

# The Decoration of the Pronaos of Petosiris' Tomb. Themes, Scenes, Styles and Techniques

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The tomb of Petosiris at Tuna el-Gebel was discovered in late 1919 and was immediately and methodically excavated until March 8, 1920 by Gustave Lefebvre. Since then, it has been recognised as having exceptional value for the history of art of the fourth century BC, when indigenous schools produced their last copies and when the first manifestations of Greek art appeared in Egypt. The internal decoration of the pronaos of this tomb displays the strong Greek influence on the style and on the art of coloured reliefs. At the same time, it portrays themes and scenes similar to the decor of the Memphite tombs from the Old Kingdom and the Theban tombs from the New Kingdom. The depicted topics denote, therefore, a remarkable historical continuity that will be dealt with this paper, within a framework of intrinsic similarities and originalities.

La tumba de Petosiris en Tuna el-Gebel fue descubierta a fines de 1919 y excavada inmediata y metódicamente hasta el 8 de marzo de 1920 por Gustave Lefebvre. Desde ese momento se reconocieron sus valores excepcionales para el arte del siglo IV a.C., cuando las escuelas indígenas producían sus últimas obras y hacían su aparición las primeras manifestaciones del arte griego en Egipto. La decoración interior del pronaos de esta tumba evidencia la fuerte influencia griega en el estilo de sus coloridos relieves. Al mismo tiempo, representan temas y escenas similares a la decoración de las tumbas menfitas del Reino Antiguo y las tebanas del Reino Nuevo. Los temas presentan, por tanto, una significativa continuidad histórica que deseamos tratar en este artículo, en el marco de sus similitudes y originalidades intrínsecas.

**Keywords:** Ptolemaic Period, funerary art, decorative grammar.

**Palabras clave:** Periodo Ptolemaico, arte funerario, gramática decorativa.

**Bibliography** on the subject is unanimous in pointing out the tomb of Petosiris as being an exceptional monument in terms of the history of art. Discovered at the end of 1919 by Gustave Lefebvre, it is, undoubtedly, the most important monument of Tuna el-Gebel, the necropolis of ancient Hermopolis in the Graeco-Roman Period whose ruins can be found in Middle Egypt, in the area of Mallawi, about 300 km south of Cairo<sup>1</sup>. The building is amongst the most important monuments of the early Ptolemaic Period, having remained in an excellent state of preservation. As a monumental family tomb dating from the end of the fourth century BC, it functioned as the burial place of Petosiris

1 Tyldesley, 1999: 1037-1039.

Ankhefkonsu<sup>2</sup>, high priest (“the Great One of the Five, Lord of the Thrones”) and *lesonis* or *oikomonos* (“administrator, attorney”) of the temple of Thoth, in Hermopolis, and several members of his family<sup>3</sup>.

The monument has the appearance of a small temple from the Graeco-Roman era, with its facade containing four columns linked together by intercolumnar screen walls, a pronaos or vestibule and a naos or chapel/inner sanctuary<sup>4</sup>. Lacking decoration on the outer walls, except for the facade, the tomb of Petosiris contains an abundance of interior decoration. Still visible are some scenes bearing traces of the original colours used to paint them. Like a “miniature temple”, therefore, of more modest dimensions, the building of Petosiris resembles, through the architecture

and exterior decoration, the hypostyle halls of the Ptolemaic temples of Edfu (in honour of the god Horus) and Esna (dedicated to the god Khnum), the Roman temple of Kalabsha (devoted to the god Mandulis) and the Meroitic-Ptolemaic-Roman temple of Debod (venerating Amun of Debod), built in the centuries that immediately followed<sup>5</sup>.

The time of its construction (c. 300 BC) and the fascination felt by the owner-builder for many ideas and advanced forms of representation for the time, explain the surprising decoration of the building. It includes, on the interior walls of the naos<sup>6</sup>, funerary scenes in traditional Egyptian style and on the interior walls of the pronaos scenes executed in a purely Greek style (scenes of processions and ceremonies of worship) and scenes of daily

- 2 PP III 5406. Petosiris is the Greek adaptation of the Egyptian name *p-dj-wsir*, Padiusir, “gift of Osiris”, and his surname, *ḥḥ-f-ḥnsw*, Ankhefkonsu, can be translated as “Khonsu is your life” (Lefebvre, 1923b: 15; Nakaten, 1982: 995; Menu, 1994: 321, note 42; Araújo, 2003: 314, TopBib 409-030-011-010).
- 3 The inscriptions within the tomb introduce to five generations of this family of priests of Hermopolis. Petosiris, according to the tradition of his family, had been devoted to the god Thoth since his birth (Lefebvre, 1920: 43, 44, 52; Lefebvre, 1924: 3-6; Redford, 2001: 38; Nakaten, 1982: 995; Menu, 1994: 323). Gustave Lefebvre considered the designation “Tomb of Petosiris” inaccurate, in so far as the tomb was dedicated to Petosiris, his father (Sishu) and his older brother (Djeddjehutyiuefankh), both also high priests of Thoth in Hermopolis, and the crypt, which penetrates through a well situated in the *naos* or chapel, housing the stone sarcophagi of Petosiris and his wife (Renpetneferet) and the wooden one of his youngest son (Djehutyrekh), who died as a child. No traces of the deceased relatives of previous generations were found. However, it is known that the tomb was violated in Roman times (Lefebvre, 1924: 1, 18-20; Festugiere, 1959: 104). Nevertheless, this was the designation that persisted and the one that is normally used when referencing the monument.
- 4 The belief that the monument was a “temple” was felt at once by the local inhabitants who informed, in November 1919, the Directorate of Antiquities of its existence. They referred to it as *ma'bad*, “temple”. The Greek pilgrims who, half a century after his death, crossed Egypt and came to the site to render honors that were almost divine to the high priest of Thoth, inscribing their names, their hopes or their prayers on the walls, also referred to the monument as τὸ ἱερόν, “temple”. The veneration during the third and second centuries BC slowly disappeared, which resulted in the desecration and violations of the site and its transformation into a common burial site for ordinary people during the Roman Period. In Byzantine times, funerary chapels were constructed around the old core of the monument (Lefebvre, 1924: VI, 9, 13, 21, 25-29). The excavations methodically undertaken by Gustave Lefebvre would continue until March 8, 1920, and would prove that the monument was, in reality, a tomb.
- 5 Sales, 2012: 48-50.
- 6 The scenes from the interior chapel follow the traditional Egyptian method, be it in the themes iconographically found, or in the attitudes, gestures and clothing of the figures (Lefebvre, 1924: 31). They are, therefore, purely Egyptian scenes.

life (agricultural work, harvesting of cereals and flax, livestock, harvest and grape-stomping, craftsmen preparing perfumes, metals and woodworking, processions of gift-bearers, etc.), where a mixture of Egyptian, Greek and Persian influences, of excellent technical quality and rich symbolism can be found.

Thus, we behold the decoration of a tomb as the masterpiece of a “curious intellectual”, religiously devout and tolerant, with visible traces, among other things, of philohellenism<sup>7</sup>. The extraordinary merging of pharaonic, Greek and Persian styles from the end of the fourth century BC, which the building offers, justifies the names and references that are commonly used to characterise it as having a “hybrid style”, “a real and rare syncretism”, “artistic eclecticism”, “composed imagery”, and “Alexandrian exuberance”<sup>8</sup>. We witness, for the first time, a decorative grammar influenced by other cultures, something unattested previously in Egyptian art.

The importance this tomb has had in the history of Egyptian art has, in fact, been known for a long time. Gustave Lefebvre, when publishing his description of the monument in 1924, states that Pierre Lacau, then General Manager of the Antiquities Services, immediately recognised the exceptional value of the

discovery when he received the preliminary report of the excavations and did everything he could to see to its protection as well as preparing a publication with the results of the completed work<sup>9</sup>. Lefebvre is himself clear in the general characterization of the monument:

Le Tombeau de Petosiris est le monument le plus complet qui nous soit parvenu des années marquant la transition entre l'époque saïto-persane et l'époque ptolémaïque. C'est un document de premier ordre pour l'étude de l'art égyptien vers la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, quand les écoles indigènes produisent leur dernière floraison et qu'apparaissent les premières manifestations de l'art grec<sup>10</sup>.

