

Ancient Egypt - The Tomb of Meryre II at Amarna (TA 2)

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Entry tags: Egypt, Tomb, African Religions, Religious Group, Amhara Religions, Religious Place

Meryra II was a high-ranking individual who lived under the reign of the 18th Dynasty king Akhenaten (1349-1332). His high rank and fundamental function in the court of Akhenaten are reflected in the titles he held: Royal Scribe, Steward, Overseer of the Two Treasuries, Overseer of the Royal Harem of the Great Royal Wife Nefertiti, and Favorite of Aten. His tomb is among 6 other rock-cut tombs of the Northern Group that occupy the west side of the northern east cliff of Amarna about 300 feet of the desert plain. Together with the tomb of Huya (1), Rudu (1A), and another unknown tomb (1B), the tomb of Meryre is located at the southern tip of the most northern portion of the range, separated from the other northern tombs by a dry ravine. It bears the numerical designation "TA 2" as Tomb of Amarna 2. Based on the number of Akhenaten's daughters in the tomb decorations, the titles of Aten, and the Typology, the tomb is dated most probably to year 14 or 15 of the reign of Akhenaten. The famous tomb presents a primary source of information about the political and religious situation during the final years of Akhenaten's rule at Amarna as well as the social state of its owner indicated by its particularities.



Date Range: 1335 BCE - 1332 BCE

Region: Tomb of Meryre II

Region tags: Africa, Northern Africa, Egypt, Amarna

The tomb of Meryra II is located among the Northern rock-cut tombs of Amarna in Middle Egypt equidistant from Thebes and Memphis.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite

General Variables

Sources and Excavations

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: L'Hôte, Nestor. *Lettres écrites d'Égypte en 1838 et 1839: Contenant des observations sur divers monuments égyptiens nouvellement explorés et dessinés*. Paris: Didot, 1840.
- Source 2: Lepsius, Carl Richard. *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: Nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preußen Friedrich Wilhelm IV. nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842 - 1845 ausgeführten wissenschaftlichen Expedition*. 12 volumes (1849 - 1858). Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849.
- Source 3: Amélineau, E. *Histoire de la sépulture et des funérailles dans l'ancienne Égypte*, 2 vols. *Annales du Musée Guimet* 28-29. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1896.

- Source 1: Lepsius, Carl Richard. Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: Text, ed. Edouard Naville, Ludwig Borchardt, Kurt Sethe, and Walter Wreszinski. 5 volumes (1897 – 1913). Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897.
- Source 2: Davies, N. de Garis. The rock tombs of El Amarna II: The tombs of Panehesy and Meryra II. Archaeological Survey of Egypt, Memoir 14. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1905.
- Source 3: Porter, Bertha and Rosalind L. B. Moss. Topographical bibliography of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs, and paintings IV: Lower and Middle Egypt (Delta and Cairo to Asyût). Oxford: Clarendon, 1934.
- Source 1: Meyers, Elisabeth Louis. "A Program of Political Theology in Amarna Tomb Art: Imagery as Metaphor." (PhD Dissertation, Pennsylvania, 1981).
- Source 2: Arp, Janne. The Private Tombs of Akhetaten: New Results from Old Publications." In Proceedings of the Fourth Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists: 31 August - 2 September 2006, Budapest, edited by András Gulyás and Kata Endreffy, 39–50. Budapest: NKTH, 2007.
- Source 1: Almansa-Villatoro, M. Victoria. "La Tumba de Meryra II En Tell El-Amarna (AT 2): Una Nueva Aproximación Arqueológico-Filológica." Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie 2: Historia Antigua 29 (2016): 99–121.
- Source 2: Arp-Neumann, Janne. "Amarna: Private and Royal Tombs." Edited by Willeke Wendrich. UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology 1, no. 1 (2020): 1–32.
- Source 1: Hesse, Marion. Die Privatgräber von Amarna: Zum Wandel Des Grabgedankens in Zeiten Eines Religiösen Umbruchs. Vol. 2572. BAR International Series. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013.
- Source 2: Hesse, Marion. Grabsitten Und Jenseitszeugnisse in Amarna." In Bestattungsbräuche, Totenkult Und Jenseitsvorstellungen Im Alten Ägypten, edited by Heike Sternberg-el-Hotabi, Orell Witthuhn, and Christoph Elsas, 129–54. Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2015.

