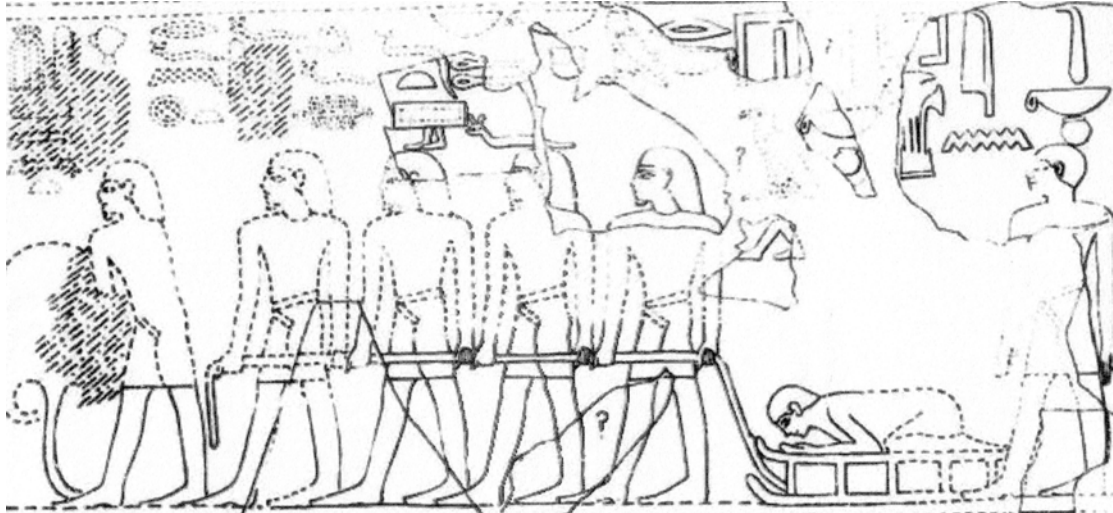


# THE *TEKENU* AND ANCIENT EGYPTIAN FUNERARY RITUAL



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Cover Image:

Davies, No. de Garis, *Five Theban Tombs: being those of Mentuherkhepeshef, User, Daga, Nehemawäy and Tati* (London, 1913), pl. VIII. Detail, top register from the tomb of *Mentuherkhepeshef*.

## **DEDICATION**

For Valerie and Kevan

and especially

John

## DECLARATION

I, Glennise Dale West, hereby declare that the material in this thesis entitled 'The *Tekenu* and Ancient Egyptian Funerary Ritual' has not been previously submitted as part of the requirements for a higher degree at this or any other institution.

I declare that this is an original piece of research wholly written by me. Any assistance I have received in my research and in the preparation of this thesis has been duly acknowledged. All literature and information sources used within the thesis are cited in the text.

Dated this                      day of

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A doctoral thesis is as much an individual achievement as it is a testament to the support system of the candidate. In the second regard I have been blessed and will be forever thankful.

Firstly I must thank my long-since-departed parents, Valerie and Kevan Paisley. They believed strongly in the education of a female and sacrificed so much to afford me the opportunities they did not have. Without them, my long, often tortuous, journey would not have even commenced.

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## ABSTRACT

The *Tekenu* is a much neglected figure in the literature on the ancient Egyptian funerary ritual. Scholars have tended to examine specific occurrences in isolation or focussed on one form while avoiding other examples. These works are appraised in the Literature Review. There is, in fact, even some contention as to what is a *Tekenu*.

Part 1 of this study is devoted to the formulation of the Corpus Catalogue. Firstly criteria are established which will enable one to conclude what is, and what is not, a *Tekenu*. Forty-six occurrences of the *Tekenu* are identified. The time span of occurrences extends from the late Old Kingdom, to the Middle Kingdom, through the New Kingdom and up to the Saite Period. Four distinct forms of *Tekenu* are recognised and these are further subdivided to aid analysis. A detailed catalogue is then constructed.

Part 2 contains the analysis of the primary sources. These are divided into textual references, pictorial representations and context. For tombs TT 20 *Mnt.w-ḥr-ḥpš=f* and TT 100 *Rekh-Mi-Rē*, a narrative involving the *Tekenu* is suggested.

Part 3 examines the possible origins of the *Tekenu* from the pre-pharaonic period up to the New Kingdom. These include the cattle culture, early dynastic figures, standards and the Opening of the Mouth ceremony.

The last chapter summarises the findings of this study and proposes that the *Tekenu* may serve a purpose which, to date, has not been explored.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AcOr(C)	<i>Acta orientalia</i> . (Lund, Copenhagen).
AE	<i>Ancient Egypt</i> .
Aegyptus Antiquus	<i>Centro de investigaciones egiptológicas (Buenos Aires)</i> .
ARCE	<i>American Research Center in Egypt</i> .
Archéo-Nil	<i>Archéo-Nil. Bull. de la Soc. pour l'étude des cult. prépharaon. de la vallée du Nil</i> .
Bace	<i>Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology</i> .
BD	Faulkner, R. O., (translator), <i>Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead</i> (New York, 2005).
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca orientalis</i> .
CAJ	<i>College Art Journal</i> . College Art Association of America. (New York).
EA	<i>Egyptian Antiquities</i> .
Estrat Critic	<i>Estrat Crític Revista d'Arqueologia</i> .
GM	<i>Göttinger Miszellen</i> .
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i> .
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i> .
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> .
KMT	<i>K.M.T. A Modern Journal of Ancient. Egypt</i>
Kush	<i>Kush. Journal of the Sudan Antiquities. Service</i> .
LÄ	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> (1975-1986), 6 vols, Weisbaden.
MAN	<i>Mémoires de l'Académie de Nîmes</i> .
MDIAK	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo</i> .
Memmonia	<i>Memmonia. Association pour la sauvegarde du Ramesseum</i> .
MJBK	<i>Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst</i> .
MMAF	<i>Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire</i> .
Orientalia	<i>Orientalia. Pontificio Instituto Biblico</i> .
PIA	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i> .
PT	Faulkner, R. O., (translator), <i>The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts</i> (Oxford, 1969)
RdE	<i>Revue d'Égyptologie</i> .
RevEg	<i>Revue Égyptologique</i> .
RT	<i>Recueil de Travaux</i> .
SAK	<i>Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur</i> .
Sphinx	<i>Sphinx. Revue. crit. embrassant le domaine entier de l'Égyptologie</i> .
Wb.	<i>Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache</i> , 7 volumes.
World Arch	<i>World Archaeology</i> .
ZAK	<i>Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte</i>
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i> .

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## CHRONOLOGY CODE USED THROUGHOUT THE WORK

5th Dynasty	5.09	Unis
12th Dynasty	12.01	Amenemhet I
	12.02	Senwosret I
	12.03	Amenemhet II
	12.04	Senwosret II
	12.05	Senwosret III
	12.06	Amenemhet III
	12.07	Amenemhet IV
	12.08	Sobeknofru
18th Dynasty	18.01	Ahmose
	18.02	Amenhotep
	18.03	Tuthmosis I
	18.04	Tuthmosis II
	18.05	Hatshepsut
	18.06	Tuthmosis III
	18.07	Amenhotep II
	18.08	Tuthmosis IV
	18.09	Amenhotep III
	18.10	Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten
	18.11	Semenkhkare
	18.12	Tutankhamun
	18.13	Ay
	18.14	Horemheb
19th Dynasty	19.01	Ramesses I
	19.02	Seti I
	19.03	Ramesses II
	19.04	Merenptah
	19.05	Amenmesse
	19.06	Seti II
	19.07	Siptah

	19.08	Tawosret
25th Dynasty	25.01	Alara
	25.02	Kashta
	25.03	Piyi
	25.04	Shabaqa
	25.05	Shebitqu
	25.06	Taharqa
	25.07	Tanutamun
26th Dynasty	26.01	Psamtik (Psammetichus)
	26.02	Necho II
	26.03	Psamtik II (Psammetichus II)
	26.04	Apries
	26.05	Amasis
	26.06	Psamtik III (Psammetichus III)

# PART 1 FORMULATION OF THE CORPUS CATALOGUE

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

*Make good your dwelling in the graveyard..*

*.....the house of death is for life<sup>1</sup>*

The tombs of the ancient Egyptians might be seen as relics consisting of 'fossilised' expressions of man's relationship with, and attitude towards, the phenomenon of death.<sup>2</sup> The ancient Egyptian relished life and perceived the tomb as the environment in which it would continue and, in a sense, the tomb was perceived as a countermeasure to death.<sup>3</sup>

Ancient Egyptian eschatology encompassed the belief that the entire funerary ritual was to consummate the deceased's aggregation with the sacred world. Embalming, mummification and funerary rituals were the means by which a dead person was transformed into a transfigured spirit, an *akh*, enabling him to partake of the world of the gods. The process could be seen as 'a kind of ritual deification requiring a very special kind, and amount, of magical power or cosmogonic energy'.<sup>4</sup>

The function of the elite tomb in ancient Egypt was both commemorative and magical.<sup>5</sup> Commemoratively, the tomb provided a place for the celebration of

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<sup>1</sup> 'The instruction of Prince Hardjedef', Fifth Dynasty, Lichtheim, M., *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (London, reprint 2006), vol. I, 58.

<sup>2</sup> Van Walsem, M., *Iconography of Old Kingdom Elite Tombs: Analysis & Interpretation, Theoretical and Methodological Aspects* (Leiden, 2005), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Assmann, J., *Death and Salvation, in Ancient Egypt* (translator Lorton D., New York, 2005), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Assmann, J., *From Akhenaton to Moses; Ancient Egypt and Religious Change* (Cairo, 2014), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Hartwig, M. K., *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes 1419–1372 BCE* (Turnhout, 2004), 37.

the tomb owner by the living and the perpetuation of his memory. Magically, it was the vehicle for the deceased's revivification and his social integration into both the world of the gods and the netherworld.<sup>6</sup>

Symbolic objects and rituals were integral in establishing the connection between the 'here' and 'yonder', that is between 'visual and mythical reality'.<sup>7</sup> It was mandatory that the body was to be enabled to function exactly as it did before death. Hence, it was believed that the deceased had the same material needs as the living.<sup>8</sup> As Assmann succinctly states, 'the goal...is to cure the condition of death'.<sup>9</sup> This reinforces the opinion that the defining aspiration of the ancient Egyptian was to be *revivified* rather than *immortalised*.

