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The certainty of change : a research into the interactions of the decoration on the western walls of the cult chapels of the mastabas at Giza during the Old Kingdom

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Chapter I

Architecture, decoration and interpretation.

A short exposition is given of the following subjects:

1. The chronological development of the superstructure of mastabas and the ground plan of their cult chapels.
2. The chronological development of the decoration of the western walls of the cult chapels, and the false door(s) placed against them.
3. The cultic versus secular content of (sub)themes and the “emic/etic” problem in their interpretation.

Introduction.

Throughout Egyptian culture the purpose of an elite tomb has always been multiple.

1. It was a place *to bury* a deceased person.
2. As a monument it not only *marked* the place of the burial, but it also *demonstrated* the earthly status of the deceased and his family.¹
3. It *consolidates* the place of the deceased in the society in which he/she used to live.²
4. It served as a place *to bring* offerings for the deceased person.

In his compilation of tomb development Reisner formulates that there was a constant development in the architectural design of tombs due to the utilization of new building techniques.³ However, changes in funerary traditions and habits could also lead to the introduction of new building conventions in both royal funerary complexes and those of private persons. The most important of these changes took place in the architecture of the area where the offerings for the deceased were deposited and in the layout of the burial chamber.⁴ For this research project only the development of the cult chapel is considered, which can be divided into the development of the architecture of the cult chapel itself and the development of the decoration therein.

¹ Van Walsem, *Pragmatics*, 129.

² Assmann, *Tod und Jenseits*, 15.

³ Reisner, *Tomb Development*, 5, section 3. The need for innovation can be considered to be a basic necessity in a culture, and the development of new building techniques is one of its many consequences. Reisner's argument that building techniques are the cause of constant development is only true for lines of change which are directly related to them. Some lines of change cannot possibly be linked to developments in building techniques, examples being the temporary habit of placing slab stelae in some cemeteries on the Giza Plateau, or the introduction of decoration on the walls of the burial chamber.

⁴ An example of the influence of technical development on the architecture can be seen in the difference in size of the single-chambered tomb B 10/15/19 and multi-chambered tomb U-j at Abydos (Ziegler, *Pharaohs*, figure 5, Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab*, figure 4). In tomb B 10/15/19 the beams necessary to span the rooms were about 7 – 7.5 meters long (Kaiser, *Umm el-Qaab*, figure 2), in the older tomb U-j the maximum span was 3.5 meters. In rooms 7, 10 and 12 of tomb U-j jars imported from Palestine have been found indicating that there was trade with the Near East, thus opening the way to importing larger and stronger wood from the Lebanon (Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab*, 34-35). The same is true for the development in the application of stone in construction. It was during the reign of Zoser (III.2) that for the first time various types of stone were employed for roofing, although only 1.30 meters was spanned with limestone and 1.65 meters with granite. During the reign of Khufu (IV.2), by employing thicker beams, already 5.25 meters could be spanned with the latter kind of stone (Arnold, *Building*, 183). This clearly shows that in the period between Zoser and Khufu stone architecture was in an experimental phase, not only testing new materials, but also trying out various designs.

I. The development of the superstructure of the mastabas at Giza.

On the Giza plateau, the mastaba, the prevailing tomb form, can be traced from Khufu, the second king of the 4th dynasty, onwards (for a schematic view of the mastaba, see figures I.1 and I.19).⁵ The building activities of the kings of this dynasty must have destroyed most of whatever earlier tombs then remained on the Giza Plateau.⁶ This makes it impossible to determine the development of the mastaba in the Giza necropolis during the period preceding the start of building the pyramid of Khufu. To remedy this, a possibility is to assume an identical development of non-royal tombs in the cemeteries of Giza and Saqqara.⁷

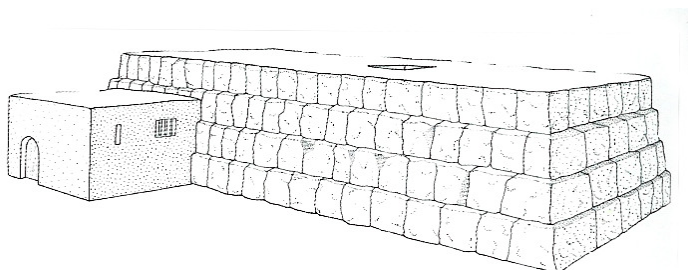


Figure I.1: Mastaba with an exterior mud brick chapel (from Jánosi, *Giza*, figure 2).



Figure I.2a: Funerary enclosure Zebet at Abydos. (from Kemp, *Anatomy*, plate 2)

⁵ A mastaba is a north-south oriented rectangular construction made from mud brick or stone. Its walls are steep, sometimes smooth, sometimes stepped. (LÄ, III, 1214-31, s.v. „Mastaba“). The roof is probably flat, because part of the funeral ceremony appears to have taken place on the roof (figure I.18).

⁶ The following information about tombs at Giza predating the 4th dynasty can be found in the literature: Covington's tomb (mastaba T) (PM, III¹, 294), a dynasty II or III mud brick mastaba (Reisner, *Tomb Development*, 155-6, figure 73; Lehner, *Development*, 115; Badawy, *Architecture.*, 159, figure 103). PM, III¹, 295 gives a tomb of the 2nd dynasty that has later been covered by a 26th dynasty mastaba. East of mastaba T a platform was excavated which, according to W.M. Flinders Petrie, must have been the base of a funerary temple belonging to mastaba T (Petrie, *Gizeh*, 1). Petrie also excavated at Giza a mastaba V, a mud brick mastaba dated to king Djet of the 1st dynasty (Reisner, *Tomb Development*, 30-1, figure 23; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 73). This mastaba is not mentioned in PM, III¹. Also see Jánosi, *Giza*, 75-6; Stadelmann, *Pyramiden*, 107-8 and Schott, *Friedhofsbräuche*, 1123.

⁷ One difference in the development of the mastabas in the cemeteries of Saqqara and Giza is the employment of the mud brick exterior cult chapel in the necropolis of Giza which was seldom built in Saqqara (LÄ, V, 400-409, s.v. “Saqqara. Private tombs of the 4.-6. Dyn.”, 404). Contemporaneous cemeteries elsewhere in Egypt cannot be taken into account, because they were not situated in the vicinity of the royal residence, and this might cause differences in chronological development. The residential cemetery of Heluan dates to the 1st and the 2nd dynasty (LÄ, II, 1115, s.v. “Heluan”) and cannot be introduced into the research project.

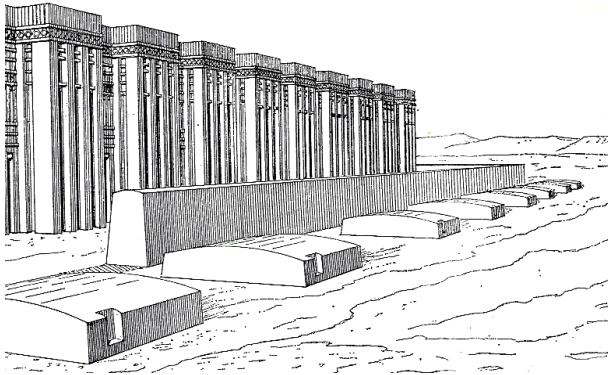


Figure I.2b: The reconstruction of mastaba S 3503, dated to the period of queen Merytneit (PM, III¹, 444-5; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, figure 30; date: 1st dynasty), (detail from Lauer, *Saqqara*, figure 8).

Until the construction of the pyramid of Khufu all mastabas were made from mud brick. It was with this building material that the technical skill was acquired that made possible the further development of mastaba building during the later dynasties of the Old Kingdom.⁸ Already during the 1st dynasty stone being introduced as a building material for parts of the mastabas of the royal family.⁹ The earliest known mastabas were excavated at Tarkhan and are dated to the 1st dynasty.

One of the oldest known mastabas with palace façade panelling is the one of queen Merytneit (figure I.2b).¹⁰

Early in the first dynasty funerary enclosures with a palace façade panelling (*Talbezirken*) (figure I.2a) were developed in the royal necropolis of Abydos and built in the desert near the edge of the valley,¹¹ a feature which was directly incorporated in the general design of the larger mastabas (figure I.2b).¹² The mastabas directly along the northern part of the eastern escarpment of the Saqqara plateau are all examples of 1st dynasty mastabas, with the exception of some intrusive burials of the 2nd dynasty.¹³ All these mastabas have a palace façade paneling on all sides and are surrounded by one or more walls.¹⁴

In the 2nd dynasty the walls of the mastaba were plain, save for two niches placed on its eastern wall. These niches were not equal in size, the larger being placed at the southern end of the wall. The form of the roof of the mastaba is not known as no mastaba with its roof still intact has ever been found. It is possible that the roof had the vaulted form that was found in the wooden coffins of the 2nd and 3rd dynasties with a palace façade panelling (figure I.3),¹⁵ and later in the stone sarcophagi of the 4th and the 5th dynasties with the same type of decoration.¹⁶

⁸ Reisner, *History mastaba*, 579ff.

⁹ Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, plates 14 and 17; tomb 3505: temp. Qa'a (end 1st dynasty) and tomb 3506: temp. Udimu (middle 1st dynasty) (PM, III², 446).

¹⁰ PM, III², 444 -5 dates this tomb to queen Merytneit; Lauer attributes the tomb to her (Lauer, *Saqqara*, fig. 8, page 86-7), and so do Emery (Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 66), and Stevenson Smith (Stevenson Smith, *Art and Architecture*, fig. 16B).

¹¹ Helck, *Talbezirken*; Kaiser, *Talbezirken*; O'Connor, *Funerary enclosures*; Kemp, *Anatomy*, plate 2 (page 54).

¹² It is not possible to determine whether the royal tombs of Abydos had the same *serekh* type false door design because their superstructures disappeared due to time and human interference. All 1st dynasty tombs of Saqqara were constructed with this type of paneling (Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, plates 5 and 6).

¹³ LÄ, V, 387-400, s.v. „Saqqara, Nekropolen der 1.-3. Dyn.“, Abb. 1, the mastabas QS 2103, 2105 and 3031 are all dated in the 2nd dynasty (Reisner, *Tomb Development*, resp. 253, 70 and 250-1).

¹⁴ Ib. Abb. 2.

¹⁵ Although the main part of the (exterior) chapel of the mastaba of Kanufer (G 1203, PM, III¹ 57) had a vaulted ceiling, its roof was flat (Reisner, *Giza I*, figures 94a and b, and page 187[2]).

¹⁶ Müller, *Monumentalarchitektur*, 18, figures 15 and 19.

