborated levels of individualised visual rhetoric,[21] iconographic (and architectural) similarities can be seen as the logical consequence of the intended and meaningful topographical proximity between one tomb and another taken as model for sociological and ideological reasons, as we will recall below. Two questions ensue. Did the tomb chapel next door provide models the new tomb owner could identify with, expecting a certain audience to appreciate this identity-fashioning approach to replication? Did it contain models that could simply provide inspiration for composing (if not filling out) large thematic scenes notwithstanding any definite beholder or particular attention?

As regards the scene of pulling flax, these questions must be asked so as to apprehend somewhat cautiously the intended indexicality of the (slightly) later direct copies in the (lost) tombs of Merymaat (TT C4) (fig. 4) and Nebamun (TT E2) (the one preserved as fragments in the British Museum)[22] (both dated to the time of Thutmose IV – Amenhotep III) (Manniche 1988: 106, 148, pls. 34, 48–49; Parkinson 2008: 6, 111–119), which gave rise to the version of Khaemhat in TT 57 (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 114–115 (8) I), dated to the reign of Amenhotep III (Laboury 2017: 237–239). Looking at the inversion and duplication of the figure of the bending female gleaner of the TT C4 version, one may reasonably wonder who, apart from Egyptologists with computers at hand, would in fact detect such subtle changes or even spot such small-sized minor figures fused into the rest of the decorative programme? Yet if this was the painter's intention, as mentioned above, he could only expect a particularly astute observer among his colleagues

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21 On the notion of visual rhetoric applied to ancient Egyptian tomb painting, see Hartwig (2003).

22 Though the fragment of the scene in question is in Berlin (ÄM 18531).

to notice it. Alternatively, in terms of reception, we might also suspect that people who were actually concerned by the depicted thematic in their real life – in this case fieldworkers, people experiencing the harvest and the related agricultural activities, *etc.* – would have responded to it somehow with a higher level of personal and psychological/emotional engagement, provided of course that, in the torchlit dark environment of the tomb chapel, they came across the motif as they visited the monument and/or carried some cultic activities in it.[23] If we can assume such beholders would have possibly recognised the TT 52 version as the model used by the painter of the TT C4 version, it still remains difficult to determine the latter's intention. Did he mean to show implicitly how well he elaborated on the model, thereby showing off his artistic skills among his peers in some kind of internal artistic emulation dialogue? Or, on the contrary, did he try to disguise too conspicuous similarities with the model, considering they would have been deemed inconvenient – if so, according to what?

Quotative or inferential evidentials?

Based upon Laboury's reconstructed stemma and assumption that the tomb chapel of Nakht would have indeed been somehow famous in ancient times, we could have provisionally considered the apparent copies of TT 52 as quotative evidentials purposely addressed to painters and a very few hypothetic art lovers from that period. Even so, would their authors have considered addressing such a restricted community with mere respect to the eponymous value of the representations at stake hypothetically referring to Nakht? Or would they have expected this audience (colleagues plus potential future clients?) to visit the tomb chapel of such an insignificant low-ranking priest that only family members and close colleagues most likely knew about? Although these narratives cannot be totally excluded, I believe they remain highly speculative. Moreover, in terms of self-fashioning visual rhetoric, TT 52 is typically a non-individualised tomb chapel. To that extent, it seems that Nakht could boast, first of all, of enjoying a tomb in the Theban necropolis among the highest elite.

As it happens, an earlier version of an agricultural scene gathering a certain number of TT 52's as-yet characteristic iconographic units is attested in the far less famous tomb TT 143 in Dra Abu el-Naga (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 255 (4)), whose owner remains unknown. Dated on stylistic grounds to the time of Thutmose III – Amenhotep II, extending possibly to the beginning of the reign of Thutmose IV, its introduction in the stemma as some plausible prototype of the whole agricultural composition of TT 52 (along with TT 56) is supported by the presence of several elements common to all the subsequent versions (*i.e.* the group of gleaners and the bending reaper all placed over the wheat field as background), as well as other small scenes and motifs illustrating the broad theme of agricultural activities as preserved in TT 52: the antithetic composition of the four cows in the scene of ploughing and that of the two groups of cloth-headed workers in the scene of winnowing (fig. 5). As for the motif of the worker jumping on a rod, it can be assumed that it disappeared in the lacuna of the sixth register (scene of pulling flax),[24] considering it belonged to a single sequence of different scenes. Be-

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23 One might think for example of the reception of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975): obviously, shark specialists would not react to the shark model as would the expected audience.

