# The fishing and fowling scene in the tomb of Ibi: a means of expression for a provincial ruler[1]

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## Abstract

This article aims to show how the fishing and fowling scene, which is frequent in Old Kingdom private tombs, is used in the tomb of Ibi as a way to display a specific social and ideological message. Indeed, this illustration presents an unusual emphasis on family members. A discussion on parietal conventions and a direct comparison with the fishing and fowling scene in Mereruka's tomb, inscribed in a different cultural landscape, highlights the capacity of the changing details of the scene to work as a means of expression. Between Memphite tradition and provincial adaptations, the composition and the visual aspects given to the painting of Ibi are a strategy to express specific values and to point out the local identity of the owner.

## Keywords

Deir el-Gebrawi – Sixth Dynasty – fishing and fowling – parietal decoration – provincial tombs – expression of identity

منظر صيد الأسماك والطيور بمقبرة إيبى: وسيلة تعبير عن حاكم المقاطعة

أوريلى قويرون

ملخص

يهدف هذا المقال إلى توضيح كيفية استخدام منظر صيد الأسماك والطيور الموجود بمقبرة إيبى، والذى دائمًا ما يتكرر بمقابر أفراد الدولة القديمة، كوسيلة لعرض رسالة اجتماعية وأيديولوجية محددة. فى واقع الأمر يقدم هذا المنظر تركيزًا غير عادى على أفراد أسرة صاحب المقبرة. كما تسلط مناقشة بعض أمثلة مشابهة لهذا المنظر، وكذلك المقارنة المباشرة مع منظر صيد الأسماك والطيور المصور فى مقبرة مريروكا، وهى أمثلة مصورة بمحتويات ثقافية مختلفة، الضوء على القدرة على تغيير تفاصيل المنظر لجعله وسيلة للتعبير. فبين تقاليد منف الفنية والتعديلات التى طرأت على المنظر بمقابر الأقاليم، يعد تكوين وجوانب المنظر المصور بمقبرة إيبى وسيلة استراتيجية للتعبير عن قيم محددة، بل والإشارة إلى الهوية المحلية لصاحب المقبرة.

الكلمات الدالة

دير الجبراوى – الأسرة السادسة – صيد الأسماك والطيور – الزخارف الجدارية – مقابر الأقاليم – التعبير عن الهوية
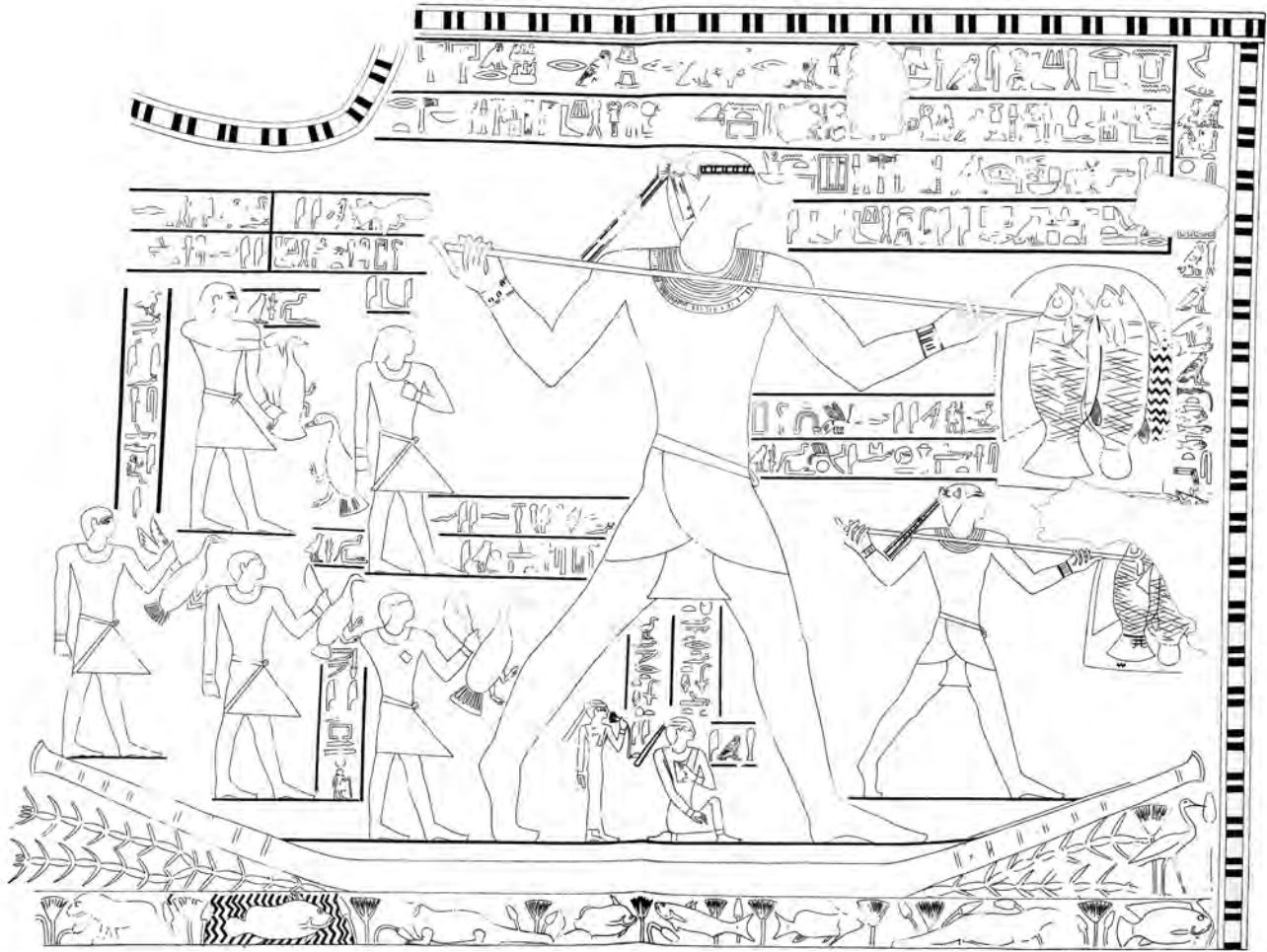
**Fig. 1 Tomb of Ibi, south wall, east of the entrance (after Davies 1902: Pl. 3)**

A prominent double scene covers a significant part of the tomb of Ibi, a provincial ruler of the Sixth Dynasty buried in the south necropolis of Deir el-Gebrawi (Twelfth Province of Upper Egypt).[1] Located inside the tomb on the south wall, it is divided into two panels flanking the entrance. On one side, the owner is represented fishing (fig. 1); on the other, he is hunting fowl in the marsh (fig. 2). The fishing representation depicts Ibi surrounded by eight members of his family. This is unique among the representations of this scene type during the Old Kingdom, in regard to the number of family members illustrated as well as to the way these figures are displayed.

