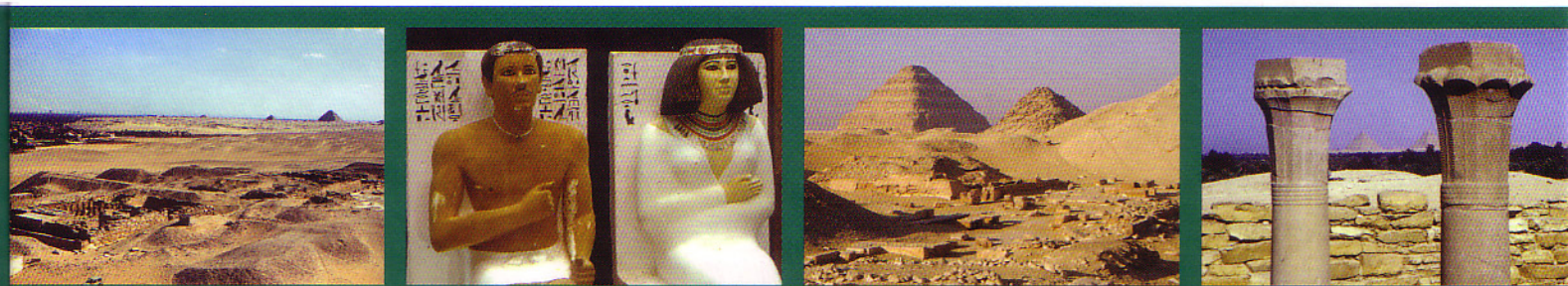


# THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

## Proceedings of the Conference



Prague, May 31 – June 4, 2004

Miroslav Bárta  
editor

# **THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD IN PRAGUE,  
MAY 31 – JUNE 4, 2004

**Miroslav Bárta**  
editor

**Czech Institute of Egyptology  
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Prague 2006**

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## Foreword

It is with pleasure that after more than two years the publication of the lectures held during the conference on the Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology in Prague in the year 2004 (May 3 – June 4) has been made possible.

The conference held in Prague continued the tradition of previous meetings by being dedicated to the same subject: art and its dating in the Old Kingdom of Egypt: the period that forms the first apogee of the developing Egyptian state. The tradition of these irregular meetings was established in 1991 by Hourig Sourouzian and Rainer Stadelmann, at that time the Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, who organised the first conference.<sup>1</sup> The second meeting also took place in Cairo, at this time the place of the venue was the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology and the conference, held on November 10–13, 1994, was organised by its director Nicolas Grimal.<sup>2</sup> The penultimate meeting took place in Paris, France, on April 3–4, 1998, and was organised by Christiane Ziegler, Chief Conservator of Egyptian Antiquities in the Louvre.<sup>3</sup>

The present volume continues a well-established and successful tradition of post-conference publications. As such, it makes available most of the contributions that were presented during the conference in Prague. It was mainly the scientific profile of the Czech Institute of Egyptology that led us to substantially widen the scope of the conference in 2004. The total of thirty-three contributions presented in this volume cover various aspects connected to Old Kingdom culture, not only its art, but also its archaeology and architecture, selected administrative problems, iconography, texts and the latest, often first time published results of ongoing excavations. From the list of contributions it becomes evident that natural sciences and their application in the widest sense receive general acceptance and support from among Egyptologists. It is one of the few aspects that can in the future significantly enhance our understanding of specific issues connected to the Old Kingdom art and archaeology.

Eng. Marta Štrachová carefully edited the manuscript and was essential in producing this volume. The advice and guidance of Eng. Jolana Malátková also proved indispensable. The Czech Academy of Sciences is to be thanked for the production of the book. Last but not least, it was Prof. Dr. Jean Leclant, Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Paris, and the chair of the European branch of the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini, and Prof. Dr. David Silverman, University of Pennsylvania, chair of the North American branch of the the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini and the respective committees that approved this publication and agreed to support it financially.

Miroslav Bárta

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was held in the German Archaeological Institute, Cairo, on October 29–30, and the proceedings published in 1995 in the volume *Kunst des Alten Reiches. Symposium des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo am 29. und 30. Oktober 1991*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo, Sonderschrift 28, Mainz am Rhein.

<sup>2</sup> N. Grimal, ed., *Lex critères de datation stylistiques à l'Ancien Empire*, Bibliothèque d'Étude 120 (Cairo, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Ch. Ziegler, N. Palayret, eds., *L'Art de l'Ancien Empire égyptien. Actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel les 3 et 4 avril 1998* (Paris, 1999).

## Bibliography

Abbreviations for journals, series and monographs used throughout the volume follow the system of *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (cf. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, Band VII. Nachträge, Korrekturen und Indices*, founded by W. Helck and E. Otto, edited by W. Helck and W. Westendorf, Wiesbaden 1992, XIV–XXXVIII).

The following additional abbreviations are also used:

ACER – *The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports*, Sydney;  
AOS – *American Oriental Society*, Michigan;  
BSAK – *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur, Beihefte*, Hamburg;  
CA – *Current Anthropology*, Chicago, Illinois;  
Hannig, *Handwörterbuch* – R. Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen. Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.)*, Mainz 1995;  
Harpur, *DETOK* – Y. Harpur, *Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom. Studies in Orientation and Scene Content*, London and New York 1988;  
Harvey, *WSOK* – J. Harvey, *Wooden Statues of the Old Kingdom. A Typological Study, Egyptological Memoirs 2*, Leiden 2001;  
KAW – *Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt*, Mainz am Rhein;  
*LingAeg* – *Lingea Aegyptia, Journal of Egyptian language Studies*, Göttingen;  
*OrMonsp* – *Orientalia Monspeliensia*, Montpellier;  
PAM – *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, Warsaw;  
SAGA – *Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens*, Heidelberg;  
WES – *Warsaw Egyptological Studies*, Warsaw.



