

*Original article***SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE NATURE OF THE KA IN ANCIENT EGYPT**

Faraman, A.

Egyptology dept., Faculty of Archaeology, Aswan Univ., Aswan, Egypt

E-mail address: [ahfaraman@yahoo.com](mailto:ahfaraman@yahoo.com)**Article info.****Article history:**

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**Abstract:**

*In ancient Egypt, the relatives of the individual buried in the tomb were typically directed to a specific building known as the cult chapel. They would bring offerings to this superstructure in order to perform certain religious and mythological rituals, all with the aim of interacting with a significant and mysterious aspect of human existence, known as the individual's KA. This category was often represented in one of two ways: A pair of raised human arms or an identical image of the deceased individual himself. This element was referred to by modern scholars by various terms, including "the double," "the spirit," "the self," "the shadow", as well as "the vital human power". However, fully understanding the nature of the KA requires further analysis and investigations. The paper explores some relevant considerations about this human entity, drawing from available iconographies and documents depicted on the walls of the temples and private tomb scenes. It examines topics such as the role of the creator god Khnum in the creation of the Ka, as well as the concepts of human birth, death, and the afterlife in connection with the Ka in ancient Egypt. Finally, the study concludes a logical result of the proper identification of this important human category based on the results of new scientific examinations of both the living and the deceased, which have confirmed the existence of important human processes within the body, such as electric waves and mysterious luminosity. Accordingly, this significant and enigmatic human entity could be highlighted.*

**1. Introduction**

Ancient Egyptians devoted significant effort to uncovering the source of their existence, aiming to establish guidelines and engage in specific rituals to conquer death. Ultimately, they concluded that every individual, whether human or deity, underwent certain procedures. This journey encompassed transitioning from coming to life to the afterlife. Remarkably, the key element ensuring the success of these crucial processes was believed to be the female figure in both human and divine worlds [1-3]. Priests formed the religious community responsible for shaping this ideological framework for mythological practices [3]. These topics were of great concern and interest to the public, who constantly sought answers about the origins of humanity, the nature of life and death, and the little that could be said about what would occur in life beyond death. In addition to the mysterious power that sustains human life, the elements that continue to function after death fascinated them deeply [4,5]. Archaeological remains provide textual and iconographic sources that describe the human life cycle. These pieces of evidence concern the pregnancy and giving birth, along with death and the afterlife. Since the survival and continuity of humans were crucial to the ancient Egyptians, it was assumed that these processes were closely tied to the creation of the universe. Mythologically, gods provided early examples of this idea. For instance, to

give birth to the falcon god Horus, his mother, the goddess Isis, received the sperm of her husband, Osiris, and protected and nurtured it within her womb. This process was seen as the only way to ensure the creation of every human being [6]. Ancient Egyptians believed that each person consisted of several distinct elements: The name, the body, the Ba, and the Ka. These elements were thought to unite a person's lifetime, providing them with vitality and purpose [7-9]. It was widely acknowledged that every living being, whether human or deity had their own KA, which required sustenance from food and drink. This belief is supported by numerous spells in the pyramid texts that refer to the KA of both deities and the dead [10-13]. Furthermore, the tomb's design was based on a strong connection to the KA, as evident in its two distinct yet often linked areas: The underground section for the corpse and the superstructure for funeral and memorial ceremonies, complete with sacrifice offerings. The architecture was designed to endure [7,14]. Understanding of the concept of the KA remained ambiguous until approximately one hundred years ago when significant studies were conducted by Gaston Maspero, who highlighted its meaning; he offered a concise explanation of its characteristic and how it related to other human categories [15]. I strongly resonate with a significant part of his theory, particularly

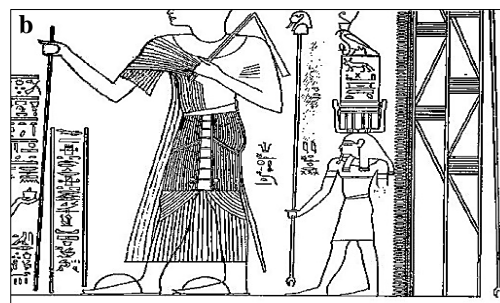
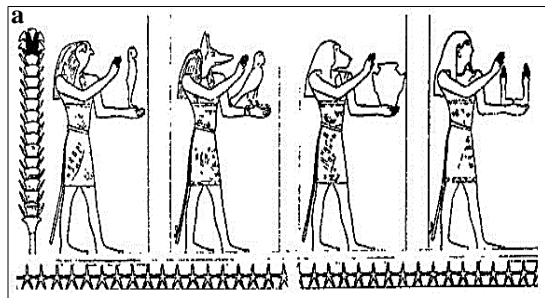
regarding the nature of the KA as a tangible category. Subsequently, the theory of Maspero sparked numerous discussions among scholars with different viewpoints, attempting to elucidate its true significance, as no definitive terms have been proposed to offer a fully satisfactory explanation. This category has been interpreted using various modern terms, such as "the double," "the image," "the shadow" and "the genius" [7, 16-18]. However, none of these terms accurately define the concept of this human category. Further analysis and investigation are still needed.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Iconography