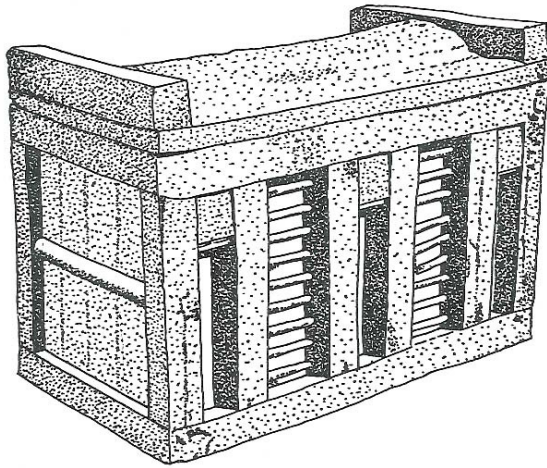


Figure I.3: A wooden coffin for a contracted burial, (Cairo, JE 43794), 2nd or 3rd dynasty. Taylor, *Coffins*, figure 4.

Also see: Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, figure 77 and plates 24a, b.

Already in the 2nd dynasty a difference between the form of royal tombs and private elite tombs existed, but this was more a difference in richness and grandeur than in underlying tradition. From the 3rd dynasty onward a real architectural dichotomy based on a changing royal funerary tradition develops between these tombs. From this time onward the pyramid and its accompanying constructions constitute the royal funerary complex,¹⁷ while, throughout the Old Kingdom, the mastaba remained the tomb for private individuals. Although early in the 3rd dynasty private mastabas were still being built with plain walls and two niches on the eastern wall, later in that dynasty palace façade panelling returned, but almost exclusively on the eastern side of mastabas (an exception is mastaba T at Giza, which has palace façade panelling on all sides).¹⁸ In the necropolis of Giza the southern niche on the eastern wall, being the more important of the two,¹⁹ had a simple, mud brick cult chapel in front of it (figure I.1),²⁰ which was replaced by a construction of stone from the reign of Khufu onward.²¹ This cult chapel showed the following development:

1. The exterior cult chapel became multi-chambered and eventually roofed over to protect the niche and the offering place in front of it (figure I.4a).
2. The next step was the incorporation of a niche inside the body of the mastaba, which eventually became a cruciform cult chapel. Here also a mud brick building was placed in front of the entrance (figure I.4b).²²

¹⁷ The first pyramid complex is the one of king Zoser at Saqqara (early 3rd dynasty); it still has a north-south orientation and its accompanying constructions are dummy temples (plates I.1 and I.2). It was from the beginning of the 4th dynasty on that the royal funerary complex consisted of the east-west oriented complex of the pyramid with its temples (the pyramid complexes at Maidum and Dahshur) (plate I.3).

¹⁸ LÄ, V, 387-400, s.v. „Saqqara, Nekropolen der 1.-3. Dyn.“, 397; LÄ, V, 400-409, s.v. „Saqqara. Private tombs of the 4. – 6. Dyn.“. According to Haeny, *Platten*, 164 the orientation of the false door was completely determined by the location of the tomb in the valley. A mastaba on the western bank has its false door(s) on its eastern wall, and on the eastern bank the false door(s) were placed on its western wall (Heluan). In LÄ, V, 563-74, s.v. “Scheintür”, 567 it is proposed that the older tombs on the eastern bank on the Nile had their false door on the western exterior wall of the superstructure.

¹⁹ Reisner, *Tomb Development*, 249.

²⁰ The entrance to the chapel is mostly on its northern side (Junker, *Baukunst*, 9).

²¹ Jánosi, *Giza*, 154-5.

²² Stevenson Smith, *Art and Architecture*, figure 66. The cruciform cult chapel of Neferma'et at Meidum was originally not intended to be such. At first it was a normal niche, which was eventually turned into a cruciform chapel by means of adding another layer of mud brick against the wall of the mastaba (figure I.4b).

3. Decoration in relief, carved in stone was introduced on sections of the false door and the walls of the cult chapel (to be discussed in part II of this chapter).

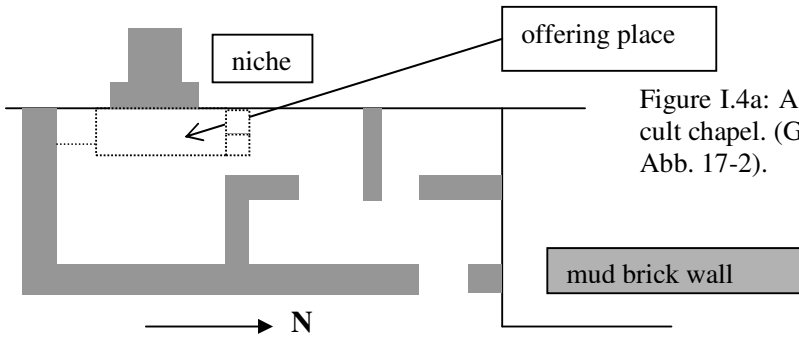


Figure I.4a: A multi-chambered exterior cult chapel. (G 1207) (after Jánosi, *Giza*, Abb. 17-2).

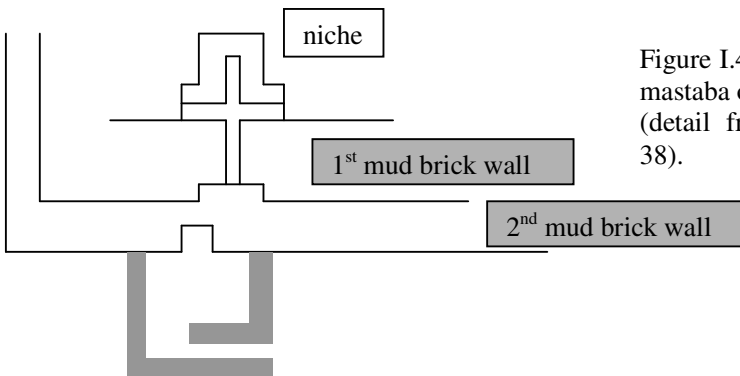


Figure I.4b: The southern chapel of the mastaba of Neferma'et at Maidum. (detail from Harpur, *Maidum*, figure 38).

All these developments can be dated to the transition from the 2nd to the 3rd dynasty. The cruciform cult chapel was further developed during the 3rd dynasty.²³ The entrance into the cult chapel was constructed through the inner niche of the original false door on the eastern wall of the mastaba. The cruciform cult chapel is an earlier development than the L-shaped cult chapel and, since the former was never generally adopted in Giza, this type of chapel remained almost completely limited to the necropolis of Saqqara.²⁴

No proof can be found either that the predominant presence of the cruciform cult chapel in the necropolis of Saqqara influenced the choice of the type of cult chapel eventually adopted in the necropolis of Giza or that the cruciform chapel is the direct precursor of the L-shaped cult chapel, which would make the choice of the L-shaped chapel in the necropolis of Giza a logical step in the chronological development of the cult chapel.

With the start of the 4th dynasty from a royal point of view the necropolis of Saqqara fell into disuse because the kings of the 4th dynasty decided to build their mortuary complexes initially in Maidum and Dahshur (Snefru (IV.1)),²⁵ and then on the Giza Plateau, the only exceptions being Ra'zedef (IV.3), the successor of Khufu, who had his pyramid constructed in Abû Rawâsh and Shepseskaf (IV.6), the last king of the 4th dynasty whose pyramid is situated in the necropolis of Saqqara .²⁶ The "Layer

²³ In Harpur, *Maidum*, 9 the cruciform cult chapel is called a north-south oriented chamber with an inner niche.

²⁴ Harpur, *DETOK*, table 5.1 (page 315) shows that in the list of the cruciform and T shaped cult chapels in Giza only one cult chapel is really cruciform (Sekhemka, PM, III¹, 221-2, plan XXXI).

²⁵ This notation is an abbreviation of "the first king of the 4th dynasty" (see table II.10).

²⁶ Although the city of Memphis was the administrative capital from the 1st dynasty on, from the start of the 3rd dynasty to the end of the 6th dynasty it was the royal residence too (LÄ, IV, 24-41, s.v. "Memphis", 27). Saqqara had been the residential necropolis from the 1st up to and including the 3rd dynasty. Snefru, the first king of the 4th dynasty, moved the royal necropolis to Dahshur, and Khufu, his successor, moved it north of Saqqara (Giza).

Pyramid” at Saujet el-Arjan cannot be included as an exception because it is not dated to the 4th dynasty but to the 3rd.²⁷

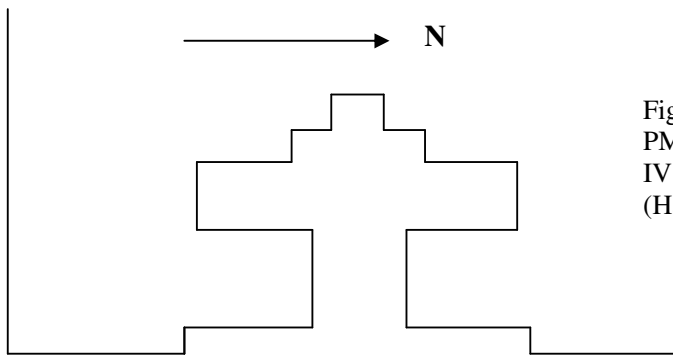


Figure I.5: A cruciform cult chapel (Methen, PM, III², 493-4, plan XLIX, Saqqara, date: IV.E) (Harpur, *DETOK*, 378, plan 2).

During the construction of the first pyramid on the Giza Plateau, several necropolises on the eastern and western side of the pyramid were laid out.²⁸ The first to be built were cemeteries G 7000, G 4000, G 2000 and G 1200 (for a plan of the necropolis: see figure I.20).²⁹

The oldest cult chapels are those of the mastabas in cemetery G 1200, west of the pyramid of Khufu (see PM, III¹, plan VII). They have an exterior mud brick chapel in front of a slab stela in the eastern wall of the mastaba (figure I.6). The slab stela appears only during a short period early in the reign of Khufu.³⁰ The mastabas that were built in later periods of his reign had L-shaped interior cult chapels.

However, the basic idea of the L-shaped cult chapel is already visible in the plan of the mud brick exterior cult chapels of the mastabas with a slab stela (figure I.6).³¹

The royal necropolis being in one place did not prevent contemporary high officials having their tombs elsewhere. Methen (PM, III², 493-4), although a contemporary of Snefru, had his tomb constructed in the necropolis of Saqqara.

