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Article details
DECODING SIGNS OF IDENTITY

EGYPTIAN WORKMEN’S MARKS IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL, COMPARATIVE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

edited by

B.J.J. Haring, K.V.J. van der Moezel and D.M. Soliman

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PRODUCTS OF THE PHYSICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH SACRED SPACE: THE NEW KINGDOM NON-TEXTUAL TOMB-GRAFFITI AT SAQQARA

Nico Staring*

1. INTRODUCTION

Examples of ancient graffiti provide a graphic testimony to peoples’ attitudes towards earlier monuments.1 They have been described as one of the key groups of sources for the study of Egyptian uses of the past,2 and are considered as one of the richest sources of evidence available of the personal experience of religion in Ancient Egypt.3 The past decade saw an increasing scholarly interest in ancient graffiti.4 While studies traditionally focussed almost exclusively on the textual component,5 more recent research has gradually included non-textual or figural graffiti as well.6

* Macquarie University (Sydney, Australia). I should like to thank Assoc. Prof. Boyo Ockinga for valuable feedback on an earlier draft of this paper; Dr. Iain Clark for critical remarks on the structure of this article and checking the English spelling; Dr. Trevor Evans for the opportunity to present some aspects of this paper at the Macquarie Ancient History Research Seminar on 22.08.2014 at Macquarie University; and the attendants of that seminar for critical questions and remarks. I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Paul van Pelt: this article expands on work that was carried out in close collaboration with him, and many of the ideas floated here were first raised in a joint paper published in *BMSAES* 24 (in press). Note that references to publications covering Egyptian graffiti are not all up to date: this paper was submitted in 2014.


The New Kingdom (ca. 1539–1077 BC) necropolis at Saqqara – the foremost (elite) cemetery for the city of Memphis – provides the spatial and cultural context for the data discussed in this paper. The graffiti were recorded in the sub- and superstructures of the tombs, and on dismantled blocks now kept in museum collections around the world.

The tomb in Egypt was considered sacred space. Therefore, it is useful to emphasize the materiality of graffiti and their physical engagement with those spaces. The figural and textual graffiti were carved into the sacred context of the tomb, thus becoming one with it.

In the words of Dorman and Bryan, ‘sacred space may be said to presuppose the actualization of ritual within it and inherently provides a setting that both frames religious ceremony and can even elicit a performative response on the part of the officiant’. One particular group of figural tomb-graffiti are the subject of this paper: the representations of human figures. How should these figures be interpreted, and what do they tell us about the use and users of the tombs?

2. Graffiti: Terminology

What exactly is understood by the term graffito? This seemingly straightforward term appears to be rather difficult to define. This has to a large degree to do with the modern-day connotations of the word, where graffiti (from *graffiare*, ‘to scratch’) often represent certain momentary ideas or inspirations, and are considered as defacements and acts of vandalism. The contents of Ancient Egyptian graffiti imply that they should not be interpreted along the same line. A Nineteenth Dynasty (1292–1191 BC) graffito left on a wall in the Old Kingdom mastaba of the vizier Ptahshepses at Abusir (near the sanctuary


of Sekhmet-of-Sahure) aptly illustrates this: ‘... We are (here) before our Mistress, and we are again [leaving?] an inscription to seek a reward from you (...)’. This statement reveals something about the custom (being a routine exercise), rationale (communication), and conditions (dependence and reciprocity) surrounding the creation of graffiti.

Recent studies of Egyptian graffiti focus largely on defining what is meant by the term, and the state of the debate may still be considered as inconclusive. Varying definitions have been proposed, even though most scholars appear to agree on what constitutes graffiti. On the whole, these definitions tend to be inherently inductive, whereas graffiti are often site-specific, or perhaps even period-specific. As a result, definitions based on the data from one specific context usually apply only partly to wider contexts. Common ground should therefore be pursued not in defining what constitutes graffiti, but in how to interpret certain graffiti in certain contexts. The carriers of the graffiti and the places in which they occur are essential to their interpretation.

Definitions usually emphasize the informal character of graffiti – ‘invariably free of social restraints’ or ‘constrained by fewer rules of public behaviour’, and the fact that they were applied onto surfaces that were not originally intended to receive them. While this may reflect the nature of certain groups of graffiti in places with restricted public access (such as temples), the same cannot be maintained for tombs. In tombs, graffiti appear to be an integral part of the so-called Besucherkult (visitors’ cult), being the results of behaviour both expected by visitors and desired by tomb owners. Viewed with that perspective,
such graffiti are indeed secondary inscriptions in the sense that they do not belong to the primary state of the place where they were applied.\(^\text{22}\) This does not exclude them from belonging to the primary function of that place (\textit{in casu}: a tomb).\(^\text{23}\) The simple fact that the custom of leaving graffiti was so widespread in Ancient Egypt supports the hypothesis that they did belong to that primary function – if only as an expected and anticipated reaction to it.

For the reasons outlined above, the term graffito in the context of the present paper is perceived in deliberately loose, generic terms, to include writings and drawings that are incised, scratched or painted\(^\text{24}\) onto extant architectural features\(^\text{25}\) and non-portable objects.\(^\text{26}\)

3. **NEW KINGDOM TOMB-GRAFFITI AT SAQQARA: PRESENTATION OF DATA**

The groups of graffiti to be analysed in this paper were recorded in the New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara. This necropolis was embedded within an ancient mortuary landscape.\(^\text{27}\) It is located ca. 20 km south of present-day Cairo, on the edge of the desert plateau to the west of the river Nile and the ancient capital Memphis. The tombs analysed in relation to this study belong to members of the highest echelons of society dating to the late Eighteenth Dynasty to the Nineteenth Dynasty, reign of Ramesses II (ca. 1353–1213 BC).\(^\text{28}\)

A previous study of these groups of graffiti resulted in the formation of a framework for the interpretation of textual and figural tomb-graffiti.\(^\text{29}\) It has been shown that the motifs of the graffiti in general have apotropaic associations, or are linked to ideas of regeneration and rebirth. In this paper the group of figural graffiti pertaining to human figures will be analysed in further depth. Due to their ability to convey identity, human

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\(^{22}\) C.C.D. Ragazzoli, ‘The Social Creation of a Scribal Place: The Visitors’ Inscriptions in the Tomb Attributed to Antefiqer (TT 60) (With Newly Recorded Graffiti)’, \textit{SAK} 42 (2013), 293.


\(^{24}\) \textit{Stricto sensu}, painted ‘graffiti’ should be termed \textit{dipinti}.

\(^{25}\) Van Pelt and Staring, \textit{BMSAES} 24 (in press).

\(^{26}\) \textit{Non-portable objects (such as statues and stelae) formed an integral part of the tomb. Portable objects (such as votive stelae and ostraca) could be introduced in the sacred space at any time. As will be outlined below, there is a degree of overlap in the pictorial and textual content of graffiti and portable objects. Graffiti, however, had a permanent character.}

\(^{27}\) The earliest tombs recorded date to the First Dynasty, ca. 2900–2730 BC.

\(^{28}\) Late Eighteenth Dynasty, reigns of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten to Horemheb: 1353–1292 BC; Nineteenth Dynasty, reigns of Ramesses I to Ramesses II: 1292–1213 BC.

\(^{29}\) Van Pelt and Staring, \textit{BMSAES} 24 (in press).
figures are a particularly interesting group when trying to answer such questions as who visited tombs and for what purposes. The main aim of this paper, therefore, is to propose an interpretation for the figural graffiti recorded in these tombs – specifically those depicting human figures.  

Let us start with the presentation of the data. A total of 243 graffiti have been recorded on the stone surfaces of the New Kingdom private funerary monuments at Saqqara. The two main groups are identified as figural (n=202; 83.1%) and textual (n=41; 16.9%). These numbers indicate that the practice of leaving figural graffiti was much more common than leaving texts.  

The textual graffiti can be divided according to script: hieroglyphic (n=19; 46.3%) and hieratic (n=22; 53.7%). The figural graffiti can be divided in eight groups: human figures (n=95; 47%), human feet (n=9; 4.5%), animals (n=32; 15.8%), flowers (n=9; 4.5%), boats (n=18; 9%), geometric forms (n=18; 9%), furniture (n=3; 1.5%), and miscellaneous (n=18; 9%).  

The human figures (n=95; 39% of total) represent the largest group of graffiti at Saqqara, and they can be divided in four groups: human figures (n=48; 50.5%), human heads (n=42; 44.2%), human eyes (n=3; 3.1%), and anthropomorphic deities (n=2; 2.1%). A number of human figures depict the king in profile, either the complete profile (n=3; 3.1%) or the head (n=15; 15.8%).  