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: http://amarnaproject.com/pages/amarna_the_place/north_tombs/index.shtml
- Source 1 Description: The Amarna Project Website is supported by the Amarna Trust and The Amarna Research Foundation. It is dedicated to explore the history of the ancient city of Amarna and its archaeology. The website has a list of the numbered Amarna private tombs with a downloadable guidebook for detailed description and plans.
- Source 2 URL: <http://www.theamarnaresearchfoundation.org/articles.html>
- Source 2 Description: The Amarna Research Foundation. The website focuses primarily on Amarna Period. It includes several articles and reports about the scientific excavation, field projects, conservation, history, and archaeology of Amarna
- Source 1 URL: <http://edoc3.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/lepsiuss/>
- Source 1 Description: The website preserves the works of Lepsius (Plates and Texts).
- Source 2 URL: <https://archive.org/details/histoiredelasepu02amel/page/n7/mode/2up>
- Source 2 Description: On that website, a downloadable copy of "Histoire de la sépulture et des funérailles dans l'ancienne Égypte" is found.
- Source 3 URL: <https://archive.org/details/rocktombsfelama14davi>

- Source 3 Description: The website provides a pdf of the standard work of Davies on the private tombs of Amarna, in particular, Davies. The Rock Tombs of Amarna vol II: the tombs of Panehesy and Meryre II.
- Source 1 URL: <https://thessea.academia.edu/LynGreen>
- Source 1 Description: To download the Ph.D Dissertation of Green on the Queens and Princess of Amarna.
- Source 2 URL: <https://unibas.academia.edu/SusanneBickel>
- Source 2 Description: The above-cited journal article of Bickel on her page on Academia.
- Source 3 URL: <https://mq.academia.edu/BoyoOckinga>
- Source 3 Description: The personal account of Boyo Ockinga on Academia where one finds his article on the non-Royal Concept of the Afterlife in Amarna.
- Source 1 URL: <https://brown.academia.edu/VickyAlmansa>
- Source 1 Description: The personal page Vicky Almansa-Villatoro on Academia provides a pdf of her article "La Tumba de Meryra II En Tell El-Amarna (AT 2).
- Source 2 URL: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0227n3wp>
- Source 2 Description: The publication of Arp-Neumann on the Amarna private tombs is obtainable from the open access UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology.

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

– Yes



Type of excavation:

– Scientific



Years of excavation:

– Year range: 1901-1907

Notes: The result of this work was published between 1903 and 1908 in six volumes of the Archaeological Survey of Egypt series (Davies 1903, 1905a and b, 1906, 1908a and b). To date, the work of Norman de Garis Davies is the standard publication on the private tombs of Amarna.



Name of excavation

– Official or descriptive name: Archaeological Survey of Egypt

Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape

– Elevation

Notes: The tomb of Meryre II is close to that of tomb of Huya (1), Rudu (1A), and another unknown tomb (1B). They occupy the southern tip of the most northern portion of the range, separated from the other northern tombs by a dry ravine. This isolation is possibly due to lack of space and choice.

- ↳ Type of elevation
 - Rock face

Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:

Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.

– Yes

- ↳ Type of feature
 - Leveling of ground
 - Clearing

Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:

– No

Is the place situated in a rural setting:

– No

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:

– Yes

- ↳ Is there an established route of travel connecting it to a wider transportation network:
 - Yes

Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:

Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.

– Yes

- ↳ A single structure
 - Yes

- ↳ The structure has a definite shape

– Rectangular

Notes: The plan of the tomb is very simple. It featured a forecourt at its entrance leading to the large main chamber where one sees the large intact columns. The tomb of Meryre II is the only tomb of the northern group that preserves this particularity. In the main chamber, there is a non-contemporary well. A portal gives access to the transverse chamber that contains a Mastaba to the east. Finally, there is a partially hewn shrine niche.

↳ One single feature

– Other [specify]: A tomb

↳ A group of structures:

– No

↳ A group of features:

– Yes

↳ Are they part of a single design/construction stage:

– Yes

↳ Is it part of a larger place/sanctuary:

– Yes

Notes: The tomb is part of the northern group of the Amarna private tombs which occupy the west side of the northern east cliff of Amarna. The northern private tombs of Amarna are contained in two separated areas within the same cliff range. The tomb of Meryre is located at the southern tip of the most northern portion of the range next to those of of Huya (1), Rudu (1A), and another unknown tomb (1B). A dry ravine separates these tombs from the other northern tombs.

