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The Body Language of Some Female Servants in the Ancient Egyptian Private Tomb Scenes¹

Ghada Khaled^a

, Hesham Ezz El-Din^b

^a The High Institute for Tourism and Hotels, 6 October, Egypt

^b Associate Professor, Tourist Guidance Department, Faculty of Tourism and hotels, Sadat City University.

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Female Servants- Body Language – Posture – Gestures – Eye Direction

Abstract

Body language is a type of nonverbal communication that delivers messages about specific people, occupations, particular cultures, and situations. This paper displays some scenes of the female servants in ancient Egyptian private tombs to indicate aspects of their body language represented in the body posture, gestures, heads, eyes, and direction of the arms, hands, and legs. This to signify the feelings of the female servants in moments of performing their daily works and condition while performing daily life activities to indicate their body languages like the posture, gestures, and eye direction.

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1. Introduction

There are numerous scenes inside tombs of the ancient Egyptians for the servants while performing different daily life activities. This paper displays some remarkable scenes for the female servants while baking bread, grinding grains, brewing beer and carrying objects like baskets or chests. There are also some scenes for the maid servants while performing their duties towards their mistresses.

The chosen scenes for the female servants intended to indicate their body language which included postures, movements, gestures, faces, eye directions and legs². This is because the body language is believed to unconsciously reflect the person's moral condition and feelings without using words. This might emphasize that the ancient Egyptian artists were aware with concept of the body language, and they tried to clarify life condition of the female servants as displayed in the coming part.

I. Scenes of Female Servants Baking Bread

This paper displays four examples for illustrations of female servants while sitting in front of an oven heaped with pile of breads (figs. 1-4).

I.A. Scene from tomb of *Mersyankh* III at Giza (G. 7530-7540), Fourth Dynasty, Old Kingdom³.



Fig. 1 after D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, fig. 11.

The first scene from the tomb of *Mersyankh* III illustrates a female servant who is extending her right hand to ignite the oven⁴. As clearly shown she is joining her left leg to her chest and she is resting her left elbow on her knee while turning the forearm up to rest her chin on the closed hand. On the other hand, her right leg is being bent beneath her body with instep facing the ground in order to have comfortable during her long sitting.

Looking to the woman's act of positioning the closed hand under her chin might lead to think she was either having boredom feeling because of repeating this task daily or probably she was thinking about something while waiting for the bread baking. It is interestingly to suggest that her mind was busy with romantic affair because artist

² R.H. Wilkenson, *Symbols and Magic in Egyptian Art*, London, 1994, p. 192.

³ Queen *Mersyankh* III was the daughter of prince Kawab son of king Khufu, see D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, p. 7.

⁴ Dunham, *Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III*, p. 20.

illustrated her with left leg joining the chest side of the heart the center of passion as thought by the ancient Egyptians ⁵.

I.B. Scene from tomb of *Hesi* at Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ⁶.



Fig. 2 after N. Kanawati and M. Abdel Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V. Tomb of Hesi*, London, 1999, pl. 61.

The scene shows the female servant sitting to kindle the oven ⁷. She is resting her left elbow on her knee while lifting her forearm and is opening her palm hand before her face (fig. 2).

The position of the left open hand before the face might refer to the woman's attempt is to protect her face as well as her eyes from the heat that aroused from baking the breads. Probably she was checking her hand which was burnt from touching the hot bread.

She is squatting which is a comfortable position especially she was spending long time till fulfilling her task.

I.C. Scene from tomb of *Khaemankh* at Giza, (G 4561), Sixth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ⁸.



Fig. 3 After N. Kanawati, *Tombs at Giza I. Kaiemankh (G 4561) and Seshemnefer Vol. I (G 4940)*, Warminster, 2001, pl. 37.

The scene shows a semi squatting female servant and her left leg is beneath her body with instep facing the ground to feel comfortable in her long sitting.

⁵ E. Teeter, "The Body in Ancient Egyptian Texts and Representations (Plate 6)", in *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, vol. 37 no. 1/4, 2000, p. 157.

⁶ N. Kanawati and M. Abdel Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V. Tomb of Hesi*, London, 1999.

⁷ Kanawati, *Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, V, Tomb of Hesi*, p. 40.

⁸ N. Kanawati, *Tombs at Giza I. Kaiemankh (G 4561) and Seshemnefer I (G 4940)*, Warminster, 2001, p. 15.

Her left hand is upon her forehead and she is lifting her right forearm with opened palm hand placed upon the forehead to protect her face from the heat⁹. This gesture can be considered sign of patience until baking the bread that she has nothing to do in her life except waiting. Probably she was suffering from a pain in her head because of facing heat for long time. So she was obligated to put her hand on her head and wear a head-band to relief her pain.

I.D. Scene from tomb of the Two Brothers Ny-Ankh-Khnum and Khnum-hotep at Saqqara, Fifth Dynasty, Old Kingdom¹⁰.



Fig. 4 after H.G. Fishcer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom*, New York, 2000, fig. 7.

This remarkable scene shows a female servant sitting in front of an oven to bake pile of unheated bread and at the same time she was nursing an infant¹¹ (fig. 4). She is extending her right hand to ignite the oven and she is lifting her left open hand towards her head. Same time, she is uprising her right leg to support her infant who is suckling from her left breast.