Where were the graffiti left and is it possible to discern any patterns? The spatial distribution of human figures in the tombs (fig. 1) does not deviate substantially from the overall distribution of figural graffiti as a whole. The entrance doorway was favoured, receiving 37.9% (n=36) of the figures. This is followed by the courtyards with 32.6% (n=31) and the chapels located in the west with 15.8% (n=15). This pattern may indicate a correlation between the increasing sacredness towards the inner spaces of the tomb (towards the west) and public accessibility, which is strikingly similar to the distribution of graffiti as observed in contemporaneous temples. For common people, the outer spaces represented thresholds between the sacred and the profane. Entrance doorways in general were considered as liminal zones, certainly in tombs.  

30 The interpretation of graffiti depicting human figures expands on ideas first developed in Van Pelt and Staring, *BMSAES* 24 (in press).  
31 Compare to graffiti at Karnak (n=1428): 82.9% figures; 17.1% texts. C. Traunecker, ‘Manifestations de piété personnelle à Karnak’, *BSFE* 85 (1979), 23.  
32 Cf. the categorisation of figured graffiti applied by Dijkstra, *Syene I*.  
33 Compare to Van Pelt and Staring, *BMSAES* 24 (in press), fig. 39.  
35 The ‘common people’ are those people who do not belong to the temple’s priesthood.  
houses of eternity (ḥw.t n.t nḥḥ), where they could be approached by, and interact with the living. The tombs’ courtyard(s) accommodated statues of the deceased (inscribed with offering formulae and/or Appeals to the Living) and it was the place where mortuary cults and services for the deceased were staged.

The human figures do not generally interact with the extant tomb decoration: 83 figures (87.4%) were left on undecorated walls and on the undecorated dado of otherwise decorated walls. This indicates that their presence within the sacred space of the tomb was considered more important than their possible interaction with the extant wall decoration (which is attested by tomb-graffiti at Thebes).38

The figures do not form any coherent compositions when they are clustered together (fig. 2a–b). This indicates that each graffito represents the action of one individual unrelated to the actions that resulted in the production of the circumjacent graffiti. The clustering merely shows that a particular spot presented a popular, convenient and/or meaningful place to leave a graffito.

The techniques employed can reveal something about the backgrounds of the visitors who produced graffiti. Only a small proportion of the population would have had access to writing/painting equipment. Scratching a figure on the wall, on the other hand, could be done by anyone with any sharp tool (such as flint) at hand. In the New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara, fourteen human figures (14.7%) were painted and 80 (84.2%) were incised. This distribution seems to indicate that not many graffitists will have been scribes carrying their writing equipment. The overview of techniques used to produce textual graffiti (see table 1, above) indicates that only few scribes used their scribe’s outfit. Thus, the technique employed to produce a graffito (incised vs. painted) does not necessarily hint at the degree of literacy of the graffitist. It could also reveal something about intention (a scribe who had intended to leave a graffito while visiting the necropolis would have
taken his writing equipment with him) or durability (an incised graffito naturally endures longer than does a graffito produced in ink).

The figures were on the whole rather unassuming in size: 36 (37.9%) measure less than 10 cm in height; 31 (32.6%) measure between 10 and 20 cm in height, and 14 figures are larger (13.7%).

Ten specimens measure between 20 and 40 cm; three between 40 and 47 cm; and one measures 77.6 cm. The measurements of fourteen figures (14.7%) are unknown.

As has been signalled in the introduction, it is useful to emphasize the materiality of graffiti and their physical engagement with the spaces in which they were introduced. The nature of the architectural setting can be instructive when analysing the nature of the graffiti.\(^{40}\) Let us therefore turn to the architectural setting for the graffiti discussed in relation to this paper: the Memphite New Kingdom temple-tombs.

A special feature of the tombs at Saqqara is that they held architectonic and decorative similarities to contemporary (mortuary) temples.\(^{41}\) While the incorporation of the temple-function, which required a courtyard,\(^{42}\) was not an exclusively Memphite development,\(^{43}\) the tombs at Saqqara have the distinguishing feature that they are completely freestanding structures.

The so-called sacralisation of a private tomb gave it the character of a private temple which provided the deceased with a place on earth where he/she could worship the gods for eternity and be close to them.\(^{44}\) Moreover, the Memphite necropolis, commonly referred to as r-sḫꜢw, was considered to be the domain of the god (Ptah-)Sokar(-Osiris). Each tomb-shaft could be similarly designated as Rosetau.

The deceased provided the facilities for contact with the living by means of architecture, iconography, statues, and inscriptions. Visitors could seek interaction as well, for example by dedicating a votive stela. Stelae in general functioned as an interface; a mode of contact between the living and the dead. The subject matter and composition of scenes (arranged vertically) represented an idealised view of activities that were meant to take place within the confines of the tomb. This system (ideally) relied on dependence and reciprocity. The dead needed the living for securing a continuity of provisions, food and drink, and, perhaps most importantly, securing the memory of one’s name among the living.\(^{45}\) The living, in turn, needed the dead as mediators for contact with the gods.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{40}\) This approach has also been argued for in Van Pelt and Staring, *BMSAES* 24 (in press).


\(^{42}\) Assmann, in Strudwick and Taylor (eds), *The Theban Necropolis*, 51.


\(^{44}\) Assmann, in Strudwick and Taylor (eds), *The Theban Necropolis*, 49–51 (‘temple function’); Ockinga, in Dorman and Bryan (eds), *Sacred Space*, 139.

\(^{45}\) Cf. the phrase sḫḫ ntr-mf, ‘who causes his name to live’, which identifies the dedicator (usually the (elder) son) of a stela to a deceased relative. See: M. Nelson-Hurst, “… who causes his name to live”, The Vivification Formula Through the Second Intermediate Period’, in Z. Hawass and J. Houser Wegner (eds), *Millions of Jubilees: Studies in Honor of David P. Silverman* (ASAE Supp 39; Cairo, 2010), 13–31.

\(^{46}\) As can be read in the Letters to the Dead, the living also sought help from the dead against perceived enemies amongst the dead (sometimes their deceased relatives), who were believed to have caused misfortunes suffered by the living (E.F. Wente, ‘Correspondence’, in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2001), I, 313–314; Harrington, *Living with the Dead*, 34–37.
Who were the people producing the graffiti? A major problem in the study of figural graffiti is the absence of any direct (i.e. written) clues (such as names, titles, or an explanation or motivation) about or by the graffitist. Results of research on textual graffiti, however, can be instructive when trying to interpret the rationale behind their figural equivalents, certainly as they are presumably the result of similar practices. For that reason, I will start with the textual graffiti in working towards an interpretation of the human figures.

A tomb presented an ideal place for the self-representation of its owner (communicative character) and enabled him to make his name endure among the living (memory function). The tomb owner availed himself of several visual (visual rhetoric) and textual (Appeals to the Living) strategies to attract prospective visitors. Visitors’ graffiti can be considered positive reactions to these visual and textual expressions, and therefore they may represent a type of communication with the world of the dead. In some cases they could be interpreted as parallels to the Letters to the Dead or as responses to the Appeals to the Living. This interpretation has recently been further explored by Ragazzoli who notes similarities in lexical choices between the corpora of visitors’ graffiti and the Appeals.

The graffitists invariably identified themselves as scribes. It has been demonstrated that this title should be understood not in the narrow sense to connote a title of office, but rather in the broader meaning as a literate person, conveying values of a certain scribal

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47 Cf. E. Cruz-Urībe, ‘Graffiti (Figural)’, in W. Wendrich (ed.), UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology (Los Angeles, 2008), 1 <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz000c7j4s> accessed 25.11.2014; Navrátilová, in Bareš et al. (eds), Egypt in Transition, 307; Frood, in Ragavan (ed.), Heaven on Earth, 286. See also the rock shrine of the waab priest Pahu (Eighteenth Dynasty, early second half), who left rock carvings comprising texts, figures and combinations of both (Darnell, Theban Desert Road Survey II, 7–82).


49 J. Assmann, Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt (Ithaca, 2005), 41–56 (‘Gedächtniskultur’).


53 Van Pelt and Staring, BMSAES 24 (in press).

54 Navrátilová, Visitors’ Graffiti, 144.

55 Navrátilová, in Bareš et al. (eds), Egypt in Transition, 308.

56 Ragazzoli, SAK 42, 282–286.

57 Outside the tomb-context, e.g. in the Theban mountains, a wide spectrum of titles of office are associated with the graffiti (Navrátilová, in Bareš et al. (eds), Egypt in Transition, 315–316), which probably reflects a different rationale.
milieu. Their fixed form may have communicated the graffitist’s degree of literacy and scribal knowledge to future visitors. As the graffiti texts are inscribed in anticipation of being read, they can be argued to have set in motion a ‘cycle of benefits’. The visitor (graffitist) is attracted by the Appeals, reads the iconography and texts, and responds to it according to what is customarily expected – reciting texts, making adorations and presenting offerings – and perpetuates that act by leaving a graffito. As this memento will eventually be read by future visitors, the graffitist secures his own space in the tomb to benefit from its magical efficacy.

