Part 1

Chapter 1
Methodology and Research Assumptions

In this section, I primarily address issues of methodology. This chapter examines the emic and etic approaches to an understanding of the types of meaning which lie in the iconography of the Old Kingdom. The stage is then set to provide a comprehensive approach to the ideas behind the methodological considerations of Wittgenstein and Van Walsem. Wittgenstein acknowledges the problems of intention and proposes the concept of language games as a way of understanding meaning in a particular context. Van Walsem agrees with this approach but he concentrates on the problems of the literal/symbolic meaning of an artifact, and proposes a purely objective approach questioning whether there is a single central meaning to Old Kingdom elite iconography. My approach follows both the above but extends it by taking into account common suppositions which man shares as set out in the research assumptions.

1.1 Methodology

In considering elite tomb iconography, one is faced with the problem that the mental processes by which the ancient Egyptians collectively and over time endeavored to construct an accurate and reliable consistent symbol of their world, are now lost. Because one lives in another era, with different cultural, social, economic, psychological, and religious values, one may fail to understand the meaning and relevance of these principles. In this case categorization of the constituent parts which is part of the heritage of Western logic will not provide a solution because clear boundaries or common properties are just not there. In other words, categories can have extendable boundaries[42].

The modern difficulty in understanding tomb iconography could also have something to do with the fact that the starting point is often Eurocentric (under the aegis of modern art history), rather than in the context in which it was created and meant to be viewed. It is therefore no surprise that different Egyptologists applying what they think is the appropriate criterion, have come up with different results for the same object (see Introductory Remarks). This

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[42] G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What categories reveal about the Mind.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 16.

has led researchers in this field to comment that it is an understatement to say that there are still problems concerning the interpretation of the iconography of the Old Kingdom elite tombs, including rock cut tombs[43].

The act of interpretation may involve several ways of translation because Egyptian culture is not based on western logic. The problem is that "in Egyptian thought, two fundamentally different formulations are evidently not mutually exclusive but complementary" … "the pairs do not cancel each other out; they complement each other. A given *x* can be both *a* and not *a; tertium non datur* the law of the excluded middle does not apply"[44]. Hornung expands this further by describing it as a "many valued logic", something which in the face of alternative affirmations we can have concurrent legitimacy. However, he also concludes, "so long as the intellectual basis of a many sided logic remains uncertain, we can only indicate possibilities, not definite solutions"[45], leading one to suppose that the "many valued logic" approach may have its limitations[46].

Van Walsem expands the "many valued logic" idea one-step further. In his book on the methodological analysis of Old Kingdom elite tombs, he opens up the problems in present day approaches and suggests alternatives[47].

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[43] J. Baines, "Forerunners of Narrative Biographies," in *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H. S. Smith*, ed. A. Leahy & J. Tait (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1999), 34-37. He shows how the Dynasty 4 chapel of Metjen can be interpreted in different ways. For another example of possible different interpretations of the Benben stone and the temple see Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 139-40 and 57.

[44] E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in ancient Egypt: the one and the many* (London: Routledge, 1982) 239-40.

[45] Ibid. 242.

[46] J. Baines, "Interpretations of religion: logic, discourse, rationality," *Göttinger Miszellen* 76 (1984): 26-32. Essentially the critique of Hornung is based on three arguments which all have their underpinning in Western logic: (1) Similar logic in order to be applied to various branches of learning has to be comparable on a theoretical and logical level. (2) It is inappropriate to seek a parallel concept of Western logic in Egypt. (3) Difficulties also arise because there are no meta-levels of complexity which were used by the Egyptians in their modes of explanation. From a practical viewpoint Hornung's approach has much to offer and is in keeping with the "multiplicity of approaches" view formulated by Frankfort decades earlier in "Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation", New York, 1948:3-4.

[47] Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom elite tombs: analysis & interpretation, theoretical and methodological aspects* 67-91.

According to him, deciphering the meaning of elite tomb decorations is dominated by the problems of deciding whether:

These scenes are literal (Sehbild) or symbolic (Sinnbild), or are these scenes magical ways of continuing life in the hereafter, or are they a copy of the tomb-owner's earthly existence? In other words, can something exist simultaneously in both states - the literal and the symbolic?

In line with this difficulty, another researcher asks, "When common objects acquire a symbolic meaning, how can we know whether it applies in all contexts"[48], in other words is there one meaning for all times and contexts?

One solution is to try to distinguish between intention and symbolic meaning. The only thing certain about intention is the resultant material object - if an object or a painting is repeatedly reproduced in a certain manner during a certain time frame, then it must imply intention.

As for symbolic meaning it has its own baggage of difficulties. It is difficult to know with any certainty because motifs may not be sufficiently distinguishable from one another, the act of transmission may imply a meaning different from its original meaning, and the differentiation between symbols may change over time as a matter of use, and habit. Ultimately all symbolic meaning is socially constructed[49].

Van Walsem asserts correctly that funerary art and architecture are multifunctional, e.g. in accessible structures, in the cult practices, and in the varying motifs of tomb art, which all vary in the context of different socio-economic, religious, political and social dimensions. This leads him to ask, whether one should be searching for a *single* correct interpretation at all. In the same way as Wittgenstein proposes that games do not have a single, well-defined collection of common properties. Cricket and football for example

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[48] G. Robins, "Problems in interpreting Egyptian art.," *Discussions in Egyptology* 17 (1990): 53.

[49] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: image, text, ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 65-71. See also N. Goodman, *Languages of art: an approach to a theory of symbols*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976) 226.

both involve competition, strategy, and skill but even though they are different they are still games.

To clarify these issues, Van Walsem formulates certain fundamental theoretical considerations[50]:

- A tomb is an artifact, defined as any object with attributes of human origin.
- A tomb is a part of human material culture in the shape of fossilized behaviour, which reflects the interaction of man's involvement with life and death.
- Life and death are not homogenous issues but complex and will depend on the person's *Weltanschauung* (philosophy of life).

Because life and death are not identical issues, their representation will differ and he groups the motifs into three categories:

1. Material daily life as experienced by the individual
2. Immaterial reality which he subdivides into - Mental/metaphorical/abstract constructs that are not 'sensorially observable', and those that are observable but may have an ideological bias.
3. Mixture of both material and mental, e.g. ideological scenes, which can straddle both areas.

The above considerations can be illustrated by the example of the ostrich feather as understood in ancient Egypt.

This can refer:

- to abstract phenomena like justice, divine power,
- to actual circumstances such as the pattern of social life which presents itself in an intellectual/emotional/behavioural aspect and
- to a supposed living goddess *M3ˁt*, the ostrich feather in Egyptian iconography being a symbol for all these.

The problem then is, how and to which of the above groups, one should allocate the motifs and sub-motifs of an Old Kingdom tomb?

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[50] Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom elite tombs: analysis & interpretation, theoretical and methodological aspects* 33-39.

One way is to use the textual inscriptions.

Whether an ostrich feather means justice, the divine power of the goddess (*mȝꜥt*) or indeed herself, may well depend on the text and its context and as Baines points out "the study of texts can involve at least as many obstacles to understanding 'from the inside' as the analysis of representations"[51]. If one follows this path, it is soon realized that subtleness of hierarchical language becomes all-important: because reality is complex, describing it is also complex. Therefore the use to which language is put will also be complex.

Another way is to search for patterns that may exist in the iconography and present a statistical survey keeping in mind the limitations of applying mathematical analysis to incomplete populations.

Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations[52] suggested another way of understanding concepts which are at the heart of all cultures. He suggests that language is an indefinite set of social activities, each serving a different purpose which he called a 'language game'. He proposed that depending on the context, we can use different language games to understand a concept bearing in mind that conceptual categories do not have clear boundaries, and are not fixed. However categories could be united by family resemblances, in which case these resemblances can be used as a starting point. Take the example of a chair which can be a chair one sits on, a chair in which one is carried, a chair which is a throne etc. So the category of chair can be given precise boundaries but the concept of chair is itself not limited in any of these ways; rather it is open to both limitations and extensions depending on one's purpose.

Words similarly are fluid, and can mean very different things in different circumstances. There is no permanently existing conceptual structure underlying the meaning of a word, because one can use a word to mean potentially anything depending on the context. The problem is that because

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[51] J. Baines, *Fecundity figures: Egyptian personification and the iconology of a genre* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985) 2.

[52] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* § 7, 64-68, 83, & 154.

we learn to play these language games by training since childhood, we employ language in an unreflecting manner and are prone to use one simplified version. Because this use does not generally take into account the various nuances of the spoken and written language it increases confusion. He therefore suggested that understanding could only be achieved by the use of the appropriate language game for that particular context. However these language games have a deeper cultural significance in that the way humans interact in the language games they play, always refers indirectly to concepts of dominance, reciprocity, and sharing.

Van Walsem agrees and suggests that we can only speak about life through the means of different 'language games', each with its own rules, starting points and aims, which together with the particular context in which it is used, can give us but one interpretation for each language game[53]. Pictures similarly like words are fluid, and can mean very different things in different circumstances. This can depend upon one's network of associations, the type of actions, and the type of participants. The emphasis then is upon how language is used in light of the knowledge, and expectations of the conversant[54]. Consequently, there are many meanings, depending on which language game is employed. However, this should not be understood to mean that symbolic meaning does not exist, or that anything goes, but that in the study of ancient objects, one must keep in mind that there was

> "involved a very deliberate process of selection and modification in order to create a set, a vocabulary of ideal types possessing internal consistency. This … gave scope to an endless (and for us bewildering) recombination of elements which lay at the heart of the constant invention of tradition"[55].

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[53] Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom elite tombs: analysis & interpretation, theoretical and methodological aspects* 68-69.

[54] G. Nunberg, "The non-uniqueness of semantic solutions: Polysemy," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 3 (1979): 143-84.

[55] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 154.

The application of the above ideas to the Egyptian iconography would imply that the ancient elite Egyptians had little trouble in coming to grips with the various shades of meaning. Their cultural underpinnings would have made many things clear to them that are obscure to us, because of what is termed their emic position. By this is meant that an important element in understanding the archeological record is to take into account: ancient values, people's perception of themselves as well as the world around them[56].

In contrast today's observers of the past, take on an extra-cultural or etic[57] position when confronted with alien material, which is seen by chance or deliberately (the terminology was developed by Lee-Pike out of the linguistic terms *phonetic* and *phonemic*). One cannot have a similarity of *Weltanschauung* with our ancient fellowman. We are thus forced to generate a language game, which *we* understand and through which *we* try to make this alien material understandable to others. In attempting this, we rely on a rationalization of our experience of objects, which leads us to try to develop an explanation and then of course we run into the difficulty that things do not follow a linear path and that a single language game does not and cannot explain such a complex object like Old Kingdom tomb iconography. Such experience can however be part of a way one views Egyptian iconography in that the very attempt leads to a grouping and further analysis. In any case one will never be sure that one can understand the mindset of the Egyptian: this is and will remain the current problem. Because of this, the iconography of the Old Kingdom elite tombs is complex and any study of these must be approached pluralistically, i.e. include as many branches of the science and humanities as necessary.

The core of Van Walsem's methodology thus follows that of Wittgenstein, in that because of the complexity of existence, different language games are potentially present simultaneously in an Old Kingdom elite tomb, and

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[56] E. M. Melas, "Etics, emics and empathy in archaeological theory," in *The Meaning of Things: material culture and symbolic expression*, ed. I. Hodder (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1989), 138-42.

[57] cf. K. Lee-Pike, *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behavior*, 2d, rev. ed., *Janua linguarum. Series maior* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967) 37.

therefore there is no certainty that there exists an absolute single core meaning[58]. Categories thus become movable and understanding is better obtainable through a gradient of observations in a particular environment.

However, while I agree with this hypothesis, I take a slightly different approach which does not *completely* discount the suppositions of the ancient Egyptians as they might have understood their world, because we too, "the way we understand the world is through our interactions with it"[59]. Consider a modern educated person; to him first order scientific enquiry only considers logic. However there are times when we have to enquire into the suppositions as a way of thinking about the world, where the old remains, but is carried into the new. This consideration of suppositions then becomes a way of revealing features of structure and meaning out of the complexity of the Egyptian material based on experience. Equally if one accepts that most action depends upon prior thought and that this is a human trait, then in understanding the actions of the ancient Egyptians, it would be constructive to take into consideration what the others' suppositions might have been. In doing this we might find that there are certain concepts/ideas/suppositions which we all share, so that it is quite possible for a person who lived some 5000 years ago to have had some of the same thoughts patterns conducive to action as a person who lives today, but cannot be explained in logical terms.

Consider an encounter with an object like a piece of clay with a hole in the centre. From this simple artifact we can start to ask many questions: what activities were entailed in its production, in what context does it appear, who were the people, the way they thought when they embarked on these activities, and perhaps any similarities to today etc.

While aware of the dangers of basing any understanding of Egyptian artifacts on the basis of modern motivations and ideas, nevertheless if we were to

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[58] R. Van Walsem, "The Struggle Against Chaos as a "Strange Attractor" in Ancient Egyptian Culture," in *Essays on Ancient Egypt in Honour of Herman Te Velde*, ed. J. van Dijk (Groningen: STYX Publications, 1997), 321-22. See also Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom elite tombs: analysis & interpretation, theoretical and methodological aspects* 86-88 and 98.

[59] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 194.

stop, and only look at the logical facts, completely discounting all suppositions that could have been a basis for the action, the discussion would be weakened. In particular it would tend to imply that Egyptian art was an inert, stagnant, and fixed system.

The archaeological record shows that this is not so, and that it had within itself the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. I maintain with Van Walsem, my opposition to the idea that we can get entry into an artistic work, merely by engaging with artistic intention.

A similar problem can be found in relation to textual data. Words in themselves as well as the way they are arranged convey information. This information may be literal or may overflow with hidden suppositions; the spectrum is unlimited when applied to abstract ideas. Any meaning will then depend upon a prior understanding and the way the sentence or text is structured.

Consequently it is not only in the individual image and the hidden suppositions, where culturally significant information is found, but also in the way similar depictions are structured in similar period graves, such that "related elements" form a meaningful pattern probably because of the same artist or workshops being involved. These patterns and the underlying suppositions will change over time as generations invent their own programmes, as can be observed in the elite tombs during Dynasties 4, 5, and 6.

The reason why significant transitions (change), albeit mostly seen when occurring across a time frame are observed in objects/signs/symbols/humans etc. will be found in chaos theory. This theory's essential element is one that embraces change as an element of newness - constant decay followed by constant renewal through related events. In the ancient Egyptian context, it can be used to explain how the Egyptians visualized the problem of change out of chaos. One version has it that at first there were only disordered primeval waters in which the creator god floated, without consciousness. The creator god then came into being of himself on a mound of earth and arose out of these waters, his first act being to bring an ordered world into

existence through an act of masturbation[60]. Through this single act were born male and female deities, who in turn sexually interacted and produced another pair and so on. Similarly the rising and the setting of the sun was explained in terms of the sky goddess swallowing the sun god every evening, which in the act of being swallowed, impregnated her and was reborn again (a new sun) the following morning[61]. Comparable concepts of change can be used to explain the transitions in social complexity and cultural changes observed in the iconography, text, images, and architecture of the Old Kingdom mastabas.

The term 'constant renewal through related elements' requires clarification for which Quantum Physics affords us invaluable insight: just as an element can exist as a discrete known particle with specific properties and boundaries, it can also exist as a wave[62]. At one level the related elements consist of the individual self as a unique person, who is physically present, and has boundaries. At another level related elements are something indefinable, what ontologist's term the infinity in us, similar to the water that keeps the boat afloat. Whilst I do not wish to imply that the ancient Egyptians had any understanding of Quantum Physics, yet by drawing this analogy from the modern world, attention is drawn to the two sides of a human being at different levels. One as a distinct being and the other that has no material being, he has a multi-leveled, multi-systemic social functioning, e.g. a person's 'base' function is active when mentioned during a meeting even though he himself may be absent. Both of these are involved in society, play

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[60] R. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) § 1248-49. For a later version of this story see R. O. Faulkner, "The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus-IV," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (1938): 41-53.

[61] C. Traunecker, *The gods of Egypt*, trans. D. Lorton (Ithaca Cornell University Press, 2001) 71-72.

[62] Hornung, *Conceptions of God in ancient Egypt: the one and the many* 241. See also Van Walsem, "The Struggle Against Chaos as a "Strange Attractor" in Ancient Egyptian Culture," 321-23 and 33-34. Similarly in Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom elite tombs: analysis & interpretation, theoretical and methodological aspects* 86-87.

an essential role in the formation of what we term a family, clan, tribe, community, or society, and ultimately socially constructed meaning[63].

Could this then not have been the case with the Egyptians too? In trying to understand the self and its relational connectedness to others, they too felt the difference between a personal identity (like a particle), and a far-reaching social identity (which could be like a wave). Because this was something which was not tangible yet was not transient, they had to find a way to concretize it, if for no other reason than the egotistical one of cultural memory and eternal life in the hereafter. They did this through tomb art, ritual, and liturgy. They left evidence of this for posterity on the walls of their tombs, in a manner in which it is equally possible to understand the phenomenon of existential change both at the particle and the wave levels. However, the ancient Egyptians of the earlier period never characterized their thought patterns in a definite and concrete manner. This is why we moderns have such difficulty in understanding the relevance of mortuary art. If the above is correct, then this could form part of the starting process for trying to understand iconography. This does not mean that we are free to create meaning as we think fit, but that there are limits, which cannot be identified in advance.

Accordingly the methodology which I intend to follow will depend on the application initially of the language game. Like all languages it will need a vocabulary and "rules of grammar".

The vocabulary is depicted in all the symbols that go into the making of the final product, i.e. tomb decoration. This could range from the material setting to the metaphysical religious ideas and to the dimensions that were relevant to the users and makers of the artifacts.

As for the rules of the game, "the grammar", these will emerge from the patterns that exist in and between the symbols, how and in what context they

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[63] I am fully aware that Quantum Physic's mathematical models and cultural concepts cannot be simply extrapolated. However, I see no detriment in using concepts from other disciplines, which may give us a clearer understanding.

interact with each other, how these change within a time frame according to the ideological basis.

Being predominantly regulated by social practices, these rules do not have the certainty of mathematics like word order in a language, but may possess both an element of the empirical as well as the ideological. One way for these rules to be made visible could be by looking at distinctions which the ancient Egyptians made in similar tomb motifs and which are visible now. By doing so, it is hoped to distill those elements which are evident in all mortuary art based on commemoration on a worldwide scale, which I call the generics. In addition their application to funerary art will provide an understanding of individual and social practices within a given time frame in the context of funerary art. Further, and crucially, it is hoped that such a study will also point to the continuum of complex cultural change, a perspective which emphasizes both the immediate as well as the continuity over time. Thus the study of Egyptian funerary art will be taken out of its exclusive cocoon and made to have significance to our contemporary world.

1.2 Research Assumptions

1. In Old Kingdom Egypt, hierarchical control was a central feature of its society[64] but this does not mean that horizontal differences within groups such as kinship can be ignored. The main instigators of change were most probably those who were at the higher levels of society. Change will deliberately occur, only if the members of that society can be controlled. However where this is not the case, change is due to the incorporation of new facts and relations and then a good deal of change is accidental. The more humans that are under the control of a person with power and status (the tomb-owner and his executors being one such example), the higher the probability of the change being executed and documented. This may be evidenced as part of a material artifact and the more times that a similar type of change is

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[64] T. A. H. Wilkinson, "Social Stratification," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 3*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 301-05.

documented and executed, the higher the probability that this change will become socially accepted and highly regarded. After a time, the particular change is no longer experienced as such, but the recent change is accepted and recorded as the new 'convention'. Change is generally more rapid in the material aspects of culture because it is easier for an artisan to change the style of a material object than for society to change its culture. In contrast, change is slower to occur in language, religion, social customs, moral order, and institutional organizations; because these are the outcome of long evolutionary processes and the sheer time scale causes inertia to exist. Additionally as the outcomes become culturally embedded, they develop increasing acceptability and may become even more resistant to change. Accordingly it is assumed that in case of funerary culture, changes may be caused by any or all of the following:

- Conscious decision of the tomb-owner prior to death,
- Conscious decision by the progeny and/or other relatives after the tomb-owner's death,
- Economic factors, i.e. access to or control of resources.

2. Given that Egyptian society was divided into different levels, the modes of pictorial and written representation would then reflect not only this division of society but also the differential abilities of the tomb-owners to acquire these resources. The resulting iconography could then be seen as a possible race to exhibit those modes of representation which were accepted as being at the top of the cultural apex[65].

3. Mortuary differentiation is a function of increasing societal complexity[66].

4. Linear change never occurs in any culture because the underlying factors are complex and will contradict[67].

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[65] Baines, "Forerunners of Narrative Biographies," 24-25.

[66] J. M. O'Shea, *Mortuary Variability* (Florida: Academic Press, Inc., 1984) 21.

5. In all societies people build long-term, interdependent relationships which produce feelings of attachment. Termination of these relationships following death results in some form of emotional distress in any society[68].

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[67] S. J. Seidlmayer, "Die Ikonographie des Todes," in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms*, ed. H. Willems (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2001), 205-06.

[68] J. R. Averill, "Grief: its nature and significance," *Psychological Bulletin* 70 (1968): 721-28.

Chapter 2

The Search for the Generics in the Material Aspects

This chapter brings together all the material features which are tangible and affect the primary nature of the accessible working material, the elite tomb, and its contents. The aim is to assess how the elite tomb's iconography was influenced by material features including location, shape, size, main architectural progression, and spatial context. In addition the role that the main actors, the tomb-owner, and the anonymous artist played in the context and their interaction is examined for its communicative value and as pointers to the generics. These actors appear in this section even though it is realized that any effect that they have on the iconography, is a result of their ideas which are intangible.

2.1 The Physical Setting

All civilizations have roots in their physical environment. A glance at any satellite image of Egypt shows its unique position, isolated by the Sahara and the Sinai and watered by the Nile, a self contained area and therefore less prone to alien cultural pollination from outside. The Nile provided not only a means of transport and communication but ensured all agricultural fertility. In addition the climatic shift to a dry arid type assisted in the preservation of the many artifacts which are present. The cyclic phenomena of the inundation and drying up of the Nile, as well as the eternal question of birth and death in all spheres, must have also powerfully influenced every aspect of Egyptian life including the type and the development of the material record left behind. Set apart on a plateau at the entrance to the Delta region, where the Nile flows northwards to join with the Mediterranean Sea, are the great cemeteries of the elite at Giza and Saqqara, located near the old capital of Memphis. These monuments of the past and their contents, such as elaborate tombs and temples, serve as the ground material for examining past social relationships because they serve as statements to social authority and prestige, in "culturally and historically situated social action"[69].

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[69] A. E. Nielson, in *Memory Work: Archaeologies of Material Practices*, ed. B. J. Mills & W. H. Walker (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2008), 208.

The majority of the elite tombs and their iconography are located in this unique setting, in an environment of monumental pyramids and a desert area bordered by steep slopes of limestone cliffs (limestone being the predominant stone found in this area).

2.2 The Elite

The term elite as it is used here, relates to any Egyptian who was important enough to acquire a monumental tomb building, such a tomb being a privilege reserved for the highest class[70]. These persons constituted "the cultural and the administrative and executive core of a society"[71].

Such a person would fulfill as a minimum the following criteria:

- Be part of a select and restricted group of people having titles.
- Be buried in a distinctive place with distinctive architecture.
- Be directly or indirectly chosen by the king and/or his closest advisors.
- Have "the production and consumption of aesthetic items" under his control through which he can benefit.[72]
- Being accepted as deserving of reverence and following.

This should not be understood as the elite being a homogenous group[73] because the whole communal system depended upon what Kemp calls "family

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[70] A. Mariette and G. Maspero, *Les mastabas de l'ancien empire* (Hildesheim: G. Olms (Reprint of 1898 ed. published by F. Vieweg, Paris), 1898). They found a mass burial field of the poor in Saqqara. The bodies were a metre below the surface. Present were small bowls and food rests for the deceased to use in the hereafter. So we have to deduce that building a tomb superstructure was not a commonplace occurence.

[71] J. Baines and N. Yoffee, "Order, legitimacy, and wealth: setting the terms," in *Order, legitimacy and wealth in ancient states*, ed. J. Richards and M. van Buren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16. This article is a follow on of the earlier article which appeared in 1998 (see following footnote).

[72] J. Baines and N. Yoffee, "Order, legitimacy and wealth in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia," in *The Archaic State: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. G. M. Feinman and J. Marcus (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1998), 235. High Culture is defined as "the production and consumption of aesthetic items under the control, and for the benefit, of the inner elite". They include under the term aesthetic items a wide range of items and traditional ways of life, e.g. visual art, musical performance, garments, high quality food and drink, and hunting.

[73] For a survey of the hierarchical structure within the elite see: E. Endesfelder, "Formierung der Klassengesellschaft," in *Probleme der frühen Gesellschafsentwicklung im Alten Ägypten*, ed. J. Hallof (Berlin: Humboldt - Universität zu Berlin, 1991), 33-37.

ties and a network of patronage and obligation"[74], the vey existence of which implies some form of opposition within the prevalent society. As Goody suggests: "Culture does not simply consist of inbuilt tendencies or customary (traditional) procedures of a socialized kind, but includes a kernel of doubt, its own critique of itself that may lead to the adoption of opposed forms of behaviour"[75], and of course be the harbringer of change.

2.3 The Elite Tomb

The establishment of a monumental tomb was an act requiring the expenditure of both intellectual and material property. The tomb representations show the grave as a place where the tomb-owner intends to start a new life 'in the hereafter'[76], similar in munificence to that of his previous life.

Prior to 2700 B.C. the mastaba[77] was the architectural form used for both royal and private elite individuals and the division of the tomb into a sub- and

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[74] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 282. While this appears in the chapter entitled 'New Kingdom Egypt', the quotation itself refers to the "earlier periods". See also C. J. Eyre, "Work and the Organization of Work in the Old Kingdom," in *Labor in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. A. Powell (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 40. While he views the assertions of the officials emphasizing the performance of their public duties as "over-formalized", nevertheless he concludes, that "the general picture is likely to be correct, of patronage and provision working downwards through society from the king, in return for labour and service working up from the lowest peasant".

[75] J. Goody, *Representations and contradictions: ambivalence towards images, theatre, fiction, relics and sexuality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) 257. See also Baines, "Forerunners of Narrative Biographies," 24. Similarly in Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 111.

[76] While some of the iconographical scenes can probably be related to some form of similar life in the hereafter nevertheless this is not a foregone conclusion. The funerary process scene can certainly not be put in this category, as no tomb-owner would want to die a second time, nor for that matter the ploughing scene - the intention by the elite to do agricultural labour was never envisaged during the Old Kingdom.

[77] I. Shaw and P. Nicholson, *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London: The British Museum Press, 2008) 192. See also J. Brinks, "Mastaba," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 3*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1980), 1214-31. Also R. Schulz and M. Seidel, eds., *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs* (Munich: Könemann, 1998) 30. Seidlmayer notes here that in Dynasty 1 the royal tombs at Abydos had no monumental superstructure, but only a covering of sand held by brick walls which surrrounded the tomb.

a super-structure is well established[78]. The development of the mastaba for private elite individuals emphasizes three key points[79]:

- Its architectural origins in the Neolithic burial mound,
- Its occurrence in the isolated areas reserved for expressions of monumental elaboration
- Its role represents one of the earliest material expressions which attempt to shape the perceptions of the non-elite.

The elite tomb as characterized by a mastaba has the following specific architectural features including:

- a substructure containing a burial chamber with access via a stairway, a slope and later by a shaft,
- a superstructure built over the burial chamber. It was made of mud-brick or stone, with paneling or smooth limestone casing. The superstructure could have an inaccessible room, where the statue(s) of the tomb-owner and members of his family were placed, called the serdab (Arabic for "cellar").
- a chapel where offerings were made and funerary services performed and where a stela or false door could be located[80]. The chapel was built either beside or into the superstructure.

It is outside the scope of this study to go into the details of the architectural development of the elite tomb; suffice it to say that in the period that this study is concerned with, the elite tomb had already undergone considerable progress as seen in the stone built elite tombs which replaced the primarily mud-brick ones of Dynasty 3[81]. What started out as an effort primarily to

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[78] G. A. Reisner, *The development of the Egyptian tomb down to the accession of Cheops* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936) 14.

[79] C. Renfrew, "Beyond a subsistence economy," in *Reconstructing Complex Societies*, ed. C. B. Moore (Cambridge, MA.: 1974), 69-96.

[80] S. Wiebach, *Die ägyptische Scheintür, morphologische Studien zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung der Hauptkultstelle in den Privat-Gräbern des Alten Reiches* (Hamburg: Verlag Borg GmbH, 1981) 198.

[81] J. Garstang, *Mahâsna and Bêt Khallâf, Egyptian Research Account* (London: 1901) 9. See also M. Barta, "The Transitional Type of Tomb at Saqqara North and Abusir South," in *Texte und Denkmäler des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, ed. S. J. Seidlmayer (Berlin: Achet Verlag,

imitate earthly estates and mansions in Dynasties 1 and 2[82], now increasingly becomes in addition, an obsession with the security of life in the hereafter.

For our purposes and from Dynasty 4 onwards, the mastaba represents a special class of tomb meant exclusively for the elite[83] developed to satisfy certain tomb functions, namely as a:

- place where the body is contained and protected, realized by the burial chamber, the shaft and later the sloping passage

- marker for the memory of the person, realized by the inscription of names and titles of the tomb-owner, the addresses to the living, the display of wealth, power, royal favour and social virtues of charity and justice.

- place where service to the dead is performed, realized initially by the outside niche, then by the inside false-door in the above ground chapel and by the development of an independent repertoire of forms and representations on the surrounding walls.

- interface between this world and the next, realized in the refinement of the Western wall of the superstructure.

Some of these functions are common whilst others are specifically Egyptian in nature especially the cult and the memory function which show considerable development in their forms, texts and representations[84].

One consequence of this development was the enhancement of the chapel, because of its role as the primary place of ritual transformation. The Egyptian

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2005), 69-87. Thus tomb development is not to be understood as sequential, and stone lined chapels did not instigate stone mastabas . The evidence would point to a sort of transitory tomb, where the burial chamber is approached by a deep shaft which opens in the middle of the tomb, vertical shafts becoming exclusive during the reign of Senefru at Maidum and Dahshur. For an architectural based analysis see U. Fritz, *Typologie der Mastabagräber des Alten Reiches: strukturelle Analyse eines altägyptischen Grabtyps* (Berlin: Achet, 2004) 48-81.

[82] A. H. Gardiner, *The attitude of the ancient Egyptians to death and the dead* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935) 10. See also P. Jánosi, *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2006) 3-32.

[83] S. J. Seidlmayer, "Funerärer Aufwand und soziale Ungleichheit," *Göttinger Miszellen* 104 (1988): 47.

[84] Harpur and Scremin, *Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom: studies in orientation and scene content*. See also N. Alexanian, "Tomb and Social Status," in *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology*, ed. M. Barta (Prague: 2004), 1-8.

architect achieved this refinement by three modifications to the interior and from the evidence it would appear that all were used[85], namely:

1. Add externally to the existing elite tomb core as in tomb QS 2305 at Saqqara and G2110 (Nefer) at Giza.

2. Eliminate part of the elite tomb core and build onto and into it as in tomb G5170 (Seshemnefer 3) and G4970 (Nesut-nefer) at Giza.

3. Build a chapel inside the core of the elite tomb as in tomb G1225 (Nefret-iabet) at Giza and tomb G4000 (Hemiunu).

These ideas are not new and many examples in the cemeteries at Giza, Maidum, Dahshur, and Saqqara are known.

What is new in Dynasty 5 is the predominance of an elite tomb type in which the cult chamber and the offering stela take their place inside the kern of the elite tomb[86], with a corresponding expansion in the type of scenes depicted. A high proportion of Dynasty 5 elite tombs also have a serdab, a feature that was already in evidence since its introduction in tomb FS 3073 of Khabausokar and his wife Hathor-nefer-hetep during the reign of Djoser[87].

The reliefs and inscriptions which are elaborated in Dynasty 5 elite tombs are already seen in their most important, albeit not so extensive forms in the Dynasty 4 tombs of Nefermaat, Atet, Rahotep, and Neferet at Maidum and Akhtihetep at Saqqara[88].

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[85] P. Jánosi, *Giza in der vierten Dynastie. Die Baugeschichte und Belegung einer Nekropole des Alten Reiches Band I: Die Mastabas der Kernfriedhöfe und die Felsgräber* (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005). 154-203 and 275-296.

[86] H. Junker, *Giza*, vol. 2 (Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky A.G., 1934) 3 & 18.

[87] E. Brovarski, "Serdab," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 5*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 875.

[88] Y. Harpur and P. J. Scremin, *The tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep at Maidum: Discovery, Destruction and Reconstruction* (Cheltenham: Oxford Expedition to Egypt, 2001) 55-119. See also Junker, *Giza* vol. 2, 18-21. In these bird netting, fishing, hunting, slaughtering, agricultural pursuits, manufacturing and offerings by personified estates, attendants and followers are already depicted.

Rock Cut Tombs[89]: These were developed primarily because of geological[90] as well as economical considerations[91]. Early rock-cut tombs are found in the neglected quarries at Giza and Saqqara[92], and in areas less suited for building an elite type of tomb such as the cliffs of Middle and Upper Egypt (e.g. Deshasha, Zawiet el-Maytin, Sheikh Said, Meir, Deir-el-Gebrawi, El-Hawawish, Salamuni, El-Khokha, and Quibbet-el-Hawa)[93]. Their main feature being that they do not have a significant superstructure[94]; the chapel being cut parallel to the cliff into the rock, from which a shaft leads to the burial chamber. From the point of decoration, this results in an increase in the wall area and thus an expansion of the types of scenes[95] as witnessed by the fact, that the cruciform chapels at Saqqara and Maidum and the L-shaped chapels at Giza were not highly suited to the expansion of scenes of daily life which required larger wall surfaces[96].

