

Some palaeographic features of Weni's biography

Mahmoud El-Khadragy

(Pls. 1-2; figs. 1-3)

Abstract

The present study is an examination of the palaeographic features characterizing the biographical inscription of the Sixth Dynasty Overseer of Upper Egypt, Weni. The text is inscribed on a monolithic limestone slab removed from a single-roomed outer chapel belonging to his brick-built mastaba at Abydos, and is now in The Egyptian Museum, Cairo bearing no CG1435. A facsimile of the slab was produced.

Introduction

The object of this article is the monolithic limestone slab, which formed a wall of the single-roomed outer chapel belonging to the brick-built mastaba of Weni, the Sixth Dynasty Overseer of Upper Egypt.* The mastaba was discovered by A. Mariette in 1860 in the central cemetery at Abydos. Shortly after, the slab was removed to The Egyptian Museum, Cairo bearing no. CG1435.¹ Although it was published several times both in hand copies and photographs,² a facsimile was still needed for its palaeographic features. These features are the main focus of the present study.

Description

Measuring 110 cm. in max. height and 270 cm. in breadth, the remaining part of the slab is broken into two pieces and its corners, except for the lower left one, are also damaged. Some parts of the upper and lower edges are missing, and the surface is pitted in some areas, resulting in a number of lacunae in the text. Both the text and the accompanying figure of Weni were executed in incised relief.

At the lower left corner of the slab is a standing figure of Weni, facing right. Depicted in an attitude unusual for main figures, he has his right arm over his chest with the hand resting on the left shoulder, while the right elbow resting in the left palm.³ He has close-cropped hair,

*I am very much obliged to Dr. Mohamed Saleh, the former Director General of The Egyptian Museum, Cairo, for his permission to republish this slab.

¹ PM 5, 72; Mariette, *Catalogue général des Monuments d'Abydos découverts pendant les fouilles de cette ville*, Paris, 1880, 84, 84, no. 522. For some other pieces removed from the same mastaba and now in The Egyptian Museum, Cairo see: CG175; CG1309-10; CG1574; CG1643; CG1670.

² de Rougé, *Recherches sur les monuments qu'on peut attribuer aux six premières dynasties de Manéthon*, Paris, 1866, pls. 7, 8; Mariette, *Abydos II*, 44-45; Erman, in: *ZÄS* 20, 1882, 1-29; Brugsch, *Thes.* VI, 1470-77; Maspero, *Le Musée égyptien I*, Cairo 1890, pls. 27, 28; Tresson, *L'Inscription d'Ouni*, *BdE* 8, 1919; CG1435; *Urk.* I, 98-110. For the translation see: *BAR* I, §§ 292-94, 306-15, 319-24; Stracmans, in: *AIP* 3, 1935, 509-44; Wilson, in: *ANET*, 227-28; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, Berkeley, 1973, 18-23; Roccati, *La littérature historique sous l'Ancien Empire égyptien*, Paris, 1982, §§177-88. For comments see: el-Sayed, *Documents relatifs à Saïs et ses divinités*, *RdE* 69, 1975, 91; Fischer, *Egyptian Studies I: Varia*, New York, 1976, 84-86; Osing, in: *Or* 46, 1977, 165-82; Kanawati, *Governmental Reforms in Old Kingdom Egypt*, Warminster, 1980, 28-30, 32, 53-56; idem, in: *CdE* 56, 1981, 210-14; Roccati, in: *LÄ* 6, 851-2; Eyre, in: *The Unbroken Reed, Studies in the Culture and Heritage of Ancient Egypt in honour of A. F. Shore*, Occasional Publications 11, EES, 1994, 107-24. For some other references see: Roccati, *La littérature historique*, 190-91.

³ According to the Old Kingdom evidence, this attitude is only documented for minor figures when shown before major figures as a sign of respect (Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden in Darstellungen des Alten und Mittleren Reiches*, *SAGA* 10, 1994, 5-9 (nos. 4-5), fig. 1 (4, 5v). For some Sixth Dynasty examples see: Duell, *Mereruka*, pls. 9, 14, 83, 91, 93, 94, 168; Macramallah, *Mastaba d'Idout*, pl. 7; Junker, *Giza XI*, figs. 65, 80, 82; Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara III*, *ACE: Reports* 11, 1998, pls. 75, 76; VI, *ACE: Reports* 14, 2000, pl. 51b). In fact, the Sixth Dynasty major figures when represented in a similar context, i.e., near some text spoken by the owner, they are usually shown sitting in the invocation attitude, with one arm outstretched and

and wears a long projecting kilt, with a diagonal line incised across the garment indicating the overlap. At the top of the slab is an offering formula written in one horizontal line facing right. The rest of the slab contains a biographical inscription in fifty-one vertical columns, of which the first faces left, while the rest face right. With the view of following Sethe's numbering,⁴ the offering formula is unnumbered here, and the first introductory column is given the number 0 (see figs. 1, 2).

