



## A NOTE ON AN INCISED INSCRIPTION FROM DJEDKARE'S PYRAMID COMPLEX<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** During the documentation of Djedkare's pyramid complex at south Saqqara, a block with an incised inscription was uncovered, containing the titles and names of two Old Kingdom officials. The date of the inscription is unknown, but the titles of the two individuals indicate that they may have been connected to the construction of royal monuments and their provision.

**KEY WORDS:** Saqqara – Old Kingdom – Fifth Dynasty – pyramid complex – Djedkare – *graffito*

In 2010, the field work in the pyramid complex of King Djedkare at south Saqqara was resumed [Pl. 1] due to the lack of proper documentation and publication of the monument and its finds (for the so-far available information, see above all Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1962; 1977). The main aims of the current ongoing activities include the detailed documentation of the architectural layout of the complex [Fig. 1], the conservation and preservation of the monument as well as the documentation of the finds, especially fragments of relief decoration uncovered in the complex by previous Egyptian missions of A. S. Hussein and A. Fakhry, as well as by the current mission (for field reports, see Megahed 2011a, b; 2014; Megahed – Vymazalová – Brůna – Marek 2016; Megahed – Jánosi 2017; Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2017; for the relief fragments, see above all Megahed 2016). The architecture and finds documented during the field work constitute an important addition to the evidence on the late Fifth Dynasty that has been available from other sources (e.g. Verner 2014; Megahed 2016: 36–62).

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Pl. 1 The pyramid complex of King Djedkare at south Saqqara (Photo: Hana Vymazalová).

Besides more spectacular finds, we sometimes encounter inconspicuous evidence that did not play a role in the final ideological and religious design of the pyramid complex and the king's funerary cult but can provide clues concerning the construction and history of the monument or the organisation of work tasks. Such evidence frequently includes so-called "Baugraffiti" and "graffiti" proper. One of the latter is the main focus of this article.

### **"Baugraffiti" and "Graffiti" in Djedkare's funerary temple**

Many blocks of masonry of Djedkare's funerary temple bear inscriptions that were not part of the decorative themes of its walls; they differ considerably in both form and content from the hieroglyphic texts that were executed in relief by the king's artists. Some of these inscriptions attest to the construction of the monument, while others refer to activities pursued in the funerary temple at a later point in time. It is generally not too difficult to distinguish between the former and the latter types of inscriptions based on their form, character and location.

#### *The "Baugraffiti"*

The first group of inscriptions is often referred to with the German expression "*Baugraffiti*", but in English the terms builders' inscriptions and mason's marks seem more accurate (see also Vymazalová forthcoming). Such inscriptions and marks are closely associated with the construction of the monument as well as with the quarrying of the material and its transportation to the construction site (Verner 1992: 167–169; Andrassy 2009: 22–25). They can generally be found on the rough surface of stone blocks and were usually meant to be hidden within the construction after its completion. The majority of them are exposed today due to the incomplete state of preservation of the monuments, especially the missing casing.

