Going to Her Ka: A New Identification of the Pair Statues in the Tomb of Meresankh III

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GOING TO HER KA: A NEW IDENTIFICATION OF THE PAIR STATUES IN THE TOMB
OF MERESANKH III

by

Paige Nehls

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Art History

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For my Papa who taught me the value of choosing a career that lets you travel the world.

For my Nana, my favorite person to talk to about art and everything else.

For my Dad whose support and enthusiasm for my career choice has led to him to read and watch more about Egyptian history than even I probably have in this program.

For my mom, who has not built me a tomb but lets me win at Scrabble sometimes.

And for my cat.
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the pair statues in the western chamber of the tomb of Meresankh III. Meresankh predeceased her mother, Hetepheres II, who repurposed her own tomb for Meresankh. This relationship has led to scholars looking for Hetepheres in uninscribed statues of women throughout the tomb. I make the case that Hetepheres is not to be found in the statues of the west chamber as that was reserved for her daughter and her daughter’s *ka*. To make this point, I provide a summary of scholarship, followed by a layout of the tomb. Then, I describe the *ka* and its relationship to statuary. Using this context, I argue that it can only be images of Meresankh and her *ka* that are present in the pair statues.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

General Remarks

Since its discovery by George Reisner in 1927, the Fourth Dynasty double mastaba tomb of Meresankh III (G7530+40)\(^1\) has stood out to Egyptologists as remarkable for a variety of reasons: the vivid colors preserved,\(^2\) the skeleton left in the granite sarcophagus for thousands of years,\(^3\) the first documented use of canopic jars,\(^4\) and the iconographic program that focuses on the matrilineal royal lineage of one of the most renowned dynasties in Pharaonic Egyptian history.\(^5\) This thesis will examine scenes that portray Meresankh III\(^6\) together with her mother, Hetepheres II\(^7\), consider the iconography that differentiates the two women, and apply this analysis to two specific statue groups within the tomb. Flentye has suggested three possible interpretations of the statues: that they represent Meresankh and Hetepheres together, just

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\(^{5}\) Visual analysis in this paper depends solely on photographs, not in-person experience.


\(^{7}\) Ranke. Personennamen, 259, no. 3. Hetepheres: ḫtp-hr-s, “may her face be merciful,” or “may peace be upon her” referenced more simply throughout the present thesis “Hetepheres.” For the tomb of the earlier queen Hetepheres I (G7000), see Porter and Moss, Topographical Bibliography III, 179–187.
Meresankh, or, they represent a “duality associated with the tomb owner, e.g. the ka.”

Flentye goes on to note that elsewhere in the tomb Hetepheres and Meresankh are connected by gesture, implying that the connection in these rock-cut statues represent Hetepheres together with Meresankh. I hope to re-examine the data to determine if a more firm conclusion regarding the identification of the statues can be drawn. To support this identification, three scenes within the tomb will be examined and a pair statue identified as Hetepheres and Meresankh will be introduced.

In the remainder of the present chapter, I offer an overview of the history of scholarship on the tomb and the family tree of the Fourth Dynasty. In Chapter 2, I discuss the layout and decorative program of Meresankh’s tomb, focusing in particular on scenes featuring Hetepheres and Meresankh together. In Chapter 3, I introduce the concept of the ka and its related concepts discuss it in relation to Old Kingdom funerary statuary. Then, in Chapter 4 I apply this analysis to two statue groups in the western chamber of Meresankh’s tomb. Chapter 5 presents a synthesis of the data and comparisons drawn in previous chapters, as well as concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

**Review of Scholarship: Discovery of the Tomb**

In 1927, the Harvard-Boston expedition to Giza, led by George Reisner, discovered the tomb of Meresankh. Reisner remarked on his findings the same year in the Museum of Fine Arts. Laurel Flentye, in her article “The Rock-Cut Tombs of Meresankh III (G7530sub) and Her Family in the Late Fourth and Early Fifth Dynasties: The Decorative Programmes in the Eastern Cemetery (G7000), Quarry Cemetery West of Khafra’s Pyramid, and the Khufu-Khafra Quarry at Giza,” in *The Art of Describing, The World of Tomb Decoration as Visual Culture in the Old Kingdom, Studies in Honour of Yvonne Harpur*, eds. Peter Jánosi and Hana Vymazalová, (Prague: Charles University, 2018), 150.

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9 Reisner, “Rock Cut,”144.

Arts, Boston’s bulletin. In it, Reisner shies away from objectivity. The language of the bulletin lends itself to the storytelling found in detective novels, of which Reisner was an avid reader. Of Kawab, the father of Meresankh, Reisner wrote that he was a “fat and coarse old man” who was “undoubtedly the eldest son of [Khufu].” How Reisner came to the conclusion that Kawab was at some point in his life the crown prince of Egypt, he does not tell. In fact, it has been suggested that, since Hetepheres is the only parent of Meresankh identified as the “daughter of the King of upper and lower Egypt, Khufu,” and Kawab is not, that Kawab might not actually be the king’s son, but rather his brother, half-brother, cousin, or nephew. Regarding the theory that Kawab was, at one point in his life, the heir to the throne, Jánosi writes,

“Auch der Status des Kawab – er wird allgemein als Kronprinz und designierter Thronfolger identifiziert –, der vor seinem Vater gestorben sein soll, ist lediglich eine Hypothese, die auf der Position seines Grabes beruht. Es gibt weder einen Hinweis darauf, daß er tatsächlich als Nachfolger seines Vaters ausersehen war, noch liegen Anhaltspunkte vor, wann und in welchem Alter er starb.”

Moreover, “evidence from Kawab’s mastaba does not identify him specifically as a son of Khufu.” However, he is represented as a scribal statue which is significant because “the statue type is reserved for the depiction of the Crown Prince, the Vizier, or the ‘King’s Eldest Son’

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13 Ranke. Personennamen, 339, no.2, Kawab: kꜣ-wꜥb, “(my) ka is pure,” with omitted first-person suffix, typical of Old Egyptian, i.e., kꜣ(⸗)wꜥb.
(who, of course, may also happen to be a Crown Prince or a Vizier.)”

Therefore, Kawab was probably either a son of Sneferu, and therefore a (half)-brother of Khufu, or a son of Khufu.”

Reisner noted that, in all three clearly identified representations of Khufu’s daughter, Hetepheres, she “takes precedence of her daughter Meresankh.” On the west wall of the tomb, Reisner made the observation that the hair-coloring of Hetepheres II is “bright yellow with fine horizontal lines” and concluded that “it seems clear that this lady may have been a fair-haired Libyan from the western desert” (Plate 1).

Attempting to piece together the family tree of the Fourth Dynasty, Reisner postulated that Hetepheres was first married to Kawab, with whom she had Meresankh, then married a king of Egypt, after which she acquired the status of queen. He suggested that this man could only have been Radjedef or Khafre, and wrote that Radjedef seemed more likely to him. The third and final marriage of Hetepheres was to Ankhaf, whose tomb included a deep burial shaft for his wife, which was never used. Reisner noted that Hetepheres outlived all three of her husbands and commissioned a tomb for herself, which she then repurposed for her daughter, when Meresankh predeceased her. Despite the fact that the entrance of the tomb bears the name

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of Meresankh, labeling it as her tomb and not as a dual tomb for Meresankh and Hetepheres, Reisner had “no doubt” that he would find the burial of Hetepheres in this tomb.\textsuperscript{26} This burial was never found. Regarding the tomb that bears Meresankh’s name, Reisner wrote “nowhere in the tomb is any mention of the name of the king to whom Meresankh was married.”\textsuperscript{27} Reisner suggested that this unnamed spouse might have been Menkaure, even though it was during the reign of Khafre that she became “of marriageable age.”\textsuperscript{28} Whoever her husband was, she bore him at least three children and possibly up to the six depicted in the tomb, Reisner suggests.\textsuperscript{29}

Of the tomb decoration, Reisner wrote that it had never been finished.\textsuperscript{30} Other parts, Reisner guessed, were included in the tomb after the death and burial of Meresankh. For example, Reisner believed that the princes painted next to Meresankh were not her sons, but most likely “grandchildren (or great-grandchildren) … painted in later to establish some claim to family estates or titles.”\textsuperscript{31}

One of the most remarkable aspects of the tomb, which Reisner recognized, were the dates of the inscriptions on doorposts at the entrance to the tomb which provided the dates for the death and burial of Meresankh III. He wrote:

“On the front of the right door-jamb a vertical line reads,— “The King’s daughter, Meresankh: year 1, month 1, of the third season, day 21: her ka was at rest and she proceeded to the \textit{wa’abet}…On the left a similar line reads,— “The King’s wife, Meresankh: year 2, month 2, of the second season, day 18: she proceeded to her beautiful tomb.” Thus 272 days… elapsed between the death of the queen and her burial. This is a much longer period than could have been

\textsuperscript{26} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 67.
\textsuperscript{27} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 74.
\textsuperscript{28} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 74.
\textsuperscript{29} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 74.
\textsuperscript{30} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 68
\textsuperscript{31} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 74.
required by the embalmment, and it is possible the tomb itself was prepared during this time. Unfortunately the name is not given of the king to whose reign these dates refer.\textsuperscript{32}

Meresankh died around the age of 50, with her mother having outlived her.\textsuperscript{33} Hetepheres then rededicated her own tomb to her daughter, which explains presumably the large gap between the dates of Meresankh’s death and burial as the time it took to retrofit the tomb for a new owner. The sarcophagus in which Meresankh was buried bears the name and titles of Hetepheres, as well as the following inscription: “That which I have given to my daughter, the king’s wife, Meresankh.”\textsuperscript{34} Throughout the report, Reisner used unequivocal language (‘no doubt,’\textsuperscript{35} ‘of course’\textsuperscript{36}) when interpreting and even speculating on ambiguous textual data. Reisner’s tendency to oversell his argument, coupled with his authority in the field, colored the interpretation of the tomb of Meresankh for decades to come.\textsuperscript{37}

**Review of Scholarship: Post-discovery**

It was not until the 1970s, when the tomb was revisited by Dunham and Simpson, that some of the dubious assumptions and outright errors in Reisner’s work came to be recognized with regard to the narrative surrounding the tomb of Meresankh. Like Reisner, Dunham and Simpson first noted the features of the tomb that make it unique: “its emphasis on the role of

\textsuperscript{32} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 74.

