

The ancient Egyptian Ka

A hypothesis about the meaning of this enigmatic figure

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1 Concepts of Ka – state of research

The term "Ka" can be traced from the early Egyptian period to the Ptolemaic period. It appears in texts and images of all kinds, whether in a funerary context (tomb and stela inscriptions, pyramid and coffin texts, verses from the Book of the Dead), in inscriptions on buildings and statues, or in literary papyri.² Ka seems to have played an important role in Egyptian life. However, the meaning of this term has not yet been finally clarified. Since the end of the 19th century, many authors have given their personal interpretations (see Table 1).

1.1 The Ka hieroglyph

The Ka hieroglyph D28³  shows the two arms in a right-angle position with the shoulders butting. Since the discovery of the only known sculpture of Ka, the wooden Ka statue of King Hor I (JE 30948/CG 259), there is no longer any ambiguity regarding the position of the arms – the forearms point vertically upwards with the palms facing the viewer. In a variant of this hieroglyph (D29), the pair of arms is shown on a standard.⁴

Helck (1954) interpreted this arm position as a defensive magical gesture,⁵ while Kusber (2005) associated the Ka hieroglyph with hieroglyphs A28  and C11  and considered it an abbreviated spelling of a word meaning "extraordinary, beyond measure".⁶ Other attempts to interpret the raised hands range from a protective gesture,⁷ symbol for a

² Literature overview e.g. in Kusber 2006, 80-89, 139-185, 197-198.

³ Hieroglyphs are numbered according to Gardiner's list.







⁴ D29 was mostly used for a king's Ka.


⁵ Cf. Helck 1954, 28.

⁶ Cf. Kusber 2005, 58. Although in A28 and C11 the upper arms are raised to the horizontal, there is an obtuse angle between the upper and lower arms. Only in the case of the hieroglyph A32A, a variant of the dancer (according to the list of hieroglyphs in Grimal/Hallof/van der Plas 2000, I A-1), does the arm position correspond to D28.

⁷ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 157; Kusber 2005, 150–151, quoted from Altenmüller-Kesting 1968, 28; Schweitzer 1956, 49; Spiegelberg 1911, 126–127.

double,⁸ symbol of hands stretched out for food (related to the word *k3.w* for “food”),⁹ a symbol of muscular strength and ability to work,¹⁰ to lifting force¹¹ (derived from the verb *k3j* for “to lift, to carry, to bring forth”).

The basic meaning of the hieroglyph D28 coupled or not with an ideogram stroke is “Ka”. However, D28 was also used as a phonogram, e.g. in  (*k3.w*, “food, sustenance”¹²),  (*k3*, “bull”),  (*k3.t*, “work, duty”),  (*hk3*, “spell, magical power”),  (*k3mw*, “garden, vineyard”),  (*sk3*, “to plow, to cultivate the field”) and many other words.¹³

The hieroglyph D32  served as a classifier for words of spreading, enfolding and embracing¹⁴ and had nothing to do with Ka.¹⁵

1.2 Meaning of the word “Ka”

Table 1 summarizes the various views on the meaning of the ancient Egyptian term “Ka”. One can roughly divide the assumptions about Ka into four categories:

- a) intellectual, mental or social construct;
- b) a physical component or life force;
- c) a being;
- d) a term associated with a cult statue.


⁸ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 158.

⁹ Cf. Von Bissing 1911, 4–5. Von Bissing interpreted hieroglyph D28 as a nisba *k3j* (“belonging to food”).

¹⁰ Cf. Griffith 1898, 15.

¹¹ Cf. Westendorf 1966, 65, 80; Westendorf 1980, 102 (about cosmological representations). See also the excursus in Kusber 2005, 96–98 and fig. 19.

¹² The word primarily means ritual food and often occurs with an ideogram stroke after D28. It is therefore sometimes translated as “Ka food”. Cf. Kusber 2005, 125–127; Schweitzer 1956, 69–70. There is an old dispute as to whether Ka and the foods denoted by *k3(.w)* are two distinct or related terms. Cf. Kusber 2005, 125–127; Von Bissing 1911, 4–5.

¹³ Sometimes D28 has an ideogram stroke in these words (especially in ). Cf. Hannig 2006, 608, 839, 941–948; Kusber 2005, 69.

¹⁴ Cf. Hannig 2006, 1333.

¹⁵ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 158.

Tab. 1: Interpretations of the word “Ka” since the end of the 19th century (in chronological order, without claim to completeness).

Author	Year	Interpretation
<i>Intellectual, mental or social construct</i>		
Maspero ¹⁶	1893	Second body made of matter less dense than physical matter; animals, plants and inanimate objects also had this second body
Wiedemann ¹⁷	1897	Man's divine counterpart (similar to a living person's relationship to his or her statue)
Birch ¹⁸	1899	Individuality, personality
Maspero ¹⁹	1913	A very old idea of the soul
Sayce ²⁰	1913	Double which, like a shadow, is inseparable from man; product of consciousness, but real ("spiritual reflection of an object [...] which had a concrete form")
Van de Leeuw ²¹	1918	" <i>Außenseele</i> " (outer soul)
Peet ²²	1923	Character of a person
Kees ²³	1926	All the essential qualities that give strength and power to the king or god
Gardiner ²⁴	1927	Personality, soul, individuality, temperament, success, position
Spiegel ²⁵	1935	Content and essence of personality
Junker ²⁶	1938	Entity that is separate from man in this world, but unites with him to attain perfection in the hereafter
Kees ²⁷	1941	Range of characteristics of a person
Mercer ²⁸	1952	Spiritual body
Rundle Clark ²⁹	1959	Royal power, the source of which was the predecessor in the tomb

¹⁶ Cf. Maspero 1893, 389. Strictly speaking, the explorer Nestor L'Hote was the originator of this interpretation. Cf. Maspero 1893, 47, note 3.

¹⁷ Cf. Wiedemann 1897, 240.

¹⁸ Cf. Birch 1899, 263-270.

¹⁹ Cf. Maspero 1913, 125.

²⁰ Cf. Sayce 1913, 48-49.

²¹ Cf. Van de Leeuw 1918, 56-60.

²² Cf. Peet 1923, 334.

²³ Cf. Kees 1926, 48.

²⁴ Cf. Gardiner 1927, 172.

²⁵ Cf. Spiegel 1935, 9.

²⁶ Cf. Junker 1938, 115.

²⁷ Cf. Kees 1941, 85.

²⁸ Cf. Mercer 1952, 194-196.

²⁹ Cf. Rundle Clark 1959, 107.

Author	Year	Interpretation
Jaynes ³⁰	1976	Inner voice (hallucination) that dictates actions
Wilson ³¹	1981	Independent part of the personality that makes decisions
David ³²	1982	Guiding and protective spiritual entity; self, personality
Bell ³³	1985	Royal Ka: divine aspect of the king that connects him to the gods and to his predecessors in kingship
Kákosy ³⁴	1989	Spiritual double
Koch ³⁵	1993	„Erhalt- und Gestaltseele“ (soul of preservation and form)
Bolshakov ³⁶	1997	Image evoked by human memory when looking at statues or reliefs; the Egyptians believed it to be real
Junge ³⁷	2003	Social standard, inner protector of correct behavior
Assmann ³⁸	2003	Social link between the deceased person and the living
Borioni ³⁹	2004	One of the three basic components of immaterial being (<i>kʿ</i> , <i>bʿ</i> , <i>ʒh</i>); immaterial double of man; conscious personality, vitality
Kusber ⁴⁰	2005	Ability to put one's plans into action (<i>potentia productiva</i>)
Lekov ⁴¹	2015	Creative power of an elusive nature bestowed by the forefathers
Nyord ⁴²	2016	Potential of all behavioral possibilities from which a person's individual personality is actualized; "meta-person"
Trautmüller	this work	High reputation (usually allegorical)
<i>Physical component, life force</i>		
Kristensen ⁴³	1896	Personified life force
Erman ⁴⁴	1909	Living power that is breathed into a person at birth and released at death

³⁰ Cf. Jaynes 1976, 190–191.

³¹ Cf. Wilson 1981, 97.

³² Cf. David 1982, 78.

³³ Cf. Bell 1985, 256.

³⁴ Cf. Kákosy 1989, 17.

³⁵ Cf. Koch 1993, 42, 81–82.

³⁶ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 143–147, 151.

³⁷ Cf. Junge 2003, 122, 125.

³⁸ Cf. Assmann 2003, 295.

³⁹ Cf. Borioni 2004, 22, 69.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kusber 2005, 198.

⁴¹ Cf. Lekov 2015, 46.

⁴² Cf. Nyord 2016, 163–165, 169, 184.

⁴³ Cf. Kristensen 1896, 14.

⁴⁴ Cf. Erman 1909, 102. Probably a confusion of Ka with Ba.

Author	Year	Interpretation
Von Bissing ⁴⁵	1911	The (life) force that enables humans to eat and metabolize food
Preisigke ⁴⁶	1920	Life-sustaining force
Bonnet ⁴⁷	1939	Hidden force that animates dead matter and provides both protection and destiny
Jacobsohn ⁴⁸	1939	Divine procreative power
Frankfort ⁴⁹	1948	Life force that works in this world and the hereafter
Bonnet ⁵⁰	1952	Higher power from which conscious active living flows
Spiegel ⁵¹	1953	Divine procreative power that originated in a Lower Egyptian fertility cult
Schweitzer ⁵²	1956	Life principle in gods and humans; invigorating forces that originated from a primordial deity
Sauneron ⁵³	1960	Expression of the generating and sustaining life forces
Morenz ⁵⁴	1973	“Hyperphysical vital force”
Altenmüller ⁵⁵	1976	Vitality, action-driving force
Hornung ⁵⁶	1979	Procreative, life-giving principle, giver of nourishment and vitality
Assmann ⁵⁷	1990	Life substance
Roth ⁵⁸	1992	Personalized placenta
Gordon ⁵⁹	1996	Invigorating force, physical vitality, life energy for rebirth in the hereafter
Bolshakov ⁶⁰	1997	Vitality and procreative force

⁴⁵ Cf. Von Bissing 1911, 4.

⁴⁶ Cf. Preisigke 1920, 52–53.

⁴⁷ Cf. Bonnet 1939, 41.

⁴⁸ Cf. Jacobsohn 1939, 55–58.

⁴⁹ Cf. Frankfort 1948, 61–65.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bonnet 1952, 358.

⁵¹ Cf. Spiegel 1953, 110–113.

⁵² Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 90.

⁵³ Cf. Sauneron 1960, 118.

⁵⁴ Cf. Morenz 1973, 170, 183–185.

⁵⁵ Cf. Altenmüller 1976, 30–32.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hornung 1979, 533.

⁵⁷ Cf. Assmann 1990, 189.

⁵⁸ Cf. Roth 1992, 126–128.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gordon 1996, 33, 35.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 160, 164–165.