For the woman's left open hand, which is lifted towards her forehead, probably she was trying to avoid her face from the heat glow that aroused from baking the bread as featured in the other scenes (figs. 2 and 3). There may be a relation between the woman's leg position and her tendency to protect her infant's face from the oven heat.

In addition, the woman is having sullen face which might express that she was not having comfortable life that led her to nurse the infant in the same moment of performing the hard work of baking the bread.

It is noticed that the main concern of the woman is directed towards the process of baking the bread. This is clearly shown in extending her right hand towards the oven and her face and eye are directed towards the breads and she is not looking at her infant. This might have led the infant to use his tiny right hand to hold the breast to take its nipple in his mouth. This indicates that the woman was quite sure with the infant ability to suckle by his own effort in a situation repeated every day when she performed the task of baking breads.

⁹ Kanawti, *Tombs at Giza I. Kaiemankh*, p. 45.

¹⁰ Both Ni-ankh-knum and Khnum-hotep were twin brothers. They worked as prophets of god Re and they were supervisors of the manicurists in the great house, see B. Porter and R.L.B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings III. Memphis. Part 2. Saqqâra to Dahshûr*, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1981, p. 641 and L. Evans and A. Woods, "Further Evidence that Niankhnum and Khnumhotep were Twins", in *JEA* 102, 2016, p. 55.

¹¹ H.G. Fishcer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and of the Heracleopolitan Period*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2000, p. 9.

The body posture of the previous woman who concentrated on her work rather than her infant can be compared with another two scenes. Firstly, a woman is shown nursing a child in the Fifth Dynasty tomb of *Ptah-hotep* at Saqqara¹² (fig. 5). The woman was giving full attention to the infant through placing him on her lap and surrounding him carefully with her left arm and she is holding her left full breast with her right hand to direct it towards the mouth of the infant so he could suckle milk comfortably.

Secondly a scene of counting donkeys from the Eleventh Dynasty Tomb of Baqet III the governor of the Oryx nome at Beni Hassan¹³ has the illustration of a man who is forcing a woman who is breast feeding her infant to sit and is using his stick to threaten her¹⁴ (fig. 6). Although the woman is experiencing a bad situation and is surrendered to the man, but the mother instinct is clearly shown in her behavior of holding her breast to feed her infant. Same time her body language represented in bowing the head and inclining the body mainly intended to keep her infant away from receiving any hit from the stick.

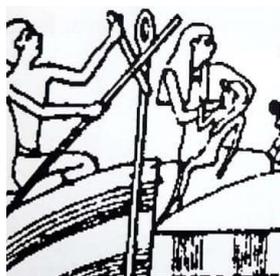


Fig. 5 after J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archeologie egyptienne V. Bas reliefs et peintures scenes de la vie quotidienne*, Paris, 1969, fig. 295.



Fig. 6 after P.E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan Part 2*, London, 1893, pl. VII.

II. Scenes of Female Servants Grinding Grains

II.A. Scene from tomb of *Djaty* at Giza (G 2337-X), Fifth Dynasty, Old Kingdom¹⁵.



¹² J. Swinton, *Dating the Tombs of the Egyptian Old Kingdom*, Archaeopress Egyptology 2, England, p. 21.

¹³ P.E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan Part 2*, London, 1893, p. 43.

¹⁴ For the scene of punishing the woman see A.F. Faraman, "Peculiar Punishments from the Tomb of Baqet III at Beni Hassan", in *مجلة التاريخ والمستقبل. مجلة علمية محكمة تعنى بالآداب والعلوم والدراسات التاريخية والحضارية*، المجلد 33، عدد 65، يناير، 2019 p. 386-412.

¹⁵ W.K. Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery, Part I Sekhemka (G 1029), Tjetu I (G 2001); Iasen (G 2196); Penmeru (G 2197); Hagy, Nefertjetet, and Herunefer (G 2352/53); Djaty, Tjetu II and Nimesti (G 2337X, 2343, 2366)*, Boston, 1980, p. 28-29.

Fig. 7 after W.K. Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetry, Part I Sekhemka (G 1029), Tjetu I (G 2001); Iasen (G 2196); Penmeru (G 2197); Hagy, Nefertjetet, and Herunefer (G 2352/53); Djaty, Tjetu II and Nimesti (G 2337X, 2343, 2366)*, Boston, 1980, fig. 41.

The scene shows a female servant who is depicted with very short cut hair, while kneeling and extending her hands to make the dough¹⁶ (fig. 7). It clearly shown that her body is slightly inclining while resting on her knee and toes. This position might refer that this woman was active in performing her duty and she is using the weight of her body to mix the flour and liquid perfectly. Her total attention towards her task is also indicated through her eye which is directed downward towards the dough.

II.B. A False Door Scene from Tomb of *Sn-nw-ka* at Giza, Cairo JE 56994, Fifth Dynasty, Old Kingdom¹⁷.



Fig. 8 after H. G. Fischer, “ An Example of Memphite Influence in a Theban Stela of the Eleventh Dynasty ”, in *Artibus Asiae* 22 no 3, 1959, fig.11 in p. 251.

The notable scene illustrates a female servant¹⁸ who was grinding cereals¹⁹. She is having curvature in her spine as if she was suffering from kyphosis²⁰ and her ribs are clearly prominent (fig. 8). She was skinny with no sign of feminine that she looks like a man.