\textsuperscript{33} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 74.

\textsuperscript{34} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 78.

\textsuperscript{35} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 67, speculating on the likelihood that the undiscovered tomb of Hetepheres will be discovered ‘as soon as operations are resumed.’

\textsuperscript{36} Reisner. “Tomb of Meresankh,” 66, speculating on the possibility of Hetepheres having “foreign blood from her mother whom we do not know.”

female members of the nobility of the Old Kingdom,38 the “unusual” placement of the tomb chapel — it was constructed beneath the mastaba rather than added to the above-ground core of the mastaba39 — and the preservation of the colors in the tomb decoration.40 The authors then shifted focus to debunking claims made by Reisner in his original publication of the tomb. First, the authors noted that Reisner’s belief that he would find the burial of Hetepheres within Meresankh’s tomb was erroneous.41 They next observed that Reisner’s speculative assessment of Meresankh as an ethnically Libyan blonde had since been accepted at face value in publications by Hermann Junker, William Stevenson Smith, and Elisabeth Staehelin.42 Against this view, Dunham and Simpson noted that “the robe with pointed shoulders and the yellow wig with red lines of the first figure have often been described and discussed. It is now generally accepted that the wig does not imply that the queen had blond hair.”43 The red lines across the wig, which Reisner failed to address in his publication, were explained as guidelines, or “red drawing lines common on yellow objects” by Smith in his 1942 publication.44 This conclusion was followed also by Dunham and Simpson.45 In support of this observation, Smith also noted that this is not the only place in the “incomplete” tomb where the red guidelines are still visible, but that there

are obvious notations in red on the door jambs.\textsuperscript{46} Further, regarding the garment of Hetepheres, Smith compared it to the garment observed on contemporary statues of the Fourth Dynasty noblewoman Nofret (Plate 2), wife of Rahotep, and the Second Dynasty king, Khasekhemwy (Plate 3). He wrote,

“The line of the cloak across the shoulders suggests to me that there may be some connection between this garment and the peculiar pointed-shoulder pieces of the dresses worn by the mother of [Khufukaf] and by Hetepheres II. The Heb-Sed robe worn by the king stands up stiffly at the back of the neck of the statue of [Khasekhemwy’s] statue in Cairo, and stiffened linen or heavier material worn about the shoulders in the way that Nofret holds her cloak might stand up in similar fashion at the sides. A detail so easy to break would ordinarily be omitted in statue, although quite safe to represent in relief.”\textsuperscript{47}

Here, Smith is suggesting that the garment that Khasekhemwy, Nofret, the unnamed mother of Khufukaf, and Hetepheres all wore is the same garment. However, the shoulder peaks demonstrated in the reliefs of Hetepheres and the mother of Khufukaf are only suggested in statuary, either through the lines of Nofret’s robe or the stiff neck delineated on Khasekhemwy. It is possible that this version of a cloak was reserved for members of the royal family. From the Middle Kingdom we know that the female king Sobekneferu had a statue made that was archaizing in its representation of her royal regalia (Plate 4). In this statue she not only wears the peak-shoulder robe which is associated with the *Heb Sed* festival when worn by the king (as is the case with the aforementioned statue of Khasekhemwy) but she also wears the “archaic globular wig with horizontal striations,”\textsuperscript{48} a three-dimensional representation of the headdress Hetepheres is wearing on the West wall of the main chamber. The red lines in Hetepheres’s

\textsuperscript{46} Smith. History, 253.

\textsuperscript{47} Smith. History, 22.

\textsuperscript{48} Henry Fischer \textit{Varia Nova}, Egyptian Studies, 3. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pp. 111–122. While disproving Smith’s assertion that the red lines on the headpiece of Hetepheres are “guidelines” but rather part of the design, he does agree that the garment Nofret is shown wearing is the same one that Hetepheres is wearing
headpiece then, are not guidelines as previously thought, but part of the style of the headpiece. It is also interesting to note that when this headpiece and garment are worn by royal women in the Old Kingdom, it is worn by women who are the mothers of the tomb owner—Hetepheres and the mother of Khufukaf—suggesting that possibly it correlates to their specific royal status.

In reference to the family tree of the Fourth Dynasty and Meresankh’s titles, Dunham and Simpson state that when she is called a “king’s daughter of his body” this does not necessarily mean that she was literally a king’s daughter but was rather the daughter of the king’s eldest son, Kawab. However, Dunham and Simpson do take Kawab’s title as “king’s eldest son of his body” as irrefutable fact. They write, “evidence obtained from a study of [the tomb’s] reliefs, and inscriptions, as well as that deduced from other monuments, [the position of Meresankh within] the royal family of Dynasty IV can be determined with some degree of certainty.” They construct the family tree as follows: Meresankh is the granddaughter of Khufu from both sides, as her parents, Hetepheres and Kawab, were siblings. Hetepheres was married to Kawab, and when he died she was married to Radjedef and then Khafre. Hetepheres, they claim, then arranged a marriage between her daughter, Meresankh, and Khafre as well. The only evidence supporting a union between Hetepheres and Radjedef comes from the scene of the offering

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49 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 1, referencing the titles they write in note 4, “the situation whereby [Meresankh] is called king’s daughter of his body, but is obviously not a king’s daughter, but the daughter of the king’s eldest son, Kawab. They cite, without specifying which volume and where accurately, Salim Hassan’s Excavations at Giza series.

50 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 10.

51 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 7.

52 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 7.

53 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 7.

54 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 7.
bearers on the east wall of the tomb. One of the estates bears the cartouche of Radjedef, possibly indicating that “Hetepheres acquired it through her marriage to him.”55 This interpretation has found favor among some scholars who believed that Radjedef was not a son of Khufu and might therefore have married Hetepheres “to strengthen his claim to the throne [as she was a] princess of the direct line.”56 Evidence for the marriage between Khafre and Meresankh comes from the tomb of her son Nebemakhet.57 In his rock-cut tomb, Nebemakhet’s titles and estate figures contain the name of Khafre, indicating Khafre fathered Nebemakhet.58 However, “interestingly, Meresankh III’s rock-cut tomb does not have estate figures with Khafre’s name and Nebemakhet lacks Khufu’s or [Radjedef’s], suggesting that Meresankh III’s estate figures derive from her mother…and were not passed on to Nebemakhet.”59

One of the most intriguing aspects of Dunham and Simpson’s work concerns the timeline that they construct, with regard to the tomb’s original ownership and subsequent use. They posit that the tomb G7520 “was meant for Hetepheres II during her marriage to Kawab, but seems to have been abandoned after his death, no chapel having been constructed…On the deaths of Kawab and [Khufu] Hetepheres, the child of [Khufu] was taken into the household of [Radjedef] presumably to strengthen his claim to the throne, and may have been married to him. At the accession of [Khafre] the adjacent double mastaba G 7530+40 was constructed for Hetepheres as evidenced by quarry marks on its casing blocks bearing her name and the title ‘weret khetes’ …This fact, added to the highest queenly titles held by her in the [Meresankh] chapel is evidence that she had been queen to Khafre… Hetepheres II built for her daughter …. the rock-cut chapel G7530 and buried her in a black granite sarcophagus re-inscribed as a gift to her daughter.”60

55 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 8.


57 Ranke. Personennamen, 259, no. 3. 190, no. 16. Nebemakhet: nb-m-ḏ.t, “gold is in the horizon.”


60 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 8.
Disputing Reisner’s assumption that Meresankh died in the first year of Shepseskaf, Dunham and Simpson argued that it is more likely that she died in the reign of Menkaure. It was Hetepheres, they said, who died in the reign of Shepseskaf, when the queen was in her seventh decade. However, like Reisner, they make note of the evidence that Meresankh was remembered well into the Fifth Dynasty, on the basis of an image of a child, which appears on the north wall, inscribed with a name honoring the Fifth Dynasty king Niusserre. In a footnote, they mention that the tomb was accessible until the Fifth Dynasty, or “was reopened in the subsequent dynasty.”

In Dodson’s book on the royal families of ancient Egypt, he outlines the royal family line of the Fourth Dynasty as follows: Khufu was the son of Sneferu. Radjedef, Khafre, Kawab and Hetepheres were children of Khufu. Hetepheres married Kawab and Radjedef, but Dodson does not have her as the same Hetepheres who married Ankhhaf. He does not clarify why he thinks these were different people. Meresankh, the daughter of Kawab and Hetepheres, married Khufu. With him she had the following children in this order: Shepsetkau, Nebemakhet, Duaenre, Niusserre, and Khenterka.

