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A Contribution to the Study of the *tekenu* and its Role in Egyptian Funerary Ritual¹

Hierzu Tafel V–VIII

Introduction

Egyptian beliefs and funerary rituals still pose at present a series of aspects and elements which are not thoroughly understood; the *tekenu* is a clear example of this. The representation of the *tekenu* was already present in several tombs of the Middle Kingdom within the Theban region², but is particularly common during the first half of the New Kingdom (18th Dynasty)³, extending its presence lasting into the early Ramesside Period⁴. However, its origin may be traced fur-

ther back into the Old Kingdom⁵ and, in the same way, it is found later in the iconographic funerary catalogue of the Late Period⁶.

One of the reasons why the *tekenu* is not yet fully understood is the absence of a full monographic study designed to evaluate the extensive corpus relating to it. However, it has attracted the attention of several scholars, leading to a diversity of opinions about its origin, nature, and religious significance⁷. Of special interest is the

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² TT 60, Intefiker (N. de G. Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Antefoker*, London, 1960, pl. XXI–XXII), and the tomb of Sehetepibre (J. E. Quibell and W. M. F. Petrie, *The Ramesseum*, London, 1898, p. 4 and pl. IX).

³ TT 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 24, 39, 42, 49, 53, 55, 78, 81, 82, 84, 92, 96, 100, 104, 112, 122, 123, 125, 127, 172, 179, 224, 260, 276. It should be added to these the documents from outside the Theban region, above all from El-Kab: see J. J. Tylor and F. Ll. Griffith, *The tomb of Paheri at El Kab*, London, 1894, pl. 5; J. J. Tylor, *The tomb of Renni*, London, 1909, pl. 9–13 and 15.

⁴ TT 157 and 284 (cf. P. Barthelmess, *Der Übergang ins Jenseits in den thebanischen Beamtengräbern der Ramessidenzeit*, Heidelberg, 1992, 56–58). TT 41, dating from the early 19th Dynasty should be added to the previous two (J. Assmann, *Das Grab des Ame-*

nemope TT 41, Mainz am Rhein, 1991, p. 93 and pl. 40). See also the anonymous tomb published in M. Werbrouck, *Les Pleureuses dans l’Égypte Ancienne*, Brussels, 1938, pl. 32.

⁵ R. Macramallah, *La mastaba d’Idout*, Cairo, 1935, pl. 8.

⁶ J. V. Scheil, *Le tombeau d’Aba*, Cairo, 1894, pp. 651 ff., pl. 9. Also, K. Kuhlmann and W. Schenkel, *Das Grab des Ibi: Theben Nr. 36*, Mainz am Rhein, 1983. Another good representation of the Late Period *tekenu* can be found at the tomb of Pabasa (TT 279). In these cases, it is simply one of those instances of an element retrieved in keeping with the archaic religious and artistic tendencies of the Late Period.

⁷ The initial studies of the *tekenu* stress its similarities with the primitive burial methods of prehistoric civilizations found in the Nile Valley: the corpse in a foetal position, placed in a simple hole and wrapped in a shroud, mat, or bull hide. Thus, it has been considered a representation of the deceased, or, better yet, of a sacrificial victim, possibly human, which some assumed was a part of the funerals of that period. The hide was attributed with a relevant function: it becomes a well-known element, recurrent in rituals of renovation and revitalization, fully in keeping with the ideas of transit from one world to another, central in Egyptian funerary beliefs and practices. Cf. A. Moret, *Les Mystères Égyptiens*, Paris, 1927, pp. 31 ff.; E. Thompson, “The magic skin: a contribution to the study of the *tekenu*”, *AE*, 1923, pp. 3–8, 46–56. Also see, C. Spieser, “Vases et peaux animales matriciels dans la pensée religieuse égyptienne”, *BiOr* 63, 2006, 219–234 (the

contribution by J. G. Griffiths, who considers the *tekenu* as one of the elements whose origins go back in time to the burial of chiefs and kings of Lower Egypt, in what is referred to as “the Butic Burial”⁸. He further connects the *tekenu* with the sacrifice, not of a human being, but of an animal, a bull: This constitutes an important clarification. In connection with this, it has been observed that in many representations of the *tekenu*, it appears in a ritual context sharing a central role with the sacrificed bovid⁹. In fact, the hide that wraps the *tekenu* is believed to come from the skin of a bull. In the majority of cases this hide is depicted white or plain black, most probably dyed. This is undoubtedly due to the significant symbolic connotations that both colours have in Egyptian religious perspective¹⁰.

approximation to the *tekenu* on 232f. is, to our understanding, erroneous, as it is located within the context of the Opening of the Mouth ritual; cf. below). See contra H. Kees, *Totenglaube und Jenseitsvorstellungen der Alten Ägypter: Grundlagen und Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches*, Leipzig, 1926, pp. 251–253. A recent contribution to the understanding of the *tekenu*, quite hypothetical and always in the light of the archaic burial practices and related with the rebirth of the dead, is G. J. Tassie, “Bulls, Hair and the *tekenu*: An Enigmatic Egyptian Custom Revisited (Burial of the Black Hairs)”, *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology (UCL)*, vol. 11, 2000, pp. 27–45.

⁸ J. G. Griffiths, “The *tekenu*, the Nubians and the Butic Burial”, *Kush* 6, 1958, pp. 106–120. In reference to the Butic Burial, see: H. Junker, “Der Tanz der Mww und das Butische Begräbnis im Alten Reich”, *MDAIK* 9, 1940, pp. 1–39; J. Vandier, “Quelques remarques sur les scènes de pèlerinage aux villes saintes dans les tombes de la XVIII^e Dynastie”, *CdE* 37, 1944, pp. 35–61; K.-J. Seyfried, “Reminiscences of the ‘Butic Burial’ in Theban Tombs of the New Kingdom”, in N. Strudwick and J. H. Taylor (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis: Past, Present and Future*, London, 2003, pp. 61–68.

⁹ See, for instance, TT 100 (Rekhmire), or TT 96 (Sennefer). Of significant interest are the scenes preserved in TT 20 (Montuherkhepeshef) and TT 11 (Djehuty), where the *tekenu* appears in association with a register partially dedicated to the sacrifice and quartering of bovinds (see below and Taf. VIII, Fig. 8). In TT 20, in particular, we found inside one of the holes represented the offerings or the remains of the sacrificed victims, the *tekenu*’s skin, the hair, the leg and heart of the bull. See N. de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, London, 1913, pl. IX.

¹⁰ Black is associated with life and resurrection, being one of the colours commonly related to Osiris;

In some instances, nonetheless, the artist opts for a rougher representation of the hide, reflecting its original texture and hues, as may be observed in the early representations found in the tomb of Intefiker (TT 60) or Sehetepibre, of the Middle Kingdom, in both cases being clearly identified as bovid skins¹¹. In addition, as will be seen below, the name of this hide wrapping the *tekenu* is *msk*¹², a term specifically applied to a skin of a bull in particular or any bovid in general¹³. Even though it is sometimes related to secular or daily uses¹⁴, it is more frequently found within a purely religious or ritualistic context. Thus, for example, in the well-known Abydos stela erected by the head priest of the cult of Osiris Wepwawet-aa, there is a direct reference to the sacrifice of bovinds and the subsequent ritual use of the victims’ skins (*msk*)¹⁵.

At this point mention should also be made of H. Kees’s thesis, which is currently considered by many a reliable one on the matter at hand¹⁶. Starting with a critique of previous interpreta-

white is the colour of purity and clearly linked to the sun. See R. H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, London, 1994, pp. 109f.; E. Brunner-Traut, “Farben”, *LÄ* II, 1977, cols. 115–128; W. V. Davies (ed.), *Colour and Painting in Ancient Egypt*, London, 2001, *passim*.

¹¹ Davies-Gardiner, *The Tomb of Antefoker*, p. 22 n. 1, pl. XXII and XXIII A; Quibell-Petrie, *The Ramesseum*, pl. IX.

¹² N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-re at Thebes*, New York, 1943, pl. 83; *id.*, *Five Theban Tombs*, pp. 14f. The recently discovered text that accompanies the *tekenu* in the tomb of Djehuty (TT 11), which will be analyzed in the last part of this study, should also be included.

