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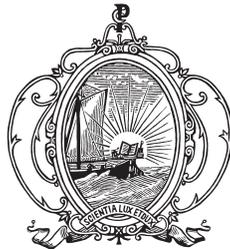
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STUDIES IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN
FUNERARY LITERATURE

edited by

SUSANNE BICKEL and LUCÍA DÍAZ-IGLESIAS



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EVERYBODY'S AFTERLIFE?
"PHARAONISATION" IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS

Susanne BICKEL*

Dealing with death is one of the central endeavours of most civilisations. It is a cultural act to bury the deceased; an act that is not only commanded by physical and sanitary necessity, but that is also inspired and guided by the social disruptions and the individual and collective emotions that death produces.¹ Burying a dead person, and maintaining a cult of the dead especially, are attempts to mediate between the physical presence (albeit in modified appearance) and the live absence of a person. It is probably this paradox that fostered thinking about forms of metaphysical existence after the end of this life. Every culture and every period develops its own answers to the question of where the dead go and how they exist. It seems to be an anthropological constant and necessity to conceive some form of individual existence beyond death.² An absolute non-existence is almost inconceivable, even in our highly secularised and rationalised Western world.³ This is certainly also related to the survivors' memory and need to mentally and/or ritually connect in some form with the deceased. In most cultural settings, thinking about those who have departed involves some sort of spatial framework within which the existence of the deceased can be imagined. This collective imagination forms the basis for concepts and practices that are generally rooted in conceptions of worldview and are in coherence with co-existing cosmological, mythological and religious, as well as social, sets of ideas. The range of funerary⁴ concepts and practices seems almost

* I am grateful to Anna Garnett for proofreading the draft of this contribution.

¹ S. KUS, *Death and the Cultural Entanglements of the Experienced, the Learned, the Expressed, the Contested, and the Imagined*, in S. TARLOW, L. NILSSON STUTZ (eds.), *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Oxford, 2013, p. 68–69.

² R. ASTUTI, *What Happens after Death?*, in R. ASTUTI, J. PARRY, C. STAFFORD (eds.), *Questions of Anthropology*, Oxford – New York, 2007, p. 227–247.

³ J. ASSMANN, *Der Tod als Thema der Kulturtheorie*, Frankfurt, 2000, p. 13–17.

⁴ The adjective "funerary" is used throughout this article to refer both to the sphere of the funeral and to the sphere of thought, expectations and practices relating to the deceased's otherworldly existence in general. It encompasses material and aspects qualified by others with the term "mortuary".

unrestricted throughout time and civilisations, oscillating from minimal to superlative.

Ancient Egypt is often considered the paramount example for conceptions of the afterlife and of particularly spectacular realisations in preparation for the future existence. This exceptional emphasis on funerary conceptions and burial strategies was already marvelled at by the Greeks and Romans, and it is also today considered — both in Egyptology and popular perception — as one of the characteristic elements of Egyptian culture. However, despite the relative abundance of source material and more than a century and a half of research in funerary texts, monuments, objects, and practices, our understanding of the various facets of the phenomenon is still very sketchy and incomplete. To mention only a few lacunae in current comprehension:

- Chronological and geographical variation in funerary practices and concepts is still imperfectly perceived.
- Archaeology, in many cases, allows the reconstruction of burial practices and also sometimes related ritual actions and objects. It is, however, only seldom possible to precisely correlate the archaeological evidence of ritual practice to the underlying concepts and ideas that motivated them.
- The evident and massive social bias induced by the available source material is still difficult to compensate with information relating to funerary expectations and practices of the wider population.
- Access to individual reflections and emotions concerning one's own and other people's death is extremely scarce.

The aspect of social bias in our documentation is particularly obvious for the Old Kingdom. Pyramids and Pyramid Texts offer overwhelming evidence of a most elaborate and broad spectrum of funerary rituals, and a highly sophisticated collection of mythological knowledge and conceptions of otherworldly spaces and forms of existence. This entire intellectual universe is set into architectural and written forms specifically intended for the pharaoh.

On the other hand, Old Kingdom elite mastabas offer a range of texts and images displaying the deceased's status and wealth and ascertaining funerary rituals, which are largely centred on the provision of food and other commodities. As will be discussed below, only sparse information transpires from the wall decoration that relates to the community's thoughts and hopes for their deceased. This is probably not astonishing

since the community did not need to expand on concepts and practices that were well known and habitually expressed in words and actions during the burial rituals, mourning, and later cultic activities. The focus of mastaba wall decoration lies clearly on the deceased's social embedding and the commemoration of his status and wealth, and not on an exposition of funerary beliefs and expectations. The few preserved burial grounds for the broader society offer even fewer insights into thoughts and acts that accompanied the deceased; they seem, however, to reflect rather complex structures and the great care also attached to the funerary sphere in lower and more provincial social strata.⁵ Architecture and the layout of tombs testify to the importance of social cohesion and food-offerings⁶ as two major concepts that are readable over a long period in the archaeological documentation.

The discrepancy between the conceptual complexity transmitted in the Pyramid Texts and the seeming straightforwardness of Old Kingdom elite tomb decoration led researchers to a rather materialistic interpretation of non-royal afterlife expectations.

The obvious importance of the food-offering cult implies the idea that the deceased existed in some form that required subsistence, and therefore also suggests his or her presence in a sphere within which offerings could be metaphysically accessed. This evidence, combined with the apparent absence of evidence of other funerary conceptions concerning the non-royal deceased, led to the modern theory that the dead simply lived inside their tombs and expected food-offerings and social recognition during their afterlife. This regularly repeated statement, probably deriving from the influential work of Hermann Kees,⁷ seems, however, difficult to substantiate. It is not only based on the lack of detection of more complex conceptions of afterlife for non-royals, but also on the over-emphasised dichotomy between the pharaoh and other people in terms of funerary

⁵ Developing the situation of Nag' ed-Der, D. O'CONNOR, *Society and Individual in Early Egypt*, in M. VAN BUREN, J. RICHARDS (eds.), *Order, Legitimacy, and Wealth in Ancient States*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 22–24. Fresh insight can be expected from the analysis of the large early Old Kingdom cemeteries related to at least one settlement in the wider area of Dayr el-Bersha: <http://www.dayralbarsha.com/node/145> (last accessed 01/04/2016).

⁶ S. SEIDLMAYER, *Vom Sterben der kleinen Leute. Tod und Bestattung in der sozialen Grundschrift am Ende des Alten Reiches*, in H. GUKSCH, E. HOFMANN, M. BOMMAS (eds.), *Grab und Totenkult im Alten Ägypten*, München, 2003, p. 60–74; J.C. MORENO GARCÍA, *La gestion sociale de la mémoire dans l'Égypte du IIIe millénaire: les tombes des particuliers, entre emploi privé et idéologie publique*, in M. FITZENREITER, M. HERB (eds.), *Dekorierte Grabanlagen im Alten Reich. Methodik und Interpretation (IBAES 6)*, London, 2006, p. 226–232.

⁷ H. KEES, *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter: Grundlagen und Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches*, Leipzig, 1926, p. 160–189.

expectations, which obviously relies on the perception of the intrinsically royal character of the Pyramid Texts.⁸

This type of approach also indirectly led to the much-disputed theory of democratisation of funerary concepts, based on the supposition that the ideas of otherworldly destiny united in the Pyramid Texts gradually spread to the social sphere of queens and, with a considerable delay, to the sphere of the elite.

Many avenues of deconstruction of these deeply rooted scholarly ideas have been addressed in recent years.⁹ Two complementary approaches can be developed: the first focuses on a profound reassessment of the original environment and the processes of constitution of the Pyramid Texts corpus and individual parts thereof. The second approach centres on a reconsideration of Old Kingdom tomb decoration as well as on an examination of archaeological data, reflecting ritual activities in the sphere of elite — and wherever possible also of non-elite — necropoleis. The following paragraphs attempt to summarise these approaches and then turn to a close analysis of selected passages of the Pyramid Texts,

⁸ Among the more recent mentions of this thesis D. CZERWICK, *The Afterlife Beliefs in the Sixth-Dynasty Private Inscriptions*, in P. KOUSOULIS, N. LAZARIDIS (eds.), *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Rhodes 22–29 May 2008 (OLA 241)*, Leuven, 2015, I, p. 1003–1015: “The private persons’s life after death was entirely parallel to that on earth. The realm of the king was celestial”; E.C. KÖHLER, *Ursprung einer langen Tradition. Grab und Totenkult in der Frühzeit*, in H. GUKSCH, E. HOFMANN, M. BOMMAS (eds.), *Grab und Totenkult*, p. 13: “Mit Ausnahme des Königs verbrachte der Tote die Zeit im Grab...”; J.P. ALLEN, *Some Aspects of the Non-royal Afterlife in the Old Kingdom*, in M. BÁRTA (ed.), *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology*, Prague, 2006, p. 9: “the difference between royal and non-royal funerary architecture clearly reflects two different visions of the afterlife”; M. FITZENREITER, *Grabdekoration und die Interpretation funerarier Rituale*, in H. WILLEMS (ed.), *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms. Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Leiden University 6–7 June, 1996 (OLA 103)*, Leuven, 2001, p. 93.

