

Fig. 1 Only two sides of the *djed*-pillar Exc. No. 1175 from the funerary temple of Djedkare are carved (photo A. Amin)

## Sculptures from the pyramid complex of Djedkare Isefi at South Saqqara. A preliminary report

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Djedkare was the eighth king of the Fifth Dynasty and played a very important role in the political, economic and religious development of the Old Kingdom state. His reign brought a change in the administrative structure, funerary cults and religious practices. More surprising, until recently, is the fact that no systematic study has been made on the reign of this king and his monuments. The site of the king's pyramid complex remains largely unexcavated and the finds from the previous explorations have never been fully published.

In 1945, the Egyptian Antiquities Department under the direction of Étienne Drioton started the Project of the Pyramids Studies (Drioton 1947: 520–521). Initially, the project was supervised by Abdel Salam Mohamed Hussein, who died in the summer of 1949 (Fakhry 1959: 25). Hussein was assisted during his investigation of Djedkare's funerary complex by Alexander Varille, who also died in 1951 in a car accident in France. Ahmad Fakhry resumed the work of the project later in 1951 and dedicated his third season, from the 30<sup>th</sup> of October until the end of December in 1952, to the funerary complex of Djedkare at South Saqqara (Fakhry 1959: 30). He was assisted in this work by Klaus Baer.<sup>1</sup>

No detailed documentation is available from the work of Hussein and Varille at the site. Some general photographs of the funerary temple of Djedkare and some of the uncovered fragments of relief decoration were identified in the archive of Varille, which has been kept since 2002 in the University of Milan's archive (Piacentini 2010: 64–69). Some notes of Fakhry concerning the architecture of the pyramid complex were found recently in the archive of the Cairo University (for more details, see Megahed 2016).

The finds from the previous excavations of Hussein and Fakhry collected during their work are now kept in the Giza, Atfih and Saqqara magazines of the Ministry of Antiquities. The finds comprise several thousands of fragments of relief

