

GRAFFITI IN THE PYRAMID PRECINCT OF SNEFERU AT MEIDUM

Graffiti in the Pyramid Precinct of Sneferu at Meidum — Legacy Records

Hana Navratilova and Khaled Hassan



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Abstract

THIS PUBLICATION INTRODUCES LEGACY RECORDS (archival records created by earlier researchers) related to secondary epigraphy (or ‘graffiti’ and ‘dipinti’) in the pyramid precinct attributed to Sneferu in Meidum, Egypt. It opens with an introduction to the research topic of secondary epigraphy and to the research history of Meidum’s graffiti and dipinti.

Following the introduction, Part I provides an overview of the archaeological and epigraphic activities in Meidum, addressing in detail the registering, documenting, and publishing of the Meidum visitors’ graffiti and dipinti. Its main sections cover the activities of W. M. F. Petrie and F. Ll. Griffith, P. Newberry, A. J. Rowe, and eventually B. G. Gunn and J. Černý. Historical records provide access to the ancient material and an insight into historical methods of epigraphy.

Part II of the volume presents a catalogue of graffiti and dipinti, utilising legacy records of Egyptologists and epigraphers, chiefly the unpublished corpus created by Battiscombe Gunn. The catalogue is organised into two main parts: the pyramid temple and the pyramid entrance passage. Each catalogue entry contains information on the location of the texts and images, their description, edition, and commentary. The corpus consists predominantly of New Kingdom visitors’ inscriptions, which contain a broader range of titles of the visitors and are more elaborate than most similar text groups.

Finally, Part III contains an interpretive essay, including quantitative and qualitative analysis of the material. The corpus of visitors’ texts at Meidum highlights the mobility of professional groups in ancient Egypt, their social identity and legitimation, demonstrated also by the visitors’ investment in the production of the graffiti, as some of the texts show careful calligraphy and are of considerable length.

Appendices provide facsimiles of the archive records from the collections of the Griffith Institute Archive, University of Oxford, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Art and Archaeology, Philadelphia.

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Abbreviations

Faulkner, CD	Faulkner, Raymond O. 1972. <i>A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian: addenda and corrigenda</i> . Oxford: Griffith Institute.
KRI	Kitchen, Kenneth Anderson. 1975–. <i>Ramesside Inscriptions I–VII</i> . Oxford: Blackwell.
LÄ	Helck, Wolfgang, Eberhard Otto, and Wolfhart Westendorf. 1973–. <i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie I–VII</i> . Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz.
Lesko, DLE	Lesko, Leonard H. and Barbara Switalski Lesko (eds) 2002–2004. <i>A dictionary of Late Egyptian</i> , revised ed. Providence: Scribe Publications.
Möller, HP	Möller, Georg. 1909–. <i>Hieratische Paläographie: die aegyptische Buchschrift in ihrer Entwicklung von der fünften Dynastie bis zur römischen Kaiserzeit</i> . Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.
PM IV	Porter, Bertha, and Rosalind L. B. Moss. 1934. <i>Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Statues, Reliefs and Paintings IV</i> . Oxford: Griffith Institute.
PM VII	Porter, Bertha, and Rosalind L. B. Moss. 1952. <i>Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Statues, Reliefs and Paintings VII</i> . Oxford: Griffith Institute.
Ranke, PN I	Ranke, Hermann 1935. <i>Die ägyptischen Personennamen</i> , Band I: <i>Verzeichnis der Namen</i> . Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin.
Ranke, PN II	Ranke, Hermann [1952]. <i>Die ägyptischen Personennamen</i> , Band II: <i>Einleitung; Form und Inhalt der Namen; Geschichte der Namen; Vergleiche mit anderen Namen; Nachträge und Zusätze zu Band I; Umschreibungslisten</i> . Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin.
TLA	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae</i> , https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/ , Corpus issue 20, Web app version 2.4.1, 3/5/2026, ed. by Tonio Sebastian Richter & Daniel A. Werning on behalf of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert & Peter Dils on behalf of the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig.
TNA	The National Archives, Kew.

- Urk.* IV Sethe, Kurt. 1961. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. 2nd revised ed. *Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums IV*. Berlin/Graz: Akademie-Verlag/Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt.
- Wb.* I–VII Erman, Adolf, and Hermann Grapow. 1926–1971. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* I–VII. Leipzig/Berlin: Hinrichs/Akademie-Verlag.

Preface & Acknowledgements

FOR THIS PROJECT, THE AUTHORS PREPARED A REVISED EDITION of the secondary inscriptions from the pyramid temple and the entrance corridor of the pyramid of Sneferu at Meidum, using archival records of dipinti and graffiti located in archives in Oxford and Philadelphia that merit being better known by the research community. As well as resulting in an edition, this project exemplifies that the study of both the material and written culture of ancient Egypt benefits greatly from access to earlier and as yet unpublished research records.¹ Such benefits include access to information that may no longer be available to view *in situ*, plus important access to the historical context of research practices, which need to be understood as part of the evolving discipline of Egyptology, a discipline that is open to questioning, developing and refining its practices. Ensuring the accessibility of archival records is therefore a pivotal task for enabling inclusive Egyptological research, where all stakeholders can use the records, irrespective of where they live and are affiliated.

The project also deposited digital copies of relevant records in an accessible repository, *Oxford Research Archive*, and integrated the data into the pilot research infrastructure *Graffiti Gazetteer*, which is currently under development at the University of Oxford's digital scholarship initiative (<https://digitalscholarship.web.ox.ac.uk/>).

Subject matter and significance

Our project has covered two important aspects of Egyptological work:

- 1) processing of earlier research records for accessibility and use; and for a comprehensive understanding of research practices in context;
- 2) addressing secondary epigraphy, a body of ancient material for which the records and publications are still uneven, although it is an important corpus of evidence for both the visual and written culture of ancient Egypt.

To address point 1): The secondary inscriptions in the pyramid temple and pyramid entrance at Meidum attributed to Sneferu were studied first by Flinders Petrie and his team, and a selection was published by Francis Llewellyn Griffith and then revised by Battiscombe Gunn and others, including Percy Newberry and Jaroslav Černý. Between the 1890s and the 1930s, these researchers made records and interpretations of the texts and images that provide unique access to the ancient reception of historical monuments; that

[1] Malek 2003.

is, the ancient reception of them as places of complex interest. This secondary epigraphy is a witness to political statement, religious faith, and social and cultural identity. Yet, as the earlier recording efforts left substantially more archival material than resulting publications managed to use, the Meidum pyramid and its temple still awaited a full publication of their secondary epigraphy. From 2005 onwards we have reviewed this evidence, and H. Navratilova briefly visited the site. H. Navratilova also made a survey of the archived material in Oxford in 2009² and in Philadelphia in 2013.³ We began working on this material more systematically from 2018 onwards. New discoveries and editions of similar inscriptions, meanwhile, developed our knowledge of Egyptian graffiti and we are delighted that secondary texts and images are now recognised as an important means of communication in the ancient world that necessitates scholarly attention.⁴

To address point 2): In the pyramid fields, graffiti were produced for centuries, possibly millennia. The first originated not as part of later reception but as communication tools for pyramid builders and workers. While masons' marks, builders' marks, and transportation indicators constitute a significant area of study, our focus lies in later graffiti which bear witness to the reception — and thus significance — of the built environment.

The Meidum graffiti are a major site-specific corpus of inscriptions and figures, which have not previously been fully published. With growing amounts of evidence from the sites of Asyut, Beni Hassan, Meir, Deir el-Gebrawi, Elkab and Deir el-Bersha, as well as Edfu, Meidum constitutes a crucial piece in the puzzle of secondary epigraphy located in and on monuments outside the 'capital' regions of Memphis and Thebes. This is for two main reasons: first, it is located within the reach of the Fayyum and, while outside the region itself, of Memphis; second, it contains possibly late Old Kingdom and certainly Middle Kingdom graffiti and New Kingdom dipinti in an Old Kingdom monument, capturing an extended period of secondary epigraphy production whilst also evidencing that the well-developed New Kingdom genre of visitors' inscriptions had antecedents.⁵ Eventually, another aspect which makes Meidum unique is its complex architectural history, including its multiple building phases and a likely collapse of part of the structure of the pyramid. Secondary epigraphy has been considered as circumstantial evidence in discussions about dating of the pyramid collapse.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank warmly the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) for supporting our research by the publication subsidy as part of the Antiquities Endowment Fund programme. Without ARCE's insight and consideration for the importance of legacy records, this project would not have been possible.

The project originally began as an archival investigation in 2009, kindly encouraged by the late Jaromir Malek in his role as the Keeper of the Griffith Institute Archive. We are very grateful to the Griffith Institute team at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford, especially Daniela Rosenow, Francisco Bosch-Puche and Felicity Crowe, and to Jenni Navratil for expert scans.

[2] Navratilova 2011.

[3] Some notes were incorporated in Navratilova 2015b.

[4] See Ragazzoli, Hassan, et al. 2023, Ragazzoli 2026.

[5] Hassan and Ragazzoli 2023 and 2024, Hamilton 2024 and 2025.

The entire Griffith team provided more than support for this publication — their benevolent presence in the lives of all epigraphers interested in graffiti is irreplaceable!

We would also like to add our sincere thanks to Alex Pezzati, Evan Peugh and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology archive team, who helped us to identify the documents, found the exceptional glass plates from the original photographic records of the Eckley B. Coxe expedition, and provided much help and guidance. Special thanks to Francine Sarin who so expertly scanned the Meidum glass negatives.

The teams at our home institutions, Cairo University, the Misr University for Science and Technology, the Grand Egyptian Museum, and Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford, have throughout this time given us a stable research environment and intellectual stimulation necessary for any research project.

Our project research assistant Chloé Agar has been indispensable for the entire endeavour, and the publication itself and its expert typesetting would not be possible without Ben Davies at Abercromby Press.

During the project, we had the benefit of advice and collegial assistance from many colleagues. Any mistake or inconsistency remains our own, but there would have been many more were it not for Niv Allon, Alexis Den Doncker, Peter Der Manuelian, Julia Hamilton, Linda Hulin, Alexander Ilin-Tomich, Mohamed Megahed, Aurore Motte, Chiara Salvador, Marina Sartori, Nico Staring, Hana Vymazalová, and again Chloé Agar.

Introduction

The Meidum secondary epigraphy and its research

The secondary epigraphy at Meidum consists mostly of dipinti, since the majority of it is executed by an additive technique: ink-written. The dipinti are at first sight at least as well-known in the Egyptological literature as their counterparts from other pyramid fields.¹ A greater part of them was also published, including their hieratic tracings, soon after their late 19th century rediscovery. The early publication in 1892 by F. Ll. Griffith, based on records by Flinders Petrie, was partly due to their perceived relevance for the identification of the Meidum pyramid as a monument of Sneferu. Later, they were revisited in the context of the Amarna period coregencies and as resources for the discussion of the collapse of the Meidum pyramid.² The *Topographical Bibliography* vol. IV (p. 90) noted the texts referring to regnal years of Thutmose III (year 26 and 41) and Amenhotep III (year 30, in several dipinti) that serve as data for New Kingdom chronology.³ The Meidum dipinti have also survived in a better state over a longer period of time than, for example, the texts and figures in the temple of Djoser at Saqqara.⁴

There was an intention to publish the graffiti of Meidum extensively in a revised edition in the early 20th century. Preparations for it began in the late 1920s, but this plan did not come to fruition. This book is largely based on the documentation provided by the Eckley B. Coxe expedition led by Alan Jenvey Rowe and on the analysis of the documentation of the graffiti by Battiscombe George Gunn and Jaroslav Černý in the late 1920s and during the early 1930s. The documentation used in the present publication comes from Rowe, Gunn, and Černý materials housed currently in academic institutions in Oxford and Philadelphia. Their contribution, as well as the contribution of A. J. Rowe's unnamed photographers, is fully acknowledged.

The main scope of the publication is to provide a systematic edition of the visitors' graffiti/dipinti texts and their contextualisation. The introductory details regarding Meidum are kept short as the history of research was provided in the Oxford Expedition to Egypt publications⁵ dedicated to the

[1] Harpur 2001, 23 as well as PM IV, 89–90, also Navratilova 2006, 2007 and 2011.

[2] Mendelssohn 1973, 68.

[3] Not used by Hornung et al. 2006, while other graffiti in pyramid precincts were used esp. those from the Step Pyramid. Dodson 2009 elaborated on the possibility that one text, **Gunn 23**, refers to a change of the heir apparent in year 30 of Amenhotep III.

[4] They were observed on site during a brief informal visit by H. Navratilova in summer 2005. Their Saqqara counterparts in the chapels within the Step Pyramid complex, except those protected by transparent covers, are substantially less visible.

[5] Mainly Harpur 2001.

site. Some details relevant to the history of Egyptology have been added, specifically concerning the approach of the researchers to the graffiti/dipinti material. The publication is also intended to validate the use of archived material coming from the first hundred years of Egyptology. Although new fieldwork provided with adequate techniques and methodologies is indispensable for the study of ancient Egypt, the contribution of legacy records cannot be underestimated and provisions for its preservation and accessibility are important tasks,⁶ especially as an enhancement of the accessibility of legacy records addresses historical inequalities in the formation of the epistemic community of Egyptology.⁷

Structure of the book

The book is divided into three main parts. The first is devoted to the history of Meidum graffiti research, including some excursi on the work of the epigraphers involved in the study. The second part consists of the catalogue of the Meidum graffiti and their interpretation in the context of other secondary inscriptions in the pyramid precincts and in other funerary contexts. The third part contains interpretive essays, followed by facsimiles of the legacy records.

Finally, some caveats. While we have endeavoured to contextualise the Meidum corpus using related bodies of secondary epigraphy and the ongoing productive discussion in graffiti studies, we do not claim to have exhausted the topic, as new editions and analyses keep adding relevant comparands.⁸ The corpus in Meidum would also benefit from a revised recording on site, which would enable an inclusion of this corpus in palaeography studies.

Secondary epigraphy as a research topic

As regards its value as a research subject, the corpus of secondary epigraphy in Egypt has been more emphatically recognised as an important resource,⁹ even as the constraints on its systematic and efficient study are removed gradually. We will address the current framework and approaches in the aforementioned third part of this publication but would like to highlight some aspects in this introduction to emphasise the need to enhance access to secondary epigraphy records.

We note a developing Egyptological re-evaluation of graffiti, dipinti, or secondary epigraphy in the context of a wide range of interests within the discipline: protection and recording of vulnerable evidence, written culture, material philology, and intellectual history. The first well-articulated calls for systematic research into secondary epigraphy in Egypt were issued in the 1930s and 1970s. Since then, the number of published graffiti studies and their level of detail have been steadily increasing.¹⁰ Work on individual sites and types of graffiti script and content has intensified since the 1990s, with an increased emphasis on contextualization, in parallel with studies of rock inscriptions and art.

Among the key developments in the study of secondary epigraphy, the first was an acknowledgement that these texts and figures are **not random**, sporadic, or limited to one social group or period. The

[6] See Malek 2003.

[7] See for instance Reid 2002 and Navratilova et al. 2023.

[8] Notably Ragazzoli 2026.

[9] See Ragazzoli et al. 2023.

[10] See updates and new developments presented in Ragazzoli et al. 2023 and Polkowski 2023; see also Agar et al. 2026 (forthcoming).

second of these developments foregrounds that secondary epigraphy in Egypt should be interpreted **in context as a historical phenomenon**, as it was recognised for many cultures within and beyond the ancient world.¹¹ Graffiti production is dependent on its material and intellectual context, beginning with its location and embedded in its contemporary written and visual culture. It is at the same time a highly variable phenomenon, so variable that using an umbrella term like secondary epigraphy or graffiti may seem problematic, and yet also a phenomenon that despite its historical and geographical and social variability always represents **means of communication**; as such, communication is the third important development in the recognition of the role of secondary epigraphy.

Graffiti in the ancient world were produced by diverse writers, many of whom — certainly in Egypt — were elites; yet, not every graffiti maker, especially in the case of figural graffiti, must be automatically considered as a member of the executive elite of the ancient society and state. Nevertheless, rather than criticizing, subverting, or disturbing the societal conventions and cultural norms as modern graffiti might do,¹² the ancient graffiti often (though not always) affirmed and reinforced official discourse, beliefs, communication with deities, and statements about kingship, authority, and political legitimacy — in sum, a social order from which the elites benefited under royal and divine protection. This factor is shaping our understanding of ancient Egyptian graffiti, particularly those in significant locations like pyramid complexes. Their messaging addressed both the living and the dead and this audience alone implies a concern with major devotional and socio-political issues. Next to such potential insights, graffiti open, among other issues, the questioning of ancient mobility or accessibility of sacred spaces alongside the questioning of lived religion — themes that are as challenging as they are attractive, especially in the ancient Egyptian context.¹³ At the same time, secondary epigraphy retains its potential to capture the expression of a broader range of actors than formal monumental registers of written and visual culture.

As New Kingdom written culture developed, so did displays of personal piety and social identity, and here New Kingdom graffiti present a particularly rich body of evidence, drawing on prior traditions and developing new accentuations. Egyptologists debate extensively why and how a more intimate or a more vocal communication with the gods evolved, but regardless of the reasons and details of the process, it evidently flourished.¹⁴ Scribal culture developed equally buoyantly.¹⁵ Examples of graffiti illustrating these phenomena appear in funerary monuments, private and royal,¹⁶ including pyramid

[11] Compare Keegan 2014, Lohmann 2018, Ragazzoli et al. 2018, Mascia et al. 2023. Summary of the move from ‘silly scrawls to research trend’: Lohmann 2021.

[12] See discussions in Ross et al. 2016, emphasising the contradictory and complex character of modern graffiti and street art, and Mascia et al. 2023. However, the dividing lines between historical and contemporary graffiti are balanced by implicit conceptual links between these media of social and cultural communication. As shown also in publications looking at graffiti and street art as distinct forms of visual culture (e.g. Waclawek 2011), modern graffiti produced by a range of techniques and materialities are still media addressing social and cultural facts, combining the heritage of visual culture with experimentation and interacting with the space they occupy. In that regard, they share some aspects of their mediality with their ancient predecessors.

[13] See, e.g., Preisigke 2018, also Salvador 2019.

[14] Compare views discussed in Baines and Frood 2011 and Busmann 2017.

[15] Ragazzoli 2019.

[16] Ragazzoli 2013 and 2023.

fields, but are also prevalent in temples, such as those at Abydos or Karnak.¹⁷

Secondary epigraphy is also a material artefact of written and visual culture. It is particularly important to consider every detail of the location of graffiti but also of their structure and execution: whether they are individual signs, longer texts, or images. In the Egyptian context this consideration highlights further aspects. As regards textual graffiti, written in hieroglyphs or in hieratic (and later Demotic), their production shows different levels of knowledge of script registers and of the location in which the written performance took place: many written graffiti, particularly visitors' inscriptions from the New Kingdom, were scripted responses to an important space, to a meaningful place, for example to a funerary chapel or a memorial/funerary temple of a king. It is equally important to consider the details of their writing, from practicalities to the aesthetic impact of the calligraphy. The shifts in emphasis of these responses, whether in the choice of script or phraseology, were likely to reflect yet again the shifts in devotional and cultural priorities of their time.¹⁸

Figural secondary epigraphy reflected visual culture: the prevalence or absence of its norms and conventions; a reception of primary visual material; or an invisible archive of the writer/draughtsman.¹⁹ Texts and images alike reflect acceptance and varied levels of mastery of cultural norms and some of them characterize a distribution of elite knowledge across Egypt.

In summation, the recognition and analytical study of these ephemeral-looking texts and images have consolidated an important insight: secondary epigraphy is a major contributor, a major source, for understanding patterns of communication within ancient cultures.²⁰

[17] Frood 2013, Salvador 2019 and 2022, Navratilova 2021, Taher 2023.

[18] Compare shifts in the conceptualisation of New Kingdom tomb space in Memphis (Raue 1995) with the shifts in the character of visitors' inscriptions in the same area and in Thebes (Navratilova 2006, Ragazzoli 2017b, reviewed in detail in Ragazzoli 2026); these parallel examples are suggesting that the funerary spaces adopted a more emphatically devotional character in the later New Kingdom, with attention directed at the divine cults.

[19] See Den Doncker and Navratilova 2025.

[20] The manuscript of this book was concluded at the time when a detailed publication of the Theban visitors' inscriptions was published by C. Ragazzoli (2026). Although full cross-referencing was no longer possible to do in a consistent manner, the authors would like to highlight this important contribution to the graffiti discussion.

Part I

The site of Meidum

Meidum (transcribed also Meydum, Medum, and Maidum, ancient Egyptian *Mr-Itm*,¹ later Moithymis and Metun²) is the name of an Egyptian settlement in the region of the Fayyum, historically in Upper Egypt (31°10' E, 29°23' N), about 70 kilometres south of Cairo, still within the Memphite nome. In Egyptian archaeology, it is also the name of an archaeological site containing a royal monument and burial sites of members of the royal family and dignitaries of the Old Kingdom, as well as various later burials.³

Meidum is located south of the 'Capital zone', as archaeologists define the Nile Valley and floodplain leading toward the mobile head of the Nile Delta.⁴ The pyramid of Meidum, called in Arabic el-haram el-kaddâb, the 'false pyramid'⁵ or even al-haram el-kebîr, the 'great pyramid' by local inhabitants,⁶ was attributed to Huni, the last king of 3rd Dynasty, or to Sneferu, the first ruler of 4th Dynasty. The attribution has until recently still been considered as open, though the actual process of the making of this building seems to be understood more clearly.⁷ Its function as well as its owner(s) was rather extensively debated,⁸ while the current consensus favours Sneferu as the builder of the complex or at least the king who finished it.⁹ As regards the reasons why Sneferu then did not use the pyramid, several were proposed,¹⁰ including a recent environmental survey suggesting that the location might have been an island at some point during antiquity and therefore less stable or desirable as a burial site.¹¹ The envi-

[1] Named also in P. Wilbour, text B, see Antoine 2017, esp. pp. 7–9. The location reference in the 18th Dynasty text of Hatshepsut implies a temple of Atum by Thutmose I; Rowe 1931, 12.

[2] Rowe 1931, 12–13.

[3] Rowe 1931, PM IV, 89–96, Wildung 1982, 9, general overview Baines and Málek 1980, 132–133, Arnold 2001, 369–370.

[4] Bunbury et al. 2017.

[5] See Lane 2000, 227, including early observations about building techniques and also about the re-use of stone from this structure.

[6] Rowe 1931, 19.

[7] Compare Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1964, (1963, vol. 3), Stadelmann 1980, and 1985, 80–86, Lehner 1997, 97–100 (see also Lehner 2008) and Verner 2002, 159–168, Verner 2020, 117–124.

[8] E.g., Borchardt 1928, Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1964, Wildung 1969b

[9] There is still the option to see Huni as starting the project and Sneferu as finalizing it (as summed up by Kipfer 2021).

[10] Verner 2020, 124.

[11] Ghoneim et al. 2024.

ronmental argument raises the question why did the king experiment with the site as a location for his building project in the first place.

In the history of Egyptology, specifically in research concerning the history of Egyptian architecture, this is the site where the history of ‘true’ pyramid building began, as it was here where a step pyramid (beginning as a step pyramid on a square footprint) was converted into a full pyramid with smooth sides. A similar technique i.e., using a stepped core of the pyramid, though already largely replaced with a different approach (‘true’ pyramids have a different inner structure and laying of courses of stones), was used later in the pyramid of Neferirkare in Abusir.¹²

In Meidum we also encounter the composition of a royal funerary complex, including a valley temple, causeway, funerary temple at the east side of the pyramid, and a subsidiary pyramid, which was later to become the standard. The ‘historical firsts’ seem to be completed with an alleged oldest known corbelled roof of its burial substructure.¹³

The Meidum site, however, does not consist of only the pyramid precinct — there are other important monuments in several mastaba fields around the pyramid, including the large mastaba no. 17 northeast of the pyramid and no. 16 (Nefermaat and Atet) and no. 6 (Rahotep and Nofret). In the history of professional as well as popular Egyptology, Meidum is the site where the statues of Rahotep and Nofret were discovered, which nowadays appear in nearly every publication on Egyptian art which in any way touches upon the Old Kingdom; there are also the ‘Meidum geese’ from the tomb of Nefermaat and Atet, which are similarly well known.¹⁴ The subjective impressions of Meidum coincide with its historical importance, though the impressions, such as the following by Ludwig Borchardt, are often coloured with the romantic fantasy of a visitor observing ruins of the past which were offset against the wonders of an exotic environment.

‘Wer von den vielen, die heutzutage Ägypten bereisen, einmal den mächtigen Turm der Mejdum-Pyramide im Glanze der über den östlichen Randgebirgen des Niltals aufsteigenden Sonne von der Ferne, von Wasta oder Riqqah aus, gesehen hat, dem wird dies als höchster Eindruck von etwas Gewaltigem und doch ebenmäßig Schöнем stets in der Erinnerung bleiben. Die wenigen aber, denen es vergönnt gewesen ist, in ihre Nähe zu kommen, werden bezeugen können, daß dieses Königsdenkmal in seiner majestätischen Ruhe das Weltwunder der Gise-Pyramiden an abgewogener architektonischer Kraft um vieles übertrifft... Die Zufälligkeiten seines jetzigen Bauzustandes, das muß von vornherein gesagt werden, sind daran schuld. Aber dieser Gedanke wird niemandem den Eindruck stören, ebensowenig bei irgendeiner anderen ägyptischen Ruine, von der der Wissende sich auch oft sagen wird, da sie unzerstört gewiß weniger gut auf ihn gewirkt haben würde.’¹⁵

In a nutshell, Meidum is one of the important sites for the Old Kingdom history of architecture, as well as for the history of Egyptian kingship represented by this architecture. It has also enjoyed a rather paradoxical history of being well-known (also due to its impressiveness in the eyes of visitors), but less systematically excavated and less extensively published.

[12] A summary of the building process in Verner 2020, 234–236.

[13] Arnold 2001, 369, Lehner 1997, 98–99.

[14] Edwards in Bard 1999, 527–528.

[15] Borchardt 1928, 1.

The history of Meidum in brief

Although the necropolis attracted significant attention from archaeologists, the ancient site contained also other human activities, even though their evidence is not comprehensive and written and archaeological sources do not always complement each other. In the Old Kingdom, the ‘pyramid town’ Djed Sneferu was probably located at or in the vicinity of Meidum.¹⁶ An early history of the settlement site is implied due to the existence of the necropolis (which demanded personnel) and of the quarries with find(s) dated to the 4th Dynasty.¹⁷ There was possibly a continuous settlement attested from the 5th Dynasty to the 12th Dynasty.

The name *Mr-Itm* seems to be encountered as early as the 18th Dynasty, in an inscription from the reign of Hatshepsut,¹⁸ and it is possible that this settlement was established at that time. Burial activities are attested in the Meidum area during the New Kingdom, up to Ramesside period and later. ‘The later reuse of the cemetery left many small remains’,¹⁹ with the finds in the burials according to Petrie not being later than Amenhotep II. Rowe added tombs built in the mastaba 17 area, which are dated from the 18th Dynasty until the Roman period.²⁰ The pyramid and neighbouring mastabas were likely sources of re-used stone for the New Kingdom builders, much in the same way as the sites in the Saqqara and Dahshur²¹ necropoleis.

The presence of a settlement, as well as any economic activities, might have brought literate individuals to the neighbourhood, and its location between the Memphite region and the Fayyum region might have been another factor assuring its presence on elite itineraries. However, there is so far no trace of larger New Kingdom tombs or of a settlement in the immediate neighbourhood of the pyramid, therefore a visit to a temple was perhaps more a deliberate or premeditated decision than in the case of the Saqqara monuments, where the reasons to visit the necropolis might have been those of business and local devotional interest connected with developing New Kingdom burial places, or religious festivals such as the festival of Sokar.²²

History of archaeological and epigraphic activities at Meidum

An extensive overview of the explorers of Meidum was provided by Alan J. Rowe, mapping a long line of visitors²³ beginning with medieval travellers whose reports were used by al-Maqrizi,²⁴ and following with a list of more recent travellers and explorers, from Frederick Lewis Norden in the 18th century to the air survey in 1928 conducted by the *Aircraft Operating Company, Ltd.* It seems that any history of the site of Meidum, or of any of its significant monuments, cannot avoid digressions into the history

[16] See also the chapter ‘Meidum after Sneferu’ in this publication, and a summary by Wildung 1982, 9–10.

[17] PM IV, 95.

[18] Rowe 1931, 12; as noted above, the name is then attested in P. Wilbour; also in the Piankhi stela: Wildung 1982, 10.

[19] Petrie et al. 1910, 36.

[20] PM IV, 95.

[21] See Navrátilová 2015a.

[22] On the social history of New Kingdom Saqqara, see Staring 2023.

[23] Rowe 1931, 6–11.

[24] See Maqrizi 2022, vol. I, 465 and 478.

of the discipline of Egyptology. Meidum has been mentioned in several written sources in antiquity as well as in those of aforementioned later travellers, but the modern recognition of its archaeological and epigraphic evidence is more complicated.

An early and rather brief account of the excavation history was provided by one of the late 19th century excavators, A. Daninos Pasha (1899, 54–56). In his account, he summarised his as well as Gaston Maspero's work.²⁵ The most detailed surveys of the history of recording and mapping of Meidum up to the 20th century are by L. Borchardt (1928, 1–3) and Rowe (1931, 6–10), and subsequent overviews and surveys often made use of their data. A new survey of the study and excavations of Meidum, providing an up-to-date and extensive history of the analysis of the site, is provided by Yvonne Harpur (2001, 6–25 and Appendix 4), who included also extensive appendices regarding each surveyor and excavator.

Harpur's approach shows²⁶ that the potential of the archival material of earlier expeditions (which was often left in large parts unpublished) in revised research of a site is substantial. This is also due to the fact that the publication of archaeological research, especially concerning the pyramid of Meidum, has until recently been rather limited. It was merely just over forty years ago that the situation was described thus:

‘Die archäologische Forschung von Meidum beschränkt sich bislang auf die Arbeiten Petries (1892, 1910, 1912) und Rowes (1929–1930); letztere sind noch weitgehend unveröffentlicht.’
(Wildung 1982, 9)

This list skips the work of Auguste Mariette and his assistant Daninos in 1872 (which brought to light the statues of Rahotep and Nofret but otherwise was relatively brief), as well as several other similarly limited expeditions, as well as the cleaning of the inner chambers of the pyramid on the orders of Maspero in 1881/1882. Nonetheless, Wildung makes a relevant claim that the site of Meidum, though mentioned extensively in several Egyptological publications connected with pyramids and pyramid building and made famous to the general public due to the tombs of Nefermaat and Atet and Rahotep and Nofret, is in fact neither fully nor (with exceptions) extensively published.²⁷

The expeditions in Meidum frequently divided their attention between the pyramid with its precinct, the large tombs of the Old Kingdom, and other burials (see map on Fig. 1). The research at first concentrated on the pyramid itself and not on the precinct, which lay buried under the débris, as shown in the activities of Maspero in 1881 and 1882, until Petrie uncovered the temple in 1890/1891. Alongside the pyramid, the large mastabas also attracted early attention from Petrie.

Concerning the graffiti, two kinds of hieratic inscriptions were documented on the pyramid and in its precinct. First to be discovered and partially published were the later visitors' graffiti. Maspero was the first to note some of the visitors' dipinti in the pyramid entrance passage.²⁸ With the Petrie expedition, the history of the research of the Meidum visitors' graffiti inside the temple began.²⁹ Later, the

[25] See also van Siclen III 1989.

[26] Harpur 2001.

[27] PM IV, 90–95; the large mastaba tombs have recently received due attention in the work of the Oxford Expedition to Egypt (Harpur 2001).

[28] Maspero 1893, see below; also Daninos 1899, 54–56.

[29] Petrie 1892, see below.

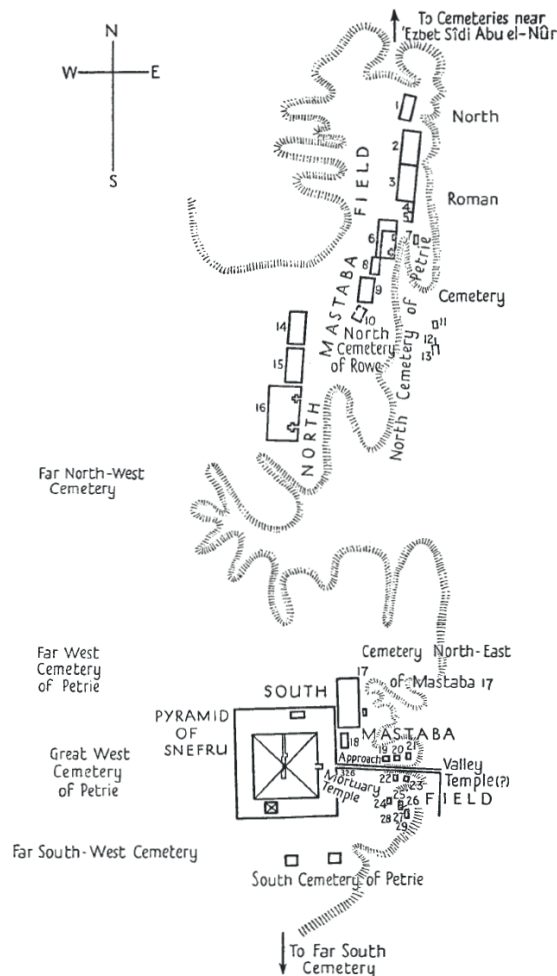


Figure 1. The key plan of Meidum with the pyramid precinct of Sneferu, from PM IV, 88; courtesy of the Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.

masons' marks were also published.³⁰ The published history of graffiti research at Meidum up until the 2000s was summed by Harpur.³¹ Concerning the site's later and unpublished evidence, there are also Coptic ostraca which W. E. Crum planned to publish, to the extent that the ostraca were documented and that documentation is now housed in the Griffith Institute Archive.³² Crum was also provided with the material related to the Coptic finds in Meidum by Rowe. However, the publication was not realised. To expand upon and synthesise this variable history of research, the following chapter offers a survey of both published and unpublished documentation related specifically to the visitors' graffiti.³³

[30] Petrie 1910, 9 ff., a selection in Rowe 1931, and new finds by P. Posener-Kriéger in Khouli et al. 1991.

[31] Harpur 2001, 275 n. 3.

[32] PM IV, 90, note 1; Griffith Institute Archive, University of Oxford, Crum Mss V.6.

[33] The expeditions which dealt with the documentation and subject of the visitors' graffiti will be mentioned, meanwhile for other activities see Harpur (2001, 6–25 and Appendix 4), Rowe (1931), and PM IV, 88 ff.

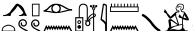
Research on the visitors' graffiti at Meidum

Post-Sneferu Egyptian visitors' graffiti and dipinti in the Meidum pyramid complex are located largely in two places: in the entrance passage on the north side of the pyramid; and in the pyramid temple next to the eastern side of the pyramid. Later visitors' texts were identified also on the body of the pyramid itself.

The pyramid entrance passage and Sir Gaston Maspero

Sir Gaston Maspero (1846–1916) was involved in the clearance of the chambers of the Meidum pyramid in 1881 and 1882. His work was aimed at the search for the Pyramid Texts, which, as it stands, are only attested from the late 5th Dynasty onwards. It would be of interest to have at our disposal a more personal view of his 1881 and 1882 activities, however, the edited letters to his second wife Louise Maspero only start in 1883.³⁴ As the publication of the Meidum graffiti appeared more than a decade after the discovery, he did not, perhaps at first, consider them a find of much importance, although Daninos (see above) saw fit to mention this discovery later.

As such, Maspero reported only in 1893 that a couple of hieratic ink-written graffiti were found in the pyramid entrance passage, where they were noted during the campaign that took place between December 1881 and February 1882. Maspero published these dipinti in hieroglyphic transcription and translation but gave no hieratic original.³⁵

‘...en examinant les parois du couloir, je vis deux graffiti tracés à l’encre, à peu de distance de la porte extérieure, sur le rebord même du cadre où le bloc de fermeture était enchâssé. C’était la signature de deux curieux, et la forme de noms comme celle d’écriture indique la XXe dynastie : l’un d’eux s’appelait *le scribe Sokari* , l’autre *Amenmésés* et constatait sa venue en cet endroit, 1.  2. . Il fallait que l’amas de décombres qui recouvre le pied de la pyramide existât déjà, pour qu’ils pussent arriver à l’entrée du couloir. Par malheur, ils n’ont pas jugé à propos de nous dire à qui appartenait le monument qu’ils venaient de visiter.’³⁶

The publication of these texts came after Flinders Petrie had published his account in 1892 and with it the Meidum pyramid temple graffiti and dipinti. Maspero’s note that, unfortunately, the scribes left no information as to whom the monument should belong is necessarily contextualised by Petrie’s discoveries, since he found graffiti mentioning Sneferu. This shows where the importance of the graffiti probably lay for the Egyptologists of that time, i.e. in the possibility of identifying the owner of the pyramid.

Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie at Meidum

The excavations by Flinders Petrie, who started his first season at Meidum in 1890, were considerably more comprehensive.³⁷ His excavation activities are not only published but also largely documented in his papers, including his excavation diaries. During the excavations, undertaken with the help of local

[34] Edited by David 2003.

[35] Maspero 1893.

[36] Maspero 1893, 149–150.

[37] Drower 1985, 170–171.

workmen and the partial assistance of Percy Edward Newberry, J. Fraser, and F. Bliss, Petrie showed his usual frugality³⁸ but also talent and, as can be shown further, keen interest in the graffiti, the historical importance of which he understood, though chiefly professed in terms of being a help to identify the owner or presumed owner of the pyramid complex. The Petrie project is herein introduced in more detail as he was the first to record the graffiti at Meidum extensively.

Egyptologist

William Mathew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) is such a well-known figure in Egyptology to the point of becoming an icon (attracting therefore also a reasonable portion of iconoclasm) as well as an anecdote-worthy figure (also due to such details as what M. S. Drower termed as ‘socklesness’), however, his actual contribution to the discipline is substantial. He produced about a hundred books and numerous other publications and developed a systematic structure of documentation, which was an innovation for Egyptian archaeology at the time. Within the (significant) limits of class and national stereotyping, he also recognised the importance of fieldwork experience, specifically of local teams.³⁹

His output was therefore prolific in documentation as well as, consequently, in publication. His biography with details of his professional life has been already written, and the following paragraphs sketching his work in Meidum in 1890 are in debt to the book by M. S. Drower⁴⁰ as well as to Petrie’s own notes. Petrie described his work in his diaries as well as in log letters, which he termed ‘journals’, and these were sent to be circulated among his family and friends. The diaries are now housed in the University College Museum (Petrie Museum) in London and the journals in the Griffith Institute Archive. The journals have largely been digitised and transcribed.⁴¹ Petrie worked at, or influenced the work in, Meidum several times, but it was during his first excavation that the visitors’ graffiti in the pyramid temple of Sneferu were discovered and recorded.

Expedition 1890 in context

In 1890, Petrie was ‘introducing’ Newberry (1869–1949) to Egypt.⁴² Newberry went to make a survey concentrated on Beni Hassan, which he later published.⁴³ Petrie himself decided to go to Meidum, stating ‘I naturally turned my eyes to what seemed with reason to be the oldest dated site in Egypt, the cemetery of Medum ... some time was lost before I could begin work, by the attempted imposition of new and onerous conditions ...’⁴⁴ This last note refers to the protracted negotiations over his excavating permits, which were in the hands of Eugène Grébaut (1846–1915).

While waiting for Grébaut, Petrie occupied himself with purchases of Egyptian antiquities in Cairo. Having obtained what can be considered a first phase of the permission, not yet relating to the pyramid

[38] Which was recorded, alongside other details of Petrie’s and his team’s life in Meidum, by travelling artist Henry Eliot Howard in 1891 (Hinson 2024).

[39] See a reprint of his instruction book, Petrie 2014.

[40] Drower 1985.

[41] See <https://archive.griffith.ox.ac.uk/index.php/petrie-1>, accessed 30 October 2025.

[42] Drower 1985, 172–173.

[43] Newberry et al. 1893.

[44] Petrie 1892, 1.

itself, 'Leaving at once for Lisht, Petrie packed up the stores ... collected a dozen of his best workmen from the year before, and the same afternoon set off on foot for Meydum eighteen miles away'.⁴⁵

Thus the works began and after three weeks the actual permit arrived, allowing for the excavation of the pyramid and its immediate neighbourhood, causing a tussle over the formulations regarding the division of finds, which had to be settled in Cairo where Consul General Sir Evelyn Baring intervened.⁴⁶ It should be noted that Egyptology in these times, as in many others, was heavily dependent on politics and the uneasy conditions of Egypt's 'veiled occupation' by Britain were reflected also in research work. Petrie's excavations in Meidum fell into this complicated time, while not even ten years had elapsed from the 1882 bombardment of Alexandria. The British occupation of Egypt was intensely debated, politically as well as in wider circles, with varied levels of knowledge and sensitivity. Evelyn Baring (1841–1917), later Lord Cromer,⁴⁷ who supported Petrie though he had to avoid any seeming slight to the French, opined that the Egyptians were in need of a qualified government.⁴⁸ In 1883, while in Egypt, he supported a quick withdrawal of British forces. However, by 1887 he was convinced otherwise.⁴⁹

Petrie lived and thought in the framework of British domination in Egypt, which, somewhat like Cromer, he took for a burden and a responsibility – no doubt, this attitude also informed his ambivalent view of the local workforce. 'These men and boys were as honest and pleasant fellows as I wish to see ... the thorough kindly simplicity and good feeling of all the party made it a pleasure to be with them. Where the Egyptian is constantly misunderstood is by applying English standards to him. ... He needs "bossing" and he feels the want of a "boss"'.⁵⁰

Some years earlier he took a stance on the relationship of the 'natives' to their past. In 1881 he was calling the attitude of the 'natives' 'savage indifference', but the government – and its organised (and French-controlled) antiquities service did not fare much better in his eyes.⁵¹ There was not only a condescending feeling, so often read in the political claims as well as in some scholarly ones, but also a genuine concern, such as Petrie expressed in the *English Illustrated Magazine* 1885–6, pp. 440–441: 'Egypt is not at a standstill at present; it is moving faster, for better or worse, than it ever moved before ... In one sense we are only just beginning to explore Egypt and the treasure seems to us inexhaustible ... in another and terribly true sense Egypt is exhausting itself, the natives are ceaselessly digging, and unless we look to it pretty quickly the history of the country will have perished before our eyes, by the destructive activity of its inhabitants ... if we are not to incur the curse of the posterity for our Vandalism and inertness, we must be up and doing in the right way'.⁵²

One of the strong motives for establishing the Egypt Exploration Fund was precisely the impression that prominent persons of British cultural life had a certain responsibility for what today is termed the cultural heritage of Egypt (this opinion in turn was part of a broader Western opinion of Egypt as a

[45] Drower 1985, 173.

[46] Drower 1985, 176.

[47] Owen 2004.

[48] Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer) 1908, 197–198; Owen 2004, 218–219.

[49] See Owen 2004, 246, and TNA, Foreign Office, 14th Dec 1887, sign. CP/2, FO 633/98,7.

[50] Petrie 1892, 1.

[51] Drower 2004, 16.

[52] Drower 2004, 1–11.

special part of European cultural heritage⁵³). These struggles over control of Egyptian politics as well as culture, struggles which influenced Petrie's activities, went on at the same time during which the Egyptian nation developed its own national revival, one of whose roots was sought in ancient Egypt. The supposed modern Egyptian indifference and neglect, considered to be a result of national 'immaturity',⁵⁴ was to be replaced with explicit 'pharaonism', which was later merged with other strands of Egyptian national identity more explicitly, such as the legacy of Islamic Egypt. While a full-fledged reception of ancient Egypt in modern Egypt's public space becomes clearly visible after the turn of the century, an intellectual debate about Egyptian heritage was in fact present since at least the reign of Muhammad Ali.⁵⁵ The lack of mutual recognition and sustained communication between stakeholders in a growing modern Egyptian interest and those involved in an international interest in Egyptian antiquity constitutes one of the most salient examples of an uneven development of the epistemic community of Egyptology.

For Petrie, however, this turmoil was reflected chiefly in his tussles with the Antiquities Service, as up to the 1920s the dominant official influences had been undisputedly French and British and Petrie entered an ensuing hot competition of archaeologists. Having eventually received his permit, Petrie's excavation work around the Meidum pyramid started.⁵⁶ He spent the time from November 1890 to April 1891 in Meidum and, during this time, managed to document the pyramid temple, mastabas in the neighbourhood, their inscriptions, and the temple's graffiti, which are our main objective, as well as a number of other finds, which were later published as chapters written by other specialists in Petrie's book on Meidum.⁵⁷

Excavations

According to Petrie's journals,⁵⁸ the chronology of his excavations — with regard to the pyramid temple and eventually the discovery of its graffiti — can be reconstructed as follows: after arrival, his first goal was the mastabas. According to the Journal of 1–7 December 1890, Petrie 'Have begun copying the Medum tombs ...' and in the same journal⁵⁹ he comments on the rather rough and superficial character of previous excavations. November and December 1890 were thus largely spent on Old Kingdom tombs.

By end of December, disputes with the Antiquities Service were occupying his time again. In January 1891,⁶⁰ F. Bliss arrived to be taught the archaeological practice and to help Petrie. In the first half of January, the cleaning inside the pyramid was underway.⁶¹ By the end of January,⁶² Petrie notes that Newberry (N. in his letters) paid a visit.

[53] Reid 1985, 234.

[54] Reid 1992, 60, using G. Charmes, *Cinq mois au Caire et dans la Basse-Egypte*, 1880.

[55] Gershoni and Jankowski 1986, 1995, and 2004; see also Reid 2002.

[56] Drower 1985, 176–179.

[57] Petrie 1892.

[58] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891.

[59] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, p. 22.

[60] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, p. 42.

[61] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, journals from Jan. 11 to 17 and Jan. 17 to 25.

[62] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal Jan. 26 to Feb. 1.

At the same time, intense clearance was done on the sides of the pyramid and at first, it seemed to Petrie that there was no temple on the east side (there were also no reports about it available to him), but something of a mysterious building on the south side. During February, the temple structure started to appear on the east side, clearance of which was intensely complicated due to windstorms.⁶³ This situation was to continue, so the work on the pyramid alternated with the work on neighbouring mastabas nearly till the end of February. The battle against wind bringing down the slopes of the excavation pit was incessant, but the clearance of the temple proceeded⁶⁴ and in March Petrie was able to get from the temple courtyard (called a 'pyramid court' in his account) to other chambers of the temple, the sketch of which he appended to one of his 'journals'.⁶⁵ Soon, the graffiti came to light.

'Near the entrance are about 20 hieratic graffiti, mostly one or two lines, but some longer as up to 12 lines'.⁶⁶ This is the first report on the Meidum pyramid temple graffiti, and Petrie continues 'All seem of like period + several are dated to Tahutmes III, Amenhotep III + Seti I. And in them are four mentions of Snefru, the predecessor of Khufu, to whom this pyramid had been attributed in modern times, though without direct evidence. Now we see that the history known to the XVIIIth dynasty connected it with his name ...' The first impression in the journal, continuing with the note on the fact that all these graffiti are within the light of the temple entrance, remained unchanged and went into the publication. In the second half of March, the clearing of the temple was done⁶⁷ and by the start of April⁶⁸ the temple was closed again.

Documentation and publication

The pyramid temple on the east side of the pyramid was for Petrie as important as it was aesthetically impressive and he made clearing it one of the main targets of his excavation. In his published account, he expanded and modified his earlier texts slightly.

'After some three weeks of work, from having first seen the building [the pyramid temple], we again reached bottom and cleared out the whole of the courtyard. ... I crawled into the perfect chambers, which had not been touched since the XVIIIth dynasty ... I eagerly looked over the inscriptions on the walls, which I saw were of Tahutmes III. and Amenhotep III.; but my satisfaction was complete when I caught sight of Snefru's name, and knew that at last there was monumental evidence for attribution'.⁶⁹

The clearing of the temple, however, was a rather complex task, as the edifice contained other traces of New Kingdom activities beside the graffiti, as well as sand:

'... The temple contained about two feet of blown sand. It was evident that the courtyard had been choked between the XIIth and XVIIIth dynasties, as all the later graffiti were within

[63] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal Feb. 8 to 14.

[64] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal 1–7 March,

[65] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal from 8 to 14 March, pp. 83–84.

[66] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal from 8 to 14 March, p. 84.

[67] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal 15 to 21 March.

[68] GIA, Petrie Journals 1890–1891, Journal March 29 to April 4, 1891.

[69] Petrie 1892, 4.

the light of the outer door, and pieces of burnt papyrus plant strewed the chamber floor, having been taken in by persons wishing to see the blocked doorway into the courtyard, which we found much smoked. In this sand in the passage was an interment of the XVIIIth dynasty, with some beads, two small bronze lance heads, and some pomegranates and nuts. This burial explains why I found the outer doorway carefully blocked with pieces of stone: evidently the passage was looked on as a convenient sepulchre, and the door was blocked and covered with rubbish. And this heaping/over of it probably finished the hiding up of the temple ...'

The dating of the burial as well as of the graffiti is, however, a rather delicate question, as will be explained further below. Of the burial, the only published documentation is this description.

The temple, however, is not the only part of the Meidum pyramid complex which contained graffiti, as aforesaid. Petrie nonetheless did not mention the pyramid entrance passage graffiti, though he cleared the passages anew. It must have been during this period when his occasional helper Newberry must have made copies of three of the entrance passage graffiti.⁷⁰

'I also exhaustively cleared the inside of the pyramid to see if there were any other chambers or passages. For though it was opened nine years ago by Professor Maspero, the accumulation of stone and rubbish in it had never been turned over.'⁷¹

Petrie, as can be already seen from previous quotes, paid great attention to the graffiti. According to the signature on the plates in the publication as well as his notes,⁷² he drew them himself and was interested in their translation, which was later (for the publication itself) undertaken by Griffith. On 7 April, 1891, he wrote to Newberry: 'I was sorry you could not come + revise the copies of the graffiti. I have copied + revised them very closely, so I hope F. L. G. [Francis Llewelyn Griffith] will be able to work them out. The photographs are too slight to be of much use, though as fine as one could hope to get ...'

This actually may suggest that either Petrie trusted Newberry as a copyist, while Newberry was known to have some interest in the graffiti, or both. Later in the same letter, the main use Petrie saw for the graffiti is again hinted 'Besides the XVIIIth [dynasty] graffiti, which name Sneferu's temple or pyramid four times, I found one of the VIth or XIIth naming Snefru very rudely scratched on wall ...'.

Since no further note on the Meidum graffiti was found in Petrie's letters to Newberry, not even a hint of the fact that Newberry later published the hieratic originals of the pyramid entrance passage graffiti,⁷³ it seems that Newberry was overwhelmed by his activities in Beni Hassan as well as by necessity to publish them, which proved to be no mean feat. As a result, the Meidum graffiti went to F. Ll. Griffith.

'Mr. Griffith has now, as always, rendered every assistance in respect to the inscriptions. And I am indebted to Brugsch Pasha for favouring me with a first and hurried translation of the graffiti, when I had the copies in Cairo.'⁷⁴

[70] Cf. Rowe 1931, 10.

[71] Petrie 1892, 4.

[72] Griffith Institute Archive, Papers of P. E. Newberry, correspondence of Petrie and Newberry, letter of April 7, 1891.

[73] Newberry 1905.

[74] Petrie 1892, 4.

Petrie was also aware of the fragility as well as the value of graffiti as historical documents, which is revealed in his comment upon the work of Edouard Naville (who had shown a great interest in the Meidum inscriptions⁷⁵) and count Riamo d'Hulst, who worked with Naville: 'Count d'Hulst told me, with superior wisdom, that in order to copy the graffiti at Meydum I ought to have put a wet paper on the wall and beaten it so as to bring the ink away on the paper!!! This would be his way of treating a graffito — a priceless and irreplaceable record'.⁷⁶ Petrie's eventual published contribution to the study of the graffiti emphasised the description of their position in the temple:

'the inscriptions in the temple are none of them due to the builders. The earliest is a scratched graffito (XXXII, 1) on the north wall of the chamber: this is exactly the colour of the stone, and so uniformly covered with a slight salt coat that I did not observe it until making a final search. It is certainly far earlier in its condition than the two scratched graffiti (XXXII, 2, 3) on the east wall of the chamber. As the latter appear to be of the XIIth dynasty, by their style closely resembling the Assuan graffiti of that age, it seems probable that the earlier one is of the VIth dynasty or before that. All three of these graffiti are within the light from the courtyard and shew that that was open till after the XIIth dynasty. The other graffiti are all ink-written, facing the front entrance to the temple on the west wall of the passage and some on the sides of the doorway. They are all of the XVIIIth dynasty: and the reader should refer to their translations by Mr. Griffith in Chapter VI. On the front of the temple are three very rude graffiti of ships by the door.' (Petrie 1892, 9).

Francis Llewellyn Griffith (1862–1934)

F. Ll. Griffith was interested in epigraphic evidence and developed a productive record in that respect, even though his translations of the Meidum graffiti corpus do not cover all the graffiti in the temple, as later investigations were to show. It also seems that Griffith apparently worked with the material provided by Petrie, not on site. In the bequest of Griffith,⁷⁷ there were, at the time of writing, no materials explicitly identified as related to the Meidum graffiti.

As regards epigraphy, Griffith also corresponded with Newberry, even advising him on the latter's work at Beni Hassan. The (preserved) correspondence from the period of interest relates mainly to Beni Hassan and the work done there and does not betray an extensive shared interest in the Meidum graffiti. In February 1892 Griffith wrote to Newberry: 'I have nearly finished Medum',⁷⁸ but Meidum does not appear to be mentioned further in the preserved correspondence.⁷⁹ And as it is absent from Griffith's preserved papers, it apparently did not play any major role in Griffith's subsequent research. Likewise, later activities by Petrie and his team did not involve graffiti.⁸⁰

[75] Drower 1895, 179–180.

[76] Petrie quoted after Drower 1895, 283. Hulst published some 'unofficial' notes in Hulst 1891.

[77] Griffith Institute Archive, Oxford, Collection Griffith.

[78] GIA, Newberry Collection, Archive No. 21/29.

[79] However, the correspondence at our disposal is selective — as the same letter mentions that Griffith, for reasons not stated, destroyed a note from Newberry. See GIA, Newberry Collection, Feb. 22, 1892 (Arch. No. 21/30) 'I have for a few new ideas, but cannot get rid of Médûm.'

[80] For instance see Petrie et al. 1910.

A letter from December 1890 contains a description of the preparation of tracing paper:⁸¹

‘Take your tracing paper + soak it for a few hours in a pan of good oil: then drain it + wipe it dry with a duster. It becomes splendidly transparent, + you can trace away like anything in pencil. Afterwards you can re-trace the tracing on dry paper + colour it.’

Alan Jenvey Rowe (1890⁸²–1968) and the University Museum of Pennsylvania Eckley B. Coxe Expedition

The extensive and unfortunately only partially published Eckley B. Coxe expedition headed by A. J. Rowe⁸³ included an attempt at mapping and a revised publication of the Meidum pyramid complex as well as the mastaba field. Meidum was already receiving renewed interest after the explorations of Jean Capart (1927) and Ludwig Borchardt (1928), but the Eckley B. Coxe expedition was intended as a thorough examination of the history of the site.

Egyptologist

A. J. Rowe worked alongside George Reisner (1867–1942) in Giza, and it was under his supervision that the chamber with the funerary equipment of Hetepheres was cleared.⁸⁴ Rowe further worked in Egypt and Cyrenaica, but also in Palestine, Syria, and Australia. Although the work at Meidum ended in 1931 following the financial crash, he continued excavating elsewhere in Egypt in the later 1930s.

Expedition

Between November 1929 and April 1930, the work at Meidum was carried out by Rowe for the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, extensively using photography as means of documentation.⁸⁵ In the published reports, it is evident that a more thorough publication of the graffiti was intended, and Rowe cooperated on its preparation with Battiscombe Gunn and Jaroslav Černý (see also below).

Documentation and publication

Rowe sent his reports to the University of Pennsylvania Museum and published a relatively succinct but highly informative excavation report in the *Museum Bulletin*⁸⁶ and photographed most of the graffiti anew. He also published some of the graffiti in the *Illustrated London News* on 22 March 1930. His materials are now housed in the University Museum of Pennsylvania, remaining largely unpublished.⁸⁷

[81] GIA, Newberry Collection, Dec. 22, 1890, it seems like one of the hieratic inscriptions was also discussed in this letter. Arch no. 21/6. It also shows the interest of the EEF in the work at Beni Hassan.

[82] Some online and published resources indicate 1891. For a biography of Rowe with archival references see Thorn 2006.

[83] On the output of the expedition to Meidum, see also Lease 1998, focusing on Greco-Roman and later finds.

[84] Harpur 2001.

[85] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meidum.

[86] Rowe 1931.

[87] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meidum.

Battiscombe George Gunn (1883–1950)

Battiscombe George Gunn (or ‘Jack’ as he was more usually known to his friends) was an Egyptologist with a long-standing interest in graffiti. Shortly before accepting the task of working on the Meidum visitors’ graffiti, he had worked in the Step Pyramid precinct, documenting the New Kingdom visitors’ texts in the North and South chapel in detail.⁸⁸ Although his epigraphic record of the Step Pyramid New Kingdom graffiti was not published until 2007,⁸⁹ it was one of the early examples in Egyptology that focused on a detailed analysis of the location, placement, and further information about these inscriptions.

His work on the Meidum material is linked to his professional position in Philadelphia, which he held from 1931 to 1934, as well as to his training in epigraphy. He consulted on his graffiti research regularly with Jaroslav Černý. Gunn’s notes on the graffiti in Meidum are located in two institutions, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Art and Archaeology (UPMAA) and the Griffith Institute Archive (GIA). The location of part of Gunn’s papers in Oxford is related to his move to Oxford in 1934, where he became Professor of Egyptology, succeeding T. E. Peet, and remained until his death in 1950.

The two collections contain parallel manuscripts with transcriptions of texts listed in the Catalogue as **Gunn 1–33** and Pyramid Entrance A to C. The UPMAA manuscript is currently known as Meydum 02.07, Notes on Graffiti and the GIA manuscript is currently known as Gunn notebook 54.⁹⁰

UPMAA, Meydum 02.07, Notes on Graffiti

Housed in the UPMAA Meydum Collection (The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition archive), the manuscript is entitled ‘Meydum Graffiti of Pyramid Temple and Entrance Passage’ and consists of 84 pages of typescript and manuscript notes, some of them duplicating other records in the collection. The first 70 pages contain transcripts of and brief comments on the graffiti, both those published by Petrie and those added by observations made by Rowe, Gunn (presumably mainly on photographs), and Černý. It seems that it was mostly, if not exclusively, Rowe and Černý who were Gunn’s ‘eyes’ at the site. The manuscript is complemented by some notes by Rowe and correspondence by Rowe, Gunn and Černý. The collection of glass negatives of detail of walls with dipinti and graffiti by Rowe’s team, also housed in UPMAA, forms an indispensable companion to the manuscript.

GIA, Gunn Notebook 54

Housed in the Gunn Collection of the Griffith Institute Archive, the notebook contains both the graffiti published and those unpublished by Petrie, a majority of which were also documented by Rowe in the form of photographs and in part by Černý in the form of tracings, however, there are exceptions to both, and we find graffiti whose main documentation currently is the Gunn hieroglyphic transcriptions, as they apparently do not have a photograph available and some even lack a tracing.

[88] Griffith Institute Archive, The Gunn Collection, tracings and notes on Saqqara.

[89] Navratilova 2007, and 2015b.

[90] The two collections are currently published online at https://portal.sds.ox.ac.uk/Graffiti_Gazetteer, accessed 11 June 2026.

In 1932, Gunn continued his correspondence with Černý: both were interested in comparing the Meidum material to the South Saqqara material recorded by Jéquier.⁹¹ Prints of Rowe's photographs and Černý's tracings (housed in the Gunn Collection as well) complement the evidence of notebook 54.

Jaroslav Černý (1898–1970)

Černý was an Egyptologist with an interest in graffiti that developed early in his career and remained one of the mainstays of his research trajectory.⁹² Although most of his work concentrated on the graffiti in Western Thebes, and specifically those related to the community of Ramesside craftsmen and artists inhabiting the settlement known as Deir el-Medina, Černý noted and on occasion recorded secondary inscriptions in many other places in Egypt. His notebooks (Černý Mss 17 series) and other manuscripts (esp. Černý Mss 6) housed in the Černý Collection in the Griffith Institute Archive contain references to and records of graffiti in Abusir, Saqqara, Meidum, Beni Hassan, Abydos, Thebes, and various locations in Nubia.

Three letters from and to Černý relating to the Meidum graffiti were enclosed in GIA notebook 54, and carbon copies of other letters sent to Černý were enclosed in UPMAA file Meydum 02.07. Černý also provided tracings of select Meidum graffiti, which are now enclosed in the Gunn Collection.

In one of the GIA letters, Černý wrote to Gunn regarding the work on the Meidum graffiti, politely urging him to publish the material as he himself did not intend to. The other two letters are from W. S. Smith to Černý and Gunn respectively, about the dating of a couple of Meidum graffiti from Petrie 1892, Plate XXXII, which were at the time tentatively dated to the Old Kingdom (later accepted dating places most of them in the Middle Kingdom). The 18th Dynasty graffiti ascribe the pyramid and the temple to Sneferu, but Smith was inclined to doubt this as a later tradition and the earlier graffiti being re-dated to the Old Kingdom would have added more weight to that option. After Gunn's passing in 1950, Černý probably considered republishing the Meidum graffiti, as he did consider revisiting secondary inscriptions in Beni Hassan and possibly Abydos. However, this project never came to fruition.

Recent work at Meidum

Herein is a non-exhaustive overview of some of the post-World War II publications concerned with the site and, more specifically, the pyramid precinct of Sneferu at Meidum. In the 1960s, the pyramid was revisited by Vito Maragioglio and Celeste Rinaldi as part of their project of mapping the architecture of the Memphite pyramids.⁹³

In the 1970s, a discussion was started by the analysis of the alleged collapse of the Meidum pyramid by Kurt Mendelssohn, whose hypothesis of an early structural failure of the pyramid core and casing was not generally accepted⁹⁴ even though it is still used in some popular narratives.⁹⁵ I. E. S. Edwards (1974) used the New Kingdom graffiti to point out the ongoing access to the temple in the New King-

[91] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum 02.06, Graffiti Correspondence, p. 14: Gunn to Černý, 20 January 1932.

[92] For his research trajectory see Navratilova 2023a including details of his work in Saqqara, Meidum and Thebes.

[93] Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1964 (vol. 3 containing Meidum dated to 1964).

[94] Mendelssohn 1973, 1974, 1975; Edwards 1974; Lauer 1976; Davey 1976.

[95] Hewison 2008, entry 'Maydūm pyramid'.

dom, as opposed to the idea of a major failure that would have happened already in the Old Kingdom and covered the temple in debris. The visitors' graffiti were mentioned in various publications (review in Harpur 2001), but only exceptionally were they treated as a site-specific corpus. Dietrich Wildung in 1969 was the only one who at least partially adopted such an approach since Gunn and Černý's idea of publishing a revised edition.

Research activities were undertaken by Ali el-Khouli⁹⁶ and his team in the 1980s and followed by others. A review of more recent work was presented, alongside her own work, by Harpur 2001. Since then, Franck Monnier has addressed the architecture and building process of the pyramid in a number of publications⁹⁷ and the art of the Old Kingdom mastabas has also been studied.⁹⁸ In 2021, Peter Jánosi provided an overview of the history of the site.⁹⁹ In 2022, Aurore Ciavatti and her team reviewed the blocks with Old Kingdom masons' inscriptions and crew names using the digital enhancement of the (often red ink) inscriptions.¹⁰⁰ This, crucially, contributed to the current attribution of all building phases of the pyramid (including the initial ones) to King Sneferu.¹⁰¹ Scholarly attention has been devoted mainly to the pyramid itself and to the necropoleis in the vicinity. The attention of Egyptologists thus still focuses chiefly on the architectural and artefactual aspects of the site.

Archive concordance

Comparison of data

Description in Gunn notebook 54	Location	Notes	Gunn Mss UPenn	Černý's dating as in UPenn Mss
30 Not published by Petrie No photo	Entrance N 5/2	[one line, inscription damaged]	metadata in both mss identical	—
31 Not published by Petrie Photo impossible	Entrance S 5/2	[one line, signature]	metadata in both mss identical	—
32 Not published by Petrie No photo	Entrance South 5/2	[either three lines or two graffiti, damaged, Černý made no addition]	metadata in both mss identical	—

[96] A review of the site was undertaken by Ali el-Khouli, with contributions by Paule Posener-Kriéger, Angela Milward-Jones, Edwin C. Brock, Jan Borkowski and Grzegorz Majcherek (Khouli et al. 1991).

[97] For instance, Monnier 2020, and 2018; the pyramid structure debate was also revisited by Reader 2015 and re-examined by Verd'hurt and Dormion 2003.

[98] For instance, Romilio's 2021 re-identification of the species of the Meidum geese.

[99] Jánosi 2021.

[100] Ciavatti 2023.

[101] For instance, discoveries by Khouli et al. 1991. An outline of the 'dilemma of the pyramid's ownership' was summarised by Harpur 2001, 25–26.

Description in Gunn notebook 54	Location	Notes	Gunn Mss UPenn	Černý's dating as in UPenn Mss
33 Not published by Petrie No photo Scratched ... probably same text as nos 1, 2	Chamber E, 4/2		metadata in both mss identical	—
1 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , pl. XXXII, i Photographs (Rowe): 568, 569, 570, 571, 584	Ch. N 5/2, 4/2, 3/2		p. 1, finished transcript, also included on a small insert card, otherwise metadata information is the same as in Gunn notebook 54 (Oxford Mss)	—
2 Not published by Petrie Photographs (Rowe): 572, 573	Chamber E 6/4, 5/6, 4/4		metadata information identical in the UPenn Mss as in the Oxford Mss transcript of graffito included on a small insert card	—
3 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXII, ii Photograph (Rowe): 528	Ch. E 5/4	[comments by Gunn, related to likely signs or absence thereof]	metadata identical with the Oxford Mss transcript of graffito also included on a small insert card.	—
4 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXII, iii Photograph (Rowe): 527	Ch. E 5/4 to left of 3	[same as 3]	metadata identical with the Oxford Mss	—
5 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXII, iv No photograph, 'Impossible to photo', A. R.	Entrance S. 4/1	[comments by Gunn and Černý, reading uncertain due to unclear signs]	metadata identical with Oxford Mss, except for an addition in the Oxford Mss by A. R.	—
6 Not published by Petrie Photograph (Rowe): 559	Ch. W. North of Door 5/1		metadata identical with Oxford Mss, except for photo no. UPenn Mss has 550.	—
7 Not published by Petrie Photograph (Rowe): 540	Passage, Ceiling, Middle Slab		metadata identical in both mss	—
8 Not published by Petrie Photograph (Rowe): 551	Chamber, W. South of Door, 5/2	[signs unclear, no transcription was offered by either Egyptologist]	addition of the position on 5/2	—

Description in Gunn notebook 54	Location	Notes	Gunn Mss UPenn	Černý's dating as in UPenn Mss
9 Not published by Petrie Photograph (Rowe): 541	Temple Roof		UPenn Mss adds to position: 'Middle of East End' -	—
10 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIII, v. Photograph (Rowe): 522, 611, 612	Passage W 5/1	[revised transcription, with notes from Černý]	also a heavily commented transcription, as if J. Č. commented on the UPenn version as well(?), metadata identical in both manuscripts	Thutmose III
11A and B = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIV, vi Photograph (Rowe): 524	Passage W. 5/1	[two short graffiti and a drawing]	metadata identical in both manuscripts	Dyn. XIX
28 2 lines of hieratic in ink	Position wanted [Gunn] Entrance S 5/2 (just beneath No. 12) [Černý]		addition 'formerly 12 contd.' in UPenn, and J. Č.'s identification is only in the Oxford mss	—
12 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIV, vii above No photograph, 'Could not photo' A. R.	Entrance South 5/2	[transcription with various comments, the head of a falcon probably not belonging to this graffiti]	metadata and some of the comments identical.	—
		[attached material for no. 13]		—
13 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIV, viii Photograph (Rowe): 543	Entrance S. 5/2	[additions and corrections by Černý in several places]	seems to be an expanded transcription making quite clear that this is a date of Thutmose III; metadata in both mss identical.	Thutmose III
14 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIV, ix No photograph 'On ceiling of door cannot take photo' A. R.	Entrance ceiling, 1 st slab near north (?)		metadata identical, A. R.'s note in Oxford Mss only.	—
15 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIV, x Photograph (Rowe): 613	Entrance Ceiling, 1 st Block towards S	'text very faint, on ceiling of entrance. Impossible to get better one' A. R.	additional info concerning detail of the text in the UPenn Mss info on Rowe's photo on. in transcript it seems like <i>sh3 ḥdw</i> suggested by J. Č.	Dyn. XX
16A and 16B = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXIV, xi Photograph (Rowe): 524	Passage W 5/1	[two inscriptions, placed on same block]	metadata identical in both manuscripts.	Dyn. XIX for 16A

Description in Gunn notebook 54	Location	Notes	Gunn Mss UPenn	Černý's dating as in UPenn Mss
17 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXV, xii Photograph (Rowe): 545 Illegible 'difficult to get better photo', A. R.	Passage W 5/2	[Two parts, a falcon with double crown, and text]	metadata identical, more notes on the text itself	—
18 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXV, xiii Photograph (Rowe): 524	Passage W 5/1	[tentative transcription, it is possible that it was done by Černý]	metadata identical	Dyn. XIX
19 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXV, xiv Photograph (Rowe): 526	Passage W 6/1–2	[Černý confirmed or adjusted some readings as asked by Gunn]	metadata identical	—
20 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXV, xv Photograph (Rowe): 526 (end only), 941 To compare with Jéquier's graffiti brought to Cairo Museum [Gunn] Now published in <i>Deux Pyramides du Moyen Empire</i> (Č[erný] 1935)	Passage W. 6/2		metadata identical, and both mss also contain a note concerning comparison with Jéquier's material, which is as from <i>deux pyramides</i> in the Oxford Mss	—
21 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXV, xvi Photograph (Rowe): 545 'difficult to take photo owing to position' A. R.	Passage W. 5/2	[on p. 28 verso] Černý, please do something about length of lacunae [which he did, but the text was and is hardly legible]	metadata in both mss identical.	—
22 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXVI, xvii Photograph (Rowe): 523	Passage W 4/1		metadata in both mss identical	—
23 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXVI, xviii Photograph (Rowe): 525	Passage W 6/1		metadata in both mss identical, some discussion of details of transcription.	—
24 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXVI, xix Photograph (Rowe): 524	Passage W 5/1		metadata identical in both mss	Dyn. XIX

Description in Gunn notebook 54	Location	Notes	Gunn Mss UPenn	Černý's dating as in UPenn Mss
25 = Petrie, <i>Medum</i> , Pl. XXXVI, xx Photograph (Rowe): 529	Passage W 6/1		metadata in both mss identical	—
26 Not published by Petrie Photograph (Rowe). 542, very bad photo on ceiling of passage, difficult to take good photo	Entrance Ceiling, 1 st block from outside	[comment on p. 32 verso] Bad photo, get better one	metadata in both mss identical, except for the A. R. comment on the impossibility of getting a better photo.	—
27 Not published by Petrie Photograph (Rowe): 524	Passage W 5/1		metadata in both mss identical, this is scribe Maya	—
29 Not published by Petrie No photo	Entrance N 4/1	[comments and corrections by Černý]	metadata in both mss identical	—
A Not published by Petrie = Newberry, in <i>PSBA</i> XXVII, Pl. facing p. 104, No. 2 cf. Maspero, <i>Etudes de Mythol.</i> , I, 149 (transcription only) Photograph (Rowe): 539	From Pyramid Entrance Passage, on 11 th roofing slab from the entrance		metadata in both mss identical, but Rowe photo no. given as 359	Dyn. XIX
B Not published by Petrie = Newberry, as No. A, No. 1, p. 103 cf. Maspero. <i>loc. cit.</i> Photograph (Rowe): 360	On 11 th roofing slab from entrance			Dyn. XIX
C Not published by Petrie = Newberry, in <i>PSBA</i> XXVII, Pl. facing p. 104, No. 3 + p. 103 cf. Maspero, <i>Etudes de Mythol.</i> , I, 149 (transcription only) Photograph (Rowe): 360	From Pyramid Entrance Passage On 11 th roofing slab from entrance			—

Part II

Catalogue of secondary epigraphy features

The ancient secondary epigraphy features within the precinct of Sneferu in Meidum are clustered — to present knowledge — in two places. The majority of known and recorded secondary epigraphy was found on the walls of the pyramid temple located at the east side of the pyramid (also defined as a mortuary temple or as a cult chapel of Sneferu). Only a few inscriptions were identified in the entrance passage leading into the pyramid itself and opening on its north side. Whereas the inscriptions in the temple include figural as well as textual examples, and incised graffiti as well as ink-written dipinti, the inscriptions in the pyramid entrance passage consists only of ink-written dipinti.

As of 2025, only ancient secondary epigraphy features had been identified in the pyramid temple in the precinct of Sneferu at Meidum; this part of the monument seems to be unaffected by later visitors, possibly due to high levels of debris surrounding the pyramid and covering the remains of its precinct. The pyramid, however, carries also several Greek names¹ and texts by modern travellers, notably Charles Barton Burr (1801) and Carlo Vidua (1820).² The survey by the Eckley B. Coxe expedition headed by A. J. Rowe also reported further graffiti on the outside of the pyramid: ‘On the sides of the Meydum pyramid which by the way are mostly covered with wasps’ nests, can be seen various graffiti. Many of the visible ones are Arabic, but doubtless there must be other inscriptions of a far earlier date; compare for instance the hieroglyphic text recorded by Robert in 1899 A.D. All these graffiti will be copied as soon as the nests are removed.’³ The copies of the hieroglyphic text reported by A. Robert were not yet identified in the available records, and neither were the records of ‘square groups of five [pitted holes] each way, exactly like a modern *signa* board’ recorded by Petrie on the inclined slopes of the pyramid.⁴ Petrie assumed these suspect ‘signa boards’ were also of a later date, being located apparently quite high on the pyramid.

[1] Noted by Robert 1902; recorded during his land surveying work; Greco-Roman period pottery sherds were noticed around the pyramid — cf. Khouli et al. 1991, 12, extensive Greco-Roman finds were identified by the Eckley B. Coxe expedition, see Lease 1998.

[2] Rowe 1931, 7–8. For more information about Charles Barton Burr see A. Rowe, Rowe, Chronological List of People Associated with Meydūm Since the Twelfth Century A.D., *The Museum Journal* 22, 1931, 7. <https://www.penn.museum/sites/journal/9298/>.

[3] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum, Egypt expedition records, 02.10 (formerly call no. 1013, box 2). Publications – Lists of individuals, ‘Addenda’.

[4] Petrie 1892, 7.

As noted in the overview of the history of research, the records of epigraphic features from both the temple and the entrance passage are mostly unpublished, except the earliest selection of facsimiles edited by Griffith for Petrie (1892) and several features from the pyramid entrance published by Newberry (1905) which contained hieratic facsimiles and translations but no transliteration or commentary or a more accurate visualisation of placement of the inscriptions within the space and in relation to each other. Table 1 provides a review thereof:

Table 1. Inscriptions included and omitted by Petrie, and their later records by Rowe, Gunn, and Černý.

Petrie identification	Rowe's photographs – Gunn Mss. III.I	Černý tracing (letter of January 17, 1935), Gunn Mss. III.2	Gunn Notebook 54 numbers	<i>Meydum</i> , 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, UPMAA, numbers	Rowe photographs numbering
I			1	1	568, 569, 570, 571, 584
not published by Petrie			2	2	572, 573
II			3	3	528
III			4	4	527
IV	III.I. 1A		5	5	no photograph, 'impossible to photo'
not published by Petrie			6	6	550
not published by Petrie			7	7	540
not published by Petrie			8	8	551
not published by Petrie			9	9	541
V	III.I.1, III.I.1B		10	10	522, 611, 612
VI:1	III.I.3		11A	11A	524
VI:2	III.I.3		11B	11B	524
VII			12	12	no photograph, 'could not photo'
VIII			13	13	543, insert in Notebook 54, p. 38
IX			14	14	no photograph, 'cannot take photo'
X	III.I.9		15	15	613
XI	III.I.3		16A = XI, 16B = XI	16A = XI, 16B = XI	524

Petrie identification	Rowe's photographs – Gunn Mss. III.I	Černý tracing (letter of January 17, 1935), Gunn Mss. III.2	Gunn Notebook 54 numbers	<i>Meydum</i> , 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, UPMAA, numbers	Rowe photographs numbering
XII	III.I.8		17	17	545, A.R. comment 'difficult to get better photo'
XIII	III.I.3		18	18	524
XIV	III.I.5		19	19	526
XV	III.I.10	III.2.1	20	20	526 (end only), 941
XVI	III.I.8	III.2.2	21	21	545
XVII	III.I.2		22	22	523
XVIII	III.I.4	III.2.4	23	23	525
XIX	III.I.3		24	24	524
XX	III.I.6		25	25	529
not published by Petrie	III.I.7		26	26	542
not published by Petrie	III.I.3		27	27	524
apparently not published by Petrie		III.2.3	28	28	no photo, said on p. 70 of the notebook
not published by Petrie		III.2.4	29	29	no photo, said on p. 70 of the notebook
			30	30	no photo – said on p. 2
			31	31	no photo – said on p. 2
		III.2.4	32	32	no photo – said on p. 2
			33	33	no photo – said on p. 3
not published by Petrie	III.I.11		A	A	359
not published by Petrie	III.I.12		B	B	360
not published by Petrie	III.I.12		C	C	360

The distribution and further qualitative as well as quantitative evaluation of the Meidum corpus of ancient secondary texts are addressed in detail in interpretive chapters; this chapter meanwhile provides an overview of the position, appearance, and content of each text or image.

The catalogue entries include information on the spatial relationships of the secondary epigraphy, i.e. where in the temple space and in what relation to other features they are positioned. This description is based on the legacy records by Gunn and Rowe that already gave some more detailed information on the location within different rooms and position on the walls of the inscriptions. As a result, each catalogue entry starts with the location and placement of the feature, including its position on the schematic temple plan, followed by a line drawing of the text or figure, a hieroglyphic transcription and translation of the text, and a commentary. References to existing unpublished and published records are added at the end of each catalogue entry.

While arranging the graffiti catalogue, the numbering provided by Gunn was adopted, with numbers from 1 to 33 for the temple graffiti and A, B, and C for the pyramid entrance passage graffiti. Each feature has also been provided with other references that were used in the past records (such as Petrie publication numbers, Rowe photographs, and others), whenever possible. As there were several systems of numbering of the Meidum graffiti, Table 1 above provides an overview of referencing/numbering used for the features in different sources.

The Meidum pyramid temple

The limestone cult chapel or pyramid temple of Sneferu at Meidum⁵ is located on the east side of the pyramid. It has an overall footprint of 9.18 × 9 m.⁶ It consists of two corridors or chambers that open onto a narrow court with two meter-high round-topped stelae and a large altar (see Figure 2).⁷ This place is considered the first cultic site attached to a royal tomb, as no altars have been found in earlier funerary complexes.⁸ Most probably, this chapel was built in the 28th or 29th years of the reign of Sneferu when he ordered his workmen to go back to Meidum to turn the step pyramid into a complete and true pyramid.⁹

The two large stelae inside the cult chapel never received inscriptions. The work in this chapel likely stopped because of the sudden death of Sneferu and the rise of the new and ambitious king, Khufu, who moved to the Giza plateau. The alternative explanation would be Sneferu's refocussing on Dahshur, which might have led to the pausing of any further significant development of the Meidum precinct.

