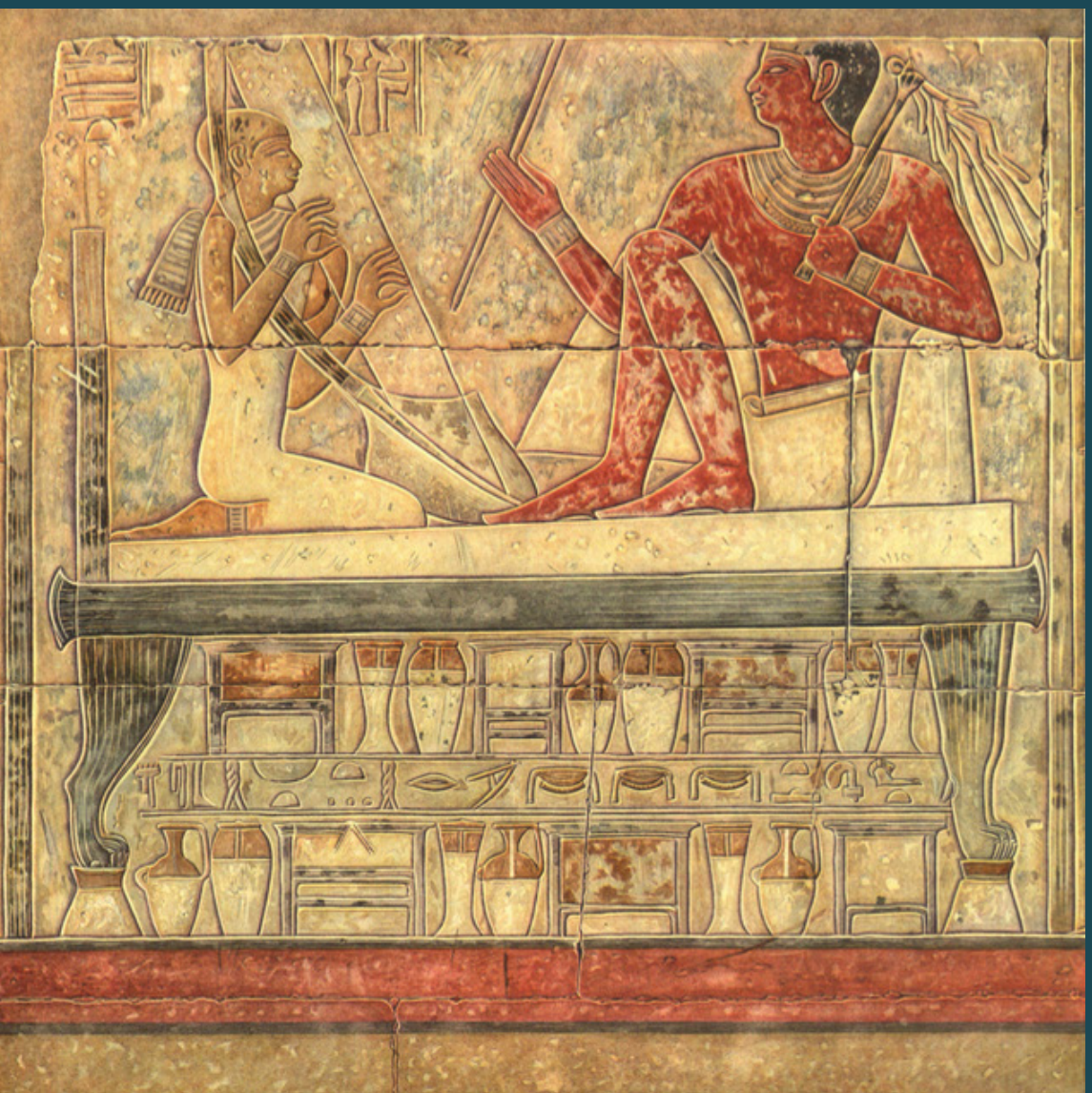
Art as Ritual Engagement in the Funerary Programme of Watetkhethor at Saqqara, c. 2345 BC

Barbara O'Neill



Access Archaeology

Archaeopress Access Archaeology

About Access Archaeology

Access Archaeology offers a different publishing model for specialist academic material that might traditionally prove commercially unviable, perhaps due to its sheer extent or volume of colour content, or simply due to its relatively niche field of interest. This could apply, for example, to a PhD dissertation or a catalogue of archaeological data.

All *Access Archaeology* publications are available as a free-to-download pdf eBook and in print format. The free pdf download model supports dissemination in areas of the world where budgets are more severely limited, and also allows individual academics from all over the world the opportunity to access the material privately, rather than relying solely on their university or public library. Print copies, nevertheless, remain available to individuals and institutions who need or prefer them.

The material is refereed and/or peer reviewed. Copy-editing takes place prior to submission of the work for publication and is the responsibility of the author. Academics who are able to supply print-ready material are not charged any fee to publish (including making the material available as a free-to-download pdf). In some instances the material is type-set in-house and in these cases a small charge is passed on for layout work.

Our principal effort goes into promoting the material, both the free-to-download pdf and print edition, where *Access Archaeology* books get the same level of attention as all of our publications which are marketed through e-alerts, print catalogues, displays at academic conferences, and are supported by professional distribution worldwide.

The free pdf download allows for greater dissemination of academic work than traditional print models could ever hope to support. It is common for a free-to-download pdf to be downloaded hundreds or sometimes thousands of times when it first appears on our website. Print sales of such specialist material would take years to match this figure, if indeed they ever would.

This model may well evolve over time, but its ambition will always remain to publish archaeological material that would prove commercially unviable in traditional publishing models, without passing the expense on to the academic (author or reader).

Art as Ritual Engagement in the Funerary Programme of Watetkhethor at Saqqara, c. 2345 BC

Barbara O'Neill

Access Archaeology

Archaeopress Access Archaeology

Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG
www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-553-6
ISBN 978-1-80327-554-3 (e-Pdf)

Cover: Watetkhethor playing the harp before her husband Mereruka (Duell, 1938: 1, Plate 94)

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

List of Figures

Preface

Art as ritual engagement is examined through a case study of feminised funerary representation in the repertoire of Watetkhethor, an elite woman interred in the mastaba tomb of her spouse, Mereruka, at Saqqara, c.2345-2181 BC. The focus is centred upon the functionality of a particular form of gendered imagery in a ritualised, funerary context.

The spaces and images in which Watetkhethor is featured alone, or in support of her spouse, indicate something of an elite woman's afterlife expectations at this particular time. Contemporaneous examples as detailed as Watetkhethor's are rare. Her high-elite status may have permitted Watetkhethor's personal involvement in her own funerary programme. Her funerary arrangements would have been 'state-of-the-art', meeting the requirements of a woman identified as the eldest daughter of King Teti, c. 2300-2181 BC.

The assumption of modern twentieth century anachronisms, attitudes and biases appear to have all but dismissed the rich iconographical programme of specifically feminised arrangements within this shared tomb. Indeed, Watetkhethor's schematic patterns appear to have been treated largely as secondary to those of her spouse in the detailed reports of this tomb's earliest excavators.

Analytical examination of women's funerary art, particularly at this relatively early period, remains critical to our developing knowledge of a nascent, gender- specific Egyptian funerary programme. Whilst degradation and destruction of Old Kingdom sites and materials have made this task difficult, modern technologies may yet reveal critical evidence from even poorly preserved locations and materials. Questions remain: what may have been missed; what, if anything has been overlooked and, just as critically, what yet remains in plain sight, waiting to be understood.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> One of the most significant tendencies in archaeological thought at present, as well as in the humanities in general, involves the rejection of modernist dichotomies, a turn toward ontology over epistemology, and a critique of anthropocentrism (Thomas, 2020:152).

Ancient Egyptian funerary imagery can be understood as a complex, multi-faceted medium through which an ancient culture addressed matters of collective concern. In attempting to interpret the material record of a culture no longer fully available to us it is vital to pursue all means of understanding the significant effort invested in funerary space and related imagery. The visible and inaccessible components that comprised the ancient Egyptian funerary programme served as more than mere instruments of human purpose. These arrangements were designed to function beyond life. Indeed, the main purpose of the mortuary cult was to sustain the deceased in the afterlife (Van Walsem, 2005: 2).

The 'New Materialism' movement in archaeology referenced in the opening quote, reflects a consideration of materiality as ritually active and in flux (Thomas, 2020:152). That is to say, the concept of materiality may have assumed an absence of inseparability between, in this context, Ancient Egyptian people and their funerary materials. This sense of materiality has been described as a tangled cultural nexus that, sometimes quite literally, binds together people and their culture (Knappett, 2014:4702; Nyord, 2020:28). Representation within the tomb served to indicate movement between the actual and the virtual; between the real and the irreal (Alberti, 2007: 219; Nyord, 2020: 26). This view supports the notion of materiality as an entanglement of things with their human interlocutors (Hodder, 2011). Material Engagement Theory examines the environment in which the representation of an individual occurs in order to understand something of the intentionalities valid at the point of creation. It is a useful methodology to apply to Watetkhethor's tomb in the chapters that follow.

The phenomenology of ancient materiality recognises that the ways in which modern peoples consider existential elements may bear little similarity with ancient forms of thinking (Malafouris and Ihde, 2019; Overmann, 2020a; Hodder, 2016). In order to facilitate an individual's viability in death, a range of ritualised devices including iconological motifs and associated liturgical texts were arranged throughout the tomb, placed there in order to mitigate against a host of dangers believed to exist in the liminal space between death and what followed. Everything inside the tomb contributed to a particular form of afterlife. As is argued throughout, strategies dependent upon the gender of the deceased functioned as a fundamental component within this arrangement (Roth, 1999:37-38; Gilchrist, 1999; Cooney, 2008:1-26; Angenot, 2015:98-119; O'Neill, 2015:31-36; Budin, 2018:25-38).

Until recently, the archaeological exploration of materiality, a structure that incorporates two-dimensional, three-dimensional and related theoretical components (including metaphor, intertextuality and other linguistic elements), has been considered from within a predominantly Western perspective that separated subject from object and mind from matter (Hodder, 2010:155; Malafouris, 2013:246). This assumption often failed to acknowledge that ancient cultures maintained complex relationships with forms of materiality that reflect little of 'modern' constructs (Malafouris and Ihde, 2019: 196).

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the work that follows, is to examine gender as a fundamental component of funerary imagery as employed in the representational programme of Watetkhethor, in the tomb of her spouse, Mereruka, at Saqqara. Watetkhethor is believed to have died around the early 6th Dynasty, c.2345-

2181 BC. [1] Using a methodological approach with tools formulated within Malafouris's (2013) theory of material engagement and through Panofsky's (1955) three level system of iconology (see Chapter 3.1) it is possible to construct an analytical framework that reaches beyond the surface materiality of architectural arrangement, painted walls and carved stone. A largely descriptive record of this tomb's décor, with an elite male as its focus, has formed the basis of earlier examination (Duell,1938; Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008; Pieke, 2011). However, by this 6th Dynasty period, funerary iconography had already developed increasingly diverse forms as a form of insurance (or assurance) in expectations of an afterlife commensurate with aspects of lived life (Dann, 2013: 133-134).

This study explores the ways in which Watetkhethor's funerary strategies were integrated through image and text with precise placement in particular areas of her funerary chambers (section B, Figure 5). All of these components are understood as enhanced with properties beyond singular functionality. A range of purposes, intentionalities and aspirations created complex ritualised programmes of representation in funerary contexts.

In various contexts, the image of a deceased woman may have represented;

- the power of the deified deceased (of both genders) over chaos or creation;
- or may have directly indicated the involvement of a deceased woman in facilitating the rebirth of male relatives;
- and finally, as enabled to act for herself in her own journey of transformation.

The notion that an image or an object, or indeed, an aspect of either, has specific meaning in a given context must be viewed cautiously. As argued by Nyord (2017: 339) the ritualised 'role' of the deceased, or, more particularly, of their representation, should not be regarded as static.

The gendered image schemas that form the focus of this study were created during a tumultuous period of social change, evidenced within a necropolis expressly constructed for high status individuals (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:3,35). Ensuring the viability of the deceased resulted in a range of embodiment strategies that amalgamated aspects of the deceased with those of the divine. Ideology associated with the funerary cult 'altered' the status of deceased men and women into forms that encompassed a range of magically empowered roles (Meskell, 1999:2-3). The transition to an eternal state and to the next level of existence was understood as jeopardous; and in particular, the liminality of death. Myriad spells attempted to reintegrate and unify elements of the potentially disembodied self (Meskell and Joyce, 2003:23). 'Your arm is that of Atum; your face is that of Anubis; your head is that of Horus' (Faulkner,1969: PT Utterances 213,148). In funerary liturgies, an individual is described as transfigured in death, associated with elements that are both male and female (Cooney, 2010:235).

Closely associated with the phenomenology of perception, 'affordance' has been described as not simply discovered or projected upon meaningless things, but as something 'negotiated', reconstructing human agency through time (Costall and Richards, 2013:91). If, as argued here, perceptual affordances exist between the perceiver and the perceived, how then can we understand the qualities of affordance encapsulated within complex, ancient imagery (Gibson 1979:353)? To apprehend a material pattern as a representation of something is to engage in culturally-shaped perceptual processes (Hutchins, 2010:429). Affordances, in the context of this work, are caught up in processes whereby a material pattern becomes something enacted; something ritualised; something sacred. Over time, the development of funerary iconography introduced and then reinforced a range of nuanced perceptual affordances. The representations of deceased men and women embodied these developments through imagery that acted

[1] Throughout, all dates follow Shaw, 2013: 740

as a medium for recreating and replicating postmortem expectations. It is perhaps simplistic to assume that only fifty percent of elite individuals made use of these strategies in what was fundamentally a life or death context, even in an androcentric society. As argued in the work that follows, feminised strategies are evidenced through iconological development, perhaps accurately described as hiding in plain sight. That these iconographical materials are only now the subject of precise examination perhaps reflects the *zeitgeist* of the period in which these early pictorial formats were first discovered by modern scholars. [2]

As noted earlier, in order to initiate a close examination of gendered representation this work takes as a single case study the funerary iconography of Watetkhethor, who shared a tomb with her husband Mereruka and their son, Meryteti. Their mastaba was constructed within the Teti pyramid field at Saqqara. The specific objective of this study is centred upon the ontological function of gender as a key element within Watetkhethor's funerary programme.

The following section provides a socio-cultural overview of the period in which Watetkhethor's funerary programme was designed and implemented. Whilst it has long been recognised that funerary imagery was intended to ensure the security of an individual in a well-supplied afterlife, what this description fails to characterise adequately, is the agency of material forms. That these forms may have been predicated on the gender of the deceased lies at the centre of the analysis that follows.

The role of visual culture in ancient Egypt

Funerary 'art' in any culture encompasses complex social practices, whilst illuminating how death, and existence beyond life, were understood. In ancient Egypt, funerary imagery indicated embodied engagement of the living with material culture intended for the deceased (Van Walsem, 2005:9-11). Image and text were inseparably intertwined; both were considered as efficacious and ritually powerful in the journey to the afterlife (Meskell, 2002:10). In the context of tomb décor, images served as bearers of the owner's identity, personality, and social status and could be called upon as referents in the afterlife (Meskell, 2002:10-11).

Humans have leveraged a range of material forms for a range of unique cognitive purposes for as long as we have existed (Overmann, 2020a:1). The materiality of representation; the stone; the associated texts; the visual canon through which funerary imagery was organised, all constitute an interconnectivity between physical objects and that which they represented. Ancient Egyptian ontologies went beyond mnemonic representation in any modern sense. Representative strategies emergent from Egyptian, Mesopotamia and Assyrian contexts shared a view of the image as 'an act of creation' (Bahrani, 2014:168). Such ontologies were ingrained within the cultures from which they emerged:

> [t]his is no mere ascription of agency, a projection of life on to an inanimate thing by the viewer through a primitive mentality ...these are things with a different status ... parts of ontologies and technologies that are different from those we take as being logical and rational, but they are nevertheless real (Bahrani, 2014:201).

The tomb and its liminality indicate two concurrent worlds; a cultic space in this world, and the locus of preservation of identity and its transformation after death in an 'other-worldly' setting (David, 2014:243). The tomb's imagery and texts were meant for its deceased owner, not for the living. Those who directed aesthetic principles were elite members of society and in their eyes, the ultimate beneficiaries were the gods (Baines, 2015:5).

[2] The mastaba of Mereruka remained hidden from view until discovered and excavated by Jacques de Morgan, of the Egyptian Antiquities Service in 1892. The first major publication on this tomb, by Prentice Duell, did not occur until over 40 years later in 1936.

Image and text formed two interconnected, parallel processes that enabled the deceased to be reborn into the afterlife (McCarthy, 2002:173). The first of these involved metaphysical union with the sun-god; the second, union with the most important of the funerary gods, Osiris, the god of regeneration and rebirth (Roth, 1999:40). The emergence of Osiris into an already complex funerary repertoire appears to have opened up the possibility for a more nuanced role for gender in the underlying principles that structured tomb iconography. Whilst individuals maintained their gendered identity in death, when joining Osiris, all the deceased assumed what Roth (1999:51) refers to as 'an active male sexual role in begetting their own rebirth'.

From the 5th Dynasty of the Old Kingdom and the emergence of Osirian aspects of religion, the deceased were understood as assimilated with this god in the netherworld (Roth, 1999:51). A developing relationship between Osiris and the deceased saw the god play a direct role in their regeneration (Nyord, 2007:10). Whereas a woman's gender was material to her husband rebirth, her spouse's role in 'her' regeneration appears to have become somewhat redundant; even viewed as 'unnecessary' at the point of feminised transition (Roth, 1999:51; Cooney, 2008:15). [3]

The funerary programme of Watetkhethor represents one of the earliest realised examples of an iconographical schema in which alternative models of gender relations are indicated. That is to say, there appears to have been adaptations relevant to the gender of the deceased as indicated in the arrangement of particular scenes. This includes the so-called 'Offering Table Scenes' in which, during this period in particular, the deceased was often represented alone (O'Neill, 2015). Gender-specific patterns are evidenced both in the orientation of imagery within Watetkhethor's burial chambers and elsewhere in scenes shared with her spouse.

Contextualising the early 6th Dynasty: An Overview

The period in which Watetkhethor lived and died was one marked by intervals of social and political turmoil (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:3,35). This was often the case when the right of succession to the Egyptian throne was uncertain, as may have been the case during the transition between the 5th and the 6th Dynasties, c.2345 BC (Malek, 2000: 104,106; Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:35-37). The material record and titularies of 5th Dynasty rulers indicate their close ties with the cult of Re. Although the succession of the 6th Dynasty kings is well established, the latter's relationship with this important solar deity appears to have vacillated (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:8). This may have caused significant socio-political and religious issues with powerful priesthoods, particularly when kings of the early 6th Dynasty chose to move their necropolis away from Abusir, the centre of the cult of Re, in what may have been a direct challenge to priestly authority (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:9).

