

# Exploration of the pyramid complex of King Djedkare: 2019 fall season

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## ABSTRACT

The recent fieldwork of the Egyptian mission in the pyramid temple of King Djedkare focused on cleaning and documenting three major areas. The temple area immediately south of the columned courtyard provided no firm evidence for reconstructing the layout and sizes of the once existing rooms. Almost all of the floor and wall blocks have disappeared here. Clearing the southeast corner of the king's pyramid revealed that all its casing blocks and backing stones were missing in that part. Further north of this area, however, a section of the original casing still remained, attesting to the pyramid's slope of 51–52°. The entire clearance of the inner temple has provided further important information as to the sizes and layout of the rooms. Most interestingly, the vestibule of Djedkare's inner temple seems to be of unique form and size not found in other pyramid temples. Equally remarkable is the fact that all the western rooms (including the offering hall as well) of this inner temple extended into the masonry of the pyramid beyond its baseline.

## KEYWORDS

Old Kingdom – South Saqqara – Djedkare – pyramid complex – inner temple – king's pyramid – royal relief

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### ملخص

ركزت أعمال التنظيف والتسجيل العلمى الأخيرة للبعثة المصرية بالمعبد الجنائزى للملك جدكارع على تنظيف وتوثيق ثلاثة أماكن رئيسية. فالمنطقة الواقعة إلى الجنوب مباشرة من صالة الأعمدة لم تقدم أية دليل قاطع يساعد على إعادة بناء تخطيط ومقاسات الحجرات التى كانت توجد فى تلك المساحة من المعبد. حيث لم يتبقى أية بقايا من كتل الأرضية والجدران على الاطلاق. كما كشفت أعمال التنظيف والتسجيل بالزاوية الجنوبية الشرقية لهرم الملك عن فقدان جميع كتل الكساء الخارجى للهرم وكذلك احجار التدعيم خلف الكسوة فى ذلك الجزء. إلا أنه إلى الشمال من تلك المنطقة لا يزال جزء من الكساء الأسمى موجود بمكانه الأساسى يشهد على أن زاوية ميل الهرم تتراوح من 51 إلى 52 درجة. كما قدم لنا التنظيف الكامل للجزء الداخلى (المعبد الخاص) الشرقى من المعبد الجنائزى للملك جدكارع مزيداً من المعلومات المهمة فيما يتعلق بأحجام وتخطيط الحجرات والممرات فى تلك المنطقة المهمة من المعبد. والأكثر إثارة للاهتمام، أن الصالة الموجودة بالجزء الداخلى من المعبد يبدو أنها ذات شكل وحجم فريد لا يوجد فى المعابد الهرمية الأخرى. ومن الجدير بالملاحظة أيضاً حقيقة أن جميع الحجرات الغربية (بما فى ذلك أيضاً حجرة القرابين) لهذا الجزء الخاص من المعبد قد بلغت جدرانها الشرقية إلى داخل جسم الهرم نفسه خلف خط القاعدة.

### الكلمات الدالة

الدولة القديمة – جنوب سقارة – جدكارع – مجموعة هرمية – المعبد الداخلى – هرم الملك – مناظر ملكية



Fig. 1 The inner part of Djedkare's temple after clearing. In many areas the position and sizes of the rooms is well-discernible because of the white foundation of the (today missing) floors (photo Djedkare's Project, P. Jánosi)

The 12<sup>th</sup> season in the pyramid complex of Djedkare had three main objectives:<sup>1</sup> the large area to the south of the open columned courtyard (Area T.f), the south-west corner of the king's pyramid and the pyramid courtyard (T.o) between the pyramid and the south façade of the inner temple and the cult pyramid as well as the inner part of the pyramid temple (comprising the areas T.b, T.m and T.n).<sup>2</sup>

#### AREA T.F SOUTH OF THE COLUMNED COURTYARD

The temple area designated T.f comprises two parts, one to the east with six magazines (on these magazines, see Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová 2017a: 37–52) and a large area to the west, which was void of any visible installations or walls (fig. 1). This part of the temple lies adjacent to the columned courtyard and measured about 25 m by 9.4 m. After clearing the site, it became clear that it was entirely demolished down to its foundation probably already in antiquity (fig. 2). In a few places, some floor blocks remained in place, but too few to provide a clear picture of the arrangement and sizes of the rooms which once existed here. Based on the layout of pyramid temples of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, it is clear that

this area of the temple was not an open courtyard but served as a connecting segment consisting of several long, corridor-like rooms between the transverse corridor in the west (T.m1) and the set of magazine rooms lying to the east, between the *pr-wrw* and the south massif. The scanty traces left in the transverse corridor indicate that a door existed in the east wall near the south exit. From this opening, a narrow corridor (T.f2–3) ran along the south side of this area straight to the east opening into the magazine compound. As for the reconstruction of the other rooms (T.f1) to the north of this corridor, one can only rely on the better-preserved examples in the other pyramid precincts of that period (see also the two different versions Maragioglio and Rinaldi published, cf. Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1962: tav. 6; Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977: tav. 13).

#### THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF THE KING'S PYRAMID AND THE PYRAMID COURTYARD T.O SOUTH

The southern pyramid courtyard along the *ka*-pyramid precinct's north and west side was cleared along its entire length revealing most of the white limestone floor blocks still in place (fig. 3). The width of the courtyard west

<sup>1</sup> The fall season lasted from 7<sup>th</sup> September to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The team would like to thank the inspectors of the Ministry of Antiquities, Hana Donkol, Ali el-Selihdar, Mounira Hussein, for their kind support during the fieldwork. We appreciate the expertise of our conservators, Ismail Ragab. Our thanks also go to the foreman, Mohamed Antar, as well as to all the workmen without whom our work would not be possible.

<sup>2</sup> As for the numbering of the different parts of the temple, see Megahed (2016a: Pl. 1).



Fig. 2 Aerial photo of the west side of T.f after clearing the site. Except the sidewalls, the few floor blocks in place offer little evidence for reconstructing the layout and sizes of the rooms in this part of the temple (photo Djedkare's Project)

of the *ka*-pyramid precinct is 5.25–8 cm (=10 cubits).<sup>3</sup> The width of the courtyard along the north side shows two different distances. At the west end, the distance is 3.14 m (= 6 cubits), while at the east end it narrows down to 3.04 m. This change is due to the fact that the north enclosure wall of the *ka*-pyramid precinct does not run straight east-west, but slightly askew (fig. 4). The reason for this deviation is not clear and might simply be a mistake by the pyramid builders.

No clearance was done along the south side of the king's pyramid, since this area is still covered by a huge and dense amount of old debris, which has not been excavated in modern times. Excavation of this side as well as along the west side of the pyramid will be a goal for future exploration. The courtyard was terminated at the south side by the royal enclosure wall, of which only the core masonry built mostly with huge local limestone blocks remained. However, the still existing floor blocks in that area clearly show the original outline of the casing of this wall. This cannot be said of the southeast corner of the royal pyramid. This part of the building was entirely removed by stone robbers down to its foundation. Today the pyramid's southeast corner presents itself as a huge gap. No floor blocks remained here to indicate the exact position of the pyramid corner and the outline of the casing blocks. The pyramid corner was entirely stripped

of its casing blocks and most of the backing stones, revealing part of the core masonry today.

The present condition of the surface of the floor in the pyramid courtyard is remarkably different in various parts. While in the northern half and alongside the *ka*-pyramid precinct the floor blocks are very well preserved, the area around the (now missing) pyramid corner has suffered considerably from the stone robbers' activities. In fact, the surface condition of the still existing floor surrounding the gap is so miserable and destroyed that one gains the impression that the stone robbers cut/processed the pyramid casing blocks at that exact spot before the material was shipped further. It is fortunate, therefore, that further north of this demolished area the casing of the pyramid remained intact for about 6.4 m to the south side of the façade of the inner temple (fig. 5). As can be gathered from this part, which has two rows of large casing blocks still in place (max. height of 2.50 m of the preserved casing), the casing blocks also feature several patch stones. These were not only inserted along the edges (the most vulnerable part of a casing block), but also in the surface of a casing block. The inclination of the pyramid measured at this spot is 51–52°, which probably comes close to the *seked* of 1:5 palms and 2 digits (corresponding to the inclination of Khufu's pyramid).

<sup>3</sup> Maragioglio and Rinaldi documented a distance of 5.9 m (Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1962) and 5.7 m (Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977), which clearly indicate that the two Italians were not able to take exact measurements in that area. This miscalculation also becomes apparent with the west end of the four magazines in the south part of the intimate temple (T.b) in relation to the foot of the pyramid (see below).



Fig. 3 The pyramid courtyard between the king's pyramid and the *ka*-pyramid complex, view to the south (photo Djedkare's Project, M. Megahed)

#### THE INNER (INTIMATE) TEMPLE (AREAS T.B, T.M AND T.N)

Small areas to the south of the offering hall – namely the *antichambre carrée* and part of the magazine complex adjacent to the pyramid – were already investigated and documented in 2014 (Megahed – Jánosi 2017: 237–256). The recent archaeological work was pursued in order to explore all the missing areas in the southern part, complete the documentation of the offering hall as well as clear the entire north half of the inner temple (T.n). Although the inner temple has also suffered from considerable stone looting and deliberate destruction, it nevertheless was surprising to see that in many areas essential and important features of the temple's architecture still remained and complemented the previous documentations (Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1962 and 1977) and extended our knowledge. It should also be stressed again that it was in this part of the pyramid precinct that Abdel Salam Hussein discovered some of the most important sculptures found in the Djedkare complex, which once must have adorned the rooms of this part of the building (for these artefacts, see Megahed 2016b: 24–33). The results of the last season showed that except for the so-called magazines none of the main rooms – the room with five chapels, the *vestibule*, the *antichambre carrée* and the offering hall – have their

original calcite floor preserved. Thus, any hope to trace the statues' original position in these rooms remains slender (see below).

