

# Some Notes on the Distribution of Goods in Egyptian Private Mortuary Cults: Three Case Studies

## Algunas notas sobre la distribución de bienes en los cultos funerarios egipcios: tres casos de estudio

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### Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es esclarecer uno de los aspectos más desconocidos en el funcionamiento del culto funerario del Reino Antiguo: la forma en que se repartían entre los oficiantes los bienes destinados al mantenimiento del culto. Para acometer nuestro objetivo, analizamos tres casos de disposiciones funerarias que son particularmente elocuentes para nuestro objeto de estudio. La información combinada de estos tres textos nos acerca a un panorama que debió haber sido tremendamente variado y adaptativo. Con mayor o menor exactitud, los particulares habrían intentado imitar la organización del culto funerario real, pero este sistema sería un costoso privilegio que coexistiría con otros modelos más modestos. Independientemente de la estructura seguida, la división de los bienes entre los oficiantes parece haber estado vinculada principalmente al tiempo de servicio cumplido. Aunque como demostraremos, los sistemas de reparto fueron complejos y distaron mucho de una mera división equitativa entre los miembros.

### Palabras clave

Egiptología, Escritura antigua, Clero, Historia del derecho, Religión antigua.

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to clarify one of the lesser-known aspects in the operation of the mortuary cult in the Old Kingdom: the way in which the goods allocated for sustaining the cult were distributed among the cultic performers. In order to accomplish our objective, we have analyzed three case of mortuary provisions that are particularly illustrative for our subject of study. The combined information of these three texts sheds light on a panorama that would have been tremendously varied and adaptive. With greater or lesser accuracy, the private owners would have tried to imitate the organization of the royal mortuary cult, but this system would have been a costly privilege that coexisted with more modest arrangements. Regardless of the structure, the division of the goods among officiants appears to have been primary linked to time served. Although, as we will show, the distribution systems were more complex than a mere equitable division among the members.

### Keywords

Egyptology, Ancient scripts, Clergy, Legal history, Ancient religions.

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## 1. Introduction

Most legal texts from the Egyptian Old Kingdom have been traditionally divided into two main groups. The first of this is the royal decrees, in which the initiative was driven by the crown; the other group contains the regulations drawn up by private tomb owners who organized their mortuary cult with their own resources or with the goods provided by a royal deed. This corpus of texts has been widely used for the study of Egyptian law, economy, land tenure and mortuary foundations (Goedicke, 1967; Goedicke, 1970; Harari, 1950; Helck, 1974; Lippert, 2008; Mrsich, 1968; Perepelkin, 1986; Seidl, 1951; Theodorides, 1995). The royal decrees are mainly concerned with giving an exemption for taxes and for compulsory labour to its recipients or giving and protecting a royal donation (Hays, 2000, 63-76; Vernus, 2013, 259-340). As for the documents of private individuals, most of them are concerned with the establishing of a private mortuary cult for the deceased tomb owner. This second group is particularly interesting for the study of the operation of the mortuary cult and the organization of the cult performers, most commonly, the ka-servants (Sánchez Casado, 2020).

Although this category of text offers information about several aspects of the organization of the mortuary cult for private owners, one can find some facets that are not well known. One of these facets is the way in which the properties allotted to sustaining the cults are distributed between the cultic performers. Since there are three texts that are specially interesting when approaching this topic, my intention here is to analyse these instances in order to shed some light on this particular topic.

As we will see, the sources clearly show that the distribution of the goods among the cultic members was not a simple equitable division; complex allocation patterns existed that took into consideration factors such as rank, time served or the internal structure of the cult. However, these aspects are rarely explicitly mentioned, and it is difficult to say if general rules that standardized the system of payment to the cultic performers within the mortuary institutions existed or if, on the contrary, it was an *ad hoc* agreement for each cult. From my point of view, both possibilities hold weight. On the one hand, general standard systems established for the operating of the mortuary temples of the deceased kings existed. But, since the private owners imitated these arrangements in a very lax and adaptative way, in practice, each cult seems to have had its own regulations.

## 2. Methodology

Indisputably, the mortuary cult is one of the most recurring themes in research on ancient Egyptian beliefs. One crucial aspect for understanding the mortuary cult is, undoubtedly, its actors, the officiants that performed the rites. Despite this, for a period as distant as the Old Kingdom, of which unfortunately we do not possess as much evidence as we do for later periods, there are still many aspects that need to be clarified and studied further. One of these aspects is the most practical and social facets of the mortuary cult: its organizational system, hierarchy, remuneration, status, etc. In spite of the dearth of evidence, by putting together sources of various kinds, such as philological, archaeological and iconographical ones, we can widen our knowledge of this key aspect of Egyptian society, religion and beliefs.

Therefore, our analysis aims to provide a new approach to the understanding of the distributive patterns of goods between the officiants of the Old Kingdom mortuary cult. To do this, we have

selected three texts, from a much broader corpus (cf. Goedicke, 1970), that are particularly relevant for our area of study since they give specific data on the allocation of goods and the payment due to the cultic performers. Each text is presented in hieroglyphics, transliteration, and translation, which is followed by a commentary that is not intended to be an in-depth grammatical analysis of the structure of the text. This commentary focuses on explaining the choices made, and it clarifies the most controversial points and analyses the meaning of the passages. Archaeological and iconographic data are also used to complement the information obtained from the texts. Joining these group of sources together allows a better understanding of the system that regulated the operation of the ancient Egyptian mortuary cult.

### 3. A short overview on the mortuary provisions of private owners

The mortuary provisions for private persons have reached us through the stone copies that tomb owners decided to include as part of the decoration of their tomb chapels. Unfortunately, only a few of these documents have been found in their original context, a circumstance that hinders the understanding of their significance within the iconographic programme of the tombs. The clauses present in these texts speak about different aspects but are mostly concerned with ensuring that the goods allotted for sustaining the mortuary cult are exclusively used for that purpose. To this effect, their authors included sections that aimed to prevent agents that were alien to the mortuary foundation using the properties or engaging the personnel in any task other than the offering service itself. For example, one of the texts belonging to Nykaankh of Tehneh reads as follows: *n rdi.n(.i) s[hm] r[mt nb] m it.[t].sn r wnw.t nb.t h3.w pr.t-hrw*, “I do not give permission to anyone to bring them (i.e. the ka-servants) for any other service except for the mortuary offering” (Urk. I, 29, 9-10).

With the same intention, other clauses are devoted to regulating the collective of ka-servants who performed the cult. Also, in this case, the texts are concerned with the goods not being disassociated from the mortuary foundation. The properties allotted to the ka-servants are only given in usufruct. A good example of this kind of clause can be found in the text belonging to an unknown 5th Dynasty owner that we will discuss as one of our case studies, who Goedicke suggested could be Kaemneferet (1970, 46-47). I follow the text as published by Goedicke (1970, 44-67, pl. 5), which present differences with the one published by Sethe (Urk. I, 12.9-15, cols. 8-10) in the reconstruction of the lacunae. The inscription, reads as follows:

*n rdi(.i) shm hm-k3 nb d.t m rdi.t 3h.t rmt h.t [nb.(t) ir.t.n(.i) n.sn r pr.t-hrw n(.i)] im  
r isw n rmt nb m rdi.t m im.yt-pr n rmt nb wp-r di[di.f n z3(.f) ikr] n(y) pšs.t.f hn<sup>c</sup> hm-  
k3 i.mn m hm.w-k3 ipn*

I have not given permission to any ka-servant of the mortuary estate to transfer the land, persons and [any other thing that I have established for them for my mortuary offering] as a payment or as a transfer document to nobody. On the contrary, [he] should give [it to an excellent son], who will receive his part (of the assigned goods) together with the position of ka-servant, (so that the goods) shall remain among these ka-servants.

