

EGYPTIAN ART
IN THE AGE OF
THE PYRAMIDS

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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THE PYRAMIDS

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THE TOMBS OF OFFICIALS

Houses of Eternity

PETER JÁNOSI

*Make good your dwelling in the graveyard,
Make worthy your station in the West.*

The house of death is for life.

From the "Instruction of Prince Har-djedef"

While our attitude toward the transitoriness of life often is primarily negative and tends to avoid contemplating death, ancient Egyptians regarded the preparation for their welfare after death as a major task to be undertaken during life. Providing for the afterlife meant not only building a tomb and equipping it with the necessities but also establishing a mortuary cult maintained by individuals who would provide for the requisite offerings and perform the essential rituals after the tomb owner was buried. Certainly, preparing for life after death involved one of the largest investments Egyptians had to make.

Only the elite of Egyptian society had enough means to create and support an eternal abode. The tombs and burial customs of ordinary men and women for the most part remain unknown, for throughout pharaonic history the majority of Egyptians were interred simply, in shallow pits with a few necessary items. This must be stressed to make clear that in studying Egyptian tombs and their extraordinary reliefs, statues, and burial equipment, we are concerned with the art, architecture, and funerary practices and beliefs of only a small portion of the society, the upper class.

Inscriptional as well as archaeological evidence seems to support the idea that the Egyptians regarded their tombs as houses or dwelling places for eternity. A survey of the development of funerary architecture during the

Pyramid Age does not contradict this idea; yet it also demonstrates that this concept represents an oversimplification that leaves unexplored a number of crucial features or phenomena that are vital to the understanding of Egyptian concerns about the afterlife.

In general, Old Kingdom tombs, regardless of their size and the status of the owner, consist of two parts: a substructure situated below ground level containing the interment, and a superstructure, the mastaba,¹ erected above the burial place, which is the monument of the deceased. The parts form a unit but developed separately and in different ways in the course of history.

It was in the Second and Third Dynasties that the idea of the dead living in their tombs was most evidently manifested in funerary architecture. A number of mastabas of the period surmount complex substructures comprising a multiplicity of chambers, some of which duplicated installations the deceased would have used in earthly life.² The superstructure, built of mud bricks and adorned with elaborate Palace Facade paneling since the First Dynasty, gradually became simplified in this period, until the paneling was relegated to a single side.³ The tomb of Hesi-re (Saqqara 2405), from the later part of the Third Dynasty,⁴ shows a substructure that retains a complex of rooms (even disposed on a number of different floor levels) as well as a superstructure that has become more complicated, with corridors, an offering chamber, a serdab, or statue chamber, delicately carved wood panels

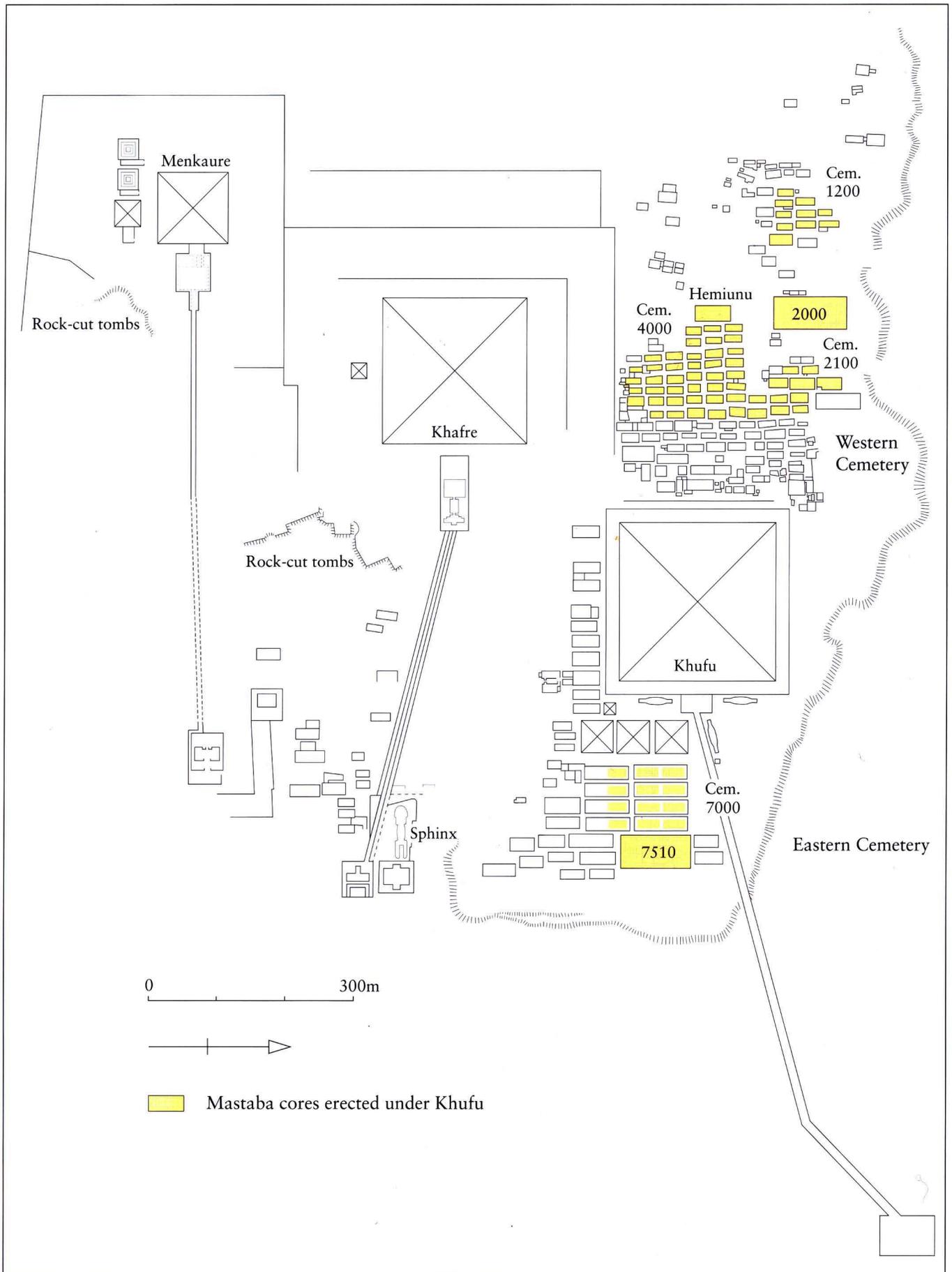


Fig 13. Map of the Giza necropolis. Drawing by Liza Majerus after Reisner 1942, general plan of the Giza necropolis

