Fig. 1. Prince Khufu-khaf and his wife, Nefert-kauw, on the north wall of his chapel at Giza.
The Servants of the Ka

The cemeteries of Egypt were in the minds of the ancient Egyptians the dwelling places of the living spirits of the dead. The tombs, the living places of the kas, were made in family groups so that in the cities of living spirits each family was gradually assembled, not only provided with all the necessities of life on earth, but actually associated in families as on earth. The great Giza necropolis differed from other cemeteries in only one particular. It was planned as a whole by Cheops as the assembling place of the spirits of all his family and court. He laid out his own pyramid, those of his three queens, and regular streets and avenues of mastaba tombs which he assigned in order of favor to his wives, his children, and his great men. He conceived of himself as a ka, or spirit, living forever in the midst of the power and magnificence which had surrounded him as the king of Upper and Lower Egypt.

The idea was not entirely new, although never before put into practice on so elaborate and expensive a scale. In Dynasty I the third king, Zer, laid out around his own tomb over three hundred smaller tombs, arranged in blocks and rows, to receive all those associated with him in life, his harim, his household officials, his body-guard, his servants, and his slaves. The majority of these were buried at the same time as the king himself and were no doubt assisted into the other world to accompany the king’s ka. This is the practice called “sati-burial” in the account of our excavations at Kerma, where the history of this practice was outlined from predynastic times downward. The custom is well known in other lands and among the savage tribes of Africa in modern times. In the great cemetery of Cheops, a more civilized expression of the idea of

For illustrations of the cemetery, see M. F. A. Bulletins, Vol. XIII, No. 76, and Special Number, Supplement to Vol. XXV.

association after death was embodied in his city of mastabas, each standing separate waiting to receive the king's favorites as they died from natural causes.

The tombs of the Giza necropolis consisted each of a rectangular mass of masonry from the top of which a great square shaft descended deep into the solid rock, where a burial chamber was hollowed to receive the mummified body in its sarcophagus of wood or stone, the necessary equipment of furniture, vessels, weapons, and ornaments, and a supply of food, drink, and other necessities. On the valley side of this "mastaba" a chapel of stone was built in which those appointed to the service of the *ka* brought offerings and recited the magic formulas which were designed to provide the daily necessities of life after death.

The most important part of each chapel was a "*ka-door" (false-door) through which the *ka* passed to and fro between the grave and the open day. In many of the early tombs, a *ka-door* was also constructed or pictured in the burial chamber, which gave exit to the *ka* in some magical way from the grave to the *ka-door* in the chapel. At the *ka-door* in the chapel the servants of the *ka* laid their offerings and recited the offering formulas. This door was a representation of an actual doorway such as was constructed in the buildings of the old crude-brick architecture of Egypt. As constructed of stone, it consisted of a deep niche (door-embrasure) surmounted by an architrave (the great wooden beam which supported the crude-brick masonry above the embrasure), with the actual *ka-door* in the back wall. The *ka-door* itself consisted of a tablet showing in relief the figure of the owner seated at a table covered with loaves of bread, a cross-bar bearing titles and name, and below this the jambs and the representation of the wooden

![Fragment from the chapel of the Crown Prince Ka-wa'ab, showing overseer in a boat returning from bird-netting in a swamp, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.](image-url)
door. The sides of the embrasure, the door-jambs, and the wooden door (back of the inner niche) presented seven surfaces which were decorated with reliefs showing the man coming through the wooden door or leaving or approaching that doorway. In other cases these surfaces showed also members of the family or offering bearers approaching the door (Fig. 2). In many chapels, particularly after the reign of Chephren, there were two ka-doors, one for the man and one for his wife. The walls of the chapel, the door-jambs of the entrance to the chapel, and often the panels of the façade bore pictures in relief. The façade panels bore representations of the owner entering the chapel, often accompanied by his wife, children, and personal attendants. The scenes on the door-jambs were of the owner seated or standing, facing out to receive those entering bearing offerings or to recite magic formulas. The scenes on the walls of the room itself were chiefly of three classes, (a) the man "viewing" processions of estates bearing offerings, scribes writing lists of estates and of offerings, servants of the ka bringing the utensils and materials of the funerary meal, and live animals and birds (Figs. 6 and 7); (b) offering scenes in which the owner is viewing masses of offerings, and usually scribes writing the lists; (c) the man seated at the table of bread where he is being served with the funerary meal accompanied by priests performing various ceremonies (Fig. 5). In the earlier tombs, the scenes in the actual offering-room were mainly concerned with the provision of food offerings and the serving of the funerary meal; scenes from life, although they occur in the chapels of the reign of Cheops at Medium, were usually confined to a room outside the inner offering room (see Fig. 3).
in the latter part of Dynasty IV, the rock-cut chapel with its greater wall spaces was introduced, the use of scenes from life became more frequent,—boating scenes, boat-building scenes, the manufacture of statues and other furniture, the hunting of birds and the spearing or seining of fish, the cultivation of fields, and the harvest, and even administrative scenes showing the household officials dealing with recalcitrant peasants.