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[89] G. A. Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press 1942) 219-47. See also W. Stevenson-Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946) 166.Both date the earliest rock cut tombs to the reign of Menkaure. However evidence now points to the reign of Khafre as being the earliest for such tombs, based on the finds of his sons and queens who are buried in rock cut tombs. For fuller details see Jánosi, *Giza in der vierten Dynastie. Die Baugeschichte und Belegung einer Nekropole des Alten Reiches Band I: Die Mastabas der Kernfriedhöfe und die Felsgräber* 296-429.

[90] S. Giedion, *The Eternal Present: the beginnings of architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) 403.

[91] Private communication Professor Kanawati (Macquarie University) that certain rock cut tombs e.g. Kai-Khent, Irukaptah and Min-Ankh mimic mastabas in certain architectural features. A link to expenditure and extent of the rock-cut tomb should always be kept in mind.

[92] Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis* 219-20. See also Jánosi, *Giza in der vierten Dynastie. Die Baugeschichte und Belegung einer Nekropole des Alten Reiches Band I: Die Mastabas der Kernfriedhöfe und die Felsgräber* 296-429.

[93] H. Brunner, *Die Anlagen der Ägyptischen Felsengräber bis zum Mittleren Reich* (Hamburg: Verlag Augustin, 1936) 14-25.

[94] A. Dodson, *Egyptian Rock-Cut Tombs* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1991) 7-11.

[95] Harpur and Scremin, *Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom: studies in orientation and scene content* 104-06.

[96] As seen in the chapels of Rahotep, Seshathetep, Seshemnefer 3 and Akhti-hetep.

2.4 Tomb Architecture, Decoration, and Cultural Affiliation

Elite tombs were called is[97]. They were unique and visible, and attested to the tomb-owner's ability to command a labour force, and having vicarious access to natural resources[98]. Elite burials were finely and richly decorated and required foreign goods such as cedar for their coffins and other costly materials for their grave goods. These goods were known to be procured for and used by the king. The private person's dependency on royal craftsmen was unavoidable because it was only they, who could provide the highest quality of workmanship. If we couple these material requirements with the religious beliefs which required an elaborate burial for a good afterlife, an additional source of kingly power becomes self-evident. In addition, the presence of the obligatory $ḥtp$-di-$nswt$[99] formula publicized the fact that the tomb-owner was legitimized by the king, who was the representative on earth of the divine. The tomb-owner thus had the indirect approval of the divine too[100].

Since the kings had monumental tombs which at the least represented power, the elite by also building monumental tombs became an extension of this power of king and the central government of which he, as a member of the elite, was an integral part. The indirect cultural effect was to glorify and consolidate the power of the official and the divinity of the king.

The architectural forms of elite tombs are thus no accident, just like the temple for the gods[101], and the "palace" for the king, they are there to create

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[97] Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom elite tombs: analysis & interpretation, theoretical and methodological aspects* 17-19.

[98] H. T. Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-Her-Akhti: Study of an Egyptian tomb chapel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943) 34.

[99] This formula appears for the first time in the tomb of Rahotep (Dynasty 4). See also G. Lapp, *Die Opferformel des Alten Reiches* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1986) 30-38.

[100] Junker, *Giza* vol. 2, 43-45.

[101] J. Baines, "Temple Symbolism," *Royal Anthropological Institute Newsletter*, no. 15 (1976): 10-15. While no Old Kingdom palaces have been found it would be naïve to believe that the head of the power base would not have allocated himself and his cohorts a specially designated place.

a perfect inhabitable world for the elite. A world which in its representations distances itself from the reality, and produces its own kind of truth of what should be, in contrast to what is, because what is, can never be perfect or absolute. Indeed this is also relayed in the ancient Egyptian's view of the cosmos during this period. The tomb is a replica of this world model, through its architecture, paintings, reliefs, and grave goods it reproduces an illusion of a unified reality of life. The totality of these is made to function for the use of the tomb-owner in his afterlife by the process of the cultic rituals, and the concept of sympathetic magic. The artist and the tomb-owner are fused into one unified endeavour, that of the literal visualization of activities in this world as well as having a communicative function which could be of symbolic value for all who visit the tomb.

During the Old Kingdom and up to the Middle Kingdom, the mastaba appears as a place where the tomb-owner is the recipient of veneration and worship, because everything revolves around him: the chief character. Totally missing from the elite tomb in terms of iconography is any depiction of any deity (apart from that sanctioned hieroglyphically in the *ḥtp-di-nswt* formula)[102]. This is even more surprising when these formulae voice the desire to enjoy the divine presence in the hereafter so frequently. Admittedly this desire is an indirect inference from the formulae that invoke Osiris or Wepwawet or Anubis. The latter two can be conceived of as identical gods, because of their similar features, and by the fact that the epithets *nb tȝ ḏsr* lord of the sacred land (read cemetery) can be applied to either of them. Wepwawet means "the one who opens the ways" and is a reminder of his function that of guiding the newly deceased over the unknown paths over the desert to the kingdom of Osiris, and of making sure that the deceased is protected from adversaries as well as any obstacles/difficulties. The relationship between all the funerary gods is a fluid one and admittedly there are subtle differences in the way their

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[102] J. P. Sørenson, "Divine Access: The so-called democratization of Egyptian funerary literature as a socio-cultural process," in *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive structure and popular expression*, ed. G. Englund (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis BOREAS 20, 1989), 112-13.

names are invoked[103]. Wepwawet as a pointer to ideology (vindication against enemies) and Anubis mainly for cultic purposes of embalming, but in the context of this study it is the desire to be with 'a god' after death, unobstructed in any way, which is a logical but not clear-cut inference[104].

Other aspects such as the belief in a self-attainable afterlife may have played a role in the elaboration of themes and in the formation of an independent elite persona which are pronounced and discernible in the court cemeteries[105]. Thus the elite tomb is not only defined by its plans and architectural subdivisions but more importantly by the events and the rituals that took place inside and around it and that may be depicted, which give the tomb its meaning[106].

Every mastaba from the purely architectural evidence can be viewed as the representation of the desire of a tomb-owner for equivalent life in the hereafter[107]. They are the outcome of beliefs shared within a society whose intention was realized in the physical act of building a tomb and the decoration of the interior, developed in the socio-cultural and the physical context of Egypt. The increase in the type and number of scenes and the volume exhibited, are related primarily to the spatial development of the elite

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[103] T. DuQuesne, *The Jackal Divinities of Egypt: From the Archaic Period to Dynasty X* (London: Darengo Publications, 2005) 437-40.

[104] Lapp, *Die Opferformel des Alten Reiches* 56-58 & 85. In the offering formula one of the requests has been interpreted as a wish – may he (the deceased) be accompanied by his Ka to the pure place and his arm be grasped by the great god. Another frequent request is for the deceased to be able to travel along the roads of the beautiful West. This has been interpreted literally, but in my opinion the crucial point is that the West is a synonym for the place where the gods of the dead reside, and where the deceased now hopes to go. It is in this sense that I have used the desire to be with a god. The specific god's name is uncertain but from Dynasty 5 onwards it is Osiris.

[105] N. Alexanian, "Social Dimensions of Old Kingdom Mastaba Architecture," in *Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, vol. 2* ed. Z. Hawass and L. P. Brock (Cairo: 2003), 88-96.

[106] A. Suaad, *Space Kinship and Gender* (University of Edinburgh, 1987 (Ph. D. Dissertation)). "… Space acquires meaning through the patterns of events observed …"

[107] Jánosi, *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit* 3. "Der vielfältige Inhalt und die besondere Ausstattung vieler Gräber zeugen von der Jahrtausende währenden, ungebrochenen Vorstellung an ein Leben nach dem Tod".

tomb[108]. All levels of society can now be reached: both as an expression of status during the life of the tomb-owner, and a source of commemoration and possible competition for his peers on his death. Architecture thus performs an ideological function by linking rulers and the elite through the stonework and monumentality to their forefathers and expressly linking them (at least as far as the kings are concerned) to the cosmos.

2.5 The Artist

All decoration in a tomb required the abilities of a craftsman experienced in the techniques of drawing/painting/sculpting and since he is a vital element in this process, his role cannot be ignored.

The role of the 'artist' can be comprehended as an anonymous enabler and purveyor of accurate representation; he thus assumes a central albeit undefined position in the realization of the tomb-owner's posthumous existence/state of being. The system of representation however was influenced by a convention as to how the visual depiction had to be executed. The artist was there to ensure that what was depicted was recognizable, and was repeated, such that reality was codified by integrating function and position into a single motif[109].

As far as the individual artists, more correctly the 'dependent specialists'[110] are concerned there is not much evidence as to their identity[111].

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[108] W. S. Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978) 167.

[109] F. Junge, "Vom Sinn der Ägyptischen Kunst," in *5000 Jahre Ägypten : Genese und Permanenz pharaonischer Kunst.*, ed. J. Assmann and G. Burkhard. (Nussloch: IS-Edition, 1983), 43-60. For an account by an ancient artist on his abilities and his training see W. Barta, *Das Selbsterzeugnis eines altägyptischen Künstlers*, *Münchner Ägyptologische Studien (22)* (Berlin: Verlag Bruno Hessling, 1970) 138-41. ..."I am a craftsman successful in his craft, through that which he knows...I know the movement of a figure, the stride of a woman, how one looks at another, how to make frightened the face, the poise of the arm of him who harpoons the hippopotamus, and the pace of the runner."...

[110] B. G. Trigger, *Early Civilizations: Ancient Egypt in Context* (Cairo: 1993) 57-59. For a general survey of craftsmen see D. Valbelle, "Craftsmen," in *The Egyptians*, ed. S. Donadoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 31-59.

Working under the patronage and control of the king had the effect that they could aspire to unprecedented levels of refinement and sophistication, and develop a unified style which shows the hallmarks of durability and consistency. As all elite art appears to be produced by artisans associated with the royal court in the Old Kingdom Memphite region, a uniform style in the principles of register composition as well as the rendering of the human form is evident. It is seen in its most easily recognizable form emphasizing certain universally known aspects of the body. Human faces, lower torso, legs and feet are shown in profile, eyes, and shoulders frontally and the big toes are on the same side, as well as in the scaling of the protagonist and the depiction of women, invariably with either one or both breasts exposed[112].

However, there are glimpses which reveal, that even though they were not part of the established instigators of change (i.e. had very little or no power), they still could reveal their creative ego to the extent allowed by the accepted ideas of decorum and requirements of the mortuary cult[113]. A very good example[114] is the way the artist in the tomb of Ti has shown the various herdsman in a presenting the scroll scene. Not only does he depict the partial baldness, the nudity, and the various types of kilts worn but he also depicts this in opposition to a standardized man wearing a short wig and short kilt.

The captions in the sub motifs of Dynasties 5 and 6, also betray creative logic on the part of the artist in making understandable the funny side and toil which must have been part of the everyday life of the non-elite for "sie sind

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[111] For an example of a named artist from Dynasty 6 see L. Borchardt, *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1937) 94, no. 1418. "…his trusted man, his beloved, the assistant sculptor of the palace, Iren-Akhti", offering his lord three geese.

[112] H. Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, trans. J. Baines (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) 91. Schäfer's solution was in proposing the absence of foreshortening and perspective. Since this is found in many cultures, the mental basis of Egyptian representation still remains a mystery.

[113] A. O. Bolshakov, "The Ideology of the Old Kingdom Portrait," *Göttinger Miszellen* 117/118 (1990): 89-142. He refers to the depiction of the chief sculptor Niankhptah shown having a drink in a papyrus boat in the tomb of Ptahhotep at Saqqarra.

[114] H. Wild, *Le Tombeau de Ti: La Chapelle*, vol. III (Le Caire: L'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1966) pl. 167.

ein merkwürdiges Zeugnis dafür, wie der alte Künstler selbst seine Bilder auffasste[115]".

Corrections by Egyptian artists also provide proof that they had judgments of their own, notwithstanding that they were dependent specialists[116]. The tomb artist is like the modern theatre director producing Shakespeare according to the original script without any improvisation: in such a script none of the living actors expresses any individual personality. The actor is secondary to the role model of the part. The lead character is defined by his lines, his clothes, body language mannerisms and position on the stage, not a particular actor. In the Oscar winning film "The Great Waldo Pepper" released March 1975, Robert Redford played a stunt pilot in a film with scenes about his hero: a German fighter ace in World War I. The actual ace participates as a fellow stunt man but does not play himself and Redford asks him why not. The rather shabby, non-heroic looking real ace replies that he does not look the part (compared to his more handsome counterfeit standing nearby). Similarly the tomb artist depicted the formula symbols associated with the role model for a member of the elite, not the actual tomb-owner himself. That is why so many paintings/reliefs of different tomb-owners have so many similarities. Of course it is accepted that there are some reliefs[117] that try to portray an actual individual, but even these were subject to strict artistic conventions and decorum.

While an Egyptian artist is seldom seen as signing his work in the modern sense[118], nevertheless from his titles it is recognised that he was an honoured member of society. Consider the example of Imhotep the great architect of Djoser who had one title that of "royal carpenter and mason and an "opener

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[115] A. Erman, *Reden, Rufe, und Lieder auf Gräberbildern des Alten Reiches* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1919) 4.

[116] Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* 252. See also H. Junker, *Giza*, vol. 3 (Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky A.G., 1938) 203.

[117] Mostly from Dynasty 4 see Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* pl. 6, 7, 8, 9.

[118] A single leaf of a carved wooden panel from the tomb of Kaemkhaset (Dynasty 5) now in the Cairo Museum identifies the sculptor's name as *Itw*. Authors personal observation.

of stone"[119], which can relate to his expertise in the design and construction of the Step Pyramid. He also had at the same time other high-sounding titles like "Seal Bearer of the King of Lower Egypt, Administrator of the Great Mansion and Chief of Seers" [120]. During the New Kingdom he is remembered for being a wise man and not just for his artistry in building the Step Pyramid. However as far as the archeological record is concerned, his (Imhotep) craftsmanship, artistry, skill etc. are seen nowhere other than in the Step Pyramid. Apart from a fragment of a statue with his name and sparse indirect references, now at the museum at Saqqara, he could for all intents not exist. Because of the formally conceived ideology of Egyptian kingship, any major changes in tradition or innovation in art form could not be attributed to the work of one individual. Therefore the absence of signed pieces means that one will never know the real contribution to advancement, by any particular person. Modern celebrity implications of automatically correlating name and fame with apparent knowledge would appear to have no place in ancient Egypt, at least during the lifetime of the individual.

The fulfillment of the desire to produce what the artist might have considered the most beautiful statues and paintings was not possible because funerary art was religiously inspired, and had to conform to certain dictates of decorum. The artist's choice of attributes was limited to what was the essential categorization of the thing, person, activity, and the material with which he had to work. Whatever he created had to have permanence not only in the sense of being physically permanent but in the sense of being based on a permanent and recognised Egyptian concept of the ideal, and so the necessity to name individual artists became irrelevant- he remained nameless[121].

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[119] C. M. Firth, J. E. Quibell, and J. P. Lauer, *Excavations at Saqqara: The Step Pyramid*, 2 vols. (Le Caire: L'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1935) pl.58.

[120] W. Helck, "Titel und Titularen," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 6*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 597. It is accepted that one could have many titles and that this did not mean that these actually were one's official duties or work; for many of them were purely honorific.

Indeed from as early as the Narmer palette, the tendency in Egyptian art is to inform, and so there is no attempt to convey an aspect from any one angle, idealization is pervasive, things are represented as they should be and not as they are. This relatively stable idealization explains how throughout the pharaonic period, Egyptian art remained distinctive and can always be recognized as something Egyptian.

Equally the sacred could also be an element that explains, at least as far as the Old Kingdom is concerned, the striving for excellence on the part of the artist. The evidence for this comes from the so-called Memphite Theology, which describes how the deity Ptah, (also a patron of artisans and builders) created the gods:

"He settled their offerings, he established their shrines, he made their bodies according to their wishes. Thus the gods entered into their bodies, of every wood, every stone, every clay, everything that grows upon him in which they came to be[122]."

Accordingly this connection between the patron god Ptah and Egyptian art may also be responsible for the exclusion of named artists from most tombs. This would help to explain why artists were not individually honoured in the modern sense, because the attainment of excellence by any craftsman may have been ultimately understood to be a product of divine inspiration.

However, since it is known that there was profit oriented economic exchange in ancient Egypt[123] this explanation would seem incomplete. The modern view is to consider the artist just like any other worker, whose technical expertise

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[121] A. Hermann, "Zur Anonymität der ägyptischen Kunst," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Instituts für Ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo (6)* (1936): 157.

[122] K. Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1928) 68. For translation see M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) 55.

[123] D. A. Warburton, *Macroeconomics from the Beginning*, *Civilisations du Proche-Orient* (Neuchatel: Recherches et Publications, 2003) 116 and 28.

could win him a slightly privileged position thus explaining the few instances in which he is identified by name[124].

Workshop scenes from non-royal Old Kingdom tombs depict artists and craftsmen working together in numerous pursuits[125]. It can therefore be assumed that Egyptian artists saw themselves as part of a tradition, in which people who had specialized in drawing, painting, and hieroglyphic skills etc. all collaborated jointly in the manufacture of particular goods desired by the patron. For the most part therefore, one does not see much evidence of artistic individualism. Occasionally however an Egyptian artist allowed himself a flicker of individuality and to these one will turn when discussing the specified tombs.

Since most Egyptian art had social, religious, and political meanings[126], the job of the artist is better described as that of an enabler, within the bounds of tradition: an art object becomes a symbol, which the artist had decrypted. The quality of what skilled craftsmen created reflected the support by the patron because of the nature of what Barry Kemp calls a "court culture"[127]. The more input and investment that were provided by the patron, the more chances that the development of artist skills would reach a higher level of perfection. His hands were however relatively tied by the demands of decorum[128], the actual material with which he had to work, as well as the power at the court in Memphis. However within the broad rules of artistic

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[124] As illustrated by the artist named Niankhptah in (Harpur, "The Chapel of Ptahhotep", Oxford (2008): pl. 211 and the eldest brother named Ihhi in (Duell, "The mastaba of Mereruka", Chicago (1938): vol. I, pl. 43.

[125] N. Kanawati, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara: the Tomb of Ankhmahor*, vol. 2, *The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports 9* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1997) pl. 40. Examples of this cooperative tradition are seen far into the New Kingdom.
See also D. Dunham et al., *The mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III: G7530-7540* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1974) Fig. 5. See also Wild, *Le Tombeau de Ti: La Chapelle* vol. 3, pl. 173.

[126] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 135-37.

[127] Ibid. 112.

[128] Baines, "Communication and Display: the integration of early Egyptian art and writing," 474-75. See also J. Baines, *Visual and written culture in ancient Egypt* (Oxford University Press, 2007) 14-30. He expands on his original concept of decorum.

convention, there was ample room for variation[129] e.g. the reserve heads from Giza[130], the statue of Rahotep and his wife Nofret from Maidum[131], the statue of Hemiunu from Giza[132], the scribal statue of Kai from Saqqara[133], the bust of prince Ankhhaf[134], and a statue of a man called 'sheikh el-Beled'[135].

Figure 1: Sheikh el-Beled in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 34.

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[129] J. A. Wilson, "The Artist of the Egyptian Old Kingdom," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6 (1947): 231-49. See also Bolshakov, "The Ideology of the Old Kingdom Portrait," 89-142.

[130] Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* pls. 7-9.
[131] Ibid. pl. 6 (c).
[132] Ibid. pl. 6 (d).
[133] Ibid. pl. 18 (a).
[134] Ibid. pl. 15 (a).

[135] M. Saleh and H. Sourouzian, *The Egyptian Museum Cairo: Official Catalogue* (Mainz: 1987) CG 34.

Chapter 3

The Search for Generics in the Immaterial Aspects

The previous chapter was concerned with the identification of material influences on the development of the elite tomb and its iconography.

In contrast, this chapter explores all those influences which are not explicit in the archaeological record, but concern the inner rationalizations of Egyptian society, and which may be the justification for the way the material record was fashioned. The range of immaterial factors that might have been involved, are explored in this chapter because these provide the primary reference points and give meaning to acts which can otherwise be routine, ordinary or even not understandable.

3.1 Organizational and Behavioural Aspects of Egyptian Society

The Old Kingdom is characterized by a society which is hierarchical and status based characterised by rapid change and social as well as economic development[136]. Kanawati views the early Old Kingdom administration as one which was centralized, where the provinces were administrated by officials who lived in, and were buried in Memphis[137]. One knows very little of the social organization that existed up to the early part of Dynasty 4 and it is impossible to tell how united and national the ruling elite were. Even when officials at Memphis held titles of provincial authority, it is difficult to infer whether this was a statement about underlying political unity, or just a declaration of local connections. The material evidence from the earlier cemeteries at Tarkhan, Saqqara, and Helwan point to a stratified society

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[136] N. Kanawati, *Governmental Reforms in the Old Kingdom* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1980). See also N. Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. The Highest Titles and their Holders.* (London: KPI Limited, 1985). There is growing penetration of the state (in early Dynasty 5, king's sons' apparaently ceased to hold functional office-Strudwick, *Administration* 320-321, 338-339). The trend is towards bureaucratically defined power structures, and expansion of the role of the state.

[137] Kanawati, *Governmental Reforms in the Old Kingdom* 1-2. See also R. Müller-Wollermann, *Krisenfaktoren im Ägyptischen Staat des ausgehenden Alten Reichs Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen (Thesis)* (Tübingen: 1986) 80.

indicated by certain graves having a separate burial chamber and cult place[138].

Prior to Dynasty 4 absolute power is seen in the king. However, by the end of Dynasty 4, growing complexity of society and the cumulative effects of increasing expectations in the elite, of upward mobility in this world and of direct access to god in the next, results in a change in the organization and behaviour of elite society marked by:

- Changes in the spatial dimensions of the elite tomb,
- Development of various genres of representational motifs and elaboration of sub-motifs,
- Progression in the biographical inscriptions from a concentration on the grave to a career type enumeration and finally to that of an individual in his own right, stressing his claim to a moral stature.

Change then is to be understood more than just simple adjustments to climate or patterns of dominance as exhibited in grave architecture and must include the changing perceptions of the socio-economic structure, and the relations between the crown and the elite.

The closeness to the king in status when alive and nearness to him when dead are the most important determining factors. The resulting structure of society is pyramidal with the king at the apex assisted by the royal family and literate officials and at the bottom the masses of illiterate others[139]. However, this structure is fluid because society as observed in this period of ancient Egypt is still in the stages of being formed. It is neither a loose aggregate of people, because hierarchy is evident, nor is it a totally structured society, because of the absence of intertwined parts which make up a well thought-out and carefully planned whole.

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[138] W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan II* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1914) pl.14. Also W. B. Emery, *Archaic Egypt* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961) pls. 8 & 9. See also E. C. Köhler, "Seven Years of Excavations at Helwan in Egypt," *The Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology* 15 (2004): 84. Further see Jánosi, *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit* 3-32.

[139] Wilkinson, "Social Stratification," 302.

Consider the structure of an ancient Egyptian village during this period. It is well known that the ancient Egyptian villages produced a wide range of handicrafts, and that local trade was exclusively based on an exchange of surplus products[140]. Even though these villages were self-sufficient they were not characterized by the belief that all inhabitants should have equal social, economic, and political rights, as the evidence from the earlier cemeteries of Naga-ed-Deir clearly demonstrate[141]. Inequalities therefore must have not only been approved but actively maintained, but the degrees of inequality among the non-elite which a well-knitted society would show are absent. Evidence points to there being important non-royal people and that kinship was the basis of the elite[142]. Accordingly by the end of Dynasty 4 Egyptian society can be understood as a community tending towards increasing hierarchy and complexity. The king is absolutely established as a god on earth, and a cornerstone of national unity[143]. As Wilson notes[144], the written language of Old Kingdom Egypt has no words for "government", "state", "nation", as impersonal terms conceived apart from the pharaoh, and the nearest approximation is in the word *nswt*[145], which refers to the religious-ideological nature of kingship rather than to the organization of society as

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[140] A. E. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, trans. H. M. Tirard, 1971 ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971) 494-97. See also D. Wengrow, *The archaeology of early Egypt: social transformations in North-East Africa, 10,000 to 2,650 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 72-98.

[141] G. A. Reisner et al., *The early dynastic cemeteries of Naga-ed-Dêr* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908). See also W. M. F. Petrie and F. Ll. Griffith, *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties, Part II* (London: Kegan Paul 1901) especially p. 8 & 12. The tombs of Djer and Khasekhemwy at Umm el-Qa'ab, Abydos are the earliest examples of class and status hierarchy.

[142] W. Helck, "Die soziale Schichtung des ägyptischen Volkes im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Christus," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient.* 2 (1959): 5-16.The important non-royals are Imhotep and Hesyre of Dynasty 3 and Metjen and Pehernefer of early Dynasty 4. See also M. Campagno, "Kinship and the emergence of the ancient Egyptian State," *Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology* 11 (2000): 39.

[143] J. J. Janssen, "The Early State in Egypt," in *The Early State*, ed. H. Claessen and P. Skalnik (The Hague: 1978), 213-14.

[144] J. A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt: an Interpretation of Ancient Egyptian Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956) 79.

[145] Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache II: 332-333.

such. Although the origins of the state are unclear[146], Wilson continues that the "theory of government was that the king was everywhere and did everything, a large proportion of the officials who acted for him carried titles expressing their direct responsibility to him". Particularly in the Old Kingdom, inscriptions suggest that the pharaohs personally ensured the consolidation of royal power, the elimination of all independent discourse and the defense of the frontiers as a fulfillment of their duty to the gods (to enlarge the boundaries of Egypt whose frontiers were within everything that the sun's disc encircles). The instructions given by Pharaoh Wahkare Khety III (ca. 2070-2040 B.C.) to his son Merikare are illuminating in this regard[147].

Royal power over the masses was exercised through a hierarchical bureaucratic structure in which all officials were ultimately subject to royal authority. One of the duties of bureaucracy was to collect taxes from the peasantry, these being levied on grain, animals, and handicrafts. Corvée labour was required for state projects and thus supported both the state and the elite who had control of this[148]. Because the Egyptian kings had at their disposal exclusive access to scarce resources and craftsmen skills, as well as a monopoly on all foreign trade, the elite were forced to turn to royalty to access these goods, both for their intrinsic value and as a sign of royal favour. There is a resultant increase in state wealth because of trade, with nearby countries as well as the exploitation of Nubia and Sinai for their mineral resources. Side by side follows the development of the administration and technical know how, especially in regard to royal funerary complexes. The application of organizational and technical skills results in the construction of the first full stone building- the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara. Further experimentation follows in early Dynasty 4 in the building of the pyramids at Medum, Dashur, and Giza.

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[146] For a helpful survey of the literature on this subject see: Endesfelder, "Formierung der Klassengesellschaft," esp. 6-9.

[147] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 152-65.

[148] D. J. Brewer and E. Teeter, *Egypt and the Egyptians*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 95.

The elite too progress to a tomb superstructure made of stone, but from a cultural point of view what is more salient is the nature of the elite tomb inscriptions. In the early part of this period the stress is on the nature of the grave and who made it[149]. However, in early Dynasty 5, the emphasis is on aligning oneself as closely as theoretically possible to the king[150], because it is only through this organizational structure that one could advance (until the end of Dynasty 4, major officials tend to be close relatives of the king).

In late Dynasty 5 and continuing into the FIP a radical and subtle change in the perception of kingship is witnessed[151]. The king is no longer quite as supreme, as he was when he was first designated "son of Re", he is from now a representative of Re on earth. The close hold on power that he had until Dynasty 4 in the institution of the delegate princes/family is now replaced by the substitution of career officials, who in Dynasty 6 became prominent enough to establish their own areas of authority[152]. Side by side is the developing role of the priests, who as servants of Re assume growing importance in the capital[153]. Another tendency is for the rise of officials, who serve in the palace and in the estate of a deceased king and thus are exempt from all imposts. With the passage of time these officials look to the fields and mortuary benefices entrusted to them as an inheritable right and an

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[149] K. Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches*, vol. I (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1933) 8, l. 14-17 "His eldest son Tjenti is he who made this when he was buried in the beautiful West, according to what he (the father) had ordered when he was alive and on his two feet".

[150] Ibid. 51-53. The phrase "esteemed by the king more than any other servant" appears six times including numerous references to closeness of the king.

[151] Ibid. 198f. "I have come from my town, I have descended from my nome, Having done justic (Ma'at) for its lord, Having contented him with what he loves: I spoke truly (Maa), I did justice (Ma'at)... I rescued the weak from one stronger than he as much as I could; I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked..." Similarly in Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 46, l. 8-9. "I have come from my town; I have come from my nome, Having said Ma'at; Having done Ma'at…"

[152] Müller-Wollermann, *Krisenfaktoren im Ägyptischen Staat des ausgehenden Alten Reichs* 73-75, & 130-34. She considers the social structure in the Old Kingdom as an example of 'Patrimonialbürokratie" with similarities to the patterns found in an extended household.

[153] K. Baer, *Rank and title in the Old Kingdom; the structure of the Egyptian administration in the fifth and sixth dynasties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) 245-47 & 50.

inalienable possession. This group of officials is designated *ḫnti-š* and occurs for the first time in Dynasty 5[154].

The characteristic from Dynasty 5 onwards is the desire to free oneself and with it the awakening of a sense of individuality[155].

This is observed among other things in texts which reveal the personal intervention of the tomb-owner in helping the disadvantaged[156]. Egyptian society was based on institutionalized inequalities. Most people accepted these inequalities as the will of the gods. Bureaucratic hierarchy was the order of the day and there must have been endless layers of officials each trying to be a part of managing the state's business, if the range of titles is anything to go by. The Egyptians accepted the status quo because of their fundamental belief that order had to be maintained, and that this was a divine pre-requirement to a happy existence (although this must have been restricted to the happy few). Hence, it has been suggested that all intellectual enquiry was restricted to those whose interest it served, namely both the secular and religious elite, with consequential effect on the material traces left behind[157].

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[154] W. Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, *Ägyptologische Forschungen (18)* (Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1954) 107-08. Both Baer and Helck agree with this dating. However Roth seems to advocate an earlier date following the dating of the tombs in the cluster in the Western Cemetery at Giza. See "A Cemetery of Palace Attendants", Boston (1995): 43.

[155] The previously held view of a 'democratization' process has been called into question, see Wlson: *The Burden of Egypt*, (Chicago:1956) 87. Whilst I agree that this word is ill conceived and it could be replaced by a better jargon (societal evolution for example), in my view he has done a service to Egyptology, in pointing to a significant factor involving the historical processes of change. We still have to explain the causes and the relationship between the observed evidence and the changes in the behaviour of the individual elite e.g. in their autobiographical inscriptions, in the architecture of their tombs, and in the increasing startification of titularies and official rankings especially in Dynasties 5 & 6. Accordingly whatever name we decide to give to these historical processes and their observed effects in society, they still are cogent evidence of change and expansion of the body politic which is undeniable.

[156] A survey of these can be seen in A. Gnirs, "Die ägyptische Autobiographie," in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. A. Loprieno (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 191-241.

[157] Helck, "Die soziale Schichtung des ägyptischen Volkes im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Christus," 17-21.

The structure of society was harnessed to the interests of the state (read king) with the help of a bureaucratic class of administrators/priests underpinning the theocratic system. State and religion were one and the same and there was social stability before its eventual decline. This can be the only inference, because the monuments and the refinements in art produced during this period could not have been achieved without an appearance of stability and unity among the inhabitants of Egypt at this time.

Another aspect of the structure of Old Kingdom society was that the elite bureaucrats did not have narrowly defined specialties. They had wide areas of control over the population group that they were responsible for. This was the norm in most societies, until the modern spread of education enabled non-elite individuals to acquire these skills and gradually displace the previous nepotism[158].

Bureaucratic control was in the hands of a hierarchy of generalists who held office initially by accident of birth but by Dynasty 5 by appointment. In this context, since writing/reading was an elite activity, only an elite class could engage in bureaucracy. The social relationships which were the outcome of the above, were not an abstract concept, they were based on relational connections between the people, the place and on the principle of $m3^ct$.

In the Old Kingdom, behaviour was dominated by religion. Such attitudes were in the main to the benefit of the ruling elite, because it was they who made the rules. This is particularly so in archaic societies. Even in today's largely secular societies, this concept may not seem so alien. For many years, a Protestant establishment in Ireland had huge problems in trying to rule because the population was largely Roman Catholic. While it goes without saying that there are differences between religion practiced/understood in ancient Egypt and today, nevertheless religion certainly has the power to influence a population. Often the state is jealous of this power that a rival

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[158] J. W. Thompson, *Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966) vol. II, 752-53. (A medieval parallel would be the influence of the English Lords of the Manor, who had a virtual monopoly of most state and legal powers in feudal England).

mass organization might wield, how else can one explain the persecution of spiritual movements, e.g. Falun Gong in modern China.

Unfortunately the non-elite members have left very little by way of archaeological material, but this does not mean that they had no part in the construction/decoration of the elite tomb beyond implementing orders. Their political influence was exceptionally limited. Nevertheless the continued consumption of great quantities of the products of craftsmanship, in building and in the decoration of burials, could probably only be sustained, because the elite recognised particular rights and duties. These come under the heading of $m\mathsf{3}^{c}t$, as opposed to $jzft$ and grg[159], (i.e. the rise of ideas of kindness and related social expediency), and because they (both the elite and the non-elite) believed in the nature of divine kingship[160]. Further, because increases in population occurred slowly[161], the nature of Old Kingdom society must have been one that was grouped, concentrated, and to some extent interlocking. This was an additional factor why manpower, skill, and resources to a project could be easily secured[162] such that monumentality and artistic refinements assume a particular role in social relations.

These behavioural attitudes could have helped to give the elite a sense of who they were, and to the non-elite the meaning of their interdependent existence. This thesis will show that this connection between the tomb-owner

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[159] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 132, line 6.5. "Great is Ma'at, and its foundation is firmly established; It has not been shaken since the time of Osiris" (The Maxims of Ptahhotep).

[160] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* Utterances 213-19. in which the supremacy of the king as a god from Unas to Pepy ll is asserted. Even though these utterances are part of the Pyramid Texts and therefore restricted to the king; these texts as opposed to the physical artefact had a much earlier pedigree before their introduction to the tomb, thus implying that the elite had knowledge of these (see Allen, In "Mummies and Magic: the funerary arts of ancient Egypt". (Boston: 1988) 38.
A clearer picture of the king's relationship with the gods Osiris, Seth and Horus, can be got if these utterances are read in conjunction with the 31 drawings depicted in the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus.
See Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen* (Leipzig: 1928), 245-258.

