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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 X

The interactions between the decoration of the western wall and the false door. Further considerations about the magical food supply.

In the preceding chapter no interactions of (sub)themes have been found between the parts of the false door itself. Yet it remains possible that interactions between the decoration of the western wall and the false door exist, but a further study reveals that the only feasible interaction might be the presence of (sub)theme 40 (tomb owner at the offering table, panel) exerting a negative influence on the frequency of employment of (sub)theme 3 (tomb owner at the offering table, western wall).

A possible chronological development in the magical food supply is further studied.

I. Preliminary considerations.

Between the (sub)themes of the false door and the western wall interactions are possible. However, many of these can be considered to have no genuine basis. The only interaction that might be worth considering is the one between (sub)theme 3 (the offering table scene on the western wall) and (sub)themes 40 and 41 together (the offering table scene on the panel of the false door). This interaction could be genuine because originally (sub)theme 40 was the only offering table scene present on the western wall as a whole. (Sub)theme 3 was later imported from the southern wall of the chapel to be placed on the western wall. This introduction of an extra offering table scene on the western wall might give rise to (sub)themes 40 and/or 41 exerting a negative influence on the employment of (sub)theme 3 on the same wall.

I.1. The interaction between (sub)themes 3 and 40.

The chronological development of the FO/period values of (sub)themes 3 and 40 are gathered in figure X.1.¹

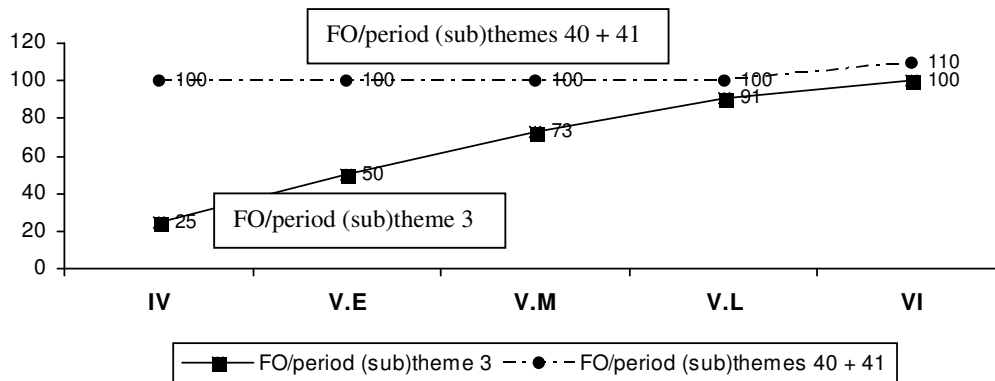


Figure X.1: FO/period curves of (sub)themes 3 and 40 + 41.

From these two curves can be concluded that the presence of (sub)themes 40 and 41 does not influence the increasing presence of (sub)theme 3 on the western wall.

The final conclusion is that there is no indication of interactions between the (sub)themes of the false door and the western wall.

¹ The FO/period values of (sub)themes 3 are taken from diagram IV.3.Vol.2, and those of (sub)themes 40 and 41 together are determined in table VIII.1.Vol.2.

II. Considerations relating to the food supply for the *ka* of the deceased.

The first depictions of the tomb owner in front of an offering table have been found in the burial chambers of tombs of the 1st – 3rd dynasty, on cylinder seals placed next to the meal laid out on the floor of the burial chamber.² This leads to the conclusion that the food supply has always been twofold, viz. actually cultic and magical.³ After the introduction of the panel in the “true” false door, both aspects became centred on the false door, in which (sub)theme 40/41 (the tomb owner at the offering table, panel) has always been the main (sub)theme for the magical food supply, while the actual food supply depended on the (sub)themes on the other parts of the false door. Two (sub)themes on the western wall can be considered also to be involved in the actual food supply (figure VII.18). These (sub)themes are the following:

1. The butchery scene ((sub)theme 9) which was always placed in the lowest registers of the western wall, either to the left side or the right side of the false door.⁴
2. The priests ((sub)theme 7).

Beginning in the period V.E changes in the repertoire of (sub)themes placed on the western wall and the frequency of employment of other (sub)themes indicate that the magical food supply on the western wall starts to increase.

As already discussed, it is highly likely that (sub)theme 3 was removed from the southern wall and placed on the western wall in order to serve as a (sub)theme connected with the non-ideographic offering list which from then on was placed on the western wall (see chapter VIII, section III.2.2). But this placing of (sub)theme 3 on the western wall also resulted in an enhancement of the tendency to supply food to the *ka* of the deceased by way of magic.

