The Conventional Formula under the Offering Tables at the Private Tombs of the Old Kingdom

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Keywords

Private tombs
Offering tables
Conventional formula,
Inscriptions
Offering lists

Abstract

Carved beneath offering tables in Old Kingdom private tombs, the “conventional formula” – a text and image combination – offers unparalleled insights into the beliefs, social order, and artistic expression of ancient Egypt. This abstract delves into the significance of these formulae, exploring their textual and visual components, their evolution over time, and their multifaceted roles in funerary practices. Studying these formulae unlocks a treasure trove of information about Old Kingdom religion, social structures, artistic trends, and individual narratives. They offer a link between the written word and the visual world, illuminating the complex tapestry of beliefs and practices that underpinned ancient Egyptian civilization. This paper dealt with 10 scenes between the time period from the fourth dynasty to the sixth dynasty. The study reached results including The depictions under the offering tables in the Old Kingdom tended to follow traditional iconographic conventions that had been established in earlier periods. Inscriptions are simple and formulaic, generally consisting of offerings for the deceased's.

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1. Introduction

The abundance and variety of burial implements, continued across several millennia. The deceased was depicted before an offering-table beside which, there was an inscription known as the “offering-list”. Offering-lists enumerated all that was offered in the offering-table and provided a series of ceremonies. In addition to the offering list a funerary one meal was presented to the deceased at the time of interment and was supposed to be presented daily and certainly during all feast-days (Hassan, S., 1948: 157).

The offering formula in ancient Egyptian private tombs, manifested through diverse textual and visual forms, served as a dynamic and context-dependent framework for structuring offerings presented on offering tables, reflecting evolving beliefs about the afterlife and societal dynamics. (Rady, M., 2021: 154). Hartwig, M (2000) refer to the offering table formulae are not mere inscriptions; they are vibrant links between the physical and the eternal, the individual and the divine. Understanding the ancient Egyptians, their culture, and their persistent search for life after death is deepened by unraveling their mysteries (Rady, M., 2021).

Kanawaty (2005) Investigated of the ornamentation of Old Kingdom tombs, included scenes for musicians from Kaiemankh's (4th or 5th dynasties) burial chambers and a scene depicting food supply from Remni's tomb. He declared that the walls of burial chambers were devoid of any decoration up until the late 5th dynasty, under the reign of Djedkare Isesi (Kanawaty, N., 2005: 55-71). Chauvet (2013: 57-71) asserts that using his research on tomb inscriptions as a historical data source, the most extensive collection of textual sources for studying the Old Kingdom is found in the inscriptions found on private tombs. She displayed a picture for the first two columns in Tomb CG1432, the Kaemfofret Tomb.

Mahran and Kamal (2016: 169-192) examined the various ways that physical disability was portrayed in these tomb scenes. They brought a relief from Mereruka's tomb in Saqqara (6th dynasty) for the dwarf goldsmiths. They displayed a number of reliefs from various tombs, including those belonging to Ptahhotep (5th dynasty), Iho and Idiots (5th and 6th dynasties), Iymery's tomb (5th dynasty), Nikauises' tomb (5th Dynasty), Ti's tomb (5th Dynasty), Nykahem's tomb, and other scene.

Offering tables are common in both temples and tombs as necessary components of the funeral architecture (Mariette, A., 1846: 14). The majority of the offering tables are located next to false doors or inside statues that depict aristocratic people in their tombs (Lundius, E., 2020: 78).

2. Literature Review
2.1. Offering Formula

The so-called offering-formula or offering-list was frequently also carved on the offering-table (The Egyptian Museum Worldwide, n.d). Mauss refer to "An offering which the owner gives" is the offering formula found in the tombs. This was accurate because of an oddity in the Egyptian offering system known as "reversion of offerings," which stated that the offerings were given to the gods by the donor and thereafter returned to the owner or the departed (Mauss, 1923-1924, pp. 30-186).

Formulas can be read without an in-depth understanding of their internal grammar because they are essentially determined phrases. The most prevalent illustration, the offering formula, is a characteristic shared by all hieroglyphic inscriptions found in museums across the globe. One can obtain a plethora of hieroglyphic texts by working through and getting acquainted with the components of the formula that are covered here (Barta 1968: 26).
The official and personal functions are combined in the offering formula. According to official terminology, the ability to carry out official duties in royal service and follow ethical principles during life were required for the deceased's status as one of the blessed deceased. This achievement was important in enabling the deceased to be qualified for burial inscriptions and burial monuments as a form of commemoration.(Bibliotheca Alexandrina, n.d.)

