Chapter 5: Conclusions

At New Kingdom Saqqara religious and social practices were closely intertwined as one would expect in a society legitimated by the divine order of Maat.¹ The highest elite fossilised their knowledge and status in large monumental and rock-cut tombs, accompanied by their peers. Since the practicalities of slot distribution for tomb building is far from clear, we should perhaps not say that they chose their slots carefully, but when we know the identity of the tomb owners, the social ties based on family or profession between neighbours is often obvious. This “sepulchral self-representation” has long been viewed from the perspective of the tomb owners only, i.e. as the deceased seeking to maintain status and eventually entering the community of worshippers surrounding the gods in the afterlife,² being supported in this endeavour by the funerary practices and the post-funerary mortuary cult. The current study has added an important nuance to this idea and demonstrated that while certain details in the decoration may have been the artist’s choice, the distribution of representations of individuals in tombs was by no means coincidental, and indeed not motivated by fashions in certain time periods. Against ideas of an increasing emphasis on the nuclear family in the 18th dynasty³ vs. the extended family in the later New Kingdom,⁴ it appeared that relationships were represented according to clear commemorative strategies, which functioned both retrospectively, but also prospective in the sense of creating realities for the future.⁵ Egyptian commemorative strategies in practice were highly flexible as to the tomb owners’ choices of which socio-religious relationships were selected to be emphasised, again in both directions, past and future: In the 18th as well as the 19th dynasties, blood relations were omitted (e.g. Maïa, Horemheb), emphasised (e.g. Amenemone (ii), Iyni, Nebnefer, and Mahu), or even created (e.g. Pabes) irrespective of chronological matters, and so were professional affiliations and dependencies of offering bearers (e.g. Maya, Tia) and generic ‘mass’ representation (e.g. Horemheb, Meryneith) vs. incidental individual representations (e.g. Ptahemwia (i)) of various other groups of people. So instead of ego-centred representations we saw the fos-

² Assmann, *Hymnen und Gebete*, 165 and see Assmann, *Totenliturgien II*, 263.
³ E.g. Whale, *Family*, 272.
⁵ Compare Belting and Jephcott, *Presence*, 10, concerning Medieval art and what also applies to the sources from New Kingdom Saqqara: “Memory had a retrospective and (…) a prospective character. Its object was not only what had happened but what was promised”.

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silisation of the respective desired reminiscence clusters, i.e. the groups of people with whom the tomb owners sought to be remembered. The respective non-generic individuals benefitted from their representation by gaining social and religious capital, but others could also actively interfere in this process through practices such as graffiti-writing and gift-giving that were alternative practices to participate in the reminiscence cluster of a tomb owner. The highest elite could do that by donations to the king (e.g. shabti of Maya in the tomb of Tutankhamun), or by placing statues in the Memphite and other temples. Some directly shared that privilege with their peers by means of representation, and others could attach themselves by means of offerings. The physical presentation of inscribed goods to the tomb owners by means of offering sometimes enabled us to identify the respective donor, and sometimes his or her ties to the tomb owner, although we have only begun to understand the prosopography of Memphis, and many potential reminiscence clusters remain yet unclear. The same applies to the temple cults in which actors can only be grasped with difficulties. On top of that, indeed many practices were of a perishable nature, such as libations and/or speech acts, and have left no traces in the archaeological record. So while it seems as if the temples and tombs were perhaps not visited very frequently, we must also consider that the number of visits we can see may only be the tip of the iceberg. What is important is that temple and tomb must not be conceptualised as separate entities. In his work on hymns and prayers, for example, Jan Assmann distinguished between temples and tombs as follows:

A fundamental difference between a tomb and a temple is that in a temple a priest does not perform the cult in his own interest, but that he acts on behalf of the community, whereas in the tomb an individual communicates with the gods, which although it is admittedly engaged in a time-delayed, permanent form, owes its individuality to its historical existence in this world and does not want to abandon it in the tomb, but on the contrary it wants to perpetuate its status with all its titles and dignities. The hymns recorded in the tomb perpetuate eternalise the tomb owner in his dealings with the gods.