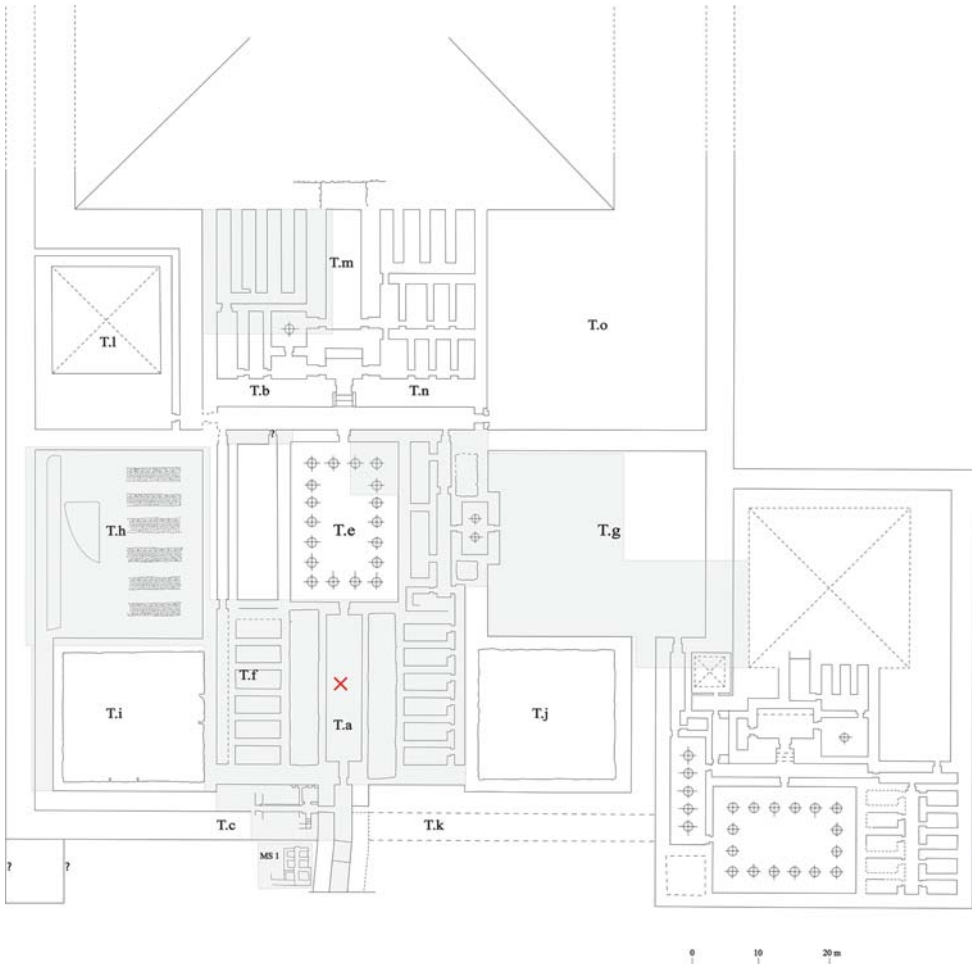


Fig. 1 A plan of Djedkare's pyramid complex with the so-far documented areas marked in grey. The red cross marks the place of discovery of the loose block with the graffiti under discussion (Drawing: Mohamed Megahed based on Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977, pl. 16).

Many such inscriptions and marks were discovered on the blocks of masonry during the exploration of Djedkare's pyramid complex. They were documented in both the substructure and superstructure of the king's pyramid, as well as on the blocks of the funerary temple. They can be found on the core blocks of walls, seldom on the casing of the walls, but they also occur on the sides of floor blocks and foundation blocks. Besides those inscriptions that were found in situ, many loose-blocks with such inscriptions have also been documented during the field work.

Most of the inscriptions and marks in Djedkare's pyramid and funerary temple (for some examples, see Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2017: 41; 2018 forthcoming) were written in black or red paint, but the ancient scribes used also yellow ochre, brown and grey paints and charcoal. It is not uncommon to find a block with two or more inscriptions or marks. The uncovered builders' inscriptions contain many dates, consisting of a month, a season and a day, the names of working crews, and numerous

masons' and quarry marks. The most common include the marks of a star, a cross and a grid, which are well-known from the royal necropolis in Abusir (e.g. Borchardt 1909: 46–47, 53–55; 1910: 85–96; Verner 1992; 1995: 43–54; Verner *et al.* 2006: 187–204; Vymazalová forthcoming).

### The “Graffiti”

Besides the inscriptions and marks left by the builders, blocks in Djedkare's pyramid complex also bear inscriptions that were secondarily added onto the walls of Djedkare's monument. These can either be painted (*dipinti*) or incised (*graffiti*) and are generally to be found on the smooth surface of the walls (for the terminology, see e.g. Verhoeven 2015: 30). These inscriptions were not related to the construction of the monument but were left by its later visitors. The best-known and most frequent examples of such texts are the so-called visitors' inscriptions from the New Kingdom and Ramesside periods, which can be found on many monuments in the Memphite necropolis as well as in other parts of the country (see e.g. Navrátilová 2007, 2015; Verhoeven 2012). Examples of *graffiti* from earlier periods, including the Old or Middle Kingdoms, are not so frequently found. They are often different in their character from the later visitors' *graffiti*, which reflects a different attitude or motivation of the scribes.

Several *graffiti* have been known from Djedkare's pyramid complex since its early exploration. These were incised on the floor blocks in the eastern part of Djedkare's funerary temple and refer to priests of the king's funerary cult who lived during the Sixth Dynasty (Fischer 1961; Roccati 1977: 108–116, pl. 17; Porter – Moss – Málek 1978: 424). Besides such inscriptions, also grids of games, especially the *senet*, can often be found on floor blocks in pyramid complexes; these were incised by priests who spent many hours in the monuments during their service (Collombert pers. comm.). No examples of *senet* games have survived in Djedkare's funerary temple in situ, but some have been partly preserved on loose blocks.

