

## Dancing for the Dead: *muu* Dancers in Egyptian New Kingdom Scenes

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**Abstract.** *Muu* dancers are one of the most common elements in the funerary processions represented in the private Theban tombs of the New Kingdom, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. This paper aims to analyse the main characteristics of the representation of these male individuals that appear only on private tombs located in different necropolises. It will also try to understand the ritual meaning of these dancers through the attested images, an enigmatic procedure that has been interpreted in different ways by several authors. In addition, the distribution of these scenes both inside and outside the Theban necropolis will be analysed to understand the diffusion of this type of representations during the Egyptian New Kingdom. Thus, firstly I will make a description of the funerary processions painted or engraved on the walls of the private tombs. Secondly, I will describe the *muu* dancers following Brunner-Traut's classification and include the representations attested, comparing them to analyse the common features of these male dancers. It should be noted that this topic is of great importance because of its symbolic role in the decorative program of private tombs, mainly those of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

**Keywords:** Dance; Egypt; Funerary Procession; New Kingdom; Painting; Theban Tombs.

### [es] Bailando para los muertos: los bailarines *muu* en las escenas del Reino Nuevo egipcio

**Resumen.** Los bailarines *muu* son uno de los elementos más frecuentes en las procesiones funerarias representadas en las tumbas tebanas privadas del Reino Nuevo, especialmente durante la 18 dinastía. Este artículo pretende analizar las principales características de la representación de estos personajes masculinos, que sólo aparecen en tumbas privadas de diferentes necrópolis. También intentará entender el significado ritual de estos bailarines a través de las representaciones encontradas, un papel enigmático que ha sido interpretado de diferentes maneras por diversos estudiosos. Además, la distribución de estas escenas, tanto dentro como fuera de la necrópolis tebana, será analizada para entender la difusión de este tipo de representaciones durante el Reino Nuevo egipcio. Así, en primer lugar, se hará una descripción de las procesiones funerarias pintadas o talladas en las paredes de las tumbas privadas. En segundo lugar, describiré los bailarines *muu* siguiendo la clasificación ya realizada por Brunner-Traut incluyendo las representaciones encontradas, comparándolas entre sí para analizar las características comunes de estos bailarines. Se debe tener en cuenta que este tema es de gran importancia debido a su papel simbólico en el programa decorativo de las tumbas privadas, principalmente en las de la 18 dinastía.

**Palabras clave:** Danza; Egipto; procesión funeraria; Reino Nuevo; pintura; tumbas tebanas.

**Summary.** 1. Introduction: Dance in Ancient Egypt. 2. Funerary Processions on Private Tombs. 2.1. *Muu* Dancers on Funerary Processions. 2.1.1. First Type of *muu* Dancers. 2.1.2. Second Type of *muu* Dancers and the 'Hall of the muu'. 2.1.3. Third Type of *muu* Dancers. 3. Conclusions. 4. Written sources and bibliographical references.

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### 1. Introduction: Dance in Ancient Egypt

In ancient Egypt, dance was an activity carried out at social gatherings such as banquets, festivities, or

funerals and it had a symbolic meaning in addition to being a physical activity<sup>2</sup>.

The main source for the study of dance in ancient Egypt is its representation in the paintings and reliefs

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<sup>2</sup> Henri Wild, "Les danses sacrées de l'Égypte ancienne", in Anonymous (ed.), *Les danses sacrées: Égypte ancienne, Israël, Islam, Asie centrale, Inde, Cambodge, Bali, Java, Chine, Japon*, 33-118 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963).

of different tombs and temples<sup>3</sup>. We cannot recreate the movements made, since the artists chose a few representative poses that illustrated the complete performance, and which were probably iconographically recognizable to the viewer. Thus, the Egyptians did not intend that the images acted as a manual, since in popular culture the transmission of dance was taken for granted, and this activity was rarely described<sup>4</sup>.

During the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1070 BC), dance could be performed by Egyptians or foreign characters, by humans or animals, by men or women. In any case, it was a segregated activity, which means that we do not find representations of men and women dancing together<sup>5</sup>. It could also be performed by a soloist, a couple, or even a group of people<sup>6</sup>.

In its symbolic role, as stated before, most of the representations that have been found are linked to the transmission of a religious message, and not only to the movement itself. As for the possible meaning of these dance scenes, it could be ritual in many cases, but they should always be studied in relation to their context, although this does not guarantee a correct or complete interpretation.

While many dance scenes are accompanied by the representation of different musicians, this does not occur on the representations of the *muu* dancers, which appear alone on their activity.

## 2. Funerary Processions on Private Tombs

When we speak of ‘private tombs’ we refer here to the tombs of the high officials of the New Kingdom, who constituted an elite among the rest of the population<sup>7</sup>. These monuments, which were intended to express prestige, success, and service to the king and the gods, provide us with remarkable details of both the life of their owners and the funeral beliefs associated with them. The carved reliefs and, more frequently, the

paintings that decorated these tombs not only played an aesthetic role, but also had a specifically defined purpose: to create an ideal Hereafter in which the deceased could exist eternally. Thus, tomb scenes were charged with a clear magical and practical efficacy due to its ultimate meaning, since it acted for the benefit of the tomb owner<sup>8</sup>.

Most of the scenes included in this paper belong to Theban tombs. Thebes is the Greek name for the Egyptian city of *Waset*, the religious capital of Egypt since the beginning of the New Kingdom<sup>9</sup>. In its Western part, in an area about two kilometres long, it is possible to detect several necropolises used during the New Kingdom, both royal and private<sup>10</sup>. The private necropolises occupy the areas of Deir el-Medina, Qurnet Murai, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, el-Khòkha, Deir el-Bahari, Dra Abu el-Naga, and el-Asasif.