More broadly, this period was marked by the rise of a provincial nobility, a crippled treasury and periods of unsatisfactory inundations all of which added to the woes of kings, their officials and people of this era (Seidlmayer, 2000:113; Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:3). All of these factors may have played a role in the choice of particular iconological structures utilised throughout the tomb of Mereruka. As Assmann (1996:81) notes, at times of social and religious distress ancient Egyptian funerary imagery can be seen to 'react' and 'reflect' through innovative and creatively productive schematic forms. New arrangements of representation became available, particularly in provincial areas, using schematic iconography indicating 'risky innovation' (Roth, 1999:37-53; Callender, 2011:41). In Watetkhethor's tomb such innovations may be indicated in a scene where she is borne on a palanquin carried exclusively by women reflecting a funerary structure more usually found in male contexts (Figure 22). Indeed, this gendered scene is also present in Mereruka's and Meryteti's burial chambers (Duell, 1938; Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008). [4]

[3] Contra this view see Smith, 2017:211

[4] Traces of Watetkhethor borne on a palanquin by female servants appears on the North Wall of her burial chamber, B5 (Figure 22).

This then was the situation during which King Teti assumed the throne of Egypt with the State struggling to deal with issues that challenged economic and social stability (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:1,8-9). Teti's predecessor, Unas, had constructed his pyramid at Saqqara, electing to build at a site that had been in use for many centuries as a royal necropolis (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:8). Teti, who may have been a son, or, more likely, a son-in-law of Unas, followed his example, although by this period, the available area for the construction of elite tombs was 'extremely limited' (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:19).

Security and harsh men?

It was common practice at this time to appoint family members to the Vizierate; such was the case with Teti's sons-in-law Kagemni and Mereruka who served him consecutively as viziers. Both men's tombs were constructed close to Teti's pyramid complex at Saqqara (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:23). Teti is said to have appointed experienced men to key roles within his administration (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008:28). Both Kagemni and Mereruka are described as 'harsh older men' whom Teti married to his young daughters (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:28). Teti's apparent preoccupation with security is described as evidenced through 'the harshest scenes of physical punishment' and of 'excessive aggression' in the tomb iconography of his viziers.

Kanawati and Swinton's (2018:32) opinion that punishment scenes in Mereruka's tomb, 'reveal an authoritarian and ruthless personality' must be tempered with the possibility that scenes of brutality

Figure 1: Officials about to be punished, tomb of Mereruka (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018: 28). That Teti's efforts ultimately ended in failure is suggested through the possibility that he may have been murdered by his bodyguards sometime between the eleventh and twelfth year of his reign (Kanawati, 2000; Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:37).

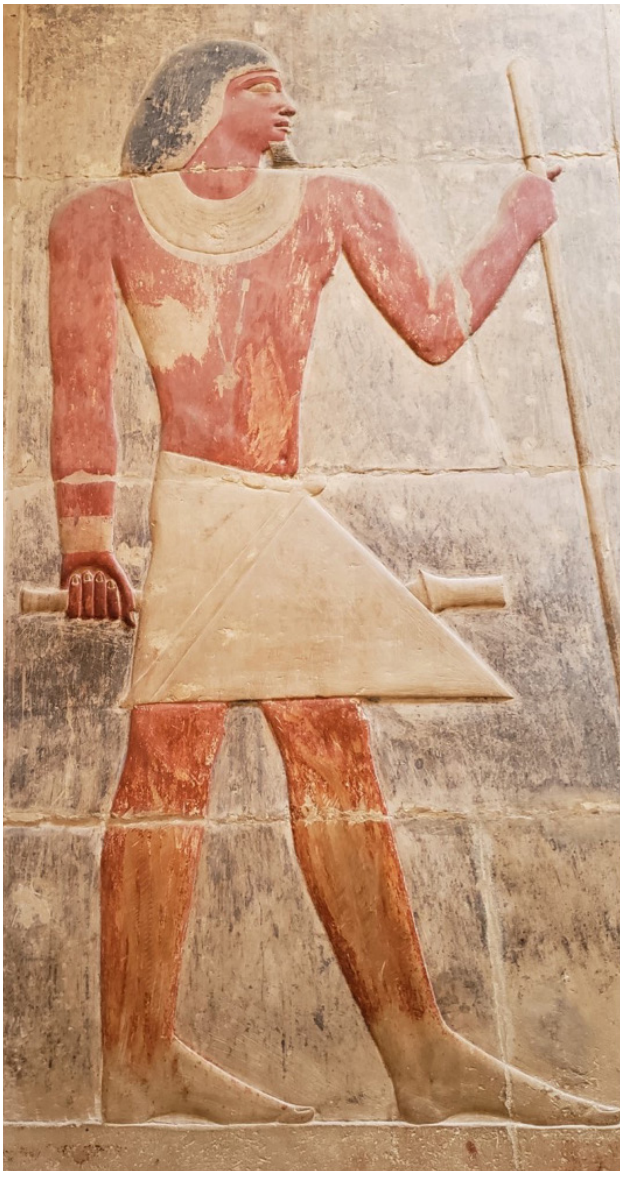


Figure 2: Image of Mereruka. Interior, looking west; mastaba of Mereruka, Saqqara (photo credit: J. Gayle, used with permission).

against human and non-human foes may function in reflecting aspects of uncertainly, perhaps indicating the taming of chaotic elements associated with the socio-political milieu of the period in which this tomb was constructed. That such images were placed alongside others depicting elaborate scenes of commodity and food production, with many goods designated as coming from the king's own estates, indicates an overarching sense of continued dependence on loyalty between the king and his most senior officials (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:29-29).

Watetkhethor's status as the eldest daughter of Teti, is supported through the use of unusual motifs within her funerary representation. Funerary emblems and objects appear to support her royal status (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:32). However, Duell (1938:1-3), author of the tomb's original, and most thorough excavation report to date was uncertain that Watetkhethor was Teti's daughter. The situation is complicated further by the fact that during this period, those who may have been 'of royal blood' either with a direct, or through a lesser degree of familial connection to the king, may have claimed titles 'son' or 'daughter' of the king's 'body' *z3t nswt nt ḥt.f*, without the requirement for close biological affiliation (Fischer, 2000:47).

That Mereruka predeceased both Teti and Watetkhethor is suggested through the chronologies of other individuals who assumed the role of vizier under this king. More tentatively, Mereruka's death is evidenced through the presence of a daughter, Ibenebu, depicted once in Watetkhethor's (B1) section of the tomb (Kanawati 2008:12).

This is the only scene in which Watetkhethor's daughter, Ibnebu, appears. She is positioned alongside her mother and her sibling, Meryteti (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008:12). Elsewhere, Ibenebu is absent from family scenes in which Mereruka's brothers, Meryteti (his son by Watetkhethor), and other sons by another wife, are all depicted (Duell, 1938:3). It is probable that Ibnebu either predeceased her mother or had not yet reached adulthood upon Watetkhethor's death. There is no evidence that she was buried in the family tomb. It has been suggested that she may have been born to Watetkhethor following Mereruka's death (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008:12).

Although Ibenebu was probably still a child and younger than her brother, her depiction displays sexualised signifiers of female adulthood. However, throughout Watetkhethor's chambers,

Figure 3: Left to Right, Meryteti, Watetkhethor and Ibenebu, Watetkhethor's Chamber B1 (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 16).

representations of Meryteti maintain the iconography of a male child. He is usually portrayed naked with a side-lock. Unlike his sister, Meryteti is iconographically infantilised (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008:43). The opposite dynamic is in place for Ibenebu who wears the slim-fitting sheath-like gown of an adult female, with one breast exposed. The siblings wear hair decorations and menat necklaces associated with dance and gymnastics scenes evidenced elsewhere in Mereruka's chambers (Duell,1938). Further nuanced hints at a sexualised role are suggested in Ibenebu's headdress, a style associated with *ḫnr* dancers, musical performers represented elsewhere in scenes within Mereruka's chambers (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008). [5] In funerary iconography, female sexuality represented a continuum, often without the age demarcations of childhood common to other cultures (Voss, 2006: 388).

The material engagement underpinning the functionality of gendered elements in funerary iconography indicates that daughters usually appear as ritually effective, sexually enabled adults in postmortem contexts. In similar contexts, male offspring are more usually infantilised in their iconographic arrangement. In this manner, children of either gender are rendered alternatively as sexually ineffective (male), or as effective females in the ongoing regenerative ritual enacted for the deceased in gendered spaces. Iconographically, the portrayal of a male child did not affect the ritually efficacy of either an adult male or an adult female in ritualised contexts. The portrayal of a young woman functioned ritually as a means through which an adult male (usually the tomb owner) could transition to his afterlife.

[5] These funerary dancers are associated with rejuvenative ritual in a role dominated by female performers until the final stages of the Old Kingdom (Graves-Brown, 2010:92, 96).

Archaeological Background: The Tomb of Mereruka

The mastaba tomb of Mereruka is one of the largest private funerary complexes at Saqqara (Duell, 1938: xiv). The tomb abuts the mastaba of Teti's vizier, Kagemni, which may also indicate that Mereruka followed Kagemni into this role (Kanawati, 1996). In spite of space 'restrictions' and perhaps indicative of Mereruka's importance, the tomb's original excavator estimated that at the time of its construction this tomb was over 1,000 metres square (Firth & Gunn, 1926). Mereruka's mastaba has long been considered as particularly important in the archaeological record of this Old Kingdom Period for a number of reasons, not least of which is its finely decorated chambers with detailed themes and motifs, some of which appear here uniquely, or possibly for the first time (Daressy, 1896:3; Pieke, 2011:216). Whilst the chambers assigned to Watetkhethor date to its original construction, other parts assigned to Meryteti are of a slightly later date, probably added following the death of both parents.

The representation of gender in this tomb, as in any shared tomb of this period, was of vital importance and a key element underpinning the framework of ritualised cult implemented through the interplay between image, text and the deceased individual who formed the focus of that activity. Within this context, embodied strategies, whether masculinised or feminised, were relevant to the nuanced and fluid categorisation which 'gender' fulfilled (Roth,1999:47; McCarthy, 2002:195; Cooney, 2010:235). This is particularly evidenced in Watetkhethor's own quarters where the use of gendered structures in ritually significant scenes remains one of the most salient sources of information available to us from tombs of this Old Kingdom period (Roth, 1999:47, 2000:198-199).

Figure 4: The mastaba of Mereruka at Saqqara (Duell,1938: Plate 3b).

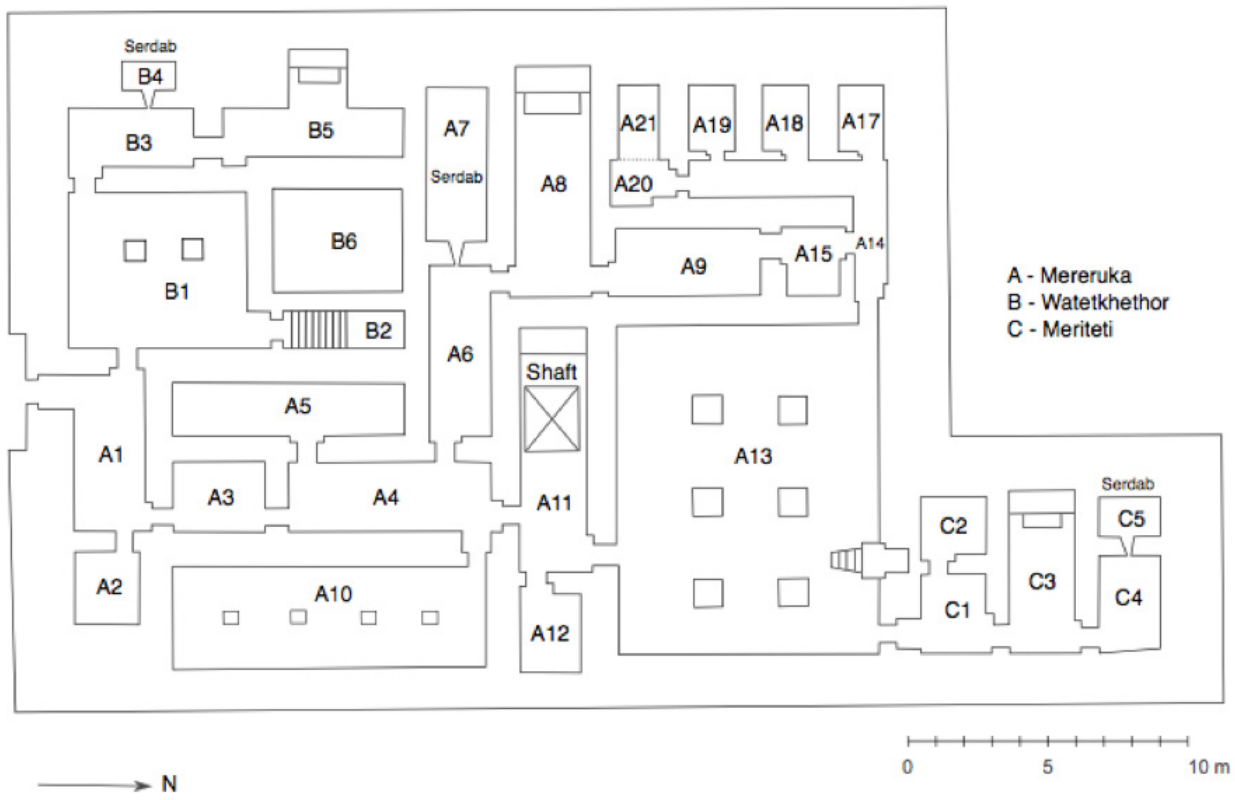


Figure 5: plan of the internal layout in the tomb of Mereruka, sections A, indicating sections dedicated to Watetkhethor, sections B, and to their son, Meryteti, sections (Cooke, 2020:44, figure 1.18).

The Funerary Chambers of Watetkhethor

Watetkhethor's burial occupies six interconnected areas in the south-west section of Mereruka's tomb (Figure 5, B1-B6). Funerary chambers, and other areas allocated to her funerary cult, represent spaces in which Watetkhethor was the primary beneficiary of rituals designed to sustain and safeguard. These areas include:

- a pillared hall (B1);
- a stairway that originally provided access to the roof (B2);
- a serdab niche in an antechamber to the chapel (B3, B4);
- a large offering chapel containing a false door (B5).

What can the spaces and imagery in which Watetkhethor appears in her husband's funerary chambers and in her own, tell us about her afterlife expectations and the role of gender in effecting these? Chapter 4 examines a range of representational evidence that addresses these questions.

The Research Focus

Having established the context of the time and place in which Watetkhethor lived and died, this study will analyse funerary depictions that present Watetkhethor in a range of scenes within her husband's section of this large, elaborately decorated tomb. Of equal focus are scenes related to funerary cult in Watetkhethor's funerary chambers. The ritual function of this imagery is analysed contextually in order to address:

- the structure of imagery in which Watetkhethor appears as facilitator in scenes relevant to the funerary cult of her spouse;
- the functionality of scenes in which Watetkhethor appears with her son, or in the company of retainers;
- the purpose of imagery in which Watetkhethor appears in areas assigned to her own funerary cult;
- the broader role of material engagement and of gendered ontologies in funerary imagery of this period.

Rationale: Why this study?

Despite significant inroads into the broad and complex subject of gender in ancient culture, many significant tombs and associated materials, particularly those of the early chronological phases in the vast span of ancient Egyptian culture, wait to be re-examined in the light of critical developments in 'gender archaeology' (Scott, 1986; Conkey and Gero, 1997; Gilchrist, 1999; Eller, 2000; Meskell, 2000). Much remains to be fully understood.

Figure 6: Watetkhethor, as depicted on the north wall of Mereruka's tomb, Room A13, Figure 5 (Duell, 1938: II, Plate 160).

In archaeological terms, gender manifests itself visibly, either intentionally, who is represented and how, and through other sources, that is to say, particular people or events are more likely to be included within gendered scenes than others (Arnold, 2006:151). Interpretative difficulties remain. Like all archaeological research, investigations of gender often interpret the past through the lens of the present, even if there are few contemporary analogues (Voss, 2006:367). Up until the relatively recent past, Egyptological scholarship viewed the presence of women in funerary iconography as largely secondary; supportive of and complementary to that of male tomb owners. The role of women in an ancient Egyptian representative context was understood (legitimately) as vital to the ultimate protection and successful regeneration of a male partner (Roth,1999). However, what of 'Her' rebirth?

The question as to how a woman achieved her own state of transition, functioning beyond serving to facilitate the regeneration of a male partner, has sometimes surfaced in scholarship focused upon the Egyptian afterlife and access to this divinised state (Kroeter, 2009:47-49; Cooney 2010:224; Graves-Brown, 2010:35). On occasion, there is an apparent dismissal of the issue altogether (Robins, 1993:175; Wilfong, 2010; Smith, 2017:211). Indeed, the question as to how transition into the afterlife worked for women remains open to question:

> [r]ebirth into the afterlife was a literal process: after death, the male tomb owner was thought to impregnate a woman, generally his wife, with his own spirit in order to birth himself into the next world ... The stimulation of fertility, is likely the reason for the erotic portrayal of women[6] in so many tombs throughout ancient Egyptian history (Kroeter 2009:47-49).

[6] As argued here, this included wives, mothers, daughters and other females depicted in funerary imagery.

Kroeter's attempt to address this rather one-sided view of postmortem rebirth is accompanied by an almost apologetic footnote, indicating a level of continued uncertainty: '[t]his concept was necessarily problematic when the tomb owner was female' (2009:57). This view was largely maintained within Egyptological scholarship until Roth addressed the issue in 1999. A key element in her work was the funerary iconology of women from the 5th to the 6th Dynasty, including that of Watetkhethor (Roth, 1999:37-53).

Perhaps the most ubiquitous image-type that promoted this rather one-sided view of gendered functionality is imagery in which the tomb owner (usually male) is identified as the 'larger than life' object of regenerative cult. Positioned as the dominant figure in the scene, the deceased is shown with a scaled-down, diminutive figure of a woman (wife, mother or daughter, sometimes all three) close to his feet. The notion of women as a hierarchically secondary feature of funerary iconography indicates an incomplete and misleading view of the evidence.

