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OFFERINGS FOR AN OLD KINGDOM GRANARY OFFICIAL

By Henry G. Fischer

The texts on the west wall of Mery-nesut’s chapel are laid out in four principal sections, as shown in Figure 2. They include (I) two horizontal lines that take the place of a long architrave, (II) two vertical lines (A) identifying the seated figure of the owner, and a shorter inscription (B) identifying his wife, who is seated beside him, (III) a list of offerings detailing the meal toward which the owner extends one hand, this being schematically represented in the form of an offering stand covered with half-loaves of bread, (IV) the “false door,” a niched offering place where the actual offerings were presented. The content of these texts consists of offering formulae (I, IV A), a short statement regarding payment for the tomb (IV F, G), lists of offerings (III, IV E), and the titles and names of the owner and his family, as well as those of the funerary priests who were designated to maintain his offerings.

In addition to the wall in Detroit the tomb of Mery-nesut also yielded a limestone statue (Fig. 3) and a limestone slab (Fig. 4) which was perforated with 21 round holes to serve as a window? Both of these pieces are inscribed with the owner’s name and titles. They are presently in the Egyptian Museum at Cairo.

Funerary Texts

The funerary texts may be translated as follows: I (1) an offering which the king gives, an offering which Anubis (gives), the Lord of the Sacred Land, Who Presides over the Divine Booth, (namely) that he (the owner) be buried in the Western Desert in peace and very well; (2) that the voice be emitted for him on the Thoth festival, the wag-festival, the first of the month, the first of the half-month, and on every feast and every day—a thousand of bread, a thousand of beer, a thousand of alabaster jars (of ointment), a thousand of clothing (to) One who is Concerned with the King’s Property, Mery-nesut.

Payment of Workers

The statement referring to the payment of workers is more summary and less explicit than a good many other contemporary examples from Giza and elsewhere:® IV (F) I made this with my own rightful property, (G) and the craftsmen therein® thanked me (literally, praised God for me).

Offering Lists

The long offering list (III: Fig. 5) consists of 92 compartmented entries presented in short columns, each with the required number of portions placed beneath it in a separate compartment? Most of the list shows the signs facing the recipient, as is usually the case, so that they advance towards him; they are accordingly read from left to right. One sign is reversed, however, in the next-to-last compartment of the third register (68), and this heralds a total reversal of orientation in the following and final register (70-92). It is difficult to say whether the change is simply a meaningless lapse into the customary rightward orientation of the hieroglyphs (reading leftward), whether it was caused by the presence of the offering scene on the adjacent false door, or whether the intention was to make the list terminate in front of the offering scene to which it properly belongs. The list includes (1) a libation of water® (2) incense, (3) festival scent and (4-9) other ointments, including (8) best cedar
FIGURE 1. Diagram of Tomb Wall of Mery-nesut (71.292).
FIGURE 2. Key to the location of the Texts.


The shorter list of offerings, beneath the offering scene on the false door (IV E) includes (1-2) green and black eye paint, (3) cake of Christ's thorn fruit, (4) unidentified fruit, (5-6) two kinds of bread, (7) incense.

Names and Titles

The first two titles of Mery-nesut, “one who is concerned with the king's property” (Fig. 6 [1]) and “priest of the king” (2), are claimed by a great many officials of the Old Kingdom, one title associating the official with the living king, the other with the king’s funerary cult in the chapel of the pyramid temple. It will be noticed that the first of these also occurs in the wife’s titulary, where it may, however, be subject to a different reading and interpretation, i.e., “one who is known to the king.”

Of the three remaining titles in Mery-nesut’s inscriptions, the most important, to judge from its position in relation to the other two, is (3) “inspector of the archivists of royal documents.” Although the nature of the documents is not specified, the following titles (4-5) suggest that they were concerned with the granary, for royal documents of the granary are mentioned in other Old Kingdom inscriptions and “archivists” (literally, “those concerned with papyri”) are elsewhere associated both with title no. 4 and with scenes showing the grain being measured and recorded (Fig. 7, at far right); furthermore titles 4 and 5 are themselves connected with “the Residence,” in other words with the central administration of the king.