²⁷ The most probable date of the “Layer Pyramid” at Saujet el-Arjan (possibly build by king Kha-ba (Huni ?), a hardly known king of the 3rd dynasty) is the end of the 3rd dynasty (LÄ, V, 495-7, s.v. “Saujet el-Arjan”; LÄ, IV, 1205-63, there 1217-8, s.v. “Pyramiden, AR”, also see Dunham, *Zawiyet el-Aryan*, IX-X).

²⁸ Jánosi, *Giza*, 91 proposes that either the complete layout of the mortuary complex of the first pyramid was already known, or that the construction of the complex had already been started, when the laying-out of the eastern necropolis was undertaken. Reisner called the necropolises west of the pyramid of Khufu «the nucleus cemeteries » (Reisner, *Giza I*, 13-4).

²⁹ Jánosi, *Giza*, figure 1. See also Jánosi, *AEP*, figure 34; Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, figure 174.

³⁰ Most of the slab stelae have been found in cemetery G 1200 and the earlier mastabas of cemetery G 4000 (Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, figure 175). In cemetery G 7000, east of the pyramid of Khufu, no slab stelae have been found. Haeny, *Platten*, proposes that the introduction of these slab stelae was not the result of a change in style, but the result of a delay in the construction of the outer casing of the newly built mastabas. Possibly the lack of stone and/or labor force, due to the construction of the nearby pyramid, meant that the casing could not be made right away. In order to make the mastabas fit for the burial and the cult of the deceased, as a temporary measure, slab stelae were placed in the cult chapels.

³¹ Jánosi, *Giza*, 283. According to Der Manuelian (Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, 36) four phases can be distinguished in the construction of the chapel of mastaba G 1201 (Wepemnefert, PM, III¹, 57). During the second phase the construction of an exterior stone chapel in L-shape form was introduced.

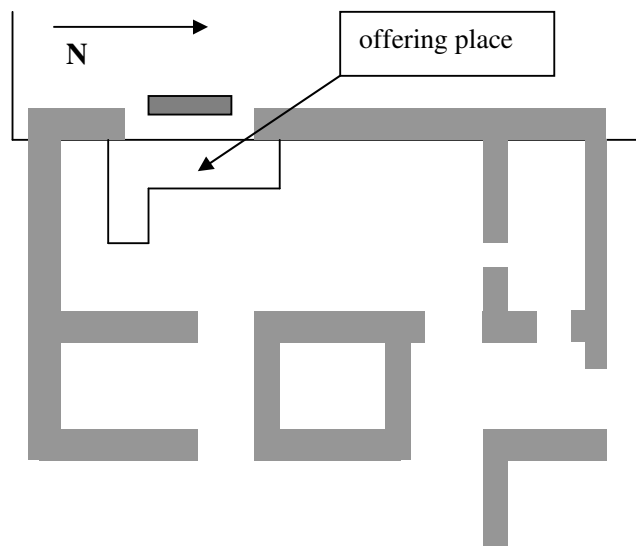


Figure I.6: An exterior mud brick cult chapel (G 1205). (After Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, figure 36).

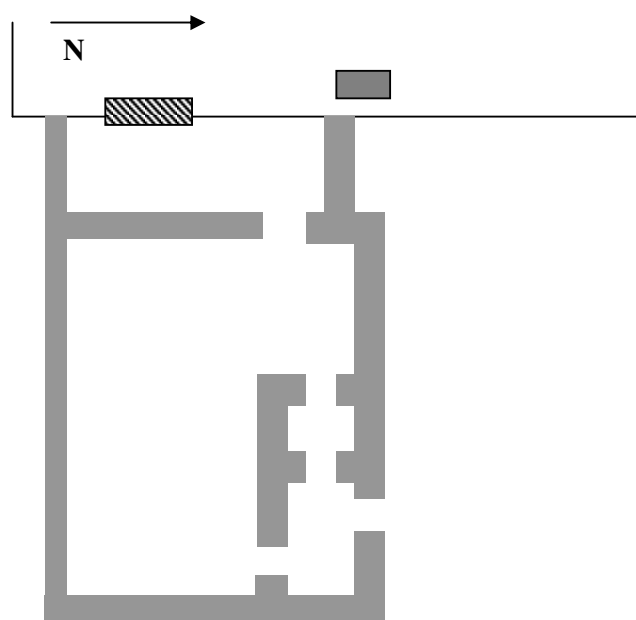
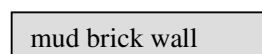
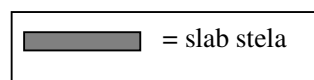
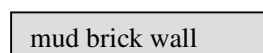
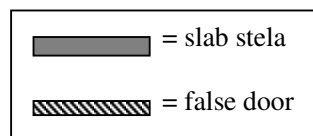


Figure I.7: An exterior mud brick cult chapel (G 1201). (After Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, figure 7).



In the necropolis of Giza the slab stela is eventually replaced by a false door (figure I.7). Most of the early L-shaped cult chapels had one false door on their western wall, but soon after a second false door was added to this wall.³² According to Reisner the introduction of the exterior L-shaped cult chapel

³² Strudwick, *Administration*, 41 indicates that the second false door was introduced during the reign of Khufu (IV.2). Reisner, *History mastaba*, 584 gives for the introduction of the second false door the start of the reign of Menkaure'. The addition of a second false door is not just the doubling of an architectonic feature; it reflects a change in basic ideas about funerary tradition and about the architecture of the tomb (Jánosi, *Giza*, 284).

was a return to the form of the chapels as constructed in the pyramid complex of Zoser (III.1) at Saqqara (figure I.8).³³

The L-shaped interior cult chapel with one false door is, by far, the most frequently employed form on the mastaba field east of the pyramid of Khufu at Giza.³⁴

This chapel could also be an exterior construction which was built against the eastern wall of the mastaba (figure I.9).

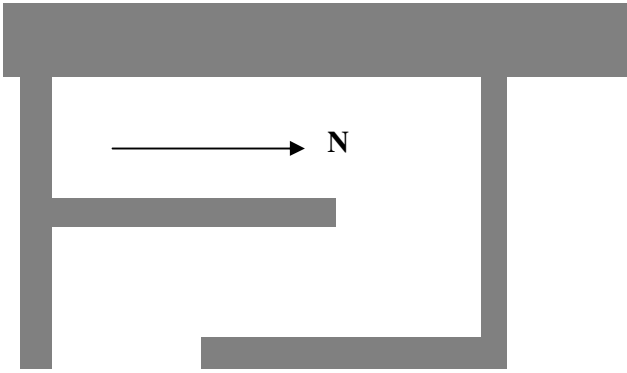


Figure I.8: The ground-plan of a chapel at the western side of the Heb-sed court of the pyramid of Zoser at Saqqara (detail from Stadelmann, *Pyramiden*, figure 12).

From the reign of Khufu on, the L-shaped cult chapel was incorporated into the superstructure of the mastaba. In the latter case an exterior building, made from mud brick or stone, would be erected in front of the entrance (figure I.10).³⁵

At the end of the reign of Menkaure^c (IV.5) or early in the reign of Shepseskaf (IV.6) the L-shaped cult chapel with two false doors is introduced (figure I.11).³⁶

According to Harpur,³⁷ the L-shaped cult chapel with two false doors is the most common form on the cemeteries west of the pyramid of Khufu (IV.2).³⁸

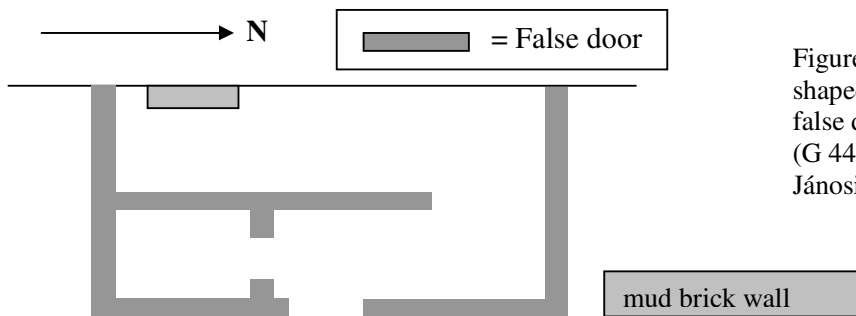


Figure I.9: An exterior L-shaped cult chapel with one false door. (G 4430, PM, III¹, 128, after Jánosi, *Giza*, figure 29)

³³ Reisner, *Giza I*, 9. Reisner, *History mastaba*, 583. Stadelmann, *Pyramiden*, Abb. 12 shows that two forms of extension were constructed in front of the chapels around the Heb-sed court. Despite their differences, the basic form of both types of rooms is L-shaped.

³⁴ For a plan of the necropolis of Giza: see figure I.20. Harpur, *DETOK*, 64. Of 28 chapels on this cemetery 25 have an L-shaped cult chapel with one false door (= 89%) and only 2 have two false doors (= 7%) (G 7510 and G 7650), while one is cruciform (G 7540) (Jánosi, *Giza*, figure 3, page 85).

³⁵ Jánosi, *Giza*, 193 mentions 16 mastabas on cemetery G 7000 (east of the pyramid of Khufu) of which 7 have an exterior building, of which 4 were built of stone.

³⁶ Reisner, *Giza I*, 219. In table V.1.Vol.2 the tomb of Akhtihotp (PM, III¹, 200-1) has two false doors on the western wall and is dated to IV.2-4.

³⁷ Harpur, *DETOK*, 64.

³⁸ Contrary to the proposition in Reisner, *Giza I*, 219 and in Reisner, *History mastaba*, 583, it is concluded that at the end of the reign of Khephren (IV.4), the L-shaped cult chapel with one false door was replaced by the same chapel with two false doors. This statement is in accordance with the claim that the introduction of the rock-cut tomb and the L-shaped cult chapel with two false doors was simultaneous (Reisner, *Giza I*, 219; Jánosi, *Giza*, 305), a claim which does not imply a causal connection between the two.