The tomb presents the first pronaos of Egyptian architecture<sup>11</sup>, an element that would later become a compulsory feature of Ptolemaic temple architecture (fig. 1). Like the facade, the pronaos is exclusively dedicated to Petosiris, for there is no mention there to his father or to his older brother. The pronaos is strictly reserved for the burial cult of Petosiris, his spouse, his younger brothers, his children and his grandson. Petosiris' deceased father and brother, Sishu and Djeddjehutyuefankh, are venerated in the naos of the tomb<sup>12</sup>. It is, in the end, their

7 Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 2; Picard, 1931: 226. The texts that cover the inside of the tombs were probably also written by Petosiris and his scribes (Menu, 1994: 315; Sales, 2015).

8 Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 1. The debate over the acknowledgment of the various styles found in the ornamentation of Petosiris' tomb and their dating was not, however, decisive. In 1931, Charles Picard, stated that “l'affaire Petosiris dure” (Picard, 1931: 203).

9 Lefebvre, 1924: VI.

10 Lefebvre, 1924: 31.

11 It can be assumed, however, of the existence of an early pronaos, presumably dating to the reign of Nectanebo I (380-362 BC) in the temple of Thoth, located in Hermopolis, where Petosiris served as a high priest, an establishment of which he was very proud of. The plan of this temple can thus have directly inspired the design adopted by Petosiris for his tomb (Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 2, 3; Tyldesley, 1999: 1038; Venit, 2016: 7).

12 Festugière, 1959: 104; Lefebvre, 1924: 49.

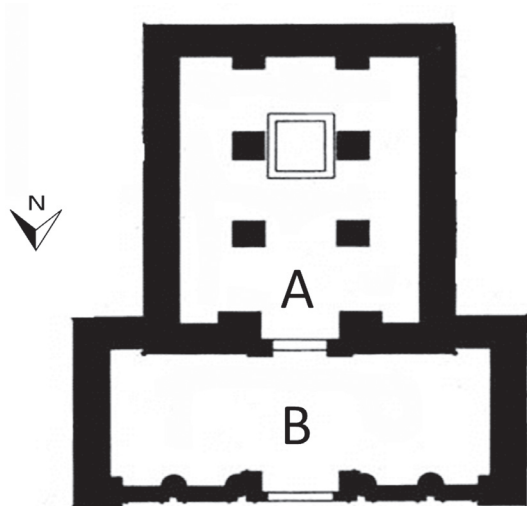


Figure 1. Plan of Petosiris' tomb (Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b: Pl. I):  
A- Naos, dedicated to Sichu and Djeddjehutyuefankh;  
B- Pronaos, dedicated to Petosiris.

burial chapel full of interesting and colourful scenes engraved in relief and in a hybrid style, as mentioned previously<sup>13</sup>.

This article is not simply concerned with the use of purely Egyptian or Greek scenes that exist in Petosiris' tomb, but instead with those included in the delightful hybridism of the pronaos that marked its time and where we can witness the greater diversity and freedom in the forms and means of expression. Thus, the upper friezes of the western and eastern walls (purely Egyptian)<sup>14</sup>, contain scenes depicting Petosiris sitting in front of a table "after lunch", as mentioned in the adjoining text, playing *senet* with a friend on a board game with 33 squares<sup>15</sup> as well as the images of the ritual sacrificing of a bull to the dead hero<sup>16</sup>

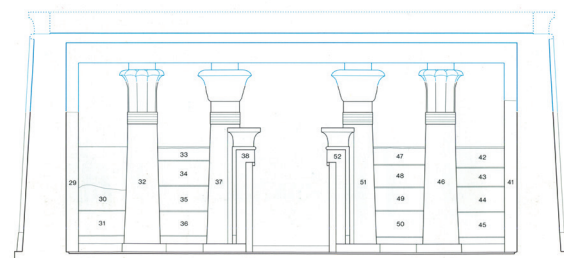


Figure 2. Scenes from the northern wall of the inner pronaos: from left to right, that is, from west to east (Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 32).

will not be dealt with here. The focus will be on the northern walls (jewellers, woodworking and perfume makers), western walls (agricultural scenes: cattle rising and viticulture) and eastern walls (agricultural scenes: ploughing, sowing, flax-picking and wheat harvesting).

The general decoration of the northern wall of the pronaos (reverse side of the tomb's facade) was originally made up of four panels with four registers each, two on each side of the entrance gate (fig. 2). Nowadays, the most western panel, occupying the space between the columns closest to the pillar, only contains the two lower registers, thus meaning that the two panels located on the western side of the gate contain only six registers (figures 3 and 4 - scenes 30, 31, 33-36) which, when read from bottom to top, form a group of scenes relating to metalworking. Wearing simple short or long robes, heads uncovered, under the supervision of two or three overseers wearing robes, jewellers usually work in teams depending on the specific phase of the work. Standing, sit-

<sup>13</sup> Lefebvre, 1920: 48, 63. Originally, the tomb turned from north to south and should only comprise the chapel or naos, shaped almost like square. The oblong pronaos seems to be a posterior addition. The pronaos of Petosiris' tomb (9,40 m long, 3,80 m wide and 4,40 m high) can be compared to the pronaos of a temple (Lefebvre, 1920: 48, 49; Lefebvre, 1924: 14, 15).

<sup>14</sup> Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 53 and 65, scenes 53 and 57.

<sup>15</sup> Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 33 and 40, scenes 27 and 39.

<sup>16</sup> Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 85-86, scenes 68a-68c.



ting on stools or kneeling on the floor, they use tools and devices that are appropriate to their activity (hammers, tweezers, chisels and scales) and perform the tasks necessary to a

good execution, transportation and stocking of pieces of copper, silver or gold<sup>17</sup>.

The inscription above the lower register acts like a caption that states “men work-