#### 2.1.1. Raised human arms

Funeral depictions show the KA as the most crucial aspect of human existence and holding greater importance and worth than both the Ba and the heart, fig. (1-a) [10]. The symbol of this term is commonly represented in textual and pictorial sources as two raised human arms. Additionally, the phonetic value of the word KA is shared with the term used to denote the concept of bull. As a result, it could be assumed that they are somewhat correlated [19-22]. Moreover, the frequent use of royal titles and personal names incorporated the syllable "KA", potentially suggesting the importance of this human category [22-24]. The correlation between the ideogram representing the KA and the gesture of two raised human arms was connected to an important moment involving the sky goddess Nut. Specifically, it references how the arms of the air god Shu were raised in order to support the sky goddess after she had separated from her consort, the earth god Geb; as a result of these actions involving the deities, other gods were then said to have been brought into existence. Moreover, when the sun god Atum expelled the deities from his mouth. Then, Atum enveloped them with his KA by extending his two arms, imparting life to them. Subsequently, the concept of raising human arms was thought to convey life and energy from the living to the non-living in the daily cycle of creation. The sun was often depicted in both the Book of the Dead and the Book of the Earth as being lifted up by two human arms associated with deities, symbolizing the start of a new day [3,25-28]. Furthermore, the raised human arms symbolizing the KA were intricately linked to the daily rebirth of the sun; the legs of the sun god who was waiting to be born were shown in the form of the KA. This representation highlighted the significant link between the KA and the human life cycle, encompassing both birth and rebirth [3]. Furthermore, the KA was depicted as a perfect replica of the deceased individual. The royal concept of the KA was surmounted by his Horus name, fig. (1-b) [10].



**Figure (1)** **a.** the KA as one of the four main human categories (After: Lefebvre, 1923), **b.** the royal KA (After: De Morgan et al., 1895)

#### 2.1.2. Human figure

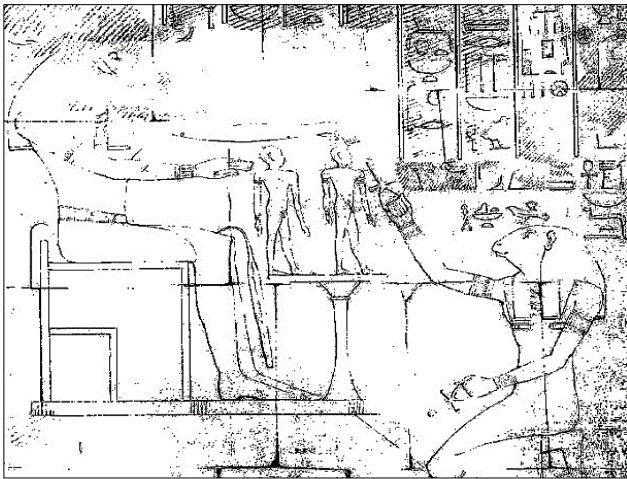
False doors and funerary stelae and statues depicted the KA as an exact representation of the deceased person, capturing their sex and physical appearance accurately. The offerings formula referred to the image of the individual who received the boons as his KA "n.k3.n followed by the individual's name" [29-31]. The Pyramid Texts described the KA as a component that is on par with the person, having both arms and legs [32]. The depicted scenes showcased the deceased in good health and symbolized their KA. These portrayals often depicted the deceased sitting in front of an offering table abundantly filled with food and beverages. A designated priest was responsible for the upkeep of the tomb, which included taking care of specific architectural features, such as the false door. Additionally, it was their duty to ensure the successful completion of these rituals by ensuring an adequate supply of important items [33].

