The False Door of Shepsi at the Egyptian Museum of Cairo
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Abstract
The Memphite necropolis was the site which provide numerous false doors dating to Old Kingdom. The limestone false door of Shepsi was discovered in Saqqara and conserved now in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo (JE 68923). It was commissioned by a man named Shepsi (ṣpsi). This research aims to publish this false door, to indicate its characteristics and to date. According to its shape, inscribed titles and costumes, this false door could be dated to Fifth Dynasty.

Keywords: False door, Shepsi, Cairo Museum, Titles, Inscriptions.

Introduction
The false door of Shepsi was found at Saqqara. This necropolis measures six kilometers from the North to the South\(^1\). The earliest royal name which the archeologists have so far found at Saqqara is the name of Narmer (Menes)\(^2\). From that time, it was used for over three thousand years when finally demolished with the burial of the monks of the monastery of Apa Jeremais\(^3\). Saqqara necropolis is divided into six sectors: the North, the Middle, Teti pyramid, the Western, Unas pyramid, and the Southern sector\(^4\). Shepsi false door is discovered by Emery for the Egyptian Antiquities in his tombs (S 3302) around the Step pyramid of Zoser in the middle sector of Saqqara\(^5\).

The false door was an architectural element that is found in private tombs structure and the mortuary temples of the pyramid. It was imitating the Egyptian real door, but it had no entrance to any interior space. It begun probably from the archaic period and attested from the second and the third Dynasty in Saqqara birthstone mastaba. It was used as an imaginary passage for the deceased and providing him with the funeral repast\(^6\).

The studied false door was listed among the archeological pieces coded in Porter and Moss (III\(^2\), 443). Furthermore, Gardiner in his notebooks mentioned the text of the lintel only, and Smith in his book "History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom" listed it in his footnote (p. 150). Despite the data had given, this false door wasn't studied in scientific research.

This paper aims to publish the false door of Shepsi in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo; analyzing the iconography of this false door through comparative study; as well as the inscription; and finally giving an academic analysis explaining the dating of the false door.

Description of the false door (Fig. 1, 4)
This false door, in the Museum’s database, was listed under JE 68923 and SR2/14872. It measures 190 cm high and 155 cm wide. It is made out of limestone.

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3 K. Daoud, Corpus of Inscriptions, P. 7
5 PM III/2, p. 443.
The panel
This door is a two-jamb door. The panel was destroyed except the remains of the deceased sitting on a bench that has animal paws. An offering table is depicted in front of him. The text on the panel is remain of an offering list; it can be read \( \begin{align*} \text{\textit{h3 ss mnht}} & \text{ thousands of alabaster and clothes,} \\
\text{\textit{h3 3bd h3}} & \text{ thousands of fowl, and thousands of ……} \end{align*} \)

The lintel
On the lintel was inscribed by the title of the owner, from the right to the left, as follows

\[ \text{imy-r ss(w) 3hwtn XIle Nome (tb ntrt) ss pr hry(w) wdb(w) hm ntr h} \text{ k3-rh nswt } \text{spsi} \]

The overseer of land-scribe\(^8\) of Sebennite\(^9\), scribe of the house of the distribution (of offerings)\(^10\), Priest of Horus elevated of arm, he who is known to the king (royal acquaintance), Shepsi.

The drum
The drum has one title of Shepsi as follows (\( \leftrightarrow \)):

\[ \text{ss pr hry(w) wdb(w) } \text{spsi} \]

Scribe of the house of the distribution (of offerings), Shepsi.

The jambs
The plaster covering of outer jambs was falling, so it had no decorations or texts. The deceased is depicted on the right inner jamb; he is shown in a standing position with right leg advanced. He folded his right hand across his chest while holding the \textit{hrp} scepter in his left hand by his side. He wears a kilt striped from the right and knotted on his waist. A close-fitting echelon-curl wig is worn on his head which covers the ears, a collar around his neck, and bracelets around his hands. The figure on the left inner jamb is similar to the other on the right one except the left leg is advanced and an amulet is shown around his neck. It can be noted that once the deceased advanced the right leg while the other extends the left, this is because they faced each other. Additionally, the ancient Egyptian artist used to represent the figures in profile with the outer leg advanced to show the best view of the portrayal\(^11\).