The Boston Museum contains a large number of statues, statuettes, ka-doors, and reliefs excavated by the Expedition in the great necropolis of the kings of Dynasty IV at Giza. The reliefs are from the offering chapels of mastabas which were found so destroyed as to be incapable of restoration. Many other chapels were exposed which were so well preserved that they had to be left in place in accordance with the regulations of the Egyptian Government. Some of these chapels, and indeed the most interesting, such as the tomb of Queen Meresankh III (Dynasty IV), the king’s clansman, Yasen (Dynasty V), and the two priests of the pyramids, Qa’ar and Yeduw (Dynasty VI), were in fact hollowed in the solid rock so that their beautiful reliefs can never be placed in any museum. Many of these scenes have been painted by Mr. Joseph Linton Smith, and his paintings deposited in the Egyptian Department of our Museum. These marvelously life-like pictures of monuments which can never leave Egypt are to be reckoned as an addition to the great works of Egyptian art deposited in the Museum.

It is of peculiar interest to visualize the acts and rites carried out by the living in the chapels devoted to the living dead. The pictures on the walls introduce us to a series of preparatory rites carried out by special classes of priests and to ceremonies which must have been repeated certainly on every day of every feast. After the preparation of the dead for burial, it was necessary to induct the ka into the spirit life of the other world. It had to be transformed into an akhuw or glorified living soul. Its mouth had to be opened to permit it to partake of food and drink.
It had to be purified with incense and water and the first funerary meal had to be served. These rites are frequently represented, performed by groups of three or four priests assisting at the funerary meal. The chief figure in this scene is the man seated at a table of bread, in ceremonial attitude, with his left hand laid on his breast and his right hand extended to the bread on the table (Fig. 5). Above and below the table are written lists of offerings, bread, beer, cakes, cattle, wild game, fowl, fruits and vegetables, water, wine, and curiously enough perfumed oils and cosmetics. The groups of priests
when they are pictured are seen on the opposite side of the table, facing the owner (Fig. 4). The first priest (first figure in lower register) is usually the *wet*, possibly to be translated as 'embalmer.' He kneels on one knee, with his hands uplifted before him, in three different positions which marked, no doubt, the different phrases used in the magic formulas which he recited. In one position he held one hand clenched and the other open, palm up; in a second he held both hands clenched in front of him, and in a third, one clenched hand in front and the other behind his head. We do not know
exactly the words he recited, but the whole ceremony is called "glorification" (causing the **ka** to become a glorified soul), and we know that it included "the opening of the mouth" and purification by incense.

The other priests appear to have acted as assistants to the "embalmer." In importance, the first of these is the "caller" or "crier" (**heru wodebuu**). He stands with one foot advanced and holds one hand extended upwards, open, palm up, and the other hanging clenched at his side, reciting the offering formula and calling one by one the offerings contained in the lists (second figure in lower register). As he spoke, with correct intonation, the food and drink and objects named materialized in spirit form in the other world for the use of the **ka**.

The second assistant is the waiter (**wodebuu-khenetwer**). Like the embalmer, he kneels on one knee with his hands extended, holding out small offerings in his palms (first figure in upper register). Usually these offerings consist of a small drinking-cup in each hand, obviously containing wine or beer; but he also holds out in some cases two small jars of wine or beer, or two small conical cakes, or two loaves of bread. Occasionally, however, the two objects are not identical, but are, for example, a drinking cup in one hand and a cake in the other. Apparently he is serving the first drink or the first mouthful of food of which the **ka** partakes after becoming a glorified soul.

The fourth assistant is a man performing one of the functions of the servant of the **ka**. In our picture from the tomb of Khutuw-khaf he is carrying a haunch of beef (see second figure in upper register); usually, however, he is bending over pouring water from a ewer into a basin resting on a tall stand. In one case he is actually pouring the water over the right hand held out over the basin by the chief
figure. In none of the pictures is the man with ewer and basin labelled, so that we cannot positively identify his designation in these scenes. In another class of picture, however, he occurs, together with the man bearing the haunch of beef, in a procession of servants of the ka (hem-ka), bringing the utensils and materials of the funerary meal, and is probably a hem-ka serving as an assistant to the wet in the preparatory rites.