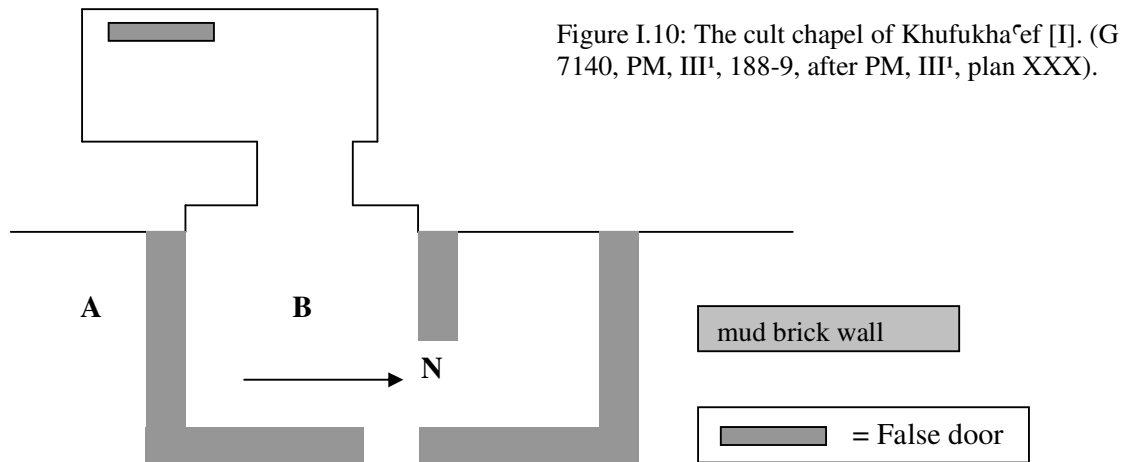
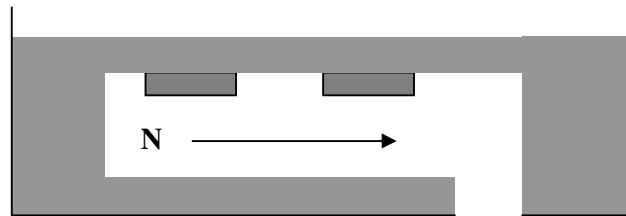


Figure I.10: The cult chapel of Khufukhaef [I]. (G 7140, PM, III¹, 188-9, after PM, III¹, plan XXX).

Figure I.11: An interior L-shaped cult chapel with two false doors. (G 2150, PM, III¹, 77-8, after Jánosi, *Giza*, figure 63).



The southern niche on the eastern wall of the mastaba was the more important of the two niches placed there.³⁹ Very often a construction in the form of a cult chapel was present in front of it, possibly either to protect decoration and offerings or to provide privacy. The consequence of the introduction of a second false door on the western wall of this cult chapel is the disruption of the original relation between the southern exterior niche, the eastern wall of the mastaba and the cult chapel in front of the southern niche. This is because the introduction of a second false door on the western wall of the construction in front of the southern niche turned this wall into a compacted equivalent of the eastern wall of the mastaba itself, thus making the northern niche on this wall of the mastaba redundant.⁴⁰ The original function of the eastern mastaba wall now being lost, this function was transferred to the western wall of the interior or exterior cult chapel.

Starting during the reign of Menkaure^c, rock-cut tombs were constructed in the quarry from which the stone for the pyramid of Khufu and partly for the pyramid of Khephren had been taken.⁴¹ These tombs were at first meant for the burial of members of the family of Khephren, and consisted of a cult chapel cut horizontally into the rock, a rock-cut substructure for the burial and in some cases buildings in front of the entrance of the cult chapel.⁴²

³⁹ See page 3 last alinea.

⁴⁰ Sometimes this northern niche remained in use as an (additional) offering place for the deceased (G 5210, PM, III¹, 155), or for another person (LG 20 and LG 21, PM, III¹, 48-9).

⁴¹ This is the quarry situated south-east of the pyramid of Khephren (Lehner, *Development*, 121, fig. 3B; Lehner, *Giza mapping project*, Fig. 1.6). Tombs were constructed in this quarry from the reign of Mycerinos (IV.5) until the start of the 6th dynasty (Harpur, *DETOK*, 104; Reisner, *Giza I*, 219). For the problems around the nomenclature of tombs, See Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 10-11.

⁴² Reisner, *Giza I*, 219; Jánosi, *Giza*, 301-2 and abb. 71.

The architecture of these chapels seems completely different from that of the L-shaped cult chapels as constructed in the mastabas in the cemetery west of the pyramid of Khufu, yet it can be concluded that both types of cult chapels are based on the same concept, a conclusion supported by the fact that rock-cut tombs had two false doors too.⁴³ Also there was a resemblance between the tombs because often a mastaba like structure was constructed on the escarpment above the entrance of the rock-cut tomb.⁴⁴

In the course of the 5th dynasty other forms of cult chapel were introduced in Giza. These innovations increased the surface area available for decoration.⁴⁵ A first step in this tendency to increase the available surface had already been made in Maidum during the reign of Snefru.⁴⁶ The tendency to increase the surface available for decoration culminated in the cult chapel with multiple rooms (Reisner's type 12), the most famous being the mastabas of Kagemni and Mereruka at Saqqara, but some examples can also be found in the necropolis of Giza. Examples include the superstructure of the tomb of Ra^cwer (PM, III¹, 265-9, plan XXXIII, date: VI), the mastaba complexes of the Kaemnefert family (PM, III¹, 263-5, plan XXXIV, date: V.M or later),⁴⁷ and the Senezemib family (see figure I.12).⁴⁸

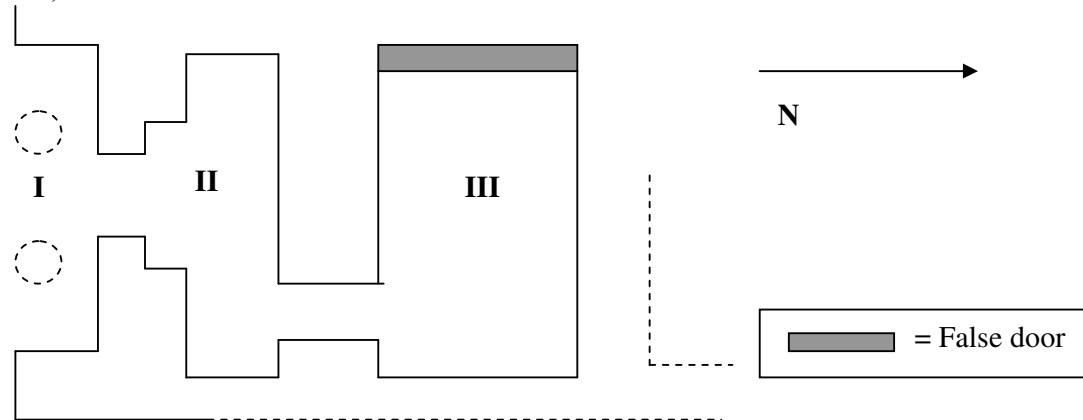


Figure I.12: Plan of the interior chapel of Senezemib (Mehi) (PM, III¹, 87-9; after Harpur, *DETOK*, 441, plan 136; Brovarski, *Gmast* 7, plan 2).⁴⁹

II. The development of the decoration of the cult chapel.⁵⁰

The introduction of stone relief decoration on the walls of the cult chapels of mastabas during the transition from the 2nd to the 3rd dynasty is also part of the development of the cult chapel as a whole, and it is discussed as such.⁵¹

The oldest examples of these reliefs in the cult chapels were the “niche stones”, the precursors of the later slab stelae and the panels of the false door (figure I.13). Reisner dates them to the 3rd dynasty, but in Giza the oldest of them can be dated to the reign of Khasekhemwy (last king of the 2nd dynasty).

⁴³ Jánosi, *Giza*, 316.

⁴⁴ Reisner, *Giza*, 219 ; Jánosi, *Giza*, 297.

⁴⁵ Reisner, *Giza I*, 301-2. The introduction of the rock-cut tomb led to an increase of wall space available for decoration (Jánosi, *Giza*, 310).

⁴⁶ The introduction of the cruciform cult chapel in the mastabas of Rahotep (PM, IV, 90-2) and Neferma'et (PM, IV, 92-4) at Maidum.

⁴⁷ Harpur, *DETOK*, 270 [261] V.6-8E?

⁴⁸ Apart from on the walls of the cult chapel (III), decoration is now also placed on the walls of antechamber II and portico I.

⁴⁹ It was impossible to place the entrance of the chapel in the eastern wall of the mastaba due to the presence of a south-north oriented escarpment directly next to this wall (Brovarski, *Gmast* 7, 2).

⁵⁰ The decoration of the false door is considered to be part of the decoration of the cult chapel.

⁵¹ LÄ, V, 224-9, s.v. „Relief“.

Other scholars suggest dates like I.L or II.E.⁵² Haeny concludes that the “ceiling stelae” of Heluan are niche stones which were re-used in the burial chamber, although for a completely different purpose.⁵³

On these stones the iconography of the decoration is already identical to the one which is later placed on the panel of the false door. A precursor is the stela of Merka (1st dynasty) on which the table with offerings is *not* depicted (figure I.14).⁵⁴

The oldest relief decorations found in situ are the wooden stelae in the tomb of Hesyre^c (figure I.15). The oldest stone reliefs found in situ are the ones in the niches in the cult chapels of Kha^cbausokar and his wife Neferhotep-Hathor (figures I.16a and I.16b, page 12).⁵⁵ All of these reliefs show the tomb owner sitting in front of an offering table.



Figure I.13: A niche stone, 2nd dynasty.
(from Smith. *Art and Architecture*.)

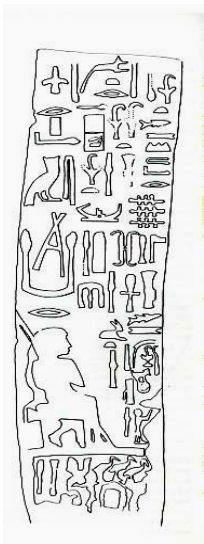


Figure I.14: The stela of Merka, 1st dynasty, Saqqara, S 3505, PM, III¹, 446.
(from Smith, *Art and Architecture*, figure 21).



Figure I.15: The stela of Hesyre^c. (Cairo, CG 1426, PM, III², 437-9, Lauer, *Saqqara*, plate 27).

⁵² Reisner, *History mastaba*, 581. The indications E = early, L = late. Scharff, *Grabplatte*, 353, details that the tradition of adorning the panel with the tomb owner in front of the offering table goes back to the second half of the 1st dynasty (a date based on a study of “the stela of Berlin”, inv. no. 23217). Vandier, *Manuel I*, 736 ff. places this stela in the last part of the 1st dynasty (I.L) or at the start of the 2nd dynasty (II.E).

⁵³ Haeny, *Platten*, 150; Kahl, *Grabplatten*, 143.

⁵⁴ The iconography of the panel, in later periods placed in the false door, consists of the tomb owner sitting at an offering table laden with loaves. His/her name and title(s) are given, while around (sometimes above) the table offerings are depicted in the form of ideograms.