As Hermann Junker has suggested, the title “strong-of-voice belonging to the granary” (4) evidently designates the official who supervised the measurement of grain and relayed the tally of measures to a nearby group of scribes, who set it down in writing and added up the totals. Junker fails to note, however, that at least one scene actually shows such an official making a gesture of counting (Fig. 8). Similar gestures, showing one or more fingers extended or the hand raised with all fingers open or fisted, accompany several other scenes of grain measurement dating to the Old Kingdom and later, but the tallier is rarely identified and in one case he is a “custodian” (literally, “concerned with property”). This case does not necessarily conflict with the other one, since Mery-nesut was himself “inspector of the custodians of the granary” (5) and it is likely enough that he had one of his subordinates cry out the measures while he merely supervised this activity.

Inasmuch as granary measurements were one of the principal bases of revenue and taxation, it is not surprising that the “strong-of-voice” is sometimes mentioned in a judicial contest. Possibly in this connection, and more certainly in connection with the storage of gold, an “inspector of the strong-of-voice” is known (Fig. 9); but it remains uncertain that this supervisory rank also applied to the granary.

In keeping with these activities, the “strong-of-voice” is represented in the company of scribes and archivists and in one case he is called “strong-of-voice of the archives” (literally, “house of documents”). These associations reinforce the probable relationship of title no. 3.

The second title of Mery-nesut’s wife is more unusual than any of those mentioned thus far, since only one other female “overseer of dancers” is known. In the other case the woman is also designated as “overseer of all recreation of the king” and as “overseer of the harem of the king.” In the present case the context is not specified; here again the dances may have been intended purely for enjoyment, but it should be noted that the temple and...
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FIGURE 5A. Offering lists.
OFFERING LISTS: TRANSLITERATION AND NOTES

Short list: (1) w3dw \(\^\) (2) \(\text{mdcm}t\) (3) nb\(\_\) (4) l\(\_\) (5) h\(\_\) (6) \(\text{h}n\_\) (7) \(\text{fr}\) (8) \(\text{n}\_\) (9) \(\text{m}h\) (10) \(\text{h}\) (11) \(\text{fr}\) (12) \(\text{fr}\) (13) \(\text{fr}\) (14) \(\text{fr}\) (15) \(\text{fr}\) (16) \(\text{fr}\) (17) \(\text{fr}\) (18) \(\text{fr}\) (19) \(\text{fr}\) (20) \(\text{fr}\) (21) \(\text{fr}\) (22) \(\text{fr}\) (23) \(\text{fr}\) (24) \(\text{fr}\) (25) \(\text{fr}\) (26) \(\text{fr}\) (27) \(\text{fr}\) (28) \(\text{fr}\) (29) \(\text{fr}\) (30) \(\text{fr}\) (31) \(\text{fr}\) (32) \(\text{fr}\) (33) \(\text{fr}\) (34) \(\text{fr}\) (35) \(\text{fr}\) (36) \(\text{fr}\) (37) \(\text{fr}\) (38) \(\text{fr}\) (39) \(\text{fr}\) (40) \(\text{fr}\) (41) \(\text{fr}\) (42) \(\text{fr}\) (43) \(\text{fr}\) (44) \(\text{fr}\) (45) \(\text{fr}\) (46) \(\text{fr}\) (47) \(\text{fr}\) (48) \(\text{fr}\) (49) \(\text{fr}\) (50) \(\text{fr}\) (51) \(\text{fr}\) (52) \(\text{fr}\) (53) \(\text{fr}\) (54) \(\text{fr}\) (55) \(\text{fr}\) (56) \(\text{fr}\) (57) \(\text{fr}\) (58) \(\text{fr}\) (59) \(\text{fr}\) (60) \(\text{fr}\) (61) \(\text{fr}\) (62) \(\text{fr}\) (63) \(\text{fr}\) (64) \(\text{fr}\) (65) \(\text{fr}\) (66) \(\text{fr}\) (67) \(\text{fr}\) (68) \(\text{fr}\) (69) \(\text{fr}\) (70) \(\text{fr}\) (71) \(\text{fr}\) (72) \(\text{fr}\) (73) \(\text{fr}\) (74) \(\text{fr}\) (75) \(\text{fr}\) (76) \(\text{fr}\) (77) \(\text{fr}\) (78) \(\text{fr}\) (79) \(\text{fr}\) (80) \(\text{fr}\) (81) \(\text{fr}\) (82) \(\text{fr}\) (83) \(\text{fr}\) (84) \(\text{fr}\) (85) \(\text{fr}\) (86) \(\text{fr}\) (87) \(\text{fr}\) (88) \(\text{fr}\) (89) \(\text{fr}\) (90) \(\text{fr}\) (91) \(\text{fr}\) (92) \(\text{fr}\)