Author	Year	Interpretation
Zelenkova ⁶¹	2008	Vitality, vital force; one of the elements (<i>hpr.w</i>) of man, along with heart (<i>jb</i>), Ba (<i>bꜣ</i>), name (<i>rn</i>), and shadow (<i>šw.t</i>)
Abdel Hamden ⁶²	2015	Vital energy
<i>Being, manifestation of a god</i>		
Le Page Renouf ⁶³	1878	Living image of man in an invisible world, comparable to a Roman genius
Steindorff ⁶⁴	1910	Guardian spirit, comparable to a Roman genius
Spiegelberg ⁶⁵	1911	Guardian spirit
Moret ⁶⁶	1913	Totem (ancestor and guardian spirit)
Preisigke ⁶⁷	1920	Divine " <i>fluidum</i> "
Hornblower ⁶⁸	1923	Ancestor and guardian spirit
Erman/Ranke ⁶⁹	1923	Independent spiritual being that dwells in man and gives him protection, life, permanence, happiness, health and joy through its presence
Kees ⁷⁰	1926	Personified association of deities of fate and protection
Jacobsohn ⁷¹	1939	Ancestral mediator, divine heir of the dynasty
Mercer ⁷²	1949	A god whose powers are manifested in man
Stock ⁷³	1950	Originally a being embodied in the Horus falcon and the king; later, in northern Egypt, a creative force of Re-Atum
Mercer ⁷⁴	1952	Benevolent and protective being
Greven ⁷⁵	1952	Manifestation in the king of a god, maintaining his eternal afterlife

⁶¹ Cf. Zelenkova 2008, 4.

⁶² Cf. Abdel Hamden 2015, 4.

⁶³ Cf. Le Page Renouf 1878, 494–508.

⁶⁴ Cf. Steindorff 1910, 152–153.

⁶⁵ Cf. Spiegelberg 1911, 126–127.

⁶⁶ Cf. Moret 1913, 181–184.

⁶⁷ Cf. Preisigke 1920, 52–53.

⁶⁸ Cf. Hornblower 1923, 67–70.

⁶⁹ Cf. Erman/Ranke 1923, 345.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kees 1926, 49, 76.

⁷¹ Cf. Jacobsohn 1939, 51, 57.

⁷² Cf. Mercer 1949, 41–44.

⁷³ Cf. Stock 1950, 624–628.

⁷⁴ Cf. Mercer 1952b, 19.

⁷⁵ Cf. Greven 1952, 15–28.

Author	Year	Interpretation
Spencer ⁷⁶	1982	Something that remains in the mummified corpse
David ⁷⁷	1982	Guide and protector
<i>Cult statue</i>		
Le Page Renouf ⁷⁸	1878	In the funerary context, cult statue and Ka were used synonymously
Bolshakov ⁷⁹	1997	Double; entity that acted independently but was dependent on statues or murals
Zelenkova ⁸⁰	2008	Ka lived on in the Serdab statue
Demidchik ⁸¹	2015	The cult statue (<i>twi</i>) was the recipient of offerings to the Ka of the deceased, so the two terms are almost interchangeable

A lowly Egyptian would probably have shaken his head at the idea of a Ka giving protection, life, longevity, happiness, health and joy, a kind of physical talisman, so to speak.⁸² In their lives, these people were mostly confronted with hard work, exploitative demands for tribute, and health hazards. In this context, the question arises as to whether Ka was reserved for the royal family and elite officials. One must not forget that in the first ~200 years of scientific Egyptology, excavations focused on royal and elite tombs with "valuable" artifacts. In addition, these tombs also had a greater chance of surviving over millennia due to their higher quality of construction. In any case, in reliefs and wall paintings, only kings are accompanied by a Ka figure.⁸³ In elite tombs of officials, however, Ka was often depicted in the form of the Ka hieroglyph integrated into the pictorial composition (usually in connection with the offering table scene).⁸⁴ Sometimes there is a fusion of the Ka hieroglyph D28 with the hieroglyph R4 (sacrificial mat with upright bread; phonetic value *htp*). This fusion also occurs on stelae with prayers of supplication

⁷⁶ Cf. Spencer 1982, 59.

⁷⁷ Cf. David 1982, 78.

⁷⁸ Cf. Le Page Renouf 1878, 494–508.

⁷⁹ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 158.

⁸⁰ Cf. Zelenkova 2008, 9.

⁸¹ Cf. Demidchik 2015, 1.

⁸² Cf. Erman/Ranke 1923, 345. Erman and Ranke argued that the king's Horus name was the "*weihevoll* *Benennung*" (solemn designation) of his Ka (ibid.).

⁸³ Cf. Kusber 2005, 44; Frankfort 1948, 63.

⁸⁴ E.g. tomb of Ahmose, son of Ibana, EK 5, in El-Kab (18th dynasty). Cf. Weigall 1911, 173–174 (fig. 8a, 8b). Tomb of Nakhtamun, TT341, West Thebes (19th dyn.). Cf. Schweitzer 1956, plate V (a). General information about the offering table scene can be found in Karl 1984, 1128–1133.

and repentance.⁸⁵

The question of whether women also had Ka⁸⁶ must be answered in the affirmative, simply because of the recorded female personal names that contain *k3=s* ("her Ka"). Also, the relief cycle of the birth of Queen Hatshepsut (in her Million Year House at Deir el-Bahari) leaves no doubt about this. Numerous texts show that even gods had one or more Ka.⁸⁷

In their reviews,⁸⁸ Kusber (2005) and Nyord (2016) came to the unanimous conclusion that none of the explanations of the term "Ka" fully lived up to its tradition. Already in the first half of the 20th century, this embarrassment made Egyptologists claim that the Egyptians themselves did not have a clear idea of Ka.⁸⁹ As far as I know, the last completely new interpretation of Ka was presented by Nyord (2016). According to him, Ka was an undifferentiated potential out of which man actualized his behavior and personality in every situation of his life.⁹⁰

1.3 Ka in the mortuary cult

The historical traditions of the ancient Egyptian funerary cult and the role of Ka in it hide some inconsistencies. According to the offering formula inscribed on tomb walls and stelae, the Ka of a deceased person is the recipient of offerings. According to the accepted translation of this formula in its Middle Kingdom version, one sacrificed in the name of the king ("an offering given by the king") to one or more gods (typically Osiris, Amun-Re, Re-Harakhte, Anubis, Thoth and/or Hathor) so that they would bestow something similar to the Ka of the deceased in the afterlife ("all good and pure gifts").⁹¹ It was concluded that Ka must have had something to do with vitality or, as a living being, needed a continuous supply of food along with the tomb owner. However, in the offering table scene that dominates the decoration of the wall and false door of a tomb sanctuary, the deceased appears to be the main beneficiary of the offerings. Here, he is seated before a table richly laden with baked goods and other offerings, smelling a lotus flower or a vase of perfumed oil. His free hand is extended toward the food on the table.⁹² In private tombs, Ka appears

⁸⁵ E.g. Tomb of Ramose, TT55, West Thebes (18th dyn.); stela of Neferabet, BM EA589 (19th dyn.); stela of Penbuy, BM EA1466 (19th dyn.). Cf. Guglielmi 1991, 121 (fig. 1), 123 (fig. 3), 126 (fig. 4).

⁸⁶ Cf. Kusber 2005, 132.

⁸⁷ Cf. PT I, spell 25, §17a–c; Kusber 2005, 165; Schweitzer 1956, 32.

⁸⁸ Cf. Kusber 2005, 46; Nyord 2016, 160.

⁸⁹ Cf. Erman 1934, 211; Erman/Ranke 1923, 345; Mercer 1952b, 18.

⁹⁰ Cf. Nyord 2016, 163–165, 169, 184.

⁹¹ Cf. Barta 1968, 584–586; Satzinger 1997, 183–184.

⁹² The offering table scene described here is one of several variants. Cf. Karl 1984, 1128–1133; Schweitzer 1956, 87. It is possible that the depiction of a person eating was considered inappropriate, so only the

in this scene, if at all, in the form of a large Ka hieroglyph. This may be placed on a standard right next to the sacrificial table⁹³ or even serve as the sacrificial table itself.⁹⁴ Rarely does the deceased sit at the table opposite an identical figure, which is usually interpreted as a Ka figure.⁹⁵ The view that the bereaved had to make offerings to ensure the survival of the deceased in the afterlife contradicts the texts, according to which a righteous person expects paradisiacal conditions in the hereafter anyway.⁹⁶

In any case, the offerings in the form of fresh water, bread, beef thighs, fowl, incense, anointing oil and linen were of considerable value to the Egyptians.⁹⁷ In this pre-modern society, food and fresh water were not taken for granted, and these goods also served as a medium of exchange.⁹⁸ This was probably also the reason why, at some point in early history, people began to deposit the offerings at the cult site in a more permanent and unrottable form, namely as reliefs or wall paintings, including lists of sacrifices.

2 A new hypothesis

A tour of a modern cemetery will remind you that people still place flowers, candles, lanterns, figurines and sometimes even toys (in the case of children's graves) on the graves of their deceased loved ones. If you asked them why they do this, no one would probably say: "I want my deceased mother to enjoy flowers and candles in the afterlife", or "I want my deceased child to continue playing in the afterlife". But these are the motives that we unquestioningly impute to the ancient Egyptians. In my mental game, I hear today's cemetery visitors answer instead: "I put this bouquet on her grave in good memory of my mother" or "as a token of my love and gratitude to this deceased". Grave flowers and candles are therefore a symbol of good memories and of gratitude for many things shared with the deceased.

The Egyptians also left us an answer to the question of why they offered water, food, flowers, frankincense, perfumed oil, and linen at mortuary cult sites: $n(.j) k^3 n(.j) NN$ ($\overline{U} NN$).⁹⁹ This phrase has been used in the already mentioned offering formula in

reaching for the food was shown.

⁹³ E.g. Tomb of Ahmose, son of Ibana, El-Kab (18th dynasty). Cf. Weigall 1911, 173–174 (fig. 8a, 8b).

⁹⁴ E.g. Tomb of Ramose, Thebes, TT55 (18th dyn.). Cf. Guglielmi 1991, 126 (fig. 4). Tomb of Nakhtamun, TT341, West Thebes (19th dyn.). Cf. Schweitzer 1956, plate V (a). Given the ancient Egyptians' penchant for puns, this could also be interpreted as a pun with k^3 or $k^3.w$ ("Ka") and $k^3.w$ ("food"[classified with a loaf of bread from the Middle Kingdom onwards]).

⁹⁵ Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 69 (with photo credits).

⁹⁶ E.g. CT I, spell 62, 265g, 269a–i, 270a–d. In these spells, the righteous are promised bread in abundance, cattle, an easy harvest, and hunting success in abundance in the "places of happiness".

⁹⁷ Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 69.

⁹⁸ Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 69.

⁹⁹ NN stands for the name of the deceased person.

different variations since the end of the Old Kingdom and was in use until the Late Period.¹⁰⁰ It is usually translated as "for the Ka of NN".¹⁰¹ However, due to the ambiguity of the Egyptian preposition *n(.j)*, a causal translation is possible: "because of the Ka of NN".¹⁰²

Therefore, my central consideration in this paper is: What if the motives of the necropolis visitors in ancient Egypt and in the present are not at all different? So, could it be that Ka was a mental image of a person? This Ka would correspond to the collective memory of a person, combined with a positive assessment of his or her actions and statements. Thus, Ka belongs to the group of the following meanings: high (social) reputation, high (social) standing, deep respect, good memory, good record, high esteem, high regard, prestige.¹⁰³ I have in mind the reputation that one can earn through the fulfillment of one's duties at work and in one's family. In the absence of any other means of representation, it was expressed in a sign with two arms,¹⁰⁴ or represented allegorically as a figure accompanying the king.¹⁰⁵ In the remainder of this paper, I will use "high reputation" or "esteem" to describe Ka.