These priests, the embalmer and his assistant, must have been engaged especially for the preparation of the body for burial and the funeral. During the period which elapsed between death and burial, two months or more, the body was in the "house of purification" (wa'abet). In the case of Meresankh III, the period was unusually prolonged to 274 days because when she died her tomb was not ready. In the tomb of Debehen, which it is recorded Mycerinus saw one day when he was going up in his carrying chair to visit his own pyramid, there is a great scene showing the ceremonies carried out at this tomb when Debehen was buried. This tomb was hewn in the solid rock, entered by a doorway in the rock cliff of the old Cheops quarry. The picture in question shows the rock cliff with the doorway, and on top of the cliff a sledge bearing what appears to be a life-size statue of Debehen standing in a small kiosk. In front of the sledge is a table of food offerings. An inclined plane or ramp runs from the foot of the cliff to the top. A procession of seven servants of the ka are proceeding up the incline to the table, the first standing with both hands extended and the rest bearing food offerings. Piled against the cliff on each side of the doorway are long rows of vessels also containing food and drink. On the left, above, are six priests performing the initial rites, and these include an "embalmer" and a "caller." Below this, women are pictured clapping hands and dancing around a table loaded with food. On the right is a great scene beginning with a list of offerings outlined in rectangular compartments and beside it an "embalmer" performing the "glorification," and a "caller" reciting the offerings written in the compartment list. Under this are registers showing the bringing of papyrus from the swamps, the sacrifice of bulls, the "embalmer" presenting offerings depicted behind him in a great list, and the bringing of flowers, birds, and animals. Over a picture of two men cutting up a bull and a third sharpening a knife is written "the slaughter of cattle in great abundance for the burial, as an offering which the king gives."

In Dynasty VI the group of priests led by the "embalmer" was replaced by a group of seven, the lector-priest (khery-heb) and six assistants. The best example is in the tomb of Qa'ar, in a table scene on the north wall. On the right of a great compartment list of offerings stand seven men, all except the seventh facing the list of offerings and the table far away at the left end. The first is an "embalmer," with his hands extended to an empty table. Behind him stands a lector-priest "making offerings" in the attitude of the "caller," except that he wears a diagonal sash and holds a papyrus roll in his hanging hand. The third figure is again the lector-priest, reading a papyrus and performing the "glorification." The fourth man is washing an offering-stone and the fifth is assisting him by pouring water on the scrubbing hands. The sixth man holds
out a bowl of incense and in the other hand a long handled spoon with which to stir the incense. The seventh man faces away to the right, but looks back over his shoulder and drags a broom of some sort behind him, while in the other hand he holds a papyrus roll. His act is called "the wiping out of the foot-steps" (yenet red). It appears that when these funerary priests had performed the necessary rites and left the chapel or the spot where the ceremony took place, the seventh man followed after with his broom, wiping out their foot-prints for some magical reason which at present can only be surmised.

The most frequent and the best known of the priests represented in the reliefs is the "servant of the ka" (hem-ka). He was a man engaged by the owner of the tomb by special written contract to carry out the presentation of offerings and the recitation of formulas in the chapel. He was supported by endowments of landed estates, or farms, and held actual possession of these lands with the power to pass them with his duties to his heirs. We have a few of these contracts preserved to us and a few wills in which the estates were bequeathed to other people. Attached to the estates were peasants and herdsmen, and in a few cases the reliefs contain a scene showing the servants of the ka dealing with recalcitrant peasants. The chief servant of the ka of Meresankh III was the steward of the estates of her father and mother; and as was to be expected, the man of business of the family was frequently selected for this position. In other cases the owner of the tomb appointed his own sons to be the servants of his ka, and thus cleverly kept the endowed estates in the family.

The servant of the ka is represented frequently on the panels of the ka-door burning incense, pouring water for washing the hands, and bearing offerings of various kinds, but the rows of these men bringing the funerary meal, which are contained in the wall scenes, give the fullest picture of their duties. They appear to move towards the offering niche bearing in order of importance the double-bell censer, a ewer and basin for washing the hands, two long towels for wiping the hands, one or two cylindrical jars of perfumed ointment for application after washing, tables of bread or cakes or other food offerings, haunches of beef or other cuts of meat, cooked fowl on platters or on skewers, vessels of wine and beer, loaves of bread and cakes, and other offerings of food and drink. In many cases these processions of servants of the ka seem to be coming away from a scene in which men labelled either "servants of the ka" or "butcher" are cutting up one or more bulls.

