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A previously unpublished false door attributable to Abdu, from a private collection

María Teresa Soria Trastoy¹

This article reports the results of a study of an Old Kingdom monumental artifact, carried out in 2015. The author was required to conduct an expert review of an Egyptian false-door purchased several years earlier from an art gallery, in conjunction with colleagues. A detailed report based on the study was requested.² The objectives were to certify the authenticity of the false-door and to establish its probable date of manufacture, and finally, to establish its possible archaeological provenance, which has been achieved with a good degree of certainty. The false-door is of special interest due to the atypical scenes represented on its left inner jamb, where priests are shown performing a series of rites.

Our study focused on details of the iconographic, material, epigraphic, and manufacturing techniques that can be seen with the naked eye. No archaeometric physical analysis was performed. With respect to the technical aspects of the visual analysis, the monument was first documented photographically using an SLR camera in manual mode, without flash. Files were saved in ARW raster file type to preserve all details. The photographic documentation was then subjected to digital laboratory processing to optimize the images, so that details could be appreciated more easily. This was an important step in the research process, because of the state of conservation of the reliefs carved into the stone.

The study concluded with the identification of the owner of the false-door, by dating it to the late fifth dynasty, and by establishing its probable point of provenance as being inside the mastaba of Abdu. This mastaba is found in the western cemetery at Giza, and the structure was excavated by Abu Bakr.

False-doors in ancient Egyptian tomb architecture

False-doors had a cultic function. This class of architectural element was associated with tombs, and they served to emphasise the prestigious social status of the tomb owners.

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2 I would like to thank the owner of the object for making it available for study, and the anonymous peer-reviewer, the JAEA editors, and the webmaster for their contributions to the final publication. In order to study the object we first requested all the documentation to verify that its acquisition and sale were legal, and that we were not faced with a case of antiques trafficking. We were given all the required documentation to verify that it was in order. The author, as well as being an archaeologist and expert in antiquities, is also a barrister of law qualified at the Ilustre Colegio de Abogados de Madrid (ICAM). In addition to a certificate of authenticity issued by the art gallery, a basic report was provided with the artifact, although containing some inaccuracies, carried out previously by a professor of the history of Medieval art.

The false-doors provided a cult place for continued worship of the deceased, to ensure his or her magical subsistence and secure their eternal life. Cult priests and family members would leave offerings of food and drink for the direct benefit of the deceased, and a series of mortuary rites were performed there. These began with the funerary banquet held at the time of the death of the owner of the tomb, and continued on a daily basis with ritual activities intended for the maintenance of the cult, and also at the time of significant festivals. Both the votive offerings and the rites performed in the ceremonies were represented on the false-doors. The decoration that represents the cults varies according to the specific cultic component being enacted, and the themes portrayed changed through time. The decorative programs developed, were maintained, or displayed innovations diachronically, thus allowing the decoration to be used as a dating criterion, not only of the object itself, but also of the tomb in which it was located.

As a consequence of their cultic and funerary character, and according to ancient Egyptian afterlife traditions, false-doors became directly associated with the western walls of tombs, where they were usually installed.³

False-doors were prestigious components of ancient Egyptian funerary architecture, at least until the end of the Old Kingdom, and they would have been visible to the public when installed within the superstructures of the tomb. This communicated the social status of the tomb's owner to the viewer, and showed that the deceased enjoyed a comfortable position in life that was to be maintained in the afterlife:

Towards the end of the Old Kingdom, it appears to have been common practice to install two false-doors, and at times even a third one, dedicated to a single owner in a single tomb. Biographical texts on the false-door of *nj-ḥnh-shmt* at Saqqara, dating to the beginning of the fifth dynasty, indicate that he was awarded two false-doors by the pharaoh, and that the pharaoh himself participated in the installation of those doors at the entrance to his tomb.⁴

The owners of multiple false-doors usually held titles indicating high hierarchical rank. Several such cases have been documented in mastaba tombs at Giza, for example those of *nj-ḥnh-hnmw* of the late fifth or early sixth dynasty, and *st-k3* from the sixth dynasty.

The false-doors became monuments that indicated to visitors who was buried in the tombs, so that in large mastabas there may have been more than one. In addition to those false-doors belonging to the principal owner, some tombs contained false-doors belonging to related family members who were also buried in the same tomb. Not all family member burials were marked with the addition of false-doors, but those of greater importance in the family, and whose names were to be made visible to visitors outside, were often honoured in this way.

Description of the false-door

Stone type

The false-door under investigation was carved from a soft yellow-drab nummulitic limestone, which is characterized by large accumulations and a high proportion of Nummulites gizehensis fossils in different forms (figs. 1-3).

³ Hassan (1948), pp. 78-104; Roeten (2011); Jánosi (2005), pp. 284-292.

