

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ROYAL FUNERARY COMPLEXES

Hana Vymazalová

The royal funerary complexes constituted an indispensable part of the ancient Egyptian state of the Old Kingdom. The pyramids of course feature among the symbols of ancient Egypt but their significance reaches far beyond tourist attractions. The funerary complexes which besides the pyramid also included a pyramid temple, a causeway and a valley temple, were at the same time burial places of kings and places of perpetuating or maintaining the kings' funerary cults—they were created for one major reason: the resurrection of the deceased ruler.

The administration of a royal funerary complex included two main aspects.¹ The project of the construction of the pyramid complex represented one of the major tasks for every king who ascended the Egyptian throne and required the efforts of a whole army of administrators throughout the lifetime of the king. A large part of the country's resources and workforce were used in one way or another on this project, in the hope that resurrection and a happy afterlife would be secured for all. The other aspect of a royal funerary complex occurred at the time of the ruler's death when his body was placed in the sarcophagus in the burial chamber, rites were performed for the king to reach safely his place in heaven, and the whole complex started to serve its function—perpetuating the funerary cult of the deceased king which was to last for decades or centuries after his death. The maintenance of the royal cults constituted an integral part of the state organisation and economy.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

When a new king began his royal career, one of his first tasks was to start the construction of his own funerary complex. The form of the

¹ V. Dobrev, "Administration of the Pyramid", in: *The Treasures of the Pyramids*, Z. Hawass, ed. (Cairo, 2003), 28–31.

monument could change in the course of time from a mastaba-shaped tomb of the Archaic Period to the sophisticated step pyramid complex of the Third Dynasty and the true pyramid complex of the rest of the Old Kingdom (and also Middle Kingdom and later). The preparation of the royal place of resurrection would however at any time require:

- 1) creating a team including those responsible for the project who delegated partial tasks to their inferiors. The whole hierarchy of these officials ended with the craftsmen and the large workforce working on the site;
- 2) identifying a sufficient and suitable place for the construction, with local construction materials in sufficient quantity and quality but also wood, water etc. available in the immediate vicinity;
- 3) securing the necessary resources, including the estates and production places throughout the whole country in order to provide sufficient and lasting economic support for the project.

A core team of constructors working for the new king bore responsibility for the project. It included high-ranking officials who undoubtedly had experience from the previous construction projects of the royal predecessors. They were headed by the “overseer of all the king’s works” (*jmj-r3 k3t nbt (nt) nzwt*) who ranked among the highest officials in the state since at least the early Fourth Dynasty.² The title was held by both viziers and non-viziers during most of the Old Kingdom, and the contemporaneous holders of the office were most likely in charge of different projects perhaps in different geographical regions.³ Until the early Fifth Dynasty, the holders of such high offices were the kings’ sons or other members of the royal family while the later holders were of non-royal origin. Three contemporaneous holders sometimes occurred during the Fifth Dynasty, one of them associated with a restricted version of the title, “overseer of the king’s works” (*jmj-r3 k3t (nt) nzwt*). In the Sixth Dynasty, a reduction in the number of the titles associated with the organisation of labour appeared, and since

² This title probably developed from the Third Dynasty form *jmj-jrtj k3t nbt (nt) nzwt*; it occurs also in the abbreviated forms *jmj-r3 k3t nzwt*, *jmj-r3 k3t nbt*, *jmj-r3 k3t*. See D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom* (Oxford: BAR International Series 866, 2000), vol. I, 262 and 49.

³ N. Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. Highest Titles and Their Holders* (London, 1985), 217–250.

the reign of Pepy I the title was given exclusively to men who were (or were to become) viziers. At the same time, these important officials were granted high-ranking positions in the organisation of the pyramid complexes of their kings.

It is assumed that the project of the construction of the royal funerary complex was in the hands of the vizier holding the title of overseer of all the king's works. His responsibility comprised organising and commissioning the works, including the expeditions and the construction, while it was his subordinates who made sure that the orders were carried out.⁴

The overseer of all the king's works delegated the tasks to the officials who were responsible for delivering the construction materials, the economic side of the construction, the labour, and other aspects of the project. Chosen officials led expeditions to desert quarries, assisted by soldiers, scribes and followed by hundreds or even thousands of workers.⁵ In the meantime, the work proceeded on the site. The choice of the place for the king's complex observed certain principles or patterns. It could be situated at a relatively new place,⁶ near the older tombs of famous ancestors,⁷ or in the vicinity of the direct predecessors, which was a very practical solution because it allowed the king to take over the construction and administrative background of the previous project.⁸

For the needs of the construction, the produce of many agricultural domains all over the country had to be collected and even some new estates were established by the king and his team for this purpose.⁹ We find hundreds of these funerary domains listed on the walls of the

⁴ N. Strudwick, *Administration*, 241–243.

⁵ Written evidence with detailed listing of the expedition attendants survived from the time of the Middle Kingdom, for instance in the inscription of Ameni in the Wadi Hammamat.

⁶ New construction places seem to be preferred above all by the kings at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty (Meidum, Dahshur, Giza, Abu Rawash, Zawyet el-Aryan). From the later kings, it was Djedkare Isesi who established a new burial place in south Saqqara.

⁷ For example Userkaf, Menkauhor, Unas and Teti built their pyramid complexes in close proximity to the step pyramid complex of Netjerikhet Djoser at Saqqara, Shepseskaf near Snofru's monuments, and Sahure near the solar temple of Userkaf.

