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Review by Eleanor B. Simmance

Joan Padgham. *A New Interpretation of the Cone on the Head in New Kingdom Tomb Scenes*. BAR International Series. Archaeopress: Oxford. 2012. ISBN 9781407310305. £31.00. x + 159 pages, 22 figures, 28 tables and 8 appendices.

The connection between the cone on the head and perfume or ointment is well established in Egyptology. In this, her revised doctoral thesis, Padgham avoids simply accepting this theory; she sets out to determine, primarily, if there is symbolic meaning relevant to different tomb scenes and, secondarily, if there is indeed a direct connection between the cone and perfume, oil or unguent (p. 1). The results of her undertaking are an admirable display of thorough data collection and analysis, and she provides a feasible alternative to the traditional schools of thought.

The initial chapter sets out her aims (as described above), research limits and foci, and the results of primary analyses. Limiting herself to the New Kingdom, studying mainly the cone on the head of the male tomb owner, and focusing on three scene types in which this was most common (Opening of the Mouth, Gold of Honour and Banquets) are sensible boundaries, which can be appreciated when one considers even then how large her data set becomes. Despite these limits, she aims to gather a representative sample, using as many tomb scenes as possible, allowing for issues of survival, from all over Egypt where possible. Most tombs come from the Theban necropolis, understandably, but she does give special attention to those from Tell el-Amarna. Aside from the indication of location in her databases ('Tomb ID'), Padgham makes but few references to location in her analyses; perhaps it is too much to expect fuller remarks on potential regional variation, not least because of the great skew towards the Theban material.

The following literature review is a full chronological summary, from the initial thoughts surrounding the cone in the 1880s and the belief that it was a physical object, to the more modern opinions that it was symbolic. What is made clear is that the connection with perfume, fragrant oils and other substances has underpinned the interpretation of the cone since the beginning. Whilst Padgham agrees that the cone is symbolic, she believes that it is important to push aside the connection to perfume as the specific concept symbolised until it can be proven more substantially.

The next three chapters each constitute a close study of the above scene types. The first, on the Opening of the Mouth, sets the tone for the others: heavy on classification and sub-classification of the scenes, numbers, percentages and tables, a methodology which risks the reader being left a little overwhelmed and needing to flick back and forth to various tables and databases to confirm and reaffirm the calculations. However, Padgham should be credited for providing an empirical foundation upon which future research can build. She states initially that the most common scene with the cone is that in front of the tomb, and

from there she shows that there is correlation between the cone and scenes in which *hṯp-di-nsw* offerings are presented to the deceased. In suggesting that the cone is in fact symbolic of the transformed state of the deceased after the ceremony – a state facilitating the receipt of the offerings – she decides that the most likely personal constituent of the individual that has undergone this transformation is the *ba*, citing examples of such events in mortuary texts. The increased solar symbolism of the New Kingdom, she believes, adds weight to this suggestion, as the *ba* of the deceased would be in the presence of the *ba* of the sun-god (the sun's rays) outside the tomb.

The purpose of the chapter on the Gold of Honour ceremony is, then, to see if the theory holds true. Despite the same systematic approach as earlier, one does get the impression that the analysis is geared towards supporting the theory rather than remaining objective, though granted this is something we all do, consciously or not. The reviewer also found Padgham's use of texts, substantiating the idea that the *ba* will emerge when the individual feels great elation (due to the occasion) or fear (of the king), a little flawed. For instance, she cites Sinuhe and his experience of fear, 'my *ba* was gone', and suggests that this is an example of him entering a '*ba*-state' where the *ba* would mediate (p. 43). It would seem, however, that Sinuhe fears retribution from a vengeful king and in fact his *ba* has deserted him, rather than being there to aid the situation. The Gold of Honour ceremony is an event of joy, and the fear one feels for the king is borne primarily of respect and honour. The other textual references quoted, referring to courtiers in the presence of the king, do not explicitly mention the *ba*. Despite these issues, her ideas are not to be dismissed. The solar imagery is, as she points out, also strong in the Gold of Honour ceremony, and the necklace bestowed upon the official was seen as a divine gift from king and sun-god, hence requiring the *ba*, in the shape of the cone, to be present; in this respect, the apparent parallels between this and the Opening of the Mouth ceremony are emphasised by Padgham.

