



Some Remarks on the dating of 12 Old Kingdom Tombs at Giza

Simon Thuault

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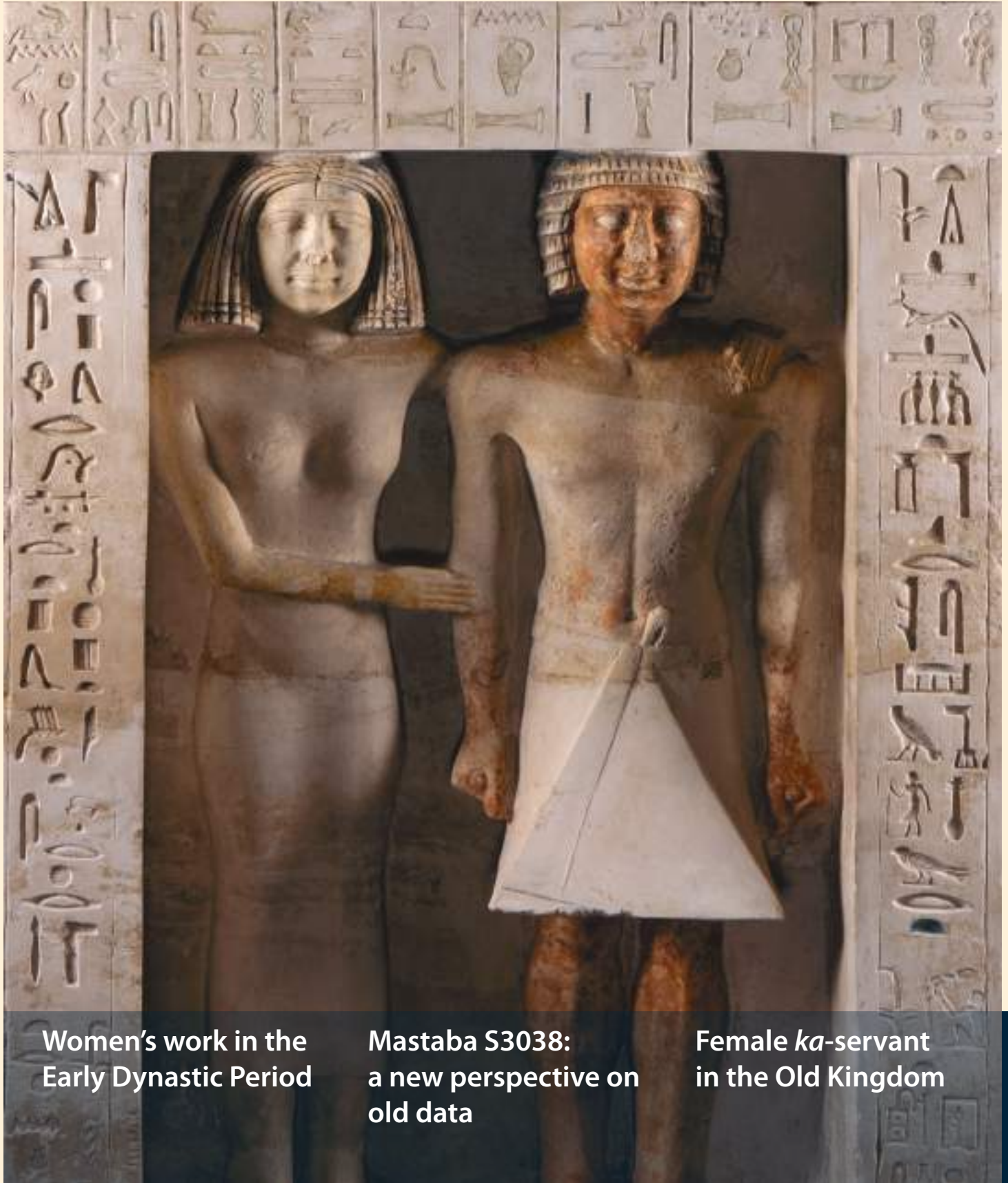
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Early Dynastic Period

Mastaba S3038:
a new perspective on
old data

Female *ka*-servant
in the Old Kingdom

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Cover photo

Detail of the limestone stela (1/AS104/2018) belonging to the scribe of the treasury and royal *wab*-priest Sekhemka and his spouse, king's acquaintance Henutsen, found in the eastern wall of the tomb of Nyankhseshat (AS 104) (photo P. Košárek)

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Some remarks on the dating of 12 Old Kingdom tombs at Giza

Simon Thuault

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to confirm or revise the dating of a dozen Old Kingdom tombs in the Giza necropolis (precisely Western, GI-South, Eastern and Central Cemeteries), monuments whose chronology is still debated. The 12 mastabas here commented on are often dated to more or less extensive periods, which can sometimes spread over two dynasties. Moreover, when absolute dating is proposed, it is generally based on questionable elements and events with uncertain chronological positioning. The Egyptian chronology is still subject to perceptive bias and archaeological happenstance, new discoveries being liable to challenge previous dating. Thus, the present study draws up lists of criteria that give the opportunity to propose clear dating for each tomb. A wide range of evidence is taken into consideration: decoration (including palaeography), prosopography, anthroponymy, location in the cemeteries, architecture, tomb dimensions, furniture, etc. I believe that an overview of these various aspects is the only way to suggest precise dating for each tomb. Moreover, this paper shows that two main periods stand out during the whole of the Old Kingdom, periods covering one or two reigns. This conclusion is very interesting for the architectural and political history of the Old Kingdom; a conclusion we may come to through the distribution of the tombs in the cemeteries, their dimensions and decoration, etc.

KEYWORDS

Egyptian chronology – architecture – iconography – Old Kingdom – mastaba – Giza

بعض الملاحظات حول تأريخ 12 مقبرة من الدولة القديمة بالجيزة

سيمون ثولوت

ملخص

تهدف هذه المقالة إلى تأكيد أو مراجعة تاريخ عشرات المقابر التي تعود لعصر الدولة القديمة بجيزة (بالتحديد بالجيزة الغربية، G1 الجنوبية، الجيزة الشرقية، الجيزة الوسطى)، وهي المقابر التي لا يزال تاريخها قيد المناقشة. غالباً ما يتم تأريخ 12 مصطبة محل المناقشة هنا لفترات طويلة إلى حد ما، والتي قد تصل أحياناً لأسرتين. علاوة على ذلك، عند تقديم تاريخ محقق لتحديد الفترة الزمنية الصحيحة لتلك المقابر، فإنه دائماً ما يعتمد بشكل عام على عناصر واحداث متكونة في صحة موقعها الزمني. ولا يزال التاريخ المصري القديم عرضة للتحيز عبر الموضوعي والتصنيف الأثري؛ بالإضافة إلى "الاكتشافات الجديدة" التي يمكن أن تتحدى التاريخ السابق. وهكذا فإن هذه الدراسة تضع قوائم بالمقاييس السليمة التي تمنح الفرصة لاقتراح تاريخ واضح لكل مقبرة كما تم الأخذ في الاعتبار مجموعة واسعة من الأدلة، منها على سبيل المثال: نقوش المساطر (نما في ذلك على الكتابات القديمة)، الصفات الشخصية، بالإضافة إلى دراسة أسماء أصحاب المقابر، موقع تلك المقابر في الجيزة، هندستها المعمارية، مساحة المقابر، المناخ الجنائزي الذي عثر عليه بالمقابر، وغير هذا من الأدلة الأخرى. حيث اعتقد أن نظرة علمية على هذه الجوانب المختلفة تمثل الطريقة الوحيدة لتقديم اقتراح دقيق لتاريخ كل مقبرة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، توحي هذه الورقة أنه كان هناك فترتان رئيسيتان برزتا خلال كامل عصر الدولة القديمة من التاريخ المصري القديم، وهي فترتان تغطي فترة حكم واحدة أو حكمتين. ويعتقد هذا الاستنتاج أهمية كبيرة لتغذية لتاريخ العمري والسلسلي للدولة القديمة؛ وهي نتيجة قد توصل إليها من خلال توزيع المقابر بالجيزة وأبعادها وزخارفها الخ.

