MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

BULLETIN
DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212

Hans Goedicke

The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].

Conditions d'utilisation

L'utilisation du contenu de ce site est limitée à un usage personnel et non commercial. Toute autre utilisation du site et de son contenu est soumise à une autorisation préalable de l'éditeur (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). Le copyright est conservé par l'éditeur (Ifao).

Conditions of Use

You may use content in this website only for your personal, noncommercial use. Any further use of this website and its content is forbidden, unless you have obtained prior permission from the publisher (contact AT ifao.egnet.net). The copyright is retained by the publisher (Ifao).

Dernières publications

9782724711264	*La chapelle d'Osiris Ounnefer Neb-djefaou*	Laurent Coulon
9782724711752	*Guide du Caire Islamique*	Hadrien Collet
9782724711660	*Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales 41*	Adrien Candiard (éd.)
9782724711745	*Bulletin archéologique des Écoles françaises à l'étranger (BAEFE)*	
9782724711271	*Du côté de chez Zeus*	Emmanuel Botte (éd.), Hélène Cuvigny (éd.), Michel Reddé (éd.)
9782724711677	*La Description de l'Égypte*	Paul-Marie Grinevald
9782724711714	*La pensée et la pratique pharmacologiques d'Avicenne*	Sylvie Ayari
9782724711899	*BCAI 40*	

© Institut français d'archéologie orientale - Le Caire

Hans GOEDICKE

THE PEPI II DECREE FROM DAKHLEH

The corpus of Old Kingdom royal documents had remained unchanged for almost half a century, but recent years have brought two unrelated discoveries of pertinent material, and thus a welcome expansion of the basis for their study can be claimed. One discovery was made at Abusir during the archaeological investigation of the funerary complex of King Raneferef of Dynasty V [1]. It was the first time that royal documents were discovered in their original form written on papyrus. While not necessarily the original document, but rather a copy of it, this find nevertheless corroborated the notion that the royal documents preserved by copies inscribed on stone faithfully mirrored the original papyrus documents.

The second discovery is a copy of a royal document on a block of limestone found in ʿAīn Aṣyl in Dakhleh Oasis in 1985. It was made available with commendable speed by Laure Pantalacci, who published it in photograph and line-drawing, with translation and commentary [2]. In view of its mention of the names of successive « oasis administrators », the document is of great prosopographical importance [3]. Although it lacks a precise date, the text is also important in connection with Old Kingdom diplomatical studies [4]. Last but not least, it provides historical insights into the foreign policy of the late Old Kingdom. Although I have not been in a position to collate the original, it appears that epigraphy [5] as well as understanding of the document can be furthered by a renewed discussion.

1. Posener-Kriéger, « Décrets envoyés au temple funéraire de Reneferef », *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, vol. II, *BdE* 97/2, 1985, 195-210, pls I-VI.

2. Pantalacci, « Un décret de Pepi II en faveur des gouverneurs de l'oasis de Dakhla », *BIFAO* 85, 245-254, pl. XL.

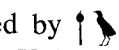
3. Leprohon, « The dating of the Dakhleh Oasis Epigraphic Material », *JSSEA* 16/2, 50ff., especially pp. 55f.

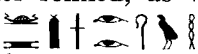
4. Goedicke, Diplomatical Studies in the Old Kingdom, *JARCE* 3, 31-41; cf. also Helck, *Altägyptische Aktenkunde des 3. und 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.*, MÄS 31, 10ff.

5. The copy of the text included here is based on the facsimile provided by L. Pantalacci. While some of the added readings are based on traces discernible on the photograph, the proposed restorations do not claim epigraphic accuracy.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

The issuing king is specified, as is customary, with the help of the Horus-name  in a *srḫ*-frame at the right edge of the document [6]. The Horus-falcon perched above it does not wear any crown, which agrees with Coptus B of Pepi II [7]; there is also no trace of a  -sign over the royal falcon, as occurs in well-finished copies. The column with the royal name does not contain a date. The only date provided is at the end of the document and concerns its verification by the « king's seal. » This date, however, is limited to the month and day of issue, but omits the year [8]. An approximate date of the document will be proposed after the philological investigation [9].

The address-line is opened by . The reversal of the  sign is standard in documents dating to Dynasty VIII and also in the documents issued under Asosis. In view of the available evidence I have promulgated the thesis that the direction of is a tool for chronological attribution, with the writing being typical for Pepi I and Pepi II [10]. The newly-found text would seem to disagree with this notion, as Pantalacci points out [11]. However, as will be discussed later, there are also other features in the document which necessitate placing it later than any other Pepi II decree available and thus close to the heretofore known time for the writing . As a result the time the writing particularity came about can be further refined, as will be shown [12].