⁸ This was the choice of Khafre and Menkauhor in Giza, Neferirkare, Neferefre and Niuserre in Abusir, and Pepy I, Merenre and Pepy II in south Saqqara.

⁹ See H.K. Jacquet-Gordon, *Les noms des domaines funéraires sous l'ancien empire égyptien*. (Le Caire: BdE 34, 1962).

royal complexes¹⁰ and they were given names incorporating the name of the king, such as e.g. “Satisfaction of (king’s name)” (*Htpt S3hw-R*) or “Great of Provision is (king’s name)” (*3-df3 S3hw-R*). It was the administrators of the project who controlled the large economic input of agricultural produce and looked after its distribution according to the needs of the construction project. The participation on a royal project implied not only great responsibility but also certain profit.

The project of the construction of a funerary complex was subject to many calculations, measurements and astronomical observations. Both the practical and the religious side of the project were overseen by a team of planners that included architects and priests who at the same time executed other offices in the state administration. The priests were undoubtedly of particular importance because essential rituals needed to be performed before and during the construction of the monument. Numerous assistants worked for the priests and the architects, together with scribes, surveyors, craftsmen, and a large number of labourers who were called to the construction site from different parts of the country and were supervised and controlled by armed forces. Evidence of the necessary background in the form of settlement structures comprising houses, workshops, storerooms, food production places and offices have been traced in archaeology, above all in Giza.¹¹ Even though only a small part of the settlements has been explored, it can give us a general idea of the size and organisation of such cities at a period when gigantic pyramids were built for the kings.¹²

The structure employed to organise the mass of workers who participated in the construction of the royal monument is reflected in many hieratic inscriptions on the pyramids themselves. Many of them

¹⁰ The most complete so far discovered list of funerary domains comes from the causeway of Sahure, excavated by the Egyptian team of Z. Hawass and T. El Awady. See M.I. Khaled, *The Old Kingdom Royal Funerary Domains: New Evidence from the Causeway of the Pyramid Complex of Sahura*. (Prague, 2008), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.

¹¹ See R. Stadelmann, “La ville de pyramide à l’Ancien empire”, *RdE* 33 (1981), 67–77; for the ongoing exploration of the settlement at Heit el-Ghurob in Giza dating to the time of Khafre and Menkaure, see the preliminary reports published in the *Giza Occasional Papers*, by M. Lehner, M. Kamel and A. Tavarez, and www.aeraweb.org.

¹² A. Tavarez, “Heit el-Ghurob: an unusual settlement in the Old Kingdom ‘Capital Zone’?”, paper presented at the conference *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010* in Prague.

come from the limestone blocks in the core and casing of the Fourth Dynasty monuments and even the blocks in their temples, but examples are known also from the Fifth and Sixth Dynasty pyramid complexes in Abusir and Saqqara. Some of the identifying inscriptions can be found even on working tools. The organisational structure probably underwent certain changes during the centuries of the Old Kingdom period, reflecting the specific requirements of the gigantic structures or the later smaller-sized pyramids.¹³

The evidence on the organisation of the workforce and the system's development during the period of the Old Kingdom indicates that in the Fourth Dynasty the working crews consisted of two gangs (*'prw*) whose names comprised the name of the ruling king. It has been presumed that each *'pr*-gang consisted of four phyles (*s3*).¹⁴ But the phyles could actually be placed above the *'pr*-gangs in the work-hierarchy and the priests in the phyles administered the workers of the *'pr*-gangs, who performed the heavy labour.¹⁵ Each phyle was further divided into four divisions (in the time of Menkaure). There exists some evidence that a phyle-division could have been headed by an "overseer of the ten" (*jmj-r3 10*).¹⁶ The system of phyles shows certain similarities to the nautical organisation.¹⁷

The work on the construction site at the Giza pyramids seems to have been divided geographically among the crews and phyles which served temporarily in a system of rotation.¹⁸ Between the late Fourth and early Fifth Dynasties the system changed due to a reduction in the size of the pyramids as well as the size of the stone blocks. The reduction in the workforce resulted in a rearrangement of the system into a form which was similar to the rotation of the phyles in the funerary

¹³ A detailed study of the evidence was presented above all by A.M. Roth, *Egyptian Phyles in the Old Kingdom. The Evolution of a System of Social Organisation*. (Chicago: SAOC 48, 1991), 119–142.

¹⁴ A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 120, 127–133.

¹⁵ V. Dobrev in *Treasures*, 30; the reason for the names of the *'pr*-gangs being mentioned before the phyle-names in the masons' inscriptions was the honorific anteposition of the royal cartouche in the former names.

¹⁶ According to an inscription on an ostrakon from Giza, see A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, p. 121, fig. 2.9.

¹⁷ A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 41–59; for further discussion on the subject also V. Dobrev in *Treasures*, 30.