The deceased's private, family-based elements of the funerary cult are primarily related to the second, or personal, function. Private offerings to the deceased can be made verbally (by pronouncing the offering formula) or physically (by providing food, drink, and goods). Moreover, these gifts might be preserved both visually and verbally (through writing and art). In this sense, the stela, visitors to the tomb, and family employees—especially the son and heir—could all continue the offerings made during the burial (Bibliotheca Alexandrina, n.d.).

2.2. Offering Formula Forms

It has been usual to translate the formula's first phrase into two distinct languages: 1) In Old Kingdom literature, the king and god(s) are introduced using parallel phrases. 2) For manuscripts dating from the Middle Kingdom and later, introducing the god(s) with a dative construction. The Old Kingdom phrase "ran": "An offering that the king gives, (and) an offering that Anubis (gives)...," introducing the monarch and the god(s) as the offering's benefactors in a parallel construction. A revised version of the phrase by the Middle Kingdom read as follows: "An offering that the king gives (to) Anubis/Osiris, that he [i.e. the god] may (in turn) give invocation-offerings to..." The god(s) are introduced by a preposition, and "hr,2" is typically left unwritten.

Ancient Egyptians typically measured material needs in huge quantities of “h₃” meaning a thousand (Bibliotheca Alexandrina, n.d.). Strangely enough, though, the offering-formula of this object ended the demand by requesting all the good and pure things, which are endless in quantity, rather than limited its specific needs to a certain amount.

The offering formula's most popular form includes of three parts, which can be divided based on the unique Egyptian expression present in each(Bibliotheca Alexandrina, n.d.):
Table (1): Forms of the offerings formula

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ-ᵈⁱ⁻ⁿˢʷ</td>
<td>an offering which the king gives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ⁻ᵈⁱ⁻ⁿˢʷ</td>
<td>a verbal offering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ⁻ⁿ שינויים</td>
<td>for the k₃ of king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ⁻ⁿ结构调整</td>
<td>offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ⁻ᵈⁱ⁻ⁿ结构调整</td>
<td>give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ⁻ⁿ结构调整</td>
<td>bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ʰᵗᵖ⁻ⁿ结构调整</td>
<td>beer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, n.d.).

2.3. Relationship between Offering Formula and the offerings under Tables

Offering tables were common in the Old Kingdom but became extremely rare in the New Kingdom (Mariette, A. 1864: 28). Beginning in the late Old Kingdom and continuing into the early Middle Kingdom, this element (s) (ʰᵗᵖ) ᵈⁱ in offering formulas is a relatively common feature (G. Lapp 1986: 9-28). These might be seen as reflecting the Middle Kingdom's common offering formula, which was—I'll threat to guess here—essentially the same as it was in the Old Kingdom: "an offering which the king has given and which Osiris has given," and not, as is usually translated in the tradition of (A. H. Gardiner's Egyptian Grammar, p.171)‘an offering (or: boon) which the king has given (to) Osirris...’. (N. De Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner, 1915: 89)

In the Old and Middle Kingdoms, the support of the king was frequently the only source of the equipment used by wealthy individuals to create their tombs and funeral residences (D. Franke 1994: 22), and the gods, such as Anubis, for example, were divine guarantors for burial’. It is generally accepted that the food offerings made to the gods come from royal estates and periodicals, and that the Old Kingdom offering formulas refer to the ruler and the god(s) as the givers of the "offerings" and favors. The phrase (s) ʰᵗᵖ⁻ᵈⁱ⁻ⁿˢʷ and (ʰᵗᵖ⁻ᵈⁱ) god's name could be understood as a formulaic description of the traditional custom of the reversion of offerings (‘Umlaufop’): the king offers ʰᵗᵖ, 'food offerings', to the gods, and after they have ‘satisfied’ (ʰᵗᵖ) themselves, Offering tables, stelae, and/or human representations receive the offerings from the gods' sacrifices in order to support their owners (A. H. Gardiner, 1915: 89).
Thus, the formula symbolizes the king and/or the gods as the theoretical origin and sources of the food offerings provided during the performance of the offering ritual.

3. Methodology

This paper aims to analyze the depictions of the "Conventional Formula" found under offering tables in private tombs of the Old Kingdom from 4th dynasty till 6th dynasty. To understand the significance of this formula in the context of Old Kingdom beliefs and practices. Through examine variations in the depictions of the formula across different tombs or regions, connect the formula to broader artistic trends and developments in Old Kingdom tomb decoration.