The interest of the deceased in maintaining his mortuary cult for eternity means that the only transference of goods allowed was inheritance from father to son. The sons would inherit the share of the revenues together with the position of ka-servant, with the enjoyment of the benefits being

indissolubly linked with the cultic performance. The sharing of the revenues among the members of the ka-service would have been quite problematic, as illustrated by clauses that seek to regulate the possible conflicts that could appear between ka-servants (Sánchez Casado, 2017, 101-116). The best example of this kind of clause can be found in the mortuary provision of Nyankhkhnum and Khnumhotep in Saqqara (Moussa and Altenmüller, 1977, 87-88, fig. 11, pl. 28). The text reads as follows:

*ir (i)gr ḥm-k3 nb šn.ty.fy ḥ.t r ḥm-k3 sn.nw.f pr.f tp-r3.f n s.t irr.f<sup>c</sup> n sd pr.t-ḥrw n.t nb.w(y) ḥrt nḥm.(w) ḥr.t.f nb.(t) m<sup>c</sup>.f didi.t(w) n ḥm-k3 pf šnn.(w).f i.ḥ.t r.f*

Regarding any ka-servant who might litigate against his fellow ka-servant, presenting his claim about his position, he should make a document about the dispossession of the mortuary offering of the two owners of this mortuary cult. May all his share be removed from his hand and given to the ka-servant he litigates against.

Most probably, the conflicts mentioned by the clause would have been generated during the sharing of the revenues between the individual members of the ka-service. It can easily be imagined that one of the ka-servants would have felt offended if he had considered his assignment to be more meagre than that of his fellows. Obviously, other kinds of disputes cannot be dismissed such as those caused by malpractice or robbery, for example.

Although the authors of these documents worried about these possible issues, they did not reveal the way these shares were issued in their inscriptions or what the allocation for each individual member was, as we have already indicated. There are some other important aspects that are also not mentioned, like the real amount of goods given to the mortuary cult and the specific numbers of cultic performers. It is possible that these aspects were not stipulated since they were an internal matter of the ka-servants and did not directly affect the deceased and his wellbeing. The clauses that are present in these inscriptions are related with the proper maintenance of the cult, the correct use of the goods and the sustenance of the cultic staff, but to a lesser extent with the way the cult should be carried out or the remuneration of its agents. It is reasonable to suggest that those regulations would have existed, but they were written on papyrus and have not reached us in the present. In the same way, it is not unreasonable to think that the mortuary cult of private persons would have generated, to a lesser degree, documents like those produced the mortuary temples of the kings, as is the case with the Abusir papyri.

Focusing our attention on the internal organization of the cult and its hierarchical structure, several of these documents mention various titles that once organized the ka-service. So, for example, the document belonging to the abovementioned dignitary from Giza includes the inspector of the ka-servants (*shd ḥm.w-k3*), the deputy inspector of the ka-servants (*im.y-ht ḥm.w-k3*) and the ka-servants (*ḥm.w-k3*) (Urk. I, 11-15). The text belonging to Nebkauher does the same with the *shd ḥm.w-k3*, the *im.y-ht ḥm.w-k3*, the scribe of the phyle (*zh3.(w) n z3*) and the *ḥm.w-k3* (Goedicke, 1970, 94-99, pl. 10).

This kind of list can also be found as part of the inscriptions that describe the processions of offering bearers in some tombs (Sánchez Casado, 2020, 38-45). For example, in the case of Neferseshemptah: *shp.t stp.wt rnp.(w)t nb.t nfr.t inn.t in shd.w ḥm.w-k3 im.yw-ht ḥm.w-k3 ḥm.w-k3 n.w ḥr.y-tp nsw Nfr-sšm-Pth*, “Bringing the choice cuts and all the good vegetables brought by the inspectors of the ka-servants, the deputy inspector of the ka-servants and the ka-servants of

the royal chamberlain, Neferseshemtah” (Lloyd et al., 2008, pl. 21). In a similar way, the relationship between the *shd hm.w-k3* and the *im.y-ht hm.w-k3* is clearly shown in the iconography given that the *im.y-ht* usually follows the *shd* in the processions (Sánchez Casado, 2020, 33-38). In view of this, we can then establish that the order is *shd*, *im.y-ht* and *zh3.(w) n z3*. But this picture does not seem to be complete, since we also know about another title that would be the one at the top of the entire hierarchy the overseer of the ka-servants (*im.y-r hm.w-k3*) (Brovarski, 2001, 88; Fischer, 1996, 17-18; Roth, 1991, 79; Sánchez Casado, 2020, 12; Yoyotte, 1953, 146). The hierarchical organization would have functioned in some tombs with a system of *phylai* that would have rotated monthly following the model established by the kings in their mortuary temples, with greater or less accuracy. Titles such as *hm-k3 im.y 3bd* and the previously mentioned *zh3.(w) n z3 hm.w-k3* could be considered to be evidence of the existence of such a system (Roth, 1991, 91-118).

Even though the mortuary provisions give us some information about the organization of the mortuary service and its structure, as mentioned before, they hold scarce amounts of data about the actual quantities of goods that were allocated for the sustenance of the cult. Most commonly, they record a series of goods in a general and standardized way, without giving explicit amounts. For example, this is the case in the quoted text belonging to a dignitary from Giza: *3h.t rmt h.t nb.(t)*, “fields, people and everything” (Urk. I, 11-15). It is probable that this kind of inaccuracy comes from the fact that there would have been other documents, probably on papyrus, that clearly specified the aspects that were considered irrelevant for inclusion on the stone copies. This is also the case for the way in which the allotted goods were shared among the different cultic agents, a procedure that, as previously mentioned, would probably have been the main cause for the disputes between the members of the ka-service.

The distributive procedures from the Middle Kingdom are better known thanks to the well-known contracts of Djefaihapy (Theodorides, 1971, 109-251). As showed by Spalinger, these contracts allow the reconstruction of a well-organized distributive pattern that involved a ka-servant and the priesthoods of the local temples (Spalinger, 1985, 7-20). Unfortunately, the information given by these texts is not a valid parallel for the Old Kingdom. The system in both periods follows very different patterns, for example, we have no notice of contracts being signed with temple priesthoods in the Old Kingdom and neither have we any evidence of the *phylai* system and hierarchical structure of the ka-service being used in the Middle Kingdom (Sánchez Casado, 2018, 137-145). Due to this, the use of the information provided by the contracts of Djefaihapy for a better understanding of the circumstances of the Old Kingdom would be too risky.