But I have also found these representations on private tombs located in the town of Elkab<sup>11</sup>. This town, known as *Nekheb* in antiquity, is in Upper Egypt, around 80 or 90 kilometres to the south of Thebes. Similarly to many other centres, it contains various necropolises dating to several periods of ancient Egyptian history<sup>12</sup>. The New Kingdom site is located to the north of the town, where one can find tombs dating to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. The tombs located in Elkab were funerary monuments belonging to high officials who were directly related to the town, and through their decoration and inscriptional evidence they can provide us with important information about the beginning of the New Kingdom and the reunification of the country.

The funerary rituals can be divided in different phases<sup>13</sup>: the procession to the necropolis, the procession to the Embalming Place and the embalming and mummification rituals, the post-embalming ritual, the procession to the tomb (the funeral itself), the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, and the mortuary service, that took place after the burial.

<sup>3</sup> Irena Lexová, *Ancient Egyptian Dances* (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1935); Henri Wild, “La danse dans l’Égypte ancienne: les document figurés”, *Positions des thèses des élèves de l’École du Louvre (1911-1944)* (Paris: École du Louvre, 1956), 227-230; Emma Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten. Nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen* (Glückstadt, Hamburg, New York: J. J. Augustin, 1958).

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Spencer, “Dance in Ancient Egypt”, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 63 (2003): 112; Erika Meyer-Dietrich, “Dance”, in *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles: UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, 2009), 3. Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://escholarship.org/content/qt5142h0db/qt5142h0db.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Edward Bleiberg, “Dance”, in *Arts and Humanities through the Eras. Ancient Egypt 2657-332 B.C.E.*, ed. Edward Bleiberg (Thomson Gale, 2005), 65.

<sup>6</sup> Lexová, *Ancient Egyptian Dances*.

<sup>7</sup> Friederike Kampp-Seyfried, “Overcoming death – the private tombs of Thebes”, in *Egypt: the world of the pharaohs*, ed. Regine Schulz and Matthias Seidel (Könemann, 1998); Naguib Kanawati, *The Tomb and Beyond: Burial Customs of the Egyptian Officials* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2001); Friederike Kampp-Seyfried, “The Theban necropolis: an overview of topography and tomb development from the Middle Kingdom to the Ramesside period”, in *The Theban Necropolis: past, present and future*, ed. Nigel Strudwick and John H. Taylor (The British Museum Press, 2003); Melinda K. Hartwig, *Tomb painting and identity in ancient Thebes, 1419-1372 BCE* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Valérie Angenot, “Semiotics and Hermeneutics”, in *A companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. Melinda K. Hartwig (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 78-97; Maya Müller, “Iconography and Symbolism”, in *A companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. Melinda K. Hartwig (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 98-119; Aidan Dodson and Salima Ikram, *The tomb in Ancient Egypt: royal and private sepulchres from the early dynastic period to the Romans* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Nigel Strudwick and Helen Strudwick, *Thebes in Egypt: a guide to the tombs and temples of ancient Luxor* (London: The British Museum Press, 1999); Daniel C. Polz, “Thebes” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Friederike Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole. Zum Wandel des Grabgedankens von der XVIII bis zur XX Dynastie*, 2 vols. (Philipp von Zabern, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Luc J. H. Limme, “Elkab”, in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Kathryn A. Bard and Steven Blake Shubert (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the archaeology of ancient Egypt* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999); James Edward Quibell, *El Kab* (London: B. Quaritch, 1898); Limme, “Elkab”.

<sup>13</sup> Harold M. Hays, “Funerary rituals (Pharaonic period)” in *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles: UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, 2010). Accessed September 29, 2020, 2-3. <https://escholarship.org/content/qt1r32g9zn/qt1r32g9zn.pdf?t=qh4675&v=lg>

The funerary procession depicted on these tombs finds its origin in the Old Kingdom (c. 2687-2181 BC)<sup>14</sup>. Its narrative structure is always partial, consisting of parts of the complete pictorial story, which consisted of thirteen episodes, beginning with the departure of the body from the place where it had been prepared, continuing with its journey down the Nile river, and ending with the burial<sup>15</sup>. The choice of the episodes to be represented in each tomb might have been due to the need to adapt the program to the available space, or to the preferences of the tomb owner himself<sup>16</sup>. In any case, the mummy was carried in a procession, along with the funerary equipment, from the house of the deceased to the tomb itself, crossing the Nile from one bank to the other<sup>17</sup>.

Upon death, the corpse was transported on a bark across the Nile from the east, the world of the living, to the west, the land of the dead. When the procession arrived at the west bank, different rituals, in which the deceased was already named as the god Osiris, took place.<sup>18</sup> Then, the deceased was taken to the Embalming Place, where the process of embalming and mummification took around seventy days.

After the preparation of the mummy by the embalmers, it was placed on a sledge, preferably drawn by oxen, although it could also be represented as being pulled by a group of men known as ‘the Nine friends’ or *smrw*. These characters were depicted as part of the funeral procession since the Old Kingdom. In some representations we find all of them, while in others we just find a few characters, or even just a single figure representing them all. The number nine is also an allusion to the plurality of the divine pantheon. The *smrw* carry a characteristic long stick or cane. In addition, the term *smrw* seems to be a title that was no longer in use during the New Kingdom. During this period, it only served to associate these processions or rituals with the pilgrimage made during the Old Kingdom<sup>19</sup>.

Two important priests also appear on these representations: the *sem* priest, identified with the god Horus, and the chief lector priest, identified with Thoth<sup>20</sup>.

Among the people who took part in this procession, we can also identify the relatives and friends of the deceased, some priests, and professional mourners. These women would play the role of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, lamenting their deceased brother Osiris,

with whom the deceased was identified<sup>21</sup>. Both goddesses appear represented as kites (with Isis being the ‘great kite’ and Nephthys the ‘little kite’), whose squawking was assimilated into the lament of the mourners, and whose pattern of flight while looking for carrion was associated with how the loyal Isis searched for her murdered brother and husband. Both were considered protectors of the deceased.