[161] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 11.

[162] K. R. Weeks, "Preliminary report on the first two seasons at Hierkonpolis. Part II: the Early Dynastic palace," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, no. 9 (1971-2).

and the community was an essential element in an approach that affected their everyday life and the accepted methods of its expression.

A behavioural principle which might also have been operative was the notion of kindness, a further refinement to the meaning of $m3^ct$, which may have provided additional solidarity for the communities. In his writings on Egypt, Diodorus Siculus remarks that:

> "among the Egyptians, the punishments of the wicked and the rewards of the good are not mythological ideas, but visible facts, and both sorts of people are reminded of their responsibilities every day; and in this way is wrought the greatest and most profitable reformation of man's character."[163]

Lichtheim correctly points out "what matters is that the inherent moral values … were respected not only by officials … but by society at large"[164].

The political ethos of the times as evidenced in the biographical inscriptions may have also been the acknowledgement of vulnerability which made them generous, and not just compassion.

Goedicke published a stela which is claimed to be from the West field at Giza. While the top is entirely missing, that which remains tells us that due to an official becoming sick, the king granted him the use of a carrying-chair as follows:

> "Now when he was ailing, His Majesty caused that a carrying-chair be brought to him from the Residence … and His Majesty caused (a guard of) young men from the Residence be made for him to enter the Residence with him[165]".

Another similar incident of concern is seen on the entrance jamb of Hetepherniptah:

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[163] Diodorus, *Diodorus "On Egypt"*, trans. E. Murphy (Jefferson: McFarland, 1985) 122.

[164] M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom: a Study and an Anthology, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 84* (Fribourg/Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1988) 6.

[165] H. Goedicke, "A Fragment of a Biographical Inscription of the Old Kingdom," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 45 (1959): Fig. 1 and 2 and p. 8-9.

> "the king caused that he be made comfortable in a carrying-chair and that young recruits carry him in it following the king"[166].

A further similar example is that in the biographical inscription of Washptah where the king orders a carrying-chair for a sick official as well as a group of young men to carry it[167].

Again in early Dynasty 5 the inscription of Rawer a high palace official and Sem-priest, narrates how his leg was touched during the taking of the prow rope of the divine barque ceremony[168], by the *ames* - sceptre of the king. Thanks to the intervention of the king this did not have any magical or other consequences for Rawer in this or the next life[169].

These incidents emphasize that the king presumably cared for his elite. The reliance on $m3^ct$ in daily life is therefore obvious at least as far as the king and the elite are concerned. However, as regards the non-elite it may have been different in the degree to which it was practiced.

The "Tale of the Eloquent Peasant" from the Middle Kingdom, is an example which defines the constructs and thought processes of Egyptian society; namely the limits of socially defined boundaries and a collective identity based on the concept of $m3^ct$, which embodies among other things the fulfillment of hierarchical expectations, and corresponding correct social behaviour. When the peasant says:

> "Speak Ma'at! Perform Ma'at! For it is great, it is exalted, it is enduring, its integrity is evident, and it will cause (you) to attain the state of

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[166] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 231, l. 14-15. The hieroglyph before the carrying chair symbol is to be recorded as s imA (to make well disposed) and not s bnr. This is clearly denoted by the variant of the sign (M1-Gardiner List). See also Bourghouts "Egyptian", vol. II: 80, 2010 (in Press), Leiden & Leuven. He lists this varainat as M1++.See also J. Kahl, *Das System der ägyptischen Hieroglyphenschrift in der 0 - 3. Dynastie*, *Göttinger Orientforschungen. IV. Reihe* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).

[167] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 43, l. 15-19.

[168] Ceremony as used in this thesis means an act conducted elaborately in accordance with prescibed religious and social procedures which serve to reinforce and renew the event, i.e. this could relate to any prescribed procedure enacted in accordance with rules of an established written or unwritten code which express social relationships.

[169] N. Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, ed. R. J. Leprohon, *Writings from the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 305.

veneration"[170], the symbolic concerns of Egyptian society are exposed and finally answered.

It was part of the understood system that a better life for the individual could only be had when the community as a whole had a better life. This concept was promoted by the notions of religion, which instilled the belief that through certain forms of behaviour like kindness, one transforms oneself. The resultant ethical foundation is that the only viable life is the collaborative life with other people, especially illustrated in the biographical inscriptions. However the biographies go beyond this and in so far they are a narrative about the past, they also have a historical perspective.

Assmann sums this up exquisitely: "Diese biographische Grabinschriften sind echte End-Text, sie blicken vom anderen Ufer der imaginativ überschrittenen Todesschwelle her auf das als abgeschlossenes Ganzen vor Augen liegende Leben zurück. ...Daher ist die Grabbiographie in Ägypten die einzige Form, die narrative in die Vergangenheit zurückgreift und in diesem Sinne als 'Geschichtsschreibung' eingestuft werden kann[171]".

If this was then the general modus Vivendi why did the Old Kingdom decline?

Different views have been proposed as to the ultimate decline of the Old Kingdom, the focus being on the "disintegration of central authority and the rise of the semi-autonomous families in the provinces"[172] but there is no single reason for the decline[173]. All one can say from the inscriptional and archaeological evidence from the First Intermediate Period is that the masses of others at the base of the organizational-pyramid, also try to participate in this unwinding of the strict bonds, and in so doing accelerate the final demise of the Old Kingdom[174].

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[170] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* B1, 320.

[171] J. Assmann, "Denkformen des Endes der Altägyptischen Welt," in *Das Ende: Figuren einer Denkform*, ed. K. Stierle and R. Warning (München: Wilhelm Funk Verlag, 1996), 19.

[172] Baer, *Rank and title in the Old Kingdom; the structure of the Egyptian administration in the fifth and sixth dynasties* 1.

[173] In this respect see J. A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998) 47-48.

3.2 Entropy as an Explanation of Cultural Change

Considering the consistency of Egyptian art, change in the form of entropy[175], might seem a strange theme at first glance. The following series of ideas attempt to make the connection between the thermodynamic concept of entropy, and its use to explain cultural change clearer in a non-mathematical way.

Entropy is a term originally used to define aspects of thermodynamics. The common understanding of the word refers to the growing internal disorder of organized systems by the spreading out of energy from within closed systems. Seen in this light, entropy is a process and not an object. From being just a concept of physics (usually applied to changes in the two forms of energy transfer, i.e. work and heat in closed systems which can be quantitatively measured), entropy's qualitative aspect can be used to make constructs in the cultural realm easier to explain. Just like we use abstract numbers in mathematics to understand, say the speed of a car, we can use entropy to explain and understand how and why cultural change occurs. Simply put, for order to exist and be maintained more energy input is required (e.g. building a shack, a house, a palace, a pyramid, etc.), because in the natural state, energy tends to spread out and revert to disorder. Conversely the more disorder there is in a system, the lower the energy level that exists, i.e. when objects disintegrate.

Consider the following example. Let's take a bucket of 10 bricks. We pick up the bucket and dump the contents onto the ground. The result will be a random assortment of brick locations and the bricks will not be stacked in perfect order or in perfect alignment. Creating an ordered, aligned brick stack requires someone to apply work or energy. To stay stacked, additional energy is required in the system - for example, using concrete or anchors to hold the bricks in place. Over time, these stacked bricks will revert to a lower state of

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[174] Müller-Wollermann, *Krisenfaktoren im Ägyptischen Staat des ausgehenden Alten Reichs* 116-25.

[175] Walsem, "The Struggle Against Chaos as a "Strange Attractor" in Ancient Egyptian Culture," 318-22.

energy and disorder (e.g. decay in organic matter, environmental conditions etc.).

It is essential to realize that entropy explains both the localization of energy which results in creating something, and the dissipation of energy, i.e. the breaking of rules, and the disruption of order. In this sense entropy becomes the synonym of change, leading to unpredictable results. One aspect of entropy, after all, is nothing but the constant departure from systems, the leaving behind of conventions, and the destruction of stereotypes. This is the reason why entropy has a lot in common with cultural perfection in the form of art and related cultural deviance. In the vocabulary of thermodynamics as already stated, entropy means 'expansion' through the spreading out of energy. Every piece of art displayed whether in a gallery or in the iconography of ancient Egyptian tombs ultimately has the same task: the spreading of values (aesthetic, moral, didactic, etc.) and the expansion of communication/understanding about the new aspects of reality that exist. In this way artistic creativity (read iconography) fills the world (and it does not matter whether it is the ancient or the modern world) with an understanding of reality. However, when a new form of reality is to be depicted there will be an energy flow to the newer form and energy depletion in the older form that existed.

I will use the current political system of the U.S. as a convenient example of entropy working in a cultural sense. When American democracy was first thrust by the founding fathers, out of the old regime that existed in Europe of that time, it was new, bold, and energetic. It took the world's breath away at its unlimited promise, and set the wheels turning on tangible change across much of the world. Before the ink dried on the Constitution, however, the degradation began. From the beginning, the country's political operations fell into the hands of a strictly limited number of parties, which quickly coalesced into just two. Since then, they have essentially shared power, with only minor differences in policies between the two. Because a disruptive external force was absent, this closed political system quickly matured into an institutionalized 'sameness' that all but assures no serious challenges –

leading ultimately to the high probability that it will degrade to only a shell of its former self. The 'only way' it can be rejuvenated and this applies to all types of ossified governments, is through using more energy to educate the electorate to recognize and reward integrity of character and to reject ruthless ambition and the *ersatz*. One might argue that the US political structure is far too complex for such a short explanation, but my aim is to illustrate the workings of entropy in a society and to culture generally, in so far as it relates to the phenomenon of constant decay and renewal, and not a full-scale description of the US political system.

It is also important to note that living systems, of which culture is one example, are not exactly in the nature of closed systems. They have an openness and freedom of their own, especially the human beings and societies, who make up the culture. They always endeavour to transform as much energy as possible into their way of life. The more the energy which is used to either maintain or develop newness, the more the probability of increasing structural complexity and differentiation of functions. These transformations (in either abstract or material constructs) will result in perceived change, a process which is characterised by energy being localized in contrast to perceived decay when energy is not localized.

How this energy is relayed could be via symbols and can be related to all aspects of the individual or the society at a particular time, e.g. in ancient Egypt this can refer to changes in the iconography, material objects, religious ideas, architectural adaptations etc.

From the above, it is clear that change is endemic in our material world, and that in order to prevent or delay change one has to expend energy. In the case of the Old Kingdom, the changes are the result of an obsession with denying death's finality. This means that the tomb and its contents contextualize the needs of the tomb-owner in a similar way to that when he was alive, sustenance being the common element. Similarly too in his transformed state, the needs of shelter and food predominate. How these were met is a theme that leads to different ways of doing things and could be the result of diverse factors and influences. Insofar that these differences are

evidenced in the elite tombs, they are pointers to the results of energy input which resulted in change and which is an aspect of culture - the subject of this section.

Every culture is confronted with issues concerning how to provide for and/or dispose of its dead. The function of bodily protection may also be seen as a symbol of communicating rank, class, and wealth. The extent to which it does so will also indicate that particular culture's role in the creation and maintenance of social life. In Old Kingdom Egypt these issues were very conspicuous because the hereafter was regarded as an extension of everyday life[176]. Similarly to the expenditure of energy to sustain everyday life energy was expended to sustain life in the hereafter.

The Egyptians attitude towards death was expressed in two ways:

1. <u>Denying death's finality:</u> by using mummification techniques, disguising the smell of decay with the use of palm wine or perfume, using indirect ways to express the notion of being dead, e.g.

   "Going out from the house of the estate to the beautiful west"[177],

   Provisioning of the dead with food, drink, and requisite equipment for their journey into the netherworld[178].

   Writing letters to dead relatives which belief implies that the 'dead' are capable of delivering the asked for benefit.

2. <u>Keeping alive the memory of the tomb-owner:</u>

   By erecting monuments in stone, developing stelae, images/statues in tomb iconography, inscriptional devices, e.g. biographies and the seeking of ritual sustenance from passersby (probably as an insurance against possible neglect by the descendants), visiting cemeteries, and taking part in commemoration rites on feast days[179]. All of these

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[176] Taylor, *Death and the afterlife in Ancient Egypt* 10-45.

[177] Kanawati, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara: the Tomb of Ankhmahor* pls. 56 & 57 (A).

[178] Taylor, *Death and the afterlife in Ancient Egypt* 13 & 46.

[179] U. Verhoeven, "The Mortuary Cult in Ancient Egypt," in *The World of the Pharaohs*, ed. R. Schulz and M. Seidel (Cologne: Könemann, 1998), 481. See also Junker, *Giza* vol. 2, 60-62.

devices were used by the elite tomb-owner to establish and maintain their status and power by way of the mortuary cult.

Death was not feared as would seem from the repeated desire to travel the beautiful roads of the West. Zandee has shown that at times it was regarded in a negative sense[180]. Numerous references of a more positive kind are found in the Coffin Texts[181] and spell 20[182] has been chosen as representative of the expectations towards death. It is accepted that these cannot be relied upon as direct evidence for Old Kingdom beliefs. Nevertheless it is suggested they can be treated as a possible indicator of these beliefs, because the archaeological material of the early dynasties is dominated by funerary material, and the only textual evidence (the Pyramid Texts) are funerary in context, and relate to the king. Moreover, it is now well established that these texts already existed for a century or more before their introduction as physical artifacts in the pyramid of Unas, and were known by the elite[183].

For further details of appeals to the living, mortuary feasts, and the mortuary cult, see Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 1, 293-299, vol. 6, 645-647, and 659-676 respectively.

[180] J. Zandee, *Death as an enemy, according to ancient Egyptian conceptions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960) 10-16.

[181] Coffin texts are a collection of mortuary texts sometimes including parts of the Pyramid Texts, inscribed on the wooden coffins of non-royal but elite individuals, and emerge during the FIP (ca. 2200-2040 BC). The use of coffin texts here is one way of contrasting the different attitudes towards death but does not imply a "democratization" of funerary beliefs.

[182] R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, vol. 1 (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1973) 11.

[183] J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912) Preface. Breasted states that the Pyramid Texts "form the oldest body of literature surviving from the ancient world and disclose to us the earliest chapter in the intellectual history of man as preserved to modern times".
Even if it is accepted that these texts were for use by the king, evidence as to the knowledge of the contents was surely known to the priests/elite as demonstrated in the tomb of Ty where he says: "es werden mir alle herrlichen, verklärenden Riten ausgeführt, die einem Gutgegestellten (durch die Dienstleistung des Vorlesepriesters) ausgeführt zu werden pflegen", (Urkunden des Alten Reiches" Vol. I, 174, l. 15-16 and Edel "Altägyptische Grammatik", vol. I, 1955: §645). Another example is from the provinces where Ibi says "Ich kenne jeden geheimen Zauber des Hofes, nämentlich jedes Gehei[mnis], wodur[ch] man verklärt wird in der Nekropole". ("Urkunden des Alten Reiches" Vol. I, 143, 2-3 and Edel "Untersuchungen zur Phaseologie der ägyptischen Inschriften des Alten Reiches", 1944:23). Restricted knowledge was therefore also known to non-royal persons.

Accordingly to deny any cultural connection with the Coffin Texts is to admit that the earth is flat, when what is being referred to, i.e. the attitude towards death, is one of the central tenets of material evidence.

Spell 20 is as follows and even though it refers to Geb, the idea can easily be understood if the idea of an all providing deity in the hereafter is accepted, all one has to do is to insert the name of Osiris instead:

> "Geb will open for you your blind eyes; He has straightened for you your contracted knees. There will be given to you your heart of your mother, your heart of your body, your ba which [was] on the ground, Bread for your body, Water for your throat, and sweet air for your nostrils".

Death was thought of as a future extension of a 'life' where interdependence, communication and re-incorporation in the social network, were as essential as it had been on earth[184] and not seen as an abrupt end to living. This concern for future existence required the same demands as life on earth namely material requirements, e.g. food, clothing, housing, and immaterial requirements such as social intercourse resulting in the perpetuation of social status in the memory of the community.

One consequence of this was the prerequisite that the elite Egyptian build a tomb for himself and his wife.

> "Make good your dwelling in the graveyard, make worthy your station in the West … The House of death is for life"[185].

A way of satisfying both of these requirements was the building of a monumental tomb with iconography. Kanawati asserts this could have only taken place when he had the necessary resources, which would normally be

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[184] J. Assmann, "Todesbefallenheit im Alten Ägypten," in *Tod, Jenseits und Identität*, ed. J. Assmann & R. Trauzettel (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2002), 243, & 47-48. Connectivity and conviviality were the 'grund norms' of existence.

[185] Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* vol.1, 58.

at the height of his career[186]. However there is evidence that there need be no relation between the dates of construction and decoration, as seen from the texts in the tomb of Senedjemib-Inti at Giza, where it took the son fifteen months to complete the tomb of his father, who must have started rather late in his career to plan for his tomb[187]. Although the above-mentioned example which admittedly is scant, it cannot be seriously doubted that the building of a tomb required serious finances supporting Kanawati's assertion.

Subsumed in the term the elite tomb, is the fact that these tombs are and cannot but be the products of a joint effort.

On the one hand the relationship of the tomb-owner and his authority, playing as they do a central part in the construction of the tomb, indirectly expresses his identity as well as conveys his expectations as to its eventual functionality. On the other hand is the consequential connection and adaptation with the tomb-owner's external social and physical environment, including those who actually built the tomb (especially the superstructure) and in the shared circumstances surrounding its production. Certain choices had to be made incorporating all elements, e.g.

- The use of the desert plateau or cliff,
- The use of different types of local and other stone and the methods of transport of the raw material,
- The assemblage of skilled craftsmen and artisans,
- The size of the superstructure and inner room segmentation,
- The type of medium used, i.e. sunken or raised relief, or painting over a coating of plaster,
- The composition and execution of the iconographic programme,
- The choice of endowment,
- The development of an administration for organizing all of the above.

The culture of Old Kingdom tomb building thus became an element of structure integrated into the nature of society and its religious beliefs, as well

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[186] N. Kanawati, "The Living and the Dead in Old Kingdom Tomb Scenes," *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, no. 9 (1981): 214.

[187] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 65, l. 5-8.

as the system of government, which were all part of Egyptian society. The needs of the tomb-owner and the actions of the craftsmen, both of which are interdependent, then serve to introduce change in this structure[188]. Thus all aspects of a tomb come have a cultural context, including the decoration. This association of the elements of collaboration and skill calls attention to all the people who participated in the tomb's creation: the patron, the craftsmen, and maybe the king (e.g. in the case of the tomb of Senedjemib-Inti). The fact that their actions were not independent and isolated, can be an actual source of understanding of cultural, historical and social processes, the implication of which was transmitted via the contents and the placement in tomb decoration of the tomb-owner and other participants. Patterns of social behaviour, however, do not always lead to logical analysis, and as a source for the understanding of social significance raise questions of intention as well as the "forces that constrain, delimit, and direct potential intentions"[189] to which there is no definite answer. As Kemp quite rightly asserts "continuity of forms" can mask "changes in meaning and practice"[190].

The way the iconographic programme was broadcast can be observed in the tomb-owner's or his progeny's choice of the artist for which there is little evidence and the content of the representations for which there is a lot more evidence. The iconography then is the medium through which the tomb-owner not only relays the identity of his person, the social institution to which he belonged, as well as the ideology of the particular component of the class to which he belonged, but also the fact that this was a community effort. According to Binford[191] this social phenomenon is symbolized in two ways:

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[188] A. Giddens, *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 2.

[189] B. David, "Intentionality, Agency and an Archaeology of Choice," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 14, no. 1 (2004): 70.

[190] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 107, esp. 04-05.

[191] L. Binford, "Mortuary practices: Their Study and Potential," in *Approaches to the social dimensions of mortuary practices*, ed. J. A. Brown, *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology, no. 25* (1971), 17.

- "by the social persona of the deceased which is a composite of the social identities maintained in life and recognised as appropriate for consideration after death," and
- "the composition and the size of the social group which has status responsibilities to the deceased".
- Additionally the size of the tomb superstructure and chapel give important clues[192].

It is clear then, that social group and social persona are important elements in any analysis of the way the elite might be represented. Inscriptions carved above a representation of a male figure answer the basic questions of who, what and where and are evidenced in the usual form, e.g. "I am the vizier of Upper and Lower Egypt dearly loved by his lord and my name is NN". However for the analysis to proceed, it has to try to address all other significant social factors that affect this inscription, and take into account other known statements and depictions of NN and the contexts in which these are found. It is only by connecting material objects with human behaviour that one can appreciate that all objects are used as a means of individual or group communication and manifestations of social order. Where instances of change become noticeable, these may result in the revelation of the processes, which relate the elite and their iconography to the environment and any ideological and social structural factors. In addition, iconography because of its extensive use and permanent presence in elite tombs, will highlight the interrelations of the elite and the 'others' and their interface between culture and environment in producing the material products, which are the object of analysis.

Egyptian cultural institutions appear for the most part to be static, however they really are not, because the nature of change was disguised under the façade of conservatism and by the fact that change appears to be slow and in phases as seen in numerous examples[193].

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[192] T. G. H. James and M. R. Apted, *The Mastaba of Khentika called Ikhekhi* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1953) 14-15. He suggests that the original chapel built was extended after Khentika's promotion to vizier.

This fundamental relationship has been stated as follows:

> "What historical archeology teaches us is that common sense is culturally relative, that in the past people have done things and behaved in ways that to us might seem almost irrational, but that to them may not have been, and that the phenomenon of cultural change is far more complex and imponderable than we might suspect, were we to rely only on the detailing of it by prehistorians"[194].

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[193] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 371-72. For a useful discussion see also J. Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Concepts and uses of the past: 3rd to 2nd millennium BC evidence," in *Who needs the past? Indigenous Values and Archaeology*, ed. R. Layton (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 131-49.

[194] J. Deetz, *In small things forgotten: an archaeology of early American life*, Expanded and rev. Anchor Books ed. (New York: 1996) 23.

3.3 Transmission of Culture and Evolution of Meaning

Transmission of cultural ideas can involve a variety of ways and people and is relatively stable over time. In the Old Kingdom, because of the nature of kinship relations, and the supreme nature of the office of kingship, the numbers of people involved in the transmission of meaning are numerous, as evidenced in the elite tombs. The mediums used for the evolution of meaning, e.g. orality, writing, iconography (painting, sunk and high relief), are associated with the development of and the combination of symbols as ways of structuring a type of reality. One aim is both to communicate and to educate, but in view of the illiterate condition of the masses the fulfillment of these objectives remains an open question. However, an unquestionable aim was provision for their lives in the hereafter but equally the representations give a definite conception of the world they lived in, and provide a record for the future.

This section will be concerned with ways in which material culture was involved in the transmission of memory. Additionally it will aim to highlight the use of such knowledge and interactions to interpret facets of Old Kingdom society, especially the ways that the people, the king, the divine and objects combined in the construction and transmission of social memory and culture.

The ancient Egyptians as has been observed in the previous section were well aware of the natural phenomena of change. It was all around them: sunrise and sunset, life and death. Yet they were obsessed to find an ideal form, one that never changes and this was their problem: can something which is continually changing have an ideal form? It is in their mastery of this problem through the canon of proportion, determination of picture content, standardization of the hieroglyphic script and the concept of decorum, that they found an answer, which causes funerary art to appear fixed and static. The knowledge required for solving the problem albeit restricted to the elite was available, e.g. the creation story and possibly replaced what was an earlier oral tradition[195]. Additionally expressions of culture are relatively stable

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[195] J. Baines, "Restricted Knowledge, Hierarchy, and Decorum: Modern Perceptions and Ancient Institutions," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 27 (1990): 22.

over time unlike a fad or a fashion. This however is only a partial answer, for within these concepts, which are of an adaptive nature, is the seed of change. In fact multiple factors may have affected change including variation in the prevailing norms and in the cosmological aspects. Written records of-course help to freeze a version at any stage in the transmission, but in their absence as in the early history of Egypt we are forced to rely on the iconographic evidence.

Both the tomb-owner and the wider community must have participated in this transmission: the resultant tomb iconography being one confirmation thereof. Iconography thus attempted to give a definite form to the ideas of cultural importance of all parties concerned, i.e. the tomb-owner, his family, wider society and the king. Because of the nature of society with its masses of others, the elite as representatives of the king had to ensure by their own constancy that there was a stable and visible specifically prescribed style, pose, and inscription.

However, we can never know the relation between images in memory and the meanings to which they were connected in the mind of the ancient Egyptian, because there is no perception of the process of change, for this process obliterates itself in passing[196].

The above recognizable details and the way these attributes were patterned thus provide a guide for ideological and social information of at least the elite members of society. They further show how 'high culture', could have expanded at the expense of other local traditions. Baines and Yoffee think that cultural change and its transmission depend upon who has power, how it is got, on whom the power is exerted, how it is exercised, and the institutionalization of the people's acceptance of this power. They argue that this can only take place when the surplus produced by the community, is used to create value laden stylistic works[197]. In the case of Old Kingdom

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[196] R. Jakobson and P. Bogatrev, "Le folklore, forme spécifique de la création," in *Questions de poétique*, ed. R. Jakobson (Paris: 1973), 59-72. They describe how oral transmission from generation to generation is successively altered, yet this process is seldom noticed. It is just like the small changes that we do not daily see in ourselves. It is only when comparing an old photograph that we finally realize that – yes change has taken place.

Egypt, the surplus was used by the elite to produce what is termed 'high culture' as a means of control and change.

It is equally true that cultural motifs arise out of a need that a particular individual/society seeks to accomplish. The motifs that are created take into account both the long established authoritative tradition and any prohibitions. A comparison of the numerous similarities in the work processes seen in the tomb of Aba (Dynasty 6) and that of Ibi (ca. Dynasty 26) evidences the similarities of tradition[198] that must have existed despite the intervening years. The transmission[199] of these needs could be by any means:

- Spreading by word of mouth from generation to generation[200].

- Developing and perpetuating it in the immaterial form of "cultural memory".

- Using particular modes of transmission which occupy a certain status in tradition, e.g. the cultic use of the false door, autobiographical inscriptions, letters to the dead etc.

- Expressing the instinctive love of form and drawing which may be an attribute of a particular artistic bent, or simply reanimating them in another form.

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[197] Baines and Yoffee, "Order, legitimacy and wealth in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia," 235-37. See also Baines and Yoffee, "Order, legitimacy, and wealth: setting the terms," 13. However, their view on the question of the dominance of high culture as a transmitter is not entirely complete. It has been noted that too little attention has been given to communicative aspects between the elite and other lower groups, which may have resulted in shifting access to resources over time. See J. E. Richards and M. van Buren, *Order, legitimacy, and wealth in ancient states*, *New directions in archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 9-10.

[198] N. de G. Davies, *The rock tombs of Deir el Gebrâwi*, 2 vols. (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902) vol. 1, pls. XIII-XVI. Compare with K. P. Kuhlmann and W. Schenkel, *Das Grab des Ibi, Obergutsverwalters der Gottesgemahlin des Amun (Thebanisches Grab Nr. 36)*, *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen (15)* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1983) taf. 30.

[199] *Webster's New Third International Dictionary: Unabridged*, (Chicago: G. & C. Merriam Co., 2002). The verb transmit means "to cause to go or to be conveyed to another person or place", being derived from the latin verb 'transmittere'. It is used here in this sense.

[200] Kuhlmann and Schenkel, *Das Grab des Ibi, Obergutsverwalters der Gottesgemahlin des Amun (Thebanisches Grab Nr. 36)* 72. Inscribed as part of an appeal to the living, are words which imply orality, writing, repetition as methods of transmission:" (namentlich) das, was ihr auf leeren Papyrus schreiben wollt, damit ein Mund dem anderen den Aussprach (weiter) gibt - wenn (es) (schon) auf dem (ehemals leeren) Papyrus zerstört ist, (namentlich) das, was man dort fand - zur Leitung in späterer Zeit."

- Reproducing and recollecting past practices including copying errors in the transmission of literature and through blatant motives which are now lost to us.

The aim of transmission was to communicate knowledge. Whether this knowledge was true, false, or indeterminate is immaterial for this discussion. The primary concern was that of concretizing both tradition and the abstract ideas behind it. As far as we are concerned this transmission had two consequences[201]:

- It enabled a clearer perception of the world for all concerned.
- It formed a record for posterity, and because of its permanent status, was responsible for the widespread belief in these perceptions.

Implicit in the above is the fact that whilst the materialization of ideas into ideology can take place in a variety of ways, this was, in ancient civilizations, always the responsibility of that section of the polity, which had the power to enforce its ideas, as well as the resources at its command with which to do so. In ancient Egypt initially this was the king revealed in his aspects of human, god, and royal office[202]. His role was crucial because only he was the instigator of aggression, the cause of victory, the creator of agricultural land and the intermediary to the gods[203]. The elite and the priests acting as 'adjuncts' to the king thus legitimize their maintenance of community order, their supply to the necessary religious foundations, and their tomb decoration.

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[201] Baines, *Visual and written culture in ancient Egypt* 146. This article traces the connections between the different modes of transmission across Egyptian history.

[202] D. O'Connor and D. P. Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian kingship, Probleme der Ägyptologie (9)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 56. See also J. Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," in *Religion and philosophy in ancient Egypt*, ed. W. K. Simpson (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 58.

[203] Some early examples illustrating the central focus of ideology on the king, include the Cities Palette in the Cairo Museum (bull as king? destroying walled enclosures?), Scorpion Macehead in the Ashmolean Museum E. 3632 (king creating agricultural land) and the Narmer palette in the Cairo Museum (king with deities).While the symbols for these may not seem to us moderns as an efficient way of doing things, nevertheless in the context of the age and the technical wherewithal then, they are without parallel in their symbolic effect. The chronolgy of early state formation is still not complete. For a comprehensive review of the present state see T. A. H. Wilkinson, *State formation in Egypt: chronology and society* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996). For convenient chronological tables see Wengrow, *The archaeology of early Egypt: social transformations in North-East Africa, 10,000 to 2,650 BC* 272-76.

While it is accepted that the elite art produced was subject to royal material, labour and ideological considerations, the consequences of satisfying increasing social needs of the upper classes, must have led to new ways of doing things, which may have resulted in less restraint, although keeping within the bounds of tradition. The iconography as will be seen in the chosen motifs in Part 2, is the culmination of a complex maze of influences which include to varying degrees: the desire of the tomb-owner and his family, the aspiration and technical expertise of the craftsman, and the prevailing religious beliefs of a particular period. Accordingly one must avoid too narrow a focus, especially when one is aware that Egyptian art is the product of material and immaterial idioms. The ancient Egyptian had a strong sense for the continuity of tradition and it is to be assumed that with the development of writing[204] and pictorial representation, an instrument of permanent transmission was developed. However, it is quite possible that an oral tradition existed prior to this method of transmission[205] and that what we see as evidence of written transmission pre-existed in a form which is now lost. The scribe as the central character in this endeavor and as part of a group which included the elite, no doubt ensured that by looking back at the 'first time' *sp tpy* and by constantly referring back to this concept, he ensured that cultural tradition was recorded, communicated and maintained. Accordingly the imagery left in the mastabas not only reflects the social, religious, and cultural setting but is a source of knowledge of the senders and receivers as well as the evolving meaning.

3.4 Necessity for Decoration

The development of representation is intimately tied to the nature of the ancient Egyptian society, and the multifaceted nature of royal, and kinship

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[204] J. Baines, *Visual and written culture in ancient Egypt* 156-61. He surveys the development of writing, noting that the written tradition across Egyptian history can only be understood by setting it in its living oral context. However he does not expand on how this is to be accessed.

[205] J. Baines, "Modelling Sources, Processes, and Locations of Early Mortuary Texts," in *Textes des Pyramides et Textes des Sarcophages (Bibliothéque d'étude 139)*, ed. S. Bickel and B. Matthieu (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2004), 23.

relationships reflecting the nature of the differences between royal and private representations.

The primary means for the elites to display their presence and influence initially, was through stelae, and then in the expanding iconography in the mastabas. There is no one reason why the representations develop as they do, and restrictive access to language, and religious knowledge might have played a role. However with time, delineation between text and image was understood by the ancient Egyptians and sometimes used deliberately to shape or enhance the message and this raises issues of individuality.

This section deals with the causes for the initial introduction of representations, the motivation for this form of expression and some of the underlying factors in their continuing development.

Representational development in private tombs can also be viewed as an important indication of the development of individuality in the official; it is only when the elite's representative function on behalf of the king starts to fade that he feels stronger and can depict various parts of his earthly office. A brief chronological survey would indicate the main trends as follows[206]:

- The first three dynasties are characterized by evidence of inscriptional material in the form of short titles and names and it is only from Dynasty 4 that one finds fuller sentences in the elite graves. The stress in this inscriptional material is mainly that of an administrative nature documenting the rights and demands of the tomb-owner. With very few exceptions, they deal mainly with his property, official contracts and endowments, gifts from the king, threat formulae against grave despoilers, payment to craftsmen for building the grave, and texts relating to the closeness to the king[207]. In contrast, the cultic demands of the tomb-owner during this period are of a predominantly religious nature and require a different type of emphasis. Cultic rituals and their

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[206] For fuller details see Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* 144-213.

[207] W. Helck, "Zur Frage der Entstehung der ägyptischen Literatur," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Wien*, no. 63/64 (1972): 6-26.

depiction require a compositional force which can only be adequately represented when all the actors are shown performing the rites because a picture is more direct. Since at least late Dynasty 2 and continuing till early Dynasty 3 the predominant depictions in private tombs is that of stelae showing the tomb-owner before his offering table with inscriptions, and describing the nature and quantity of the goods[208].

- Dynasty 4 results in important changes and these are not uniform as the various necropolises evidence. At Maidum, private tombs show in addition to the offering table scene a wide genre of representations seen in the early Dynasty 4 graves of Nefermaat and his wife Atet, Rahotep and his wife Nefert and Metjen at Saqqara. At Giza from the time of Khufu (ca. 2604-2581 BC) representations disappear from most private graves apart from the offering table and associated offering lists. The dependency on the king is in stark relief to the earlier period graves at Maidum.