⁹ First observations in this direction were already made by H. JUNKER, *Pyramidenzeit: das Wesen der altägyptischen Religion*, Einsiedeln, 1949, p. 126–135 and prior to this by K. SETHE, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, Glückstadt, 1936, e.g. II, p. 281. For the most recent, and probably final rejections of the democratisation theory, see M. SMITH, *Democratization of the Afterlife*, in J. DIELEMAN, W. WENDRICH (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2009, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/70g428wj> (last accessed 01/04/2016); H.M. HAYS, *The Death of the Democratization of the Afterlife*, in N. STRUDWICK, H. STRUDWICK, *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives: Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750–2150 BC*, Oxford, 2011, p. 115–130, *idem*, *The Entextualization of the Pyramid Texts and the Religious History of the Old Kingdom*, in P. DER MANUELIAN, T. SCHNEIDER (eds.), *Towards a New History for the Egyptian Old Kingdom. Perspectives on the Pyramid Age*, Leiden – Boston, 2015, p. 200–226. From the Middle Kingdom and Coffin Text perspective: H. WILLEMS, *Historical and Archaeological Aspects of Egyptian Funerary Culture. Religious Ideas and Ritual Practice in Middle Kingdom Elite Cemeteries (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 73)*, Boston – Leiden, 2014, p. 124–229.

with the intention of identifying underlying concepts with a probable broader validity as well as mechanisms of textual amendments.

PYRAMID TEXTS AND FUNERARY CULTURE

As far as the Pyramid Texts are concerned, it is now increasingly accepted that the primary setting of most of the material was in fact situated outside the tomb and was in use in different spheres and forms before it became textualised (brought into a stabilised unit), entextualised (fixed in writing), and finally transferred to the pyramid walls.¹⁰ This approach brings forward decisive arguments to contextualise the Pyramid Text material, to reconstruct its history and to work out the various stages that led to its final monumentalisation. It conclusively refutes the old perception that the Pyramid Texts were the result of some sort of invention.

The most obvious and most often advocated argument of this approach centres on the offering list and offering ritual. Offering lists with more or less fixed and elaborate sequences of presented goods are attested since the Second Dynasty in the private context of funerary stelae, and also in royal funerary temples since at least the early Fifth Dynasty. The existence of this list — often accompanied by figures of offering priests¹¹ — in both contexts has clearly been recognised as proof of a corpus of rites common to both the king and the elite.¹² Material remains furthermore ascertain the effective practice of these rites on the tomb sites.¹³

¹⁰ Among the most recent studies, see A.J. MORALES, *Text-building and Transmission of Pyramid Texts in the Third Millennium BCE: Iteration, Objectification, and Change*, in *JANER* 15 (2015), p. 169–201, *IDEM*, *Iteration, Innovation und Dekor in Opferlisten des Alten Reichs. Zur Vorgeschichte der Pyramidentexte*, in *ZÄS* 142 (2015), p. 55–69; H.M. HAYS, *The Entextualization*. See also J. BAINES, *Modelling Sources, Processes, and Locations of Early Mortuary Texts*, in S. BICKEL, B. MATHIEU (eds.), *D'un monde à l'autre: textes des pyramides & textes des sarcophages : actes de la Table ronde internationale, textes des pyramides versus textes des sarcophages : IFAO, 24-26 septembre 2001 (BiEtud 139)*, Le Caire, 2004, 15–41.

¹¹ G. LAPP, *Die Opferformel des Alten Reiches: unter Berücksichtigung einiger späterer Formen (SDAIK 21)*, Mainz, 1968, p. 153–192.

¹² A.J. MORALES, *ZÄS* 142 (2015); H.M. HAYS, *The Entextualization*, p. 210–214, *IDEM*, *The Organization of the Pyramid Texts. Typology and Disposition (ProblÁg 31)*, Leiden – Boston, 2012, p. 81–92.

¹³ N. ALEXANIAN, *Ritualrelikte an Mastabagräbern des Alten Reiches*, in H. GUKSCH, D. POLZ (eds.), *Stationen, Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Ägyptens, Rainer Stadelmann gewidmet*, Mainz, 1998, p. 3–22; T. RZEUSKA, *Saqqara II, Pottery of the Late Old Kingdom. Funerary Pottery and Burial Customs*, Warsaw, 2006, p. 428–512. For pottery from predominantly ritual use in a royal funerary context see M. BÁRTA, *The pottery*, in M. VERNER, *Abusir IX. The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Archaeology*, Prague, 2006, p. 289–312.

The presence of some vessels and food offerings, even in very simple burials, seems to extend the evidence of this practice, at least in its basic ideas and actions, across the entire population and over a very long time span.

Originally the recitations that accompanied offering rituals were presumably transmitted orally before they became entextualised and stored in archives.¹⁴ The Pyramid Texts spells 72–171 preserve the “narrative version”¹⁵ or “the recitative dimension of the rites specified in the list”.¹⁶ They reflect the recontextualised version of the priests’ spoken performance, which was now monumentalised by the fact that it was engraved in the underground chambers of the royal tombs.

The texts and depictions of the offering ritual probably refer to two different realities: one concerns rites executed during the burial with the deposition of offerings next to the deceased’s body in the private sphere and within the temple in the royal sphere; and the other concerns the perpetual funerary cult to which king, elite¹⁷ and perhaps also the more humble aspired in the same way, and which they secured according to their economic possibilities.¹⁸

Purification and nourishment therefore belong to a set of actions deemed relevant for the burial — and ideally also for the subsequent cult — for individuals of all social levels. In the sphere of ritual, the verbal statement or the symbolic substitution of the action and the evocation of the anticipated result can be considered as equally efficacious as an elaborate performance.¹⁹ Consequently, the degree of elaboration and wealth invested in the ritual performance could vary according to the deceased’s status, as could the geographical and architectural setting, whereas the conceptual background that determined the necessity of cleansing and sustenance was part of the core values of a common cultural frame. If we assume that these ritual actions were undertaken with the conscious objective of being useful or even necessary to the deceased person, then the need felt

¹⁴ A.J. MORALES, *JANER* 15 (2015), p. 173–178; C.H. REINTGES, *The Oral-Compositional Form of Pyramid Text Discourse*, in F. HAGEN et al. (eds), *Narratives of Egypt and the Ancient Near East. Literary and Linguistic Approaches (OLA 189)*, Leuven, 2011, p. 3–54.

¹⁵ A.J. MORALES, *ZĀS* 142 (2015), p. 56.

¹⁶ H.M. HAYS, *The Entextualization*, p. 212.

¹⁷ Y. SHIRAI, *Ideal and Reality in Old Kingdom Private Funerary Cults*, in M. BÁRTA (ed.), *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology*, p. 325–333.

¹⁸ Possible uses of the offering ritual or of modified versions thereof in the context of divine cults and temples are beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁹ Compare for example the presence of model offerings or of containers filled with mud next to real offerings in non-royal burial chambers, S. IKRAM, *Portions of the Old Kingdom Offering List Reified*, in M. BÁRTA (ed.), *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology*, p. 170–173.

for sustenance implies the common expectation of a form of post-mortal existence that requested at least symbolic nourishment.

Another example of textual material with an origin and use-life outside the Pyramid Texts are the so-called magical spells or the snake spells. Their function was both apotropaic and protective,²⁰ and their origin lays in oral practice and a widespread tradition, as these utterances are particularly rich in recitative-rhetoric features, visible in their predominantly alphabetical written form.²¹ This material might have undergone several stages of collection and adaptation long before it was selected for further reworkings and finally for inscription in the pyramids.²² These texts were originally neither bound to the funerary context nor to an exclusively royal setting, but used in all social spheres for the safeguarding of individuals and places. In the royal funerary context, some spells were adapted to protect the king or the pyramid from the danger of snakes and other creatures, whereas in other formulae the snakes were entreated to defend passageways against potential enemies, therefore carrying out a “uraeus-role” typical for the kingly or temple environment.²³ Hence, the utterances either protect from snakes — an effect that presumably corresponds to their principal and original function — or the material was amended to a royal/divine setting, where snakes could be empowered with protective capacities.

The texts relating to the offering ritual and to “magical” protection present an opportunity to consider not only anterior use-lives for some of the material that was adapted to figure in the underground chambers of the pyramids, but also to envisage a common ground of funerary practice for royal and non-royal deceased. The question that remains is whether the common background was limited to these types of spells and their content, which concerned a practical engagement with the deceased, or whether there also existed some convergence in terms of funerary expectations and destiny.