This paper did not address the scenes from the 3rd dynasty, Because of their rarity and the lack of clarity of the conventional formula depictions under the offering table at the private tombs. All the scenes from Saqqara and Giza only, because they were the main necropolis in the Old Kingdom.

4. Table of scenes:

4.1. 4th dynasty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.</th>
<th>TT&amp; Owner</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Place of the scene</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>Fig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Iy-nefert</td>
<td>Saqqara.</td>
<td>Room III, south wall of the tomb of Iy-nefert.</td>
<td>PM III², p. 482.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Tomb C56)¹ (in G 4940).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Stela of Princess Nefertiabet</td>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>Western Cemetery 1200:G. 1225.</td>
<td>PM III¹, p. 59-60.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(G 1225).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Now in the Louvre. E 15591 E 22745.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. 5th dynasty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.</th>
<th>TT&amp; Owner</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Place of the scene</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>Fig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Seshemnufer II sšm-nfr</td>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>Chapel, West wall, center</td>
<td>PM III², pp.146-147</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(G 5080).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Seshethotep</td>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>Chapel, south wall, middle part, Giza</td>
<td>P.M. III¹, pp. 149-150.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>called Heti</td>
<td>(G 5150).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kaemankh kš(j)-m-‘nh²</td>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>Chapel, recess, south wall, the burial chamber</td>
<td>PM III¹, pp.135, 136.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(G 4561).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ N. Kanawati and Abdel Raziq, the Units Cemetery at Saqqara, vol. II, The tomb Iy-nefert and Ihy (used by Idut), (oxford, 2003), pp. 41-46
4.3. 6th dynasty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.</th>
<th>TT&amp; Owner</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Place of the scene</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>Fig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Iasen (G 2196)</td>
<td>Saqqara</td>
<td>Chapel, west wall, left of the statue.</td>
<td>PM III², p. 490.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Idut, also called Seshseshet (G 7875)</td>
<td>Saqqara</td>
<td>Room IX, north wall of Idut's tomb</td>
<td>PM III², p. 623.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mereruka, Meri (G 6735)</td>
<td>Saqqara</td>
<td>Room A8, south wall, west section of Mereruka's tomb</td>
<td>PM III², pp. 525-534.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Meryteti (G 7875)</td>
<td>Saqqara</td>
<td>Room C3, South wall, Right of Meryteti's tomb</td>
<td>PM III², pp. 536-537.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>S'ankhuptah (G 8893)</td>
<td>Saqqara</td>
<td>Room I, west wall</td>
<td>PM III², p. 723.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Samples of the study

5.1. Scene 2: The Tomb of Iy-nefert (T C56),³ (in G 4940)

Dynasty: 4th.

Title: “High Priest of Pharaoh Teti”

Scene Location:
Room III, south wall, Saqqara.

![Fig. 1: Tomb of Iy-nefert, High Priest of Pharaoh Teti (Tomb C56) (after Kanawati N, Abder-Raziq M.2003, pl. 37 [b])](image)

| Description | Iy-nefert is shown in the scene sitting on a chair with padded backrest and bull's legs. He presents one hand to an offering table full of offerings while holding a folded cloth in the other. He is dressed in a collar, a beard, and a shoulder-length wig. Beneath the table is inscribed, |

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³N.Kanawati and Abdel Raziq, the Units Cemetery at Saqqara, vol. II. The tomb Iy-nefert and Ihy (used by Idut), (oxford, 2003), pp. 41-46.
Inscription

\[ t\ h_3\ p\ h_3\ h\ m\ 3\ s\ h_3\ m\ n\ h\ t\ h_3 \]

‘Bread, one thousand; cake, one thousand; beer, one thousand; alabaster, one thousand; clothes, one thousand’

\[ k_3\ h_3\ p\ h_3\ m_3\ h\ d\ h_3\ g\ h\ s\ h_3 \]

‘Oxen, one thousand; fowl, one thousand; Oryx, one thousand; gazelle, one thousand.’

Commentary
A litany of several offerings, including bread, cake, beer, alabaster, garments, oxen, poultry, Oryx, and gazelles, is inscribed beneath the table, to the right of it. A variety of offerings are arranged in front of the ewer in a basin that is supported by a stand to the left of the stand beneath the table.

