CHAPTER TWO

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter the purpose of the present study is discussed, together with its most important definitions, its general procedure and the restrictions imposed on it.

The chronology, which acts as the basis for the study to be undertaken, is determined. Possible discrepancies with the dates given in the literature are discussed.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In the period covered by this study the offering place was the centre and raison d’être of the cult chapels of the tombs. It was decorated and integrated into the western walls of the cult chapels, walls which themselves also bore decoration. In several cult chapels offering slabs, libation basins, statues, and offering stands have been found in situ in front of the false door (figure II.1).

1 This offering place could either be in front of a false door or a slab stela (see figure II.1 and Der Manuelian, Giza archives, photo AEOS II_2580).

2 Hassan, Giza I, 110–1, plate LXVIII (Mersu’ankh, PM, III¹, 269–70); Junker, Giza, X, plate Vb (Ny’ankh-hathor, PM, III¹, 218).

3 In the tomb of Akhmerutnesut (PM, III¹, 80–1) a statue of the tomb owner (Boston MFA 12.1482) was found in situ together with a libation basin (Stevenson Smith, Sculpture, 57, plate 22c; ASAE 13–14 (1914), plate 11b).

4 Handoussa, Offeringslab; Reisner, Report, plate III I; Der Manuelian, Slab stelae, figures 40 and 197; Reisner, Giza I, plate 66d. In the tomb of Sonb (PM, III¹, 101–3) an offering table had been dug into the ground, leaving only its upper part visible (Junker, Giza V, 3–122, fig. 2; Bolshakov, Hinting). On the false door in the cult chapel of Khufukha’ef [I] (PM, III¹, 188–90) offering stands are depicted on the front side of the posts (8 c/d in plan XXX of PM, III¹; Simpson, Gmast 3, figure 32). On the false door in the tomb of Merib (PM, III¹, 71–2; LD, II, 20) these stands are painted on the inner sides of the posts. In the chapel of the mastaba of Ipi at Dahshur (DAS 9) a libation basin has been found in situ (Alexanian, Residenznecropole, 5; Mariette, Mastaba, 41–2). In the northern niche of the mastaba of Kanefer (PM, III¹, 77–8) a libation basin has been hewn directly in the bottom stone of the false door (Der Manuelian, Gmast 8, fig. 12.50 (page 332)).
In one chapel a statue of the sitting tomb owner has been found *in situ* next to the false door,\(^5\) and one can assume that this might have been the case in more chapels.\(^6\) All of this contributes to the assumption that the false door was the primary cultic element of the chapel,\(^7\) possibly supported by the cultic significance of the decoration on the remaining surface of the western wall of the cult chapel.\(^8\)

The supposition that all of the (sub)themes of the decoration of both the western wall and the false door(s) against it were of a cultic nature might not be a priori true, though.

For this reason one of the aims of this study is to investigate whether some of the (sub)themes on the western wall are placed there for other than cultic purposes.\(^9\)

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5 The chapel of Akherutnesut (G 2184; PM, III¹, 80–1).

6 Probably the statues of Rahotep and Nofret (mastaba 6 at Maidum) were originally also placed in front of the false door or in front of the entrance into the cruciform chapel, because it is unlikely that they were intended to be “locked” away. The cruciform chapel finally became a serdab as the result of a development that only manifested itself after the conclusion of the construction of the original mastaba.

7 Bártá, *Serdab*, 70 details that in the tomb of Hesyre’ (PM, III², 437–9) a pottery stand meant for votive offerings has been found *in situ* in front of the serdab. This means that, at least in that period, not only the false door was a focal point of cultic activity, although the latter probably was the most important. Also see LA, V, 874–9, s.v. “Serdab”.

8 The remaining surface of the western wall is further referred to as “the western wall”.

9 Fitzenreiter, *Grabdekoration*, 78 concludes that the decoration on the walls cannot be separated from the utensils handled during the cult in the chapel. The decoration of