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► To cite this version:

Chiara Salvador. Graffiti and sacred space: New Kingdom expressions of individuality in the court of the seventh pylon at Karnak. Martina Ullmann. 10. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Ägyptische Tempel zwischen Normierung und Individualität, Harrassowitz Verlag, pp.111-128, 2016, Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen, 978-3-447-10572-9. <hal-04880303>

HAL Id: hal-04880303

<https://hal.science/hal-04880303v1>

Submitted on 10 Jan 2025

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Graffiti and sacred space: New Kingdom expressions of individuality in the court of the seventh pylon at Karnak¹

Chiara Salvador

Introduction

The theme of the tenth Ägyptologische Tempeltagung, 'Zwischen Normierung und Individualität', offered the occasion to reflect upon important questions concerning the use of sacred space, such as whether non-royal individuals could express themselves, and if so, how and to what extent.

It is well known that temples in ancient Egypt were conceived as dwelling places for the god(s) to whom they were dedicated. Temples had an important symbolic value, as they represented a small-scale cosmos; within their premises world-order was maintained and constantly renewed through daily, monthly and annual rituals, and this was reflected in their architecture, their texts, and their decorative programmes. The pharaoh was the only possible interlocutor of the gods and this is clearly displayed in the large majority of scenes in which the king and the gods are the only beings represented. Exceptions include battle scenes that portray groups of soldiers as well as some processional or ritual scenes where anonymous groups of priests are displayed. Although these are highly standardized and hardly express individuality, they represent the king's entourage and, as such, are part of official discourses of royal power.²

All these elements disclose a complex set of rules governing what was possible and what not to display at a given time,³ leaving apparently little room for individual expression and deviation from established norms. A closer look at temples, however, reveals a number of

¹ I am grateful to Ben Haring for encouraging me to present a paper at the tenth Ägyptologische Tempeltagung. I am indebted to Elizabeth Frood for reading and improving this article. Many thanks to her and all people with whom I shared lots of inspiring conversations about graffiti, especially Ahmed Eltaher for showing me graffiti at Karnak of which I ignored the existence. The survey, epigraphic recording, and study of the graffiti dealt with in this paper were possible thanks to two epigraphic campaigns with Elizabeth Frood in cooperation with the CFEETK and to a six-month internship at the Karnak Documentation Project. I am grateful to Sébastien Biston-Moulin, director of the database project, for letting me study and incorporate the graffiti from the southern processional route in the database, which provided me with an insightful overview on their distribution and type. I would also like to thank Christophe Thiers, director of the CFEETK, Amin Ammar, director of the Temples of Karnak, and all the staff of the Centre for facilitating my job and supporting me throughout.

² Examples of individuals identified by a name and title are rare and appear mostly in Old and New Kingdom royal memorial temples. In these contexts the focus of worship is the deceased king rather than a god of the Egyptian pantheon (cf. BICKEL 2013, esp. p. 206).

³ Although there is a tendency to treat all periods of Egyptian history the same way, one has to bear in mind that religious conceptions and their formal expressions changed considerably through time.

possibilities for leaving personal marks within a sacred space, the most common of which is the dedication of private stelae and statues. This practice is attested at least since the Old Kingdom (VERBOVSEK 2007) and became increasingly popular in the New Kingdom as a means for wealthy private people to preserve the memory of their names and good deeds while securing their permanent presence before the gods.

In the New Kingdom another possibility for self-expression in temples were graffiti. Despite the widespread assumption that graffiti appeared in a sacred space only once it was partially⁴ or entirely desacralized (CRUZ-URIBE 2008: 218–224), as is probably the case with some graffiti of lay people inscribed in Tuthmose III's Djeser Akhet at Deir el-Bahri (DOLINSKA 2007, 79–80), this is not always the case. This is best exemplified by the temple of Amun at Karnak – one of the major state temples during the 18th dynasty and a prominent one in later times. By using it as a case study, this contribution aims to challenge the idea of an immutable set of rules governing sacred space through analysis of some graffiti left in an area of the north-south processional way at a time when this part of the temple was not only active but in full expansion. I assess issues of authorship and the aims of the graffiti, as well as the implications of their presence in such a context.

Attempting a definition

Graffiti can generally be defined as all those marks, drawings and texts, that are intentionally left on surfaces not originally designed to receive them (CRUZ-URIBE 2008: 205–206; FROOD 2013: 286). Ancient graffiti are mostly a socially accepted cultural practice.⁵ Differing in context, medium, technique, and aim, they are widespread in most past societies,⁶ ancient Egypt being no exception (overview: PEDEN 2001).

Ancient Egyptian graffiti vary significantly. Their contexts encompass tombs, temples, desert roads, and quarry sites. They can be textual, pictorial or a mix of both, and differ in technique, level of formality, visibility, as well as in their intended audience. Their definition is far from straightforward⁷ and, as pointed out by NAVRÁTILOVÁ (2010: 309–312), is subject to change according to the context and time when the graffiti were inscribed (for an overview of different categories, see STARING 2011: 146–147). These often modest-looking marks represent an alternative to more traditional sources, such as the statues and stelae previously

4 NAVRÁTILOVÁ (2010: 311–312) rightly suggests that the presence of graffiti in a holy place implies its modification; that this modification necessarily means some loss in sacredness is however arguable.

5 The close association of the word 'graffito' with illicit acts of defacement of public areas and monuments is rooted in the street movements of marginalized groups of young people in the suburbs of New York and Philadelphia in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a way to claim freedom of expression and ownership of the streets (DANIELL 2011). Yet, as KEEGAN (2014: 5) points out, at times "property owners in the ancient world did express their desire to restrict or debar the marking of certain surfaces". This is exemplified by a Pompeian graffiti that reads: "If someone writes something here, may he rot and his name be pronounced no more" (KEEGAN 2014: 5).

6 As demonstrated by the workshop on graffiti organized by Chloé Ragazzoli at Ertegun House, Oxford (23–25 September 2013), which brought together scholars from diverse disciplines. Papers ranged from Medieval Chinese graffiti to classic Maya, encompassing ancient Indian, Christian, pre- and early-Islamic, and Medieval ones from many different areas up to modern marks (RAGAZZOLI et alii, in preparation). For a collection of essays on ancient graffiti see BAIRD and TAYLOR 2011.

7 See, for instance, CRUZ-URIBE's (2008: 199 ff.) definition of Egyptian graffiti in 16 points and NAVRÁTILOVÁ's (2010: 309–310) response to each point.

mentioned, for the investigation of their composers' interaction with sacred space and their modes of self-presentation.

