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AN OFFPRINT FROM

Current Research in Egyptology 2016

Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Symposium

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland
4–7 May 2016

edited by

Julia M. Chyla, Joanna Dębowska-Ludwin,
Karolina Rosińska-Balik, and Carl Walsh

Paperback Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-600-4
Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-601-1 (epub)

 OXBOW | books

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Oxford & Philadelphia

www.oxbowbooks.com

Published in the United Kingdom in 2017 by
OXBOW BOOKS
The Old Music Hall, 106–108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE

and in the United States by
OXBOW BOOKS
1950 Lawrence Road, Havertown, PA 19083

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Paperback Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-600-4
Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-601-1 (epub)

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Front cover: Miniature figurines from a shrine deposit of Tell el-Farkha, Dynasty 1. Robert Słaboński
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Contents

List of papers presented	v
List of posters presented	xi
Foreword.....	xiii
Introduction.....	xv
1. Revisiting Walter B. Emery at Saqqara: Exploring Emery's excavations, a re-evaluation of his field notes (1946–1956).....	1
<i>Rinus Ormeling</i>	
2. The placement of the Predynastic grave goods and its role in mortuary context: A case study of the cemeteries at Naqada.....	22
<i>Taichi Kuronuma</i>	
3. Who are the Naqadans? Some remarks on the use and meaning of the term Naqadans in Egyptian Predynastic archaeology	40
<i>Agnieszka Mączyńska</i>	
4. Remarks on ancient Egyptian cartonnage mummy masks from the Late Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom	56
<i>Emanuele Casini</i>	
5. Generous patrons, loyal clients? Some remarks on patronage of Middle Kingdom elites	74
<i>Martina Bardoňová and Věra Nováková</i>	
6. Military expeditions of King Hatshepsut.....	90
<i>Filip Taterka</i>	
7. Egyptian artists in the New Kingdom: Travelling artists and travelling ideas?	107
<i>Inmaculada Vivas Sainz</i>	
8. Material culture and social interactions in New Kingdom non-elite cemeteries	121
<i>Rennan Lemos</i>	

9. New finds of Greco-Roman Period decorated wooden coffins
from Abusir South 136
Marie Peterková Hlouchová
10. The Egyptian land-based layer: Between god(s), cosmic sacredness
and fertility beliefs..... 150
Guilherme Borges Pires
11. Identity and the protagonist in Greek and Egyptian narrative poetry:
The construction of cultural identity in Homer's *Odyssey* and the
Tale of Sinuhe..... 159
Maxwell Stocker
12. The south face of the Helicon: Ancient Egyptian musical elements
in ancient Greek music..... 173
Daniel Sánchez Muñoz
13. Oil press installations and oil production in ancient Egypt 186
Jose M. Alba Gómez
14. Artefact (re)contextualisation: Comparative context analysis from
the Egyptian collection in Zagreb – preliminary research report..... 209
Porin Šćukanec Reznicek

Chapter 7

Egyptian artists in the New Kingdom: Travelling artists and travelling ideas?

Inmaculada Vivas Sainz

Abstract: This paper focuses on the artists in the New Kingdom, especially on their role in the diffusion of motifs within the artistic repertoire. The analysis and discussion of a range of textual, artistic and archaeological sources dating to the New Kingdom will be the basis to explore the mobility of artists. The movement of craftsmen could be best exemplified in the transfer that took place before and after the Amarna Period, and the presence of certain details attested on paintings and reliefs of private tombs from different areas may let us track those ‘travelling artists’ in Egypt.

