

# SETTING THE SCENE:

## THE DECEASED AND REGENERATIVE CULT WITHIN OFFERING TABLE IMAGERY OF THE EGYPTIAN OLD TO MIDDLE KINGDOMS

(c.2686 – c.1650 BC)

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Front Image: Woman kneeling before an offering table c. 1450 BC. Walters Art Museum. Public domain, CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)

**Dedicated to Pat O'Neill, whose *kA* lives on.**



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The funerary art<sup>1</sup> of Egypt is one of the most recognisable forms of ancient imagery. Superficial aspects of this culture's mortuary iconography are firmly embedded into modern culture, although complex meaning encapsulated within this imagery is, at best, only partially understood and often misinterpreted entirely (Van Walsem 2005:14; Mitchell 2002: 166-167). Modern, westernised assumptions often have little in common with Egyptian ways of 'looking and thinking' (Hornung 1982:29; Vischak 2006: 255-276). The primary purpose underlying the structure, spatial arrangement and content of Egyptian tombs and their decorative programme was to facilitate the transitional process from life to afterlife for the tomb owner (Bárta 2011:238-257; Nyord 2013:195-200; Assmann 1996: 157-159; Quirke, 1992:141). One of the most ubiquitous elements within this image corpus is a depiction of the deceased seated before an offering table bearing food and drink (Willems 2001: vi-viii; Franke 2002: 8; Bárta 2011:187-188).

This study of offering table imagery is centred on the interpretation of iconographical meaning within scene composition and on the ritualistic<sup>2</sup> contexts in which this image functioned. Offering table scenes in non-royal contexts from the Old Kingdom<sup>3</sup> (c.2686-2160 BC) through the First Intermediate Period (c.2160-2055 BC) and into the Middle Kingdom Period (c.2055-1650 BC) form the focus of this study. It is hypothesised throughout, that significant socio-political influences are reflected in offering table imagery which becomes increasingly complex over this dynastic period. What this study does not include is an interpretation of three dimensional offering tables. Where actual offering tables are referred to, it is solely in reference to their role in the development of table iconography. This evolved from a functional format into a body of complex iconology integral to afterlife transitional processes (Bárta 2011: 187-189; Der Manuelian 2003: xxi-1; Köhler 2009: 3-5).

The following study is divided into five chapters. In order to relate developments in offering table scene structure to the historical periods in which these occurred, an historical overview of the socio-political background of this period will be presented in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 contextualises the offering table scene genre into a chronological framework, tracing development from a three dimensional offering slab to a multidimensional iconographical image. This chapter will also explore Egyptian visual culture, and the relatively new, more inclusive methodology employed in situating this material within a wider archaeological context.<sup>4</sup> In Chapter 3, levels of existence within Egyptian ontology will be considered through an exploration of the ways in which the deceased continued to function in the world of the living. Socio-religious aspects of individual gender and the engendered constructs of offering table imagery will also be explored in this chapter. The fourth chapter will examine image schemata,<sup>5</sup> considering degrees of connection between offering table scene composition and its

<sup>1</sup> The ancient Egyptians, although conscious of aesthetic notions within their representational imagery would not have understood the concept of 'art' in the modern sense but purely as an element of 'religious experience' (Aldred 1980:11). The definition of 'art' used throughout this study follows René Van Walsem as 'the term for individual and/or collective product of human behaviour by means of artefacts and/or performances ... beyond the purely functional' (Van Walsem, 2005:2).

<sup>2</sup> This study follows Catherine Bell's definition of ritual as existing in a variety of contexts in which there are multiple systems of interpretation (Bell 1997: x, 301).

<sup>3</sup> All dates referred to in this study are based on the chronology in Shaw 2000:481-489 (Figure 1).

<sup>4</sup> Aspects of ancient European mortuary culture and of contemporaneous Mesopotamian funerary traditions will be explored comparatively in this context. While ancient Egyptian culture is not directly comparable to that of European or contemporaneous Mesopotamian traditions, Egyptian material remains are analogous in character to that found all over the ancient world (Exell, 2013:2; Wengrow 2010:13-14).

<sup>5</sup> The definition of an image schema as used throughout this study follows Johnson (1987) who defines this metaphorical construct as a pattern, shape or regularity in actions, perceptions and conceptions that recurrently provides structured

functionality in the transition of the deceased. Aspects of ritual incorporated into table depictions will be explored through an investigation into the roles of libation, purification and censuring within scene structure. The fifth and concluding chapter of this study will gather together the strands of complex ideology incorporated into offering table imagery, contextualising these in regard to the afterlife expectations of the deceased.

In its entirety, the aim of this work is towards a fuller understanding of the functionality of offering table imagery across an important phase of Egyptian history. <sup>6</sup> In order to understand image development and the cultural phases in which significant scene elaboration occurred, an examination of the historical background to this period is explored in the section which follows.

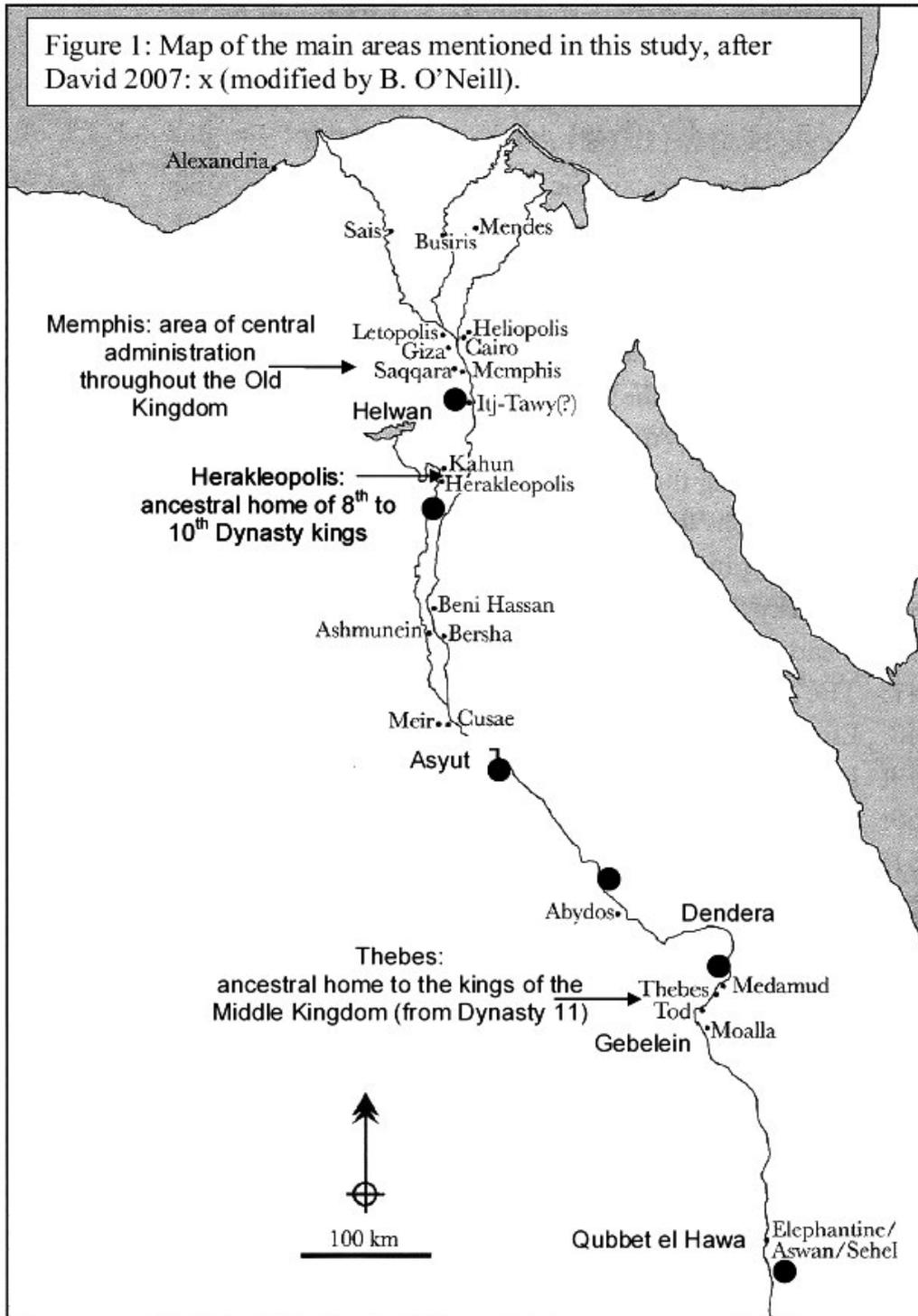
### 1.1 An Historical Perspective

Chronological Date	The Cultural Background	Dynastic Period	Total Duration
c.3000 – 2686 BC	Early Dynastic Period	First and Second Dynasties	c. 314 years
c.2686 – 2160 BC	The Old Kingdom	Third to Sixth Dynasties	c. 526 years
c.2278 - 2184 BC	The end of the Old Kingdom	Sixth Dynasty reign of Pepy II	c. 94 year reign
c. 2160 – 2055 BC	The First Intermediate Period	The Seventh to Eleventh Dynasties	c. 105 years
c. 2055 – 1650 BC	The Middle Kingdom	The Eleventh to Fourteenth Dynasties	c. 405 years

The modern system of dividing Egyptian history into dynastic divisions is, for the most part, a nineteenth-century construction which differed significantly from the temporal divisions understood by the Egyptians (Malek 2000:83). Most of our information on the periods covered in this study - stages we now refer to as the Old Kingdom, the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom - are taxonomies established in the modern era in order to organise Egypt's lengthy dynastic period chronologically (Shaw 2000:6). Egyptologists define these historical phases as 'kingdoms' indicating periods of political unity and strong centralised government (Seidlmayer 2000:108). Conversely, the so-called 'intermediate' phases which followed the Old, the Middle and the New Kingdoms are defined as periods of significant social disunity (Seidlmayer 2000: 108; Quirke 2001:129). The first of these intermediate phases (and the only one explored in this study) was characterised by..socio-political rivalries between local rulers who attempted to govern a decentralised Egypt from regional districts outside the royal residence at Memphis, Figure 1: Map of Egypt (Seidlmayer 2000: 108; Trigger 1983: 44; Kemp 1983: 110; David 1998:89).

understanding of various experiences (Johnson 1987: 4, 29).

<sup>6</sup> The periods which form the main focus of the study begin in the latter part of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties Four to Six), the First Intermediate Period which followed (Dynasties Seven to Ten) and the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties Eleven to Thirteen). All dates follow Shaw 2000: 482-484.



### 1.1.1 *The Old Kingdom (c.2686 – 2160 BC)*

While complex details of state formation and dynastic chronology are beyond the scope of this study, most scholars acknowledge that by the Old Kingdom Period, Egypt had a highly organised, hierarchically structured society with a diversified and productive economy (Malek 2000:92-95; Wenke 2009: 4-5, 273-275; Bárta 2011:130-131; Baines 2007:20-21). High culture within Old Kingdom society was limited to the ‘literocracy’ of elite <sup>7</sup> individuals who were sharply divided from the rest of the population through their ‘literacy, clothing and knowledge’ (Assmann 1996: 48; Bárta 2011: 91-92).

In religious inscriptions known as the Pyramid Texts, first attested in the fifth dynasty pyramid of King Unas (c.2375-2345 BC) the first mention of Osiris appears, indicating this god’s role as an important royal funerary deity (Shalomi-Hen 2006:10; Bárta 2011:93-97). <sup>8</sup> While the living king maintained a relationship with the sun god Ra, the deceased monarch is described as becoming ‘one’ with Osiris (Quirke 2001: 44-45; Malek 2000: 99; Silverman 1991: 55, 73). By the end of the Old Kingdom Period, Osiris was understood as the supreme deity of the netherworld who facilitated the king’s resurrection (David 2007: 44). He was the only Egyptian deity understood as having experienced not only death, but a violent end murdered by his brother, Seth <sup>9</sup> (O’Connor, 2009: 16).

Until the latter part of this period, the non-royal deceased had limited access to an afterlife ‘beyond the tomb’ (Snape 2011: 49; David 1998: 93; Bárta 2011:187-189). The ideological chasm between the king and his subjects was ‘emphatically obvious’; only the king ‘crossed the great divide’ and ascended to heaven (David 2007:39; Assmann 1996: 157). While kings enjoyed a ‘smorgasbord’ of stellar, solar and Osirian expectations in the royal netherworld, the elite were restricted to an earthbound eternity (Snape 2011:20-21; Van Walsem 2005:61-62, Bárta 2011: 132). Direct contact with the gods was the prerogative of the monarch who acted as a guarantor of continued order indicated in the change of seasons, the return of the inundation, and the movements of celestial bodies (Malek 2000: 92).

The non-royal tomb was conceptualised as a house of eternity, a sacred space provided with all the necessities of life through the availability of grave goods interred with the deceased, and maintained through regular offering rituals made by the living on behalf of the dead (Snape 2011: 49, 61; Kanawati 2001: 1, 4). The afterlife for non-royal individuals <sup>10</sup> was characterised throughout this Old Kingdom period as similar in form to ‘earthly life’ (Bárta 2011: 94). For the well-to-do tomb owner, this necessitated the construction of an increasingly elaborate tomb incorporating many of the main components of a domestic dwelling (Snape 2011: 46, 49-60; Bárta 2011:81, 94; Kanawati 2001: 4). Tomb preparation was perceived as the most important personal undertaking and one in which a tomb owner invested not only his financial resources but his ‘intellectual powers’ (Assmann 1996: 69). Whilst the non royal netherworld was understood as earth-bound, the tomb owner expected to enjoy a different level of afterlife ‘far in excess of a peasant in the provinces’ (Snape 2011: 46). Private tombs

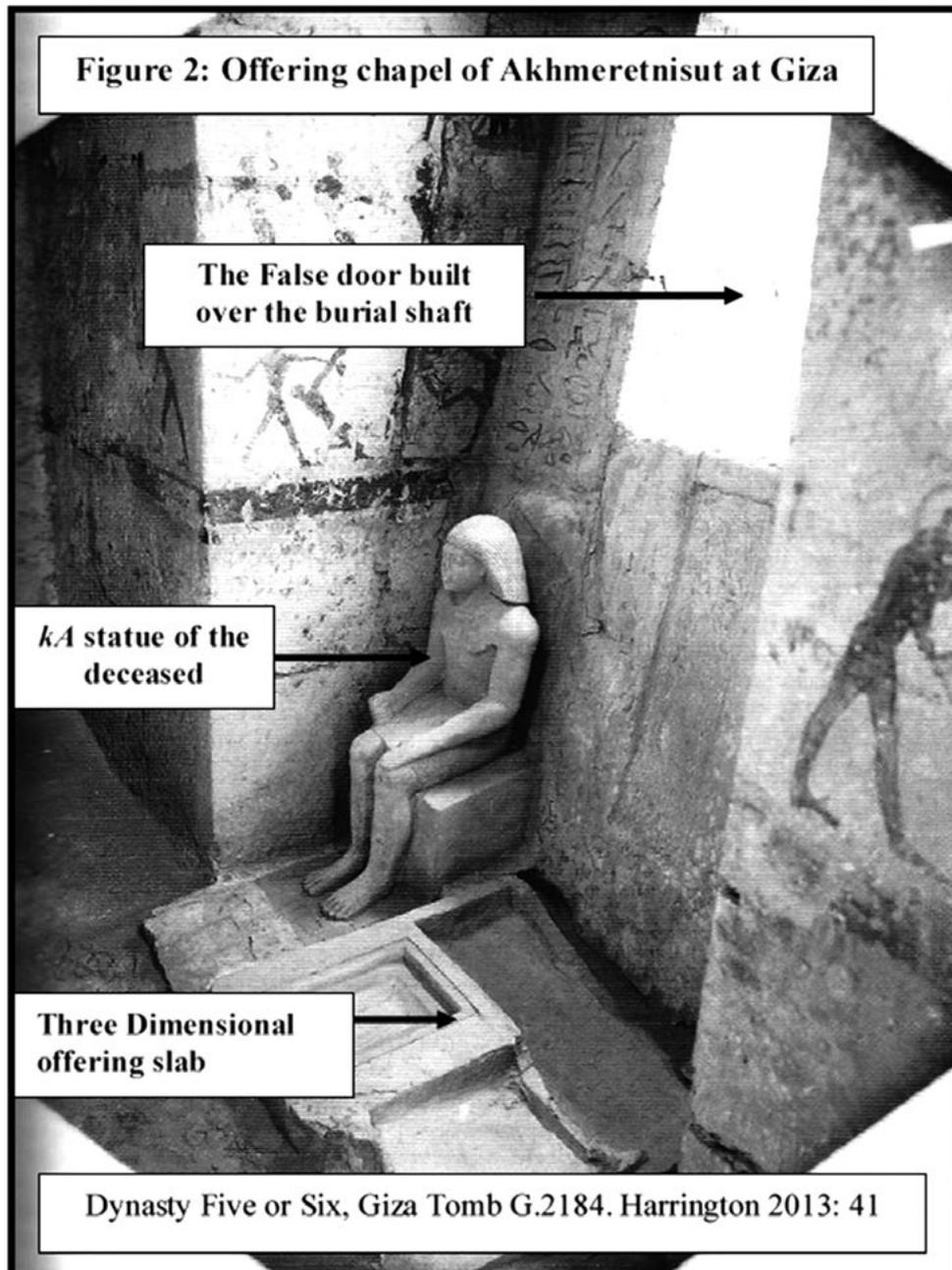
<sup>7</sup> ‘Elite’ indicates a segment of society regarded as socially superior exerting influence or decisive power (Van Walsem 2005: 17-18). Others, referred to as non-elite in this study consisted of almost everyone else ‘outside a small ruling faction’ (Baines 2007: 13). The existence of a ‘sub-elite’ class of people has recently been identified in the more socially differentiated Middle Kingdom Period (Richards 2005: 21, 26; Parkinson 2002: 65).

<sup>8</sup> The importance of this deity in the funerary programme cannot be overemphasised. In Osiris lay the power of renewal. The metaphysical symbolism embedded into the persona of this god epitomised the Egyptian perception of the cyclic renewal of nature, of the cosmos and of man.

<sup>9</sup> Only Osiris is described as having experienced death – a reason (or cause) for his appeal ‘as a classless, human and yet divine’ entity (Shalomi-Hen 2006: 164).

<sup>10</sup> The term ‘individual’ is perhaps somewhat misleading in an ancient context: ‘individual identity is something of a recent construct’ (Insoll 2007: 3). However, the term is used throughout this study in the context of how members of different social groups - within a highly stratified Egyptian society - understood their world and beyond that, their access to an afterlife.

symbolised the sum of life and its achievements in an iconographic, encoded form whilst enabling an idealised state of eternal existence, Figure 2, tomb chapel of Akhmeretnisut (Assmann 1996:70).



This image shows the nature of the architectonic connectivity between the *ka* statue, offering slab and false door. All are positioned immediately above the burial shaft. The deceased was manifest in this area of the tomb through these ritually charged elements. However, the tomb statue ‘could only contain part of the deceased’s essence’ (Harrington 2013: 42). All of the remaining two and three dimensional elements in this area and in inaccessible areas below combined to represent the deceased in total (O’Connor 1996: 624; Assmann 2005: 215).

The architectural structure of the tomb permitted the *ka*<sup>11</sup> of the deceased access to areas beyond the burial space including offering chapels in external areas, which were accessible through a structure known as a false door.<sup>12</sup> The false door served as a liminal contact point between the deceased and the living who made offerings there (Snape 2011: 20-21, 61-67; Bárta 2011: 80-81; Nyord 2013: 198; Brovarski 2004: 71-119). Within the tomb, the deceased is depicted enjoying the pursuits of elite life, hunting in the desert and fishing in the marshes surrounded by his family in a ‘locus of self-observation and self-thematization’ (Assmann 1996:70; Bárta 2011: 94). These so-called ‘scenes of daily life’ served as a sacred dimension of ‘permanence’ epitomised in a perpetual state of idealised existence (Van Walsem 2005: 33; James 1984:20). There appears to have been a highly selective process in the choice of such scenes which provide a socio-religious construction representing different ‘spheres of reality’ (Van Walsem 2005: 51, 35).

The well organised, tightly controlled society of the Egyptian Old Kingdom began to change during the reign of Pepy I c. 2321-2287 BC (Malek 2000: 104-106; Bárta 2011:187, Snape 2011: 87). The causes of this ‘internally generated crisis’ were various (Malek 2000: 105 David 1998: 89-90). As was the case with his immediate predecessors (his father and a brother) Pepy II continued to empower various unrelated officials, appointing non-royal individuals as governors of provincial regions throughout Egypt (Bárta 2011: 130, 187). Members of the royal family who once held these lucrative posts, found themselves ‘shunted aside’ as Pepy began to grant their positions to ambitious officials as a means of ensuring their loyalty (Doxey 2009:1-30; Snape 2011: 87-90; Bárta 2011: 187). This was one cause (of many) in a progressive weakening of power and influence in the administrative centre at Memphis as significant regional control devolved to these wealthy, and increasingly independent, provincial governors (Bárta 2011:173; David 1998:93; Doxey 2009:11).

Ancient literary, biographical and other sources indicate that during Pepy II’s reputed ninety four year reign (c.2278-2184 BC) with corruption ‘deeply entrenched’, the country entered a period of further significant economic and ideological decline (Wenke 2009: 1-2, 282; Malek 2000:106-107). The death of the king, following a long and increasingly ineffective reign, is said to have ushered in a time of chaos and political retraction resulting in an era now referred to as the First Intermediate Period (Assmann 1996: 84; David 1998: 87-88; Wenke 2009: 281).

The end of the Old Kingdom is also indicated through an abrupt cessation in the royal building programme, once a ubiquitous feature of this period (David 1998:88; Malek 2000:107; Snape 2011: 90). This sudden halt in monumental construction towards the end of Pepy II’s reign supports the theory that state-controlled organisation of workshops, stone quarries and construction sites had all but ceased and that the Old Kingdom had ‘effectively ended’ (Malek 2000:10; Assmann 1996: 87; Kemp 1983:112-113; Wenke 2009: 282-283).

The Old Kingdom’s dissolution ‘under centrifugal forces’ initiated a century of political disunity (Quirke 2001: 129). In its ending however, a crucial process was initiated. This involved the ‘seepage of literacy’ and of ritual knowledge emanating from the highly influential elite stratum of Old Kingdom society into the provinces. This process activated ideological developments in funerary beliefs (Quirke 2001:129; Bárta 2011: 92-94; David 2007:42). Whereas in earlier phases of the Old Kingdom only the king could expect to enjoy immortality, the situation now changed with the emergence of a process now referred to as the ‘democratisation of the afterlife’ (David 2007:154;

<sup>11</sup> This complex term is often translated as an aspect of the soul (Snape, 2011: 19). The *ka* has also been described as the ‘protective spirit, soul and doppelgänger, all rolled into one’ (Harrington 2013:13). The subject is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.1.

<sup>12</sup> The term ‘false door’ is used to describe a carved stone or wooden door-like structure set into the western side of the offering chapel beyond which there was no physical access to the burial chamber below (Snape 2011: 39). The functionality of this pseudo architectural element is discussed in Chapter 4.2.

Bárta 2011:187).<sup>13</sup> Wider access to once restricted funerary components resulted in royal (and highly restricted) ritual knowledge filtering into the non-royal mortuary repertoire (Richards 2005: 4-5; David 2007: 154; Hays 2011: 116; Seidlmayer 2000: 111). In the final decades of the Old Kingdom, royal motifs, liturgical texts and mortuary rites - once the prerogative of kings - emerged in elite and non-elite funerary contexts<sup>14</sup> in a 'top down' parallel development (Bárta 2011: 93). From this period onwards, the concept of the deceased joining Osiris beyond the confines of the tomb became gradually available to all (Quirke 1992: 54-57).

### 1.1.2 The First Intermediate Period (c.2160-2055 BC)

The First Intermediate Period, a phase of just over one hundred years which followed the administrative dissolution of the Old Kingdom, has been described as a 'pivotal epoch' of profound religious and cultural developments, Figure 3, reduced tomb structure at Saqqara, First Intermediate Period c. 2160- 2055 BC (Assmann 1996:81; Snape 2011: 115).

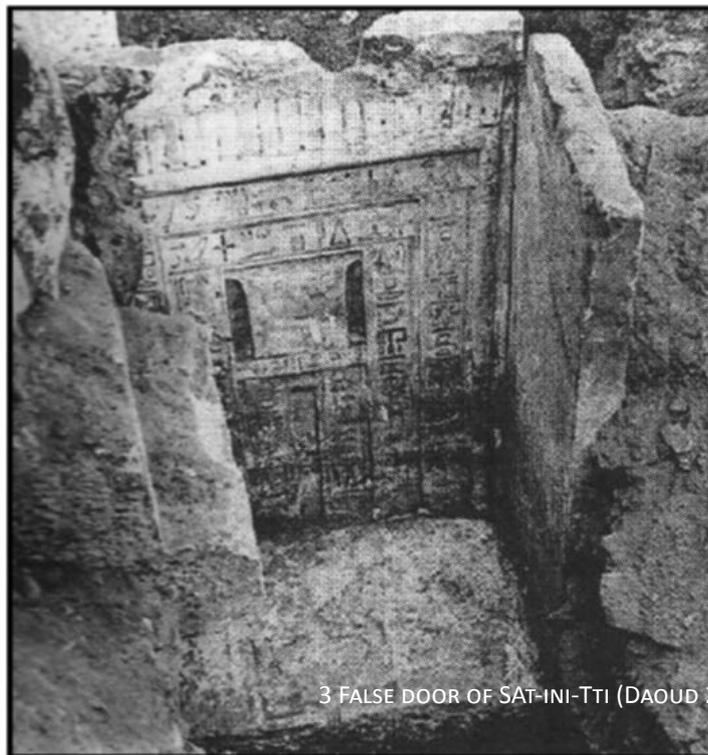


FIGURE 3:

The false door stela of the woman SAT-ini-Tti, Dynasty Nine or Ten *in situ*. Teti Pyramid Necropolis, Saqqara.

Daoud 2005: 82, Plate XXXII.

The false door of SAT-ini-Tti was found *in situ* together with the two side pieces which formed a shallow chapel. The image indicates the reduced style of tombs in the First Intermediate Period. Aside from the false door stela and its side panels, there is no indication of further rooms or offering chapels in many elite tombs of this period. SAT-ini-Tti's coffin would have rested directly below her false door at the end of a burial shaft below. This spatial arrangement was sufficient for her to receive all that was necessary for survival in an Osirian afterlife, while maintaining an external offering area where funerary cult could be enacted.

In spite of an undisputed degree of social disruption this period is increasingly understood as a significantly innovative phase (Willems 2010: 82-83; Smith 2009: 10-11; David 1998:93). There is a growing consensus amongst most, if not all scholars<sup>15</sup> that rather than an era of famine, poor flood

<sup>13</sup> This phrase was first used by James Breasted in the early twentieth century (Breasted 'Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt' 1912 cited Bárta 2011: 94).

<sup>14</sup> Royal motifs including crowns, staffs, sceptres and other items of kingly regalia appear in the so-called object friezes of First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom coffins and are also represented as items in offering table scene composition (Abdel-Fattah and Bickel 2000: 2-3, 10-11).

<sup>15</sup> In Fekri Hassan's view, the initial breakdown of the Old Kingdom was caused by a sudden, unanticipated, catastrophic reduction in the Nile floods over two or three decades. According to Hassan, this was so severe that famine gripped the country and paralysed Egypt's political institutions (Hassan 2011: [www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/apocalypse\\_egypt\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/apocalypse_egypt_01.shtml)).

seasons and general decline, this period was predominantly one of social change with a ‘different distribution of wealth amongst the population’ (Willems 2010: 82, 85; Moeller 2005:153-167; Seidlmayer 2000:118-123; David 2002: 154; Hays 2011: 115; Smith 2009: 10). Many of the alleged catastrophic elements later assigned to this phase ‘lack any proof’ (Willems 2010: 82) Significant religious and social developments initiated during this era suggest that this historical period was far from the ‘dark ages’ with which it was once associated (Bell 1971:1).

More recent interpretations view the First Intermediate Period as a dynamic phase of social development when provincial regions flourished as religious and ritualistic knowledge ‘flowed from the stock of court culture to the periphery’ (Shaw 2000: 453; Seidlmayer 2000: 110). The transformation of culture and of provincial economy ultimately affected the whole of Egyptian society (Seidlmayer 2000:112; David 2007: 41-42). This historical experience of failing monarchy and its impact on culture provoked renewed reflections on the nature of eternity and upon the complex relationship between ‘good and evil’ (Frandsen 2001; 168). The absence of the motivating authority of the king instigated ‘a whole new philosophy of human agency’ (Assmann 1996: 94). This was exemplified through an emergent self-image in tomb presentations ‘that derived meaning from within rather than without’ (Assmann 1996: 94). Overall, these ‘intermediate’ years between the Old and Middle Kingdoms were characterised by a loosening of state control and in the emergence of fundamental changes in society and in religion (Richards 2005: 1; Wegner 2010:133).

There is evidence too, of wider expectations for an Osirian afterlife by a greater range of people: ‘dependence on the king’s bounty as the only means of attaining immortality was replaced by the need to perform the correct ritual and burial procedures, and to worship Osiris’ (David 2007: 43; Baines 2007:68). Developments in afterlife expectations evident in the tombs of elite, and of less well-to-do individuals at provincial cemeteries support the view of this phase as one when greater access to funerary ritual and associated equipment became available to a wider section of society (Wenke 2009: 282; Baines 2007: 20-21). Explicit identification with an Osirian afterlife appears to have become available to ‘titleless owners of modestly endowed graves’ (Richards 2005: 176). Individual immortality, once beyond the aspirations of ‘poorer people’ now became accessible, hinged upon the correct worship of Osiris and the ability ‘to lead blameless lives’ (David 2007: 43; Seidlmayer 2000:113; Richards 2005:4; David 1998:93; Allen 2006:9).<sup>16</sup> The significant socio-religious developments of this period have been summarised wryly by Robert Wenke (2009: 269) as turning death into a ‘career move’ for ordinary Egyptians.

The theory of the democratisation of religion at this juncture does not stand unchallenged. Some scholars refute the idea of the First Intermediate period as a time when full access to restricted religious concepts became widely available (Hays 2011; Smith 2009). This alternative view suggests that for a large proportion of Egyptian society the First Intermediate Period resulted in more of the same, or at best, a level of continuity in afterlife expectations (Smith 2009: 1-17; Hays 2011: 126). Although scholarly opinion differs over the cause and effect of cultural change there is consensus that following Pepy II’s death, central government was no longer able to assert itself (Assmann 1996: 84; Snape 2011: 105-106; Seidlmayer 2000: 110; Quirke 2001: 129-130; Hays 2011; Smith 2009; David 2007: 41; Willems 2010: 82). This resulted in a devolution of power from Egypt’s administrative centre at Memphis to provincial areas on the periphery (David 1998: 93; Snape 2011: 115, 125; Wenke 2009: 282-283).

<sup>16</sup> This involved access to burial space in once restricted cemeteries and through similar access to sacerdotal imagery and inscriptions, funerary stelae and decorated coffins. On a metaphysical level, this is also indicated in greater complexity in afterlife expectations for non-royal individuals (Richards 2005: 75-77; Seidlmayer 2000: 112).

### 1.1.3 The Middle Kingdom (c.2055-1650 BC)

Approximately a century later, the coronation of the ‘unifier of the realm’ Mentuhotep II heralded the start of the period referred to as the Middle Kingdom c.2055 - 2004 (Assmann 1996:85; Seidlmayer 2000: 127, 134; Shaw 2000: 483). Mentuhotep reunified Egypt, shifting the royal residence from Memphis to his own southern birthplace at Thebes (Seidlmayer 2000: 139; Grajetzki 2009: 3). This king successfully reinstated Egypt’s strong, bureaucratic system which resulted in his revered position in the centuries which followed (Grajetzki 2003: 3-4; Dodson 1989: 226). The Middle Kingdom was recognised throughout the remainder of Egypt’s dynastic era as a period of great cultural, religious and literary development (Richards 2005:31). This was the first period in Egyptian history when there is clear evidence of social change in Egypt’s burial record (Richards 2005: 4; Snape 2011:90-92). The concept of the king as the sole intermediary between gods and men had faded with the Old Kingdom (Willems 2010: 82-83; David 2007: 44-45). It becomes increasingly evident from this period onwards, that a more individual relationship between man and god was possible (Assmann 1996:160-161; Bárta 2011:173).

Changes initiated in the earlier Intermediate Period continued to develop throughout the Middle Kingdom (Richards 2005: 1-4; Assmann 1996: 155-160). These changes created, in increasingly elaborate detail, the possibility of an Osirian afterlife ‘beyond the tomb’ for all <sup>17</sup> (David 2007: 45; Seidlmayer 2000: 114). The ‘judgement of the dead’ was crucial to this process. An awareness of ritual knowledge, and of how to use cultic rites in order to achieve this transition were essential requirements, knowledge of which was boasted of in self-presentation texts carved alongside tomb imagery (Assmann 1996: 160-162; Frandsen 2001: 168). The final judgement was a metaphorical construct based on the mythological trial in which Osiris was vindicated (Snape 2011:118-119; Assmann 1996: 159). By the Middle Kingdom this judgement is demanded of all the deceased who desired ‘similar vindication’ in order to follow Osiris into the realms of immortality (Assmann 1996: 159). Transcendence into the Osirian afterlife is expressed succinctly in Middle Kingdom funerary self-presentations where an emphasis on how individuals lived their life emerges (Parkinson 2002:134-135). <sup>18</sup>

The ideological purpose of the Middle Kingdom tomb had evolved from the *pr Dt*, or house of eternity, into a liminal point of potential access between this world and the next (Assmann 1996: 157-158; Nyord 2013: 199). Burial inscriptions which refer obliquely to ‘the place where I am’ no longer reference the tomb or its offering chapels, but indicate an ‘imaginary geography’ and a whole new dimension of meaning (Assmann 1996: 158). Concepts of ‘the beautiful west’ <sup>19</sup> within Egyptian ontology continued to reflect the terrestrial world, although the emphasis had switched from perpetuation within the liminal areas of the tomb to wider possibilities beyond it (Finnestad 1986: 361). It was specifically through the performance of ritual that the dead were able to make these necessary transitions <sup>20</sup> (Nyord 2009b: 1-2; Willems 2010:85). The process entailed a complex sequence of metaphysical transformations facilitated through ritual and through perpetually enacted mortuary cult (Hays 2011: 120-121; Bárta 2011: 188; O’Connor 2009:31-32). <sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> In support of broader access to an Osirian afterlife, Janet Richards (2005:7-8) notes that there is evidence of ‘a wide range of socioeconomic statuses’ evident in early Middle Kingdom burials with an absence of titles contributing to an ‘impression of extensive differentiation’ at this time.

<sup>18</sup> Moralistic claims in the self-presentation inscription from the stela of Intef are typical of many in this era: ‘I buried the old, I clothed the naked, I gave bread to the hungry and put the lowly at their ease’ (Stela of Intef and Senettekh, ca. 2065-2000 B.C. Brooklyn Museum Accession Number: 54.66). Translation: Collier and Manley 1998: 80-81.

<sup>19</sup> The ‘west’ represented the land of the dead.

<sup>20</sup> Transitions were effected through a combination of funerary rituals performed by the living, and increasingly, through internalised religio-magic elements structured within the tomb. This subject is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.2 of this study.

<sup>21</sup> Cult is defined as the regular presentation of offerings, prayers and other rituals (which included the performance of

The spread of Osirian religion and accessibility to a life beyond the boundaries of the tomb were the most significant developments in the transition from the Old to the Middle Kingdoms. However, the First Intermediate Period had contributed an element of doubt into this dynamic (Assmann 1996: 157; Bárta 2011: 185-187; Willems 2010: 81-99). Reliance on family members, on the largesse of the royal household,<sup>22</sup> or on others from the living community to maintain one's mortuary cult appears noticeably weakened by the beginning of this Middle Kingdom phase (Assmann 1996: 89, 93; Snape 2011: 88-91). Self reliance was now vital (Frandsen 2001: 169).

Private tombs were no longer structured to accommodate links to the outside world (Assmann 1996: 87-88; Snape 2011, 88-91). This changing concept of accessibility involved an architectonic adjustment with a refocus from outer ritual to inner magic (Assmann 1996: 87; Snape 2011: 117-118; Frandsen 2001: 168-169). This development is accompanied by the progressive elaboration in the form and content of funerary imagery (Snape 2011: 150-153; Richards 2005: 177). Depictions suggesting the performance of perpetual ritual, now incorporated into the internal decorative programme of the Middle Kingdom tomb, support the theory that confidence in external mortuary cult (provided by the living for the deceased) had been 'terminally undermined' (Assmann 1996: 88). Underpinning this paradigm is a 'distinctive conception of human nearness to god' (Assmann 1996: 88, 186).

In tomb imagery and in self-presentation texts of this period the deceased appears to assume 'quasi-royal' status, going 'well beyond the limits of decorum' (Snape 2011: 111, 112). The acceptability of what might be included in the decorative programme of the tomb had changed significantly (Baines 2007: 114). The need to be self reliant was translated into the requirement for an increasing quantity of people, performance and produce incorporated into the image schemata of the tomb (Snape 2011: 108-111; Grajetzki 2003: 34-35; Assmann 1996: 87-89).<sup>23</sup> Relatives and retainers depicted performing rituals or bearing offerings on the periphery of table scenes now functioned in increasingly complex roles for the benefit of the deceased (Richards 2005: 151; Vischak 2006: 10-14). These important developments can be traced through evolving socio-religious constructions incorporated into the iconography of the offering table scene during this cultural phase (Richards 2005: 4; Assmann 1996: 157; Bolshakov 1992: 203; Van Dijk 2006: 182; Snape 2011: 87, 90).

In this section of the study the changing socio-political background in Egypt from the final stages of the Old Kingdom to the early part of the Middle Kingdom has been explored in the context of religious developments. In the following section, the ways in which offering table depictions have been interpreted in scholarly literature over the past century are reviewed. The varying levels of interest which these scenes have attracted reflects an evolving historiographical focus within the discipline of Egyptology itself (Baines 2009: 12-14; Eyre 2009; Snape 2011: 6; Exell 2013:1-7; Meskell 2004: 2-4).

## 1.2 The History of The Research: The Offering Table Scene

Complex layers of meaning within Egyptian offering table iconography and associated mortuary elements remained somewhat irrelevant<sup>24</sup> to early Egyptological scholarship. It is relatively recently

libation and censuring) performed for the deceased in the environs of the tomb (Baines 1991:126).

<sup>22</sup> This reliance on external mortuary cult in elite contexts, was part of the socio-economic process known as 'the reversion' or 'redistribution' of offerings' (Spalinger 1985: 7-20; Frandsen 2001: 169). This was a reciprocal process in which offerings of food and other commodities (including incense, oil and cloth) received by temples as donations from royal mortuary cults were later diverted as offerings to the cults of elite individuals (Assmann 1996: 87-88). Such redistributed offerings carried 'quite literally' the stamp of divine or royal approval involving a practice that can be traced to the beginnings of urban life in Mesopotamia, and to the origins of the dynastic state in Egypt (Wengrow 2013:296).

<sup>23</sup> Individuals depicted in the periphery of these scenes were able to benefit from rituals taking place within them (Meskell 2007:75).

<sup>24</sup> The focus of most early scholarship in Egyptology was - perhaps legitimately - predominantly centred on monumental architecture and on royal chronologies.

that the complex structure and purpose of offering table imagery has been more fully recognised (Troy 1986; Franke 2002; Marée 2013; Bárta 2011; Snape 2011, Van Walsem 2006; Richards 2005, Willems 1988; Nyord 2013; Harrington 2013; Wengrow 2013). For over a century, this image has received a narrow, descriptive interpretation in scholarly literature which often simply records the biographical details of the deceased with a brief overview of the commodities included as offerings (Budge 1911; James 1961; Stewart 1979; Harpur 1987). The depth of metaphorical symbolism within offering table imagery went almost unnoticed. The earliest interpretation of this scene-type went no further than to provide an accurate (if simplistic) explanation regarding the role of such depictions in the sustenance of the deceased (Budge 1911:4).<sup>25</sup>

Historically, the largest (and earliest) corpus of work to include offering table descriptions, does so within a wider analysis of the hieroglyphic texts which were carved or painted on to a range of funerary items. A series of nine volumes was published by the Trustees of the British Museum under the title *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae*. The first in this series, compiled by Ernest Wallis Budge<sup>26</sup> in 1911, consists of descriptions of three-dimensional tables and table scenes depicted on architraves, false doors and funerary stelae, accompanied by meticulously hand-drawn plates (Budge 1912: plates 34-40). This was an important undertaking, representing the first publication of the British Museum's large collection of stelae and other elements dated to the first eleven dynasties c.3000 BC – c.1650 BC (Shaw 2000: 481-483). This body of work remains pertinent to researchers engaged with Egyptian philology and iconography, and to art-historians and students of epigraphy (Franke and Marée 2013: vii, 1).

Volume I in the *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae* series includes depictions of a range of offering table elements (Budge 1911). All are dealt with in a descriptive format providing little more than an overview of food-types and other items featured on, beneath, or alongside tables (Budge 1911:5). At the time of this publication, with an as yet poorly understood chronology of royal succession, it is hardly surprising that the author refers to the fact that stelae which incorporated the names of kings represented 'information of the highest historical value' (Budge 1911:3). The intrinsic value of these artefacts was to a large degree in the information they contained relevant to dynastic succession (Budge 1911: 3). There were earlier precedents of using the composition of offering tables as a means of establishing chronologies for kings (or other elite individuals) identified within table depictions (Griffith 1898: 54; Kamal 1909: 10-11). However, in reference to significant stylistic changes in offering table components, Francis Griffith notes '[s]tands for food and drink naturally vary', commenting further that bread<sup>27</sup> featured on the tables is often represented so conventionally 'as to have become almost meaningless' (Griffith 1898: 54). Clearly, the scholarly focus was elsewhere.

The multifaceted content of Old and Middle Kingdom stelae, now widely acknowledged as a vast repository of 'conscious and unconscious cultural codes', remained outside the scope of early twentieth century scholarship which remained firmly (and perhaps legitimately) focussed on other considerations (Budge 1912: 3; Franke 2002: 8). Aspects of change which occur in offering table scene composition throughout this phase are referred to as 'crude' or 'abnormal', 'exhibiting many peculiarities of style' (Budge 1912: 3). There is little comment regarding social or religious significance of these semiotic motifs (one cannot see what one is not looking for) and so the system of complex, metaphysical representation encapsulated within the offering table scene-type continued to receive cursory attention (Budge 1914:4; Assmann 2001:186).