The graffiti from Karnak

At Karnak, thousands of texts, images and other marks were added secondarily to the walls in the precincts of Amun-Re, Montu and Mut (FAZZINI 2010: 83, 92–94); this is a productive context for examining the widespread practice of graffiti within one sacred space.

The vast corpus of graffiti in the Amun-Re precinct was first surveyed, recorded, and studied by Claude Traunecker and the Centre Franco-Égyptien de Karnak during an extensive palaeographic survey in the 1970's (TRAUNECKER 1979: 1982). His work resulted in a largely unpublished archive – now entrusted to Elizabeth Frood and the Griffith Institute, Oxford – which provides a detailed survey of the graffiti typology and distribution.

This corpus, spanning the New Kingdom to Graeco-Roman and Christian times, comprises many clusters of graffiti that are concentrated in certain areas of the complex, such as the temple of Ptah and the southern processional route.⁸ This body of evidence is especially relevant for issues of temple accessibility (FROOD 2013; NAVRÁTILOVÁ 2010: 319). Access to temples was strictly regulated, hence only a selected circle of people was allowed in. The presence of graffiti in such restricted areas is often regarded as spontaneous manifestations of lay people who were granted access during special religious events (BRAND 2007); other scholars, however, consider them as the product of an elite institution and as part of modes of scribal self-representation (FROOD 2013: 286). Both views do not exclude the possibility that certain marks could be responses to sacred and social events, as might have been the case with several drawings of barque shrines on the west wall of the court of the seventh pylon, which were likely linked with awe-inspiring divine processions. Patterns of distribution of certain graffiti may also shed light on the daily movements of temple personnel (Frood 2010). In addition, they could help in assessing how rules of decorum, which established what could regularly be displayed on temple walls (BAINES 2007: 15), were operating along with their possible breaches (FROOD 2010: 116).

The court of the seventh pylon

This open air court, which is the focus of my doctoral research,⁹ is also known as the cachette court after Legrain's discovery of thousands of buried votive objects, statues, and architectural elements there in 1903.¹⁰ It sits in a strategic position within the whole complex: of the four courts forming the southern approach to the Amun temple this is the one closest to the main axis. This southern route was probably one of the settings for annual festival processions, such as the Opet Festival (STADLER 2008: 6). In the New Kingdom and later, this was one of the largest and most important religious events in the Theban sacred landscape, encompassing Luxor temple. During all processions that involved the use of the north-south

8 The corpora at the temple of Ptah and the eighth pylon are currently being studied by Frood in collaboration with the Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak (CFEETK).

9 Under the supervision of Elizabeth Frood at the University of Oxford.

10 The presence of a large quantity of fragments of statues was first discovered by Maspero in 1883 during soundings in that area (BARGUET 1962 [2006]: 276). An overview is available in COULON et alii 2011. The Karnak cachette database can be consulted at: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/>.

axis, the court of the seventh pylon was therefore the first one the divine statues passed through when leaving the temple and the last one when going back to it.

At least two hundred informal inscriptions survive on the walls of this court. They are all incised and do not seem to bear any trace of paint, although this might be just a matter of survival.¹¹ They range from very formal to extremely crude, from purely pictorial to textual, showing in some instances a mix of hieratic and hieroglyphic script – a quite common feature among the Karnak graffiti – and span pharaonic times to the Christian period. Following a pattern that applies to most areas of the Amun temple, the graffiti in this court are seldom isolated. More often they appear in groups of at least two or three marks depicting a similar subject, such as the group of seven birds on the soubassement of the western wall (Fig. 1). These small clusters seem to vary in formality, visibility, and perhaps also in date.

One of the greatest challenges when studying ancient graffiti is dating them, as usually they don't provide any chronological indication. In addition, extensive palaeographic studies, which could help assessing textual ones, have not been undertaken as yet. A distinctive feature of this corpus is the interplay between some of the graffiti from the west wall and the so-called marginal inscription carved during Ramses IV's reign, and later usurped by Ramses VI (KITCHEN 1984; PEDEN 1994: 38; BRAND 2009), which provides a striking terminus ante quem. The interaction between graffiti and primary decoration seems to be an almost unique feature in the Amun precinct at Karnak as other clusters, such as at the temple of Ptah (FROOD 2013) and the temple of Khonsu (DÉGARDIN 2009; 2010; JACQUET-GORDON 2003), are carved on undecorated surfaces. Only a few other informal marks underneath primary decoration are known from other areas of the Amun temple proper, such as one on the east façade of the north massif of the third pylon; however these are rare and isolated, probably due to treatments when preparing a wall for recarving. The longstanding practice of graffiti-writing in the court of the seventh pylon highlights the importance of this particular area as a place for people to express their closeness to certain gods or to simply mark their presence.

Graffiti on the west wall

This wall bears the highest concentration of marks in this area with at least 133 graffiti and 11 significant surface alterations, which are likely to be unfinished or partly erased graffiti. More such marks are likely to be discovered on the same wall as this project continues. Graffiti are not distributed evenly across the surface, but are mostly concentrated on the two lowest courses; the lowest is uninscribed while the next bears the marginal inscription. Only a few blocks belonging to the main scenes, at eye-level and further up, bear such marks. This might point to their later dating, when rubble and sand were filling up the floor of the

¹¹ One has to bear in mind that what we see is just what survived under the layer of plaster that once covered and adorned the walls. These are made of sandstone and are therefore very friable, as opposed to the limestone walls at Deir el-Bahri, where many dipinti survive (I thank Elizabeth Frood and Andreas Dorn for pointing this out). Many other ink or lightly incised graffiti might have existed. Dipinti found in the staircase of the 8th pylon confirm this as a strategy of graffiti practice in Karnak (BISTON-MOULIN and FROOD in preparation).

court making the higher blocks easily accessible and when the sense of decorum toward the primary scenes in the first register had probably changed.¹²

Only 28 graffiti out of 133 are textual, of which only 17 are partly legible; these range from relatively long and well-written lines in hieratic to much shorter and crudely made signs in hieroglyphic or hieratic.