In the address line  can be read without difficulty, Pantalacci read it « amiral, gouverneur de l'oasis, directeur des prêtres » and assumes that the official's name was not stated in the document. There are cases among the Old Kingdom decrees where in the address mention is made of people without the giving of names [13]. However, they are not the prime recipient of the document, but rather people in a subaltern position who are affected by the contents of the royal document. It lies in the very nature of Old Kingdom royal documents as an instrument to convey the law-creating royal ordinance that the documents have to be addressed to a specific person [14]. Consequently, it can be assumed that the name of the addressee was originally mentioned. That it is no longer available is due to the mutilation of the left upper corner of the stone. At the same time, it can be taken for granted that not much has been lost. From these two considerations it can be concluded that the now missing name was very short, a point of significance in connection with the later efforts to identify the recipient of the document [14a].

6. Cf. Goedicke, *o.c.*, 33; Helck, *o.c.*, 10.

7. See Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, (Äg. Abh. 14) Abb. 8; cf. also Weill, *Décrets royaux de l'Ancien Empire*, 1912, pls I, V.

8. The omission of the year indication is not unique; cf. also *Urk.* I, 296, 17; 299, 4; Goedicke, *o.c.*, 169. For the dating of the royal sealing, cf. Goedicke, *o.c.* 12ff.

9. See below 9.

10. See Goedicke, *o.c.*, p. 10; Helck, *o.c.*, p. 14; H.G. Fischer, *The Orientation of Hieroglyphs*, *Egyptian Studies* II, p. 57f.

11. Pantalacci, *o.c.*, 248 throws out the thesis without considering the date of the Dakhleh document.

12. See below 8.

13. E.g. *Urk.* I, 209, 16; 280, 16; 284, 5.

14. An exception might be claimed in the decree of Raneferef, which gives no name in the address line. The document grants two tenured priestly positions and their recipients are mentioned in the opening of the text, namely *ʿIri*, son of *Smn-pṯḥ* and *ʿIzi-ʿnḫ*, son of a like-named father.

14 *a*. See below 8 f.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

While here is not the place to enter upon a detailed discussion of the designations, it is nevertheless necessary to clarify some features. The main rank of the addressee was without question that of *ḥqꜣ-whꜣt* « oasis ruler », i.e. he was the holder of authority in the area defined as « oasis ». In its political significance the designation equals the use of *ḥqꜣ* for independent Nubian rulers in the Old Kingdom [15]. In his capacity of *ḥqꜣ* the addressee of the royal document should be recognized as independent as far as local control of the oasis was concerned; this does not influence the political status vis-à-vis the Egyptian king, who is apparently recognized as overlord. Implied is a two-tiered structure of authority in which the *ḥqꜣ* is autonomous within his realm, but is also a vassal of Egypt's king.

This political role is complemented by the designation *imy-r ḥmw-nṯr* « overseer of priests », indicating its holder as the supreme religious authority of the area. It was apparently a development of the Sixth Dynasty to create an administrative structure of the religious offices on a regional basis.

Those *imy-r ḥmw-nṯr* should not be seen as primarily cultic leaders, but rather as administrative representatives of the religious professionals. This explains why this designation was frequently held by people in whose hands the administration of a district was united. As a result the mention of the designation « overseer of priests » should not be seen as concerning a specific cult, or as an indication that the oasis as an administrative unit contained only one cult, but rather as a reflection of a separation between religious and secular occupation [16].

The designation , which is listed as the first one, is traditionally considered to indicate a position connected with boating and navigation. While *imy-irty* is attested in such a context [17], it would seem somewhat out of place to have an indigenous « oasis-administrator » holding the title « admiral. » The designation recurs in expedition records, where the role of a ship's captain would also seem misplaced [18]. There is certainly nothing to navigate in the Dakhleh oasis, just as there is no way to get there by boat. As *imy-irty* does occur in navigational context, it appears that the original meaning of the title was either extended or its basis is not in navigation, but rather in the degree of independent decision-making held by its bearer. In this respect it asks for an equation with « captain, » which is also not limited to officers on board ship, but can denote other officers as well [19]. As for , it would make no sense to find a maritime officer in Dakhleh, lest the title is considered honorific. In view of the occurrence of this term in connection with expedition records, it is best understood as denoting « commercial (or supplying) pursuit enterprise » in which the *imy-irty* held a position of independent

15. David Lorton, *The Juridical Terminology of International Relations in Egyptian Texts through Dyn. XVIII*, p. 21 ff.

16. See Eva Martin-Pardey, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Provinzialverwaltung bis zum Ende des Alten Reiches*, HAB 1, p. 126ff.

17. Cf. Charles Boreux, *Études de nautique égyptienne*, *MIFAO* 50, p. 433.

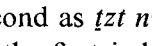
18. Cf. Goedicke, *Two Mining Records from the Wadi Hammamat*, forthcoming.

19. The etymology of « captain », which comes from Latin *caput*, points in the same direction.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

decision-making [20]. It is in no way connected with the Egyptian administration in general or its royal aspect in particular. As « captain of commercial pursuit » it could denote anybody who was active in commerce, and in this capacity was a potential trading partner.

