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Saqqara 2008 : Inscribed Material

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SAQQARA 2008 INSCRIBED MATERIAL

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Abstract: The article presents inscribed material of Old Kingdom date from excavations carried out by a Polish mission at Saqqara. The finds include an offering basin of Iku, fragment of a boundary stela of Netjerykhet, false doors, one of Ny-Pepy and the other of Fafa, and a lintel of Iry, as well as a fragmentary inscribed block.

Keywords: Saqqara, mastaba, Old Kingdom in Egypt

OFFERING BASIN OF IKU

A simple rectangular offering basin (Field Inv. no. S/08/4) [Fig. 1] was found in the secondary fill of Shaft 97. It was carved of a single piece of hard white limestone and represents Type B1 in R. Hölzl's typology (Hölzl 2002: 14, 17; "rechteckige isolierte Kultbecken"). The basin is 25 cm wide by 15.6 cm long and 11 cm high; its sides, narrowing towards the bottom, are rough and irregular, while the surface of the rim and of the depression was smoothed. On the slightly slanted rim of the basin there is an inscription incised along two adjacent sides:

*rht-njswt hmt-ntr Hwt-Hr jm3hw(t) hr
Jnpw tpj dw.f Jkw rn.s nfr Mrwt*

King's acquaintance, priestess of Hathor¹ honored by Anubis Iku² whose beautiful name is Merut.³

None of the tombs excavated so far by the Polish mission can be securely attributed to Iku/Merut.

FRAGMENT OF AN INSCRIBED LIMESTONE BLOCK

A small fragment (19.8 cm by 10.9 cm) of hard white limestone (Field Inv. no. S/08/9) [Fig. 2] was found in a deeper layer

¹ Jones 2000, 540–541, No. 2012. On other priestesses of Hathor buried west of the Step Pyramid, see, e.g., Mysliwiec, Kuraszkiwicz 2000; Kuraszkiwicz 2008: 171–172.

² Ranke, *PNI*: 48, No. 10. Fragments of a false door inscribed for a priestess of Hathor named Iku were found in the Teti Pyramid necropolis (*PM III/2*: 544). A relatively recent find of two fragments of an inscribed jamb (Mysliwiec 2008a: 161; Kuraszkiwicz 2008: 171–172) provides a good example of displacement processes occurring in an extensively used necropolis. Thus, while the mentioned false door and the basin could have belonged to the same person, it does not seem likely considering the distance separating the two finds.

³ Ranke, *PNI*: 162, No. 14. A woman named Merut, wife of a certain Teti-ankh, was depicted on the latter's fragmentary false door found in 1998 (Kuraszkiwicz 2002: 354–356). However, the popularity of this name in the Old Kingdom precludes a secure identification of these two women as the same person.

of secondary fill inside Shaft 97. It bears fragments of three columns of inscription, carved carelessly in low bas-relief:

[... nb.f ...] [...] m z(mj)t [jmnt ...] [...]rt
 [...] his lqrd [...] in the [western] desert
 [...]rt [...]

The type of relief, the preserved parts of the text as well as the width of the middle column (approx. 8.7 cm) indicate that the

fragment should be attributed to an ideal autobiography or offering formula carved on the façade of an as yet unidentified tomb.

FRAGMENT OF A BOUNDARY STELE OF NETJERYKHET

A fragment of a boundary stela of Netjerykhet (Field Inv. no. S/08/14) [Fig. 3] was found in the secondary fill of Shaft 114, by its east wall, at a depth of approx. 1.90 m.⁴ The fragment, 26 cm wide,



Fig. 1. Offering basin of Iku (Field Inv. no. S/08/4)
 (All photos in the text W. Wojciechowski; all drawings K.O. Kuraszkiewicz)

⁴ For fragments of various Netjerykhet stelae found previously on the site, see Kuraszkiewicz 2006: 276–277; 2010: 187–189.