⁴ Takenoshita (2011), pp. 16, 66-68.



Fig. 1. General view of the false-door of Abdu (María Teresa Soria Trastoy).

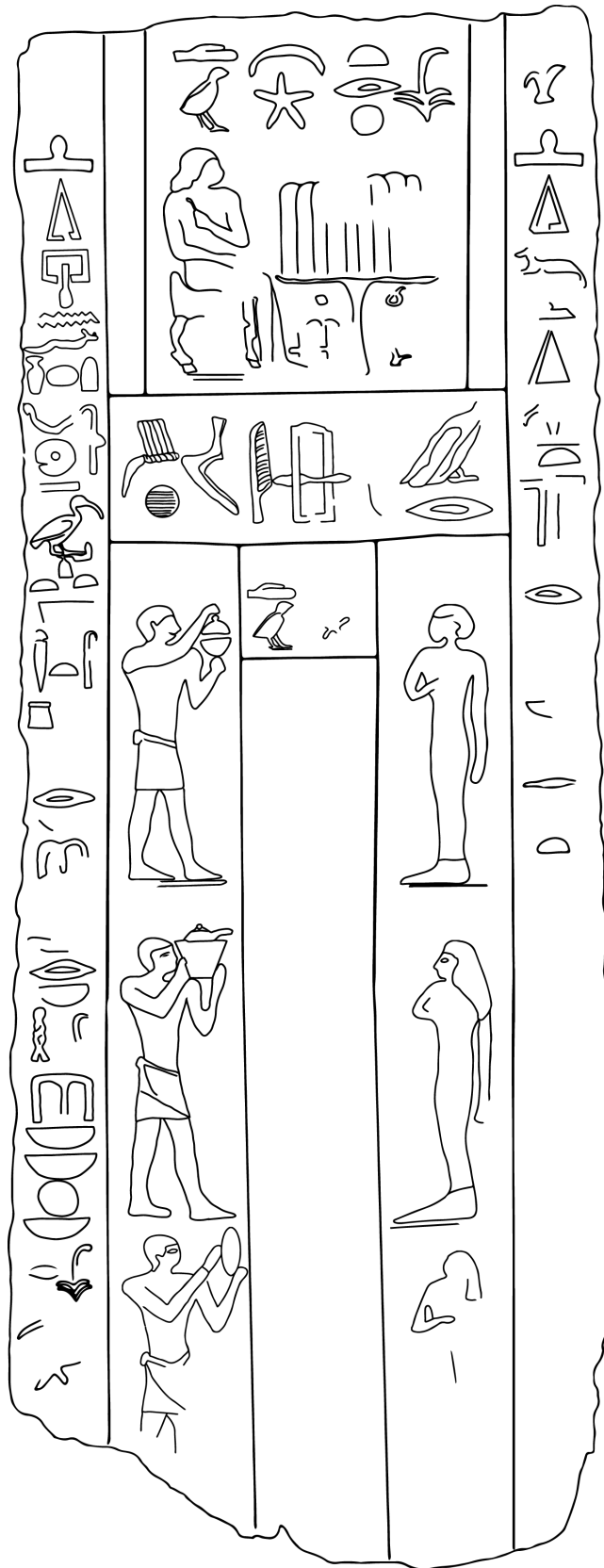


Fig. 2. Line drawing of the false-door of Abdu.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy)



Fig. 3. *Nummulites gizehensis* (María Teresa Soria Trastoy).

From the Late Cretaceous through the Eocene epoch of the Tertiary period, most of Egypt was under a shallow sea and accumulated carbonate sediments that are best represented today by the Eocene limestone formations of the Nile Valley (except the younger formations at Dahshur, Gebel el-Gir, and el-Dibabiya). Nearly all the limestone used as building stones in ancient Egypt came from ancient Tertiary formations, and in particular the limestone quarries located in the hills and cliffs bordering the Nile Valley between Cairo in the north and Esna to the south.⁵

The largest Old Kingdom quarries in the Memphite necropolis, including the Giza necropolis, belong to the Observatory Formation of the Mokattam Group geologic formation. The quarries located on the Giza Plateau are formed by massive limestones and dolomites (nummulitic wackepackstones), rich in *Nummulites gizehensis*, as is the case for the false-door in the current study.⁶

The vast majority of the mastabas, rock-cut tombs, and other architectural structures on the Giza Plateau were constructed from or in the locally-sourced nummulitic limestone of the two chief local varieties; the softer yellow-drab stone and a harder grey stone, both of which occur in different qualities.⁷ These limestones were used in abundance during the fifth and sixth dynasties, although they were occasionally used to make reliefs during the fourth dynasty. The main reason proposed for the preferential use of these local limestones as building stone, instead of importing fine-quality limestone from the Tura quarries, is that the Giza cemetery assumed a position of secondary importance after dynasty four, and thereafter it suffered from a lack of pharaonic patronage and a reduction in the resources made available to import Tura limestone from the other side of the valley. The proximity of the local quarries to the building site where the stone was to

5 Harrell *et al.* (2009), pp. 9, 17, Table 1.

6 Aigner (1982); Aigner (1983); Harrel (2012).

7 Reisner (1942), pp. 37-38.

be used was, therefore, a primary factor in the use of the stone extracted there during the fifth and sixth dynasties.