The text on the right jamb is shown from the left to right as follows (\( \downarrow \)):

\[ \text{7 Simpson as well as El-Khouli and Knaawati read it kmi;} \]
\[ \text{wati, Quseir el-Amarna. The Tombs of Pepy-anhk and Khwen-wekh, (The Australian Centre for Egyptology. Report 1). S} \]
\[ \text{ydney, 1989; Jones added the word } \text{thov} \text{ to the title; D. Jones, An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Épithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom, vol. II, BAR International Series 886 (II), Oxford 2000, 561, 2077.} \]
\[ \text{10 Jones translated it as scribes of the house/department of those in charge of reversions (of offerings); Jones, An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, vol. I, p. 212 (790).} \]
The text in the left inner jamb is faced the other on the right as follows (→):

\[
\text{imy-r ss(w) (n) XIIe Nome (tb ntr) hm ntr hr k3- r} \text{ spsi}
\]

The overseer of scribe of Sebennite, Priest of Horus elevated of arm, Shepsi.

The statue of Shepsi

(Fig. 2)

The statue was made out of limestone. Its height is 120 cm. It was supported by a pillar that reached its shoulder. Shepsi is depicted standing with the right leg advanced. He fists a cylindrical object on his hands. He wears a striated wig parted in the center reaching to just above shoulder length and reveals the ear\(^{12}\). He wears a kilt around his lower part until his knees. The kilt is stripped from the right part and knotted around his waist like the two scenes on the inner jamb. In addition, there is a representation of a flower on the belt of the kilt.

The artist is skillful enough in representing the details of the body such as the full face with wide eyes, collarbones, muscles, the details of the knees, leg bones, and the nails of his toes\(^{13}\).

On the pedestal of the statue (fig. 3), a title of the owner is written as follows (→):

\[
r\text{ht ns} \text{ wt ss kdt ntr n pth spsi}
\]


He who is known to the king (royal acquaintance\textsuperscript{14}), the scribe of the divine book\textsuperscript{15} of Ptah, Shepsi.

The titles of the Shepsi

Shepsi has five titles; The first title is \textit{imy-r ss(w) 3hw\textit{t} n XII\textsuperscript{c} Nome (\textit{th ntrt)} the overseer of land-scribe of Sebennite\textsuperscript{16} (Samanoud today). It was written on the false door of \textit{hr n k\textit{w}} from Giza from (IV – V) Dynasty\textsuperscript{17}, while in the fifth Dynasty was inscribed on an offering table of \textit{iti} at Egyptian Museum of Cairo (CG 1346). Moreover, the title \textit{imy-r ss(w) 3hw\textit{t} without the name of the twelfth Nome appeared in the fifth Dynasty; it was inscribed on the statue of \textit{iti} (CG 26)\textsuperscript{19}, on the Double-statue of \textit{nfr} \textit{hpt} and his wife in Cairo Museum (CG 89)\textsuperscript{20}. It was written on the coffin of \textit{mn htt.k} from Deshasheh\textsuperscript{21}, on the unfinished false door of \textit{hpt} (C 2)\textsuperscript{22}; on the false door of \textit{shm k\textit{3}} (C 19)\textsuperscript{23}, and it appeared on Chamber A \textit{dw\textit{3} n r\textsuperscript{c}} (D 61)\textsuperscript{24}. Furthermore, it was appeared at the beginning of the sixth Dynasty in the tomb of Mereruka\textsuperscript{25}.

The second title is \textit{ss pr hry(w) \textit{wdb}(w)} scribe of the house of those in charge of reversions (of offerings)\textsuperscript{26}. It has appeared in the fifth Dynasty on some block from tombs of \textit{whm k\textit{3}, mry l\textit{wfw}, and hnmw nh} at Zawiet el- Mayetin\textsuperscript{27}; on Chamber B of the tomb of \textit{dw\textit{3} n r\textsuperscript{c}} (D 61)\textsuperscript{28}, and on the false door of \textit{dw\textit{3} n r\textsuperscript{c}} (H 15)\textsuperscript{29}. In addition, this title was inscribed on the sarcophagus of \textit{hpt}\textsuperscript{30}, and on fragments from the tomb of \textit{nfr k\textit{w}} at Gebel Aboufodah\textsuperscript{31}; all of them were dated to the end of the fifth Dynasty and the beginning of the sixth Dynasty. Furthermore, it was engraved on the wooden statue of \textit{tt\textit{t}ti} at Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (No. 24.607) during the reign of Pepi II\textsuperscript{32}.

The third title is \textit{hm ntr hr k\textit{3}-rs\textsuperscript{33} Priest of Horus raised (strong\textsuperscript{34}) of the arm\textsuperscript{35}. It appeared in the end of the fourth Dynasty; it was inscribed on the south wall of the tomb of \textit{hr l\textit{wfw}}\textsuperscript{36}(G 7140).