⁵⁵ Hesyre^c, PM, III², 437-9, date: III.E (Vandier, *Manuel I*, 711 ff.); Kha^cbausokar, PM, III², 449-50, S 3073, date according to PM, III²: III.M – IV.E; Reisner, *History mastaba*, 581: transition from 3rd to 4th dynasty. Harpur, *DETOK*, 275 [462] gives dynasty III. Bolshakov, *Double*, 34-5 concludes that the date of these tombs is not certain, but mentions the 3rd dynasty as the period in which the first decoration appears on the walls of the cult chapels.



Figure I.16a: The false door niche of Kha^cbausokar.
(PM, III², 449-50).
(from Stevenson Smith, *Art and Architecture*, figure 49).



Figure I.16b: The false door niche of Neferhotep-Hathor.
(PM, III², 449-50).
(from Stadelmann, *Strenge Stil*, plate 59a).

Tombs were the primary site for the cult for the *ka* of the deceased: consequently a special place where the cult could take place was included in their architectural design.

As it was of the utmost importance to identify who was buried in the tomb, at first the name and titles of the deceased were given by inscribing them on a stone stela which was placed either in front of the tomb or against its flat or niched wall.⁵⁶ The stelae for private individuals soon came to include a

⁵⁶ An early example for royalty is the stela of king Djjet found at Abydos (the 4th king of the 1st dynasty) (Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, plate 2b), examples of a later date for private individuals are the stelae in front of the southern cult niche of Netjer-aperef (date IV.1-2) (Alexanian, *Netjer-aperef*, plates 8a/b and 10) and Rahotep (date IV.1-2) (Harpur, *Maidum*, 50-1 and figure 61). Another early example is the stela of Merka (figure I.14) which shows the tomb owner sitting but *not* in front of an offering table. His name and titles are placed above and in front of him. Already the mastabas of the 1st dynasty at Saqqara show that one of the palace façade doors at the southern end of the eastern wall was meant as an offering place (LÄ, IV, 589-90, s.v. “Opferstelle”). In the tomb of Hesyre^c (PM, III², 437-9, date : III.E) eleven of these stelae were placed in niches in the western wall of the

depiction of the sitting tomb owner, but now with an *offering table* in front of him.⁵⁷ This feature would remain dominant, whether used on a slab stela or on the panel of the false door.⁵⁸ About the decoration of both, Reisner concludes that from the start their decoration was executed in relief (late 2nd – early 3rd dynasty). The name and titles of the tomb owner were not only placed on the slab stela or on the panel of the false door,⁵⁹ but also on the architraves over the entrance of the interior chapel and over the false door.

At an early stage of the development of these tombs, an open air cult chapel was built in front of the false door on the eastern wall of the mastaba.⁶⁰ Technically this rendered the false door a part of the western wall of the cult chapel.⁶¹ As the cult chapel was originally meant as a shelter, without a direct cultic meaning of its own, the eastern wall of the mastaba as a whole still retained its original function.⁶²

The slab stela, and later the false door, were the most important features of the cult chapel.⁶³ The program of the type of (sub)themes on the false door had been fixed from the period late 2nd – early 3rd dynasty.⁶⁴ Yet, some variations were possible and most of these were on the sides of the outer recess of the false door.

corridor cult chapel constructed at the eastern side of the mastaba (for one of these stelae: see figure I.15) (Vandier, *Manuel I*, 710 ff., Klasens, *Stela*, plate I).

⁵⁷ Smith, *Art and Architecture*, figures 31 and 32. In Barta, *Opferliste*, pages 6 and 22-3 it is stated that this theme is placed on stelae from the second half of the 2nd dynasty on. LÄ, V, 1128-1133, s.v. “Speisetischszene”, indicates that the theme itself already existed on cylinder seals which can be dated to the 1st dynasty.

⁵⁸ On the stela of Netjer-aperf (Alexanian, *Netjer-aperf*, figure 21, plate 10) the tomb owner is depicted as a standing figure and not sitting in front of an offering table. The offering table theme itself had been placed on the panel over the back of the southern niche of the mastaba (now nearly completely lost) (Alexanian, *Netjer-aperf*, 58 ff. and figures 28 and 29). The stela was one of a pair in front of the niche and on it his name and titles were given. Beneath the effigy of the tomb owner goods were carried towards the cult chapel by personified estates. The simultaneous use of this type of stela and the panel show that the stela had no direct cultic function and must be considered as a precursor of the decoration which was in a later period placed on the eastern wall of the mastaba at both sides of the entrance to the cult chapel.

⁵⁹ The concept of a door allowing the *ka* of the deceased to move about, is probably already present in tomb U-j in Abydos witness slits in the walls between the chambers of the tomb (Dreyer, *Umm el-Qa'âb*, 34-35 and figure 4; Ziegler, *Pharaohs*, 23, plate 5). Its concept might have been taken from the door of a house, but it was primarily meant to give the *ka* the opportunity to pass from one room to another (LÄ, VI, 659-676, s.v. “Totenkult, Totenglauben”). Discussion still continues as to whether the stela that was placed near the tomb later became the slab stela that eventually developed into the panel of the false door, or whether in the 4th dynasty this false door panel was “taken” out of the false door and as such placed against the western wall of the cult chapel of the tombs at Giza (Junker, *Giza I*, 23 ff.; Heany, *Platten*, 152 ff.; Scharff, *Grabplatte*, 346-357).

⁶⁰ Reisner, *History mastaba*, 580. No archaeological proof of the decoration of the walls of these mud brick cult chapels has been found. The slab stela and later the false door were the only decorated features there.

⁶¹ This was already the case in the 1st dynasty tomb “mastaba 2038” at Tarkhan (Reisner, *Tomb Development*, 71, figure 53). In Giza this can be seen in the plan of the mastabas with a slab stela against the eastern wall (Jánosi, *Giza*, figure 17).

⁶² The original function of the niche on the eastern wall of the mastaba was to make a connection between the world of the living and that of the tomb owner in its interior or in the western world of the dead. Reisner called this niche (later the false door) the “*ka*-door” (Reisner, *Giza I*, 330), a term that has given rise to misunderstanding, because Reisner gave the same name to the openings between subterranean compartments in the tombs of the 1st dynasty at Abydos (Reisner, *Tomb Development*, 23; Dreyer, *Grab U-j*, plan tomb U-j between rooms 2 and 3, see also Ziegler, *Pharaohs*, 23, plate 5).

⁶³ El-Metwally, *Grabdekoration*, 20, proposes that the false door in the form of a niche was introduced in the period II.L – III.E.

⁶⁴ An early example is the tomb of Hesyre^c (PM, III², 437-439, date: III.E). On the eastern wall of the inner corridor of this cult chapel all the decoration has been painted. The eleven niches in the western wall of the inner corridor were painted and contained a wooden tablet showing a relief of the deceased with name and titles, one of them showing the deceased sitting in front of a table with loaves and above it an early form of the offering list in which most of the offerings necessary for the cult are already given (wine, incense, the washing of the hands and a libation) (figure I.15). The decoration of the false door of Methen (PM, III², 493-4, date: IV.E) was already fully developed (LD, II, 3 to 7; Cherpion, *Mastabas*, plates 1 and 2).



Figure I.17: Detail of the false door of Iynufer (PM, III², 894). (detail from Alexanian, *Netjer-aperef*, plate 15a).

The first decoration to appear in the cult chapel was on the panel over the door in the niche. The name and titles of the tomb owner were written on the other elements of the door and sometimes an offering list was placed on it.⁶⁵ The figure of the tomb owner was often placed in the center of the false door either standing or sitting.⁶⁶

The above mentioned facts indicate that the first decoration to appear in the cult chapel was on the false door and only at a later stage decoration was introduced on the remaining surface of the western wall.⁶⁷ The development of the decoration on the latter part of the western wall took place during the 3rd dynasty, witness the fact that the walls of the cruciform interior cult chapel of the 4th dynasty tomb of Rahotep at Maidum (PM, IV, 90-2, date: IV.1-2) were already fully decorated.⁶⁸ In cemetery G 7000 of the necropolis of Giza individual mastabas were combined into twin mastabas with interior L-shaped cult chapels.⁶⁹ One of these, the chapel of the tomb of Khufukha^cef [I] (PM, III¹, 188-90, G 7130-40, date: IV.2-4) was fully decorated.⁷⁰

The wall against which the false door was placed was decorated,⁷¹ and part of this decoration was human figures. Of these a first idea might be that their main purpose was to focus the attention of the

⁶⁵ See the niche in the tomb of Kha^bausokar (PM, III², 449-50, III.M– IV.E; El-Metwally, *Grabdekoration*, 24) (see infra figure I.16a, page 12).

⁶⁶ The southern niche of the tomb of Iynufer (PM, III², 894, date: IV.E) shows the tomb owner standing in the inner door opening (see figure I.17), while in the northern niche the tomb owner is sitting (but not at an offering table) (Alexanian, *Netjer-aperef*, plate 17a). A later example is the false door in the chapel of Nihetepkhnum (PM, III¹, 50, date: V.M or later) (Cherpion, *Mastabas*, plate 4).

⁶⁷ This is also shown in the corridor cult chapel of Hesyre^c (see above) where the eastern wall is decorated with painted depictions of the goods that were to be given to the tomb owner (the inventory offering list), while the western wall remains without any decoration other than the wooden panels.

⁶⁸ This was before the cult chapel was walled up during the period of the reign of Snefru in which the change in style of architecture and two-dimensional art was introduced (Stadelmann, *Strenge Stil*, 162; Harpur, *Maidum*, figures 61 and 90).

⁶⁹ Twin mastabas first appeared on cemetery G 7000 and were constructed by combining two adjacent two-niched mastabas, thus converting them into an enlarged mastaba with four niches on the east façade. The northern niche of each of the mastabas was usually omitted (Harpur, *Maidum*, 35-6; Jánosi, *Giza*, 94, figure 5b).

⁷⁰ Simpson, *Gmast* 3, plate 24 -34. Janosi, *Giza*, 104 proposes that the twin mastaba of Khufukha^cef [I] came into use, at the earliest during the reign of Khephren.

⁷¹ In the necropolis of Giza there has been an interruption in the development of the decoration of the cult chapel, because, contained within some of the cult chapels of the mastabas in the cemeteries west of the pyramid of

visitor(s) on the false door. However, in Harpur, *DETOK*, 377-450, the ground-plans of 60 tombs in Giza are given which makes an analysis of the orientation of the major figure in relation to the principal false door reliable enough. In 29 tombs the tomb owner is depicted looking towards the false door and in 31 tombs he/she is looking away from it. This indicates that there is no preference for a specific orientation and the supposition that the figures on the western wall were added in order to focus the attention of the visitor on the false door is not valid.