The size of the inner temple measured  $41.56 \times 29.55$  m ( $79 \times 56$  cubits) and the building was bound with the sloping face of the pyramid's east side. While the north façade of the inner temple has vanished completely, the south wall's first course of blocks was preserved for a length of 11 m. The very last block at the west end had a special L-shape forming the corner of the south façade of the building and at the same time was dressed back to form the first row of the casing of the pyramid.<sup>4</sup> Another block of this type, which was partly moved by the stone robbers, already sticks out of the debris on the pyramid's east face a couple of meters above the temple façade (fig. 5).

As was usual, the inner temple stood on a higher platform thus causing a step between the eastern part of the pyramid temple and the intimate part. Maragioglio and Rinaldi (1977: 78) reported a difference of 80 cm (84 cm in their plans) between these two temple parts. It is not clear, however, where exactly the two Italians took their measurements in order to reach this number. No floor blocks are left in the transverse corridor for calculation. Our measurements, which are based on various points surrounding the inner temple, namely the floor in the columned court, the floor in the north

<sup>4</sup> This special form of casing block is also attested at the pyramid of Unas (Labrousse – Lauer – Leclant 1977: pl. XXII).

pyramid courtyard and the corridor between the *ka*-pyramid and the temple, revealed a difference in height of *ca.* 66 cm (1 cubit, 2 palms).<sup>5</sup>

The intimate temple is separated from the columned courtyard by the transverse corridor. The distance between the east face of the massive platform of the

inner temple to the west wall of the open courtyard is *ca.* 5.1 m (almost 10 cubits). It is clear, however, that this distance was not the intended width of the original transverse corridor. Based on a few remaining blocks along the east side of the platform, it becomes clear that the original width of the corridor was about 2.7 m