Despite everything mentioned above, there are three texts particularly rich in data, whereby we can get a better understanding of the ways distributive procedures would have been performed in the Old Kingdom.

#### **4. The inscription belonging to an unknown dignitary from Khaefra's necropolis**

Our first case study is on the previously mentioned unnamed dignitary from the Giza necropolis (Cairo CG 1432). This text has been translated and commented on several times (Breasted, 1962, 91-93; Fitzenreiter, 2004, 3-6; Goedicke, 1970, 44-67; Logan, 2000, 54; Moret, 1907, 75-91;

Mrsich, 1968, 48-55; Pirenne, 1934, 335-336; Stracmans, 1955, 31-35; Strudwick, 2005, 189-191; Théodoridès, 1977, 25-27). The passage that interests us is between columns 18 and 20 in the inscription (Goedicke, 1970, pl. 5).



Figure 1. Columns 18-20 of the disposition belonging to an unknown dignitary from Giza necropolis. After Goedicke (1970, pl. 5).

*ir ḥ.t nb(.t) pr.t(y).s(y) ḥnt rđit.n.(i) n.s[n ...]*  
*wđ<sup>c</sup> mdw im mdd.t đ3.wt (i)m.y-ḥt n z3.w ipn m r(3) 10 irr nw n[.sn ḥm.w-k3 đ.t ipn r]*  
*đ3.wt r pr.t-ḥrw n.(i) im m ḥr.t-ntr m iz đ.t n.t(y) m [Wr]-Ḥ<sup>c</sup>.f-R<sup>c</sup>*

Regarding all the revenues that will be obtained from what I have given to them [(they must be distributed in the place where)] the court is. The part of the supply of (each) member of these *phylai* is one tenth, which will be transferred to [them, these ka-servants of the estate for] (their) supply and for the mortuary offering for me in the necropolis in the tomb of the estate that is at Wer-Khaefra.

Due to the extant lacunae, it is difficult to specify the exact sense of the text. There are some aspects of the translation proposed that must be further discussed. The first issue is the pairing of the words *pri ḥnt*, the understanding of which is key since it determines the way in which the lacuna at the end of the column should be reconstructed. The first translations understood the two words as having separate meanings, interpreting *pri* as “alienate” and *ḥnt* as “before”. In consequence, these translators considered the sense of the clause to be a prohibition of any goods being disassociated prior to the donation to the ka-servant (Moret, 1907, 86; Pirenne, 1934, 335; Stracmans, 1955, 34). With this negative perception, and in view of the beginning of the following column, they proposed that the gap should have contained a standard threatening sentence to those that defaulted. As an example of this trend, one can quote Moret: “Pour toute chose qui a été aliénée avant que je leur (aux honou-ka) aie fait la donation, [il y aura jugement avec eux dans le lieu] où l’on juge” (1907, 86). Goedicke, who was against this view, suggested the meaning “*herausgehen aus*” for *pri ḥnt* (1970, 61). With this sense of “coming out”, he suggested that the meaning of the sentence could be related to the revenues given by the allotted fields. Necessarily, this new viewpoint meant a change in the reconstruction proposed for the lacuna at the end of the column. He suggested various alternatives with a similar sense: *wnn wđ<sup>c</sup>.tw st*, *wnn psš.tw st*, *psš.tw st* and translated “man soll sie teilen an einem Ort” (Goedicke, 1970, 46 /62). The general idea would then be that a reference is being made to the distribution of land revenues, a meaning which agrees with the sense of the following column.

About *wđ<sup>c</sup> mdw im*, Goedicke (1970, 62) pointed that the general sense is that of “Ort wo Recht gesprochen wird”, following the line established by Moret (1907, 86): “le lieu où l’on juge”, also by Pirenne (1934, 335). The proposal by Stracmans (1955, 34) of simply reading “court” is followed here. This option is also considered by Mrsich (1968, 54). Nonetheless, as pointed by

Morschauer (1991, 72-73)  $w\bar{d}^c mdw$  would involve either an oral complain or a plea. Therefore, this “court” would “litigate an oral complain”.

Another controversial issue lies in the interpretation of  $\bar{d}3.wt$  and  $im.y-ht$ . Early researchers translated  $\bar{d}3.wt$  as “rest, remainder”, and  $im.y-ht$  as “after”, with an adverbial sense. According to Breasted, the resulting translation is that of “the portion which remains afterward” (1962, 93). However, this translation does not fit well with the previous sentence. If we understand that the tomb owner is preventing any disassociation of the goods from happening prior to the establishment of the mortuary foundation, then we do not know to what this “remainder” refers. A prior action must have existed that would have somehow reduced the amount of goods to leave “a remainder” that could be divided afterwards and is not mentioned in the text. On the contrary, if we turn to the option proposed by Goedicke, the text can be completely understood. Unlike his predecessors, Goedicke proposed a different interpretation for  $\bar{d}3.wt$ , that he translated as “*Versorgung*” (1970, 62-63). The meaning given seems valid, especially considering the mention of the same term at the beginning of the next column, in which a dichotomy seems to have been established in the use of the land revenues: the allocation for the ka-servants (i.e., their salary) and the provision for the offering service. Moreover, Goedicke also proposed a different interpretation for  $im.y-ht$ . Instead of reading it as an adverb, he gave it a nominal sense and proposed the translation of “member”. In this way, the sentence refers to the share of the revenues designated to each member of the *phyle*.

Another lacuna at the end of the column also hinders the complete understanding of the text, although in this point there is general agreement that the ka-servant would have been mentioned there, as they were the members of the *phylai*. The discrepancies reappear, however, with the second mention of the term  $\bar{d}3.wt$ . Again, we see the disagreement between those who translate it as “remainder” and Goedicke’s option of “allocation”. This difference is important since, for the first group, the sentence implies that the goods devoted to the mortuary offering are “the remainder” that is left after the division of the goods among the members of the cult (Moret, 1907, 89). It is very unlikely that this circumstance would have been considered by the tomb owner, whose main concern would have been that the goods allotted to his mortuary estate were first used for his cult. Instead, the translation by Goedicke implies that the goods are to be used for both the allocation to the ka-servants and the mortuary offering. In this way, there is no conflict of interests with the deceased owner. It could be considered that the division of the goods would have probably been made after the mortuary offering was carried out, since the reversion of the offering would also have been a constituent part of the “payment” of the ka-servants (Legros, 2016, 115-116).

The information that this text gives us about the sharing procedures among the ka-servants will now be focussed on. The importance of the *phylai* in the process of the distribution of the goods stands out. It seems that the properties were firstly assigned to the *phylai* and afterwards distributed among their members. This idea is reinforced by other clauses on the text, which establish that in the case of a particular ka-servant leaving the service, the shares of the goods given to him should be returned to the *phyle* in which he was formerly integrated.