- Late Dynasty 4 to early Dynasty 5 represents a fundamental shift and the East wall is predominantly used for the expansion of scenes which are usually seen outside the royal mortuary temples such as the bringing of the offerings, representation of domain offering bearers, slaughtering, presenting the scroll, boats over the entrance as in Meryib[209].

- Late Dynasty 5 private graves result in more varieties of non-cultic, i.e. earthly scenes. This development is to be seen side by side with the institution and the development of the career official.

The central role of the cult in Egyptian life and the intimate association between writing and cult is well established since Pre-dynastic times. However this does not mean that all sections of the elite have total and unhindered

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[208] E. C. Köhler and J. Jones, *Helwan II: The Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Funerary Relief Slabs* (Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf GMBH, 2009) 122-203.

[209] C. R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, vol. III,Tafelwerke Abteilung 02 (Berlin: Nicholaische Buchhandlung, 1897) pl. 19-22.

access to all forms and types of media that were being used for representational purposes. This is notwithstanding the fact, that there existed similarities between the royal and private representations at Maidum, and those in Senefru's valley temple of the Bent Pyramid.

The evidence would indicate that the elite had restricted access to:

- The language used in the Pyramid Texts
- There was a delaying effect in the equivalence between the development of the written and the spoken language[210] and
- Religious knowledge at an official level was not available to all, but only to the higher echelons of the elite[211].

Underlying all of this would have been the general nature of the force of decorum. It is quite probable that some, or all, or a certain mixture of the above elements played different roles, at differing times and places, in the development of the iconography in the elite tombs.

While these factors may explain why cultic representations arose in the earlier part of Egyptian history, they do not answer the question of why 'daily life scenes' continued to exist till the end of pharaonic period side by side and at a time, when language was fully developed and access was widespread[212].

For example why do hymns to the sun coexist with vignettes illustrating the very complicated gist of these hymns in the New Kingdom?

Again take for example the depiction of the hunting in the desert in the grave of Raemkai at Saqqara (end Dynasty 5). The representations here act as determinatives: *ṯsm* is written above a pair of dogs, *gḥs* is written above a pair of gazelles, *nw* is written above that of a hunter, and *niꜣ* is written above a pair of ibexes. In fact the whole scene is described by the words *spḥ niꜣ in nw* "catching an ibex by a hunter" which is written above the hunter shown

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[210] W. Westendorf, "Die Anfänge der altägyptischen Hieroglyphen," in *Frühe Schriftzeugnisse der Menschheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1969), 56-57.

[211] A. Spalinger, "The Limitations of Formal Ancient Egyptian Religion," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57 (1998): 241-60. "For earlier periods, there is little documentation of just how involved the populace may have been with their cults".

[212] For a diagrammatic representation of the development of the Egyptian language see W. Schenkel, *Tübinger Einführung in die klassisch-ägyptische Sprache und Schrift* (Tübingen: Universität Tübingen, 2005) 21.

lassoing the ibex[213]. The animals and the hunter are depicted with no determinatives indicating that the development of language and text was beginning to reach a certain stage of maturity. This raises complicated issues of language development and is outside the scope of this study.

An additional element in the expansion of iconography could be its use in reinforcing and consolidating an existing ideology without the spectator realizing that this was happening (a particularly useful functionality where mass illiteracy exists). An example is the depiction of heaven and hell at the entrance of many Spanish cathedrals during the medieval period, when the church controlled the use of the Latin language. Even if one did not understand the language, the picture itself was a direct method of maintaining the awe of the people and the ascendancy of the church, because it was direct and well understood with no need for explanation. A similar interpretation could very well apply to and be one of the driving forces behind the representations found in the elite tombs and it is difficult to agree on the division between *res sacrae* and *res religiosae* (which if it existed was probably restricted to the elite). Ultimately a fundamental factor may have been the realization of the adage that 'a picture is worth 1,000 words'.

Another instigator could have been the belief in an afterlife, which required for its functioning a sure provisioning of food, representations of which could be made to come alive through the nature of 'sympathetic magic'. The ka or life force of the tomb-owner had to be sustained by a sure provision of food an element which is well established in the Pyramid Texts[214] and in the early grave goods from pre-dynastic gravesites.

> "O King, raise yourself, receive your head, gather your bones together, shake off your dust, and sit on your iron throne, so that you may eat

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[213] W. C. Hayes, *The scepter of Egypt: a background for the study of the Egyptian antiquities in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Harper, 1953) 99.

[214] This is the oldest known body of mortuary texts found on the inner chamber walls of the pyramid of the last king of Dynasty 5, Unas (ca. 2490-2460 BC), and the kings and some queens of Dynasty 6.

the foreleg, devour the haunch, and partake of your rib-joints in the sky in company with the gods"[215] and such like.

This is also the attested relationship with the simple and humble food offering, the material remains of which have been found as early as the pre-Dynastic times at El Omari, Tasa, and Badari (food rests, stone and clay vessels, linen, and fur[216]).

In order to supply the tomb-owner with the wished for necessities, it is obvious that these had to be produced, transported to the tomb and accepted by the recipient. The archeological record of Dynasties 1, 2 and early 3 lists evidence of an ample supply of actual grave goods[217]. However, by the end of Dynasty 3 there is a marked diminution and the actual grave goods are replaced by models[218], wall-representations, and texts[219].

It may be that in an era of relatively limited food supply and production, its very unpredictability and unavailability in perpetuity, would support the belief that the sculpted and/or painted scenes could be brought back to life and could be partaken through some means, e.g. through the Opening of the Mouth and Eyes ritual[220]. This ritual would ensure that the Ka of the tomb-owner would not go without, in the event the descendants or the appointees under the endowment, failed to make the regular offerings of food and drink.

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[215] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*.§ 736, § 859, § 1882. Admittedly these were meant for the king but in some way they must also relate to wishes which the earlier Egyptians must also have had, if the food rests discovered are to have any behavioural significance.

[216] S. Hendrickx and P. Vermeersch, "Prehistory: From the Paleolithic to the Badarian Culture," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. I. Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 36-43.

[217] W. B. Emery, *A funerary repast in an Egyptian tomb of the Archaic period* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1962) 1 & 6-7.

[218] S. Ikram, "Portions of an Old Kingdom offering list reified," in *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology* (Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, 2004), 167-73. Cairo Museum displayed these models in a special room opened in April 2008.

[219] E. C. Köhler, "Ursprung einer langen Tradition: Grab und Totenkult in der Frühzeit," in *Grab und Totenkult im Alten Ägypten.*, ed. H. Guksch, E. Hoffmann, and M. Bommas (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 14-18. See also Köhler and Jones, *Helwan II: The Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Funerary Relief Slabs* (Rahden, 2009).

[220] For details of this ritual see E. Otto, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, vol. 2, *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 3* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1960) 6-8.

The genius of the ancient Egyptian was to create a controlling link between a given human and the depiction of things, " durch den Glauben an die magische Kraft des Wortes kann der Besitz von Gütern schondurch die blosse Niederschrift ihrer Namen garantiert werden" [221]. Accordingly images of people, places, things, and inscriptions in tombs could supposedly be made to come to life should the occasion warrant, to aid and provide for the tomb-owner in his life in the hereafter.

By converting the imagined into the real, the everlasting provisioning of the tomb-owner in all its forms in the hereafter, becomes one catalyst for tomb painting and relief and, consequently, also an analogous focus of memory and consequently on the generics. Figures and names could not only have visual qualities but also possess the same qualities as living beings – useful or dangerous[222]. However, it must be noted that this sympathetic magic religious function has its limitations, because it has never been clearly specified in the texts, and in any case it is a historical fact that the Egyptians had developed images as far back as the late Paleolithic/early Neolithic period[223], when religious beliefs were undeveloped. Therefore reading magic in every image can result in serious errors, because there is no emic proof for this concept.

Therefore the way to understanding the initial attempts at funerary layout and imagery is to adopt a polysemic approach[224], where function can be but one element. It is not my intention to give it the aura of empirical objectivity, for even though a function may be a reason, why does it cause and motivate something into being accepted as normal social behaviour in the first place. Certainly it may still have (a) potential function(s) over and beyond that.

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[221] H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1952) 553.

[222] Ibid. 119.

[223] W. Davis, "The Earliest Art in the Nile Valley," in *Origin and Early Development of Food-Producing Cultures in North-Eastern Africa*, ed. L. Krzyzaniak and M. Kobusiewicz (Poznan: Polish Academy of Sciences, 1984), 82. He identifies two rock drawing stations SJE 382c and 382d as the oldest recorded, showing geometric designs and game as well as human figures.

[224] V. Evans, *A glossary of cognitive linguistics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) 163. Refers to something which exhibits multiple distinct yet related meanings.

Consider the concept of funerary iconography in general: this may tell us something about the social habitat of the tomb-owner but may also additionally indicate ideas relating to prevailing religious beliefs, levels of hierarchy and status, technical know-how, subsisting aesthetic skills, and may also be of a didactic nature. However, not all of these ideas are always present in the iconography of a tomb and even if they are, the displayed artistic/literary work may still be incomplete because not all parts of the social and personal relations are necessarily depicted. The evidence therefore points to differing and non-linear expansion.

Accordingly in order to highlight generic aspects of cultural significance it will be necessary to deconstruct the motifs to ascertain their contents in terms of their communications, commemorative and manifestations of social order aspects, keeping in mind that it is the experiences of real life that form the medium through which all this is symbolized. This will be undertaken in Part 2 of this thesis.

3.5 Symbols

By symbols is meant – either a sign whose link to its referent is entirely arbitrary, or a sign where the link while having some non-arbitrary component[225], depends for understanding upon convention, such as justice symbolized by a blind folded woman holding balanced scales. In either sense it has a communicative function shared and understood by other members of society.

The ideas enumerated and developed in the works of Wittgenstein and Van Walsem are useful when considering symbols. Because symbols are related to a thing or an idea, they get their meanings via equivalences to the things/ideas concerned, and thus help one to understand the external reality, i.e. to comprehend.

Communicative aspects of culture in the Old Kingdom primarily used visual methods as the intimate connection between the hieroglyphic script and

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[225] C. S. Pierce, "The icon, index, and symbol," in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Pierce*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 156-73.

representation shows[226]. The tomb then becomes a semiotic phenomenon as a composite of signal emitting elements in the form of symbols, to which the rules of semiotics can apply. The consequence is that the description of the function and conditions under which an artifact's communicative aspects are to be understood become pointers to the generics. Symbols thus can result in the communication of cultural aspects.

Consider the example of the hieroglyph for mother and for death. As early as the predynastic period one encounters figures of authority with the headdress of a vulture and a snake (the Two Ladies Nekhbet and Wadjet). In the Pyramid texts we also find the word for mother written with the vulture hieroglyph (G15). It (the headdress) is also seen on many goddesses during the Old Kingdom. From Dynasty 5 onwards it begins to be depicted on the forehead of queens as an insignia of royalty equating goddesses with queens, i.e. a symbol of an ideal woman easily understood by all, without any further explanation. However, as far as death was concerned the vulture (nrt) as such was never equated with death even though the word mwt can mean both mother and death. The way death was written was to show either the determinative of a prostrate man, or one lying on a bed, but not a vulture. Thus the idea of a vulture as a scavenger is lost, and replaced by one that is synonymous with eliteness and femininity.

In this thesis the term symbols means:

> "…any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended through the first"[227].

Concepts and ideas, as has already been stated, may be represented by well-known symbols capable of definition and meaning, and these existed in

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[226] T. Q. Mrsich, "Ein Beitrag zum Hieroglyphischen Denken," *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, no. 6 (1978): 109. See also F. Junge, "Versuch zu einer Ästhetik der ägyptischen Kunst," in *Studien zur ägyptischen Kunstgeschichte*, ed. M. Eaton-Krause and E. Graefe (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1990), 8-11. This does not mean that oral methods did not exist, but that we just do not have any evidence of this method of transmission.

[227] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. D. Ihde (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1974) 12-13.

ancient Egypt at least from the pre-dynastic times, if not earlier. Equally, symbols and their meaning may vary with context and in relation to different persons, because "meanings are not inherently ambiguous, but become so as the same, or different, "knower's" engage with the Sign…again and again in different contexts"[228].

That the individual units of each motif or sub-motif in tomb iconography may have a symbolic value in themselves, regardless of their being part of a cultural whole, cannot be denied. It is accepted that symbols can have many meanings[229] and because meaning is a culturally assigned phenomenon having multiple levels of meaning it becomes a "slippery term especially when applied to images"[230].

Freud's insistence on limiting the value of symbols ("the language of symbolism knows no grammar"[231]), to the temporality of the physical mind and body of the individual, imposes an artificial boundary. It cannot be used to explain how meaning is transferred in society over time, when it shows up in the continuing culture, and its symbolic forms. For this we must accept that symbolic and cultural frameworks proceed together in transferring meaning i.e. communicating. Symbols can then have various functions being used as a means of:

- Providing communication and transferring meaning
- Standing for concepts
- Making visible that which is invisible
- Explaining contradictions
- Producing a certain form of action and reaction.

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[228] W. R. Preucel and A. Bauer, "Archaeological Pragmatics," in *Norwegian Archeological Review (34)* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001), 93.

[229] M. Fitzenreiter, "Grabdekoration und die Interpretation Funerärer Rituale im Alten Reich," in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms*, ed. H. Willems (Leuven: Uitgevrij Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies, 2001), 78-79.

[230] E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon, 1972) 2.

[231] S. Freud, *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953) 212.

Archaeologists often rely on non-textual objects including graphics, to give clues about the past. Such objects may have obvious functional purposes but may also symbolize issues of greater importance, e.g. the best-preserved remnants often belonged to a society's elite members, whose possessions may have indicated status, rather than their routine functions.

Pure functionality can be easier to assess than symbolic attributes, which are more difficult to detach from the researcher's own subjective perceptions. I am often concerned that my own background attitudes will alter my perception and thus understanding of past cultures' symbols. For example, contemporary culture apparently places more emphasis on efficiency, than on preserving traditions, therefore a modern person runs the danger of either over-playing functional efficiency or over-playing the role of tradition in compensation for modern values.

The effort to extract the maximum symbolic evidence from artifacts with minimal contamination by the observers' own preconceptions has generated interest in the following academic fields that study symbols:

Semiotics

In its broadest sense semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as "signs" in everyday speech, but anything which stands "for something else"[232]. In this sense signs may take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Semiotics is concerned with meaning making and representation in many forms. The spoken and written words and pictures are signs of both the object itself and the meaning(s) attached to the sign[233]. The co-founders of Semiotics are Ferdinand de Saussure[234] and C. S. Peirce[235] who followed Locke and understood semiotics as the formal doctrine of

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[232] U. Eco, *A theory of semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) 8.

[233] Ibid. 9-14, 85-86, 165-67.

[234] F. de Saussure et al., *Course in general linguistics* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1986) 15. He states, "It is possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life", which he termed semiology. Semiotics is now recognised as a synonym for semiology.

[235] C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) 5.484. Peirce extended Saussure's definition by not demanding that a sign be intentionally released or be artificially produced. His understanding of semiotics as "an action" involving "a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object and its interpretant," is more practical.

signs[236]. Applying semiotics to the representations found in the elite tombs of the Old Kingdom results in the following understanding:

- The generation of meaning in symbols can be influenced by concepts such as decorum and is a cultural phenomenon.
- The repertoire of symbols represents various levels of communication,
- Cultural conventions e.g. the canon of proportions as well as religious factors underscore the connotative aspects of symbols, both in their combined and individual forms.
- The result is that symbols regulated by the canon of proportions and influenced by decorum and religious factors ensure that both what is represented and its context, yield an adequate understanding of the world of the deities, the world of mankind, as well as their necessary interconnections.

Accordingly there are related elements which combine to portray and to yield meaning. This resultant meaning is an amalgam of the accrued beliefs and the ensuing actions. The material objects then encompass both the immaterial and material aspects of culture and give rise to forms of communication. This communication can present itself to society at different levels, because of the emphasis which may be put on some or selective parts of the related elements, as in the Table 1 below. The temporality of this selection will also result in the application of a particular language game and a particular understanding of reality which may or may not be true, and that is why symbols and their meanings are subject to differing interpretations. However this may be, the communicative feature of all symbols cannot be denied.

The related elements which combine to portray the communicative aspect in the representations are depicted in the table appended below:

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[236] J. Locke, G. Berkeley, and D. Hume, *A letter concerning toleration; The second treatise of government; An essay concerning human understanding* (Franklin Center, Pa: Franklin Library, 1984) IV, 21.4.

Table 1

<u>Semiotic Components applied to</u>
<u>The Egyptian Decorative Programme</u>

The cosmos

World of deities

World of mankind

The particular society

Human beings

↓

Chain of events, resulting in the
communicative aspect of culture

↑

The elite tomb resulting from an interaction

of the particular concepts encompassing:

Receiver (tomb-owner)

Sender (all others)

Geographical setting

Architecture

Medium used

Symbols used in the motifs/sub-motifs, inscriptions,

Context of representations,

Functionality of representations

Modern refinements to the theory of semiotics have resulted in theories of:

Structuralism: attempts to create structures of signs, such that individual systems can be deduced in a variety of cultures and was made popular by Claude Lévi-Strauss[237] in the field of Anthropology. Structure refers to and means the traditions that provide a framework for a society.

Neo-Structuralism: was a result of Edmund Leach's dissatisfaction with popular Structuralism, which he believed overlooked the complexity of such systems due to other factors. Leach modified Structuralism with the politics of kinship to create Neo-Structuralism, which recognizes a less static significance of symbols[238]. This was later refined by Giddens[239] who included in addition the traditions, and the concept of agency. By agency he means the creativity of the people constituting a particular society that has an impact on the maintenance and transformation of the structure of that society.

Such theories have been stretched beyond their original roles, and then have been criticized for not being panaceas for unrelated problems. However whilst these theories certainly were not tailor-made for archaeological use, they still have relevance, including in the archaeological analysis of ideology, identity, individuality, and components of memory.

Consider ideology: for people living inside a reality dominated by an ideology, this ideology may seem the natural order of things. However, for an outsider, e.g. a modern archaeologist, this ideology is just one method among many, for relating to existence, i.e. ideology is a method for symbolizing reality (or

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[237] J. T. Duke, *Issues in sociological theory: another look at the "old masters"* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983) 23-40.

[238] E. Leach, *Culture and Communication: the logic by which symbols are connected* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

[239] A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: action, structure and contradiction in social analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

forces acting upon reality). If ideology can be treated as a symbol, then it can be subjected to some of the tools of semiotics, etc.

Consider social identity: this can be distinguished as the individual's social position. This role is determined by the rigid expectations of other members of the host society, even though these expectations are not totally rigid over time, possibly because the underlying ideology changes over time. Therefore in assessing roles, it is useful to examine the attitudes and values that determine social significance, e.g. wealth, power, education, and the social significance of the distribution of roles which can also be ascertained through symbols.

Regardless of an individual's inherent character, abilities, etc., the requirements associated with her/his identity or role will alter the individual's and the society's perception of that individual. For example, a tomb-owner may have been selfish, arrogant, and cruel but if this is not what the society thought of what an elite was, then irrespective of actuality, he will not be considered in these deprecating terms. Perception being influenced by the general characteristics expected of this role.

For the purposes of this study, the development of the theory of Symbolism/Semiotics need not be further explored.

What is vital to realize is that these theoretical studies, led to the realization that "the whole of social life could be viewed as a sign process or as a system of semiotic systems"[240].

The consensus is that:

- Symbols have to be discussed not in isolation but in the total social context.
- The product and the process whereby a symbol is generated are equally important.
- The nature of the symbol is not arbitrary and only appears to be so if detached from the world around it, i.e. taken out of context.

So how do these theoretical abstractions work in practice?

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[240] U. Eco, "Social Life as a sign system," in *Structuralism: the Wolfson Lectures 1972*, ed. D. Robey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 61.

Let us assume that:

Both hieroglyphs and material objects (and this includes wall paintings, reliefs, statuary, grave goods, and non-funerary objects of all kinds) are 1) symbols of a kind and 2) hide within them an immense variety of cultural meaning, depending upon for example other objects with which they may have been associated, or how they were used within a specific time frame.

If these assumptions are correct, then one is forced to explain why and how exactly symbols operate? The varied functions of symbols have already been alluded to on page 81 and it now remains to answer this question.

While the meaning of tangible symbols can be understood as concepts, there is no clear and unambiguous explanation of abstract concepts such as god, love, sexuality, the hereafter etc. One has to wait till a later period for the full extent of the depiction of the hereafter which can be observed from the Coffin Texts on Middle Kingdom coffins, and in some cases can be traced back to the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom[241]. This implies that just because we cannot find something in the material objects left behind, we must be wary of categorical denial of the ideas which may have existed.

It seems that the Egyptians tried to explain these abstract concepts by attempting to make them into something real and tangible, which could be understood and transmitted by living human beings. Many obvious aspects of everyday life are symbolized in the wall paintings. However abstract ideas behind these symbols e.g. of the hereafter (an important part of funerary culture) can only be indirectly inferred from the inscriptions (as developed and inscribed later, in the Coffin Texts on Middle kingdom coffins, with a fullest version in the New Kingdom Book of the Dead).

Transmission of culture in the form of symbols has the advantage that it can be applied across society and only those values which are shared and understood will form part of this durable transmission.

In ancient Egypt, this would mean that certain but not all symbols would have to be 'understood' by all social strata, both the literate elite and the illiterate

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[241] D. P. Silverman, "Textual Criticism in the Coffin Texts," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W. K. Simpson (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 30.

others. While the elite would be no strangers to the hidden meanings behind the symbols, the illiterate too could be assumed to have some rudimentary understanding, because the materialized concepts in the representations are to some extent anchored in their real world, of which they had knowledge. This understanding by all strata of society would be further enhanced by the fact that the symbols could be seen, touched, subject to magical manipulation, and perhaps felt psychologically, a routine in almost all developed cultures.

Another way of understanding symbolic meaning in mortuary art is to take the emphasis off the material object and to transfer it to the act of its formation. Focusing on the rules for its production, leads to an understanding of both the object in its context and the processes that went into its formation, and thus the culture of a society at the time of its creation. Because of the constant interaction between individual actions and the context under which the individual acts, the rules by which objects are created, modified, and destroyed undergo change. The result may be a different object but with the same function, and this would then point backwards to times when meaningful cultural change occurred in the first place. This process of constant addition, subtraction, modification is not restricted but applies to societies generally and is known as structuration[242]. Because of these changes one never quite returns to the original starting point. It is because layers upon layers of different ideas come to be added or subtracted to form current meaning that it becomes so immensely difficult and time-consuming to try to peel off these coats. Discovering intention will always be a problem even if one were to succeed in peeling off these layers. Intention encompasses both a state of mind and a state of action, the latter is manifest while the former can never be so and this is why it is so difficult to uncover[243].

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[242] D. Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, trans. A. L. Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). Introduction, p. X.

[243] M. E. Bratman, *Intention, plans, and practical reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 23-27.

The meaning of symbols changes over time. In order to understand how symbols operate in so far that they may represent changing concepts, one has to search for either texts, or historical circumstances that show us that change has taken place. Because change means a new way of doing things, it also implies that there was a choice made to do something in that particular way, i.e. conscious decision to do things differently which may reveal a change in the ideology. It may also reveal individuality because implicit in the choice must be intention, a desire to know what one is doing, and the desire to understand why one is acting as one is. It is acknowledged that things may also change due to a misunderstanding of the past, because innovative tools may have unintended consequences, or for more obscure reasons. Because of their subjective nature these causes of change are not archaeologically verifiable. However this may be the repeated appearance of a specific type of sub motif or types of object or relief in the archeological record is a pointer of the impulses that create cultural significance, which because they are preserved, are capable of retrieval, and have communicative and chronological value.

Like all cultural behaviour, the behaviour that results in the production of tomb iconography as a certain set of patterns and sequences of events, or detail, is influenced both by the inherent meaning of the symbols and the rules that dictate how these are to be placed relative to each other. Symbols follow codes and patterns. They are like words in a sentence and can only be understood if they are arranged following strict rules that follow societies' understanding of their original meaning. Just like the temple can be understood as "as symbols, guarantors, and participants in Egyptian civilization"[244] the elite tomb too has a common progenitor in symbols as illustrated in the science of semiotics, and just like temples, the elite tomb too, can be regarded as a single complete object and as a combination of communicating elements. If one considers the placement of the various human figures in an ancient Egyptian wall painting, one is immediately struck

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[244] J. Baines, "Temples as symbols, guarantors, and participants in Egyptian civilization," in *The Temple in Ancient Egypt*, ed. S. Quirke (London: British Museum Press, 1997), 223-26.

by the fact that the spatial configurations are an important factor. Their positions directly in front of or behind the tomb-owner, in separate registers or sub registers, all characterize their relationship with their master as well as between themselves, as one of control and direction.

Any depiction is the result of a deliberate putting together of symbols, a unique event that had a real function at the time of its creation. The consequences of social intercourse ensured that any find must have had acting upon it diverse conditions, some results of which would be passed on and become the accepted norm, while others would be rejected. Each archaeological find therefore becomes an expression of past conditions and probably some of the conditions which led to its creation, will be observable in the find itself. However there are phenomena which are not directly observable and in considering the diverse phenomena which act upon iconography, one is constantly faced with data that is latent in any explanation of the finds. Some of this hidden data affecting the find may be vague and abstract e.g. religious dogma, and intention, and therefore difficult to clarify with full assurance, "intentionality being a conceptual space that both separates and links function and praxis (as socially embedded individual action)"[245].

Fitzenreiter suggests a way out of this dilemma, which is to consider these underlying ideas along a continuum[246]. There is no 'religion' in itself, but only the constant reconstitution of religiosity by means of religious practice; no mortuary beliefs, but only the constant revision of funerary concepts in the framework of funerary actions; no abstract decorative program for funerary complexes, but only the concrete expressions of some of the possible repertoires of motifs. While this is an extremely useful description of the continuousness of culture, it does not explain why culture occurs in the first place, its transmission, and changes over time. Van Walsem suggests that

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[245] L. Russel, "Can Archaeology Recover Past Intentions?," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 14, no. 1 (2004): 64.

[246] M. Fitzenreiter, "Raumkonzept und Bildprogrammen in dekorierten Grabanlagen im Alten Reich," in *Dekorierte Grabanlagen im Alten Reich*, ed. M. Fitzenreiter & M. Herb. (London: Golden House Publications, 2006), 62.

every new generation has and wants to define and assert its position with respect to the previous one, and so symbols are given different significances over time. Since these attributes are mostly but not necessarily realized over a considerable time span, their importance appears only after full realization, which may be some many generations away. It is almost as if this is a "biological evolutionary necessity" (personal communication by Van Walsem).

Fitzenreiter has also suggested, that since each manifestation ("Erscheinung" - as part of the decoration) is the result of concrete actions, the key to its interpretation, finally, lies again in tracing back all the conditions that limit its meaning and purpose, or more simply, in its function[247].

However can we speak of a function and how did it change over time? How can one decipher this? Can one link those who created the find to those who used it and how much control did they have over its use? Did the "Erscheinung" have any essential meaning (if there was one)? While these are important questions they do not yield straightforward or definite answers.

Consider the example of the false door, a symbol which is present in nearly every Old Kingdom tomb and which has been interpreted by various Egyptologists as having seven different and complementary functions[248], thereby implying the multidimensionality of symbols. Because any artifact or depiction has the potential to have different kinds of functions e.g. funerary, cultic, symbolic, or aesthetic, analyzing what functions the artifact may have and how those various functions are stressed, may tell us something about the culture of the period.

Consider the clothes worn by the tomb-owner and/or his servants. One can analyze these as some fundamental human activity of a practical kind: clothes being used to protect the body and tools to produce these clothes. We know

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[247] Ibid., 63 "Da aber jede Erscheinung Ergebnis von konkreten Handlungen ist, liegt der Schlüssel der Interpretation letztendlich wieder in der Zurückführung aller Rahmen-bedingungen auf deren Sinn und Zweck - vereinfacht in der Funktion."

[248] Wiebach, *Die ägyptische Scheintür, morphologische Studien zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung der Hauptkultstelle in den Privat-Gräbern des Alten Reiches* 63. See also S. Wiebach, "False Door," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 1*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 498-501.

however that this is not accurate, the very varieties of clothing and the context of their usage indicates that clothes were not just a mere byproduct of human endeavor, because they are also crucial in the creation and maintenance of social life. Significantly clothing has both a general and a specific symbolic function. It may serve all of the social, moral, communicative, aesthetic, or nationalistic roles and thus serve to reinforce in the wearer his/her part in society. Problems arise when we view clothing and changes to it, or for that matter any data of tomb iconography, on a level that does not take into account the facts of change over time, in response to, or along with other aspects of societal change.

Consider the wall representations in the elite chapel. Text and image in both mastabas and rock cut tombs cover the interior walls and are usually divided into separate registers - a feature which is common to most iconography of the Old Kingdom[249] whose use is attested since the early dynastic year tags[250]. Even in incompletely decorated tomb chapels, text and image adhere to the pattern of register divisions leaving out the area underneath - the dado, which varies from about 30 cm to over a meter from the floor. This leads to two conclusions:

1. The division of the depictions into registers means that a choice as to content was made which may have also included the limitations of decorum[251].

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[249] I am aware that this is not true of Old Kingdom provincial art in all cases as seen at Quibbet-el-Hawa, where the decoration is carved/painted on sections of a wall or pillar, leaving a great section of the wall surface in a rough state. Only those parts of the walls which were intended to receive an image were smoothed. This results in a series of panel type pictures which do not conform to the traditional Memphite design. Numerous examples exist, e.g. the tombs of Mekhu (QH 25), Sabni I (QH 26) and Sobekhotep.

[250] W. M. F. Petrie and F. Ll. Griffith, *The Royal Tombs of The First Dynasty, Part I* (London: Kegan Paul, 1900) pl. 15. It depicts the sed festival run in three separate registers.

[251] Baines, "Communication and Display: the integration of early Egyptian art and writing," 471-82. See also Baines, *Visual and written culture in ancient Egypt* 14-21 & 304. This contains his latest thoughts on decorum. He has expanded the concept considerably, from simply the juxtaposition of power relations and the sacred charachter of knowledge, to include inaccessible features of lived practice; acknowledging that decorum is not a single determining factor.

2. It implies that the Egyptian painters worked from the top downwards. Indeed this is logical in most cultures, because the focal point for the most significant features (symbols) about the social environment that the tomb-owner wanted to depict, and the role in which he would like to be remembered, would be at eye-level and not at the lower/higher ends of the decorated wall[252].

However, underlying the various choices is the fact that for any civilization, there is the basic need to classify both the physical and the abstract elements of its environment, this being essential for a systematic and collective understanding. Weeks' suggestion that the representations depict "the way in which the Egyptians viewed and categorized their world"[253], thus explains the need for classification as directly essential for the propagation of culture, the paintings, reliefs and inscriptions in elite tombs being one such method. The frequent recurrence of a motif or clusters of motif types that are similar in various tombs, signals at the very least, an engagement with an idea to which meaning must be attributed. The more similar types of motifs/texts there are, the more it serves to strengthen our understanding, because repetition reinforces both the ascribed meaning[254] as well as the associated symbols. All elite mastabas of the Old Kingdom have a false door with related ritual scenes; however no two mastabas have exactly similar motifs. Why? One answer is that the furnishing of the other areas of a tomb (excluding the offering motif on the false door in the West wall) was a relatively undifferentiated act; every tomb-owner could therefore select those scenes that he thought were effective for his particular position.

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[252] As usual there are exceptions e.g. in the mastaba of Hetep-her-akhti at Leiden. However the general idea of the 'Blickpunktsfeld' is the norm.

[253] K. Weeks, "Art , Word, and the Egyptian World View," in *Egyptology and the Social Sciences*, ed. K. Weeks (The American University in Cairo Press, 1979), 60. See also E. Hornung, *Ideas into Image* (New York: Timken Publishers, 1992) 34. "The Egyptian used the power of image as a means of describing and constructing their world".

[254] R. Barthes, "Theory of the Text," in *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader*, ed. R. Young (London: 1981), 33-35.

In the tombs we find a plethora of titles indicating various positions that the tomb-owner occupied. If the motifs were in any way associated with the titles this would result in a wide array of motifs. This is in direct contrast to the actual evidence, where there are a maximum of seventeen main motifs estimated from a survey of 337 decorated tombs[255]. Accordingly the question of what prevented massive proliferation of motifs must be addressed. It could be any combination of things, e.g. ideology, decorum, religious beliefs, restrictions of having to choose from sources which had already been established and represented in the past - what is termed eclectic archaism[256]: all or any of which would have limited the expression of individual concepts. However Egyptian innovation was not entirely restricted as is demonstrated by the proliferation of the many sub-motifs[257], e.g. in the Leiden Mastabase, common motifs like "Fishing and Fowling" have 25 sub-motifs. These sub-motifs are a reminder of the many and simple experiences of daily life which, because these were experienced and understood, could be easily copied.

Inscriptions were also used in a similar way. Take for example the ubiquitous offering formula[258] that accompanies the representations of food and drink and other items, which could be activated to supply the tomb-owner in perpetuity. Here the power of the spoken/recited and written word (hieroglyphic symbol) was assembled to feed the physical body of the tomb-owner, in much the same way as were the 'appeals to the living' found inscribed on tomb doors and walls. Even though there are no funerary texts akin to the Pyramid/Coffin texts in the elite tombs of the Old Kingdom, nevertheless this absence should not be a hindrance to a beginning of

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[255] R. Van Walsem, *Leiden Mastabase* (Leiden: Peeters/Leiden University, 2008). The CD Rom is available from the publishers.

[256] E. R. Russmann, "Aspects of Egyptian Art: Archaism," in *Eternal Egypt: masterworks of ancient art from the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 40-44.

[257] By sub-motif is meant scenes which denote a specific type of activity, e.g. fishing is a general activity but fishing with a clap net, hook or seine is a particular way of fishing which would be a sub-motif under the genre of fishing.

[258] For a philological survey see Lapp, *Die Opferformel des Alten Reiches*. The tomb of Metjen is the earliest example of the offering formula at Saqqara. See Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien* BI. 4.

understanding. An argument from silence is the only other alternative. The sender, the receiver, and the medium all acted in unison to transmit and communicate knowledge, which had the end effect of creating and perpetually maintaining *m3ꜥt*.