According to Junker<sup>22</sup>, these burial rituals took the funeral procession of the king from predynastic times as a model. In them, the deceased ruler travelled to Buto in the Delta, and Abydos in the South to visit his father, Osiris, mythical king and god of death, resurrection, and fertility, who was buried in the latter city. Already in the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty, these processions ceased to be something reserved for royalty and began to be carried out by the elite.

In this pilgrimage, the cities of Buto (Pe and Dep)<sup>23</sup>, Sais (the place where it was believed that Osiris had been buried)<sup>24</sup>, and Heliopolis<sup>25</sup> (represented by two obelisks during the New Kingdom) became fundamental centres of influence. However, in the Middle and New Kingdoms these trips seem not to have been experienced in reality, but symbolically, becoming limited to crossing the Nile River from one bank to the other and performing the associated rituals, such as the purification rites, the presentation of offerings, and the Opening of the Mouth ceremony<sup>26</sup>, in the necropolis itself<sup>27</sup>. It was, therefore, a kind of pilgrimage that symbolized the journey of the deceased into the realm of the dead, as well as his resurrection and rebirth in the Hereafter.

As for the representation of obelisks in the funerary processions, it seems that they could refer, as stated above, to the city of Heliopolis, since inside the

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Settgast, *Untersuchungen zu altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen* (Verlag nicht ermittelbar, 1963); Ann Macy Roth, “Funerary ritual” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford University Press, 2001); Hays, “Funerary rituals (Pharaonic period)”.

<sup>15</sup> Hays, “Funerary rituals (Pharaonic period)”.

<sup>16</sup> Gemma Menéndez Gómez, “La procesión funeraria de la tumba de Hery (TT 12) en Dra Abu el-Naga”, *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Egiptología* 15 (2005), 36.

<sup>17</sup> Hays, “Funerary rituals (Pharaonic period)”.

<sup>18</sup> Hays, “Funerary rituals (Pharaonic period)”.

<sup>19</sup> Jaques Vandier, “Quelques remarques sur les scènes de pèlerinage aux villes saintes dans les tombes de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie”, *Chronique d’Égypte* 19 (1944), 38.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Assmann, *Death and salvation in ancient Egypt* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 303.

<sup>21</sup> Andrea Kucharek, “Isis und Nephthys als Drt-Vögel”, *Göttinger Miszellen* 218 (2008), 57-61; Hays, “Funerary rituals (Pharaonic period)”.

<sup>22</sup> Hermann Junker, “Der tanz der Mww und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich”, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 9 (1940), 1-39; Horst Beinlich, *Die “Osirisreliquien”: zum Motiv der Körpergliederung in der altägyptischen Religion* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Beinlich, *Die “Osirisreliquien”: zum Motiv der Körpergliederung in der altägyptischen Religion*; Thomas Von der Way, “Buto” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Beinlich, *Die “Osirisreliquien”: zum Motiv der Körpergliederung in der altägyptischen Religion*; Karol Mysliwiec, “Sais” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> James P. Allen, “Heliopolis” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 2, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Eberhard Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1960); Eberhard Otto, *Egyptian Art and the Cults of Osiris and Amon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968); Jean-Claude Goyon, *Rituels funéraires de l’ancienne Égypte: le rituel de l’Embaumement; le rituel de l’Ouverture de la Bouche; les Livres des Respirations. Introduction, traduction et commentaire* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972); José M. Serrano Delgado, “The composition of the Opening of the Mouth in the tomb-chapel of Djehuty (TT 11)”, in José M. Galán, Betsy M. Bryan, and Peter F. Dorman (eds.), *Creativity and innovation in the reign of Hatshepsut: papers from the Theban Workshop 2010*, 273-295 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Greg Reeder, “The Mysterious Muu and the dance they do” (1995). Accessed September 29, 2020. <http://www.egyptology.com/reeder/muu/>; Roth, “Funerary ritual”.



enclosure of the main temple in this city there were several obelisks. However, they could also reflect the idea of the solar cult, an allusion to the sun god Re, who also experienced a journey of rebirth through the passage of the day, or even a representation of the obelisks that were sometimes placed at the entrance of tombs<sup>28</sup>.

In addition, the representation of various chapels in scenes of funerary processions is also frequent, such as the group of chapels that are inhabited by kneeling mummy-gods representing the guardians of the 'sacred domains' through which the deceased passed on his trip, or the chapel inhabited by the *muu* dancers, in which this paper is focused<sup>29</sup>.

## 2.1. *Muu* Dancers on the Funerary Processions

In addition to the characters mentioned above, in these funeral processions one can also find very interesting male dancers called *mww* or *muu* (literally 'those who belong to the water'), who seem to play a fundamental part in the ideal funeral as a procedure to which only the elite could aspire<sup>30</sup>. In general, it can be said that this dance was performed at private funerals, as attested from the Old Kingdom<sup>31</sup> to the New Kingdom, and its frequent representation on the walls of the tombs reflect its deep religious significance.

An example of this importance is the text inscribed on the stela found at the tomb of Djehuty (TT 110)<sup>32</sup>:

The beautiful burial, may it come in peace  
after your seventy days are completed in your embalming  
hall.

May you be laid out on a bier in the house of the rest  
and be drawn by white oxen.

May the ways be opened with milk  
until your arrival at the entrance to your tomb.

May the children of your children all be assembled  
and wail with loving heart.

May your mouth be opened by the chief lector priest,  
may you be purified by the *sem*-priest,  
may Horus weigh your mouth for you,  
after he has opened your eyes and ears.

May your limbs and your bones all be present on you.

May the transfiguration spells be read for you  
and the mortuary offering be performed for you.

<sup>28</sup> Norman de Garis Davies, "The Tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (No. 15)", *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology (JEA)* 11 (1925): 17; Stephen Quirke, *The cult of Ra: sun-worship in ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Kampp-Seyfried, "The Theban necropolis: an overview of topography and tomb development from the Middle Kingdom to the Ramesside period", 2-10.