If my hypothesis is correct, the common translation of the beginning of the ancient Egyptian offering formula¹⁰⁶ would have to be modified accordingly (change in italics): "A sacrifice offered by the king to the [name and epithets of one or more deities] *in good memory of NN*" or "*because of the high reputation of NN*".¹⁰⁷ At first glance, it sounds absurd to offer to a god in good memory of a deceased person. This is exactly what still happens in Catholic parishes today, where the faithful donate money (the offering) so that a service is celebrated in the church in honor of God, but this is to be done expressly in memory of a specific deceased person.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Demidchik 2015, 28; Kusber, 2005, 43, 160; Satzinger 1997, 183. Often also *n(.j) k3=k* ("for your Ka") or *n(.j)=k NN* ("for you, NN"). Cf. Junker 1938, 156, 235; Schott 1952, 62; Schweitzer 1956, 82. Up to the end of the Old Kingdom it was simply *n(.j) NN* ("for NN"). Cf. Steindorff 1910, 155–156.

¹⁰¹ Alternative reading: "for the Ka and for the NN". Cf. Kusber 2005, 161.

¹⁰² Cf. Wb II, 193.3–4, 194.5; Allen 2010, 86–87; Hannig 2006, 407 (14594, 14604); Werning 2015, 74, §47.

¹⁰³ I deliberately do not want to include the word "fame" here, as it is strongly associated with the exercise of worldly or divine power, which is not at the essence of Ka as I understand it. See also Chapter 3.7.

¹⁰⁴ If one were to find a "logo" for this kind of reputation, it would not be wrong to choose a sign with two arms.

¹⁰⁵ Kusber, on the other hand, rejected the view that the king's attendant in reliefs and wall paintings represented his Ka. Rather, he thought it was simply a bearer carrying a representation of Ka behind the king. Cf. Kusber 2005, 91–93, 106–107. My Ka hypothesis remains unaffected by Kusber's view.






¹⁰⁶ The offering formula was widely used in the funerary context. The traditional translations can be found e.g. in Barta 1968, 52–222; Demidchik 2015, 28.

¹⁰⁷ See Junge's quote on p. 17 which goes in a similar direction (Junge 2003, 125, note 248).

¹⁰⁸ This is often done with the ulterior motive that the person will then be particularly well off in heaven (this is also a parallel to the ancient Egyptian offering formula).

I do not share the often-expressed opinion that the behavior of the ancient Egyptians should never be viewed from a modern perspective. Fundamentally different ways of thinking cannot exist within a thinking species whose survival for more than 200,000 years has depended on the same communal needs for water, food, reproduction, warmth, and shelter. Living conditions, social structures, and worldviews may vary widely across habitats and epochs, but existential needs are anthropological constants. Among these is the pursuit of esteem in one's community, which may even have been vital to survival.¹⁰⁹ There also seems to be a universal human need for this esteem to continue with those left behind after death.¹¹⁰

Already in Early Dynastic Egypt there were stelae with inscriptions in the basic form "Ka of NN".¹¹¹ Such a stela may have been a stone symbol of the high reputation of NN; today it would be called a memorial stone.¹¹² In later elite burials, the *ḥm-kʿ* (lit. "servant of Ka") was responsible as a mortuary priest, together with the lecture priest, for the care of a mortuary cult site, provided that the bereaved could afford it.¹¹³ However, many tomb owners did not seem to rely on the *ḥm-kʿ* to uphold their reputation and took care of it themselves in the form of autobiographical inscriptions full of self-praise in their tombs, which were completed as far as possible during their lifetime – Ka in writing, so to speak.¹¹⁴

It is possible that the verb  (*kʿj*), written alternatively  and translated as "to think, to remember, to ponder, to contemplate, to plan"¹¹⁵ shares a linguistic root with Ka.¹¹⁶ In the dictionary of the Egyptian language by Erman and Grapow (1926–1961), the authors gave the word *wʿš* (reputation, honor) with the note "*Auch personifiziert als kʿ*" (also personified as *kʿ*) and cited two spellings, videlicet  (*kʿ-wʿš*) and .¹¹⁷ On the other hand, the verb  (*kʿ*, "to say, to name"), which

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Koltko-Rivera 2006, 302–317.

¹¹⁰ Marking and decorating the grave of a valued person has been practiced worldwide since the late Neolithic.

¹¹¹ Cf. Von Bissing 1911, 5.

¹¹² So did Kurt Sethe. Cf. Urk. IV, passim.



¹¹³ Cf. Demidchik 2015, 29; Schweitzer 1956, 86.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Zelenkova 2008, 19–22 (with literature review).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Hannig 2006, 941.

¹¹⁶ Linguists would have to make up their own minds about that. Other authors have postulated a word root *kʿ*, which has the basic meaning of „*hervorbringen, herausdrängen*“ ("to bring forth, to push out"; cf. Kusber 2005, 72–74, 199–200) or „*Reproduktion, Augmentation, Dualität*“ (reproduction, augmentation, duality; cf. Bolshakov 1997, 159–165).

¹¹⁷ Cf. Wb I, 262.10. However, these two spellings do not appear under the *k* rubric in this dictionary or in other dictionaries (TLA, Budge [1920], Hannig [2006]).

often preceded or followed a personal name, was written with single consonants.¹¹⁸ Only in the Third Intermediate Period did the spelling  or  in the meaning "name" appear.¹¹⁹

Ancient Egyptian society was pervaded by the notion of an all-encompassing order, the Ma'at, and by a principle of class-specific propriety in a person's behavior and appearance (*tp-hbs*). Therefore, great importance was attached to a person's track record and social standing. The Egyptians had to create a catchphrase, a symbol and an allegorical representation for it, as was done in many cultures with similarly crucial and at the same time complex concepts such as justice, virtue, love or wealth. Accordingly, Kusber (2005), who has studied Ka extensively, wrote that

„mit Ka etwas derart Allgemeines und gleichzeitig Bedeutendes gemeint sein muß, daß es sich – trotz der anzunehmenden sich verschiebenden Sinnhaftigkeit – die ganze ägyptische Geschichte hindurch in bestimmten Kontexten behaupten kann“¹²⁰

(Ka must mean something so general and at the same time so significant that, despite its supposedly shifting meanings, it can persist in certain contexts throughout Egyptian history),

and that

„der Ka eine positive Qualität darstellen [muss], weswegen seine Nähe gewünscht wird. [...] Offensichtlich ist jeder, der Ka hat, gegenüber anderen privilegiert.“¹²¹

(Ka must represent a positive quality, which is why its proximity is desired. [...] Obviously everyone who has Ka is privileged over others.).

And elsewhere:

„So kann zusammenfassend nur festgestellt werden, daß eine abträgliche Ka-Qualität von Übel ist, und daß der Ka Schaden erleiden kann, im Diesseits und im Jenseits.“¹²²

(Thus, to summarize, it can only be stated that a detrimental Ka quality is evil, and that the Ka can suffer harm, in this world and in the hereafter).

¹¹⁸ Cf. Wb V, 85.6–16.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Wb V, 92.17; Bolshakov 1997, 159; Kusber 2005, 69, 194; Schweitzer 1956, 55, note 8a.

¹²⁰ Quoted from Kusber 2005, 44–45.

¹²¹ Quoted from Kusber 2005, 137–138. Ka was desirable in both this world and the hereafter. Cf. Kusber 2005, 201.

¹²² Quoted from Kusber 2005, 190.

In fact, Ka was something that grew, or could be made to grow by promoting its bearer,¹²³ and it could also be taken away from a person.¹²⁴ This is another important indication of the correctness of my hypothesis. Gods, too, had a reputation in society that came from fulfilling the various expectations that people had of them.

Ka accompanies a person from birth¹²⁵ to death.¹²⁶ As an anthropomorphic figure in reliefs and wall paintings,¹²⁷ it is, in my opinion, an allegory of high reputation. Thus, Ka was depicted as the king's attendant in his central tasks, namely in ritual acts before the gods, in hunting, in "slaying the enemies" or in festive processions. It is noteworthy that the Ka figure in these scenes often holds the Ma'at feather in addition to the Ankh sign.¹²⁸ At the end of his earthly life, the king came before Osiris with his Ka behind him.¹²⁹ Unlike karma in Indian and Far Eastern traditions, Ka is an earthly construct of fulfilling social norms and expectations. This construct had no direct influence on the fate of the individual, except for certain social amenities and promotions during life and for becoming righteous before Osiris. However, the ancient Egyptians also believed in the consequences of actions through the mediation of deities.¹³⁰

With my interpretation of Ka, I come close to the statements of some other authors, although they had developed completely different Ka concepts. Steindorff (1910) wrote that $n(.j) k3 n(.j)$ in the offering formula should not be understood literally, but as a solemn phrase.¹³¹ Gardiner (1927) translated the word "Ka" as "fortune" and "position",¹³² among others. To a certain extent I also agree with Le Page Renouf (1878), who saw Ka as an

¹²³ Cf. Bissing 2011, 4. The following text passage from the stela of Nebnetjeru (22nd dyn.) is an example: "One who was promoted in order to let his Ka grow". Cf. Jansen-Winkel 1985, 120 (A10).

¹²⁴ For example, in the Teaching of Ptahhotep, verses 389–392, there is a warning against contradicting a higher-ranking person in his "great moment" (of speech), for in doing so one takes Ka from him. Cf. Žába 1956, 47. In pyramid spell 372, Horus is said to have dismembered the strong arms of his enemies, thus eliminating their Ka. Cf. PT I, spell 372, §653a–c.

¹²⁵ Cf. Brunner 1964, plate 6; Chassinat 1939, plate XIII; Gayet 1894, plate LXIII; Naville 1897, plate XLVIII. A person acquires a certain reputation through the status of his or her parents (see also Chapter 3.4).

¹²⁶ This lifelong companionship also applies to other interpretations of Ka, such as the mental-spiritual double, the guardian spirit or the life force (see Table 1). Many texts indicate that Ka also accompanies its bearer in the afterlife.

¹²⁷ It appears only with the king. Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 55; Steindorff 1910, 152–159. The figure bears the Ka hieroglyph on its head with the king's Horus name between the raised arms (in the form of a Serekh). Therefore, some consider this figure to be a personified "Ka-name" of the king. Cf. Bell 1985, 278–280 and fig. 8; Schweitzer 1956, 55–62.

¹²⁸ Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 55–62. A way of life with strict observance of the Ma'at was a prerequisite for high esteem.

¹²⁹ E.g. in a wall painting in the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV62, 18th dyn.). Cf. Reeves 1990, 73.

¹³⁰ Cf. Assmann 2003b, 24–27.

¹³¹ Cf. Steindorff 1910, 156.

¹³² Cf. Gardiner 1927, 172.

object of the cult of the dead.¹³³ In my view, the ritual acts and the offerings formed the framework for a commemoration, a celebration of the deceased for his Ka, i.e. for his exemplary lifestyle during his lifetime. Bolshakov (1997) argued that Ka (“the double”) was a memory of the dead that was kept alive by inscribed statues, images, and objects.¹³⁴ Junge (2003) wrote that Ka was something to be seen in others and found fulfillment in social recognition.¹³⁵ And elsewhere:

„In den Anredeformen, insbesondere von Grabinschriften und Graffiti (*n k3 n NN*), ist somit natürlich auch nicht jemand als Verstorbener charakterisiert, sondern es ist eine respektvolle Form der Anrede: ‘für die Persönlichkeit des NN’, ‘der Person des NN’, ‘zu Ehren von NN’“ [my italics, E. T.]¹³⁶

(In the forms of address, especially in epitaphs and graffiti [*n k3 n NN*], someone is of course not characterized as deceased, but it is a respectful form of address: “for the personality of NN”, “for the person of NN”, “*in honor of NN*”).

