

PhD thesis report

Marta Kaczanowicz: Old Tombs, New Tenants. Third Intermediate Period and Late Period Reuse of Theban Tombs

I have the honour to present to you my report on the above thesis that has been submitted for examination.

Aims and structure

The aims of this thesis are clear and straightforward. Those like me who have worked for many years in the necropoleis of Thebes in Egypt are no strangers to the fact that in effect every tomb that we study has seen multiple phases of use. Most of the tombs in this thesis date originally from the Middle and New Kingdoms, and it is typical that a tomb constructed in one of those epochs was almost certainly going to be reused for a variety of purposes over the following millennia. Probably the greatest evidence of reuse comes from the post Imperial epochs of the Third Intermediate Period (c. 1079–715 BC) and the Late Period (c. 715–332 BC), covering the 21st to the 30th dynasties and the Second Persian Period, sometimes termed the 31st dynasty. The thesis aim is to collect together a corpus of the examples of reuse and analyse it in a variety of ways.

This is done in eight chapters of introduction, methodology and analysis (276 pages), and an extensive catalogue of tombs that show, or probably show, reuse during the periods in question (593 pages); end matter, including bibliography, occupies 62 pages. The structure is logical and the choice of topics for analysis likewise.

Standard of writing, presentation of data and use of sources

Although not a native English speaker, the standard of the English writing in this thesis is astonishingly high, and would put some work I have read by native speakers to shame. For sure, there are the occasional minor errors and infelicities, but the candidate deserves high praise for this element of her work. I have noted these down and they can be made available to Miss Kaczanowicz for either corrections later or for further work on the subject.

She has also read very widely and is very up-to-date in her collection of literature; indeed, reading the thesis took me longer than expected as I uncovered many articles that I had not previously encountered which will be useful in my own research! For the same reason, I had cause many times to check references, not out of sheer pedantry, but because I needed to check myself what the author had said. Invariably, the references were correct, no small feat in a work of this size with so many sources. Miss Kaczanowicz is to be commended for the compilation and management of this range of literature.

Completely valid divergences of opinion are bound to exist on scientific issues. Nonetheless, I would from time to time have reason to query whether she had fully understood an original author in her text. I did notice in a small number of cases (no more than ten) that my reading of what the quoted author was saying varied from what she wrote in the text. I will not bore the committee reading this report with examples, but I have noted them for future discussion with Miss Kaczanowicz.

My other point on references is the occasional lack of specification of pages. This is an indirect effect of the use of the name-date system in the text (e.g. Kaczanowicz 2018a), which seems to encourage authors to give the entire paper or book rather than the relevant pages—it is one of many reasons

why I personally dislike it. Perhaps the best example is a quote on p.201, with the reference Nerlich and Zink 2003.

I would encourage the author to use even more tables than at present, as there are places where lists are given in the text that would be much clearer as a table (e.g. p.200).

Many of the chapters and sections seem to dive straight into the material without perhaps an introductory discussion of what the section hopes to achieve. I find such introductions very helpful as it controls one's expectations of what is to come; the same is true with ensuring that fundamental definitions of terms as she understands them in the thesis, are made before the material is discussed.

Many minor comments I have made in my notes (not repeated here but will be made available to the candidate at the appropriate time) relate to usability, how easily it can be used by the reader. Even though the present version is "only" a thesis, I very much hope that before long it will form the core of a major publication, and publications that take the needs of the reader into account will always be received much more sympathetically by that reader.

Analysis of content (bulk of report)

Chapter 1 is an historical overview of the period, accompanied by a chronological table. Since the purpose of the thesis is not historical, this is a good summary and perfectly appropriate for setting a framework for the body of the work.

Chapter 2 deals with Methods of research. Beginning with defining "burial", she outlines her underlying wish to review whether or not the view often expressed that burials in reused tombs belonged to those of lesser social and economic status. She then reviews the numbering of the tombs and their publication status, the latter of which is very poor given the site's importance, and then explaining how the tombs in the Catalogue are presented. The chapter ends with consideration of context disturbance and the concept of caching.

One thing I missed in this thesis is a discrete summary of the issue of tomb robbery, which is otherwise mentioned only in passing. Robbery at the end of the New Kingdom in Thebes was a huge issue here since destruction caused by it underpins so many of the tombs discussed. I would suggest that a small section be added somewhere, perhaps in Chapter 2, that quickly introduces it and outlines its significance, both ancient and modern, for the material that forms her data corpus.

I also did not find a review of the literature on the subject, not even a brief one. I am aware that the extent to which this practice is encouraged can vary widely in universities, and it can occupy excessive space, but it is not without merit here to draw attention to what has—or as in this case—has not been done on this subject before. This thesis is the first work known to me looking at this subject as a whole but it is nonetheless surely worthwhile giving a brief summary of other work (or lack of it).