The palaeographic features

In col. 3, the vizier's title *ḥtj* has a determinative showing a seated man with a slender, short object in his right hand (see fig. 3a), of which no other example is attested anywhere else. In col. 11, the same title is determined with a seated man having nothing in hands. However, a comparison with the Old Kingdom representations suggests that the seated man determinative of col. 3 might have a baton in his hand.⁵ As a nobility insignia, the absence of the baton from the title of col. 11 might be connected with the historical events alluded to in cols. 10-11: (10) *šnj.tj ḥt m jpt nswt r ḥmt nswt Wrt-jmḥt.s m sḥt rdj ḥm.f ḥḥj(.j) r sḏm w^c.k(wj) n wnt* (11) *ḥtj zḥb ḥtj nb sr nb jm wpw-r(.j) w^c.k(wj)* “(10) When there was a secret charge in the royal harem against Queen Weret-yamtes, his majesty made me go in to hear (it) alone. No (11) chief judge and vizier, no official was there, only I alone.”⁶ According to this statement, Weni replaced the unnamed vizier during the trial of Pepy I's queen.⁷ Such a replacement of the vizier is believed to be the result of the latter being involved in some conspiracy against Pepy I⁸ or against the influence of the family of Djau and their control of the succession to the throne,⁹ which resulted in disgracing the vizier. Returning to col. 3, it mentions the vizier while he was still in office: *sḏm(.j) ḥt w^c.k(wj) ḥn^c ḥtj zḥb ḥtj m sḥt nb* “I alone heard cases with the chief judge and vizier, concerning all kinds of secrets.” Accordingly, the title of col. 3 is probably meant to refer to “the vizier having his insignia, i.e., the vizier before being disgraced”, while in col. 11 the title may refer to “the vizier after losing his office.”

In cols. 3, 4, 35, *ḥk* “servant” has the determinative of a seated man holding some object in his left hand (see fig. 3b), while in cols. 7, 13, 22, the same word is followed by the usual seated man with nothing in hand. The close examination of the original suggests that this rather thick object, narrowing near the end might be a club *ḥ*. In fact, such a determinative is

slightly bent at the elbow, and the open hand is directed towards the text (Müller, in: MDAIK 7, 1937, 63; Harpur, *Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom*, London, 1987, 129-30, 327-28 (table 6.7). For some examples see: Firth-Gunn, *Teti Pyramid Cemeteries II*, pl. 59 (2); James-Apted, *The Mastaba of Khentika Called Ikhekhi*, ASE 30, 1953, pls. 5, 6; Simpson, *Giza Mastabas II, The Mastabas of Qar and Idu*, Boston, 1976, fig. 28; Kanawati-Hassan, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara I*, ACE: Reports 8, 1996, pl. 49b; II, ACE: Reports 9, 1997, pls. 34, 35. However, during the Sixth Dynasty, the invoking figure is sometimes shown standing, e.g., LD II, 114d, e; CG1579; Hassan, *Mastabas of Princess Ḥemet-R^c and Others*, Excavations at Saqqara III, Cairo, 1975, fig. 39).

⁴ Urk. I, 98-110.


⁵ For this baton see: Fischer, in: MMJ 13, 1978, 18-19. For some examples see: CG1536; Blackman, *Meir IV*, pl. 14; V, pls. 31, 32, 41, 45; Murray, *Saqqara Mastabas*, pl. 7; Hassan, *Giza V*, fig. 122; Duell, *Mereruka*, pl. 95; Simpson, *Qar and Idu*, fig. 38.

⁶ The translation of Lichtheim is adopted here and elsewhere in the article, unless otherwise is stated: *Literature*, 18-23.

⁷ This vizier is believed to be the same as the one whose name was erased from the Dahshur decree of cattle-count 21 of Pepy I (Goedicke, *Königl. Dokumente*, 57, n.3, fig. 5). As for identifying him with the vizier *R^c-wr*, whose name was also hacked out from his tomb at Saqqara, see: el-Fikey, *The tomb of the Vizier R^c-wer at Saqqara*, Warminster, 1980, 45-46; Kanawati, in: CdE 56, 1981, 209; Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom*, London, 1985, 115.

⁸ Goedicke, in: JAOS 74, 1954, 88-89.