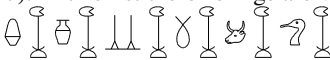
The fully developed decoration of the western wall of the cult chapel consists of a concise program of (sub)themes that can be divided into three main groups:⁷²

1. (Sub)themes concerning the *food supply* of the deceased
 - a. The offering (sub)themes: offering bearers with food or with equipment for the cult; individuals leading animals.
 - b. The presentation (sub)themes: personified estates; presentation of e.g. food and/or animals to the standing tomb owner with or without family, the tomb owner with or without family sitting at the offering table.
 - c. The offering list (ideographic and non-ideographic).⁷³
 - d. Piles of food sometimes depicted with offering bearers adding more food to it.
2. (Sub)themes concerning the *production of the offerings and funerary equipment* for the tomb owner e.g.
 - a. The production of the food that is brought to the deceased (e.g. the butchery scene). In this category the (sub)themes depicting agriculture, hunting in the desert or the marshes and fishing could also be mentioned, but at a later stage of this research project it is determined that their employment on the western wall of the cult chapel is extremely rare.
 - b. The production of funerary equipment that has to be placed in the tomb during the funeral.
3. (Sub)themes showing *scenes from the (idealized) daily (profane) life of the tomb owner* (with or without family) e.g.⁷⁴

Khufu, the only decoration was a slab stela (Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, xxxi). This development of an increasing simplification of the decoration appears to have been initiated by Snefru in Maidum and Dahshur and in Giza this locally restricted interruption continued and resulted, during the reign of his successor Khufu, into what has been called by Junker “Der strenge Stil” (Stadelmann, *Strenge Stil*, 155). Yet, this development is not visible in the eastern cemetery field of the necropolis of Giza. It turns out that this interruption lasted only for a short period (the reign of Khufu, because of the 25 actual slab stelae or stela-emplacements found, only two can be dated after the reign of Khufu (G 4840, Wenshet (Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, 106); G 4860, anonymous (Der Manuelian, *Slab stelae*, 111), with the proviso that the latter could be the product of archaism). The employment of slab stelae was restricted to the Western Field of the Giza necropolis. In most of the mastabas in which slab stelae had been placed, the eastern wall (and sometimes also the stela) was later covered with a new layer of building material and the slab stelae were either removed or hidden behind it. In front of this new cover a cult chapel with a monolithic false door was built.

⁷² For the term “(sub)theme” see the table “technical terms and abbreviations” (page iii ff.).

⁷³ The ideographic offering list is a short list of the supplies that the tomb owner had to receive during the daily offering cult. This makes this list a “Ritualopferliste” according to the definition given by Barta (Barta, *Opferliste*, 7). In this list the offerings are written as ideograms and are invariably placed near the offering table.

The text is  *h3 t h3 h3 nq.t h3 mnh.t h3 šs h3 k3 h3 3pd* “a thousand loaves of bread, a thousand jars of beer, a thousand pieces of cloth, a thousand alabaster vessels, a thousand oxen, a thousand fowl”. At first the non-ideographic offering list was an inventory list (Barta, *Opferliste*, 7), detailing the goods that were considered necessary for the *ka* of the tomb owner which was living in the tomb.

⁷⁴ Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 33 specifies that most of the scenes on the walls of the cult chapels are “scenes of daily life”. The oldest of these depictions have been found in Saqqara in the tomb of Methen (PM, III², 493-4, date: early IV) and in Maidum in the tomb of Rahotep (PM, IV, 90-2, date: early IV) (Harpur, *Maidum*, figures

- a. The rendering of accounts, a scribe presents a person to the tomb owner or a papyrus scroll is handed over or read by a scribe.⁷⁵
- b. Scribes alone or in a row standing or sitting in the act of writing.
- c. Rows of animals in front of the tomb owner which can be interpreted as the inspection of a herd.
- d. The tomb owner sitting with or without family and watching dancers, musicians and singers.
- e. The tomb owner playing a board game with a person opposite.
- f. The tomb owner hunting fowl or spearing fish in the marshes.⁷⁶
- g. The tomb owner transported by carrying chair.

In the above list it is possible to interpret the (sub)themes to be scenes from the daily life without a connection to the production of goods for the offerings to the tomb owner, and to consider them as depictions of various aspects of his/her daily life with or without family.

III. The secular versus the non-secular content of (sub)themes.

Scholarly opinions about the purpose, the origin and the development of the false door are still far from unanimous,⁷⁷ but the persistent placing of this element on the western wall of the cult chapel is indicative that both the western wall of the cult chapel and the false door which was inseparably connected to it, had a special significance.

The main purpose of this research project is the description and interpretation of relations between (sub)themes which were placed on this western wall of the cult chapel and on its false door. In order to do this, a description of the cultic character of the (sub)themes is necessary.⁷⁸ However, this description is based on the terms “funerary”, “cultic” and “ritual”, terms which have to be defined.

92, 93, 94 and 95). These tombs are also the ones mentioned by Müller who proposes that these types of (sub)theme might already have been in cult chapels during the 3rd dynasty. The oldest tombs he mentions in the article are those of Methen and Rahotep (Müller, *Kultkammer*, 79). Reisner, *Giza I*, 322 states that the cruciform chapels of Maidum and Saqqara have scenes from the daily life of the tomb owner on their walls, but that nearly all the L-shaped chapels of Giza are bare of these scenes (for possible exceptions see: Reisner, *Giza I*, 322, note 1).

⁷⁵ From the table in Harpur, *DETOK*, 75 it can be inferred that the line of scribes and the rendering of accounts do not occur on the *western* wall, which is in contradiction with the results of this research project (see table IV.1.Vol.2). Der Manuelian, *Scroll*, 581-585 mentions 28 tombs with (sub)themes in which a written text is shown to the tomb owner with a caption to explain the action (no mention is made of the wall on which the scene is depicted). Some of these captions indicate that the scene is cultic because the scroll enumerates the offerings for the deceased. However, some of them leave open the possibility that the theme is a depiction of a scene from the profane life of the tomb owner. Leaving aside the pose of the scribe who shows the scroll, 8 captions describe offerings to be given to the tomb owner, and are therefore cultic and 17 captions describe actions that can be considered to be profane. Three tombs have this theme with a caption that mentions funerary estates, making it difficult to decide whether this (sub)theme is profane or cultic. The result is that the theme of the presenting of the scroll is not automatically directly involved with the cult itself. El-Metwally, *Grabdekoration*, 101 states that, based on the translation of the word *sš* (Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch*, 1219 gives *sš n qrst.t* which is translated as “Liste der Grabausstattung”), the presenting of the scroll can be considered to be the presentation of a (written) compilation of the totality of the offerings.

⁷⁶ The (sub)themes of the tomb owner watching dancers, playing games or hunting ((sub)themes 12-17 as mentioned in chapter IV) are rare on the western wall of the cult chapel (see table IV.1.Vol.2).

⁷⁷ LÄ, V, 563-574, s.v. “Scheintür”, 563 just mentions that different points of view concerning purpose, origin and development still exist. A more elaborate compilation of them is given in Wiebach, *Scheintür*, 63-6.

⁷⁸ In chapter VII the various types of cultic character are discussed.

III.1. The terms “ritual” and “cultic”.

According to the definitions given by Mühlmann and Mowinckel, a distinction can be made between the terms “ritual” and “cultic”.⁷⁹ This distinction is based on the type of use in the chapel of a basic unit, the cultic act, which is defined in the following way: “die sichtbaren und gesellschaftlich festgesetzten und geordneten, wirkungskräftigen Formen, durch die das religiöse Erleben der Gemeinschaft zwischen Gottheit und “Gemeinde” verwirklicht wird und ihre Wirkungen ausübt”.⁸⁰ If the sequence of the cultic acts (the basic units) is always repeated in the same order it becomes a ritual.⁸¹

The cult performed for the sustenance for the *ka* of the deceased is an action that is supposed to take place on a daily basis (whether or not a festival day) in the cult chapel of the mastaba. Because this cult is intended to be performed regularly and always in the same way, the totality of the actions in the chapel becomes a ritual, which is also evident from the name “lasting offerings” (*jmn.y.t*) given to the goods mentioned in the ritual offering list.⁸²

However, the definitions are strongly based on modern Christian theology, and are therefore purely “etic”. As a consequence, it is possible that modifications have to be introduced in order to “adjust” them to the “emic” situation of the actual cult as it was performed in the chapel of the mastaba.⁸³ Although in definitions given for Christian “Ritus” and “Kultus” magic is not mentioned as an element, it is important that it is accepted as one of the integral components of the cult in the chapel of the mastaba, and at the same time as a means to provide for the sustenance of the *ka* of the deceased.⁸⁴

III.2. The terms “funerary” and “mortuary”.

The actual funeral is an integral part of the total mortuary cult for the deceased and according to the definition given in section III.1, the funerary ceremony as a total must be considered to be a ritual, because, although it is performed only once for every deceased, the ceremony itself was a ritual because as a standardized sequence of cultic acts it was performed (“repeated”) during every funeral.⁸⁵ Contrary to the daily ritual for the sustenance of the *ka* of the deceased, the cult performed during the burial ceremony, although also for the *ka* of the deceased, apparently was not confined to the cult chapel. It is probable that part of it took place on the roof of the mastabas, as is shown by a scene placed on the southern wall of the cult chapel of Debhen (LG 90, PM, III¹, 235-6) in which bearers carry food offerings up a ramp to a statue standing on what can be interpreted as the roof of the mastabas (figure I.18).⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Mühlmann, *Ritus*, 1127-8 and Mowinckel, *Kultus*, 120-6.

⁸⁰ Mowinckel, *Kultus*, 120-1.

⁸¹ Mühlmann, *Ritus*, 1127 „So wird die genaue Wiederholung der Aktabläufe zum Muster des Verhaltens und somit habituell“. The lemma « Rite » in Wikipedia defines the term « rite » in the following way : « un **rite** ou **rituel** est une séquence d'actions stéréotypées, chargées de signification (action « symbolique »), et organisées dans le temps » ; Alexanian, *Ritualrelikte*, footnote 1 employs the following definition : « Ein Ritual is eine geordnete, standarisierete und sich wiederholende Abfolge von Worten und Aktionen“.