<sup>30</sup> Gustave Jéquier, "À propos de la danse des mouaou", *Revue de l'Égypte ancienne* 1 (1927): 144-151; Junker, "Der tanz der Mww und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich", 1-39; Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten. Nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen*, 53-59; Settgast, *Untersuchungen zu altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen*; Hartwig Altenmüller, "Zur Frage Der Mww", *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 2 (1975), 1-37; Reeder, "The Mysterious Muu and the dance they do"; Lesley Kinney, "The Dance of the mww", *Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology* 15 (2004): 63-77; Meyer-Dietrich, "Dance", 5.

<sup>31</sup> Lesley Kinney, *Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2008), 138-145.

<sup>32</sup> Assmann, *Death and salvation in ancient Egypt*, 301-2.

May your *jb*-heart be with you in the right way,  
and your *HA.tj*-heart of your existence on earth,  
you being restored to your previous form,  
As on the day when you were born.

May the *sA-mr*-priest be brought to you,  
may the friends sing the litany 'Beware, O earth!',  
the entry into the earth that the king grants,  
in the coffin of the western side.

May you be given an escort like the ancestors,  
may the *muu* come to you in jubilation.

The god's favour for the one he loves is  
to be imperishable forever and ever.

We can find the *muu* dancers in four different stages of the funerary procession<sup>33</sup>: i) they received the funeral procession in the so-called 'hall of the *Muu*', where they lived within the limits of the necropolis; ii) they danced while the priests carried the coffin on the funeral barge in a ritual place called 'Sais', associated with the city of Sais in the Delta; iii) they 'greeted' the sledge that carried the coffin to the ritual site of the necropolis called 'the Gates of Buto', associated with the city of the same name; and finally, iv) in an unknown place in the necropolis, where these dancers were the reception committee for the sledge that carried the canopic vessels and the *tknw*<sup>34</sup>. Thus, they were responsible for taking the deceased through the waters to the 'other world', simulating a voyage on the Nile river.

Generally, these dancers are depicted wearing a characteristic headdress that makes them easily recognizable. It was made with plant stalks, probably papyrus, forming a kind of cone-shaped crown that widened at the end, similar in shape to the King's White Crown or the *Atf* crown of Osiris<sup>35</sup>. However, during the New Kingdom it seems that scribes sometimes identified the images of the *muu* dancers through inscriptions, and not through their distinctive headdress<sup>36</sup>. They also wear kilts, which can be pointed or straight depending on the representation.

<sup>33</sup> Altenmüller, "Zur Frage Der Mww", 1-37; Bleiberg, "Dance", 76.

<sup>34</sup> John Gwyn Griffiths, "The Tekenu, the Nubians, and the Butic burial", *Kush: Journal of the Sudan Antiquities Service* 6 (1958): 106-120; Reeder, "The Mysterious Muu and the dance they do"; Abeer El-Shahawy, *The Funerary Art of Ancient Egypt: A Bridge to the Realm of the Hereafter* (El Cairo: Farid Atiya Press, 2005), 54-55; Maria Rosa Valdesogo Martín, "La víctima humana (tekenu) y el sacrificio de cabellos", in *Actas del segundo congreso ibérico de egiptología, Bellaterra, 12-15 de marzo de 2001*, ed. Josep Cervelló Autuori, Montserrat Díaz de Cerio Juan and David Rull Ribó (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2005), 311-315; Jose M. Serrano Delgado, "A Contribution to the Study of the tekenu and its Role in Egyptian Funerary Ritual", *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 138 (2011): 150-162; Glenisse West, *The tekenu and ancient Egyptian funerary ritual* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> Junker, "Der tanz der Mww und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich", 1-39; Reeder, "The Mysterious Muu and the dance they do"; Kinney, "The Dance of the mww", 69; Francisco L. Borrego Gallardo, "La corona atef durante el Reino Antiguo", in *Novos Trabalhos de Egiptologia Ibérica. IV Congresso Ibérico de Egiptologia*, ed. Luís Manuel de Araújo and José das Candeias Sales (Lisboa: Instituto Oriental e Centro de História da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 2012), 145-166.

<sup>36</sup> Bleiberg, "Dance", 76.

For Menéndez Gómez<sup>37</sup>, the existence of different types of *muu* dancers may have been due to the fact that the term referred to the dance itself, which could be related to regeneration. This term probably was not able to be translated, and so became the denomination for the characters that performed it as well.

The words used to refer to their dance are *kheby* or *xbb*<sup>38</sup>. Both terms were already attested in the Old Kingdom, and they are frequently used in ancient Egypt to refer to dance. They are also associated with the *muu* dancers in the Middle Kingdom (e.g. appearing in The Story of Sinuhe the sentences “Cattle draw you and singers precede you. The dance (*xbb*) of the *mww*-dancers is done at the door of your tomb. The offering list is recited for you, and a sacrifice is made on your offering-stone.”)<sup>39</sup>, and with the *muu* dancers, especially those of the third type, as well as with acrobatic dances during the New Kingdom<sup>40</sup>.

In the process of collecting evidence for the study of the *muu* dancers, I have found 36 scenes of *muu* dancers and five supplementary references to them. An interesting point to take into consideration is that on some occasions two representations of different types of dancers have been found in the same tomb. However, I have not found any attestation of the three types together (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Representations of *muu* dancers by tomb. Source: Author.

TOMB	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3
TT 12	X		
TT 15	X	X	
TT 17	X		X
TT 20	(X)		
TT 21		X	
TT 24			X
TT 29	(X)		
TT 39		X	
TT 41	X		X
TT 42			X
TT 53		X	X
TT 81	X	X?	
TT 82			X

<sup>37</sup> Menéndez Gómez, “La procesión funeraria de la tumba de Hery (TT 12) en Dra Abu el-Naga”, 49.

<sup>38</sup> Kinney, “The Dance of the *mww*”, 64; Kinney, *Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian literature I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 229; Kinney, “The Dance of the *mww*”, 63.