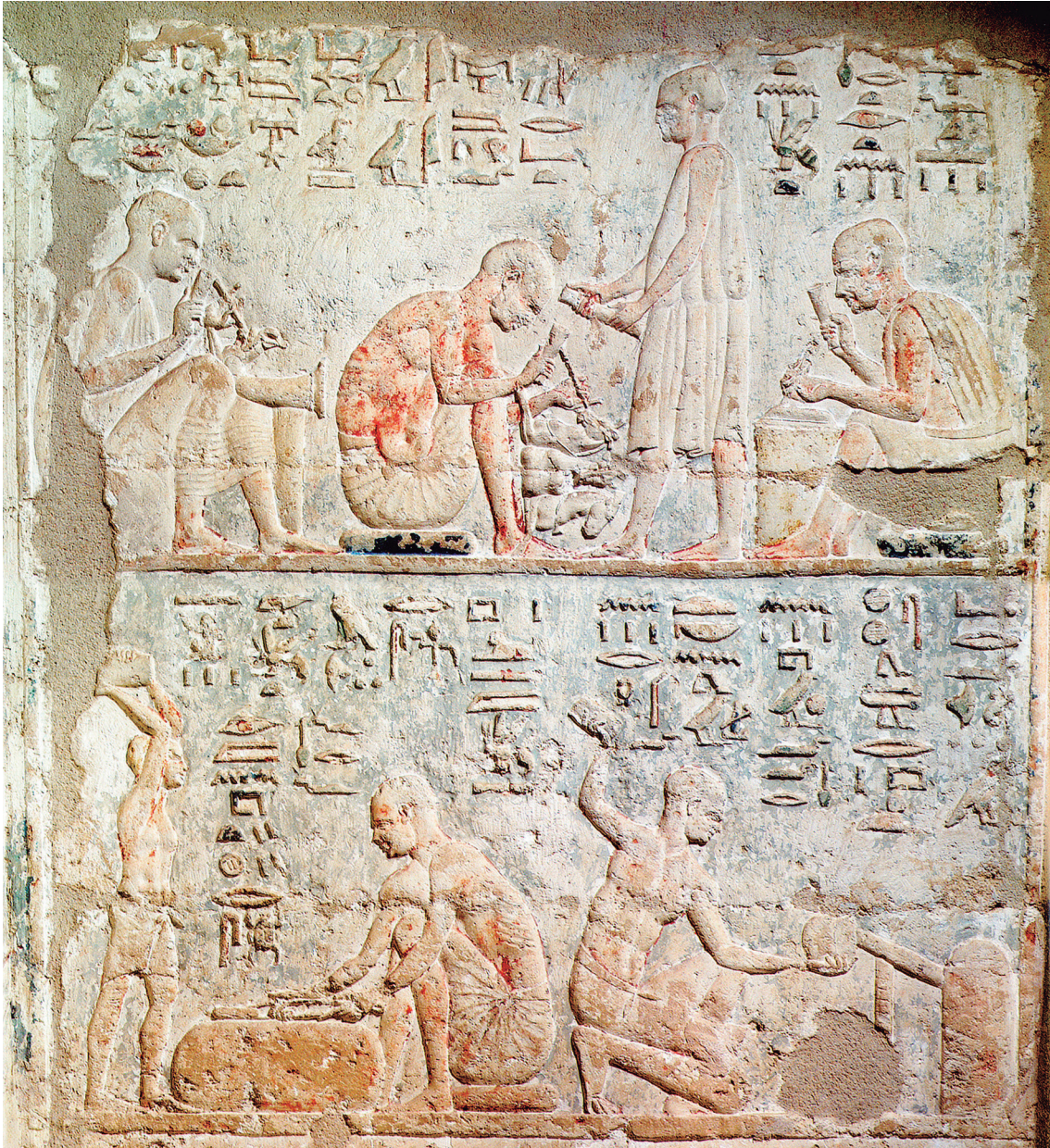


Figure 3. A jeweller working in his workshop (Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b, Pl. VII = Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 30, 31).

17 Lefebvre, 1920: 65; Lefebvre, 1924: 51.



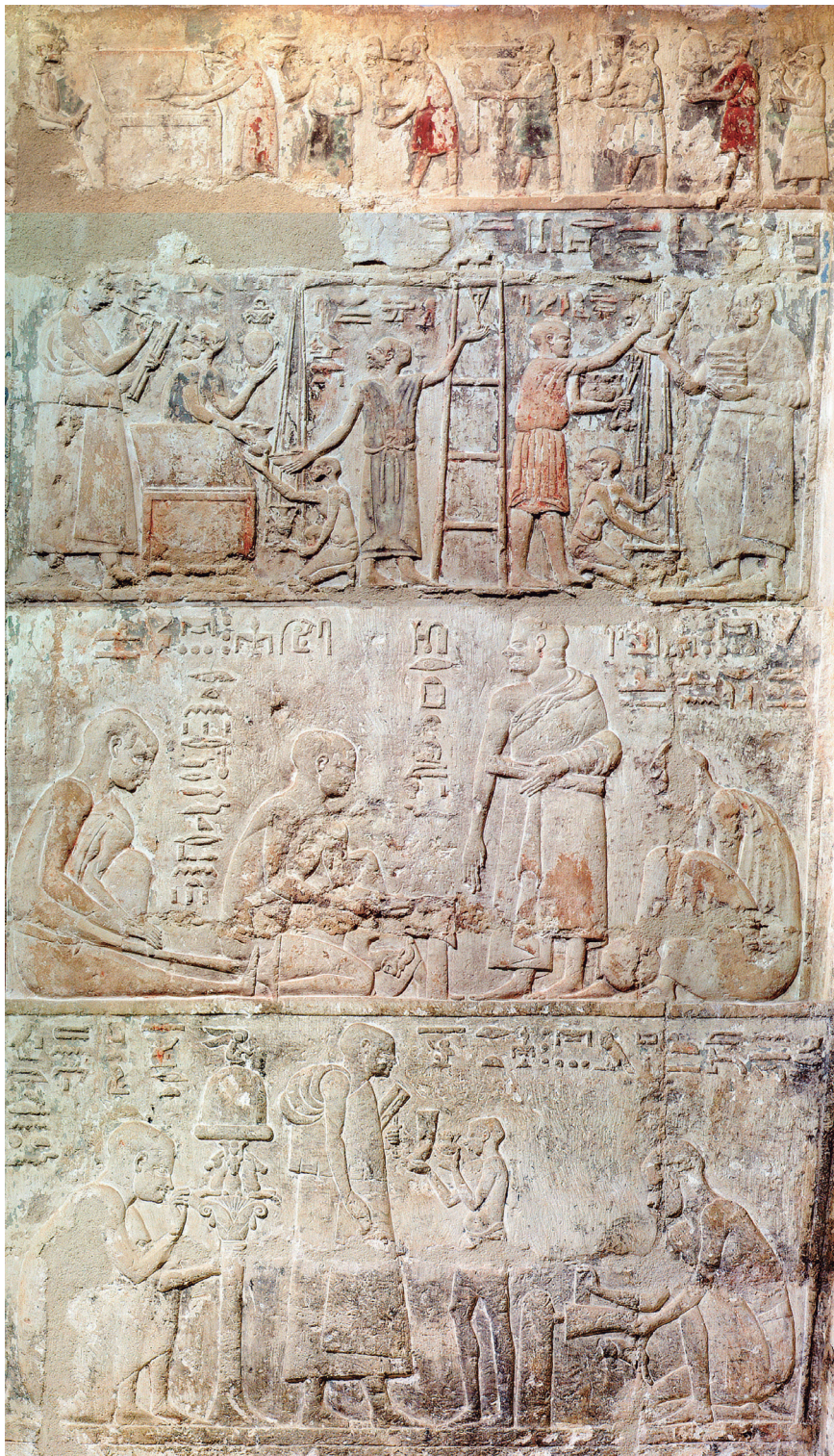


Figure 4. The transportation and stocking of jewelry, weighing, polishing and tuning of the metals  
(Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b, Pl. VIII = Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 33-36).

ing copper to enhance their lords' house through their work"<sup>18</sup>. In addition to this, as if to give rhythm and incentive to the work shown, there is an inscription between the two figures on the far left (west), which advises: "do it vigorously, do it vigorously so as to produce his well-being"<sup>19</sup>.

The process of weighing the metal objects produced is meticulously represented (fig. 4 - scene 34). Besides the size and type of scales shown, the figure of the overseer on the left is also worthy of note, wearing a broad *himation* and, as the careful accountant scribe that he is, registering the results of the weighing.

The two panels and their inscriptions (eight in all: scenes 42-45 and 47-50 - figures 5 and 6) on the northern wall, situated to the east of the gate, have survived intact. They do not depict, however, the same professional unity observed in the two western panels. Instead, the two upper registers on each of the panels are dedicated to workers involved in the making of perfumes while the two bottom registers of each panel show the tasks done by the woodworkers. There is not, therefore, a professional category for each of the panels (read vertically from the bottom upward) and scenes must be read horizontally (upper register and mid-upper register; mid-lower register and lower register)<sup>20</sup>.

The registers 42, 43 (fig. 6), 47 and 48 (fig. 5) thus refer to the work of perfume makers: crushing fruit and odorous seeds and resins coming from Punt, according to one inscription, using large pestles and mor-

tars, mixing and cooking the essences and bottling the perfumes while in liquid state. Hence, "the perfume-makers produce pleasantly fragranced resins", as the inscription in scene 43 explains<sup>21</sup>. Although there is no inscription, the figure in charge sitting on a comfortable cushion, on the right of scene 42, must be feeling satisfied and intoxicated by the fragrances being produced. If we had an inscription accompanying this scene, all this would have been adequately registered.

Scenes 44, 45 (fig. 6), 49 and 50 (fig. 5) reveal specialised wood, rush and wicker workers, either kneeling, crouching or sitting and making furniture with all the tools (augers, clamps, chisels, and scrapers) and the techniques used on these materials, that is, for perforations and incrusting of metals (gold and silver) - scene 50: the making of a funerary bed. Each of them, from the cabinet maker to the rush specialists, "perform work that is useful for their master" as stated in one accompanying inscription<sup>22</sup>.

In both activities (perfume makers and joiners), scribes supervising the activities can be found and are usually also easy to identify through their long robes or typical professional equipment (palettes and reed pens). In scene 47, the scribe in the blue robe is holding a papyrus scroll in his left hand and stretching out his right arm in a gesture indicating command<sup>23</sup>. Although this scene lacks an accompanying inscription, we can imagine him giving several perfume-making workers the same instructions.