The offering ritual obviously belongs to the sphere of priestly performance and is at the core of the category termed “sacerdotal texts”

²⁰ B. MATHIEU, *Les formules conjuratoires dans les pyramides à textes: quelques réflexions*, in *La magie en Égypte: à la recherche d'une définition, Actes du colloque organisé par le musée du Louvre les 29 et 30 septembre 2000*, Paris, 2002, p. 185–206; C. LEITZ, *Die Schlangensprüche in den Pyramidentexten*, in *Orientalia* 65 (1996), p. 381–427.

²¹ A. LOPRIENO, *Vom Schriftbild*, in A. LOPRIENO, C. KNIGGE, B. MERSMAN (eds.), *Bild – Macht – Schrift. Schriftkulturen in bildkritischer Perspektive*, Weilerswist, 2011, p. 29.

²² A.J. MORALES, *JANER* 15 (2015), p. 184–186.

²³ For this repartition see C. THEIS, *Magie und Raum: Der magische Schutz auserwählter Räume im alten Ägypten nebst einem Vergleich zu angrenzenden Kulturbereichen (ORA 13)*, Tübingen, 2014, p. 465.

by Harold Hays, whereas the apotropaic utterances with their more individual scope of efficaciousness form part of his category of “personal texts”.²⁴ The two groups of texts with clearly identifiable anterior and non-royal contexts therefore stretch over both categories distinguished by Hays in the Pyramid Texts, on the basis of recurrent “motifs” and grammatical person. This might open the possibility for further references to common royal and non-royal backgrounds to be recognised in other types of texts. The particularly intense re-workings of “personal texts” point to their possible use-life anterior and exterior to the sphere of the royal tomb.²⁵ As pertinent and valuable as Hays’ classification is in many ways, it can be observed that motifs pertaining to the same theme are often attributed to both categories on the basis of their relative discursive perspective. Hence the same themes or conceptual spheres can be referred to in more practical-recitative as well as in more asserting-argumentative terms and dimensions of use. Hays defined “personal texts” as originally deriving from personal preparation for death during lifetime, a supposed practice that he also considered to be ritual.²⁶ This is not the place to discuss the hypothetical setting and operative scope reconstructed by Hays. Rather, this study seeks to investigate whether the non-royal deceased shared larger parts of funerary culture with the king — other than ritual and protective actions — and whether a wider part of society did in any way partake of comparable aspirations and apprehensions related to a future metaphysical existence.

ELITE TOMBS AND FUNERARY CULTURE

Questions relating to non-royal funerary culture have already been approached for the subject of Old Kingdom tomb decoration and archaeological remains of ritual activity. It has been recognised that elite tomb architecture and its decoration were conceived in relation to ritual activity and the establishment of forms of commemoration and of communication with the world of the living.²⁷ This highly codified and selective display focuses on maintaining social relationships in the sphere of family and household, mainly through permanent supply. Tomb architecture and decoration also communicate with the sphere of peers within the administrative elite through forms of demonstrating individuality, emulation,

²⁴ H.M. HAYS, *Organization*, p. 266–267, fig. 15 and 16.

²⁵ H.M. HAYS, *The Entextualization*, p. 216.

²⁶ H.M. HAYS, *Organization*, p. 202, *IDEM*, *The Entextualization*, p. 214–219.

²⁷ M. FITZENREITER, *Grabdekoration*.

and competition.²⁸ Many areas of an individual's reality are, however, excluded from the representations, such as professional relations within the administrative hierarchy, relations with the king (with the exception of stereotyped textual references), personal life and family relations, religious thought and activity (with the exception of priestly titles), or any form of social tension and struggle. The scope of representations in elite tombs is so restricted that it seems highly unwarranted to conclude that conceptual realities — people's thoughts, beliefs, hopes, and fears — were limited to what the tomb decoration overtly refers to. Besides, it is certain that tombs were never the place to expound funerary conceptions, rather they were the place to live and enact them and to offer material support and effective perpetuation to certain funerary aspirations.

Despite the tomb decoration focusing primarily on the display of its main owner's social identity and perpetual social integration, hints towards concepts of afterlife implying his personhood and expected individual existence after the burial occasionally emerge. As has been noted before, the belief in a continuation of existence after death seems to have been at the core of funerary conceptions since Predynastic times, as well as during the Old Kingdom and later periods, and there is no apparent reason or indication that this expectation was restricted to a particular gender or social level. The belief in a metaphysical existence is highly probable, both on general anthropological grounds as well as for more specific reasons within the Egyptian cultural framework. This then begs the question in which forms and in which spatial dimensions this existence was envisaged, and whether it implied the notion of mobility and access to otherworldly spheres. Some information can be drawn from the more extensive wall decoration of the mastabas. Many of these references to the deceased's post-mortem destiny might, however, represent new visual and textual realisations which reflect long prevailing concepts.

Numerous elite tombs from the Fourth to the Sixth Dynasty preserve archaeological remains of highly elaborate and variegated ritual actions undertaken at different stages of the process of burial and afterwards, and implying the use of a variety of objects.²⁹ Parts of these sets of objects can already be found in much earlier tombs and in simpler categories of tombs.

²⁸ R. VAN WALSEM, *Diversification and Variation in Old Kingdom Funerary Iconography as the Expression of a Need for 'Individuality'*, in *JEOL* 44 (2013), p. 117–139. I owe this reference to Frederik Rogner and Andréas Stauder.

²⁹ N. ALEXANIAN, *Ritualrelikte, EADEM, Grabinventare als Ritualzeugnisse*, in S. HAAG, R. HÖLZL, P. JANOSI (eds.), *Im Schatten der Pyramiden. Die österreichischen Grabungen in Giza (1912–1929)*, Vienna, 2013, p. 139–153.

The conceptual references to these symbolic actions are difficult to grasp with any precision: whereas ritual action can be meaningful in the process of separation of the deceased from the community, the deposition of objects — often purpose-made items and models of real-life objects or situations — rather points towards an intended function for the deceased himself.

The following is a brief summary of some aspects of funerary ideas and expectations, relating to non-royal individuals, which can be inferred to from Old Kingdom elite tombs.

Ascension to heaven

The idea of ascension to heaven is reflected in tomb architecture as well as in iconographic and textual references.³⁰ As illustrated in the famous tomb reliefs of Debeheni in Giza from the Fourth Dynasty, offering rituals for the deceased's statue and body were performed on the roof of the mastabas before the corpse and the images were lowered through the shafts into their final position. Several later and more complex tomb structures integrate a staircase to the roof despite the fact that the access to the funerary chamber at that point was from ground level. Food offerings and invocations regularly exhort the deceased "to ascend to the great god, lord of heaven".³¹ The ritual actions on the roof immediately preceded the burial of the body in the subterranean funerary chamber, and were also connected with the endeavour to assist the deceased's transformation into a metaphysical *akh*-being (see below). This was the form of existence that allowed mobility and ascension. A passage from the Pyramid Texts refers to the fact that this process of transformation and dissociation between the *akh* and the body was related to food offerings:

PT 305 § 474 WPMNnt³²

The *akh* to the sky, the corpse to the earth! What people (*rmt*) receive when they are buried is their thousand of bread and their thousand of beer from the offering table of Khentamenti.

³⁰ N. ALEXANIAN, *Himmelstrepfen und Himmelsaufstieg. Zur Interpretation von Ritualen auf Grabdächern im Alten Reich*, in H. GUKSCH, E. HOFMANN, M. BOMMAS (eds.), *Grab und Totenkult*, p. 27–40.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 34; G. LAPP, *Die Opferformel*, p. 61–77, *IDEM* (*Totentexte der Privatleute vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zur 1. Zwischenzeit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Sarkkammern und Särgen*, in *SAK* 43 (2014), 216–218) raises doubts that the sense of the word *ḥr* really refers to ascension, as its determinative mostly differs from that used in the Pyramid Texts.

³² J.P. ALLEN, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts (Writings from the Ancient World 23)*, Atlanta, 2005, p. 57 (Unis 210). This passage is situated in the context of the motif of the ladder, see below.

Together with the representations of offering rituals on the tomb roof, this passage indicates that the very common act of food presentation not only fulfilled the purpose of granting sustenance, but also served as the vehicle for the deceased's ontological transformation.³³

This process empowered the deceased's immaterial self to accede otherworldly spaces. It is likely that the conceptualisation of these spaces became more complex over the course of the Old Kingdom, as imaginations of the Osirian sphere integrated older views of the celestial abodes. Few details of these otherworldly spheres can be determined from tomb decoration, with the exception of occasional mentions of the Field of Offerings (*sh.t htp*) as a desired place.³⁴

Boats and mobility

It is probable that reference to the importance of mobility in immaterial form, and in imaginary spheres, is made by the boat. Ships are already conspicuously frequent in Predynastic burials, either as models in tombs or as representations on Naqada III pottery. It is difficult to determine the purpose of these models and images, and to which concepts they referred. Were they viewed in relation to a crossing over into other spheres or to a navigation within the future abode of existence, or did other ideas prevail on the function of ships in the funerary context?