<sup>40</sup> Lynda Green, “Egyptian words for dancers and dancing”, *Ancient World* vol. VI (1983), 30; Abdalla Abdel-Raziq, “An unpublished small sculpture of a female acrobat at the Al-Salam School Museum in Assiut”, *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 45 (2016): 5.

TOMB	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3
TT 92			X
TT 96			X
TT 100		X	X
TT 110		(X)	
TT 112		(X)	X
TT 123		X	X
TT 125		(X)	X
TT 127		X	X
TT 172	X		
TT 179			X
TT 260	X		
TT 276			X
TT 342		(X)	X
TT A4		X	X
EK 3		X	X
EK 7	X	X	

The classification of the representations presented in this paper follows the one already established by Brunner-Traut<sup>41</sup>, which distinguishes three different types of *muu* dancers.

### 2.1.1. First Type of *muu* Dancers

The first type of *muu* dancers (Fig. 1) shows the aforementioned characteristic headdress: a high crown made of plants (probably papyrus), similar to the king’s white crown or to the *Atf* crown of the god Osiris<sup>42</sup>.

These dancers joined the funeral procession on the West bank of the Nile river, at the entrance of the cemetery, and by gesturing with their hands pointing to the floor they seem to give their permission for the procession to enter in the necropolis. Another possible interpretation of this gesture is that it could be a protection symbol, since it also appears in scenes with dangerous animals from the Old Kingdom, or even on some amulets<sup>43</sup>. The other gesture made by these dancers with their legs, with one raised foot moving forward, seems to mimic the act of taking a step, which can symbolize the fact that they are crossing from the world of the living to the world of the dead<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten. Nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> Junker, “Der tanz der *Mww* und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich”, 1-39; Reeder, “The Mysterious *Muu* and the dance they do”; Kinney, “The Dance of the *mww*”, 69; Borrego Gallardo, “La corona atef durante el Reino Antiguo”, 145-166.

<sup>43</sup> Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 194.

<sup>44</sup> Reeder, “The Mysterious *Muu* and the dance they do”; Kinney, “The Dance of the *mww*”, 63.



Figure 1. First type of *muu* dancers. TT 15. Norman de Garis Davies, “The Tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (No. 15)”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology (JEA)* 11 (1925), pl. V. Source: Miriam Bueno Guardia.

Sometimes, such as in the case of the representations found in TT 15<sup>45</sup> and TT 81<sup>46</sup>, a priest is depicted seeming to talk to them. He is a lector chief priest, who probably is invoking them. He wears a distinctive costume that crosses his chest and passes over his shoulder, and he usually appears with a roll of papyrus in his hand.

One can find these dancers in six tombs dating to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty – TT 12<sup>47</sup>, 15<sup>48</sup>, 81<sup>49</sup>, 260<sup>50</sup>, 175<sup>51</sup>, and 172<sup>52</sup>–, mainly situated in the cemetery of Dra Abu el-Naga, as well as in a tomb from Elkab (EK 7)<sup>53</sup> dating to the same period, and in a Theban tomb from the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty – TT 41<sup>54</sup>– (Tab. 2).

The representations of these *muu* dancers of the first type appear mostly on the left side of the corridor of the T-shaped Theban tombs, where the funerary processions were usually depicted. In addition, they are usually orientated facing the entrance of the tomb, depicted as receiving the funeral procession as it entered the tomb and, symbolically, into the realm of the dead.

It is remarkable that most of these representations follow the same characteristic rigid style of the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. This rigid style is related

to the art of the Middle Kingdom. In contrast, the dancers found on the TT 41, dated to a later period, are more dynamic. Their bodies seem to be drawn over a curved line that approximately follows an ‘S’ shape. This difference is probably related to the artistic change that took place during the Amarna period, when the paintings and reliefs became more realistically rendered, and curved lines gained more importance in art<sup>55</sup>.

It is also important to note that these dancers found in TT 41 are not in the corridor of the tomb, but on the transverse hall, the one at the entrance. This could be due to the importance of the funerary scenes during the Ramesside Period, when the so-called ‘scenes of daily life’ that were typically located in this room during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty almost disappear.



Figure 2. Headdress of the *muu* dancers described by Wild. Source: Miriam Bueno Guardia.

A variation on this particular type of *muu* dancers is described by Wild<sup>56</sup>. They appear with a different headdress, a floral one associated with Lower Egypt<sup>57</sup> (Fig. 2). Their arms appear bended and over their chest. These *muu* dancers are attested from the Old Kingdom to the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, and appear in two Theban tombs of the New Kingdom – TT 20<sup>58</sup> and TT 29 – but they are not represented as dancing. Their main duty seems to be the reception of the sacred boat in Sais, in a similar way to the royal funerary procession in ancient times. Due to their different headdress, we could consider them as a different kind of *muu* dancers, but this new classification deserves a further analysis of this kind of dancers throughout the Egyptian history to propose a change in the established classification.

<sup>45</sup> Davies, “The Tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (No. 15)”, pl. V.

<sup>46</sup> Eberhard Dziobek, *Das Grab des Ineni: Theben nr. 81*. (Philipp von Zabern, 1992), t. 25b.

<sup>47</sup> Menéndez Gómez, “La procesión funeraria de la tumba de Hery (TT 12) en Dra Abu el-Naga”, fig. 19.

<sup>48</sup> Davies, “The Tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (No. 15)”, pl. V.

<sup>49</sup> Dziobek, *Das Grab des Ineni: Theben nr. 81*, t. 25b.

<sup>50</sup> Mohammed W. Nasr, “The Theban tomb 260 of User”, *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 20 (1993), t. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Torgny Säve-Söderbergh, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs* (Oxford, 1957), pl. XXV.

<sup>52</sup> El-Shahawy, *The Funerary Art of Ancient Egypt: A Bridge to the Realm of the Hereafter*, fig. 50.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph John Tylor, Somers Clarke and Francis Llewellyn Griffith, *Wall drawings and monuments of El Kab: The tomb of Renni* (Bernard Quaritch, 1900).

