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SECONDARY EPIGRAPHY AND MEMBERS OF THE FUNERARY CULT STAFF

THE GRAFFITO OF THE DINING-HALL ADMINISTRATOR (*HRP-SH*) KAI-HERSETEF IN TOMB HAMMAMYIA A2 (WITH GRAFFITI FROM MEIR)

*Khaled HASSAN & Chloé RAGAZZOLI**

Graffiti bear witness to actions that follow one another over time and are linked to one another, but which appear within the unified framework of the iconotextual space constituted by the decoration of Egypt's private funerary chapels. This is so for the document we present in this article, which was collected as part of the secondary epigraphy survey we have been conducting in Middle Egypt in private necropolises since 2017.¹ During the 2023 season, we were authorised to visit the tombs of El-Hammamyia and Qoseir el-Amarna,² a provincial necropolis in the 10th nome of Upper Egypt, whose tombs date mainly from the 5th dynasty. We have recorded only one document, which is the subject of this article.

The graffito, probably very close in time to the funerals of the owner of tomb A2, belonging to the regional governor Kai-khent, bears witness to the interaction between the funerary personnel and the clientele of a deceased person. These interactions are evident through epigraphic acts, the consideration of which makes it possible to explore the range of funerary practices of which the tomb was the scene. It is another example of a particular use of secondary epigraphy, which can be considered as writing in action.

I. EL-HAMMAMYIA: A FIFTH DYNASTY NOMARCHAL NECROPOLIS

The cemetery of El-Hammamyia is situated north of the contemporary village of the same name in the Assiut governorate, not far from Akhmim. During the 5th dynasty, it was the necropolis for the nomarchs who governed the 10th Upper Egyptian Nome known as Wadjet (*Wꜣdjt*).³ The size

1 This project is part of the pluriannual scientific program under the aegis ECRITURES, devoted to the archaeology and anthropology of writing practices in Ancient Egypt and beyond, see <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/recherche/operations/op19225/>. Publications on Middle Egypt secondary epigraphy within the project's framework: K. HASSAN, "The Visitors' Graffiti in Two Tombs of Beni Hassan (Ameny and Khnumhotep II)", *JARCE* 52, 2016, pp. 33-54; C. RAGAZZOLI & K. HASSAN, "Un compte hiératique de grains exposé dans la chapelle de Pépyânkh-Hénikem (A2) à Meir", in P. Collombert & P. Tallet (eds.), *Les archives administratives de l'Ancien Empire, Orient & Méditerranée* 37, Leuven, Paris, Bristol, 2021, pp. 281-296; K. HASSAN & C. RAGAZZOLI, "The Survey of Secondary Epigraphy in the Private Necropoleis of Middle Egypt: The Case of Meir", in C. Ragazzoli, K. Hassan & C. Salvador (eds.), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt. A companion to Secondary Epigraphy, Bibliothèque d'Étude* 182, Cairo 2023, pp. 217-238; C. RAGAZZOLI, "Entre cursivité et monumentalité: les tombes de Béni Hassan comme paysage d'écriture(s)", in *Questions sur la scripturalité égyptienne. Des registres graphiques aux espaces d'écritures, Bibliothèque d'Étude*, Cairo, forthcoming.

2 We thank the Permanent Committee of the SCA for this, as well as our inspector Tarek Mahmoud Mohamed Abdel Hadi. We also feel indebted to Islam el-Amir and Prof. Hassan Selim for their help in the field. Unfortunately, the tombs of Qoseir el-Amarna were not accessible and were not covered eventually.

3 N. KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom Tombs of el-Hammamiya, Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports 2*, Sydney, 1990, p. 11: There is no indication that this site was used at the time of the 6th dynasty.

of this nome is relatively small, and none of the titles of the senior officials mentioned in their tombs refers to agricultural or economic activities, which may suggest a nome of little economic consequence at the time.⁴

The tombs are divided into three clusters on the desert slopes, A, B and C, from north to south (fig. 1). Cluster A, with its three tombs, appears to be the first grouping of tombs, including the two largest on the site (A2 and A3). Its opening as a funerary place for the head of the nome may coincide with a change of trend for individuals of this status. They constituted a high-elite with provincial responsibilities on top of their central duties and from this time on were interred locally rather than in the Memphite necropolis which had been the custom in the 5th dynasty.



Figure 1. Tombs clusters in the necropolis of Hammayieh and position of tombs A1, A2, A3 [after KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, pl. 1].