الكلمات الدالة

التاريخ المصري القديم – العمارة – المساطر – الدولة القديمة – المصطبة – الجيزة

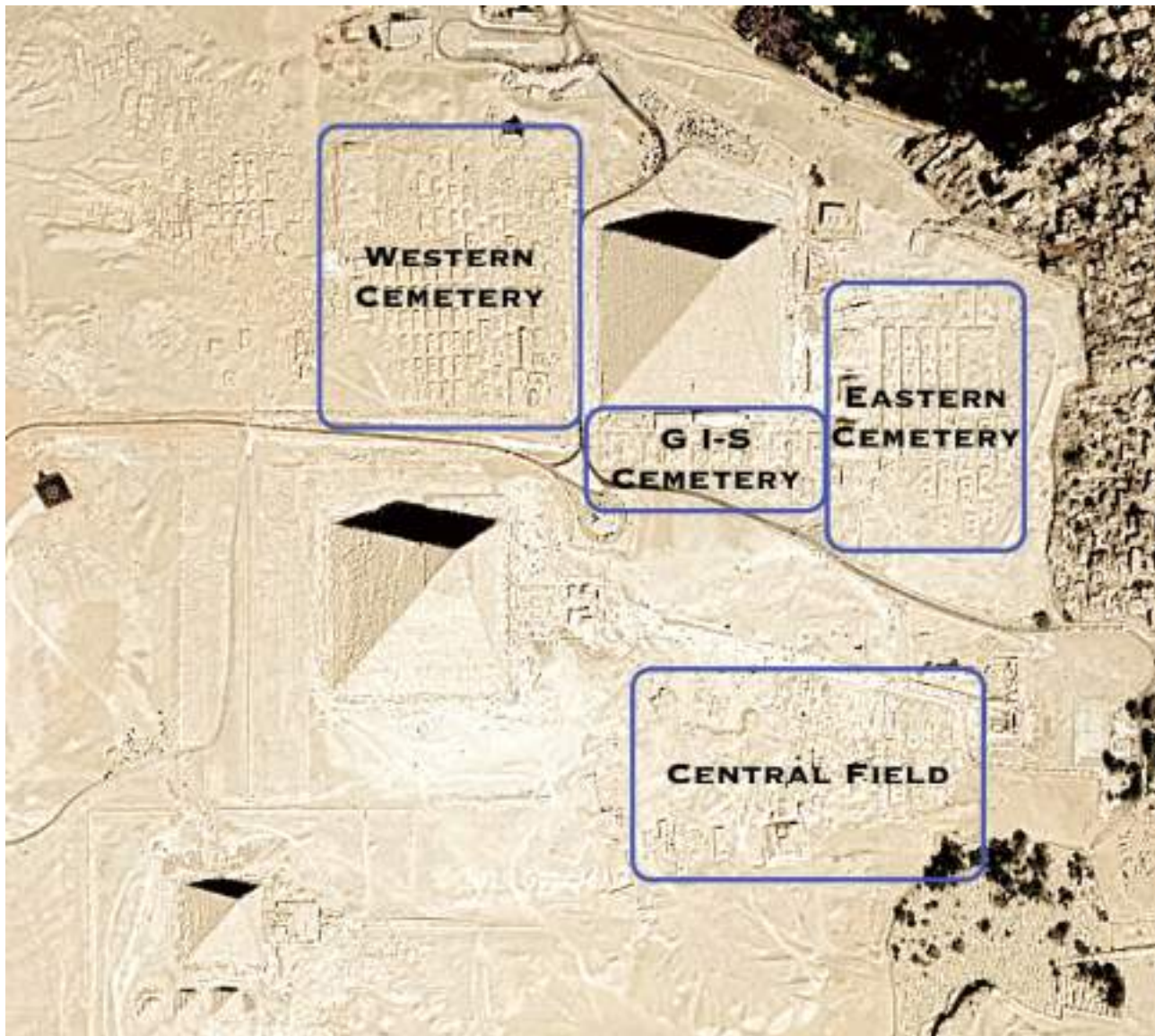


Fig. 1 Giza plateau with the considered necropoleis (map made by the present author over a Google Earth screenshot of the Giza necropolis, with the assistance of data given by the website <http://giza.fas.harvard.edu>. Accessed on 31st August 2019.)

Dating is an issue inherent to the study of ancient civilisations, and particularly to Egypt whose *comput* is sometimes difficult to comprehend and adapt to our modern periods.¹ This issue is even more challenging when we deal with early periods, such as the Egyptian Old Kingdom.

A first question immediately arises: why is it important to give more precise dating for Old Kingdom tombs? In other words, what is the *raison d'être* of such a study? This paper was born during the realisation of my Ph.D.² for which I made chronological analyses of Old Kingdom monuments. Whereas temples and pyramids are usually well-dated (in relative chronology,

see below), it is far from being the case with private monuments. Therefore, it becomes important to establish clear dating for these buildings in order to use them accurately in archaeological, historical or semiological studies.

Nadine Cherpion (1989: 21) already defended this statement in her reference study on Old Kingdom mastabas: “Malgré les classements proposés et les efforts accomplis pour préciser la chronologie des tombes privées d’Ancien Empire, on est cependant frappé par le fait que celle-ci reste très floue et aléatoire. Pour ne citer que quelques exemples – nullement exceptionnels, mais au contraire extrêmement banals – le mastaba de

¹ This is proven by a comprehensive bibliography – impossible to draw up here – dealing with the chronology of Egyptian history, being about reigns (their duration, succession, etc.), Egyptological main periods or dynasties (length, events), etc. For a global overview of this question, see Beckerath (1997).

² *La dissimilation graphique dans les textes égyptiens de l’Ancien Empire. Essai de grammatologie cognitive*. Supervised by Prof. Bernard Mathieu (University Paul Valéry Montpellier 3). Defended on 1st December 2017 (*summa cum laude*) (see Thuault 2017).

Kaemheset à Saqqara est daté par certains de la VI^e dynastie, par d'autres de la Ve et par d'autres encore de la IV^e ; le mastaba de Neferirtenef, aujourd'hui à Bruxelles, est daté du règne de Neferirkaré ou plus tard, ce qui n'exclut pas, pour certains, la VI^e dynastie. Non seulement on ne peut se satisfaire de datations aussi vagues ou contradictoires, mais en outre les auteurs les justifient si rarement que le lecteur a de la peine à se faire une opinion à ce sujet."

Naguib Kanawati (1992: 34) agrees in his review of the previous work: "The progress of change can only be understood if the tombs are placed in the correct chronological order, which in turn would help establish a clearer picture of the various aspects of Egyptian civilization."

As for Michel Baud (1998: 34), he explains that this kind of research forms the basis of historical studies: "Sans ce type de recherche, l'histoire de l'Ancien Empire resterait dans un flou relatif, ou serait établie sur des éléments partisans. Critiquer la disproportion entre la lourdeur des études nécessaires et la minceur des résultats, favoriser une démarche intuitive dans l'appréhension des sources contre un traitement systématique des données, arguer que les dates plus « raffinées » peuvent ne rien ajouter à la compréhension des grands évolutions sur le long terme, contredisent les principes mêmes sur lesquels la démarche de l'historien se fonde". More recently, Joyce Swinton (2014: 2) added new arguments in favour of works concerning the dating of Old Kingdom private monuments: "The tombs of Old Kingdom officials constitute a large proportion of the available source material from which a history of this period might be derived [...] without an acceptable chronological ordering of the basic data, however, the full potential of this rich body of historical evidence will not be accessible."

The need for better dating partly explains the number of studies dedicated to this topic. These works use various criteria to reach their conclusions: titles (Baer 1960; Kanawati 1977), offering lists (Barta 1963), false doors (Wiebach 1981), decorative program (Stahelin 1966; Harpur 1987; Fischer 1989 and 1990;³ Cherpion 1989; Baud 1998 and 1999; Swinton 2014),⁴ etc. This is why the present study takes into account all these features – and more – in order to give an overview of the dating issue and to offer the best possible results.⁵

Unlike those of other studies, the results of the present paper are given in a relative chronology rather

than absolute dating. Even if some scholars try to suggest absolute dating for Egyptian first dynasties, the documents giving clues to the dating of events for our own chronology are usually inadequate. Thus, if we have difficulties in precisely dating reigns and events, placing private tombs on an absolute historical scale is even more complex. This is why I have decided to use kings' reigns rather than absolute chronology. Baud (1998: 83–84)⁶ has already suggested choosing this method: "Il est souvent préférable de se contenter d'une fourchette que de risquer une date au sein d'un règne, voire simplement au règne près."

Swinton (2014: 3) agrees with this statement, pointing out that this is no reason to deny the utility to chronological works:⁷ "it may never be possible to date some Old Kingdom monuments more precisely than within one or two generations [...] (but) a sufficiently precise chronological ordering of monuments and the evidence they offer should then be available to support further investigation into the historical dynamic of the Old Kingdom."

In the following pages, I suggest some new elements in order to put a date on a dozen Giza Old Kingdom tombs. Most of them (9 of 12) are situated in the Western Cemetery (fig. 1). Some of these tombs have already been dated with more or less precision; so, I will take these dates in order to confirm, specify or revise them. Different books and papers are the basis of this research, studies that are still references for dating Old Kingdom tombs. Thus, in addition to the original monuments' publications, I have used prosopographical studies (Baer 1960; Kanawati 1977; Strudwick 1985; Baud 1999), stylistic analysis (Hassan 1948; Barta 1963; Cherpion 1989; Baud 1998; Swinton 2014), archaeological works (Reisner 1942–1955; Junker 1929–1955; Hassan 1932–1960)⁸ and architectural descriptions (Jánosi 2005; Roeten 2016).⁹ In combining different data and issues, it is possible to make precise observations and, consequently, more accurate dating.

With these new chronological elements, I aim to refine the dating of 12 Old Kingdom private tombs, which can become a firm basis upon which to start future studies on ancient architecture, decoration, or even social history. These tombs are variously preserved, and while most of them offer many architectural and decorative elements, others only provide scant information and force us to focus on a few discriminative details such

³ Henry G. Fischer was also interested in palaeography, hieroglyphic texts being an important clue for dating, as we will see throughout this paper.

⁴ Notwithstanding, these stylistic analyses show differences, like Cherpion's use of the last cartouches found on tomb walls. This method has been deeply criticised, but some reviewers admit that it is very useful and, in general, valid. See, for example, Kanawati (1992: 326): "Nadine Cherpion's thesis will remain, with others, an important dating tool for years to come", or Roth (1994: 57–58): "In conjunction with a study of other indications of date, however, these criteria will be a useful tool for anyone working in the fields of Old Kingdom history, iconography, epigraphy, and art history".