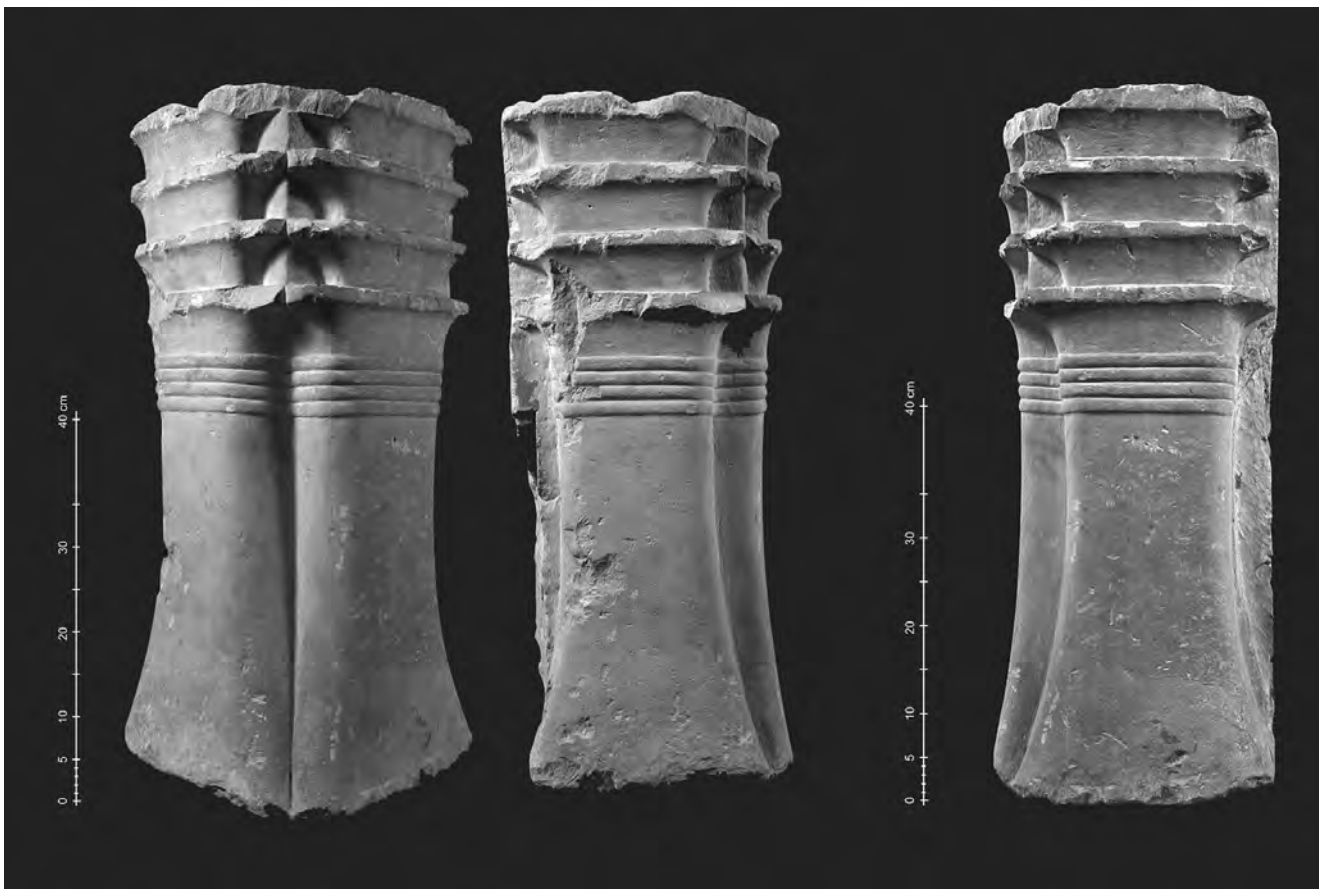


Fig. 2 The *djed*-pillar Exc. No. 1176 is considered to be the most complete of the three examples found in Djedkare’s complex (photo A. Amin)

decoration (Megahed 2016), but also fragments of statues and *djed*-pillars and many pottery finds.

The aim of this brief communication is to present a preliminary report on the sculptures, which were found

in the mortuary complex of King Djedkare. It aims to make the long hidden material available to scholars, and furthermore provoke a discussion, which will undoubtedly contribute to the final publication of the sculptures, which



Fig. 3 The *djed*-pillar Exc. No. 1177 was perhaps placed together with the other two examples of Djedkare in the corners of one of the chambers inside the mortuary temple (photo A. Amin)

is to come in the near future. This preliminary report thus constitutes the basis for further study of the pieces, which will include a wide art-historical approach.

The sculptures are generally inaccessible to the public, and only basic photographic documentation was done by the author in the storerooms. No detailed documentation and no physical comparison of pieces kept in different magazines were possible due to the present conditions.

### ***Djed*-pillars**

Three limestone elements decorated with *djed*-signs were found in the funerary temple of Djedkare (Exc. Nos. 1175, 1176 and 1177; figs. 1–3). Small fragments of a fourth one were uncovered as well but too little of it survived and so it cannot be reconstructed to its original shape. Two sides of the pillars are carved in the shape of the *djed*-sign (Gardiner 1957: 502, R 11), while the other two sides were left without carving, some of them smooth and some not. The top part of the pillars was flat and smooth as well. The measurements of the three preserved pillars are almost identical, they are 93 cm high.

The decoration of the pillars with the *djed*-signs is very suitable for a pyramid complex of a king in general, expressing the concept of endurance and eternity. It is worth mentioning that four of the five royal names of Djedkare comprised the element *djed*, and the concept of endurance was apparently an important part of the king's political program.<sup>2</sup> However, it cannot be confirmed whether the names of the king were in any way connected with these architectural features.