⁹ Kanawati, in: CdE 56, 1981, 209-17; idem, *Governmental Reforms*, 62-63.

rarely attested for *b3k* in Old Kingdom inscriptions,¹⁰ which usually show the normal seated man determinative .¹¹ As an instrument used by fullers in washing,¹² its association with the seated man after *b3k* “servant” is understandable. But while miniature objects were used in association with human signs as ideograms and determinatives to clarify the related words,¹³ the unusual Old Kingdom determinative of the seated fuller is highly unexpected for *b3k* when referring to Weni and his high-official colleagues. However, the club seems to be used here as a phonogram reading *hm* “majesty”, and it is thus used to connect both words more closely than the direct genitive would do. So col. 3, for example, is suggested to be read: *[rdj wj hm].f m z3b jrj Nhn jb.f mh jm(.j) r [b3]k.f nb* “(His majesty made me) judge attached to Nekhen, his heart being filled with me more than any other of his majesty’s own servants.”

The ideogram used for *mšc* “army” in cols. 14, 16, 22-26, 31 and for *mšc* “expedition” in cols. 41-42 has received a certain modification, for the seated soldier holds a bow and a mace instead of the usual bow and quiver (see fig. 3c).¹⁴ However, although some more deviations from the norm are attested for this ideogram in the provinces during the late Old Kingdom,¹⁵ Weni’s particular form is attested only once in a royal inscription belonging to Pepy I at Wady Maghara.¹⁶ Considering that the mace is not attested as a soldier’s weapon during the Old Kingdom,¹⁷ its association with the seated soldier ideogram may have other significance than being a substitute for the quiver. In fact the mace seems to be regarded as a royal insignia during the Old Kingdom, held by human determinatives following royal names,¹⁸ and sometimes by figures of the kings themselves.¹⁹ The intimate association of the king and the mace is known since the Early Dynastic Period in the symbolic representations of the king striking a kneeling captive with his upraised mace.²⁰ Accordingly, we may assume that the mace shown in the hand of the soldier’s ideogram is a symbol used here to illustrate the close

¹⁰ Of the few examples known to me see: Urk. I, 12:3, 127: 12, 182:12.

¹¹ E.g., *ibid.*, 81:6, 82:4, 83:8, 17, 84:1, 139:8, 10, 140:3, 11, 147:9.

¹² Gardiner, EG, Sign-list, U36.

¹³ See the following paragraphs and figs. 3 (a, c, d, e).

¹⁴ For the standard Old Kingdom form see: Fischer, Dendera, 133:3; Gardiner, EG, Sign-list, A12. For some examples see: Urk. I, 127:6, 128:9, 133:16, 134:17, 181:2. For the same sign as a determinative for *mšc* see: Petrie, Medum, pl. 9.

¹⁵ On one of the Eighth Dynasty Coptos decrees issued by Neferkauhor, the ideogram for *mšc* shows the soldier holding a bow in one hand while shooting an arrow with the other (Urk. I, 298:6). The same form is attested at Dendera during the First Intermediate Period (Petrie, Denderah, EEF 17, 1900, pl. 9: lower right; Fischer, Dendera, 133:3). In one of the First Intermediate Period tombs at Assiut, the sign has received another modification so that the soldier is shown standing while shooting the arrow (Edel, *Die Inschriften der Grabfronten der Siut-Gräber in Mittelägypten aus der Herakleopolitenzeit*, ARWAW 71, 1984, fig.9: 48). At Akhmim, a Ninth Dynasty sarcophagus shows the soldier standing with the usual bow and quiver in hands, while in another Tenth Dynasty tomb the seated soldier holds a bow with both hands (Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish V*, Sydney, 1985, fig. 28c; IX, 1989, figs. 17b, 18b, c, respectively). The standing soldier holds some other kind of weapon in a late Old Kingdom tomb at Naga ed-Dêr (Peck, *Some Decorated Tombs of the First Intermediate Period at Naga-ed-Dêr*, University Micro-films, Ph. D. Thesis, Brown University, 1958, 53, pl. 3). In the First Intermediate Period inscriptions from Mo^oalla and Naga ed-Dêr, weapons other than the bow and quiver, are shown in the hands of seated soldiers (Vandier, Mo^oalla, 162:I, a, 1, 186:II, y, 3, 220:IV, 2; Dunham, *Naga-ed-Dêr Stelae of the First Intermediate Period*, London, 1937, pl. 33:85).

¹⁶ Urk. I, 92:1.


¹⁷ For the known Old Kingdom war scenes see: Quibell-Hayter, *Teti Pyramid, frontispiece*; Kanawati-McFarlane, *Deshasha*, ACE: Reports 5, 1993, pl. 27.