¹⁸ It has been suggested that each gang had an independent system of rotation and probably two phyles of each gang were in service at one time, A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 133.

temples.¹⁹ It has been suggested previously that the ‘*pr*-gangs no longer existed in the system since the Fifth Dynasty, as their names appear no more in the masons’ marks in the temples even though they still continued to occur in the royal reliefs.²⁰ This suggestion was, however, influenced by the lack of published material from the Fifth and the Sixth Dynasties.²¹ The recently published masons’ inscriptions on the blocks in the pyramid of Neferefre in Abusir did contain names of several gangs, and in addition to that other evidence from Abusir indicates that gangs bearing the same names served different kings in the necropolis.²²

THE FUNERARY CULTS IN THE ROYAL COMPLEXES

The completion of a funerary complex and the placement of the mummified body of a king into the sarcophagus in the burial chamber marked the beginning of another stage in the existence of a pyramid complex. No evidence on the funerary cults of the kings survived from the early Egyptian dynasties, except for stelae with the kings’ names and labels bearing information on the types and quantities of objects which formed the funerary equipment. In the Old Kingdom, however, a sophisticated system was created for maintaining the cults of the country’s deceased rulers. After the king’s death, the construction crews of labourers moved to the project of the new king,²³ and only the priests organised in phyles settled in the vicinity of the funerary complex in order to maintain the funerary cult of the king and perform the rituals essential for his afterlife.²⁴

Administrative titles related to the perpetuation of the royal funerary cults occur on the walls of the tombs of officials. Their strings of

¹⁹ This suggestion in A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 143 was based on the inscriptions on four limestone tablets found in Userkaf’s solar temple in Abusir.

²⁰ A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 142.

²¹ Names of both the ‘*pr*-gangs and the phyles can be found in the masons’ inscriptions on the blocks of the pyramid of Pepy I in Saqqara, personal communication with V. Dobrev.

²² M. Verner et al., *Abusir IX. The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Archaeology*. (Prague, 2006), 201–202.

²³ M. Verner, *Abusir IX*, 201–202; M. Verner, in: *Abusir X. The Pyramid Complex of Raneferef. The Papyrus Archive*, P. Posener-Kriéger, M. Verner and H. Vymazalová, (Prague, 2006), 367.

²⁴ V. Dobrev in *Treasures*, 29.

titles show the general development of the rank and importance of the offices in the course of the Old Kingdom, and indicate that the structure of the organisation was rather complex.²⁵ In addition to that, the remains of papyrus archives discovered in the pyramid temples in Abusir reveal some details of the organisation of the cults.²⁶ The archives appear to be a particularly useful source for the study of the administration and economy of the royal cults, but they reflect only the reality of the late Fifth Dynasty in Abusir. No similar evidence survived from earlier times or from other Old Kingdom necropoleis.

The connection between the administration of the royal funerary cults, the residence and other institutions of the Egyptian state is clearly reflected in the strings of titles of the officials who were appointed as priests in the pyramid complexes. Economic connections were further confirmed by the Abusir archives. Of particular importance is the connection with the sun temples built by the kings of the Fifth Dynasty. Economic connections clearly existed between the pyramid complexes and the sun temples;²⁷ in addition, certain administrative connections can also be traced in the evidence. Even though the personnel of the funerary and sun temples was not joint,²⁸ many of the *hm-ntr*-priests associated with the sun temples also held positions in royal funerary temples. The question remains to what extent these men actually performed cultic acts in both types of temples. In addition to the priests, also various *jmj-r3* titles are known for the attendants of the sun temples, and these indicate that next to the cultic rituals, the main activities of the officials associated with a sun temple related to the administration of provisions.²⁹

²⁵ K. Baer, *Rank and Title in the Old Kingdom. The Structure of the Egyptian Administration in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties*. (Chicago, 1960), 248.

²⁶ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives du temple funéraire de Neferirkare-Kakai (Les papyrus d'Abousir). Traduction et commentaire*. (Le Caire: BdE 65, 1976), 565–609 presented a fundamental study of the organisation of a royal funerary cult; some additions were made recently by M. Verner, “The personnel of Raneferef’s mortuary temple”, in: *Abusir X*, 360–374.

²⁷ H. Vymazalová, “The economic connection between the royal cult in the pyramid temples and the sun temples in Abusir”, in: *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives. Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750–2150 BC*, N. Strudwick and H. Strudwick, eds. (Oxford, 2011), 295–303.

²⁸ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 524.

²⁹ M. Nuzzolo, “The V Dynasty sun temples personnel: An overview of titles and cult practise through the epigraphic evidence”, *SAK* 39 (2010), 1–24.

The Abusir archives revealed that the administrative structures within the funerary temples of kings Neferirkare and Neferefre,³⁰ which were situated next to each other in the same necropolis, were for the most part not interconnected. The priests and functionaries who could serve the cult of more than one king were the only exception. Four persons bearing the same name and title can be found in both archives: a lector priest by the name of Niankhre, *hm-ntr*-priests Khuwinefer and Khenu, and a palace-attendant by the name of Khenu,³¹ while in the case of three others, their different titles indicate that different persons were referred to.³² The majority of the many personal names occurring in the documents was however attested only in one king's archive.

The two archives moreover seem to indicate that the numbers of the funerary temples attendants differed. At least 250–300 men could be attached to the pyramid complex of Neferirkare in permanent or temporary service, while each of the two divisions of the five phyles seemed to have 20 members.³³ In Neferefre's pyramid temple it was probably not more than half of that number, even though it cannot be established with certainty.³⁴

³⁰ To make a distinction between the archives of the two kings, Roman numbers are used to refer to the documents found in the pyramid temple of Neferirkare Kakai after P. Posener-Kriéger and J.L. de Cenival, *The Abusir Papyri* (London: HPBM V, 1968), while Arabic numbers are used in the documents found in the pyramid temple of Neferefre Isi after Posener-Kriéger, Verner and Vymazalová, *Abusir X*. The remains of another papyrus archive found in the pyramid temple of Khentkaus II in Abusir reveals only a few administrative details. P. Posener-Kriéger, "Les fragments du papyrus", in: *Abusir III. The Pyramid Complex of Khentkaus*, M. Verner, (Prague, 1995), 133–142.