⁸² LÄ, IV, 587, s.v. “Opferliste”; Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch*, 141-3 translates *jmn.y.t* with “dauerndes, tägliches Opfer“. The basic function of the cult chapel is to be the place where, on a regular basis, supplies can be brought in order to be offered to the *ka* of the deceased. This offering action is a cult which is repeated on a sequential basis, and which is strongly dictated by rules based on social acceptance. Consequently, the sum of these actions conforms to the definition of a ritual. Proof of the repetitive character of the offering cult is evident in the text of the offering formula where the deceased asks to receive offerings every day, and not only on festive days (Simpson, *Gmast* 2, 20-1, figure 33, plate 15c).

⁸³ For the terms “emic” and “etic”, see part IV of this chapter.

⁸⁴ LÄ, III, 1138, s.v. “Magie”; CT, IV, 23i, Sq6C.

⁸⁵ Alexanian, *Ritualrelikte*. LÄ, I, 743-5, s.v. « Bestattung ». The term „repeated“ is necessary to turn a series of acts into a ritual.

⁸⁶ Alexanian, *Netjer-aperef*, figure 16, page 36-8; Kanawati, *el-Hawawish*, figure 12. For the ramp complete with stelae giving the name and a title of the tomb owner Shepseskha¹ankh, see : Reisner, *Royal stewards*, figure 3; Weeks, *Gmast* 5, plate 52b.

Kees reaches the same conclusion,⁸⁷ while Hassan refers to the building as the embalming house.⁸⁸

The term “funerary” has not been included in the description of the character of (sub)themes, because it is ambiguous for the following reasons:

1. The tomb complex and everything pertaining to it has to be considered to be “funerary”, because it is primarily meant for the burial of the tomb owner. The term “funerary” in the sense of burial rites however, is also strongly connected with the cult performed during the burial itself. In literature it is mentioned that parts of the burial ceremony were considered to be of such importance that they were sometimes depicted on the walls of the chapel.⁸⁹ The acts shown include the transport of the coffin or sarcophagus, of one or more statues or of a chest mounted with feathers, and various articles of furniture.⁹⁰ Also depicted are buildings connected with the burial and priests performing ceremonies. This shows the cultic importance of priests because they are also connected with activities directly adhering to the sustenance of the *ka* of the deceased.

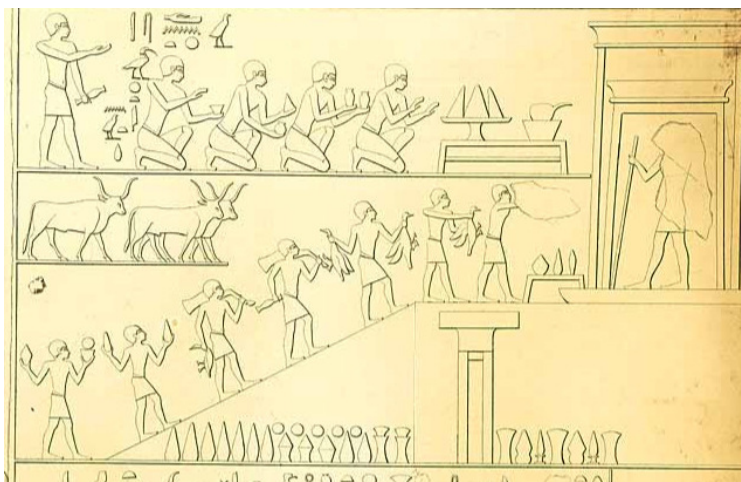
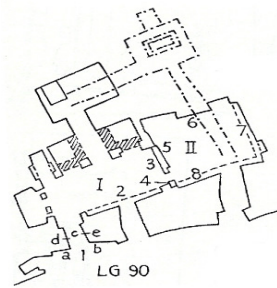


Figure I.18: Detail of the decoration of wall 5 in the tomb of Debhen (LD, *Plates*, II, 35; LG 90, PM, III¹, 235-6).



2. It was only after the burial that the second function of the complex, the cult for the sustenance of the *ka* of the deceased, became apparent. This means that the burial and the cultic activities pertaining to it are only a small part of the purpose of the complex.⁹¹ Ideally the cult for the *ka* of the deceased continues for ever and it seems justified to conclude that it is the more important of the functions of the cult chapel. This conclusion is corroborated by the observation that (sub)themes that can be interpreted as “funerary” are not abundant in the cult chapel itself, and if present, they do not occur on the western wall of any of the cult chapels known to us.⁹² In multi-chambered mastabas these funerary scenes are frequently placed on the walls of rooms which are not intended to be cult chapels. It is clear that, being placed there, they confirm in a general sense the funerary nature of the tomb but have nothing to do with the regular mortuary cult for the *ka* of the deceased.⁹³

⁸⁷ Kees, *Totenglauben*, 125-6.

⁸⁸ Hassan, *Giza IV*, figure 122, page 177-8. For the funerary ritual see: LÄ, I, 745-65, s.v. “Bestattungsritual”; Roth, *Funeral*, 56-8; Roth, *Funerary ritual*, 576-77.

⁸⁹ PM, III¹, 357. Examples are given in Wilson, *Funeral services*, plates XII – XVIII.

⁹⁰ Meresankh [III], Dunham, *Gmast 1*, fig. 8; Iymery, Weeks, *Gmast 5*, figure 32.

⁹¹ Roth, *Funerary ritual*, 575.

⁹² The only exception might be found on the western wall in the chapel of the tomb of Zaty (PM, III¹, 161; G 2337 X) where a boat journey is depicted which can be interpreted as the funerary procession crossing the river to the necropolis (Simpson, *Gmast 4*, 29-30, figure 41; www.oxfordexpeditiontoegypt.com/Database.html, scene 15.7 ; www.gizapyramids.org, photo A3655P_NS).

⁹³ Roth, *Funeral*, 57-8.

The term “mortuary” applies to every activity which relates to every aspect of the way the Egyptians not only dealt with their deceased but also with death as a physical phenomenon. These mortuary activities are divided into funerary rituals and the rituals of the daily offering for the sustenance of the *ka* of the deceased. These two main rituals are themselves again subdivided into other rituals.⁹⁴

III.3. The tomb as an architectural construction.

The tomb consists of two parts (figure I.19)⁹⁵

1. A substructure that was considered to be inaccessible after the burial of the tomb owner.
2. A superstructure that was meant for the funerary cult during the burial and later for the offering cult for the *ka* of the deceased.

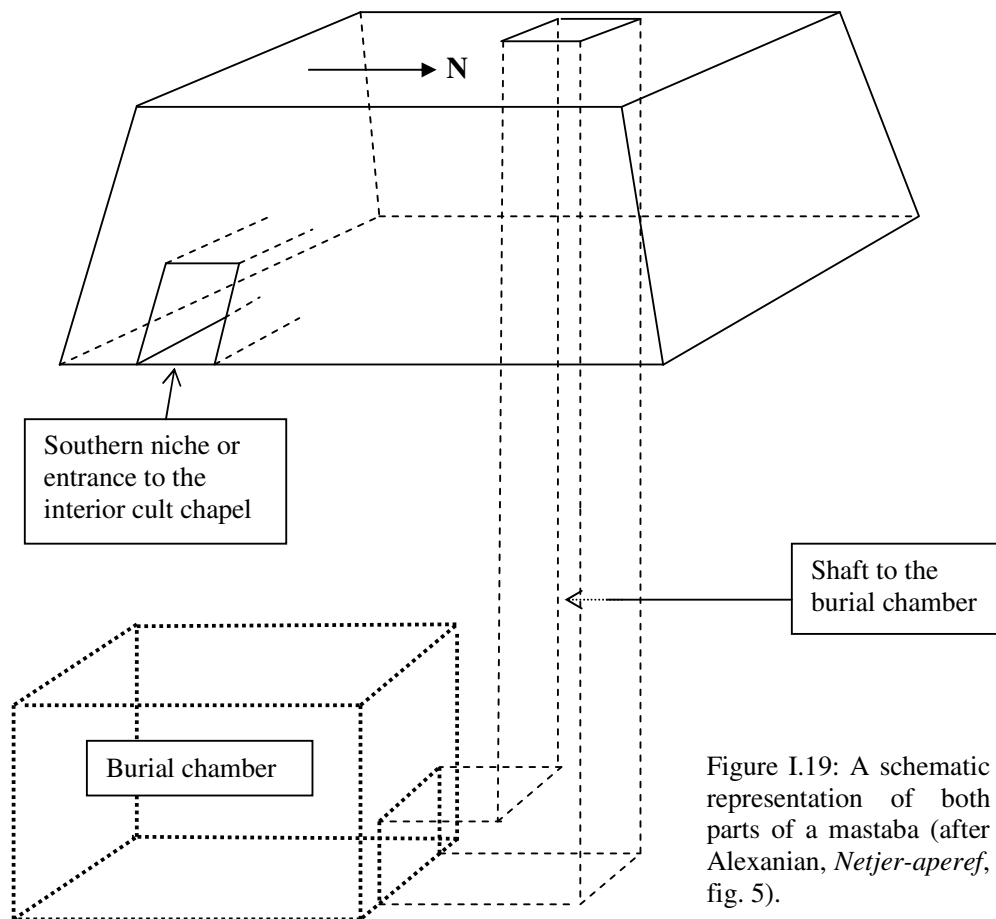


Figure I.19: A schematic representation of both parts of a mastaba (after Alexanian, *Netjer-aperet*, fig. 5).

The latter activity takes place in the cult chapel, which is, as a consequence, the most important part of the superstructure, both for the living and the deceased. In the cult chapel the offering place was marked either with a slab stela or with a false door. Both of them bore decoration identifying the tomb owner by his effigy and his name with or without his title(s).

⁹⁴ LÄ, I, 745-65, s.v. « Bestattungsritual », there 746.

⁹⁵ Dodson, *Tomb*, figure 7, page 14.

III.4. The decoration of the tomb.

III.4.1. The decoration of the tomb (the superstructure).

The oldest tomb decoration found yet is the painting on plaster on one of the walls in tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis.⁹⁶ It already featured scenes that would be placed on the walls of the later chapels for many centuries to come (e.g. hunting, boating, fighting and some important person (tribal chief?) subduing smaller persons placed on a register). At the start of the 4th dynasty in the cruciform internal chapels of the elite tombs of Neferma'at and Rahotep at Maidoum a large scala of decorative scenes was already painted on the walls.⁹⁷ The catalogue contained the following scenes:

1. The tomb owner with or without wife and/or children (later (sub)themes 1 and 2).
2. The tomb owner carried in a palanquin.
3. The tomb owner with estates, offering bearers, herdsman with cattle (later (sub)themes 5 and 6).
4. Desert-hunting, fowling (later (sub)theme 17).
5. Boat building, boatmen returning.
6. Butchery, fish netting and the preparation of the fish thus caught, bird netting (later (sub)theme 9).
7. Vintage, agriculture (later (sub)theme 15).