<sup>25</sup> While this is a perfectly legitimate interpretation by Budge, offering table scenes are now acknowledged as serving significantly more complex purposes within the funerary programme (Franke 2002:8).

<sup>26</sup> Budge was then curator of the Egyptian and Assyrian Department of the British Museum (1911 – 1922).

<sup>27</sup> Bread had complex iconographical associations and remains a focus of scholarly attention (Jacquet-Gordon 1981: 11-12; Cherpion 1989; Barta 1995:21-35; Faltings 1998: 125-137; Samuel 2000: 537-608).

Budge's work was revised in a second edition published fifty years later by T.G.H. James in 1961.<sup>28</sup> James' revision is described as an effort to advance the study of material dated to the Early Dynastic, Old and Middle Kingdoms through the addition of updated information which had been 'unavailable' to Budge (James 1961: Preface). The main focus of James' revisions concerns erroneously assigned provenances, which given better understanding of artistic style and philology are often reassigned as 'provincial' (James 1961:41).<sup>29</sup>

The preponderance of middle to late twentieth century scholarship continued to deal with offering table imagery through mainly diachronic or descriptive methodologies (Pflüger 1947; Stewart 1979; Harpur 1987). In the case of Kurt Pflüger's early - and insightful - work, with a nascent indication in his analysis that offering table elements might function as a source of valuable religio-cultural information, the pertinent value of these scenes continued to be in their function as 'a solid foundation for a comprehensive dating system' (Pflüger 1947: 127). Although Pflüger's work remains highly relevant, containing a useful overview of gender, familial relationships and ritual objects embedded within offering table imagery, there remains a tendency to dismiss other, highly relevant content in scene composition: "[g]enerally speaking we can say that the stelae show a tiring, monotonous array of postures and gestures" (Pflüger 1947: 132; El-Khadragy 2001:187-201).

Two other prominent German scholars, Peter Kaplony and Winfried Barta, turned their attention to the complex lists of offerings found within (or alongside) table scenes (Kaplony 1963, 1966; Barta 1963). Barta and Kaplony each published in 1963,<sup>30</sup> presenting detailed translations of offering texts found in royal and non-royal mortuary contexts. Both publications remain heavily referenced in scholarly work on funerary inventories and rituals (Kaplony 1963; Barta 1963; Edwards 1966; Kohler 2009:51; Hays 2010:8; Bárta 2011; Harrington 2013; Nyord 2013). Each author groups offerings into two main taxonomies: those items which appear to be related to sustaining the body of the deceased (food and drink), and other commodities necessary to the performance of offering rituals (Edwards 1966: 181-182; Kohler 2009: 50-51). Barta and Kaplony's work also provides a useful chronological overview of the transmission of royal ritual and iconography into non-royal contexts, although this aspect was not an intentional focus of their research (Quirke 2001: 129).

Yvonne Harpur's (1987) valuable contribution to an understanding of the schemata in the decorative programme of Old Kingdom tombs deals with the offering table genre thus:

*'Table scenes are earlier depicted on niche stelae and in the chapels of Dynasties III and IV... significant changes are made to the contents of the offering list, the shape of the loaves, table and chair, and the postures of various minor figures associated with the scene' (Harpur 1987: 79).*

The focus here is on the spatial arrangement of tomb scenes with minimal interpretative consideration of intended meaning. Indeed, with few notable exceptions,<sup>31</sup> it is only in the last two decades that specific focus on the social significance of the engendered deceased and on the ritual significance of offerings within table imagery has received more than cursory attention (Meskell 2004; Nyord and Kølby 2009; Cooney 2010; Bárta 2011; Franke and Marée 2013; Harrington 2013).

<sup>28</sup> In James 1961 *British Museum Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae etc., Part 9*, with extensive revisions in the 1970 edition by the same author. James was keeper of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum at the time of this publication.

<sup>29</sup> James' comment regarding 'provincial' context appears reflective of the historiography of the 1960s and 1970s when interest in provincial culture first emerges in this discipline (James 1961).

<sup>30</sup> Winfried Barta published *Die altägyptische Opferliste von der Frühzeit bis zur griechisch-römischen Epoche* in Berlin in 1963 (Hessling). Peter Kaplony published *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit* in Wiesbaden, the same year (Harrassowitz).

<sup>31</sup> Troy 1986; Willems 1988, 1995; Quirke 1992; Bárta 1995.

Harco Willems' 1988 publication, *Chests of Life* provides one of the earliest studies focussed on Middle Kingdom coffins. His work includes an analytical study of Coffin Texts <sup>32</sup> and of related offering friezes painted on to coffins dated to this period (Willems 1987: 388). Willems explores the 'internalising' of mortuary cult as indicative of growing insecurity regarding the reliability (and sustainability) of external <sup>33</sup> support for the deceased (Willems 1988: 46). The growing rise of Osirian belief systems and the so-called democratisation of the afterlife is traced through the newly emergent body of ritual and iconographic content in the decorative programme of coffins from a First Intermediate and Early Middle Kingdom context (Willems 1988 1996). <sup>34</sup>

Useful insight into state-authorised funerary culture at Old Kingdom necropoleis at Giza and Saqqara is explored by Peter Der Manuelian in *Slab Stelae of the Giza Necropolis* (Der Manuelian 2003). While maintaining something of a chronological perspective, Der Manuelian's work identifies continuity and innovation in the design of Old Kingdom offering stelae (Der Manuelian 2003).

René van Walsem's 2005 work *Iconography of Old Kingdom Elite Tombs* provides a thorough analysis of funerary scene-types painted or carved into elite tombs of this period. Van Walsem's Old Kingdom focus is expanded in Christiana Köhler's publication of Early Dynastic <sup>35</sup> offering stelae. In *Helwan II: The Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Relief Slabs* Köhler focusses on the Early Dynastic stages of the Egyptian funerary programme at an important provincial cemetery near Memphis (Köhler 2009).

Contextualising the widening socio-economic status of the people who commissioned funerary stelae Janet Richards' (2005) work, *Society and Death in Ancient Egypt* explores the highly structured decorum related to the allocation of burial space in Old and Middle Kingdom provincial cemeteries. Richards' analysis is complemented by Wolfram Grajetzki's wide body of work focussed specifically on the Middle Kingdom phase of Egyptian culture (Grajetzki 2003, 2006, 2009, 2014). Karen Exell's (2013:107) recent work <sup>36</sup> continues to build on this scholarship, contextualising votive and funerary stelae of the Ramesside Period <sup>37</sup> in a 'living' context, exploring the range of social events and rituals related to the creation and placement of these objects (Exell 2009, 2013: 106-109, 124-125).

The most recent analysis of meaning embedded within offering table iconography is presented in Nicola Harrington's 2013 publication '*Living with the Dead*'. Her work complements Detlef Franke and Marcel Marée's 2013 publication *Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum from the 13 to the 17 Dynasties* (Franke and Marée, 2013). With this publication, the interpretation of offering stelae is now 'firmly presented' in an appropriate historical and social context (Franke and Marée 2013: vii). Marée's comment that most of these <sup>38</sup> artefacts have never been published, 'much less discussed' is noteworthy (Marée 2013: vii).

A more nuanced analysis of Egypt's funerary culture over the past decade continues to add to our understanding of this scene-type. The focus of current analysis continues to move beyond previous methodologies of chronology and the prescriptive documentation of monumentality. Importantly too, given the previous lack of inclusiveness within this discipline, Egyptology is increasingly viewed within a broader theoretical and interpretive framework which contextualises its funerary culture

<sup>32</sup> The Coffin Texts were liturgical texts painted on to Middle Kingdom coffins in order to protect individual body parts of the deceased in the transitional journey to the netherworld (Willems 1988, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> External aspects of mortuary cult were maintained by living family members or appointed retainers, and funded through contracts based on land grants and the redistribution of temple offerings (Spalinger 1985:7).

<sup>34</sup> This subject is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.2.

<sup>35</sup> The Early Dynastic Period covers Dynasties 1 - 3, c. 3000-2868 BC.

<sup>36</sup> *Egypt, Ancient Histories Modern Archaeologies* co-edited with Rachel Dann, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> The Ramesside Period c.1295-1069 BC.

<sup>38</sup> Marée's comment refers to Middle Kingdom offering stelae in the British Museum. The same situation applies to many non-royal stelae held in museums overseas.

alongside that of other ancient traditions (Baines 2009: v; Willems 2001: v-viii; Bright 2006: 7-10; Exell 2013: 6-7). Along with this more global analytical framework comes an awareness that the processes involved in the Egyptian concept of becoming ‘an Osiris’ cannot be fully understood from a westernised, modern perspective (Hornung 1982: 252; Finnestad 1986).<sup>39</sup> The responsibility of adjusting our interpretation to an ancient Egyptian view of life and afterlife continues to challenge:

*‘no other civilisation did things quite like the ancient Egyptians, especially in the provisioning of their tombs with an important starting point the very obvious physicality of the Egyptian response to the problem of death and what comes after’* (Snape 2011: 4).

One of the most important functions of religious development between the Old and the Middle Kingdoms was the provision and accessibility (symbolically and literally) of new horizons for the dead, with the first evidence of this ‘hidden in the symbolism of the standard offering scene’ (Bárta 2011: 188, 189-190). The evolution of these new perspectives embedded with offering table scene composition is explored further in the chapters which follow.

### 1.3 Aims and Objectives

The inevitability of death acted as a ‘source of motivation’ for a host of ancient Egyptian cultural efforts (Assmann 2001:12). The end of life was not considered as the end of existence nor of ‘one’s effectiveness on earth’ (Meskell 2002: 203). In Egyptian thought, the afterlife was a place where the dead went ‘in order to prolong existence’ (Assmann 2001: 10). The aim of this study is to use examples of the offering table image corpus as a means of understanding something of the complex procedures involved in the transition from life to afterlife. Whilst no funerary programme can provide more than a limited understanding of living society, Egyptian concepts of the body, self and death viewed through a mortuary context enable engagement with embodied persons, indicating something of their worldview (Meskell 1996:1). Pictorial representation within the mortuary landscape may also permit insight into aspects of ‘social reality and social process’ across a dynamic period of cultural development (Richards 2005: 18).

The recent emergence of a more interpretative and analytic examination of Egypt’s funerary programme has initiated a broader, cross-cultural approach within mainstream Egyptological studies.<sup>40</sup> Alongside this more nuanced consideration, there has been a refocus from the previous (almost exclusively) westernised perspective on Egypt’s material record over the course of the last century. A more emic<sup>41</sup> viewpoint is vital in understanding the flexible nature of ancient Egyptian bodily boundaries and notions of ‘Being’<sup>42</sup> in this culture. It is within this emergent area that this study is set.

In pursuit of these aims, the objective of this study is to examine offering table depictions in order to interpret this multifaceted iconological motif within the context of socio-religious developments from the Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom Period. An overview of the chronological framework in which this scene-type developed is explored in the next chapter of this study, following the presentation of the theory and methodology employed.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Smith (2008: 4) qualifies the process of ‘becoming’ an Osiris as more of an identification of the deceased as a ‘follower’ of the god, in a newly transfigured ‘Osirian form’.

<sup>40</sup> This is exemplified particularly in recent work by scholars including Bruce Trigger 2003, Lynn Meskell 2007, Rune Nyord 2009, David Wengrow 2010, 2013, Willeke Wendrich 2010, Nicola Harrington 2013, Karen Exell 2013 and Rachel Dann 2013 who all contextualise their Egyptological research within a wider framework of ancient culture.

<sup>41</sup> This can be understood in the sense that an emic approach is a study from the perspective of the culture itself using modern interpretations (in so far as this is possible) of internal criteria and concepts (Van Walsem 2005:49).

<sup>42</sup> The philosophical domain of ‘Being-in-the-World’ is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.1 of this study.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND METHOD

The Egyptian tomb has been referred to as functioning as ‘a kind of lens, capturing and diffracting the past, present and future’ (Nyord 2013: 195). The theory which underpins this study is focussed on one specific part of this lens as a means of understanding the functionality of processes involving people, produce and performance represented within offering table scene composition. The methodology employed here involves using offering table imagery as a portal through which ancient Egyptian understanding of what happened to the deceased after death can be explored. In order to achieve this goal, an examination of non-royal scene composition and development from the Old to the Middle Kingdom will form the focus of the following chapters. The time frame is significant, as this was a period in which religious and cultural developments impacted upon the whole of society (Seidlmayer 2000:112). The ‘new religious beliefs’ which emerged out of the First Intermediate Period resulted in developments in funerary ritual and iconography<sup>43</sup> which reflect these changes (Grajetzki 2003: 27, 34; Richards 2005: 25-29). This process of change affected the decorum<sup>44</sup> of what could now be included within tomb iconography, widening the boundaries of what had previously been acceptable (Frandsen 2001: 168-169; Richards 2005: 2; Seidlmayer 2000: 113).<sup>45</sup>

The contexts in which certain scenes occur, either within accessible (visible) regions of the tomb, and in restricted or inaccessible regions (including the burial chamber) begins to vary. The compositional structure of offering table imagery also changes. It is the intention in the chapters which follow to identify what Baines (1985: 23) refers to as the ‘principle of selection’ and the underlying rationale which governed scene composition.<sup>46</sup> The ultimate concern of all ancient Egyptians was ‘salvation’ which did not mean surviving death but surviving within the realms of the afterlife thereby continuing to participate in perpetual cycles of the ‘created world’ (Frandsen 2001:167). In order for this post-mortem transition to be successful, it was necessary that funerary cult was provided either externally, enacted via prayers and offerings placed at the tomb, or internally, through religious texts and representations depicted there (Van Walsem.2005:33-35; Assmann 2001:186). It is through these internal contexts that the offering table scene provided the means through which the deceased was able to access a virtual, metaphysical world beyond the tomb.

Although a detailed description of tomb development lies beyond the scope of this study, changes in the Egyptian belief system initiated towards the end of the Old Kingdom had a direct influence on the architectural development of tomb structure (Snape 2011:.51,.68,.166). A more complex

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<sup>43</sup> Iconography as used throughout this study follows Van Walsem (2005) who interprets this term as a process in which two (or three) dimensional representation according to outward appearance represents concepts related to ‘intrinsic meaning’ and symbolic values within an image type (Van Walsem 2005: 21).

<sup>44</sup> Baines (1991:138) defines ‘decorum’ as a system which affected what could be represented in tomb iconography and accompanying liturgical texts (Baines, 1991:137-138). Gay Robins has extended this notion of iconological decorum to gender, demonstrating the ‘pervasiveness’ of conventions that privileged men in Egyptian iconography (Robins 1993: 180-190 cited Baines 2007: 304).

<sup>45</sup> Predating Baines’ definition of ‘decorum’ the British anthropologist Max Gluckman broadened the field of ritual behaviour into ‘a more embracing category of social action’, with religious activities at one extreme and social etiquette at the other (Gluckman 1962: 20, 24). His definition merges neatly with Baines’ description of the close relationship between what could (or could not) be represented in tomb art and social systems of decorum ‘that governed the public presentation of order’ (Baines 1991: 138).

<sup>46</sup> In the context of choice and intent in how offering table scenes were structured and where the image was positioned, levels of selection and negotiation between the tomb owner and the craftsmen he employed must have occurred (Van Walsem 2005). Beyond this degree of agency however, the Egyptian example adds another dimension: that of ‘displacement’ of agent identity (Hays 2009: 24). In this dynamic the tomb owner was essentially choosing scenes and embedding ritualistic elements designed to operate for him in a deceased state (Hays 2009: 24).

programme of internal décor within tombs in central administrative and provincial regions involve the phenomenon referred to as ‘wall theology’ (Bács 2011: 13). As the non-royal funerary programme grew more complex, the expanding repertoire of tomb imagery required an ever increasing series of pictorial genres. This is especially apparent in ritualistic elements incorporated more overtly<sup>47</sup> into offering scene composition and through engendered components more apparent in the Osirian ‘overlay’ superimposed upon this scene (Assmann 2001: 38; Doxey 2009: 8-9).

The iconographical features of offering table imagery, in conjunction with other pictographic, ideogrammatic and architectural components of the tomb, served as a ‘matrix’ for recurrent cult that ensured the afterlife survival of the deceased (Nyord 2013: 198, 199; Friedman 1985: 86-87). Rituals structured within offering table scene composition functioned as supernaturally charged processes of renewal in a transition from a this-world to an otherworldly focus (Frandsen 2001: 170; Grajetzki 2003: 13, 27, 32, 49). Ritualistic elements embedded into scene structure present the deceased as a beneficiary of cult assuring ‘membership in the society of the provisioned and the redeemed’ (Assmann 2001: 403; Doxey 2009: 9; Grajetzki 2003: 32-33). By the end of the Old Kingdom, the funerary programme had undergone an ‘astonishing transformation’ in which there is no distinction between the destiny of the deceased king and that of ‘ordinary mortals’ (Assmann 2001: 147).

By the First Intermediate Period, adaptation to ‘the religion of Osiris’ made aspects of religious iconography theoretically ‘more significant’ to deceased individuals (Baines 1987: 91). That death was understood as transitional and not as an end to life becomes clearer in tomb self-representations and in funerary liturgy of this period: ‘the deceased has departed and the continuation of his journey to the afterlife entails, first and foremost, a distancing from death’ (Assmann 143, 158; Frandsen 2001: 168; Meskell 1999: 203). Intertextual<sup>48</sup> indicators suggest that many tomb inscriptions developed through a ritualistic requirement for transfiguration into the ‘divine world’ (Hays 2006: 227, 2010: 8). Although many of these funerary liturgies were originally intended to be read aloud<sup>49</sup> they are most often found within the inaccessible reaches of the burial chamber in private tombs of the late Old to early Middle Kingdom phases (Assmann 2002: 20; Hays 2006: 26-27; Baines 2007: 149-151). There is an interesting dynamic in the inclusion of ‘ritual recitations’ now restructured so that they functioned for the deceased magically<sup>50</sup> ‘with little or no accompanying physical action’ (Hays 2006: 227). Other forms of sacerdotal offering liturgy worked cohesively with associated imagery in offering table depictions (Doxey 2009: 7; Grajetzki 2003: 34). Prayers, once intended for oral<sup>51</sup> delivery no longer required the presence of a lector priest, ‘possessing validity by their presence alone’ (Baines 2007: 151). This provides useful insight into the mode of ritual visualised as occurring autonomously for the deceased inside the tomb (Nyord 2013: 195-197).

<sup>47</sup> Overtly in the sense that ritualistic performance had always been part of the Egyptian funerary programme, but is now embedded internally within iconographical elements placed strategically into inaccessible areas of the tomb. The perpetuity of magically enacted rituals was thus ensured.

<sup>48</sup> The ‘intertextuality’ of Middle Kingdom offering prayers suggests that previously oral sacerdotal liturgies (related to cultic acts performed outside of the burial chamber) were now integrated into offering scenes where they served as ritually charged elements of enacted cult. (Hays 2010: 2).

<sup>49</sup> These inscribed incantations often indicate the deceased as the orator (Hays and Schenck 2007: 106).

<sup>50</sup> There was no real distinction between ‘magic’ and ‘religion’ in Egyptian culture (Ritner 1989: 103). The closest term for ‘magic’ was *Heqa*, a word which indicated the ‘force used by both gods and men to bring about divine intervention in the affairs of earth, heaven and the underworld’ (Ritner 1989: 104).

<sup>51</sup> On the subject of oral liturgy, Ben Haring (drawing on anthropological studies from non-Egyptian contexts namely the work of Jack Goody: 1968, 1977, 1986 and Walter Ong: 1982 cited Haring 2003: 256) notes that ‘[t]he impact of the spoken word in an oral context is not to be underestimated. ‘An utterance’ may be seen as an event in itself that had ‘magical power’ (Haring 2003: 256). Oral performance was not restricted to speech but included gestures, facial expressions and movement of the hands, in addition to the possible presence of ‘witnesses’ (Haring 2003: 256). The change in once orally delivered liturgy to textual inscription was significant: ‘[f]or the Egyptians the transmission of a text was an exemplar of cultural permanence, and was privileged over oral transmission’ (Parkinson 2002: 50).

Scenes intended to sustain the deceased through the transitional process from life to afterlife are made manifest in depictions of the tomb owner seated before an offering table (Assmann.2001: 141-142, 158; Frandsen 2001:167-168;Barta.2011:188). Structured within this imagery, the ideological and metaphysical nature of bodily death and material decay were rationalised quite differently from a modern understanding of these concepts (Willerslev 2013:11; Nyord 2013:203; Finnestad.1986:361).<sup>52</sup> Tomb imagery presents life in a ‘fossilised form’ representing the deceased as shifted ontologically from the living person referred to in autobiographical inscriptions to that of an ‘ancestral spirit’ (Nyord.2013: 203). Offering table scene composition became more elaborate in order to reflect these religious and socio-cultural constructions. By the early Middle Kingdom, table scenes contained all the necessary metaphysical elements required to facilitate the transformation of the deceased into a spiritual entity capable of a ‘fully virtual existence’ in the netherworld (Nyord.2013:200;Frandsen 2001:167-169).

Offering table scenes which form the focus of this study <sup>53</sup> are drawn from central administrative contexts <sup>54</sup> at Saqqara and Giza, where tomb space was located within royal necropoleis and exclusively in the gift of the king (David 1998:87; Bárta 2011:91,130, 189). Other, comparative examples are drawn from contemporaneous provincial contexts <sup>55</sup> at Helwan, Beni Hasan, Asyut <sup>56</sup> Elephantine and Abydos <sup>57</sup> where, from the end of the Old Kingdom, there was less official oversight and evidence of regionally-specific adaptations (David 1998: 87; Bárta 2011: 189-190; Vischak 2006). The officially sanctioned ‘Memphite’ <sup>58</sup> style will be explored with examples from the Old Kingdom, First Intermediate and Middle Kingdom phases of this study. <sup>59</sup> The methodology which structures this study will result in a progressive presentation of evidence as this study develops. Other relevant material related to gender (discussed in Chapter 3) and ritual (discussed in Chapter 4) can be found in appendices at the end of this study. In order to understand something of how offering table composition developed over time, a chronological overview of scene development is presented in the following section of this chapter.

## 2.1 The Offering Table Scene: A Chronological Framework

Scenes containing an image of the deceased before a table laden with food have been described as ‘the quintessential symbol for the continuity of the offering ritual’ (Köhler 2007: 94). However, the two-dimensional image of the deceased at a funerary table painted or carved inside the tomb does not constitute the earliest context for this image (Friedman 1985; 86-89). The offering table scene is first found on stone cylinder seals with the oldest examples dated to the First Dynasty (c.3000 – 2890 BC; Bárta 1995:26; Kaplony.1963: 1-3;Friedman 1985:86; Shaw 2000:481). The degree of complexity already present in scenes carved on to these objects would suggest much earlier, Predynastic origins for this motif (Kaplony 1963: 229; O’Connor 2009: 144-147). Incorporated within the narrative scene

<sup>52</sup> The subject of levels of existence within Egyptian ontology is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.1.

<sup>53</sup> The study sample explored here, as with all ancient Egyptian material culture, is intrinsically biased on the basis of survival. It is also the case that the elite produced more elaborate artefacts formed from better quality materials ensuring better survival rates. This unavoidable geographical and social bias has been balanced, in so far as this has been possible, by the inclusion of non-elite examples from provincial contexts.

<sup>54</sup> These are areas in which the Egyptian ‘court’ - the king and the central administration - were located. In the Old Kingdom this was in the north at Memphis. Towards the end of First Intermediate Period, the court moved to Ijtawi (modern Lisht, south of Memphis on the edge of Fayum) and in the Middle Kingdom the royal residence was established at Thebes. Memphis remained a centre of administrative control throughout this period. (Manley 1996: 45-46).

<sup>55</sup> Helwan was located in the region of the royal necropoleis at Giza and Saqqara. Burial space at Helwan was available to a wider socio-economic range of people.

<sup>56</sup> See Figure 1, page 4 for a map of all major areas discussed in this study.

<sup>57</sup> Although provincial cemeteries at Abydos are included, restricted parts of its mortuary landscape served as a major religious centre important to Egyptians from all levels of society. (Richards 2005: 21-22).

<sup>58</sup> Memphite style has been defined as officially sanctioned iconography originating from the decorative programme of high-elite necropoleis in the environs of the royal residence at Memphis (Vischak 2006:261; Assmann 1996:91).

<sup>59</sup> All dates for dynastic periods referred to throughout this study can be found in Table 1.

incised on to one of the earliest seals, the deceased is identified as an *Sps*, or ‘august one’ (Friedman 1985:86). In pre-formal hieroglyphic figures which accompany this image, an ibis is designated as the *ikh akh*<sup>60</sup> of the deceased (Friedman 1985:86). Renée Friedman (1985: 86) suggests that even at this early stage, the ibis was intended to represent the fully transformed deceased suggesting a funerary context for the offering table motif in a compositional structure that was already complex, Figure 4, Cylinder Seal, First Dynasty.



Figure 4: Stone cylinder seal bearing offering table image. Walters Art Museum, Accession Number: 42168, First Dynasty Egypt c. 3100-2900 BC. 4a: the stone seal showing a deceased woman at an offering table; 4b: the impression made from rolling the seal along dampened clay; 4c: the bottom of the seal; 4d: a second offering table image on the seal.

As discussed in this chapter, this is the earliest known object to bear an offering table scene. Two images of a deceased woman are shown before an offering table. Already scene composition indicates positional hierarchy; she is seated on the left side of the table, facing right. Her reaches towards the table. Both aspects were consistent in table iconography over the following two thousand years. This seal is discussed in more detail in Friedman 1985: 86.

Two apparently essential elements incorporated into cylinder seal iconography are the name and title of the individual, indicating status in life, along with an explicit identification of the deceased as ‘an equipped spirit’, indicating status in the afterlife (Friedman 1985: 86; Der Manuelian 2003: 133-134; Köhler 2007: 94). The intricate interconnection between the deceased, the offering table and aspects of the transformed individual are already defined as ritually related elements incised on to these early seals (Edwards 1966: 181-182; Friedman 1985: 86-87; Wilkinson 1998: 292). The fact that offering table imagery was already iconographically complex from an early phase indicates the importance of this construct within Egyptian religious ideology from the beginning of the Dynastic era (Edwards 1966: 181; Köhler.2007: 93-94).

Following its use on cylinder seals, offering table imagery appears carved or painted on slab stelae within elite tombs at the royal necropolis at Giza and on offering slabs from more ‘socially complex’ burial contexts at Helwan (Köhler 2007: 93; Barta 1995:26; Der Manuelian 2003: 133). The function of slab stelae<sup>61</sup> was to identify the tomb owner, with the earliest examples bearing only the names and titles of the deceased (Grajetzki 2003: 12). The examples from Helwan are dated from late Dynasty One to Dynasty Three (c.3000-2686 BC) whilst at Giza, slab stelae from elite contexts bearing some of the ‘finest examples of intricately carved and painted offering table imagery’ have been assigned in almost all cases to a particularly narrow phase of the Fourth Dynasty<sup>62</sup> (Der Manuelian 2003: 133; Köhler 2007: 93). Along with an individual’s title and name, a list of offerings begins to appear on relief slabs at Helwan from the latter part of the Third Dynasty c.2686-2613 (Köhler 2007: 1, 17;

<sup>60</sup> The *ikr akh* represented an able or ‘effective spirit’ (Demaree 1983: 9). The ‘prime medium’ of achieving this desired postmortem status was through ritual carried out at the time of the funeral (Friedman 1986: 86).

<sup>61</sup> The location of offering stelae varied over time. Some were visible, placed in tomb forecourts where they functioned as a liminal space for communication between the living and the dead (Harrington 2013: 60). Others were never meant to be seen, covered over with monolithic false doors (Der Manuelian 2003: xxxi).

<sup>62</sup> Most of the Giza slab stelae can be dated to the Fourth Dynasty reign of Khufu c.2589-2566 BC (Der Manuelian 2003: 133).

Grajetzki 2003: 12-13). In some cases, as with the slab stelae at Giza, this imagery was never intended to be seen, embedded into the walls of the burial chamber in inaccessible areas of the tomb (Der Manuelian 2003: xxxi). In this architectonic context, intrinsic meaning attached to this motif was most likely predominantly symbolic and ritualistic (Baines 1985:4).

Christiana Köhler (2007:94) notes a reductionist process in place over this period at Helwan where actual food offerings, once placed as grave goods, are increasingly indicated solely through imagery. As the amount of grave goods diminishes, offering table depictions on the Helwan slabs become more elaborate. An increasing range of commodities including textiles, oils, incense and purification sets are ultimately included within this image corpus (Köhler 2007:94). At Giza, a reduction in the number and size of storage rooms attached to elite tombs there coincides with a similar expansion of iconography incorporated into table scenes carved on to limestone slab stelae (Der Manuelian 2003: 167). A related reductionist process appears to be in place at Abydos, at the other end of the country, where the number of storerooms is ‘considerably reduced’ in elite burial complexes of this period (Bárta.2011:75; Der Manuelian 2003: 133-136; O’Connor 2009:149-151). Although physical offerings remained ‘the ideal’, two-dimensional depictions of commodities accompanied by lists delineating quantities and regularity of supply had ‘the power to create a reality’ simply by describing it (Snape 2011: 44, 45).

During the funeral, and at specific periods following this event, offering rituals would have been enacted for the deceased outside the tomb.<sup>63</sup> During these ceremonies, food offerings, along with offerings of textiles, incense and oils, would have been placed on three-dimensional offering tables in rites performed in a relatively ‘public’ area of the tomb<sup>64</sup> (Köhler 2007: 93; Der Manuelian 2003: 133). The earliest examples of undecorated offering tables have been recovered from Early Dynastic contexts, but some form of offering mat or slab is believed to have been in place from the Predynastic Period (Wengrow 2006: 220-222; Köhler 2007:5, 34, 93-94). These functional tables upon which offerings were laid, prayers were recited and libations were poured continued to be produced throughout the dynastic era, Figure 5, three-dimensional offering tables (Kanawati 2001: 54-59). The tables were another means through which the living continued to interact with the dead.

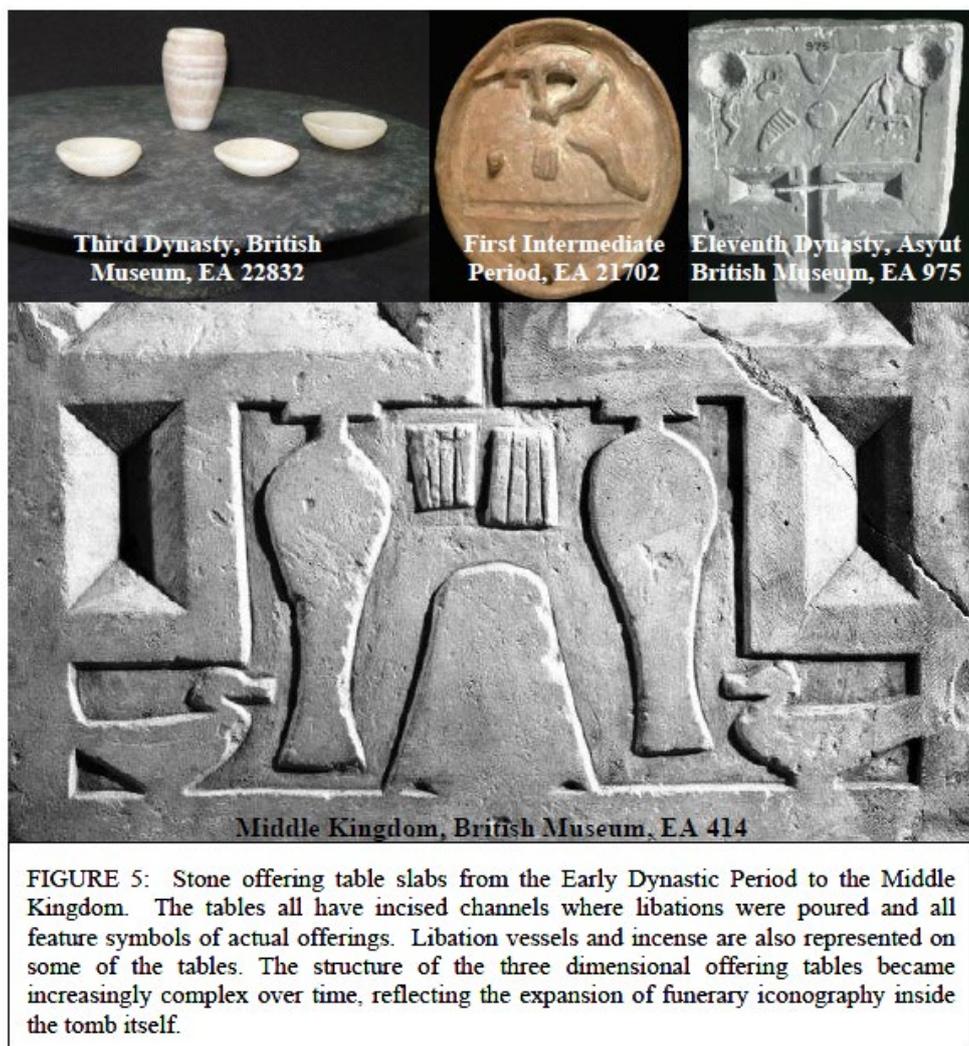
Three dimensional offering tables were closely associated with the false door through which the deceased was magically able to receive food, prayers and other offerings (Aldred 1980: 64-65; David 1998: 77-78; Köhler 2007: 93). Terminology used to describe three-dimensional tables suggests a predominantly practical aspect of their function: the term *xAw.t* was also the term used to describe dining tables found in domestic contexts (Binder 2010: 1-10).

By the Fourth Dynasty, the deceased is depicted within an increasingly elaborate offering table scene. Although the table continued to bear little apart from reed-shaped bread loaves, offering imagery extended beyond the table to include a substantial inventory list of linen and other commodities, now apparently ‘essential’ to the afterlife (Snape 2011:39; Der Manuelian 2003: 161; Grajetzki 2007: 18). The offering table depiction found on limestone slabs of this period transferred to the lintel, or central panel of false doors in private tomb chapels.<sup>65</sup> The table motif remained as a regular component of false door structure from this period onwards (Friedman 1985: 86; Snape 2011:39).

<sup>63</sup> Tomb inscriptions often request that offerings be made during specific festivals and other religious holidays which took place throughout the year. This post mortem desire to remain included in living events has been described as the ancient Egyptian’s desire to participate ‘ahistorically’ in his life (Spalinger 1996: 71).

<sup>64</sup> Three dimension offering tables have also been found in New Kingdom domestic contexts including at Deir el Medina, a town built to house craftspeople working in the Valley of the Kings (Harrington 2013: 61).

<sup>65</sup> The ‘chapel’ was often no more than stone panels on either side of the false door or stelae (Snape 2011:39,123; Daoud 2005: 187).



Offering chapels may have had predynastic origins, with the earliest <sup>66</sup> dated to the Naqada II period c. 3500-3300 BC (Snape 2011:8, 11). These early chapels took the form of a mud brick rectangle just big enough for a human to enter in order to place offerings (Snape 2011:11). By the latter part of the Old Kingdom, the offering chapel (sometimes consisting of multiple rooms with adjoining storage areas) was decorated with scenes of the deceased tomb owner in the company of immediate

<sup>66</sup> Tomb 1845 at Tarkan, a Predynastic cemetery located 60 km south of Cairo on the West Bank of the Nile, was excavated (and numbered) by Petrie in 1912-13. Dated to the Late Predynastic Naqada II phase (on the cusp of the Dynastic era c. 3200) this is one of the earliest known examples of a bi-partite Egyptian tomb (Snape 2011:11; Shaw 2000:481). A small room attached to the burial chamber (and accessible only from a crouched position) was filled with large storage vessels and food containers (Snape 2011: 11). The brickwork of the small 'chapel' had two apertures through which offerings were 'accessible'. There are other examples of early bi-partite tombs at Tarkan indicating the importance of food offerings within a liminal space close to the tomb. These predynastic structures represent an early form of what would become a 'fundamental feature' reflecting the functionality of the Egyptian tomb as both a point of contact between the living and the dead and as a means of providing sustenance for the deceased (Harrington 2013: 86). Offering chapel structures which occur in the mortuary programmes of other ancient cultures, appear to have served a similar metaphysical 'provisioning' function. An analogous liminal purpose appears to have been part of the function of 'cult houses' in Late Bronze Age Scandinavian barrow tombs at northern Jutland (Masojc and Bech 2011: 210). The cult houses, a 'phenomenon so far unnoticed in the literature by archaeologists', also served as a point of contact between the living and the dead and as a repository for offerings (Masojc and Bech 2011:210). Like the Egyptian Predynastic offering spaces, Scandinavian structures were built on to the edge of burial chambers. These 'houses' contained 'large collections of flint artefacts' and other 'cult objects' indicating the means (or technology) of supplying food, rather than the provisioning of actual foodstuffs *per se* (Masojc and Bech 2011: 210, 211).

family members, enjoying the pursuits of everyday life (Grajetzki 2003:15-17). The most important part of the chapel was its false door, which served as a liminal point of contact between the deceased and those making offerings on their behalf (Snape 2011: 39). From its position in the upper part of the false door, the offering table scene evolved into a major feature of the decorative programme of offering chapels from this period onwards (Backes 2007:2; Der Manuelian 2003:80).

By the latter part of the Fifth Dynasty, the combination of offering table scenes on false doors and as an image painted or carved on to the western wall of the offering chapel had become a ‘standardized model’ in the tombs of high officials at Saqqara (Brovarski 2004: 71). Offering table scenes of this era have been described as ‘state of the art’ serving as exemplars for the decorative programme of tombs belonging to lower ranking officials in the provinces (Brovarski 2004: 72). The concept of incorporating the name, the status and rituals intended to sustain the deceased within a single, growingly complex scene-type was already well established by this stage (Köhler 2007: 93; O’Connor 2009: 151; Assmann 2001: 29, 165).

Over the First Intermediate Period, the offering table depiction on funerary stelae found within the tomb and on imagery within the offering chapels continued to develop in complexity. A significant development of this phase is the internalisation of what had once been external cultic practice carried out by the living on behalf of the deceased <sup>67</sup> (David 2007:41-43; Bolshakov 1997:156). An ethos of self-reliance in how one prepared for the afterlife is apparent in inscriptions which now begin to accompany offering table imagery: ‘I made this tomb of mine in three months, I erected its enclosure wall, established it with servants and made payment for them’ <sup>68</sup> (Snape 2011: 96). The maintenance of an individual’s mortuary cult was no longer regarded with certainty. Indications point towards self-reliance as an intrinsic, metaphysical element incorporated into the decorative programme in tombs of this period (Assmann 1996: 87). <sup>69</sup> This ‘highly charged nature of visualizing and materializing’ is referred to by Lynn Meskell (2004:218) as demonstrating the need to magically ‘intervene’ into otherworldly spheres. The onus was now on the individual to secure his or her own postmortem survival.

The disruption of ‘residential culture’ <sup>70</sup> saw the transmission of elite mortuary cult into provincial ‘lower order’ or ‘sub-elite’ contexts (Wegner 2010: 123; Richards 2005: 21-22; Assmann.1996:50). First Intermediate necropoleis display ‘a good deal of personal autonomy’ in the tombs of the ‘local elite’, as formerly royal and high-elite cultural forms were co-opted by less socially elevated individuals (Snape 2011:97). Throughout this era, the offering scene continued to function as an important element within the false door structure and as a ever expanding image on offering chapel walls. During this period, the offering table image also appears on funerary and votive stelae placed at the tomb and along processional routes at Abydos (Backes 2007: 2 ; Exell 2009).

By the start of the Middle Kingdom Period, the offering table scene had become ‘the most central iconographic feature’ in the decorative programme of tombs in both central administrative and

<sup>67</sup> Although the First Intermediate era marked a change in socio-cultural aspects of Egyptian life which impacted on religious practice, the need to maintain the ‘purity of the tomb’ while still permitting necessary mortuary ritual had always ‘created a tension between restriction and accessibility’ (Harrington 2013: 88). In earlier periods this ‘tension’ may have been resolved by the placement of funerary stelae and statues of the deceased close to the entrance of the tomb (Chauvet 2008: 45).

<sup>68</sup> This inscription is from the Sixth Dynasty tomb of a ‘governor of the Oasis’ Khentika (who served under the long-lived Pepy II) at Dakhleh Oasis, near modern Balat (Snape 2011: 95). Tombs at Dakhleh, far from central administrative oversight, present ‘a clear picture of change’ with access to the inner regions of the tomb increasingly restricted, with evidence of an associated ‘internalisation’ of mortuary cult (Assmann 1996:87-88; Snape 2011:95-96).

<sup>69</sup> In this evolving situation, the deceased (as the beneficiary of mortuary cult) is put in charge of his own post-mortem destiny (Hays and Schenck 2007: 106).

<sup>70</sup> This term is defined by Assmann (1996:48) as ‘the refined tradition of Memphis’ ... encompassing not only writing, art and architecture but also a corpus of knowledge, a semantic system, a standard language and a code of ethics’.

provincial contexts (Köhler 2007: 34). Essential elements of individual identification, along with semiotic motifs representing the bodily and spiritual sustenance of the deceased, are common to all funerary elements on which this scene appears (Bolshakov 1997:30; Köhler 2007:96; Wegner 2010: 123). The manner in which the offering table functioned as a significant iconographical element is discussed in the next section of this study.

## 2.2 New Approaches to Egyptian Visual Culture

Representation produced within ancient cultural traditions was both symbolic and abstract and developed from the worldview of discrete belief systems (Renfrew 2007:107-113). Meskell (2004: 2-3) notes that studies of objects and iconography within material culture should look beyond the artefact in order to ‘focus more directly on broader interpretive connotations’ beyond objects and their representation. In doing so it is important to ‘deconstruct our own notions’ regarding an artefact or its place in the world (Meskell 2004:2). In the modern context, images in art are often valued for their aesthetic value rather than for a cultic function (Alloa 2013:3). In the Egyptian worldview the opposite was the case (Van Walsem 2005: 2-3). In dealing with the complex subject of ancient iconography it is necessary to attempt a consideration of the world in ways significantly alien to a modern mind (Bolshakov 1997:292-293; Finnestad 1986:366).<sup>71</sup> In this sense the schematic structure of whole scenes – such as that centred around an offering table – is organised in order to convey emic<sup>72</sup> information and values rather than to capture the appearance of individual elements (Baines 2007: 220-221). Metaphorical meaning embedded into ancient imagery can indicate the existence of abstract relationships ‘hidden’ within the scene (Tilley 1999:8). Metaphors incorporated into representations are invariably linked to ‘knowledges deemed fundamental to social reproduction’ (Tilley 1999:9).

