

Copy—Paste in Graffiti Production?

Intericonicity in religious graffiti in the Valley of the Kings and the dissemination of motives

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The following lines were written with the goal to provide another answer to the question which many researchers working with graffiti and most probably also the celebrant Ursula Verhoeven may have had¹: why was a specific graffito applied at a particular spot? The answers given so far show quite often a broad variety and oscillate between easy and very difficult as well as between one clear explanation and several, sometimes also complementary propositions. Besides personal reasons of the producer, which can only be assessed to a certain extent, two main external factors had an impact on the place of application of an inscription or a drawing. One is the macro level which refers to landscape and/or man-made structures—in particular also pathways and view axis determined by them—and the other is the micro level consisting of surface qualities and already existing graffiti². The focus of the following case studies on some religious graffiti in the Valley of the Kings will be on the latter when the graffiti space was already created with one or several graffiti in place. One of the reactions on existing graffiti which was so far not yet further looked at in the corpus of the *graffiti de la montagne thébaine*—a less formal level of image production than in for example private tombs—are the different forms of intericonicity³. The analysis of the use of images, of image transfer, of adaptations and of new compositions developed great dynamics during the past years⁴. Text and image transmission, passing on, adapting and copying is attested from at least the 3rd millennium BC onwards and

¹ Verhoeven 2020.

² Part of the material used here was first investigated for a presentation entitled “Writing-environment interaction: the agency of space on acts of producing religious graffiti in the royal necropolis of Western Thebes, Egypt” at the conference “Interferences: The spatio-material interaction of writing and image in Ancient Egypt and around the world”, held at Leiden University, 24–25 March 2022, organised by Frederik Rogner. The high potential of the religious graffiti for analyses on intericonicity phenomena became as a side result quite obvious. All the aspects of the impact of landscape on graffiti production will not be discussed here, but will form part of a future study including the entire corpus of the *graffiti de la montagne thébaine*.

³ Intericonicity as a concept was first discussed in Egyptology by Laboury 2017, 247–251.

⁴ Den Doncker 2017; Den Doncker 2022.

different studies based on other theoretical concepts, just to name archaism⁵ as one of the research areas, were made long before the actual intericonicity studies with the Theban Private Tombs as primary source material⁶.

In a recent article Muhammad Ragab has presented an in-depth analysis of different kinds of Amun-Ra graffiti in the Valley of the Kings⁷. He identified the moment when a particular representation of the god (ram headed protome, standing in human form, standing in human form ithyphallic, seated and others) was first rendered as a graffito in the Valley of the Kings, followed by diachronic and diatopic observations, the identification of the actors according to their rank, and the analysis of the transformation of spaces into sacred spaces by the application of images of the god Amun-Ra. This transformation of spaces was done in different ways: with only one image or with several images created by one person or several persons in the same area. The transformation could be enhanced by the continuous application of god's images of the same type in the now sacred space, of other types of Amun-Ra images or even by representations and texts of other gods or goddesses.

Original and copy: intericonic relationship between signed and differently dated images

The place above the tomb of Merenptah⁸ with seven images of the god Amun-Ra and with further textual (Amun-Ra, goddess of the West) and figurative presences of goddesses like Taweret and Meretseger can be identified as a particular sacred space like the area below the tomb of Thutmose III⁹. Ragab identified the sculptor Amennakhte (viii)¹⁰, who was active as sculptor in the second half of the reign of Ramses II as theme opener¹¹, in the area above the tomb of Merenptah with the application of at least two similar protomes of Amun-Ra (graffito 280 and 307)¹². The protome graffiti of Amun-Ra discussed here consist of the following elements: a sun disk above the ram head combined with an uraeus, a caption in a column in front of the ram head and the indication of Amennakhte's (viii) name and filiation introduced by *iri.n*. The only differences between the two renderings of the protome of Amun-Ra are the additional offering table in graffito 280, the indication of

⁵ Der Manuelian 1994.