Depicted most commonly within the funerary procession on the walls of the tombs of some of the elite of Egyptian society, one finds the enigmatic *Tekenu*. It is also found, albeit less frequently, amongst the ritualistic scenes of what Settgast describes as the 'Heilige Bezirk', or *holy district*.<sup>10</sup> It has not been discovered in the wall decoration of any pharaonic tomb nor has any physical evidence of its existence been attested. One is forced to rely on artistic representations of the *Tekenu* and any accompanying text in funerary and ritualistic scenes to endeavour to ascertain its significance. This is in contrast to the canopic vessels and other funerary objects that have been archaeologically attested in numerous tombs. If one assumes that there is a purpose for the *Tekenu*'s inclusion amongst the funerary ritual then, due to its positioning, one might suggest that it is likely to possess a magical function.

The ancient Egyptians believed humans were composed of both physical and non-physical elements. The deceased's attainment of the afterlife depended on the survival of these various constituent elements within the preserved

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<sup>6</sup> Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Assman, J., 'Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt', in, Allen, J. P., Assmann, J., Lloyd, A. B., Ritner, R. K., Silverman, D. P. (eds) *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt* (New Haven, 1989), 137. 'Mythical' is used in the sense of 'referring to the divine world'.

<sup>8</sup> Teeter, E., *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (New York, 2011), 329.

<sup>9</sup> Assman, 'Death and Initiation', 138.

<sup>10</sup> Settgast, J. V., *Untersuchungen zu Altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen* (Hamburg, 1963), chapter VII.



mummified body and the protective magical structure of the tomb.<sup>11</sup> The tomb was the physical space where the deceased's body and all his different entities would be reunited and rest.<sup>12</sup> The exact number of these components is indeterminable. In the tomb of Amenemhêt, TT 82, for example, the accompanying text to part of the depiction of the offering scene is translated by Davies as being:

*[bringing all manner of good things...]for his ka, for his stele...for his [ba?], for his illumination, for his corpse, for his shadow, and for all his modes of being (ḥprw).*<sup>13</sup>

However, many scholars recognise six primary components which, when united, aid in constituting an entire individual.<sup>14</sup> Each part was deemed integral for human existence:

- *ḥst* 'the body', was the physical shell within which a human exists.
- *ib* 'the heart', was the centre of physical activity and the seat of emotion, thought and intelligence.
- *šwt* 'the shadow', derives from the body and thus the Egyptians believed it had something of the body's owner in it. The shadow was also thought to be cast by the *soul*. The main attributes characterising the shadow were its ability to move with agility and speed and its ability to carry and transfer power.
- *rn* 'the name', was thought to be an essential component of its owner. A name provided the owner with an identity. Without a name an individual

<sup>11</sup> Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Kanawati, N., *Decorated Burial Chambers of the Old Kingdom* (Cairo, 2010), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Davies, N., *The tomb of Amenemhêt (No. 82)* (London, 1015), 99.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Allen, J. P., *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (second edition, Cambridge, 2010), 81–83; Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, chapters 1–4; Frankfort, H. *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (6th Impression, Chicago, 1969), chapter 5; Hornung, E., *Idea into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought* (translated by Bredeck, E., New York, 1992), 175–177; Ikram, S., *Death and Burial in Ancient Egypt* (Cairo, 2015), 23–30; Taylor, J. H., *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2001), 15–23.

became a non-entity. In and through the name it is possible to harm, or worship, its owner.

- *ba* 'the *ba*', belonged to the physical sphere of the deceased, restored his movement and his ability to take form. It could be defined as the 'personality' as it contained everything that makes a person an individual except for the body.
- *ka* 'the *ka*', often translated as 'life force'. It was soul, protective spirit and doppelgänger. It was the *essence* of the *self*. The *ka* has also been identified as 'the force of conscious life, present in men, gods and *akhs*... (which is) transmitted by the creator to the world, by the king to the people and by fathers to their children; also present in food and drink.'<sup>15</sup> The *ka* makes the difference between a living person and a dead one as death occurs when it leaves the body.<sup>16</sup>

The *hwt* was preserved by means of the embalming and burial processes. By mummification, the ancient Egyptian, endeavoured to maintain the 'shell' of the body. Most of the internal organs, which were known to deteriorate, were removed and placed in the canopic vessels. The canopic vessels were then preserved within the tomb.

The *ib* usually remained with the *hwt*.<sup>17</sup> Further protection for the body of the deceased was provided by the coffin or a series of nested coffins.<sup>18</sup> The final protection was the sanctuary of the tomb.

As, with the aid of the sun, every body creates a *šwt* (shadow), the shadow becomes an essential adjunct of the body.<sup>19</sup> Thus, if the body survives, so too

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<sup>15</sup> Der Manuelian, P. (ed.), *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (translator: Allen, J. A., Leiden, 2005), 434.

<sup>16</sup> It is beyond the scope of this work to examine these components in detail. The author has summarised the essential elements from the scholars noted in footnote 14.

<sup>17</sup> See Ikram, S. and Dodson, A., *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt: Equipping the Dead for Eternity* (London, 1998), chapter 3 for a detailed description of the mummification process.

<sup>18</sup> See Ikram and Dodson, *The Mummy*, chapter 7 for coffin development.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 81. Assmann contends that the shadow belonged with the *ba* but did not follow it into the sky: Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 112.

will the shadow. The solar association of the shadow is closely linked to revivification. When the sun disappeared, the shadow vanished, only to reappear when the sun rose the next day.<sup>20</sup> The shadow of the *soul* was invisible.

The ancient Egyptian went to extreme lengths to perpetuate his *mn*. Doorways, door jambs, walls and statues all bore the tomb owner's name so that it was preserved for eternity. Visitors to the tomb were encouraged to utter the deceased's name. The erasing of the name of someone was perceived as an act of annihilation. Thus Akhenaton endeavoured to eradicate the god Amun by destroying his name on all monuments.<sup>21</sup>

The *bꜣ* is the freely moving part of the person. It is able to commute between different worlds such as heaven, earth, and the netherworld. It is not the person himself, but his representative.<sup>22</sup> In early sources the *ba* appears as a saddle-billed stork and reveals itself as an earthly manifestation of heavenly powers. Later images and texts depict the *ba* as a human-headed falcon. This change in depiction emphasises the dual nature of the *ba*. The human head represents the nature of the being it manifests, either human or divine, while the avian body points to the freedom of movement and transformation, and the possibility of its entering different cosmic realms.<sup>23</sup> The *ba* is often depicted hovering over the body or descending the tomb shaft to the burial chamber. It is shown especially in the reliefs and paintings of New kingdom tombs.<sup>24</sup>

Frankfort distinguishes between the *ka* of the king and the *ka* of the commoner.<sup>25</sup> While he identifies the *ka* of the king with the placenta or stillborn twin, he discusses whether this is also the case with the ordinary individual.<sup>26</sup> That there is no evidence of this he attributes to the fact that it

<sup>20</sup> Ikram, *Death and Burial*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Ikram, *Death and Burial*, 25–26.

<sup>22</sup> Assmann, J., 'A Dialogue between Self and Soul': Papyrus Berlin 3024' in Baumgarten, A. I., Assmann, J., Stroumsa, G., *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience* (Leiden, 1998), 389.

<sup>23</sup> Janák, J., 'Ba', *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, May 2016, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 63.

<sup>25</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, chapter 5.

<sup>26</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 72.

would remain in the scope of unwritten folklore.<sup>27</sup> Despite this conundrum, one might assume that the *ka* of the non-royal is reunited with the body in the tomb as are the other non-physical components. As death occurs when the *ka* leaves the body, then presumably revivification could not occur until the *ka* is reunited with the body. Consequently it is conceivable that the non-royal might desire some reference to the *ka* within the repertoire of his tomb decoration.

Given the acknowledged functions of the tomb, its decoration is of vital importance. The chosen decorative compositions are likely to have been socially selected according to criteria that remain unknown today.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the fact that not all tombs contain a funerary scene is an observation for which a definitive explanation is elusive. The tomb owner, or a member of his family, made a choice of what to include on the wall scenes of the tomb.<sup>29</sup> However, it is possible that chronological factors and access to particular ateliers, whose repertory very likely varied, would have influenced this selection.<sup>30</sup> It must also be noted that the tomb was most commonly organised well before death, rendering the depictions of the rituals and funerary procession within it the *ideal* rather than the *reality*. Where a funerary scene occurs it is not showing the *actual* funeral of the tomb owner but rather an idealised depiction of it.

As literacy was thought to be uncommon in pharaonic Egypt,<sup>31</sup> the depth of any scene's interpretation was determined by the 'knowledge', or *rekḥ*, of the viewer'.<sup>32</sup> The scenes were dynamic and functioned on a multitude of levels and thus on which level they were interpreted, or *read*, was dependent on the beholder.<sup>33</sup> One must, therefore, be cautious not to oversimplify the analysis

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<sup>27</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 365, n. 55.

<sup>28</sup> Ucko P. J., 'Ethnography and Archaeological Interpretation of Funerary Remains', *World Archaeology* 1/2 (1969), 266.

<sup>29</sup> Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity*, 28; Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> For a concise discussion on literacy levels, see Lesko, L. H., 'Literacy' in Redford, D. B. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2001), vol. II, 297–299.

<sup>32</sup> Bryan, B. M., 'Memory and Knowledge in Egyptian Tomb Painting' in Cropper, E. (ed.) *Dialogues in Art History from Mesopotamian to Modern: Readings for a New Century* (New Haven, 2009), 19; Woods, A., 'Relief' in Hartwig, M. K. (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* (Chichester, 2015), 236.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

of scene components. Another element about which to be wary is the fact that ,although burials and funerary structures are received by the archaeologist as static items uncovered in excavation, they are of course the result of various social processes.<sup>34</sup>

Compounding the problem of the interpretation of ancient Egyptian images is the fact that nothing can be analysed simplistically due to the multilayered nature of ancient Egyptian symbolism.<sup>35</sup> The example of the use of the ostrich feather aids in elucidating these difficulties. The ostrich feather in Egyptian iconography can be a symbol for:

- an abstract phenomenon like justice and divine power, or
- an actual circumstance such as the pattern of social life which presents itself in an intellectual, emotional or behavioural aspect, or
- the living goddess *M3ꜣt*.<sup>36</sup>

Given that the aim of this work is to document the attestations of the *Tekenu* and reveal its possible underlying meanings and functions, the task would appear daunting. Inexorably this study must contain an interpretative component. Acknowledging the probable disjuncture between ancient and modern thought and *logic*, and the complexity of the iconography, one questions whether it is viable to search for a single, *correct* interpretation or even an absolute single core meaning.<sup>37</sup> Inevitably one is inclined to conclude that there is likely a multiplicity of answers. However, the complexity of the task does not render it unviable, idle or indeed worthless. The author's aim is to examine the component threads in the identity and function of the *Tekenu* and to proffer an interpretation or interpretations.