The curvature of her back might recall certain idea concerning this woman who suffered from poverty and physical disability that her body could not stand straight to confront the hard circumstances. She would be described as one whose back was broken according to a contemporary common saying. Also the woman’s body posture might reflect an interesting idea that her work represented the only method to release the depression she had been experiencing in her life.

It seems inevitable to notice her scowling facial features which are marked with bitterness represented in firm tight closed mouth, wrinkle on the cheekbone and semi closed eye.

¹⁶ Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetry, Part I*, p. 29.

¹⁷ H. G. Fischer, “ An Example of Memphite Influence in a Theban Stela of the Eleventh Dynasty ”, in *Artibus Asiae* 22 no 3, 1959, p. 251 and footnote 20 in p. 251 and H.G. Fischer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and of the Heracleopolitan Period*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2000, p. 21-22 and endnote 113 in p. 66.

¹⁸ These are known as *djet*- servants or slaves who were engaged in the funerary services like bringing offerings, grinding grain, slaughtering cattle and brewing, see A.M. Bakir, “Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt”, in *SASAE* 18, 1952, p. 101.

¹⁹ H. G. Fischer, “ An Example of Memphite Influence in a Theban Stela of the Eleventh Dynasty ”, in *Artibus Asiae* 22 no. 3, 1959, p. 251.

²⁰ محمد إسماعيل محمد الشافعي، العيوب الخلقية للأفراد في الفن المصري القديم، رسالة ماجستير (غير منشورة) جامعة طنطا، كلية الآداب، 1998، صفحة رقم 49.

III. Scenes of Female Servants Brewing Beer

III.A. Scene from tomb of *Hesi* at Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ²¹.



Fig. 9 after after N. Kanawati and M. Abdel Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V, Tomb of Hesi*, London, 1999, pl. 61.

The female brewer is depicted with her upper part almost naked and is wearing a head band while inclining her upper torso towards the large bowl (fig. 9). Her right hand is outside the bowl as to support it. Her left hand is deeply inserted inside the bowl to brew the beer. It is noticed that her left breast is drooping down towards the bowl. This might direct the sight towards the bowl that she was using her effort to perform her task.

Against the direction of her body, she is upraising her face forward as if she was going to talk with someone. From another view lifting the head can be considered normal because the women were inclining and spending her entire effort to perform her hard job. So, if she looked downwards towards the bowl, she might be dizzy. Thus, she was lifting her head up to keep the balance of her body.

III.B. Scene from tomb of *Hesi* at Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ²².



Fig. 10 after N. Kanawati and M. Abdel Raziq, *The Teti cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V. Tomb of Hesi*, Warminster, 1999, pl. 61.

This scene shows two women facing each other while bending towards a bowl to brew beer ²³ (fig. 10). Each woman is extending a leg forward. The woman on the right her breast is drooping down between her two arms. This refers that they use their full effort to perform their works. Each one of them is extending a leg forward in order to have comfortable position and to avoid tiredness during performing their work because they would stand for long time.

Their faces are little bit upward as if they are exchanging conversation to avoid the boredom they might feel during their work.

²¹ Kanawati, *Teti Cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V. Tomb of Hesi*, 1999.

²² Kanawati, *Teti Cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V. Tomb of Hesi*, 1999.

²³ Kanawati, *Teti Cemetery at Saqqara. Volume V, Tomb of Hesi*, p. 40.

IV. Scenes of Female Servants Carrying Objects

IV.A. Scene from tomb of *Shepseskafankh* at Giza (G 6040) Fifth Dynasty, Old Kingdom²⁴.



Fig. 11 after K. R. Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000. Including G 6010 (Neferbaupt); G 6020 (Iymery); G 6030 (Ity); G 6040 (Shepseskafankh)*, *Giza Mastabas 5*, Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian and Near Eastern art Museum of Fine Arts. Boston, 1994, fig. 55

The scene shows a woman and a man who are carrying basket upon their heads²⁵ (fig. 11). The woman is wearing a long transparent dress over her straight body with exposed firm breast and she upraising her right hand to support the basket. In addition she is lifting her left hand towards her chest. Her body posture gave her graceful look with self confidence. Probably her attitude in placing her left hand upon her chest might symbolize that she was enjoying perfect health with strong heart that she was having the ability to keep the balance of her body while carrying the basket upon her head with the other hand.

IV.B. Scene from tomb of *Queen Mersyankh III* at Giza (G. 7530-7540), Fourth Dynasty, Old Kingdom²⁶.



Fig. 12 after D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, *Giza Mastaba*, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, fig. 10.

²⁴ Swinton, *Dating the Tombs of the Egyptian Old Kingdom*, p. 39.

²⁵ K. R. Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000. Including G 6010 (Neferbaupt); G 6020 (Iymery); G 6030 (Ity); G 6040 (Shepseskafankh)*, *Giza Mastabas 5*, Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian and Near Eastern art Museum of Fine Arts. Boston, 1994, p. 62.

²⁶ Queen *Mersyankh III* was the daughter of prince Kawab son of king Khufu, see D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, *Giza Mastaba*, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, p. 7.

This unique scene shows a man and a woman facing each other while carrying heavy basket filled with breads ²⁷ (fig. 12). Although both of them are bending their body but it is noticed that the man is easily carrying the basket from its middle and it seems difficult for the woman. This can be featured from the place of left hand which is extending under the basket that she was afraid that it might fall down.