The result is that in the Egyptian language, idea and word become increasingly intertwined. Hieroglyphs or god's words, which appear on the walls of tombs, indicate not only the literal meaning but also the ability to communicate with the divine. Because the tomb-owner is associated with the offering formula in his tomb to the divine, this could be one reason why a deity is never represented in non-royal Old Kingdom iconography. His link to the divine was a fait accompli, and there was no need to repeat what was obvious and understood at that time. However, this goes against the fact that royal funerary iconography depicts gods. A better explanation would lie in stressing that the needs of the king and all others had to be differentiated according to decorum.

As to why the need for a personal deity was felt in later periods the answer must be sought in the development of the self because of the developing dilution of the king's power. As the desire for self-knowledge and self-understanding increases, so too do desires to know what one is doing and to understand the reasons why one does something. The enquiry of what sort of an after-life a non-royal would have is no longer dependent on a myth which starts to break up, but is increasingly accepted as something which one is himself capable of fashioning. Witness the multitude of answers proposed by the different religions of the world which reinforce this sentiment of god available to all.

With time certain iconographic motifs become fixed in meaning in the form and way they might be represented. These then become well-known timeless icons and because their meaning and context of action is unequivocal, they perform a useful function: that of the representation itself and presenting the narrative behind it[259], to the literate and illiterate[260]. We do not know the

actual literacy rates, an estimate of between 1% and 10% has been proposed[261]. These low levels can be accounted for by the fact that scribal training was a long process. Written Egyptian was presumably based on an elegant version of the language spoken at court, which would be immediately understandable by all elite individuals, irrespective of any regional differences. In any case accessibility by the elite few (males) to hieroglyphs would imply that it was restricted both in its use and function. While this limited nature is not to be denied, yet it seems to be unduly restrictive to imply that elite women in general were not literate, the evidence sparse as it is does not follow[262].

As far as kings were concerned they were most probably able to read and write[263]. Although the hieroglyphic script was not available to all Egyptians these glyphs were constantly repeated, and the symbols would have come to represent a meaning which was commonly understood.

The examples already cited the *ḥtp-di-nswt* formula, the appeals to the living which were addressed to all; both literate and illiterate confirm a commonly understood meaning. Equally on the many feast days, sections of society must have seen and maybe talked about these inscriptions (stories repeated are like epidemics and spread from mouth to mouth).

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[259] Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* 212. It is acknowledged that narrative depictions are a rarity in the Old Kingdom. Therefore the siege scenes in Kaem-heset and Yenti (if these are considered to be true narratives) will need to be reassessed.

[260] B. M. Bryan, "The Disjunction of Text and Image in Egyptian Art," in *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson*, ed. P. der Manuelian (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996), 166-67.

[261] L. Lesko, "Literacy," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 2*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 297-99. See also J. Baines and C. J. Eyre, "Four Notes on Literacy," *Göttinger Miszellen* 61 (1983): 65-96. For a useful discussion see H. Te Velde, "Scribes and literacy in ancient Egypt," in *Scripta Signa Vocis*, ed. H. l. J. Vastiphout, et al. (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986), 253-64.

[262] G. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1993) 111-14. See also P. Piacentini, "Scribes," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 3*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 187-91.

[263] Baines, *Visual and written culture in ancient Egypt* 78.

These would then come to have some meaning, even to those members of the society who were female, too young, craftsmen and artisans, and even the masses of the illiterate others[264].

To this effect it could well be that all representations did not have to be explicit, as the following examples will show:

- Consider the example of the smiting of the enemy. Since pre-dynastic times it is an example of a symbol with well-known meaning. The Narmer palette which depicts this may have reflected a real event and been prominently displayed in a temple. However, crucially in time, it became a recognized pharaonic emblem[265], and one that needed no explicit translation.

- In the royal decrees which appear on a stela at the gateway to the temple of Min at Coptos, the hieroglyph for *nswt-bity* occurs before nearly every cartouche[266]. In addition the Horus with a double crown is apparent in the first vertical line on a large scale in the right hand column, sometimes with a record of the sealing and the date beneath it[267]. The origin of this title is obscure but is attested since Dynasty 1 as the embodiment of "der unveränderlichen Institution des Königsamtes[268]". However the exact meaning is still unclear. Recent suggestions from the Hamito-Semitic language have been taken to

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[264] O. Goldwasser, *From Icon to Metaphor: Studies in the Semiotics of the Hieroglyphs, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 142* (Fribourg/Switzerland: Universitätspress, 1995) 33. "It seems that categoric definition and differentiation play a most important cognitive role within the script system, as well as in the maintaining of the control by the leading group (read elite) over the conceptual system of the reader and to a certain extent, also that of the non-literate beholder."

[265] D. Wildung, "Erschlagen der Feinde," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 2*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 15. For later period references see the monumental depiction on the 1st. pylon in Medinet Habu (Ramses III) and the 7th. pylon in Karnak (Thutmoses III) of the smiting of the enemy motif.

[266] H. Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen (14)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967) 17, 23, 39, 56, 81, 89, 121, 28, 45, 49, 57, 79, 87, 201, 09, 17.

[267] Ibid. 56, 145, 57, 79, 87, 209,17.

[268] E. Martin-Pardey, "Das "Haus des Königs" pr-nijswt," in *Gedenkschrift für Winfried Barta*, ed. D. Kessler and R. Schulz, *Münchener ägyptologische Untersuchungen (4)* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 271. For a critical analysis of other views see p. 282-285.

imply the meaning of *bit* as that of a "big strong man"[269] but the question of the etymological foundations of both signs together is still unanswered. Interestingly the "n" of the title only appears from Dynasty 3 onwards. In a suggestion as to why this was not done at the end of Dynasty 1 when the title first appears Kahl validates my hypothesis that symbols could be both explicit and implicit. He states:

"Hier scheint die häufige schriftliche Wiedergabe dieser Königsbezeichnung eine Rolle zu spielen, die bereits zu einer fest eingeprägten Gruppen- oder Wortschreibung geführt hatte, deren Aufgabe auch einen Verlust ihrer identifizierenden Funktion bedeutet hätte. Das königstheologisch so bedeutetsame Wort *nsw* hätte vom Schreiber wie vom Leser erst wieder neu erkannt werden müssen. Dieses Phänomen … oftmals weniger von ihrer "linguistischen Angemessenheit" als vielmehr von ausserlinguistischen Faktoren … abhängt[270]".

- Similarly even though the king is referred to as a perfect god (*nṯr nfr*) he is still not regarded as a deity and it is likely that the divinity of the king was a problem for the Egyptians[271]. This is seen in the title "Horus in the palace" which appears as early as Dynasty 4 on a statue of Khafre. He is designated as one who is both under the protection the sky god Horus while at the same time he is a subordinate of the sun god, because one of his titles is the 'son of Re. Without going into the semantic problems that arise from the difference between the office of kingship and that of the individual king himself[272], the masses must have understood that both symbols stood for something royal and

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[269] T. Schneider, "Zur Etymologie der Bezeichnung König von Ober- und Unterägypten," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, no. 120 (1993): 181.

[270] J. Kahl, "*nsw und bit*: Die Anfänge," in *Zeichen aus dem Sand: Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte zu Ehren von Günter Dreyer*, ed. E. M. Engel, V. Müller, and U. Hartung (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 2008), 310.

[271] Hornung, *Conceptions of God in ancient Egypt: the one and the many* 141-42.

[272] E. Windus-Staginsky, *Der ägyptische König im Alten Reich, Marburger altertumskundliche Abhandlungen 14* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006) 241-49 for a review.

authoritative, because of their consistent placement before the name of the king even before the Old Kingdom[273].

- Another example which shows the continuing nature of the above process to show how symbols and meaning keep on being developed and understood is from the Middle Kingdom stela of Senwosret III, Year 16, set up in the fortress at Semna. In line 8 is the hieroglyph which may represent in the widest sense a female organ (uterus)[274]. In the context of the stela (war and victory against the wretched Kush), this is understood to be a synonym for cowards, further on, only the hieroglyph for Hm is written: (translation: "retreat is vile, he who is driven from his boundary is a back tracker (coward)"[275]. So it is understood by those who could read the stela, as a synonym for cowardice and not necessarily male and similarly by those who could not, as the equivalent of female or servant like, a meaning that could have been passed on by word of mouth.

- Again examples of this mode of transmission and understanding can also be found in the New Kingdom temples[276]. On certain feast days the masses were allowed into the outer courtyard, which was situated just behind the pylon walls of the temple precinct. On many of the courtyard walls and columns there is a depiction of the *rekhyt* bird on a neb sign, followed by a five-pointed star. Although the masses were illiterate, this sign was understood by them as meaning a place where

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[273] H. A. Schlögl, *Das Alte Ägypten: Geschichte und Kultur von der Frühzeit bis zu Kleopatra* (München: C. H. Beck, 2006) 73-74. He provides material examples from Dynasty I & II.

[274] C. Obsomer, *Les Campagnes de Sésostris dans Hérodote: Essai d'interprétation du texte grec a la lumière des réalités égyptiennes* (Bruxelles: Connaissance de l'Egypte ancienne, 1989) 182. The female organ is to be understood as the Hm sign (Gardiner sign list N41/42), even though the two occurences of Hm in line 8, the first with no determinative and the second with a dripping phallus can hardly be read as "cowardly". However for Obsomer's explanation see p. 51-52.

[275] R. B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings* (London: British Museum Press, 1991) 45.

[276] R. H. Wilkinson, *The complete temples of ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000) 71.

they could stand and participate in the festivities[277]. Similarly at the rear of temples there are chapels which have carved on them: the ear of the god. This was a place where the common man could address his prayers to the gods. In this case the symbol is not quite as cryptic as the *rekhyt* bird but its meaning was unambiguous. The said hieroglyphs may or may not have been a mystery to the people who visited the temple but they were from the beginning, symbols with a clear conceptual reference of authoritative public character, and thus required no further explanation because art and symbol were joined to broadcast the intention of the message.

If this analysis is correct, then it could well be that in ancient Egypt, all representations (symbols) did not have to be explicit, or to be read, or to be recited, or even to be understood in context of the accompanying text as they would have been 'generically' understood, something that is lost to us today.

As Assmann has pointed out "Icons could at anytime be developed into stories and stories could at any time be condensed into icons"[278]. Different iconography could then be the result of not only the individuality of the tomb-owner but also the subtle pressure of the cultural development at a particular time; thus the visual image goes beyond the verbal message in presenting something, parts of which may be pre-recognized and generally understood and needed no further explanation.

Symbols could also have a didactic function: that of instructing the visitors[279] in the meaning of the funerary offering ceremonies, for artistic emulation and for consolidating the belief that commemoration would result in a personal benefit. The ancient Egyptians chose to do this by means of symbols including iconography in any of its forms, because transmission of the meaning both

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[277] Ibid. 99.

[278] J. Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, trans. D. Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) 112.

[279] D. Wildung, "Besucherinschriften," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 1*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 766-67."Durch das Lebenshaus erhielten die Bildhauer...Auskunft über die Inschriften und Dekorationen, die sie anzubringen hatten". See also M. Weber, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Schrift- und Buchwesens der alten Ägypter* (Köln: 1969) 11.

symbolic and literal could take place at different levels to all concerned, and thus have the broadest possible target and consequential support.

As all of my data (e.g. the selected motifs) are to be understood as composed of symbols, it was essential to have an idea of what symbols are and how they may operate, and the approaches used to discover their meaning at any level, hence the somewhat detailed framework presented above.

3.6 Art of Remembrance: Memory and its Components

The concept of remembrance requires for its maintenance the presence of some kind of reminders, without which there would be no need for markers of any kind.

Markers assist in the maintenance of cultural memory. The reasons are quite complex ranging from religious fervor to megalomania and need not detain us.

In the Old Kingdom, cultural memory was an essential cornerstone of the physical and social aspirations of the tomb-owner. The Egyptians ensured the continuance of cultural memory as follows:

- The elite depict their status, their actions, their titles and names in a manner which stereotyped the elite as one class, whose main occupation it would seem was the saying and doing of $M3'^ct$ and thus be worthy of remembrance.

- Through a combination of inscriptions which advertise their identity and contain material inducements, apotropaic curses, benefits, and such like.

- The building of an elite tomb itself required a lot of financial and material backing over an extended period of the lifetime of the tomb-owner. This great effort to create a "system of notation in service of memory[280]" points to a common basis for funerary art, because "all culture is a struggle with oblivion[281]".

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[280] J. Asssmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (California: Stanford University Press, 2006) 87. This ensures that any symbols can be referred to in the future, which is essential in a memory-based culture like that of ancient Egypt.

Herodotus begins his '*Histories*' which were written sometime before 425 BC and testify to the value of the preservation of memory, by a statement explaining its purpose. The purpose is to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time, and to preserve the fame of the important and remarkable achievements produced by both the Greeks and the non-Greeks[282].

Inherent in this statement are three ideas: that memory is fragile, that without memory we cannot live and therefore it has to be preserved[283].

Memory can only be preserved if the social structure is preserved because it is the avenue for providing the means of commemoration. Accordingly in pursuing the question of how memory was preserved, one has to include indications of how the social structure was preserved, thus forcing us to rely on the material objects and the related cultural concepts and the influence, if any, that the humans involved may have had.

From the archaeological evidence and the previous discussion of symbols it would appear that:

- The creation of iconography was not a random but a deliberate act.
- This deliberate act emphasizes both communication and the need of being remembered.
- Where rare motifs are present an explanation outside the recognized value of symbols has to be sought.

Repeated motifs in the iconography may be considered symbols/codes, which act as markers for complex concepts and which belong to the cultural domain of a society. Judging from the tomb art left behind, the ancient Egyptians must have been aware of the above, when they converted the preservation of

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[281] Ibid. 81. The construction of a national identity is only possible when groups share the memory of what has been. This process has to be continually worked at.

[282] Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. J. M. Marincola, trans. A. de. Selincourt (London: Penguin Classics, 1954) 3.

[283] E. Mendelsohn, *The English Auden* (London: Faber, 1977). A similar longing would appear to be widespread in modern humans too "And none will hear the postman's knock, without a quickening of the heart. For who can bear to feel himself forgotten".

memory into a visible art form. The hierarchical system as it existed, meant only a few had the means to ensure that they would maintain their social awareness and be remembered, for as long as someone is remembered, he still is somebody special.

Tomb art may also reflect the fact that humans when alive form bonds of attachment, the disruption of which through death, leads to the desire for remembrance - the simple burial mound being the first external evidence of this fact.

By making others think of them through their depictions/monuments the elite eradicated the risk of their own social oblivion. They did this by ensuring that there co-existed a widespread willingness to cooperate by those left behind, endowments being one material inducement thereof.

Assmann has stressed the desire to be remembered, as the "principle that we owe the institution of the monumental Egyptian grave and with it not only thousands and tens of thousands of the most magnificent iconography, sculptures, and buildings, but also hundreds of important biographical inscriptions. In them the owner of the grave gives accounts for his life to posterity"[284]. While this is certainly true, it disparages other equally relevant aspects, i.e. satisfaction of having achieved those acts for which the actor wants to be remembered, the desire to be boastful, the sense of history and moral discourse which an elite person might have entertained. One can suppose that this discourse did not start and end with the mortuary inscriptions/representations, and that the awareness of a living audience long after the death of the tomb-owner must have played a significant part in the formulation of these scenes[285].

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[284] J. Assmann, *Religion and Cultural memory*, trans. R. Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006) 90. See also J. Assmann, *Stein und Zeit: Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1991) 172. My translation:"For the dead live on in memory and not in the grave, which is only an outer signpost of this social continuity and as such is a social phenomenon".

[285] Professor Loprieno has pointed out that the development of a fictional discourse is better seen as a continuous phenomenon linked to the development of individual consciousness, which of course is part memory and part remembrance.

While it may be that the sheer status of being a tomb-owner automatically warranted that he be commemorated, it must be equally accepted that all strata of society subscribed to the belief in an afterlife. This is evidenced since pre-dynastic times in the fundamental necessity for the dead to be continually supplied with all his requirements, because he continues to exist in some form.

Remembrance thus played a very central and cultural role in the life of an elite Egyptian. This leads to four questions.

1. What role did the tomb-owner play in perpetuating his memory?
2. How would memory be preserved?
3. What would be worthy of remembrance?
4. Who should be remembered?

3.6.1 Tomb-Owner's Role

All tomb decoration is different. This therefore suggests that the individual tomb-owner or his trustee(s) chose certain pictorial content for his/their own reasons in addition to satisfying the mortuary ritual and decorum requirements. The use of different content can be correlated to the desire of the tomb-owner to create a tomb different from others, because he wanted to make sure that not only would he be remembered, but also, that he would be remembered as a unique individual. This then leads to the need to record both individuality and personal/social identity in the tomb decoration.

Consequently the tomb-owner asserts his distinguishability and identity, which then is one cause of changes to:

- Place of burial
- The external approach to the tomb
- Number of rooms he had in the elite tomb
- Type and content of the tomb inscriptions and representations
- Distribution of decorative programme in the rooms of the superstructure but very rarely in the burial chamber
- Medium used e.g. sunken, raised relief or painting

The changes made to the above elements can be seen when one compares the decorative content and style of the internal chapel walls and the tombs of Rahotep, Seshathotep, Seshemnefer 3, Hetep-her-akhti, Mereruka, Kagemni and Ti spanning across from Dynasties 4, 5 and 6.

However in pursuing his goals of eternal commemoration, the tomb-owner's dependence on other people suggests a certain commonality of goals between the wider community and the tomb-owner and thus is a pointer to the importance of agency and intention, both present and future. In this context the ancient Egyptians must have been aware not only of the obvious physicality of the monuments, but of their implications. Being involved in their production they must have realized that the monuments themselves would broadcast at the very least, a relationship of informed knowledge and resulting meaningful actions[286].

Consider further the rights and duties imposed by the system of endowments, as an example of the idea of mutual exchange between the tomb-owner and the living. This social relationship could not have been a nominal one, because it existed in different forms right through the pharaonic period, one in which both parties were forced to think of the other through kinship and exchange commitments[287]. These commonalities of goals and the effect of the interdependencies of the wider community and the tomb-owner raise questions about whether this was peculiar to ancient Egyptian society. The iconography and textual evidence tend to support the assumption of mutual commitments. In ancient Egypt in matters of life and death, what one did for one's parents or master was, later done by one's progeny.

In all societies which are dependent upon each other, have religious homogeneity, and live within a specified territory, the correlation between the

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[286] Giddens, *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration*. Of course the depth of understanding would vary with the individual concerned, but as already indicated some objects need little or no explanatory memoranda. It is suggested that the mastaba with its interior iconography (at least that part which was obvious) was one such and could be understood by all.

[287] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 166-71. See also H. Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich* (Vienna: Verlag Notring, 1970) 190-214.

individual and the commonality of societal goals is more evident and ancient Egypt is a prime example of this interaction.

3.6.2 Memory Preservation

In any community including the Egyptian the technique of social intercourse is one means, whereby the above interdependencies, would have been worked out. Take for example writing and depiction. Both of these artistic forms not only describe a particular reality, but recreate and fix knowledge about a place and time, while at the same time elaborating the various kinds of political and cultural powers that may underpin the material object. The writings and depictions thus create traditions which involve all aspects of social reality: the tomb-owner, the craftsmen, and the lived practice.

Further, because we can only witness communally[288], it follows that the places of commemoration: the elite tombs together with the visual and written word - become a kind of public memory - a type of trace that would act against forgetfulness. Articulation allows one to share objective memory although this sharing doesn't make it social. Thus we define both our personal and collective memories in the way we structure and transmit these. "Social memory is a source of knowledge. This means that it does more than provide a set of categories through which… a group experiences its surroundings; it also provides the group with material for continuous reflection[289]". Its importance is that while it (social memory) may be inaccurate or selective it can at the same time be exact because the people have found it to be socially relevant. Thus the question of the accurateness of memory is sterile, as memory cannot be studied without its social context.

The etymology of the word 'monument' comes from the Latin word "môneo" meaning both 'to remind' as well as 'to warn'. This refers to something that is

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[288] M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. F. J & V. Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) 44-49 and 77-78. He maintains correctly that social groups construct their own images by establishing an agreed version of past events. He further emphasizes that these versions are established by communication, and that even private memory contains much that is social in origin.

[289] J Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 26.

present in the sense that it is physically there but it also warns of something that is now absent and should be remembered[290].

In ancient Egyptian culture, this aspect of remembrance can be inferred as far back as the Narmer. One may conclude among other things, that the deposition/creation of this palette was a guarantee of cultural survival, which served to remind the beholders, of the present state of affairs, and to warn against forgetting it. As an expression of collective experience it may have given to the ancient beholders a sense of the past. The codes which are being developed at this early stage, as observed on the palette, will in time serve to transform individual memory into collective history through the institution of the monumental grave, both royal and elite.

3.6.3 Preservation of Intrinsic Excellence

The evidence from the Old Kingdom points to two main avenues of memory preservation in the tomb, that from the inscriptions and that from mortuary art which I collectively signify as actions of preserving intrinsic excellence.

Royal decrees and private documents exist during the Old Kingdom[291]. The royal documents have the advantage of being enforceable and therefore are authoritative statements albeit restricted to the administration. In contrast private material does not have the same enforceability, but because it is more concerned with ownership and property rights, a more useful picture of society is obtained. The elite authors are forced to distinguish rights and obligations between members of their community. The point to note is that the initial cause was one of administrative needs as the property documents of *Mṯn*, what is generally considered to be one of the oldest such documents testifies[292].

However my concern is with that part of the inscriptional evidence found in the elite tombs that highlight the interactive nature of social dependency,

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[290] For "môneo" see *Latin Dictionary*, ed. C. T. Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 1161.

[291] Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich*. For royal documents see Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*.

[292] Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich* 5-20 & Taf. Ia, Ib and II.

kinship and economic relationships, of which the biographical inscriptions, e.g. (threat formulae, the appeals to the living, and the letters to the dead) are one major element[293].

3.6.3.1 Biographical Inscriptions

The biographical inscriptions start to appear for the first time during mid-Dynasty 4[294] and in their developed forms from the reign of Neferirkare Kakai (early Dynasty 5) when they become prominent features of the elite tombs at Giza and extend into Dynasty 6 at Saqqara[295].

The inscriptions emphasize the activities of the tomb-owner; his relationship to the king, what he did for the common man and in a way legitimizes the rule of the king. The texts' main purpose is to transmit the way officials should act and how the individual should respond to the ideological expectations of society[296]. The biographical inscriptions from the Old Kingdom reflect these tensions between social expectations, what Loprieno calls, *topos*, and individual reactions to them what he terms, *mimesis*[297]. The inscriptions do not refer to a specific time, but suggest how the moral qualities continue to play a role even after death, in that good deeds while alive will result in a good life in the hereafter.

There are many examples available and I shall restrict myself to three types which span the main contents of these inscriptions indicating: (1) the importance of the concept of the ethical person, (2) relationship to the king and (3) career progression of the tomb-owner. In that these are personalized

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[293] While the technical meaning of the definition of biography and autobiography listed by Kloth are important, this area is outside the focus of this work.   See N. Kloth, "Beobachtungen zu den biographischen Inschriften des Alten Reiches," *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, no. 25 (1998): 193-94.

[294] M. Baud, "The birth of Biography in Ancient Egypt: Text format and content in the lVth Dynasty," in *Texte und Denkmäler des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, ed. S. J. Seidlmayer (Berlin: Achet Verlag, 2005), 91-124.

[295] N. Kloth, *Die Autobiographischen Inschriften des ägyptischen Alten Reiches* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2002) 222-23.

[296] A. Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian literature: history and forms* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996) 10-13.

[297] Ibid. 46.

vis-à-vis the king and society in general, they are again pointers to the aspects of cultural significance namely identity, individuality and ideology and more specifically to early signs of the bit-by-bit developing consciousness in the elite. At first these are articulated in the third person, possibly because of the absolute power of the king. However, in the tomb of Senedjemib these are partly in the first and partly in the third person but they appear to be recorded after the tomb-owner's death[298].

It is however instructive to view these so called biographical inscriptions, as incentives to the general practice of ethics in an interrelated community, especially with a view to a favorable posthumous judgement[299], as well as the desire to be in favour with the pharaoh and society at large[300].

(1) The biography of Metjetji (reign of Teti to Pepy I) is on the left façade and the left entrance jamb of his tomb[301].

The left façade (Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum 953.116.1) states:

> "I did not allow them to see any unkindness, from their youth till they joined the ground in the beautiful West. [I was beloved of] everyone. I have done nothing that could anger anyone since my birth, for I am considerate when speaking of all the king's works I have done".

The left Entrance Jamb (Kansas City, Nelson-Atkins Museum 52-7/1) states:

> "I was honoured by men; I was beloved of the multitude. As for all who saw me anywhere ('a blessed soul and beloved man is coming', they said of me in every place)".

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[298] E. Brovarski, *Senedjemib Inti - G2370: Text, Part I*, *The Senedjemib Complex* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2001) 89-110.

[299] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 123, l. 2. "I desired that it be well with me in the presence of the Great God".

[300] Ibid. 47, l. 1-4. "I am one beloved of his father, praised of his mother, honoured by his companions, loved by his brothers, whom his servants loved", "I am one who was loved by all people... I did what men praise".

[301] P. Kaplony, *Studien zum Grab des Methethi*, *Monographien der Abegg-Stiftung (8)* (Bern: Abegg-Stiftung, 1976) 31-34. See also Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age* 298-99.

Another more extensive description is from the tomb of Qar at Edfu[302]. It reads:

> "I have given bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked whom I found in this nome. I have given jars of milk and measured out Upper Egyptian barley from my estate for the hungry man whom I found in this nome. As for every man I found in this nome with a grain debt to someone else against him, it is I, who repaid it to the creditor out of my estate. It is I, who buried everyone belonging to this nome who had no son with garments out of my goods …. I have protected the poor man from one powerful than he. I have judged between two litigants that they might be satisfied. I am one loved by his father, praised by his mother, whom his brethren love".

(2) A contrasting example is that from the biography of Weni from Abydos (whose career spanned the reigns of Teti, Pepy I, and Merenre I).

The interesting part of his biography (apart from its rhythmic structure, the first line is always the same while the second line alters), is the way he justifies why he should be provided with the various funerary accessories. Because he was "excellent, was rooted in his heart (the king's) and his heart (again the king's) was for me". He insists that he was the sole person for whom the king did this favour, for "never before had the like been done for any servant", and again "never before had anyone like me heard the secrets of the royal harem"[303].

Similarly texts in the tomb of Sabbw a high priest at Memphis, read[304]:

> "Never had the like been done for any servant like me by any sovereign, because His Majesty (always) loved me more than any servant of his for my doing of that which he praises every day, because my reverence was in his heart, I being competent in the presence of

[302] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 254, 13-17 & 55, 1-3 & 6-7.

[303] Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age* 352-53.

[304] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 83, l. 17 and p. 84, l. 1-6.

His Majesty (and) finding a solution to every problem of the Residence, so that I was respected by His Majesty".

The question of broad social responsibility so evident in Metjetji's biography is not manifest here, the emphasis being on the fulfillment of the duty towards the king and the resulting esteem. It may also be that the promotion of Weni of apparently low background to a commander of royal servants and bodyguard – *ḫnti-š pr-ꜥꜣ-* is a sign of how the relations between the crown and the elite were exercised. It was a way in which royal control could be implemented over areas of government which had expanded vastly. One of Weni's titles was that of overseer of Upper Egypt (*imi-rꜣ šmꜥ*), a title of which he was the earliest holder in the provinces[305]. Considering that this title existed parallel to that of the vizier, it is probable that this too was an attempt by the crown to deal with the tensions between centralized control and the expanding state organization. This fact emphasizes once again the processes of change that were ongoing during the Old Kingdom.

 (3) From the false door of Ptahshepses from Saqqara (early to middle Dynasty 5):
This inscription lists his career, which spans the reigns of Menkaure (infant), Shepeskaf (youth), Userkaf (marriage to eldest royal daughter Khammat) and Sahure (great controller of craftsmen, and guard)[306]. Surprisingly his other extensive tutelary's which appear on the architrave, is not specifically mentioned, the stress being on his importance to the king and Ptahshepses taking part in royal ceremonies. The biography of Weni has already been mentioned, its interest now lies at the point when he describes how he was promoted above others[307]. It reads:

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[305] Kanawati, *Governmental Reforms in the Old Kingdom* 54.

[306] Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age* 304-05.

[307] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 100, l. 7-8.

> "His Majesty made me Sole Companion and Overseer of the *ḫnti-š*
> (palace attendants) of the palace after four Overseers of the *ḫnti-š* of
> the palace, who were there, had been demoted in my favour".

Personal relationship with the king was far more valuable as an indicator of social identity, because it was only the king, who could make the type of life worth remembering possible. In addition because the king was supposed to be immortal high favour from the king deeming the tomb-owner worthy, had the effect of 'immortalizing' his identity and may even have been more important than the inscribing of titles.

Just like relief carving or painting was a representation of the tomb-owner suitable for commemoration, the biography too was a portrait, a form of self-presentation albeit a very idealistic one which had a similar goal as that of reliefs, namely to eternalize that what had to be said. "Der vergängliche Augenblick des Ereignisses ist wertlos; nur das, was in Stein "bleibt" (*mn*), ist Denkmal (*mnw*) und damit "vorhanden"[308].

Being an epitaph meant for eternity, it could not but express praise: leaving no place for sins of the flesh but this would be a cynical attitude. One-way of balancing this approach would be to look at these writings not simply as portraits in self-promotion, but as an inspiration to the living. They serve to remind them of what matters most, the importance of king, family, and the wider community, and by doing so perhaps inspiring them to emulate the best qualities of the deceased. The wording of these biographies signify that the successful fulfillment of one's duty towards the king, one's family and one's fellow humans, depends upon the ethical and intrudes into every facet of everyday behaviour. It becomes therefore an essential part of the ideal Egyptian role model[309].

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[308] Helck, "Zur Frage der Entstehung der ägyptischen Literatur," 8.

[309] Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* vol. I, 58-76. As evident in the writings of Hardjedef, Kagemni, and Ptahhotep.

Implicit in the self-laudatory phrases of the biographies are the concepts of authority, protection and the maintenance of *m3ꜥt*. The tomb-owner says, "I brought the boatless to land, I was one who buried him who did not have a son", and numerous other phrases signifying material and immaterial help towards the needy and helpless[310]. In these instances he is implying in part that he is going beyond the needs of his immediate family, and trying to look after the needs of the wider community of which he is an integral part. Giving then, is a relationship of power, and forms an important part of Egyptian social relationships.

These statements are not restricted to the Old Kingdom and can be traced further to the Middle[311] and New Kingdom too[312], the moral obligation stresses the 'thou shall' culture of giving.

At another level similar inscriptions could also indicate a grab for power in so far that the distribution and storage of resources was a prerogative of the king illustrated by the inscriptions of the First Intermediate Period nomarch Ankhtifi of Moalla. Dying, death and burial are then to be understood in a wider sense extending to and including socially dependent persons. In this way the biographical inscriptions open a window, on society in general and who the others were[313]. These others are to be included because only by

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[310] Kloth, *Die Autobiographischen Inschriften des ägyptischen Alten Reiches* 77-107 for a detailed list of such phrases.

[311] H. O. Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab-und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1902) no. 20001, b, lines 3 ff. "I did not take the daughter of a man, I did not take his field... I provided Gebelein with food in its worst years... I served my senior lord and I served my junior lord, and no misfortune came over me".

[312] G. Lefebvre, *Historie des grands prêtres d'Amon de Karnak* (Paris: 1929) 132. For translation see K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Translated & Annotated Translations*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) 214. Bakenkhons the High Priest of Amun during the New Kingdom (reign of Ramses II) says"... I will inform you of my character when (I) was upon earth, in every office that I exercised since my birth...I was a good father to my personnel, bringing up their young people, giving a (helping) hand <to> who(ever) was needy, sustaining who(ever) was in need, and performing benefactions in the temple... I am a truly decent man, useful to his god...".

[313] D. Franke, "Arme und Geringe im Alten Reich Altägyptens," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, no. 133 (2006): 120. Franke draws attention to the levels of power and the levels of dependency that existed in ancient Egypt. In doing this he points to the existence of members of society who were not part of the community. In the biographical

including all members, could one keep the social community intact. It is common to help others who are close to one, but in the biographical inscriptions, we see that the elite go beyond this to provide for others. This is vaguely similar to the examples of royal concern examples of which were given earlier on pages 55-56.

Further the inclusion of non-elite in elite tomb representations is itself an indication of this aspect and suggestive of the constant focus on the maintenance of the physical and social structure of the Egyptian world. Apart from their own name and titles which are obviously obligatory, the elite's use of the representations is such as to impose a different vocabulary: they try to show both their own point of view, e.g. in the splendour of their lives, while at the same time imaginatively identifying with the 'common pain', by including the others in the iconography. One could postulate that biographical excerpts are all examples of the point of being human, i.e. to spend one's life upholding the principles of social justice. In a state of relative dependency such as we find in the Old Kingdom, this ideal could have been the glue that held it together for as long as it did. Although the result was the favouring of a minority, yet it activated the collective consciousness through *m3ˁt*, which provided a way of "colonizing the future"[314]. By the communicative interplay present in the 'ideal-biography', it showed that the poor were essential elements of society not to be forgotten, and this acted as a spur to the "discourse of inequality and power"[315]. While the requirements of food and drink are important and thus found in every tomb, there seems to be an imperative to include other factors which point to elements of social concern albeit with self-interest at heart.

If the biographical inscriptions are read in the manner I have suggested, then it becomes clear that the elite were aware of the inequalities that existed in

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inscriptions they are specifically referred to as the afflicted (*m3r*), poor (*šw3*), and nomadic (*šm3*) and they are said to be deserving of protection.

[314] A. Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) 75.

[315] Richards and van Buren, *Order, legitimacy, and wealth in ancient states* 11.

society, of the dangers of opposition, and the need for some sort of control. The biography implies that they were aware of these problems and is perhaps a form of philosophical contemplation of history, directed at all who could read, and reflecting on what was required if order was to prevail in a developing society.