24 Alternatively, it might have been associated with the motif of the two gleaners represented on the fourth register.

Fig. 5   TT 143 (tomb owner's name unknown); Thutmose III – Amenhotep II. Agricultural scene (photo A. Den Doncker, H. Tavier, © University of Liège)

Fig. 6   T Bubasteion II.x (Ptahmes); Amenhotep III. Scene of pulling flax (photo G. Pieke)

sides, it seems that its long-established association with TT 52 and the Theban repertoire in the Egyptological tradition should be revised as it now also appears, together with three figures of gleaners, in the tomb chapel of Ptahmes at Saqqara (T Bubasteion II.x), dated to the reign of Amenhotep III (Zivie 2010) (fig. 6).[25]

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25 The tomb was found in 1996–1997. It is located under the tomb of Netjeruymes (T Bubasteion I.16). As for the scene of pulling flax, another Eighteenth Dynasty Memphite example can be found on one of the two relief-decorated panels of Merymery preserved in the Leiden Rijksmuseum van

To that extent, this study case is a good illustration of the enduring issue of the missing data, which cannot be overlooked in the study of transmission patterns, particularly in the interpretation of (re)constructed stemmata. What if another version of the same motif was to be found even nearer TT 52? As a matter of fact, it has to be reminded that only about a half of the private tomb chapels of the Theban necropolis have preserved traces of decoration (Kampp 1996: 151–156). In these circumstances, how can we really measure the peculiarity of the jumping worker motif, and of TT 52 accordingly? How can we value, from an epistemological perspective, art-historical analyses based on explanatory elaborations on such-and-such artistic developments from one to other versions of some motif if their connections remain tentative? While the iconographic hints between TT 143 and TT 52 should, of course, not be interpreted as evidence for a direct filiation between both tombs, and certainly not with T Bubasteion II.x, they clearly bring into perspective Laboury's reconstruction and related interpretation of TT 52 reception in the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Ancient Egyptian perspectives on (re)productivity

Emic views on creativity echoing the etic issue of reproductivity vs. productivity (as an object-based counterpart of continuity vs. discontinuity) can be found in ancient Egyptian literature. While they trigger the idea that such dichotomy was not as relevant to the ancient Egyptians, for they seem to have reconciled tradition and innovation without making it a theoretical problem as we usually do – hence Khety's statement "*conform* to this, having *added* to what I have done"[26] – they do not effectively help us answer the question of evidentials. If artists were indeed trained to imitate, they had the technical ability to produce exact copies of iconographic units. This is clearly evidenced by the didactical use of squaring-up grids traced over definite motifs on temple or decorated tomb chapel walls, in order to be studied and reproduced accurately on a mobile support such as wooden boards or ostraca. We could mention the famous hunting in the desert scene from the temple of Sahure at Abusir (Borchardt 1913: 30–35, pls. 16–17; Brinkmann [ed.] 2010: 217–224, fig. 181),[27] which we know gathered New Kingdom scribes interested in the past (Navrátilová 2016: 55–106) and generated a wide iconographic tradition, particularly in the Eighteenth Dynasty (Decker – Herb 1994: 292–352; Hofmann 2012: 52–56; Pieke 2022), or the tomb of Qenamun (TT 93) most probably restored and reused, among others, as a source of models, in the early Nineteenth Dynasty (Den Doncker 2019: 178–189). We should therefore understand that exact copying actually represented a technical challenge, especially with respect to the ancient Egyptian canon of proportions. Motivations could have been driven by purely artistic aspirations to innovation as part of

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Oudheden (RMO AP 6-a), also dated to the reign of Amenhotep III. As concerns specifically the Memphite iconographic repertoire, it seems clear that it was at that time strongly, directly (and for the most part?) influenced by nearby Old Kingdom tomb decorations, which were presumably still accessible in the New Kingdom.

26 *mꜣꜣ.i ḳn sn.f r.s ir.n.f ḥꜣw ḥr irt.n.i*. Teaching for Merykare, P. 90 (see Vernus 1995: 91, for parallels; also Tobin 2003: 152–165, for bibliographical references). Note the utilisation of the verb *sni* (with preposition *r*) to refer to the idea of conformity, based on its transitive use expressing "doubling", *i.e.* "overtaking", "surpassing" (see Vernus 1995: 88–92).