# Ideal and reality in Old Kingdom private funerary cults<sup>1</sup>

Yayoi Shirai

## I. Introduction

How long the funerary cults of non-royal persons were practiced in the Old Kingdom (c. 2687–2191 B. C.) is an unexplored subject. Although we know how the sustaining institutions for private funerary cults were organized systematically parallel to royal funerary cults<sup>2</sup> since the early Old Kingdom (in particular, in the reign of Sneferu<sup>3</sup>), we know little about their duration. Archaeological reports sometimes devote a few pages to this topic,<sup>4</sup> but it has never been thoroughly and comprehensively investigated, perhaps because concern has focused principally on the establishment of the funerary cult by the tomb owner during his or her lifetime. But did the cult continue to be practiced in accordance with his or her wishes or did it cease shortly after the burial, even though human and economic resources had been provided by contract? These issues remain to be elucidated.

I attempt to show in this paper that private funerary cults during the Old Kingdom exhibit diversity in duration, contrary to the theoretical assumption of existence in perpetuity. Memphite cemeteries provide an appropriate sample to explore this question. Textual, iconographic and archaeological data obtained from some well-documented private tombs at Giza, Dahshur and Meidum form the basis of the analysis that follows.

## II. Definition: Funerary cults as posthumous cults

It is well known that a tomb owner normally started to establish his cult during his lifetime.<sup>5</sup> However, it is still debatable when the cult was actually first performed because there is no direct evidence bearing on the question.

Andrey Bolshakov asserts that a cult began during the lifetime of the tomb owner. He bases his theory on the premise that the cult benefited the tomb owner's statue(s), rather than his corpse.<sup>6</sup> Bolshakov argues: 'Since the tomb was usually completed during the lifetime of its owner, the bringing of the equipment had also to have a premortal character; hence the beginning of the cult of the statues was premortal too.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful to Stephan J. Seidlmayer for his overall comments and suggestions on versions of this paper, as well as Nicole Alexanian for valuable advice on objects from Dahshur. I would like to thank Ann M. Roth for her valuable comments on my paper, in particular concerning the mastabas at Giza.

<sup>2</sup> The first clear evidence for royal funerary cult institutions can be seen in the procession list of the funerary estates of Sneferu, A. Fakhry, *Monuments of Snefru at Dahshur II/1* (Cairo, 1961), pls. 12–15. However, the presence of earlier royal cult institutions has been suggested on the basis of the fact that several First, Second and Third Dynasty kings had a royal domain respectively. For this discussion, see T. B. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt* (London, New York, 1999), 119–123.

<sup>3</sup> The first obvious example of a private funerary institution is from the transitional period between the Third Dynasty and the Fourth Dynasty (H. Goedicke, 'Die Laufbahn des *Mṯn'*', *MDAIK* 21 [1966]: 1–3).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Junker sometimes mentioned the cessations of cults he excavated. See Junker, *Giza VI*, 164–166.

<sup>5</sup> Presence of legal contracts during the lifetime of tomb owners suggests this. For the overall study of legal contracts concerning private funerary cults, see H. Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich, Beihefte zur WZKM* 5 (Vienna, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> A. O. Bolshakov, 'The Moment of the Establishment of the Tomb-Cult in Ancient Egypt', *AfO* 18 (1991/2): 204–218.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

It is questionable, however, that a cult was practiced without a corpse. If it had been possible to practice the funerary cult without a body, why were the Egyptians concerned from early Old Kingdom times with preserving it through developing the techniques of mummification?<sup>8</sup> And what of those tombs *without* statues in the royal cemeteries of the Old Kingdom?<sup>9</sup> Even simple tombs and burials always have tiny offering places with false doors, offering tables and basins<sup>10</sup> which clearly show that a cult could have been performed without a statue. Furthermore, Bolshakov's idea emphasizes the immutable character of a cult before and after death. Even if we accept the existence of a cult during the tomb owner's lifetime, it is doubtful that the cult would have remained unchanged following death and burial; ancient Egyptian culture was no exception in considering death to be characterized by different moments and a transitional period such as death, burial,<sup>11</sup> and mourning<sup>12</sup>. In particular, the burial ritual might have been a significant moment, which transformed the deceased's character. This issue requires more consideration which is beyond the scope of this paper. Here I shall provisionally employ the term 'funerary cults' to refer to posthumous cults, which were to be practiced after the beneficiary's death.

### III. Perpetuity of funerary cults

#### Main sources

Private funerary cults of the Old Kingdom were characterized by a theoretical conception of eternity, signalled by the terms *d.t* or *pr-d.t*. Even if the interpretation of these concepts is still debated,<sup>13</sup> there seems to be general agreement that they designate a kind of property that was established by the tomb owner during his lifetime, for the main purpose of securing his funerary cult forever.