Dating is the subject of **Chapter 3**. Finding plausible dates for all of the tombs in the corpus is essential, and the author has looked at as many criteria as she reasonably can on this subject in an attempt to give more precision, although, like everyone who works on Theban material, the poor state of publication of the source material can be a major obstacle. I offer here a few comments by sub-sections.

The definition of *Independent dating evidence* (n. 12 on p.44) seems much too important to be relegated to just a footnote, and I would like to see it form the basis of an introductory paragraph. Although mention of the use of mummies in the modern era (*Internal dating evidence*) is not the central aim of the thesis, there are much better references available than the one given on p.45. In the discussion of coffins in that section, I find the putting of the coffins of the 22nd to 26th dynasty together somewhat too broad; as Taylor 2003's phase I equals Miss Kaczanowicz's first section on coffins, why not also separate his phases II and III? The term "bivalve" ought to be explained too for those not very familiar with the coffins (p.52).

The centrepiece of Chapter 3 is a new study of how the shabtis/ushabtis of the period in question may be dated, as this subject has been rather neglected, in no small part due to the difficulty of working with thousands of small plain objects, and the fact that they have often not been sufficient to attract the proper effort of the excavator or collector. This is a drawback in Schneider's basic study of the topic (1977), and the only real work done on it is by Aston (2009a). The author is to be congratulated in taking this on and excavators like me are under no delusion of the inherent difficulty in it.

I will not go into detail on this subject, but confine myself to some more general points, mainly about method. In my view, when a formal typology is being developed, the general criteria to be used should be clearly stated before discussing the individual types. These criteria should be, particularly in a thesis, presented in a structured manner, preferably in tabular form, and with all the relevant criteria presented to help the reader before (s)he starts; at present, the only tables come at the end of the section, but do not present, in my view, enough criteria. Once moving on to the individual types, it would be of great assistance to the reader to summarise the basic criteria (e.g. material, whether inscribed) in a few words in the type heading (e.g. "Type 1 (figure 1), faience, inscribed")—all of which helps the reader. Dealing with criteria, due to the lack of exposition of the same, it is unclear to what extent the existence or not of a text is a criterion. A further issue related to shabtis made of faience is the vexed question of whether the difference between blue and green faience is critical or not, as I did not see this; green and blue faience, as I recall, are technologically very similar and so are changes in colour deliberate or not?

I just have two remarks on the remainder of this chapter. One of the very few omissions of a relevant reference appears to be the study of shabti boxes by Marini ("I contenitori di ushabti dei Musei Italiani" *EVO* 35 (2012), 83–124). The Book of the Dead section uses the terms "textual", "figural" and "illustrated", all of which should be defined.

The "meat" of the study begins with **Chapter 4**, a topographical analysis of reuse. The whole Theban Necropolis is divided into the usual areas known to archaeologists, and the spatial layout of reuse is considered, hampered as ever by the poor publications of many areas. The following are mostly general comments.

I realise it is largely due to technical and practical reasons, but the size/resolution/quality of the maps in the figures is inadequate to show any useful information; perhaps they should be larger and placed in a pocket at the back of the thesis? I would also find it very useful if the locations of the tombs were marked on them, perhaps colour-coded, as it might make patterns, if they exist, more evident, and save lists of tombs as in e.g. notes 31–33? Something that may be worth briefly surveying for each area is the extent of pre 21st dynasty use; this would be perhaps most significant for the Assasif, there was a very noticeable gap in its otherwise extensive use in the New Kingdom, probably due to the holiness of the valley at that time, which mostly lasted until the temple tombs appeared in the 25th dynasty.

I appreciate the tabular lists of tombs for each location, but they make reference to "Type of burial" which is otherwise unexplained at that point—they are references to the typology of tombs in Chapter 5, so it could be good for there to be a simple summary of what these types are with a reference forward. I did contemplate whether Chapters 4 and 5 should be reversed, but I think it is much more important for the wider topographical view to be taken before looking at individual tombs.

Lastly, there appears to be the occasional confusion, understandable in context, of the naming of the valleys south of Deir el-Bahari. Also a number of tombs are not marked on Figure 17 that should be; and a map of the tombs in the South Assasif plain would be a worth addition.

I like how the nature of the necropolis as "liminal space" is dealt with at the end of the chapter. This is an important subject, and brings us very much into the area of landscape archaeology, on which I am no expert. Miss Kaczanowicz might want to investigate what has been done outside our subject on the issue of liminality in the landscape and in settlements?