This was the type of stone used to make the false-door in question. Although the stone was of a quality inferior to the fine limestones brought from the Tura quarries, its use for producing decorated walls would nevertheless have been restricted to tomb owners who could afford to hire the most expert craftsmen; ones able to work with the more challenging material.⁸ Nummulitic limestone was used from the fourth dynasty onwards, including in tombs for royal family members.⁹

Relief technique

The scenes were executed in bas-relief carved in the stone (fig. 4) with copper chisels. No traces of any plaster were detected that might have covered the surface of the limestone. Nummulites are integrated within the reliefs. In spite of the erosion suffered and the difficulty of working with nummulitic stone, details such as the muscles on the legs of the figures depicted were carefully carved. This is particularly visible on one leg of a figure in the first register, and also in the fine details of the kilts. The false-door preserves some evidence of the use of black and red pigments to color the figures and the glyphs in the scenes.



Fig. 4. Details of the reliefs carved on the rock surface.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy).

At Giza, there are several examples of walls and architectural elements built with nummulitic limestone that were first coated with plaster before the reliefs were carved (fig. 11). In these cases, the relief was partly cut in the rock and partly in the plaster. Reisner concluded that the technique was developed for the early tombs of type RC (i), which had more wall space available for the display of reliefs. He called these scenes ‘sized-plaster’ reliefs and noted that they were created on

⁸ Cherpion (1989), pp. 79-80; Harrell *et al.* (2009), p. 29; Brovarski (2000), p. 21; Roth (1995), p. 14.

⁹ Reisner (1942).

the nummulitic walls in their chapels. This method was quite differed to that used previously, and it was used for both fine white and nummulitic limestone walls. It seems that craftsmen were trained in the skills that made the use of the cheaper nummulitic stones in the mastaba chapels possible, from that time onwards.¹⁰ Sometimes the decoration was carved into plaster of various thicknesses, for example in the tomb of rdj (G 2086), two separate applications of the plaster were used, one to minimize irregularities and defects in the stone substrate, and a subsequent layer was applied and sculpted while wet.¹¹ In spite of these innovations, the older technique was still used in some locations.

According to Smith,¹² the high-quality reliefs created in pyramids such as those of Userkaf and Sahure were the result of the experimentation and experience acquired in working with this mixed type of process designed to cope with the nummulitic limestone of the Giza plateau. Unfortunately, in many cases the layers of plaster ended up detaching from the walls, taking off large areas of the reliefs, due to the fragmentation of the underlying stone as well as the plaster, or other external forces.

The false-door in this study has lost part of its upper and lower ends. The damage most seriously affects the lower-most figures depicted on either side of the the inner door jambs, who are missing from the waist downwards. The inscriptions on the outer jambs are poorly preserved, with the exception of the upper part of the left jamb. Almost all of the inscriptions on the right jamb have been lost. Besides the erosion suffered, many of the fossils have detached leaving cavities and causing the disappearance of parts of the reliefs.

Evidence of modern restoration efforts can be seen in the seated figure of Abdu, and in the fissures caused by the fragmentation of the false-door into four parts, leaving visible patches of reparative material (fig. 5) running along the fissure lines.



Fig. 5. Patches caused by modern restorations.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy)

¹⁰ Reisner (1942), pp. 247, 300-301, 361.

¹¹ Roth (1995), p. 74.

¹² Smith (1998), p. 68.

Taking into consideration the quality and age of the stone, the reliefs are in fair state of preservation, with the exception of the bottom parts of the false-door.

The structure of the false-door

At the top, the squarish central panel is set back from the lintel directly below it, and is separated from the outer jambs by two roughly-cut narrow apertures running vertically on either side. The lintel is located above two inner jambs, which are about twice as wide as the two outer ones. Directly below the lintel, between the inner jambs, is the inscribed drum. Below that, a tall central niche is undecorated and uninscribed. The false-door lacks a cavetto or cornice.