5.2. Scene 1: Stela of Princess Nefertiabet nfrt-jꜣbt (G 1225).

Dynasty: 4th
ca. 2590-2565 BC.
Title: “Princess Nefertiabet”.
“Khufu’s daughter”

Scene Location:
Western Cemetery
1200:G. 1225, Giza,
Current location: in the Louvre museum, E 15591 E 22745.

Description
Nefertiabet is seen in the scene presenting offerings to the gods. She is shown sitting at a table with meat, drink, and bread spread out in front of her. Little figures of the gods are seen looming over the offerings. Details on the offerings are included in hieroglyphic inscriptions above the scene.

Nefertiabet was a princess during the reign of King Khufu; the best artists of the day were called upon to portray her food for the afterlife.
Inscription

**Left side,**

\[
\text{mnht Šs } \text{spd t } h_3
\]

‘Linen, alabaster, fowl, bread, one thousand.’

**Right side,**

\[
P_3t \text{hnqt } \text{ka } Ss \_h_3 \_h_3
\]

‘Cakes, beer, ox, gazelle, one thousand, one thousand’

**Commentary**

Inscription under the table described variety of offerings for the deceased at the afterlife, especially the sign \(h_3\) 'one thousand' is mentioned many times under them, So it means the sign refer to a very big quantity of different items like bread, beer, clothes, ox, linen, Oryx.

5.3. Scene.3: The tomb of Seshemnifer II sšm-nfr [\(G\ 5080\)].

**Dynasty:** 5\(^{th}\).

**Title:** “The name Seshemnifer means "He who makes beautiful things."”

**Scene Location:**
Chapel, west wall, center

**Description**
In front of an offering table laden with eighteen half-loaves of bread, Seshemnifer II and his wife are shown sitting on chairs. Seshemnifer is decked up in a leopard skin, short wig, beard, and collar, while his wife is decked up in a long, tight dress, long wig, dog collar, wide collar, and anklets.

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6 N. Kanawati, Tombs at Giza. SeshathetepHeti (G5150), Nesutnefer (G4970) and Seshemnifer II (G5080), Volume II. Australian Centre for Egyptology Report 18. Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2002, pp.59,60.
**Inscription**

Beneath the table is inscribed,

\[ t \ h_3 \ hnqt \ h_3 \ k_3 \ h_3 \ ssp \ h_3 \ mn \ h_3 \ h_3 \]

‘bread, one thousand; beer, one thousand; fowl, one thousand; alabaster, one thousand; clothes, one thousand.’

\[ m \ h_3 \ nb(t) \ nfrt \]

‘of every good thing’

**Commentary**

The hieroglyphics inscription under the table highlights Seshemnefer II riches and rank by emphasizing the amount of items offered for the deceased.

5.4. **Scene 4: The Tomb of Seshethotep** 🕊, called **Heti** 🕊, *(G 5150).*

**Dynasty:** 5th.

**Title:** King’s son of his body, Overseer of all works of the King, Greatest of the Ten of Upper Egypt.

**Scene Location:** Chapel, south wall, middle part, Giza.

**Description**

The owner of the tomb is seated on a chair with bull’s legs and raises his right hand to a table that has eleven half-loaves of bread on it.

Below the offering table, to the right is written the amount of offerings: Bread, one thousand; beer, one thousand; alabaster, one thousand; clothes, one thousand; \( rth \) – bread, \( wr \) – bread.

**Inscription**

Beneath the table is inscribed,

\[ t \ h_3 \ hnqt \ h_3 \ ss \ h_3 \ mn \ h_3 \ h_3 \]

‘Bread, One thousand; Beer, One thousand; Alabaster,

7 N. Kanawati. Tombs at Giza II. Seshathetep/Heti (G 5150), Nesutnefer (G 4970), and Seshemnefer II (G 5080), A. McFarlane, S. Shafik, E. Thompson, N. Victor, S. Winlaw (Edts) ACE Reports 18, 2002, p. 60.
8 P.M. III², pp. 149-150. For more information, see: N. Kanawati, 2002, pp.59, 60.
9 N. Kanawati, 2002, Pl. 46.
One thousand; Clothes, One thousand.”