Besides the much earlier frieze of *djed*-signs in Temple T in Netjerykhet's Step Pyramid complex and inside the South Tomb (Lauer 1938: figs. 74–77, pl. ci; Drioton – Lauer 1939: figs. 21, 52–53), another parallel is known from the Old Kingdom pyramid complexes: at least three similar pillars were found in the pyramid complex of Wenis at Saqqara (Labrousse – Lauer – Leclant 1977: 130, doc. 132, fig. 154, with note 1). Two of them were found in the north-east part of the mortuary temple (Egyptian Museum in Cairo, JE 37910 – JE 37911). Wenis's examples are smaller in size than Djedkare's, measuring 60 cm in height (JE 37910 and JE 37911). Moreover, one side of Wenis's pillars has the decoration of the *djed*-sign while the other side has the *tyet*-sign decoration (Gardiner 1957: 508, V 39), which is connected with the goddess Isis in later times, and often appears in apposition with the *djed*-pillar from the Early Dynastic Period (Andrews 1994: 9, 44–45; Germond 2005: 37–40). Another difference is the character of the carving: the sides of these pillars were not sculpted into the signs, like Djedkare's examples, but bore them in the form of a relief.

We can try to determine the function of Djedkare's pillars from the way of their carving, with the two undecorated sides as well as the upper flat part. Their shape indicates that they were used as architectural features in the funerary temple. The carving from two neighbouring sides indicates that they might have been placed in the four corners of one of the chambers inside the mortuary temple. The number of the attested *djed*-pillars can support this idea. In addition, the upper flat part can suggest that they might have formed stands placed in the corners of the

room, used to hold an item on their smoothed top. The smooth top seems to indicate that they did not support anything permanently. No more details can, however, be discussed on the basis of the available evidence.

### **Kneeling captives**

Sculptures of kneeling captives were collected from the funerary temple of Djedkare at South Saqqara (Exc. Nos. 1180, 1186 and 1193; figs. 4–7). They were all made of limestone and found scattered in the temple. The preserved fragments belonged to at least two, possibly three sculptures of this type.

The first discussed statue (Exc. No. 1180; figs. 4–5) shows the bottom part of a kneeling male figure. His upper part, including the shoulders and the head, is lost. His elbows are tied behind his back and his fists are depicted above his feet. He is wearing a short kilt with a belt, knotted at the waist with two strips hanging in front. The preserved height of the statue is 55 cm, while its width is 48 cm. In addition, the statue has a back pillar (17 cm wide). The sculpture is well-executed, with muscles on the legs and belly nicely shaped.

The second sculpture of a male captive (Exc. No. 1186; fig. 6) is also only partly preserved. The statue is missing the head and also parts of his feet and knees. A vertical break is visible on the front part of the statue, which runs from top to bottom through the chest and belly until the knees. The elbows of the captive are tied behind his back, and the rope loops two times around his upper arms, just above the elbows. His closed fists are resting on the top of his feet. The sculpture depicted a non-Egyptian captive, as indicated by his long hair, of which only a small part behind his shoulders remained. The hair was tied with a headband, and its hanging strips are visible on both sides of the sculpture. The captive is wearing a short kilt with a belt on his waist, knotted at the waist but without any hanging strips. The statue measures 66 cm in height, and is 28 cm wide. Like the above-mentioned sculpture, this statue also has a back pillar support and was well-executed, with perhaps less details shown.

Only the upper part of the third sculpture survived (Exc. No. 1193; fig. 7) while the lower part is missing. The statue is badly affected by weather and its face seems to bear traces of intentional man-made damage. It depicts a male captive with long hair reaching to his shoulders, and a headband. The features of the face of the statue suggest that it is a non-Egyptian captive, with large eyes, slightly slanted. His nose is damaged, but one can see that it was a jutting nose. Possibly, this fragment belongs to the same sculpture as fragment Exc. No. 1180 presented above; however, this suggestion cannot be confirmed at the moment because the two fragments are located in two different storerooms.

Sculptures of kneeling captives are well attested in the Old Kingdom mortuary complexes. Statuettes made of wood were found in the funerary temple of Neferefre (Verner 1985; Benešová 2006: 407–410), Nyuserre (Borchardt 1907: 42, Bl. 24), Wenis (Labrousse – Lauer – Leclant 1977: 131), Teti (Lauer – Leclant 1972: 84, 98–99). In addition, several similar statues made of limestone were found in the pyramid



Fig. 4 Part of a kneeling captive statue with a back pillar (Exc. No. 1180), the statue is missing the shoulders and the head (photo M. Megahed)

complex of Pepy I (Leclant 1979: 8–9, figs. 22–24), and perhaps were once also placed in the funerary complex of Pepy II (Jéquier 1940: 27–29; Hill 1999: 440–441, nos. 173–174). The size of these limestone captive statues from the monuments of Pepy I and Pepy II can be compared to those of Djedkare, however, the statues from Pepy I have preserved bases (Leclant 1979: fig. 24).

