

Sadness, gender and empathy: Amarna and Post-Amarna (18th Dynasty) mourning scenes from the Egyptian Memphite necropolis

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Abstract. This paper is focused on private tomb scenes with mourners dated to the end of the 18th Dynasty located in the Egyptian Memphite necropolis, with a special interest on the artistic resources and the clear division of groups according to the gender of mourners, as mourning men in expressive attitudes are particularly rare in ancient Egyptian scenes. The presence of men in grief, together with the traditional female mourners, within the funerary procession is striking, portraying expressive poses which provoke feeling of empathy and sorrow in the beholder. Indeed, the expressions of feelings in mourning scenes and their diverse artistic treatment in Memphite tomb decoration reveals the innovation and originality of the artists, features that could be traced back to the reign of Akhenaten. This paper explores the complex process of creation of the funerary iconography of the Post-Amarna art, a period of religious, political and social changes which were mirrored in private tomb scenes.

Keywords: Amarna; Egypt; Mourning; Tombs; Memphis; Artists.

[es] Tristeza, género y empatía: Escenas de duelo amarnienses y post-amarnienses (XVIII Dinastía) de la necrópolis menfita en Egipto

Resumen. El presente trabajo se centra en las escenas de duelo de tumbas privadas de finales de la XVIII Dinastía ubicadas en la necrópolis menfita egipcia, con un especial interés en los recursos artísticos utilizados y la clara división de grupos de acuerdo con su género, ya que los hombres en duelo en actitudes expresivas son especialmente raros en las escenas del arte egipcio. La presencia de hombres en duelo, junto con las tradicionales plañideras, dentro del cortejo funerario es sorprendente, con poses expresivas que provocan sentimientos de empatía y tristeza en el que las contempla. De hecho, la expresión de sentimientos en las escenas de duelo y el variado tratamiento artístico en la decoración de tumbas menfitas es indicativo del nivel de innovación y originalidad de los artistas, rasgos que pueden rastrearse hasta el reinado de Tutankhamón. En un ámbito más amplio, esta investigación explora el complejo proceso de formación del arte post-amarniense, un periodo de cambios religiosos, políticos y sociales que tienen reflejo en las escenas de las tumbas privadas.

Palabras clave: Amarniense; Egipto; duelo; tumba; menfita; artistas.

Summary. 1. Introduction. 2. Sources of inspiration: Mourning scenes from Tell el-Amarna. 3. A unique piece of information: the tomb of Meryneith/Meryre. 4. Memphite reliefs with mourning scenes from Tutankhamun/Ay/Horemheb reigns. 5. Conclusions. 6. Written sources and bibliographical references.

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1. Introduction

Amarna art is a controversial topic as it is a popular one². A large high number of studies have paid attention to the artworks produced during the reign of Akhenaten

and his immediate successors, so one may wonder if anything new can be added to the historiography of the art of Amarna and Post-Amarna periods. In the current research I will try to explore a particular issue which seems to have received scarce attention: the expressions

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of feelings in mourning scenes and their diverse artistic treatment in tomb decoration, with a special focus on several examples from the Memphite region. A gender approach could provide a new look at Amarna and Post-Amarna funerary scenes, exploring whether our Western perception of masculinity may or may not have influenced the interpretation of mourning scenes, and the attention paid to male mourners.

In the past decades, several tombs dated to the end of 18th Dynasty have been located or relocated in the Memphite necropolis, such as the ones of Ptahemwia and Sethnakht³, Meryneith⁴ or Ry⁵ which, together with previously known tombs and the hundreds of fragments coming from museum collections with a probable Memphite origin, stand as an excellent source of information about the art of this period. In this research, a group of reliefs with interesting mourning scenes coming from the Memphite area and dated to the period of Tutankhamun/Ay/Horemheb will be analysed. This necropolis experienced an outstanding development during the end of the 18th Dynasty, due to political or religious factors⁶. The criteria applied on the selection of scenes respond to the presence of groups of mourners, which must include men (and preferably both groups of men and women), and of course a geographical criterion with a Memphite origin attested or at least attributed.

Women played a prominent role in Egyptian funerary mourning scenes, as shown by Werbrouck in her traditional study⁷. The feminine goddesses Isis and Nephthys are represented as protective figures of the deceased, as an archetype of women in grief and sometimes depicted on sarcophagi⁸. Female mourners were an outstanding icon of grief in funerary procession depicted on Egyptian tomb scenes as it happens in many ancient cultures, e.g. Greek culture⁹. This role could be traced back to the Old Kingdom, but men are usually absent in this type of scene¹⁰. The exception is the reliefs in the mastabas belonging to Mereruka, Ankhmahor and Idu, dated in the Old Kingdom in reigns of Teti I and Pepi II, where mourning men are depicted in the same attitudes and poses as women:

raising their arms, pulling their hair and even fainting¹¹. Noteworthy is the clear segregation of men and women within the funerary procession, common to New Kingdom scenes.