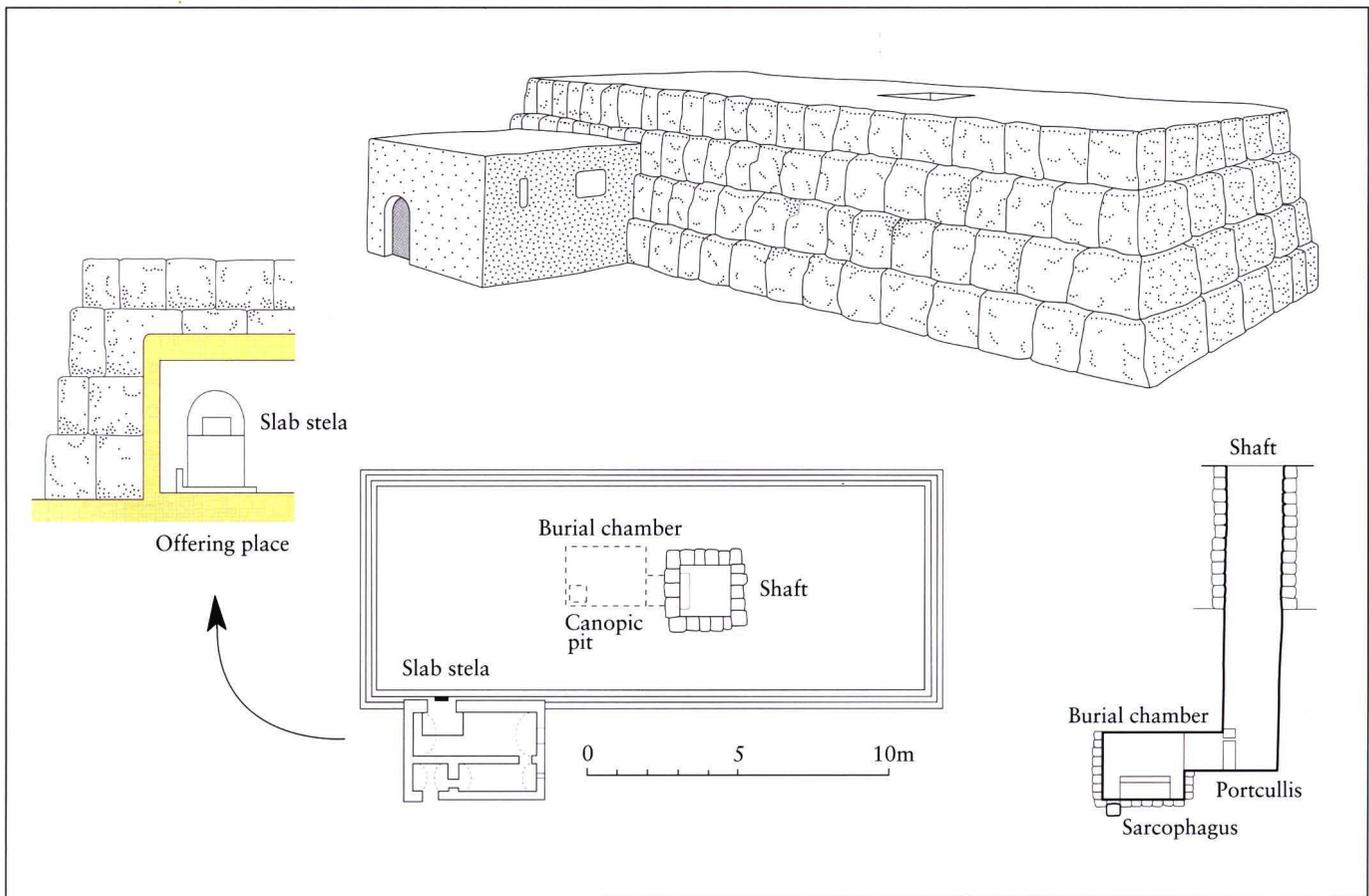


Fig. 14. Core mastaba with mud-brick chapel, from the reign of Khufu. Drawing by Liza Majerus after Junker 1929, figs. 3, 3a, 4, 6

set into the false doors (cat. no. 17),⁵ and wall decorations, all features demonstrating that the accessible part of the tomb has gained importance.⁶

With the Fourth Dynasty the classic type of Old Kingdom tomb, the stone mastaba, emerged,⁷ as limestone gradually replaced the mud bricks that were still the primary building material at the beginning of the period.⁸ In Meidum, offering chapels (of Nefer-maat and Itet, Rhotep and Nofret) and burial chambers (such as the example in the anonymous mastaba M 17)⁹ were erected in limestone during the reign of Snefru. Some tombs of the same period to the southeast of the Red Pyramid at Dahshur were built with superstructures of rubble cased with limestone (M II/1).¹⁰ The east facade of each Dahshur monument contains two false doors, the southern being larger and decorated, and a small mud-brick chapel that is the main offering place of the tomb has been added.¹¹

When Khufu, one of Snefru's many sons, ascended the throne early in the Fourth Dynasty, he chose a new place for his pyramid complex, a location commonly referred to as the necropolis or plateau of Giza (fig. 13).¹² There Khufu not only constructed the largest pyramid ever built in Egypt but also ordered the erection of rows of tombs

to the east and west of his own funerary monument. The tombs to the east were given to his wives (who were buried in small pyramids) and close relatives, while the mastabas to the west were built for his officials and more distant relatives. The tombs of these initial, or nucleus, cemeteries, the oldest in the necropolis,¹³ display a number of features that seem to set them apart from the funerary architecture of the previous reign and from later monuments as well. The mastabas in the various sections are set in rows equidistant from one another and separated by streets and avenues¹⁴ with a degree of symmetry unparalleled in both previous and later necropolises. The cores of the tombs either are solid, consisting of well-laid stone blocks, or have a rubble filling cased with stone blocks.¹⁵ Massive rectangular structures with stepped courses (fig. 14), the mastabas for the most part are not cased or decorated on their exteriors with palace facade paneling, nor were they given false doors.¹⁶ There are no entrances into rooms inside the core superstructures like those in the tombs at Meidum or Saqqara, where a cruciform chapel within the mastaba became the standard offering room.¹⁷ The serdab, present in earlier tombs and a common feature from the end of the Fourth Dynasty

onward,¹⁸ is absent from the mastabas of these nucleus cemeteries, whose only decoration is a small limestone tablet, or slab stela, with delicate painted low relief (cat. nos. 51–53) set into the southern part of the east facade. A small mud-brick chapel with whitewashed walls usually encloses the place of worship and protects the slab stela, which in these unfinished structures must be regarded as a substitute for the false door that was a standard element of funerary architecture before the time of Khufu and in later tombs. A shaft penetrates the northern half of the superstructure as well as the rock below and leads to a short horizontal passage that ends in the burial chamber to the south. Except for its roof, this chamber is cased with fine limestone painted to imitate granite.¹⁹ From the middle of the Fourth Dynasty onward, cased burial chambers gradually disappear, and in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties only in very large tombs are such chambers occasionally cased with white limestone.²⁰ The only sculpture associated with these tombs was the reserve head, which was set up in the substructure (see “Reserve Heads” by Catharine H. Roehrig in this catalogue).²¹

The high quality of the relief carving and painting of the slab stelae has led to the supposition that these objects, issued from royal workshops, were distributed by the king as marks of ownership or assignment during the lifetimes of the recipients.²² It seems more probable, however, that the stelae were made at various times during Khufu’s reign, most likely once the owners died, in order to provide for the basic requirements of the mortuary cult when the tomb remained unfinished (without a casing, a stone chapel, and a false door). This theory accounts for the many epigraphic and iconographic variations the stelae display despite their uniformity in other respects.²³ It also accords with the fact that most tombs were furnished with only mud-brick chapels that could not have survived long and certainly did not fulfill the initial aims of the builders. When the owner was buried, building activities usually ceased or were reduced to a minimum,²⁴ the relatives contented themselves with preparing a place of worship simpler than originally intended, and the royal workshops contributed the slab stela as a gift. (For a somewhat different interpretation, see “Excavating the Old Kingdom” by Peter Der Manuelian in this catalogue.)