18 Lefebvre, 1920: 65; Lefebvre, 1923a: 9; Lefebvre, 1924: 51.

19 Lefebvre, 1923a: 9; Lefebvre, 1924: 51.

20 Lefebvre, 1920: 66.

21 Lefebvre, 1920: 69; Lefebvre, 1923a: 14; Lefebvre, 1924: 59.

22 Lefebvre, 1920: 69, 70; Lefebvre, 1923a: 13; Lefebvre, 1924: 56.

23 Lefebvre, 1924: 58.



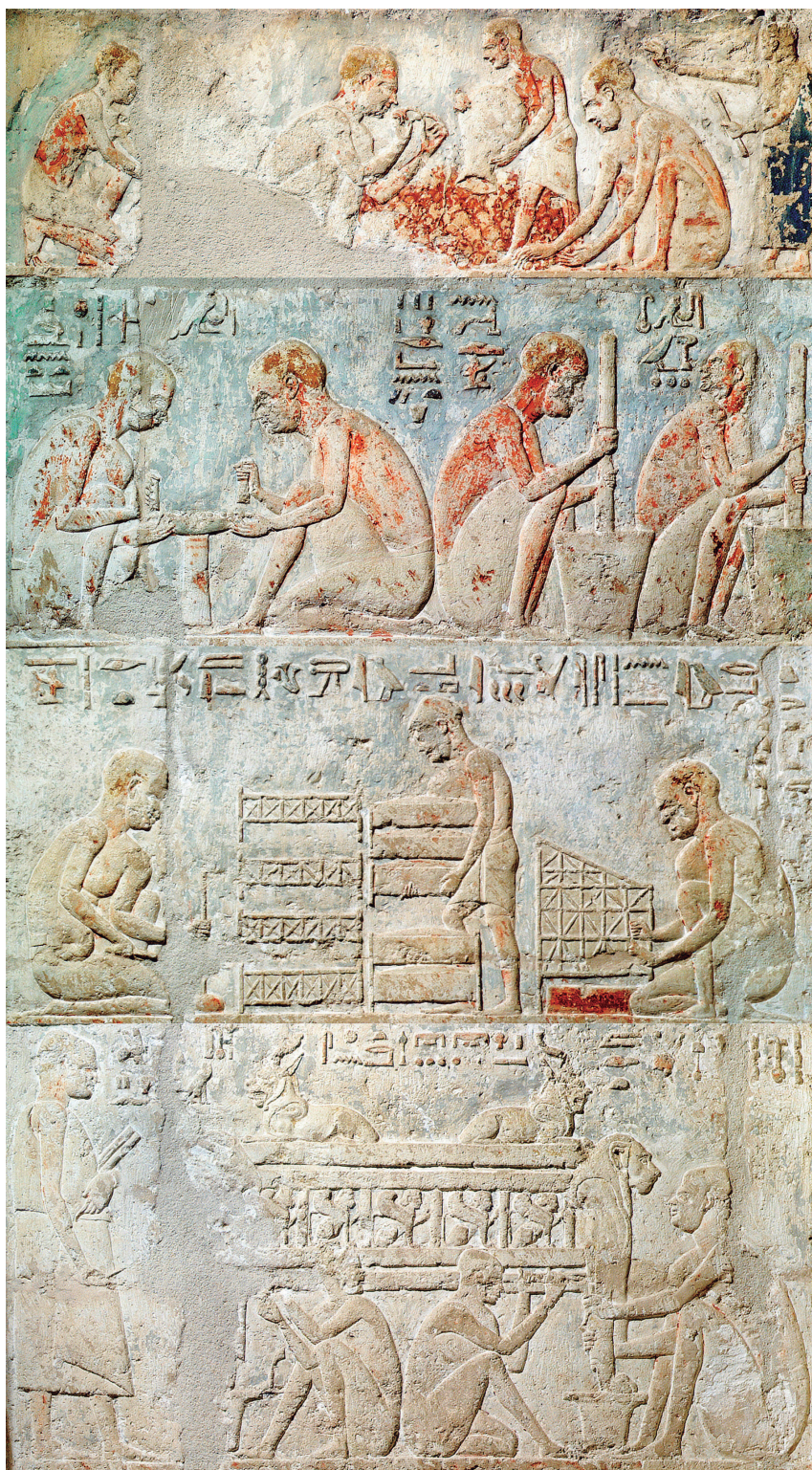


Figure 5. Perfumers and woodworkers performing their duties  
(Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b: Pl. X = Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 47-50).





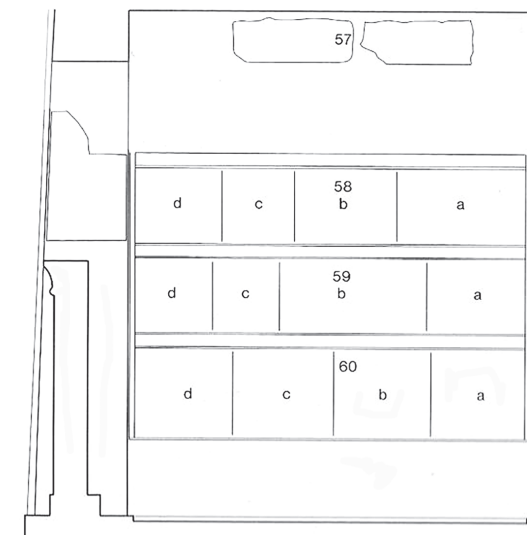
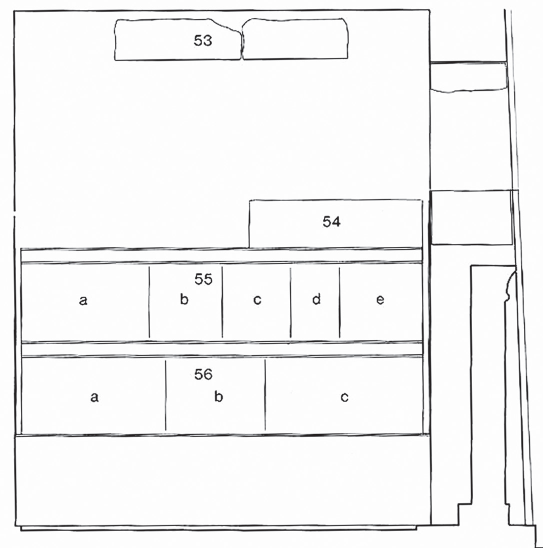
Figure 6. Perfumers and woodworkers performing their duties  
(Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b: Pl. XI = Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 42-45).



The decoration of the western and eastern walls of the pronaos follows the list of themes describing the daily life of the Egyptians (“the day to day activities”) and in this case, is based on agriculture and the raising of bovine livestock. On the western wall (figures 7 and 9), with the exception of the upper frieze—which has not been included in this study for the aforementioned reasons—there are still three registers, all of which are sculptured in relief and painted, with the lower register full of scenes related to viticulture (grape harvesting, grape stomping, the pouring of wine in amphoras and the supervision of the production - scenes 56a-56c). The upper and middle registers are decorated with the keeping of livestock (breeding of bovines, the protecting of calves, cows giving birth, milking, workers and herds, etc. - scenes 54 and 55a-55e). On the eastern wall (figures 8 and 10), except for the upper frieze, the three registers are also painted in low-relief and depict the ploughing using oxen, the sowing of seeds, the harvesting of wheat, the plucking of flax and the threshing of cereals on the ground - scenes 58 to 60<sup>24</sup>.

“The gardeners of the vineyard”, as the caption above the relief calls them, carry out the main tasks associated with the making of wine, from the grape picking (the picking and putting the grapes in large tubs) to the transportation of the wine-filled amphorae, not forgetting the difficult but compulsory grape stomping with one’s feet and performed by groups of men—one of the most important images in wine-making—the collecting of the wine produced and its pouring into jugs or amphorae.

The scene of the viticulture (scene 56c; fig. 9), which is dominated by intertwined vines,



Figures 7 and 8. Scenes from the eastern and western walls of the pronaos: Egyptian agro-cattle-raising (Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 52, 64).

shows several male figures (nine in all) hand-picking grapes “on the eighth hour of the day”. One is naked, four are wearing short pleated robes, while the remaining four are represented smaller, perhaps to indicate the

<sup>24</sup> In the work of Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, the scenes 58 to 60 are all separated in four (Cherpion, Corteggiani and Gout, 2007: 65-77).