**THE FISHING AND FOWLING SCENE IN THE TOMB OF IBI**

**ICONOGRAPHIC AND TEXTUAL CONTENT**

The eastern part of the scene shows Ibi standing on a papyrus boat and fishing with a spear (fig. 1). He is wearing a headband, a large necklace and a tripartite kilt. He is catching two fish that are depicted in the water. His son Djau is depicted before him exactly in the same

way, but on a smaller scale, as a miniature version of his father. Between the legs of Ibi his wife is depicted, seated, and his daughter stands behind her smelling a flower. Three other sons and one brother stand behind Ibi and present him with birds. All the figures are looking to the right, and captions indicate their names and titles. The captions next to each figure are arranged vertically or horizontally and separated by lines. The one above Ibi is the most developed and is four times longer, but the size of the hieroglyphs is not bigger than that of the other captions.

The upper part and the sides of the scene are delimited by a geometrical frame, while the lower part shows a water flow with fish, crocodiles and aquatic plants. In front of the scene is a column of text describing the activity:

*m33 k3t sḫ[t] ḥꜥm mḥywt stjt* [(a)] *r mḥywt* [(b)]

To see the work of the marshland, to catch the fish, to spear the fish.

(a) The verb *stj* is usually written without a determinative in Old Kingdom private tombs: 𓊃𓏏𓅱 . Here, it is written

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[2]   The tomb was first published by Norman de Garis Davies (1902) and recently republished by Naguib Kanawati (2007).

with two determinatives, a boomerang 𓌙 and a man spearing fish �. This is the exact transposition in hieroglyphs of the representation of Ibi spearing. The only parallel for the use of this sign for this verb is found in an inscription in the Wadi Hammamat (Couyat – Montet 1912: 32, Pl. III), dating to Montuhotep IV, as already noted by Wolfgang Schenkel (1965: 270 [h]). Furthermore, the verb is here written phonetically with the uniliteral signs *s* and *t*. In most provincial attestations of this verb, we notice a preference for a phonetic orthography *stj*: 𓊃𓏏𓌉 .[3] This is probably an indicator that this word was complicated to read in the provinces and needed clarification in order for it to be understood.

(b) The word *mḥywt* does not seem to have been written in the hieroglyphic text. The drawing of Norman de Garis Davies shows that the verb *stj* is followed by an *r*, not in the continuity of the column but to its left, which indicates that the text must continue in this direction. Here, the inscription is damaged but there is little space available for the complement of the verb. Therefore, I propose that this complement is written in the image, by the fish caught by Ibi and his son. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that there is no line separating this text, as is the case for the captions, and that the form of the last determinative of the verb *stj* clearly shows a game between image and writing.[4]

On the western part of the entrance, the fowling scene is represented in symmetry to the spearing one (fig. 2). His son Djau is once again represented as a miniature version of his father. His wife and daughter are depicted between his legs and two other men accompany the group. The caption above the first of these men is lost but the one above the other man identifies him as a son. These two men are facing the owner. All the figures must have possessed a caption, but the upper part of the painting is damaged. A rather large part of the scene is devoted to the representation of the thickets of papyrus with birds and nests. The thickets are rendered in a geometrical way, this effect being strengthened by the alignment of birds on top of it.

Between the boat and the papyrus thickets, a column of text describes the activity:

[*m3*]*3 k3t sḫt ḫnz pḥw ʿmʿ<3> ḫnm zšj(w) 3pdw jn ḫ3ty-ʿ ḥk3 ḥwt smr wqtj Ibj*

To see the work of the marshland, to go through the marsh, to throw the stick, to capture the nests and the birds by the count, chief of the estate, sole friend, Ibi.

### VISUAL ASPECTS OF THE SCENE

Together, the two parts of the scene cover the equivalent of one full wall, which is one sixth of the inscriptions of the tomb. Furthermore, it covers the entire height of the decorated part of the wall. If the decoration of this tomb is rich and contains a great variety of scene types,[5] this is the one that takes up the most space inside the chapel, along with the depiction of the owner observing manufacturing works and the autobiographical presentation of the owner (tab. 1). However, in the manufacturing scene, the visual emphasis is put on the activities, and in the autobiographical presentation, the emphasis is on the text. The fishing and fowling scene emphasizes the owner's body and actions. The size given to the owner's representations offers it great visibility and illustrates its importance among the other scenes of the tomb.

In addition to its considerable size, the general visual aspect of the painting is also striking, especially regarding the eastern part that represents Ibi spearing fish. Indeed, the disposition of the figures and their captions create a visual effect of crowding and disorder. Several elements cause this effect. First of all, the family members are numerous, and their images and captions fill almost all the free space around Ibi. That is what creates the crowding effect. Secondly, their disposition in space all around the owner seems rather chaotic. The figures are arranged on five different baselines (see fig. 4). Furthermore, their captions are also positioned in a non-uniform way. They are sometimes displayed in lines, sometimes in columns. Their disposition can confuse the belonging of one text with the image it captions. For example, it would seem logical to attribute the caption written in lines just next to the rear leg of Ibi to the image of the man depicted on the same baseline (number 5 on fig. 4). But it appears that the caption of this man is clearly written just above his head, so that the one next to the rear leg of Ibi must belong to the man below it (number 7 on fig. 4). All of these elements contribute to the disorder of the scene.

Nevertheless, what appears to be *prima facie* a chaotic disposition is not actually random at all. The structure of the scene is in fact very elaborate. All the texts are separated by strokes. Furthermore, their disposition emphasizes the name of the persons by separating it from the core of the text. That is the case for three of the sons to the left of the owner (Ibi and the two Djau: numbers 5, 6, and 8 in fig. 4) and the name of his wife (Hemi: number 3 in fig. 4). In addition, the fact that all the captions have the same size creates a certain uniformity between all the members of the family. It can thus be asserted that the visual effect of crowding and disorder is intentional and has a purpose. Ibi is certainly the main character of the scene, but its visual aspects do not present him alone. It presents him and his whole family as one unified and nearly indivisible block.

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[3]  In the tombs of Henqu II at Deir el-Gebrawi (Kanawati 2005: Pl. 54); Pepyankh/Henikem at Meir (Kanawati – Evans 2014: Pl. 84); Shepesipumin/Kheni at el-Hawawish (Kanawati 1981: Fig. 18); Hemmin at el-Hawawish (Kanawati 1985: Fig. 7); Hesimin/Sesi at el-Hawawish (Kanawati 1986: Fig. 3); Bawi at el-Hawawish (Kanawati 1989: Fig. 15).

[4]  On the notion of interrelation between images and writing, see Vernus (2016: 1–19).