↳ What is the function of the structure/feature or group:

Answer "Yes" once for each distinct function

– Memorial

↳ Is the structure/feature finished:

– No

↳ Has the structure/feature been reconstructed:

– No

Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:

– No

Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:

– No

Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:

– No

Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:

A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.

– Yes

↳ Specify

– King or emperor

Notes: The Amarna private tombs were a gift from god Aten as it mentioned on the left thickness of the tomb's entrance and from king Akhenaten to his loyal followers on the mountain of Akhetaten.

Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:

– Yes

↳ Groups:

– Priests

– Specialized labourers/craftspeople

Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

– Yes

↳ Specify

– Other [specify]: The location of the whole city of Amarna was revealed by god Aten, while the Amarna private tombs were the gift of king Akhenaten to his followers.

Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

– No

Was the place created as the result of an event:

– No

Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

– Yes

Notes: The construction of the tomb was likely sponsored by the king.



Is this sponsor of the same religious group/tradition as the main usage of the place:

– Yes

Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

–Other [specify]: Funerary beliefs.

Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

– No

Design and Material Remains

Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

– No

Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

– No

Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

– Yes



Earth

– No



Sand

– No

↳ Clay

– No

↳ Plaster

– Yes

Notes: The poor quality of limestone demanded much work and preparation. Therefore, plaster was applied to cover holes and massive areas with bad rock surfaces resulted from the initial cutting.

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– Yes

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No

↳ Wood

– No

↳ Grass

– No

↳ Stone

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– Yes

Notes: The tomb was hewn from the poor quality white limestone of the mountain. The tomb has a forecourt which has niches in its entrance facade. The entrance leads to the large main chamber where one sees large intact columns. In the main chamber, there is a non-contemporary well. A portal gives access to the transverse chamber that contains a Mastaba to the east. Finally, there is a partially hewn shrine.

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No

Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

– No

Decoration

Is decoration present:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration part of the building (permanent):

– Yes

↳ On the outside:

– Yes

Notes: The decorations on the outside are only on the right and left jambs of the facade. The decoration features prayers to the Aten, while the deceased is portrayed kneeling on the west side (entrance left).

↳ On the inside:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration attached to the building, i.e. movable reliefs or tapestries

– No

↳ Is the decoration figural:

A figural representation is defined here as one that contains the depiction of discernible human, anthropomorphic, animal, or zoomorphic forms. In general, it differentiates between animate and inanimate beings, as well as between narrative compositions and still life, landscapes, abstraction, etc. Answer [Yes] for each type of figure depicted

– Yes

↳ Are there gods depicted:

– Yes

Notes: The god (Aten) is depicted as a solar disk emitting his rays. These rays end with human hands which were either left open or holding ankh signs.

↳ Are there other supernatural beings depicted:

– No

↳ Are there humans depicted:

– Yes

↳ Are there animals depicted:

– Yes

↳ Are there animal-human hybrids depicted:

– No

↳ Is the decoration non-figural:

– Yes

↳ Is it geometric/abstract

– Yes

Notes: Traces of geometrical friezes are still preserved in the royal kiosk (south wall west side) and the window of appearance (south wall east side) in the main chamber.

↳ Floral motifs

– Yes

Notes: Very few floral motifs decorate the royal kiosk in the scene of filling the king's cup.

↳ Is it writing/caligraphy

– Yes

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: Decoration also involves architectural representations e.g. the window of appearance of the royal palace and the deceased home.

↳ Is the decoration hidden or restricted from view:

– No

↳ Are there statues present:

– No

Notes: The shrine is partially cut. However, it may give an indication of an intended statue.

↳ Are there reliefs present:

A relief as opposed to sculpture carved on the round is a work of sculpture in which the figures project from a background support, generally a flat surface. Reliefs can be carved out of stone, clay, or a similar material.

– Yes

↳ Reliefs representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

– No

↳ Reliefs representing mythological narratives:

– No

↳ Reliefs representing human/historical narratives:

– Yes

Notes: Details of a historical event, the reception of the foreign tributes, are preserved on the east wall of the first hall of the tomb. The event, which can also be seen in the tomb of Huy TA 1, is dated to year twelve of Akhenaten's reign. It is likely that Meryre was participating in this event (the Durbar). Additionally, the deceased is rewarded by the royal family on the southern wall west side. The following scene shows the deceased being welcomed at home. The reward scene is repeated on the north wall east side but the cartouches were replaced later by Smenkhkare'.