\( m\ h t\ nb(t)\ nfrt \)

“All beautiful for everything”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The scene in the tomb of Seshathetep/Heti reflects the typical offering scenes commonly found in Old Kingdom tombs, where the tomb owner is depicted making offerings to the gods. The accompanying figures represent different roles in the offering ceremony, including the presentation of offerings, announcement of offerings, and acceptance of offerings. The inscriptions provide details about the types and quantity of offerings being made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5. Scene 5: The tomb of Kaemankh K₃(j)-m-’nh¹⁰ (G 4561).¹¹

**Dynasty:** Late dynasty ₅ᵗʰ.

**Title:** \( w’b\ nswt \)

“Priest of the king.”¹²

**Scene Location:** Chapel, recess, south wall, the burial chamber.

![Fig. 5: Kaiemankh, chapel, recess, south wall](after N. Kanawati. Tombs at Giza. Kaiemankh (G 4561), Vol. I. 2001, Pl. 29)

**Description**

The owner of the tomb is seated on a chair with a cushion behind him and bull's legs protruding. He's got a collar, a beard, a shoulder-length wig, and a leopard skin on. With his right hand he extends to a table piled with twenty half-loaves of bread, and in his left hand he holds a folded cloth.

**Inscription**

Beneath the table, to the right is inscribed:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{šš h₃ mnh₃ h₃ r h₃ t h₃ [zt h₃ s h₃]}
\end{align*} \]

‘alabaster, one thousand; clothes, one thousand; \( r- \)goose, one thousand; \( t- \)goose, one thousand; \( zt- \)goose, one thousand; pigeon, one thousand; young ox, one thousand; all fine things, every day’

¹¹ PM III. pp.135, 136.
At the opposite side, beneath the table is inscribed,

\[
\text{mnt \[wt h3 \, \, \, \, \, \, r3 \, \, \, \, \, \, k3 \, \, \, \, \, \, h3 \]} \, \, \, \, \, \, ht \, \, \, \, \, \, nbt \, \, \, \, \, \, nfrt \, \, \, \, \, \, hrw \, \, \, \, \, \, \{nb\}^{13}
\]

‘bringing the choice food’

**Commentary**
The owner of the tomb is depicted in the scene making a ceremonial offering of bread and other goodies. He will receive daily supplies of food and other opulent things, according to the inscription. The scene on the other side of the table shows someone bringing food to the Choi, which could have been a momentous occasion in the life of the tomb owner.\(^{14}\)

### 5.6. Scene.6: The Mastaba of *Iasen* \(\text{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{mastaba.png}}\), (G 2196).\(^{15}\)

**Dynasty:** 6\(^{th}\).\(^{16}\)
**Title:** Unknown.
**Scene Location:** Chapel, west wall, left of the statue.

*Fig. 6: The Mastaba of Iasen*  
([https://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/iasen/e_iasen_03.htm](https://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/iasen/e_iasen_03.htm))

**Description**
Two “one thousand” signs are placed after the conventional hieroglyphic formula for offerings that includes bread, cakes, beer, birds, and livestock on the left side of the offering table. Two individuals are represented for purify him before starting the offering ritual on their knees, one in each hand, are carrying tiny offering vessels on the right.

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\(^{13}\) The items written in [ ] are no longer visible, but were recorded by Junker, Giza 4. Fig 7. In: N. Kanawati. Tombs at Giza I. 2001. p. 25.


\(^{15}\) PM III\(^2\), p. 490.

\(^{16}\)Simpson, William Kelly : "Mastabas of the Western Cemetery, Part 1: Sekhemka (G 1029) ; Tjetu I (G 2001) ; Iasen (G 2196) ; Penmeru (G 2197) ; Haby, Nefertjentet, and Herunefer (G 2352/53) ; Djaty, Tjetu II, and Nimesti (G 2337X, 2343,2366). Guiza Mastabas 4, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1980.
Inscription

Beneath the table is inscribed:

\[\text{t \ t hnt \ ùs \ apd \ k₃ \ h₃ \ h₃}\]

‘bread, cakes, beer, birds, and livestock, one thousand (tow times).’

Commentary

The scene is representative of Old Kingdom funerary art, emphasizing the giving of food and drink to the dead so that they may continue to exist in the hereafter. It could be a funerary scene.

5.7. Scene 7: Idut, also called Sesheshef.

Dynasty: 6th.
Title: “Prophetess of Hathor.”
Scene Location:
Room IX, north wall of Idut's tomb in Saqqara.