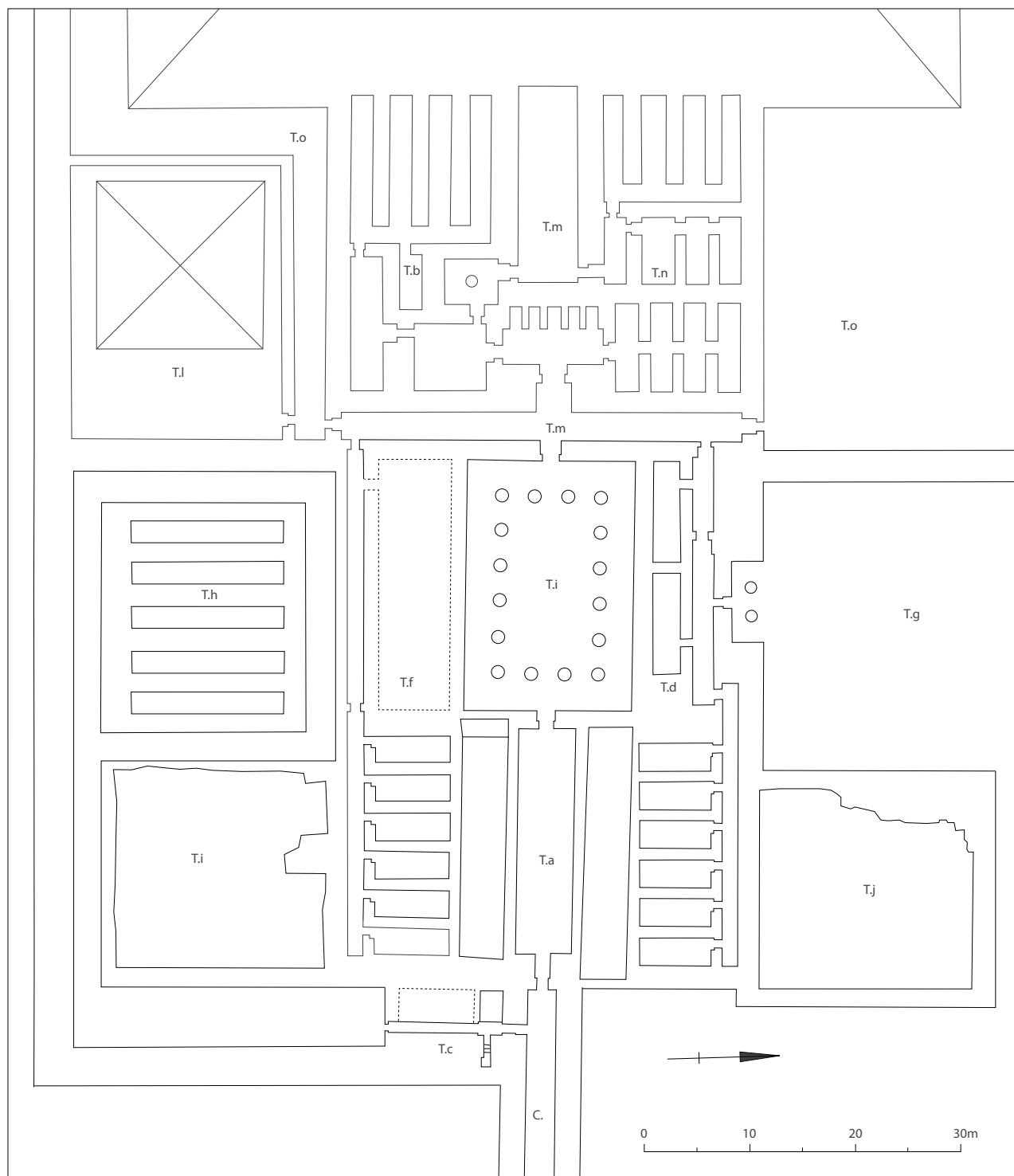


Fig. 4 Simplified preliminary plan of the pyramid temple excavated and documented until 2019 (drawing Djedkare's Project, P. Jánosi)

<sup>5</sup> Teti: 1 cubit, Pepy I and Pepy II: 2 cubits (see Jéquier 1938: 24; Lauer – Leclant 1972: 25; Labrousse 2019: 119, fig. 77).



Fig. 5 The preserved casing of the king's pyramid south of the intimate temple. At this spot, the casing blocks are cut "L-shaped" since their north side forms part of the façade of the intimate temple (photo Djedkare's Project, P. Jánosi)

(= 5 cubits) (Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977: 76 reconstructed 6 cubits). What is interesting about this is that a few remaining blocks along the east face were not part of the platform, but clearly added later. None of these blocks were connected with the platform. This feature is curious, since there is no convincing explanation (a miscalculation by the architects?) for initially building the two temple parts with an intermediary space of 5 m and then (during the construction of the temple) add an additional row of blocks along the east side in order to reduce the space in the transverse corridor. However, this observation in this part of the temple is not the only puzzling feature of Djedkare's building (see for instance the different lengths of the core walls of the *pr-wrw*, the southern one receiving an addition at the west side).

The transverse corridor provided access to the north and the south pyramid courtyards and the *ka*-pyramid, respectively. In its east wall two more doors (besides the central gateway) gave way to corridors and rooms to the east. In the centre of its west wall a huge doorway opened to the west into the intimate temple area. In order to access the first room – the room with the five chapels – a staircase, set into a deep niche, led to the upper part. Nothing of this installation remains today. The emplacement, where the staircase (probably

made of travertine)<sup>6</sup> was once built, has a deep hole revealing the foundation construction of the corridor and the platform. The statue room has vanished almost beyond recognition. No floor blocks remained in place; only a few blocks to the west of the entrance indicate its western outline. As for its size, only an estimate according to the available space is possible. No remains indicate the original position and sizes of the chapels as well. It can be inferred that they were made of red granite. Whether the central chapel was bigger (like in the temples of Khafre, Teti and Pepy II) than the other four (as suggested by Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977: 78), remains a mere speculation. However, clear traces of a door were revealed at the south side of the room attesting to the connection into to the so-called *vestibule*.<sup>7</sup> No floor blocks of this room remained either; only the foundation was fairly well preserved showing that this room also had a floor made of travertine slabs (fig. 6). The form of the vestibule was almost square, measuring 6.90 by 6.33 m (13 × 12 cubits). The lower parts at the floor level of the south and west walls were preserved, and a block at the east side indicated the southeast corner of the room. Compared to the other known *vestibules* of the Old Kingdom, Djedkare's *vestibule* is remarkable in many ways. It was larger than the *antichambre carrée*

<sup>6</sup> In the temple of Teti the staircase was made of one block of travertine consisting of eight steps (5–6 cm in height) (Lauer – Leclant 1972: 24, pl. XIII).

<sup>7</sup> As for the somewhat inappropriate labelling of this room as "*vestibule*", see most recently Labrousse (2019: 131, footnote 246). In this report, however, the authors retain the traditional name for the sake of convenience.



Fig. 6 The outlines of the large vestibule in the inner part of the temple are clearly visible although all of the original travertine floor has disappeared (photo Djedkare's Project, M. Megahed)

( $10 \times 9$  cubits),<sup>8</sup> and it did not follow the elongated form that is first attested in the temple of Sahure and remained characteristic in all the pyramid temples until Pepy II (Pepy I:  $14 \times 6$  cubits; Labrousse 2019: 131). For the first time, the *vestibule* received a third door located in the south wall connecting to further rooms. This feature remains present in all the successive pyramid temples of the late Old Kingdom. Traces of the door leading west into the *antichambre carrée* were found along the west wall. The door leading to the south was a small passageway (max. width: 80 cm) near the southwest corner of the room (fig. 4).