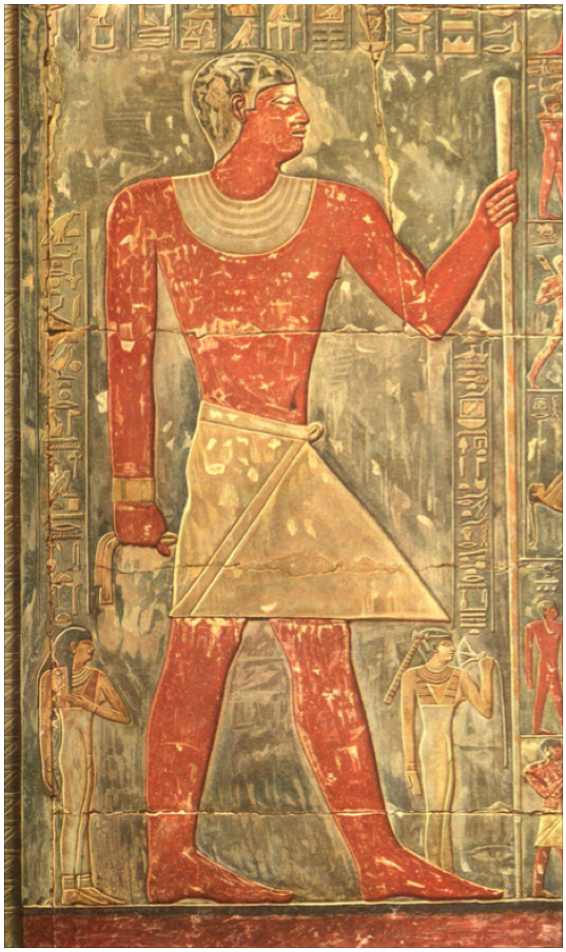


Figure 7: Watetkhethor, positioned to the left/front of Mereruka with his mother on his right, behind in image, (Duell 1938: II: Plate 159).

Within the broader scope of visual culture and of material studies within archaeology, there is as yet, no consistent understanding of image as semiosis/code, or as mimesis/imitation of reality in funerary contexts (Angenot, 2015:100; Bahrani, 2014:34). Understanding art as ritualised action requires that attention is paid to form, to schematic patterning, and to what can be observed, albeit with equal attention to what might be absent. All of these factors must be considered within discrete historical contexts in order to better understand why a particular type of funerary object, or pattern, or image-type was intentionally produced for use in specific socio-religious contexts:

> art as a form of intentional human action can only be understood in the context of the relationships and objectives of human beings acting in the social world (Morphy, 2010:268).

Those in charge of arranging the décor within this tomb, ensured that particular image sequences were placed within discrete, ritually significant, areas. The execution of these scenes was prioritised and placed in the hands of master craftsmen (Pieke, 2011:223). Ritual significant scenes often display a higher standard of workmanship and are in a more advanced state of completion (Pieke, 2011:223). Spatial arrangement and context mattered. Within this tomb, the west walls of each chamber, ontologically significant spaces associated with the land of the dead, were carved in a more 'sophisticated' way than the east walls (Pieke, 2011:223). These image sequences show Mereruka at various stages in his funerary 'journey'; seated at offering tables, or with Watetkhethor as the couple survey the production of funerary commodities provided by the king (Duell, 1938: Plate 94). Given however, the undeniable circumstances of our limited, etic-level access to meaning in placement choice, an awareness of assumptions levelled through less rigorous (i.e. earlier) examination of women's funerary representation, must remain the

subject of interrogatory approaches. As set out in the case study that follows, a detailed examination of funerary iconography provided for Watetkhethor permits an opportunity to redress elements of these oversights (Chapter 4).

Watetkhethor's burial complex indicates that she was an important person in her own right, with a spouse who held one of the most important positions in the royal administration. Her representational record (that which remains extant) provides an ideal context through which to analyse the role of gender within women's funerary imagery as evidenced through the decorative programme of this significant tomb. The next section of the study examines the ways in which both 'art' and 'ritual' are defined.

Contextualising terms: Art and Ritual

Throughout this study, funerary art is construed as the product of aesthetically ordered activity in a society, indicative of a particular worldview (Baines, 2015:2-3). This is not to imply that aesthetics was a primary concern in an Egyptian context, rather this aspect was just one element within a complex schema (Müller, 2015:78-79). Van Walsem (2005:2) defines 'art' as the term for individual and/or collective products of human behaviour by means of images, artefacts and performances beyond the purely functional (Van Walsem, 2005:2). In the hermeneutic of Egyptian art, it is necessary to extend image to the ritualistic, mythological themes to which it might belong; this includes the subject-matter, position and location of a representation (Müller, 2015:79).

The nature of funerary art has been described as multifunctional, encapsulating cultural history, religion and ritual (Franke, 2002:8). The agents, purveyors and recipients of ancient Egyptian funerary art would not have understood the concept of 'art' in any modern sense (Angenot, 2015:109). 'Art' was accepted as an aspect of 'religious experience' (Baines, 2015:5).

One of the main characteristics of developments within elite funerary representation in some Old Kingdom tombs, is found in what Lemos (2016:125) refers to as 'the opening of space'. A burgeoning provision of architectonic elements within the funerary programme widened and developed throughout this era. Such provisioning included false doors and offering chapels containing expansive tomb imagery, evidenced in better preserved examples from both non-elite and elite contexts (Richards, 2005:41-42). Larger, more elaborate tombs, allowed individuals to extend a range of ritualised strategies with programmes that permitted a particular use of gendered space: again, the given proviso was that the ultimate audience, and indeed the beneficiaries, were not of this world.

Changes in the decorum of funerary representation and an apparent loosening of the 'rules' which, up until this period, had prevented the use of particular motifs within the funerary programme of non-royal individuals was always gradual. The impetus for stylistic change is hard to determine as there was never explicit reference made to artistic arrangement in funerary representation at any period in Egyptian history (Hartwig, 2015:45). Rather, we are left to probe the cultural and religious climate in order to piece together a range of representational exemplars that provide evidence of these strategies.

The definition of ritual should be understood in similarly broad terms. This study broadly follows Bell's definition where 'ritual' exists in a variety of contexts with multiple systems of interpretation (1997:x, 301). Ancient Egyptian ritual (and related cultic activity) was based on a tripartite distinction between action, iconic representation and recitation (Assmann, 1992:87). When ritual was internalised into imagery and script carved, or painted within a funerary scene, representation served as 'a sacred text' (Assmann,1992:87). This dynamic created a sacerdotal semiosis in which objects, ritual performance and once orated liturgies were transformed into imagery and scripts that functioned as powerful signifiers of cultic symbolism (Assmann, 1992:89). It was through the performance of ritual that the dead were

able to make the necessary transitions that enabled individual access to the afterlife (Nyord, 2009:1-2; Willems, 2010:85). This process entailed a sequence of metaphysical transformations facilitated through complex engagement between art, script and magically charged, perpetually re-enacted mortuary cult (Hays, 2011:120-121; Bárta, 2011:188).

Morphy (2010:266) speaks of the discomfort with which the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology (to which one must add, Egyptology) have neglected the broader subject of ancient art as a research resource. Non-Western art in particular, has been somewhat neglected through 'definitional issues' entangled with questions of what is art, and what does it do (Morphy, 2010:266)? Indeed, as explored throughout this study, retrieving essential aspects of a particular socio-cultural background through the analysis of representative schemas is vital to accessing 'meaning' (Panofsky, 1955: 55). Ideally, Egyptian representation should be viewed contextually, albeit that given the challenging history of artefact collection, original context is not always retrievable.

The Structure of the Study: Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 sets out the aims and objectives of this study, alongside a rationale as to why the analysis that follows is relevant to understanding the role of gender in funerary imagery at this time. Watetkhethor's funerary record is contextualised within the socio-political and ideological milieu in which she lived and died. Chapter 2 explores the literature that constitutes prior exploration of this tomb, providing something of the theoretical pathways through which gendered imagery is explored within this study. The methodology applied throughout is examined in detail in Chapter 3, whilst Chapter 4 comprises the analytic discourse of this case study. This chapter examines the concept of ritualised engagement through an analysis of scenes in which Watetkhethor serves as the means through which her husband, and ultimately, the deceased herself, sought rebirth into the afterlife. Chapter 5 gathers the strands of each part of the case study in order to substantiate the role of gender as a key element in the materiality of funerary representation. A literature review, examining original and more recent reports on this tomb, follows

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In their joint introduction to the first publication of this tomb (a two-volume book authored by the American Archaeologist, Prentice Duell, 1894-1960) the noted Egyptologists, James Henry Breasted and George Allen, described this large complex as divided into three distinct sections, with the largest area dedicated to the chief justice and vizier Mereruka (Duell, 1938: xviii). Breasted and Allen noted that the smaller, 'relatively unimportant portions belonging to the wife and the son are not reproduced here, but are described by Professor Duell in his Introduction' (Duell, 1938: xviii). It would be another seven decades before Watetkhethor's burial chambers were published (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008).

Whilst there exists a limited range of literature to have delved directly into the architectural structure and lay out of this particular tomb, other sources employed in this study are garnered from scholarship that lies outside of 'Egyptology'. The relevance of this scholarship, ranging from art history to material engagement theory, is essential to any attempt at 'reading' the embodied strategies that structure a significant proportion of representation within Watetkhethor's funerary repertoire. Increasingly and purposefully, scholarship emergent from archaeological, art historical, anthropological and material engagement perspectives continue to enrich the once-set-apart discipline of 'Egyptology' (Panofsky, 1955; Bahrani, 2014; Hodder, 2012; Morphy, 2010; Malafouris, 2013, Overmann, 2020a, 2020b).

Early Perspectives

Duell (1938:1) acknowledged that his carefully produced plans utilised earlier designations established by Daressy (1898) in the latter's exploration of this tomb. Earlier still, this tomb had been identified in small drawings made by its discoverer, De Morgan (1896:521-574) who excavated Mereruka's mastaba in July 1893. Following Daressy's work, the tomb was again examined as one in a group of mastabas all located within the Teti Pyramid Field at Saqqara (Firth & Gunn, 1926; PM III: 2,138).

Whilst Duell's authoritative work remains essential reading for anyone with an interest in Old Kingdom tombs, these volumes are primarily descriptive, focused legitimately upon the archaeology of tomb structure. Duell was not concerned with a nuanced interpretation of Egyptian funerary imagery.

Until relatively recently, interest in this structure was centred firmly on the funerary record of the elite male tomb owner, with limited interest afforded to other 'less important areas belonging to the wife' (Duell, 1938: xviii). Duell refers to the tomb as containing 'a great variety of secular scenes' (1938:17). The notion of determining that any form of funerary imagery in an ancient Egyptian context can be anything other than (what we might refer to as) 'religious', is somewhat curious, but again of its time. However, any explicit dichotomisation inherent in the sacred and the profane is perhaps now better understood as less bounded within ancient culture, where spheres of overlap between religion and secular activity are recognised as somewhat fuzzy (Insoll, 2004:16,17).

Earlier interpretations of funerary elements within this mastaba were somewhat misrepresentative in a failure to note the significance and developing importance of feminised spaces within funerary complexes. However, an apparent lack of analytical interpretation of representative content in this, one of the most complex and elaborately decorated private tombs of this period, is again fundamentally of its time. Breasted, Allen and Duell, who all contributed to the latter's double-volume publication (1938), appear unaware of particularly nuanced, gendered elements. Women, ancient or modern, were regarded as 'less than' in the *zeitgeist* of the period in which these men lived. Those who first explored Mereruka's burial complex maintained their focus on the funerary record of an important man. What

we might now recognise as intentionality in the provision of gender-sensitive spaces provided for a high-elite woman who may have outranked her husband socially, went unnoticed (Daressy, 1898; Firth and Gunn, 1926; Duell, 1938).

In Duell's extensive publication, Watetkhethor was relegated to the role of a bystander in the narrative discourse of a funerary programme which, at this time, was understood as principally purposed for elite males (Duell, 1938). Women's funerary repertoire in - usually shared - tombs; on stelae, on false-doors and within offering chapels, was poorly understood contextually and not always fully recorded in archaeological reports of this period.

As noted, Watetkhethor's intricately decorated chambers were not fully recorded or described until 2008. A lack of recognition regarding the significance of gendered space in shared burials of this era is unexceptional. The focus was firmly elsewhere for Duell, Breasted and Allen (1938). Fortuitously, Watetkhethor's burial chambers remained intact enough for their scenes to be recorded eventually, even if the significance of complex, ritualised representation evidenced in Duell's original publications, went unrecognised (Roth, 1999:47-49, 2000:198-199; McCarthy, 2002:175; Kanawati, *et al*, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2018).

Past interpretation of representation stopped short at features that included a well-defined use of discretely gendered areas for Mereruka and Watetkhethor. Indeed, there was little focus from early to late twentieth-century scholarship upon interpretative analysis, or upon identifying aspects of gendered intentionality that might remain 'visible' in the archaeological record. [7]

One might assume that Pieke's more recent interpretation was timely (2011). Pieke (2011: 216) notes that whilst the usual focus of scholarship on tombs of this period is centred upon the semantic content of funerary motifs and on the social rank of tomb owners, her stated intent is to examine other, important elements in Mereruka's mastaba. She notes that her first objective is to focus upon the techniques employed by the artists employed within this highly-decorated complex. A further stated intent is to examine the process of scene selection, and more broadly, to explore the agency of the tomb owner in this process. The author claims that her work is intended to make available 'a great deal of further information about the impact of the images themselves' (Pieke, 2011:216). However, Pieke's work meets only the first of her stated aspirations. Details on semantic content, individual agency in scene selection and image impact are largely absent. The intricacy and complex iconology in gendered representation throughout Mereruka's tomb continued as largely unexplored as recently as 2011.

New Perspectives

For some time now, research into the form and function of ancient imagery has been viewed as a discrete subject within archaeology (Hartwig, 2004, 2015: 47-49; Meskell, 2004; Hodder, 2012; Angenot, 2015: 98; Bahrani, 2014). The distinctive manner in which representational forms were rendered and made meaningful on a range of levels is recognised in emerging scholarship emanating from broader studies on cognitive archaeology and related fields, including that of material engagement studies (Malafouris, 2013; Angenot, 2015; Overmann, 2020a, 2020b). Whilst a focus upon gender and sexuality in art and material culture is a relatively recent arrival into Egyptology, somewhat ironically, the construction of masculinity in ancient art and literature is now described as lagging behind continued interest in feminised constructions (Robins, 2007; Alberti, 2006; Joyce, 2008).

[7] See for example, Schäfer, 1919; Harpur, 1987; Davis, 1989; Simpson, 1989; Robins, 1994; Lesko, 1996, 1999 for largely descriptive overviews of funerary representation, albeit that all of these studies remain highly relevant.

The importance of Ann Macy Roth's work on gender in an ancient Egyptian funerary context, cannot be overestimated (1999, 2000, 2006). She was the first scholar to notice gendered patterns in the funerary programmes of private and royal individuals in tombs dated to the Old Kingdom and in later Ramesside contexts (Roth, 1999, 2000). Roth's datasets were limited due to disparate material survival rates, not least in Lower Egyptian contexts where material survival has been compromised for a range of reasons. Nevertheless, in summarising that which was available to her, Roth observed that in particular places at particular times some elite women were afforded their own offering scenes, stelae, false door elements and narrative image sequences in tombs shared with a spouse (1999:38). In a number of these contexts, both the image and name of the spouse appears to have been intentionally omitted. This phenomenon was described by Roth as the 'absent spouse' theory (1999: 37-53).

Occurring during the Late 5th and Early 6th Dynasties, Roth's 'patterns' highlighted instances in which the names and representation of spouses (affecting both genders) appear to have been intentionally omitted from gendered, funerary spaces and on associated elements within these areas (Roth, 1999: 47). According to Roth, a similar pattern re-emerges in Ramesside contexts, elaborated upon in her subsequent work on Nefertari's tomb with a similar pattern of 'absences' recorded (1999: 49). Roth associated such absences with male and female roles in fertility and conception: roles that expanded from those performed in life to similar functionality in a postmortem context (2000: 187-201). Whilst this phenomenon was apparently short-lived, its existence at various points in tomb development nevertheless raises important questions concerning the role of gender in funerary imagery.

Cult spaces assigned to Watetkhethor in the tomb of Mereruka were next addressed through the scholarship of Naquib Kanawati (2007, 2008). Kanawati adopted Duell's approach, providing an updated archaeological survey of this tomb with separate publications on areas assigned to Meryteti, and on the chambers of Mereruka and Watetkhethor (respectively 2004, 2008, 2011). Two thirds of Kanawati's (and in subsequent collaboration with Mahmud Abder-Raziq) scholarship on Watetkhethor's funerary chambers consists of colour plates and line drawings, essential materials to any student of these fragile surfaces and gendered spaces (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008).

The work that follows builds largely upon Roth's scholarship. Roth determined that Egyptian mythologies of rebirth focused predominantly upon the role of masculine creator gods, positing that the deceased female required assimilation with a male divine identity in order to be reborn (1999: 51). She refers to this dynamic as 'an alternative model of gender relations' (Roth, 2000: 187). During the 5th to 6th Dynasty, this process was still developing with a nascent programme of intentional engendered constructs yet to be fully realised (Cooney, 2010: 228). By the First Intermediate Period (c. 2181–2055 BC) with a range of innovative socio-religious developments in place (the causes of which lie beyond the scope of this study) the use and forms of gendered funerary iconography was fully realised in transitional rituals associated with tombs and coffins of this era.

As demonstrated in this review of relevant literature, the nature and function of ritualised representation within this tomb has been discussed through a limited range of publications, each with a different perspective. None of these were particularly concerned with the role and function of gendered spaces in funerary contexts. [8] Interest in the development of gendered, architectonic and semiotic programmes within Old Kingdom (and later) burial programmes, may ensure that an exquisitely executed funerary repertoire will remain a focus of scholarly attention for some time to come. Initiating an interpretative analysis, the next chapter is focused upon details of the methodological approach employed in this study.

[8] The only exception to this is Roth's work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In Egyptian funerary art, representation was adjusted to meet and to reinforce, particular theological, socio-political and ideological conventions (Nyord, 2016). Gendered representation as an element of funerary art went significantly beyond self-representation. Indeed, funerary images serve as a critical lens through which to interpret changes in ideological religiosity and in decorum (Angenot, 2015:105). It is the contention here, that the resulting frameworks serve as essential tools in understanding developments, consistencies and changes in the iconography of deceased individuals.

The methodology employed throughout this study, adopts a fusional approach framed by Panofsky's three-level system of iconology alongside Malafouris's Material Engagement Theory. These methodologies form an interpretative framework through which the materiality of funerary culture can be usefully examined (Panofsky,1939,1955; Malafouris, 2013:50-51). Why two methodologies? Each in its own way contributes much to understanding embodiment in representation. No single interpretative framework is sufficient. Rather it becomes necessary to tack between accessible and inaccessible evidence through the materiality structured within funerary representation. Images of idealised individuals in these contexts serve as one of the few 'concrete' elements of lives that are otherwise no longer available to us. Traces of intentionality visible within this framework throw light on the use of gender as a significant aspect of ritualised representation. Whilst the term 'gender' in archaeology includes a range of adopted and adapted identities aside from the binary of 'male' or 'female', this study will focus predominantly on the latter.