A range of evidence attests to the tomb owner's efforts to maintain an eternal existence. In the first place, building a tomb can be considered an act of securing cult space. The desirability of erecting a tomb during one's lifetime is stressed in various 'Instructions'.<sup>14</sup> Legal contracts pertaining to funerary services<sup>15</sup> were sometimes made between tomb owners and the relevant people. In these contracts, the tomb owner specified the proper way of utilizing his property to insure the regular performance of the cult for his benefit. Furthermore, it may well be that funerary cult scenes in tombs highlighted the ideal aspect of funerary cults, emphasizing perpetuity, as discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> N. Tacke, 'Die Entwicklung der Mummenmaske im Alten Reich', *MDAIK* 52 (1996): 307–336.; S. D'Auria, 'Mummification in Ancient Egypt', in S. D'Auria, P. Lacovara, K. Roehrig, eds., *Mummies and Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt* (Boston, 1988), 14–19; A. Batrawi, 'The Pyramid Studies: Anatomical Reports', *ASAE* 47 (1947): 97–111.

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication with S. J. Seidlmayer.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., see photos from the workmen's cemetery at southeast Giza in Z. Hawass, *Secrets from the Sand* (Cairo, 2003), 102–114.

<sup>11</sup> H. Altenmüller, 'Bestattung', *LÄ* I (1977), cols. 743–745.; *idem*, 'Bestattungsritual', *LÄ* I (1977), cols. 745–765.

<sup>12</sup> W. Westendorf, 'Trauer', *LÄ* VI (1986), cols. 744–745.

<sup>13</sup> On traditional interpretations of (*pr-*)*d.t*, see Seidl, *Äg. Rechtsgeschichte*; P. Kaplony, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung des Totenkultes im Alten Ägypten', *Asiatische Studien* 18/19 (1965): 290–303.; S. Allam, 'Vom Stiftungswesen der alten Ägypten', *Das Altertum* 20 (1974): 131–146; On the interpretation of the word as 'private property', see J. J. Perepelkin, *Privateigentum in der Vorstellung der Ägypter des Alten Reichs* (Edited and translated by R. Müller-Wollermann) (Tübingen, 1986); For a recent interpretation of the word as 'funerary property', see M. Fitzenreiter, *Zum Toteneigentum im Alten Reich, Achet Schriften zur Ägyptologie* A4 (Berlin, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> E.g., see the instruction of Prince Hardjedef, in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, A book of Readings vol. I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1973), 58–59.

<sup>15</sup> On inscriptions relating to funerary cults, see Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften*, 44–67 (pl. 5), 68–74 (pl. 6), 75–80 (pl. 8), 81–103 (pl. 9), 104–107 (pl. 11a), 108–112 (pl. 11b), 113–121 (pl. 12), 122–130 (pl. 13), 131–143 (pl. 14), 144–148 (pl. 15).

### Characteristics of funerary cult scenes

Exactly what the wall scenes in Old Kingdom tombs reflect remains controversial. Some scholars tend to regard them a kind of symbolic expression.<sup>16</sup> Others stress that realism generally dominates.<sup>17</sup> This paper is not the context for discussing this issue in detail, but it is difficult to imagine that scenes of the private funerary cult reflect the past event when the tomb owner died. In the first place, reliefs and paintings will have been completed in most cases before his death, in other words, before the funerary cult was actually practiced. There were, of course, exceptions, when a tomb owner's son provided a tomb and for the cult of his father – an example is provided by Sennedjemib Mehi's efforts on his father Inti's behalf.<sup>18</sup> In such cases, a son might leave an inscription describing the events after his father's death. It is therefore likely that, although there are exceptions, funerary cult scenes hardly show what was really happened.

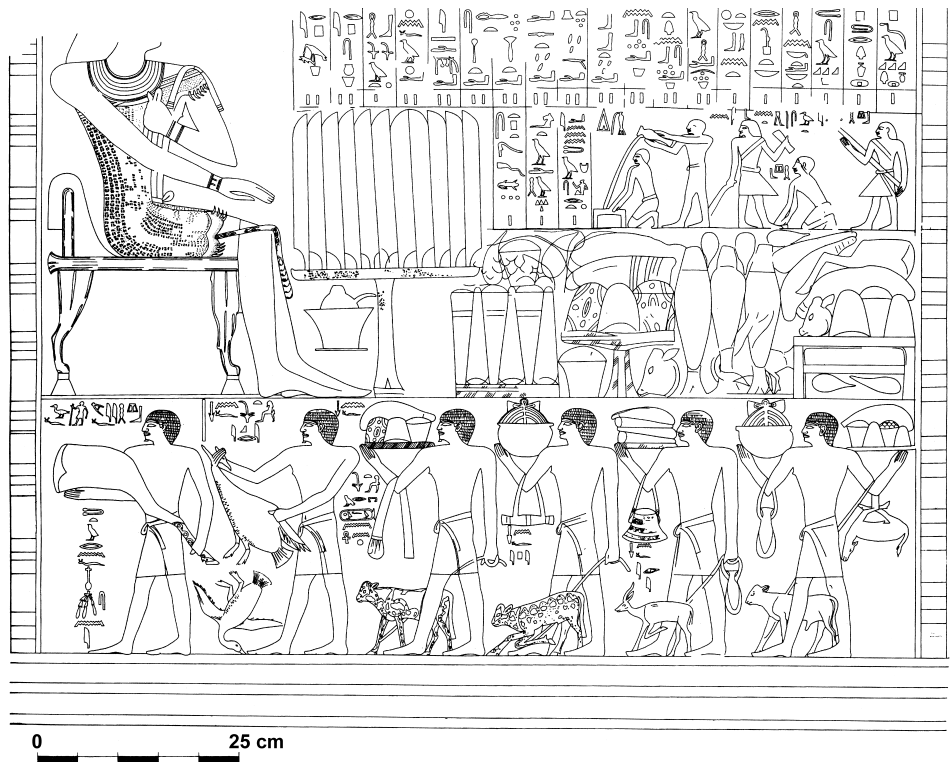


Fig. 1 Daily offering ritual scene on the north wall of the portico in the tomb of Tjetu (G 2001) (after Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery I*, fig. 24, Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

### Case studies and their interpretation

It will be worthwhile to examine funerary cult scenes by asking why and how they were depicted, based on the premise that the scenes hardly reflect past events. Two representative examples may be considered here in detail with special attention focused on the tomb owner's social circumstances.