↳ Other [Specify]

– Other [specify]: Other scenes represent the royal family doing recreational activities, and the deceased in prayer attitude.

↳ Are there paintings present:

– No

↳ Are there mosaics present:

– No

↳ Are there inscriptions as part of the decoration:

– Yes

↳ Are the inscriptions ornamental:

– Yes

↳ Are the inscriptions informative/declarative
[e.g. historical narratives, calendars, donor lists etc...]

– No

↳ Are the inscription a formal dedication:

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

- Other [specify]: The tomb preserves prayers to the Aten on both thickness of the entrance, details of the historical event i.e. the presentation of the foreign tributes (east wall), and the offering formulae (eastern and western architrave).

↳ Other type of decoration:

- No

Iconography

Are there distinct features in the places iconography:

- Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not)

- Field doesn't know

Notes: Facial features in all scenes are badly preserved.

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic)

- No

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic)

- No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic)

- No

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract)

- No

↳ Portrayals of afterlife

- No

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols)

- Yes

Notes: The tomb preserves the aspects of the new religion. These aspects are the representations of god Aten and his cartouches

↳ Humans

– Yes



Supernatural narratives

– No



Human narratives

– No



Other [Specify]

– Other [specify]: The god Aten is the only supernatural god represented. He is described as he who gives life to itself, and for all the people and beasts of all kinds that walk on four legs. He is depicted as a sun disk, with a uraeus at its base, sending its rays, which end with human hands either left open or holding ankh signs.

Beliefs and Practices

Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

– Yes

Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

– No

Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

– No

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Are formal burials present:

– No

Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: Aten appears in the tomb and during the Amarna Period, Aten was promoted as the sole god

↳ Are they anthropomorphic:

– No

Notes: God Aten is depicted as a sun disk from which light rays are extended. These rays end with human hands.

↳ Are they sky deity:

– Yes

↳ Are they chthonic (underworld)

– No

↳ Are they fused with king/kingship role (king = high god)

– Yes

Notes: Akhenaten became the sole representative of the god on the earth, for there is no priesthood to stand between the king and his god.

↳ Are they the monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– I don't know

↳ Are they kin relation to elites:

– I don't know

↳ Are they other type of loyalty or connection to elites:

– I don't know

↳ Are they unquestionably good:

– I don't know

Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are previously human spirits present:

– Yes

Notes: It is likely that ka of the deceased could have inhabited the tomb space.

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– No

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– No

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: From the prayers to the god Aten mentioned in the tomb, it is likely that the ka (soul) of the tomb owner may have inhabited the tomb.

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– Field doesn't know

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

– Yes

Notes: King Akhenatens is a mixed human-divine individual.

↳ Mixed human-divine spirits can be seen:

– No

↳ Mixed human-divine spirits can be physically felt:

– No

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

— No

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

— No

Supernatural Interactions

Is supernatural monitoring present:

— No

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

— No

Ritual and Performance

Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

— No

Are there self-sacrifices present:

— No

Are material offerings present:

— No

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

— No

Is maintenance of the place performed:

— No

Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:

— No

Is this place a venue for feasting:

— No

Are festivals present:

— No

Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

— No

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

— No

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

— No

Institutions and Scriptures

Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

— No

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

— No

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

— No

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

— No

Bureaucracy

Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

– No

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

– No

Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

– No

Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

– No

Are there scriptures associated with this place:

– No

Bibliography

General References

Reference: Boyo Ockinga. The non-Royal Concept of the Afterlife in Amarna. Studies in honour of Margaret Parker: Part I, Ancient History: Resources for Teachers (Special Issue), 38(1)

Reference: Janne Arp. Echnaton Und Die Rites de Passage: Zur Interpretation Des Königsmotivs Im Privatgrab von Tell El-Amarna.”.

Reference: Janne Arp. Die Nekropole als Figuration: zur Methodik der sozialen Interpretation der Felsfassadengräber von Amarna.. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. isbn: 978-3-447-06639-6.

Reference: Susanne Bickel. Ich Spreche Ständig Zu Aton: Zur Mensch-Gott-Beziehung in Der Amarna Religion..

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