The entrance, entry corridor (or passage), and chamber are roofed, whereas the courtyard with two stelae and a *hṯp*-shaped altar is open and there is no relief decoration on the outside or inside walls of the temple. The courtyard walls are partly dressed, while most of the interior walls are not fully dressed. Maragioglio and Rinaldi characterised the temple as 'completed but not finished.'¹⁰

[5] See discussion in Stadelmann 1997, also Roth 1993.

[6] Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, vol. 3, tavole, tav. 6.

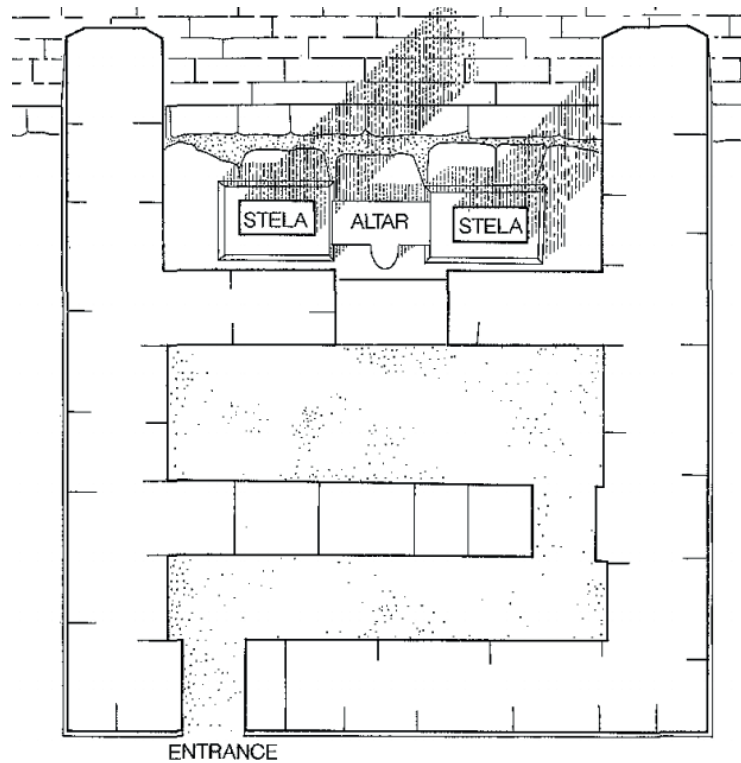
[7] Shafer and Arnold 1998, 45.

[8] Shafer and Arnold 1998, 45.

[9] Lehner 1997, 99.

[10] Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, vol. 3, text, 24.

Figure 2. The plan of the pyramid temple (after D. Arnold).



The temple is built of Tura limestone, and the black ink texts must have been relatively visible as, even though they are not smooth,^[11] the walls were neither finalised nor covered with any primary decoration. As regards the limestone blocks, Maragioglio and Rinaldi observed that ‘each course has nearly the same height for the whole perimeter’^[12] (the heights are shown in Figure 3).

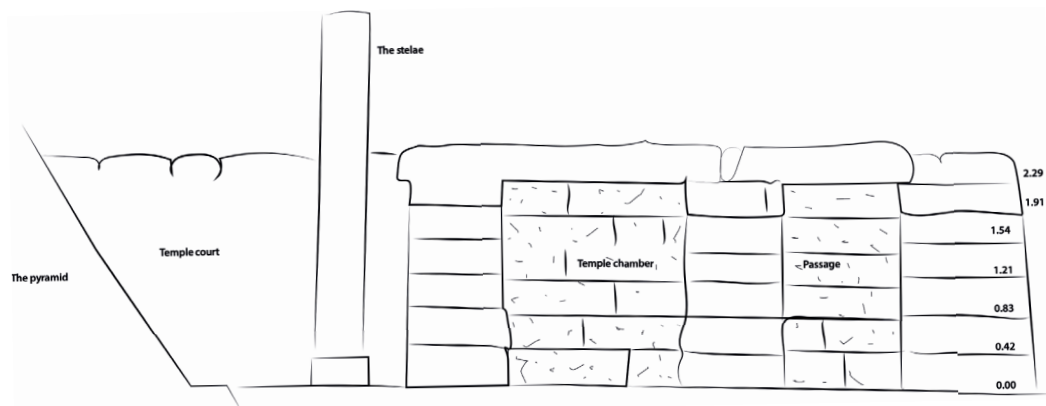


Figure 3. A cross-section of the temple marking the height of the individual blocks and the ceiling, after Maragioglio and Rinaldi (1963, vol. 3).

[11] Wildung (1969a, 141) considered them ‘glatt’, but that is a relative assessment.

[12] Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, vol. 3, text, 24.

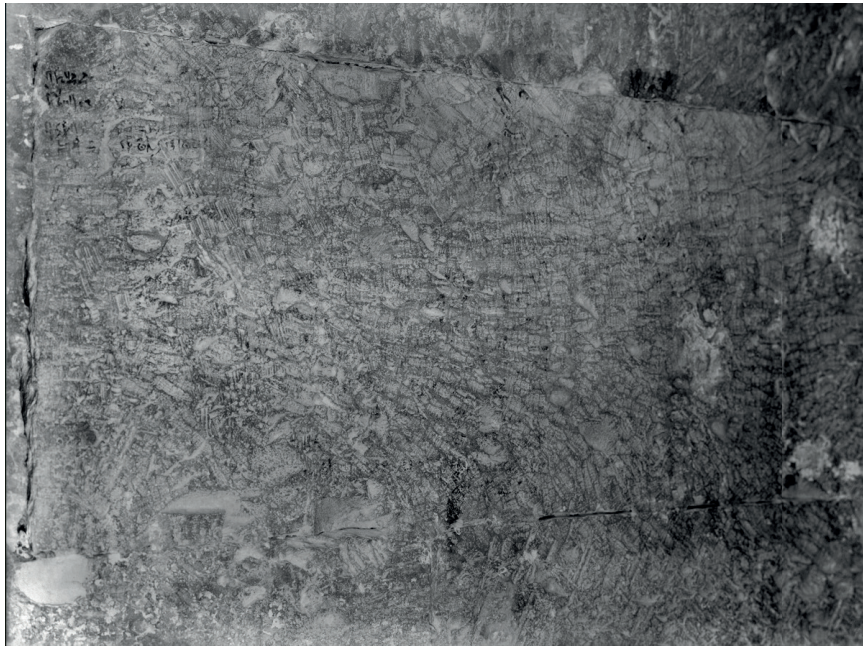


Figure 4. A close-up of the block surface in the entrance passage (corridor), fifth course from the ground, first block from the left with dipinti Gunn 11, 16 and others; note the chisel traces on the surface. Photograph by A. J. Rowe, Gunn Mss. Ill.1.8, © The Griffith Institute Archive, University of Oxford.

The interpretation of the secondary epigraphy is therefore governed by both the material (plus spatial) and conceptual context of these features, as there is no preexisting epigraphy to which the graffiti would be responding and otherwise utilising its message.¹³ They are nonetheless not a part of the primary plan to decorate the place, as they are still ‘inscriptions that do not belong to the primary state of the environment in which they appear but that redefine it’.¹⁴

The surface of the limestone blocks is uneven and bears some traces of the tools used to shape them. This factor affected both the writing and recording of the secondary epigraphy features. In Figure 4, the traces of tools are especially visible on the upper left quadrant of the block.

Within the temple, textual and figural epigraphy were scattered in different parts of the building such as the entry corridor as well as in the chamber preceding the offering area with the altars. They were placed on the ceilings as well as the walls. Several clusters were recorded on the northern and eastern wall of the temple chamber.

Rowe also noted the name of Sneferu scratched ‘on the roof of E chamber’,¹⁵ but no further record of this inscription has been identified so far.

The temple provides a unique example of a space that is well-preserved, ‘almost intact’,¹⁶ and allowing for an insight both in the space that the visitors originally saw and in the transformation of that

[13] See a differently organised analysis in Ragazzoli 2023 or Den Doncker 2023.

[14] Ragazzoli 2023, 139.

[15] UPMAA, Meydum, 01.21, Diary 1929–1930, p. 12.

[16] Verner 2020, 123.

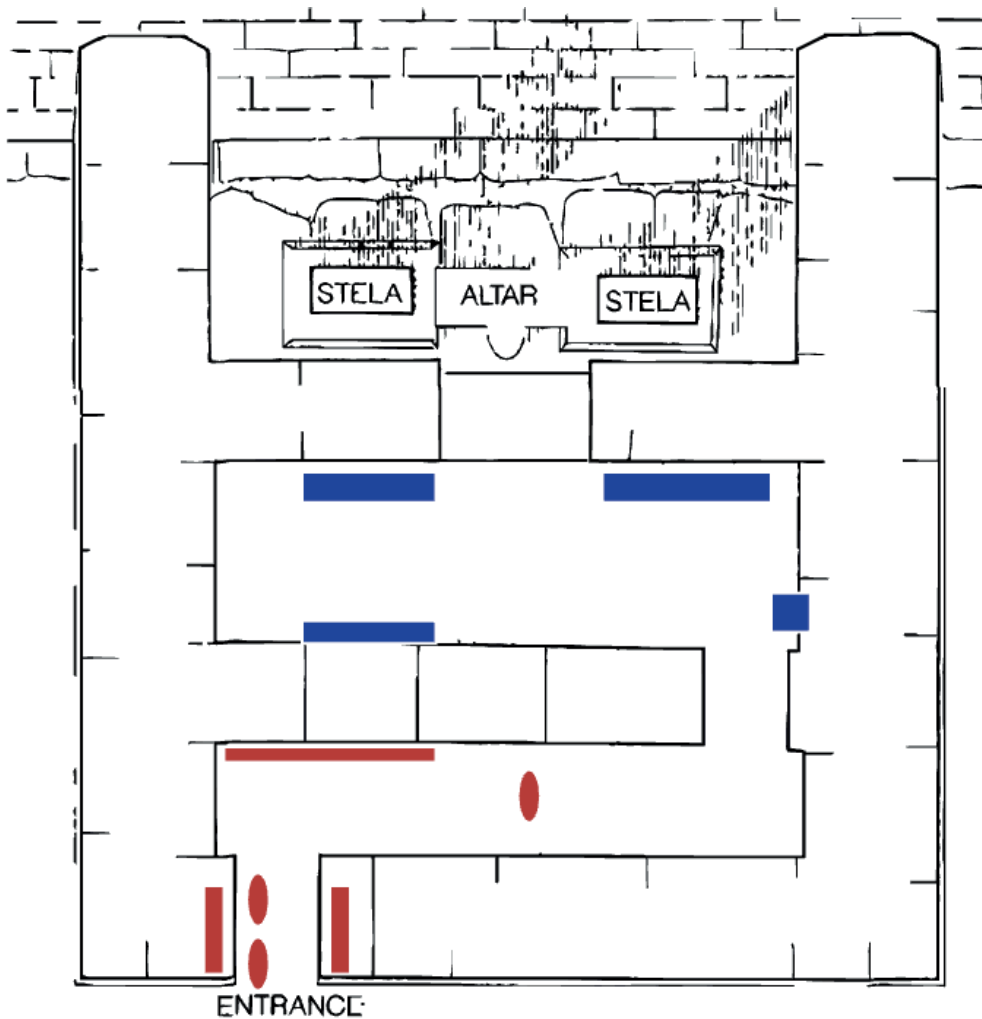


Figure 5. Plan of the temple with the locations of all the recorded secondary epigraphy; rectangles mark the inscriptions on the walls and ovals those on the ceiling; the markers in blue represent Middle Kingdom graffiti and those in red represent New Kingdom dipinti and graffiti.

space by the input of secondary epigraphy, in its original placement both on the walls and the ceiling slabs which are also still *in situ*. Most of the secondary epigraphy in this temple was inscribed in black ink with some insertions in red, while there are some incised texts. Isolated incised bird signs were recorded by Rowe's team on the stelae^[17] and some incised ships were noted already by Petrie on the façade near the door.^[18]

[17] Rowe 1931, pl. xxxvi, figs 1 and 2.

[18] Petrie 1892, 9.

Gunn 1

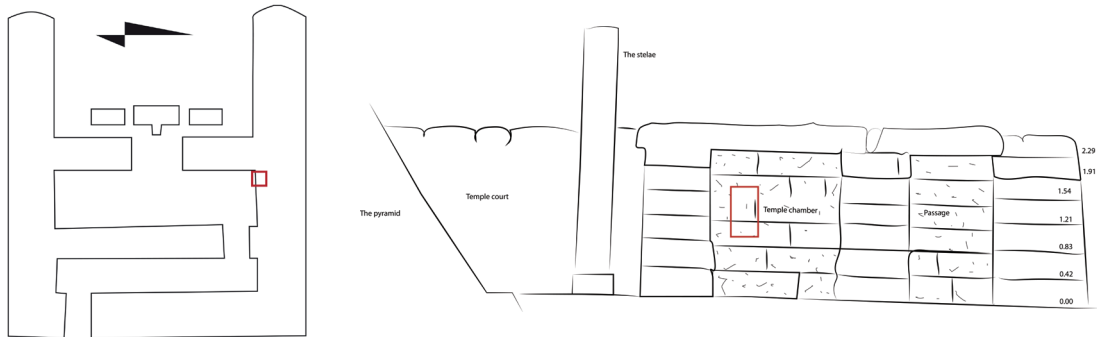
This text is arranged in one vertical column incised in a cursive script, deploying hieratic forms, located in the temple chamber.

This incised ‘true’ graffiti was not given an explicit date by Griffith (1892) but he grouped it with other carved texts, one of which (no. II/**Gunn 3**) contained a name connected with the Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period: Sobekhotepemsef (see similar names in Ranke, *PN I*, 305 with frequent, yet not exclusive, Middle Kingdom usage). Yoyotte (1963, 95 n. 9) supported a Middle Kingdom date due to the palaeography. Other dating options were suggested, such as the late Old Kingdom¹⁹ (notably Petrie 1892, 9; Rowe 1931, 19; and followed by Gundacker 2006, 247–248; this date may be considered a *terminus post quem*).

Location & Placement

Temple chamber; Gunn’s description N 5/2, 4/2, 3/2; as on the north wall of the temple chamber, second block from the left side, fifth to third course of blocks from below. The height above ground corresponds to the placement of **Gunn 2** and **3**, stretching over several courses of stone blocks, albeit on a different wall.

This allows for an approximation of the position on a section view of the temple (based on the section view in Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, vol. 3, tavole, fig. 9, section W–E).

*Text*

Drawing by Petrie (left) and the authors (right).

[19] See review in Wildung 1969b, 138–139; earlier dating was supported by Rowe 1931, 18–19.

[1] *wnn nfr:w rn n nswt bitj snfr:w ʿnh d.t r nh*

[1] The name of the Dual King Sneferu, living forever and ever, will be most beautiful/perfect.

Commentary

The above translation follows the structure suggested by Griffith, who translated ‘Thrice beautiful is the name of King Seneferu’ (Petrie 1892, 40), but it is open to discussion (see also below).

As noted above, a Middle Kingdom date was suggested by Yoyotte (1963, 95 n. 9), who (and Wildung 1969b, 138) read . ²⁰ Such a date for the graffito is plausible because the other comparable vertical incised texts contain names more frequent in or typical for Middle Kingdom sources. The technique and individual signs may also be compared to the other incised texts located in the same chamber but on its eastern wall.

Yet, even if a future review and preferably photogrammetry is conducted, dating incised signs of this character will remain challenging. It would be very difficult to base a date on the palaeography alone, ²¹ as similar sign forms have been encountered at other sites which are datable to later periods. ²² Equally, it could be argued that the signs are comparable to, albeit less elaborate than, the Old Kingdom graffiti in other locations and that the 5th or 6th Dynasty dating which was also proposed still stands as a possibility. See for instance examples in Rzepka 2003, or indeed relevant signs in Dobrev et al. 2011 ²³ (16, Np.06–07 for ; 26, Pt. 424 for ; 6 passim for ; 47, esp. P 1.3531f or P1.591a for ).

If the Middle Kingdom is accepted as the date for these inscriptions, this would indicate that Middle Kingdom visitors associated both Meidum and Dahshur with Sneferu (the cult of this king flourished in Dahshur in the Middle Kingdom). ²⁴ If the Old Kingdom is accepted as an option then the cult of Sneferu at Meidum could be part of a developing veneration of both the king and several gods with whom he was associated in the line of reasoning presented by Wildung, namely that by the 5th Dynasty the precinct at Meidum was an equivalent of the *meret* sanctuary of the king where he was venerated alongside and as a manifestation of other gods. ²⁵ Two complex questions arise. First, if this was the case, then the graffito would have come from an active phase of use of the temple as part of the precinct. This is not impossible or completely unknown. Second, however, is more entangled: with which divine figure is Sneferu identified? The titles of his priests as well as his own identification in other (later) texts name Horus. Yet **Gunn 1** suggests other, additional possibilities.

As regards the text content and syntax: the particle *wnn* could be taken for a future converter (see Schenkel 2012, 205–206); in this case using *wnn* as a future converter for a sentence with the adjective preceding the noun (Winand & Malaise 1999, §496).

The title used for the deceased king is the same as it would be for a living sovereign. The name of Sneferu is provided with an elaborate classifier of an enthroned royal figure , comparable, however,

[20] Gundacker 2006, 101 suggested a different, more extensive reading, on which see below.

[21] Yet, the locations and overall arrangement in columns, as noted by Yoyotte 1963, 95 n.9, should still count toward assigning this text to the Middle Kingdom group.

[22] See Ali 2002, for example the , see Taf. 50.

[23] Sign construction would allow the extension of comparisons to ink-written signs, albeit with caveats, see also: <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/14122> or <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/18373> (accessed 27/2/2026).

[24] Wildung 1969a, 107–128, Rees forthcoming..

[25] Wildung 1969a, 109.

to the writing in Old Kingdom Abusir papyri (Möller *HP* I, 2.28): . Indeed, Yoyotte linked this 'majestic' depiction of the king to Old Kingdom texts, for example in South Dahshur.²⁶

If we accept the first reading above, then both concepts of Egyptian time — linear and cyclical — are referred to using the formula *d.t r nhh*. The linear *d.t* time was connected to Osiris Wennefer: 'the one who exists in perfection'.²⁷ The end signs of *nhh* are damaged and not clearly visible in the record. The king is also referred to as 'living', in a manner that would also be appropriate for a living sovereign.

Gunn's interpretation was 'The name of the Dual King Sneferu, living forever and ever, is Wennefer', directly linking the deceased king with Osiris.²⁸ In Rowe 1931, 19, Gunn was quoted thus: 'Concerning this title, Mr. Gunn writes me that "the *nfr* is not simply adjective, *nufer*, but pseudo-participle, *nofrew* or *nofrej*; *wnn* is of course the participle, so that we have something like 'he who is good' (literally, 'he who exists beautifully' or, 'he who exists well')". Wildung suggested that it meant the existence of Sneferu is like that of Wennefer.²⁹

Building on Yoyotte, Wildung, and Fecht (all three admitted a level of speculation in interpreting this graffito),³⁰ Gundacker promoted the reading: , *wnn-nfr.w rn nj nswt bitj snfr.w hnt.j [imntj.w]*, 'Wennefer is the name of the Dual King Sneferu, the foremost of the Westerners, Khontamenti'.³¹

The reading that links Sneferu with Osiris (or Khontamenti) would be particularly interesting if the dating of the graffito is regarded as open and the late Old Kingdom is accepted as a possibility. In that instance, the text would become another piece of early evidence for the developing cult of this god. Given recent evidence for the cult of Osiris in late 5th Dynasty Saqqara,³² this option must be at least taken into consideration.

In every suggested reading, the graffito would reference some important cultural concepts. First, the specific value of the royal name(s) is accentuated throughout Egyptian history by visual emphasis (*serekh*, cartouches) as well as by the developing complexity of the structure and contents of the name(s). The royal name could be personified/embodied and as such it could act in ways usually reserved for royal figures, such as smiting enemies.³³ It could also be treated with special care in basilophoric names.³⁴ Venerating a royal name is thus a part of a veneration of the king: Spieser defined the royal name as a 'hypostasis' of the king.³⁵

[26] Yoyotte 1963, 95.

[27] Assmann in Fischl et al. 2013, 359.

[28] UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, 'Translations'. This of course gave him the date as 6th Dynasty, as it was assumed the title associated with Osiris was not likely to have been used earlier.

[29] Wildung 1969a, 118, reviewed by Graefe 1990, 260.

[30] Fecht 1960, 48; Fecht accepted the Old Kingdom date for this inscription and for **Gunn 2**, but with a caveat, as Rowe's dating was tentative.

[31] Gundacker 2006, 101.

[32] For an introduction to the complex of Djedkare Isesi and Setibhor, see Megahed and Vymazalová 2020 and 2022.

[33] Hamden 2023. For the later, New Kingdom, representations and agency of royal names, see Spieser 2000.

[34] Hamilton 2021.

[35] Spieser 2000, ch. VI.

The concept of a ‘good name,’ or a name, *rn*, that was to become good, *nfr*, is part of private Egyptian commemorative practice: the Middle Kingdom biographical texts thematise an expectation (and a need) to have a ‘good name’ if one wanted to be remembered.³⁶ As succinctly put by Antef, son of Myt on the stela BM EA 1164: *nfr rn=i wnn sh3(=i) r-mn mjn*, ‘(so that) my name would be good (and) my memory would last until today’.³⁷ Note also the use of *wnn* in the second part of the statement. These biographical texts concern non-royal, private, figures. Referring to a king in a similar way would suggest an understanding of (historical) memory as — on some level — sharing the concept that good deeds and therefore a good name were the building blocks of social and cultural memory across the royal and private spheres.

The interpretation that links the king directly with deities such as (Osiris) Wennefer and Khontamenti (who became merged)³⁸ connects Sneferu to the pantheon closely involved with the underworld and the necropolis. Yet, late Old Kingdom evidence otherwise does not unequivocally identify the king and Osiris.³⁹

E. Graefe (1990), discussing the earlier work of H. Goedicke, added that it was possible the writer was working with the literal meaning of both Wennefer (‘living in goodness’) and Sneferu (‘maker of good’) and that the graffito referenced a developing good reputation of the king, a reputation enhanced by the writing of his name! Extending cautiously the idea of a long-standing tradition, Graefe⁴⁰ referenced also the Coptic legend recorded by John of Nikiu concerning a good king Ⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟⲩⲣⲓ.

It is also possible to consider that the text articulated a *double entendre*: the memory of a good name (and by extension character) combined with the identification of the king with Horus⁴¹ and with Osiris.⁴² This last option would align with a possibility suggested by Wildung for the interpretation of the falcon statue BM EA 41745,⁴³ labelled with a *ntr nfr nb t3.wy snfr.w*, where the falcon would reference Horus and, Wildung believes, *ntr nfr* Osiris. However, this statue fragment may also be dated to the Middle Kingdom, thus cementing the ambivalence.

Documentation & References

GIA Gunn Mss. notebook 54, no. 1, p. 7; Petrie 1892, pl. XXXII, i; Rowe photographs 568, 569, 570, 571, 584; PM IV, 96. UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 1.⁴⁴ Rowe 1931, 18; Fecht 1960, 48;

[36] Overview of values and expressions of non-royal commemoration in Landgráfová 2011.

[37] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/text/JKT5NQPQAJC6DLYLZWSNCAHPYM>, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (accessed: 20/7/2025). Also Landgráfová 2011, 36–39.

[38] As regards the early cult of Osiris see Smith 2017 and Végh 2021.

[39] Smith 2017, ch. 3.7.

[40] Graefe 1990, 261–262.

[41] Priestly titles of *hm ntr hrw snfr.w* or *hrw nb-m3̄.t* are attested from the later Old Kingdom; Gundacker 2006, 247. Lists of priests and earlier references Rowe 1931, 17–18; Wildung 1969a, 105–113.

[42] This would align perhaps with views expressed in later tradition, namely that ‘the nocturnal encounter between Re and Osiris utilized the imagery of birth and rebirth. As a result of their meeting, Re was reborn as Horus. Thus he was, in effect, the offspring of Osiris’ (Smith 2017, 304).

[43] PM VII, 358; Wildung 1969a, 111–112.

[44] The abbreviation stands for UPMAA, **Meydum**, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, formerly known as ‘Meydum Expedition Records, PU-Mu. 1013, University Museum Archives, Group Egypt, Series Meydum’, Containers (boxes) 22 and 23.

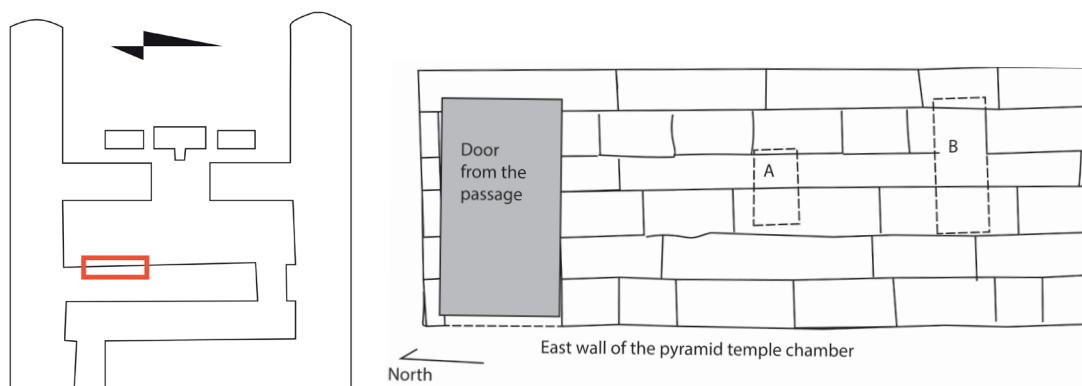
Wildung 1969a, 117–119 (Wildung also traced the graffiti in 1966, as per 1960, 117 n. 8); Wildung 1969b, 138–140; Graefe 1990, 260; Gundacker 2006, 101.

Gunn 2

This text was not published by Petrie and consists of an incised graffiti written in a column, similar to **Gunn 1**. Its dating and interpretation pose similar challenges to **Gunn 1**.

Location & Placement

The temple chamber, in Gunn's description: E 6/4; 5/6; 4/4; thus, located on the east wall, fourth block, sixth to fourth course from the ground. Rowe's sketch shows this graffiti in position B:



Text



wn<n> nfr:w r<n> hr nswt bitj [...] <the name of> Horus, the Dual king [...] will be beautiful [...]
Or: Wennefer is Horus Dual King [...]

Commentary

The text of this graffiti strongly resembles **Gunn 1**. It may be interpreted as (1) either using the construction of the particle *wnn* followed by *nfr:w* — ‘perfection’ — to praise a king, most probably Sneferu, or (2) as an equation of the king with Wennefer (Osiris). It is likely that it belongs to the same group of

Gunn's notes, former folder 23/4.

incised vertical texts from the Middle Kingdom (or, speculatively, late Old Kingdom). The surviving portion of the text does not display the name of Sneferu; however, the expression Horus Sneferu was frequently used to denote the owner of the Meidum precinct, including in later New Kingdom dipinti, and the 'Horus' in this text is likely to have been followed by the king's name.⁴⁵ Gunn's first reading in notebook 54 was more fragmentary, which he later improved most likely with Černý's help.⁴⁶

As both **Gunn 1** and **Gunn 2** are described and drawn as extending over several blocks, these texts were comparatively large compared to the later and smaller dipinti features, which appeared as clusters within one block and only occasionally straddled more than one.

The lines of these true graffiti are very faint and the photograph provided challenging material to trace, however, the outlines of the signs in the upper part of this graffiti were identified.

A possibly related (trial?) graffiti showing two *nfr* signs was identified on the second block of the east wall (from left), fourth row (**Gunn 33**).

Documentation & References

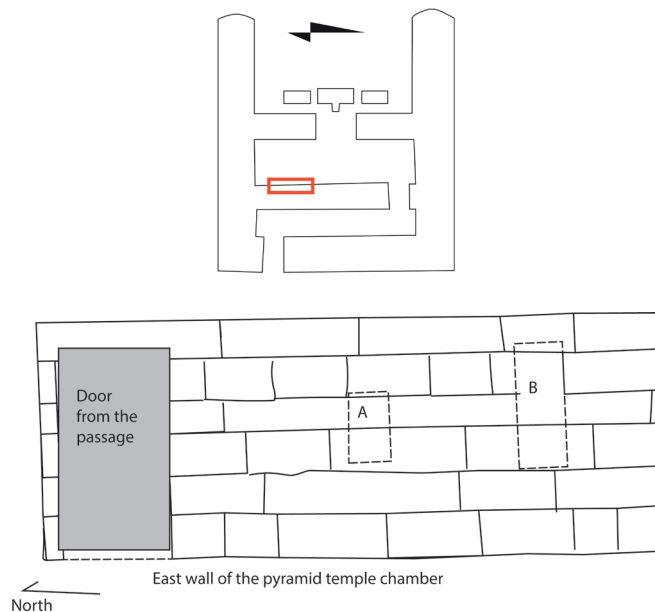
Not published by Petrie/Griffith 1892; Gunn Mss. notebook 54, no. 2, p. 9; Rowe photographs 572, 573; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no 2; Navratilova 2011.

Gunn 3

This is a text in one column, an incised signature graffiti.

Location & Placement

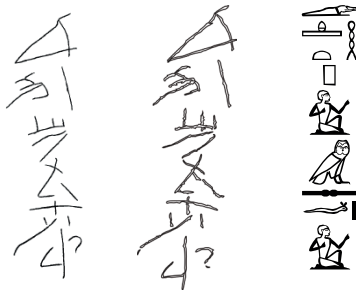
East wall of the temple chamber; Gunn: E 5/4, i.e., fourth block from the left wall, in the fifth course of blocks from below. Probably indicated by position 'A' on the sketch:



[45] See above, the deification of Sneferu and his identification with Horus have most likely Old Kingdom roots.

[46] Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 2.

Text



Drawing by Petrie (left) and the authors (right).

sbk-ḥtp-m-sf Sobekhotepemsef

The reading could also be plausibly varied to:



Commentary

A single column identifying a visitor only by name without any title or affiliation. Gunn noted this anomaly in his file [*sic!*]. This would be untypical, but not impossible in any period. The text could have been related to **Gunn 2**, but there is no clear link apart from the texts being relatively close and it is also close to **Gunn 4**.

The name Sobekhotepemsef (or -saf) is not mentioned in Ranke, who lists Sobekemsaf; Ranke *PN I*, 304,7. *PNM* lists Sobekhotepemhotep,⁴⁷ a late 12th Dynasty name; Griffith suggested a 13th Dynasty dating (Griffith in Petrie 1892, 40).

The writing of the crocodile sign has Middle Kingdom parallels e.g. in Gebel es-Silsila (for instance, Nilsson and Faraman 2025, no. 10).

As this text is very likely of a Middle Kingdom date, it may support the overall dating of incised graffiti in the temple chamber to this period, although some reservations remain: earlier texts could have referenced Sneferu and these possibly later additions named the first visitors who wanted to emphasize their presence. Execution of the handwriting is also different from the sharper, narrower lines of **Gunn 1** and **Gunn 2**.

Documentation & References

Gunn Mss., notebook 54; Petrie, *Medum*, Pl. XXXII, ii, Rowe photograph 528; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 3.

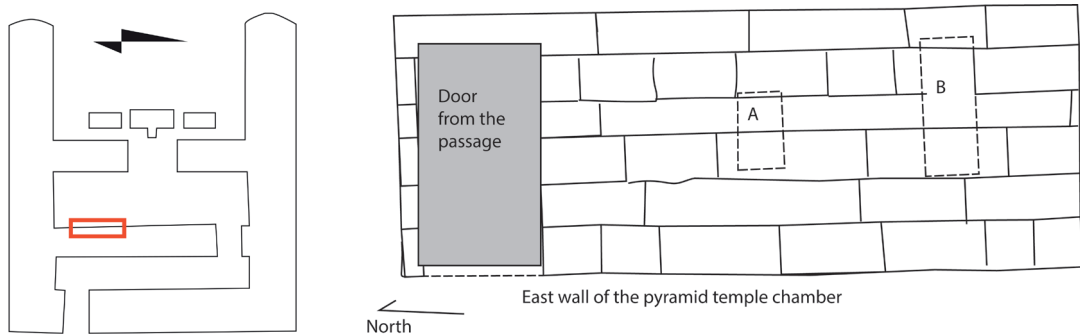
[47] <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/6/name/1830>, from Stela Liverpool WM M.13634.

Gunn 4

This is another incised column graffito of a suspected Middle Kingdom date, clustered in approximately the same area as **Gunn 3**.

Location & Placement

Gunn: E 5/4; i.e., on the eastern wall of the temple chamber, fourth block from the left in the fifth course from below, to the left of the previous graffito **Gunn 3**. Probably indicated by position ‘A’ on the sketch:

*Text*

Drawing by Petrie (far left) and the authors (centre).

sh3 in=f-it=f(?) Scribe Aneftf

Commentary

Opening with a scribal title, this text resembles what Egyptology came to consider as a typical secondary inscription thematising the social and cultural capital ('scribe') of the visitor and indicating his name (probably Ranke, *PN I*, 36,11, not *PN I*, 34,5). The writing seems to differ from otherwise attested *sh3 in=f-it=f(?)*, but it is possible that the writer struggled with his tool and/or the surface.

This text in a vertical column is close in overall arrangement to **Gunn 1–3**, suggesting a similar date; it is located close to 3. It is a substantially earlier example of creating a scribal 'social place' than its more numerous followers in the New Kingdom, which arrogated both royal and private locations.⁴⁸

[48] Compare Ragazzoli 2013; Verhoeven 2023.

Documentation & References

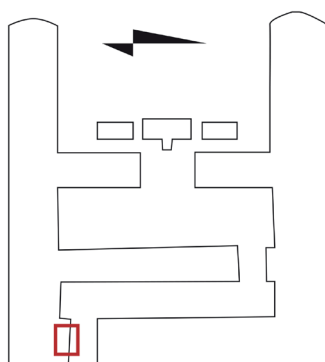
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXII, iii; Rowe photograph 527; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, no. 4 on p. 6; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 4.

Gunn 5

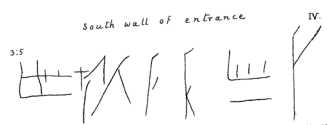
A horizontal incised graffito containing only an isolated name.

Location & Placement

Gunn: entrance S 4/1; i.e., the entrance, south wall, first block from the left on the fourth course, one line of an incised graffito.



Text (the only record available is Petrie 1892)



imn-snb Ameniseneb (?), or: *imny* [...] Ameny [...]

Commentary

Although name-only graffiti are not typical for more formal visitors' texts in the pyramid precincts, they do appear (the Step Pyramid precinct has several examples⁴⁹). The reading was discussed by Gunn and Černý, as seen in the notes in Gunn notebook 54, p.7: Černý did not agree with the above reading and suggested , noting in his 1932 comment that there was 'nothing to be done,' presumably to specify the reading further or to decide which reading is more accurate. It is also possible to speculate on a reading , suggesting there was a second name included. If the one-line graffito

[49] Navratilova 2015b, review on p. 257.

contained more than one name, then an expected sequence would be X son of Y, but this reading is not supported by the available evidence.

The palaeography of this text is more difficult to assess as the reading is not clear. Some signs could pass as either Middle or New Kingdom (notably the different variants of 𓂏).⁵⁰

The location of this text in the entrance area puts it in the context of other secondary epigraphy dated to the New Kingdom; the other secondary inscriptions in this area are dipinti, and some of them are located on the ceiling of this space (Gunn 7, 14, 15, 26).

The text, although executed in a different technique, is probably related to these New Kingdom dipinti and not to the other incised graffiti that are written in vertical columns and located in another area of the temple.

Documentation & References

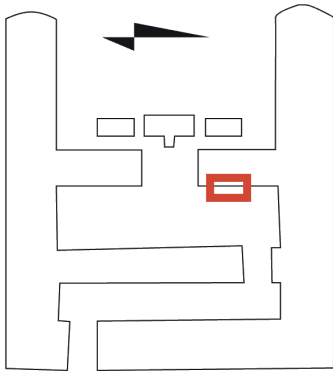
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXII, iv; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, 7; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 5; no photograph, according to Gunn notebook 54 'impossible to photo'.

Gunn 6

A vertical incised text, written in one column.

Location & Placement

Temple chamber, west wall: Gunn: W 5/1: north of the door; first block from the left, on the fifth course.



Text



[50] See also Ali 2002, Taf. 130–131.

sh3 hrj-m-s<3>f Scribe Horemsaf

Commentary

This text has a sequence of title and name, as has **Gunn 4**; the name is typical for the Middle Kingdom (see statue BM EA27403), albeit also attested in the Late Period (e.g. the canopic vase Louvre E 18877). However, the standard writing of this name is different (Ranke *PN I*, 248,12, more typically ).

This graffito belongs to the series of vertical incised inscriptions which might be considered as representative of Middle Kingdom graffiti activity in the temple, linked also by their location in the temple chamber and a similar height above ground. The photograph allows for capturing the opening and closing signs of the inscriptions more clearly than the signs in the middle part of the text.

References

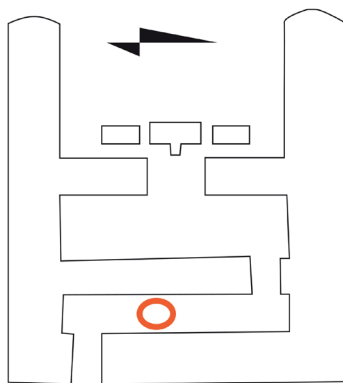
Not published by Petrie 1892; GIA Gunn notebook 54, p. 8; Rowe photograph 550; Meidum/Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, UPMAA, former folder 23/4, no. 6.

Gunn 7

A vertical inscription, in the format of an incised graffito.

Location & Placement

Ceiling of the passage, described as located on the middle slab.



Text



snfr:w-nh sm3 [...] Sneferu-ankh-sema(?)

Commentary

An incised text that is more complicated to read. It was not included in Petrie's records and neither Gunn nor Černý were sure about the reading of the signs. They suggested that the text might have been longer; there could also have been a preceding sign *s3*, extending the text into 'son of Sneferu-ankh...'. Rowe's photograph 540 shows that the surface of the wall is very uneven and thus that discerning the signs of this secondary incised text from chisel marks is not straightforward.

The signs *s-nfr* at the top and the classifier A1 at the bottom of the inscription are, however, clear, identifying this text as likely a personal name containing a reference to Sneferu. The basilophoric name

is similar to names like Senwosretankh (a Middle Kingdom name⁵¹), etc. In this case, the name likely referenced a past king who was seen as an important figure and whose cult was celebrated at Dahshur and possibly also Meidum. Another Middle Kingdom example of a basilophoric name concerned with Sneferu is attested in Meidum: the statue of the lady Sneferu-kheti.⁵² Both putative Sneferu-ankh and Sneferu-kheti would be thus connected with the temple space.

The ceiling location is interesting, as it could have implied a contemporary low level of debris that made writing on the ceiling more convenient and it is far from an isolated example. Several other secondary epigraphy features dated to the New Kingdom (**Gunn 14, 15**) are located on the ceiling of the entrance. Other, particularly later New Kingdom, examples from different sites across Egypt showcase similar behaviour, for instance several dipinti in the *Grotte des scribes*.⁵³

Documentation & References

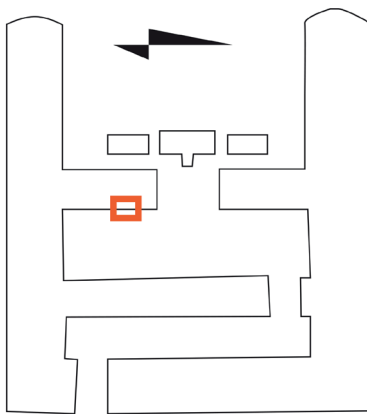
Not published by Petrie 1892; Rowe photograph 540; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 9; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no.7; Navratilova 2011.

Gunn 8

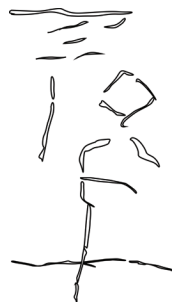
A vertical, one-column inscription from the temple chamber, with only a photographic record.

Location & Placement

Temple chamber; Gunn: W, 5/2; i.e., west wall, fifth row of blocks, second block from the left; Gunn also specified ‘south of the door’ in the record UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 8.



Text



Unclear.

Commentary

Another vertical inscription, incised. The traces captured by Gunn suggest a text also beginning with *wnn nfr*, like texts **Gunn 1 and 2**.

[51] See for instance Yamamoto 2021 for one dignitary with this name buried at North Dahshur; another earlier one was buried at Lisht (Arnold 2006, 13–24).

[52] Harpur 2001, 23, with fig. 29, with previous bibliography; Rowe 1931, 19; statue Berlin ÄM 20581. See chapter *Meidum after Sneferu* below.

[53] Ragazzoli 2017a, 33–34.

Wnn as the opening sign is likely, but the following text is unclear. Accepting this reading would indicate that similar texts were likely located on the north (**Gunn 1**), east (**Gunn 2**), and west (**Gunn 8**) walls of the temple chamber, beginning approximately at the same height above the floor.

Documentation & References

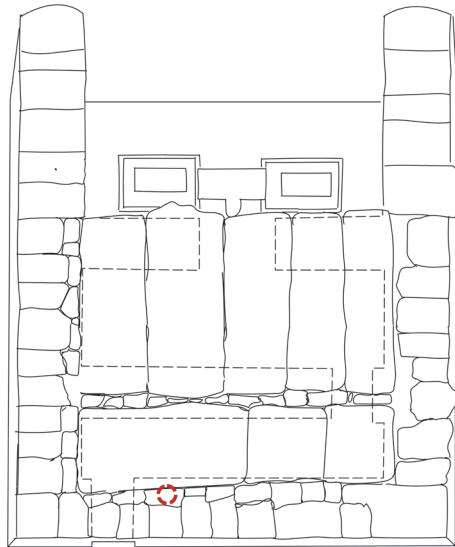
Not published by Petrie; Rowe photograph 551; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 10; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 8; Navratilova 2011.

Gunn 9

This figural secondary epigraphy feature is located on the temple roof and was added to this catalogue due to its inclusion in the Gunn records. However, as will be explained, it is likely that this is in fact a team mark left by the temple builders and has no link to the reception history of the temple.

Location & Placement

‘Temple roof, middle of east end’. The drawing indicates a probable location based on this description and on Rowe 1931, pl. XI, fig. 2. Drawing of the temple roof based on Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, vol. 3, tavole.



Text/Figure

A plant — possibly a papyrus stalk — *w3d*. Drawing based on Rowe photograph 541.



w3d(.t), fresh/green.

Commentary

The outline of a plant is executed with deep cuts, possibly made by a professional tool. Rowe and his team had already interpreted it as an Old Kingdom ‘gang’ name⁵⁴ but, nonetheless, Gunn kept it in both iterations of his graffiti records, notebook 54 (GIA) and file Meydum 02.07 (UPMAA).

It strongly resembles some of the builders’ dipinti later noted on other blocks in the pyramid precinct by A. el-Khouli’s team and published by P. Posener-Kriéger, particularly dipinti B.13, B.15, B.18 and B.20, which she also reads as *w3d.t*.⁵⁵ The signs and texts grouped by Posener-Kriéger under letter B likely distinguished phyles or sections of phyles⁵⁶ that took part in the stone transportation and building process. These inscriptions were located on the revetment and other blocks of the pyramid and were mostly red ink dipinti — only one (a different sign) is incised (Graffito E). *w3d* or *w3d.t* is an abbreviation of the phyle name frequently used in the early Old Kingdom.⁵⁷

As regards the material properties of **Gunn 9**, its position on the roof and the possibility that it was executed by a stonemason’s tool are both exceptions compared to other secondary epigraphy features in the temple.⁵⁸ An observation of the photograph is indicative that relatively deep cuts were used to produce this mark — a more accurate analysis of the tool will be possible if more complex imaging can be deployed in the future; it is possible that it was a flint chisel (compare Serotta 2023).

Even if it were hypothetically possible to attribute the sign to priests or visitors in the later phases of the life of this pyramid precinct, as temple roofs are known locations for secondary epigraphy, a substantially later date is unlikely. The contents as well as the context of New Kingdom visitors’ texts and later temple roof graffiti production is substantially different, as the temple roof graffiti of large New Kingdom temples probably reflect temple staff practices.⁵⁹ Given that ‘green’ as a phyle name abbreviation could also reflect a funerary priesthood phyle,⁶⁰ one other possibility could be raised: namely that this incised sign, unlike the dipinti on revetment blocks, is not a mark linked to the building crews but to a cult phyle of an Old Kingdom date.⁶¹

Documentation & References

Not published by Petrie; Rowe photograph 541; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 11; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 9; Navratilova 2011. Rowe 1931, pl. VI, fig. 9 and XI, fig. 2 and XXXVIII, fig. 1.

[54] Rowe 1931, p. 39, pl. VI no. 9 – the ‘vigorous gang’, and pl. xxxviii, fig. 1. On a related topic of crew names and crew section names see also Helck 1973, Roth 1991, Andrassy 2009, Jüngling 2025, with bibliographies, including on the expected three levels of Old Kingdom workforce organisation. This Meidum example is not mentioned by Roth 1991, 15 or 125.

[55] Khoulî et al. 1991, 17–21; see pl. 9 for B.13 and B.15, and pl. 10 for dipinti B.18 and B.20; reading on p. 20.

[56] For organisation see Roth 1991, 120, discussed by Andrassy 2009, 3.

[57] Roth 1991, 3 and 30–34; Andrassy 2009, 2; also Helck 1973 with earlier references.

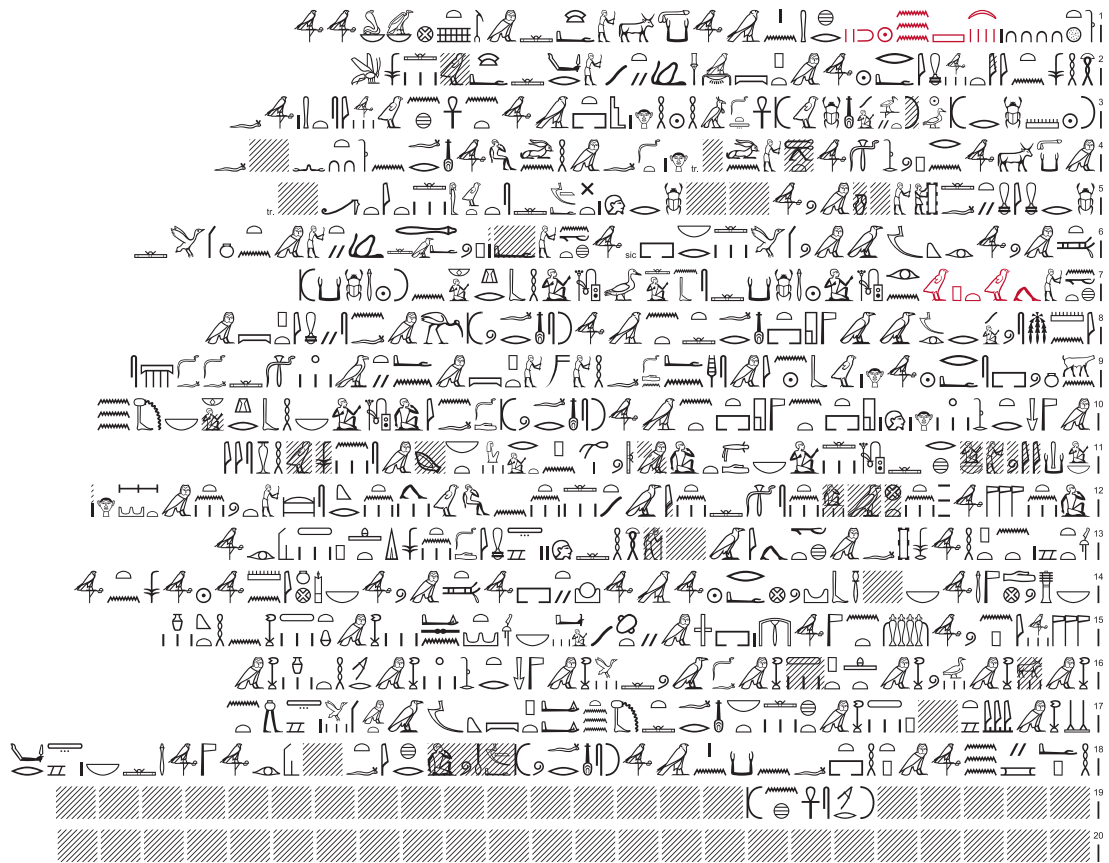
[58] With the possible exception of an incised name of Sneferu that Rowe mentioned as located on the roof but of which no records have yet been identified (see UPMAA, Meydum, 01.21, Diary 1929–1930, p. 12).

[59] Jacquet Gordon 2003. Staff practices, both expressing devotion and indexing day-to-day work, were also referenced in much later Demotic dipinti and graffiti in animal necropoleis, such as the secondary burial space in the Theban tomb cluster around TT 11, the tomb of Djehuty: see Jasnow et al. 2021; with warm thanks to Francisco Bosch-Puche for pointing out & discussing this corpus with the authors.

[60] See Helck 1973.

[61] If hypothetically so, it would provide more evidence for the five phyle system in the earlier Old Kingdom, compare discussion in Roth 1991, 87.

Hieroglyphic Transcription



[1] *h3.t-sp 41 3bd 4 šmw sw 12 hr hm n hr k3-nh.t h^c m w3s.t nb.ty*

[2] *w3h nsyt mi R^c m p.t hr-nbw shm ph.ty dsr h^cw nsw(t)-bitj*

[3] *(mn-hpr-R^c) s3-r^c (dhw.tj-ms nfr hpr.w) ^cnh d.t (r) nhh hr s.t hr nt ^cnh.w ist hm=f*

[4] *m k3-nh.t rnp w3d iti? wn ... hr dt=f m hwn-nfr n rnpt 20 n ...f*

[5] *hpr mi mity=f kd hnm hpr tp-st? m3^c stwt tit*

[6] *tm ir km3 nb-r-dr nht ^c pw 3 ph.ty m-tn.w*

[7] *nh.t tw.t pw ir:n sh3 3-hpr-k3-r^c snb s3 sh3 hry-hb n (3-hpr-k3-R^c)*

[8] *Imn-ms r m33 hw.t-ntr nfr:t n.t hr (snfr:w) gm.n=f sy mi p.t m*

[9] *hnw=s R^c hr wbn im=s ^ch^c.n dd.n=f hw pt m ^cnti.w w3d dfdf*

[10] *m sntr hr tp hw.t n.t hw.t ntr n.t hr (snfr:w) dd.n=f i.sh3 nb hry-hb nb w^cb*

[11] *nb hmy-k3 nb rh sh3w nb sd.t m wd pn rm.t nb.t sdm=sn sw hsy*

[12] *=tn ntrw=tn nwt.yw=tn swd=tn i3.t=tn n hrd.w=tn krs.tw=tn m sp3.t hr*

[13] *imnt.t n.t Pth inb rsy=f m-h.t i3w w3h tp B mi dd=tn htp di nsw n Wsir*

[14] *nb ddw ntr 3 nb 3bdw R^c hr 3ht.y tm nb Twnw Imn-R^c nsw*

[15] *ntr.w Inpw hn.ty sh-ntr imy wt nb lmnt.t di=sn h3 m t h3 m hn(k).t*

[16] *h3 m k3.w h3 m 3pd.w h3 m htp.t h3 m df3w h3 m sntr h3 mrh.t h3 m*

[17] *mnht h3 m s.ht ... h3 m ht nb.t nfr.t wfb.t dd p.t km3 t3 in.t*

[18] *h3py m tph.t=f n k3 n hr (snfr.w) m3c-hrw hr it (=f) Wsir 3 nb t3 dsr*

[19](mr.s 3nh).....

[20]

[1] Regnal year 41, month 4 of Shemou season, day 12, under the Majesty of Horus, mighty Bull who appears in Thebes, he of the Two Ladies.

[2] (He) of a lasting kingship like Re in the sky, the golden falcon, mighty in strength of a sacred appearance, king of Upper and Lower Egypt.

[3] Menkheperre, Son of Re Thutmose, he of beautiful forms, may he live (for) ever and ever upon the throne of Horus (as ruler) of the living. Now His Majesty,

[4] as vigorous as a young and strong bull ... his form like a young male soldier of 20 years old. No

[5] likeness has been formed, Khnoum formed (him) ...? in truth, who resembles the features of

[6] Atum, who the universal god produced. He is the mighty handed of great strength in every

[7] victory, then came the scribe Akheperkaresoneb son of the scribe and the lector priest of (the dead king) Akheperkare,

[8] Amenmose to see the beautiful temple of Horus (Sneferu), he found it as heaven

[9] within it, and the sun rising in it. Then he said, may heaven rain with fresh myrrh, may it drip

[10] with incense upon the roof of the temple of Horus (Sneferu) and he said: O every scribe, every lector priest, every ritualist

[11] every ka-servant who knows all writings, who shall read this writing and all people who shall hear them. You will be favoured

[12] by your local gods. You shall hand over your office to your children, and shall be buried on

[13] the west of Ptah south of his wall, after old age and a long life on earth, so you say: An offering that the king gives to Osiris

[14] Lord of Busiris, the great god, lord of Abydos Re-Harakhty, Atum lord of Heliopolis, Amun-Re king of

[15] the gods, Anubis who presides over the divine booth, imy-wt lord of the west: then may they give thousands of loaves, thousands of beer (jugs),

[16] thousands of oxen, thousands of birds, thousands of offerings, thousands of victuals, thousands of incense (sticks?), thousands of mrht-oils, thousands of

[17] clothes, thousands of fields? Thousands of every good and pure thing that heaven gives and the earth produces

[18] that the Nile brings from its sources to the soul of Horus (Sneferu) justified before (his) father Osiris, the great god, lord of the sacred land.....

[19] (Meresankh).....

[20]

Commentary

The hieratic text is arranged horizontally so the lines run in parallels.

Line 1:  This sign for the falcon is written in compact form. The month and day are written in red as in **Gunn 12A** and 17.

Line 3:  This form is attested at the time of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II    (AKU).

Line 4: The sign after *wn* has been wiped out and cannot be read.

Line 5: A few signs after the word *hnm* are very faint.

Line 6: In the term  *nb-r-dr*, the scribe wrote the sign  *dr* in form of the sign  *pr*. Most probably this mistake came from the phonetic homogeneity between *pr* and *dr*. If this conclusion is correct, this could mean that the text was dictated by someone else.

Line 7: *iw.t pw* was written in red ink.

Line 8: The sign of Horus is written in compact form  and relatively different from that of the previous lines.

Line 9:  Most probably this group that comes after the sign  can be read as *l l l*.

Line 9:  Most probably this sign can be read as the classifier  for the word *dfdf*.

Line 10: Wildung 1969b, 139 n. 4, suggested that this should be read as *mr pn* instead of as *hw.t ntr*.

Line 11: The beginning of this line is very faint, so the restoration of this part was based on Gunn's work on this text.

Line 19: Very few signs can be read in this line, mostly the cartouche of queen Meresankh.

Line 20: Gunn in his notebook noted traces of ink in this line, however the image of this graffito does not show any traces.

This interesting dipinto is written in 18th Dynasty hieratic handwriting. The scribe designed this text to be in four sections. The text starts with the complete date, then follows with the royal title of King Thutmose III and praises the king in an elaborate way. The normal 18th Dynasty visitor's formula is then placed in the middle of the text, followed by an *Appeal to the living*.

Line 1: *h3.t/rnp.t-sp 41 3bd 4 šmw sw 12*: Often, visitors' graffiti may be written without dates⁶² or the dates are added to a later part of the text. In many cases, the text starts directly with the characteristic *incipit iw.t pw ir* The red ink used for day and month reflects administrative practice used throughout the New Kingdom; a later example is P Turin Museo Egizio Cat. 2004+2007+2106 (KRI VII, 650–652).

However, a few examples of graffiti with dates survived in the Memphite necropolis, Deir el-Gebrawi, and Gebel Asyut Al-Gharbi. Some of the examples, including dates from Deir el-Gebrawi and Gebel Asyut Al-Gharbi, were written by a scribe called Men who recorded his texts during different years of the reign of the King Amenhotep III. He left about two dozen in the tomb of Iti-ibi-iqr at Gebel Asyut Al-Gharbi, with some of them mentioning dates 1, 2, 3, and 30.⁶³ He also left a graffito naming year 16

[62] Ragazzoli and Hassan 2021, 110.

[63] Verhoeven 2020, I, 217–220.

in the tomb of Ibi at the cemetery of Deir el-Gebrawi.⁶⁴ From the Memphite necropolis, few graffiti include dates, and most of them can be dated to the 18th Dynasty while others date to the Ramesside period. Some of the graffiti date to different years of the king Thutmose III.⁶⁵

Line 7: *sh3 ʿ3-hpr-k3-rʿ snb*: Most probably the graffito was written by a scribe called  Akheperkaresoneb,⁶⁶ whose name is mentioned in line 7 accompanied by his title of scribe. He mentions the name and title of his father Amenmose, as a kind of veneration, who acted as a scribe and lector priest in the temple of Thutmose I. The name Akheperkaresoneb — which is basiliform and references the throne name of Thutmose I — used the papyrus roll (Y1) and seated man (A1) as classifiers at the end of his name. It seems that this is the only attestation of this scribe in the Memphite necropolis, however this name with same title and spelling is attested in two graffiti about 650 km from Meidum in tomb MMA 504 (*la grotte des scribes*) at Deir el-Bahri.⁶⁷ He may have been connected with a temple building of Thutmose I either in the Fayyum or the Memphite area — or indeed within the locality of *Mr-Itm* (Meidum) itself⁶⁸ as a representative of the network of professionals connecting Thebes and other regions of Egypt.

Both graffiti in tomb MMA 504 are accompanied by a portrait representing himself. In graffito O.1.1 (see figure below), he illustrated himself as a noble man seated on a chair.⁶⁹ In graffito O.2.3, Akheperkaresoneb was represented as a man on his knees raising his two hands in adoration of the gods.⁷⁰ In both writings, the name Akheperkaresoneb was unclassified. Most probably the two seated/kneeling representations played a role as determinatives for his name as well. In graffito O.2.3, Akheperkaresoneb son of the lector priest Amenmose took only the title ‘scribe’, however this man can be identified with Akheperkaresoneb who served as the first prophet and lector priest in the temple of Thutmose I.⁷¹ Most probably this graffito was recorded before he was promoted to this higher position which was previously held by his father.⁷² At the same time, Amenmose was mentioned with a man called Neb-meheyt, most probably one of his family members.⁷³ Later, Akheperkaresoneb was mentioned in the Ramesside Theban tomb no. 51 of Weserhat, who acted as the first prophet of the Royal *ka* of Thutmose I.⁷⁴ In a scene in this tomb, Neb-meheyt, Akheperkaresoneb, and Weserhat were depicted, probably as different generations of the same family.⁷⁵ Presumably, Weserhat wanted to depict his ancestors who held the same position. This can be aligned very well with the appeal text, especially in line 12: *swd=tn i3.t=tn*

[64] Ragazzoli and Hassan 2021, 109.

[65] For the graffiti that include dates, see Navratilova 2007, 51, 60, 77, 89–90.

[66] Ranke, *PN I*, 58–7.

[67] For the corpora of graffiti discovered in this tomb, see Ragazzoli 2017a.

[68] A temple locality named as Meratum of Thutmose I is referenced in the Deir el-Bahri inscription published by Naville 1894, vol. V, pl. CXXVIII and p. 5.

[69] Ragazzoli 2017a, 171.

[70] Ragazzoli 2017a, 180.

[71] Legrain 1907, 261.

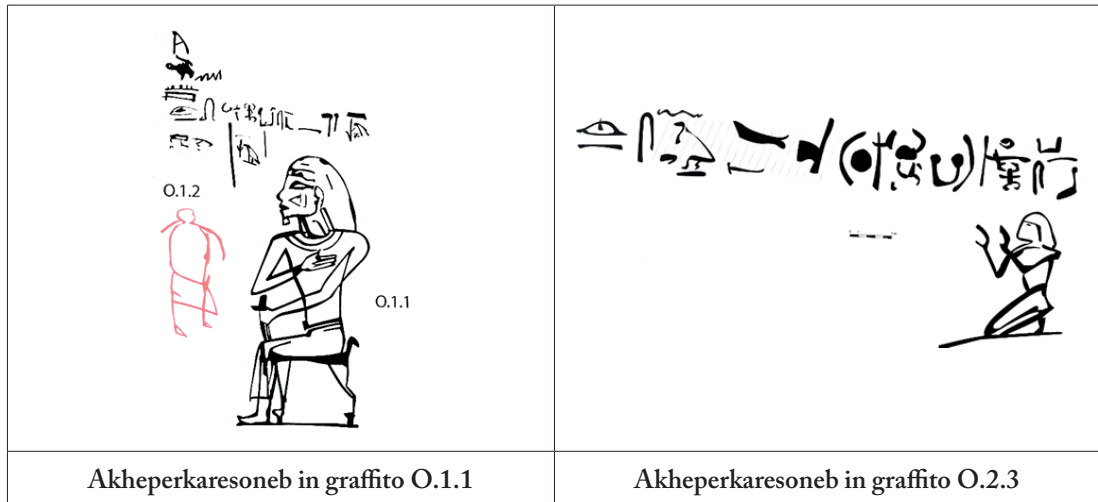
[72] Legrain 1907, 261 n. 2.

[73] Legrain 1907, 261.

[74] *PM I*, 98; Davies et al. 1927.

[75] Davies et al. 1927, pls 16–17.

n hrd.w=tn, ‘your office will be kept to your children.’ It seems that this family kept this position for successive generations extending from the 18th Dynasty to the 19th Dynasty.



Graffito O.1.1 Deir el Bahri.

Line 7: (*ʕ3-hpr-k3-rʕ*): The name of the temple of Thutmose I is mentioned in visitor graffito P.2.15 in the tomb of MMA 504 at Deir el-Bahri, attached to the name of the scribe and the priest *Nb-wʕw*.⁷⁶

Line 8: *ḥw.t-ntr nfr.t n.t ḥr (snfr:w)*: The name of Sneferu is mentioned three times throughout the text (lines 8, 10, 18). His name was placed in a cartouche and preceded by the title *ḥr*. This is an uncommon title to precede the king's name in cartouches — implying a more direct identification of a specific king with Horus as opposed to the more generic understanding of the king as a ‘living Horus’. One suspected parallel of ‘Horus Djoser’ was debated for a graffito in the Step Pyramid precinct but the case is not convincing.⁷⁷ In most cases, the king's name was preceded by *nswt-bitj*. On the other hand, the scribe writes the correct name of the owner of the monument, i.e. Sneferu.⁷⁸ The ‘Horus Sneferu’ designation appears in other dipinti in the temple, notably **Gunn 29**, and it seems to reflect earlier graffiti such as **Gunn 2**. It is, however, likely that the latter correlation is a result of a continuing association of Sneferu with (the falcon of) Horus, not necessarily of New Kingdom writers observing earlier texts, as the New Kingdom dipinti are noticeably absent from the temple chamber where the earlier graffiti are located.

Line 10: *i sh3 nb ...*: For comparison, an early example of an appeal text included in a secondary inscription is the dipinto of Reneny at Elkab, dated to the reign of King Ahmose I, which includes an appeal for the benefit of the visitor rather than the tomb owner.⁷⁹

[76] Ragazzoli 2017a, 237–238. *Twt pw ir.n wʕb sh3 (n) ḥw.t-ntr (ʕ3-hpr-k3-rʕ) nb-wʕw* ‘then the scribe and the priest of the temple of Thutmose I *Nb-wʕw* came to ...’.

[77] Navratilova 2015b, 138.

[78] In some instances, the scribes of the graffiti wrote names inaccurately or attributed the monument to someone else, and examples of this are found in both Thebes (TT 60, Ragazzoli 2013) and Beni Hassan (Hassan 2016).

[79] Demarée 2024.

The appeal genre is attested for the first time in the mid-4th Dynasty and continued until the end of the Roman period.⁸⁰ Appeal texts were mostly employed as funerary texts and placed within tombs. The first known appeals from a non-funerary context are likely from the 11th Dynasty and are found in graffiti from the Hatnub quarry site.⁸¹ During the New Kingdom, when appeal texts were comparatively common, they can be found at tombs and temples throughout Egypt, with more than half of the New Kingdom appeal texts coming from temple contexts.⁸² Some of them are attested at the Karnak temple complex, the temple of Hathor at Deir el-Bahri, Medamud, Coptos, Abydos, Fayyum, and Saqqara.⁸³ Most of the New Kingdom appeal texts were inscribed on the walls of the tombs, statues and stelae.⁸⁴ They were placed at different places in temples and most of them were inscribed in hieroglyphic script, however a few examples were written in hieratic.⁸⁵

It is possible that the nature and the function of the monument played a role in determining the category of people who would be addressed, based on who had access to that space. For example, in the current graffiti of Sneferu the text addresses the scribes and the priests who can access the building and read the texts,⁸⁶ while ordinary people who had no access and were not able to read the texts could only hear (about) them from outside the gate.⁸⁷ The scribes and *w^cb*-priests are the most attested categories in New Kingdom appeal texts.⁸⁸ They played a prominent role in the performative magic of the place e.g. tombs and temples through reading the scenes and formula that can accomplish their power.⁸⁹ In the New Kingdom, a few instances of this genre are found in graffiti such as those in tomb MMA 504 at Deir el-Bahri.⁹⁰

E. 2.14: *i sh3 nb w^cb nb hm-ntr hmy-k3 (m) šd=sn m wd.*

P. 2.15: *ir sh3 nb rmt nb nty iw=f r šd sh3w pn.*

Line 17–18: *dd p.t km3 t3 in.t H^cpy m tph.t=f n k3 n:* This phrase was attested in the offering formula from the early 12th Dynasty onwards.⁹¹

[80] Salvador 2014, 153; for more details about the appeal texts, see Lichtheim 1992; Plater 2001, 224–259; Shubert, 2007.

[81] Salvador 2014, 154.

[82] Salvador 2014, 161.

[83] Salvador 2014, 162.

[84] See Shubert 2007.

[85] For example, Anthes 1928, 28, pl. 15; 35, pl. 16; 38, pl. 16; 42, pl. 42–47; 63–65, pl. 30; 76–77, pl. 31; Černý 1967, 47–50, pls 16–19.

[86] The interplay of appeals and graffiti in other funerary environments was developed and summarised effectively by Ragazzoli 2023, building on previous work by Salvador, who developed the analysis of the appeals and graffiti as constituting a line of communication between the living and deceased or visitors and visited, including in the temple environment (Salvador 2022).

[87] In addition, texts on some carriers, such as statues, were mobile; graffiti were not and required access. Salvador 2022, 33–38.

[88] Ragazzoli, 2013, 283.

[89] Ragazzoli 2013, 282.

[90] Ragazzoli 2017a, 160–62, 236–237.

[91] Stefanović and Satzinger 2014, 29.

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIII, v; Rowe photographs 522, 611, 612; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, 12–16 and Gunn Mss. III.1, 1A and 1B; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 10; Gundacker 2022, 31–33; Rowe 1931, 18; Wildung 1969a, 142–143.

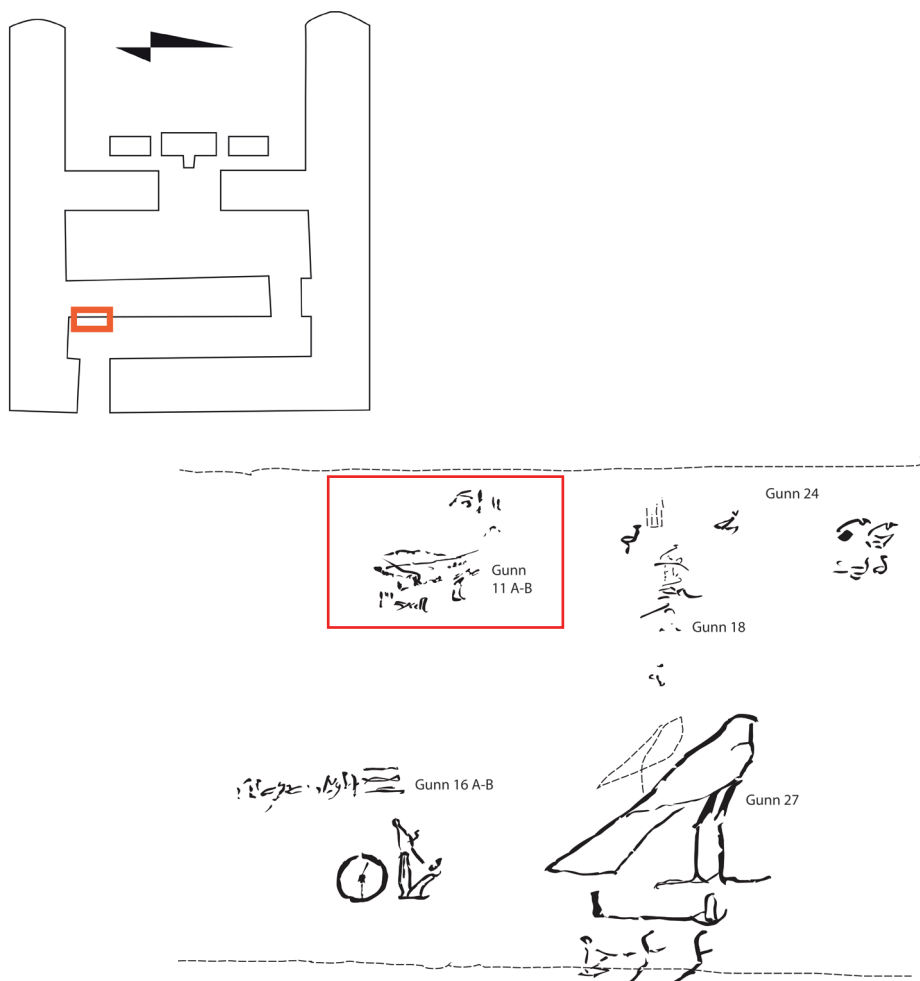
Gunn 11 A–B

Two lines of text, first copied by Petrie for Griffith, surround a figural dipinto (or a large cursive hieroglyph) of a bird, and they, like the figural dipinto, were executed in black ink.

Location & Placement

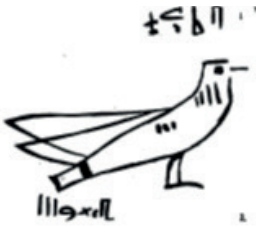
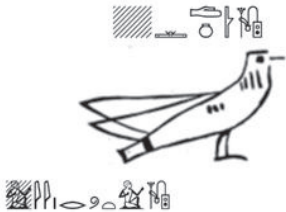
Entrance passage of the temple: passage W 5/1: western wall, fifth course of blocks from below, first block from the left.

It is located to the left of **Gunn 18** and **Gunn 24** and above **Gunn 16A–B**, as well as close to **Gunn 27**.



sh3 kd.w ... Draughtsman [...]

sh3 twri Scribe Turi

		
provisional sketch from Petrie 1892	drawing based on Rowe photo 524	Reading of the text

Commentary

This is one of the interesting examples of dipinti within the Meidum corpus, as it is composed of a text and a figure. The latter could also be considered a large cursive hieroglyph. The large drawing of a bird with two separately drawn wings was represented in the middle of what looks like a dipinto composition, and two short texts in hieratic were recorded: one above the head of the bird and the other one beneath its tail. The whole dipinto was written in black ink. Unfortunately, the photograph recorded by Rowe is not very clear. The facsimile created by Petrie for Griffith can provide more details.

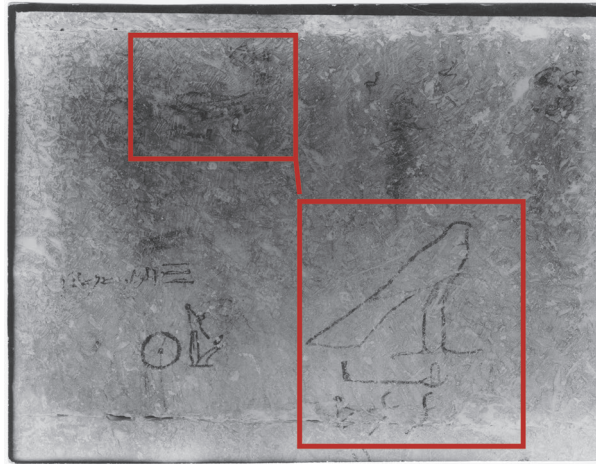
An interpretation of this group must start with the view that it is uncertain if or how the bird and the hieratic texts are connected to each other, and that it is equally uncertain if the whole dipinto was written and drawn by the same individual. However, the compact composition and the thickness of the ink brushstrokes in both the bird drawing and the hieratic texts, as well as the palaeographical features of the texts, suggest that it is plausible to consider that they were made by the same hand and therefore constitute one epigraphic feature.

Another element that can prove this supposition is the quality of the drawing of the bird, which suggests that it was executed by an artist and would fit with the title above the head of the bird, 'draughtsman'. As for the type of the bird, most probably it is not a falcon because Egyptian artists had the knowledge and ability to draw a falcon, or any other specific bird, deliberately and precisely. Indeed, on the same wall, very close to this dipinto, there is a large representation of a falcon. Most probably this drawing represents a swallow (G 36) that in most cases is translated as *wr* 'great'.

This can make a good connection with the text in hieratic where the scribe drew this bird associated with his names and titles to describe himself as 'a great one'. If this supposition is correct, we may be looking at the composite self-presentation of a 'draughtsman, the great one, scribe Turi'. This line of explanation could also be supported by a differently nuanced explanation, namely that the bird is meant to be a cursive hieroglyphic insert in the text, emphasising the importance of the word as a commemoration of the writer. Combinations of this type are seen in TT 60 and in the *Grotte des scribes*.⁹² It is also possible that for an ancient Egyptian professional with some knowledge of visual and written

[92] As noted by Ragazzoli 2013 and 2017a; see also the commentary for **Gunn 10**; the Theban reference to the writer Akheperkaresoneb, who likely wrote the classifier/determinative for his names as a full figure of himself in the *grotte des scribes* (O.1.1 and O.2.3).

culture the above difference (image vs. hieroglyphic insert) was not relevant or that they would be satisfied with their creation being interpreted either way.



Both the drawings of the swallow and the falcon to show the clear differences.

Notes on the reading

- ▷ Černý proposed a different reading for the first line to be . However, in the word *kd*, there is no room for the sign  where only traces of the sign  are visible.
- ▷ The last sign at the end of this word can be interpreted as a sign for the papyrus roll  Y1 rather than G 46.
- ▷ The sign of the seated man and the end of the name of the scribe *twri* is visible in Rowe's image, however it does not appear in Petrie's transcription.

Dating

Although Černý dated these texts to the 19th Dynasty, the handwriting can date this text to as late as the 20th Dynasty, more specifically the reign of Ramesses III. Based on a palaeographic examination, this short text is very similar to the hieratic handwriting in Papyrus Harris, as can be seen in the following notes:

- ▷ The sign , *kd* copied by Petrie is written similarly to that in Papyrus Harris where its lower part was written in a rounded form .⁹³ As attested in Möller, this is a unique writing for this sign.
- ▷ The sign  is very similar to the same sign attested in Papyrus Harris .⁹⁴
- ▷ The sign  has a very similar shape to that written in Papyrus Harris as well .⁹⁵

[93] Möller, *HP* II, 488.

[94] Möller, *HP* II, 537.

[95] Möller, *HP* II, 90.

In Saqqara and other locations, including private tombs and temples, the images of birds, especially the falcon, are frequently attested in secondary epigraphy.⁹⁶ Some earlier examples in the relieving chambers in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri show varied bird signs, including an elaborate quail chick.⁹⁷ In the Saqqara tomb of Horemheb, the goose is also found.⁹⁸ In the Ramesside tomb of Iurokhy at Saqqara, a large drawing of an ostrich was executed beside a royal figure.⁹⁹ A range of different birds and parts of birds is also included in the graffiti and dipinti corpus in the precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur.¹⁰⁰

This range of birds suggests potentially diverse interests and observations by the writers. However, text/image combinations such as that seen in **Gunn 11** are not frequent; an intricate example of this composition is the aforementioned 18th Dynasty tableau dipinto of draughtsmen surrounding the elaborate quail chick in Deir el-Bahri, in the relieving chamber above the Barque Hall of the temple of Hatshepsut.¹⁰¹

This text, however, used columns of hieroglyphic script flanking a full-colour image of the bird. The text commemorates a draughtmen's family, spelling out the names and titles of individuals: it is likely set in the context of staff working in the temple,¹⁰² thus a different scenario from the targeted visit of an earlier monument, but the coincidences raise the question of a possible continuum of commemorative practices, operating across different script registers.

The two hieratic textual dipinti in **Gunn 11** have a standard type of content involving the title and name of the writer, thus also thematising both their/his individual identity and social group allegiance. The title of a 'draughtsman', or indeed any other more specific title, is less common in 18th Dynasty visitors' dipinti and graffiti than the social cypher of the 'scribe' used for the designation of the writers, which is more ubiquitous in this text genre. However, the draughtsman title appears in other dipinti at Meidum, namely **Gunn 14** and **Gunn 15**. It also appears in dipinti by artists/craftsmen involved in the building process of New Kingdom structures, as illustrated by the Deir el-Bahri examples.

As noted earlier, Černý dated these Meidum texts to the 19th Dynasty, but from the perspective of the content they could have also been earlier or later. The presence of craftsmen or draughtsmen implies the diversification of the (scribal) social space¹⁰³ with another set of cultural practices: next to the exercise of literate competence and of immersion in classical texts (so amply demonstrated in Asyut¹⁰⁴), these are visual culture specialists.¹⁰⁵ They could have seen themselves as participating in a process that was potentially motivated by a similar confluence of the intellectual and devotional encounters intended to

[96] Navratilova 2023c, 82.

[97] Barwik 2018a, explaining the frequency of this motif in graffiti, n. 4 on p. 42.

[98] Pelt and Staring 2019, 16.

[99] Hassan and Staring 2025.

[100] A publication is forthcoming by H. Navratilova.

[101] Barwik 2018a, 42–47.

[102] See also Barwik 2018b.

[103] Compare Ragazzoli 2013 and 2023.

[104] Verhoeven 2020.

[105] The scribe/draughtsman continuum and boundaries are discussed in Allon and Navratilova 2023, with further references. For the visual culture reflection in secondary epigraphy, see *inter alia* Den Doncker 2023.

take place in funerary chapels of their own time and also, in cases where primary epigraphy was available, to contribute to the transmission and adaptation of significant texts and images.¹⁰⁶ The emphasis on such nuanced professional allegiance is still holding as a plausible option even when the image is reconsidered as an inserted cursive hieroglyph (see also further discussions under **Gunn 16A–B** and see also **Gunn 18** and **Gunn 27**).

Documentation & References

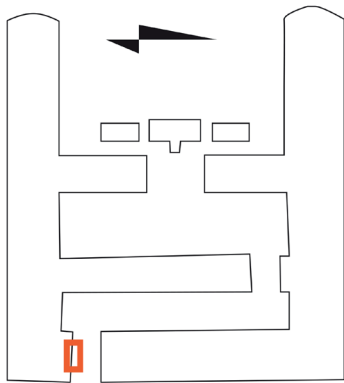
Petrie 1892, XXXIV, vi; Rowe photograph 524; also Gunn Mss. III.1.3; Gunn notebook 54, 11A–B, passage, w. 5/1, p. 17; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, nos 11 A–B.