The role played by the “court” or, at least, “the place where justice is spoken” ( $w\bar{d}^c md.w im$ ) is more difficult to understand. Here we can probably consider that the procedure of the distribution of the goods was carried out at a location where the different members of the cult, or at least the

hierarchical structure, met and took the decisions concerning the organization of the ka-service. On the contrary, it is also possible that this “court” referred to a civil court where agreements between the owner and the cult members were made, and where the operation of the cult was decided, and the resolution of disputes was carried out. On this topic, we can rely on the previously mentioned clause that regulates disputes between members. There, the *sr.w* are mentioned as those who solved the disputes arising in the ka-service. I understand that the judicial procedure would have been carried out within the institution of the ka-service, according to their own regulations. The verdict reached by the members of the cult was definitive and no recourse to civil court could be issued. This idea was first raised by Moret, who also understood the *sr.w* to be an appeal court (1907, 83-84). Goedicke agrees that the procedure was carried out within the institution of the ka-service, but, on the contrary, he argues that these *sr.w* would not have belonged to a civil court but to the mortuary estate, and these individuals were in charge of passing judgement on the problems between the different members (1970, 60). The well-known role of the *sr.w* in judicial affairs (Bárta, 2013, 167; Hamilton, 2015, 36; Martin-Pardey, 1994, 164-165; Philip-Stéphan, 2008, 12) and the existence of references to the *d3d3t n.t pr d.t* (Jones, 2000, 1010, num. 3743), could also be an indication of the presence of this kind of courts within the framework of the mortuary estate.

The most relevant point of the clause for our study is the  $1/10$  that is established for the division between the members of the *phylai*. It seems a simple sum at first but there are various aspects to consider in order to understand this division. As mentioned before, based on the Abusir papyri, the common practice for the *phylai* system was to have five *phylai* subdivided into two sections that rotated on a ten-month cycle (Roth, 1991, 78). However, in the case of non-royal owners, the use of the *phylai* was limited and followed different patterns of adaptation. Nevertheless, as indicated by Roth, the case of this inscription would be one of the few that had a fully developed *phylai* system (1991, 96-97). It is difficult to know if the five *phylai* were subdivided or not; if they were not, then each *phyle* would have been in service for two months in the ten-month cycle. One possible interpretation of this  $1/10$  is to understand that it was related to the five *phylai* and their subdivisions, giving a total of ten so each *phyle* subdivision would have received a tenth of the total of the land revenues.

Although the text belonging to Nykaankh, which we will discuss later, is not a perfect parallel and shows a different organizational structure, it helps the understanding of the way in which the goods are divided. In this text, the assignation of goods for each member of the cult is clearly connected with the time frame. The goods are assigned to a month, regardless of the persons in service during this month. In this way, the division was not connected with the number of cultic performers but with time served. In a five *phylai* system, the scheme used to split the allocated goods would have meant assigning  $1/10$  of the total goods to each month. This given amount would have been assigned to the *phyle* in service during this period and, ultimately, divided among its members. Consequently, the  $1/10$  mentioned in the text would correspond to the proportion of the goods deserved for being in service for a month.

This interpretation is interesting, but it does not give a complete explanation of the whole system. One of the problems is the translation of *im.y-ht* as “member”, which seems to indicate that the division that the text described was being made within a *phyle* and among its members. Therefore, the most plausible option is to suggest that the  $1/10$  would have been distributed between the members of each *phyle* (or *phyle* subdivision). In that case, even if we accept that there was a



certain amount of goods assigned to each month, splitting this quantity among the members would still have been necessary. Therefore, a question arises: how many members would have been present in each *phyle*?

It is not easy to answer this question, since we do not have any sources that explicitly provide evidence on this particular issue. A possible exception could be the Koptos Decree K, where the king Neferkauhor provides his vizier Shemai and his wife Nebet with various groups of ten or twelve *shd.w hm.w-k3* (Urk. I, 302-303). But this case does not seem to be the most fitting parallel, since it is much later (8th dynasty), there is no mention of a *phylai* system, and only *shd.w hm.w-k3* are mentioned, so the organizational system seems to be quite different to the one of the 5th dynasty. Another possibility would be to rely on the data from the Abusir papyri. Following the calculation made by Posener-Kriéger for the Neferirkara mortuary cult, each subdivision of a *phyle* would have been comprised off around 20 members (1976, 573). The data from the mortuary complex of Raneferef seems to reveal lower numbers, around 12-15 members for each *phyle*. Fragment 69A is particularly interesting since it seems to show that *phyle st 2* was divided into two groups of five men, which meant ten members plus two overseers (Posener-Kriéger et al., 2006, 368). This number is obviously interesting since it matches well with a 1/10 division. Probably, one would expect a more limited number of members for a private owner.

In any case, even if we consider that there were ten officiants in each *phyle*, the problem of explaining the 1/10 division still exists. For example, what was the role of the variegated titles in the hierarchy of the institution? Were they sharing the 1/10 with the members of the *phyle* they supervised? A better remuneration for services provided by the higher ranks than those provided by regular members of the staff would have been expected. This circumstance seems true in the case of the mortuary cult of Neferirkara, where the *shd hm.w-ntr* and the *im.y-ht hm.w-ntr* had a considerably larger assignment than their subordinates. Interestingly enough, there is no difference between these titles despite the difference in rank (Posener-Kriéger, 1976, 322). If this had also been the case for the mortuary cult for private owners, the presence of the *shd hm.w-k3*, the *im.y-ht hm.w-k3* and eventually the *im.y-r hm.w-k3* and *zh3.(w) n z3* would hinder the understanding of this 1/10 pattern of distribution.

Another interesting document where one can find a reference to the number of ten probably associated with the ka-service is the recently discovered royal decree in favour of one of the queens named Ankhesenpepi (Legros, 2018, 288-291, 298-299). In the text, the title is damaged and only the *hm* mace remains. As pointed by Legros (2018, 290), it could have been either *hm-ntr* or *hm-k3* as both titles could have worked in the service of a queen. Since the *hm* mace is in the middle of the column, I believe the title would have been that of ka-servant, since if it were the case for *hm-ntr* one should expect the sign *hm* to be off-center to leave space for the sign *ntr*. In the decree, the sign for 10 (*md*) appears on two occasions. The first one is on a very damaged column where only the phrase [p]sš[t]... 10 hmw-[k3].t remains. Legros notes that the “ten” that appears here does not refer to the number of officiants, since in this case, the ten would follow the title, and it seems that “ten” would refer to the subdivisions of the *phylai*. With this argument, he proposes translating “[qu'on répartisse ?] tes prêtres (de ka ? [par phylè ?] et par division”. Legros considers that the term *psš*, usually translated as “division”, should be translated as “répartir”, and understands that the main purpose of this column is to establish that the ka-servants had to be distributed among the *phyles* and their

subdivisions (2018, 290). The second reference to ten is on column five of the text, in this case fully preserved: *psš n z3 10*, “répartis par phylè et par division” (Legros, 2018, 289). I agree with Legros in his interpretation of ten not referring to the numbers of *phylai* but to their subdivisions. Also, since no mention is made of the properties allotted to the cult, it seems unlikely that any kind of division of goods among members would be found here. Consequently, I believe that Legros is right in noting that the term *psš* refers to the priests, who are distributed among the *phyle* subdivisions (2018, 290). In spite of this, it is worth mentioning that the word *psš* appears in the text of the dignitaries of the necropolis of Khaefra with the meaning of “share” or “assignation” (of goods) (Goedicke, 1970, 55). *Psš* is also mentioned with the same meaning in the mortuary disposition belonging to Senuankh (Goedicke, 1970, 75-80, pl. 8). Conversely, the disposition belonging to Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep use the word *hrt* instead of *psš* with the same meaning in a similar context (Moussa and Altenmüller, 1977, 87-88, fig. 11, pl. 28). One could wonder if a similar meaning could be given to the royal decree in favour of Ankhesenpepi.

