The Unidentified Temple Scene in TT 55

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Abstract:
Numerous temple representations within Theban's private tombs remain unidentified because of the absence of accompanying inscriptions and, at times, the partial or damaged nature of the scenes. This lack of identification presents challenges for reconstructing the biographies of tomb owners, thus hindering a comprehensive understanding of their lives. Identifying these temple representations is crucial for elucidating the relationship between the tomb owner and the depicted temple, potentially shedding light on the individual's societal roles and professional pursuits. One such enigmatic temple representation is in TT55 of Ramose, situated within the necropolis of Sheik Abd El-Qurnah and dating back to the reign of King Akhenaten. This paper aims to elucidate this scene through a rigorous investigation of an unidentified temple representation, aiming to determine its specific identity and discern the tomb owner's connection to it. To achieve this objective, I conducted a detailed analysis of the temple's iconographic features, meticulously translated all associated inscriptions, and compared the overall contextual framework of the scene with analogous depictions from the contemporaneous Tell El-Amarna Necropolis. Through this methodological approach, this paper proposes a plausible identification of temple representation in TT55, thus providing insights into the rationale behind its inclusion in Ramose's tomb.

Keywords: Theban private tombs, Temple representations, Iconographic analysis, Tomb owner biography, King Akhenaten, Tell El-Amarna, Sheik Abd El-Qurnah

Introduction:
The ancient Egyptians held profound reverence for their tombs, adorning their walls with intricate decorations that provided a rich tapestry of ancient Egyptian art. In particular, private tombs serve as invaluable records of both secular and religious life in ancient Egypt, surpassing the significance of royal tombs in preserving daily routines, religious practices, and societal structures (Ghaly and Ibrahim 2017). Reflecting the wisdom passed down through generations, the emphasis on tomb maintenance underscores the belief in death as a transitional phase to eternal life, symbolized by the Old Egyptian term "*pr-nḥḥ*" meaning "home of everlasting" (Kanawati, 1988).

For each tomb owner, the act of immortalizing one's life through pictorial scenes held profound spiritual importance. Through ancient Egyptian beliefs in resurrection and the continuity of consciousness in the afterlife, individuals meticulously recorded their life stories, careers, titles, and significant events within their tombs, ensuring their eternal existence (Ghaly and Ibrahim, 2017; Sadek and Lecture, 2010). Furthermore, the strategic positioning of tombs near royal cemeteries and funeral temples not only served practical purposes but also symbolized a divine connection facilitated by kings and central figures in ancient Egyptian religious practices (Gabolde, 1995).

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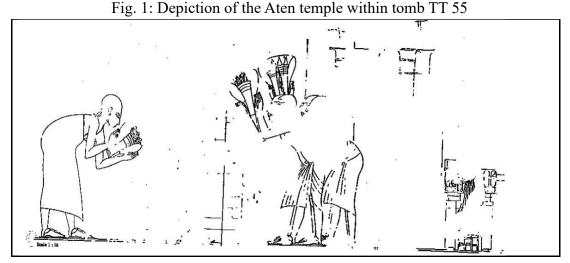[4] Lecturer at Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University, Egypt.

Temple representations within Theban private tombs are particularly noteworthy, offering valuable insights into the original structures and layouts of ancient Egyptian temples, many of which have been lost over time due to various factors such as erosion and reuse (Mohammed, 2020). These representations not only attest to the high status and prestige of tomb owners, but also serve as significant iconographic accounts for reconstructing temple architecture. However, some temple scenes remain unidentified because of the absence of accompanying inscriptions or damage to depicted scenes (Mohammed, 2020). One such unidentified temple scene is found within the tomb of Ramose, TT 55, dating to the reign of King Amenhotep IV of the 18th dynasty, situated in the Sheik Abd El-Qurnah necropolis (PM, 1960). Ramose, a prominent figure serving as the town's governor and the king's vizier, left an enduring legacy represented in his unfinished tomb, notable for its dual artistic styles and thematic expressions spanning the pre-Amarna and Amarna periods (Davies, 1941). This study focuses on identifying an unknown temple represented within Ramose's tomb through contextual analysis and iconographic examination, shedding light on the intricate relationship between the tomb owner and the depicted temple.