Archaeological evidence shows that in several instances either the tomb owner’s family or the king’s office of works completed a core mastaba that had a mud-brick chapel by replacing the latter with a stone chapel with a false door and adding a stone casing. These alterations

clearly indicate that the tomb as it was previously constituted did not embody the form of the funerary monument the owner desired.²⁵ In some mastabas the remains of the old mud-brick chapel were preserved underneath the additional stone construction,²⁶ and in four of them slab stelae have been found behind the stone wall, apparently having been left in place and hidden when the new chapel was built.²⁷

Reconstructions of this kind, which probably took place during the reign of Khufu or shortly thereafter, did not much alter the form of the mastabas. However, other alterations pursued at the same time and later had considerable impact on the size and layout of the tombs. Three methods of changing the original design can be distinguished in the monuments of the Western Cemetery. The first left the core of the mastaba intact and added new structures to the existing one. The second broke a hole in the existing core or removed part of the existing mastaba and built a chapel in the new space created (fig. 15f). Although this procedure seriously interfered with the original structure, it was undertaken in a considerable number of tombs,²⁸ the earliest of which are the huge twin mastabas in G 7000.²⁹ The third method, which seems to have developed from the second, did not modify an existing structure but rather created a new design in which the chapel was built within a space left inside the core. This last procedure was used in the tombs surrounding the nucleus cemeteries and can be dated to the reigns of Khafre and Menkaure.³⁰

The first method allowed different kinds of alteration to the form of the tomb, which can be observed in the archaeological remains (fig. 15). The simplest variation, visible in the tomb of Nefer (G 2110) (fig. 15c), involved setting up two false doors in the east facade and adding a stone chapel around the main false door.³¹ A more complicated alteration, undertaken in the tomb of Kani-nisut I, from the end of the Fourth Dynasty (G 2155) (fig. 15d), not only introduced a casing but also extended the mastaba core to the south by building a new structure that contained the offering chamber and a serdab behind the south false door.³² A third variation incorporated a chapel or offering place in the mass by constructing it within masonry that was added to the entire east side of the original core (fig. 15e).³³ An impressive example of such an enlargement is the monumental mastaba of Hemiuu (G 4000) (fig. 15a).³⁴ In the east facade of the original core of this tomb two holes were broken out and reconstructed as serdabs, the north one containing the owner’s splendid statue (fig. 15b; cat. no. 44). A long, narrow corridor with two false doors in its west wall and

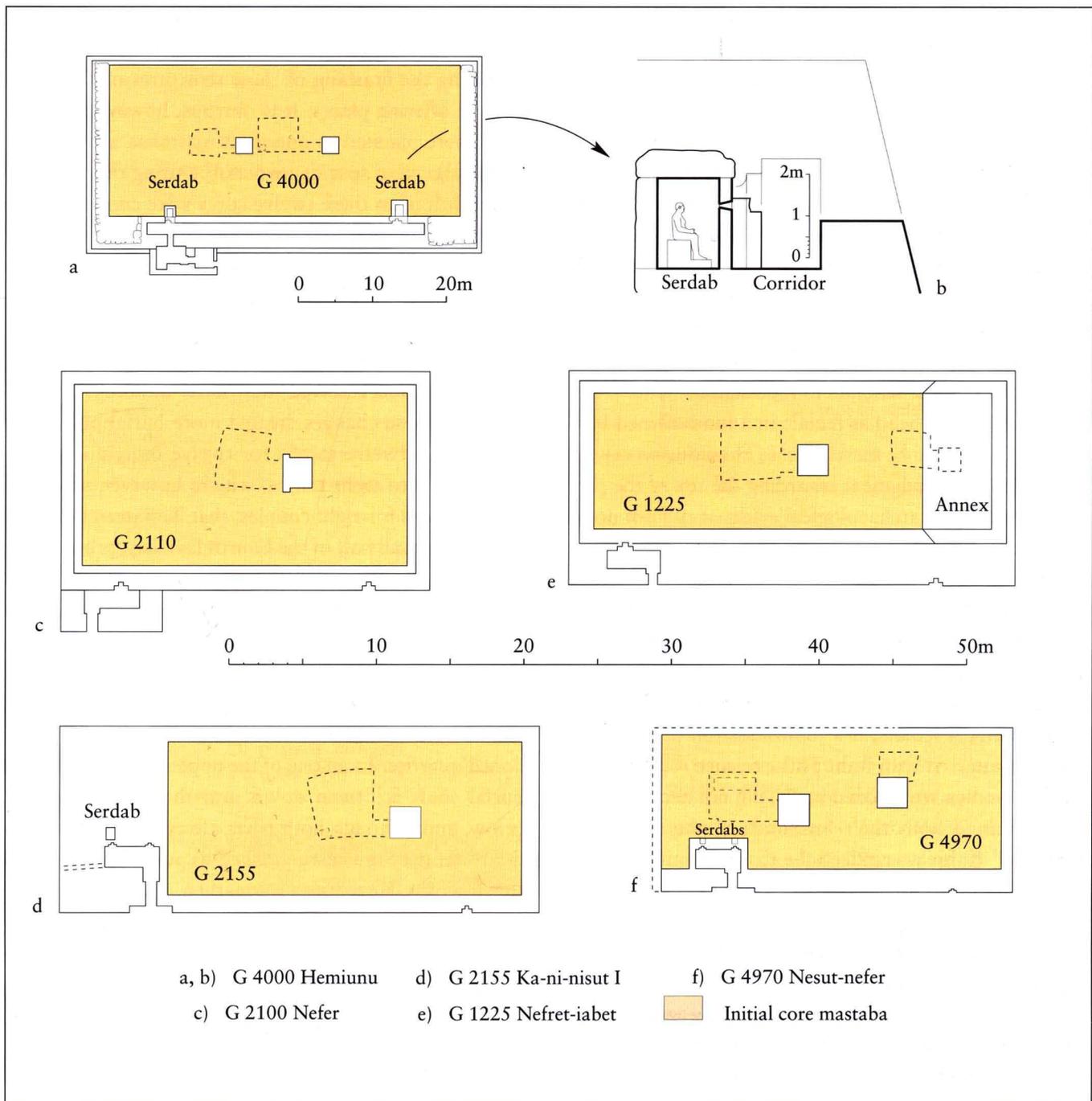


Fig. 15. Types of mastabas in the Western Cemetery, Giza. Drawing by Liza Majerus, (a, b) after Junker 1929, figs. 18, 20, pl. 21a; (c) after Reisner 1942, plan of cemetery G 2100; (d) after Junker 1934, fig. 12; (e) after Reisner 1942, plan of cemetery G 1200; (f) after Junker 1938, fig. 26

an entrance at its south end was erected in the new masonry. A small mud-brick structure was placed in front of the entrance to the corridor.

These procedures all increased the size of the tomb and added a chapel inside the new structure. A fourth not only accomplished these same alterations but also changed the original purpose of the tomb. All tombs of the nucleus cemeteries were built as one-shaft mastabas that served as resting places for one person.³⁵ However, in the Western Cemetery six mastaba cores³⁶ were enlarged

by the addition of masonry that includes a shaft for a second burial (fig. 15e). Because these tombs were destined to be cased, nothing in their final forms would have revealed that in each, two substructures are incorporated under one superstructure. Each single tomb had become a two-shaft mastaba.

All of these alterations clearly served to accomplish one intention of the tomb owners: to move the offering room, in one way or another, into the core of the superstructure. Another goal, the creation of a second burial place in the

substructure, probably for the owner's wife or a near relative, was less frequently attempted, but its realization had major consequences for the development of tomb building.

The few epigraphic remains from slab stelae in the core cemeteries show that most tombs were owned by men and only a small percentage can safely be assigned to women.³⁷ The sex of tomb owners is sometimes deduced not from the epigraphic traces but from the reserve heads found in the substructures (cat. nos. 46–49).³⁸ However, identifications made in this manner are controversial: for example, although the owner of G 1203 is beyond doubt a man named Ka-nefer, the head found in his tomb is considered by some scholars to represent his wife.³⁹ The identification of a head as female in a tomb owned by a male might seem to be merely a case of confusion caused by subjective misjudgment regarding the sex of the person represented if archaeological evidence did not point in another direction: two reserve heads, one male and one female, have been found in the substructures of each of two mastabas (G 4140 and G 4440),⁴⁰ indicating that both a man and a woman may have been buried in each (but see “Reserve Heads” by Catharine H. Roehrig in this catalogue)—and by extension that the head in Ka-nefer's tomb, if female, is a representation of a woman who was interred with him. This evidence suggests that perhaps women were occasionally, but not necessarily as a rule, buried with their husbands in the husband's mastaba.⁴¹ If this was indeed the case, it would account for the small number of women's tombs found in the nucleus cemeteries.