Neither iconology nor material engagement operate separately. Panofsky's Iconology, alongside broader constructs of semiotics structured within Malafouris's Material Engagement Theory (defined as MET by the latter), provide tools useful in the interpretation of imagery from 'an archaeologically recovered civilization' (Baines, 2015:1; Panofsky, 1955:26-41; Malafouris, 2013: 95,118). The 'enacted sign', in this case funerary and representational, served as the product of situated, ritualised activity encompassing both contexts (Malafouris, 2013:51). Although not without criticism, Panofsky's significantly older theory of iconology remains relevant to ancient art and has been described by Egyptologists as one of the best methodological approaches available (Seidlmayer, 2000:247; Van Walsem, 2005: 22; David, 2014:236-239).

Material Engagement theorists recognise 'mind' as an essential element within an embodied environment formed through material culture (Hutchins, 2010: 705; Malafouris, 2013:227; Knappet, 2014; 4702-4703). Both methodologies operate within a cognitive archaeology that considers 'mind' as extending beyond the body/brain dichotomy. Any understanding of the enacted ritual that was continuously operating within an ancient Egyptian funerary context must include consideration of the environments in which the cognitive processes that underpinned such 'enactments' developed.

Panofsky's Iconological System

Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) was one of the first scholars to differentiate between iconography, the subject matter or meaning of pictorial representation, and an overarching concept of iconology (1939,1955). Panofsky defined the latter as 'a unifying principle which underlies and explains both the visible event and its intelligible significance' (1955: 30). His iconological theory, an approach that emerged out of art-historical contexts, provides an avenue through which to interpret and contextualise ancient imagery within an historical location and through the socio-cultural and 'religious' milieu in which iconography was produced (Panofsky, 1972:11-14).

Panofsky understood pictorial interpretation as a combination of 'rational archaeological analysis' with an 'intuitive aesthetic recreation' (Panofsky, 1955: 14,10-17). Understanding ancient imagery required a level of familiarisation with what the authors of such representations 'knew' (Panofsky, 1972:12). Panofsky's three-layered approach involves:

- primary level meaning; in the context of this study this would apply to the corpus of bodies, objects and motifs associated with an individual in a funerary narrative. Where is it and why is it? The architectonic position and arrangement of an object, or of a narrative scene in all its complexity, requires its own interpretation beyond primary level meaning, as a 'never complete, always observer induced' scenario (Panofsky,1955:10-17,26-41);
- secondary or conventional level meaning (the iconography); in the context of this study this interpretation involves analysis of the values and functions attached to the elements of a scene. What is included (or excluded) and why? This larger cultural context can only be attempted through the use of ancient Egyptian textual and archaeological sources (Panofsky, 1955:14; David, 2014:238).
- Finally, the tertiary, intrinsic or perceptual level of meaning associated with an object or an image (its 'iconology') functions as a cohesive whole (Panofsky, 1972:5-9). In particular, this level of non-literal and symbolic meaning, including anomalies in scene-structure, contributes significantly to understanding scene-purpose. Image-interpretation at this level, may involve a cluster of elements including rebuses, metaphors and tropes (Panofsky,1955:26–41).

Malafouris's Material Engagement Theory

As noted, a fusional approach to representation and to image-interpretation within ancient, funerary contexts, permits a broader consideration of materiality intrinsic to the functionality of ritualised imagery in Watetkhethor's funerary programme. Material Engagement Theory indicates the inherent capacity of an object, or of an image, to carry multiple, interconnected values (Malafouris, 2004). Malafouris suggests that material signs have no meaning in themselves, they 'merely afford the possibility of meaning' (2013:118). Interpretation requires habituation with the possibilities and consequences of context (Malafouris 2013:118).

Malafouris's MET dovetails effectively with Panofsky's hypothesis that an image type can only be understood within discrete historical, geographical and ideological contexts. Beyond historical contexts however, MET proposes the radical notion, supported in this thesis, that human cognitive and emotional states (and intentionalities) 'literally comprise elements in their surrounding material environment' (Malafouris, 2013:227). The embodied functionality of gender was fundamental to this environment. Whilst people, not material things, do the thinking within this construct, deceased individuals were the product of 'worlds ambiguously natural and crafted' (Malafouris, 2013:236). As an artefact of this culture, Watetkhethor's funerary programme created a postmortem world that met her needs through the materiality of the immediate environment.

MET hypothesises that materiality, in this instance, a pictorial programme formed out of stone and paint, had its own agency. One may assume, tentatively, that the repertoire of material forms available to Watetkhethor elicited particular behavioural and psychological responses (Malafouris, 2013:116-117). The materiality of a tomb (its décor; layout; content and structure) encompassed a range of ontologies, engaging embodied funerary representation with walls, stone, space, text and image serving the deceased. In this 6th Dynasty context, material characteristics 'responded' to changing socio-cultural requirements through contrasts in form and structure, affording possibilities for ideological change in gendered funerary strategies.

Whilst acknowledged as a somewhat challenging task in the context of such ancient forms of representation, Iconology and MET methodologies function productively as tools critical to scene analysis. If ancient cognition cannot be examined directly, the existence of resulting material forms can provide insight into aspects of the associated behaviours and psychological processing of those who created these materials (Malafouris, 2013:15-16; Overmann, 2020b: 1). One of the goals of interpretation when 'reading' ancient representation is in recognising the historically intended meaning, as opposed to a scene's significance in a modern context (Parkinson, 2002:37). Within this discourse, it should be possible to view funerary elements as an expression of local and personal axiologies related to the lived experiences of long-dead people (Hodder, 2000:24). Apprehending a material pattern as representative, is to engage in a specific, culturally-formed perceptual process: herein lies the interconnectivity of Iconology with Material Engagement Theory.

In considering art as ritually functional and when vestiges of practice and 'performance' are no longer accessible, 'image' continues to reflect elements of 'knowing and acting in the world' (Morphy, 2010:265). This approach recognises the complexity of funerary representation and that inevitably, the concept of 'art', and in particular, ancient art viewed from an etic perspective, must remain conceptually 'fuzzy' (Morphy, 2010:265). The following section is focused upon scene interpretation, initially in scenes where Watetkhethor serves as facilitator to her husband's regeneration and rebirth, and latterly in image sequences where she facilitates the same transitional dynamic autonomously.

Chapter 4: Art as Ritual Engagement

While many questions regarding intentionality often remain unanswered, ancient Egyptian art has long been 'bedeviled' by, what Robins (1994: Preface) describes as preconceived theories that relate more strongly to the mind of the modern interpreter than to the intentions of the ancient craftsman. Although ancient Egyptian art might seem familiar, there are distinctive aims and principles underlying image composition both in two and three dimensional forms.

Watetkhethor and Mereruka are portrayed together throughout their elaborate tomb (Duell, 1938). In spaces dedicated to her funerary cult, however, Watetkhethor's representational repertoire consistently omits her husband's image or his name. Other individuals are depicted alongside Watetkhethor in many of these scenes. Her son, usually portrayed as an infant, and a range of male and female attendants accompany her (Roth, 1999:46-47). It appears that men in subordinate positions do not disturb the gendered protocol within these image sequences (Roth, 1999:51). Elsewhere within this shared tomb, Watetkhethor plays a key role in Mereruka's funerary cult. In shared imagery, she is always subordinate to her spouse; he remains the focus of funerary cult.

In an ancient Egyptian context, 'iconography' describes the totality of images working as a dynamic and ritually enacted whole. In a modern context, the same word implies an understanding of themes and motifs 'to be identified, classified and interpreted' (Müller, 2015: 78). In order to fully understand the subject of ancient representative imagery, it is necessary to distinguish between the dialectical and reflexive relationship between 'art' then and 'art' now.

In order to recognise the role of (what we might view as) gender-ambiguities in ancient culture it is critical to consider the power of image and metaphor in the worldview of past societies. The issue of interpretation becomes even more acute when the culture under examination is no longer extant; when there is no one to 'explain' the meaning of an object, an act, a ritual or a representation. The very term 'representation' derives from traditional Western philosophical and religious notions of the 'sign' 'commonly bound up with a particular concept of explanation concerned with characterising congruities and incongruities between an image (e.g. copy, surrogate, representation or signifier) and what it is thought to represent (Preziosi, 1998: 581; Piquette, 2018: 9).

Watetkhethor as facilitator

Our understanding of an engendered role for women in mortuary iconography in ancient Egypt, as in cultures contemporaneous to that of Egypt, has shifted and expanded over the past two decades. The dynamic of gender, and its complex relationship with the divine in a postmortem context, can be understood within a more richly interpretative body of scholarship focused upon representation and semiotic message (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Roth, 2000; McCarthy, 2002; Van Walsem, 2005; Shalomi-Hen, 2006; Cooney, 2010; Nyord, 2013; Bleiberg, 2016).

Nyord's image ontologies are valuable in the absence of explicit explanations regarding the 'beliefs' attached to a particular image or object (Nyord, 2017: 341). This approach draws on the internal qualities exhibited by the object itself (and is therefore subjective) and, importantly, on ways through which conceptual affordances are instantiated through the deployment of an object/image in particular contexts. What can representation deployed in a particular context indicate about individual identity/intentionality? Zakrzewski (2015: 166) argues that it is important to acknowledge the multiple aspects of identity that are bound together in constructions of 'self and other'. Each reflects differing aspects

of individual identity (Zakrzewski, 2015:166). To this range of existential personas, one might add the intricate constructions of identities of the self in death.

In scenes within her husband's chambers, Watetkhethor can be understood as serving in the role of the divine feminine element essential to his regeneration (Roth, 1999: 51; Troy, 1986: 2, 3). Watetkhethor is depicted alongside her spouse as both the receptacle for and as the facilitator of Mereruka's metaphysical rebirth. In these contexts, Watetkhethor is portrayed diminutively (Figure 7). In other scenes, Watetkhethor's figure is to scale, almost equaling that of her spouse, Figure 9 (Duell, 1938: Plate 41). The rationale underpinning such proportional variance remains open to interpretation. Why this apparent inconsistency in proportional representation at particular points within the tomb? The role of iconographical arrangement appears to both enable and play with the 'material manifestations of power' (Nyord, 2020:33).

Was this an indication that as the eldest child of a ruling king Watetkhethor warranted a level of hierarchical equality on, at the very least, a social level? Kanawati suggests that Mereruka may have been proud of his marriage to a high-status woman and that this may have influenced the arrangement of particular images (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008:14). The agency of a woman, even in relatively current scholarship, is often 'read' as secondary to the ideological desires of a spouse who, one may surmise, had overall 'say' in his tomb's representational schema.

Watetkhethor's presence in Mereruka's chambers

Watetkhethor is depicted as accompanying her spouse in thirty-nine of the forty-six principal scenes throughout this tomb (Duell, 1938:3). As noted, however, in areas of the tomb dedicated to her own funerary cult, Mereruka is neither portrayed nor named (Duell, 1938:2). In these instances, Watetkhethor can be understood as functioning as the feminine element crucial to her own access to the afterlife. This appears to be emphasised through particular forms of discrete representation that served her funerary cult (see Figures 22-24).

Egyptian mythologies of rebirth focused on masculine creator gods as the initiators of life; they were directly involved in the regeneration of the deceased. A deceased female, like a deceased male, required assimilation with a god in order to be reborn (Roth, 1999:51; Cooney, 2010:228). During the 6th Dynasty, this dynamic was still in development (Cooney, 2010:228). During Watetkhethor's era, nascent mechanisms of female rebirth, managed through an assumption of masculine regenerative powers, enabled a woman's ultimate assimilation with both Osiris and the solar deity, Ra (McCarthy, 2002). An amalgamation between male deceased and the gods of the afterlife was already present in funerary protocols (Cooney, 2010:228). During this period however, particular arrangements of funerary imagery allowed a deceased female to temporarily adopt a male role in order to facilitate her own rebirth (Roth, 1999:51; McCarthy, 2002:175).

By the Eleventh to Twelfth dynasties, following a loosening of earlier patterns of representational decorum, this dynamic was fully realised in what Roth refers to as 'an alternative model of gender relations' (2000:187). By the New Kingdom, women were enabled through 'new' forms of isolated representation to channel the mythic masculinity of generating life autonomously, effecting their own rebirth, exactly as a man would (Cooney, 2010: 225). Later, this schematic arrangement was more fully developed in the tombs of Ramesside royals, including that of Nefertari (McCarthy, 2002).

From the entrance to her tomb, Watetkhethor's presence is concurrently diminutised whilst iconographically prominent. This would have been an accessible and visible part of the structure. Hierarchical order is evidenced in the subtle arrangement of the couple's feet.

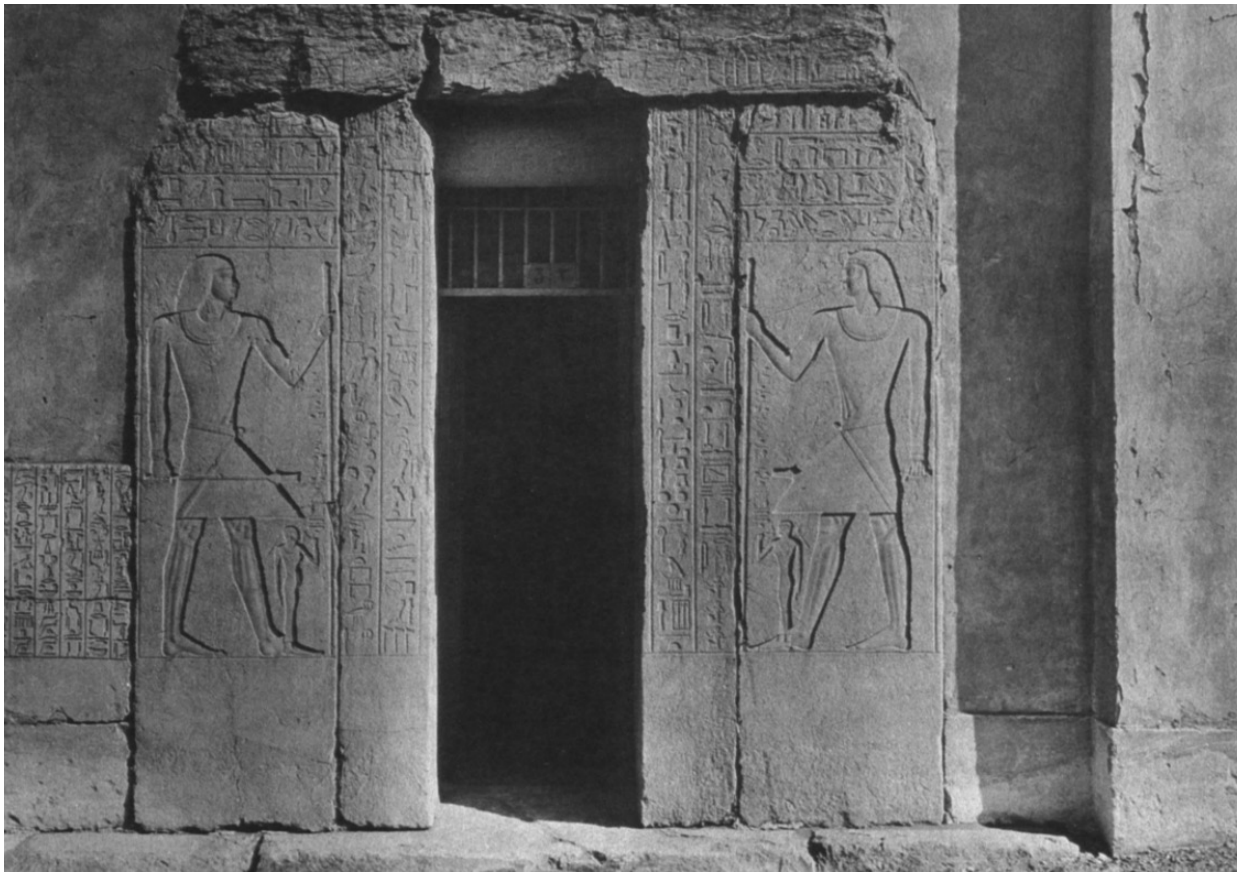


Figure 8: Entrance to the mastaba (Duell, 1938: Plate 4).

Although Mereruka dwarfs her, Watetkhethor's diminutised figure assumes a nuanced precedence whilst maintaining representational decorum at the entrance to the tomb; her feet are placed before those of her spouse as she stands in the foreground of the scene. Effectively, she is positioned before him giving her an element of primacy in figural hierarchy. It is possible that this scene was carved following the death of Mereruka; one of the last images to be completed within the tomb. Whilst Kanawati (2008:14) implies that this unusual arrangement reflects Mereruka's pride in acquiring a high-status woman as spouse, one might also hypothesise that Watetkhethor may have wished to signify her own social status to those able to access the relatively open area before her tomb.

In a subsequent scene inside the tomb, the couple are represented again, this time in proportionally similar dimensions as they observe the transportation of their funerary goods, Figure 9. What iconological criteria (an aspect of decorum) required Watetkhethor's figure to be significantly smaller in one scene, whilst in others the couple appear at a similar scale? There is much yet to understand regarding perceptual meaning embedded into the structure of such representational arrangements. Supporting texts indicate that most of the valuable items being carried into this tomb were gifts from Teti (Duell, 1938; Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008). Does the arrangement of feet at the tomb entrance, followed by the couple portrayed at a similar scale, indicate that a royal woman is alternatively afforded representational parity - or precedence - as her royal father's largesse is demonstrated?