1. Here as elsewhere the archaic form \(\gamma\) is used, as in inscriptions as late as Dyn. VI; e.g.: Junker, \(\text{Giza V}\), Figs. 6, 15, 25, 26.

2. \(\text{m}\) is omitted after this entry.

3. Note \(\text{h}3\_\text{fr}\) "behind him" instead of \(\text{h}3\_\text{fr}\) "behind thee". This is otherwise known only from Cairo Cat. 1165; Hassan, \(\text{Giza VI}\), Pt. 2, p. 339.

4. Wrongly in place of \(\text{goose}\), which would be expected here; \(\text{fr}\) occurs later, in its correct position (no. 57).

5. The sign following \(\text{goose}\), which would be expected here; \(\text{fr}\) occurs later, in its correct position (no. 48).

6. Below the long list, and towards the right, are two signs: \(\text{fr}\) and \(\text{fr}\). The first might represent \(\text{fr}\) or possibly \(\text{fr}\) (in \(\text{fr}\) and \(\text{fr}\) "overseer of funerary priests"?). In any case it seems likely that the signs belong to an inscription, the rest of which was executed in paint, perhaps accompanied by a figure. This—to judge from the orientation of \(\text{fr}\)—would have faced to the right.
OWNER:  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  passim

TITLES:  
(1)  ḫ  ḫ  I, II A, IV A, D  
(2)  ḫ  ḫ  IV D, statue  
(3)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV C  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  , window  
(4)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV B  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  window  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV C  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  II A *  
(5)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  I  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  window  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV B  
  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  II A *  

WIFE:  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  II B, ḫ  ḫ  IV D  

TITLES:  
(1)  ḫ  ḫ  II B, IV D  
(2)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV D  

SONS:  
(1)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV B  
(2)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV B  
(3)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV C  

DAUGHTER:  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV C  

FUNERARY PRIESTS:  
( Ṣ ) (1)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV F  
(2)  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV G  

FUNERARY PRIESTESS:  
( Ṣ Ṣ )  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV F  

NO TITLE:  (f.):  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  ḫ  IV G
NOTES ON THE TITLES AND NAMES

Owner: In inscription IIA the sign evidently belongs to ל א, but might also be read simultaneously as a determinative of ל א. This possibility in turn suggests that titles (4) and (5) both end with n {return} n  n, reading each of these phrases twice.

Title (3) is read ה  n  n. Wife: The name ל ל ל ל is not attested elsewhere but cf. (My ka is (my) companions," Selim Hassan, Giza II, Fig. 94 and Hermann Ranke, Die Ägyptischen Personennamen I, 339 (23), and "(My) ka is (my) brethren," M.M.A. 26.9.1, William Hayes, Scepter of Egypt I, Fig. 60.

In title (2) note that  ל ל ל ל is clearly the fem. pl. of "dancers". The parallel title in Hassan, Giza II, Fig. 228, has  ל ל ל ל, which looks like "dancers" or masc. "dancers". Son (3): For cf. (Hermann Junker, Giza VII, 72), var. ל ל ל ל (Abdel-Moneim Abu-Bakr, Giza I, Fig. 95A) and ל ל ל (Junker, Giza II, pp. 158-159).