Keywords: artists, mobility, iconography

Introduction

The present study focuses on the artists in the New Kingdom, especially on their mobility and potential role in the diffusion of motifs and details within the artistic repertoire. In this preliminary approach, I provide a holistic analysis and discussion of a range of textual, artistic and archaeological sources dating to the New Kingdom that relate to the role and movement of artists. The majority of the sources discussed are private tomb paintings which are arranged into three geographical groups: 18th- and 19th-dynasty tombs from Thebes, 18th-dynasty tombs from Amarna, and 18th- and 19th-dynasty tombs from Memphis. The focus on private tombs primarily relates to the larger scope of iconographic topics in their decoration, as opposed to royal tombs which are often more restricted in their iconographic programs. This is particularly due to the employment of traditional royal religious scenes that are linked with concepts of personal piety and display the ideology of the monarchy (Reeves and Wilkinson 1996). In contrast, the contemporary private tomb-chapels provide a much richer and innovative iconographic repertoire. The type of scenes included in a private tomb probably depended on the tomb owner’s career, on his choices or likes,

as has been studied for the case of the private Theban necropolis in the 18th dynasty (Engelmann-von Carnap 1999; Hartwig 2004). But the type of scenes could also depend on the background and originality of the artist, and indeed the freedom of the artists must have been greater in the context of a private rather than a royal patronage.

Although the high quality of the New Kingdom private tomb paintings and reliefs is remarkable, the goal of this paper is to highlight the role of their ‘producers’: the artists or ‘schools of artists’. Few studies have paid attention to the figure of ancient Egyptian artists, as Dimitri Laboury (2013, 28) has discussed in pointing out the paradox that the art of ancient Egypt has been recognised and appreciated worldwide, despite the nearly unanimous opinion regarding the absence of authentic artists in Egyptian society. The present study examines the evidence for the identification of regional artists or artistic schools and on their possible role as ‘travelling artists’ (or ‘travelling schools of artists’) during the New Kingdom. This artists’ mobility could be best exemplified in the transfer that took place before and after the Amarna Period, as craftsmen were certainly part of the workforce moved to build the new royal city in Tell el-Amarna, and after the death of Akhenaten some of them might have been transferred to Memphis, where Tutankhamun seems to have established his court. The private tombs built in the Memphite necropolis in the post-Amarna Period reveal the high level of craftsmanship of the artists and the weight of the Amarna style (Berlandini 1982; Van Dijt 1988). Meanwhile, other artists may have also returned to Thebes where workforce was necessary in temple project construction or temple restoration. The movement of artists during and after the Amarna Period may be considered as a factor contributing to the diffusion of innovations and new themes through distant areas, as it will be analysed below.

The diffusion of iconography and innovations could also be due to the movement of decorated portable objects such as furniture, weapons, jewellery, cosmetic boxes, and seals. These types of objects could be easily transported and exchanged, acting as a medium for artistic transfer and helping to explain the manner in which regional artistic transfer operated regionally during the New Kingdom. But their usual reduced dimensions may determine a limited complexity of the scenes they portray. The spread of new iconographic details could also be achieved by other means, such as portable sketches made by artists, or even by verbal descriptions of images, which could also be made by the patrons, the tomb owners. However, the use of specific details seems to rely more on the artists’ choice and could reveal the artists’ mobility.

Movement of artists: sources of information from the Theban necropolis

For the analysis of the mobility of artists in ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom, several written sources must be taken into account, as they may show that the geographic origin of the artists was quite diverse. For instance, the Theban necropolis offers important information, coming from some *ostraca* with administrative texts in

hieratic, some kind of accounting documents or journals, which illustrate the daily routine of the workers involved in the preparation of a tomb. Of particular relevance is a corpus of *ostraca* edited by Hayes (1942, 22), coming from the excavations of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which refer to the building of a tomb, probably belonging to the royal steward Senenmut, TT 71. These *ostraca* record the involvement of multiple different craft specialists in tomb construction, such as stonecutters, plasterers and painters, who all appear to be working in a tomb at the same time.