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<sup>34</sup> Ucko, *World Archaeology* 1/2 (1969), 276; Shanks, M. and Tilley, C., *Re-Constructing Archaeology, Theory and Practice* (second edition London, 1987) especially chapter 1 for a full discussion of the problems for the archaeologist.

<sup>35</sup> Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity*, 40.

<sup>36</sup> Verma, S., *Cultural Expression in the Old Kingdom Elite Tomb* (Oxford, 2014), 11.

<sup>37</sup> See Hornung, E., *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (translator Baines J., New York, 1982), 'The problem of logic', 237–243.

The record of known depictions of the *Tekenu* spans the period from the late Fifth Dynasty to the Saite Period. To date one example has been found in the late Fifth Dynasty and none in the First Intermediate Period. The *Tekenu* reappears in the Middle Kingdom but is absent in the Second Intermediate Period. The greatest number of representations is attested in the Eighteenth Dynasty. The *Tekenu* appears in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, then is absent until the archaising examples of the Saite Period.

Given the wealth of material available to be studied from Egyptian wall paintings, it is not surprising that the topic of the *Tekenu* has often been referred to 'in passing'. It is frequently merely mentioned as part of the funerary procession in certain tombs but its iconography tends to be neglected. Scholars at times make the mistake of trying to attribute one meaning to the *Tekenu* when Egyptian religion allows for a multiplicity of purposes which may seem to us as contradictory and/or illogical. One must not make the error of interpretation by modern standards.<sup>38</sup>

One of the challenges of this present study is how to define a *Tekenu*. As there is no extant description of this object, not even a cryptic one, one is left with the task of determining what is and what is not a *Tekenu*. If there is no identifying text, this task can be troublesome as there is no common scholarly agreement regarding the physical attributes of the object. One Egyptologist's *Tekenu* is declared to be a priest by another. Some Egyptologists have propounded as a *Tekenu* the image of two figures appearing together. Yet still others have contended that images of quite disparate appearance and apparent function are also *Tekenu*. This problem is compounded by the complexity of the iconography, which can render it very difficult to read Egyptian images and to recognise what they represent.<sup>39</sup> It is therefore imperative to clarify the process for identification of the *Tekenu* and, if possible, establish criteria to enable one to state what it is, and what it is not.

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<sup>38</sup> Ucko, *World Archaeology* 1/2 (1969) discusses this problem in great detail. Also see Shanks and Tilley, *Re-Constructing Archaeology*.

<sup>39</sup> Müller, M., 'Iconography: basic problems of the classification of scenes' in *Sesto Congresso internazionale di egittologia* (Turin, 1993), 337.

To achieve this goal, it is vital to examine the interaction of the pictorial and textual evidence together with the extended context of the object.

Not infrequently, scholars have concentrated on one form of the *Tekenu*, while neglecting disparate forms. For example, a *Tekenu* might resemble the shape of a frog or mushroom in one tomb, yet such a depiction is not frequent, let alone common. The depictions of the Type 1 *Tekenu* in TT 20 as a seemingly uncovered human being atop a towed sledge or the Type 4 *Tekenu* in TT 20 and TT 11, which is of an upright human being, could not be said to resemble mushrooms or be associated with a frog or the priest of Heket. Indeed the *Tekenu*, when found reclining or seated, on a table or stool, of which there are currently six undisputed occurrences, has different features from those displayed when it is towed on a sledge. One inevitably is led to the conclusion that the nature of the *Tekenu* is complex and that its state is not static. Could it be that it is part of a narrative and that the tomb owner chooses which part of the story is to be illustrated in his tomb?

To adequately research the *Tekenu*, the frame of the bulk of this study encloses the late Fifth Dynasty to, and including, the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. However, the chapter on origins necessitates delving into the Early Dynastic and Pre-Dynastic periods.

‘Egyptian thought steers clear of monocausal simplification, convincing instead through refinement and association, through mastery of both word and image’.<sup>40</sup> It is the aim of this work to examine the complexity of the *Tekenu* within the funerary ritual. One would be presumptuous to aim for *the* answer or *the* explanation. However, the quest for an *interpretation* is a viable objective.<sup>41</sup> The author contends that the *Tekenu* performed a magical role ensuring the deceased’s successful crossing of the *duat*, his integration into the netherworld, and his subsequent revivification.

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<sup>40</sup> Hornung, *Idea into Image*, 14.

<sup>41</sup> See Assmann, ‘Solar Discourse Ancient Egyptian Ways of Worldreading’ in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 68 (1994), 116—117.

## 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A plethora of ideas has been propounded by scholars to explain the nature and function of the *Tekenu*. These ideas, some speculative though perhaps plausible, have added significantly to the analysis of the *Tekenu* by drawing attention to the multiplicity of valid approaches that may be adopted. Given the complex nature of Egyptian symbolism and the fluidity of Egyptian ideas that allows for contradictions,<sup>42</sup> some scholars have come to the conclusion that it is essential to examine the image and ritual of the *Tekenu* on more than one level. They conclude that it is perhaps foolish to search for the *one correct* answer to the question ‘what is the *Tekenu* and what is its function’. Other scholars persist in the quest for the one definitive answer. However, despite the variant approaches, each contribution to the body of scholarship on the enigma of the *Tekenu* does provide avenues for exploring new aspects of interpretation aiding in the development of a broad-based integrative approach.

It is not the aim of this study to record and comment upon every reference made over time to the *Tekenu*. Some references are in the form of brief remarks made in passing or purely descriptive without any analytical component. For example:

*A curious object that forms part of the procession from the Middle Kingdom on is the Tekenu. In the Middle Kingdom it appears to be a wrapped figure that is either crouching or in the foetal position, with only the head showing. In the New Kingdom the Tekenu is shown as an entirely wrapped bundle, or with the head and sometimes an arm showing. Its role in the funerary ritual is enigmatic.*<sup>43</sup>

In this study, an endeavour is made to examine the salient arguments and key concepts of the major works on the topic. Comment is also made upon those articles that depart from the dominant views in current scholarship.

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<sup>42</sup> Tassie, G. J., ‘Bulls’ hair and the Teknu: an enigmatic Egyptian revisited’, *PIA* 11 (2000), 33; Hartwig, *Tomb Painting*, 40, 98. See also Hartwig, M. K., ‘Style’ in Hartwig, M. K., (ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, (Chichester, 2015), 47–54.

<sup>43</sup> Ikram, *Death and Burial*, 183–184. Note that the one attested occurrence of the *Tekenu* in the Old Kingdom is not mentioned.



The relevant studies are presented according to the function attributed to the *Tekenu* and within each function in chronological order. Several scholars perceive the *Tekenu* as potentially performing more than one function and, therefore, they are discussed under more than one heading. However, where scholars have emphasised one function or association, while mentioning and acknowledging other possible components, this discussion focusses upon their major consideration.

### 1.2.1 THE *TEKENU* AS A SACRIFICIAL OBJECT

The preponderance of available scholarship suggests that the *Tekenu*'s function is in some way associated with a real or symbolic sacrifice. However, confusion arises as often it is not stipulated whether the *Tekenu* is viewed as an object or a human being. There is also little consensus of opinion about the nature of this sacrifice. Commonly scholars have neglected to define what they mean when they adopt the word 'sacrifice'. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'sacrifice', among other definitions, as 'primarily the slaughter of an animal (often including the subsequent consumption of it by fire) as an offering to a god or deity' or 'the surrender to a god or a deity, for the purpose of propitiation or homage, of some object of possession'.<sup>44</sup> It is important, however, to note that in the ancient world the concept of 'sacrifice' most probably involved a different emphasis. It did not necessarily focus on the death of the victim or involve the surrendering of some valued possession, but rather it meant to make holy or sanctify.<sup>45</sup> Consequently the *Tekenu*, although determined by some scholars to partake in a ritual sacrifice, is not always perceived as dying or even being harmed. Rather, it might be seen as participating in a form of sanctifying ritual. It is also the significance of the sacrifice or sanctifying ritual that is frequently in dispute.

**Lefébure** (1900, 1904) argues that the *Tekenu* was a human being who was to be an actual or symbolic sacrifice and that the sacrifice was performed at 'the religious locality of Abydos'.<sup>46</sup> Primarily Lefébure refers to the tomb of

<sup>44</sup> Oxford English Dictionary (second edition, Oxford, 1989), vol.IX, 17–18

<sup>45</sup> Harrison, J. H., *Ancient Art and Ritual* (London, 1948), 90.

<sup>46</sup> Lefébure, E., 'Le sacrifice humain d'après les rites de Busiris et d'Abydos', *Sphinx* 3 (1900), 161.

*Mnt.w-ḥr-ḥpš.f* (TT 20), discussing the positioning of the *Tekenu*'s sledge in a pit adjacent to the depiction of two captured Nubians. Each Nubian he perceives as being flanked on either side by men who 'mime strangulation with a cord' (p. 148). He infers that although the sledge of the *Tekenu* is in a pit with parts of the bull, it might, like the Nubians, be undergoing a simulated, rather than actual, sacrifice.

While concentrating on TT 20, Lefébure also comments on the appearance of the *Tekenu* in the tombs of *Sn-nfr* (TT 96) and *Rḥ-mj-R<sup>c</sup>* (TT 100). In these tombs he describes the *Tekenu* as on a bed, seemingly lying flat on its stomach under a skin in the pool of Kheper and being accompanied by torches (p. 157). This he interprets as another depiction of a real or symbolic sacrifice. Further, he suggests that this portrayal is also being enacted at Abydos as 'one of the names of Abydos is Nu-Kheper' (p. 158).

Unlike Lefébure, who perceives the ritual of the *Tekenu* as being performed on a real person at a real and specific place, **Maspero** (1909) states that the *Tekenu* was merely a sacrificial symbol and that the sacrifice:

*was only a pretence practiced on a statue or on a special person, the tikanou who played his part in the funerals of the rich and was strangled several times a year without coming to much harm.*<sup>47</sup>

Maspero interprets the ritual of the *Tekenu* as being symbolic and theatrical.

**Moret** (1927) argues that in TT 20 one sees a seemingly nude figure, the *Tekenu*, brought on a sledge opposite a large skin of an animal. He suggests that the scene where the *Tekenu* is then draped in the skin would have occurred, but is not preserved. Later one sees the skin, thigh and heart of a bull and also the hair of the *Tekenu* all contained in a pit seemingly in preparation for sacrifice. Moret contends that the hair of the *Tekenu* replaced the *Tekenu* itself as sacrificing part of an object, and was seen by the ancient Egyptian as akin to sacrificing the whole.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Maspero, G., *New Light on Ancient Egypt* (London, 1909), 31.

<sup>48</sup> Moret, A., *Mystères Égyptiens* (Paris, 1927), 45.