South of the vestibule, however, very little remained to offer a conclusive picture of the layout and size of the room(s) in this part of the temple. The traces of architecture suggest that the small passage must have led to a connecting chamber (?) and further on to a corridor oriented east-west providing access to the four long magazines to the west. One of these rooms – the second from the south – was already cleared in 2014 (Megahed – Jánosi 2017: 237–256). During this season, all four rooms were excavated and documented, revealing their good states of preservation (fig. 7). All of these rooms had their limestone floors intact. Furthermore, the west end of each room still had the lower part of its

walls preserved up to a height of 59–62 cm. However, very little traces remained of the sidewalls between the rooms. Most of the outlines were only preserved on the intact floor. Thus, we have no evidence to indicate whether these magazines once had two stories as with other temples (Sahure, Teti, Pepy I). The length of each room was 12.20 m (23 cubits); the width however varied. Only the southernmost magazine conformed to exactly 4 cubits (2.10 m). The two middle rooms were narrower (2.03 and 2.06 m), while the northernmost measured 1.85 m in width.<sup>9</sup> Another peculiar feature of these magazines is the fact that their west walls are not strictly aligned on a north-south line (all the walls are slightly askew) and – most importantly – they do not end at the baseline of the pyramid but actually extend beyond it (fig. 4).

The offering hall, the main sanctuary of the pyramid temple, was entered from the *antichambre carrée* (Megahed 2016c: 239–258). The connecting door stood at the west end of the north wall of the antechamber, but no masonry remained at that spot to document the exact position and size of the passageway. It was built of red granite as indicated by the incomplete decorated east doorjamb still lying in the vicinity. The sidewalls of the offering hall were 2.6 m (5 cubits) thick, surpassing the

<sup>8</sup> One wonders if some of the sculptures found by Ahmed Fakhry in this area (see above and fig. 6) were originally installed in this large room. Especially the animal figures (Megahed 2016b: 24–33) might provide a connection to the later attested decoration found on the walls of the *vestibule* (cf. Pepy II).

<sup>9</sup> The same is true for the intermediary walls, which vary between 1.58 m (3 cubits) and 1.85 m ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  cubits).

thickness of all the other walls in the inner temple. This thickness was due to the ceiling construction consisting of two rows of huge limestone blocks set against each other and carved from below to form a (false) vault. The ceiling was decorated with yellow stars set against a dark blue background. Except for some small pieces with star decoration no part of this ceiling remained today. The hall was denuded down to the foundation. In no place was the original floor once made of calcite – as attested by the many fragments still scattered on the foundation – preserved (fig. 8).<sup>10</sup> The existing wall blocks nevertheless confirm that the room once had a width of 10 cubits. The west wall with the huge false door – probably made of quartzite – has entirely disappeared. There, only a huge limestone block with some traces of pinkish mortar remains in place. This slab could indicate the original position of the huge false door set up here. Beyond this point, however, everything is destroyed, and a huge breach reaches deep into the core of the pyramid. This gap, today filled with debris and large stones constantly sliding down the pyramid's east side, was not excavated. Thus, as for the exact length of the offering hall only a tentative reconstruction is possible now. Taking the large foundation slab as the original position of the false door, the room could have had a length of 30 cubits, which is in accordance with all other pyramid temples (except Unas) of the late Old Kingdom (see the list in

Arnold 1988: 57). However, the available space in the west (if not merely the work of treasure hunters or stone robbers) might indicate a length of at least 32 or even 34 cubits. The large foundation slab then probably supported the altar in front of the false door, which would then be assumed further west. This would also mean that the offering hall did not end at the foot of the pyramid but reached into its core masonry. An indication to support the argument of a longer offering hall is the fact that the west end of all four magazine rooms to the south of the offering hall (see above) also reach into the masonry and do not end at the foot of the pyramid as is usual with magazines in the other pyramid temples. Since it seems to be a kind of “law” that no other room in the inner temple was longer than the central sanctuary, this could very well be a further corroboration of a long offering hall.

Since the entire floor in the room has vanished nothing can be said about any installations once present in the room. In front of the false door, certainly an altar probably made of calcite was set up. Next to it, along the north wall a massive table made of the same material would be expected; that is well attested in other royal offering halls: Unas, Pepy I, Merenre, Queens Neith and Iput II (Jéquier 1933: 10, 45, pls. I–IV, XXXVI, XXXVII; Lauer 1972: 591, pls. VIIb, VIIIa; Lauer 1974: pl. XV; Labrousse – Lauer – Leclant 1977: 49, fig. 33; Labrousse



Fig. 7 The west end of the four magazines in T.b, built directly against the pyramid's core masonry (photo Djedkare's Project, P. Jánosi)

<sup>10</sup> For an early precursor of an offering room paved with this special kind of stone, see Borchardt (1910: 57).