Figure 9. Scenes from the western wall of the proanos (Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b: Pl. XII = Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 53-63).

young children of the grape gatherers. Four have their heads bare while the others use small caps, all under the supervision of the overseer, who can be seen on the right of the scene and in a larger scale<sup>25</sup>. The Hellenizing feature of the scene is clear: the way their hair is depicted, for example, more or less hirsute and dishevelled or the use of caps (*pilos*) or the clothing itself (*chiton*), which is not a part of the traditional Egyptian artistic style<sup>26</sup>.

The grapes that have been picked are quickly taken to a large rectangular tub, which was

apparently dug from a stone block, through a five-step ladder that is turned towards the trellis. Three carriers wearing short pleated robes transport everything into the large tub where four muscular and completely naked men, holding on to a horizontal bar for support, undertake the precious task of stomping of the grapes to extract the scent and the taste of the final liquid (scene 56b; fig. 9)<sup>27</sup>. Here too, the representation focuses on the male muscles, especially those on the chest and abdomen of the figure shown facing

25 Lefebvre, 1920: 77; Lefebvre, 1923a: 16; Lefebvre, 1924: 60.

26 Venit, 2016, 34.

27 Lefebvre, 1920: 77, 78; Lefebvre, 1924: 62.

the observer as well as their full beards that do not derive from or obey the traditional Egyptian artistic canons.

The scene ends, on the left, with the representation of another nude man who is collecting, in a little jug, the liquid from a small side tank next to the big tub. This figure is used as an element linking to the next scene (scene 56a; fig. 9) where one can see the other procedures related to wine production: several types of vessels are filled and labelled so as to be carried on the shoulders of other servants, registered by a zealous scribe and taken to the warehouse in order to be offered to Petosiris, a shaven headed figure wearing a narrow *himation*<sup>28</sup>. Most the carriers in this scene have shaved heads or very short hair<sup>29</sup>. Here too, the clothing (short pleated robes and long tunics) and the hair of the amphorae carrier shown in the centre of the scene follow the artistic Greek rules.

The three remaining scenes in the middle of the western wall (scenes 55a-55e; fig. 9) show, on the left, a man wearing a short robe carrying a calf on his back while leading a bull and a cow out to graze in the fields. They are followed by another shepherd wearing

a short cloak with a bag over his shoulder, with a rope wrapped around his left elbow and stretching out his right arm holding a small stick (scene 55a; fig. 9)<sup>30</sup>. The scene continues on the right with the depiction of a cow with its head up and tongue sticking out, evidently mooing in pain as it gives birth to a calf with the help of another shepherd, shown here in smaller size than that of the previous human figures, while yet another shepherd, of a larger size, leans on a long stick (scene 55b; fig. 9)<sup>31</sup>.

The birth scene is followed by a milking one: a calf is tied to its mother's neck, waiting for the moment to feed while the mother's hind legs are tied up in order to prevent her from knocking over the container used for capturing the milk. Behind her stands another man wearing a large robe, head uncovered and holding in his left hand the rope attached to the hind legs of the cow together in his left hand and a small pot in his right hand (scene 55c; fig. 9)<sup>32</sup>. Next are two dairy cows whose horns are tied and led by a zealous shepherd to green pastures. The shepherd is wearing a pleated robe and carrying a stick on his shoulder, with clothes tied to its end. In front of these cows, another one feeds its

28 Lefebvre, 1920: 78; Lefebvre, 1924: 62, 63. In scene 56a, three types of containers appear: 1) small jugs used to collect wine from the tub and to fill up the larger amphorae; 2) needle-shaped amphorae with two small even handles on the top; 3) the egg-shaped amphorae with needle-shaped bases (and therefore on wooden bases so as to maintain a vertical position), with larger handles on the sides. The sealing of the jars is a less common scene in the Graeco-roman tombs: in fact, the tomb of Petosiris is the only one to portray the event (Venit, 2016: 28).

29 Six of the eight carriers are in this style. One of them has a very thick head of hair, while the preservation of the second figure on right does not allow us to conclude as to the type of hair he has, although he seems to have a lot of hair on the nape of the neck. The scribe who records things with his reed pen, and who serves as middleman between the carriers and Petosiris also has a shaven head, while the man collecting wine from the tub seems to be bald since the crown of his head lacks any trace of hair whereas he still has a lot of curls hanging down the back of his head.

30 Lefebvre, 1920: 76; Lefebvre, 1924: 65.

31 Lefebvre, 1920: 76; Lefebvre, 1924: 65.

32 Lefebvre, 1920: 76; Lefebvre, 1924: 66.



calf under the gaze of another standing shepherd who carries a stick attached to a bundle of straw (scene 55d; fig. 9)<sup>33</sup>. The scene concludes with a new birthing scene, which is in a poor state of preservation (scene 55e; fig. 9)<sup>34</sup>.

The various scenes from this middle register relate to the subject of livestock, breeding of calves, and the milking of dairy cows. Once again, the way the appearance and clothing of the herdsmen (one with an *exomis* and the others with *chiton*) in this Egyptian country life scene is depicted followings the Hellenic artistic canon rules. The decorator of the pronaos breaks free of the usual Egyptian representation and utilises a new rural fashion<sup>35</sup>.

Finally, little is left on the upper register of the western wall of the pronaos (scene 54; fig. 9). It is only possible to view, on the right, a bull mounting a cow under the gaze of a shepherd who holds a stick in one hand and wearing an ample robe. Another three men, clad in Egyptian style with short skirts, are trying to stop another bull from launching itself onto another cow whose hind is partially visible in the scene. To restrain this second bull's impetus, another figure, wearing a *chiton*, has tied a rope to its front left paw and is strongly holding on to it with his left hand<sup>36</sup>. This is, in fact, another variation of the theme on bovine livestock in ancient Egypt and in this case dealing with the natural breeding habits of the animals.

Just like the western wall, the eastern wall of the pronaos was originally divided into five overlapping registers (fig. 10). Of these, three exist today, decorated with agricultural scenes that are highly appealing in colour, originality of styles and robes and in the picturesque attitudes<sup>37</sup>.

In the lower register (scene 60; fig. 10) on the right, under a robust tree full of branches and leaves where several birds can be seen nesting as well as several bunches of red berries, lies Petosiris himself, wearing a heavy cloak and sandals and carrying an open scroll in his hands. He is accompanied by one of his overseers, who carries a long stick in his right hand and wearing a short green robe with short sleeves while awaiting instructions concerning the fields<sup>38</sup>. Additionally, it is possible to observe the presence of a child sitting on one of the lower branches of the tree, scaring away some birds with a long twig (scene 60a; fig. 10)<sup>39</sup>. Next, on the left, are scenes of field work that the overseer must supervise, under Petosiris' orders. The first group is composed of a sower, seen in profile with dishevelled hair, carrying his rectangular bag of seeds carefully to his chest in his left hand while throwing seeds on the ground with his right hand, leaving a "shower of seeds" in the air, painted in red and causing a beautiful iconographical effect. There is also a farmer in a short red robe, slightly bent forward, thus putting all his weight upon the plough

33 Lefebvre, 1920: 76; Lefebvre, 1924: 66.

34 Lefebvre, 1920: 76; Lefebvre, 1924: 66.

35 Picard, 1931: 216.

36 Lefebvre, 1920: 75; Lefebvre, 1924: 64.

37 Lefebvre, 1920: 70; Lefebvre, 1924: 67.

38 The text that accompanies the figure is explicit in stating that "the intendant receives orders to lead the work in the fields" (Lefebvre, 1920: 71; Lefebvre, 1923a: 20; Lefebvre, 1924: 69).

39 Lefebvre, 1920: 70, 71; Lefebvre, 1924: 68.



Figure 10. Scenes from the eastern wall of the proanos (Cf. Lefebvre, 1923b: Pl. XIII = Cf. Cherpion, Corteggiani, Gout, 2007: 65-77).

pulled by a set of oxen (scene 60b; fig. 10)<sup>40</sup>. Following this, in another group, a sower appears in the same position as his preceding work colleague but this time is shown facing frontward while yet another farmer wearing a pointy cap (*pilos*) with horizontal stripes and a sort of ribbon on the top but bowing down, holds the plough with his left hand and whipping and motivating the pair of oxen he works with using a small stick

(scene 60c; fig. 10)<sup>41</sup>. Finally, in the last scene on the left, a standing worker stops working, holding back his pair of oxen and a small calf that joined them, carrying his plough on his back. The scene seems to take place at the end of a work day (scene 60d; fig. 10)<sup>42</sup>. We can see two of the most important phases of farm work in the lower register: the tillage and the sowing<sup>43</sup>. All workers shown (two sowers and three farmers) are wearing short

<sup>40</sup> Lefebvre, 1920: 71; Lefebvre, 1924: 69.