Methodology:

The research methodology for this study encompasses a multifaceted approach to investigating the temple scene depicted in TT 55 of Ramose's tombs. Beginning with a comprehensive literature review, existing scholarship on Theban private tombs, temple representations, and religious practices during Akhenaten's reign will be synthesized to contextualize the study. An iconographic analysis will follow, focusing on the architectural features, symbolic elements, and stylistic attributes of the temple scene, with comparisons drawn between known representations of temples from the same period. The contextual analysis explores the spatial placement of the temple scene within the tomb and its thematic continuity with preceding scenes, particularly the palace scene, as well as parallels with scenes from the Tell El-Amarna tombs. A comparative study will then be conducted, comparing the temple scene in TT 55 with scenes similar to contemporary tombs and representations of temples in Tell El-Amarna to discern patterns and shared motifs. Based on these analyses, interpretive frameworks are developed to propose a plausible identification of the temple scene and its significance within Ramose's tomb and the broader socio-religious context of ancient Egypt. Finally, the implications of the research findings for advancing knowledge in Egyptology are discussed, along with potential contributions to understanding ancient Egyptian art, religion, and society.

Unidentified Temple Representation

Ramose is depicted in a posture of reverence, leaning forward to receive a flower from the priest of the deity, Aten Temple. Despite the absence of recorded inscriptions detailing communication between Ramose and the priests, the scene conveys a sense of sacred interaction. The temple itself is represented by its distinctive low-entrance pylon, with portals open wide (Fig. 1). Above, the radiant figure of the sun god Aten is depicted in the sky, his rays extending downwards, presumably to bless or receive offerings placed within the temple's sacred precincts (Davies, 1941)
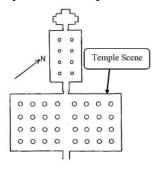
Fig. 1: Depiction of the Aten temple within tomb TT 55

After: Davies, N. de Garis. *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose.* Pl., Pl. XXXVIII

Scene Context:

The temple scene is situated on the western wall of the northern side of the tomb within the columned hall(Fig. 2). It is divided into two registers: the first portrays the deceased being rewarded and surrounded by attendants and courtiers, while the second depicts the deceased receiving courtiers and foreign delegates, including Nubians, Asiatic, and Libyans. Following these scenes, the temple representation shows that the deceased received bouquets from temple priests (PM: 1960).

Fig. 2: Tomb TT 55 layout and temple scene position in the hall.

After: PM., Vol. 1, P. 106.

Hypotheses of Identification

The challenge of identifying the specific temple of the god Aten depicted in TT 55 arises from the lack of accompanying inscriptions and the deteriorated state of the tomb. Nonetheless, several hypotheses have emerged by drawing on contextual and comparative analyses. One hypothesis posits that the depicted temple corresponds to the Temple of Aten within the Karnak complex, known as "*gm p3 itn*" This conjecture finds support in Davies's proposal that Ramose might have retained his position as governor of Thebes, given his absence from Tell Amarna records. Akhenaten's relocation of the royal court to Amarna would have necessitated Ramose's continued governance of Thebes. Consequently, it is conceivable that Ramose is portrayed as receiving floral tribute within the Temple of Aten at Karnak.

Alternatively, the temple's iconographic elements, particularly the portrayal of its pylon, bear a striking resemblance to the grand Temple of Aten in Tell El-Amarna, as depicted in