Most probably this type of statue was placed either at the entrance of the lower part of the causeway, or in the *pr-wrw* hall (Hill 1999: 440), where the king was depicted in scenes trampling the enemies in his either human or animal form (Megahed 2016: 151–157).

The preserved fragments of the captive statues from Djedkare's pyramid complex exhibit long hair and headbands and an elongated face, which all might indicate that they belonged to Asiatic prisoners.

### Sphinxes and lion statues<sup>3</sup>

Two sphinxes and a lion statue made of limestone were discovered in the pyramid complex of Djedkare (Exc. Nos. 1188, 1192 and 2243; figs. 8–11). The precise place of their discovery is, however, unknown. All the three sculptures show some specific features indicating that they were not free standing statues but architectural elements.

The statue of a lion (Exc. No. 2243; fig. 8–9) depicts the lion sitting with his front legs extended. The preserved height of the statue is 105 cm, while it is 107 cm long. The statue is almost completely preserved but is broken into several fragments. It is very well-executed and the body and face of the lion are well-shaped. His tail is turned around his right hind leg. The upper surface of the lion, from the top of its head to its back part, is flat and rough.

A similar lion statue was found in the mortuary complex of Sahure (Borchardt 1910: 111–112), namely, in the southern storerooms of the funerary temple (Borchardt 1910: 112–113, Bl. 144–145). It is a clear, earlier parallel to

Djedkare's lion statue. Sahure's lion is not well-preserved and four fragments were uncovered, showing that the lion was sitting with his front legs extended. The general shape of the statue is similar to Djedkare's lion, with small differences (e.g. the empty space between the front and back legs, pedestals under the feet). The top of his back from head to tail is flat and rough and Borchardt deduced the sculpture to be a part (a side) of an offering table with an inclination for the flowing of liquids (Borchardt 1910: 112–113).



Fig. 5 Details of the kilt of the kneeling captive statue Exc. No. 1180, showing the belt and two strips hanging in front (photo M. Megahed)