¹⁸ In private inscriptions, only one example is known to me from the tomb of *Hr-hw.f* at Aswan (Urk. I, 130:5). But in royal inscriptions, the following examples are known: *ibid.*, 276:2, 281:6, 282:9, 283:4, 9, 11, 17, 286:1, 287:12.

¹⁹ E.g. CG 1747; Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, London, 1906, pls. 50, 51.




²⁰ E.g. Gardiner-Peet, *The Inscriptions of Sinai I*, EEF, 1917, pl. 1; CG 14716 (verso); Schäfer (translated and edited by J. Baines), *Principles of Egyptian Art*, Oxford, 1974, pl. 11.

connection between the army and the king, and hence *mšc* in cols. 14, 16, 22-26, 31 may be understood as “royal army”, and *mšc* in cols. 41-42 may have the meaning of “royal expedition.”

In col. 14, *mšc* is determined with a seated man wearing a fillet and streamer and holding a mace in each hand (see fig. 3d), and in cols. 16, 22-26, *mšc* is determined with three similar figures (see fig. 3e).²¹ No other parallels are found in Old Kingdom inscriptions, and compared with the standard Old Kingdom form ,²² these determinatives differ in two details, the fillet and streamer as well as the mace in hand. It appears that the mace is shown in each case when referring to the king as the one who prepared the army (col. 14), and the determinative changed to the three seated men after enumerating the different troops composing the Egyptian army including Egyptians, Nubians and those of the Tjemeh-land (cols. 14-16).²³ So, it seems reasonable to assume that the maces are used here as miniature determinatives added to the standard Old Kingdom form in order to link the army to the king. Accordingly, the literal meaning of *mšc* in col. 14 would be “royal army of the king.”

Although fillets are well documented as a civilian dress in the Old Kingdom,²⁴ they were not worn by soldiers in Old Kingdom scenes.²⁵ However, such fillets are attested in the Fifth Dynasty for Nubians who were employed by Egyptians for domestic services,²⁶ and they are shown to be worn by Asiatic soldiers defending their fortified town in *Jntj*'s chapel at Deshasha.²⁷ Fillets were also worn by Nubian mercenaries dated to the First Intermediate Period.²⁸ In Weni's text, the determinative showing men with fillet bound heads surmounted by feathers is used for *ʿ3mw* “Asiatics” (col. 13), *nḥsjw* “Nubians” (cols. 15, 16, 18), *sqrw-ḥnh* “captives” (col. 27), *ḥ3stjw* “foreigners” (col. 29), *btkw* “marauders” (col. 29), and for *ḥq3w* “chiefs” in reference to those of Irtjet, Wawat, Yam and Medja (col. 46). In the decree of Pepy I concerning the pyramids of Seneferu at Dahshur, *zntw* “rebels, enemies” is determined with three filleted men.²⁹ Accordingly, in a military context, such filleted men are usually used in reference to the foreigners, regardless of their being on Egypt side or against it. Consequently, the filleted-men determinative of *mšc* “army” agrees well with the fact that the army was not

²¹ Because of the damage in this area, one is uncertain whether or not the three seated men determining *mšc* in col. 31 have fillets and streamers.

²² When written with the ideogram , *mšc* either has no determinative (e.g., Urk. I, 127:6, 134:17, 181:2, 298:6; Kanawati, The Tombs of El-Hagarsa III, ACE: Reports 7, 1995, pls. 19b, 25), or has the determinative of the seated man  (e.g., Urk. I, 128:9, 139:6, 149:7). But, when it is phonetically written, the determinative of the soldier  is used (e.g., Petrie, Medum, pl. 9; Peck, Naga-ed-Dêr, 53, pl. 3).

²³ According to the text we read: (14) *jr.n ḥm.f mšc n dbꜥw ʿš3w m Šmꜥw mj-qd.f ḥnt m 3bw mḥt m Mtnwt T3-mḥw m gswj-pr mj-qd.sn* (15) *m Sḏr m Ḥn-sḏrw m Jrtt-nḥsjw (m) Mḏ3-nḥsjw (m) Jm3-nḥsjw* (16) *m W3w3t-nḥsjw m K33w-nḥsjw m T3-ṯmḥ* “(14) his majesty made an army of many tens of thousands from all of Upper Egypt: from Yebu in the south to Medenynt in the north; from Lower Egypt: from all of the Two-Sides-of-the-House (15) and from Sedjer and Khen-sedjru; and from Irtjet-Nubians, Medja-Nubians, Yam-Nubians, (16) Wawat-Nubians, Kaau-Nubians; and from Tjemeh-land.”