the tombs of Akhenaten and his high officials. Furthermore, an examination of analogous temple scenes in Tell El-Amarna tombs reveals a recurrent pattern: the depiction of the tomb owner's reward scene often encompasses both the temple and palace on the same wall. Typically, the procession commences from the palace, where King Akhenaten bestows honours upon the high official (tomb owner). Subsequently, the procession advances towards the Temple of Aten, where the high official presents offerings to God Aten as an expression of gratitude. This thematic representation initially surfaces in TT 55 of Ramose during King Akhenaten's early reign. Additionally, the alignment of accompanying inscriptions alongside the temple scene closely mirrors those accompanying the palace scene, suggesting a thematic correspondence between the two. Although both hypotheses present cogent explanations, further scholarly enquiry and empirical corroboration may be required to conclusively ascertain the identity of the temple depicted in TT 55 of Ramose.
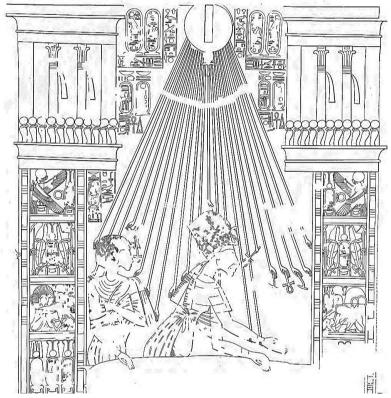
Fig. 3: Temple and palace scene contexts in Tell el-Amarna tombs and TT 55.

The same wall (in most cases): palace and temple scenes		
Palace Scene	**The Procession**	**God Aten's temple scene**
*The accompanying **inscription** is (almost) **identical** to that accompanying the **Palace** scene*	*The direction of the procession goes from the palace to the temple and vice versa* ⟷	*The accompanying **inscription** is (almost) **identical** to that accompanying the **Palace** scene*

The contextual similarities between the temple scene in TT 55 and preceding depictions, particularly the palace scene, suggest a thematic resonance reminiscent of scenes encountered in the Tell El-Amarna tombs. Davies' suggestion that the palace depicted in TT 55 resembles the Malkata palace adds weight to this proposition. Within this framework, the portrayal of King Akhenaten, accompanied by Queen Nefertiti, is shown to bestow rewards upon Ramose within the palace's confines. Subsequently, Ramose, flanked by courtiers, progresses from the palace to partake in ceremonies at the Temple of Aten (as yet unidentified). This narrative trajectory closely echoes the sequences witnessed in Tell El-Amarna tombs, underscoring thematic continuity in the depiction of royal favour and religious devotion.

Moreover, the accompanying inscriptions adjacent to the palace scene, serving as a counterpart to the temple scene in TT 55, offer valuable textual corroboration, enhancing our understanding of the tomb's narrative composition. These inscriptions likely provide additional contextual details, enriching the symbolic significance of the depicted scenes and elucidating Ramose's esteemed position within the royal court and religious milieu of Akhenaten's reign; " *ỉtn ꜥnḫ wr ỉmy ḥb nb pt ꜥꜣ ḥry ỉb gm pꜣ ỉtn m pr ỉtn*" " *life for the god Aten, lord of the festival, lord of the great sky, Aton is founded in the temple of Aten*". Unfortunately, the accompanying inscriptions beside the temple scene are now missing because the wall scenes have partially fallen.
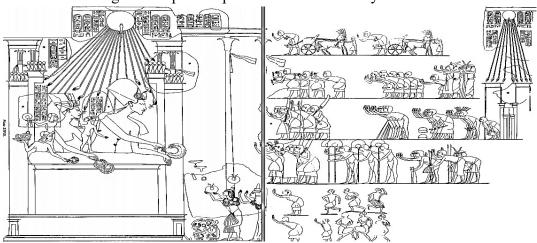
Fig. 4: Akhenaten and Nefertiti depicted in the Malkata palace window (TT 55).

After: Davies, N. de Garis. *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose.* Pl. XXXIII.

As previously noted, a consistent pattern emerges in the accompanying inscriptions for both palace and temple scenes. For instance, in the tomb of Ay at Tell El-Amarna, the inscriptions for both scenes read: "*ỉtn ḫḏ wr ỉmy ḫb nb šnw nb pt nb t3 m pr ỉtn m 3ḫt ỉtn" Aten, the great white, lord of the festival, and lord of the circuit. Aten, lord of Aten, lord of the sky, lord of the land, in the temple of Aten, in Akhenaton*" (Fig. 4).