As indicated above, the size differential between husband and wife fluctuates through various points in the pictorial programme of Mereruka's chambers. In Figure 10 the couple are again represented at a similar scale. Notably, when their son Meryteti is depicted with his parents, he is always the smallest

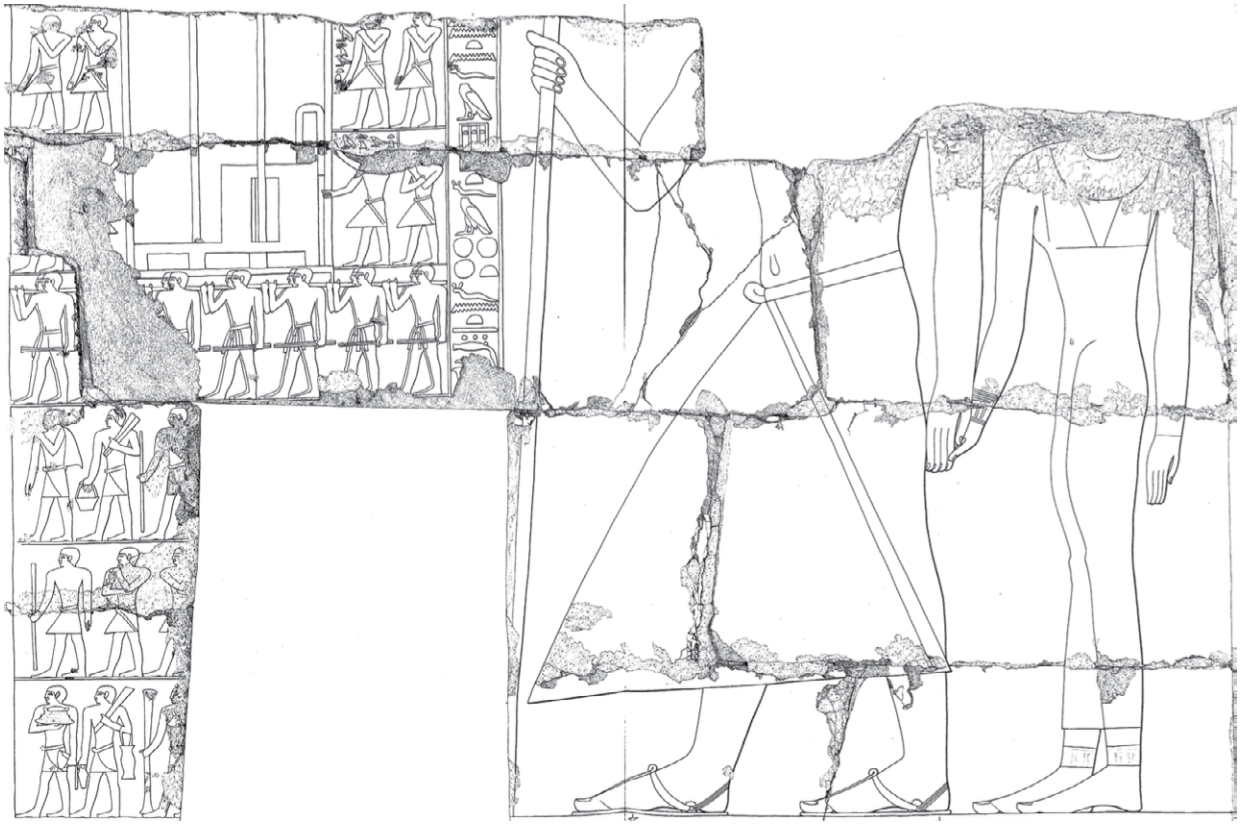


Figure 9: Chamber A6, north wall (Duell, 1938: Plate 48c).

figure in a triadic arrangement. Only within his own chambers is the latter portrayed as an adult male. Elsewhere, he assumes infant iconography even though Meryteti was most likely an adult when the tomb was decorated. The adult-child schema that influenced the appearance and status of other males in Mereruka's tomb appears to form part of a gender-sensitive arrangement. Usually, whenever a male tomb owner (elite, male) is represented in tomb iconography he retains his position as the sole focus of regenerative cult. The only exceptions here are found in chambers assigned to Watetkhethor (see Figure 16).

Figure 10: A triadic arrangement, chamber A6, east wall (Duell,1938: 1, Plate 23).

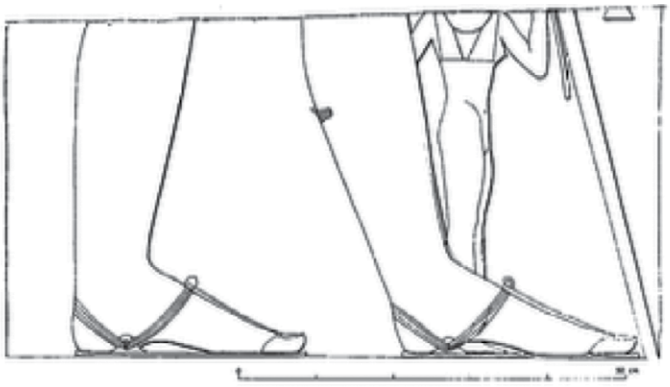


Figure 11: Mereruka and Watetkhethor (Duell, 1938: 1, Plate 48d).

In subsequent scenes on the same wall (Figures 11-12) Watetkhethor again assumes a 'subordinate' position in the absence of the couple's son. She has shifted her previous ontological role and representational arrangement where she was 'equal' to Mereruka proportionally, to another in which she again serves as the feminine prototype crucial to the afterlife regeneration of her partner (Troy,1986: 2,3). Although diminutised, her presence here is essential.

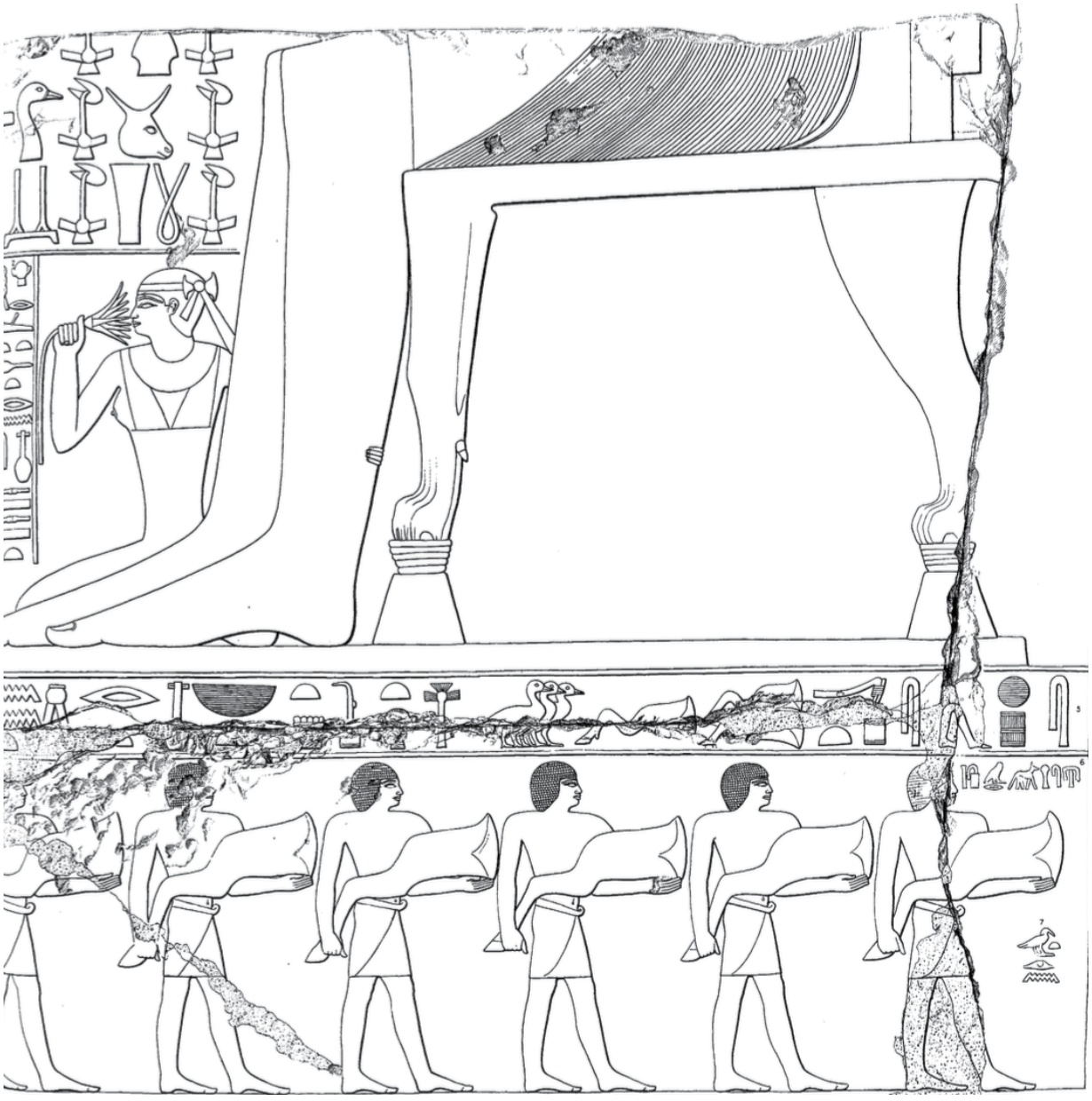


Figure 12: Chamber A8, south wall (Duell, 1938: Plate 57).

In Figure 12, Watetkhethor fulfills the material and metaphysical means to her husband's postmortem transition in a ritually-charged scene before his offering table. She serves here both apotropaically and in a regenerative role as the means to her partner's rebirth. Mereruka's postmortem viability is central to this construct. Ensuring bodily survival was perhaps the ultimate *do ut des* strategy underpinning offering table development, and the presence of a wife (sometimes a mother) was crucial to this ritualised arrangement (O'Neill, 2015). This dynamic was not regarded as reciprocal. That is to say, Mereruka's presence does not facilitate the rebirth of his spouse in chambers assigned to Watetkhethor's funerary transition. In order for that to occur, Watetkhethor was required to become one with Osiris. That assimilation, as argued here, depended on her being alone, or at least not with her spouse, as demonstrated through other narrative scenes arranged throughout her chambers.

Whilst almost all the offerings and libation equipment placed before the deceased are represented at a natural scale (fruits, meats, oils), Watetkhethor's figure is significantly diminutised, portrayed at a similar scale to the offering bearers below her, Figure 12. The latter function as material references to eternal supplies of metaphysical sustenance for the deceased. Watetkhethor herself serves as an aspect of materiality, similar in function to the food, libation and purification items stacked on and under the offering table, all of which ensure Mereruka's postmortem survival. Her presence provides what Malafouris terms an 'enactive sign'; a semiotic conflation through matter (in a two-dimension representative form) that both enacts and brings forth Mereruka's 'world' (2013:51). For this scene is 'his'. Watetkhethor is significant but secondary. Her spouse is again identified as the beneficiary of regenerative cult indicating his 'membership in the society of the provisioned and the redeemed' (Assmann, 2001:403). This gendered size differentiation occurs each time Watetkhethor is functional in an important, though subordinate role, throughout the tomb she shared.

The rules of decorum regarding the position and role of women in funerary scenes was highly proscribed at this, as in earlier and subsequent periods. From the Helwan Corpus (Dynasties 1 to 3), to the Giza Slab Stelae (Dynasty 4) women elite women are afforded their own offering table scenes in which they assume the primary focus of regenerative cult (O'Neill, 2015). Later, in scenes dated to the First Intermediate Period, this situation develops as women are represented seated at their own offering tables in tombs that are clearly shared (Daoud, 2005:112). By the Middle Kingdom, the situation changes again as women are more often found seated opposite (or, sometimes standing behind) a spouse in a secondary important position at the offering table (Wegner, 2010).

In Figure 13, the couple appear as observers as high-value funerary goods are carried by into the tomb. Watetkhethor holds the hand of her spouse reinforcing her role not simply as 'wife', but as an apotropaically feminine element of transitional cult. She is the means through which he is reborn.

The canon of gendered representation is maintained through Watetkhethor's lighter skin tones; her gender is perhaps the main feature in scenes shared with Mereruka, a strategy maintained in her own chambers.

In Figure 14, Watetkhethor joins Mereruka upon the marital bed as she plays the harp for her husband. This image has been described as hinting at eroticism exemplifying a somewhat questionable approach to ancient imagery from a modern, Westernised perspective (Graves-Brown, 2010:81-82). Daughters, mothers and spouses all played a sexualised, regenerative role in the funerary iconography of a deceased male. Indeed, all female members of a family played what might be termed as 'sexualised roles' serving male family members through what has been described as a *k3 mwt.f* dynamic [9] (Troy,1986: 27; Traunecker,

[9] Kamutef, literally, 'bull of his mother' is a term that originates from mythic patterning in which an individual impregnates his mother/wife who subsequently gives birth to the deceased in the afterlife. This emulates the process in which the sky

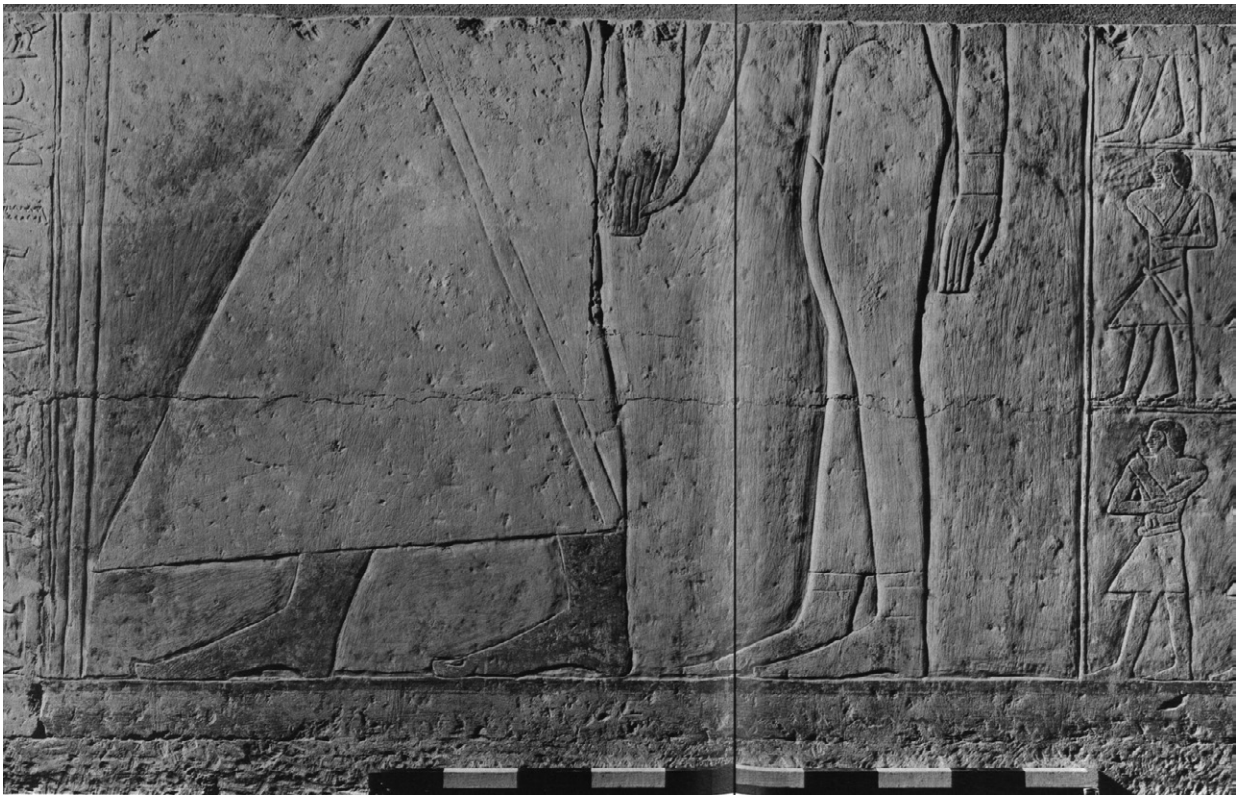


Figure 13: Chamber A10 (Duell,1938: Plate 91).

2001). The wives and mothers represented in shared tomb depictions in the presence of spouses and fathers, can be understood as playing the same sexual, multigenerational role that goddesses played for the solar deity and for Osiris (Roth, 1999:51; McCarthy, 2002:174; Cooney, 2010:225; Smith, 2008:3). Intrinsic to this emphasis on the sexualisation of what was essentially a deceased human being, is the Egyptian perception that the body was a continuing source for the extension of life (O'Connor 1996:630). Within this process, the boundaries regarding the cultural domains of motherhood, gender, sexuality and 'religiosity' were structured significantly differently to modern perceptions of these constructs.

It is vital to view ancient Egyptian female sexuality as playing a significant role in the social performance of death and in post-mortem revivification processes (Meskell, 1999:133; Troy,1986:2-3,146-147). It is equally important to avoid the conflation of modern constructs of sexuality into an ancient, non-Western construct. The iconological structure present in precisely mediated depictions in the central scene (above) reference a range of gendered dynamics crucial to the successful rebirth of the deceased. So-called 'erotic' scenes such as this, incorporate a range of metaphysical tools that facilitated rebirth. Narrative images were not intended as 'realistic documentaries' of life (Angenot, 2015: 109).

Beyond the central scene (Figure 14) female attendants adopt gestures of respect behind Watetkhethor. A similarly large number of male attendants adopt a similar pose on the other side of the scene adjacent to her spouse. The material engagement between people, spatial location, funerary goods and 'ritualised action' reinforces scene purpose:

goddess, Nut, gave birth to her father/spouse and to the solar deity each dawn (Traunecker, 2001; Troy, 1986: 27; McCarthy, 2002: 173).

Figure 14: Watetkhethor playing the Harp before her husband Mereruka (Duell, 1938:1, Plate 94).

- Watetkhethor serves as the primary officiant in Mereruka's regeneration;
- Mereruka's fox-tailed flagellum serves as an iconographical indicator of his status as an important official;
- Mereruka's image forms a rebus incorporating the form of a seated male figure, with a flagellum, referencing the deceased's own rebirth, ancestry and descendancy via the maternal line (Graves-Brown, 2010:82);
- a range of nuanced motifs in this scene offer a cryptogrammatic rendering of Mereruka's progress towards rebirth;
- throughout, clear equivalencies may be drawn between enacted phenomena and their otherworldly purposes. Ritualised action means that the deceased's physical and metaphysical needs are met.

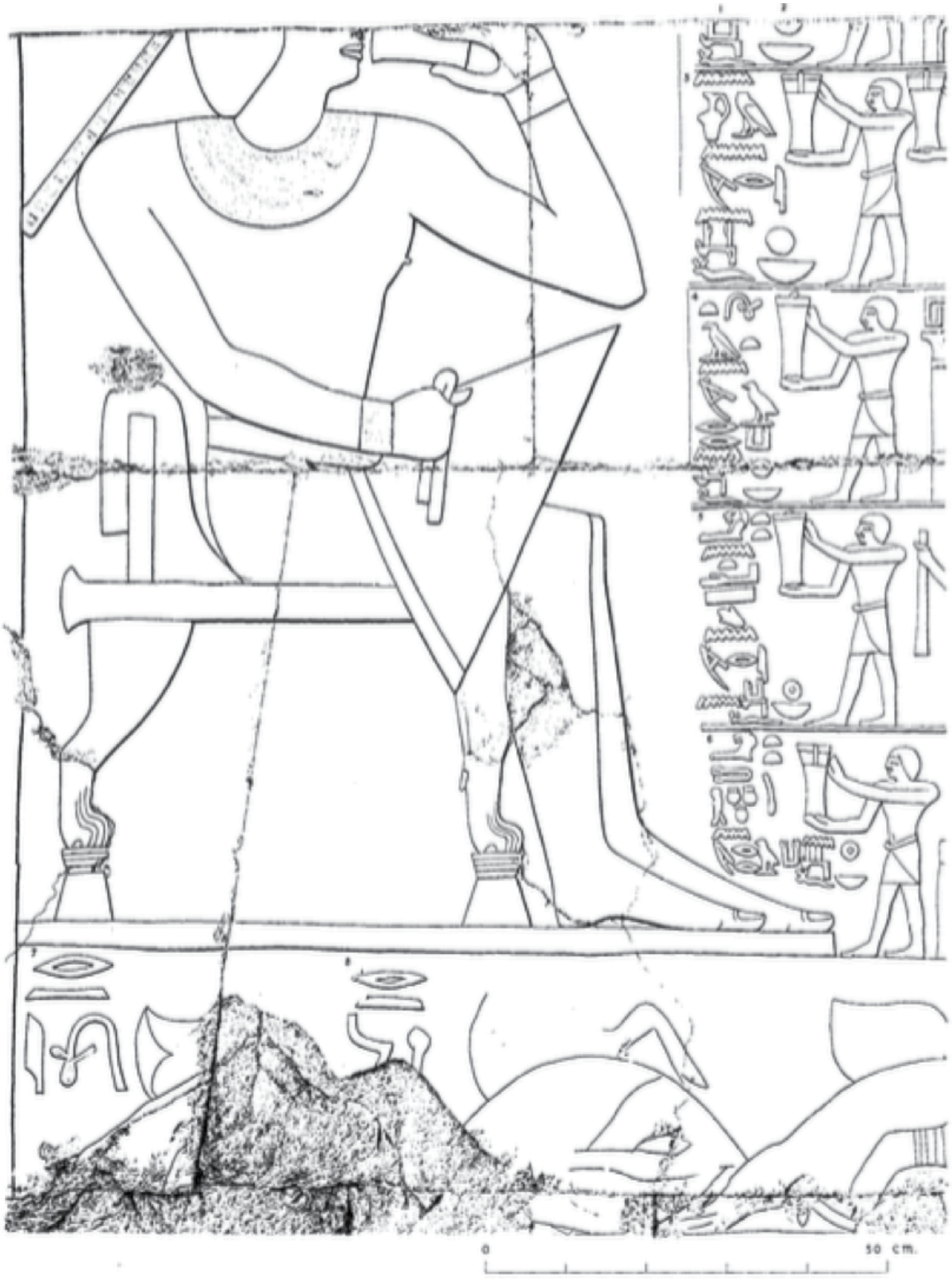


Figure 15: Mereruka drinking from a cup. Before him are presented various oils; below lie cattle slaughtered for offerings (Duell, 1938: 2, Plate 117).