¹³ Wb II, p. 150, 3–4; A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford, 1957, p. 464, 570; R. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch*, Mainz, 1997, p. 365.

¹⁴ Cf. The Satire on Trades, Chapt. 18. Cf. W. Helck, *Die Lehre des Dw3-Ḥtj*, Wiesbaden, 1970, vol. II, pp. 104f. See also A. Gardiner and K. Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead*, London, 1928, p. 14.

¹⁵ For this interesting document see K. Sethe, *Ägyptische Lesestücke*, Leipzig, 1928, pp. 72–74; M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies*, Fribourg-Göttingen, 1988, pp. 77–80; Cl. Obsomer, *Sésostris I: étude chronologique et historique du règne*, Brussels, 1995, pp. 563–567.

¹⁶ Kees, *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen*, pp. 250–251.

tions, Kees identifies the *tekenu* as essentially a victim, allowing for the possibility of it representing some kind of image, a double or substitute of the deceased. The important element is that in the ritual he performs a special purifying role, that of drawing towards himself all that is evil and negative, acting as a scapegoat that will allow the dead person a clean and pure transit to the afterlife. Following the same line of argument, E. Hornung goes beyond this and considers the *tekenu* as a receptacle, a container or a sack, where the remains of the embalming process that had no room inside the mummified corpse or the canopic jars would be stored. These remains had to be preserved, as they would be required in the funeral and, possibly, would finally be placed in the tomb¹⁷. This idea appears to be supported in the customary proximity and connection between the *tekenu* and the canopic jars in the funerary procession, as observed in the scene of “Dragging of the Coffin”¹⁸.

Bearing in mind these aforementioned ideas and proposals, we find it possible to establish more precisely the nature and function of this special character in the Egyptian funeral. The existing documents provide us with abundant information by introducing significant variations and detailed differences, even though most of them are either unpublished or may be difficult to obtain. But it is not the aim of this article to complete an exhaustive study of the *tekenu*, nor to illustrate the various aspects and problems conveyed by this figure. That would require a much longer work. Our primary intention is, first, to highlight several representations of the *tekenu* which have been known for a time, but, from our point of view, have not been totally

understood or assessed; and, secondly, to incorporate new sources, mainly from the tombs of Djehutymose (TT 295) and Djehuty (TT 11). With the support of these documents we expect to assert that the *tekenu* is neither a mere object; nor an inanimate shape; nor a sack. The *tekenu* represents a real character, an officiant, a ritualist, or, maybe, a priest. In addition, far from the traditional static image, motionless and devoid of expression which is normally attributed to the *tekenu*, it will be shown dynamically in the course of different ritual sequences: preparing his participation by applying ointments and perfuming himself with incense; entering the ritual scene; and handling the different objects included in his performance, mainly, a hide and a bed of sorts. Finally, we will emphasize the idea that our character’s fundamental actions revolve around a dormition ritual, some kind of oneiric trance, real or dramatized, of which an interpretation will, undoubtedly, require a more adequate comprehension of the nature of the *tekenu* and its role in the funerary context.

The Ritualist *tekenu*

To start with a much-discussed topic, we need to reassert that the *tekenu* was a real character, of human nature. From the walls of the tomb it can be inferred with little doubt how this person participates as a sacred officiant that assumes a very particular role in the liturgical dramatization that is the Egyptian burial¹⁹.

From an iconographic point of view, a wide range of representations of the *tekenu* exists, but all of them coincide in pointing towards its anthropomorphic nature. It generally appears as a sack or crouching shape being hauled on a sledge²⁰ (Taf. V, Fig. 1), bringing to mind either

¹⁷ E. Hornung, *Spiritualità all’Epoca dei faraoni*, Rome 2002, pp. 168–170. For an adequate understanding of this idea it is suggested here the reading of R. Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*, Paris, 1982, *passim*.

¹⁸ J. Settgast, *Untersuchungen zu altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen*, Glückstadt, 1963, pp. 39–47; Barthelmess, *Übergang ins Jenseits*, pp. 56–58.; J. Assmann, *Mort et Au-delà dans l’Égypte Ancienne*, Paris, 2003, p. 453. Again in this line recently, see: R. Metawi, “The *tknw* and the *hns*-emblem: are they related objects?”, *Memnonia* XIX (2008), 179–187.

¹⁹ For the funeral seen as a dramatization, cf. R. Gillam, *Performance and drama in Ancient Egypt*, London, 2005, pp. 63–66.

²⁰ See, for example, the representations of the tomb of Pahery in El-Kab (Tylor-Griffiths, *The Tomb of Pahery*, pl. V), the tomb of Ramose in Thebes (N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of the vizier Ramose*, London, 1941, pl. XXIII and XXVII), or the tomb of Amenem-

the sacrificed bovid²¹ or a man lying down with arms and legs pressed against his body. This latter option is strengthened by the common representation of the *tekenu* in a sitting position, almost totally covered by a shroud or skin but for his face, head, and, sometimes, hands (Taf. V, Fig. 2)²².

There are a number of documents that are especially significant in this respect and deserve a precise commentary. In TT 20 (Montuherkhepeshef) there are two samples of the *tekenu* that can be considered an exception: both of them are portrayed as a crouching man on the sledge without the accustomed shroud (Taf. V, Fig. 3)²³. In TT 15, tomb of Tetiky from the early 18th Dynasty, the figure of the *tekenu* is illustrated by a graffito accompanied by a short inscription, which generated a certain amount of controversy, that identifies it with “The scribe *Parehny*”²⁴. Carter and Carnavon, who discovered the tomb, published the text without further reference to it²⁵; subsequently, Davies, to whom we owe a more adequate study of this tomb, provided a new interpretation for the scene: “the executant of the picture”²⁶. Altenmüller, contrary to this view, identifies the name

with the officiant performing the role of the *tekenu*²⁷.

This last opinion is also ours. But an attempt to clarify this matter would require an in-depth examination of the graffiti in the tomb of Tetiky that, as is typical for other monuments of the Theban necropolis, are abundant and date from different historical periods²⁸. Some graffiti show evident signs of being posterior additions to the tomb, attributable to visitors and pilgrims, or draftsmen and artists coming to the tomb to copy the texts and scene models. However, others are originals that date from the period of completion and decoration of the tomb. Their function is, generally, evident: some of these graffiti serve as epigraphs, indicating the scene depicted; others identify the characters that are portrayed, priests, officiants, servants, relatives or those closest to the deceased. In this way, for example, the upper register of the north wall offers a long sequence of relatives of Tetiky, each of them accompanied by their name and, at times, even their degree of kinship²⁹. In the upper scene of the south wall, several original graffiti from the early 18th Dynasty illustrate the funerary procession where the *tekenu* is included. Two of them serve the purpose of naming the accompanying scenes (“Carrying by the Nine Friends” and “Dragging of the *tekenu* to the necropolis”), while a third one identifies, as its position and name indicate, an officiant performing a libation under the catafalque borne by the Nine Friends³⁰. These graffiti, particularly the latter, are very similar in style to the one of

het, TT 82 (N. M. Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhet*, London, 1915, pl. XI–XII).

²¹ The relation between the *tekenu* and the sacrifice of the bull was mentioned above (Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens*, pp. 45 ff.; Griffiths, “The *tekenu*, the Nubians and the Butic Burial”, *passim*).

²² See, for example, TT 39, of Puiemre (the *tekenu* completely wrapped with the exception of the face), or TT 60, of Intefiker (with a totally uncovered head).

²³ Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. II and VIII. This document will be extensively analysed in the last section of the present article.

²⁴ This name (*Pi-r-hny*) is attested during the 18th Dynasty, also in the Theban necropolis (TT 161, of Nakht). Cf. H. Ranke, *Ägyptische Personennamen*, Glückstadt, 1935, vol. I, p. 109, n° 18; vol. II, 353.

²⁵ The Earl of Carnavon and H. Carter, *Five Years' Explorations at Thebes*, Oxford, 1912, p. 17.

²⁶ N. de G. Davies, “The tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (n°15)”, *JEA* 11 (1925), 17. This is a proposal that contradicts the norm, save for a small number of exceptions, of artist anonymity in the Egyptian milieu.