The references to these craftsmen in the *ostraca* indicate that painters appear to have had a special and important role amongst the workmen, and the number of painters was reduced compared to other craftsmen. An interesting *ostrakon* found near the tomb of Senenmut (TT 71) records the action of ‘taking over the work of the tomb by the scribe (or painter) Nebamun from the scribe (or painter) User until day 28’ (Laboury 2012, 202). We are not informed about the reason for the absence of the first artist, but we may assume that the function of the scribe or the draughtsman was somehow necessary at that time and should be done by another specialised craftsman who was available in order to complete the tomb-decoration. It is also striking that painters are always mentioned by name in the *ostraca*, in contrast to the other craftsmen, which could denote a more individualised recognition of painters (Laboury 2012, 202). An *ostrakon* now in the Cairo Museum collection and dated in the 18th dynasty, coming from the private Theban necropolis, offers unique information about the number and origin of artists working in the construction of a tomb. The artisans mentioned came from different cities in Upper Egypt and even one in Middle Egypt. The *ostrakon* reports men who seem to come from Thebes, but others from more distant places in Egypt, such as Armant (about 20 km south of the necropolis), Neferusy, Qau el-Kebir or even Hermopolis, a site the midst of Middle Egypt and 380 km from Thebes (Megally 1981, 293–312).

As Laboury (2012, 202–203) has pointed out, the tomb owner himself directly supplied the human and material resources needed for the creation of his commemorative monument. If we bear in mind the high number of tomb-chapels being built in the 18th dynasty in Thebes, as there are today more than 200 and we can assume almost double in antiquity (Kampp 1996, 144–146), it seems probable that the tomb owners may have been forced to look for non-local workers and artists, coming from different places in Egypt. There are some unique sources that suggest artists could come from more distant places, for instance several stelae found in the Theban area give us interesting information about a family of painters, especially about a painter called Dedia who may have lived in the early 19th dynasty, probably under Sety I. We know that the draughtsman Dedia, after the reign of Akhenaten, was ‘charged by his Majesty to restore [Theban temples] as the chief of works and director of artistic functions’ in these monuments (Lowle 1976, 97). Both Dedia and his father Hatiay held the title of ‘Superintendent of Draughtsmen’, a high rank position, and they belonged to a family of painters, as the study of Dedia’s monuments shows seven generations of male family member who were draughtsmen (Lowle 1976,

100–102). Interestingly, the study of the names of Dedia's relatives suggests a possible Semitic origin, indicating a Levantine origin of many of them. This Levantine heritage demonstrates a possible case of a foreign painter, or painter with foreign origins, establishing a lineage of painters at Thebes.

The analyses of tomb scenes themselves can provide information about the role of artists. During the 18th dynasty, a huge number of private Theban tombs were built and decorated, which would imply an important demand for high-skilled artists probably coming from different places (Bryan 2001, 70). The study of the paintings in the tomb of Suemniwet (TT 92), an unfinished private tomb dated to the 18th dynasty, shows the organisation of the Theban artists, who seem to have followed a workshop method. Bryan (2001, 71) has suggested that a considerable number of artists took part on the tomb decoration, probably around 25 working simultaneously or at different times, and using different techniques and varied type of pigments. The tomb of Suemniwet was planned and decorated by workshop-crew composed of artists who used different painting methods and worked following diverse organisational systems, probably as each master artist had freedom to organise his crew as he wished. It seems that several crews of specialised artisans with a varied background and sometimes with different styles and techniques have been employed in these private Theban tombs, and perhaps their geographical and regional origins might have been quite diverse.

The evidence from unfinished tombs: scarcity of artists?

As it has been pointed out, there is hardly a single tomb for which the decoration has been completed in the Theban necropolis, nor in any other Egyptian necropolis (Laboury 2012, 204), and even the great royal tombs have unfinished parts. Despite this fact, scholars have not paid much attention to the degree of incompleteness of the tombs.

The Theban tombs have been studied in depth, but mainly from the point of view of stylistic and artistic considerations. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the pioneer work of Tavie (2012, 209–215), who has studied two unfinished tombs in Thebes, TT 96A and TT 29. The tomb of Amenemope, TT 29, unfinished in construction and decoration, gives us a precise image of how Egyptian artists worked in a private tomb, determined by a reduced space and by light conditions (as the quality of light may be linked to the quality of the paintings). The walls and ceilings of the tomb-chapel were plastered and decorated at the same time in stages, as we can see that the ceiling was plastered in small sections and then immediately painted (around one-and-a-half metres). This seems to correspond to the surface which an artist could paint from a precise position and suggests the process was made by the same person, that is, the plaster was applied on the ceiling by the painter. The same process seems apparent in the corridor of the tomb, where we can see a sequence on the decoration of the walls in sections of one-and-a-half metres, a distance which corresponds to the area which could be properly illuminated using the type of lamps available for the ancient

Egyptian artists (Tavier 2012, 211–212). It seems that the decoration in the corridor was done by a single painter, who tried to speed up the process of painting in the north wall, which remained finally unfinished.