3.6.3.2 Appeals to the Living, Threat Formulae, and Letters to the Dead

In order to keep the commemorative aspect working posthumously, the tomb-owner had to rely on the living for survival in the beyond, for only thus could he ensure that he had conquered mortality. This he could only do by stimulating the living through rewards, apotropaic benefits, and/or curses.

The category of Egyptian literature which deals with curses and blessings has the following characteristics[316]:

- A method of communication between the dead and the living
- The tomb-owner is the alleged sender
- All other living individuals are the recipients
- They contain an implied threat and a corresponding benefit
- They appear on the usual monumental forms e.g. stelae, offering tables, tomb walls, coffins and so forth but are also seen in the later periods on temple walls, as well as on papyri and wooden amulets
- Their efficacy depends on society's belief in superhuman powers and not in the existing legal institutions.

The fact that only a small minority were literate, should not be taken as an indication of the limited reach of these formulaic inscriptions. The common masses would have been exposed to the funerary services, funerary equipment, and were at times part of the cultic services as ka priests (Hekanakht for example was most probably illiterate and was a ka-priest of the vizier Ipy, Dynasty 11)[317]. This contact was not just a physical one, but

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[316] K. Nordh, *Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Curses and Blessings* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1996) 2-5.

one which must have also entailed some sort of cognition of the norms and values based on a worldview which was built around the socio-ethical aspects of *Mꜣꜥt* , encompassing cosmic and social order, truth, and justice. This then could explain why the suppositions of the common masses even if illiterate were complex. This would also imply that even when they could not read or write they had a basic understanding of what blessings and curses meant, because they believed in the power of the word, whose guarantor was the god[318]. This belief was reinforced by the idea that the efficiency of connective justice went "well beyond the sphere of legal institutions into the sphere of divine maintenance of cosmic order[319]". At the other end of the scale one has to reconcile this lofty ideal with the fact of increasing degradation of tombs in Dynasties 5 and 6. This was a problem that required a solution, one such being the inscription of curses, threats and apotropaic benefits[320].

The appeals to the living are interesting example of evolving thought patterns. While in the beginning a certain element of compulsion is detected in the appeals, with time, from the Middle Kingdom onwards, mere recitation was all that was required. Three examples from the many should suffice to follow the thought patterns of the ancient Egyptians:

1. Cairo text of Nekhebu from Giza (JE 44608) from the reign of Pepy I.

   "O you who live on earth and who shall pass by this tomb,

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[317] T. G. H. James, *Pharaoh's people: scenes from life in Imperial Egypt* (London: Bodley Head, 1984) 167. See also T. G. H. James and B. G. Gunn, *The Hekanakhte papers: and other early Middle Kingdom documents* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1962) 1-2.

[318] W. Boochs, "Religiöse Strafen," in *Religion und Philosophie im Alten Ägypten. Festgabe für Philippe Derchain zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Juli 1991*, ed. U. Verhoeven and E. Graefe. (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), 62.

[319] J. Assmann, "When Justice fails: Jurisdiction and Imprecation in Ancient Egypt and the Near East," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992): 151.

[320] W. K. Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetry (Part 1)*, vol. 4, *Giza Mastabas* (Boston: Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts, Boston., 1980) 8, Fig. 15. Note the specific nature of the curse in the tomb of Tjetu Kanesut. "As to any man who will take or tear out a stone or brick from this tomb, [I] will be judged with [him] in the court of the great gods, [I] shall put an end to him on account of it for the living ones who are upon earth to see". The threat in the tomb of Kagemni adds in addition a specific threat to the person: "any person who shall enter this tomb of mine in an impure state, I shall wring his neck like that of a goose" (E. Edel, "Inschriften des Alten Reichs", (Berlin, 1953), 213.

do you desire that the king favour you

and that you be *imakhu* in the sight of the Great God?

Then you shall say

"a thousand of bread and a thousand of beer for Nekhebu, the *imakhu*

You shall not destroy anything in this tomb….

With regard to any man who shall destroy anything in this tomb,

I shall be judged with them by the Great God"[321].

2. Lintel, left-hand side, text of Bia from Saqqara.

"With regard to any man…

and who shall pass by this tomb

and who shall read the (inscription on) this doorway,

I shall be his support in the court of the Great God"[322]

3. At the other extreme from the Middle Kingdom the threat becomes a humble request to the scribe just to read the offering formula aloud to the people, or to all passersby just to recite the formula[323]. The reasoning is persuasive for all visitors to the chapel, in that recitation of the funerary formulae costs nothing, neither effort nor weariness[324] as per the following inscription from the stela of Nebipusenwosret in the reign of Amenemhat lll.

"Every scribe who shall read aloud (the text), and all people who shall listen". (This is) breath of the mouth, excellent for the noble dead. It is no weight on your shoulders"[325].

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[321] Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age* 268.

[322] Ibid. 269.

[323] The belief that the spoken word was more effective than the written word, resulted out of the desire for certainty for their posthumous welfare. For evidence see the stela of Sebekhotep (H. Brunner, "Hieroglyphische Chrestomathie", 1965, Tafel 11, Tübingen 458) and that of Neferniy (Cataloghi dei musei e gallerie d'Italia, 1959, Florence 2590).

[324] P. Vernus, "La formule 'Le souffle de la bouche' au Moyen Empire," *Revue d'Égyptologie, Le Caire* 28 (1976): 142-43.

[325] W. K. Simpson, *The terrace of the great God at Abydos: the offering chapels of dynasties 12 and 13* (New Haven: Yale University 1974) ANOC 11.1. Cairo CG 20 017. Such phrases

Another interesting part about these appeals is not the exaggerated amounts of food, threats, or benefits but the fact that both the priest's offering ritual and the visitor's offering of food have a great communal significance in terms of commemoration. The performance of the actions requested by the tomb-owner presupposes a community in which co-operation and communication is an essential element in the achievement of social goals, and indirectly reflects these as matters of cultural significance.

For the givers, the act was important because this was the creation and the maintenance of the concept of $M3^ct$ on which order, and his future after-life could depend.

For the receiver, the act was an indication that he had not been forgotten in the memory of future generations, that the protection of his self-interests in the hereafter were assured, thus again alluding to aspects of cultural significance.

Letters to the Dead were another vehicle[326], which echo the mind-set of the living towards that of the dead in contrast to the appeals to the living which are from the dead to the living. In their content they generally parallel the appeals and threats, in containing the obligatory elements of a perceived problem: a request, and the promise of a reward to the deceased addressee.

These letters serve to remind one that the dead were recognized by the living, as possessors of special power (akh-iker, the life force of the able spirit of the Ka) and that ancestor worship may have been an informal practice[327]. These letters also point to the reciprocal duty towards the living, as far as

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from the Middle Kingdom and later have been collected by W. Spiegelberg, "Eine Formel der Grabsteine," *Zeitschrift fuer ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, no. 45 (1908): 67-71.

[326] A. H. Gardiner and K. Sethe, *Egyptian letters to the dead* (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1928).

[327] M. Fitzenreiter, "Zum Ahnenkult in Ägypten," *Göttinger Miszellen*, no. 143 (1994). The connection of the living to the dead evidenced in the letters to the dead is not an act of veneration. The leap to ancestor worship happens later on as evidenced in the akh-iker stelae, an example of which is in the Petrie Museum UC 14228. See also a fragment of an Old Kingdom letter to the dead from the British Museum (BM EA 10901), where akh-iker is mentioned, for which reference I thank Dr. R. J. Demarée (Leiden University).

regulations of certain family problems (childbirth, inheritance, and sickness) are concerned and go to prove that the dead continued to be part of the living society[328].

These letters therefore represent an indirect method of remembrance; in the same way as the cults of the dead were a means for communicating with and remembering the deified dead which grew up around the tombs in the Old Kingdom, e.g. Hardjedef,[329] and Kagemni[330] at Giza and Saqqara and Heqaib at Aswan[331]. The need to be in touch by the living and the dead is recognized, dependency in certain instances is acknowledged, and memory is preserved. As these letters are rather long no quotation will be given but a compilation across periods can be found in "Letters from Ancient Egypt"[332].

3.6.4 The Protagonist Remembered

All the components in the mastaba from architecture to decoration to inscriptions work together towards a goal that is both functional and communicative. The goal in the context of funerary culture is connected to an individual elite identity manifested in title and name which shares in the prevailing ideology and perhaps individuality.

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[328] I. Hafemann, "Feinde und Ahnen-Briefe an Tote als Mittel der Feindbekämpfung," in *Feinde und Aufrührer*, ed. H. Felber (Leipzig: 2005), 162-63.

[329] H. Junker, *Giza*, vol. 7 (Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky A.G., 1944) 26-27.

[330] C. M. Firth and B Gunn, *Teti Pyramid Cemetries 1* (Cairo: 1926) 1-30. See also H. Goedicke, "Ein Verehrer des Weisen Djedefhor aus dem späten Alten Reich," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 55 (1958): 49-55.

[331] L. Habachi, *Elephantine IV. The Sanctuary of Heqaib*, 2 vols., *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen (33)* (Mainz am Rhein: Philip von Zabern, 1985) 19-21. For general details see H. de Meulenaere, "Verehrung verstorbener Privatleute", in Lexikon der Ägyptologie", vol. 6, 973-974.

[332] E. F. Wente and S. E. Meltzer, *Letters from ancient Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 210-20. See also M. O'Donoghue, "The 'Letters to the Dead' and Ancient Egyptian Religion," *Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology* 10 (1999): 87-104.

3.6.4.1 Titles

The depiction of official titles was an important theme in the elite's self-presentation because it showed both their importance and proximity to the king as well as an indication of royal favour[333]. By titles is meant an indication of "a specific office, function, or dignity"[334] However it is questionable whether these titles represent true functions; are significant pointers of status, or even correspond to the terminology of desirable qualities, because "the Old Kingdom is notoriously imprecise in the qualifications of very important titles"[335]. Opinion is divided on whether the titles in a tomb represent "in all probability the accumulation of a lifetime"[336], or whether they represent those that the tomb-owner had at the time of the construction of the tomb, or those which he specifically wished to display.

In the elite tomb one usually is faced by the names and titles of the tomb-owner and in addition usually his imposing figures as a way of distinguishing and remembering who he was[337].

 As far back as at least Dynasty 3, the administration of the state demanded that it be compartmentalized into five main departments: scribal administration, granaries, the treasury, public works, and the judiciary. Strudwick has selected a representative title for each of these departments: *imi-r sš ꜥ-nswt, imi-r šnwt (i), imi-r pr(wi)-ḫd, imi-r kꜣt nbt nt nswt*, and *imi-r ḥwt-wrt*[338]. While the titles of the elite include in the main, reference to these departments, it must be noted that Strudwick does not specify whether these

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[333] Baer, *Rank and title in the Old Kingdom; the structure of the Egyptian administration in the fifth and sixth dynasties* 6.

[334] Ibid. 4.

[335] Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. The Highest Titles and their Holders*. 322.

[336] Baer, *Rank and title in the Old Kingdom; the structure of the Egyptian administration in the fifth and sixth dynasties* 35.

[337] An exception is in some boat representations when he is depicted on the same scale as the others e.g. tomb of Ty.

[338] Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. The Highest Titles and their Holders*. 175.

are the only departments or that these are the highest possible titles in each department during the Old Kingdom. However his selection has the merit that the departments represent a broad array of the important functions of the Old Kingdom administration. An overseer of these departments would certainly belong to the elite element of Egyptian society.

As already stated the elite tombs present a wide variety of titles[339], some being official, others being merely conventional. Over time the number of titles held, makes it impossible to use these predominantly as a signpost of nobility. Furthermore the titles are not arranged chronologically but according to ranking conventions, which may vary according to the nature of specialized duties, main functions, territory, particular area of competence, a specialized department, etc[340]. It would seem that variations in the age of the tomb-owner do not have any effect upon the titles, e.g. as in the early Dynasty 3 tomb of Hesyre. It probably reflects a separation of duties (cultic vs. administrative). Titles then arose out of an administrative necessity[341] but in time become a sort of identity card without any narrative function. The vizier for example, always held the title of "overseer of works" but it was also granted to any official in charge of a building project and each called himself an overseer of works. Still other titles such as "hereditary prince and count", "seal bearer of the king of Lower Egypt", did not imply any special function but conferred high rank on the bearer.

Again in a predominantly agricultural society like Egypt, the annual assessment of harvest and supervision of the granaries must have been of especial importance. The agricultural department was divided into two sections dealing with crops and livestock and one must assume that within

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[339] D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom*, *B A R International Series* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2000). Kanefer son of Senefru (Dynasty 4) held 47 titles.

[340] Baer, *Rank and title in the Old Kingdom; the structure of the Egyptian administration in the fifth and sixth dynasties*. He cites multiple variations of conventions especially from mid. Dynasty 5 onwards.

[341] The admiministrative core can be identified in the tomb of Nikaankh where the priests are named with their monthly service duties related to the land and this is not an isolated example. See Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 25f.

each section, there must have been a vast number of administrators. The plethora of titles is therefore not surprising. Even so titles such as the "overseer of granaries" and "chief stewards of kings", who handled his vast personal estates, must have been of major importance. Perhaps a constructive way is to view titles according to their type; bureaucratic, priestly, geographical, epithet, and royal based, focusing on their nature rather than on the implied function. No clear demarcation is possible between honorific and official titles at any period. Many titles which may have begun as official titles evolve in due course to become purely honorific. Similarly honorific titles may also refer to official work of a totally different nature[342]. Attempts have been made to identify patterns in the placements of elite tombs ranked according to title but with so many imponderables, this task is still in its infancy[343].

Titles are important in this study only in so far as they relate to ideas of status and rank superiority and thus as a pointer of social significance. Additionally the titles were instrumental in making clear (both to the visitor and the returning Ka) the tomb-owners distinctive identity and any claims to power.

The wives of the elite were termed merely *nb.t pr* 'mistress of the house' although there are cases where an exclusive title such as "sole companion" is also used by women.

3.6.4.2 Name

In a sense the Egyptians were no different to modern man; we too have graveyards with named family crypts, headstones, and named urns. However, whereas names matter less to modern man, considering the ease with which names can be changed (with major exceptions like proprietary rights), to the ancient Egyptian, names were an essential part of being. Combined with the

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[342] Baer, *Rank and title in the Old Kingdom; the structure of the Egyptian administration in the fifth and sixth dynasties* 231-39.

[343] A. M. Roth, "The Organization of Royal Cemeteries at Saqqara," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 25 (1988): 201-14.

other elements of *bꜣ, kꜣ, šwt, ḥꜥw* and *rn* they were necessary for his existence[344]. Names and titles then are an embodiment of the tomb-owner's identity and as Fitzenreiter remarks "Erst durch die Namengebung wird das Neugeborene offiziell anerkannt und ist neben seiner biologischen Existenz auch als sozial existent in die Gesellschaft integriert"[345].

The name is 'a rigid designator'[346]. It is mentioned several times from the entrance door to the innermost parts of the chapel on the false door, it also appears in inscriptions, which relate to his biography as well in appeals to the living[347], and in every possible part of the interior decoration. These rigid designations supplement the actual depiction of the tomb-owner and shape a complete identity kit of how the elite tomb-owner wished to be represented. Whether sitting in front of the offering table, sitting in a carrying-chair, in his striding pose, in a hunting scene or viewing the presentations, his name is typified and this is what serves to distinguish him forever. "Der aufgeschriebene Name stellt die Verbindung zwischen Dargestelltem und Darstellung her; er ist gewissermassen der Zauberzwang, der die Lebenskraft (*Ka*) des Dargstellten in die Statue zwingt"[348].

Even if no name were to be seen, one would still be able to recognize the tomb-owner from his pose and size. However, it should be noted that the pose and size of the principal character in a particular tomb, is no more than an obvious symbol of that character being a successful member of the elite class, rather than portraying a specific tomb-owner.

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[344] J. P. Allen, "BA," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 1*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 161-62.

[345] Fitzenreiter, "Grabdekoration und die Interpretation Funerärer Rituale im Alten Reich," (Leiden, 2001), 70.

[346] S. A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[347] P. Vernus, "Name," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 4*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1980), 320-23. See also J. H. Johnson, "What's in a Name," *Lingua Aegyptica* 9 (2001): 143-52.
See also J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents*, vol. 1 (University of Chicago Press, 1906) 131 & 58. He warns that one should be aware that the Egyptians were fond of giving similar names to brothers and sisters which could lead to the erroneous belief that the name was of no consequence.

[348] Helck, "Zur Frage der Entstehung der ägyptischen Literatur," (Wien, 1972), 7-8.

In Egyptian religion, the name indicates e.g.[349]:

1. Power associated with good and evil
2. Boundary denoting the individual sphere of the person
3. Insurance of eternal life, which only the elite could have

In life it is easy to be denoted by a name but in death one has to ensure that it will be pronounced and thereby remembered. The name is thus a symbol of what is to be commemorated: "he whose name is pronounced lives on"[350] and therefore the preservation of the memory of a name is paramount.

Most ancient Egyptian names that one encounters have some form of association with the world of myth and gods. Names can be looked on as word games subject to the same sort of manipulation that the symbols (I include myths and gods) they were associated with are; just like the same sun god could be named Khepri in the morning, Ra at noon and Atum in the evening[351], the name could also mean different things. In understanding the concept of a name we must not loose sight of the way these were used, in ensuring that they became among other things, an indispensable element for the continuation of life after death.

The Egyptian was very serious about leaving his name on monuments through which association he hoped to live permanently[352].

Whether or not the monument belonged to him was unimportant, what was essential to him was that a social system of memory and specific identity existed in the concept of a monument, because a monument only makes

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[349] D. M. Doxey, "Names," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 2*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 490.

[350] E. Otto, *Die biographischen Inschriften der ägyptischen Spätzeit, Probleme der Ägyptologie (2)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954) 62. For a general review of the importance of the survival of the name, see ibid. 58-65.

[351] S. Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. E. Keep (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) 145.

[352] Assmann, *Stein und Zeit: Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten* (Munich, 1991), 139.

sense in a system where social memory is commemorated[353]. Wengrow sums this up clearly "in attaching growing numbers of people to particular places, and in reproducing these attachments over generations, the urbanization of the dead may have been more important than the urbanization of the living, the density of social memory more vital than the massing of private dwellings[354]. Although the foregoing statement was made in the context of the development of Egypt as a whole, it nevertheless points to the way how the concept of a widely understandable elite identity and ideology may have developed and been maintained.

It is a fact that certain graves were usurped and this was not restricted to any class/period, for even Ramses II is famously known for his usurpations. While for the normal person this could be because of the scarcity of burial space, this could hardly apply to a king and in the ethical context demands an explanation. Interestingly usurpation, when it is pictured, is of the *name* because it is the identity and memory which is destroyed not the representation itself, for this is an idealized fiction. In the tomb of Hetep-her-akhti an indirect reminder of this is seen on his tomb entrance, he says that he built his tomb in a pure place where there was no previous grave, thus respecting the property rights of every dead[355]. The fact that this statement was inscribed may have been the result of the fact that tomb robbery and destruction were self-evident elsewhere. This phenomenon of usurpation is probably due to human nature because at all times and in all societies, some people care, respect, and others are indifferent and insensitive. Kemp would classify this as perversity. He expands on this by asking why this sort of behaviour arises and his answer is that:

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[353] J. Assmann, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten* (München: C. H. Beck, 2001) 70. "Mein Herz sorgt sich um meinen wahren Vater, indem ich wie Horus bin, zur Seite seines Vaters und des Namens meines Erzeugers gedenke, (denn) an dem Ort, an dem man eines Namens Millionen Male gedenkt, vernachlässigt man nicht ihren (der Toten) Zustand". Said by Sethos I. in relation to his father Ramses I.

[354] Wengrow, *The archaeology of early Egypt: social transformations in North-East Africa, 10,000 to 2,650 BC* 83.

[355] Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-Her-Akhti: Study of an Egyptian tomb chapel*.

"whilst one direction of human endeavor is towards inhabiting a stable system…it stands constantly in a tension with jagged moments or long nurtured schemes of rejection…everything provokes its opposite; everything needs its opposite in order to survive"[356].

3.7 Religious Concepts

The focus here will be on those concepts which were essential to solving the elite's problems concerning the continuation of life in the hereafter, and of social existence in the world of the living which was a part of Egyptian culture and society. The two concepts of Ka and Ma'at in Ancient Egyptian religion are the integral elements, which must be incorporated into any analysis of aspects, which are a vital part of society and religion and culturally significant, yet are not amenable to strict logic. In the maxims of Ptahhotep it is said

"That man will endure who is meticulous in uprightness"[357].

Implied in this statement are the concepts of who is to be remembered (identity/ Ka) and why he is to be remembered (because he is upright, i.e. he has said and done Ma'at). The tomb-owner who is thus identified is rewarded with eternal life in the hereafter and with eternal remembrance in the society, which he has left. This illustrates social connectivity and indirectly identity. Memory is then to be understood as an effort by the Egyptians to explain their hierarchical world and its problems and in so doing point to the significance and existence of the generics. The motifs not only served a decorative purpose but were concepts which embodied the tradition of Egyptian cultural beliefs. Being cultural they were never static: they were modified by being supplanted with new ideas and by being reduced to a smaller selection of subjects that conformed best with the needs of the society at that time as well as the principal religious ideas.

3.7.1 Ka

In his dead state (after having been subjected to the 'opening of the mouth ritual') the tomb-owner could enjoy all his faculties as when he was alive. This

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[356] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 5.

[357] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 138, l. 10.3.

included the ability to partake of food, to be sustained by the food offerings received or depicted in the representations, and inscriptions in his tomb. The Ka's importance lies in the fact that for the deceased to be able to partake of the offerings, the Ka had to inhabit a recognizable statue or depiction of the deceased, and so the Ka came to represent a guarantee of survival and eternal life. Even a cursory look at the names from the early dynastic periods onwards indicates the importance that 'Ka' played in the composition of the name[358].

Equally the offering formula on the false door of the chapel - a prayer requesting that offerings be given to the deceased, mostly end with the hope that the offerings provided are 'for the Ka of N'. In any event the offering formula always connects with food and so the connection between survival and identity is explicit. Just like the body cannot survive without food, the spirit too needs food to be sustained eternally. This idea helps to reinforce the Ka's commemorative role (the concept of the Ka as the "animating force"[359] that part which has to be revitalized according to Egyptian religious thought). The Ka then plays a significant commemorative role, and in this role it brings into focus once again all the implications of cultural generics.

The (Ka) is part of the tomb-owners static eternity dt linked to the contrasting continuing eternity ($n\underline{h}\underline{h}$) as seen in the cycles of life and death and is "a complex and scarcely definable concept"[360]. The concept defies any one single meaning. It is said to be the interface between the dead and the living, between the individual and society and between the father and the son which continuity, death cannot alter[361]. The role of the Ka in defining a person as

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[358] H. Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, vol. I (Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1935). See also Petrie and Griffith, *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties, Part II*. Also evident in royal names of Dynasties 4, 5 and 6, e.g. Menkaure, Shepeskaf, Djedkare, Userkaf, Neferirkare.

[359] A. H. Gordon, "The ka as an animating force," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 32 (1996): 185-96.

[360] Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* 204.

[361] A. Loprieno, "Drei Leben nach dem Tod: Wieviele Seelen hatten die alten Ägypter," in *Grab und Totenkult im Alten Ägypten*, ed. H. Guksch, E. Hoffmann, and M. Bommas. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 203-06.

having many aspects at the spiritual, social, and material level is now well recognized[362]. The simplest way of understanding it, is as one's "hyper-physical vital force"[363]. According to ancient belief, the god Khnum manufactured each person's Ka and although made at the same time as the physical body, it had no separate existence until the time came "to go to one's Ka" - meaning the time of physical death[364]. At the time of physical death the Ka is no longer active; it becomes so after the opening of the mouth ritual and is then of use in the afterlife. In this way, according to Assmann, the former living being and the spirit jointly continue to live in the monumental tomb just like they had lived when the tomb-owner was alive on this earth[365].

3.7.2 Ma'at in the Old Kingdom

What follows is an attempt to illustrate what Ma'at meant in the Old Kingdom in relation to the monumental tomb and its role in ensuring commemoration and consequently social connectivity. This section continues and expands on what has already been stated in relation to $M\beta^c t$ under the behavioural aspects of Egyptian society especially the quote by Diodorus Siculus (see page 55).

Although this concept of doing the right thing ($M\beta^c t$) is well known ("Die ma'at ist das Gute, und das Gute ist das, was geliebt, gewünscht, und gewollt wird"[366]), there are no explicit philosophically precise statements about $M\beta^c t$ itself. What we have is a variety of direct and indirect references in the five

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[362] P. Kaplony, "Ka," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 3*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1980), 275-82.

[363] Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* 170. Bonnet ("Religionsgeschichte", 1952: 357-63) translated it similarly to Morenz as "Lebenskraft", Kaplony in Lexikon der Ägyptologie III, 275 translates it as "Macht im Leben". This 'vital force' could differ in strength among individuals or in the same individual. cf. A. Bolshakov in *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts*, vol. 3, (Boston, 1991), 5-14.

[364] Assmann, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten* 62, 131, 34.

[365] Ibid. 135.
[366] J. Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1990) 108.

groups of writing: wisdom literature, non-royal tomb chapel biographies, funerary literature, liturgical solar texts, and kingship texts[367]. The ancient Egyptians seem to have had a habit of not expounding fundamental values and the way they were implemented at a practical level within society. Consider their explanation about the creation of humans which is equally obscure even though it was a most serious subject that formed the basis of the very structure of Egyptian society[368].

Egypt at the time of the Old Kingdom was a unified state, its cultural unity being dependent among other things on a complex of fundamental values sanctioned by the deities, and which underlie their major patterns of thought and behaviour. This ethos acts jointly with the quasi-divine role of the pharaoh to produce an unquestionable moral system. This is the progenitor of *M3ˁt* the ideological mother of the Egyptian state. In the Old Kingdom the king is the centre of all power; every act is the outcome of his command and is the acknowledgement of his authority. One does *M3ˁt* because it is what the king wills. This union between a way of thinking and the coercive power of the king combine to define and refine all those significant factors which hold society together, in particular parts of art, religion, justice, and society. *M3ˁt* became a fundamental principle, a set of ethical and customary obligations which formed the backbone of this society. Because it was such a deep-seated principle which had royal and divine support, it becomes indisputable, and because everyone was supposed to practice it, it needs no overt explanation.

In any event this concept of *M3ˁt* is archeologically noticeable in the monumental royal architecture (mortuary temples), Pyramid texts,

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[367] Ibid. 50.

[368] R. B. Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture in the Middle Kingdom: A Dark Side to Perfection* (London: Continuum, 2002) 169-74. He relates the implementation of Ma'at in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant as a practical example of the thinking within society. The peasant is only able to reconcile social injustice and the ideal by coming to terms with what should be and what is reality. This example even forcefully exposes the critical role of the nature of Ma'at. It would be naive to dismiss this tale just because it is from the Middle Kingdom, because equivalent instances of injustice are a common feature of developing societies where the rule of law is still in its infancy.

monumental elite tombs, funerary inscriptions, the iconography, and a few papyri. At one level it can be visualized as eminent symbol for Egypt representing the complicated nature of Egyptian social and religious life and relationships. At another level it contains within it the germ of the idea that of undiluted power and indirect social control, which, as already observed, was the progenitor of the concept of *M3ᶜt*.

In concrete terms to the ancient Egyptian, *M3ᶜt* was what held the universe, the natural world, the state, and the individual together. Helck interprets the hieroglyph for *M3ᶜt* as a base of the world and human life[369].

In the Old Kingdom the achievements of success in this life and survival in the memory of posterity are considered as attributes of *M3ᶜt*. Both of these attributes are symbolized in the monumental grave because:

 "zum einen als äusseres Zeichen des Lebenserfolgs und zum anderen als Äussenhalt der sozialen Erinnerung und Zeichen diesseitiger Fortdauer"[370].

In practical terms there is awareness that while violence and injustice cannot be eliminated they can be tamed by the state (read king/elite). The Pyramid Texts assert the cosmic role of the king and in the ritual where he raises *M3ᶜt*, he is symbolizing that everything in the world is in its proper order[371].

Consequently by Dynasty 5 Old Kingdom society was based on a concept of what is known as "vertical solidarity"[372]. This refers to achievement of social cohesion that is vertical, directed from the king and elite down to the masses of others that need or desire protection. To live according to *M3ᶜt* becomes a guiding principle. *M3ᶜt* serves to assure all of the right way of doing justice, righteousness, solidarity, and the resultant benefits of this social intercourse.

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[369] W. Helck, "Ma'at," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 3*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1980), 1110.

[370] Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* 36.

[371] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* § 1775. "The sky is at peace, the earth is in joy, for they have heard that the King will set right [in place of wrong]".

[372] Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* 248. Some sort of horizontal solidarity must have existed between the elite because their basic interests, (e.g. control of the others and resources) were similar.

There are numerous instances[373] of biographies beginning with the following combination of phrases, and the example here is from the tomb of Neferseshemre at Saqqara in the reign of Teti:

> "I came forth from my town, I went down into the afterlife; I carried out Ma'at for her Lord; I satisfied him with regard to that which he loves; I spoke Ma'at, I carried out Ma'at"[374].

The implication is that Ma'at represents the truth of what is being said and the fairness of what was done. The connection between this principle and the monumental grave is seen in the biographies of the Old Kingdom[375] especially in the references by the tomb-owner to:

- Building the grave where there was no other
- Destroying no other graves in the process of building a grave
- Plundering no other grave for stone and materials
- Paying the craftsmen who built the grave[376]
- Respecting the graves of others who had gone to their Ka's meaning the previous dead
- Carrying out $M3^c t$

The link between $M3^c t$, memory, and society thus comes to the fore and is one based on the idea that $M3^c t$ was a normative fact of man's integration in society, and that there were many ways of showing one's responsibility for $M3^c t$, as the biographies testify and as is repeatedly affirmed in the maxims of Ptahhotep.

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[373] See Kloth, *Die Autobiographischen Inschriften des ägyptischen Alten Reiches* 54-128.

[374] Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age* 224.

[375] Ibid. Texts no. 202, 10, 16, 20, 23, 24

[376] W. K. Simpson, "Topographical Notes on Giza Mastabas," in *Festschrift Elmar Edel*, ed. M. Görg and E. Pusch (1979), 494-95. He notes the similarities in the texts. In the tomb of Nimaatre, "as for his tomb, all the craftsmen who made it, he gave them a very great payment so that they thanked all the gods for him". Hetep-her-akhty's mastaba now at the Leiden Museum reads "people built this for me upon bread, upon beer, upon clothing, upon oil and upon barley in very great quantities". A similar expression can be found in the tomb of Ankhmare (G7837+7843) and Neferkhuwi (G2098).

Further the monumental tomb and its contents indicate to society in particular that the owner is one who is to be remembered, because he has fulfilled his ethical duty and therefore, is worthy of remembrance and thus provides the means by which social connectivity prevails[377].

The emphasis on the personal quality of the individual so predominant in the inscriptions reinforced his social identity and individuality, which ultimately called for commemoration, an act which would not only keep the cosmos in order but keep *Mȝ‘t* functioning for all time. These examples and their literal connection might seem exaggerated, but they do point to the ideal notion of a person, who would be acknowledged, remembered, and venerated. Even if the phrases are general and if the events described did not actually take place, even if the phraseology is about the effective (*mnḫ*) and efficient (*iḳr*) practice of official careers, or from evidence that is entirely from the world of the literate, and even if it has nothing to do with charity or compassion[378], they are still important. The importance of these inscriptions and the underlying religious ideals lies in the fact that they are there at all. They point to the deep-rooted dependent nature of the then prevailing societal attitudes towards the formation and preservation of memory, which is the foundation of all iconography based on a funerary culture and the underlying generics. How far down did these ideals filter, and why they appeared, and to what extent the surviving record represents society practicing them as a whole are difficult questions to answer with certainty. However, if the craftsmanship of the elite tombs and the effort in their interior decoration is anything to go by, then the answer is obvious, that prevailing social concerns must have impinged on the elite and the other people constituting Egyptian society. While *Mȝ‘t* might have been a word used by the elite, surely it is incredulous to argue that doing what was right was not in the vocabulary or the mindset of the masses especially in the developmental phases of a culture.

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[377] For a contrasting view see M. V. Fox, "World Order and Ma'at: A crooked parallel," Journal of the Ancient Near East Society of Columbia University 23 (1995): 37-48.

[378] Franke, "Arme und Geringe im Alten Reich Altägyptens," 112.

Against the above argument that $M3^ct$ as an ethical concept was widespread and practiced in Egyptian society, one can argue that these so-called good works had no component of memory. They were a mere subterfuge by the tomb-owner to avoid having to face any accusations of impropriety in the hereafter. Equally one could also argue that the paintings and reliefs because of their artistic merit were sufficient cause in themselves for commemoration and no other underlying idea was necessary. Reducing arguments thus to a one-dimensional purely tentative prescription and excluding the full range of historical developments is an incorrect and wrong approach and will not be pursued.

The biographical inscriptions also contain ideas about success in this world and the next. They can also be viewed as a sort of critical didactic discourse because they have a message for the viewer, which because of its importance must be remembered. The message may have been one such: in death, those who were highly thought of because they had observed $M3^ct$ joined the community of the blessed dead, and would be forever remembered in communal memory[379]. In contrast for those who did not practice $M3^ct$ the results would be a tragic eternal death. Perhaps the hieroglyphic words ntt and $iwtt$[380], the former means "that what is" and the latter means "that what is not" and therefore cannot exist, may be seen as indirect markers of this social process of being part of, or permanently cast off from an ordered community[381].

The reality of $M3^ct$ is clearly shown by a comparison with the way it was understood at a time of change in the FIP. During the dying days of the Old Kingdom, the first thing to suffer was the ideological basis of the king's power. Side by side is observed the emphasis by the elite protagonists as they

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[379] Assmann, *Stein und Zeit: Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten* 159.

[380] R. Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen: Grosses Handwörterbuch*, vol. 1 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2001) 37 (welche nicht ist) and 440 (das was ist).