Gunn 12

A figural dipinto executed in black ink, possibly referencing a sun deity.

Location & Placement

‘Entrance South, 5/2.’ This dipinto is located on the south side of the entrance, fifth course of blocks, second from the left, above **Gunn 28**.



Contents

Figural dipinto showing a falcon's head with a sun disk and uraeus.



[106] Standardised and restricted knowledge involved in the codified yet creative re/production of visual culture was discussed, inter alia, by Stauder 2018 and Laboury 2020; see also Miller 2025, 47–52, for an insight into possible results of the Thutmoside reception of a complex text and image composition of the *Amduat*.

Commentary

The image would correspond to the divine manifestation of Re, but also Re-Harakhty. A sun deity is thematised in some of the visitors' texts, especially in the standard formula: the visitor finds 'the temple like heaven, Re rising in it', which is shown in the Meidum dipinto **Gunn 21** and more frequently attested in Saqqara. Falcons appear in figural secondary epigraphy production in other locations, for instance Dahshur (Senwosret III, e.g., fragment group 04.123 + 04.173 (4) + 04.459 (1)) and as discussed under **Gunn 11 A–B**, however, the sun disc over this falcon's head makes the link to a specific deity more likely.

Another option would still be to consider a link to a more generic divine falcon and thus also to Sneferu: see the 'falcon of Sneferu' as a focal point of devotion in **Gunn 13**. Neither type of New Kingdom falcon image was reported by Fakhry when investigating the temple of Sneferu at Dahshur, but this may be due to those graffiti being related to the (potentially Ramesside) demolition of the area.¹⁰⁷

Documentation & References

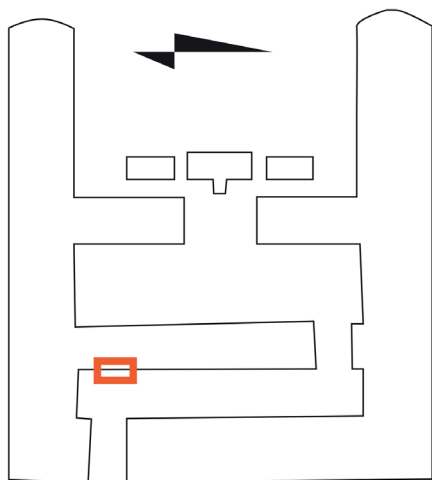
In GIA, Gunn notebook 54, the record is not clear, it looks like this dipinto was not photographed; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 12, has also a note that it could not be photographed and that this falcon head is located above another graffito not included in the record. The image is shown in Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, vii.

Gunn 12A

A dipinto written in red and black ink located in the temple passage.

Location & Placement

'Passage, W 5/2.' Entrance passage of the temple, west wall, fifth course of blocks, second block from the left. Above no. 28, as noted by Černý.¹⁰⁸



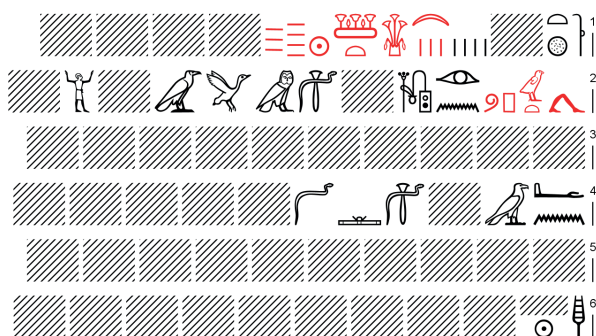
[107] Fakhry 1959, vol. I, 14.

[108] GIA, Gunn notebook 54, 17 verso.



Block 5/2 showing relative position of dipinti 12A (?), 17 and 21.

Text



[1] *h3.t sp* [...] -4, *3bd 3 h.t sw 7* [...]

[2] *iw.t pw iri.n sh3* [...] *w3d m p3* [...] *k3*

[3] [...]

[4] *nt[i.w] w3d* [...] *d*

[5] [...]

[6] *h^c[.n ...]*

[1] Year [...] 4 month 3 of Akhet season day 7 [...]

[2] There came the scribe [...] fresh [...]

[3] [...]

[4] Fresh myrrh [...]

[5] [...]

[6] And [...]

Commentary

This dipinto is located in the temple passage. A preliminary transcription was made by Gunn in his notebook. Unfortunately, there is no available image for this text, and the only source is Gunn's transcription and Petrie's facsimile. It is worth noting that such work by Petrie was occasionally inaccurate and, in this case, also potentially confusing as the text is not located near the falcon head dipinto (**Gunn 12**), with which it is visually associated on Petrie's plate. According to the archive records, the text of **Gunn 12A** should be on the same block as **Gunn 17** and **Gunn 21**. Therefore, Gunn's work remains the best available source to discuss this dipinto.

In the archive material of Gunn, we note that Černý repeatedly pointed out the mistake of connecting **Gunn 12** and **Gunn 12A**.¹⁰⁹ Petrie's confusion had further repercussions, as Wildung 1969a, 145, linked the text with the falcon head dipinto with which it is shown in Petrie 1892; however, the two are located on different walls.

According to Gunn's transcription, the text is composed of at least six lines mostly written in black ink while several parts were written in red ink. The text presented the conventional text that was frequently attested in visitors' graffiti throughout Egyptian necropoleis, outlining the act of the visit, anchored chronologically and spatially.

Line 1: It seems that the remaining part of this line includes a full date. This date was partially written in red: specifically, the month, season, and the day, while the year was written in black ink (as in **Gunn 10**). This is seemingly going against the emphasis on the year that we see in texts **Gunn 22** and **Gunn 23**, where the festival year of Amenhotep III (his 30th year) is the only element in the date, with month, season, and day entirely omitted.

This is not a typical way to write the date in graffiti, although it is a practice known from other texts.¹¹⁰ There are many examples of New Kingdom and later dipinti at various other sites written completely in red¹¹¹ and, in at least one case attested in Asyut (to be discussed further in the interpretive chapter), a red ink dipinto has an inverse, black-ink date.¹¹² The dual red/black ink use is particularly relevant here. The ink colour alternation in hieratic writing seems to have been used for practical as well as symbolic reasons: It is an example of manuscript practices being transferred to the wall, and not just any manuscript practices, but those that would fit a literary text, a religious text, or a longer administrative text, although the use of red also had nuances, for instance in the administrative record¹¹³ or in magical and medical papyri.¹¹⁴ The colour red may be generally considered ambivalent in ancient Egyptian culture, and it was noted already by Posener (1949) that its alternate use in writing of important texts and/or text portions could be practical but also specific and refined in relation to a particular text and scribe.

There are several examples of graffiti with dates in the Memphite necropolis, while it was rare in the Theban necropolis. Different examples of graffiti with full dates occurred in the north and south

[109] GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 18; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, nos 12A–12B.

[110] Posener 1951, and also 1949.

[111] Ragazzoli 2018; Navratilova 2021.

[112] Compare observations by Posener 1949. See also dipinti **Gunn 10** and **Gunn 17**.

[113] Moezel 2022, 140–143.

[114] For instance, see Ollette-Pelletier 2016.

chapels of the pyramid complex of Djoser.¹¹⁵ Another example of a graffito with a date comes from Abusir, where this dipinto include the same season and the same day as the current graffito, however the year cannot be confirmed.¹¹⁶

The date, as written in most graffiti, was written in one short line including the year, month, season, and the day. Then it was followed by one or two names of the king. So presumably the broken part of the first line of the current graffito could include the King's names.

Line 2: The second element that was written in red ink was the *incipit iw.t pw* that opens the classical visitors' formula followed by the name of the scribe, which can also be seen in **Gunn 10**.

Line 4: The formula referring to myrrh and incense raining or dripping onto the roof of the visited place is attested in Abusir and Saqqara as well as in Dahshur (so in royal pyramid precincts),¹¹⁷ as well as in Asyut¹¹⁸ and Beni Hassan.¹¹⁹ It has not been mapped in Thebes yet, except on ostraca.¹²⁰

Date

This text can be dated to the first half of the 18th Dynasty based on the remaining part of the visitor's formula that was frequently attested in the same way during that period. Unfortunately, it is not possible to depend on the drawing of the text made by Petrie to date this text.

In sum, the graffito must have included a conventional visitors' text; possibly including the narrative frame of *iw.t pw – gm.n=f – ḥ n dd.n=f ...* It is noteworthy that this dipinto has rubrics, which is a feature repeated in other texts in the temple: alongside **Gunn 10**, **Gunn 17** (located close by **Gunn 12A**) also has the same pattern of rubricising part of the date.

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, vii; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 18; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, nos 12A–12B. Rowe photograph 545. Information on an individual photograph or tracing has not been reliably identified yet.

Gunn 13

A longer dipinto with traces of up to 13 lines was recorded as located in the entrance area; it is written in black ink.

Location & Placement

'Entrance, S, 5/2'. Entrance, south wall, fifth course of blocks, second block from the left. The photo (Rowe 543) shows this block directly underneath the ceiling, which probably complicated its recording.

[115] Navratilova 2015b, 77, 81, 84, 87, 90, 92, 95, 97.

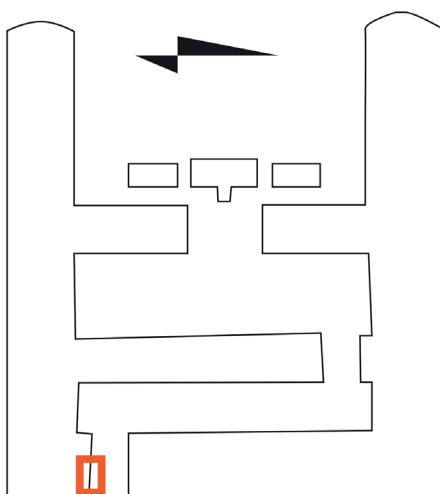
[116] Megally 1981, 221, 228.

[117] Navratilova 2015b, 89, 120, 126, 137, 162; for Dahshur (Senwosret III), likely on unpublished fragments, prov. No. 93.02, column 6b and fragment 92.446.

[118] Verhoeven 2020, I, overview on p. 224.

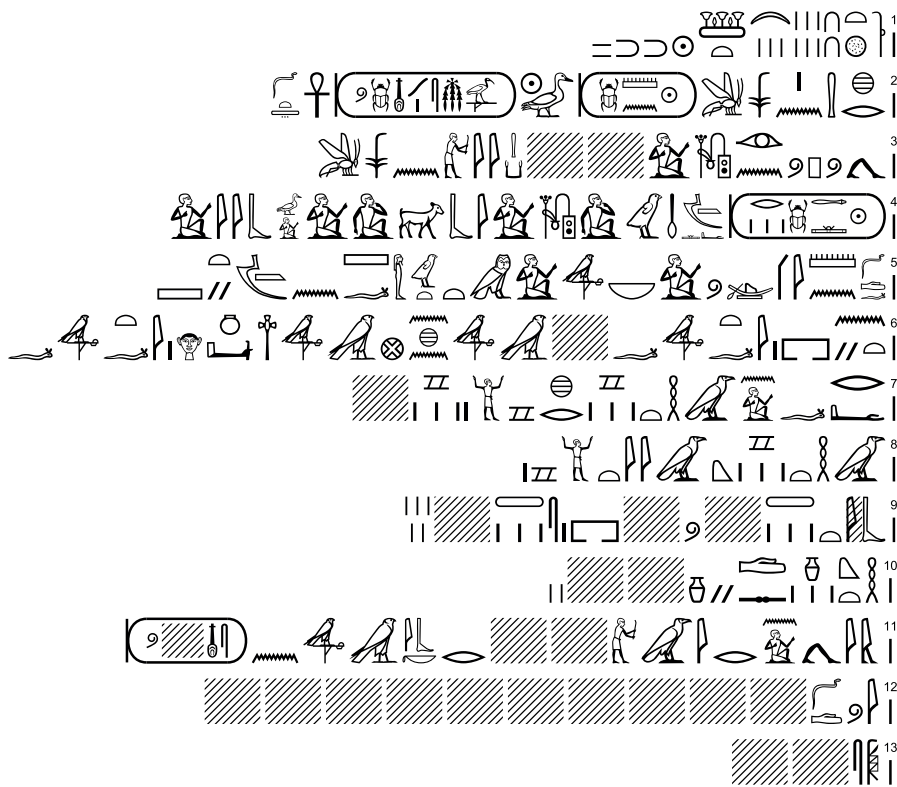
[119] Hassan 2016, 43.

[120] Verhoeven 2020, I, 225.



Text

Drawing by authors, capturing the traces shown in the photographic record (note the slight distortion).	Drawing by Petrie.



[1] *ḥ3.t-sp 26 3bd 3 3ḥ.t sw 22*

[2] *ḥr ḥm n nswt bitj (mn-ḥpr-rʿ) s3 rʿ (dḥw.tj-ms nfr-ḥpr.w) ʿnh d.t*

[3] *iw<.t> pw ir.n sh3 [...] ḥm-k3 n nswt bitj*

[4] *(ʿ3-ḥpr.w-rʿ) m3ʿ-ḥrw sh3 ibw s3 by*

[5] *dd=f mni wi nb=i m twt=f n m3ʿ.ty*

[6] *nty [m] pr it=f[...] ḥr-nḥn nd ḥr it=f*

[7] *rdi=f n=i 3ḥ.t ḥr k3[...] 2*

[8] *3ḥ.t k3y.t*

[9] *bi.t [...] psn [...] s*

[10] *ḥk.t ds [...] 2*

[11] *iy.n=i r i3<.w> r(?) bik n snfr [...]*

[12] *iw dd [...]*

[13] *šms [...]*

[1] Year 26 month 3 of Akhet, day 22

[2] under the Majesty of Dual King (Menkheperre) Son of Re Thutmose (Neferkheperu), living forever

[3] there came the scribe [...] the funerary priest of the king

[4] (Aakheperure) ([sic] for Aakheperenre) justified, scribe Ib son of Bay

[5] (and) he said: My lord endowed me with/hired me as [a priest for] his genuine statue

- [6] which is [in] the temple of his father Horus of Nekhen, who avenged his father
 [7] he gave me low fields [...] 2
 [8] high field(s) [...] 2
 [9] loaves of *pesen* bread [...] 5
 [10] beer (in) jug(s) [...] 2
 [11] I came for praise (?) of (lit. for) the falcon of Sneferu [...] 2
 [12] follow(ing?)
 [13] [...]

Commentary

The surface appears uneven and irregular with noticeable shadows and highlights showing in the photograph, which severely affect the reading of the hieratic text. The uneven surface likely caused difficulties for the scribe, resulting in possible distortions of the signs.

The text is composed of 13 hieratic lines written in black ink. The date occupies the first line, while the two royal names of Thutmose III are written on the second line. Petrie made a preliminary drawing of this dipinto that could be helpful in interpreting the text. However, it is very difficult to read the text on the basis of the available record, so the reading will depend on that made by Gunn in his notebook with Černý's help and we cannot make any significant improvements to the interpretation of the text.

Line 1: The date of this dipinto is visible, however, unlike **Gunn 12A**, it is written entirely in black ink. The dating of year 26 would point to the early years of the sole rule of Thutmose III. These years were marked by active military campaigning as well as independent building activities (such as erecting *Akh menu* in the great Amun precinct in Thebes;¹²¹ and possibly other projects in the Memphite area). This text was written about 15 years before the dipinto (**Gunn 10**) that was recorded in year 41 of the same king. This shows a sustained interaction with the site during the reign of Thutmose III.

Line 3: The *incipit* of the classical formula (*iw:t pw ir:n sh3 ...*) is introduced in line 3, followed by a broken part that is normally dedicated to the name of the visitor. Most probably, two titles for this man were written after the word *sš/sh3* and then he mentioned his name in line 4. He served as a funerary priest in the temple of Thutmose II. The name appears misspelled from *ʕ3-hprw-n-rʕ* to *ʕ3-hprw-rʕ*. Griffith's reading was 'scribe of measuring' (Petrie 1892, 41); in the context of **Gunn 10**, it is interesting to see another priest of the royal cult of the immediate ancestors of Thutmose III, in this case of his father Thutmose II, being linked with the memorial establishments of this king. A temple or shrine of Thutmose II is not yet known from the area. The name — using the same orthography — is attested at Edfu (Bandy 2021), where the priestly family of Ib is attested on several stelae.

Line 4: The reading by Gunn would imply an error in the ancient writing or in the modern reading of the royal name (Akheperure is the throne name of Amenhotep II, the successor of Thutmose III); the name of the scribe, Ib, is well attested in different writing variants: *PN I*, 20, no. 21. The father's name also, in Ranke's transliteration *hjj*, *PN I*, 93, no. 9.

Line 5: This line used the verb *mni* which was attested in the biography of *ʔwʔ* from Edfu. This verb

[121] Laskowski 2006b, 193.

has several meanings such as ‘displace’, or ‘move’¹²²: see <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/69720>. However, this cannot serve the meaning of the current text. Anthes presented a different translation for this verb that is attested in one of the Hatnub graffiti,¹²³ as he translated it as ‘endow with’.¹²⁴ Helck, in his editing of the text of *Twf*, mentioned that this verb could mean ‘present, hire, appoint’.¹²⁵ Thus, the translation of the verb in this graffiti could reference that the master of Ib (possibly the king) presented his statue to him, which is very similar to the biography of *Twf* where the queen Iah-hotep granted him a statue of her own majesty.¹²⁶ However, the translation of this verb as ‘hire’ could be more fitting, since the rest of the text can reinforce that translation. The text must be explaining that the master of Ib hired him as a *hm-k3* for his genuine statue that was placed in the temple of Horus-Nekhen. For this role, his master rewarded him with lowlands and highlands and different types of bread and beer. In sum, this biographical dipinto may have indicated that Ib served as a *k3*-priest for the sake of the king Aakheperenre Thutmose and for the statue of his unknown (and possibly royal) master. One also can suppose that Ib was working in Upper Egypt and travelled to Meidum to praise the falcon of Sneferu.

Lines 7, 8: The specification of field types in donation texts: e.g. Ahmose, Donation stela¹²⁷ with *3h.t hr.w*, Donation stela at Medamud (Thutmose IV)¹²⁸ with *3h.t k3y.t*; the *k3y.t*, high land, is also found listed in P. Wilbour (as discussed by Antoine 2011, 15, with further references; these ‘high lands’ were not necessarily only at the fringes of the Nile Valley but could be adjacent to mounds or cities). A result of royal favour listed alongside other royal gifts, the field gifts are referred to in several stelae of the early 18th Dynasty (Ahmose I to the Thutmosides¹²⁹) of which *Twf* of Edfu is particularly eloquent (see further below). These ‘gifts’ could have represented fields given to a person with the responsibility to supervise harvest/tax collection for a profit.¹³⁰

Line 9: *bi(3).t*, a type of bread (<https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/54150>), one of the most frequently attested bakery items and probably made of barley.¹³¹ Other New Kingdom sources indicate that its shape was elongated.

Line 10: The same number of jugs as in the ‘Man from Edfu’ *Twf*, *Urk.* IV, 31.

[122] Tentative reading *nni* as ‘move, displace’, also Late Egyptian ‘steer, bring into port’  (Lesko, *DLE*, 185). But see further in the commentary, this translation is unlikely.

[123] Anthes 1928, no. 43, l. 11. See also Faulkner, *CD*, 107.

[124] Anthes 1928, no. 43, l. 11.

[125] *Urk.* IV.1, p. 17 and n. 3.

[126] Compare the inscription of the man from Edfu: *Twf* from Edfu, *Urk.* IV 30–33, and see below, Guksch 1994, 165–166; other similar biographical examples include Stele Berlin 14944; Thutmose I, Menkheperreseneb, TT 86, *Urk.* IV, 933, 10; Usersatet, stela BM 623, Amenhotep II.

[127] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBgANEcBWCTBMoHVgYvvpPzules>, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (accessed: 14/9/2025).

[128] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBgCU62PrTVu8ERTlOfHB4ICFA4>, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (accessed: 14/9/2025).

[129] Cf. Guksch 1994, 42–43.

[130] Warburton 1997, 179, 286.

[131] Janssen 1997, 18–20.

Line 11: *ly.n=i r i3.<.w>* (see <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/20360>), *i3.<.w>* is often written without the *w*; the classifier is in fact more likely to have been 𓆎 (Gardiner A 30); the construction is a simple *sdm.n=f* followed by *r*, after which one would expect an infinitive: *rdj.t* followed by *i3.w*. The usual construction is *rdi.t i3.w n* somebody. Instead, it is only *ii r* — this combination of verb and preposition is interpreted as come for, come to do something (frequent use; Gardiner §163,4; Winand 1999 §233), also *ii r* as Gardiner §163,6 — thus the phrase may be still an expression of respect — ‘I came concerning the praise, to (do a) praise’. The text as recorded is damaged and does not allow for further refining of its reading. The second preposition after *i3.w* is at present difficult to verify; Gunn suggested reading *r*, on/for; we could evoke the meaning with ‘(heap) praise *on* the falcon on Sneferu’ in English. As put by Winand (1999 §233): ‘le sens fondamental de cette préposition doit être de marqueur un relation entre deux choses (« relativement à »)’. However, there could also be *n*, so ‘praise of the falcon’ etc.

This is quite an interesting dipinto as its content is certainly different from the typical visitors’ graffiti in pyramid precincts, but it correlates with dipinti from other locations. The usual New Kingdom visitors’ formula started, in most cases, with the *incipit iw.t pw ir:n* followed by the formula itself.¹³² The last part of the text was usually an offering formula *htp di nsw*. However, in the current dipinto, the scribe preferred to mention his name, titles, and filiation in addition to his biographical text in the second part of the dipinto. This is unusual (but see details below) in the visitors’ graffiti of the New Kingdom, however it is well attested in the Middle Kingdom rock graffiti at Hatnub.¹³³ Thus, the current dipinto constitutes one of the few examples of a biographical text merged with the visitors’ formula specifically in a royal context.

As we already noted, the biography part is very similar in its content to an inscription of a man named *Iw.f* from Edfu and dated to the 18th Dynasty, preserved in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo. This aspect is worth revisiting in detail:



[1] *mn.i.n=s wi m rp.t n.t hm.t=s*

[2] *di.n=s n=i ʕk=s*

[3] *bit 100*

[4] *psn*

[5] *hnk.t ds 2*

[1] she presented me with a statue of her majesty.

[2] she gave me her bread

[132] See Hassan 2013, 2017, also Ragazzoli 2013, 47, for an overview of the structure of these visitors’ texts.

[133] See the corpora published by Anthes 1928; for updated research on the site, see Enmarch and Gourdon 2023.

[3] *bit*-bread, 100

[4] *psn*-bread

[5] beer, 2 jugs

The latter part was repeated twice in the biography of *ʿWf*, most probably to emphasise the generosity of the queen Iah-Hotep. At the end of his text, he also mentioned a statement which is very similar to that attested in the dipinto of Ib, where he spoke about granting him highlands and lowlands.



I was presented with highlands and lowlands.

The dipinto **Gunn 13** represents an integration of a similar biographical text, of a type attested in the earlier part of the 18th Dynasty, into the secondary epigraphy genre. This genre merge (see also the chapter *Text structure, contents and message*) was noted by Guksch as a feature of 18th Dynasty biographical production (Guksch 1994, 25): ‘Besucherinschrift-Biographie’. In the dipinti at Meidum, there are several genre mergers; **Gunn 10** for instance adds a royal eulogy.

The potential of an Edfu connection is built on the intertextual relationship and also on the writing of the name Ib. Both points are circumstantial evidence but, as they appear together, they merit at least some consideration. The Edfu family contains both people named *ʿWf* and Ib. Ib of Meidum, meanwhile, uses the same biography phraseology as one *ʿWf* of Edfu. However, the genealogy of Ib at Meidum does not overlap with the Second Intermediate and early New Kingdom family trees, including his namesake(s) in Edfu.¹³⁴ It is also not possible to assess another aspect of evidence: the hieratic palaeography of Ib of Meidum, which might have given us a clue regarding any relation to the hieratic style attested at Edfu, which now supplies an important corpus of hieratic ostraca (Bandy 2021, 67–69). However, the speculative possibility that a representative of scribal culture (and/or a descendant of an important local family) from Edfu was present at Meidum during the reign of Thutmose III cannot be ruled out.

The focus — at least in the surviving part of the text — is entirely on the visitor for several lines before his visit gets referenced and explained by his devotional attention to the ‘falcon (of) Sneferu.’ In this case the identification of Sneferu with Horus is modified; the focus is on a falcon (could this be a statue/image?) linked to Sneferu. However, there were no known images in the temple unless some could have been painted (?) on the stela. It is also possible to follow Yoyotte 1963, 95, and suggest that the images were inspired by depictions at other sites, just as the figure of an enthroned Sneferu might have been in some of the earlier texts. The falcons feature prominently in the Old Kingdom reliefs at Dahshur.¹³⁵

Images of falcons appear in other dipinti, such as **Gunn 17** and **Gunn 27**. The identification/assimilation of the king with a falcon is frequent and appears across Egyptian cultural and devotional contexts.

Religious texts and royal iconography, as well as literary texts, would identify the royal person with a falcon, such as in the passage from the Tale of Sinuhe, where ‘the falcon flew off with his followers’¹³⁶ (Sinuhe R20), so the concept as well as the imagery would have been anchored in the visual archive of a

[134] As discussed by Bandy 2021 with further references.

[135] Fakhry 1954, 564–5, pl. 2B & 3.

[136] Parkinson 1997, 27.

literate Egyptian. However, other royal pyramid precinct owners were visited (and venerated) without such an emphasis on this specific concept, corroborating Sneferu's specificity.

The 18th Dynasty historical context is of interest: the king and falcon appear linked in diverse patterns capturing varied expressions of the concept of kingship,¹³⁷ and this is particularly visible in (if not limited to) the Thutmoside era: Thutmose III was apparently repeatedly portrayed in statues merging the human and falcon forms.¹³⁸

Documentation & References

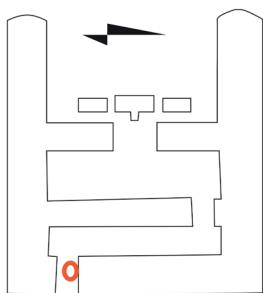
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, viii. Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, UPMAA, former folder 23/4, no. 13; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, no. 13, p. 19; Rowe photograph 543, a copy was enclosed in notebook 54.

Gunn 14

A dipinto containing a probable visitors' text.

Location & Placement

Temple entrance ceiling, 'first slab, near north'; Rowe quote from Gunn notebook 54: 'on ceiling of door'.



Text

𓆎𓆏𓆐
𓆑𓆒𓆓
𓆔𓆕



[1] *sh3 kdw* [...]

[2] *hrj-* [...]

[3] [...]

[1] Draughtsman [...]

[2] [affiliation/city of origin?]

[3] [...]

(Image from Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, ix).

[137] Valbelle 1997.

[138] Kriéger 1960, discussed by Brunner 1962 (reprinted 1988), an overview and new material regarding the king as falcon type of statues: Hardwick and Riggs 2010, including an 18th Dynasty corpus. The concept had developed from earlier antecedents, a famous example of these is the statue of Khafre with a falcon protecting the head of the king with its wings (CG 14, Egyptian Museum in Cairo). The material is also discussed further in the chapter *Kingship and memory*.

Commentary

The text is not recorded in the available legacy material, neither as a photograph nor as a tracing.

Line 1: The text must have contained the title and name of a *sh3 kḏ.w*, clearly identifying the writer.

Line 2: It is possible that the second line identified where this visitor hailed from, given the city classifier; this identification would constitute a parallel to ‘scribe Baki, the child of the Southern city’ from the Step pyramid precinct.¹³⁹

Together with **Gunn 11** and **Gunn 15**, this is possibly an interesting piece of evidence of the use of a more specific professional affiliation, and also of the professional confidence that enabled these writers to claim their role as artists visiting the precinct, such as that reflected in the *milieu* captured in the 18th Dynasty in Theban ostraca and later by the Ramesside text production in Deir el-Medina,¹⁴⁰ as these communities included readers and copyists as well as writers of literary texts and specialists working across the script register spectrum.¹⁴¹ They could have claimed to set up a social place in the realms of memory for their professional group.

The draughtsmen at Meidum may have visited the precinct for a specific purpose or because they happened to be in the area. Given that other professionals targeted the pyramid precincts, their visit may have been purposeful even though the pyramid precinct did not offer any specific visual culture clues beyond its architectural concept. Where may they have come from? One option would include the royal palace and its services at Miwer/Medinet Ghurab,¹⁴² as its New Kingdom floruit starts with Thutmose III.¹⁴³ However, the sites are about 8 hours’ walking distance apart, so the trip would have been possible but would have required a rather dedicated effort.

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, ix; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 21; not photographed by Rowe — note ‘cannot take photo’; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 14.

[139] Navratilova 2015b, 151–153.

[140] It is important to note the discontinuity of writing practices between the 18th Dynasty and Ramesside Deir el-Medina, for a summary see Nielsen 2022, 169–170.

[141] The evaluation of this milieu, the degrees or variants of literacy, as well as the challenges of multiple scripts and their assigned register — these are all topics of an ongoing debate with a very rich bibliography: the following references are entry points mapping the issue (and changing opinions) and providing further material: Janssen 1992, Assmann 1994 (broad context), Lesko 1994, Parkinson 1999, McDowell 2000, Mathieu 2003, Janssen 2005, Baines 2007 (with updated versions of Eyre and Baines 1989 and Baines 1989), Allen 2010, Goelet 2013, Haring 2021, Laboury 2022, Allon and Navratilova 2023. A higher-than-average literacy rate among specific groups of craftsmen/artists is probable, although that does not imply that everyone in such a team or community would have had such privileged access and consistent understanding ranging across the script registers. The lack of consistent proficiency within these professional groups is shown in the mistakes in executing Atenist censorship tasks (see Manuelian 1999) and in the production of texts (and creation of pseudotexts) in funerary art (see recently Uljas 2025).

[142] For a review of the history of administrative documents from this site, and for an update on their publication, see Hagen 2023.

[143] This was already noted by Petrie and reviewed by later expeditions led by Ian Shaw (Liverpool/Copenhagen joint mission) and Marine Yoyotte. For an update on the archaeological work with focus on finds of the era of Thutmose III, see Yoyotte 2021a and 2021b; for an important summary of previous archaeological work and a new analysis, see Hodgkinson 2018, 187–205; and for earlier records, see Serpico 2008, Thomas 1981, and Lacovara 1997.

correspondence¹⁴⁵), which would imply the accessibility of the temple up until the late New Kingdom.

The ink-written dipinto was later affected by many scratched/incised graffiti of uncertain shapes.

As both **Gunn 14** and **Gunn 15** are located on the ceiling and contain the *sh3 kḏ.w* title, it is possible to speculate that draughtsmen felt relatively comfortable writing on the ceiling — their experience would have made this an easier exercise than for other professions, especially if any of them were involved in tomb decoration.

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, x; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 22; Rowe photograph is listed as 613 in Gunn 54, but this photograph shows in fact a different dipinto, the end of **Gunn 10**. UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 15 adds ‘no photo yet’ — however GIA, Gunn notebook has a photo: Gunn Mss. III.1.9.

Gunn 16 A–B

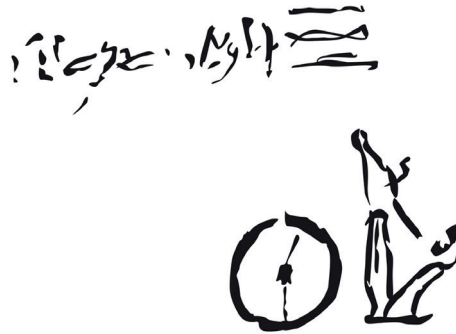
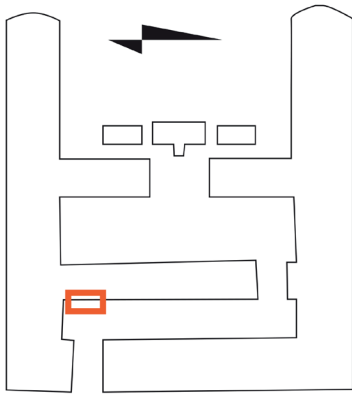
An apparent combination of a textual and a figural dipinto, executed in black ink. Tentatively dated by Černý to the 19th Dynasty.¹⁴⁶

Its interpretation, similarly to **Gunn 11 A–B**, may also be considered as a combination of script registers, where the identification of the visitor (in hieratic) is followed by a reference to a royal or divine figure (in cursive hieroglyphs).

Location & Placement

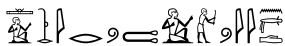
‘Passage, W, 5/1’. Temple passage; west wall; fifth course of blocks, first block from the left.

This dipinto is located below **Gunn 11 A–B**, to the left of **Gunn 27**, and on the same block as **Gunn 18** and **Gunn 24**.



Drawing based on Rowe photograph 524.

Text 16A



nšdy twrj Decorator/jeweller Tjuroy.

[145] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

[146] Rowe 1931, 45; pl. 35.1.

Image 16B

Image of a seated deity, possibly Osiris (?), or a king wearing the Upper Egyptian crown, and a sun disc.

Commentary

The title is known from Ramesside documents, including the Tomb robbery papyri.¹⁴⁷ An interesting coincidence is potentially implied by P. Anastasi IV = P. BM EA 10249, Verso C.6,¹⁴⁸ where the ‘decorators’ (*nšdj.w*) in a royal palace are called for , *sdbḥ.w*,¹⁴⁹ ‘equipping’ or ‘inlaying’. It would be tempting to suggest that if the latter proposed translation of ‘inlaying’ is accepted, then the New Kingdom professional might have also been interested in the inlaid hieroglyphs in nearby tombs, but it is unlikely that the chapels of Nefermaat and Atet, where this technique had been extensively deployed, would have been accessible.¹⁵⁰ Other examples, meanwhile, translate as ‘equipping’.

The text thematises a title that is not routinely seen in visitors’ texts, yet it may be considered as belonging to the same group of titles of artisans and artists as *ḥmw.w*, the goldsmiths (seen in Saqqara¹⁵¹) or indeed *sh3.w ḳd.w*, who are named together with *nšdj.w* in P. Anastasi IV. Černý dated the text to the 19th Dynasty,¹⁵² which would be in accordance with other text witnesses of this title. For variants of the name Turi/Tjuroy (attested across the New Kingdom) see Ranke, *PN I*, 16–18.

As with other examples of textual and figural features near each other, it is not possible to make a secure claim that the same person wrote the text and drew the figure(s). Yet, the proximity and brushstrokes imply that this may have been the case. The seated crowned god or king and the sun disc are sketched by a sure hand and by someone (1) aware of the conventions of Egyptian visual culture, capable of sketching a draft figure and/or (2) confident in cursive hieroglyphic writing

The figure of the seated king or deity evokes the style of the sketches of Thoth from P. Lansing (P. BM EA9994,7).¹⁵³ However, the possibility of a connection to cursive hieroglyphic writing, deployed in specific contexts,¹⁵⁴ would also strengthen the option that an artisan/artist (some of whom, as observed in the entry on **Gunn 14**, were likely to be more knowledgeable in different script registers¹⁵⁵) was involved in both writing and drawing and used, yet again (see **Gunn 11 A–B**) an interplay of script registers to note his own presence in hieratic (the register apposite for a visitors’ text), and in this case also a reference to the divine in a different register. At least two other groups (**Gunn 11 A–B** and **Gunn 27**) show a similar pattern, albeit not necessarily for the same reason(s). In the case of **Gunn 11 A–B**, the

[147] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/88940>.

[148] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd5MNqSN5oUroiZEaLPDqFsk>, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (accessed: 4/11/2025).

[149] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/149780>.

[150] Harpur 2001, 165–168 analysed this technique and its interpretation.

[151] As visitors in the Step Pyramid complex, Navratilova 2015b, 136–138 (reign of Thutmose III), 178–179 (probably reign of Ramesses II).

[152] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

[153] See Ragazzoli 2019, 292–293.

[154] See, for instance, Lucarelli 2020, Sartori 2022, Díaz-Iglesias Llanos 2025, and Ragazzoli 2025; summary Hagen 2025, 62–65.

[155] See also the recent contributions concerning artists’ expertise in Menéndez et al. 2025.

choice of inserting a cursive hieroglyphic *wr* as an epithet of the visitor would keep the focus on the newcomer rather than on the tomb owner.

The seated figure of a crowned king followed by a hieroglyph used to express words such as ‘sun’, ‘sun-disc’, but also the calendar unit of a ‘day’, is interesting in its own right. The figure of a king wearing an Upper Egyptian crown is known to have been used as a classifier for Osiris. Therefore, was this a reference to Osiris and Re? Is it referencing the crucial moment of the underworld journey of the sun god whereupon both deities achieve their union and renewal, namely when ‘Re is resting in Osiris, and Osiris is resting in Re’?¹⁵⁶

Or was this a non-standard¹⁵⁷ writing of the epagomenal ‘day (of the birthday) of Osiris,’ i.e. the first epagomenal day or 361st day of the year?¹⁵⁸ Visits on epagomenal days are indeed attested in the pyramid fields: for instance, one visitor in the precinct of Senwosret III in Dahshur came on the ‘birthday of Isis.’¹⁵⁹

With regards to why the writer would have located a supposed compact reference to either a divine birthday or a divine union in such close proximity to his own signature: the combination of texts, images, and script registers in dipinti are more varied¹⁶⁰ than the standard textual expressions alone would imply, as shown in examples of similar possible combinations in the Meidum corpus (**Gunn 11 A–B** and **Gunn 27**).

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXIV, xi; Rowe photograph 524; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 23; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, nos 16A–16B. Rowe 1931, 45; pl. XXXV, 1; Wildung 1969b, 139; Wildung 1969a, 144–145.

Gunn 17

A likely combination of an image and a text is located on a stone block marked by a number of dipinti. The image occupies the upper part of this composition. The text follows immediately below the image, suggesting the composition of the two was intended and planned. Parts of four lines of this dipinto executed in red and black ink have survived and traces of up to 9 or 10 lines were observed by Gunn (notebook 54, 24–25).

Location & Placement

‘Passage, W, 5/2.’ Located in the temple entrance passage, west wall, fifth course of blocks, second from the left.

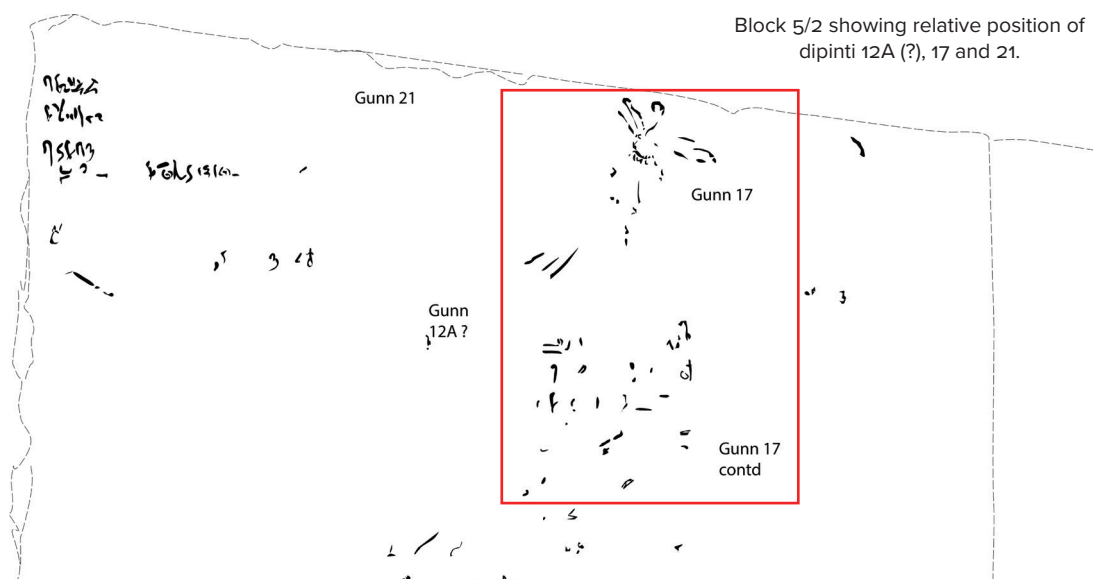
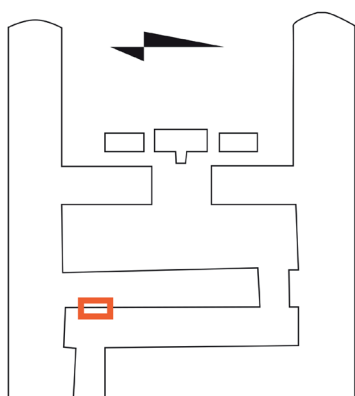
[156] Smith 2017, 271–355.

[157] Different variants of such writings are addressed by Spalinger 1995, but not including this or a similar one.

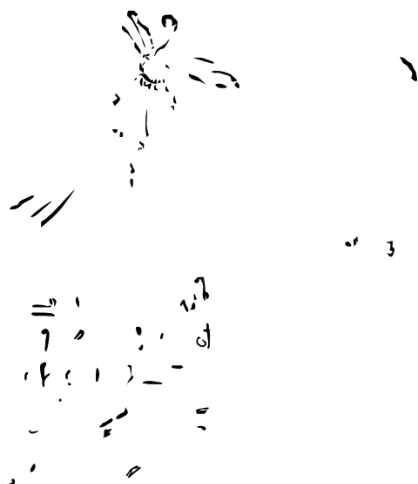
[158] These days were often named as ‘birthday of god NN’; Schott 1950, 67–68.

[159] For a brief introduction to this dipinto see Navratilova 2023a.

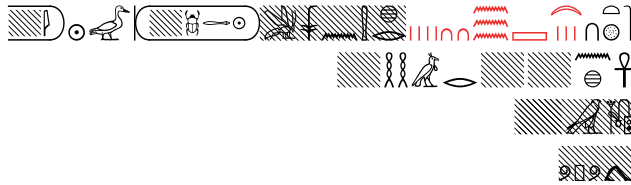
[160] Compare the Theban corpus, for instance examples in Ragazzoli 2013 and 2017b. In addition, in the corpus in Asyut script registers are mixed in some offering formulae written in a combination of hieroglyphs and hieratic (Verhoeven 2020, I, 307–308).



Composition



Text



[1] *h3.t sp 10 3bd 3 šmw 24 hr hm n nswt bitj 3^c-hpr-[n]-r^c s3 r^c Imn-[...]*

[2] *nh [dt] r nhh [...]*

[3] *sh3 hrj [...]*

[4] *iw.t pw [...]*

[1] Year 10, month 3 of Shemu (day) 24 under the Majesty/Person of the dual king Aakheper[u], Son of Re, Amen[hotep] [...]

[2] Living forever [...]

[3] Scribe Hori (?)

[4] There came [...]

Commentary

The text is underneath the figural dipinto of a falcon wearing the double crown, and it probably originally contained a more elaborate dating formula followed by an *iw.t pw* type text. It is dated to the reign of Amenhotep II. This is aligned with dipinti from other pyramid precincts, notably Senwosret III at Dahshur.¹⁶¹

The image of the falcon appears elaborate, and it is difficult to say with absolute certainty if it should be considered intentionally juxtaposed with the text, correlating the symbol of the royal office (or of Sneferu) with the text. However, a purposeful combination is possible, as in the other cases at Meidum where images (or enlarged cursive hieroglyphs) correlate with hieratic texts (**Gunn 11 A–B** and **Gunn 16A–B**), although a differently nuanced motivation likely applied in each of these cases.

Line 1: Alternating colours in the first line of this dipinto follow the pattern shown in **Gunn 10** and **Gunn 12A**. The date as such is set apart from the body text by being written in red, while within the date the situation is reversed: the year is set apart from the rest of the date by being written in black. **Gunn 12A** and **Gunn 17** appear in the same location and **Gunn 10** on the same wall, which may imply that the visitors noted each other's epigraphic behaviour and may have emulated one another not only by using the same location but also by deploying a similar (administrative) scribal practice of ink colour use.

Line 2: The traces of the *nh* sign are still evident in the photographic documentation.

Line 3: The name Hori is attested in the necropolis of Sedment, but not always with a matching title.¹⁶² However, it is a frequent name (Ranke, *PN I*, 251, 8), and therefore any connection is completely speculative. Travel on foot between Meidum and Sedment is estimated to take ten hours.

[161] Fragment no. 18.980 from the South Temple of Senwosret III in his pyramid precinct at Dahshur.

[162] Franzmeier 2017, 393.

An evaluation of the archival epigraphic record is especially relevant here. The photograph shows almost illegible traces; however, it is still possible to ascertain the overall extent of the dipinto as well as the positioning of the image and text parts of it. Understanding and reading this composition requires a combination of data, beginning with information from Petrie's sketch, which appears to have captured a rather more extensive image of the falcon but only 5 lines of the text. Later observations by Gunn suggest 9 lines of text and photograph 545 implies possibly up to 10, but the text and image are shown as more fragmented.

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, no. xii; Rowe photograph 545; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, 24–25; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 17; Wildung 1969a, 145 — Dok. XX.400.g.

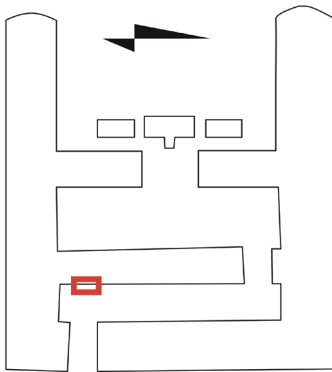
Gunn 18

A vertical dipinto recorded as executed in black ink. Only the upper part of the text can be traced and transcribed. The entire column is twice the length, but its lower part is illegible and only traces of ink are visible on the available photograph (Rowe 524), not permitting a facsimile drawing or transcription.

Location & Placement

'Passage, W, 5/1.' The text is located in the entrance passage, on the west wall, fifth course of blocks, first from the left.

It is located underneath **Gunn 24**, to the right of **Gunn 11 A–B**, and above **Gunn 27**.

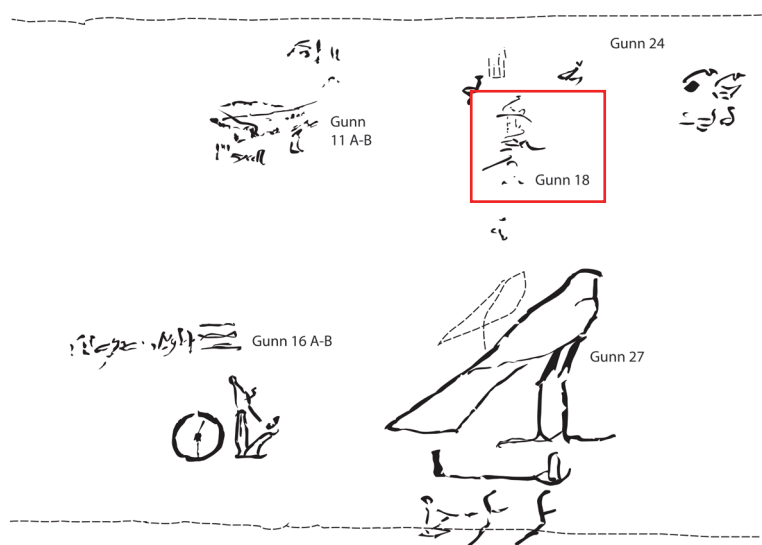


Text



Option 1: *b3k iy[t] <pw> ir:n{=f} sh3* servant, there came the scribe [...].

Option 2: *b3k dd.n=f* [...] servant said [...].



Position of Gunn 18 with other dipinti on block 5/1.

Commentary

The text is written in one column, which is not typical for visitors' texts of the New Kingdom. The style of writing in a column was nonetheless used by one of the writers in the Asyut corpus, probably to write a name or another text.¹⁶³

This text opens with a word that the writers were used to seeing at the opening of the Book of Kemyt (*b3k*). The first proposed transcription suggests that it is not a complete quote from Kemyt (such as seen in Dahshur, Senwosret III, and in private tombs), as it seems to continue with an *incipit* of the visitors' inscriptions: *iy.t ir:n*. This syntax occurs in 19th Dynasty texts more often than *iw.t pw*, which was the apparent standard of 18th Dynasty visitors' dipinti, and Černý indeed dated the text to the 19th Dynasty.¹⁶⁴

An alternative interpretation would be to consider the first two signs as writing of the scribe's name, such as 'Baki,' but this would be quite unusual, and from the point of view of the usually codified visitors' text structure a mistake. It is more likely that the text would have continued with a name after the scribal title, ending with an A1 classifier. It is possible to speculate that the author of this inscription was not an experienced writer of visitors' texts, but someone undecided if he wanted to showcase his knowledge of Kemyt or his proficiency in recording the standard phraseology of visitors' inscriptions.¹⁶⁵

The second proposed option is to consider the writing to represent a less-than-clearly written Kemyt quote, like the specimen in the tomb of Ptahemwia in Saqqara.¹⁶⁶ The likely candidate in this instance would be the opening formula of Kemyt i.e. the same used by the writer in the tomb of Ptahemwia

[163] Verhoeven 2020, I, 307.

[164] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

[165] The authors would like to thank Aurore Motte for a productive discussion of this text.

[166] Pelt and Staring 2020, 154–155.

and by the visitor in the precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur:¹⁶⁷  *b3k dd=f* [...]; some Ramesside variants of  would be close to the putative writing here (O. London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UC 31912 or T. Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, OL 41¹⁶⁸), except for the D 54-like 'flourish' in front of the sign.¹⁶⁹

The positioning of this dipinto with test signs in **Gunn 24** may be significant: perhaps less experienced scribes or draughtsmen (note also the artist/artisan titles in the nearby **Gunn 11 A–B** and **Gunn 16 A–B**) tested their pens and experimented with complex signs and a text they had used in their own professional formation, i.e. Kemyt.¹⁷⁰

See also further discussion under **Gunn 24**.

Documentation & References

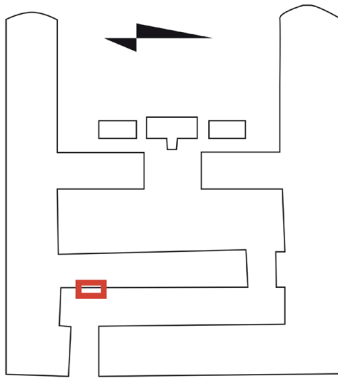
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXV, xiii; GIA Gunn notebook 54, 26; Rowe photograph 524; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 18; GIA, Gunn MSS iii.1.10.

Gunn 19

A *hṭp-di-nsw* formula written in four horizontal lines in hieratic, black ink, neat signs with minimal ligatures.

Location & Placement

'Passage, W 6/1–2.' The Entrance passage, on the west wall, sixth course of blocks, 1–2 from the left. It sits directly above **Gunn 20**.



[167] Published by Motte and Navratilova 2022.

[168] Motte 2025, 154–155.

[169] Motte 2025, 154–155.

[170] The authors would like to thank Aurore Motte for a productive discussion of this text.

Text

[1] *hṭp di nsw hr snfr.w imn-r^c nswt ntr.w r^c-hr-3h.tj*

[2] *pṭh rsy [inb]=f nfr hr ntr.w ntr.wt nb.wt dj=sn ḥ m p.t wsr m*

[3] *ḥ swr mw hr [...] n.t itrw š=s sn.t ḥ.w ndm n mhy.t*

[4] *n k3 n s3[...] nb ḥ.wy hr-ms whm ḥnh nb im3h*

[1] The offering that the king gives so that Horus Sneferu, Amun-Re king of the gods, Re-Harakhty,

[2] Ptah who is South of His [Wall], Beautiful of face,¹⁷¹ (and) all the gods and goddesses, may they give the 3_h-spirit status in heaven, strength on

[3] earth,¹⁷² a drink of the water of [...] of the river,¹⁷³ the breath of the sweet northern wind,¹⁷⁴

[4] to the *ka* of the guard[?] [...] of the lord of the two lands Netjerimose, repeating life, possessor of reverence.¹⁷⁵

[171] See ‘*nfr-hr*’ (Lemma ID 400940) <<https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/400940>>, edited by Altägyptisches Wörterbuch with contributions by Simon D. Schweitzer, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*, Corpus issue 19, Web app version 2.2.1.1, 3/6/2025, ed. by Tonio Sebastian Richter & Daniel A. Werning on behalf of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and by Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert and Peter Dils on behalf of the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig (accessed: 5/8/2025). Wildung 1969a, 144, suggested the reading ‘royal *ka* of Sneferu’, proposing thus that Sneferu would be approached twice in the same formula, as ‘Horus’ and again as a deified king via his royal *ka*, but admitting that it is uncertain.

[172] Barta 1968, 142–143.

[173] Possibly *swr mw hr bb.t itr.w*: see Barta 1968, 92 and 146, Bitte 68.

[174] As in Barta 1968, 93, Bitte 79.

[175] Wildung 1969b, 139, suggests emending with ‘*ka* of Sneferu lord of the two lands’ and Netjerimesu as beneficiary, following Gunn (in Rowe 31, 19).

Commentary

An offering formula for the benefit of the visitor. Such formulae, as well as other texts focused on benefiting the writer/visitor appear across sites marked by secondary epigraphy. In some instances, these formulae are written in hieroglyphs (Djoser, graffito F in the North Chapel¹⁷⁶), although hieratic versions also exist, for instance E.2.14 in the *grotte des scribes*.¹⁷⁷ Černý dated the text to the 18th Dynasty.¹⁷⁸

The inclusion of such formulae in secondary epigraphy of the 18th Dynasty is in line with their frequent appearance on a range of text carriers, for instance funerary spaces, equipment, scribal palettes, and game boards.¹⁷⁹

Line 1: The writing of the formula *incipit* as  is attested in both the first and second halves of the 18th Dynasty.¹⁸⁰ The text lists Sneferu among the gods whose favourable provision is sought. This feature is characteristic of offering formulae since the Middle Kingdom.¹⁸¹ Both local (Sneferu, Ptah South-of-his-wall) and dynastic deities (Amun-Re) were approached in this formula in accordance with the 18th Dynasty usages. The sequence chosen by Netjerimose goes from a local god/deified king to a dynastic god and then back to a Memphite god. However, Osiris is not included here, possibly because the beneficiary was alive?

Deceased kings could be also approached in Ramesside *ir nfr* texts: for instance, in the Step Pyramid complex graffito of Hednakht in the South Chapel, where ‘all the great glorified dead of the western Ankhtawy’ are approached, possibly meaning kings buried in the area.¹⁸²

Lines 2 and 3: The gods are asked for provisions in this life and the next. Osiris is not named, nor are other gods linked closely with the afterlife, and hence also no funerary offerings are requested: instead, the focus is more prominently on this world and on the future of the beneficiary.¹⁸³

Line 4: An ending with *whm ʕnh* and *nb im3h*, however, aims at securing a good afterlife for the writer (‘admittance in the afterlife’ as Doxey 1998, 90, put it). *whm ʕnh* as an epithet also appears in Asyut and on column 140 in Dahshur,¹⁸⁴ as well as in Theban examples (Ragazzoli 2013, 305–306 — an almost identical combination of *whm m ʕnh* and *nb im3h*, differentiated only by the spelling of *m* in *whm (m) ʕnh*). In Asyut, the variants are *whm ʕnh* and *whm m ʕnh*, the latter being a fuller writing of the formula.¹⁸⁵

The *nb im3h* title is further frequently attested in offering formulae. The dedicatory’s name is probably to be read Netjerimose (Ranke, *PN I*, 214, 15, more typically written as  and similar).

[176] Navratilova 2015b, 193–194.

[177] Ragazzoli 2017a, 159–165.

[178] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

[179] Barta 1968, 85.

[180] Barta 1968, 85, 107.

[181] Barta 1968, 87.

[182] See discussion in Navratilova 2015b, 170–173, based on Wildung 1969a, 70.

[183] See comparable examples in Barta 1968, 90, Bitte 7, and 111–112, Bitte 7.

[184] Asyut: used as an epithet of the writers or relatives of the writers: Verhoeven 2020, I, 39–41, 87, 106.

[185] As discussed by Verhoeven 2020, I, 41, following Doxey 1998, 102, and Kubisch 2008.

Curiously, another Netjerimose (with a different orthography — ) is named as a priest of Wepwawet by his son Khaemwaset in Asyut during the reign of Amenhotep III. Khaemwaset used the *whm (m) ḥnh* epithet for his parents.¹⁸⁶

Documentation & References

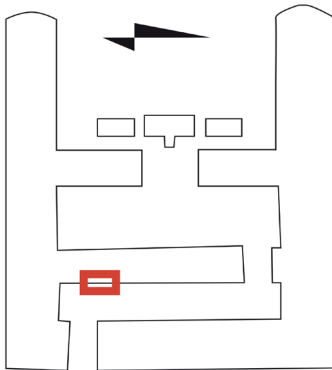
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXV, xiv; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 27; GIA, Gunn Mss. III.1.10 (end); UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 19; Rowe 1931, 19; Wildung 1969a, 144.

Gunn 20

Fragments of text allowed Gunn and Černý to tentatively read 2 lines of a dipinto written in black ink; Černý sketched up to 3 lines in his tracing. The locus on the wall where this dipinto is situated is on the first and second blocks from the left, in different courses; the locus carries a number of dipinti, some of them datable to the late 18th Dynasty: see also **Gunn 19–25** and **27**.

Location & Placement

‘Passage, W, 6/2.’ Temple passage, west wall, mostly on the sixth course of blocks, second from the left. Photograph Gunn Mss. III.1.10 shows this dipinto located underneath **Gunn 19**. Unfortunately, a complete view of block 6/2 is not available in the available documentation.

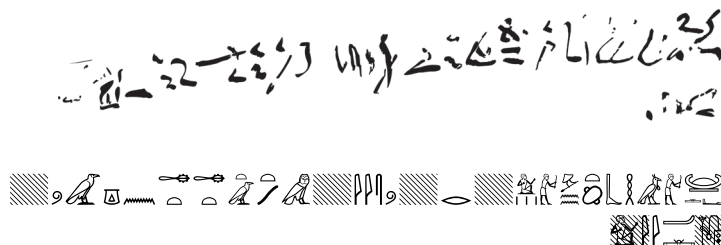


Text

(a) copy following the tracing:

[186] Verhoeven 2020, I, 39–41, 87–88.

(b) adjusted tracing following corroboration with Gunn III.2.1:



[1] *wh^c nhb.t hni* [...] *r* [...] *mt t3 htth n g3.w* [...]

[2] [*sh3*] *Hwj*

[1] Release (of) the neck of the crew [...] in/of(?) recruiting/recruits(?) of(?) [...]

[2] Scribe Huy

Commentary

Gunn (UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, typescript with translations page 3) notes this dipinto as ‘at present unintelligible.’ The tracing by Černý (Gunn. Mss III.2.1), reproduced above, captures also the end of line 1 from **Gunn 29**, (not shown here¹⁸⁷), then traces of the name  as the ‘first’ line of **Gunn 20**, and the ‘second line’ which is transcribed as the offering reference.

However, the record in Gunn notebook 54 (p. 28, annotated by Černý, including a tentative transcription) shows the line sequence clearly: the longer line comes first.

Both Gunn and Černý suggested comparing this dipinto to the text by the scribe Nashuy from one of the Saqqara Middle Kingdom pyramids. We may assume that they referred to the style of writing, as the text is rather different. Nashuy wrote a devotional text involving the *ir nfr* formulae invoking the divine help of the kings Djoser and Teti.¹⁸⁸

Line 1: The reading of this line may have alternatives such as , ‘release/offer the neck(?) [...] greatness of [...]’; the last group of traces on this line could stand for , ‘shrine’, and in that case the line could have referred to the offerings and shrine of Sneferu(?).

Compare, however, <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/48770>, *wh^c*, bring/release; related word *hni*, also sailors, contingent of men, crew; *nhb.t*, neck, nape of neck, <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/86210>.

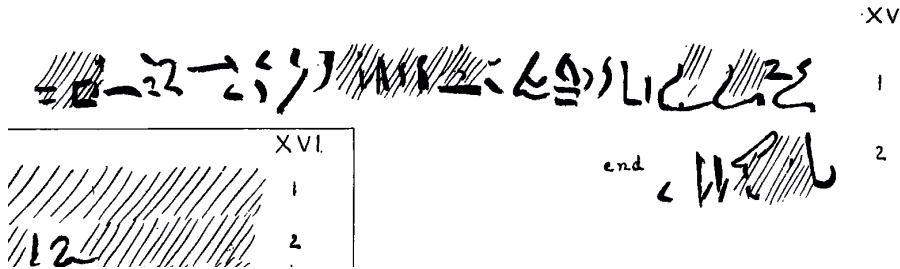
Line 2: The scribal title is not visible in the tracing from the 1930s, but the signs recording the name –  – are plausible. A scribe and master craftsman Huy was attested at Miwer as the owner of the New Kingdom writing palette UC 16054, with six grooves, three of which contained black and three red ink.¹⁸⁹ The writing of the name cannot be reliably compared.

[187] This must have been due to the availability of tracing paper, as **Gunn 29** is located elsewhere.

[188] See also Navratilova 2015b, 199–202.

[189] Thomas 1981, 1, no. 257 on p. 50; Petrie 1890, 36 and pl. XVIII, no. 13; Petrie 1927, 65 and LVII, no. 44. The inscription, described by Thomas as ‘faded’, is not visible in the Petrie reproductions.

Petrie (1892, pl. XXXV, xv) also shows the two lines in the correct order, with visible traces of the scribal title in line 2:



Documentation & References

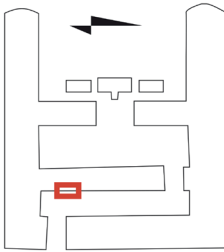
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXV, xv; GIA, Gunn Mss. III.1.10 and III.2.1 (Rowe photographs 526, 941 and tracing by Černý); GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 28; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 20.

Gunn 21

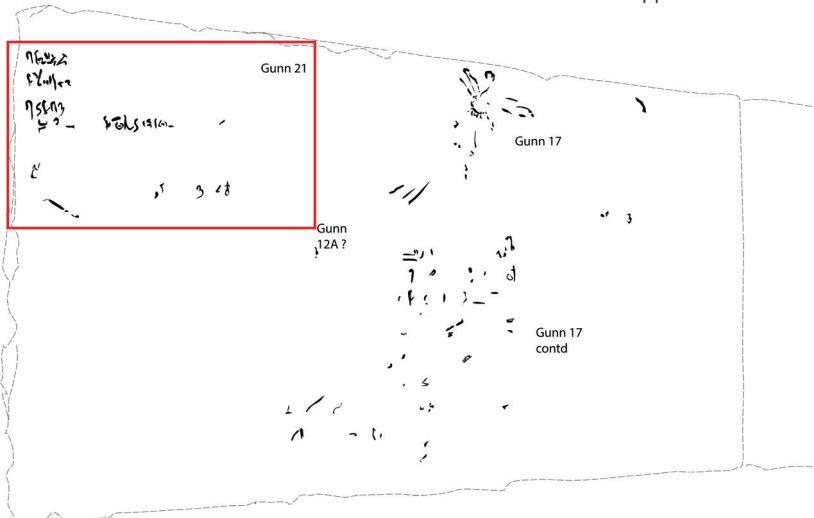
A dipinto written in black ink with extensive traces of seven lines preserved. The locus carries a number of dipinti, some of them datable to the late 18th Dynasty: see other texts in the group **Gunn 20–25** and 27.

Location & Placement

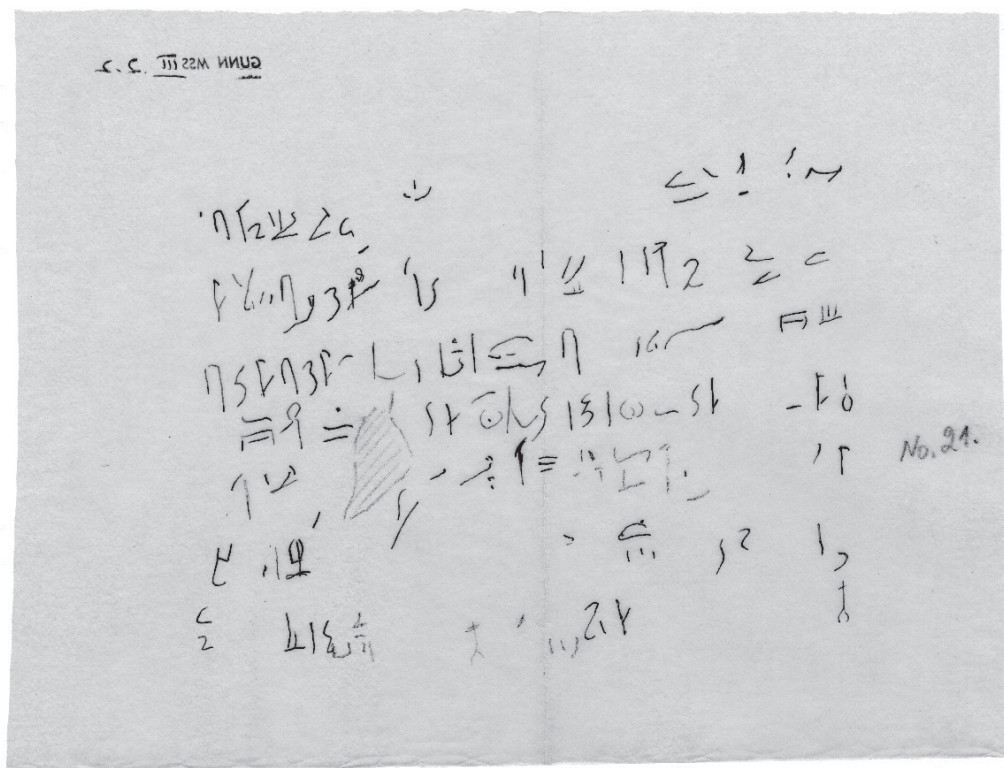
‘Passage, W, 5/2.’ Temple passage, west wall, on the fifth course of blocks, second from the left.



Block 5/2, drawing based on Rowe photograph 545, showing traces of Gunn 21 in the upper left corner.



Text



A schematic outline by Černý (Gunn Mss. III.2.2); this record does not constitute a full tracing.



[1] *iw.t pw ir:n sh3* [...] = *f p3 nh3j*

[2] *r m33 hw.t ntr hr snfr:w gm.n=f sy mi*

[3] *p.t m hnw=s{y}* [*mi itn/jʿh?*] *hr [wnb] im=s iw=s*

[4] *p.t* [...] *iw t rʿ wbn im=s* [...] *nn šnʿ*

[5] [...] *hpy* [...] [*df*]*df p3 s* [...]

[6] *hr=s* [...] *krs.t*

[7] *nfr <i>m<i> ht i3w.[t] nfr:t hr imnt.t hr s.t=k nfr:t*

[1] The coming of scribe [...] his [...] Panehsi

[2] To see the temple of Horus Sneferu. He found it like

[3] (there was) heaven in it, as if (moon/sun disk?) was rising in it. While it was

[4] as heaven [...] whilst the sun is shining, without a rain cloud.

[5] [...] Hapi [...] dripping [myrrh?]

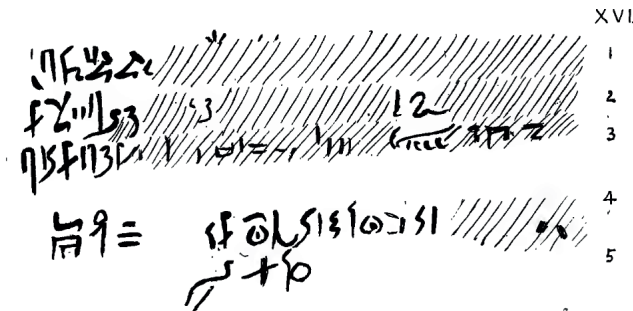
[6] On it. [...] [A beautiful] burial,

[7] following after a good old age in the West in your beautiful place.

Commentary

In the photograph (Gunn Mss. III.1.8), as well as in the sketch by Petrie, the beginnings of all the lines appear nearly obliterated and only the endings are clear. The following comments are based on a compilation of data from the drawings, the photograph, and the transcription by Gunn that was supported by collation on site by Černý.

Černý's schematic tracing is more informative than the sketch by Petrie (see immediately below), who noted signs from only five lines as opposed to Gunn and Černý's seven. The photograph, despite showing a very fragmentary record, confirms seven lines.



Text sketch by Petrie.

Line 1: The name of the writer is lost but the name of his relative, most probably his father or, less likely a brother/colleague accompanying him,¹⁹⁰ is preserved: Panehsi (Ranke, *PN I*, 113,13).

Lines 2–3: The text then follows the narrative structure describing the importance of the site in the codified language of the visitors' texts. This text offers a variation of the visitors' formulae, emphasising the temple's perfection by using a comparison with celestial and environmental qualities. In this text, the usual comparison of the temple to a horizon where the sun is rising is complemented by further details. Exceptionally, one of them is a comparison to a sky not covered by any rain clouds. The perfection of natural beauty and bounty may have been emphasised in the following fragmentary text passage, which refers to the river, most likely specifically to the Nile, possibly even to the Nile flood, as a symbol of divine approval.

[190] Both an affiliation and an accompanying party of friends/colleagues or family members may appear in visitors' texts, see Verhoeven 2020, I, 274; Ragazzoli 2013, 279; Navratilova 2015b, 92, 101, 170.

Line 4: The expression relating to a divine celestial presence is repeated twice, and the second (more important?) on the list is the Sun/Re. Could the first expression refer to the moon? The moon is referenced elsewhere in secondary epigraphy: a comparison of the visited temple and its perfection to the moon-lit night sky appears in Abusir.¹⁹¹ It may be considered as a reference to the power of Thoth, the god of the moon and also of writing and patron of scribes, but it could also be seen as a parallel to the praise of the sun that symbolises renewal. It is possible that the Meidum text referenced both gods.

Line 5: The passage that probably refers to myrrh/incense is not clear; the sequence used for example in Saqqara is as follows: *ḥwꜥ p.t m ʕnti[.w] w3d df[.df]=s m sntr*.¹⁹² The complete phrase can be seen in **Gunn 10**, ll. 9–10. The phrase is known not only from visitors' inscriptions but also from spells, such as the text included in the London Medical Papyrus (P. BM EA 10059).¹⁹³

In this example in Meidum, however, the Nile god is introduced in the text, followed probably by . Although it is not entirely clear how the Nile god¹⁹⁴ fits into the composition, it appears to be a summary of the divinely approved world in one dipinto.

The hymn to the Nile was also included in the dipinti in Asyut¹⁹⁵ and a reference to Hapi is found in a dipinto in the pyramid of Pepi II.¹⁹⁶

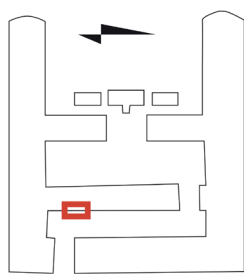
Lines 6–7: This part of the text might have contained a part of the *Appeal to the living*, as shown in **Gunn 10**.

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXV, xvi; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 29; GIA, Gunn Mss. III.1.8, upper left; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 21. Rowe photograph 545; Rowe 1931, 18. Wildung 1969a, 144.

Gunn 22

The locus on the wall where this dipinto is situated is placed on the first and second blocks from the left, in different courses; the locus carries a number of dipinti, some of them datable to the late 18th Dynasty: see also **Gunn 20–25** and **27**.



Location & Placement

'Passage, W, 4/1.' The temple passage, west wall, fourth course of blocks, first block from the left.

[191] Navratilova 2015b, 91–93.

[192] Navratilova 2015b, 120.

[193] <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd4dbJElgDE1ekPF3vARb8Yg>, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (accessed: 24/7/2025).

[194] Hapi also appears in offering formulae (Barta 1968, see index entry *ḥꜥpi*, p. 352).

[195] Verhoeven 2020, I, 117–122, 203–205.

[196] Jéquier et al. 1936–1940, vol. II, 66, figs 7–8; Navratilova 2015b, 197–198. Not *sbꜣy.t* but *dwꜣ ḥpy*.

Text

[1] *h3.t sp 30 hr hm n nswt bitj nb-m3^c.t-r^c*

[2] *s3 r^c immn-htp.w hk3 w3s.t nḥ d.t r nḥḥ*

[3] *m nsw.t mnḥ.t t3 pn r dr=f iw.t pw*

[4] *ir:n sh3 m^cy r m33 mr pn 3^c wr n*

[5] *hr [s3 r^c] snfr:w [...] m3[^c hrw]*

[1] Regnal year 30 of the Dual King Nebmaatre

[2] Son of Re Amenhotep, Ruler of Waset, living forever and ever

[3] ruling efficiently this entire land. There

[4] came the scribe May to see this great and imposing pyramid of

[5] Horus (son of Ra?) Sneferu [...] justified.

Commentary

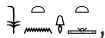
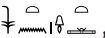
A more elaborate dating formula than most of the graffiti in this corpus refers to the *sed* jubilee year of Amenhotep III and is followed by the *iw.t pw* and the standard opening of a visitor's text.

The text is located underneath block 5/1 with its prominent falcon figure (see **Gunn 27**). Wildung saw the text's content referring to Horus Sneferu and the falcon figure as related,¹⁹⁷ which is plausible.

Line 1: The first part of the date only contains the year, while the month and day were omitted, as if the writer wanted to emphasise the *sed* festival date as his main concern and focus.

[197] Wildung 1969a, 144.

Line 2: The royal names are not as extensive as in the more elaborate examples available, which include **Gunn 10**, but see the eulogic statement in Line 3 below.

Line 3: *nsw.t*, , kingship or *nsw.t mnḥ.t*, , efficient kingship?¹⁹⁸

The *incipit* of the visitors' formula itself is not emphasised by a rubric as it was in **Gunn 10** and **Gunn 12A**, and it is visually streamlined within the flow of the text.

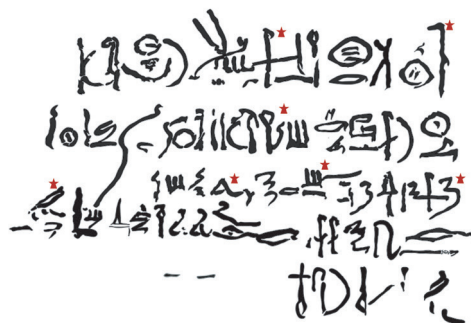
Line 4: The monument is clearly defined as a pyramid;¹⁹⁹ this is not a frequent occurrence, although many of the visitors' texts of the 18th Dynasty are located in pyramid precincts. The visitors, however, often foregrounded the perception of the visited space as the funerary chapel/temple: a *ḥwt ntr*, that is the commemorative and cult space.

The definition of the visited monument (or a monument nearby) as a pyramid is otherwise found in the Sun Temple of Userkaf in a dipinto left by the royal herald Amunedjeh and his retinue (reign of Thutmose III), and in the Step Pyramid precinct in the dipinto of the scribe Khaemmennefer (reign of Amenhotep II).²⁰⁰

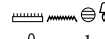
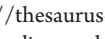
Line 5: Sneferu is identified as 'Horus'; the 'son of Ra' is one possible reading; the earlier discussions by Griffith, Varille and Wildung are inconclusive.²⁰¹

The veneration of the past king in the context of the jubilee of the present king could have resonated with the royal cult setting where current and past kings converged, i.e., in the royal memorial temples of the New Kingdom. In such a location, a dignitary could also have had a statue, thus personal commemoration was permitted even though it concerned only privileged members of the elite

(see further notes on statues appearing in royal memorial temples from Middle Kingdom onwards in the chapter *Meidum after Sneferu — Middle Kingdom*). The graffito would represent a variation on the theme of personal commemoration in a royal space: in absence of a statue, the graffito would take on the role of a personal memorial.



The calligraphy of this example is very clear and bold, with relatively frequent dipping to achieve an even appearance throughout the text. As indicated by the red stars in the figure above, the photographic record implies that the scribe dipped most often in line 3 and then dipped less frequently toward the end of the text in lines 4 and 5.

[198] TLA — , 'splendid, effective': <https://thesaurus-linguae-egyptiae.de/lemma/71080>, abbreviated writings such as  are also attested; emphasised also in earlier royal phraseology, see for instance Blumenthal 1970, 390. Wildung 1969a, 143: 'hilfreich', see also p. 114 n. 6. See *mnḥ* as an ideal official's quality, perhaps best translated as 'competence', 'capability', Guksch 1994, 78–84. Both the king and his officials thus should be *mnḥ*. Ramesside and later kings still used this epithet in different contexts: Grimal 1986, 178, also 384, and later example p. 524 n. 383.

[199] Pace Harpur 2001, 23, who refers that 'none of these graffiti related to the ownership of the pyramid, it must be said—just to its temple', although the pyramid is included already in the translation by Griffith in Petrie 1892, 41.

[200] Navratilova 2015b, 61–62 and 145–148 respectively.

[201] Reviewed in Wildung 1969a, 143.



[1] *ḥ3.t sp 30 ḥr ḥm n nswt bitj nb-m3^c.t-r^c s3 [r^c] imn-ḥtp ḥk^c w3s.t m3^c.t*

[2] *imn-ḥtp.w ḥk^c w3s.t nb nḥt.w ḥk3 im3ḥ.wt ib mr[y m3^ct]*

[3] *msd.y jsf.t ib rdj.t ḥ3y ȝy.w*

[4] *ḥr s.t it=f smn<.w> iw^c.w=f tp t3*

[1] Year 30 of His Majesty, the Dual King Nebmaatre, Son of [Re], Amenhotep, sovereign of Waset

[2] Amenhotep ruler of Waset, lord of victory, ruler of revered character, loving [order],

[3] hating chaos, heart strengthened, man

[4] on the place of his father establishing his inheritance on earth.

Commentary

Fully developed and elegant hieratic writing²⁰² hampered by the rough surface of the block; note the  signs. The dipinto is two blocks above **Gunn 22**, suggesting some interaction or competition (?), for instance the writer of **Gunn 23** might have decided to add his text above a previous text from the same regnal year. However, it could also be argued that the higher located dipinto was earlier and the text located underneath it was a copycat.

Line 1: For the titles of Amenhotep III, see Beckerath 1999, 140–143. For a discussion of the royal task list encapsulated in New Kingdom royal names and epithets, see Gundlach 1992 and 1997.

Line 2: The overall impression of the text is that it may be compared to an excerpt from a royal eulogy; its phraseology is also related to the private commemoration and devotional sphere, which is consistent with the royal aspect: in all three cases (i.e., devotional texts, personal commemoration, or royal commemoration) key values of the Egyptian society and state were formulated in an elite discourse:

- ▷ *m3^c.t × jsf.t*: the love of order and hate of disorder is thematised in a range of texts from religious ones to private biographies; this opposition generally was explored by Megahed and Mahmoud 2025. Blumenthal (1970, 432–438) illustrates the principle (if not identical phraseology) of loving order/truth and hating disorder/falsehood in Middle Kingdom royal texts and in texts where private persons emphasise an appreciation of their actions by the king. Megahed and Mahmoud 2025 also highlighted that identical epithets were used by Rameside kings (Ramesses II, III, and IV as cases in point) and then continued to be used until the Greco-Roman period; Grimal mapped Rameside and later occurrences of the same concept:

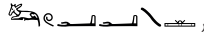
[202] See noted by Ragazzoli 2017b, 36–41.

the defence of justice and suppression/hatred of injustice.²⁰³ The expression and its variants also kept its currency in the private biographical texts.