**Davies** (1941) speculates on the identity of what he deems is the person taking the role of the *Tekenu*. He states that the *Tekenu* was the 'servant sacrificed to give company to his master on the last of his adventures'.<sup>49</sup>

For **Kees** (1956), the *Tekenu* was not a person but rather an object. He regards the *Tekenu* as a 'simulacrum of the deceased' who was buried in the ground along with the sacrificial parts of the bull, which were burned to symbolise the defeat of the deceased's enemies. He perceives the *Tekenu* as acting as a scapegoat whose function was to attract the evil powers that won control over a person in death so that the transfigured body of the deceased would remain free of them. Kees postulates that the role of the *Tekenu* was to bear the sufferings of the deceased in death and absorb *dwt nbt* (every evil thing) that was removed during the embalming process.<sup>50</sup> Assmann interprets Kees' view as being that of the *Tekenu* as a symbol of distancing by removing the deceased from the abhorrent aspects of death while simultaneously being associated with the concept of death as an enemy to be defeated.<sup>51</sup>

**Griffiths** (1958) proffers the suggestion that the *Tekenu* was 'probably a sacrificial symbol'.<sup>52</sup> However, he continues: 'whether there was previously a real or fictitious sacrifice of a human being is another matter' (p. 114). Griffiths' main point is the prominence of the association with Buto in the *Tekenu* ritual. He cites the reference to the *Tekenu* haulers, from Dep and Pe, cities of Buto, and a priest called 'the son of Selket' to support his argument. His conclusion is that 'the *Tekenu* ceremony belonged to the ancient Butic Burial and took place originally when the voyagers had returned to Buto' (p. 120).

**Taylor** (2000), in a similar approach to Kees, perceives the *Tekenu* as a 'scapegoat' who, as a ritual simulacrum for the deceased, absorbed all the deceased's evil deeds. Taylor perceived the *Tekenu* as being ritually 'killed'

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<sup>49</sup> Davies, No. de Garis, *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose* (London, 1941), 22.

<sup>50</sup> Kees, H. V., *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter: Grundlagen und Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches* (Berlin, 1956), 251.

<sup>51</sup> Assman, *Death and Salvation*, 464, n. 22.

<sup>52</sup> Griffiths, J. G., 'The Teknu, the Nubian and the Butic Burial', *Kush* VI (1958), 114.

along with the animals that dragged it.<sup>53</sup> However, it would appear that Taylor has added elements that are not anchored in ancient Egyptian iconographic evidence as the *Tekenu* is never dragged by animals, only by men.

In an Egyptology conference in Spain, **Martin** (2005) suggested that the *Tekenu* could represent the symbolic sacrifice in archaic times of a human victim to save the power of the sovereign.<sup>54</sup> This conjecture would seem to be attributing a random motif to the ritual of the *Tekenu* which has no basis in the iconographic evidence.

### 1.2.2 THE *TEKENU* AS AN ELEMENT OF A 'SKIN RITUAL'

**Lefébure** (1904) argues that the deceased must pass through the *mskꜣ* / *msꜣt* (skin) in order to enter the next life.<sup>55</sup> He differentiates between *mskꜣ* and *msꜣt*, arguing that *mskꜣ* originally meant a simple shroud or a canopy of hide and *msꜣt* was a word for the netherworld, 'the country of the skin of the typhonian bull, where Gods and spirits were engulfed' (p.17). He posits that the *Tekenu* might be linked with the skin of this bull (p. 17). Just as Anubis passed under the skin for Osiris and the son for his deceased father, so too, he argues, the *Tekenu* might pass under the skin for the deceased (p. 17). Lefébure cites Book of the Dead 17 to support this suggestion without further comment or clarification (p. 17 n. 10).

**Campbell** (1912) proposes that there is a representation of the *Tekenu* on the northern wall of the birth room of the Temple of Luxor where the story of the 'Miraculous Birth' was recorded.<sup>56</sup> He contends that, here, there is the depiction of a figure entirely swathed in the skin of a slaughtered bull. The figure is recumbent on a sledge that is dragged by three men. This, he suggests, is a depiction of the *Tekenu*. He argues that this being would 'pass through the place of the skin', as 'to pass through the animal's skin was the means of having the deceased's soul restored to him' (p. 74). Campbell

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, R. P., *Death and the Afterlife —A Cultural Dictionary* (Santa Barbara, 2000), 114.

<sup>54</sup> Martin, M. R. V., 'La víctima humana (tekenu) y el sacrificio de cabellos' in Autori, J. C., Juan, M. D. de C. and Ribo, D. R. (eds), *Actas del Segundo Congreso Ibérico de Egiptología* (Barcelona, 2005), 311.

<sup>55</sup> Lefébure, E., 'La Vertu du Sacrifice Funéraire', *Sphinx* 8 (1904), 8–9.

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, C., *The Miraculous Birth of King Amon-Hotep III and other Egyptian Studies* (Edinburgh, 1912), 73–74.

concedes that the inscription above this scene is totally destroyed and that 'the absence of clear outlines of part of the objects resting on the stands of the sledges' necessitates the use of conjecture' (p. 73). He refers to similar objects and sledges in the tombs of *Pzhrj* (EK 3), *Rnnj* (EK 7), *Rh-mj-R<sup>c</sup>* (TT 100), *Mnnz* (TT 69) and *Sn-nfr* (TT 96) to support his conjecture (p. 74). Unfortunately, due to severe damage and the height of the wall in the birth room, verification of this is impossible.

The idea of the magical properties of skin is continued by **Thomas** (1923). He extends the earlier ideas of Lefébure by suggesting that, by the mere contact with the hide of the bull, the *Tekenu* becomes the sacrificial bull.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Thomas argues, the *Tekenu* becomes the Bitau bull.<sup>58</sup> He believes that even when the bull is dead the potent *prana*, 'life essence', of its skin can materialise a spirit bull, which can be incarnated temporarily, or when required for the purpose of the drama, in the *Tekenu*, who lives and moves and acts (p. 53). The absorption of the *prana* of any being, man or beast, enabled a person, by magic, to become that being not merely an imitation of it (pp. 1–8). Thomas suggests the scenario that the role of the *Tekenu* was to emerge from the skin, shedding the blood of the bull, which in turn provided nourishment for the growth of the sacred persea tree.<sup>59</sup> That this ritual activity conceals an Osirian myth, Thomas contends, 'is undoubted' as 'the Bitau.(Bata).bull is a form of Osiris, 'the bull ever born afresh' (p. 49).

The idea that a bull's skin could be associated with the burial of the deceased is also found in **Moret** (1927). He suggests that burial in a sarcophagus in the skin (of a bull?), may be represented as early as the Fourth Dynasty in the tomb of Nebmahout at Gizeh (1.2.21).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas, E., 'The Magic Skin', *AE* 1.2 (1923), 53.

<sup>58</sup> In the Tale of Two Brothers Bata was changed into the Bitau bull. See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, 203–211.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas, *AE* 1/2.1923, 53. Often pharaohs were depicted protected by this tree's foliage or seen emerging from it. Specimens of the *Egyptian persea mimusops* have been found in tombs from the twelfth Dynasty at Illahun and in the wreaths around the mummy of Ramses II as well as in the tomb of Tutankhamun. See Schroeder, C. A., 'The Persea Tree of Egypt', *California Avocado Society Year Book* 61: (1977), 59 — 63.

<sup>60</sup> Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens*, 59.



Fig. 1.2.2.1. Possible burial in a sarcophagus covered by bull? head and skin. Tomb of Nebmahout at Gizeh. Source: Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens*, fig. 20.

For Moret, this image substantiates the idea that the ‘mystery of the skin’ and the ‘rebirth by the skin’ are an integral part of the early Egyptian religion (p. 64). He discusses at length the use of skin and the *Tekenu* (pp. 44–59). He examines the link between a sacrifice, either human, animal or simulacrum, and animal skin. He draws upon the image in TT 100 as an example where the *Tekenu* is covered by a skin (p. 50). He argues that under this skin, which he states is obviously reminiscent of a sacrificed animal, the *Tekenu* is in the ‘place of fate of the transformations of renewed life’ and that it will emerge from the skin in a fashion reminiscent of a child being born (pp. 50–51). Moret perceives a transformation in the rite of the *Tekenu* whereby it was no longer covered in a skin but rather in a long loin cloth, or shroud, which was sometimes mottled or spotted like a skin (p. 46).

Moret further argues that the *Tekenu* takes part in a journey, in a form of progressive funerary ritual (pp. 41–100). After death, the body of the deceased is transported, under a naos, in a small boat across the river. Moret suggests it may be assumed that the *Tekenu* is, at this stage, with the body (p. 46). Once ashore Isis drapes the *Tekenu* in a shroud (p. 47). At times, the face of the *Tekenu* is revealed so it may breathe. The *Tekenu* is then installed and dragged upon a sledge towards the tomb. On arrival at the tomb, the *Tekenu* lies on a low bed in a position reminiscent of a sacrificed animal. At this stage, Moret sees the *Tekenu* as being in the ‘place of becoming, of transformations, of the life renewed’ (p. 50). This state he equates to that where a man or a mannequin passed through the skin of a bull or a gazelle, ensuring the revivification of the deceased (p. 44). Moret perceives the *Tekenu*, here, as adopting the attitude of the human embryo which will come out of the skin like a child at birth (p. 51). He comments on the similarity of the shape of the *Tekenu* in some tombs and a foetus citing the depiction of the *Tekenu* in the tomb EK 3 as an example (pp. 81–84). In each episode of

the journey of the *Tekenu*, Moret contends that a skin is depicted as integral for its progression.

**Griffiths** (1958), while ultimately concluding that the *Tekenu* ceremony belonged to the ancient Butic Burial, concedes that 'probably in the first place it is the prehistoric burial in a skin which is the basis of the rite'.<sup>61</sup>

**Spieser** (2006) is unsure whether the skin that is associated with the *Tekenu* is that of '*boeuf*' (bull) or '*vache*' (cow).<sup>62</sup> She does not make the relevance of this distinction apparent, although it might allude to reproductive energy. However, she asserts that the *Tekenu* arrives at the '*ville de la peau*' (city of the skin) where it passes through a '*bassin de transformation*' (pool of transformation) (p. 232). This enables its passage from the world of the living to that of the '*Au-delà*' (the netherworld). Spieser postulates that where a ritual object is associated with an animal skin it has a link to embryonic life, a prelude to rebirth.<sup>63</sup>

### 1.2.3 ARCHAIC FUNERARY PRACTICES AND THE *TEKENU*

**Davies** (1913) posits the idea that, as some representations of the *Tekenu* appear in the absence of any concept of sacrifice, a 'mild' interpretation might be sought.<sup>64</sup> He suggests that the *Tekenu* ritual might be a 'ceremonial survival of the ancient practice of burial in a crouching position which only gradually gave place to the full length burial' (p. 10, n. 3). Further, Davies argues that the only way the Egyptian artist could represent a contracted burial in which the knees are drawn up to the elbows and the hands held before the face was by a way which to us suggests a crouching position (p. 10, n. 3). He continues: 'burial beneath a skin is thoroughly characteristic of the ancient period and so foreign to the later that it would naturally be emphasised in the rite' (p. 10, n. 3). He later (1923) suggests that this ancient form of burial without a coffin is 'honoured in some dumb show and secondary

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<sup>61</sup> Griffiths, *Kush VI* (1958), 120.