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It was not until the 2000s that the tomb of Meresankh was given significant attention again by an Egyptologist. Flentye published two articles on the tomb in 2006 and 2018. It is the latter that is the most comprehensive and up-to-date publication on the tomb of Meresankh and her family. In the family tree that she constructs from the evidence in the tombs of the Eastern Cemetery, Quarry Cemetery west of the pyramid of Khafre, and the Khufu-Khafre Quarry, Flentye asserts that Meresankh was the daughter of Kawab and Hetepheres, who were both themselves children of Khufu. She then suggests the possibility that Hetepheres was married to her other brother, Radjedef. Meresankh married Khafre and with him she had Nebemakhet, Khenterka, Duara, and Niusserre. Flentye does not rule out the possibility that Shepsetkau, one of the sisters of Nebemakhet who features prominently in his tomb, was one of Meresankh’s daughters.

In the three main publications of the tomb Reisner, Dunham and Simpson, and Flentye assert that Meresankh predeceased Hetepheres, and that she constructed her own tomb, which she then re-dedicated to her daughter, Meresankh, after Hetepheres outlived her as well. While the burial of Hetepheres has not yet been discovered, in antiquity the location of the tomb of Meresankh was known well enough, evidently, to have been robbed. At the time of its discovery, Reisner noted the disturbed state of the sarcophagus, which still sat propped upon stones placed beneath it in antiquity.

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69 Flentye, “Rock Cut,” 129.

70 Flentye, “Rock Cut,” 129.

71 Flentye, “Rock Cut,” 133.

Chapter 2: Tomb Layout and Decoration

Construction of the Tomb

Graffiti on the casing stones of the G7530+40 suggest that it was built either thirteen years into Khafre’s reign, or early into the reign of Menkaure (Plate 5). It was constructed in the Eastern Cemetery at Giza, so-called for its location, facing the east side of the pyramid of Khufu. According to Reisner, the mastaba was a “reconstructed massive core,” which he designated Type IV-iii. Of its construction, Reisner wrote, “the northern end of the core was partially demolished and the stones or similar stones [were] used to back the white casing of the southern extension. The core of the southern extension was recessed to take the interior chapel.” This recess for the interior chapel in the massive core is what qualifies G7530+40 specifically as a Type IV-iii monument. The tomb chapel was cut into the limestone rock beneath the street level, for which reason it is classified usually as a “rock-cut tomb.”

Meresankh’s tomb represents the beginning of a shift from strictly above-ground mastabas to mastaba superstructures with rock-cut substructure elements, which was taking place in the Eastern Cemetery at Giza in the mid-Fourth Dynasty. Flentye writes of this change that “an analysis of the rock-cut tombs belonging to Meresankh’s family may reflect significant

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1 Dunham and Simpson. *Mastaba*, 1. Graffito reads: rōp.t-ḥsb 7, šbd 4 pr.t, sw 10; “regnal year 7, month 4 of Peret, day 10.”
4 Reisner. *History*, I, 73.
5 Reisner. *History*, I, 41.
6 Dunham and Simpson. *Mastaba*, 1, noting that the “standard practice at the time consisted of tomb chapels either added to the core of the mastaba, at the same level, or incorporated within the core itself”; see also Porter and Moss, *Topographical Bibliography III*, 197.
changes that were made possible by the introduction of this tomb type and which contributed to the decorative programmes, particularly the expansion of iconography in Fifth and Sixth Dynasty mastabas,”\textsuperscript{7} meaning that the new space created by the walls of the rock-cut tombs could have inspired additions to the artistic canon that would have been incorporated in later rock-cut tombs as well as mastabas.

In Reisner’s first volume of \textit{A History of the Giza Necropolis}, he categorized the mastaba as “en echelon” explaining that this term means that it is part of a cemetery where the “mastabas of the second row are so [situated] so as to leave the chapels of the first row opposite the open spaces between the cores…The third …line is [situated] similarly with reference to the second (middle) line.”\textsuperscript{8} This staggered arrangement (Plate 6) allows for viewers looking from the east to get a view of each mastaba, with only a partially obstructed view. Dunham and Simpson summarized the construction process as follows:

“As Reisner reconstructed the development of the Eastern Cemetery, the mastaba unit 7520–7530–7540 was built from north to south. It was extended to the south (by adding 7540) to initiate an echelon cemetery, at which time the northern part was separated and left as a roughly square, isolated structure designated by Reisner as G7520 which had its own shaft. The resulting final structure, G7530–7540, had a (now) ruined small interior chapel in the southern part of its eastern face but appears to lack a shaft through the masonry of the mastaba itself.”\textsuperscript{9}

The tomb chapel is located two meters below the level of the street above.\textsuperscript{10} It was for this reason that Reisner was surprised by this discovery, as “most other tombs in this cemetery had entrances to their chapels at street level with the shafts to the burial chambers placed on top of the mastaba

\textsuperscript{7} Flentye. “Rock-Cut,” 127.

\textsuperscript{8} Reisner. \textit{Giza 1}, 69.

\textsuperscript{9} Dunham and Simpson. \textit{Mastaba}, 1.

\textsuperscript{10} Flentye. “Mastaba,” 71.
superstructures, where they were easily located by robbers.”

The mastaba consisted of four parts. According to Dunham and Simpson,

“The small, ruined interior chapel on the south side of the eastern face, a small inscribed niche on the north side of the east face, the large underground tomb chapel reached by the descending stairs and entered on the north side of the eastern face below ground level, and the burial chamber itself reached by shaft in the western chamber of the latter.”

The notes Dunham and Simpson provide regarding a ruined interior chapel are unclear and not labeled as such in any plates, which they provide. This chapel is also not shown on any plans or descriptions provided by Reisner. This could possibly mean that the authors were drawing from a set of data which remains unpublished, or which became accessible only after Reisner’s publication, or else that the chapel has since been destroyed. In any case, it is the entrance, subterranean tomb chapel, and burial chamber that I will focus on in the present chapter.

**Tomb Layout: Entrance**

The entrance to the main chamber of the tomb (Plate 7) is located on the southeast end of the mastaba. This was typical for tombs of this period as it would require the visitor to enter from the east and face the west, the land of the dead. It is accessed through an open court that was also below street level. The posts of the entrance contain the inscriptions mentioned in Chapter 1, which record the date of Meresankh’s death and her burial, respectively. The architrave lists the titles and name of Meresankh as follows:

\[
m\dot{i}.t \ Hrw \ Sth \ wr.t \ hts.(t) \ Nnty \ ht.(t) \ Hrw \ wr.t \ hs.t \ mrf[y].t \ Dhwty \ Hrw \ skr.t=t \ s\dot{i}.t \ nsw.t \ n.t \ h.t=t \ hm.t \ nsw.t \ Mr=s-cnh, \ “She \ who \ sees \ Horus \ and \ ...
\]

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Seth, great one, whom Nebty favors, follower of Horus, great one who is praised, belov[ed] of Thoth and Horus, his companion, King’s daughter of his body, King’s wife, Meresankh.” Each side of the doorway features a reclining figure of Anubis above a larger figure of Meresankh, in the company of smaller figures. On the south door jamb, to the left of the architrave (pl. 7b), Meresankh stands, holding a lotus blossom to her nose. A lector priest, approximately half Meresankh’s size, stands before her, holding and unrolled papyrus scroll. Two smaller offering bearers stand behind her, stacked one above the other. On the north door jamb, to the right of the architrave (pl. 7c), Meresankh stands, looking out “as if she was receiving viewers.” A small male figure stands on a short register line and pushes a hyena toward the larger figure of Meresankh on the north door jamb; below this group’s register line, a second, small male figure leads an oryx toward Meresankh.

**East Wall, North Side**

According to Flentye, “the decoration of the east wall combines two important elements: the emphasis on family as well as daily life scenes.” Further, “the iconography of the east wall can be divided into scenes that have occurred before and also new ones based on the imagery.”

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15 Translation adapted, with modifications, from Dunham and Simpson. *Mastaba*, 8.

16 The reclining jackal is identified as Anubis by Dunham and Simpson. *Mastaba*, 8. However, only the epithet is present in the caption above: *jmj-w.t “he who is in bandages”*


The north part of the wall depicts typical genre scenes of everyday life; scenes of offering-bearers, fowling, animal processions, boating, and herding scenes. The animals presented in this scene depict the animals present, presumably, at Meresankh’s funerary feast as well as magically representing the animals available to Meresankh in her afterlife.21

The most imposing figure on this section of the wall is the figure of Kawab (Plate 9), whose height spans the four registers to the right of him. His positioning on the wall “is typical but his orientation is unusual, because he faces away from the registers on the central section of the wall.”22 The figure of Kawab is the largest figure in the tomb, as befits his rank in comparison to Hetepheres and Meresankh. He holds a staff indicating his authority and is portrayed in an idealized manner for a successful, older official in the Old Kingdom. This “portly” body type can be seen in the representations of other high-ranking men in the period, such as Hemiuunu (Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim inv. no. 1962) and Ka-Aper (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG34). Above him, the inscription reads \( jt \text{ s} jry-p \text{ s} t s \text{ nsw.t smsw n h.t\( t \) hry-hb.t hry-tp hrp jw.t ntr.t wn-c Dw\( w \) Ki-wßb, “Her father, the hereditary noble, King’s eldest son of his body, chief lector-priest, director of divine offices, assistant of Duwa, Kawab.”23

Concerning the image of Kawab, Dunham and Simpson write:

“He is strangely uninvolved with the rest of the wall…[he] seems to turn his back on the activities rather than to form part of them…The larger division is also curious. It is basically a “viewing scene” in which the tomb owner(s) observe the presentation of the offerings of the estates and the agricultural work carried out on the farms. In the place of the standing or seated viewers, however, Hetepheres II and Merysanch are shown engaged in the activity or ritual of pulling papyrus.”24

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23 Transliteration and translation adapted from Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 10.
To the right of Kawab is a marsh scene, showing fishing and fowling, set up in four registers. To indicate their status, Meresankh and her mother, Hetepheres, stand two registers high while all of the other figures stand within their respective registers. Both women wear ankle-length sheath dresses. Meresankh extends her left arm to grasp her mother’s waist. Hetepheres wears a tripartite wig and Meresankh wears a short black wig. The two women stand in a papyrus skiff on the Nile and are shown pulling papyrus. According to Yvonne Harpur, this is the first time a “papyrus pulling” scene is shown.” She wrote, “this particular relief seems to show the woman’s role in the ceremony, grasping papyrus from the thicket, and it is the only example in which two women are represented on a skiff performing the action together.” The ritual of pulling papyrus (sšš wḏ) “was connected with the idea of rebirth [as]... Osiris was miraculously reborn in such a thicket as well as the cult of Hathor [as] wild cows still lived in the swamps of the Delta.” The location of a boating scene on the north wall “may be a reference to the delta.” Moreover, scenes with boats “usually occur [near the] entrance due to their outdoor theme as well as the location of the Nile River to the east.”