²⁷ H. Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual in den Pyramiden des Alten Reiches*, Wiesbaden, 1972, p. 132.

²⁸ The presence of graffiti is especially significant in tombs that become famous and, therefore, models imitated later, being visited assiduously, such as – for example – TT 60, of Intefiker (cf. Davies-Gardiner, *The tomb of Antefoker*, chapt. IV).

²⁹ Davies, “The tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (n°15)”, pp. 15–16 and pl. IV.

³⁰ Davies, “The tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (n°15)”, p. 17 and pl. V. The inscription that accompanies the officiant of the libation ceremony is not complete, but Davies reconstructs it with the following result: “The lector Amenmose [son of] the chief web-priest of Amun (?) Ahmose”.

“The scribe Parehnnny”, which indicates its antiquity and that its function would really be that of identifying the person with the role of *tekenu*.

Moreover, contrary to the traditionally static image of the *tekenu* as a passive character dragged on a sledge, series of representations exist that have not received the attention they deserve and that show the *tekenu* as an active ritualist, adopting various positions and postures. Probably, the most complex and striking document is the one found in tombs TT 11 and TT 20, which will be analysed in the last section of this work.

Attention will now be drawn to a particular scene frequently found in funerary representations. It shows two characters facing each other, one of them, perhaps a priest, holding in his hand a bowl while perfuming or outlining the eyes of the other participant. This group consistently appears behind the sledge where the *tekenu* lies, thus constituting a parallel scene, almost symmetrical, to that of the transportation of the canopic jars, in which case its sledge is followed by two men, each holding a large papyrus flower (Taf. V, Fig. 4)³¹. Both groups, the dragging of the *tekenu* and of the canopic jars, including the secondary figures just described, are mostly treated as closed scenes and are prominent elements in the funerary procession³². From our point of view, it is hard to question the link between the *tekenu* and the two characters perfuming or applying make-up. The structural and iconographic treatment of the group, normally situated at the side of the register initiating a sequence of images and, apparently, taking part in the funerary procession, should make us wary of considering the two characters in isolation from the *tekenu*. Their attitude, furthermore, connects the two participants with the action that takes place afterwards, located to their right: the dragging of the sledge-*tekenu* (see Taf. V, Fig. 4). It is common in Egyptian art to play

with the orientation of the characters in order to break the linear monotony of a series of images, or a ritual sequence. This device may help in showing a motion or action prior to the ritual scene that is depicted consecutively in the register. For example, this can be clearly seen in the ritual sequence of the Opening of the Mouth, in the central scenes where the bull is sacrificed³³: once the animal has been sacrificed, its leg and heart are handed over to two officiants, who are sometimes portrayed in different moments: first, they appear collecting the offerings from the performer of the sacrifice whom they face; and then, they turn around to bring them to the statue of the deceased or mummy³⁴.

In conclusion, we believe that the group of two opposing figures include the character who will assume the role of *tekenu* and that of the priest or officiant who anoints him, before occupying the sledge illustrated next to them. In addition, thanks to the text that supplements this scene in TT 125 (Duaerneheh), we are informed that the one manipulating the incense or cosmetics is the *sʿsrqt*³⁵, a priest who seems to have a special leading role throughout the *tekenu*'s ritual³⁶. We must remember that the actions observed here, the purification by perfuming with incense and the outlining of the eyes, are part of the prerequisites or preparations that priests and ritualists must undergo in order to correctly complete the sacrifice and efficiently perform the rituals³⁷.

³³ These are scenes 23–25 and 43–45. Cf. E. Otto, *Das Ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, Wiesbaden, 1960, vol. II, pp. 73 ff. and 102 ff.

³⁴ There is a good illustration of this artistic convention in the Opening of the Mouth in TT 11 (Djehuty). Cf. José M. Serrano, “El ritual de la Apertura de la Boca en la tumba de Djehuty (TT 11)”, in *Papers on Ancient Egypt-Trabajos de Egiptología*, 5, forthcoming (pl. 2).

³⁵ Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual*, 135.

³⁶ The *sʿsrqt* leads the procession hauling the sledge with the *tekenu*. For this figure see: F. van Känél, *Les Prêtres-Ouâb de Sekhmet et les conjurateurs de Serket*, Paris, 1984, pp. 225–231 and 299–301; Ch. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, Leuven, 2002, vol. VI, pp. 438–440.

³⁷ Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual*, p. 135 n. 75; BD Chapt. 125 Appendix.

³¹ Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 41–42; Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual*, p. 135. Through the texts associated to this scene, it is known that the action that is carried out consists of outlining the eyes and perfuming with incense.

³² TT 42, 53, 100, 104, 125, 127.

The Sleeping *tekenu*

The *tekenu* appears in two different episodes of the complex performance of Egyptian funerals. The most common representation of the *tekenu* is as part of the retinue that forms the funerary procession. Here, within the context of the “Dragging of the Coffin”, and closely linked most of the time to the canopic chest, the figure adopts its most typical and recognizable appearance: a sitting or lying figure on a sledge dragged by two, three or four characters who, lead by the *s3 srqt*, are usually identified with “The people of Ked”³⁸. A second representation of the *tekenu* portrays him lying down on a bed, not the sledge³⁹, and totally wrapped up in the bull hide except for his face, his head and, interestingly, the hands, which adopt a distinct position in front of his face or, more precisely, his mouth (Taf. VI, Fig. 5)⁴⁰. This relatively well documented second appearance of the *tekenu*, which will be carefully examined below, is closely connected to the ritual episodes that, supposedly, take place at the necropolis before the actual carrying of the mummy and the goods needed by the deceased in the afterlife to the tomb and the final ceremonies that close the funeral⁴¹. In at least three tombs (TT 100, 125 and 39), this scene appears along with a short but also very significant text. In the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), where it is best and most adequately preserved, it reads: *rdit ii n niwt msk3 m tknw sgr hr=f m š hpr(y)*. One can translate: “making the skin-*msk3* come to the city (= the necropolis) with

the *tekenu*; sleeping under it in the pool of Khepry”⁴².

It has already been noted that here we find ourselves in the presence of a ritual dormition of the *tekenu*, and it would be possible to establish an analogy with the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth, more precisely with scenes 9 and 10⁴³. In these scenes, an officiant, invariably a *sem*-priest in a cloak or cover of special colour and shape, either sits or lies on a bed in the presence of the image or effigy of the deceased. At the request of the assistants, the *sem*-priest is urged to complete a ritual dormition, considered by some as a kind of shamanic trance⁴⁴, by others as some sort of concentrated meditation that leads to oneiric revelations⁴⁵. Whatever the case (and the understanding) may be, the *sem*-priest awakes and speaks, and the lector-priest is apparently able to gather and interpret his words. The purpose of all this could be to reveal and define the final shape of the image, the statue of the deceased, inferring from the dormition of the *sem*-priest a “Vision von der Statue im Stein”, in the words of Fischer-Elfert (see n. 45).

The formal and iconographic similarities between this episode of the Opening of the Mouth and some representations of the *tekenu* leave little room for debate. However, as has often happened due to lack of evidence, these similarities should not compel us to be too hasty in

⁴² For the different versions of this text, see Settgast, *ibidem*.

⁴³ This association takes us back to Moret, who saw in this a rebirth or resurrection ritual (cf. Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens*, pp. 41 ff.). For a first approach on scenes 9–10 of the Opening of the Mouth see Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, vol. II, pp. 53 ff.

⁴⁴ W. Helck, “Schamane und Zauberer”, in *Mélanges Adolphe Gutbub*, Montpellier, 1984, pp. 103 ff; id., *LÄ V*, 1984, col. 273, s.v. “Rituale”; G. Reeder, “A rite of passage: the enigmatic Tekenu in Ancient Egyptian Funerary Ritual” *KMT* 5-III, 1994, pp. 53–59.

⁴⁵ H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision von der Statue im Stein: Studien zum altägyptischen Mundöffnungsritual*, Heidelberg, 1998, pp. 64 ff. Altenmüller added recently a mythical interpretation of these scenes, understanding them under the light of the Osiris-myth; cf. H. Altenmüller, “Die Wandlungen des Sem-Priesters im Mundöffnungsritual”, *SAK* 38, 2009, pp. 1–32.