<sup>41</sup> Lefebvre, 1920: 71, 72; Lefebvre, 1924: 69, 70. The presence of the two sowers in this scene is understood by Lefebvre as proof that there were two different fields being worked on (ploughed and sown).

<sup>42</sup> Lefebvre, 1920: 71; Lefebvre, 1924: 71.

<sup>43</sup> In Lefebvre's opinion, the plough shown in this scene is typical of ancient Egypt: "La charrue, représentée (...), est du type que l'on rencontre communément en Egypte: elle se compose d'un âge à l'extrémité inférieure duquel s'adapte le soc, et d'une longue tige transversale que terminent deux jougs; elle est munie de deux mancherons à poignée (...)" (Lefebvre, 1920: 71; see also Lefebvre, 1924: 69).



(*chiton*), short-sleeved robes tied at the waist. On the sower in scene 60c, facing frontwards, the central knot tied in a bow on his robe is particularly easy to see. The Greek fashion (robes, *chiton*, and headwear, *pilos*) are popular again in these scenes.

As for the middle register (scenes 59a-d; fig. 10), it is dedicated to the picking of flax<sup>44</sup>. All the figures working on this demanding task have their heads uncovered and are wearing blue, yellow or red short-sleeved robes, tied at the waist<sup>45</sup>. All three scenes are related to the picking of flax, thus showing the activities carried out on three different jobs. The work is supervised by an overseer or foreman who is shown slightly bent over and leaning on a long stick. In the first field, a blue robe clad worker pulls out a bunch of flax stems with both hands, which is then collected by a naked male figure, shown in a smaller scale behind him (scene 59a; fig. 10)<sup>46</sup>. In the next field, four men wearing short tunics pull out the flax (with their hands and stepping on the lower parts of the stems for support), preparing bunches of flax and braiding some stems to make resistant ropes. The title that can be seen above the two men on the right of this scene reads as: "braiding the flax" (scene 59b; fig. 10)<sup>47</sup>. In the third work field, another man, head high and left hand stretched out as if to shield himself from the sun, pulls out the stems of flax with one hand, grabbing the plants by their extremity while another man

concentrates on tying the bunches, kneeling on them with his left knee (scene 59c; fig. 10)<sup>48</sup>. Thus, the flax is picked and bunched together to eventually be carried away on the backs of three donkeys pulled by an older man in a short robe tied at the waist: "they are happy, carrying the flax to their lord's house" (scene 59d; fig. 10)<sup>49</sup>.

Finally, the upper register is dedicated to the harvesting of wheat. This is a very old theme used in the decoration of Egyptian tombs, which is reinvented in the pronaos of Petosiris' tomb in the way the decorator decided to clothe and animate his figures. The peasants portrayed are not nude or wearing simple pharaonic-like skirts. Instead, they are wearing light robes, *chiton*, that reach their knees and are tied at the waist. They are usually sleeveless. Additionally, they are wearing delicate caps or hats, *pilos*, which are also supposedly light and possibly made of vegetation (leaves, straw or papyrus).

In this upper register, there are also three wheat harvest fields. In scene 58a (fig. 10), under the supervision of a bearded overseer clad in a large robe and wearing a cap and leaning on a long stick, is a bearded man looking back and using a sickle to harvest wheat. He is accompanied by a woman who is following him in a long white dress, hair loose and falling upon her shoulders (apparently well-groomed hair) carrying a small bag slung over her shoulder as well as a naked

44 Sown sooner, flax was also harvested earlier than wheat. The picking of flax opened the harvest season. It is, therefore, normal that the middle register on the western wall of the pronaos shows this form of harvest first and wheat next. The tips of the flax plants are shown painted in blue. See Montet, 1925: 181, 192.

45 Lefebvre, 1924: 72.

46 Lefebvre, 1920: 73; Lefebvre, 1924: 73.

47 Lefebvre, 1920: 73; Lefebvre, 1923a: 23; Lefebvre, 1924: 73.

48 Lefebvre, 1920: 73; Lefebvre, 1924: 74.

49 Lefebvre, 1920: 73; Lefebvre, 1923a: 24; Lefebvre, 1924: 75.

masculine figure (a child?) who is helping with the harvest. Between the harvester's legs is a bunch of cobs, properly cut and tied together. His robes are painted blue and his cap brown. The tall cobs of wheat in the field are painted yellow and surely originally gave this scene a strong colourful appearance<sup>50</sup>.

In the second field (scene 58b; fig. 10), another harvester wearing a short-sleeved, knee-length robe, bald around the forehead and bearded but head uncovered, is holding a sickle in his right hand, which he uses to harvest. At the same time, he hands the produce over to his helper, seen here naked and carrying a bag over his shoulder. Like the harvester in the first field, the one in this scene also has a finished bundle between his legs<sup>51</sup>. The wrinkles on his forehead and the pleats around the neck show the effects that the relentless passage of time have had on the farmer shown here.

With all the figures facing to the right, just like in previous scenes, scene 59c, fig. 10 (third field) depicts a bald bearded harvester wearing what was once a blue robe, similar to that of other farm workers, and drinking water from a ceramic vase. The work pauses under the unforgiving Egyptian sun, which explains the moment of shelter that the farmer is enjoying. He holds a sickle under his right arm while looking quite relaxed. Another man, who is also bald and bearded while wearing an elegant salmon-coloured robe, stands behind him. Additionally, he holds a small bunch of cobs in his right hand<sup>52</sup>.

The upper register on the left concludes with a scene depicting threshing (scene 58d; fig. 10). Gustave Lefebvre considered it to be a unique scene of Egyptian art since the threshing is not carried out by oxen or donkeys, or even by rams stomping on the cereal, but by a man<sup>53</sup>. Three people, dressed like the others before them, are each holding two rattles or two short mallets with which they are striking several bunches of wheat spread out on the threshing floor. The figure in the middle and on the right are wearing bluish robes while the farmer on the left is clad in an ochre-coloured robe. The middle figure, facing the observer, is also wearing a cone-shaped hat (*pilos*) over his curly hair, which peeks out from under the head cover. The other two figures are bald. It can be presumed that the striking is done to a rhythm and motion, perhaps eventually accompanied by some sort of motivational chants. Additionally, it seems that the wearing of hats or shaven heads were a response to the amount of sweat and dust that this threshing inevitably causes<sup>54</sup>.

The clothing, hair styles, caps, beards and front-facing depictions give the scenes related to rural work a characterising Hellenistic touch, which is clearly different from the iconography of more distant pharaonic times, particularly when very short hair or shaved heads, short skirts and eternally young wrinkle-free faces shown in profile were used to illustrate the life of farmers in the Nile valley<sup>55</sup>.

50 Lefebvre, 1920: 74; Lefebvre, 1924: 76.

51 Lefebvre, 1920: 74; Lefebvre, 1924: 77.

52 Lefebvre, 1920: 74; Lefebvre, 1924: 78.

53 Lefebvre, 1920: 74; Lefebvre, 1924: 78.

54 Lefebvre, 1920: 74; Lefebvre, 1924: 78, 79.

55 Pierre Montet identified the seven farm jobs as 1) preparing the soils; 2) picking of flax; 3) harvest; 4) the carrying of bunches on the backs of donkeys; 5) the piling of wheat stacks; 6) threshing; 7) the cleaning of grains (Montet, 1925: 183).