Funerary priest (2): The sign clearly replaces  ל; see note 32. Woman without title: Perhaps read ל קר (1); cf. ל קר (1), Ranke, Personennamen I, 416 (12); ל קר (1), ibid., II, 266 (5), both of which are feminine. Might the meaning be "One whom my ka has kneaded"?

FIGURE 6B. Names and Titles.
funerary cults also called for dancing, and a male “overseer of the dancers of the god” is known from Giza.\(^{30}\)

As a rule, Egyptian names had a recognizable meaning, and in most cases the names of Mery-nesut’s family and retainers can be translated. He himself is “Beloved of the King,” while his wife’s name is probably to be interpreted as “My ka is my children.” The sons are

(1) “Re is possessor of kas,” (2) “Re is a possessor of life,” and (3) “His(?) father is the possessor of a ka.”\(^{31}\) A daughter is called “Hathor is acclaimed.” The funerary priests are (1) “Min is a possessor of life” and (2) “One who belongs to Re,”\(^{32}\) and the priestess is “Jackal.” It does not seem possible to explain the name of another woman, who has no title but is probably a second funerary priestess.\(^{33}\)

### NOTES

1. Cf. Hermann Junker, Giza III: 190. I do not know of another example which has an inscription, and this feature suggests that the stone may originally have been intended to serve as an offering slab.

2. The statue is Journal d’Entrée no. 37713 (cf. W. S. Smith, A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom: 65); the window is Journal d’Entrée no. 37728. In both cases the photographs are from the field negatives of the Museum of Fine Arts and I am obliged to Dr. William Kelly Simpson for the use of them.

3. The words “in peace” would normally be expected after the following phrase “that he may walk upon the good ways;” and the words “very well” (\(nfr\ wdt\)) may mistakenly anticipate the phrase “having reached a very good old age” (\(\text{iw} nfr\ wdt\)) at the end of the same line. But \(nfr\ wdt\) does occur—albeit rarely—in a somewhat similar context: “may he be buried in the necropolis very well” (L. Borchartt, Denkmäler des Alten Reiches 1, Cairo cat. 1485); “may be buried in the western desert very well” (ibid., 1526); cf. also T. G. H. James, British Museum: Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae 1, 2nd ed., p. 17 (BM 682), and Cairo T. 64491 (Fischer, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung 7 [1960]: 303).

4. This is sometimes called “the month-festival of sadj”; hence the terminal sign, which evidently represents the moon, as in the following writings:

\[
\begin{align*}
(a) & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example (a) is from Selim Hassan, Giza VII: 26, fig. 20; similar writings are discussed by Junker, Giza VII: 129. Example (b) is from Hassan, Giza IX: 23 and pl. 8.}
\end{array} \\
(b) & \quad \begin{array}{c}
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]


6. “Therein” probably refers to “this,” i.e. the tomb; cf. Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reichs*: 50, “I made this tomb with my own property . . . As for all the people who did things therein, when they had done they thanked me exceedingly for it, (for) they did this (in return) for bread, for beer, for clothing, for oil and barley and emmer, exceedingly much.” A later statement of the same kind says “then shall that which they did there, in the necropolis, remain” (H. Fischer, *Dendera in the Third Millennium B.C.*: 159 [c]).

7. The most detailed compilation of such lists is to be found in Hassan, *Gïza VI*, pt. 2.

8. This first entry seems to show a standing figure making a libation rather than the usual kneeling figure; the standing figure is not known before the end of the First Intermediate Period (cf. Fischer, *Dendera in the Third Millennium B.C.*: 197), but just possibly this case is like one shown in Hassan, *Gïza VI*, pt. 2, p1. 98 (103), where the figure crouches.