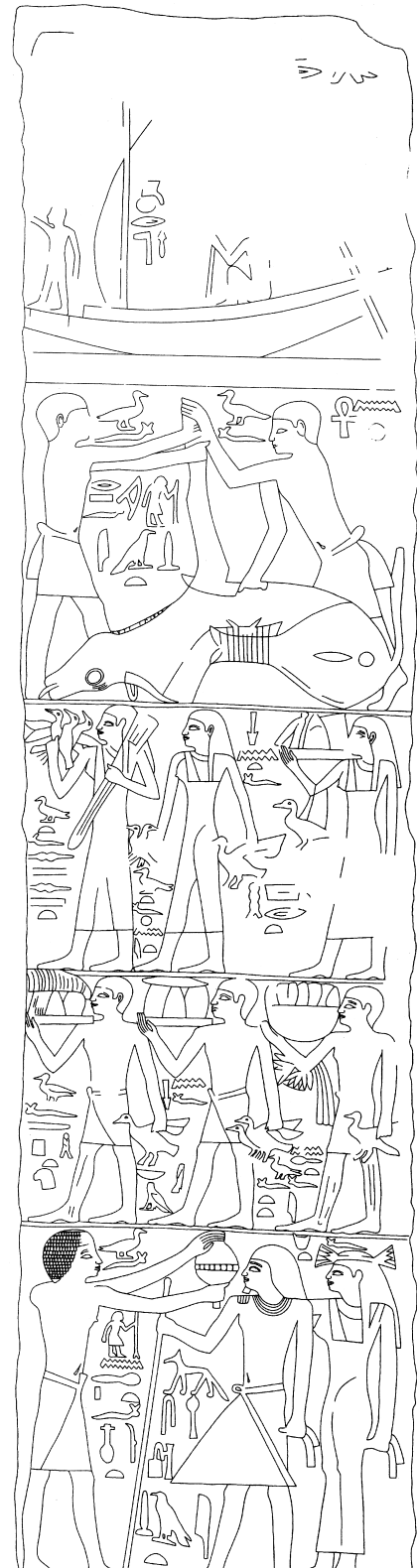
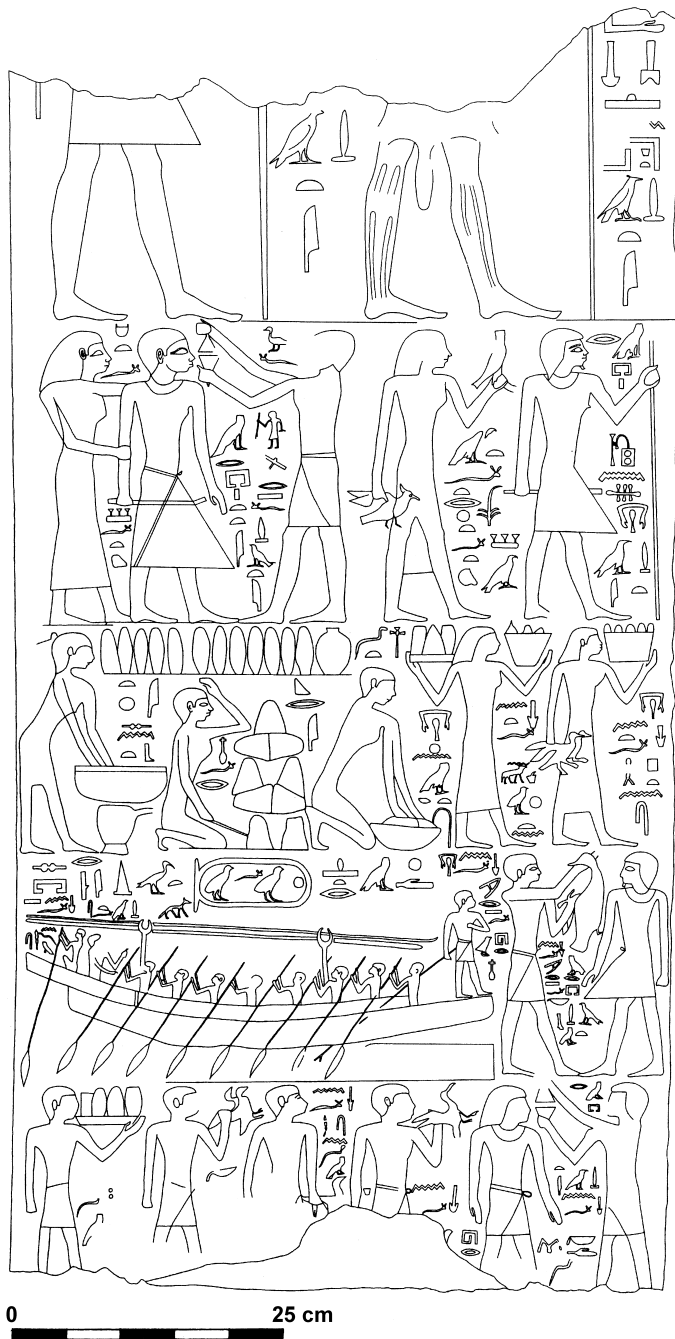
The first example is the daily offering ritual scene shown in the tomb of Tjetu (G 2001)<sup>19</sup> at Giza (fig. 1). Five unnamed priests, including two lectors, perform rites in front of Tjetu. They pour a libation, and perform the rituals of 'removing footprints' and 'making glorifications'. There are six offering bearers in the bottom