During the recent field work in Djedkare's complex, only very few *graffiti* have been uncovered. One of them – even though very short – is the subject of our discussion. Its features differ from the above-mentioned Sixth Dynasty floor *graffiti* – it is much rougher in execution and its signs are considerably larger.

### An incised inscription from Djedkare's funerary temple

The inscription, which is the main subject of this paper, is incised on a loose block uncovered during the cleaning of the entrance hall (*pr-wrw*) of Djedkare's funerary temple in 2015 (for the report on this season, see Megahed – Jánosi 2017). It consists of two columns of text, with the left column being placed slightly higher than the right column. The signs are well shaped, albeit very simplified. They were probably chiselled out with a sharp tool, quickly and without the intention of perfecting the result by smoothing the lines.

The inscription reads:

<sup>1</sup> *wr bzt Htp* “the great one of *bezet*, Hetep”,

<sup>2</sup> *mdh kstjw Šn-k3(.j)* “overseer of sculptors, Shenka”.



Pl. 2 The loose block with a scratched inscription found in the entrance hall of Djedkare's funerary temple (Photo: Peter Jánosi).

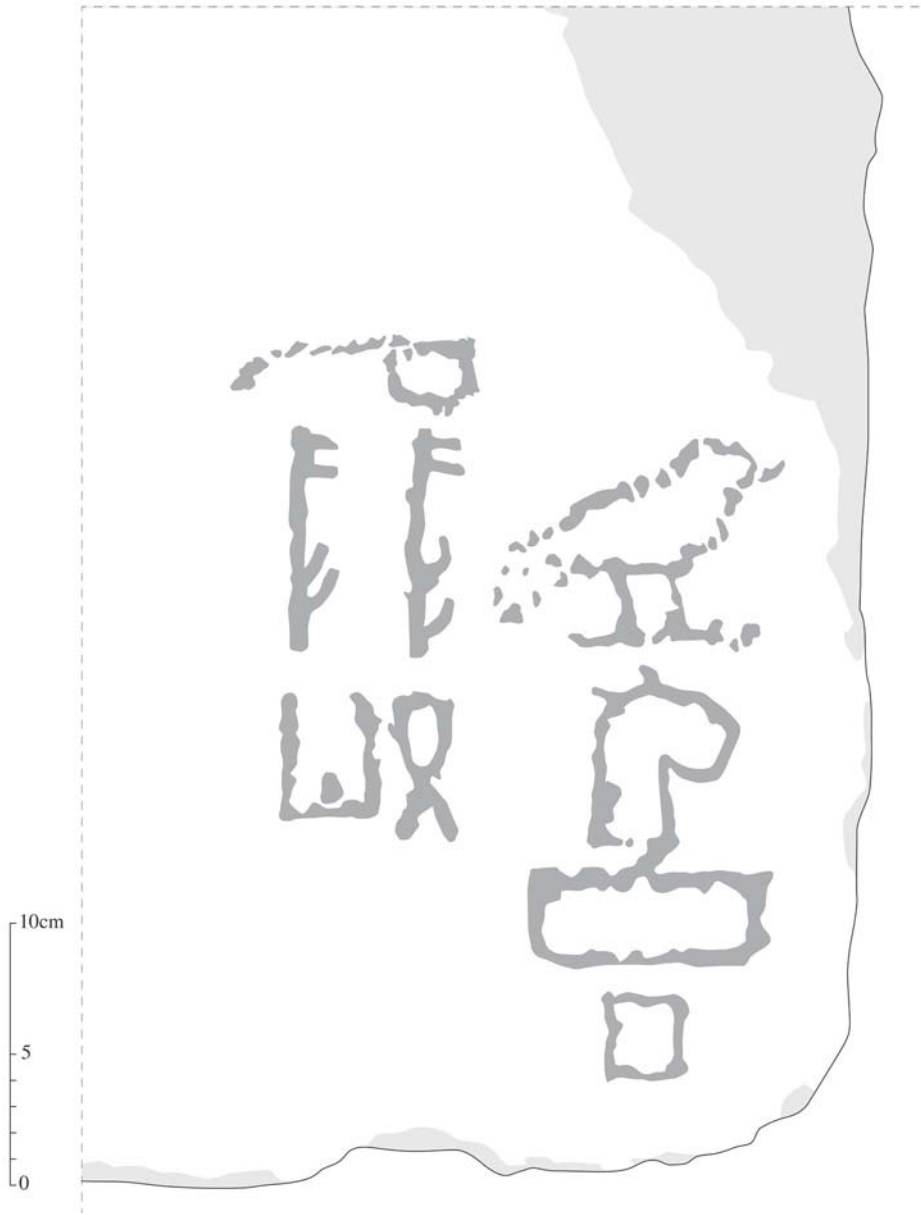


Fig. 2 The loose block with a scratched inscription found in the entrance hall of Djedkare's funerary temple (Drawing: Elisabeth Majerus).