27 Berlin ÄM 21783/1–5.

accurate imitation. However, variation was in most cases a natural continuity dynamic of evolving iconographic traditions. Although, as previously mentioned, the activation of the potential indexicality of one representation indicating another depended (and still depends) on the beholder's visuality (the image itself does not *do* any agentive work[28]), the question nonetheless remains as to what might have been conceptually, practically, and perhaps technically, at stake in such *systematic* iconographic transformations of models, notably the recurrent inversion formula.

INVERSION AS INDEX: SHOWING AND/OR DISSIMULATING THE RELATION TO THE MODEL?

Whether or not the beholder would detect the model of a representation and therefore be in a position to consider it an index, either as quotative or as inferential evidential, the possibly intended agency of the copy was at first the painter's concern in responding to his patron's commands. In such ramified intericonic contexts as that of the ancient Egyptian repertoire's multiple clusters, even in definite spatial areas like the Theban necropolis, we might still wonder whether the painter of TT 52 (located in the middle area of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna) even knew about TT 143 (located in Dra Abu el-Naga South), despite the numerous iconographic connections. Considering neighbouring tomb chapels often provided models for painters who were possibly working on the decoration of several tomb chapels in the same area, copying representations (= using monumental archives) might well have had some *economic* and *practical* advantages in terms of saving time and limiting the sources of models.

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE COPYING PRACTICES AS FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As concerns the multifunctional advantages of copying, interesting parallels can be found in the Italian Renaissance painting tradition where, for example, the use of *carta lucida*, originally developed by engravers, enabled painters to reproduce designs with high fidelity.[29] Aligned with the concept of *imitatio*, and perhaps contrary to modern expectations, the action of *contrafare* was at that time positively valued, as confirmed by Giorgio Vasari (Brooke 2018: 214–219).

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28 In the sense that it remains a material object only the creator and, potentially, the beholder acknowledge the power or efficiency thereof. On this theoretical problem, sometimes due to writing style, see Gillen (*forthcoming*: 7); Davis (2008); Davis (2011: 184–185); *contra* Mitchell (2005) and the aesthetising rhetoric used by Gell (1998). On the ancient Egyptian image's capacity to "act" and the consequent incentive for image production, see Assmann (1990); also Arnold (2008).

29 On the practice of copying in Modern Period European art, see Bellavitis (ed.) (2018). For a general overview on workshop practices in the Italian Renaissance, see Bambach (1999). Concretely, as transparent parchment paper sheets (*i.e. carta lucida*) developed by the end of the fourteenth century, it began technically possible to make tracings directly over selected models (entire compositions or specific details) and transfer the latter's original main contours onto new supports, either by pouncing bags of soot over pinpricked cartoons or using the carbon paper technique, which often resulted in inverted copies. For an examination of preserved examples, see Galassi (2013).

For instance, Andrea Andreani's version[30] of Mantegna's *Corselet Bearers* from the well-known *Triumphs of Caesar*,[31] possibly modelled on the original, is just one of the numerous copies of the famous series painted for the Ducal Palace of Mantua (Lambert 1999).

The multiple advantages of the *carta lucida* were not only the transfer and transport but also the diffusion and accessibility of prestigious models, either for further replication of designs on final supports or for artistic training (Galassi 2013: 131–136). Cennino Cennini even recommended its use by novice artists (Brooke 2018: 217). As a result of the very technical procedure, the copies often present as the exact inverted replication of their model (Currie – Allart 2012: 947–949), which is clearly exemplified by Georg Christoph Killian's counterpart copy[32] of an etching of the *Bacchant, Satyr, and Fauness, from the Scherzi* executed by Tiepolo around 1740.[33]

It seems that in other cases, when practical and economic factors met the workshop's specifications, artists made use of the same models in different compositions, with the clear purpose of saving time and facilitating execution. Slight modifications added to another monumental display, often geographically distant, tend to exclude any possible conspicuousness of the intericonic relationship between the model and the copy. A Perugino replication of the figure of the Madonna from his *Madonna with Child Enthroned between Saints John the Baptist and Sebastian*, originally commissioned for the chapel of San Domenico in Fiesole (1493),[34] onto his *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Augustine* in the church of Sant'Agostino in Cremona (1494) is one example.[35] Although the parallels are obvious if we analyse the pictures next to each other, the beholder is not expected to spot such connections, so that self-citation is then not properly at stake; it is simply a technical issue. In other cases, the inversion was preserved, even more flagrantly betraying the technical copying procedure.[36]

Visual indexicality operated when, for example, it was considered prestigious to have a presumably rare reproduction of what should be considered a masterpiece by the finest connoisseurs of a few privileged milieus. This was most probably the case of the replication

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30 Andrea Andreani, *Triumphs of Caesar* VI: *Corselet Bearers*, *ca.* 1598–1599; chiaroscuro woodcut with gouache; Washington, Library of Congress.