The question arises whether (and if so, to what extent) the same applies to the graffiti recorded in the New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara. Their form and content are presented in Table 1.

In relation to the observations made in the discussion above, the set of data in Table 1 highlights four points of interest:

1. The variety of script.
   Both hieratic (n=16; 64%) and hieroglyphic (n=9; 36%) are employed. Whereas the scribes’ script of choice was hieratic, more than one-third of tomb-graffiti at Saqqara were executed in hieroglyphic.

2. The distribution of graffiti formulae.
   A minimum of twenty-three texts (92%) are so-called signatures and two (8%) are of a descriptive type. The latter contain the typical visitors’ graffiti formulae. These normally start with iw.t pw ir N, ‘[The scribe N] came …’ and fy.t ir. n N, ‘there came [the scribe N] …’). The majority of texts recorded at Saqqara are signatures. These probably commemorated the visit of the graffitist to a particular site and might be considered as an abbreviation of more elaborate (although unspecified) formulae.

3. The variety of titles.
   The title ‘scribe’ (n=9; 36%) is attested most often and a minimum of ten graffitists held other, or more specific scribal titles.

4. The correlation between titles and script.
   Those who wrote in hieratic almost exclusively identified themselves as scribes. The hieroglyphic graffiti were left exclusively by people bearing different titles.

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60 Ragazzoli, SAK 42, 288–289.
63 For the different formulae, see: Navrátilová, Visitors’ Graffiti, 132–133.
These observations deviate from the trends observed both at Thebes and in the greater Memphite necropolis. These are New Kingdom visitors’ graffiti left in Old Kingdom monuments at Abusir, Saqqara, and Dahshur. See: Navrátilová, *Visitors’ Graffiti*, passim.

Furthermore, the observations are not in line with the argument that graffitists preferably identified themselves as scribes in compliance with a certain scribal culture. How should these deviating patterns best be explained?

The critical difference between the varying graffiti spaces is their relative age at the time of applying the graffiti. At Thebes and in the greater Memphite necropolis, the tombs represented monuments from the distant past. The people who visited those tombs may have been motivated by a sense of historic awareness. The graffiti that are the subject of this paper, on the other hand, were inscribed in contemporaneous structures. These were still functioning with an actively maintained mortuary cult and/or received (additional) burials. Visitors to these tombs may have had a closer personal relationship to the dead. The graffiti could have been left during visits connected to the funerary rituals performed during and mortuary practices after burial. This hypothesis is best illustrated by the (originally) anonymous offering bearers in the pylon doorways of the tombs of Maya and Tia. At some stage (possibly related to the burial of the tomb owner), short texts were inscribed in front of, or above these figures. The texts contained a title and name (‘signatures’) and were written (incised) in hieroglyphs. As a result, these generic offering bearers were transformed into very specific individuals. By so doing, these people secured their permanent presence in the following of the tomb owner and, more importantly, benefited from the magical efficacy offered by the tomb’s decoration programme. The titles associated with these figures indicate that they were not random visitors, but rather subordinates to the tomb owner: officials of middle to lower rank. The hieroglyphic graffiti incised by people who identified themselves other than ‘scribes’ should undoubtedly be interpreted along the same line. Those graffiti were inscribed by people involved in the burial(s) (not necessarily of the main tomb owner) and/or the subsequent mortuary cult (such as (wab-) priests). The use of hieroglyphic script was a conscious choice: it is the monumental script used in funerary contexts and it was aimed at securing eternity.
6. Groups of Figural Graffiti Commemorating Tomb-visits

In addition to written graffiti, certain groups of figural graffiti also commemorated peoples’ visits to monuments. The best examples include the incised footprints (*vestigia; plantae pedis*) and depictions of boats. Footprints reflect the Ancient Egyptian custom to mark one’s worshipful presence before a deity,\(^{71}\) which can be considered as a type of votive practice.\(^{72}\) By inscribing their name, title and footprints on the Khonsu-temple roof at Karnak, lower-clergy priests would remain forever in the presence of their god.\(^{73}\) These wishes were made explicitly clear by the texts that often accompanied them, and they were similarly used later in the Demotic *rn=f mn*-formula (‘his name endures’). Depictions of boats served a similar goal, as they graphically represented one’s safe arrival at a sacred site and simultaneously ensured that person’s perpetual presence at that place.\(^{74}\) As such, these types of graffiti can be regarded as metonyms representing both identity and journey.\(^{75}\)

It is possible that representations of human figures in the Saqqara necropolis should similarly be interpreted as testimonies of devotional interaction, perhaps left by an illiterate (or less literate) section of the Egyptian population.\(^{76}\) The depiction of a human figure certainly represents a more explicit, personal expression of identity. It may explain the large quantity of human figures in the corpus of non-textual tomb-graffiti. In a temple-context, the footprints can be regarded as a cheaper alternative to the statues that were placed in courtyards by higher-ranking officials.

This hypothesis is corroborated by graffiti left on a block that originally formed part of the (now lost) tomb of Pahemneter, the Memphite High Priest of Ptah (*sm ur-hyp-hm.w*), at Saqqara (Stockholm, Medelhavsmuseet NME 053; fig. 3).\(^{77}\) On account of the block’s

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\(^{71}\) Dijkstra, *Syene I*, 43–47, 153.


\(^{74}\) Dijkstra, *Syene I*, 73.

\(^{75}\) This practice was not only used in Ancient Egypt and the wider Mediterranean, but also far beyond, as has been demonstrated for the San rock-engravings in South Africa: S. Ouzman, ‘Seeing is Deceiving: Rock Art and the Non-visual’, *World Archaeology* 33/2 (2001), 237–256.

\(^{76}\) Van Pelt and Staring, *BMSAES* 24 (in press).

dimensions (width: 46 cm), the four text columns, and the orientation of the signs, it will have formed part of a doorjamb on the right-hand side to the central axis of the tomb’s accessible superstructure. At some point after the original tomb decoration had been applied, two male figures were roughly carved on the block’s undecorated dado. The figure on the left is depicted in a striding pose and he raises his hands in adoration; the second man, with shaven head, follows as he brings two censers and several jars clutched under his arms. Censers were used to initiate contact with the dead and the divine, and the jars will have contained liquids for offering purposes. A short, incised hieroglyphic inscription

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78 Each column undoubtedly started with a ḫpt ḫnsw offering formula, and concluded with the owner’s title(s) and name.
80 For adoration-graffiti, see Van Pelt and Staring, BMSAES 24 (in press), fig. 7.
81 Both were often mentioned in offering formulae, e.g. ḫpt ḫnsw m sntrs ḫḥ, ‘an offering which the King gives comprising of incense and libation’ (stela of Ptah-Sety, Boston MFA 25.635; D. Dunham, ‘Four New Kingdom Monuments in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston’, JEA 21 (1935), 148–149, No. 2, pl. 17.2).
in three framed columns identifies the second man as the bry h姆t n(yt) Pth Pth-m-hb, Chief of the Altar of Ptah, Ptahmehb. Some signs are curiously arranged and orientated. The text should read from left to right, but the signs that make the words Pth and hb are arranged as if set in retrograde and the m sign (Gardiner Sign-List Aa15) is reversed. This could be explained as the scribe being uncomfortable in writing from left to right; perhaps being not fully proficient in writing monumental hieroglyphs. The scribe had to configure the orientation of his text with that already extant on the same wall, and with the orientation of his graffito.

Graffiti of striding figures in adoring pose that were identified by a short text consisting of a name and title were observed also in the tomb ascribed to Antefiquer at Thebes (TT 60). Ragazzoli connects this practice with the wishes expressed by the tomb owners of leaving votive offerings (ḥtp d ṯnsw). By inscribing graffiti, which were sometimes accompanied by additional ritual acts such as ‘making many adorations’, the graffitist complied with these wishes. The magical power of writing ensured that these acts of offering and giving adoration were perpetuated. In that sense, these graffiti texts can be seen as (part of) a votive act. The same can be observed on the block from the tomb of Pahemneter, where a Priest of the Altar and his colleague (perhaps on a professional assignment) bring offerings and make adorations. Their positioning at a doorway was certainly not coincidental, as they can be observed entering the tomb in perpetuity. It is conceivable that the offerings presented and adorations made by the priests were meant to eventually serve their own cult by means of magically taking part in the diversion of offerings. Such a wish could be materially substantiated e.g. by presenting a basin for libation.

Similarly, a faience plaque inscribed with a hieroglyphic text starting with the ḥtp d ṯnsw formula for the Royal Butler and Chief Physician of the Lord of the Two Lands Nebmerutef was placed as an ex voto in the tomb (inner courtyard) of Horemheb. Its dedicator would thereby be able to (continue to) participate in the cult of this deified king.