The scene is labeled as follows: sšš=wḏ n Ḥw.t-Ḥrw m pḥw ḫwɛ mw.t=s mš=sn ḫ.t nb.t nfr.t n.tt m mh.t mw专门为ገ s.t nsw.t ḫ.t ḫwfw wr.t hts Ḥtp-hr=s, s.t=s mr.t=s, mš.t Ḥrw-Sṯḥ wr.t hts Mr=s-ạ⁻Nh “she pulls


28 Bárá. *Journey*, 150. Regarding the connection to Hathor, he continues that “during their associated rituals for Hathor, Egyptians used the sistrum...in such a way that at every movement the instrument evoked the sound of the approaching cow goddess pushing her way through the thicket. Because of this, Bárá refers to the act not as “pulling papyrus” but as “rattling papyrus.”


papyrus for Hathor in the marshland, with her mother. They see every good thing in the marsh. Her mother, daughter of the king of upper and lower Egypt, Khufu, great favorite, Hetepheres.”

Facing the two women in the top-most register (register 1) is the procession of the thirteen estates owned by Meresankh. The estates bear the names of Khufu and Radjedef, “emphasizing Hetepheres II’s status as a daughter of Khufu and presumed wife of [Radjedef] as well as Meresankh III’s connection to this status.” Below this, in the second register, is a bird trapping scene. To the right of the large net, the rest of the second register is divided into two smaller registers. The upper register contains a scene of men crafting a papyrus mat from the pulled papyrus. The lower register is uninscribed and shows a man taking a bird from the cage in order to pluck it. In the third register, there is a procession of cattle and fowl. While Dunham and Simpson suggest that the figure of Kawab was “unengaged” with the rest of the scene on the wall, this processional of the third register leads right up to him, as though he is the leader of this processional of offerings.

The fourth register contains two scenes in different landscapes: water and terrain. The figures in the boats on water are significantly smaller than the figures on land. The first scene closest to Kawab, contains four skiffs and is inscribed as pr.t m šl hntn nb.t jn mhtyw=s jn=sn n=s št nb.t nfr.t jnn.t n šps.t m ki.t st.t, “coming out of the marsh with lotus blossoms by her marsh-men, that they may bring to her every good thing which is brought to a noblewoman as the work of the field.” Despite this label, Yvonne Harpur interpreted the actions of the boatmen as “fighting,” writing that this is the “earliest attested scene of fighting boatmen,” basing this

31 Transliteration and translation adapted from Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 10.
33 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 11.
classification on the posture of one figure in the scene, a man in the stern of the first boat “who threatens the second skiff with [an] upraised arm containing a bundle of stalks(?).” This is not the only “new” scene on this wall. The scene of the “pluckers” in the second register and the animals sowing seed in the fourth register are “new” to the artistic canon as well. To the right of this is an agricultural scene. This division of a register into two scenes “is uncommon in later chapels.” In the top center of this section of the wall is a slit left between the masonry that allows for light to pass through and illuminate the false door in the west chamber.

**East Wall, South Side**

This section of the wall contains five registers (Plate 10). In the first register is a boating scene depicting Meresankh seated on a chair or throne in one of the skiffs, while smelling a flower. Several blocks of masonry are missing from this section of the wall, presumably to make room for the door. The scene of the second register is similar to that of the first register. These scenes allude to traveling to pilgrimage sites within Egypt as “such trips were an established part of funeral customs.” Again, it is a boating scene that depicts Meresankh in a lappet wig.

The third register depicts manufacturing scenes. In other Old Kingdom tombs, which include similar depictions, laborers and artisans were not normally furnished with individual

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41 Old Kingdom Tombs with manufacturing scenes: tomb of Nebemakhet (G 8172), tomb of Wepemnofret (G 1201), tomb of Ti (D22- Mariette), tomb of Henykem (D2).
names, but in Meresankh’s tomb they are. A man applying paint to a female statue is called qdw.t(j) R-ẖy, “the painter, Rehay.” Nearby, a man holding a tool faces a seated statue of a woman. He is labeled as gnv.tj Jn-kꜣ⸗f, “the sculptor, Inkaf.” Junker states that even when they are named, this is not a sign of any special importance, but rather “Dieser Sitte liegt in erster Linie der Wunsch zugrunde, seine Leute auch im Jenseits um sich zu haben.”

The fourth register contains five scenes of artisans. Of note is the scene in which two men are “polishing a granite coffin, stippled red and black.” The fifth register depicts workmen engaged in a variety of tasks including smelting metal and carrying a chair. Flentye writes:

“Scenes of craftsmen also occur in the rock-cut tombs of Nebemakhet and Khuenra…. [indicating] that this scene type was considered essential to the expanded decorative programmes in these rock-cut tombs…These scenes usually appear on the southern section of the east wall south of the entrance [perhaps] reflecting a topographical connection to the area of production southeast of the pyramid complexes known as Heit el-Ghurab.”

South Wall

The south wall includes the offering list of Meresankh and depicts offering scenes (Plate 11). Meresankh sits at the top right-hand side of the wall viewing the offerings being presented to her. She wears an ankle-length gown and a long wig; she faces the offerings. According to Flentye, “[Meresankh’s] juxtaposition to the false door on the west wall coupled with the

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42 Rzepka. “Hidden”, 105. Regarding unnamed craftsmen, Rzepka notes that another exception is found in the tomb of Meresankh’s son, Nebemakhet.

43 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 12. No entry for this name in Ranke. Personennamen based on the transliteration provided by Dunham and Simpson in Mastaba.


46 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 12.

iconography of offerings replicates the actual performance of the offering cult."\(^{48}\) Meresankh lifts a lotus flower to her nose with her right hand and holds another flower in her lap with her left hand. The offering list was essential in antiquity as its depiction was an act of creation in and of itself, allowing Meresankh to have literal access to these items in her afterlife.\(^{49}\) It is also useful thousands of years later as none of these objects were present in the tomb at the time of its discovery by Reisner, but presumably would have been interred with her. Aronin writes: “Few grave goods remained within the looted burial chamber other than her sarcophagus and four canopic jars, used to hold her embalmed internal organs. [However we get hints of things] the queen may have taken with her [into the afterlife]: boxes, bags, jars [all containing] food, clothing and jewelry, [as well as] statues and furniture.”\(^{50}\) One of the grave goods depicted is a bed, similar in appearance to the physical bed recovered from the tomb of Hetepheres I.\(^{51}\) In the scene, “two females are making a bed at the head and foot with a headrest underneath a canopy… [and this is, as well as a similar scene in the tomb of Meresankh’s son, Nebemakhet are] the earliest examples [of such a scene] demonstrating the importance of Giza in the formation of this iconography which subsequently occurs at other sites.”\(^{52}\)

Below the offering list are three niches in which statues sit. Reisner believed the niches to be later additions to the tomb, suggesting Hetepheres did not know the statues would be included

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\(^{51}\) For which, see: George Reisner. *The Tomb of Queen Hetepheres.* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1927).

in the tomb. From left to right they contain: first, a man dressed and seated in a scribe’s posture; next, the same; and finally, a series of four smaller figures that are identical to the statues in the first two niches, except they decrease in size from right to left. All of these statues are uninscribed. Reisner believed them to be Khemetnu the elder—Hetepheres’s steward—Khemetnu’s son, Khemetnu the younger, and a series of Khemetnu’s grandsons. Khemetnu, or “Khemten” as Reisner referred to him, was documented as the steward of Kawab and Hetepheres who stayed in the employ of Hetepheres after the death of her husband. In addition to his role as steward, he would fulfill the duties of chief funerary priest in observing the cult of the family’s dead members, once they passed. He was succeeded in office by his son. We do not know if the miniature figures were meant to represent the sons of Khemetnu the younger as they “are not elsewhere represented and neither their names nor titles are recorded in the chapel.” However, both Khemetnu the elder and Khemetnu the younger appear elsewhere in the tomb. Khemetnu the younger’s image, name, and titles appear in the western room and Khemetnu the elder’s image, name, and titles appear both on the west wall of the main room and the south door jamb.

