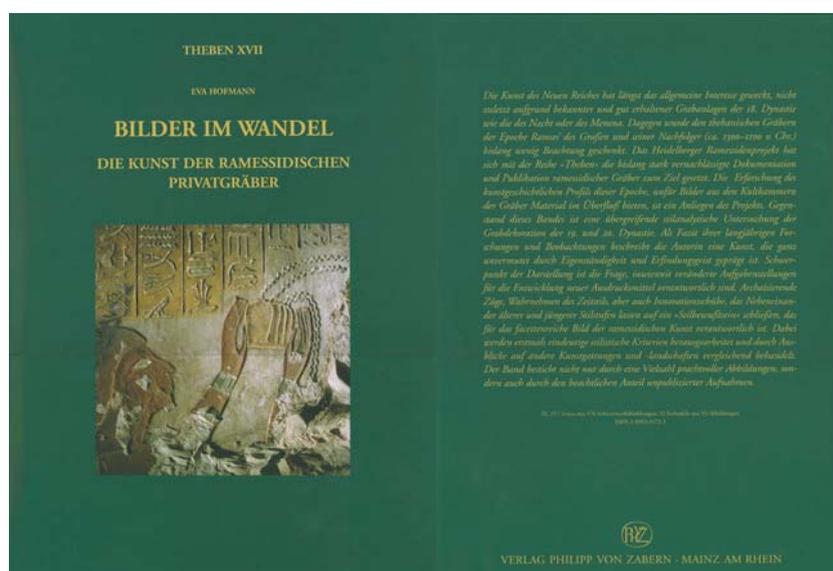


Hofmann, E. 2004. *Bilder im Wandel. Die Kunst der ramessidischen Privatgräber*. – Mainz, Philipp von Zabern (Theben XVII)

Book review by J. Moje



The interest of scholars in the tombs of the Theban necropolis has always been large, but focus has much been on the buildings of the 18th Dynasty, whereas the Ramesside buildings received only little attention. The Theben Project of the University of Heidelberg fills this gap. Hofmann's book on the Ramesside private tombs from art-historical perspective, has to be seen as part of this project and can be regarded as a summary of the author's research. Where individual tombs were topic of most monographs and essays, Hofmann presents various tombs which makes a detailed analysis possible of the style development of this epoch in Thebes.

'Bilder im Wandel' is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the style development of the Theban tombs and starts with the section on buildings from immediate post-Amarna date (Amenhotep Hui TT40, Neferhotep TT49, Mose (TT 254), Parennefer/Wennefer TT-162, Amenemope TT41, Nai TT 271, Hatiaï TT 324 Ramose TT166 and Neferhotep TT 50). The tombs are described in great detail and the focus is, obviously, on the decoration. Interesting is the comparison with Memphite funerary buildings, since directly after the Amarna period the capital shifted to Memphis and many high officials were buried there. Various figures and photos of high quality are mixed with the text and illustrate the different decorations of these tombs beautifully.

The next section is headed 'Stilgebundenheit und Neuerungen, Künstler und Werkstätten'. First the tombs of the early 19th Dynasty (Userhet TT 51, Rai TT 255, Amenmose TT 19, Chons TT 31, Paser TT 106 and Nebwenemef TT 157) are discussed after which the tombs of the late 19th Dynasty (Neferrenpet TT 178, Nefersecheru TT 296, Nebsumenu TT 183 as well as TT 32, 35, 184, 164, 370 and TT 138, 189, 194, 26, 16) follow. Hofmann is able to distinguish a new style developments and innovations and thus disprove the often expressed opinion that the Ramesside period did not attribute to artistic innovation in decorative arts. Another interesting result of Hofmann's research is that she is able to assign several tombs to the same workshop or to point out direct dependences.

After this the author shows the development in the 20th dynasty. The analysis concerning graphism, architecture and procedure shows a decline of the artistic development in this dynasty. The artistic quality becomes increasingly less important, whereas the concept of the decoration gets a substantially stronger weight. Also, as Hofmann points, there is a tendency in the 20th dynasty for abstraction in representations.

The development in Deir el-Medineh is dealt with in a separate chapter. Hofmann compares the style of the reliefs with that of the other tombs in the necropolis, in order to receive new starting points for a comprehensive evaluation of the Ramesside period relief style.

The following section is dedicated to the art development outside Thebes, Saqqara being the first. Because it is not possible to make statements on the total decoration corpus, due to the bad preservation, Hofmann presents a somewhat more general overview. After Saqqara, Ramesside tombs from Bahariya, Zawyet Sultan, Deir Durunka, El Mashayikh, Hierakonpolis, Elkab, Aswan, Aniba and near Bogga are discussed.

The elaborate, detailed style analysis forms the second main part. The development of the style runs neither straight-lined nor uniformly, the phenomenon of which Hofmann named 'Stilpluralismus'. Even within one tomb the workers experimented with different techniques and styles but Hofmann notes that the most

important scenes were always executed by the best artists. Again, the innovations of the 19th Dynasty are lengthy discussed.

An interesting part of the book is about the so called “Stilbewußtsein”, *i.e.* the planned use of style variations, also from earlier periods, which occurs often in the decoration of Ramesside private tombs.

The appendices and indices at the back of the book presents the observations of work procedure of applying the decoration (appendix X). Appendix B presents tables in which the occurrence of characteristics in time and place are neatly arranged. Included information are its technology, wall arrangement, colour choice, clothing, wigs, body characteristics as well as iconographic characteristics. These tables well arranged and highly detailed. Finally, there are, among others, indices with family names and an illustration list. The bibliography is very extensive. At the end of the book, 32 high-quality colour photographs are inserted.

Eva Hofmann's book is an important work on the decorative craft and art. The author presents clear arguments as well as sound and detailed interpretations; the research has contributed to our knowledge of the Ramesside private tombs and understading of its decoration greatly and serves as reference work for the further study of the funeral customs in the New Kingdom. The book corresponds to the high standard we are used from Philipp von Zabern. It contains outstanding, partly even coloured photographs, has a clear layout and is printed on high quality paper and is worth the price.

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