Description

The north wall of Room IX is occupied by an offering table scene, similar in many ways to that on the west wall of the same room. The princess is depicted sitting on a chair with lion's legs, holding a perfume jar to her nose, and extending her right hand towards an offering table laden with eighteen half-loaves of bread. The inscription beneath the table lists offerings of bread, beer, cakes, oxen, fowl, and Oryx, each in a quantity of one thousand. On the other side of the table is an ewer in a basin placed on a stand. The bottom register beneath the offering table scene shows six offering bearers, five of whom are wringing the necks of geese while the last carries a pigeon in one hand and supports a tray of food on his shoulder with the other.¹⁸

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¹⁷ PM III², p. 623.
Beneath the table is inscribed¹⁹:

\[ t \ h \ h \ nq \ h \ p \ k \ h \ h \ m \ h \ h \ m \ h \]

‘Bread, one thousand; beer, one thousand; cakes, one thousand; oxen, one thousand; fowl, one thousand; Oryx, one thousand.’

**Commentary**

In the context of the Tomb of Princess *Idut*, the inscription you gave, describing copious amounts of food, beer, cakes, oxen, poultry, and Oryx, presents a complex tapestry of meaning. Each offering carries specific meaning; Bread: Staple food representing nourishment and life. Beer: Refreshment and enjoyment, often associated with Osiris, god of the afterlife. Cakes: Sweet offerings for appeasement and divine favor. Oxen: Sacrificial animals symbolizing strength and offering meat for sustenance. Fowl: Associated with the sky and rebirth, potentially linked to Princess Idut's journey to the afterlife. Oryx: Powerful animals linked with the sun god Ra, potentially offering protection and divine connection.²⁰

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**5.8. Scene.8:** The Tomb of *Mereruka* 𓊃𓊄𓊝, *Meri* 𓊄𓊝𓊃.²¹

**Dynasty:** 6th.

**Title:** “Chief Justice and Vizier, Inspector of prophets and tenants of the Pyramid of Teti.”

**Scene Location:** Room A8, south wall, west section of *Mereruka's* tomb in Saqqara.

**Description**

In this scene, *Mereruka* is seated in a luxurious chair with a backrest, and his wife is standing behind him, clutching a lotus blossom. Underneath the table, which is raised on one pedestal, are many offerings. To the left of the table are piles of other offerings. *dp ht hipt.*

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²¹ PM III², pp. 525-534.
Beneath the table is inscribed:

\[\text{ḥnqt } h_3 t h_3 p\delta h_3 \text{ḥnqt}\]

‘One thousand; beer, one thousand; cakes, one thousand; bread, one thousand; geese.’

Commentary

The different offerings that are under and to the left of the table indicate that Mereruka was a wealthy and well-respected individual who could support his family and others working for him. Because the lotus flower represents rebirth and regeneration in ancient Egyptian culture, its portrayal is significant.

5.9. Scene 9: Meryteti

Dynasty: 6th.
Title: “Chief Justice and Vizier, King's eldest son of his body, Inspector of prophets of the Pyramid of Pepy I, Temp. Pepy I or later.”

Scene Location:
Room C3, South wall, Right of tomb, Saqqara.

The scene, an intricate and beautifully maintained offering table scene, shows Meryteti sitting on a cushioned chair with lion-legs, a shoulder-length wig, bracelets, and a half-pleated kilt. He extends one hand toward an offering table filled with twenty-two half-loaves of bread, and he carries a folded cloth in the other. Meryteti appears to have been a wealthy and well-respected individual who could support his family and people under his employment based on the intricate inscriptions and gifts.

Fig. 9: Meryteti Tomb (King's Daughter.)
(after Mereruka and his Family - PART 1 - The tomb of Meryteti is “Report 21; https://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/meryteti/e_meryteti_04.htm)

Description

The scene, an intricate and beautifully maintained offering table scene, shows Meryteti sitting on a cushioned chair with lion-legs, a shoulder-length wig, bracelets, and a half-pleated kilt. He extends one hand toward an offering table filled with twenty-two half-loaves of bread, and he carries a folded cloth in the other. Meryteti appears to have been a wealthy and well-respected individual who could support his family and people under his employment based on the intricate inscriptions and gifts.

22 PM III 2, pp. 536,537.
Inscription

There are two inscriptions to the right of the offering table, one of which explains the requirements of the ḫtpt-offerings and ḫnk-offerings

\[ ḫnk\ dbḥt-ḥtp \text{ ‘food requirement’} \]^{24}

**Beneath the table is inscribed,**

\[ h₃ t h₃ ḫnqt h₃ p₃ t h₃ k₃ h₃ \]

‘One thousand bread, one thousand beer, one thousand oxen’

\[ ṣpd h₃ ṣs h₃ mnḥt \]

‘One thousand fowl, one thousand alabaster, and one thousand clothes.’