³¹ *Hrj-ḥbt* Niankhre in documents LXX B and LXX C from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive and in document 5A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive; *hm-ntr* Khuwinefer in IIIb, V Ae, VI A b.c.e., VII Ai from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive and in document 4A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive; *pr-ḥ* Khenu in document LXXVII F from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive and in document 7A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive; *hm-ntr* Khenu in document LXVIII d2 from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive and in document 7A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

³² It is not possible to say whether this evidence can point to the same people at different stages in the development of their careers. Ipi in document XLVI from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive, and in documents 8E, 14A and 66B from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive; Isiankh in documents LXII 14 and LXXXVII B from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive, and in document 66A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive; Ptahshepses in document XLVI from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive, and in documents 8E from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

³³ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 573.

³⁴ Five, seven or nine persons were listed for some of the phyle-divisions in the documents, but these do not have to include all the members and some of them are

There were economic and/or administrative reasons for the difference in the number of people attached to the two king's funerary temples in Abusir. It has been suggested that king Neferefre who ruled for less than two years³⁵ was not able to establish a sufficient number of funerary domains necessary for the infrastructure of his funerary cult, which was therefore supported by other kings' complexes.³⁶ The number of domains newly established by a king however did not necessarily influence (or at least not on its own) the extent of his funerary cult.³⁷ The number of the funerary temple attendants could also reflect the number of other funerary cults associated with the king's cult. For instance Neferirkare's funerary cult is known to have been closely connected with that of queen Khentkaus II whose pyramid complex was located just south of the king's funerary temple.³⁸

A large part of the responsibilities associated with the royal cult—and the advantage of a guaranteed income—was in the hands of middle-ranking officials: we can find judges, palace attendants, overseers, different ranks of scribes, and many others among those who were mentioned in the Abusir archives.³⁹ In addition to them, high ranking officials appear in those texts, such as a “vizier” (*t3jtj z3b t3tj*), a “sole companion” (*smr-w'tj*) and a “count” (*h3tj-*). These functionaries probably fulfilled certain tasks assigned to them within the top level of the temple organisation.

The core of the attendants of the royal cults included several levels of priests who were organised in five phyles, each of them consisting of two divisions. Each phyle-division spent one month in the service

only partly preserved. For instance the five men and their two foremen in document 69A do not necessarily include all the members of the two divisions of the phyle but only those of the members who were appointed to bring mud-bricks and do building work on the northern wall in the course of two successive months. The rest of the members of the same phyle could fulfill other tasks in the temple at the same time.

³⁵ M. Verner, *Abusir IX*, 10.

³⁶ M. Verner in: *Abusir X*, 369.

³⁷ The hundreds of funerary domains that appear on the walls of the pyramid complexes (M.I. Khaled, *Royal Funerary Domains*) were possibly used by kings for the construction of their pyramid complexes but after their completion only some of them were assigned to their funerary cults while the majority of the domains were re-used by the new king for his own project. Neferefre's funerary domains are attested only sporadically but evidence of his activities around the country survived for instance in Middle Egypt, see M. De Meyer, *Old Kingdom Rock Tombs at Dayr Al-Barsha*. (Leuven, 2008), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 28–36, pl. 1.

³⁸ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 527–533; For the queen's pyramid complex see M. Verner, *Abusir III. The Pyramid Complex of Khentkaus*. (Prague, 1995).

³⁹ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 565–609; M. Verner in *Abusir X*, 370–374.

and then was replaced by another division. Thus the phyle-divisions' service in the funerary temple rotated along a ten month cycle.

The names of the five phyles seem to have been the same in every complex—*wr*, *st*, *w3d*, *nds* and *jmj-nfrt*.⁴⁰ The five phyles were associated with five pairs of storerooms; their names can be found inscribed on the door jambs of these rooms.⁴¹ The phyles were presumably directed by a director of the phyle-members (*hꜣrp jmjw z3*). This title occurs only once in the papyrus archives⁴² and rarely appears in the strings of titles of officials, usually in connection with the title *ꜥd-mr*.⁴³ The names of the phyle-divisions differed in individual temples, as the examples from Neferirkare's and Neferefre's pyramid temples in Abusir clearly show.

At the head of each of the ten phyle-divisions stood an inspector of the *hꜣm-nꜣtr*-priests (*shꜥd hꜣmw-nꜣtr*) and an under-supervisor of the *hꜣm-nꜣtr*-priests (*jmj-ht hꜣmw-nꜣtr*). In the archives the two functions often occur only as titles and are only occasionally associated with names of individuals—it was the function that mattered to the scribes who worked on documents such as the tables of rations. The rations of the inspectors and under-supervisors were higher (even double) than the share of the other members of the phyles.⁴⁴ In the documents from the archive of Neferefre's pyramid temple the two titles appear only rarely. This might be due to the fact that much less survived of the tables with the assignments of duties in this archive compared to that of Neferirkare or that the people in charge were not always addressed by this title.