Jan Assmann (1992:87) notes that ancient Egyptian cult was based on a tripartite distinction between action, iconic representation and recitation. A strong belief in the power of symbols meant that when ritual was internalised into imagery and texts carved or painted into a funerary scene, it was as if real provisions and food offerings were turned into ‘a sacred text’ (Assmann 1992: 87). Such imagery had ‘more representational power’ than actual grave goods or enacted rituals because it was ‘more symbolic’ and therefore ‘more divine’ (Assmann 1992: 88). This process is referred to by Assmann as a process of ‘sacred semiosis’ in which objects, ritual performance and once orated liturgies are transformed into representational imagery and texts which function as powerful signifiers of cultic symbolism (1992: 89).

John Baines (1985:2) has defined ‘meaning in art’ as fixed within a given cultural setting. In his interpretation of symbols and the decorum which governed their use Baines refers to ‘a hierarchy of meaning’ within Egyptian iconographical patterns (Baines 2007:16). Where a two dimensional depiction was placed spatially and what was included (or should not be included) within visual representation within the tomb context was highly prescribed, ‘part of a tightly structured symbolic system’ (Baines 2007: 16). Baines also refers to the expansion of tomb scenes and a general trend over time towards a ‘proliferation of figures’ surrounding the deceased (1985: 26, 28). The internalising of a range of mortuary rituals caused exactly this dynamic within offering table scene structure with a proliferation of ‘others’ required in order to ensure the efficacy of offering rituals. An important consideration in interpreting meaning as part of a cultural system is that a majority of Egyptian pictorial representation was destined never to be seen. However, offering table iconography whether on wall, stelae or coffin would have been visible to the tomb owner and to the artists he employed (Baines 1985:5).

<sup>71</sup> Recent scholarship on the nature of visual imagery interprets visual perception as culturally specific challenging modern interpretations of what was perceived emblematically and metaphorically within ancient representational systems (Goebis 2013:128; Lakoff 1987: 338; Johnson 1987:66).

<sup>72</sup> Judgement in this context is based on ancient criteria and concepts (Van Walsem 2005: 49).

The expansion and development of offering table depictions, with the deceased surrounded by an increasing range of commodities and by other individuals apparently significant to the scene, was already highly developed by the end of the Old Kingdom. As noted in Chapter 1, until relatively recently scholars tended to view offering table imagery from a modern, westernised perspective. A useful reminder of misinterpretation is found in the work of Kurt Pflüger, who notes that in his study of imagery on Eleventh Dynasty stelae he found no examples ‘of a purely religious character’ (1947: 128). Pflüger goes on to observe that offering table scenes appear ‘pre-eminently secular’ (1947:128).<sup>73</sup> The notion of determining that any form of funerary imagery in an ancient Egyptian context can be anything other than ‘religious’ is somewhat curious, but perhaps of its time.<sup>74</sup> A more recent definition considers offering stelae as ‘monuments as well as memorials’ which encapsulate cultural history, religion and ritual (Franke 2002:8).

Egypt’s rich artistic tradition constitutes the first time in world history when artists were required to make representations of reality: ‘metaphorical representation became a way of securing immortality’ (Bolshakov 1997: 294). There was an unbreakable link between the spirit or *ka* of the deceased and ‘an entire world’ structured around metaphysical aspects of the tomb owner’s otherworldly requirements embedded into the decorative programme of the tomb (Bolshakov 1997:294). Over time, this created what Andrey Bolshakov refers to as ‘the doubleworld’ of the Egyptian mortuary cult and the creation of an otherworldly mythical realm where the tomb owner became the central figure around whom ‘the whole world rotated’ (1997: 295). In this context René Van Walsem refers to ‘the opening up of new horizons’ in the act of creatively combining new components of tomb iconography alongside ‘something already there’ (2005:4). What appears to matter in the composition of ancient Egyptian art is ‘a (very) high complexity of ideas and emotions’ in the attributes of an image (Van Walsem 2005: 4).

The tomb represented an ‘eternal property’ for the deceased and within its regions the creation of an individualised and idealised construction was perfectly possible (Bolshakov 1997: 295). From the end of the Old Kingdom, the deceased had the ability to create an idealised netherworld where he was judged on his ‘honest service’ in life, for which he was rewarded in the afterlife (Bolshakov 1997: 295, 296). This was a crucial development, for until the collapse of central authority at the end of the Sixth Dynasty there had been no real option for most people other than expectations of a very limited afterlife in the confines of the tomb. With the broadening of access to a netherworld in a metaphysical reality beyond the tomb ‘new symbolic relationships’ were formulated (Renfrew 2007: 116). As Colin Renfrew (2007: 116) notes, when new practices ‘or understandings’ come into existence it is sometimes indicative that an entirely new concept has been adopted within a society, not just its symbolic representation.

By the early Middle Kingdom Period the offering table scene-type extended far beyond what might have served as an earlier pragmatic function in physically sustaining the deceased with food and beverages (an aspect of the table motif which was always important). Newly formulated beliefs involving the metaphysical transformation of the deceased were introduced and then consistently built upon. In order to fully participate in the transitional process from death to afterlife available within the ‘new’ Osirian religion, it became necessary to construct an increasingly expansive depiction of the

<sup>73</sup> The term ‘religion’ as used throughout this study describes practices, rituals, actions, beliefs and material culture. However, using any single term to describe the vast and complex array of actual and metaphysical elements which might be construed as ‘religious’ within ancient Egyptian cultural tradition poses an ‘explicit dichotomisation’ between religious and other aspects of life when such divisions may not have existed (Insoll 2004: 6-7).

<sup>74</sup> On this point Mircea Eliade (1969: 68) notes that the development of ‘profane culture’ is a relatively recent construct. Timothy Insoll (2004: 16, 17) supports this view noting that ‘the explicit dichotomisation inherent in the sacred and the profane evident today was less bounded’ within ancient culture where spheres of ‘overlap’ between religion and secular activity ‘were more fuzzy’. This provides useful insight into Pflüger’s interpretation of ‘secular’.

process through which this could be realised. Situating once orally delivered (and ritually performed) sacerdotal texts into inaccessible areas of the tomb restructured an older dynamic where the deceased was ‘the passive benefactor of rites performed by others on his behalf’ (Hays and Schenck 2007: 106). The ramification of these developments represented a means of attainment whereby the dead were enabled to enact perpetual ritual as independent agents of cult (Hays and Schenck 2007: 106).

An expansion of funerary ritual following social change that results in an increasingly complex purpose for mortuary artefacts is evident within other cultures, where graves are ‘the intentional outcome of mortuary rituals (Williams 2006:5) Although Howard Williams is referring to European funerary traditions, the developing complexity of the offering table motif provides insight into cultural responses, attitudes and practices surrounding death which are global in nature (Meskell 1999: 219).<sup>75</sup> Indeed, understanding the mortuary programme of any ancient culture may permit useful insight into views of individuality, of ‘aspirations for the future and of links with the supernatural’ (Williams 2006:9). Representations within tomb iconography were not ‘things’ in their own right but aspects of ontology that worked in ‘particular, culturally specific ways’ (Dann 2013: 155). In this context offering table scene iconography is a prime example of what Williams refers to as ‘materialised ideology’ (2006: 8, 9). However, the adoption of an eternal domain for the deceased that was centred in the pictorial script and narrative imagery of the Egyptian tomb and fuelled by metaphysical offerings is described by Bolshakov as ‘unique’ in ancient culture (1997: 296). This ‘anchoring’ of aspects of the Egyptian worldview within a burial context may have reinforced the symbolic significance of a range of motifs incorporated into table iconography (Baines 2007:8).

The Egyptologist, René Van Walsem has referred to the ‘overwhelming complexity’ involved in describing and interpreting funerary imagery (2005:7). What is represented does not operate in a ‘cognitive vacuum’ but is embedded within a pre-existing cultural background (Van Walsem 2005: 7). Visual culture is a construction that ‘is learned and cultivated, not simply given by nature’ (Mitchell 2002:166) Exploring the intrinsic meaning within offering table scene structure leads to a consideration of broader ‘culture historical embedding’ which is defined by Van Walsem as iconology (Van Walsem, 2005:22). Although a concept developed for Western art history,<sup>76</sup> the methodology of examining the iconography and wider structure of iconology ‘is applicable to any culture’ because of its universal character’ (Van Walsem 2005:22). An overarching concern in this respect is that ancient Egyptian culture did not try to explain itself or its belief systems overtly. There are no explanatory texts or theological tracts delineating what any aspect of ‘art’ or ‘religion’ meant. In fact there were no words in the Egyptian language for either term (Aldred 1980: 9). What can be gleaned from tomb depictions and their accompanying texts remains very much open to interpretation (Bolshakov 1997: 17).

In this chapter, the theoretical and chronological framework in the development of offering table iconography and the socio-political contexts which influenced its development have been explored. The societal and religious changes which followed the end of the Old Kingdom appear to have acted as a catalyst, not only in regards to mortuary culture, but for society in general (Seidlmayer 2000: 110-

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<sup>75</sup> The Egyptians were already concerned with questions that did not surface until much later in European philosophy, concerning being and non-being, about the meaning of death, the nature of the cosmos and of the notion that individuals could transcend death (Meskell 1999: 219).

<sup>76</sup> Erwin Panofsky (1955: 30) was one of the first scholars to differentiate between iconography, the subject matter or meaning of pictorial representation and an overarching concept of iconology. Panofsky defined the latter as ‘a unifying principle which underlies and explains both the visible event and its intelligible significance’ (1955: 30). Van Walsem describes Panofsky’s work in the context of ancient Egyptian iconography and iconology as ‘the best methodological approach we have’ (Van Walsem 2005: 22). The German Egyptologist Stephan Seidlmayer (2000: 247) has also acknowledged Panofsky’s approach as useful beyond the art-historical context in which his theory was first formulated. George Lakoff’s work (1987:302-303) on the ways in which categories of language, imagery and thought are structured has extended Panofsky’s theories into the field of cognitive linguistics, another discipline through which modern scholarship attempts to access ancient perceptions and understanding of Being-in-the-world.

112; [Wegner 2010:139-140](#)). An exploration of ancient Egypt's 'unique' ontology, of the interpretation of 'states of existence' embedded within offering table iconology and the related concept of 'Being-in-the-World' follows in the next chapter ([Davis 1999:29](#); [Bolshakov 1997: 296](#)).

### CHAPTER 3: SOCIETY AND DEATH

Death was the ‘most strongly ritualized’ of life stages in ancient Egypt (Baines 1991: 144). The fact that there was no ‘explicit theology’ within Egyptian religion, no definition for god and no attempt to systematically set forth a theology underpinning beliefs makes ‘implicit theology’ vital in interpreting how Egyptians understood death and in how they perceived the fate of the individual following death (Gee, 2009:3). Modern society is described as being increasingly concerned at specific existential problems associated with the prospect of death, situating this concern within a nature/culture dichotomy (Giddens 1991 cited Meskell 1999: 108).<sup>77</sup> Such concerns are not specific to the modern era (Meskell 1999: 108). The Egyptians already possessed ‘a notion of unbounded selfhood’ that inextricably connected the body, self and death in a highly articulated and developed mortuary culture (Meskell 1999: 108-109).

Studies which draw boundaries between modern and pre-modern concepts of death sometimes do so in a somewhat dismissive manner privileging our own attitudes to the body as a narrowly defined ‘cultural product’ (Meskell 1999: 109). What we might consider as rigid boundaries however, often become blurred when considering aspects of society, kinship, magic and religion within ancient cultural traditions. The concept of the grave and of the objects and decorative programme within it should not be viewed as ‘static’ artefacts but as repositories of multiple levels of meaning, possessing their own complex iconographical histories (Meskell 2007: 35). The possibility of extrapolating information on notions of existence within Egyptian ontology, and to an understanding of gender within this construct are explored in the following sections of this chapter.

Embedded within Egyptian ideology was an understanding that it was possible to prolong life beyond biological limitations through ‘cultural effort’ (Assmann 2001: 14). The binary potential of creation was one of the key elements which underpinned this ideology (Troy 1986: 149). The interaction of male and female as complementary elements which, in their union, gave rise to the dynamic of creation underpinned one of the earliest versions of the Egyptian creation myth (Troy 1986: 3, 149). In the cosmological<sup>78</sup> narrative of the Heliopolitan Ennead<sup>79</sup> Atum created the first gods Shu and Tefnut (deities related to moisture and to the breath of life). This twin pairing of brother and sister in turn produced the gods Geb and Nut (a male god of the earth and a female goddess who personified the sky). They in turn created the sibling deities, Osiris, Isis, Nephthys and Seth. The mythological structure of this creation narrative encompasses what Lana Troy refers to as the pattern of ‘binary dualisms’ that structured the Egyptian worldview (Troy 1986: 148, 149).<sup>80</sup>

Initially, scholarly interpretation of ancient Egyptian religion emanated from a predominantly western, dualistic and, as noted earlier, usually Christian perspective which was at severe odds with the ‘reality’ of how life and death were perceived within ancient culture (Finnestad 1986:359). Ancient understanding of how human beings were constructed and the process of metaphysical changes following death

<sup>77</sup> Giddens structuration theory indicated that individuals within a society ‘are essentially moulded and managed’ within the narrow confines and traditions of a discrete social setting (1991: 37).

<sup>78</sup> The sociologist Talcott Parsons refers to a cosmological society as one which lives by ‘a model of cosmic forms of order, which it transforms into political and social order’ (Parsons 1966 cited Assmann 1996: 205). This worldview was the ‘reverse’ of that of nearby Mesopotamia, another cosmological society where natural manifestations (rainbows, earthquakes, planetary eclipses) were observed, recorded and ‘read’ as meaningful emanations. In Egypt, the reverse was the case with such phenomena ‘passed over in silence’ (Assmann 1996: 205; Jacobsen 1963: 180-181).

<sup>79</sup> The Ennead, of which more than one version existed, consisted of a group of nine deities who convened to deliberate on the final judgement of the deceased (Bell 1985:272).

<sup>80</sup> Egyptian religion organised its deities into kinship systems, relating their actions and destinies to each other (Assmann 1996: 204; Silverman 1991: 33). This mythological pattern formed the underlying structure of Egyptian society (Silverman 1991: 32, 46-47; Assmann 1996: 204).

were significantly different from Euro-centric interpretations of these concepts (Kjølby, 2009:35). Meskell (2007: 23) refers to the ‘rigidity’ of Western taxonomies, and the desire of earlier scholarship to fit individuals from a range of cultural constructs into ‘neatly pigeonholed’ categories according to a set of predetermined labels. Such modern constructs are irrelevant to Egyptian identity which is expressed through the interaction of masculine and feminine elements embedded within mortuary cult and realised through tomb iconography (Warburton 2009: 89).

The notion of bodily death was of course recognised in Egyptian ideology, although the act of dying did not represent the end of life (Dann 2013: 154; Meskell 1999: 110). The body could be revived, regenerated and maintained<sup>81</sup> through funerary rituals which enabled perpetual cycles of renewal (Meskell 1999: 110). In order to understand the functionality of offering scene imagery in the range of contexts in which it was utilised, it is useful to understand something of how Egyptians conceptualised the components of the human being and their concept of ‘Being-in-the-World’<sup>82</sup> (Nyord 2009a; Thomas 1996:17, 2007: 211-212). In an alternative view to Cartesian<sup>83</sup> duality, this philosophical concept of ‘Being’ has provided a means through which the range of dichotomies within Egyptian ideology can be usefully approached (Nyord 2009a: 63). The metaphysical and physical components from which human beings were understood to be constructed will be examined in the following section of this chapter. The relevance of gender, and the ways in which engendered constructs were integrated into Egyptian understanding of post-mortem existence, is also considered in the context of how these factors influenced the structure of offering table imagery.

### 3.1 Being Egyptian: States of Existence for the Living and the Dead

Many ancient societies developed funerary rituals which include ideas about the afterlife and of the ‘regeneration of life’ through the symbolism of some form of rebirth (Willerslev *et al* 2013: 11; Roth 1993: 127, 146). The social processes surrounding death and implicit concepts of rebirth are not ‘merely’ a method for understanding the Egyptian mortuary system but are crucial to understanding notions of the self and of personhood within this and many other ancient cultures (Willelav *et al* 2013: 1; Thomas 1996: 19; Kjølby 2009: 37; Finnestad 1986: 360-361).

The notion of identity and of ‘Being’ within ancient society has been gradually obscured and ‘covered over’ by western tradition (Thomas 1996: ix). ‘Knowledge never exists outside of the world ... and material culture is not the manifest reflection of abstract cognition’ (Thomas 1996: 19). It is a relatively modern paradigm in which human beings are understood as an amalgamation of a physical, material body with an immaterial, metaphysical soul (Finnestad 1986: 360). ‘Seeing humanity as built in layers forces a distinction between mind and body’ (Thomas 2007: 211). This perceived duality of body and soul as distinct elements, one of which has supremacy over the other following death, has ‘no relevance’ to an ancient Egyptian worldview (Finnestad 1986: 360). In the relatively new

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<sup>81</sup> Claas Bleeker (1968: 21) has drawn attention to the abundance of Egyptian terms to describe the concepts ‘new, to renew, to be renewed, to become new, to make new, to rejuvenate, to be revived’ suggesting that this plethora of terms provides some understanding of the ancient Egyptian ‘religious’ mindset, particularly in regard to death (Bleeker 1967 cited Nyord 2009: 100).

<sup>82</sup> ‘Being-in-the-World’ is a philosophical concept first determined by Martin Heidegger (1962) with earlier contributions from the phenomenological philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* cited Nyord 2009a: 63). The concept of Being-in-the-World indicates that even abstract thinking is deeply rooted in experiences of the human body ‘from whence abstract concepts acquire both structure and axiology’ (Nyord 2009a:63). These ‘knowledges’ varied according to traditional prejudices in ancient societies and were, on the whole, very different from modern perspectives on the world (Barrett 2000:66, 67).

<sup>83</sup> Cartesian duality (based on the work of philosopher René Descarte) emanates from a western construct that perceives human beings as composed of both physical matter (the body) and of incorporate matter, ‘characterised by thought’ (Thomas 1996:11, 14). This duality within an individual is further split into culture/nature and mind/body dichotomies: divisions alien to many ancient (and some indigenous modern) cultures (Thomas 1996: 14-18; Lloyd 1989:117; Hornung 1982: 160, 175-177).

philosophical tradition of phenomenology<sup>84</sup> there is no notion of ‘anthropological dualism’ in which human beings are understood as consisting of two ‘ontologically incommensurable parts’ (Nyord 2009a; 63, 64; Thomas 2007: 211-212). Egyptian culture recognised the human being as a duality<sup>85</sup> of physical and non-physical elements, each of which might be approached separately and ‘each of which required nurturing’ (Quirke 1992: 105) There was no concept of a single soul or spirit, but rather the perception of a ‘cluster’ of metaphysical elements, each with a unique nature and potential (Snape 2011: 19). These components were not regarded as separate from the body, but considered as ‘qualitative aspects of the self’ (Dann 2013: 154).

Over the past few decades, scholars from different anthropological and archaeological disciplines have attempted to interpret ancient concepts of ‘Being’ in order to examine the relationship between early society and the world of material objects through which funerary systems were created (Kjølby, 2009: 34; Thomas 1996:19; Hays 2010: 7-8). In this approach, boundaries between mind, body and ancient worldviews require examination from a more relevant, emic<sup>86</sup> perspective. The cognitive reality of the ways in which cult objects, funerary imagery and related ritual functioned within an ancient society’s mortuary programme requires a significantly different perspective beyond modern notions of these elements<sup>87</sup> (Bolshakov 1997: 15-17). There are however, some commonalities within a global funerary context.

The Egyptologist Alan Lloyd refers to five factors which determine the nature of funerary beliefs and practice in the religious systems of ‘any society’<sup>88</sup> (1989: 117). These include two which are particularly relevant to this study: the component parts of personal identity (as understood within Egyptian culture) and the way in which the nature of the afterlife was conceptualised (Lloyd 1989:117). In this ancient construct, manifestations of consciousness are created out of completely different life conditions and experiences ‘dissimilar from our own cognition and interpretations’ (Bolshakov 1997: 15). Images of the deceased within the narrative imagery, statuary and other objects placed within the Egyptian tomb did not function simply as representations of an individual tomb owner but as ‘detached parts of their distributed person, i.e., personhood distributed or extended beyond the body-boundary’ (Kjølby 2009:35). During mummification, the physical parts of the deceased self were ‘separated, individuated, packaged and compartmentalised’ (Dann 2013: 154). Such fragmentation was ‘absolutely necessary’ for the survival of the reunited, reborn self in the netherworld (Dann 2013: 154). During the process of physical reconstruction the deceased assumed another form as a ‘highly semiotically charged self’ with a redefined body which transformed the individual into an eternalised object with a biography beyond death (Meskell 2004: 124; Dann 2013:152). An exploration of existence following death, according to Egyptian ideology, is explored in the following section of this study.

### 3.2 Transformation and Transition

<sup>84</sup> The concept of phenomenology as used in this study follows Nyord (2009b: 2-3) in reference to ancient Egyptian concepts of the body, of bodily experiences and of individual powers and processes of the body as subject to transformational ritual.

<sup>85</sup> On this point Kathryn Piquette (2013: 73) notes that ‘dualism’ sees agent and structure as two separate ‘mutually exclusive sets of phenomena’. By contrast, ‘duality’ holds that agents and structure are ‘mutually constituting’ permitting insight into the interaction between individuals and their material culture (Piquette 2013: 75).

<sup>86</sup> An emic approach, as defined by Van Walsem (2005) is one in which a society is studied from the cultural system it constructed, ‘using internal criteria and concepts’ (2005:49). Van Walsem qualifies this type of approach by emphasising its challenges and the need to remain critical about the ‘degree to which a, by nature, external study’ may coincide with an inside view on reality and existence (2005: 49).

<sup>87</sup> On this point Timothy Insoll notes that one must question ‘[a] paradigm whereby ‘primitive’ peoples are somehow seen as more religious, whereas those of more ‘developed’ state systems are seen as ‘more similar to the perceived modern condition’ (2004: 18).

<sup>88</sup> Lloyd (1989: 117) describes these five concepts as: the nature of man (the component parts which construct personal identity); the relationship between the individual and his social context; man’s position within the cosmos; basic human reactions to bereavement, which as Lloyd notes have been shown ‘to follow a consistent pattern irrespective of culture’; and finally, a society’s belief on the nature of the afterlife.

Aspects of ancient Egyptian ideology have been considered as ‘abstract’ even though forms of artistic expression and of language within its funerary culture were ‘highly concrete’ (Warburton 2009: 84). Each funerary image functions as a ‘microcosm’ of the culture that produced it, a product of ‘conscious and unconscious cultural codes’ which reveal much about the deceased tomb owners who commissioned this imagery and of the artists who created it (Franke and Marée 2013:2; Robins 1998: 963). Specific components included within offering table scene composition provide emic hints regarding how gendered embodied experiences and the transitional process from death to afterlife were conceptualised (Nyord 2009b: 73; Lloyd 1989:117; Franke 2002: 9). Religious concepts were ‘constantly rethought’ with new ideological insights incorporated into the expansion of objects, people and ritual gradually incorporated into offering table imagery (Bickel 1998: 164; Kjølby 2009: 34-35). Each of the constituent parts which made up the living (and the deceased) human being was sustained and renewed through elements, people and produce embedded within scene composition.

Egyptian concepts of the individual, and of how the human body was composed indicate five interdependent aspects of ‘Being’: the *kA*<sup>89</sup>, the *bA*, the *rnn*, the *Swt* and the *akh* (Bárta 2011: 235; Lloyd 1989: 118-119).<sup>90</sup> Each of these complex elements existed as interrelated components of the self. Early attempts at defining these physical and metaphysical components referred to these elements as ‘illogical’ and ‘contradictory’ (Hornung 1982: 237). Édouard Naville’s (1909:63-64) somewhat brave attempt at untangling Egyptian concepts of the *kA* and the *bA* are perhaps illustrative of other early efforts to understand the concept of existence or of ‘Being’ in this ancient culture. Naville wrote, ‘all these doctrines are very vague and ill-defined. Here, as with all Egyptian ideas, there is an absolute lack of system and logic’ (1909: 63-64).

Scholars have continued to invest considerable time pondering over categories of the self within Egyptian ontology (Lloyd 1989:117-133; Nyord 2009a: 63-74; Bárta 2011: 235-239; Snape 2011: 42-50; Harrington 2013; Meskell 1999, 2002, 2007; Dann 2013). The manner in which these classifications worked ideologically is important in comprehending how they functioned iconographically (Gee 2009: 4; Meskell 1999: 132). The *kA* represented the life force or sustaining power of an individual; a ‘vital element’ that was born with him and lived on ‘after death’ (Lloyd 1989:119 Hornung 1982: 47; Bárta 2011: 235; Kanawati 2010: 5). Although one’s *kA* was present at birth it functioned mainly in the afterlife as the means through which metaphysical sustenance, prayers and other ritual offerings were received by the deceased within the burial chamber (Snape 2011: 37). There is often a play on words<sup>91</sup> associated with this term which is also the word for ‘bull’<sup>92</sup> symbolising male potency (Quirke 1991: 106). Metaphorical elements encapsulated within the symbolism of the *kA* are referenced textually and iconographically in haunches of beef presented as food offerings to the deceased. This schema establishes a clear connection between effectiveness and potency in the afterlife with regeneration enabled through funerary offerings (Quirke 1991: 106; Gee 2009: 4). The functional aspects of table scenes were the main concerns of the ‘*kA*-spirit’ in that these images maintained a ‘perpetual’ source of food, drink and other ritual offerings critical to survival in the afterlife (Snape 2011: 40). The metaphysical power of the *kA* however, was limited ‘since it was effectively constrained within the tomb’ (Snape 2011: 37).

<sup>89</sup> These components have been defined as the vital power of the soul, or *kA*; the *bA* with the ability to move in the afterlife; the name (*rnn*) as another significant identifier of the self, and the shadow (the *Swt*) which was linked to the mobility of the *bA*. Other significant components included the physical body or *Ht* and the heart (the *HAty* or *ib*) which was considered as the ‘centre’ of an individual’s ‘moral and intellectual being’ (Lloyd 1989:119; Nyord 2009: 64-65).

<sup>90</sup> The *akh* represented the whole of these parts as ‘the transfigured deceased in his entirety’ (Harrington 2013: 7).

<sup>91</sup> This play on words is represented iconographically within offering table imagery where a haunch of meat or the leg of a bull is a ubiquitous offering presented to the deceased, often by a son or another male individual.

<sup>92</sup> ‘*kA*’ has a range of meanings beyond those discussed here. John Gee (2009: 5-6) notes that precise meaning in any of these contexts may have been indicated through different ‘vocalization or intonation of the word’.

The *ba*, another component of the human being associated with mobility in the afterlife,<sup>93</sup> became more prominent in funerary iconography at around the same time as afterlife possibilities beyond the tomb became more accessible (Quirke 1991: 106). A consensus on the role of the *ba* defines this element as the vital energy enabling the mobility of the *ka* (Barta, 2011: Boshakov, 1996; Finnestad, 1986: 362-363; Assmann, 1996: 172). Through the power of its *ba*, the *ka* was enabled to travel beyond the tomb during the day. This interaction between two important elements of the self was dependent upon rituals enacted magically through imagery and liturgical texts distributed throughout the tomb (Meskell 1999: 111-112).<sup>94</sup> The social person was a unity despite this partitioning: ‘Most of these aspects came into their own in transition from this world and the next’ (Baines 1991: 145).

A significant aspect of the *ba*’s mobility was in facilitating the rebirth of the deceased (Harrington 2013: 5). In a metaphysical synthesis of conception, rebirth and rejuvenation, women - in their roles as wives, mothers and daughters- served as ‘feminine prototypes’ crucial to afterlife regeneration (Troy 1986: 2, 3). This process was patterned on the Egyptian creation myth, where the god Atum created himself initiating a multigenerational progeny of cosmological deities who in turn gave birth to other gods of the divine Ennead (Troy 1986: 146). The dichotomy of male and female engendered attributes was crucial to this process. In order for any deceased Egyptian to become an *akh*, or effective spirit, and therefore assume another identity as ‘an Osiris’<sup>95</sup> it was necessary for a transitional process of rebirth to be enacted within the tomb (Smith 2008: 3; Snape 2011: 145). The mechanics of this process were analogous with procreation and birth during life: ‘[i]n the mythological expression of the Egyptians, the generative force is seen in terms of the unity of the original primeval state ... differentiated internally into the duality of male and female roles’ (Troy 1986: 146-147).

While the tomb functioned as a ‘necessary vehicle’ to get to the netherworld, access to an Osirian afterlife beyond its confines permitted entry to the ‘field of reeds’ and ‘the field of *hetep*’ (Snape 2011: 197; Lesko 1991: 120).<sup>96</sup> The former was associated with the eastern horizon and considered as a place of purity (Lesko 1991: 120-121). The latter was connected to the western horizon and was perhaps the nearest thing to an Egyptian notion of paradise ‘rich with offerings’ (Lesko 1991: 120). Reaching these metaphysical destinations epitomised the ultimate state of transition. The deceased was fully equipped to benefit from the generous ‘blessings’ which flowed into these ‘fields’ from the offering table of Osiris himself (Snape 2011: 197). It was necessary however, to possess the correct imagery and liturgical texts in order to gain entry into expanded regions of the afterlife (Assmann 2001: 344-345).<sup>97</sup> The key to achieving this state of ultimate afterlife success was through knowledge of ritual. Formulaic inscriptions within table imagery emphasise the deceased’s awareness of cultic ‘mysteries’ and of the ritual knowledge necessary to navigate various stages en route to the netherworld (Snape 2011: 197). ‘Crossings’ between the realms of the living and of the dead were subject to strict cultural and moral controls (Assmann 2001: 15). From the end of the Old Kingdom ‘only the just and the knowing were admitted; only the good would succeed’ (Assmann 2001: 148).

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<sup>93</sup> Through the power of the *ba* the deceased was enabled to ‘come forth’ from the realms of the dead to participate in festivals and receive mortuary offerings (Kjølby 2009: 39).

<sup>94</sup> The *ba* was represented as a human headed falcon with mythical links to the god Horus (Harrington 2013:6). Horus acted as the protector of his father’s corpse during mortuary rituals. This paternalistic dynamic was re-enacted in royal and non-royal funerary cult where the son of the deceased played a similar sacerdotal role in burial rituals (Willems 1996).

<sup>95</sup> Non-royal individuals are explicitly identified as ‘an Osiris’ from the First Intermediate Period onwards (McCarthy 2002: 174).

<sup>96</sup> The term ‘*hetep*’ translates as ‘offerings’.

<sup>97</sup> Richards (2005: 65) has pointed out an interesting dynamic where the material and symbolic boundaries between people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds may have been ‘blurred’ through the usurpation of ‘upper’ or ‘middle’ group symbols and materials. A similar pattern is visible in the Mesopotamian mortuary record (Pollock 1983,1999 cited Richards 2005: 65).

Following social changes which emerged over the course of the First Intermediate Period and into the Middle Kingdom, many non-elite individuals were able to incorporate ritualistic scenes, objects, products and other people within their burial structures (Richards 2005:42, 104, 179). Specific, once highly restricted iconography changed in the course of this dissemination ‘into something that was mainly prestigious’ rather than maintaining all of its high elite and royal meaning (Baines 2007: 324). Changes reflected in tomb iconography at this time, illustrate new ways in which the Egyptians constructed ‘the interface between the human and the divine’ in a dynamic picture of multiple avenues of access to an Osirian afterlife (Wegner 2010: 122).<sup>98</sup> One of the main methods of incorporating all of the necessary funerary components was through the inclusion of an offering table scene. This might be an elaborate depiction embedded into a massive false door in an offering chapel, or a roughly worked image on a ‘crude limestone stela’ (Richards 2005: 41). By the First Intermediate Period the scene was also placed within the coffin itself (Willems 1988: 47).

Magically charged architectonic objects (and their iconographical representation) effected crucial transformations which changed the nature, role and construct of a deceased individual into an ancestral spirit<sup>99</sup> (Harrington 2013: 7-8). Individual gender was relevant within this transitional dynamic and, as with other aspects of Egyptian ontology, blurs modern constructs of male and female taxonomies. Sexual ambiguity within ancient mortuary cult may point to the existence of ‘conceptual categories’ which diverge significantly from our own (Meskell 1999: 82). The subject of individual gender within the dynamic of tomb iconography is explored in the section which follows.

### 3.3 Gender and the deceased

Any reference to the study of gender is often followed by an investigation specifically into females within ancient culture. This is no doubt due to the fact that gender studies developed out of feminist anthropological scholarship initiated in the 1960s and 1970s (Hays-Gilpin *et al* 1998: 5, 7). This feminist critique opened up new ways of considering gender, particularly within the (until then) long neglected field of ancient culture (Wylie 1998: 59-60). Archaeology and anthropological studies have gradually substantiated a set of culturally specific beliefs which (consciously or not) propagate particular ideas about gender in reconstructions of the past. However, it is crucial to avoid the conflation of modern experiences of gender and of sexuality into ancient constructs. In many early cultural traditions including Egypt’s, gender and sexuality were inextricably linked to various life stages including death and the afterlife.

Following the pattern of other ancient cultures, an important aspect of Egyptian social organisation was through family groups based on the concept of a man, a woman and their children (Robins 1993: 56). Just as society was organised around the king, the female role within this dynamic was central both to the monarchy and to wider society (Robins 1993: 60). At an elite level, the queen represented the female principle of the universe through which the male king could renew himself, and on a practical level both queens and non-royal women bore the main responsibility of providing heirs. Although it was acknowledged that the female acted as a receptacle for the child before birth, there was a strong underlying perception, evident in Egyptian literature and liturgy, that fertility and creation –the very constituents involved in the formation of life- were a predominantly masculine phenomena (Roth 2000:187). Women were never perceived as the initiators of life (Troy 1986: 145-

<sup>98</sup> Our understanding of the innovative nature of this period continues to develop. This is indicated in the recent work of Josef Wegner (2010: 124) who notes that ‘many of the materialized forms [of material culture] that first emerge in the First Intermediate Period – and then culminate in the Middle Kingdom – are not merely transpositions or emulations of high cultural forms. Rather they are ... augmented by a quite dynamic and unique set of forms new to the material tradition’ (Wegner 2010: 124).

<sup>99</sup> In the transfigured form of an *akh* the deceased became one with Osiris and enabled to communicate and arbitrate on behalf of the living (Harrington 2013: 7). Aspects of interconnection between the living and the dead are explored further in Chapter 4.

149). The Egyptian creational schema has been described as ‘counterintuitive’<sup>100</sup> to notions of the female as a main source of fertility and of creative powers. The perception of males as the creators of life was replicated within the symbolic structure of divine and royal families, and beyond this became an ideological pattern assimilated into the Egyptian worldview (Roth 2000: 187; Cooney 2010: 224). This paradigm of masculine power over creation was also embedded into concepts of rebirth and rejuvenation in the afterlife (Cooney 2010: 224).

The divine feminine complement to this construct where the goddess (queen, wife or mother) served as a container for the masculine power of creation, is indicated in the metaphor of death as a return to the womb.<sup>101</sup> This analogy exhibited a remarkable consistency in the Egyptian mortuary programme from crouched foetal positions of the Predynastic era, to inscriptions on Late Period coffins which sustain this metaphor (Assmann 2001: 173). Females and female sexuality played a significant role in the social performance of death and in vital post-mortem revivification processes (Meskell 1999: 133; Robins 1993: 191; Troy 1986: 2-3, 146-147). In mortuary iconography, both the wife and the mother of the deceased functioned as a metaphorical manifestation of this ‘maternal’ aspect containing the deceased in the feminised form of the coffin, the tomb and ‘the West’ (Assmann 2001: 172). The presence of other men and women within tomb imagery addressed a range of metaphysical functions essential to the regeneration of the deceased. Engendered iconology was also manifest in the structuring of sacred space within burial chamber and coffin, which becomes apparent in the phenomenon of absence<sup>102</sup> discussed in the section which follows.

The ways in which gender was addressed through funerary art varied, changing quite significantly over time in line with developments in religious ideology. In the Fourth Dynasty, the ‘sudden and consistent’ depiction of family members in funerary imagery appears to signal ‘an unusual emphasis’ on marriage and children during this period (Roth 1999: 38). The first known depiction of a royal family dates from this era, apparently reflecting the structure of the creation narrative of the Heliopolitan Ennead (Ayad 2009: 5). In earlier periods ‘women did not appear on the monuments of their husbands; husbands did not appear on the monuments of their wives; and children were never shown’ (Roth 1999: 38). However, from the Fourth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom and continuing through the first six reigns of the Fifth (c. 2613- 2421 BC) this situation changed significantly (Roth 1999: 34; Shaw 2000: 482). Osirian influences affecting religious development were contemporaneous with, and appear to have contributed significantly to, these ideological and religious changes<sup>103</sup> (Grajetzki 2007: 16, 32). Just as rapidly as they appeared however, at the middle point of the Fifth Dynasty in a small but interesting number of examples, wives once again disappeared from the decorative programme of elite tombs in cemeteries at Saqqara (Roth 1999: 40-41). Given the apparent importance of the wife in the metaphysical rebirth of her spouse it is surprising that women should again be omitted from the decorative programme of male tombs (Roth 1999: 42).

Osirian aspects of the mortuary cult made it imperative that all deceased Egyptians were provided with the correct cultic motifs in order to effect transformations as a fully justified<sup>104</sup> entity in the

<sup>100</sup> In historical and modern western culture the ‘power of procreation’ is associated primarily with women (Roth 2000: 188).

<sup>101</sup> The image of an Egyptian body buried in a foetal position drew the attention of Carl Jung, who attempted to demonstrate a link between the ‘Oedipal desire for an incestuous union’ (as hypothesised by Freud) and a desire for a primeval immortality (Jung 1912: 443 cited Assmann 2001: 173).

<sup>102</sup> Husbands were usually absent from the tomb iconography of women’s tombs and, at certain periods during the dynastic era, women (specifically wives) were absent from those of men (Roth 1999, 2000; Cooney 2010).

<sup>103</sup> The divine family of Osiris, Isis and their son Horus also became prominent in mortuary liturgy and imagery at this time.

<sup>104</sup> Justification or vindication of the deceased in the ‘judgement of the deceased’ has been likened to ‘moral mummification’ with the integrity of the dead individual preserved eternally just as his body was preserved (Smith 2008: 3).

netherworld (Smith 2008: 3). Given the importance of Isis' role within Osirian mythology<sup>105</sup> there is no 'obvious reason' why wives are absent from tomb iconography at this time (Roth 1999: 41). In an attempt to explain this puzzling development Kathlyn Cooney, in a survey of similar changes that emerged in later, Ramesside iconography<sup>106</sup> concluded that these 'absences' reflect an intentional metaphysical dynamic. It is probable that a similar strategic rationale was in place in earlier periods (Cooney 2010: 225).

*'During Dynastic times, the Egyptians believed that a dead woman needed to become a god of masculine virility, since a goddess lacked the creative spark needed to be reborn. Because of this, ancient Egyptian women had to contend with a variety of innovative and nuanced adaptations to their gender when preparing for death. Essentially, Egyptian women had to shift their gender and "masculinize" themselves to enter the ...realms of the afterlife' (Cooney 2010: 225).*

In order to access the afterlife a deceased woman had to assume aspects of androgyny -just as Osiris himself embodied aspects of both genders -<sup>107</sup> in order to effect her assimilation into the netherworld (Cooney 2010; Roth 2000; Quirke 2001: 30, 38).<sup>108</sup> In this engendered construct the deceased (male or female) was understood as reborn through a procreational dynamic (Roth 1999: 51). Once again, it is necessary to regard gender in this ancient context as fluid with 'blurred boundaries and collapsed dichotomies' (Meskell 2007: 34).

The wife's role as her husband's post-mortem partner is stressed repeatedly in funerary iconography which emphasises her role in his rebirth. Many of these pictorial compositions also show mothers as a metaphysical substitute for wives (Roth 1999: 42).<sup>109</sup> In this ancient construct, the wife of the deceased functioned metaphysically as both the spouse and the mother of her deceased husband. With sexualised rebirth crucial to afterlife regeneration it was necessary for men and women to be intimately associated with Osiris (Quirke 2001: 31). Roth (2000: 199) asks the pertinent question, who then served as the mother/spouse in the transfiguration of female deceased:

*'[t]he overwhelming maleness of the creative sexual role would seem to make it impossible for a woman to re-engender herself ... the burial equipment and mortuary texts provided for women were identical to those provided for men. The answer must be that a woman, like her husband, was syncretized with Osiris after death ... Osiris's role as an androgynous male fertility god allowed her to re-engender herself just as a man would' (Roth 2000: 199).*

Death marked a return to the 'undifferentiated pre-existent state' of primeval creation and only in this androgynous state could dead women (like dead men) be identified with Osiris (Roth 2000: 200).<sup>110</sup> In

<sup>105</sup> The goddess Isis was instrumental in rejuvenating her deceased husband so that he was enabled to impregnate her with their son, Horus. This metaphorical stimulus to creation became a vital function of women in the ritual dynamic of the funerary programme from the Old Kingdom Period onwards.

<sup>106</sup> c.1295-1069 BC.

<sup>107</sup> Osiris had no phallus which was hacked off by Seth (Roth 2000: 199). Despite this somewhat obvious flaw, his role as an agricultural deity and, more significantly his involvement in post-mortem female syncretism, permitted the possibility of rebirth for deceased women (Roth 2000: 199).

<sup>108</sup> In the Theban Eleventh Dynasty (c.2125-2055 BC) the name of Osiris appears, on more than one occasion, with a female determinative in elite tomb inscriptions. Examples of this apparently deliberate feminising of the god's name are attested from the tomb of Princess Ashyt, a consort of Mentuhotep II (Shalomi-Hen 2006: 158). Ashyt's coffin is discussed in Figure 13 (page 75) of this study.

<sup>109</sup> Within this image schema, the deceased is often referred to as the *ka-mwt.f*, literally 'bull of his mother'. *ka-mutef* theology gained prominence in the Eighteenth Dynasty through the mythological narrative of the divine conception of kings (Collier 1993:145). In the earliest example of this strategic construct the god Amun is said to have impregnated the mother of Hatshepsut with her, in a retrospective attempt to legitimise Hatshepsut's position as heir to Thutmosis I. Earlier reference to the *ka-mutef* within the timeframe of this study serves as another example of the transmission of royal iconography and ritual into the mortuary programme of private individuals.

<sup>110</sup> In a somewhat similar reflection of the blurring of male/female gender constructs in a funerary context the 'gala', or lamentation performer at Mesopotamian funerals is described as of ambiguous gender (although ostensibly male) and 'a

regenerating herself, a woman was required to play all three roles as her own husband, her own wife and her own mother.<sup>111</sup> This may also indicate why spouses are never shown in tombs constructed exclusively for women, for within the ritually charged cultic space of her burial chamber a woman adopted both gender roles (Roth 2000: 199).