The tomb of Suemniwet mentioned above (TT 92), is a good example of the unfinished state of many Theban tombs, and the analyses of the tomb paintings give us a detailed picture of the varied organisational and painting methods. As Bryan has suggested, there were insufficient numbers of trained artists to meet the demand of the private tombs of the mid-18th dynasty, so the workforce should have come from varied sources. Some artists could have come from temple and local workshops, and maybe others, although not many, from Deir el-Medina (Bryan 2001, 70). In fact, the research conducted by Hartwig (2004, 32–35) about the paintings in private tombs dated in the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III, points out the clear existence of two different styles which may belong to two different Theban workshops, one linked to the temples and the other linked to the royal palace. Hartwig has also suggested that the so-called ‘Palace Style’ and the ‘Temple Style’ seen in private Theban tombs show connections with motifs attested in palace and temple artworks, which may indicate a common origin of the artists. Maybe the artists were lent by the temple or the royal palace (or perhaps directly hired by the tomb owner) for a specific period of time and had to return to their institution, leaving the work in the private tomb chapels unfinished.

Amarna private tombs offer a similar picture of unfinished elite tomb-chapels, a fact that could be linked to the sudden end of the capital after the death of Akhenaten. Owen and Kemp analysed the 43 rock-cut tombs from Tell el-Amarna which belonged to king’s courtiers and high officials, paying special attention to the diverse patterns of work of the artists and the scarcity of artists. It seems that the artists employed in these private tombs did not work as a team of tomb-workers, but they were drawn, for a rather short period, from a pooled workforce. Some tomb owners managed to bring a plasterer and a draughtsman at an early stage of the construction of the tomb, while other tombs have just had the doorway cut. The progress in the tomb construction and decoration may have relied mainly on the unpredictable access to craftsmen. The study of the private tombs of Amarna suggests there was a real scarcity of artists, which may have resulted in an elite competition for the scarce human resources (Owen and Kemp 1994, 125–127).

Possible transfer of artists in the New Kingdom

During the Amarna Period and the subsequent years, the movement of artists seems to have been particularly important, first due to the fact that in his fifth regnal year Akhenaten built a new capital in Middle Egypt, Akhetaten. The size of the city and the impressive number of royal monuments which were built, would have required a significant number of artists. The estimations of the population which was moved to Amarna are varied, but a minimum of 20,000 inhabitants have been suggested (Kemp

2012, 17), and an important percentage must have been craftsmen and artists. Despite this fact, the archaeological evidence for artists at Amarna is scarce. Even within the so-called 'Amarna's Workmen Village', there is little evidence of any quantity of stonemasons' tools or artists' trial pieces left behind. The only firm evidence comes from the fragments from a carefully gridded outline painting of a king, which were found in house West Street 2/3 (Kemp 1987, 43–44). This painting had been made by someone very practiced in outline draftsmanship, probably a high skilled artist.

However, the number of temples, royal palaces, mansions, private tombs and other buildings, like the Royal Tomb, found in Amarna, clearly indicate the presence of a large quantity of artists. Maybe one of the most interesting topics, and hardly explored, is the origin of those artists. In a recent publication, Kemp (2012, 74–76) pointed out that the human resources needed for the building project of the city of Amarna may come from resident population, rather than from temporary workforce. Among the small number of house owners of the Amarna whose names are known, there are two who hold the title of 'Overseer of Works' and 'Overseer of Builders'. Therefore, they must have been some kind of supervisors involved in constructions, probably in major stone building such as the Great Palace. In ancient Egypt artists were part of an organised and hierarchical workforce, and Amarna society should not be considered an exception.