In the archive from the pyramid temple of Neferefre, we find titles and names of a relatively high social rank, such as *smr-wꜥtj*, *sm*-priest, *hꜣtj-ꜥ*, and *hꜣrj-tp nzwꜣt*, who were associated with the individual

⁴⁰ In the Middle Kingdom the phyles were numbered instead of bearing the names used in the Old Kingdom. This is attested by the documents found in Kahun, a settlement associated with the pyramid complex of Senusret III at Lahun.

⁴¹ E.g. L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-reꜥ* (Leipzig: VWDÖG 7, 1907), 54; L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Nefer-ir-ke3-reꜥ* (Leipzig: VWDÖG 11, 1909), 32. The previous theories suggesting that the five phyles were also related to the five-niche chapel seem not so obvious, see M. Verner in *Abusir X*, 366.

⁴² Document Vc from Neferirkare's temple archive.

⁴³ P. Posener-Krieger, *Les archives*, 574.

⁴⁴ A double share or more for an *jmj-ht* in document LIII A from Neferirkare's papyrus archive and in document 74L from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive; half of the shares for all the *wꜥbw* and *hꜣntjw-š* in document XCIV from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive.

phyle-divisions in several documents and were apparently responsible for the sealing of the temple parts,⁴⁵ undoubtedly some of the most important tasks. The fragments indicate that these high-ranking phyle-representatives might have held a specific position within the funerary temple, which was written out in red ink below their titles and names: god's sealer (*htmtj-ntr*), scribe of the crews (*zš 'prw*) or flautist of the white crown (*zbḥ ḥdt*). In another record, related to the distribution of products,⁴⁶ six of these men appear again, one of them as *shḏ ḥmw-ntr* while the other five bear their other titles (*zḥb 'd-mr* and *smr*). This record might indicate that these high-ranking officials indeed stood at the head of the phyles but not necessarily as the *shḏw ḥmw-ntr* or *jmjw-ḥt ḥmw-ntr*. It seems apparent that these high-ranking men seldom provided their services in person and their daily duties were delegated to their servants.

The phyles of the funerary temples comprised of *ḥm-ntr*-priests together with *ḥntjw-š*. The former were always mentioned in the first place before the latter, and thus the *ḥmw-ntr* appear to have been considered more important (and were less numerous).⁴⁷

The *ḥm-ntr*-priest titles often feature in the strings of titles in the officials' tomb inscriptions, and it is well known that one person could be a *ḥm-ntr*-priest in more than one pyramid complex. A certain development of the title can be traced in the course of the Old Kingdom. The title could be associated either with the name of a king or with the name of a king's pyramid complex. The former is attested much more often than the latter title until the middle of the Fifth Dynasty. Evidence indicates that changes occurred at the end of the Fifth Dynasty⁴⁸ which we can possibly connect with certain change in religious practices.⁴⁹ With the introduction of the title associating the *ḥm-ntr*-priests with a pyramid complex (instead of a king's name), the rank of the holders increased. In the Sixth Dynasty a distinction was apparent between the priestly titles in the pyramid complexes of the

⁴⁵ Documents 8E and 45–46A b–c from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

⁴⁶ Document 14Ac from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

⁴⁷ For the *ḥm-ntr*-priests and *ḥntjw-š* in the archive from Neferirkare's temple see P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 574–581; and for those in the archive from Neferefre's temple see M. Verner in *Abusir X*, 370–374.

⁴⁸ K. Baer, *Rank and Title*, 264–265.

⁴⁹ Around the same time the kings ceased to build the sun temples related to the pyramid complexes and started to inscribe the walls of the subterranean chambers in their pyramids with the Pyramid Texts.

earlier kings and those in the pyramid complexes of the Sixth Dynasty kings, who were obviously of higher rank.⁵⁰

On the other hand, the *hntjw-š*, whom we find in the phyles together with the *hm-ntr*-priests, seem to have been associated with a single complex and one deceased king only. This relation could also be expressed by their names which often contained the name of that ruler.

Both groups of phyle-members were ascribed more or less the same tasks in the daily service, one next to the other, as attested by the service-tables preserved in the archive from Neferirkare's pyramid temple.⁵¹ According to these records, both types of phyle attendants participated together in cultic rituals and in profane services in different parts of the temple:⁵² they prepared instruments for rituals, took care of the offering-table, made purification rituals and libations, spent days and nights in different parts of the temple and on its roof, including the isolated service in the intimate part of the temple, and in guard service.⁵³ The question nevertheless remains: To what extent did the *hm-ntr*-priests fulfill their duties ascribed to them in the tables of duties preserved in the archive from Neferirkare's pyramid temple? In the archive from Neferefre's pyramid temple several tables registering the fulfillment of duties indicate that some *hm-ntr*-priests (and other officials) actually sent their *dt*-servants to do their work. The scribes did not forget to record such details in the tables.⁵⁴ The *dt*-servants never did the work of the *hntjw-š*, and it seems that the latter were the real core of the phyles while the *hm-ntr*-priests enjoyed their income guaranteed from such office but their regular participation in the daily work within the temples can be put into doubt.

In some cases, the task attributed to a *hm-ntr*-priest and a *hntj-š* could be pursued by the same person, as indicated by the names written in and across both respective columns in document IIIb from Neferirkare's temple archive which relate to the morning and evening ambulation around the pyramid. The passage around the pyramid was elsewhere called explicitly the way of the *hm-ntr*-priest,⁵⁵ but the

⁵⁰ K. Baer, *Rank and Title*, 257, 266.