31 Andrea Mantegna, *Triumphs of Caesar* VI: *Corselet Bearers*, *ca.* 1484–1492; glue and tempera on linen canvas, 268 × 278 cm; London, Hampton Court Palace Royal Collection.

32 Georg Christoph Killian, *Bacchant, Satyr, and Fauness, from the Scherzi*, 1767; etching, 12.4 × 17.9 cm; Geneva, Musée d'art et d'histoire.

33 Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Bacchant, Satyr, and Fauness, from the Scherzi*, *ca.* 1740; etching, 13.3 × 19.8 cm; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

34 Pietro Perugino, *Madonna with Child Enthroned between Saints John the Baptist and Sebastian*, 1493; oil on panel, 178 × 164 cm; Florence, Uffizi Gallery.

35 Pietro Perugino, *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Augustine*, 1494; tempera on canvas; Cremona, Sant'Agostino church.

36 Compare for example the two versions of the *Nativity* painted by Michele di Rodolfo del Ghirlandaio (both dated to the first half of the sixteenth century), one for the Badia di Passignano, the other exhibited at the Musei Civici in Udine.

Fig. 7   Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Archers Shooting at a Herm*, 1530–1533; red chalk on paper, 21.9 × 32.3 cm; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (lent from the Windsor Castle Royal Collection) (© Royal Collection Trust)

Fig. 8   Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta, *Archers*, 1544–1545; detached fresco, 104 × 208 cm; Rome, Borghese Gallery. Reproduction on sheet of paper (15.9 × 34.3 cm) published by Ruland (1876: 288) (© Royal Collection Trust)

of Michelangelo's famed presentation drawing *Archers Shooting at a Herm*[37] on a fresco in Raphael's villa in Rome, generally attributed to one of the latter's pupils, Girolamo Siciolante (Jones – Penny 1983: 179–180) (figs. 7–8).[38] In his treatise on the practice of painting,[39] the way Giovanni Battista Armenini emphasised the importance of *maniera* in default of *invenzione* reveals how the excessive use of *carta lucida* led to heated debates among the painters and in the workshops of the time (Galassi 2013: 132). In spite of the basic technical concerns about the practice of copying, this induces the expected existence of various artistic approaches to reproductivity. Individual agency in respect of this cultural practice could provide food for thought on what could be equally at issue among the ancient Egyptian painters, regardless of the cultural and chronological distances – notably the fact that the latter's names have by and large been lost over time, which partly explains their apparent anonymity.

While copy grids can be seen as the technical equivalent of the *carta lucida* in ancient Egypt, apart from training purposes, it seems that exact conformity to the model in terms of line drawing was not usually deemed necessary. Obviously, we are dealing with two distinctive artistic approaches to depiction and composition. Outside usual variation, through almost unlimited techniques of image transformation such as those mentioned above, a single iconographic formula could yet be easily preserved and repeated,[40] and still contribute to some extent to the uniqueness of the tomb chapel decorative programme in addition to its own overall layout.[41] From this perspective, we can assume the idea of the patron, and/or the commissioner, was to *dissimulate* overly conspicuous links with the model, whereas jumping smartly from inferential to refined quotative evidential. Thereby, they could address a knowledgeable audience capable of discerning and appreciating the citation value of the copy, as a stylish feature and a tasteful index.

"IDENTIFYING-COPIES" USED AS POWERFUL INDEXES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF VISUAL IDENTITIES

Taking into account the determinative performance of the copy as pointing implicitly to the model's original owner, I have proposed referring to these powerful tools of self-fashioning visual rhetoric as "identifying-copies" (Den Doncker 2017: 352–353). One might think of some visual equivalent of the practice of namedropping as a way to gain social credit among targeted people. This must have been the case of the copy of the dance scene of the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of the vizier Antefiqer and his mother/wife Senet (TT 60) (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 121 (2) II; Davies 1920: 10, 22, pl. XV) (fig. 9), that the steward of the vizier Useramun, Amenemhat, ordered to be placed in the innermost shrine of his tomb chapel (TT 82) (Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 166 (16) III; Davies – Gardiner 1915: 94–96, pl. XX) (fig. 10). Here, the inversions were applied not only to the position of the figures, but also to their clothing (Den Doncker 2012: 30–31).