8.3 cm high and 16 cm thick, came from the rounded uppermost part of a “boundary” (that is, flat, quasi-rectangular) stele. Along its upper edge a slightly protruding border can be seen and below it, the remains of three hieroglyphic signs of a conventional inscription (see, e.g., Kahl, Kloth, Zimmermann 1995: 70–75, 80–89, 112–113):

Jnpw hntj T3-[dsr]

Anubis, foremost of the Sacred Land.

Judging from the preserved parts of the relief, it differs in quality of craftsmanship from the majority of other monuments of this kind, which are usually carved without

much care. Also, none of the previously known steles seems to have the protruding border around the decorated field (see, e.g., Lauer 1936: 189–190).

FALSE DOOR OF NY-PEPY

A false door inscribed for an official named Ny-Pepy⁵ (Field Inv. no. S/08/16) [Fig. 4], was found in the secondary fill of Shaft 64, at a depth of approximately 2.40 m. It was broken into three parts. Remains of whitewash were still recognizable on the decorated surface of the stele upon discovery.⁶

The stele, 1.04 m high, 0.60 m wide and 0.14 m thick, was carved in a single limestone block. The false door, composed



Fig. 2. Inscribed limestone fragment
(Field Inv. No. S/08/9)

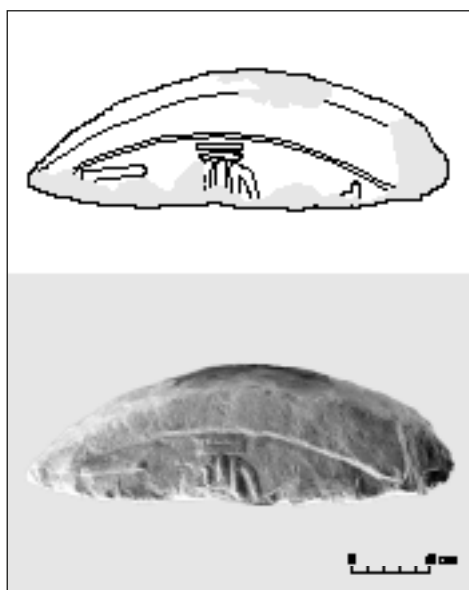


Fig. 3. Fragment of a boundary stela of
Netjerykhet (Field Inv. No. S/08/14)

⁵ The mastaba of Ny-Pepy was excavated by the mission in the 1999 and 2004 field campaigns (Myśliwiec 2000; 2008b; Kuraskiewicz 2001: 128–133; 2002: 361–363; 2005: 168; Rzeuska 2005: 175–176).

⁶ For the late Old Kingdom practice of painting offering places white, see Kuraskiewicz 2002: 366–368.

of two pairs of jambs and two lintels, classified as type B I 1 in A. Rusch's typology (Rusch 1923: 113–114, Pl. B; see Badawy 1948: 103–109; Wiebach 1981: 6–28), is crowned with a vertically striated cornice and framed with a slightly rounded torus, the latter decorated with incised zigzag lines. A T-shaped panel is to be found between the inner and outer lintel.

The lintels and the jambs are decorated with texts carved in sunk relief approximately 0.3 cm deep, two lines on the outer lintel, a single line on the inner one, and a single column on each jamb. On both the outer jambs, below the column of

text, there is a small figure of the deceased facing the center of the stele. He is shown standing with one hand loosely hanging by his side and clasping a *hrp*-sceptre, the other bent at the elbow and holding a long staff. His wig is short and rounded, and he wears a stiff triangular apron. The other figure has a distinctly longer apron.⁷ The figure on the left jamb sports a short beard, while its counterpart on the opposite jamb is beardless, but has a broad collar.