Already here the same division as given on pages 15-6 can be made between effigies of the tomb owner with or without his family, food production and its bringing to the tomb owner. Although the third group is still less evident, some of the main themes of this group are already present, thus giving us a glimpse of the daily life of the owner.⁹⁸ Throughout the Old Kingdom the catalogue of decoration never remained the same; throughout the whole period (sub)themes were disappearing and new ones were being introduced, although their number remained quite stable.⁹⁹

The presence of this decoration, combined with the fact that the remaining wall surface of the cult chapel was also decorated, might lead to the conclusion that decoration was an integral part of the function of the chapel, and it is one of the main goals of this research project to find proof for this assumption.

However, this does not imply that each (sub)theme included in the decoration on the walls was placed there to play a direct role in the offering ritual. There is a distinct possibility that (sub)themes can have different functions. An example of this is the depiction of the tomb owner together with his family (in chapter IV designated as (sub)theme 2), and of which the frequency of occurrence (FO) is high enough (53% in table IV.1.Vol.2) to indicate that it has a certain importance.¹⁰⁰ However, this high FO does not automatically indicate that the (sub)theme is important for the offering ritual itself. It is possible that it just shows the tomb owner in the more profane setting of his/her earthly life as a father/mother of children, and a member of a family. Such a depiction does not necessarily show the real family situation, but more probably rather the ideal of a family with at least one male child or more children of various sexes.¹⁰¹ Possibly this was a "Sinnbild" and considered important enough to rate a high frequency of selection.¹⁰² If the deceased is a man, the role of provider could also be implicated.

⁹⁶ Crowfoot Payne, *tomb 100*. Stevenson Smith, *Art and Architecture*, figure 9, page 31.

⁹⁷ Harpur, *Maidum*, figures 72 – 78, 81 – 88 and 92 – 97.

⁹⁸ Especially in Harpur, *Maidum*, figures 76-7, 92 and 94.

⁹⁹ *Infra* figure IV.1.

¹⁰⁰ It is clear that a selection was made of the (sub)themes that were placed on the walls of the cult chapel (Weeks, *Art*, 60; Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 51-61).

¹⁰¹ LÄ, II, 101-3, s.v. „Familie, soziale Funktion“.

¹⁰² Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 71-83.

Another example is (sub)theme 1 (the tomb owner alone), which might be important for the offering ritual itself, but it could also be nothing more than a depiction of the deceased placed on the wall in a signaling and/or identifying role.

Another consideration is that the frequency of occurrence of (sub)themes might not only be determined by their cultic importance, this frequency can also be influenced by the presence of absence of other (sub)themes in their vicinity.

III.4.2. The decoration of the tomb (the substructure).

During the Old Kingdom some (but not many) of the elite tombs also had decoration on the walls of the burial chamber, but the themes chosen for this room consisted of food offerings and burial equipment.¹⁰³ It is probable that this was a pictorial transformation of the old tradition of placing burial equipment and a meal in the burial chamber.¹⁰⁴ From the end of the Old Kingdom on the decoration was increasingly placed on the coffin itself.¹⁰⁵

IV. The “etic” versus the “emic” interpretation.¹⁰⁶

It is for ever hidden in the past exactly how an individual, living in Egypt in pharaonic times, would react to certain situations. Although their reaction to the most basic needs of physical existence would not differ much from ours in our own time, their reactions to more sophisticated situations were culturally determined, and therefore out of our reach.

Despite these considerations we cannot only give a description of the (sub)themes as they are employed in the decoration of the funerary complexes (the pre-iconographic and iconographic description), but we can also express an opinion about their possible meaning.¹⁰⁷ The latter, which is called the iconological description, is more difficult and can easily miss the mark due to the fact that the Egyptologist is working from an “etic” point of view.¹⁰⁸ These arguments are the reason for the difficulties sometimes encountered in attempting to give an iconological description of the (sub)themes making up the decoration of a mastaba.¹⁰⁹ Kemp proposes an intuitive approach as a possible solution of the “emic/etic” problem.¹¹⁰

However, the iconological content of a (sub)theme can change over time in two ways:¹¹¹

1. With an unchanging content, the depiction (symbol) used for it changed.
2. The content changes, but the depiction does not.

In the first case a change is apparent while in reality no such thing takes place, and in the second case the change remains invisible.

Considering that the interpretation of the iconological content of many of the (sub)themes is already problematic, it will be hard to observe, let alone interpret, these two types of change.¹¹² A consequence

¹⁰³ LÄ, II, 853-7, s.v. « Grabdekoration », there 854. In the necropolis of Giza this feature has only been found on the walls of the burial chambers of Kaem'ankh (G 4561, PM, III¹, 131-3) and Seshemnufer (PM, III¹, 238-9).

¹⁰⁴ Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, plate 29.

¹⁰⁵ The coffin of Idu [II] (6th dynasty) (PM, III¹, 165-7).

¹⁰⁶ Polz, *Recording methods*, 123 ff..

¹⁰⁷ Panofsky, *Iconography*.

¹⁰⁸ The term “etic” indicates that a culture as a whole or one of its subsystems is described, interpreted or influenced by a person or stimulus not pertaining to it. The term “emic” has the same definition but now from within the culture or subsystem (Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 49).

¹⁰⁹ Haeny, *Platten*, 153.

¹¹⁰ Kemp, *Anatomy*, 47. Also with this approach, however prudently applied, the perspective of the culture under study remains etic.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, 46.

of this is that in this research project only the pre-iconographic or iconographic description of a (sub)theme is taken into consideration.

To avoid misguided “etic” interpretations as much as possible, this research project employs methods based on calculus wherever and whenever possible to reach its conclusions.¹¹³ But the argument that this method too is «etic» to the culture under study still remains valid, from a strict point of view.

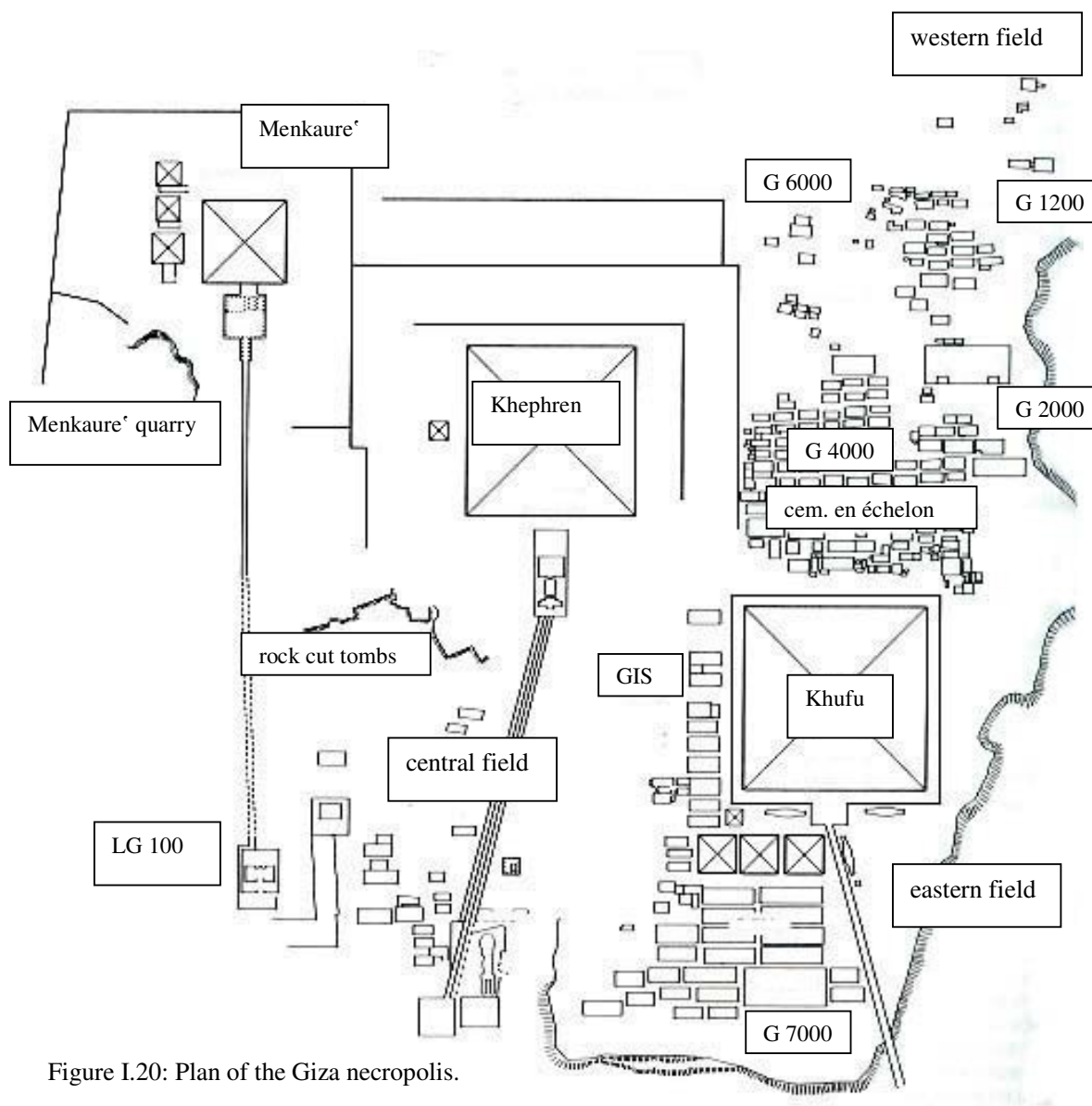


Figure I.20: Plan of the Giza necropolis.

¹¹² It is already difficult to find examples of symbols that have changed in meaning enough in our own culture; although some can be found in language. An example is the word “shift” of which the medieval meaning of a ladies loose undergarment has been lost. A non-linguistic example is the swastika, which originated as a Sanskrit symbol of unknown meaning (symbol of the sun, the wind, phallic symbol?). Later it was adopted by Buddhism as a symbol of holiness and happiness, and in the 20th century as the symbol of Nazism.

It is easier to find examples of symbols that lost their meaning over time, an example being the owl as a symbol of photophobia in the sense of fear for the truth (“The three ages and death”, a painting by Hans Baldung Grien, AD. 1539, Museo del Prado, Madrid, (Cohen, *Naakte mens*, 103)).

¹¹³ Van Walsem, *Iconography*, 41 ff..