⁶ Kahl 1999.

⁷ Ragab 2021.

⁸ Sector A5 with the sections 12 and 13 according to the designations introduced by the *graffiti de la montagne thébaine* project, see Félix and Kurz 1970, 23, pl. 40–43 (sector A5), pl. IV (for the location of all sections in the Valley of the Kings).

⁹ Sector A9 sections 77, 83 and 84, see Félix and Kurz 1970, 28–29, pl. 58–62, for examples from there, see below.

¹⁰ Persons are identified according to Davies 1999, for Amennakhte (viii) see p. 187–188 with a reference to the several depictions of Amun-Ra ram heads in n. 147 made by Amennakhte.

¹¹ For the new category “theme opener” to classify graffiti, see Ragab 2021, 203.

¹² Published by Spiegelberg 1921, 25 pl. 31 (graffito 307), 30–31 pl. 41 (graffito 349); more recently partly re-published by Hawass, Abdel-Monaem, and Afifi 2010, 70–73 with fig. 7a (graffito 307). See the corrections of the translations differing from Spiegelberg's provided by Demarée 2012, 110–111.



Fig. 1: The 19th dynasty graffito 307 of the sculptor Amennakhte (viii) and the 20th dynasty graffito 349 of the deputy Hay (vii) (after Spiegelberg 1921, pl. 31, 41)

only Amun-[Ra] (280) in comparison with the “corrupted” rendering of the longer caption *Imn-R: nb ip.t* “Amun-Ra, lord of Karnak”¹³ (graffito 307, see fig. 1, left) and Amennakhte’s (viii) name with filiation written in one line (280) instead of three lines (307). A third graffito (350) with a less elaborate (unfinished) rendering of the protome of Amun-Ra—without mane, sun disk and caption—can eventually also be ascribed to Amennakhte (viii), depending on which inscription should be related with the producer: the bigger one of Meryra below the head or the one of Amennakhte (viii) just in front of the head. Graffito 350 is located on a freestanding rock¹⁴ in the center of the beginning of the upper end of the gully. This rock may have been considered as a particular landscape feature motivating graffiti scratchers further to transform the area in a sacred space¹⁵.

¹³ For a comment on the captions, see Spiegelberg 1921, 25, 27. The signs below the inscription—falcon and “cross”—are considered here as not belonging to the graffito of Amennakhte (viii).

¹⁴ Not included in the maps and plans of the *graffiti de la montagne thébaine* project.

¹⁵ Sacred space is not understood here as an exclusive label for the area in which religious graffiti were applied, but as a designation of one of the capacities of the place where more than hundred other graffiti were left, pointing to multiple use of space by the members of the community of workmen, as for example for recreation, informal gatherings in shade, etc.

In the sacred space above the tomb of Merenptah on the freestanding rock another graffiti writer, the deputy Hay (vii)¹⁶, who lived at least two generations after Amennakhte (viii), followed the theme opener topic by applying another image of the Amun-Ra protome (graffito 349, see fig. 1 right). Hay (vii) did not just add another protome, but copied the existing nearby located graffito 307 accurately with some features typical for his own graffiti.