\textsuperscript{14} A. Hallström, \textit{the False Doors of Hershefnakht, Nyankhanty and Senetites}, Uppsala 2017, P.1 8.
\textsuperscript{16} Jones, \textit{An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles}, Vol. I, 207 (774); Murray, pl. XXIII.
\textsuperscript{17} LD II, pl. 94 d.
\textsuperscript{20} Borchardt, \textit{Statuen}, I, pl. 20, pp. 70-1; PM II/2, p. 451.
\textsuperscript{22} Mariette, \textit{Mastabas}, p. 115; PM II/2, p. 451.
\textsuperscript{23} Mariette, \textit{Mastabas}, p. 150; PM II/2, p. 465.
\textsuperscript{24} Mariette, \textit{Mastabas}, p. 349; PM III/2, p. 608.
\textsuperscript{25} G. Daressy, \textit{Le mastaba de Mera}, Cairo, 1900, p. 531.
\textsuperscript{26} Jones, \textit{An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles}, vol. II, pp. 850-51 (3108); M.A. Murray, \textit{Index of Names and Titles of the Old Kingdom}, BSAE I, London, 1908, pl. XXXVIII.
\textsuperscript{28} Mariette, \textit{Mastabas}, p. 349; PM III/2, p. 608.
\textsuperscript{29} Mariette, \textit{Mastabas}, p. 455.
\textsuperscript{33} Helck suggested that this title was priesthood originally referred to the king, but later was identified with a local falcon god in the western Delta; W. Helck, \textit{Untersuchungen zu den Beanentiteln des aegyptischen Alten Reiches} (AF18), Glückstadt, 1954, 120 no. 3.
In the fifth Dynasty, it was written on the west wall of the tomb of sšm nfr (I)37 (G 4940), on the false door of pḫn wỉ kỉ38 (D. 70, LS 15), on the lintel of the door which leads to the chapel of the tomb of sšm kỉ39 (G 4411), it was inscribed on the statue of iti(CG 26)40, on the false door of kỉ41 (D 19), and on the façade of the tomb of hw n ḫw:tti42. In the sixth Dynasty, it was inscribed on the false door of m33 nfr43 (D37).

The fourth title of Shepsi is ḫr nswt. The royal acquaintance44, one who is concerned with the things of the king45, custodian of the king’s property46. It was the more important Honorific Titles in the Old Kingdom47; it was held by men as well as women48. It was entailed by pḥ ḫr nfr49 in the early of the fourth Dynasty, and held by dwš r s60, ittti51, and pr sn52. In addition, it was entailed by mṛy pṛth mṛy r s53 during the sixth Dynasty.

The last title is ss kdi nfr n pṛth The scribe of the divine book of Ptah54. It was appeared in the fourth Dynasty on the entrance of the tomb of ḫr f ⲧn55, and on the remains of the chapel of the tomb of dwš n r s56. Moreover, it was written in the fifth Dynasty; on the façade of the tomb of ṭtti57 (C 18), on the corridor of the tomb of ḫr m kỉ58(D3), and on the Eastern wall of the tomb of wḥ m nfr59, while in the sixth Dynasty it was inscribed on the false door of ss60 (E 16), on the burial chamber of ḫr b ḫw ḫmnw61, on the west wall of the tomb of ʿibi at Dei El-Gebrawi62, and on the North wall of ḫtti tomb at Dei El-Gebrawi63.

35 Jones, an Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Vol. II, pp. 560- 62, (2075, 2077); Murray, Index, pl. XXIX.
36 Daressy, Le Mastaba de khaefkhounou a Gizeh, ASAE 16, 260, 257-67; Simpson, Giza Mastabas, III, p. 12; PM III, p. 188
37 LD II, pl. 27; PM III, p. 142- 43; Piacentini, Scribes I, p. 303 and pl. 55.
39 LD II, pl. 89 c; PM III, p. 127.
40 Borchardt, Statuen, I, pl. 7, p. 27; PM III/2, p. 450.
41 Mariette, Mastabas, p. 231; Weil, A., Die Vezier des Pharaonenreiches, p. 14; PM III/2, p. 479.
42 A. El-Khouli, and N. Kanawati, Quseir el-Amarna, p. 34.
43 Mariette, Mastabas, p. 266; PM III/2, p. 456.
48 Fischer, Egyptian Women, p. 15, nn. 132-3,
49 PM III/2, p. 502.; Strudwick, Administration, p. 85.
50 PM III/2, p. 894; Strudwick, Administration, p. 163.
51 Strudwick, Administration, p. 67.
52 PM III/2, pp. 48-9; Strudwick, Administration, p. 84.
53 PM III/2, p. 876; Strudwick, Administration, pp. 94-95.
55 PM III/1, p. 195; Strudwick, Administration, p. 122 (103).
56 PM III/1, p. 148.
57 Mariette, Mastabas, p. 149; PM III/2, p. 482.
58 Mariette, Mastabas, p. 179; PM III/2, p. 487.
60 Mariette, Mastabas, p. 420; PM III/2, p. 689.
61 PM III/2, p. 684; Strudwick, Administration, p. 121 (102).
\(\text{hr} \ km^{3}\) has appeared between a name of an estate on the right thickness of the tomb of \(\text{hmw} \ km^{3}\) which dates back to the end of fifth Dynasty or later.