I agree with Nyord (2016) in the following sentence:

„several of the descriptions [statements about the Ka in ancient Egyptian texts, E. T.] imply that the general mode of actualisation of a ka (and its ‘wishes’, ‘commands’ etc.) goes through the behaviour of the ka’s possessor.”¹³⁷

3 Support for the hypothesis

The following chapters examine various aspects of Ka in light of the hypothesis proposed here that Ka equals high reputation.

3.1 Ka in the plural

The plural *k3.w*, often found in ancient Egyptian texts, could be used as an argument against my Ka hypothesis. However, the Egyptian language has many entities written with plural strokes if they are composed of many parts or persons (e.g. pharmaceutical ingredients, minerals, sand, grain, the body, the army, and many others).¹³⁸ Since a high

¹³³ Cf. Le Page Renouf 1878, 494–508. However, Le Page Renouf suspected a correspondence between Ka and the cult statue.

¹³⁴ Cf. Bolshakov 1997, 188.

¹³⁵ Cf. Junge 2003, 122.

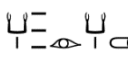
¹³⁶ Quoted from Junge 2003, 125, note 248.

¹³⁷ Quoted from Nyord 2016, 171.

¹³⁸ Cf. Kusber 2005, 116–119.

reputation is ultimately formed from thoughts and memories in the minds of fellow human beings, or because it is formed in many minds, the plural is a perfectly appropriate grammatical form. It is also conceivable that the plural, which occurs most often in connection with kings or gods,¹³⁹ was intended to express a particularly high reputation.¹⁴⁰ I have therefore decided to translate *k3.w* with the singular Ka. In the New Kingdom, the Ba, which is probably closest to our modern concept of soul, consciousness or life force, was also occasionally in the plural.¹⁴¹ Re-Harakhte was attributed not only fourteen *k3.w* but also seven *b3.w*,¹⁴² with the numbers 7 and 14 (2 x 7) most likely having a mythological background.¹⁴³

3.2 Attributes of Ka

During the late New Kingdom, Ka acquired attributes. The attributes of the fourteen Ka of Re were (there are more than fourteen entries): *k3 wsr* (mighty Ka), *k3 w3d* (flourishing Ka), *k3 df(3).w* (Ka of food), *k3 šps.w* (Ka of nobility), *k3 w3š* (Ka of honor), *k3 spd* (sharp¹⁴⁴ Ka), *k3 dd* (permanent Ka), *k3 jr(.y)* (acting Ka), *k3 sdm* (Ka of hearing/obedience), *k3 sj3* (Ka of awareness), *k3 hw* (Ka of feasting), *k3 hk3* (Ka of magical power¹⁴⁵), *k3 šms* (successive Ka), *k3 thn* (gleaming Ka), *k3 wbn* (appearing Ka), *k3 nht* (strong Ka), *k3 psd* (shining Ka), *k3 rn* (Ka of the name).¹⁴⁶ In my opinion, these attributes describe the essence of Re's high reputation. However, in the hymn to Re-Harakhte on papyrus BM EA10541 (21st dynasty) one can find a less clear combination of words  (*k3.w jr[.w] k3*, "Ka, who makes food"¹⁴⁷). We could read: "Reputation that brings sacrificial food". It may even be a play on words for the reciprocal relationship between Ka and food. Re-Harakhte's high reputation attracted many to come and make offerings at the cult sites. And vice versa, the sun god who provided a good supply of food naturally enjoyed a high reputation.

¹³⁹ Cf. Kusber 2005, 119–125; Schweitzer 1956, 73–78.

¹⁴⁰ However, in the phrase *hh=f n(.j) k3* ("his million Ka, his endless Ka"), Ka is grammatically correct in the singular. Cf. CT III, spell 261, 383e.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Žabkar 1968, 1–2, 15–36.

¹⁴² Cf. Kusber 2005, 121; Schweitzer 1956, 73.

¹⁴³ Cf. Borioni 2004, 100; Dawson 1927, 97–107.

¹⁴⁴ Sharpness perhaps in the sense of selectivity? In the Teaching of Ptahhotep, verse 88, the substantive form *spd.t* is mentioned as a quality of Ma'at. Cf. Žába 1956, 23. Schweitzer's translation of *k3 spd* was "*Ka der Tüchtigkeit*" ("Ka of efficiency") according to the second meaning of *spd* (cf. Schweitzer 1956, 74), Kusber's interpretation was "*(Ka der) Aktionsbereitschaft*" ("Ka of willingness to act"; cf. Kusber 2005, 120).

¹⁴⁵ According to Nedjmet's Book of the Dead (papyrus BM EA10541, 21st dyn.). Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 74.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. British Museum (online), EA10541; Budge 1920, 783; Kusber 2005, 121 (citing papyrus BM EA10541 and Ringgren 1947).

¹⁴⁷ Note that the second *k3* is classified with a loaf of bread. Cf. British Museum (online), EA10541.

3.3 Ka in expressions and phrases

The phrase *hw.t-k3* (lit. “house of Ka”) may not necessarily have been a specific Ka house or Ka chapel¹⁴⁸, a serdab¹⁴⁹, or an agricultural domain for a doppelganger.¹⁵⁰ Rather, *hw.t-k3* was a place of worship in general, i.e. a building as a place of reverent remembrance in honor of whom it was built.¹⁵¹ It is fitting that *hw.t-k3* was used to designate very different buildings such as funerary temples, temples of the gods, statue rooms or funerary chapels.¹⁵²

Numerous text passages show that Egyptians of both sexes went to their Ka after their death (*zbj nj k3=f/s*).¹⁵³ The preposition *n(.j)* to express the target person of an action is well documented.¹⁵⁴ The prepositions *hr* (“next to”) and *hn^c* (“along with”) are also used in this phrase, but not *r* (“towards, up to, related to”).¹⁵⁵ In addition, *zbj* may be replaced by the verbs *hpij* (“to walk, to meet someone”),¹⁵⁶ *jiwj* (“to go”)¹⁵⁷ or *šmj* (“to go, to leave”)¹⁵⁸. Other passages express that the deceased was united with his Ka (*dmd hn^c k3=f*).¹⁵⁹ These are variants of one and the same statement, and with my Ka interpretation I have no difficulty in explaining them. Once the perishable body is in the burial chamber and no longer participates in society, that person is present only in the memories of the bereaved. In a sense, the deceased has become one with his reputation.

In the New Kingdom, Ka took on human features, which may have been either a consequence of visual habits (Ka as an attendant of the king) or an expression of the ancient Egyptians’ playful use of their language. Many languages use idioms to personify abstract concepts. For example, we say that someone is plagued by fate, that someone is struggling with a decision, that success proves someone right, that an unfavorable quality stands in someone’s way, that someone’s reputation dictates something, and so on. It is not surprising, then, that in ancient Egyptian texts, Ka could be pleased or reviled, bestowed favors, decreed or commanded something, desired or abhorred something, was

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Fitzenreiter 2001, 545–548.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Maspero 1893b, 80.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Demidchik 2015, 26.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Fitzenreiter 2001, 546; Kaplony 1980, 284–287; Schweitzer 1956, 84–86; Steindorff 1910, 154–155.

¹⁵² Cf. Wb III, 5.14–19; Moreno Garcia 1999, 36.

¹⁵³ Cf. e.g. Junker 1938, 116; Urk. I, 50.15, 73.2–3; 264.18, 265.6; Zelenkova 2008, 209, 302.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Werning 2015, 74, §1; Allen 2010, 86–87.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Kusber 2005, 141.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Urk. I, 34.6; Zelenkova 2008, 280, 288, 289–290.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. PT II, spell 534, §1275a, §1276a.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. PT I, spell 359, §598c.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. e.g. CT VI, spell 674, 303g–h.

caused to come or found, and much more.¹⁶⁰

A survey through phrases and sentences from all periods of pharaonic Egypt shows that they can be interpreted in the sense of the meaning of “Ka” proposed here (Table 2).

Tab. 2: Selection of ancient Egyptian sentences and phrases and their reinterpretation in terms of the Ka-hypothesis presented here.

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>wnn=k hnt k3.w ʕnh.w nb <.w></i>	Pyramid temple of Sahure, Abusir, 5th dyn. ¹⁶¹	You are the foremost in Ka of all living beings. ¹⁶²	You are the most respected of all.
<i>hw wd k3=k pw mr.y Rʿ</i>	False door of Niankhsekhmet, 5th dyn. ¹⁶³	It was the statement and command of your Ka, beloved of Re.	It was in accordance with your high reputation.
<i>j.n(=f) k3 nfr(.w) jrj.n(=j) m(j)</i>	Tomb of Rashepses, 5th dyn. ¹⁶⁴	(Caption to the picture of a delinquent:) He said: My Ka is perfect. What have I done?	He said: My reputation is impeccable. What have I done?
<i>jw k3.w NN h3=f</i>	Pyramid spell 273, Old Kingdom ¹⁶⁵	NN's Ka is behind/around him.	NN is "embedded" in high reputation.
<i>jn.j n=k sn Hr šc.w s.hrj.n Hr k3=sn jr=sn</i>	Pyramid spell 372, Old Kingdom ¹⁶⁶	(About the strong arms of the enemies): Horus brought them to you dismembered, and so Horus removed their [the enemies'] Ka from them. ¹⁶⁷	Horus brought you the strong arms dismembered, thus destroying the reputation of the enemies.
<i>hny n(.j) NN hny n(.j) k3=f</i>	Pyramid spell 405, Old Kingdom ¹⁶⁸	Cheers to NN, cheers to his Ka!	Cheers to NN and his high reputation!

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Kusber 2005, 171, 176; Schweitzer 1956, 33–39.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Urk. I, 168.10.

¹⁶² I translate the sentence as a *nfr-hr* construction, where, strictly speaking, it should be *wnn=k hnt k3.w n.w ʕnh.w nb.w*. Hannig's translation: „An der Spitze der Kas aller Lebenden“ (“[You are] at the head of the Ka of all the living”). Cf. Hannig 2006, 942 (34848). Bell's translation: “[You are] the foremost of all living Kas”. Cf. Bell 1985, 278. Thus, according to Bell, the king is the highest-ranking living Ka. I agree, because the king was, so to speak, the personification of reputation.

¹⁶³ Cf. Urk. I, 38.8.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Erman 1919, 51; Nyord 2016, 173 (fig. 7.1)

¹⁶⁵ Cf. PT I, spell 273, §396a.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. PT I, spell 372, §653b-c.

¹⁶⁷ I interpret the second occurrence of the perfect tense as a case of coincidence.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. PT I, spell 405, §704a.