The way Hay (vii) copied the older image can be summarized as an improved, corrected, more formal version of the original. Iconographic differences can be seen in the form of the beard and, in graffito 349, the additional upper eye lid line, the single stroke inside the pupil and the bigger snake inside the sun disk. One of the characteristics of the graffiti made by Hay (vii) is the quite often attested rendering of his inscriptions in between lines, both when written in columns and in lines. These lines create here a more formal setting in particular for the two lines below the figure containing his name and the filiations, with the uppermost horizontal line building the baseline on which the protome of Amun-Ra was placed in contrast to the more free-floating indication of the name of Amennakhte (viii). The caption of the god, described above as “corrupted”, was replaced by a correct designation of that form of Amun-Ra as *Imn-R: n ip.t* “Amun-Ra of Karnak”. Other observations like the different size of the uraeus and the writing of his name in hieratic and not with hieroglyphs indicate on the one hand that Hay (vii) did not slavishly copy, but on the other hand that he wanted to relate his version in a subtle way to Amennakhte’s (viii) model: Hay (vii) introduced his inscription also by the *iri.n* formula, which he rarely used in his other graffiti¹⁷, and ended the first line as in the model with the name Amennakhte by mentioning his own son Amennakhte (vi)/(xii). As such, he created a parallel with the original. The second line of Hay’s (vii) graffito may be a latter addition by his son Amennakhte (vi)/(xii) or at least made by Amennakhte himself at the same time¹⁸, which is supported by the use of hieroglyphs instead of the hieratic script, speaking for another writer. Rendering his name in hieroglyphs created a further visual correlation.

Further arguments can be presented to argue that Hay (vii) created an image of Amun-Ra that is closely related to graffito 307 of Amennakhte (viii) on purpose. First, Hay (vii) left his image in proximity to other protomes, which were made by Amennakhte (viii) and which therefore already existed there as possible models when he produced his version (see above the description of graffito 280 and 350). Second, Hay (vii) was the first person who created a graffito for Amun-Ra using the standing figure of Amun-Ra (see f. ex. graffito 1880) as the god’s representation¹⁹. This was the form he and his son used mainly in the named Amun-Ra graffiti, which they left in the Theban necropolis. This form of Amun-Ra was, for example, added here later next to Hay’s (vii) graffito 349 on the free-standing

¹⁶ Davies 1999, 63–73 especially 69.

¹⁷ Dorn 2017, 615–616.

¹⁸ The name of Hay’s (vii) son Amennakhte (vi)/(xii) is doubled in the graffito, once written in hieratic by Hay (vii) after his name, once most probably by Amennakhte (vi)/(xii) himself in the second line. A mistake can’t fully be excluded, which would make the identification of one Amennakhte named in the graffito as Amennakhte (x), father of Hay (vii) possible: superfluous *f* in line 1 in *z:zf* or *z: n* instead of *z:zf* at the beginning of line 2 (questioning the rendering of the two horns of the viper by Spiegelberg).

¹⁹ Ragab 2021, 197–198.

rock by his son Amunnakhte (vi)/(xii) (graffito 351). Third, the type of the protome used by Hay (vii), and earlier by Amennakhte (viii) above the tomb of Merenptah, was twice applied only here (with the variants 280 and 350 even four times)²⁰. The other protome types are different: the one group below the tomb of Thutmose III is set on a square pedestal and the other type there made by the contemporaneously active scribe Amennakhte (v) (see graffito 593, fig. 4 right) consists of a protome that was placed on a tomb façade. All these observations make it clear that Hay (vii) had consciously chosen graffito 307 as model and not the other two graffiti (280, 350) that were already present on the spot, nor the other forms of the god that existed in parallel or the form (standing Amun-Ra figure), which he introduced himself to the iconographic repertoire of Amun-Ra graffiti in the Valley of the Kings. Fourth, Hay (vii) left in the area (on the same wall as graffito 307) another religious graffito (1635), which depicts the goddess Taweret, who is very rarely present in pictorial graffiti²¹. This shows that Hay (vii) would have had even further options, but he decided to add another protome of Amun-Ra of that particular type in the area to continue the visual tradition already established at the spot. Besides that, he further developed the sacred space of Amun-Ra by enlarging its religious capacity by the introduction of the Taweret-graffito.