The tombs in this group are located on the narrow northern spur of the cliff with A2 and A3 being the major and highest tombs while tomb A1 is lower down.⁵ A2, the first tomb, belongs to Kai-khent (*K3(.j)-hnt*) who owns titles connecting him to the royal Residence as well as to the whole administration of Upper Egypt.⁶ The owner of A3, another Kai-Khent, is most likely the son of the former;⁷ he has similar titles but is also “leader of the land in Wadjet (Upper Egypt 10th nome)” (*sšm-t3 m W3dt*), a title typical of provincial administrators in the 5th dynasty, before

⁴ N. SINCLAIR, *The Development and Decline of Provincial Rule of the Old to the Middle Kingdom: an Analysis of the Tombs and Titles of the Senior Officials of Upper Egypt*, MA thesis unpublished, Macquarie University, 2013, p. 82; E. MARTINET, *L'administration provinciale sous l'Ancien Empire égyptien*, *Probleme der Ägyptologie* 38, 2019, pp. 899-907

⁵ KANAWATI *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

the title of “great chief” (*hry-tp ʿj*) took over in the 6th.⁸ Tomb A1, smaller, lower on the slope and less distinctive in the landscape, belonged to a certain Djefai-ded, (*Djffj(.j)-dd*), literally “My-provisions-are-given”, which seems very appropriate for an “overseer of the ka-servants” (*jmj-r hm-kj*), in other words the man in charge of the funerary cult of the two Khai-khent, his patrons. He is represented in their tombs, and he probably managed to get himself a funerary monument thanks to his activities in the necropolis for the local governors. Two further tombs, A3a and A3b were excavated at a slightly later date to allow study of burial apartments; A3a belonged to Idi (*Jdj*), “overseer of the carpenters” (*jmj-r fnh*) and A3b is undecorated.⁹

Tombs A2 and A3 are dated from the earlier half of the 5th dynasty, while the others came slightly later (from mid 5th dynasty onwards).¹⁰ Furthermore, these two tombs shared architectural and decorative features with the 5th dynasty tombs of Seshta-hotep (*Sstj-hotp*) and Nesut-nefer (*Nswt-nfr*) in Giza (G4970).¹¹ The latter was the first administrator known for the 10th Upper Egyptian nome, under Sahura.

2. TOMB A2 AND ITS OWNER

This tomb belongs to Kai-khent (*Kj(.j)-hnt*, “My-ka-is-preminent”). He seems to have opened the necropolis for the leaders of his nome; being interred provincially was a relatively new custom among the ruling elite of the kingdom, even those with provincial offices. The titles of Kai-khent¹² as shown on the wall of his tomb connect him directly to the king and the Residence. We learn that he is “King’s son of his body” (*sj nswt n ht.f*);¹³ “sole companion” (*smr wʿty*), “acquaintance of the King” (*rh nswt*), “overseer of the palace” (*jmj-r ʿh*) and “overseer of the commissions” (*jmj-r r wpt*). Other titles witness to the tasks with which he was entrusted for the development and management of Middle Egypt, such as “Chief of the Ten of Upper Egypt” (*wr md Šmʿ*) and “overseer of the phyles of Upper Egypt” (*jmj-r s3w Šmʿ*). His title of “overseer of the royal works” (*jmj-r k3t nswt*) indicates his involvement with the architectural agenda of the King. His wife Iufi holds many priestly titles linked to the goddess Hathor “in all her places”, meaning throughout the country, which shows a lady of first standing (“priestess of Hathor lady of Dendera”, *hm(t)-ntr Hwt-Hr nb(t) Jwnt*; “of Hathor in all (her) places”, *m swt nb(wt)*; and of “Hathor Lady of the Sycamore”, *Hwt-hr nb(t) nht*).¹⁴

The tomb is a long corridor with many places of worship that include 13 engaged statues. It “is a rock cut mastaba composed of two unroofed entrance-corridors cut deeply into the rock from

8 *Ibid.*, p. 54

9 *Ibid.*, p. 67

10 For the different hypothesis of dating them see *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

11 For more details about this tomb see <http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/ancientpeople/2356/full/> accessed 19/11/2023. See also N. KANAWATI *et al.*, *Tombs at Giza*. Volume II: *Seshathetep/Heti (G5150), Nesutnefer (G4970) and Seshemnefer II (G5080)*, Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports 18, Warminster, 2002, p. 32.

12 KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom Tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, p. 26; on this case, see also M. BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir sous l’Ancien Empire*, Bibliothèque d’Étude 126/1, 1999, p. 172.

13 The mention *n ht.f* has been systematically chiselled out, cf. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

the west, one at the southern and the other at the northern end, each having a way at its eastern end".¹⁵ The main access is the southern one.¹⁶

The decoration was executed in bas-relief and was painted; it is reasonably well preserved. The west wall is continuously decorated with seven sections, five with several registers and two are false doors. The scenes illustrate two main themes: first the position of Kai-khent playing his role as an officer during his life, with a scene of "(over)seeing the cattle and making the account" (*mꜣꜣ jh jrt sꜣ*). The officials of the scene are scribes. Below this scene figure two boat scenes, illustrating Kai-khent's functions as an "overseer of (royal) missions" (*jmj-r wpt*). The second is a scene of offerings, with the deceased couple seated before a table of offerings, and a scene of butchery in the lower registers.