**Dating**

The name of the owner was not common during the Old Kingdom. It appears twice at Saqqara during in the fifth Dynasty. The titles of the deceased were common during the Old Kingdom but the majority of people who held these titles were lived during the fifth Dynasty. Moreover, some of these titles were continued in the Middle Kingdom: such as: \(\text{imy-r ss(w)} \ \text{3hwt n XIle Nome (tb ntrt)}\), \(\text{ss kdt ntr n pth}\), and \(\text{ss pr hry(w) wqdb(w)}\).

The style of the kilt (half-goffered kilt, the so-called Galaschurz) is similar to the kilt of \(\text{r nfr}\) (CG 19), early to the fifth Dynasty; the stripped part of the kilt is shown in the statues during the fifth Dynasty such as: \(\text{r wr}\) (CG 29) and \(\text{r htp}\) (CG 130).

The flower on the belt of the kilt was worn by men during the Old Kingdom, especially at Saqqara during in the fifth Dynasty such as: the statue of \(\text{k3 m nswt}\), and the statue of \(\text{nl m3t}\) (CG 51). Furthermore, in the six Dynasty the statues of \(\text{munru}\) (Brooklyn Museum, 50.77), \(\text{itti}\) (CG 47), and \(\text{k3 m hst}\) (JE 44174), had the flower in the middle of the kilt. They are from Saqqara.
The hair-wigs were common during the Old Kingdom; the close-fitting echelon-curl wig was depicted in scenes such as: the false door of hfr r nfr \(92\) (G 7948), the west wall of the tomb of sst htp \(83\), on the room III of nfr bsw pth \(84\) (G 6010), and mni tomb at El-Hawawish \(85\) (M23); all of them date back from the fourth and fifth Dynasty.

The straight hair wig was shown in a lot of statues during the fifth Dynasty at Saqqara such as: the statue of the seated scribe \(86\) (CG 36), the statue of nfr m34t r \(87\) (CG 51), the statue of snfrw snb \(88\) (CG 137), unknown seated man \(89\) (CG 92), double statues of two men \(90\) (CG 168), and the statue of r\(8\) htp \(91\) (CG 185). In addition, there were some statues of the sixth Dynasty \(92\) have straight hair wig: itti \(93\) (CG 47), m33 nfr as a scribe \(94\).

Staehelin \(95\) argues that the straight hair wig first appeared in the fourth Dynasty, but only becomes popular during the fifth Dynasty on statues from Saqqara, and later in the Old Kingdom it supersedes the echelon-curl wig, but this appears to hold true only for stone statues. Furthermore, Fletcher \(96\) suggested that the greater number of depictions of male peasant and workers start to occur, wearing either the cropped style or the short round one, but they never wear the shoulder-length hair wig, which being exclusively worn by the elite.

To summing up the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the titles and the costumes of the owner of this false door were popular during the Old Kingdom. Thus, the fifth Dynasty was the preferred date for this false door.

**Conclusion**

This study tried to publish and date the false door of Shepsi that was found at Saqqara and presented in the Egyptian Museum at Cairo, on one hand. On the other hand, it tries to describe the different portrayals of the deceased. Moreover, it tried to translate the texts which inscribed on this false door. The most significant of such titles and costumes were prevalent during the Old Kingdom. Additionally, the study suggested the fifth Dynasty as the original date for such a false door according to the titles, and costumes as well.

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\(82\) PM III/1, 207; LD II, pl. 10.


\(84\) PM III/1, pp. 169-70; LD II, Abb. 57.


\(88\) PM III/2, p. 724; Borchardt, *Statuen*, I, pl. 31, p. 102.

\(89\) PM III/2, p. 724; Borchardt, *Statuen*, I, pl. 21, pp. 72-73.

\(90\) Borchardt, *Statuen*, I, pl. 37, p. 119.


\(93\) PM III/2, p. 598; Borchardt, *Statuen*, I, pl. 12, p. 43.

\(94\) PM III/2, p. 457; Borchardt, *Statuen*, I, pl. 14, pp. 50-51.


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Excavation at Giza, Vol. V, 1933-34, Cairo.


Figure 1: Photograph of the false door of Shepsi (after the courtesy of the Egyptian Museum).
Figure 2: Photograph of the statue of Shepsi (after the courtesy of the Egyptian Museum).
Figure 3: Photograph of the pedestal of the statue of Shepsi (after the courtesy of the Egyptian Museum)
Figure 4: Facsimile of the false door of Shepsi ©Mina Samy.