Despite the abundance of figurative graffiti on this wall, only three were carved over by the marginal inscription and they all depict birds: graffiti KIU5123¹³ (ca. 10 cm in height) which is an ibis partially erased by the large hieroglyphic sign 's'; graffiti KIU5073 (roughly double the size) which was cut through the centre by the sign for Upper Egypt (*šm*). Its long neck and the curved elongated beak suggest this is another ibis, with a long stroke, possibly a flail, protruding from its back. This detail makes it similar to *š*, *db*. In the Ptolemaic period this sign on a divine standard means *nt* 'god, divine' or 'Thoth' (KURTH 2010: 94, no. 67), although it is not sure that this value is attested as early as the New Kingdom. The third bird (KIU5122) apparently represents a quail chick and is carved close to the first small ibis; it has roughly the same dimensions and, although it is not erased by the Ramesside marginal inscription, its bottom appears to be cut by an incised moulding framing the bottom of the primary inscription. This moulding is part of a series of four mouldings running along the second course of the west wall. The two central ones are partially covered by the marginal inscription. On the assumption that all mouldings were carved at the same time, possibly to decorate the space underneath the main scenes, then graffiti KIU5122 also predates Ramses IV.

The carving of birds in this context is subject to various interpretations. One possible explanation is to read them as representative of divine manifestations. Thus the ibises could represent Thoth. The quail chick, however, does not match with any divine representation, nor does it mimic any primary inscriptions close to it. Graffiti of isolated birds are quite common in the temple precinct. Perhaps they could be interpreted as practice exercises, since birds are quite difficult to draw and carve.¹⁴ Alternatively, yet not excluding the previous interpretation, they might have been inspired by the aquatic fowl that once populated the sacred lake, which was probably present east of the processional way from the reign of Thutmose III (GESSLER-LÖHR 1983: 156–159, 162).

Another pictorial graffiti that is certainly New Kingdom in date, although it is not cut through by other datable elements, is KIU4664 (Fig. 2). This is carved on the soubassement and depicts a 17.5 cm high priest with a shaven head wearing a long pleated tunic with large sleeves in typically Ramesside style.

Significantly, the graffiti overlapped by the marginal inscription are mostly textual, numbering at least seven. KIU4413 (Fig. 3) is the finest one on this wall, consisting of a beautifully carved line of hieratic, 5 cm high running for about 30 cm underneath the upper part of the hieroglyphs for (*Ip.t*) *sw.t nt* *3^c* [...] 'Karnak, the great god ...'. It reads:

¹² This hypothesis will be tested during my doctoral research.

¹³ The graffiti referred to as KIU (= Karnak Identifiant Unique) followed by a number are those that I have studied and entered in the Karnak online database. They will soon be available at <http://www.cfeetk.cnrs.fr/karnak/>.

¹⁴ Many thanks to Elizabeth Frood and Chloe Ragazzoli for suggesting this alternative interpretation.

sh [*hw.t*] *ntr* [...] *hn.t* *Nht*¹⁵ [...] *pr* (?) *Imn*

'The scribe of the [temple] [...] water procession, Nakht [...] (?) [in the domain of (?) Amun].

Despite more careful observation during last fieldwork season, the reading could not be improved further. The signs are carefully incised and their palaeography is close to that of 19th dynasty hieratic papyri. It seems that it was left by a temple scribe likely based in the Karnak complex. The mention of *hn.t* 'water procession' (Wb III, 375.5–12) may suggest that the author was claiming participation in a divine festival, possibly taking place in the nearby sacred lake (BLYTH 2006: 85). Waterborne processions were celebrated on the sacred lake at least since the reign of Thutmose III, as confirmed by an inscription on the southern exterior wall of the pharaoh's jubilee hall mentioning a statue for the water processions on the lake *p3 twt hr hn.t n[t] š* (Urk. IV 1257: 7). These processions were enacted to celebrate the New Year (GESSLER-LÖHR 1983: 159), and symbolized the rebirth of the sun god from the primeval waters. They were therefore associated with the cyclical regeneration of divine and royal power, which ensured maintenance of cosmic order.

Immediately to the left of KIU4413 is KIU4414 (Fig. 4), another graffito finely incised in cursive hieroglyph (3 x 5 cm). The text is incomplete, again cut by the marginal inscription, and reads: [...] *msw*, [...] '-mose' clearly indicating the final part of a name. Endings in *-msw* are very frequent during the New Kingdom, so the name alone does not help to narrow down the dating. Its position and size suggest a date similar to that of the previous inscription, perhaps sometime in the 19th dynasty.

Further to the left, again cut by the Ramesside inscription, is KIU4415 (Fig. 5) consisting of a rougher hieratic line (3 x 17.5 cm). It possibly reads: *sh* ... (?) *P3* [...] *Imn*, 'the (?) scribe Pa-[...] Amun'. Despite its incompleteness and the difficult reading, the first, third and the last signs clearly indicate that this was left by a scribe who was somehow linked to Amun.

Further to the left, a closely comparable example is KIU4409 (2.2 x 4.5 cm) (Fig. 6). The graffito reads *sh* [...] *Imn*, 'the scribe [...] Amun', thus also a scribe probably affiliated to the temple of Amun.

Much further south (left) on the same wall is a quite different pre-Ramses IV graffito (KIU5126) (Fig. 7). Its hieratic signs are double the size of graffito KIU4413 (ca. 8 cm high) and quite shallow, apparently realized by hammering rather than incising. Again, reading is complicated and only the first two signs can be clearly distinguished: *w^cb sh* [...], 'wab-priest and scribe [...]'.¹⁵

The different quality of execution of graffiti KIU5126 and KIU4413 might be explained in the light of a competitive display; while the author of the first one may have tried to highlight his presence through means of a sizeable graffito with his title and name – the latter now lost – the other graffitist probably sought to demonstrate his skills as a professional scribe by publicly displaying his talent in front of his colleagues (cf. RAGAZZOLI 2013: 290).

¹⁵ This sign could be either part of a personal name or the first part of a god's epithet, such as 'strong of arm' or the like. As authorship in textual graffiti is almost always made explicit, it is more likely that this is part of a name.

At least five more graffiti on the uninscribed soubassement include scribes' names. These sorts of signatures are clustered on the two lower courses and probably all date to the same period, sometimes between the erection of the wall (Tuthmose III, ca. 1504–1452 BC) and the addition of the marginal inscription (Ramses IV, ca. 1166–1160 BC).