And where did those artists come from? They could have predominantly been of Theban origin, as the building projects in the Karnak temple were reduced, although did not stop completely with the build of Akhetaten (Vergnieux 1999). The temples and royal palaces at Akhetaten built in only a few years, so this rapid and effective building must have relied on expert hands. It is not known what happened exactly to the population of Deir el-Medina during the Amarna Period, but as a population and community linked to the state, we might think that some high skilled artists were asked or forced to move to Akhetaten. The Memphite area could also have supplied, to a minor extent, artisans to build up the new capital of Akhenaten (Zieve 2013, 112). Memphis is considered the administrative capital during the main part of New Kingdom, and although there are no written sources regarding the existence of a place similar to Deir el-Medina, probably there were a significant number of artists linked to the temple and royal administration.

The events after the death of Akhenaten are obscure, but it is evident that most of the population of the city of Amarna gradually abandoned it. We may assume that artists were part of this migration, returning to their places of origin, probably many of them to Thebes, or perhaps following the young Tutankhamun to the new royal residence, Memphis.

In fact, the Theban private tombs of the post-Amarna Period provide important information regarding the influence of Amarna art on wall decoration, which could give clues of the mobility of the artists who left Akhetaten. The tomb of Neferhotep (TT 49), dated to the reign of Ay, is an important example of the influence and transmission of the Amarna style on the later art at Thebes, maybe revealing the

transfer of artists coming from Amarna. Within this tomb, we find some scenes that utilise the typical Amarna style, with its particular canon and specific poses, as well as the presence of common Amarna scenes such as the deceased being awarded in the 'Window of Appearances' (Alzoragay and Vera 2007, 5–7).

Nadine Cherpion (1995, 125–128) has analysed the scenes in the tomb of the sculptor Ipyu (TT 217), dated in the reign of Ramses II, noting that specific themes and scenes typical of Amarna art were found within the tomb. These included scenes of the deceased being rewarded by the king in the 'Window of Appearances' in the palace, the image of a *shaduf* in a garden, the rendering of the façade of Ipyu's house shown in a frontal view, and the papyrus plants on the north-east wall being rendered with a naturalistic style which recalls the 'Great Room' of the Amarna Palace. Another post-Amarna example of the 'Window of Appearances' scene can be found in the tomb of Hemui at Saqqara, dated to the reign of Sety I (Cherpion 1995, 126). This example might indicate the movement of Amarna artists to the Memphite region, therefore explaining the reoccurrence of this particular scene. With regard to the strong influx of Amarna in the tomb of the sculptor Ipyu, he may have felt a particular admiration for the art of that period, and having in mind that the office of an artist usually passed from father to son for several generations, it might be even possible that Ipyu's relatives could have been part of the body of artists working in the city of Amarna.

On the other hand, in the following years after the death of Akhenaten the administrative capital of Egypt seems to have been established in Memphis by Tutankhamun, which may have implied the movement of artists to Memphis. Interestingly, the Memphite private necropolis saw an important development during the post-Amarna Period (Van Dijt 1988, 37–39). The private tombs of the Saqqara area dated in the end of the 18th dynasty provide significant examples of the post-Amarna style and their high quality is striking (Berlandini 1982, 195–212). Several tombs can be mentioned, for instance the private tomb of general Horemheb (constructed when its owner was a general of the Egyptian armies under Tutankhamun), the tomb of Pay (Overseer of the Harem in Memphis) built during the reign of Tutankhamun, or the tomb of a lady called Maia, the wet-nurse of Tutankhamun (Bubasteion 1.20), as well as the impressive tomb of Maia and Meryt ('Overseer of the Treasury' and 'Overseer of Works' during the reign of Tutankhamun). These Memphite tomb owners had access to high-skilled artists who were still influenced by the Amarna style, maybe because they had been trained in Akhetaten. The evidence from these tombs certainly provides a strong indication that at least some of the Amarna artists moved to the Memphite region after the abandonment of Akhetaten, meanwhile other artists may have moved to Thebes, according to the presence of specific Amarna icons in post-Amarna Theban tombs.

