

# Study of the False door of Nakhty- Egyptian Museum

## Study of the False door of Nakhty- Egyptian Museum

دراسة الباب الوهمي للمدعو نختي- المتحف المصري بالتحريير

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### المخلص

تتعلق هذه المقالة بدراسة الباب الوهمي للمدعو نختي، وهو عبارة عن باب وهمي مسترد من إمارة الشارقة في نوفمبر ٢٠١٧ المحفوظ بالمتحف المصري بالتحريير، وقد حظيت الأبواب الوهمية باهتمام كبير في الدراسات السابقة، ولذلك فإن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو الوصول إلى تاريخ الباب الوهمي بشكل أكثر دقة، من خلال أسلوب النقش ودراسة الخط ومقارنة هذا الباب الوهمي ببعض النماذج الأخرى المؤرخة، من أجل الوصول إلى السمات الفنية المشتركة وربطها ببعضها، وعلى هذا النحو، نعرض لترجمة النصوص المنقوشة على الباب الوهمي، التي تحمل ألقاب المتوفي ووظيفته.  
الكلمات الدالة: نختي - باب وهمي - الشارقة - المتحف المصري القاهرة - الدولة القديمة.

### Abstract

This study concerns the false door of Nakhty that Returned from Emirate of Sharjah in November 2017. False doors have received much attention in the past, and certainly not their own dedicated study. Previously, these doors have only been roughly dated, this study seeks to narrow down the dating of these false. To more precisely date the false doors, relevant features are presented together with relevant information concerning the characteristic in question. As such, a more precise date is built from the various relevant elements of the door. The false doors are translated with appropriate commentary on the short texts. The most important parts of these texts are the titles and through comparisons to other holders of the same titles and discussion of what is known about these titles; a judgment of their social status is made. In the end, Nakhty's doors can be dated to, at earliest reign of the old kingdom.

**Keywords:** Nakhty - false door - Sharjah -Cairo Museum - old kingdom.

### Limestone: Old kingdom; Returned from Emirate of Sharjah in November 2017.

The name and titles of Nakhty as the Honorable and scribe (*hry-hp sš*) are inscribed on the upper edge and the two sides of the false door.

Formerly number: C. O. O 40 No of object, EMC No: PV.2017.20

The false door is made of two separate parts that were re-welded upon restoration

<sup>1</sup> This study was carried out with the approval of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, as shown in the attachments.

**The first separated part:**

- Width: 59.0 cm
- Height: 55.6 cm
- Thickness: 9.7cm

**The second:**

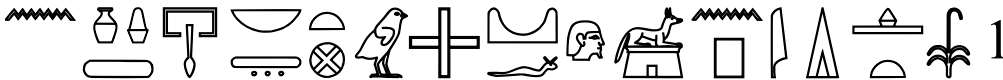
- Formerly number: C.O.039
- Width: 59.7 cm
- Height-length: 30.4 cm
- Thickness: 7.1 cm

**Texts of the False door:**

There are seven ledges are inscribed in columns and lines expressing the titles and names of the deceased

Text (1):

It was written in a horizontal line above the frame of the false door, oriented from right to left, as follows:←



*ḥtp-di-nsw Inpw tp(y)- dw.f imywt nb t3<dsrt> pr(t)-ḥrw t ḥnkt n*

"An offering which the king and which Anubis, who is upon his mountain and his holy tent, Lord of the(holy) land, the offerings (consisting of) bread and beer going out to".

Text (2):

It is written twice in vertical columns on either side of the false door frame as follows: →



*ḥry-ḥp sš ḥnt mt n s3 im3ḥw ḥr ntr-ᜨ nb pt Nḥti*

"The chanter, scribe, is surrounded by protection, Honorable by the great god, lord of heaven, Nakhty".

Text (3):

It is written once in a horizontal line above the view of the deceased and its direction from right to left:←



*Im3ḥw ḥr ntr-ᜨ Nḥti*

"Honorable by the great god Nakhty".