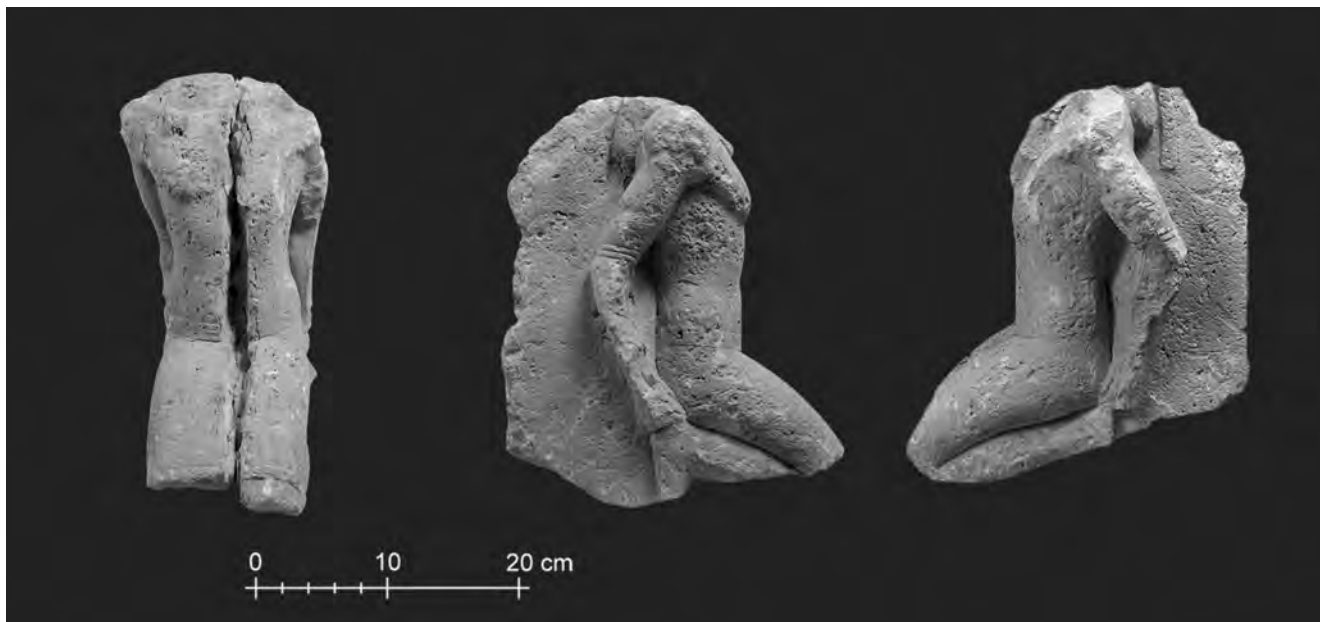


Fig. 6 The kneeling captive statue Exc. No. 1186 is also missing the head and the feet and it has a back pillar support (photo A. Amin)



Fig. 7 The third sculpture of a kneeling captive Exc. No. 1193 is showing the top part of the captive and long hair reaching to his shoulders (photo M. Megahed)

The two sphinxes are only partly preserved but we can recognize both to be in the shape of a lion resting on his belly. One of the sphinxes (Exc. No. 1188; fig. 10) is well-preserved but its face and front legs are missing. The sculpture is ca. 75 cm long and 64 cm high. The lion mane is discernibly shaped and the left ear survived. The body of the lion is well-executed and its tail is turned around the right hind leg. The second sphinx (Exc. No. 1192; fig. 11) had the same shape; its front legs are preserved but the head and the chest are missing and the left hind leg is damaged. It is ca. 103 cm long and 60 cm high.

Each of the sphinxes is resting on a rectangular pedestal. It is worth noting that the left side of the pedestal of Exc. No. 1192 and the right and the back side of the pedestal of Exc. No. 1188, were not smoothed (the front one of the first sphinx Exc. No. 1188 is missing) and this is an indication that the sculptures were to be perhaps attached to a wall or another feature. The first statue might have been attached by its right side while the second by its left side. In addition, the better-preserved first statue features a pillar on the back of the lion's body. This pillar starts behind the lion's head and reaches to its back part. This feature indicates that the statues were not free-standing but served as architectural elements, similarly to the above-mentioned lion statue.

In both cases, the head is damaged and the original shape of the face is unclear. The traces of the ear and a partly preserved outer shape of the face of the better-preserved sphinx, however, seem to indicate that the head was of a lion.

Royal sculptures representing sphinxes are very rare in the Old Kingdom. Perhaps the red quartzite head of Djedefre (Louvre Museum E 12626) found in Abu Rawash, depicting the king wearing the *nemes* headdress, is the oldest example of a sphinx statue (Chassinat 1921–1922: 53–76, pls. 8–9; Ziegler 1999: 248). However, recently the attribution of the head of Djedefre to a sphinx statue has been reconsidered by scholars as a head of a seated or



Fig. 8 Two sides of a seated lion Exc. No. 2243 from the funerary temple of Djedkare (photo A. Amin)



Fig. 9 The front and back part of the seated lion Exc. No. 2243 from the funerary temple of Djedkare (photo A. Amin)