Original and copy: intericonic relationship between not signed and therefore not dated images and the dissemination of motives

The distribution of the different forms of Amun-Ra in the Valley of the Kings shows²² that a rendering of a god in a particular form can motivate other persons to create that form again at the same place, as the case of Hay (vii) has shown²³. The identification of the original and the copy was easy to establish in the case of the two graffiti (307 and 349, see fig. 1) based on the indication of the producers' names. In other cases, the relationship between original and "copy" cannot be established due to the lack of chronologically relevant data connected with the images. But the intericonic relation between the images

²⁰ The other similar Amun-Ra protomes are graffito 2191 (inscription of the god: *Imn-R n ip.t* "Amun-Ra of Karnak"), rendered flipped, without beard, ear and producer's name, located in the area of the tomb of Seti II; graffito 3572 in the *vallée de l'aigle* (see below), also rendered flipped (for flipping and its meaning, see Den Doncker 2022); and graffito 1221 in the Valley of the Queens (see below). All three graffiti show several distinct iconographic differences. In the vicinity of graffito 2191, other renderings of Amun-Ra (graffito 2127 similar to 350 but flipped, 2145 standing figure, 2172 protome with necklace) point to his veneration in this area as well. The execution of the eye identical to graffito 349 of Hay (vii) is not considered here enough evidence to correlate graffiti 349 and 2191 further. For the placement of these graffiti, see Ragab 2021, fig. 1.

²¹ For another representation of Taweret, see graffito 2836 (Valley of the Kings, sector A3, valley of the tomb of Ramses XI).

²² Ragab 2021, fig. 1.

²³ Agency of existing images on further image production.

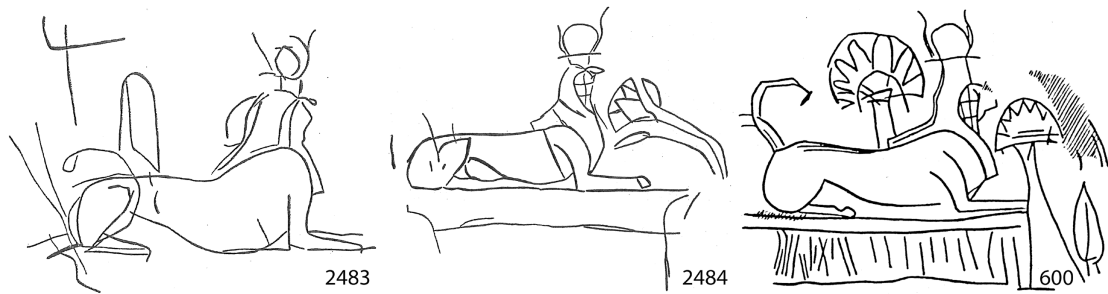


Fig. 2: Three undated representations of the goddess Meretseger as Sphinx with snake head located below the tomb of Thutmosis III (KV 34) each applied around half a meter apart from each other (Černý and Sadek 1970 pl. 118; Spiegelberg 1921, pl. 65)

is quite obvious especially when the following two criteria are given: rare iconographic renderings (two or several times) of an image²⁴ (here gods), located in close proximity to each other. Such a case can be found in another group of protomes of Amun-Ra (fig. 4; graffiti 2458, 2464, 2465, 2472, 593) as well as in the three representations of the goddess Meretseger as sphinx with a snake as head (full body of a lion) lying on a tomb façade/pedestal (2 out of 3) (fig. 2; graffiti 600, 2483, 2484), which are both located on the cliffs below the tomb of Thutmosis III (KV 34) (fig. 3)²⁵.

The three graffiti were applied nearby on the same height and not more than half a meter apart from each other (fig. 3). They show significant iconographic differences, graffiti 600 even with a fan above/behind the back of the body of the sphinx, which can usually be found in that position with renderings of Amun as a ram, and also with two tails, both not in the usual position, first turning down and then encircling the hind leg of the lion body. This form of Meretseger is quite rare and so far attested only a few times on stelae, one by a scribe or draftsman ///-nefer, not dated/datable²⁶, the other by Qenna (i)²⁷, active during the mid-20th dynasty. Further attestations are found in graffiti in other parts of the Theban necropolis, one in graffiti 1082 at the bottom of the *vallée de l'aigle* made by the draftsman Hormin (i), active during mid 20th dynasty²⁸, the other in graffiti 1218 in the Valley of the Queens, producer not named²⁹. The group of three rare forms of Meretseger representations below the tomb of Thutmosis III are flanked by Amun-Ra protomes. The same pattern, the combination of Meretseger as sphinx on a tomb façade with an Amun-Ra protome rendered close by, can also be found in graffiti 1082 in the *vallée de l'aigle*