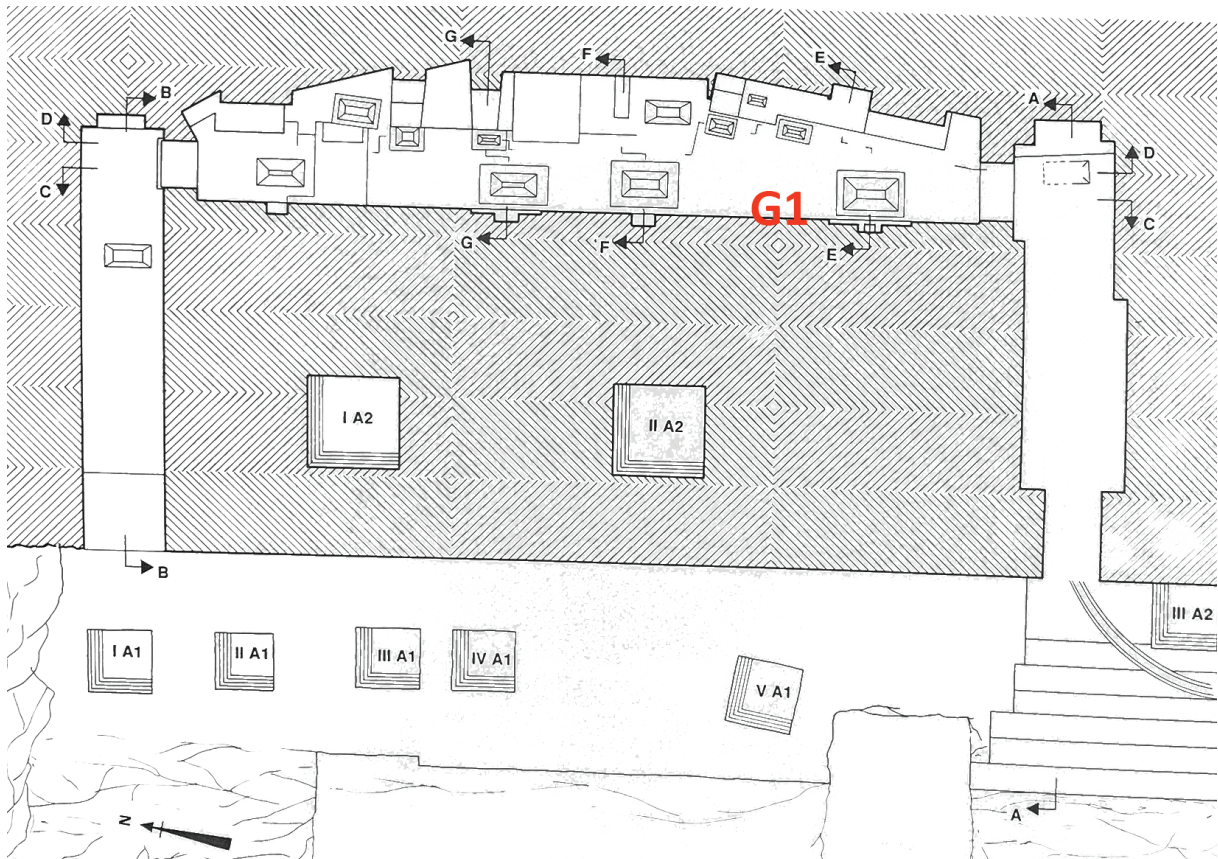


Figure 2. Floor-map of A2 tomb with the position of the graffito
[after KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, pl. 31].

3. THE GRAFFITO

The only graffito we found in the necropolis appears on the west wall, within the scene of the cattle count, before the first man of the second register, who has a calf in his arm, just before the deceased (fig. 2). It has already been copied by Naguib Kanawati¹⁷ (fig. 3). It is composed

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41, pl. 44.

of one column of incised hieroglyphs, engraved directly on the painted coating of the wall and oriented towards the left, like the offering bearer. The signs show an author who is confident in tracing hieroglyphs and they follow a regular cadrats' layout.