In the Old Kingdom, funerary boats accompany royal burials during the Second³⁵ as well as Fourth and Fifth Dynasties,³⁶ and some examples of boat pits also exist in elite burials. Representations of ships are among the most frequent motifs in non-royal tomb decoration, and wooden boat models appear occasionally in Old Kingdom burial equipment. The different forms of expression — materialised boats, boat pits, and wall depictions of ships — generally appear in pairs. This double grouping, together with specific iconographic details, helped to identify this feature of the royal and non-royal funerary sphere as referring to the conception of the Day and Night Barques known from textual sources. The presence of these ships alludes to the anticipated integration of the deceased into the

³³ This relationship is also made explicit by the inscription on an offering bowl from Dayr el-Bersha, S. DONNAT BEAUQUIER, *Écrire à ses morts. Enquête sur un usage rituel de l'écrit dans l'Égypte pharaonique*, Grenoble, 2014, p. 130–131.

³⁴ M. SMITH, *Democratization of the Afterlife*, p. 8.

³⁵ D. O'CONNOR, *Abydos. Egypt's First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris*, Cairo, 2009, p. 183–200.

³⁶ T. EL-AWADY, *Boat Graves in the Old Kingdom Royal Funerary Complexes*, in Z. HAWASS, K.A. DAUD, S. ABD EL-FATTAH (eds.), *The Realm of the Pharaohs: Essays in Honor of Tohfa Handoussa (CASAE 37)*, Le Caire, 2008, 1, p. 177–200.

cosmic cycle and the heavenly navigation from East to West and West to East.³⁷ All evidence points to the fact that the non-royal and the royal expectations, regarding a permanent and regenerating boat journey in the heavenly spheres, coincided.

Judgement

Mastabas from the Fourth Dynasty onwards contain frequent mentions of a tribunal summoned to judge earthly wrongdoing, in particular the trespassing of requirements of the tomb's purity or integrity. The so-called "appeals to the living" can include threat formulas such as in the tomb of Herymeru at Saqqara: "With regard to any man who shall do anything evil to my tomb, or who shall enter it with the intention of stealing, I shall seize his neck like a bird's, and I shall be judged with him in the court of the great god."³⁸ The judgement between the deceased and the potential wrongdoer will evidently take place in a future, otherworldly reality and under divine surveillance.³⁹ The speaker menaces to convoke the confrontation, being convinced of his justification. However, contemporaneously, the idea of a tribunal in the otherworld had already received a moral connotation as it was correlated not only with attacks from others, but also with one's own correct behaviour and actions on earth. Members of the elite assert that they refrained from wrongdoing, because of their awareness of a funerary judgement: "I never took away anything which was brought by another man to this tomb of mine, as I am mindful of the judgement in the West (*n sh3.t wd3-mdw m Jmn.t*)".⁴⁰ The tribunal was probably not yet a compulsory step of an individual's establishment in the afterlife, but it was conceived as a possible punishment of moral misconduct on earth, of which it was advisable to be mindful.⁴¹

³⁷ H. ALTENMÜLLER, *Funerary Boats and Boat Pits of the Old Kingdom*, in *Archiv Orientalní* 70/3 (2002), p. 269–290; as well as IDEM, *Die Nachfahrt des Grabherrn im Alten Reich: zur Frage der Schiffe mit Igelkopfbug*, in *SAK* 28 (2000), p. 1–26.

³⁸ N.C. STRUDWICK, R.J. LEPROHON, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, Leiden – Boston, 2005, p. 220.

³⁹ On the identity of "the great god" as either a major deity, most commonly Osiris and sometimes the deceased king as Osiris, see B. MATHIEU, *Mais qui est donc Osiris? Ou la politique sous le linceul de la religion*, in *ENiM* 3 (2010), p. 81–82; J.P. ALLEN, *Some Aspects of the Non-royal Afterlife*, p. 11–12; R. SHALOMI-HEN, *The Dawn of Osiris and the Dusk of the Sun-temples: Religious History at the End of the Fifth Dynasty*, in P. DER MANUELIAN, T. SCHNEIDER (eds.), *Towards a New History for the Egyptian Old Kingdom*, p. 460–462.

⁴⁰ N.C. STRUDWICK, R.J. LEPROHON, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, p. 257.

⁴¹ This reading would contradict Assmann's understanding that the moral aspect of the theme of judgement only developed during the Middle Kingdom, J. ASSMANN, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten*, München, 2001, p. 101.

Components of personhood

It is debatable to what extent funerary rituals and expectations in a metaphysical existence and individual projections of self into otherworldly spaces were dependent on clear-cut definitions of the immaterial components of personhood. It is also questionable how widespread the knowledge of these components throughout society might have been. If this knowledge was part of a more general understanding of the human being, their activation through funerary rituals might have been considered common knowledge that did not have to be stated prominently. Conversely, the concepts of these multiple components of the human being might also have originated, evolved and diversified within the elite sphere.

The concept of *ka* and its relation to funerary sustenance can be traced back to the beginning of the dynastic period. Through its relation to ancestry and posterity, it is likely that the *ka* was considered inherent in every being.

Mentions of the *akh* can also be found from the earliest dynasties, but it is difficult to establish the precise meaning at this stage.⁴² Decorated Old Kingdom elite tombs regularly refer to the *akh* as a constituent of the deceased's personhood and the form of his or her metaphysical existence in the afterlife. Ritual actions are said to provoke or assist the realisation of this form of existence. The first reference to the rite of *s3h* "enabling to be an *akh*" appears in the mastaba of Metjen from the early Fourth Dynasty,⁴³ and many attestations of *akh*-hood occur throughout decorated tombs.⁴⁴ As tomb owners often refer to specific knowledge favouring the acquisition of the status as an *akh*-being, this form of existence has also been considered as an elite privilege. Whether the claims of knowledge primarily back up the presentation of social status or refer to an exclusiveness of this quality of personhood is difficult to assess from the sources. The hypothesis of *akh*-hood being dependent on knowledge and elite status would go against the fact that anthropology recognised the concept of some spirit-like form of afterlife existence as being a particularly widespread phenomenon in various types of societies.⁴⁵ Rather than

⁴² D. CZERWICK, *The Afterlife Beliefs*, p. 1008.

⁴³ For the specificities of this tomb see J. BAINES, *Forerunners of Narrative Biographies*, in A. LEAHY, W.J. TAIT (eds.), *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H.S. Smith (EES Occasional Papers 13)*, London, 1999, p. 29–36.

⁴⁴ H.M. HAYS, *The Death of Democratization*, p. 123–130; M. SMITH, *Democratization of the Afterlife*, p. 3; J. JANÁK, *Akh*, in J. DIELEMAN, W. WENDRICH (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2013, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7255p86v?query=akh> (last accessed 01/04/2016).

⁴⁵ E.g. R. ASTUTI, *What Happens after Death?*, p. 227.

a prerequisite of acquisition of *akh*-hood altogether, the access to specific knowledge and ritual performance might have been valued as a means of reinforcing the stability and efficaciousness of the status of *akh*-being.

Even more problematic is the much-debated concept of *ba*, which appears prominently in the Pyramid Texts as an immaterial form of being of the deceased king. Because of the scarcity of references in the context of Old Kingdom tombs,⁴⁶ the concept of *ba* was interpreted as a royal monopoly that only gradually spread out to non-royal individuals during the First Intermediate Period.⁴⁷ Much rather than the breaking up of a royal privilege, the phenomenon should be considered as the result of a shift in the semantic value of the term. In the Old Kingdom, the *ba* was a vehicle of the manifestation of (supernatural) power and therefore intrinsically related to the king and the gods.⁴⁸ It only gradually developed into a form of manifestation of self, as it appears in sources since the Coffin Texts.⁴⁹ In Old Kingdom funerary conceptions, the fact that non-royal individuals rarely projected their future existence in the form of a *ba* in no way impeded their capacity to aspire for an existence in otherworldly spheres.

The decorated tombs sporadically hint at the funerary expectations of the elite man regarding his subsistence, his ascension to the other world, his existence in otherworldly fields and navigating integration into the cosmic movements, as well as his transformation into an *akh*-being. References remain very allusive to the desirable but unknowable spheres of future existence, and refrain from any attempt of imaginary description. The wall decoration seems to refer only to those aspects of funerary conceptions on which the ritual intervention of the community of the living could have a beneficial effect. Cultural conventions prevented any explicit reference to fears and apprehensions.

As for the geographical setting for expectations of the afterlife, otherworldly spheres seem to predominate. Nowhere are the anticipated

⁴⁶ M. Smith, *Democratization of the Afterlife*, p. 3. A mention in the tomb of Herymeru, Sixth Dynasty Saqqara, H. ALTENMÜLLER, *Sein Ba möge fortdauern bei Gott*, in *SAK* 20, 1993, p. 1–13. Also in the tomb of Mehu, cf. H. ALTENMÜLLER, *Die Wanddarstellungen im Grab des Mehu in Saqqara (ArchVer 42)*, Mainz, 1998, p. 145.