In figures VIII.4a/b the disappearance of (sub)themes 31 (members of the family), 34 (offering bearers), 35 (priests) and 36 (containers/standards) and the simultaneous appearance of (sub)theme 33 (offering formula, figure VIII.3) on the door jambs has been explained as a decrease of the importance of the actual cult of placing offerings in front of the false door, with a simultaneous increase in the supply of food by means of magic. The repertoire of (sub)themes was altered to reflect to this change in the type of cultic activity employed for the food supply of the *ka* of the deceased.⁵

Yet, as already mentioned above, (sub)theme 9 (the butchery scene) remained in its normal place close to the false door in the lowest registers, even though its connection with the (sub)themes placed on the door jambs and which were connected to the actual cult, was disappearing. The consequence was that the frequency of employment of the butchery scene started to diminish too (figure X.2 in which (sub)theme 34 is taken as a representative of the group of disappearing (sub)themes).⁶

From the period V.E on the magical food supply started to become more important and somewhat later the decrease in the frequency of employment of the butchery scene began to turn into an increase

² LÄ, V, 1128-9, s.v. „Speisetischszene“; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, plate 29.

³ It is highly probable that at first the two aspects of the food supply were architectonically separated, i.e. the magical supply was confined to the burial chamber, and the actual cult to the stela placed in front of the eastern wall of the superstructure. In, for instance, the tomb of Merka (PM, III², 446; S 3505), the stela placed there showed the sitting tomb owner accompanied by his name and titles, but without an offering table in front of him (figure I.14).

⁴ In table VI.1.Vol.2 it is only in the chapel of Person (PM, III¹, 143-4) that this scene has been placed in the 3rd register counted from the bottom (in a total of 6 registers); in all the other tombs it is either in the first or the second register. The fact that the butchery scene is placed low on the wall, close to the false door (that is, close to the offering place in front of it) throughout the Old Kingdom makes it highly probable that it is a (sub)theme connected to the actual cult.

⁵ In LÄ, V, 560-1, s.v. « Scheingaben », it is proposed that all (sub)themes depicting the provision of goods, are, because of their inherent magical power, able to sustain the deceased tomb owner. Examples of such (sub)themes are : offerings brought by offering bearers, personified estates (refuted in this research project), the offerings on the table in front of the tomb owner, offering lists, the production of food (e.g. the butchery scene).

⁶ The FO/period values for (sub)theme 9 are taken from diagram IV.9.Vol.2, and those for (sub)theme 34 from diagram VIII.5.Vol.2.

(figure X.2 as a testimony of this tendency). This can be explained by an increasing importance of the (sub)theme for the magical food supply because of its depiction of the production of food.

This increase links up with the chronological development of (sub)themes 10 (piles of food) and 11 (non-ideographic offering list), and from V.M on the curves indicate a possible association between the three (sub)themes (figure X.3; see also chapter IV, section IV, point 5).

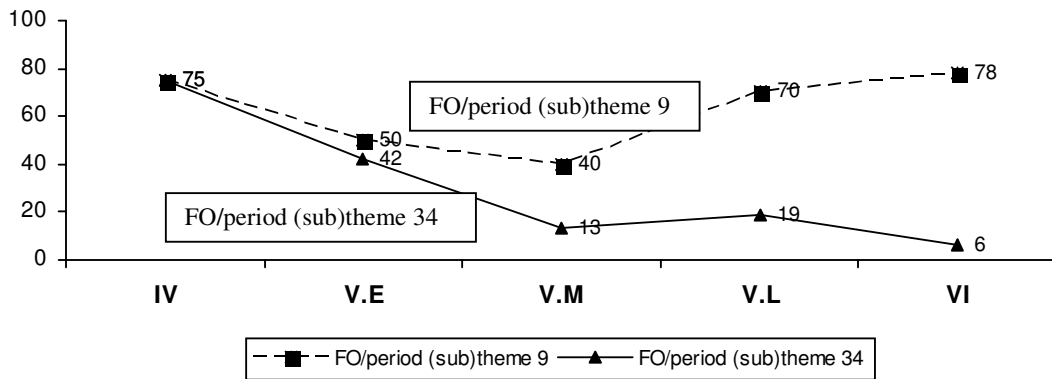


Figure X.2: The chronological development of (sub)themes 9 and 34.