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82 For the title, see e.g. N. de G. Davies, Seven Private Tombs at Kurnah (London; 1948), 31–41, pl. 22: TT 341, Nakht-Amun, Chief of the Altar in the Ramesseum, Twentieth Dynasty.
83 Hieratic was always written from right to left.
84 Ragazzoli, SAK 42, 287–288, fig. 12; 307, G. Amongst the walking figures at the entrance to TT 60 was also a human head, which may suggest that the head served as an abbreviation for a human figure (in adoring pose) identified by a name and title. Compare also to the orantes, depictions of men in praying gesture, common in the Christian period in Egypt and Late Antiquity throughout the Mediterranean: Dijkstra, Syene I, 64.
85 Cf. the stela of Yamen, the Lector Priest (ḥr.y-hb) who served in the offering cult for Maya and Meryt: M.J. Raven, ‘A Stela Relocated’, in A. Niwiński, S. Rzepka, and Z.E. Szafrański (eds), Essays in Honour of Prof. Dr. Jadwiga Lipońska (Warsaw Egyptological Studies 1; Warsaw, 1997), 146.
86 Cf. the basin of Huy in the sanctuary of Sekhmet-of-Sahure: ‘[An offering which the King gives to Sekhmet] may she grant entering and leaving her temple with /// [to receive offerings that are brought forth] on the offering table of the Lady of the Two Lands to the ka of (Huy)’ (L. Borchardt, Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sꜥaḥure, 1: Der Bau (Leipzig, 1910), 120–121, fig. 164).
87 H.D. Schneider, The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tut’ankhamün II: A Catalogue of the Finds (EES EM 61; Leiden and London, 1996), 17, Cat. 59, pls 8, 55. For a similar faience plaque, see: PM III/2, 559 (Huynefer; Cairo JE 39171); J.E. Quibell, Saqqara (1906-1907) (Cairo, 1908), 5, 79, pl. 35.4; from tomb shaft No. 332, Teti pyramid cemetery.
The prospective aspect of graffiti is also apparent in the hieroglyphic text of Djehuty-her-hesef, Scribe of the King in the Temple of Ramesses II in the House of Amun (i.e. the Ramesseum), carved in four framed columns in the sanctuary of Sekhmet-of-Sahure.\(^{88}\) The scribe, who was of course alive when he carved the text, identifies himself as a \(mꜢꜥ-ḥrw\), ‘one true of voice’, to indicate his deceased status. The graffito was therefore carved in anticipation of the scribe’s perpetual presence after death.

7. **Figural Graffiti = Illiterate Graffitists?**

**On literacy and orality, and sensual aspects**

An Appeal to the Living inscribed on a niche-statue (Cairo JE 89046)\(^{89}\) originally placed in the accessible superstructure of the tomb of Pahemneter, the High Priest of Ptah already mentioned above, is explicit about the oral dimensions of the text. The \(ḥtp\ d i\ ns\ w\) formula needs to be pronounced:

‘… according as you say: “An offering which the King gives to…”’, and it continues with ‘“… may you pronounce my name, while doing for me what is done for [the spirit of … Pahemneter, etc.]”’. (emphasis: NS)

Baines argues that reading out texts such as the Appeals and offering formulae served to activate the contents of those texts.\(^{90}\) The emphasis on reading out indicates that visiting a tomb constituted acts that have not left any tangible, material traces; they belong to the less tangible arena of communication, which included words and gestures.\(^{91}\)

An Appeal to the Living inscribed in the tomb chapel of Mose, a Scribe of the Treasury of Ptah, at Saqqara pursues the same effect:

‘May [Ptah-Sokar-Osiris] grant a good remembrance before the sun disc enduring in the mouth of the living; and provisions and food offerings daily before my statue, [my] name abiding eternally, engraved forever’.\(^{92}\) (emphasis: NS)

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\(^{88}\) Borchardt, *Grabdenkmal*, 124, fig. 170.

\(^{89}\) G.A. Gaballa, ‘Two Dignitaries of the XIXth Dynasty’, *MDAIK* 30 (1974), 21–24, pl. 2b–c; *KRITA*, III, 411–412. The standing statue was found in the Jeremias Monastery (1950) alongside additional inscribed material from the tomb. It measures 160 × 72 cm and is carved half in the round and it is set in a shallow niche with which it forms a single piece.


\(^{92}\) *KR III*, 422.5–8; *KRITA* III, 305; Harrington, *Living with the Dead*, 40–42.
This text indicates that inscribing a name ensures that it will last forever, but that the remembrance of an individual endures by means of pronouncing one’s name by the living.

From the textual character of offering formulae and Appeals, it follows that one needs to be literate in order to read them. Literacy levels in New Kingdom Egypt, however, were low, with around 1% of the population being able to read and/or write.93 The question arises whether figural graffiti were just as socially exclusive as their textual equivalents.94 Or could they be understood as a strategy employed by the non-literate to adapt to areas of life (and death) dominated by the literate?95 Visiting elite tombs was not considered an exclusively scribal affair. The Appeal texts, for example, addressed ‘the living who exist upon earth, and everyone who comes (here) [after] years’.96 Obviously, the dead did not bury themselves,97 and a wide spectrum of people from different layers of society would have been involved in the different stages of constructing and maintaining the tomb, although we can only read the mementos of the literate. Moreover, burying the dead was not an exclusively elite affair. As the lower classes formed part of the same cultural system, one may assume that similar or adapted mortuary practices were performed by/for them. Materially, these were expressed differently. Thus, one cannot exclude the possibility that certain popular customs were introduced in the elite tombs as well, certainly when those tombs were ‘reused’ for simple burials in the late Nineteenth Dynasty.

Votive offerings similarly represent the surviving, material aspects of more substantial ritual acts of words and gestures.98 Considering the low literacy rates in Egypt, many uninscribed objects may also have been dedicated with verbalised petitions to the deceased, thus serving the same purpose as those carrying texts.99 The saying or reading out of spells

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94 Van Pelt and Staring, BMSAES 24 (in press).

95 Cf. Quirke, Egyptian Literature 1800 BC, 37–38.

96 In the tomb of Neferekheru at Zawyet Sultan scribes are prompted to read out the texts also to the illiterate: J. Osing, Das Grab des Neferekheru in Zawyet Sultan (AVDAIK 88; Berlin, 1992), 43–52.


98 Or non-representational culturally manufactured marks: cf. Ouzman, World Archaeology 33/2, 239.

could serve to identify the object with that which it represented. The same can be suggested for the graffiti of human figures without texts to identify them.

Finally, one should also consider the visual value of graffiti: while texts could be conceived only by a minority, figures could be perceived by all. One should also add that certain symbols, such as the apotropaic wedjat eye, will have been effective only as a figure and not as a text. Literacy certainly has been an important factor in the choice between textual and figural graffiti, but it was not the only or deciding factor. The purpose of the graffito (i.e. what was the graffitist’s intention or what did the graffitist hope to achieve?) will have been just as important, and it could have made literate individuals produce a figural graffito.

8. GRAFFITI, FORMAL GRAFFITI AND VOTIVE STELAE

Above, an attempt was made to define the term graffito. The fact that this is necessary implies that there are other media closely resembling or overlapping with what have been considered graffiti in relation to this study. This should not be considered a problem, but an opportunity to broaden the scope for analysis.

The lengthy hieroglyphic texts and images of priests and gods at Karnak, which Frood considers ‘formal graffiti’, qualitatively approximate the extant temple decoration. The same is true for the graffiti in figure 3. The men were roughly carved in proper sunk relief, and only a comparison with the overall tomb decoration enables one to make a distinction between the original iconography and that added later. In the temples of Luxor and Karnak, Brand distinguishes between simple ex voto (e.g. images of the god), formal graffiti (e.g. officials adoring a god), and graffiti in the form of reliefs carved by trained artists and commissioned by the clergy. It has already been observed above that certain graffiti can be regarded as a votive act. The varying degrees of ‘formality’ enable one to also compare the graffiti to other media.

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100 Pinch and Waraksa, UEE 2009, 6. For the magical potency of the spoken word (in societies that are primarily oral), see also E. Brunner-Traut, ‘Wechselbeziehungen zwischen schriftlicher und mündlicher Überlieferung im Alten Ägypten’, Fabula 20/1 (1979), 35; W.J. Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World (London, 1982), 32; Haring, JESHO 46/3, 256.

101 Van Pelt and Staring, BMSAES 24 (in press).

102 Van Pelt and Staring, BMSAES 24 (in press).


One characteristic of votive objects is that they were not intrinsically valuable. The symbolic value was of prime importance, and the objects were made by people of all ranks. Many of the ‘crude’ stelae, figured ostraca and figural graffiti found at Saqqara do not convey the impression that they were produced by artistically skilled individuals. What does this qualification reveal about their makers? With regards to the small, so-called informal stelae found at Amarna, Stevens notes that quality can distinguish domestic from workshop production, but that despite their low artistic quality, the images are recognisable. She argues that the painter had to work free-hand and that the differences in quality could be the result of differences in natural aptitude. The same qualifications apply to graffiti: despite their low artistic quality, the images are generally recognisable. Thus, graffiti of apparent low artistic merit need not necessarily be the products of individuals lacking artistic skills. Similarly, one may question the ability of someone who lacked any artistic experience to convey an image (recognisable even to the present-day observer) to a vertical stone surface with a random (i.e. not purpose-made) tool.