Yet two mastabas in the Western Cemetery, G 1225 and G 4140, belonging to the titular princesses Nefret-iabet and Meret-ites,⁴² demonstrate that generalizations should not be too strictly applied regarding the gender and relative importance of tomb owners and those who were buried with them. Each mastaba was augmented by an annex containing a second shaft (fig. 15e), raising questions about the ownership of these additional burial places.⁴³ Since women were laid to rest in the original substructures, the secondary shafts must certainly have been intended for their husbands or offspring and clearly, then, it would be rash to argue that women's burials were less important than or subordinate to those of their male counterparts.⁴⁴

A somewhat different picture of tomb building, although quite enlightening in this matter, is offered in cemetery G 7000, to the east of Khufu's pyramid, where the royal children were buried (fig. 13).⁴⁵ In this part of the necropolis twelve mastaba cores that are larger than those in the Western Cemetery were originally erected

and arranged in three rows, each of which contains four tombs.⁴⁶ Nothing is known about the initial intentions regarding the finishing of these structures or the forms of their offering places. It is obvious, however, that the cores were planned as one-shaft mastabas and had not been assigned to specific owners.⁴⁷ During the later part of Khufu's reign these twelve cores were converted into long twin mastabas (fig. 13).⁴⁸ The cores of the mastabas in the two northern rows were joined in four pairs, while each of the southern cores received an extension. In each core a recess was broken and a chapel with a false door and relief decoration was built.⁴⁹ Most of the structures were cased and received additional buildings of mud bricks.⁵⁰ These changes created more burial places, for the original twelve tombs for twelve individuals were converted into eight tombs, which, however, served as resting places for eight couples, that is, sixteen people.⁵¹

In the second half of the Fourth Dynasty, probably by the later part of Khafre's reign, a new type of tomb appeared at Giza. This was the rock-cut tomb,⁵² which became especially popular during the second half of the Old Kingdom.⁵³ As the name implies, these funerary monuments are set apart by one main feature: their cult chambers are hewed vertically into the walls of abandoned quarries. From one of the upper cult chambers the burial shaft is driven down into the burial chamber below, and although both parts are completely cut into the rock, they are distinguished as superstructure and substructure. The upper section, then, is not a real superstructure like a mastaba, and, indeed, in numerous examples in the necropolis at Giza the tomb owner had a dummy mastaba (lacking the shaft leading into the burial chamber) erected atop the cliff, directly above the rock chapel.⁵⁴

The oldest rock-cut tombs belonged to Khafre's queens and their offspring; their rock-cut chapels are considerably larger than earlier stone chapels of mastabas, for they contain at least two rooms, and these are bigger than the chambers in the mastabas that preceded them. They show a concomitant increase in wall space available for decoration⁵⁵ and were adorned in their interiors with a new type of statuary: nearly lifesize figures of the tomb owner, sometimes accompanied by smaller representations of relatives, cut into the nummulitic limestone walls of the rock chapels.⁵⁶ These figures did not replace the other statues commonly found in mastabas, either free-standing, in serdabs, or in niches closed with wood doors (see “Old Kingdom Statues in Their Architectural Setting” by Dieter Arnold in this catalogue). Rather they appeared exclusively in rock-cut monuments, representing an

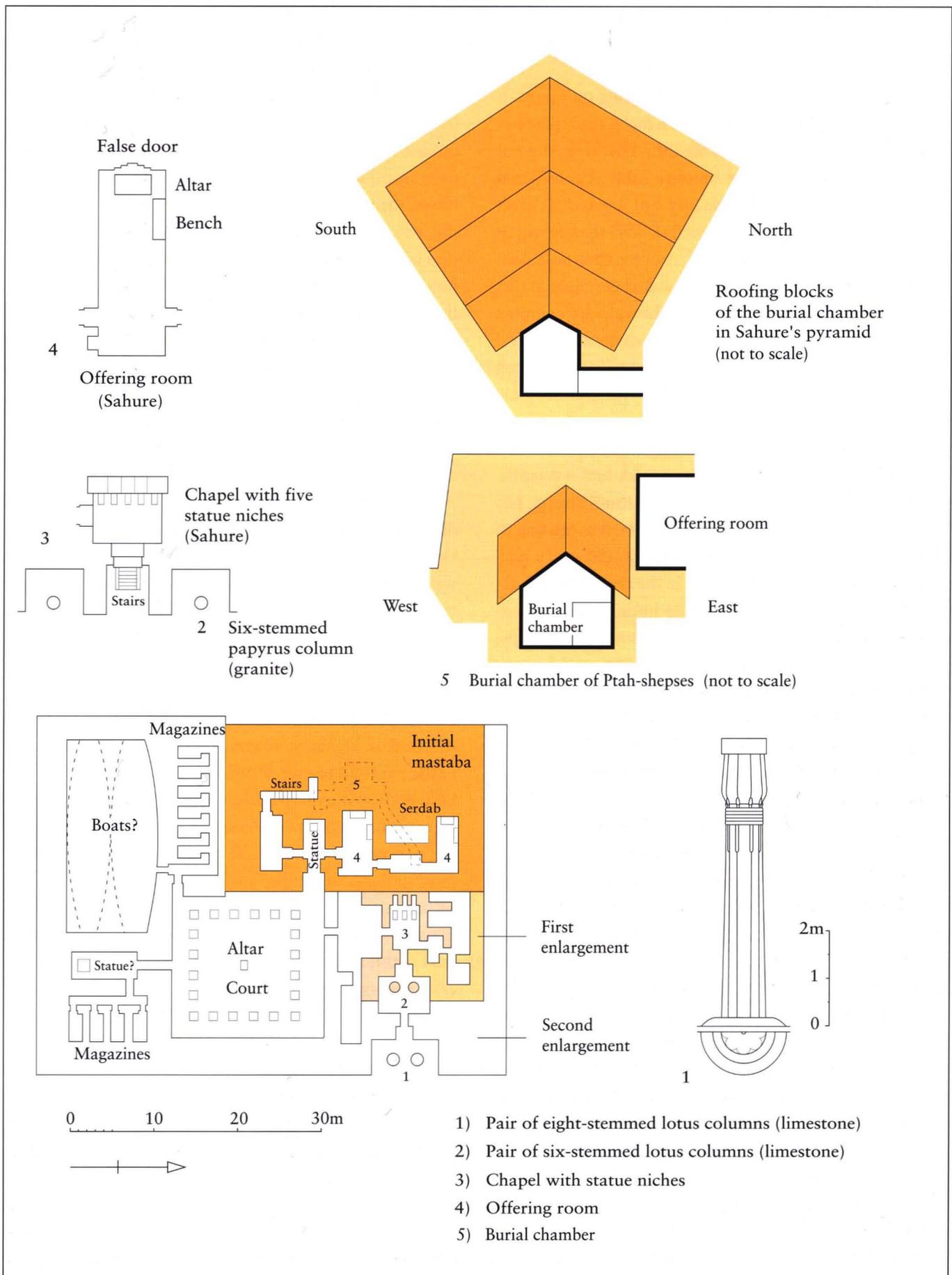


Fig. 16. Mastaba of Ptah-shepses, Abusir. Drawing by Liza Majerus after Borchartd 1910, pl. 12; *Preliminary Report* 1976, fig. 2; Korecky 1983, figs. 285, 291, 293-95; and Verner 1994b, figs. on pp. 175, 177

addition to the repertory of sculptural depictions of the tomb owner,⁵⁷ and remained in use until the end of the Old Kingdom.⁵⁸