As in the scenes of the jewellers, perfume-makers and joiners depicted on the northern wall (figures 3 and 4), those on the western and eastern walls of the pronaos (figures 10 and 9, respectively) show other human figures (grape-pickers, grape-stompers, amphora carriers, herdsman, and farmers) with Hellenistic traits. This can be recognised in several scenes by the way in which the hair is portrayed on the characters, for example, more or less hirsute and dishevelled, shaved or very short (scenes 56a, 56c, 58b, 58d, 59c, 60c), or by their beards: sparser or fuller (scenes 56b, 58a - 58c), by the head covers (*pileos*): caps, berets, cone-shaped with horizontal stripes and a kind of ribbon on top (scenes 56c, 58a, 58d, 60c), and their clothing (*chiton*, *exomis* and *himation*): short or long pleated robes, short sleeved robes tied at the waist, light robes or heavy cloaks (scenes 54, 55a - 55e, 56a - 56c, 58a - 58d, 59a - 59d, 60a, 60b). Additionally, their poses, such as the detailed chest and abdominal muscles of the nude individuals and the people shown face on, are not normally present in formal Egyptian art (scenes 56b, 58d, 60c).

None of these elements share the traditional Egyptian aesthetic view, i.e., they do not obey the traditional canons of Egyptian representation. Instead, they follow Greek artistic rules. The decorator of the pronaos breaks away from the traditional native representations, giving way to the new artistic fashion of the time. He partially renews

some of these themes and iconographical procedures chosen for representation, thus giving them a certain degree of originality. The clothes, hairstyles, beards, hats, and poses give the scenes a characteristic Hellenic tone, which contrasts to those depicted for most of pharaonic history.

It is clear that the technique and style used to paint the low-reliefs of Petosiris' pronaos in Tuna el-Gebel is an "updated" version, accordingly to life in the fourth and third centuries BC and with the technical skills of the artists involved. The underlying themes of farming, livestock, wine-making as well as the manual work materials are, however, all traditional and belong to the repertoire of scenes used throughout ancient Egypt. The classic Greek canon blends perfectly with Egyptian themes.

Without being too thorough, it is important to consider, as an example, some significant parallels that correspond directly with the representations in the pronaos of Petosiris. Firstly, the scene in which jewellers weigh metal, visible on the northern wall, includes a large weighing scale whereas in earlier periods (Old, Middle and New Kingdoms), the scale is significantly smaller. This can be seen in the tombs of Mereruka, in North Saqqara (Sixth Dynasty)<sup>56</sup>; of Khnumhotep II (BH3)<sup>57</sup>, Baqet III (BH 15)<sup>58</sup>, and Kheti (BH 17)<sup>59</sup> at Beni Hasan (Twelfth Dynasty); Nebamun and Ipuki (TT 181)<sup>60</sup> in El-Khokha, and of Rekhmire (TT

56 Porter and Moss (=PM) III, Part 2, 1931b: 528. Duell, 1938a: plates 29, 30 and 32; Siliotti, 1997: 119.

57 PM IV, 1934: 145; Montet, 1911: 23.

58 PM IV, 1934: 154; Newberry, 1893b: plate VII.

59 PM IV, 1934: 156; Newberry, 1893b: plate XIV.

60 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 288; N. de G. Davies, 1925: plate XIV; N.M. Davies, 1936b: plate LXII; N.M. Davies, 1936c: 118, 119.

61 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 211; N. de G. Davies, 1935: plate XXIII; Newberry, 1900: plate XVII.

100)<sup>61</sup>, in Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah, both dating to the Eighteenth Dynasty.

The scene dealing with the transportation of metals is also reminiscent of earlier periods, as can be seen in the tombs of the sculptors Nebamun and Ipuki in El-Khokha, dating to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty (reigns of Amenhotep III/Amenhotep IV)<sup>62</sup>. In general, the metalworking scenes of Petosiris' pronaos can easily be compared to similar scenes in the tombs of Nebamun and Ipuki<sup>63</sup>. The themes and images have the same iconography but are represented in different ways.

The same can be said for the scenes at Tuna el-Gebel depicting fourth century craftsmen working with wood using specific tools that are similar to those depicted within the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), the vizier of Upper Egypt during the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, located at Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah<sup>64</sup>.

Moving from craftwork to that involving livestock, it is possible to find the same themes and scenes, particularly in the Old Kingdom, to those used in the pronaos of Petosiris. For example, room III in the tomb of Kagemni at Saqqara (Sixth Dynasty), deserves special attention because of its

well-known reliefs of suckling, milking and care given to calves by herdsmen<sup>65</sup>. Aside from this tomb, the mastabas of Nefer and Kahai at Saqqara (Fifth Dynasty)<sup>66</sup>, and of Iymery (G 6020; Fifth Dynasty)<sup>67</sup> and Iasen (G 2196; Sixth Dynasty)<sup>68</sup> at Giza, include breeding, milking and calf birth scenes. The same scenes, including the one that depicts a zealous shepherd carrying a calf over his shoulders, can also be found at Saqqara in the mastabas of Ti (Fifth Dynasty)<sup>69</sup> and of Niankhnusut (Sixth Dynasty)<sup>70</sup>. Not only do we have the same themes with the same activities and tasks, but also evidence of the same scenic repertoire, which survived throughout centuries practically intact, denoting this great artistic transversally throughout time.

Grape-picking is amongst the most commonly represented scenes in Egyptian tomb art, be it in painted versions or sculpted in low-relief<sup>71</sup>. It is impossible to list all the examples here as there are too many, but amongst them are those in the tombs of Amenemhat (BH 2)<sup>72</sup> and of Khnumhotep III (BH 3)<sup>73</sup> at Beni Hasan, both dating to the Twelfth Dynasty, and of Userhat (TT 56)<sup>74</sup>, situated in the Theban Necropolis

62 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 288; N. de G. Davies, 1925: plate XIV; N.M. Davies, 1936b: plate LXII; N.M. Davies, 1936c: 118, 119.

63 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 288; N. de G. Davies, 1925: plates XIII and XIV.

64 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 211; N. de G. Davies, 1935: plate XXIII; Newberry, 1900: plate XVIII.

65 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 522; Hawass, 2003: 300, 301; Siliotti, 1997: 120.

66 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 640; <http://i47.tinypic.com/2icgmxc.jpg>.

67 PM III, Part 1, 1931a: 172; Hawass, 2003: 216, 217; Siliotti, 1997: 85.

68 PM III, Part 1, 1931a: 82; Hawass, 2003: 213, 214.

69 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 475; Steindorf, 1913: Tafel 112 and 118; Montet, 1925: plate IX.

70 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 694; AAVV, 1999: 469, 471.

71 Montet, 1913; 1925: 257, 258.

72 PM IV, 1934: 143; Newberry, 1893a: plate XII.

73 PM IV, 1934: 145; Newberry, 1893a: plate XXIX; Montet, 1911: 5, 23, plate VI.

74 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 113; Mekhitarian, 1954: 61.

in Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah, which dates to the Eighteenth Dynasty. Within the same dynasty are similar scenes in the tombs of Khaemwaset (TT 261) at Dra Abu el-Naga<sup>75</sup> and of Paheri (EK 3) at El-Kab<sup>76</sup>. At Deir el-Medina, the same scene in the tomb of Ipuï (TT 217)<sup>77</sup>, which dates to the Twentieth Dynasty, deserves special mention. From the Old Kingdom tombs, there is Rashepses<sup>78</sup>, Neferherentah<sup>79</sup>, Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep<sup>80</sup>, dating to the Fifth Dynasty, and the Sixth Dynasty tomb of Ptahhotep<sup>81</sup>, all located within the Saqqara necropolis.

The people who decorated the pronaos of Petosiris did not forget the grape-picking scenes, giving it special attention and including all its stages. In all the events related to wine-making that appear in Egyptian tombs, grape-stomping is particularly noteworthy. Apart from the previously mentioned tombs of Neferherentah and Ptahhotep (of the Fifth

and Sixth Dynasty), of Amenemhat (of the Twelfth Dynasty), of Nakht, Paheri, Khaemwaset, Rekhmire and Userhat (all dating to the Eighteenth Dynasty) and that of Ipuï (of the Twentieth Dynasty), grape-stomping also appears in the decoration of the tombs of Nefer and Kahai<sup>82</sup> and Mereruka<sup>83</sup> at Saqqara, dating to the Fifth and Sixth dynasties respectively (Old Kingdom) as well as in those of Kheti (BH17)<sup>84</sup> at Beni Hasan (Twelfth Dynasty), of Puimre (TT 39)<sup>85</sup> in El-Khokha, of Nebamun (TT 90)<sup>86</sup> and Amenemhat (TT 53)<sup>87</sup> at Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah, the last three dating to the Eighteenth Dynasty. The depictions of grape-stomping in tubs, performed by men holding on to horizontal sticks or hanging branches and sometimes holding on to each other, vary in terms of the number of men shown<sup>88</sup>. However, these men are always portrayed in profile, according to the Egyptian canon, and wearing a short skirt<sup>89</sup>. The details observed in the tomb of Petosiris (the

75 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 344; N.M. Davies, 1936a: plate XXVIII; N.M. Davies, 1936c: 59-61; Mekhitarian, 1954: 19.