Text (4):

It is written twice on both sides of the scene of the deceased in two vertical columns in both directions, once from right to left and the other from left to right:→

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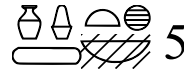


*Im3hw hr ntr-ꜥ3 hry-hb Nḥti*

*"Honorable by the great deity, the chanter Nakhty".*

Text (5):

It was written once in a vertical column and the direction of writing is from right to left above the offering table that placed in front of the deceased: ←



*ht nbt t ḥnkt*

*"Everything (consisting of) bread, beer".*

Text (6):

It was written in a horizontal line once below the deceased and the direction of writing appear from right to left: ←



*Im3hw Nḥti*

*"Honorable Nakhty".*

Text (7):

The name of the deceased is written twice below the offering scene on either side of a small imaginary door in both directions: → 7

*Nḥti*

*"Nakhty".*

Description

A false door, or recessed niche, is an artistic representation of a door which does not function like a real door. They can be carved in a wall or painted on it. They are a common architectural element in the tombs of ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

The ancient Egyptians believed that the false door was a threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead and through which a deity or the spirit of the deceased could enter and exit.<sup>3</sup>

The false door was usually the focus of a tomb's offering chapel, where family members could place offerings for the deceased on a special offering slab placed in front of the door.<sup>4</sup>

Most false doors are found on the west wall of offering chapel because the Ancient Egyptians associated the west with the land of the dead. In many mastabas, both husband and wife buried within have one false door.<sup>5</sup>

This false door is carved from a single block of stone or plank of wood, and it was not meant to function as a normal door. Located in the center of the door is a flat panel, or niche, around which several pairs of door jambs are arranged—some convey the illusion of depth and

<sup>2</sup> Donald B. The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt: A-F. Oxford University Press. p. 498

<sup>3</sup> Bard, K. Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt. NY, NY: Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, J., Middle Egyptian. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press. p. 95.


<sup>5</sup> Allen, JP, Middle Egyptian. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press. p. 95.

a series of frames, a foyer, or a passageway. A semi-cylindrical drum, carved directly above the central panel, was used in imitation of the reed-mat that was used to close real doors.

The door is framed with a series of moldings and lintels as well, and an offering scene depicting the deceased in front of a table of offerings is carved above the center of the door. Sometimes, the owners of the tomb had statues carved in their image placed into the central niche of the false door.

Here we see the deceased Nakhty is shown sitting on a chair in front of an offering table, raising his left hand towards his nose, inhaling the lotus flower, which indicates resurrection and life in ancient Egypt, while he picks up with his right hand a piece of food placed on the offering table, which is a table carved square in shape, and perhaps not completed carving. Some titles were written in front of his name (Nakhty).

Surrounding the false door is an offering formula from all four sides, and this formula addresses the god Anubis, the god of the underworld and the cemetery in ancient Egypt.

In fact, there are some surrounded frames were carved inside the false door, all bearing the titles and the name of the deceased. As for the deceased (Nakhty) he was depicted three times, the first time in front of the offering table in the focus of the view, the second on the left and right sides of the lower outer corner, he was depicted standing, He wears a hemispherical wig, and after writing Nakhty's name  the end of name which has no determinative end here, it was replaced by drawing the deceased Nakhty personally instead of writing the hieroglyphic sign of man.

The offering formula in the Old kingdom

Following Gardiner's analysis of the *htp-di-nsw* formula, two different translations of the opening phrase of the formula have been customary: using parallel clauses to introduce the king and god(s) for Old Kingdom texts, and using a dative construction to introduce the god(s) for texts of Middle Kingdom date and later. However, the paleographic variation in the writing of the word 'Anubis' by the late Old Kingdom-change-over from the jackal over a *htp*-sign to a jackal on a stand-suggests that the transformation of the formula had already occurred by that time.<sup>6</sup>

The Gardiner's analysis of the *htp-di-nsw* formula argued that the construction of the phrase changed between the Old and Middle Kingdoms.! The Old Kingdom formula ran: 'An offering that the king gives, (and) an offering that Anubis (gives)...', using a parallel construction to introduce the king and the god(s) as donors of the offerings. By the Middle Kingdom, the formula had been reinterpreted, with the god(s) introduced by a preposition, usually *n* but also *hr*<sup>7</sup> usually unwritten 'An offering that the king gives (to) Anubis/Osiris, that he [i.e. the god]

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<sup>6</sup> Leprohon R. J., The Offering Formula in the First Intermediate Period, JEA 76, pp. 163.

<sup>7</sup> Lapp G., Die Opferformel des Alten Reiches, Mainz, 1986, p. 32.