In the middle of the Fifth Dynasty, during the reigns of Neferirkare and Niuserre, major changes took place in the building of private tombs. Wealthy Egyptians did not content themselves with the simple mastabas considered adequate in the previous dynasty but started to erect funerary monuments of impressive size that featured multiroomed superstructures.⁵⁹ Among the most outstanding tombs of this kind, and one that certainly marks a turning point in tomb building, is the funerary complex of Ptah-shepses at Abusir (fig. 16). His tomb is the largest private funerary monument built in the Old Kingdom and also a nonroyal structure that displays architectonic features derived from royal pyramid complexes. As Overseer of All Construction Projects and married to a daughter of King Niuserre, Ptah-shepses had a remarkable career, to which the growth of his tomb attests. His monument was originally the usual mastaba consisting of the few rooms necessary for the mortuary cult and a burial chamber (fig. 16).⁶⁰ However, in the course of the second and third building stages the initial mastaba was enhanced with a structure to the east containing a chapel with three niches for statues and additional rooms. Access to this complex was provided by a portico with two six-stemmed lotus columns made of high-quality limestone. This entrance soon fell into disuse, when the second enlargement was executed and a new and larger one was constructed farther to the east. The new portico was equipped with a pair of eight-stemmed lotus columns, also of fine limestone, reaching a height of 6 meters. A courtyard with twenty pillars and a complex of rooms were built to the south, and added to the southwest were a set of magazine rooms as well as a unique large boat-shaped room that probably housed two large wood boats.⁶¹ In its final form the vast monument attained a size of 80 by 107 meters (whereas the grand tomb complex of Mereruka from the Sixth Dynasty [fig. 17] measures a mere 48 by 81 meters). The rooms were adorned with numerous colored reliefs depicting a variety of scenes, only a small portion of which remain in place,⁶² and numerous statues of different sizes and materials were set up throughout the structure.⁶³

Ptah-shepses' complex without doubt inspired other tomb owners to build similar elaborate monuments, none of which, however, succeeded in surpassing his impressive example. Thus the architectural features of Ptah-shepses' tomb are significant and merit discussion both because many reflect royal prototypes and because

a number were adopted by various private tomb owners for generations to come. Even the initial mastaba shows details that imitate or at least paraphrase features of royal buildings. The room to the south with a staircase leading to the roof of the monument, for example, follows models from the valley and pyramid temples and, moreover, inspired copies in numerous private tombs of later times, such as those of Nebet, Idut, Mereruka, Ka-gemni (fig. 17), Ankh-ma-hor, and Nefer-seshem-re.⁶⁴ The function of this staircase is by no means clear. One argument holds that the coffin with the mummy was dragged up the staircase to the roof, from which it was lowered into the burial chamber.⁶⁵ Since the entrance corridor or shaft into the substructure in some tombs with staircases—including those of Ptah-shepses himself and Mereruka—is situated in a special room within the superstructure, this explanation is not completely convincing and the issue remains open.

Also in Ptah-shepses' original mastaba are two large offering rooms, one to the south belonging to Ptah-shepses himself and one to the north belonging to his wife; both are oriented east-west, and each was once equipped with an altar placed in front of a huge false door in the west wall and a stone bench set up along the north wall. This kind of chamber is first observed in the pyramid temple of Sahure, the second king of the Fifth Dynasty, and prevailed in royal architecture until the Twelfth Dynasty, where it is relatively well preserved in the pyramid temple of Senwosret I at Lisht.⁶⁶ The earliest nonroyal example discovered may be the offering room in the mastaba of Persen at Saqqara (D 45), dating to the time of Sahure.⁶⁷ The type continues to appear in most of the large multiroomed mastabas of the latter part of the Fifth Dynasty and of the Sixth Dynasty and displays a standard form of decoration.⁶⁸ While the west wall is almost entirely occupied by the false door, the east wall shows scenes of butchering of meat in the lower registers and offering bearers and piles of food offerings in its upper portions. The north and south walls depict offering bearers marching toward the tomb owner, who is shown seated in front of a table and receiving their goods.⁶⁹

The most impressive architectural feature in Ptah-shepses' tomb is without doubt the roof of the sarcophagus chamber, which, however, was certainly not visible once the mastaba was finished and is of a type that was not adopted in any of the later private tombs. A saddle roof consisting of four pairs of huge monolithic limestone blocks like those used in the royal pyramids of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, this element presents clear

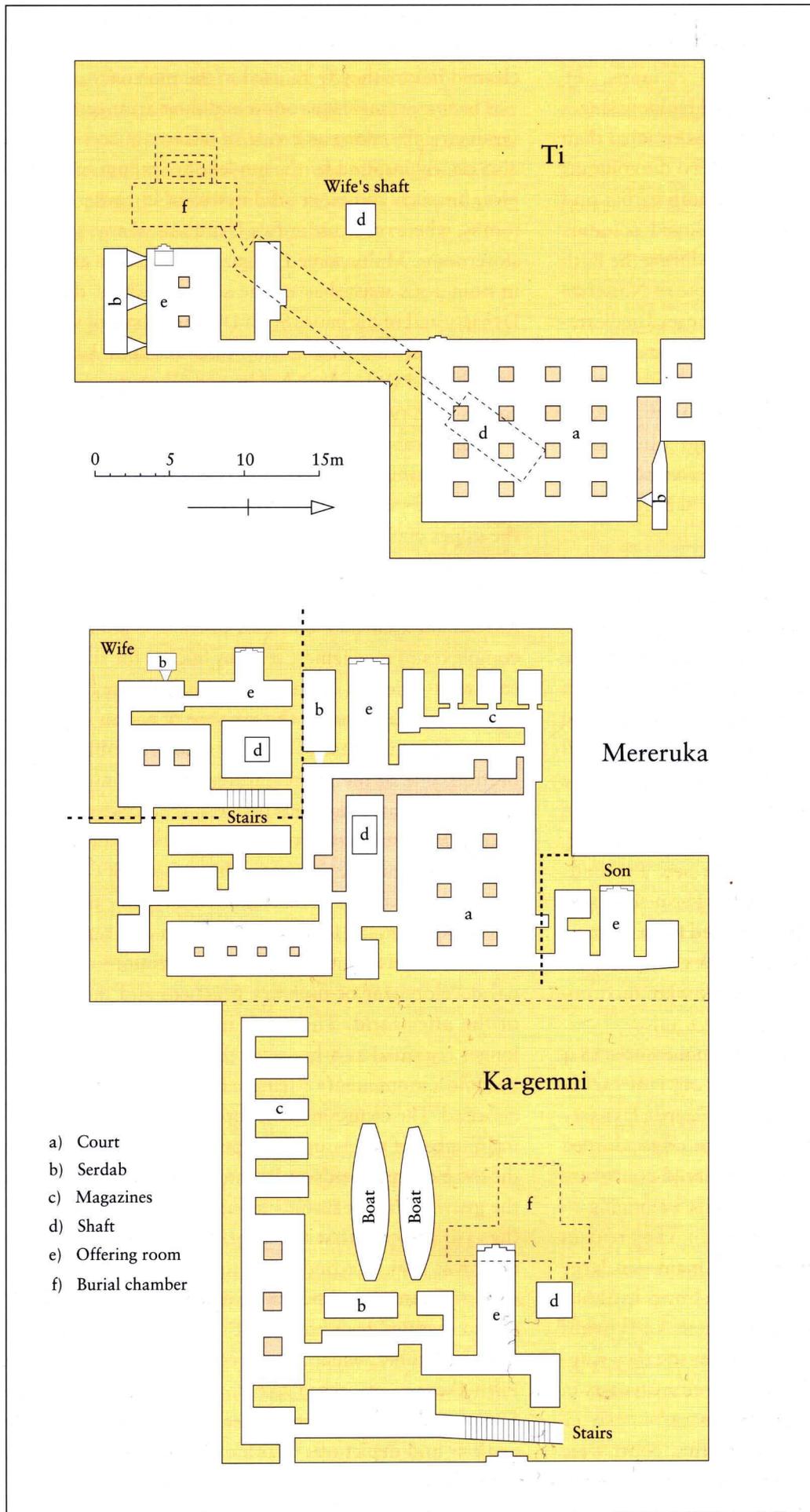


Fig. 17. Tombs of Ti, Ka-gemni, and Mereruka with his wife and son, Saqqara. Drawing by Liza Majerus after Bissing 1905, pl. 1; Firth and Gunn 1926, pl. 51; and Duell 1938, plan opp. pl. 2

evidence that Ptah-shepses was familiar with the building techniques used in the pyramids of his era.⁷⁰