⁴⁷ For this interpretation, e.g. J. ASSMANN, *Maat. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, München, 1990, p. 114–115.

⁴⁸ L. V. ŽABKAR, *Ba, LĀ I*, 1975, col. 589.

⁴⁹ This change of focus was accompanied by the schematisation of the hieroglyphic sign and also by the gradual disappearance from the Egyptian environment of the original *ba*-bird, the large saddle-billed stork, J. JANÁK, *A Question of Size. A Remark on Early Attestations of the Ba Hieroglyph*, in *SAK* 40 (2011), p. 143–153. I owe this reference to Lucía Díaz-Iglesias.

abodes of existence stated to be restricted to the tomb or the necropolis. Rather, hopes of ascension and mobility appear in the foreground. The location of the “West” is at best ambiguous, more often evoking a sphere and events outside real-world reality than a metaphor for the necropolis.

Although the decorated Old Kingdom tombs reflect a high degree of elite display and the exclusivity of privilege, it can be assumed that the actual funerals and associated rituals were socially more open. They probably involved not only the elite circle and the priests, but also a larger community of family and household members, servants, offering bearers and subalterns. Difficulties of assessing patterns of social integration and exclusion were discussed by John Baines. Elite funerals must have been “arenas of display and participation”⁵⁰ and certain procedures were probably replicated, in much simplified manner, throughout society. Involvement in elite funerals and ritual performances was only one among several instances of possible lived experience that shaped social interconnectedness and modes of exchange.⁵¹

A recent analysis of the tomb decoration of the provincial elite necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa⁵² shows that representational options could diverge quite markedly from conventions adopted in the great Northern cemeteries: the tombs at Aswan show large numbers of subsidiary personnel (over 400 figures other than tomb owners and their family members), which were in most cases individualised by name and also often titles. A large part of the deceased’s social environment, both male and female, seems to have been included in funerary practices on behalf of their leader and the perpetuation thereof. Funerary cult, both during the burial process and thereafter, was directed at the deceased’s otherworldly needs and forms of existence. In participating in these activities, underlying concepts must have circulated in a wider society, if they were not anyhow part of shared cultural views and beliefs. In contributing so actively to their leader’s otherworldly survival, would the entire community mentioned in the Qubbet el-Hawa tombs have refrained from all comparable hopes and fears for their own sake?

⁵⁰ J. BAINES, *Public Ceremonial Performance in Ancient Egypt*, in T. INOMATA, L.S. COBEN (eds.), *Archaeology of Performance. Theaters of Power, Community, and Politics*, Lanham – New York, 2006, p. 270.

⁵¹ J. BAINES, *Modelling the Integration of Elite and Other Social Groups in Old Kingdom Egypt*, in J.C. MORENO GARCÍA (ed.), *Élites et pouvoir en Égypte ancienne*, CRIPEL 28 (2009–2010), p. 117–144.

⁵² D. VISCHAK, *Community and Identity in Ancient Egypt. The Old Kingdom Cemetery at Qubbet el-Hawa*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 197–215.

The decorum of tomb decoration seems to exclude, to a large degree, explicit reference to the conceptual background and to individual and collective funerary expectations. This does not mean that ideas about an afterlife destiny did not prevail among a wider population, sharing at least some aspects of funerary culture with the elite and even the king. This “communality of belief and practice between king and elite”⁵³ and potentially also a wider population can to some extent be substantiated by a closer look at certain discursive strategies in the Pyramid Texts.

REFLECTIONS OF NON-ROYAL FUNERARY CONCEPTIONS IN THE PYRAMID TEXTS

As tomb decoration and archaeological remains provide only limited indications about non-royal individual’s funerary thoughts and expectations, it is worth trying to explore another avenue and to address the Pyramid Texts as our only extensive textual source in order to gain a more detailed view of Old Kingdom funerary culture. It might seem paradoxical to investigate the royal funerary corpus in search of information relating to more broadly accepted conceptions. However, as noted above, some of the Pyramid Text material can be shown to have had a use-life before being transformed and inscribed in pyramids. Moving from the presence of text components in other and earlier contexts to the level of content and of textual evidence for mental images and funerary anticipations, one may try to find further indications of ideas and practices, which might have had validity beyond and outside the sphere of the pharaoh. This is an attempt to approach a broader conceptual background from within highly elaborate products of the elite sphere. The underlying hypothesis is that even the most elitist realisations must in part ground in a wider cultural substratum and share some values and possibly also specific figurations with spheres outside their own.

In analysing the Pyramid Texts, certain statements have long been observed which refer to the presence of non-royal individuals in the vicinity of the deceased king’s otherworldly existence.

Several passages project the king into an expected surrounding where he was bound to encounter the deceased,⁵⁴ *akhs* or “living ones”. The king’s future abode was therefore imagined as being peopled not only with gods and former kings, but also with “ordinary” deceased.

⁵³ H.M. HAYS, *The Death of Democratisation*, p. 116.

⁵⁴ For example PT 93 § 63b (J.P. ALLEN, *Pyramid Texts*, p. 23, Unis 66); PT 666 § 1926a–b (*ibidem*, p. 324, Neith 242).

For example PT 422 § 755b–c⁵⁵ “The *akhs* will come to you prostrate, kissing the earth at your feet, because of your fierceness, oh Pepi.” The king’s social environment and the typical behavioural patterns towards him are transferred to the otherworld where he is surrounded and treated with deference by other *akhs*.

Such assertions seem to have been composed specifically for the king in order to ensure his social surroundings and status in the otherworld. Indirectly, however, they also point to possible expectations of non-royal individuals to spend their afterlife in the same areas of otherworldly existence as the king.

A number of statements within the Pyramid Texts appear in striking discrepancy to the royal subject and putative royal funerary expectations. Where do they come from? To which conceptual sphere do they belong? Through a contextualising analysis of some passages, certain features highlighted below could indicate the existence of ideas that were not conceived for the royal recipient and therefore seem to have had actuality and validity in other settings. In many cases, it can be hypothesised that this setting lay in funerary conceptions and anticipations that were accepted and in use outside the royal sphere. The following comprises a selection of examples and possible avenues of investigation, and is by no means an exhaustive study of the entire textual record.

If the assumption is correct that the Pyramid Texts were destined to secure the deceased king’s supreme position and safe integration into the otherworldly spheres and into the cosmic cycles, then any statement that does not foster this general purpose of the monumentalised inscriptions nor correspond to the status of the recipient must attract our attention. These statements might reveal remnants from different original contexts and conceptual backgrounds. A scrutiny of the Pyramid Texts for evocations of ideas that are incoherent with the status and imputed funerary expectations of the pharaoh could be a useful tool for accessing conceptual strata behind the texts and notions embedded in wider funerary culture.

Dangers and obstacles

Among the most striking features within the Pyramid Texts are the countless dangers and obstacles, which the king was expected to encounter during his progress in otherworldly spheres.⁵⁶ One wonders

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 100 (Pepi 4).

⁵⁶ G. MEURER, *Die Feinde des Königs in den Pyramidentexten* (OBO 189), Friburg – Göttingen, 2002.

why this potential of impediments — often coming from gods and demons⁵⁷ — had to be so massively unfolded in a royal context. The dangers are either warded off on behalf of the king or he verbally repels them himself through threats that reflect his earthly power (e.g. to reduce the offerings for the gods). In no instance does the king actually confront and overpower these adverse forces, he has no victory and no glory in encountering these enemies or menaces. These statements, therefore, do not belong to the semantic sphere of earthly royal discourse nor constitute an adaptation into funerary ideas of the concept of the king as the subduer of enemies. These dangers awaiting even the royal newcomer in the funerary sphere might rather be echoes of more general, even popular, fears related to the unknown afterlife. This hypothesis would then imply that people did indeed expect access into realms where obstacles and dangers were anticipated and where gods might challenge each new arrival. In this perspective, the mentions of dangers and obstacles in the Pyramid Texts could be understood as part of a strategy of purposeful adaptations to the royal referent of texts or concepts that were in wider circulation. Dangers that could have been foremost in people's concerns were preventively addressed in formulations that would assure the king of being shielded, being helped to avoid, or being capable of staving off any potential hindrance.

Similar observations could be made concerning the otherworldly topography. Numerous passages assert that doors opened or were thrown open for the passage of the king towards heaven.⁵⁸ Would this feature have been invented simply as a parallel to earthly circumstances in the king's palace or was it part of a more widespread view of conditions in the otherworld? It has been observed that similar statements in the Coffin Texts mention the deceased's active opening of the doors.⁵⁹ Here again, ideas relating to doors and barriers impeding the deceased's progression might have been reworked and adapted to the king's projected arrival in the otherworld.