Scenes on the false-door

A. The upper panel

On the left side, the deceased is depicted in front of an offering table. He is facing right, seated on a theriomorphic bull-legged chair on which just the end of a short, curved back cushion is visible. Abdu wears a shoulder-length wig and a short kilt, and has his right forearm placed on his thigh with the palm downwards. This is presumably due to a poor-quality restoration, as this hand is more typically shown reaching for the table of offerings. His left arm is held across his chest with the hand closed in a fist. The table carries ten stylized half-loaves of bread. Under it on the left there is an ideographic offerings list, and more offerings must have been depicted under the right side, but are now lost.

An inscription running across the top of the upper panel gives the name of Abdu and one of his titles (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Central panel and lintel.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy)

B. *The inner door jambs*

The right inner door jamb is divided into three registers. A woman facing left is shown in each of them. The figures may represent the wife, or a daughter, or daughters of the deceased, but since there are no inscriptions recording their names or positions, their relationship with the deceased is unknown. The three women are shown standing upright, with their legs together, their right hands resting on their chests, and their left arms hanging down alongside the body.



Fig. 7. Scenes on inner right and left jambs.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy)

The left inner jamb is divided into three registers. In each register a priest is depicted with short-cut hair and a short kilt, facing inwards towards the central niche and performing some of the offering-rites to be celebrated in front of the offering-table, or at least in the vicinity of the offering-place. These scenes are, therefore, associated with the ceremonies accompanying the funerary repast for the deceased, since ten of them usually appear on the jambs of the false-doors of older mastabas.¹³ The rites were frequently performed by the eldest son of the deceased, but also by *hm-k3* priests and less frequently by *hry-hb* priests.¹⁴ As members of the family of the tomb owner also acted as priests, and thus priests and family members came to be depicted together,¹⁵ the representation of priests on door jambs fell out of use.¹⁶

¹³ Hassan (1948), pp. 84-85.

¹⁴ Reisner (1934), pp. 1-12; Dawood (1998), p. 248, n. 1074.

¹⁵ Hassan (1932), p. 104, fig. 174; Hassan (1936), p. 41, fig. 35 [B], pl. XI.

¹⁶ Roeten (2014), pp. 179, 183.

The rites depicted on this door jamb are among the oldest ones.¹⁷ They include the rite of censuring,¹⁸ a priest carrying a ewer and basin,¹⁹ and a priest holding a conical beer jar with a mud stopper.²⁰

C. The outer door jambs

The offering formulae are inscribed on these two door jambs. These are described in the following section.

Titles of Abdu

rh/jht nswt

This title may be translated as royal acquaintance, or custodian of the king's property.²¹ Abu Bakr noted that the title may be read as *jht nswt* and chose to translate it as royal acquaintance, but he also referred to additional proposals made by scholars of his time, such as 'the one in charge of the king's property', 'Königsenkel', 'Nachkomme des königs' or 'Königsabkommling', or 'the one who is concerned with the affairs of the king'.²²

This title of rank may indicate that Abdu's status was derived from his relationship with the pharaoh, especially when it is translated as 'custodian of the king's property',²³ or, by using *ht* as 'cult', in which case, it can be translated in the way suggested by Ron Leprohon, to show that it is referring to 'one connected to the [royal] cult'.²⁴

imy-r3 [pr (n)] hwt-ʿ3t

This can be translated as 'The steward of the great estate'.²⁵ Abu Bakr translated it as 'The director of the great house' and 'The director of the great palace'.²⁶

Texts (figs. 1-2)

Panel (fig. 6)

(←) *3bdw rh/jht nswt*

Abdu, royal acquaintance/custodian of the king's property.

(←) *t h3 psn (h3) hnkt h3*

thousand of bread, (thousand)²⁷ of cakes, thousand jars of beer

17 Junker (1938), pp. 103-111, Abb 10; Hassan (1948), pp. 84-99.

18 Hassan (1948), p. 93; Badawy (1976), fig. 14.

19 Hassan (1948), p. 87.

20 For the jar see Malykh (2012); Hassan (1948), p. 211; for related iconography see Junker (1941), p. 92, Abb. 24; Hassan (1936), p. 38, fig.35; Hassan (1944), p. 251, fig. 109; Junker (1934), Abb. 29.

21 Jones (2000), pp. 327-328, n° 1206. For king's acquaintance see Grajetzki (2013), pp. 241-243 and Fischer (2000), p. 71, n° 176.

22 Abu Bakr (1953), p. 47.

23 On the title 'Property Custodian of the King': Jones (2000), pp. 327-328, n° 1206; Barta (1999), pp. 79-89; Baud (1999), pp. 107-113.

24 Friedman (2015), pp. 43-44.

25 Jones (2000), p. 121, n° 486.

26 Abu Bakr (1953), pp. 69, 82.

27 There are more examples in Giza of the lack of the xA sign. See the northern false door in the chapel of G 8975 inscribed for *js[s]jʿnh*: Hassan (1936), p. 51, fig. 45; the south wall of the chapel relief of *hmw* in G 8816: Hassan (1936), pp. 165-166, fig. 196; the false-door inscribed for *htphrs hmw* in G 8900: Hassan (1936), pp. 208-210, fig. 230.