With their pairs of limestone lotus columns, the entrance porticoes of the second and third building stages of Ptah-shepses' complex are even more exceptional than the roof of his sarcophagus chamber. Indeed the columns are a unique invention, unparalleled in both earlier and later monuments. Although kings employed columns made of granite in their pyramid temples during the Fifth Dynasty, they were either papyriform (those of Niuserre) or, more often, palmiform (those of Sahure, Djedkare-Isesi, and Unis), whereas any lotus examples that appeared in their buildings were wood.⁷¹ Only sporadically were stone columns used in porticoes of later mastabas,⁷² and these never display a specific type of plant⁷³ but rather show the simple and undecorated stem column that was introduced in the side entrances to Sahure's pyramid complex.⁷⁴

A chapel with three niches, which is placed on a level higher than other chambers in the superstructure and reached by small staircases, was one of the most important places of worship in Ptah-shepses' tomb.⁷⁵ Lifesize statues representing Ptah-shepses must have been put in these niches, hidden behind the narrow two-leaved wood doors that fronted them.⁷⁶ Ptah-shepses found royal precedents for this type of chapel. In royal precincts five niches became the norm for kings, at the very beginning of the Fifth Dynasty, in the pyramid temple of Userkaf, marking the west end of the outer temple (see "Pyramids and Their Temples" by Audran Labrousse in this catalogue).⁷⁷ Such chapels with three niches seem to have been the standard in the pyramid temples of queens in the Sixth Dynasty⁷⁸ but only very rarely were incorporated in mastabas.⁷⁹

Ptah-shepses' pillared courtyard, which measures 18.4 by 17.6 meters, must be regarded as a copy of earlier royal examples, which date from the Fourth Dynasty through the time of Userkaf. At Abusir the kings adorned their pyramid courts with columns. Pillared courts are also a typical feature of pyramid temples belonging to queens of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties.⁸⁰ They remain important—although in much smaller form—in large private tombs, such as those of Ti, Ptah-hotep I, Akhtihotep, Ka-gemni, Mereruka, and Khentika-Ikhekhi (fig. 17), until the middle of the Sixth Dynasty; they reappear, moreover, at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty in the small tombs of Ihy and Hetep at Saqqara.⁸¹

We know that the walls of Ptah-shepses' court were once decorated with reliefs but not whether statues of him were set up there as well. The existence of a huge

altar⁸² in this impressive place indicates its function as the area in which offerings were presented and ritually cleaned before they were used in the mortuary cult.⁸³

The many magazine rooms and their arrangement, set symmetrically along one side of a narrow corridor, are also clearly inspired by the model of royal pyramid temples, for such complexes did not exist in earlier private tombs, where only one or two chambers, if any, served as storerooms. Multiroomed magazine complexes are found in numerous mastabas of the second half of the Fifth Dynasty and of the entire Sixth Dynasty, some of which—for example, the tombs of Mereruka and Khentika-Ikhekhi and the queens Nebet and Khenut—contained rooms with two floor levels.⁸⁴

Multiroomed mastabas following the model of Ptah-shepses' monument—albeit in much smaller versions—became the prevalent form of funerary architecture for the upper class, while simpler tombs continued to serve individuals with fewer economic resources. None of the large mastabas are precisely alike, but all display more or less similar elements: entrance porticoes, pillared halls, complexes of magazines, serdabs, niches for statues, the east-west-oriented offering room with a huge false door. All share an increase in the number of rooms and, consequently, an increase in the wall space available for decoration, one of the main features that distinguish them from the tombs of previous periods. The massive mastaba above the substructure of earlier days was transformed into a superstructure that is a multiroomed cult complex in which hardly any solid masonry remains, as exemplified, for instance, in the tombs of Mereruka and Ka-gemni.

These architectural changes are reflections of a gradual development of funerary practices and the concept of the afterworld. The tomb in its new form was no longer regarded as a house of the dead but had instead become a monument or temple for the veneration of the deceased. The inclusion in the superstructure of an increasing number of reliefs and inscriptions—the latter stressing the tomb owner's deeds and personal achievements⁸⁵—and the growing use of statues set up to confront the visitor (fig. 16) indicate that the offering room with the false door was now a secondary feature. How strong was the shift of meaning and priorities within the tomb complex is also revealed by a significant invention: the decorated burial chamber, which appeared at the very end of the Fifth Dynasty or, more likely, at the beginning of the Sixth.⁸⁶ Indeed, the subjects treated in these decorations are lists and depictions of offerings, demonstrating that the deceased's welfare in the afterlife had become a concern centered in the burial chamber rather than in

the superstructure. Thus, two threads are discernible in the development of the multiroomed tombs of the later Old Kingdom: the first, and probably the more important, being the transformation of the superstructure into the locus of worship of the deceased as a venerable person, and the second the confinement to the offering room and the sarcophagus chamber of the mortuary cult and provisioning for the dead in the afterlife.

1. The Arabic term *mastaba*, or “bench,” was applied by Egyptians to the rectangular benchlike form of the superstructure of these Old Kingdom tombs. In modern Egyptological usage the word commonly denotes the entire tomb, that is, both the substructure and the superstructure, although it correctly refers only to the upper part. That the narrower meaning is appropriate is borne out by the existence of numerous tombs that consist of a rock-cut chapel, a subterranean burial place, and a mastaba added as a superstructure on top of the rock-cut chapel (see p. 32 of this essay), indicating that it was considered a distinct, separate entity.
2. The tomb of Ruabu (QS 2302), for example, consists of twenty-seven rooms, among which a bedroom, a bathroom, and a lavatory can clearly be distinguished (Quibell 1923, pp. 11f., pl. 30). On the idea of living in the tomb, see Scharff 1947; and Bolshakov 1997, pp. 28ff.
3. Kaiser 1982, pp. 256ff., fig. 13; Kaiser 1985, pp. 25–38.
4. Quibell 1913.
5. Wood 1978, pp. 9–24.
6. The building stages of this tomb are still insufficiently investigated and documented. Because Hesi-re’s monument is unique in the context of the few other known mastabas of the late Third Dynasty, it is difficult to make a clear presentation of tomb development in this epoch based on its example.
7. Reisner 1942, pp. 5f.
8. See Reisner 1936, pp. 184ff., 219ff.; Saad 1947; Saad 1951; Wood 1987, pp. 59–77; and D. Arnold 1994, pp. 246f.
9. Petrie 1892, pp. 11–20, pls. 1, 6, 7; Petrie, Mackay, and Wainwright, 1910, pp. 3–5, pls. 10, 12, 20/4–6; Reisner 1936, pp. 206ff., 234f.
10. Stadelmann et al. 1993, pp. 268–90; Alexanian 1995, pp. 1–18.
11. Alexanian in Stadelmann et al. 1993, pp. 278–81, fig. 12; Alexanian 1995, pp. 3ff., fig. 1.
12. The name derives from a suburb of Cairo located about eight miles to the east of the pyramids. For the area enclosing the pyramids and tombs, see Zivie 1974, pp. 53ff.; and Zivie 1976, pp. 1f., 15 n. 2.
13. Reisner (1942, pp. 13f., 66ff.) numbered these initial cemeteries G 1200, G 2100, G 4000, and G 7000 and called them “nucleus cemeteries,” since they form the oldest parts of the necropolis.
14. Junker 1929, pp. 82ff.; Reisner 1942, pp. 56ff., 61ff.
15. Reisner and Fisher 1914, pp. 232ff.; Junker 1929, pp. 14ff., 75ff., 82ff.; Reisner 1942, pp. 39ff., 177f.
16. Only seventeen of the sixty-three mastabas in the Western Cemetery had casings, and many of these were left unfinished. Six of the eight huge twin mastabas in the Eastern Cemetery were cased. In many instances the casing was added after the original core of the mastaba had undergone considerable alteration and enlargement (see text below); thus, it is necessary

to distinguish between the time the casing was executed and the time the core was erected.