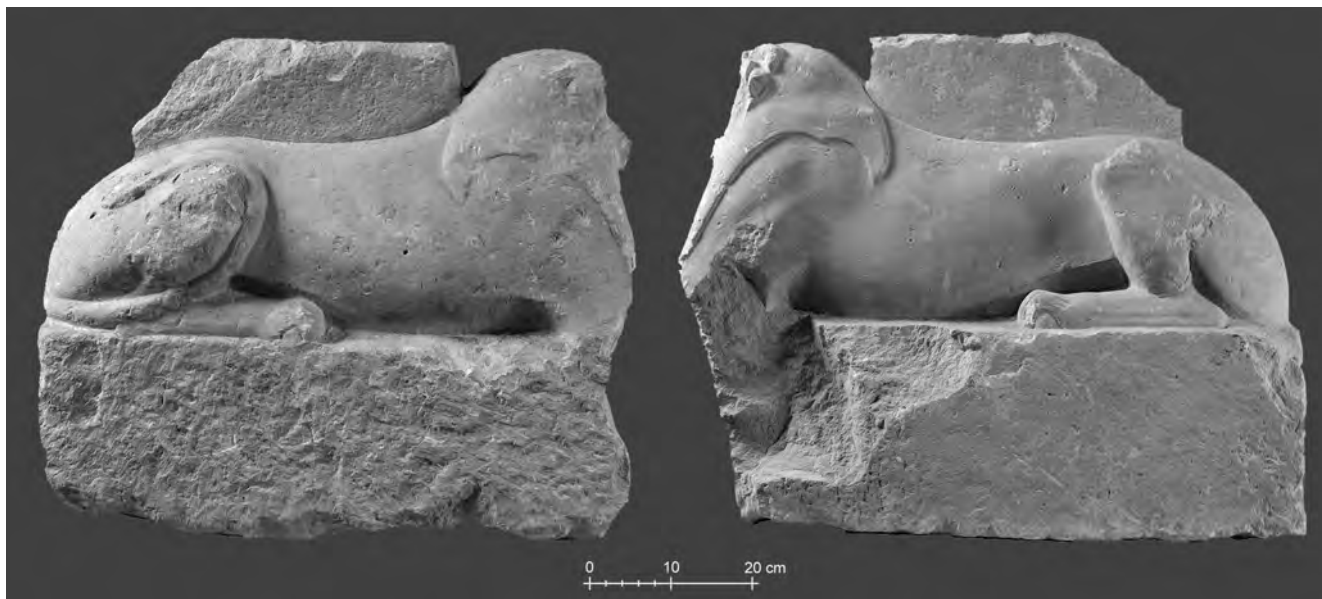


Fig. 10 Statue of a sphinx Exc. No. 1188 resting on a rectangular pedestal that has one side (left) polished and the other side (right) unpolished (photo A. Amin)