This image (Figure 15) is described by Duell as portraying Mereruka 'drinking'. However, the iconography and the rules of decorum suggest an alternative interpretation. At this point in scene sequencing, the deceased is presented as reborn; divinised, transformed and enabled to breath in the sweet scent of the ointment held before him. There is no longer a requirement for Watetkhethor's presence in the scene.

On a perceptual level, her role can be 'read' as having been fulfilled.

Mereruka is portrayed as beyond the metaphysical ministrations of his wife. He is reborn and viable in his afterlife. In his other hand, the deceased grasps a linen cloth; a sign of Mereruka's rank, emphasised in the titles and epithets around this scene. Cloth was a valuable commodity, referenced elsewhere in Mereruka's extensive offering list and, in this context, may have indicated the 'divine perception' of a deceased individual, signifying his awareness of afterlife ritual (Harrington, 2013:16).

Emphatic references to incense, *snṯr*, portrayed in the registers around the deceased, reinforce Mereruka's transfigured status. The term references the materiality of incense and the metaphysical qualities associated with divinity (Vygus, 2018, [online]). Both the iconography and material agency of this scene combine to promote the connection between text and image in semiotic mode (Angenot, 2015:99).

Watetkhethor and autonomous funerary cult

Watetkhethor's status in life and her transfiguration in death are referenced through a series of complex representational strategies. Meskell's (2013: 92-107) view that artefacts entrap people, entangling them in an expected investment into care and maintenance is inverted here where the physical manifestations and materiality of burial spaces appear to possess agency, all of which is directed towards the needs of the deceased (Malafouris, 2013: 247). For this to be effective, the deceased was required to be isolated. Therefore, in each scene associated with regeneration and transition, Watetkhethor is indeed, alone. Iconographical hierarchy associated with positioning a woman beside her husband in what should be understood as a cultic stance (supporting or touching) benefitted him and not her; this order is flipped into reverse in the sequence of three large images in which Watetkhethor is portrayed without her spouse (Figures 46,47,48b). In two of the most ritually significant scenes in her tomb chapel, the deceased is alone, seated at the dominant position at her offering table. Both scenes are located at either side of her false door. Here, it is argued, that things (or their absence) again constitute environments in which certain behaviours are selected for (Hodder, 2011:155).

As evidenced in Figure 16, below, Watetkhethor was provided with substantial space within this tomb through which to effect her own transition to the afterlife. This section of the study will examine representational imagery in Watetkhethor's funerary chambers, examining the ritual purpose of these scenes.

Although Watetkhethor appears in various scenes within her spouse's chambers, her own burial space, as noted earlier, consists of four rooms constructed at the western side of the complex.

The section that follows, will examine images in which Watetkhethor appears alone in a visually interpretative approach to the range of ways in which image functioned ritually.

On entering Watetkhethor's chambers, a pillared hall (B1) features elaborately carved high-relief imagery. Although now badly damaged, enough remains of these scenes to indicate something of their functionality. To the right of this hall, a staircase (Ba-Bc) leads to the roof area (B2) in a space that originally led to the roof of the mastaba. Signs of pivot marks for door posts in front of the staircase indicate that a substantial wooden door once stood between the pillared hall and the stairway to the roof (Kanawati and Hassan,

1997:22). The pillared hall leads to a smaller room (B3) which allows access to a sealed serdab (B4). Watetkhethor's offering chapel is located next to the serdab room (B5). Some of the most significant imagery is carved across the wall spaces on all sides of this chamber, leading to a false door at the western side of the chapel (B5). As is usual, the deceased's burial chamber is located below her false door and its offering chapel (B1).

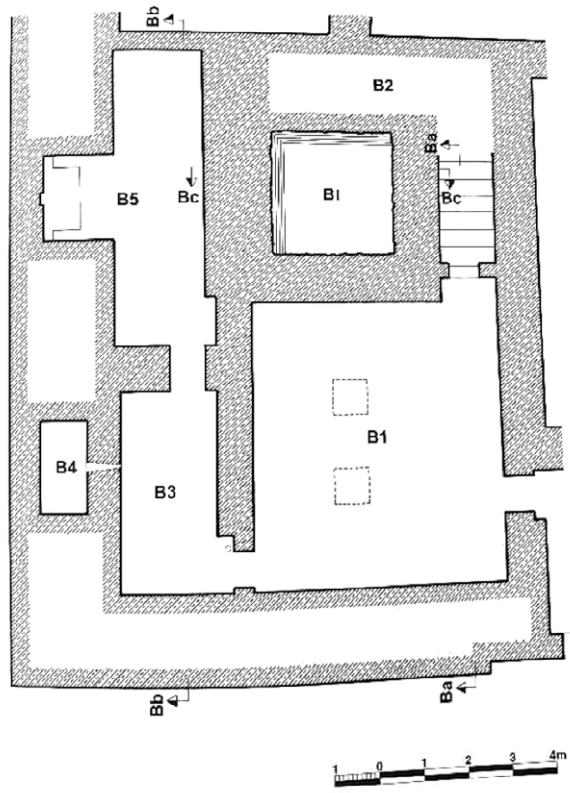


Figure 16: Plan of Watetkhethor's chambers within the tomb of Mereruka (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 3, 53b).

The Pillared Hall (B1)

This is the first room entered upon leaving Mereruka's chambers and moving into those assigned to his spouse. Although the paint has largely gone and, as noted, the upper parts of the walls are damaged, a reasonable amount of fine carving on the southern and western walls remains *in situ.* Kanawati and Abder-Raziq's (2008) publication was the first to record scenes inside Watetkhethor's chambers. Duell (1938) included a cursory description of scenes assigned to Watetkhethor. Non-intrusive analysis into paint and carving remains warranted in these lesser known chambers. State-of-the-art photographic and scanning techniques may yet reveal features currently inaccessible.

Figure 17: B1, pillared hall, south wall (Kanawati, and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 3, 53b).

In the main scene below, enough detail remains to indicate that Watetkhethor may be holding something to her face; conventionally, this would be a scented bud. As noted earlier, these image types indicate the viability of the transfigured deceased, a convention applied in an earlier scene featuring Mereruka (Figure 15). Like her spouse, the transfigured Watetkhethor indicates iconographically, her restored ability to breathe (Harrington, 2013:19).

It has been suggested that Meryteti's figure is a later addition here and elsewhere in Watetkhethor's chambers. In life, her son may have pursued a strategic effort to legitimise his status as royal heir through his mother's bloodline (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008:33-34). Kanawati and Abder-Raziq (2008:33) further hypothesise that until the birth of Pepy I late in Teti's reign, Meryteti may have been heir to the throne. Neither the presence of her son, nor that of the male offering bearers before her, affect the ritual efficacy of a scene in which Watetkhethor is represented as an effective *ʿkh* following the decorum associated with her transfigured, divinised form (Harrington, 2013:8).

The staircase in the chambers of Watetkhethor (B2)

The structure of this tomb provides both Mereruka and Watetkhethor with their own doored staircases, each of which led up to the roof of the mastaba (Cooke, 2020:146). These staircases sit alongside their respective burial chambers. As noted earlier, the floors of these spaces retain evidence of pivot grooves indicating that the arrangement allowed a wooden door to be closed from the inside securing the tomb (Kanawati and Hassan,1997:22). The wooden doors, once fitted to these staircases, are now lost.

During this era, an apparent requirement for an internal door extended beyond pragmatic security concerns. Doorways and staircases served as actual and liminal spaces in funerary iconography and liturgies. These architectural features may have represented ontological responses to the concept of the afterlife during this period. A doored staircase enabled Watetkhethor's participation in afterlife rituals where the deceased is described as drawing back the bolt of the door in order to open her way to the sky (Cooke, 2020:146). There is direct allusion here too, to the deceased's journey to the 'heavens', as described in the Pyramid Texts, [10] 'a stairway to the sky is set up for me that I may ascend on it to the sky' (Faulkner, 1969: Pyramid Texts: 365, 553, §1360-1361; Davis, 1977:163). In PT Utterance 536, Isis and Nephthys proclaim, 'the doors of the sky are opened for you; the doors of Nut are thrown open for you' (§1291, Faulkner, 1969). These spells reference elements incorporated into the materiality of tomb structure in ritual and physical forms.

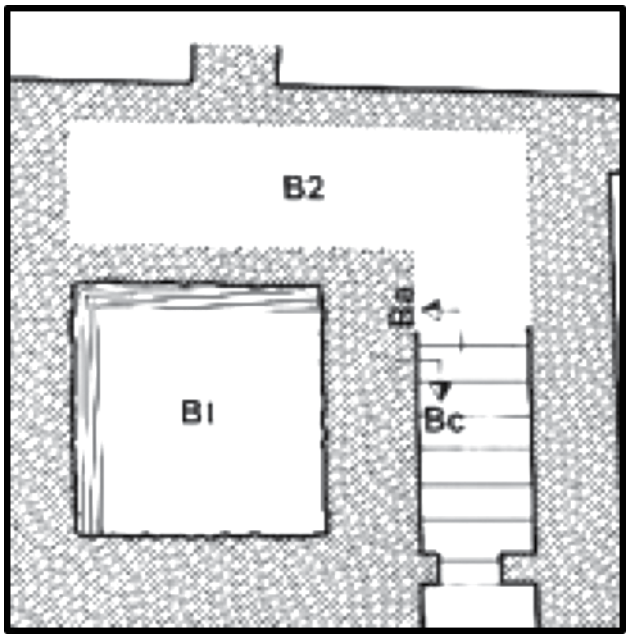


Figure 18: Stairway area leading to tomb-roof via a door that opened from the inside (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 53).

The sky, as a netherworld destination, is identified directly with Nut and other divinised entities. Isis and Nephthys are described as welcoming 'their brother' (a reference to Osiris) through the doors of the sky (Faulkner,1969, PT 536). Although ostensibly a male deity, women

[10] The Pyramid Texts, the earliest sacerdotal sources, are filled with goddesses stimulating the life-giving power of male gods. However, this functionality bears few analogies with modern notions of eroticism.

began to be identified with Osiris postmortem, without abandoning their gender (Roth, 2000:199; Cooney, 2008:20; Sweeney, 2011:4; Daoud, 2005). Although archaeological evidence suggests that it was not until the First Intermediate Period that women are first referred to as 'an Osiris' in their own right, nascent signs in the development of this process are already evidenced in Watetkhethor's decorative programme (Daoud, 2005: Plate XXXII).

Teleological factors, directly interconnected with design and ritual purpose in the deceased's chambers, appear to have influenced the layout of Watetkhethor's rooms. Complex functionality was factored into the structural arrangement permitting ritual isolation for spouses in particular spaces. Here, in the feminised space where Watetkhethor's body would have rested, reinforced through her gender-isolation in the iconography surrounding her image, metaphysical processes resulting in afterlife viability were assured for the newly justified deceased. Whilst her son's presence, or indeed the presence of other, male attendants appears immaterial to this ritualised process, the absence of her spouse, either in form or in name, was essential (Roth, 2000:198-200; Cooney, 2008: 20). Before and after this Old Kingdom period, a woman's epithets would usually reference her husband, however, within her own dedicated chambers, Watetkhethor's spousal titles do not appear.

The Serdab Room, B3, B4

Before the serdab niche (B4) in the room that leads to her offering chapel, Watetkhethor is represented as the sole focus of cult, although she is accompanied by her son and surrounded by offering bearers, some of whom are male. The texts around her describe Watetkhethor as one worthy of the offerings pledged to her via substantial funerary estates. The central motif depicted here, where the deceased holds a flower to her face, acts on multiple levels. Watetkhethor's open blossom (Figure 19a) references the sun god, Ra who is reborn each dawn. Alongside this image, the depiction of a closed blossom (Figure 19b) reflects the chthonic home of Osiris and of the primeval creator deity, Nerfertum (Franke and Marée, 2013:28-29). The serdab niche, which may once have held a statue of the deceased, was a material assurance of continuity, of Watetkhethor's ability to be sustained in her afterlife, continuing as the sole recipient of offerings should any element of her physical body fail.

The Burial Chapel, B5

This location is the most ritually important space within Watetkhethor's area of the tomb. Her physical remains rested beneath the chapel (B6, Figure 5) serving as the ultimate focus for her regenerative cult. In each of the previous areas, representations of the deceased served as points in which her transition to the afterlife was autonomously enacted. In the period that followed, Pyramid Texts first found in the tomb of Neith (sister wife to Pepy II), addressed the deceased through the use of resurrection spells that encouraged the deceased to proceed from the *dw3t* (representing the tomb and, more broadly, the netherworld itself), in order to reach the *3ḫt*, representing the horizon and eternal life, (Allen, 2015:303). Emphasising perhaps the ritualistic and architectural requirement for at least two individual doorways to the roof within this large mastaba, sacerdotal sequences begin and end with addresses to the doorkeeper at the 'entrance to the sky' (Allen, 2015:303):

> Ascending to the sky: I am an equipped akh who demands to come into being (PT627A, Allen, 2015:243). I am now off to my place of malachite and my food is now in the lakes of rest and the fields of turquoise (PT627B, Allen,2015:242). You should give a document concerning me, for I am coming (Allen, 2015:305).

Although, as noted earlier, the Pyramid Texts are not found in the funerary programmes of private tombs until the First Intermediate Period, they provide a useful overview of what may already have begun to

Figure 19a: Serdab room, B3, east wall (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 32).

Figure 19b: Serdab room, B3, east wall (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 32).

influence expectations for the deceased at the time in which Watetkhethor's funerary programme was arranged (Daoud, 2005:112-115,187). Retrospectively, sacerdotal inscriptions serve as useful indicators of funerary cult associated with cultically-charged spaces within elite tombs of this period. The quasi royal rituals embedded within slightly later liturgical sources indicate the importance of the burial chapel and of the cult enacted there. Part of the architectonics related to ritualised aspects of this shared tomb appear in the provision of individual doorways to the 'sky' for both its primary occupants.

The diversifying, complexifying and individualising phenomena expressed through Watetkhethor's gendered iconography appear to reflect the act of creation itself (Van Walsem, 2013:139). Indeed, the reality of her afterlife expectations loom large throughout these chambers, both in representative form and in metaphysical terms. In large offering tableaux, a series of two, on either side of a large false door set into the west wall of the burial chapel, reed-shaped loaves represent the Delta marshes; the verdant fields in which Osiris was reborn (Bárta, 2011:189-190). The materiality and iconography of the scene can be understood as the point at which the deceased enters through the doors of heaven in order to make her entrance to the sky (Faulkner,1969: Pyramid Texts, 365, 553, §1360-1361).

Doors, real or iconographical, permitted the movement of the deceased within the tomb and opened access to a world beyond it. The symbolic and physical relations between the tomb and aboveground

Figure 20: Burial chapel, B5, west wall recess, north sidewall (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008, Plate 43).

were realised through these portals (Ćwiek, 2003:330-331,335). Watetkhethor's false door bears an elaborate palace façade commensurate with royal iconography of this era. Her offering scenes are writ large at either side of the false door, Figures 22-23. Once again, as is usual in such highly symbolic offering table contexts, the deceased is the sole object of transitional cult.

On the north wall (B5) other scenes include a palanquined procession as Watetkhethor is led towards her resting place, (Figure 22, annotated). There is an emphatic focus on the deceased's transfigured status in this image. Watetkhethor is depicted here in what has been described as a rare scene-type featuring a woman borne on a palanquin by other women (Kanawati and Swinton, 2008:31). Behind the deceased, an attendant carries a sunshade with a second held aloft by a male attendant (annotated, upper left). Sunshades have their own iconographical significance relevant to the transitional function of the scene. The transfigured status of the deceased is emphasised as she is carried towards her afterlife (McDonald, 1999: 8; Falk, 2015:287-288).

Figure 21: Burial chapel, B5, west wall recess, south sidewall (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 40).

The association between gendered motif and materiality appears intentional and innovative; most palanquin scenes bear a single male occupant (Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:32). This mode of transport is associated with only four other women and is described as a marker of royal status (Vasiljević, 2012: 397-398). Both male and female attendants perform a gesture of reverence; one arm held across the breast (annotated). The materiality of ritual purity is an important component of the scene. Close to the deceased, one attendant is described as 'female overseer of linen', whilst another bears a chest inscribed for *ʿntyw* (myrrh): both products are closely linked with funerary (and temple) ritual (Harrington, 2013:117-118). Whereas elsewhere Meryteti is represented as a naked child, here he wears a long white kilt, perhaps demanded by the ritual purity associated with this scene and its location (annotated, centre right).