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may (in turn) give invocation-offerings to ...'. Thus, the offerings were given by the king to the god, who passed these on to the recipient.<sup>8</sup>

### Dating

A more precise dating for this transition is furnished, G. Fischer believes, by the paleographic variation in the name 'Anubis'. This changes from the standard Old Kingdom form of Anubis with the *h*tp-sign below it, to the tall stand under the jackal, a writing that appears in the late Old Kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of this is that the *h*tp under the jackal is actually an integral part of the writing of the offering formula, which reads *h*tp *di nsw*, *h*tp (*di*) *Inpw*, 'an offering that the king gives, and an offering that Anubis (gives)'. There, the relative form *di* or *rdi* is written (when it is written at all) after the group of Anubis over *h*tp, and the *h*tp -sign is actually the substantive 'offering' in the phrase 'an offering that Anubis gives'; it serves much the same purpose in the first phrase 'an offering that the king gives'. He suggests that this paleographic distinction is how the Egyptians showed the change-over from the earlier rendering with the parallelism between king and god to the newer re-interpreted formula with the preposition introducing the god (albeit without writing the preposition).

### Models of False doors

The side panels usually are covered in inscriptions naming the deceased along with their titles, and a series of standardized offering formulas. These texts extol the virtues of the deceased and express positive wishes for the afterlife. For example, the false door of Ankhires reads:<sup>10</sup>

The scribe of the house of the god's documents, the stolist of Anubis, follower of the great one, follower of Tjentet, Ankhires.

The lintel reads:

*"His eldest son it was, the Honorable Medunefer, who made this for him.*

The left and right outer jambs read:

*"An offering which the king and which Anubis, who dwells in the divine tent-shrine, give for burial in the west, having grown old most perfectly. His eldest son it was, the Honorable Medunefer, who acted on his behalf when he was buried in the necropolis. The scribe of the house of the god's documents, Ankhires".*

### comparative models

1. The False Door of Hershefnakht (MM 11407) (Fig. 5)<sup>11</sup> This door is a two-jamb door with cornice and torus moldings. The hieroglyphs are in sunk relief, except those in the panel. They are of a high quality and finely cut. The text is also of the same length and the figures on the bottom of each jamb are of the same size. The figure on the right outer jamb is standing with his hands up before him in prayer, he does not have a wig but he does wear a kilt. On the right inner jamb stands a naked figure

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<sup>8</sup> Fischer H. G., in: *Inscription from the coptic Nome*, Rome, 1964, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Fischer H., *Dendera in the third Millennium B. C.*, New York, 1968, 84.

<sup>10</sup> Strudwick, N., *Texts from the Pyramid Age*. BRILL, 2005, p. 239.

<sup>11</sup> The Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities Online Database. Item MM 11 407.

of the deceased with a lotus bud in his left hand, hanging by his side and holding up a lotus flower to smell with his right hand. The figure on the left inner jamb wears a kilt, no wig and carries a staff in his left hand and scepter in his right hand by his side.

The last figure, on the left outer jamb, wears a wig and kilt and stands with both hands by his sides. All the figures wear a collar around their necks. The panel is a flaring T-shaped panel with the deceased seated on a chair that has animal feet. He wears a kilt, wig and collar with his left arm folded across his chest and his right arm extended towards the offering table. On the offering table, there are twelve bread loaves and on top of the bread lies a bird and the leg of an ox. On the right side of the offering table, there is a single jug on the floor. The craftsmanship of this door is excellent, and the preservation is also very good apart from the damaged corners.

The colors that remain are limited to a few places; the cornice has a spot of red on one of the reeds, and another reed has a spot of blue.

A few hieroglyphs have some traces of green left. The ‘background’ of the panel together with the torus have remnants of red as does the background behind the figures at the bottom of each jamb. Below

them, the remnants of black are easy to see. The red of the figures’ skin and white of their garments can also be noted without major difficulty.

The False door of *Mt̄w* at Saqqara: (see Fig. 6)

false door in Cairo Museum It bears the no. (CG 1397), it is a false door belonging to the scribe of the royal documents, scribe of the royal records in the presence, royal chamberlain, juridical overseer of scribes and the overseer of the divisions of divine offerings *Mt̄w*. For the dating of this false door, it shows many later features which appeared frequently on the false doors at the end of the Old Kingdom:

The type of the panel appeared on the current false door is the T-shaped Panel. which appeared frequently in the Memphite necropolis, Gunn suggested that it represents a rectangular wooden shutter swinging on two horizontal pivots at the top corners, Indeed, there were two types of the T-shaped panels, the first is the T-shaped panel in which the joint of the horizontal and vertical sides of the “T” form a right angle (which is the current case), while the second is the flaring T-shaped panel whose sides have a gradual curve, this latter is known since the middle reign of Pepy II.<sup>12</sup>  
Elements of the False door

The parts of the false door are better represented with a figure (Fig. 3), rather than words. Still, a few additional words might be required on terminology. The torus molding is a roll around the outside edge of the door, that was a representation for the fibrous binding. The torus is always found together with the cornice. Furthermore, the terms for a one, two or three-jamb

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<sup>12</sup> Abdel-Moniem H., The False Door of *Mt̄w* from Saqqara, in: BFALEX 69 (2019), No. 95, p.10.