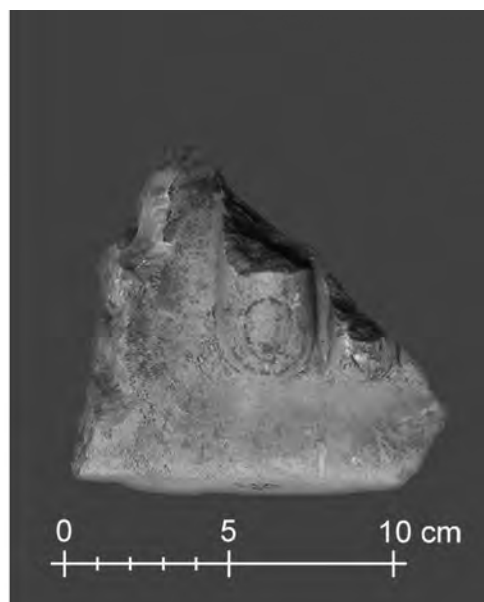


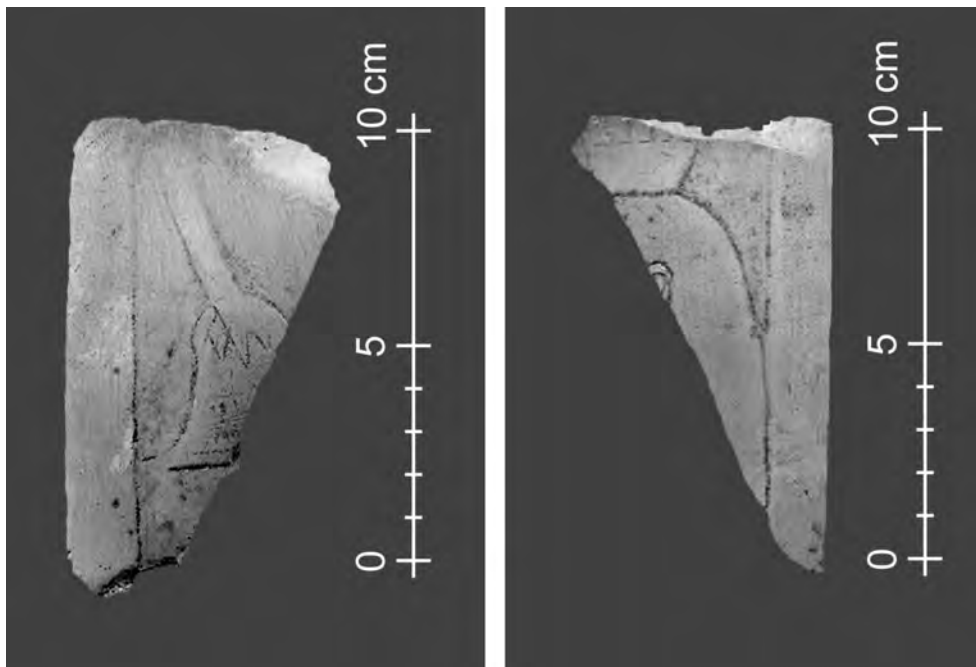
Fig. 11 Statue of a sphinx Exc. No. 1192 resting on a rectangular pedestal that has one side (right) polished and the other side (left) unpolished (photo A. Amin)

Fig. 12 Fragment of alabaster representing remains of a seated statue of Djedkare (Exc. No. 218): part of the left foot of the king and the base of the statue (photo M. Megahed)



> Fig. 13 Alabaster fragment representing remains of a seated statue of Djedkare (Exc. No. 218): part of the king's foot (photo M. Megahed)





< Fig. 14 Fragment of alabaster representing remains of a seated statue of Djedkare (Exc. No. 218): a corner of the throne with remains of the *sm<sup>3</sup>-t<sup>3</sup>.wy* motif (photo M. Megahed)

Fig. 15 Alabaster fragment representing remains of a seated statue of Djedkare (Exc. No. 218): head of the Nile god (photo M. Megahed)

standing statue of the king (Fay 1996: 62) or as part of a striding statue (Valloggia 2001: 82). The Great Sphinx of Giza represents the most famous instance of this type of sculpture in ancient Egyptian history (for a detailed study of this statue, see Lehner 1991).

Parallels to Djedkare's sphinxes (Exc. Nos. 1188 and 1192) can be found in the sphinx statue of Wenis (Hawass 2010: 211–212, figs. 8–11). The example of Wenis is more complete and the head is preserved, showing the face of the king and the *nemes* headdress.

Most probably fragments of sphinx statues were found in the funerary complex of Teti (Hawass 2010: 223), although this information cannot be confirmed. A large fragment (2.15 m long) of a base for a sphinx statue (Egyptian Museum in Cairo, JE 29220) made of schist was found in Haret el-Roum (Romans Ally) in El-Ghoureya, Cairo, in 1891. The fragment represents remains of a statue of Pepy I (Borchardt 1925: 90, no. 541, pl. 90, no. 541).

Interestingly, we can find a reference to Djedkare's sphinx in the biographical inscription of Kaemtjenenet, who lived during the reign of Djedkare (for translation, see *e.g.* Strudwick 2005: 283–285). The inscription describes how the king and Kaemtjenenet brought a sphinx and its base in boats to the funerary complex to be placed in its perfect place for eternity. The sphinx was to be placed, according to this inscription, on a 5-cubit (2.6 m) base and the king assigned Kaemtjenenet to organise this work and to calculate the amount of labour (Schott 1977: 448; see also Vymazalová 2015: 45–46). One should wonder whether the 2.6 m refers to the height or the length of the base, since it is not specified in the original text (Schott 1977: fig. 4, line 4). To specify the exact place within the temple is, however, difficult on the basis of the extant evidence. It is worth mentioning that the sphinx was called *m<sup>3</sup>j* in the biographical inscription of Kaemtjenenet (Schott 1977: fig. 4, line 5), and this expression refers to a lion as well as a sphinx/lion statue (Hannig 2003: 500, nos. 12072, 12074). It is not clear whether the pedestal mentioned in the

inscription relates to the preserved remains of sphinxes, or whether yet another sphinx of King Djedkare was once placed in the mortuary temple.