[381] A. Assmann, J. Assmann, and C. Hardmeier, eds., *Schrift,Tod und Identität: Das Grab als Vorschule der Literatur im Alten Ägypten, Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Munich: 1983) 67.

attempt single handedly to better the living conditions, to avert famine and violence, to build new temples and places of offering in their nome e.g. as known from the tomb of Itibi (Dynasty 10-11)[382]. Another example is from the tomb of Ankhtifi (Dynasty 11) at Moalla. He says:

> "I am the van of men, the rear of men, for my like has not been, will not be, my like was not born, will not be born. I have surpassed the deeds of my forbears, and my successors will not reach me in anything that I have done for the next million years… I am the champion who has no peer"[383].

A new attitude is obvious in that personal success is no longer measured by the close connection with the institution of kingship but alone on one's own political power[384]; a harbringer of times when individuality is in the ascendant. The doing of $M3^ct$ then points to action leading to independent development of the self, to being commemorated irrespective of dependency on the king, examples of which can be seen in the autobiographies. However, the issues of reconciling the possible divergence between individual and collective memories and of judging whether the individual and collective authorship is historically accurate cannot be verified. How then should one assess their social significance?

One suggestion would be not to think of inscriptions (biographies) as a store of images and their constitutive meaning. If one were to consider remembrance as the process of production and transmission, then the above issues would be peripheral because the focus would be more on the society and the means by which remembrance is evoked, rather than their interpretation. This is not to argue that interpretation is wrong per se. However the first three steps in understanding Egyptian art are to analyze the characteristics of the people for whom it was produced, the composition of

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[382] W. Schenkel, *Memphis, Herakleopolis, Theben. Die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7.-11. Dynastie Ägyptens* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965) 74-81.

[383] Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom: a Study and an Anthology, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 84* 26, no. 5. For full text see Schenkel, *Memphis, Herakleopolis, Theben. Die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7.-11. Dynastie Ägyptens* 45-56.

[384] Gnirs, "Die ägyptische Autobiographie," (Leiden, 1996), 224.

the society that produced it, and the technique of social intercourse that led to its proliferation. The resulting focus would then be primarily on a mode of behaviour constitutive of identity and secondarily on meaning and interpretation.

The conclusion however cannot be denied that the preservation of the social structure and its affiliated memorial function in the iconography, ensured for the elite, the prospect of conquering death and perpetuating the tomb as a symbol of elite distinctiveness with all its consequential connotations. This *Grundgedanken* is certainly evidenced in every period of ancient Egyptian history. It implies that 'all' the members of the community are together, whether in this world or the next and so the rigors of death have been modified. Admittedly these are indirect inferences and arise because "the sources for investigating practical religion and morality are sparse and indirect",[385] but this should not be an excuse for ignoring their force on the culture of ancient Egypt.

Private elite tombs thus existed within a well-defined and ordered memorial functional system, of which religious cult, endowment practices, inscriptions, and decorum were an integral part. By focusing on the interpretation of the representations in terms of social memory, which is a cultural aspect, one can identify strategies by which material culture was employed to commemorate the dead in ancient Egypt. I would go even further and posit that commemoration should be viewed as a widespread consequence of people living together in certain relationships, and although the ancient Egyptian evidence is of a purely funerary nature it should not be restricted to the funerary theme alone.

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[385] J. Baines, "Society, Morality, and Religious practice," in *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, ed. B. E. Shafer (London: Routledge, 1991), 131.

Chapter 4

Characterizing the Generics

The evidence of the existence of the generics has been construed over a certain time frame. Difficulties exist with the combining of material and context, distortions caused by the nature of the archaeological record, and the influence of the changing nature of lived practice. Nevertheless by including both the influences of the material and the immaterial nature of ancient Egyptian culture, it has been possible to identify those concepts of cultural significance which were essential for the Old Kingdom elite in their own right; as being fundamental to the concept of a funerary culture based on the preservation of individual and collective memory. These were common to all elite tombs and are part of what I term the "generics". They refer to the intuitive concepts of identity, individuality, and ideology. Remembrance and Change which play a significant part in their constitution and evolution have already been discussed previously.

The goal of this chapter then is to explain the remaining generics both theoretically and practically, i.e. in terms of their relationship to either the existing world or a possible world and to their real and implied detection in Egyptian artifacts.

Previous chapters have examined most of the necessary ingredients that could possibly be involved in the demarcation of aspects of cultural significance which could have widespread application. At the end of the preceding examination it had become apparent that connected with the perpetuation of memory, there was a clear and consistent pointer to certain widespread cultural aspects. These were referred to as constituting support for the cultural generics, i.e. identity, individuality, and ideology.

These are what I term the generics, and, while not formally expressed, nevertheless are implicit in the iconography of the Old Kingdom, and shall be analyzed in Part 2 of this work.

However before doing so, it would be worthwhile to consider the theoretical basis of these generics. In attempting this, difficulties and distortions that may be apparent in the archaeological record due to accidents of preservation as well as influences of religious and other beliefs, must be kept in mind.

I will not be giving precise definitions of these generics, because I do not believe that it is desirable in dealing with such far-reaching concepts to do so. To go down this path would lead to the cutting down of exploration; it either makes the definitions so short as to be unacceptable, or so long as to be totally incomprehensible. Take for example the definition of ideology as:

> "a set of closely related beliefs or ideas or even attitudes, characteristic of a group or community"[386].

On the surface this appears as a logical and concise definition. On scrutiny however, one begins to wonder what is meant by beliefs and ideas and how can these be established? A similar epistemological difficulty confronts one with the concepts of identity and individuality; both pertain to the self, but what is the self? The controversial natures of these abstract/psychological deliberations are outside the scope of this study[387].

However a clarification of the uniqueness of each of these aspects (identity, ideology, and individuality) is still necessary, because of the considerable divergence of views in sociological literature as to the ideas and effects on the individual and the group, and its interactions as they relate to material culture.

The ideas that affect the individual and the group interactively give rise to those cultural aspects which I referred to as the generics, and which are expressed in different ways in the iconography.

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[386] J. Palmenatz, *Ideology* (London: Macmillan, 1971) 15.

[387] For different views see B. Russell, *Authority and the Individual* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949). See also L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications*, trans. M. Sainsbury: Nature of Human Society (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970).

4.1 Identity

Identity is explored in the context of the tomb-owner's personal and socio-cultural contexts. In particular it is the latter context, which awakens identity aspirations because it intimately connects the individual and the community together in a wide range of life processes. These aspirations can be explicitly and implicitly observed in the material artifacts of funerary culture and are illustrated in the numerous examples found in the elite tombs.

The concept of identity has been traditionally approached in two ways as:

1. The sum of abstract qualities which are connected to the individual[388] which has its basis in both psychology, and behavioural sciences.

2. The particular outcome of interaction and positioning in different social and cultural contexts[389] having its basis in sociology.

Both of these approaches envisage a particular pre-existing notion of the individual and this presupposition is not questioned. The main concern it would appear is to determine the origin of identity. This is not something which we can take on or discard at our whim because it is fundamental to both approaches to identity. In ancient Egypt, whether you were a vizier, a landowner, a high priest, or a normal scribe, one was associated with a certain image because of one's participation in a range of cultural practices. The outcome of this involvement resulted in one being addressed and accepted as a person of a particular kind. In this context identity in the main can be imagined as a sort of exclusivity, as an attachment to a specific position. Both, the personal and social identity of the tomb-owner, because they relate to different aspects of the self are represented in elite tomb iconography.

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[388] M. Mauss, *Sociology and Psychology*, trans. B. Brewster (London: Routledge and Keagan 1979) 29-31. He indicates the self as the site where the organic, the psychological, and the social converge as characterizing the interrelated human condition.
See also J. E. Marcia, "The ego identity status approach to ego identity," in *Ego Identity: A Handbook for psychological research*, ed. J. E. Marcia (New York: Springer, 1993), 3-21.

[389] J. Shotter, "Becoming Someone: Identity and Belonging," in *Discourse and lifespan identity*, ed. J. F. Nussbaum and N. Coupland (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 5-27.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary offers a Latin root – *identitas* from *idem,* 'the same'[390]. Identity thus could refer to:

- sameness of objects, as in A1 is identical to A2 but not to B2; and the consistency or continuity over time, that is the basis for establishing and grasping the definiteness and distinctiveness of something.

At the most fundamental level this would therefore require a comparison of similarities and differences, which is a behavioural activity.

In this study the fact is stressed that the tomb complex served to highlight four levels of the tomb-owner's identity at:

- The individual's personal level: concerning his striking physical traits, and unique desires

- The family level: concerning his responsibility for and towards his family

- The communal level: concerning his responsibility and those normative wishes, which he shared as part of various communities including as a 'citizen' of Egypt

- The political level: concerning what was politically expected of him, as part of an elite segment of society as a valid justification for obligations and priveleges held.

All these levels involve a contradiction, which comes about from the dichotomy of a certain amount of mutual inclusiveness as well as individual distinctiveness. Even when the protagonist was not a living member, the funeral programme would reflect the past identity of the individual. The treatment accorded to him would not only be consistent with the status of the particular person's social position, but would reflect the political and social aspirations of the 'pecking order' to which he belonged. The nature of that particular society and maybe the wishes of his progeny would also be an element of the extent and nature of the funeral practices which would be appropriate[391].

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[390] *Webster's New Third International Dictionary: Unabridged*, 1123.

[391] O'Shea, *Mortuary Variability* 32-39.

In contrast to personal identity, social identity has been described as "that part of an individual self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the values and emotional significance attached to that membership"[392]. As a concept it does not explain how to measure emotional significance, nor does it define the number of groups an individual must belong to, for it to be considered established. The starting point then is again the individual. Because the group is composed of individuals each of whom have diverse personalities, social identity transcends the individual. It has as its raison d'être all those recognized and accepted shared values, in the formation of which most individuals have very little input. It is these shared and connected values, which define oneself as part of a certain group[393]. Social identity refers to ways in which individuals and collectives interact, which then results in the creation and maintenance of the norms and values of society[394]. For example, I define myself as an Australian because I accept and recognize the commonality of values which are part of the collective norm of being a member of the Australian community. These have evolved over years and over which I have very little, if any influence. My acceptance into the community is a reflection of my accepting, following, and projecting my social identity in terms of the prevailing patterns of normative social behaviour for a person in my particular social position[395]. However in the sharing of common

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[392] H. Taifel, "Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison," in *Differentiation between Social Groups*, ed. H. Taifel (London: Academic Press, 1978), 61-76.

[393] Assmann, "Todesbefallenheit im Alten Ägypten," 231.

[394] M. Díaz-Andreu et al., *The Archaeology of Identity: approaches to gender, age, status, ethnicity and religion* (London Routledge, 2005) 1-12.

[395] I am not referring to the sort of ethnic identity which can only be perceived on the basis of cultural differences and/or common descent but to the sort of 'ethnic identity' which is an aspect of relationship and not a property of a specific group. A modern illustration is the case of the 'migrating countries' e.g. Australia/Canada which represent a cross-section of the world's cultures, resulting in layers of identities, beneath a state imposed one .

cultural norms there is an effective crossing over of group specific boundaries[396] and ultimately in an Australian social identity.

In ancient Egypt the crossing over of cultural traits between the South and the North has been suggested by Kaiser[397] which may have resulted in the formation of a unified Egyptian culture/state as seen in the decoration of the Narmer palette, the ceremonial knives, and combs.

It is clear that in contrast, I have far greater influence as regards my personal identity.

That social identity by stressing the group does so at the expense of the individual is evident but it is equally true that groups and inter-group relations play a significant role in one's self definition, and that social identity sustains belief structures.

Long before the royal cult was established, the belief in human survival beyond the grave (as evidenced by an ample supply of grave goods) is well attested in the prehistoric cemeteries[398]. It is also evidenced later in the Pyramid Texts:

> "your bones shall not perish, your flesh shall not sicken[399],
>
> "receive your water, gather together your bones, stand on your feet, raise yourself to this bread of yours, that you may be effective thereby, that you may be powerful thereby, and that you may give some to him who is in your presence[400]",
>
> "cast off your bonds, throw off the sand which is on your face[401]",
>
> "you have your milk which is in the [breast] of your mother Isis[402]", and such like.

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[396] G. Emberling, "Ethnicity in complex societies," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5 (4) (1997): 295-340.

[397] W. Kaiser, "Trial and Error," *Göttinger Miszellen* 149 (1995): 5-14.

[398] K. Bard, "The Egyptian Predynastic: A Review of the Evidence," *Journal of Field Archaeology*, no. 21/3 (1994): 265-88. See also B. Midant-Reynes, *The Prehistory of Egypt: From the First Egyptians to the First Pharaohs*, trans. I. Shaw (Oxford: Blackwell 1992) 100-66.

[399] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* § 725.
[400] Ibid. § 858.
[401] Ibid. § 1878.

These are parts of spells indicating a belief in life after death, and encompass all the types of identity which I proposed on page 139 other than the political one, because politics as understood today did not exist then. For this we have to turn to indirect inferences, expressions of political ideology as delegates of the king, and on the emergence of the self-conscious person reflecting his ideology in autobiographical texts[403].

The transmission of culture involves to some extent also the transmission of political ideology because it is through this means that an ordered society and identity can be maintained. The king's main political aims were that of maintaining order within Egypt and that of protecting its borders. One way in which this is reflected is in the different names of the king[404]. Prior to Dynasty 4 these names echo the political reality of the times as follows:

The Horus name is the oldest royal name encompassing the god of kingship in the person who resides in the palace.

The "two ladies" name incorporates the cobra goddess and the vulture goddess, necessary for the protection of Lower and Upper Egypt respectively.

The "Golden Horus" name probably had some connection to the sun and the sky stressing the connections of the king to these elements.

The *nswt bity* is one of the two names which appear within a cartouche symbolizing the fact that the king rules over everything. It identifies the person who resides in the palace as the ruler of Lower and Upper Egypt.

The beginning of a political ideology is to be seen in the act of assuming in addition to the above four names that of son of Ra which Djedefre does in Dynasty 4. What might appear at first glance a mere chronological assimilation of names was in reality a chronological assimilation of political power? At one stroke all the gods and their cults are linked to the person of the king. As the highest priest he is responsible for the well-being of the gods,

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[402] Ibid. § 1883.

[403] J. Assmann, "Sepulkrale Selbstthematisierung im Alten Ägypten," in *Selbstthematisierung und Selbstzeugnis: Bekenntnis und Geständnis*, ed. A. Hahn and V. Kapp (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), 213-21.

[404] For details of the development of the different names see: Kahl, "*nsw und bit*: Die Anfänge," (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 307-351.

a consequence of which is the flow on effect to society as a whole. The price for this is an eternal ideological dependency of all the people on the king as consisting of a particular version of the office of kingship – that accepted by the gods. By mid. Dynasty 5 this political ideology is exemplified by Nuiserre taking on the title of King of Lower and Upper Egypt (*nb tᶜwy*). All and everything on earth belongs to the king and the only way to prosper is to ally oneself as close to him as possible.

The elite in taking over delegated powers from the king then implicitly take on a particular social identity and a role. In addition they are responsible for maintaining and propagating his political ideology. Because the effective exercise of political power depends largely upon economic control, the elite's social identity then reflects political ideology, the seeds of which were sown in the earlier periods. This is evidenced in their various titles appearing prior to Dynasty 4 as seen in the seal impressions, e.g. incorporating executive power[405], leader of escorts[406], leader of officials[407], administration of royal revenue[408], and in the funerary cult[409].

Indeed as far back as King Den persons were designated as royal seal bearers (*ḫtmw.bity*)[410]. Therefore the person who carried the royal seal was also the agent of the king and the *ḫtmw-bity / nswt* must have exercised symbolic as well as executive authority.

Embedded in this is the fact that the materialization of ideas into ideology was the responsibility of two sections of the polity whose social identity is well

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[405] P. Kaplony, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit*, vol. I, *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1963) 23. For the seal impressions indicationg power see P. Kaplony, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit*, vol. III, *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1963) figs. 298-300. For a general survey of early administration see T. A. H. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt* (London: Routledge, 1999) 109-49, esp. 28-33.

[406] Kaplony, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit* vol. III, fig. 872.

[407] Ibid. fig. 267 & 769.

[408] Ibid. fig. 214, 29 & 862.

[409] Ibid. fig. 368-70.

[410] W. B. Emery, T. G. H. James, and A. Klasens, *Excavations at Saqqara: Great Tombs of the First Dynasty*, vol. III (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1958) pl. 81.37.

established: the king and the elite as far as the maintenance of a community order was concerned, and the priests whose main task was to supply the underlying religious underpinning.

The tendency for the lower echelons to follow the beliefs of the higher ones is well known[411]. Consider the fact that the Pyramid Texts were most probably compiled from earlier sources and were the result of different traditions acting upon them- which must have been known to some of the elite[412]. The development of the non-royal mortuary ritual in line with that reserved for the royals would then seem natural. Further while there is no Old Kingdom tomb with a burial chamber inscribed with continuous texts, pictorial and textual description of offerings are found in a few tombs[413]. The implication that the non-royal elite would also like to be transformed into a blessed dead ($s\underline{3}\underline{h}.w$) with a view to being admitted into the society of the gods does not seem far-fetched. He (the elite) would then continue to live with the social identity which he possessed when alive, and which in death was reconfirmed. All that the elite had to do was to ensure that what was described both in painting/relief and text was a reconfirmation of his social identity when alive. As Assmann points out convincingly, personal identity is for the Egyptian, a function of social integration and approval and a human being is a person only within the limits of the image which the (significant) others hold of him[414].

It is thus seen that in this case, identity is primarily constituted through discourse, language, society, and the regulating symbols. Since this is itself subject to varying nuances, the concept of social identity is contextual and therefore relational.

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[411] J. G. Platvoet and K. van der Toorn, *Pluralism and Identity: studies in ritual behaviour* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 42-45.

[412] Taylor, *Death and the afterlife in Ancient Egypt* 193-200.

[413] James and Apted, *The Mastaba of Khentika called Ikhekhi* pls. 34-38.

[414] J. Assmann, "Persönlichkeitsbegriff und -bewusstsein," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 4*, ed. W. Helck, E. Otto, and W. Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982), 963-78. It seems that Assmann is fusing the concepts of personal and social identities, which in my view are two connected, yet separate issues.

Zijlmans & Van Kooij claim that identity is unique; therefore it cannot be used as a concept for comparative research[415]. However they only consider a person's distinctive individual identity. They neglect social identity, which is bestowed by society on the individual, based on his/her interaction with society, which may change over time and not be just self-generated. Different subjects including people, are unique but this should not inhibit classifying, comparing &/or researching them, etc. It is restrictive to only consider one immediately apparent notion of identity and deny the implications of wider definition and related analysis.

A simple example will make this clear. The Tasmanian tiger is unique and is extinct and so is a dust particle from the planet Mars which is non-living. In a classification system that groups all objects which are not alive today together, the Tasmanian tiger and this particle would be in the same class and thus could be studied. The Tasmanian tiger could then be compared and considered in the same classification system (or comparative research) with something totally alien like the existing dust particle from Mars.

4.2 Individuality

The development of individuality is one process which parallels the slackening of the bonds between the supreme, the senior, the junior, and the dispossessed in Old Kingdom Egypt. It is the outcome of the continuous struggle for betterment in mankind in both the material and the spiritual sense. Limited archaeological data means that it is only evident in elite tomb iconography and then manifested as an atypical form of behaviour. It (the behaviour) is thus a psychological phenomenon in so far as it relates to activities/outcomes/actions of certain personality traits, and strictly speaking is not immediately part of culture. However when these traits become assimilated into being beliefs, system of rules and finally shared behaviour across society and time they become part of culture, and must be included in

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[415] K. Zijlmans and K. R. van Kooij, *Site-seeing: places in culture, time and space* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2006) 6. The idea has its origins in a book by J. Z. Smith, "To Take Place", (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987) 35. Smith talks about 'absolute uniqueness'. Even if something is unique it still has relative comparable features and so the concept of Zijlmans/van Kooij is open to question.

any study of cultural aspects. A model is developed such that accidental/erroneous/negligent acts can be discounted in order to make individuality visible as a special form of behaviour, yet separate from that which is a one off.

The very existence of a community is predicated on the existence of the individual and the collective group. In order to project individuality and consequently a certain identity, we have to have a group or at least other individuals on whom this is projected. Otherwise it would be meaningless, as projection on to, and acceptance by the group is an essential requirement. Earlier ideas were predicated upon the assumption that individuality is the result of a fundamental conflict between the individual and the group hence the need for an absolute sovereign, an idea that can be traced back to Thomas Hobbes[416]. This assumption of conflict is now open to question, "Society and the individual are not antagonists"[417]. As this thesis is not about political conflict, it will only examine this concept's unique characteristics that are relevant for the analysis of the motifs, in elite tomb decoration.

Any reference to the tomb-owner as an individual implies that he is the central player in the context of his particular tomb. It is obvious, that human beings are characterized by individual differences, and that no two are one hundred percent similar. This is evident when one projects one's differences to other humans, for it is then that one begins to realize oneself as a certain type of person. This self-differentiation may be the result of inter alia: desires of self-esteem enhancement, achievement of positive respect, competition, greed, or just simple reduction of uncertainty.

So individuality in order to be comprehensible is expressed as a certain type of behaviour which at the most lasts for the lifetime of the individual. This behaviour arises when one tries to define oneself in a way that accentuates the uniqueness of the self vis-à-vis the differences from others, be it in individual behaviour, in hankering after social approval, in the stress that one

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[416] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. M. Oakeshott (New York: Touchstone, 1997) 98-102.

[417] R. Benedict, *Patterns of culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989) 251-53. "…no civilization has in it any element which in the last analysis is not the contribution of an individual".

places on certain ideas or objects, in interpersonal relationships or indeed any action that may be personally gratifying. The outcome of these social processes becomes the wanting to achieve a particular presentation of the self, and hence the notion of individuality which may result in the articulation of a distinct identity. Individuality then is not a fixed idea in one's head; rather it is the way one wants to appear to society and which may manifest itself in various ways and times.

In a study of modern individuality and the group, certain characteristics were documented[418]. To the extent that this was a contemporary study of modern man, not all of their conclusions can be applied to ancient man, but key facts emerge which follow through irrespective of time. These indicate that individuality is a constantly changing phenomenon, being constantly restructured by the action of both personal and social identity in a classic struggle to find out who we are and what we are. The following is a summary of the relevant applicable characteristics of individuality mentioned in that study:

1. Individuality is a highly variable form of behaviour and perception differing among fellow humans as well as across particular situations.
2. It is a product of societal and psychological forces.
3. There exist certain interdependencies between identity, individuality, and ideology.

The ancient Egyptian elite tomb-owner was no different. He too wanted to appear to posterity in a certain type of way, and this is evident from the fact that there is no one set type of iconography with no differentiation whatsoever. So does this mean that all tombs show individuality? To answer this question we must delve into the reasons why individuality would arise in a state which at least in the beginning, consisted of subservient family members.

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[418] J. C. Turner et al., "Expressing and Experiencing Individuality and the Group," in *Individuality and the Group*, ed. T. Postmes and J. Jetten (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 16-17.

Prior to Dynasty 3 there was a distinct division between the institution of dominant quasi-divine kingship and the related subservient kinship. It is, when the emphasis changes from the dominant divine nature of kingship to a more human actuality, that the kinsmen develop ideas about their own individuality. This is seen in the art of the late Dynasty 4 mastabas and onwards[419]. Apart from a loosening of the bonds of king and kin that this implies, there is evidence that from middle Dynasty 5 onwards, a new class of officials arose, who did not live in the capital but locally administered the various outlying provinces[420]. The result was the gradual rise of an upper class that was wealthy, independent, and could afford to project a form of behaviour and perception different from their fellow humans and across particular situations. Corresponding with this, there is evidence of religious change in the prominence of Ra, reflected in the sun temples as well as the first great upswing in the worship of Osiris. One consequence of this is to free the deceased from reliance for his material needs in posterity from the king, as the king of the dead now was Osiris[421]. The deceased also came

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[419] Stevenson-Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* 157-75 & 85-91. Prior to Dynasty 5, evidence of the way an elite should be represented is evident in the ideal of sheer perfection, individual differences in physicality, and relates to the understanding of the elite by the elite. From Dynasty 5 onwards the tendency is to have a less differentiated view, one in which the representation of an elite tends towards that which is understood by all. However the idea behind the ideal as such does not change (the desire to overcome death and to continue to exist in an undying environment in the hereafter). All that changes, is in the representation, which goes from being a specific realistic one as in Dynasty 4 to a general, non-specific one, in which the individual is recognized not in a specific sense but as an individual as such. This then becomes the norm and is evidenced in the ensuing periods. This tendency may have been accelerated by "the increasing number of men who were able to climb the Egyptian equivalent of the corporate ladder" during Dynasties 5 through 6: one element of which success was the ability to have a tomb and related iconography (See also Russmann,"Egyptian Sculpture" London, 1989: 31).

[420] H. Altenmüller, "Old Kingdom: Fifth Dynasty," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 2*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 597.

[421] M. Smith, "Democratization of the Afterlife," in *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, ed. W. Wendrich, et al. (Los Angeles: 2009), 1-15. The link is: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/70g428wj
He gives evidence of non-royal individual access to royal ritual utterances and asserts that democratization is in reality just a consolidation of a practice already evident in the tomb of Metjen (Dynasty 4). However his stress on time frames and dating criteria while important tend to obscure the fact that change is endemic all the time, even when one cannot date it.

increasingly to depend on the living kinsmen for his needs in the hereafter, as the biographical inscriptions evidence.

These changes were gradual, but they could well be the triggers that ultimately provided the elite with their own innate sense of worth articulated as individuality, and which was ultimately expressed in their tomb art (also evident in the provincial tombs)[422] for all to see in perpetuity.

The issues as to how this individuality was expressed and its recognition as such are difficult to answer.

The reality was that in Old Kingdom Egypt, the masses of individuals were coerced to follow the normative beliefs of the king and his elite in all areas, which must have had important limitations on the range of options available for expressing individuality within their cultural context.

Yet the fact that individuality of the elite is discernible from the tomb art may point to stimuli other than causative, and by implication to other aspects of the person. A general and a specific example are illustrative:

Slaughtering scenes are a common feature of entrance thicknesses in the Old Kingdom tombs at Giza, Saqqara, and Abusir but after mid. Dynasty 5 slaughtering is a regular west wall scene[423].

Iymery depicts his father Shepeskafankh, in presumably his carrying-chair in his tomb.

Although tomb decoration is geared towards a particular individual, it rarely shows him as one such, rather he is always part of the elite, the group of officials of the king. Therefore the representations follow clear rules, as to the type of scenes and the way they are depicted. The rules impose a system of graded ranks through size differentiation (hierarchy), a spotlighting system which ensures that the tomb-owner is always at the centre of attention, a

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[422] E. Edel, *Die Felsengräber der Qubbet el Hawa bei Assuan, 2 Abt: Die althieratischen Topfaufschriften. 1.Bd. Die Topfaufschriften aus den Grabungsjahren 1960-1963 und 1965. 2.Teil: Text.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970) 94-107. Many of the tombs at Qubbet-el-Hawa evidence a tradition of inscribing the offering vessels such that they identify the food being offered as well as the individual responsible for the offering. This is unique and serves to identify the people concerned, their connection and support of each other.

[423] Harpur and Scremin, *Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom: studies in orientation and scene content* 56-57.

system of spatial organization by registers as a way of delimiting and describing a particular theme. However, our experience of objects must also play a role here and must provide a further basis for understanding which goes beyond physicality and spatial orientation. As far as the pre-ordained system is concerned, it implies at the very least social acquiescence and cultural coherence, and more importantly the apparent absence of individuality. However, as soon as we mix life experience into the equation the presence of individuality raises its head. This is the reason why individualistic traits are not obvious and apparent, and seen with difficulty.

The tomb-owner is always represented in three forms, as:

1. The recipient of a sacrificial offering
2. A land owner viewing his estates and in action scenes
3. A member of the elite or as the king's official, enjoying the life of plenty in the company of his family and non-family

In these forms the tomb-owner's following status and identity characteristics are fixed: loyal courtier, successful member of the elite and a respected member of society, provider of the community, upholder of right order, caring landowner, talented scribe, brave soldier, loving husband and father.

All these characteristics represent the essentials; the ideal of a successful person and therefore would be wished for by every tomb-owner as proscribed by the rules of decorum[424].

One can also argue that ancient Egypt was a collectivist society, because the means of production were controlled by the king as personification of the Egyptian State and as such, individuality was not as preeminent a 'virtue' as in modern Anglo Saxon countries and Europe.

Where glimpses of any sentiment of individuality are revealed in the iconography/texts of the tomb-owner, these are subsidiary aspects but the

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[424] A good illustration of these is to be found in the multi roomed chapels of the officials of Teti (but they are not restricted to these). The only exception is the reference to a brave soldier, which appears only in two tombs that of Yenti at Deshahsheh and Kaem-heset at Saqqara (see Stevenson Smith, "A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom", New York:1978, 212).

sentiments are there nevertheless, tearing aside the veil of anonymity so typical of Egyptian art.

Consider and compare the example of the slaughtering motif in the graves of Ty[425], Mereruka[426], and Ptahotep[427].

Ty's tomb has a full 'narrative' sequence all in one register, showing:

- Lassoing of the bull with erect penis
- Pinning the bull to the ground
- Sharpening of the butchering knife
- Taking out the heart of the beast
- Holding a bowl for the blood of the animal by a man described as a butcher, followed by another person sharpening a knife
- Hacking off the foreleg

 In total there are 13 participating persons. It is as if a series of film slides are being shown in sequence. In contrast, in the slaughtering scene in Mereruka's tomb, there is the sense of rush and urgency. Here there are 2 registers with 16 butchers all busy with carving up the four bulls, which are already pinned to the ground. One of the participants is shown with a foreleg ready to carry it to the offering chamber. Accordingly one is left with just the essentials, there is no rhythm, and the whole register seems to be asymmetric. In the two scenes in Ptahotep's tomb (West and North walls) the standard slaughtering motifs of knives, butchers, animals, and short captions are depicted. However on the North Wall there is also depicted what Harpur calls "a procedure without parallel in butchery scenes of the Old Kingdom"[428], which I understand to indicate a motif which is not seen elsewhere. Here the fifth man who is holding the haunch of a slaughtered ibex, extends his hand

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[425] L. Épron et al., *Le Tombeau de Ti*, vol. I (Le Caire: L'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939) pls. XIII-XV.

[426] P. Duell, *The Mastaba of Mereruka*, 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938) vol. I, pl. 54.

[427] J. E. Quibell et al., *The Ramesseum and The Tomb of Ptah-hetep* (London: Histories & Mysteries of Man Ltd., 1989) pls. XXXIV, XXXVI.

[428] Y. Harpur and P. Scremin, *The Chapel of Ptahotep* (Oxford: Oxford Expedition to Egypt, 2008) 279.

to a man in a pointed kilt (whose title is Overseer of the wab- priests of the palace and the physician, Irenakhet), saying "examine this blood". The physician grasps the butcher's forearm and replies, "it is pure"[429].

In all of the above-mentioned three scenes the function of the motif (slaughtering) is clearly not an issue and the stages in the slaughtering scenes are well documented[430]. However the scenes also include variables which while not being an essential element of the motif (e.g. erect penis), add to it a distinctive character. Perhaps in depicting the normal and the understandable with no transitory elements there was an element of individuality, which, while not going beyond the bounds of what was allowed, yet tried to show a distinctive and individual quirk, which could be distinguished as an example of individualistic behaviour. The examining of the blood certainly points in this direction.

Another example is from the rock cut tomb G7721 of Kaherptah which possesses 29 freestanding statues, the most of any Old Kingdom tomb[431]. The almost total exclusion here of any other form of decoration, is evidence of a sort of personality that was willing to depart from the common standards, and express his desire to create something different from his peers.

Another example is from the tomb of Nefermaat and Atet at Medum (Dynasty 4), where the tomb-owner is himself seen snaring birds. This is in itself an unusual depiction because it is usually the servants of the tomb-owner, who do the provisioning. What makes it even more interesting is the size of the tomb-owner, the number of birds in the net as well as the size of the

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[429] P. Montet, *Les scènes de la vie privée dans les tombeaux égyptiens de l'Ancien Empire* (Strasbourg Librairie Istra, 1925) 158.

[430] A. Eggebrecht, *Schlachtungsbräuche im Alten Ägypten und ihre Wiedergabe im Flachbild bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches* (Munich: Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich, 1973) 53-57.
See also dissertation by S. Ikram, *Choice Cuts: Meat Production in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 44-54 & 145-82.

[431] T. Kendall, "An unusual Rock-Cut Tomb at Giza," in *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean and the Sudan*, ed. W. K. Simpson and W. M. Davis (Boston: Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts 1981), 104-14. In comparison the tomb of Debehen (Dynasty 4) at Giza has 13 engaged statues, the tomb of Qar and Idu has 7 statues, the tomb of Djedi has 11 standing statues, in Irukptah there are 14 statues, and in the tomb of Queen Meresankh lll there are 20 statues (14 being standing females and 6 being seated miniature scribes).

inscriptions, all of which point to something that is not quite in keeping with accepted practice. Other clap-net scenes in this tomb show the sons of the tomb-owner and other unnamed persons engaging a clap-net too, but these do not have the same number of birds, the size of the participants is smaller and the inscriptions are nowhere as large[432].

Again the depiction of Sekerkhabau[433], Rahotep[434], and Wepemnefret[435] with a mustache is a genre of the elite that is prevalent in Dynasties 3 and 4 and which is probably a "Bildnis nach dem Leben"[436] but is then never to be seen again.

These examples indicate that perhaps the Egyptian did think of his person in an instinctive way, and perhaps this is a possible common human trait. He may have understood the Egyptian conception of life and death, and its traditional portrayal. In due course, time and the conditions of his life affected a process in which he went beyond that of accepted normative selection to that of private natural selection. It is this, particularly in the context of the individual scenes to be described in Part 2, which yield glimpses of the private and related expressions of difference and maybe individuality.

So how can one describe something as individual when one cannot get inside the ancient Egyptian mind, how can one decide if the object was not the result of an oddity, fluke, or accident? How are we then to understand the aspect and/or character of individuality, which Nefermaat and the other examples given, sought to convey?

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[432] Idea suggested by Dr. R. Van Walsem in private discussions. Article in press.