Concerning New Kingdom mourning scenes, the gestures for expressing grief are diverse but the most common are raising their hands and exposing their breasts (this being this later posture adopted by women), together with others such as opening the mouth to show wailing, pulling or shaking their hair, pouring dirt or dust on their faces (maybe to provoke tears), or even fainting as a result of deep grief¹². The role of gestures as expressions of emotion was extremely important in a mainly illiterate society, where images were the vehicle to express beliefs and rituals¹³. These poses are common to many ancient and modern societies and linked to social, anthropological and cultural reasons, a topic which is outwith out of the scope of this paper.

The aim of this paper is not only to analyse the concept of death in ancient Egypt, but more specifically the iconography of sadness towards death. In fact, the information of the concept of death in ancient Egypt comes mainly from funerary rituals described in texts and portrayed in tomb paintings and reliefs, and not on images of the actual death itself. Despite their belief in the afterlife, Egyptians showed their feelings of sadness and loss through the iconography of mourning people, which were part of the funerary ritual.

At the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, groups of men start to be represented in Theban tombs as part of the funerary procession, the tomb of Hery (TT 12) being one of the earliest scenes¹⁴. But in these earlier examples, the postures of men (usually relatives of the deceased) and women (professional mourners and relatives) in the funeral entourage are quite different: female postures are very expressive but male postures are less static and less expressive, sometimes even passive as seen in TT 181, the tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky¹⁵. The different attitude of men and women may reflect an artistic convention but could also be connected to the different role in the funerary procession according to what happened in real life. However, late 18th Dynasty depictions of mourning men are found in a few private Theban tombs, such as the scenes in the tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky (TT 181, dating to the reign of Amenhotep III), the tomb of Roy (TT 255, dating to the reign of Horemheb), or the tomb of Neferhotep (TT 49, dating to the reign of Ay), illustrating a trend which may reflect a change in the artistic conventions to represent men's grief, or even a change

³ Maarten Raven, *The tombs of Ptahemwia and Sethnakht at Saqqara* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2020).

⁴ Maarten Raven and René Van Walsem, *The Tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014).

⁵ Nico Staring, "The Late Eighteenth Dynasty Tomb of Ry at Saqqara (Reign of Tutankhamun). Horemheb's Chief of Bowmen and Overseer of Horses Contextualised", *Rivista dei Museo Egizio* 4, (2020): 16-61, <https://doi.org/10.29353/rime.2020.2994>

⁶ Jacobus van Dijk, *The Development of the Memphite Necropolis in the Post-Amarna Period* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche, 1988).

⁷ Marcelle Werbrouck, *Les Pleureuses dans l'Égypte Ancienne* (Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1938).

⁸ Alessandra Colazilli, "Il pianto nell'Antico Egitto", *Vicino & Medio Oriente* 15 (2011): 173.

⁹ For a brief summary of female mourners' iconography and their survival, see Christina Riggs, "Mourning women and decorum in ancient Egyptian art", in *Decorum and Experience: Essays in Ancient Culture for Prof. John Baines*, eds. Elizabeth Froom and Angela McDonald (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2013), 156-162.

¹⁰ Emily Millward, "Mourning of the Deceased: An Overview of Current Research into the Gestures and Attitudes of Grief in Ancient Egypt", *Rosetta* 12, no. 5 (2013): 43-50; Youri Volokhine, "Tristesse rituelle et lamentations funéraires en Égypte ancienne", *Revue de l'histoire des Religions* 2, no. 225 (2008): 163-197.

¹¹ Mouhamadou Nissire Sarr, "La représentation du deuil dans les tombes de l'Ancien Empire égyptien", *ANKH* 8-9 (1999-2000): 72-85.

¹² Milward, "Mourning the Deceased", 45.

¹³ For a recent discussion and theoretical frame see Richard Parkinson "The sensory worlds of ancient Egypt", in *The Routledge Handbook of Sensory Archaeology*, eds. Robin Skeates and Jo Day (London: Routledge, 2019), 413-433.

¹⁴ Gema Menéndez, "La procesión funeraria de la tumba de Hery (TT 12)", *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Egiptología* 15 (2005): 29-65.

¹⁵ Arpag Mekhitarian, "La tombe de Nebamon et Ipouky (TT 181)", in *La peinture égyptienne*, ed. Roland Tefnin (Brussels: Brepols Publishers, 1997), 21-28.