Iconography might be another source of information about the number of members and the structure of the cult, although it is evidence that might express idealized conceptions and, therefore it is difficult to interpret. In any case, when analysing the number of ka-servants identified with their names in the Old Kingdom private tombs, we realize that the number is compatible with the use of a fully developed *phylai* system on only a few occasions. There are multiple pieces of evidence, with the most common case being that of tombs presenting only a few ka-servants, rarely reaching the number of ten. The most frequent case seems to have been that the mortuary service was constituted of a few ka-servants, who were not necessarily organized in a *phylai* system (Sánchez Casado, 2020, 113-146). This circumstance is also reflected in the mortuary dispositions. The two cases we examine in the following pages are especially eloquent about this, since they show a different organization of the mortuary cult and offer specific data about the goods distributed among the cultic members.

## 5. The mortuary provision belonging to Tjenti

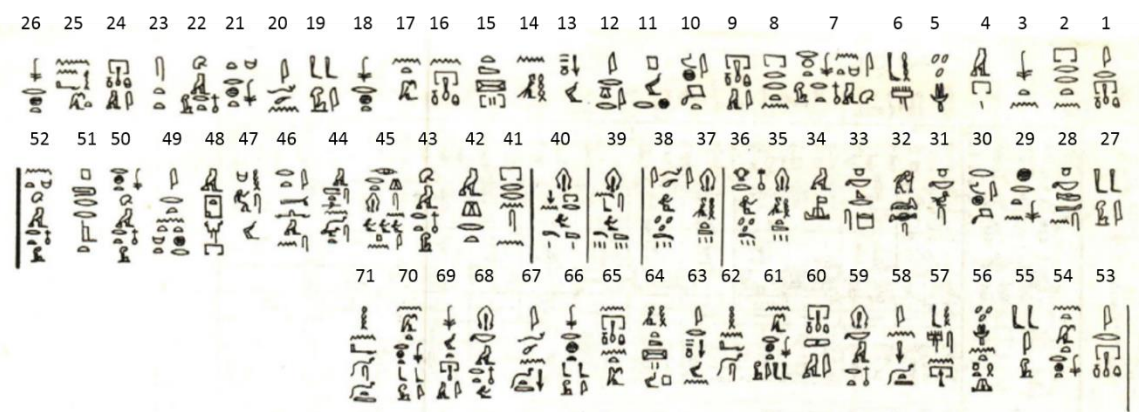


Figure 2. Mortuary disposition belonging to Tjenti. After Goedicke (1970, lám. 13).

The provision belonging to Tjenti is inscribed on a lintel, probably from Giza, now at Cairo Museum (Cairo JE 57.139) (fig. 2). There are several previous translations and editions of the text (Fitzenreiter, 2004, 14-15; Goedicke, 1970, 122-130, pl. 13; Harari, 1957, 331/335; Moret, 1914, 538-546; Pirenne, 1934, 359-360; Strudwick, 2005, 202-203; Urk. I, 163-165). The text reads as follows:

*ir pr.t-hrw prr.t n(.i) m pr nsw it hbs in hm.t(.i) rh.t nsw Tp-m-nfrt prr.t n(.i) pr.t-hrw im im3h.wt pw hr(.i) ir igr sn.nw n 3h.t st3.t [2] n pr.t-hrw n.t mw.t(.i) rh.t nsw Bbi iw.f n hm.t(.i) rh.t nsw Tp-m-nfrt stt pr.t-hrw im n(.i) hn<sup>c</sup> mw.t(.i) rh.t nsw Bbi ink dbh sn hr nsw r im3h.(i) ink z3.s sms.w iw<sup>c</sup>.s ink kr(s) s(y) m hrt-ntr*

*hm-k3 Nfr-hr 3h.t t3 3 it hk3.t 3*

*hm-k3 Twfi 3h.t t3 3 it hk3.t 3*

*hm-k3 Snb (3h.t) t3 3 (it) hk3.t 3*

*hm-k3 Pr-sn (3h.t) t3 1 (it) hk3.t 1*

*prr n.sn m hr.t Tp-m-nfrt ir(.i) hr.t.s n hm.(w)-k3 ipn m st3.t nds.t ir.t tm.sn hms.w m hw.t-k3 ir.t n.tt hr hm.t(.i) rh.t nsw Tp-m-nfrt phr r s.t n hm.t(.i) Tp-m-nfrt ir pr.t-hrw n.t mw.t(.i) rh.t nsw Bbi it n.t(y) (m) šn.wt hbs n pr-hd in sn d.t(.i) hm-k3 K3-m-nfrt pr.t-hrw im n mw.t(.i) rh.t nsw Bbi hn<sup>c</sup> ds(.i) ir sn.nw n 3h.t st3.t 2 pw n pr.t-hrw n.t mw.t(.i) rh.t nsw Bbi iw.f n sn d.t hm-k3 K(3.i)-m-nfrt sw.t pr.t-hrw im n mw.t(.i) rh.t nsw Bbi hn<sup>c</sup> ds(.i) d.t*

Regarding the mortuary offering coming forth for me from the king's house (consisting of) barley and clothes, it is my wife, the king's acquaintance Tepemneferet, who should do the offering service therein, she will be a revered one with me.

Regarding one of the [two] *arurae* of land for the mortuary offering of my mother, the king's acquaintance Bebi, it is for my wife, the king's acquaintance Tepemneferet. She is the one who should make the mortuary offering for me and my mother, the King's acquaintance Bebi. It was me who requested them from the king for my own provision. I am her eldest son, her heir. I am the one who buried her in the necropolis.

The ka-servant, Neferher. 3 ta of land. 3 heqat of barley.

The ka-servant, lufi. 3 ta of land. 3 heqat of barley.

The ka-servant, Seneb. 3 ta of land. 3 heqat of barley.

The ka-servant, Persen. 1? ta of land. 1? heqat of barley.


Shall be provided for them from the property of Tepemneferet, I have established her property for these ka-servants in a small *aroura*. If they do not remain in the *hut-ka* that is under the control of my wife, the king's acquaintance Tepemneferet, (then these possessions) shall be returned to the place of my wife Tepemneferet.

Regarding the mortuary offering of my mother, the king's acquaintance Bebi, (consisting of) barley from the granary and clothes from the treasury, it is the *sen-djet* and ka-servant Kaemneferet who should make the mortuary offering for my mother, the king's acquaintance Bebi and for myself. Regarding the second of these two *arurae* of land of the mortuary offering of my mother, the king's acquaintance Bebi, it is for the *sen-djet* and ka-servant, Kaemneferet. It is he who should make the mortuary offering there for my mother, the king's acquaintance Bebi and for myself forever.