⁵ This method also allows the overcoming of obstacles underlined by Baud (1998: 31–34): uncertain dating resulting from statistics (resulting in weak representativity) and the lack of the "absolute" chronological value of royal cartouches.

⁶ According to him, "precise dating" is a "ploy", an opinion that I share.

⁷ Further, she adds "The time scale used is that of dynasties and reigns rather than years, because monuments in Groups A and B (*groups used in her study*) can be assigned to a reign but rarely to a year within the reign".

⁸ See also the various volumes of the *Giza Mastaba* Series published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Cf. Bibliography.

⁹ These syntheses of Giza necropolis' tombs (their plans, furniture, dimensions, etc.) are used in addition to the previous archaeological studies.

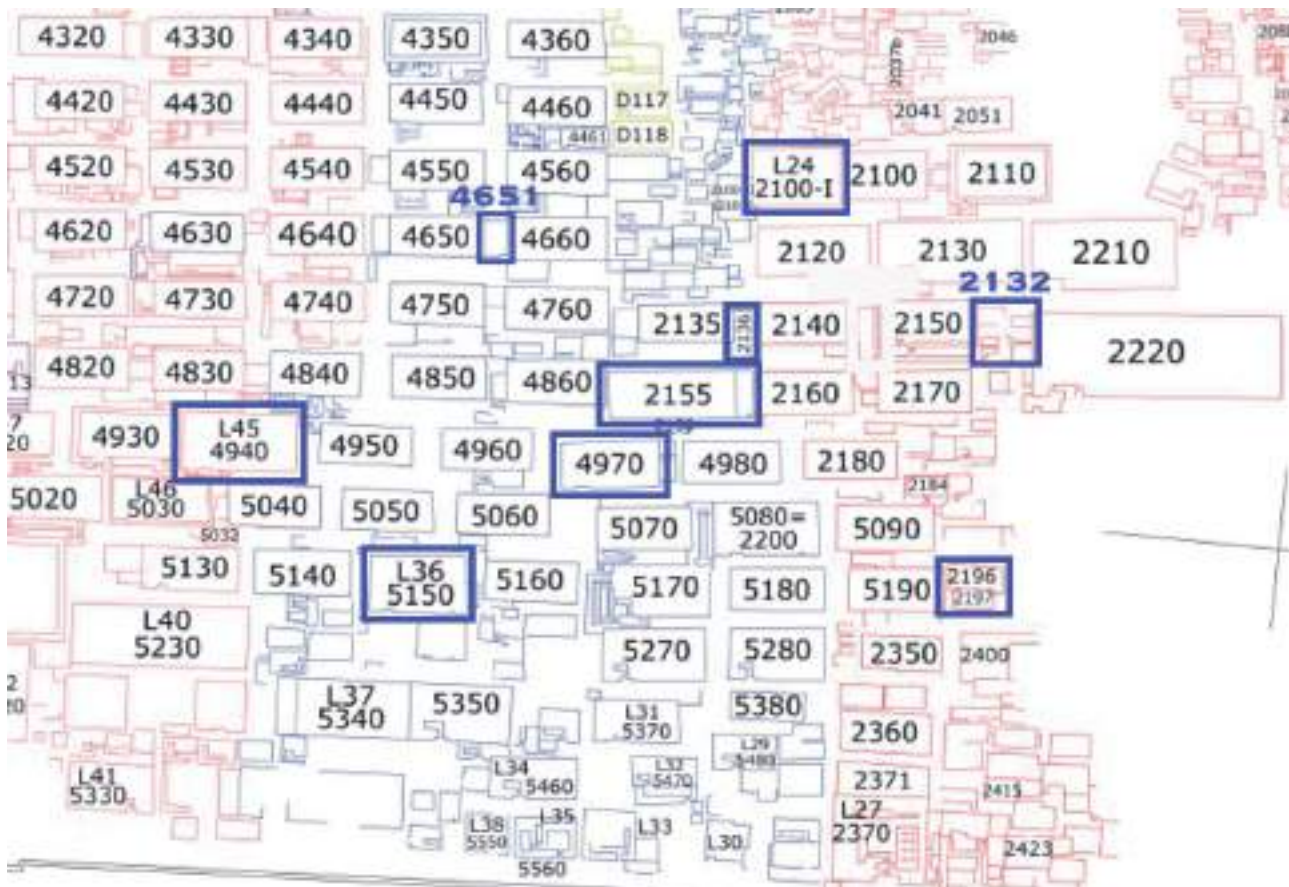


Fig. 2 Detail 1: Western Cemetery (eastern section of the eastern part) with considered tombs (after Manuelian 1999: fig. 83, processed by S. Thuault)

as the offering list, potential palaeographical hints, the situation in the necropolis area, prosopography and anthroponymy, etc.

WESTERN CEMETERY

IASEN (G 2196) (𓂏𓂏𓂏, J3sn)

This mastaba is usually dated between the end of the Fifth Dynasty and the beginning of the Sixth (Porter – Moss – Málek 1974: 82; Simpson 1980: 16–23). Michel Baud (1998: 48–49) places its construction during the reign of Neferirkare,¹⁰ whereas Swinton (2014: 15 [3]) refers it to the end of the reigns of Djedkare and Unas. Klaus Baer (1960: 287 [16]), Yvonne M. Harpur (1987: 265 [13]) and William K. Simpson (1980: 16) prefer to assign it to the first reigns of the Sixth Dynasty.

Some stylistic details of the tomb decoration allow one to claim that the Sixth Dynasty is too late for this mastaba, the analysis of several clues supporting a Fifth Dynasty dating. For example, the criteria of Cherpion nos. 16–17 (length and form of the bread loaves on the

deceased's table; Cherpion 1989: 47)¹¹ and 47 (several bracelets on women's arms) appear in tombs whose later cartouche is that of Nyuserre (Cherpion 1989: 70). Moreover, her criteria nos. 4 (little pointed cushion), 7 (armchair) and 10 (bull-legs on chairs) can be found in tombs not posterior to the reign of Djedkare (Cherpion 1989: 29, 31, 34). To these elements the criteria of Swinton nos. 2 (details on the loincloth), 52 and 54 (two priestly gestures), 78 (lotus in the hand of the tomb owner) and 95 (scene of "pulling papyrus") can be added, which are attested in tombs until the reign of Nyuserre (Swinton 2014: 80, 88, 91 and 94).

The offering list is also an important clue for dating this tomb to the Fifth Dynasty, partly because of its affiliation with the *Listentyp A* of Winfried Barta (1963: 47–77).¹² Furthermore, when we compare this list with other lists of the Giza necropolis, we observe clear similarities between that of Iasen and those of tombs mostly dated from Nyuserre (Kanynesut II [G 2156], Neferbauptah [G 6010], Tepemankh [D 20], Nefer [G 4761]) to Unas (Hemu Shepseskafankh [G 8492], Kapuptah [G 4461], Seshemnefer III [G 5170]).¹³ The

¹⁰ With an eventual lengthening to Nyuserre.

¹¹ Swinton (2014: 84) gives the same *terminus* for this stylistic detail (crit. no. 31).

¹² *Listentyp A* was the referred form of the offering lists during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties.

¹³ See, for instance, Jánosi (2005: 243). A few lists can be extended to the reign of Teti, e.g. Uri and Minu (G 4851).

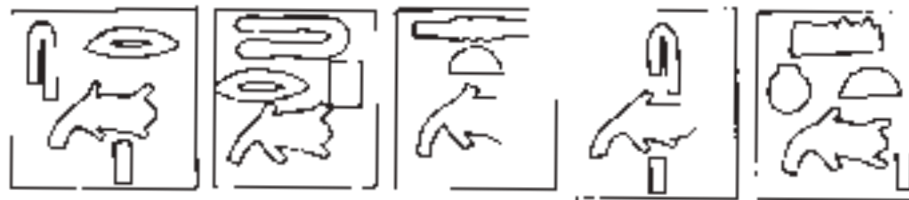


Fig. 3 Iasen's offering list (group of fowls) (after Simpson 1980: fig. 35)

most evident correlation between these lists is the likeness of the group of bird offerings (fig. 3), the different species and their writings being identical in the different tables.¹⁴

Finally, it is worthwhile taking into consideration the nearest tombs built in its vicinity that can be dated with precision (fig. 2).¹⁵ The mastaba of Penmeru (G 2197), who mainly lived under Djedkare (Manuelian 2009b: 48), may have been built during this reign or shortly after, thus being contemporary with Iasen.¹⁶ A little bit further afield is the tomb of Akhmerutnesut (G 2184) (see Manuelian 2009b: 3; Woods 2009: 168), probably built during the last reigns of the Fifth Dynasty (Djedkare to Unas?).¹⁷ Thus, the location of Iasen's tomb speaks in favour of a date to the end of the Fifth Dynasty.

As a conclusion, thanks to the different criteria previously mentioned, I propose to date the building of Iasen's mastaba to the reign of Djedkare. The second part of the Fifth Dynasty is, furthermore, especially important in the history of the Old Kingdom, notably regarding private funerary architecture (Bárta 2005: 105–130).¹⁸

MERIB (G 2100-I) (𓄏𓄏𓄏, *Mr-jb*)¹⁹

This tomb is the subject of several studies. As a result, various dates are given, and even though a relative consensus exists for the transitive period between the last reigns of the Fourth Dynasty and the first ones of the Fifth Dynasty,²⁰ few scholars opt for the Fourth Dynasty only (Strudwick 1985: 94 [59]; Cherpion 1989: 233; Baud 1999: 35–40).