(←) *k3 h3* [...]

thousand of cattle

Lower lintel

(←) *imy-r3 [pr (n)] hwt-ʿ3t im3h(w)*

The imakhu,²⁸ the steward of the great estate.

Drum (fig. 8)

(←) *3bdw*

Abdu



Fig. 8. Drum.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy)

Left outer jamb

(↖↓) *h̄tp dj [nsw.t] pr n.f hrw t psn hnkt*

An offering which [the king] gives, invocation offerings for him of bread, cakes, and beer may come forth for him

wp rnpt dhwt tpy rnpt [w3g].g [...]

[on] the new year's festival, the festival of Thoth, the first of the year festival, wag festival [...]

hb [sk]r nb rʿ nb [rh/jht] nswt 3bdw [...]

the festival of Sokar, and every festival every day, for the royal acquaintance/custodian of the king's property, Abdu [...]

Right outer jamb

(↖↓) *h̄tp dj nsw.t h̄tp dj jnpw hnt.j sh ntr krs[.tj.f] [...] .f [...]*

An offering which the king gives and an offering that Anubis gives, foremost of the god's booth, that he be buried [...]

Dating the false-door²⁹

Typology of the false-door

The false-door of Abdu has no torus and no cavetto cornice. Those features appeared in the mid fifth dynasty and were an additional sign of the high status of the owner. They became common during the sixth dynasty, although they coexisted with the older type, so their absence cannot be used for dating purposes.³⁰

Upper panels were squarish for most of the Old Kingdom. From the reigns of Teti to Pepy I, some examples were very elongated. From the mid sixth dynasty onwards, they were often T-shaped, particularly during the reign of Pepy II. They were normally decorated with a seated figure of the deceased at the left side.³¹

The vertical apertures or slots (fig. 9) were wide from the mid fourth to mid fifth dynasties, when they were frequently decorated. Most doors with a torus and cornice have narrow apertures, especially from the late fifth dynasty onwards.³²

One or two pairs of jambs were normal in the fourth to mid-fifth dynasties. They were usually wide and decorated with a very large figure of the deceased, often accompanied by family members. There were several columns of text per jamb, the length of which varied on different jambs. After the mid fifth dynasty, jambs became narrower and of equal length and width. The figure of the deceased became smaller.³³



Fig. 9. Details of the right side slot.
(María Teresa Soria Trastoy)

Iconography and style

Raised or bas-relief was typical in the fourth and for the greater part of the fifth dynasty for the doors of the most important officials, who established the bulk of the examples referred to here. The door in this study is bas-relief. Bas-relief then became associated with doors adorned with a

²⁹ See Table 1: Summary of the dating criteria.

³⁰ Bolshakov (2001), p. 68.

³¹ Strudwick (1985), p. 36; Bolshakov (2005), p. 150.

³² Strudwick (1985), p. 36.

³³ Strudwick (1985), pp. 24, 35.

torus and cornice.³⁴ Inscriptions and representations carved in sunken-relief did not appear on the lintels and jambs of false-doors earlier than the reign of Nyuserre, and this style replaced bas-relief at the end of fifth dynasty.³⁵

The short, curved back cushion on the chair is not covering a backrest. According to Cherpion, this feature was typical until the reign of Isesi, and then became less common during his reign.³⁶ Baud considered it difficult to use it as a dating criterion, and proposed that it is characteristic of a date range running from Khafre until Teti.³⁷ Bolshakov considered that when ‘applied to Old Kingdom monuments’, this is a working dating criterion.³⁸

The theriomorphic bull-legged chair indicates a date range running up to the reign of Pepi I, and probably extending to the reign of Merenre.³⁹ The slices of loaves are depicted in the most ‘classical’ Old Kingdom manner. Cherpion dates them until the reign of Nyuserre, Baud to Djedkare/beginning of the reign of Unas, and possibly extending through the reign of Unas. For Bolshakov, the bread is not a very reliable dating criterion.⁴⁰ In addition, the large wig worn by Abdu covering the ears can be dated to the reign of Teti.⁴¹

Representations of priests on door jambs declined in frequency during the fifth dynasty, and the practice had almost disappeared by the start of the sixth dynasty. This change had a strong chronological correlation with the increasing number of representations of the family of the deceased shown on false-doors.⁴² False-door jambs including this feature dating from the fifth and sixth dynasties include that of *nfrf*, of the sixth dynasty/First Intermediate Period, in which the second register from top of the inner door jamb shows a priest censing in the same position and attitude as the priest on the door of Abdu, while the third register depicts a priest holding a ewer inside a basin in his left hand.⁴³ On the door of *snwḥm* of the sixth dynasty, the lower register of the left outer door jamb depicts a priest holding a ewer inside a basin at the end of a procession of two offering bearers, while in the fourth register from the top of the right outer door jamb, a priest is represented censing followed by an offering bearer.⁴⁴ Finally, on the door of *nfrtnswt*⁴⁵ of the fifth dynasty, the lower register of the right-side outer jamb of the northern door shows a *ḥm-k3* priest walking and burning incense.