The royal deed granted by the document is introduced by *iw wḏ·n ḥm* « the majesty commanded ». As pointed out on other occasions [21], the document is not in itself producing law, but it is (only) the codification of the royal will as expressed verbally. The major consequence of the prevailing legal situation is that the royal promulgation is stated as a past event and that the reference to the king is void of personalizing in the form « my majesty, » as assumed by Pantalacci. The column is in its upper part arranged in two short horizontal lines. The now missing second line must be restored , which is rather meager considering the available space. However, in none of the available documents is *ḥm* « majesty » followed by a determinative.

The subject of the royal deed is twofold. It is stated in two parallel columns, each containing an infinitive, followed by the dativ *n·k* and the object. Only the latter part is preserved, while the two infinitives are mostly missing. While the reading of the second as *ṯzt n·k* () is ascertained by discernible traces, only the determinative of the first is left, indicating a word concerning construction. It was restored as *qd* by Pantalacci, who did not give it in hieroglyphs. This reading is epigraphically untenable because of the available space. The latter requires restoring *ḫwz*, which not only suits better the remaining traces of the determinative, but which also has an attestation in the reign of Pepi II : *Urk.* I, 272, 8 *ḫwz n·s ḥwt-nṯr m ỉnr ḥḏ n ʿn* « to build for her a *ḥwt-nṯr* out of Turah linestone » [22]. The permission to have a *ḥwt-kꜣ* is not paralleled among the other royal documents of the Old Kingdom, although its existence as a place of the « funerary priests' » (*ḥmw-kꜣ*) activity was ascertained by the decree Coptus K [23]. According to this document a person could have more than one *ḥwt-kꜣ*, which makes it clear that the term does not specifically denote a tomb, but rather a structure which can hold land and has people attached to it. Its purpose is ultimately funerary, but not in a personal way, and I have compared it with the institution of the *waqf* [24]. The *ḥwt-kꜣ* has a geographical specification attached in the form *m whꜣt*, i.e. the envisaged *ḥwt-kꜣ*

20. Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, (Äg. F. 18) p. 101 sees them as « Expeditionleiter ». Cf. also Osing, in *A. Fakhry, Denkmäler der Oase Dachla*, (AVDIK 28), p. 19 « Kapitän der Schiffs-Briglade(n) »; Valloggia, « Stèle d'un chef d'expédition », *BIFAO* 85, p. 264 who gives for it « armateur de la barque (royale) ».

21. Goedicke, « Theorie des Befehls », *LÄ* I, 678f.; idem, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, p. 10ff.

22. *Ḫwz* was originally building in pisé-technique, i.e. with beaten clay but by the end of Dynasty VI it already had a general meaning.

23. *Urk.* I, 302f. = Goedicke, *o.c.* p. 206ff. A *ḥwt-kꜣ* is also attested for the mother of Pepi I, the « king's-wife » *'Ipwt* located at Coptus; see *Urk.* I, 214 = Goedicke, *o.c.*, p. 41ff.

24. Goedicke, *o.c.* p. 208; cf. also Shafik Allam, *CdE* 63, 40. It might be seen as a kind of cemetery which, however, lacks the specific royal privilege. The organizing of a local cemetery is proudly reported by Pepi-ʿankh in his tomb at Meir; see *Urk.* I, 222, 14ff.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

was to cover the oasis as an administrative unit. In this respect it corresponds to the *ḥwt-k*3 of queen *'lpwt* at Coptus and the *ḥwt-k*3 of Pepi I at Bubastis [25].

The basically funerary character of the *ḥwt-k*3 makes the hiring of funerary priests (*ḥmw-k*3) understandable. The same permission is contained in Coptus K, which speaks of « 12 *ḥmw-k*3 », thus revealing their organization on a monthly basis [26]. The *ḥmw-k*3, who are to be recruited, are specified as *m wnmw tp-r*3 *im*3*ḫ*, which Pantalacci rendered « (des prêtres funéraires) en tant qu'usufruitiers de (ton) attribution d'*im*3*ḫ*. » The proposed emendation not only lacks support, but also changes the meaning. As the *ḥwt-k*3 is followed by a specification, the « funerary priests » recruited for it are also specified. *Wnmw* is a technical term expressing the right of usufruct, i.e. the enjoyment of benefits without holding legal title to the source from which they flow. This applies in particular to *wnmw n sbnn·f* « beneficiary who cannot consume »; cf. *Wb.* I, 320, 7; Sethe, *ZÄS* 61, 78, Gardiner — Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead,* p. 20. *Tp-r*3, lit. « upon the mouth », has the specific connotation of someone's verbal instruction without official authority. It concerns employments within « civil law » and can thus not be enforced legally. In connection with the employent of people in socio-religious circumstances, *Urk.* I, 213, 5-7 « you shall not grant the priesthood of any *ḫnty-š* of these pyramidtowns upon the saying of somebody, but only (on the basis) of a matter which is commanded or of which one has experience » is a close parallel; see for it, Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich,* p. 74. Accordingly *wnmw tp-r*3 *im*3*ḫ* has to be rendered « upon the saying of the ' honored one ', i.e. the recruiting of the funerary priests is left to the recipient of the royal deed and does not require official sanction. As the specification *m wnmw tp-r*3 *im*3*ḫ* has the appearance of an established idiom, it opens hitherto undocumented aspects about legal basis for the funerary cult and the people performing it. It would appear that the ability to make their selection by the recipient of a royal funerary deed required special permission or, in reverse, that the funerary care was not necessarily within the legal abilities of a beneficiary. On the other hand, there are also documents testifying to personal arrangements, but it is not always clear if those legal instruments were established with already appointed « funerary priests » or if they also constituted aboriginal hiring; see further, Goedicke, *Private Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich,* p. 207ff.