A close look at the stylistic details of the tomb clearly prevents us from placing it at the beginning of the Fifth

Dynasty. Cherpion's criteria nos. 2 (full long cushion), 28 (high skullcap on the wig), 41 (long *sekhem*-sceptre without umbel) and 59 (navigation scene) are not attested with cartouches of kings posterior to the Fourth Dynasty (Cherpion 1989: 28, 55, 65 and 79). Moreover, if the *terminus ad quem* can be situated in the reign of Menkaure, the *terminus a quo* is likely to be put during the reign of Khufu, as Cherpion's criteria nos. 16 (small offering bread loaves) and 59 indicate (Cherpion 1989: 47 and 79).

Baud (1999: 36–37) underlines additional architectural clues which reinforce the Khufu – Menkaure period: exterior blocks, massive core, Reisner's type 3, "twin mastaba" formation, etc. Moreover, the chapel's form ("L-shaped")²¹ and the slab stela (where appears the "linen-list", see below) are typical of the second part of the Fourth Dynasty (Roeten 2016: 9–10).²² As for the mastaba's dimensions (308 m² for the tomb and 6 m² for the chapel), they are within the average of the mid-Fourth Dynasty measurements (Roeten 2016: 40–42). The other hints are quite scarce. The offering list is, for example, only composed of a kind of "proto list" with some animal heads and a "linen list" (fig. 4), as we can observe in archaic tombs of the Third Dynasty (like the tomb of Khabausokar at Saqqara) and mastabas from the reigns of Khufu and Khafre (for example, Snefruseneb [G 4240], Hemiunu [G 4000], Seshatsekhtiu [G 2120] and Merytites [G 4140]).²³ We find more information by comparing Merib's monuments with the other tombs of the area (see fig. 2), the majority of them being dated from the reigns of Khufu to Menkaure:²⁴ e.g. Seshatsekhtiu (G 2120) and Khentka (G 2130) (Smith 1952: 127; Jánosi 2005: 221–222; Manuelian

¹⁴ About these groups of 5 or 6 fowls, see Thuault (2018).

¹⁵ I express my gratitude to Peter Der Manuelian, who authorized me to use this plan in the present paper, as well as the other figures extracted from his own works.

¹⁶ The comparison between these two mastabas already appears in Baud (1998: 48–49) and Swinton (2014: 15 [3]).

¹⁷ I would like to thank Inès Torres for our short discussion about Akhmerutnesut's tomb and its dating. Her preliminary work on the tomb seems to distinguish two phases for its building, the last one probably taking place at the end of the Fifth Dynasty.

¹⁸ Cherpion (1989: 80–81) also distinguishes the reigns of Djedefre and Nyuserre (and their direct successors) as "innovative" periods of the Old Kingdom, during which several criteria appear and others seem to disappear. Nonetheless, she tempers this statement due to some difficulties in distinguishing a few monuments of Nyuserre and Neferirkare's reigns (Cherpion 1989: 82).

¹⁹ For the tomb, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 71–72); Manuelian (2009a: 69–115).

²⁰ The references are numerous and gathered at this address: <http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/sites/671/full/>. (Accessed on 31st October 2019).

²¹ See Manuelian (2009a: 84, fig. 4.2) for a plan of Merib's mastaba.

²² Nevertheless, Manuelian (2009a: 72) says that these elements can be "archaisms". According to him, the slab-stela is "not enough to allow a Dynasty 4 date". However, added to the other clues detailed in the present paper, a Fourth Dynasty date seems more accurate. The presence of two shafts, if not a decisive clue in order to date the tomb to the Fourth Dynasty, remains an interesting element because this architectural peculiarity appears in Giza during the Khufu – Khafre period (see Roeten 2016: 33).

²³ Baud (1999: 37–39) makes this clue essential for Merib's dating. See also Jánosi (2005: 125, 221–227).

²⁴ We could add the tombs of Kanefer (G 2150) and Senenuka Keki (G 2041), placed during Menkaure with a possible extension to the very first reigns of the Fifth Dynasty (see, for instance, Jánosi 2005: 223).



Fig. 4 Offering scene of Merib (with linen list) (after Manuelian 2009: fig. 4.60)

2006: 228),²⁵ G 2135 (Junker 1929: 227–231; Manuelian 2006: 223), G 2140 (Manuelian 2006: 223–226).

Basilophoric elements are also very useful to pinpoint a specific reign as a date. Merib was priest of Khufu, his tomb walls bearing several names of domains including the cartouche of Khufu,²⁶ and his son was named Khufumernetjeru (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏, *Hwfw-mr-ntr:w*).²⁷ These elements speak in favour of the fact that Merib probably died during the reign of one of Khufu's direct successors. Additionally, in Merib's tomb, Nensedjerkai is also mentioned (G 2100 II) (Junker 1934: 97–121),²⁸ whose mastaba likely dates to the Djedefre – Khafre period, based on several stylistic and prosopographical details.²⁹

Following these observations, it is probable that Merib's mastaba began to be built under Khufu's reign and that Merib was buried during the reign of Djedefre or Khafre.

NESUTNEFER (G 4970) (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏, *Nsw.t-nfr*)³⁰

Contrary to the Fifth Dynasty dating suggested by Hermann Junker (1938: 163–187), Kanawati (2002: 36–37)

and Peter Jánosi (2005: 243),³¹ Swinton (2014: 31 [60]) proposes older dating for Nesutnefer, from Menkaure to Userkaf.³² As for Baud (1999: 57–58), he suggests the reign of Khafre, thus giving the most ancient dating for this tomb.

At least five stylistic criteria of Cherpion tend to give a Fourth Dynasty date. In fact, the criteria nos. 2 (full cushion) and 58–59 (hedgehog prow and navigation scene) are attested in tombs whose latest cartouche is that of Khafre (Cherpion 1989: 28 and 78–79), while the criteria nos. 28 (curled wig with high skullcap) and 41 (long *sekhem*-scepter without umbel) can be found up to the reign of Menkaure (Cherpion 1989: 55 and 65). Thus, the *terminus ad quem* is likely to be placed at the end of the Fourth Dynasty (*ca.* Menkaure's reign). Moreover, thanks to the criteria of Swinton, the reign of Khafre can be claimed as *terminus a quo*. Indeed, details no. 17 (diagonal line on the animal skin of the tomb owner), 51 (priest with censer) and 65 (wife embracing her husband) appear during Khafre's reign (Swinton 2014: 82, 88 and 90).³³ Finally, Baud (1999: 57–58) and Kanawati (2002: 36) mention the very

²⁵ The tombs of Seshatsekhentiu and Khentka even bear graffiti that can be dated to more or less precise years in the reign of Khufu (at least to decades in this reign), thus giving clear clues concerning their dating (see Jánosi 2005: 131).

²⁶ For example 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏 *jw.wy Hwfw*, 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏 *mn tb.wt Hwfw*, 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏 *nfr htp.t Hwfw*, etc. See Manuelian (2009a: fig. 4.37).

²⁷ Titles and anthroponyms including royal names are very useful for chronological studies, as Cherpion explains (1989: 139–140): “même les noms de personnes, les noms de domaines funéraires et les divers titres de prêtres dans lesquels apparaissent les noms de rois – c'est-à-dire trois contextes considérés a priori comme peu significatifs – ont une valeur chronologique extrêmement concrète”.

²⁸ About the dating to the Fourth dynasty, see Manuelian (2006: 227–229).

²⁹ Full cushion (Cherpion's criterion no. 2), low offering table with low bread loaves (Cherpion's no. 16), “Rahotep style” loincloth (Cherpion's no. 37), title of “priest of Khufu”, own priest with basilophoric name (Khufuankh).

³⁰ To the tomb, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 143–144); Junker (1938: 163–187).

³¹ Baer (1960: 292 [292]) gives similar dating.

³² Her dating is close to that of Reisner (1942: 214).

³³ These details are attested up to the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty.



Fig. 5 Mastaba of Seshathetep Heti (G 5150) (after Junker 1938: Abb. 27)



Fig. 6 Mastaba of Nesutnefer (G 4970) (after Junker 1929: Abb. 51)

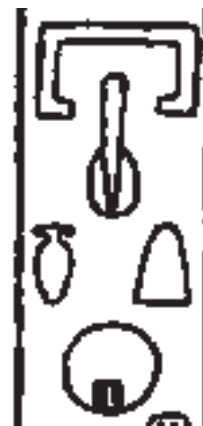



Fig. 7 Mastaba of Iabtet (G 4650) (after Kanawati 2002: pl. 45)

close relationship between the decorative programs of Nesutnefer and Seshathetep, the latter being dated to the Khafre – Menkaure period (see below).

A palaeographical element not considered in Cherpion and Swinton's works seems to confirm the dating to the second part of the Fourth Dynasty: the presence of little lines on the hieroglyph of the *p3.t*-bread:  (X6)³⁴ (figs. 5–7).³⁵ These ribbings are frequently attested during the Fourth Dynasty but very rarely after.³⁶ Additionally, the offering list is very close to the “proto lists” mostly attested during the Third Dynasty (cf. above and fig. 4)³⁷ and can be compared to some others whose dating goes from Khufu to Menkaure.³⁸ By the way, those of Hemiunu and Seshatsekhtiu are identical to that of Nesutnefer, these two tombs being dated to the reign of Khufu.³⁹

Nesutnefer was priest of Khafre and administrator of his pyramid town, priests and statues. There is also, in his mastaba, the mention of a dwarf servant named Djedefreankh.⁴⁰ Thus, the prosopography and basilophoric names are additional clues in favour of a Khafre – Menkaure date.