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>wrš NN pn hr k3=fjb3n r=f NN pn hr k3=f</i>	Pyramid spell 468, Old Kingdom ¹⁶⁹	This NN spent the day with his Ka, this NN now slumbers with his Ka.	This NN was highly esteemed during the day, this NN is now resting on his laurels.
<i>NN pn d3.w hn^c jf=f nfr.n NN pn hn^c rn=f ^cnh NN pn hn^c k3=f</i>	Pyramid spell 469, Old Kingdom ¹⁷⁰	This NN was ferried [to the netherworld] with his flesh, this NN was perfect with his name, this NN may live with his Ka.	This NN has physically arrived in the netherworld, he has earned high reputation and now he may live on with his high reputation.
<i>nd.n kw Hr hpr.tj m k3=f</i>	Pyramid spell 589, Old Kingdom ¹⁷¹	Horus protected you after you arose because ¹⁷² of his Ka.	Horus protected you after you arose because he is a god of high esteem. ¹⁷³
<i>h3 NN h3 k3.t tn h3 mr pn m-^c k3 wnn k3 n(.j) NN jm=f rwd n(.j) d.t d.t</i>	Pyramid spell 600, Old Kingdom ¹⁷⁴	Ah, NN, ah, this work, ah, this pyramid as a result ¹⁷⁵ of Ka! NN's Ka is on it, lasting for all eternity.	Ah, this pyramid building as a result of [NN's] high reputation! The high reputation of NN is visible on it for all eternity.
<i>jr wr wnn=f h3 t' shr hft wd k3=f jw=f r rdj.t n(.j) hzz.y=f</i>	Teaching of Ptahhotep, 6th dynasty, Verses 135–137 ¹⁷⁶	As for a high-ranking official, when he sits eating, his behavior is according to the command of his Ka. He will also give [something] to one he cherishes.	His high reputation dictates ¹⁷⁷ that he be hospitable.
<i>šms k3=k r tr n(.j) wnn=k</i>	Verse 186 ¹⁷⁸	Follow your Ka for life.	Pursue high reputation throughout life.
<i>bw.t k3 pw</i>	Verses 125 and 189 ¹⁷⁹	It is an abomination to Ka.	It is bad for reputation.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. PT I, spell 468, §894b.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. PT II, spell 469, §908a-b.

¹⁷¹ Cf. PT II, spell 589, §1609b.

¹⁷² Causal translation of the preposition *m*. Cf. Wb II, 1.12; Hannig 2006, 329 (11856). Other possible translations of *m k3=f*: "from his Ka, according to his Ka, according to the principle of his Ka". Cf. Wb II, 1.6, 2.6; Hannig 2006, 329 (11826, 11857).

¹⁷³ Gods may gain high esteem through power, wisdom, fulfillment of human desires, etc.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. PT II, spell 600, §1653b-d.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Wb II, 45.11; Hannig 2006, 330 (11936).

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Žába 1956, 26–27.

¹⁷⁷ This idiom is analogous to "command of his Ka".

¹⁷⁸ In the version of the papyrus BM EA10509. Cf. Žába 1956, 30 (L2, 3,8).

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Junge 2003, 217; Žába 1956, 26, 31.

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>hpr sdb.j=f r šnt sw sflh k3 m mrr sw</i>	Verses 391–392 ¹⁸⁰	(On dealing with a superior:) His problem arises when he is reviled and when Ka is separated from the one who loves it. ¹⁸¹	He suffers a loss of authority when he is reviled, and when the prestige he cherishes so much is taken from him.
<i>hw.t-k3 K3-m-zj.w jrj.t.n n=f z3=f [name] r jm3h=f hr=f jsk sw hp(.w) n(j) k3=f</i>	Tomb of Kamsiu, Saqqara, Old Kingdom ¹⁸²	The “house of Ka” of Kamsiu, which his son (name of the son) made for him, so that he [Kamsiu] may be honored through him [the son], for he [Kamsiu] has gone to his Ka.	The burial chapel of Kamsiu, which his son [name] had built for him, so that Kamsiu may be honored by his son's work, because Kamsiu is dead but remains in good memory.
<i>w3h k3=s hr s.t wr.t</i>	Stela of Redikhenemu, FIP ¹⁸³	(About a woman:) May her Ka last in the Noble Place ¹⁸⁴ .	May her reputation remain high in the Noble Place.
<i>n(j) k3 n(j) ntj nb hr wd pn</i>	Family stela text, Middle Kingdom ¹⁸⁵	Because ¹⁸⁶ of the Ka of everyone on this stela.	In honor of everyone on this stela.
<i>hr šzp hz.wt n(j).t k3=f</i>	Stela text, Middle Kingdom ¹⁸⁷	When receiving the favor of his Ka.	When receiving the social benefits that come with a high reputation.
<i>dd=f k3.w n(j) ntj.w m šms=f s.df3=f mdd mtn=f k3 pw njswt h3.w pw r2=f</i>	Stela of Sehetepibre, Abydos, 12th dyn. ¹⁸⁸	(About Amenemhet III:) He provides Ka for those who follow him and nourishes those who are devoted to him. ¹⁸⁹ The king is Ka, his mouth is abundance.	He brings prestige/food to those who serve him and nourishes those who are devoted to him. The king stands for reputation/food, his mouth is abundance. ¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Žába 1956, 47.

¹⁸¹ My translation assumes that the preposition *r* refers to both verbal forms (ellipsis). Burkard translated: “dann trennt sich (sein) Ka von dem, der ihn liebt” (“then [his] Ka separates from the one who loves him”). Cf. Burkard 1991, 211. My interpretation remains unaffected – the superior's reputation is endangered.

¹⁸² Cf. Urk. I, 34.3–6; Mariette/Maspero 1889, 160.

¹⁸³ Cairo CG 20543. Cf. Petrie 1900, 52 and plate XV.

¹⁸⁴ The Noble Place (*s.t wr.t*) can mean a temple, sanctuary (of a temple), throne, barque room, pedestal of a cult statue, or tomb, depending on the context. Cf. Wb IV, 7.4–14; Hannig 2006, 702 (25571–25579).

¹⁸⁵ E.g. Cairo CG 20001 (cf. Lange/Schäfer 1902, plate 1); CG20577 (cf. Olabarria 2020, 24).

¹⁸⁶ The causal translation of *n(j)* is explained in Chapter 2.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Barta 1968, 149, 115d.

¹⁸⁸ Cairo CG 20538. Cf. Grapow 1954, 24.

¹⁸⁹ Lit. “who follow his way (lifestyle)”. Hannig's translation: “who are devoted to him” (see Hannig 2006, 398–399 [14331, 14333], 405 [14579]).

¹⁹⁰ Neither of the two Ka hieroglyphs (the first in the plural, the second in the singular) is classified with a loaf of bread, so it remains open whether Ka or food is meant. It could be a play on words. Reputation

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>dd k3.w s.hntj j3.w</i>	Stela of vizier Mentuhotep, 12th dyn. ¹⁹¹	One who bestows Ka ¹⁹² and awards promotions. ¹⁹³	One who helps subordinates gain prestige and promotions.
<i>sj3 (m) jb=f hw.w (m) sp.tj=fj k3=f (m) wnn.wt nb.t m jmj r3=f</i>	Hymn on Amun, papyrus Leiden I 350 recto, text from the Middle Kingdom ¹⁹⁴	Knowledge is in his heart, words of power are on his lips, his Ka is in everything that comes out of the inside of his mouth. ¹⁹⁵	Knowledge is in his heart, words of authority are on his lips, his high reputation is based on all his words.
<i>jw k3=k r rdj.t jr.y=j ph.wj h3.w=j m hnw</i>	Story of Sinuhe, papyrus Berlin 3022, line 204, Middle Kingdom ¹⁹⁶	Your Ka will allow me to spend the "end of my limbs" ¹⁹⁷ at home.	With your high reputation, I can hope that you will let me sail home so that I can die peacefully at home. ¹⁹⁸
<i>n(j) k3=k t3.w n(j) wsh.t R3</i>	Tomb of Pujemre, Thebes, 18th dyn. ¹⁹⁹	Because of your Ka, [here is] bread from the Broad Hall of Re.	Because of your high reputation, here is bread from the Broad Hall of Re.
<i>mr.tj k3=f pw jr.tj</i>	Inscription of Thutmosis III, Karnak, 18th dyn. ²⁰⁰	Whatever his Ka desires may be done. ²⁰¹	Whatever serves his high reputation may be done.
<i>dj=f n(j)=k nh wd3 snb ndm-jb hz.wt n(j) k3=k m h3w nfr</i>	Tomb of Tjanuni, Thebes, 18th dyn. ²⁰²	May he [Amun-Re] give you life, prosperity, health, joy, and favors because of your Ka during your perfect lifetime.	May he [Amun-Re] give you life, prosperity, health, joy, and favors because of your high reputation during your perfect lifetime.

and abundance of food were interrelated. See the passage in the hymn to Ptah from the 22nd dynasty: "The Lord of Ka [in the plural, classified with C1 and Y1], who gives food (*df3.w*) to whomever he pleases." (Papyrus Berlin 3048 recto, IV, 1; cf. Wolf 1929, 21–22).

¹⁹¹ CG 20539. Cf. Blumenthal 1970, 369.

¹⁹² Blumenthal here translated *k3.w* as "Rangstufen" (ranks). Cf. Blumenthal 1970, 369.

¹⁹³ This *parallelism membrorum* indicates that Ka means "reputation".

¹⁹⁴ The text is from the Middle Kingdom, the papyrus from the Ramesside period. Cf. Zandée 1947, 98 and plate V (lines 16–17).

¹⁹⁵ Lit.: "all those, which emerge from within his mouth".

¹⁹⁶ Cf. unknown author 1850, 37.

¹⁹⁷ "The end of my limbs" is a paraphrase for death.

¹⁹⁸ For the ancient Egyptians, dying and being buried abroad was a terrifying prospect.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. de Garis Davies 1923, plate LIII (top left).

²⁰⁰ Cf. Urk. IV, 162.8.

²⁰¹ The verbal forms *mr.tj* and *jr.tj* (each written with U33 for *.tj*) are controversial.

²⁰² Cf. Brack/Brack 1977, plate 23b.

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>ḳwḳ-jb=k ḥm^c kḳ=k mj</i> R ²	Relief cycle of the birth of Amenhotep III, Scene 14, Luxor, 18th dyn. ²⁰³	May you be happy together with your Ka, like Re.	May you rejoice in your high esteem [as a king], just as the sun god rejoices in your reputation.
<i>kḳ=k m-^c=k nn bt=f tw</i> <i>nn šwj=k jm=f d.t</i>	Stela of Senemjah, Abd el-Qurna, 18th dyn. ²⁰⁴	Your Ka with you (or: caused by you) may not leave you ²⁰⁵ and you shall not be free from it forever.	The high reputation you have earned may be with you forever.
<i>dj=k n(j)=j qrs.t</i> <i>nfr<.t> m wd kḳ=k</i>	Tomb of Aye, Tell el-Amarna, 18th dyn. ²⁰⁶	(To Akhenaten: ²⁰⁷) May you give me a nice funeral by the order of your Ka.	I hope that you will live up to your high reputation and give me a nice funeral.
<i>jrj(.w) wj s.hpr(.w)</i> <i>kḳ=j</i>	Tomb of Aye, Tell el-Amarna, 18th dyn.	(About Akhenaten:) He created me and brought forth my Ka.	He encouraged me and established my high reputation. ²⁰⁸
<i>pḳ kḳ n(j) nb tḳ.wj m</i> <i>dj=f r nhh</i>	Tomb of Aye, Tell el-Amarna, 18th dyn.	(About Akhenaten:) The Ka of the Lord of the Two Lands comes from the fact that he gives until eternity.	The high reputation of the king comes from the fact that he gives forever.
<i>dnḥ.w=sn m jḳw n(j)</i> <i>kḳ=k</i>	Great hymn to the Aten, Tell el-Amarna, 18th dyn. ²⁰⁹	(About birds:) Their wings are in praise of your Ka.	Even the birds praise your high reputation with their wings.
<i>dj=f sns n(j) ḥr=f</i> <i>s.htp kḳ=f</i>	Block statue of a scribe, 18th dyn. ²¹⁰	May he cause his face to be praised so that his Ka may be satisfied.	May he cause his face to be praised so that his high reputation may be honored.

