

# Lintel of unknown person discovered recently at Saqqara

## Abstract

This article concerns a recently discovered Old Kingdom lintel in Gisir El-Mudir at Saqqara. There is a description of the lintel. Its texts are translated. Commentary on the decoration of the lintel will accompany the descriptions and translations, giving consideration to the kind of the lintel, its owner, and offering formula. The lintel is dated to the end of the Sixth Dynasty.

**Keywords:** old kingdom, sixth dynasty, Saqqara, Gisir el-Mudir, lintel

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## Introduction

The expedition of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, supervised by the first author with his colleague Ali El-Batal, initiated excavations in January 2008, in an area located to the west of Unas Pyramid at Saqqara. The site is called 'Gisir el-Mudir'.<sup>1</sup> The work continued until the revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011. During these years, we found about 20 stone and mud brick built mastabas and rock cut tombs and over 100 shaft-tombs.

Among the debris covering the tombs and filling the shafts, a variety of coffins, architectural elements, and small objects were found. Many of these items were inscribed with the offering formula, along with the names, titles, and representations of the deceased. The architectural elements were systematically recorded, beginning with the reference code A.F. 700 (Architectural Find).

In 2008, the main mastaba A/A in the site was discovered. This mastaba is rectangular in shape (17.70 × 16.40 m) and consists of a limestone superstructure and a rock-cut substructure. Its entrance lies on the east side and leads to a rectangular limestone chapel. On the west wall of the chapel, remains of a damaged limestone false door were found.

Excavations revealed two large limestone blocks: A.F 703 (170 × 45 × 30 cm) and A.F 704 (94 × 33 × 30 cm), the latter coated with gypsum and decorated with an offering list, suggesting Old Kingdom date. North of the chapel, a rectangular serdab (4.50 × 9.50 m) was discovered.

A shaft (1005) was discovered in the northeastern corner of the chapel within mastaba A/A. It was filled with a deposit of sand and clay mixed with limestone chips. Numerous fragments and blocks were recovered, including a jamb fragment from a real door or niche of unknown ownership (A.F 710), another entrance or niche jamb (A.F 711), the false door of Sedekhi (A.F 709), an offering table belonging to Metet (S.F 805), and a lintel of unidentified ownership (A.F 712).<sup>2</sup>

## Lintel of unknown ownership

A limestone fragment was found in shaft 1005. It was given excavation number A.F 712. It measures 100 x 13 cm. It is broken into two pieces. It is now preserved in Museum storeroom II at Saqqara (Figures 1-3).

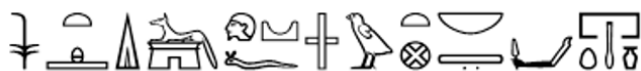


**Figure 1** Inscribed lintel of unknown person.



**Figure 2** Inscribed lintel of unknown person with the Step Pyramid at the back.

It is inscribed with one horizontal line of Hieroglyphs in sunken relief, directed from right to left:



Htp di nzwt Inpw tpy Dw.f imy-wt nb tA Dsr prt-xrw [...]

An offering that the king and Anubis, who is above his mountain, who is in the embalming place, lord of the sacred land (necropolis), give that an invocation offering may come forth [...].



**Figure 3** Line Drawing of inscribed lintel of unknown ownership.

## Commentary

### Kind of the lintel and its owner

This limestone fragment could be a part of a lintel of an entrance or a niche. It was found with two jambs and a false door. One of the two jambs is complete and a piece of the second was found. Their decoration is facing each other. These lintel and two jambs could be an entrance of a tomb of Sedekhi. These finds could be a part of a niche of Sedekhi which consists of the lintel (A.F 712), two jambs (A.F 710, 711), and the false door (A.F 709).

### Decoration

The lintels of the entrances and niches of the Old Kingdom tombs have different inscriptions; the offering formula,<sup>3</sup> the titles and name of the deceased,<sup>4</sup> the autobiography and words to the living,<sup>5,6</sup> the titles and names of his family,<sup>7</sup> and the dedication texts.<sup>8</sup>

This lintel of unknown ownership is decorated with a broken horizontal line of text, but the majority of Old Kingdom lintels have between one up to three horizontal lines.<sup>9</sup>

The offering formula (Htp di nzwt) is written on this lintel. As usual, offerings are given by the king and gods to the dead, or offered, in the name of the king, to the deities: the great god, Anubis, and Osiris.

The name of Anubis is followed by three epithets from the four common ones. Anubis is attested following the king in the same formula since the reign of Cheops in the tomb of Kawab G 7120 at Giza.<sup>10</sup>

The lintel includes one desire. It is that the invocation offering comes forth for him [at the feasts and daily] consisting of certain offerings. This is the most common request.<sup>11</sup>

Prt-xrw formula is used to be translated as ‘going forth of the voice with the offerings’.<sup>12</sup> A new suggested translation was presented by the first author in his previous study. It is ‘the voice, bread, beer and cake of (the deceased) may go forth’.<sup>13</sup>

The missing part on this lintel supposed to include the rest of the offering formula and titles and name of the deceased.

### Dating


The lintel of unknown person could be dated to the end of the Sixth Dynasty because:

The lintel was found in Gisir El-Mudir cemetery, which represents a part of the cemetery of Unas. It contains tombs dated from the reign of Unas to the end of the Old Kingdom. According to this, this lintel can be dated to the same period of the cemetery.

This lintel was found among other finds in the shaft 1005. These finds are dated to the reign of Pepy II, Sixth Dynasty or the end of the Old Kingdom (late Dynasty VI–VIII).<sup>14</sup>

In the offering formula on the lintel, Anubis is attested in the form of an animal crouching on a stand. This shape appeared from Pepy I’s reign onwards.<sup>15</sup>

The determinative, in the epithet of Anubis imy wt, takes the shape of a city, not a pustule. This means that this lintel is dated to a period before the very end of the Sixth Dynasty.<sup>16</sup>

In the epithet of Anubis imy wt, the determinative is written in the form of a city with a diagonal cross , which is the usual shape of the Old Kingdom.<sup>15</sup>

The t3-sign on the lintel is written with two pellets underneath, not three. This way of writing is common from the end of the Sixth Dynasty onwards.<sup>17</sup>

The lack of care in executing the inscriptions may indicate that the lintel dates back to a period of decline in art. This would be in line with the end of the Old Kingdom (end of Dynasty VI–VIII).

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## Conflicts of interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

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