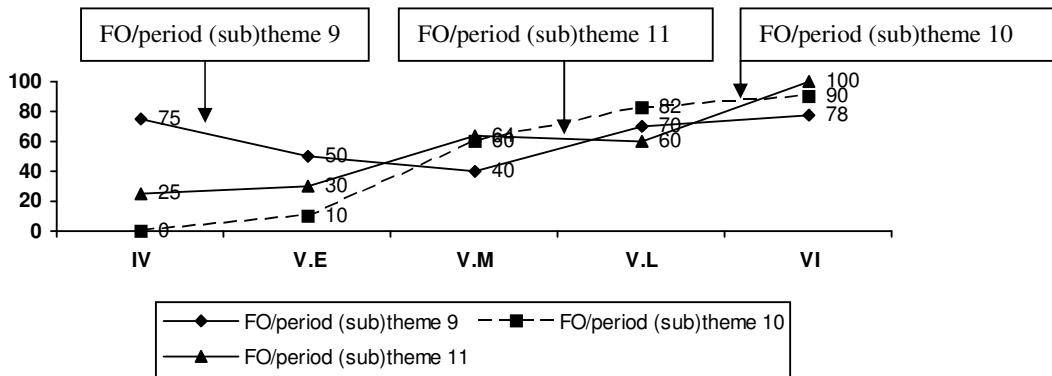


Figure X.3: The chronological development of (sub)themes 9, 10 and 11.

In order to further study how the change of cultic activity was mirrored in the repertoire of (sub)themes placed on the whole western wall, the chronological behaviour of a number of (sub)themes has been interpreted in the light of this change.

The first problem encountered is defining the use life of the (sub)themes involved. The definition employed for the chronological development of the cultic content of a (sub)theme is based on the assumption that only at a certain FO/period value can the (sub)theme be considered to be really embedded in the tradition.⁷ When studying the employment of (sub)themes for the magical food supply, it has to be taken into account that the subject of the study is a *change* in the type of food supply. This means that certain (sub)themes, whose realization depends already on magical imagery, can only be taken into account from the start of a *change* in that level. In that case the (sub)theme can only be included from the period that its frequency of employment starts to change. The beginning of such changes is determined in the diagrams IV.1-11.Vol.2 and VIII.1-15.Vol.2.

⁷ As already discussed, this value cannot be defined (chapter VII, section V).

The definition has some consequences:

1. The FO/period of e.g. (sub)theme 3 (offering table scene) indicates that the change started at the onset of the 4th dynasty.⁸
2. The changing cultic character of (sub)theme 2 (tomb owner with family) (figure VII.7) indicates that it has no role in the magical food supply (perhaps so at the end of the Old Kingdom, but even then its connection with the magical supply of food is doubtful).
3. If the curve of the FO/period of a (sub)theme is horizontal, it cannot be admitted to figures X.4 and X.5 because no change takes place.

The following changes are obvious:

1. The change of (sub)theme 42 (non-ideographic offering list, panel) to (sub)theme 11 (non-ideographic offering list, western wall) (figure VIII.5) is important, because, when the presence of the non-ideographic offering list on the western wall started to increase (V.E-V.M), it did so with the same cultic character it had on the panel (type Ib), but it was no longer directly connected to the offering activity in front of the false door.⁹
2. Right from the start of the period taken into account in this research project the offering formula was placed on the architrave of the false door ((sub)theme 63) (the offering formula) (figure VIII.3). The frequency of employment of the offering formula on the architrave does not change appreciably over the whole period, and for this reason (sub)theme 63 is not admitted to figure X.4.
3. Although the offering formula is already present on the door jambs of the false door ((sub)theme 33) during the period V.E, its frequency there is extremely low and only starts to really increase from the period V.L on (figure VIII.3).¹⁰
4. As already discussed, in figure X.2 it is evident that from the start of the period V.L on the importance of (sub)theme 9 (the butchery scene) increased, because the (sub)theme changed from a depiction closely connected to the actual (cultic) supply of food to an integral part of the magical food supply, and from halfway in that period on it is included in figure X.4. The use life of the latter is contradictory to the one in figure VII.18, in which it is depicted as being employed throughout the Old Kingdom. This is due to the fact that in figure VII.18 its presence as a type Ib (sub)theme is represented, while in figure X.3 it is only of interest when it becomes part of the magical food supply.
5. During the period V.E/L - V.M/E (sub)theme 3 could be placed either on the southern or on the western wall (table VI.3.Vol.2), but from the start of the period V.L it is exclusively placed on the western wall. It is in the period that it could be placed on any of the two walls (V.E/L-

⁸ The consequence of this is that the use life of the (sub)themes admitted here is not always in accordance with the ones given in figures VII.17, IX.1 and IX.3.