Finally, there is a certain chronological coherence in the area of the necropolis where Nesutnefer's tomb is situated (see fig. 2). At least four tombs can be dated to the reigns of Khufu to Menkaure: Seshatsekhtiu (G 2120) (Smith 1952: 127; Jánosi 2005: 221; Manuelian 2006: 228), G 2135 (Junker 1929: 227–231; Manuelian 2006: 223), G 2140 (Manuelian 2006: 223–226) and G 4860 (Junker 1929: 242–248; Manuelian 2008a: 236).

Others are dated with less precision, from the end of the Fourth Dynasty to the beginning of the Fifth: Kanynesut II (G 2156) (Junker 1931: 15–16; Junker 1938: 145–163), G 2160 (Manuelian 2006: 225–226), G 4760 (Junker 1929: 231–234; Woods 2009: 162–163) and G 4960 (Junker 1944: 9–13). This uncertainty between Fourth and Fifth Dynasty is also raised about Nesutnefer's dating by Jánosi and Roeten, based on architectural details. For example, Jánosi (2005: 241–242) mentions a statue dedicated to Nesutnefer's wife, Shenet, that could date to the reign of Khafre; but he also points out the fact that the decorative program of Nesutnefer is close to that of Seshathetep (see below), which he dates from the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty. Nevertheless, this argument is insubstantial, the process of copying decorative programs being difficult to interpret about Old Kingdom tombs (Thuault 2017: 299–306). As for Roeten, he gives a vague date at the transition between the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties, according to the mastaba's dimensions (268 m² for the tomb; 3.9 m² for the chapel). These measurements are coherent with the tombs of the second part of the Fourth and the first half of the Fifth Dynasty (Roeten 2016: 41–46). Given its location in the cemetery, Nesutnefer's mastaba is within the average compared to the nearby tombs (Roeten 2016: 41–46). So, it cannot be considered as a “rich tomb”, thus allowing a date in the second part of the Fourth Dynasty. The L-shaped chapel is by the way another hint in favour of the late Fourth Dynasty (Roeten 2016: 9–10).⁴¹

³⁴ Gardiner (1957: 532) describes this mark as a print of the baker's finger.

³⁵ This peculiarity is coherent with the dating of Iabtet's mastaba (G 4650) as explained in Jánosi (2005: 127). I thank warmly the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften and professor Kanawati for the authorization to reproduce their figures through the whole paper.

³⁶ Utility of epigraphy and palaeography is well established since the numerous works of – among others – Fischer and Meeks, Swinton (2014: 171) taking back this statement in her own study.

³⁷ For example Khabausokar's one.

³⁸ Hemiunu (G 4000); Seshatsekhtiu (G 2120); Nefer (G 2110); Snefruseneb (G 4240); Merytites (G 4140). Even in other necropolis, similar lists can be dated to the Fourth Dynasty, from Snefru and Khufu (like Rahotep in Meidum) to Khafre and Menkaure (like Mery and Minkhaf in Saqqara). See Jánosi (2005: 220–227).

³⁹ About Hemiunu (G 4000), see Manuelian (2008b: 29–57). For Seshatsekhtiu, see Smith (1952: 127) and Manuelian (2006: 228).

⁴⁰ Already mentioned in Swinton (2014: 31 [60]).

⁴¹ For the plan of Nesutnefer's tomb, see Junker (1938: Abb. 1).

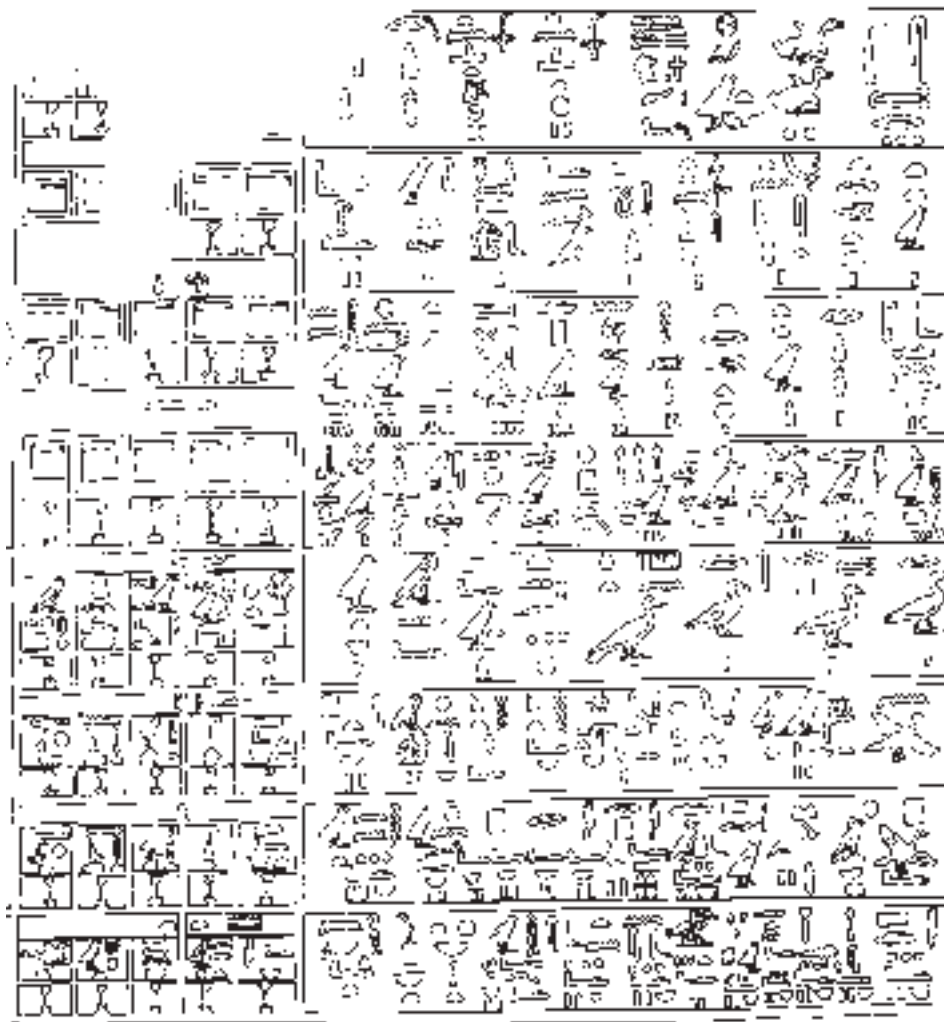


Fig. 9 Offering tables of Seshemnefer I (after Kanawati 2001: pl. 43)

form and decoration of the chapel are coherent with this dating when compared with “zeitlich gesicherten Gräbern Parallelen”. Thus, János’s dating under Sahure (“spätestens Neferirkare”) is convincing and supported by numerous elements.

In conclusion, in spite of the relative chronological inconsistency of the different elements in Seshemnefer’s tomb, it seems that this monument can be dated to the reign of Sahure. This dating is based on the stylistic details previously mentioned and only attested to the very end of the Fourth Dynasty and the first reigns of the Fifth. As aforementioned, with the area in the necropolis, which is not fully discriminating but offers some similar monuments built between the late Fourth and early Fifth Dynasty (for example, Seshathetep Heti [G5150, Khafre] and G 5030 [late Fourth to early Fifth Dynasty]). Thus, this dating is still open to debate, even if the preceding remarks tend to give a relative overview of the useful clues leading to Sahure.

KAPUNESUT KAI (G 4651 AND G 1741) (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏: 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏, K3-pw-nsw.t-K3j)⁵³

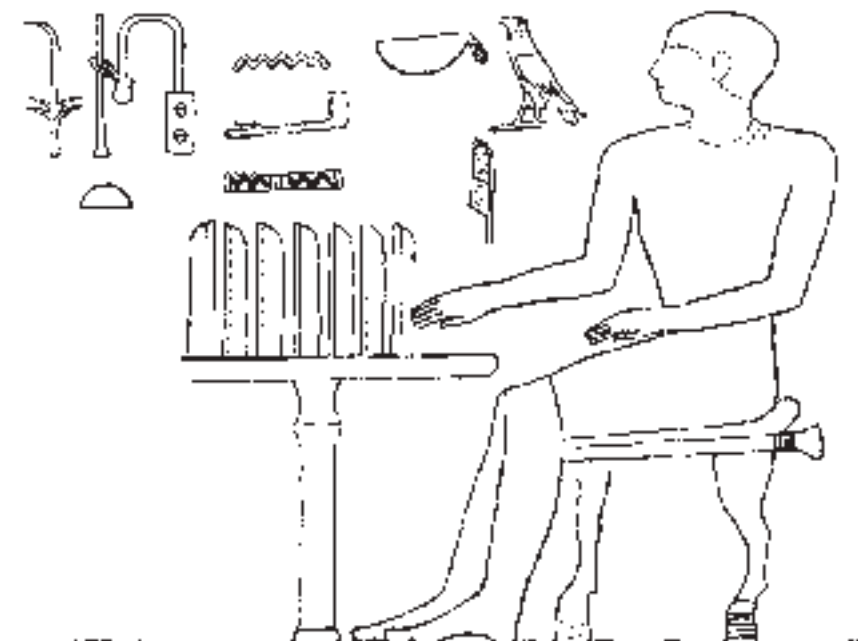
As with Nesutnefer (see above), the usual dating of Kapunesut’s tomb ranges,⁵⁴ depending on the considered author, from the reign of Khafre (Cherpion 1989: 126–128; Baud 1999: 54) to the first half of the Fifth Dynasty (Harpur 1987: 270, 277). The early Fifth Dynasty is also the dating proposed by Roeten (2016) based on the tomb’s dimensions (65 m² for the monument, 3.1 m² for the chapel). Notwithstanding, this size is difficult to analyse because the tomb was built between two other mastabas belonging to persons Kapunesut was linked to (see below). Therefore, Kapunesut may have included his own tomb in a meaningful group given his life and functions, thus restraining the size according to the empty space between two other mastabas. In addition, the presence of several shafts and an L-shaped chapel complies with a late Fourth Dynasty dating.⁵⁵

⁵³ To the tomb, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 135); Hawass (2011: 191–196).