In the text, Tjenti established the regulations for his mortuary cult and that of his mother, the king's acquaintance Bebi. According to the text, it seems clear that the land and goods mentioned were

formerly allotted to the cult of Bebi. Tjenti, as the heir to his mother, is asking for the rights over this land and goods to be transferred to his own cult, without this implying that his mother's cult would have been neglected. The emphasis on stressing his position as the elder son and heir of Bebi shows that Tjenti is claiming his right to a royal donation to his mother that should be transferred to him, probably with the acquiescence of the king. The relevance of this text for our discussion here is the way in which these properties were divided among the different persons mentioned in the text, which shows a manner of organizing the mortuary cult different to that of a *phylae* system, more simple, more economical, and also, probably, much more extended.

First of all, we should consider that the properties were being divided into two parts. The first one consisting of barley, clothes and one of the two *arurae*, which is given by Tjenti to his wife Tepemneferet. The second one, also consisting of clothes, barley, and land, was being given to a *sen-djet* and ka-servant, named Kaemneferet. At the same time, a portion of the land given to Tepemneferet was granted to four ka-servants.

The division of the properties is very interesting and sheds some light on the functioning of a small-size mortuary cult. The reason why Tjenti gave a share of the properties of his mortuary cult to Tepemneferet should probably be seen as a way of ensuring the well-being of his wife after his death. The widow would have enjoyed the revenues of the properties and would have also been in charge of overseeing the mortuary cult of his husband and mother-in-law. The widow would probably not have performed the mortuary cult herself, at least not daily. For this reason, a portion of his share was given to four ka-servants who would perform the cult instead. Notwithstanding, it is worth considering what exactly was given to these ka-servants. Two explanations can be offered. The first one was suggested by Baer, who believed that from the *arura* (30 *t*) given to Tepemneferet a small *arura* (10 *t*) was being transferred. In this way, part of the land would have been kept under the direct control of the widow, while another part would have been given to the ka-servants (Baer 1956, 115-116). The second possibility, an opinion held by Goedicke, is that all the land was being given to the ka-servant, while the widow would have received the profits of the land but without managing it herself (Goedicke, 1970, 128). The problem here is whether to consider the reading of  as *3h.t sṯ.t* and whether its translation as “*arura*” is appropriate or if, on the contrary, one should understand *3h.t* as a generic piece of “land” or a “field” (Baer, 1956, 116; Strudwick, 2005, 202). Since the text seems to show a particular interest in specifying the quantities, we believe that the option proposed by Baer is more fitting, although the other considerations should be kept in mind.

Assuming that Baer's theory is valid, we should accept that the ka-servants received a share of a 1/3 of the *arura* given to Tepemneferet, this is to say ten *t* of land together with a certain amount of barley. Interestingly enough, the amount belonging to each ka-servant was specified in the text, so we are aware of the amount of payment for the services of a ka-servant in a small-size mortuary cult. Unfortunately, the text is damaged in that particular section and some doubts exist about the quantities assigned to each particular servant. Curiously, not all the researchers who worked on the text considered the same area to be damaged or lost. Moret considered that the amounts of land corresponding to Seneb and Persen (columns 39-40) were missing (1914, 541). However, at the Urkunden, Sethe showed one of the traces of the amount of land held by Neferher (column 35) to be damaged, those corresponding to Seneb and Persen (columns 39-40), and the amount of barley belonging to Persen (column 40). In the case of Persen, Sethe includes a note

indicating that he could appreciate only one single stroke and not three, despite the fact that he amended the text so that the quantities agreed in all four cases (Urk. I, 164). On his plate, Goedicke does not show any of the quantities as having been restored, although he regards those attributed to Persen as one measure of land and one of barley (1970, 125). Finally, Strudwick attributes the amounts of one measure of land and three *heqat* of barley to Persen (2005, 202). Without having had the opportunity to inspect the inscription, it is impossible to offer a definitive opinion on this issue. However, the most logical interpretation would be to assume that all four ka-servants enjoyed the same retribution. However, contrary to this, it should be understood that if what was being distributed was a small *arura*, and if, as Baer suggested, it consisted of ten *t3* (1956, 115-116), if the three first ka-servants were given 3 *t3* each, then only one would have remained for Persen. It is difficult to explain the reason for this unequal division. A different range of functions or a shorter service time can be suggested as possible explanations. On the other hand, a correlation seems to have been established between the measurements of land and barley in each case, so if we consider the amount of land as one unit, we should probably also believe that the amount of barley was one measure, as Goedicke suggested. If this interpretation is right, it has an interesting implication for the understanding of the sharing procedures within the ka-service, in other words, not all the members of the cult would have received the same payment, even those at the same hierarchical level.

The second of the *arurae* belonging to Tjenti's and Bebi's mortuary cult was given to the *sen-djet* and ka-servant Kaemneferet, who, unlike Tepemneferet, would have managed the cults entirely by himself. Since Kaemneferet held the title of ka-servant, he probably did not need to appoint any other ka-servants to the cult. As pointed out by Goedicke, the appointment of a *sen-djet* as one of the recipients of the donation probably shows that Tjenti and Tepemneferet did not have a son, or that he was too young at the moment of the writing of the inscription (1970, 127-129). The absence of an heir also seems to be highly likely given that no children are mentioned in the inscription, and the widow is the one in charge of the mortuary cult, a role usually bestowed upon the eldest son (Sánchez Casado, 2020, 71-72). The dual system established between Tepemneferet (together with the ka-servants), and Kaemneferet can probably be explained by the fact that the widow needed to be provided with a revenue that would ensure her well-being. Another explanation could be that there were two cultic places, maybe the *hut-ka* mentioned in the inscription and the tomb-chapel itself, or the tomb of Tjenti and that of his mother. Another option could be that various officiants were present at the same cultic place but were managing mortuary properties separately.

## 6. The inscription belonging to Nykaankh of Tehneh

The text of Nykaankh in tomb 13 at Tehneh (Thompson, 2014, 44-48) is outstanding for many reasons (fig. 3). One of these is how explicit the text is regarding the organization of the cult and the properties allotted to its perpetuation. I am not commenting on the details of this text here since the interest is only to show the operation of the cult.