The male relationship with the female (husband and wife, or king and queen) represented within the same scene ‘fixes’ an unambiguous female role for women (McCarthy 2002: 194). If a woman was ‘locked in’ to a feminine role, she could not attain the fluidity of gender identity necessary to enable her own rebirth and renewal (McCarthy 2002: 194). Hence, the absence of men from the tombs of elite women, and an apparent desire for women to be depicted alone at their own offering table scene - a location primarily organised for the regeneration of the deceased.

The presence of female figurines, elaborately styled though ‘virtually naked, often with the pubic triangle marked in’ have been interpreted as fertility objects which are found amongst the tomb goods of both men, women and children (Robins 1993: 76). Whether these figurines were instrumental as feminine motifs, or played any part in rebirth rituals is unclear. However, the ‘stimulus’ to creation required the ‘divine feminine’ component and the figurines may have functioned symbolically in this regard (Quirke 2001: 31). Whatever their precise purpose these objects appear to be connected with rejuvenation and rebirth (Robins 1993: 76).

Despite the assured and persuasive analysis of Meskell (1999,<sup>112</sup> 2004) Roth (1999, 2000), McCarthy (2002) and Cooney (2010) in their analysis of the complex issue of female transfiguration, it appears that Egyptological scholarship continues to struggle with an unfamiliar dynamic of sexualised and engendered post-mortem regeneration:

*‘[t]he gender of the dead for much of ancient Egyptian history is subject to ambiguities of various kinds. Although the dead participate in gendered activities ... and are shown as gendered in two dimensional art, the ambiguous three-dimensional figures and the wide reference to all dead by way of a male god’s name (Osiris) may reflect an ambivalence not fully understood’* (Wilfong 2010: 167).

Funerary cult can be seen as a strategic effort to impose order out of chaos in challenging the ever present threat of death as a complete annihilation of life. Intrinsic to this emphasis on the sexualisation of what was essentially a deceased human being, is the Egyptian perception that the body was a continuing source for the extension of life (O’Connor 1996: 630). Within this process, the boundaries regarding the cultural domains of motherhood, gender, sexuality and ‘religiosity’ were structured significantly differently to modern perceptions of these constructs. It is perhaps naïve to expect similar (modern) expectations from significantly different (and ancient) cultural contexts (Meskell 2007: 35; Insoll 2004: 152-153). In death, male and female deceased were transformed into a particular transitory category of personhood during which a ‘highly semiotically charged self’ was created (Damn 2013: 152). In the sexual subtext of creation which permeated the Egyptian funerary programme male creator gods created themselves and the next generation of deities (Quirke 2001: 31). Female complements to these gods served as both stimulant and vessel to the masculine power

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figure of uncertain sexuality’ (Cooper 2006: 44).

<sup>111</sup> In an intriguing trace of syncretism between Pharaonic Egypt and the early Christian Church, a passage in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas (Nag Hammadi Codex II 99.18-26), a Coptic version of the gospel composed in the late third century AD, reflects tensions in the involvement of women in Christian religious life. This resulted in the notion that women could (and should) become male in order to better serve God (Rowlandson 1998: 77). In Thomas 99:18 Simon Peter asked that Mary Magdalen be sent away from the group because she was not a man. Jesus offered to make her a man so that she could remain with his disciples, extending the offer to all women: ‘Jesus said ... For any woman who makes herself male shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven’ (Rowlandson 1998: 77).

<sup>112</sup> Meskell 1999: *Archaeologies of Social Life* and 2004: *Object Worlds*; Roth 1999: *The Absent Spouse* and 2000: *Father Earth, Mother Sky*; McCarthy 2002: *The Osiris Nefertari*; Cooney, 2010: *Gender Transformations in Death*.

of creation. It is apparent that the ancient Egyptians saw these gods ‘as models for their dead’ and constructed their mortuary narrative using a similar paradigm (Cooney 2010: 227).

Underpinning this elaborate compositional and ontological effort to deny death, was a developing iconological construct of engendered renewal. By the Sixth Dynasty and continuing into the early Middle Kingdom, wives and offspring are once again (there are exceptions) included within tomb depictions of male deceased within offering table scenes and in scenes of daily life (Roth 1999: 45). However, within this evolving, engendered construct many elite women continue to be afforded their own offering scenes within tombs owned by males (their fathers, husbands or brothers). This may have been a pragmatic – and economically feasible – means of ensuring female transition. As beneficiaries of cult within their own dedicated offering table imagery, women could continue to effect an independent transition into the state of being ‘an Osiris’ and therefore achieve individual justification in the netherworld.

The inclusion of sons, daughters, mothers and wives in the tomb depictions of deceased males acted as evidence of a man’s fertility and emphasised his position at the head of an extended family. As discussed in this section, while females were part of an engendered ritualistic programme of renewal and of rebirth, males had a more pragmatic function in providing the offerings and ensuring the performance of mortuary ritual for their deceased fathers. This dynamic was closely linked to the Osirian mythical narrative where the divine son, Horus tends to the funerary needs and mortuary cult of his murdered father, Osiris (Snape 2011: 118-119; Quirke 1992: 52-61). The justification of Horus and his defence of his father ‘gave meaning and form’ to the world beyond the grave (Quirke 1992: 66).

In the context of another engendered construct within a contemporaneous culture, <sup>113</sup> Benjamin Alberti (2007: 137) notes that the ‘norms of society’ are often reproduced through engendered imagery in which ‘the clear-cut distinction between men’s and women’s roles and male and female symbolism occupies a central position’. Mesopotamian creation mythology also repeats the cosmological theme of the engendered passage from primordial chaos to the renewal of all things enacted through ritual (Bell 1997: 17, 18; Cooper 1992: 25). In this cultural schema similar cycles of renewal presented through ritual performance appear to have been instrumental in ‘making the original creation happen again’ (Bell 1997: 18). The ‘dying-rising’ motif embedded into Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultural traditions is presented as a symbolic reversion of primordial chaos and of the restoration of order (Bell 1997:18). <sup>114</sup> In the Egyptian tradition, this ‘performance’ was transferred into ritually charged iconographical motifs that represented engendered acts of perpetual renewal. <sup>115</sup>

Underlying renewal strategies within ancient mortuary traditions the embodiment of human meaning and understanding manifests itself ‘over and over, in ways ‘intimately connected to forms of imaginative structuring of experience’ (Johnson 1987: xiv). Yet until relatively recently, a consideration of ‘the human body’ and of embodied experience within the area of cognitive reasoning was ignored because its importance in non-Western conceptual systems ‘went unrecognised’ (Johnson 1987: xiii-xv). The importance of embodiment and gender as a pervasive mode of understanding appears to have been the means through which Egyptians projected patterns from one domain of experience (birth, death and the control of nature) in order to structure another experientially less certain domain (what happened

<sup>113</sup> Alberti’s work is primarily focussed on the role of gender within the iconography of Late Bronze Age Knossos (2007: 137-151).

<sup>114</sup> The decorum which governed where and when certain images might appear in funerary iconography was not replicated in contemporaneous Mesopotamian cultures where ‘art is far more chaotic’ (Bahrani 2013:106).

<sup>115</sup> An understanding that depiction could serve as an act of creation was shared in the Mesopotamian tradition (Bahrani 2013: 107).

to individuals following death). Such metaphorical projections were not arbitrary but were highly constrained by aspects of bodily functioning and experience (Johnson 1987: xvi; Beck 1978: 91-93).

‘Imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is very powerful in creating another nature, as it were, out of the material that actual nature gives it’ (Kant 1965: 49 cited Johnson 1987: 162). At the core of Egyptian funerary practices was the creation of a new kind of post-mortem existence. As a ‘ritual object’ the deceased became a ‘different type of being with a new kind of agency and embodiment’ (Nyord 2013: 196). The change in the materiality of the body corresponds to its ontological transformation to an ancestral spirit. This transfiguration was dependent, by the end of the Old Kingdom, on metaphysical rituals of rebirth in which the gender of the deceased was key (Cooney 2010: 224; Roth 2000: 198-199; McCarthy 2002: 194-195; Meskell 1999: 123-126). The engendered persona of the deceased is represented emphatically in the structure of the offering table scene-type from the Old to the Middle Kingdoms. This consideration of gender extends beyond the tomb owner to others involved in ritual performance within offering scene composition.

As discussed in this chapter, an understanding of gender in ancient society must involve an acknowledgement of the diverse ways in which people experience life and death without the constraints of modern westernised taxonomies. It becomes necessary to understand and define cultural domains using significantly different paradigms, although to attempt this within the emic framework of a long-dead culture is challenging. What we consider as natural to processes of life and of death emanate from our own temporal and cultural boundaries. Modern cultural norms cannot be transferred to, or layered upon ancient ideological constructs which bear little relation to our realities or to a westernised worldview. In current post-mortem and funerary domains there is no possibility for, or need to consider sexuality in the next life. It is clear however, that the Egyptians had no such framework and this is indicated schematically in the composition, meaning and ritual encapsulated within offering table iconography.

Although various studies incorporate instances where women are pictured alone before an offering table this information has not been gathered together or studied as a discrete corpus. Nor has table iconography been used as a means of understanding engendered transition to the afterlife. An appendix to this chapter collating table scenes in which women are the sole beneficiaries of offering cult, can be found at the end of this study.<sup>116</sup> This collation seeks to address the process of female transfiguration as an Osiris, first evidenced within the time frame covered in this study.

The following chapter explores the role of the offering table motif as a liminal point of contact between the living and the dead. The hypothesis of connectivity between table imagery and internalised rituals crucial to the regeneration of the deceased is presented diagrammatically in the next section of this study.

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<sup>116</sup> An appendix to this chapter can be found on page 92 of this study. A related appendix (Appendix 3) which explores the epithets most frequently borne by women in possession of their own offering table depictions can be found on page 124.

## CHAPTER 4: LIMINAL CONTEXTS

The iconographical features of offering table imagery, in conjunction with other components of tomb content and structure including false doors, coffins and stelae, encapsulated and maintained cultic processes that ensured afterlife survival. The false door and its offering table elements when placed in external, accessible areas of the tomb acted as a liminal point of contact between the living and the dead (Brovarski 1977: 108). In this section of the study, these components are explored in the context of relationships between living family members and their recent dead.<sup>117</sup> Each funerary component that incorporated an offering table depiction formed part of a complex, architectonic and ritually charged whole within the decorative programme of the Egyptian tomb. The hypothesis of an interconnectivity between these funerary components structured to autonomously maintain the deceased through a process of internalised ritual is also explored within this chapter.

Throughout Egypt's history, the tomb served two functions that were diametrically opposite: as a place of mystery and one of memory. Externally, the visible structure served as a visible sign keeping the recollection of the deceased alive in local memory. Internally, the deceased 'vanished' from the world of the living and entered the mysterious realms of the netherworld (Assmann 2001: 187). Within this construct, the Osirian aspect of protection and of 'absolute hiddenness' took on greater significance during the First Intermediate era in a dynamic phase of social and religious development (Assmann 2001: 187). The process of the internalisation of mortuary cult is common to the decorative programme of tombs throughout Egypt across this timeframe. A significant focus on sustaining the non-physical components of the body along with the corporal is indicated in offering table scene composition dated to this period. The emergence of the Coffin Texts<sup>118</sup> transferred the performance of sacerdotal elements of mortuary ritual from cultic rites performed by priests (or sons) in external areas of the tomb, to ritualised enactment within burial chambers and coffins (Assmann 1996: 89; Grallert 2007: 38-39). This imagery remained largely invisible after the point of production. Liturgical inscriptions which address an audience - human or divine - played a crucial role in mortuary cult of this period (Parkinson 2002, 82). Tombs with biographical inscriptions explicitly maintain the connections of the individual and his tomb with the outside, lived world, as well as extending the implications of a direct relationship with the gods (Frood 2004: 16). In an interesting paradox, the expected audience for the presentation of the deceased as the beneficiary of offering rituals appears to have been those already in the metaphysical realm of the gods, and therefore somewhat disconnected from the living world.

The goal of interpretation when 'reading' ancient artefacts is in understanding the historical intended meaning, as opposed to their significance today (Parkinson 2002: 37). Revisiting Heidegger's concept of 'Being-in-the-world'<sup>119</sup> it is possible to view architectural and artefactual elements as an expression of local and personal axiologies related to the lived experiences of long-dead people (Hodder 2000: 24). Another inescapable dichotomy in this context, is that the past cannot be interpreted 'except through its modern significance' for we cannot entirely lose our own perspective (Parkinson 2002: 38). Richard Parkinson (2002: 38) suggests the necessity of establishing a 'fusion of horizons' when approaching this task so that our own cultural constructs are extended (or suspended) sufficiently in order to understand 'long dissolved realities'.

It becomes necessary, in the context of exploring any part of the Egyptian mortuary programme, to consider the powerful aspect of decorum which governed what could and should be included, and

<sup>117</sup> Jan Assmann (2001: 180) estimates that on average, active mortuary cult provided for a non-royal individual probably lasted no longer than 'one or two generations'.

<sup>118</sup> The Coffin Texts were magical and liturgical 'spells' inscribed principally on to wooden coffins from the First Intermediate Period (Seidlmayer 2000: 115; Willems 1988: 48).

<sup>119</sup> The subject is explored in Chapter 3:1 of this study.

what was deliberately excluded from the funerary image genre. On this subject John Baines notes: ‘the analyst’s aim should be to elucidate a work of art, primarily in terms of its cultural setting ... the iconologist’s work does not simply convert the work of art into something that can be analysed’ (1985: 2). Neither the analyst nor the iconologist is a translator; both are interpreters (Baines 1985: 2). In approaching ancient Egyptian materials (as is the case with any ancient culture) the task of interpretation is inevitably from the perspective of a very different worldview.

Individual components within the offering table image schema may be symbolic (suggesting an idea extending from an image) or iconic, which is defined by Baines as ‘requiring visual resemblance’ (2007: 211). In this sense there is both a thick, multifaceted layer of meaning within the offering table image genre, and a more superficial gloss of suggestion, hint and nuance. In the latter instances, specific hand gestures (palms down) can be interpreted as iconic expressions of respect, or of adoration (El Khadragy 2001: 200). Other hand gestures (palms up) served as a semiotic indicator that the deceased was requesting offerings (Harrington 2013: 16).<sup>120</sup> A range of other nuanced gestures are made by attendants in table scenes (often representing adult children of the deceased) who bear offerings or perform ritual acts of libation and censuring.<sup>121</sup>

Elsewhere in the offering scene, symbolic references embedded within a superficially ‘simple’ image of a woman seated before an offering table might provide much thicker, complex indicators of her status (she is assigned her own table); of her metaphysical regeneration (during which she was – ideally - required to be depicted alone); or of ancestral reverence and piety (with her image isolated to ensure the sustenance of an individual afforded her own offering table as a mark of respect). None of these aspects are mutually exclusive, although they indicate discrete, sophisticated layers of iconic and symbolic meaning encapsulated within table imagery.

With these considerations acknowledged, the following section of this chapter explores the ways in which architectonic, iconographic and symbolic structures served as a source of liminal communication between living and deceased Egyptians and ourselves as interpreters. The composition, schema and relevance of the offering table scene investigated in preceding chapters will be investigated diagrammatically here, in the context of false doors, stelae and coffins. This chapter will conclude with a consideration of the vital role of ritual as an intrinsic element of offering table iconography.

#### 4.1 Talking to the Dead

The realms of the living and of the dead were not categorically distinguished within Egyptian ideology.<sup>122</sup> This dynamic reflects the significantly different ontological rationale regarding the world and the netherworld (Trigger 2003: 442). Timothy Taylor in his exploration of the human response to death explores commonalities and shared motifs associated with life and with the end of life in early societies (2002: 121). Just as the ‘mere physical event of birth’ was followed by ‘social birth’ involving an individual’s integration into society, so too physical death was followed by rituals of ‘social death’ where the dead were removed and separated (Taylor 2002: 121). There can be little doubt that emotions encapsulated within Egyptian laments that refer to feelings of loss and grief were common to all ancient peoples:

*‘Go away-how can you do that?  
I walk alone, see, I am behind you!*

<sup>120</sup> This is a gesture that often accompanies ‘requests to the living’ inscribed onto false doors and offering stelae placed in external areas of the tomb and along pilgrimage routes at Abydos.

<sup>121</sup> Baines (1992: 31) refers to the ‘open palm’ as a strongly charged gesture related to adjacent figures or objects. Similar open-hand gestures in temple relief ‘negotiate symbolic concerns of the boundary between the sacred and the secular, and of the tension between the abstract and the corporeal’ (Baines 1992: 31).

<sup>122</sup> This is also true of other early complex societies.

*O you who loved to chat with me,  
You are silent, you do not speak!*' (Assmann 2001:114).<sup>123</sup>

Fear of the dead in ancient (and some modern) cultures is often associated with the pre-transitional state before the sublimation of the deceased into the world of the ancestors (Taylor 2002: 122). Only through successful funerary ritual was the deceased considered as fully integrated into the 'other world' of the dead (Taylor 2002: 123). Yet in spite of the complex rituals which ensured the transition of the dead into 'another place' (the realm of Osiris), the deceased Egyptian was not removed from the 'connective life-giving structure of affiliation' but remained included within society through offering rituals which followed burial of the deceased (Assmann 2001: 180).

Offerings were part of the mortuary cult of 'ordinary people' and by the end of the Old Kingdom Period, the term *nTr*, or god was used as an epithet to describe deceased commoners as well as deities and kings (Shalomi-Hen 2006: 45-46; Trigger 2003: 425). By the end of this period, '*nTr*' appears to have signified 'any entity that received cult offerings', although the expectations regarding the 'powers' of dead commoners was likely to have been perceived as 'very limited' by comparison with those of dead kings or major deities (Trigger 2003: 425).

The most important form of connectivity between the dead and living society was through mortuary ritual. After the interment of the deceased 'sacerdotal service' was performed on their behalf at external areas of the tomb (Hays 2010: 8).<sup>124</sup> Offering table scenes which appeared on stone slabs, false doors, tomb lintels or offering stelae served as focal points for enacted offering ritual. Through the structure of a tomb and the expectation of at least a limited period of ritualised offerings, the deceased continued to exist as an affiliated member of the community (Assmann 2001: 181). At the same time, the dead were separated from the living by physical barriers like the false door.<sup>125</sup> Returning to the world 'was first and foremost' in order to receive offerings (Assmann 2001: 181). However, prayers and invocations functioned as more than homage for the deceased. The oral enactment of liturgical texts at the tomb established both the mythological identity of the deceased with Osiris, while emphasising the 'interhuman bonds of kinship' with those still living (Willems 2001: 261).<sup>126</sup>

The presentation and recitation of so-called 'letters to the dead'<sup>127</sup> also took place in the vicinity of the false door (Hays 2010: 9). The earliest examples of this form of communication were written on pottery vessels which may once have held food offerings (Szpakowska 2008: 163). Such communication formed a specific genre of ancient Egyptian composition which reveal much of the continued relationship between the living and their deceased relatives (Donadoni 1997: 276). There are frequent references within this limited corpus<sup>128</sup> to the tribunal of the dead, expressed as a hope that the deceased would intervene there in solving problems encountered by the living (O'Donoghue 1999: 87-90). The letters indicate a belief that the dead and the living remained able to interfere with, or influence one another's lives (O'Donoghue 1999: 91-96; Harrington 2013: 34-35). There is also

<sup>123</sup> The lament is from the Theban tomb of Neferhotep (TT 49: c.1320 BC) and is attributed to his widow (Assmann 2001: 114).

<sup>124</sup> Varying in structural arrangement across chronological periods and according to socio-economic status, this space could be as simple as an undecorated offering slab above the burial shaft, or as complex as a multi-roomed stone superstructure built over an extensive burial chamber.

<sup>125</sup> The false door acted as an 'interface' between the inaccessible and accessible areas of the tomb, and between this life and the afterlife (Assmann 2005: 335).

<sup>126</sup> Ideally, a son would perform this rite for his father in a dynamic patterned on the mythological narrative of Horus officiating for Osiris as his funerary priest.

<sup>127</sup> The term 'letters' is somewhat misleading as this form of correspondence is rarely found on papyrus but more often painted on to ostraca, pot sherds or linen (Szpakowska 2008: 163; Leithy 2003: 304-306).

<sup>128</sup> Few of these so-called Letters to the Dead exist: with sixteen definite examples and a remaining eight deemed 'less certain' (Harrington 2013: 34). The very nature of their immediacy and the materials used may explain this poor survival rate.

a significant body of liturgical texts which were structured as oral invocations enacted for or by the deceased, placed within liminal areas close to the tomb entrance. These have been described as the ‘most cogent evidence for a tomb-focused connection between the dead and the living’ (Baines and Lacarova 2002: 22). Other inscriptions take the form of warnings against anyone who would either enter the area in an impure state, or threatening anyone who might damage the integrity of the tomb structure (Willems 2001: 320-321).

In external depictions of the offering ritual which remained (carved or painted on to the false door, stela or within offering chapels) there appears to be an expectation - realistically or otherwise - that people would visit the necropolis as a whole, not only to attend the tombs of family members. Anyone could read and activate the formulae embedded within offering imagery inscribed at the entrance of a tomb (Baines and Lacarova 2002: 12). Whether visitors came to make offerings, or to present requests for help “[i]n a largely non-literate society, the written form of these appeals was probably exceptional: they would normally have been spoken’ (Baines and Lacarova 2002: 22). However, while offering table imagery brought together a range of ritualised components involving the living and their deceased, the core offering ritual had evolved into a self contained formulaic rite ‘involving no ritual in the tomb’ (Baines and Lacarova 2002: 12). The compositional arrangement of the deceased at a table surrounded by offering lists and symbolic depictions of other cult-objects was considered efficacious in and of itself.

In a wider focus on social theories of dying, death and the dead the work of both Robert Hertz (1907)<sup>129</sup> and Arnold van Gennep (1909) emphasise the ritualised transitional aspect of death in non-Western contexts (Hertz 1907, van Gennep 1909 cited Williams 2006: 17; Hertz 1907 cited Davies 2000: 99). In common with the Egyptian perception of death as a process of rebirth and of transfiguration, other non-Western cultures<sup>130</sup> ‘almost always’ viewed death as a ritualised transition (Williams 2006: 17). Hertz’s scholarship in particular, presented an early focus on ‘embodiment theory’ which connects bodily processes of dying, death and transition. Throughout his work there is an emphasis on the regenerative power of ritual (Davies 2000: 100). Similar work by van Gennep<sup>131</sup> explored the processes of death as a ‘rite of passage’ in which the deceased moves through stages of separation until finally incorporated within ‘a new identity’ (Williams 2006: 17).

Both Hertz and van Gennep presented hypotheses regarding the transitional nature of death and the fact that these processes are contextualised within discrete cultural terms (Davies 2000: 99; Williams 2006: 17). In an Egyptian context in a very different, although seemingly familiar paradigm, Hertz’s theory helps to elucidate the role of these cultural and structural funerary components within the specific constraints of pharaonic culture. To paraphrase one of Hertz’s main tenets: society imparts its own character of permanence to the individuals who compose it because it feels itself immortal and cannot believe that its members should be fated to die (Hertz 1960: 77). Therein lies the very premise for the purpose of offering table imagery.

In the following section of the study, an examination of these compositional strategies structured within the offering table image as it appeared on false doors, coffins and stelae is explored. Although these schematic components functioned primarily for the deceased in the afterlife, they were created by the living, and therefore present a rich vein of information regarding the axiology of table imagery

<sup>129</sup> Although Hertz published his work in 1907 it was translated from the original French in 1960. References here refer to the later edited and translated version of his original 1907 work, ‘Contribution à une étude sur la représentation collective de la mort,’ *Année sociologique*, 10:48-137, translated from French by R. and C. Needham 1960, in *Death and The Right Hand*: 27-86.

<sup>130</sup> In Hertz’s study the focus was on his native France and on Indonesian culture (Davies 2000: 98).

<sup>131</sup> van Gennep’s original 1909 work, *Les Rites de Passage* is also more widely known from a 1960s translation from French by M. Vizedom and G. Caffé, 1960, in *The rites of passage*.

within the decorative programme of the Egyptian tomb. The hypothesis presented diagrammatically in the section that follows, explores the complex array of transitional and regenerative elements incorporated into offering table imagery. It is intended that a deconstruction of this scene-type will allow a level of useful insight<sup>132</sup> (within an unavoidably restricted sphere of emic understanding) into what was important to an elite individual at the end of life.

#### 4.2 Offering Table Scene Composition: False Doors, Stelae and Coffins

The compositional structure of the false door usually includes an offering table image carved into a stela or lintel set within (or carved into) the upper part of the stone structure. The deceased appears seated or standing before a table laden with food, and surrounded by other offerings. The image of an individual may be repeated below the table, positioned on elongated stone jambs<sup>133</sup> facing in the direction of the tomb (or burial shaft) located below the door structure (Brovarski 1977: 108-110). Around these depictions, the deceased is sometimes accompanied by family members, or by unnamed individuals who perform ritualistic acts of censuring and libating and offer a range of items to the deceased.

Although no two offering table scenes were exactly the same, there is a formulaic process to table arrangement and to the inclusion of certain rituals, objects, gestures and people incorporated into scenes produced over the timeframe of this study. This will be exemplified in the following section, where significant features common to table structure are presented.

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<sup>132</sup> Howard Williams (2006: 21) terms such funerary components as ‘technologies of remembrance’ which help us to approach the actions (and values) of past people. In this context mortuary practices do not *a priori* provide direct insight into ancient culture, but help us to understand instances of ‘considerable uniformity’ innovations and other strategies which create distinctive identities (Williams 2006: 22).

<sup>133</sup> In this position, two dimensional carved or painted representations of an individual may have functioned as structural embodiments of the deceased, particularly in instances where the false door was the only superstructure above the burial shaft. In this way, the *kA* embodied within a two or three dimensional representation of the deceased could continue to access offerings should anything happen to the corpse itself (Harrington 2013: 45-49).

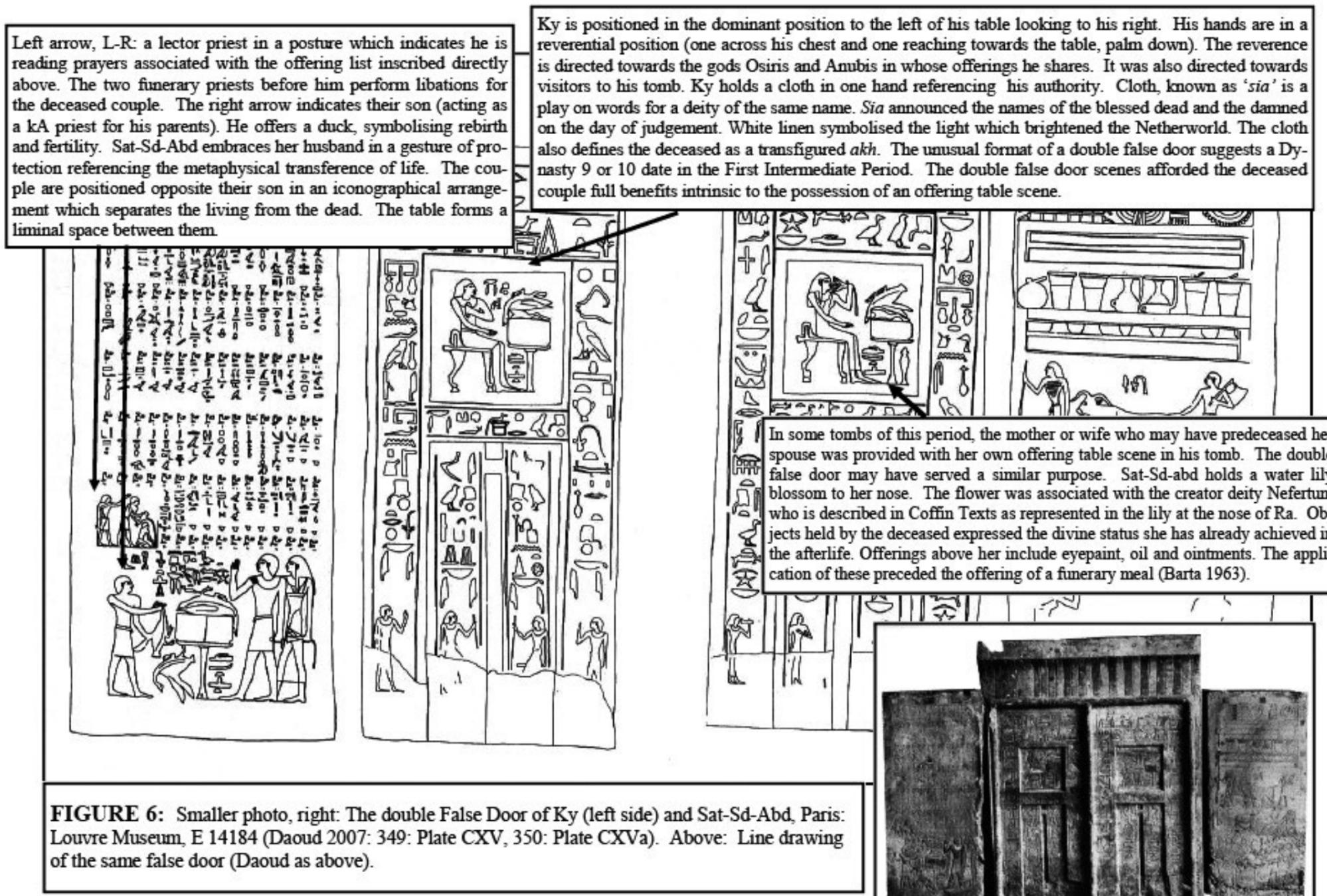


FIGURE 6: THE DOUBLE FALSE DOOR OF KY AND SAT-SD-ABD, FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD.

Figure 7: False door of Henut. The Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, San Jose, California, USA. PM VIII (59) 803023150 (Malek 2007: 59).

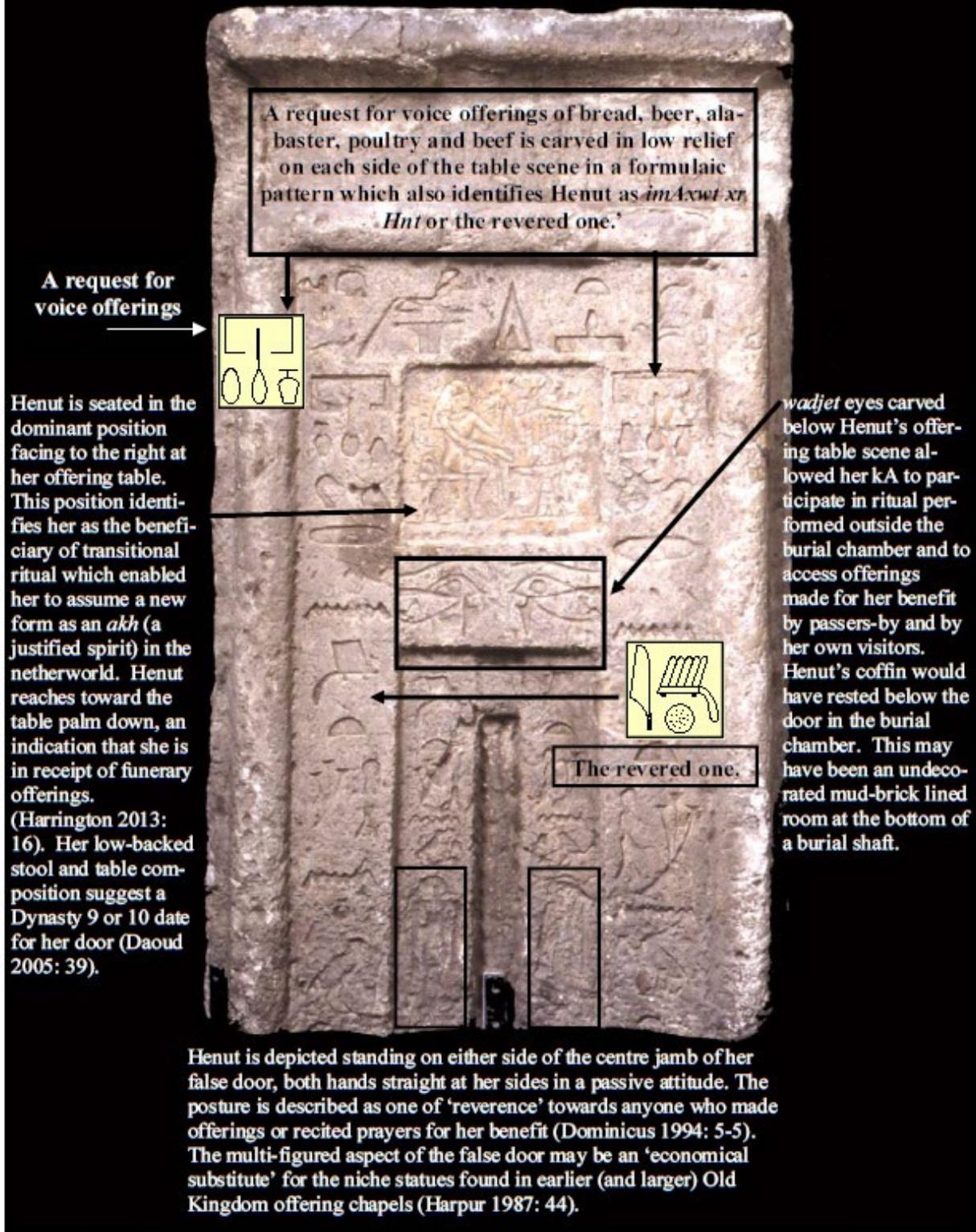


FIGURE 7: THE FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD FALSE DOOR EXEMPLIFIES THE CONCEPT OF THE DOOR AS A CONDENSED SUBSTITUTE FOR MORE ELABORATE TOMBS OF THE EARLIER OLD KINGDOM PERIOD.

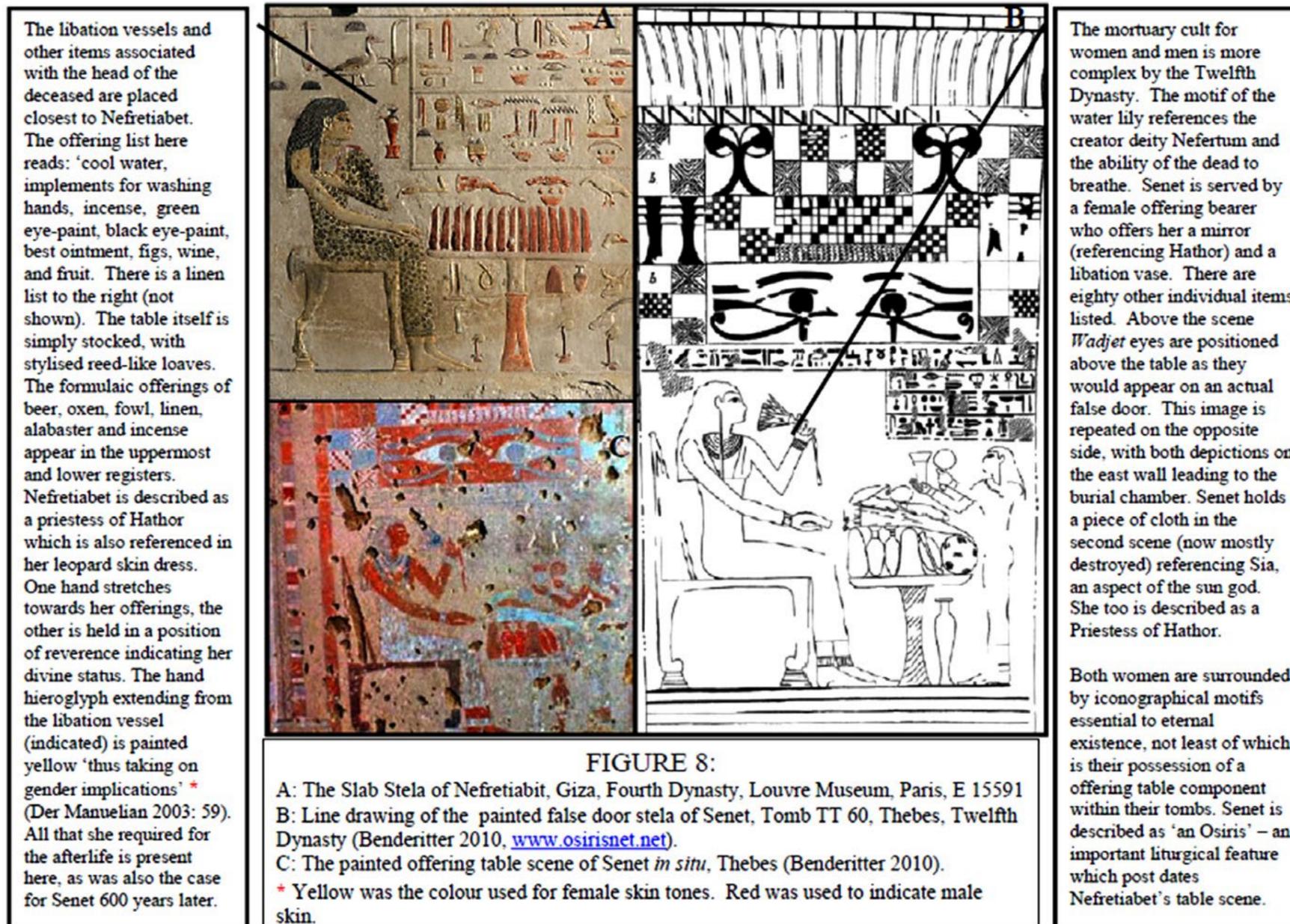


FIGURE 8: A COMPARATIVE EXPLORATION OF TABLE SCENES BELONGING TO TWO WOMEN, NEFRETABET AT GIZA (IN THE FOURTH DYNASTY) AND THAT OF SENET AT THEBES SIX HUNDRED YEARS LATER.

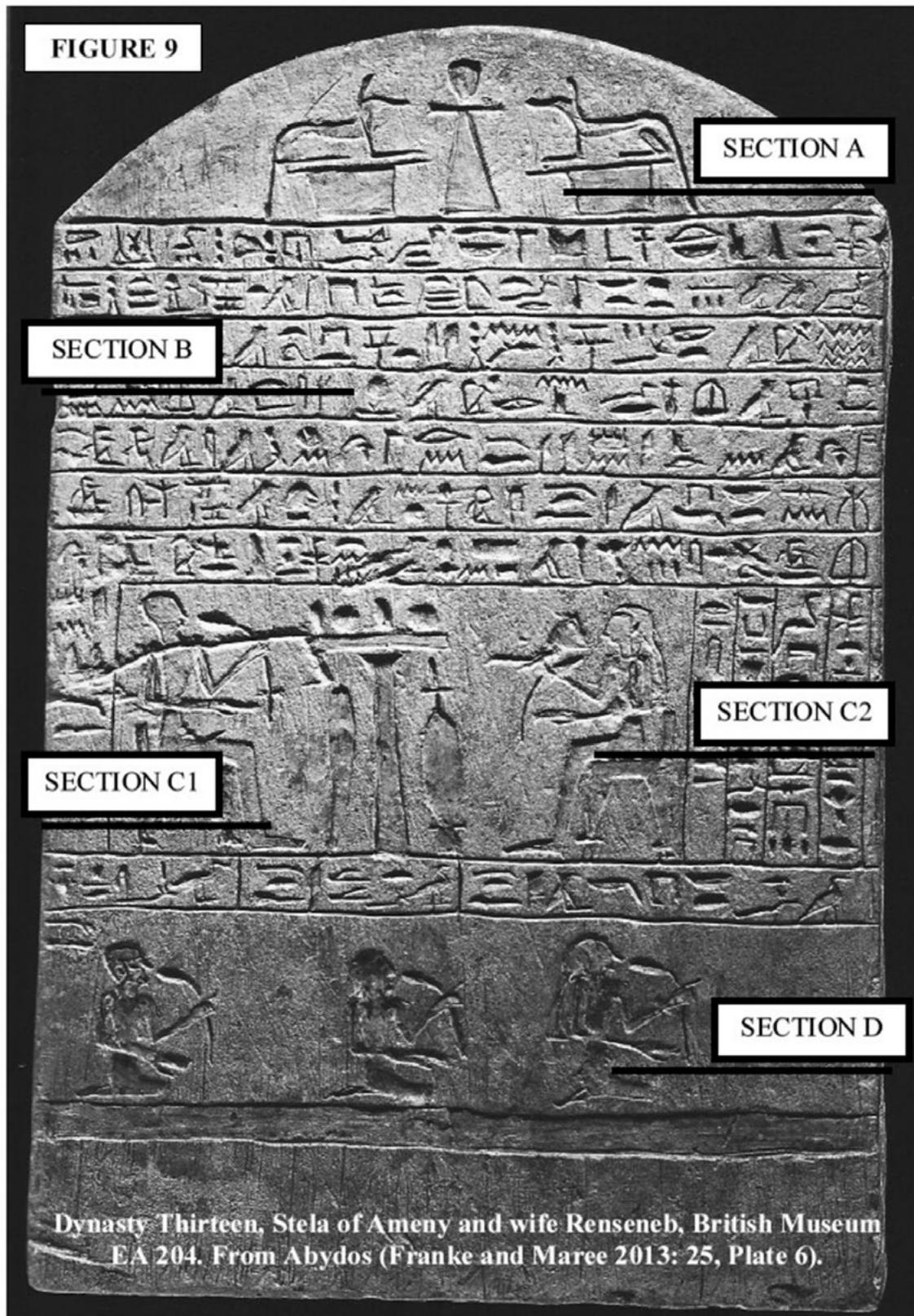


FIGURE 9: A FAMILY GROUP: THE STELA OF AMENY AND RENSENEB WITH THEIR CHILDREN, ABYDOS, DYNASTY 13. THE COMPOSITIONAL ARRANGEMENT OF THIS STELAE IS DISCUSSED IN TABLE 2 BELOW.