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58 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 17.
59 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 17.
Smith maintained this identification of the statues in his work he published with Reisner, taking the theory further by saying that the rebated\textsuperscript{60} edges around the niche of the larger statue suggest that it was enclosed, or hidden (Plate 12).\textsuperscript{61} Opposing this theory, Rzepka identifies the statues as Kawab, Nebemakhet, and other sons of Meresankh.\textsuperscript{62} He draws on the work of Ziegler who observed that the scribal statue “seems to have been created for princes and reserved for their exclusive use during the Fourth Dynasty.”\textsuperscript{63} These rebated niches, he argues, “were just a form of the serdab, in which figures…were closed.”\textsuperscript{64} As to why only one of the niches has a rebated edge, Rzepka has two theories. The first is that there was originally a plan “to decorate…the lower part of the wall [but this plan had been changed] and two other niches were cut already without rebate.”\textsuperscript{65} The second theory takes into consideration Simpson’s observation that the statues and reliefs of Kawab in his own tomb “were evidently smashed as a vindictive procedure instituted against Kawab or his memory personally, against the nobles of the house of [Khufu] as a group, or against the royal family of the Old Kingdom.”\textsuperscript{66} Rzepka writes that “this destruction must have happened soon after Kawab’s death and as a result of conflicts within the

\textsuperscript{60} Rebated or ‘rabbeted’ edges refer to a recess cut into the edge of the limestone niche. See Plate 12 for reference. The image shows how there are recesses or grooves that indicate a door/covering could have been present at one point to hide the statue.

\textsuperscript{61} Smith. “History,” 44.


\textsuperscript{63} Christiane Ziegler. “Setka, eldest son of king Djedefre, as a scribe,” in Arnold, Do. et al., \textit{Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids}. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art), 251 note 2.

\textsuperscript{64} Rzepka. “Hidden”, 104.

\textsuperscript{65} Rzepka. “Hidden”, 104.

royal family.”67 This conflict followed Kawab’s death but was resolved by the time of
Meresankh’s, allowing for her father to be depicted in her tomb. However, this anxiety over the
defacement of his image could be a reason why only his scribe statue was hidden in a serdab
chamber.68

**West Wall**

The west wall is capped by two rows of hieroglyphs (Plate 13). A htp-dj-njsw.t formula
appears on the right.69 Beneath the inscription are two doorways into the western chamber, which
leads to the burial chamber of Meresankh. In addition to two actual doorways, the southern
section of the wall contains a false door for Meresankh’s *ka* to pass through to receive the
offerings presented to her in the main room of her offering chapel.

The false door appears to be unfinished. Above the door is a scene of Meresankh, seated
facing right, receiving offerings inscribed in a list following the table, where she is seated. To the
left of the false door, near the corner, is a relief depicting Khemetnu. His titles are given as *rḥ
nsw.t jmy-r pr sš jy-r ḫm(w)-kš nb jmẖ [Ḥ]mt-nw; “king’s relative, overseer, scribe, overseer of
funerary priests, possessor of veneration, [Khe]metnu.”70

The central portion of the wall contains two images of Meresankh flanking the
southernmost door. In both of these images she is dressed similarly, wearing a long white, fitted,
ankle-length dress, a tripartite wig, and a broad collar necklace. Mirroring each other, the

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69 Allen, “Some Aspects,” 10 an nn. 5–6. Regarding the Old Egyptian formula, this was still a prerogative of royalty
in the Fourth Dynasty. Ibid, 5–6.
70 Transliteration and translation adapted from Dunham and Simpson. *Mastaba*, 17.
figures’ furthest away arm crosses over her chest, while her arm closest to the viewer rests by her side.

The northern section of this wall reiterates the theme of family relations found on the northern section of the east wall, the north wall and north chamber. In this scene (Plate 14), three large figures in receding height face south. The first figure is that of Hetepheres who faces south towards the door into the western chamber. She wears an ankle-length, skin-tight white gown that forms two large peaks on her shoulders. Hetepheres’s head appears between the two peaks atop her shoulders, adorned with a yellow head covering, which still reveals the red guidelines the draughtsmen had once used. Squatting behind Hetepheres is a much smaller figure, possibly one of Meresankh’s daughters or a servant. She is not given a name. Another small figure stands before Meresankh, shown as a child with the side-lock of youth. He is labeled as Khenterka, but it is not made clear what his relation is to Meresankh. It is possible he was one of her sons, or a servant. Flentye and Dodson both believe he was a son of Meresankh.71 The figure of Meresankh is shown shorter than Hetepheres. Meresankh wears a leopard-skin garment over her skin-tight, ankle-length white dress and wears a black headpiece as well. The animal-print garment is more commonly seen in men, but can be seen in representations of women and here is being worn to reference her royal status.72 In a gesture typically reserved for men, she holds across her breast the red tie, which was used to bind her leopard skin garment to the garment beneath it.73 Her son, Nebemakhet, appears behind her. He wears a long white kilt and white sash across his chest. In his left hand he holds a folded piece of cloth. The folded cloth is a

72 Flentye. “Rock-Cut,” 144.
73 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 14.
motif restricted to royalty in the Old Kingdom that “signified the elevated status of an official in the Egyptian bureaucracy.”  

Behind him are three smaller figures representing either his son, siblings, or servants, separated into their own registers. Of this scene, Flentye writes,

“Hetepheres II, Meresankh III, Nebemakhet, Khenterka, and three unidentified children of Meresankh III, including possibly a daughter Shepsetkau, who is depicted in Nebemakhet’s rock-cut tomb...are placed in the traditional location of the tomb owner and his family in the offering chambers of the mastabas of the Eastern Cemetery... since Meresankh III’s husband is presumably [Khafre] and kings did not appear in elite tombs, Hetepheres II assumes his position on this section of the wall.”

**North Wall and North Room**

The north wall features three doorways into the north room. In between the doorways are two images of Meresankh facing the center doorway (Plate 15). She is dressed in a white, ankle-length sheath dress with a broad collar and wears a short, black head covering. In front of each carved relief image of Meresankh are smaller, painted figures representing her sons, Niussereankh and Duara. This distinction between the carved and painted figures led Dunham and Simpson to believe the smaller figures were later additions.

Inside the north room are ten statues of women separated by spacing into three groups (Plate 16). This unique series of statues underscores an “important development of the late Fourth Dynasty [:] the depictions of family groups that include siblings and different generations,

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74 Rita E. Freed. “Rethinking the rules for Old Kingdom Sculpture: Observations on poses and attributes of limestone statuary from Giza.” In *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology*, ed. Miroslav Bárt. (Prague: Charles University, 2006), 156.

75 Flentye. “Rock-Cut,” 144.


which may be the result of the greater wall space in rock-cut tombs (versus mastabas), royal influence, and the fact that kings are not represented in royal tombs.”

A group of three women appears on the far right. The first woman wears a tripartite wig with two sections over her shoulders. This hairstyle sets her apart from the other statues. The other two women in the group wear voluminous wigs, typical in the Old Kingdom, that pass down their backs behind their shoulders. This wig is seen on all women in the next group. Set off from the first three women by a gap in space created by a recession in the wall carved away from the surrounding engaged statues, the central group of four women all wear voluminous wigs and the same ankle-length, sheath dress shown in every representation of a woman in the tomb. The last figure of this group is visibly shorter than the other women. Her figure is connected to the last group of figures through gesture. This last group of two figures, based on their smaller scale, are either younger or of a lower status. The rightmost figure of the pair extends her right arm out and touches the waist of the last adult figure of the preceding group. The girl to the left of this figure is shorter, suggesting she is the youngest member of the group of ten women, or least important, as suggested again by the hierarchy of scale.

None of the statues in the room are inscribed, but the architrave above the statues originally listed the names and titles of Hetepheres and Meresankh, but now only those of Meresankh remain visible. Reisner posited that the first group are three images of Hetepheres, the second group of five figures are four representations of Meresankh, with the smaller figure being her daughter Shepsetkau. The last two he suggests are younger daughters of

80 Ranke. Personennamen, 327, no. 7. Shepsetkau: šps(f).t-kt.w
Meresankh.⁸¹ There is no other decoration on any of the other three walls of the chamber, though Jánosi believes there may have been free-standing statues originally interred there.⁸²

**West Chamber**

Through the doorways in the west wall of the main chamber of the tomb is the west chamber or the offering room, as Dunham and Simpson refer to it.⁸³ While the burial chamber is the westernmost part of the tomb, this chamber is the westernmost part of the tomb accessible to the living. The western chamber was “the most important area for the funerary cult and the afterlife.”⁸⁴ In the center of the western wall of the west chamber is another false door (Plate 17). The light from the slit-like window on the east wall of the main chamber falls on this false door. In the tablet above the false door Meresankh is seated facing a table of bread; the rest of the scene is badly damaged.

On either side of the false door appear two uninscribed pair statues. The pair to the viewer’s left (Plate 18) wrap their arms around one another, one around a shoulder and another around a waist; the pair to the viewer’s right hold hands (Plate 19). In both pair statues the women wear large, shoulder-length, sloping wigs and ankle-length sheath dresses. Regarding the identification of the figures, Flentje writes:

“Although there are various theories, Meresankh III’s rock-cut statues are not identified or carved identically. The architrave above mentions Meresankh III only; however, the architrave on the west wall of the [main chamber] leading into the west chamber does mention both Hetepheres II and Meresankh III… Either the pair statues… represent Hetepheres II and Meresankh III, just Meresankh III, or a duality associated with the tomb owner (e.g. the *ka*). Interestingly, there are four rock-cut statues in the west chamber, and Meresankh III is considered to represent the four central rock-cut statues in the north chamber. However,

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⁸⁴ Bárt. *Journey*, 152.
representations of Hetepheres II and Meresankh II in relief and statuary in the rock-cut chapel usually show them joined by gesture.”85

On the north wall of the chamber (Plate 20) is a banquet scene. Meresankh is shown seated, facing four smaller registers. The first two registers include images of dancers and musicians. The bottom two show figures bringing offerings and brewing beer. According to Harpur, this is the first example of a “symmetrical orientation” of banquet scenes throughout the tomb on the north and south walls of a tomb.86

On the east wall, plaster was layered over the limestone, but much of the decoration was never completed. On the pillars between doorways are images of Khemetnu facing a larger image of Meresankh (Plate 21).