<sup>16</sup> E.g. H. Altenmüller, 'Nilpferd und Papyrusdickicht in den Gräbern des Alten Reiches', *BSEG* 13 (1989): 9–21; *idem*, 'Der Grabherr des Alten Reiches als Horus, Sohn des Osiris. Überlegungen zum Sinn der Grabdarstellungen des Alten Reiches in Ägypten (2500–2100 v. Chr.)', *Ankh. Revue d'égyptologie et des civilisations africaines*, Gif-sur-Yvette 4/5 (1995–1996): 184–213.

<sup>17</sup> For example, A. O. Bolshakov, 'The Old Kingdom Representations of Funeral Procession', *GM* 121 (1991): 31–54.

<sup>18</sup> K. Sethe, *Urk.* I, 63–66.; *BAR* I, 123–125; E. Brovarski, *The Sennedjemib Complex Part I: The Mastabas of Sennedjemib Inti (G 2370), Khnumente (G 2374), and Sennedjem Mehi (G 2378)*, *Giza Mastabas* 7 (Boston, 2001), 101–110.

<sup>19</sup> W. K. Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery I, Giza Mastabas* 4 (Boston, 1980), 7–15, fig. 24, pl. 28.



register. The first is identified as eldest son and lector priest. The other four are the tomb owner's brothers.

The second example comes from the side panels of the false door in the tomb of Djaty (G 2337X)<sup>20</sup> at Giza (fig. 2). The second register of the left panel shows Djaty holding a staff with his mother behind him, and Djaty burning incense for his parents. In the third register, there are five women. The first two are offering bearers. The woman on the right side is Djaty's sister with the title 'funerary priestess'. The

**Fig. 2** Various scenes on the two side panels from the false door of Djaty (G 2337X) (after Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery I*, fig. 41, Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

<sup>20</sup>Simpson, *Mastabas of the Western Cemetery I*, 28–31, fig. 41, pls. 54, 55.

woman on the left side is also his sister. The third woman, kneeling forward over a bowl, is a funerary priestess. There are no labels for the women heating pottery for baking and brewing. The fourth register comprises two scenes. At the right, Djaty is offered a duck by his brother. To the left, a boat sails to Akhet Khufu, where the tomb is located. In the bottom register, Djaty's brother burns incense for him. Two of the four offering bearers that follow are also brothers. The second register of the right hand panel shows Djaty's two sons cutting off an ox's leg. The third register depicts three offering bearers. Two of the women at the left side are Djaty's daughters; the third is his sister. The fourth register also shows three offering bearers: Djaty's two sons and a brother. The bottom register portrays Djaty and his wife; their eldest son burns incense before them.

These two examples indicate that family members and other dependents play particular roles in the scenes. The common elements are the tomb owner's eldest sons and his brothers. Eldest sons are shown not only performing rituals for tomb owners, but also as offering bearers. Brothers are in most cases offering bearers. Djaty's example provides additional information about his social circumstances; his parents are the objects of ritual, and children are engaged in offerings as well as butchery. Funerary priests are also involved in production work.

In a study of ritual scenes in Memphite private tombs, Fitzenriter<sup>21</sup> points out that each figure plays a part in establishing a tomb owner's social standing; individuals were depicted to demonstrate the social status of the tomb owner in the community during his lifetime.<sup>22</sup> For example, a depiction of the tomb owner's parents documents his observance of decorum in his relationship to them. The presence of children shows that the tomb owner has descendants. In short, Fitzenriter implies that people play idealized roles in ritual scenes to express the tomb owner's social position, based on a family unit. This idea explains why ritual scenes were depicted in tombs, even though the cult had not yet started.

In order to clarify this point, I would like to consider funerary cult scenes from a different angle. The legal contracts relating to the funerary cult mentioned above were inscribed on tomb walls.<sup>23</sup> Although differing in detail, they usually include: 1) appointment of heirs and funerary priests 2) specification of property apportioned them, and 3) their rights and limitations. Some additional clauses cite 4) penalties in case of violation and 5) their obligations to maintain the cults of a tomb owner. Certainly, this kind of document in a tomb reflects a tomb owner's social standing in that it shows how successfully he has established his cult. This idea accords with Fitzenriter's theory about wall scenes. However, the inscriptions seem to tell us something more when they refer to more practical things such as penalties and obligations. Since legal documents tend to be inscribed in conspicuous locations near offering places in tombs,<sup>24</sup> often together with funerary cult scenes nearby, it is plausible that they evoked the tomb owner's intention to exhort his delegates to maintain the cult regularly and eternally. It is most likely that funerary cult scenes tended to serve as reminders of how and by whom service should be performed to benefit the tomb owner, giving visual expression to the specific roles of the people involved and the rituals. In this respect, I suggest that funerary cult scenes

<sup>21</sup> M. Fitzenreiter, 'Grabdekoration und die Interpretation Funerärer Rituale im Alten Reich', in H. Willems, ed., *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms*, Proceedings of the international symposium held at Leiden University 6.-7. June, 1996, *OLA* 103 (2000), 67-140.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-93.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see the contracts in Goedicke, *Rechtsinschriften*, 75-80 (Snnwankh), 81-103 (Nebkauhor), 131-143 (Niankhkai).