TABLE 2. THE STELA OF AMENY (Franke and Marée 2013, PLATE 16).<sup>134</sup>

Section A	The ankh sign in the centre, which served as a ideogrammatic hieroglyph for life, is flanked by symmetrically arranged jackals recumbent on their shrines. The jackal was the zoomorphic form of the funerary deity Anubis, the god of mummification and protector of the deceased. In his archaic syncretic form as Upwawet, this god was known as the ‘opener of the ways’ indicating a metaphysical role in guiding the deceased from the place of mummification, through the sacred landscape of the Necropolis to interment in the tomb. In liturgical texts the jackal god on the shrine protects the body of the deceased. He is described as a syncretic form of Osiris and in this role resuscitates the dead in a cyclic ritual of renewal (Goebis 2008: 118).
Section B	Texts which identify the deceased by name and which also provide titles or epithets are usually placed at the uppermost register on offering stelae. On stelae shared by spouses, only male titles and epithets appear in this dominant position. <sup>135</sup> References to ‘the breath of life’ in Ameny’s offering formula were already ancient by this period, dating back to royal Pyramid Texts of the Early Old Kingdom. The formula includes an appeal to the living, which was common to stela placed in external areas of the tomb or along processional routes at Abydos. <sup>136</sup>
Section C1	In the Old and early Middle Kingdom husbands and wives were usually seated opposite each other, with the husband invariably taking precedence. By the end of the Middle Kingdom and throughout the New Kingdom, couples are often placed alongside each other, with the wife positioned behind her husband (Robins 1994: 33-34). Beneath the table are vessels that held beer and wine and to the left a head of lettuce. <sup>137</sup>
Section C2	Renseneb also reaches towards the shared offering table, palm down in a gesture of ownership ‘rather than one of requesting’ (Harrington 2013: 16). Symbols and gestures incorporated into both depictions create an image of the couple as equipped spirits indicating their success in the judgement of the dead. Given that this stela was probably placed at Abydos along a processional pilgrimage route, this state of being ‘blessed’ or equipped confirmed their ability to act on behalf of the living. The reference to the ability to ‘come forth’ by day in Ameny’s offering formula emphasises the mobility of the <i>bA</i> enabled to move between the land of the dead and the world of the living (Franke and Marée 2013: 27).
Section D	Two women and a man seated below the couple are identified as their children. All three bear the epithet ‘vindicated’ suggesting that they too were deceased. <sup>138</sup> Like both parents, the children also hold what appear to be the closed buds of the blue water lily. <sup>139</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Other aspects of this stela are discussed in [Appendix 2](#).

<sup>135</sup> The text reads: ‘An offering that the king gives and Osiris, lord of Abydos, the great god, lord of eternity: may he give an invocation offering of bread, beer, fowl, of oil in alabaster vessels and linen, and offerings and provisions and everything good and pure what heaven gives, what earth creates . . . and the sweet breathe of the northern wind, the going forth by day, the receiving of an invocation offering at the good feast of Osiris, and supernatural ability and strength in the necropolis for the *kA* of the god’s sealer of Osiris, Ameny, vindicated . . . O living ones who are on earth who will pass by this stela, you shall say: ‘An offering that the king gives and Osiris for the *kA* of Ameny, vindicated’ (Franke and Marée 2013: 25).

<sup>136</sup> The appeal to the living is sometimes described (as it is here) as ‘only’ accessible to literate visitors who could read it. However, the iconology inherent in placing a stelae at Abydos may have meant that anyone seeing this stone would have understood that invocations, prayers or offerings were expected. Degrees of literacy in ancient culture and what it meant to be ‘literate’ remains a subject of scholarly debate (Baines 2007: 147-148; Richards 2005: 25-26; Parkinson 2002: 66-67)

<sup>137</sup> This ancient form of lettuce bore little resemblance to the plant grown today. The lettuce appears regularly amongst items placed on or close to offering tables from the Old Kingdom on. This plant was associated with the creator god Min. The leaves of this ancient variety of lettuce exuded a white milky fluid when broken, referencing procreation and rebirth (Murray 2000: 632).

<sup>138</sup> As noted earlier, the epithet ‘vindicated’ might be applied to those still living and was used to include family and retainers retrospectively, in the mortuary cult of the deceased (Harrington 2013: 15).

<sup>139</sup> The motif of blossoms held or offering to the deceased is discussed in [Appendix 2](#) of this study.

During the First Intermediate Period changes become visible in the archaeological record through the emergence of an epithet describing the deceased as ‘an Osiris’ (Assmann 1996: 165; David 2007: 44-45). This close association with the supreme god of the netherworld allowed a richer level of existence both within the tomb, where the deceased benefited from offerings received via the *ka*, and into an enriched afterlife beyond it: ‘Osiris was crucial to both’ (David 2007: 45). Two of the earliest examples of the use of this epithet (one male and one female) are attested from the Memphite necropolis at Saqqara, Figure 10. Although the deceased individuals in this example were unrelated, they lived at approximately the same time in the same region of Lower Egypt. Images of their respective false doors have been combined in this diagram. : THE EARLY OCCURRENCE OF THE EPITHET OSIRIS IN PRIVATE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (DYNASTY 9 OR 10).

Towards the end of the First Intermediate Period, in a further example of architectural, iconographical and stylistic reductionism <sup>140</sup> the coffin took on a new role as a microcosm of the tomb and of the world beyond it (Snape 2011: 136-137). Motifs or items once represented through actual grave goods or in two-dimensional imagery began to appear painted inside wooden coffins (Hoffmeier 1996: 46; Willems 1988: 242). The coffin, like the burial chamber before it, assumed the metaphysical role of a womb-like space from where rebirth into the next life was enacted (Roth 2000: 198). In this iconological continuum the coffin now represented a miniature of the cosmos ‘a true microcosm’ encapsulated within its space (Willems 1988:48). By the Middle Kingdom, the coffin had become the most important and ritually charged item of mortuary equipment (Richards 2005: 76; Willems 1988: 46). Its role in encapsulating religious and ideological changes is one reason why the coffin has been described as ‘the most informative object informing the religious background to the Egyptians’ understanding of the afterlife’ (Snape 2011: 144).

An indication of this emphatic focus on the coffin as a ritually charged space is indicated in the appearance of offering rituals and table scene components painted into the head end of coffins dated to the early First Intermediate Period, c. 2160 (Willems 1988: 48). These scenes were closely connected to Coffin Text liturgy painted close to offering table components. Mortuary rites, once spoken or enacted by a *ka*-priest (often represented by a son of the deceased) are now encapsulated into texts painted on to the coffin itself (Grallert 2007: 39, 45). <sup>141</sup> The body was placed strategically inside, so that the *ka* of the deceased had access to ‘all things good and pure on which a god lives’ (Collier and Manley 1998: 46-48). <sup>142</sup> That which had been outside the coffin is now strategically placed within it.

The head was the most important part of the body allowing the reconstituted, transformed deceased to see, hear and breath (Nyord 2009b: 159). So called *wadjet* eyes were painted on the outside of the coffin at the position where the head of the deceased rested inside looking towards the sunrise. The *wadjet* eye motif was closely associated with the sun god Ra, and with Horus, son of Osiris and Isis. Indeed, every part of the coffin was personified as a deity safeguarding individual body parts and ensuring these remained intact and able to function in the afterlife (Willems 1988: 169). Iconographical motifs painted into the head-end of the coffin included sacred oils and ointments, incense, mirrors and eye paints: all items which would ritually enhance the body’s ability to breath, to see and to appear as in life (Lapp 1996: 74; Abdel Fattah 2000: 10; Nyord 2009b: 150). Perhaps more

<sup>140</sup> Prior to this, the false door took on condensed aspects of multi-roomed superstructures from the First Intermediate Period on.

<sup>141</sup> Coffin Texts had a dual purpose as a magical repository for the ‘immortalizing force’ of rituals while supplying the deceased with knowledge required in the hereafter (Assmann 1996: 89). These inscriptions (many of which were structured as invocations to be spoken aloud) provided a means through which the deceased was enabled to ensure his own safe navigation through the netherworld. This is emphasised by maps painted on to the floorboards of some Middle Kingdom coffins (Lesko 1991: 89).

<sup>142</sup> These words are part of the formulaic texts which accompanied offering table scenes. The words also provide for any gaps in iconography: anything not provided pictorially is included through liturgical texts which request ‘all things good and pure on which a god lives’ (Collier and Manley 1998: 76-78).

importantly, the description of the deceased as *hr-tp*, (literally ‘at the head’) which accompanied these images indicated an ability to ‘control’ offerings, maintaining both supply and efficacy (Nyord 2009b: 153).<sup>143</sup>

The sequence of images, Coffin Texts and other liturgical inscriptions placed inside coffins all share one important feature: the invocation of divine protection for the deceased through imagery that is largely Osirian in nature (Willems 1988: 134; Grallert 2007: 37-38). Texts written in series of vertical bands on the outside of the coffin associate the deceased with protective deities including Nut. This goddess who personified the sky, associated the coffin-lid with this element in the Osirian construct of the ‘coffin-as-cosmos’ (Snape 2011: 146). In a continuation of this mythological dynamic, Isis protected the body from the foot-end of the coffin and her sister Nephthys performed the same role at its head. Osiris represented the body itself (Willems 1988: 134; Snape 2011: 147). Through these powerful apotropaic associations, the function of the coffin as container was expanded into a role in preserving life (Willems 1988: 47). The entire decorative programme of coffins of this period indicates a sharp focus on offerings and on offering rituals which turned the Middle Kingdom coffin into ‘a ritual machine’ (Willems 1988: 239).<sup>144</sup> Taken together, iconographical motifs and Coffin Texts resulted in a ‘compilation of tools for survival in the Hereafter’ (Willems 1988: 48).

The diagrams which follow, indicate key features of internalised offering ritual painted on to the surfaces of coffins from the First Intermediate Period to the Middle Kingdom from central administrative contexts at Thebes, and provincial contexts at Gebelin, Beni Hasan, Qubbet el Hawa, Asyut and Sedment (see map, Figure 1). Although there are some regional, stylistic and iconographical differences in coffin styles over this period, there is consistency in the transference of offering table elements from external areas of the tomb structure to the inner coffin. Practical considerations of space may have been a consideration in this process. However, the reduction of funerary iconography into a confined and highly significant space permits a degree of insight into what was important – and therefore what had to be preserved – within this reduced schema. The coffin now functioned as a repository for regenerative ritual within a spatially limited yet somatically intimate space.

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<sup>143</sup> On this point, see the Opening of the Mouth incantation (on page 83 of this study) which references the deceased’s *hr-tp* over bread and beer in one of the most important funerary rites.

<sup>144</sup> Appeals to the living, once a part of the decorative program embedded within the false door and offering stela, continue to appear in First Intermediate and Middle Kingdom coffins. These texts were painted onto mitred bands holding the lid planks together. The fact that these inscriptions were not visible supports the view of the coffin as a ritual device in the transitional process of rebirth (Lapp 1996: 76; Allen 1996: 5-9; Willems 1988: 239).

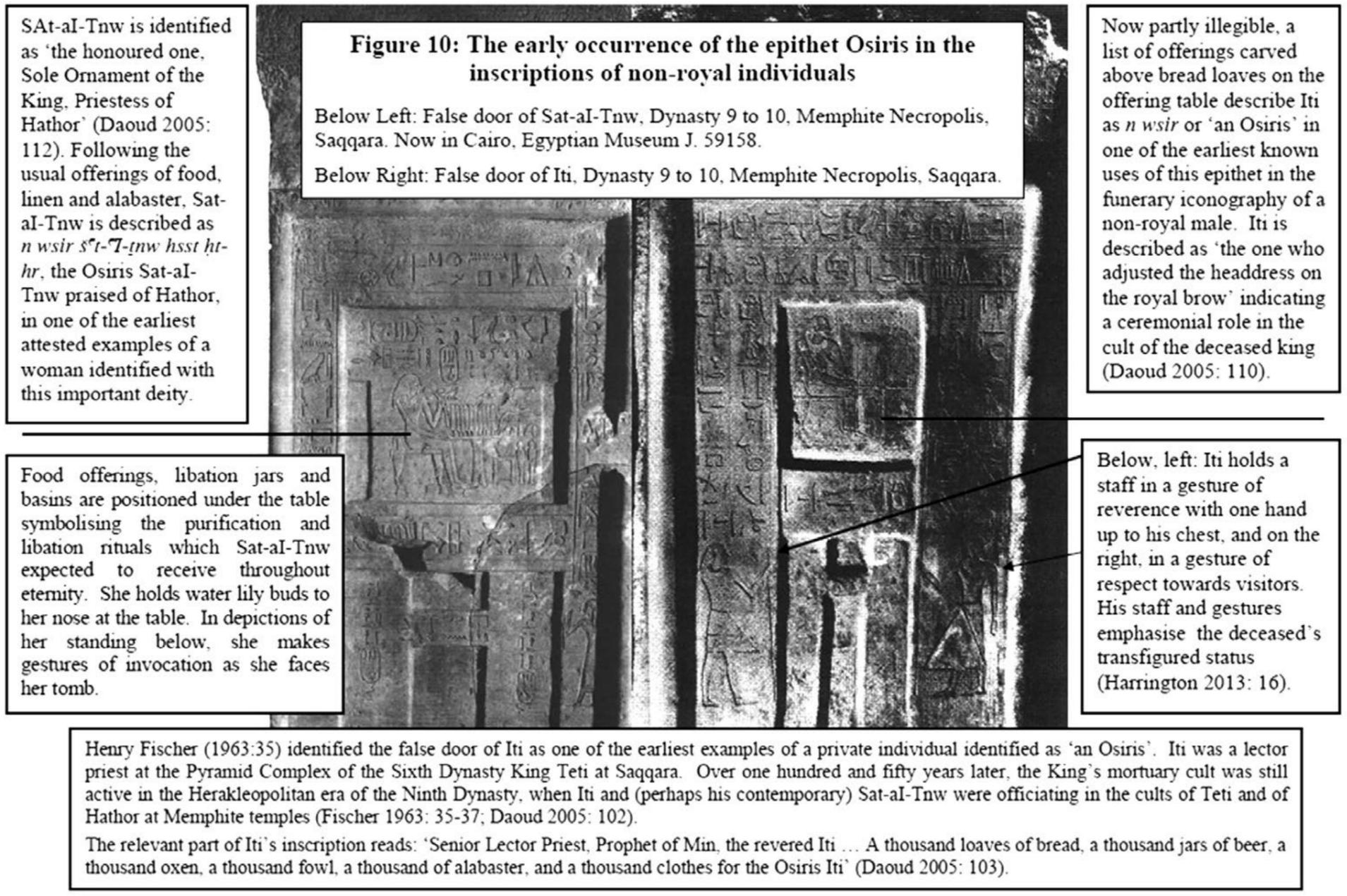


FIGURE 10. STELAE OF SAT-AI-TNW AND ITI (DAOUD 2005, PLATES XLVII, XLVIII).

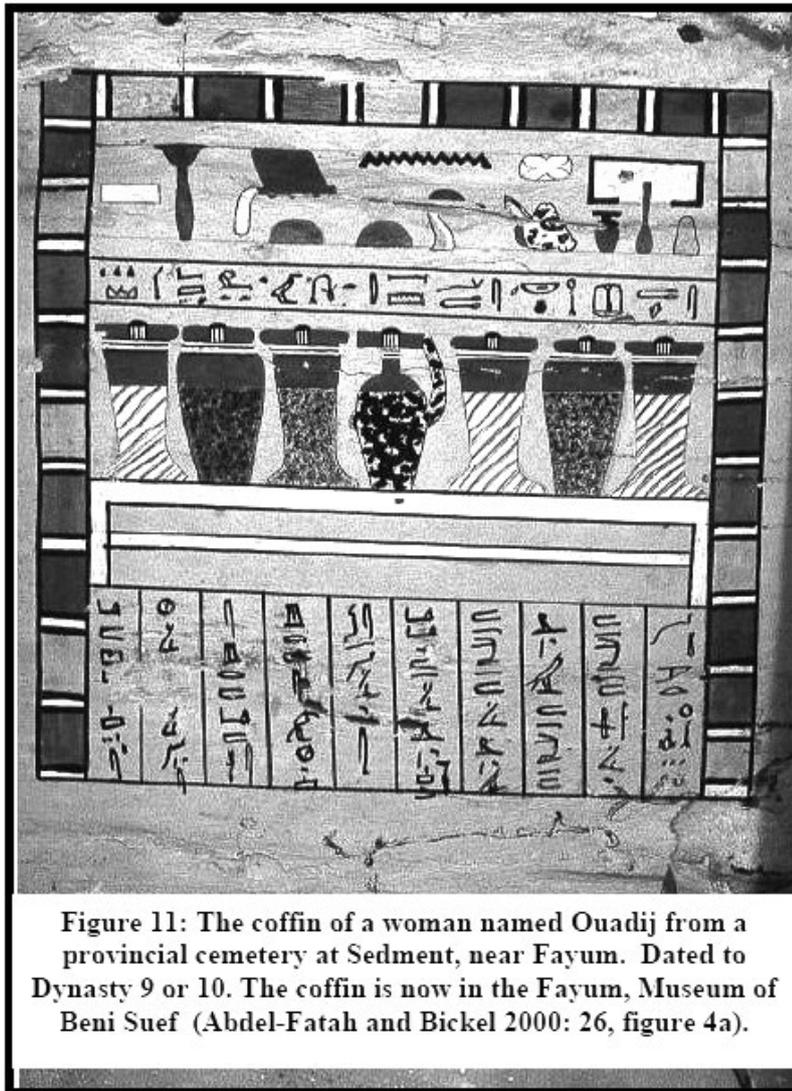


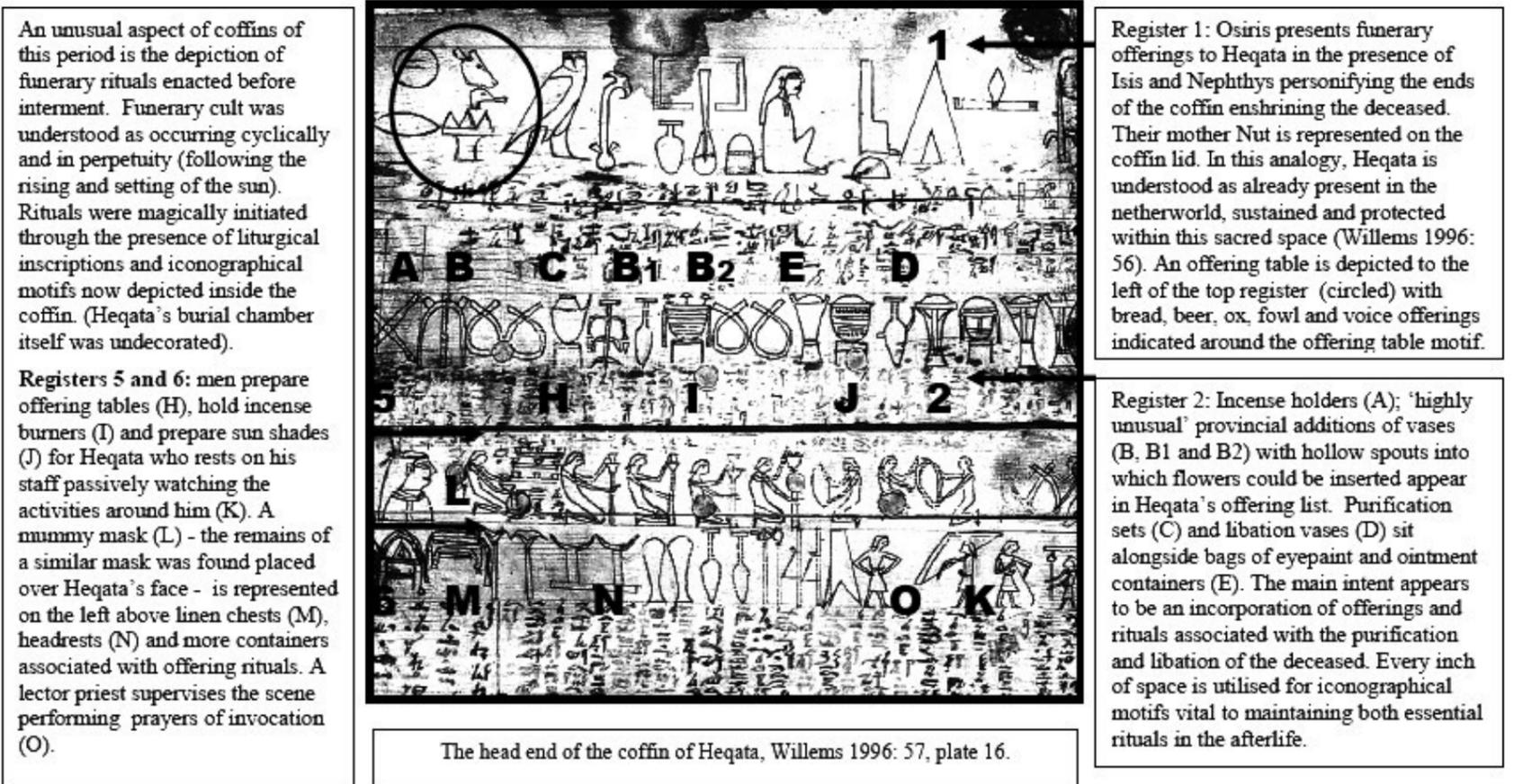
Figure 11: The coffin of a woman named Ouadj from a provincial cemetery at Sedment, near Fayum. Dated to Dynasty 9 or 10. The coffin is now in the Fayum, Museum of Beni Suef (Abdel-Fatah and Bickel 2000: 26, figure 4a).

Vessels containing 7 sacred oils or ointments, used to anoint Ouadj in her new form as a transfigured *akh* are addressed directly in texts below the jars: 'Ointment, Ointment, where are you? I will put you on the brow of this 'King' that you may make a spirit of him' (PT Utterance 77). There was no requirement to adjust the masculine grammatical form for Ouadj in the androgynous process of transfiguration enacted within her coffin (Cooney 2010: 224-236; Roth 2000: 187-201).

Above the jugs, hieroglyphic determinatives for voice and food offerings are depicted in a deconstructed arrangement of texts and commodities placed close to the head of the deceased.

The prayer of invocation (requesting voice offerings) is now part of the scene and not dependent on a human orator. The reference to 'this king' refers directly to the deceased as a transfigure divine *nTr* (god or king) in a manner which would have been unthinkable within the established decorum of the pre -Dynasty 5 Old Kingdom Period.

FIGURE 11: HEAD END OF THE COFFIN OF OUADJ, SEDMENT (ASYUT), DYNASTY 9 TO 10 (WILLEMS 1988: 47).



An unusual aspect of coffins of this period is the depiction of funerary rituals enacted before interment. Funerary cult was understood as occurring cyclically and in perpetuity (following the rising and setting of the sun). Rituals were magically initiated through the presence of liturgical inscriptions and iconographical motifs now depicted inside the coffin. (Heqata's burial chamber itself was undecorated).

Registers 5 and 6: men prepare offering tables (H), hold incense burners (I) and prepare sun shades (J) for Heqata who rests on his staff passively watching the activities around him (K). A mummy mask (L) - the remains of a similar mask was found placed over Heqata's face - is represented on the left above linen chests (M), headrests (N) and more containers associated with offering rituals. A lector priest supervises the scene performing prayers of invocation (O).

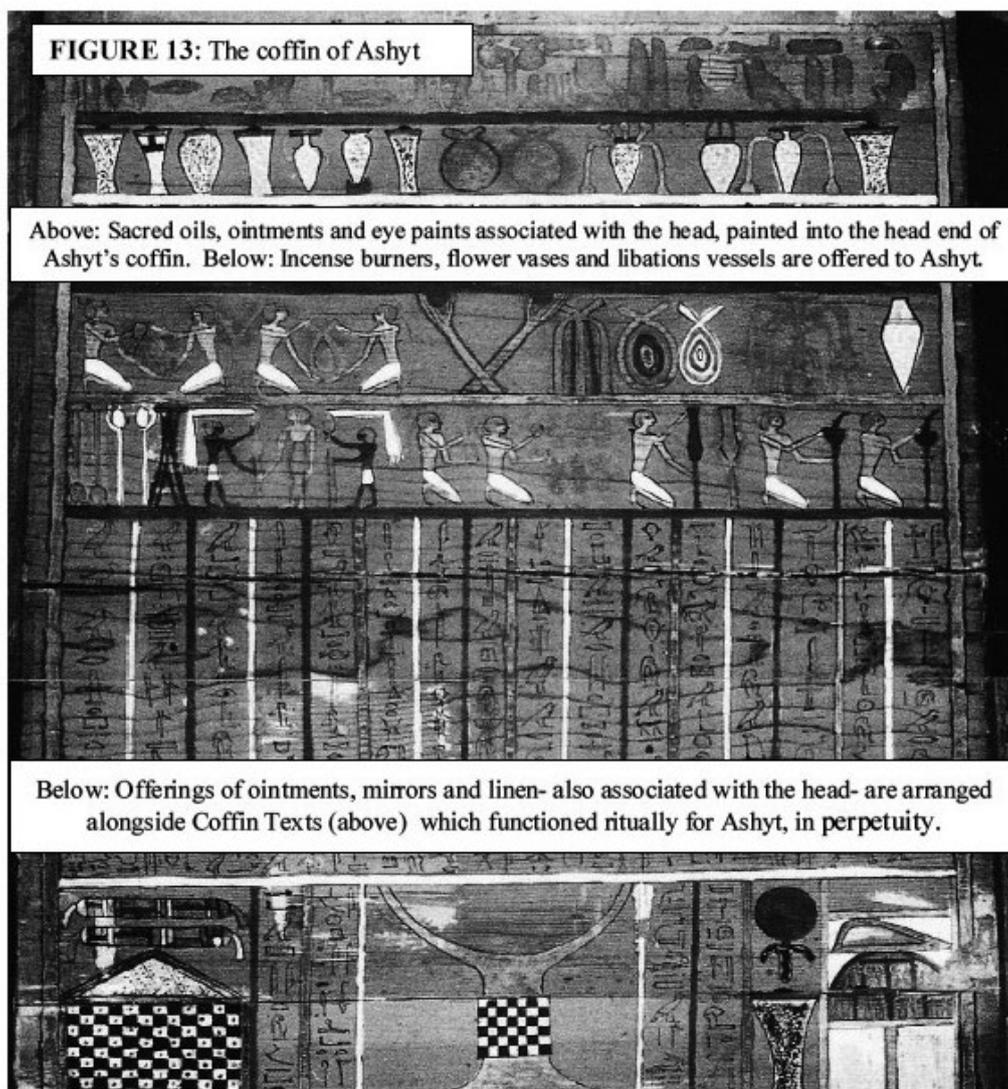
The head end of the coffin of Heqata, Willems 1996: 57, plate 16.

Register 1: Osiris presents funerary offerings to Heqata in the presence of Isis and Nephthys personifying the ends of the coffin enshrining the deceased. Their mother Nut is represented on the coffin lid. In this analogy, Heqata is understood as already present in the netherworld, sustained and protected within this sacred space (Willems 1996: 56). An offering table is depicted to the left of the top register (circled) with bread, beer, ox, fowl and voice offerings indicated around the offering table motif.

Register 2: Incense holders (A); 'highly unusual' provincial additions of vases (B, B1 and B2) with hollow spouts into which flowers could be inserted appear in Heqata's offering list. Purification sets (C) and libation vases (D) sit alongside bags of eyepaint and ointment containers (E). The main intent appears to be an incorporation of offerings and rituals associated with the purification and libation of the deceased. Every inch of space is utilised for iconographical motifs vital to maintaining both essential rituals in the afterlife.

FIGURE 12: The coffin of Heqata was found *in situ* in a cliff side burial context at Qubbet el Hawa (which was the necropolis for Elephantine near Aswan). Despite the rough craftsmanship, this coffin's provincial style encapsulates aspects of the innovative elements which exemplify changes in religious ideology throughout this period. It is likely that Heqata was related to provincial rulers at Elephantine. His heavily decorated coffin is an example of what Harco Willems categorises stylistically as a 'southern style' coffin (Willems 1996: 43-51). Its décor was adapted from royal motifs and compositional arrangements found on the sarcophagi and coffins belonging to queens of the early Eleventh Dynasty ruler Mentuhotep II at Thebes. The women are all believed to have predeceased their husband which places Heqata's coffin within a late First Intermediate or early Middle Kingdom context. The image explored here is the head-end of the coffin (Willems 1996: 57-78). All of the items and rituals depicted in this space are associated with the head of the deceased. As Harco Willems wryly notes, the coffin is executed so roughly that 'Heqata must have experienced a feeling of relief when ... his mummy was removed from its coffin. The drawings are, to put it mildly, not very aesthetic' (Willems 1996: 49). However unkempt their execution, there is little doubt that Heqata would have regarded their iconological and liturgical symbolism as essential.

FIGURE 12: OFFERING TABLE SCENE: COFFIN OF HEQATA, QUBBET EL-HAWA. LATE FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD, DYNASTY 9 AND 10 (WILLEMS 1996, PLATE 16).



**FIGURE 13: The coffin of Ashyt**

Above: Sacred oils, ointments and eye paints associated with the head, painted into the head end of Ashyt's coffin. Below: Incense burners, flower vases and libations vessels are offered to Ashyt.

Below: Offerings of ointments, mirrors and linen- also associated with the head- are arranged alongside Coffin Texts (above) which functioned ritually for Ashyt, in perpetuity.

Figure 13: This is the head end of another 'southern style' coffin which belonged to Ashyt, one of Mentuhotep's minor queens. The work here (in contrast to the work on Heqata's coffin) was executed by master craftsmen working at Thebes before unification under Mentuhotep (c. 2125 BC). Ashyt's coffin contains many of the symbolic elements also depicted on Heqata's intricate, yet somewhat dishevelled example. An important feature of 'southern style' coffins is the recording of entire scenes depicting the enactment of funerary rituals (Willems 1996). Although offering table elements are included here, their arrangement is more controlled and truncated than those painted on to the coffin of Heqata originating from a provincial context, far from Thebes. Perhaps a royal woman was more certain that the extensive programme of offering rituals required to sustain her mortuary cult would be maintained. Heqata's more emphatic inclusion of objects, people and imagery directly related to offering rituals, appears to have been part of the somewhat unique provincial burial tradition at Qubbet el Hawa and Elephantine (Vischak 2006). Without the southern style coffins, important aspects of Egyptian funerary ritual would have disappeared from the historical record (Willems 1996: 22-23). Ashyt's coffin both influenced and borrowed provincial style following the less rigid decorum affecting funerary iconography emerging from the First Intermediate Period (Willems 1996: 25).

FIGURE 13: THE COFFIN OF ASHYT, THEBES, DYNASTY 10 – 11 (WILLEMS 1996, PLATE 46). <sup>145</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Ashyt was the minor consort of a king. Her coffin exemplifies how the offering ritual (as evidenced on the coffin of Heqata, Figure 12) became canonical in the iconography of elite coffins in the central administrative capital of Thebes. 'Official' southern style coffins appear to have borrowed elements of provincial iconography already evidenced at Asyut and Qubbet el Hawa (Willems 1996: 24-25).



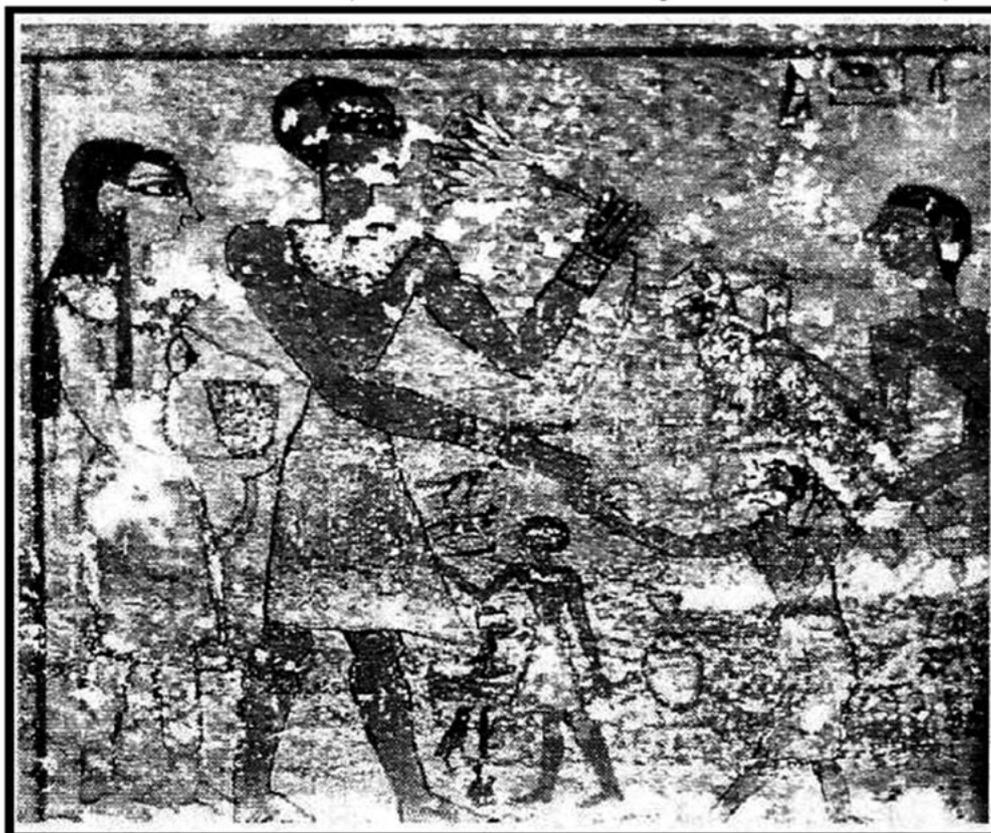
Figure 14

Painted wooden coffin of Khnumnakht, Middle Kingdom, Meir. Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York. Accession number: 15.2.2. (left, coffin; right, detail from foot end).

Khnumnakht is unattested apart from his coffin which was recovered from a provincial context at Meir, near Asyut. The front features *wadjet* eyes on a false door façade. The eyes allowed the deceased to access rituals enacted beyond the coffin. Inside, the deceased rested on his side facing the east and the sunrise. The head-end of the coffin carries an image of Isis bearing a small offering table on her head. Her table holds a dish of smoking incense and two ointment jars. These items were used in purification rituals for the deceased and are ritually associated with the head. Isis' apotropaic role in protecting the body of the deceased is emphasised in her posture. Her arms are raised in a gesture that forms the hieroglyphic determinative for 'kA' referencing the viability of Khnumnakht inside the coffin. Texts around the coffin edges refer to the dead man as 'the revered one, Khnumnakht, true of voice, justified.'

The hieroglyph for kA = 

FIGURE 14: COFFIN OF KHNUMNAKHT, MEIR, DYNASTY ELEVEN TO TWELVE.



Components of offering table scenes which included the table itself; the voice offering determinative; piles of food stuffs; ointment jars and offering bearers appear frequently inside First Intermediate and early Middle Kingdom coffins. It is rarer to find the deceased portrayed in person, as in this example from a provincial context at Gebelein (south of Thebes). Here the local nomarch, Ini receives offerings directly from his children, with his palm up in a gesture of receiving. Whether this inclusion of the deceased inside coffin imagery along with family members was a provincial stylistic element, or served some other function is unclear.

Although the table itself is missing, all the necessary components of the offering table scene-type are included, either held by the deceased or offered to him. Emphasised features of interest include; the lotus/lily flower held by Ini referencing the creator god Nefertum and the breath of life (Harrington 2013: 16). The female role in the rebirth and rejuvenation of the deceased is referenced in the unopened lily-bud held in the woman's hand and the apparent emphasis on her breast. Ini's wife has her arm around his shoulder in another iconographical hint towards her regenerative and apotropaic function within the ritually charged structure of the scene. His daughter offers libations. The elder son offers a duck; this is a frequent motif indicating the elder son's Horus-like sacerdotal function as *ka* priest for his father, the 'Osiris' (Snape 2011: 41).

FIGURE 15: OFFERING SCENE INSIDE THE COFFIN OF INI, GEBELEIN, DYNASTY 11 OR 12 (GRAJETZKI 2006, PLATE X).

The nuanced enactment of ritual incorporated into offering table scenes is explored further in the final section of this chapter, in the context of the transition of the deceased into the afterlife.

### 4.3 Deconstructing Ritual: Libation, Purification and Censing

In almost all societies imagery of feasting in religious contexts has been a significant motif related to funerary ritual (Feldman 2014: 63). The ritual meal at an offering table in Egyptian iconography was one cultural response to death that is universal in scope. Other ancient cultures also employed the motif of a funerary banquet as a means through which the living continued a relationship with their deceased. Often however, the underlying ideology underpinning these cultural constructs varied greatly. Depictions of the afterlife ranged from the relatively independent and blessed eternity of the deceased within Pharaonic culture, to death as a dark realm of sorrow and deprivation as constructed within the Mesopotamian mortuary tradition (Herrmann 2014: 20).

Mesopotamian funerary iconology also features imagery of the deceased before a table bearing a funerary meal. The cultic ideology within this schema differed significantly from that of the Egyptian construct. While the food portrayed in a Mesopotamian-Sumerian context might - as in an Egyptian context - function in sustaining the deceased, their autonomous afterlife experiences were significantly less rewarding (Cooper 1989 24-25). 'The departed continued to live but the afterlife was a dim and dull version of real life' (Van Der Toorn 2014: 30). Without intervention from the living, the deceased remained unclean, poorly fed and unlikely to survive the trials of the afterlife: 'by most accounts the netherworld was a grim refuge' (Cooper 1989: 25). Mesopotamian texts refer to the childless or uncared for deceased as living on clay and muddy water (Van Der Toorn 2014: 30). Moral behaviour in life was no guarantee of a blessed afterlife in this culture, where the responsibility for the wellbeing of the deceased fell entirely into the hands of the living, Figure 16, Mesopotamian offering table depictions (Bonatz 2014:40-41; Cooper 1989: 24-25).

The work of Metcalf and Huntingdon (1991) provides a useful exploration of commonalities within the mortuary programmes of a diverse range of modern and ancient cultures. Their work illustrates a commonly held disconnect between grieving and emotional processes associated with loss, and the actual production and performance of funerary ritual (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991: 4-5). 'Ritual sometimes aids the process [of transition] but it could as easily be no help at all, or even an extra burden to bear' (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991: 5). Their analysis of cross-cultural aspects of funerary culture illustrates the paradox that 'death, the one true universal, is not everywhere regarded in essentially the same light' (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991: 6).

One of the primary functions in the use of ritual in the Egyptian mortuary programme was, as in Mesopotamian tradition, in support of the deceased. This does not appear to have been a response prompted by suspicions or fear, but a reasoned and measured association of 'cause and result' (Teeter 2011: 160). With the internalisation of funerary ritual (now represented iconographically inside inaccessible regions of the tomb) an understanding of ritual practice, performance and invocation, which had always been important, now became an essential skill in the afterlife repertoire of the Egyptian deceased.<sup>146</sup> Liturgical texts and iconographical arrangements became instrumental in providing the dead with ritual knowledge necessary to the avoidance of a 'second death' in the netherworld (Willems 1988: 46). This requirement was twofold: ritual knowledge was necessary in order to gain entry to the netherworld and an essential element in remaining there (Teeter 2011: 159-162; Willems 1988: 46). Ritualised motifs in a funerary context functioned as textual and pictorial expressions of social and ideological spheres and concepts (Franke and Marée 2013: 6).

<sup>146</sup> It is unclear if the deceased was assumed to have gained such ritual knowledge during life or if this was transmitted solely via iconography and liturgy that encapsulated funerary rites. Tomb inscriptions (and Coffin Texts) are filled with references to the dead having knowledge of a wide host of spells and incantations related to passage into and survival within the netherworld (Willems 1996: 10-13).



**Figure 16: Syro-Anatolian offering table scenes: left to right: Stela of Katumuwa, c. 735 BC from Zincirli, ancient Sam'al, Turkey, Gaziantep Museum, Zincirli (Herrmann 2014, figure C1); Stela of a woman, c.800, Zincirli, Berlin, inv. VA 2995 (Herrmann 2014, figure 3.1); Stela of a priest from Neirab Turkey, c. 750 BC, Paris, Louvre, inv. AO 3037 (Herrmann 2014, figure 3.2); Syro-Hittite mortuary stela of a husband and wife, c. 750, Marash, Marash Museum, inv. 1040 (Herrmann 2014, figure 3.4).**

Interesting parallels to Egyptian offering stelae exist in funerary artefacts dated from the Seventh to the Ninth Century BC from regions of Mesopotamia (Eastern Turkey/Northern Syria). These examples (although later than the Egyptian scenes featured in this study) attest to a joint cultural practice in which the motif of a funerary banquet was adopted (and adapted) in a widespread area of diffusion (Bonatz 2014: 39). Contemporaneous literary sources indicate that the sustenance of the deceased was heavily dependent on the intercession of living relatives whose offerings actively sustained dead ancestors in Mesopotamian funerary tradition. Until 2008 and the discovery of the stela of Katumuwa (with its detailed Aramaic inscription) the exacting post-mortem requirements of the Mesopotamian deceased were not fully understood (Herrmann 2014: 17). Mesopotamian iconographical structure seems to follow a prescribed decorum: all of the deceased hold cups in their right hands except for the woman, in the last example, who holds a mirror. Other motifs are culturally specific. Katumuwa holds a conifer cone. Hittite women on stelae dated to a similar period often grasp distaff and spindle representing rotation as a symbol of 'regular regeneration' (Bonatz 2014: 43). Narrative mythology associated with the dead in these later, Near Eastern contexts is that 'living' conditions in the afterlife were almost entirely dependent on external support (Der Toorn 2014: 82). Offering rituals were often carried out in a domestic context (in homes or small chapels), which was also the case in New Kingdom Egypt. Evidence for ancestor worship is demonstrated in the workers' village at Deir el Medina (which housed craftsmen working in the Valley of the Kings) in New Kingdom Thebes (Harrington 2013: 59; Müller 2014: 89). In all of the examples depicted here, there is an implication of support from the living. In Egyptian funerary cult, during the period covered in this study however, an emphatic focus on self-reliance and 'inbuilt' ritualised motifs equipped the dead to take matters into their own hands (Frandsen 2001: 169; Snape 2011: 88). The Mesopotamian corpus throws new light on the degree of innovation directed towards self-reliance (and self-memorialisation) embedded into Egyptian iconography, one thousand years before the Anatolian Katumuwa, commissioned his stela (Herrmann 2014; Seidlmayer 2000:115).

Artefacts and their iconographical forms defined, encapsulated and perpetuated concepts of the cosmos, of the afterlife and of what was expected of the deceased in the netherworld. ‘Vague and inconsistent’ references as to how the afterlife was structured indicate that the Egyptians themselves were ‘completely conscious’ of the challenges in meeting these post-mortem requirements (Warburton 2009: 86). As noted, an immediate requirement in enabling the deceased to continue as an effective entity involved the condensing of once performed ritual acts into symbolic motifs carved or painted into inaccessible areas of the tomb (and ultimately, within the coffin). In this context, ritual practices were produced ‘with an intent to order, rectify or transform a particular situation’ (Willems 1996: 9).