IV.C. Scene from tomb of Queen *Mersyankh III* at Giza (G. 7530-7540), Fourth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ²⁸.

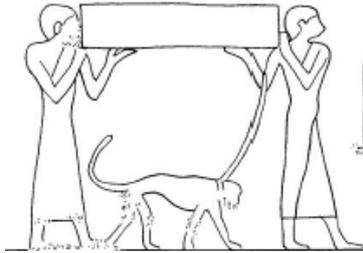


Fig. 13 after D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, fig. 8 second Lower register.

The scene shows two walking women who are carrying long chest upon their shoulders (fig. 13). Around the right elbow of the first woman is a rope with a collar that ties neck of the monkey which is walking under the chest ²⁹. No doubt carrying the chest while walking is not simple but looking to the two women, they are shown with straight body, their arms resemble letter “V” while carrying the chest and their faces are looking forward. According to these aspects the two women seem confident that their legs would not stumble while performing their habitual task during their daily routine. In addition the two women are not paying attention to the monkey because it is a clever animal and it would follow the rhythm of their active steps without causing disturbance.

IV.D. Scene from tomb of *Mersyankh III* at Giza (G. 7530-7540), Fourth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ³⁰.

²⁷ D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, p. 19.

²⁸ Queen *Mersyankh III* was the daughter of prince Kawab son of king Khufu, see D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, p. 7.

²⁹ D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974, p. 16.

³⁰ Queen *Mersyankh III* was the daughter of prince Kawab son of king Khufu, see Dunham and Simpson, *Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III*, p. 7.



Fig. 14 after D. Dunham and W.K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III. G 7530 – 7540*, Giza Mastaba, Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1874, fig. 8 Lower register.

The scene shows two walking women with straight bodies, and they are using their hands to carry long box ³¹ (fig. 14). The positions of their hands indicate that they are easily carrying a light box. The first woman in the right is turning her head back to her companion. This clearly shows that she was talking to her about important subject and she wants to be sure that she was listening to her.

IV.D. Scene from tomb of Kae-em-nefert at El-Hagarsa (A 3), Fourth Dynasty, Old Kingdom ³².

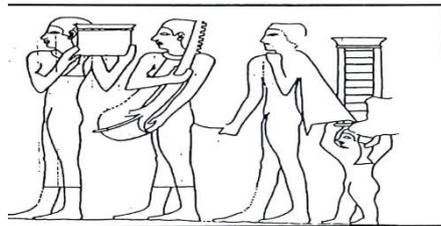


Fig. 15 after W.M.F. Petrie, *Athribs, BSAE/ERA XIV*, London, 1908, pl.1.

The interesting scene shows a group of female servants; the first one is carrying box, the second is holding musical instrument, the third is walking and the fourth is a female dwarf ³³ who is carrying long box upon her head (fig. 15) ³⁴. The first one to the right is carrying a casket with her two hands upon her left shoulder. Her body is straight and her breast looks firm which give her elegant appearance that she is walking in a graceful way.

The second woman is carrying a musical instrument. It is noticed that she is holding her harp towards her chest as if she is embracing it. This might express her passion towards the musical instrument because when she played on it she obtained pleasure and satisfaction for her heart. That's to say they were united together.

Amazingly the fourth servant was a female dwarf who is upraising her two arms to carry upon her head a long chest which is almost having her same size. Her image reflects the effort she was spending to keep balance of the chest for she is having short arms and she can't use one like the people with normal body. Image of the female dwarf

³¹ Dunham and Simpson, *Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III*, p. 16.

³² Kai-em-nefert carried the titles of Overseer of the People and wab-priest of the King, after N. Kanawati, *Tombs of El-Hagarsa*. Volume 1, The Australian Center for Egyptology: Report 4, 1993, p. 11.

³³ W.R. Dawson, "Pygmies and Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt", in *JEA* 24, London, 1938, p.187-188

³⁴ W.M.F. Petrie, *Athribs, BSAE/ERA XIV*, London, 1908, p. 2.

was found in another tomb with the same body posture and short upraised arms to carry box upon the head in the tomb of *Seshemnefer I* at Giza (G 4949)³⁵ (fig. 16).



Fig. 16 after N. Kanawti, *Tombs at Giza I. Kaiemankh (G 4561) and Seshemnefer I (G 4940)*, Warminster, 2001, pl. 47.

V. Scenes of Female Servants with their Mistresses

V.A. Scene from tomb of Nefer and Kahay at Saqqara, Fifth Dynasty, Old Kingdom³⁶.

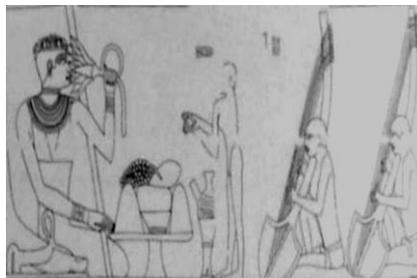


Fig. 17 after Y. Harpur and P.J. Scremin and H. Youssef, *The chapel of Nefer & Kahay*, Harpur Scremin Publishing, 2015, pl. 241.

This marvelous scene shows the maid servant standing before her mistress and behind her are two female musicians who are playing the harp³⁷ (fig. 17). The lady is listening to the music while sniffing from a lotus flower which had been associated with continuation of life in the religious beliefs³⁸.