[5]  The decoration of the tomb of Ibi contains 52 types of scene ("subthemes"), according to classification of the MastaBase of Leiden (van Walsem 2008).
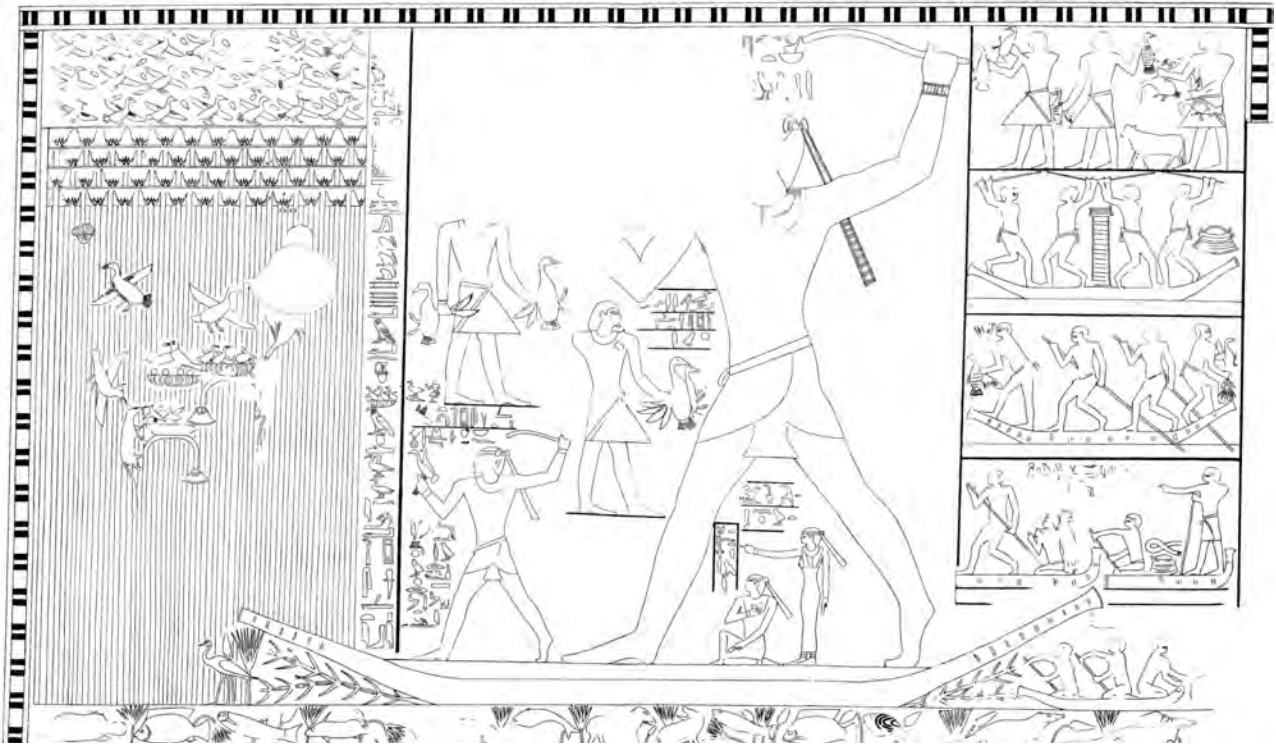
**Fig. 2 Tomb of Ibi, west wall, east of the entrance (after Davies 1902: Pl. 5)**

| Main scenes | Location | Relative size |
|---|---|---|
| Fishing and fowling | South wall, flanking the entrance | 1 wall |
| Owner observing fowling activities | South wall, western part | ½ wall |
| Representations linked to funerals (dance, coffin transport, palanquin transport) | East wall, southern part | ½ wall |
| Owner observing various activities (rendering of accounts, cloth manufacturing) | East wall, northern part | ½ wall |
| Owner observing field works | North wall, western part | ½ wall |
| Owner observing animals (desert and cattle) | North wall, western part | ½ wall |
| Owner observing manufacturing works | North wall, eastern part | 1 wall |
| Autobiographical presentation of the owner (text and images) | East wall | 1 wall |
| Owner observing fishing activities | South wall, eastern part | ½ wall |

**Tab. 1 Main scenes of Ibi's chapel**

The other part of the scene, depicting Ibi hunting with a stick, shows the same characteristics (fig. 2). Here, the representation of the papyrus thicket takes a large place, at the expense of the representation of the family members. Yet the disposition of the figures has the same visual impact, emphasizing the family of Ibi.

**EMPHASIS ON THE FAMILY**

The fishing and fowling scene of Ibi displays a strong emphasis on the family.[6] However, the presence of the family is not limited to this representation; his family

is very present in the decoration of the other walls. For instance, Ibi's wife accompanies him in half of his representations; that is eight times, of which she is depicted at the same scale as her husband four times (Kanawati 2007: Pls. 44, 51, 54, 57). On the northern wall, east of the offering recess, his wife and seven of his sons are depicted seated before him (Kanawati 2007: Pl. 72). The walls of the offering recess represent his daughters and sons making offerings to him (Kanawati 2007: Pls. 74–75). Eight brothers of Ibi are depicted facing him on the south wall, east of the entrance

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[6]  In this article, I am using the term "family" for people strictly linked by family ties, which is different from the Egyptian notion of *pr* "household" that includes serfs, dependents and friends. I am also using the notions of the nuclear family (formed by a father, a mother and their children) and the extended family (Moreno Garcia 2012b) for practical reason, even though they are based on an etic definition.

(Kanawati 2007: Pls. 45, 67). Finally, on the northern wall, west of the offering recess, one of his brothers is depicted among other persons behind the figure of Ibi watching the scenes of the cattle's care (Kanawati 2007: Pl. 52). Although these representations consist of small motifs spread over the walls, they draw attention to the individual members of the family. However, the family as a united group only occurs in the fishing and fowling scene. This scene is thus chosen among all the others to put emphasis on the family of Ibi; a theme that seems rather important to the owner.

### THE FISHING AND FOWLING SCENE IN OLD KINGDOM PRIVATE TOMBS

#### COMMON LAYOUT OF THE SCENE IN MEMPHITE TOMBS[7]

The motif of the owner fishing and fowling in the marshland may be attested in the Memphite region from the Fourth Dynasty.[8] It frequently occurs during the Fifth and the Sixth Dynasty in Memphite necropoleis.[9] The representations show either one part of the scene (fishing or fowling) or the two together, but it is usually displayed symmetrically (Binder 2000: 111; Dunnicliff 2012: 109).

There are as many variations of this scene as there are attestations.[10] The core elements are the representations of the owner fishing or fowling on a boat and the swamp. The water itself is often filled with representations of fish, hippopotami and plants, which are rendered very precisely. The different species of fish are commonly illustrated in a similar fashion, such as the two fish caught by the owner, which are always from the same two species: a *tilapia nilotica* and a *lates niloticus* (Binder 2000: 112; Dunnicliff 2012: 110).