<sup>62</sup> Spieser, C., 'Vases et Peaux Animales Matriciels dans la Pensée Religieuse Égyptiennes', *BiOr* LXIII 3/4 (2006), 232.

<sup>63</sup> Spieser, *BiOr* LXIII 3/4, (2006), 234.

<sup>64</sup> Davies, No. de Garis, *Five Theban Tombs: being those of Mentuherkhepeshef, User, Daga, Nehemawāy and Tati* (London, 1913), 10.

place (by the inclusion in the scene of the *Tekenu*), lest its omission should be avenged by some unknown god'.<sup>65</sup>

The historian and philosopher of religion **Leeuw** (1938) discusses tribes, some ancient others not, in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia, who used 'stool graves' to bury their dead.<sup>66</sup> He argues this practice also occurred in ancient Egypt. He contends that the rite of rebirth, as an embryo, from the animal skin is attested throughout pharaonic Egyptian history and that this rite provided a remarkable confirmation of the significance of the embryo. He perceives the *Tekenu* ritual as being a commemoration of both these ancient customs (pp. 166–167).

**Griffiths** (1958) argues that the prominence of the Lower Egyptian area of Buto in the *Tekenu* ceremony indicates that this ceremony was a part of the Butic Burial which originally took place after the voyagers had returned to Buto for the final funerary ceremonies.<sup>67</sup> To support this contention, he cites the fact that the cities in Buto of *P* and *Dp* are mentioned as places from where the *Tekenu* haulers come. Also mentioned is the city *Ht-wrt-k3w*, which Griffiths cites as seemingly to be in the Western Delta (p. 119). Further, he argues, one of the priests associated with the goddess Serket is depicted pulling the *Tekenu*. Serket was a scorpion goddess associated with Lower Egypt and was paired with Neith of Sais as a protective goddess of the dead as a counterpart to Isis and Nephthys.<sup>68</sup> Griffith stresses that there are many instances where the *Tekenu* ceremony is illustrated near the dance of the *MWW*, who were an integral component of the Butic Burial (p. 119). Ultimately, Griffiths somewhat spuriously states 'the fact that the *Tekenu* occurs only in private tombs confirms its Butic origin' (p. 119, n.80).

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<sup>65</sup> Davies, No. de Garis, *The Tomb of Puyméré at Thebes* (New York, 1923), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Leeuw, G. van der, 'Das sog. hockerbergräbnis und der Ägyptische *Tjknw*', *Studie Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 14 (1938), 153–155.

<sup>67</sup> Griffiths, *Kush* VI (1958), 119.

<sup>68</sup> See Leitz, C., *Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* (Leuven, 2003), vol. VI, 437–440. See also the canopic shrine of Tutankhamun, fig. 5.2.2.1, 242.



**Ogdon** (1982) has as his 'working hypothesis' that the *Tekenu* ritual evolved from the predynastic practice of burial covered by a skin.<sup>69</sup> However, he argues that this ritual also had its origins in the 'royal' Butic house (p. 16). He sees the *Tekenu* as a symbol of democratisation when it appears in the late Fifth Dynasty in the tomb of the noble *Jh̥j* (p. 16). This perception is supported by his contention that the macehead of king Narmer contains the first depiction of a *Tekenu* and that the *Tekenu* continued to be represented with the king throughout the Old Kingdom. At the end of the Fifth Dynasty, no longer just associated with the king, the *Tekenu* became the mediator between the noble and the gods (p. 16). No iconographic evidence is provided to support this assertion.

**Tassie** (2000) observes that, in scenes featuring the *Tekenu*, cattle handling features very prominently.<sup>70</sup> He argues that Egypt has a long history of cattle management and that pastoralist beliefs and changing burial practices were intrinsically linked (p. 33–37). Tassie suggests that the wrapping of the deceased in ox hide may have been seen as using the protective force and strength of the black bull against evil as well as possibly evoking primordial pastoralist beliefs (p. 36). He concludes that pastoralist beliefs, and influence, lasted throughout the history of ancient Egypt and that the rites involving the *Tekenu* seem to have evolved through these beliefs and appear to have been assimilated into the funerary ceremonies (p. 36–37).

#### 1.2.4 THE *TEKENU* AND REMNANTS OF THE MUMMIFICATION PROCESS

The process of mummification required the use of many strips of linen. These were used in procedures of evisceration and cleansing such as the removal of organs and their internment in the canopic jars, the application of embalming oils and natron salts and the packing of the body. Inevitably, bodily parts and fluids would remain on the used material. To ensure the integrity of the burial, it was believed that these could not be discarded but rather had to be preserved and ultimately buried with, or near, the deceased. The ancient Egyptians deemed that any remnants of the body could be used to work

<sup>69</sup> Ogdon, J. G., 'Nuevas Observaciones sobre los entes Llamados Tekenu', *Aegyptus Antiquus* 3/2 (1982), 13.

<sup>70</sup> Tassie, *PIA* 11, (2000), 33.

magical spells to the detriment of the deceased. This perception led Hornung to propose the 'left overs' theory to explain the function of the *Tekenu*.<sup>71</sup>

**Hornung** (1992) describes the *Tekenu* as a 'formless entity', which he believes contained the remnants of all that came in contact with the deceased's body that could not be mummified or be placed in the canopic containers. He dismisses the concept that it was a figure of human sacrifice or a form in a contracted position. Rather, he interprets the *Tekenu* as being 'both an image of the deceased and an independent being' (p. 169). Hornung erroneously records the *Tekenu* as being pulled by cattle and does not refer to the *Tekenu* depicted on a table (p. 169).

**Ikram and Dodson** (1998) postulate that it was possible that after the brain was removed during the mummification process it was 'wrapped in a bundle called the 'Tekenu', together with other mummification detritus'.<sup>72</sup>

To an extent, **Assmann** (2005) concurs with the view of Hornung stating that the *Tekenu* 'probably contained remnants of the embalming process sewn into an animal skin'.<sup>73</sup>

**Teeter** (2011) suggests that, as the canopic jars were usually very small, they could only contain a 'symbolic sample' of the four vital organs. Thus the *Tekenu* was probably used to contain remnants from the mummification process that could not otherwise be preserved.<sup>74</sup> Teeter erroneously infers that the *Tekenu* was drawn by 'cattle or oxen in the funerary procession' (p. 138). She makes no mention of the *Tekenu* depicted on a table.

### 1.2.5 THE *TEKENU* AS AN OFFICIANT OR RITUALIST

**Campbell** (1912) suggests that the *Tekenu* is either the king or the sem priest impersonating him.<sup>75</sup> This figure, Campbell conjectures, is swathed in the

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<sup>71</sup> Hornung, *Idea into Image*, 169.

<sup>72</sup> Ikram and Dodson, *The Mummy*, 108–109.

<sup>73</sup> Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 301.

<sup>74</sup> Teeter, *Religion and Ritual*, 138.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell, *Miraculous Birth*, 74.

*mesekt* or *mesket* (skin) of a slaughtered bull. The ritual, he believes, symbolised the:

*way Osiris had passed by death from the mortal to the immortal life and the king, even in life, being made like unto Osiris, also passes through the skin* (p. 74).

**Moret** (1927) notes the similarity in appearance of the sem priest sleeping under a skin in TT 69 with the *Tekenu*.<sup>76</sup> He suggests that from the Nineteenth Dynasty, as there are no further attestations of the *Tekenu*, it disappears and its role is taken by the sem priest (p. 51). This proposition neglects the appearance of the *Tekenu* on the Twentieth Dynasty sarcophagus of Djedmout and in the Saite Period.

**Griffiths** (1958), like Moret, notes the similarities between the *Tekenu* and the sem priest and argues that it is unlikely that this is a coincidence.<sup>77</sup> He cites the similarities as being that they are both connected to the bull, both sleep under a skin, and both are associated with Horus (p. 116). He suggests that these are reasons for believing that, in 'some cases', the person under a hide on a sledge is the sem priest and that 'perhaps the *Tekenu* is the name given to him to define a special rôle which he assumes in the ceremonies' (p. 116).

**Settgast** (1963) also classifies the *Tekenu* as a 'ritual figure'.<sup>78</sup> His argument is that as the *Tekenu* can never be 'archaeologically comprehensible', its role is impossible to determine unequivocally (p. 45). Rather he examines, in detail, the position of the *Tekenu* on a sledge and on a table in relation to its context. He does this with reference, in particular to the *mww*-dancers and the canopic jars. (p.45-47) By his own inference, his work, in this area, tends to be descriptive more than analytical.

**Wildung** (1976) commenting on fragment ÄS 5365 from the tomb of *Mnt. w-m-hst* (TT 34) in the Munich Museum, which depicts a recumbent *Tekenu* with head, face and hand protruding from a shrouded body suggests that the

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<sup>76</sup> Moret, *Mystère Égyptiens*, 50.

<sup>77</sup> Griffiths, *Kush VI* (1958), 116.

<sup>78</sup> Settgast, *Untersuchungen*, 44.

*Tekenu* in this representation is a priest. He believes the priest is tied up in an animal skin and is trying to break away from his wrappings in order to enact the beginning of life of the deceased in the netherworld. This enactment Wildung perceives as taking place in front of the tomb.<sup>79</sup>

**Ogdon** (1982) has as a 'working hypothesis'<sup>80</sup> that the *sem priest*, in the form of the *Tekenu*, partakes in scenes IX–X of the Opening of the Mouth and Eyes Ceremonies. Here the *Tekenu*'s role, Ogdon believes, is to mediate between the dead father and his son to prevent the deceased's soul from fleeing before all the appropriate rituals have been performed to ensure the integrity of the burial (p.14–16).