The chapter concerning the Gold of Honour ceremony also presents the first clear argument against the traditional anointing or perfume theory, showing the lack of direct correlation between anointing scenes and the cone, and the lack of definite identification of the supposed oil or perfume in the imagery or the associated texts. Whilst not entirely convincing, for symbols by their very nature may not have needed identification through captions, Padgham's thoughts give room for doubt.

The chapter on the banquet ceremony is the longest, with the explanation that the banquet is a complex ceremony and the cone appears on many participants, not just the tomb owner; these include women and musicians, to whom is dedicated an excursus at the end of the chapter. Not only does Padgham narrow her study to the Eighteenth Dynasty, but also groups her 'time bands', as laid out in the first chapter, into four sets 'so adequate numbers of scenes are analysed and compared' (p. 58). This does seem to defeat the point of the time bands a little, and makes them even more irregular in length and number of monarchs than they were originally. It also assumes, with little acknowledgement besides of the Amarna Period, that within each set there are negligible differences in the iconographic protocols and preferences of each pharaoh and consequently their subjects. The advantages, however, are that the percentages are calculated from larger sets of data, and the tables are smaller! Focusing on the Beautiful Festival of the Valley banquet scenes, Padgham uses much textual evidence to support various concepts inherent in the festival and in the role of the *ba* of the tomb owner, and then how both may be connected to the symbolism of the cone. A few of these texts are not New Kingdom: P. Boulaq III is of the Roman Period. This might not be ideal, but any anachronism is assuaged by the suitably wide range of sources used.

Chapter six includes a chronological discussion of the cone's development from its first appearance to the Ramesside Period, including size and shape, as well as a return to the arguments against direct connection to perfume, anointing and sexuality. The chapter feels a

little like an afterthought, so perhaps the ideas covered here are instead intended as suggestions for further study. Chapter seven rounds off the work with discussion of theological developments that led to the New Kingdom, non-royal elite depicting their *ba* and subsequently requiring a symbol. Ideas of ‘decorum’ governing religious expression, briefly addressed earlier, are highlighted as ruling the circumstances in which the cone could be represented. Hereby, it seems, she is implicitly (perhaps not consciously) rejecting the ‘perfume’ idea, and linking the cone more directly to a religious concept.

This publication reads very much like a thesis, as might be expected, but consequently benefits from structure and hence clarity of argument. There are only a few minor editing errors, and it has an attractive layout, with a suitable number of images, all, moreover, sketched by the author herself from the original drawings. The provision of numerous tables within each chapter and the full databases in the appendices are invaluable for reference. It was often found, however, that a significant amount of time was required puzzling over the database conventions, since there was only a brief explanation at the start (p. x). In one instance in the banquet chapter, this reviewer was unable to tally what was written in the text proper with the relevant database and required more guidance than ‘See Database 7’. The complexities of Padgham’s data, nonetheless, demonstrate the effort expended. The footnotes (844 for 106, albeit large, pages), too, are thorough and often lengthy, and the book is in itself a decent reference work for many related areas of study. What Padgham missed when revising her thesis is an index: the detailed contents page is not quite enough for a reader with specific needs.

Overall, the book is well thought out. There is a substantial amount of detail that could not be mentioned in this review, but she does not attempt to address too much. This reviewer would have liked to have seen a little consideration of how the ancient Egyptian people themselves might have learned of and understood the significance of the cone (for instance, could it have been known only to the artists or to the tomb owners as well?). This is only briefly alluded to when she suggests that by the Nineteenth Dynasty divine offerings were not always explicitly represented because the cone was a well-established and understood symbol of the *ba* receiving divine offerings (p. 95). The book has a few other weaknesses, and close statistical analysis is perhaps too rigid a framework for a good understanding of the variable and abstract Egyptian beliefs, but in general Padgham should be commended for being aware of and trying to mitigate the pitfalls and limitations, and for producing a fresh and entirely credible contribution to the discussion of the cone.

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