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ABSTRACT

The tomb paintings and reliefs of ancient Egypt, while occurring in a specific funerary context and reflecting a specific religious intent, constitute a major source of evidence for the historical and cultural reconstruction of the civilisation to which they pertain, hence it is surprising that the compilation and detailed analysis of the iconographic and textual data present in such material within a thematic, chronological and geographical framework remains largely neglected. This thesis attempts to redress the imbalance in relation to the theme of workshop activities, based on a revised catalogue of 162 scenes collated from 55 tombs and 8 unprovenanced fragments dating to the Old Kingdom. It will be argued that the method of documentation devised, specifically an anatomisation approach, can be applied to the study of scene iconography in order to classify and analyse the content featured, determine common representational conventions and isolate geographical, chronological and individual styles. Its effectiveness as an aid to reconstruction will also be demonstrated with the presentation of over 70 new or amended scene identifications.

As a result of the investigation, it will be concluded that the workshop theme was comprised of seven industries. Statistical evidence will show that scenes were dominated by a small core of repetitive actions and images which acted as iconographic abbreviations for each of these industry types, supplemented by a number of secondary depictions, and that defined criteria relating to both placement and content were applied. Expansion of these core motifs with discretionary scenes and procedures was nevertheless an accepted practice, with significant examples of experimentation attempted. This experimentation, it will be argued, was not confined to but was often initiated outside the capital, included the regular use of artistic devices designed to convey a sense of ‘process’ or a continuum, contrary to the conventional view that scenes of this type are largely episodic, and may be dated as commencing somewhat earlier than usually assumed.

SUBMISSION STATEMENT

I, Michelle Thérèse Hampson, hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. I affirm that the work is my own and that due acknowledgement of all sources consulted, both primary and secondary, has been made.

Macquarie University
31st May, 2012.

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Michelle Hampson

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To Mum and Dad