²⁴ Exceptional or rare motifs are also among the images that were several times discussed in recent studies on intericonicity, see Den Doncker 2017, 335–336, Laboury 2017, 235, Den Doncker 2022.

²⁵ Sector A9 section 84, see Félix and Kurz 1970, 28–29, pl. 58–62.

²⁶ Bruyère 1930, 115 fig. 55: possession of B. Bruyère.

²⁷ Bruyère 1930, 116 fig. 56: stela Vatican museum no. 170. Date proposed by Bruyère based on stylistic criteria: 18th dynasty. The rarity of stelae from Deir el-Medine securely dated to the 18th dynasty speaks for a later date even with strong stylistic allusions to late 18th dynasty.

²⁸ Černý 1956, 2 pl. 4.

²⁹ Černý 1956, 12 pl. 27. Several persons are named in graffiti (1214–1217) placed in a line just above Meretseger as sphinx (1218): Sobeknakhte (PN?), the chisel bearer Nebnefer, Nebamentet and Amenakhte (viii) with filiations.

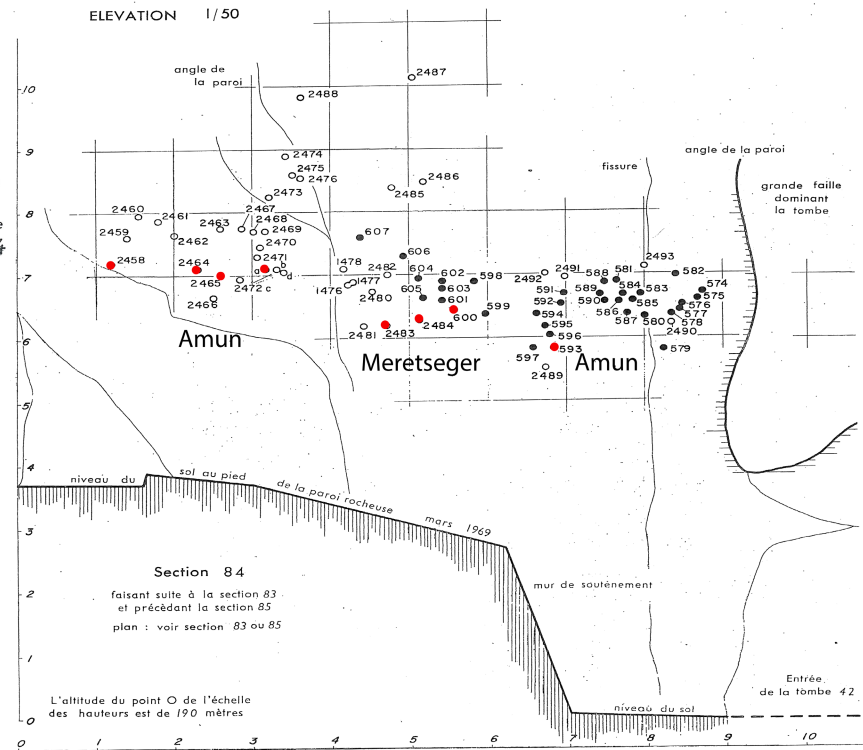
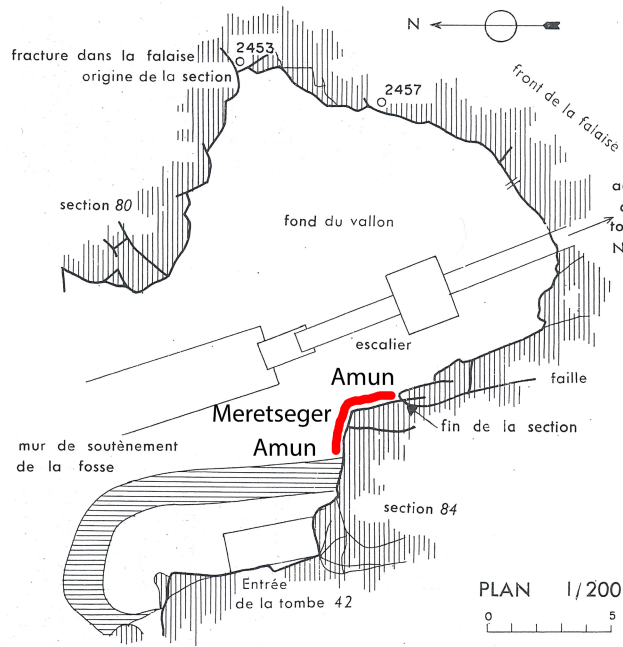


