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Zahi Hawass

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The Tomb of Dedi, Superior of Inspector Merer (Pap. Jarf D) (?) and Two Other New Discovered Old Kingdom Tombs at Giza

ZAHI HAWASS*

ABSTRACT

This article presents three hitherto unpublished mastabas from the Western Field of Khufu' pyramid complex: the mastabas of Dedi (GM 1727), Ankh-jb (GM 1703) and Henuneb (GM 1709). The tomb of Dedi is the subject of particular attention, due to the rarity of the name of its owner, who could well be identified with the scribe Dedi, who is mentioned in the Wadi el-Jarf papyri, and who is known to have played a major role in transporting the Tura limestone blocks destined to the construction of the Great Pyramid. The owner of GM 1727 would then be the first scribe in Egyptian history whose written work and burial are both known.

Keywords: Giza, mastabas, Khufu, Dedi, Wadi el-Jarf, Red Sea Papyrus.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente trois mastabas inédits du cimetière ouest du complexe funéraire de Chéops : les tombes de Dedi (GM 1727), Ânkh-ib (GM 1703) et Hénouneb (GM 1709). La tombe de Dedi fait l'objet d'une attention particulière, en raison de la rareté du nom de son propriétaire, qui pourrait être identifié au scribe Dedi mentionné dans les papyrus du Ouadi el-Jarf, lequel est connu pour avoir joué un rôle majeur dans la logistique du transport

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des blocs de calcaire nécessaires à la construction de la grande pyramide. Le propriétaire du mastaba GM 1727 serait ainsi le premier scribe de l'histoire égyptienne dont on connaisse à la fois l'œuvre écrite et la sépulture.

Mots-clés : Giza, mastabas, Chéops, Dedi, Ouadi el-Jarf, papyrus de la mer Rouge.

The batch of papyri from Wadi el-Jarf, recently discovered on the Red Sea coast, includes the logbooks left by a team of royal workmen who were involved in the building of Khufu's pyramid in Giza. Some of them—the best preserved—were written to the name of a minor official, Inspector Merer (*sḫḏ Mrr*), who was in charge of one of the team's phyles (*s3*) and was tasked, among other things, with transporting blocks of Tura limestone to the site of the king's funerary complex.[1] But other, more fragmentary diaries show a more senior figure in the hierarchy, the scribe Dedi (*sš Ddj*), who was clearly responsible for all four *phyles* forming this team. His name appears regularly in 'Papyrus D', which details the tasks carried out by the team's various phyles at the foot of the Giza Plateau, in the area of the King's Valley temple.[2] In fact, the decorated tomb of this official was most likely identified by our team in the Giza necropolis even before the discovery of these papyri. This convergence of several sources on a single individual at this early period of Egypt's history is quite exceptional and confirms the importance of the teams working on the king's funerary monument, whose highest officials could be granted the privilege of a tomb in the royal necropolis.

1. Discovery of the tomb of Dedi () – mastaba 1727

We discovered the tomb of Dedi in the Western Field of Khufu's pyramid thirty years ago. It was one of a series of tombs uncovered in 1990 and was given the serial number 1727. It lies to the west of the tomb of Perniankhu[3] and to the south of both the stone and mudbrick tombs of Kai.[4] The name of the owner is very rare, which makes his identification with the

1 P. Tallet, *Les papyrus de la mer Rouge I. Le « journal de Merer » (Papyrus Jarf A et B)*, MIFAO 136, Cairo, 2017.

2 *Id.*, *Les papyrus de la mer Rouge II. Le « journal de Dedi » et autres fragments de journaux de bord (papyrus Jarf C, D, E, F et Aa)*, MIFAO 145, Cairo, 2021, pp. 47–95.