**Reeder** (1994) also views the *Tekenu* as possibly a *sem priest* who might have been like a shamanistic magician appearing as the *Tekenu* in his initial manifestation.<sup>81</sup> He envisages a process of transformation. In a foetal position and in a state of trance, it is the work of the *Tekenu* (shamanistic magician) to locate the deceased in the 'spirit world'. Once the deceased is located, the *Tekenu* is awakened from his trance by the *imy-is* priest who was one of the 'dramatis personae' of the Opening of the Mouth and other funeral rituals.<sup>82</sup> From this moment the *Tekenu* appears only in the form of the *sem priest*. He then participates in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony (p. 59). In TT 20, in one of its appearances, the *Tekenu* is followed by a shrine containing ointment or oils. Reeder contends that these could be the seven holy oils used in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony.(p. 55) Subsequently, he concludes that 'it would appear that the key to the *Tekenu*'s identification lies with his relationship to the Opening of the Mouth rite' (p. 55). Ultimately, he speculates on the existence of the '*tekenu-sem*' and that the two beings coexisted until the *sem priest*, by visiting the 'spirit world', was enabled to perform the Opening of the Mouth rite. Then 'the *Tekenu* was no more because he had been transformed into the *sem*' (p. 59). The inference is that the *Tekenu* was originally an officiant other than the *sem priest*. This argument

<sup>79</sup> Wildung, D. (ed.), *Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst* (Munich, 1976), 94.

<sup>80</sup> Ogden, *Aegyptus Antiquus* 3/2 (1982), 17.

<sup>81</sup> Reeder, *KMT* 5/3 (1994), 59.

<sup>82</sup> See Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 302–303 for a discussion of the individuals involved in the rituals.

appears complicated and circular and Reeder concedes that it is only a possible explanation of the nature and role of the *Tekenu* (p. 59).

**Serrano Delgado** (2011) incorporates newly released material from *Dḥwtj-msj* (TT 295) and *Dḥwtj* (TT 11) that he asserts confirms the human nature of the *Tekenu* and its identity as an ‘officiant or ritualist’.<sup>83</sup> He observes that the *Tekenu* participates in several episodes of the funeral as a passive figure dragged on a sledge and then as an active ritualist adopting varied positions. He stresses that its fundamental actions revolved around an oneiric trance and dormation ritual and that it ‘must undergo a series of initial purifications that include the use of cosmetics and incense’ (p. 162). He discusses the iconographic similarities between the Opening of the Mouth ceremony and some representations of the *Tekenu* and of the roles of the *Tekenu* and the sem priest. He comes to the conclusion that the *Tekenu* and the sem priest have similarities but are not the same character in any part of the funerary ritual (p. 158).

#### 1.2.6 THE *TEKENU* AS A SPECIFIC DEITY

**Bárta** (1999) reflects on the possibility that the *Tekenu* might represent the priest of Heket.<sup>84</sup> His argument relies upon the defining nature of the goddess Heket who was worshipped in the form of a frog and was connected with the cycle of rebirth and regeneration (p. 111).<sup>85</sup> The goddess Heket is also closely associated with the lake, Heket, one of the three lakes (Khepri, Heket and Sokar) that appears in some scenes of funerary rituals and in the New Kingdom is depicted within the sacred compound (p. 112).<sup>86</sup> Bárta further argues that frogs were also known to increase in numbers before the rise of the Nile and were regarded as symbols of life, fertility and self-regeneration. Consequently he states:

*the link between the funeral procession crossing the lake on the way to the cemetery and the self-creating creatures living in the lake (frogs) is plausible* (p. 113).

<sup>83</sup> Serrano Delgado, J. M., ‘A Contribution to the study of the *tekenu* and its Role in Egyptian Funerary Ritual’, *ZÄS* 138 (2011), 162.

<sup>84</sup> Bárta, M., ‘The Title “Priest of Heket” in the Egyptian Old Kingdom’, *JNES* 58/2 (1999), 116.

<sup>85</sup> See Leitz, *Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, vol. V, 491–492.

<sup>86</sup> See Leitz, *Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, vol. VIII, 567–568.

Bárta also suggests that the *Tekenu* was similar in form to a frog and perhaps somewhat spuriously states:

*that the shape of the Teknu strongly resembles the contours of a frog. Furthermore the Teknu has always been described as covered by a brown-painted skin, a most appropriate representation of the skin of a frog* (p. 116).

**Berlant** (2005) postulates that many Egyptian symbols were originally designed to represent entheogenic mushrooms.<sup>87</sup> These mushrooms, he contends, were ingested to produce a non-ordinary state of consciousness for religious or spiritual purposes. He argues that this information has so far largely been ignored as:

*the theory that Egyptian religion and culture was built around the practice of ingesting entheogenic mushrooms, which we now condemn, can create a cognitive dissonance that some people may never be able to resolve* (p. 287).

Berlant believes that the red and white crowns of Egypt were determined by plants and he uses the enigmatic inscription in the tomb of Unas to support this statement (p. 276).

*he has eaten the Red Crown, he has swallowed the Green One [and] delights to have their magic in his belly'* (PT 410–411).

Berlant further argues that Osiris, whose original nature was mycological, that is fungal, was a personified psilocybe. This, he contends, is supported by the fact that Osiris was typically portrayed with a fused leg or legs not unlike the stem of the mushroom and that mummies were similarly fashioned with bound legs (pp. 283–284). That Berlant perceives Osiris as a psilocybe is pertinent as the psilocybe is a genus of small mushroom known for psychedelic or hallucinogenic properties (pp. 283–284).

Berlant observes that, as Osiris was a personified psilocybe, the Egyptians constructed beds of straw shaped like Osiris to plant psilocybes (p. 283). He cites Otto's recording of a coffin-like vessel of granite containing the image of

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<sup>87</sup> Berlant, S. R., 'The entheomycological origin of Egyptian crowns and the esoteric underpinnings of Egyptian religion', *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 102 (2005), 276.

Osiris that is filled with earth and intermixed with sacred material to support his theory (p. 283).<sup>88</sup> This vessel contained seeds which was generally thought to be barley seeds. However, Berlant argues that, if that were so, there would have been no reason to construct a bed of precious materials (p. 284). He suggests that the *Tekenu* ceremony recapitulates the birth of Osiris and directly associates the *Tekenu* with an ancient hallucinogenic mushroom. (pp. 283–284).

Berlant believes the *Tekenu* to be a shamanic priest, possibly the sem priest. His argument is that, in the ritual of the *Tekenu*, the shamanic priest wrapped in a bull's hide assumes a foetal position and is then pulled on a sledge. The priest emerges later 'in the same distinctly mushroom-like form that Osiris typically manifests' (p. 285). The priest is reborn as the mushroom deity with the *amanita muscaria*'s mottled red and white cap.<sup>89</sup> To Berlant, the cap was significant as it symbolised strength and as such was associated with the bull. In this empowered state, the priest was able to participate in the Opening of the Mouth ritual. Berlant refers to the figure of the sem priest in TT 100 to support this theory.<sup>90</sup>

### 1.2.7 THE CORN MUMMY AND THE *TEKENU*

**Bunson** (1991) states that the *Tekenu* was an effigy made of reeds and other vegetation which absorbed the guilt of the deceased. On being ceremoniously burnt, the *Tekenu*, ensured the purification of the tomb owner<sup>91</sup>

**Beinlich** (2006) endeavours to examine the objects found in Tutankhamun's tomb to recreate the ritual of the royal burial.<sup>92</sup> As there is no preserved record of a royal burial ritual, he uses evidence from the private tombs, predominantly that of TT 100, to aid in his recreation. He justifies this method

<sup>88</sup> Otto, E., *Egyptian Art and the Cults of Osiris and Amon* (London, 1968), 58.

<sup>89</sup> Berlant at this point follows the suggestion of Mabry that Osiris personified the *amanita muscaria*. See Mabry, M., 'Osiris: Eine Reidentifikation' in Bauer, W., Klapp, E., Rosenbohm, A., (eds), *Der Fliegenpilz: Ein Kulturhistorisches Museum* (Wienand, 2000).

<sup>90</sup> Berlant, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 102, (2005), 285. Berlant does not, however, equate the *Tekenu* and the sem priest.

<sup>91</sup> Bunson, M., *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1991), 258.

<sup>92</sup> Beinlich, H., 'Zwischen Tod und Grab: Tutanchamun und das Begräbnisritual', *SAK* 34 (2006), 17–31.

by explaining that representations of the funerary procession in private tombs imitated royal burial customs (p. 17). He reasons that important objects used in this ritual would be included in the inventory of Tutankhamun's tomb. He identifies three essential elements in the funeral procession: coffin transportation, transportation for the canopic jars and the *Tekenu* (p. 26). The *Tekenu* he determines is an 'amorphe Gestalt' (amorphous shape) which 'etwas mit der Wiederbelebung zu tun hat (it has something to do with revival) und daß sie eine verhüllte Menschengestalt' (and it is meant to represent a veiled human form) (p. 26). He concludes it would be about the size of the mummy.

Beinlich identifies the grain Osiris in Tutankhamun's tomb as being 1.90m in length, about the size of the king's coffin (p. 28). A Grain Osiris was perceived to function as an icon of revival in the royal tomb and it was, like the mummy itself, covered with mummy bandages. From this revelation he concludes of the *Tekenu*: 'M.E. kann es sich dabei nur um den sogenannten Kornosiris handeln '(in my opinion, this can only be the so called corn Osiris) (p. 27).<sup>93</sup>

It is difficult to accept Beinlich's conclusion when one considers the description by Carter of the germinated figure of Osiris in Tutankhamun's tomb:

*a wooden frame moulded in the form of that god, hollowed out, lined with linen, filled with silt from the Nile bed, and planted with corn. (fig. 1.2.7.1) <sup>94</sup>*

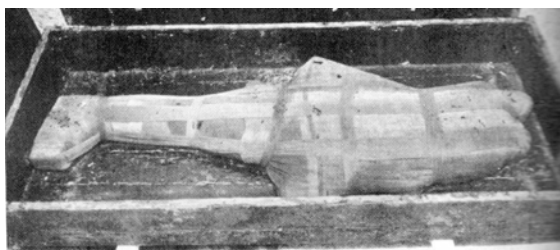


Fig. 1.2.7.1. Germinated effigy of Osiris. Source: Carter, *Tut.ankh.Amen: Annexe and Treasury*, pl. LXIV B.

<sup>93</sup> See Ikram and Dodson, *The Mummy*, 120 for a concise explanation of corn mummies and Osiris beds including photos.

<sup>94</sup> Carter, H., *The Tomb of Tut.ankh.Amen: The Annexe and Treasury* (reprint, Bath, 2000), 61.