The original location of this inscription within the pyramid complex is unknown. The type of stone and its working leave no doubt that it once belonged to the original masonry of Djedkare's funerary temple, most likely to a casing block of a wall. The block may have come from the side walls of the entrance hall, as its place of discovery suggests, but it cannot be excluded that it came from another part of the complex and was moved to the entrance hall secondarily.

The block bears no traces of relief decoration but shows a smooth, carefully worked surface. Therefore, it may have come from the bottom part of a wall or from an undecorated room. Unlike the painted hieratic builders' inscriptions and marks mentioned above, the inscription under discussion was incised into the surface of the block in simple semi-hieroglyphs. The overall character of the inscription and its position on a smooth surface of the block confirm that this was a secondary *graffito* [Fig. 2], like the above-mentioned *graffiti* of the Sixth Dynasty priests (Fischer 1961; Roccati 1977: 108–116). It is, however, executed in larger signs, and in much rougher form than the latter inscriptions.

## Discussion

It is rather difficult to interpret the newly uncovered *graffito* from Djedkare's pyramid temple as the text is limited to the titles and names of the two individuals, providing no further context or clues on dating. Some indications may be found through a closer inspection of the two officials.

### *The great one of bezet, Hetep*

The official Hetep who held the title "great one of the *bezet*" has not previously been attested in the available sources. Hetep was a common name in the Old Kingdom (Ranke 1935: 257 no. 22; Gourdon 2007: 500 no. 1) and it was also often used as a short version for composite names (Scheele-Schweitzer 2014: 559–561 no. 2551). None of the previously attested individuals of this name can, however, be identified through their titles with our Hetep.

The title *wr bzt* is attested from the Fourth Dynasty until the end of the Old Kingdom, with most of the holders dating between the mid-Fifth and early Sixth Dynasties (see the attested holders in Silvermann 1994: Table 18.1). The title's meaning is not very clear and has been interpreted in various ways (e.g. Murray – Sethe 1937: 8; Helck 1954: 62; Fischer 1996: 36, e; Baud 1999/1: 237, 239 "grand de brilliance").

It has been noticed that all the attested holders of the title *wr bzt* also held the title *imy-r3 pr-ḥd* and/or *imy-r3 prwy-ḥd* and thus were closely associated with the royal treasury (Helck 1954: 62; Strudwick 1985: 280–281, 289; Silverman 1994: 247–249). In addition, many of the holders held titles associated with linen and *ḥkr nzwt* (Silverman 1994: 249 and Table 18.2). In his study, D. Silverman suggested the interpretation of the title as the "great one of the container of adornments" (Silverman 1994: 253), in which he was also followed by Jones (2000: 384 no. 1423).

As the title *wr bzt* is only attested for the overseers of treasury, we can suppose that our Hetep also held the latter title. It is not unusual that the short, scratched inscription mentioned only one of the many titles of the official (the same is attested for builders' inscriptions in Old Kingdom tombs, see e.g. Vymazalová forthcoming). Therefore, even though not explicitly mentioned in our inscription, Hetep undoubtedly was one of the most important and powerful dignitaries of the state.

It should be mentioned that the builders' inscriptions on the pyramid of Pepy I, located just north-west of Djedkare's precinct, provide evidence of certain Hetep(s). Here, the name is associated with the title of a vizier (Dobrev 1996: 106–107; 1998: 152) and also with the title of *smr-w<sup>c</sup>ty* (Dobrev 1996: 113; 1998: 157). Even though Hetep was quite a common name, the close proximity of the two kings' monuments might lead us to speculations whether one of the Hetep(s) living under Pepy I might have been identical with the Hetep who scratched the discussed inscription in Djedkare's funerary temple.