17. Reisner 1936, pp. 262–78.
18. Bárta 1998, pp. 65–75.
19. Junker 1929, pp. 47f., 96 (tombs G 4150, G 4160, G 4360, G 4450, G 4560).
20. See the tomb of Ra-wer in the Central Field at Giza (no number) from the Fifth Dynasty (Hassan 1932, p. 30).
21. Although most reserve heads have been found in burial chambers and shafts, the original position of these superb works of art is still a matter of debate. Lacovara (1997, pp. 28–36) correctly questions Junker’s theory (1929, pp. 57–61, pl. 10) that they were placed in the horizontal passage between the bottom of the shaft and the burial chamber.
22. Junker 1929, pp. 17, 36f.; Reisner 1942, pp. 64, 79. Smith (1949, p. 159) remarks that they were “given to certain persons for the decoration of their mastabas by the king as a mark of royal favour.”
23. Bárta 1963, pp. 41ff., 56; Der Manuelian 1998a, pp. 115–34.
24. A similar situation existed in the royal pyramid complexes: as soon as the king was buried, the parts of the monument needed for establishing the royal mortuary cult and guaranteeing the sovereign’s afterlife were constructed, often with poor materials (wood and mud bricks), while the rest remained unfinished. No pyramid of the Old Kingdom is known to have been completed by a ruler’s successor as initially intended.
25. Although Junker (1928, pp. 9ff.; 1929, pp. 14, 35, 75ff.; 1955, pp. 31ff.) always understood that these tombs should have been given casings and false doors, he explained that their seemingly unfinished state was the form of the private funerary monument intended during the reign of Khufu. He designated this type of mastaba the “normal mastaba” (*Normalmastaba*) and regarded every change and addition in the architecture of the prototype as a deviation from the original concept. Haeny (1971, pp. 153–59) has shown, however, that Junker’s reconstruction of the *Normalmastaba* is not sustained by the archaeological evidence. For the most recent treatment of this question in connection with the slab stelae, see Der Manuelian 1998a.
26. Reisner and Fisher 1914, pp. 234f.; Reisner 1942, p. 427, fig. 243.
27. G 4150 (Innu): Junker 1929, p. 173, pl. 26; Junker 1955, p. 53; G 1201 (Wep-em-nefret), G 1223 (Ka-em-ah), and G 1225 (Nefret-iabet): Reisner and Fisher 1914, pp. 234f.; Reisner 1942, pp. 64, 385f., 399, 403, pl. 11b–d. Some Egyptologists believe that the slab stelae were hidden in response to an order by the king that curtailed or forbade the practice of any funerary cult by private individuals (Shoukry 1951, pp. 31ff.; Helck 1981, p. 54; Helck 1986, p. 20). That a number of private tombs had casings, false doors, and stone chapels added to them clearly shows that this explanation is incorrect and that there could not have been any such royal order. Concerning private sculpture under Khufu, see Russmann 1995b, p. 118.
28. G 2130, G 2140, G 2150, G 4710, G 5010, G II S, G III S, G VI S.
29. Reisner 1942, p. 72. In some tombs, such as that of Seshemnefer III (G 5170), sufficient superstructure was removed to allow the erection not only of an offering place but also of other cult chambers. See Junker 1938, p. 193, fig. 36.
30. Reisner 1942, pp. 69f., 81f.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 422f., fig. 109. Similar reconstructions can be found in the tombs of Akhi (G 4750; Junker 1929, pp. 234ff., fig. 55)

- and of Snefru-seneb (G 4240; Reisner 1942, p. 465, fig. 110, map of cemetery 4000).
32. Tomb G 2155 = G 4780; see Junker 1934, pp. 138ff., fig. 12; and Reisner 1942, pp. 446f.
 33. See G 1201 and G 2210, both left unfinished, and G 1201, completed in mud bricks (Reisner 1942, pp. 385f., 433).
 34. Junker 1929, pp. 132ff., figs. 18–20, pls. 15, 16, 18.
 35. One of the few early exceptions is the mastaba of Hemiunu (G 4000), with two substructures, the southern one of which was excavated later and left unfinished (*ibid.*, pp. 141–45, fig. 18).
 36. G 1223, G 1225, G 1227, G 1233, G 4140, G 4150. In all cases the addition was built on the north side of the mastaba.
 37. Of the sixty-three mastabas in the nucleus cemeteries only eight can be assigned to women, while twenty-six clearly belonged to men. The inequality is obvious even though the considerable number of remaining tombs cannot be taken into account, as they are anonymous (either because they were never occupied or because the names of their owners are lost). Moreover, only about 15 percent of false doors executed throughout the entire Old Kingdom are known to have belonged exclusively to women. See Wiebach 1981, pp. 227, 255, n. 200.
 38. Tefnin 1991, pp. 41–52, 97–129.
 39. Smith 1949, p. 26 (21), pl. 9b. There is also uncertainty regarding the sex of the individuals represented in heads from G 4340, G 4350, G 4540, and G 4560; see Junker 1929, pp. 64f.; Tefnin 1991, pp. 64ff., 104, 114, 122, 127; and Junge 1995, pp. 105ff.
 40. Reisner 1915, pp. 30f., figs. 5–7, 10; Reisner 1942, p. 462, pls. 46c,d, 52a,b, p. 477, pls. 49c, 54a,b.
 41. Reisner and Fisher 1914, p. 240; Junker 1929, p. 38. It is possible, of course, that at least the second reserve heads in tombs G 4140 and G 4440 were placed there randomly, after they had been stolen from their original sites in other burial chambers, in which case serious doubts would be raised about the original locations of all the other heads found in burial chambers; if, however, they were left there deliberately, the only reasonable explanation for their pairing would be that they represent men and women who were buried together. Yet in no burial chamber have the fragments of more than one limestone sarcophagus been found, which indicates that second burials must have been carried out in wood coffins. Fragments of both wood and stone have been discovered in a number of burial chambers—the usual explanation for this being that the wood coffins were put inside the stone sarcophagi (Junker 1929, pp. 45, 54, 190, 233f., 247).
 42. Reisner 1942, pp. 460ff., 403ff. The simple forms of the women's titles do not give any clue as to whether or not they were descendants of the king. Since no direct offspring of Khufu were buried in the Western Cemetery, it has been deduced that Nefret-iabet and Meret-ites are merely honorary princesses. See Schmitz 1976, pp. 123, 127f., 133; and Ziegler 1990b, p. 188.
 43. Shaft G 1225—annex A has been completely plundered (Reisner 1942b, p. 405, fig. 230).
 44. See *ibid.*, p. 285; this assumption is refuted not only by these two tombs but also by a number of others.
 45. *Ibid.*, pp. 72ff., 80f.
 46. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 72.
 47. *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 72. No complete slab stelae or fragments thereof were found in this part of the necropolis.
 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 72f., 80f., 296.
 49. These were of the so-called L-shaped chapel type, which became standard at Giza during the Fourth Dynasty (*ibid.*, pp. 183, 187–211), whereas the so-called cruciform chapels were prevalent at Saqqara into the Fifth Dynasty (*ibid.*, pp. 302ff.).
 50. The casing was not executed or was left unfinished on the three eastern mastabas in the southern row (*ibid.*, pp. 72f.).
 51. The two shafts of the mastabas in the southern row are both in the original cores rather than in the extensions. Thus the original cores are of the two-shaft type but in their finished form are twin mastabas, for example, G 7130/40 (*ibid.*, pp. 54, 298). The twin mastaba was not an invention of the Fourth Dynasty but was introduced in the Third Dynasty with the clear intention of joining the burial places of a man and a woman under one superstructure. Third Dynasty tombs of this type are found mainly at Saqqara and also in Nag el-Deir and Beit Khallaf (Reisner 1936, pp. 285ff.). The tombs of Kha-bau-sokar and Hathor-nefer-hotep (FS 3073) at Saqqara and of Nefer-maat and Itet (M 16) at Meidum, in which the relationship between husband and wife is corroborated by inscriptions, are the most famous (the other known examples are anonymous).
 52. Reisner (1942, p. 219) and Smith (1949, p. 166) dated the first appearance of the earliest rock-cut tombs to the reign of Menkaure; however, their findings must be corrected in view of the fact that certain of Khafre's queens and sons owned some of these monuments.
 53. Reisner 1942, pp. 219–47, 300f. The most important sites with large rock-cut tombs are located in the provinces and date to the later part of the Old Kingdom: see Brunner 1936; Steckeweh 1936; Vandier 1954, pp. 293ff.; Kanawati 1980–92; El-Khouli and Kanawati 1989; El-Khouli and Kanawati 1990; Kanawati 1993; and Kanawati and McFarlane 1993.
 54. See Reisner 1942, p. 219, for the tombs of Khuen-re in the Menkaure quarry (MQ 1), Mer-si-ankh III in cemetery 7000 (G 7530/40), and Rekhetre in the Central Field (no number).
 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 300f., 346–70; Harpur 1987, pp. 104–6.
 56. See the tomb of Queen Mer-si-ankh III, from the time of Shepseskaf (Dunham and Simpson 1974, pls. 6, 8, 9a,b, 11b–d) and the late Fifth Dynasty tomb of Ka-kher-ptah (Kendall 1981).
 57. Brunner 1936, pp. 16f.; Hassan 1944, pp. 45–50; Shoukry 1951, pp. 238–55; Rzepka 1995, pp. 227–36.
 58. Shoukry 1951, pp. 248–55.
 59. Harpur 1987, pp. 106f.
 60. For similar types of mastabas at Abusir, see Borchardt 1907, pp. 25–32, 109–34.
 61. Verner 1992a, pp. 58ff.; Verner 1992b, pp. 599f. A similar although smaller installation for boats is encountered in the tomb of Ka-gemni at Saqqara (fig. 17; Firth and Gunn 1926, p. 21, pl. 51).
 62. Verner 1986a. The number of fragments no longer in situ is estimated at about ten thousand (Rochholz 1994b, p. 261, n. 10). Concerning some of the scenes depicted, see Vachala 1992, pp. 109–11; Vachala 1995, pp. 105–8; and Vachala and Faltings 1995, pp. 281–86.
 63. It is estimated that about forty sculptures made of limestone, calcite (Egyptian alabaster), quartzite, granite, gneiss, and basalt were once present; see Rochholz 1994b, pp. 259–73; Verner 1994a, p. 187; and Patocková 1998, pp. 227–33. The number may seem high but it is not entirely unprecedented, for as early as the Fourth Dynasty some tombs were equipped with large quantities of sculpture: see, for instance, the tomb of Kawab in cemetery 7000 (G 7110/20, time of Khufu), which probably housed ten to twenty statues (Simpson 1978, p. 7) and the tomb complex of Ba-baef in the Western Cemetery