Epigraphy

The offering formula used here on the left side jamb is the normal form of the pharaoh’s offering formula used during the Old Kingdom, the earlier arrangement of the offering formula *ḥtp-dj-nswt* (type I) for vertical text. This was used until at least the start of the 13th dynasty, although the order is often changed for aesthetic reasons, by arranging the two tall signs adjacent to each other.⁴⁶ According to Satzinger, this is the complete formula.⁴⁷

34 Strudwick (1985), pp. 24, 36.

35 Bolshakov (2005), pp. 151.

36 Cherpion (1989), p. 27, fig. 4^a, pp. 29, 31, tableau 149.

37 Baud (1998), pp. 82, 91, tableau 4.

38 Bolshakov (2001), p. 79.

39 Cherpion (1989), p. 34, fig. 15, tableau 155; Baud (1998), p. 91, tableau 4.

40 Cherpion (1989), p. 47, fig. 28, pl. 19, 33, tableau p. 166; Baud (1998), p. 91, tableau 4; Bolshakov (2005), p. 75.

41 Cherpion (1989), pp. 57-58, fig. 35.

42 Roeten (2014), pp. 179, 183; Hassan (1944), p. 155.

43 Hölzl (2001), pp. 18, 94-18, 100.

44 Mastaba G 2132, MFA 27.444.

45 Mastaba G 8957; Hassan (1936), p. 92, fig. 94.

46 Bright (2005).

47 Satzinger (1997), pp. 177-178.

The god's formula used here on the right side jamb (fig. 1), *sw.t htp dj* GOD *htp dj* is also in the 'normal form'.⁴⁸ A similar arrangement to that on the door of Abdu can be seen at the entrance to the chapel in mastaba G 4651, dating to the early to mid-fifth dynasty,⁴⁹ on a lintel inscribed for *k3 pw nswt k3j* and his wife *ht-k3*.⁵⁰ This arrangement⁵¹ is also seen in mastaba G 4761, dating to the late fifth or early sixth dynasty,⁵² on a false-door inscribed for *jh3*,⁵³ and finally in the mastaba of nfrn dating to the sixth dynasty where it is found on the false-door on the south side of the monument, although with an arrangement of the god's formula as follows: *inpw dj htp*.⁵⁴ Anubis was written there in the earlier form using the sign of the jackal over the *htp*-sign, in the form used during the Old Kingdom until the beginning of the sixth dynasty. This older variant was, however, not completely discarded after the reign of Teti,⁵⁵ and the form of the phrase *hnt.j zh ntr* that was used on Abdu's door jamb was an epithet of Anubis used during the whole of the Old Kingdom, starting from the fourth dynasty onwards.⁵⁶ The sign *hnt* shaped as a rack of three vessels prevailed during the second half of the Old Kingdom.⁵⁷

The spelling of *pr.t-hrw* used on the left jamb establishes a terminus ante quem non for Abdu's door of the mid-late fifth dynasty.⁵⁸ The more familiar, developed orthography of *pr n.f hrw* formed by the rearrangement of the three food determinatives into a *pr.t-hrw* group is not seen earlier than the late fifth or early sixth dynasty, or early in the sixth dynasty at both Giza and Saqqara. The earlier form continued to occur as late as the reign of Pepy II in the Memphite cemeteries, although not at Giza.⁵⁹ The first clearly dated occurrence of the later arrangement of *pr hrw n* seems to belong to the reigns of Teti or Pepy I.⁶⁰

The spelling of the word *qrs* with the harpoon-sign after the s-sign is characteristic of a period starting from the mid sixth dynasty,⁶¹ and in general, it may be used as a dating criterion, however, it did occasionally occur earlier, in the fifth dynasty, as on the false-door of *k3tp*, in the western cemetery at Giza.⁶² An arrangement of the *qrs* determinative + t-sign + f-sign dates the false-door to before the late sixth dynasty, while an order t-sign + determinative + f-sign would be characteristic of the period after the sixth dynasty,⁶³ and a late sixth dynasty for that arrangement is not impossible.⁶⁴

The festivals listed are typical and are in chronological order. The earliest examples of festival lists that do not follow the original order can be found from as early as the fifth dynasty, but are most typical in the sixth dynasty, especially during the late sixth dynasty.⁶⁵

In conclusion, the orthography supports a mid-late fifth dynasty dating for Abdu's false-door.