The process of internalising aspects of once performed ritual into an intrinsic element of tomb iconography would have involved a level of conscious presentation and inclusion (Inomata and Coben 2006: 22-23). Only the most important elements would have been selected (Van Walsem 2005: 101). Whilst external offering rituals were still practiced outside the tomb (sometimes in domestic contexts) <sup>147</sup> ritualistic elements placed inside burial chambers and coffins were intended for a divine audience (Grallert 2007: 38). <sup>148</sup> Iconographical structures placed into inaccessible regions of the tomb were a material reaction to the uncontrollable phenomenon of death manifested ‘in the form of cult in the widest sense of the word’ (Van Walsem 2005: 101). <sup>149</sup>

Ritual lists assumed an instructional format which suggests that the Egyptians themselves were conscious that performance and presentation were as important as the offerings themselves (Barta 1963: 2-3). Acts of libation, purification and censuring were not mutually exclusive events; all were associated with the preservation of the rejuvenated deceased. Some of these ritual performances, condensed into representational motifs, preceded the offering of food and drink (Barta 1963: 50-51; Blackman 1916: 31-34). In death as in life, purification rituals involving hand, foot and mouth washing initiated the funerary meal (Blackman 1918: 476). <sup>150</sup>

Winifred Barta <sup>151</sup> produced one of the most thorough studies of the complex components within offering inventories (Barta 1963). In the earliest and most consistent of these lists (defined by Barta as ‘Type A’) a wide range of offerings and the rituals involved in their presentation are inscribed alongside each other (Barta 1963: 47). <sup>152</sup> Following the end of the Old Kingdom, the ritual list merged with offering inventories to form what Barta referred to as the ‘*Speisungrituals*’ or feeding rituals. This revised offering format, attested from the end of the Fifth Dynasty, was contemporaneous with the emergence of Osirian religion. As offering inventories became more complex the accompanying ritual list becomes noticeably abbreviated. In one example, lengthy instructions regarding the ritual of anointing the deceased were abbreviated to an inscription simply indicating which oil was to be used (Barta 1963: 55). This process of amalgamation which integrated ritual instructions into offering inventories resulted in individual offering lists that contained more than ninety items (Barta 1963: 75).

<sup>147</sup> Ancestor worship in domestic contexts in Egypt is poorly attested until the New Kingdom c. 1550 – 1069 BC (Harrington 2013: 83). However, there is little doubt that private ancestor worship would have played some part in Egyptian life at all levels of society throughout the dynasty era (Robins 1993: 163).

<sup>148</sup> Short texts or spells inside First Intermediate and Middle Kingdom coffins prepare the deceased for a new life ‘in the role of a king or of Osiris’ (Grallert 2007: 38). These inscriptions appear ritualistic in nature, hidden from view painted on to the mitre joints of coffin planks rendering them invisible once the coffin was assembled (Grallert 2007: 38).

<sup>149</sup> The word in Latin indicates a connection with cultivation, care, reverence and adoration (Van Walsem 2005: 101).

<sup>150</sup> Similar ablutions continue to be practiced in Egypt and elsewhere in the Islamic tradition before and after praying or eating.

<sup>151</sup> In parallel (in the same year, 1963) Peter Kaplony published his work on Early Dynastic offering lists. Kaplony’s chief interest was in offering scenes as a source for understanding the Early Dynastic economy (Köhler 2009: 51). Barta’s interest was on the religious and ritual significance of these scenes (Köhler 2009: 51).

<sup>152</sup> In total, Barta defined five list types from Type A to Type E consisting of various combinations of rituals and associated offerings (Barta 1963: 178-183).

Some of the commodities utilised within these rituals, including incense and natron<sup>153</sup> originated as royal offerings before emerging in the table scenes of private individuals (Barta 1963: 65). It was not until the latter stages of the Old Kingdom however, that the important, and once exclusively royal ritual of the Opening of The Mouth is evidenced in the tombs of non royal deceased (Barta 1963: 78, 82).<sup>154</sup> While the main purpose of this ritual was to permit the deceased to verbally defend himself at the judgement of the dead, cult objects (some of which were associated with birth rituals) were used to magically ‘open’ or activate all elements required by the deceased within the tomb (Roth 1993: 57-59; Hays 2010: 8). By the Middle Kingdom, the ‘Opening of the Mouth’ rite had developed into a ‘consecration ritual carried out on all possible sacred objects’ including imagery, texts, statues<sup>155</sup> and the coffin ‘in order to dedicate them to their sacred purpose’ (Assmann, 2001: 312; Hays, 2010:8).

During the performance of this rite, the mouth, ears and eyes of the deceased were all ritually ‘opened’, although as noted, the act of ‘opening’ (or enabling) extended to everything represented or placed within the tomb (Baines, 2007: 151; Assmann, 2001: 310-313). Words which accompanied the Opening of the Mouth ritual encapsulate, in a condensed form, an exact indication of the purpose of all cultic performances enacted for the deceased:

*‘I have given breath to those who are in hiding [a euphemism for the deceased inside the coffin]. I have enabled those who are in the netherworld and their offerings to endure ... his mouth is opened. He hears the call. He protects the body of one who pours water for him. He has power over bread!<sup>156</sup> He has power over beer! He emerges as a living bA ... wherever his kA wishes to tarry’* (Assmann 2005: 327).

Through this important ritual the cycle of life, death and rebirth was completed: ‘the deceased was now fully mobile and responsive in the underworld’ (Teeter 2011: 143).

Libation rituals are implied through the inclusion of basins and ewers placed close to offering tables. Their function extended significantly beyond simply quenching the thirst of the deceased. The free movement of the *bA* was dependent upon the receipt of various fluids including the efflux of the deceased (Nyord 2009b: 322). There is evidence in ritual instructions and liturgical texts associated with water that the intention was to replace these fluids, lost during processes of mummification.<sup>157</sup> Lost elements of bodily fluid were referred to as the ‘efflux of Osiris’, a term also used to describe the inundation of the Nile. The reconstitution of these vital elements was crucial to the fertility of the deceased (Nyord 2009b: 321-322). As offering rituals became more complex, loss of ‘substances of the self’ represented the greatest moment of instability in the human body (Dann 2013: 155). The need to replace ‘that which was lost’ was the underlying purpose of libation rites (Nyord 2009b: 322-332).

Underpinning this complex dynamic is a mythic, all-encompassing identification with Osiris. In this construct, water was the most important of the funerary offerings: ‘[i]n water lay the power of return’

<sup>153</sup> Natron is a mineral salt consisting of hydrated sodium carbonate. Found in dried lake beds throughout Egypt, it was used as a detergent, as a mild bleach and as a substance used in purification rituals in temples and tombs (Vogelsang-Eastwood 2000: 284, 295; Manniche 2006: 44).

<sup>154</sup> In Sumerian ritual, the purifying of images of gods in temple contexts also involved a similar rite of opening the mouth (Blackman 1924: 47-59). In this tradition however, the phrase ‘washing’ or ‘opening’ of the mouth became a general term for consecrating any sacred object (Blackman 1924: 59).

<sup>155</sup> Terms used to describe two and three dimensional representations of the dead indicate their role as manifestations and ‘life-extenders’ of the body of the deceased (Kjølby 2009: 37). The term for sculptor was *sankh*, or ‘one who makes life’ (Kjølby 2009: 37).

<sup>156</sup> This reference to having power over one’s offerings (*hr-tp*) was an important formulaic expression of the deceased’s ability to autonomously maintain offerings throughout eternity (Nyord 2009:153).

<sup>157</sup> Human efflux was a powerful substance within the iconology of other modern and ancient cultures Diane Lyons (1998) examines this process in her work *Witchcraft, gender, power and intimate relations in Mura compounds in DZla northern Cameroon*, *World Archaeology* 95(3): 344 - 362. In an Egyptian context, bodily fluids were regarded as physically detached fragments of personhood (Meskell 1999: 48).

(Assmann 2005: 359). In Coffin Text 833 an invocational spell demands: ‘Water for Horus, Water for Horus! Give him the water of his father Osiris! You have your cold water, the efflux which issued from the god, the putrescence which issued from Osiris (Faulkner 1973: 3:22).<sup>158</sup> There is an element of axiological ambiguity here as elsewhere bodily secretions are described as ritually contaminating. In another example of an Egyptian paradox, bodily secretions were to be avoided in the netherworld, yet apparently essential to gaining entry there (Nyord 2009b: 323; Frandsen 2001: 141-145).<sup>159</sup>

It is apparent in rituals related to the presentation of foodstuffs that providing the deceased with nutritional sustenance constituted only one level of meaning in metaphors associated with food (Goebis 2008: 294). Ingesting or swallowing, and thereby acquiring supernatural powers, is a common motif in Egyptian religio-magical practice (Goebis 2008: 295). Complex conceptual blends related to the deceased’s ability to communicate and to the acquisition of powers necessary to enact ritual independently, are all embodied within metaphors related to eating, swallowing or licking (Goebis 2008: 296-297; Nyord 2009b: 323). The ingestion of food was part of a process of empowering the deceased (Nyord 2009b: 524).

Censing and anointing rituals constitute another form of cultic activity frequently represented in offering table scenes either statically, through the representation of objects and commodities (including incense, oils and bags of eye paint), or as enacted ritual. The scent of incense is a prevailing metaphor indicating the presence of the divine in temple ritual (Hornung 1971: 64, 133-134; Roberts 1995: 122). The Egyptian word for incense, *snTr* translates as ‘to make divine’. In temple ritual, statues of deities (and of deceased kings) were censed with myrrh, anointed with sacred oils and purified with water before food and other commodities were offered (Meskell 2004: 94). In similar rituals, the non-royal deceased is censed by offering bearers in table scenes while incense, oils, ointments and perfumes are key components of offering lists (Harrington 117-118). The pouring of libations was closely associated with censing rituals: ‘both rites were performed for the same purpose – to revivify the body of a god or a man by restoring to it its lost moisture’ (Blackman 1912: 75).

The act of burning was understood as a means of transferring the essential essence of an object from the world of the living to that of the dead (Harrington 2013: 37). Closely associated with censing, the roasting of meat<sup>160</sup> before the deceased formed a ‘point of mediation’ between mortals and ‘invisible’ gods (Wengrow 2013: 292). Following these repeated acts of censing, libating and purifying, food and drink was offered to the deceased (Barta 1963: 47). The command to ‘Raise yourself!’ appears multiple times in offering rituals with a clear connection between the supply of food, the anointing with oils, the pouring of libations and censing rituals; all directed at the revivification and maintenance of the deceased (Assmann 2005: 332-335). Throughout this process liturgical inscriptions in the form of recitations guide the deceased on the metaphysical journey from the tomb to the netherworld. Just as significantly, the Coffin Texts serve to ‘divinise’ the deceased in preparation for the transition into the world of the gods (Nyord 2009b: 510-511; Willems 1996: 364-365).<sup>161</sup> Overall, the function of

<sup>158</sup> The pouring of water is the first act in the offering ritual identified by Barta (1963: 47-48) from a Sixth Dynasty context in the tomb of the nobleman *dbH.nj* at Saqqara. Here the ritual of *Zat*, the pouring of water for the deceased, is followed by the burning of incense and the application of ointment and eye-paint, before fine linen garments and food were offered to the deceased. These rites were borrowed in their entirety from earlier, divine temple contexts involving kings and deities.

<sup>159</sup> On the subject of efflux as a form of ‘corporal pollution’ see Frandsen, 2001: 141-174.

<sup>160</sup> This is an iconographical image originally found in royal mortuary temple contexts where the king is depicted roasting a spitted goose in offering rituals before important deities (Wengrow 2013: 292). The roasting of meat was a common feature of religious ritual amongst other early cultures ‘from the Indus to the Mediterranean’ (Wengrow 2013: 293). The ‘consecrated’ residue was later shared out between selected individuals in a communal meal (Wengrow 2013: 293).

<sup>161</sup> References to the ‘divinisation’ of the deceased are often unequivocal and emphatic. Coffin Text 644 painted inside Heqata’s coffin (figure 12) reads ‘Oh Nut, spread yourself over me that you may enfold me with the life which is with you ... I am the Limp Great One! Open for me for I am Osiris! I am Anubis at the place of embalming. I have come with my *akh* power ... that I may conduct the food offerings. (For) I am a possessor of speech’ (Willems 1996: 485).

the offering table schema in incorporating metaphysical requirements with ritual instructions and liturgical invocations represented the deceased's ability to survive in the afterlife.

The appendix to this chapter explores ritualised elements depicted within offering table imagery.<sup>162</sup> An exploration of these rites, including those once the prerogative of kings, permits a degree of insight into the intentions of the living in addressing the requirements of their deceased. Examples included in this appendix highlight the importance of offering table imagery in the transfigurational progress into the netherworld, [Appendix 2](#).

In the final chapter of this study which follows, the multidimensional function of offering table imagery is reviewed in the context of its role in the regeneration of the deceased. Conclusions indicate that the growing complexity of offering scene composition and functionality was directly related to the multifaceted belief system emergent over the timeframe of this study.

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<sup>162</sup> This exploration is qualified by an acknowledgement of the ambiguity and uncertainty of the effects of ancient ritual when viewed from a modern analytical perspective (Inomata and Coben 2006:24). The 'ultimate locus of meaning ... resided in hypothetical, now largely inaccessible features of lived practice' (Baines 2007: 25). A related appendix ([Appendix 4](#)) explores the frequency of rituals occurring within the offering scene depictions explored throughout this study.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION: GATHERING THE STRANDS

This study has explored offering table imagery in a range of settings from the latter part of the Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom Period during a phase in which religious developments enabled greater access to an afterlife for non-royal individuals. Socio-religious changes and their impact on the Egyptian mortuary programme have been considered in the context of offering table scene development from its earliest appearance on cylinder seals, to a later role in the intimate and highly charged confines of Middle Kingdom coffins. Previous studies have tended to focus on the offering table scene-type as a chronological marker, with little analysis afforded to the overall purpose of the table motif as a ritual device facilitating the transition of the deceased. This study has attempted to redress this through an exploration of significant components integrated within scene composition, contextualising these within the range of settings in which this image occurs.

Aspects of gender and of ritual incorporated into scene composition have also been explored throughout these chapters. More complex expectations of the afterlife resulted in an integration of engendered offerings and rituals related to the requirements of deceased men and women. Ritualised motifs embedded within offering imagery have been explored within the changing decorum which permitted access to once exclusively royal or divine emblems, iconography and rites.

An expansionist theological rationale regarding afterlife expectations during the Old Kingdom, First Intermediate and Middle Kingdom Periods has been examined through the table iconography of private tombs. The condensing of once performed ritual into imagery encapsulated within an abbreviated - yet powerful charged - range of funerary components has also been considered. Greater focus on internalised cult was intended as a means of sustaining processes of rejuvenation for the deceased with minimal intervention from the living. This development occurred in direct response to social and ideological uncertainties initiated in the latter stages of the Old Kingdom. The incorporation of complex, ritually charged elements into offering table imagery appears to have been a direct response to these same social insecurities, which are particularly visible in the mortuary culture of this period. The requirement for the embedding of ritualised performance into inaccessible regions of the tomb resulted in a growing requirement for the depiction of ‘others’ within table imagery, thereby ensuring its cultic efficacy.

The metaphorical relationship between death and other social systems, including procreation and birth, have been considered in the context of engendered constructs within table iconography. In order to effect transition to an Osirian afterlife, the requirement (or desire) of well-to-do elite women to possess their own tombs, or at least their own offering table scenes, has also been explored. In this dynamic, it is apparent that metaphysical transitions of rebirth and of regeneration were dependent upon and relevant to the gender of the deceased. That most women continued to serve as adjuncts and facilitators to their husbands’ transition to the afterlife is an avenue that requires further exploration.

By the Middle Kingdom, mnemonic devices of false doors and offering stelae bearing offering table depictions ensured a means for the living to remain connected to the deceased. Idealised self-presentations of deceased individuals transfigured into god-like entities within a ritually maintained version of the living world, provided eternities to which everyone aspired. Although artefacts and iconography discussed throughout this study emanate predominantly from elite contexts, the much vaunted requirement<sup>163</sup> for elite social status as a pre-requisite for access to the netherworld has not been evidenced in this study. Rather, it appears to have been the case that anyone with basic funerary

<sup>163</sup> See [Baines 2007](#): 9, 13-14, [Smith 2009](#) and [Hays 2010](#) regarding elite ‘ownership’ of funerary culture. [Richards \(2005: 178-180\)](#); [David 2007](#):42 and [Wegner \(2010: 119-125\)](#) provide useful contra perspectives.

elements inscribed, carved or painted onto a stone, a slab or a simple coffin had similar access to an Osirian netherworld (David 2007: 42). Conditions met with once there may have varied according to social status, but otherworldly locations were available to those with knowledge of ritual incorporated into - even the most basic - funerary toolkit (Wegner 2010: 123; Richards 2005: 154-156). As Rosalie David notes 'even the peasants who could not aspire to elaborate burials, came to hope for eternal life' (2007: 42).

Presenting the deceased as independently enabled to continue an existence beyond life illustrates the motivation and desires of the living. Whilst an intricate programme of maintaining the dead was motivated out of a reluctance to accept the finality of death, there is also an element of what Catherine Bell (1992: 76) refers to as 'strategic practice' which was both manipulative and expedient. Placing the dead in control of their own afterlife survival was perhaps less about the dead and more about the living and their capacity to cope with what had become a demanding burden of post-mortem responsibility (Exell 2013: 108). Transferring control of perpetuating their own eternity into the hands of deceased Egyptians grew out of the socio-economic and religious changes brought about by the collapse of 'normal' order. Providing the dead with the tools to maintain the physical and metaphysical structures of the self was both practical and reassuring for the living. Through the process of embedding powerful, ritualised motifs into offering table imagery the living transferred responsibility for the deceased into the sphere (and control) of the dead themselves. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a lack of distinction between the living and the dead in mortuary iconography is evidenced within offering table imagery. The epithet *mAa-xrw*, or true of voice (and justified) served as an advance verdict of innocence at the judgement of the dead in a function of propaganda and self-aggrandisement which extended to living individuals represented in these scenes.<sup>164</sup> Effort and expense invested in the funerary iconography of one family member functioned ritually for everyone placed within the architectonic arrangement of an offering table depiction.

### 5.1 The End of the Afterlife

The end of the Middle Kingdom Period marked the cessation of many of the rituals and funerary requirements explored in this study. References to an idealised existence in netherworld regions including 'the field of reeds' disappears, along with the need for the so-called scenes of daily life previously incorporated into tomb iconography. The objective of the Egyptian funerary programme had changed significantly by the latter part of this era, indicating a more cosmological role for the deceased in the afterlife. Within this construct, a more personal relationship with the gods was now possible (Harrington 2013: 31). The dead were now expected to join the king on the solar barque in a cyclic process of renewal, once the exclusive prerogative of the monarch (Snape 2011: 223-226). There is less focus on the continuation of earthly pursuits, and a concomitant cessation in the requirement for inventory lists and for the depiction of food, drink and other 'household' commodities in tomb iconography. Gradually, objects of daily life 'disappear from tombs' as everything placed into a mortuary context was now especially produced for burial (Grajetzki 2003: 66).

During the latter part of the Middle Kingdom, more canonical (some might say overtly restrictive)<sup>165</sup> societal mores were re-established through a succession of strong monarchies (Wegner 2010: 121). The perception of the afterlife had evolved beyond the earthly realm with royal prerogatives for a cosmological role in the afterlife now an expectation of all. The Egyptians appear to have 'actively reduced' complex tomb iconography and accompanying extended genealogies from earlier periods

<sup>164</sup> René Van Walsem (2005: 62) provides a nuanced qualification to this point noting that 'a really deceased person, namely a mummy or a corpse lying on its back, has *never* been represented in any Old Kingdom tomb, but always the living owner with his living relatives and subordinates'.

<sup>165</sup> Views of the Middle Kingdom era range from perceiving this phase as a period of developing democracy (particularly in the provinces) to that of a time with highly prescriptive and somewhat repressive polities (Richards 2005: 28-29)

(Harrington 2013: 125).<sup>166</sup> Tombs were smaller, less furnished with grave goods and multiple burials were more common (Grajetzki 2010: 186-187). The practice of ensuring that internalised mortuary cult provided the deceased with everything required for perpetual existence resulted in the reciprocal notion that the living now required less from the deceased (Grajetzki 2003: 54, 63).

A strong tradition of archaism within Egyptian culture, resulted in many of the funerary themes initiated in the course of the Old and Middle Kingdoms being ‘explicitly manipulated’, as motifs were revisited and built upon during the New Kingdom Period which followed (Wegner 2010: 139). The Middle Kingdom in particular, was venerated within later cultural memory as an era of renewal and innovation, ‘a cultural apogee in the history of Egyptian civilization’ (Assmann, 1996: 118). Iconographical motifs associated with offering table imagery and their component rituals of libation, anointing and censuring were revised and extended within lavish representations of funerary banquets in the decorative programme of New Kingdom tombs. Here, the deceased appeared in the company of family and guests, along with dancers, musicians and singers, all of whom had ritualised roles within banquet scene composition (Harrington 2013: 31).

## 5.2 *anx Dt r nHH*: Living Enduringly and Repeatedly

An Egyptian epithet associated with the beneficiary of offering rituals, *anx Dt r nHH*,<sup>167</sup> indicated that the deceased, having survived the transition to the netherworld existed there in a transfigured state of ‘sacred permanence’ (Assmann 1996: 19). The justified dead were described as living enduringly (*Dt*) and repeatedly (*nHH*) in a cyclic process of renewal. The expression also identified the dead as ‘empowered beings’ able to mediate between humanity and the gods (Parkinson 2002: 134). The phrase marks the final stage in the culmination of the Egyptian funerary programme: the state of perpetuity for a deceased individual in the next world, the purpose of the offering table scene having been fully realised.

In exploring the iconographical construct of offering table depictions, subtle indicators have illuminated aspects of social decorum and of gendered-based hierarchies which extended beyond a living context. As Ann Macy Roth (2000: 200) notes Egyptian women played a variety of sexual roles in an engendered funerary construct, some of which ‘were only accessible to them after death’. Individual human beings remain only partially visible within this narrative, and perhaps this is exactly what was intended. ‘When we speak about identity and personhood in the context of ancient Egypt we should take into account that the concept of a person included a supernatural identity ... closely associated with notions of the afterlife’ (Wendrich 2010: 201). This study of offering table scene composition has attempted to locate and define the individual, which even as a symbolic construct, was created through a process of negotiation by the living in response to the harsh realities of death. Recording that one existed and establishing a context for one’s life was one of the main purposes of self-presentation in the tomb setting. In establishing existence in the ritually charged setting of the tomb, a continuation of life beyond death was assured.

Offering table imagery, as explored throughout this study, has provided insight into cultural value systems and the ways in which Egyptian society understood itself and its dead over a significant period of religious development. The embodied individual, both corporal and metaphysical, was central to this construct. Ensuring bodily survival was perhaps the ultimate *do ut des* strategy underpinning offering table development. The ritualised manner in which this was achieved is not yet fully understood. Scenes on tomb walls, false doors and stelae were not created to record the ‘complete story of cult involvement’ but served as perpetual symbols of past actions (Exell 2013: 124).

<sup>166</sup> A more expansive and elaborate decorative programme of Egyptian tombs re-emerged in the archaeological record of the New Kingdom c. 1550 – 1069 BC.

<sup>167</sup> *anx Dt r nHH* translates as ‘living enduringly and repeatedly’ (Allen 2000: 104).

The range of nuanced representation incorporated into offering table scene composition served as a ‘multimedia’ experience of ritual practice transferred into a ‘laconic shorthand’ (Tambiah 1979: 165 cited [Exell 2013](#): 124). Extrapolating notions of ancient realities from this context is both challenging and a somewhat intractable task.

Lynn Meskell (2000: 21) advises that in examining ‘irreducible domains’ it is possible to build on synchronic developments in order to explore constructions of identity and self in ancient society. This study has attempted to interpret the ancient Egyptian domains of the social and the biological; of gender and engendered ritual and of societal decorum and free will. It has been possible - if only at a limited etic level – to understand concepts of embodiment as exemplified through the image of a deceased individual seated at a table surrounded by objects of everyday life. That these abstract, ritualised components of body and object could conjoin to bring about an eternal afterlife, and the means to maintain it, is surely testament to individual intellect, to emotions connected with loss, and to a determination to exist.

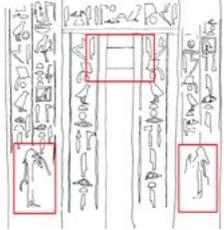
## APPENDIX 1: APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3

### Women Depicted At Their Own Offering Tables<sup>1</sup>

Date	Scene Type, Description, Location and Accession numbers where known.	Publication References <sup>2</sup>	Provenance	Figure <sup>3</sup>
1. Dynasty Four	Detail from the offering stela of Nefertiabet. Nefertiabet's offering table scene is one of the earliest examples of this scene type from the Old Kingdom Period. It is included here as an example of Memphite offering table scene composition at its finest. Offering table imagery which followed, adopted and adapted many stylistic features first attested at Giza. Now in the Musee du Louvre, E. 15591.	<a href="#">Der Manuelian 2003</a> : 58-59.	Western Cemetery 1200:G. 1225, Giza.	
2. Dynasty Five	Jamb of false door <sup>4</sup> of Intkaes, described as Prophetess of Hathor and Prophetess of Neith, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, E.7. 1909. Intkaes is accompanied by two daughters represented in the vicinity of her table. Nigel Strudwick (1987: 200-202) argues for a Giza origin based on personal names.	PM III: (20) 803011250 Strudwick 1987, <i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i> , pp. 200-202.	Unknown provenance.	
3. Dynasty Five	Detail from false door of Inty, described as a Priestess of Hathor. Inty's table scene composition is unusual bearing a hieroglyphic sign 'n', a determinative for 'water' and a large fish above this. <sup>5</sup> She holds a blossom to her nose <sup>6</sup> and is described as 'the revered one before Osiris' in texts bordering the central door panel. Now in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 31.781.	Excavated and published by the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts Expedition; 1931.	Giza, Street G 7700 in radim east of tomb G 7753.	
4. Late Dynasty Five	False door of Inti, described as Sole Ornament of the King <sup>7</sup> and Prophetess of Hathor, now at Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 71.39.	PM VIII (32) 803016500 <i>Ancient Art in the Virginia Museum</i> , 1973: Figure 19.	Unknown provenance.	
5. Dynasty Five or Six	False door of Djait-Merti, described as King's ornament, Prophetess of Hathor, <sup>8</sup> now in Berlin.	PM VIII (11) 803010705 <i>Aegyptische Inschriften i</i> , 48.	Unknown provenance.	
6. Dynasty Five or Six	Unfinished false door of Hetept, found in situ (1909). She is seated alone at her offering table. No inscriptions remain. This item was in Frankfurt in 1930, Museum Liebieghaus, 722.	PM III: 1 (298) <i>Städtische Galerie, Kurzes Verzeichnis der Bildwerke</i> , 1930: 90.	'Probably' from Giza Necropolis, West Field (Malek1974: 298).	

7. Dynasty Five or Six	False door of Henti, located <i>in situ</i> at the entrance to her offering chapel. An address to visitors includes a threat to potential vandals. She is seated before her table of offerings. On a lower register another woman named Nebt is also described as ‘Prophetess of Hathor, Mistress of the Sycamore’ (Malek 1974: 66). Nebt holds a lotus/lily to her nose. Offering bearers officiate before the table.	PM III: 1 (66) G. 2001 Reisner 1905-6: 286, Figure 183.	Giza Necropolis, Cemetery G. 2000.
8. Dynasty Six	Stela of Iku, described as ‘Daily Watcher of Min’ now in Amsterdam.	PM VIII (10) 803010500 Kanawati, 1987, Plate 9.	Unknown provenance, probably from Akhmim, a cult centre of the god Min.
9. Dynasty Six	False door of Khuitenptah, described as a Noblewoman of the king, now in Berlin.	PM VIII (14) 803010815 Discovering Hieroglyphs, 1992, Fig. 80	Unknown provenance.
10. Dynasty Six	False door of Gerg, described as Prophetess of Hathor, ‘honoured by Ptah’, now in Cairo (CG 1405).	PM VIII (16) 803011008 Denkmäler i, 67-8.	Unknown provenance.
11. Dynasty Six	Left part of stela <sup>9</sup> belonging to Bendjet, described as Daily Watcher of Min, now in Cairo (CG1667).	PM VIII (18) 803011053 Kanawati, 1988: Plate 13.	Probably Akhmim.
12. Late Dynasty Six	Rectangular stela of Nefertjenut, described as King’s sole ornament, Prophetess of Hathor, now in Cairo, Mohammed Khalil Museum, 575.  Nefertjenut is shown standing at her offering table. The standing position is found most frequently in later, First Intermediate Period provincial images such as those from Naga el-Deir and Girga (Malek 2007: 20).	PM VIII (20) 803011240  Göttinger Miszellen, 54, 1982, Fig. 60.	Probably from Naga el-Deir or Girga.
13. Dynasty Six	Panel of false door of Ipi, seated at her offering table which divides her from two daughters. The table forms a liminal barrier (and contact point) between the living and the deceased (Harrington 2013: 15). Now in Chicago.	PM VIII (21) 803011271 Chicago Field Museum of Natural History, A.31307.	Unknown provenance.
14. Late Dynasty Six	Rectangular stela of Tjetuti depicted standing at an offering table holding ‘lotus’ <sup>10</sup> blossoms. Tjetuti’s inscription was dedicated by her husband.	PM VIII (21) 803011380 Kanawati, 1986: 61, Plate 14.	
15. Late Dynasty Six	False door of Kausut, described as King’s sole ornament, Prophetess of Hathor, now in Florence.	PM VIII (24) 803012000  Il Regio Museo Archeologico di Firenze, 1931.	Unknown provenance.

16. Dynasty Six	False door of Sheshti, described as Prophetess of Hathor, now in Istanbul.	PM VIII (26) 803013350  Aegyptische Grabsteine und Denksteine aus Athen und Konstantinopel, 1908.	Unknown provenance.	
17. Dynasty Six	False door of Meresankh, now in London, Petrie Museum, UC 14288. Although she is identified on the door, the table scene is not shown. This is a recurrent feature of false doors dated to this period. <sup>11</sup> The table scene does occur carved into the lintel above otherwise 'blank' structures, or may have been represented only inside the tomb. Meresankh is indicated as the beneficiary of the offering cult in texts carved into this door.	PM VIII (27) 803014502  Stewart, Egyptian Stelae II, p. 35, Plate 36.	Unknown provenance.	
18. Dynasty Six	False door of Khnumet, described as Prophetess of Hathor, King's ornament, now in Munich. Although Khnumet is seated alone at her table two funerary priests appear in separate side registers as they officiate in her offering rituals.	PM VIII (28) 803014600  Staatliche Sammlung Agyptischer Kunst Munchen, 1995: 48.	Unknown provenance.	
19. Dynasty Six	Rectangular stela of Atjetka, described as a Daily watcher of Min, is depicted seated at the table. Now in Turin Museo Egizio, Sup. 1263.	PM VIII (34) 803017250  Kanawati, 1986: 60, Plate 13.	Probably from Akhmim (Malek 2007: 34).	
20. Dynasty Six	False door of Init, described as King's sole ornament, Prophetess of Hathor, now in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, ÄS 5102.	PM VIII (34) 803017315  Agyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung, Wien: 1987: 98, Figure 97.	Unknown provenance.	
21. Dynasty Six	False door of Ankhet, Prophetess of Hathor, now in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, ÄS 6125.	PM VIII (35) 803017320  Jahrb. Wien 88: 1992: 193, Figure 174.	Attributed in Vienna as 'probably from Saqqara'. Unprovenanced in Porter and Moss (Volume VIII 2007:35).	
22. Dynasty Six	False door of a woman named Hepti, dedicated by her mother Sehat. Both women have titles indicating their roles as Priestesses of Hathor. <sup>12</sup> In the private collection of J. Bollen (2001).	PM VIII (35) 803017500  Unpublished elsewhere.	Unknown provenance.	

23. Dynasty Six	Lower part of false door of Irti, described as Prophetess of Hathor. During this period the central stela was often undecorated, as in this example (central rectangle). Irti does appear standing in two images positioned on the lower lintels of her door, facing the tomb beyond this structure (red rectangles).  Published Sotheby's Sale Catalogue, December 1990: No 406. Now in private possession.	PM (37) 803017910  Leprohon 1994, JARCE 31, 1994: 41-7.  (Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt).	Unknown provenance.	
24. Dynasty Six	False door of Khuitba, on the art market in London, 2004. No other details available.	PM VIII (40) 803018250  Unpublished elsewhere.	Unknown provenance.	
25. Dynasty Six	Fragment of two connected left door jambs of Inti-Nikanebti, described as Prophetess of Hathor. Known to be in private ownership in 1985.	PM VIII (40) 803018500  Naissance et evolution de l'écriture, Bruxelles, 1984-1985: Figure 35.	Unknown provenance.	
26. Dynasty Six to Eight	False door of Setwert, described as King's sole ornament, Prophetess of Hathor, now in Brussels.	PM VIII (15) 803010968  Proceedings of society of Biblical Archaeology 1889, xi.	Unknown provenance.	
27. Dynasty Seven to Eight	Upper part of false door of Menib, described as Prophetess of Hathor recovered from burial shaft.	PM III:1 (104) S. 4248/4321  Junker 1950: 214.	Giza Necropolis, West Field.	
28. Dynasty Seven to Eight	False door of a woman named Niankh-Hathor, described as Prophetess of Hathor Mistress of the Deserts. Her name and titles remain on her false door which was found <i>in situ</i> within her tomb. The door is now Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 7822.	PM III: 1 (118)  Junker, 1950: 91-6.	Giza Necropolis, West Field.	
29. Dynasty Eight	False door of Hemi-Ra with many unusual features, described as 'provincial' by Fischer (1979: 14). Hemi-Ra is depicted twice; as a naked girl and as an older woman on the door jambs below the table image. She is described as an 'acquaintance of the king' <sup>13</sup> and a priestess of Hathor. Now in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.	Henry Fischer published twice on this artefact Metropolitan Museum Journal, 1976: 11, pp. 5-24, 1989: 39-40.	A Busiris provenance is suggested by Fischer (1976: 14).	
30. Dynasty Eight to First Intermediate Period <sup>14</sup>	False door of Sitantef, described as Prophetess of Hathor, now in Berlin.	PM VIII (12) 803010712  Aegyptische Inschriften i, 49.	Unknown provenance.	
31. Dynasty Eight to First Intermediate Period	False door of a woman named Nebt, described as a Prophetess of Hathor. Now in Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard Univ. Semitic Museum, 2357.	PM III: 1 (306).	'Probably' from a Memphite context (Malek 1974: 306).	

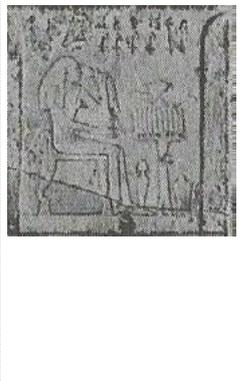
32. First Intermediate Period <sup>15</sup>	False door of Nesuserti, described as King's sole ornament, and Prophetess of Hathor in the Mert-temple of Teti. Now in Cairo, CG 57186. Nesuserti is shown on the side panel of her false door holding a blossom to her nose and an ankh sign in the other hand. This is one of the earliest examples of a non-royal woman holding this emblem. Previously, it was associated with royal individuals or gods.	PM VIII (41) 803020100 Daoud 2005: 178, Plate CXIV.	Unknown provenance. Daoud (2005: 178) notes it is likely she was buried in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery.	
33. First Intermediate Period	False door of Netpepy, described as a Prophetess of Hathor. Significant features of the stela are the wDA eyes on the cross bar of the door, which do not occur on false doors or offering stelae before this period. Now in Moscow.	PM VIII (41) 803020450 Daoud 2005: 174, Plate CIX.	Daoud (2005:174) suggests .Netpepy may have served in the funerary cult of Pepy II.	
34. First Intermediate Period, or Early Middle Kingdom c. 2055 – 2125 BC)	False door of Sentiotes, described as 'honoured by Ptah', now in Athens, Inv. 30.  This door is incorrectly attributed to Dynasty 6 in this publication according to Malek (2007: 43).	PM VIII (43) 803022070 Tzachou-Alexandri 1995: 78-79, Figure 2.	Unknown provenance.	
35. First Intermediate Period	Fragment of rectangular stela of a woman bearing the epithets Prophetess of Hathor, Mistress of Dendera. Her name is missing from the fragment. Now in Berlin Ägyptisches Museum 9055.	PM VIII (43) 803022120 Fischer 1981 Bulletin du Centenaire, BIFAO <sup>16</sup> 81 pp.235-238, Plate xxix.	Probably from Dendera, suggested by her titulary (Malek 2007: 43).	
36. First Intermediate Period or early Middle Kingdom	Rectangular stela of Sheshi, described as King's sole ornament. The name of the dedicator of Sheshi's stela is a man named Id who is described as 'Overseer of Phophets'. He is not identified as her husband or father. <sup>17</sup> Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 1640.	PM VIII (47) 803022311 Borchardt 1964 Denkmaler des alten Reiches. Caire, Volume 2: 104.	Unknown provenance.	
37. First Intermediate Period	Rectangular stela of a woman named Bukemni, described as a steward of the chamber of royal linen of the god's offering, and honoured by Onuris. Now in Cairo Egyptian Museum, JE 87778.	PM VIII (48) 803022500 Fischer Varia 78, Plate xix.	Probably from the Thinite area (near Abydos) where the god Onuris had a cult centre.	

<p>38. First Intermediate Period or Early Middle Kingdom</p>	<p>False door of a woman named Sitimpy-iker. Allen (1936:13) notes that Sitimpy-iker is described as ‘the worthy one’ in epithets included on her door. Offerings are invoked for her on the occasion of a range of annual religious festivals during which she requests clothing for the New Year. Sitimpy-iker also requests food offerings during ‘the feast of Thoth’ (Allen 1936: 14-15). The deceased holds a lotus/lily to her nose as she sits before her offering table. Now in Chicago, Field Museum of Natural History, A. 31285.</p>	<p>PM VIII (48) 803022523 Allen 1936. Egyptian Stelae in Field Museum of Natural History, pp.13-15, Plate II.</p>	<p>Unknown provenance.</p>	
<p>39. First Intermediate Period</p>	<p>Rectangular stela featuring two women facing each other with offering text and objects above them. The woman on the left side, facing to the right (the primary position in table scene composition) is named Rudjti. She is described as King’s sole ornament. Opposite her a daughter named Hatkaui is featured seated at the table. She bears the same epithet.</p>	<p>PM VIII (51) 803022581 Valloggia 1974: pp252-4, Figure 2.</p>	<p>Unknown provenance.</p>	
<p>40. First Intermediate Period or Early Middle Kingdom</p>	<p>Rectangular stela inscribed for a woman named Merut, described as a royal acquaintance. She is seated at her offering table holding a lotus/lily blossom to her nose. An unnamed daughter is depicted standing in front of her, holding an open lily to her own face. Now in Paris, Musee du Louvre, C.165 [E.3138].</p>	<p>PM VIII (57) 803022950 Pierret, 1878 Recueil d’inscriptions inédites du Musee égyptien du Louvre.</p>	<p>Probably from Saqqara or Giza (Malek 2007: 57).</p>	
<p>41. First Intermediate Period or Early Middle Kingdom</p>	<p>False door of Nebsen, described as a Prophetess of Hathor. Now in Louvre Museum, Paris, C 242 [E.8404].</p>	<p>PM VIII (57) 803022952 Unpublished. Entry in Gardiner Notebook 67: 18.</p>	<p>Unknown provenance.</p>	
<p>42. First Intermediate Period or Early Middle Kingdom</p>	<p>Rectangular stela for Sitn(et)wia, described as King’s ornament. She is depicted standing before her table, holding a lotus/lily blossom. Now in Paris, Musee du Louvre, C 239 [E.10480].</p>	<p>PM VIII (57) 803022953 Unpublished.</p>	<p>Unknown provenance.</p>	
<p>43. First Intermediate Period</p>	<p>False door of Henut. Henut holds a blossom to her nose with one hand and reaches towards her table with the other. <i>Wadjet</i> eyes are carved below the offering scene. Now in San Jose Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum and Art Gallery.</p>	<p>PM VIII (59) 803023150 Schwappach-Shirriff 2004, Treasures of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, Figure 5.</p>	<p>Unknown provenance.</p>	

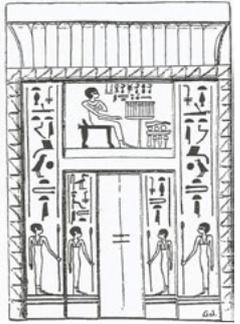
43a (detail).	<p>In this detail from Henut's offering table (photo above, 43) the simplicity of scene composition almost disguises the fact that ritually (and iconographically) everything required by Henut is present. The enlarged ewer and basin under the table reference the essential purification of the deceased before admission into the presence of Osiris. The ointment jar held to her face (a masculine motif before this period) references the 'sweet breath of life' an ancient phrase which dates back to royal Pyramid Texts. Henut's hand is positioned palm down as she reaches towards the table indicating that she is in receipt of rituals and offerings necessary to afterlife transition. The offerings listed above the table indicate perpetual supplies marked in quantities of a thousand for bread, beer, fowl, ox, alabaster and linen, a formulaic construction covering all commodities necessary to eternal existence. The merged bread loaves and the ox leg above the table reference power, vitality and regeneration of the deceased. Although scenes become more complex after this period, everything essential to the deceased is represented in this relatively simple scene composition.</p>			
44. First Intermediate Period	<p>False door of Khuit-harshef, with epithet 'honoured by Hathor, Ptah-Sokari and the great god of the Letopolite Nome' (Malek 2007: 62). In private ownership.</p>	<p>PM VIII (62) 803023340 Published in Christies Sales Catalogue, July 12 1972 and in Charles Ede Sales Catalogue, June 1973.</p>	<p>Assigned by Christies to a Memphis context.</p>	
<p>There is a noticeable gap in Porter and Moss's bibliography in offering table imagery from the second half of the First Intermediate Period to the early Middle Kingdom. Khaled Daoud (2005) has addressed this apparent gap in the archaeological record through a process of redating stelae previously attributed to an earlier Old Kingdom date. Daoud has reassigned many of these so-called Old Kingdom artefacts to the Herakleopolitan era in the First Intermediate Period (Dynasties 9 and 10). Dynasty 8 remains poorly represented in the archaeological record in all sources available during the compilation of this appendix.</p>				
45. Dynasty Eight	<p>Small limestone false door of a woman named Snt.i. The lower part is missing. The workmanship is described as 'poor' (Daoud 2005: 66). In spite of the poor quality of her false door, Snt.i is described as 'King's Daughter'. Snt.i may have been the daughter of one of the so-called 'ephemeral' kings who ruled briefly (and ineffectively) following the demise of Pepy II during the period of disintegration which followed the demise of his Memphite Dynasty.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (545).</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	
46. Dynasty Eight	<p>The false door of Iwiw is set into the east side of a so-called stele-maison, a style of superstructure developed in burials of this period in the Memphite necropolis. Iwiw's false door shows her seated at her table scene and she is also depicted standing in central door niches of the door panel. She is described as Sole Ornament of the King and holds a papyriform staff. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 49804.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (686) Line drawing Daoud 2005: 288.</p>	<p>Recovered at South Saqqara.</p>	

47. Dynasty Eight	This false door is named for Nwb-Htp who is designated as Royal Acquaintance and Priestess of Hathor. She served in the pyramid temple-cult of King Unas. The temple itself was devoted to Hathor. Nwb-Htp may have been involved in ritual services there. The false door is dedicated to her by her husband which suggests he outlived her. He is not depicted in her table scenes. Nwb-Htp is portrayed wearing a broad amuletic collar holding a lotus/lily blossom to her nose.	PM III:2 (652) Line drawing Daoud 2005: 283.	From the Unas Cemetery at Saqqara.	
48. Dynasty Eight	Partial fragment from the side of a false door belonging to a woman named Snt. The style of her wig places her at the end of the Old Kingdom. She is described as ‘honoured by Osiris’ on the remaining inscriptions of her door. Current location (2005) Saqqara Storeroom Number 1.	Unpublished elsewhere. Daoud 2005: 158.	From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.	
49. Early Dynasty Nine	Incomplete false door stela of Hnw-xti who bears the epithets of Sole Ornament of the King and Prophetess of Hathor. Hnw-xt’s false door was part of a shallow chapel structure. (See the example in Figure 3, page 10). Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum.	PM III:2 (511) Daoud 2005: 45-46.	From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.	
50. Dynasty Nine or Ten	Stela of Sat-Impy. The deceased holds a lotus/lily to her nose with one hand. She is described in the offering formula as one honoured by Osiris and Anubis. Now in Hamburg, Volkerkunde Museum, C. 3710.	PM III:2 (345) Daoud 2005: 17, Plate IX (erroneously listed as XI in this publication).	From the Memphite Necropolis at Abusir.	
51. Dynasty Nine or Ten	False door of <a href="#">Sat.sn</a> with <i>wadjet</i> eyes carved into the stone beneath her offering table. Part of her offering formulae requests ‘a beautiful burial in her tomb of the necropolis’ a phrase first attested to this period (Daoud 2005: 176). She holds a lotus/lily blossom towards her face before an offering table piled with food. Ewer, basin and other vessels are depicted under the table. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum CCG 57186.	PM III:2 (736) Daoud 2005: 175-176.	From the Memphite necropolis.	
52. Dynasty Nine or Ten	False door of Ns-wsrt on which she is depicted as a young girl on one door jamb and as an older woman on another. This double aspect of youth and age is more common in male iconography. Ns-wsrt holds an ankh in another scene. She is described as Sole Ornament of the King and as a Prophetess of Hathor. The Egyptian Museum in Cairo has assigned this piece to the Sixth Dynasty. Daoud (2005: 178) has reassigned the door to the First Intermediate Period based on the ankh held by a non-royal female. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CCG 57186.	Unpublished. Daoud 2005: 177-178.	From the Memphite necropolis.	