A tomb discovered in the Bubasteion in 1996 is especially interesting for this research: the so-called 'Tomb of the Artists' (Tomb 1.19), which has high quality wall paintings and in some parts is carved. It is a hypogeum tomb constructed and decorated during the reign of Amenhotep III and the reign of Amenhotep IV/

Akhenaten (Zivie 2001, 94). The tomb owner of this small tomb was probably Thutmes, although a second artist named Kenna, probably a relative, is also mentioned, both holding the title of 'Directors of the Scribes of Forms'. The fathers of both painters hold the title of 'Director of Scribes of Forms' in the Place of Maat, a term attributed to Deir el-Medina. It seems that Thutmes and Kenna, who built their tomb in Saqqara, were part of a family of painters with an ancient tradition linked to artists from the Theban necropolis (Zivie 2013, 97–103).

The wall paintings of the tomb of Thutmes are remarkable for their high quality, made by an experienced painter, and the general impression is that the tomb is paralleled on the best examples of the Theban paintings dated to the reign of Amenhotep III, such as the tomb of Ramose (TT 55) or the tomb of Khaemhat (TT 57). Many scenes in the tomb could be attributed to the 'hand' of Thutmes, who painted three walls and also designed and started to carve one of the main walls near the entrance. Some scenes show strong connections with scenes in the tomb of Khaemhat, which lead Zivie propose that Thutmes could be the artist who made TT 57, and who even took part in the decoration of the tomb of Amenhotep III in the Valley of the Kings (Zivie 2007, 606). According to the study of the techniques and pigments used, the artist seems to have employed a complex and varied palette of colours. The figure of Thutmes, whose work could be linked to Memphis and Thebes, may be considered as an example of the artists' mobility (Zivie 2013, 107–108).

One of the most interesting paintings in this tomb is found in the west wall of the chapel of the tomb, showing Thutmes and his wife standing. The most striking fact is that in his self-portrait, Thutmes is holding a painter's palette, and in the extreme of this tool the name of the king Amenhotep III can be read, giving a precise connection between Thutmes and the reign of this king (Zivie 2007, 608, 616). In the recent full publication of the tomb, an interesting hypothesis has been suggested regarding a connection between this Thutmes from the tomb of Saqqara, and the sculptor Thutmes attested in Amarna and well-known for the famous bust of Nefertiti, now in the Egyptian Museum of Berlin (Zivie 2013, 128–135). The Tomb 1.19 in Saqqara could be an evidence of the transfer of high-skilled artists, Thutmes and Kenna, within Egypt during the New Kingdom, who could have worked in Thebes and Memphis.

Diffusion of innovations: travelling artists?

The topic of the diffusion of new iconography and artistic innovations has received scarce attention, except for the recent research by El Shahawy regarding the presence of iconographic elements in New Kingdom tombs located both in Thebes and in Memphis. For instance, the representation of the funerary rite of 'the breaking of red vessels' is attested first in the temple of Luxor in a scene of Amenhotep III, then in the Saqqara tomb of Horemheb and other Memphite tombs, and later in TT 44, dated to the 20th dynasty (El Shahawy 2012, 134). El Shahawy (2012, 137–140)

briefly analysed the appearance of other innovations, such as the emancipation of the pictorial canons (for example the frontal depictions of animals and humans), or the presence of unusual elements which work as ‘visual hooks’ which retain the attention of the viewer. Her main conclusion was that the diffusion of innovations could be attested in both directions between Thebes and Memphis, and also from Memphis to Thebes, although Theban artists were more innovative regarding emancipation of representation rules. From my point of view, the presence of innovations in distant areas could give us clues regarding the mobility of artists, who could have been requested to work in different places according to the needs of the Egyptian crown.