3 Z. Hawass, "The Statue of the Dwarf *Pr-n(j)-ʿnḫ(w)* Recently Discovered at Giza," *MDAIK* 47, 1991, pp. 157–162.

4 *Id.*, "Unique Statues from Giza V: The Exceptional Statue of the Priest Kai and his Family," in D. Khaled, S.H. Bedier, S. Abd el-Fattah (eds.), *Studies in Honor of Ali Radwan 2*, Cairo, 2005, pp. 25–37; *id.*, "The Biographical Text of Ka-pu-nesut Kai in the Western Field at Giza," in Z. Hawass, K.A. Daoud, R.B. Hussein (eds), *Scribe of Justice: Egyptological Studies in Honour of Shafik Allam*, Cairo, 2011, pp. 191–196; Z. Hawass, S.A. Abdoh, "The Mudbrick Tomb of Kai at Giza," in F. Coppens, J. Janák, K. Smoláriková (eds.), *Knowledge and Memory: Festschrift in Honour of Ladislav Bareš*, Prague, 2022, pp. 191–204.

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Dedi who appears in the Wadi el-Jarf Papyri at once most probable.[5] In fact, only two other occurrences of the masculine version of the name are known so far for the whole Old Kingdom: one attestation from the Saqqara necropolis, which is clearly dated to the 6th Dynasty,[6] and another on a fragmentary statue of a man, excavated at Giza in 1928 to the east of the Great Sphinx, which could belong to this same Dedi who owns mastaba 1727.[7]

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE TOMB

The dimensions of the tomb from outside are: eastern wall: 11.5m long; southern wall: 5m long; western wall: 11.5m long; north wall: 5.85m long. The tomb was built of limestone. The eastern façade consists of six courses of varying dimensions with blocks measuring from 35-40cm high × 50-60cm long (Figs. 1-2). The entrance to the chapel is in the east wall, 7.1m from the southern end and 3.36m from the northern end. This is the only decorated part of this mastaba, the chapel itself having been left without reliefs. The entrance is 1m × 1.99m, with the opening measuring 0.58m × 1.50m. The courses of the entrance are more finished than the other courses that make up the tomb. The inner north and south walls of the entrance jambs feature scenes and hieroglyphic inscriptions.



Fig. 1. Eastern façade of GM 1727.



Fig. 2. Entrance of GM 1727.

5 K. Scheele-Schweitzer, *Die Personennamen des Alten Reiches*, Wiesbaden, 2014, no. 3815, p. 748.
6 G. Jéquier, *Tombeaux de particuliers contemporains de Pepi II. Fouilles à Saqqarah*, Cairo, 1929, p. 90.
7 B. Gunn, "Additions to the Collections of the Egyptian Museum during 1928," *ASAE* 29, 1929, p. 92/PM III, p. 292 (lower part of a black granite statue with the name Dedi).

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Inner north jamb of the entrance

The inner north jamb of the entrance is 0.63m × 1.50m. It features scenes carved in low relief (Fig. 3). There is no remaining color.

– The top register is 27cm long and contains the remains of a scene of animal slaughter. The upper part of the scene is lost, but the legs and feet of four butchers are still visible (Fig. 4). One of the men is restraining an animal that is lying on its back while another man cuts off its foreleg.

– The lower register is 68cm high. Dedi, the owner of the tomb, is represented seated, with his wife, Debet, behind him, facing east to greet the visitors to the tomb (Fig. 5). A priest faces the deceased couple and offers them incense (Fig. 6). Inscribed above him is: *sn.<f> ḥm-kꜣ wḏ.f-n-ʿnḫ*, "his brother, the *ka*-priest, Wedjef-en-ankh." The priest is either bald or wears a simple cap, a broad collar, and a short kilt tied at the waist. Dedi is shown wearing a garment that is tied over his left shoulder, a tiered wig of a type popular in the Old Kingdom, and a broad collar. In his left hand is a scepter symbolizing his authority. His wife wears a long tripartite wig, a sheath dress, a necklace, bracelets, and anklets. The legs of Dedi's chair are fashioned to resemble the hind legs of a bull (Fig. 7). A lotus emblem appears on one of the two chairs, though it is difficult to tell which. There is a horizontal hieroglyphic text above the couple that reads: *rḫ nswt Ddj ḥmt.f Dbt*, "The known by the king, Dedi, and his wife, Debet."[8] Below the priest is the smaller figure of a naked serving boy (Fig. 8), presumably the 'sandal holder,' holding sandals in his right hand. In front of him is written: *kꜣ n nb.f*, "his lord's servant."