⁵⁷ For the numerous demons and personified dangers in the Pyramid Texts, MEURER, *Feinde*, p. 213–268; R. LUCARELLI, *Demons (Benevolent and Malevolent)*, in J. DIELEMAN, W. WENDRICH (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2010: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1r72q9vv?query=Demons> (last accessed 01/04/2016).

⁵⁸ R.J. LEPROHON, „Opening“ in the Pyramid Texts, in Z. HAWASS, J. RICHARDS (eds.), *Archaeology and Art in Ancient Egypt, Essays in Honor of David O'Connor (CASAE 36/2)*, Le Caire, 2007, p. 83–94.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

The ladder

An analogous distribution between the active agency of the non-royal deceased and assisted passivity of the king can be observed when addressing notions of ascension to heaven. Many spells refer to the ladder that is being prepared for the king by various gods or obtained through menacing the gods.⁶⁰ As shown convincingly by Hartwig Altenmüller, the tomb scenes of the so-called *zšš-w3d* refer to a ritual or symbolic action through which the non-royal deceased could build a ladder and thereby ensure his or her ascension towards Hathor.⁶¹ Whereas the non-royal deceased had to engage actively in splitting up a papyrus stem to metaphorically produce a ladder, the king, according to the Pyramid Texts, was presented with the same, finished object. This example shows the convergence of funerary expectations implying the ascension to and existence in heavenly abodes. It also points to a widespread metaphor of possessing a ladder as a means of reaching the otherworld. Despite this convergence, the method of obtaining this device differed according to royal or non-royal status. The fact that the reference to this concept appears in tomb decoration some 150 years before the Pyramid Texts suggests that a notion, seen as central to a deceased's destiny, was consciously adapted to suit the behavioural scheme of a king who would receive the device rather than produce it himself.

The ferryman's interrogation

The transition to the abodes of otherworldly existence was imagined in various forms. As mentioned above, the fundamental imaginative scheme seems to combine the idea of a spatial progression with forms of impediments and obstacles. This basic structure could be expressed in numerous metaphoric enunciations. One vision included a ship that would allow the crossover to a field or to other celestial regions. This notion often appears in the context of ascension spells. The starting point of the passage clearly lies in an imaginary setting and some references place this crossing in parallel with the precedent of the combat of Horus and Seth.⁶²

⁶⁰ For the occurrences of this motif, see H.M. HAYS, *Organization*, p. 573.

⁶¹ H. ALTENMÜLLER, *Der Himmelsaufstieg des Grabherrn. Zu den Szenen des zšš-w3d in den Gräbern des Alten Reiches*, in *SAK* 30 (2002), p. 13–23; C. THEIS, *Die B3.w und der Himmelsaufstieg in den Pyramidentexten. Die Macht des Pharao und die Ohnmacht des Privatmannes*, in D. PANAGIOTOPOULOS, M. SCHENTULEIT (eds.), *Macht und Ohnmacht. Religiöse, soziale und ökonomische Spannungsfelder in frühen Gesellschaften*, Wiesbaden, 2014, p. 69–113.

⁶² S. BICKEL, *D'un monde à l'autre: le thème du passeur et de sa barque dans la pensée*

This mythological reference is sometimes used semantically to activate a recalcitrant ferryman described as sleeping or otherwise intractable. In two instances of the Pyramid Texts, this ferryman rather abruptly replies to being called with a question that prompts an answer.

PT 310 § 493–494 WPMN⁶³

Unas is Horus; Unas has come in the wake of his father, Unas has come in the wake of Osiris.

You (ferryman) who faces forward and who faces backward, bring this for Unas.

- Which ferryboat should be brought for you, Unas?

- Bring for Unas “Whenever it Flies it Lands”.

PT 505 § 1091–1092a PMN⁶⁴

Face-Behind-Him, ferry Pepi to the Field of Rushes.

- Where have you come from?

- He has come from Awaret. His dangerous one is the cobra that came from the god, the uraeus that came from Re. Ferry him, put him in the Field of Rushes.

This last spell is situated in the middle of a sequence of texts (PT 503–511) for which an intensive editorial intervention can be shown to have taken place after the texts were carved on the walls of the pyramid of Pepi I. Original first person pronouns were recarved into third person pronouns or the king’s proper name. Building upon the observations of Bernard Mathieu for the pyramid of Unas,⁶⁵ Hays has interpreted this change of referentiality as a shift from a situation where “the performance would have been dependent upon the text owner”⁶⁶ to a situation where the king had become the passive beneficiary. The king is obviously the addressee of the ferryman’s question, but the reciter answers on his behalf. In the passage of PT 310 the counterpart to the question “Which ferryboat should be brought for you” might also have been a first person. Originally, the deceased would have replied himself, before the text was adapted to the name of Unas and the question was provided with an interpolated, secondary vocative.⁶⁷ This physical recarving of the text in the pyramid of Pepi, and the probable reworking of the same passage already in the

funéraire, in S. BICKEL, B. MATHIEU (eds.), *D’un monde à l’autre*, p. 91–117, esp. 92–94. For PT passages concerning the ferryboat, see H.M. HAYS, *Organization*, p. 516.

⁶³ J.P. ALLEN, *Pyramid Texts*, p. 59 (Unis 215); H.M. HAYS, *Organization*, p. 133.

⁶⁴ J.P. ALLEN, *Pyramid Texts*, p. 156 (Pepi 459).

⁶⁵ B. MATHIEU, *Modifications de texte dans la pyramide d’Ounas*, *BIFAO* 96 (1996), p. 289–311.

⁶⁶ H.M. HAYS, *Organization*, p. 144.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 132–134.

pyramid of Unas, prove the existence of a previous formulation where the deceased himself had to undergo the harsh interrogation of the ferryman. In both Pyramid Text occurrences, however, this interrogation is restricted to a single question and its answer; and in both cases effort was clearly made by the editors to spare the king from being called to account, by a simple ferryman, for his desire to cross over an expanse of water.

A further Pyramid Text passage, beginning with an invocation of the ferryman,⁶⁸ has no dialogue in the versions of Pepi I, Merenre, and Pepi II Neferkare, but serves as introduction to an interrogation with seven questions and answers in the pyramid of Ibi⁶⁹ and also as the basis for an expanded questioning of the deceased in Coffin Texts spells 396 and 397.⁷⁰ Considering the aforementioned editorial efforts in PT 310 and PT 505 and their original wording, it seems rather improbable that the developed interrogations, attested since the time of king Ibi and central in CT spells 396–405 (with descendants in Book of the Dead spells 99 A+B), constitute later expansions integrated into existing textual material. The abruptness of the interrogations in PT 310 and PT 505, and the editorial interventions to release the king from the obligation of answering, point to a process of truncation of a text (or idea) existing outside the present realisations, or to a voluntarily limited evocation of a notion that was developed in other contexts, together with the notion of crossing over with the help of a ferryman. The example of PT 270 developed below also shows that an interrogation or even accusation was expected in the context of the ferryman, which in the edition of this spell was forcefully warded off. Through his realistic and slightly outrageous character, this ferryman appears as a figure issued from popular imagination.⁷¹ The motif of his unwillingness and exacting interrogation must have seemed incongruent in the setting of a royal receiver, and was therefore eliminated from the Pyramid Text adaptations.

The more developed dialogues between the ferryman and the deceased in the pyramid of Ibi and the subsequent Coffin Texts represent a discursive illustration of the transition to a new and desirable sphere of existence: a performative interrogation⁷² that might have been staged in

⁶⁸ PT 475 § 946–948.

⁶⁹ G. JÉQUIER, *Fouilles à Saqqara. La pyramide d'Aba*, Le Caire, 1935, pl. XI col. 587–602.

⁷⁰ S. BICKEL, *Le thème du passeur*, with fig. 2.

⁷¹ C.H. REINTGES, *The Oral-Compositional Form*, p. 12, draws attention to the fact that “ordinary language” is used, specifically in PT 505.

⁷² S. BICKEL, *Dialoge und das Dialogische in den altägyptischen Sargtexten*, in A. EL HAWARY (ed.), *Wenn Götter und Propheten reden - Erzählen für die Ewigkeit (Narratio*

some contexts as an effective rite of passage. The notion of transition by means of an interrogation led by the ferryman was probably not fixed in a single text, but rather existed as an idea that could be developed in various ways. Although the result of this verbal process seemed most advantageous to the editors of the Pyramid Texts, the means to achieve it through an interrogation were not appropriate for the royal referent. This led to the short and deviated evocations of the dialogue in PT 310 and PT 505, and also possibly to its voluntary omission in PT 475. This process again implies a vast conceptual background of funerary expectations, and perhaps also practices, upon which the editors of the Pyramid Texts drew selectively and with great care when adapting the textual material to the status of the royal beneficiary.