**Fig. 8** View across the cleared offering hall looking west, showing the large limestone slab at its end, probably marking the position of the quartzite false door (photo Djedkare's Project, P. Jánosi)



2019: 212).<sup>11</sup> In the debris found in the joints of the blocks forming the lowermost row of the north wall of the hall, a number of calcite fragments with traces of well-carved decoration and signs were recovered (see fig. 14f here). These fragments might originate either from the altar in front of the false door or from the table at the north wall.<sup>12</sup> In or near the east wall, a basin and the opening of a drainage system must have existed. Except for one block of the east wall, all the masonry, however, has vanished in this part. The area immediately east of the offering hall is today marked by a deep hole. At the hole's east end, a huge block made of quartzite, displaying the characteristic cut of the drain on the upper side, juts out of the still existing masonry of the intact foundation (fig. 9). The width of the drain was

about 16–17 cm; its depth 7–8 cm. To the east of this block, three further quartzite blocks are still in position and covered by the foundation construction of the inner temple. The east end of this section of the intact drain system was already uncovered in 2017. It was still in place in the foundation of the west wall of the transverse corridor below the entrance into the room with the five chapels.<sup>13</sup> While all the drain blocks were made of brownish quartzite, huge limestone blocks covered the water-conduit.

A word should be said about the “space” between the room with the five chapels and the east wall of the offering hall. Due the discovery of a hidden chamber (“serdab”) between these two rooms in the temple of Pepy II and probably also in the temple of Teti (Jéquier 1938: 24–25,

<sup>11</sup> This stone table, which sometimes is adorned with torus moulding and cavetto cornice, is also a characteristic feature in many large mastabas of that time.

<sup>12</sup> Similar fragments made of calcite were found in Pepy I's offering hall (Labrousse 2019: 213).

<sup>13</sup> For the final end of this drainage system in the upper end of the causeway, see the report Megahed – Jánosi – Vymazalová (2017b: 36–63).

pl. I; Lauer – Leclant 1972: 29, pl. XXV), such a room might have already existed in earlier temples as well.<sup>14</sup> However, in the case of Djedkare (as in the temple of Unas) the space between the two rooms is too narrow (only *ca.* 3 m) to accommodate such a hidden chamber (on this, see already Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977: 78, 94). In the temples of Teti and Pepy II, the space amounts to 10 cubits (Jéquier 1938: 25).

The rooms found in the northern half of the intimate temple were divided in two parts comprising three rows of magazines of different sizes and forms (fig. 1). The eastern set was directly accessible from the room with the five chapels and consisted of one row only. The second and western set comprised two rows, which were accessed via the offering hall. There was no interconnection between these two sets of magazines (as suggested by Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977: tav. 16). Thus, each arrangement of magazines was obviously only related to each of the two most important rooms within the pyramid temple, the statue chamber (room with the five chapels) as the final point of the outer temple and the offering hall as the nucleus of the inner temple. Unfortunately, no traces remained to confirm if these magazines had two stories as in other temples. All of these rooms had floors made of fine white limestone.

The eastern set of rooms accessible from the room with the five chapels comprised probably eight rooms altogether. The northern six can be fairly well reconstructed (fig. 4) due to the preserved outlines on the still existing floor blocks as well as the structure of the still remaining foundation, indicating the former presence of the supporting walls. These six symmetrically arranged rooms were accessible from a central passage, 2 cubits wide. There were no indications of doors closing these six rooms, each one measuring  $3.60 \times 2.06$  m ( $4 \times 6$  cubits). This peculiar layout of these six rooms seems to be unique for pyramid temples thus far. The area connecting these six rooms with the statue room remains enigmatic however and can only be reconstructed tentatively.<sup>15</sup> No clear evidence exists for any doors and the layout of the room. Because of the available space it might have been of similar form and size to the other rooms, thus forming eight rooms altogether.

The central row of rooms to the west and accessed from the offering hall (traces of the door still remained), comprised four rooms orientated east west. While all four rooms had the same length (12 cubits) the width differed for each room (4 to 5 cubits). The first or southern room was a connecting room providing also



Fig. 9 View of the room with the five chapels (now missing) from the west. Below this room, a section of the still intact quartzite water drain is preserved (photo Djedkare's Project, P. Jánosi)

<sup>14</sup> In the temple of Sahure, this "space" between the two rooms was entirely massif (Borchard 1910: 21, 57).