Formal Graffiti as Votive Stelae

‘Formal graffiti’ have been found in the New Kingdom sanctuary of Sekhmet-of-Sahure at Abusir. Recesses for the placement of small votive stelae were cut in the surviving remains of the Old Kingdom walls. Such stelae could also be carved directly onto the walls (‘formal graffiti’). The upper register of one such round-topped ‘stela’ contains three representations of the standing goddess Sekhmet with a lioness head. The dedicator of the stela – May, who was Priest of Sekhmet and Scribe of the Treasury of the Temple (pr.w) of Tutankhamun – is represented in the lower register, kneeling and with his hands raised in adoration. The text inscribed in front of him starts with ḫtẖw n Sḥm.t, ‘Giving adoration to Sekhmet’.

A similar practice is attested on a block found in the second courtyard of the tomb of Horemheb. This limestone block in sunk relief was taken for reuse from another tomb chapel. The lower part of the undecorated reverse was used to carve a round-topped stela in sunk relief (fig. 4).

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110 Nineteenth Dynasty; 143 × 58.2 × 24 cm: Schneider, *Horemheb II*, 91, NK 1, pl. 99 (’undoubtedly a trial piece of a sculptor’).
Limestone ostraca could similarly be used to serve as small votive stelae. A number of such crude stelae have been found in the Leiden concession area. One limestone ostracon contained on both the obverse and reverse the red-painted outlines of a round-topped stela. Another limestone ostracon from the second courtyard of the tomb of Tia was

111 Schneider, Horemheb II, 19, Cat. 66, pl. 56 (6.8 × 5.3 × 2.1 cm); Martin, Tia and Tia, 68, Cat. 16, pl. 104 (15.5 × 11 × 4 cm).
112 Martin, Tia and Tia, 68, Cat. 20, pl. 171: 23 × 17.5 × 6.5 cm.
The design on the obverse, drawn in black, red, and yellow paint, presents scenes in two registers. The upper register depicts a man standing with his hands raised in adoration in front of an enthroned deity. The lower register depicts two individuals standing with their hands raised. Another ostracon, found in the outer courtyard of the tomb of Maya, was shaped as a small round-topped stela bearing the representation of a human head, executed in sunk relief and painted in red and black (fig. 6).114

Ninety-three figured ostraca found in the Leiden concession area at Saqqara have been published. Potsherds represent the material most often used (n=62; 67%), followed by limestone (n=30; 32%), and one calcite fragment (1%). The depictions were painted (n=76; 81.7%), scratched/incised (n=10; 10.7%), or carved (n=5; 5.4%).

Most ostraca depict human figures (n=61; 66%), although predominantly only the heads (n=42; 45.1%). Nearly all human figures are males (n=51; 83.6%); females are depicted on 4.9% (n=3) of the corpus. Animals occur on 10.8% (n=10) of the ostraca. Other motifs are extremely rare.115

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113 Raven, in Martin, Tia and Tia, 68 [Cat. 16], pl. 104.
114 10.2 × 9 × 4 cm; M.J. Raven, The Tomb of Maya and Meryt II: Objects and Skeletal Remains (EES EM 65; Leiden, 2001), 25, pl. 31.37.
115 These are: basket/jar (n=1); blue crown (n=1); censer (n=1); five-pointed star (n=1); gaming board (n=2); lotus (n=1); wedjat eye (n=1); circles (n=1); text (in combination with a figure; n=3); indistinct (n=9).
Most ostraca were found without a secure stratigraphic context, which makes it difficult to make any well-founded assertions regarding their original use and dating. In the area between the south wall of Horemheb’s second courtyard and the north wall of Iniuia’s tomb a number of figured ostraca were found. In this well-defined area, a dump of pottery originally placed in the cult chapel(s) of Horemheb’s tomb (presumably after the burial of his wife/wives) has been identified. The same area also contained several figured ostraca.

A pit dug in the forecourt of the neighbouring tomb of the Overseer of Builders, Paser, contained a cache of broken pottery, including some figured ostraca bearing the representations of human heads. The ceramics included types used in funerary rituals and services in honour of the deceased.

Another dump was found in the area between the south wall of Tia’s inner courtyard and the north wall of Horemheb’s second courtyard. Besides pottery, it also included a range of objects such as a female (fertility) figurine and figured ostraca, including the ostracon with the painted outlines of a round-topped stela mentioned above. Finally, a deposit of used pottery under the staircase located in the same area contained a large number of figured ostraca (both pottery and limestone).

Other types of votive objects found in the accessible tomb superstructures included an ear-stela (tomb of Horemheb), and a limestone ostracon bearing the representation of two ears in sunk relief (tomb of Maya).

That certain figured ostraca, instead of being mere trial pieces, could also have been used as rudimentary cult images – intended as foci for worship or as votive offerings – has


117 Aston, in Raven et al., *Horemheb V*, 238, Cat. 178–179, fig. VI.20. For the ostraca, see: Raven, *Pay and Raia*, Cat. 17–18, 75–80, 82, pls 98, 103 (interpreted as a workmen’s deposit). The same area was later appropriated for two surface burials of Nineteenth Dynasty date: ibid., 70, burial 96/2, pl. 13.3, and burial 96/3, pl. 139.3.


119 Martin, *Paser and Ra’ia*, 3.

120 Martin, *Tia and Tia*, 66, Cat. 6, pl. 70. See also the tomb of Maya: Raven, *Maya II*, 20, Cat. 9–10, pl. 14 (two figurines on beds).

121 Martin, *Tia and Tia*, 68, 74, 75 [18, 75–76, 78, 80–81, 83, 85–93], pls 104, 105.

122 Schneider, *Horemheb II*, 18, Cat. 63, pls 8, 55. For ear-stelae in general, see: Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, 248–253.

123 Raven, *Maya II*, 24–25, Cat. 35, pl. 31 (interpreted as a trial piece). Pinch (Votive Offerings, 250–253) argues that the ears encouraged the deity to hear a prayer. In a tomb-context, they may have served the same purpose towards the dead. Note that one form of Ptah at Memphis was Ptḥ sḏm nḥt, ‘Ptah-who-hears-prayers’ (Sadek, *Popular Religion*, 16–29).

124 That a number of the ostraca indeed represented artists’ sketches is beyond doubt. Their very nature (as crudely produced images) make them difficult to distinguish from depictions made by people lacking artistic skills. However, even trial pieces or sketches could be later used as votive objects, even though they were not produced with that intention (cf. A.R. Schulman, ‘Ex-votos for the Poor’, *JARCE* 6 (1967), 153).
been argued for material found at other sites in Egypt. Additionally, an offering table found at Amarna contained a human head incised in profile and well centred on the reverse. While it is not clear whether the image is contemporaneous with the carving of the offering table, it is tempting to see them as belonging together. Perhaps the head should be interpreted as the representation of the object’s dedicator, where it served a similar purpose as the texts usually inscribed on such objects.

9. Grafitti of Human Figures at Dahshur and Saqqara in the Context of the Early Nineteenth Dynasty

Dahshur, the necropolis south of Saqqara, presents a remarkable parallel for the graffiti depicting human figures. The walls of the serdab located in the subterranean apartments of the pyramid of the Twelfth Dynasty King Sesostris III (1837–1819 BC) are covered with nearly fifty human heads drawn in black ink. Most are just under life-size and a few are even larger. The presence of the graffiti depicting a falcon has led to the suggestion that the graffiti have some connection with Sokar.

Dieter Arnold initially connected the graffiti with the systematic robbery of pyramids during the later Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1759–1539 BC), arguing that they represented ‘portraits’ of the foreign robbers. Later, he suggested that the graffitiists were the people (foreigners and/or natives) who entered the monument in connection with its dismantling in the late Ramesside Period (1190–1077 BC). Due to the absence of texts, he proposed that these people were illiterate; recording their identities with ‘self-portraits’. Recently, Dorothea Arnold explored the possibility that the drawings were produced by a ‘group of easterners’ who left ‘various images that convey their self-understanding almost entirely unencumbered by the confines of Egyptian artistic convention’. This identification is based primarily on their ‘wild and wiry’ hairdo with a distinctive tuft. She argued that a SIP date is provided by the ‘Middle Kingdom-style image’ of a male figure, and that a Ramesside date should be rejected by this image alone.