⁵⁴ G 4651 can be considered as the main tomb of Kapunesut, G 1741, being a chapel where a statue of the deceased was unearthed. The dating suggested here firstly concerns the mastaba and to a lesser extent his small chapel.

⁵⁵ See the tomb’s plan in Junker (1938: Abb. 12).

Fig.10 Offering table scene of Kapunesut Kai (after Junker 1938: Abb.17)



According to Cherpion's study, dating it to the Fourth Dynasty seems likely. In fact, her criteria nos. 2 (full cushion), 28 (high skullcap) and 45 (no *usekh*-necklace) (Cherpion 1989: 28, 55, 69) are essentially – even exclusively – attested from Snefru to Menkaure. Moreover, the criteria nos. 41 (long *sekhem*-scepter) and 47 (multiple bracelets) (Cherpion 1989: 65, 70) do not appear in tombs with cartouches posterior to that of Sahure, thus preventing a date after this reign.

Oddly, the identical offering lists in Giza tombs look alike to those of the second part of the Fifth Dynasty, from Nyuserre (Kanyesut II [G 2156], Neferbaupthah [G 6010], Tepemankh [D 20], Nefer [G 4761]) to Unas (Hemu Shepseskafankh [G 8492], Kai, Kapuptah [G 4461], Seshemnefer III [G 5170]). Only Khafkhufu I (G 7130–7140) (Smith 1933)⁵⁶ and Meresankh III (G 7530–7540) possess a similar table where they are dated to around the reign of Khafre.⁵⁷ However, the global appearance of Kapunesut's offering list can be linked to the *Listentyp A* of Barta (1963: 47–77) with an archaic offering table scene (fig. 10).

In spite of the chronological incoherence of the offering lists, the necropolis' area includes several tombs whose large majority is dated from the middle to the end of the Fourth Dynasty: G 4540, G 4640, G 4840, G 4650, G 4750, G 4560, G 4660, G 4760, G 4860, G 2135 (see Jánosi (2005: 220–230; and fig. 2 here). Thus, the presence of Kapunesut's mastaba among these Fourth Dynasty tombs, added to the elements previously quoted, support dating it to this

dynasty, as Cherpion and Baud suggested. Additionally, according to Cherpion (1989: 126), Kapunesut was priest of the princess Iabtet (G 4650), whose tomb dates to mid Fourth Dynasty. Moreover, Kapunesut placed his own mastaba on Iabtet's one, highlighting its relation to her and probably their contemporaneity or direct succession. Finally Baud (1998: 40 [1]) adds that Kapunesut was also priest of Khafre, giving another clue in favour of an early date.

Consequently, due to the stylistic and geographical clues, I suggest that Kapunesut Kai had his tomb built during the reigns of Khafre and Menkaure, with a possible burial during the very last years of the Fourth Dynasty or the very first of the Fifth.

KANYNESUT I (G 2155) (𓆎 𓆏 𓆑, *K3-n(y)-nsw.t*)⁵⁸

Except for Manuelian (2009a: 368–369) and Baer (1960: 294 [531]), who follow the dating of Porter and Moss (Fifth Dynasty), the other authors prefer the Fourth Dynasty, between Khufu and Khafre (Cherpion 1989: 118–119; Baud 1999: 42–43; Swinton 2014: 41 [102]). As for George A. Reisner (1942: 214), he only proposes a large period between Menkaure and Neferirkare.

The dating to the Fourth Dynasty seems to be the most likely, due to some stylistic elements like Cherpion's criteria nos. 28 (high skullcap), 38 (long leopard skin) and 58–59 (navigation scene with hedgehog prow) (Cherpion 1989: 55, 62, 78–79). Moreover, her criteria nos. 16–17 (height and form of

⁵⁶ Khafkhufu's decorative program possessed some similar elements to Kapunesut's (see Cherpion 1989: 127).

⁵⁷ For Khafkhufu's dating, see, for instance, Simpson (1978: 9–20); Flentye (2002: 387–389); Callender (2006: 122). As for Meresankh's tomb, it is usually considered to be composed of parts built during the reign of Khafre and others during the end of the Fourth Dynasty (probably Menkaure or the very beginning of Shepseskaf): see Dunham – Simpson (1974: 3–8) and Jánosi (2005: 305–307).

⁵⁸ To the tomb, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 78–80); Junker (1934: 135–172); Manuelian (2009a: 367–414).

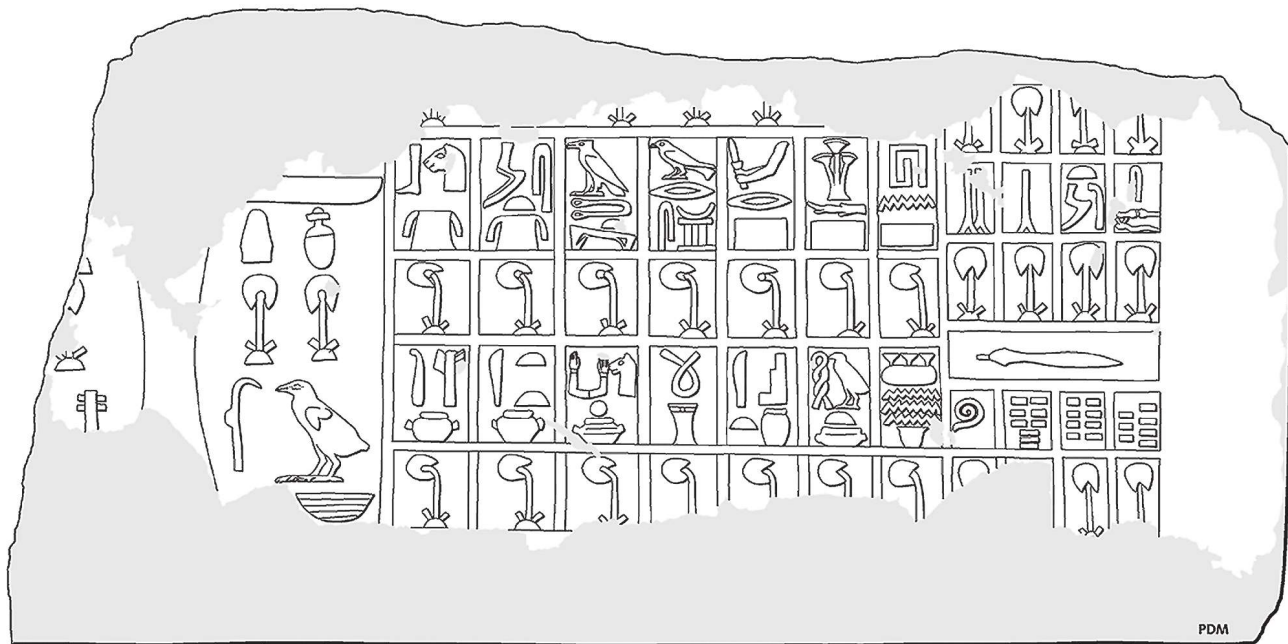


Fig. 11 Slab stela with linen list of Kanynesut I (after Manuelian 2009: fig. 13.22)

bread loaves) (Cherpion 1989: 47) and Swinton’s no. 39 (linen list, see fig. 11)⁵⁹ (Swinton 2014: 86) mostly appear during the Fourth Dynasty.⁶⁰ So, a date to the last reigns of the Fourth Dynasty is very probable,⁶¹ and supported by Swinton’s criterion no. 52 (priest with ewer and basin) (Swinton 2014: 86), which is attested from the reign of Khafre (*terminus a quo*).

Kanynesut was priest of Khufu and his tomb contains several estates’ names including Snefru and Khufu’s cartouches (Manuelian 2009a: fig. 13.43): e.g. grg.t-Snfrw and mr-R'-Hwfw . Kanynesut’s mastaba thus must be dated to the reign of a successor of Khufu. The necropolis’ area where the tomb is located also speaks in favour of this dating, the other monuments of the site being mostly dated from Khufu to Menkaure (Seshatsekhentiu [G 2120], G 2135, G 2140, G 4660, G 4760, G 4860). By the way, in Kanynesut’s mastaba Uhemka (D 117) and Kanynesut II (G 2156) are mentioned (Junker 1931: 15–16; Junker 1938: 151–163). The former is quoted by Baud (1999: 43) and must be dated from the middle to end of the Fourth Dynasty (Roeder 1927: 7–8).⁶² This dating is due to many stylistic details (Kayser 1964): archaic slab stela, linen lists (Swinton’s no. 39), long leopard skin (Cherpion’s no. 38), small bread loaves (Cherpion’s

no. 16), long *sekhem*-scepter (Cherpion’s no. 41), shell formed inkpot (Cherpion’s no. 57), high skullcap (Cherpion’s no. 28), hieroglyphs on the ground line (fig. 12), etc. The latter, sometimes considered as the son of Kanynesut I (Kayser 1964: 43),⁶³ was also priest of Khufu and probably had his tomb built during the very first reigns of the Fifth Dynasty, as several criteria show (Junker 1938: 145–163): Swinton’s nos. 3 (lines of the loincloth) and 78 (lotus received by the deceased), Cherpion’s nos. 17 (height of the bread loaves and offering table) and 39 (leopard skin and loincloth).