## 3. Mythologies

### 3.1. Origination

#### 3.1.1. Procreation

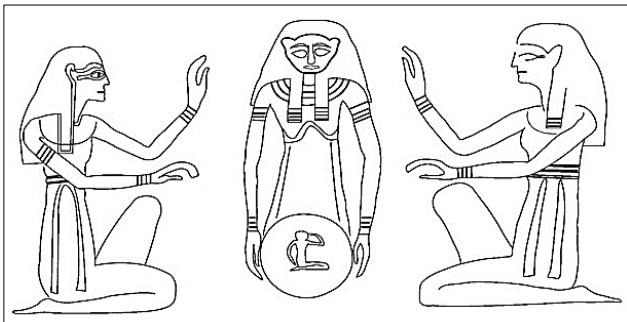
The origin of the KA could be revealed through pictorial and textual records, which were prominently displayed on the walls of the temples of Luxor and Deir El-Bahari and so-called divine birth. These sources provided valuable insights into the history and significance of the KA, which helped understand its significance. The availability of these sources highlighted the importance of this human category. The scene and the accompanying texts depicted a symbolic union between the god Amun and the queen, resulting in her conception. The encounter contained sexual symbolism, representing the creation of a new child [10,34-36]. Then, the role of the god Khnum took center stage as the one responsible for shaping the newborn child on a potter's wheel. This imagery highlighted the divine intervention in the creation and modeling of life, showing him modeling two identical children, explaining that one was representing the body, and the other was the KA. The children were typical in terms of their physique and sex. The life-giving power was bestowed upon them by the goddess Heqat, facilitated through the use of the *ḥ* sign. This symbolism held great significance, as it represented the transfer of vital energy and the transformation of the individual. Such practices played an important role in shaping the beliefs in ancient Egypt, fig. (2) [37-39].



**Figure (2)** Khnum modeling the KA and the body on the potter's wheel  
(After: Naville, 1897)

### 3.1.2. Creation

The merging of the two previously shaped categories within the mother's body marked a highly significant stage. This process was thought to involve the culmination of both the KA and the body, resulting in the formation of a unique individual. As a result, the mother's womb was perceived as the foundation where essential processes took place to facilitate the growth of the child; it was sometimes defined with the term “*sšt*”, which described something secret or hidden, alluding to its undisclosed significance in the human experience. This foundational element, thought of as a matrix, served as a transitional stage before coming to life and was symbolically represented as the sky, a mountain, a crocodile, a serpent, a vessel, and a woman's uterus [3,40]. The “Book of the Day” contained depictions of the symbolic process behind the daily birth of the sun. The illustrations depicted the sun god in prenatal form, housed within the womb of his mother, manifested in the sky goddess Nut. The imagery captured the sun god as a unified entity, showing him as one whole child, fig. (3). This confirms that the process of merging happened inside the womb of the mother. This procession described in the pyramid texts is referred to as a ritual to infuse the body with the KA [32].

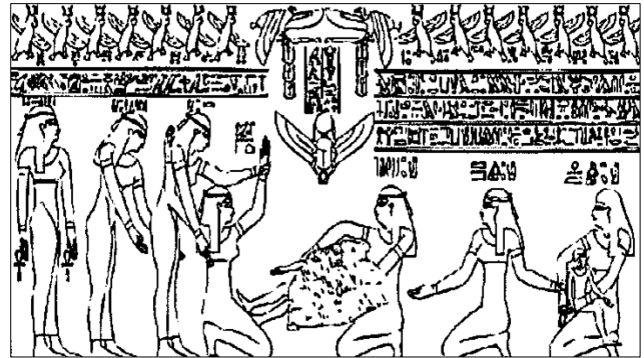


**Figure (3)** consolidation of the two categories within the mother's womb

### 3.1.3. Delivery

Although there were limited numbers of birthing scenes in ancient Egypt, the available depictions provided a detailed understanding of the final stages of human reproduction.

They illustrated the moment of birth of the child, to be delivered from the womb of the mother, showing the kneeling mother in an ideal position in order to make it easy to get the newborn out of her body, fig. (4) [41]. The devices displayed the combination of the two specific categories, the KA and the body, merged into a complete and unified form. Following birth, these two categories continued to be consistently replicated as a single individual. In the realm of divinity, the birth of a god was aligned with human birth. This signifies that the KA, which was shaped from the mother's body, was joined with the body through the intervention of the god Khnum, resulting in the creation of a singular and unified individual who would be brought to existence [10,35,42,43].