Adding to the variety of scenes in this chamber is the south wall offering menu scene. Flentye writes, “This atypical iconography in an offering room exemplifies the experimental quality of these rock-cut tombs, in which the function and imagery do not always coordinate even on the same wall… [as the] bottom register on the south wall shows an unusual scene rendering accounts with [Khemetnu] seated at a table on the right/east with five scribes facing towards him.”87 Above Khemetnu, Meresankh sits before a table of conical loaves of bread (Plate 22). Assuming from the tie on her shoulder, she is meant to be shown wearing a leopard-skin garment.88 The offering menu is more extensive in the west chamber than in the main chamber as this chamber would have been the focus of the actions performed as a part of Meresankh’s funerary cult, and it is in this room that the burial shaft is located. According to

87 Flentye. “Rock-Cut,” 149.
88 Dunham and Simpson. Mastaba, 17.
Barta, the offering menu designates the offering place and forms the central point of the cult events both in the tomb and temple.\(^89\) The purpose of the offering menu, other than to act as the center of the funerary cult of the deceased, was to meet the needs of the dead by securing for them for eternity their food supply and other necessities they needed to be comfortable in the afterlife.\(^90\)

**Burial Chamber**

At the time of its discovery, the burial chamber was empty except for the sarcophagus, which was propped open, with an incomplete skeleton left in an assemblage at the north end (Plate 23). The sarcophagus featured minimal decoration, only niches. This decoration has a parallel to the decoration of the shrine of Anubis, and perhaps this similar decoration was “an effort to increase the protection of the tomb by means of that divinity.”\(^91\) Of note, however, is the inscription of the dedication of the sarcophagus. The sarcophagus, constructed originally for Hetepheres, is the only location where the full titulary of Hetepheres is inscribed, and it contained the original inscriptions for her with the addition of her dedication to her daughter:

\[
m.i.t	ext{ Hrw}-Sth	ext{ wr.t}
hts	ext{ wr.t}
hs.t
hrp
sšt.m.t
ṣn.t
hm.t-nṯr
B讉(p)f
sm.t
mry
Nbt.t
NSW.t
n.t
\ḥt
andr.t
Htp-hr\$s.t.
Tps.t
Hrw
sm.t[.f]
Hrw
hm.t-nṯr
Tȝ-sp
sšt.t
NSW.t
Htp-hr\$s.t.
Hm.t-nṯr
Dhwty
ḥt
Hrw
hm.t
NSW.t
andr.t
sšt.t
NSW.t
Htp-hr$\$s.t.
dj.nj\n
n.sšt.t
NSW.t
hm.t
(NSW.t)
Mr̪-ṣy-\$nh.
\]

“Seer of Horus and Seth, great favorite, great of praise, controller of the butchers of the acacia house, priestess of Bapefy, consort of him who is beloved of the Two Ladies, King’s beloved daughter of his body, Hetepheres... Intimate of Hours, Companion of Horus, Princess of Tjasep, King’s daughter Hetepheres... Priestess of Thoth, follower of Horus, King’s wife, his beloved, King’s daughter, Hetepheres... I have given it to the King’s daughter and wife, Meresankh.”\(^92\)

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\(^89\) Barta. *Opferliste*, 2.

\(^90\) Barta. *Opferliste*, 1.


Presumably, objects such as those listed in the offering list on the south wall would have been present but have since been looted. In his report, Reisner wrote, “nothing of the equipment carved on the walls was found, only the four canopic jars of limestone with their plain lids, a few fragments of copper models, some beads, and several scraps of decayed wood. The fortunes of the family were at a low ebb after the death of [Menkaure], and in all probability the thieves found no great reward for their labors.”93 It is unclear if Meresankh was mummified at the time of her death.

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Chapter 3: Conceptions of the *Ka*

**Defining the *Ka***

The *ka* was a foundational concept in ancient Egyptian culture and religion, which has nevertheless evaded a definition in modern scholarship.\(^1\) This is because Egyptologists have to piece together aspects of its essence from written and archaeological material as “the Egyptians themselves were not in need of explaining the correlation between the *ka* and the representations—the nature of the *ka* was quite obvious for them.”\(^2\) We do know that the *ka* was one of the five elements that were believed to comprise a human being, namely, the body, the shadow, the *ba*, the name or identity, and the *ka*.\(^3\) Attempts to define what the *ka* is tend to prioritize textual evidence over archaeological evidence, or vice versa.\(^4\) Nevertheless, such efforts have resulted in three main theories to be discussed below.

**Ka as Personality**

Friedrich Junge has suggested that the *ka* might represent the Egyptians’ conception of the personality.\(^5\) Junge based his definition primarily on the literary source, The Teachings of

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\(^4\) On the potential for philological bias in modern investigations of the *ka* and other parts or aspects of the individual, see especially Stephen Quirke. *Exploring Religion in Ancient Egypt* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 55–56.

Ptahhotep. Junge defines the \textit{ka} as “der Begriff, mit dem man über die Person, die Personalität, das Selbst der Menschen spricht. Indem Ptahhotep dies tut, betont er aber vor allem auch das ideale, das bessere Selbst.”\(^6\) Against this view, Nyord suggests that Junge’s psychological interpretation of the \textit{ka} does not make sense in the mortuary contexts, highlighting the issue of giving one body of evidence or one interpretation of the \textit{ka} more attention at the expense of the others.\(^7\)

\textbf{Ka as Life-force}

The \textit{ka} is perhaps most commonly defined as the life-force, or vital force of a person.\(^8\) Frankfurt, who calls it the “vital force,” explains that “death is a crisis during which the vital force, the \textit{ka}, leaves the body. However, since the \textit{ka} is the force of life, and since man survives death, he is bound to have rejoined his \textit{ka} in the beyond, even though it has left his body.”\(^9\) Allen concurs that “the \textit{ka} is what makes the difference between a living person and a dead one: death occurs when it leaves the body.”\(^10\) It was presumably through its identification as the life-force that the \textit{ka} came to be associated closely with offerings left for the deceased. As the life force, the \textit{ka} continued to require sustenance after death, and it was for this reason that living Egyptians, observing the cult of the dead, would leave physical offerings as well as inscriptions depicting or describing them on tomb walls and false doors.\(^11\) Against this view, Nyord argues that the \textit{ka} does

\begin{footnotes}
\item[7] Nyord, “The concept of \textit{ka},” 158
\item[8] Kaplony, \textit{“Ka,”} 275.
\item[10] Allen. \textit{Middle Egyptian}, 82
\end{footnotes}
not leave a person at death; in fact, the ka is not generally said to be “with” the living person but rather something a person goes to at their death, hence the Egyptian euphemism of “going to one’s ka.”

**Ka as Double**

In parallel to modern analyses of the ka as personality and life force, other scholars have interpreted the ka instead as a “double.” In *Man and His Double in Egyptian Ideology of the Old Kingdom*, Andrey Bolshakov describes the history of this translation:

“An English equivalent [for ka] should be found… Of course, no adequacy can be reached, since as Western cultures do not know anything analogous to ka… for this reason any word we choose for translating ka will be inexact…[In any case,] it was N. L’Hote who proposed to translate ka as “double” [and this was] brought into wide use by G. Maspero, [and] this translation seems to be the most acceptable, for it reflects best the most important aspect of the ka — its resemblance with the “original” — and its outer opposition to the man.”

The ka as double, then, is inextricable from representations of the individual. Bolshakov writes, “whenever an artist creates a representation, he simply outlines the ka, thus making it visible not only to himself, but others.” From this perspective, a statue — or any likeness of a person — was the ka made visible and tangible. However, Nyord notes that this interpretation is also not without pitfalls, insofar as there is no “textual support for the concrete identification of ka and statue.”

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15 Bolshakov. *Man and His Double*, 188.

The Ka in Life versus in Death

According to Nyord, the essence of the ka can be divided into the realms of the living and the dead, based on textual evidence from the Old and Middle Kingdoms.\(^\text{17}\) For the living, the ka is the origin of a range of behavior; a quality that can be identified in oneself and others; something that can be made by a person’s superior; and, in royal contexts, the ka of the living king can accompany him on royal monuments.\(^\text{18}\) For the deceased, the ka is something to which the person “goes;” the entity to which mortuary offerings are presented; and a way in which relationships between gods are described.\(^\text{19}\) As this thesis concerns representations from a tomb, I shall limit my discussion to the ka of the deceased, insofar as the function of the living ka and the cult of the royal ka fall beyond the scope of the present study.

The Ka as Relational and Potential

Nyord proposes that the ka is relational, and is connected most closely to the condition of being.\(^\text{20}\) In life, the ka “becomes an expression of the continuous actualisation of the person.”\(^\text{21}\) When a person goes to his ka, or dies, he is journeying to a state of being in the spiritual realm where he is reunited with his ka, and thus the distance between the person and the ka no longer exists.\(^\text{22}\) In his 1996 redefinition of so-called “pseudo-group” statues, Rzepka reviews the history

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\(^{17}\) Nyord, “The concept of ka,” 166.


\(^{19}\) Nyord, “The concept of ka,” 166.