48 Satzinger (1997), pp. 177-178.

49 Hawass (2005), p. 29.

50 Junker (1938), p. 129, abb. 14.

51 Scheele-Schweitzer (2014), 334 [959].

52 Bolshakov (2001), p. 73.

53 KHM Vienna ÄS 7445; Junker (1940), pp. 76-77, abb. 18.

54 Junker (1940), pp. 198-204, abb. 76.

55 Bolshakov (2001), p. 75; Brovarski (1994), p. 21; Lapp (1986), pp. 8-9.

56 Barta (1968), p. 8.

57 Bolshakov (2001), p. 79; Baud (1999), p. 518, n. 107.

58 Bolshakov (2001), p. 75.

59 Brovarski (1994), pp. 21-22.

60 Brovarski (1994), pp. 23-24.

61 Barta (1968), p. 9.

62 Leclant (1953), p. 94, tab. XVIII, fig. 32; Bolshakov (2005), p. 182.

63 Lapp (1986), p. 92.

64 Bolshakov (2005), p. 182.

65 Barta (1968), p. 18; Bolshakov (2005), p. 183.



Fig. 10. Nummulitic limestone first coated with plaster before the reliefs were carved and painted. From the tomb of Neferkhuwi, G 2098. MFA Giza Archives. A8107_NS. (photographer: Mohammedani Ibrahim)

Comparanda

The name of Abdu is attested several times on the Giza plateau, specially in the western cemetery of the pyramid of Khufu.

Mastaba G 2338, located in the western cemetery of Khufu's pyramid, was excavated by George Reisner. The superstructure had been lost and only the burial shaft remained. This tomb belonged to a group of nine mastabas built in the vicinity of the Senedjemib complex, and all of them belonged to priests and servants of Senedjemib and his family.⁶⁶ The name Abdu is attested in this cemetery, however, it corresponds to a woman. In addition, it is unlikely that the false-door in the current study came from that tomb group, since the carving technique used there was sunken-relief rather than the bas-relief style of the door in this study. The Senedjemib family group consisted of four generations who lived from the reign of Djedkara Isesi to Pepi II, i.e. between the end of the fifth and the end of the sixth dynasty.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Brovarski (2000), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ Brovarski (2000), p. 23.

A second Abdu is attested in the western cemetery in the rock-cut tomb G 7710 that belonged to a person called Iby, which has been dated to the fifth dynasty.⁶⁸ On a fragmented and incomplete offering basin, Abdu is identified as the supervisor of the artisans. The rank of this title is below that of the Abdu who owned the false-door in this study.

A third Abdu was the owner of a mastaba in the western cemetery excavated by Abu Bakr in 1949-1950.⁶⁹ This mastaba of Abdu was dated to the sixth dynasty, and more specifically, from the reign of Teti at the beginnings of the sixth dynasty to Merenra in the mid-sixth dynasty.⁷⁰ Six false-doors were found in this mastaba of Abdu. Abu Bakr noted that part of this tomb of Abdu was what he called a 'pseudo-mastaba'. It had a superstructure 'of the same length as a mastaba and similar in construction', a rectangular plan, and was 'built of local nummulitic limestone enclosing a filling into which two unfinished pits are sunk'. Its 'four faces are vertical and in the eastern one are inserted three false-doors, which are badly weathered'.⁷¹ The drum of middle one has the following text: *3bdw rh/jht nswt* using an identical spelling to the inscription shown in the central panel of the false-door in the current study. The structure was adorned with three more false-doors, one of them inserted into the eastern face of the chapel, another found at the southern end of the mastaba and tapered by its sloped face, and the final one at the southern end of the western wall of the second hall.⁷²

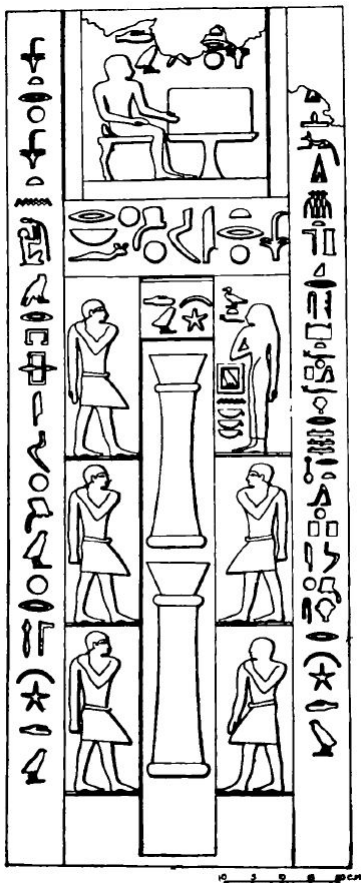


Fig. 11. False-door in the second hall of the mastaba of Abdu. (Abu Bakr (1953), p. 82, fig. 62)

68 Porter *et al.* (1974), p. 202.

69 Abu Bakr (1953), pp. 69-82, figs. 42-62, 36-41; Allen (2006), p. 10; Pieke (2006), p. 278, n° 18; Porter *et al.* (1974), p. 51, plans 17, 24.