⁹ The definition of the type Ib cultic character (figure VII.3) does not make it possible to distinguish between the magical and the actual cultic food supply. The offering list, as it was placed on the panel, was partly an inventory list intended as a summing up of what was believed to be needed by the *ka* of the deceased during his stay in the hereafter, and partly a ritual list mentioning the goods which were to be offered on a regular basis. During the 4th dynasty the importance of the ritual part of the list grew, and at the transition from the 4th to the 5th dynasty the ritual offering list had become too large for the panel of the false door, and had to be placed on the western wall. The number of goods that, according to the list, had to be offered to the deceased had become so comprehensive that any physical connection with an actual offering ritual is highly unlikely. LÄ, IV, 586, s.v. „Opferliste“, concludes „.....wohnte dem geschriebenen Wort die Kraft inne, auf magische Weise Realitäten zu erschaffen. Die in der Opferliste schriftlich fixierten Opfer konnten daher denselben Zweck wie tatsächlich überreichte Gaben erfüllen“. The ritual offering list is placed (as (sub)theme 11) on the western wall from the start of the 5th dynasty on, and from then on the offering list placed there can be considered to be solely intended for the magical food supply and no longer for the real cultic activity in front of the false door (for that reason it is incorporated in figure X.3). During the period V.E the offering list remained placed on the panel as well (table VIII.1.Vol.2) and there it served the actual offering cult (for this reason (sub)theme 42 is not admitted in figure X.4).

¹⁰(Sub)theme 33 is admitted in figure X.4 from V.L onward.

- V.M/E) (table VI.3.Vol.2) that the importance of the magical supply of food started to increase, consequently from the start of that period on the (sub)theme is admitted to figure X.4.
6. Diagrams IV.5.Vol.2 and IV.7.Vol.2 show that the frequency of employment of (sub)themes 5 (offering bearers) and 7 (priests) remains the same throughout the Old Kingdom. Consequently, they are not introduced into figure X.4.
 7. The frequency of employment of (sub)theme 10 (the piles of food offerings) starts to increase from period V.E on (diagram IV.10.Vol.2). Although it is a (sub)theme with a unifying function, its increased employment from V.E on, combined with the food that it depicts indicates a connection with the change to a more magical supply of food.
 8. It is probable that the actual cult in front of the false door did not disappear completely, as offering stands have been found in situ in tombs that had been tentatively dated from the middle of the 5th dynasty to the end of the 6th.¹¹

The chronological development of the (sub)themes which have a sufficient certain connection with the two types of food supply, are gathered in figures X.4 and X.5 and the overall chronological development is represented in figure X.6.¹²

(sub)theme	IV		V.E		V.M		V.L		VI	
	early	late	early	late	early	late	early	late	early	late
11										
10										
9										
3										
33										
43										
total	1	1	2	3	3	3	6	6	6	6

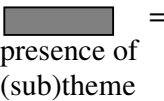


Figure X.4: The use life of (sub)themes involved in the magical food supply.

(sub)theme	IV		V.E		V.M		V.L		VI	
	early	late	early	late	early	late	early	late	early	late
6										
8										
9										
31										
34										
35										
36										
42										
total	8	8	8	8	6	6	1	1	0	0

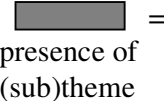


Figure X.5 : The use life of (sub)themes involved in the actual food supply.

Combining the results of figures X.4 and X.5 gives the diagram of figure X.6:

¹¹ In PM, III¹ several offering stands are mentioned, of which some have been found in situ. 1. Niuzaptah, date: V-VI (PM, III¹, 62-3; Harpur, *DETOK*, [109] 267). 2. Zaduwa' (PM, III¹, 64), date: V.M or later.

¹² Here the chronological developments as given in the diagrams IV.13-23.Vol.2 have been taken into account.

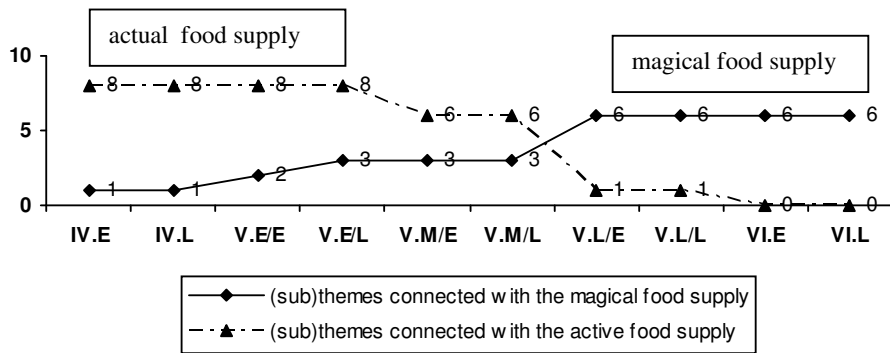


Figure X.6: The chronological development of the number of (sub)themes connected with the actual and the magical food supply.