\(^{22}\) Nyord, “The concept of ka,” 184.
of scholarship regarding ka statues. He disputes the earlier scholars, such as Junker, who suggested that these statue groups show the deceased in the company of his ka. The conclusions that Rzepka draws anticipate the relational nature of the ka, which Nyord would articulate later. Rzepka suggest that pseudo-groups, which is to say groups of statues that are nearly or fully identical, show the ka in its different manifestations—not of the same individual, but of an individual and the person who gave them their ka, namely, their father. One of the Egyptian texts that Rzepka cites in support of this view is Pyramid Text §1653a. The spell reads, in part, \( w.d.\,n.k \, c.k \, h.i.s.n \, m \, c.k \, w.n \, k.i.k \, j.m.s.n \), “You (Atum, the divine father) set your arm about them (your children, Shu and Tefnut) as the arm of ka, so that your ka might be in them.” Rzepka refers to the process as a transmission of the ka from parent to children, again anticipating Nyord’s interpretation of the ka being relational and changing based on your location in the world of the living or the dead. Of course, insofar as Rzepka’s analysis relies primarily on textual evidence to explain a phenomenon that occurs in private sculptural groups, which do not otherwise incorporate the relevant Pyramid Texts, opens his analysis to the same criticism of over-generalization mentioned above, with regard to the basic problems of definition.

Nyord summarizes his own interpretation of the ka, stating,

“at death, the person undertakes a passage to the place where the ka is... resulting in the meeting between the two parties. Having thus met, the person and his or her ka(s) can then be said to

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26 Pyramid Texts §1653a (M, N), with thanks to Dr. Joshua A. Roberson.

27 Rzepka, Pseudo-Groups,” 342.
undertake a number of different actions together, generally the same ones which the deceased can also be said to undertake himself, e.g., in offering formulae...As the potential aspect of a human being, it makes very good sense that the *ka* of a person can be said to receive the deceased and that they subsequently are seen as being together or even understood as merging, since this range of expressions can be seen as personified conceptualizations of the human being reverting to a purely potential existence.”

This understanding of the *ka* also helps to explain why the priestly group known as *hm.w kꜣ*, or “*ka* servants,” “bore no essential relation to the dead body” but rather focused on representations of the deceased within the tomb because his duties began when the person was still alive and the burial chamber was empty. The potential being of the person, the *ka*, exists therefore in parallel to the living person, such that the *ka* servants might begin their work before the person was dead.

**The Relationship between the *Ka* and Statuary**

As discussed above, the *ka* is something that exists parallel to the living world, which joins or merges with the deceased, such that the two become one in the afterlife. However, as it no longer experienced the world through a living, human body, the *ka* required repositories in which to manifest and take part in the mortuary cult. These come in the form of reliefs and statues in Old Kingdom tombs. To the ancient Egyptians, “statues were considered to be repositories for the living *ka*...of gods, kings, and human beings. The *ka* of these entities could inhabit any number of statues at one time.” According to El-Sawi, the *ka* was believed to be sufficiently powerful that it could animate representations of the body it once inhabited. It was presumably from this perspective that multiple statues of the deceased were placed in the

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offering chambers of tombs, as vehicles through which the \textit{ka} might engage with the living via the cult of the dead.
Chapter 4: Going to Her *Ka*

Past Interpretations of the Engaged Pair Statues

Scholars have proposed two primary interpretations with regard to the inscribed pair statues from the western chamber in the tomb of Meresankh. The most widely repeated suggestion views the pair statues as images of Meresankh and her mother, Hetepheres.\(^1\) Parallels are drawn to the statues carved in the north room of the tomb, which are also assumed to be representations of Hetepheres and Meresankh, despite lacking any direct inscriptive evidence in support of this view.\(^2\) However, in the northern chamber, at one point, there was a visible inscription of Hetepheres’s name, though now only Meresankh’s name survives.\(^3\) In the west chamber, only Meresankh’s name is present.\(^4\) In only one publication have I been able to identify a second interpretation of the statues. It identifies them as two distinct groups: one pair of statues of Hetepheres and another pair of statues of Meresankh.\(^5\) In that work, Dieter Arnold writes that “the attached rock-cut west chamber displays, in two separate groups, two figures of [Meresankh] and two of her mother [Hetepheres] standing at both sides of a central false door.”\(^6\) Arnold does not clarify which group is which. It is possible that the author was attempting to acknowledge the popular identification of two groups of statues showing mother and daughter, but the language remains unclear.


\(^3\) Flentje. “Rock-Cut,” 150.


\(^5\) Arnold. “Old Kingdom,” 45.

\(^6\) Arnold. “Old Kingdom,” 45.
Flentye suggested a possible identification of the statues as solely Meresankh “or a
duality associated with the tomb owner (e.g. the ka).” However, she goes on to note that the
statues are joined by a gesture, which she cites as evidence that the groups in question actually
represent Meresankh and Hetepheres. However, I believe Flentye’s initial suggestion merits
reconsideration, insofar as unambiguous depictions of Meresankh and Hetepheres together,
elsewhere in the tomb, do not consistently show the women joined by gesture.

**Hetepheres and Meresankh Identified Together**

The tomb of Meresankh preserves only three certain examples of Meresankh and
Hetepheres together. Two of these appear on the tomb walls, while the other, a free-standing pair
statue, resides presently in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (MFAB 30.1456). The two wall
scenes mirror one another on the north end of the main chamber of the tomb. On the east wall,
Hetepheres and Meresankh stand in a papyrus skiff, pulling papyrus (Plate 8). Meresankh holds
the crook of her mother’s arm, but the touch is not reciprocated. The two female figures appear
at the same height. The figures’ similar height is unsurprising, given that the nearby (male)
figure of Kawab, Meresankh’s father, takes priority in the hierarchy of scale, while Meresankh
and her mother held similar titles and status. They are also engaged in the same activity; both are
active participants in the pulling of papyrus. The women are, however, differentiated through
their appearance: Hetepheres wears a tripartite wig and a white linen sheath dress while
Meresankh wears a short black wig adorned with a headband and a beaded dress.

On the west wall, the two women exhibit hierarchical scale, with Hetepheres shown
clearly larger than Meresankh. Here, also, Hetepheres is in the most important position, on the

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8 Flentye. “Rock-Cut,” 150.
viewer’s left.\(^9\) In this case, however, Hetepheres is probably not depicted as more important than Meresankh because of her position or titles. Rather, Hetepheres assumes the role of “husband,” since kings did not appear in elite tombs from this period.\(^10\) Not only is Hetepheres larger and in the position of primacy, but she leads the scene by facing the doorway. The man, the most important person in the scene, had to stand in front, wherever front was.\(^11\) The scene stresses a line of succession from Hetepheres down to her grandson, Nebemakhet. This scene may be understood then as a way of visually depicting familial succession and inheritance, not as a way to elevate the status of Hetepheres within the iconography. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Meresankh inherited her estates from her mother’s side, not her father’s side.\(^12\) While Nebemakhet did not inherit from Hetepheres, he did inherit from his mother. This is the only scene in the tomb where Hetepheres takes precedence over Meresankh; on the east wall it is Meresankh in the position of primacy appropriate to the tomb owner, on the left.

The free-standing pair statue that was recovered from the tomb (Plate 28, Acc. no. 301456), also clearly differentiates between the two women. The bodies have been damaged and the paint was not preserved so we do not know how they would have been differentiated via dress. However, Meresankh wears her black, short wig, and her mother wears her voluminous, longer wig. Hierarchy of scale is employed with Hetepheres standing much taller than Meresankh and wrapping her arm over the shoulder of her daughter. Hetepheres’s palm covers Meresankh’s left breast in an unusual pose. This was not the standard gesture of support seen in

\(^12\) Flentye. “Rock-Cut,” 130.
statues of separate individuals.\textsuperscript{13} A similar gesture does occur, however, in the roughly contemporary (Fourth Dynasty) pair statue of the male figure Memi and his female companion Sabu (Plate 30, MMA, 48.111). On the basis of this parallel, it is possible that Hetepheres again occupies the role of “husband” for her daughter. However, it is also important to note that, whereas Sabu reciprocates her companion’s embrace by wrapping her arm around his waist, the figure of Meresankh does not reciprocate her mother’s gesture.

In sum, when Meresankh and Hetepheres are depicted together unambiguously, they are named individually and they are made distinct from one another via dress, their wigs, and/or their size. In some cases, Hetepheres embraces her daughter, but the women are never joined by reciprocal gestures. These observations do not support the interpretation of the two pair statues in the western chamber of Meresankh’s tomb as Meresankh together with her mother, Hetepheres. In fact, neither textual nor iconographic evidence supports the suggestion that any of the four statues depict Hetepheres.

**Old Kingdom Engaged Statuary Comparanda**

In tombs contemporary with Meresankh’s, when the deceased is shown in the company of another person, usually a close relative, they are usually differentiated visually in more than one way. Additionally, there appears to be a correlation between who is permitted to be represented in the offering chamber and who was intended to be buried within the tomb.

\textsuperscript{13} Compare, for instance, the statue of Menkaure and Khamerernebty (Boston 11. 1738; reproduced at Plate 29, below). Menkaure, as king, is shown as the most important figure in the pair: he occupies the left position of primacy and is taller than his wife. Khamerernebty wraps an arm around her husband's waist and crosses another in front of her body to touch her husband’s arm in a gesture of support.
Tomb of Idu (G7102)

The Sixth Dynasty tomb of Idu features a parent-child relationship, specifically that of father and son, which calls to mind the mother-daughter relationship that informed the construction of the nearby rock-cut tomb of Meresankh. In the mastaba of Idu (Plate 24), six engaged statues stand along the west wall, facing the false door on the east wall. The northernmost statue is half of the size of the others and is identified as Qar, the son of Idu. Qar is nude and sports short, black hair. The other statues, however, are identical—shown wearing short kilts and a short black bob wig—and explicitly named in the surrounding text as Idu multiple times. In his offering chamber, then, Idu chose to include his son, but the representations of the two men are clearly distinguishable from one another. Further, if the inclusion of Qar in this scene confuses the viewer as to whom this offering chamber is for, perhaps suggesting that Qar, too, is a recipient of the offerings given in this room, then the statue of Idu rising from the ground (Plate 25) with his arms extended to actively receive, if not take, the offerings dispels us of this notion. Idu is not the only person for whom offerings were given, as his “beloved wife” Meritites is also named and featured on his false door, and possibly given one of the two offering slabs set up in the tomb. The inclusion of only two offering slabs might suggest that Idu included his son Qar, then, as his legacy, not as an equal recipient of offerings made to the *kas* of the tomb.