- ▷ the *mr* × *msdd* opposition is also a characteristic part of the appeal of the living composition; the invocation involving this opposition appeared in the late Old Kingdom and was in use until the New Kingdom — those who love life × hate death.²⁰⁴
- ▷ *nht.w* — the topos of the king's victories — *nht.w* became a prominent element in military records.²⁰⁵ The expressions *sdd nht.w* and *h3ti-^c m nhtw* were among 'very few labels that could refer to type of text', in this case 'Recital' or 'Beginning' of victories, became labels for New Kingdom military inscriptions.²⁰⁶

Line 3: Epithets equivalent to royal inscriptions; however, the titulary of the king also has *h^cj hr ns.t it=f*²⁰⁷ — as would befit a royal eulogy: 'appearing on the throne of his father'; the use of this expression anchors the royal eulogy in this visitor's dipinto.

Line 4: A similar reference in the dipinto from the reign of Hatshepsut in Saqqara ('on the throne of the living with her father'²⁰⁸). As regards coeval formal inscriptions, the phrase is also used in the *sed*-festival inscriptions of Amenhotep III.

- ▷ A similar writing of *iw^c.w*, as , is also attested also significantly later.²⁰⁹
- ▷ *smn*: set up, establish, secure, to make endure;²¹⁰ is used in the context of the king establishing his own monuments such as stelae.²¹¹ The epithet  is also attributed to Horus.²¹²

A second dipinto dated to the *Sed* festival year of Amenhotep III, possibly written by someone who noticed **Gunn 22** or visited the site at around the same time. The titulary of the king reflects a format of dipinti also known from Saqqara and Dahshur, which began with a full version of the king's name as part of a date. One instance in Dahshur had verse points marking individual segments of names and epithets of Thutmose III (column 6, South Temple). In this instance, dipinto **Gunn 23** at Meidum does

[203] Grimal 1986, 304–307.

[204] See Shubert 2007, 305–310; different nuances of meaning of the two verbs were explored by Otto 1969.

[205] Cf. Spalinger 1982.

[206] Stauder-Porchet and Stauder 2020, 73.

[207] As in the royal stelae of Amenhotep III, Klug 2002, 363, etc.

[208] Navratilova 2015b, 141. This dipinto thematises both Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, as do some of their monuments: notably the Chapelle Rouge; Stephan 2008, 114–115. It is an elite reflection of the double kingship.

[209] '*jw^c.w*' (Lemma ID 857231) <<https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/857231>>, edited by Altägyptisches Wörterbuch, with contributions by Andrea Sinclair, Annik Wüthrich, Amr El Hawary, in: *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae*, Corpus issue 19, Web app version 2.2.1.1, 3/6/2025, ed. by Tonio Sebastian Richter & Daniel A. Werning on behalf of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert and Peter Dils on behalf of the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig (accessed: 6/8/2025).

[210] TLA: <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/135100>.

[211] Klug 2002, 211.

[212] See <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/854090>.

not continue after the titulary. At the moment, it is a matter of conjecture if **Gunn 23** or **Gunn 22** was written first. One writer might have experimented with a fuller version of the date with the royal name in **Gunn 23**, then abandoned his attempt. Another writer might have then decided to opt for a shorter version of the date shown in **Gunn 22**, where it is followed by the visitors' formula. Alternatively, **Gunn 22** might have come first, after which the writer of **Gunn 23** decided to emphasise his king's exceptional festival year by repeating the date accompanied by a more extensive set of royal epithets.

Griffith (in Petrie 1892, 41) suggested that the epithet in line 4 was specifically meant to emphasise the succession of the male heir, but this is probably not the case as the expression was conventional, and indeed king Hatshepsut could also refer to herself as the 'son' of Amun.

Aidan Dodson discussed the possibility of this text marking the start of the coregency of Amenhotep III and IV (as elaborated earlier by H. W. Fairman and W. J. Murnane) and proposed instead that it could have marked the installation of a new heir apparent rather than a coregent.²¹³

Documentation & References

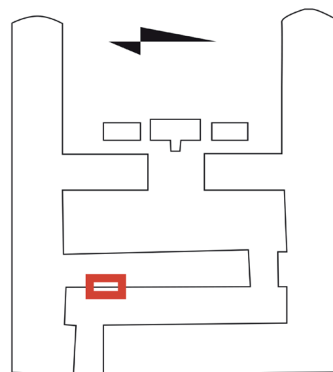
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXVI, no. xviii; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, no. 23; Gunn Mss iii.1.3; Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, UPMAA, former folder 23/4, no. 23. PM IV, 96; Dodson 2009.

Gunn 24

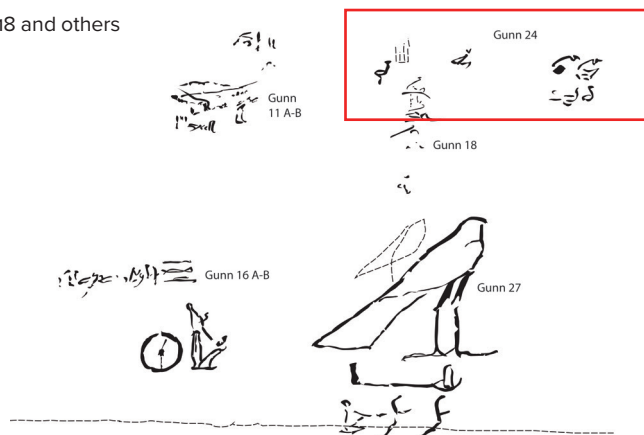
The locus on the wall where this dipinto is situated carries several dipinti, some of them datable to the late 18th Dynasty: see **Gunn 20–25** and **Gunn 27**.

Location & Placement

'Passage, W 5/1.' In the temple passage, fifth course of blocks, first block from the left. Opposite the entrance.

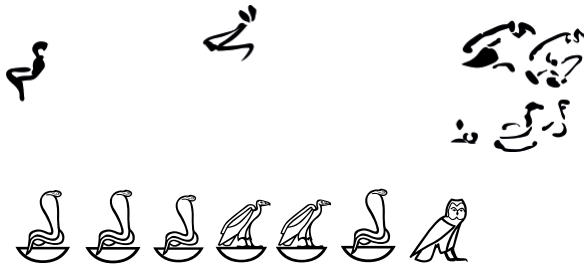


Location of dipinti 24, 18 and others on block 5/1.



[213] Dodson 2009, 26–28.

Text

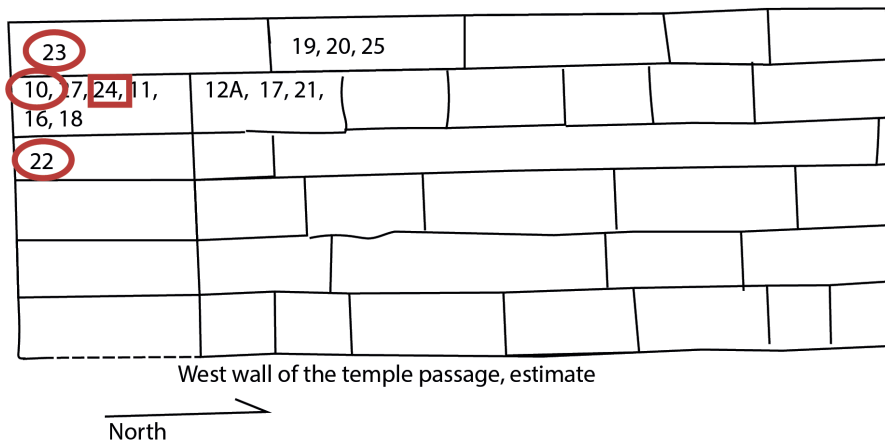


A series of signs with an *m* and repeated parts of the royal title ‘Two Ladies’.

Commentary

These are possible trial signs for a royal name; trial signs in secondary epigraphy production are shown in Asyut (TN₃₅)²¹⁴ where multiple D54 signs implied testing the *incipit* of a visitors’ text.

The temple space hosts several dipinti with 18th dynasty royal names; even though there are none in the immediate vicinity of the locus of **Gunn 24**. **Gunn 10**, which uses the full royal name set and titulary, is close by on the same wall and it is possible that the signs in **Gunn 24** are trial signs for another dipinto. **Gunn 22** and **Gunn 23** are also on the same wall:



Texts with royal names (**Gunn 10**, **22**, **23**) are marked by ovals, the test signs in **Gunn 24** by a rectangle.

However, Černý dated the signs to the 19th Dynasty²¹⁵ in line with **Gunn 11 A–B**, **16 A–B**, and **18**. This option offers another possibility, already outlined in the discussion of the above dipinti: these dipinti could have been produced over a period of time by 19th Dynasty visitors with the professional standing of craftsmen/artists, who were thus specialists who would not have been necessarily as fluent in literary or administrative texts (although some of them could have been), but who had a level of literacy and encountered diverse script registers. They could have experimented with compositions, including their titles and names, trial signs, cursive hieroglyphs, and an experiment recalling their knowledge of Kemyt.

[214] Verhoeven 2020, I, 78.

[215] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7 September 1930.

The potential experiment with Kemyt (**Gunn 18**) and these trial signs are located close to one another. Their spatial relation resembles an instance of the opening of Kemyt followed by sign experimentation, in this instance on a scribal palette: the Guimet palette (Louvre AF 12725) carries 6 pigment slots (implying a draughtsman user/owner; includes traces of pigments), a hieroglyphic text using cryptography and a hieratic text with the opening of Kemyt I, followed by a group of hieratic signs suggesting an experimentation.²¹⁶

The resulting dipinti cluster, which might have developed over a shorter or longer period of time, would, in this case, attest to a presence of visual culture professionals, even though the temple and the precinct of Sneferu at Meidum did not offer an opportunity to study patterns of visual culture that these professionals would have been able to use productively in their own training and development. If these dipinti were produced by craftsmen/artists, those visitors must have explored the precinct regardless of this absence (which they might have not known about if they had encountered other locations with reliefs or paintings available) — a convergence of professional and devotional interest offers the most likely explanation. We have repeatedly noted the likely parallel presence of such professionals in other pyramid precincts such as Senwosret III at Dahshur or Pepi II in South Saqqara, where specialists titled as *hmnw.w* appeared.²¹⁷ In the Step Pyramid complex we also encounter evidence for administrators who were likely in charge of the monumental building programme, such as the scribes of the treasury.²¹⁸

Documentation & References

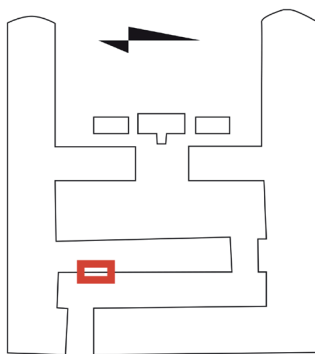
Petrie 1892, pl. XXXVI, no. xix; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 24, Rowe photograph 524; GIA Gunn iii.1.10.

Gunn 25

The locus on the wall where this dipinto is situated carries a number of dipinti: see **Gunn 20–25** and **27**.

Location & Placement

‘Passage, W 6/1.’ West wall of the entrance passage, sixth course of blocks, first from the left.



[216] Drioton 1944. With thanks to Aurore Motte for highlighting this artefact.

[217] See also Navratilova 2026.

[218] For a discussion of the presence of both artists and their (likely) superiors among the cadres of visitors, see Den Doncker and Navratilova 2025.

Text*Commentary*

This group of signs is intriguing as it could have been a test (as seen in **Gunn 24**), but is perhaps more likely a deliberate composition. The lotus flower is known to stand for *nfr*, good/beautiful, in the *iri nfr* Ramesside texts known from other graffiti collections in Saqqara, Thebes, and Asyut.²¹⁹

If the first sign is indeed an *m*, then the result looks like *m nfr dhwtj* ‘do not be good, Thoth.’ This is, at a first sight, rather unusual but not impossible. Critical comments on other people’s writing and presence are known from other sites. In Dahshur, a scribe’s name might have been removed from a dipinto, and a well-publicised critical remark of the scribe Amenemhet was located in the Step Pyramid precinct, suggesting that his predecessors should not have been allowed to write in this location as they were not ‘enlightened by Thoth.’²²⁰ The location of this text one block above the group of trial signs in **Gunn 24**, which are in the upper corner of the block, could in that case imply a targeted critical remark.

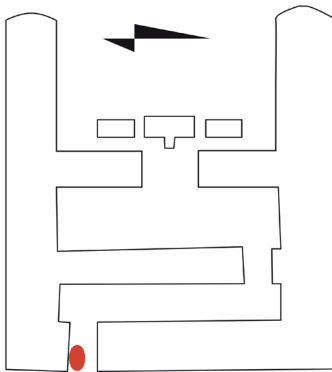
Černý dated the text to the 18th Dynasty.²²¹

Documentation & References

Petrie 1892, pl. XXXVI, no. xx; Rowe photograph 529; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 33, no. 25; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 25.

Gunn 26*Location & Placement*

The entrance ceiling, ‘first block from the outside,’ south side.



[219] A rich collection with varied orthographies in Asyut: Verhoeven 2020, I, 104–105, 114–115, 128, 138–139, 141, 176–177, 215, overview 237–240.

[220] Navratilova 2015b, 157–158.

[221] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

Text



iw.t pw ir:n [...] Coming made by [...].

Commentary

An *incipit* of a visitors' text of the 18th Dynasty format. It is not entirely clear how long the original text might have been. As is known from sites such as Dahshur and Asyut, writers occasionally experimented with writing only the *incipit*, searching for a suitable location or perhaps just testing their writing ability on an unknown surface. This fragment could have been a test, but it went beyond the *incipit* itself.

The placement on the ceiling or high on a wall/top part of a door frame is not an isolated occurrence — even at Meidum — but is encountered at different sites and probably for different reasons (Thebes, the *grotte des scribes*;²²² Asyut;²²³ or the precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur²²⁴). The texts in the *grotte* at Deir el-Bahri seem to have used parts of the ceiling that offered vertical sides of stone projections, resembling ostraca. Examples at Asyut or Dahshur could have shown an interest in a specific location and context of primary epigraphy, leading to a choice of less convenient graffiti placements.

A placement high on a wall or a ceiling mostly suggests some support or accumulated material on the floor. Černý dated the text to the 19th Dynasty,²²⁵ as he did with the texts from the pyramid entrance.

Documentation & References

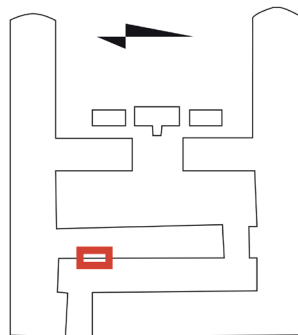
Not published by Petrie; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 33 no. 26. UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 26; Rowe photograph 542; Navratilova 2011.

Gunn 27

A signature (?) dipinto that is located with a cluster of other texts, several of which are signed by draughtsmen.

Location & Placement

'Passage, W 5/1.' Entrance passage, west wall, fifth course, first block from the left. The dipinto is located on the same block as Gunn 11 A–B, 16 A–B, 18, and 24.

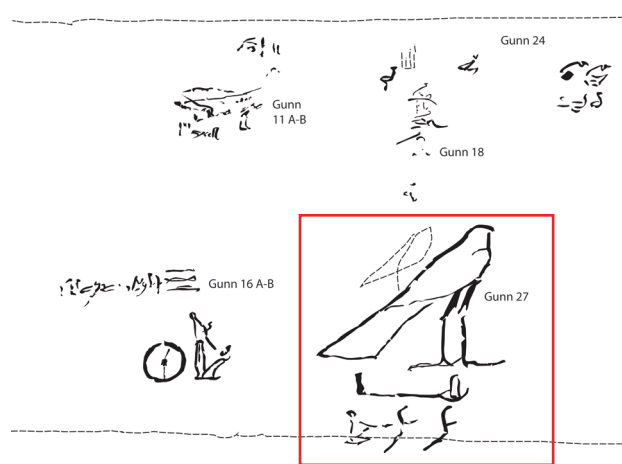


[222] Ragazzoli 2017a, 81–82, catalogue 193–240.

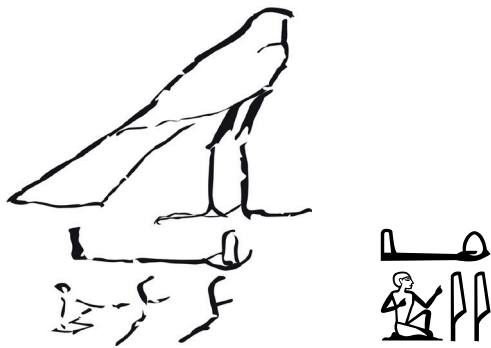
[223] Some inscriptions were located very close to the ceiling: Verhoeven 2020, I: TS29 (discussed on p. 294).

[224] Navratilova 2024, texts inserted in an offering list that was likely located more than 2.5 m above ground.

[225] UPMAA, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.



Position of Gunn 27 on block 5/1.

Text

hr-imy Hormay (personal name).

Commentary

The composition could be read as *hr-imy*, possibly a name, determined by the A1 classifier. The name *imy* is attested, usually with a different orthography (Ranke, *PN I*, 26,2), as is the name *hr-mj* (Ranke, *PN I*, 248, 18, written, however, )

The signs stand out, having been carefully executed in cursive hieroglyphs rather than in hieratic, identifying their writer as likely to be a visual culture professional or a person involved in writing funerary texts.

The writer could have also been making some visual puns: first, by drawing the initial sign of his name enlarged, he could have been referring to the divine falcon and thus to Horus or Horus Sneferu. Second, the A1 classifier at the end of the name is strictly speaking not an ordinary , but rather  or even , implying a gesture of adoration. This writer may have encapsulated his veneration of the falcon god within the writing of his own name.

For remarks on the dipinti cluster and the use of cursive hieroglyphs, see above, esp. **Gunn 11 A–B** and **16 A–B**.

Images of falcons do appear separately in graffiti production (Dahshur, Senwosret III, fragm. 04.19) or on ostraca. The latter, however, are usually more formal images. Ostrakon MMA 05.4.122 shows a falcon with a training/copying grid.²²⁶

Documentation & References

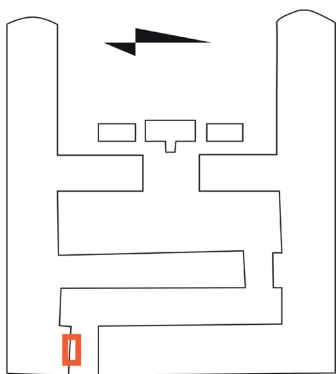
Not published by Petrie; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 33, no. 27; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 27, Rowe photograph 524; Navratilova 2011; Rowe 1931, pl. XXXV, fig. 1.

Gunn 28

Two lines of a hieratic visitors' text, located in the entrance area.

Location & Placement

Beneath **Gunn 12**, located on the south side of the entrance, fifth course of blocks, second from the left.



Text

Two lines of hieratic script, written in black ink on a light background. The script is cursive and difficult to read without transliteration.



[1] *iw<.t> pw ir<.w>.n sh3 m'y3 s3 hrd [n] kp imn-htp.w n hnw*

[2] *ms<.w> [n] nb.t pr šm'y.t n [...] dhwtwy*

[1] The coming of the scribe Maya, son of the child of the *kap* Amenhotep of the palace,

[2] born (of) the lady of the house, the chantress of [...], Djehuty.

[226] Gillett 1906.

Line 1: The dipinto appears to open with a conventional visitors' text *incipit* and the initial part contained affiliation of the writer, both in terms of his profession and of his family.

The initial reading in Gunn UPMAA 2.7 was fragmented, so the above suggestion follows Černý's comments in Gunn notebook 54 more closely.

Line 2: The formula *ms.n* — also used during some periods of the Middle Kingdom.²³¹ The title of the chantress of Amun was discussed by Onstine 2005. Gunn and Černý suggested  as a possible reading for line 2. For Djehuty as female name in the New Kingdom, see Ranke, *PN I*, 4–7, 13.

Not published by Petrie; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, opposite no. 12 on p. 18 (with additions by Černý); also GIA Gunn Mss. III.2.3; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, between nos 11 and 12 (as ‘position wanted’, and with gaps; preceded later observations); Navratilova 2011. No photograph by Rowe.

[231] Ilin-Tomich 2015, 151; Obsomer 1993.

made at the same time and not during separate visits. This Maya also gave his affiliation and, it seems, he also added a reference to his wife, which is less frequent in visitors' texts, although female relatives and even female visitors are referenced in them on occasion. One of the dipinti in Saqqara refers to a chantress named Sakhmet,²³² and the female name Takhat appears in one of the dipinti in the precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur.²³³

Whether the spouse in **Gunn 29** was named as part of the family identification or whether she might have been in fact present remains speculative. In some settings, female visitors also left (or commissioned) graffiti and dipinti. Examples include a wife of a mayor who ordered a rock inscription near a desert road from Qift to Berenice in Wadi Umm Awad during the reign of Thutmose III (PM VII, 327), and varied women, often with the title of chantress, who were named in the dipinti in the New Kingdom devotional setting in the temple of Thutmose III at Deir el-Bahri.²³⁴ The Deir el-Bahri corpus is Ramesside and specifically connected to the local cults.

The writing of the writer's father's name, Huy, looks very similar to this name written in **Gunn 20**, while the royal name is written without a cartouche, which is a development observed also in Abusir in the context of the writing of the epithet of Sakhmet of Sahure, where the name of Sahure must have lost some of its value as the name of a particular king.²³⁵ King Netjerikhet Djoser seems to have lost his cartouche whilst still being approached as a deified king in a dipinto at South Saqqara.²³⁶

Line 2: The temple of Sneferu is already designated as *nfr* before the moment of 'finding' it is introduced. The expectation of its perfection is already stated in this variant of the visitors' text. Gunn's reading indicates a cartouche around the name of Sneferu, which would be likely, but the signs are not clearly visible in the available tracing.²³⁷ The current transcription therefore omits the cartouche. If it indeed had been omitted when the dipinto was written, this phenomenon would not be limited to Sneferu; as just noted above. Here, Sneferu is identified with Horus, however, his identity as a deceased king is not entirely erased as he is also referred to as *mꜣꜥ hrw*, justified.

Line 3: A comparative phrase of this kind is frequent at Dahshur in the precinct of Senwosret III and it defines this temple as the most beautiful of its kind, among all others. This expression is not encountered in Abusir or Saqqara but it does appear in Asyut.²³⁸

Documentation & References

UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 29; GIA, Gunn notebook 54; p. 1 recto, and Gunn Mss. III.2.4 (tracing by Černý); Navratilova 2011.

[232] Navratilova 2015b, 191–192.

[233] Precinct of Senwosret III, fragment no. 98.931, Pyramid Temple, probably a door frame fragment.

[234] Marciniak 1974.

[235] Navratilova 2015b, 294–295.

[236] Navratilova 2015b, 199–201, 283.

[237] Navratilova 2011, 114 transcribed without the cartouche.

[238] For a summary with a list of specimens, see Verhoeven 2020, I, 224.

across the group is not yet an option. Another (or the same) Amenmose signed also the north side of the temple entrance (**Gunn 30**), where he added his brother's/colleague's name.

Gunn 31 provides an affiliation for Amenmose as the son of Baki. The name Baki is known from other sites, including Saqqara, where a scribe Baki claimed he was from the 'Southern city' i.e. from Thebes.²⁴⁴ This is likely a coincidence.

Another Baki may have been among the visitors to the North Chapel of Senwosret III in the pyramid precinct of this king at Dahshur.²⁴⁵

Both names are well attested in Egyptian sources: Amenmose: Ranke, *PN I*, 29,8; Baki: Ranke, *PN I*, 90,13.

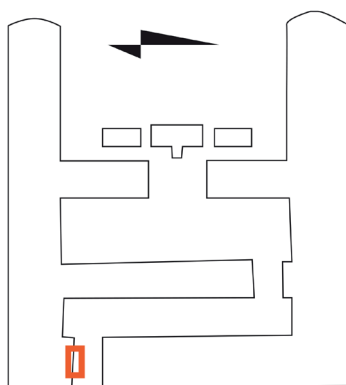
Documentation & References

Not published by Petrie; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 1 recto, no. 31; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 31; no Rowe photograph; Navratilova 2011.

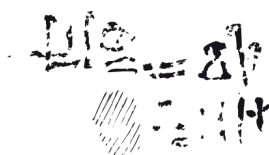
Gunn 32

Location & Placement

Gunn's description: 'Entrance, S 5/2.' Entrance, south side, fifth course of blocks, second block from the left. The drawing is based on tracing 'no. 32' in the file Gunn Mss. III.2.4. The original tracing was made by Černý.



Text



[244] Navratilova 2015b, 151–153.

[245] Navratilova 2024.



[1] *h3.t sp 8 hr hm n nswt bitj* [...]

[2] [*nh wd3 snb (?)* ...]

[3] *iw<.t> pw ir<.w> n mcy3 s3 wcb pth b-nfr s3 nb.t pr s3-ti-imm*

[1] Year 8 of His Majesty the Dual King [...]

[2] [L·P·H·(?) ...]

[3] then came the scribe Maya, son of priest of Ptah Tjanefer, son of the lady of the house Satiamun

Commentary

The three lines of text captured by the tracing are treated here provisionally as one dipinto. However, in the absence of a photograph, this reading cannot be supported with absolute certainty, leaving a possibility that the tracing captured two fragmentary dipinti: one beginning with a date and the other opening with an *iw.t pw incipit*. The tracing does not by itself confirm the text as continuous and, as the example of **Gunn 20** (Gunn Mss. III.1.10 and III.2.1) has shown, the tracings should be used in comparison with further records.

Line 1: The dateline is another example where only the year of the king seems to be indicated without the season, month, and day. This abbreviated approach to dating can be added to the other examples known from this site and focused on the *sed* festival year of Amenhotep III (**Gunn 22** and **Gunn 23**). Unfortunately, the name of the ruler is not preserved.

Line 2: Probably contained a continuation of the royal name(s) and epithet(s). It is possible that the previous line ended with a cartouche and line 2 started with  followed by the Son of Re personal name of the king in question.

Line 3: The visitors' text *incipit* appears in this line, which is in accordance with the construction of some of the longer, more elaborate texts. The visitor also indicated their affiliation with names of both parents, which is not frequent but does appear in other texts (see **Gunn 28** and examples outside Meidum: notably 19th Dynasty scribe of the Treasury Hednakht visiting the Step pyramid complex²⁴⁶ as well as Asyut²⁴⁷).

The orthography of Tjanefer is tentative, following Ranke, *PN I*, 387,9; for Sat(i)amun, see Ranke, *PN I*, 286, 6.

A *wab*-priest is a lower-ranking priestly title; the deity Tjanefer served — Ptah — potentially links this visitor and his family to the Memphite region.

Scribes named Maya signed both the north and south side of the temple entrance (see **Gunn 28** and **Gunn 29**). The name Maya also appears in secondary inscriptions in several pyramid precincts;

[246] Navratilova 2015b, 170–173.

[247] Verhoeven 2020, I, list of texts and writers 477–481.

any identification must remain speculative, especially as Meidum has already shown two Mayas (the other Maya with a different affiliation penned **Gunn 28**).

Documentation & References

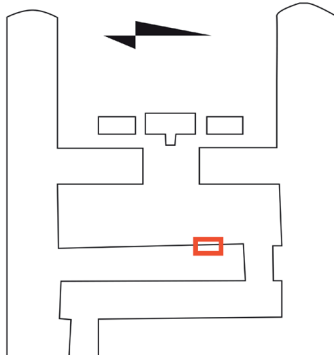
UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 32. GIA, Gunn Mss. III.2.4, tracing by Černý, and Gunn notebook 54, p. 1 rto; Navratilova 2011, 115–117.

Gunn 33

Two incised *nfr* signs²⁴⁸ next to each other, probably belonging to the same group of secondary inscriptions as **Gunn 1** and **Gunn 2**.

Location & Placement

Gunn's description: 'Chamber, E 4/2.' The two signs were in the temple chamber, on the east wall, fourth course of blocks, second block from the left.



Text



nfr.wy(?) (how) perfect!(?)

Commentary

These incised signs located in the temple chamber might have been part of the group of late Old Kingdom or Middle Kingdom texts. The technique (subtractive rather than additive), and the location (the temple chamber) link this inscription with **Gunn 1** and **Gunn 2**.

The two *nfr* signs may have been a trial before the writers attempted a more complex incised inscription such as **Gunn 1**, or they might have been a statement in their own right. If taken at face value as two signs on their own, they could be understood as an emphatic comment on the building's perfection.²⁴⁹

In the absence of a photograph or tracing, these signs cannot be assessed for palaeography purposes.

[248] Gunn in UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 33, has 'scratched.'

[249] Written as a dual but possibly standing either (1) for the 'exclamatory' dual no longer understood as such (cf. Hoch 1995, §45), or (2) the superlative expressed by writing the adjective twice — *nfr nfr* — very beautiful (Winand and Malaise 1999, 84).

Documentation & References

Not published by Petrie and not photographed by Rowe; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 2; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, no. 33; Navratilova 2011.

The temple stelae

The open courtyard of the temple in front of the pyramid contains two stelae and an offering table. Rowe (1931, 44 and pl. XXVII) suggested, following others, that a false door stela (no longer present) was also originally erected in the courtyard, standing behind the offering table.

The tall narrow stelae flanking the offering table carry no surviving traces of primary decoration. Incised large hieroglyphic signs, very likely secondary, were added to the stelae: a *w* (quail chick) and an *m*,²⁵⁰ and the available photographic record was published alongside their preliminary description in 1931. In his 1931 publication, Rowe does not specify which sign was on which stela or if they were both on the same one. Gunn did not include these signs in his records.

The isolated signs are very different in character from all other examples of secondary epigraphy in the pyramid precinct. They could have been testing or trial signs, but it is intriguing that they were added to such conspicuous elements in the temple as the stelae. Given the number of craftsmen/ draughtsmen attested in other secondary inscriptions in the temple, it is plausible that they were testing their drawing ability on another available surface without always appending their own signature or another epigraphic feature in the immediate vicinity. Such experimenting with written and visual culture is attested in New Kingdom secondary epigraphy contexts in other locations.²⁵¹

The suggestion that the signs on the stela(e) may have been a result of experimentation by a draughtsman is further supported by the sure command of the tool and the mastery of visual culture conventions that characterise the execution of these two signs, as shown in the photograph published by Rowe (1931, pl. XXVII).

The pyramid entrance

The substructure is accessed from the north side of the Meidum pyramid, and the entrance opens from the pyramid slope 15 m above ground level.²⁵² The corridor has an inclination of about 30° in that part, which may be considered a walkable slope. The height of the corridor is 1.55 to 1.59 m, except the place where the corridor encounters the layer 2.2, where it rises to 1.84 m.²⁵³ That is also the location of the New Kingdom dipinti.²⁵⁴ Given this height, the ceiling could be inscribed by an ancient Egyptian individual of an average height even without sand or debris on the floor.

The dipinti in the pyramid entrance passage were the first secondary epigraphy features from the Meidum pyramid precinct to be observed by Maspero in the 1880s and published in 1893.²⁵⁵ Flinders

[250] Detailed photographs were published in Rowe 1931, pl. XXXVI, figs 1 and 2.

[251] See further Den Doncker and Navratilova 2025.

[252] For a review of research and description of the pyramid, see Verner 2020, 120–122.

[253] Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, Vol. 3, text, 19.

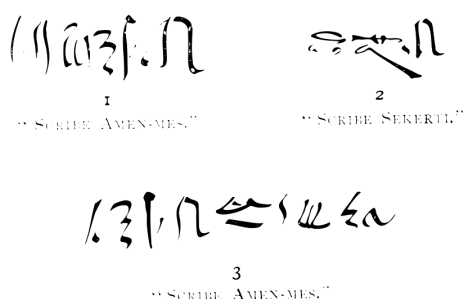
[254] See Rowe 1931, pl. X.

[255] Maspero 1893, 149, and see also the notes above in the chapter *The visitors' graffiti research in Meidum*.

Petrie did not include these texts in his records used by Griffith for the 1892 publication, which focused on the pyramid temple.

Both Percy Newberry, and later Rowe in collaboration with Gunn, who was in turn aided by Černý, recorded and interpreted three dipinti in the entrance passage of the pyramid. Newberry provided their facsimile in his 1905 publication.²⁵⁶ The facsimile reflects the state of preservation and probably the spatial limitations that Newberry faced when tracing or sketching them.

Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch., March, 1905.



Tracings of the entrance passage dipinti in Newberry 1905; this image does not capture the appearance of the group on the pyramid entrance ceiling.

Rowe and Gunn specified that they were found on the eleventh roofing slab, counting from the entrance. Compared to the description and cross-section of the entrance corridor provided by Maragioglio and Rinaldi, this is approximately 6–7 m from the entrance, still within reach of daylight from the outside and close to the limit of the accretion layer E2.2 of the pyramid core.²⁵⁷ The entrance may have been adapted to take large plug stones²⁵⁸ but, if they ever were in situ, they must have been gone by the time of the New Kingdom when these visitors entered.

Černý suggested a 19th Dynasty date for these texts²⁵⁹ while Maspero²⁶⁰ dated them to the 20th Dynasty. Černý also emphasised that 'most of the graffiti are so short that they do not allow a closer examination on palaeographical grounds'.²⁶¹

If we accept Černý's dating for all three texts, it would imply that the *iw.t pw* formula was still in use by some visitors in the Ramesside period, although the corpus in other pyramid precincts would otherwise suggest that the *iw.t pw* text is more typical for the 18th Dynasty.²⁶² Perhaps this is an exam-

[256] Newberry 1905.

[257] Maragioglio and Rinaldi 1963, Vol. 3, 19–20.

[258] Review of the topic in Clark 2016, 253–254.

[259] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, **Texts A–C**; also UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum, 2.6, letter Černý to Gunn, from 7th September 1930.

[260] Maspero 1893, 149.

[261] Černý to Gunn, UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum, 2.6, 7th September 1930.

[262] Navratilova 2006.

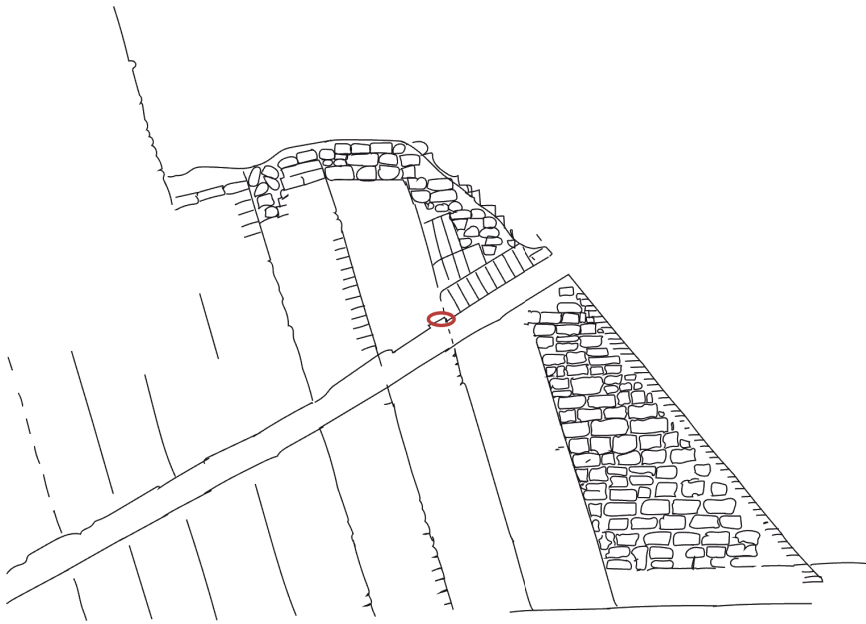


Figure 6. Section of the entrance corridor, after Maragioglio & Rinaldi 1963, vol. 3, tavole, tav. 3; with the location of the dipinti, as explained by the earlier record in Rowe 1931, pl. X, marked on the ceiling blocks.

ple of an early 19th Dynasty visitor still applying the visitors' formula that was gradually phased out.²⁶³

Dating of the texts in the entrance corridor of the pyramid is nonetheless likely to present an ongoing challenge. Short texts on a difficult surface indeed cannot be expected to produce sufficient diagnostic signs that would imply a firm date based on palaeography: Černý's caveat still stands.

Text A

One line of a dipinto written in hieratic, in black ink, containing a title and a name.

Location & Placement

Eleventh ceiling slab of the entrance corridor of the pyramid.

Text



sh3 skry

Scribe Sokari.

[263] Compare graffiti corpora in Asyut (Verhoeven 2020, overview in vol. I, 220) and Thebes (Ragazzoli 2013 and 2017a, 2017b, also Ragazzoli 2026 on the West Theban graffiti corpus).

Commentary

A signature type dipinto. The name is possibly abbreviated, since it is based on the name ‘Sokar(i)’, which is often attested in this form in sources from the Middle Kingdom (but see details of writing: Ranke, *PN I*, 298,8), whereas longer theophoric names containing Sokar (which could be possibly thus abbreviated²⁶⁴) have a broader chronological range of testimonies. The writing of the deity’s name as  is attested from the Second Intermediate Period onwards.²⁶⁵

In any event, the name referenced an important patron deity of the Memphite necropolis and could imply a visitor from that area.

The tracing is based on Rowe photograph 359 and differs in some details from the version reproduced by Newberry in 1905.



Figure 7. Tracing by Newberry (published 1905).

The drawing has an adjusted outline of the brush strokes, which were affected by uneven surfaces of the block — a more accurate view of the brush strokes influenced by the surface would probably be as follows:



Although the date of the text was proposed by Černý as 19th Dynasty, some signs could be equally considered as relevant for an 18th Dynasty date:

- ▷  (Y3): The sign is debatable, as similarly constructed shapes also occur in the 18th Dynasty, (<https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/30131>, ) yet with closer parallels in the 19th Dynasty (<https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/45771>, Ramesses II, .
- ▷  (O34): The version shown in P. Ebers, AKU 1675 —  — is dated to the reign of Amenhotep II.²⁶⁶
- ▷  (V31): This sign could be also attributed to both dynasties.

Documentation & References

Not published by Petrie; published by Newberry 1905 and transcribed by Maspero 1893, 149; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, A; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 34; Gunn MSS iii.1.11; Rowe photograph 359; Rowe 1931, pl. XXXIX, fig. 1. Also referred to in UPMAA, Eckley B. Coxe Expedition letter from A. J. Rowe to B. Gunn, 19th April 1930, and Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

[264] See the discussion on abbreviated names in Ranke, *PN II*, 95–97.

[265] See the discussion and review of previous literature in Ilin-Tomich 2011.

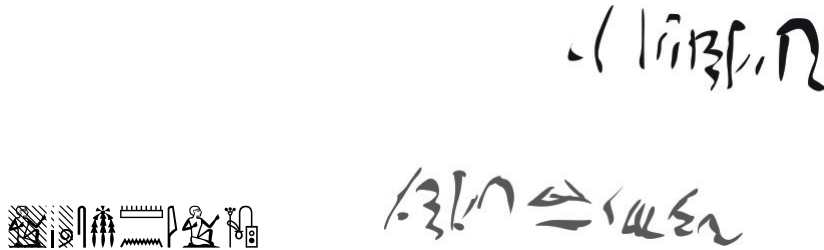
[266] <https://aku-pal.uni-mainz.de/signs/1675>.

Text B

One line of a dipinto written in hieratic, in black ink, located above **Text C**. The text contains a title and a name. Both texts B and C were dated by Černý to the early 19th Dynasty.²⁶⁷

Location & Placement

Eleventh ceiling slab of the original entrance corridor of the pyramid.

Text

sh3 imn-ms[-w?]

scribe Amenmose.

Commentary

The title and name of the visitor who also wrote dipinto Text C on the ceiling in the entrance corridor, close to Text B (the tracings reproduce both texts together in each entry, enhancing relevant text within its entry). The reading above follows the revision by Gunn and Černý. Gunn's earlier suggested reading was .

For further comments see **Text C**. **Texts B** and C could be considered as line 1 and 2 of one dipinto, which is also how Maspero (1893, 149) read them.

Newberry's tracing is very close in appearance to the one offered here.

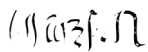


Figure 8. Tracing by P. Newberry (published 1905).

Documentation & References

Not published by Petrie; published by Newberry 1905 and transcribed by Maspero 1893; UPMAA, Meydum, 2.7, Notes on Graffiti, B; GIA, Gunn notebook 54, p. 34; Rowe photograph 360; Gunn Mss iii.1.12; Rowe 1931, pl. XXXIX, fig. 2. Also referred to in UPMAA, Eckley B. Coxe Expedition letter from A. J. Rowe to B. Gunn, 19th April 1930.

[267] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum 2.6, Graffiti Correspondence, Černý to Gunn, 7th September 1930.

Part III

Interpreting the corpus

Earlier in this book, we concluded our introductory remarks by saying that the recognition and analytical study of graffiti have developed an important insight: secondary epigraphy, while looking ephemeral, is a major source for the understanding of ancient cultures. Here, we open our interpretation by re-stating the value of graffiti in the study of the ancient Egyptian civilization within the context of the ancient world and by consolidating our own interpretive approach.

Any corpus of epigraphy¹ is only one part in a larger collection of ancient evidence at any given archaeological site. For cultures that write, it is a very important part, yet its importance is not limited to its textual content. The written artefact acts just as much as a material object as it does as a text carrier. In that respect, it enters into a relationship with spaces and other objects and other, animate, actors, all of which and all of whom interact to some degree with the text: including ‘a mixed epigraphic “audience” of texts displayed in public, which included some who read the text, some who heard the text read, and some who ignored the verbal message altogether.’² In the ancient world, the two latter groups would have included a significant percentage of the population i.e. those who were illiterate.

As such, secondary epigraphy must be interpreted in its context as a ‘written artefact’;³ and the context has to be understood both on a local scale and more comprehensively.⁴ The local aspect involves the material and spatial location as well as the process of making, that is features ranging from movements through the landscape to the building to the materiality of writing or drawing.⁵ The comprehensive aspect involves comparable epigraphic features and behaviour at other sites and the overall context of written and visual culture, of which secondary epigraphy is but one element. The approach entails a combination of skills linked with being a philologist, visual culture specialist, epigrapher, archaeologist

[1] We will not reopen the debate as regards what epigraphy is: see Davies and Laboury 2020. For a review of the changing viewpoints in Classics, see Bodel in Benefiel and Keesling 2024: a large part of this discussion has some relevance for Egyptology as well, especially situating the definition of ‘inscription’ and thus ‘epigraphy’ on the conceptual plane of communication, of a communicative intent: a message which has an audience (or audiences) in mind, not an individual and possibly confidential missive to another person. As regards defining *secondary* epigraphy and its variants, see Ragazzoli et al. 2023 and Polkowski 2023.

[2] Bodel in Benefiel and Keesling 2024, 6.

[3] Škrabal et al. 2023, 6–8, 18–21.

[4] See also Baird and Taylor 2011.

[5] See introductory chapters in Ragazzoli et al. 2018 and Ragazzoli et al. 2023.

with an interest in the landscape, anthropologist, and historian, especially as some monuments and sites carry multiple layers of epigraphic activity.

There are challenges to this approach. Firstly, the interpretation may get entangled in detail and lose any clarity regarding cause and effect and what may have been a major or minor factor. Secondly, when the researcher is aiming to explain where the visitors found themselves, how they understood and possibly experienced the place, and how they responded to it, there is a possibility of producing a circular argument when trying to address ‘lived experience’⁶ in the past. We come to see graffiti as unique mediators of ancient experience and may easily try to use them as a dominant lead, subordinating our carefully built contextualisation to our impressions based on the graffiti corpus.

Nonetheless, the material circumstances and bodily presence of the writer, if only approximated in the imagination of modern observers, are an important factor. The inscriptions and images were produced by people (mostly) aware of their surroundings and responding to how they understood the place, but also influenced by the available space, light, and other conditions of the visited location, so the interpretation considers and attempts to reconstruct all these facets.

The multi-level contextualisation goes some way to preventing the study of epigraphic features in isolation, or only as small corpora, and enables us instead to conceptualise a study of epigraphic habits, modes, or cultures, to use terminology applied in the Classical world,⁷ where secondary epigraphy has been recognised for some time as a productive source.⁸

In the following interpretive chapters of this book, we review our leading questions, address a summary of methods and approaches utilised in the Egyptian context, and then build an archaeologically and historically situated reading of the Meidum corpus, as well as include a brief note regarding the epigraphy techniques.

Leading questions

Before continuing our exploration of the Meidum graffiti group, we will review the leading questions of our approach. The first question is concerned with *the history of Meidum after Sneferu*. Regarding any pyramid precinct affected by secondary epigraphy, what other contemporary evidence is there that could relate to the time and the people involved in secondary epigraphy production?⁹ An emergence of secondary epigraphy may be prompted by qualities (including a different temporality) of the pyramid precinct or temple that spur its human audience to action,¹⁰ individual and social, ran by the wish to relate to those qualities or even communicate across temporalities. But this human audience must first physically come here, or inhabit that location, or use it in some way — where are they coming from and what other human traces are left as a result? Those connections may be local or go beyond the site and its region.

[6] This term is largely a tautology, even as it tries to emphasise an individualised, embodied sort of experience, not a generalised or summative experience of a large group.

[7] See the review of terminology and case studies in the Classical world in Benefiel and Keesling 2024 and epigraphy in a contextual case study in Prag 2018.

[8] Millar 1983.

[9] Compare also an effective use of contextual evidence and graffiti by Staring 2018.

[10] Compare Hodder 2012, 4–8.

We address the contextualisation of this specific corpus from the pyramid precinct at Meidum, led by the comprehensive view of the available evidence from Meidum suggested by Rowe and Gunn.¹¹ As the research has identified¹² secondary epigraphy features dated both to an earlier history, possibly late Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom, and to a later era, the New Kingdom, the study proceeds to address contextual evidence across the historical periods after Sneferu.

The second point is questioning the *inscribed space*. The analysis of the materiality and spatiality of the texts follows in detail. The content and appearance, as well as the location (where the epigraphic feature located is within the building) and placement (where and how the epigraphic feature is placed on the wall) of individual secondary epigraphy features, are equally informative. The last point must be moreover considered with a caveat that the spatial and material conditions often significantly changed. Whilst the pyramid temple at Meidum may be probably, and advantageously, in a condition resembling how it would have appeared in the New Kingdom (with exceptions, such as the different levels of debris), other pyramid temples changed or almost completely disappeared, as was the case in Dahshur (Senwosret III), South Saqqara (Djedkare), and Abusir (Neferirkare, Niuserre), among others.¹³

The third and fourth leading questions are concerned with the *text structure plus contents*, and finally, the *agency, affordances, and motivations* of the writers. We would like to emphasise at this point that we consider secondary epigraphy production in the New Kingdom to be part of a continuum of practices of both written and visual culture, present in both royal and private commemorative contexts. This will enable us to address the writing practices deployed by the makers of secondary epigraphy, and eventually to outline the social and cultural context as well as the motivations of those who wrote and drew secondary epigraphy features. Some of the observations will be made using comparands from other sites, including both royal precincts at other pyramid necropoleis and other funerary monuments affected by secondary epigraphy production.

Our layout of research questions, as well as our following analysis, are based on a state of research that has changed considerably where secondary epigraphy is concerned, particularly in the last two decades. With each new corpus of secondary epigraphy being analysed and published or republished,¹⁴ new details appear and contribute to the overall understanding of the production of features of both visual and written culture, features that were produced by a broader range of practitioners than monumental visual or written culture, and therefore features that must be considered as particularly informative about cultural practices and the transmission of social and cultural values in ancient communities.

Summary of methods and approaches

Before addressing the individual sections dedicated to interpretation, we would like to provide a summary of the current state of methods and approaches used to study secondary epigraphy. Secondary epigraphy used to have an idiosyncratic role in earlier interpretations of ancient cultures. It has been

[11] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum, Egypt expedition records, 2.10 (formerly call no. 1013, box 2): Publications – Lists of individuals.

[12] See Part II.

[13] For a general overview of the changes on the pyramid fields, see Verner 2020 and Bárta and Brůna 2021.

[14] The corpus-based versus comparative approaches were outlined in Škrabal et al. 2023.

extensively recorded, sometimes with a significant degree of interest and accuracy.¹⁵ From the point of view of the interested public or travellers, graffiti often attracted attention and that is the case for the Greek and Roman world as well as for the ancient Near East. At the same time, the records and notes that researchers and epigraphers made about graffiti were not at the forefront of interest as regards publishing them and making them widely accessible. From the point of view of publishing ancient Egyptian epigraphic corpora, graffiti could be indeed seen as a body of material standing initially on the margins of interest of epigraphers. The publications often offered only a selection of material¹⁶ or a translation without a detailed visual record.¹⁷ This was often due to the contingencies and limitations of research or the publishing process. The unpublished archives of Egyptologists are therefore still a significant source of information about secondary epigraphy, especially as the material itself is fragile and its study *in situ* is influenced by a range of local conditions: an epigrapher visiting at an opportune time of day or with more time on their hands could have achieved remarkable results not available to a focused but short-term visitor.¹⁸

In recent decades, there has been a resurgence of interest both in the recording and publishing methods and in the interpretation of these corpora of texts distributed across many ancient sites, including the sites in the Nile Valley, in Egypt and in Sudan.¹⁹ The interpretation developed a more comprehensive paradigm, recognising the value of this body of ancient Egyptian evidence as very informative about practices of cultural communication and indeed social structures of the ancient world.²⁰ Secondary epigraphy study developed a collaborative role in ancient history, together with the study of other phenomena including nonepigraphic genres in written culture and the study of material culture. The ongoing discussions only underline the productivity of work with secondary epigraphy.

First, the delimitation of what kind of evidence, what body of evidence, we are looking at is still under discussion. And this discussion may not have a definitive set of answers: ‘Their nature is so diverse that any attempt to define more precisely this category of evidence has so far been frustrated by counterexamples.’²¹ Graffiti, secondary epigraphy, or rock inscriptions include a vast body of texts and images spread on surfaces that range from natural features, such as cliffs or boulders in the desert, to the built environment. The highly formalised decoration of Egyptian tombs and temples is equally affected by this epigraphic behaviour as are mines and quarries.

This may suggest a wide range of intentions and practices behind this behaviour. Nonetheless, the research, concerned with both the built environment and natural yet anthropogenic environment,

[15] For an early overview of graffiti/secondary epigraphy research, see Desroches Noblecourt 1973; updated outlines are included in Ragazzoli et al. 2023 and Polkowski 2023, and see also Agar et al. 2026.

[16] As noted explicitly by epigraphers such as Gunn in Frankfort 1933 on the example of graffiti in the Osireion in Abydos. The challenges were further discussed by Caminos 1976, 20–22, and Dorman 2008 (as regards epigraphy contingencies in general).

[17] Černý in Firth and Quibell 1935.

[18] As was recognized by those who revisited earlier epigraphic surveys, such as Černý reviewing the work of Flinders Petrie at Sinai; GIA, Collection Gardiner, Correspondence, AHG 42.56.64, 16th April 1935, J. Černý to A. H. Gardiner, from Sinai.

[19] For an overview, see Salvador 2020.

[20] Agar et al. 2026.

[21] Salvador 2020, 435.

suggests that there are similarities and connections between the texts and images produced as additions to these spaces. These connections may not be a matter of content, although contents in different environments also overlap. The more recent and productive research consensus suggests that the most important connection between all these broad categories of inscriptions and images lies in what they do, that is the impact they have by interacting with the spaces in which they are located and with audiences they might have been intended for. This consensus sees graffiti as perhaps occasionally idiosyncratic but not necessarily as predominantly arbitrary or informal.

Another important element in the developing consensus of researchers is the recognition that ancient graffiti as a means of communication could have been and possibly often had been socially accepted, that is expressing a range of views that were affirmative or in any event broadly acceptable for the communities that were producing and utilising this medium. The idea of graffiti as subversive, or at least mischievous, combative, or problematic (as they may be in a modern urban space, albeit in ways that also claim and reclaim the city space for various stakeholders²²), does not apply across cultures and historical periods. This does not preclude the use of graffiti as a means of communication in different situations or between different subgroups/subcultures: for example, we are aware of ancient Egyptian texts that are subversive and indeed of some that could be considered disrespectful and offensive in their own context. However, based on the extant evidence, these texts and images are a minority in ancient graffiti production.

This double recognition of added texts and images as features that augment or enhance a space, serving as means of communication that transmit and possibly affirm (or occasionally debate) social and cultural norms of society, has changed the way we approach ancient graffiti. This recognition has also changed the research effort dedicated to them. Not only the time and focus of researchers is dedicated to graffiti but also enhanced technology is available to support research. The acknowledgement that these texts and images carry and express a range of cultural communications has also expanded our view of ancient societies that are now recognised as probably involving a broader range of practitioners of written and visual culture. This recognition doesn't weaken the acknowledgement and need for understanding cultural and social norms and restrictions placed on training and cultural expression in ancient societies.

For a body of material initially considered problematic, graffiti have gained the status that makes them legitimate competitors for the attention of both researchers and the public interested in ancient lives and ancient experience.²³ In this perspective, they may appear as deceptively easy to understand and as particularly open to interpretation because they seem to present a more accessible aspect of ancient societies. This impression, however, is not entirely accurate. While graffiti most likely concerned a broader range of practitioners of visual and written culture, and while they also encoded a more personal, individual communication, they were still in many cases encoded using the norms and expectations of written and visual culture. One of the better-known misapprehensions of Sir Alan Gardiner is his expectation that graffiti in tombs could carry an energetic, vivid, spontaneous response to the paintings and reliefs in the tombs. He was then disappointed by their repetitive character.²⁴ He did not

[22] For instance, see Zieleniec 2016, with earlier literature.

[23] The Egyptological perspective has parallels in Classical world studies and beyond: see Lohmann 2018, Škrabal et al. 2023, but also for instance Eastmond 2015, particularly Yasin 2015.

[24] Navratilova 2010a.

realise that the texts he was addressing were part of a significantly larger corpus affecting the funerary and temple environment, as well as other meaningful places throughout Egypt. This corpus, whilst using some defined phraseology, in fact had many variations showing a range of interactions by different professionals addressing themselves to the deceased, to the gods, and indeed to their own social group. The interaction with visual culture was part of this range of practices reflected in graffiti.²⁵

The above shifts in paradigm have also required shifting the methods. The texts or images are studied as part of the written and visual culture of their time, as well as recognised as specific expressions of that culture in the conditions of the space and place in which they were produced. The analysis of a corpus involves both qualitative and quantitative methods: which features appear? What kind of phraseology/motif is encountered and where does it belong in the intellectual history/art history/social history of the time? Further, what writing/drawing hand was used or how much calligraphic effort had been invested? Analysing the investment of effort, inasmuch as it may be gauged, is a relevant interpretive category,²⁶ as it contributes to evaluating the prestige and worth of the activity and its results. The materiality and spatiality perspectives come alongside the previous point: how was the surface handled and which tools were deployed to achieve the desired result?

Eventually, the detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis may locate secondary epigraphy in a continuum of written and visual culture, not necessarily in opposition to, but also as an extension of the formal and monumental register of writing and drawing. To close the circle, graffiti may then be productively interpreted as a distinctive and functional tool of cultural communication, specific in each context yet also indicative of cross-cultural patterns of behaviour.

Regarding the pyramid precincts, these shifts in emphasis may be illustrated as follows: from graffiti noted as isolated examples or small groups at one site, research moved to a corpus-based approach and then again to a close reading and re-contextualization of the individual parts of this broader corpus in each pyramid precinct.²⁷

Looking beyond graffiti and into other related parts of written culture brought insight into the intellectual history of the time, scribal training practices, and the development of the graffiti/dipinto as a tool of personal commemoration, devotion, and professional self-fashioning,²⁸ without losing the sense of a local, regional importance of the corpora coupled with an overall sociocultural impact of past monuments that was reflected in graffiti production.

Looking beyond pyramid fields emphasises the continuities of these practices, as well as their refashioning at the beginning of the early 18th Dynasty, manifested characteristically (yet not exclusively) in the Memphite royal necropolis environment. More generally, graffiti are routinely and productively called upon to corroborate, or provide context for, the discussion about tradition, uses of the past, and cultural transmission.²⁹

[25] Den Doncker 2023; Den Doncker and Navratilova 2025.

[26] See Stauder-Porchet and Stauder 2020.

[27] See Navratilova 2015b, Navratilova et al. 2013.

[28] Ragazzoli 2013, developed in 2019, *passim*, and also 2023.

[29] This was the view of Yoyotte 1960 and Wildung 1969a, and it has been developed with increasing nuance: see, for example, Navratilova 2006, Ragazzoli 2016, 2023, or, in a different context, Miller 2025.

Epigraphy notes

The technology of producing and processing the epigraphic record has become an acknowledged part of outlining one's methods and approaches. Whilst practical issues of Egyptological epigraphy work were always important and noted in research communications, they were often part of the 'behind the scenes' knowledge addressed in diaries or correspondence.³⁰ This is no longer the case, since such records are being increasingly brought to the fore. As this publication uses legacy records, the field epigraphy is not addressed here directly. However, in processing the legacy records, we have used a parallel approach, applying the methods of digital epigraphy to the legacy material whilst acknowledging the practical limitations: for example, the records cannot be reviewed or rephotographed on site, and mostly they do not have a scale. Nonetheless, what we already have can still be digitally enhanced.

The most often used software in digital epigraphy supporting the enhancement of texts captured in photographs are D-Stretch³¹ and Hierax. The former is particularly effective in enhancing the presence of any features that were written or drawn with red ink, if captured on a colour photograph. The latter has shown good results when used to enhance black ink texts on papyri and ostraca. The usability of both is best demonstrated with high quality, high resolution photographs made recently. On archival material, the results depend on the quality of the photographs available. Any colour filters and enhancements are of course not applicable to black and white documentation, but some supporting information in this publication was obtained using Hierax applied to black and white documentation of the secondary inscriptions in the temple. The Rowe photographs were our principal source for tracings.

For processing the digital tracings, this project has used Adobe Illustrator (AI) to produce vector drawings of the hieratic texts.³² The process uses digital layers to replicate the procedure where facsimiles of hieratic signs are drawn, first as outlines of individual brush strokes, then filled in with appropriately coloured ink to produce a full facsimile of the text. As the quality of the legacy records varies, it is not always possible to address the sequence of brushstrokes reliably. However, the general outline and, at least in some instances, also the construction of individual signs can still be determined.

Meidum after Sneferu

It is not our intention to include in this publication the history of the pyramid, from its architectural development and organisation of work to the identification of its building teams and possible interrelation with teams in Dahshur. We focus on its history *after Sneferu*, especially until the end of the New Kingdom, as it relates to the production of secondary epigraphy. Both Petrie and Rowe noted a volume of later finds in the area, often small finds that are difficult to date.³³ Some larger and more diagnostic finds nonetheless enable us to sketch a history of Meidum after Sneferu's project had been finished.

[30] See Davies and Laboury 2020, esp. chapters by P. Der Manuelian, W. Schenck, B. McClain, and V. L. Emery.

[31] For the practice of using D-Stretch see, for instance, Gasse 2023, Evans and Mourad 2018; for successful case studies see also Jasnow et al. 2021, Enmarch and Gourdon 2023 (reviewing previous research), and Cooke et al. 2024.

[32] See in detail Gülden et al. 2020 and Gülden 2023.

[33] Petrie 1892 and Rowe 1931.

Old Kingdom

Following the archaeological, administrative, and prosopographical evidence of the funerary sites, funerary cult operation, and staff, it is evident that the local posthumous cult of the kings, as attested from the 4th and 5th Dynasties onwards and centred on their precincts, was shaping both the social landscape and the landscape of memory. Next to its political value to kingship and its role in the Egyptian economy,³⁴ the royal cult at the pyramids helped to ground the kings in local memory. In Meidum, it would appear that the cult is so far attested in the Old Kingdom, but less prominently than at Dahshur.³⁵

Secondary epigraphy at Meidum contains features that Gunn (in Rowe 1931) dated tentatively to the late Old Kingdom (such as **Gunn 1, 2**, and possibly **Gunn 33**). While this is speculative, the possibility that the cult practitioners left some of these inscriptions cannot be excluded. The (possibly late) Old Kingdom incised graffiti refer to the visited (deified) king and this king is in at least one instance clearly identified as Sneferu (**Gunn 1**).

Various small hawk statuettes found in the temple were considered by earlier excavators to belong to the Old Kingdom category of evidence for the Meidum cult,³⁶ while the traces of habitation and a later burial complicated interpreting the early post-Sneferu history of the temple. If Wildung's assumptions were to be accepted, namely that this pyramid was erected by Sneferu as a place to venerate his divine presence as Horus (and that it might have contained a *meret* shrine³⁷), then the Horus Sneferu cult survived with less evidence than Sneferu's 'royal' cult at Dahshur. The original choice of Meidum, as well as its subsequent modification and the transfer of the main royal funerary operations to Dahshur, may not yet be satisfactorily explained,³⁸ but they did leave behind a site with a particular, if perhaps more restricted, royal memory.

Sneferu's cult, irrespective of the location, was linked to other royal cults also by the possible donation of vessels and commodities.³⁹ Some of the commodities circulated in the cult economy as late as the 5th Dynasty came from the pyramid town of *dd-snfr.w* (Djed-Sneferu), which is a name considered to be shared by the Meidum precinct and the pyramid town,⁴⁰ yet, the town, despite its importance in the economic network of royal precincts in the Old Kingdom,⁴¹ is not mentioned in the Dahshur decree⁴² as a significant settlement and its archaeological footprint at Meidum is so far unknown.⁴³ All of the above factors would point to the status of Meidum as a place linked with Sneferu, but in a specific capacity.

[34] Compare Verner 2014, 99–136.

[35] Wildung 1969a, 104.

[36] See Rowe 1931, 29.

[37] Wildung 1969a, 109; Wildung 1969b. However, see the investigation into this shrine type and its possible location in Dahshur by Arnold 2025.

[38] Verner 2020, 124.

[39] Posener-Kriéger et al. 2006, 351.

[40] Wildung 1969a, 108, 117; the evidence of Abusir papyri is used to imply this (see the summary in Verner 2020, 124). There is also a suspected red ink docket on one of the Bent pyramid blocks (see the list in Zibelius-Chen 1978, 274–275).

[41] Posener-Kriéger et al. 2006, 351.

[42] Zibelius-Chen 1978, 277.

[43] For a review of the evidence, see Bussmann 2004, 17–18.

Middle Kingdom

The Egyptian Middle Kingdom is another period of change in the pyramid fields. It was a period when royal building activity reshaped the landscape around el-Lisht and in the Fayyum Oasis and continued along the Nile towards Dahshur. This former southernmost outpost of the Memphite necropolis (unless we count Meidum as such) was turned into the northernmost outpost of the new belt of royal necropoleis reaching northwards from the region of the Fayyum. As Meidum is in the 21st Upper Egyptian nome, the last Upper Egyptian region before the border of Lower Egypt, it was probably more closely related to the Fayyum area, unlike Dahshur, which alternated connections to the north and to the south.

The new building projects were not the only Middle Kingdom activity in the broader area of the Capital zone. A multifaceted interaction with existing structures is also attested. As part of the building projects, varied re-use of Old Kingdom material in Middle Kingdom projects is debated.⁴⁴ At the same time and alongside the procurement of material from earlier royal precincts, the veneration of Old Kingdom kings in the Middle Kingdom manifested notably in several locations: Abusir, Saqqara, and Dahshur are certain. The later tradition (P. Westcar) still referenced the pyramid town Djed-Sneferu.⁴⁵

Middle Kingdom evidence available in the archaeological record at Meidum is uneven and currently does not include the same range of finds as at other pyramid sites, yet it includes secondary epigraphy.

What else is involved? The area of the mastaba tomb of Nefermaat and Itet had pottery from the Old Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, but apparently not the Middle Kingdom.⁴⁶ The numerous pottery finds from around the site have also been discussed, implying a longer, more complex history, but the Middle Kingdom element is still limited.⁴⁷

Other Middle Kingdom finds indicate a Middle Kingdom presence on site, such as two coffins dated to the reign of Senwosret I. The first is a rectangular wooden coffin JE 69295, belonging to *s3t-hr-m-h3t*,⁴⁸ the second is the coffin of Khentykhetymhat,⁴⁹ also of a rectangular Middle Kingdom type. One of the Middle Kingdom burials excavated by Rowe was reported to contain 'a large linen sheet for wrapping a mummy, its texture marvellously preserved if we consider that it was four thousand years ago',⁵⁰ now preserved in the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia.

The obvious conclusion is that the site retained some importance as a burial ground. Regarding its broader archaeological context, it must be added that although Meidum has more limited Middle Kingdom activity, sites within its vicinity have more prominent tombs, such as in Riqqeh or Tarkhan.⁵¹ Seen together, the finds suggest that Meidum was not an unknown element in the Middle Kingdom funerary landscape.

[44] Goedicke 1971; Jánosi 2008.

[45] Wildung 1969a, 104–117. The identification of *dd-snfr:w* and Meidum is discussed by Zibelius-Chen 1978, 274–277.

[46] Khoulî et al. 1991, 43–45.

[47] Rzeuska 2011.

[48] PM IV 95; Rowe 1930, 677 fig. 6 [bp]; Outline info: <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/inscription/12342>, accessed 6/5/2025.

[49] Rowe 1930, 677 fig. 5 [bp]; Outline info: <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/inscription/18060>, accessed 6/5/2025.

[50] Ranke 1950, 84–85.

[51] For an overview, see Grajetzki 2024, 134–136.

What might have happened to the cult of Sneferu? A statue base of the lady Snefru-kheti was found by Petrie in the temple and he dated it to the 18th Dynasty, which would have corresponded to more extensive finds of secondary epigraphy. However, it was reattributed to the Middle Kingdom by Rowe,⁵² followed by Harpur,⁵³ and linked to the domains providing for the cult of Sneferu, as the offering formula on the statue base invokes the gods of Djed-Sneferu. To this sparse trace, the probable Middle Kingdom graffiti add another piece of evidence for a Middle Kingdom cult of Sneferu at the site. According to Petrie and Gunn's records, the Middle Kingdom secondary epigraphy in Meidum are concentrated in the chamber of the pyramid temple (**Gunn 1**⁵⁴–4, 6, 33?), and possibly also one example on the ceiling of the entrance passage (**Gunn 7**). The texts were written in columns, and they are 'true' graffiti, incised into the stone surface.⁵⁵

Gunn 1 and **Gunn 2** may also be dated to the late Old Kingdom, but the other, more securely dated Middle Kingdom graffiti examples in Meidum are succinct and communicate their commemorative purpose clearly. There is one probable basilephoric name (**Gunn 7**): this Middle Kingdom text focussed on the deceased king as well as the visitor, both commemorated by referencing their name. Other texts from the same time also give some personal names: most likely the names of the visitors. Commemorating one's presence by adding a signature is a common feature that is also encountered in earlier settings, for example in private tombs in the Teti Pyramid Cemeteries and elsewhere in Saqqara.⁵⁶ The texts in Meidum therefore offer further support to interpreting the Middle Kingdom visitors as still concerned with the temple as an active cult place of Sneferu. The conceptual continuum of private and royal commemoration could be further implied in texts like **Gunn 1**, possibly articulating the veneration of the royal name or deification of the royal person (but note the caveats as regards both dating and interpreting this text).

Secondary epigraphy, combined with the evidence of the statue base, may suggest a local tradition of some importance. As the ongoing research has shown, secondary epigraphy appears as a means of communication in private funerary edifices of the Old and Middle Kingdoms,⁵⁷ and Meidum would constitute an example of an early royal precinct. As noted by E. Frood, 'A significant transformation in the Middle Kingdom is the opening up of the world of the temple as theme and dedicatory context'.⁵⁸ A private person's commemoration in a temple context, still rare, became possible: in one case, a private commemorative statue or several statues was/were probably set up in a memorial temple of

[52] Rowe 1931, 29.

[53] Harpur 2001, 23 with fig. 29 with previous bibliography; first published by Petrie 1892, 34 and 40, pl. XXIX, no. 6; also see Reader 2015, 216. The statue base is now located in Berlin: ÄM 20581.

[54] See the discussion in the catalogue entry **Gunn 1** as regards a possible date of either late Old Kingdom or Middle Kingdom.

[55] As noted in the catalogue, Griffith (Petrie 1892, 40) included also the text listed by us as **Gunn 5** as part of this group, no doubt due to its technique, as it is also incised. However, this text may be considered open for reattribution to the New Kingdom. It is written in a horizontal line and it is also located in a different space, the entrance area, which is much richer in New Kingdom secondary inscriptions; for more information see the catalogue entry **Gunn 5**.

[56] Since the late Old Kingdom: see Hamilton 2024 and Hamilton 2025.

[57] Hassan and Ragazzoli 2023 and 2024.

[58] Frood 2007, 12.

king Amenemhet I at Ezbet Rushdi.⁵⁹ A royal funerary temple of Sneferu, neither fully decorated nor fully operational, could have been thus adopted for less formal expressions of personal commemoration by both a statue and graffiti as well, prefiguring later more extensive New Kingdom developments.

The agency is in this case with the visitors, as a counterpoise to the biographical texts where it is with the protagonist; however, the ‘memory contract’⁶⁰ between the tomb (funerary chapel/temple/stela, etc.) owners and their visitors depended on successful communication between both parties. This communication is in this case not mediated by any primary inscription on site referencing Sneferu: we do not observe any relation to earlier visual or written culture because the interior walls of the temple were left unfinished (unless the visitors saw some as yet unnoticed (or no longer preserved) builders’ marks and were able to read them?).⁶¹ The entire structure and its expected owner must have been of interest and Sneferu must have been strongly connected with the site in the understanding of its Middle Kingdom visitors.

At the same time, if we accept **Gunn 4** and **Gunn 6** as part of the Middle Kingdom group, then the commemoration of the visitor was similarly important, including the tribute to at least two visitors’ literacy and social status: scribe Aneftef in **Gunn 4** and scribe Horemsaf in **Gunn 6**.

New Kingdom

The New Kingdom context at Meidum is interesting to compare to contexts seen at other pyramid precincts. Petrie listed various New Kingdom finds ranging from an ostrakon to stelae. The ostrakon of ‘Apusenb’⁶² is an interesting find. It probably carried several texts, one of which begins with a date and another of which was read as 𓂏𓂛𓂏𓂛 , giving the ostrakon its name.

Pottery dated to the New Kingdom was identified at the mastaba of Nefermaat and Itet, and fragments of late New Kingdom amphorae were later found by el-Khouli and team ‘in the debris surrounding the pyramid.’⁶³ Petrie also described many faience beads, some lance heads and dried fruit, as well as other traces from a burial he dated tentatively to the 18th Dynasty and which he added was found in the temple passage.⁶⁴ This would contrast with New Kingdom burials that appeared initially around the

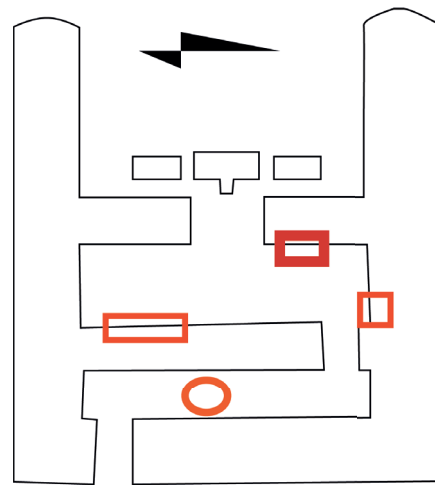


Figure 10. The location of Middle Kingdom secondary epigraphy in the pyramid temple at Meidum.

[59] See further Fischer-Elfert and Grimm 2003.

[60] See Den Doncker and Navratilova 2025 as regards the use of this terminology on later, New Kingdom examples.

[61] Known examples of builders’ marks (Khouli et al. 1991, 17–21) do not mention Sneferu (see p. 18 n. 5), although one of them probably refers to his royal name Nebmaat (C.19, see pl. 12).

[62] Petrie 1892, 34 and 40, pl. XXIX, no. 8. Griffith (on p. 40) added that it is probably accounts but is difficult to read.

[63] Khouli et al. 1991, 43–48, quote p. 47.

[64] Petrie 1892, 9.

walls of other pyramid temples, such as Neferirkare or Djedkare Isesi,⁶⁵ and only later inside the perimeter of the temple buildings, usually after these buildings had been affected by a dismantling process.

Secondary New Kingdom burials at Meidum were also identified near the mastabas in various parts of the necropolis, and Petrie and his colleagues reported further and more extensive re-use in the 22nd Dynasty.⁶⁶ Yoyotte (1963) outlined several necropoleis related to Meidum, based mainly on work by Petrie (et al. 1910) and Rowe (1931): one located four miles south of the pyramid and one north of the pyramid, plus the burial activity close to and within the precinct itself.

As for the tombs of the New Kingdom and later, especially in mastaba 17, apart from a 1930s publication by Rowe (1931, pl. VII), some finds (such as coffin 31.27.118) were included by Ranke in his presentation of the collection of the UPMAA.⁶⁷ There are also further unpublished finds from these burials, including wooden coffins and pottery, in the UPMAA.⁶⁸

The mid-18th Dynasty stela (UCL 16051) of the scribe Paheray and his wife Iniuset came from tomb 34, together with a small faience scarab. Other objects from the 18th Dynasty were identified in tombs 31, 51, 56, 57, and 72.⁶⁹ Petrie also refers to a bronze chisel as possibly being datable to the 19th Dynasty,⁷⁰ which he was willing to link to the destruction of the pyramid complex under Ramesses II. The interpretation of the beginning of organised destruction as Ramesside was also seconded by Rowe.⁷¹

Other artefacts related to people connected with Meidum in the New Kingdom come from outside the site. Stela Wien ÄS 139,⁷² owned by Turoy, is said to be from Meidum (Meratum). The stela was bought in Egypt in 1821. Turoy was the head of Medjay, shown with his family adoring Osiris. As the provenance of the stela is unknown, it remains an open question as to how many more burials with stelae such as Paheray and Turoy may have been in the vicinity of the pyramid. Turoy may be identical with or related to the owner of a Theban tomb with a similar name and title, from the era of Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV.⁷³

A more elevated Thutmoside dignitary, the Viceroy of Kush Usersatet (*fl.* in the reign of Amenhotep II) was named as overseer of the house in Meidum on British Museum Stela no. 623 from Wadi Halfa, where he is shown offering to Thoth.⁷⁴ The Thutmoside Meidum was therefore connected with middle-rank as well as more significant dignitaries. The presence of administrators such as Akheperkaresoneb

[65] Borchardt 1909, 71, and H. Vymazalová, personal communication May 2025.

[66] Petrie et al. 1910, 22–36; Rowe 1931, 23. Some burials were on the top of the temple in debris, suggesting that the sides of the pyramid were covered by debris by the Third Intermediate Period. However, if Černý was right about the possible 20th Dynasty date of some dipinti, this leaves a short window of opportunity for more sustained destruction at or after the end of the New Kingdom.

[67] Ranke 1950, 85.

[68] Nos 31.28.269, 32.42.241, 32.42.127, 31.28.85, 32.42.875, 32.42.1069, 32.42.1107, acc. to Appendix slips of the *Topographical Bibliography*, Griffith Institute Archive, University of Oxford.

[69] Currently in the possession of the Petrie Museum, UCL, London.

[70] Petrie 1892, 34 and pl. XXIX, no 14; described as 18th Dynasty on the plate.

[71] Rowe 1931, 22.

[72] PM 803–050–779, PM VIII.4, 194–195. Also see outline info: <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/inscription/6528>, accessed 6/5/2025.

[73] See also <https://www.khm.at/kunstwerke/stele-des-teri-317218>. Accessed 29/7/2025.

[74] *Urk.* IV, 1687, 2; cf. also Der Manuelian 1987, 154–155, and 191; PM VII, 141; see also Randall-MacIver 1911, 96.

(dipinto text **Gunn 10**) or Ib (**Gunn 13**) linked to royal memorial temples and also active in Thebes, or possibly even Edfu, would not be surprising in this context. Wildung suggested a ‘business trip’ for such Upper Egyptian dignitaries.⁷⁵

The mobility of such visitors attested both in Upper and in Lower Egypt also corresponds to the patterns of mobility shown by other 18th Dynasty dignitaries, e.g. Amunedjeh known from a dipinto in Abu Ghurab.⁷⁶ It places Meidum on the map of 18th Dynasty Egypt, in a relatively important role. The combined evidence of stelae and dipinti outlines continued New Kingdom elite involvement with the region at least from Thutmose III to Amenhotep III.

Later, an Amarna dignitary is named as a mayor of Meidum.⁷⁷ Meidum is also cross-referenced in economic documents such as P. Wilbour,⁷⁸ and the temple of Ramesses II (the Theban Ramesseum) had a vineyard nearby.⁷⁹ It is these documents and other references that suggest a New Kingdom settlement in existence since the early 18th Dynasty, with the region belonging first to the 21st Upper Egyptian nome and only later to the Memphite nome.⁸⁰

The New Kingdom secondary epigraphy activity in the Meidum precinct of Sneferu is more prominent in quantity and contents than that of the Middle Kingdom, which is in accordance with other pyramid fields and with epigraphic modes⁸¹ in private tombs of the period.⁸² The New Kingdom epigraphic mode of visitors’ texts links private and royal funerary monuments as spaces for the performance and affirmation of social and cultural capital: from literacy to connective and cultural memory.

In both royal and private environments, it is important to note that secondary epigraphy mostly impacts spaces that could have been deemed as commemorative, not as intended for burials. The graffiti in the substructure of the pyramid of Senwosret III are widely debated,⁸³ and as of now largely an exception among graffiti production in pyramid precincts, next to the dipinti in the entrance corridor at Meidum. Note also that most identifications of the royal funerary monuments in graffiti focus on the *ḥw.t ntr*, i.e. the functional equivalent of a funerary chapel of a private person, or indeed of a later royal memorial temple.

A more comprehensive and structured genre of visitors’ inscriptions must have begun to develop at the very beginning of the 18th Dynasty, as the earliest examples were registered during the reign of Ahmose in Elkab,⁸⁴ whilst the earliest hitherto recorded examples from the pyramid precincts are

[75] Wildung 1969a, 142–143.

[76] Navratilova 2022 with earlier references; on Amunedjeh, see also Polz 1991.

[77] Rowe 1931, 12; following Engelbach 1915, 17, 27, pl. XV.

[78] See the discussion in Antoine 2011 and 2017.

[79] Kitchen 1992.

[80] Wildung 1982, 10.

[81] Developing earlier concepts of epigraphic habit or culture, John Bodel proposed the productive concept of an ‘epigraphic mode’: a qualitative assessment of an ‘epigraphic mode’, or modality, based on ‘location, material support, language, writing technique, layout, or register of expression to enhance its meaning for its targeted audience’ (Bodel 2024, 14).

[82] Alan Rowe and Battiscombe Gunn were the first to relate the secondary epigraphy features at Meidum to the tombs at Beni Hassan (Rowe 1931, 18).

[83] Di. Arnold 2002, 42–43 and Do. Arnold 2010.

[84] Demarée 2024.

attested in Saqqara from the reign of Amenhotep I. We address the structure and development of the genre and its deployment at Meidum further on.

There is a perceived rise in the production of secondary epigraphy in the pyramid fields in the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep III. Whilst this is no doubt due to the length of both reigns, there seem to be particular periods when visitors were engaging with the monuments more intensely. One such period seems to be the early forties of the reign of Thutmose III, a pattern that can also be observed at Meidum. One option of how to interpret this rise in interest is linking the interaction with past monuments to the art and architecture of the 18th Dynasty.⁸⁵ This may have been the reason behind Thutmoside interest in the beautifully decorated precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur and, while in Meidum the relief decoration is absent, it is possible to debate if all the visitors knew this as they approached the temple, or alternatively if the temple was worth visiting simply as a monument of Sneferu.

The 1st millennium

The area of the Meidum necropolis continued to be used after the New Kingdom, although the production of secondary epigraphy, except for later graffiti on the pyramid itself, seems to have ceased by the 20th Dynasty at the latest. Maragioglio and Rinaldi reported, following an earlier publication, Greek graffiti on the pyramid,⁸⁶ but none were found in the temple, which must have been covered significantly enough with debris to allow for the Third Intermediate Period burials.