<sup>54</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das Grab des Amenemope TT41* (Mainz von Zabern, 1991).

<sup>55</sup> Dimitri Laboury, “Amarna art”, in *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles: UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, 2010). Accessed September 29, 2020. <https://escholarship.org/content/qt0n21d4bm/qt0n21d4bm.pdf?t=qh4662&v=lg>

<sup>56</sup> Wild, “Les danses sacrées de l’Égypte ancienne”, 93-8.

<sup>57</sup> Junker, “Der tanz der Mww und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich”, 35.

<sup>58</sup> Norman de Garis Davies, *Five Theban tombs (being those of Mentuherkhepeshef, User, Daga, Nehemawäy, and Tati)* (Egypt Exploration Fund, 1913), 1-19.

Table 2. Representations of the first type of *muu* dancers. Source: Author.

TOMB	NECROPOLIS	DATE	OWNER	LOCATION
TT 12	Dra Abu el-Naga	Ahmose – Amenhotep I	Hery	Corridor, left side
TT 15	Dra Abu el-Naga	Ahmose – Amenhotep I	Tetiky	Chapel, South wall
EK 7	Elkab	Amenhotep I	Renni	East wall
TT 81	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Amenhotep I [...] Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Ineni	Corridor, left side
TT 260	Dra Abu el-Naga	Thutmose III ?	User	Chapel, left side
TT 17	Dra Abu el-Naga	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Nebamun	Corridor, left side
TT 172	El-Khòkha	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II ?	Mentiywy	Corridor, left side
TT 41	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Horemheb [...] Seti I	Amenemopet	Transverse hall, left side
TT 20*	Dra Abu el-Naga	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Montuherkhopsheshef	Corridor, left side
TT 29*	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Amenemopet	Corridor, right side

### 2.1.2. Second Type of *muu* Dancers and the “Hall of the *muu*”

The second type of *muu* dancers was depicted wearing the same crown as the first type of dancers, but they appear now in connection with a building or shrine with a vaulted ceiling, known as the “hall of the *muu*”, from where they guarded the necropolis (Fig. 3). These *muu* dancers are represented again in a static pose, not dancing.

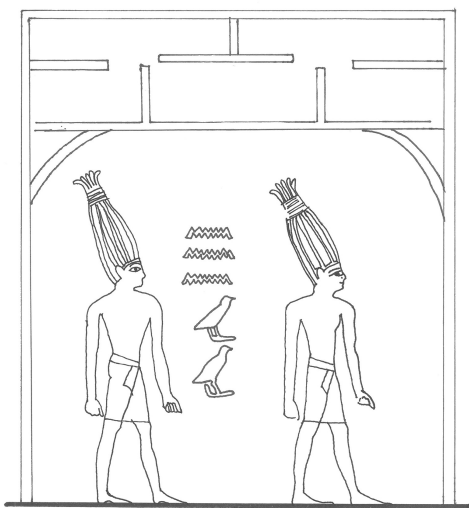


Figure 3. Second type of *muu* dancers. TT 100. Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re' at Thebes*. 2 vols. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943, pl. LXXX. Source: Miriam Bueno Guardia.

The so-called ‘hall of the *muu*’ is a vaulted chapel or *pr-nw* chapel, a symbol of Lower Egypt – and, therefore, of Buto – and a schematic representation of its royal palaces<sup>59</sup>. The complex typically numbered several

rooms in the New Kingdom, and it would be surrounded by gardens and ponds.

It seems that it is the complex where the coffin was placed while awaiting the permission of the gods to enter the kingdom of Osiris, after which the procession could continue its journey. But it could also be some kind of building near the tomb where some funerary rites were performed. Thus, it is at the entrance of the tomb that these *muu* dancers of the second type were depicted, and from where they, as agents of the kingdom of the dead, communicated the approval of the gods for the burial of the deceased. In this role, they act as a kind of demigods, spirits of the deceased kings of Buto that returned from the Beyond to intercept the procession and allow the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead<sup>60</sup>.

The depiction of this type of dancers appears on the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, from the time of Ahmose until the reign of Thutmose III, with most of them belonging to the latter. Their location within the tombs is mostly on the left side of the corridor, as is usual for funerary processions.

Eight clear examples of this type of dancers have been documented in the Theban private tombs of the New Kingdom: TT 15<sup>61</sup>, 21<sup>62</sup>, 39<sup>63</sup>, 53<sup>64</sup>, A4<sup>65</sup>, 127<sup>66</sup>, 123<sup>67</sup> and 100<sup>68</sup>, a doubtful example (because the depiction

pèlerinage aux villes saintes dans les tombes de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie”, 48-51.

<sup>60</sup> Junker, “Der tanz der Mww und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich”, 23; Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten. Nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen*, 58.

<sup>61</sup> Davies, “The Tomb of Tetaky at Thebes (No. 15)”, pl. V.

<sup>62</sup> Davies, *Five Theban tombs (being those of Mentuherkhepeshef, User, Daga, Nehemawäy, and Tati)*, 20-27.

<sup>63</sup> Norman de Garis Davies, *The tomb of Puyemre at Thebes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1923).

<sup>64</sup> Bertha Porter and Rosalind L. B. Moss, *Topographical bibliography of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs and paintings. Second Edition, revised and augmented. Vol. 1.* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1970), 103.

<sup>65</sup> Lise Manniche, *Lost tombs: a study of certain Eighteenth Dynasty monuments in the Theban necropolis* (London: KPI, 1988), 62-87.

<sup>66</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 242.

<sup>67</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 236.

<sup>68</sup> Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re' at Thebes*. 2 vols. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943).

<sup>59</sup> Junker, “Der tanz der Mww und das Butische begrabnis im Alten Reich”, 20; Vandier, “Quelques remarques sur les scènes de



is now destroyed) – TT 81<sup>69</sup>– and four supplementary references (for which I have not found an image during my research) – TT 125<sup>70</sup>, 110<sup>71</sup>, 342<sup>72</sup>, and 112<sup>73</sup>. To this

list we must add two examples found in Elkab: one in the tomb of Paheri (EK 3), and another one in the tomb of Renni (EK 7)<sup>74</sup> (Tab. 3).