- (G 5230, end of Fourth Dynasty), where between thirty and fifty sculptures are estimated to have been installed (see cat. no. 87; Smith 1949, pp. 46, 50). In the large late Fourth or Fifth Dynasty mortuary complex of Ra-wer at Giza twenty-five serdabs and twenty statue niches were built (Hassan 1932, pp. 1, 4–38; Porter and Moss 1974, pp. 267ff.).
64. See, for instance, Munro 1993, pp. 43f., 82f., foldout 2; Macramallah 1935, pls. 2, 3.
 65. Badawy 1978, p. 12.
 66. D. Arnold 1988, pp. 48f., pls. 75, 105, foldouts 1, 2; Jánosi 1994, pp. 143–63.
 67. H. Petrie and Murray 1952, p. 9, pl. 19 (4); Strudwick 1985, p. 30; Harpur 1987, p. 107, fig. 99.
 68. Harpur 1987, pp. 107f.
 69. See, for example, James 1953, pls. 18–22.
 70. Fiala in *Preliminary Report* 1976, p. 53, figs. 16, 17; Verner 1994a, p. 177, ill. For the royal examples, see D. Arnold 1991, pp. 191ff.; and Labrousse 1996, pp. 94ff., figs. 56, 57, 71, 78, pls. 8, 9.
 71. Lotus columns made of wood were set up in the court of Neferirkare's mortuary precinct to finish the complex quickly after the king died, and it can perhaps be surmised that stone lotus columns were originally intended (Borchardt 1909, p. 21, figs. 16–18). Six-stemmed lotus columns of wood were also employed in the pyramid temple of Neferefre (Verner et al. 1990, p. 36).
 72. Only stone pillars were used in the courts of mastabas.
 73. See the tombs of Senedjem-ib Inti (Reisner 1942, fig. 162) and Seshem-nefer IV (Junker 1953, p. 101, figs. 49, 50, pl. 11).
 74. The royal type shows the titles and names of Sahure (Borchardt 1910, pp. 9f., 24f., 35, figs. 5, 20, 28, 79, 81, pls. 3, 8).
 75. Verner in *Preliminary Report* 1976, pp. 64ff., fig. 28; Verner 1986a, pls. 29, 76.
 76. Verner 1994a, pp. 181f. According to the Abusir papyri, statues representing the seated king were set up in the five chapels in pyramid temples (Rochholz 1994b, p. 262).
 77. Borchardt 1910, pp. 12, 20f.; Ricke 1950, pp. 35f., 70; Leclant 1979b, p. 359; D. Arnold 1997, pp. 63–72, figs. 21–24.
 78. Jánosi 1996, pp. 145–49. An exceptional shrine with four chapels was built in the mastaba tomb of Queen Nebet (wife of Unis); see Munro 1993, pp. 31, 34, pls. 4, 6, foldout 2.
 79. They appear, for example, in the mastaba of Ankh-ma-re (D 40) at Saqqara (end of Fifth Dynasty; Mariette and Maspero 1885, pp. 280ff.), the tomb of Ra-shepses (LS 16/S 902) at Saqqara (time of Djedkare-Isesi; Naville 1897–1913, vol. 1 [1897], p. 166), and the rock-cut tomb of Tjauti (No. 2) at Qâsr el-Said (late Sixth Dynasty; Brunner 1936, p. 46, fig. 24).
 80. Jánosi 1996, pp. 150–53.
 81. Firth and Gunn 1926, pp. 61–65, fig. 72.
 82. Verner 1994a, p. 187.
 83. The royal courtyards also feature an altar of the king that served similar purposes; see D. Arnold 1977, pp. 7f.; D. Arnold 1988, p. 44; and Málek 1988, pp. 23–34.
 84. Munro 1993, p. 31, pl. 4, foldout 2; James 1953, pp. 27, 29, pl. 3.
 85. Assmann 1991, pp. 169–99.
 86. Concerning the dates of the tombs with decorated burial chambers, see Junker 1940, pp. 2, 4; and Lapp 1993, pp. 10ff., § 25 (Saqqara), pp. 29ff., § 89–91 (Giza), p. 36, § 104. A list of decorated burial chambers is offered by Bolshakov (1997, pp. 116f.).