Looking to the maid servant her body is slightly bowing and she is lowering her arms while lifting her forearm with hands holding fruit towards the direction of her mistress. The servant body expresses that she was attentive to serve her lady. For the servant's bending arms they refer her cleverness. This is because she was aware that her lady is enjoying the music so she is bending her arms not extending them waiting for the signal of her lady to serve her.

³⁵ *Seshemnefer lived in the Fourth Dynasty and he carried the titles of the known one to the king and supervisor of the scribes, after Swinton, Dating the Tombs of the Egyptian Old Kingdom, p. 38.*

³⁶ *Nefer carried title of the Known One to the King, see Swinton, Dating the Tombs of the Egyptian Old Kingdom, p. 29.*

³⁷ *M. Lashien, The Chapel of Kahay and his Family, The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports 33, 2013, p.41.*

³⁸ *Christie G. Haddad, "The Lily of the Nile: A work on the ritualistic use of an ancient flower of immortality", Kandidat-uppsats, Uppsala universitet/Centrum för forskning om religion och samhälle (CRS), 2021, p. 14 and 27.*

V.B. Scene from tomb of *Ukh-Hotep* II at Meir (B2), Twelfth Dynasty, Middle Kingdom³⁹.

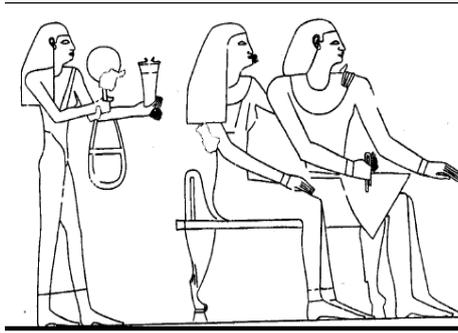


Fig. 18 after A.M. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir. Part 2. The Tomb-Chapel of Senbi's Son Ukh-Hotep (B, No.2)*, London, 1915, pls. XV and XXXIV.

This scene depicts a maidservant standing behind her mistress who is sitting beside her husband (fig. 18). The maid servant is carrying perfume vase in her left hand and is holding a rounded mirror in her right hand⁴⁰. She is standing straight with a left leg stepping forward and her eye is directed towards side of her lady. These might indicate her attentive feelings to perform her services towards her lady. In addition the scene expresses the importance of the maid servant for her mistress depended on her in everything related to beautify her self to have pleasure moments with her husband.

Probably the exposed left breast of the maid servant symbolizes idea of the servant who is completely devoted to her mistress. This is because the left was side of the heart had been regarded as center of emotions and passions in ancient Egypt⁴¹.

V.C. Scene from tomb of *Djser-ka-re-seneb* at Thebes (TT 38), Eighteenth Dynasty, New Kingdom⁴².



Fig. 19 after https://osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/djeserkareseneb38/e_djeserkareseneb_04.htm- accessed in 14-2-2022.

³⁹ Akh-hotep carried numerous titles like prince, governor of the 14th province of Upper Egypt, treasurer and superintendent of the Priests, see A.M. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir. Part 2. The Tomb-Chapel of Senbi's Son Ukh-Hotep (B, No.2)*, London, 1915, p. 1-2.

⁴⁰ Blackman, *Rock Tombs of Meir. Part 2*, p. 24.

⁴¹ E. Teeter, "The Body in Ancient Egyptian Texts and Representations (Plate 6)", in *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, vol. 37 no. 1/4, 2000, p. 157.

⁴² Djser-ka-re-seneb held the titles of the counting scribe of the grain of god Amun and the warden of the second priest of Amun, see https://osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/djeserkareseneb38/e_djeserkareseneb_01.htm accessed in 15-3-2022.

The scene illustrates two maid servants; the first one is anointing the lady with scented ointment and the second one is holding necklace and bundle of lotus flower in both hands ⁴³ (fig. 19). The first servant to the right is bending her body while extending her right hand towards the hair of the lady to anoint her with scented ointment. It is noticed that eye of the servant is directed towards the lady's hair. This expresses the keen of the servant to provide the lady with good smell.

For the second maid servant on the left side, she is standing while extending her right arm and holding necklace and her left hand is holding bundle of lotus flower. She looks attentive and ready to give the first servant the necklace.

V.D. Scene from tomb of Queen *Neferu* at Thebes, Deir Al-Bahari (TT 319), Eleventh Dynasty, Middle Kingdom ⁴⁴.

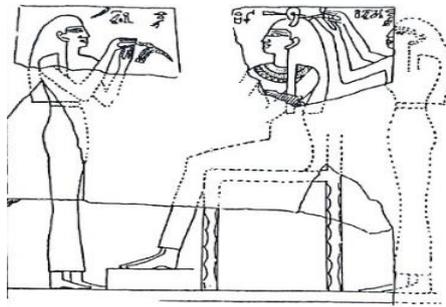


Fig. 20 after E. El-Kilany, *Scenes Depicting Female Occupation in Ancient Egypt at the Private Tombs from the Old Kingdom to the End of New Kingdom*, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Minia University, Unpublished Thesis, 2007, p. 139.

The scene shows Queen *Neferu* with her two female hairdressers (fig. 20). The first woman *Inu* is standing behind the queen while styling her hair. The second woman *Henut* is standing in the front while holding a lock of hair for the Queen ⁴⁵.