The panel depicts the deceased sitting on a lion-legged chair in front of an offering table. The man, wearing a shoulder-long wig, short beard and kilt, holds up

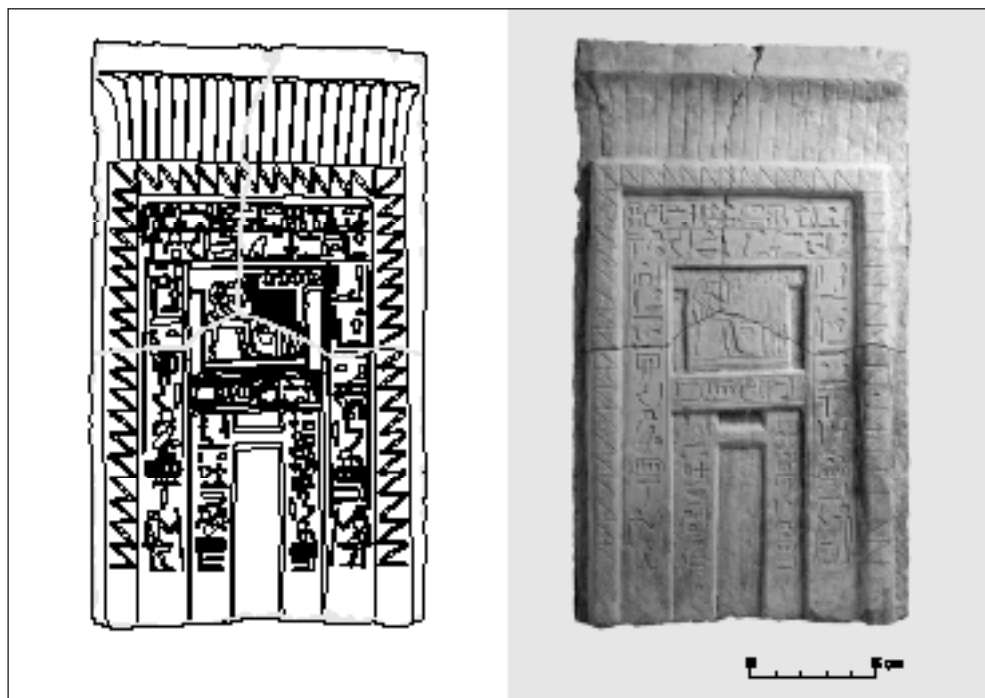


Fig. 4. False door of Ny-Pepy (Field Inv. no. S/08/16)

⁷ Concerning this feature in the context of the age of a depicted person and the interpretation of the representation, see Mysliwiec 2006.

a stylized unguent jar with his left hand, while extending the right hand towards the offering table. Tall and thin loaves of bread are delineated with straight lines. A vessel for washing and three *hs*-type vases are shown under the table.

The inscriptions are as follows:

a) outer lintel:

1. *hṭp ḏj(w) njswt Wsjr prjt-ḥrw n ḥrj-pr pr-njswt smr w^ctj ḥrj-ḥ3bt*
2. *ḥrj-sšt3 nj njswt m jst.f nb jm3ḥw*
3. *Nj-Ppjj*

An offering that the king gives and Osiris, (namely) invocation offering for the majordomo of the royal palace, sole companion, lector priest, privy to secrets of the king in every cult-place of his, honored one Ny-Pepy;

b) right outer jamb:

smr w^ctj ḥrj-sšt3 nj ḥtmt-ntr jm3ḥw Nnj-Ppjj
Sole companion, privy to secrets of the god's treasure,⁸ honoured one, Ny-Pepy;⁹

c) left outer jamb:

ḥrj-sšt3 pr-njswt smr pr jm3ḥw Nj-Ppjj
Secretary of the king's domain,¹⁰ companion of the house,¹¹ honoured one, Ny-Pepy;

d) panel:

ḥ3 (m)¹² t ḥ3 (m) ḥnkt ḥ3 (m) r ḥ3 (m) trp¹³ n Nj-Ppjj
Thousand loaves of bread, thousand jars of beer, thousand *r*-geese, thousand *trp*-geese for Ny-Pepy;

e) inner lintel:

smr w^ctj ḥrj-ḥ3bt Nnj-Ppjj
Sole friend, lector priest, Ny-Pepy;

f) right inner jamb:

ḥrj-pr pr-njswt šps njswt smr pr jm3ḥw Nnj-Ppjj
Majordomo of the royal palace, noble of the king,¹⁴ companion of the house, honored one, Ny-Pepy;

g) left inner jamb:

smr w^ctj jmj-jb nj nb.f jm3ḥw Nnj-Ppjj
Sole companion, favorite of his lord, honored one, Ny-Pepy.