Chapter 5 examines the architecture elements of reuse: the types of burials, and other structures added to older tombs (both inside and out). Burials are categorised into five types; as I said above on the typology of shabtis, it would really help the reader if these five types were tabulated at the beginning of the chapter, and summary titles were given along with the type numbers. Such a summary would also have the advantage of trying to distinguish between the types as the boundaries are much looser and complex than when dealing with a portable object, and make things easier for the reader to get an overview of the differences. It is, however, a very useful division, and one that has not been attempted before; the changes likewise to the architecture of the tombs have never been documented before either. Table 52 tries to see a chronological pattern in the burial types, although I am not sure it succeeds, except that it suggests that practical considerations took precedence over any ideas of a specific style of a particular date.

Chapter 6 looks at the question of sacred space and how that space was reused. This chapter gives the candidate the opportunity to look at how the decoration that may have existed was adapted or left the same. The first pages highlight many interesting issues, including the issues of what is reuse and the role of robbery. I have already commented above on the lack of a separate general overview of robbery and reuse in area such as tomb equipment. There is a case that these general discussions of reuse might feature better in the final chapter of the thesis, leaving this one more on the issue of reuse of decoration, but this should not detract from the most interesting contents.

At several points in this thesis, I also felt that there was a need for a brief resumé somewhere of the many burials of the Third Intermediate and Late Periods within older temple structures, and I thought I would mention it here as a use of very sacred space. I fully understand the need to restrict the formal scope of the thesis to reuse in tombs, but given how much funerary material, and to some extent architectural modifications, are involved in the placing of burials in the Ramesseum and Deir el-Bahari temples, the subject needs brief summaries so that the reader can remember that there is indeed important comparanda in there. It seems to me it might fit best as an Excursus, along with that on caches? I know these are briefly mentioned in the conclusions (p.234) but I think a little more is needed earlier.

Chapter 7, on the identity of those buried in the reused tombs, is the one with which I had the most issues, some structural, some leaving questions rather unanswered. I wondered even whether had been completed perhaps in something of a hurry? My comments are general and structural.

The chapter uses the terms “identity, “ethnicity” and “social status” several times. I am aware that these three issues have caused a lot of theoretical academic discussion, mainly but not exclusively outside Egyptology, and I wonder whether this theoretical material should have been used more than it is (there is some referred to in n. 68 in reference to “identity”, but none on the other two topics).

I found the section on “Social status and family filiation” in need of some prefatory remarks about how the discussion is to run and how the social categories are defined (this is additional to any more theoretical content as above). I would like to understand the candidate’s definition of such terms as “elite”, for example. Such a paragraph or so would make this section easier to follow, as it otherwise seems lacking in structure. Tabular presentation of the individual categories discussed would make it more readable.

Also, while I see how “Cult of the dead and cult of the ancestors” sits with family, might it be better as a separate chapter? It is a most interesting discussion!

The final **Chapter 8** looks at tomb reuse in context. Again it needs an explanation of what Miss Kaczanowicz means by “in context”. It would appear, from discussion of the economic situation, that she means “why did it happen”? It contains very helpful discussions of some wider aspects of reuse (which should perhaps have already have been noted?), and on archaism, which the candidate thinks is clearly a major factor in the concept of reuse.

General opinion

One of the problems of an examiner whose own work is so closely related to that of a candidate that one is bound to have many comments, which can make this report look more negative than it actually is. I thus want to state here that while more can always be done, this thesis makes a very important and ground-breaking contribution to a subject that has been long neglected.

There has been a clear lack of a study of the question of post New Kingdom tomb reuse for longer than I have been working in the Theban Necropolis, and with the ever-increasing amount of material published, the subject is more viable now than ever. Miss Kaczanowicz should be congratulated on an excellent piece of work.

Were this in the UK, I would categorise it as “minor corrections needed” before awarding the degree. Subject to the actual defence, I would suggest it needs the structural and usability matters suggested above attending to before resubmission, but no fundamental changes are needed. It should certainly form the body of a publication, for which I have many additional detailed comments to share with her in a less formal environment. I have in mind the importance of Friederike Kampp’s *Die thebanische Nekropole* as an equivalent study of Theban tombs themselves without major attention to later reuse; this thesis could be the Kampp of the first millennium BC!

Official Statement

I believe that the thesis *Old Tombs, New Tenants. Third Intermediate Period and Late Period Reuse of Theban Tombs* by Marta Kaczanowicz reaches or exceeds the PhD requirements (according to the Act of 14 March 2003 on academic degrees and academic title and degrees) and I request that she be permitted to progress to further stages of the PhD examination procedure.

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12/03/2021