³⁸ Ked is a location of the Delta with strong links with the scorpion goddess *srqt* (cf. Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual*, p. 133 f. n. 65).

³⁹ Ritual beds are a common element in the funerary equipment, but it may be possible for the one used by the *tekenu* to be sometimes used also as transportation of the canopic chest (Davies-Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhet*, pl. XI–XII. See too our Taf. V, Fig. 4).

⁴⁰ TT 39, 41, 96, 100, 125, 276.

⁴¹ Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 92 f. This author includes the scene among the rites of the *pr 3w* (“Pfeilerhaus”), closely linked to the important liturgical acts that take place in what he refers to as the Sacred Precinct (“der Heilige Bezirk”).

identifying the *sem*-priest with the *tekenu*. From our standpoint, it would be incorrect to equate the two of them⁴⁶. As is well known, nonetheless, the *sem*-priest is one of the main protagonists of the Egyptian funeral. He appears continually, generally speaking well-identified as the main participant in central stages of the funerary ritual, for example, the Opening of the Mouth or the Offering⁴⁷. The *tekenu*, on the contrary, is a less frequent and more marginal figure whose presence and function here is specific and limited. In addition, there is no evidence to be found of the *tekenu* receiving the title of “*sem*”, a priest who is customarily represented in ritual sequences which may even include the *tekenu*, though totally disconnected the one from the other⁴⁸.

It must be concluded therefore that the *tekenu* and the *sem*-priest are not the same character. Bearing in mind the aims of this study, however, there are connections between the liturgical function of the former and the episode performed in scenes 9 and 10 of the Opening of the Mouth involving the latter. As we will see below, even the Egyptians seemed to be aware of this parallel, giving rise to uncertainty or experiencing confusion on this particular. This should come as no surprise, when one bears in mind

that the ceremonies related to the deceased person and the funeral rite are, largely archaic, dating back to the remotest period of pharaonic civilisation. Being faithful to their traditional and conservative by inclination, the Egyptians maintained them from one generation to another, repeating the rituals once and again in the iconographic and textual repertoires found in tombs and temples⁴⁹. Even if the original sense was altered or lost, these rituals were piously represented in Egyptian tombs because they retained a certain sense, because their magical force was still held to be true, and because they were still accepted as an efficient means to allow the deceased pass to the afterlife. In many cases, the presence of detailed variations on the reliefs, images and texts may lead to a better understanding of both the religious concepts and their underlying rituals, and of how the passing of the centuries have affected their transmission. Bearing this in mind, we will now proceed to analyse two documents related to the *tekenu*, unknown or misinterpreted until now, that, from our perspective, clearly support the proposals of this section of our work:

1) In TT 21 (User), chronologically ascribed to the period of Thutmose II or Hatshepsut, on the corridor's left (southern) wall including the funeral procession and burial rites, we come across an atypical representation of the *tekenu*: sitting on the bed, wrapped in the characteristic hide, but adopting a pose that strongly reminds the observer of the *sem*-priest from scenes 9 and 10 of the Opening of the Mouth with arms and shoulders clearly marked under the shroud (Taf. VII, Fig. 6). This is probably one of the reasons why Davies, to whom we owe an excellent publication of this tomb, considered that this image and the one adjacent to it of a priest performing a libation on the mummy (apparently connected), did not correspond to the

⁴⁶ As done by Reeder, “A rite of passage: the enigmatic Tekenu in Ancient Egyptian Funerary Ritual”, p. 59. In this line, Moret believed there takes place an evolution: at the beginning of the Ramesside Period, the *sem*-priest assumes the role of the *tekenu*, who simply disappears (Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens*, pp. 51 ff.).

⁴⁷ We lack a monographic study on the figure of the *sem*-priest (cf. B. Schmitz, “*sem* (Priester)”, *LÄ V*, 1984, cols. 833–836). It could be also useful for partial approaches, for example on the *sem* in the Sed-Fest, or special titles like the “*sem* of Nekhen” (Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. IX).

⁴⁸ Cf. Davies-Gardiner, *The tomb of Antefoker*, pl. XXII: within the context of the funerary procession, the *sem*-priest appears in the upper register, approaching the Mww, while in the lower register the *tekenu* is dragged on his sledge, before the coffin. See a similar case also in the TT 17, of Nebamon (Th. Säve-Söderbergh, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs*, Oxford, 1957, pl. XXIV–XXV) or in the TT 20 (cf. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. II). In the TT 100 we find the *sem* and the *smr* apparently consecrating two naoi, just beside the “sleeping *tekenu*” (Davies, *Tomb of Rekh-mi-re*, pl. LXXXIII).

⁴⁹ One could rightfully ask whether the artist that designed or copied the images, or even the priest, fully grasped the meaning of rituals as complex as those preserved in the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), which could only be carried out with difficulty.

ritual of the *tekenu*, but to the Opening of the Mouth⁵⁰.

Nevertheless it is important to note on the one hand, that the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth, during the 18th Dynasty at least and as far as the times of Thutmose IV-Amenhotep III, is almost invariably situated on the right wall of the corridor⁵¹. As a matter of fact, the tomb of User adopts this practice as the right wall of the corridor, the one to the north, shows the Opening of the Mouth, customarily, after the hunting scenes of the deceased in the desert. Although the decoration in this area is considerably deteriorated, scenes 2 and 3 of the original are still preserved. Both of them focus on the purification through water of the mummy or effigy of the deceased, and, very likely, they must be part of a relatively larger version of the ritual⁵².

In addition, in accordance with decorative practices in private Theban tombs from the 18th Dynasty, it was not usual to divide the representation of the Opening of the Mouth in the two walls, or combine it with other ritual sequences, such as the funerary procession or the rituals of the “Sacred Precinct” (see n. 41)⁵³. Neither is it common to repeat scenes, given that the group of the officiant pouring water before the mummy next to the *tekenu* was previously identi-

fied with scenes 2 and 3 of the ritual, precisely those well preserved on the opposite wall⁵⁴. Finally, it must be kept in mind that the scene with the officiant purifying, through water or incense, over the mummy or effigy of the deceased is a recurrent element in Egyptian funerary iconography, and that it should not be invariably connected to the Opening of the Mouth⁵⁵. In fact, we can find a scene of the same type, very similar to that of TT 21, also in the context of the funerary rituals of the “Sacred Precinct”, in the tomb of Tetiky (TT 15), which, due to its date, the early 18th Dynasty, and to its iconographic programme, displays a remarkable similarity to the tomb of User, having no connection once again, with the Opening of the Mouth⁵⁶.

In conclusion, we believe that the character sitting on the bed in TT 21 is another illustration of the figure of the “sleeping *tekenu*”. It can then be understood that TT 21 represents the *tekenu* within the context of the rituals of the *pr ʿsw* and the “Sacred Precinct”, due to the proximity of the sacrifice of bovinds and of the three sacred pools that appear in this part of the funeral⁵⁷. This last fact is of particular relevance because, as we infer from some texts⁵⁸, the ritual dormition of the *tekenu* takes place precisely in one of these sacred pools consecrated to Khepry or Heket, that significantly are deities of rebirth and resurrection. These pools moreover could correspond to the “pool of the *tekenu*” which is sometimes to be found⁵⁹. The undeniable fact that the *tekenu*'s silhouette in TT 21 evokes the figure in scenes 9 and 10 of the Opening of the Mouth is by no means a coincidence, but should not be

⁵⁰ Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, p. 25. This is also the opinion of Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, p. 124 and pl. 5 and, more recently, Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision von der Statue*, pp. 74f.

⁵¹ B. Engelmann von Carnap, *Die Struktur des thebanischen Beamtenfriedhofs in der ersten Hälfte der 18. Dynastie*, Berlin, 1999, pp. 150f., 228–230. The only real exception, nonetheless, is TT 84, where the funerary procession and the Opening of the Mouth appear together on the left wall of the corridor.

⁵² Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, p. 23f., pl. XX, 4.