Table 3. Representations of the second type of *muu* dancers. Source: Author.

TOMB	NECROPOLIS	DATE	OWNER	LOCATION
TT 15	Dra Abu el-Naga	Ahмосe – Amenhotep I	Tetiky	Chapel, South wall
EK 7	Elkab	Amenhotep I	Renni	East wall
TT 81?	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Amenhotep I [...] Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Ineni	Corridor, left side
TT 21	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose I [...] Thutmose III	User	Corridor, left side
TT 125	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut	Duaerneheh	Corridor, left side
TT 39	El-Khòkha	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Puymre	Chapel
TT 53	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Amenemhet	Corridor, left side
TT A4	Dra Abu el-Naga	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Wensu	Corridor, left side
TT 110	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Djehutymes	Corridor, left side
TT 127	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III / Ramesside	Sememiah	Corridor, left side
TT 123	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III	Amenemhat	Corridor, left side
TT 342	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III	Dhutmosi	Corridor, left side
EK 3	Elkab	Thutmose III	Paheri	West wall
TT 100	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Rekhmire	Corridor, left side
TT 112	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II / Ramesside	Menkheperasonb / Ashefytemweset	Corridor, left side

### 2.1.3. Third Type of *muu* Dancers

The third type of *muu* dancers consists of a male couple represented face-to-face without any headdresses (Fig. 4). Both dancers are depicted in the same position and with identical postures, although there are several variants of the pose: they are usually depicted with one of their legs and their arms flexed. The variations are mainly related to which leg is flexed, how flexed it is, or even whether one of the arms is raised. In any case, the composition of the figures is always symmetrical, and clearly recognizable as the third type of *muu* dancers.

They are called ‘pseudo *muu*’ by Altenmüller<sup>75</sup>, because of their substantial iconographic differences compared to the other types.

They have been related to boatmen, who must have looked back and front while they navigated across the Nile<sup>76</sup>. Their dance could conceivably be associated with a folkloric tradition in which they were experts. It is also possible that this type of dance was performed to invoke the actual *muu* dancers<sup>77</sup>. The aforementioned association with the boatmen is reinforced by the actual function they fulfil, since, while the boatmen manage the direction of the boats and propel them through the water, these *muu* dancers would be responsible for directing the funeral procession (and the boats) from one side to

the other, not only across the river but also on the night voyage of the sun<sup>78</sup>.

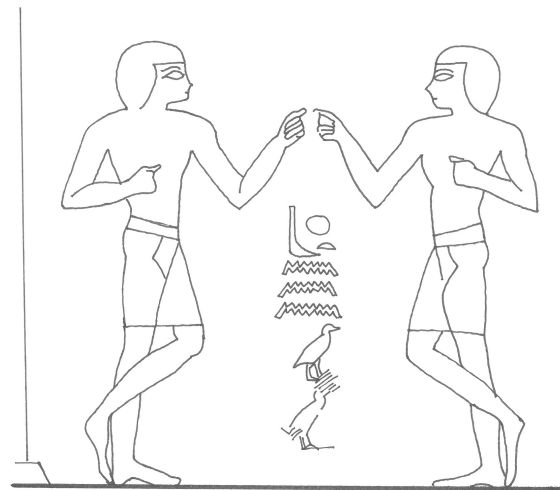


Figure 4. Third type of *muu* dancers. TT 100. Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re' at Thebes*. 2 vols. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943, pl. XCII. Source: Miriam Bueno Guardia.

Seventeen of the representations found date from the reign of the queen Hatshepsut to the reign of Amenhotep II, but there is also an example dated to later times

<sup>69</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 162.

<sup>70</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 240.

<sup>71</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 228.

<sup>72</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 410.

<sup>73</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography...*, 230.

<sup>74</sup> Tylor, Clarke and Griffith, *Wall drawings and monuments of El Kab: The tomb of Renni*.

<sup>75</sup> Altenmüller, “Zur Frage Der Mwu”, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Reeder, “The Mysterious Muu and the dance they do”.

<sup>77</sup> Reeder, “The Mysterious Muu and the dance they do”.

<sup>78</sup> Bleiberg, “Dance”, 69.



(Tab. 4). It is also important to stress that most of them are somehow related to the reign of Thutmose III.

As for their location, they appear once again on the left side of the corridor of the tombs. In this case, most of the attestations come from the necropolis of Sheikh Abd

el-Qurna: TT 125<sup>79</sup>, 53<sup>80</sup>, 127<sup>81</sup>, 82<sup>82</sup>, 123<sup>83</sup>, 342<sup>84</sup>, 42<sup>85</sup>, 100<sup>86</sup>, 92<sup>87</sup>, 96<sup>88</sup>, 112<sup>89</sup>, 41<sup>90</sup>. Beyond this necropolis, we only find five representations in Thebes (TT 24<sup>91</sup>, 179<sup>92</sup>, A4<sup>93</sup>, 17<sup>94</sup>, and 276<sup>95</sup>) and another one in Elkab, this time in the tomb of Paheri (EK 3)<sup>96</sup> (Tab. 4).

Table 4. Representations of the third type of *muu* dancers. Source: Author.