Fig. 3: Plan and view of section 84 below the tomb of Thutmosis III (KV 34) with the indication of the placement of the Amun (see fig. 4) and Meretseger (see fig. 2) representations (after Félix and Kurz 1970, pl. 71, 72)

as well as in the Valley of the Queens (*vallée des trois puits*) in graffito 1221 (Amun-Ra protome) in combination with graffito 1218 (Meretseger as sphinx). The later Amun-Ra protome (graffito 1221) is quite an elaborate one made by the workman Hori (iii) who was active during the first half of the 20th dynasty and similar to graffito 307 and 349, but with an offering table and flowers in front of the head and a serpent surrounding the sun disk. That the combination of Amun-Ra and Meretseger, attested in the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens and in the *vallée de l'aigle*, is not an accidental one, becomes obvious in graffito 1082 of Hormin (i), which shows him venerating Meretseger with Amun-Ra in the forms discussed here located close by. This combination is exceptional and not found in the Valley of the Kings on other media such as stelae or ostraca³⁰, and only once in graffito 507 in which Amun is depicted in the protome-form discussed below together with Meretseger, not as sphinx, but as snake³¹. The combination brings together the local patron and the main Egyptian god Amun, further designated with an epitheton “of Karnak”. This points to the interpretation of the royal necropolis as belonging to the wider realm of Amun opposite of Karnak “who faces her lord”³². In general, Meretseger is venerated alone or in combination with Ptah, Amun alone, as well as in different forms or in combination with Mut and Khons.

Another case of intericonic relationship can be found nearby the representation of the Meretseger sphinxes (fig. 4). It consists of four images of Amun-Ra protomes (graffiti 2458, 2464, 2464, 2472). The intericonic relation of the images is quite evident by their close proximity to each other (see fig. 3) and the use of the same type of Amun-Ra protome with a square pedestal, which is nowhere else attested. Despite the close relationship, the variations between the images are quite high with different angles between body and chin, the uraeus (on the head or surrounding the sun disk), objects in front of the god (altar, flower) and the flipped version in graffito 2458 and the different kind of captions. These differences may be in some cases due to the different quality in the execution of the images³³ and in others to consciously created own interpretations of the basic image type of the Amun-Ra protome on a square pedestal by the graffiti producers. A general date, as well as the determination of the internal chronology/relationship between the four protomes, is difficult to establish. It is tempting to date graffito 2458 to the reign of Seti I based on the hieroglyphs *mn-r'-mꜣ:t (?)* as a corrupted rendering of the king's name facing the protome, but a general date in the 19th–21st dynasty seems more appropriate.

³⁰ For an exception, see the different rendering of an Amun-Ra protome designated as “Amun-Ra, king of the gods, lord of heaven” on O. BTdK 195 (Dorn 2011, pl. 184).