²⁰³ Cf. Brunner 1964, plate 14.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Urk. IV, 499.17–500.2.

²⁰⁵ On the stela of Paheri (El-Kab, 18th dyn.) there is a text passage with the same wording, except that Ka is replaced by "heart" (*jb=k m-^c=k nn bt=f tw*). Cf. Urk. IV, 117.13–14.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Sandman 1938, 91.

²⁰⁷ Aye was older than Akhenaten and when he had his tomb decorated, he could not have known that he would outlive Akhenaten.

²⁰⁸ Aye rose to a high position in the royal court under Akhenaten, which was undoubtedly associated with high prestige (hence he later became king himself).

²⁰⁹ Cf. Lichtheim 2006, 97.

²¹⁰ Louvre E 17168. Cf. Vandier 1951, 22.

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>dj=f^ch^c(.w)=j rwd(.w) hr šms k3=f</i>	Measuring rod (cubit) of Maya, Saqqara, 18th dyn. ²¹¹	May he give my lifetime that endures if one follows his Ka. ²¹²	May he give me lasting life [in the netherworld], because that is what one who seeks respect deserves. ²¹³
<i>s.^cj.n nzw s.q3j.n bj.t jrj.n nb t3.wj k3=f</i>	Tomb of Hepuseneb, Thebes, 18th dyn. ²¹⁴	One whom the king of Upper Egypt made great and the king of Lower Egypt exalted. The Lord of the Two Lands created his Ka. ²¹⁵	The king made him great, exalted him, and helped him to glory.
<i>dj=sn nn jrj.tw šnt.t (r) k3=j</i>	Stela text, New Kingdom ²¹⁶	May they make sure that my Ka is not disparaged.	May they make sure that my high reputation is not called into question.
<i>stš t(w) M3^c.t m b3h=k dj=s^c.wj=s h3=k wnn k3=k jm=s.t^[sic]</i>	Papyrus Berlin 3055, 14,11-15,1, 22nd dyn. ²¹⁷	Rise, the Ma'at is before you! May she embrace you ²¹⁸ so that your Ka emerges from it [this action]. ²¹⁹	May you be imbued with the principles of the Ma'at, so that you may gain a high reputation. ²²⁰
<i>s.hnt.j n(j) s.rd=f k3=f</i>	Block statue of Nebnetjeru, cachette Karnak, 22nd dyn. ²²¹	One who has been promoted so that he may increase his Ka.	One who has been promoted to increase his reputation.
<i>jsw=j pw sh3=j hr mnh=j ddj k3=j hr jm3-jb=j</i>	Block statue of Harwa, Thebes, 25th dyn. ²²²	My reward is that I am remembered for my excellence, and that my Ka endures because of my kindness.	My reward is that I am remembered for my excellence, and that my reputation endures because of my kindness.

²¹¹ Louvre N 1538. Cf. Barta 1968, 124, 151c.

²¹² I translate the preposition *hr* in the causal sense. Cf. Hannig 2006, 585 (21208); Werning 2015, 74, §1. Contrary to Kusber (cf. Kusber 2005, 146-147), I think that this sentence refers to the Ka of Maya, because *šms k3=f* is a standing phrase used here as the dependent of a preposition.

²¹³ Thus, one could hope for eternal life by pursuing reputation.

²¹⁴ Cf. Urk. IV, 486.1-3.

²¹⁵ In this *parallelism membrorum*, the first two phrases anticipate what is meant in the third phrase.

²¹⁶ Cf. Barta 1968, 132, 213a.

²¹⁷ Cf. Kusber 2005, 159.

²¹⁸ Lit.: "May she put her two arms around you".

²¹⁹ Assmann translates: "*so dass dein Ka in ihr bleibt*" (so that your Ka remains in her). This cannot be reconciled with Assmann's own or other Ka hypotheses. Cf. Assmann 1975, 263.

²²⁰ Cf. Kusber 2005, 160.

²²¹ CG 42225; Cf. Jansen-Winkel 1985, 120 (A 10).

²²² Louvre A 84/N 85. Cf. Gunn/Engelbach 1931, 809 (VI).

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>šwj.n(=j) m b3gj hr m33 mrj<.t> k3=tn šdj.n jb=j m k3=tn hr šhr nb jrj.n(=j) sh3 k3=j hr jrj.n(=j) m pr=tn</i>	Theophoric statue of Nes-Hor, 26th dyn. ²²³	(To gods:) I have never grown tired ²²⁴ of looking at and loving your Ka. My heart "took" from your Ka in every undertaking I made, so that my Ka would be remembered in what I have prepared in your temple.	I have never grown tired of admiring your high reputation. I have followed the example of your high reputation in each of my projects, so that my reputation will be remembered in what I have prepared in your temple.
<i>rdj.t w3h rn=j m pr=tn sh3 k3=j m-ht c h.c.w</i>	Statue block, 26th dyn.	Grant that my name may endure in your house, and that my Ka may be remembered after [my] lifetime. ²²⁵	Grant that my name may not be forgotten in your house, that my good name will be remembered after my death.
<i>n(.j) k3=k c nḥ.w n(.j) thn rn=f dj=f wnn jrj.n=k</i>	Statue pedestal of Mentuemhet, Cachette Karnak, 26th dyn. ²²⁶	Because of your Ka, a bouquet of life ²²⁷ from "His-name-is-hidden" [= Amun]. May he make exist (continue to exist) what you created.	A bouquet of life from Amun because of your high reputation. May he cause your good works to continue.
<i>jr hm nb.t^[sic] m33=f mḏ3.t pn jrj.n=f mn k3 rn=j gr ḥz.w</i>	Colophon in papyrus Bremner-Rhind, Macedonian Period ²²⁸	As for every priest ²²⁹ who sees this scroll: he has (at the same time) ²³⁰ made the royal Ka ²³¹ and my name permanent and has also applauded.	As for every priest who reads this scroll: he has (at the same time) made the royal reputation and my good name permanent and has also applauded.
<i>k3.w n(.j) R' m ḥnw=s</i>	From a dictionary ²³²	(About a city:) The [fourteen] Ka of Re are in it.	Re is highly respected in this city.
<i>nḥb k3(.w)</i>	From a dictionary ²³³	bestow Ka	give prestige ²³⁴

²²³ Louvre A 90/N 91. Cf. Maspero 1884, 88.

²²⁴ Lit. "I was not free from tiredness".

²²⁵ In this *parallelism membrorum*, the semantic relationship between a good name one makes for oneself and Ka becomes clear.

²²⁶ CG42239. Cf. Legrain 2014, 89–90.

²²⁷ A special kind of bouquet (also: staff bouquet).

²²⁸ Papyrus BM EA10188. Cf. Faulkner 1933, 34 (38); Spiegelberg 1913, 37 (38), 40 (38).

²²⁹ It simply is *hm*, meaning *hm-ntr* or *hm-k3*. Cf. Spiegelberg 1913, 40, note 2.

²³⁰ Perfect tense in a case of coincidence.

²³¹ Ka is classified with a Horus standard, so the royal Ka is meant. Cf. Faulkner 1933, 34 (38).

²³² Cf. Wb V, 89.9; Hannig 2006, 942 (34844).

²³³ Cf. Wb II, 291.7–9; Hannig 2006, 445 (16059).

²³⁴ This interpretation is also taken up by Hannig. Cf. Hannig 2006, 445 (16059). There was also an *nḥb-k3.w*

Text	Source	Own translation	Reinterpretation
<i>nḥḥ rn=f d.t sšm=f k3=f wnn.t nb.t</i>	From a dictionary ²³⁵	Eternity is his name, infinity is his image, his Ka is all that exists.	His name, image and reputation are all that remain of him and will last for all eternity.

However, some pyramid, coffin and temple texts challenge my Ka concept. Spell 25 from the pyramid of Unas (5th dynasty) says: "The arm of your Ka is in front of you, the arm of your Ka is behind you, the leg of your Ka is in front of you, the leg of your Ka is behind you".²³⁶ This is shown in a wall painting in Tutankhamun's tomb (KV62): Tutankhamun and Osiris are embracing; behind Tutankhamun his Ka is standing with his right arm extended behind the king.²³⁷ This could mean that a high reputation gives its bearer security at this important moment.²³⁸ After all, it is Osiris who presides over the all-important judgment of the deceased.

Another pyramid spell addressed to the king says: "Horus will not leave you, for you yourself are his Ka".²³⁹ Similarly, the Ma'at or a particular god (Khnum, Sobek, Seth) could be called "Ka of Re".²⁴⁰ My interpretation of these statements is that those who are called "offspring" of Horus or Re express his reputation. On the other hand, if someone was called the Ba of a god, it meant that he embodied one of several manifestations or aspects of that god.²⁴¹

The ritual incantations in which the body is purified together with Ka present difficulties for my hypothesis.²⁴² Usually either the verb *ntrj* (if written with the hieroglyph R9 it means "to be purified with natron or frankincense"²⁴³) or *w^cb* ("to be ritually pure, to be consecrated"²⁴⁴) was used. So it is not a washing in the strict sense, but a ritual treatment with natron, water and/or frankincense.²⁴⁵ It cannot refer to purification from evil,

festival in the 1st month of the Peret season (cf. Hannig 2006, 445 [16068]) and a serpent god of that name (cf. Shorter 1935, 41–48).

²³⁵ Cf. Hannig 2006, 942 (34854).

²³⁶ Cf. PT I, spell 25, §18a–b.

²³⁷ Cf. Reeves 1990, 73.

²³⁸ For a discussion of this process from the perspective of other concepts of Ka, see Kusber 2005, 150–154.

²³⁹ Cf. PT I, spell 364, §610d.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 28.

²⁴¹ This is expressed, for example, in the Book of the Heavenly Cow (the oldest known version dates from the late 18th dyn.). Cf. Hornung 1997, 47, verses 275–285.

²⁴² E.g. in PT I, spell 35, §27a–c, spell 36, §29a; Assmann 2005, 233; Kusber 2005, 147–150, 165.

²⁴³ Written with the hieroglyph R9. Cf. Wb II, 366.12–13.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Wb I, 281.9.17–24; Hannig 2006, 195 (6935–6960).

²⁴⁵ Cf. Kusber 2005, 148, note 270. Washing in the strict sense (before eating, before entering a place of worship) is only meant if the verb *jꜣj* is used. Cf. PT I, spell 436, §789b–c. Natron was used both for actual

because this would contradict the meaning of Ka as I and others understand it.²⁴⁶ It may mean that the deceased is ritually cleansed in memory of his high reputation.

In coffin texts, Ka often takes on physical traits. For example, it is injured by hostile snakes²⁴⁷ or crosses mythological otherworldly waters.²⁴⁸ It is possible that over time, the coveted high reputation acquired a divine personification and thus became integrated into the myths.²⁴⁹

3.4 Ka of a child

A king received his Ka in his mother's womb. The goddess of childbirth, Mesekhenet, seems to have been responsible for this by decree of the god Geb.²⁵⁰ During the 18th dynasty it was the ram-headed god Khnum who sculpted the royal child and his Ka, depicted as two identical child figures on Khnum's pottery wheel.²⁵¹ There the royal child is mentioned as "together with his Ka", not vice versa.²⁵² That is, the child is the main figure, Ka is something that belongs to that child. From my point of view, the idea behind this is that a child acquires a certain reputation before birth through the status and reputation of its parents. This is especially true for the royal child.²⁵³

3.5 Ka in personal names

Ancient Egyptian personal names²⁵⁴ are generally considered to be programmatic and as

cleaning and for desiccating a corpse for mummification. The latter procedure, however, was not performed at a cult site. Cf. Assmann 2005, 31–33; Josset 1996, 385–396.