⁵¹ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 14–57.

⁵² P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 536–543.

⁵³ Documents III–IV, V, VI–VII and LXXXVI A² from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive.

⁵⁴ Document 4A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

⁵⁵ Document V from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive.

former record does not clearly indicate whether the people recorded were *hm-ntr*-priests or *hntjw-š* because some of the names occur in both columns and thus acted in place of both types of phyle members. Whether the *hm-ntr*-priests could delegate tasks to those *hntjw-š* who were assigned to perform the tasks with them, is not clear from the documents.

It was always the *hntjw-š*, the truly present and lower positioned members of the phyles, who were in charge of the transportation of offerings and meat products. Another distinction between the tasks of the two groups of phyle members is apparent during the festivals when specific rituals took place. In the rites performed on statues as described in the archive from Neferirkare's pyramid temple,⁵⁶ the *hntjw-š* fulfilled all the steps of the rituals, except for the final fumigation which was in the hands of a *hm-ntr*-priest.⁵⁷ Such seems to have been the ritual difference between the two types of phyle members.

It is worth noting that no overseers or inspectors of *hntjw-š* seem to have operated in the pyramid temples.⁵⁸ It seems natural that the *hntjw-š* were subordinate to the *hmw-ntr*, who were headed by the above mentioned inspectors or under-supervisors.

Another type of priests mentioned in the papyrus archives and in the title-strings of the officials were the *w^cbw*. As well as the *hm-ntr*-priests, they could serve in more than one pyramid complex and a similar development of the titles, their hierarchy and the rank of their holders can be traced in the evidence.⁵⁹

It has been suggested, on the basis of the archive from Neferirkare's pyramid temple,⁶⁰ that the *w^cb*-priests represented the permanent attendants of the funerary temples and were not members of the alternating phyle-divisions. This seems to be contradicted by some documents from Neferefre's pyramid temple in which we find

⁵⁶ Document III-IV from Neferirkare's temple archive.

⁵⁷ See also H. Vymazalová and F. Coppens, "The clothing rite in the royal temples of Abusir", in: *My Things Changed Things. Social Development and Cultural Exchange in Prehistory, Antiquity, and the Middle Ages*, P. Maříková-Vlčková, J. Mynářová and M. Tomášek, eds. (Praha, 2009), 64-73.

⁵⁸ The title *šd hntjw-š* is mentioned in the index of titles in the publication of the archive from Neferirkare's pyramid temple but its existence is not convincingly proven. In document LXXIV A from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive, we would read *šd prw-š hntj-š* rather than *pr-š hntjw-š*, and in document XCII A similarly *šd III hntj-š*.

⁵⁹ Baer's study on the titles of priesthood included both the *hm-ntr*- and *w^cb*-priests; see K. Baer, *Rank and Title*, 245-273.

⁶⁰ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 582.

“*w^cb*-priests of the month” (*w^cb jmj 3bd*).⁶¹ In addition to that, the tasks of a “*w^cb*-priest who is in charge of the temple every day” (*w^cb jrj hwt r^c nb*) were assigned to several people in a table of priestly duties which covered the month-long service of a phyle-division.⁶²

The archive from Neferefre’s pyramid temple moreover provides a useful comparison with the previous study. The *w^cb*-priest were mentioned less often than *hm-ntr*-priests in the archive from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple but it was the other way round in the archive from Neferefre’s pyramid temple. The former (as well as the latter) were often mentioned together with *hntjw-š* and it is worth noting that *w^cb*-priests and *hm-ntr*-priests did not occur together in the same record (even though they can occur on the same papyrus scroll in different records).⁶³ Fragments of royal decrees preserved in the archive from Neferefre’s pyramid temple were addressed either to *hm-ntr*-priests and *hntjw-š*⁶⁴ or to *w^cb*-priests and *hntjw-š*. It were the *w^cb*-priests and *hntjw-š* who had access to the offerings of the deceased king according to these official documents. The *w^cb*-priests were still in the headings of some documents preceded by a *šd hmw-ntr*⁶⁵ but at other times this title was replaced by *šd w^cbw*.⁶⁶ *W^cbw* also feature together with *hntjw-š* in a document of the distribution of rations or in a document referring to the transmission of two phyle-divisions in the temple service, and they are mentioned after the inspector and undersupervisor of *hm-ntr*-priests, i.e. as members of a phyle-division.⁶⁷ In addition to that, several people of the same name are attested as both *w^cb*-priests and *hm-ntr*-priests in documents preserved from both kings’ pyramid temples.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Documents 25B and 84H from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁶² Document 5A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁶³ For instance in document XCII A from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive.

⁶⁴ Document 19C from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive: *wd nzwt šd hmw-ntr hm-ntr/////*.

⁶⁵ Document 19B from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive: *[wd nzwt] šd hmw-ntr w^cbw hntjw-š/////*.

⁶⁶ Document 18A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive: *wd nzwt šd w^cbw w^cbw hntjw-š m Ntrj-b3w-Nfr.f-R^c*; document 18E from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive: *wd nzwt (n) šd w^cbw w^cbw hntj-š m Ntrj-b3w-Nfr.f-R^c*; document 20A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive: *wd [nzwt] (n) šd w^cbw hntjw-š/////*.