<sup>15</sup> Note that already Maragioglio and Rinaldi were not able to provide a conclusive solution for this part of the inner temple. While in their report they speak of "a corridor that gave access to five rooms" their plan only shows four (Maragioglio – Rinaldi 1977: 78, tav. 16). But see Maragioglio and Rinaldi (1962: tav. 6), where five rooms were documented.

access via a door in the west wall (not preserved) to the westernmost set of rooms. This row also consisted of four rooms (oriented east-west) of different widths. The west end of these rooms is lost today, but it can be inferred from the magazines in the south that in all likelihood they also reached beyond the baseline of the pyramid (fig. 4).

### THE FRAGMENTS OF RELIEF DECORATION

Since the modern excavation in the pyramid complex of Djedkare (for the history of the excavation, see Megahed 2016a: 66–70) began, none of the wall decoration of the complex has been found *in situ*. Thousands of fragments of relief decoration were collected from the site by both Abdel Salam Hussein in 1945 and Ahmed Fakhry in 1952; however, we can assign some of these fragments to certain parts of the funerary temple (Megahed 2016c: 245–248; Megahed 2018: 324–325).

A large number of the fragments of relief decoration and artefacts that were previously found by Hussein and Fakhry are missing their provenances, and only a small number of these finds that were found by Hussein can definitively be assigned to a specific area within the temple, thanks to the general photographs that were taken by Alexander Varille, now kept in the University of Milan's archive.

The mission was able to collect a few fragments of relief decoration from two of the three major areas that were cleaned during the 2019 fall season. Although, the fragments were not found *in situ*, as was the fate of many other pieces of relief decoration of Djedkare, the location of the fragments found during this season let us better understand the original position of these fragments. However, the authors of this paper have excluded the fragments depicting the *hkrw*-frieze and five-pointed stars, since these were found in large numbers.

Many of the fragments with relief decoration were uncovered in the intimate part of the funerary temple, especially in areas T.b and T.m. Fragment DJ 426 (fig. 10a) was found *ca.* 2 m south of the *antichambre carrée*. The limestone fragment measures 9 × 11 × 1.3 cm and contains a very fine relief with traces of the separating line and the sky with five-pointed stars, with traces of light blue colour representing the sky. Under the sky an *ꜥnh*-sign is depicted, and most probably it represents part of the general blessing, usually inscribed above the deities (for comparison see Megahed 2016c: fig. 11; Megahed 2016a: pl. 83).

DJ 427 (fig. 10b) represents a fragment of limestone with low relief, and it measures 32 × 15 × 10 cm. It was found in the south part of the intimate temple. The surface also displays a very fine carved relief showing traces of a male figure facing left. His left arm is outstretched downward to reach the head of a cow, of which only the remains of its face are partly preserved on the left side of the scene. The missing right arm of the male figure suggests that it might be outstretched upward to hold the head of the cow from above. Behind

the male figure, the hieroglyphic sign *hm(t)* is carved. It is also worth mentioning that the upper edge of the fragment is sharply cut. One may suggest that this scene represents some cattle mating in pasture, which is frequently attested in the decoration of the private tombs (OEE: 4.3). However, this kind of scene is rarely attested in the decoration of the royal funerary complexes. On the other hand, cattle and animals in general are very well attested in the “Room of the Seasons” in the sun temple of King Nyuserre at Abu Ghurab, with the females designated with *hm(t)* (Seyfried 2019: pls. 1–4).

DJ 428 represents a limestone fragment with low relief, and it measures 30 × 8 × 16.5 cm (fig. 10c). The piece was found in the south side of the intimate temple. It shows the upper most parts of the ears of a jackal (for comparison see Megahed 2016a: 190–191, pl. 129). The bottom, left and top edges of the fragment bear sharp cuts.

The scene on DJ 429 consists of three pieces of limestone (fig. 10d). The three fragments together measure 18.8 × 9 × 3.7 cm. They were found in the offering hall (T.m3). The scene shows a depiction of offerings, and most probably it originally comes from the relief decoration of the offering hall of Djedkare.

The fragment of limestone DJ 432 measures 15.2 × 7 × 2.5 cm (fig. 10e). Only a small part of the relief surface that depicts, most probably, a striding figure remains on this block. The relief shows a large toe facing right with no traces of color. Because DJ 432 was found in the debris covering the storerooms (T.b) in the south-west part of the intimate temple, it seems most appropriate to assign the original location of this fragment to the *antichambre carrée*, since the storerooms were not decorated.

The scene on DJ 435 consists of three small pieces of calcite (fig. 10f). The fragments were found among many other small unincised calcite fragments in the north side of the offering hall (T.m3). Certainly, they once represented part of the alabaster altar in the offering hall of the funerary temple of Djedkare. The scene depicted on the surface shows on its upper part five-pointed stars, while in the bottom register there are hieroglyphic signs *h* and *s* incised. The three fragments together measure 9.2 × 8 × 3 cm. It is worth mentioning that other calcite blocks were found in the funerary temple of Djedkare. Most probably they were part of the calcite altar of the open courtyard (for more details on this altar and altars from the funerary temples of Sahure, Nyuserre and Teti, see Megahed 2014).