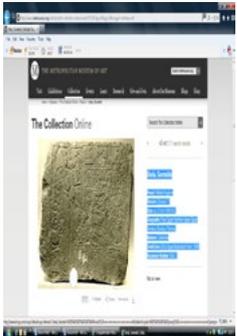
<p>53. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Upper part of false door belonging to Mrt-Tti-ii. She is seated in the dominant position at her offering table, facing right. Mrt-Tti-ii does not appear to hold priestess or other official titles. The composition of her offering table (bread loaves surmounted by beef and trussed ducks ) is unattested before this period. She is depicted wearing multiple pieces of jewellery on the outer jambs of the door where she holds a lotus/lily blossom up to her face. Offering bearers carry bolts of linen towards her. A second offering tables on this elaborate false door holds vessels of water, wine, ointment jars and a wide range of other commodities. Now in Munich, Sammlung Museum, GI. 108.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (563) Daoud 2005: 164.</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery, Saqqara.</p>	
<p>54. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Stela of Mert-Teti-Hotepi. In various depictions within the scene the deceased woman holds both lotus blossoms and an ointment jar to her nose. Offerings include a range of sacred oils and green and black eye paint. Mert's full names may associate her with the Mrt sanctuary of King Teti at Giza (Daoud 2005: 23). Current location not given.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (544) Daoud 2005: 22, Line Drawing Daoud, 2005: 239.</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	
<p>55. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Stela of Ipi-m-sas. She holds an open lotus/lily blossom to her nose and a closed bud in her other hand. Both hands are raised in invocation in a scene below. Ipi-m-sAs is designated as a priestess of Hathor. Her striding posture in the middle of the stela was associated predominantly with male iconography until this era. This table image may be among the earliest examples where a woman holds an ointment/unguent jar to her nose. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum CG 1665.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (544) Daoud 2005: 24- 26.</p>	<p>Teti Pyramid Cemetery Saqqara Necropolis.</p>	
<p>56. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Small false door of Hnwt.i, described as the sole ornament of the king. Her name incorporates an epithet for Hathor. This woman may have been a contemporary of Ipi-m-sas and in another early example of the gesture she also holds an ointment jar to her nose. Purification ewers and basins are depicted directly under her table. Imagery of women with fistled hands are unusual before this period. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (544) Daoud 2005: 39.</p>	<p>Teti Pyramid Cemetery Saqqara Necropolis.</p>	
<p>57. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>False door of Snt-it.s in which she is depicted holding lotus/lily blossoms in her hand and before her face. In another image both hands are held vertically at her sides, 'in a token of reverence' (Daoud 2005: 41). Snt-it.s is described as sole ornament of the king and as Prophetess of Hathor. Now in Stockholm, Medelshavsmuseet, 11434.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (586) Daoud 2005: 41.</p>	<p>Teti Pyramid Cemetery Saqqara Necropolis.</p>	

58. Dynasty Nine or Ten	False door of Sni who is described as Priestess of Hathor and Sole Ornament of the King. As noted, the ankh symbol which she holds in one hand was a rare motif until this period. Now in Switzerland, Neuchâtel Musée d'Art et d'histoire, Eg. 426.	PM III:2 (568) Daoud 2005: 44.	Teti Pyramid Cemetery Saqqara Necropolis.	
59. Dynasty Nine or Ten	Small stela (with upper part missing) dedicated to Qiswtt. Workmanship is poor although Qiswtt is described as Sole Ornament of the King and Prophetess of Hathor. Her name is unusual and suggests regional origins near Cusae (Asyut) which was the location of an early cult of the goddess Hathor in her syncretic form of Pakhet.	PM III:2 (545) Daoud 2005: 62.	Teti Pyramid Cemetery Saqqara Necropolis.	
60. Dynasty Nine or Ten	Small format false door of Sat-xmt showing her seated at an offering table. She is also depicted on the four jambs of her door where she adopts a different posture in each image. She holds lotus/lily blossoms before her nose and in her hand. In other positions she is shown in a striding stance, and holding an ointment jar to her nose. The latter gestures were predominantly masculine motifs until this period. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 57202.	PM III:2 (563) Daoud 2005: 69-70.	From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.	
61. Dynasty Nine or Ten	Large fragment of a false door belonging to another woman named Sat-xmt. The fragment comes from a much larger false door and Daoud (2005: 153) believes both items belonged to different women. This piece features a scene where Sat-xmt receives vessels and other items presented to her as funerary offerings. <sup>18</sup> She holds a staff in one hand and an ankh symbol in the other. The papyriform staff was originally a royal motif in the iconography of Old Kingdom queens (Harpur 1987: 138). A maidservant presents a mirror and a kohl grinding bowl with an accompanying inscription 'To your kA' (Daoud 2005:153).	PM III:2 (545) Daoud 2005: 153-154.	From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.	
62. Dynasty Nine or Ten	False door of Snt-n.i who is depicted at her table holding a lotus/lily blossom to her nose. Elsewhere she faces the central niche of the door. She is also shown striding. The inner jamb depicts Snt-n.i holding her right hand to her chest in a gesture of 'respect' (Daoud 2005: 70). Although her door is large, well crafted and complete, no titles are indicated amongst her self-presentational inscriptions.	PM III:2 (563).	From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.	

<p>63. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Small false door named for Mst-n.i, described as Sole Ornament of the King and Priestess of Hathor. Unusually, Mst-n.i is also designated as <i>Spst nswt</i>, or ‘noblewoman of the king’ (Daoud 2005: 75). This was formerly a masculine title. On one of the four door jambs she holds her hand to her chest in a gesture of respect; opposite her hands are open at her sides ‘an attitude of veneration and respect (Daoud 2005:75). She adopts a striding posture while holding a lotiform staff. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CGG 57206.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (563) Daoud 2005: 75).</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	
<p>64. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>The false door belonging to the Prophetess of Hathor, Sat-ini-Tti is described as ‘large format’ and is highly detailed with the table scene and door jambs featuring detailed depictions of the deceased. She bears the epithet Sole Ornament of the King which, as noted earlier, associates the holder with the cult of Hathor and with the court (Fischer 1989:24). She holds a lotus/lily blossom to her nose in some scenes; in others she holds a long staff. Sat-ini-Tti’s offering list is one of the most extensive to survive from this period consisting of 97 entries. The chapel was found in situ together with its false door. Now in Boston, Museum of Fine Art, 24/593.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (539) Daoud 2005: 82-84.</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	 <p>The image of Sat-ini-Tti’s false door as it appears now and in situ appears in Chapter 4.3.</p>
<p>65. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>False door of DwAw-Htp who is described as Sole Ornament of the King and Prophetess of Hathor. She is shown with a lotus/lily to her nose while seated at her table. Below, she is shown standing in front of door jambs holding an ankh symbol in one hand with a lily blossom held to her face with the other. DwAw-Htp is referred to as a ‘Royal Acquaintance’; literally ‘one who is known to the king’ (Fischer 1989: 45).</p>	<p>PM III:2 (539) Daoud 2005: 84-85.</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	
<p>66. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Fragment of the false door panel of Nfrt-wA. <sup>19</sup> On the outer jamb she is positioned with her feet apart in a striding attitude earlier associated with male iconography (Daoud 2005:153). The striding attitude is a characteristic feature of ‘major’ female figures from this period on (Daoud 2003: 153). The stance emphasises the vitality of the deceased. Her hands are fist-ed in another gestural motif earlier restricted to male figures in funerary iconography (Harpur 1987: 138).</p>	<p>PM III:2 (545) Daoud 2005: 152-153.</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	

<p>67. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>The false door of Sat-al-Tnw indicates the increasing importance of the offering table scene within the structure of this external architectural component. Many elements of the false doors of this period would once have been incorporated into a wider range of scenes placed within the offering chapels of larger tomb structures. The deceased bears the epithets Sole Companion of the King and Prophetess of Hathor. Sat-al-Tnw is referred to directly as ‘an Osiris’ in one of the earliest attestations of this epithet in reference to a woman (Daoud 2005: 113). The identification of a deceased woman with Osiris (very common in the epithets of both males and females in the Middle Kingdom) emerges in funerary texts of non royal women only from this period (Daoud 2005: 187). Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 59158.</p>	<p>Daoud 2005: 112-115.</p>	<p>From the Teti Pyramid Cemetery at Saqqara.</p>	
<p>68. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>The small false door belonging to Impyanx describes her as Sole Ornament of the King and as a Prophetess of Hathor. Her offering liturgy describes her as praised by various gods and ‘by her entire city’ (Daoud 2005: 140).</p>	<p>PM III:2 (852) Daoud 2005: 140-141.</p>	<p>From the Kom el Fakhry Cemetery near Saqqara.</p>	
<p>69. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>This small false door is dedicated to the funerary cult of Tti. She is depicted at her offering table and on all four jambs of her door. In these images she holds a long staff with a spear tipped point in one hand, while the other hand rests at her side, with her hand open. She is described as Sole Ornament of the King with offerings designated to ‘the Royal Ornament Tti’, suggesting a favoured position at court. The addition of the spear-headed staff amongst the accoutrements of women did not occur before this Period. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (686) Daoud 2005: 121-122.</p>	<p>Found at South Saqqara in an area of extensive cemeteries centred around the royal tombs of Sixth Dynasty kings and their queens.</p>	
<p>70. Dynasty Nine or Ten</p>	<p>Partial offering table scene of an unnamed woman seated to the left (and therefore in the dominant position) at her table which indicates she is the beneficiary of offering rituals enacted within the scene. Above the offering table there is an interesting assortment of vessels and ritual objects, including jewellery. This piece, along with other side pieces of this artefact are in Saqqara Storeroom Number 7: 14072, 14073.</p>	<p>PM III:2 (546) Daoud 2005: 145.</p>	<p>Saqqara, exact province unknown.</p>	

<p>71. Late Dynasty Ten or Early Dynasty Eleven</p>	<p>The false door of SnDt is described as small format depicting the owner standing facing the opening niche of the door, holding a spear-tipped staff. Her offering table scene dominates the door where she is seated holding a lotus/lily to her nose. The lotus flower in front of SnDt's face appears to mimic the mirror motif usually attested from later table depictions in (Lilyquist 1979: figures 120, 124,138). SnDt is described as 'honoured by Ptah-Sokar' and 'honoured by Osiris'. The usual composition and prosopography of this artefact speaks of the changes in tomb iconography occurring around this period. With the disappearance of centralised control the established 'Memphite' style which had dominated funerary culture was increasingly replaced by a variety of provincial styles (David 2007: 42-43). SnDt's stela remains unpublished (aside from the catalogue entry by Daoud 2005: 133). The door was at Saqqara Storeroom Number 7 in 2005.</p>	<p>Daoud 2005: 133-134.</p>	<p>Found in the South Saqqara cemetery excavated by Zakaria Ghoneim in 1951.<sup>20</sup></p>	
<p>72. Dynasty Eleven</p>	<p>Stela of Hemet depicts two women. Hemet is proportionally larger than the second woman who is unidentified (she is probably a daughter). Hemet holds a lotus/lily to her nose, and another is held at her side. The smaller woman also holds a lotus/lily blossom to her nose. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 44302.</p>	<p>Musacchio 2008. Bulletin of the Egyptian Museum 5: 54.</p>	<p>Early Eleventh Dynasty Dendera provenance (Musacchio 2008:51).<sup>21</sup></p>	
<p>73. Dynasty Eleven</p>	<p>Although this stela (which was dedicated to a woman whose name is now lost) is badly worn it indicates that access to stone funerary elements may have been more available to less wealthy individuals in provincial areas in this period. The woman faces her offerings in a gesture of invocation. Although the stela is roughly carved, the work is in raised relief indicating effort and a degree of skill employed in its production. A mirror and a jar can be distinguished amongst offerings depicted close to her. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 44304.</p>	<p>Musacchio 2008: Bulletin of the Egyptian Museum 5: 54.</p>	<p>Dendera.</p>	

74. Dynasty Eleven	Broken stela of a woman whose name is now missing. She is accompanied by a daughter who gestures towards her mother with her hand raised in a gesture of invocation, common amongst those performing offering rituals. Stone or pottery vessels and a haunch of beef are depicted amongst the offerings. The dedicatory inscription reads; ‘her daughter whom she loves, Bbi’. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 45603. This stela is also discussed in <a href="#">Appendix 2: 18</a> .	Musacchio 2008: Bulletin of the Egyptian Museum 5: 55.	Dendera.	
75. Dynasty Eleven	False door with cornice of a woman named Inteti, described as a Prophetess of Hathor. ‘With Todros’ (a dealer in Luxor) in 1980 (Malek 2007: 286).	PM VIII (286) 803034710 Unpublished elsewhere.	Unknown provenance.	
76. Dynasty Eleven	This unfinished stela belonging to a woman named Sentekhi shows the freer style evident in provincial scene composition. An offering bearer holds food (or drink?) before her face and below her hand a mirror in a woven container rests on a linen chest beside the deceased. White linen (a high value commodity) references the illumination of the netherworld while indicating the ‘transfigured’ state of the deceased ( <a href="#">Harrington 2013: 19</a> ). The mirror in its container both captured and reflected ritual (Lilyquist 1979).	No prior publication information available.	Dendera.	
77. Late Dynasty Eleven	Rectangular stela with three lines of offering text for Benent, described as King’s sole ornament, Prophetess of Hathor. She is depicted twice; seated at her table and standing to the right in another scene. Now in Hamburg, Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde, C.4056.	PM VIII (153) 803029530 Altenmuller 1976, Grab und Totenreich der alten Ägypter 50, Figure 6.	Unknown provenance.	
78. Late Dynasty Eleven	Fragment of offering table scene belonging to a woman named Iput who holds a cloth (symbolic of her transfigured status) and a mirror, which captured and maintained both her image and ritual enacted before it (Lilyquist 1979: 17, Plate 164). The term for ‘mirror’ ‘ankh’ was also the word used for ‘life’. Now in London, British Museum, EA 1658.	PM VIII (197) 803030285 Manniche 1989: 45.	Unknown provenance.	
79. Late Dynasty Eleven	Rectangular stela belonging to Ketu and Senet, who are identified as daughters of a woman named Hetep. They face each other across an offering table, each holding a lotus/lily blossom. Now in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, ÄS 95.	PM VIII (261) 803033000 Vernus 1998: 141.	Unknown provenance.	This stela is discussed in more detail in <a href="#">Appendix 2</a> .
80. Late Dynasty Eleven	Rectangular stela belonging to Nebtiotirakaes who is seated at an offering table holding a lotus/lily. Now in private ownership.	PM VIII (286)803034623 Sotheby (New York) sales catalogue. June 15 1988, Figure 15.	Unknown provenance.	

81. Dynasty Eleven or Twelve	False door of Iry, described as King's sole ornament, 'honoured by Ptah-Sokari' (Malek 2007: 109). Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 1512.	PM VIII (109) 803028005 Borchardt, 1964, 2: 216-17.	Unknown provenance.
82. Dynasty Eleven or Twelve	Rectangular stela dedicated to a woman named Ded. She is described as standing at her offering table holding lotus/lily blossoms. Now in Florence, Museo Archeologico, 7400.	PM VIII (151) 803028965 Nosticco Le Stele Egiziane i: 30, Figure 27.	Unknown provenance.
83. Early Dynasty Twelve	Incomplete false door of a woman named Sentiotesi. Now in private ownership.	PM VIII (287) 803034628 Sotheby (New York) Sales Catalogue, June 8 1994, Figure 24.	Unknown provenance.
84. Dynasty Twelve	Rectangular stela belonging to a woman named Hemt, daughter of Iti. She is seated at her offering table holding a lotus/lily. A lector priest officiating before her is identified as her son, Amenemhet. Unusually, the god Amun-Re is mentioned in the offering formula. Now in private ownership.	PM VIII (286) 803034600 Sotheby Sales Catalogue July 11, 1988, Figure 50.	Unknown provenance.
85. Dynasty Twelve	Lower part of a stela belonging to a woman named Iuseni, daughter of Weki. She is kneeling in her table scene. This was a highly unusual position for a woman, before this period. Now in private ownership.	PM VIII (280) 803034172 Christies Sale Catalogue, July 7 1970, Figure 125.	Unknown provenance.
86. Dynasty Twelve	Rectangular stela belonging to a woman named Hetept depicted holding a lotus/lily, seated at her offering table. Now in Cleveland Museum of Art, 1932.190.	PM VIII (139) 803028600 Berman, 1999:534, Figure 452.	Unknown provenance.
87. Dynasty Twelve	Rectangular stela of two women (mother and daughter). Diu is seated on the left and therefore in the prime position hierarchically indicating this woman as the owner – and therefore the beneficiary - of the offering ritual. Meket, her mother is identified as the daughter of a third woman Sit-Hathor. <sup>22</sup> Now in Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts.	PM VIII (144) 803028690 Laurent 1985 Des pharaons aux premiers chretiens, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Figure 47.	Unknown provenance.
88. Late Dynasty Twelve	Rectangular stela of Hepy, daughter of a woman named Debates. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 20357. The Egyptian Museum record indicates that Hepy is standing before her table. Traces of red paint remain on a scene which unusually, is partially carved and partially painted.	PM VIII (115) 803028099 CG <sup>23</sup> Lange and Schafer, 1902. Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs im Museum von Kairo. Caire, 1: 365, Taf. xxvii.	Unknown provenance.

89. Dynasty Twelve	Rectangular stela of a woman named Memi who is identified as the daughter of Rehutut. Memi is depicted alone, standing at her offering table with an image of a false door below the table scene. <sup>24</sup> Now in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Inv. 441428.	PM VIII (242) 803032353 Sist 1996 Museo Barracco. <i>Arte egizia</i> , Figures 35-36.	Unknown provenance assigned in Porter and Moss but Sist (1996: 36) attributes the piece as from Memphis (Malek 2007: 242).	
90. Dynasty Twelve	Round-topped stela of a woman named Iuhetib (in Porter and Moss, Malek 2007: 201) and Wennibu (in <a href="#">Stewart 1979</a> : 25). She is described as ‘the mistress of the house’ an epithet used to describe an otherwise untitled, married woman. It appears Iuhetib/Wennibu held no other titles. Very large <i>Wadjet</i> eyes are carved above the offering table where she is positioned in the dominant space to the left. Offerings are listed but no table is depicted. The stela was dedicated by Iuhetib’s daughter Nebmawadet. Other family names are mentioned on her stela, although the owner is depicted alone. Now in London, Petrie Museum, UC 14452.	PM VIII (201) 803030323 Published in Stewart assigned a different name for the same woman ( <a href="#">Stewart 1979</a> : 25, plate 25.4).	Unknown provenance.	
91. Dynasty Twelve	Sithormery’s offering table is unusual in that the table before her is small bearing a modest pile of offerings. Above the offering inscriptions however, copious amounts of additional food are provided. Stylistic changes in the table arrangement indicate the somewhat freer stylistic decorum evidenced in table composition from the First Intermediate period on. Although the deceased’s stance (holding lily blossom and linen cloth) is conventionally passive, the blossom before Sithormery’s face is huge, perhaps emphasising the connection with the creator deity Nerfertum. Now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, Accession Number: 09.180.128.	No information available.	Lisht North Cemetery, Pit 85A MMA.	
92. Late Dynasty Twelve	The Topographical Bibliography VIII Part 3, identifies this stela as belonging to a woman named Djehutihotep, daughter of a woman named Teti. However, the Louvre Museum database identifies this stela as belonging to a man bearing the same name (and accession number). It is included here, although clearly there is some doubt regarding the gender of the owner (which is somewhat ironic given the hypothesis of androgyny which was instrumental to the function of the table scene). Louvre Museum C 171.	PM VIII (222) 803031047.	Unknown provenance.	

93. Dynasty Twelve or Thirteen	Round topped stela of a woman whose name has not survived. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 20362.	PM VIII (115) 803028101  Schafer 1913: 368 in Aegyptische Inschriften aus den königlichen Museen zu Berlin.	Unknown provenance.
94. Dynasty Twelve or Thirteen	Lower part of a stela with three registers of kneeling people. Part of the inscription reads ‘her daughter Adjadj which appears to indicate this piece as another example of a female owned offering table scene. However, although the Porter and Moss entry (Malek 2007 VIII: 121) mentions no males, the record in the CG Catalogue lists names of men on this stela, thereby leaving this entry in some doubt concerning female ownership.	PM VIII (121) 803028158  Lange and Schafer, Grab- Und Denksteine, 1902, II: 36).	Unknown provenance.
95. Dynasty Twelve or Thirteen	Round-topped stela belonging to Ipi whose offering formula contains none of the usual titles. Four registers of people appear below her table scene. Now in Rio de Janeiro, Museu Nacional, Inv. 660.	PM VIII (240) 803031898  Kitchen 1990: 62- 65, Plates 43-44.	Unknown provenance.
96. Dynasty Twelve or Thirteen	Two fragments of a ‘crude’ rectangular stela belonging to a woman named Mereshotep. The use of the term ‘crude’ is typical of the historiography of the period in which Mereshotep’s stela was published. The term was used for any deviation (or innovation) which departed from official Memphite style. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 20493.	PM VIII (125) 803028188  CG: Lange and Schafer, Grab- Und Denksteine, 1902, II: 86.	Unknown provenance.
97. Dynasty Thirteen to the latter part of the Middle Kingdom c.1773 BC	Rectangular painted stela of Khenty with offering bearer (her son?) holding a duck before her. Now in Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Λ128.	PM VIII (91) 803027162  Tzachou- Alexandri, 1995: 106-7, Figure xvii, 5.	Unknown provenance.
98. Dynasty Thirteen	Rectangular stela with cornice depicting a woman named Ankhtisi at an offering table holding lotus/lily blossoms. Now in Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1022.	PM VIII (211) 803030465  Cantilena and Rubino (eds)	Unknown provenance.
99. Dynasty Thirteen	Round-topped stela with three registers and offering texts dedicated to Mutisenebt, the daughter of Wadjet who was a female servant of ‘the ruler’ (the ‘ruler’ is unnamed). Mutisenebt is seated at her offering table and her mother is seated on the ground before her. Other people (offering bearers) are depicted on the registers below. Now in Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 6. 19888.	PM VIII (98) 803027197  Lutz, 1927: 8, plate 41 in Egyptian Tomb Stelae and Offering Stones.	Unknown provenance.

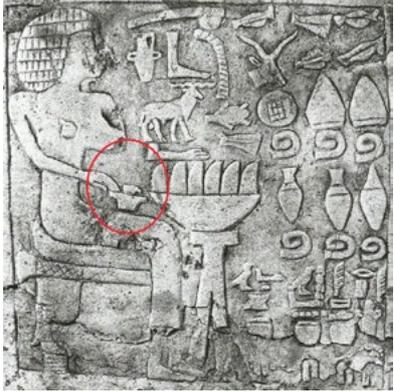
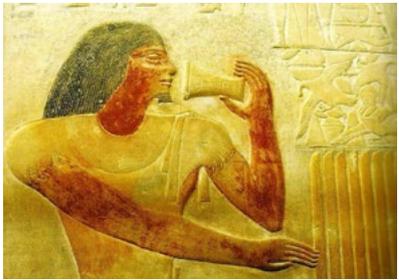
100. Dynasty Thirteen	A stela with two registers shared by two women. A <i>wab</i> (purification) priest is shown performing invocation rituals for the women who are identified as the priest's niece, Beb-sherit and his aunt, Iymeru. The latter is depicted seated on the ground with a child on her lap. Now in Berlin, Agyptisches Museum, 13675.	PM VIII (102) 803027320 CG Lange and Schafer 1913:196 (eds) in Aegyptische Inschriften aus den koniglichen Museen zu Berlin.	Unknown provenance; purchased at Thebes.
101. Dynasty Thirteen	Round topped sandstone stela of Inthapi, who is described as the daughter of a woman named Mereret. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 20674. The CG record (the Egyptian Museum Catalogue 'Catalogue Général des Antiquités Egyptiennes du Musée du Caire') indicates that while the stela is very roughly worked it includes an ankh sign adjacent to the offering table scene with <i>wadjet</i> eyes carved below it. Both are features which only emerged in non-royal iconography during the First Intermediate Period. They occur as a standardised components around the offering table image by this Middle Kingdom phase.	PM VIII (130) 803028245 CG.Lange and Schafer 1902: II, 301 (eds) in Grab- Und Denksteine.	Unknown provenance.
102. Dynasty Thirteen	The bottom right hand corner of a stela which is inscribed for four women, each with dedicated offering texts on separate registers. The stela is dedicated to females named Iti and Rensobeb and the gods Wepwaut and Anubis are named in the offering formulae. The CG entry indicates that each of the women is crouched on one knee, perhaps in an attitude of obeisance before the funerary deities they invoke. One woman makes a gesture of reverence with one hand across her chest and the other outstretched towards her table.	PM VIII (133) 803028274 CG: Lange and Schafer (eds) in Grab- Und Denksteine, 1902, II: 392-393 (text only).	Unknown provenance.
103. Dynasty Thirteen	Rectangular stela belonging to an woman whose name is no longer legible. Her epithets remains identifying her as 'King's ornament'. A young girl (her daughter?) stands before her with two offering bearers. The CG entry adds the information that a mirror is held before the deceased's face by a female servant. Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum. Mirrors are rarely (never?) held or offered by males, although they do appear as grave goods in male burials (Lilyquist 1979).	PM VIII (134) 803028284 CG:Lange and Schafer (eds) in Grab- Und Denksteine, 1902, II: 400-401 (text only).	Unknown provenance.
104. Middle Kingdom period (Malek 2007: 116).	Fragment of a stela (described as 'crude') belonging to a woman named Neferjentet (Malek 2007: 116). Now in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 20369.	PM (116) 803028105 CG: Lange and Schafer (eds) in Grab- Und Denksteine, 1902, II: 365 (text only).	Unknown provenance.

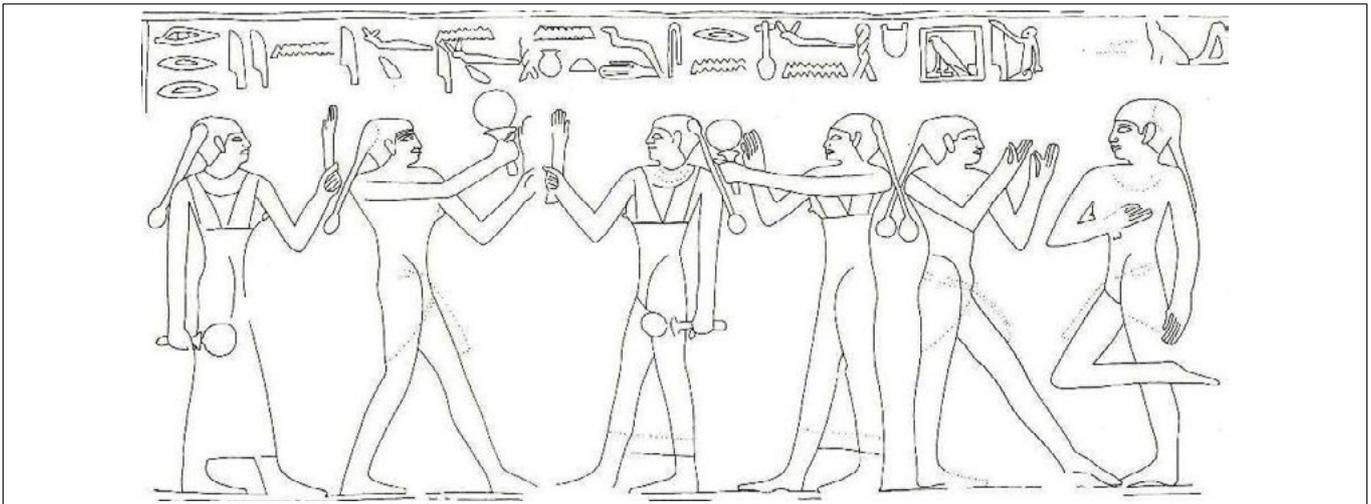
105. Dynasty Thirteen	<p>Round-topped stela containing offering inscriptions for Ibres, who is accompanied in the scene by a daughter and four small children. Three female servants grind grain in a separate register, ensuring an eternal supply. Offering texts invoke the goddesses Mut and Hathor-both associated with the regeneration of the deceased. Now in Leipzig, Ägyptisches Museum, Iv. 5128.</p>	<p>PM (171) 803030068 Krauspe 1974: 159-161, Taf. 18a. Festschrift zum Ägyptischen Museums.</p>	Unknown provenance.	
106. Dynasty Thirteen or Second Intermediate Era	<p>A round-topped stela which includes the names of two women, Nubiyti and Iusnaierpesesh who may have been mother and daughter. The women proffer lotus/lily blossoms to each other across a very tall offering table. Original is now in London, Petrie Museum, UC 14360.</p> <p>For comparative purposes regarding a similar scene composition on an offering table dedicated to two sisters, see the table scene of Ketu and Senet (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, ÄS 95) in <a href="#">Appendix 2: 20</a>.</p>	<p>PM (198) 803030304 <a href="#">Stewart 1979:33</a>, Plate 34. Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs and Paintings from the Petrie Collection.</p>	Unknown provenance.	

## APPENDIX 2: APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 4

### Ritualised Elements and Royal Motifs within Offering Table Imagery

Date and Publication	Description	Image Detail
<p>1. The Helwan Stelae:</p> <p>Left: Slab Stela of the woman Hiti, Dynasty Two C. 2890 - 2686 bc, Helwan.</p> <p><a href="#">Köhler 2009</a>: 192.</p> <p>2. Right: Slab Stela of the woman Hkn, Dynasty Two Helwan.</p> <p><a href="#">Köhler 2009</a>: 130.</p>		
<p>Some of the earliest offering table scenes in Egypt were found at Helwan, the main eastern necropolis of Memphis and one of the largest cemeteries of the Early Dynastic Period. The people buried here range in social status and generally fall outside the class of high elites buried at nearby Saqqara (<a href="#">Köhler 2009</a>: 95). The stelae date to the Early Dynastic Period of Dynasties Two and Three (and therefore fall outside the scope of this study). However, they indicate a remarkable consistency in the positional hierarchy of offering table scene composition, hence their inclusion at the start of this appendix. While the hair in the Helwan corpus is gender specific (all women have loose, long hair; the men have cropped hair) little else appears related to the gender of the deceased. Men and women both occupy their own scenes as beneficiaries of food offerings. In this early Dynastic Period, the offering table structure is simple, with the table bearing reed-shaped bread loaves. Offerings which became canonical throughout the later dynastic period are already present here, above and around the table itself. The arm gesture of reverence (one hand folded across the breast) with the other touching the table, palm down is also typical of table imagery until the end of the Middle Kingdom. Hiti's offerings are all pictorial; Hkn's have numerals delineating amounts of bread and beer. The main purpose of the scene is to name an individual and identify them as the recipient of offerings. Offerings depicted are 'only the very necessary and perishable ones'. (<a href="#">Köhler 2009</a>: 94-96).</p>		

<p>3. Slab Stela of the carpenter Wab-Hnm, Dynasty Three c. 2686-2613 BC, Helwan.</p> <p><a href="#">Köhler 2009</a>: 148.</p>	<p>Wab-Hnm’s table scene from a slightly later Third Dynastic context at Helwan is still predominantly focussed on food and drink offerings. However, the right arm, which in most other examples at Helwan usually reaches towards the offering table is depicted here touching a ‘purification/toilet set’ (circled in red) placed on the lap of the deceased (Köhler 2009: 148).</p> <p>This example suggests that there may have been a developing requirement for more ritualised representation within offering table composition. However, this is the only example in the Helwan corpus published by Christiana Köhler (to date) to depict a cultic object held in this manner.</p>	
<p>4. Tomb painting, offering table scene of Ptahhotep, Dynasty Five to Six c.2414- 2345 BC, Saqqara.</p> <p><a href="#">Bárta 2011</a>: 189-190.</p>	<p>The first indications of Osirian aspects of religion appear in private tombs of this period. The loaves of bread are modified to resemble reeds of the Delta marshes, the place where Osiris was reborn. The loaves also reference the field of reeds, a mythical region of the netherworld. Ptahhotep holds a finely carved alabaster jar to his nose. There are no images of the deceased actually eating or drinking in table iconography; evidently this fell outside the decorum of mortuary iconography. Ptahhotep’s jar is inscribed ‘ceremonial and best oil’. The jar motif is represented exclusively in the offering iconography of deceased men until the First Intermediate Period when the protocol which governed mortuary imagery changed in line with wider access to Osirian</p>	 <p>funerary cult for both men and women (Daoud 2005: 23, 39). The jar held to nose gesture in women is first attested to the First Intermediate tomb of a woman named <i>Idwt</i>, who usurped the tomb of a man. The artist is said to have amended motifs originally intended for its male owner, and so <i>Idwt</i> is shown holding a jar filled with perfume. The motif became common within male and female iconography by the Middle kingdom (Daoud 2005: 39).</p>



5. Above: tomb painting, detail, offering scene of Mereruka, Dynasty Six, Saqqara.

Plate 164, Lilyquist 1979, after Duell, 1938.

This scene from the offering chapel in the Sixth Dynasty tomb of Mereruka at Saqqara, supports the function of mirrors as receptacles for ritual in offering scenes. In this image dancing girls hold mirrors; three also hold ritual wands which terminate in a hand. The fourth dancer (fourth from the left, above), holds her hand close to her mirror. The pose seems to indicate an intent to capture the ritual occurring within this scene, in order to hold it for eternity. The accompanying text reads, ‘the beautiful name of Hathor, the hand of Atum’, a reference to Hathor’s crucial role in the regeneration of Atum, an early creator god. The analogy to the regeneration of the deceased Mereruka appears to be the aim of this ritual. This is also reflected in the hathoric umbrellas of mirrors depicted in this scene which again emphasise Hathor’s role in primeval creation mythology.

6. Offering table scene on stela of Indi and his wife Mutmuti, Early First Intermediate Period, Dynasty Seven to Eight, Thinis (near Abydos).

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Accession Number: 25.2.3.

In the freer style of this period, elements once associated with royalty or with deities emerge in private tomb iconography. Indi’s regalia of collar, kilt, staff and sceptre indicating his status in the underworld were once items of royal regalia. The scaled down *sem* priest close to Indi’s face is shown in the act of presenting food offerings to the deceased. The large ox leg floating above the priest’s head references the *ka* of the deceased and his ability to receive offerings. The table is structured in linear registers and –unusually- contains no food, but

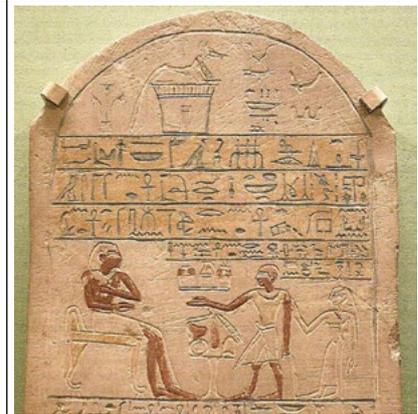


only the sacred oils, incense and unguent containers reflecting the commodities now apparently crucial to transfiguration rituals (Barta 1963: 55).

7. Stela of Ankhren, Dynasty Nine to Eleven c.1985 – 1773, Abydos.

[Harrington 2013](#): 32.

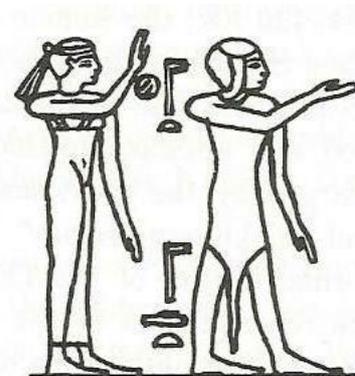
In his greatly scaled-down table scene, Ankhren makes a gesture of reference towards his son, who is depicted in a posture of invocation, as is his sister positioned behind him (Daoud 2005: 185). The son gestures towards his father in the act of performing liturgical recitations directed at the deceased. Below the scene, an appeal to the living was inscribed. Recognition of the finite nature of mortuary cults may explain the purpose of ‘appeals to the living’ which appear in offering stelae from the end of the Old Kingdom Period ([Harrington 2013](#): 31-32). The Anubis jackal above the scene acted apotropaically while assisting the deceased in the transition to an Osirian afterlife.



Right: Palm positions differ between men and women when performing funerary prayers in table scene iconography. Men offer offering prayers presenting a flat palm; women present their hands with the palm vertical, facing towards the deceased. The reason for this gender differentiation remains unclear. It is consistent amongst all examples explored for this study (an actual example can be seen above in the differentiated gestures made by Ankhren’s son and daughter).

8. Right: Male and female invocation gestures.

[Blackman 1921](#): 8-30.

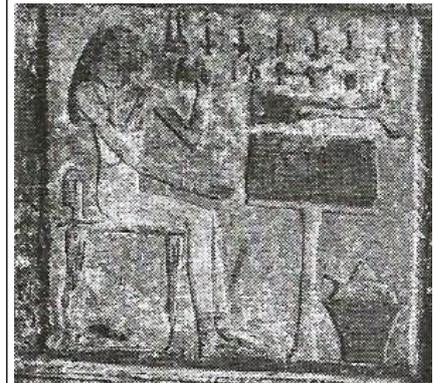


9. Line drawing (detail) from the False door of Henut, Dynasty Nine or Ten c.2160 - 2055 BC Saqqara.

Daoud 2005: 39.

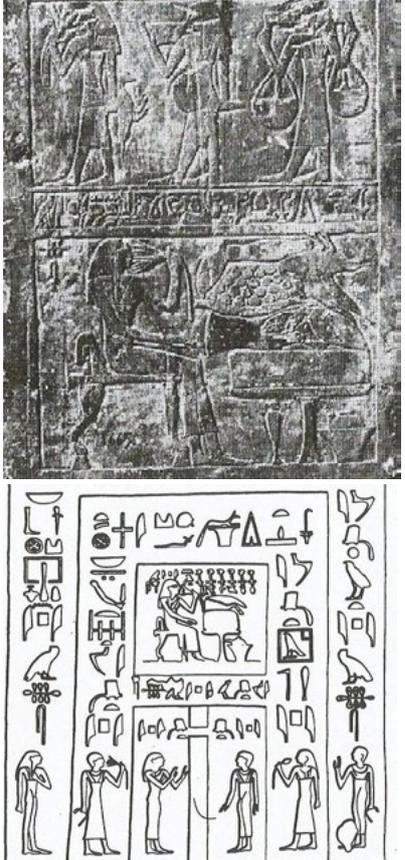
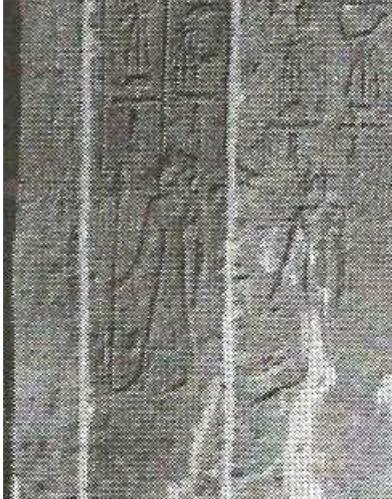
As noted earlier, until the end of the Old Kingdom, women were not depicted holding perfume or ointment containers to their faces. The scent of perfume was connected with rebirth and with the sphere of the divine. On the left, Henut is positioned at her offering table which holds conjoined reed-form bread loaves. Above it is a leg of beef, referencing the *ka* of the deceased. The only other object -aside from formulaic offerings listed above the table - is an oversized purification ewer and basin (Daoud 2005: 39).

This image is also discussed in [Appendix 1](#).