²⁴ Staehelin, Tracht, 144ff. For some examples see: Junker, Gîza V, fig. 8; VI, fig. 40; VIII, figs. 32, 34; IX, fig. 86; Hassan, Gîza III, fig. 107; Murray, Saqqara Mastabas, pl. 9; Petrie-Murray, Memphite Tomb Chapels, pl. 6; Simpson, Qar and Idu, figs. 15, 18b, 39; Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery III, pls. 43a, 45a, 60c, 76; El-Khouli-Kanawati, Quseir El-Amarna, ACE: Reports 1, 1989, pl. 38; Davies, Deir el-Gebrâwi I, pls. 3, 4, 5, 6; II, pls. 3, 5.; Blackman, Meir IV, pls. 7, 14, 17; V, pls. 24, 27, 28, 30.

²⁵ See n.17 above.


²⁶ Junker, Gîza III, fig. 27.

²⁷ Kanawati-McFarlane, Deshasha, pl. 27.


²⁸ For example, Fischer, in: Kush 9, 1961, fig. 5, pl. 13a. For determining *Nḥsjw* with a filleted archer in a First Intermediate Period inscription see: Petrie, Denderah, pl. 8c; Fischer, Dendera, 138.

²⁹ Urk. I, 168:5.

only composed of Egyptian troops, but it had also some other troops of friendly foreigners. So *mš*^c in cols. 16, 22-26 is probably to be understood as “the royal army consisting of Egyptians and foreigners.”

The standard Old Kingdom determinative showing a man striking with a stick  shows here a curious change where the stick is replaced by a tree branch (see fig. 3f). This form is used to determine the following verbs: *nḥm* “seize” (col. 20), *sm*³ “slew” (cols. 26, 31), *bst* “rebel” (col. 28), *ndrj* “catch” (col. 31), *wh*³ “quarry” (col. 43). No other parallel is known for such a determinative throughout the Old Kingdom, but in a Twelfth Dynasty example, it is attested for the adjective *nḥt* “strong”.³⁰ Accordingly, we may have here the earliest known example of the tendency towards altering some signs by elaborating on the details, which is attested for some other signs in provincial sites during the First Intermediate Period.³¹ It is to be noted, however, that the striking man determinative shows another deviation from the norm in col. 23, where *pds* “flatten” is determined with a man striking with a curved stick resembling the shepherd’s crook (see fig. 3g).³² Having no other Old Kingdom parallel attested anywhere else; Weni’s example is the antecedent of more deviations attested for the striking man determinative during the First Intermediate Period.³³

Further evidence for such tendency towards altering some signs by adding some details is attested again in col. 25, where the vine branches of the determinative of *jʿrrt* “vine” are shown hanging down on both sides of the vineyard instead of the usual one side as attested in Old Kingdom inscriptions³⁴ (see fig. 3h).

One of the palaeographic features characterizing Weni’s text is the use of the shorter form whenever a sign has more than one Old Kingdom forms. So, although the Sixth Dynasty material shows two forms of *hnt*-sign, one with four jars in the rack,³⁵ and the other with only three,³⁶ the shorter form was adopted everywhere in Weni’s text (see fig. 3i).³⁷ In Old Kingdom inscriptions, the ideogram  used for *tʿtj* “he of the curtain” shows a gateway surmounted by a frieze of uraei,³⁸ the number of which ranges from four to seven.³⁹ In Weni’s

³⁰ Gayet, Musée du Louvre, Stèles de la XIIe dynastie, Paris, 1886, pl. 1=Sethe, Lesestücke, 82:6, 9.

³¹ Fischer, Dendera, 135-36, fig. 25.

³² Gardiner, EG, Sign-list, S39. For a typical crook held by the seated shepherd sign used as ideogram for *jrj* “relating to” in the Eighth Dynasty Coptos decree issued by king Neferkauhor see: Urk. I, 296:3.

³³ Fischer, Dendera, 79-82 (5), 133 (4), 135, 165, 179, 183.

³⁴ E.g., Davies, Ptahhetep and Akhetetep I, pl. 10:166; Blackman, Meir V, pl. 20; Macramallah, Mastaba d’Idout, pl. 18; Hassan, Gîza III, fig. 57; Urk. I, 4:17, 5:2; Kanawati-Hassan, Teti Cemetery II, pl. 65.

³⁵ E.g., Davies, Deir el-Gebrâwi II, pls. 4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 18; James-Apted, Khentika, pls. 6, 7, 8, 13, 19, 21, 22; Junker, Gîza VI, fig. 31; Simpson, Qar and Idu, figs. 20, 22a, 26a, 28, 31, 32, 33, 36; Blackman, Meir IV, pls. 4a, 16; V, pl. 24; Kanawati, El-Hagarsa I, ACE: Reports 4, 1993, pl. 42a; Kanawati-McFarlane, Deshasha, pl. 52; Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery V, ACE: Reports 13, 1999, pls. 52, 57, 63.