Rowe collected references to Meidum in later finds inside as well as outside the area,⁸⁷ listing among others Piankhi's inscriptions and also Papyrus Krall.⁸⁸ A large number of burials in the debris around and on the top of the temple were dated to the 22nd Dynasty and later Greco-Roman finds, possibly from burials, were also identified.⁸⁹ For instance, a vessel with a possibly mixed hieratic and Demotic inscription was found.⁹⁰

All of the above points to the continued use of the site as a necropolis, ongoing until the Greco-Roman period, and to the sporadic interest in the pyramid by visitors that was carried forward to new language groups.

Inscribed space

The analysis of the Meidum corpus of secondary epigraphy is contributing to the discussion about how the place and space of the pyramid precincts were constructed as meaningful locations in later periods of Egyptian history, and how they were experienced. The location of secondary epigraphy in

[85] Navratilova 2017.

[86] Published by Robert 1902. And possibly Coptic ones, discussed by Gunn and Rowe in correspondence in 1932: UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum 02.06, Graffiti Correspondence pages 10 and 22–23.

[87] UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum, Egypt expedition records, 02.10 (formerly call no. 1013, box 2). Publications — Lists of individuals.

[88] Most of the contents of this list, but beginning with the medieval visitors, was included in Rowe 1931, 6–11.

[89] Rowe 1931.

[90] Discussed by Gunn, Rowe and Černý. UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum 02.06, Graffiti Correspondence pages 10 and 21, and even with F Ll. Griffith — UPMAA, The Eckley B. Coxe Expedition papers, Meydum 02.06, Graffiti Correspondence pages 10 and 28.

pyramid precincts has been shown to have been influenced by several factors, reflecting the ways in which humans relate to space and place, in which they ‘locate culture’.⁹¹

As ‘all behavior is located in and constructed of space’, humans moving through it have more than a biological presence; in the anthropological research of ‘embodied spaces’ or in the ‘anthropology of experience’,⁹² the human body is conceived of as a multiplicity: physical/biological (and individual), social body, and by extension body politic.⁹³ The physical/biological body moves in a space and the choices where to write might have been dictated by what was available and accessible in the location, literally within reach of a sitting or standing person, and also where the person could come, see, or carry a source of light.

Standing between the affordances of the body and the technical affordances of writing, the choice of writing surface might have been dictated by reasons of writing expediency — flat, pale, relatively smooth, or at least not so rough, a surface; the ability of the hand to transfer ink/pigment to the vertical surface of the wall, or even to the ceiling above the writer’s head.

The social body and the body politic makes, however, also a different set of choices. The writers might have exerted themselves to reach locations in a landscape and within a building that were meaningful to them.⁹⁴ The writing surface might have been chosen for its closeness to something else of interest, more specifically for its capacity to convey the new writer’s unique status by placing them in an important context, by making them participate in the place’s meaning.

Inscribed landscape

A landscape marked with texts is a characteristic of ancient Egyptian culture. From desert roads to inscribed pathways along Theban cliffs, and from frontier regions to mines and quarries. Epigraphic modes that were embedded in the environment provide clues to political statements, mobility, work practices, social habits, affinity groups, and both group and individual devotion and commemoration.⁹⁵ They also imply how the landscape itself was ‘materialising time’,⁹⁶ capturing traces of human mobility and adaptation.

However, is there scope for addressing the landscape of the pyramid fields as an ‘inscribed’ landscape environment when the texts on monuments situated in it are mostly concerned with the monument itself? First, although visitors’ texts are focused on the monuments, some do emphasise the landscape setting. None of the texts surviving at Meidum do so, but their counterparts in Saqqara note that the visit to the monuments entailed going to the ‘desert’, or even ‘the desert to the West of Memphis’.⁹⁷ Therefore, the funerary monuments were seen as part of that specific environment. It may be argued

[91] See Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003.

[92] Turner et al. 1986.

[93] Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 3.

[94] As documented for instance in Dahshur, see Navratilova 2024, but likely also elsewhere.

[95] The corpus of the Theban Mountain graffiti or the collections of graffiti and rock inscriptions in the Aswan border region are good examples, but any graffiti corpus is likely to express some of these phenomena (overviews in Ragazzoli et al. 2023; Polkowski 2023; see also Ragab 2024).

[96] Garnett 2013.

[97] Navratilova 2020.

that they also dominated this environment as targets of the visitors' trips, thus orienting the focus on elite political and devotional narratives embodied by their architecture. Yet the encounter with such a meaningful monumental place still involved an environmental characteristic: the desert necropolis.⁹⁸

Second, there is the inhabited, practised space of the landscape where people lived, worked, built their homes or burial places, transported commodities, and addressed any other need of daily life. The above context of finds from both the Middle and New Kingdoms suggests that New Kingdom Meidum, although not a necropolis of a capital like Memphis, was of some local interest for a community that buried their dead there. The general pattern of re-use of the Old Kingdom necropolis in the era spanning the Middle Kingdom to the Greco-Roman period⁹⁹ is shared, with variations, by many pyramid fields.¹⁰⁰ This re-use must have involved varied levels of local landscape knowledge and memory, as well as amnesia, as regards where earlier buildings were located.

Third, going beyond a local, regional interaction, the visitors' texts suggest a much larger catchment area than a local one (at least for some of the visitors). In that regard, the pyramid and its temple sitting within their environment attracted attention above and beyond the local interest, as important necropoleis elsewhere did too. The Egyptian elites were aware of the major 'gateways' to the underworld across the country, like Abydos, Rosetau (the Saqqara/Giza area), or indeed Western Thebes. From this perspective, every necropolis was a gateway to the Underworld but each was also seen as a specific, even unique, landscape with its own geographical features.¹⁰¹

In this context, the graffiti in pyramid precincts form a layer within the inscribed landscape of the necropolis, as witnesses to its regional and transregional importance, and to the patterns of behaviour of people, who may be seen as the 'necropolis stakeholders'. Together with other sources, from local archaeology to texts from elsewhere, which reference the region and site, the graffiti display:

1. local relationships;
2. representations of the Egyptian elite across regions of the country.

In the 18th Dynasty, such representations may be seen as part of a reestablished administrative and intellectual connectivity supporting the central government.¹⁰² The location of Meidum on the route between the Memphite region and the Fayyum region — addressed also in the chapter *Visitors in a geographical and social network* — might have contributed to there being visits from a larger catchment area, even though the historical Middle Kingdom connection of the Fayyum, Meidum, Lisht, and Dahshur was not fully replicated.

[98] The 'aspirational' landscape as defined by J. Baines 2013, *passim*.

[99] Yoyotte 1963, 92, with a list of references.

[100] The variations are, however, significant. There was a royal necropolis at Middle Kingdom Dahshur, a Middle Kingdom cult of Old Kingdom kings at Abusir, Saqqara, and Dahshur, but less pronounced Middle Kingdom activity in Giza (as much as it is known). By the New Kingdom, the patterns are more even across the pyramid fields and the ongoing research will no doubt continue to develop this picture.

[101] The Ramesside text of P. Anastasi IV, 4.4–4.5, states, in a series of compliments to a high official: 'May you rest upon the Peak, the lady of which is in the West of Thebes. May your soul become divine among the living, may you mingle with the virtuous spirits and walk with Osiris in Rosetau on the day of the feast of Sokar' (Caminos 1954, 143. Caminos's 'Crag' has been amended to 'Peak', as the definition of El-Qurn, the Theban Mountain, identified with the goddess Meretseger).

[102] Compare the analysis of the 18th Dynasty government in Shirley 2013, 570–596.

Graffiti and dipinti in the temple

As the temple of the pyramid of Sneferu at Meidum is devoid of any primary visual culture record, the writing/drawing choices would have probably been influenced by the overall importance of the place, as opposed to responding to a specific visual or textual element of an existing relief or painting.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, some affordances from the list above still need to be considered, such as the material accessibility.

The graffiti and dipinti in the pyramid temple of Sneferu at Meidum are clustered in several locations, suggesting specific spatial preferences which may have been based on diverse motivations. The following table (Table 2) lists spaces affected by secondary epigraphy and the distribution of epigraphy features on the walls. The spaces are listed in sequence from the entrance to the chamber, reflecting the original access route. The walls are listed beginning with the north.

Space/wall	N	S	W	E	Ceiling
Entrance	29, 30, 31, 32	5, 12, 13, 28			14, 15, 26
Passage			10, 11 A–B, 12A, 16 A–B, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27,		7
Chamber	<i>1</i>		6, 8	2, 3, 4, 33	
Temple roof				9	

Table 2. The digits in italics stand for true graffiti; Roman for dipinti.

The entrance and the wall of the passage immediately opposite the entrance were most affected by the secondary epigraphy production, as summed up in Table 3.

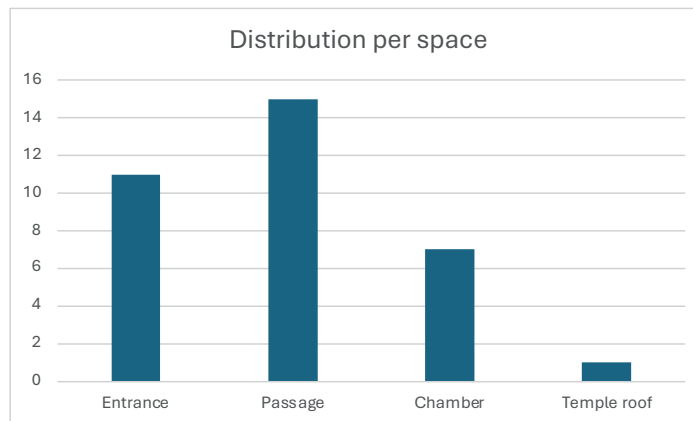


Table 3. Distribution of graffiti and dipinti per space.

[103] As shown in the precinct of Senwosret III, where the visitors appear to respond to a royal offering list, the names of the queens of Senwosret III (Navratilova 2024), or to a pile of offerings (Navratilova 2023b).

Entrance

On the outer façade, there were sketches of boats incised to the left of the temple entrance.¹⁰⁴ Most of the texts inside the entrance have been dated to the New Kingdom and were executed as dipinti; one incised text has doubtful dating (**Gunn 5**). They are situated in positions that would have been comparatively easy to write for a standing visitor, on both sides of the entrance on the fourth (**Gunn 5, 29**) to fifth (**Gunn 12–13, 28–32**) course of blocks, which are also areas that are sufficiently lit and must have been so at the time of writing. There are also three dipinti on the ceiling of the passage (**Gunn 14, 15, 26**). The fifth course of blocks would be between 1.54 to 1.91 m above ground and the ceiling just above 2.29 m. Writing on the ceiling would have been more demanding, but still within the reach of a standing person. Rowe (1931, 32) also refers to a crude animal sketch on the entrance ceiling, which however was not reproduced nor, apparently, recorded.

Passage: Group on the west wall of the passage & Ceiling

The largest concentration of dipinti in the temple overall is on the upper courses of blocks of the wall directly opposite the entrance at the beginning of the temple passage. The dipinti groups are located on the block courses four to six above ground, with the largest concentration on course five. The sketch in Fig. 11b provides a scheme of the distribution of dipinti on the west wall; the outlines of the blocks are approximate, not an exact representation of the wall composition. The passage also carries one incised graffito on the middle slab of the ceiling — **Gunn 7** — of a probable Middle Kingdom date.

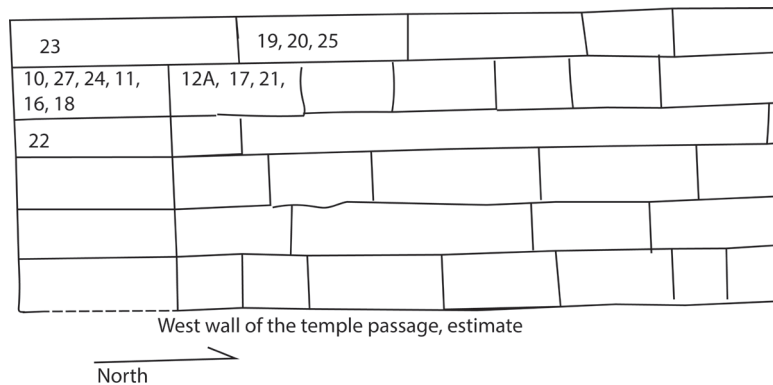
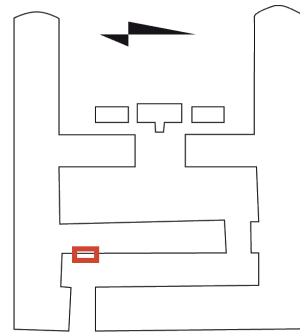


Figure 11.a–b. (a) The plan of the temple with the west wall graffiti locus, and (b) The schematic representation of the dipinti distribution on the west wall of the temple passage.

The blocks 5/1 and 5/2 (fifth course, first and second from left) were most popular as writing surfaces. Block 5/1 carries the longest inscription, **Gunn 10**, as well as a cluster of dipinti. It is not (yet) clear from the archived notes to which side of the cluster **Gunn 10** is.

[104] Rowe 1931, 32.

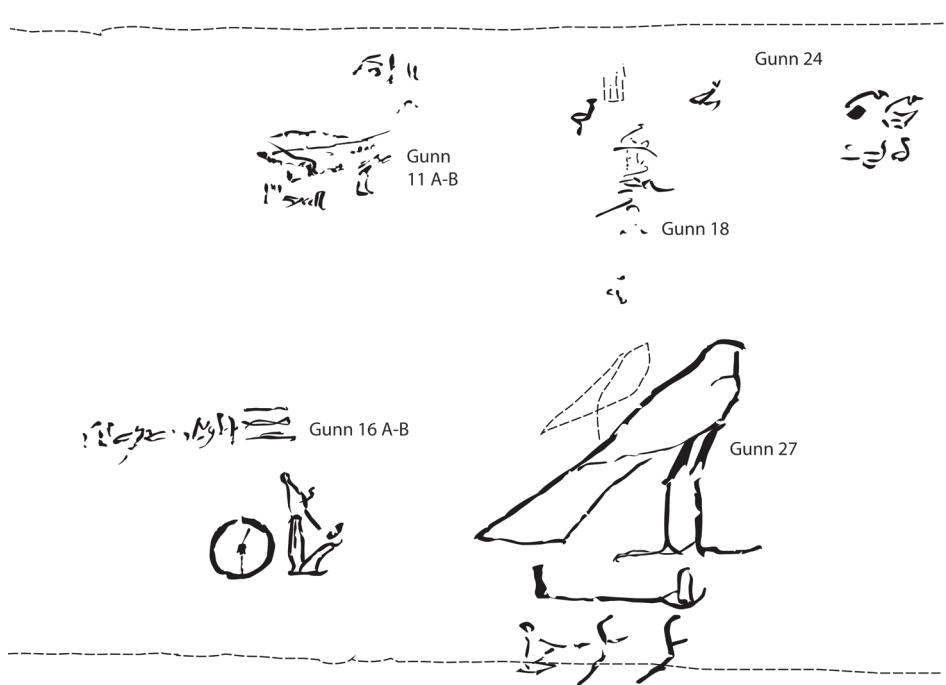


Figure 12. A cluster locus on the block 5/1, west wall of the temple passage.

The cluster locus, next to that of **Gunn 10**, could have been attractive for dipinti writers for the practical reasons of accessibility and lighting conditions.¹⁰⁵ The block is the fifth from below, i.e. more than 1.54 m above ground,¹⁰⁶ a convenient height for a standing person — or even a seated one if we assume a level of sand on the floor. As highlighted by Wildung, both standing and seated writers may be expected: both were attested in the Step Pyramid precinct.¹⁰⁷ The amenability of this portion of the wall for inscriptions is particularly evident when noting the cone of light shown in a photograph of the south end of the passage.¹⁰⁸

The dipinti are distributed in several groups. **Gunn 11 A–B** and **Gunn 16 A–B** are groups of dipinti, and parts A and B could have been written at the same time in both cases, as the groups each appear planned as one visual composition. **Gunn 11**, **16**, and **27** also contain a combination of textual and figural epigraphy features. These groups may have been the earliest secondary epigraphy features in the locus,¹⁰⁹ later accompanied by **Gunn 18** and the trial signs of **Gunn 24**. Possibly after **Gunn 27** was written, another visitor scratched an outline of a bird of prey next to the image of the falcon.¹¹⁰ **Gunn 27** is also located above an expressive and well-written text on block 4/1 (**Gunn 22**).

[105] See also Wildung 1969a, 141 n. 5.

[106] See Maragioglio and Rinaldi, vol. 3, tavole.

[107] Wildung 1969a, 141. See also Navratilova 2010b.

[108] Rowe 1931, pl. xxviii, fig. 1.

[109] See the interpretive suggestions for groupings of dipinti in MMA 504: Ragazzoli 2017a, 30–31.

[110] Wildung 1969a, 144, suggested that this scratched outline was the devotional act of an illiterate person joining more literate visitors.



Figure 13. A cluster locus on the block 5/2, west wall of the temple passage.

The block 5/2 carries another cluster of dipinti, two of them (**Gunn 12A** and **17**) written in black and red ink and one a figural dipinto in black ink displaying a crowned falcon. The focus on the cultic image of falcon/Horus as linked to the site and to Sneferu was evidently significant and reflected both in the text and in the visuals.

Temple chamber

The temple chamber¹¹¹ carries only ‘true’ graffiti located on the north, west, and east walls. This may, like the distribution of dipinti in the passage, be due to the lighting conditions in the chamber.¹¹² The graffiti are larger than the later dipinti and in some cases extend over several courses of blocks. According to the available record, they are far less numerous than the dipinti concentrated in the entrance and in the entrance passage. Rowe (1931, 32 and diary 1929, Meydum 1.21, p. 12) also refers to the scratched graffito of a boat on the north wall, near the door between the chamber and the passage. This graffito, however, is not included in Gunn’s corpus.¹¹³

Dipinti in the pyramid entrance

The three texts — probably by two writers — in the pyramid entrance corridor are quite short. Although it was evidently manageable to write them on the ceiling, it is not likely that doing so would have been

[111] Views of the temple chamber were published by Rowe (1931, 44 and pl. XXIX).

[112] Compare photographs of the chamber by Rowe (1931, pl. XXIX).

[113] UPMAA, Eckley B. Coxe Expedition, diary 1929–1930, Meydum 1.21, p. 12, gives a sketch of a boat with prominent rigging.

particularly comfortable. The length, therefore, could be influenced by both the wish to leave a personal memento and practical constraints on the writing process. The element of personal commemoration was evidently a priority, as the writers preferred to foreground their titles and names.

One writer used the visitors' formula, best attested in the 18th Dynasty. Neither writer tried to produce a longer text incorporating more elements traditionally used in visitors' texts and illustrated both on the walls of the pyramid temple at this site and in other pyramid precincts, as well as in private tombs. There is no explicit interaction with the owner of the monument in these short texts. They also represent relatively less frequent texts written in pyramid substructures. The other examples of substructure graffiti from Dahshur (Sneferu,¹¹⁴ Senwosret III¹¹⁵) are considered to be later or earlier.

Chronology of text distribution

The distribution of the texts shows that secondary epigraphy production affected different parts of the temple interior at different times. The Middle Kingdom texts in the pyramid temple were incised, implying that the writers chose not to use their writing tools or simply did not have them to hand. However, they decided to write mostly in a roofed chamber and, as shown in Figure 10, did not limit their activity to one locus. The light would have been coming through the doorway from the courtyard with stelae, possibly at noon or in the early afternoon, before the pyramid overlooking the temple cast a shadow. It is intriguing that these writers preferred the chamber as possibly a more meaningful(?) location and were fewer in numbers. One likely Middle Kingdom text, **Gunn 7**, was incised in the ceiling of the passage.

The New Kingdom writers in the temple and in the pyramid entrance acted differently. They did apply their technical skill of writing with ink and pen and brush, but they must have found the interior parts of the temple as either difficult to access or too dark (and they did not carry a source of light sufficient to enable a writing exercise to continue deeper inside).¹¹⁶ Petrie suggested that at that time the courtyard (and inner parts of the temple) were full of sand and that the burnt papyrus he found inside the temple indicated that some visitors tried using this impromptu light source to figure out their options.¹¹⁷

The New Kingdom visitors focused intensely on the temple entrance (preferring its south wall), and on the wall immediately opposite at the beginning of the passage. They mostly wrote within the range convenient for a standing person,¹¹⁸ that is on the upper blocks of the wall. The preference for the south wall of the entrance may suggest the timing of the visit: the sunrays must have come from the north, suggesting a summer visiting time. As the light penetrated inside the corridor, they may have also preferred to come in the morning with the sun in the east.

The next locus they adopted was the wall of the entrance passage to the left of the visitor, i.e. the south wall, and then the wall immediately opposite the entrance, i.e. the west wall of the passage. They mostly wrote at the height of the fourth to sixth course of blocks, i.e. 1.21 to 1.91 m above ground, which was again likely convenient for a standing person.

[114] For the entrance corridor of the Bent Pyramid, see Rees 2026.

[115] Di. Arnold 2002, 42–43, discussed by Do. Arnold 2010 and Staring 2018, 101–102.

[116] One caveat needs to be added: the visitors might have also decided to write in the liminal door space and thus claim the temple space as 'theirs'.

[117] Petrie 1892, 9.

[118] The mean height of ancient Egyptians (based on a sample of 150 skeletons) was 157.5 cm (or 5 ft 2 in) for women and 167.9 cm (or 5 ft 6 in) for men. See Zakrzewski 2003.

Overall, the New Kingdom text distribution in the pyramid temple at Meidum implies a different scenario compared to the more extensive (in terms of available structures) pyramid precincts of Djoser or of Senwosret III, where the visitors engaged with several buildings and appear to have roamed different spaces within each building.¹¹⁹ At Meidum, the New Kingdom visitors chose to engage only with the most easily available portion of the temple: its entrance and its immediate surroundings. Yet, the inscriptions are in some cases equally as elaborate as those found in other pyramid precincts, targeting important and productive political as well as cultural concepts: kingship and memory. The inscriptions also show variants and ‘genre mergers’ that suggest the repertoire of options available to writers, from which they chose with agency of their own.

Text structure, contents and message

The epigraphic mode of visitors’ inscriptions probably developed from earlier antecedents and was articulated in a more comprehensive format in the New Kingdom. One of the earliest known examples of this comprehensive format comes from a private tomb in Elkab: the dipinto of the scribe and dignitary Reneny in the tomb of Sobeknakht.¹²⁰ This genre then developed a consistent structure that varied in terms of how elaborate the individual parts of it may have been.

Apart from short texts resembling a signature, the visitors’ inscriptions in the pyramid precinct at Meidum follow the structure of visitors’ texts found in other pyramid precincts and in private tombs. This pyramid precinct, like several others in the Memphite area, does not seem to contain any literary texts, which featured so prominently in one specific private tomb, N13.1 in Asyut,¹²¹ alongside the visitors’ formulae.

Most complex visitors’ texts have a structure that situates the visitor first in their own historical moment, defines the intent of the visit located in a specific and meaningful place, and communicates social, cultural and political contents. The texts have a narrative structure, as shown in the following section.¹²²

Visitors in time

The more elaborate texts may open with a date, but not exclusively; there are also examples that omit the date and open immediately with the *iw.t pw incipit*.¹²³ If the date is present, it contains a reference to the regnal year, month with season, and day, although exceptions and variations exist — notably at Meidum shown in **Gunn 22** and **23**, where only the year is included.

Most of the Meidum graffiti and dipinti, however, do not contain a date at all. Out of 38 secondary epigraphy features documented in the legacy records, only 6 have surviving dates. 5 of these also have a surviving king’s name. 2 are dated to the reign of Thutmose III (**Gunn 10** and **13**), 1 to the reign of Amenhotep II (**Gunn 17**), and 2 to the reign of Amenhotep III (**Gunn 22** and **23**), whilst **Gunn 12A** does not have a preserved royal name in the dateline.

[119] Navratilova et al. 2013, Navratilova forthcoming in *Abusir and Saqqara 2025*.

[120] Demarée 2024.

[121] Verhoeven 2020.

[122] Outlined in Navratilova et al. 2013, Ragazzoli 2013, Verhoeven 2020, I, 220–221.

[123] Examples from Saqqara include Navratilova 2015b, 125, 157, 163–164.

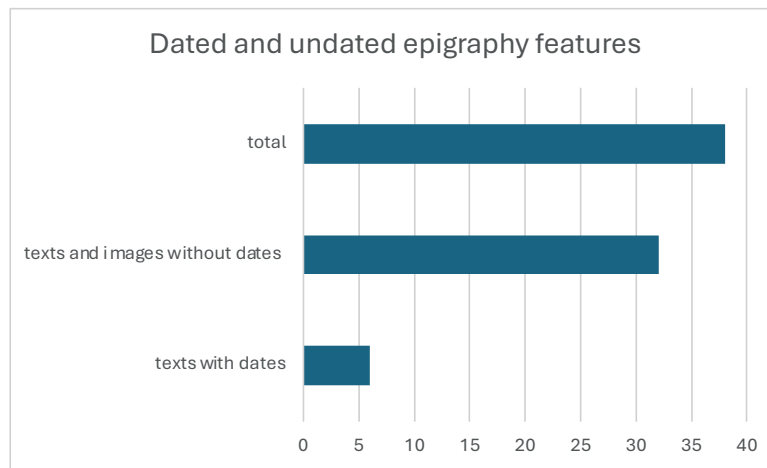


Table 4. Dated and undated secondary epigraphy features.

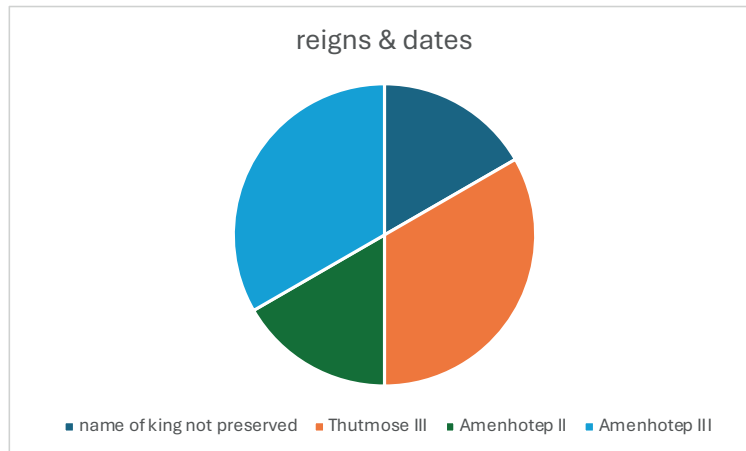


Table 5. Preserved royal names.

The date may include an elaborate version of the royal names and epithets referring to the king who was contemporary to the writer. Dipinti at Meidum, as well as some examples in the pyramid precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur, contain detailed versions of royal names and epithets. One version of the full royal titulary of Thutmose III at Dahshur was marked with verse points (column 6b, South Temple). Details about the activities of the king may also have been added (as they were in Abu Ghurab, Saqqara, Dahshur) and the importance of this feature will be discussed later.

The date may be set apart by using a rubric, as in **Gunn 12A** at Meidum, or inversely by using black ink when the body of the dipinto is executed in red, as for instance in Asyut (TN₄₃¹²⁴), displaying that the construction of the text could be visually divided into units of meaning. In these instances, the date was set apart from the narrative contents of dipinti, as the narrative part opens with the characteristic , with variants.¹²⁵

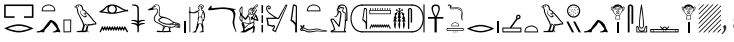
[124] Verhoeven 2020, Tafelband, Taf. 226–227.

[125] Ragazzoli 2013, 47.

Intentional visits

The visitor text opening uses a form that functions to open a new narrative unit, the A *pw* B tripartite form:¹²⁶ *iw.t pw ir<w>.n*. This is an expression with predecessors known from earlier rock inscriptions and other types of New Kingdom historical texts.¹²⁷ Altogether, 8 texts in Meidum include the *iw.t pw incipit* either as a true *incipit* or as a marker to begin the visitors' narrative after an initial dating formula (Gunn 10, 12A, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, and C). This corresponds to most examples known from the reign of Amenhotep I onwards,¹²⁸ which have a narrative opening *iw.t pw ir<w>.n sh3 NN r m33* ... The variations of the *iw.t pw incipit* and the following narrative structure were also analysed for the significant groups of dipinti in private (non-royal) locations such as Asyut and Thebes. The formula changed over time, and writers also made individual orthography choices.¹²⁹

Several examples at Meidum skip the historical anchoring (including the date at the beginning of the text), yet foreground the act of *coming to see*. The beginning of the visitor narrative may be also highlighted by writing the *incipit iw.t pw* in red, as shown by examples at Meidum (distinctly Gunn 10–12A), although this use of the rubrum is not a stylistic decision that would have been observed by most writers. Once the writer addressed his own social and historical anchoring ('coming of the scribe/draughtsman/craftsman/dignitary XY', anchored in the reign of king NN), he moved to thematise his coming in the context of his intentions.

In an earlier Elkab example (reign of Ahmose), Reneny thematised his coming 'to wander for pleasure in the desert' (also seen in pyramid and sun temple sites, e.g. Abu Ghurab¹³⁰ and Saqqara¹³¹). The expression 'to wander for pleasure in the desert' is used in the 18th Dynasty and in the Ramesside context. Importantly, it is used not only in private commemorative texts, such as visitors' inscriptions, but also in the monumental royal record. In the 18th Dynasty, it appears in the context of a royal visit to Giza. In the naos of Amenmose (Louvre E 8974), son of Thutmose I, the text states that the prince went for a promenade to amuse himself:  and the same phraseology is encountered in royal texts of Thutmose III and Thutmose IV.¹³² The prince's *pr.t pw ir.n* is the same narrative construction as that typically found in 18th Dynasty private visitors' texts (*iw.t pw ir<w>.n*). Meidum texts known thus far do not contain the reference to 'wandering for pleasure', as they follow the model where the writers, after articulating their formalised position as visitors, turn to communicate with or to the benefit of the tomb/funerary chapel owner (with their own interests at heart as well): hence they come to 'see' (*m33*) and they 'find' (*gm*).

The sequence of 'coming' and 'finding' also appears in historical narratives of other sorts, for example in the Middle Kingdom monumentalised hieratic rock inscription of the soldier Tjehemau,¹³³ and it is

[126] Winand and Malaise 1999, 285.

[127] Hsieh 2012: notably the inscription of Khusobek in Gebel el-Girgawi for a Middle Kingdom example.

[128] The graffito was identified on a loose block, on 'Stone A, on right' (Gunn's notebook 31, p. 45, no. 1). Navratilova 2015b, 127–128.

[129] Ragazzoli 2013, and Verhoeven 2020.

[130] 18th Dynasty, Navratilova 2015b, 73–74.

[131] 19th Dynasty, Navratilova 2015b, 170–171.

[132] Zivie-Coche 1976, 53–55.

[133] Darnell 2003, 43; Roeder 1911, vol. I: 106.

also identified in the early daybook style of a historical narrative.¹³⁴

This narrative style was later adopted widely in New Kingdom royal military inscriptions, which developed at the same time as more extensive visitors' texts. Could this daybook recording style shared with the royal historical record imply that visitors' graffiti were indeed developing into a text category linked with the genre that enabled a personal historical record of private individuals, i.e. with the biographical record?¹³⁵ Or, more succinctly, do graffiti constitute an epigraphic mode of personal commemoration that is anchored both in the scribal social place¹³⁶ and in biographical elite self-presentation?¹³⁷ Before we return to this argument, we may wish to review the other salient features of the texts: the location and the stakeholders identified therein. It is in any event plausible to claim that the writers came with an intent and were prepared to respond to the space they saw and engaged with.

Visitors in space — monuments

The monument itself is characterised as a *ḥw.t ntr* or as a *m(ḥ)r*: conventionally, the terms are translated as 'temple' and 'pyramid'. These definitions are more specific than a description of dedicated monuments in the royal inscriptions of the New Kingdom, characterising the coeval royal monument production: these are *mn.w* in general¹³⁸ and then may be specified further.¹³⁹

It is intriguing that at Meidum both the 'temple' and the 'pyramid' (see below) designation appear in texts located side by side. Within one text, such as **Gunn 10**, as Wildung suggested,¹⁴⁰ they could have been used interchangeably.

Ḥw.t ntr was used for a pyramid temple or another chapel within a pyramid precinct and it might have reflected the developing concept of the royal memorial temple; *m(ḥ)r*¹⁴¹ is a designation of a tomb, often provided with the pyramid classifier.¹⁴² It is used to designate the pyramid in the Pyramid Texts and elsewhere.¹⁴³ However, that does not imply that a *m(ḥ)r* had to always be a pyramid, as the classifier of the pyramid might have also referenced the general concept of a monumental tomb.¹⁴⁴

[134] Darnell 2003, 48.

[135] Compare discussion in Frood 2020.

[136] Ragazzoli 2013.

[137] We note that the audiences and accessibility of the biographical record varied: see von Lieven 2010.

[138] The dedicatory formula *ir.n=f m mn.w=f* is used often in royal texts: Taufik [Tawfik] 1971, Castle 1993, 1994, See also Baines 2008, and further discussion concerned with the grammar and syntax of this dedication formula: Depuydt 2001, Laskowski 1998, Jansen-Winkel 1997, Vittmann 1977. Private persons used the expression as well — review in Meltzer 1994 — including in an 18th Dynasty dipinto of as yet unknown provenance (p. 96). Seti I used the expression *smḏwy-mn.w* to mark his renewal of monuments, in this case buildings or statues, after the Amarna intermezzo (discussed and mapped by Brand 2000, *passim*).

[139] See a concise overview of what can be dedicated as *mn.w*, see Taufik 1971, 231–233: buildings or valuable donations to the temple.

[140] Wildung 1969b, 139 n. 4.

[141] For a discussion regarding the reading of this word and Gardiner sign U23, see Quack 2003.

[142] With sincere thanks to Lea Rees and Roland Enmarch for a productive discussion.

[143] See illustrative references in <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/71780>. Accessed 16/3/2026.

[144] References in the text of Papyrus Turin Cat. 1892+1886+1893 suggest a more generic 'monumental tomb': see <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd7eBFVyjvoXhqsSfU8xuldc>, in: Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae (accessed 16/3/2026).

The use of both expressions in visitors' texts points to a differentiation being made between architecturally and functionally different parts of the pyramid precinct, and what was mainly the cult site (*ḥw.t ntr*) that hosted visitors.

Meeting the gods?

Some of the graffiti formulae highlight what would have been the most salient moments in their environment that the Egyptians would have appreciated and considered as vital and as symbolising divine power, but also divine approval. Whereas we may suggest that the comparison of a memorial chapel or temple to a horizon where Re is rising¹⁴⁵ (*rꜥ wbn(.w) im=s*), as in **Gunn 10** and **21**, is a reference to the renewal of life and power that the sun god experiences after travelling through the underworld and uniting with Osiris,¹⁴⁶ the other comparisons that appear more sparsely in the visitors' texts are concerned with other positive features in the environment.

Gunn 21 is an extended version of the more typical formula focused on the presence of the sun god. Yet, in this text the descriptions of positive features in nature and in human existence seemed to grow and multiply one after the other. Starting with the more conventional reference to the sun god, the text continues to refer to the cloudless sky full of light, referring further to Hapi, the god of the Nile (who also appears in more elaborate offering formulae: see **Gunn 10**, l. 18), and then reverts to the benefits to be enjoyed by the visitor; these include a good burial and old age, rewards thematised in other text genres, for example in *Appeals to the living* and biographical texts.¹⁴⁷ It gives the impression of a comprehensive list of positives available thanks to divine care and provision for Egyptian society and for the individual. The memorial place of Sneferu symbolises a node in a network of human and divine interaction, a place where such wishes and expectations could be articulated.

Genre mergers

The dipinti used a relatively fixed structure, but both Meidum and other sites contain variations and extensions. The literary excerpts and colophons at Asyut are a prominent case of such enrichment or merging of genres.¹⁴⁸ Among the most elaborate examples of dipinti from the pyramid precincts is one of the Meidum specimens, **Gunn 10**. This text can be parsed into units of meaning concerned with the contemporary king, the writer, the visited monument and its owner, and an appeal to other visitors exhorted to join the writer in the performance of a significant act of worship of the deified king in a place defined by its devotional and historical value (see Figures 14 and 15).

The date of this visit was marked with a full and elaborate version of royal names, titles, and epithets of the contemporary king. Although no specific events in the reign of the king are mentioned, the rich and eloquent epithets encapsulate the message of kingship promoted by Thutmose III. The next part of the text part, as mentioned, clearly marked by syntax, grammar, and the colour of the ink. The *incipit* of the text is marked with a *rubrum*. The next part is fully focused on the writer, who is thematised as a

[145] Frequent in the Step Pyramid (see Navratilova 2015b, 120, 128, 161, 251–252).

[146] See solar-Osirian unity discussed by Smith 2017, chapter 5.

[147] As regards perceptions of being and getting old, see Janssen and Janssen 1996.

[148] Verhoeven 2020, *passim*.

literate member of the Egyptian elite, embedded in an important professional group and also elevated by his family connections. Both his titles and affiliation mark his status.

From the point of view of syntax, the next meaningful unit of the text is started by the narrative form *gm.n=f*. However, this expression still belongs to the characterization of the writer as an interested party and knowledgeable visitor.¹⁴⁹ The next part of the text is focused on the past king and the visited monument. This is a relatively brief thematisation of the monument and its owner, complemented later in the text by an offering formula at the end.

Before we arrive at the offering formula for the benefit of the visited and long deceased king, another textual unit containing another genre is embedded and marked by characteristic syntax. It is the *Appeal to the living*, and it appears in visitors' texts from the 18th Dynasty onwards. The above-mentioned scribe Reneny in Elkab used the formula of the *Appeal to the living*, but for his own benefit (also seen at Deir el-Bahri¹⁵⁰ and Asyut¹⁵¹). The *Appeal* formula, seen in Elkab, Meidum, and elsewhere,¹⁵² is not always used in the graffiti corpus, and its integration, as well as other decisions as regards the fulsomeness of the royal titulary, for example, point to a level of individual decision-making by the writer. The use of this formula highlights the role of secondary epigraphy as communication in the funerary space, and notably as a medium that was essential for the commemorative purpose of that space, as well as for the articulation of desirable actions by the visitors.¹⁵³

In **Gunn 10**, the call was on behalf of a long-deceased king (of whom no texts or images survived in the monument, which links his identification as an owner or the assumption thereof to the prior knowledge of the visitor). The knowledgeable visitor is also one capable of expressing the correct offering formulae. Eventually the royal genealogy of the king Sneferu is articulated (with a likely reference to the queen Meresankh) at the end of the text, where he is named as the beneficiary of the offering formula that was expected to be uttered by all the professional groups named as the audience of the *Appeal to the living*.

Another genre merger is represented by **Gunn 13**; on this occasion the dipinto became the carrier for a biographical inscription which has parallels in the contents of private monumental inscriptions. There, the opening contained a date in two lines, followed by the *iw<.t> pw incipit* with the identification of the

[149] As an aside, it is possible to investigate the concept of the 'finding' of a historical monument alongside the 'finding' of historical documents, usually efficacious texts with religious, medical, and similar contents (as analysed by Hagen 2013, and see also Eyre 2013, chapter 7.2). The context of the 'findings' is obviously different, yet there is on occasion a shared sequence of actions that is represented, when a noble visitor (e.g., a prince like the sage Hardjedef, or the dignitary Amenhotep son of Hapu, or indeed the Ramesside prince Khaemwaset) or a king (various kings were credited with searching for or having people sent to search for valuable texts) travels to and visits a temple and finds an important text: i.e. a representative example of cultural and social capital. The finder's credit as knowledge maker and knowledge preserver may be enhanced equally, as he (usually a male literato) interacts with ancient texts or locations. Hagen (2013, 204) linked Khaemwaset's interest in monuments, including his involvement in restoring the statue of Kawab, to this status of the 'discoverer' of efficacious texts. This connection that makes the prince an accessory to creating (fictional) historical identity of certain texts, would also be unaffected by the prince's possible entanglement in the re-use of ancient building material. The later Demotic tradition of tales of 'Setne Khaemwas', however, problematises this positive evaluation, as Khaemwaset is chastised for excessive curiosity.

[150] Marciniak 1981, Ragazzoli 2017a, 107, 234–240, P.2.15, compare also E.2.14.

[151] Verhoeven 2020, I, text TS34 (160–162, 270).

[152] Demarée 2024; see also **Gunn 10**.

[153] See the parallel communication of appeals and graffiti: Ragazzoli 2013, Salvador 2022.



Figure 14. The narrative units of the text of scribe Akheperkaresoneb (Gunn 10).

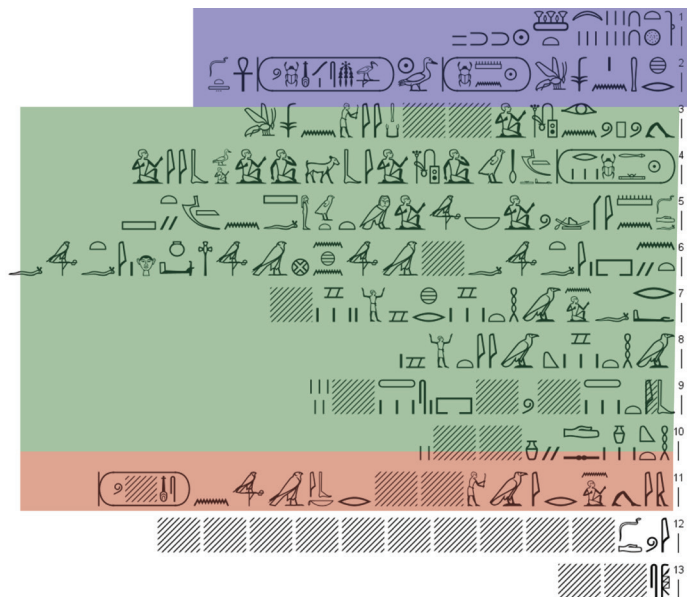


Figure 15. The narrative units in the text of Ib.

writer (also in two lines), followed by a biographical statement ushered in by *dd=f*, using syntax typical for the 18th Dynasty and some earlier biographies. The biographical contents consist of a sequence of statements that strongly thematise the gifts of the king or another person of superior rank to the protagonist. They are gifts for recognition and for sustenance. After a selection of royal donations, the travel of the protagonist for the praise of Sneferu is thematised.

We could further argue that the definition of the dipinto as a ‘carrier’ for biographical information is in fact inaccurate: the text does move the biographical genre, usually but not exclusively hieroglyphic, monumental, and linked to stelae, tombs and later statues,¹⁵⁴ to a specific script register and to a specific space, yet both extensions of the biographical genre are also attested elsewhere. The extension of the script register into hieratic is also known for instance from monumental stelae, such as the stela with the text of a decree protecting the temple of Amenhotep son of Hapu (BM EA 138), or monumental tomb inscriptions with biographical content (such as the inscription of Tjay, TT 23).¹⁵⁵ There probably was — at least for some Egyptian professionals — a rather stronger continuum of the use of scripts than a modern observer may expect,¹⁵⁶ while other professionals might have obtained a training with noticeable preference for one script register only. This seeming contradiction highlights a possible diversity of ancient literacy (or script proficiency).¹⁵⁷

The spatial move is parallel to other extensions of Egyptian life-writing spaces into the landscape and indeed to divine temples, including royal memorial temples.¹⁵⁸ The fact that the temple of a king is someone else’s commemorative space may have only strengthened its appeal, possibly for one or both of these two reasons: 1) setting up a statue in a royal memorial temple is an attested practice since the Middle Kingdom;¹⁵⁹ and 2) the *Appeals to the living* make it evident that correct behaviour in a funerary space — i.e. commemorating the visited owner, here Sneferu¹⁶⁰ — brought a reward to the visitor. A visitor’s text that constituted at once a memorial of the past king and of the present visitor provided an answer to the twin memory needs. Yet, the balances are often shifting in the visitors’ texts, problematising any homogenisation in modern research. **Gunn 13** operates strongly in relation to the life-writing aspect, which foregrounded¹⁶¹ the relationship between the protagonist of the biography and the king, here both living and deceased, in line with the 18th Dynasty ethos of royal service.

While **Gunn 10**, **13**, and **21** represent more elaborate and intertextually enriched examples of visitors’ texts, other texts in the pyramid temple, albeit being more succinct, may put more emphasis on the temporality of their writers’ visits. For example, the two dipinti from the reign of Amenhotep III (**Gunn 22** and **23**) may do this by expanding the royal epithets in a date by eulogical statements or by emphasising the *Sed* festival year dates.

[154] Frood 2020.

[155] Discussed by Hagen 2025, ch. 4.1. Theban Tomb 23 text is investigated by Frood and Hagen in a forthcoming publication.

[156] See also Donnat 2014.

[157] See also the discussion by Walsem 2024, linking visual and text literacy/proficiency.

[158] Summarised by Frood 2020, 469–470.

[159] Fischer-Elfert and Grimm 2003.

[160] See also Gundacker 2022, esp. 28–35.

[161] As explained by Guksch 1994, 2–3.

Historical awareness

The historical aspect of the visitors' texts was initially understood as a reflection of historical awareness:¹⁶² they often identified the owner of a funerary precinct and, where pyramid precincts are concerned, they were mostly accurate.¹⁶³ As regards Meidum, their insistence on Sneferu has been taken as an argument in favour of the attribution of the precinct to this king in modern research since Petrie and Griffith in 1892. In this interpretive framework, graffiti stand for historical awareness and intellectual engagement with the past,¹⁶⁴ even though this historical awareness was never sundered from social and cultural memory or from the devotional aspects of interaction with the deceased kings.

However, we may also argue that the historical awareness here is in fact expressed on another level and by other means. It may be achieved by historicising the visitors and highlighting the conduct of their own sovereigns, therefore enhancing commemorative cultural practices performed in the funerary space of a long-deceased representative of an important political principle of the Egyptian world: kingship. The centrality of the royal role is evident but so is the arrogation of the format of a historical record by the private person leaving a dipinto. This aspect concerns the social standing and individual motivation of the writers.

Agency, affordances and motivation

The 18th and some 19th Dynasty visitors identified the pyramids and adjacent sanctuaries, while indexing as well as anchoring their perception of the necropolis landscape as dominated by royal monuments. However, the texts at Meidum, like other visitors' texts, are not concerned only with the physical space of the pyramid or royal funerary chapels (in Meidum, the monument is identified both as a *m(h)r* and as a *hw.t ntr*, as discussed earlier¹⁶⁵). As already noted, at Meidum, as at Abu Ghurab and Saqqara, the writers appear to extrapolate from what the monument stands for conceptually (*hw.t ntr* or a *mr* of a king XY) and take the opportunity to thematise the kingship of the past and the figure of the king of their own age in their secondary inscriptions.

At the same time, it is important to recognise the effort they were able and willing to devote to their visit, that is their writing performance and the (at this site mostly implicit but clearly intentional) claim they laid on a specific level of competence and intellectual prowess. The texts constitute an effort to create and then control an inscribed space that confirms the writers' investment of skill and knowledge.¹⁶⁶ For this investment, they must have expected a return in symbolic capital: as with many epigraphic habits, modes, or cultures,¹⁶⁷ the writing was intended for an audience whose response conferred that asset and the entire process promoted and symbolically consolidated the social order.

[162] Wildung 1969a, Navratilova 2006.

[163] This is not always the case with private monuments, cf. TT 60 (Ragazzoli 2013), Beni Hassan (Hassan 2016).

[164] Helck 1952, Yoyotte 1960, Wildung 1969a, Navratilova 2006, etc.

[165] See section *Visitors in space*, p. 137 above.

[166] Compare the 'processing' of the funerary space of TT 60 (Ragazzoli 2013), and also of the *grotte des scribes* (Ragazzoli 2017a).

[167] See discussion by Bodel in Benefiel and Keesling 2024.

Agency and affordances

The New Kingdom visitors to the Meidum pyramid precinct were willing to invest time and effort, writing some of the longest surviving examples of visitors' texts in the pyramid fields. They were also inventive in terms of text composition, utilising diverse textual components to achieve the compilation of a multi-level message about the past, the present, and the future they wished to happen not only for the deceased but also for themselves.

At the same time, they followed the immediately obvious affordances of the space (a well-lit entrance area, accessible wall spaces) and they did not invest, apparently, a systematic effort into visiting (and possibly first clearing) all the spaces of the temple or to bringing sources of light. They must have noticed or quickly realised that this building did not afford the possibility to interact with any extant visual or written culture, which would have offered them further options to express as well as to enhance their cultural and social capital in a way observed for instance at Dahshur, where visitors interacted with figures, scenes, and texts.

The location of the pyramid precinct also did not invite as extensive a production of dipinti/graffiti as, for instance, the *grotte des scribes* in Thebes, which was also an unfinished, undecorated chamber, yet a very productive place within the Theban 'inscribed landscape'.¹⁶⁸ Unlike the *grotte* or indeed other pyramid fields (especially Abusir and Saqqara, and also Dahshur), the Meidum pyramid was not located close to the major necropolis of a large urban centre. Yet, the landscape at Meidum was a potential and actual burial space, and the monument evidently had some standing as a meaningful place of memory. The visitors still decided to interact with the space (as indeed they did also in the chapels of the pyramid precinct of Djoser), recognising its intrinsic importance linked to a past king, and, as we argue further, specific memory of kingship.

Kingship and memory

The tenets of a message concerned with kingship and memory are already present in the significantly more succinct Middle Kingdom (or late Old Kingdom) texts in the Meidum pyramid temple, encapsulated in the graffito **Gunn 1**, which addresses the wish for the name of Sneferu to be 'perfect', *nfr.w*, or — as Gunn suggested, followed by others — implies an identification of Sneferu with (Osiris) Wennefer.¹⁶⁹ It is at least possible to assume that Sneferu, by that time also already identified as 'Horus' Sneferu,¹⁷⁰ was here proclaimed to have the perfect name and the perfect memory surviving for posterity.

It is possible to argue that this approach emphasised a concept that private persons also wished for: asking for their name to be 'good', *nfr*, in order to be remembered. The current studies in anthropology of names are clear about their importance for inserting a person (alive or dead) into a cultural matrix,¹⁷¹ and Egypt is an excellent case study;¹⁷² here it was the equation of their name (and thus character)

[168] Ragazzoli 2017a.

[169] A later tradition records Wennefer as the 'Son of Re' name of Osiris in the ideal royal titulary of this god (Smith 2017, 5–6, following Yoyotte 1977).

[170] In his Old Kingdom cult: Gundacker 2006, 247–252.

[171] See, for example, 'names and naming' in Barnard and Spencer 2010; Bodenhorn and Bruck 2006, with references.

[172] *LÄ* IV, 320–337, 'Name', 'Namengebung' and 'Namensbildung', entries by Pascal Vernus, utilising earlier works, including Ranke, *PN* II.

with the cultural values of goodness or perfection that dictated an individual's fate. The people with a 'good name' entered the fabric of 'connective memory', as articulated by Assmann¹⁷³: 'the man who has become predictable by virtue of his memory will be the same man tomorrow and he was yesterday and today. The remembering self is the locus in which the society is inscribed, along with its claims and obligations'.¹⁷⁴ Here the king of the past was a pivotal point in cultural memory, and inscribing his monument situated the writers within their social group and its connective memory as well as within the cultural memory of their entire (elite) society — and its political principles as they saw them.

The thematization of kingship in the New Kingdom texts at Meidum was achieved and emphasized by further genre mergers: we have discussed the longer excursi within graffiti that were dedicated to the coeval royal person and included indexing of the king's deeds or qualities.¹⁷⁵ The latter are emphatically listed in **Gunn 10** and parallels with royal epithets, otherwise attested in eulogies and in royal narratives, are found at sites from Abu Ghurab to Dahshur. An observation of the Meidum examples in the context of comparands from other pyramid precincts suggests three main ways of thematising the contemporary king across this graffiti group:

1. The focus on the royal name. In Memphite graffiti that have a date, the royal name appears as part of the dating, on occasion using only the throne name (Saqqara¹⁷⁶) or a longer version (Abu Ghurab, Saqqara¹⁷⁷). In the precinct of Senwosret III at Dahshur, column 6b (graffito 5 = V₃₄) bears a full royal titulary with titles and epithets, and a date of year 41 of Thutmose III. The use of an extended royal name and titles in this graffito differs from conventional shorter datelines encountered in most dated Memphite graffiti and is probably the longest and most complex version of the royal name and titulary hitherto known from graffiti in this area. It also contains verse points¹⁷⁸ implying the careful attention of the writer, who presumably focused on the completeness and accuracy of the text. The Meidum corpus, as noted in the catalogue in Part II, has less expansive but still notable examples of royal names in **Gunn 10, 22, and 23**, dated to the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep III.

2. The royal narrative. Examples at Dahshur include limestone fragment 94.1413, with remaining traces of polychrome paint, which was originally part of a doorway. Its more accurate identification has been complicated by the absence of adjoining fragments or traces of relief decoration that could have been related to other finds. The large fragment bears several texts executed in hieratic script with black ink. The longest text on this fragment, an inscription of 12 lines, includes references to Thutmose III's campaigning in Naharina. The surviving text is probably part of a longer composition.

[173] Assmann 2006, 89–91.

[174] Assmann 2006, 90.

[175] This part of the interpretation overlaps with the ongoing work of H. Navratilova on the Dahshur corpus of New Kingdom dipinti, and her forthcoming paper on the historical texts included in dipinti.

[176] Navratilova, 2015b, 129, 132 (problematic, texts extensively damaged).

[177] Navratilova 2015b, 61, 89, 123, 127, 133, 137, 139–140, 146, 167.

[178] Their role was discussed by Enmarch 2020 for Old and Middle Kingdom texts, Nassar 2019 for Middle Kingdom texts, and Tacke 2001 for Ramesside texts, and in detail by Goelet 2015; it is likely that they had a more complex function: not only 'dividers', but possibly also check marks for a copyist or a reader?

On 94.1413, the characteristic narrative markers used in monumental and graffiti texts alike (*ist, tw.t pw, ḥᶜ n ...*)¹⁷⁹ were not preserved and the dateline and names of the writer(s), usually included in visitors' graffiti, are missing. They are preserved in another text from Dahshur, the longest dipinto on fragment 94.1411 (marked in bold).

[1] *illegible*

[2] [...] *nswt bitj* [*ḥᶜ-k3.w-rᶜ*] *m33 ḥrw* [...]

[3] [...] *rᶜ ḥrw* [*ᶜḥ.tj ...*]

[4] [...] *ᶜnh dt (n)ḥḥ mr* [...]

[5] [...] *ᶜnh (w)d3 s(nb) mj rᶜ* [...]

[6] [...] *w is.t ḥm=f bs n [d]ᶜ-h[i] ḥr smᶜ* [...]

[7] [...] *s[...]nt r sdm* [...]

[8] [...] *is.t grt dbᶜ.n=f s.t n pth* [...]

[9] [...] *r jr[...] nswt bitj* [*ḥᶜ-k3w-rᶜ m33-ḥrw m3ᶜ ḥrw tw.t pw*] [...]

[10] [...] *nt pr* [...]

[1] *illegible*

[2] [...] King [Khakaura], justified [...]

[3] [...] Re-Harakhty [...]

[4] [...] Thutmose III], alive forever, beloved [...]

[5] [...] life, prosperity, health like Re [...]

[6] [...] **while** His Incarnation entered Djahi, killing [...]

[7] to hear [...]

[8] **while** he also replaced/adorned it for Ptah [...]

[9] [...] to make [...] King] Khakaura, justified. **There came** [...]

[10] [...] the house [...]

The reference to a military campaign in Djahi was also included by a Thutmoside dignitary, the royal herald Amunedjeh, whose name survives as part of his and his entourage's dipinto at Abu Ghurab.¹⁸⁰ These narrative elements put forward an image of successful kingship, reflecting also the innovative 18th Dynasty genre of 'royal inscriptions centring on military matters'.¹⁸¹ It is of further interest that the military narratives had an evident ancient reception, specifically the campaigns of Thutmose III in Asia, probably fictionalized in Papyrus Turin 1940–1941.¹⁸² The reception history of historical texts, whether

[179] See Ragazzoli 2013, 289. Regarding the composition of royal texts in the 18th Dynasty and the annalistic, reporting, and eulogic modes, see also Beylage 2002, II, 619–718, although we don't see a long enough example in the graffiti that would provide a sequence with alternating *sdm=f* forms and *iw=tw*, as seen in long-form royal inscriptions with contents ranging from military (e.g. Amenhotep II, Memphis stela JE 86763, Klug 2002, 242–253) to *Bauprogramm* (e.g., Amenhotep III, CG34025, Klug 2002, 393–407).

[180] Navratilova 2022.

[181] Stauder-Porchet and Stauder 2020, 77.

[182] See the analysis by Manassa 2010; an edition of P. Turin 1940–1941 was published by Botti 1955, following consultations with Černý. On historical fiction also inspired by the era of Thutmose III, see Manassa 2013.

royal or private, was probably richer than the relatively restricted access to some of the monuments bearing them would initially imply.¹⁸³

Whether His Majesty was in Djahi or Naharina, or set up the monuments for his father god NN, it is the narrative articulation of royal deeds *in extenso* that is emphasised in the royal texts of the 18th Dynasty and onwards.¹⁸⁴ Deploying such expressions in inscriptions by private people involved the king in broader features of elite presentation and commemoration in a spectrum of texts: loyal service to a successful king, followed by royal backing and praise, etc., is thematised significantly in 18th Dynasty biographical texts.¹⁸⁵ This happens in the context of the general development of the biographical genre, when 'Biography generally gains prominence in the Eighteenth Dynasty both through its expansion into temple domains and through the increased space accorded it in tombs, particularly on stelae in Theban tombs ...'.¹⁸⁶ In the above graffiti examples, the 18th Dynasty secondary epigraphy developed another specific manifestation of the biographical genre in terms of location, and interlocutors.

It is likely that the 18th Dynasty mutual legitimisation¹⁸⁷ of the king (as a specific royal, not kingship in the abstract¹⁸⁸) and of the elite shaped royal texts as much as it did private biographical texts, and that this discourse was manifested in the corpus of secondary inscriptions, turning them into historical texts *sui generis*. If 'legitimacy should be understood as a multidimensional concept, comprising rules, normative beliefs and appropriate actions',¹⁸⁹ then the texts of the 18th Dynasty, including graffiti, may be seen as capturing various dimensions of that era's political legitimisation.¹⁹⁰

[183] See the discussion on Egyptian annalistic texts in Baines 2008.

[184] Popko 2006, see also the discussion in Stauder-Porchet and Stauder 2020; Beylage 2002.

[185] Guksch 1994, Gnirs 1996a, overview Frood 2007, 9–11 including also earlier references.

[186] Frood 2007, 11.

[187] Private biographical texts express the self in ways that are 'largely relational. The individual is often defined through his actions for, and the responses of, gods, the king, and people, including his peers and dependants, as well as the dead' (Frood 2020, 467; see also Kubisch 2008, 45–46). This emphasis on a relational self is interesting in comparison to more abstract discussions about legitimacy and legitimation. The concept of mutual legitimisation is discussed with renewed emphasis in modern diplomacy, yet in principle every legitimisation process is relational, whether this is explicit or implicit; Bourdieu 1991, 164, discussed symbolic power accepted by those subject to it; Beetham 2013 defined 'rightful authorisation' and 'due performance' (p. xiii), both being important criteria observed and applied by those subject to and in contact with an authority that claims legitimacy, which is, as Beetham put it, not an 'icing on the cake of power', but an essential ingredient (p. 39). Bárta also proposed to use the concept of a *status race* to characterise a simultaneous interdependence and competition of the elites and the ruler in the context of the divine framework of royal power (Bárta 2017). See also Janák and Coppens 2017.

An example of communication that built and modified a royal image in relation to the stakeholders necessary for its legitimisation was explored, among others, by Burke 1992 (as regards Louis XIV of France; 1638–1715 AD; reigned from 1643). Egyptologists addressing royal legitimacy list and analyse the features used to articulate royal power and authority, as well as individual components of royal authority; the need to communicate with stakeholders, including the subjects, was thematised as well by several authors (for example: Sabbahy 2021, Hsu 2019, Richards 2010, Hirsch 2008, Blöbaum 2006, Roth 2006, Richards 2000, Gundlach 1997, Baines 1997, Baines 1995, Gundlach 1992, Grimal 1986).

[188] See Gundlach 1992, 40.

[189] Beetham 2013, xiv, offering a general political analysis of power and its legitimisation.

[190] On the challenges to the reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, responses that both kings provided in terms of utilising role models, and innovative promotion of their right to kingship, see Galán et al. 2014, Cline and O'Connor 2006, Roehrig et al. 2005. Their coevals responded with an equal flair for biographical expression (Guksch 1994, see also comments on the period biographies in Gnirs 1996a, b).

3. The non-narrative praise of the king shown in some examples of secondary epigraphy also has intertextual parallels. As some visitors attended the pyramid precinct at Meidum during the *Sed* festival year of Amenhotep III (**Gunn 22 and 23**), it could be argued that they chose a significant moment in their king's reign. The 30-year jubilee or indeed another work anniversary could also be celebrated by non-royal dignitaries, although the private sources are fewer and do not imply that there was any intent to encroach upon this royal privilege.¹⁹¹ The focus on the royal festivities is shown at Meidum very clearly. This aspect of connection to the king is further reflected in **Gunn 23**, which could be seen as a modified *Lobrede* about the king, not in a direct dialogue with the king, as the *Lobreden* in royal texts could be.¹⁹² This genre is not a narrative about the king, but an 'abstraction' of the king's qualities.

These three elements are characteristic of Egyptian historical writing, since we define royal texts and private biographical texts¹⁹³ as historical. The 18th Dynasty interplay between the private and royal records is particularly evident: both could use an encomium as well as a narrative. Graffiti are thus linked to other forms of commemoration that were often sanctioned by the king or that expressed a relationship to the king. 18th Dynasty history writing is reinforced as a rich and inventive element of the Egyptian written culture by its extension into secondary epigraphy.¹⁹⁴

Both royal and private persons articulated/commissioned and applied historical writing and the 'ideological contents of these histories is (in that respect) inconsequential', as the target was to convince the audience of veracity and reliability and to assure that posterity had access to this information.¹⁹⁵ The above manifestations of legitimacy and loyalty in graffiti were therefore different versions of the same theme: a strong emphasis on the connection to the royal patron, expressed in these more elaborate texts by people of varied elite status. This may be seen as part of a broader private elite narrative about kingship, and in a dialogue with kingship, and even more pertinently with a specific king.¹⁹⁶ This fashioning of a graffiti as a commemorative inscription is also noticeable in context of earlier rock inscriptions that emphasized the king particularly in the context of expedition inscriptions (quarries, etc.).¹⁹⁷

The significant cultural assets of history and memory, both encoded in graffiti, also work on a different textual level. We need to return briefly to the text structure and revisit **the New Kingdom innovation to graffiti that introduces a sustained narrative element in visitors' dipinti and graffiti**, and 'monumentalises' the visitors themselves by the judicious use of phraseology. As noted, the graffiti follow the general text structure and expressions which are usually included in the biographical record or a royal or private daybook type report.¹⁹⁸ These expressions include the cross-referencing of royal activities and the narrative syntax that thematises the visitor and the visited, and commemoration and devotion:

[191] Seidlmayer 2001.

[192] For 'responses' in royal texts, where loyal courtiers, army etc. speak to the king, see Spalinger 2003, 417–418.

[193] Gnirs 1996a, 194.

[194] Compare discussion by Baines 2008, 33–34.

[195] Popko 2006, 161–162.

[196] See also Popko 2006, 158–161.

[197] Doxey 1998, 88.

[198] See also Spalinger 2003.

iw.t pw ir<.w> n – gmn.n=f – ‘h’ n dd.n=f, that is: invocation – appeal – offering formula, a compact expression of a ‘memory contract’ between past, present, and posterity.

The narrative syntax is applied to achieve a text that may be a structural parallel to a royal text, such as is seen in the 18th Dynasty example of the inscription of prince Amenmose at Giza or in various military inscriptions:

	Middle Kingdom	Early 18 th Dynasty, Ahmose to Amenhotep I	Thutmose I to Thutmose III	Later 18 th Dynasty	Ramesside
Royal tradition		Use of <i>sdm pw ir.w</i> in royal texts, e.g. the Tempest stela	Amenmose (Louvre E 8974, Giza) ¹⁹⁹ <i>pr.t pw ir.n ... swtw sd3y hr</i>		Military texts using <i>sdm pw ir<.w>.n=f</i>
Private tradition	Khusobek: <i>mr.y nb=f šms.w-nswt (?) hw-sbk wd3 <pw> ir<.w>.n=f</i> ²⁰⁰	Reneny (Elkab): ²⁰¹ ‘Came the able scribe <i>Rnny</i> to wander for pleasure in the desert’ (Ahmose I); Draughtsman Ahmose (Saqqara): <i>iw.t pw ir.n<.w>.n</i> (Amenhotep I)	General use of <i>iw.t pw ir<.w>.n=f ... r m33</i> in graffiti	<i>iw.t pw ir<.w>.n=f ... r m33</i> as well as <i>r swtw sd3y hr</i> and variants in graffiti	<i>iy.t ir.n ... r swtw sd3y hr</i> , as well as <i>r m33</i> , in graffiti. <i>Tw.t pw</i> etc. still seen at least in the reign of Seti I ²⁰²

The intertextual relations connect political (cultural) memory to personalised (connective) memory, and both are inevitably linked to the historicization of an individual visitor. This process could also happen in spaces that were not imbued with the presence of an important deceased individual: the *grotte des scribes* at Deir el-Bahri was shaped by the graffiti therein as a social place *par excellence*, where the visiting writers created their own monuments.²⁰³

The pyramid precinct at Meidum had an added layer of complexity. Its special royal and devotional theme, which took the form of both textual and visual expression, was the **identification of the king with the divine falcon**. Albeit at Meidum this identification was projected onto Sneferu, and thus likely continued earlier models of veneration of the Old Kingdom sovereign, the falcon-king concept gained noticeable traction in the 18th Dynasty fashioning of the king across different media. The conceptualisation was embodied in monumental visual culture, including ‘a striking development of the iconography of New Kingdom kingship’,²⁰⁴ namely the statuary of the king portrayed literally fused together with the falcon: a three-dimensional expression of a more comprehensive New Kingdom emphasis comparing the king to the divine bird of prey. It is interesting to note that the floruit of this more experimental

[199] See above; Zivie-Coche 1976, 53–55.

[200] Hsieh 2012, 121–122.

[201] Demarée 2024 and Gardiner Mss. AHG/23.70.

[202] As at Saqqara; Navratilova 2015b, 168–169.

[203] Ragazzoli 2019, 546; the corpus published in Ragazzoli 2017a.

[204] Hardwick and Riggs 2010, 115.

visual expression²⁰⁵ overlaps with the era of sustained interaction with earlier monuments of kingship. The 18th Dynasty visitors, some of whom, as we have now shown, clearly related to the discourse of royal legitimacy and articulated this relationship textually, might have emphasised this aspect of kingship in line with its symbolic expression by their own sovereigns.

For context: a specific approach to the falcon as a focal point of veneration otherwise appears in an only somewhat later royal context, when Thutmose IV (while still a prince) claims to have found a remarkable stone (a silex nodule) in the form of a falcon for which, as a recent review of the artefact has shown, a naos was later produced and located in the Karnak temple precinct.²⁰⁶ It is difficult to claim where exactly the future Thutmose IV found this falcon, and it is possible that this find most likely belongs to the Upper Egypt/Theban location and not to any of the pyramid field locations. Nonetheless, it does fit into the overarching importance of falcon gods for (a) 18th Dynasty kingship and (b) Thutmose IV specifically. Its message of a miraculous find, i.e. a signal from a (falcon) god, is conceptually aligned with Thutmose IV's involvement at Giza, i.e. within the remit of the 18th Dynasty's theoretically, materially, and spatially anchored interaction with the past, an interaction that took on different nuances throughout the history of this dynasty.²⁰⁷

Visitors in a geographical and social network

In most cases where the visitors are identifiable, they appear to have been officials, possibly of a local origin but also from further afield. Both Memphite, Medinet Ghurab, or travelling officials may have been involved in the region of Meidum, which would correspond to the pattern of travelling officials seen in other pyramid precincts in the Memphite area and to the connectivity of the region, with royal dignitaries likely to have been travelling in a region located in-between the Capital Zone and the Fayyum. The Fayyum Oasis has held a unique position in the history of the Egyptian landscape, agricultural production, and in the history of social and political change tied to the reclamation of this large lake area for agricultural use that probably began in the Middle Kingdom.²⁰⁸ Among significant New Kingdom sites in this region, Miwer (Ghurab, Medinet Ghurab) stands out in relation to the graffiti production at Meidum, as it was the location of a royal palace of Thutmose III and later kings of the 18th Dynasty and thus an important economic and social centre which must have attracted visitors (in a professional capacity, no doubt) during the same time period in which the production of graffiti at Meidum was at its height.²⁰⁹ Another significant New Kingdom site is located further south — Sedment, a settlement

[205] Its origins were expected to reach back to the Old Kingdom (Valbelle 1997, 209), and more recent discussion by Hardwick and Riggs 2010 suggest the surviving statues are more likely to be predominantly of a New Kingdom date. For the more conventional but noticeable use of bird of prey iconography for Thutmose III, see also Dolinska 2017.

[206] von Lieven 2016.

[207] Compare observations in Miller 2025. The sequence of royal visitors to the area of Giza, for instance, runs at least from Thutmose I (prince Amenmose) to Thutmose IV, with another noted by Amenhotep II (Great Sphinx stela of Amenhotep II): TLA sentence <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBkAiMmvi7VWNUvuiK-PceR7aomI>.

[208] On the history and historiography of the Fayyum, see Malleon 2019 and Haug 2024. A brief overview of some significant New Kingdom activities was provided by Wada 2007, 351; the same author addressed New Kingdom cemeteries in the Fayyum and Heracleopolitan area.

[209] For publications, see Thomas 1981, and for a more recent project, e.g., Shaw 2012, Yoyotte 2021a, 2021b, Yoyotte et al. 2024.

whose cemetery hosts burials of administrators and officials.²¹⁰ The documented cemetery of Sedment was used more intensely toward the end of the 18th Dynasty and in the Ramesside period. Family connections of the Sedment population included a vizier and the higher priesthood from Memphis.

Some of the dignitaries and officials who stopped at Meidum may have been en route to and from Miwer or Sedment. They were clearly connected to the administration of the royal cults and domains, and thus keen to emphasise their professional and personal networks: their affiliations included their parents (both fathers and mothers could be referenced), and in one case possibly a spouse. Yet, the visits appear to be made by a single gender — all the clearly identified visitors were male. This gender pattern is usual for 18th Dynasty visitors' texts in the pyramid precincts, but not necessarily for later Ramesside pilgrimages, where mixed gender visits are attested.²¹¹

Next to the literacy and cultural competence attributed to administrators and officials, the Meidum corpus displays among the clearest witnesses of the presence of other professionals who were keen to notify others of their status as artists or artisans. These professionals would have been an important part of the staff of a royal palace such as Miwer.

The likely presence of middle officialdom and of a broader range of professionals augmenting²¹² the temple space of Sneferu with the dimension of their own social place²¹³ stands in an interesting relationship with the emphasis on the mutual legitimation of the elites and the king expressed in some of the Meidum secondary texts. Were the graffiti expanding participation in the discourse of political legitimacy to further groups of the literate elite and sub-elite? From the royal herald Amunedjeh in Abu Ghurab to a priest in a royal funerary cult in Meidum? As they are already seen as a medium expanding their participation in devotion and commemoration,²¹⁴ it may have been the case.

We have already underlined that we see the visitors' texts of the 18th and 19th Dynasty as an organic continuation and innovation of earlier textual traditions. One important aspect in their development is undoubtedly the emphasis on the cultural pattern of the 'memory contract' in tombs, invoked by the *Appeal to the living* to which graffiti gave a performative written response. The graffiti could thus adopt most social functions that a tomb wall, stela, or statue text would perform.

The prominent royal presence, visible in 18th Dynasty biographical material and parallel to the *floruit* of innovations in the royal texts of that period, seems to have been transferred to the manifestations of secondary epigraphy. Although some of the texts may be dated to the 19th and 20th Dynasty, the characteristic shifts toward a devotional emphasis are not as noticeable as they are, for instance, at Saqqara, Asyut, or Thebes.²¹⁵

Overall, the secondary epigraphy at Meidum contributed to framing an inhabited, purposeful, anthropogenic landscape and space, as they carried a connection with the past, present, and future, and with the gods and the deceased, rounding up an ancient social network.

[210] Its New Kingdom necropoleis was thoroughly reviewed by Franzmeier 2017, with details about buried people p. 376–377. The titles include *sh3*, *sh3 kd.w*, *nb.t pr*, *hm ntr*, and *šm'y.t*.

[211] A well-known example is the Ramesside corpus of dipinti in the temple of Thutmose III at Deir el-Bahri: Marciniak 1974, Sabek 2016; and for an example of a local staff devotional graffito in the temple of Hatshepsut, see Barwik 2022.

[212] Term used by J. Darnell for rock inscriptions in Darnell 2009.

[213] See Ragazzoli 2013 exemplifying the process on TT 60.

[214] Ongoing research by E. Frood and C. Salvador with forthcoming publications: see Frood 2013, Salvador 2016, 2019, and 2022.

[215] See Ragazzoli 2017b; Verhoeven 2020, I, 237–240; Navratilova 2006.

Conclusions

THE SITE OF MEIDUM IS LOCATED BETWEEN TWO IMPORTANT REGIONS OF EGYPT: the Capital Zone, including Memphis, and the major agricultural production and settlement area of the Fayyum Oasis. In this context, it is likely that varied people of elite or sub-elite standing may have had sufficient reason to travel through the area in connection with settlements located in Medinet Ghurab and Sedment. Meidum is also documented as a location with economic value. In the 18th Dynasty, a cult installation of Thutmose I was located at Meidum or nearby and, in the later New Kingdom, its fields were related to major royal institutions such as the Theban Ramesseum.

Secondary inscriptions in the pyramid precinct at Meidum provide further support to the hypothesis that the micro-region was of some importance. The corpus highlights the mobility of professional groups in ancient Egypt and their social identity and legitimation, demonstrated by the investment of the visitors in the production of graffiti, especially as some of the texts show careful calligraphy and composition.

Actors in cult administration as well as in the production of visual culture were identified as visitors at Meidum. Even though the buildings did not provide the same opportunity to interact with past visual and written culture as more extensively decorated pyramid precincts or tombs elsewhere did, the architecture of the site and a recognised connection to an important king and deified figure of the past must have provided sufficient reason to engage with the precinct. The contents of secondary texts confirm local knowledge and devotional interests intertwined with a level of historical awareness, all linked to the important royal figure of the Old Kingdom, Sneferu.

The visitors' texts and other graffiti and dipinti at Meidum capture a microcosm of Egyptian elite and sub-elite culture. As the clusters of graffiti in New Kingdom temples likely captured group identities as well as the local 'microcosm of social relationships',¹ the pyramid precincts, like other realms of memory, also provided a space for group identities and individualised statements² that linked their writers not only to their peers or immediate superiors but within the entire political system of their era. These links centred on the institution of kingship, an evolving concept which had carefully engineered its relationship to the past.

The inscriptions from Meidum are among the most elaborate visitors' texts recorded in the pyramid precincts. This may be due also to their state of preservation and the ability of early epigraphers

[1] Salvador 2022, 38.

[2] Demonstrated in other funerary contexts: Ragazzoli 2017a, 2023; Verhoeven 2020, 2023.

studying them to record and interpret this body of data. In any event, this means that we have access to a corpus of unique and complex texts, mediated by early 20th century epigraphy records and inviting a further investigation.

These extensive texts also provide insight into the development of genre mergers that enabled the integration of phraseology and content that usually appear in monumental texts in both royal and private contexts. As a preliminary summary, we offer the option that the visitors' texts of the New Kingdom are an organic development of the textual traditions of the *Appeal to the living* and earlier visitors' texts.

Using the epigraphic mode³ of secondary epigraphy, these inscriptions may be divided into shorter signatures and more elaborate visitors' inscriptions.⁴ Both the longer and more succinct categories of secondary epigraphy were used extensively by non-royal yet elite or sub-elite visitors, in both private and royal commemorative contexts. As a specific genre, the well-structured visitors' texts borrow the narrative construction and reuse some conventions of biographical texts, as well as other genres including reports and dispatches. The inscriptions used by private people in the royal precincts also follow (or share) some elements from (with) royal inscriptions in Giza that showed an interest in the area of the Memphite necropolis, such as the inscription of Prince Amenmose, son of Thutmose I.

Although visitors' texts are executed mostly in the hieratic script, resembling religious and literary texts, in other respects they may and do resemble lapidary inscriptions as a genre diagnosed by Stauder and Stauder-Porchet:⁵ they are in distinctive locations, they have a high degree of internal patterning and stability of formulations, and 'licensing lines of authority', that is the royal name and date, as well as royal epithets. The motivation to build this epigraphic culture must have stemmed from the connective as well as cultural memory of the Egyptian elite⁶ and given this dual memory a tool and an expression at once concerned with cultural and social skills such as literacy and with political legitimation. Rich evidence of the complex graffiti at Meidum prompts a review of the interplay of dynastic and elite legitimation in the 18th Dynasty, a topic that reaches beyond the target of the present publication.

Moreover, if we accept the possibility that some of these graffiti and dipinti may be dated to the later part of the New Kingdom, this expands our options for the interpretation of the phraseology used therein and, consequently, the intent behind these texts. It is possible that the reception history of the royal monuments had more fluidity and continuity between the earlier and the later part of the New Kingdom. This potential of both continuity and discontinuity aligns with a revisiting of the shifting uses of the past embedded in the context of political legitimation and in the culture of the literati.⁷

The corpus at Meidum stands out, as it shows an elaborate approach to group and individual representation established in the mode of secondary epigraphy and specifically in the genre of visitors' texts, including literacy and cultural competence, as well as an articulation of an elite political identity; an identity that was closely linked to royal authority. Whereas shorter texts in other locations point out these links between the elite and royalty in a more implicit way, in this corpus (and in its Dahshur counterpart) we encounter texts that explicitly foreground contemporary kingship. We see a dialogue of private and royal legitimation, with themes and phrases cascading through registers of written culture.

[3] Following the definition in Bodel 2024.

[4] See also Ragazzoli 2023 and the typology in Verhoeven 2020, I, 218–266.

[5] Stauder and Stauder-Porchet 2020, 72.

[6] Compare Ragazzoli 2013 and 2023; Navratilova 2022.

[7] The shifts in literate culture between the early and late New Kingdom were addressed by Ragazzoli 2016.

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Appendix A

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GUNN MSS Notebook 54

MEIDÛM
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OF
PYRAMID TEMPLE
AND
ENTRANCE PASSAGE.

54

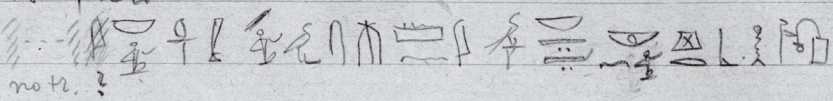
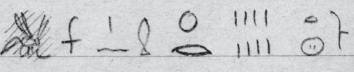
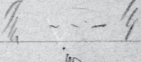
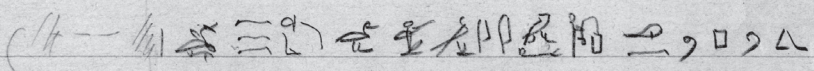
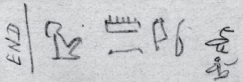
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✓ 17 ✓✓		

30	Not published by Petrie No photo no 42. ?	Entram N 5/2 
31	Not published by Petrie photo impossible	Entram S. 5/2 ✓ 
32	Not publ. by Petrie No photo	Entram South 5/2.  1  2  3 any more ? X no 42/32 END  

2

33	Not pink by petiole no photo
----	---------------------------------

Chamber E, 4/2

Scratched: ♂♂ vis: probably same text as
nos 1, 2.