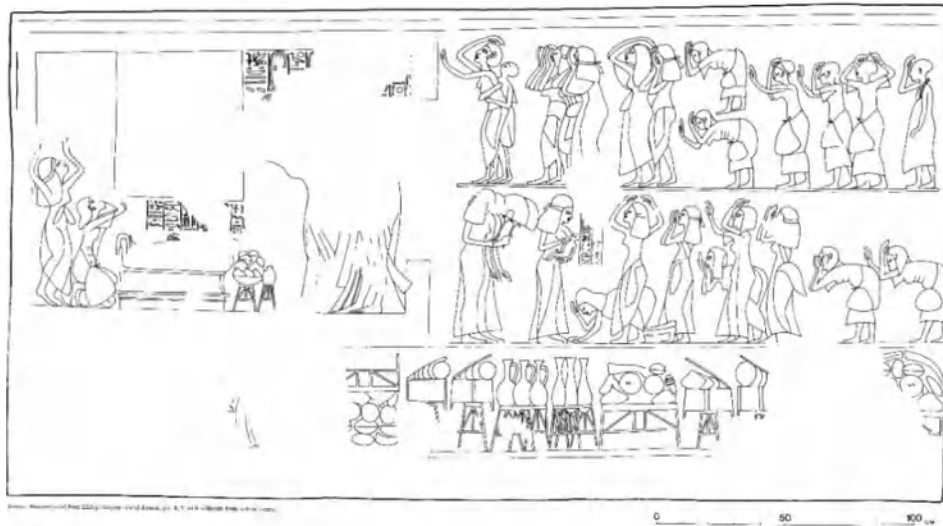


Figure 1. Royal Tomb at Tell el Amarna, Room Alpha, Wall A, detail of mourning scene. Source: Geoffrey Martin, *The Royal Tomb at El Amarna: II* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1989), pl. 63. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

in their feelings towards death, which can perhaps be interpreted as an impact of Amarna religion¹⁶.

Gender has been traditionally considered a decisive element regarding the attitude and the expression of feelings in mourning scenes of ancient Egypt. In fact, the main research on this topic continues to be the work of Marcelle Werbrouck published in 1938 under the title “*Les Pleureuses dans l’Égypte Ancienne*”, focussing on female mourners. However, thinking on the concept of gender has changed significantly in the decades since, and gender in ancient societies is currently a debated topic, which is out of the scope of this paper¹⁷. Analysis of ancient Egyptian sources grounded on gender have focused on women only¹⁸, but it is also important to understand how masculinity was constructed, and more specifically during the Amarna and Post-Amarna era. Why did male mourners begin to be depicted in expressive poses in the Amarna period? The case-studies analysed below may throw some light on the discussion.

2. Sources of inspiration: Mourning scenes from Tell el-Amarna

Apart from Theban tombs which provide examples of mourning scenes, the site of Tell el-Amarna and its tombs may be considered as a source of inspiration for Memphite artists. During the reign of Akhenaten, the attitude of men in mourning scenes changes significantly, the best

example of which is the Royal tomb in Tell el-Amarna (especially the compositions of the king and Nefertiti in a very expressive attitude taking part in the funerary rituals of their daughter Meketaten)¹⁹. But, leaving aside the controversial mourning figures of the royal family, several groups of female and male mourners with very expressive poses are depicted²⁰. The attitude of the mourners is surprisingly similar for men and women, for instance raising their hands, kneeling, crying or covering their heads with their hands, but the artist still arranges separate groups of mourners according to gender, as can be seen for instance in Room Alpha, Wall A (Fig. 1)²¹. The King and the Queen are also represented in mourning attitudes in Wall F in Room Alpha of the Royal tomb, followed by female members of the entourage and finally three men, one of them being the vizier²². Both groups of men and women are rendered in similar mourning poses, raising their hands to cover their heads, but they are distinguished in terms of spatial distribution.

The scenes in Room Gamma, Wall C also include men and women in grief. The male mourners are represented with varied poses and the composition suggests movement, agitation and deep sorrow, revealing the high craftsmanship of the artist and their sensibility. The same features can be found in the group of women in grief on the same scene, rendered in vivid style and expressive poses²³ (Fig. 2).

¹⁶ Inmaculada Vivas Sainz, “¿Los hombres también lloran? Representaciones masculinas en actitudes de duelo del Reino Nuevo”, in *Actas del V Congreso Ibérico de Egiptología*, eds. Laura Burgos et al. (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-la Mancha, 2017), 1081-1096.

¹⁷ A recent discussion can be found in Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, “What is gender transformation, where does it take place, and why? Reflections from archaeology”, in *Gender Transformation in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies*, eds. Julia Katharina Koch and Wiebke Kirleis (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2019), 111-123.

¹⁸ Deborah Sweeny, “Walking alone forever, following you: Gender and mourners’ laments from ancient Egypt”, *NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity* 2 (2002): 27-48.

¹⁹ Jacobus van Dijk, “The Death of Meketaten”, in *Causing his Name to Live: Studies in Egyptian Epigraphy and History in Memory of William J. Murnane*, eds. Peter Brand and Louise Cooper (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009), 83-88; Claude Vandersleyen, “Les scènes de lamentation des chambres alpha et gamma dans la tombe d’Akhénaton”, *Revue d’Égyptologie* 44 (1993): 192-194; Marc Gabolde, *D’Akhénaton à Toutânkhamon* (Lyon: Université Lumière Lyon, 1998).

²⁰ A new fragment of this scene has been recently located and discussed by Rennan Lemos, “A New Fragment from the Amarna Royal Tomb”, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 106 (2020): 249-253, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0307513320963283>

²¹ Geoffrey Martin, *The Royal Tomb at El-Amarna: II* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1989), 43, fig. 8, pl. 63.

²² Martin, *The Royal Tomb at El-Amarna: II*, 38-40, pl. 58.

²³ Martin, 48, fig. 11-12.