Another type of artistic innovation attested in Theban and Memphite tombs, but also in Amarna tombs, is the appearance of expressive mourning men in funerary scenes. One of the first examples of mourning men appears in the tomb of the sculptor Huy (TT 54), dated to the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III (Polz 1996, fig. 17, pl. 2). The tomb of the sculptors Nebamun and Ipuky, TT 181, (*tempus* Amenhotep III or the early reign of Amenhotep IV), included a scene with expressive mourning men (Davies 1925, pl. XIX). Besides, this type of representation is attested not only in the Royal Tomb at Amarna, but also in the private tomb of Huya (TA 1), where mourning men are shown in expressive attitudes, raising their hands to show grief (Davies 1905, figs XXII–XXIII). A similar treatment is found in several post-Amarna Memphite tombs, such as the tomb of Horemheb (Martin 1989, pl. 125). It is necessary to mention that scenes of expressive mourning men are also found in contemporary Theban tombs, for instance the tomb of Neferhotep, TT 49, (Davies 1933, vol. I, pl. XXIII) showing that they were popular in the post-Amarna Period and even later, in the Ramesside Period (Vivas Sainz 2017). The presence of these rare scenes with mourning men in distant locations, Thebes, Amarna and the Memphite area, could be also considered as a hint of the diffusion of new styles and renderings, maybe due to artists’ mobility during this period.

One specific type of innovation in New Kingdom tombs, which may be a good example of diffusion of motifs, deserves further comment: the representation of landscape. It is generally assumed that Egyptian artists did not use perspective in their compositions of landscape and nature, but in a very subtle way the artists of the 18th dynasty tried to create some perspective and depth, combining what they could see in reality and the representational rules of Egyptian art. For instance, in the east wall of the transverse hall of the tomb of Nakht (TT 52), probably dated to the reign of Amenhotep III, there is an agricultural scene, composed of two sub-registers divided by an undulating line (Fig. 7.1). The human figures in lower sub-register are represented larger than the ones in the upper sub-register, trying to create the effect of a more distant position of the smaller figures (Davies 1917, pl. 18). A nearly identical scene can be found in the tomb of Khaemhat (TT 57), where we also see an undulating line in the agricultural scene (Laboury 1997, 55–56). The tomb of Khaemhat is one of only four private tombs from the reign of Amenhotep III decorated with reliefs, and



Fig. 7.1: Agricultural scene in the tomb of Nakht (TT 52), east wall, transverse hall (Davies 1917, pl. 18).

it is one of the few tombs specifically dated, recorded as year 30 of Amenhotep III's reign. As both tombs are located in the Theban necropolis, it is reasonable to think that the scene was copied from the tomb of Nakht.

But what is really surprising is to find the same composition in one of the New Kingdom Memphite tombs: the tomb of Horemheb in Saqqara. The tomb, which shows an incredible degree of craftsmanship, includes military scenes in the North wall of the first courtyard, notably the representation of a military encampment. In this context, we find a scene divided by an undulating line, which separates the composition creating an effect of depth (Martin 1989, pl. 35.23). The idea of perspective is also created by the presence of mounds or hills, rendered by an undulating terrain, and the lively representation of workers behind the terrain (Fig. 7.2). The artist ignored the use of the registers and tried to create an original composition, which has a very close parallel in the aforementioned scenes in TT 52 and TT 57. This particular composition in the tomb of Horemheb, also attested in Theban tombs, may be a hint of artists' mobility to the Memphite area after the Amarna Period, as this type of precise and rare details seem to depend on the artists' choice and may reveal their background.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a fragment carved in relief from the tomb of Horemheb now in the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Bologna (inventory number: e.g. 1889), which shows another original scene of a military camp of soldiers. Several individuals are represented, and the artist is rendering an inclined base line, creating the effect that the people are climbing a hill (Martin 1989, pl. 34.22). In the lower part of the scene a man is riding a horse, and several workers are climbing up while carrying a beam. In the upper part of the relief there are two individuals and a chariot, as well as an original figure of a man running, climbing up the hill (Fig. 7.3). This very unusual way of rendering the landscape might be due to an artistic license, and the scene shows freedom and expressiveness that would have been unthinkable in earlier times. The private tombs of Memphis found in the recent years, many of



Fig. 7.2: Landscape scene in the tomb of Horemheb with undulating line, Saqqara (Martin 1989, pl. 35.23).