The owner is very frequently accompanied by family members, which are represented with him in his boat or in a register next to him. Only three attestations, all dating to the Fifth Dynasty, show the owner fishing or hunting fowl without a family member.[11] Other small scale figures can accompany the owner, but he is always the principal figure (Binder 2000: 113–114; Dunnicliff 2012: 109). A group of people – generally intendants or priests – occur in a few scenes in one or several registers behind the boat.[12] This group can be very large and represent dozens of people.[13]

A title describing the activity performed can be written before or above the owner. These texts can be grouped into four categories, depending on the action it focuses on. The first group describes the scene as *ḥnz pḥw*, "to go through the marsh".[14] The second one indicates *m33 pḥw*, "to look at the marsh".[15] However, most of the texts focus on the activities of fishing and fowling themselves. Thus, the third group inscribes *stt mḥt*, "to spear the fish"[16] and the fourth group inscribes *ḥsb 3pdw*, "to catch the birds"[17] or the variant *ʿmʿ3 3pdw*, "to throw a stick at the birds".[18]

The fishing and fowling scene often has a considerable size, especially when it is divided in two panels. It can take the space of almost an entire wall, as is the case in the tomb of Iynefret/Shanef (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 2003: Pl. 37) and Mereruka (Kanawati – Woods – Shafik – Alexakis 2010: Pls. 67, 69), two rich tombs belonging to viziers. However, it can also take a smaller place and blend in with other sets in more modest tombs, such as the one of Irukaptah/Khenu (McFarlane 2000: Pl. 46). It is a scene that expresses a lot of movement, through the action of the owner and the representations of swimming fish and flying birds. Furthermore, this is one of the only scenes that show the owner in motion. In the majority of representations, nature occupies an important part. Sometimes the "mount" of water and the thickets of papyrus take up as much space as the owner. In the adjoining double scenes, they are the focal point, and they create a swarming texture in the middle of framed and aligned representations of the owner and his companions. Indeed, when the owner is accompanied by a large group of people, they are all lined up in strict registers.[19] Finally, most of the representations clearly show a difference in size between the hieroglyphs

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[7]  For a description of this type of scene, see Binder (2000: 111–128); Dunnicliff (2012: 109–124); Woods (2015: 1897–1910); Woods (*forthcoming*).

[8]  August Mariette (1889: 473) described a hunting scene in the marsh in the tomb of Nefermaat at Meidum, but he did not publish any drawing. Now, this section of decoration is destroyed and there is no other information about this scene (Harpur 1987: 56–57).

[9]  The Scene-details Database lists 27 Memphite tombs dating to the Fifth Dynasty that contain one or two parts of this scene, and 31 Memphite tombs dating to the Sixth Dynasty (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/oee_ahrc_2006/. Accessed on 2nd October 2018).

[10]  For the mechanism of copying and innovating in private tombs, see Laboury (2017: 229–258); Pieke (2017: 259–304).

[11]  The tombs of Iynefret/Shanef at Saqqara (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 2003: Pl. 37); the tomb of Kaemnofret at Saqqara (Simpson 1992: 5, fig. 4); the tomb of Zaib at Giza (Roth 1995: Pl. 181).

[12]  See for instance the tomb of Seankhuiptah (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1998: Pl. 76).

[13]  See for instance the tomb of Mereruka (Kanawati – Woods – Shafik – Alexakis 2010: Pl. 67) and the tomb of Hesi (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1999: Pl. 53).

[14]  In the tomb of Hesi (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1999: Pl. 53) and the tomb of Seankhuiptah (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1998: Pl. 76).

[15]  In the tomb of Hetepherakhti (Mohr 1943: Fig. 34, pl. II).

[16]  In the tombs of Irenkaptah (Moussa – Junge 1975: Pl. 12); the tomb of Iynefert/Shanef (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 2003: Pl. 37); the tomb of Kaiemankh (Kanawati 2001: Pl. 31); the tomb of Mehu at Giza (Smith 1958: Fig.1); the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 20); the tomb of Neferseshemptah (Moussa – Junge 1975: pl. 6); the tomb of Senedjemib/Inti (Brovarski 2001: Pl. 25).

[17]  In the tomb of Iynefert/Shanef (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 2003: Pl. 37); the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (Moussa – Altenmüller 1977: Fig. 6, pl. 75); the tomb of Seankhuiptah (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1998: Pl. 76).

[18]  *ʿm 3pdw* in the tomb of Neferseshemptah (Moussa – Junge 1975: pl. 6) and *ʿm33 3pdw* in the tomb of Hesi (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1999: Pl. 54).

[19]  See the examples cited above in footnotes 11–12.

belonging to the owner and the ones belonging to subsidiary figures.[20]

## FAMILY GROUP IN THE SCENES OF MEMPHITE TOMBS

We have seen that family members were a frequent feature of this scene[21] and that the example of Ibi's tomb displays a strong emphasis on them. In Memphite examples, the most frequent family member accompanying the owner is his wife, who is always represented in the boat, either seated at the foot of her husband[22] or standing and embracing him[23], pointing to the papyrus thickets[24] or smelling a flower.[25] The owner's sons are also frequent members represented in this scene. Most of the time, they are represented on the boat, but they can also be shown in a register next to it.[26] Sometimes, a son can be represented in the same posture as the owner, fishing or fowling, as a miniature double (as is the case in Ibi's tomb).[27] There are representations of daughters in these scenes, but only three tombs clearly depict and identify them. In two of them, they are depicted at the stern of the boat on a different baseline than the rest of the family.[28] In the third one, a daughter is depicted twice seated in the boat between the legs of her father.[29] Finally, no members of the extended family are found in Memphite examples. Only sons, daughters and wives are depicted (the scene of Ibi depicts a brother), and the number of family members never exceeds four people[30] (the scene of Ibi depicts eight family members).

Visually, the figures of family members are aligned, and they never surround the owner: they are represented