<sup>24</sup> The clearest examples if this are: the contracts of Penmeru on the south wall of the chapel recess described in Reisner, *Giza I*, 292; that of Snnwankh on the eastern wall of his chapel in *PM III*<sup>2</sup>, pl. 59, no. 6; that of Nebkauhor on the western wall of the pillared hall in S. Hassan, *Excavations at Saqqara 1937-1938, I, The Mastaba of Neb-Kaw-Her* (Cairo, 1975), pls. 26, 27.; those of Niankhkai near false doors on the western walls of his younger and older tombs (*PM IV*, 132 upper left and right).

essentially display the idealized aspect of the funerary cult with the emphasis on perpetuity. Of course, the funerary cult scenes took on the character of reality, when (or if) the deceased's family and others carried out his wishes just as shown in the scenes. However, our understanding of private funerary cults following on the tomb owner's death is considerably limited. I will scrutinize this issue in the next section.

#### IV. Reality in archaeological records

Peter Kaplony was the first to point out the possibility of a discrepancy between the theory and the practice of private funerary cults during the Old Kingdom.<sup>25</sup> He asserts that a tomb owner's property may have been fragmented within a few generations of his death, due to successive division among his descendants and professional priests. Kaplony cites the case of Niankhkai, who left his property and his priestly offices in the cult of Hathor and in the funerary cult of a private person named Khenuka, as well as a newly created post of funerary priest for his own benefit, to be apportioned among 13 family members.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Shafik Allam expresses fundamental doubts concerning the durability of private funerary cult after detailed examination of the textual evidence.<sup>27</sup> He assumes that Old Kingdom funerary cults emphasized an aspect of the inheritance of a tomb owner's property rather than that of maintenance of the cult itself.<sup>28</sup> In short, both Allam and Kaplony doubt that private funerary cults endured for any length of time.

The crux of the problem seems to lie in our biased understanding of Old Kingdom funerary cults which resulted from accepting the claim to perpetuity at face value, despite doubts expressed by some. I shall now turn to archaeological data, as a means of approaching this problem from a different angle, bringing phenomena such as the continuous use of pottery and evidence for the enlargement, rebuilding, or destruction of offering places to bear on the problem.

##### Case 1

The large mud-brick mastaba of Prince Nefermaat and his wife Atet (Tomb No. 16) in the northern part of the necropolis at Meidum is thought to have been built in the early Fourth Dynasty.<sup>29</sup> The two offering places exhibit three building phases.<sup>30</sup> At first glance, these phases would seem to imply long-term maintenance of the funerary cults. However, most pottery sherds and miniature model vessels associated with the cult place can be dated exclusively to the early Old Kingdom.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that the funerary cult of the prince and his spouse was maintained for a relatively short time. (Anomalous pottery sherds dating to the late Second Intermediate Period and even subsequently were also found,<sup>32</sup> but they can hardly be related to the funerary cults of the tomb owners, especially since they do not derive from known ritual vessel types.)

<sup>25</sup> Kaplony, *Asiatische Studien* 18/19 (1965): 297.

<sup>26</sup> On reports and discussions of the relevant inscriptions, see E. Edel, *Hieroglyphische Inschriften des Alten Reiches* (Opladen, 1981), 38–64.

<sup>27</sup> Allam, *Das Altertum* 20 (1974): 143–144.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>29</sup> For the probable date and the family relationship, see Y. Harpur, *The tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep at Meidum: Discovery, Destruction and Reconstruction, Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom I* (Oxford, 2001), 26–29.

<sup>30</sup> The building phases were originally proposed by Petrie in *Medum*, 14–15. Petrie's conclusions were partly questioned by E. Brock in A. el-Khouli, *Meidum*, *ACER* 3 (1991), 37–38. For a concise summary of the architectural characteristics of each phase, with a plan, see Harpur, *The tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep*, 35–44, fig. 36.

<sup>31</sup> A. M. Jones, 'Section D: Pottery', in A. el-Khouli, *Meidum*, 43–45, pls. 49–50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 47–49, pl. 51.

<sup>33</sup> For the position and plan of the mastaba, see N. Alexanian, *Dahshur II: Das Grab des Prinzen Netjer-aperf. Die Mastaba II/1 in Dahschur*, *AV* 56 (1999), figs.1, 4.

### Case 2

The stone-built tomb of Prince Netjeraperef which lies between the Red Pyramid and the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur<sup>33</sup> was also built in the reign of Sneferu<sup>34</sup>. No trace of enlargement of the two offering places was observed, but both, and the southern one in particular, yielded a variety of Old Kingdom pottery. Typological and chronological analyses reveal that the majority of the pottery can be securely dated to the early Fourth Dynasty,<sup>35</sup> suggesting that the regular funerary cult for the prince is unlikely to have continued beyond that period. Specific pottery types such as vats, beer jars, storage jars, bread moulds, dishes, cups, and a stand are evidently related to offering- ritual activity for the prince's benefit. In particular, the concentration of certain kinds of pottery like miniature models, beer jars and dishes at the southern offering place are indicative of continual, periodic use with food offerings.<sup>36</sup> The presence of a few examples of late Old Kingdom pottery may indicate sporadic cult activity on a reduced scale at that time.<sup>37</sup>

### Case 3

Junker reported that the offering place of the mud-brick mastaba tomb S 677/817 in the Western Cemetery at Giza was obviously encroached upon and severely destroyed by a late Old Kingdom shaft tomb S 676/707.<sup>38</sup> Mastaba S 677/817 is evidently later than the neighbouring tomb belonging to Rawer II which dates between the reigns of Djedkara and Unas or later.<sup>39</sup> Judging from the time elapsed between the construction of S 677/817 and the destruction of its offering place, it can be estimated that the funerary cult associated with the tomb endured only from the reigns of Djedkara/Unas to some point towards the end of the Old Kingdom.