The royal deed makes reference to precedence. Pantalacci's rendering « de même qu'on agira à ce sujet immédiatement » is due to an unfortunate misreading, resulting in a grammatically and conceptionally untenable notion [27]. It is, of course, to be read , i.e. « like the doing there previously ». For the adverbial use of *tp-'wy*, see Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik,* § 752 and *Urk.* I, 283, 6 [28]. is an infinitive; cf.

25. Habachi, *Tell Basta, CASAE* 22, p. 17f., fig. 3*A*.

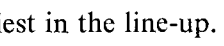
26. The same monthly organization prevails in Tehneh, as specified in the inscription of *Ḥnw-k*3 : *Urk.* I, 27f. = Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich, BWZKM* 5, p. 132f., Taf. XIV.

27. It was uncritically copied by Leprohon, *o.c,* 56, while Allam, *o.c.*, 41 gives for the proposed reading « comme l'on procédait (auparavant) à charge (*ḫr-'wi*) de (ses) aïeux, les gouverneurs de l'Oasis... ».

28. See Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich,* p. 108.

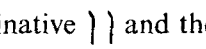
BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

Edel, *o.c.*, §§ 701f. The adverbial *im* can be taken specifically to refer to the place of the intended endowment, i.e. the oasis, but also to the deed itself.

The beneficiary of the previous deed was the predecessor of the document's addressee. Although the text clearly gives  Pantalacci emended it to a plural **it(w)·k*, which se rendered « tes pères, les gouverneurs de l'oasis. » This singled-out « father » of the recipient of the royal deed is *Ḥnty-k*3 [29]. His name is the last of three names which represent a full filiation. As customary prior to the New Kingdom, the generations are listed in descending order, i.e. the grandfather is listed first, followed by the father, followed by the person concerned [30]. As Pantalacci envisages here a reference to three other beneficiaries of a royal deed, she takes them in parallelism as « Ididouy, (son fils) Decherou, (son fils) Khentika », while Leprohon has the correct « for your father the oasis governor Kheny-ka son of Deshru son of Idedwy ». Those gentlemen are mostly known personalities and will concern us later [31]. A word, however, has to be said about the earliest in the line-up. It is given as  which Pantalacci for unknown reasons transcribes *'Id-idwy*, followed by Leprohon as *Idedwy*. As the « ear » and the « youth » are both used for writing **id*, the name should be read *'Idwy* [32].

The next column has suffered some surface destruction and Pantalacci leaves it partly blank. Her readings can be improved, including the previously unread part, with the help of the traces discernible in the photograph. The opening is unquestionably , which, however, cannot be read **irr·k*. As the verb concerns one, though emphatically stressed action, it cannot be an « imperfective » *sḏm·f*. It is a recurrent feature of the documentary style, paralleled by *Urk* I, 296, 6; 299, 8; 301, 1, 5; 302, 2. Since *iri* is a transitive verb it requires a direct object.  is discernible in the photograph, located in the center of the line. One could — though wrongly — consider it as « neuter » [33], but this would leave the remainder of the line unaccounted for.

There are traces concerning it. After a gap of one square, which contains a  in outer mid-position, follows a square which contains three tall narrow signs. The reading * by Pantalacci is unquestionably wrong, as can be seen from the published photograph. Those three signs are not all alike, but the first two are bent at the top, requiring a reading  with following it. The end of the line is clear with the exception of the ending  after *zbt*; the off-center position of makes it necessary, and traces are discernible.

In view of the apparent determinative and the opening *s*, a reading *smtr* () can be considered virtually certain. *Smtr* is a later technical term in diplomatics; see Gardiner, *The Wilbour Papyrus* II, p. 185; Helck, *Altägyptische Aktenkunde*, p. 62. The present context speaks against a meaning « certify », but for « verification », in the sense

29. For the historical discussion of *Ḥnty-k*3, see below 9 f.

30. See principally Gardiner, *Eg. Gr.* 3, § 85; Edel, *Die Felsengräber der Qubbet el Hâwa bei Assuan*, II. 2. Teil, 1970, p. 72; idem, *Altägyptische Grammatik* § 307 (Nachtrag).