The size and the position of these graffiti on the west wall, originally carved on an undecorated area at a reachable level, about a metre from the ground,¹⁶ would suggest that they were visible and had a visual impact on the people frequenting the court (cf. SEIDLMAYER 2013), at least for some time.¹⁷ Yet, their visibility most likely did not survive the carving of the marginal inscription, which included plastering and painting as part of the presentation of all primary decoration. This raises questions as to the graffitists' awareness of the ephemerality of their inscriptions. Perhaps their idea of leaving a mark that would have survived, although concealed, underneath a layer of plaster was sufficient to ensure some sort of participation with sacred sphere.¹⁸

Discussion

All in all, the diverse typology (figural and textual), style, size, and formality of the graffiti predating Ramses IV suggest the existence of a wide spectrum of possibilities for people to leave a mark of their presence in the court of the seventh pylon between the 18th and 19th dynasties, thus expressing their individuality. By leaving a graffito in this context people claimed a space and sought to make their presence endure forever, a concept expressed as 'memorialisation' by Claire TAYLOR (2011: 95) in her discussion of Classical Attic erotic graffiti,¹⁹ and further developed by RAGAZZOLI (2013: 290) with reference to Egyptian visitors' graffiti from the Theban necropolis. I agree with the view that these sorts of graffiti were cheaper alternatives to 'more traditional forms of monumental display such as stelae and statues' (FROOD 2010: 105), that aimed to endure in eternity before their favourite gods.²⁰

The choice of a sacred space, and specifically of the innermost court of the processional way at Karnak, was certainly deliberate and personal. This area allowed a multi-layered interaction: on the one hand with the earthly sphere, when the graffiti engaged with other people in the court who could read their authors' names and sometimes react to them by adding a new graffito; on the other hand with the sacred sphere, especially during divine processions when gods' statues were physically carried along the southern processional way, allowing visual contact between the graffiti, their authors, and the deities. According to this interpretive framework some of the graffiti that are arranged in small clusters and portray similar subjects display responses to previous graffiti. The reference to a water procession in graffito KIU4413 appears to be a reaction to religious events. Similarly, the depiction of many portable barques on the same wall, possibly from the Late or Graeco-Roman Periods

¹⁶ The original ground level was at least 50 cm lower than today.

¹⁷ Some graffiti were probably whitewashed soon after they were painted or carved, such as the one in red ink left on the altar in Hatshepsut's solar complex at Deir el-Bahri (FROOD 2013: 288).

¹⁸ Cf. with SEIDLMAYER's (2013) more pragmatic approach.

¹⁹ Despite the different subject and culture, these erotic graffiti share the same goal of leaving a durable mark of their composers.

²⁰ I here refer only to the sort of graffiti that are dealt with in this article. Much more elaborate and formal graffiti, such as those in the stairwell of the eighth pylon, were probably quite expensive and probably aimed at some specific audience, i.e. the people that had access to certain parts of the temple.

based on comparable geometric styles, as well as representations of gods elsewhere in the processional way, all of which have parallels in Ptolemaic-Roman temples elsewhere, testify to the persistence of these practices in an active religious environment, where gods continued to be worshipped and processions to be enacted.

The widespread and longstanding graffiti practices attested in Theban temples from at least the New Kingdom, if not earlier,²¹ suggests that they were accepted. Their presence in a functioning sacred space, along with that of gouges (improperly called pilgrim grooves) that started to be made on walls as early as the 19th dynasty,²² likely reflect some sort of transformation in temple decorum at a time (late 2nd – early 1st millennium BC) when even more formal private modes of self-display changed (FROOD 2013).

I cautiously propose a further possibility. As a set of non-written rules, decorum has to be inferred indirectly from a range of different sources. Although not yet acknowledged,²³ graffiti in fully active temples might have been a much more common and widespread phenomenon than we now think, not at all restricted to the Amun complex at Karnak.²⁴ If future research supports this hypothesis, then at least two different options open up: 1) that graffiti were exempted from rules of decorum, as not belonging to the official primary decorative scheme; 2) that graffiti were an integral part of temple decorum at least in the New Kingdom and later. Both ideas, so distant from our modern perception of decorum, especially of a sacred space, are not unfamiliar to western culture. An appropriate comparison is offered by the widespread practice of graffiti-writing in Medieval Christian churches (e.g. PLESCH 2002). After memory of their existence was lost, marks, symbols, and short inscriptions of non-religious subjects are being rediscovered, sometimes concealed under layers of plaster, in many European churches²⁵ and are currently the subject of diverse studies. The church of S. Sebastiano at Arborio, a town in Piedmont, Italy (PLESH 2002: 170–181), for instance, displays dozens of graffiti carved by members of the parish community between 1531 and 1889 on the bodies of the saints painted on the walls. Through them, people entrusted the saints with their greatest concerns for their community. The fact that today we perceive these acts as highly inappropriate or even profane manifests a change in our sense of decorum and our perception of church decoration as inanimate.

Graffiti as devotional acts?

The carving of secondary marks in the court of the seventh pylon while it was fully active has been interpreted as the proof of popular devotion (CABROL 2001: 720; TRAUNECKER 1979) and might support theories that lay-people were allowed on processional routes, at least

21 Graffiti from the temple of Medamud might date to the Middle Kingdom (FROOD 2013: 288, no. 7).

22 This is proved, for instance, by the presence, on top of the stairwell leading up to the eighth pylon, of a gouge carved over by the rather formal Ramesside graffiti of Amenemopet (KIU1736).

23 This is due to a number of factors including the incompleteness of the published corpora of graffiti, the difficulty in dating them, and an understanding of graffiti as markers for the end of cultic activities in temples.

24 Cf. the corpus of graffiti at the temple of Khonsu at Karnak (JACQUET-GORDON 2003), but also, for example, the graffiti at Medamud (FROOD 2013: 288, no. 7); if the Middle Kingdom dating of the latter is confirmed then graffiti might have been part of the decorum ever since.

25 E.g. the Norfolk medieval graffiti project: www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/.

during religious events.²⁶ However, I tentatively suggest that the southern processional way at Karnak was not accessible to lay-people at any time and that, consequently, the graffiti could only be a (cultural) product of priests, scribes and other specialists working within the temple premises.

The southern axis of the Amun precinct, with its four open-air courts projected toward the temples of Mut and Amun at Luxor, is generally considered as a liminal place occasionally permeable to the outer world. CABROL (2001: 711) proposed that four social groups could interact in the southern processional way: the god, who was the dweller and owner of the temple; the king, whose power was inherently linked to the god and expressed through-out the temple; the clergy, whose task it was to officiate in the cults; and the population, who supposedly could access the processional way on special occasions.