3

1

ch. N 5/2
 4/2
 3/2

= Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxii, I.

photographs (Rowe): 568, 569, 570, 571, 584.

Ph.

PT

2

Chamber E

6/4

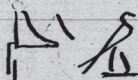
5/6

4/4

2

Not published by Petrie

photographs (Rowe): 572, 573.

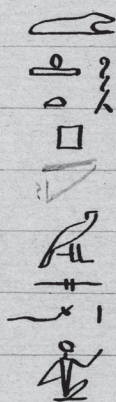


3.

ch. E. 5/4

= Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxII, II

photograph (Rowe): 528.

— no  above su

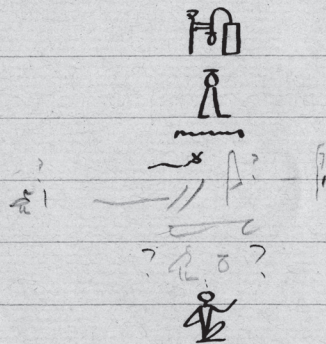
95 - 1000

ph

pt

4

ch E 5/4 ✓
 to left of 3
 = Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxii, III
 photograph (Rowe): 527.



Ph

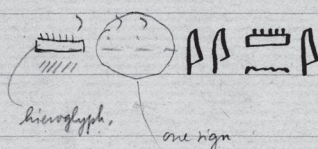
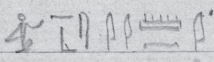
Pt

5

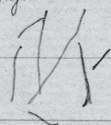
Entram S. 4/1

= Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxii, IV.

No photograph "Impossible to photo" A.R.

try for 

X nothing to be done
 24 32



6

Ch. W. North of Door 5/1

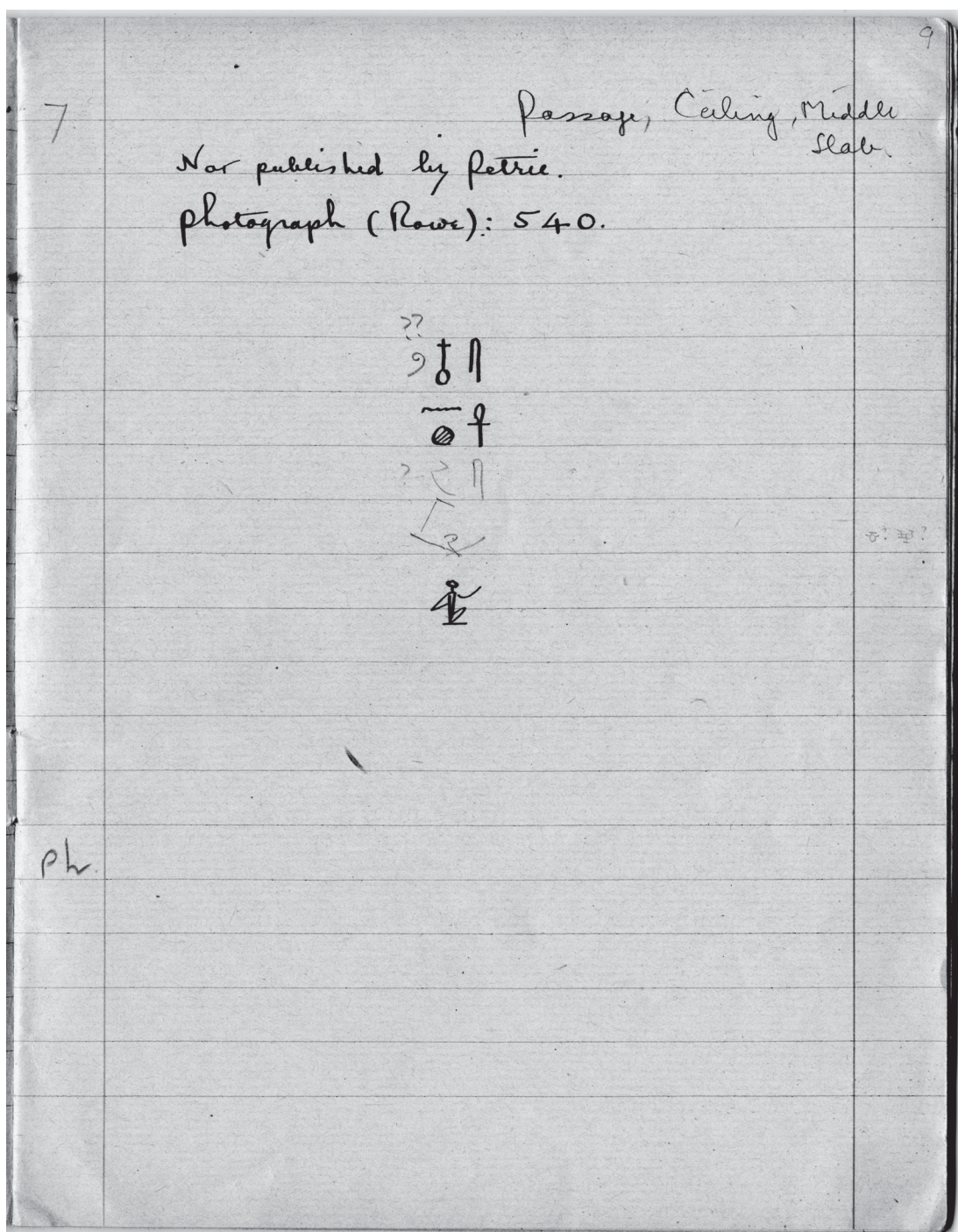
Not published by Petrie.

Photograph (Rowe): 55a



Ph

Pt.

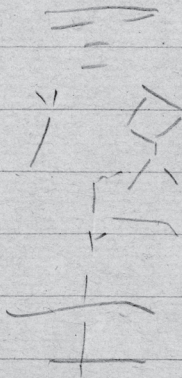


8

Chamber, W, South of Door, 5/2

Not published by Petrie.

photograph (Rowe): 551.



9

Temple Roof Middle of East End.

Not published by Petrie.

Photograph (Rowe): 541.



Pl.

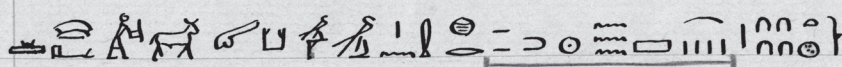
10

Parage W 571

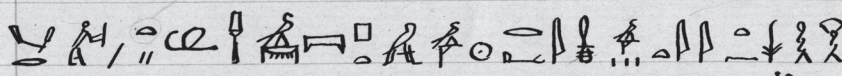
= Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxiii. v.

photographs (Rowe); 522, 611, 612.

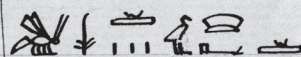
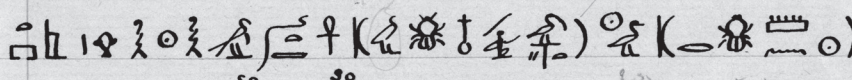
12



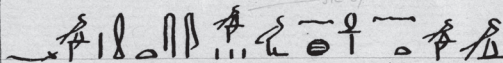
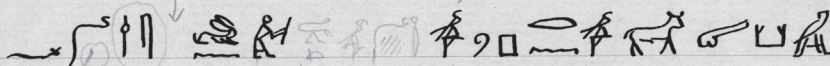
1

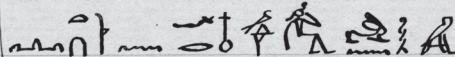
2

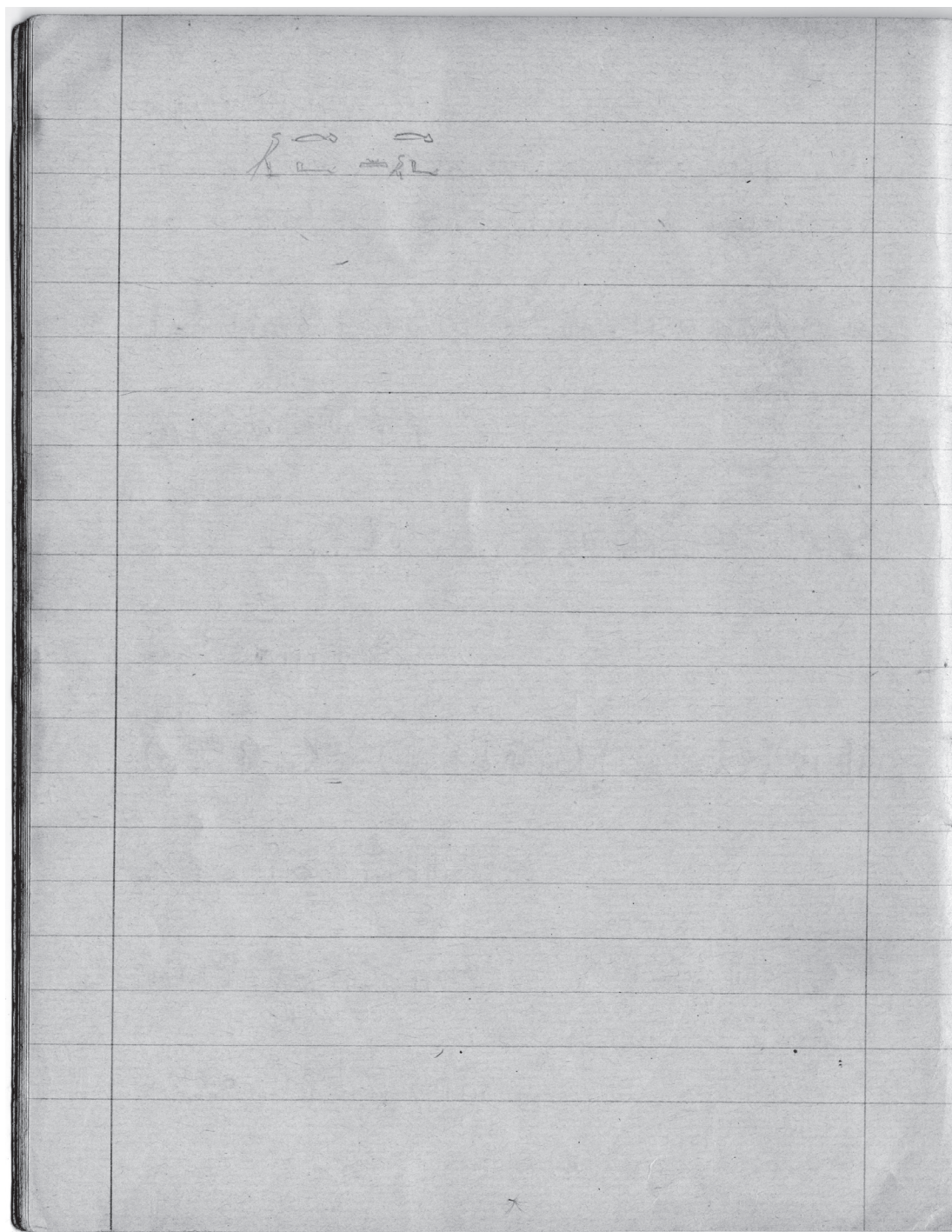
3

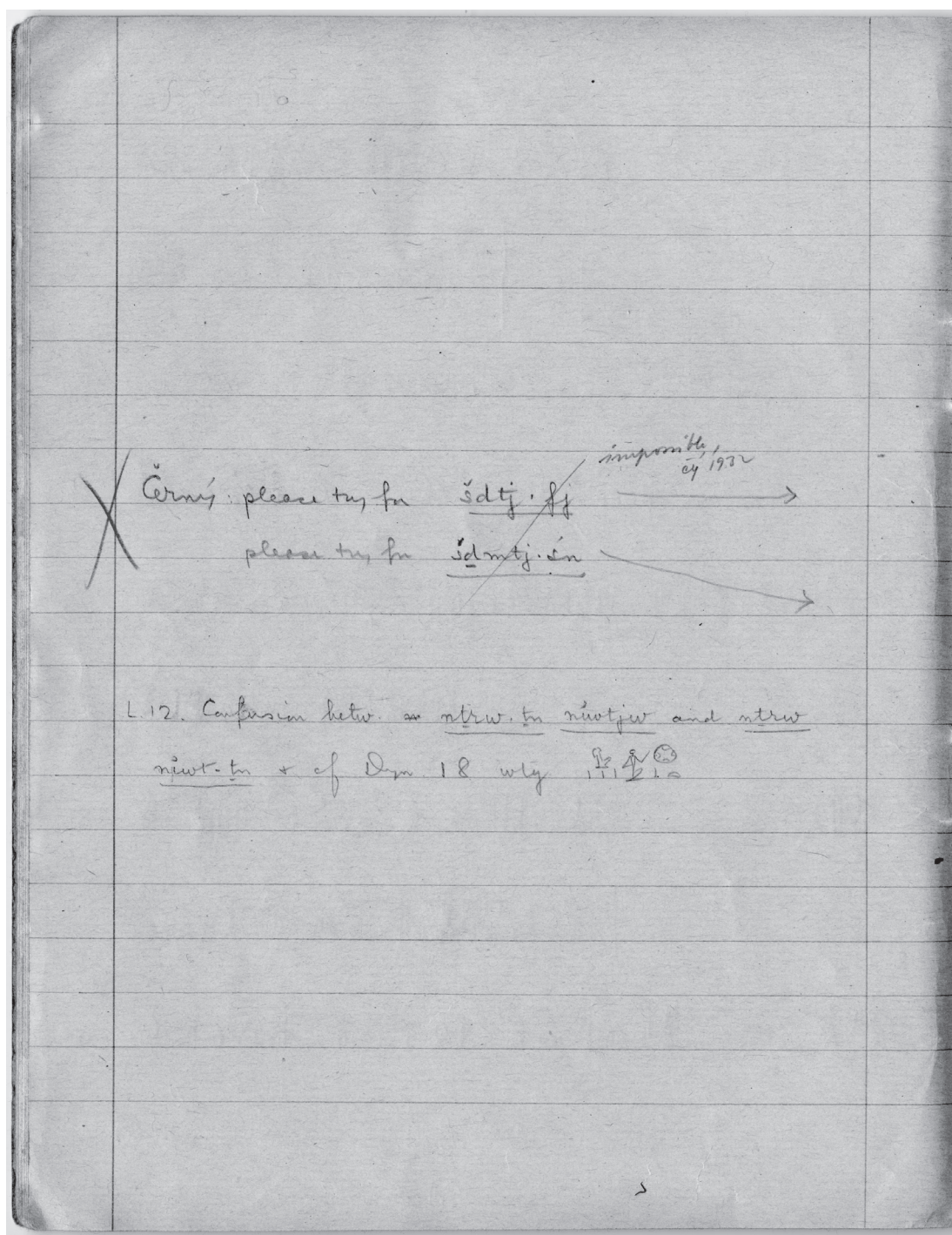
4

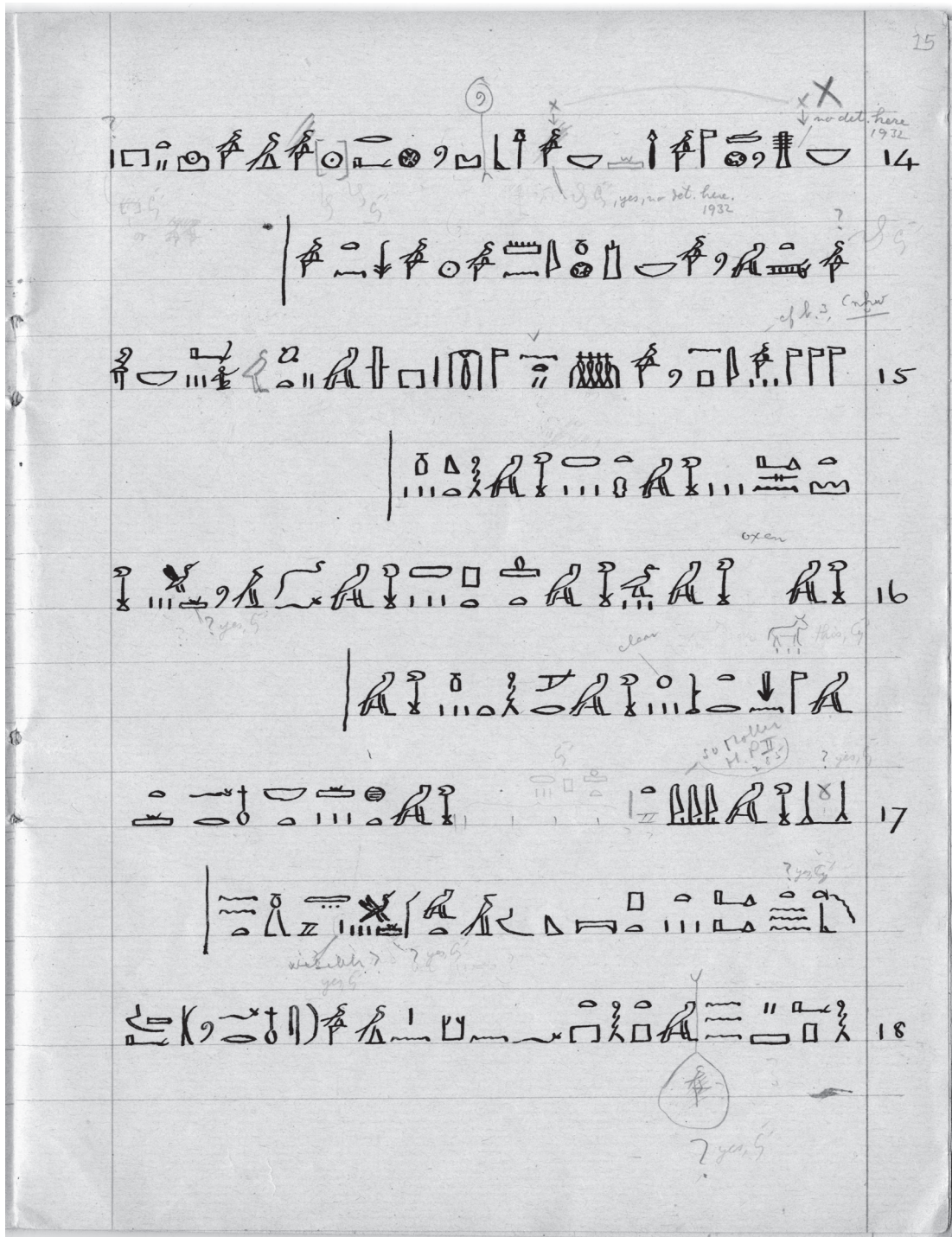


* See Möller, Hier. pal., II, 30 note



13



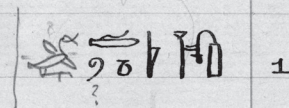


11A

Passage W. 5/1

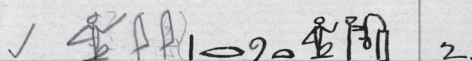
= Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxiv · VI

Photograph (Rowe): 524.



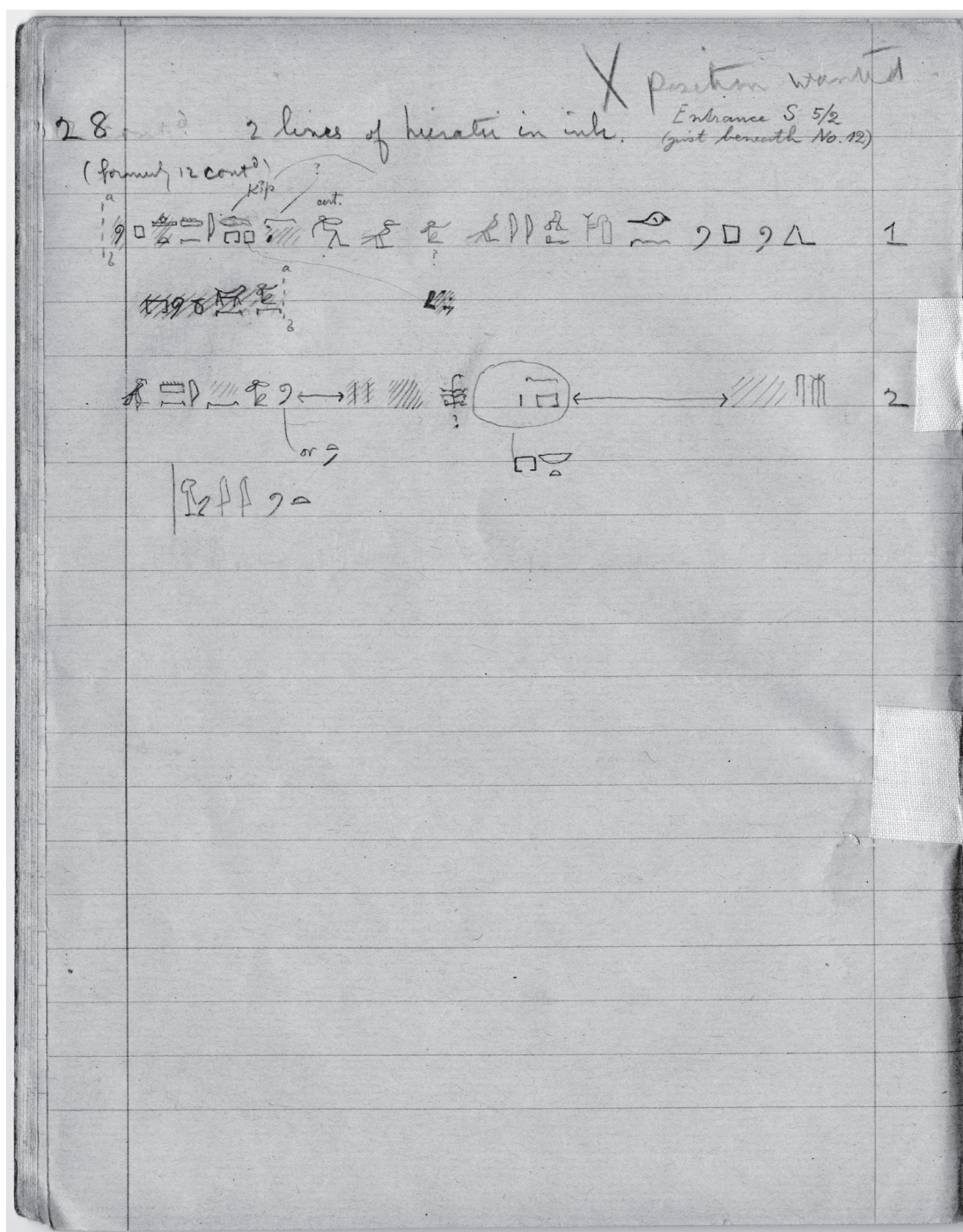
Drawing of Bird

11B.



h

pt

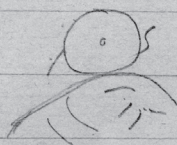


12

Entrance South 5/2

= Petrie, Medum, Pl. XXXIV, VII above

? ~~photograph (Boson)~~ No photograph, "Could not
photo" A.R.



not here!
is above and the feet
not contained in this N.Bore

12 A.

= Petrie Medum
Pl. XXXIV, VII,
below

Passage 5/2
5/2

large lacuna
about 15 cent.

1/2
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

2

3

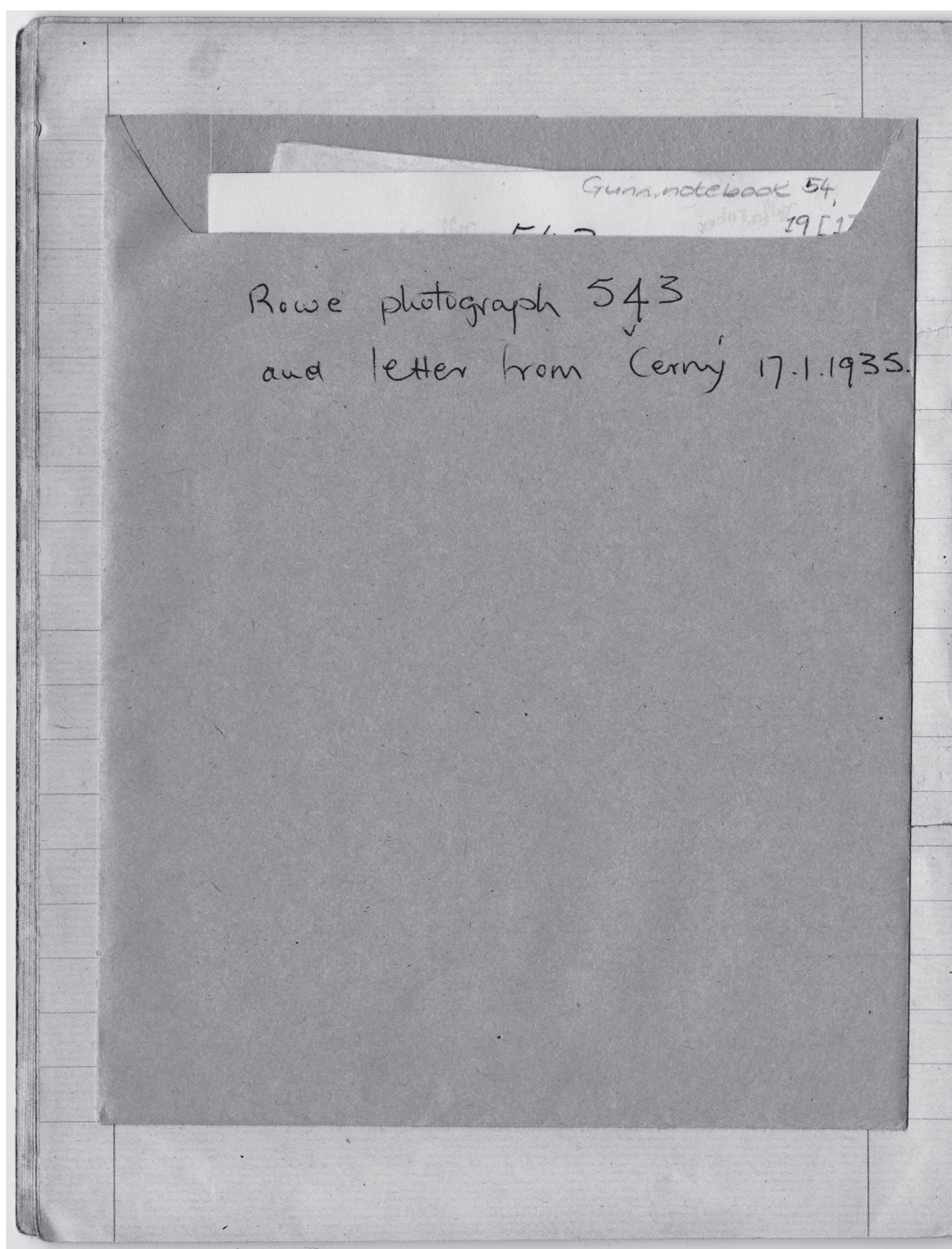
4

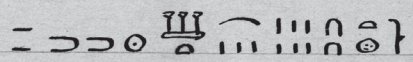
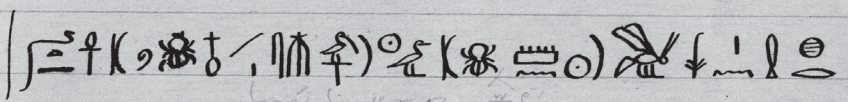
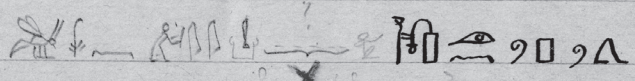
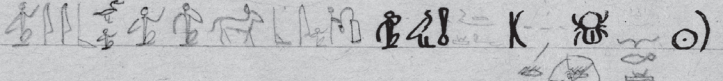
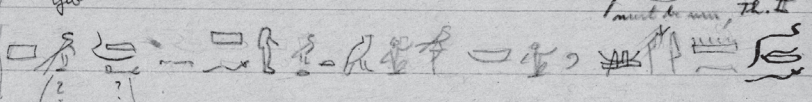
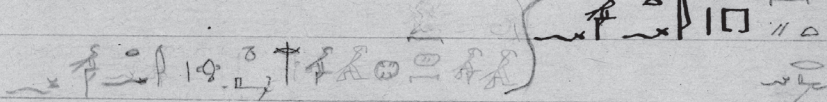
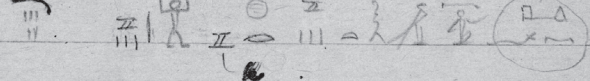
35

Pt

6

only.



13	Entrance S. 5/2. = Petrie, <u>Medum</u>, pl. xxxiv . VIII photograph (Rowe): 543.	19
		1
	 <i>99° North Italy</i>	2
	 <i>can be considered as certain G, 1932</i>	3
		4
	cf. Wm II  30-31 <i>or 31</i>	5
	 <i>sic</i>	6
	 <i>G, 1932</i> <i>yes, 1933</i>	7
		8



*Dear Mr. Gunn -
Spencer, Revised?*

Gunn n6K. 19[2] 1.

Prague, 17.I.1935.

Dear Gunn,

I send you herewith a list of books which I should like to buy from Peets library. Their price amounts - if I am not mistaken - to £ 33/14/1. Please let me know, when you wish me to pay them, and I will send you a check. So far as the books are concerned, please keep them provisionally in Oxford. It will necessitate my presence in Prague at the moment of their arrival, for there will be some rather complicated formalities to be performed to get them through customs.

I enclose all Meydum materials, i.e. your note book, the photographs and all facsimilies I made. I tried to do my best with regard to your desires expressed in your letter of Jan. 20th 1932, and I really think I reached my limits and cannot hope to improve any more. I leave Monday next for Egypt and am naturally quite ready to go again to Meydum, if necessary, and to try to answer all last hour questions, if you have any.

I examined carefully all passages marked by a red cross, but am afraid my answers are not always satisfactory. I made facsimilies of Nos. 22, 28, 29 and 32, and a very rough sketch of No. 21 will perhaps enable you to estimate its lacunae. No. 17 is quite desperate and I could not do anything about it, so too with regard to the end of No. 14 and the scratched inscriptions Nos. 1-8. I went to Meydum three times. On the first visit /21 and 22 Febr. Jan. 1932/ I was guest of Mr. Rowe and have been paid 2nd class ticket. I returned on 18 April 1932 and 15 Apr. 1933 in absence of Mr. Rowe; I do not claim any compensation of my expenses, but should be very pleased, if the University gave me a book, e.g. Rowe's publication of Beisan inscription, which I do not possess.

If you do not object I shall keep for some time longer your photographs of the Turin abnormal hieratic papyri; they are safe with me and after Griffith's death I am probably obliged to publish sooner or later all these early demotic materials.

I am keeping very well and so are you I hope. Is it not too late

now to give you my best wishes for 1935?

Please remember me to Mrs. Gunn and believe me

Yours ever sincerely

James H. Murray

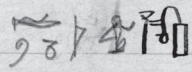
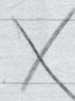
✓ ||| ||| | | □ ♪ ||| | | 9

✓ || tr. ~~8~~ 8 8 9 10

prob.
END

	/ / / / / / / /	7 K
		?

13

14	Entrance Ceiling ^{1st slab} near north	21
	= Petrie, Medium, pl. XXXIV. Tx "No photograph. "On ceiling of door, cannot take photo" A.R.	
		1
	  Pl 18	2
		3

15

Entrance Ceiling. 1st Block
inwards, S.

= Petrie, Medium, pl. xxxiv · x

Photograph (Rowe): 613.

??

15 PA 15 PA 15 PA

s

"Text very faint; in ceiling of entrance. Impossible to get better one" A.P.

a)

15

what does this refer to?

15 X

ph.

23

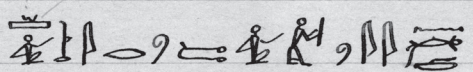
16A.

Passage W 5/1

= Petrie, Medum, pl. XXXIV. XI

photograph (Rowe): 524.

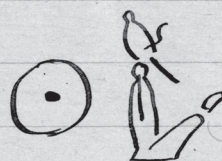
Ph. Pr.

7 09


16B.

as above.

Passage W 5/1



Ph.

Pr.

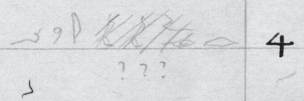
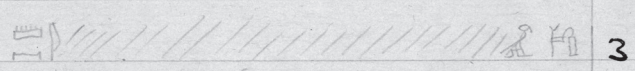
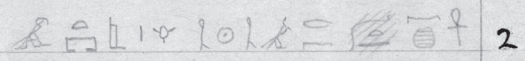
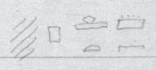
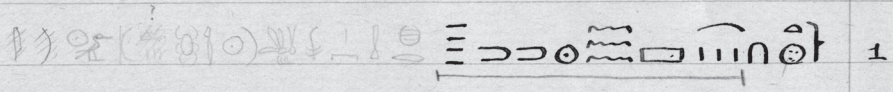
17.

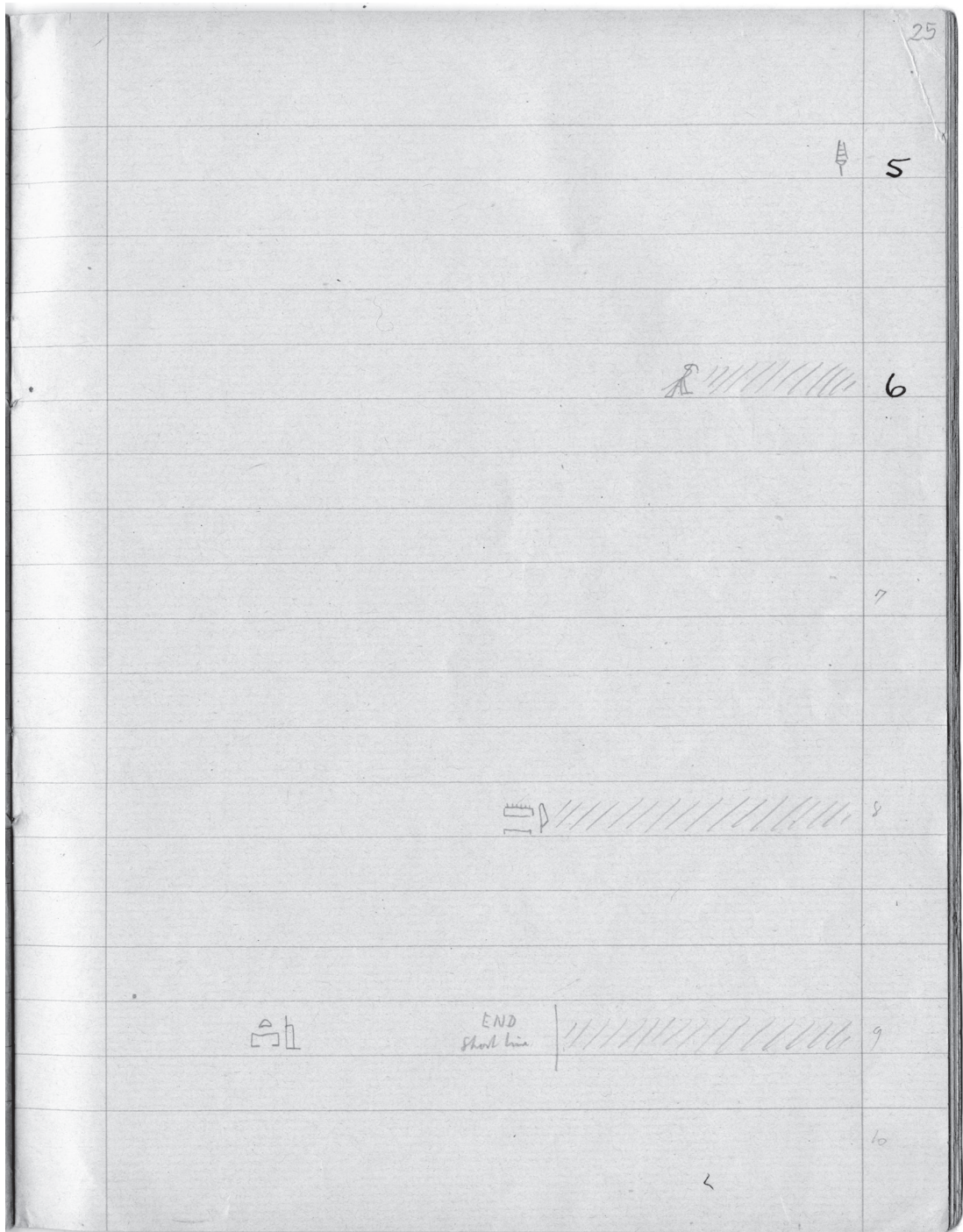
Passage W 5/2.

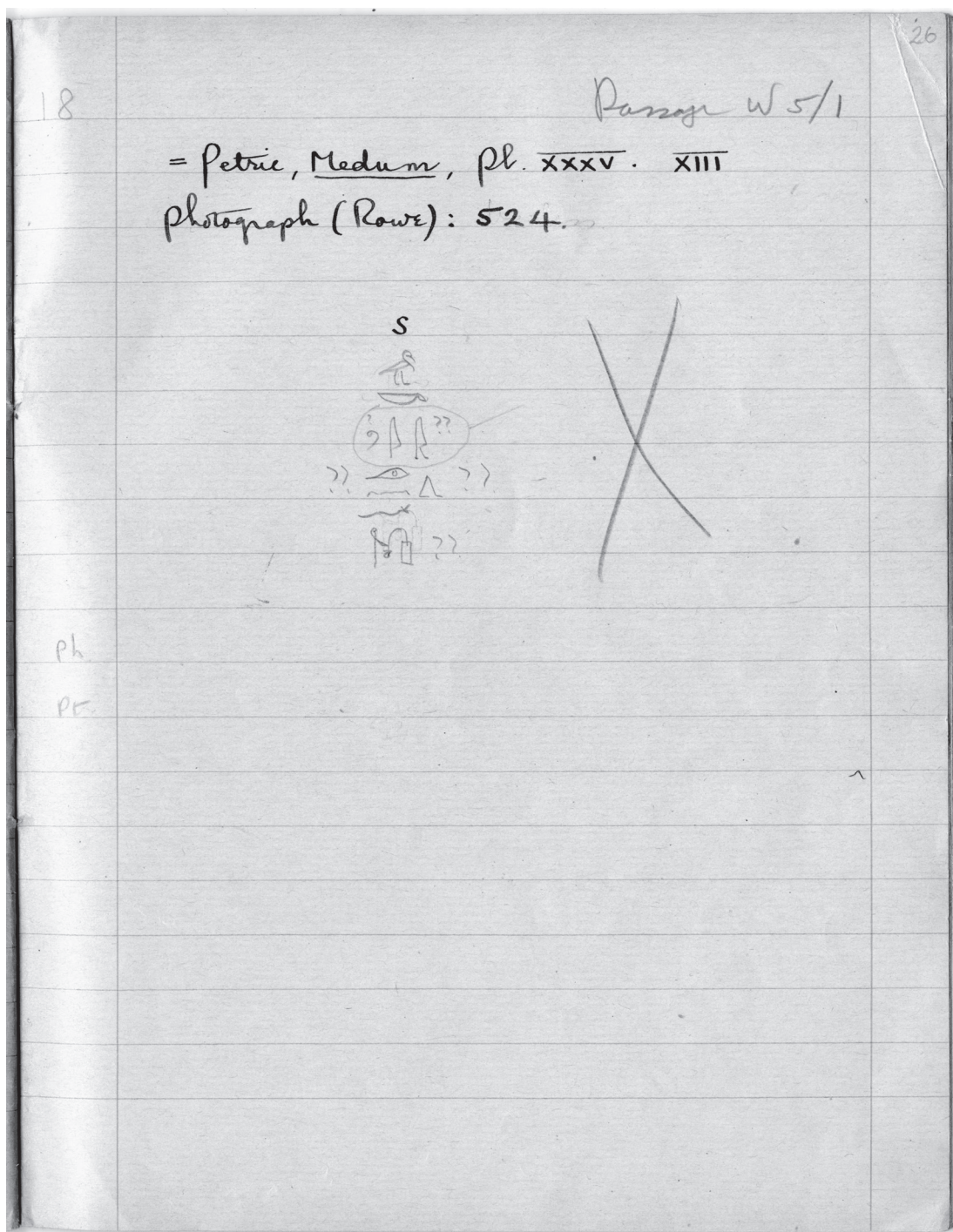
= Petrie, Medum, Pl. xxxv. xii

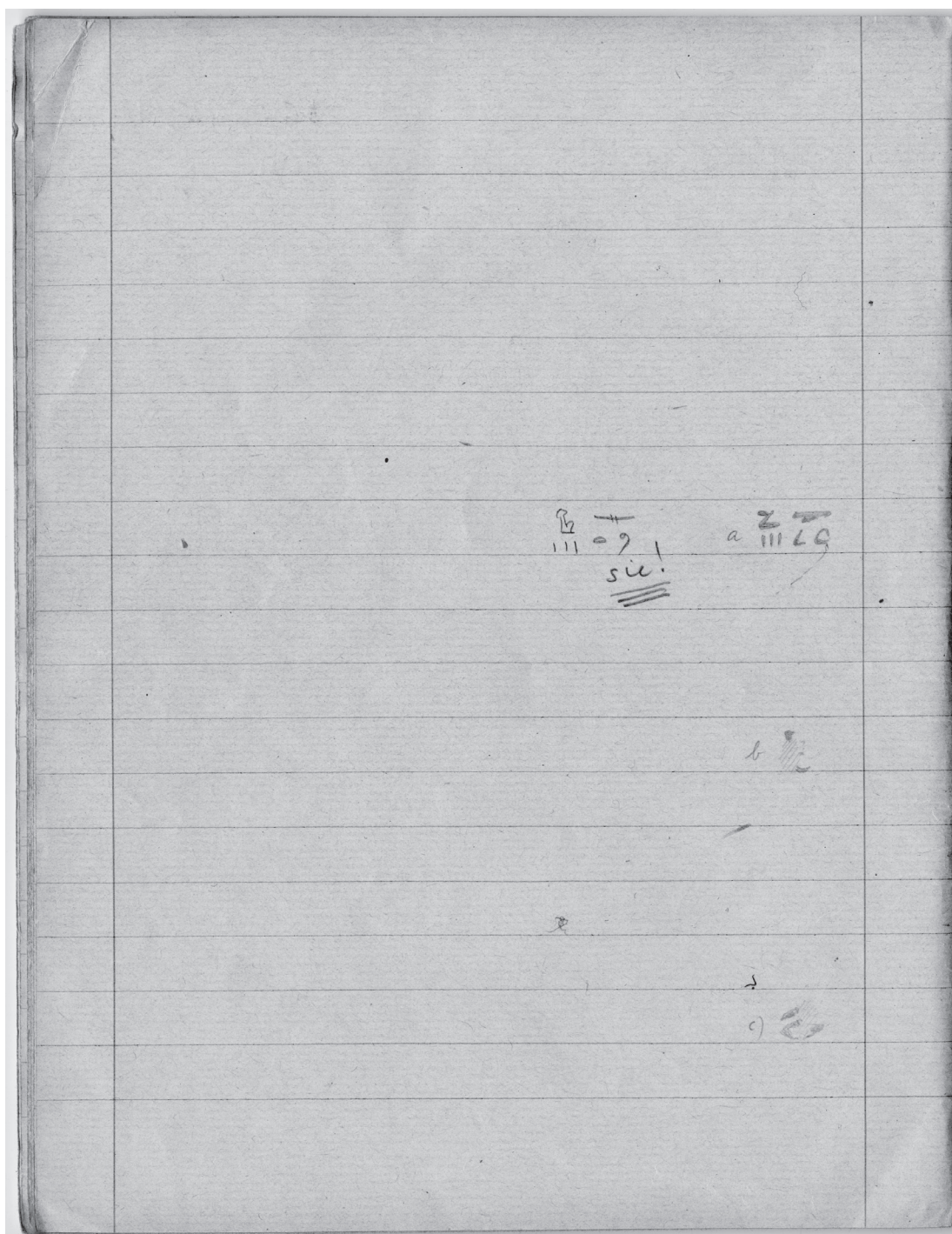
Photograph (Rowe): 545 illegible
 "difficult to get better photo." A.R.

Picture of Falcon with Double Crown.









27

19

Passage W 6/1-2.

= Petrie, Medum, pl. xxxv . xiv corrected roll

photograph (Rowe): 526.

1

try for this

2

3

Pl

Pt.

4

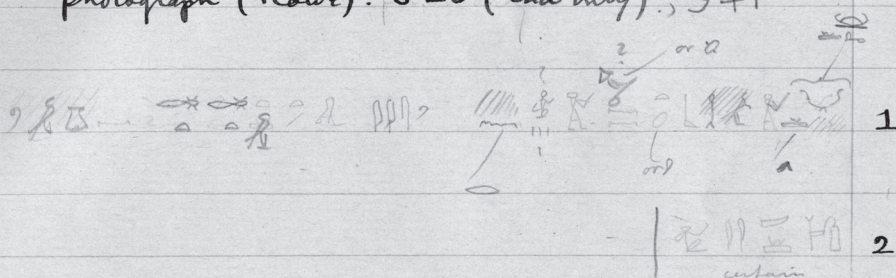
what here?

20

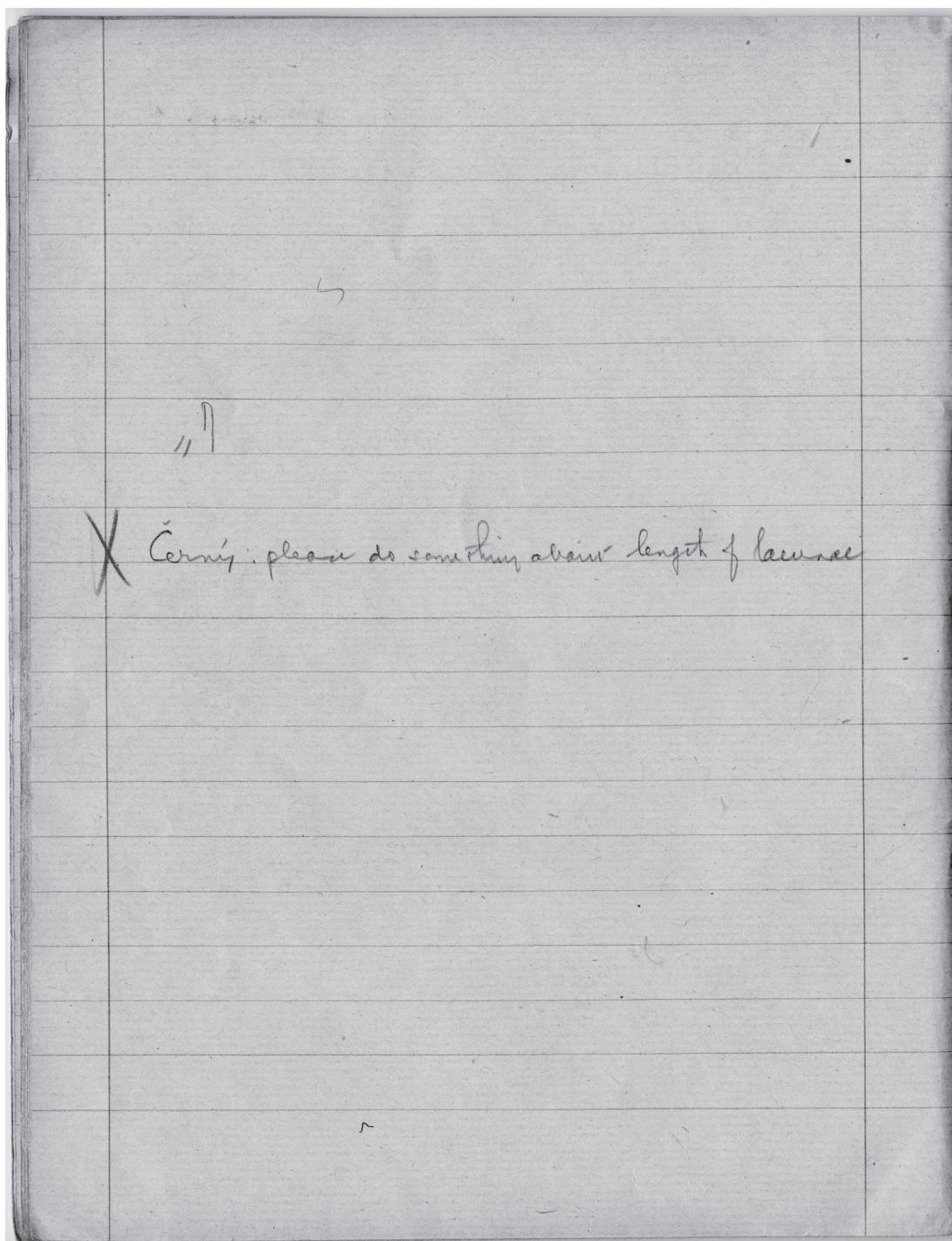
Range W. 6/2.

= Petrie, Medum, pl. xxxv. xv

Photograph (Row): 526 (end only); 941

to compare with Feignier's graffiti brought to ^{Cairo} Museum

now published in
*Deux pyramides du
 Moyen Empire*
 (Cg 1935)



29

21

Passage W. 5/2

= Petrie, Medium, Pl. xxxv · xvi

Photograph (Row): 545.

"difficult to take photograph to position" A.R.

1. 1.

2. 2.

3. 3.

4. 4.

5. 5.

Pl. 6.

Pt. 7.

30

22

Passage W. 4/1

= Petrie, Medum, pl. xxxvi - xvii

photograph (Rowe): 523.

~~try for~~
no. 15132

| (K9)          

23

Passage W 6/1

= Petrie, Medum, pl. xxxvi · xviii

Photograph (Rowe): 525.

50. ^{290.9}
 4. 2. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 220. 221. 222. 223. 224. 225. 226. 227. 228. 229. 230. 231. 232. 233. 234. 235. 236. 237. 238. 239. 240. 241. 242. 243. 244. 245. 246. 247. 248. 249. 250. 251. 252. 253. 254. 255. 256. 257. 258. 259. 260. 261. 262. 263. 264. 265. 266. 267. 268. 269. 270. 271. 272. 273. 274. 275. 276. 277. 278. 279. 280. 281. 282. 283. 284. 285. 286. 287. 288. 289. 290. 291. 292. 293. 294. 295. 296. 297. 298. 299. 300. 301. 302. 303. 304. 305. 306. 307. 308. 309. 310. 311. 312. 313. 314. 315. 316. 317. 318. 319. 320. 321. 322. 323. 324. 325. 326. 327. 328. 329. 330. 331. 332. 333. 334. 335. 336. 337. 338. 339. 340. 341. 342. 343. 344. 345. 346. 347. 348. 349. 350. 351. 352. 353. 354. 355. 356. 357. 358. 359. 360. 361. 362. 363. 364. 365. 366. 367. 368. 369. 370. 371. 372. 373. 374. 375. 376. 377. 378. 379. 380. 381. 382. 383. 384. 385. 386. 387. 388. 389. 390. 391. 392. 393. 394. 395. 396. 397. 398. 399. 400. 401. 402. 403. 404. 405. 406. 407. 408. 409. 410. 411. 412. 413. 414. 415. 416. 417. 418. 419. 420. 421. 422. 423. 424. 425. 426. 427. 428. 429. 430. 431. 432. 433. 434. 435. 436. 437. 438. 439. 440. 441. 442. 443. 444. 445. 446. 447. 448. 449. 450. 451. 452. 453. 454. 455. 456. 457. 458. 459. 460. 461. 462. 463. 464. 465. 466. 467. 468. 469. 470. 471. 472. 473. 474. 475. 476. 477. 478. 479. 480. 481. 482. 483. 484. 485. 486. 487. 488. 489. 490. 491. 492. 493. 494. 495. 496. 497. 498. 499. 500. 501. 502. 503. 504. 505. 506. 507. 508. 509. 510. 511. 512. 513. 514. 515. 516. 517. 518. 519. 520. 521. 522. 523. 524. 525. 526. 527. 528. 529. 530. 531. 532. 533. 534. 535. 536. 537. 538. 539. 540. 541. 542. 543. 544. 545. 546. 547. 548. 549. 550. 551. 552. 553. 554. 555. 556. 557. 558. 559. 560. 561. 562. 563. 564. 565. 566. 567. 568. 569. 570. 571. 572. 573. 574. 575. 576. 577. 578. 579. 580. 581. 582. 583. 584. 585. 586. 587. 588. 589. 590. 591. 592. 593. 594. 595. 596. 597. 598. 599. 600. 601. 602. 603. 604. 605. 606. 607. 608. 609. 610. 611. 612. 613. 614. 615. 616. 617. 618. 619. 620. 621. 622. 623. 624. 625. 626. 627. 628. 629. 630. 631. 632. 633. 634. 635. 636. 637. 638. 639. 640. 641. 642. 643. 644. 645. 646. 647. 648. 649. 650. 651. 652. 653. 654. 655. 656. 657. 658. 659. 660. 661. 662. 663. 664. 665. 666. 667. 668. 669. 670. 671. 672. 673. 674. 675. 676. 677. 678. 679. 680. 681. 682. 683. 684. 685. 686. 687. 688. 689. 690. 691. 692. 693. 694. 695. 696. 697. 698. 699. 700. 701. 702. 703. 704. 705. 706. 707. 708. 709. 710. 711. 712. 713. 714. 715. 716. 717. 718. 719. 720. 721. 722. 723. 724. 725. 726. 727. 728. 729. 730. 731. 732. 733. 734. 735. 736. 737. 738. 739. 740. 741. 742. 743. 744. 745. 746. 747. 748. 749. 750. 751. 752. 753. 754. 755. 756. 757. 758. 759. 760. 761. 762. 763. 764. 765. 766. 767. 768. 769. 770. 771. 772. 773. 774. 775. 776. 777. 778. 779. 780. 781. 782. 783. 784. 785. 786. 787. 788. 789. 790. 791. 792. 793. 794. 795. 796. 797. 798. 799. 800. 801. 802. 803. 804. 805. 806. 807. 808. 809. 810. 811. 812. 813. 814. 815. 816. 817. 818. 819. 820. 821. 822. 823. 824. 825. 826. 827. 828. 829. 830. 831. 832. 833. 834. 835. 83

30
50
3

[illegible]

Ph

Pt.

can see
only indistinct
traces of

is 15 cert. ? it gives no sense; one would

expert

prob. so, but indistinct

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| 24 | Passage W 5/1 | 32 |
| | = Petrie, <u>Medum</u> , pl. <u>xxxvi</u> · <u>xix</u>
photograph (Rowe): 524. | |
| |  | 1 |
| |  | 2 |
| |  | 3 |
| |  | 4 |
| |  | 5 |
| |  | 6 |
| Ph
Pr |  | 7 |

Bad photo. get better one.

25

Passage W. 6/1.

= Petrie, Medum, pl. xxxvi . xx

Photograph (Rowe): 529.

Ph

Pl-



26

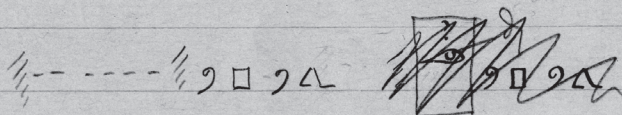
1st block from outside
Entrance, Ceiling, S.

Not published by Petrie.

Photograph (Rowe): 542. very bad photo

on ceiling of
passage, difficult
to take good
view.

Ph

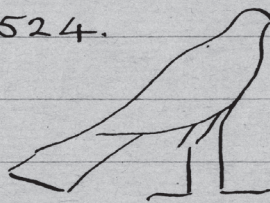


s

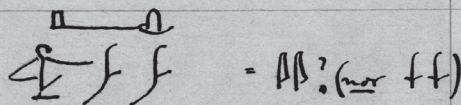
27

Not published by Petrie Passage W 5/1

Photograph (Rowe): 524.



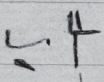
Ph.



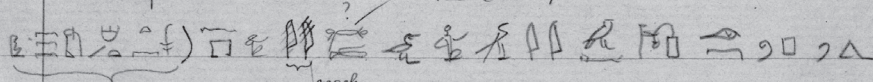
= Ab? (not ff)

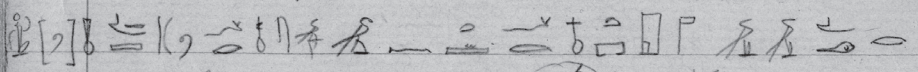
28 See to left of N. 12. line
No photo.

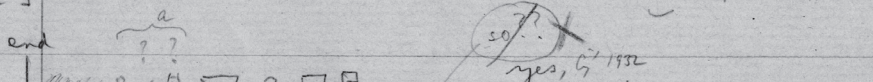
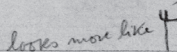
Entrance
South
5/3
plus
below
12. A

a) 
cannot be 4

29 Not published by Petrus Entrance N 4/1.
No photo.

 1
??? nearly cert.

 2

end  3
tr. X looks more like 

no further lines. no 2 mile! 5/32

30 to 33 } see beginning of this book.

FROM PYRAMID ENTRANCE PASSAGE.

34

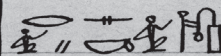
On 11th roofing slab from entrance.

A

Not published by Petrie.

= Newberry in P.S.B.A., XXVII, pl. facing p. 104, N^o 2
+ p. 103.

cf. Maspero, Etudes de Mythol., I, 149 (transcription
only)
photograph (Rowe): 359



s

ph

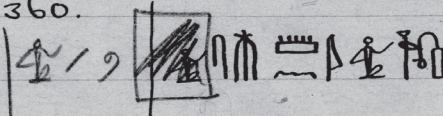
B

Not published by Petrie. (On 11th roofing) Slab from entrance.

= Newberry, as N^o A, N^o 1, + p. 103.

cf. Maspero, loc. cit. in N^o

photograph (Rowe): 360.



s

ph

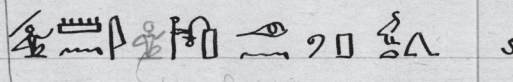
FROM PYRAMID ENTRANCE PASSAGE.

35

C. Not published by Petrie.

= Newberry, P.S.B.A., pl. facing p. 104, N^o 3, + p. 103.

Cf. Maspero, Et. de Mythol., I, 149 (transcription
photograph (Rowe): 360 ^{with nothing slot from entrance.} _{and})



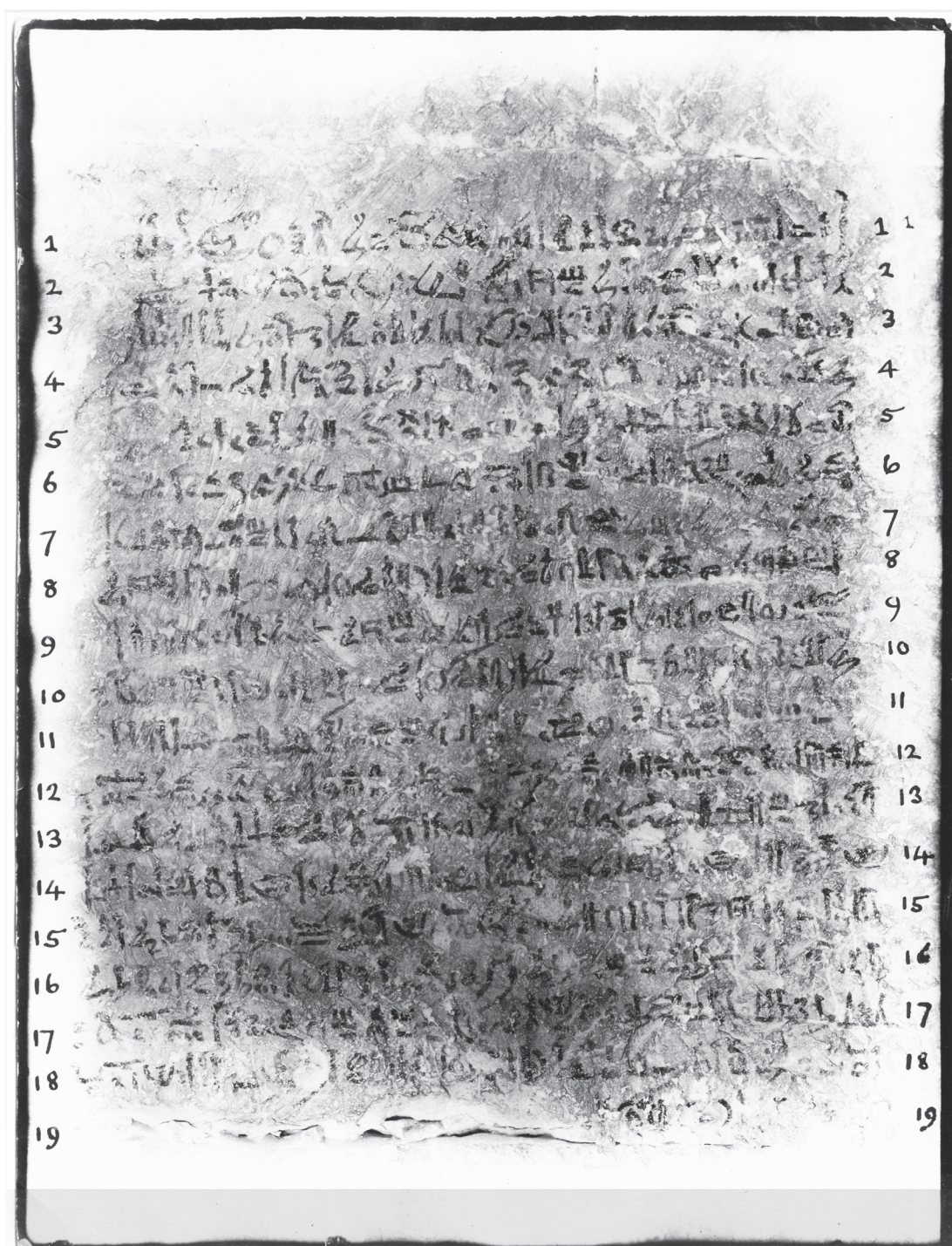
try for more.

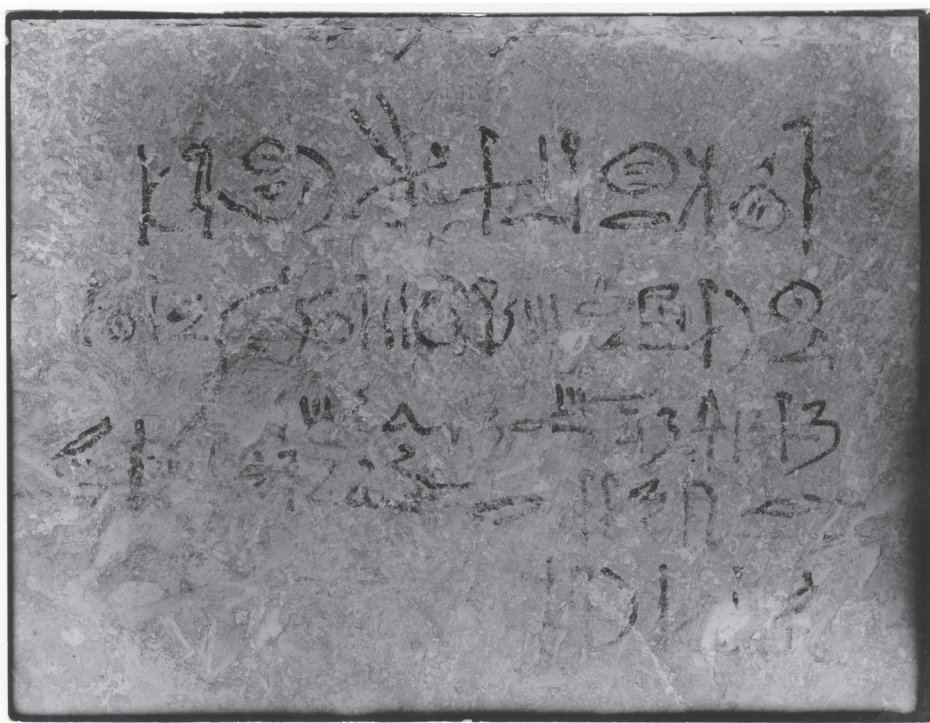
ph.

[illegible]

Appendix B

Gunn Mss. III.1 and III.2

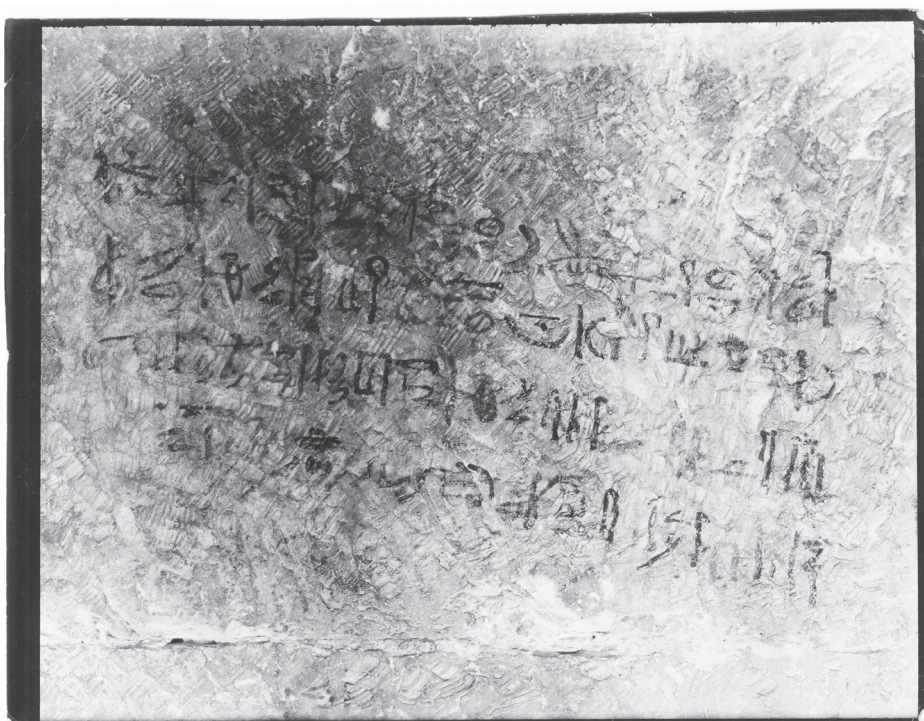




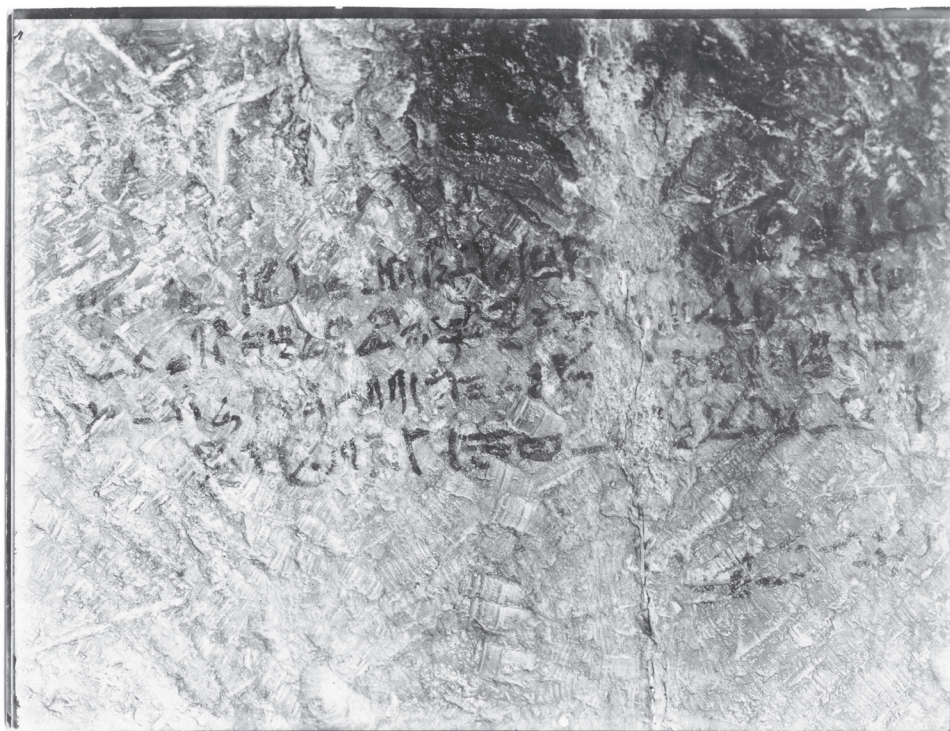
Gunn Mss. III.1, 2.



Gunn Mss. III.1, 3.



Gunn Mss. III.1, 4.



Gunn Mss. III.1, 5.



Gunn Mss. III.1, 6.



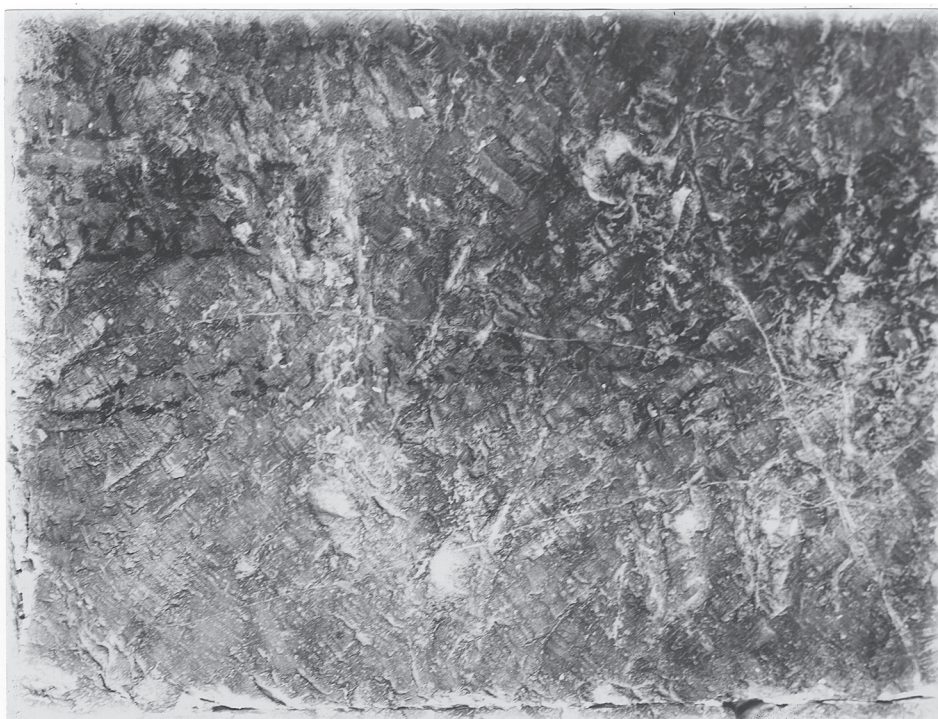
Gunn Mss. III.1, 7.



Gunn Mss. III.1, 8.



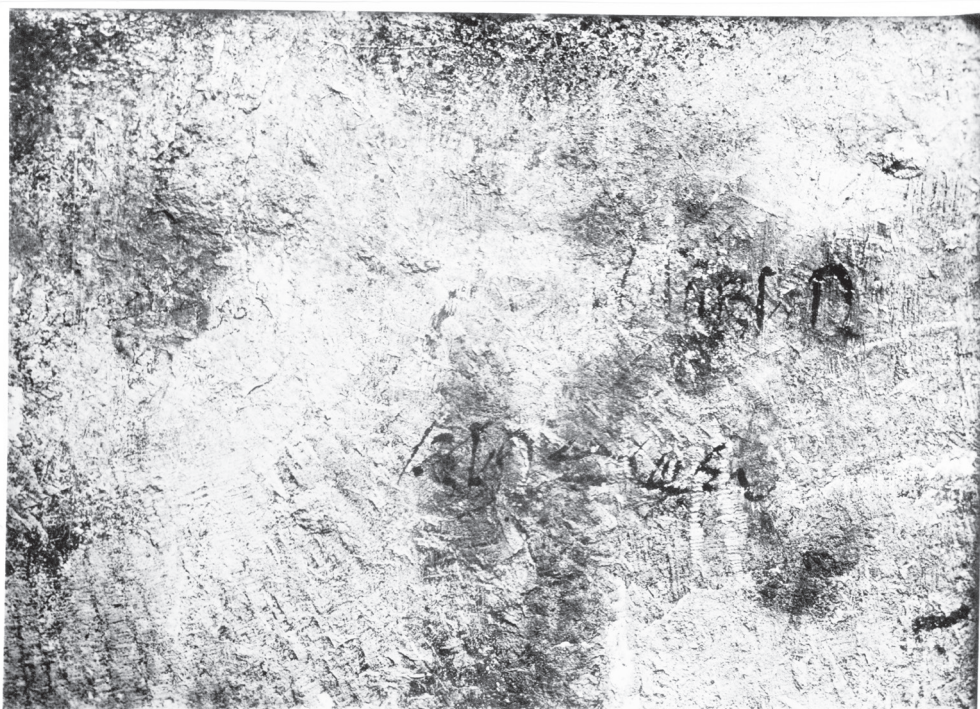
Gunn Mss. III.1, 9.



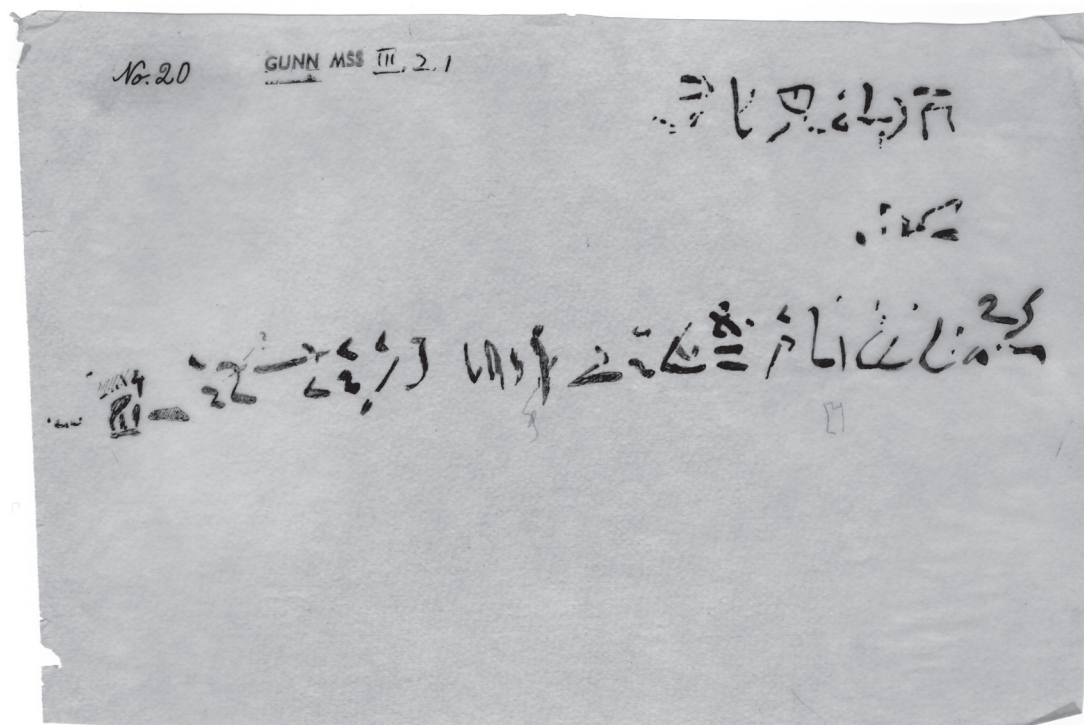
Gunn Mss. III.1, 10.



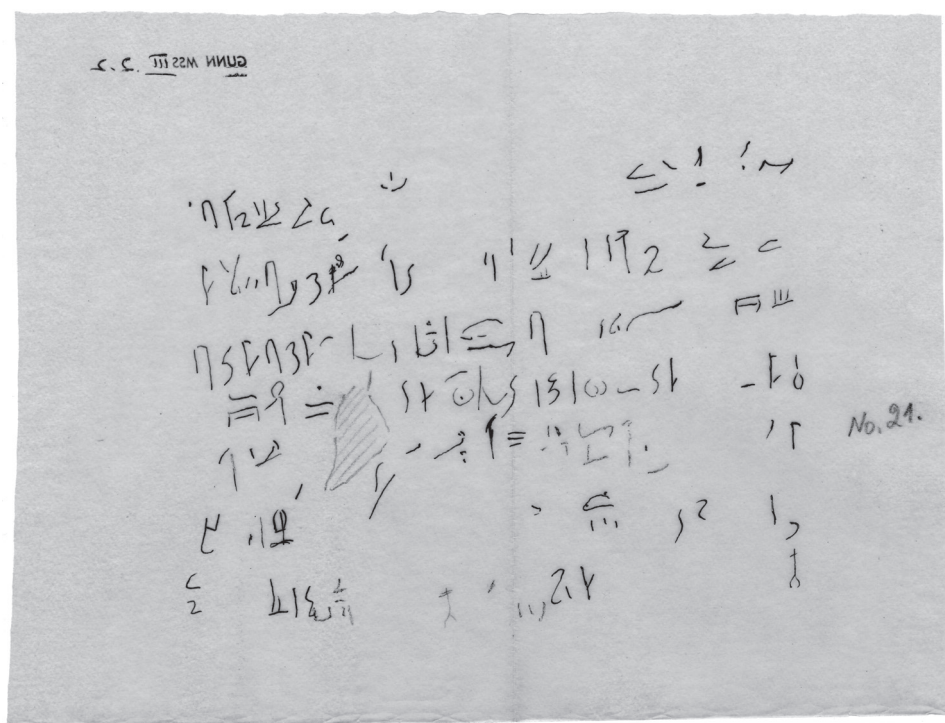
Gunn Mss. III.1, 11.



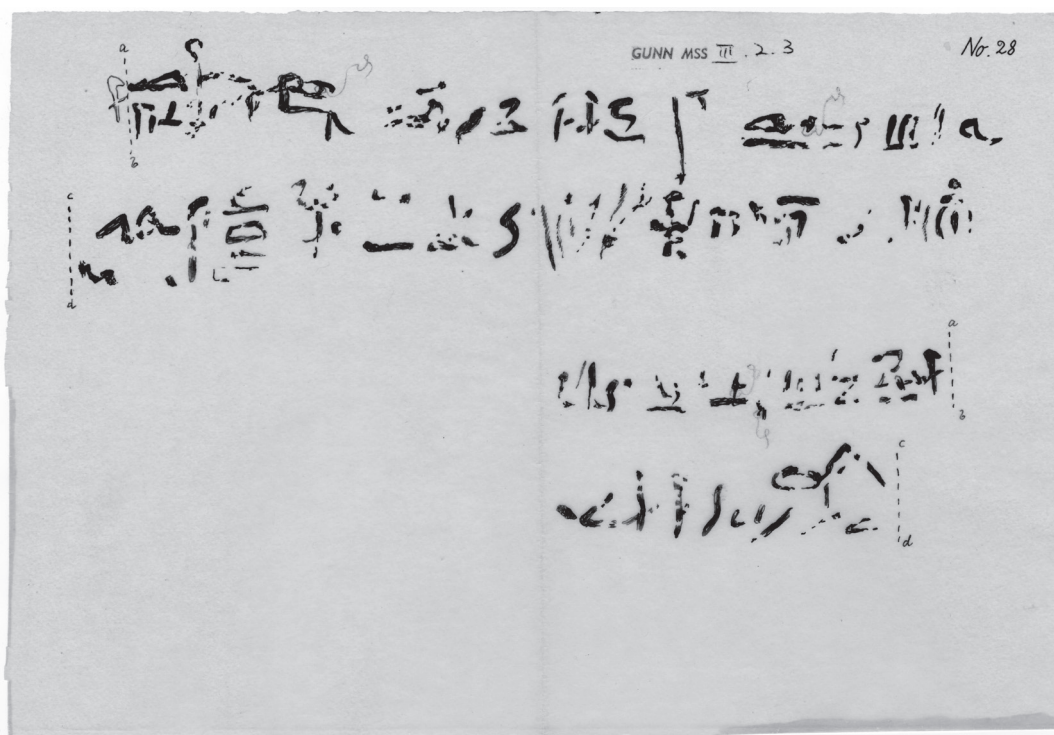
Gunn Mss. III.1, 12.