It is evident that the number of (sub)themes concerned with the magical food supply increases from the start of the 5th dynasty on and reaches a maximum value at the end of this dynasty. The actual food supply starts to decrease in a somewhat later period (V.M/E), and reaches its minimum value at the end of the 5th dynasty.

The curves obtained in this figure X.6 can be connected with the results in figure IX.6. From the values two diagrams are made:

1. A diagram in which the curves “type Ib cultic character western wall” and “magical food supply” are compared (figure X.7).
2. A diagram in which the curves “type Ib cultic character false door” and “actual food supply” are compared (figure X.8).

In these two diagrams is shown that a strong connection exists between the development of both the magical food supply and the cultic character of the western wall, and the same is valid for the development of the actual food supply and the cultic character of the false door.

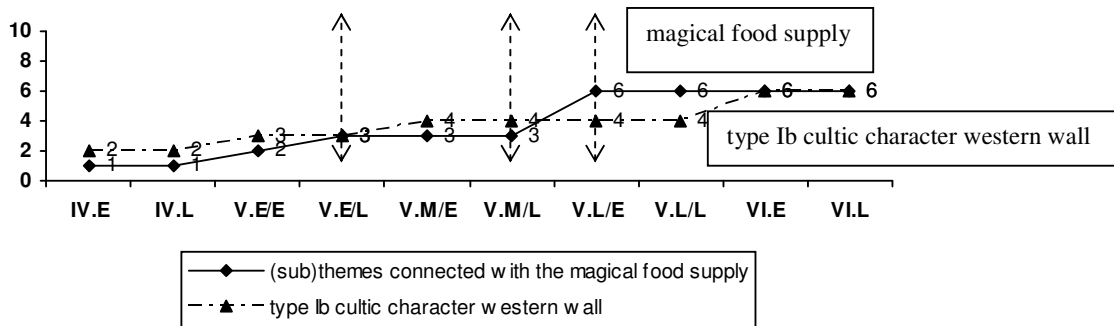


Figure X.7: The chronological development of the magical food supply and the type Ib cultic character of the western wall.

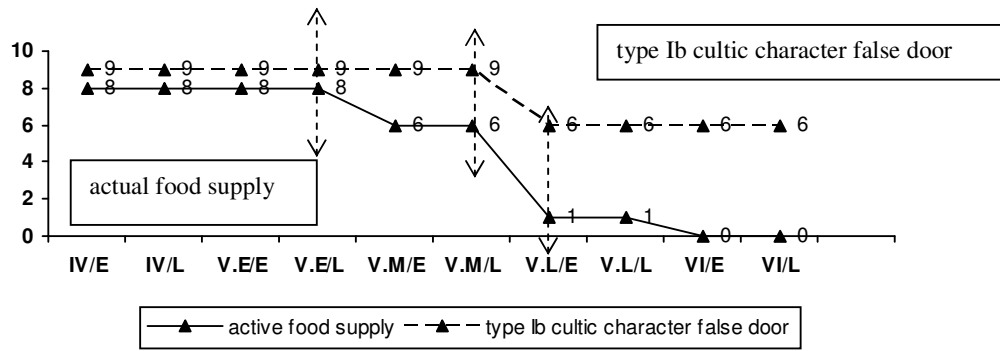


Figure X.8: The chronological development of the actual food supply and the type Ib cultic character of the false door.

The conclusion is that on the western wall as a whole a change took place in the cultic activity in front of the false door, and that this change became permanent in the second half of the 5th dynasty. The curves also show that the decrease in actual food supply and the increase in magical food supply reached their final values nearly at the same time.

III. Conclusions.

1. No interactions between the (sub)themes of the false door and the western wall can be deduced from the CP/period and FO/period diagrams of the realistic interactions.
2. At the start of the 5th dynasty the decoration of the whole western wall started to change from a predominantly actual supply of food by way of offerings in front of the false door to a magical supply of food, by way of text, the depiction of food and/or its production, and the tomb owner in front of the offering table, not only on the panel, but also on the western wall.
3. A close connection has been demonstrated between the chronological development of the actual food supply and the cultic character of the false door.
4. A close connection has been demonstrated between the chronological development of the magical food supply and the cultic character of the western wall.