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Tomb of Kaherptah (G7221)

The tomb of Kaherptah is notable for its incorporation of twenty-nine engaged statues, the largest number known from any private monument of the Old Kingdom.¹⁷ Six of the statues appear in the antechamber, along the south wall (Plate 26). All of the figures appear at the same scale. The first, third and fifth statues wear the same style of wig that passes behind their shoulders while the second, fourth, and sixth statues wear matching wigs that are shoulder-length. The three statues on the eastern side are joined by reciprocated gesture, holding hands. The figure in the center is set apart from the figures holding either of his hands by his shorter wig in comparison to the longer wigs of the two figures flanking him. Kendall believes that the gesture of holding hands represents the deceased in the company of his sons, while the other three statues represent only the deceased.¹⁸ This would not have been uncommon in Old Kingdom tomb decoration. In a relief in chamber A13 of the tomb of Mereruka, for example, Mereruka stands between his two sons holding their hands (Plate 27). Unlike the engages statues from the tomb of Kaherptah, however, the hierarchy of scale was employed to distinguish Mereruka from his sons.

Summary of Ka Statue Comparanda

A few points are critical here in all cases mentioned above. First, the deceased person, whose tomb in which the statues are located, is visibly set apart from the accompanying figures, whether through the hierarchy of scale, iconographic differences, or textual indicators. In other words, there appears to have been some importance placed on specifying who was being

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represented where. Second, and perhaps most importantly, neither the scene of Mereruka nor the statues of Kaherptah are located within the offering areas of the tomb. In the tomb of Idu, where Qar was represented in the offering chamber, he was nevertheless set visibly and clearly apart from his father. In addition, Qar was not mentioned on the false door as a recipient of the offerings.

**Two Pairs of Statues in the Western Chamber: Identification of Meresankh**

The two pair statues discovered in Meresankh’s offering chamber exhibit no visible distinctions in terms of dress, hairstyles, scale, gesture, or text. Conversely, unambiguous representations of Meresankh in the company of Hetepheres always differentiate the two women through their wig styles (short on Meresankh; long on Hetepheres), hierarchy of scale (Hetepheres larger), and/or text labels. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that all four engaged statues in the western chamber represent Meresankh alone. Meresankh’s name is the only name inscribed in the chamber; the statues are identical to other identified depictions of Meresankh elsewhere in the west chamber; the two pairs flank Meresankh’s false door; and they are located above Meresankh’s body in the burial chamber directly below them. Ultimately, the only piece of evidence to suggest that the figures represent Meresankh and Hetepheres is Flentye’s observation that the figures are joined by gesture. However, as discussed above, unambiguous representations of the two women together never show the two women in a reciprocal embrace, comparable to the hand-holding gesture employed in the four engaged statues from the west chamber.

**Possible Explanations for Two Pairs**

The presence of two pairs of pair statues can be explained possibly by a few phenomena happening in the Old Kingdom at this time. First, in art, the ancient Egyptians preferred
symmetry, especially surrounding architectural or pseudo-architectural features such as false doors, which is the case here. Second, as Flentye notes, the increased wall space would allow for more iconography within the tomb. The desire to produce as many images of the deceased as possible can be explained by the ancient Egyptian fear of their name and images being forgotten or destroyed. Further, with the damnatio memoriae enacted in Kawab’s tomb, it is possible that Hetepheres wanted as many depictions of her daughter as possible in her tomb to ensure her image’s survival.

A Case for Ka Statues

I have offered evidence to suggest that the four women depicted in two engaged statue pairs from the western chamber of tomb G7530+40 all represent Meresankh. The figures are anonymous but identical, and their iconography matches that of figures labeled elsewhere in the same monument as Meresankh, which are always visually distinct from images of her mother, Hetepheres. What is left, then, is to make the case that this sequence of engaged statues depicts Meresankh in the company of her ka. Ultimately, I believe that the critical feature in understanding these statues is the reciprocity of gesture, and the specific location of the engaged statues in the tomb itself. The two female figures, who link hands on either side of the false door, are equals; we observe a person meeting her reflection, her literal double. By contrast, in every certain representation of Meresankh in the presence of her mother, her mother takes precedence, and no gestural reciprocity occurs. When Meresankh reaches out to her mother in the marshes (pl. 8), her gesture is not returned. Thus, the reciprocal, hand-holding gesture of the pair statues in the western chamber reinforce the figures’ identity as literal doubles: Meresankh has merged


with her *ka*. This display of equality is not present between any other figures in the tomb, suggesting a relationship that is not present elsewhere in the monument. In addition, the engaged statues flank the false door, as the literal portal between worlds that allowed the deceased to emerge and take part in the offering cult, which was located, in turn, directly above the burial chamber of Meresankh herself.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary of Data and Conclusion

This thesis has considered elements from the decorative program of the Fourth Dynasty mastaba of Meresankh, whose tomb chapel has been described as “the most famous of those in the Giza necropolis and yet one of the least known.” The central question, which I have sought to address, was the identity of the anonymous, engaged statue pairs from the western chamber, which have been frequently identified as images of Meresankh in the company of her mother Hetepheres. Through my examination of iconography of the two women depicted elsewhere in the tomb, I have argued that the four engaged statues actually depict Meresankh alone—the deceased in the presence of her ka, her literal double.

In Chapter 1, I presented the history of scholarship of the tomb beginning with its discovery, and identified the issue of scholars following their predecessor’s interpretations of the tomb without question. In Chapter 2, I presented an extensive description of the tomb as well as the most recent scholarship regarding it. In Chapter 3, I provided a summary of the schools of thought regarding the ka, and discussed how the ka related to statuary in the Old Kingdom. In Chapter 4, inspired by Laurel Flentye’s suggestion that engaged statues in the offering chamber of the tomb of Meresankh could represent a duality such as the ka, associated with the tomb owner, I analyze representations of Hetepheres and Meresankh depicted with one another. Concluding that there are iconographic tools employed to distinguish the women from one another in scenes which they are shown together, I suggested that it can only be Meresankh represented in the engaged statues in the offering chamber, and that it would be inappropriate for

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Hetepheres to be shown in her daughter’s offering chamber as an equal recipient of the offerings. The notion that Hetepheres might be represented in the western chamber stems ultimately from Reisner’s initial belief that Hetepheres was also buried in the tomb.\(^3\) In the offering chamber, it is fitting that only representations of the deceased would be shown as recipients of offerings. Therefore, it seems most likely that we observe Meresankh, together with her \textit{ka}, or perhaps even merging with it, in these pair statues.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Several questions linger from my research for this paper, and I suggest them here as points for further research. Pseudo-group statues, as Rzepka defines them, demands further scrutiny and it is appropriate for a new definition to be put forth, perhaps one that separates engaged statues from statues in the round. Rzepka declares the statues flanking the false door in the western chamber of the tomb of Meresankh as the oldest pseudo-group of statues, but this argument relies on the now questionable assumption that Meresankh is shown with Hetepheres throughout the tomb.\(^4\) Further, he does not satisfactorily explain why well-established artistic constructions of rendering age and family relationships are abandoned in only this sculptural form. He never explains why in some groups, figures are exactly the same and in others they are shown with different elements such as different wigs. Additionally, his argument as to why similar statues would only show one name is unconvincing. Another issue which merits further investigation is the concept of plurality with regard to the \textit{ka} in general, as well as the possible relationship between plural “\textit{kas}” and the plurality of engaged \textit{ka}-statues in the tomb of Meresankh. Nyord suggests that Egyptian spellings that appear to write \textit{ki.w}, “\textit{kas},” might


represent false plurals, or that the word could have been written as a plural due to its very nature. With his definition of the *ka* as something potential, then it is potentially infinite, and a person can have any number of *kas*. The notion of plurality as it related to the engaged statues in Meresankh’s is particularly interesting considering there are four statues. As Henri Wild noted, by the Ptolemaic and Roman periods there existed a concept of the “four *kas*.” The four *kas* in that period referred to the “four privileges” which a person could hope to be afforded in this life and the next: “a long life, a happy material existence, good [company], and beautiful burial.” Is it possible that this shorthand came from an idea much older than the Ptolemaic dynasty? Is what became cliché, as Wild puts it, founded in something archaic whose meaning has changed over time? Alternately, it is possible that the notion of the *ka* as “double” was represented in Meresankh’s engaged statuary in the most literal of terms: The deceased appears as a double, and that pair is itself duplicated as a symmetrical element surrounding the false door. Thus, the statues constitute a doubling of doubles, a three-dimensional rebus for concept of the “*ka*,” which necessarily surrounds the very portal through which the *ka* itself emerged to partake of the offering meal.

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5 Nyord, “The concept of *ka*,” 203.

6 Nyord, “The concept of *ka*,” 203.


8 Wild. “Hor-Néfer,” 206.


10 With thanks to Dr. Joshua A. Roberson.


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“Blonde” Hetepheres on the north side of the west wall of the main chamber
Image from The Giza Project at Harvard University’s VR tour of the tomb of Queen Meresankh III.
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Photo credit: osirisnet.net
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Photo credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York