FALSE DOOR OF Fafa

In the secondary fill of Shaft 114, at a depth of 4.75 m, there were three fragments of a small false door inscribed for a man named Fafa (Field Inv. no. S/08/19) [Fig. 5]. The stela, 0.42 m high, 0.29 m wide and approximately 0.07 m thick, was carved of a single block of yellowish lime-

⁸ Jones 2000: 638, No. 2340.

⁹ This name seems not to be attested elsewhere, but see Ranke, *PNI*: 205 No. 26.

¹⁰ Jones 2000: 620, No. 2274.

¹¹ Jones 2000: 896, No. 3287.

¹² Edel 1955: 172 (§ 398); Lapp 1986: 112–130 (§§ 199–226).

¹³ On the reading of multiple bird-head signs in offering formulae, see Edel 1981: 70; also see Lapp 1986: 120–124 (§§ 213–215).

¹⁴ Jones 2000: 988, No. 3648.

stone. The surface of the stone, especially in the upper part, is heavily eroded; a large part of the stele is missing.

The false door was crowned with a vertically striated cornice and framed with a torus. It consisted of three pairs of jambs and three lintels (type B II 4b in A. Rusch's typology; (Rusch 1923: 113–114, Pl. B; see Badawy 1948: 103–109; Wiebach 1981: 6–28). The outer and middle jambs and lintels are decorated with incised inscriptions and figural representations, while the inner jambs and lintels, as well as the panel, are blank. Remains of blue paint can be seen inside the hieroglyphs.

On the preserved outer jamb on the left, below the column of text, there is

a small figure of the deceased in a short wig and stiff triangular apron, facing the center of the stele. The seated human figure below the inscription on the middle jamb here is schematically represented on a lion-legged chair.

The inscriptions are as follows:

a) outer lintel:

[*htp djw njswt ...*]

An offering that the king gives [...];

b) right outer jamb:

jm3[hw ...]

Honored [...];