70 Porter *et al.* (1974), p. 51; Harpur (2006).

71 Abu Bakr (1953), p. 70, figs. 42, 43.

72 Abu Bakr (1953), pp. 70, 71, 81-82.

In each case, the spelling of the name of the owner is identical to that used for the owner of the false-door in this study, and the title given is *rh/jht nswt*.

On the northern and southern faces of the northern pillar in the first hall of the mastaba, the wife and one of the four daughters of the deceased are represented, standing and looking to the right with their left arms folded over their right breast and their right arms hanging straight down their sides. The iconographic style is identical to that used for the women shown on the right inner jamb of the false-door in this study.⁷³

At the left corner of the upper register on the western wall of the second hall, Abdu is shown in a scene, sitting in an armchair receiving offerings. A ewer shown inside a washing dish is of the same type and represented in the same way as the one carried by the man shown in the second register of the left inner jamb of the false-door in this study.⁷⁴

The false-door inserted into the south end of the western wall of the second hall of the mastaba of Abdu was also made of local nummulitic limestone (fig. 11).⁷⁵ It is very similar to the false-door in the current study, identical in typology including identical architectural elements and proportions. It is carved in *bas-relief* with the same inscription in the central panel and on the drum. Each inner jamb is divided into three registers, although it includes representation of five men who are not identified by inscriptions, and one of Abdu's daughters. The figures face each other across the central niche. The epigraphy contains the same arrangements and spelling in the *h̄tp dj nsw* formula.

Conclusions

The false-door of Abdu in the current study can be dated from the end of the fifth dynasty to the early sixth dynasty. The bas-reliefs, the priests represented on the jambs, the way in which the cushion is shown, the sign of jackal over the *h̄tp*-sign, the spelling, the form and arrangement of the *h̄nt*, *pr n.f hrw* and *krs* glyphs, and the closely-related mastaba of Abdu in the western cemetery, are the reasons to tentatively date the false-door to the end of the fifth dynasty or the reign of Teti at the start of the sixth. Following Bolshakov and Strudwick, the fact that the inscriptions are carved in bas-relief makes us prefer to date the false-door to the late fifth dynasty.⁷⁶ Furthermore, its provenance, and the most probable original location of the false-door, can be securely identified as the mastaba of Abdu in the western cemetery at Giza, excavated by Abu Bakr in 1949-1950.

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74 Abu Bakr (1953), p. 81, fig. 61.

75 Abu Bakr (1953), p. 82, fig. 62.

76 Bolshakov (2005), p. 153; Strudwick (1985), pp. 24, 36.

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CRITERIA	IV DYN	V DYNASTY								VI DYNASTY							
		<i>wsrk3f</i>	<i>s3kwr</i>	<i>nfrjrkr</i>	<i>špsk3r</i>	<i>nfrfr</i>	<i>nfrjwsrr</i>	<i>mnk3wkr</i>	<i>đdk3r jsgj</i>	<i>wnjs</i>	<i>tjt</i>	<i>wsrk3r</i>	<i>ppj I</i>	<i>mrnr I</i>	<i>ppj II</i>	<i>mrnr II</i>	<i>ntrk3r</i>
		Early			Middle			Late		Early			Middle		Late		
TYPOLOGY	1																
	2																
	3																
	4																
ICONOGRAPHY	5																
	6																
	7																
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EPIGRAPHY	11																
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TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF DATING CRITERIA

	Exclusive
	Concurrence
	Extension

DOOR TYPOLOGY

1. No torus and cavetto cornice
2. Squarish panel
3. Narrow apertures
4. Two jambs equal length and width

ICONOGRAPHY

5. Raised relief
6. Cushion without backrest
7. Bull-legged chair
8. Classical halves of loaves

EPIGRAPHY

9. Large wig covering ears
10. Priests in door jambs
11. Earlier arrangement of king's formula
12. Normal form of God's formula
13. Anubis over the *hnp* sign (earlier form)

VI DYNASTY

14. *hnt, j sh ntr* epithet of Anubis
15. Sign *hnt* shaped as a rack of three vessels
16. Food determinatives to *pr.t-hrw* in a row
17. *hrs* with the harpoon-sign after *s*-sign
18. Arrangement of *hrs* determinative + *t*-sign + *f*-sign
19. Selection and chronological order of the festivals