The privileges and the duties of the servant of the ka are further illustrated by the great wall scene which I call the presentation scene. In this the owner stands, usually holding staff and wand, often with his wife behind him, a child between him and the staff, and occasionally other descendants behind the wife. In front of him are a number of horizontal registers containing small figures, processions of the funerary estates, each with its name, scribes writing or reading the list of estates or the list of the products of the estates and other property. A procession of servants of the ka bringing the funerary meal and also grave equipment (personal effects), and others carrying birds and young animals or leading in domestic cattle and wild animals (Figs. 6 and 7). The personified estates are bearing in their dyes which, after being listed and checked by the scribes, are then carried by the servants of the ka into the presence of the owner of the tomb for inspection. The inscription in front of the chief figure states that he is "viewing the gifts (the funerary offerings) brought by his estates of the funerary endowment." Occasionally it is said that these offerings are brought from his estates and from the king's estate or, in one case, from the king's estate alone. Another class of presentation scene shows the owner "viewing the sealed things brought from the king's estate." The fullest of these scenes is that on the east wall of the chapel of Prince Khufuw-khaf, son of Cheops. The sealed things consist of sealed jars of wine and beer (not present in the Khufuw-khaf scene), sealed jars of perfumed ointment and oils, cases of utensils used in the offering ceremonies, and clothing. These objects are being presented by funerary priests or pictured in rows, while in the lowest register garments are being held up for inspection by pairs of men. The jars of ointment were sealed with mud stoppers impressed with the cylinder seal of some official of the royal household. A number of these sealings have been found in the burial chambers at Giza and in each case date for us approximately the time of the burial. It was the sealings in the tomb of Queen Hetep-heres I which proved definitely that she had been buried by her son Cheops.

The wall scenes of Dynasty IV were limited by the size of the offering room of that time and are therefore almost exclusively pictures concerned with the offerings of food and drink. When, in the reign of Mycerinus, the large rock-cut chapels came into vogue, the wall spaces were considerably increased and permitted a great extension of the scenes. The presentation scenes were altered to include the processes by which the offerings were procured, the netting of birds and fishing in the swamps, the cultivation of the fields, and the harvest, the care of the herdsmen and the disciplining of the herdsmen, and similar outdoor scenes. Boating scenes showing the owner sailing on the river or the swamp ponds, or being rowed or paddled, had already been used in the mastaba chapels. In the rock-cut tombs these were enlarged, and in the tomb of Meresankh III, her mother and she herself are shown on a papyrus raft plucking papyrus flowers in a swamp. When
in Dynasties V and VI the mastaba chapel was provided with greater wall spaces in the multiple-roomed and corridor chapels of that period, the new types of scene introduced in the rock-cut chapels were continued in use, and the composition of the decoration of the chapel assumed a different character, although still preserving the difference in size between the chief figure and the registers of small figures. It was in this period that the great scene was introduced which shows the chief figure, of disproportionate size, on a boat in the swamp hunting birds with throw-stick or split-spear, or spearing fish: the ka in action in his pleasure ground.

The great offering formula which was recited by the "caller," by the servants of the ka, and indeed by any pious visitor to the tomb, was written in its fullest form on the architrave over the outer door or that over the ka-door. In a shortened form it appears in the table scene, sometimes on the cross-bar or panels of the ka-door itself, and after Dynasty IV with increasing frequency on the sarcophagus. There were at first two separate offering formulas, one beginning "may the king give an offering," and the second "may Anubis give an offering," but in the reign of Cheops and later the two opening phrases were placed one after the other, and finally the two were combined, "may the king give an offering, Anubis foremost of the divine pavilion." After the opening words the formula proceeds with three phrases wishing for the owner a good burial, a great old age, and funerary offerings ("that which cometh forth at the call"). These wishes are all for the welfare of the ka in the other world. The whole idea is best illustrated by the great inscription over the doorway of the tomb of Yeduw of Dynasty VI, "may the king give an offering, may Anubis give an offering, foremost of the divine pavilion, he who is on his hill, he who is in the city of net, lord of the beautiful land, lord of good burial in the cemetery; may Osiris give an offering, may he give that he be properly buried in his tomb which is in the West-land, that he may walk upon the good roads, that he be followed by his kas, received by the great god, conducted upon the beautiful paths upon which the honored ones wander, that he may be presented to the great god as an honored one whom the great god, lord of honor, loves; a good burial for him in the cemetery, funerary offerings for him in great abundance in the West-land, his abundant glorification by the
In order that I might be with him in one place. Life on earth.

The scenes represented in the chapels reproduced for the ka in some magic way prosperous and happy surroundings in the spirit world. In the tomb of Khafra-ankh, on the east wall, is a large picture showing scenes from life, boating, sowing, and harvesting, the disciplining of peasants, bird-netting, and fishing. The chief figure, that of Khafra-ankh, stands leaning on a staff with his dog and the bearer of a sunshade. These figures are reproduced in miniature in the third register in the midst of the scenes from life, and show Khafra-ankh, his dog, and his sunshade bearer watching the reaping of the field.

In the chapel relief the owner and beneficiary is shown as a figure of very much larger size than the scenes depicted before him, but it is to be remembered, as in the case of Khafra-ankh, that he was thought of as moving and having his being in a spirit world among figures of the same size as himself. In this spirit world he lived according to his rank and favor before the king, in the company of his wife, his mother, his children, his personal attendants and servants, his favorite dog, and sometimes his monkey; in a word, all those beings which he had loved to have with him in his life on earth.

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