**Below the table** are two stands on which are placed four ewers and jars, with one foreleg on the ground. To the left of the table are more stands and piled offerings of food and drink, including loaves, geese, cuts of meat, vegetables, and fruits.²⁵

- \( h₃ \) (pronounced "kha"): thousand
- \( t \) (pronounced "te"): bread
- \( ḫnqt \) (pronounced "hanket"): beer.
- \( p₃ t \) (pronounced "pet"): cake.
- \( k₃ \) (pronounced "ka"): oxen.
- \( ṣpd \) (pronounced "aped"): fowl.
- \( ṣs \) (pronounced "shesh"): alabaster.
- \( mnḥt \) (pronounced "menket"): linen.

Commentary

The scene offers insight into the religious customs and beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. A relationship between the pharaoh and the divine is implied by the use of the lion-legged chair and other animal themes in the tomb decorations. Almost every offering scene in the tombs of the officials from the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth dynasties has a type tow portrayal. Either behind the conventional formula list or in one or more registers, they are situated.²⁶

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5.10. Scene.10: The tomb of S’ankhuptah (G 8893)

**Dynasty:** 6th dynasty.

**Title:** “Overlord of Nekheb, Director of the Two Seats, Secretary of the Toilet-house, etc.”

**Scene Location:** Room I, west wall

**Description**

S’ankhuptah is depicted sitting on a lion-legged chair holding a folded cloth in his left hand, while extending his right hand to a table with 18 half-loaves of bread. Above his head are two vertical lines of hieroglyphs identifying him as:

\[ hm – ntr \ dd – swt – Itij \ smr \ w \ tj \ ...
S [ ‘nh ] . w (j) - pth \]

‘The priest of the pyramid; one steadfast of places is Teti, the sole companion S’ankhuptah.’

**On the opposite side of the table** is a heap of offerings, including meat, fowl, fruit, vegetables, food items in baskets, stands with jars of drink and ewers in basins. Above the table is written “dbht hipt hnk” (requirements of hipt and hnk-offerings) followed by an inscription of the offerings:

\[ h_3 \ p3d \ h_3 \ p3d \ h_3 \ k_3 \ h_3 \ mnht \ h_3t \]

\[ hntq \ p3t \ n S \ cnh – w (j) - [P] th \]

‘One thousands of fowl, one thousands of fowl, one thousands of oxen, one thousands clothes, one thousands of bread, beer and cakes for Seankhuptah.’

**Inscription**

Beneath the table is another transliteration and translation of offerings:

\[ \text{Transliteration} \]

\[ \text{Translation} \]

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27 PM III, p. 723.
"One thousands of fowl, one thousands of fowl, one thousands of oxen, one thousands of bread, one thousands of clothes, one thousands of cakes, one thousands of beer, one thousands of unguent, one thousands of fowl, one thousands of fowl, one thousands of alabaster.'

**Commentary**
The scene depicts the offering of food and other items to S'ankhuptah for use in the afterlife. The use of hieroglyphs and the specific items offered provide insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the time.

# 6. The conventional formula under offering tables

## 6.1. Analysis Conventional formula in scenes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4th Dynasty</th>
<th>5th Dynasty</th>
<th>6th Dynasty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invocation</strong></td>
<td>- Begins with hipt-offerings and hnk-offerings</td>
<td>- Similar to 4th Dynasty: hipt-offerings and hnk-offerings</td>
<td>- Continued Use of hnk dbht-htp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ℓhnk dbht-htp ‘food requirement’</td>
<td>ℓhnk dbht-htp ‘food requirement’.</td>
<td>- Expanded Inclusion of a wider range of deities, reflecting theological developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invokes Anubis, Osiris, or other deities for sustenance</td>
<td>- May include more deities, reflecting a broader pantheon</td>
<td>- Personalized Appeals: Direct addresses to specific deities for favors or protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Depictions of deities receiving offerings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offering List</strong></td>
<td>- Bread, beer, oxen, fowl, incense, and more.</td>
<td>- Wider range of food, drink, and ritual items.</td>
<td>- Detailed lists of food, drink, clothing, ritual items, and luxury goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reflects social status and afterlife aspirations</td>
<td>- Inclusion of luxury goods like fine linen or exotic perfumes</td>
<td>- Items chosen to reflect the deceased's personal preferences, status, and spiritual aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beneficiary</strong></td>
<td>- Names the</td>
<td>- Lists the</td>
<td>- Inclusion of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>deceased and their titles, asserting identity</th>
<th>deceased's official and religious titles, signifying their accomplishments and social standing</th>
<th>professional, religious, and honorary titles, highlighting the deceased's career and achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>- &quot;That he/she may live&quot; or &quot;that his/her name may endure&quot;</td>
<td>- Emphasized Individuality: Phrases like &quot;that his/her name may endure in the house of the king&quot; or &quot;that he/she may be remembered among the living.&quot;</td>
<td>- Phrases expressing desires for sustenance, remembrance, eternal life, divine company, and even participation in cosmic cycles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Depictions of the deceased enjoying offerings</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of metaphors, similes, and literary flourishes to convey the deceased's hopes and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Offerings</strong></td>
<td>- The king or a deity, highlighting divine favor</td>
<td>- King's Role: Continued emphasis on the king as the provider of offerings, but with increased mention of deities as direct sources</td>
<td>- Increased emphasis on deities as the direct providers of offerings, reflecting a growing focus on personal piety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Royal figures or deities presenting offerings</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Continued mention of the king as a mediator, but with less prominence than in earlier dynasties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>- Conciseness: Focus on</td>
<td>- Elaboration: Longer and</td>
<td>- Formulas display a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Essential Elements