For the body language of the first woman *Inu*, she is standing straight, slightly uprising her face with the eye looking upwards and she is lifting her forearms and using her fingers to work on the lady's hair. The posture of her body, the direction of her eye and her fingers reflect her keen and full concentration to work accurately on the lady's hair.

Looking to the he second woman *Henut*, she is elegantly lifting her forearms and holding a lock of hair in the same level of the lady's eye. This expresses the respect of *Henut* towards the lay.

⁴³ https://osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/djeserkareseneb38/e_djeserkareseneb_04.htm- accessed in 14-2-2022.

⁴⁴ Queen Neferu was daughter of king Montuhotep Sankhibtawy and wife of king Montuhotep Nebhepetre, after B. Porter and R.L.B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings: I. The Theban Necropolis. Part 1. Private Tombs*, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1970, p. 391.

E. El-Kilany, *Scenes Depicting Female occupation in Ancient Egypt at The Private Tombs from The Old Kingdom to The End of New Kingdom*, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Minia University, Unpublished PH.d Thesis, 2007, p. 139.

V.E. Scene from tomb of *Neferhotep* from Thebes, El-Khokha (TT 49), Eighteenth Dynasty, New Kingdom ⁴⁶.



Fig. 21 after N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Nefer-Hotep at Thebes*, New York, 1933, pls. V and pl. XVIII.

This well-known banquet scene shows an elite lady who is vomiting because of over drinking wine ⁴⁷ (fig. 21). In front of the lady there is a maid servant who is holding a cup in her right hand. The maid was carrying her sandals because she hurried to the lady and did find time to wear them ⁴⁸. She is bending her body towards the lady while extending her left open palm hand to gently touch the lady's forehead. This symbolizes the feelings of tender of the servant towards the lady. She is also anxious and wants to be sure that the lady would be released from her temporary bad condition.

V.E. Scene from tomb of *Ptahemhat* at Thebes (TT 77), New Kingdom ⁴⁹.

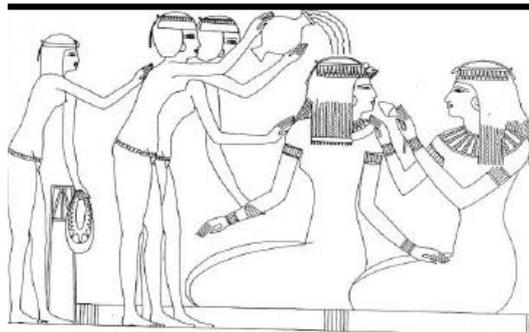


Fig. 22 after Sh. A. Byl, *The Essence and Use of Perfume in Ancient Egypt*, Degree of Master of Arts, University of South Africa, 2012, fig. 14.5 and L. Manniche, *The Wall Decoration of Three Tombs (TT 77, 175, and 249)*, Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen, 1988, fig. 6 in p. 19.

⁴⁶ Neferhotep was the chief scribe of god Amun, after B. Porter and R.L.B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings: I. The Theban Necropolis. Part 1. Private Tombs*, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1970, p. 91.

⁴⁷ See T.G. Wilfong, "Intoxication" in D.B. Rehdorff (ed), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt II*, 2001, p. 181.

⁴⁸ N. Saad, A. Abd El-Razik and E. Ahmed, "Les scènes du vomissement dans les tombes des nobles à Thèbes", in *Annal of the Arab Archaeologists. Studies of the Arab World Monuments, The General Union of Arab Archaeologists Continued to Associate of Arab Universities* 14, 2011, p. 33.

⁴⁹ Ptahemhat was described as son of the nurse and he carried the title of supervisor of the works in temple of God Amun and he was also the standard bearer of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, see B. Porter and R.L.B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings: I. The Theban Necropolis. Part 1. Private Tombs*, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1970, p. 150 and L. Manniche, *The Wall Decoration of Three Tombs (TT 77, 175, and 249)*, Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen, 1988, p. 9.

In a famous banquet scene from the New Kingdom tomb of *Ptahemhat*, an elegant lady is sitting between a lady and three female servants. The scene shows servants while anointing the mistress⁵⁰ (fig. 22). The first servant was pouring red perfume over the lady's head⁵¹.

The second servant is holding the forearm of the mistress with her left hand while the other one is anointing the mistress's shoulder with ointment. This illustration shows the tender feelings of the servant towards her mistress and the desire to provide her with good smell.

The third servant at the right side is carrying a necklace for the lady⁵². She is extending her forearm to touch back of the first servant as if she wanted to take her attention to let her aware that she had brought the necklace which would be worn by the mistress. She is slightly bending her body as if she wanted to show respect in the presence of the mistress.

Conclusion

From the selected scenes concerning the female servants, the following points can be concluded:

- The ancient Egyptian artists had skillfully used the body language to express the feelings of the female servants in moments of performing their daily works.
- The simple gestures of the female bakers like putting hand under the chin or lifting it towards the head expressed boredom for staying long time and difficulty of facing the heat glow that aroused from the oven and breads.
- The remarkable scene of the woman who baked bread while breast feeding her infant expressed her hard life. Her body language seems mainly concerned on baking the bread but her right leg moved to protect the infant from the heat glow. Interestingly this scene can be seen until nowadays in the countryside when the women bake bread inside their houses.
- The artist illustrated power of the maternal instinct through the woman who breast fed her infant and used her body to protect him from receiving hit from a man.
- The body language of the female brewers and those who grinded grain represented in the inclined body and the droopy breast clearly expressed the effort they made to perform their tasks.
- The women who are shown carrying objects upon their heads with one hand seemed active in their graceful walk. But it was not simple for the female dwarf who should use her short arms to carry the chest.
- The artist expressed idea of the women who possessed the stamina like men. This is shown in scene of the woman who carried heavy basket of breads with a man and the woman who carried basket upon her head while walking before a man.