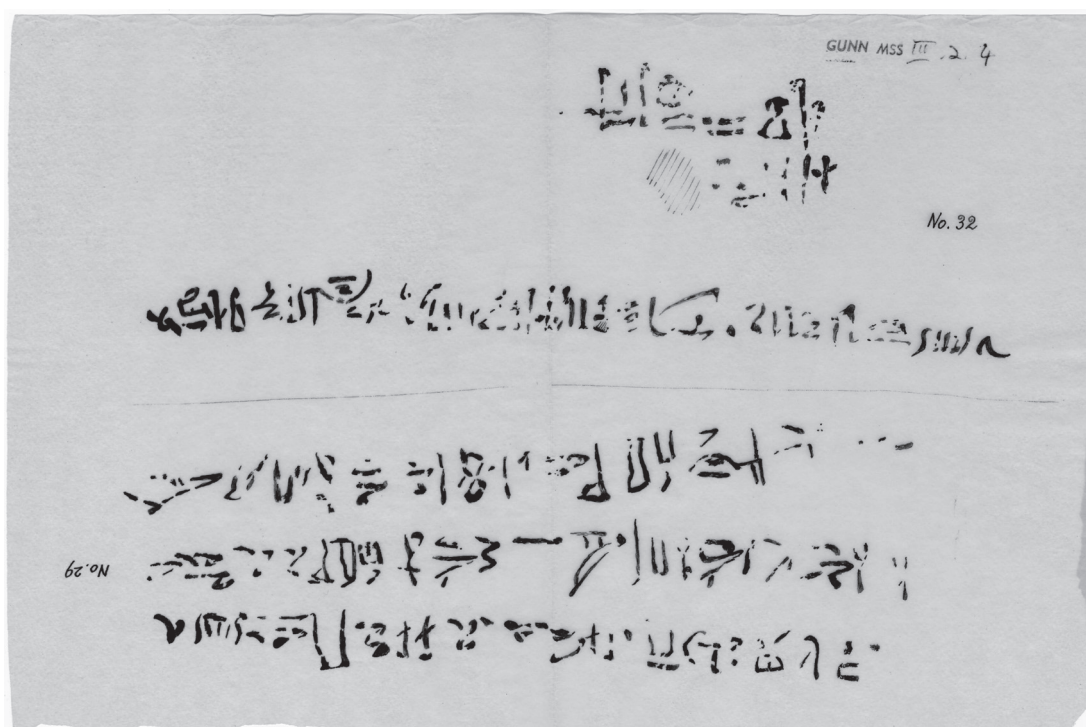
Gunn Mss. III.2, 1.



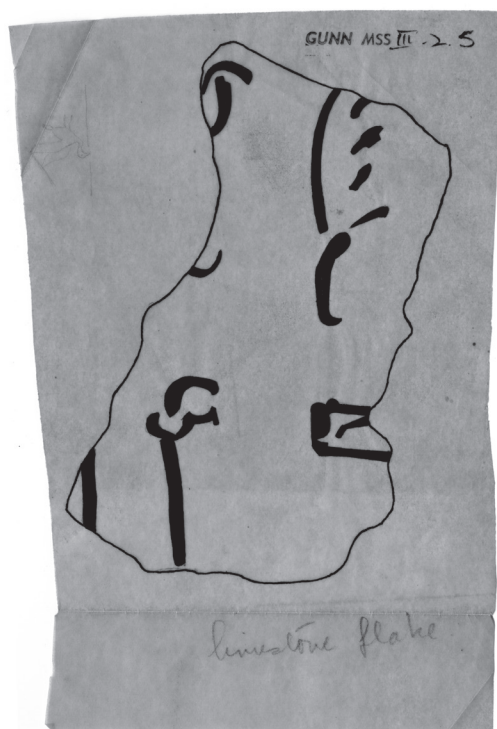
Gunn Mss. III.2, 2.



Gunn Mss. III.2, 3.



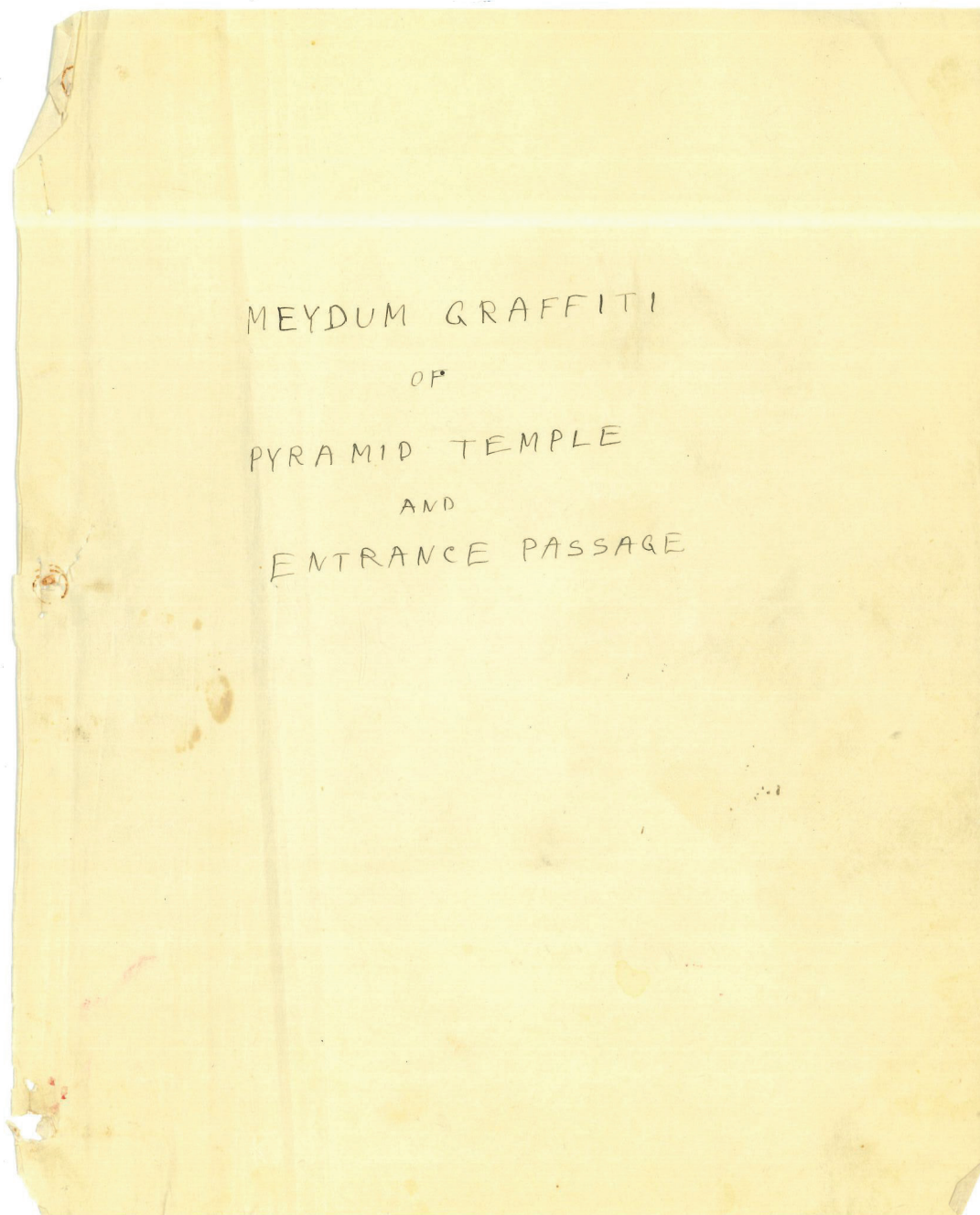
Gunn Mss. III.2, 4.



Gunn Mss. III.2, 5. Not included in the secondary epigraphy corpus.

Appendix C

Meidum Notebook 2.7 and Rowe Meydum Photographs



Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti, cover.

GRAFFITI IN MEYDUM PYRAMID-TEMPLE, ETC.

Notes on photographs.

(The numbers are those of my provisional numbering of the graffiti).

2. (Photos. 572, 573). - A larger area requires to be taken, ^{namely} ~~namely~~ above, below and to the right of the area included in the existing photos.
 ~~Fluorine and all the graffiti on this part of the wall; no photo is not taken at.~~
5. I have no photo of this. It should be possible to take some sort of photo of it, as it is a scratched graffiti. - ^{2 photos, as it is} ~~in the door to left; we tried but could not manage it.~~
12. I have no photo of this. ~~Could not photo.~~
13. Photo (543) almost unusable; doubtless it is not possible to get a better one. - ^{Very difficult to get better one, as there is window door on left hand side.}
14. I have no photo. - ^{Can. ceiling of door. Cannot take.}
15. I have no photo. - ^{Photo 613 involved.}
17. Photo (545) unusable, but it is doubtless as good as is possible. ^{Difficult to get better one.}
20. Photo No. 526 gives only the end of line 1. ^{To be retaken.}
21. It would be well to take another photo on a larger scale. - ^{Difficult to take photo owing to position.}
26. The photo (542) is largely out of focus, and is by so much unusable. ^{Difficult to take, as is ceiling of door to doorway. at.}

A-C (from Entrance Passage of Pyramid). I have no photos. - ^{359, 360 involved.}

GRAFFITI IN MEYDUM PYRAMID-TEMPLE - TRANSLATIONS.

1. The name of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Snefru, may he live for ever and ever! is Wenen-nofru (Onnophris). ✓
2. The name of the Horus Snefru is Wenen-nofru. ✓
3. Sebekhotpu-emsaeft.
4. The scribeson of (?) Inyōter(?).
5. Amenisorb(?).
6. The scribe Hor(?)emsaeft.
7. son of (?) Snefru-'onkh. 05
8. At present unintelligible.
9. ~~W³d~~ - sign. W³d - sign
10. (1) Regnal-year 41, month 4 of Shemu, day 12- under the Majesty of Horus, Mighty Bull, Appearing in Thebes; He of the Two Ladies (2) Of lasting Reign like Rē in Heaven; Golden Horus, Mighty in Strength, of Sacred Glory; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, (3) Menkheperre; Son of Rē, Tuthmosis, whose Existence is Beautiful, may he live for ever and ever upon the Horus-Throne of the Living! Now his Majesty (4) is a young Bull,he shines (?) as a goodly youth 20 years old, whose (5) equal has never been. Khnum formed him ... true..., who resembles the features of (6) Atūm, who has (?) the form of the Universal Lord; he is mighty-handed, of great strength in every (7) victory.
The scribe 'Akheperkerē sonb, son of the scribe and ritualist of

King 'Akheperkerê^c, (8) Amenmôse, came to see the beautiful Temple of the Horus Snefru. He found it as though heaven were (9) within it and the sun rising in it. Then he said: "May heaven rain with fresh myrrh, may it drip (10) with incense, upon the roof of the Temple of the Horus Snefru!" And he said: "O every scribe, every ritualist, (11) every ihms nj k'p, every knower of writings, who shall read this text, and all men who shall hear:- your local gods (12) shall favour you, and you shall hand over your officess to your children, and be buried in the cemetery on (13) the west of Ptah-south-of his-wall, after a prolonged old age upon earth, if you say: 'An offering that the King gives to Osiris, (14) Lord of Busiris, the Great God, Lord of Abydos, and Rê^c-Harakhti, and Atum Lord of Heliopolis, and Amen-rê^c King of (15) the Gods, and Anubis who presides over the God's Dwelling, who is among the embalmers(?), Lord of the West - that they may give a thousand loaves and a thousand jugs of beer, (16) and a thousand oxen, and a thousand geese, and a thousand hpt - offerings, and a thousand df² - offerings, and a thousand packets of incense, and a thousand jars of oil, and a thousand (17) pieces of cloth, and a thousand fields(?) ... a thousand of all good and pure things that Heaven gives, and Earth puts forth, and Bile brings from his source, to the Soul of the Horus Snefru, who is justified before his Father Osiris, the Great God, Lord of the Sacred Land (19) (Queen?) Meres 'ankh.....'".

11. (a) The draughtsman.... (b) Drawing of bird (c) The scribe Ter (?). *X 1 X 11 An*

12 (a) Drawing of falcon's head with disk. (b) (1) Regnal -year x+3, month 3 of Akhet, day 7(?) (2) The scribe.....came.....

3

13. (1) Regnal-year 26, month 3 of Akhet, day 22 (2) under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menkheperre^c, Son of Re^c, Tuthmosis whose Existence is Beautiful, may he live for ever! (3) The scribe, the of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt (4) the justified ... kheper...re^c, Ab(?) son of (?)..., came, (5) and said: "..... (6).... house of his (the king's) father....kheperen(?) re^c, (7) he gave me land(?).....

14. The scribe.....

15. The draughtsman..... *Xxll*

16. *Xxll* The Jeweller(?) Ter. (b) Two drawn signs.

17. (a) Drawing of falcon with double crown. (b) Regnal-year 10, month 3 of Shomu, day 24.....

18. At present unintelligible. *Xxll*

19. (1) An offering that the King gives to the Horus Snefru, and Amen-re^c, King of the Gods, and Re^c - Harekhti, (2) and Ptah South of his Wall, of smiling face (?), and all gods and goddesses (?), that they may give glory in heaven, and power on (3) earth, and drinking water upon the..... of the river, and smelling the sweet air of the (4) north wind, to the soul of the Attendant [at the feet ?] of the Lord of the Two Lands, Netrimesu, living again, possessor of honour. *XVlll*

20. At present unintelligible.

21. [Date?] [The scribe], son of Pinahsi, [came] (2) [to see the beautiful(?) Temple of the Horus Snefru.] He found it

as though (3) heaven were within it,.....in it, it (4).....
the sun shining in it.....

22. (1) Regnal-year 30 under the Majesty of the King of Upper and
Lower Egypt, Nebma'et're', (2) son of Rê, Amenophis, ruler of Thebes,
may he live for ever (3) as a beneficent king in the whole of this
land. The scribe (4) Mey came to see this very great Pyramid of (5)
the Horus..... Snefru.....

23. (1) Regnal-year 30 under the Majesty of the King of Upper and
Lower Egypt, Nebma'et're', Son of Anân, taking pleasure <in> Truth, (2)
Amenophis Ruler of Thebes, Lord of Might, Master of Joy, who loves <right?>
(3) and who hates wickedness of heart, who causes the male to rest(?)
(4) upon the seat of his father, who establishes his inheritance in the
land.

24. Trial signs. XIXK Dn.

25. At present unintelligible. XVIIIK Dn.

26. The scribe ^{came} ~~one~~ XIXK Dn.

27. (a) Drawing of falcon. (b) The name "Mey(?)".

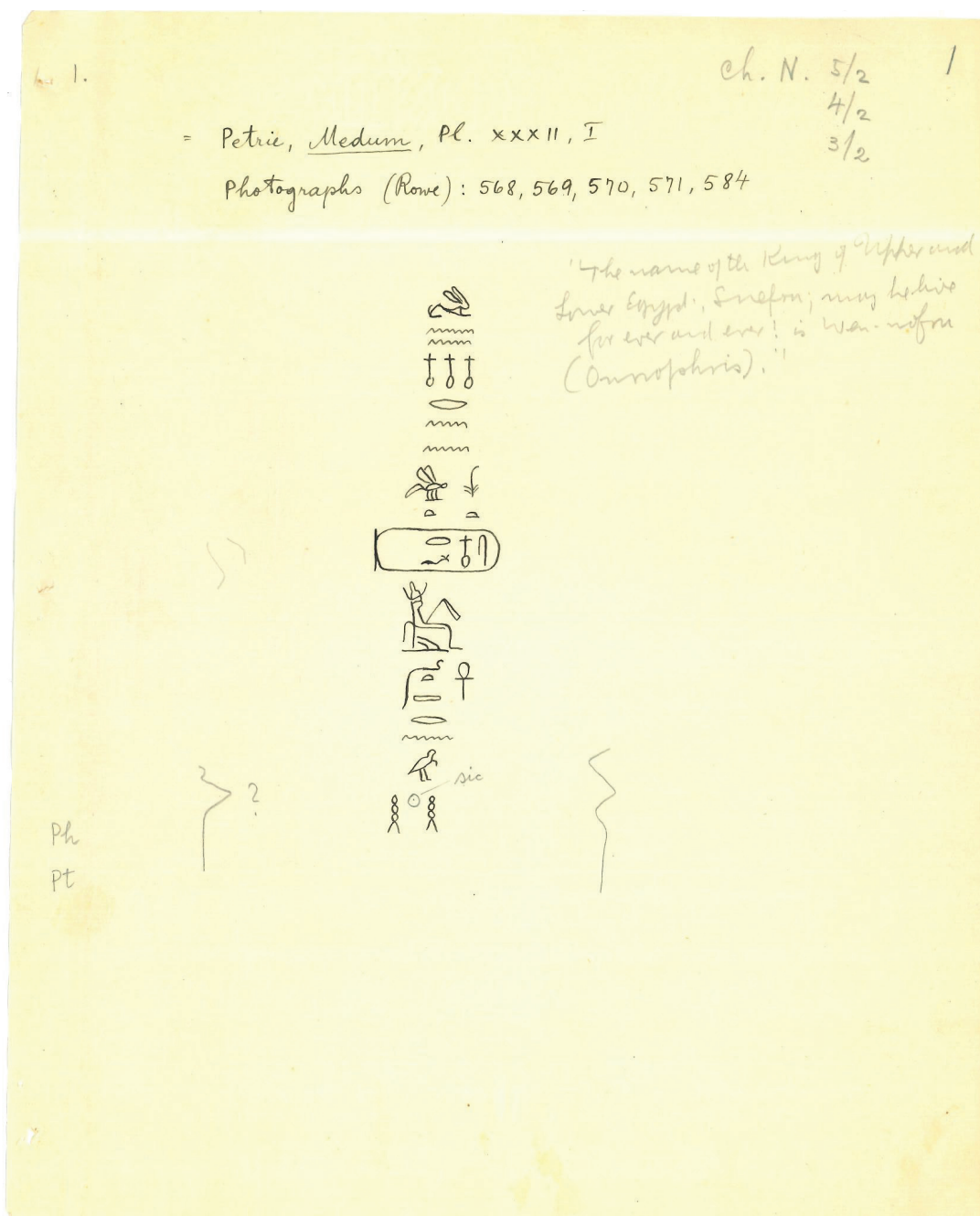
A. The scribe Sekri. XIXK Dn.

B. The scribe Amenmôse.

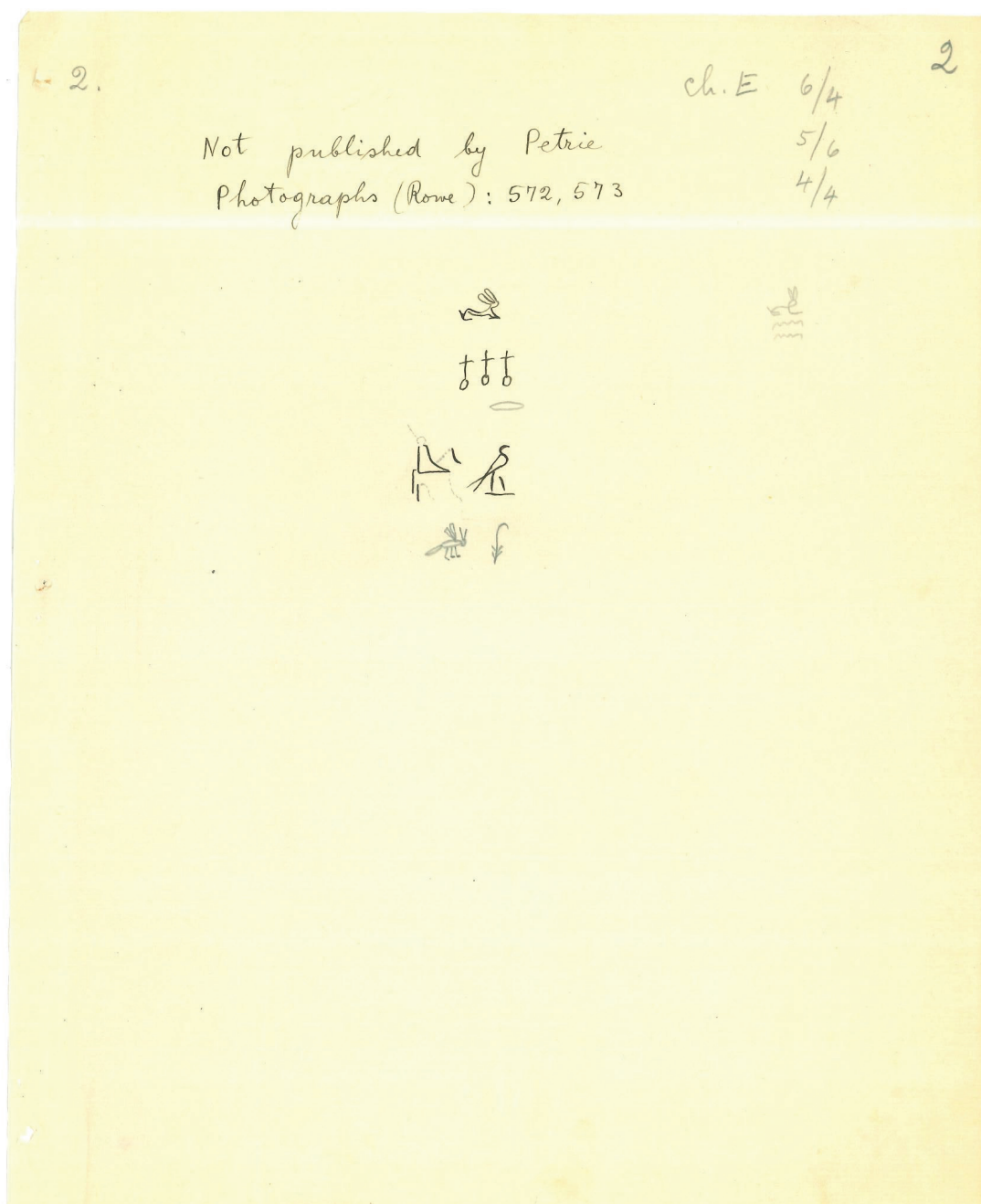
C. The scribe Amenmôse came (complete?)

} First 1/2 of
XIXK Dn.

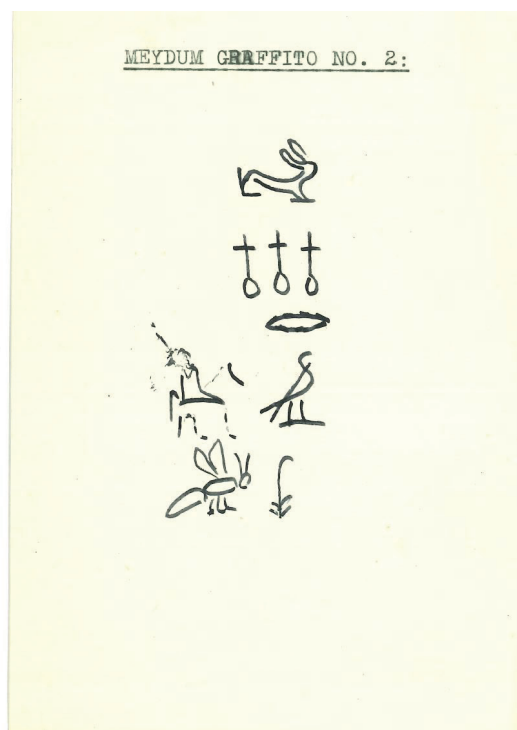
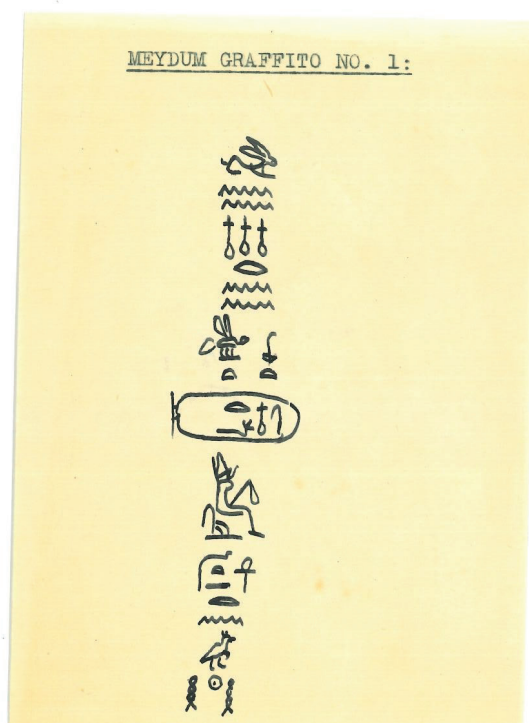
A - C are from the Entrance Passage of the Pyramid.

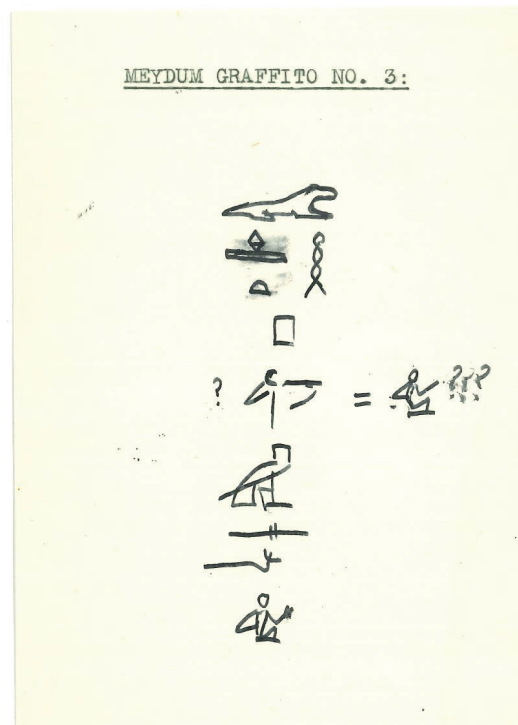


Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Medum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.

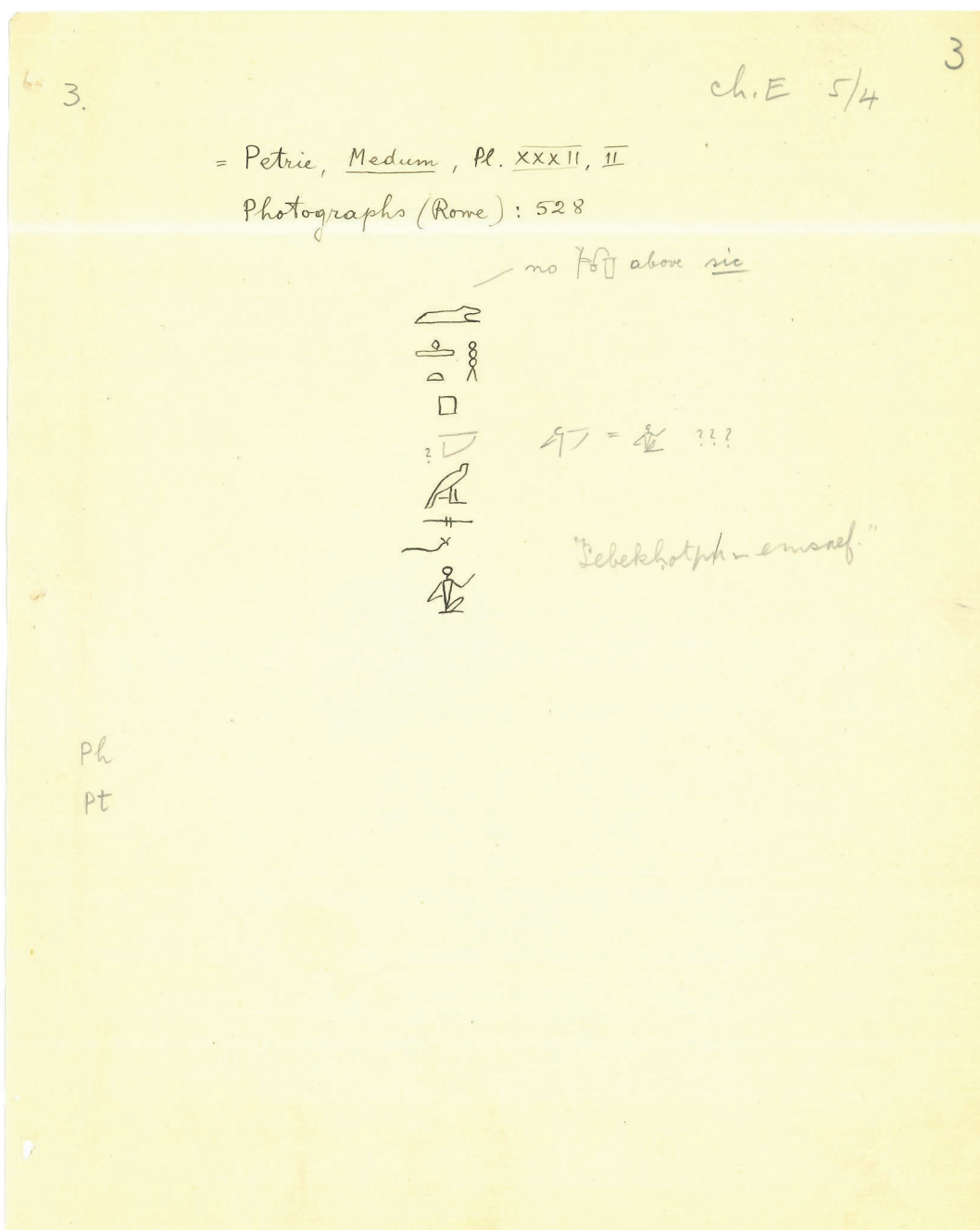


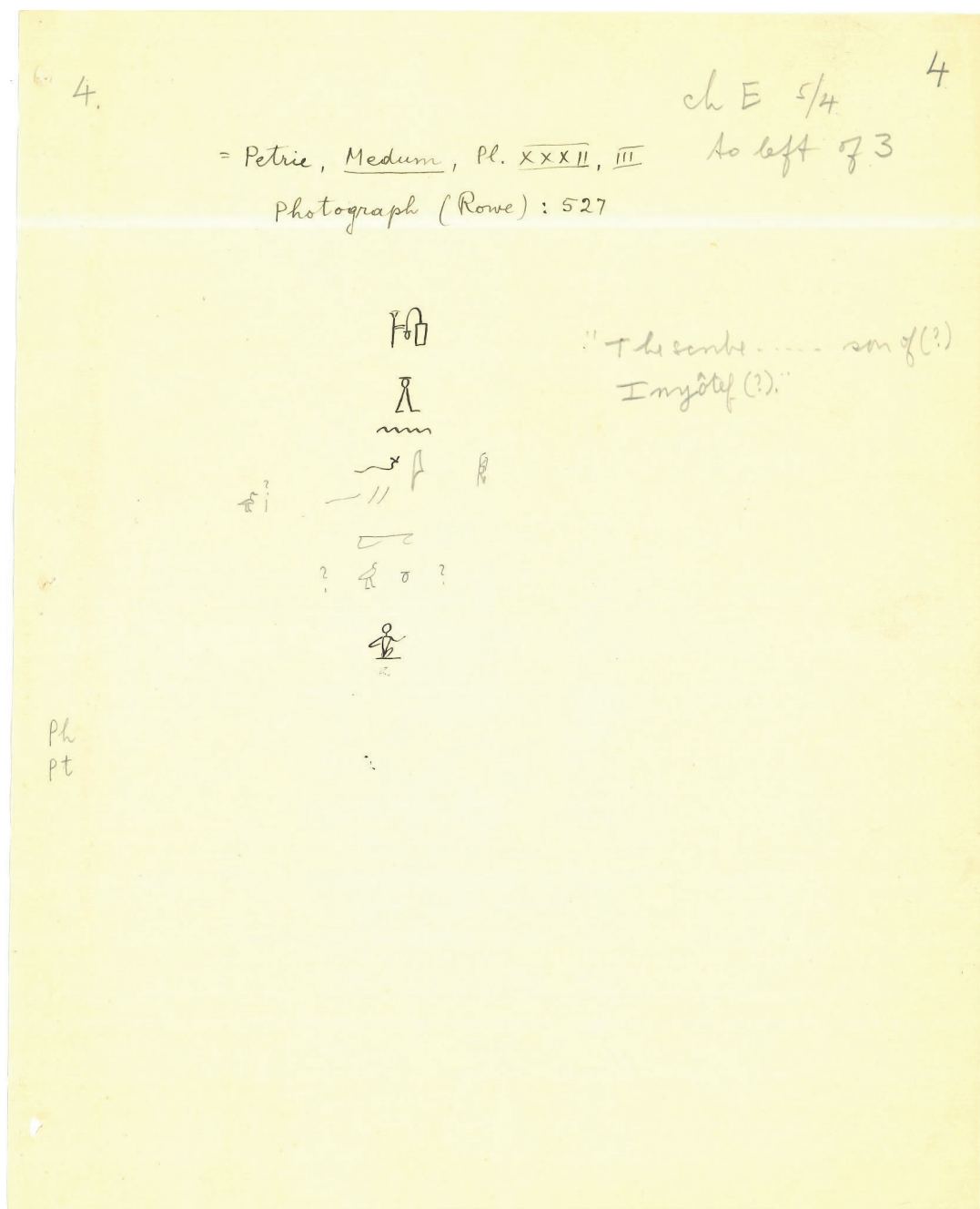
Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



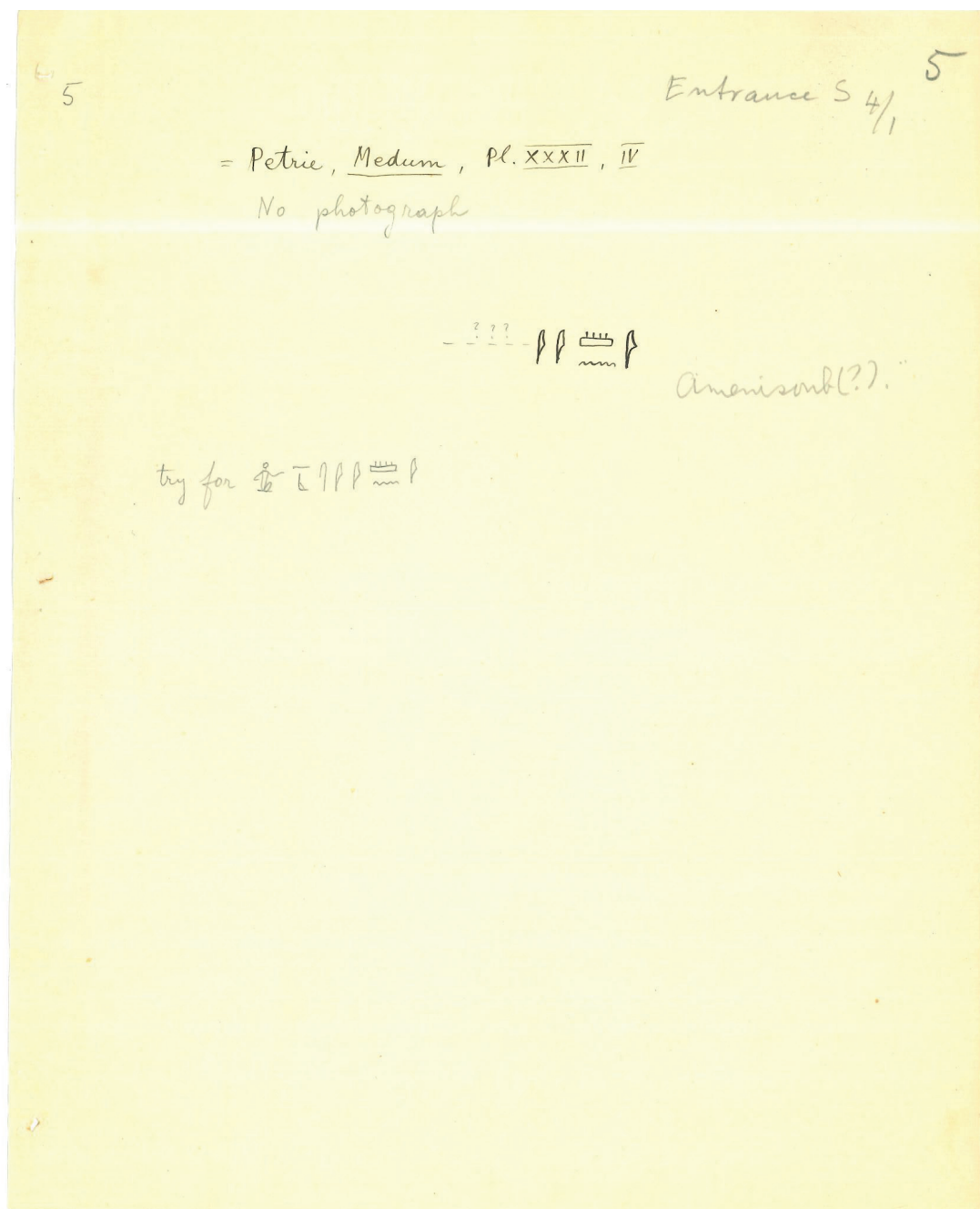


Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.





Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



6.

ch. W. North of Door 5/1 ⁶

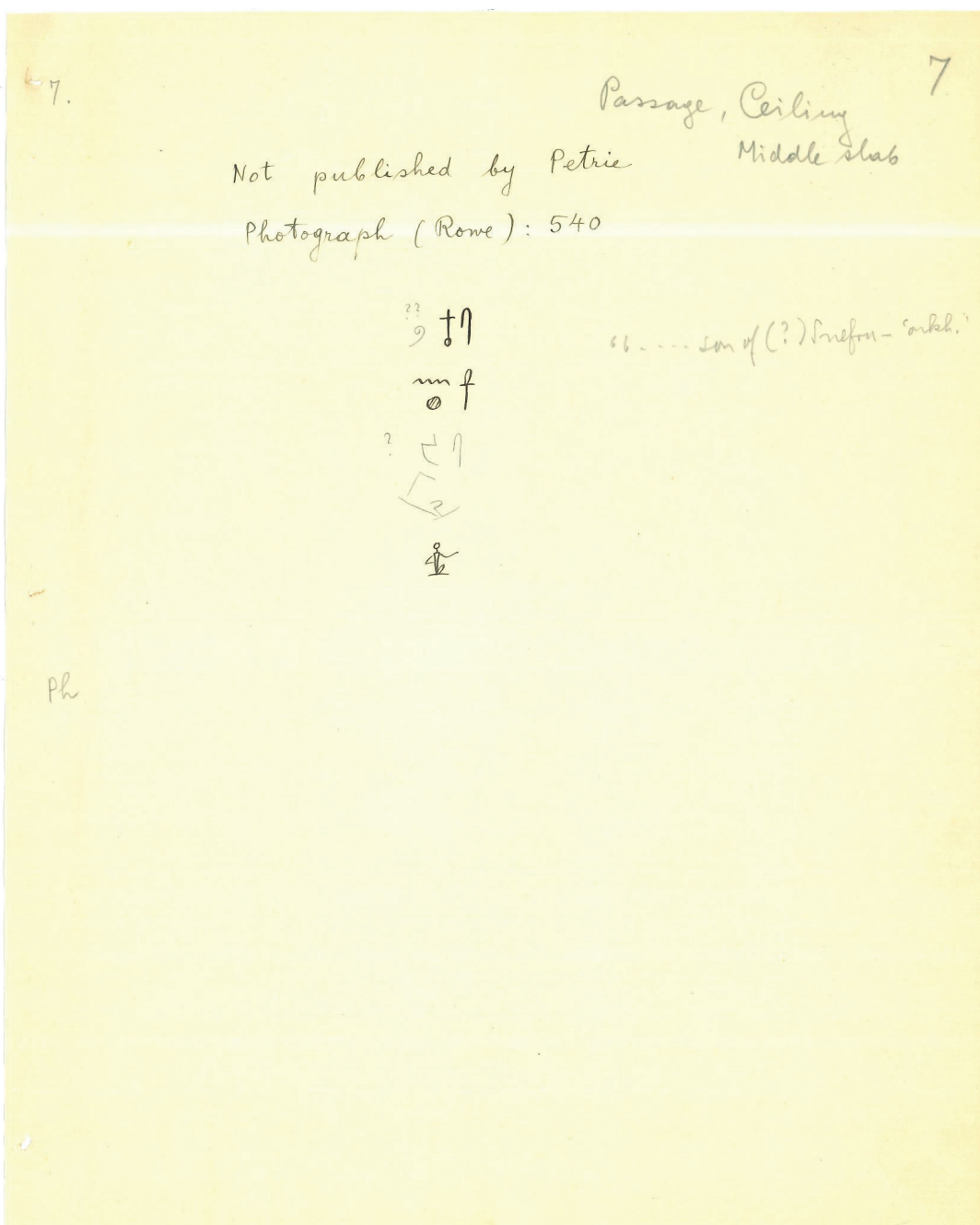
Not published by Petrie

Photograph (Rowe): 550.

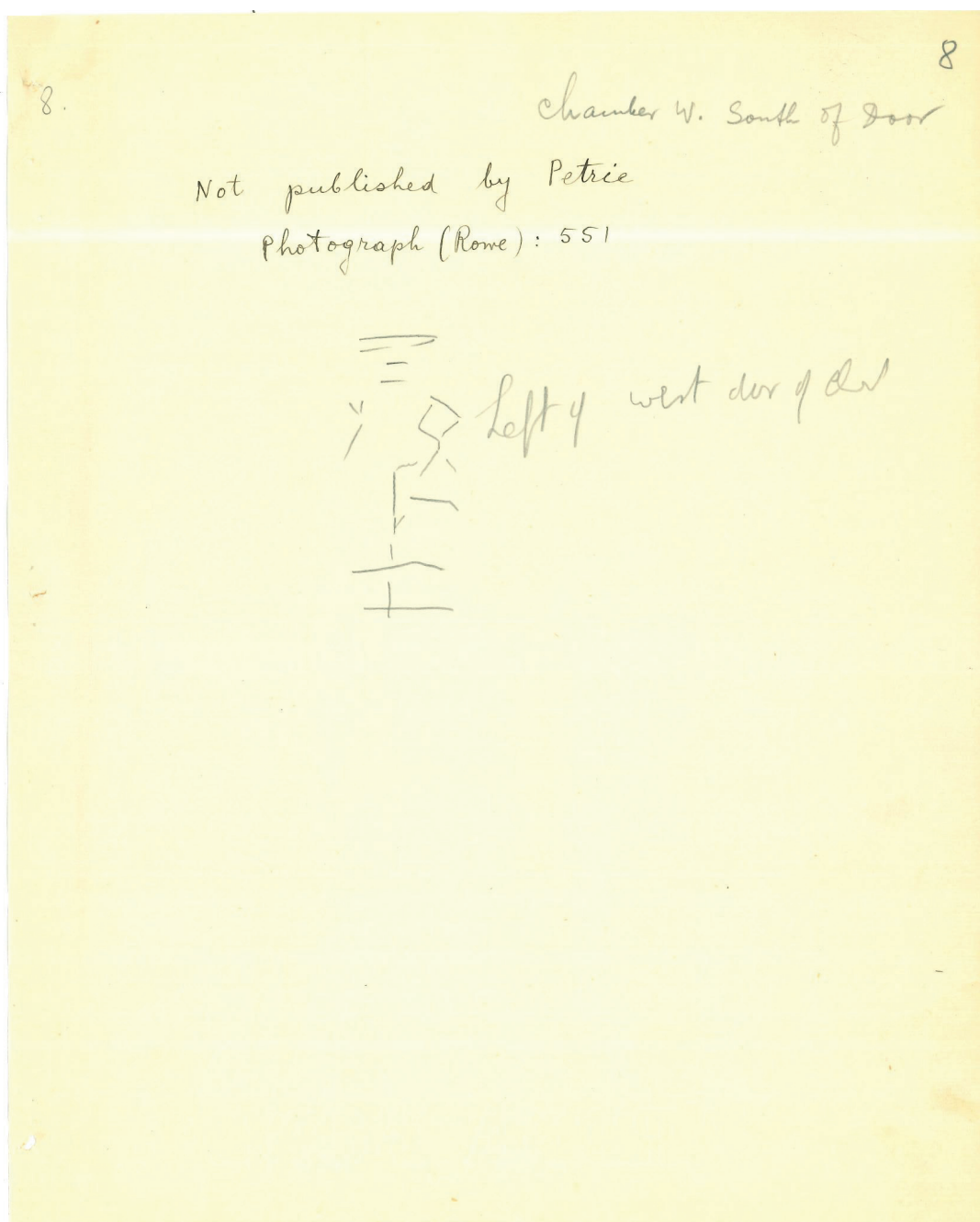


"The scribe Hor(?)emsaef."

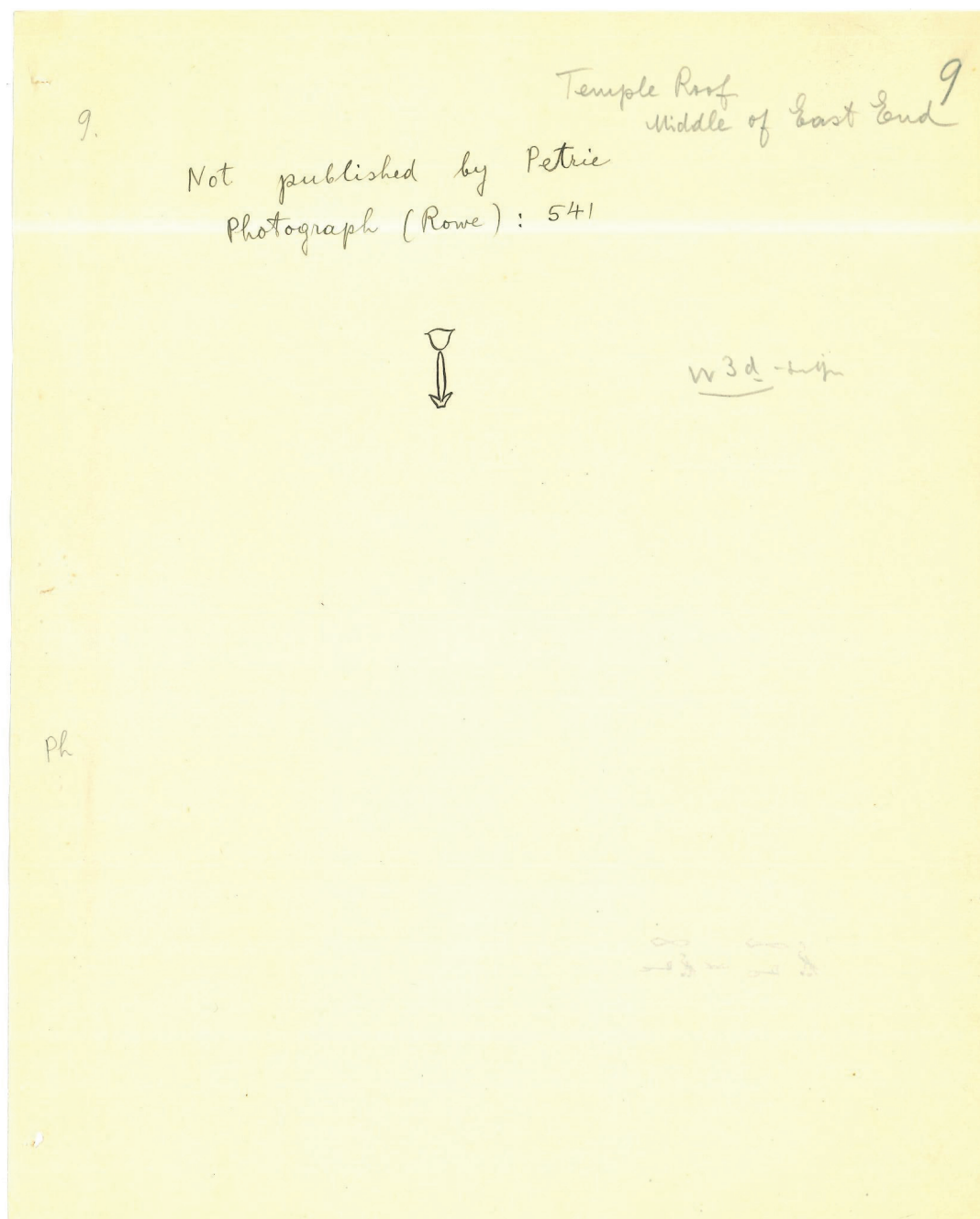
Right of ^{west} door of
chPh
pt



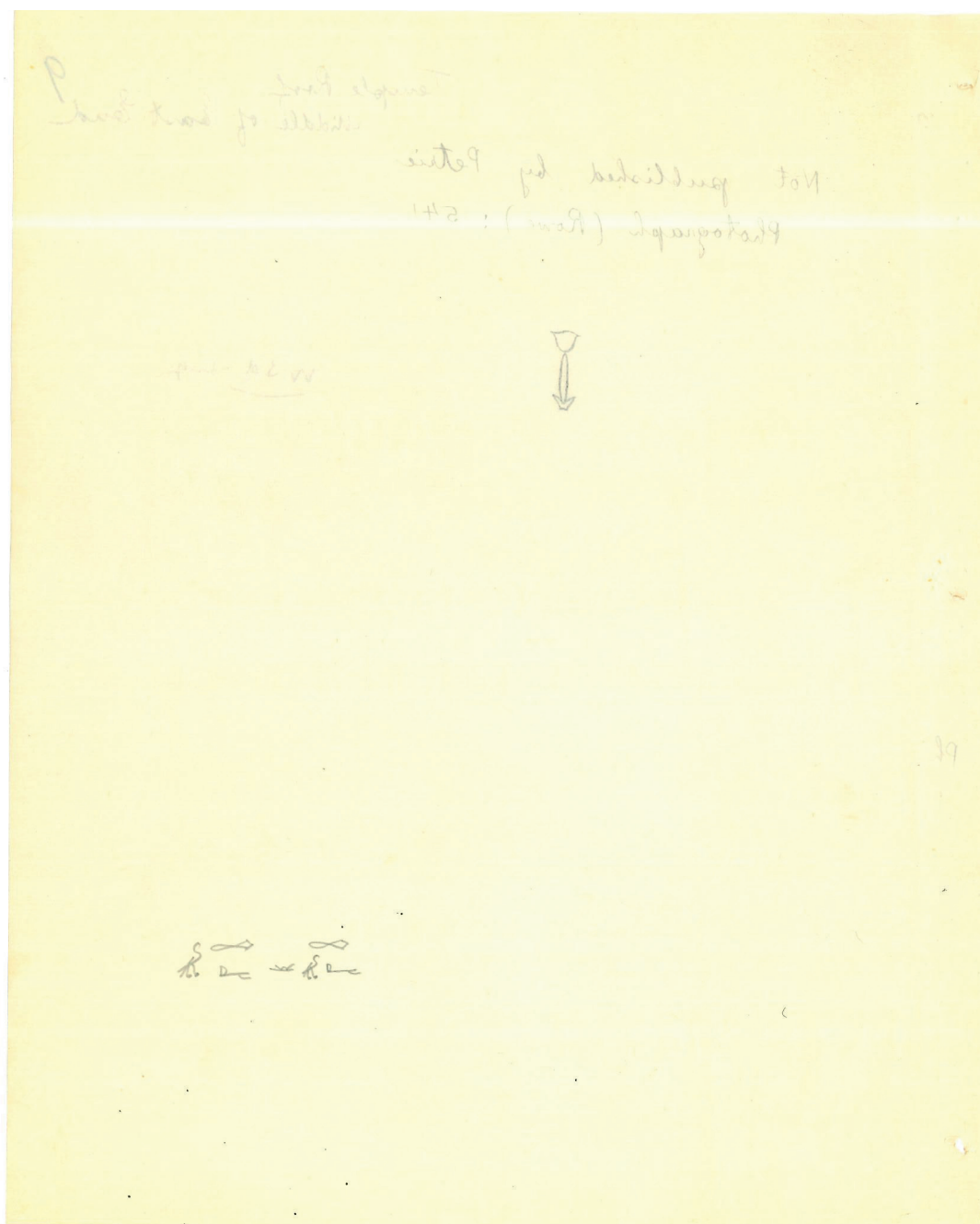
Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



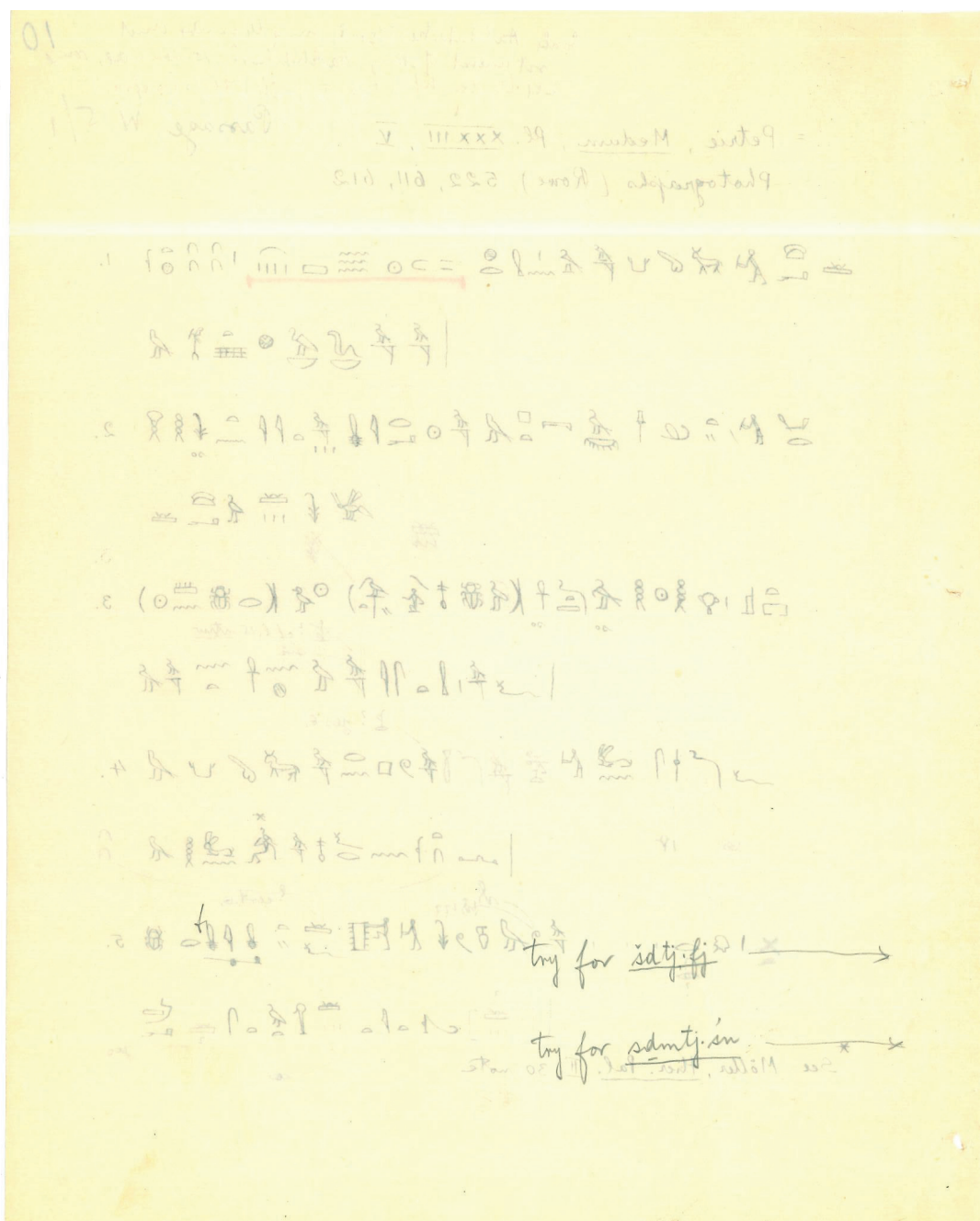
Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



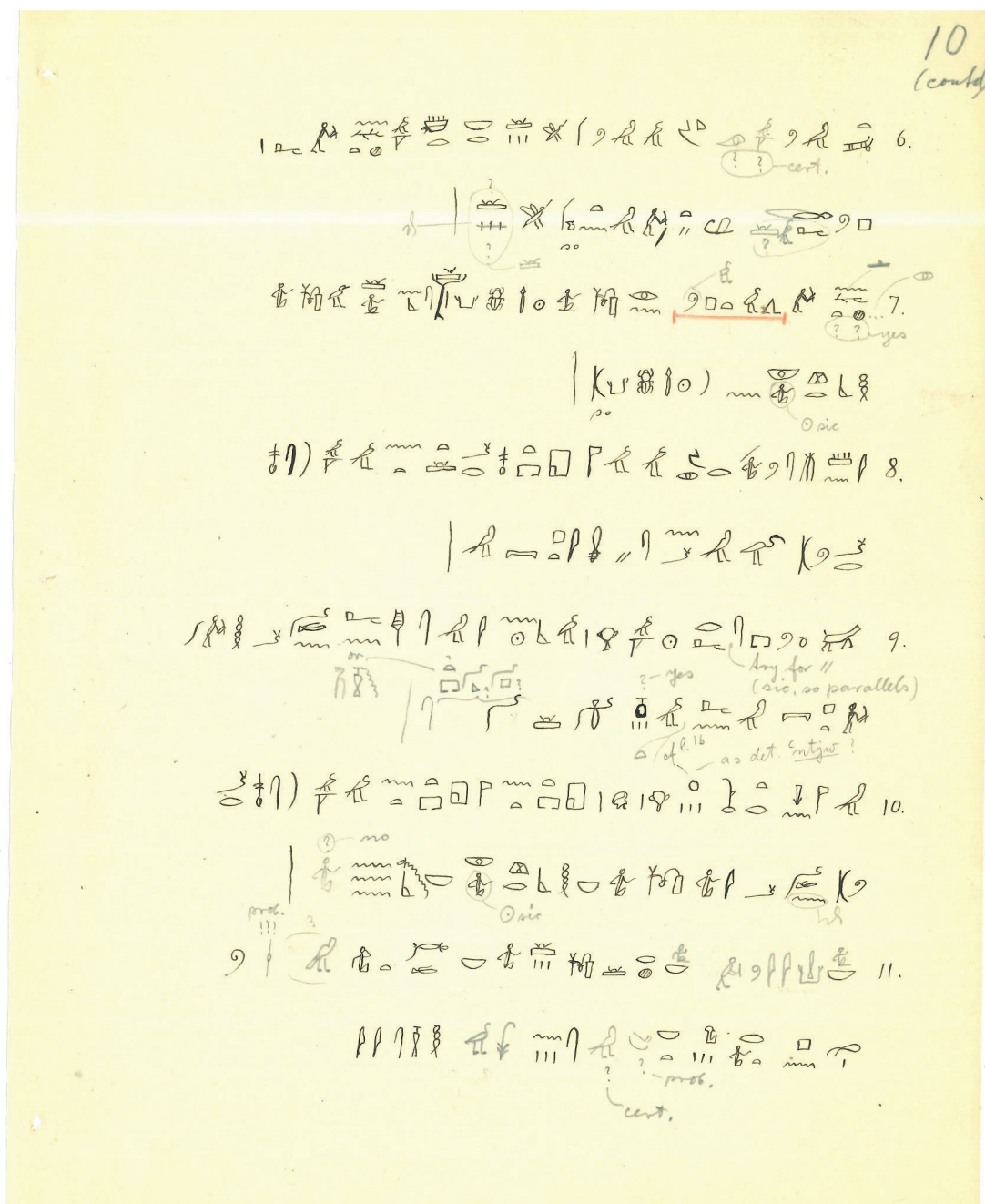
Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



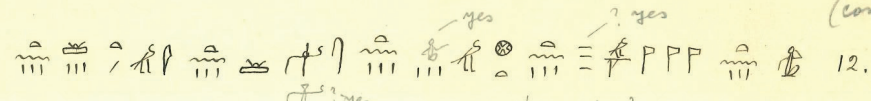
Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.

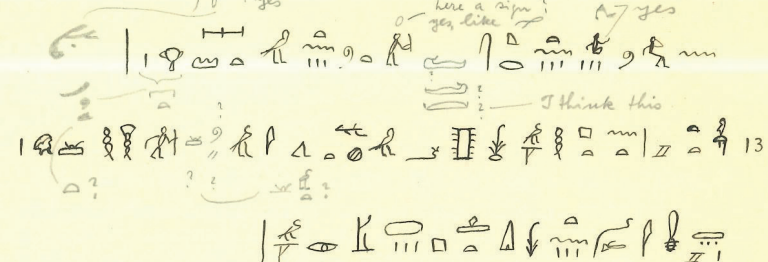


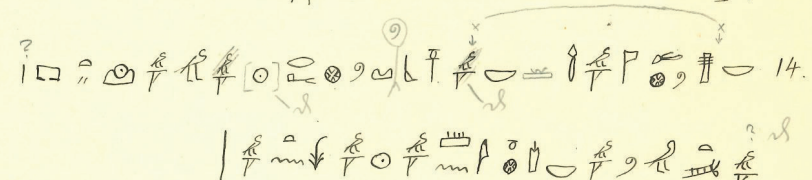
Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.

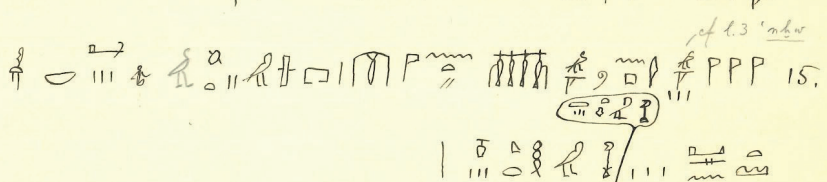


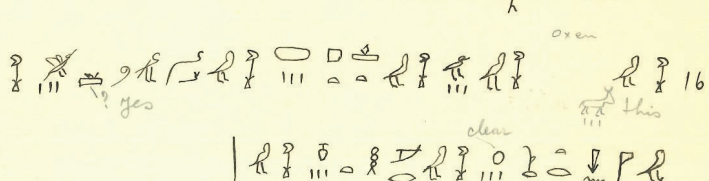
10
(contd.)

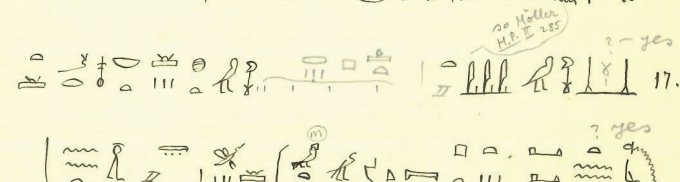
12. 

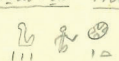
13. 

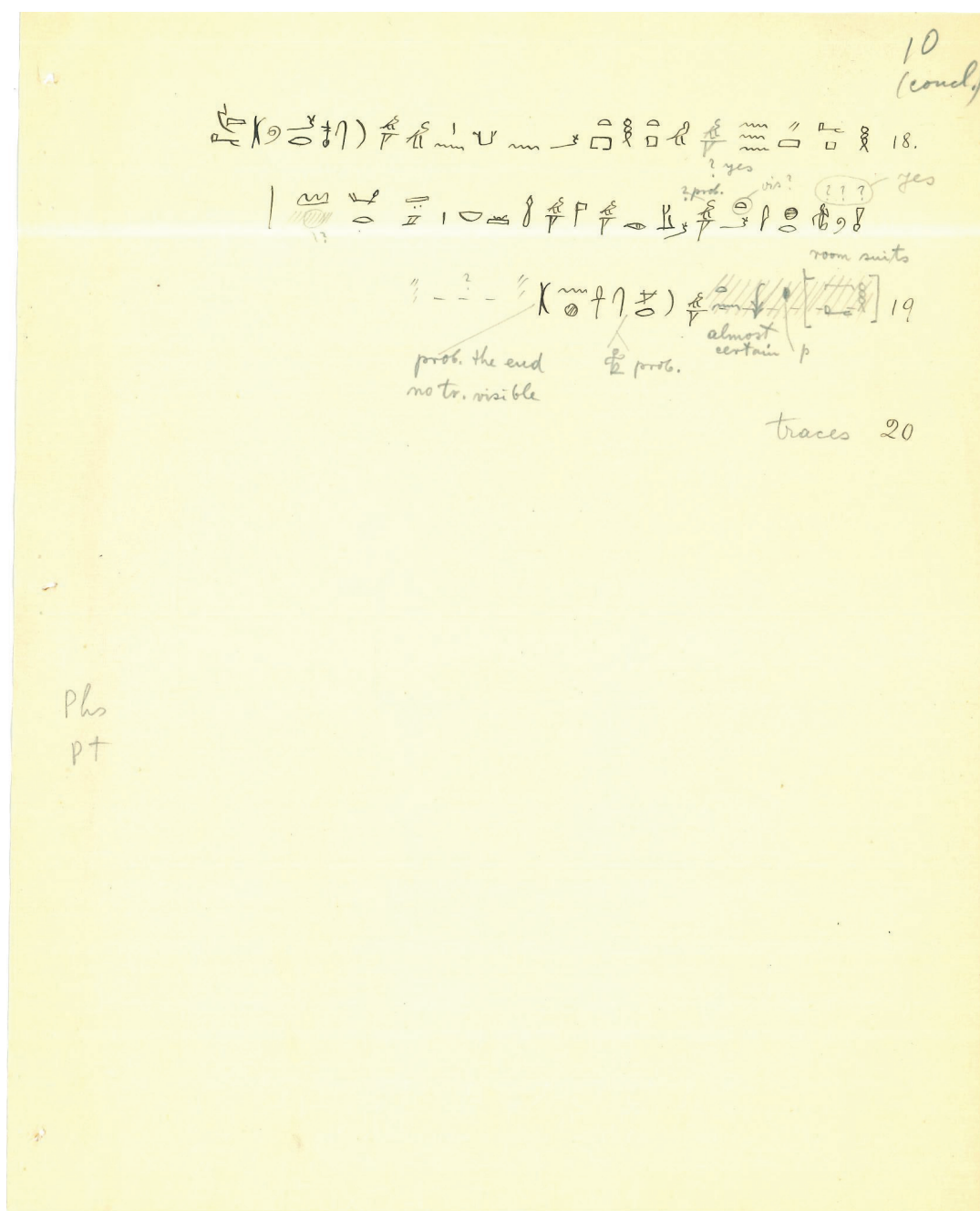
14. 

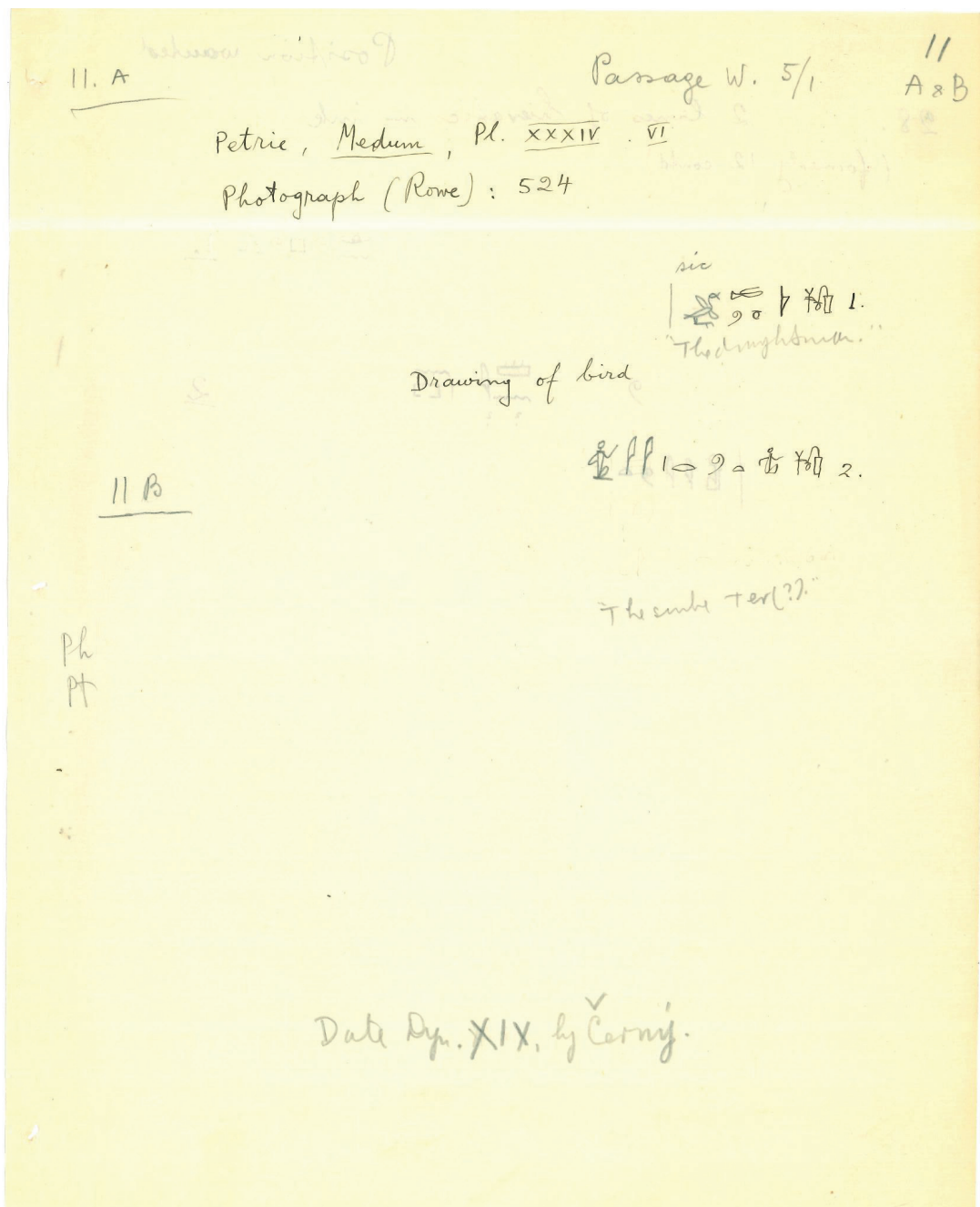
15. 

16. 

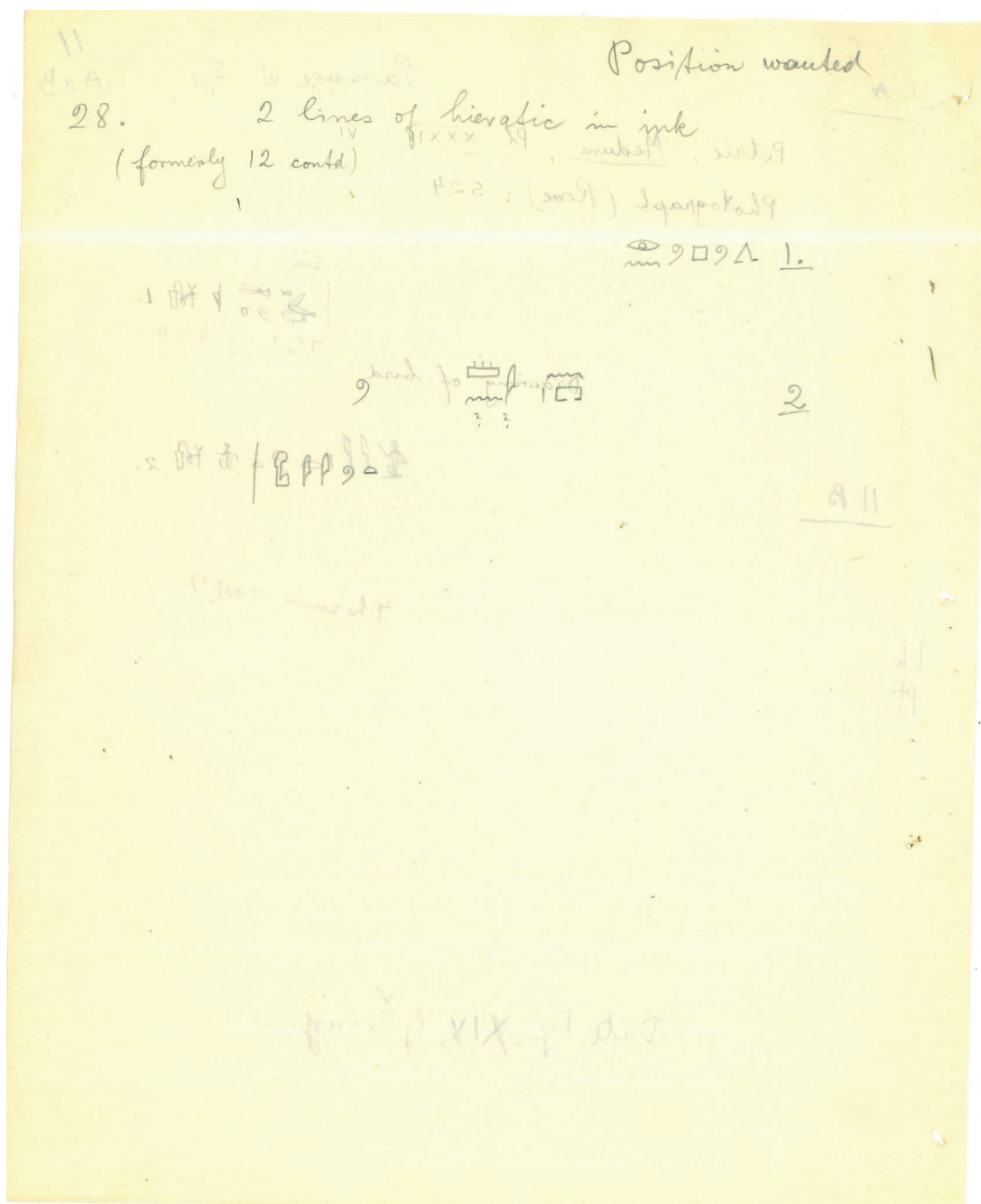
17. 

L. 12. Confusion between ntw.tn niwtjw and ntw niwt-tu
 of Dyn. 18 wty 

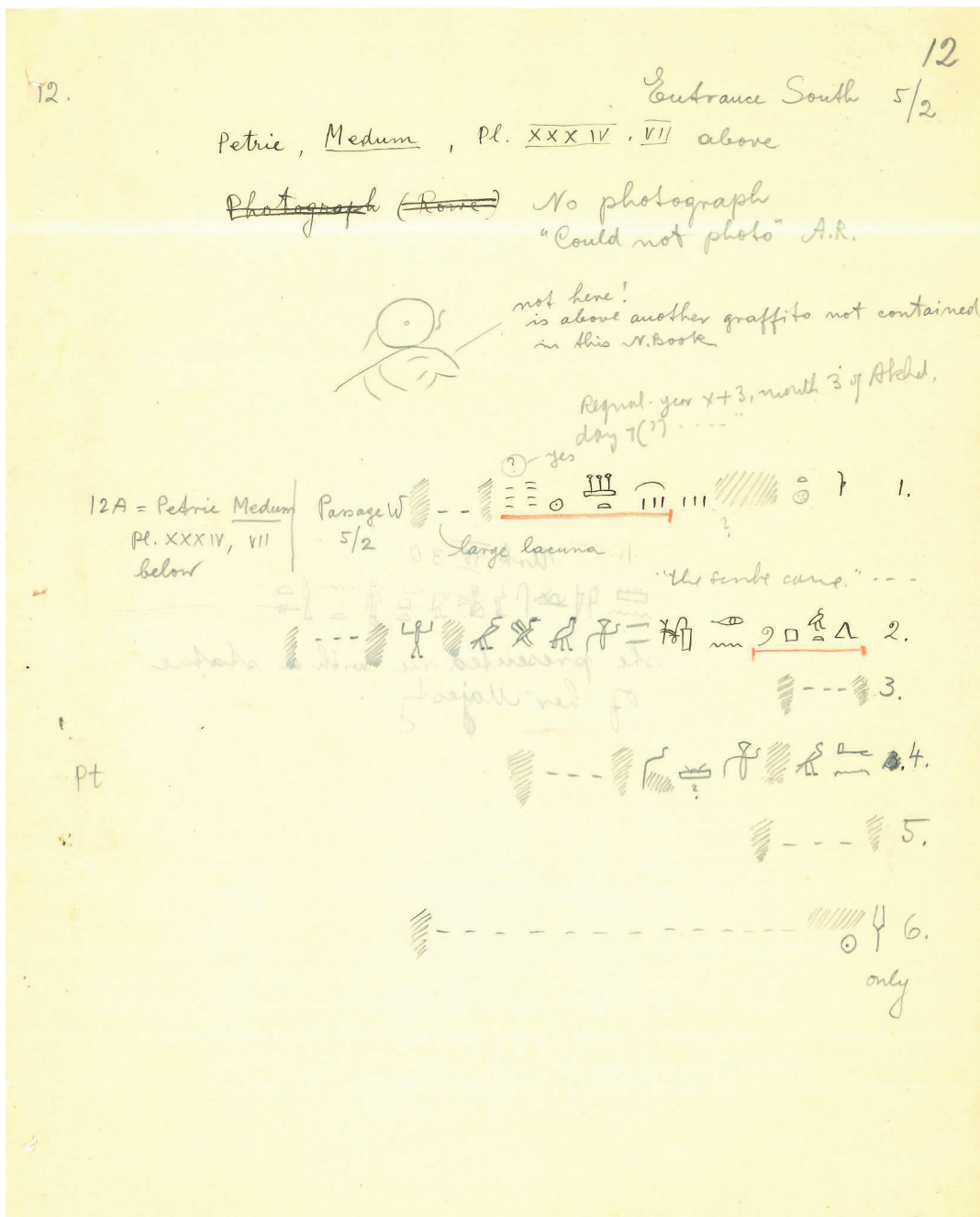




Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.

13

13.

Entrance S. 5/2

= Petrie, Medium, Pl. XXXIV, VIII

Photograph (Rome) : 543

= 2 2 0       1.

1. $\Gamma \times \Gamma \rightarrow \Gamma$ (with "Ta") $\rightarrow$ $\Gamma \times \Gamma \rightarrow \Gamma$ $\rightarrow$ $\Gamma \times \Gamma \rightarrow \Gamma$ 2.


 9094 3.

















→ 

[illegible][illegible]

"The scribe, the ... of King of S. rev. ... At(?) son of(?)..."