⁶⁷ Document XCIV A from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive; document 62–63A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁶⁸ Iha in documents 7A and 45–46A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive; Kaninisut in documents 4A and 20D from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive;

It therefore seems plausible that the $w^c b$ -priests either did at some time replace the $hm-ntr$ -priests⁶⁹ or more likely that some of the $hm-ntr$ -priests (or other functionaries) were chosen to fulfil the function of a $w^c b$ -priest in the temple, and were rewarded by a share of the offerings. The latter possibility seems supported by mentions of the “one who is on monthly service as a $w^c b$ -priest”⁷⁰ (...*jmj-3bd n w^c b*) and of a lector priest acting as a $w^c b$ -priest⁷¹ (...*hrj-ḥbt sw wpj m w^c b*) in Neferefre’s pyramid archive. In addition, the title “overseer of $w^c b$ -priests” (*jmj-r3 w^c bw*) was attested in documents, but it occurs very rarely and its position within the hierarchy of the temple attendants is not very clear.

According to the documents from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple, the *hrj-ḥbt*-priests do not seem to change with the circulation of the phyles and could be employed in the funerary temples permanently or for longer periods.⁷² The number of lector priests who acted as directors and reciters of rituals, as attested in the papyri, is very limited but it is possible that more than one lector priest was attached to the temple at one time.⁷³ The same lector priest, Niankhre, moreover features in documents from both kings’ archives,⁷⁴ which confirms that the lector priests were not very closely attached to a single king’s cult.⁷⁵

The tasks of the lector priests attested in the papyri were associated only with ritual performances, and they seem to be specific and clear. In the tables of duties preserved in Neferirkare’s pyramid temple the lector priests appear reciting rituals during the daily service and are involved in the statues rituals during the festival of the month.⁷⁶

Ankhametjer and Akhhetep in documents XI and V A from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive.

⁶⁹ Such a replacement was refused by Posener-Kriéger (*Les archives*, 582) and by Roth (*Phyles*, 83).

⁷⁰ Document 6F from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁷¹ Document 62–63A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive: “garment of the lector priest of the first day as $w^c b$ -priest”.

⁷² P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 583; a yearly service has been suggested for a lector priest on the basis of the title *hrj-ḥbt hrj-tp jmj-rnpt* attested in the Sixth Dynasty.

⁷³ Documents LXX B, LXX C and LXX D from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive name different lector priests together in one document.

⁷⁴ Documents LXX B and LXX C from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive and document 5A³ from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁷⁵ A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 84.

⁷⁶ *Hrj-ḥbt* Tia is attested in documents III–IV and LXXXIV C from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive.

In addition to that, they also seem to have organised festivals.⁷⁷ Lector priests attested in the documents that survived in Neferefre's pyramid temple feature as recipients of linen, grain⁷⁸ and also other products.⁷⁹ They were apparently responsible for checking the sealings of the "house of the cloth" (*pr-mnḥt*) and the "house of the statues" (*pr-twt*).⁸⁰ It is likely that the lector priests were present in the funerary temple only at moments of ritual importance: to arrange festivals, prepare ritual garments for themselves and for the cultic statues, supervise the rituals and do the recitation, and make sure that the statues and linen were safely sealed in the storerooms after the conclusion of the rites. The rations of the lector priests were considerably smaller than those of the phyle-attendants,⁸¹ which undoubtedly reflected the specialised nature of the lector priests' tasks within the temple, and the limited amount of time necessary for their fulfilment.

Many other officials were attested in the papyrus archives from Abusir. These included various levels of scribes, court officials, juridical titles as well as members of the central administration, people attached to the treasury or royal hairdressers.⁸² Their position or function within the funerary cult can hardly be specified due to the very fragmentary state of the archives. These numerous officials could have been attached to the royal cult through an economic connection (either during their lifetime or after their death) or fulfilled services assigned by the central administration that were not part of the daily routine in the temple.

The servants (*ḏt*) and assistants (*hrjw-ꜣ*) who appear in the tables of duties seem however to have fulfilled the tasks ascribed to the members of the phyles. The *ḏt*-servants are usually associated with the *ḥm-ntr*-priests, scribes, palace attendants and also with lector priests and

⁷⁷ Document XIX from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive.

⁷⁸ Documents 62–63 and 63J from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

⁷⁹ Documents 65A² and 73E from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

⁸⁰ Document 45–46A from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive.

⁸¹ Document XCVI A from Neferirkare's pyramid temple archive attests a lector priest's share as one fifth of the share of the inspector and under-supervisor, or one tenth of the share ascribed to the *wꜣb*-priests and *ḥntjw-š*; document 68B from Neferefre's pyramid temple archive shows a lector priest's share as one seventh of the share of the other men whose functions are not given, while in document 62–63A it was the same share as the share of a *ḥntj-š*, which was approx. half of other people's shares.