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door relate to the number of pairs of jambs. For an example: a two-jamb door has two pairs of jambs, thus it has four jambs in total.<sup>13</sup>

### Summary of Conclusions

Due to some features of the false door, I believe it can be dated with some certainty to the end of 6th dynasty. The features I base this of being the flaring T-shaped panel and its decoration, plus the two pairs of jambs and their decoration. More specifically, the flaring T-shaped panel and the rather narrow jambs with single columns of text are both features that could suggest a date as early as Pepy II. Two of the other features on the false door might support this conclusion; firstly, the figure at the bottom who holds up his hands in prayer.

Secondly, some hieroglyphic signs of the offering formula as  , which might be a sign of the preferred simplicity of the second half of Pepy II's reign.

With those features in mind, the earliest possible date this door can have is the reign of Pepy II, possibly in the second half. However, it is worth to point out that the door could also date to a later date seeing as many of these features came to continue into the end of the Old kingdom. For a more secure date, it would be required to have a feature that only exists during a certain more limited timespan or not possess a feature that is very common later. With this new, more certain date, it can be said with certainty that this false door is at least not a 5th dynasty door.

As for The False door of *Mtw* at Saqqara in Cairo Museum, it shows many later features which appeared frequently on the false doors at the end of the Old Kingdom, The type of the panel appeared on the current false door is the T-shaped Panel. which appeared frequently in the Memphite necropolis, a form right angle while the second is the flaring T-shaped panel whose sides have a gradual curve, this latter is known since the middle reign of Pepy II.

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<sup>13</sup> Strudwick , N., The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom: The Highest Titles and their Holders. London; SIE, 1985, p. 10; also, Hallström, A., The False Doors of Hershefnakht, Nyankhanty. Nyankhanty and Senetites, 2017, p. 4.

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# Study of the False door of Nakhty- Egyptian Museum