Although projected toward the exterior world, the high walls (at least 8 m) and the monumental doorways (the ninth pylon was over 26 m high) forming the southern processional way strongly indicate the intention was to keep separated, symbolically and physically, the space within the processional way from the outside world. It has to be stressed that, at least since the reign of Thutmose III, the southern approach was further separated by a massive mud-brick precinct wall, the wavy effect of which is generally interpreted as a symbolic division between the primeval mound, within its perimeter, and the chaotic waters outside it.²⁷ Even though the exterior walls of the processional way, which were certainly less sacred, may appear more accessible, they were most likely restricted to temple staff. The area east of the processional way housed the workshops, the priests' residential quarter (MASSON 2007) and the sacred lake, which was regularly used by the priests to purify themselves (GESSLER-LÖHR 1983: 153), while the area west of the processional way has not been excavated.

I suggest that the most logical place where contact between sacred space and the outside world was possible was along the sphinx alleyway that connected the temple of Amun with that of Mut and that of Amun at Luxor. This was a liminal place outside the temple precinct²⁸ along which the population could watch divine parades and request oracles (CABROL 2001: 727). A further argument in favour of graffiti as an intramural phenomenon is the fact that, if lay people were the authors of graffiti, we would have huge concentrations of graffiti in areas of the complex that were definitely more accessible. The exterior wall of the tenth pylon, which was presumably accessible to anyone at anytime,²⁹ bears virtually no graffiti, except for two rather formal representations of Amun, one of which (KIU4456) has his name carved twice in demotic (KIU4496, KIU4497).

26 This has been suggested by CABROL (2001: 720 ff.), BRAND (2004; 2007: 64–65), and BELL (2005: 135).

Bell's theory, which is based on the presence of rekhyt birds as markers of the areas where lay-people were allowed, is untenable, as demonstrated by GRIFFIN (2007).

27 Part of Thutmose III's enclosure wall still lies east of the sacred lake. Its southern section probably extended up to the eighth pylon, which was the southernmost at that time. The southern limits must have been later expanded as to enclose the whole processional route.

28 The role of the sphinxes as guardians is fundamental to protect the sacred space from the impure outside world. The pathway was further separated by a small wall all along.

29 Or at least so can be inferred from the famous statue of Amenhotep son of Hapu (JE 44861; Urk. IV 1833: 11–19) and that of Paramses (JE 44864; Urk. IV 2176: 3–8), later Ramses I, both found at the feet of the colossus on the north side of the eastern massif of the tenth pylon, which bear inscriptions that explicitly appeal to lay people.

I agree with CABROL's (2001: 711) definition of the processional way as a contact zone between gods, the king and the clergy, but I think it highly unlikely that the wider population took part in this interaction. More plausibly, this was the place where priests and other temple personnel could engage with gods and the king by leaving a durable individual mark.

The textual graffiti predating Ramses IV support this theory: they were made by scribes and in one case by a wab-priest and they almost always mention Amun's name, suggesting that these men were affiliated to his cult. These generic titles are also prominent in the majority of the many secondary inscriptions clustered on the southern exterior wall of the Ptah temple, in the north of the Amun precinct (FROOD 2013: 296). RAGAZZOLI (2013: 270, 276–282), with reference to 18th and 19th dynasty visitors' graffiti from the Theban necropolis, defines graffiti-writing as an elite or sub-elite scribal practice³⁰ which contributed to shaping the identity of a community who felt represented by the generic title 'scribe' featuring in most of them. This interpretation is appropriate for the graffiti from the Amun precinct at Karnak, in which scribes and priests needed no more than their short title and name to feel part of the privileged community serving Amun.

Extending RAGAZZOLI's interpretation to the hundreds of figurative graffiti clustered all over the walls of the court of the seventh pylon and throughout the temple complex, however, is complicated by their brevity and laconicism. FROOD (2013) rejects the idea that the many formal pictorial graffiti of gods incised along the exterior girdle walls and elsewhere in the Theban temples were manifestations of 'popular religion', as BRAND (2004; 2007) suggests; she convincingly proposes that they could be markers of priestly movements as well as focal points of a more intimate priestly devotion, as opposed to the official cultic activities that priests were performing inside the temple as part of their duties. I suggest that all New Kingdom textual and pictorial graffiti from the southern processional way, including roughly executed secondary pictures of birds, barques and other subjects, should be understood as different aspects of the same practice by the people working and living in the temple. Hence, the drawing of the priest wearing a typical Ramesside tunic (KIU5122) could be another way to visually express membership of the priestly community. Even the use of images and drawings rather than texts was probably a deliberate choice and not necessarily the mark of an illiterate. As with writing, different degrees of ability in drawing can be determined.

To conclude, graffiti represent a wide range of possibilities for individual expressions in New Kingdom Karnak and most certainly in other contemporary and later Egyptian temples. As KOCKELMANN (2013) well demonstrates in his contribution about Philae graffiti, these non-conventional inscriptions that filled up the temple walls tell us so much about the people that populated the area, thus allowing us to catch a glimpse of the temple life beyond formal religious texts and scenes.

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³⁰ PARKINSON (1999: 92) defines graffiti as 'an integral part of Egyptian writing practice and of official culture'. FISCHER-ELFERT (2003: 131–133), FROOD (2013) and RAGAZZOLI (2011; 2013) support this view, as opposed to PEDEN (2001: xx), who describes graffiti as 'casual inscriptions free from social restraints'.