A comparison with some graffiti at Saqqara, however, suggests that an early Ramesside date cannot be excluded. The kilt of the so-called Middle Kingdom figure is the same as the pointed kilt worn by deified Old Kingdom rulers depicted on Memphite reliefs and

125 Van Pelt and Staring, BMASAES 24 (in press).
126 Stevens, Private Religion, 196–197, fig. II.9.2.
128 Di. Arnold, Senwosret III at Dahshur, pl. 25.
131 Di. Arnold, Senwosret III at Dahshur, 42–43.
stelae. A graffito scratched in the pylon entrance of Maya’s tomb has the same profile (see fig. 2b). Most heads at Dahshur do not have the distinctive ‘Eastern’ hairdo, and the tuft is visible also in a graffito scratched in the tomb of Maya (fig. 2a). The depiction of the heads in profile with the eyes in a frontal view is according to Egyptian artistic conventions. Finally, the peculiar way in which the mouths are drawn is similar to the beaklike mouths of the three kings’ heads in the late Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of the Royal Butler Ptahemwia at Saqqara (fig. 7: Nos I.1_40-42).

New Kingdom visitors’ graffiti are concentrated in the greater Memphite necropolis around royal complexes. During the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty (temp. Thutmose III, 1479–1425 BC), Sesostris III enjoyed renewed private and royal interest, and the visitors’ graffiti texts demonstrate a sense of historic awareness. The same monuments continued to be visited during the Nineteenth Dynasty; at least partly for different reasons. The Ramesside graffiti at Dahshur can be connected with the dismantling of the complex. The inscriptions include both visitors’ graffiti and control notes probably containing the names (in abbreviated form) of temples of Ramesses II. Navrátilová interprets the temples mentioned in the control notes as the delivery addresses for the re-use of the blocks on which they were written. Interestingly, a block found reused near the tomb of Mery-Neith contained part of the cartouche with the name of Sesostris III (H-k3.w-R.w).

For example Menkauhor (Fifth Dynasty, ca. 2373–2366 BC) on a relief in the late Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Amenemone, Chief Goldsmith (Louvre B 48; B.G. Ockinga, Amenemone, the Chief Goldsmith: A New Kingdom Tomb in the Teti Cemetery at Saqqara (ACE Reports 22; Oxford, 2004), scene 13, pls 21, 68); Teti (Sixth Dynasty, ca. 2305–2279 BC) on the late Eighteenth Dynasty Apis stela of May (Louvre IM 5305: M. Malinine, G. Posener, and J. Vercoutter, Catalogue des stèles du Sérapéum de Memphis (Paris, 1968), Cat. No. 1, pl. 1); Teti on the late Eighteenth/early Nineteenth Dynasty stela of Ptah-Sety, Outline Draughtsman (Boston, MFA 25.635: Dunham, JEA 21, 148–149, pl. 17.2; Mäle, in Lloyd (ed.), Studies J. Gwyn Griffiths, 68 [S6], fig. 3, pl. 7).

Navrátilová, Visitors’ Graffiti, 27.


Navrátilová, Kmt 24/3, 46; Navrátilová, JARCE 49, 118.

M.J. Raven and R. van Walsem, The Tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara (PALMA 10; Turnhout, 2014), 158–159, No. 92 (SAK 2003-R75). The inscription is in sunk relief and, since the inscriptions in the pyramid complex of Sesostris III are in raised relief, it probably derived from a private mastaba tomb.
The dismantling of ancient monuments in the Memphite necropolis during the reign of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BC) is well attested. Prince Khaemwaset, the High Priest of Ptah at Memphis and fourth son of Ramesses II, played a prominent part in the process.140 His hill-top monument at Saqqara-north, constructed sometime after Year 30 of Ramesses II, contained building material taken from Old Kingdom monuments at nearby Abusir.141 He simultaneously embellished the monuments he exploited as stone quarries, including the pyramid of Sesostris III.142

10. Graffiti Depicting the King

A final group of graffiti from the Leiden concession area at Saqqara depicts the king (fig. 7).143 These graffiti probably were left in connection with the cult of Horemheb.144 During the early Ramesside period his former private tomb was transformed into a royal memorial temple.145 Most graffiti depicting the king, however, were recorded not in his tomb, but in those surrounding that monument.

Data

Eighteen graffiti depicting the king were recorded in the Leiden concession area (fig. 7), representing 8.9% of figural graffiti at the site. The king was depicted either standing (n=3; 16.7%) or represented only by his head (n=15; 83.3%). The figures are identified on account of their crown (n=16; 88.9%) or the uraeus attached to the forehead (n=2; 11.1%). Three types of crown are recorded: the nemes (n=1), the ‘white’ crown146 (n=2) and the so-called ‘blue’ crown or khepresh (n=11).

In a study on the iconography of the king wearing the khepresh crown, Hardwick concludes that it represented the mortal aspects of the king’s personality, i.e. the living King.147 He is frequently shown offering to, and receiving benefits from deities. The aspect of

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143 These graffiti were drawn and/or redrawn from the original by the author. The drawing may therefore differ slightly from those published earlier (see bibliographic references).
144 Martin, Horemheb I, 70–73; Van Pelt and Staring, BMSAES 24 (in press).
145 The royal tomb of Horemheb is located in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, KV 57 (T.M. Davis, The Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatankhamanou (London, 1912)). His Memphite memorial temple was called ts hwt Dsr-bpr(w)-R.w-Stp.n-R.w t(w)-Ptḥ-mr-y-bḥ (relief Cairo TN 31.5.25.11).
146 Note that Osiris and Atum wear also this crown. The uraeus indicates that the crown is royal.
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<tr>
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<td>42; incised; 15 x 14 cm</td>
<td>Ptahemwia Unpublished</td>
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<td>81; scratched; 7.2 x 5.4 cm</td>
<td>Mery-mery, Leiden AP 6a</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>82; incised; 8 x 6 cm</td>
<td>Ramose, <em>in situ</em> Martin, Three Memphite Officials, 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 7. Graffiti at Saqqara depicting the king.
mortality is further emphasized by what Hardwick defines as the ‘naturalizing eye’. These characteristics are present in a relief of Memphite origin depicting Ramesses II. Together with his mother Tuya he is engaged in a ritual act before Osiris. Another block presumably from Saqqara shows a dyad of Ramesses II and the goddess Anat-of-Ramesses. The king wears the high, nearly vertical blue crown in combination with the formal eye.

Most graffiti depicting the king wearing the khepresh indicate the naturalizing eye, if the eyes are indicated at all. Only one graffito indicates the formal eye (fig. 7: No. I.1_76).

**Horemheb in the Ramesside Period**

At Saqqara, the king is seldom included in the relief decoration of New Kingdom tombs. The few representations show him wearing a wig, the nemes-headdress, and the khepresh crown. Depictions of the king in graffiti, on ostraca and stelae show him predominantly wearing the khepresh.

In the private tombs at Thebes, and on monuments from Deir el-Medina, Horemheb was recognised as the founder of the Nineteenth Dynasty. That dynasty was founded on politically shaky ground, and its success was far from certain. To reinforce their own

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148 The naturalising eye is gradually replaced in the reign of Ramesses II in favour of the formal eye, emphasizing divinity.
149 Relief Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 5091: A. Radwan, ‘Ramses II. und seine Mutter vor Osiris’, SAK 6 (1978), fig. on p. 158; Martin, *Tia and Tia*, 46 n. 5, pl. 46.
150 J.D. Cooney, *Five Years of Collecting Egyptian Art 1951-1956: Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at The Brooklyn Museum 11 December, 1956 to 17 March, 1957* (Brooklyn, 1956), 27–28, pls 51–52 (as provenance Tanis); E. Hofmann, *Bilder im Wandel: Die Kunst der Ramessidischen Privatgräber* (Theben 17; Mainz am Rhein, 2004), 139, fig. 163. Three more reliefs probably deriving from the same structure were discovered in the ruins of the Jeremias Monastery at Saqqara: L. Habachi, ‘Jubilees of Ramesses II and Amenophis III’, *ZÄS* 97 (1971), 70–71, fgs 4–5, pl. VIIa–b. Habachi suggests that the statues were erected on the occasion of a Sed-festival celebrated by the king, and that the blocks may derive from the (lost) tomb of Khaemwaset.
153 The Fifth Dynasty king Menkauhor as represented in the tomb of the late Eighteenth Dynasty Chief Goldsmith Amenemone (Louvre B.48; Ockinga, *Amenemone*, scene 13, pls 21, 68).
154 Martin, *Horemheb I*, 100, scene 81, pl. 117.
155 For ostraca depicting the King, see also E. Brunner-Traut, *Die altägyptischen Scherbenbilder (Bildostraka) der deutschen Museen und Sammlungen* (Wiesbaden, 1956), pls 10–16 (Deir el-Medina); Schulman, *JARCE* 6, 154 (Ptah temple, Memphis); Stevens, *Private Religion*, 157 (Amarna).
156 McDowell, in Demarée and Egberts (eds), *Village Voices*, 98.
legitimacy, both Seti I and Ramesses II widely promoted the cults of their deceased fathers\textsuperscript{158} and the royal ancestors.\textsuperscript{159} The emerging search for the past ascribed to the early Ramesside period conforms to these developments.\textsuperscript{160}

At Thebes, the cult of the deified king Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmes Nefertari was promoted during the reigns of Seti I and Ramesses II.\textsuperscript{161} According to Hollender, their cult served to emphasize a continuity with the pre-Amarna monarchy as well as the succession from father to son (Ahmose to Amenhotep I), with Ahmes Nefertari as the matriarch not only of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but also for the new Ramesside Dynasty.\textsuperscript{162}

A cult for the royal ancestors has also been demonstrated in some private tombs at Saqqara. By means of king-lists, the cult of the royal ancestors was incorporated into the private mortuary cult of the deceased.\textsuperscript{163}

It is perhaps no coincidence that the most elaborate king-list at Saqqara was found in the tomb of Tjuneroy, the Overseer of Works on all Monuments of the King during the reign of Ramesses II.\textsuperscript{164} The building activities in the Memphite necropolis realised by Khaemwaset have been described by Snape as ‘the manipulation of the monumental landscape in the early Ramesside period’.\textsuperscript{165} He argued that this was motivated by contemporary views of the past, and especially those views stressing the projection of aspects of kingship. The tomb of Tjuneroy is lost, but that of his brother, the Overseer of Builders of the Lord of the Two Lands named Paser, is located immediately behind the tomb of Horemheb.