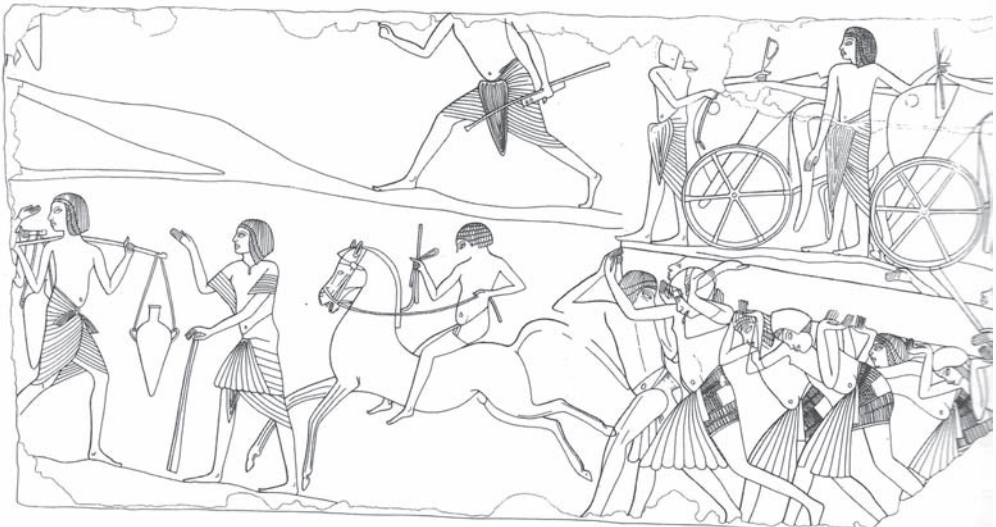


Fig. 7.3: Fragment from the tomb of Horemheb, Saqqara, Archaeological Museum of Bologna (Martin 1989, pl. 34.22).

which are still being excavated and restored, may provide more examples of the innovations of the Egyptian artists.

Conclusions

The topic of the present study is not easy, as one relies on the comparative analyses of tomb scenes according to their iconographic details, sometimes supported by epigraphic sources from which one could infer artists' mobility. Unfortunately, there are no written sources confirming the specific transfer of artists from one place to another, which might have been linked to the movements of the king and his court at certain periods. However, the evidence of the unfinished tombs and the scarcity of artists may suggest a higher mobility of New Kingdom artists than it was thought, as the career of the artist Thutmes may reflect. In this preliminary approach, I have tried to pinpoint some examples of the possible diffusion of specific elements in tomb decoration, which could illustrate the fact that very similar details and icons are found in Thebes and Memphis, and in some instances in Amarna. Although the tomb owner may have participated in the election of the main themes in his funerary monument, specific details or certain ways of rendering must have relied on the artists themselves.

As suggested by El Shahawy several pathways for the transmission of new elements between Thebes and Memphis are possible, not only the artists but also the tomb owners themselves, who travelled at some point of their careers between the two cities, and could have visited the tombs remembering some scenes (El Shahawy 2012, 144–145). However, from my point of view, certain specific innovations such as attempts of perspective and depth, or the representation of unusual expressive male mourners, may imply the influence of an artist or school of artists on another one, or the presence of a certain artist or a school of artists working in different locations. Artist's mobility may be considered as a factor in the process of transmission of innovations.

Much has been argued in the past years about the existence of travelling artists in the Levant and Egypt (Zacagnini 1979), and their role in the diffusion of foreign iconography. The best example could be the Minoan itinerant artists (Cline 1998), who produced high quality paintings with fresco technique and Minoan iconography in several places in the Levant (Niemeier and Niemeier 2002) and at the Egyptian site of Tell el-Dab'a. The wall paintings found in Tell el-Dab'a in a Thutmoseid palace complex are an indication of the exceptional presence of Minoan or Aegean artists in Egypt (Bietak 2005). Having in mind this new scenario of foreign interconnections and mutual artistic influence, it is time to reconsider the concept of the artists' mobility within the context of New Kingdom Egypt, artists who may have played a relevant role in the diffusion of iconography and innovations.

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