**Fig. 3 Tomb of Mereruka, north wall (after Duell 1938: Pl. 9)**



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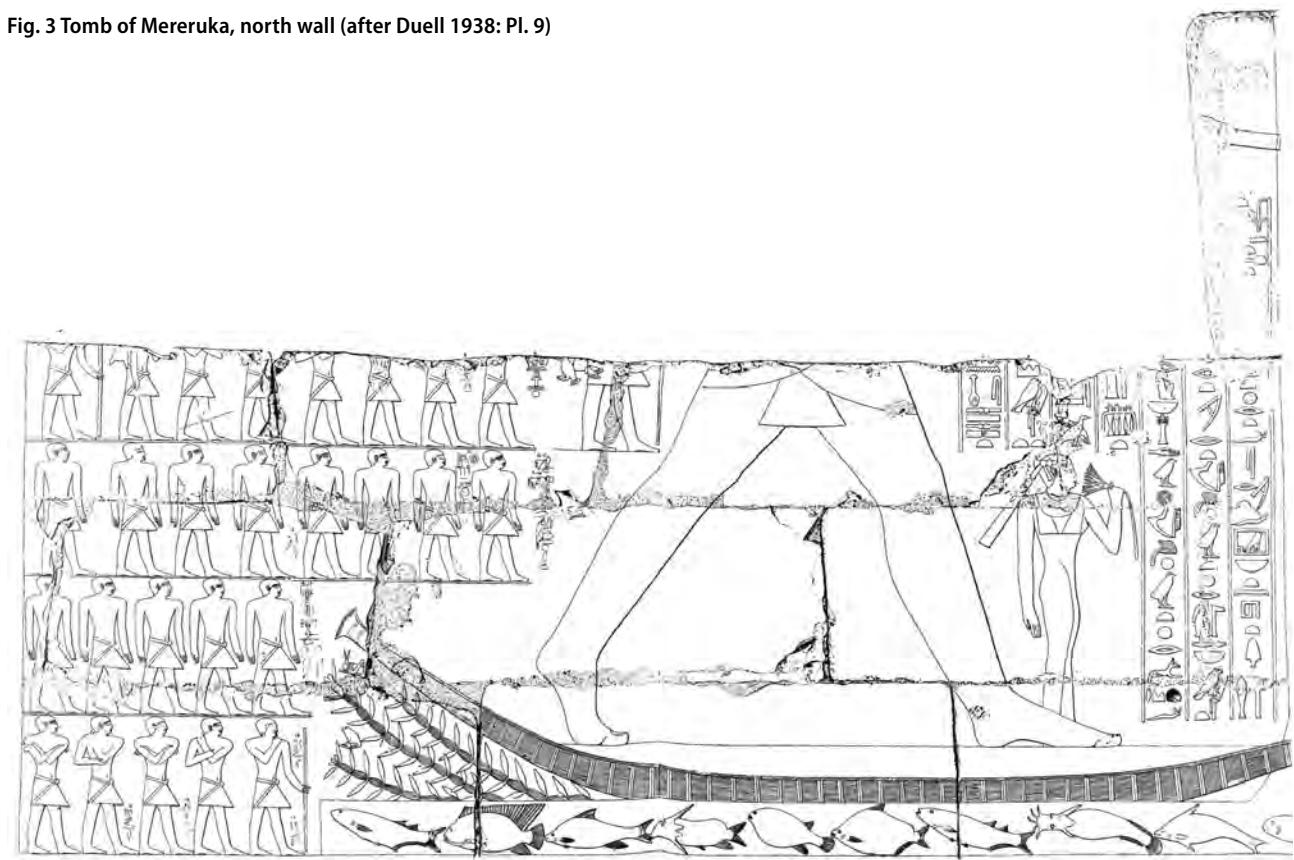
[20] See for instance the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 1).

[21] Only three tombs do not include family members in this scene, see footnote 10 above.

[22] See for instance the tomb of Hesi at Saqqara (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1999: Pl. 53); the tomb of Iynefret at Giza (Schürmann 1983: Pl. 6, 21); the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 1).

[23] See for instance the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 1); the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara (Moussa – Altenmüller 1977: figs. 5–6).

[24] See for instance the tomb of Seankhuiptah at Saqqara (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1998: Pl. 76).

[25] See for instance the tomb of Mereruka at Saqqara (Kanawati – Woods – Shafik – Alexakis 2010: Pl. 67).

[26] See for instance the tomb of Mehu at Saqqara (Altenmüller 1998: Pl. 10); the tomb of Nekhebu (Smith 1958: Fig. 2); the tomb of Nikauisesi (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 2000: Pl. 50).

[27] That is the case in seven Memphite tombs: Herimeru/Merery (Hassan 1975: Fig. 42); Insnefru/Ishetef (Morgan 1903: Pl. 24); Nekhebu (Smith 1958: Fig. 2); Seshemnefer (Junker 1953: Fig. 60); an anonymous tomb at Saqqara (Quibell 1909: Pl. 51 [3]); an anonymous tomb at Dahshur (tomb 3) (Morgan 1896: Fig. 516); Rashepses (El-Tayeb 2018).

[28] In the tomb of Mehu at Saqqara (Altenmüller 1998: Pl. 12) and the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 1).

[29] In the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (Moussa – Altenmüller 1977: figs. 5–6).

[30] A maximum of four family members is found in the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 1) and in the tomb of Nekhebu (Smith 1958: Fig. 2).

in a maximum of two different registers (the scene of Ibi depicts them in five different registers).

A caption often identifies family members, but the text varies from that of the owner. The titles are usually shorter, the size of the hieroglyphs is smaller, and they are rarely flanked by lines (in Ibi's scene, the family's captions are flanked by lines and the size of their hieroglyphs is the same as the caption of Ibi). Exceptions are found in the tomb of Mereruka (Kanawati – Woods – Shafik – Alexakis 2010: pls. 67, 69), the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (Moussa – Altenmüller 1977: figs. 5, 6) and the tomb of Seankhuiptah (Kanawati – Abder-Raziq 1998: Pl. 76) in captions above the figures of their wives, which are more developed and separated by lines.

### Appropriation by provincial elites

The fishing and fowling scene is attested in 16 provincial necropoleis and in almost 40 tombs, from Deshasha, the northernmost provincial necropolis, to Qubbet el-Hawa, the southernmost.[31] These representations are very similar to the Memphite examples and show the same general characteristics already described. This is especially true for the family members of the owner, who are limited to the nuclear family and to a number of four individuals maximum (the scene of Ibi being an exception). Otherwise, the differences are small and limited to unique examples. The only general adaptation is found in three provincial necropoleis (Naga ed-Deir, Aswan and Moalla), where the form of the boat is thicker (Woods 2015: 1904).

Regarding the texts, some provincial tombs also inscribe a scene title, with the same vocabulary as the Memphite examples, the most frequent title being *stt mḥt*, "to spear the fish".[32]

### Religious and social aspects

It has already been demonstrated that private scenes in Old Kingdom tombs carry more than one meaning and reflect multiple dimensions, such as daily life representations, religious metaphors and social messages (Roth 2006: 243–253). The fishing and fowling scene may certainly have reflected a real activity done by ancient Egyptians. However, it does not necessarily imply that the owners of such representations performed this activity themselves during their lives. Many theories have been formulated about the religious aspect of this scene. For example, it has been linked to leisure time and to the need of food supply for the owner in the netherworld (Feucht 1992: 157–169). It has also been argued that it allows the owner depicted in such a scene

to appear in the world of the living (Altenmüller 2006: 30–31). Finally, it has been demonstrated that this scene takes part in a strategy of social valorization: the idea of fishing and fowling as a sport marks a distinction between the elites and the population who have to fish and hunt to survive (Vernus 2009–2010: 80–83). The following development will focus on the visuality of this scene as a way to express social and individual values.[33]