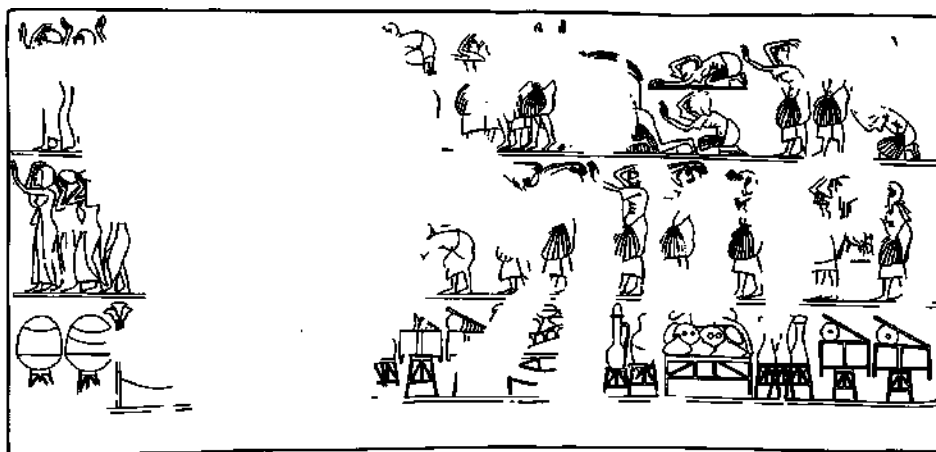


Figure 2. Royal Tomb at Tell el Amarna, Room Gamma, Wall C. Source: Martin, *The Royal Tomb*, pl. 72. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

The tomb of Huya (TA 1) at Tell el-Amarna is, to my knowledge, the only mourning scene in the private necropolis, in which both male and female mourners (spatially distinguished) follow the porters in large numbers, and in tokens of grief carry one or both hands to the head or cover the face with both hands (Fig. 3)²⁴. But the style of the figures is much more static than the one in the Royal Tomb, and they are mainly rendered in the same formulaic pose, raising their hand to their heads, so the result is a rather repetitive composition. This might be due to the ancient Egyptian sense of *decorum* in private funerary monuments, but it is more probably related to the use of less innovative artists in Amarna private tombs. Nevertheless, the scenes of the tomb of Huya are highly important for knowledge of the private religious beliefs on the afterlife and the funerary ritual (including mummification) during the Amarna period.

Therefore, the Royal Tomb seems to represent a unique example of expressive mourning scenes in the necropolis from Tell el-Amarna and reflects the skill of the artists in creating lively compositions. Besides, it includes striking depictions of a pharaoh expressing deep sadness for the loss of a relative, maybe reflecting the realistic nature of Amarna art based on the new attitude of men towards death, not only of commoners but also of the king himself. These images may also be understood within the trend of expressionism and intimacy of the Amarna art, usually attested in the depictions of the Royal family showing love and emotions.

As Jan Assmann has pointed out, in the New Kingdom there is a change in the type of representation of the funeral, presumably from depictions of an image sanctified by tradition to more realistic scenes, and with an open expression of sorrow and mourning. It seems that there are changes in the iconography of the funerary ritual but not in the ritual itself. Before, the pictorial representations tried to emphasise the funeral's ritual and cultic aspect that rested on an ancestral tradition, and later the desire was to stress its ritual and above all

its emotional character. The importance of the deceased was shown by the intensity and diversity of emotions expressed, which reflect an authentic grief rendered in a theatrical way²⁵. Jan Assmann suggested that during the Amarna and Post-Amarna period artists did not hesitate to depict men making gestures of passionate grief, even men of high rank²⁶. Before that period, the funerary procession could include men and women, but while the female mourners displayed intense pain, the male mourners grieved calmly. As it will be shown, during the Amarna and Post-Amarna period gender was not always a differentiating element regarding the attitude of attendants to the funeral in mourning scenes. General constructions of gender in ancient Egyptian society might be 'deconstructed' with a detailed analysis of the corpus of images of specific periods, as will be attempted in the current paper.

3. A unique piece of information: the tomb of Meryneith/Meryre

The tomb of Meryneith/Meryre at Saqqara deserves a detailed analysis for two reasons: it includes extremely original mourning scenes, and the tomb comprises several stages of construction and decoration, being started during the early years of Akhenaten but completed during the reign of Tutankhamun. The decoration process comprises four phases: Phase I (probably dated after Akhenaten's year 5), Phase II (after Akhenaten's year 9), Phase III (during the early years of Tutankhamun) and Phase IV (tomb usurpation by Hatiay during the final years of Tutankhamun or reign of Ay)²⁷. Thus, it stands as a perfect example of the evolution of the style of mourning scenes and reflects how ancient Egyptians were adapting their funerary monuments to the political and religious context. Meryneith changed his name into Meryre, as attested by inscriptions of the second phase

²⁴ Norman de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna, III, The tombs of Huya and Ahmes* (London: Egypt Explorations Fund, 1905), 17, fig. 22-23.

²⁵ Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 309-310.

²⁶ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 310.

²⁷ Raven and Walsem, *The Tomb of Meryneith*, 177-183.