³¹ For the clumsy executed graffito of a Ramose, see Spiegelberg 1921, 43 pl. 58. For the location of the graffito, see Ragab 2021, fig. 1. The unexperienced execution of the graffito, drawing and inscription, makes dating difficult and it is tempting to date it to the end of the New Kingdom or even later. If one proposes a date in the first millennium, the snake cannot be identified as Meretseger, because her veneration is not attested after the New Kingdom. A late date based on low quality is, from a methodological point of view, quite problematic and excludes the possibility that the graffito was made by an unexperienced graffito producer or pupil. In the actual case, the ubiquitous name Ramose does not further help dating the graffito.

³² For a recent discussion of the necropolis and its relation to Karnak, see Ragab 2021, 192 with further literature.

³³ Graffito 2464 is considered here as an unfinished version of the same Amun-Ra protome.

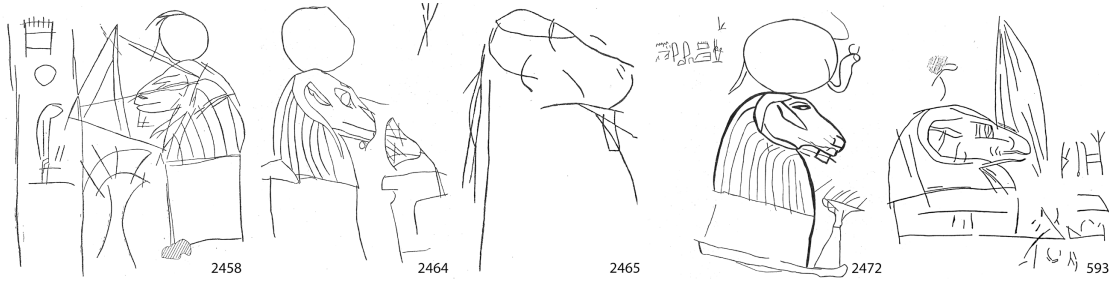


Fig. 4: Five Amun-Ra protomes located below the tomb of Thutmose III (KV 34). The first four are located close to each other, the fifth 3 m apart on another wall surface framing with the first four the three Meretseger representations (Černý and Sadek 1970 pl. 113, 114, 117; Spiegelberg 1921, pl. 65)

Different is the protome of graffito 593, which is set on a tomb façade and which shows the uraeus above the head but without a sun disk³⁴, like the protomes of Amennakhte (viii) and Hay (vii) located above the tomb of Merenptah. Other than those and the ones to its left, the ram head does not have a beard and the mane/head cloth is not indicated. The incomplete hieroglyphic inscription in front of the head reads *sš-ḳd m ḥ.t nḥḥ* “the draftsman in the horizon of eternity”. It was fully rendered under the inclusion of the producer’s name Amennakhte (v), son of Ipuw, in graffito 597 just behind the protome, allowing the identification of the graffito writer. The spot can be designated as appropriated by Amennakhte (v) by the presence of two other graffiti, 591 and 594–596 (both in hieratic), which he left just above the Amun-Ra protome. Amennakhte (v), who lived more or less at the same time as Hay (vii)³⁵, created with this image a new type of Amun-Ra protome (on tomb façade), which became the model for the other mid-20th dynasty versions of Amun-Ra protomes attested in the Theban necropolis. The dissemination of this new Amun-Ra protome can be further traced. Graffito 1454, located above the tomb of Thutmose IV and made by the draftsman Hormin (i), who belongs to the generation of Amennakhte’s (v) children, attests that the scribe and draftsmen of the period knew about each other’s use of the motive. This is shown by the name and title of Amunnakhte (v), which he inserted between the inscription of the graffiti producer Hormin (i) and the image of Amun-Ra³⁶. Hormin (i) continued to produce this kind of Amun-Ra protomes in particular in the *vallée de l’aigle*, where he applied graffito 1082 (Amun-Ra and Meretseger as sphinx, see the discussion above) and ten meters to the left in another veneration scene showing him in front of the Amun-Ra protome (graffito 2927). Through these two graffiti with three veneration scenes, another sacred space is generated. Also, in the same area another graffito (3572) can be found with a protome of the earliest type of Amun-Ra graffiti (see above graffito 307 of Amennakhte [viii]) here facing left. Around the protome of Amun-Ra, several scratches and remains of inscriptions can be detected. Among them is the partly preserved caption *Ḳmn-R n ip* /// “Amun-Ra of Karnak”, which is not attested with the younger Amun-Ra protome type. Above the head is a workman’s mark and above it the name with