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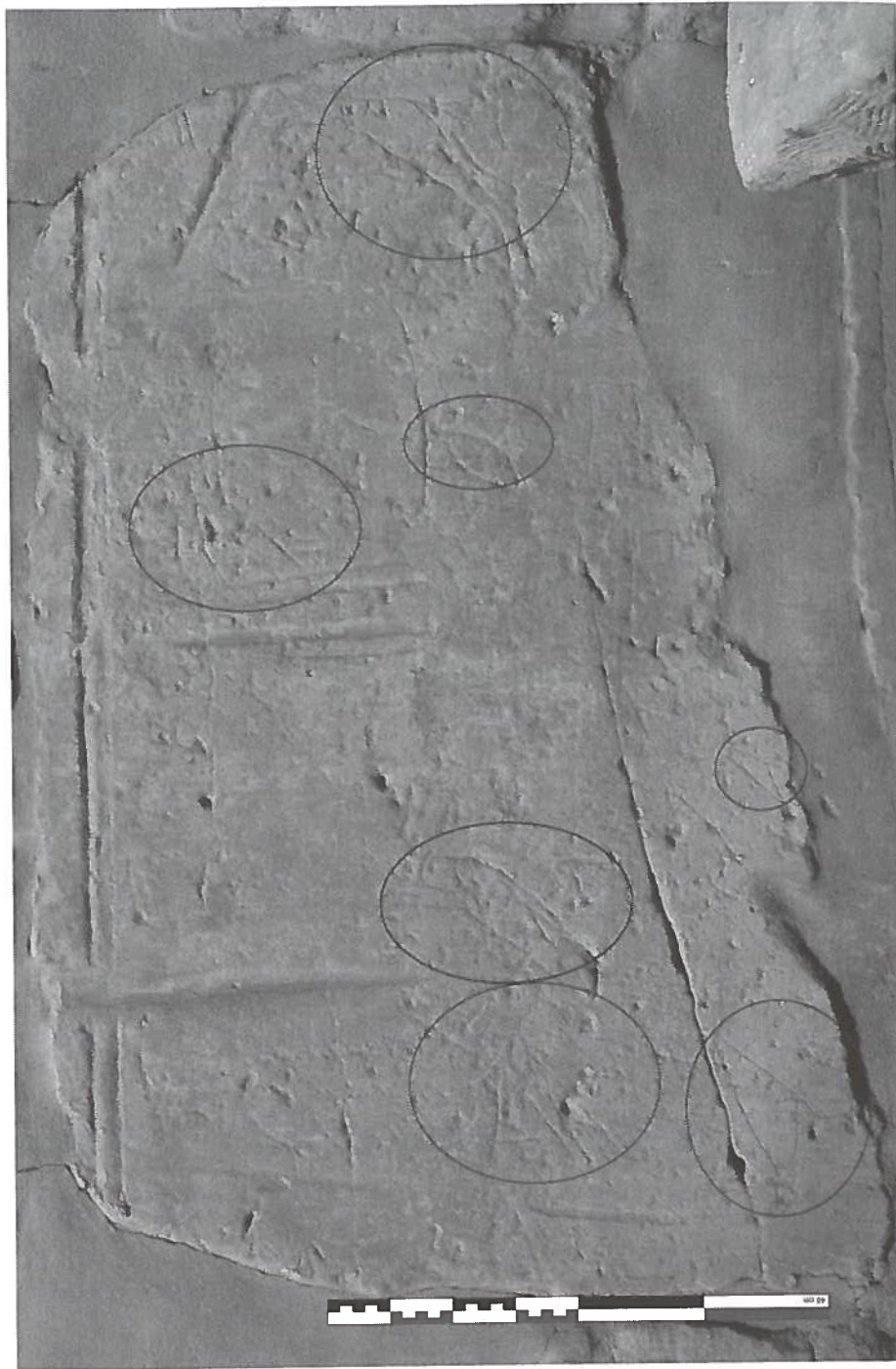


Fig. 1 Block with a cluster of seven birds. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