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6 See Olabarria, Kinship, 106.
7 But see now Herzberg, Prosopographia.
While tombs may have become increasingly important places for people to also interact with gods,⁹ their role seems to be mostly confined to supporting the transfiguration of the deceased who sought to join the gods in the afterlife, and indeed to provide a platform for the creation of reminiscence clusters, just like the temples. Statues of deities started to appear in the Ramesside period (e.g. Tatia, Tia, Nemtymes).¹⁰ I would rather see them mainly as yet another way for the tomb owner to demonstrate his status, access to the gods, and knowledgeability than trying to construct a divine cult separate from the cult for the tomb owner and his or her reminiscence cluster rather, than as evidence for a tendency of a “sacralization of the tomb”.¹¹ Elsewhere Assmann must admit that “the transition is fluid, and the wishes of the litanies for the deceased (‘may you’) draw on the same motifs as the requests of the offering formulae (ḥtp-dj-nsw.t-prayers”).¹² So why separate them in the first place? On the contrary, we saw that tombs and temples both served for commemoration of individuals and their reminiscence clusters (the latter who could continue to ‘subscribe’ by means of ongoing offering practices). Therefore, Assmann’s vision of a “man in the collective” developing into “man in front of god”¹³ is highly questionable. The contrary is true: where domestic religious evidence at Deir el-Medina had reflected strong family traditions and emphasis on family continuity,¹⁴ on the local level of the cultural geography of Saqqara we see once again the reproduction of the extended family and indeed wider network of social ties. Conceptualising these ties as flexible reminiscence clusters also solves the problem of any decision of whether the desire was to be embedded more into “professional social groups” or into “local-family groups”.¹⁵ The answer is both, emphasising whatever the tomb owner deemed strategically beneficial, irrespective of chronological matters. The mortuary culture did not “operate [...] independently

⁹ See also Assmann, Totenliturgien II, 36.
ⁱ⁰ The famous Hathor-cow in the tomb of Nemtymes is not addressed here because the tomb is unfortunately still unpublished.
ⁱ¹ Like assumed for Thebes e.g. recently Rummel, ‘Sacred space’.
ⁱ² “Der Übergang ist fließend, und die Wünsche der Totensprüche (‘mögest du’) schöpfen ebenso wie die Bitten der Opferformeln (ḥtp-dj-nswt-Gebete) und Götterhymnen aus dem gleichen Motivvorrat”, see Assmann, Totenliturgien II, 516.
ⁱ⁵ Compare for Thebes e.g. Fitzenreiter, ‘Totenverehrung’, 116 with reference to Polz, ‘Grabbenutzung’.
of theological discourse”,¹⁶ but parallel to it by following the divine order of Maat. In this, hierarchies and other selected social and religious ties were reproduced for eternity in both directions, sharing into and constantly re-enacting the “cult of the patron”¹⁷ and his or her chosen reminiscence cluster – a practice starting during the patron’s lifetime¹⁸ and ideally continuing forever and ever. There are some still questions regarding a cult without a corpse (i.e. prior to the funeral and the use of the tomb as tomb);¹⁹ however, statues, tomb representations, and gifts (incl. perishable ones) in fact provided that ‘corpse’ in both directions: as body of the donor and of the patron, i.e. as beneficiary as well as focal point for religious activity that could be performed to create reminiscence clusters even prior to the burial. I have previously called this procedure “immortality as the response of others”²⁰ in order to emphasise the mutual interaction of social and religious practices beyond simply transferring the social order of this life to the next. This idea still holds, and we may follow Franzmeier’s idea to conceptualise the result of these practices in terms of creation of “permanence”.²¹ What is important to acknowledge, however, is that creating this permanence meant choosing from a range of different strategies accumulating in a kaleidoscope of options, each of which form (sometimes overlapping) reminiscence clusters.

¹⁶ Willems, Démocratie, 224.
¹⁷ Willems, Démocratie, 224.
²¹ Franzmeier, ‘Unsterblichkeit’, 36.