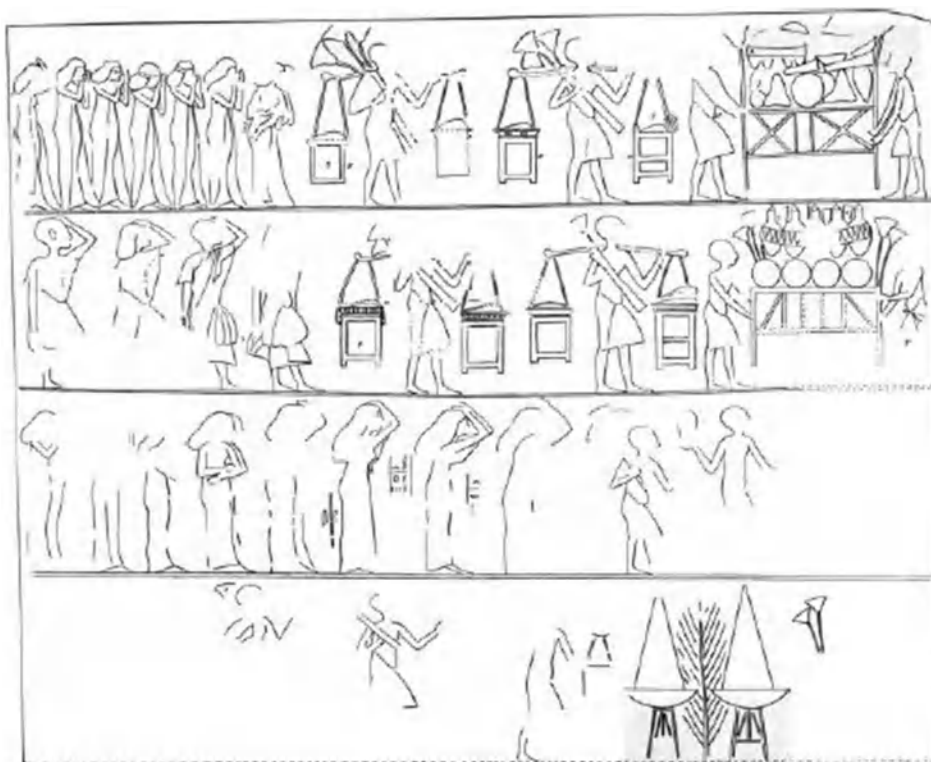


Figure 3. Funerary procession in the tomb of Huya at Tell el Amarna, West Wall. Source: Norman de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna, III, The tombs of Huyg and Ahmes* (London: Egypt Explorations Fund, 1905), pl. 23. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

of the tomb decoration (between Year 9 of Akhenaten and years 1-2 of Tutankhamun), and in the final stage he reverted again to Meryneith²⁸. It has been argued that the Meryneith/Meryre who built this tomb at Saqqara could be also the owner of tomb TA 4 at Tell el-Amarna named Meryre, who left his tomb unfinished²⁹.

The scenes representing the mourners in the deceased's funeral belong to Phase III in the sequence of the tomb construction, which corresponds to the reign of Tutankhamun (starting from year 2). It is remarkable that although Phase III seems to be the shortest episode in Meryneith's career, he managed to decorate the greater part of the available wall surface with reliefs of high quality, which may indicate that he had access to the best sculptors³⁰. Deserving special comment are the funeral scenes on the South Wall of the inner courtyard, which was probably composed of four registers, though only two remain. The preserved upper register, in raised relief, includes a unique composition: a scene showing the body of the deceased on a stand and combined with a depiction of the funeral, which according to Raven could be paralleled in the Royal Tomb of Amarna³¹. The lower register shows an antithetical composition of several groups of men and women mourning, making expressive and varied gestures of grief, such as raising their hands, and covering their faces or their heads. The composition follows an axis of symmetry in the center, with

two women with crossed arms in the middle (Fig. 4)³². Again, the artists separated the groups of mourners by gender, although they are depicted in a similar fashion.

The South Wall comprises another interesting funeral scene. In the upper register, there is another antithetical composition of female and male mourners, and in the lower register the representation of the funerary booths, including shaven-headed attendants in mourning poses and the "Ritual of Breaking the Red Pots". The mourners in the upper register are arranged in several groups according to gender, but in both similar and varied poses, creating a scene full of movement and with a marked expressive character. The female mourners are rendered in expressive postures, one of which is prostrated on the ground and another one kneeling. Two groups of male mourners are depicted (Fig. 5), the first of bald men wearing sash-kilts, and a second group wearing long tunics, sash-kilts and some of them with 'Nubian' wigs³³. According to Raven, in this mourning scene from the tomb of Meryneith there is the same interest in expressive gestures as in the Amarna-style scenes in the tomb, but the element of motion has been reduced in favor of a fair amount of rather static groups of standing men and women, with reduced interaction between individual figures³⁴. In my opinion, the scenes combine both movement and rather static poses, suggesting the strong original and innovative character of the sculptors. In the

²⁸ Raven and Walsem, 46-49.

²⁹ Raven and Walsem, 48.

³⁰ Raven and Walsem, 49.

³¹ Raven and Walsem, 181.

³² Raven and Walsen, 91-94, fig.14.

³³ Raven and Walsem, 94-95, fig.15.

³⁴ Raven and Walsem, 185, fig.15.