⁵³ This situation will change in the Ramesside age (XIXth and XXth Dynasties), mainly in the royal tombs (Sety I, Tausret), but, also, in private burials like the tomb of Nebsumenu (TT 183). Cf. H. Altenmüller, “Die Wandlungen des Sem-Priesters”, *passim*, and J. Assmann, “The Ramesside Tomb of Nebsumenu (TT 183) and the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth”, in N. Strudwick and J. H. Taylor, *The Theban Necropolis: Past, Present and Future*, London, 2003, pp. 53f.

⁵⁴ Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision der Statue*, pp. 74f. In addition, the mummy on top of which the priest pours water next to the *tekenu* is not situated over the mandatory sand mound, characteristic of the Opening of the Mouth, even though it is clearly present on the opposite wall (cf. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. XX, 4 and XXI).

⁵⁵ A. J. Morales, “El ritual funerario en el Reino Antiguo: los oficiantes”, *Aula Orientalis* 20, 2002, pp. 123ff.

⁵⁶ Davies, “The tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (n°15)”, p. 17, pl. V.

⁵⁷ Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 57ff.

⁵⁸ TT 39, 100 and 125. Cf. above.

⁵⁹ Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 60 and 92.

considered an argument in favour of a connection with the *sem*-priest. From our point of view, this purely formal correspondence derives from the same ritual action that both characters had to undergo, the unusual ritual dormition of the officiant.

2) The second document that will support our hypothesis is, to our belief, more convincing. It comes from another Theban tomb, Djehutymose's (TT 295), from a later time in the 18th Dynasty⁶⁰. There are no elements in this tomb related to the funerary procession or to the rituals that traditionally involve the *tekenu*, but there is a representation of the Opening of the Mouth that includes scenes 9 and 10, of considerable interest to this study. The text that accompanies the episode of the dormition of the *sem*-priest, who appears in his traditional pose, first sitting, then lying down on a bed, includes the word *sdr*, "sleep", twice and in a particularly uncommon manner: instead of the conventional determinative, the mummy-shaped figure on the bed (A55), we are confronted with the delineation of the unmistakable silhouette of the *tekenu* lying on top of it (Taf. VII, Fig. 7). It would be interesting to note that if on TT 21 (User) a representation of the *tekenu* clearly inspired by scenes 9 and 10 of the Opening of the Mouth were to be found, in TT 295 (Djehutymose) the influence, to put it simply, is the opposite: in the text dealing with the dormition of the *sem*-priest in the Opening of the Mouth there is a visual and graphic reference to the *tekenu* as determinative of the word "sleep". From our point of view, this authentic *hapax legomenon* cannot be attributed to the simple result of carelessness or confusion; its explanation has its origin in the similitude of the actions of two differentiated characters, *sem*-priest and *tekenu*, as officiants in the funerary liturgy.

We consider the conclusions derived from what has hitherto been stated to be clear: at least when the *tekenu* is represented on the bed, we are confronted with a figure that performs a

ritual action of dormition, notably similar to that of the *sem*-priest in scenes 9 and 10 of the Opening of the Mouth. The existence of ritual dormitions, dreams and oneiric visions within the frame of Egyptian religion is a thoroughly studied matter, apart from a common phenomenon in ancient religions⁶¹. In a recent study, K. Szpakowska focuses on the determinative of the word *qd*, one of the terms that more accurately express the action of dreaming or, more precisely, of having an oneiric vision or dream: significantly, this word included an open eye decorated with makeup (D6), which corroborates "the idea of the dream as related to a state of awareness, of being associated with the ability to see", and even of being awake⁶². In addition, having correctly understood the above-mentioned group of two figures adjacent to the dragging of the *tekenu*, they are performing a preparation of this participant by the purification through incense and the application of make up, precisely, to the eyes. This may connect with the iconographic treatment of the figure of the "sleeping *tekenu*" which emphasizes his wide open and profusely marked, outlined eyes⁶³.

A different query related to the *tekenu* is whether this officiant states anything at the finalization of his dream, trance or meditation, something that does happen in the case of the *sem*-priest during the Opening of the Mouth⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ A good parallel is found in the ritual of *incubatio*, frequent in the Greco-Roman world. Cf. H. Lechat, "Incubatio", in Ch. Daremberg and E. Saglio (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, III/1, Paris, 1900, pp. 458–460; F. Graf, "Inkubation", in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (ed.), *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, Band 5, Stuttgart-Weimar, 1998, pp. 1006–1007.

⁶² K. Szpakowska, *Behind closed eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt*, Swansea, 2003, p. 16 and 18.

⁶³ This iconographic treatment could be an allusion to the make-up, or to the relation of open eyes with the ability to experiencing a vision, though it is hard to state this with certainty.

⁶⁴ For a translation of the words of the *sem*-priest here, see Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, vol. II, p. 53–59 and J.-Cl. Goyon, *Rituels Funéraires de l'Ancienne Égypte*, Paris, 1997, pp. 114ff. For a

⁶⁰ E. S. A. Hegazy and M. Tosi, *A Theban Private Tomb: Tomb N° 295, Mainz*, 1983.

Bearing this in mind, we bring the attention to the distinctive position of the hands of the “sleeping *tekenu*”: instead of being hidden by the cloak or hide, as is the case during the funerary procession, the hands are clearly in sight in front of the face of the *tekenu*, with palms obviously facing towards the mouth⁶⁵. This is an unusual gesture in the scope of Egyptian liturgy and religious cult, but much more familiar in daily life scenes found in Theban tombs⁶⁶. In this case, the gestures may illustrate the action of speaking, of dictating an order or command, which leads to the suggestion of a similar action on the part of the *tekenu*.

In the light of our present knowledge and available sources, it is more complicated to fathom the content of either the *tekenu*'s dream or the words and phrases pronounced upon his awakening. The problem with the scenes of the *tekenu* is that, in a majority of cases, they lack accompanying texts or, if present, they are too brief, difficult to understand, or its content is corrupted⁶⁷. We could hazard a conjecture that it might be related to the transformations, rebirth, transit to the afterlife, and incarnation of the blessed deceased. This is not stating a great deal, as the whole collection of rituals, liturgies and practices that proceed along with the funeral and the burial are, in one way or another, oriented towards that purpose. As was mentioned above, the use of a skin to cover the *tekenu* is a common

element in regeneration or resurrection rituals (cf. nn. 7–8). Moreover, the ritual dormition of the *tekenu* apparently takes place in the pool of Khepry or of Heket, two divinities closely linked with the rebirth of the new being that is supposed to be the blessed dead.

The *tekenu* in Action: New Images

Within the body of sources and documents that illustrate Egyptian funerary beliefs and practices, the Theban tomb of Montuherkhepeshef (TT 20) occupies a place of its own. Decorated with scenes of great complexity and beauty, the tomb offers a series of rituals, which are sometimes accompanied by texts, unparalleled in Egyptian art⁶⁸. Unfortunately, the tomb was sacked soon after its discovery, at the end of the 19th century, and, despite being well known and profusely cited, there is no modern study of it available. Hence, most of its scenes and rituals are still difficult to reconstruct and interpret⁶⁹.

In TT 20, as has been previously noted, the *tekenu* is twice represented, with the special feature of appearing without the hide that normally covers the body, allowing an unobstructed view of a complete human shape lying face down on the sledge in a foetal position (Taf. V, Fig. 3)⁷⁰.

complete and in depth study see the already cited Fischer-Elfert, *Die Vision der Statue*, passim.

⁶⁵ The best example is undoubtedly found in TT 100 (Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-re*, pl. 83), cf. Taf. VI, Fig. 5. There are other equally significant: TT 125 (Duaerneh), TT 96 (Sennefer), or TT 276 (Amenemope; cf. A. el-Shahawy, *The funerary art of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, 2005, p. 54).

⁶⁶ See, for example, E. Dziobek, *Das Grab des Ineni: Theben Nr. 81*, Mainz am Rhein, 1992, pl. 4, 10. We can find a similar gesture in a special type of statue-cube, where it means the capacity of the represented person to receive the offerings and, also, to speak to the gods and answer questions. Cf. J. J. Clère, *Les Chauves d'Hathor*, Leuven, 1995.