### Djedkare's statue

Among the fragments collected from the mortuary temple of Djedkare at South Saqqara, seven fragments of alabaster were found, which represent remains of a seated statue of Djedkare (Exc. No. 218 (7 pieces), figs. 12–16). On one of the fragments (fig. 12), a part of the left foot of the king



Fig. 16 Fragment of alabaster representing remains of a seated statue of Djedkare (Exc. No. 218): part of the kilt (photo M. Megahed)



remained together with part of the base of the statue, which carries an inscription reading: [*nšwt bity*] *Dd-k3-R<sup>c</sup> di ʿnh dt*, “King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Djedkare, given (granted) life, eternity”. Another fragment shows a different part of the same foot, which cannot, however, be attached directly to the previous fragment (fig. 13).

Another fragment represents a corner of the throne and both its sides depict the *sm3-ḥ3.wy* motif: the papyrus plant (fig. 14), head of the Nile god (fig. 15). The rest of the seven fragments show parts of the king's body and the kilt with pleating (fig. 16).

A seated statue of Djedkare (only the lower part was found) made of limestone was found by Petrie in the temple of Osiris at Abydos (Petrie 1902: 28, pl. 55, no. 2; Verner 2014: 80, fig. 16), and this might be a good parallel to the fragments of the alabaster statue.

In addition to the above-mentioned examples, also other sculptures were found in the mortuary complex of Djedkare, which perhaps dated to later times. In the funerary temple, we can still find an unfinished, perhaps Ramesside, sculpture depicting a child with a side lock.

The sculptures which have been found in the mortuary complex of King Djedkare include various types, including the king's statue, captives, sphinxes and lions, as well as *djed*-pillars. As we have seen, these sculptures vary not only in form but perhaps also in their functions. As noted above, the *djed*-pillars may have been used in the corners of a chamber as an architectural element, where its shape symbolized the eternal role of stability.

The reason for carving statues of kneeling captives and placing them in the Old Kingdom mortuary complexes from the Fifth Dynasty onward was to emphasize the idea of the king's control over the universe and defeating his enemies. The translation of this idea known from two-dimensional reliefs, such as those depicting the king's enemies slain under his macehead or claws, into three-dimensional figures has a fundamental significance to manifest the role of the king. The same idea can be also applied to the sphinx statues, where in this case the royal sculpture represents part of the divine aspects of the kingship.

Of the king's statues, which once belonged to the equipment of his mortuary temple and were used during cultic rituals, only small fragments of one statue were uncovered. We can, however, presume that the preserved fragments constitute only a small part of all the statuary which once belonged to the pyramid complex of King Djedkare. The author's intention is to document the pieces in more detail in the storerooms of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and to present a more detailed analysis of these sculptures in the near future.

#### Note:

<sup>1</sup> For the complete history of the excavation of the site, see Megahed (2011: 617–619).

<sup>2</sup> For the royal names, see e.g. Leprohon 2013: 40.

<sup>3</sup> The find of fragments of sphinx statues in the mortuary temple of Djedkare was recorded by different scholars (Smith 1949: i; Leclant 1954: 68; Fakhry 1961: 181; Fay 1996: 63, no. 10; Lehner 1997: 154).

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### Abstract:

After more than sixty years since the first investigation of the pyramid complex of King Djedkare Isesi at South Saqqara, the monument keeps adding to our knowledge a great amount of information concerning the architecture and the decorative program of the royal pyramid complexes in the late Fifth Dynasty. In addition, Djedkare's pyramid complex, where *djed*-pillars, fragments of kneeling captive statues, sphinxes, lion statues and a small statue of the king himself were found, provides us with material about the royal statuary program. This article presents these sculptures, hoping to complete a detailed publication in the near future.

Old Kingdom – Djedkare – pyramid complex – South Saqqara – royal sculptures

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