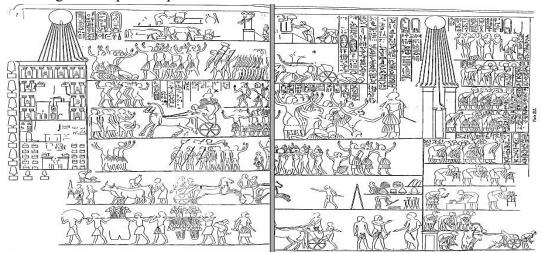Fig. 4: Temple and palace in the tomb of Ay in Tell El-Amarna.

After: Davies, N. de Garis. *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose*. Pl. XXXIII.

Similarly, in the tomb of Tutu at Tell El-Amarna, we find a repetition of this pattern, in which the accompanying inscriptions for both the temple scene and its corresponding palace scene are identical. The text read: "*ỉtn ꜥnḫ wr nb ỉmy wr nbt šnwt, ỉtn nb*

pt nb t3 m pr ỉtn m 3ḫt ỉtn" "*Life for the god Aten, the lord of the festival, lord of the circuit, lord of the sky, lord of the land in the temple of Aton in Akhetaten*" (Fig. 5). This consistency in inscriptional content further underscores the thematic unity between palace and temple scenes in the artistic and religious milieu of Akhenaten's reign.

Fig. 5: Temple and palace scenes in Tutu's tomb in Tell El-Amarna.

After: Davies, N. de Garis. *The rocket tombs of Tell El Amarna*. Vol, VI.1908. Pl. XX

The scenes and their contextual parallels are also evident in Meryre II's tomb at Tell El-Amarna (Davies 1905). Davies suggested that the palace depicted in Ramose's tomb is the Malkata palace (Davies: 1941), indicating a possible continuity in Ramose's role as governor of Thebes "*ỉmy-r nỉwt*" (Davies: 1941). Given these assertions, the depicted events likely transpired before Akhenaton relocated to Tell El-Amarna. Furthermore, the name of King Akhenaten in the palace scene in TT 55 is inscribed as "*ỉmn-ḥtp nṯr ḥk3 w3st',*" his birth name before moving to Tell El-Amarna. Building on the observed pattern of representation between palace and temple scenes as well as Davies' suppositions, it can be inferred that the accompanying inscriptions of the palace in Ramose's tomb (Fig. 4) correspond to those of the temple scene (Fig. 1).

Consequently, the hypotheses strongly suggest that the unidentified temple scene in Ramose's tomb is the Gem-Pa-Aten, "*gm p3 ỉtn*", temple of god Aten at the Karnak complex. Therefore, the temple scene may be interpreted as follows: Ramose is depicted receiving rewards at the Malkata palace by King Akhenaten, after which he offers gratitude and presents offerings to the god Aten at his temple, "*gm p3 ỉtn*", within the Karnak complex. If confirmed, this supports Davies's identification of the palace as Malkata palace and his proposition of Ramose's continuation in his post at Luxor following Akhenaton's relocation to Tell El-Amarna, underscoring the significant roles played by both Ramose and Akhenaton during their lifetimes.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, temple representations within the New Kingdom tombs serve as poignant indicators of the tomb owner's esteemed status and commemorate significant events in their lives. These scenes not only offer glimpses into ancient Egyptian religious practices, but also provide valuable insights for reconstructing the architectural layouts of temples, especially those that have been lost to time. Despite the lack of accompanying inscriptions, the temple scene in TT 55 has been meticulously analysed within the broader

context of Ramose's titles and history. By drawing comparisons with similar scenes from Tell El-Amarna tombs and considering Davies's identification of the palace as a Malkata palace, along with his proposition of Ramose's continued role as governor, a compelling case emerges to identify the temple scene as a representation of the temple of god Aten "*gm p3 ỉtn*" north of the Karnak complex. This identification not only affirms Ramose's pivotal role during this transformative period in Egypt's history, but also lends credence to Davies' interpretations of the palace and Ramose's continued occupation. The synthesis of these findings underscores the interconnectedness of art, history, and sociopolitical dynamics in ancient Egypt, enriching our understanding of this fascinating era.

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