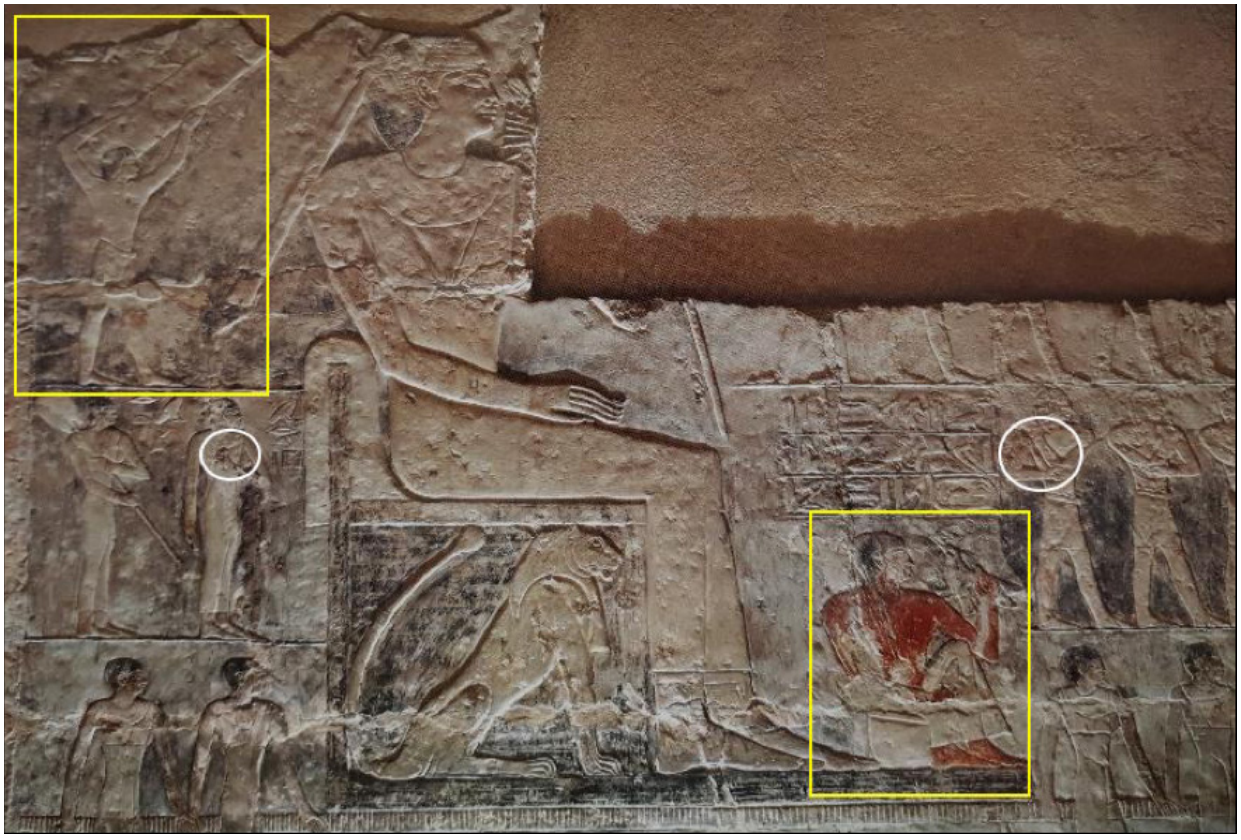


Figure 22: Palanquin Scene, chapel, B5, north wall (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2008: Plate 47, annotated B. O'Neill).

Figure 23: Burial chapel, B5, north wall, detail (Duell, 1938: Plate 47).

Watetkhethor's throne-like chair resembles the block thrones associated with male and female deities (Falk, 2015:287). Royal iconography is reflected in the use of a lion-motif carved into the chair. Similar, 'portable thrones' have their origins in the Early Old Kingdom (Falk, 2015:289). Watetkhethor's is almost identical to that used by Meresankh III at the end of the Fourth Dynasty and may reference a quasi-genealogical link between Watetkhethor and this Fourth Dynasty queen (Dunham and Simpson,1974: Figures 7-8; Kanawati and Swinton, 2018:33).

An apparent requirement for a woman to appear ritually, materially and iconographically the sole focus of funerary cult, thereby avoiding associations with either father or spouse, appears intentional and purposeful. Throughout her chambers, a range of material forms embedded into ritually significant spaces work concurrently within Watetkhethor's funerary programme. The architectonic programme (placement; scene content) displayed in her chambers illustrates what Overmann refers to as 'the co-evolution of cognition and culture reflecting cognitive states beyond representation ... in periods otherwise

remote and inaccessible' (2020b: 18). As exempflied throughout, script and image, iconography and materiality form a complex framework that operates together in maintaining the deceased as ritually autonomous.

Watetkhethor's status in life and her transfiguration in death are referenced through a series of intricate, complex representation. Meskell's (2013: 92-107) view that artefacts entrap people, entangling them in an expected investment into care and maintenance is inverted here where the physical manifestations and materiality of burial spaces appear to possess agency, all of which is directed towards the needs of the deceased (Malafouris, 2013: 247). For this to be effective, the deceased was required to be isolated. Therefore, in each scene associated with regeneration and transition, Watetkhethor is indeed, alone. Iconographical hierarchy associated with positioning a woman beside her husband in what should be understood as a cultic stance (supporting or touching) benefitted him and not her; this order is flipped into reverse in the sequence of large images in which Watetkhethor is portrayed without her spouse (Figures 20, 21, 22).

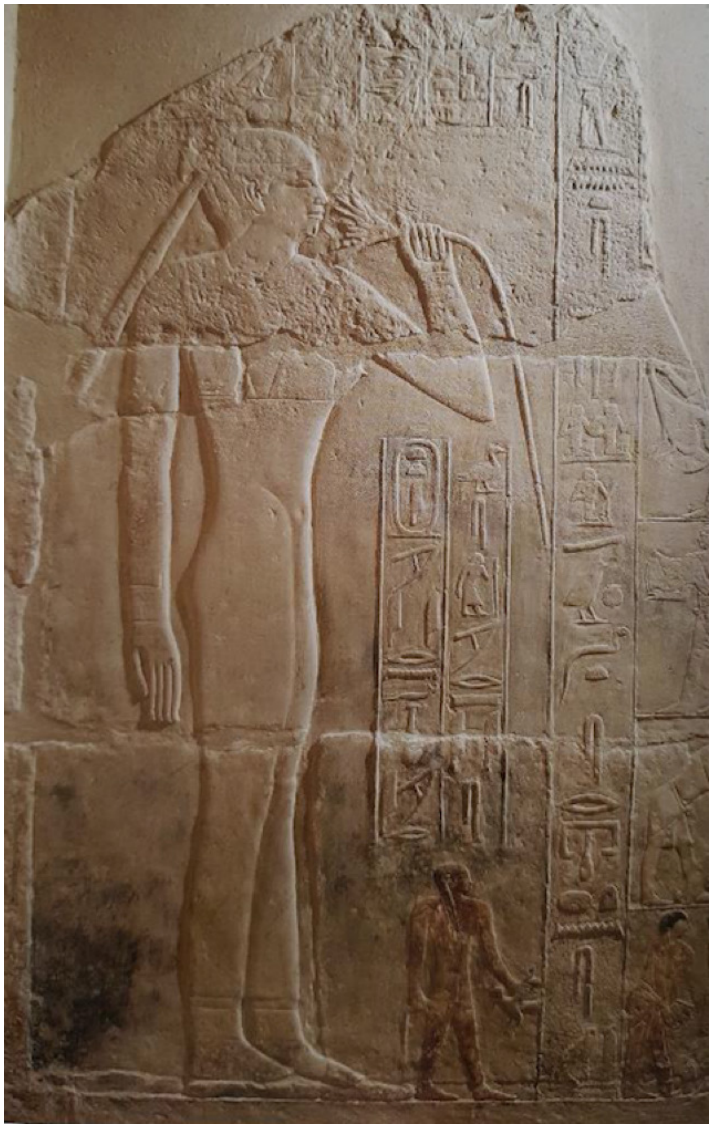


Figure 24: Burial chapel, B5, east wall, north end and the final scene in Watetkhethor's burial chapel chamber (Duell,1938: Plate 50).

In two of the most ritually significant scenes in her chapel, the deceased is alone, seated at the dominant position at her offering table. Both scenes are located at either side of her false door. Here, it is argued, that things (or their absence) again constitute environments in which certain behaviours are selected for (Hodder, 2011:155). Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in scholarship dealing with issues of gender, sexuality and embodiment within ancient culture. As noted earlier, Roth's work on the analysis of representations of women in men's funerary iconography and of men in women's, was one of the earliest studies to consider the purpose of female iconography in an ancient Egyptian context and its meaning beyond the important function of enabling the regeneration of male deceased (Roth, 1999, 2000). The subject has also been the focus of Heather McCarthy and Kathlyn Cooney's work on the dynamic of women temporarily shifting gender in death (McCarthy, 2002:173-195; Cooney, 2010: 224-232). In these bodies of work, whilst the feminine role in the process of male regeneration is acknowledged, the apparent necessity of gender-shifting by women in order to facilitate their own postmortem transition has been explored through the work of these scholars. Earlier feminist scholarship raised questions regarding other functionality that may yet be revealed through deeper explorations of funerary iconography:

> [w]hen archaeologists employ a set of stereotypic assumptions about gender, how it is structured, and what it means – what might be called a gender paradigm – a temporal continuity of these features is implied (Conkey and Spector, 1984:5).

In a postmortem context, gender fluidity enabled an elite woman to assume Osirian-solar identification in her own right, with 'a conceptual (one might say "kingly") primacy of place in the absence of a male presence' (McCarthy, 2002:195). Cooney advances questions that place renewed focus upon the complex subject of gender in ancient Egypt (2010:226). From the beginnings of Egyptian civilisation, divine creation and rebirth had a sexual subtext.

Scholarship continues to present gender ideologies in ancient cultures as more diverse and complex than earlier interpretations allowed. Indeed, in the current positive climate of self-declared interpretations of gender it should not be surprising if past constructions of this fundamental principle were every bit as complex, offering multiple models of feminisations (alongside models of masculinisations), actual and idealised; not 'merely' nurturing, but also destructive or simply ambiguous:

> The process of fragmentation is a powerful and creative mechanism ... Fragmentation explains how the Egyptians were able to apply a masculine sexualised creation mythology to an individual female's rebirth into the next world ... And we see the female deceased as an *ʿkh* worshipping Osiris. She is no longer male. She is no longer Osiris, but a blessed being in worship of him (Cooney, 2008: 20).

It is vital that these ancient image forms are contextualised within particular cultural and socio-religious frameworks. Ultimately, in the context of a tomb, gender-sensitive imagery either exploited or denied particular ontological relationships.

Chapter 5: Study Synthesis

In a burial context, Watetkhethor's personhood was understood as dispersed within the imagery and the other funerary artefacts that created an effective afterlife for herself and her spouse. Although the functionality of Egyptian iconography is, understandably, no longer fully accessible, it is hypothesised that the entire range of tomb iconography contributes something to how a particular image may be read.

Nyord suggests a representational convention wherein, for example, a deceased woman can be characterised variously as encapsulating both masculinised and feminised aspects (Nyord, 2016:4-5). In practise, using fundamental postmortem structures, Watetkhethor was enabled to channel the mythic masculinity of being in order to generate her own rebirth, having served elsewhere (in her husband's tomb) to facilitate his regeneration.

Recently, Thomas posed the question as to whether the attributes of an entity are required to be overt and available, or in his terms, 'apparent' or 'incidental' (2020: 152-153). Aspects of 'incidentalness' within ancient iconography can be understood as an ontological relationship, existing between ritualised aspects of the deceased. Such strategies were wrought out of emic, indigenous culture and remain remote in time and space, detached from our immediate, etic interpretation. Thomas's metaphysical 'incidentalness' (2020: 153) echoes Nyord's earlier hypotheses (2016: 4-5) where the latter identifies a powerful dynamic in the heuristic device of 'becoming'. Indeed, the dynamic of 'becoming', that is to say, regeneration following death, dovetails neatly with the 'incidentalness' of funerary imagery.

The characteristics of ancient Egyptian materiality that constitutes a burial, including narrative imagery and associated texts indicates that this materiality, bricks, mortar, paint and the deceased herself, were constantly in a ritualised state of 'becoming' (Nyord, 2016: 4-5). Did the highly-charged relationship between funerary imagery and gendered space reveal aspects of intentionality? This study asserts this to be the case, specifically, in this instance, in the relational networks between the visible, and the invisible; between that which is readily accessible and that which remains inaccessible and in flux. The latter is exemplified in gendered efforts to achieve viability in the afterlife through what was understood as constantly enacted ritual.

This study supports the shift away from closed categories of persons and things in ancient iconology, and towards what Malafouris describes as 'the sphere of the fluid and relational transactions between them' (2013:9). However, understanding the role of art as a stimulus for ritual engagement and as a means through which to understand the nuanced functionality of gender, remains a work in progress. Addressed initially through the feminist critique of the 1970s, androcentric biases in what Spencer-Wood (2006:60) refers to as the 'surface layer of ungendered paradigms, frameworks, method and theory' have, for too long, influenced past archaeologies that generalised men's experiences. Such biases in the material record directly reflect the androcentric perspectives of Daressy (1896), Duell (1938), Breasted and Allen (1938) when they turned their attention to this tomb.

Other ancient iconographical programmes of this and earlier periods, await more nuanced, analytical approaches. The Helwan Corpus of the First to Third Dynasties is the subject of re-examination by Köhler and Jones (2010, 2014); the Fourth Dynasty Giza Slab Stelae would lend themselves equally to similar 'gendered' scrutiny (Manuelian, 2003). At least one other mastaba tomb from this place and period, that of Qar, Idu and their wives Gefi and Meretyotes, would form a useful, comparative example (Reisner, 1925; Simpson, 1976). Whilst Qar and Idu held important hereditary roles as overseers of the

pyramid complexes at Giza, each wife possessed her own tomb chapel within a large, shared structure (Reisner, 1925:28; Simpson, 1976:11). A paucity of similar examples should not prevent an attempt at future scrutiny of gendered funerary materials in this and in earlier contexts.

Looking forward: Art as Action, Art as Gendered

A focus on art as action and art as gendered demands that attention is paid to form and placement in order to understand why a particular type of image was produced for use in a specific cultural and social environment (Morphy 2010: 289; Baines, 2015: 20-21; Nyord, 2017: 337-337). Funerary representation and its function in the tomb of Watetkhethor has served as a conduit through which the complex role of gender in ancient Egyptian funerary contexts has been analysed, albeit that this is just one early example of a developing role for gendered imagery.

As hypothesised by Malafouris (2013: 247) the processes through which artefacts entrap people, entangling them in an expected investment into care and maintenance is inverted here. The physical manifestations and materiality of Watetkhethor's discrete burial spaces appear to possess agency directed towards the needs of a deceased woman.

The complex entanglements between object, space, and human being in Egyptian funerary culture, remains a subject that requires further, sustained exploration. Questions remain regarding the degree of theological knowledge required in order to commission a particular programme of representation, or to desire its presence (Van Walsem, 2005, 2013). Old Kingdom elite tombs, in particular, were forever in a state of 'dynamic evolution' (Van Walsem, 2013: 138). Were the elite conscious of their own individuality and of related funerary contexts (Van Walsem, 2013: 139)? An inevitable dependence on surviving material limits the possibility of broader engagement, particularly during the period in which Watetkhethor lived.

Duell (1938:3) notes that in 46 of the principal scenes positioned throughout Mereruka's tomb, Watetkhethor accompanies her spouse in 39 scenes. As indicated here, in spaces where she is alone, the deceased can be understood as functioning as the divine feminine element essential to her own access to the afterlife. Those who organised her funerary programme appear to have utilised the affordances of image functionality in such instances. The meeting of mind and matter in material engagement should not be considered as representational; rather it is transactional and participatory (Malafouris, 2019:7).

The limitations of this study

Any level of analytical interpretation of the representative materials that form the core of this study must be acknowledged as pertaining to a comparatively narrow section of society. Neither Watetkhethor nor her spouse were 'typical' ancient Egyptians. Both were high status individuals, closely integrated into the royal administration and possibly, in Watetkhethor's case, a member of the royal family. We have little evidence as to what degree the non-elite, or what Richards refers to as the 'sub-elite', a level of society composed of low-level officials and artisans, may have been aware of the intricate complexities of Egyptian religion (2005: 154-156). Were 'ordinary' people aware of the religious complexities referenced through funerary representation, most of which may have been inaccessible to them (Baines 1987: 88; Richards 2005: 154)? A level of awareness may have been the case in a culture where so many elements of elite iconography filtered into non-elite funerary contexts (Willems, 1996; Richards, 2005).

The exploration of gender in a particular funerary context has its own obvious limitations. The relationship between space and rituals related to postmortem gendered renewal, and the ways in which tomb materiality (coffin, imagery, funerary object) provided an arena for the performance and

experience of gender, has much wider analytical possibilities beyond one particular tomb dated to one specific period (Sørensen, 2006: 120-121).

Directions for future research

Staying in a funerary context, the gendered ritualisation of coffin space and the role of gender in ancient liturgical texts may provide other areas that could be usefully explored through the methodologies employed in this study. Visual representation encompassing materials not exclusively associated with women and indicating broader, differently gendered intentionality, are also of interest.

An analysis of funerary materials from Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, Ramesside and Late Period contexts would provide a fuller, diachronic picture of the role of gender in periods that followed the 6th Dynasty. Looking at these materials reflexively, and in engagement with relevant analytical methodologies from contexts developed within and outside of Egyptology, could prove productive. Similarly, a comparative study of materials from contemporaneous cultures holds merit and may prove useful in contextualising the gendered funerary strategies of other ancient women during periods of dynamic, socio-religious development. Similar methodologies employed in broader, non-funerary contexts may ultimately contribute to our understanding of elements within ancient Egyptian culture that, as yet, remain only partly understood.

Conclusion

In the context of an ancient Egyptian tomb, gendered attributes of deceased individuals were real and meaningful to the people who set them in place (priests, artisans) and to those who commissioned them (tomb occupants, or people acting on their behalf). As has been argued throughout this work, modern observers have lost full access to the range of powerful cultic processes set in motion through the materiality of these reified spaces. This study has focused on but a few theoretical possibilities.

It is necessary to understand the functionality of gender in funerary representation as operating on different ontological levels; moving into and out of embodied forms, highlighting particular aspects of postmortem roles according to spatial positioning and figural form. Gendered imagery was an important element within a mythic continuum wherein 'He' was conceived and regenerated by 'Her' in reoccurring rituals that operated through self-perpetuated embodied agency. Elsewhere, gendered aspects of the deceased operated on an autonomous level, functioning exclusively for, in this instance, Watetkhethor, in particular areas of her tomb in which any reference to her spouse, pictorial or nominal, was avoided. It is highly likely that there were other 'Watetkhethors'; elite women whose tombs are now inaccessible, or lost through degradation.

Representations of Watetkhethor in the tomb of Mereruka functioned as an essential element within a range of agential roles all of which relied upon her gender. A deceased woman's functionality did not end with ensuring a secure afterlife for her spouse. Embodied ritualised roles, particularly for women, functioned within a range of transfigurative scenes in particular spaces. Women were not only facilitating the regeneration of their spouses, 'sisters [were] doin' it for themselves' (song: Lennox and Stewart, 1985).