31. See below 8 ff.

32. The spelling is a hybrid between two common spellings; cf. Ranke, *PN* I, 19, 54, 9-11.

33. Cf. E. Edel, *o.c.*, § 166.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

of a solemn acknowledgement. For the admonition *ir r·k smtr*, cf. the similar one in *Urk.* I, 306, 9 *ir n·k sp*ḫ*r wdw pn.*

Pantalacci's reading **sšm pn* is epigraphically impossible, because the sign is clearly 𓊪. It is the infinitive of the verb *zbi* « to bring »; see *Wb.* III 431, B IV (and also 27) [34]. The last word in the line is indisputably the demonstrative *pn*, thus requiring a masculine noun to precede it. This can only be 𓏏, i.e. the word *ꜥ* « document », also «(legal) titles»; see, Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, p. 106. Summing up the discussion it results that the section of the royal decree reads, « You shall make an acknowledgement of the bringing of this document ».

In addition to the statement about the validation of the document by its being sealed in the personal presence of the king and the giving of the day on which this happened [35], the document also contains a statement about its delivery. This feature has otherwise its earliest attestation in the decree Coptus D, dating to the later part of the reign of Pepi II [36]. It is standard in the Eighth Dynasty documents as well as in the decree of *Dmḏ-ib-tꜣwy*, most probably of Tenth Dynasty date [37]. The wording found there most closely resembles that found in this decree and helps clarify one point : *iw di*(*w*) *iwt imy-*ḫ*t* ḫ*nty-š pr-ꜥꜣ hꜣb Wnis-ꜥnḫ r·s* « the coming of the dispatch of the *pr-ꜥꜣ imy-*ḫ*t* ḫ*nty-š* Wenis-ꜥankh for it ». *Di*(*w*) is a passive *sḏm·f*; cf. Edel, *o.c.* § 459 [37a]. In both documents the same type of « official » makes the delivery, i.e. an *imy-*ḫ*t* ḫ*nty-š pr-ꜥꜣ*. There is still considerable uncertainty about the meaning of this and similar designators, but it appears to indicate status [38]. Thus far unparalleled is the qualification of the designation by the passive participle *hꜣb*. Derived from the verb « to send out, » it has the particular connotation of dispatch for the delivery of « mail » [39]. This form of qualification of a title is unusual so that **hꜣb* was previously taken as a personal name by Sethe (= *Urk.* I, 306, 15), Hayes (*JEA* 32, 1946, 20) and myself. *Wnis-ꜥnḫ* is surprising as a name in the late Sixth Dynasty. However, to have it chronologically fixed is significant for the dating of the owner of Theban Tomb 413 [40] and possibly also for the dating of graffito

34. *Pyr.* 741e *Ḥrw·ṯ pw nn ꜣst zbi·ṯ ꜥ·f n Rꜥ r ꜣḫt* « Your Horus is the tired one, o Isis! May you bring his document to Reꜥ to the horizon! »

35. See Goedicke, *o.c.*, p. 12f.; idem, *JARCE* 3, Helck, *o.c.*, p. 14.

36. *Urk.* I, 292, 12 = Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, p. 137ff., Abb. 11.

37. Cf. Goedicke, *o.c.*, p. 14f.; 147. Pantalacci, *o.c.*, 250f. is incorrect that the particulars of the delivery of the document occur « à partir de la VIe dynastie », as it is apparently an innovation of the later reign of Pepi II.

37a. Cf. James, *The Hekanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents*, p. 129.

38. Without entering the entire complex of which this designation is part, one can establish its main features as follows : the person denoted this way is ḫ*nty-š*, i.e. « resident of an area », the latter being defined as *pr-ꜥꜣ*. This residence » has primarily a legal rather than a physical nature, i.e. the person holds citizen privileges of a certain type. As I pointed out previously, *pr-ꜥꜣ* appears to denote the royal funerary establishment rather than the royal palace; see Goedicke, « Die Laufbahn des *Mṯn* », *MDAIK* 21, 24f.

The particular form in which this « citizenship » is held is indicated by the initial *imy-*ḫ*t* as being contractual and not tenured; see for it Goedicke, *Die privaten Rechtsinschriften aus dem Alten Reich*, 230ff.

39. *Wb.* II, 480, 5; *Papyrus Reisner* II, D 3, 5; James, *o.c.*, p. 129.

40. Mohamed Saleh, *Three Old-Kingdom Tombs at Thebes*, p. 17.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

no. 157 in the Wadi Hammamat [41]. Why someone would bear the name of King Wenis at this time is a puzzle; it can be ruled out that he was born under him.