²⁴⁶ The temptation to hypothesize purification from evil/sins is great, given the religious purification rites practiced today. Cf. Wb I, 280.18. But it would be absurd to purify the high reputation of evil.

²⁴⁷ Cf. CT V, spell 378, 41i, 42d–e; spell 381, 44c; spell 436, 287a–b; CT VI, spell 586, 206l, 206p, 207c, 207n.

²⁴⁸ Cf. CT III, spell 170, 38c–39a.

²⁴⁹ Often we cannot understand passages of the pyramid and coffin texts from the literal translation because we are not fully familiar with their mythological background, ambiguities, puns or idioms.

²⁵⁰ Proven e.g. by the childbirth-related incantation on papyrus Berlin 3027. Cf. SAW Leipzig (online), papyrus Berlin 3027, verse F; Schweitzer 1956, 67, quoted from Erman 1901, 24–26. The published translations of the surviving passages of the incantation are inconsistent.

²⁵¹ For example, in the relief cycles depicting the births of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III (temple at Deir el-Bahari, cf. Naville 1897, plate XLVIII; temple of Luxor, cf. Brunner 1964, plate 6; Gayet 1894, plate LXIII), as well as in the birth houses of the Romans (cf. Chassinat 1939, plate XIII; Schweitzer 1956, 65–66).

²⁵² Cf. Brunner 1964, plate 5; Kusber 2005, 105, 108. This second child may have had the same function as the anthropomorphic Ka in representations of the king in his later life.

²⁵³ In the relief cycle depicting the birth of Amenhotep III (temple of Luxor) in scene 9, the newborn king has a Ka hieroglyph directly above the cartouche. Cf. Brunner 1964, plate 9; Gayet 1894, pl. LXV. According to Schweitzer, this child rather represented the newborn Ka of the king. Cf. Schweitzer 1956, 63. In my opinion, the message of the image is: The king is a bearer of Ka (reputation) from birth. See also Kusber 2005, 105–106.

²⁵⁴ All personal names mentioned in this chapter are taken from Ranke's or Schweitzer's collections. Cf. PN II, 208–216; Schweitzer 1956, 26–39.

such were very often used to describe something that the parents wished it would apply to the child sooner or later.²⁵⁵ A good reputation, both professional and personal, was certainly one of those desirable things. Ka as part of royal and non-royal names was most common in the Early Dynastic and the Old Kingdom periods.²⁵⁶ It is sometimes found in the plural (by tripling the Ka hieroglyph, adding a *w* ending or in an old plural form with the prefix *j*).²⁵⁷ There is no honorific transposition of Ka.²⁵⁸ In general, abbreviated spellings were used for personal names by omitting a suffix pronoun, a preposition, a weak semi-vowel, or a *pw*,²⁵⁹ which opens up more than one possible interpretation of a name. For example, the royal name *Spss-k3-R'* ("Noble is the Ka of Re") could also be read as *R2-špss-k3(=f/k)* ("[Son of] Re, noble is [his/your] Ka"²⁶⁰). Many names express positive qualities of Ka in the form of adjective clauses, e.g. beautiful (*Nfr-k3-R'*), great (*3-k3=s*), mighty (*Shm-k3=f*, *Wsr-k3=f*), noble/magnificent (*špss-k3-R'*), enduring (*Dd-k3-R'*, *Mn-k3.w-R'*), sublime (*Dsr-k3=f*), prospering (*W3d-k3.w=s*), alive/lively (*cnh-k3-R'*) and others.²⁶¹ This fits well with my interpretation of Ka as high reputation. I consider feminine forms like *Wr.t-k3* to be nominalized *nfr-hr* constructions ("One with great Ka"),²⁶² although Ranke's explanation that this is merely a habitual feminization of a masculine name²⁶³ cannot be denied.

The names that were formed with a verbal form, especially those with a causative, need to be examined more closely. Taking the king's name *S.mnh-k3-R'* as an example, the Ka of Re would be the subject of a verbal phrase ("May the Ka of Re make [him] excellent") or a relative form ("One whom the Ka of Re makes excellent"²⁶⁴). This makes sense to the proponents of divine Ka powers,²⁶⁵ but not to me, who equates Ka with reputation.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Kusber 2005, 131, 132; Vittmann 2013, 2.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Kusber 2005, 129; Schweitzer 1956, 22–24. Even in the Early Dynastic Period there were non-royal names with Ka. On the other hand, the Ba did not appear in names until the Middle Kingdom. Cf. PN II, 208, notes 7, 8.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Edel 1955, 115 (No. 2).

²⁵⁸ Ranke therefore concluded that Ka could not have been a deity. Cf. PN II, 208.

²⁵⁹ Cf. PN II, passim; Kusber 2005, 130.

²⁶⁰ The variant "With noble Ka, a Re" is similar. Cf. Schneider 1994, 279. In the 2nd person, it would be an exclamation after birth, which is often said to have determined the name of the newborn. Cf. PN II, 30–31; Helck 1954, 27. Compare also the royal name *špss-k3=f* (Schepseskaf, 4th dyn.; "Noble is his Ka").

²⁶¹ Cf. PN II, 210–211; Schweitzer 1956, 32–33. A subjunctive translation is often possible: "May her Ka be great" etc. If it is not clear whose Ka is meant, it is recommended to add the suffix pronoun of the first person singular. Cf. PN II, 54–55, 210; Schweitzer 1956, 34–39. According to Ranke, a written out suffix pronoun of the 3rd person singular does not refer to the name bearer, but to an unnamed deity. Cf. PN II, 209. This assumption becomes obsolete if one assumes a profane meaning for Ka.

²⁶² Cf. Werning 2015, 91–92, §60.

²⁶³ Cf. PN II, 210.

²⁶⁴ Cf. PN II, 25–29; Schweitzer 1956, 29. PN II, 22–47 gives an overview of the translation options for verbal forms in personal names.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Greven 1952, 15–28; Preisigke 1920, 52–53; Schweitzer 1956, 29.

However, the Ka of Re can also be the object in this phrase (“One who lets the Ka of Re be excellent”). This could be interpreted to mean that the name bearer helps the reputation of Re to deserve earthly recognition (e.g. through foundations in honor of Re). Furthermore, assuming an abbreviated spelling and a correct first position of the Re symbol, this name could be read as $R^2-s.mnh-k^3(=j)$ (“A [son of] Re, who lets [his] Ka be excellent”), which easily fits my Ka hypothesis.

It is noticeable that the names formed with the verb *mrj*, such as $Mr.y-k^3-R^2$ or $Mr.t-k^3$, are usually translated in the passive voice (“Beloved of the Ka of Re”).²⁶⁶ However, grammatically they could be translated just as correctly as “Re, who loves Ka” or “One who loves/wants Ka”. After all, the goddess Meretseger ($Mrj.t-sgr$) is not the one who is loved by the silence, but the one who loves silence.

With my Ka hypothesis, the names $K^3-m-md.w$ (“Ka in the words”) and $K^3-m-rd.wj$ (“Ka in the legs”)²⁶⁷ are easily understood as expressing of the parental wish that the child will later earn high esteem through good speech or diligent work.²⁶⁸ Similarly, $K^3-m-zj.w$ (“Ka in/on men”)²⁶⁹ is easy to understand, if one equates Ka with high reputation. Somewhat more problematic are the personal names introduced with $n(j)$, which are commonly understood as possessive constructions. For example, $N(j)-k^3-R^2$ could mean “Ka belongs to Re”.²⁷⁰ From my point of view, there is nothing wrong with this, although I would formulate “Re is a bearer of Ka” (Re is a bearer of high esteem). Alternatively, the bearer of this name is “The one who belongs to the Ka of Re” (The one who belongs to the esteem of Re), which sounds a bit presumptuous.

The name $Nb-k^3$ (“Lord of Ka”) could mean that its bearer should become a role model in terms of reputation.²⁷¹ The female names $S^3.t-k^3$ (“Daughter of Ka”) or $Sn.t-k^3.w$ (“Sister of Ka”) were intended to describe somewhat poetically the expectation that the girl would later be held in high esteem.²⁷² With $^c m-k^3$ (“Connoisseur of Ka”), the name-givers wished that this child would later personally experience high esteem. If this name is supplemented with a first-person suffix pronoun to $^c m-k^3(=j)$ (“May my Ka be known”), it

²⁶⁶ Cf. e.g. PN I, 158–159; Schweitzer 1956, 22, 27.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Kusber 2005, 137; Schweitzer 1956, 38.

²⁶⁸ Similarly in Kusber 2005, 137, note 245.

²⁶⁹ Tomb of Kamziu, Saqqara. Cf. Urk. I, 33–34.

²⁷⁰ Cf. PN I, 180; PN II, 209; Schweitzer 1956, 32. In the basic form of this name, various gods, the Two Ladies, or the king could take the place of Re.

²⁷¹ Cf. PT II, spell 519, §1215d ($nb.w k^3.w$); Kusber 2005, 115; Schweitzer 1956, 26. According to Kusber, *nb* denoted a master of exemplary character. Cf. Kusber 2005, 130.


²⁷² These female names probably had a similar intention as the male name *nb k^3*. Ranke added a 1st person suffix pronoun to such names ($Sn.t-k^3=j$, “Sister of my Ka”). Cf. PN II, 209, 210.

also easily fits into the Ka hypothesis presented here. For the name *Jrj.w-k³-Pth*,²⁷³ I advocate reading *Pth-jrj.w-k³* (not taking the precedence of *Pth* as an honorific transposition) and translating the phrase as a participial construction²⁷⁴ (“Ptah [is] one who procures Ka”). Alternatively, *Jrj-w(j)-k³-Pth* (lit. “the Ka of Ptah makes me”, meaning “My patron is the Ka of Ptah”²⁷⁵) is possible, which at best can be interpreted as the wish that the regionally high reputation of the god Ptah could help the name bearer to social advancement. A third possibility is, that the reading *Jrj.w-k³-Pth* translates *k³* as “procreativeness”²⁷⁶ (“Begotten [by] the procreativeness of Ptah”), with which the name-giver claimed a divine origin of the child.

It is generally advisable to consider the full range of meanings of *k³* (including food, fruit, seed, fecundity, or name), or the abbreviated spelling of a verbal form (*k³*, *k³j*), for the plausible explanation of a personal name,²⁷⁷ especially since *k³* in personal names is often written with the single-consonant characters (occasionally with *k* alone).²⁷⁸ Regardless of the interpretation of the term “Ka”, some names still remain a mystery. Ranke (1952) wrote:

"The result is therefore quite disappointing: from the hundreds of personal names composed of the word *k³*, our understanding of this mysterious being is not significantly promoted, and the names of enigmatic content far outnumber those that are reasonably understandable!"²⁷⁹

3.6 Ka in the Early Dynastic Period

The earliest depictions of the Ka hieroglyph D28  are found on royal tomb stelae, cylinder seal impressions and fragments of various Early Dynastic pottery and stone vessels.²⁸⁰ In the case of pottery, the Ka hieroglyph was speculated to be the signature of a potters' dynasty. However, these jars were not limited to a particular region, and their dating spans hundreds of years.²⁸¹ My suggestion is that D28 on jars may have served as

²⁷³ This name also existed with Khufu (Cheops) instead of Ptah (*Jrj.w-k³-Hwfw*). Ranke found these names “*merkwürdig*” (peculiar) and assumed that the translation was “Servant of Ptah/Cheops”. Cf. PN II, 209.