TOMB	NECROPOLIS	DATE	OWNER	LOCATION
TT 24	Dra Abu el-Naga	Thutmose II [...] Thutmose III	Nebamun	Transverse hall, left side
TT 179	El-Khòkha	Hatshepsut	Nebamun	Corridor, left side
TT 125	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut	Duaerneheh	Corridor, left side
TT 53	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Amenemhet	Corridor, left side
TT A4	Dra Abu el-Naga	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III	Wensu	Corridor, left side
TT 127	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Hatshepsut – Thutmose III / Ramesside	Senemioh / Piay and Paury	Corridor, left side
TT 82	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III	Amenemhet	Corridor, left side
TT 123	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III	Amenemhet	Corridor, left side
TT 342	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III	Djehutymes	Corridor, left side
EK 3	Elkab	Thutmose III	Paheri	West wall
TT 17	Dra Abu el-Naga	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Nebamun	Corridor, left side
TT 42	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Amenmes	Corridor, left side
TT 100	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Rekhmire	Corridor, left side
TT 92	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Suemnut	Corridor, left side
TT 96	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Sennufer	Chapel, left side
TT 112	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II / Ramesside	Menkheperasonb / Ashefytemweset	Corridor, left side
TT 276	Qurnet Murai	Thutmose III – Amenhotep II	Amenemopet	Corridor, left side
TT 41	Sheikh Abd el-Qurna	Horemheb [...] Seti I	Amenemopet	Transverse hall, left side

The tombs located in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna seem to be grouped in three different parts of the necropolis. There is one group on the West part (TT 92, 96, and 100, and also, although a bit further, TT 81 and 82), another one to the East (TT 41, 42, and 112), and the last one to the South (TT 53, 123, 125, 127, and 342). This distribution could mean that the same group of artists worked on the decoration of the different tombs, or that they inspired themselves by visiting the nearest tombs to determine the decoration of the new one.

### 3. Conclusions

This study presents 36 clear attestations of *muu* dancers collected during my research and five other references of which I haven't found the pictures or drawings (Tab. 1).

In general terms, it can be pointed out that most of the depictions of *muu* dancers appear in tombs from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty (until the reign of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II). Only two

representations, both located in tomb TT 41<sup>97</sup>, date to the Ramesside Period. It is remarkable that, although

<sup>79</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 240.

<sup>80</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 103.

<sup>81</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 242.

<sup>82</sup> Nina de Garis Davies and Alan H. Gardiner, *The tomb of Amenemhet (no. 82)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>83</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 236.

<sup>84</sup> Settgast, *Untersuchungen zu altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen*: t. 11.

<sup>85</sup> Nina de Garis Davies and Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tombs of Menkheperasonb, Amenmose, and Another (nos. 86, 112, 42, 226)* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1933), pl. XXXVIII.

<sup>86</sup> Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re' at Thebes*, pl. XCII.

<sup>87</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 189.

<sup>88</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 202.

<sup>89</sup> Settgast, *Untersuchungen zu altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen*: t. 11.

<sup>90</sup> Assmann, *Das Grab des Amenemope TT41*.

<sup>91</sup> El-Shahawy, *The Funerary Art of Ancient Egypt*..., fig. 48.

<sup>92</sup> Porter and Moss, *Topographical bibliography*..., 285.

<sup>93</sup> Manniche, *Lost tombs: a study of certain*..., fig. 24.

<sup>94</sup> Sève-Söderbergh, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs*, pl. XXIV.

<sup>95</sup> El-Shahawy, *The Funerary Art of Ancient Egypt*..., fig. 49.

<sup>96</sup> Joseph John Tylor and Francis Llewelyn Griffith, *The tomb of Paheri at El Kab* (Egypt Exploration Society, 1894).

<sup>97</sup> Assmann, *Das Grab des Amenemope TT41*.

the importance of religious and funerary motifs in the decorative program of private tombs increases during this period, the representation of these funerary dancers almost disappears, perhaps due to a change in the preferences of the tomb owners or a revision of religious ideas after the Amarna Period.

As for the geographical aspect, if we focus on the location of the tombs, we notice that most of them are situated in the area of Thebes, while we find only two tombs with representations of *muu* dancers in the necropolis of Elkab.

However, if we take into consideration the type of dancers represented, we can observe that the distribution of scenes within the Theban necropolis changes depending on the type of dancers represented: most of the *muu* dancers of the first type are found in the necropolis of Dra Abu el-Naga, while most of the *muu* dancers of the second and third types are found at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna. This pattern might indicate the existence of particular workshops for each part of the necropolis. It is also remarkable that we do not find representations of *muu* dancers in any other Egyptian necropolis of the New Kingdom, apart from Thebes and Elkab, perhaps due to the changes in cultural perspective and iconography that took place at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, when the Theban necropolis was abandoned and the main private burials were located in Amarna or Memphis.

Moreover, if we analyse the depictions of all *muu* dancers' types in the private Theban tombs, it should be noted that none of the tombs contain all three types (Tab. 1). However, the first and second types of *muu* dancers have been found in TT 15 and EK 7, and probably existed in TT 81, and the first and third types in TT 17 and 41. The most frequent coincidence is that of the second and third types of *muu* dancers, with both found in TT 53, 100, 123, 127, A4, EK 3 and, probably, in TT 112, 125, and 342.

Despite this, it is most common to find only one of the three types of *muu* dancers in the funerary processions represented in these tombs.

Regarding the positioning of the *muu* dancers' scenes, they were represented on the left wall of the corridor or the elongated room in typical T-shaped tombs. Regarding their orientation, the *muu* dancers of the first type are always depicted looking towards the entrance of the tomb, welcoming in this way the approaching funerary procession, which is represented as entering the tomb.

In addition, the register in which the dancers appear is not always the same, although it can be stated that they primarily appear in the registers presided over by the goddess *Imntt*, goddess of the West and personification of the necropolis.

In this paper I have also noted that all the representations of *muu* dancers of different types follow a basic model that is repeated wherever they are depicted, although one can notice small variations in individual instances, and in the composition of the constituent scenes.

If we focus particularly on the symbolism of the scenes, we can see that their meaning changes according to the type of dancers represented. The first type of dancers were the ones that welcomed the funerary procession to the West bank of the Nile river and approved the burial of the deceased in the necropolis. The second type watched over the necropolis from their characteristic building. The third type of *muu* dancers probably invoked the 'real' *muu* dancers and guided the procession to the tomb and the journey of the deceased to the afterlife.

Finally, it is remarkable that there is no depiction of musical accompaniment in any of these scenes of dancing, while it is common in other scenes of dance.

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