³⁴ It is tempting to interpret a round elevated part just above the head as a kind of a natural sun disk.

³⁵ See above graffito 349.

³⁶ Luiselli and Dorn 2016, 103–105.

filiations of Amennakhte (viii), the producer of the first such Amun-Ra protome. Above and a little bit behind the head, graffito 3571 of Hormin (i) is present, which may also point to the producer of the Amun-Ra protome of graffito 3572. The attribution of this flipped version to one of the two persons named nearby is not fully clear, the different upper face line (from above the eye until the nose) speaks more in favour of Amennakhte (viii), but the beard, the nose and the position of the ear, for example, do not support this attribution, yet neither speak for Hormin (i).

In addition to the above mentioned protome of Amun-Ra placed in close proximity to a rendering of Meretseger as sphinx (see graffito 1217 + 1221) in the Valley of the Queens (*vallée des trois puits*), another Amun-Ra protome of the later type on a tomb façade (graffito 1164) can be found in this part of the necropolis 80 meters south-west of the tomb of prince Qenherkhepeshef (QV 55). The caption *Imn-R' nb ip.t* “Amun-Ra, lord of Karnak” is present in front of the protome. The graffito was made by Hay (vii) as indicated by graffito 1161 (starting with *iri.n* “made by” as above in graffito 349). The identical rendering of the eye in graffito 349 further supports Hay (vii) as the producer of graffito 1164. That Amennakhte (v), who “invented” that Amun-Ra protome type, was aware of that graffito and the dissemination of the motive during the 20th dynasty all over the necropolis, is supported by two graffiti (1165 and 1170), which he left on the same rock formation just some meters to the right of graffito 1164 by Hay (vii). He was most probably the first who started to copy the Amun-Ra protome (graffito 349), which was established as a visual representation of the god in graffiti during the 19th dynasty by Amennakhte (viii) in the area above the tomb of Merenptah.

Summary

It could be shown with two types of representations of gods, Meretseger as sphinx and different renderings of Amun-Ra protomes, that intericonic relationships can also be found in the corpus of the *graffiti de la montagne thébaine*. With a clear copy-paste case—graffito 307 made by the sculptor Amennakhte (viii), who was active during the second half of the reign of Ramses II, and copied by deputy Hay (vii) in graffito 349, who was active during the mid-20th dynasty—adaptations and variations in the later rendering could be shown. Rare motives, like Meretseger as sphinx applied on the same spot, could be identified as clearly intericonically related. In these geographically closely related cases the impact of the existing image (agency) could be identified as one of the motivations for the application/production of the copy. It is more difficult to identify the motivation for the image production in the case of the dissemination of the two different forms of Amun-Ra protomes—variants of the once, in the 19th dynasty, established image type—over the entire royal necropolis (Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens and adjacent valleys) during the mid-20th dynasty. But based on the identification of several persons of the Deir el-Medine elite (deputy, scribe, draftsmen), who were involved in the dissemination process and who were all closely connected and aware of the dissemination process, it can be proposed that the application of the Amun-Ra protomes on different, more or less remote, spots in the necropolis was the common goal. Further, the connectedness of the producers

may explain the iconographic variants in the renderings of the common motive as markers allowing their personal distinction.

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