Sh. A. Byl, *The Essence and Use of Perfume in Ancient Egypt*, Degree of Master of Arts, University⁵⁰ of South Africa, 2012, p. 289.

Byl, *The Essence and Use of Perfume in Ancient Egypt*, p. 289.⁵¹

Byl, *The Essence and Use of Perfume in Ancient Egypt*, p. 289.⁵²

- Amazingly the artist succeeded to express idea of the working woman who was having passion towards her musical instrument. She seemed united with musical instrument while holding it towards her heart.
- The maid servants who closely presented services to the mistresses of the houses- their body postures, hand gestures and eye direction reflected complete alert to fulfill the needs of their mistresses. The body language of the maid servants also expressed their deep loyalty to their mistresses.
- Hands of the maid servants expressed tenderness, loyalty and devotion when they touched the hair or the arms of their mistresses. This is considered normal for the maid servants who enjoyed satisfied lives for receiving good treatment and rewards from their mistresses.
- The body language and gestures are considered interesting in the field of practical guidance for they helped to present the feelings and conditions of the female servants in the ancient Egyptian society.

Table of the Body Language (Posture - Face - Eye - Arms - Breast - Hands - Legs) and the significances

Fig.	Date and Site	Scene of the Female Servant	Body language	Significance of Body Language
1	4 th dynasty – Saqqara	Servant is backing bread	a- She joins left leg to chest b- She rests left elbow on knee c- Her right leg bents beneath the body	- She obtains comfortable sitting
			d- Her chin rests on closed left hand	1- She has boredom feeling 2- She thinks (probably about romantic affair)
2	6 th dynasty – Saqqara	Servant is baking bread	a- Her left leg joins the chest b- Her left elbow rests on knee	- She obtains comfortable sitting
			c- She lifts forearm with open hand before face	1- She protects face from heat 2- She checks her burnt hand
3	6 th dynasty – Giza	Servant is baking bread	a- Semi squatting with left leg beneath the body	- She obtains comfortable sitting
			b- She places open hand upon forehead	1- She protects face from heat 2- Position is sign of patience 3- She suffers from pain in the head because of facing heat.
4	5 th dynasty - Saqqara	Female is baking bread and nursing infant	a- She lifts her open hand to her head	- She has pain in the head
			b- She upraises the right leg	1- She supports the infant. 2- She protects the infant from the heat
			c- Shown with surly face	- She suffers from hard life
			d- Face and eye are directed towards the oven	1- Main concern is to bake the bread. 2- She is aware with the infant ability to suckle the milk without her help
5	5 th dynasty – Saqqara	Woman is nursing an infant	a- Placing infant on lab. b- Arm surrounding the infant carefully	- Her main concern is to feed the infant

			c- Right hand is holding left breast	
6	11 th dynasty – Beni Hassan	Woman is nursing an infant while being threatened by a man with stick	a- Holding her breast	- Her main concern is to feed the infant
			b- Bowing the head c- Inclining the body	- She wants to protect the infant
7	5 th dynasty - Giza	Female servant is grinding grains	a- Inclining body that rests on knee and toes	1- She is active to perform the work 2- She depends on the body weight to grind grains
			b- Eye is looking downward	- She concentrates on the task
8	5 th dynasty – Giza	Female servant is grinding grains	a- Curvature spine and prominent ribs	- She suffers from disability, poverty and hard life
9	6 th dynasty – Saqqara	Female servant brewing beet	a- She is inclining torso towards bowl b- Breast is drooping down c- Her left hand is inside bowl	- She uses effort to perform the task
			d- Her right hand outside the bowl	1- She supports the bowl 2- She keeps her balance
			e- She raises her face forward	1- She talks to someone 2- She keeps the body balance 3- She avoids feeling of dizzy
10	6 th dynasty – Saqqara	Two women are brewing beer	a- Each woman extend a leg forward	1- They obtain comfortable standing and avoid tiredness 2- They keep the body balance
			b- Woman on right: her breast is drooping between her arms	- She uses effort to perform the task
			c- Their faces are slightly upward	- They exchange conversation to avoid boredom
11	5 th dynasty – Giza	Woman is carrying basket upon her head and she is followed by a man who carrying basker	a- Straight body b- Exposed firm breast c- Uprising right hand to support the basket	1- She give graceful look 2- She has same ability of the man who follows her
			d- She is lifting left hand upon the chest	1- She enjoys perfect health 2- She keeps the body balance
12	4 th dynasty- Giza	Woman and man are carrying basket filled with bread	a- She bends her body b- She extends her left hand under the basket to carry it	1- She tries to spend same effort of the man to carry the basket 2- She is keen to avoid fall of the basket
13	4 th dynasty – Giza	Two women carrying chest and the first one is holding a monkey with rope	a- Both women have straight body b- They are looking forward c- Their arms resemble letter “V” which carrying the chest	1- They enjoy confident 2- They have graceful walk
			d- They are not paying attention with the monkey	- They are aware that the monkey would not hinder them
14			a- straight body	- Graceful walk