Accusation and judgement

Similar processes of adaptation can also be observed in connection with the idea of a tribunal to be held in the otherworld. As mentioned above, the concept of a funerary tribunal and a judgement in the otherworld is attested in contemporary elite contexts, both with the implication of accusing possible offenders and of being potentially accountable for earthly moral behaviour. The tribunal therefore belongs to a general set of ideas related to conditions of otherworldly existence.

In accordance with his former activity and royal/divine status, the king is regularly described in the Pyramid Texts as the judge, officiating either alone or together with one of the major gods. Being associated with the various deities — in this function in particular with Thoth and Anubis — the king can even be said to be the judge of the gods.⁷³ These projections of the deceased king's future juridical role are entirely consistent with his status and expected all-powerful and god-like position in the otherworldly spheres.

There is, however, a group of texts that address the theme of the tribunal from another angle, with remarkable emphasis on the assertion that the deceased king will not himself be accused or brought into a tribunal.⁷⁴

Aliena, Studien des Bonner Zentrums für Transkulturelle Narratologie 3), Berlin, 2012, p. 65–82.

⁷³ Many examples in B. MATHIEU, *L'huissier, le juge et le greffier. Une hypothèse sur la fonction du serdab dans les pyramides à textes*, in *Méditerranées* 13 (1997), p. 11–28; see also J.P. ALLEN, *Some Aspects of the Non-royal Afterlife*, p. 12, n. 27.

⁷⁴ G. MEURER, *Feinde*, p. 88–93.

PT 270 § 383–384, 386 WPMN⁷⁵

May you awake in peace, Face-Behind-Him, in peace; He-who-Sees-Behind-Him, in peace; the sky's ferryman, in peace; Nut's ferryman, in peace, the gods' ferryman, in peace. Unas has come to you that you may transport him in the ferryboat in which you transport the gods. [...] There is no accusation of one alive against Unas, there is no accusation of one dead against Unas, there is no accusation of a duck against Unas, there is no accusation of a *nga*-bull against Unas.

As mentioned above, this spell associates a strong refutation of potential accusations in the context of the invocation of ferrymen. This rejection of any charge against the king — entirely inappropriate to his royal/divine status — is only comprehensible in the context of the anticipated situation of the ferrymen's refusal to act, and of their instigating an interrogation reminiscent of a trial. By inserting this hyperbolic refutation of potential accusations, the manifest intention of the text editors was to ward this feared judgement-like examination away from the king.

PT 302 § 462 WPN⁷⁶

There is no case involving Unas on earth with people, there is no guilty verdict of his at the sky with the gods, for Unas has removed the case involving him, Unas has destroyed what is against his ascending to heaven.

This passage also refutes various forms of accusations in an all-encompassing manner. As in the ferryman spell above and in the citation below, this inherent threat is situated during the process of ascension to heaven.

PT 258 § 309b–310e WT⁷⁷

Unas is off to the sky, Unas is off to the sky, in the wind, in the wind. He shall not be opposed, and there is none who will oppose him. He shall not sit in the god's court. Unas is the one who is on his own, the oldest of the gods.

These words are pronounced by the king's sister the Mistress of Pe (Wadjet). It is noteworthy that the sentence "He shall not sit in the god's court" was suppressed in the second version of this spell (PT 259 § 313d–e T)⁷⁸ inscribed in the pyramid of Teti.

All these passages use negations, always in repetition and with stress. Repeated negations are a clear textual indication that the validity of some generally admitted statement is emphatically rejected in a given situation. The emphasis not only corroborates the statement's usual validity, but

⁷⁵ J.P. ALLEN, *Pyramid Texts*, p. 50 (Unis 177).

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 56 (Unis 207).

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 46 (Unis 169).

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 79 (Teti 194).

also points to some moot point or vulnerability in the specific situation. In the given context, these passages clearly signal the threat of a trial on the way to the aspired destination as an important theme in general funerary thought, and as a potential threat even to the king. Already in 1953, Erich Lüddeckens⁷⁹ expressed doubts that this concept of the otherworldly judgement had originally been restricted to the king. Quite the contrary can be suggested: the notion was widespread and probably part of the worrying aspects of funerary expectations. For the edition of the Pyramid Texts, a considerable effort was deployed to subtract the idea of a possible trial from the evocation of the king's ascension. The concept of the tribunal and judgement must have had such a strong impact in the sphere of funerary thought that it was deemed necessary to explicitly and categorically refute the possibility of any accusation against the king. This is even more noteworthy, as in real life the status of the king would certainly have rendered any juridical prosecution inconceivable; this immunity, however, was considered to be endangered during the progression to the king's future existence.

It seems difficult to gauge whether there were precedents of these assertions in written form. Did the evocation of a future judgement and the refutation of accusations exist in some context outside the Pyramid Texts? Could this theme have been part of the repertoire of non-royal funerary recitations?

Indeed, a passage that appears strikingly unrelated to the royal setting of the Pyramid Texts and therefore points to an origin in a non-royal context might suggest the existence of textual material related to the subject. PT 486 begins with a description of the deceased king as a primordial being, born in the Nun before the appearance of the created world. This type of formulation is regularly used to metaphorically enhance the presentation of the king as a supremely powerful being. Then follows:

PT 486 § 1041–1042 PN⁸⁰

Pepi is [the unique one of] that great Company that was born before in On, who are not arrested for a king or taken to the magistrates, who are not accused, who are not found guilty. This is Pepi: he will not be accused, he will not be arrested for a king, he will not be taken to the magistrates, and the opponents of Pepi will not be justified.

⁷⁹ E. LÜDDECKENS, *Alter und Einheitlichkeit der ägyptischen Vorstellung vom Totengericht*, in *Jahrbuch der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur*, Mainz, 1953, p. 182–199

⁸⁰ J.P. ALLEN, *Pyramid Texts*, p. 133–134 (Pepi 338), p. 297–298 (Neferkare Pepi II 548).

This passage has been recognised as one of the clear instances where a text was not composed with the king in mind as receiver.⁸¹ It reflects the view of somebody who is not a king, possibly not even a magistrate. The model of this spell could have begun with a self-presentation — adapted to the description of the king's status as primordial being — and then continued with the evocation of the deceased's blameless ancestors and the prophylactic refutation of the deceased's being himself accused. Whereas the evocation of the ancestry was adapted to the notion of the king originating from the great Company of gods, the rest of the passage did not undergo the amendments that would have been expected in the royal context.

Although the precise use and conceivable setting of such rejections of possible accusations remain unclear, it appears most probable that the theme of potential judgement was treated in the wider funerary context. As mentions of this subject in elite tombs as well as in the Pyramid Texts make obvious, the dreaded trial was not an earthly event, but situated in an otherworldly surrounding. Prophylactic refutation of accusations was perhaps understood as an apotropaic form of warding off the threat; the recitation, entextualisation and inscription of such forceful repetitive rejections were considered as permanent and performative assertions for avoiding the dreaded trial situation.

The cited passage of PT 486 furthermore indicates the two aspects of the concept of the funerary tribunal already mentioned in the context of elite tombs: it contains, on one hand, the possibility of being accused and made answerable for earthly behaviour (moral aspect) and, on the other, the potential necessity to face the challenge of opponents, wrongdoers or enemies.

CONCLUSION

A close contextual reading of some Pyramid Texts spells reveals passages that do not seem to correlate with a royal funerary discourse, since they deal with ideas which were in some way problematic with regards to the receiver's status and expectations. This approach should in the future be systematized and further differentiated. The few examples presented here suffice to show that this method can have two very different outcomes. On the one hand, it opens a window to funerary conceptions, expectations and apprehensions that — with a very high degree of certainty — were not created specifically for the king and probably not limited to

⁸¹ M. SMITH, *Democratization of the Afterlife*, p. 7.

the knowledgeable elite, but rather were part of more widespread views of the otherworld and afterlife. On the other hand, the identification of these textual asperities offers insight into the processes of producing the Pyramid Texts from a new perspective.

Everybody's afterlife?

Old Kingdom funerary conceptions can be comprehended as a body of imaginations related to the expected post-mortem existence that underlay and shaped collective and individual actions on various social levels. They formed a central part of widely shared cultural core values. Materialisations and enactments of funerary conceptions could take place in very simple and popular or in highly elaborate forms. Social, geographical and temporal factors would certainly have accounted for the large variety of ways of expression. It seems probable, however, that on most social levels some form of collective action was meant to accompany or activate a deceased's process of transformation into a metaphysical form of existence and a departure to otherworldly abodes. As seen above, common gestures of food and drink offerings and the deposition of only a cup and a flask could be viewed as minimal tokens of permanent subsistence and presumably also empowerment to ontological transformation into a metaphysical being. This spirit-like existence is the form in which an individual could project himself into the afterlife and in which he or she could be remembered (and potentially also feared).⁸²

Numerous mental representations regarding the afterlife were conceivably shared through large parts of society, whereas their reflection in material culture varied from more modest forms of expression (or no materialisations at all) to sophisticated and ostentatious displays. Practices of exclusion and social distinction could be based less on the validity of concepts and expectations and more on the means to materialise them through elaborate performance, through the possession of funerary monuments, and through access to written versions of textual material that might have been in wider circulation in the form of oral tradition or shared ideas.