⁶⁷ Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 38–47 and 92; Altenmüller, *Die Texte zum Begräbnisritual*, pp. 132–136. Cf. n. 42 above, for the most significant text on the “sleeping *tekenu*”, which is nothing more than a description of the scene.

⁶⁸ The only recognized parallel until recently was TT 29, of Amenemope, that includes some of the scenes of TT 20, though preserved in a fragmentary state (cf. H. Altenmüller, “Bestattungsritual”, *LÄ I*, 1975, col. 747). This tomb is currently under study by the Mission Archéologique de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles. See L. Bavay, “La tombe thébaine d'Amenemope, vizir d'Amenhotep II”, *Egypte, Afrique & Orient* 45, 2007, pp. 7–20.

⁶⁹ Apparently, the tomb was discovered at the beginning of 1882. It underwent a first and inadequate publication by G. Maspero: “Tombeau de Montouhikhopshouf”, *MMAF V*, Cairo, 1883, pp. 435–468. Fortunately, Davies republished it in his *Five Theban Tombs*, pp. 1–19, where an admirable task of reconstruction and interpretation was carried out, being the best reference work to date of this important monument.

⁷⁰ We are unable to grasp the reasons behind this way of representing the *tekenu*. It might simply be artistic license. In any case, the use of the hide is, undoubtedly, part of the ritual represented in TT 20, as seen below.

This is the representation chosen for the funerary procession, escorting the coffin to the necropolis, near the canopic chest, as is customary⁷¹. Furthermore, the scene of the dragging of the *tekenu* is repeated, which is exceptional, in the upper register of one of the most interesting and renowned panels of the tomb of Montuherkhepeshef. The panel, which displays several scenes of bovid slaughter and quartering, contains the unique image of the sacrifice of the Nubians, which has given rise to a great number of questions and comments of all sorts (Taf. VIII, Fig. 8)⁷². Due to the great deterioration of the wall, Davies had to reconstruct, though only partially and with many gaps, a considerable number of the figures and their texts⁷³.

Nowadays, however, the work that the Spanish-Egyptian Mission has been conducting for several years in the Theban necropolis, precisely in TT 11 (Djehuty), has successfully recuperated images and texts that shed new light on this matter. Specifically, the inner shrine in the tomb of Djehuty, excavated in the 2007 season, is embellished with a collection of ritual scenes analogous to those of TT 20. The style and technique used are manifestly similar in both tombs, which suggests the possibility of them originating from the same artistic tradition or, probably, from the same group of artisans or workshop⁷⁴. We must recall that Djehuty (TT 11) and Montuherkhepeshef (TT 20) are practically contemporaneous, from the time of Hatshepsut-Thutmose III, and that, in addition, both tombs are located in the same area of Dra Abu el Naga, just a few meters apart from each

other⁷⁵. For the purposes of the present study, the scene of the *tekenu* in the tomb of Djehuty that appears in the panel of the sacrifice of the Nubians is indeed preserved in good condition, allowing the reconstruction and completion of what was visible in TT 20 (Taf. VIII, Fig. 9). With the combination of both tombs we are able to offer a description and interpretation of what constitutes an exceptional document on the *tekenu*, fundamentally, for the following two reasons:

1) First, because the officiant assuming the role of *tekenu* is represented a total of three times in the same register, when the norm would be only one presence in the compendium of funerary rituals of any one tomb.

2) The second reason constitutes the most substantial new discovery. In the images reproduced in TT 11 and TT 20, the *tekenu* is an active figure in motion, captured in a dramatic ritual sequence. This movement contrasts with the quiescence that normally distinguishes the *tekenu*, an important reason that has led to an inaccurate understanding of this figure.

Observing the development of the scenes we witness three representations of the *tekenu*. First, the figure is found on the right-hand side, the beginning of the register⁷⁶. In TT 20, this section of the register, lost in the tomb of Djehuty, appears next to the representation of Montuherkhepeshef and his mother that attend the liturgy. The *tekenu*, as he walks towards the sledge, is situated under an inscription that reads: *pr(t) h3 in tknw*, “the *tekenu* comes out (= appears)⁷⁷”. He

⁷¹ Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. II.

⁷² Cf., for example: Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens*, pp. 41 ff; Griffiths, “The *tekenu*, the Nubians and the Butic burial”, *passim*.

⁷³ Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pp. 14–16 (according to Davies, the difficulties in the reconstruction of this part of the reliefs were mainly due to the mediocre task carried out by the copyists sent by Maspero).

⁷⁴ The rituals found in both tombs may have some relation with the innovations of the times of Hatshepsut, but also with another phenomenon from that historical moment: a recovery of artistic, ideological and religious elements from the past, looking for archaism. See S. Ratié, *La Reine Hatchepsout: sources et problèmes*, Leyden, 1979, pp. 311 f.

⁷⁵ The possibility should not be ruled out for one tomb to be a copy of the other, something commonly witnessed in the Theban necropolis. In this case, the tomb of Djehuty, slightly older, must have served as a model to TT 20.

⁷⁶ In our opinion, the dramatic sequence in the register should be read from right to left, and, so, should the rubric that appears above it, even if the texts that accompany the images display the opposite orientation. This reading from right to left seems clear in other scenes from the same shrine, mainly, the sequences of the catafalque (Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. VI), and even on the lower register of our panel, representing the sacrifice of the Nubians (*id.*, pl. VIII. Cf. Fig. 8).

⁷⁷ Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. VIII, upper register. The expression, with the sense of coming out,

is wearing a short skirt and a cap or headdress that does not cover the ear, a significant detail from our perspective.

The *tekenu* is then shown on the sledge, under another brief text that alludes to the setting that is graphically displayed, the action of lying down on the sledge that four men are dragging. Following the reconstruction of Davies (see n. 77), this brief text reads: *h3(t) tknw*, “the *tekenu* comes down (= descends)”⁷⁸. By referring to the reliefs in the shrine of Djehuty we are able to note that the character leading the group, probably the overseer of the liturgy, is the *s3 srqt*, a priest that holds a special connection with the rituals of the *tekenu*. Here, as stated, TT 20 is an exception in Egyptian tombs because of the repeated scene of Dragging the Sledge⁷⁹. Under closer examination, however, the Egyptian artist chose to represent the *tekenu* on the sledge during the funerary procession with the palms of the hand facing down; but, on the second scene (over the sacrifice of the Nubians), the palms are facing upward, in a gesture that hints towards an approximation to the face or mouth of the *tekenu* (Taf. V, Fig. 3). It is a similar attitude to the one that distinctly characterized the “sleeping *tekenu*”, in the lines we described above, and allows for the possibility for this representation to evoke the ritual episode of the dormition of the *tekenu*.

The last instance of the *tekenu* in the ritual sequence being described is, in our view, the most striking and interesting of the set due to its originality. Almost lost in TT 20, the reliefs in the inner chamber of the tomb of Djehuty are practically intact: preceding the *s3 srqt* and the group of men hauling the sledge we chance

upon a character that holds a bundle with two protusions, one longer than the other. A column text located directly to its left identifies the character with the *tekenu*: *tknw m-rk niwt*, “the *tekenu* (is) in the city (=the necropolis)”⁸⁰. In addition, his headdress, short hair, and uncovered ear differentiate him from the remaining priests dragging the sledge⁸¹. Further to the left, closing the register, a second and longer text, organized in three columns, reads: *msk3 n-hr=f sfl3 sm=f n dt=f*. A possible translation could be as follows: “(Once) the hide-*msk3* (that is) in front of him is removed, he leaves for his eternity”. Apart from the reference to the skin-*msk3*, the one that typically shrouds the *tekenu*, the use of the verb *sfl3* is noteworthy, having the sense of “removing an article of clothing”⁸². In the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth, in scene 19, this verb is precisely used to describe the action of the *sempriest* of removing his clothes before taking the panther skin, characteristic of him⁸³. Thus can the above-mentioned bundle be identified, in relation with removing the hide and placing it at a specific place as represented in the image. The reliefs in the tombs of Djehuty and Montuherkhepeshef provide the information necessary to determine the ending place for the skin-*msk3*: apparently, along with the most select of the sacrificed bull, i.e., the heart, a leg and, too, a lock of hair, the bull hide is thrown into a hole. This passage is represented in detail in an interesting sequence of images located on a different register where the main protagonist is the *s3 srqt* escorted by a group of officiants among which there is a *hm-ntr srqt*⁸⁴.