Fig. 3. Inner north jamb of the entrance of GM 1727.

8 The name Debet means literally "the hippopotamus," as the determinative of her name shows; for other attestations of this name, cf. K. Scheele-Schweitzer, *Die Personennamen des Alten Reiches*, Wiesbaden, 2014, no. 3784, p. 745.

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Fig. 4. Inner north jamb of the entrance of GM 1727, upper register: remains of a scene of animal slaughter.



Fig. 5. Inner north jamb of the entrance of GM 1727, lower register: Dedi and his wife, Debet, seated.



Fig. 6. Inner north jamb of the entrance of GM 1727, lower register: Dedi and his wife, Debet, with a priest facing them, offering incense.

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Fig. 7. Inner north jamb of the entrance of GM 1727, lower register: Dedi's chair (detail).



Fig. 8. Inner north jamb of the entrance of GM 1727, lower register: sandal holder facing Dedi and his wife.

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Inner south jamb of the entrance

The inner south jamb of the entrance is 63.5 cm high and only features one ground line, anchoring one scene (Fig. 9). The scene is 87cm high and poorly preserved. Dedi stands facing east with a *kherep* scepter in his left hand, carved as if it crosses behind his body. His right arm is in front of him and bent, holding a staff. He wears a short kilt tied at the waist and a broad collar. Debet stands behind him on a smaller scale in a sheath dress. Her right arm crosses behind her husband and she grasps his right shoulder. Facing Dedi, on an even smaller scale than that of his wife, is his daughter (Fig. 10), as indicated by the inscription: *s3t.f Ḥtp-nbw* "his daughter, Hetepnebu."[9] She wears a sheath dress like her mother, with broad straps over her shoulders and her left breast exposed. She also wears a broad collar and her hair is cropped short (or she wears a cap). She touches her father's knee with her left hand while her right arm hangs by her side.



FIG. 9. Inner south jamb of the entrance of GM 1727: standing figure of Dedi, facing east.



FIG. 10. Inner south jamb of the entrance of GM 1727: Dedi's daughter, Hetepnebu.

9 K. SCHEELE-SCHWEITZER, *op. cit.*, no. 2583, p. 567.

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Rectangular hall

The entrance leads to a rectangular hall with dimensions of 2.05m in length × 1.18m width. From the original interior casing only one course, 73cm high, was preserved. Additional courses were added to the interior walls during a recent restoration; these are now 190cm high. The walls are devoid of inscriptions. To the south of the western wall, there is an uninscribed false door measuring 148cm in height and 56.5cm in width. Directly below the drum there is a hole measuring 14 cm × 11.5cm and behind this is the *serdab*.

Tomb shafts

On the roof of the tomb, in the western side of the *serdab*, there are two burial shafts located on a north-south axis. The first from the south measures 1.30m. × 1.20m. The depth is about 1.40m so far, with debris still remaining inside the shaft. The second, to the north of the first shaft, measures 1.07m. × 1.30m. The depth so far is 4.5m, with debris at the bottom still to be cleared.

3. DATATION OF THE TOMB

The titles alone do not provide definitive proof that this Dedi, owner of Giza Mastaba 1727, is the same Dedi who appears in papyrus D as Merer's supervisor. In the Wadi el-Jarf papyri, Dedi wears only the generic title of "scribe," whereas on the mastaba walls, he is only referred to as "known by the king" (which is also the case on the statue of Dedi found in Giza[10]), which does not shed any light on his actual duties. But we can once again stress the fact that Dedi is a very rare name, and one would expect that the Dedi of the papyri, placed at the head of a very important team working to the building of the Great Pyramid, was finally buried somewhere in the Giza Necropolis. Moreover, all the dating criteria found in this tomb point to a date corresponding to the early 4th Dynasty, which would fit well with the identification of the two officials.[11] Those are, amongst others, the following:

- the long panther-skin garment;[12]
- the *medu*-stick shown with the pommel at the bottom;[13]
- the spontaneous gesture of affection of a son or daughter holding the leg of one of their parents, and not the *medu*-stick of his/her father;[14]

10 B. Gunn, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
11 N. Cherpion, "D'un Dedi à l'autre," *Nehet* 6, 2022, pp. 119–122.
12 N. Cherpion, *Mastabas et hypogées d'Ancien Empire*, Brussels, 1989, dating criteria 89.
13 *Ibid.*, dating criteria 40.
14 N. Cherpion, "D'un Dedi à l'autre," *op. cit.*, p. 121, note 16, which also gives several other dating criteria pointing broadly to an early period of the Old Kingdom.

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– the collar worn by Debet, the wife of the deceased (in addition to her "dog collar"), a curious and very rare necklace, which seems to be made of woven plant fibers whose parallels are only found on two monuments from the time of Snefru.[15]

It can also be noticed that this sector of Giza's western cemetery as a whole (its western end) was occupied for the most part by tombs that can now be dated to the 4th Dynasty—including the one of the famous Seneb dwarf—, the cartouche of Khufu being the one found almost exclusively in tombs of this area.[16] It is all the more likely that the Dedi of the Wadi el-Jarf papyri can be identified with this official, who benefited of a decorated chapel close to the funerary complex of his king.

4. OTHER OLD KINGDOM TOMBS FROM THE SAME SECTOR

Mastaba of Ankh-jb (1703)

The tomb is located in the western cemetery to the south of Dedi's tomb. Its serial number is 1703. This is a rectangular mud-brick mastaba, the eastern façade of which measuring 4.5m long × 2m high. There are three niches on the eastern façade.

– **Niche 1** is the northernmost niche. Its dimensions are 15cm × 17cm × 18cm. The drum is made of limestone and is 18cm long and 15cm tall (Fig. 11). The mortar on the drum remains; on this is carved a band of hieroglyphs reading: *sḫḏ srw ʿnḫ-jb*, "inspector of the officials, Ankh-jb."



Fig. 11. Eastern façade of GM 1703, drum of niche 1.

15 *Ibid.*, note 17.

16 Tombs of Seneb, Ankh, Itiu, Irty, Nefernisut, Neferi, Nihetepkhnum, Senenu, Katep (N. Cherpion, *Mastabas et hypogées*, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–100).

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Above the drum is a rectangular limestone lintel measuring 34cm long and 10cm high (Fig. 12). This bears a damaged inscription that reads: *mjtrt*[17] *Sn<t>-jt.s*[18] "the lady Senetites"—who was probably the wife of Ankhib.

– **Niche 2** (moving south) is destroyed and has no stone enhancements remaining. The niche is 35cm deep and 30cm wide.

– **Niche 3** is located on the southernmost end of the eastern façade with a width of 62cm and a height of 1.53m. It includes a limestone drum measuring 31cm width, 35cm deep and 12cm tall (Fig. 13). It has a line of hieroglyphic text reading *ḫrp ʿpr(w) nfrw ʿnḫ-jb* "the director of the gang of recruits, Ankhib."[19]



Fig. 12. Eastern façade of GM 1703, lintel above niche 1.



Fig. 13. Eastern façade of GM 1703, drum of niche 3.

17 D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom*, BAR-IS 866, Oxford, 2000, no. 1572, p. 424.
18 K. Scheele-Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, no. 3135, p. 650.
19 D. Jones, *op. cit.*, no. 2575, pp. 705–706.