Figure 4. Detail of mourning men in the tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara, South Wall.
Source: Raven and Walsen, *The tomb of Meryneith*, fig.14.



Figure 5. Detail of mourning men in the tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara, South Wall.
Source: Raven and Walsen, *The tomb of Meryneith*, 94-95, fig.15.

case of the male mourners the figures are always standing, so the artists employ the movement of the hands to create the idea of motion and distress, creating an original composition which blends expressive attitude and delicate figures.

It may be possible that work in the tomb was interrupted for a certain period during the end of the reign of Akhenaten and resumed in the aftermath of the Amarna period. The artists who worked in the tomb of Meryneith seem to be adapting their art to the new times, drawing from innovations found especially in tombs at Amarna, but also marking the return to traditional styles with Tutankhamun. Several details in the funerary scenes show marked similarities with the one in the tomb of Horemheb in Saqqara. Indeed, it has been suggested that both tombs could be the work of the same school of artists³⁵.

4. Memphite reliefs with mourning scenes from Tutankhamun/Ay/Horemheb reigns

Berlandini dedicated a thorough study of the iconography and style of the Post-Amarna tombs, remarking the expressive character of the scenes of the reign of Tutankhamun, which is also attested on mourning scenes³⁶. She highlighted the duality of mourners in Memphite

iconography, whose attitude could be of high expressive character (with a lyricism echoing Amarna art), or calm grief³⁷.

Several mourning scenes dated to the end of the 18th Dynasty and the early 19th Dynasty have been previously analysed by Ali Radwan in an interesting article, where Memphite examples are also examined³⁸. Radwan focused on a couple of specific gestures made by men when expressing their grief: placing the hand under the chin and placing the hand in the mouth. Both gestures could be attested first in the reign of Tutankhamun and their use continued during the reign of Horemheb, with a later use during the early Ramesside Dynasty (reigns of Ramses I and Ramses II). Therefore, both poses may be used to provide a chronology for undated fragments with mourning scenes with unknown provenance³⁹. Besides, the appearance of new types of poses on mourning scenes reveals the originality and innovative character of the art of the Post-Amarna era, which is also attested in other elements which will be explored below.

The Memphite area provides an interesting example of a mourning scene in a fragment now kept in the *Louvre Museum* (Louvre E11274), which is attributed to the private tomb of Horemheb, built during the reign of Tutankhamun. Although the style of the fragment is quite similar to the scenes in the tomb of Horemheb, it does not match exactly any reliefs found at the tomb, so

³⁵ Raven and Walsen, 181-185.

³⁶ Joyce Berlandini, "Les tombes amarniennes et d'époque de Toutankhamon à Sakkara. Critères stylistiques", in *L'Égyptologie en 1979. Axes prioritaires de recherches* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1982), 195-212.

³⁷ Berlandini, "Les tombes amarniennes", 206-207.

³⁸ Ali Radwan, "Der Trauergestus als Datierungsmittel", *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 30 (1974): 115-129.

³⁹ Radwan, "Der Trauergestus als Datierungsmittel", 129.

its identification must remain tentative⁴⁰. The fragment shows three registers with group of mourners, some officials being depicted in the top register, and a group of women depicted in middle one (Fig. 6). The female mourners show varied and expressive poses, such as raising their hands, covering their heads, or kneeling, in a composition full of movement. The women in this mourning scene compose an original group, with figures placed in different 'levels', standing, kneeling or nearly lying on the floor when bending their body. Similar poses are adopted by men at the bottom register, who are shown near the façade of a building, kneeling and agitating their hands in a frantic way. Martin remarked that this lower register may show servants in extravagant mourning attitudes, perhaps gathered near the dead man's house⁴¹. From my point of view, the attitudes of the group of mourners, rather than 'extravagant attitudes', could be better considered as an example of deep grief expressed with intense movement in some kneeling figures (even suggesting perspective by overlapping them), and more static poses in standing mourners, thus creating scenes with similar as the poses of those found in the Royal Tomb at Tell el-Amarna.



Figure 6. Fragment in Louvre Museum, attributed to the tomb of Horemheb, Louvre E11274. Source: Geoffrey Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb*, pl. 125. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

A very original limestone relief with a mourning scene is kept in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow (Inv. No. 1.1.a.6008), dated to the late 18th Dynasty (*tempus* Tutankhamun and Ay) and with a provenance in the Saqqara area (Fig. 7)⁴². Its style resembles the scenes from the Memphite tomb of Horemheb and might have been the work of the same artist or the same workshop. If we compare the mourning scenes in the tomb of Horemheb, and the fragments in the Pushkin collection, we see striking similarities.

It could belong to a private tomb, maybe from a soldier or an official considering the triangular aprons typical from military men⁴³. Besides, the relief in the Pushkin Museum matches with a second one acquired by the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts (N^o Inv. 24.98), which is part of the same mourning scene⁴⁴, and accordingly with the same provenance (Fig. 8).

The scene in the collection of the Pushkin Museum shows a group of mourners in extremely expressive poses, on the right part some men are depicted raising their hands, some laying or kneeling, forming an unusual triangular composition. In fact, the use of triangle compositions seems to have been an innovation of the Amarna era⁴⁵.