## Figures



Fig. 1 The false door of Nakhty

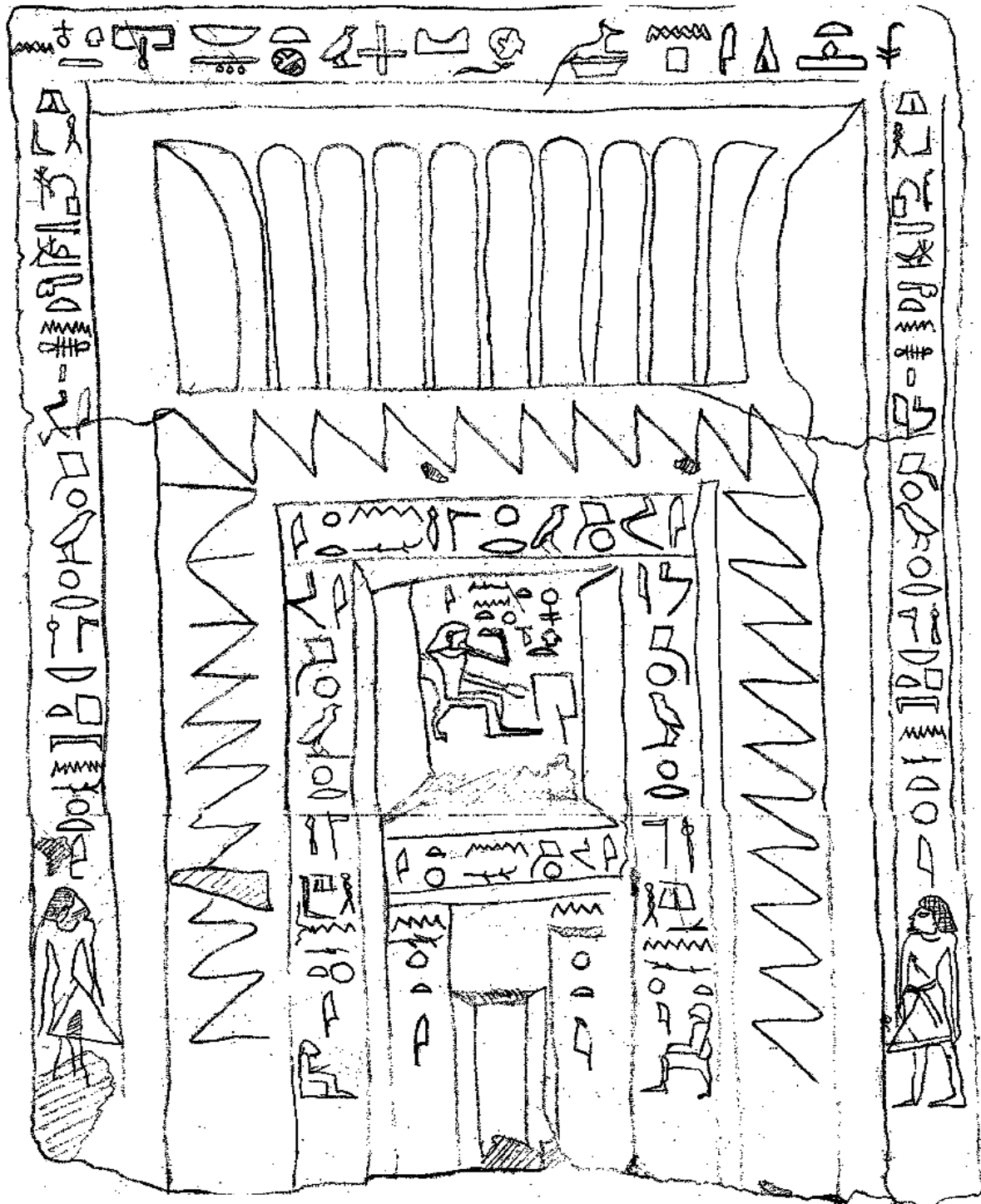
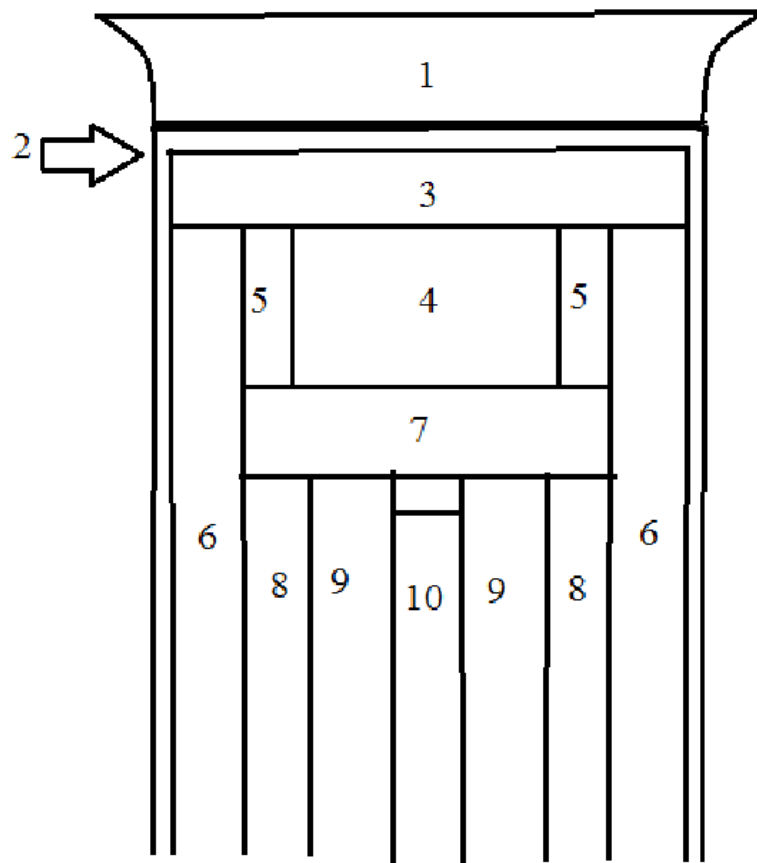


Fig. 2 Drawing figure of the False door

(Drawing by the researcher )

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*Fig 1: A false door and its features. Inspired by fig 1 in Strudwick 1985.*

1. Cornice
2. Torus moulding
3. Architrave
4. Panel
5. Apertures
6. Outer pair of jambs
7. Lintel
8. Inner pair of jambs (If more specific: Middle pair)
9. Inner pair of jambs (If more specific: Innermost pair)
10. Central niche

### **Fig. 3 Elements of the False door**

(Hallström, A.(2017), The False Doors of Hershefnakht, Nyankhanty. Nyankhanty and Senetites, p. 5)