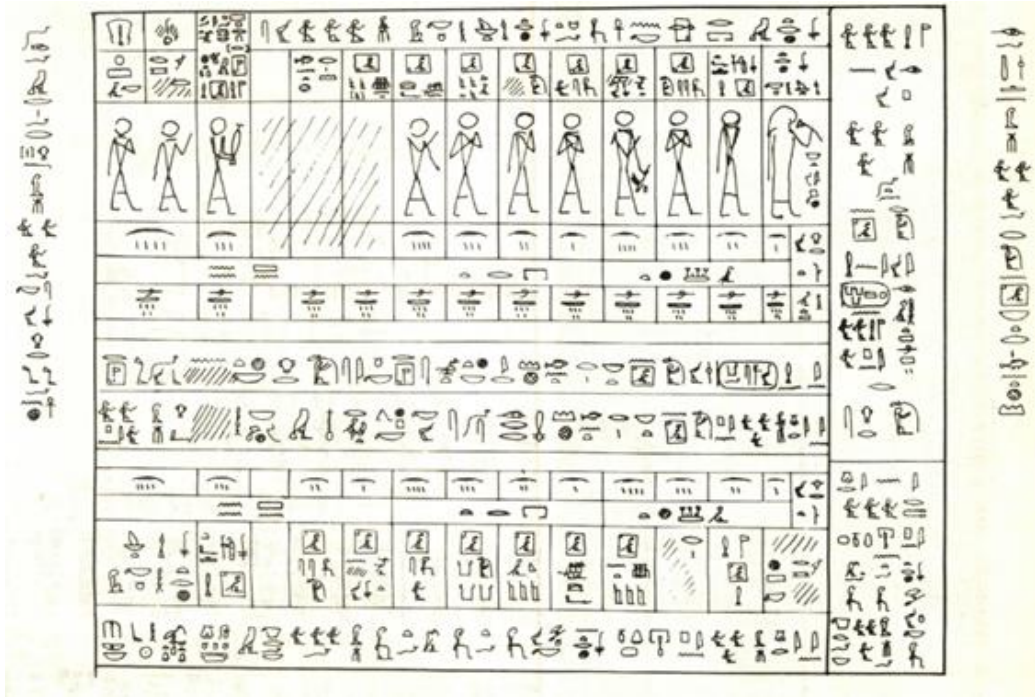


Figure 3. Text of Nykaankh in tomb 13 at Tehneh. After Goedicke (1970, pl. 14).



Nykaankh bestows his rights as overseer of the god-servants (*im.y-r hm.w-ntr*) of the goddess Hathor, Lady of Rainet, to several of his dependants who will perform the cult of the goddess as *hm.w-ntr*. At the same time, he offers a position to the same people at the mortuary cult of a certain Khenuka. It is important to indicate that in this case Nykaankh was not regulating his own mortuary cult, but that of a goddess and a private owner. Due to this situation, the properties he gave did not belong to him. On the contrary, they belonged to a royal donation made by Menkaura to sustain the cult of the local temple therein. The right held by Nykaankh over these properties comes from his position as overseer of the cult of the goddess based on a deed given by Userkaf that is mentioned in the text. As pointed out by Der Manuelian (1986, 12-18), the mention that is made to two royal decrees (that of Menkaura and that of Userkaf) is motivated by the necessity to show the provenance of the goods that are being bequeathed and the rights over them, a practice that is common in the legal texts of the Old Kingdom. Goedicke questioned Nykaankh's ability to regulate the cult in the temple of a god in this manner (1970, 135-136), but as Moreno García has indicated, the control of the local temple would have been a prerogative –and a profitable source of income– of the provincial governors (2004, 122).

The right to the cult of Khenuka is probably a question of inheritance. The connection between Nykaankh and Khenuka is not clear. It greatly depends on whether or not we consider the Nykaankh owner of tomb 13 the same person as the owner of tomb 15 (for this discussion see: Thompson, 2014, 15-20). If we consider both owners to be the same person, then the family links can be tentatively established. Khenuka seems to be the owner of tomb 14, where a daughter named Debet is mentioned. This Debet should be probably identified as the wife of Heti, father of Nykaankh. In this case, Khenuka would be Nykaankh's maternal grandfather.

The text is arranged in two sections: the upper one is related to the cult of the goddess Hathor, while the lower one is devoted to the cult of Khenuka. Thirteen people are depicted in the upper register, all identified by their names and some also by a title. Each person is assigned to a month

and a season except for the last two who share the same month. In the same way, each person is assigned a portion of land. In the lower section, the names of the same people appear in reverse order, this time without any depictions of the individuals. In this way, each person is in service for two months per year, one in the cult of the goddess Hathor of Rainet and one in the mortuary cult of Khenuka.

The people Nykaankh assigned for this cult are members of his household. The word used for describing this group of people is *ms.w-d.t*, “descendants of the mortuary estate”. Despite this, Nykaankh’s wife, Hedjethekenu, can be identified among them. The figure of his mother is followed by her eldest son Hemhathor, who is described as a “scribe of the royal documents”. Another eight people were depicted following Hemhathor, although two of them are now lost. These ten individuals are separated from the later three by a blank space. Additionally, they seem to be described by the horizontal line of text located on the top of the inscription, which does not affect the last three persons. This inscription reads as: *rh nsw im.y-r pr hw.t-3.t N(y)-k3-5nh hm.t.f rh.t nsw Hdt-hknw ms.w.s*, “The king’s acquaintance, the overseer of the Great-Hut Nykaankh, his wife the king’s acquaintance Hedjethekenu and her sons”. The fact that this inscription does not cover the last three persons, together with the separation by the blank space, seems to emphasize a difference between the two groups. Only the ones depicted under the inscription would have been sons of Hedjethekenu and Nykaankh; the other three would have had other kinds of interdependence bonds. This hypothesis could be argued against by saying that this explanation is not applicable in the lower part devoted to the cult of Khenuka, where the distribution of the names isolated the wife and the eldest son of Nykaankh from the rest of the group. Despite this, the visual relevance of the upper part of the document where the depictions are located should be considered; the arrangement of the lower part would have been conditioned by it and by the necessity to show the names in reverse order. Edel and Der Manuelian maintain that the disposition of the text does not provide a good enough reason to make this division. Indeed, they believe that the first of the three separated individuals constitutes a second depiction of Hemhathor, Nykaankh’s eldest son (Edel, 1981, 45-46; Der Manuelian, 1986, 10-12). The individual in question is described as the *hm-ntr* Hemhathor and is given an extra donation in the form of a measure of beer, a piece of meat and one tenth of the offerings of the temple (Thompson, 2014, 47). From my point of view, we do not possess enough arguments to asseverate that this second Hemhathor is the same person as Nykaankh’s son. A theophorous name composed with that of the goddess could be considered to have been very frequent in the area. Additionally, if we believe that Nykaankh used this document to bequeath the title of god-servants of Hathor to his dependents, the fact that this Hemhathor had already been identified as a god-servant could imply that he had previously held that title.

The last two men share the same cell (see fig. 3). The title of the first person is damaged, though it has been restored as  or . The second one is clearly designated as ka-servant. It should be considered that the use of these titles here was a way to identify the person receiving these rights and did not mean that these titles had any connection to the cult of the goddess. Since these two men share the cell, consequently they also share the month and its allocation. An interesting point to be considered here is that the amount of goods is assigned to a month, regardless of the number of persons that are in service. The goods are linked with a period. Accordingly, a larger number of people performing the cultic tasks does not mean an increase in the allotted amount,

but the sharing of it. Therefore, it is important to remember that what is being granted in the text is the right to share the goods assigned to the cult during a particular time frame.

Regardless of who the individuals designated as cultic performers were, Nykaankh shared two *arurae* of land among them, secured by a deed given by Menkaura. Therefore, it can be understood that this land did not belong to Nykaankh but it was linked by royal donation to the temple of the goddess Hathor. Consequently, what was been transferred was not ownership of the land, but the right of usufruct. As Goedicke pointed out, the possibility exists that the amount of two *arurae* was not a real amount of land but a standard amount since it is frequently mentioned in legal texts of this kind (1970, 136).