- **Formal Structure:** Consistent patterns
- **Divine Authority:** Emphasis on king and deities

### More Detailed Formulas

- **Individual Expression:** Greater emphasis on the deceased's personal achievements and relationship with deities.
- **Artistic Flourish:** Often accompanied by more intricate and colorful reliefs and paintings.

### Material

- Carved on stone offering tables or stelae
- Similar to 4th dynasty, carved on stone offering tables or stelae in tombs and chapels

### Similar to Earlier Dynasties

- Carved on stone offering tables or stelae

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### 7. Conclusion

This paper deals with 10 scenes of the conventional formula under tables in which the tomb owner offered to gods or to his relatives. The paper did not detect any scenes after the old kingdom, almost 50% of the counted scenes date to the 6th dynasty period which reached to 5 scenes. The 5th dynasty included 3 scenes, while the 4th dynasty included 2 scenes. Used some scenes from these dynasties, to show the development of the conventional formula under the table and show the development of elements and symbolism in them, and complete the time periods according to methodology.

The depictions under the offering tables in the old kingdom tended to follow traditional iconographic conventions that had been established in earlier periods. The Conventional formula depictions “one thousand” of different items like: ` לח‘bread’, `ברק‘beer’, `לֵין‘linen’, `אלבסטר‘alabaster’, `זית‘ox’, `גוז‘geese.’

Inscriptions are simple and formulaic, generally consisting of offerings for the deceased's ‘קִצּו‘ (spirit) and the gods. They include the name and titles of the deceased.
Food and drink offerings take center stage, alongside depictions of wealth and abundance. Inscriptions detail the types and quantities of offerings, ensuring their provision in the afterlife. Symbolic objects.

The majority of the offering formulas in old kingdom times show a sequence

\[ nswt +dj + htp \]

The htp-sign is actually the substantive 'offering' in the phrase 'an offering that Anubis gives'; it serves much the same purpose in the first phrase 'an offering that the king gives'. I suggest that this palaeographic distinction is how the Egyptians showed the change-over from the earlier rendering with the parallelism between king and god to the newer re-interpreted formula with the preposition introducing the god.

The formula specified exactly what kinds and how much food, drink, and other offerings were meant for the deceased. This provided direction for both the living and the dead, ensuring that the latter were given what they needed to live on in the afterlife. Changes in the formula could be a reflection of societal standing, personal preferences, or changing ideas about the afterlife. Certain deities were linked to particular sacrifices in certain formulas, for instance, suggesting a relationship between heavenly favor and earthly rituals.

The formula's word and image choices offered symbolic meanings about the deceased's identity, standing, and connection to God.

Offering formulas, though they shared a basic framework and necessary components, also showed variation between tombs within the Old Kingdom. This capacity for change offers significant insights into the dynamic nature of ancient Egyptian funeral culture, reflecting variations in beliefs, interactions between people, and artistic styles.

Standardized scenes and formulas dominate, with less focus on personal details or unique attributes of the deceased. The focus remains on maintaining social order and securing divine favor through established rituals and representations.

Studying the inscriptions and depictions under offering tables provides a valuable window into the evolving beliefs and practices surrounding death and the afterlife in ancient Egypt. The inscriptions and depictions found beneath these tables reveal fascinating layers of meaning, offering glimpses into the deceased's desired afterlife experiences, relationships with deities, and their aspirations for the journey beyond life.
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