### Adaptation and communicability of the fishing and fowling scene

#### Parietal convention of inscriptions: limits and means of expressing specific values

If a scene can express several messages at the same time, it can also be argued that the same scene can express different messages according to the tomb in which it is represented (Vischak 2006: 258). There are strict rules and practices (*decorum*) that define the way in which parietal inscriptions are represented in Old Kingdom private tombs (Baines 1990: 20; Baines 2007: 14–29). These conventions were defined by the central elites for the private tombs built around the royal funerary monuments in the Memphite area, and were taken up by the provincial elites from the Fifth Dynasty onwards (Moreno Garcia 2006: 222; Willems 2014: 23–27). The artistic conventions give the impression of a limited corpus of scenes: there are few unique patterns. The parietal inscriptions, Memphite or provincial, are therefore based on a strong canonical tradition (Davis 1989). Nevertheless, no tomb is exactly identical to another. Each one has a unique decoration program. Among all the existing scenes, only one really appears in all the tombs of the Old Kingdom: the deceased person seated at the offering table (Staring 2011: 259). So, it seems that this was the only one considered as necessary for the funerary role of the tomb. All other ones seem to be additional and result from the choice of the owner and the person in charge of the decoration. Therefore, the scenes represented on the walls of the tombs assume a great communicative role. They can be chosen and combined to express specific values, related to the individuality, social environment or locality of the owner of the tomb.[34] Furthermore, each scene possesses minimal and definitional elements, but their details vary with each representation: there is no exact copy from one tomb to another (Laboury 2017: 229–258; Pieke 2017: 259–304). One can see this process as being related to the creativity of the artist (Laboury 2017: 229–258), as

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[31] See the list of the fishing and fowling scenes given by the Scene-details Database: http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/oee_ahrc_2006/ (last visited on the 2nd October 2018), to which it must be added the necropolis of Sharuna: in the tombs of Pepyankh/Ipi (Schenkel – Gomaà 2004: Pl. 3), Pepyankh/Khewi (Schenkel – Gomaà 2004: Pls. 13, 14) and Senedjemib (Schenkel – Gomaà 2004: Fig. 144); and the necropolis of Beni Hassan in the tomb of Ipi (Laschien 2016: Pl. 39b).

[32] In the tomb of Pepyankh/Heriib (Kanawati 2012: Pl. 80); the tomb of Pepyankh/Henikem (Kanawati – Evans 2014: Pl. 84); the tomb of Shepesipumin/Kheni (Kanawati 1981: Fig. 18); the tomb of Hesimin (Kanawati 1983: Fig. 12); the tomb of Hemmin (Kanawati 1985: Fig. 7); the tomb of Hesimin/Sesi (F1) (Kanawati 1986: Fig. 3); the tomb of Bawi (G126) (Kanawati 1989: Fig. 15).

[33] On the notion of "visuality", see Vischak (2016: 96–98).

[34] Choosing the themes represented in a tomb is one of the five possible variables on which the future deceased could potentially express his individuality, according to the analysis of René van Walsem (2012–2013: 127–128).
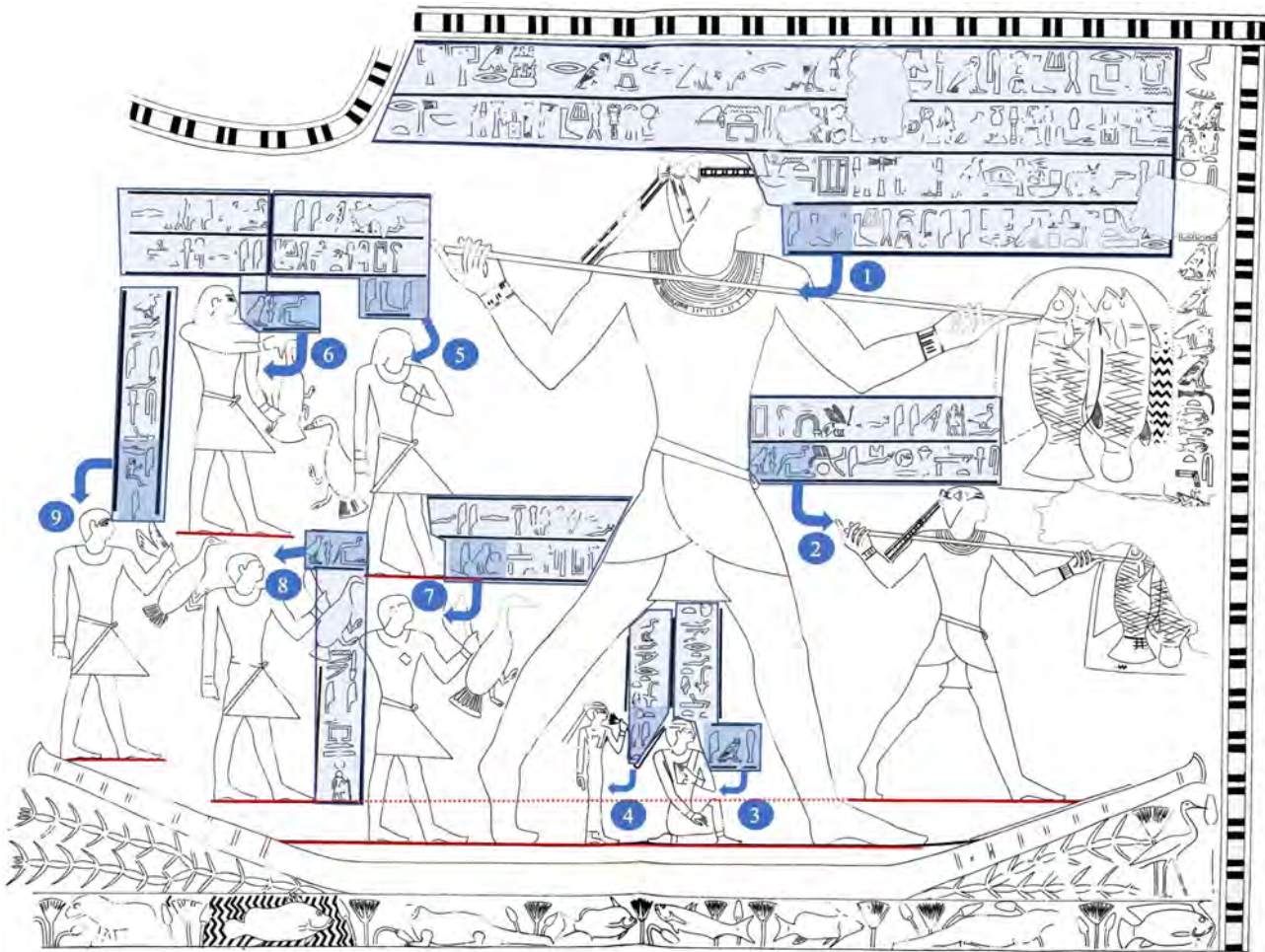
**Fig. 4 Disposition of the figures and their captions in the fishing scene of the tomb of Ibi, south wall, east of the entrance (after Davies 1902: Pl. 3)**

the development of the scene through time (Woods 2015: 1897–1910), or as local divergences (Vischak 2015: 179–223; Pieke 2017: 259–304), but changing details can also be a way to express specific values within a rigid system.

**ADAPTATION AND EXPRESSION IN CONTEXT:**

**MERERUKA VS. IBI**

To illustrate this last assertion, we can compare the fishing and fowling scene of Ibi's tomb with another example. The mastaba of Mereruka offers an interesting comparison. As for Ibi, it depicts the two activities, fishing and fowling, next to the entrance. Moreover, it is inscribed in a different cultural landscape than that of Ibi's scene, which means that its values are potentially different. But more importantly, it also shows unique details that significantly diverge from the other attestations of this scene.