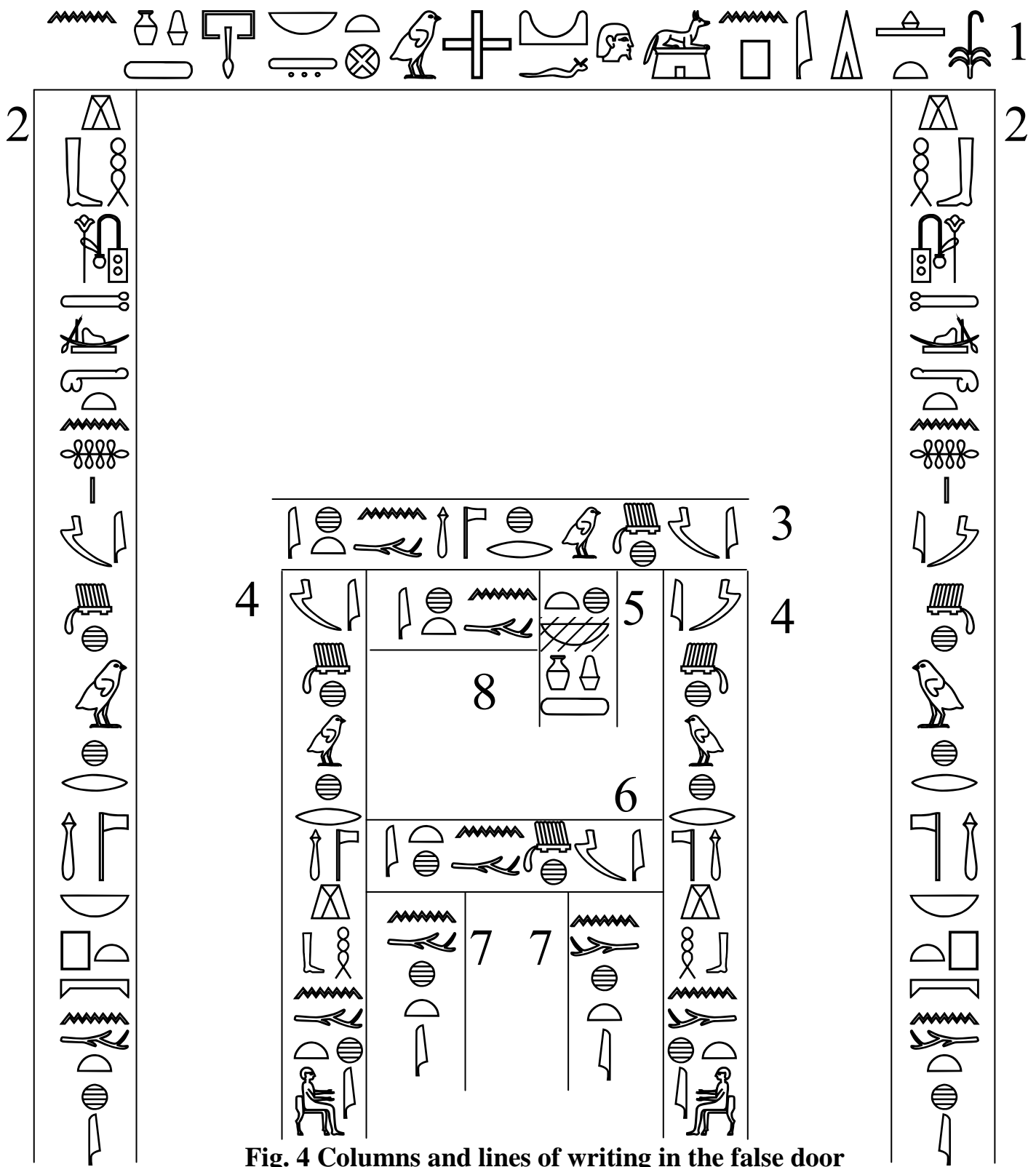


Fig. 4 Columns and lines of writing in the false door



**Fig. 5 The False Door of Hershefnakht (MM 11407)**

**(Comparative model)**

(Hallström, A.(2017), The False Doors of Hershefnakht, Nyankhanty. Nyankhanty and Senetites, p. 7)



**Fig. 6 The false door of *Mtw* at Saqqara  
(Comparative model)**

(Abdel-Moniem H., The False Door of *Mtw* from Saqqara, in: BFALEX 69 (2019), No. 95, p.17.)