On the left area several men are shown standing in varied poses, each one in a unique and individualised pose in the composition: raising hands, pulling hair, hiding the face, and even bending the bodies and touching the floor (maybe representing the practice of grasping dust and pouring it in the eyes in order to provoke tears). Strikingly, one of the figures breaks the figurative scheme as it is depicted with his body completely bent and wiping away his tears. The movement in the composition, the realism and the vivid grief are outstanding features, in a style strongly similar to the scenes from Amarna.

The Detroit fragment shows a group of women in varied poses in grief, depicted in different levels standing, kneeling or squatting (second register), while a bald man (probably a priest) is raising his arms up to his head in the first register.

The whole scene reflects desperation and sadness, both men and women showing their emotions in public, but the artists establish a division of the mourners within the funerary procession according to gender.

The scene composed by reliefs of the Pushkin Museum and the Detroit Institute shows a delicate treatment of mourning figures regarding motion and expression, which could be only paralleled in the Royal Tomb of Amarna and in the Memphite tomb of Horemheb. The close ties in iconography between those funerary monuments could make us wonder about the origins of the artists working in the Memphite private tombs: is it possible that the artists or workshops who decorated the Ro-

⁴² Svetlana Hodjash and Oleg Berlev, *The Egyptian Reliefs and Stelae in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts* (Moscow-Leningrado: Pushkin Museum Editions, 1982), 121-122.

⁴³ Hodjash and Berlev, *The Egyptian Reliefs and Stelae*, 121, fn. 68.

⁴⁴ Josephine Walther, "Tomb Relief from Tel el Amarna", *Bulletin of the DIA* 64 (1925): 41.

⁴⁵ Davis Summer, "Two compositional tendencies in Amarna Relief", *American Journal of Archaeology* 82, no. 3 (1978): 391-392.

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1989), 104.

⁴¹ Martin, *The Memphite Tomb*, 103-104.



Figure 7. Relief from Pushkin Museum collection. Inv. 1.1.a.6008. Source: ©The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts.



Figure 8. Detroit Institute of Fine Arts collection, Inv. 24.98. Source: ©Detroit Institute of Fine Arts.

yal Tomb in Amarna moved to Memphis? The mobility of artists during the Amarna and Post-Amarna era could be considered a relevant factor in the spread of styles and iconography⁴⁶.

Another example of a mourning scene is found in a fragment in Bologna Museum (MCA-EGI-EG_1893), dated to the reign of Tutankhamun or Horemheb, from a tomb built for a man called Sobekmes, probably in the Saqqara area⁴⁷. The relief shows a group of women in grief kneeling in several poses, while the group of men on the left are standing and raising their arms or cover-

ing their faces. The style of the relief suggests a date in the reign of Tutankhamun (Fig. 9).

A relief in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen (AEIN 38)⁴⁸ provides an original composition of several groups of male and female mourners (Fig. 10), dated to the end of the 18th Dynasty or early 19th Dynasty⁴⁹. In fact, the scene comprises two fragments, the smaller one being formerly in the Berlin collection (Berlin Museum 20365) and later acquired by the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

The upper register shows a group of women with expressive attitudes and diverse poses, in a composition full of movement. In contrast, in the second register a group of men wearing wigs, probably officials, reflects a calm grief, many of them depicted with two characteristic poses: placing the hand under the chin and placing the hand in the mouth (Fig. 10)⁵⁰. As mentioned before, both gestures could be attested first in the reign of Tutankhamun and their use continued during the reign of Horemheb, with a later use during the early Ramesside Dynasty. This gives a narrow date for the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek relief. From my point of view, the third register is the most interesting and original, composed by six men showing an intense grief, covering their faces or raising their hands, some of them standing and others bending their bodies (Fig. 11). It seems the artists were trying to represent several social groups common in the funerary procession, depicting officials in the middle register with a more dignified and ceremonial attitude, and women and men as generic mourners in expressive and nearly dramatic poses.

⁴⁶ Inmaculada Vivas Sainz, "Egyptian artists in the New Kingdom: Travelling artists and travelling ideas?", in *Current Research in Egyptology 2016*, eds. Julia Chyla et al. (London: Oxbow Books, 2017), 107-120.

⁴⁷ Edda Bresciani, *La collezione egizia del Museo Civico di Bologna* (Ravenna: Longo, 1975), 42-43.

⁴⁸ Maria Mogensen, "Les oeuvres d'art de Tell-el Amarna dans La Glyptothèque Ny Carlsberg a Copenhague", *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 30 (1930), 459.

⁴⁹ Bertha Porter and Rosalind Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, Volume III, Memphis, Part 2 (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1981), 756.

⁵⁰ Radwan, "Der Trauergestus als Datierungsmittel", 120.



Figure 9. Fragment in Bologna Museum. MCA-EGI-EG, 1893.
Source: ©Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna.



Figure 10. Middle register, detail of mourning groups in the relief in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen (AEIN 38). Source: Photo by Inmaculada Vivas Sainz.



Figure 11. Lower register, Details of mourning groups in the relief in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (AEIN 38).
Source: Martin 1987, fragment 62.