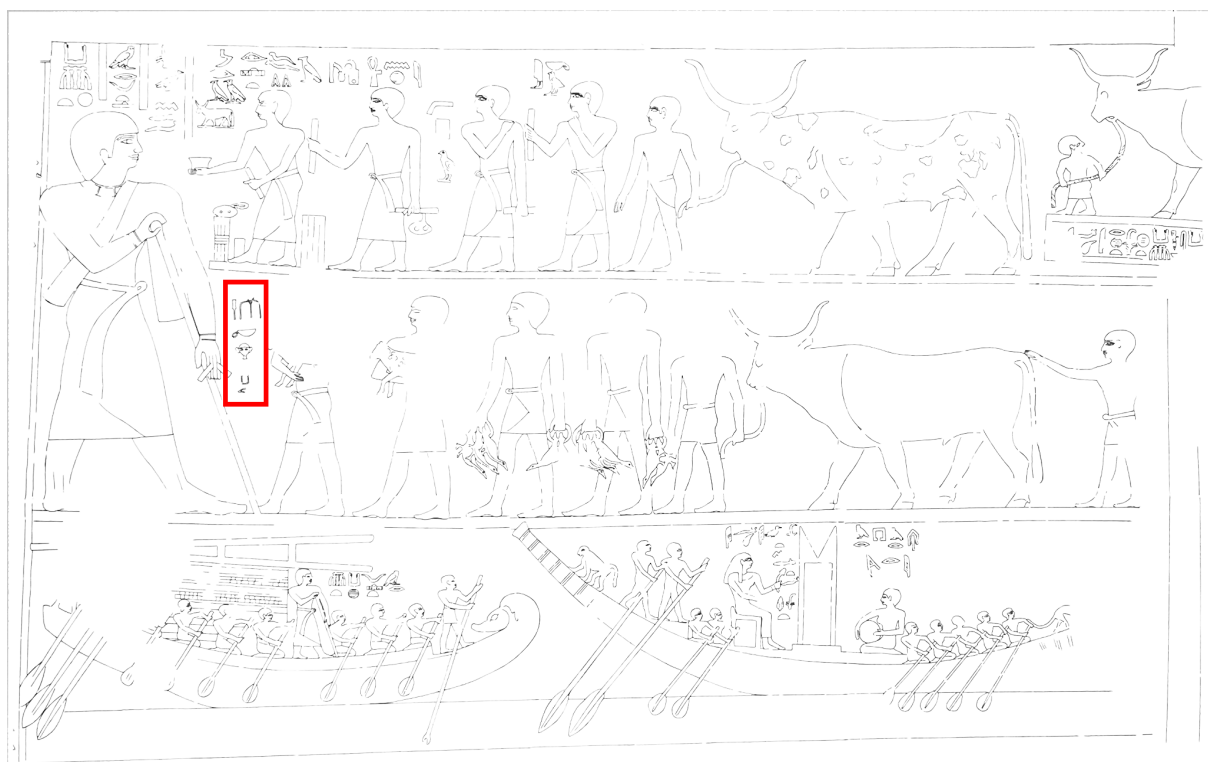


Figure 3. Position of the graffito on the trace-recording of the wall
[after KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, pl. 44].



brp-sb K3(.j)-hr-s[t.f]

“The administrator of the dining-hall Kai-herset[ef]”

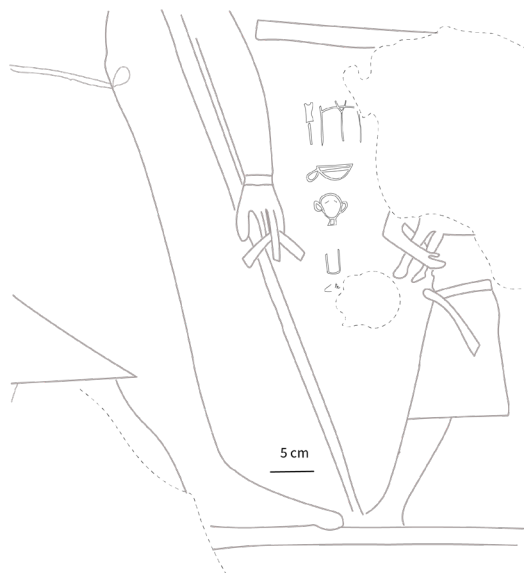


Figure 4. Line drawing made in 2023
[the authors].

The graffito is signed by a so-called Kai-hersetef¹⁸ – the last cadrat of the anthroponym is illegible and we are following Kanawati’s restitution.¹⁹ He is an administrator of the dining-hall (*brp-sb*),²⁰ a title that was initially connected to the royal house.²¹ For example, the title appears in the Abusir’s archives in connection with the royal food-hall.²² Yet, it is found more widely in connection with the preparation of food for those outside royal circles. In tomb A2, the same title is included repeatedly in the decoration in connection with the preparation of meat offerings (see below). In the funerary domain, Clère translates the function as “directeur du pavillon des offrandes”.²³ The apparent ambivalence of the term shows that it can refer to stewarding services in this world as well as in the afterlife.

4. THE SITZ IM LEBEN AND AGENCY OF THE GRAFFITO

4.1. *The position within the decoration*

This graffito appears on the chapel’s west wall, in the scene devoted to the cattle count under the aegis of the deceased, who overlooks the two registers of the scene, leaning on his long staff. The scene shows an activity related to Kai-khent’s social status in this life – the four characters leading the presentation of the cattle are featured as scribes, the first two each with a papyrus roll in one hand and their writing kit in the other. The second character is named scribe Ankhi (*sn̄ nbj*), and the two following scribes (identified as such through their scroll) *Hpw* and *Jkw*. These captions follow the same graphic register as the rest of the tomb (high-reliefed polychromatic hieroglyphs). The representation of the four scribes is bigger than that of the following herdsman, which indicates their higher social status. The member of staff leading the procedure and meeting Kai-khent at eye level is Djefa-ded (*df̄-dd*), known as Kai-khent’s chief funerary priest.²⁴ His presence in an administrative scene exemplifies how Kai-khent’s social and economic standing provides for his afterlife.