From an architectural point of view, it is difficult to deduce clear clues in order to ascertain the dating. If Jánosi (2005: 183, 224) thinks that there is no evidence for a date before the end of the Fourth Dynasty, the dimensions are coherent with this late Fourth supposition (344 m² for the tomb and 5.2 m² for the chapel).⁶⁴ Moreover, the L-shaped chapel and the presence of a slab stela in the tomb are two more typical hints in favour of a Fourth Dynasty date (Roeten 2016: 9–10).⁶⁵ These elements are identical to Merib’s (G 2100I, see above), a parallel and almost contemporaneous tomb.

In conclusion, given the archaic elements of the decorative program of the mastaba combined with the

⁵⁹ This linen list is linked to a “slab stela” which, despite the Fifth Dynasty dating of Manuelian, speaks in favour of a Fourth Dynasty date.

⁶⁰ With rare attestations during the very beginning of the Fifth Dynasty.

⁶¹ Even though he suggests a date to the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty, Manuelian (2009a: 368) points out that the decorative program of Kanynesut is similar to Merib’s, which I date to the reign of Khafre (see above). Baud (1999: 42–43) has already mentioned this similarity. The son of Merib (Khufumernetjeru) is even depicted in Kanynesut’s tomb (Manuelian 2009a: fig. 13.43)!

⁶² *Contra* Junker (1938: 37–38) and Kayser (1964: 21), who date the tomb to the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty. Nevertheless, their arguments can be refuted thanks to more recent works like the ones of Manuelian (2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a and 2009b).

⁶³ The author nevertheless notes that this filial relationship is not absolutely certain.

⁶⁴ These dimensions (and the related conclusions) are comparable to those of Seshathetep Heti’s mastaba (see above).

⁶⁵ For the plan of the mastaba, see Manuelian (2009a: 385, fig. 13.3). About the remains and possible reconstitution of the slab stela, see Manuelian (2009a: 390–391, figs. 13.21–13.25).

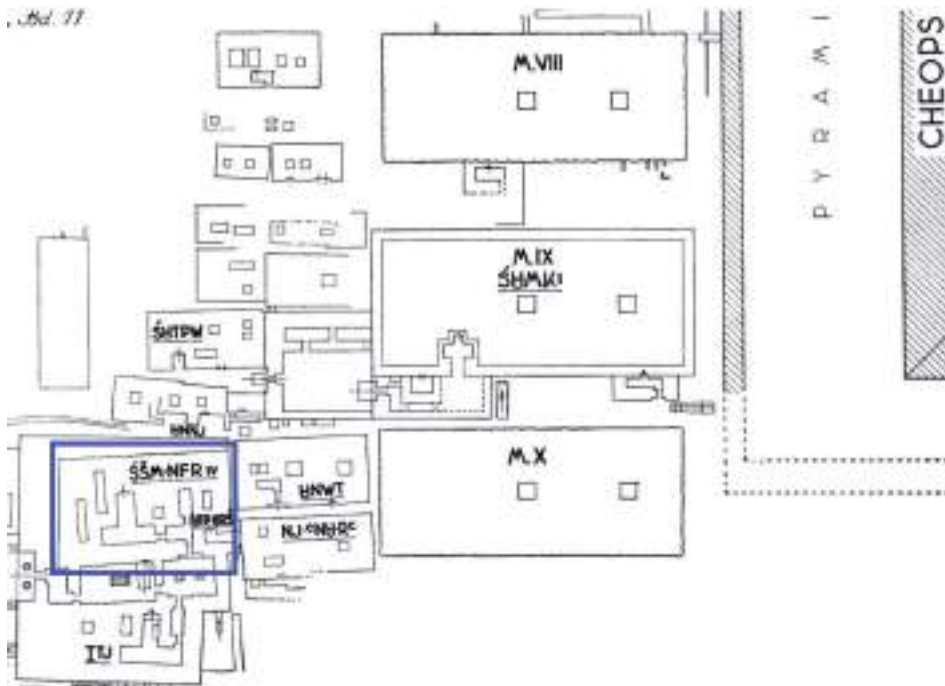


Fig. 13 Detail 2: G I-South Cemetery (eastern part) with considered tomb (after Junker 1955: Teil-Plan 6, processed by the present author)

[479]; Baud 1999: 570)⁷³ and the beginning of the Sixth (Junker 1953: 103–104; Harpur 1987: 270, 235). In the mastaba, the presence of Djedkare’s cartouche offers a *terminus a quo*.⁷⁴ But apart from this element, very few stylistic details give clear clues, most of them being attested from the second half of the Fifth Dynasty to the end of the Sixth.

Be that as it may, two criteria appear in tombs whose latest date is the end of the Fifth Dynasty: Swinton’s nos. 2 (lines on the loincloth) and 31 (height of the bread loaves) (Swinton 2014: 80, 84).⁷⁵ These are the only two helpful elements in order to date the tomb. Next to that, the offering list is damaged and what remains is similar to tables from tombs of the second half of the Fifth Dynasty and of the whole Sixth. Moreover, the tombs in the same area of the necropolis extend from the second half of the Fourth Dynasty (Junker’s Mastabas VII, VIII, X and XI; see Junker 1951), to the middle of the Sixth (Heneni, Hetepheres, Tjeti, Tjetout, Ptahhetep; see Junker 1953), with two monuments dating to the reigns of Unas and Teti (Sehetepu, Sekhemka (M.IX); see Junker 1953).

Several kings are mentioned in Seshemnefer’s mastaba. Three of them have their cartouches inscribed in estates’ names (Junker 1953: Abb. 76): Sahure (. . .) : *b^ch.t-S3hw-R^c*, Menkauhor (. . .) : *mr-m3tj.t-Jk3w-Hr*, and Djedkare (. . .) : *3-nfr-Jssj*, . . . : *b3h.t Jssj*, . . . : *hw.t-shtp-R^c-Jssj*, . . . : *hw.t-mr-R^c-nh-Jssj*, etc.).⁷⁶ Additionally, Seshemnefer IV was chamberlain under Djedkare’s reign, as Baud

(1999: 570) explains. We can add to these royal and prosopographical elements the presence of Seshemnefer Tjeti (Junker 1953: 241–258) and Sehetepu Tepu (Junker 1953: 48–66) in the decorative program of the mastaba. The tomb of the former dates from the late Fifth to early Sixth Dynasty, as some stylistic criteria seem to indicate (e.g. Cherpion’s no. 6). As for the latter, several details tend to confirm the end of the Fifth Dynasty: very high bread loaves and Swinton’s criteria nos. 50 (ewer and basin beneath the offering table) and 84 (no cushion).

To conclude, considering the few elements available, I suggest a date to the reigns of Djedkare and Unas. The most probable is that Seshemnefer IV mostly lived during the reign of Djedkare and that he died during the reign of Unas, the mastaba being built during years of these two periods.

EASTERN CEMETERY⁷⁷

NESEMNAU (LG 64) (. . .) : *Ns-m-n3w*⁷⁸

Briefly mentioned by Junker (1938: 48), who dates this rock-cut tomb to the Fifth Dynasty (without any precision), Harpur (1987: 268, no. 146) prefers the transitional phase between the Fifth and the Sixth Dynasties.

At least four stylistic details refute a date to the Sixth Dynasty. Among Cherpion’s criteria, we can quote nos. 7 (armchair) and 16–17 (length and form

⁷³ Baud suggests a date around the reign of Djedkare.

⁷⁴ Besides, Seshemnefer III (G 5170) (the father of Seshemnefer IV) died during the reign of Djedkare.

⁷⁵ These two criteria are attested until the reign of Unas.

⁷⁶ There are many more Djedkare estates on this wall, thus illustrating the link between Seshemnefer IV and this king.

⁷⁷ For detailed plans of this cemetery, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 209 and pl. XVIII).

⁷⁸ Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 209); Lepsius (1849: 92e).

of the bread loaves), whose last attested cartouches are respectively those of Djedkare and Nyuserre (Cherpion 1989: 31, 47). Moreover, Swinton's criteria nos. 14 (style of the animal skin worn by the tomb owner) and 31 (height of the bread loaves) are not attested after the reigns of Nyuserre and Unas (Swinton 2014: 82 and 84). Thus, it seems very difficult to date Nesemnau to the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty.

As for the offering list, which is similar to the lists of Barta's *Listentyp A*, a great number of alike Giza tables can be dated with relative certainty to the end of the Fifth Dynasty (Kaemneferet [G 8538], Hetepi [G 8298], Seshemnefer II [G 5080], Iasen [G 2196]),⁷⁹ with rare exceptions dating to the very beginning of the Sixth Dynasty (Qar [G 7101], Tjetu [G 2001]).