5. Conclusions

The mourning scenes analysed, mainly dated to the reigns of Tutankhamun and Ay, reveal a hybrid style which is the heir of the original Amarna art and at the same time goes back to the traditional Memphite style. As Dodson pointed out, the so-called “Tutankhamun-esque” style is also to be seen in two dimensions, and while retaining some of the elegance of the mature Amarna art style, it reverts to the pre-Amarna proportions used in laying out human images⁵¹.

Berlandini has remarked on the existence of dual trends in Amarna and Post-Amarna mourning scenes: on the one hand, lyricism is attested on the fragment at the Louvre Museum -which is attributed to Horemheb’s tomb- the fragment in Copenhagen, and the scene on the fragments kept in Detroit (N° Inv. 24.98) and Moscow (N°. Inv. 1.1.a.6008); on the other hand, a restrained sadness can be seen in the fragment of Bologna, for instance⁵².

The artists from Amarna and Post-Amarna times seem to have a special sensibility and empathy for showing the mourning attitudes. The varied types of mourning men, from very active and expressive figures to more quiet and self-contained men, seem to depend more on the artist choice.

Movement in the composition could be linked to the idea of distress produced by the death of a relative. It seems that these artists are using movement as an artistic resource and they are breaking with the traditional symmetry of Egyptian art. The fragments from Moscow and Detroit seem to be good examples of this treatment, which is employed both for men and women. If these fragments are compared with the well-known tomb of Ramose (TT55), the different treatment is easily observed. In the tomb of Ramose the figures form a “com-

⁵¹ Aidan Dodson, *Amarna Sunset: Nefertiti, Tutankhamun, Ay, Horemheb, and the Egyptian Counter-reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 78.

⁵² Berlandini, “Les tombes amarniennes”, 207.

pact group”, while in the Memphite fragments, they are placed in different levels and with varied poses⁵³.

In my opinion, the outstanding expressive character of the mourning scenes analysed is gained by the diverse postures of the mourners, as artists avoid repetition of the same pose. Some mourning scenes show men in a restrained grief, while others are depicted with highly expressive attitudes, as attested in the tomb of Meryneith. The tombs dated to the reigns of Tutankhamun and Ay seem to represent the highest level of expression and movement in mourning scenes. The relief in Pushkin Museum collection (Inv. 1.1.a.6008) could be considered as the climax of the expressive trend, no doubt the artwork of a high specialised artist,

Despite the similar poses of both female and male mourners, Egyptian artists continued to divide the groups by gender. Is it possible that this division between men and women reflects what happened in real life? Probably men and women had different roles in the funerary procession, and they may have even gathered in mourning groups according to their affinity based on their gender. There is scant written information about the pharaonic funerary ritual in which mourning men and women participated, and how the funerary procession acted. Therefore, iconography stands as the main source of information of the religious ritual. During the Amarna and post-Amarna period mourning was an important part of the funerary ritual, essential to enter the afterlife. Male mourners could be as expressive as female ones when showing their sadness and desperation in the Amarna era, showing the same feelings within the funerary procession, but artists depicted them in a segregated fashion. This new iconography of men in grief could reflect a change in their feelings towards death, which can perhaps be interpreted as an impact of Amarna religion.

I believe that the appearance of those expressive scenes of mourning men in the Memphite necropolis and the high quality of the reliefs may be linked to the movement of artists from Amarna to Memphis⁵⁴. The tomb of Meryneith could be a perfect example of the changes in the style of tomb decoration. Further research of the Memphite necropolis may throw some new light on the spread of artists and iconography, and future field work may result in new tombs being discovered⁵⁵.

The analysis of mourning scenes of the Post-Amarna period show well that the style of the reign of Akhenaten left a deep mark on the subsequent Ramesside era, indicating that despite the political and religious changes of the time, artists sometimes took more effort to leave the characteristic Amarna style behind. For instance, the solar disk, the Aten, stopped being represented in the Post-Amarna era but the style of the figures or the spontaneous compositions remained. The images studied in detail in this paper may be also understood within the trend of intimacy and expressive and spontaneous attitudes of the Amarna art.

The artists from the Amarna and Post-Amarna periods created scenes full of dynamism, revealing a great ability and a unique sensibility to show feelings of pain, loss and despair in mourning depictions. The scenes analysed seem to emphasise the feeling of empathy: the viewer of these scenes could experience the sadness of the loss through the mourners in the funerary procession and could imagine the loss and desperation of the relatives of the deceased. This feeling of strong empathy is gained by several artistic resources, such as frantic movement, diverse poses and original compositions, which avoid repetition, looking at individualised figures. In some ways, artists were recreating the feelings of sadness and loss, using an iconography understandable for any human being.

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⁵³ Norman de Garis Davies, *The tomb of the vizier Ramose* (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1941), pl. 25.

⁵⁴ Vivas Sainz, “Egyptian artists”, 111-114.

⁵⁵ For instance, the field work recently conducted by the Leiden/Turin mission: Paolo del Vesco, et al. “Current Research of the Leiden-Turin Archaeological Mission in Saqqara. A Preliminary Report on the 2018 Season”, *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 3 (2019): 1-25, <https://doi.org/10.29353/rime.2019.2236>.

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