The graffito appears in the lower register, between the deceased and the first member of a row of offering bearers, loaded with calves and fowl. It can be read as a secondary caption for the row leader, in the same position as Djefa-ded just above. The character carries a calf in his arms.

18 H. RANKE, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, Glückstadt, Hamburg, 1935, p. 393, n° 1.

19 KANAWATI *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

20 D. JONES, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom*, BAR-International Series 866, Oxford, 2000, pp. 736–737, n° 2682.

21 W. HELCK, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptischen alten Reiches*, Glückstadt, Hamburg, New York, 1954, pp. 33-34; 145.

22 P. POSENER-KRIÉGER, *Les archives du temple funéraire de Néferirkarê-Kakaï (Les papyrus d’Abousir): traduction et commentaire*, Bibliothèque d’étude 65, Cairo, 1976, p. 293.

23 J.-J. CLÈRE, “La stèle d’un commissaire de police (*mr-šn̄*) de la première période intermédiaire”, *RdE* 7, 1950, pp. 19-32, p. 24, n. 2.

24 KANAWATI *et al.*, *op. cit.*

The name Kai-hersetef (*k3(.j)-hr-st.f*) is uncommon and is attested on a false-door stela from Saqqara (Cairo CG 1515)²⁵ and on the mastaba of Nesut-nefer at Giza (G4970).²⁶ Nesut-nefer, a high official of Sahura,²⁷ headed several nomes of Upper Egypt, as was customary until the beginning of the 5th dynasty, including Wadjet, the 10th U.E. nome, where he was “overseer of the (royal) commissions” (*jmj-r wpt*), “overseer of the towers” (*jmj-r sunw*);²⁸ “overseer of the king’s people” (*jmj-r nswtjw*), “ruler of the great estate” (*hq3 hwt 3t*) and “leader of the land” (*s3m-t3*).²⁹ Many of these titles are similar to those of Kai-khent in his A2 tomb in Hammamiya: Nesut-nefer may have been his direct predecessor. As for the man named Kai-hersetef in the Giza tomb, he is a son of the owner and a “scribe of the royal documents” (*s3 (w) nswt*).³⁰ He appears several times on the walls of his father’s tomb in a position similar to those of the characters in Kai-khent’s tomb, in Hammamiya, close to the secondary caption (fig. 5). In the offerings’ scene of the north wall, he similarly holds the scroll as Djefa-dedu on the west wall of Kai-khent’s tomb.³¹ On the west and east walls, he presents a bird, like the people of the register of the graffito in the Hammamiya’s tomb.

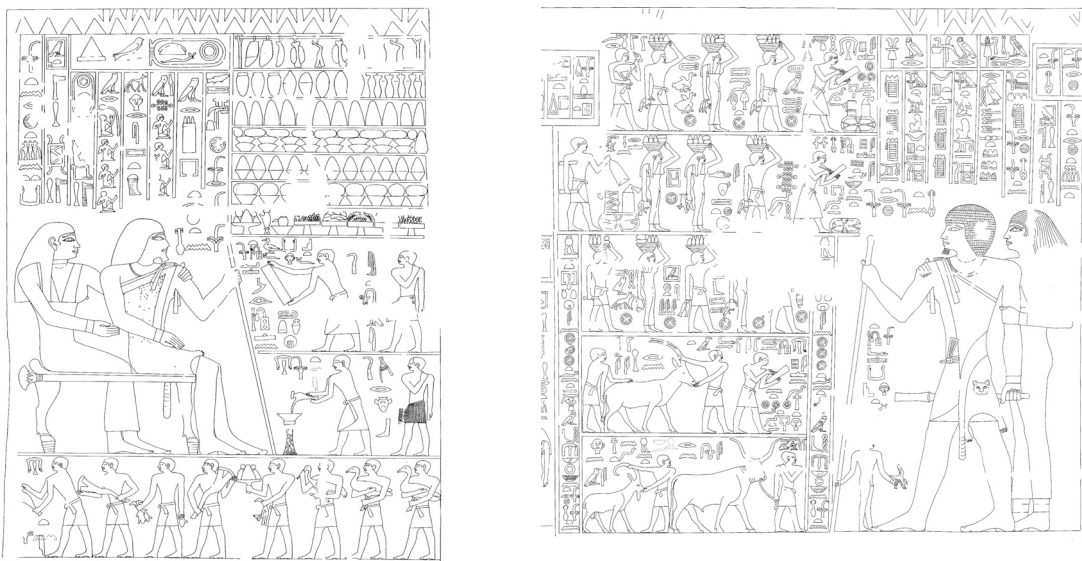


Figure 5. Scenes from Nesut-nefer’s mastaba in Giza: son named Kai-hersetef is presenting the papyrus to the deceased on the left and a bird on the right [after KANAWATI *et al.*, *Tombs at Giza*. Volume I: *Kaiemankh* (G4561) and *Seshemnefer I* (G4940), *Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports* 16, Warminster, 2001, pl. 57 and 53].