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37 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Archers Shooting at a Herm*, 1530–1533; red chalk on paper, 21.9 × 32.3 cm; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (lent from the Windsor Castle Royal Collection).

38 Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta, *Archers*, 1544–1545; detached fresco, 104 × 208 cm; Rome, Borghese Gallery.

39 *De' veri precetti della pittura* (Armenini 1587).

40 See the significant remarks of Merzeban (2014: 343), based on Old Kingdom material.
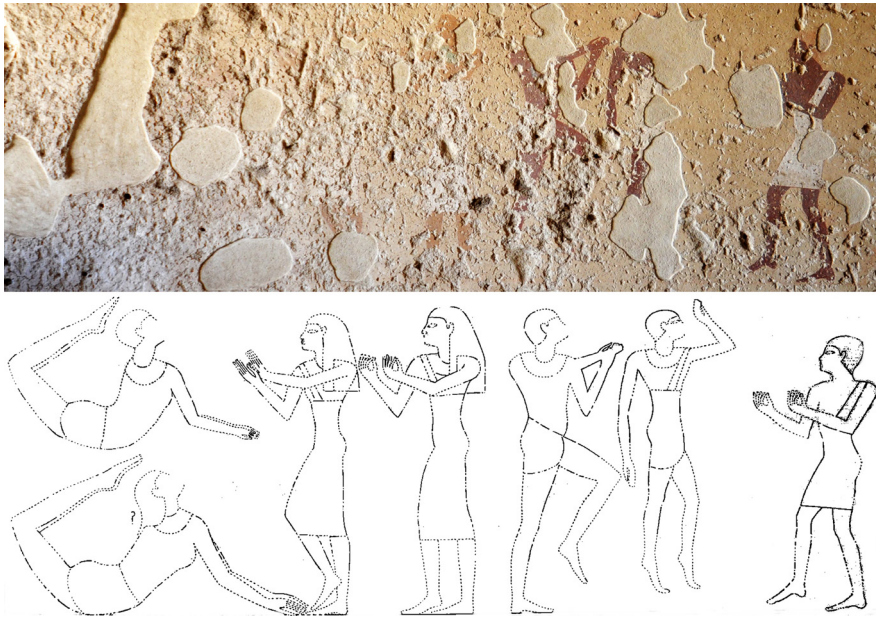
41 See examples in Pieke (2022).

Fig. 9 TT 60 (Antefiqer and Senet); Senusret I. Dance scene (photo A. Den Doncker, © University of Liège; drawing Davies 1920: pl. XV)

Fig. 10 TT 82 (Amenemhat); Hatshepsut – Thutmose III. Dance scene (photo A. Den Doncker, H. Tavier, © University of Liège, drawing Davies – Gardiner 1915: pl. XX)

However, the rarity of the scene, its clear association with Antefiqer, the close topographic proximity of TT 82 and TT 60 (cut on the same upper terrace of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna hill), and the latter tomb chapel's high significance among the community of scribes involved inter alia in the production of royal monumental decoration and the search of ancient models in the time of Hatshepsut – Thutmose III (as revealed by TT 60 corpus of visitor inscriptions and figural graffiti) all suggest that Amenemhat had a strong interest in precisely *showing* how, as the steward of the vizier, he belonged to this socio-professional milieu, that is, his targeted audience. In terms of concrete evidence, this interpretation is clearly supported by a graffito left by the same Amenemhat near the model of the dance scene in TT 60 (graffito G.60.33), bearing witness to his visit and aesthetical appreciation of the tomb chapel, which was indeed "beautiful/pleasant in his heart [...] efficient for eternity" (Davies 1920: 29; Ragazzoli 2013: 69–70; Den Doncker 2017: 335–336).