As Roth (1999) first indicated, at particular points in time feminised cult appears to have played a more overt, dualistic role; essential in achieving rebirth for male deceased whilst vital to a woman's afterlife viability. This dynamic resurfaced during particular points in history from this period on, including documented Ramesside exemplars c.1295–1069 BC (on the latter see McCarthy, 2002 and Cooney, 2008,

2010). It is hypothesised here that this process probably began significantly earlier than the period in which Watetkhethor lived and died, perhaps from the beginning of dynastic culture.

Upon entering the tomb of Mereruka, early excavators were oblivious to the range of gendered processes embedded within this tomb's decorative programmes. As men of their time, the original excavators were unaware that Egyptian funerary imagery was intentionally unobtrusive in a way that challenged, and that continues to challenge, Western philosophical tradition. These men worked within a tradition that predisposed scholars to assume that object and image should be readily accessible (Thomas, 2020:154).

The materiality and iconology of ancient visual culture should be viewed as closely intertwined. Both elements have emerged from their relative infancy in Egyptological contexts following broader archaeological inroads initiated in the scholarship of, most notably, Hartwig, 2004; Malafouris, 2013; Van Walsem, 2005; Hodder, 2012; Angenot, 2014; Müller, 2015; Nyord, 2020; Bahrani, 2014 and Thomas, 2020. The practice of looking beyond the discipline of Egyptology and into the range of anthropological and visual culture studies that surround 'new materialism', and material engagement discourses, continues to broaden our understanding of funerary culture. As Thomas notes:

> [materiality] undermines the expectation that the world should be composed of static, inert entities, which should stay where we left them, without changing. It alerts us to the disquieting reality that everything is always in motion, to a greater or lesser degree, with or without our permission' (2020:153).

Increasingly, scholarship focused upon the anthropology of Egyptian funerary culture is moving away from an earlier position where it is predominantly elite males who are securely evidenced in the material record. The role of gender in a funerary context is accessible and present, if it is only looked for. By drawing further on ideas from phenomenology and cognitive archaeologies, it is possible to analyse conceptual structure and classification as well as the interconnectivities between gender and intentionality. The once restrictive, exclusionary boundaries within this discipline are weakening and merging, revealing new relationships between the materiality of representation in innovative and challenging ways. The existence of two separate axes of the world within the tomb (withdrawn and present) yields its own unique ontology. As argued throughout, the nuanced role of gendered presence - or its absence - was critical to a deceased individual's afterlife viability.

Those who commissioned the funerary programme within Watetkhethor's shared tomb were aware of an engagement between materiality and representation. Image, form and physical substance created significant aspects of the transfigured deceased and gender was an essential part of this dynamic. The complex fusion of ritualised elements within the framework of materiality and iconography that structure the ancient Egyptian funerary programme are simultaneously ubiquitous and thoroughly challenging, marking a convergence of multifaceted levels of ritual significance not all of which are, as yet, fully available.

> Material culture does not just exist. It is made by someone. It is produced to do something. Therefore, it does not passively reflect society — rather, it creates society through the actions of individuals (Hodder, 1991: 6).

Bibliography

Alberti, B. 2006. Archaeology, Men, and Masculinities, in S. Nelson (ed.) *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology*, Oxford: Altamira Press, 401-434.

Alberti, B. 2007. Destabilizing meaning in anthropomorphic forms from northwest Argentina. *Journal of Iberian Archaeology* 9(10), 209-229.

Aldred, C. 1980. *Egyptian Art*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Allen, J. 2015, (Second Edition). *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Angenot, V. 2014. Semiotics and Hermeneutics, in M. Hartwig (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 98-119.

Appadurai, A. 1986. *The Social life of things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arnold, B. 2006. Gender and Archaeological Mortuary Analysis, in S. Nelson (ed.) *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology*, Oxford: Altamira Press, 137-170.

Assmann, J. 1992. Semiosis and Interpretation in Ancient Egyptian Ritual, in S. Biderstein and B. Scharfstein (eds) *Interpretation in Religion, Philosophy* and Religion 2. Leiden: Brill, 87-109.

Assmann, A. 1996. Texts, Traces, Trash: The Changing Media of Cultural Memory. *Representations*, No. 56, Special Issue: The New Erudition,123- 134.

Assmann, J. 2001. *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Bahrani, Z. 2013. On the status and purposes of ancient art, in E. Frood and A. McDonald (eds) *Decorum and Experience: Essays in Ancient Culture for John Baines.* Leuven: Peeters, 103-108.

Bahrani, Z. 2014. *The Infinite Image: Art, Time and the Aesthetic Dimension in Antiquity*. Reaktion: University of Chicago Press.

Baines, J. 1987. Practical Religion and Piety, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 73: 79-98.

Baines, J. 2015. Baines, J., 2015. What is Art? in M. Hartwig (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 1-21.

Bárta, M. 2011. *Journey to the west: The world of the Old Kingdom tombs in Ancient Egypt*. Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts.

Bell, C. 1997. *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bleiberg, E. 2016. A Woman's Afterlife: Gender Transformation in Ancient Egypt (2016) Exhibition Curator: Brooklyn Museum of Art. New York. [January – April, 2016], viewed November 2020, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/womans_afterlife_ancient_egypt

Budin, S. 2018. Phallic Fertility in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, in N. Hopwood, R. Flemming and L. Kassell (eds) *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25-38.

Conkey, M. and Gero, J. 1997. Programme to Practice: Gender and Feminism in Archaeology, *Programme to Practice: Gender and Feminism in Archaeology*, Annual Review of Anthropology, 26: 411-437.

Cooke, A. 2020. *The Architecture of Mastaba Tombs in the Unas Cemetery*. Leiden: Sidestone Press.

Cooney, K. 2008. The Problem of female rebirth in New Kingdom Egypt: the fragmentation of the female individual in her funerary equipment, in C. Graves-Brown, (ed.) *Sex and Gender in ancient Egypt 'Don your wig for a joyful hour'*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1-26.

Cooney, K. 2010. Gender Transformations in Death: A Case Study of Coffins from Ramesside Period Egypt. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 73(4), 226-227.

Costall, A. and Richards, A. 2013. Canonical Affordances: The Psychology of Everyday Things, in P. Graves-Brown and R. Harrison (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Contemporary World*, 82-93.

Crossland, Z. Materiality and Embodiment, in D. Hicks and M. Beaudry (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford: OUP, 386-404.

Ćwiek, A. 2003. Relief Decoration in the Royal Funerary Complexes of the Old Kingdom. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University, Poland.

Dann, R. 2013. Substances of the Self in ancient Egypt, in R. Dann and K. Exell (eds) *Egypt: Ancient Histories, Modern Archaeologies*. New York: Cambria Press, 133-162.

Daoud, K. 2005. *Corpus of Inscriptions of the Herakleopolitan Period from the Memphite Necropolis: Translation, commentary and analyses*. BAR International Series 1429, Oxford: Archaeopress.

Daressy, G. 1896. Mastabas de Merru-ka et de Ka-bi-n. *Revue Archéologique* 3 Série XXVIII. Paris: Ernest Leroux.

Daressy, G. 1898. Le mastaba de Mera, *Institut Égyptien: Mémoires 1116.* Cairo*:* Egyptian Institute Publications.

David, A. 2014. Hoopoes and Acacias: Decoding an Ancient Egyptian Funerary Scene, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 73:2, 235-252.

De Morgan, J. 1896. *Recherches sur les origines de l'Egypte: L'edge de la pierre et les metaux*. Paris, 165-78.

Duell, P. 1938. *The Mastaba of Mereruka, Parts I and II*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Dunham, D. and Simpson, W.K. 1974. *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III* (G 7530-7540). Giza Mastabas 1. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.

Eller, C. 2000. *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Falk, D. 2015. Ritual Processional Furniture: A Material and Religious Phenomenon in Egypt. Unpublished PhD thesis, Liverpool, University of Liverpool.

Faulkner, R. 1969. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Translated by R.O. Faulkner. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Fischer, H.G. 2000. *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and of the Heracleopolitan Period*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Firth, C. and Gunn, B. 1926. *Excavations at Saqqara: Teti pyramid cemeteries*, Vols.I-II. Le Caire, L'Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

Franke, D. 2002. The Middle Kingdom Stelae Publication Project, exemplified by stela BM EA 226, *The British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 1: 7-19.

Franke, D. and Marée M. 2013 (eds.) in *Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum from the 13th to 17th Dynasties* Volume 1, Fascicule 1, Descriptions: 1-11. London: The British Museum Press.

Gibson, J. 1979. *The ecological approach to visual perception.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Gilchrist R. 1999. *Gender and Archaeology Contesting the Past*. London: Routledge.

Graves-Brown, C. 2010. *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt*. London: Continuum.

Harman, G. 2018. *Object related ontology: a new theory of everything*. London: Penguin Random House.

Hartwig, M. 2004. *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes, 1419-1372 BCE*. Monumenta Aegyptiaca XII, Serie IMAGO no.3. Turnhout: Brepols.

Hartwig, M. 2015. Style, in M. Hartwig (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 39-59.

Hays, H. 2011. The Death of the Democratisation of the Afterlife, in N. Strudwick and H. Strudwick (eds.), *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives: Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750-2150 BC*: 115-131. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 115-130.

Hodder, I. 1991. Interpretive Archaeology and Its Role. *American Antiquity* Vol. 56: 1, 7-18.

Hodder, I. 2011. Human-Thing Entanglement: Towards an Integrated Archaeological Perspective. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 17: 154-177.

Hodder, I. 2012. *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hodder, I. 2016. Studies in Human-Thing Entanglement. Open Access Publication. Available at: http://www.ian-hodder.com/books/studies-human-thing-entanglement

Hutchins, E. 2010. Cognitive Ecology. *Topics in Cognitive Science 2*, 457 – 705.

Insoll, T. 2004. *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*. Oxford: Routledge.

Joyce, R. 2008. *Ancient Bodies, Ancient Lives: Sex, Gender and Archaeology*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Kanawati, N. 1996. *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara*. Australian Center for Egyptology, 8. Warminster.
Kanawati, N. and Hassan, A. 1997. *The Tomb of Ankhmahor*. Australian Centre for Egyptology: 11-12. Oxford, Aris and Phillips.
Kanawati, N. 2000. *Conspiracies in the Egyptian Palace, Unis to Pepy I.* London, Routledge.
Kanawati, N. and Abder-Raziq, M. 2004. *Mereruka and his family, Part I, The Tomb of Meryteti*. Australian Centre for Egyptology: 21. Oxford, Aris and Phillips.
Kanawati, N. 2007. *Mereruka and King Teti: the power behind the throne*. Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities Press.
Kanawati, N. and Abder-Raziq, M. 2008. *Mereruka and his family, Part II, The Tomb of Waatetkhethor*. The Australian Centre for Egyptology Reports: 21. Oxford, Aris and Phillips.
Kanawati, N. Woods, Al Shafik, S. and Alexakis, E. 2011. *Mereruka and his family, Part III, The Tomb of Mereruka*. The Australian Centre for Egyptology Reports: 30. Oxford, Aris and Phillips.
Kanawati, N. and Swinton, J. 2018. *Egypt in the Sixth Dynasty: Challenges and Responses*. Wallasey: Abercromby Press.
Knappett, C. 2014. Materiality in Archaeological Theory, in C. Smith (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*. Springer: New York, 4700-4708.
Knsel, C. 2015. The Archaeology of Masculinity, in A. Bolin and P. Whelehan (eds) *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality,* New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 746-748.
Köhler, C. and Jones, J. 2009. *Helwan II: The Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Funerary Relief Slabs*. Rahden: VML Verlag Marie Leidorf.
Kroeter, C. 2009, Sensual Banquet, *St Andrews Journal of Art History and Museum Studies*, 13, 47-57.
Lemos, R. 2016. Material culture and social interactions in New Kingdom non-elite cemeteries, in J. Chyla, J. Debowska-Ludwin, K. Rosinska-Balik, and C. Walsh (eds) *Current Research in Egyptology, 2016*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 121-135.
Malafouris, L. 2013. *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement*, Massachusetts, MIT Press.
Malafouris, L., and Ihde, D., 2019. *Homo faber* Revisited: Postphenomenology and Material Engagement Theory. *Philosophy and Technology*, 32: 195-214.
Manuelian, P. 2003. *Slab Stelae of the Giza Necropolis*. New Haven & Philadelphia: Peabody Museum of Natural History of Yale University.
McCarthy, H. 2002. The Osiris Nefertari. *Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt*, 39:173-195.
McDonald, J. Egyptian Sunshades. *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 18:2, 8-14.
Meskell, L. 2002. *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt.* Princeton, Princeton University Press.
Meskell, L. 1998. Consuming Bodies: Cultural Fantasies of Ancient Egypt. Body & Society, 4(1), 63–76.
Meskell, L. 1999. *Archaeologies of Social Life: Age, Sex, Class etcetera in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.
Meskell, L. and Joyce, R. 2003. Introduction, in L. Meskell and R. Joyce (eds) *Embodied Lives: Figuring Ancient Maya and Egyptian Experience*. Oxford, Routledge, 1-11.
Meskell, L. 2000. Writing the Body in Archaeology. In A. Rautman (ed.) *Reading the Body: Representations and Remains in the Archaeological Record*. Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 13-24.
Morphy, H. 2010. Art as Action, Art as Evidence. In D. Hicks and M. Beaudry (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 265-291.
Müller, M. 2015. Iconography and Symbolism, in M. Hartwig (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 78-97.
Nyord, R. 2009. *Breathing Flesh, Conceptions of the body in the ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*. Copenhagan: Tusculanum Press.
Nyord, R. 2013. Vision and conceptualisation in ancient Egyptian art, in R. Caballero and J. Diaz-Vera (eds) *Sensuous Cognition: Explorations into Human Sentience: Imagination, (E)motion and Perception*. Berlin, De Gruyter, 135-164.

Nyord, R. 2016. (En)gendering the world in ancient Egypt, in J. Økland (ed.) *Hierarchy and Equality: gender in the ancient world*. Proceedings of the seminar held at the Norwegian Institute, Athens, September 11-13, 2016. Athens Oslo: Norwegian Institute at Oslo. Keynote lecture notes.

Nyord, R. 2017. An image of the owner as he was on earth: Representation and ontology in Middle Kingdom funerary images, in G. Miniaci, M. Betro and S. Quirke (eds) *Company of Images: Modelling the Imaginary World of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000-1500 BC)*. Leuven: Peeters, 337- 360.

Nyord, R. 2020. The Nile in the hippopotamus: being and becoming in faience figurines of Middle Kingdom ancient Egypt, in I. Danielsson and A. Jones (eds) *Images in the Making: Art, Process, Archaeology*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 19-33.

O'Neill, B. 2015. *Setting the Scene: The deceased and regenerative cult within offering table imagery of the Egyptian Old to Middle Kingdoms* (c.2686 – c.1650 BC). Oxford: Archaeopress Egyptology.

Overmann, K. 2020a. The material difference in human cognition. *Adaptive Behaviour*, 28:3, 1-13.

Overmann, K. 2020b. A Cognitive Archaeology of Writing: Concepts, Models, Goals, in P. Boyes, P. Steele and N. Astoreca (eds.) *The social and cultural contexts of historic writing practices*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1-18.

Panofsky, E. 1972 [1939]. *Studies in Iconology*, 4th Edition. Colorado, Icon Publication, Westview Press.

Panofsky, E. 1955. Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art, in E. Panofsky (ed.) *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History.* New York: Doubleday, 26-54.

Pieke, G. 2011. The evidence of images: art and working techniques in the mastaba of Mereruka, in N. Strudwick and H. Strudwick (eds) *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives, Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750–2150 BC*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 216-228.

Richards, J. 2005. *Society and Death in Ancient Egypt: Mortuary Landscapes of the Middle Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robins, G. 1993. *Women in Ancient Egypt*. MA: Harvard University Press.

Robins, G. 1994. *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art*. Texas, The University of Texas Press.

Robins, G. 2007. Male Bodies and the Construction of Masculinity in New Kingdom Egyptian Art, in S. D'Auria (ed.) *Servant of Mut: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Fazzini*, Probleme der Ägyptologie, 28. Leiden: Brill, 208-215.

Roth, A.M. 1999. The Absent Spouse: Patterns and Taboos in Egyptian Tomb Decoration. *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*:16, 37-53.

Roth, A.M. 2000. Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian beliefs about conception and fertility, in A. Rautman (ed.) *Reading the Body, Representations and Remains in the Archaeological Record*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 187-201.

Scott, J. 1986. Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91: 5, 1053-1075.

Shaw, I. 2013. Pharaonic Egypt, in P. Mitchell and P. Lane (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of African Archaeology,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 737-749.

Smith, M. 2017. Following Osiris: Perspectives on the *Osirian Afterlife from Four Millennia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sørensen, M.L. 2006. Gender, Things and Material Culture, in S. Nelson (ed.) *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology*, Oxford: Altamira Press, 105-136.

Spencer-Wood, S. 2006. Feminist Gender Research in Classical Archaeology, in S. Nelson (ed.) *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology*, Oxford: Altamira Press, 59-104.

Sweeney, D. 2011. Sex and Gender, in W. Wendrich (eds), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, viewed July 2020, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3rv0t4np

Thomas, J. 2017. Comparing Comparisons in Rethinking Comparison, in A. Vale, J. Alves-Ferreira, I. Garcia Rovira (eds) Rethinking Comparison in Archaeology, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 191-205.

Thomas, J. 2020. Insignificance: On the Unobtrusiveness of Material Things. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 30:1, 149-153.

Traunecker, C. 2001. [2005 online edition]. Kamutef. Translated by S. Romanosky, in D. Redford (ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, viewed 4 June 2020, https://www-oxfordreference-com.manchester.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780195102345.001.0001/acref-9780195102345-e-0373

Troy, L. 1986. *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*. Boreas. Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations, 14. Uppsala: Uppsala University.

Van Walsem, R. 2005. *Iconography of Old Kingdom Elite Tombs: Analysis & Interpretation, Theoretical and Methodological Aspects*. Leuven: Peeters.

Van Walsem, R. 2013. Separate contrasts optimally fused in single Theban 'stola' coffins (±975-920 BC), in R. Sousa (Ed.) *Body, Cosmos and Eternity: New Trends of Research on Iconography and Symbolism of Ancient Egyptian Coffins*.

Voss, B. 2006. Sexuality in Archaeology, in S. Nelson (ed.) Handbook of Gender in Archaeology, Oxford: Altamira Press, 365-400.

Wegner, J. 2010. Tradition and Innovation: The Middle Kingdom, in Wendrich, W. (ed.) *Egyptian Archaeology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 119-142.

Wilfong, T. 2010. Gender in Ancient Egypt. In W. Wendrich (ed.), *Egyptian Archaeology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 164-179.

Willems, H. 1996. *The Coffin of Heqata*, Leuven: Peeters.

Willems, H. 2010. The First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, in A. Lloyd (ed.) *Companion to Ancient Egypt.* Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 91-101.