25 L. BORCHARDT, *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches (Ausser den Statuen) im Museum von Kairo. Text und Tafeln zu Nr. 1295-1541*, Cairo, 1937, pp. 218-219.

26 KANAWATI *et al.*, *Tombs at Giza*. Volume II, 2002.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.

28 We chose to read here *sunw* rather than *mnnw*, following J. C. MORENO GARCIA, “Administration territoriale et organisation de l’espace en Égypte au troisième millénaire avant J.-C. (II): *sunw*”, *ZÄS* 124, 1997, p. 116-130 and Cl. Somaglino (personal communication, article in preparation). Note that Nesut-nefer is also *jmj-r mnnw*, with a phonetic spelling. We thank Claire Somaglino for her insight on the matter.

29 KANAWATI *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 32-33.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 35

31 KANAWATI *et al.*, *Tombs at Giza*. Volume I, 2001, pl. 52 and 57.

On a 5th dynasty stela from Saqqara (Cairo CG 1515), the owner is called *Kꜣ(.j)-ḥr-st.f* and is also a “scribe of the royal documents” (*šš ‘w nswt*), as well as “inspector of scribes” (*šḥd šš*) and “seal-bearer” (*ḥr(y)-ḥtm*). He is most likely the same person as Kai-herasetef, son of Nesut-nefer.

Therefore, is it possible to consider the owner of the secondary legend of Hammamiya, the dining room administrator Kai-herasetef, to be the same man as the Kai-herasetef mentioned in the Memphite tomb? There is no formal proof of this, but the rarity of the name and the link, at least in function, between the owners of the Giza tomb and that of El-Hammamiya make it a plausible hypothesis. Yet, how can we understand the title of an “administrator of the dining room” (*ḥrp-šḥ*) that Kai-herasetef bears in his Hammamiya graffito? Is he doing this out of mimicry of the various *ḥrp-šḥ* depicted on the same wall of the tomb, who are preparing meat offerings? Indeed, the signature graffito is next to a bearer of a meat offering (a calf). Or does his title refer to the Royal Palace, a title that Kai-herasetef would have worn at the beginning of his career and which does not appear on the Memphite monuments above-mentioned?

4.2. Other *ḥrp-šḥ* in Kai-khent tomb (El-Hammamiya A2)

There are about 20 dependents of Kai-khent on the walls of his chapel,³² most of them had roles in the funerary cult, such as Meri, “overseer of the house and overseer of the *ka*-servants” (*jmj-r pr, jmj-r ḥm-kꜣ*); Mau, “*ka*-servant” (*ḥm-kꜣ*); Heqa-ib, “scribe of the divine scroll” (*šš mdꜣt-ntr*); Djefa-ded, “director of the *ka*-servants” (*jmj-r ḥm-kꜣ*). Beside Kai-herasetef, two “administrators of the food-hall” (*ḥrp-šḥ*) appear in the primary decoration, Nefer-her (*Nfr-ḥr*) and Kai-nebefui



Figure 6. Tomb of Kai-khent, two *ḥrp-šḥ* in the procession of offering-bearers (west wall)
[after KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom Tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, pl. 47].

32 KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom Tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, p. 29-30.



Figure 7. West wall (detail): two *hrp-sh*
[photograph of the authors].



Figure 8. West wall, scene of geese butchery and cooking with two *hrp-sh*
[KANAWATI *et al.*, *The Old Kingdom Tombs of el-Hammamiya*, 1990, pl. 48, detail].



Figure 9. West wall, scene of geese butchery and cooking with two *hrp-sh*
[photograph of the authors].

(*K3(.j)-nb.f-wj*), on the same wall (West, virtual East), first in an offering scene (figs. 6 and 7), as two offering-bringers, and then again in a scene of (geese) butchery and cooking (figs. 8 and 9).

The link of these dining hall administrators with the preparation of funerary edible goods is clear. We can assume that when Kai-hersetef visited the tomb and left his secondary caption, he could not ignore the presence of these people on the wall. With his graffito, which can be seen as an act of writing, he joins and identifies with the actions of the funerary servants on the tomb's walls. As defined by Beatrice Fraenkel, such acts of writing are not the mere transcription or continuation of the act of speaking but have a performative value and agency of their own.³³ Such an act differs from the act of speaking not only because it is a “graphic act”, with its own materiality, but also because it has its own temporal depth, which will integrate it to a pre-existing graphic setting. Through the performativity of this act of writing, he also performs their funerary service.