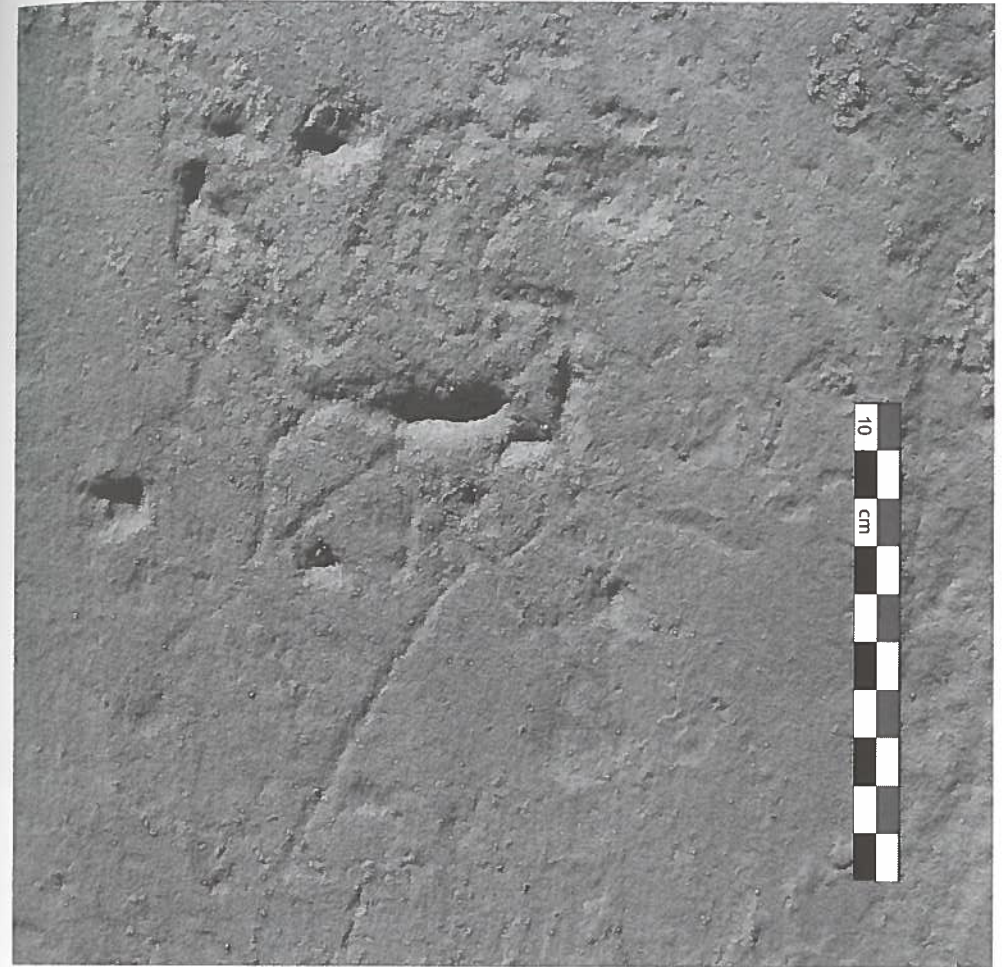


Fig. 2 KIU4664 of a priest. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

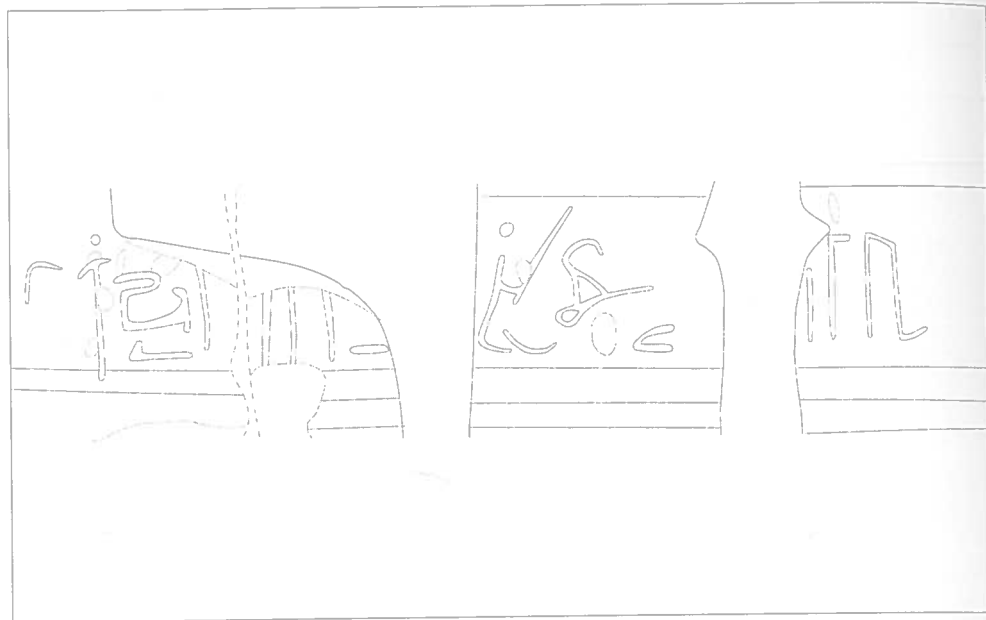


Fig. 3 KIU4413. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

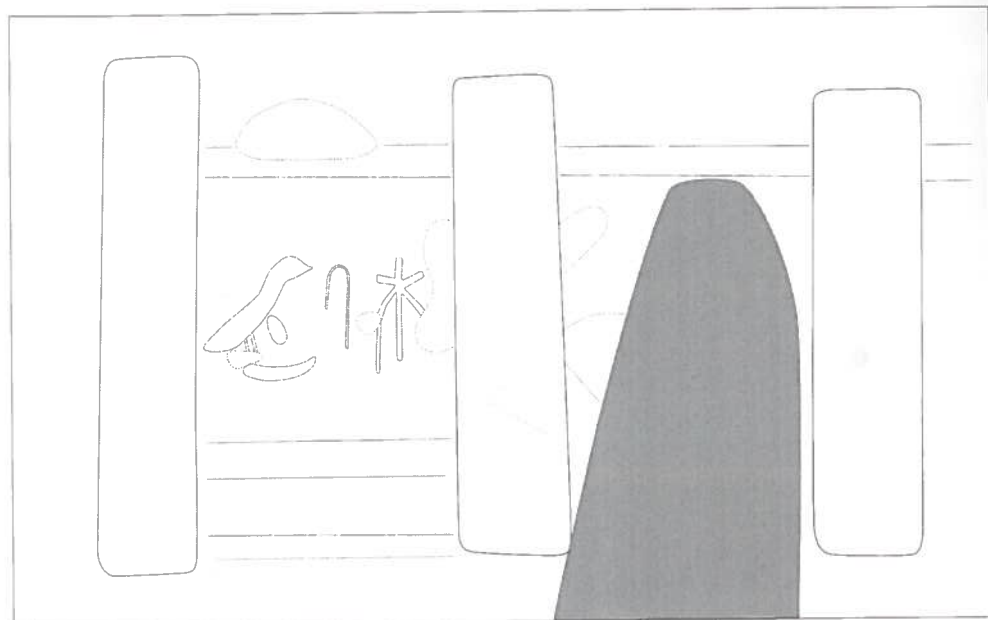


Fig. 4 KIU4414. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

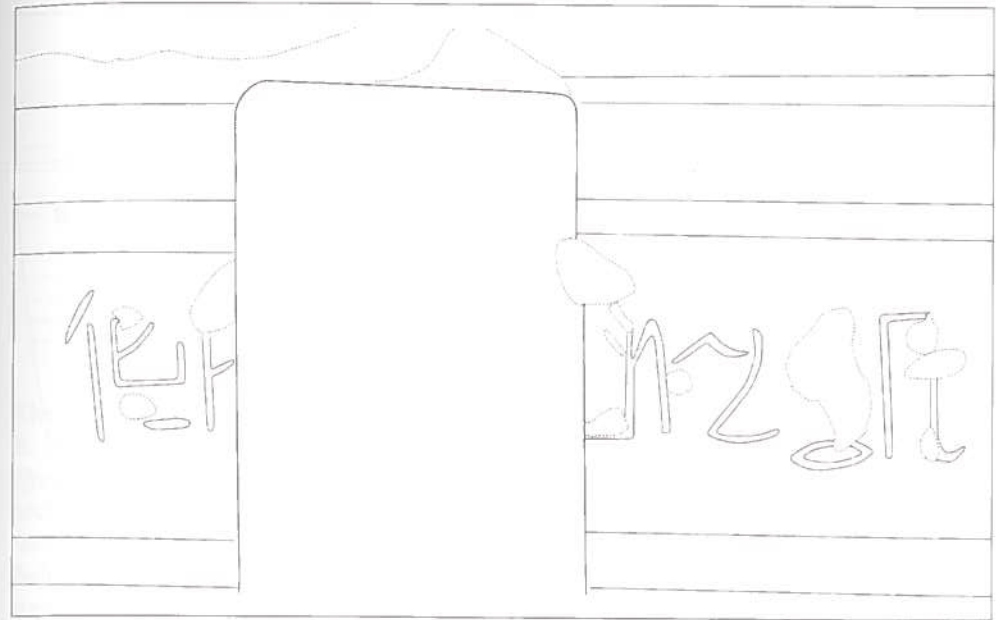


Fig. 5 KIU4415. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

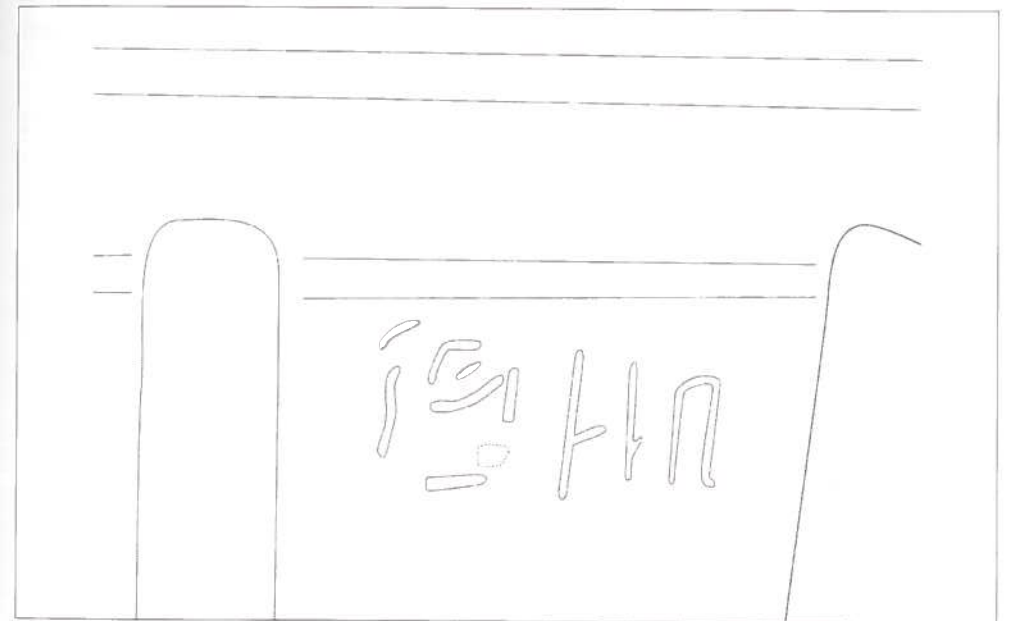


Fig. 6 KIU4409. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

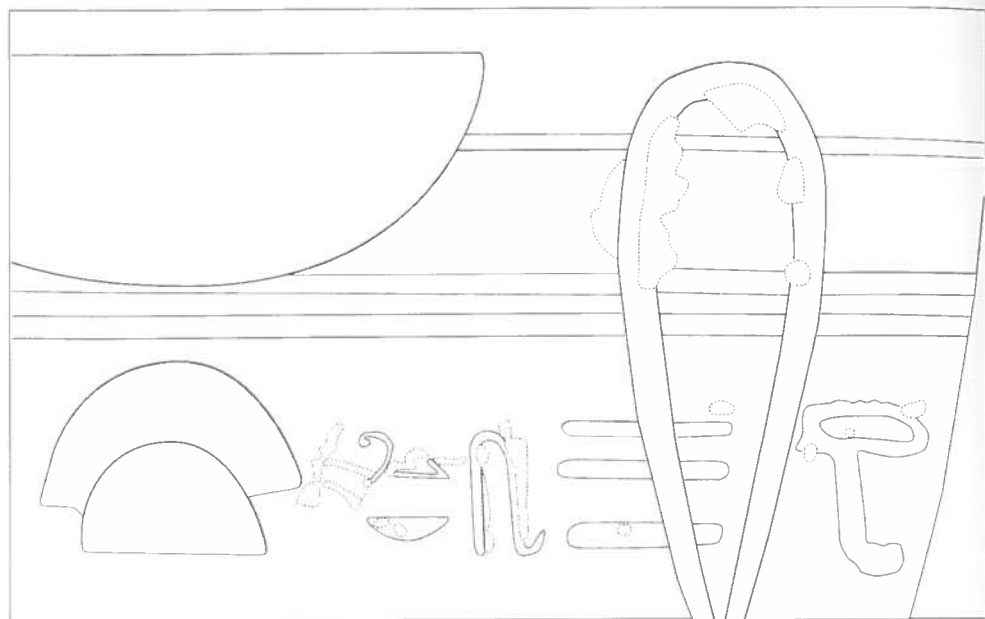


Fig. 7 KIU5126. Soubassement of western interior wall of the court of the seventh pylon, Karnak temple. © CNRS-CFEETK / Chiara Salvador.

Iumutef and Thoth in the Chapel of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari

– an unusual motif incorporated into typical offering scenes*

Anastasiia Stupko-Lubczyńska

The Offering Chapel of Hatshepsut (the Southern Hall of Offerings in the publication by E. Naville¹) is the main room in the Royal Cult Complex, located on the third terrace of *Djeser-djeseru*, to the south of the main axis of the temple. Its function – reflected in the architecture and decoration – has frequently been considered to refer to the sanctuaries of the pyramid temples, the model of which was established during the Fifth Dynasty, under Sahure.² Indeed, the Chapel of Hatshepsut shares a number of distinctive features of those rooms, pointed out by P. Jánosi,³ such as the orientation and size, the vaulted ceiling, the false door placed in the west wall, with offering scenes decorating the long (north and south) walls and the butchery scenes depicted on the east wall.

As to the offering scenes, although not a single royal example of the Old Kingdom presents the state of preservation comparable to that attested in the Chapel of Hatshepsut, their fragments seem to indicate that the entire compositions followed a uniform layout, consisting of a number of elements, the position of which was fixed (Fig. 1a):⁴