Depending on their socio-professional position, tomb owners had a clear interest in hiring particularly skilled painters, even from afar, who would conceive on their behalf the appropriate visual rhetoric with respect to definite audiences (see Hartwig 2016: 60). This was probably the case of Amenemhat, who found the opportunity to benefit from the same group of painters as the vizier Useramun, for whom he had overseen the works of both tombs (TT 61 and TT 131), as revealed by a painted stela placed near the dance scene in TT 82 (Davies – Gardiner 1915: 70–72, pls. XXV–XXVI; Den Doncker 2017: 343–345, 362, fig. 8). In addition to the numerous iconographic analogies between TT 131 and TT 82, the stylistic connections between TT 61 and TT 82 are highly significant in this respect. What's more, Amenemhat was proud enough to claim that he had hired *that* group of artists – namely, by way of indexicality, those who decorated his superior's tombs as well as those of the highest dignitaries of his time – as he had them depicted in the transverse hall of his tomb chapel benefiting from offerings and *seshed*-headbands, which he himself addressed (Davies – Gardiner 1915: 36–37, pl. VIII).

Apart from graffiti, high topographic proximity to some extent makes the intericonic relationship between a copy and a model even more noticeable, especially if their respective owners lived around the same period and belonged to the same socio-professional commu- nity so that their audience should be approximately the same. This was surely the case of the copy of the entire decorative programme of the tomb chapel of Amenemheb-Mahu (TT 85) by his subordinate Pehsukher-Tjenenu (TT 88), studied by Sigrid Eisermann (Eisermann 1995; Den Doncker 2017: 337–339).

While in comparison, Amenemhat's self-fashioning manoeuvre was far more nuanced, other painters (or tomb decoration designers, *i.e.* chief draughtsmen working as patron on behalf of the tomb owner as the commissioner) imagined even more complex formulae of inversion applied to the very structure of the decorative programme. The tomb chapel of the vizier Rekhmire (TT 100) is a good illustration. Its decorative programme appears to be a to- tally re-sequenced version of the tomb chapel decorative layout of his uncle and predecessor Useramun (TT 131). While the complete thematic content is almost exactly *identical*, enabling a non-ambiguous identification to the vizieral iconographic and textual apparatus, especially that of Useramun, none of the scenes kept its original location. Moreover, the painters chose the exact opposite locations systematically, thereby inversing the whole decorative structure used as a model, so much so that TT 100 visually mirrored TT 131 (and to some extent TT 61), with the result that it was *different* just as it remained fundamentally *identical* (see the complete

analysis in Den Doncker 2017: 346–349). In view of the tomb chapel's reception and in terms of indexicality, it is clear that the gist of the command lay somewhere between showing and dissimulating the mode, in neat correspondence with the ideological tenets of the aforementioned Teaching for Merykare: "*conform* to this, having *added* to what I have done".

STUDY CASE 2. THE REPRESENTATION OF THE VIZIER'S OFFICE IN TT 100 AND TT 29: INVERSION AS THE PERFECT COMPOSITIONAL FORMULA TO MAKE THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

Finally, another identifying-copy is worth mentioning as it clearly establishes the intended indexicality of this type of inverted representations. Again it occurs in a very limited topographic context, in this case the southern hill of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna. Just like his predecessor Rekhmire, Amenemopet, the owner of TT 29, had a well elaborated visual rhetoric of self-fashioning, which he largely borrowed from TT 100, thereby likely complying with the need to affirm and give legitimacy to his non-inherited position (on this question see Shirley 2005: 246–259), that is, standing in the vizierial sphere through its visual apparatus. While he placed his tomb chapel a few meters uphill, he replicated several eye-catching iconographic

Fig. 11   TT 100 (Rekhmire); Thutmose III – Amenhotep II. Vizier's office (photo D. Laboury, © University of Liège)

Fig. 12   TT 29 (Amenemopet); Amenhotep II. Vizier's office (photo P. Hallot, © University of Liège)

units from the neighbouring TT 100, granting particular attention to the scenes distinctively illustrating his position as vizier.

One of these scenes is the well-known representation of the vizier's office, or Judgement Hall (fig. 11) (TT 100: Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 206 (2); TT 29: Porter – Moss 1960 I/1: 46 (4)), which seemingly operates as the visual counterpart of the text of the Duties of the vizier inscribed next to it in both tomb chapels, as well as in that of Useramun (TT 131). In fact, Amenemopet's version presents as the exact inverted copy of the model in TT 100 (fig. 12), while it was placed oppositely on the northern east wall of the transverse hall instead of the southern east wall (see complete analysis in Den Doncker 2017: 349–351). We thus find here the same system of structural inversion as that elaborated during the conception of TT 100's decorative programme. Furthermore, the ostracon that the painter[42] utilised to accurately reproduce the key motif of the man dragging the appellant by his neck to his sentence was found during the recent excavation of TT 29 (Den Doncker 2017: 370, fig. 18). As it seems to have constituted an iconographic challenge in terms of drawing, the sketch was almost certainly executed in front of the model in TT 100. Interestingly, it was already inverted in prevision

42 On Amenemopet's single painter, see footnote 14.

of the opposite location of the scene in TT 29, while randomly associated with other motifs that do not appear on it.