### Case 4

The tombs of palace attendants in the Western Cemetery at Giza<sup>40</sup> provide further examples. Ann Macy Roth's careful observation of architectural detail and the spatial relationships between the tombs<sup>41</sup> allow us to infer the duration of the cult activities to some extent. Her chronological framework – Phases I to IV, ranging from the reign of Nyusera to the reign of Pepy I – is quite useful for dating these tombs as well as for understanding the architectural features of each phase. Of particular interest for investigating the duration of cults are tombs of Phase IV (end of the Fifth Dynasty through the reign of Pepy I),<sup>42</sup> when destructive activity in the cemetery occurred. Roth explains:

*'significant for an understanding of human activity in Old Kingdom cemeteries in the surprisingly rapid breakdown in respect for the major mastabas that can be seen in the cluster after the end of the Fifth Dynasty. Already by the early Sixth Dynasty, it was no longer felt necessary to preserve access to the earlier cult places. The dismantling of chapel walls and the scattering of the contents of serdabs occurred not long afterwards, to judge from the apparent stratigraphic position of the remains. These activities may have been coupled with the robbery of many of the tomb shafts.'*<sup>43</sup>

In the tomb of Neferkhuwi (G 2098, Phase II: the reign of Unas),<sup>44</sup> a burial shaft of Phase IV (Pepy I at the latest) was cut into the floor in front of a false door in the

<sup>34</sup>Alexanian, *Dahshur II*, 170–171.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 163, 166.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 161., and personal communication with N. Alexanian.

<sup>38</sup>Junker, *Giza VIII*, 44–45 and plan on p. 39. The dating of the tomb was based on an offering table typical of the late Old Kingdom. See *ibid.*, 45, fig. 16. The mastaba S677/817 encroaches on the tomb of Rawer II. See plan in *ibid.*, fig. 11.

<sup>39</sup>Harpur, *DETOK*, 268.

<sup>40</sup>A. M. Roth, *A Cemetery of Palace Attendants, Including G 2084–2099, G 2230+2231, and G 2240, Giza Mastabas 6* (Boston, 1995).

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 13–38.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 142–149, fig. 79.

offering place. Since a second, northern false door seems to have been still accessible in the offering place even after the shaft was made, some cult activity could have continued. But it is quite possible that the original cult setting and the character of the offering place were altered by the presence of the shaft.

A more conclusive example of the alteration of offering places can be observed in the tomb of Neferked (G 2089, Phase II: the reign of Unas),<sup>45</sup> where a shaft with burial chamber was sunk through the offering place, and three more shafts were put in the corridor leading to the false door in Phase IV.<sup>46</sup> These later constructions presumably caused not only the alteration of the offering place, but also the cessation of the original cult activity.

### Interpretation

Although I have dealt with just a few examples, the four cases provide insights into the duration of private funerary cults. Their funerary cults would have lasted less than 100 years at most. This estimated duration could be shorter, because cult activity will have begun not during the tomb's construction but after the tomb owner's death and burial while the date of the destruction of the offering places provide only a *terminus ante quem* for cessation.

Nefermaat and Atet, and Netjeraperef were not exceptions, even though they were members of the royal family and possessed funerary estates<sup>47</sup> during their lifetimes. As already noted, it is highly likely that funerary cults at both tombs ended within the early part of the period, although a slight cult activity possibly persisted in the tomb of Netjeraperef. In contrast, royal funerary cults had a tendency to be maintained much longer.<sup>48</sup> For example, the cult of Sneferu, the presumed father of the two princes, may well have been practiced continuously throughout the Old Kingdom at the Bent pyramid in Dahshur.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, the cult of Khufu probably persisted almost 300 years.<sup>50</sup> This may indicate the crucial difference between kings' funerary cults and those of all others, even royal family members, perhaps because the former were supported by every succeeding king, as state cults supported by huge social and economic institutions, while the latter were, in the final analysis, only 'private' cults.

The possible cessation periods of the funerary cults in Cases 3 and 4 were observed in the late Old Kingdom. However, interpretational problems of intrusive burials towards the end of the Old Kingdom remain; cult activity at the tomb of Neferkhuwi (G 2098) could have continued after an alteration of the offering place. In addition, it is undeniable that the shafts in the tomb of Neferked (G 2089) might have been cut for the burial of the original tomb owner's family members. If so, the original funerary cult would have still existed, integrated into the new cult space built by the family members. But it is impossible to identify the owners of the shafts as family members in lieu of inscriptions or until anthropological examination of any human remains recovered from the shafts. Nevertheless, it may be safely said that a certain change in private funerary cults occurred during the late Old Kingdom, or to be more precise, from the end of the Fifth Dynasty through the reign of Pepy I.<sup>51</sup> As

<sup>45</sup> Roth, *Cemetery of Palace Attendants*, 93–95, fig. 58.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Nefermaat had more than 45 funerary estates as listed in Jacquet-Gordon, *Domaines*, 442–446. Additional estates are reported in Harpur, *The tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep*, 64–69. Netjeraperef had at least three funerary estates as described in Alexanian, *Dahshur II*, 47–49, fig. 22, 56–58, fig. 27.