1 +

I II  = PP   III =   8

III
II

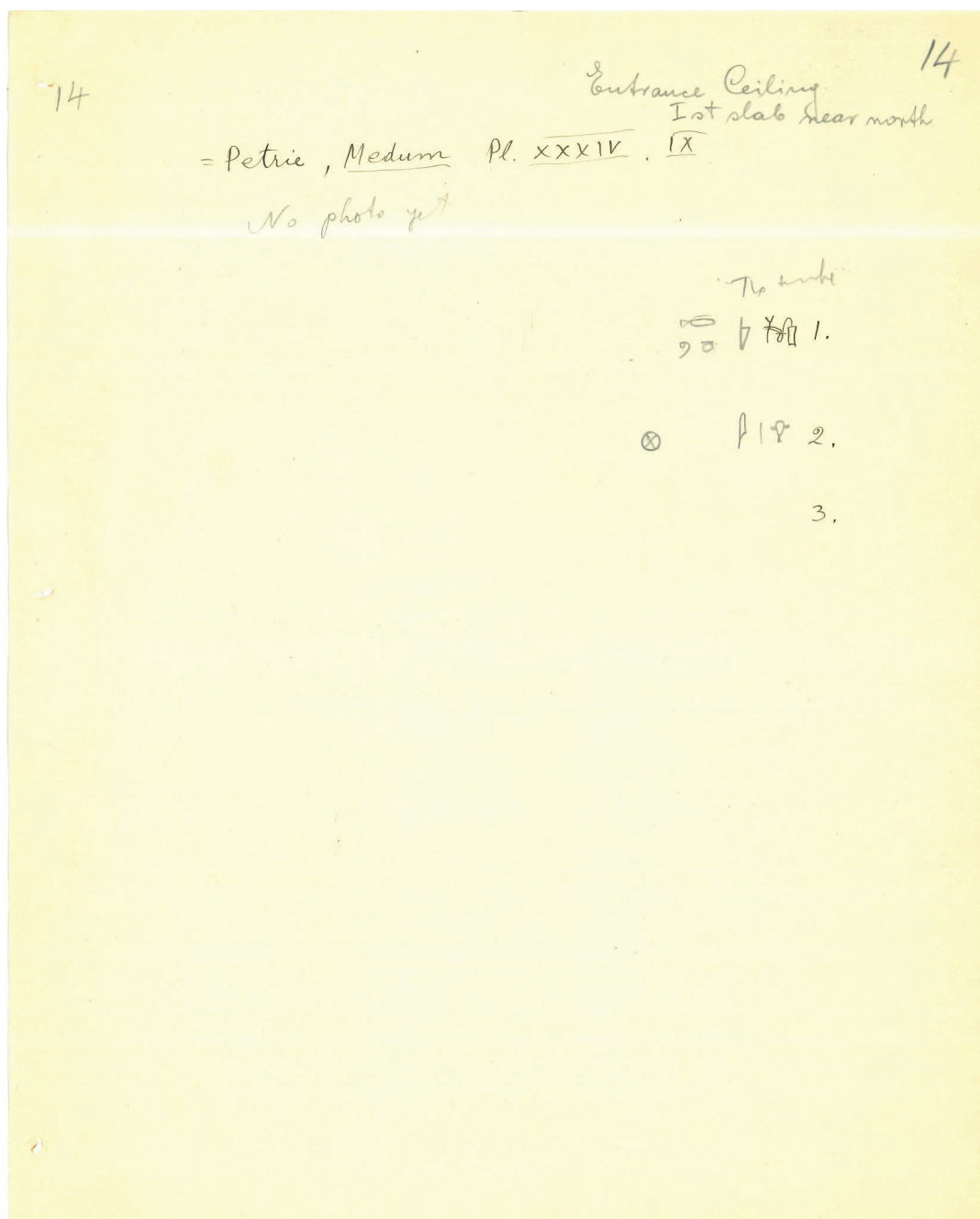
11 5 11 10 10 10

PP 11

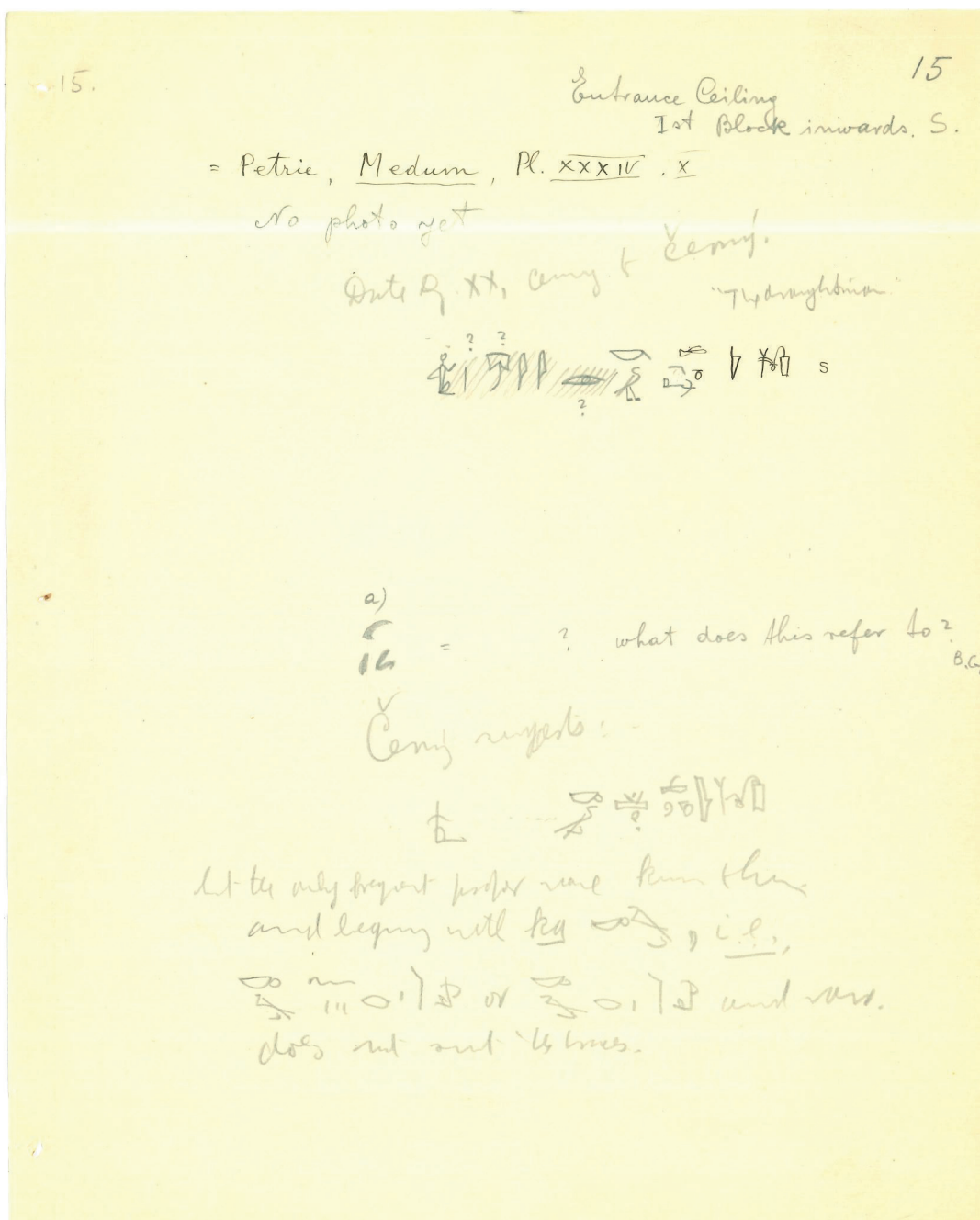
12

76 13.

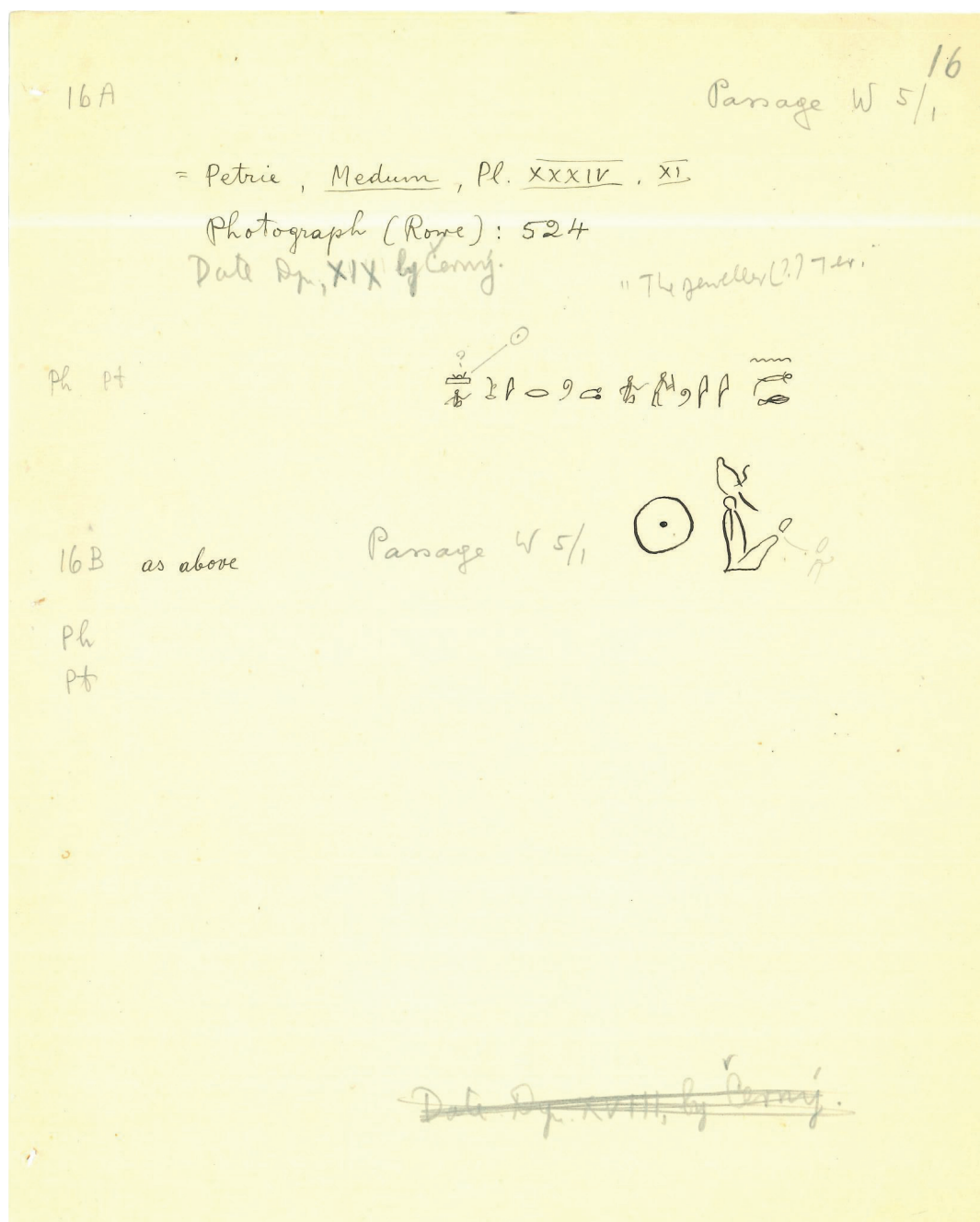
1) $\sim \frac{f}{f} \frac{f}{f} \frac{f}{f}$

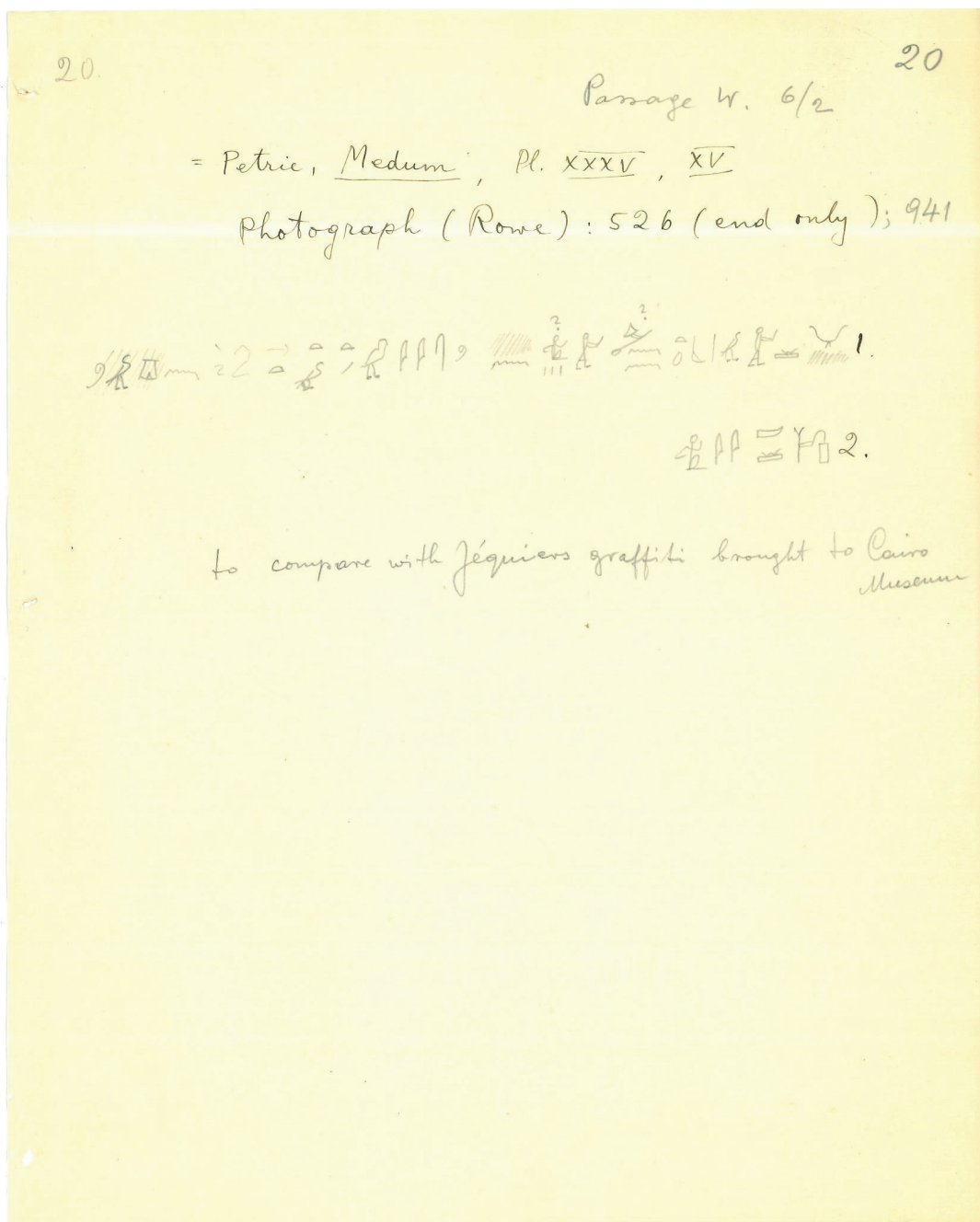


Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meydum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.



Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Meidum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.





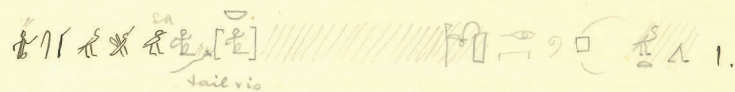
21.

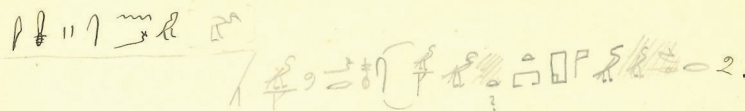
Passage W. 5/2

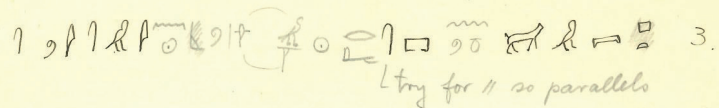
21

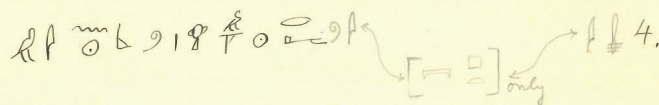
= Petrie, Medium, Pl. xxxv, xvi

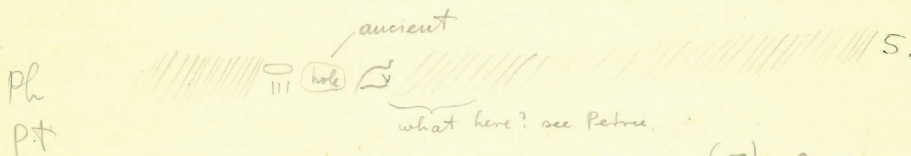
Photograph (Rowe): 545

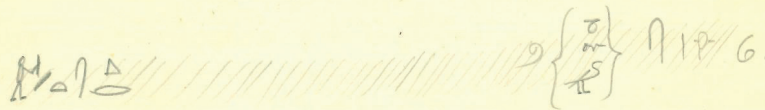
 1.

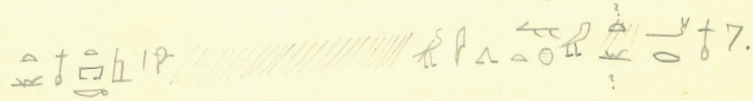
 2.

 3.

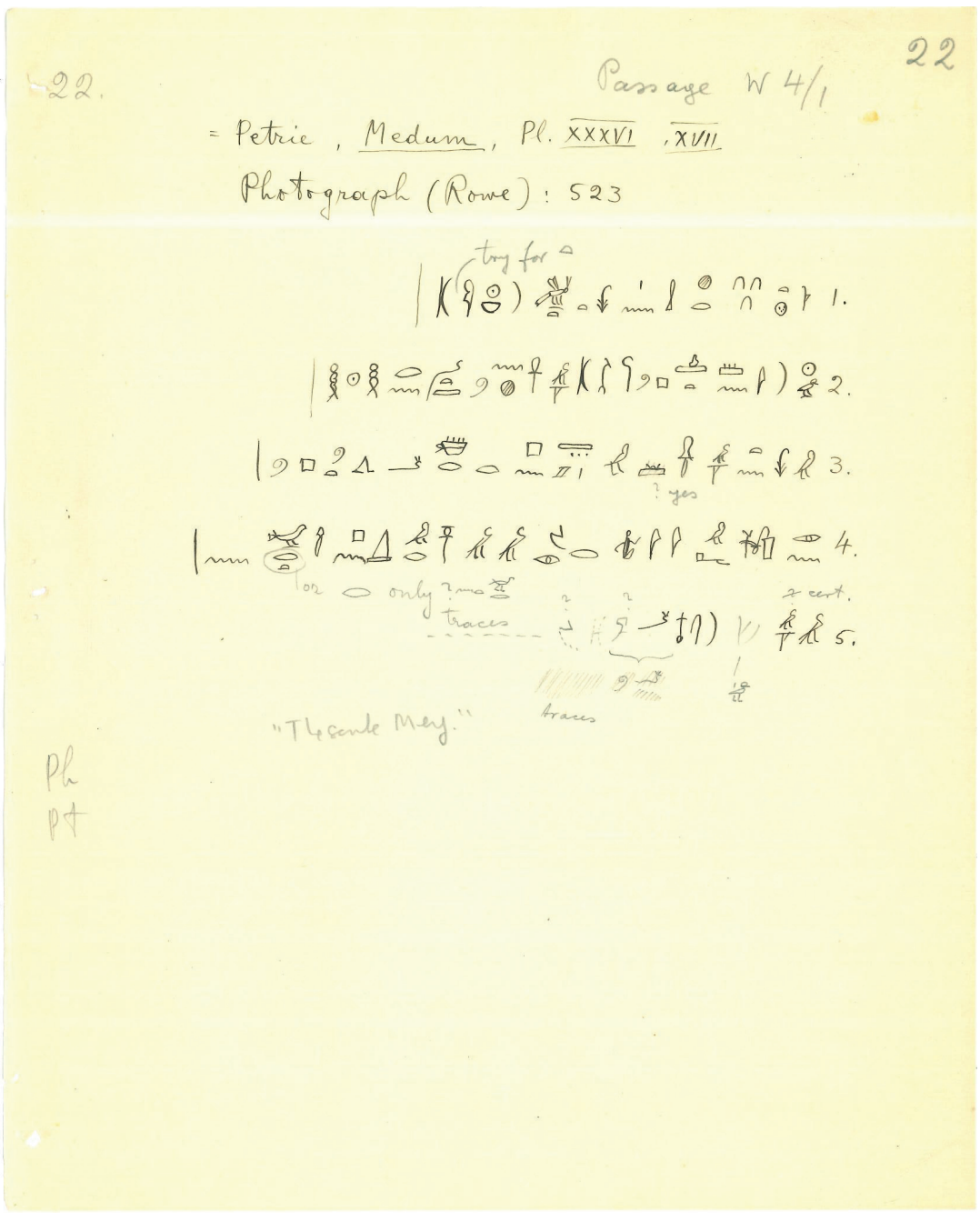
 4.

 5.

 6.

 7.

"[The scribe] - - - son of Pinahsi"



Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Medum 2.7, Notes on graffiti.

23

23.

Passage W 6/1

= Petrie, Medium, Pl. XX XVI. XVIII

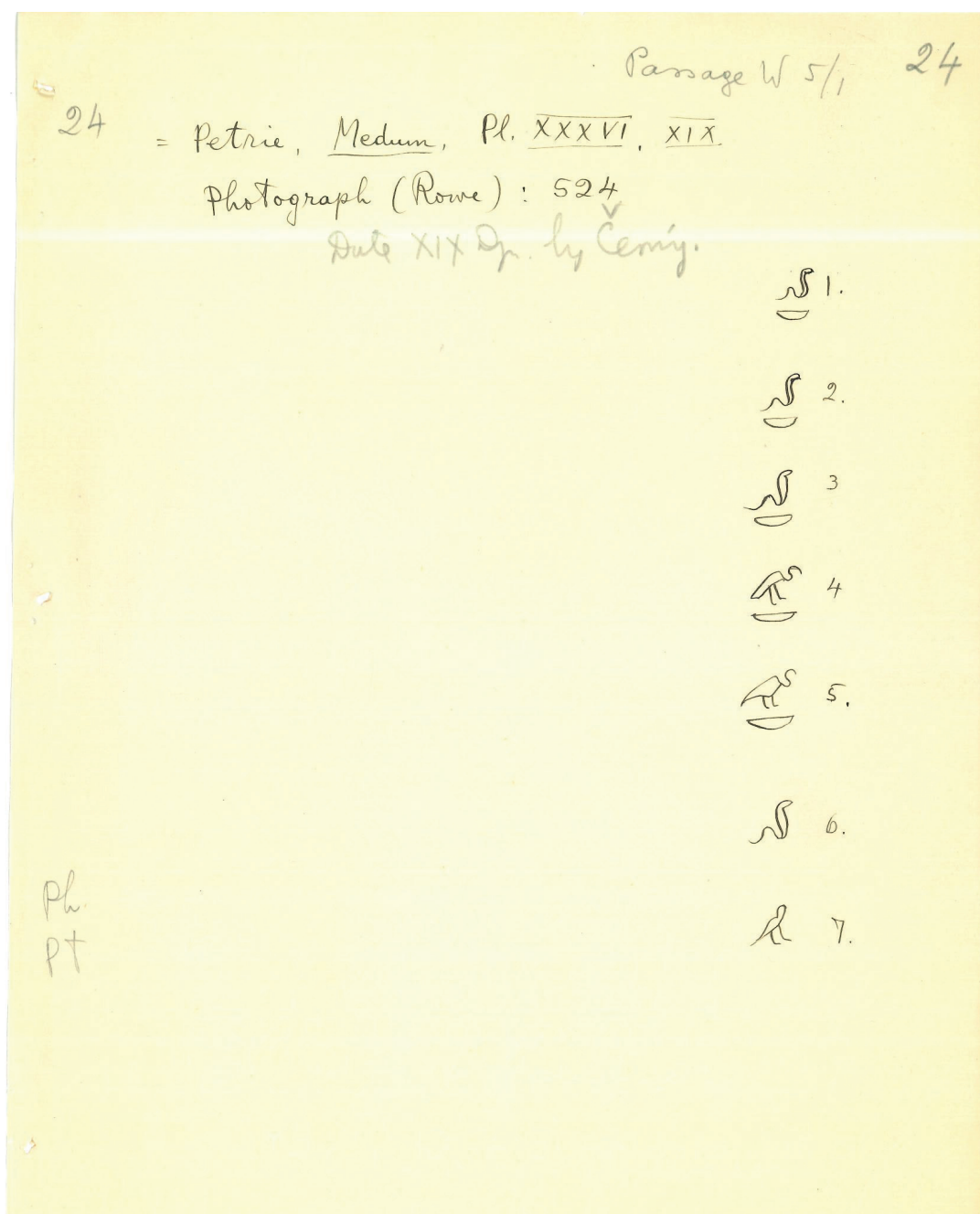
Photograph (Rome): 525.

^{so}
 | 1. 1. ^{? yes}
^{so} ^{yes}
 | 2. 2. ^{? yes}
^{so} ^{yes}
 | 3. 3. ^{? yes}
^{so} ^{yes}
 | 4. 4. ^{? yes}

Ph
Pt

15 or 16; not 7 6.
 can see only
 indistinct traces
 B.G.

is 15 cert. ? if gives no sense;
 one would expect 16 B.G.

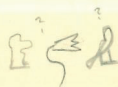


25. 25.

Passage W 6/1 25

= Petrie, Medum Pl. XXXVI, XX

Photograph (Rome) : 529



Ph
Pt

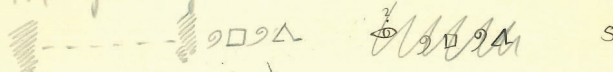
26.

Entrance, Ceiling, I block from outside 26.

Not published by Petrie

Photograph (Rome) : 542 very bad photo, get better one

Date XX by Cemiy.



Ph

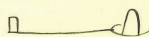
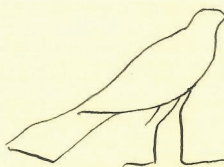
"[the same] -- came --"

27.

Not published by Petrie

Passage W 5/1 27

Photograph (Rome) : 524



Ph

ff = PP? (now ff)

"May (?)". a name.

FROM PYRAMID

ENTRANCE PASSAGE

Photo (Rmt) 359: on the 11th roofing slab from entrance

A

Not published by Petrie

= Newberry in P.S.B.A. XXVII, Pl. facing p. 104 No. 2 & p. 103

cf. Maspero Études de Mythol. I, 149 (transcription only)~~No photograph~~

XIX Dn Cemj.

The cube below.

B

Not published by Petrie

on the 11th roofing slab from entrance

Photo (Rmt) 360

= Newberry as No. A, No. 1. & p. 103

cf. Maspero loc. cit.~~No photograph~~

The cube Anamwse.

Date First half 4th XIX, Cemj.

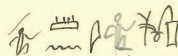
cf. Maspero, Études de IV
p. 127-128.

FROM PYRAMID
ENTRANCE PASSAGE
Photo (Roue) 360.

C

Not published by Petrie.
= Newberry P.S.B.A. Pl. facing p. 104 No 3 & p. 103
Of Maspers Etudes de Mythol. I 149 (transcription
only)

"The early Amenemhat came."

ⓘ   20  Δ S

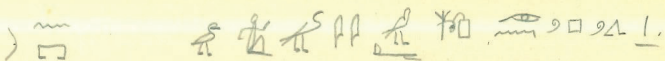
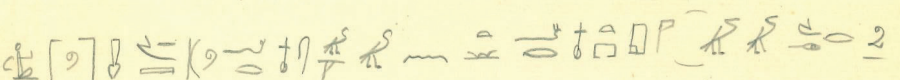
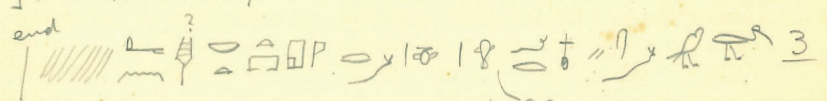
try for more

Date, first half of 19th XIX.
Cem.

See to left of no 12

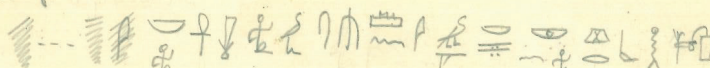
28

(Entrance N 4/1) 29
 Not published by Petrie
 No photo

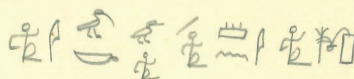


 end

 tr.

no further lines

Not published by Petrie Entrance S. 5/2 30
 No photo

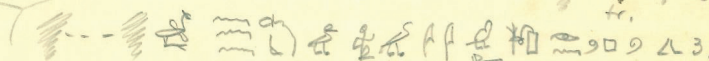

 no tr?

Not published by Petrie Entrance S. 5/2 31
 Photo impossible



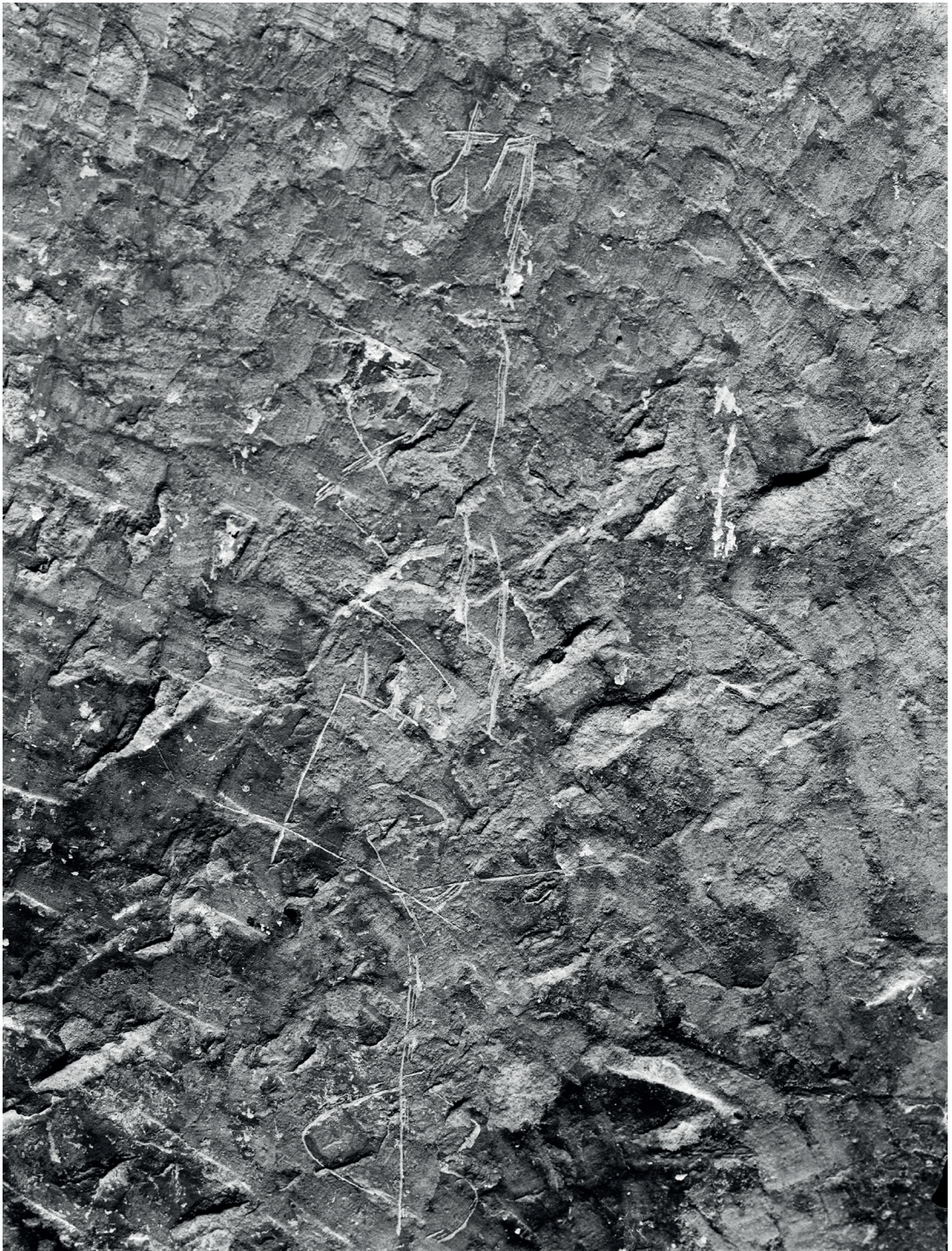
Not published by Petrie. Entrance S. 5/2 32
 No photo


 any more?

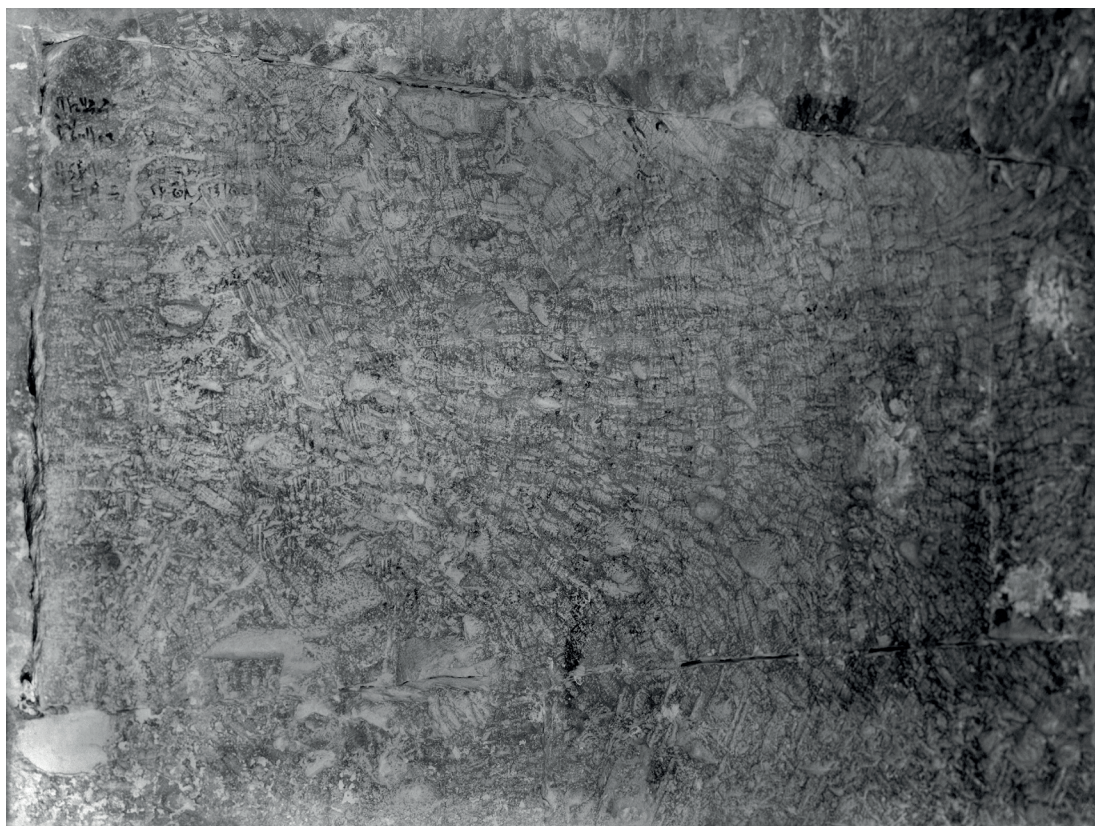


Not published by Petrie Chamber E 4/2 33
 No photo

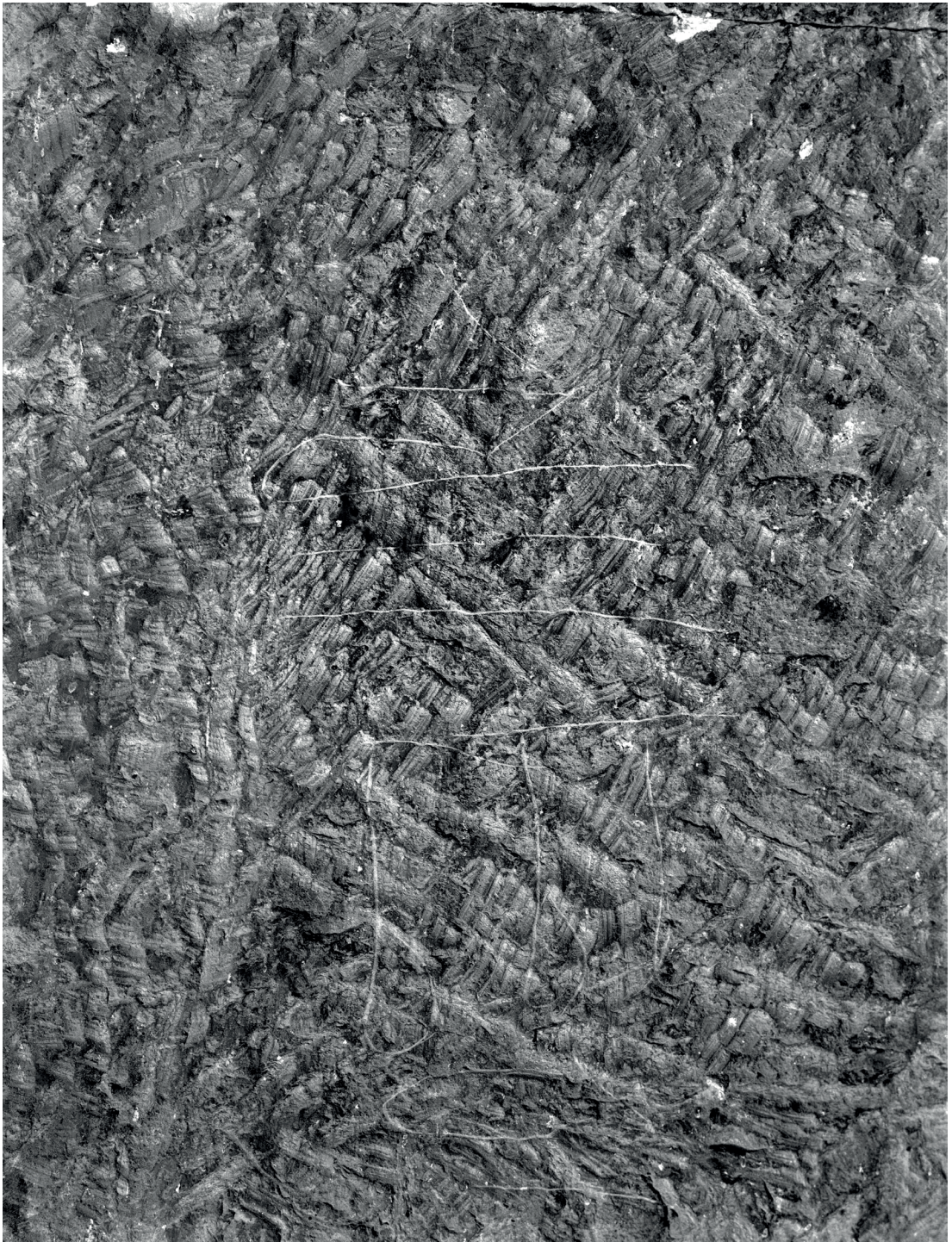
Scratched to vis: prob. same text as Nos 1, 2



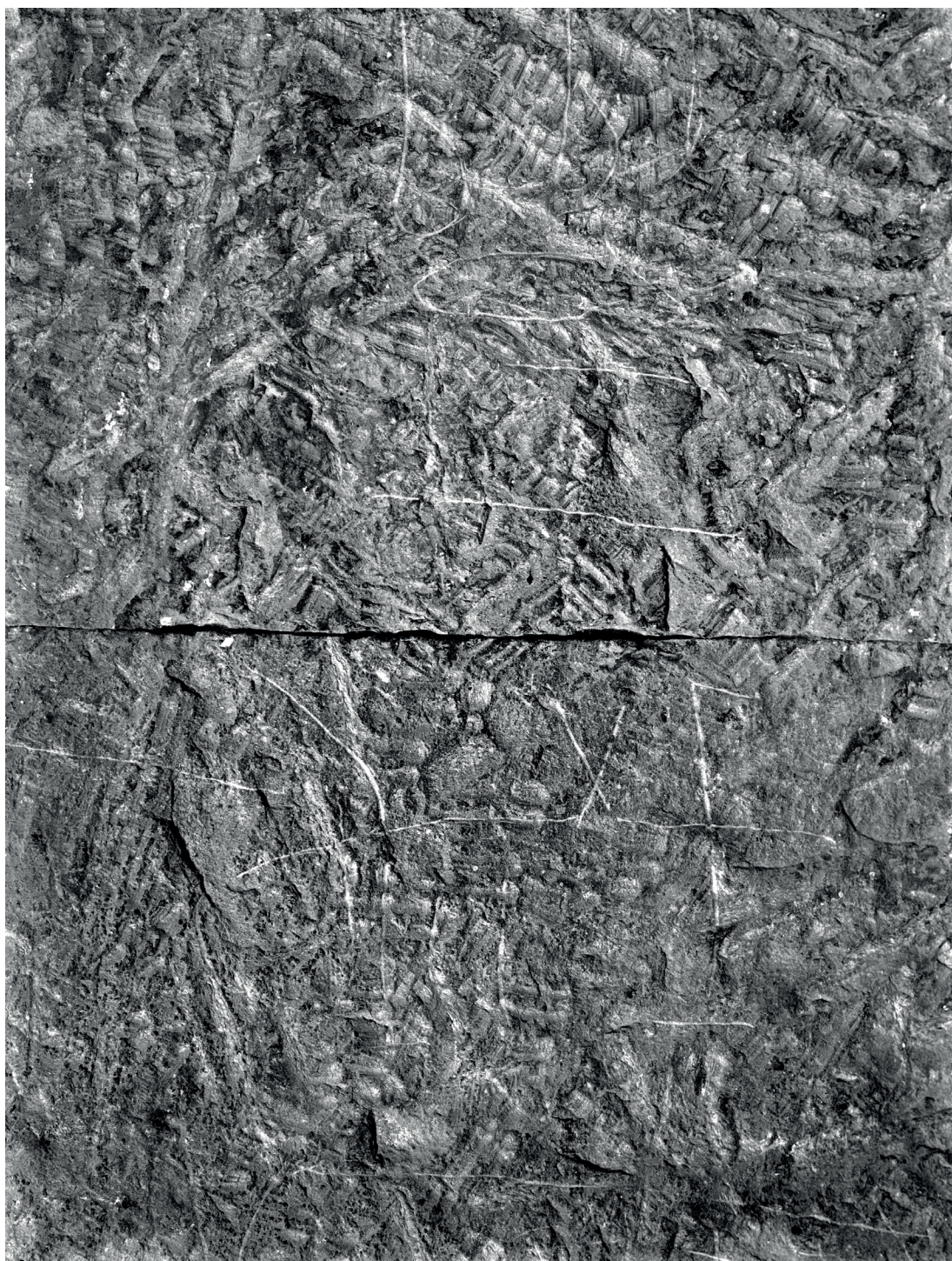
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 540. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34477.



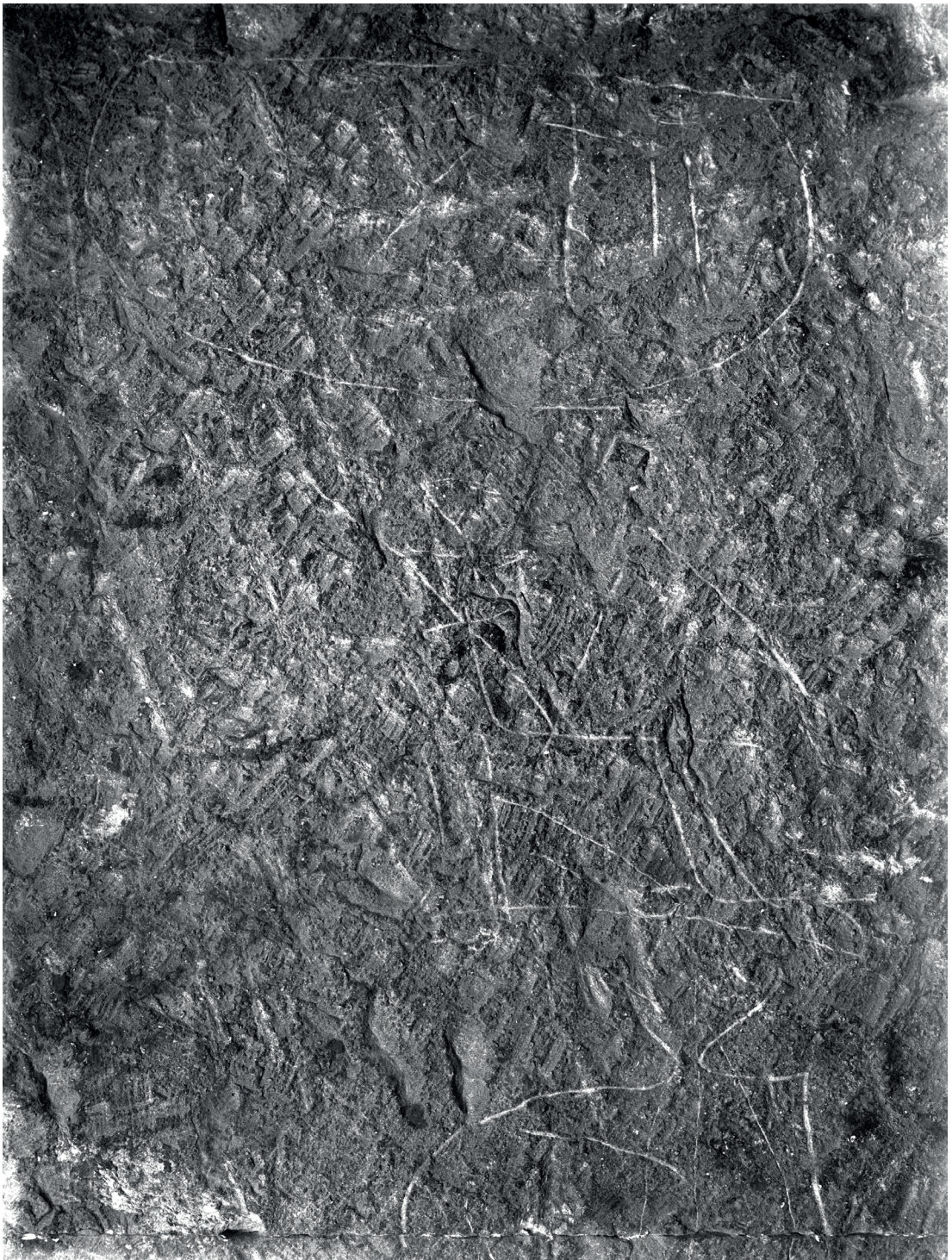
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 545. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34478.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 568. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34496.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 569. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34497.



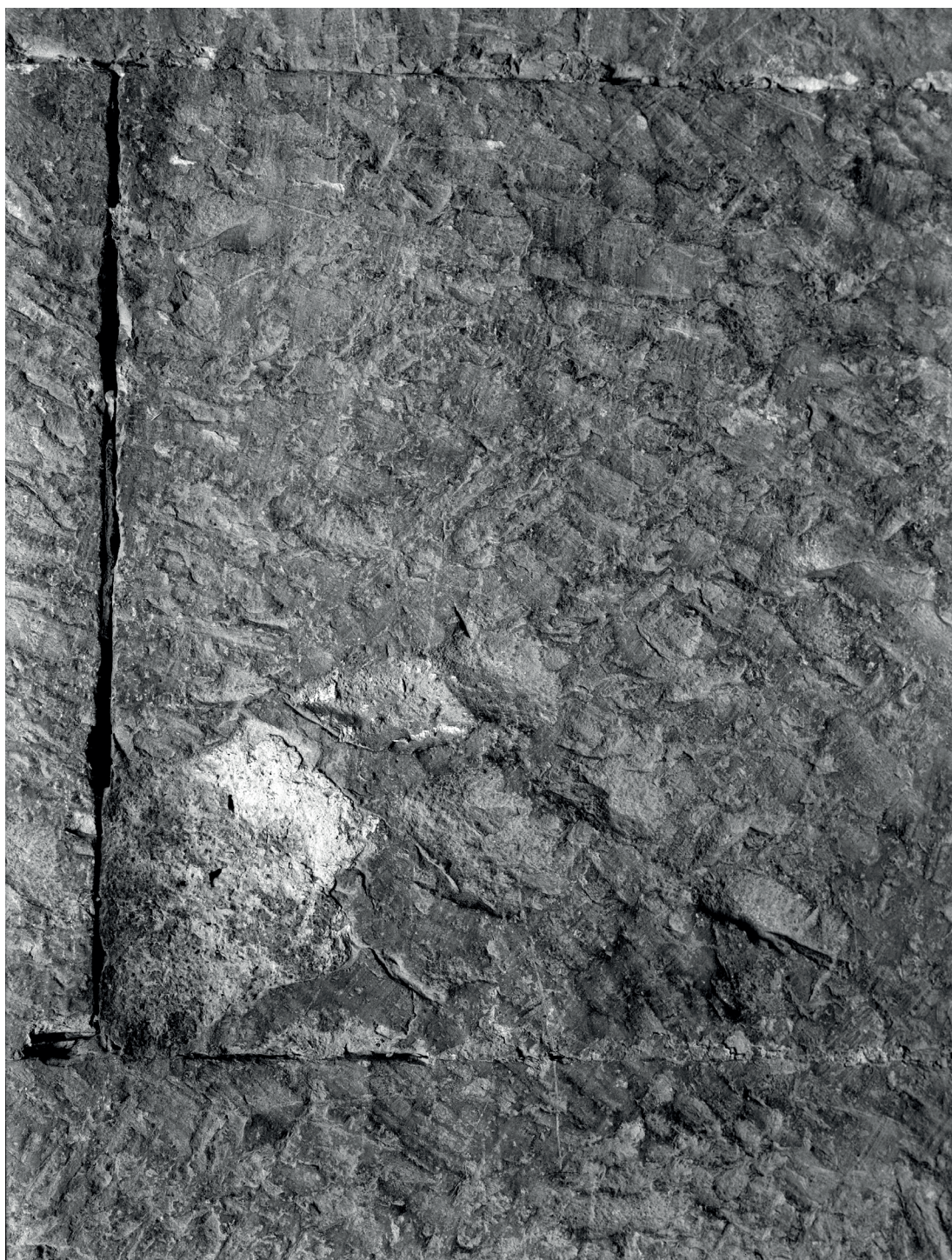
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 570. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34498.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 571. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34499.



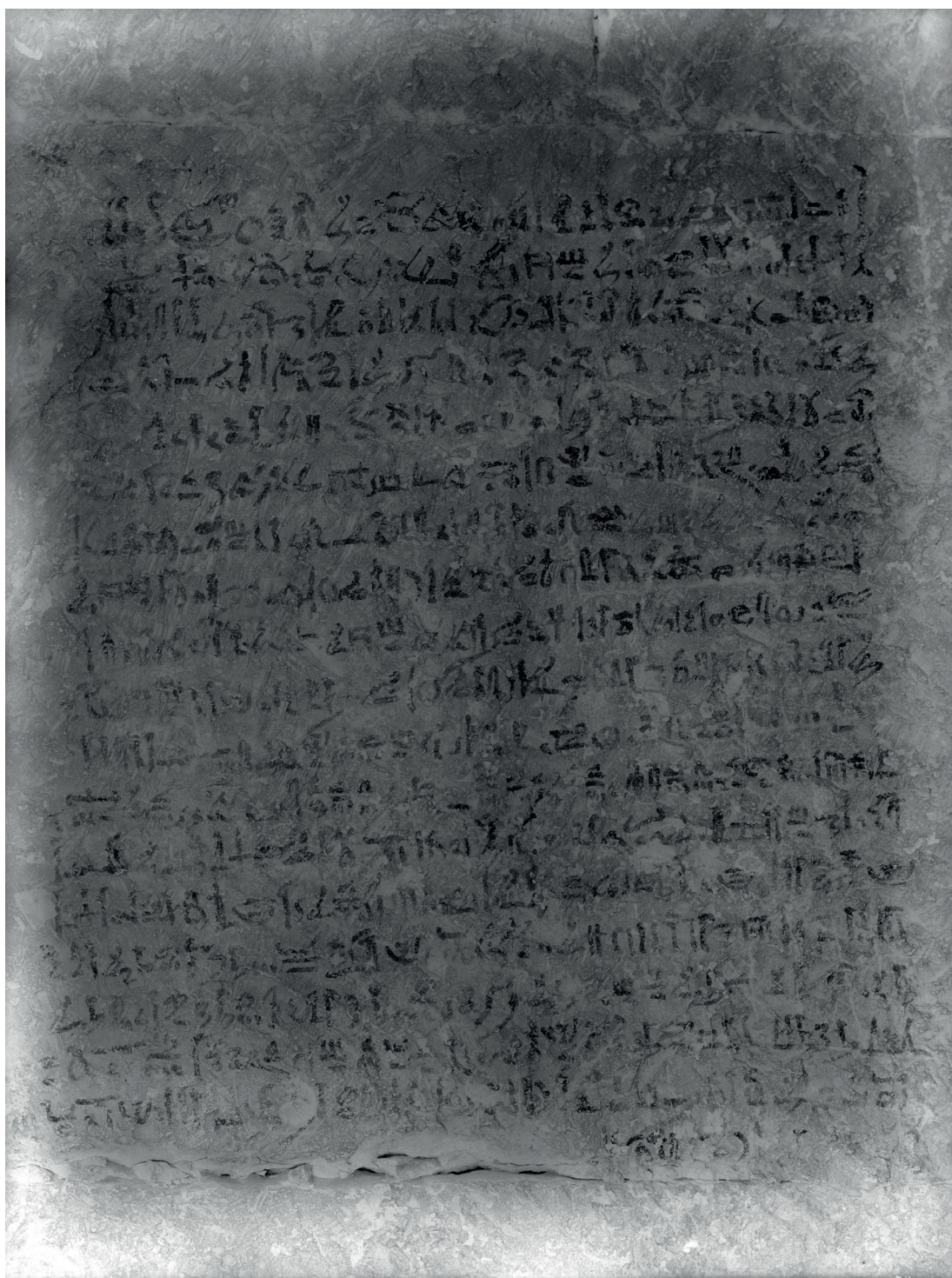
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 572. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34500.



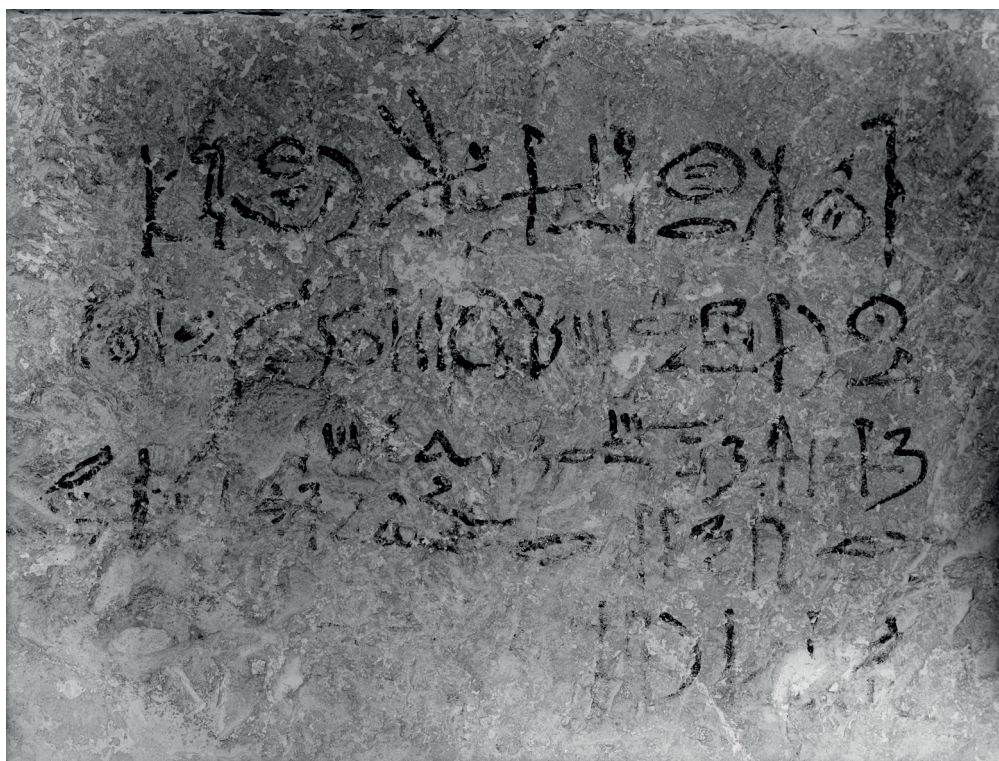
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 573. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34501.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 584. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34508.



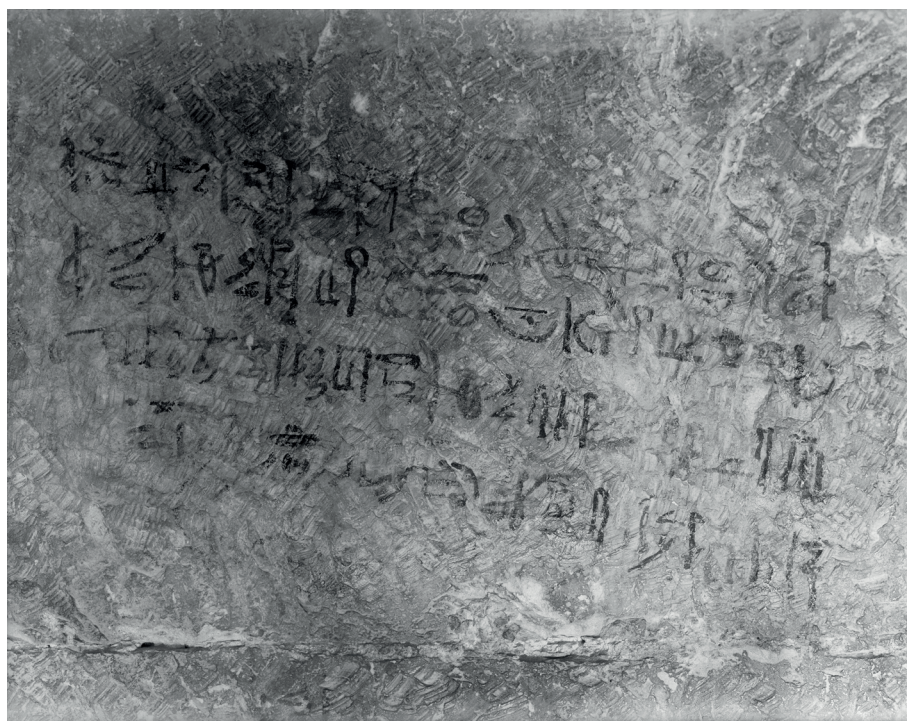
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 522. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34547.



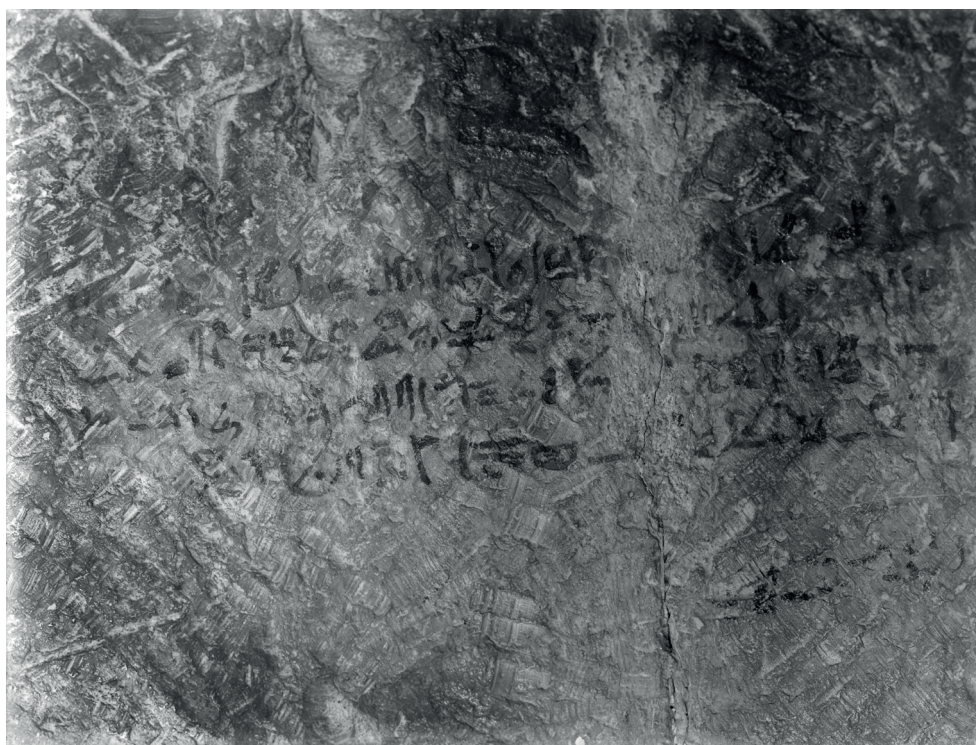
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 523. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34548.



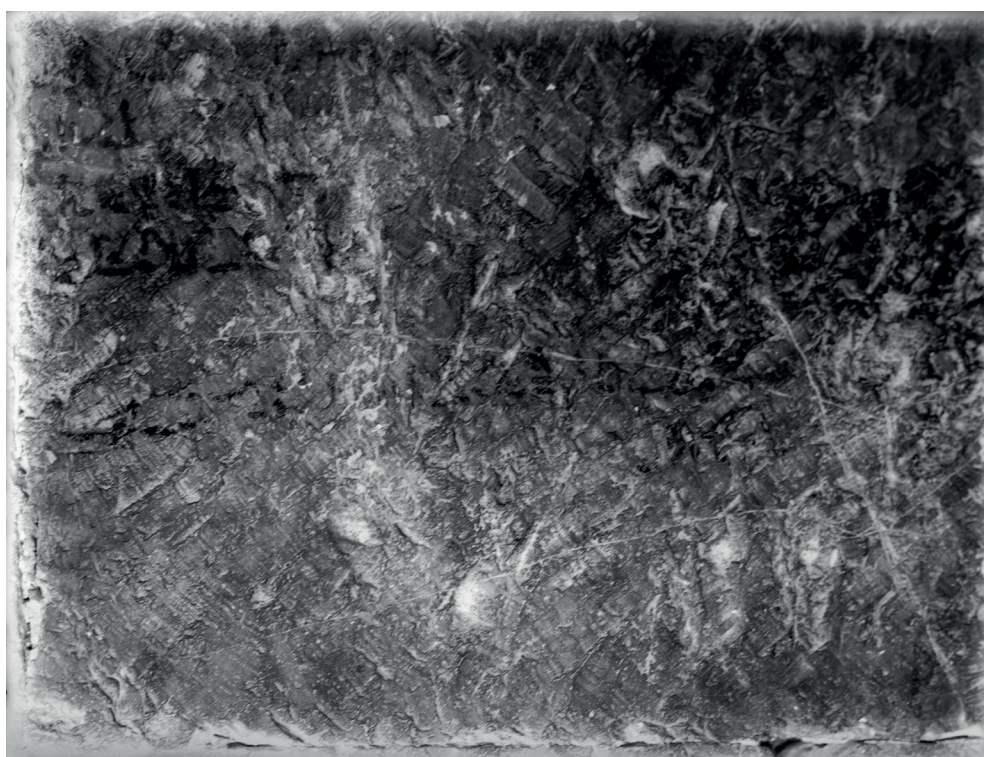
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 524. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34549.



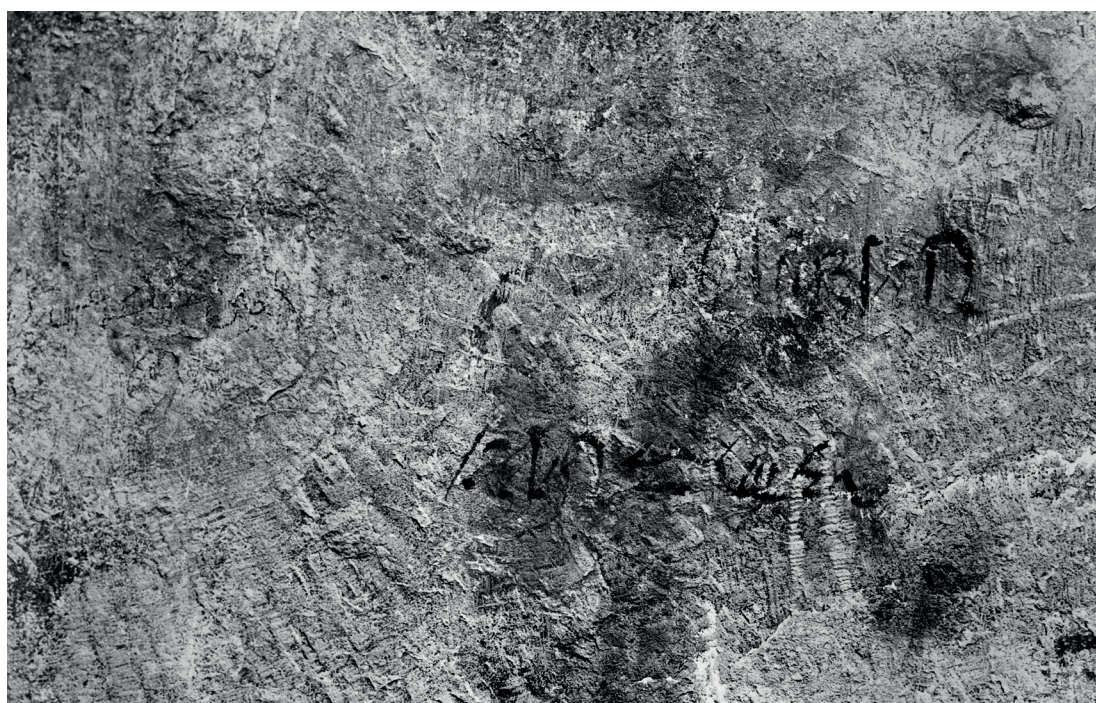
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 525. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34550.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 526. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34551.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 941. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 34696.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 360. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36105.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 527. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36184.



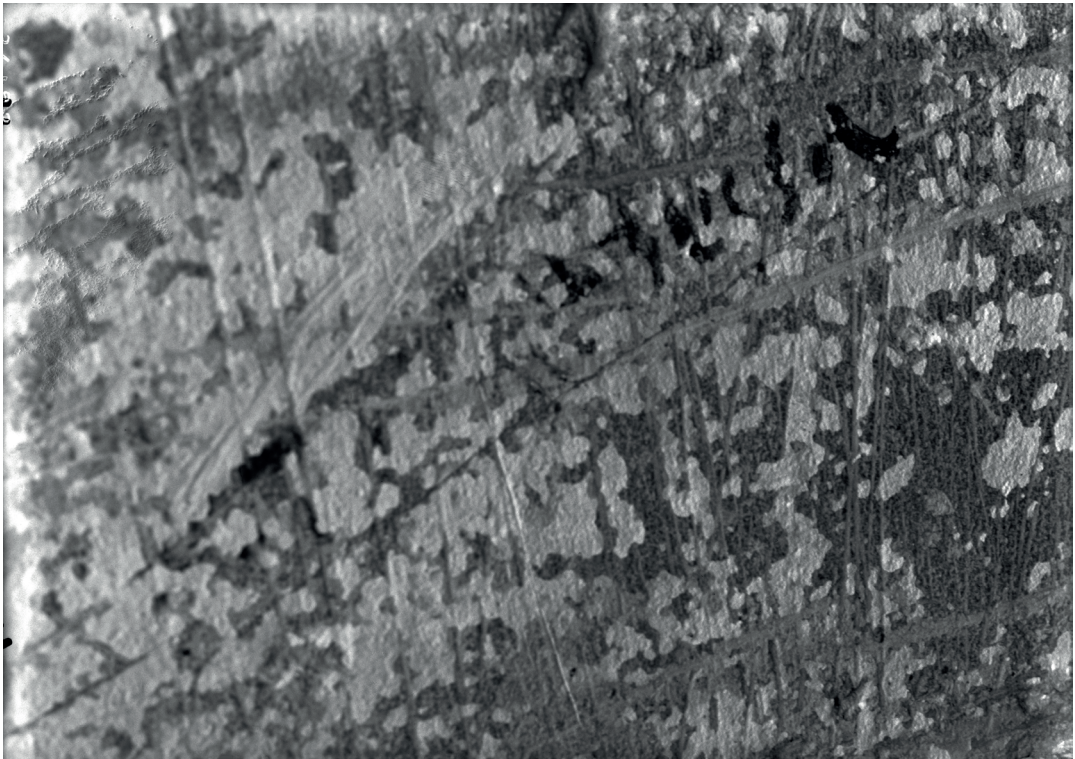
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Rowe Photo Meydum no. 529. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36186.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 541. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36192.



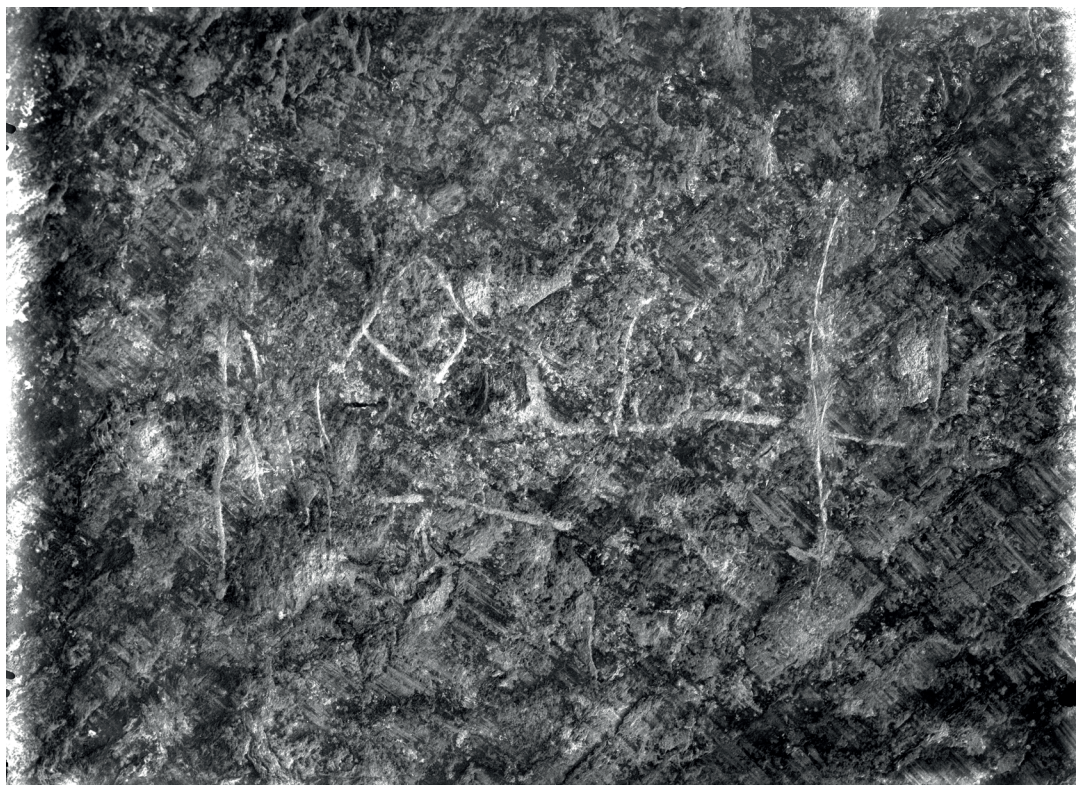
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 542. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36193.



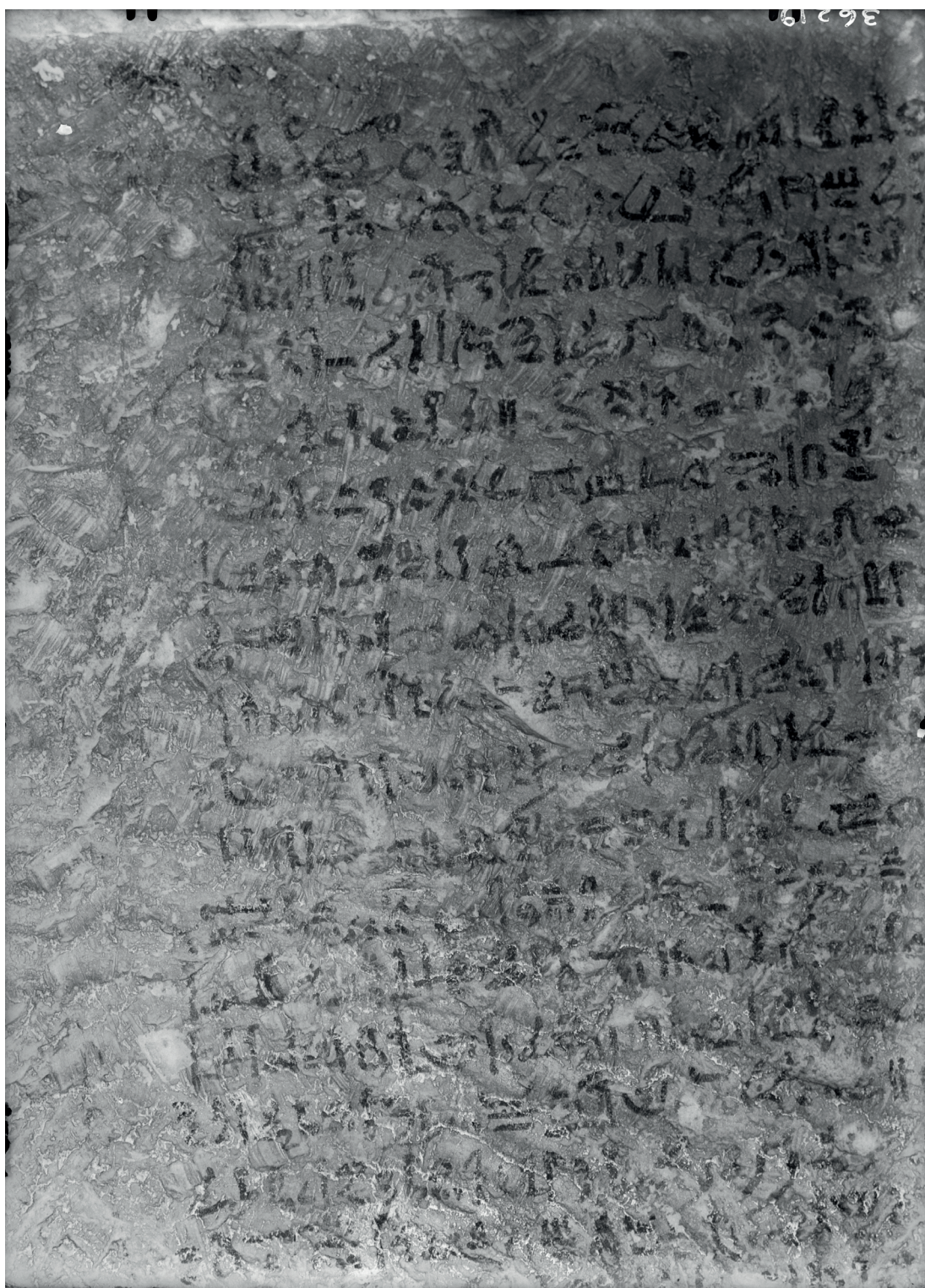
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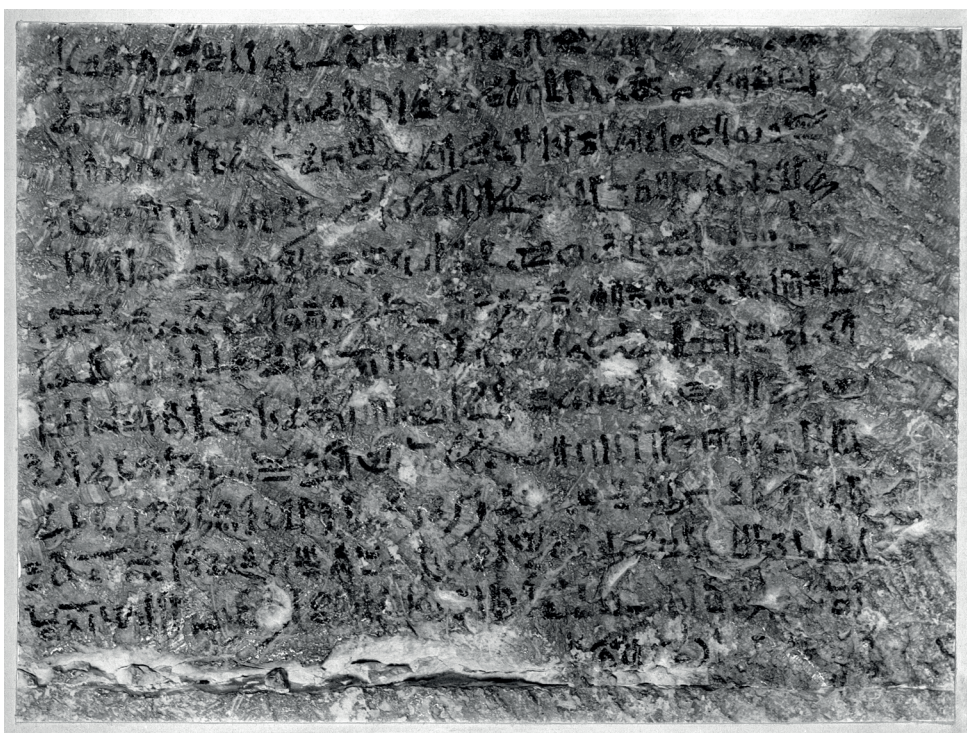
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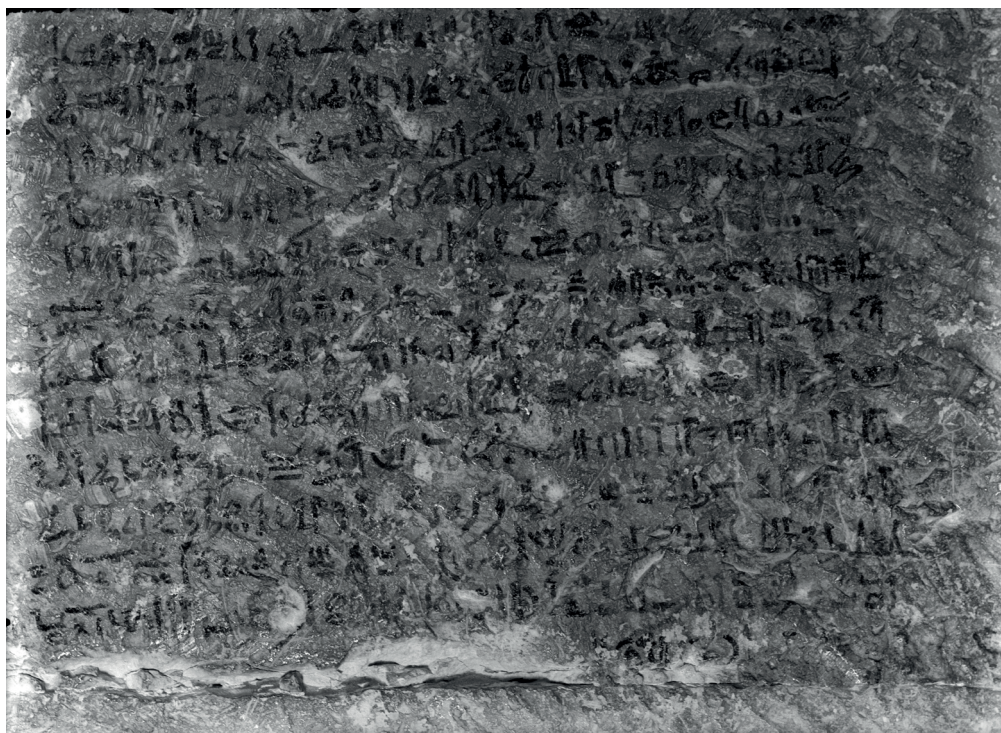
Rowe Photo Meydum no. 551. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36197.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 611. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36219.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 612. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36220.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 613. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 36221.



Rowe Photo Meydum no. 359. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 38278.