[433] M. A. Murray, *Saqqara Mastabas*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Egyptian Research Account: Tenth Year 1904* (London: 1989) pl. I.

[434] Harpur and Scremin, *The tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep at Maidum: Discovery, Destruction and Reconstruction* 136, fig. 19.

[435] E. R. Russmann, "Aspects of Egyptian Art: Two-dimensional Representation," in *Eternal Egypt: masterworks of ancient art from the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 29, fig. 15.

[436] H. Junker, "Das Lebenswahre Bildnis in der Rundplastik des Alten Reiches," *Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, no. 19 (1951): 401- 06.

To answer these questions individuality must be divided into the following two groups:

1. Type 'A': individuality characterized by behaviour that spreads across a time frame and eventually destroys itself by replacement.
2. Type 'B': individuality characterized by behaviour that is aberrant, not followed across a time frame, and is restricted to one or a few individuals, e.g. painting the seasons as in the tombs of Mereruka and Khnetika[437].

It was previously established (page 147), that for individuality to exist as a behavioural pattern it had to be in a particular context. Accordingly my donning a red peaked hat in the Netherlands Institute for Near Eastern Studies library, would qualify in the first instance as an expression of type 'B' individuality. However for this behaviour to be truly individualistic in the type 'A' sense, and to eliminate the noise which may be the result of error/negligence, it will have to be carried across a time frame and become an acceptable norm in its own right in a similar context. Admittedly the question of a time frame is an artificial construct to distinguish between intentional and unintentional behaviour. Repetition of such, being acknowledged as an indication of intention calls for no objective quantification of time, because for it to occur, some sort of time-period is an a priori. This is crucial if all difference is not to be understood as an instance of individuality. It is only, when the manifested behaviour transcends from being merely idiosyncratic to that which is ubiquitous, and accepted in society, that one can refer to it as an example of what was once individualistic behaviour. Of course when this happens and all of Leiden University students start to wear a red peaked hat in the library, it can no longer be classified as individuality, but it is a confirmation of what was *once* individualistic behaviour in the more meaningful type 'A' sense.

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[437] Duell, *The Mastaba of Mereruka* vol. I, pl. 7. See also James and Apted, *The Mastaba of Khentika called Ikhekhi* pl. X.

Understood as providing a definition in the sense of a criterion and not as an exclusive definition, this approach has merit. This will then not only point to change but how, and when that change became accepted in society. This will also assist in recognizing that everything novel is not individualistic and that everything individualistic could be part of the way of doing things in the past.

If one applies the logic in the above paragraph to the examples already given it will be seen that the actions of Nefermaat and Kaherptah while showing aberrant behaviour are to be considered type 'B' individualistic, because their behaviour in that context was not followed across a time frame. The examples of Rahotep and Wepemnofret with a mustache likewise, and similarly the examining of the blood representation in the tomb of Ptahhotep fall into the definition of wider individualistic behaviour. Numerous other examples in this category can be cited, most well known among these are the reserve heads, the statue known as Sheikh-el-beled, the bust of Ankh-haf, the Louvre scribe and the statue of Hemiunu[438].

However the slaughtering scenes in the tombs of Ty, Mereruka are possible examples of narrow type 'A' individuality which are carried through in different periods including any fine distinctions. While this may seem arbitrary its justification will lie in the fact of the discovery of the first instance of a slaughtering scene, and this given the sparse record is difficult to establish with certainty.

A few more examples will make this line of reasoning clearer of trying to equate the first instance of change as an example of type 'A' individuality which because of the scarcity of archeological remains may never be known and of the dangers of accepting all change as individualistic.

In the period prior to the reign of Khufu examples of interior decorated chambers with offering lists exist at Maidum[439] and in the third and fourth Dynasties the funeral stelae are found encased in the brickwork of the

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[438] Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* pl. 7-9, 18 (c), 14-15, 18 (a), 6 (d).

[439] W. M. F. Petrie, *Medum* (London: David Nutt, Strand., 1892) pl. 9-28.

mastabas[440]. The stelae serve the functions of identity, cult, and memory, because depicted on all of them is the funerary repast motif, offering lists and identifying inscriptions.

Under Khufu the quantity of decoration was curtailed and is substituted by the slab stelae which now are placed outside the tomb[441] which contains no interior chapels or decoration. Theories of royal intolerance and a scarcity of craftsmen as these would have been otherwise occupied in the building of the pyramids have been proposed[442]. However it is the element of behavioural choice by the individual tomb-owner not to follow the anterior examples at Maidum, where there already existed decorated interior chambers with offering lists and to depict a single object which was both an elite type of burial equipment, and which served his essential needs, that is relevant to the issue of individuality. The single slab stelae contained all the necessary elements essential for a continuing life of the tomb-owner in the memories of those left behind and in the hereafter while at the same time in keeping with decorum.

By Dynasty 5 of the Old Kingdom, the stelae move inside the tomb[443]. It is when the stela moves inside the tomb, predominantly in Dynasty 5, that a separation of the cultic, the memorial, and the identity functions is realized;

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[440] H. Junker, *Giza*, vol. 1 (Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky A.G., 1929) 26.

[441] Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* 159. Examples of slab stelae are found in the nucleus cemeteries G1200, G2100, G4000. They are set in an exterior chapel of mud brick which surrounds the recess on the south side of the east face of the mastaba, e.g. Setji-hekenet (G1227) / Cairo JE 37.726. Fifteen such stelae are known, for details see Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis* Appendices A, C, D. In mastabas numbered G1201, 1203, 1205, 1207, 1223, 1225, 1227, 1235, 2120, 4140, 4840. See also tombs numbered G2135, 4150, 4860 and fragment in Junker, *Giza* pl. 8, 26, 38b.

[442] P. Der Manuelian, "The Problem of the Giza Slab Stelae," in *Stationen: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Ägyptens, Rainer Stadelmann Gewidmet*, ed. H. Guksch and D. Polz (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 115-34. See also P. Der Manuelian, *Slab Stelae of the Giza Necropolis* (New Haven: Pennsylvania-Yale Expedition to Egypt, 2003) 133-39. The evidence for this behaviour is from the mastabas in the Western side of the Great Pyramid and most likely points to a purposeful and intentionally chosen form of tomb decoration and supply scarcity.

[443] P. Jánosi, "The tomb of officials: Houses of Eternity," in *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids*, ed. J. P. O'Neill (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 31. For fuller details see also Jánosi, *Giza in der vierten Dynastie. Die Baugeschichte und Belegung einer Nekropole des Alten Reiches Band I: Die Mastabas der Kernfriedhöfe und die Felsgräber* 275-96.

the slab stela disappears. The cultic function becomes confined mainly to the false door and the Western wall; while the identity/memorial function is seen in the expanding iconography, e.g. in the representation of the tomb-owner, in the variation in his attire and adornment and in the way he displays his wealth, power, and access to royal favour and of course the biographical inscriptions[444]. Admittedly this separation would lend itself to more choices which are manifested as different behaviours and this is exactly what is observed in the tomb decoration. What begins as an act of individualistic behaviour sows the seeds of its own destruction when it is copied and followed by the many and when society and its beliefs become more refined. We may never know who started this form of behaviour because of the lack of evidence but the search for it can be informative.

Again in the Old Kingdom the statue of the tomb-owner is hidden in the serdab, in line with one function of the mastaba which is to conceal and protect and he is able to partake of the offerings in total privacy.

However from the Middle kingdom, the mastaba is no longer the predominant form of burial but the rock-tomb and the concealment function becomes redundant. The statue moves to the open part of the cult chamber and is able to take part in the cultic rituals. This (making visible and placing the statue in the open cult chamber) is not a random act but one which was deliberately chosen. The tomb-owner can now not only be directly related with the food offerings but can be part of all the rituals/ceremonies depicted on the adjoining walls in line with the formation and refinement of cultural memory the generics of which are identity, individuality and ideology and which become increasingly important.

Changes in emphasis in textual inscriptions are another example. Consider the appeals to the living and their eventual subtle changes. From mid-Dynasty 5 these start as a request of worship for the benefit of the deceased, in due course an additional request to visitors to purify themselves before entry into

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[444] Harpur and Scremin, *Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom: studies in orientation and scene content*. The authors detail chronological development of Old Kingdom elite tombs and their internal decoration.

the tomb is added and soon thereafter we see the addition of prohibitive spells and threats plus humble requests[445].

In the tomb of Ankhmahor Dynasty 6, we see the appeal being extended specifically to the 80 men including the embalmers and administrators of the necropolis, with a request to place the lid securely on its mother (read sarcophagus)[446]. A similar request is also seen in the tomb of Khentika.

We are thus faced with changes in the architecture, the iconography, the function of the tomb, as well as the textual representations, which may or may not have been followed across time. Taken as one of a kind they may appear as idiosyncratic type 'B' individualistic behaviour, as an indication of change. However taken in the context of development of ideas across a time frame, the changes when and where these first occur, are what I would refer to as type 'A' individualistic behaviour, and if these can be followed over time will serve to provide an insight into the development of society and religion. What is important is to note that change as expressed by behaviour may be synonymous with individuality, but it does not have to be so. The action denotes change but can only be truly individualistic in the narrow sense of the term if imitated and accepted across a time frame. Of-course one could argue that there are grades of individuality, that changes take place along a continuum, but this would open up the question of quantifying something which we can only detect but analyze with great difficulty due to the absence of objectively verifiable causality. Therefore individuality can exist in both type 'A' and type 'B' forms of behaviour, the emphasis on either of which will depend on the research demands.

All cultures indicate in some manner changes in their society[447]. When this individualistic behaviour becomes a widespread phenomenon especially in a

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[445] J. Sainte Fare Garnot, *L'appel aux vivants dans les textes funéraires égyptiens des origines à la fin de l'Ancien Empire* (Le Caire: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1938). Here the change in emphasis in the way the appeals are structured across the various time periods is illustrated.

[446] A. Badawy, *The Tomb of Nyhetep-ptah at Giza and the Tomb of Ankhmahor at Saqqara* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 15.

particular context, and can be traced in the iconography, it becomes a valuable avenue for detecting change.

The constraints of my study mean that I can only trace this for the Old Kingdom, for the selected motifs and within the limits of the archaeological evidence.

4.3 Ideology

Ideology is the science of ideas usually confined within a socio-political and economic context. It is primarily concerned with the need to address certain existing belief systems in society and it functions in reinforcing, elevating or relegating, existing ideologies.

In ancient Egypt social inequality may have been the reason why a particular ideology arose in the first place.

Ideology in ancient Egypt functioned as a disguise for the elite's competition for power in areas which mattered to it: the social and the religious. It is in these areas that the elite constructed or invented belief systems that enhanced their position at the expense of the others (control and dominance). Ideology thus served to ease tensions within the dominant group by concentrating the focus of attention on the subordinate group.

For the ideologies to succeed they had to be accepted by the others resulting in defining and sharing of some fundamental values.

The ideology then, as it appears to an outsider belies this tension; it is splendid, all are in agreement with certain beliefs and practices, while the fact of legitimation, reinforcement, and control is successfully hidden from the others. In this context, the warning by Thucydides in his 'History of the Peloponnesian War' (an eyewitness account of the war between Sparta and Athens) as it unfolded, and, significantly, about the behaviour of the people as the long war dragged on, is constructive. He comments that we must

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[447] J. Aruz, ed., *Art of the First Cities*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 148. She (Jean M. Evans) traces the devlopment of the standing figure in Mari culture in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia has been chosen as an illustration because the appearance of new motifs in Egyptian Art ca. 3000 B.C. had direct antecedents in archaic Susa and the Uruk culture that was prevalent in Mesopotamia. See also Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 5-6 & 150-60.

always be aware that the witnesses to the individual events do not describe the same event in a similar way. Ideology just like the writing of history is also subject to the diverse influences of the witnesses at our disposal. This difficulty is compounded in the case of the ancient Egyptians because of the limited ways of estimating their historical veracity.

The past resonates with the fact that ideology is an imperative to cultural and political progress which requires action, but at the other extreme it also points to the fact that ideology is a system of ideas. It is the ways, in which people organize, characterize, and interpret their world and ideas that they appear to give universal, everlasting, unquestionable qualities to ideology for it is "the residual condensate"[448].

The issues of the Egyptian state's (read king) propagation of a certain ideology, its effect on the population and its targets, meant that only by preservation of the natural order (read the omnipotence of the king), could primeval chaos be averted.

Ideology as it appears in the iconography is concerned with two main themes that of indicating domination and that of implying a sense of shared ideals.

In this context one has to consider three key concepts from mortuary analysis, which are crucial to the understanding of the actors and their relationships that lead to the development of ideological thought[449]. These are:

- Social identity: by which is meant a social position or title
- Identity relationship: by which is meant the rights and duties by which two or more social identities are connected
- Social persons: by which is meant the sum total of an individual's identities (personal and social).

While no natural reason exists as to why attitudes should vary as regards particular 'social identities', nevertheless it is precisely these attitudes which

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[448] R. Barthes and Honoré de Balzac, *S/Z*, 1st American ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974) 98.

[449] A. Saxe, *Social dimensions of mortuary practices (Dissertation)* (University of Michigan, 1970) 4-7.

point to inequality, to a relationship of hierarchy, to status and rank distribution encompassed within ideology. It may be that wealth, power, literacy, or whatever might be considered as socially significant are the external factors which go into the making of such attitudes. The way these factors act upon the others is by frequent repetition of ideas, about values which determine what is or is not socially significant, irrespective of its truth. This is the process of operational culture, and once roles are accepted, given, or inherited, they have to be maintained by the imposition of a mystifying quality. In 'the teaching of Khety' one is exhorted to be a scribe as follows: "But if you know writings, all will be well for you, more so than with these professions I have shown you. Look at them, at their wretchedness"[450]. This is a prime example where ideology abducts the natural and replaces it with an ideal, and confuses the use with its value.

4.3.1 Ideology of Domination

Imposed systems of ideas which involve a role of domination, cannot just be different. If one is to dominate on the strength of a particular system of ideas, then he must be more titled, more powerful, more learned, have more possessions, or whatever is necessary to achieve the desirable effect.

Ideology then is a part of human interactions that allows among other things for the control of people[451]. This social power is used to manage and manipulate the labour and other activities of the general population, such that the dominant individual or group is able to obtain certain benefit[452]. This is an argument for unequal access to social and material resources, at the expense of other members of society. Obviously this leaves unanswered the question as to why people accept the legitimacy of values (read ideology), which do not benefit them? It has been suggested that acceptance implies that there

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[450] R. B. Parkinson, "The Teaching of Khety," in *The Tale of Sinuhe and other Ancient Egyptian Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 275-79.

[451] E. Carlton, *Ideology and Social Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) 23-39.

[452] E. de Marrais, L. J. Castillo, and T. Earle, "Ideology, materialisation and power strategies," *Current Anthropology* 37 (1) (1996): 15-31.

must have been some form of negotiation, struggle, and/or complicity between all parts of the polity, although the participants may have had unequal resources[453]. As regards ancient Egypt this is difficult to ascertain directly. Indirectly however the evidence points to the role played by ideology as a creative one, which produced a unified state under the pretext of an omnipotent king. He was considered the representative of the divine on earth, and the only means by which disorder could be turned into order[454], which on modern logical grounds would be termed nonsense, and one that misrepresented reality, and in that way added to the control exerted over the masses of other human beings[455].

If we were to look for explicit words denoting ideology in Egypt, we will not find them. The only early hint comes from the Early Dynastic period in the concept of the 'two lands' characteristic of the ideological basis of Dynastic Egypt.

What is evident is the fact that through the coming together (by war or otherwise) a single political state arose in the Nile Valley. It may well be, that the development of a stable state required this fact to be permanently impressed on all: that two major parts of the land had been brought under one control. Egyptian ideology can be seen as a response to this fundamental idea, which had as its goal, the expression of unity and stability brought about by an omnipotent king. This is because the available records at least from Dynasty 3 onwards, point to accomplished developments in art and architecture, both of which are the consequences of a stable and united society. Thus society came to be held together by an artificial ideology of Egyptian kingship, in the interest of which all were expected to subordinate

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[453] M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1986) 2-3.

[454] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts.*§ 265. Unas arrives in heaven after "having set right [Ma'at] in the place of wrong [Isfet]".

[455] M. Bloch, "Property and the end of affinity," in *African Studies Association Studies: 2*, ed. M. Bloch (London: Malaby Press, 1975), 5-28.

their desires. The role of the king is explicitly stated as follows and while this is from the New Kingdom, the same sentiments are to be found in "The Teachings of Merikare" a late Old Kingdom text: he (the king) was placed on earth "for ever and ever, judging humanity and propitiating the gods, and setting order in place of disorder. He gives offering to the gods and mortuary offerings to the spirits (the blessed dead)"[456]. His actions are related to that what the gods desire him to do now and in the future, so that he can act pre-emptively to counter any threat of disorder. In so far as his actions are divinely sanctioned, he and his inscriptions are exempt from most ethical considerations[457].

This ideology of "one single, indivisible theopolitical unity"[458] stressed domination. Initially it was the king versus the rest; later with the rise of the career bureaucrat, it becomes that of the king and the elite versus the rest, what I have called the 'others'. Official ideology however at the beginning of Dynasty 3 at least, reflected royal ideology and the position of the 'others' was of very little consequence but should not be dismissed entirely.

Accordingly the ideology underlining the iconography of the Old Kingdom: that of a society with wealth and status differentiation can best be understood by referring to the central focus on the king and his office of kingship. The king is shown triumphing over enemies; he has power to repel chaos and guarantee order, he is "an intermediate between" the people "and the deities"[459], and he is always accepted into the hereafter by the gods, no

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[456] Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," 58. See also Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 158, l. 65, 63, l. 15, 64, l. 30, 65, l. 35. The respective lines found in the Teaching for King Merikare are: "Replenish the offerings, multiply the sacrificial loaves, Increase the daily offerings", "And God has made him pre-eminent over the land among countless others, The Kingship is an excellent office", "Shepherd the people, the cattle of the God", "For them He has made rulers from the egg, Leaders to raise up the backs of the weak." See also M. Bonhême, "Kingship," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 2*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 238-45.

[457] Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Concepts and uses of the past: 3rd to 2nd millennium BC evidence," 131-49.

[458] Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," 58.

[459] D. Silverman, "The Nature of Egyptian Kingship," in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, ed. D. O'Connor and D. Silverman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 67.

matter what the actual state of affairs might have been. The king and the gods have a reciprocal relationship; he (the king) ensures their existence through offerings and the building of temples, they (the gods) in return grant him total power over all in his dominion[460]. It would appear that the king in this period combined in himself all the ritual, political power and legitimacy what Assmann terms an "identitäre Theokratie"[461], his all-powerfulness was the glue that held society together, something which gradually changes between the highpoint of the Old Kingdom and the beginning of the Ramesside period but that is another story.

The resultant basic premise suggests that every Egyptian was bound to his place in the divine order, without being deprived of all his rights under the umbrella of a supreme king with divine affiliations.

This concept that all Egyptians had a degree of equity that could not be infringed upon is supported by the archaeological record which yields numerous scenes of status and rank differentiation, implying a certain awareness of one's place in the system and what was the right order of things. How far this was reality, is quite another question, if we are to go by the number of times (nine) and the eloquence required by the eloquent peasant in order to attain justice[462].

In the Old Kingdom the social group is well defined archaeologically as consisting of the king at the apex followed by his secular and sacral elite, and then the others. Interaction between these groups did take place and it would do well to keep in mind Seidlmayer's suggestion that:

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[460] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* vol. I, 153-54ff. For an example of offerings being shared by the gods and the king in the temple see R. Stadelmann, "Die Wiedererlebung religiösen Gedankenguts des Alten Reiches in der Architektur des Totentempels Sethos' I. in Qurna," in *Structure and Significance*, ed. P. Jánosi (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 489.

[461] Assmann, *Stein und Zeit: Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten* 244-45. In modern terms this is best summed up in *Trolius and Cressida* where Shakespeare's Ulysses puts this point with theatrical force, "Take but degree away, Untune that string, Hark what discord follows".

[462] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 29-44.

> "Der Blick auf die kleinen Leute und auf das archäeologische Material hilft die Uniformiesierung dieser kulturellen Normvorstellungen zu durchschauen und das Vielerlei der gelebten Wirklichkeit anzuerkenen"[463].

Be that as it may, the relationship between the classes most probably was one as follows:

Domination by the king in all aspects at least until the end of Dynasty 4, and reciprocal arrangements between the king and his elite[464], so as to justify his aims and policies, and to affirm and condition everybody into believing a particular version of reality. Consequently there is a sort of sharing process between the elite and the rest resulting from "a keen awareness of kinship" and a "sense of mutual obligation[465]" something which was probably done out of socio-political necessity, rather than altruism. This ideology was maintained by developing and refining the concepts of religion and mortuary culture as expressions found in the tomb, as a source of art, literature, social memory, and didactic discourse. As Assman says, religion and politics were "aspects or dimensions of one single, indivisible theological unity[466]" and as such the boundaries are not easily discernible.

For this ideology to succeed as long as the Old Kingdom did, there had to be a stable agricultural system, capable of producing more than necessity required. Notwithstanding this material requirement, there also had to be an interconnected communication between various parts of the polity.

If we are to understand the iconography as one aspect of this ideology of domination, then the symbols of this ideological discourse are well

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[463] S. J. Seidlmayer, "Vom Sterben der Kleinen Leute," in *Grab und Totenkult im Alten Ägypten*, ed. H. Guksch, E. Hoffmann, and M. Bommas (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 60-74.

[464] G. Jéquier, *Le monument funéraire de Pepi II*, vol. 2, *Fouilles à Saqqarah* (Le Caire: L'institute Français d'archéologie Orientale, 1936) pls. 48, 57, 59.   This is as far as I am aware the only iconographic example of the dialogue between the king and his councillors. They are portrayed as a corporate body of four different groups and one can suppose that these men represented the central administrative system- a depiction which one would expect to find in a royal tomb.

[465] A. B. Lloyd, "Psychology and Society in the Ancient Egyptian Cult of the Dead," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W. K. Simpson (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 120.

[466] Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," 56.

documented: in the Pyramid Texts, the monumental graves, the sun temples in Dynasty 5, the iconography, and inscriptions.

The Old Kingdom lasted some 500 years, therefore one can assume that the people of this time consented in, believed in, or at the very least begrudgingly accepted the prevalent ideology.

In Old Kingdom Egypt there were probably no alternatives other than accepting the articulated values of the king and his elite, and that acceptance or consent to the values of the dominant class, was a given "which is quite different from belief in the legitimacy of those values"[467].

Williamson has this to say about ideology:

> "A central part of ideology is the constant reproduction of ideas which are denied a historical beginning or end, which are used or referred to because they already exist in society and continue to exist in society, because they are used and referred to and which therefore take on the nature of a timeless, synchronic structure, out of history although this structure as a whole does exist in history. It only seems timeless i.e. inevitable, natural, from the inside: obviously an ideology can never admit that it began because this would remove its inevitability. Thus, although systems of knowledge do have a beginning and an ending and a place in historical developments, their internal workings must be purely structural and self-perpetuating not from any movement onwards, but from a process of translation and re-translation between systems[468]".

Ideology as characterized above relates to the way it is used to achieve certain goals, and that the way it is packaged is crucial to its transmission and maintenance.

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[467] J. G. Merquior, *The Veil and the Mask: Essays on Culture and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) 11-14. Followed by J. B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984) 63. "Consent may be given to a dominant value system but this does not mean they accept them as legitimate".

[468] J. Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: ideology and meaning in advertising* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978) 99.

Kemp takes a different approach and is more concerned with how ideology arises in what he calls the invention of tradition. To him it is in the pursuit of a balancing act between past and future that ideology arises. He says, "At the heart of a cultural tradition is a trade-off between respect for past achievements and the accommodation of fertile and creative minds that look for something new. Ancient Egypt provides an early case history of the dynamics of the Great Tradition of culture: how it arose and was maintained as a living system, how it expanded at the expense of local traditions, and how it achieved this difficult balance between past and present"[469].

4.3.2 Ideology of Shared Fundamental Values

Another way of thinking about ideology is to avoid any question of domination or conflict and treat it as value neutral: simply stating that ideology relates to the system of values and interests that are fundamental to a society and shared by all members[470]. This would mean that the Egyptian state was a tight organization under the supreme authority of the pharaoh who shared a common economic interest with the elite and the rest of society[471].

Both of these versions have merit: the first version serving to uncover how ideology is used by a dominant class, while the latter highlights the reason for social cohesion and integration, (ultimately self-interest).

Because both versions do give an indirect indication as to how the forms of ideology, be it institutional or individual, were created, transmitted, accepted, and reproduced and because both are present in Old Kingdom Egypt, I propose that their joint use as characteristics of ideology have merit.

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[469] Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* 160.

[470] C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1992) 187-89.

[471] I use the term "economic" in a restricted sense, to refer specifically to the manner of the production and distribution of goods in ancient Egyptian society, albeit without the use of money as a medium of exchange.

4.3.3 Ideology as practiced in the Old Kingdom

The Egyptians during the Old Kingdom did not opt to change their society to any meaningful extent. The effect was that the initial ideology continued to have both a legitimating and reinforcing role. This in fact aided the realization of the normative goals of the king and his elite, to the end of the dynastic period.

The ways that ideology was used in its legitimating and reinforcing role to justify, mystify and manipulate, is shown in the use by the elite of inscriptions. If we accept that these inscriptions are a part of the shifting function of texts as they pass from one social stage to another, then we must also accept that they are a constructed medium of communication and therefore a cultural construct. The understanding of statements such as:

"never before had the like been done for any servant of his, for I was excellent in the heart of His Majesty"[472], becomes a reflection on the generics. In this statement alone we can discern all the generics: the identity of the phraseologist, the nature of the statement indicating a certain amount of individuality, the fact that both these aspects correlate to the ideology of the elite person as someone worthy of such an accolade pointing indirectly to the value of *M3ʿt* and one worthy to be remembered.

Ideology is thus eternalized into the service of the elite by the forms expressed in tomb iconography, as well as in later forms of literature. In a way similar to the instances when the king, because of his identification with Horus, becomes empowered, the elite in their identification with someone, who the king thinks highly of (the ideal), become empowered in the eyes of the others. Ideology thus plays an identical legitimating, mystifying, and empowering role for the elite, as it did for the king.

An example from a later period because it is well documented is equally instructive about this role of ideology. When Hatshepsut depicts the story of her divine birth, the truth of her femininity is hidden as against that of a usual male pharaoh. When she implies that she was directed by the god Amun to wage war, the truth about expansionism and economic goals as fundamental

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[472] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 403. (Weni the Elder).

to her kingship are hidden, because the directions of Amun are self-sufficient and do not warrant any further discussion, adding a convenient veneer of divine respectability and rationality[473].

One effect is to depict at least on the outer surface, a fixed continuous proof, that the right order is being maintained, and that the ideal of the self-made and self-reliant ethical man is paramount (outer surface, because this is but one part of the story). If the images selected by the officials are but reflections of choice (which is a possibility), then it must also be accepted that they imply a value judgement. The question of what a person is or what he wants to be can then be seen as role assuming, and not necessarily one of domination and deceit. However this may be, at the very least this implies that the past had an ideological value worth repeating and preserving. It is this retrospective orientation of learning for the future from the past which was an important attribute of Old Kingdom ideology; seen very clearly in the writings at the end of the Old Kingdom[474], when Egyptian society and culture start to disintegrate.

There is of course a danger here. It lies in the fact that just like the written word, the depicted word, and painting, might equally be incomplete, it may be selective, or it may be a portrayal of past events, which never occurred in the present but which were portrayed. For example the depiction of an identical Libyan campaign appears in the mortuary temples of Sahure, Userkaf, and Pepy ll, and later Taharqa in Nubia which is not evidenced from the archaeological record. As Helck warns

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[473] P. Lacau and H. Chevrier, *Une chapelle d'Hatshepsout à Karnak*, vol. I (Le Caire: L'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1977) 105-14. "This [land] which I opened for you, you are the king who utters words against his enemies. Your knife is the servant of the hot flame and its heat is there to burn those who rebel in the land… that your terror may seize that which acts as a crime and those who plan rebellion… you will subdue chaos, you will cut off the arm of civil war… " See also J. A. Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut: the female pharaoh* (London: Penguin, 1996) 69-74 & 141-43.

[474] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 216-20. The Prophecies of Neferty are one such example.

"Damit wird der Wert vieler historischer Darstellungen suspekt und der Kreis unserer Geschichtsquellen stark eingeschränkt"[475].

In the context of the tomb, the satisfaction of needs in the hereafter is the generator of ideological thought, which when combined with religion serves to sustain the placement needs of the elite. The placement needs could have been any or all of the following:

- The body had to be protected.
- Various funerary rituals had to be performed to enable the tomb-owner a secure access in the hereafter.
- The people, places, and things depicted on the walls of the tomb had to become 'real' and meet the tomb-owner's physical and social needs, through the process of sympathetic magic. This belief in magic can be indirectly inferred from the spells that the herdsman utter for a safe crossing of the waterways often depicted in the mastabas[476], and in the use of amulets[477] and spells against snake and scorpion bites etc.[478] which although they appear in the Pyramid texts (PT 230 etc.) imply a belief in some supernatural power.
- The tomb-owner's name, titles, status, and the society of which he was a part had to be broadcast and celebrated.
- The hierarchy and decorum of the social order would be maintained in what was displayed and how the actors were placed on the tomb walls.
- The tomb-owner had to be transformed and recognized as a 'blessed dead', as one having both the right to have a tomb, as well as a guaranteed association with the king, the gods (Osiris, Anubis, and Geb) and the other inhabitants of the netherworld.

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[475] W. Helck, *Geschichte des Alten Ägypten* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968) 65.

[476] Kanawati, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara: the Tomb of Ankhmahor* pl.37 (a). "May you be watchful against that acquatic which is in the water. May these not go to that acquatic and may he be blind-of-head. May you be watchful against him, greatly." For further examples see Duell, *The mastaba of Mereruka* vol. I, pl. 21, and Wild, *Ty* vol. II, fig. 124.

[477] C. A. R. Andrews, "Amulets," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol. 1*, ed. D. B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 77-78.

[478] C. Leitz, "Die Schlangensprüche in den Pyramidtexten," *Orientalia* 65 (1996): 381-427.

- The tomb-owner would also have a special and independent place of existence, just as he had when he was alive in a town and a Nome.

The ideas inherent in the above list of placement needs, which were once the paramount desire of the elite, in time, become an aim for all the masses, such that all concept of an externally forced ideology is lost and these needs become the 'attainable' norm of the later accepted ideology.

All Old Kingdom ideology whether it is personal, communal, religious or of a political nature, can be associated with any or all of the above mentioned placement needs, examples of which can be found in one form or the other in most Egyptological literature/iconography. These requirements must have influenced the elite in the way they created and manipulated the varying religious and political ideas and must have had a far-reaching affect on the others too.

Consider the funerary inscriptions in the tombs of Akhmahor, Djaty, Ipi, Mehu, Mereruka, Ptahotep, and Senedjemib-Inti and Hermeru. In these tombs, the tomb-owners are identified in the funerary rites, as those who will be guided to the necropolis; to the "beautiful West" and transported in a boat

> "to traverse the paths of the revered in great peace, and finally to ascend to the mountain heights of the necropolis"[479],

even though they might have been undeserving of this honour. The implication of a certain type of conduct and resulting fulfillment then appears to be available for all who act similarly, although it is patently obvious that only a few could afford a tomb or aspire to such high office. Yet, it is part of accepted ideology right throughout the dynastic period.

Similarly the tomb as attested in the offering formula[480], advertises to the living, the fact that the occupant's right to a tomb is condoned both by the king (a living god) and some of the other gods (Osiris/Anubis/Wepwawet)[481].

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[479] H. Kees, *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter*, 5th unaltered ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956) 31 & 108-31.

[480] Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich* 37.

[481] It is clear that in the Old Kingdom offering formula both the king and the gods are responsible for fulfilling the wishes of the tomb-owner. The question of evolution of this

That every elite tomb depicts such a formula should not be seen to diminish its value, for it is evidence that it has now become a socially recognized fact. It stands out like a symbol of having achieved all that was desirable during the Old Kingdom: the fact that one had served the king diligently and loyally, that one was respected and beloved of one's family and by one's fellow humans and therefore deserving of a tomb. The inscriptions are also a pointer to the facts that order, truth, and legitimacy have not only been achieved but officially accepted by the king and gods as achieved.

> "I have come from my town, come up from my Nome and been buried in this my tomb,"[482] and "burial at the end of a very old age, near the great god, lord of burial as one $im3hw$ with the king"[483].

Where it was not possible to be buried near the royal cemetery, the sentiments of wanting to be are still evident[484].

The cult of the gods, the king, and the dead, thus all combine to play a central role in the cultural and social life of the individual/community and influence the development of a certain form of ideology.

The king is an earthly representative of god and his officials act on his behalf, those who question this state of affairs are the king's enemies, and by implication gods' enemies and their destruction is thus a sacred act.

After death, the non-royal who had achieved the $im3hw$ status could depend both on the great god for authority and redress[485] and on his fellow humans

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formula in the Middle Kingdom into something in which only the gods are responsible for has been questioned on grammatical grounds (the plurality of gods being introduced by a single masculine suffix $di=f$). See in this regard the argument by H. O. Willems, "Food for the dead," in *Pap Uit Lemen Potten*, ed. W. H. van Soldt (Leiden: Schap Publications XI, 1991), 98-108.

[482] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 57, l. 11-12.

[483] S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza*, vol. IX (Cairo: Government Press Bulâq, 1944) 23. This is part of the offering formula.

[484] Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reiches* 118, l. 14-16. The setiment expressed is clear: "Though I have made this tomb in Abydos, it is one $im3hw$ with the incarnation of the dual king Neferkare, alive forever and with the incarnation of the dual king Meryra and the dual king Merenra".

[485] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* 81, § 399. The king being described as the lord of judgemnt in the hereafter.

for keeping his memory and all the other culturally significant aspects termed generics alive.

The entire elite tomb culture was based on this ideological assumption because

> "A man will survive after death, His deeds will be set out beside him
> as (his) reward, and existence in the beyond is for eternity"[486].

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[486] Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* 157, l. 55.