### 1.2.8 THE *TEKENU* AND ITS LINK WITH HAIR.

**Tassie** (2000) stresses that the Egyptians created images with 'many layers of meaning'.<sup>95</sup> Thus, he believes that it is inevitable that the *Tekenu* cannot be explained in simple terms. He perceives the *Tekenu* as a 'human totem' which was associated with the change in the form of burial (p. 27). This change, from the burial of the deceased in the foetal burial position to burial in the extended supine position, meant that the body might have been perceived to be in the incorrect position to guarantee the deceased revivification in the afterlife. Thus, Tassie suggests, the ancient burial practice was included in the form of spells and utterances in the Pyramid Texts and later mirrored in the nobles' tombs by the inclusion of the *Tekenu* in the iconography of the tomb decoration (p. 39).<sup>96</sup>

Tassie contends that the 'full' ritual concerning the *Tekenu* is shown only in the tomb of TT 20, where it appears in three different scenes one of which shows the burial of black hairs with the *Tekenu* (p. 28). He suggests that this scene might be symbolic of the archaic custom of burying people in a tightly flexed position bound in an ox hide and interred with parts of a bull (p. 37). The inclusion of black hair in the inhumation, he contends, was crucial as it was symbolic of youth, strength and virility and hence important in magical religious rituals (p. 27). Alternatively, Tassie suggests, the inclusion of black hair is used to 'personalise the *Tekenu*, making it a more potent effigy of the deceased' (p. 39).

Tassie further suggests that the incorporation of black hair acts to reinforce the *Tekenu*'s 'free will' in the ritual and the deceased's desire to a successful afterlife (p. 39). He does, however, concede that the burial of black hairs and pieces of an ox could be a representation of a territorial rite 'as bulls were often sacrificed when entering new or marginal zones' (p. 33).

Despite there being different depictions of the *Tekenu*, Tassie feels that there is the unifying concept of emergence from a shroud (p. 38). This ox hide

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<sup>95</sup> Tassie, *PIA* 11 (2000), 33.

<sup>96</sup> See Kanawati, N., *The Tomb and its Significance in Ancient Egypt* (Cairo, 1987), 44.

shroud he sees as probably symbolic of the placenta. Following this concept, the tomb is perceived as the womb whereby rebirth is possible (p. 40).

Tassie also argues that the *Tekenu* was part of the funerary rites whereby the deceased travelled from the 'World of the Living' (Kemet) to the 'Tomb' (Duat) and then to the 'World of the Dead' (Fields of Iaru) (pp. 40–41). This is evidenced by the fact that the scenes he discusses containing the *Tekenu* have a journey preceding them. From this Tassie reasons that 'this whole genre of iconography concerning the *Tekenu* seems to be one of safe passage and rebirth into the afterlife and symbolises the rebirth of the deceased as Osiris' (p. 39).

Ultimately, Tassie concludes that the *Tekenu* is part of a 'a very personal sympathetic magic' whereby the burial of black hairs is seemingly linked to the ancient Egyptians' pastoral ancestry, to Osiris, and to the belief of 'resurrection into the afterlife' (p. 41).

**Martin** (2005) considers that the *Tekenu* might initially have been the symbol of the human victim sacrificed in archaic times to ensure the power of the pharaoh. She feels that the *Tekenu*'s function changes in later times to being an aid in the regeneration of the deceased.<sup>97</sup> Her focus is upon the role played by the representations of hair in this ritual.

Martin discusses scenes where the pharaoh is depicted smiting the enemy while pulling a tuft of the enemy's hair in a display of this power. She contends that from the symbolic perspective the hair is a manifestation of life and a very personal element that identifies its owner. She further proposes that the pulling of tufts of hair by mourners, which is evidenced in the Egyptian funerary procession, is directly tied to the resurrection of the deceased.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Martin argues, the ritual of the *Tekenu* centres around the necessity of the deceased to be revivified. She cites the scene in TT 20 where the word *tknw* occurs in a pit next to a heart, bull's leg and hair, and suggests that

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<sup>97</sup> Martin, 'victima humana', 311.

<sup>98</sup> Martin also examines the symbol of the frontal tuft of hair in the sed festival and the revival of the pharaoh, 314.

the hair might belong to the *Tekenu* (p. 314). This suggestion is supported by the argument that hair was used to revitalise the deceased and also to eliminate evil, and that both of these elements were crucial to assure the afterlife of the deceased (p. 314).

Martin also stresses the integral relationship between the *Tekenu* and the bull. Seen as an embodiment of evil, the bull was slaughtered and its leg and heart were offered to the deceased (p. 314). Martin contends that the archaic human victim, the *Tekenu*, could have been a substitute for the animal victim in the form of the bull (p. 314).

Ultimately Martin concludes that a human victim, the *Tekenu*, real or symbolic and the incarnation of evil, must be sacrificed. As a sign of its elimination and victory over it, the *Tekenu* suffers the removal of a frontal tuft of hair (p. 315).

Martin's interpretation is narrow and arbitrary. It is essential to note that the bull has very positive connotations for kingship. There is another possible positive interpretation of the presentation of parts of the bull to the deceased. They could be seen as symbols of strength and as an empowerment for revivification.

### 1.2.9 THE *TEKENU* AND THE *HNS* OBJECT

**Moret** (1927) suggests that the origin of the *Tekenu* might be found in the depictions of the *shedshed* in the early dynastic period.<sup>99</sup> He comments on the similarity of the *Tekenu* 'under the skin' and the shape on one of the standards found on early dynastic mace heads and palettes, such as those of Narmer. He does not however, suggest this is the only, or complete, explanation of the derivation of the *Tekenu* (pp. 81–84).

**Martin** (2005), while not agreeing with Moret's identification of the role and nature of the *Tekenu*, concurs with his assessment of its origin.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Moret, *Mystères Égyptiens* 78–82. Leeuw, *Studie Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 14 (1938), 165 agrees with Moret's assessment of origin.

<sup>100</sup> Martin, 'victima humana', 311.

**Metawi** (2008) also focusses on the origin of the *Tekenu*, believing it 'developed from, or was at least related to, the so called *hns* object'.<sup>101</sup> This object she describes as being held on a standard and attested on both palette and mace-head of Narmer, and the relief panels under Djoser's step pyramid in the early dynastic period. The *hns* object continued to feature in temple reliefs, royal ceremonies and processions throughout the pharaonic period (p. 192). Metawi believes that this object represented the royal placenta which was, in fact, the stillborn twin of the pharaoh (p. 196). She reasons that the *Tekenu* was a container for the placenta, or stillborn twin, of the deceased. This identification, she suggests, would explain the association of the *Tekenu* with Horus. Horus fought Seth to recover Osiris's umbilical cord, which was thought to be a substitute for the placenta.<sup>102</sup>

Metawi believes that the identification of the *Tekenu* as a receptacle for the placenta would also explain the 'variant iconography' of the *Tekenu*. She postulates that the so-called 'pear-shaped' sack was similar to the object on the standard, the round spotted sack was similar to the placenta with its outer surface showing 'cotyledons', and the shrouded man represented the stillborn twin (p. 197). The container had to be buried with the deceased to ensure the integrity of the burial and 'facilitate his resurrection' (p. 196).

#### 1.2.10 THE WORD *TEKENU*, A PHILOLOGICAL APPROACH

A number of scholars have addressed the question of whether the meaning of the word '*Tekenu*' itself provides a clue to the relevance of the enigmatic figure. However, even this endeavour's findings provide little consensus.

The *Altägyptisches Wörterbuch* is built upon the *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* which was begun in 1897. These volumes were not completed until circa 1940 and not fully published until 1961. It is not evident whether scholars commenting on the meaning of the word *tknw* before this time, or even after, consulted these works.

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<sup>101</sup> Metawi, R., 'The *Tknw* and the *Hns*-Emblem: Are they Related Objects?', *Memmonia* XIX (2008), 196.

<sup>102</sup> See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume II*, 214–233.

**Lefébure** (1900) suggests a non-Egyptian origin for the word *Tekenu*. He believes it is significant that no determinative is used in the hieroglyphs for the word *Tekenu* (*tknw*), unlike the word for 'approach' (*tkn*) which has the determinative  $\Delta$  D 54. Thus, he argues that it is as if the Egyptians wanted to hide the meaning of the word. He states that if a banal idea, such as 'approach', was intended then such a precaution would not be taken.<sup>103</sup> He suggests it is necessary to look at other possible sources. He cites the names 'Tekennu' and 'Tektana' of an oasis tribe recorded in the texts of the Israel stela and the duplicate text at Karnak as a probable source. His supposition is that, as the *Tekenu* involved some form of sacrifice, it was associated with foreigners and not part of the Egyptian language (p. 151–155). In his later work, Lefébure (1908) cites Petrie's description of a stela belonging to the pharaoh Antef to reinforce his argument. The major content of this stela depicts the pharaoh standing with four hounds that bear Libyan names. A servant who stands behind the pharaoh is accorded the Berber name 'Tekenru'.<sup>104</sup>

**Davies** (1913) concurs with the view of Lefébure that the meaning of the word *tknw* might have to be sought outside the Egyptian language.<sup>105</sup> He does not, however, proffer any possible sources.

**Thomas** (1923) concedes that the word *Tekenu* yields no 'radical illuminating meaning'.<sup>106</sup>

**Leeuw** (1938) feels that the word '*Tekenu*' might have been derived from *tkn*, meaning 'close, come near'. He extends this meaning to 'perhaps near, familiar'.<sup>107</sup>

**Bonnet** (1952) suggests that, while the meaning of the word *Tekenu* is uncertain, it could possibly signify 'oncoming'.<sup>108</sup> Other scholars, who are not

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<sup>103</sup> Lefébure, *Sphinx* 3 (1900), 151.

<sup>104</sup> Lefébure, *Sphinx* 8, (1904), 18. Petrie, W. M. F., *A History of Egypt from the 1st to the XVIth Dynasty* (eighth edition, London, 1916), 134.

<sup>105</sup> Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, 10.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas, *AE* 1/2 (1923), 48.

<sup>107</sup> Leeuw, *Studie Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 14 (1938), 164.

<sup>108</sup> Bonnet, H., *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1952), 776.

philologists, express similar opinions. **Griffiths** (1958) concedes that the name *Tekenu* perhaps means ‘he who approaches’.<sup>109</sup> **Hodel-Hoenes** (1991) agrees that ‘*Tekenu* may be derived from *tkn*, “to be near”’.<sup>110</sup> **El-Shahawy** (2005) concurs with the view of Hodel-Hoenes.<sup>111</sup>

The *Altägyptisches Wörterbuch* was published in the period from 1926 to 1961. **Erman and Grapow** in a reprint of the *Wörterbuch* (1971) record *tknw* as ‘the (symbolic) human offering/sacrifice in the funerary cult. Particularly in the context: pulling the sacrifice/object on the sled.’<sup>112</sup> This is not a translation of the word *tknw* but rather a description of its perceived function.