9. Literally, “head of foreleg” with the shank removed, as represented here and in many other lists. The addition of the word “head” is exceptional but occurs at Tehna (*Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte* [1902]: 122 ff. [pl. VI]), and at least once again at Gïza (*Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 32 [Boston, 1934], Fig. 2, p. 2). Cf. the use of *tp* as “Ende eines Knochens,” Erman-Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache* 5:266 (1).


12. This combines two entries; see Hassan, *Gïza VI*, pt. 2: 401-406.

13. Numerous offering scenes of the Old Kingdom refer to *spt rnt nbt* “select cuts and all kinds of vegetables,” which are often presented, in that order, by a row of bearers, the first of whom bring cuts of meat and fowl. I doubt the validity of Junker’s “offerings of the Year-festivals” in this context, despite the arguments he has marshalled in his *Gïza III*: 111-13 (and similarly Hassan, *ibid.*: 99-102). One might, however, translate “all growing things” as does Margaret Murray, *Seven Memphite Tomb Chapels*: 19 (90).

14. For offerings listed on this part of the false door see H. Fischer, *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheiden te Leiden* 41 (1960), p. 3. As a rule the orientation is rightward, as in the present case; see also Junker, *Gïza*, V, fig. 41, p. 147; Silvio Curto, *Gli scavi italiani a El-Ghiza*, Fig. 22 and pl. 2.


FIGURE 9. Inscription of Mesdier at Gïza.
17. This less restrictive translation seems preferable to “he who is connected with the letters,” as proposed by Gunn in Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte 25 (1925): 251.

18. H. Wild, Le tombeau de Ti III pl. 150; Hassan, Giza V: 266, fig. 122.


21. R. Lepsius Denkmaler 2, pl. 103 (a). A second example is certainly to be recognized in L. Borchardt, Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-re: 123, fig. 103 (a).

22. For the Old Kingdom, cf. Hellmuth Müller, “Darstellungen von Gebärdem,” Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts für ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo 7 (1937): 67; for later examples, see H. E. Winlock, Models of Daily Life . . . from the Tomb of Meket-NE; pls. 20-21; J. de Morgan et al., Catalogue des Monuments 1:194; N. De G. Davies, Tomb of Rekh-mi-RE; pl. 51.

23. J. E. Quibell, Excavations at Saqqara (1907-1908), pl. 62.


25. Ibid.; the more certain occurrence is attested on a lintel photographed by Reisner at Giza (G 1011; Museum of Fine Arts neg. B 7599) and previously recorded by J. T. Dennis, Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 27 (1905): 32, no. 3. Fig. 9 is based on the photograph, kindly provided by Dr. Simpson; it reads: “One Concerned with the Property of the King, Inspector of the Strong of Voice of the Treasury, Keeper of the Stores of Gold, Mesdjeru.” For the name, cf. Hermann Ranke, Die Aegyptischen Personennamen 1: 165 (29).

26. My example of an “inspector of the strong-of-voice” in Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung 7 (1960): 310, n. 20, is based on a misreading of Mery-nesut’s offering slab. Another architrave (unpublished, Michailides Collection, Cairo) mentions, as donor of the monument, an inspector of the strong-of-voice belonging to the Great Mansion: he is also “eldest of the house,” another title associated with the storage and dispensing of grain.

27. Note 18 above; in the second instance he carries a document case.


29. Hassan, Giza II, fig. 228 foll.: 206.


31. An adequate English equivalent for “ka” is scarcely to be found; it refers to the sustaining spirit of the individual, regarded as a separate entity which was joined after death. The reading of the last name is based on the parallels quoted in the “notes on the titles and names.” For the use of this term in other personal names, see H. Ranke (note 25 above) 2: 208-16; Ursula Schweitzer, Das Wesen des Ka: 30-39.

32. The peculiar writing of this name will be discussed in Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 59 (1973).

33. One possibility is mentioned in the “notes on the titles and names.” Ranke (note 25 above) lists this occurrence (431.26), but offers no interpretation.

Addendum: In “Offering lists” note 1, it should be noted that the archaic form of the hieroglyph also recurs in the Middle Kingdom: W. M. F. Petrie, Lahun II, Pl. 47 (19).