To sum up, the combination of the images of TT 11 and TT 20 favours the reconstruction of

or appearing, is frequently used to refer to participants in rituals and procession (cf. Wb I, p. 519, 15).

⁷⁸ It is interesting to note the combination of two subsequent actions represented by the verbs *pr(i)* and *h3(i)*, a recurrent structure in funerary texts. Cf. Wb I, p. 521 and H. Goedicke, “The Egyptian idea of passing from life to death (an interpretation)”, *Orientalia* 24, 1955, pp. 225–239.

⁷⁹ A similar state of affairs would probably have been the case in the tomb of Djehuty, but it is impossible to be certain, as the relevant reliefs of the left wall of the corridor, those possibly comprising the funerary procession, are, to a great extent, lost.

⁸⁰ We understand *m-rk* as a compound preposition (cf. Wb II, p. 458, 3; Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, p. 545).

⁸¹ It is the same headdress or appearance of the *tekenu* in the other two images of the register that has just been introduced, which prevents any possible confusion.

⁸² Wb IV, pp. 116, 10–11; Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 698.

⁸³ Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, vol. I, 41.

⁸⁴ Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. IX, lower register.

one of the ritual episodes of Egyptian funerals: with the *tekenu* as the centre of attention, this officiant covers himself in a hide (the skin of the slaughtered bull?), either sits or lies down, probably, undergo a ritual dormition, and, then, has the bull skin and its remaining parts thrown in a hole as an offering. This hypothesis would also help to explain the frequent association of the *tekenu* with the scenes of the sacrifice of the bovid.

Conclusion

Evidently, there are many aspects about the *tekenu*, its origin, historical evolution, and the role he performs, that are still unknown to us. It would be logical to ponder on whether, with the passing of time, he continued to be a real element of the funeral, or whether his image was simply retained in the iconographic repertoire of tomb decorations, in keeping with Egyptian conservative tendencies and respect for religious traditions. In any case, we hope to have proved that a re-evaluation of current sources, together with new documents from TT 295 and TT 11, mainly, allows for the presentation and understanding on this particular character and his function within funerary liturgy.

Thus, possible symbolic or mythological interpretations left aside, the *tekenu* is presented as an officiant or ritualist, one of the participants in the ritual that, as usual, must undergo a series of initial purifications that include the use of cosmetics and incense. Even though the *tekenu*'s best known function is as part of the funerary procession and the hauling of the coffin and the

canopic jars, it is possible that his most relevant function would link him to a ritual dormition, an oneiric trance (real or fictitious) that would probably take place once the funerary procession reached the necropolis or the tomb itself. In this dormition, the *tekenu* is assisted by other priests, such as the *s' srgt*, and he makes use of the bovid skin-*msk*³, being one of the most characteristic elements of the process and which will end up in a hole or well, along with the selected offerings. Through this ritual dormition, this character appears as an active and dynamic figure, obvious protagonist of a number of episodes within the funerary ritual. And it is this dynamicity which evidently contrasts the motionless and static image normally attributed to the *tekenu*.

Summary

The *tekenu* is a recurrent element in Egyptian funerary rituals which is not completely understood and, therefore, still raises several questions. The aim of this article is to reassert the human aspect of the *tekenu* and his role as officiant or ritualist. This study is based on a revision of known sources and incorporates new documents, mainly from the TT 295 and TT 11. In this role of officiant or ritualist, the *tekenu* participates in several episodes of the funeral ceremony, particularly in a ritual of dormition with a close analogy in the Opening of the Mouth.

Keywords

funerary beliefs – opening of the mouth – ritual – tekenu

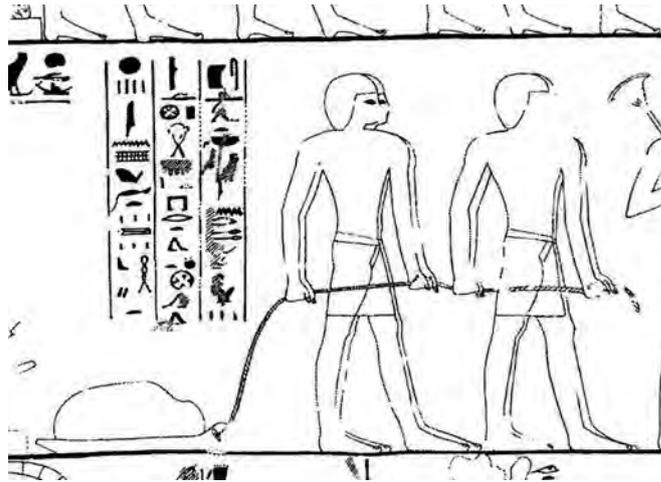


Fig. 1. The *tekenu* in TT 82 (Nina de G. Davies & Alan H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhet* (n° 82), London, 1915, Pl. XII) (zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).

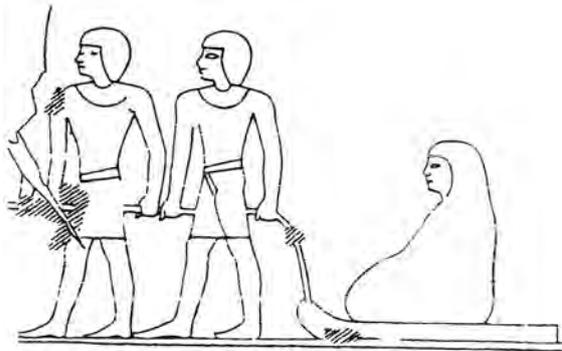


Fig. 2. The *tekenu* in TT 39 (Norman de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Puyemre at Thebes*, New York, 1922, Pl. LXVI) (zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).

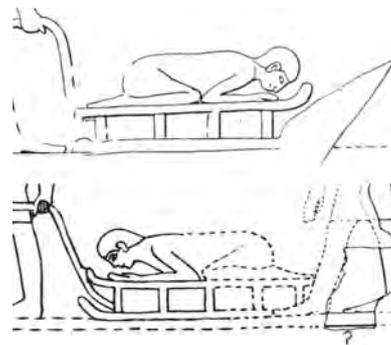


Fig. 3. The two samples of the *tekenu* in TT 20 (adapted from Norman de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, London, 1913, Pl. II and VIII) (zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).



Fig. 4. The dragging of the *tekenu* in TT 127 (Foto Proyecto Djehuty) (zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).



Fig. 5. The sleeping *tekenu* in TT 100 (Norman de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Rekhmire at Thebes*, New York, 1943, Pl. LXXXIII) (zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).

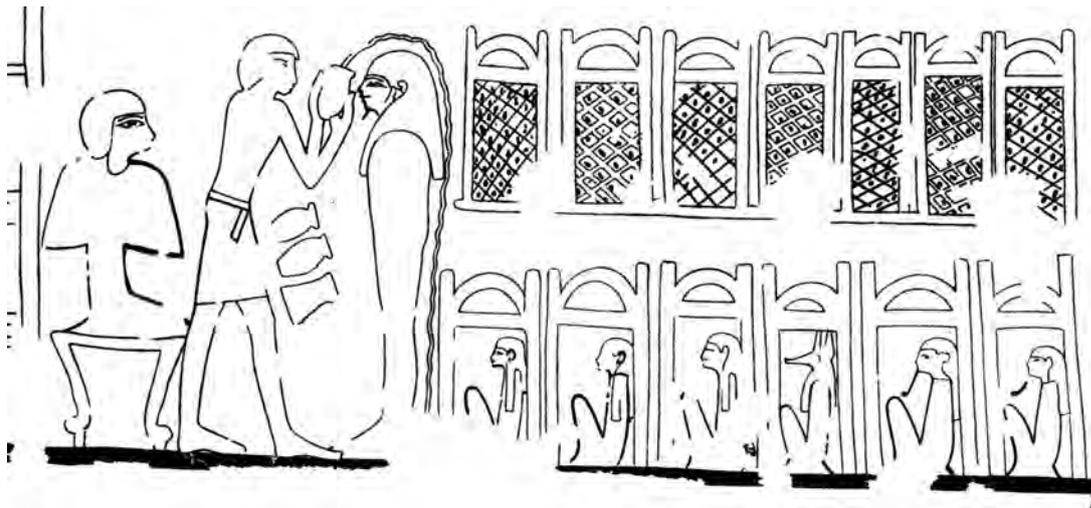


Fig. 6. Tomb of User-TT 21 (Norman de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, London, 1913, Pl. XXI)
(zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).