**Grimal** (1994), in contrast, states that the word *Tekenu* is usually given the name ‘neighbour’, which he perceives indicates that it was possibly a ‘protective force in the necropolis, helping the dead man to triumph over his enemies’.<sup>113</sup> He gives no attestations to support this statement. It is possible that Grimal adopted the translation of Faulkner which does not refer to the funerary object *tknw* as indicated by the inclusion of determinatives (fig. 1.2.10.1.)

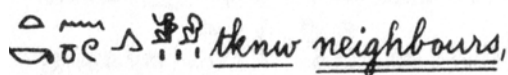


Fig. 1.2.10.1. Dictionary entry for the word *tknw*. Source: Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 302.

**Tassie** (2000) proposes yet another interpretation:

*The ancient Egyptian word for an obelisk or pillar was tikhenou, and although it is written differently, it may have sounded very similar to teknu, and therefore there may have also been a play on words in this case as well. If this was the case, the teknu may also have been*

<sup>109</sup> Griffiths, *Kush VI* (1958), 120.

<sup>110</sup> Hodel-Hoenes, S., *Life and Death in Ancient Egypt* (translator Warburton D., London, 1991), 53.

<sup>111</sup> El-Shahawy, A., *The Funerary Art of Ancient Egypt: A Bridge to the Realm of the Hereafter* (Cairo, 2005), 54.

<sup>112</sup> Erman, A. and Grapow, H. (eds), *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* (reprint: Berlin, 1971), V, 335, 14–15.

<sup>113</sup> Grimal, N., *A History of Ancient Egypt* (translator Shaw I., Oxford, 1994), 136.

*symbolic of the Djed pillar of Osiris, a powerful symbol of stability and rebirth.*<sup>114</sup>

This suggestion relies on equating the ‘modern ear’ with that of the ancient Egyptian, which is an unfounded assumption.

### 1.2.11 THE DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE *TEKENU*

**Thomas** (1923) suggests that Egyptian religious practices over time possibly lost the ‘glow of life’, becoming purely ‘sacerdotal ceremonies’. They were ‘dramatic representations...the performances being regarded only as mysteries’.<sup>115</sup> Thus the original meaning and relevance of the *Tekenu* could be forever lost.

**Reeder** (1994), likewise, in his concluding remarks about the *Tekenu*, hypothesises that the Egyptians may, themselves, have had no idea what the object was.<sup>116</sup> This point concurs with the view of other scholars.<sup>117</sup> In fact, some scholars concede that it was possible that the portrayal was more important than the meaning.<sup>118</sup> A ceremony that originated in the late Fifth Dynasty (or earlier) might over time attract differing ideological accretions.<sup>119</sup> Reeder concedes that it might not be possible to reach beyond speculating about the nature and function of the *Tekenu*.<sup>120</sup>

These approaches suggest that, because the modern scholar has difficulty in interpreting the nature and function of the *Tekenu*, it is possible that the ancient Egyptians did not know either. This conclusion would seem highly presumptuous and impugns the religious integrity of the ancient Egyptians.

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<sup>114</sup> Tassie, *PIA* 11 (2000), 33.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas, *A.E.* 1/2 (1923), 4.

<sup>116</sup> Reeder, *KMT* 5/3 (1994), 59.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas, *AE*, 1/2 (1923), 3 agrees suggesting that the meaning of religious practices was often completely lost long before the performance of the practice ceased. Serrano Delgado, *ZÄS* 138, (2011), 162 suggests that the image might have been merely retained in the iconographic repertoire of tomb decorations in deference to religious traditions.

<sup>118</sup> Reeder, *KMT* 5/3 (1994), 59; Thomas, *AE* 1/2 (1923), 3; Serrano Delgado, *ZÄS* 138, (2011), 162.

<sup>119</sup> Griffith, *Kush* VI (1958), 120.

<sup>120</sup> Reeder, *KMT* 5/3 (1994), 59.

### 1.2.12 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- The *Tekenu* has never been discussed in more than a journal article or a chapter in a book. Rarely have scholars considered the entire corpus of attestations of the *Tekenu* but have more commonly focussed on specific aspects and from this formed a generalised conclusion. Particularly the *Tekenu* when depicted on a table is frequently neglected.
- The argument that the *Tekenu* is involved in a form of sacrifice relies heavily on the vignettes of TT 20: the torture and perhaps slaying of the Nubians; the word *tknw* in a pit plus other possible parts such as its sledge, and its association with the slaughter of a bull. Representations in other tombs provide little iconic or textual evidence supporting the theory of sacrifice.
- There is some merit in the argument that the *Tekenu* is in some way involved in a skin rite. In all cases, except for two occurrences in TT 20, the *Tekenu* is concealed totally or partially in a wrapping. When depicted in human form standing upright, in TT 11 and TT 20, the *Tekenu* is seen carrying a skin. However, the nature of the covering is often indeterminable. The text refers to the covering by the generic term *msk3*.
- It is the nature of Egyptian funerary practice and ritual that it evolved. Sanctified by tradition, ancient cult drama was incorporated into 'new scenes' whereby some of its original significance disappeared.<sup>121</sup> Hence, it is plausible to assume that the *Tekenu* ritual derived from archaic funerary traditions and that there is perhaps a diachronic aspect. Griffiths' suggestion that the ritual of the *Tekenu* is part of the ancient Butic Burial is substantiated by the texts in TT 17, 20, 24, 55, 82, 112 and 224. These texts identify the people who drag the *Tekenu* as coming from, or associated with, cities of Buto.<sup>122</sup> Further, where the *Tekenu* is positioned upon a table, it is invariably surrounded by vignettes of the Holy District, a mystical area associated with Buto.

<sup>121</sup> Assmann, 'Death and Initiation', 299–230.

<sup>122</sup> The cities of Pe, Dep, Ked, Hutihut and the generic 'city of divinity'. The Serket ritualist is associated with Buto.



- It is unlikely that the role of the *Tekenu* is purely to contain mummification remnants. The canopic jars that contain internal organs are archaeologically attested, the *Tekenu* is not. One would expect some physical evidence of the *Tekenu* if it contained 'left overs' from the mummification process.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, this approach neglects the nuances contained in the textual references which suggest that the *Tekenu* is involved in some mysterious, magical aspect of transcendence.<sup>124</sup>
- It is difficult to deny the possibility that the *Tekenu* could be a 'ritual figure', as this is such a generic term. Such a label however, provides little to one's understanding of the *Tekenu*. If the *Tekenu* is in fact the sem priest, why give the sem priest another name? There are similarities in appearance of the *Tekenu* and sem priest in some representations but no evidence that they are one and the same. In many attestations the *Tekenu* bears no physical resemblance to the representation of the sem priest.
- The *Tekenu* is associated with the pool of Heket in TT 82 and 112 and the pool of becoming in TT 100 and 125. However, in the typology presented in chapters 3 and 4 below, its form could only be classified as vaguely indicative of a frog in Types 1A and 1B. The other identified types bear no such resemblance. Hence the *Tekenu* is unlikely to be solely a representation of the priest of Heket.
- To adopt Berlant's theory that the *Tekenu* is affiliated with an ancient hallucinogenic mushroom, one must accept the premise that many Egyptian symbols were originally designed to represent entheogenic mushrooms.<sup>125</sup> There is a paucity of evidence to support this proposition.
- There is no epistemological foundation to suggest that the *Tekenu* is made of vegetation. Moreover, it is difficult to see how this would explain its

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<sup>123</sup> Tassie, *PIA* 11 (2000), 39.

<sup>124</sup> See TT 82, TT 100, TT 112, TT 125.

<sup>125</sup> Berlant, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 102 (2005), 276.

apparent human form in TT 11 and 20 where independent movement may be attributed to the *Tekenu*.

- For the ancient Egyptians corn, embodied the concept of renewal and resurrection and corn-mummies embodied a range of symbolic meanings that centred on Osiris.<sup>126</sup> However, the range of corn-mummies catalogued by Centrone (2005) indicates they were usually ornate and highly coloured, with falcon heads, wax masks and other adornments.<sup>127</sup> These representations bear no resemblance to the depictions of the *Tekenu*. More importantly, the photograph taken by Carter of the effigy of the germinating Osiris in the tomb of Tutankhamun, upon which Beinlich bases his argument, shows an image unlike that of any *Tekenu*.
- There is a possible association of the *Tekenu* with hair but this only occurs in TT 20. The association of hair and sacrifice linked to the *Tekenu* is tentative at best.
- It could also be conceivable, to the 'modern' scholar, that the *Tekenu*, because of its shape on occasions, is associated with a foetus. However, it is likely that the Egyptians did not know the shape of a foetus as evidenced by the depiction of a child of Nut sitting up in her mother's womb (fig. 1.2.12.1).<sup>128</sup>



Fig. 1.2.12.1. Nut with child sitting up in her womb. Source: Haas, D. H., *Bilderatlas zur Religionsgeschichte*, (Leipzig, 1924), fig VII.

- The *Tekenu*'s being related to the *hns* object provides a possible explanation for its origin and also its variant iconography. Adopting this

<sup>126</sup> Centrone, M. C., 'Behind the Corn-mummies' in Piquette K. and Love S., (eds), *Proceedings of the 4th Annual Symposium of the University College London 2003* (Oxford, 2005), 27.

<sup>127</sup> Centrone,, 'Corn-mummies', 12–21.

<sup>128</sup> Griffiths, *Kush* VI (1958), 115.

theory, the *Tekenu* becomes a container for the placenta, or stillborn twin, of the deceased. However, the theory, if solely adopted, neglects many nuances contained in the iconography of the *Tekenu*. For example, the variant covering, or lack of covering, of the *Tekenu*; the accompanying text; the context and the Butic references are unaccounted for if this conjecture is solely adopted.

- The quest for the meaning of the word '*Tekenu*' is an ongoing task. What scholars have suggested to this point is of little aid to identifying the nature or function of the *Tekenu*.
  - No one tomb contains a depiction of the funerary procession and ritual in its entirety. Hence, inexorably one is forced to speculate on the variant role of the *Tekenu*. Given that the *Tekenu* is depicted on a sledge, on a table and as a standing, moving human being, one might suggest that it is a dynamic character changing action and form in different ritual sequences.
- 129
- The contribution by scholars has produced a range of hypotheses on which the present study builds. The synergy resulting from examining both the hermeneutic and iconic elements associated with the *Tekenu* and its layers of symbolism is frequently neglected. Consequently, it is the aim of this present work to attempt to discover the multifaceted underlying meanings of the ritual of the *Tekenu* in an endeavour to more fully understand its role within the Egyptian funerary liturgy.

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<sup>129</sup> Serrano Delgado ZÄS 138 (2011), 152. Serrano Delgado especially refers to TT 295 and TT 11 to support this view.