The nearby tombs giving no clue to the dating of Nesemnau's rock-cut tomb,⁸⁰ we can summarise the preceding elements by suggesting that this tomb was built during the reign of Nyuserre. His cartouche is the last one attested in tombs with the decorative details already mentioned: the style of the bread loaves and the animal skin worn by the deceased.

CENTRAL FIELD⁸¹

KAEMNEFERET (G 8538) (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏, *K3-m-nfr.t*)⁸²

While Baud (1999: 589–590 [235]) suggests dating Kaemneferet's tomb to the reign of Nyuserre, Harpur (1987: 270, 260) follows the Sixth Dynasty dating given by Porter, Moss and Málek (1974: 250).

This late dating seems nonetheless unlikely due to stylistic details of the decorative program. In fact, Cherpion's criterion no. 51 (offering list on the false door back panel) (Cherpion 1989: 74) is attested in tombs whose latest cartouche is that of Neferirkare. Additionally, her criteria 16–17 (height and form of the bread loaves) and 24 (offering table with a crafted leg) (Cherpion 1989: 47, 51) do not appear in monuments later than Nyuserre or Menkauhor. Finally, Swinton's criterion no. 88 (small pointed cushion) appears from the reign of Khufu to that of Unas (Swinton 2014: 93).

As for the offering list, most of the similar tables (in Saqqara and Giza) are attested in tombs that can be dated from the second half of the Fifth Dynasty (Saqqara: Ty [D 22], Kaemneferet [D 23], Kaemsenu; Giza: Hetepi [G 8298], Seshemnefer II [G 5080], Iasen [G 2196]), to the very beginning of the Sixth (Saqqara: Iteti [D 63]; Giza: Qar [G 7101], Tjetu [G 2001]), with a majority dating from Nyuserre to Djedkare.

Baud (1999: 588–589) underlines the fact that Kaemneferet is buried in a three-part mastaba whose other occupants are Ankhkakai and Irenakhti, the former giving an interesting clue with his basilophoric name (based on Neferirkare Kakai) and the latter being dated to the post-Nyuserre period.⁸³

In conclusion, by cross-referencing stylistic details and similar tombs, Kameneferet's tomb very probably dates to the reign of Nyuserre, an important reign for the history of the Old Kingdom and its private funerary customs.⁸⁴

CONCLUSION

This paper has aimed to give new or additional clues to the dating of a dozen Giza tombs. These hints combine stylistic elements (stemmed from iconographic and epigraphic programs), architectural criteria, prosopographic and anthroponymic information, and geographical clues (e.g. proximity and similarity with other tombs in the area). Thanks to all these data, I wanted to offer the utmost of detail in order to confirm or refute previous dating or to suggest new dating.

Through this dating, we see that the 12 tombs here analysed can be dated to different periods, with two major times: the reign of Khafre and the second part of the Fifth Dynasty, with a focus on the reigns of Nyuserre and Djedkare.⁸⁵

In fact, at least six of the previous mastabas can be dated to the reign of Khafre or his direct successors of the Fourth Dynasty: Merib, Nesutnefer, Senuhem, Seshathetep Heti, Kapunesut Kai and Kanynesut I. To the reigns of Nyuserre and Djedkare five tombs are dated: Iasen, Seshemnefer IV, Kahif, Nesemnau and Kaemneferet. All in all, it is eleven of twelve tombs that can be dated to these two periods.⁸⁶

Besides these results, the present study allows reconsideration of some criteria of Cherpion and Swinton. Indeed, the addition of several methods and features has enabled us to strengthen or modify the dating of some criteria. For instance, Cherpion's criterion no. 47 is attested in only one tomb bearing the cartouche of Nyuserre, according to Cherpion herself. However, we have seen with Iasen's mastaba (above) that this criterion must be considered as a clue valid at least to the reign of Djedkare.

The same process can be applied to Cherpion's criterion no. 51, supposedly attested with cartouches whose latest is that of Neferirkare. Nevertheless, Kaemneferet's mastaba (see above) proves that this

⁷⁹ We can add the list of Kasudja (G 5340), which is generally dated to the reigns of Sahure to Neferirkare.

⁸⁰ In fact, the majority of tombs close to that of Nesemnau are only dated by Porter, Moss and Málek (1974: 209), with no precision, between the late Fifth and early Sixth Dynasties (see LG 63 to 70).

⁸¹ For detailed plans, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 230 and pls. XX–XXIII).

⁸² For the tomb, see Porter – Moss – Málek (1974: 250); Hassan (1950: 19–29).

⁸³ The author points out that Irenakhti's chapel is an addition posterior to the part of Kaemneferet (which is the median one).

⁸⁴ See above, Iasen (G 2196) (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏, *Iasn*); and Bárta (2005: 105–130).

⁸⁵ This conclusion confirms Cherpion and Bárta's statements about the importance of Khafre and Nyuserre's reigns (see above).

⁸⁶ The only remaining mastaba is that of Seshemnefer I, which can be dated to the reign of Sahure.

dating can be extended to Nyuserre. So, it is likely that this criterion will help re-date some other monuments in future studies.

Likewise, Cherpion's criteria nos. 38 and 59 were a priori attested in tombs whose latest cartouches are respectively those of Djedefre and Khafre. However, thanks to Kanynesut's mastaba (dating from the Khafre – Shepseskaf period) it is possible to suggest the very end of the Fourth Dynasty as a new *terminus post quem* for these criteria.

Finally, Swinton's criterion no. 84, dated by the author to the sixth or eighth reign of the Fifth Dynasty,⁸⁷ can be *advanced* to the last reign of this dynasty. In fact, the tomb of Seshemnefer IV, being dated between the reigns of Djedkare and Unas, includes this criterion. Thus, the dating of Swinton's criterion 84 must be considered as valid to the very end of the Fifth Dynasty.

Parallel with these "late" considerations, the present research also allows reinforcement of the early dating of some other criteria. For example, Swinton suggests that her criteria nos. 17 and 65 could be attested in tombs of the second part of the Fourth Dynasty, but with no precision. However, the dating of Nesutnefer's tomb to the reign of Khafre makes it possible to confirm the dating to the fourth reign of the Fourth Dynasty for the two above-mentioned criteria.

The same process can be applied to Swinton's criterion no. 22, dated to "IV.4–6". In fact, it is very likely that this stylistic detail appeared at least during Khafre's reign, to which Senuhem and Seshathetep mastabas are dated. Likewise, the appearance of Swinton's criterion no. 53 during the reign of Khafre is confirmed by Seshathetep's mastaba.

To the contrary, Senuhem's tomb allows slight modification of the dating of Cherpion's criterion no. 37, which she mentions with tombs including Djedefre's cartouche as the latest royal name. *Idem* with Cherpion's criterion no. 59, supposedly not attested with cartouches later than Khafre but that occurs in the tomb of Seshemnefer I, which is dated to Sahure. The dating of this criterion can thus be extended to at least four reigns after Khafre!

Finally, the mastaba of Seshemnefer I also supports the presence of Cherpion's criterion no. 6 in tombs dating from the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty (*i.e.* Sahure).

Apart from stylistic elements,⁸⁸ architecture and location are important hints in order to confirm or modify dating. The architectural point of view is essential but sometimes difficult to evaluate. In fact, it is evident that some structures are typical of a more or less extended period. This is the case, among others, of the L-shaped chapel that is especially attested during

the Fourth Dynasty.⁸⁹ Moreover, tombs' dimensions are another interesting clue, as Roeten (2016: 40–63) showed.⁹⁰ As for the location in the cemeteries, this element is generally omitted, despite the range of information that we can extract from it. It has been especially useful for the Western Cemetery tombs:⁹¹ even if some mastabas in this area are difficult to date, others are (in my opinion) well-known and quite precisely placed in the Old Kingdom chronology. Hence, thanks to comparisons and links between all these monuments, it is possible to refine our understanding of the site and to suggest better dating for some of its tombs.

Obviously, like every other characteristic, these architectural and locational hints cannot be used independently without any addition of other elements. This is why these clues are integrated into a global discussion, sometimes to propose dating that we can confirm or contest with further examinations, sometimes to complete an analysis leading us to our results.

To conclude, I am conscious that previous dating of some tombs can create kind of "self-realisation prophecy" because of the analysis of similar hints. Additionally, some pitfalls remain, like those of the potential errors in facsimile or copies and the absence of more specific dating than to a whole reign. Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, I think that the preceding elements give sufficient and convincing clues to the mastabas' dating. Nevertheless, I encourage other scholars to pursue this analysis and to submit new interpretations that could yield a better comprehension of the whole Egyptian chronology.

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⁸⁷ Swinton actually prefers dating to reigns indicated by their position in their related dynasty instead of kings' names. Thus, she proposes dating like "IV.1–2" instead of "Snefru – Khufu".

⁸⁸ Including palaeographical and epigraphic clues.

⁸⁹ Some later chapels also have this form, but the other characteristics of the tomb make us consider these examples as "late" attestations, sort of archaisms that do not intrinsically modify the dating of this architectural hint.

⁹⁰ Even if some of his conclusions can be discussed, his analysis of statistical data is often convincing and offers information that must be integrated into dating works. See the reviews of Roeten's study by Legros (2017) and Bárta (2017).

⁹¹ See, for example, the cases of Merib (G 2100-I) and Nesutnefer (G 4970), which are among the most significant.

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