For the present study, it is worth mentioning that the *wr bzt* title holders also held functions associated with scribal tasks related to the king's documents, but mainly to royal offerings, and priestly functions associated with royal pyramid complexes and sun temples. Among the mid- to late-Fifth Dynasty title holders, one can mention for instance Nikauptah (the false door at Manchester Museum 10780, Porter – Moss – Málek 1979: 744–745; Strudwick 1985: 106 no. 77), who was a *w<sup>c</sup>b*-priest of the king, a *hm-ntr*-priest of Sahure, a *hm-ntr*-priest of Re in Userkaf's sun temple (*w<sup>c</sup>b nzwt, hm-ntr R<sup>c</sup> m Nhn-R<sup>c</sup>, hm-ntr S3hw-R<sup>c</sup>*), but also a sealer of the best provisions of the king (*[h<sup>t</sup>m h3]t df3w bity*). Another of the holders of this title, Djefawy (tomb D25, Porter – Moss 1978: 466; Strudwick 1985: 166 no. 167), was a *hm-ntr*-priest of Nyuserre (*hm-ntr [Ny-wsr]-R<sup>c</sup>*) and an overseer of the department of provisions (*imy-r3 swt df3w*). A similar association may be presumed for the anonymous owner of a statue (CG 49; Strudwick 1985: 169 no. 171) who also was a priest (*hm-ntr* [...]).

A particularly interesting figure is Kaipure, who built his tomb at north Saqqara most likely at the time of Djedkare (tomb D39; Porter – Moss 1978: 455–456; Strudwick 1985: 149 no. 143; chapel in Penn Museum, E.15729 <https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/276782>; Silvermann 1994: 245–254; 1997: 170–175). He was directly associated with Djedkare's pyramid complex as he was a *hm-ntr*-priest of Perfect-is-Djedkare (*hm-ntr Nfr-Dd-k3-R<sup>c</sup>*) as well as he who belongs to the phyle of the king's crew (*ny z3 ʕprw nzwt*?).

#### *Overseer of sculptors, Shenka*

The “overseer of sculptors, Shenka”, has not been attested before in the available Old Kingdom sources (no attestations in Ranke 1935; Gourdon 2007; Scheele-Schweitzer 2014).

The title *mdh kstjw* (Murray 1908: pl. XXV; Jones 2000: 468 no. 1743) is attested from the end of the Second Dynasty onwards (Endesfelder 1991: 34; Kaplony 1963: 621). It was held, for instance, by Imhotep, the architect of the step pyramid complex at Saqqara (Helck 1954: 93, note 9), and is generally considered to be connected with craftsmen and artists (see also Drenkhahn 1976: 62–65). H. Goedicke suggested that this title was closely associated with the cult of Sokar (Goedicke 1957: 58 note 7).

It is worth mentioning that a bearer of the title *mdh kstjw* occurs among the high officials depicted in the reliefs in the pyramid complex of Pepy II (Jéquier 1938: 61), which indicates that an individual with this title was important and probably played a significant role in the construction and decoration of a king's monument.

## Conclusion

The brief graffito on a loose-block from Djedkare's pyramid complex mentions two individuals previously unattested in the Old Kingdom sources. The Old Kingdom date of the inscription is, however, indicated by the titles of the two individuals: the



title *wr bzt* is unattested in later sources, while the title *mdh kstjw* only seldom occurs after the Old Kingdom (Ward 1982: 98 no. 818).

The titles of Hetep and Shenka seem to indicate strongly that these two men might have been involved in the construction, decoration and provision of an Old Kingdom royal monument. Hetep as the holder of the title *wr bzt* was most likely also an overseer of treasury (as all the attested holders of the former title also held the latter), and as such he was responsible for the collection of state income and its further redistribution. Shenka, on the other hand, was in charge of the craftsmen and artists who worked on royal projects.

As the inscription was apparently incised secondarily onto the wall of the funerary temple, it is not certain whether these two men were involved in the construction of the monument of Djedkare himself or they visited his pyramid complex at a later point of time (thence the secondary character of their inscription), perhaps in search of an inspiration for a monument of a later king. In addition, their functions, namely Hetep's association with provisions and Shenka's responsibility for decoration, may also indicate that the two may have been involved in supplying and restoring Djedkare's monument. In this respect, a mention of the vizier Hetep in the pyramid complex of Pepy I might seem particularly interesting. However, no holder of the title *wr bzt* is attested to have been a vizier during that same period (Strudwick 1985, Tables 25–26). The identification of the vizier Hetep of the early Sixth Dynasty with the Hetep of our inscription is, however, too speculative.

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