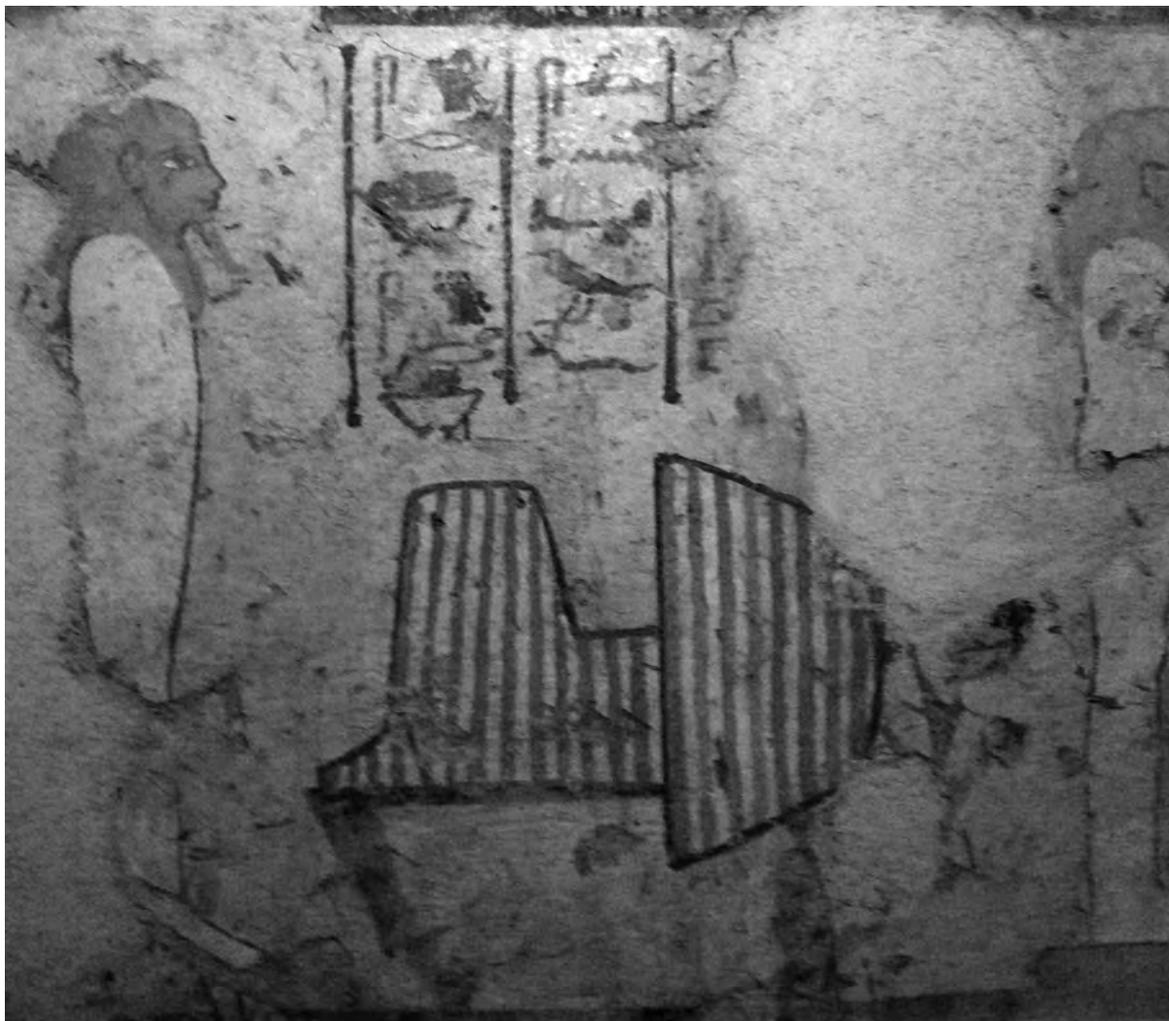


Fig. 7. Scene 9 of the Opening of the Mouth in TT 295 (Foto Proyecto Djehuty)
(zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).

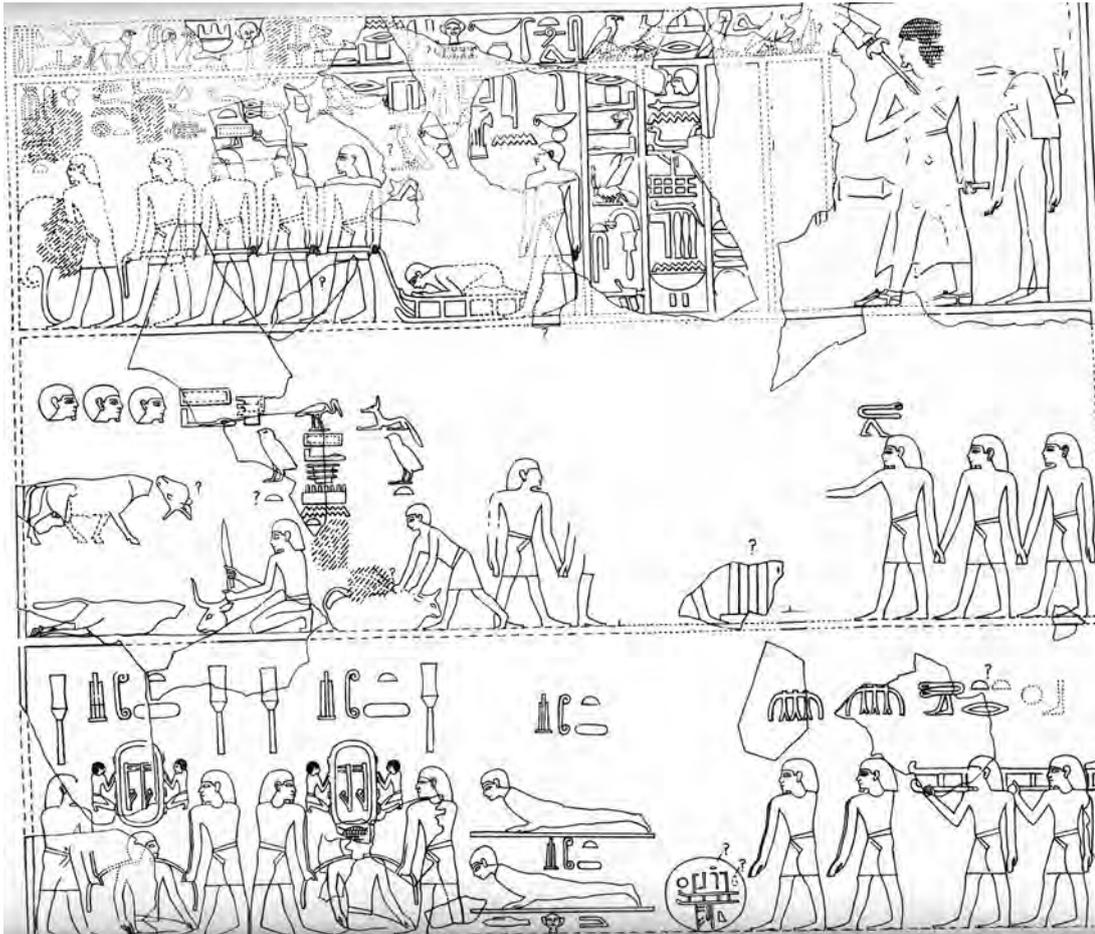


Fig. 8. The *tekenu* in TT 20 (Norman de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, London, 1913, Pl. VIII)
(zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).



Fig. 9. The *tekenu* in TT 11 (Foto Proyecto Djehuty) (zu Serrano Delgado, *The tekenu in Egyptian Funerary Ritual*).