**Figure (4)** Moment of birth as an integral element; the Temple of Armant  
(After: Lepsius, 1849)

### 3.1.4. Afterlife

The ancient Egyptians placed great importance on the meticulous preparation of the tomb for kings, high officials, and commoners alike. They were deeply concerned with the concept of death; it was symbolically depicted through the renowned myth of Osiris. It represented the division and disconnection of human beings and was regarded as a universal occurrence in Egyptian society, encompassing similar rituals and procedures for all individuals [43]. Furthermore, death has long been a perplexing topic when it comes to the fate of humanity. Its mysterious nature captured the interest of the Egyptians, who considered it to be an event that coincided with the creation of the sky, heart, and human beings. The processes surrounding death were always observable, and various written records indicated a certain level of fear associated with this phenomenon. Consequently, individuals were encouraged to equip their tombs with provisions and amenities to help them adapt to these unfamiliar circumstances [44,45]. Following the passing of an individual, no available means could demonstrate any form of disconnection or separation between the KA and the physical body. The KA was consistently linked to the structure of the tomb, particularly the area where the deceased's remains were placed. Additionally, it was associated with the specific location where offerings given by the living were deposited and illustrated. In contrast, the BA was portrayed as separate from the body, suspended above the lifeless body [42]. Another factor that contributes to the ongoing debate regarding the persistence of the KA within the body, even after death, shall be considered. A rigorous scientific examination, i.e., an electrogr-



aphic test (EnG), conducted on both deceased and living individuals, revealed the presence of certain living elements within the body post-mortem. This particular form of energy, which manifests as electronic waves and luminous phenomena, continues to function even after the vital processes have ceased. It is plausible to establish a connection between this energy and the concept of the KA [46].

#### 4. Results

The KA was a fundamental aspect of human being in Ancient Egypt. Texts and images referred to it as the entity that ensured a successful journey of the deceased to the afterlife. Both the KA and the physical body were demonstrated to be made of the same substance and formed simultaneously. The KA possessed the same physical characteristics as the body, including sex, appearance, and size. The two elements were united within the mother's womb, and at birth, they appeared as a single integrated individual, indicating the disengagement of the body and the KA. There is no mention or depiction of a separation between the KA and the body at the time of death, suggesting that the KA remained closely connected to the body even after death within the tomb. According to modern scientific examinations conducted on the body of the deceased demonstrated the existence of human processes, such as electric waves and mysterious luminosity. This phenomenon was present in and around every individual who continued to function fully and caused a mysterious impression on the deceased and those who visited their tombs.

#### 5. Discussion

Throughout history, the concept of the KA has been associated with human desires, such as the need for food and sexual attraction. Certain actions could potentially affect and harm the KA of others, as it aligned with the desires of the heart. Additionally, the KA was believed to be responsible for producing future generations with similar qualities [46]. It also symbolized the ability to defend against enemies and represented the overall essence of being human. It also represented the individual's embodiment of their social standing [44]. In funeral iconographies of private tombs, it was common to depict the deceased sitting before an offering table. These depictions were accompanied by a formula directed towards one's KA, serving as a substitute for the deceased. The KA acted as a representative and counterpart of the individual in the afterlife, receiving nourishment, drinks, and other supplies from the living relatives for his benefit in the afterlife [47-49]. According to ancient Egyptians, death was seen as a separation of the different components of a person. The body, for instance, became motionless within the burial chamber, losing all its power and will. On the other hand, the KA continued to exist but required specific funeral services and offerings within the tomb chapel to replenish its energy and ensure its survival. Many of these offerings held symbolic importance and were depicted through images and texts. By providing perpetual energy to the KA of the deceased, these offerings played a crucial role. The KA held such significance that it was often considered the focus of each tomb [50,51].

Some funeral inscriptions even mentioned a designated area within the tomb specifically for the Ka, referred to as the "house of the Ka" or *hwt-K*. In comparison, no specific place was assigned to the BA, emphasizing the importance of the KA as an essential aspect of being human [52,53]. The KA required constant care and attention, which was provided by a professional servant priest known as the *hm-K*. This individual was responsible for performing vital rituals dedicated to the deceased in order to ensure the well-being of their KA [4,19,20,22].

#### 6. Conclusion

*The modern scientific examinations conducted on both the living and the deceased demonstrated the existence of human processes within the body, such as electric waves and mysterious luminosity. This phenomenon was present in and around every individual, which motivated ancient Egyptians to treat their deceased as if they were still alive. It could be understood as the "KA" of the dead, which continued to function and evoke the same experiences as the person had during their lifetime. It could be concluded that the KA was the only human element capable of interacting with the living for the benefit of the deceased. It maintained the same personal experiences in the tomb to sustain the vital processes that occurred during the person's lifetime, ensuring their continuation after death. The KA might be the source of human instincts. Additionally, it retained the unique physical characteristics of everyone. The KA, along with other human components, possessed this exceptional quality. This entity represented the enduring image of every individual, surviving as long as the physical body did. Furthermore, the KA could virtually represent and act on behalf of the person existing in its own virtual world as an integral part of everyone's being. With a foundation rooted in the notion of describing the mother's uterus in various aspects, it could be inferred that the tomb served a similar function to that of a mother's womb, ensuring that both the KA and the body, remained fused together within it.*

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