76 PM V, 1937: 179; Tylor and Griffith, 1894: 12, 17 and plate IV (Upper right register).

77 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 316; N. de G. Davies, 1927: 62, 63 and plates XXX, XXXII, XXXIII.

78 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 495.

79 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 638.

80 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 642; Murray, 2000: 589.

81 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 601; N. de G. Davies, 1900: 10, 40 and plate XXI; Murray, 2000: 585.

82 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 640; <http://i47.tinypic.com/2icgmx.jpg>.

83 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 351; Duell, 1938b: plate 116.

84 PM IV, 1934: 157; Newberry, 1893b: plate XVI; Murray, 2000: 589.

85 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 72; N. de G. Davies, 1922: 64, 65, plate XII; Murray, 2000: 587.

86 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 184; Murray, 2000: 587.

87 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 103; DSA - Das Digitale Schott Archiv: Schott-Nr. 8230 - <http://www.schott.uni-trier.de/img/6/high/8230.jpg>.

88 In the examples mentioned, the number of men stomping grapes varies between 2 and 6: 2 in Amenemhat's tomb (TT 53); 3 in Ipuï's tomb; 4 in Nefer and Amenemhat's tomb (BH 2); 5 in Ptahhotep, Neferherentah, Niankhkhnum/Khnumhotep, Nakht, Nebamun and Khaemwaset's tomb; and 6 in Mereruka, Paheri and Userhat's tomb. In Puimre's tomb, the representation is incomplete but one can see at least 3 men at work.



build, nudity and facing frontward) are never attested in the older Egyptian representations. Despite this, the scene is a very popular iconographical tomb theme. The task of carrying amphorae in the tomb of Petosiris, another wine-making phase, is also reminiscent of a similar scene in the Eighteenth Dynasty tombs of Rekhmire (TT 100) at Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah<sup>90</sup> and of Intef (TT 155) at Dra Abu el-Naga<sup>91</sup>.

As for the compulsory scenes of ploughing, sowing and the harvesting of flax and wheat, many of them seem to be direct copies of earlier tomb representations. In the case of ploughing, for example, they are similar to the representations within the tombs of Horemheb at Saqqara<sup>92</sup>, of Nakht (TT 52) at Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah<sup>93</sup>, both of Eighteenth Dynasty, and of Sennedjem (TT 1) at Deir el-Medina, dating to the Nineteenth Dynasty<sup>94</sup>. In even earlier monuments, there are the scenes of the sowers in the act of sprinkling seeds on the ground. The same images can be found in the tombs of Paheri (EK3)<sup>95</sup>

at El-Kab, and of Nakht (TT 52), both dating to the Eighteenth Dynasty<sup>96</sup>.

The picking of flax and the harvest are also scenic subjects present in the older funerary monuments. Perhaps the most eloquent example of this can be found in the tomb of Sennedjem (TT 1) at Deir el-Medina, in which the tomb owner, accompanied by his wife, Iyeferti, participate in the harvest. This colourful scene is located on the north-eastern wall of his tomb<sup>97</sup>.

The treatment bestowed on the theme of the “thirsty harvester”, in which he drinks from a jug of water, also has parallels in earlier periods. This includes the Eighteenth Dynasty tombs of Paheri (EK 3)<sup>98</sup> at El-Kab, and of Menna (TT 69) at Sheikh Abd el-Gurnah<sup>99</sup>. The way the threshing is depicted within the tomb of Petosiris (scene 58d) is really, as G. Lefebvre previously pointed out, very much different from those of the more ancient tombs. For example, in the tomb of Petosiris the task is performed by men holding sticks or mallets whereas in the

89 Pierre Montet summarised this point on grape-stomping in the following way: “Les cuves égyptiennes étaient rondes, larges et basses. Deux perches fourchues partant de deux points diamétralement opposés, supportaient une poudre à laquelle se tenaient d’une main cinq ou six hommes, pendant qu’ils piétinaient les raisins qui formaient une couche peu épaisse sur la plate-forme de la cuve” (Montet, 1925: 267). For the various types of tubs depicted on the Theban tombs, see Murray, 2000: 588.

90 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 210; N. de G. Davies, 1935: plate XV and XXIII; Newberry, 1900: plate XIII.

91 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 263; Murray, 2000: 595.

92 PM III, Part 2, 1931b: 656; The stela in the Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna presents two representations of Horemheb as a farmer ploughing the fields with a pair of oxen: <http://www.comune.bologna.it/archeologico/documenti/47654>. See also: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saqqara,\\_rilievo\\_di\\_horemheb,\\_1332-1323\\_ac.,\\_A\\_02.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saqqara,_rilievo_di_horemheb,_1332-1323_ac.,_A_02.JPG).

93 N. de G. Davies, 1937: plates XVIII, XXI.

94 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 3; Mekhitarian, 1954: 149.

95 PM V, 1937: 179; Tylor and Griffith, 1894: 12-16 and plate III.

96 N. de G. Davies, 1937: plates XVIII, XXI.

97 [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Tomb\\_of\\_Sennedjem?uselang=pt#/media/File:Egyptian\\_harvest.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Tomb_of_Sennedjem?uselang=pt#/media/File:Egyptian_harvest.jpg).

98 PM V, 1937: 179; Tylor and Griffith, 1894: 12-16 and plate III.

99 PM I, Part 1, 1927: 135; N.M. Davies, 1936a: plate L; N.M. Davies, 1936c: 99-101.

Eighteenth Dynasty tombs of Menna<sup>100</sup> and of Paheri<sup>101</sup>, the threshing work is done by oxen<sup>102</sup>. The threshing activity (whether performed by the oxen's feet or by men's mallets), is essential among the tasks associated with the agricultural processing of cereals, and is a compulsory iconographical scene for the tomb decorators.

## Conclusions

Petosiris' tomb at Tuna el-Gebel is one of the most interesting monuments dating to the early Ptolemaic Period, particularly in artistic and architectural terms, as it expresses the cultural-artistic juxtaposition so typical of Hellenism. It is possible to see, for the first time, an Egyptian monument, and in this case a tomb, impose itself using decoration that contains other influences of style and techniques that are different from that which had been known in Egyptian art until then.

The interior decoration of Petosiris' tomb, which includes daily life scenes (field work, harvest, flax picking, livestock, grape-picking and grape-stomping, craftsmen preparing scents or working metal and wood) displays a blend of Egyptian and Greek influences of excellent technical quality. The strong Greek influence on the style and technique of the colourful low-reliefs frequently reproduce, with some originality, scenes that are well attested in the monuments of the Memphite mastabas of the Old Kingdom, and of the tombs of the Middle and New Kingdoms.

The high priest of Hermopolis Petosiris Ankhefkhonsu, despite his high socio-ad-

ministrative status, is unlikely to have visited the interior of all these tombs so as to observe their daily life scenes that were sculpted or painted within. What is important to note is how long these funerary representations have survived, and in particular, how they were adapted to suit the changing culture of fourth century to the third century BC in the necropolis of Hermopolis. One generation after another, the tomb craftsmen and decorators repeatedly executed these themes of Egyptian art, thus allowing their survival for thousands of years. The artists and decorators at Petosiris' tomb proved to be an eclectic group, who were able to blend the old and the new, the Egyptian and the Hellenic, with a sense of balance and truth.

The decoration of the pronaos of Petosiris' tomb is generally considered more realistic and, as such, more authentic than that which can be found in the tombs of earlier times. On the one hand, these changes can be interpreted as an improvement to the pharaonic traditions. On the other, however, they can be seen as moving away from the style and techniques used in traditional representations. Yet, there is an aspect that remains clear: the artistic themes within the pronaos are classical Egyptian iconographical themes carried out in a Greek style.

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