Moreover, except for adding a few little captions, Amenemopet's painter did clearly not bring any visible modifications to the scene. There was obviously no desire to dissimulate the intericonic relationship with the model, quite the contrary. Most probably, the essence of the patron's command was that the largest audience would be able to detect and unambiguously understand that he was the new vizier and the equivalent of Rekhmire, who had occupied this position for almost 30 years before him. In terms of visual rhetoric, the indexical value of the copy was absolutely essential in this regard. However, on a more subtle level of artistic expression, literate visitors and high dignitaries acquainted with tomb chapel iconographic *and* textual contents were also probably expected to appreciate, on the one hand, the globally innovative style of architectural display joined to the contrasting chromatic atmosphere of the painting (with an unusual dominance of blue and red pigments), and on the other, certain highly original iconographic assets such as the funerary rites scene, most probably borrowed from the tomb of Mentuherkhepeshef (TT 20) in Dra Abu el-Naga (Davies 1913: 30–31, footnote 69; Bavay 2007: 12; Hofmann 2012: 58–63). In terms of the reception of these indexical codes, there was therefore a clear balance at stake between the various targeted audiences that Amenemopet needed to address in the process of appropriately defining his own self-fashioning.

CONCLUSION

Whereas flipping iconographic units seems to have been a frequently utilised efficient tool for the painters during the process of composing further versions of a prototype and elaborating on large iconographic themes, it is interesting to note that it had apparently not a single strictly predefined function or meaning as regards visual indexicality. One of the first issues explored in our discussion was indeed the value of these copied versions as indexes: what did/do they indicate to the beholder, particularly in respect of their model and the latter's possible significance? Should they always operate as quotative evidentials insomuch as such assessment seems to be influenced by a certain historical distance in approaching tomb decorations as a notional iconographic repertoire or "catalogue" totally disconnected from its archaeological context, monumental support, material reality and sociological background? Beyond the fact that the visuality of the beholder remains the determining factor in the recognition of any of the iconic, symbolic or indexical values of a representation, it appears that inverted copies were generally conceived, and thought to be perceived, as inferential evidentials. Although commissioned patrons and painters were themselves probably, as specialised beholders, *the* exception as being professionally involved in image production and tomb decoration, they would therefore not count on them as effective indexes addressed to large audiences. In parallel, the inversion of iconographic units may also have been the logical consequence of the easy steerability of the ancient Egyptian image and thus, to some extent, natural when not necessarily intentional.

Of course, in any iconographic environment or stemma – and this might apply to other visual cultures outside ancient Egypt, the evaluation of an inverted copy in terms of quotative or inferential evidential relies mainly on the contextual data surrounding the intericonic

relationship with its model. In a limited topographic area such as the Theban necropolis, provided visitors entered the two concerned tomb chapels in certain circumstances and for specific reasons, to be defined, such a relationship would be visually more conspicuous. This must have been the intention of identifying-copies, the value as determinatives thereof directly points to the individual related to their model, even more efficiently in a restricted sociological sphere. This means that skilled patrons and painters had the capacity to aptly address selected communities taking into account their respective visuality as a targeted audience. The case of the inverted copy of the dance scene from TT 60 to TT 82 is the perfect illustration of such a reception pattern.

By virtue of emic ideological principles associated conceptually with continuity and discontinuity, tomb owners were expected to clearly distinguish themselves, in particular through style and eloquence as regards the visual rhetoric of self-fashioning. Although painters had the technical means to execute exact copies using grids, they almost always aimed at variation, thereby dealing subtly and accordingly with the degree of indexicality of the identifying-copies, from flagrantly showing the visual connection to the model to disguising overly conspicuous links with various levels of inversion, within or outside the representation itself. In this respect, inversion may have been intended to be demonstrative, evocative as well as innovative, *conforming* and, at the same time, *adding* to the model. Flipping a copied representation seems indeed to have been the simplest way to do the same, while remaining different; a smart compositional tool operating in the frame of plentiful works of scene composition and visual self-fashioning.

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