³⁶ E.g., Firth-Gunn, Teti Pyramid Cemeteries II, pl. 62; Junker, Gîza VI, figs. 11, 28, 29, 93; von Bissing, Die Mastaba des Gem-ni-kai I, Berlin, 1905, pl. 14; Davies, Sheikh Saïd, pl. 31; Kanawati, El-Hagarsa I, pls. 19, 21, 44; idem, El-Hawawish V, figs. 26d-e, 27a; VII, 1987, fig. 34b.

³⁷ See cols. 0, 8, 9, 14, 19, 33, 48.

³⁸ Gardiner, EG, Sign-list, O16-17.

³⁹ Strudwick, Administration, 304-5. For some examples having a frieze of four uraei see: Firth-Gunn, Teti Pyramid Cemeteries II, pl. 60 (5); James-Apted, Khentika, pls. 5, 26, 39 (216); Kanawati-Hassan, Teti Cemetery II, pls. 68, 69b. The five uraei frieze is documented for *tʿtj* in the following examples: Murray, Saqqara Mastabas, pl. 17 (1); Firth-Gunn, Teti Pyramid Cemeteries II, pls. 52, 59 (1); Blackman, Meir IV, pl. 15; Duell, Mereruka, pls. 132, 137; James-Apted, Khentika, pl. 19; Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery III, pls. 48a, 52b, 54a. For the six uraei frieze see: Murray, Saqqara Mastabas, pls. 4, 6, 8, 9, 17; Firth-Gunn, Teti Pyramid Cemeteries II, pls. 59 (2), 61, 77a; Junker, Gîza VIII, fig. 34; Duell, Mereruka, pl. 72; Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery III, pl. 58. The frieze of seven uraei is documented in: Murray, Saqqara Mastabas, pl. 5; Blackman, Meir IV, pl. 4a (1); Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery III, pl. 44a. For some unusual forms see: Strudwick, Administration, 305.

inscription, a frieze of five uraei appears in cols. 3, 11 (see fig. 3j). Another example of preferring shorter forms is evident in the land ideogram, which usually shows two forms,⁴⁰ one with three grains of sand under the flat land,⁴¹ and the other has only two.⁴² Weni's scribe used the two-sand grain form (see fig. 3k).⁴³ The same tendency is observed in writing of the *jbt*-sign in cols. 1, 2, 12, 19, 21 which omits the coils of the rope usually shown hanging down from the emblem of Min's temple in other Old Kingdom inscriptions⁴⁴ (see fig. 3l).

General commentary

The practice of adding some objects held by human figures used as ideograms and determinatives to clarify the meaning of the related words testifies to the ability of the scribes who composed the text. Linguistic analysis of the text indicates that it was composed after the tradition and style of religious writing best preserved in the pyramid texts.⁴⁵

With his funerary equipment originally provided by Pepy I (see col. 5-7), it is likely that Weni's tomb at Abydos was also decorated by royal craftsmen through a royal favour of Mernere, the last royal name mentioned in his biography. And although some earlier inscriptions refer to the decoration of false doors inside the royal palace,⁴⁶ and the preparation of a tomb by royal workmen,⁴⁷ no other provincial instance is known of a tomb decorated by royal artists before the reign of Pepy II.⁴⁸ Accordingly, Weni might be the first provincial official having the privilege of decorating his tomb by royal artists.

In spite of the possible decoration of the tomb by royal artists, the absence of interior details from most of Weni's hieroglyphic signs and the preference given to the shorter hieroglyphic

§

⁴⁰ For some unusual forms either having more than three sand grains under the flat land or having no grains at all see: Murray, Saqqara Mastabas, pl. 1; Petrie-Murray, Memphite Tomb Chapels, pl. 4; Kanawati-Hassan, Teti Cemetery I, pl. 43 (1); Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery III, pl. 58 (no sand grains); Urk. I, 23:13 (four sand grains).

⁴¹ For example, Murray, Saqqara Mastabas, pls. 6 (1), 18; Macramallah, Mastaba d'Idout, pl. 12; Blackman, Meir IV, pl. 9; V, pl. 10 (2); James-Apted, Khentika, pl. 7; Simpson, Qar and Idu, figs. 33, 36, 39; Kanawati-Hassan, Teti Cemetery I, pls. 40, 50, 51; II, 34, 35, 44, 46, 62, 68; Kanawati-Abder-Raziq, Teti Cemetery III, pls. 63, 73; V, pls. 52, 57, 63; McFarlane, The Unis Cemetery at Saqqara I, ACE: Reports 15, 2000, pls. 45, 47.