It remains to discuss the probable date of the document, its recipient and his position in the local history of Dakhleh. Although the text lacks a specific date, it contains two features which provide a chronological indication. One is the graphic peculiarity of the opening of the address-line with a reversed  -sign. This feature has thus far not been attested for the reign of Pepi II, but is standard in the documents of the Eighth Dynasty. This would suggest that the Dakhleh decree belongs to the late reign of Pepi II, i.e. it falls after the latest previously known text which dates after the king's 44th year [42]. Such an assignment accords principally with the other documentary idiosyncracy, namely the mention of the person who delivered the decree. As already pointed out [43], this feature appears to be an innovation of the late reign of Pepi II and has its earliest attestation in the decree Coptus D. When these two indicators are combined, it can be assumed that the Dakhleh decree falls sometime after the decree Coptus D, which in turn dates after year 44. While it would seem unwarranted to hypothesize any further, it seems nevertheless justified to assign the Dakhleh document somewhere around the king's 50th year, i.e. placing it in or close to his last decade [44].

It appears that Pepi II's decree was addressed to the last « ruler of the oasis » of his reign. As pointed out earlier [45], it is essential for a document conveying the granting of a royal favor that its beneficiary be named in it as addressee. Although no such name is preserved in its appropriate place, this is no reason to assume that it had never been mentioned. The end of the address line is missing. The overall shape of the slab of stone on which the decree was copied suggests that only a rather small area of the original upper left corner is now missing. It is in this limited space that the name of the recipient of the king's deed has to be envisaged; at the same time it can be posed that this missing name was very brief. Among the known names of « rulers of the oasis » only *Mdw-nfr* could possibly qualify to meet the particulars.

A *Mdw-nfr* is not only attested at Balat in Dakhleh, but his name has been found there in the short form  accompanied by the same designations listed in the address of the decree [46]. While it is certain that he was a contemporary of Pepi II, it is more difficult to place him in this long reign. The fact that two vessels mentioning the « first *ḥb-sd*-festival » of Pepi II-Neferkare' were found in his tomb [47] gives some indication concerning the acme of his life. Although the celebration of the *ḥb-sd*-festival is commonly assigned

41. Couyat-Montet, *Les inscriptions du Ouâdi Hammamat*, pl. XXXIII.

42. It is the decree Coptus D. For its date after Coptus C, which mentions the « Year of the 22nd count », i.e. year 44, see Goedicke, *Königliche Dokumente aus dem Alten Reich*, p. 145.

43. See above 2.

44. That Pepi II did not reign the commonly assumed 94 years, but that his reign actually lasted 64 years is discussed in « The Death of Pepi II - Neferkare », *SAK* 15, 111-121.

45. See above 2.

46. Valloggia, *Balat I : Le mastaba de Medou-nefer*, p. 72.

47. Valloggia, *o.c.*, p. 79f.

BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

to a king's 30th year [48], we have no independent information that Pepi II celebrated it in this year. His father Pepi I had certainly not celebrated it in his 30th year, and the scarcity of references to the *ḥb-sd*-festival of Pepi II, especially the lack of references to later *ḥb-sd*-festivals of this king [49], makes one wonder if Pepi II's « first *ḥb-sd*-festival » occurred in what would have been approximately the middle of his reign. Whatever the actual date of the celebration was, the evidence from *Mdw-nfr*'s tomb does not contradict dating him to the later part of Pepi II's reign in accordance with the stylistic features of the document.

For the local history of Dakhleh and its political association with Egypt the royal document provides some major insight by listing the « rulers of the oasis » in their successive order. As a result the following line of dignitaries can be established : *'Idwy — Dšrw — Ḫnty-k3 — Mdw-nfr*. Except for *'Idwy* they are all attested from other sources as well [50]. Not included in the succession listing in the decree are two more names associated with the designation *ḥq3n wḥ3t* « ruler of the oasis ». These are  and  [51]. The former name has been read *Pipi-im3* and has the variant *MryR'-im3*. This establishes the date, namely by the late reign of Pepi I, i.e. at or after his *ḥb-sd*-festival when the name *MryR'* was adopted. As for the reading of the name, Ranke [52] renders it « (König) *mrjjr'* ist freundlich ». Such a rendering would seem to adhere to the general pattern of « court-names » [53]; however, in view of the fact that Dakhleh and its inhabitants were apparently denoted as *im3* [54], I wonder if the name might not be better taken in this case to mean « the Iamy of Meryre' », expressing fealty and close personal association [55]. This makes him the earliest « ruler of the oasis », which agrees with Harkhuf's report about his oasis exploits that apparently led to the local ruler's recognition of Egypt's king as his overlord [56].

As for , this name is attested on a huge free-standing stela as well as a tombstone; their original setting or place of discovery is apparently not recorded. The name is unparalleled in this form [57], but would require a rendering « foremost of the

48. Cf. Hornung und Staehelin, *Studien zum Sedfest* (*Ægyptiaca Helvetica* I), p. 62ff.

49. The only possible mention of a second *ḥb-sd* of Pepi II is in an uncollated inscription from Elephantine copied by Petrie; see *Urk.* I, 115, 11.