10. Detail from photo of Henu's false door,

Daoud 2005: Plate XVI

<p>11. Detail of the offering stela on the false door of the woman Ipi-m-sAs, Dynasty Nine or Ten, Saqqara.</p> <p>Daoud 2005: 24, Plate XII.</p> <p>11a. Line drawing of the complete door.</p> <p>Daoud 2005: 28, Plate XII</p>	<p>Ipi-m-sAs has over thirty five offerings listed around her table. Above the scene, female offering bearers carry cased mirrors and toiletry boxes. Mirrors were understood not simply as reflectors of an image but as receptors which captured the essence of an individual and of ritual occurring around them (Lilyquist 1979). The word for mirrors, <i>anx</i> was also the word for life.</p> <p>On the lower part of her false door, the deceased appears in six different postures indicating from left to right: reverence; divine status and affinity with the sun god; praising the living; in a passive attitude of respect, and in the invocation of prayers (Harrington 2013: 16; Daoud 2005: 24-29, 75).</p>	
<p>12. False door of the woman Mst-n.i, Dynasty Nine or Ten, Saqqara.</p> <p>Daoud 2005: 75, Plate XXVII</p>	<p>In this detail carved below her table scene, Mst-n.i holds a spear-headed staff, an item associated primarily with men before the First Intermediate Period. She is shown in a striding posture, another masculine motif in earlier iconography. The deceased bears a feminised male epithet <i>Spst nswt</i> or noblewoman of the king. This epithet became feminised, with the earlier male version almost unknown during the First Intermediate era (Daoud 2005: 75).</p>	

13. Detail from false door of the woman DwAw, Dynasty Nine or Ten, Saqqara.

Daoud 2005: 84 – 85.

DwAw is depicted holding a blossom to her face with an ankh sign in her other hand. She is depicted at the central part of her false door, directly below the offering table scene.

The ankh was a potent motif symbolising eternal life (with a host of other metaphorical and divine associations) and is rarely depicted, even as a royal motif, before the Old Kingdom.

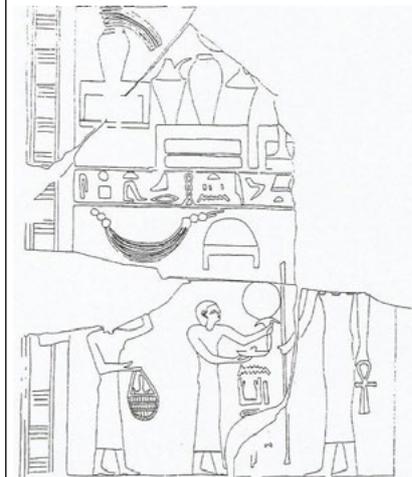
During the period in which DwAw lived, there are just a few instances which show non-royal women holding the ankh. (There is a second example immediately below).

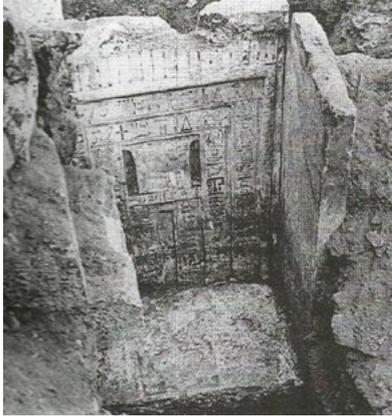
Another example from the bottom panel of a false door belonging to SAT-xmt shows this woman holding a staff, in a striding position (right). Two female attendants offer SAT-xmt mirrors in the register below her offering table scene (Daoud 2005: 153). One mirror is cased and both have Hathoric umbrellas: on the significance of mirrors in offering imagery see entry 5, page 113).

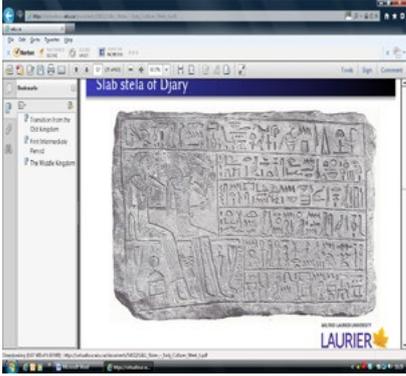
14. Right: Detail (line drawing) from the offering table scene of SAT-xmt.

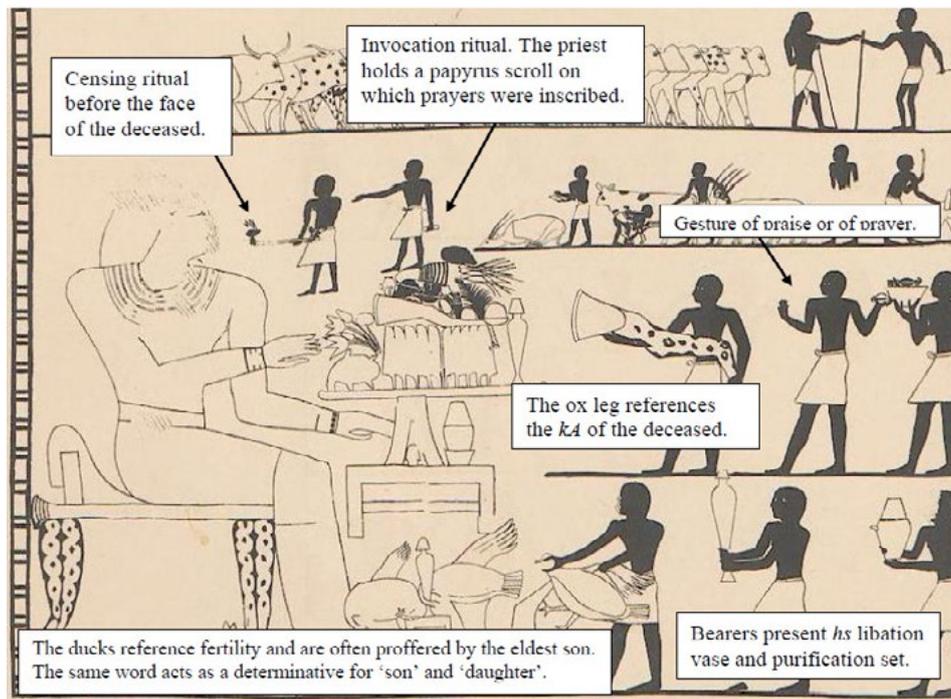
Daoud 2005:153, plate 316.

There is another example of an ankh held by a non-royal woman in [Appendix 1: 52](#).



<p>15. The false door stela of the woman SAt-ini-Tti, Dynasty Nine or Ten <i>in situ</i>. Teti Pyramid Necropolis, Saqqara.</p> <p>Daoud 2005: 82, Plate XXXII.</p>	<p>The false door of SAt-ini-Tti was found <i>in situ</i> together with the two side pieces which formed a shallow chapel. The image indicates the reduced style of tombs in the First Intermediate Period. Aside from the false door stela and its side panels, there is no indication of further rooms or offering chapels in many elite tombs of this period. SAt-ini-Tti's coffin would have rested directly below her false door at the end of a burial shaft below it. This spatial arrangement was sufficient for her to receive all that was necessary for survival in an Osirian afterlife.</p>	 <p>Offerings continued to be made outside at the false door, which may have had an actual offering slab before it. This image is also discussed as Figure 3 within Chapter 1 of this study.</p>
<p>16. Detail from the stela of Aha, Dynasty Seven to Eleven, from a provincial context at Naga ed-deir.</p> <p>Teeter 2011: Plate 1.</p>	<p>Aha is depicted receiving libations. Two scaled down offering bearers are depicted pouring water (with natron?) close to his face. Perhaps cleansing rituals of the mouth are implied. In this provincial image, although the overall composition is formal and highly organised, there are stylistic freedoms evident in scene arrangement. The table motif is deconstructed into essential elements offered directly to the deceased by priests officiating in a range of ritual performances. Both Aha and his wife are shown in a striding position emphasising their transfigured (active) state. There is a stylistic similarity to Number 6.</p>	 <p>The same provincial workshop may have been involved in the production of these artefacts. Both are provincial in context.</p>
<p>17. Detail from the double false door of Ky and SAt-Sd-Abd, detail (line drawing). Dynasty Nine or Ten, Memphite necropolis, Saqqara.</p> <p>Daoud 2005: 179-193, Plates CXVa, CXVb.</p>	<p>This unusual double door affords both Ky and his wife SAt-Sd-Abd their own independent false doors and table scenes alongside each other, in which each holds the dominant position at the left side facing right. Ky grasps a piece of cloth in his hand. His wife holds an open lily. Both items reference their divine status. Above their son's head, three priests facing the direction of the tomb owner officiate in various offering rituals. The female gesture of support for a male partner in this scene is rare in non royal iconography until this period (Daoud 2005: 182).</p>	 <p>This image is explored further in Figure 6 of this study.</p>

<p>18. Slab stela of Djary, First Intermediate Period, el-Tarif.</p> <p>The Metropolitan Museum of Art (this item is not on display and no accession number is available).</p>	<p>Djary’s somewhat sharply incised and distinctive offering table scene has been described as ‘an excellent example of the bold – even bizarre – style’ of provincial art towards the end of this period (Bryan 2000: plate 5). Conventional ritualised elements included the woman’s grasp of her partner’s shoulder and the ointment jar raised to his face. The bovine Hathoric amulet and other items beneath their shared chair are unusual and perhaps local in style.</p>	
<p>19. Fragment of offering table stela of a woman, whose name is now lost.</p> <p>Dynasty Eleven, Provenance unknown. Cairo Museum JE 45603.</p> <p>Musacchio 2008: 55.</p>	<p>In this much reduced scene, although an offering table is implied it is not depicted (perhaps this was considered unnecessary as the table is implied through other elements usually featured in offering table image composition). Items positioned where a table would normally stand include purification and libation sets which by this period, were significant components of rituals associated with offering table imagery. The only specific food offering is referenced in the leg of beef. Unstoppered <i>hs</i> vessels at the bottom of the scene held water libations. The woman’s daughter Bbi stands in front of her (Musacchio 2008: 55).</p>	 <p>This example is also discussed in <a href="#">Appendix 1: 74</a>.</p>



20. Above, detail of offering table scene from the tomb of Khety, Beni Hasan. Dynasty Eleven.

Newberry, 1893, II: 53, Plate 118.

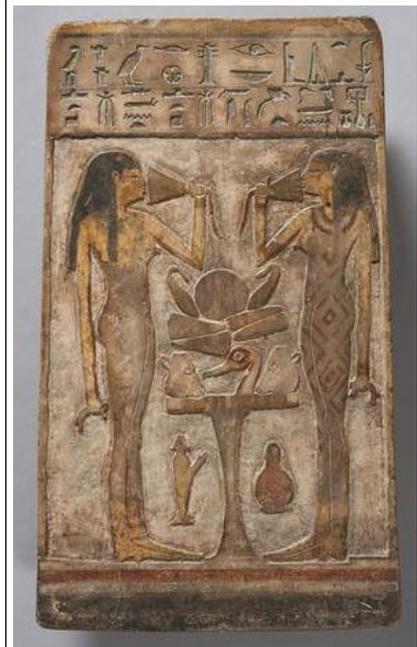
Khety was a nomarch serving the king in the region of Beni Hasan in the early Middle Kingdom c. 2055 BC. Following the breakdown of central government at the end of the Old Kingdom, nomarchs required appropriate monuments to express their status (Doxey 2009: 4-7. Their use of provincial workshops far from Memphis introduced new styles which evolved out of older Memphite traditions (Robins 1990: 39). Khety's substantial tomb was carved into cliffs alongside the Nile. This scene (line drawing above) is taken from a false door carved into an eastern wall close to the burial chamber. Khety's wife and children appear in other imagery nearby, in ritualised scenes of hunting and fishing in the marshes. However, in this image the deceased is seated alone at the table, the sole recipient of mortuary rites which are enacted before him. Other scenes of butchery, of gathering grain and of the harvesting of flax in scenes around this image ensure perpetual supplies of all essential foodstuffs and commodities required by the deceased in the afterlife.

21. Offering stela of Keti and Senet, Late Dynasty Eleven. Provenance unknown.

Kunsthistorische Museum Vienna, ÄS 95.

Malek 2007: 261.

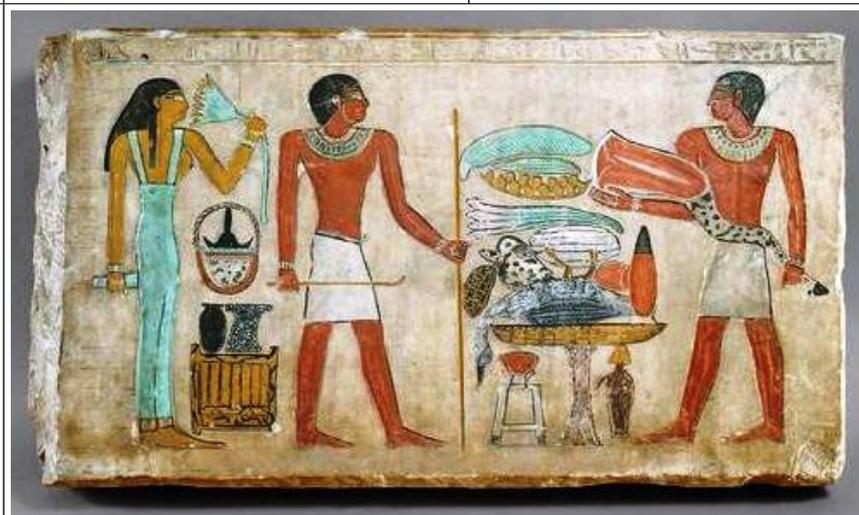
The offering formula above their table indicates the stela is dedicated to sisters Keti and Senet and names their mother as Hetep. The scene is carefully balanced symmetrically so that both women are clearly indicated as joint beneficiaries of mortuary cult embedded within this scene. The blossom references the ability to breath and, more fundamentally, their affinity with the sun god, Ra and the creator deity Nefertum. Offerings on the table are directed at both women: the ox heads and the fowl referencing fertility and the ability of the *ka* to access offerings. The women wear tight, sheath dresses emphasising a youthful, idealised form referencing fecundity and rebirth. Each grasps a strip of fine linen. This item was exclusively a male motif in funerary iconography until the First Intermediate Period. Cloth was a valuable commodity and in this context indicates ‘divine perception’ of the deceased indicating their knowledge of afterlife ritual (Harrington 2013: 16). The shared scene is unusual and indicates the innovative possibilities available to artists and agents in the composition



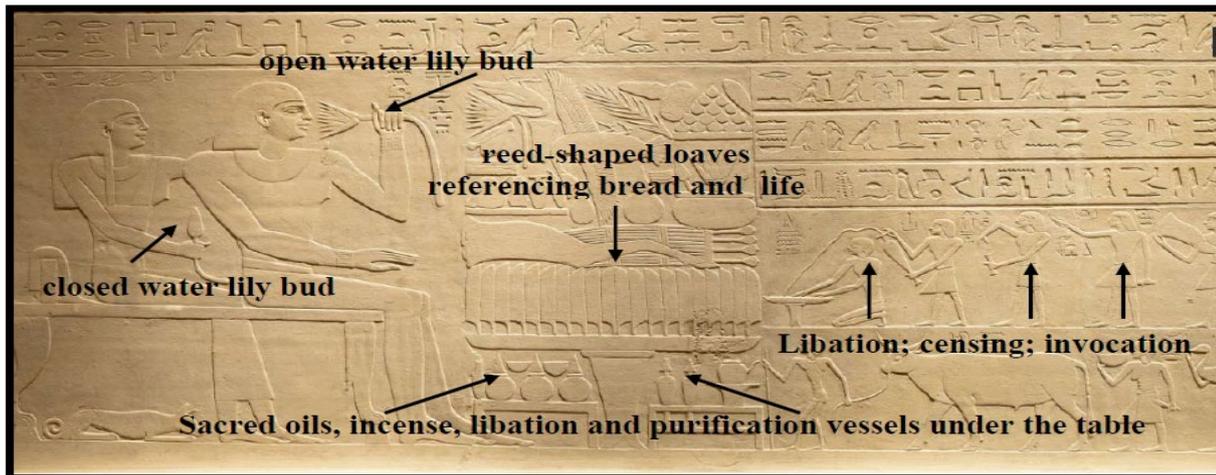
of funerary imagery following the end of the Old Kingdom. The previous strict adherence to Memphite iconographical decorum which governed funerary scene composition lessened, permitting a somewhat ‘freer’ style.

See [Appendix 1: 106](#) for a similarly structured scene dedicated to two women.

22. Offering Stela of Cheti, Dynasty Twelve c.1985 – 1773 BC, Provenance Unknown, Kunst Historisches Museum, Vienna, AE Inv.202.



Cheti's wife is positioned behind him in a hierarchical arrangement which became common in later, New Kingdom banquet scenes. She holds a cloth in one hand, and an opened water lily or lotus blossom in the other, effectively ensuring her own rebirth and transition while enabling that of her husband. Mirrors, ointment containers sacred oil jars and libation vessels appear closely associated with this woman. The items are strategically positioned between the couple, so that effectively, they serve both individuals. The mirror positioned above the chest enabled the capture and retention of funerary ritual. The *sekhem*-sceptre held by Cheti represents the powers he possesses as an *akh* (Harrington 2013:16). These items and the elaborate offerings on his table form a liminal zone between him and the offering bearer (a son?) who offers the ox leg which references the *ka* aspects of both the deceased. Libation and purification vessels also feature prominently under Cheti's table.



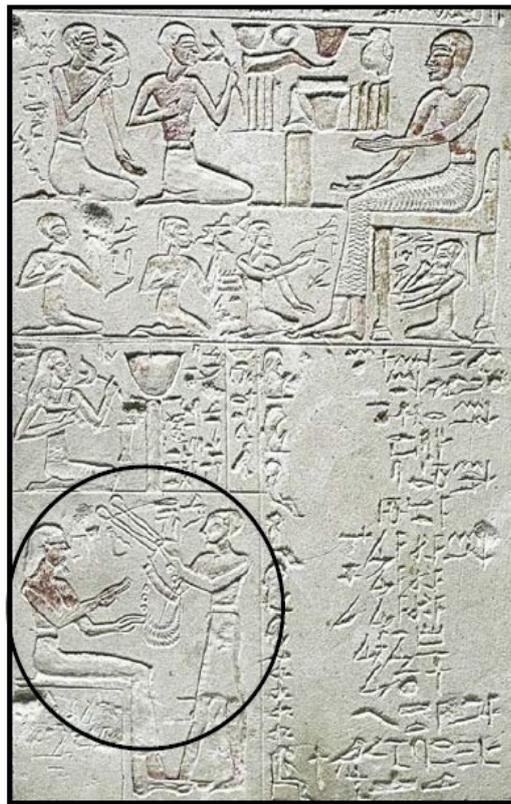
23. Offering table stela of Intef, Dynasty 11, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 57.95.

Intef served the king, Mentuhotep II, in his successful overthrow of the northern kingdom of Herakleopolis at the end of the Tenth, early Eleventh Dynasty c. 2012 BC. As an elite courtier, Intef would have had access to the finest craftsmen and materials. It is therefore likely that his offering table scene exemplified all that was desired by an elite individual in the afterlife. As such, the stela incorporates evidence of significant iconological motifs encapsulated within an expertly crafted offering scene. The closed water lily bud references night (when the buds closed) and the kingdom of Osiris. The open blossom references the sun-rise (when the flowers opened) and the kingdom of the sun god Ra (Franke and Marée 2013: 28-29). The presence of a *sem*-priest reading offering prayers (invocations) should be interpreted as the son of the deceased enacting funerary rituals for his dead father. This iconographical structure reflects the mythological narrative of Osiris and Horis and the divine paradigm of father and son. Filial priestly responsibility also included feeding, anointing and eye-painting the deceased in a ritualistic pattern based on temple cult. In a temple context these ritualistic acts were performed upon the cult-statues of gods and those of deceased kings (Franke and Marée 2013: 50-51).

<p>24. False door stela of Ameny, Dynasty Twelve or Thirteen c.1985 – 1773 BC, Abydos.</p> <p><a href="#">Franke and Marée 2013</a>: 85 – 88.</p>	<p>Ameny holds his right hand palm down, indicating he is in receipt of the offerings on and around his table. His other hand holds a ceremonial flagellum, once an item of royal regalia. These semiotic motifs indicate Ameny’s transfigured state; he is now an <i>akh</i>, part of the community of the blessed dead. The flagellum associates the deceased with Osiris and as an item of burial goods, was often placed close to the coffin in so-called ‘court burials’ of this period (Grajetzki 2014: 150). (Heqata, featured in Figure 12 of this study had similar items placed on top of his coffin, found in situ at Qubbet el-Hawa at Elephantine, near Aswan). By this early Middle Kingdom stage once divine aspects of kings and gods have transitioned into non-royal iconographical compositions. Above the loaves are three sealed jars of unguents.</p>	 <p>There are, somewhat unusually, two basins with spouted ewers beneath the table. Purification equipment is usually represented as a single item. There appears to be an emphasis on cleansing rituals which involved the ewer, basins, water and natron (a natural cleansing agent) in scenes of this period. Coffin Texts emphasise the necessity for the deceased to be in a purified state in order to enter the presence of Osiris (<a href="#">Faulkner 1973</a>:25-26).</p>
<p>25. Offering stela of Khentikhetywer, Dynasty Twelve or Thirteen, provenance unknown ‘probably’ Abydos.</p> <p><a href="#">Franke and Marée 2013</a>: 99 – 102.</p>	<p>Although its owner is described as a minor official, this stela is described as ‘remarkable’ for the complexity of detail crammed into its offering table scene. Khentikhetywer is accompanied by his wife Aty (centre) and his mother Renet (who is not visible here). His mother makes a gesture of reverence towards her son while his wife offers ointment with one hand raised in a posture of invocation. The motif of a wife making offerings to a spouse is unusual. Aty appears to be wearing a transparent cloak which suggests her priestly role. An offering of ointment supports this conjecture. This commodity was an important element of Hathoric cult (<a href="#">Franke and Marée 2013</a>: 102). The deceased holds a lotus blossom to his face. This symbol was primarily associated with women until the end of the Old Kingdom.</p>	

26. Stela of Senwosret, Wadjhau, Senbef. Dynasty Thirteen, Abydos.

[Franke and Marée 2013](#): 70-73, Plate 2.



This stela was shared by three named men; the first of whom is seated (somewhat unusually) to the right of the scene. His size suggests he is the owner of the stela (and recipient of offerings enacted in the scene) even though he is seated in what is usually a secondary position. The piece is described as provincial in style and perhaps regional style influenced scene content and layout. In the lower register there is a rare (possibly unique) scene of the presentation of a collar, offered to the deceased by his son. ‘This is a scene normally restricted to temple ritual or tomb decoration, and, as such, it was never before depicted on a stela’ ([Franke 2002](#): 17). Its inclusion on the stela of a private individual is another indication of the transference of royal motifs into the iconographical repertoire of private individuals. The collar supports the close connection between offering table imagery and Osirian religion: ‘[t]he gift of a collar and the rattling of its counterpoises provided the dead with a means to assimilate to Osiris and acquire his regenerative powers’ ([Franke and Marée 2013](#): 73). Below the deceased, his wife kneels at her own table which holds a large water basin, referencing purification and libation. An ointment jar is positioned below it. Although described as ‘crude’ (Hall 1912: 5) and ‘second rate’ ([Franke and Marée 2013](#): 72) this stela incorporates many of the gender specific or royal motifs (the lotus flowers, the ointment containers, dominant position at the table and the ornamental collar) which by the Middle Kingdom had become available to non-royal men and women. Amuletic collars (such as that offered here) also feature in offering friezes in Middle Kingdom coffins.

27. Offering stela of a man named Ameny, unknown provenance but ‘probably’ Abydos. Dynasty Thirteen.

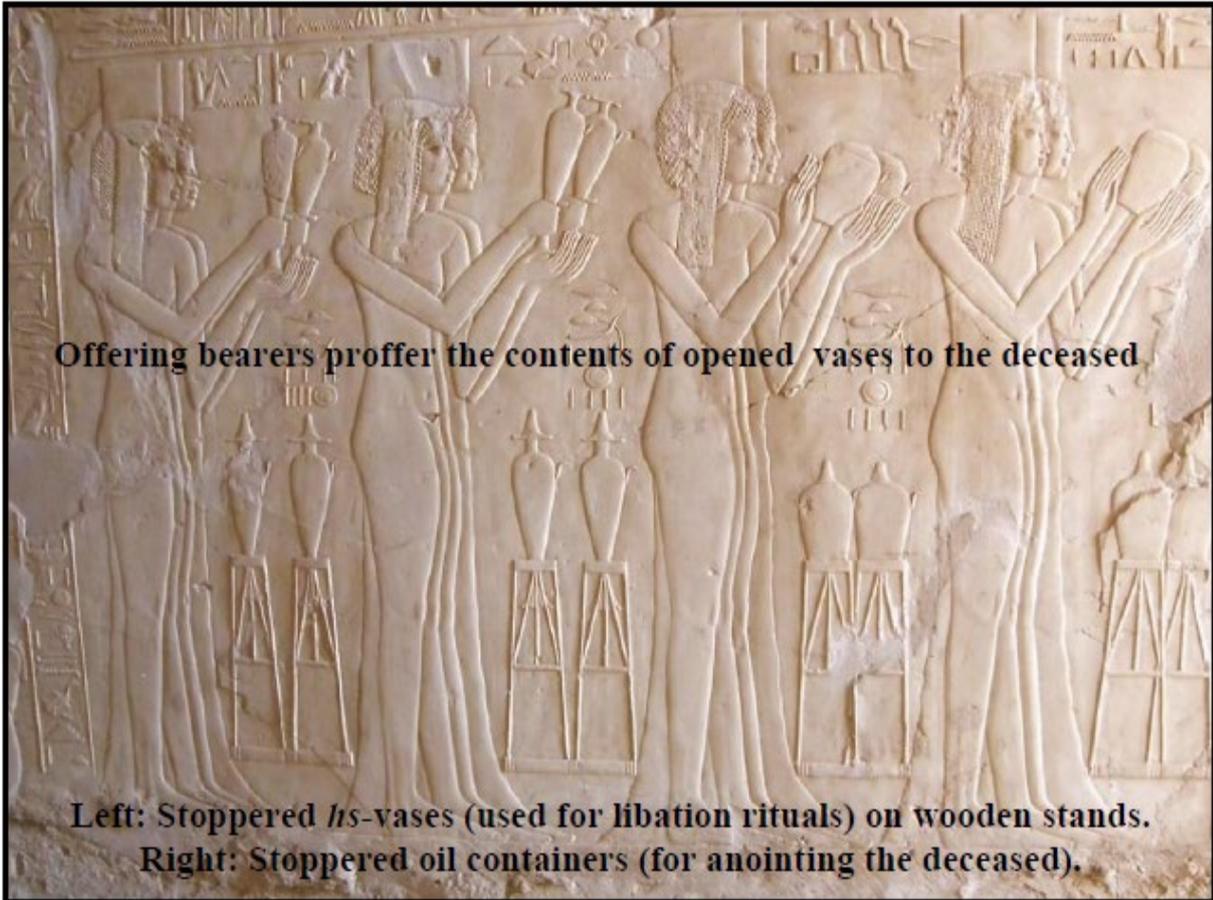
[Franke and Marée 2013](#):25, Plate 6.

Ameny holds a closed water lily bud to his nose. His wife, Renseneb holds an open blossom to her face. By the end of this period, the blossom is frequently held by both men and women. It had a powerful iconographic presence in offering scenes. The blue water-lily opened at sun rise and closed at noon. The motif of smelling this flower ‘was to perpetuate the ‘morning state’ of the flower, and symbolised the act of smelling the ‘sweet’ breath of life’ ([Franke and Marée 2013](#): 28). Open blossoms referenced Ra the sun god,



whilst the closed blossoms acted as a motif for Osiris. The symbolic role of the flower is emphasised in this display of ‘its complete botanical cycle’ ([Franke and Marée 2013](#): 28).

<p>28. Table scene, detail. Late Middle Kingdom stela of Siamun.</p> <p>Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 1970.49.</p>	<p>The daughter of Siamun and his wife (who are positioned seated together to this left of this detail) performs libation and censuring rituals before her parents. Both rituals acknowledge their transition into the netherworld.</p> <p>The depiction of these important ritual acts of libating and censuring were now realised in perpetuity through the inclusion of motifs carved into scene composition.</p> <p>Similar motifs of smoking censors and flowing water are represented within object friezes painted inside Middle Kingdom coffins.</p> <p>Although eldest sons played an important role in the (enacted) funerary rituals of their fathers, iconographically, females frequently take precedence over their male siblings in tomb imagery as in this example and in the previous stela of</p>	<p>Ameny (27). In the table scene of Ameny, his oldest daughter takes precedence over male siblings. This positional hierarchy is also a feature of Middle Kingdom provincial tombs at El Kab</p>  <p>(Meskell 2001: 35; Doxey 2009: 8-9).</p>
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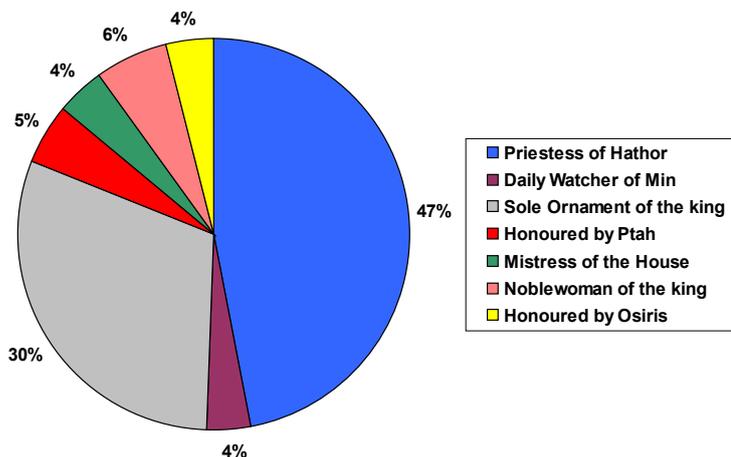
**Tomb of Kershef, Thebes, New Kingdom:**

In the era which followed the Middle Kingdom, rituals of libation and purification were fully realised within expansive banqueting imagery in private tombs. Although the offering table motif of earlier periods was subsumed within this scene-type, the performance of transitional rites which underpinned the purpose of funerary meals continued as an overt element within scene iconography.

29. Tomb of Kheruef, Thebes, New Kingdom (photo: [K.Webb](#)). In the era which followed the Middle Kingdom, rituals of libation and purification were fully realised within expansive banqueting imagery in private tombs. Although the offering table motif of earlier periods was subsumed within this scene-type, the performance of transitional rites which underpinned the purpose of funerary meals continued as an overt element within scene iconography. In this image lines of offering bearers (their headdresses suggest a priestess function) approach the deceased with opened containers, indicating their readiness to perform libation and purification rituals.

### APPENDIX 3: Titles and epithets associated with women in possession of offering table depictions (based on the 106 instances of women’s offering table scenes collated in Appendix 1, page 92).

3: Epithets or titles of women depicted in their own offering table scene



Although no conclusions can be drawn regarding the significance of epithets from this limited sample, the epithets Priestess (occasionally ‘prophetess’) of Hathor, and Sole Ornament of the King are often found together in the titulary of First Intermediate women, Figure 17 (Stefanović 2013: 209-210).

While some scholars believe the role of priestess to have been an honorary title (Galvin 1984: 42-49), others (Fischer 1976: 21; Daoud 2005: 113-114) note that there is evidence that women did actually play active roles in temple and funerary rituals of the Hathoric cult, from the end of the Old Kingdom.

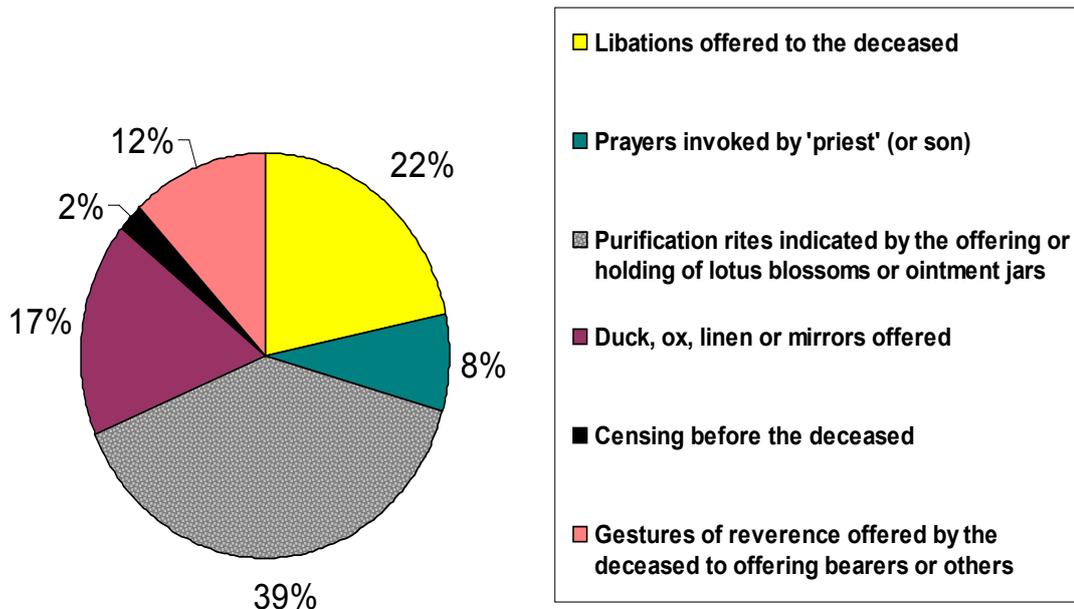
There is scope for further study regarding the relationship between an engendered offering table construction and titles borne by the deceased. The role of Hathor in primeval creation mythology and in the rejuvenation of gods, kings and non-royal deceased, may be reflected metaphorically through the rank of priestly office associated with some deceased women.



Figure 17: Stela Lacock Abbey 50029. First Intermediate Period, unknown provenance (Stefanović 2013: 211). The inscription describes the woman iAm-Hqt as Priestess of Hathor and Sole Ornament of the King (titles indicated). iAm-Hqt’s stance and spear were male accoutrements before this period.

## APPENDIX 4: Frequency of rituals enacted in offering table depictions from the examples included in this study.

4: Rituals depicted within the offering table depictions collated in appendices 1 and 2



Although the sample analysed here is limited to the offering table imagery collected in appendices 1 and 2, there is supporting evidence in Coffin Texts and other liturgical inscriptions (associated with table scenes) that purification and libation were two of the main ritualised functions facilitated by the inclusion of this motif within the iconographical repertoire of the deceased.

The first most frequently indicated ritual (purification) ensured that the deceased was regarded as physically pure and thereby entitled to enter the company of Osiris (and other gods) in the netherworld. A state of purity was essential to the deceased's ability to receive offerings vital to his or her sustenance. The second most frequently occurring ritual (libation) in the limited example studied here, ensured that the deceased retained physical and metaphysical faculties beyond life. Both rites were vital to the afterlife integrity of the deceased.

<sup>1</sup> While the scope of this study makes it impossible to include every example where a woman was provided with her own offering table scene, every effort has been made to include as many examples as possible which fall within the time frame of this study. The focus is on offering scene depictions which exemplify aspects of Osirian-related components. The most salient aspect of the offering scenes collected here is their association with women who are the sole beneficiaries of cult in these depictions (as opposed to sharing table scenes with spouses, fathers or brothers). Scene details (and, where these exist) relevant photos or line drawings have been collated from the following sources: Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes Du Musée Du Caire, Volumes 1 – IV (1902, 1907, 1908, 1925), abbreviated to CG in this appendix; The Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Statues, Reliefs and Paintings (Porter and Moss Volumes III, Parts 1 and 2: 1981 and Volume VIII: 2007), abbreviated to PM in this appendix; The Corpus of Inscriptions of the Herakleopolitan Period (Daoud 2005); Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom (Harpur 1987); Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs and Paintings from the Petrie Collection, Part Two, (Stewart 1979). Other entries have been sourced from museum catalogues and publications. It is intended that the corpus of female offering table information collected here, will form a useful adjunct to existing catalogues of more generally inclusive offering table elements on stelae, false doors and tomb walls.

<sup>2</sup> References cite the most recent publication of a particular scene or architectural element. The number in parenthesis indicates a page number in Porter and Moss's bibliography which lists any other references to any other known publications of a specific scene. Most primary source materials published on these images date to 19th century to early 20th century sources which have been extensively revised in almost all instances. Some of the revisions have been carried out by Khaled Daoud (2005) of the University of Liverpool. Daoud's work does not however, focus on tables owned by women, but is centred on tables dated to the Herakleopolitan phase of the First Intermediate Period (Dynasties Nine and Ten).

<sup>3</sup> Actual images of scenes are not intended as the prime focus of this appendix. Space restrictions permit the use of thumbnail versions only. Full images are available through publication references where these exist. Where images do not exist (or were unavailable) accession numbers and the physical location of each item is indicated. It is of concern that some of the items listed here remain in storerooms at Saqqara, awaiting full publication many decades after their excavation.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all funerary elements listed here are constructed from limestone.

<sup>5</sup> The fish amulet is sometimes depicted in the hair of young girls as a protection against drowning.

<sup>6</sup> The subject of items held and gestures made in a ritual context are discussed in more detail in the Appendix to Chapter 4, [Appendix 2](#).

<sup>7</sup> The earliest occurrence of this title according to Junker (1931) is attested in the titulary of elite women from the Fifth Dynasty. There has been inconclusive scholarly discussion as to whether 'Sole Companion of the King' can also be read as 'King's concubine' (Nyord 1970: 2 cited Daoud 2005: 113).

<sup>8</sup> The title sequence "Priestess of Hathor, Sole Ornament of the king" was in use predominantly in the First Intermediate Period and again at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty. These titles appear to indicate the high social rank of the deceased in the Memphite necropolis (Stefanović 2013: 209-212; Leprohon 1994: 31-47). These epithets are discussed in more detail in [Appendix 3](#), page 124.

<sup>9</sup> Malek (2007) assumes her husband may have been seated at the missing part of the offering table. This may not be the case however, given that other women bearing this epithet are usually depicted alone as sole recipients of offering rituals.

<sup>10</sup> Nicola Harrington (2013:19) makes a convincing case that the flower frequently held by the deceased, which is almost always referred to as a 'lotus' was in fact a blue water lily. Her persuasive argument is supported by Franke and Marée (2013: 28-29) who note that the blue water lily (*Nymphaea cerulean*) commonly called 'lotus' by Egyptologists was a significant motif in offering table symbolism. The appendix in this chapter uses the 'lotus/lily' format for this reason. The subject is discussed further in [Appendix 2](#).

<sup>11</sup> See item 23 in this Appendix for another example of this Old Kingdom door style.

<sup>12</sup> This title appears in female burial contexts throughout Egypt. However, the epithet seems to be dominant in the Memphite area at this time where 'up to 25% of nearly 400 examples collected' originate (Galvin 1983: 425).

<sup>13</sup> Doxey (1998: 125-126) notes that from the First Intermediate Period, this title occurred only in autobiographical contexts. From the Middle Kingdom it changed from an epithet to an actual title (Doxey 1998: 125). Doxey (1998: 126) notes that 'in a largely illiterate society, frequently repeated stock phrases and titles (such as this) may have been recognised by a larger segment of the population than could read complete "autobiographies".'

<sup>14</sup> 181 c. 2181 -2160 BC ([Shaw 2000](#): 483).

<sup>15</sup> The First Intermediate Period followed the end of the Old Kingdom: dates are c. 2686 – 2160 BC and for the First Intermediate Period, (Dynasties 9 and 10) dates are c. 2160–2055 BC ([Shaw 2000](#): 483). Pepy II's 'exceptional longevity' resulted in the 'gradual fossilization of the state administrative system with a marked decline in royal authority (Daoud 2005: 1). After Pepy II a line of eighteen 'wholly ephemeral kings' ruled throughout the final years of the Old Kingdom forming the Seventh and Eight Dynasties ([Seidlmayer 2000](#): 108). The First Intermediate Period also encompasses Dynasties 9 and 10 of the so-called Herakleopolitan period during which Egypt was split between rulers in the Northern Memphite part of Lower Egypt who were challenged by powerful nomarchal rulers from the Southern Theban region of Upper Egypt ([Shaw 2000](#): 483; Daoud 2005: 1-2). During the First Intermediate Period both Memphite and Theban rulers shared control over Egypt until the Theban ruler Mentuhotep II ousted the Herakleopolitan ruler as he gained control over the entire country c. 2055. This act of reunification initiated the Eleventh Dynasty in a period now referred to as the Middle Kingdom (Daoud 2005: 1-2; [Shaw 2000](#): 483).

<sup>16</sup> Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire.

<sup>17</sup> An apparent reticence in naming a spouse or father in female offering table scene inscriptions is explored in section 3.3 of this study.

<sup>18</sup> Mirrors and items of jewellery start to appear in an elaboration of offering (and offering ritual) in this period (Lilyquist 1979:16, 33 136; Daoud 2005: 153, 316).

<sup>19</sup> Although inclusion of the deceased's name somewhere on a mortuary component was vital to the effectiveness of funerary ritual, Nfirt-wA's name is absent from jambs on her false door where it would normally appear. This is possibly due to lack of space and as Daoud notes, it appear that at this period that the representation of the deceased 'was enough to identify the texts above it' (2005: 152).

<sup>20</sup> This cemetery has never been recorded or published. Zakaria Ghoneim excavated there for just one season. Some of the funerary components he excavated were transferred to the Saqqara storerooms, the location of others is unknown. This area is the location for a group of small stele-maison type individual structures (shallow chapels formed mainly from a false door with side panels) or larger mud brick offering chapels belonging to groups of related individuals (Daoud 2005: 8).

<sup>21</sup> Inscribed material from mortuary contexts at Dendera increased 'dramatically' from the beginning of the Eleventh Dynasty, suggesting greater access to once restricted funerary components. The Dendera stelae reflect something of the political and social reality of this era. Aspects of Memphite Old Kingdom style was maintained while 'striking variations' were introduced indicating a greater independence from state control in the use of funerary motifs by elite individuals from this region (Musacchio 2008: 57). People described as brewers, carriers of bricks and dog handlers erect their own false doors and offering stelae in this period. While these roles may have been well regarded, they do not suggest 'elite' positions (Malek 2007: 155, 160).

<sup>22</sup> By naming people in a funerary inscription those people were also enabled to benefit from rites enacted for the deceased.

<sup>23</sup> CG Publications are the official entry catalogues for artefacts entering the museum at Cairo. The Catalogue abbreviated here to CG is Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Cairo.

<sup>24</sup> False doors with embedded offering table stelae formed the symbolic focus of the entire tomb for many burial structures of this period (Daoud 2005: 187). Earlier extensive elements of tomb structure were now condensed into this ritually charged element situated directly over the burial shaft, replacing multi-roomed structures of earlier periods.

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