⁴² Urk. I, 286: 14; James-Apted, Khentika, pl. 21; Fischer, Dendera, fig. 16; Kanawati, El-Hagarsa I, pl. 28; idem, El-Hawawish I, 1980, fig. 10; II, 1981, figs. 4, 6, 19, 20; III, 1982, fig. 15a; VII, figs. 35a, 38c, 40a.

⁴³ See cols. 14, 16-18, 30-31.

⁴⁴ For example, Urk. I, 205:1, 247:7, 253:4, 298:16; Firth-Gunn, Teti Pyramid Cemeteries II, pl. 58 (1); James-Apted, Khentika, pl. 6; Kanawati-Hassan, Teti Cemetery II, pl. 69a. For an early Fourth Dynasty form showing the coil details see: Junker, Giza I, fig. 23. For some other examples of the abbreviated form see: Urk. I, 118:7, 119:11, 147:14, 306:5; Mariette, Mastabas, 415; Blackman, Meir V, pl. 6 (3).

⁴⁵ Roccati, in: LÄ VI, 851-2.

⁴⁶ Urk. I, 38-40; Reisner, Giza I, pl. 65b. It is to be noted, however, that artisans belonging to the *w^cbt*-workshop decorated the first example of *Nj-^cnh-^{sh}mt* (Urk. I, 38:15). As for the *w^cbt*-workshop see: Wilson, in: JNES 3, 1944, 202 n.5; Junker, Die gesellschaftliche Stellung der ägyptischen Künstler im Alten Reich, SÖAW 233, 1959, 23-25; Drenkhahn, Die Handwerker und ihre Tätigkeiten im Alten Ägypten, ÄA 31, 1976, 147-51; Brovarski, in: Or 46, 1977, 114-15.

⁴⁷ Urk. I, 18-21.

⁴⁸ All provincial tombs are securely dated after the reign of Mernere, while that of *Ppjj-^cnh: Hwj* of Kom el-Ahmar/ Sawaris might belong to the period of Mernere-Pepy II (Baer, Rank and Title, 70, 289 [131]; Gomaà, Ägypten während der Ersten Zwischenzeit, TAVO, Reihe B 27, 1980, 118; Harpur, Decoration, 279 [624]). However, an earlier date is also suggested for this tomb (cf., Kanawati-McFarlane, Akhmim in the Old Kingdom I, ACE: Studies 2, 1992, 80-81). Men are represented in these tombs bearing the title *zš pr-mdjt ntrj pr-^c* "scribe (artist) of the house of the sacred books of the palace" and that of *shd zšw qdwt pr-^c* "superintendent of the draftsmen (painters) of the palace" either at work or in some other scenes, which may suggest that these tombs were decorated by those royal artists. For these scenes see: Brodrick-Morton, in: PSBA 21, 1899, 31c; Blackman, Meir IV, pls. 8, 17; V, pls. 18, 19; Kanawati, El-Hawawish I, fig. 8; II, fig. 18. For the title *zš pr-mdjt ntrj pr-^c* see: Junker, Künstler, 22 (5), and passim; Drenkhahn, Handwerker, 71.

forms, in addition to the incomplete carving of the leg-sign used for *w^crt* “district” in col. 21, might indicate some haste in executing the decoration. This could be the result of the death of the then aged Weni before completing his tomb decoration.⁴⁹

As already noticed before, some sentences of Weni’s inscription were still in use by Saite scribes as model for copying purposes.⁵⁰ Taking into consideration some palaeographic features first documented in Weni’s inscription,⁵¹ and later in other provincial sites during the First Intermediate Period, it is argued that Weni’s inscription was used as a model by local scribes for instruction and copying purposes shortly after his death.