5. FUNERARY SERVANTS AND EPIGRAPHIC INTERACTIONS IN THE OLD KINGDOM

(Secondary) epigraphic interactions with the funerary decoration of chapels were a common practice in the Old Kingdom.³⁴ They took place in a period closely related to the date of the tomb and often involved staff and dependents of the owners. This is the case in the tombs of the 6th dynasty at Meir. In another article, we showed how experts connected with the creation of the tomb interacted with its decoration, through secondary epigraphy.³⁵ Other examples in the same cemetery include the officiants of the funerary cult. At Meir, this involves the insertion of a complete unit representing the priest or servant and a legend. In tomb A1 of Pepyankh, such a vignette appears to the right of the false door stele on an undecorated wall. An epigraphic space has been smoothed out to receive the graffito. It shows the “servant of the *ka* of his master” (*hm-k3 nb=f*) Itji in colour and has a graphic register that is compatible with the rest of the tomb (figs. 10 and 11).

In tomb D2, belonging to Pepyankh the Middle and dated to the late Old Kingdom, the first room shows several vignettes of such people – engraved this time – hinting at a recurrent practice during this period of leaving such ex-votos for the funerary staff, demonstrating in the same

33 B. FRAENKEL, “Actes d’écriture: quand écrire c’est faire”, *Langage et Société* 121-122/3, 2007, pp. 101-112; EAD., “Actes écrits, actes oraux: la performativité à l’épreuve de l’écriture”, *Études et Communication* 29, 2006, pp. 69-93.

34 E.g. J. HAMILTON, “Casting Light over Graffiti in the Chapel of Mehu at Saqqara”, *Egyptian Archaeology* 60, 2022, pp. 31-35; ID., “‘That his Perfect Name May be Remembered’: Added Inscriptions in the Tomb of Vizier Kagemni at Saqqara”, in A.-K. Gill, C. Alvarez, A. Belekdanian & S. Klein (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2015: Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Symposium, University of Oxford, 15-18, April 2015*, Oxford, Philadelphia, 2016, pp. 50-61; ID., “Secondary Epigraphy and Interaction with Transfigured Dead: The Case of Nikauizezi, Saqqara”, in C. Gracia Zamacona (ed.), *Variability in the Earlier Egyptian Mortuary Texts*, Leiden, Boston, 2024, pp. 7-28; ID., “The Sacredness of the Royal Name in Old Kingdom Inscriptions: Palimpsests in the Chapel of Meryteti Meri at Saqqara”, in M. Bárta, F. Coppens & J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2020*, Prague, 2021, pp. 107-120; C. RAGAZZOLI & K. HASSAN, “Un compte hiéroglyphique de grains exposé dans la chapelle de Pépyânkh-Hénikem (A2) à Meir”, in P. Collombert & P. Tallet (eds.), *Les archives administratives de l’Ancien Empire*, Leuven, Paris, Bristol, 2021, pp. 281-296.

35 K. HASSAN & C. RAGAZZOLI, “The Survey of Secondary Epigraphy in the Private Necropoleis of Middle Egypt: The Case of Meir”, in C. Ragazzoli, K. Hassan & C. Salvador (eds.), *Graffiti and Rock Inscriptions from Ancient Egypt. A Companion to Secondary Epigraphy*, *Bibliothèque d’Étude* 182, Cairo 2023, pp. 217-238.



Figure 10. Meir, tomb A1, west wall (section) [photograph of the authors].



Figure 11. Added vignette/graffito of a funerary priest by the false-door niche in Meir tomb A1, west wall [photograph by the authors].

action the accomplishment of their duty. Four of these testimonials were recorded on both the south and north walls.³⁶

Following on these examples and the graffito from el-Hammamia, votive inscriptions by funerary staff should be included in the panel of votive actions available to these people – and possibly expected from them.

6. CONCLUSION

This case study and the evocation of the epigraphic interactions that are revealed in the iconotextual programme of the tomb (the closely knitted combination of text and image) leads us to conclude that we stop considering what we see as a closed image in which all the elements would be inscribed on the same level and would be the result of a single, unified intentionality and programme. Instead, it should be understood as a device that combines elements and actions of different levels and temporalities but whose meaning is woven by their interaction. This happens when a dependent of the tomb owner leaves a graffito in which he assimilates himself to the character in the iconographic