⁸² P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 588–609; M. Verner in *Abusir IX*, 370–374.

other functionaries, and with a *hrp jmjw z3*.⁸³ The documents associate *hrjw*-^c-assistants with higher-ranking men, such as *smr-w^ctj*, *hrj-tp nzwt*, *htmtj-ntr* or *smsw-ist*. Two of them—*smr-w^ctj* Rawer and *hrj-tp nzwt* Hetepib—seem to have headed two phyle-divisions and delegated their tasks to their assistants in more than one document.⁸⁴

The rarely attested *hrjw-nst*, usually translated as “functionaries”, seem to be associated with heavy work, such as transportation of deliveries, in the Abusir archives. On the base of other evidence from the Old Kingdom, they are considered young men who were to inherit a function within the phyles.⁸⁵

In addition to the officials, some of the documents from the Abusir archives record the profession (but not the name) of the men who worked for the funerary temples. Thus we know that a cook, a god’s potter, a gardener, a bleacher or a physician received their share of the provisions. Their place within the temple organisation is however not apparent. These people could be employed as assisting staff and were not necessarily associated with the phyles. It is, however, also possible that the members of the phyles could have fulfilled these tasks as a form of service, as we can find a bleacher among the members of a phyle in the table assigning guardian duties.⁸⁶

The administration of the royal cults in the funerary complexes required sufficient service centre which took the form of the so-called pyramid towns. Some of these cities seem to have played an important role in the distribution of specific products, as is for instance the case with the town Djed Snofru associated with Snofru’s monument in Meidum.⁸⁷ Due to the usual location of the pyramid towns in the vicinity of the valley temples, i.e. in a humid environment, only scarce

⁸³ Documents V A, LXXV B and LXXXIIa from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive; documents 5A, 6C, 14A, 79F and 83M from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁸⁴ Documents LXXXII c, LVIII B from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive; documents 4A, 20B, 69A and 88E from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive.

⁸⁵ P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 584; and A.M. Roth, *Phyles*, 82.

⁸⁶ Document 4 A from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive; a bleacher also appears among the professions in document 49–50.

⁸⁷ Djed Snofru is attested in the Abusir archives as a sender of specific bakery products for both kings’ funerary complexes; see documents XXXIV, XXXV B, XXXIX A and LXXVII N from Neferirkare’s pyramid temple archive, P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives*, 623–624; and documents 62–63A, 63H and 63I from Neferefre’s pyramid temple archive, M. Verner in: *Abusir IX*, 351.

archaeological evidence has been traced, but it provides a useful addition to the written sources.

Two kinds of settlements can be distinguished in the available evidence, namely the originally planned cities and the secondary settlements that developed later in time. Regularly shaped houses and buildings have been uncovered in Giza to the east of the tomb of Khentkaus I.⁸⁸ These are neat rectangular structures that include houses, circular granaries, ovens and other facilities that provided the necessary background for the rotating phyle-divisions.⁸⁹ It is not clear whether the members of the phyles lived in these settlements during their month of service or whether they came daily from their houses to fulfill their tasks, with the exception of those who guarded the temples at night.

In the Abusir necropolis secondary structures were attested directly next to and within the pyramid temples of Neferirkare and Neferefre.⁹⁰ These houses can be dated to the time of Menkauhor and Djedkare and seem to be the result of the fact that the complexes of these two kings were never fully finished. The pyramid towns located in the cultivation areas served only for the cults of Niuserre and Sahure, at least from the moment when Menkauhor moved the construction crews from Abusir to Saqqara. Similar structures of a Sixth Dynasty date were found also in the valley temple of Menkaure in Giza.⁹¹ The evidence moreover shows that the longer these funerary cults were in operation, the more damaged the temples became. Over time parts of them had been closed up and only small parts continued to be used for the kings' cults, regardless the importance of the king-owner. More excavations are however needed before general conclusions can be drawn about the size, shape and development of the pyramid towns.

The administration of a royal pyramid complex at the time of the Old Kingdom constituted an integral part of the state administration,

⁸⁸ S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza VI. 1932–1933*. (Cairo, 1943), 35–50; for recent excavations see M. Lehner, M. Kamel and A. Tavares, “The Khentkawes Town”, in: *Giza Plateau Mapping Project. Season 2008, Preliminary Report*, M. Lehner, M. Kamel and A. Tavares, eds. (Giza Occasional Papers 4, 2009), 9–46.

⁸⁹ Another city of a regular plan was found around the lower temple of Snefru's bent pyramid in Dahshur but it seems to be of a Middle Kingdom date. See A. Fakhry, *The Monuments of Sneferu at Dahshur I. The Bent Pyramid*. (Cairo, 1959), 106–117, pl. 62.

⁹⁰ L. Borchardt, *Nefer-ir-ke3-re*, 11–12, 36–37; M. Verner, *Abusir IX*, 71–78, 106–107.

⁹¹ G.A. Reisner, *Mycerinus. The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza*, 34–54, 278.

and many officials from different branches of state administration were attached to royal complexes. The construction of a pyramid complex was the responsibility of the highest officials of the state, while the maintenance of the royal cults lay in the hands of the middle rank officials, together with lower ranking attendants who made up the phyles.

The fragments from the Abusir archives provide information on the organisation of the cults of the deceased kings for only a limited period of time of the late Fifth and early Sixth Dynasties and cover the limited area of the Abusir necropolis with several unfinished royal pyramid complexes. Other evidence indicates that in the course of the Old Kingdom the structure of the priesthood associated with the pyramid complexes underwent changes⁹² that were undoubtedly connected to general trends in the development of state administration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was written within the Programme for the Development of Fields of Study at Charles University, No. P14 “Archaeology of non-European Regions”, project “Research of the ancient Egyptian civilisation. Cultural and political adaptation of the North African civilisations in ancient history (5,000 B.C.–1,000 A.D.)”.

⁹² K. Baer, *Rank and Title*, 248.