The formation and transmission of funerary conceptions might be modelled as a bidirectional process. As already mentioned, participation in elite funerals and in the preparation of all its material requirements

⁸² On the relation between remembrance and fear see L. MORENZ, *Der Erinnerer - ein bedrohlicher altägyptischer Dämon und die existentielle Furcht vor dem Totengericht* (Bonner ägyptologische Beiträge 6), Berlin, 2015.

provided insight into this group's aspirations to a much larger spectrum of society.⁸³ Aspirations formulated by the elite might have been absorbed. Conversely, more general apprehensions and popular figurations, such as the ferryman or various demons as well as apotropaic formulations to ward off dangers, were obviously assimilated and also considered relevant at higher levels of society; they were explicitly integrated into elite written production. In the context of fears and magically dealing with threats it must be remembered that life expectancy and health conditions were to a large extent identical throughout all social levels. It therefore seems probable that mental constructions regarding worldview and one's being-in-the-world, as well as modes of action through "magic" in various forms, were shared across wider parts of society. Furthermore, thoughts about death and afterlife were not limited to the sphere of special occasions and the form of ritual. Rituals are mainly referential and use symbols to relate actions to a set of ideas. Expectations, thoughts, and imaginations can have circulated in numerous informal ways and formed a conceptual framework within which focus and emphasis could shift according to social and geographical parameters.

The minimal components of a shared, culturally grounded set of ideas regarding the afterlife might have included the conception of existence after death that (ideally) required sustenance, as well as an expected transfer to otherworldly spheres entailing a wide range of dangers and impediments. Otherworldly existence was not only a passive way of living and enjoying food, but it also seems to have involved long-distance mobility as well as an active and demanding engagement with contests and dangers. The generalised provision of nourishment might also have been directed towards enabling the deceased to face these challenges.

Whether components of personhood, in particular the transformation into an *akh*-being, were ascribed to every human being or made dependent upon social status and possibilities of ritual performance and materialisations of the burial place is probably impossible to evaluate.

Fears seem to have constituted a central part of imaginations of the afterlife. To what extent concepts of threat or judgment also had a societal function and were used as instruments of power is difficult to assess.⁸⁴

Access to knowledge has so far been at the centre of reflections concerning issues of non-royal funerary conceptions, and the discussion

⁸³ J. BAINES, *CRIPPEL* 28 (2009–2010).

⁸⁴ For this aspect as a possible driving force behind the rapid expansion of Osirian conceptions, see B. MATHIEU, *ENiM* 3 (2010), p. 86.

very much focussed on texts and text-based ritual activities.⁸⁵ It seems necessary, however, to dissociate the scope of conceptions, imaginations, and anticipations from any form of materialisation and of entextualisation through which ideas were made into objects of knowledge. Experience, ideas, expectations, and fears do not require literacy, and their expression and transmission did not even necessarily rely on fixed, textualised recitations and rituals. It is on this wider conceptual background that elite culture could build up sophistications, and material or literary products, upon which to ground strategies of distinction and exclusion.

“Pharaonisation” in the Pyramid Texts

The creators of the Pyramid Texts obviously grounded their enterprise within the scheme of current conceptions and practices. They collected and produced material that was necessary to ascertain the king’s transition to and existence in otherworldly spheres. However, they could have probably only relied on rather limited written material and therefore proceeded to an ambitious endeavour of text composition through the entextualisation of funerary ideas and textualisation of already more or less stabilised oral traditions. The project of covering such a vast surface with relevant inscriptions probably also led to an unprecedented gathering of material from various contexts that was deemed useful for the purpose. The new situation of inscribing invisible, subterranean chambers resulted in new requirements, such as the necessity to transcribe and comment on the recitations of the offering ritual of which until that time only a keyword list of items existed in writing. After assembling the material to be monumentalised in the pyramids, one of the main tasks was to customise it to make it appropriate for the royal receiver. As there was no tradition of inscribing tomb walls, all the selected material had to undergo a double transformation from an exterior context to this specific situation: it had to be adapted to funerary monumentalisation as well as to the royal referent. This twofold process of conversion was applied irrespective of the original chronological or functional setting of the textual material, and it left numerous traces in the final product, the Pyramid Texts. The present study has compiled instances of conflict between the evoked ideas of funerary destiny and the king as receiver or referent of the enunciation.

⁸⁵ H. Willems advocates against the possibility of shared funerary conceptions and a partial bottom-up influence. His argumentation is primarily based, however, on a distinction of object categories and possibilities of display between elite and non-elite, H. WILLEMS, *Historical and Archaeological Aspects*, p. 219–225.

The textual markers that signal conceptual frictions and incompatibilities with the royal setting mainly highlight contexts of endangerment and impediment, as well as unpleasant and destabilising events. It seems more difficult to extract references to positive concepts from the Pyramid Texts with this method that might have been in wider circulation, such as ideas concerning ascension or the hope for a sojourn in the Fields of Offering.

Adaptations to the royal receiver could mobilise various strategies of reworking. Whether the monumentalised product was based on a written *Vorlage*, on an orally transmitted model, or specifically composed and drawn upon a more open ideational background may not have significantly influenced the necessity and ways of amending the discourse.

Reworkings could have focused on the ideological framework that defined the king's power,⁸⁶ on his regalia or on behavioural structures. The last phenomenon is well illustrated by the numerous texts in which the king is described as the object of actions, undertaken on his behalf in an otherworldly setting. These actions generally benefit the king's progression and ascension. References to performative actions (constructing a ladder, opening doors, etc.) were adapted from an active speaker pronouncing the efficacious utterances as actor to his own advantage, to a passive royal beneficiary for whom the intended effects of the spells are produced by others. The projected situations of pharaoh's funerary destiny were reformulated to fit the conventions of a king's behaviour, expecting to be served and to achieve his goals passively and effortlessly. Similar amendments to the text structure were observed in the examples from PT 310 and PT 505 where even the trouble of answering the ferryman's provocation was anticipated by an external reciter. Again, by modifying the underlying concept, utterance, or text, the king was cast in the role of a passive object and receiver of the intended benefits.

Other forms of adaptations seem to have been applied in cases where an already fixed (oral or written) composition was adjusted to the specific purpose of the royal receiver. One such possible form of alteration was the truncation or the suppression of passages that were present in the *Vorlage* but considered unsuitable for the new assignment. A likely instance of this process is the ferryman's interrogation that was not only deviated from the king by an external speaker, but probably purposefully limited to a single question that was sufficient to evoke the notion of the ferryman's habitual long and unfriendly examination.

⁸⁶ This is exemplified by the Cannibal Hymn (PT 273–274) that can be seen as a royal adaptation of a general slaughtering ritual, C. EYRE, *The Cannibal Hymn. A Cultural and Literary Study*, Liverpool, 2002.

A further strategy of amendment was the wholesale negation of an idea. Examples for this process can be found in relation to the concept of the afterlife judgement in a tribunal. This concept must have been notably present in general thought concerning conditions of existence in the otherworld, but it was entirely unacceptable in the context of the deceased king. Rather than just suppress the evocation of this notion, it was chosen to forcefully reject it by means of repeated negations.

The Pyramid Texts show traces of countless conceptual and textual adaptations, through which notions considered to be constituent of funerary expectations were maintained in the new text production, thanks to alterations that ensured accordance with the royal context and the subject of the deceased pharaoh. These alterations can (playfully) be termed “pharaonisation” as a way of referring to a process of profound reworking and recontextualisation of concepts that were concurrently valid for, and in use by, a wider part of society. This approach is demonstrable in the extant text material itself and it is anthropologically and culturally much more plausible than the out-dated theory of democratisation, that drew an opposing line of evolution with the Pyramid Texts as almost monolithic starting point.

Alongside these strategies of adaptations to the royal receiver, other types of reworking could have taken place during the process of preparing of the text material for inscription in the royal tomb, such as possible theological elaboration and structuring. It has been observed, for instance, that most malevolent and demonic beings or negative phenomena, such as sickness or hunger, were associated with Seth in the Pyramid Texts.⁸⁷ Here, a re-shaping of popular figures and notions might have been undertaken in order to create coherence and to connect various concomitant ideas to the one central mythological structure around Osiris and Seth that was being so forcefully promoted at the time of producing the Pyramid Texts.

In creating a funerary discourse suited for the royal receiver, numerous mechanisms of adaptation were deployed to avoid any direct implication of the king with awesome, dangerous and unpleasant ideas, particularly in cases where the overall funerary conceptions required their evocation. All this effort was ultimately conditioned by the new situation of inscribing subterranean pyramid chambers and the necessity to pay utmost attention to the efficaciousness of the written word that would eternally surround the pharaoh.

⁸⁷ G. MEURER, *Feinde*, p. 268.