50. As for *Dšrw*, see Fakhry, *Denkmäler der Oase Dacla*, p. 23ff.; for *Ḫnty-k3*, *ibid.*, p. 26f.

51. See Fakhry, *o.c.*, p. 21ff. and 29ff.

52. Ranke, *PN* I, 25, 9; II, 263, 10.

53. Ranke, *PN* II, 219ff.

54. See Goedicke, « Harkhuf's Travels », *JNES* 40, 14f.

55. The name has parallels in the Nile Valley, all dating to Pepi II : Jéquier, *Monument funéraire de Pepi II*, II, p. 37; 71; 48; idem, *Tombeaux de particuliers*, p. 54; there is also a vizier *Mryr'-'i3m/I3m(y)-Mryr'*, whose tomb is associated with the funerary complex of Pepi II; see Jéquier, *Monument funéraire de Pepi II* III, 50ff. How this man is to be dated and how he relates to the « ruler of the oasis » with seemingly the same name is an uninvestigated question. It is feasible that the name of the two bearers is to be understood differently, with the vizier's as « Meryre' is gracious » and the oasis-man « Iamy of Meryre' ».

56. See Goedicke, *o.c.*, 13f.

57. It is not clear that *Ḫnt-k3w·s*, which is exclusively female, is construed the same way as this name.

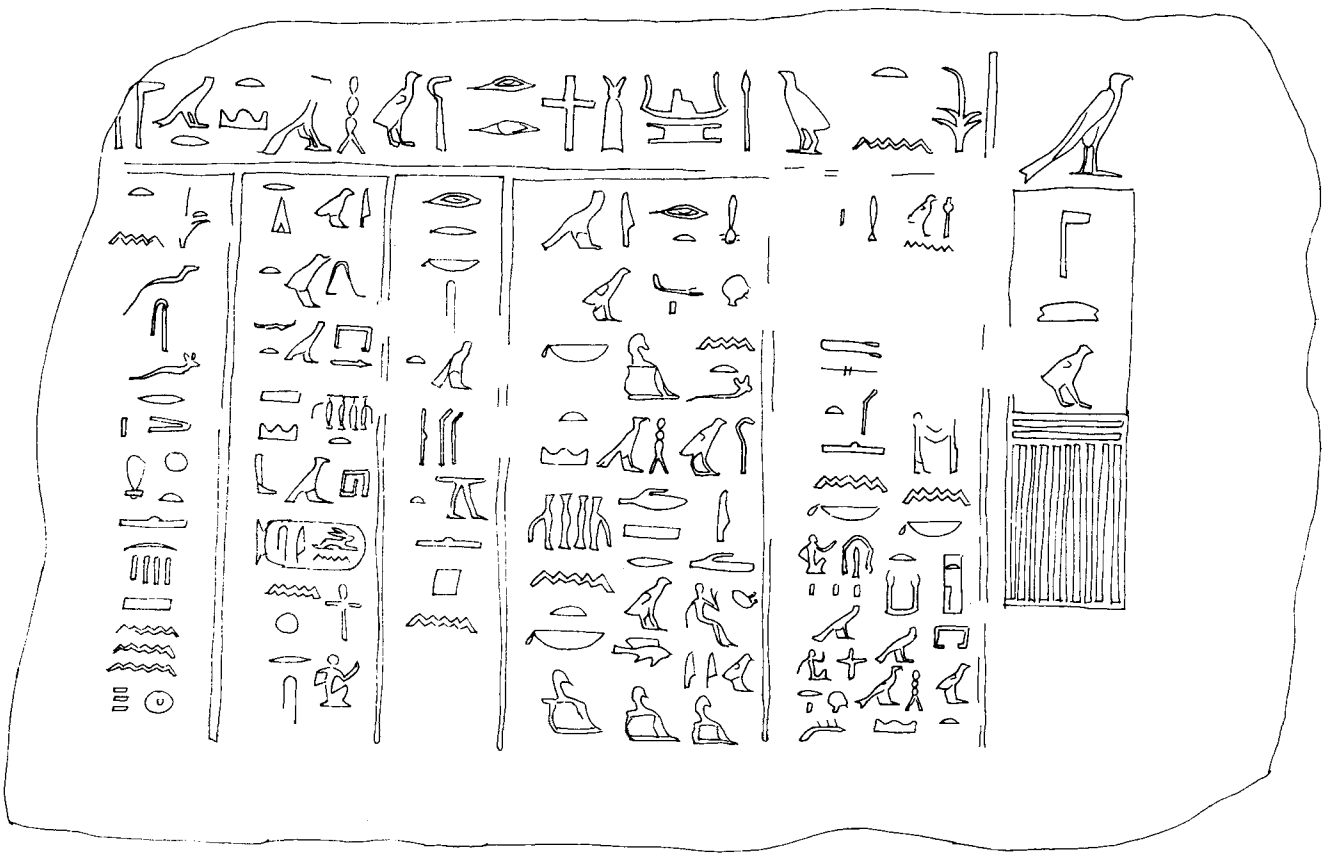
BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net

kaus of Pepi ». At the same time it is curiously similar to *Ḫnty-k3* with the difference that the latter is not a court but a personal name [58]. This opens the possibility that *Ḫnty-k3* and *Ḫnty-k3w-Pipi* denote principally the same person. This would reduce the line of known « rulers of the oasis » to five, covering a period of approximately 60+ years.