—
49
Bu
tw
hii
53
in:
50,
51
co

19.
tel,
for
ms,
yre,
t in

Pl. 1. The right side of Weni's biographical inscription



Pl. 2. The left side of Weni's biographical inscription



Fig. 1. The right side of Weni's biographical inscription

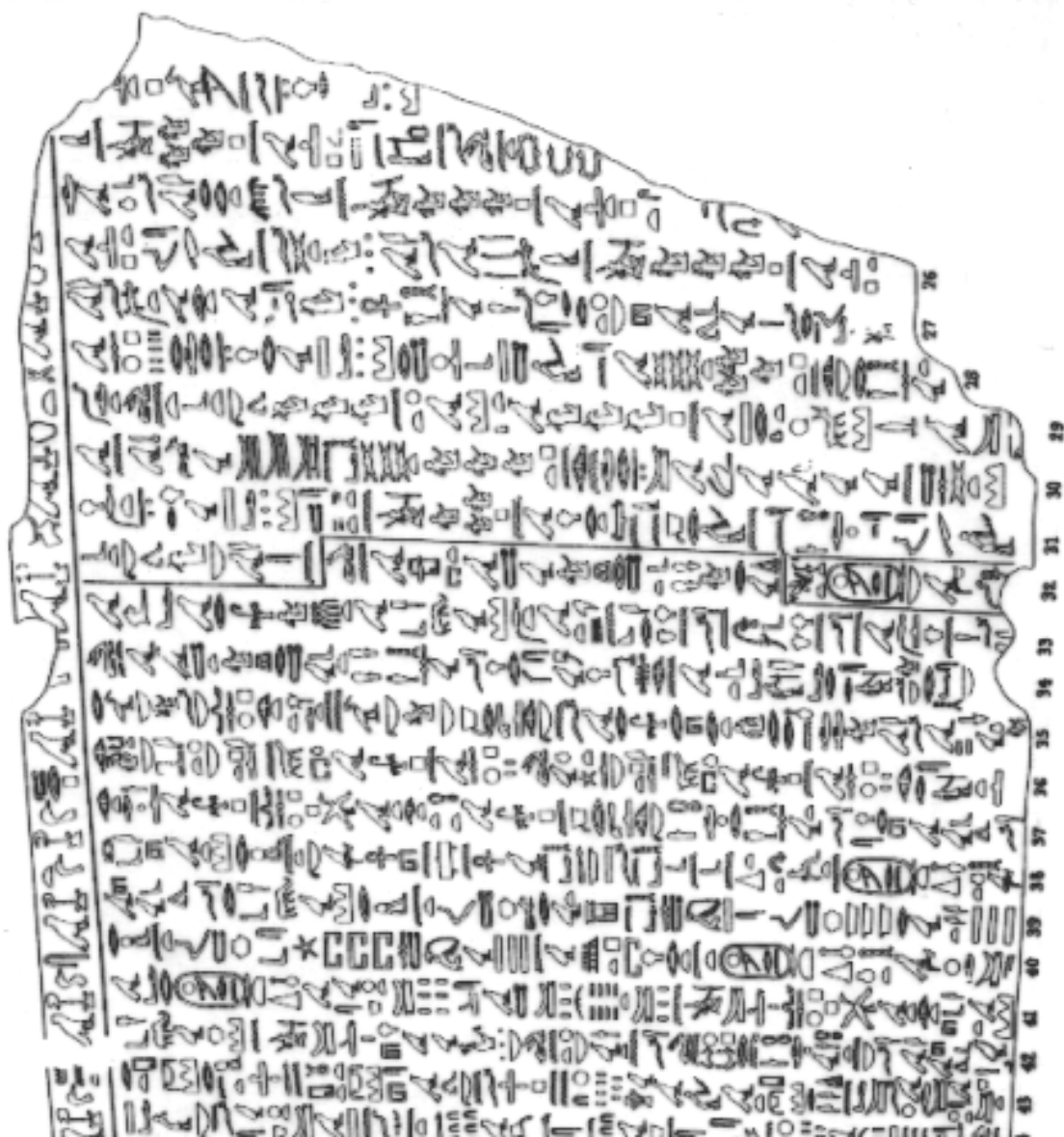


Fig. 2. The left side of Weni's biographical text



(a) The determinative of *b'tj*
(col. 3)



(b) The determinative of *b3k*
(cols. 3, 4, 35)



(c) The ideogram for *mš^c*
(cols. 14, 16, 22, etc.)



(d) The determinative of *mš^c*
(col. 14)



(e) One of the men determining *mš^c*
(cols. 16, 22-26)



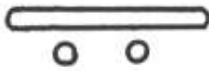
(f) The beating man determinative
(cols. 20, 26, 28, 31, 43)



(g) The beating man determinative
(col. 23)

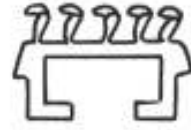


(i) The three-jar *hnt*-sign
(cols. 0, 8, 9, etc.)



(k) The ideogram for *t³*
(cols. 14, 16-18, etc.)

(h) The determinative of *j³rrt*
(col. 25)



(j) The ideogram for *t³tj*
(cols. 3, 11)



(l) The ideogram for *j³t*
(cols. 1, 2, 12, 19, 21)

Fig. 3. Weni's palaeographic details