As we have seen, we can only presume the original location of many of the pieces that were found in the funerary temple of Djedkare. This is only possible through the nature of the scenes and a comparison of these reliefs with similar ones that were found in other Old Kingdom funerary complexes. This case can be also applied to all the fragments that were found, whether by Hussein or Fakhry. Certainly, the reliefs carved on the calcite fragment DJ 435 represent part of the altar of the main offering hall, while the rest of the reliefs found during this season could be part of the wall decoration of more than one space in the temple.

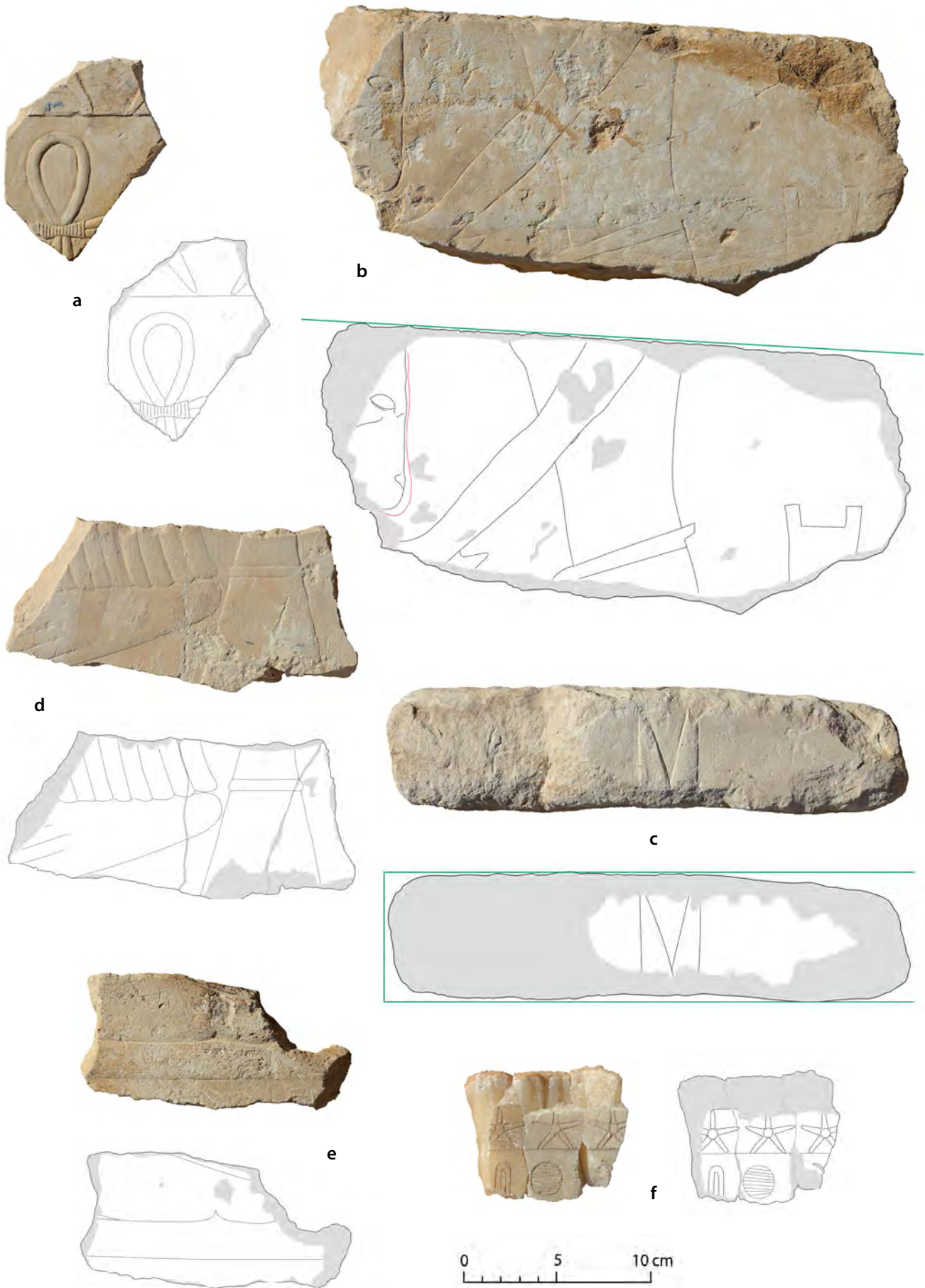


Fig. 10 Fragments of relief decoration that were uncovered during the 2019 fall season (photo and drawing Djedkare's Project, M. Megahed)

Comparative studies between the scenes depicted on those pieces and the blocks that were found in their original places, or near their original places, especially in the funerary complexes of Sahure in Abusir and Pepy II in Saqqara, are of great importance to our understanding of the nature and function of these wall decorations and their original placement.

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