The two *arurae* mentioned would have been divided among the members of the cult assigning five *ta* of land to each month. Each person would have received that portion of land during the month they were active in the cult, except for the two last ones, who shared the month. Probably, it can be understood that they did not receive the land itself but a value equivalent to its production. It is important to note the way in which Nykaankh ensured the wellbeing of his family and dependants after his death and the importance that this would have had for the control of the local temple for these local rulers.

Nevertheless, the text does not clearly state the origin of the goods allotted for sustaining the mortuary cult of Khenuka. One possibility is to consider that Khenuka left a series of goods for his cult that are not specified in the text. Another possibility that they employed the goods of the local temple, perhaps using the procedure of the reversion of offerings. This second possibility seems to be supported by the emphasis that Nykaankh placed on ensuring that he owns the right over the reversion of offerings of the temple thanks to the deed of Userkaf. If Nykaankh and Khenuka were grandson and grandfather as it seems, then the goods coming from the temple were used to sustain the mortuary cult of the local dynasty.

The most remarkable aspect of this text is that it shows a way of organizing the cult of a goddess and the mortuary counterpart of a private person that is clearly different from the *phylai* system used by some tomb owners in the Memphite area. Although a kind of rotation system is implied, this system does not follow a ten-month pattern and does not use gangs of officiants but a single person for each month. A different element to be determined is, however, whether these dependents of Nykaankh would have performed the cult themselves or would have only enjoyed the title and its benefits nominally, while lower ranking people would have performed the actual cult.

## 7. Conclusions

Although it is true that the sources available for understanding the organization and distribution of goods in the private mortuary cult are scarce, the three case studies examined here demonstrate that the system followed for the organization of these cults were varied and adaptive. The text belonging to the dignitary from Khaefra's necropolis is representative of a fully developed *phylai* system that would have been in use mostly in the Memphite area, and it would have imitated, with greater or lesser accuracy, the organization of the royal mortuary cult. This system would have been a costly privilege only affordable for some of the members of the high elite (Roth, 1991, 91-118). Despite this, it seems clear that the *phylai* were not restricted to the most sumptuous



arrangements, and there are cases where they were used in a more affordable way (2020, 113-146). This situation is suggested, for example, for the case of Nyhetepptah in Giza (Roth 1991, 102), and for Mehu and Sabni in Qubbet el-Hawa (Edel et al., 2008, 216; Seyfried, 2013, 49), as both seem to have had only two *phylai* in service. Together with this way of adapting the royal system, the other two examples analysed show a scheme that was not based on *phylai* and they were surely less expensive and more extensively used in the cemeteries.

The text belonging to Tjenti represented the cult provided to a dignitary who was high-ranking enough to be the recipient of royal donations, but maybe not wealthy enough to afford a cult organized in *phylai* by himself. Here, the cult was based on four ka-servants and a *sen-djet* ka-servant who would have performed the cult for Tjenti and his mother. Another example of this organizational system of the cult can be found in the case of Penmeru, who also trusted his mortuary cult to a *sen-djet* ka-servant (Der Manuelian, 2009, 19-30).

Nykaankh's text is an example of a cult organized in relation to a local temple controlled by a local governor. It shows a rotation system that it is not built upon a system of *phylai* but depends on persons who were employed in both the cult of the local goddess and the mortuary cult of a deceased local governor. This kind of system is not so explicitly shown in any other Old Kingdom document, but it should be considered that it would probably have been a common practice for the local dynasties of nomarchs in the provincial area. In this specific aspect, we can make a connection with the already mentioned Middle Kingdom text from the tomb of Djefaihapy at Assyut, where the resources of the local temple were also used for the mortuary cult of the governor himself (Spalinger, 1985, 7-20). Nevertheless, the similarities end here, since the system proposed in both texts are not comparable. As already stated, the mortuary cult changed greatly from the Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom.

As for the system of distribution of the goods, each text depicts a different situation. The first one shows the presence of the 1/10 division among the *phylai* members, but as pointed out above, there are many problems that hinder our understanding of this pattern of division since we cannot be certain about the number of members of each *phyle* and whether the sharing procedure would have been equitable or would have depended on the rank and specific functions of each member.

We learn about a system of division between different cultic actors from the text belonging to Tjenti. In addition, we discover that the allocation for each of the members was not necessarily equal, even among members of the same rank. This distinction among the members was probably at the root of the conflicts that the mortuary provisions tried to regulate, as we have mentioned before.

For its part, the text belonging to Nykaankh seems to show an equitable division among the members, although it introduces another variable, namely the fact that one position could be held by two people who shared the cultic responsibilities and the allocation related to the post. The tendency of the authors in the mortuary provisions to stress that the title should be given only by inheritance to the eldest son can be interpreted as a way of avoiding a situation in which the cultic position was divided among various persons and, consequently, that the goods allotted to maintaining the cult were fragmented.

Although we are still far from understanding the entire system, the combined information of these three texts brings us closer to a panorama that, as we have been indicated, would have been tremendously adaptive. On the one hand, there was the possibility of organizing the cults in a rotating system that may have involved the use of *phylai*, on the other, there were cultic systems that worked with a few members that do not seem to have been subject to this rotation. Regardless of the underlying structure, the division of property ascribed to the mortuary cult appears to have been linked to time served. In rotating systems, the goods would have been assigned to each month and later distributed among the officiants. In non-rotating systems, the goods would not have been assigned to specific months, but differences still existed in the payments to the different officiants. Said discrepancies would probably have depended on service times, but also on other elements whose implications are difficult to understand, such as the type of functions or the hierarchical position.

Another interesting implication is the fact that various people could share a position, dividing the assigned assets between them. This implies that the distributions between the members were much more complex than a mere equitable division. The assets would have been assigned to a series of original positions (perhaps 10 or 12) that remained constant. These positions could be exercised, and shared, by several people. The inclusion of new members, mainly through inheritance, would not have meant a recalculation of the assignments of all the members. What was inherited was the position with its functions and, overall, its assignment, regardless of the number of heirs. Consequently, the exercise of the cult would have been more profitable for some members than for others, depending on the circumstances of their access to the cultic services. This situation makes the clauses of the mortuary provisions that sought to avoid inheritance to more than one heir more understandable. The situation was the same for those clauses that sought to regulate disputes between ka-servants, since there were so many elements to be considered during the distribution of 'payments' that the existence of many imbalances and inequalities is really understandable.

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## Specific contribution of the authors

The author is the only responsible of this research.

## Abbreviations

ASAE. Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

CRAIBL. Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres. Paris: Impr. Nationale.

GM. Göttinger Miszellen. Göttingen: Universität Göttingen.

JAOS. Journal of the American Oriental Society. Baltimore – Boston – New Haven: American Oriental Society.

- JARCE. Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt. Boston – Princeton – New York – Cairo: American Research Centre in Egypt.
- JNES. Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Polis. Polis: revista de ideas y formas políticas de la antigüedad clásica. Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá.
- RdÉ. Revue d'Égyptologie. Paris: Société française d'égyptologie.
- RIDA. Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité. Brussels: Ministère de l'instruction publique – Fondation universitaire de Belgique.
- RT. Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes. Paris: A. Franck.

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