	4 th dynasty – Giza	Two walking women are carrying box	b- First woman uses one hand to carry the box c- First woman turns her head back to the other woman	- Easily carrying the box - She talks to her partner and wants to grantee that she is listening to her
15	4 th dynasty- El-Hagarsa	Group of women carrying objects: 1 st Woman is carrying box 2 nd woman carries the harp 4 th dwarf woman is carrying a long box upon her head	a- Straight body b- She carry box upon her shoulder - Holding the harp towards her chest - She is using her two hands to carry the box	- Graceful appearance - Easily carrying the box - She loves playing the harp - She spends effort to carry the box especially she has short arms.
16	4 th dynasty – Giza	Dwarf woman is carrying a long box upon her head	- She is using her two hands to carry the box	- She spends effort to carry the box for having short arms.
17	5 th dynasty – Saqqara	Maid servant standing before her mistress	a- Her body is slightly bowing b- She is lowering her arms and her hands are holding fruits	- She shows respect to her mistress - She enjoys cleverness because she is waiting to present the fruits to her mistress according to her order.
18	12 th dynasty – Meir	Maid servant standing behind her mistress and she is carrying perfume jars and rounded mirror	a- She is standing straight with left leg stepping forward b- Her eye is directed towards her mistress c- Her left breast is exposed	- She is attentive to respond to her mistress's orders. - She is loyal and devoted to her mistress
19	18 th dynasty – Thebes	two maid servants before their mistress:- 1 st maid servant is anointing the lady with scented ointment 2 nd maid servant is holding necklace and bundle of lotus flower in both hands.	a- Her body is bending b- She is extending her right hand towards the hair of the lady. c- Her eye is directed towards the lady's hair. a- She is standing with straight body b- She is extending her right hand that holds the necklace c- she is looking forward	- She is keen to perform the task of anointing the hair of her mistress/ - She is attentive - She ready to give the first servant the necklace
20	18 th dynasty – Deir Al-Bahari	Two maidservant with their mistress 1 st maid servant is standing behind the mistress to style her hair	a- She is standing with straight body b- She is uprising her face c- Her eye is looking upward	- She works with full attentiveness and awareness on the hair of the lady.

			d- She is lifting her forearm to work with her finger on the hair	
		2 nd maid servant is standing in front of the mistress while holding lock of hair	a- She is lifting her forearms b- She is holding	- This expresses her respect to her lady.
			c- The lock of hair in the same level of the lady's eye	- She is ready to give the lock of hair to the first lady
21	18 th dynasty – El-Khokha – Thebes	A maid servant is helping a lady who vomited because of the heavily drinking	a- She is bending her body b- She is extending her left arm and is touching the lady's forehead	1- She is feeling anxious 2- She is showing sympathy to the lady. 2- She wishes that the lady would be in good condition
22	18 th dynasty – Sheikh Abdel Qurna	Maid servants are anointing the mistress		
		1 st servant is pouring perfume over the lady	a- She extends her upraised hands b- Her eye is looking forward towards the perfume jar	- She concentrates to pour all the contents of the perfume over the lady
		2 nd servant is anointing the lady	- She is holding the forearm of the mistress with her left hand.	- This expresses her feelings of tender towards the mistress
		3 rd servant is holding necklace	a- She is bending her body b- She is extending her arm to touch back of the 1 st servant	- She shows respect to the mistress - She wants to inform 1 st servant that she is having the necklace

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ملخص البحث

لغة الجسد لبعض النساء الخادمت في مناظر مقابر مصر القديمة

غادة خالد - د. هشام عز الدين

يتناول البحث لغة الجسد متمثلة في حركات الجسم والأيدى وكذلك اتجاه العين التي يمكن ملاحظتها في حركات النساء الخادمت والتي من خلالها يمكن تكوين فكرة عن مشاعرهم وحالة الحياة التي تعيش فيها وذلك من خلال بعض مناظر النساء في مقابر قدماء المصريين. يبين البحث حالة أحاسيس النساء اللاتي يخزنن أرغفة الخبز ولاتي تعبر عن بعض الضجر للجلوس فترة طويلة والتعرض للحرارة المنبعثة من الفرن والخبز. كما ان هناك منظر يعبر عن حياة صعبة لإحدى الخبازات التي عبر جسدها على الاهتمام بالخبز أكثر من إرضاع الطفل. بالنسبة للنساء اللاتي يطحن العجين فيبدو عليهم بذل الجهد في أداء العمل ويستعرض البحث منظرا مثيرا لخدمة يبدو عليها التعب الشديد في الحياة من خلال ظهرها المنحني وملامحها المتجهمة. من خلال بعض مناظر النساء السائرات وعن يحملن الأشياء المختلفة على رؤوسهن مستخدمين بيذا واحدة فتبدو رشيقا ولا يقلن عن قدرة الرجال في التحمل. وبالنسبة للمناظر المختارة للنساء اللاتي يقدمن خدماتهم لسيداتهن في المنزل فيبدو من حركات أجسادهن التنبه التام لتلبية إحتياجات سيداتهن، كما عبرت أيديهن عند ملامستها لشعر أو كتف سيداتهن أو الإمساك بساعدها عن الإخلاص وعاطفة الوفاء لهن.