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Two burial shafts are cut into the bedrock that makes up the lower part of the mastaba's superstructure. The northern shaft is a rectangular, with a cross-section of 85cm × 85cm. It is carved 3m deep into the bedrock, with its upper part built of mud brick to a height of 2.40m. It is filled with rubble; the cross-section of the southern shaft is 1.20m × 1m, and it is cut into the bedrock to a depth of 5m. An upper section, 2.3m high, is constructed of mudbrick topped with a course of limestone blocks. The western wall of the mastaba is connected to the eastern wall of another tomb. Four courses of stone are clearly visible from the southwestern side of the mastaba. A layer of broken limestone fragments, 25cm thick, has been placed on the roof of the mastaba in order to strengthen it.

Mastaba of Henuneb (1709)

The tomb is located in the western cemetery to the southwest of Ankhib's tomb. Its serial number is 1709. The tomb was built in both mudbrick and stone.

The northern side is 5.80m long × 1.40m high.

The western side is 10m long with a maximum height of 1m preserved.

The southern side is 10m long × 1m high.

The eastern facade of the tomb is 10.35m long.

The first section is made of mudbrick and measures about 6.5m in length. The next section, made of limestone, deviates slightly northwards, and is 6.7m in length. Then it turns toward the west for 4m. At 2.33m from the north side of the eastern wall, there are about four stone blocks, 90cm high × 65cm wide, topped with a rectangular block. The top block, which measures 30cm × 65cm, is carved with a poorly preserved, but almost complete, hieroglyphic inscription in three lines, which is placed before a small representation of the deceased, accompanied by his son (before him) and his wife (behind him)—with traces of red paint. All three are named in the 2nd line of the offering formula (Fig. 14). A third line indicates in a "cleft sentence" that the eldest son was responsible for the engraving of the text on this block. The text reads:



Fig. 14. Inscribed block of the eastern wall of GM 1709.

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[1] *ḥtp dj nswt Jnpw ḫnty sḫ-nṯr krs m smt jmntt jꜣw nfr jmꜣḫw ḫr nṯr-ᶜꜣ*
[2] *[prt-ḫrw] t ḥnkt wp-rnpwt Dḥwty tp-ꜥbd ḫb-nb rᶜ-nb rḫ-nsw wᶜb-nsw*
mrr nb.f Ḥnw-nb, ḥmt.f Ḥtp-nbw sꜣ.f smsw ᶜḏ-nṯr
[3] *j[n] sꜣ.f smsw ᶜḏ-nṯr jr.n.f nw*

[1] An offering that the king grant to Anubis who is in front of the divine chapel <for> a burial in western cemetery <after> a good old age <to> the honored one before the great god
[2] [a voice offering of] beer and bread at the beginning of the years, at the feast of Thoth, at the beginning of the months, at the occasion of each feast and every day <for> the one known by the king, the *wab*-priest, the beloved of his lord Henuneb,[20] his wife Hetepnebu, his eldest son A[dj]netjer.
[3] It is his eldest son Adjnetjer[21] who made this.

The tomb has two shafts on a north-south axis. The southern shaft (Fig. 15) is carved into the bedrock and is almost square in shape, measuring 1.50m × 1.60m. The upper 1m of height is built of limestone. The depth of the shaft is 7m. The northern shaft (Fig. 16) is square in cross-section, measuring 1.55m × 1.45m. It was carved into the rock, with the upper 1.30cm built of limestone blocks. The shaft is 2.4m deep. There is a void on the western side carved into the rock at a depth of 1.70m from the mouth of the shaft. The width of the void is about 1.20m and extends to a depth of about 0.95m.

The family mentioned on this inscribed block is presumably the owner of this mastaba. A connection with that of Dedi is not impossible, as the latter's daughter, who is named Hetepnebu, may be identical to the Hetepnebu, who is the wife of the principal beneficiary of the offering formula engraved on the wall of mastaba 1709.

20 To be read  — not in K. Scheele-Schweitzer, *op. cit*, but close to no. 2437, p. 544; probably with the meaning "Henu is the lord."
21 To be read  — not in K. Scheele-Schweitzer, *op. cit*, but close to nos. 796-797, pp. 313–314; probably with the meaning "The god is safe."

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Fig. 15. Southern shaft of GM 1709.



Fig. 16. Northern shaft of GM 1709.

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