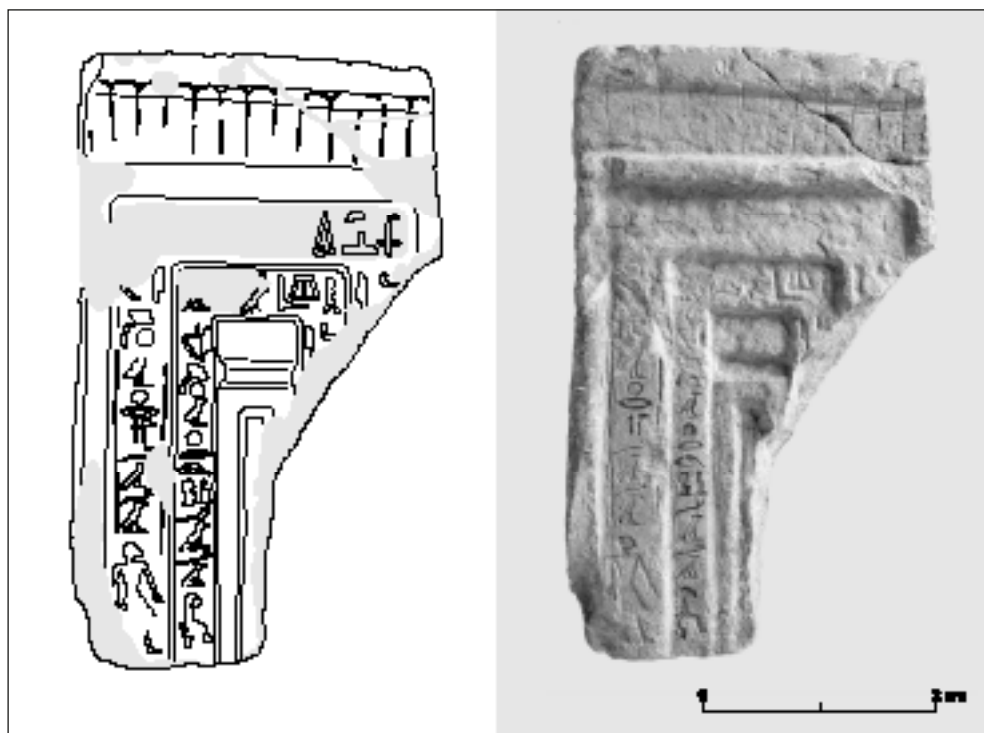


Fig. 5. False door of Fafa (Field Inv. no. S/08/19)

c) left outer jamb:

jm3hw hr ntr-3 F3f3

Honored by the great god, Fafa;¹⁵

d) inner lintel:

hrj-h3bt F3[f]3

Lector priest, Fafa;

e) right inner jamb:

jm3[hw ...]

Honored [...];

f) left inner jamb:

jm3hw hr Wsjr F3f3

Honored by Osiris, Fafa.

The stele was found in secondary context and there are no data available that would allow ascertaining the position of Fafa's tomb.

LINTEL OF IRY

A limestone block inscribed for a man named Iry (Field Inv. no. S/08/29) [Fig. 6] was found in secondary fill of Shaft 65, at a depth of 3.80 m. The block is 0.11 m high, 0.53 m wide and about 0.23 m thick. Its frontal (inscribed) and bottom surfaces were smoothed, while the other sides were left roughly dressed, which indicates that the block was a lintel, most probably surmounting the entrance to a chapel.

The inscription was rather crudely executed in shallow sunken relief without any preserved traces of polychromy:

Jm3hw hr Pth-Zkr Jrj

Honored by Ptah-Sokar, Iry.¹⁶

The block was used as an architectural element, most probably in a mud-brick mastaba. The state of preservation of the structures excavated by the mission precludes a secure identification of Iry's tomb; certain observations, however, can be made. A limestone lintel of this kind indicates that the chapel of Iry was roofed and therefore its walls had to be relatively massive; this is confirmed by the dimensions of the lintel: 0.23 m corresponds approximately to a two-brick-thick wall. The entrance surmounted by this lintel stone could not have been wider than 0.50 m, if both ends of the block were to be supported. Among the structures excavated so far, the only one that fulfils these two criteria is Chapel 20, situated in square 2102, approximately 10 m from Shaft 97 (Myśliwiec 2008a: 162, Fig. 7) where the lintel was found. Thus it

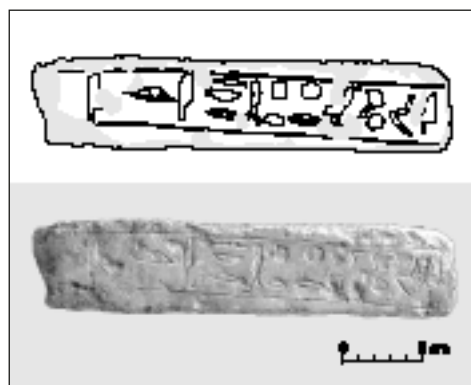


Fig. 6. Lintel of Iry (Field Inv. no. S/08/29)

¹⁵ The name does not seem to be attested elsewhere.

¹⁶ Ranke, *PNI*: 41, No. 1.

may be presumed that Iry was the owner of the otherwise anonymous Chapel 20, although it cannot be excluded of course

that his tomb was situated in a part of the necropolis which has not been excavated as yet (Kuraskiewicz, forthcoming).

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