<sup>48</sup> Y. Shirai, 'Royal Funerary Cults during the Old Kingdom', in K. Piquette, S. Love, eds., *Current research in Egyptology 2003: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium* (Oxford, 2004), 155.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* On the revival of Sneferu's cult during the Middle Kingdom, see J. Málek, 'Old-Kingdom rulers as "local saints" in the Memphite area during the Middle Kingdom', in M. Bárta, J. Krejčí, eds., *Abusir and Saqqara in the year 2000* (Prague, 2000), 241–258.

<sup>50</sup> For other examples of late Old Kingdom intrusive burials in earlier Old Kingdom tombs, see Junker, *Giza VI*, 4–5, 93–94.

<sup>51</sup> Roth, *Cemetery of Palace Attendants*, 2, 24.



far as the mastaba S 677/817 is concerned (Case 3), cult activity can be more safely presumed to have ceased in the Late Old Kingdom.

## V. Conclusions

The question concerning the duration of Old Kingdom private funerary cults is particularly significant in investigating the cults from a different perspective. Our understanding of the cults has relied largely on information provided by the tomb owner before his death, which stresses the perpetual and uniform character he desired for his cult. By contrast, investigation of the duration of some specific funerary cults revealed that they did not persist for more than 100 years. It is difficult, however, to extrapolate a comprehensive picture of Old Kingdom private funerary cults from the small sample examined in this paper. Moreover, some interpretational problems regarding later burials also remain.

It is essential to consider every cult carefully since even those discussed here exhibited diversity rather than uniformity as regards duration, though all cases showed durations within the timeframe of a century. Through considering the context of the diversity, a different picture of the Old Kingdom funerary cults will emerge more clearly. While I could not fully develop this point here, it will be necessary in particular to give due weight to the situation in society of individual tomb owners when evaluating the duration of their funerary cults – their social status, as well as family relationships, and economic resources which influenced the extent of funerary endowments.

The change in private funerary cults during the late Old Kingdom is of historical importance. The intrusion of later burials on early cult spaces at Giza could imply a concurrent decline in control over the cemeteries by the central government. This circumstance would have caused the frequent cessation of extant funerary cults. If so, it is likely that the change in the private funerary cults was not unrelated to political developments during the late Old Kingdom. Looking at the phenomenon in royal funerary cults, we see that the kings of the Sixth Dynasty issued decrees to benefit the cults of earlier rulers (e.g., Pepy I for the cult of Sneferu at Dahshur;<sup>52</sup> Pepy I, Merenra and Pepy II for Menkaura at Giza<sup>53</sup>). Elsewhere I have argued that this historical situation was an attempt to strengthen and legitimize the position of the reigning king through the revival or strengthening of ancestor worship.<sup>54</sup> It is reasonable to assume that in the course of a decline in central authority, the kings of the Sixth Dynasty gave political priority to ancestor worship in an effort to reassert royal prerogatives, but a comparative lack of concern for the control over the Memphite cemeteries resulted in the deterioration of private funerary cults.

A highly developed ideology with social and economic backgrounds undoubtedly characterized Old Kingdom private funerary cults with tomb owners employing every possible means to secure eternal existence. However, from the results and interpretations presented here there emerges a modified picture, which mirrors the reality of the private funerary cults during the Old Kingdom.

<sup>52</sup> L. Borchardt, 'Ein Königserlaß aus Dahschur', *ZÄS* 42 (1905): 1–11.; K. Sethe, *Urk. I*, 209–213; Goedicke, *Königl. Dokumente*, 55–57.

<sup>53</sup> Reisner, *Giza II*, 279–281.; Sethe, *Urk. I*, 277–278.; Goedicke, *Königl. Dokumente*, 148–154.

<sup>54</sup> Shirai, in Piquette, Love, eds., *Current Research in Egyptology*, 159.

**THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD IN PRAGUE,**  
**MAY 31 – JUNE 4, 2004**

**Miroslav Bárta**  
editor

Autoři příspěvků:

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Vydaly

Český egyptologický ústav Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze  
Celetná 20, 110 00 Praha 1  
Nakladatelství Academia, Středisko společných činností AV ČR  
Vodičkova 40, 110 00 Praha 1

Kniha vychází s finanční podporou  
Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini  
MŠMT, grant MSM 0021620826

Odpovědný redaktor Pavel Zátka

Obálku s použitím fotografií z archivu Českého egyptologického ústavu FF UK  
a grafickou úpravu navrhla Jolana Malátková

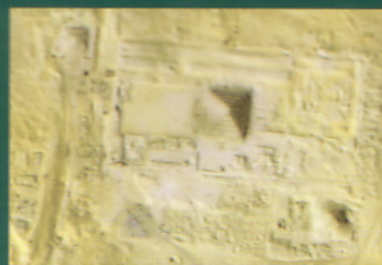
Vydání první, Praha 2006  
Ediční číslo 10456

Sazba Český egyptologický ústav Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze  
Celetná 20, 110 00 Praha 1

Tisk Serifa s. r. o., Jinonická 80, 150 00 Praha 5

ISBN 80-200-1465-9

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