²⁷⁴ A participial statement, but without the introductory *jn*.

²⁷⁵ Lit. “The Ka of Ptah makes me”. Cf. Hannig 2006, 102 (49075).

²⁷⁶ Cf. Helck/Otto 1956, 165.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Wb V, 83.5–6, 85.6, 91.3–14, 92.17–23; Budge 1920, 782–785; Hannig 2006, 941–942 (34802–34856). It would be worthwhile to examine Ranke's entire collection of personal names containing *k³* for this purpose.


²⁷⁸ Cf. e.g. PN II, 209–215.

²⁷⁹ Quoted from PN II, 216. Kusber also emphasized, that name translations can often only have the character of a draft. Cf. Kusber 2005, 132–133, 137.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Kusber 2005, 49–54; Petrie 1924, plate IV; Schweitzer 1956, 22–24.

²⁸¹ Cf. Emery 1964, 206–208.

an abbreviation for *k³.w* in the sense of (sacrificial) food.²⁸² Much later, more specific information about the contents of a jar and its origin was inscribed on jar labels or closures.²⁸³ The situation is different for funerary stelae and luxurious cosmetic palettes of the Early Dynastic period, which are decorated with the Ka hieroglyph.²⁸⁴ Since these objects were reserved for the elite, it can be assumed that the Ka hieroglyph means "Ka" (high reputation), especially as some of these objects are also inscribed with a *w³s* scepter as an ideogram for the word *w³s* ("rule, authority").²⁸⁵

Unexplained – and also not satisfactorily explained by the Ka hypothesis presented here – are the early seal impressions that show the Ka hieroglyph D28 in conjunction with D36  and the number 8. However, this is a variant of D28, in which one of the two raised hands is clenched in a fist around a short stick or a knife-like object.²⁸⁶ Perhaps it has something to do with a unit of measurement.²⁸⁷

3.7 Egyptian words with related meanings

The objection that there are words in the Egyptian language for "esteem, respect" or similar terms is valid. However, they do not correspond to the meaning of Ka suggested here, i.e. high reputation due to excellent performance (as we would say today) in the professional and private spheres.

jm³h (there is also an identical verb) has a special meaning in the sense of venerability, justification or blessedness, especially in the case of the deceased. It is also translated as "the one who is provided" (in the hereafter).²⁸⁸

As a verb, *^cb^c* or *^cb^cb* means "to brag, to boast". As a noun it can be translated as "boast", but also as "fame".²⁸⁹ Either way, it is a self-congratulation.

w³s can be translated with words like "respect, honor", but also "power", and as a verb it

²⁸² It was not until the Middle Kingdom that *k³.w* was classified with a loaf of bread in the sense of "food". Cf. Kusber 2005, 110–112, 125–127; Schweitzer 1956, 68–69.

²⁸³ E.g. the beer and wine jars from the palace district of Amenhotep III at Malkatta. Cf. Hayes 1951, 156–183.

²⁸⁴ Cairo CG 14234 and 14235, and a cosmetic palette from Helwan. Cf. Fischer 1972, 34, 181.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Fischer 1972, 34, 181. However, in the so-called *Städtepalette* (palette of cities; 1st dyn.), the Ka hieroglyph appears within a stylized city wall and probably had something to do with the name of the city. Cf. Emery 1964, fig. 74.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Kusber 2005, 54 (with a figure after Kaplony).

²⁸⁷ At least D36 suggests so. Cf. Hannig 2006, 134 (4551, 4555, 4556, 46711).

²⁸⁸ Cf. Wb I, 81.13–21, 82.1–20; Hannig 2006, 80–81 (2560–2581). The translation as "the one who is provided" (cf. Hannig 2006, 80 [2566]) reflects the widespread scholarly view that the ancient Egyptians believed, that a deceased person needed a constant supply of natural resources in the afterlife.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Wb I, 177.16–20.

can be transitive (“to honor”) or intransitive (“to be powerful”).²⁹⁰ It also occurs as a name for beings in the realm of the dead (*wššj.w* or *wšš.wt*, the respected ones).²⁹¹ The word apparently does not stand for a reputation based on the fulfillment of earthly social expectations, since this is completely independent of power.

β.w means “respect, reputation, prestige, splendor, grandeur”.²⁹² However, the word was used in close association with the exercise of divine or political power.

hmhm.t means “glory” (glory of war) or “war cry, roar”.²⁹³ The word is clearly associated with acts of war.

swhʒ can be translated as “fame, glory, admiration” but also as “roar”.²⁹⁴ The related verb *swhj* for “to boast, to give credit, to praise,” can also mean “to shout, to roar” in the context of a king, god, bull, or lion.²⁹⁵ It does not refer to fame gained through the quiet performance of duty.

srh can mean both “fame” (associated with a god or king)²⁹⁶ and “bad reputation, reproach, accusation”²⁹⁷, depending on the classifier (the latter meaning being the opposite of my Ka interpretation).

shʒ.w can be translated as “memory, recollection”. This noun and the corresponding verb *shʒ* mean primarily value-free thinking about something or someone.²⁹⁸ However, there was the phrase *shʒ nfr* (“good memory, remembrance, remembering someone's good qualities, praising someone”²⁹⁹), which is very close to my Ka concept.

šfj.t/šfy.t or *ššf.t* means “reputation, charisma, aura, charisma”, i.e. a reputation generated by a certain appearance, physical charisma, or status associated with reverence (often used together with a god or king).³⁰⁰ The related verb *šfj* means “to respect” or “to be exalted” or “to be in the shape of a ram” (this is also a reference to outward appearance and awe).³⁰¹

²⁹⁰ Cf. Wb I, 261.9, 262.7–10, with the addition of the note “*Auch personifiziert als kʒ*” (also personified as *kʒ*) added (262.10); Hannig 2006, 189 (6674–6679).

²⁹¹ Cf. Hannig 2006, 189 (6680); TLA (online).

²⁹² Cf. Wb I, 575.4–13; Hannig 2006, 323 (11678–11682).

²⁹³ Cf. Hannig 2006, 525 (18968–18976).

²⁹⁴ Cf. TLA (online).

²⁹⁵ Cf. Wb IV, 71.5–17; Hannig 2006, 735 (26806–26811).

²⁹⁶ Cf. Wb IV, 200.1; Hannig 2006, 790 (29052).

²⁹⁷ Cf. Wb IV, 199.4–8; Hannig 2006, 790 (29045–29047).

²⁹⁸ Cf. Wb IV, 232.10–234.17; Hannig 2006, 804 (29554–29573).

²⁹⁹ Cf. Wb IV, 233.9; Hannig 2006, 804 (29569).

³⁰⁰ Cf. Wb IV, 457.3–459.7, 460.5–461.4; Hannig 2006, 883 (32690–32700), 884 (32713–32717).

³⁰¹ Cf. Hannig 2006, 883 (32687–32689).

Stelae and grave goods are often inscribed with the donor's statement that he will "keep the name of the deceased alive" (*s.chn* *rn=f*).³⁰² The name, like Ka, seems to function here as a paraphrase for the reputation of the deceased.³⁰³ Reputation was of great importance during life, and had to be preserved at all costs after death through proper burial and a continuing mortuary cult.

4 Conclusion

Kusber (2005) understood Ka as *potentia productiva*, i.e. the ability to carry out one's plans and bring them to a successful conclusion. Social reputation was therefore a consequence of Ka (ability = Ka → works → reputation).³⁰⁴ In this sequence, Nyord (2016) replaced the ability with an undifferentiated potential.³⁰⁵ I take a step back. In my view, Ka is not the prerequisite for high reputation, but Ka is the high reputation (ability → works → Ka = reputation). After all the attempts to explain the term "Ka" that have been published since the end of the 19th century, this interpretation may seem very unspectacular. However, as I have shown, it is largely consistent with the appearance of Ka (possibly in allegorical form) in images, texts, and personal names.

I put my Ka hypothesis up for discussion here. As long as there is no Ka concept that finds agreement with the majority of experts, *k3* or *k3.w* in the sense of "Ka" should remain untranslated.³⁰⁶

Abbreviations:

AAWLM: Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse; ÄAT: Ägypten und Altes Testament. Studien zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion Ägyptens und des Alten Testaments; ÄF: Ägyptologische Forschungen; APAW: Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin; ArOr: Archive Orientální. Quarterly Journal of African and Asian Studies; ASAE: Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte; ASAW: Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Berlin; AVDAIK: Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutschen Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo; Bae: Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca; BIFAO: Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale; BM: British Museum; BSÉG: Bulletin de la Société d'Égyptologie; CG: Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire; CHANE: Culture and History of the Ancient Near East; CT: Coffin Texts (Adriaan de Buck, The Egyptian Coffin Texts, Vol. I–VII, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, Chicago/London/Toronto 1935–1961); dyn.: dynasty; EtMyth: Études de Mythologie et d'Archéologie Égyptienne; FIP: First Intermediate

³⁰² Cf. Zelenkova 2008, 4, 184, 259.

³⁰³ This is reminiscent of the modern idiom "making a name for oneself", which is also a mental association between name and reputation. For the relationship between *k3* and *rn*, see also Bolshakov 1997, 154–157.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Kusber 2005, 198.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Nyord 2016, 163–165, 169, 184.

³⁰⁶ This opinion was also held by Kusber. Cf. Kusber 2005, 198.

Period; IBAES: Internet-Beiträge zur Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie; JARCE: Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt; JE: Journal d'Entrée; JEA: Journal of Egyptian Archeology; JES: Journal of Egyptological Studies; JNES: Journal of Near Eastern Studies; KAW: Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt; KV: Kings' Valley; LÄS: Leipziger Ägyptologische Studien; MÄS Münchner Ägyptologische Studien; lit.: literally; Memnon: Memnon: Zeitschrift für die Kunst- und Kultur-Geschichte des Alten Orients; MIFAO: Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Cairo; MMAF : Mémoires publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française au Caire; MVAeG: Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft; NN: Placeholder for a personal name or cartouche; OER: Open Educational Resources (University of Florida); OMRO: Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden; PN: Personenamen (Hermann Ranke, Die ägyptischen Personennamen, Vol. I/II, Glückstadt/Hamburg/New York 1935/1952); PT: Pyramid texts (Kurt Sethe, Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums, Vol. I/II, Leipzig 1908/1910); RdE: Revue d'Égyptologie; RHR: Revue de l'Historie de Religions; RT: Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes; SAK: Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur; SAOC: Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization; SAW: Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften; SBAW: Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften; SSEA: The Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities; TLA: Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae; TSBA: Transactions of The Society of Biblical Archaeology; TT: Theban Tomb; UCLA: University of California in Los Angeles; Urk.: Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums (Kurt Sethe et al., Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums, Vol. I–VIII, Berlin/Leipzig 1903–1957); Wb: Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache (Adolf Erman/Hermann Grapow, Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, Vol. I–VII, Berlin 1897–1961, unchanged reprint 1971); ZÄS: Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Schrift und Altertumskunde.

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