Mereruka

The mastaba of Mereruka possesses a representation of the fishing and fowling scene, which is depicted on two walls (fig. 3). The fishing scene is on the north wall of the first chamber (A1), and the fowling one is on the south wall of the same chamber (Kanawati – Woods – Shafik –

Alexakis 2010: pls. 67–70). In both representations, the owner is depicted alone with his wife, who stands at the rear of the boat; no other family members are represented. Only one part of the lengthy caption above the figure of Mereruka is preserved in the southern scene. The caption identifying his wife consists of seven columns of texts preserved on the northern wall. The fowling representation shows a small fragment of the scene's title, but there is no trace of it on the other part. In both scenes, dozens of *ka*-priests fill the space behind Mereruka in several smaller registers. Despite its fragmentary state, the fishing scene depicts 27 of these subsidiary figures. These figures take up at least one third of the space of the scene. The back of the fowling scene is almost entirely lost, but the few remains of the registers depicting intendants indicate that its composition was similar. Thus, the fishing and fowling scenes of Mereruka clearly emphasize these subsidiary figures. This is a specificity of this tomb since no other Memphite tomb shows so many registers of intendants.

The *ka*-priests have an important funerary role because they are in charge of the food supply and thus the well-being of the owner in the afterlife (Sauneron 1998: 126–127). Their representations in tombs are evidently linked to a religious purpose, but their representation,

especially in such number, can also be a way to emphasize the economic power of the owner and his belonging to the highest elite sphere. Indeed, the *ka*-priests are a mark of the social position of the owner of the tomb in his life: they index his funerary domains. It may also be a way to compete with the other neighboring tombs (competitive emulation), by transmitting the idea that he possesses the most numerous funerary domains.[35] Furthermore, the focus on food supply and *ka*-priests is found all along the decoration of the tomb. It is not only a specificity of the fishing and fowling scene, but a general specificity of the entire tomb decoration. It is thus possible that the fishing and fowling scene is used to highlight one of the main characteristics of the tomb decoration, because this scene type is often inscribed next to the entrance of the tomb, a position that gives it good visibility.

Mereruka possesses one of the largest and richest mastabas in the "Teti cemetery". It is built just in front of the pyramid of Teti and next to the other tombs of the highest elites of his time. The landscape in which this tomb was built thus highly renowned and already well inscribed. As a vizier, Mereruka had a very high social position. The presence of the fishing and fowling scene in the first room of the tomb complex makes it one of the first presentations of the owner. The fact that Mereruka is here surrounded by *ka*-priests supports the role of the scene in displaying the high status of the owner.

Ibi

In comparison to the scene of Mereruka, the one of Ibi shows different specificities, which are mainly the number of family members and their positions all around the owner (fig. 1). Eight relatives are represented, whereas the other examples in the Memphite and provincial necropoleis show more commonly one to three family members, and a maximum of four (tab. 2).[36] Furthermore, these figures are generally limited to the nuclear family. Yet the family group in the example of

Ibi's tomb includes a brother.[37] The scene of the tomb of Ibi focuses on the familial cohesion, and this particularity is rendered by a visual effect using images and texts.

We have seen that family members were also depicted elsewhere in the tomb and this was a general trend in the decoration program. As for Mereruka, the fishing and fowling scene seems to be used to highlight one of the characteristics of the general decoration of the tomb.

The specificity of Ibi's painting is unparalleled in other tombs, but it cannot be attributed to a lack of competence of a local artist: too many details indicate a high correspondence to the canonical corpus. For example, the two fish caught by Ibi have the same form as the fish that always illustrate this scene: they are the same specific species with the same identifying details. Additionally, the scene presents a high level of elaboration: in the disposition of the captions that emphasize the names or in the text plays. Therefore, its composition seems deliberate rather than indiscriminate.[38]

Unlike Mereruka, Ibi is not buried next to a royal funerary monument and among other elites, but in a provincial necropolis far from the capital. His tomb is potentially the first inscribed tomb of the necropolis.[39] Until then, the rulers of the Twelfth Province of Upper Egypt were buried in uninscribed burials.[40] Ibi's tomb possesses a very rich and elaborate decoration, which presents him as a powerful member of the provincial elites (Fitzenreiter 2013: 40–58). Although the themes of the decoration are the same in the provinces as those in the Memphite necropoleis, the intentions and the needs of display are correlated with different contexts. These differences can have an impact on the images and texts, like the unusual emphasis of the family in the fishing and fowling scene of Ibi.

Indeed, family bonds are an important notion in provincial necropoleis. For example, there is a larger percentage of tombs shared by two spouses in the

| Fishing and fowling scene | Ibi's tomb | Memphite tombs | Provincial tombs |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Max. number of family members | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| Max. number of registers for family members | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Size of hieroglyphs in family members' captions | Same size as that of the owner | Smaller than that of the owner | Smaller than that of the owner |
| Family members' captions structured by lines | Yes | Rarely | Rarely |

**Tab. 2 Main specificities in the fishing and fowling scene of the tomb of Ibi, compared with the other Memphite and provincial attestations**

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[35]  On the notion of competitive emulation, see van Walsem (2012–2013: 134–135).

[36]  In the tomb of Neferiretenef (van de Walle 1978: Pl. 1) and in the tomb of Nekhebu (Smith 1958: Fig. 2).

[37]  The fishing scene in the tomb of Nekhebu also depicts a brother (Smith 1958: Fig. 2).

[38]  See the concept of "agency" used for the study of Old Kingdom tomb decoration by Deborah Vischak (2006: 255–262).

[39]  According to Kanawati's arguments, the first inscribed tombs of the south necropolis are the tomb of Ibi and the tomb of Hetepnebi (Kanawati 2007: 74–75). Between the two, Ibi's tomb is more likely the first one, because of the ideal position of his tomb on the hill compared to the small space available for Hetepnebi's tomb.

[40]  The order of creation between the north and the south necropoleis of Deir el-Gebrawi is debated. For a summary of this debate, see Moreno Garcia (2012a: 2–3). Studies on autobiographical texts indicate that the north necropolis must be dated to the very end of the Sixth Dynasty or later. Therefore, the south necropolis is the oldest one. For an overview of the other monuments of this province, see Kurth – Rossler-Köhler (1987).

provinces than in the Memphite necropoleis (Moreno Garcia 2006: 275).[41] Furthermore, the local elite cemeteries were spatially organized in relation to familial groups and even the undecorated and modest inhumations of the province were used collectively (Moreno Garcia 2006: 228).[42] To the contrary, some elites of the Memphite necropoleis specifically inscribed an interdiction forbidding their family to be buried in their tombs (Moreno Garcia 2006: 225–226, footnote 60). The convention of decoration of the walls in elite tombs let little space to express family bonds (Moreno Garcia 2006: 223). However, provincial elites seem to have had more willingness to represent their families in their tombs. As a matter of fact, some provincial tombs show exceptional representations of multiple generations,[43] and provincial autobiographical inscriptions show innovations emphasizing the family (Stauder-Porchet, *forthcoming*). Moreover, during the Sixth Dynasty, we can observe an increasing trend in provincial tombs representing long lines of children. This type of scene appears during the Fifth Dynasty in the necropoleis of el-Hagarsa[44] and el-Hammamyiah[45]. Then, it is found during the Sixth Dynasty at Sawiet Sultan[46] and Quseir el-Amarna,[47] and becomes more popular at the end of the Old Kingdom (end of Sixth Dynasty – Eighth Dynasty) in the necropoleis of Deir el-Gebrawi,[48] el-Hawawish[49] and el-Hagarsa.[50] Thus, the focus on the family in the tomb of Ibi belongs to a tradition that seems stronger in the provinces and that grows in popularity at the end of the Sixth Dynasty, but the way of expressing it in the fishing and fowling scene is unique.

## FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MERERUKA AND IBI

The fishing and fowling scenes of Mereruka and Ibi both represent the same theme and therefore the same core elements, according to the canonical rules, but they also show dissimilar details that impact their global visuality. The scene of Mereruka focuses on the huge number of *ka*-priests' figures, while the example of Ibi focuses on a familial cohesion. These differences are adaptations that suit the main characteristics of the decoration program of their tombs and echo the landscape in which they are inscribed. In contrast with Mereruka, the fishing and fowling scene of Ibi expresses a drastically different message. Whereas Mereruka used it to emphasize his

power among the highest elite of the capital, Ibi used it to emphasize his family, which was a strong value in the provinces.

## THE USE OF THE FISHING AND FOWLING SCENE AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION

We have seen with the comparison between the examples of Mereruka and Ibi that details can change the message of a scene, regarding the values the owner wants to focus on. It does not mean that any scene can be transformed to express any message; the rules of *decorum* were far too strict. In the cases of Mereruka and Ibi, adaptations occurred in the same pattern: the emphasis of one element of the core scene. In the scene of Mereruka, the emphasis is on intendants, who are recurrent elements in other examples. In the scene of Ibi, the emphasis is on family members, who are part of the core elements of the scene.

Going one step further, it can be argued that the representation of the owner fishing and hunting is the scene type *par excellence,* among all the others, to express family bonds. Not only are family members part of the core elements of the scene, but the fishing and fowling scene also gives them active roles, which is rare in Old Kingdom private corpuses. Indeed, representations of a family member as an active figure are restricted to some scenes such as children represented as harpists or singers and children playing games, but the number of these representations is small (Harpur 1987: 136). In fact, the most common scene giving family members an active role is the representation of the owner fishing or hunting fowl (Harpur 1987: 136). There, the owner's son is sometimes shown as a miniature version of the owner, also fishing or hunting, and women can be depicted pointing to the papyrus – as is the case in Ibi's decoration.

To sum up, the fishing and fowling scene allows the tomb owner to emphasize the family and to depict at least two of the family members with an active role. Therefore, the choice of representing this scene in the tomb of Ibi seems to be strategic. It is a common motif that allows the emphasis of the family while using the habits and customs of elite tomb decorations. In the case of Ibi, this particularity is simply put to an extreme degree. In other words, the fishing and fowling scene is here used as a means to express personal or local values within a very standardized and canonical system of decoration.

[41] The author refers to an article by Vivienne Gae Callender (2002: 301–308).

[42] The author follows the study of George Andrew Reisner (1932) on the necropolis of Naga ed Deir and the works of Stephan Seidlmayer in the region of Elephantine (Seidlmayer 2001: 221–223).

[43] Especially in the necropolis of Meir (Moreno Garcia 2006: 228, footnote 72).

[44] In the tomb of Neferether (Kanawati 1993: Pl. 22b).

[45] In the tomb of Kaikhenet II (Khouli – Kanawati 1990: Pl. 63).

[46] In the tomb of Khunes (Lepsius 1849: Pl. 109).

[47] In the tomb of Khewenwekh (Khouli – Kanawati 1989: Pl. 41).

[48] In the tomb of Ibi (Kanawati 2007: Pl. 72), Djau (Kanawati 2013: Pl. 74), Henqu I (Kanawati 2005: Pl. 36).

[49] In the tomb of Tjeti/Kaihep (Kanawati 1986: Fig. 31).

[50] In the tomb of Mery (Kanawati 1993: Pl. 46), Sobeknefer (Kanawati 1993: Pl. 26), Meryaa (Kanawati 1995: Pl. 42), Wahi (Kanawati 1995: Pl. 24, 28).

## Conclusion

The fishing and fowling scene is visually the most important one in the tomb of Ibi. It possesses the particularity to display content and a visual aspect different from the other examples found in the Memphite and provincial necropoleis. These differences take place in a highly structured setting that creates a strong emphasis on family bonds. Therefore, they are conscious adaptations and must be related to the general decoration of the tomb and to the cultural landscape in which the tomb is inscribed.

As a matter of fact, family is an important component in the decoration of Ibi's tomb, but it is also a valued notion in the provincial elite's sphere. Thus, the fishing and fowling scene is used in Ibi's tomb to express values that correspond to the general trend of its decoration and to the local habits.

It is probably the most suitable scene type to emphasize the family while respecting the strict rules of parietal inscriptions, because family members are already part of the core elements of the scene. Indeed, both the canonical corpus of themes and the *decorum* created within the Memphite elite sphere restrained the expression of specific values, and if family bonds were valued by provincial rulers, the motifs created by the Memphite elites were not suitable to express those links. The adaptation of the fishing and fowling scene thus provided a way to circumvent the problem.

More than that, the considerable size and visibility given to the fishing and fowling scene of Ibi emphasizing a local value may have been a deliberate strategy to point out the provincial identity of the owner, and to mark differentiation from the Memphite private tombs. While the process of inscribing his tomb bonded Ibi to the Memphite elite sphere, displaying such local value distinguished him from it.

There is indeed a complex game in the decoration of provincial elite tombs, between displaying their belonging to the Memphite sphere and displaying their differentiation. Parietal inscriptions (texts and images) of Old Kingdom private tombs were created by the elites of the capital and taken up by provincial elites as a second step, but in a different cultural landscape, with different needs and purposes. Private tombs were first inscribed exclusively around the royal funerary monuments in the necropoleis of the capital. At the same time, the tombs of the provincial elite were mainly in the form of buried anepigraphic structures. However, from the Fifth Dynasty onwards, certain provincial elite members adopted elements of the "high culture" for their tombs (such as monumentality and inscriptions) (Kemp 2006: 111–160). The decorations of these tombs were then similar to those of the capital. As in Memphis, they had very rich content, but largely generic. Nevertheless, they sometimes present differences of style[51] or content as well as innovations,[52] as the fishing and fowling scene of Ibi illustrates, displaying the expression of their high social status as well as their local identity.

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[51]  The decorations of the tombs of Qubbet el-Hawa present certainly the most different styles from the capital (Vischak 2015: *passim*).
[52]  The bull fighting scene is, for example, exclusive to provincial tombs (Galán 1994: 81–96).

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