\textsuperscript{158} T. Ling, ‘Ramesside Filial Piety’, BACE 3 (1992), 59–66.


\textsuperscript{160} Ling, BACE 3, 63; J. Assmann, Stein und Zeit: Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten (München, 1997), 306; J. Assmann, Steinzeit und Sternzeit: Alägyptische Zeitkonzepte (München, 2011), 261–278. However, Navrátilová (Visitors’ Graffiti) noted that the Eighteenth Dynasty graffiti in the greater Memphite necropolis on the whole exhibit an awareness of the past (admiring old monuments) unattested in the Nineteenth Dynasty graffiti.

\textsuperscript{161} Their representations initially appear sporadically in tombs dating to Amenhotep III (1390–1353 BC). During the reign of Seti I, a chapel for Amenhotep I and Ahmes Nefertari was constructed at Deir el-Medina. For Amenhotep I (1514–1494 BC) as an oracle god at Deir el-Medina; see: B. Bruyère, Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1934 à 1935), III (FIFAO 16; Cairo, 1939), 321; A.G. McDowell, Jurisdiction in the Workmen’s Community of Deir el Medina (EU 5; Leiden, 1990), 107–141; L. Weiss, ‘Markings on Oracle Ostraca from Deir el Medina: Conflicting Interpretations’, in B.J.J. Haring and O.E. Kaper (eds), Pictograms or Pseudo Script? Non-Textual Identity Marks in Practical Use in Ancient Egypt and Elsewhere. Proceedings of a Conference in Leiden, 19–20 December 2006 (EU 25; Leiden and Leuven, 2009), 221–222, fig. 1.

\textsuperscript{162} Hollender, Amenophis I., 149–157. Compare Ramesses II and his mother Tuya on relief block Vienna 5091 (see n. 149, above).


\textsuperscript{164} PM III/2, 666.

The Cult of the Deified King Horemheb

The cult of the deified King Horemheb was performed in the Nineteenth Dynasty by a number of priests.\(^{166}\) Cult activities are corroborated by additional material evidence. Two deposits of pottery found in the first courtyard of the tomb contained material originally placed in the cult chapels.\(^{167}\) Additionally, a number of offering stands and basins were introduced in the tomb in the course of the Nineteenth Dynasty.\(^{168}\)

There are indications to suggest that the exterior pylon was gradually covered with sand in the course of the Nineteenth Dynasty, but that the gateway itself was kept clear for a longer period of time.\(^{169}\) Visitors thus frequenting the tomb also left graffiti. A large number of graffiti depicting boats were scratched on the stone surface of the entrance pylon doorway.\(^{170}\)

Miniature Stelae Depicting the King

The king was depicted not only in graffiti but also on additional votive objects. One irregularly shaped limestone round-topped miniature stela depicting the king was found in the tomb of Horemheb.\(^{171}\) The standing figure of the king wearing the khepresh crown is boldly incised without much attention for physiognomic details. The king is positioned in front of two offering stands painted in black ink.\(^{172}\) The style of the figure appears to be indicative of a late Eighteenth Dynasty date. A close parallel for this miniature stela was found at Amarna.\(^{173}\)

\(^{166}\) The plinth of the br.y-hb n(y) Hr-m-hb Ph.f-nfr (who named one of his sons after Horemheb: Hr-m-hb-m-nṯr) was found in situ in the tomb of Horemheb (Martin, Horemheb I, 70–73, scenes 65–66, pls 68–71; Nineteenth Dynasty); and the stela of the wb3 nsw.t wꜥb ḥm-nṯr n(y) Hr-m-hb Ph.t-pꜢ-tnr derives undoubt-edly also from Saqqara (Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico EG 1906, temp. Ramesses I–Seti I; PM VIII/4, 803–805–020; E. Bresciani, Le stele egiziane del Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna (Bologna, 1985), 68–69, No. 24, pls 33–35; S. Pasquali, Topographie cultuelle de Memphis I, a- Corpus: Temples, et principaux quartiers de la XVIIIe dynastie (CENiM 4; Montpellier, 2011), 65, A.133).

\(^{167}\) Aston, in M.J. Raven et al., Horemheb V, 217–219, 223–224. The deposit contained some late Eighteenth Dynasty pottery (perhaps pertaining to the burial of Horemheb’s wife), but the majority dated to the first half of the Nineteenth Dynasty. The first deposit consisted of 151 vessels (with 138 (91%) so-called beer jars); the second contained a minimum of 142 vessels (with 110 (77%) beer jars).

\(^{168}\) Martin, Horemheb I, 110–111, pls 171–174 (all uninscribed).

\(^{169}\) Aston, in Raven et al., Horemheb V, 226.


\(^{171}\) Measuring 10.5 × 9.6 × 2.5 cm: Schneider, Horemheb II, 18, Cat. 62, pls I, 8, 56. For more, comparable votive stelae, see: ibid., Cat. Nos 60, 63 and 64; Raven, Maya II, 24, Cat. 33, pl. 31.

\(^{172}\) Schneider, Horemheb II, 18, considered the object as an ex-voto placed in the tomb on the occasion of the burial of Horemheb’s wife, and identified the King as Ay (cf. Ibid., 18–19, Cat. 61 and 65, pls I, 8, 55, 56). Mutnodjmet was buried in the tomb, and the fragment of a votive stela depicting her (with her husband, wearing the khepresh), left by a Ramesside visitor to the tomb of Horemheb, was found in the rubble covering the forecourt of the tomb of Tia: Raven and Van Walsem, Horemheb V, 74, Cat. 8, figs on p. 70, 75; measurements as preserved: 13.5 × 8.7 × 3.6 cm.

\(^{173}\) Stevens, Private Religion, 136, fig. II.5.4; approximately 7 cm high, current location unknown. For more royal votive stelae from Amarna, see: Ibid., 133–138.
An ostracon found in the tomb of Horemheb depicted the king in a similar pose, although without the offering stand (fig. 8).\(^{174}\) This suggests that while a different medium was used to carve the image, it served a similar purpose, i.e. as a votive object (votive miniature stela) deposited in the sacred setting of the deified king’s tomb.

The donors of votive stelae need not necessarily be represented on them, and neither do such stelae necessarily bear inscriptions.\(^{175}\) Following Pinch\(^{176}\) and Stevens,\(^{177}\) New Kingdom stelae from Saqqara showing the king can be divided into three types:

1. The living or deceased king depicted as an intermediary to a deity.\(^ {178}\)
   For example the stela of the Outline Draughtsman Ptah-Sety (early Nineteenth Dynasty, from the Teti pyramid cemetery; Boston, MFA 25.635), depicting Teti offering to Osiris (upper register), and Ptah-Sety and his wife standing in adoration (lower register).\(^ {179}\)

2. The deceased king, or his cult image, being worshipped, alone or on equal terms with deities.
   For example the stela of the Overseer of Horses Amenemhat (late Eighteenth Dynasty, Teti pyramid cemetery; present location unknown), depicting Amenemhat offering to Osiris (seated) and Teti (standing behind Osiris);\(^ {180}\) the stela of \(\text{NN}\) (Nineteenth Dynasty; Cairo TN 9.2.15.1), depicting Teti seated in front of an offering table (upper register), and various individuals standing in adoring pose (lower register);\(^ {181}\) the naos-shaped

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\(^ {175}\) Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, 96, 98.


\(^ {179}\) Dunham, *JEA* 21, 148–149, pl. 17.2; Málek, in Lloyd (ed.), *Studies J. Gwyn Griffiths*, 68 [S6], fig. 3, pl. 7.