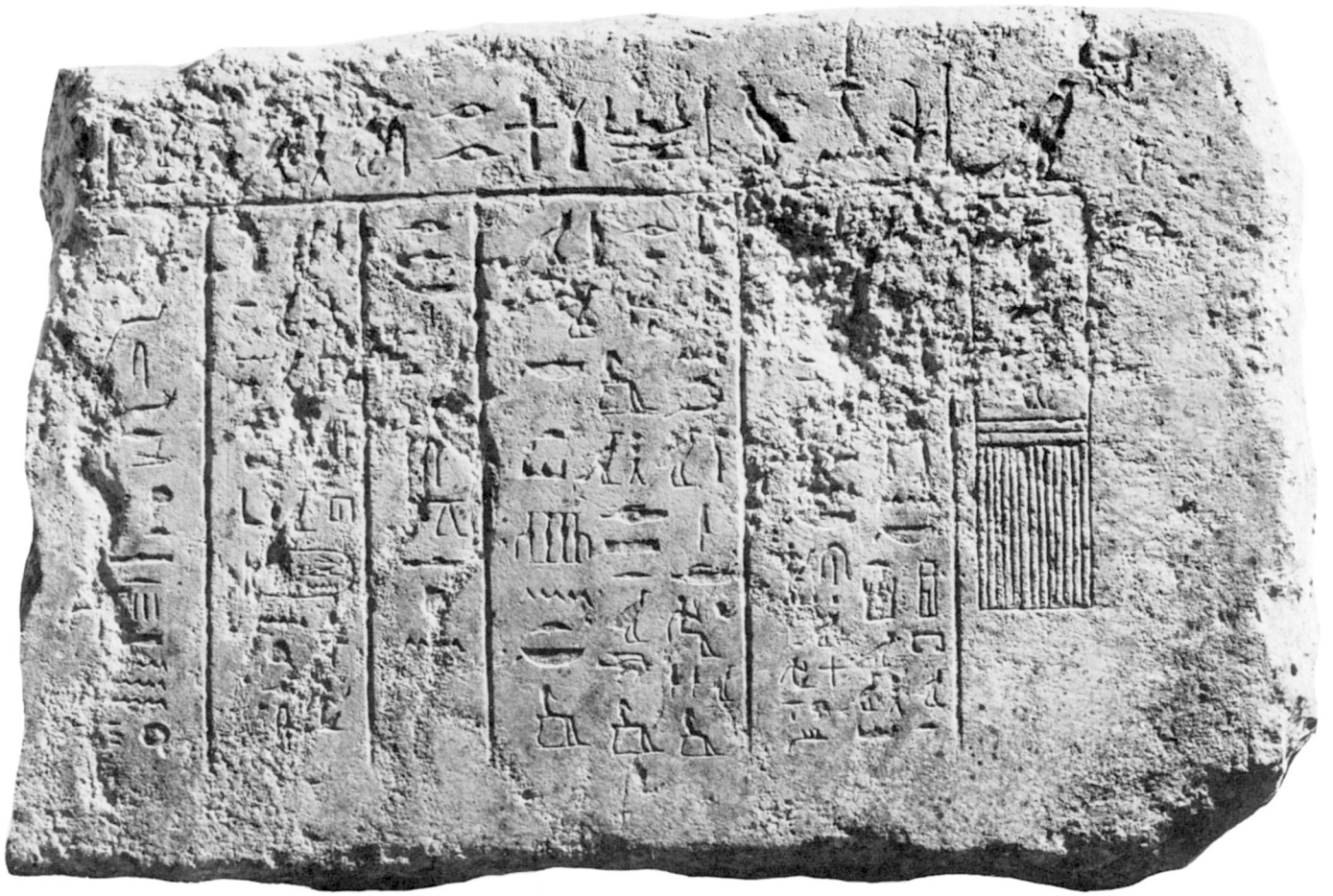
It was apparently only *Ḫnty-k3* and *Mdw-nfr* who received royal permission to have a *ḥwt-k3*. The latter does not refer specifically to a person's tomb, but rather is an inclusive term for funerary installation [59]. Consequently, there is no need to correlate the Old Kingdom mastabas in the Dakhleh area with the known « rulers of the oasis ». It appears that they were local dignitaries who recognized the Egyptian king as their lord. The beginning of this political constellation falls into the late reign of Pepi I. When it ended cannot be established with certainty; it is certain that according to the decree of Pepi II for *Mdw-nfr* it lasted well into the reign of Pepi II.

58. For a discussion of the name, see James, *The Mastaba of Khentika called Ikhekhi*, p. 11f.

59. See above p. 4; cf. also Allam, *CdE* 63, 1988, 40f.



BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net



BIFAO 89 (1990), p. 203-212 Hans Goedicke
The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh [avec 1 planche].
© IFAO 2026 BIFAO en ligne https://www.ifao.egnet.net