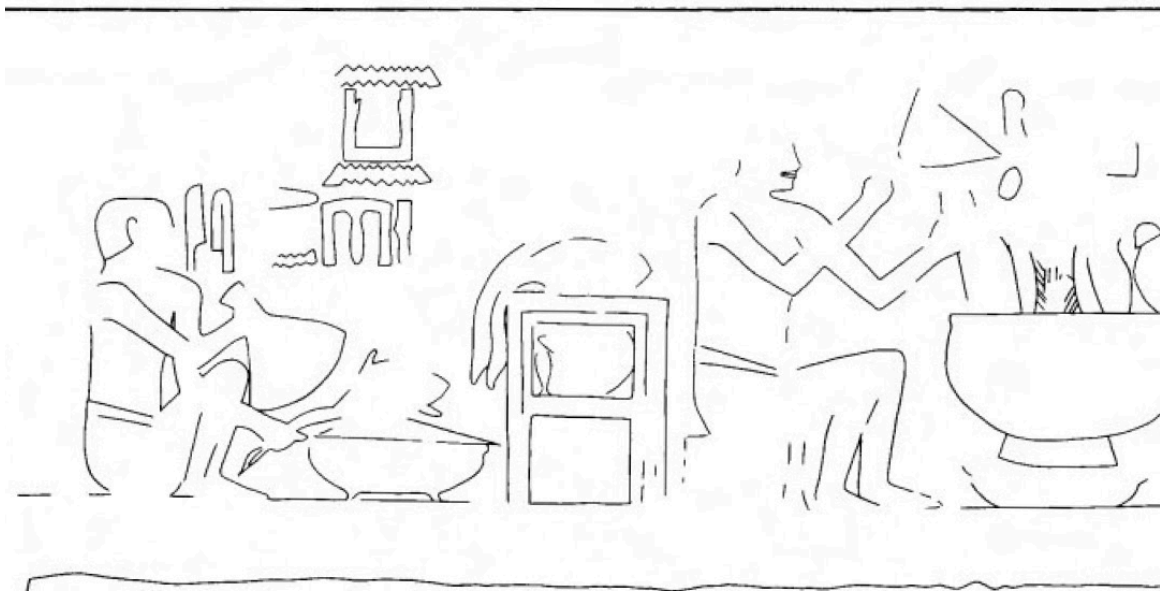


Figure 12. A scene of geese butchery with a votive dedication to the dining-hall administrator [after SIMPSON *et al.*, *The Mastabas of Qar and Idu G 7101 and 7102*. II, *Giza Mastabas*, Boston, 1976, fig. 29 (detail)].
http://gizamedia.rc.fas.harvard.edu/images/MFA-images/Giza/GizaImage/full/library/giza_mastabas/giza_mastabas_2/giza_mastabas_2.pdf

36 Graffito Meir D2.1.N1a (A. M. BLACKMAN, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*. Part IV. *The Tomb-Chapel of Pepi'ankh the Middle Son of Sebkhotepe and Pekhernefert*, ASE 25, London, 1923, pl. 3; N. KANAWATI, *The Cemetery of Meir*. Volume I: *The Tomb of Pepyankh the Middle*, *Australian Centre for Egyptology: reports* 31, Oxford, 2012, p. 23) with a “unique companion, royal chamberlain, overseer of the house, Khewenwekh the honored one before his lord, who does that which he praises and wishes” (*smr hry-tp nswt jmy-r pr Hwj-n-wh jm3hw hr nb.f irr hst mrrt.f*) and “the inspector of ka-servants, Yam” (*shd hm(w)-k3 J3m*).

Graffito Meir.D2.1.N1b (BLACKMAN, *op. cit.*, pl. 3; KANAWATI, *op. cit.*, pl. 75 (e)): “the inspector of ka-servants, who does that which his lord praises, Tjani” (*shd hm(w)-k3 jrr hst nb.f T3nj*).

Graffito Meir.D2.1.N1c (BLACKMAN, *op. cit.*, pl. 3; KANAWATI, *op. cit.*, pl. 75 (e)): “the inspector of the ka house, the owner of cattle, Fefi” (*shd hwt-k3 jmy-r jhw Ff*).

Graffito Meir.D2.1.S1 (BLACKMAN, *op. cit.*, pl. 3; KANAWATI, *op. cit.*, pl. 75 (f)): “the inspector of ka-servants, beloved of his lord, Henenit” (*shd hm(w)-k3 mrr nb.f Hnnt*), “the inspector of ka-servants, Iuhi” (*shd hm(w)-k3 jwhj*).

programme who acts in the service of the deceased. These different voices and objects of discourse are found within the so-called primary decoration following a similar process. The primary decoration constitutes a discourse and an instance of enunciation whose object is primarily the transfiguration and survival of the deceased. How the different units of the decorative programme function as units of enunciation makes it possible to speak on several levels: while the primary level tends towards the general purpose of the tomb, it does not prevent a double enunciation for the benefit of more or less secondary members of the entourage. This happens with another ‘administrator of the dining hall’ in a scene of butchery and meat offerings from Giza Mastaba 7101, which is very similar to the one from El-Hammamya (fig. 12). A votive dedication to ... himself accompanies a man preparing a goose! The caption reads: “To the good health (ka) of the administrator of the dining hall Rensi!” (*n k3 n(y) hrp-sh Rnsj*).

This last example shows how the epigraphic surface should be considered as hosting a network of discourses and voices, opened to further dialogue through the addition of secondary inscriptions, which nevertheless play with the rules set up by this space of communication.

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