* I am indebted to Prof. Mirosław Barwik for his kind help given me during the edition of the texts from the Chapel of Hatshepsut discussed in the paper and to Paul Barford for improving its English.

The research project aiming at documentation, theoretic reconstruction, and substantial study of the reliefs decorating the chapels in the Royal Cult Complex of the Hatshepsut Temple at Deir el-Bahari is financed from the funds of the National Science Centre, Poland, granted on the basis of the decision No. DEC-2012/05/D/HS3/03680.

1 Deir el-Bahari IV, 6–11, pls. CVII–CXVIII.

2 JÉQUIER, Pepi II, 55; HESPOK, 204; W. BARTA, Der königliche Totenopfertempel und seine Entstehung, in: MDAIK 22, 1967, 49; D. ARNOLD, Vom Pyramidenbezirk zum „Haus für Millionen Jahre“, in: MDAIK 34, 1978, 6; D. ARNOLD, Djeser Djeseru. The Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, in: C. H. ROHRIG/R. DREYFUS/C. A. KELLER (eds.), Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/New Haven/London 2005, 138; A. ĆWIEK, Old and Middle Kingdom Tradition in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, in: ET XXVII, 2014, 84–87.

3 P. JÁNOSI, Die Entwicklung und Deutung des Totenopfertraumes in den Pyramidentempeln des Alten Reiches in: R. GUNDLACH/M. ROCHHOLZ (eds.), Ägyptische Tempel – Struktur, Funktion und Programm. Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagen in Gosen 1990 und in Mainz 1992, HÄB 37, Wiesbaden 1994, 156–157.

4 The most complete scene of the kind comes from the temple of Pepi II (JÉQUIER, Pepi II, pls. 61–62, 81–82). For the bibliographic references of the remaining royal examples, see e.g. P. STEINER, Symbolic Connotations of Pyramid Temples in the 5th and 6th Dynasties, in: K. MUHLESTEIN/J. GEE (eds.), Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation, and Reinterpretation in Ancient Egypt, BAR S2397, Oxford 2012, 33–34.