\(^ {180}\) Gunn MSS XIX 2[2]; Notebook 7, No. 41; Málek, in Lloyd (ed.), *Studies J. Gwyn Griffiths*, 68, pl. 6.1–2. The reverse contains an offering formula mentioning Teti alongside Osiris Lord of Rosetau.

\(^ {181}\) J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1907-1908)* (Cairo, 1909), 114, pl. 77.4 [left].
pedestal of the Scribe of the Altar of the Lord of the Two Lands Amunwahsu (Nineteenth Dynasty, temp. Seti I, Teti pyramid cemetery; Marseille, Musée d’archéologie No. 211), depicting Teti standing in his pyramid and adored by both Amunwahsu and his wife;\(^{182}\) the stela of the Royal Butler and Priest (\(hmn\)-\(ntr\)) of Horemheb, Ptahpatener (Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico EG 1906), depicting Ptahpatener and his wife bringing offerings to a seated (statue of) Horemheb; the stela of Mery-Ptah (late Eighteenth Dynasty, Teti pyramid cemetery; Cairo JE 34188) depicting Mery-Ptah and his son Thutmose (who dedicated the stela) in front of an offering table (lower register), and Teti represented by two cartouches in the upper register.

3. Statues of the living king as the object of worship.\(^{183}\)

No examples from Saqqara.

Málek interprets the renewed interest for the Old Kingdom kings at Saqqara in the context of the location of their pyramids, particularly in the case of Teti.\(^{184}\) The area around the pyramid of Teti was densely populated by New Kingdom tombs, and it was located on the approach to the Serapeum. Teti’s presence within the sacred and mortuary landscape may have made him a powerful local deity; one of several deities who dwelt in the Memphite necropolis.\(^{185}\)

Horemheb may have acquired the same status as a local deity at the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty. The significance of Horemheb as the founder of the Ramesside dynasty, and the great emphasis on the ancestors, aptly made him a particularly powerful such deity. All representations of the king in graffiti, on ostraca, and votive stelae depict him standing, actively receiving offerings and mediating between the living and the gods.

The amuletic\(^{186}\) use of an ostracon bearing the representation of a deified king?

Graffiti depicting human figures may have been related to the later reuse of the monumental tombs.\(^{187}\) The chapels of the tomb of Ptahemwia, for example, were reused for

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\(^{182}\) M. Nelson and G. Piérini, Catalogue des Antiquités Egyptiennes: Collection des Musées d’Archéologie de Marseille (Marseille, 1978), 33, fig. 64.

\(^{183}\) L. Habachi, Features of the Deification of Ramesses II (ADAIK 5; Glückstadt, 1969), 34, pl. 21; R. El-Sayed, ‘Stèles de particuliers relatives au culte rendu aux statues royales de la XVIIIe à la XXe dynastie’, BIFAO 79 (1979), 155–166.

\(^{184}\) Málek, in Lloyd (ed.), Studies J. Gwyn Griffiths, 72.

\(^{185}\) With regards to the status of the Old Kingdom rulers during the Middle Kingdom, in the Memphite area, Málek argued that the deified kings, unlike the ‘real gods’ of the Egyptian official religion, may have been ‘invoked locally as intercessors because their posthumous state and local associations made them more ‘approachable’ than other gods (J. Málek, ‘Old-Kingdom Rulers as “Local Saints” in the Memphite Area during the Middle Kingdom’, in M. Bartá and J. Krejčí (eds), Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000 (ArOr Supp 9; Prague, 2000), 257.

\(^{186}\) Cf. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, 1 (Chicago, 1976), 74: Amuletic: ‘functioning as an amulet’; and Amulet: ‘a charm (as an ornament, gem, or relic) often inscribed with a spell, magic incantation, or symbol and believed to protect the wearer against evil (as disease or witchcraft) or to aid him (as in love or war)’.

the burials (initially) of infants. The central chapel contained the graffito of a jackal on a divine stand: Wepwawet in his role as psychopomp. A limestone ostracon (fragment) was found in the same chapel (fig. 9a–b). It contains several representations carved in sunk relief that were painted in red and black ink. The obverse shows a depiction of a wḏꜢ.t eye (a left eye): perhaps one of the best known Ancient Egyptian apotropaic symbols. The same side depicts a partly preserved male human figure standing on a register line. The reverse shows the representations of a young boy raising his left hand, a hieroglyphic inscription, and part of a standing male figure. The hieroglyphic inscription was

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188 Van Pelt and Staring, *BMSAES* 24 (in press), fig. 10.
189 Measurements: 14.3 × 11.5 × 3.9 cm: Raven et al., *Ptahemwia and Sethnakht*, Cat. 127. I thank Maarten Raven for information on this object and permission to publish it here.
intended to read Ἰmn(.w)-Rꜥ(.w), although curiously written as (→) \( \frac{\text{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}}{\text{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}} \).\(^{191}\) The male figure appears to represent a standing king wearing the nemes headdress, holding an object (ankh sign?) in his right hand and extending his left hand towards what might be an offering table, which is similar to the depiction of kings on some votive stelae.\(^{192}\) It is tempting to interpret this set of loose drawings as forming a coherent, apotropaic ‘amulet’ introduced to (one of the) child burials. The young boy is represented on the object surrounded by protective symbols: the ṯḏ.t eye, the name of a god, and the figure of a king: perhaps the deified King Horemheb as the powerful, local deity. The tomb of Ptahemwia received an exceptionally large number of child burials, and a similarly large number of graffiti depicting the king were carved on its walls.

11. Conclusions

In this article, the graffiti recorded in the New Kingdom tombs at Saqqara were studied as the products of the physical engagement with sacred space. Graffiti can be considered as the material expressions of mental reflections of (individuals from) the (distant and recent) past, and they can be used to analyse the reception-history of a monument – an active process of memory-making through time, which contributes to a further understanding of contemplations of the past in the past.\(^{193}\) Memories of ancestors are perpetuated via the maintenance of predecessors’ monuments, and they are conveyed through ritual performances and commemorative ceremonies.\(^{194}\) Tomb-graffiti were produced in connection with exactly those activities.

The spatial distribution of graffiti depicting human figures revealed a preference for the entrance doorways. As with the depictions of footprints and boats, depictions of human figures mark an individual’s worshipful presence at a certain place. They are metonyms of both identity and journey, and the figural equivalent of certain textual graffiti that convey the same message more explicitly. Inscribing a figure secured one’s permanent presence in the following of the tomb owner and ensured that one would also benefit from the magical efficacy offered by the tomb’s decoration programme. Additionally, the spatial distribution of graffiti demonstrates a correlation between the increasing sacredness of the tomb from outside to inside spaces and public accessibility, which compares well with the distribution

\(^{191}\) A similar writing of the name Amun-Re can be observed on panel AP6-b from the (lost) Saqqara tomb of Merymery, Custodian of the Treasury of Memphis (Eighteenth Dynasty, temp. Amenhotep III): (→) \( \frac{\text{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}}{\text{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}} \) (P.A.A. Boeser, Beschrijving van de Egyptische verzameling in het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden: De monumenten van het Nieuwe Rijk. Eerste afdeeling: Graven (The Hague, 1911), pl. 18). Compare also to the graffito mentioning the same deity written as (→) \( \frac{\text{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}}{\text{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}} \) on a stela found at the hill-top monument of Khawm-waset at Abisur South: Waseda University, Institute of Egyptology, Abisur South [II] (Tokyo, 2006), 90, No. 2, pl. 14.1: object no. AK04-0131: limestone, 45.7 × 30.5 × 6 cm. The unfinished stela depicts an anonymous king before one standing and four sitting deities, and also contains graffiti depicting sitting baboons (2) and a horse.

\(^{192}\) Cf. fig. 8 and nn 159 and 162, above.


of graffiti in contemporaneous temples for the gods. The sacralisation of the tomb, and the appearance of the tomb as a contemporary temple may have provided easier access to the gods than provided by the state temples with a higher level of exclusivity. Deceased family members provided direct access to the gods in return for offerings and adoration presented by the living.

The varying degrees of formality observed for graffiti enables their comparison with depictions on other media, such as (limestone and pottery) ostraca and miniature stelae, which stresses the opinion that graffiti should not be studied in isolation.

Because of the status inherent in written texts, one would expect the figural graffiti to have been produced by illiterate (or less literate) individuals. If a certain image (such as a human figure in adoring pose) was the equivalent of an inscription (such as the text ‘... adoring X by N’), then why would someone with the ability to write choose to carve an image? While the answer to this question may appear to be rather straightforward, this study suggested that the figural graffiti, including those of low artistic merit, need not necessarily have been produced by illiterate individuals. Moreover, the saying or reading out of spells could also serve to identify a figure with whom it should represent, so that these anonymous representations of human figures would have been just as effective as their presumed textual equivalents.

One group of graffiti from the New Kingdom necropolis south of the Unas causeway depict the king. These graffiti and additional votive objects (such as ostraca and miniature stelae) were left in connection with the cult of the deified King Horemheb, who may have acquired the status of a local deity at the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

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