An Alternative Writing of *sḏm*: the Use of the Human Ear (D18)

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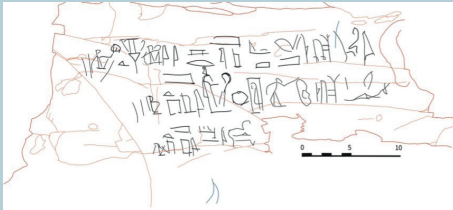
Graffito 1463, located near the tomb of Thutmose IV in the Valley of the Kings, presents a rare variation in the writing of the verb *sḏm* within the title *sḏm-ꜥš*, meaning "the servant" or "the one who hears the call". In this instance, the draughtsman Merysekhmet (iii) from the mid-20th Dynasty employed the hieroglyph of a human ear (D18) instead of the traditional cow's ear (F21) to write *sḏm*. A similar phenomenon is also observed in Graffito 1157, created by the contemporaneous royal scribe Amennakht (v) in the Valley of the Queens. In this example, the human ear (D18) is followed by that of a cow (F21) to further clarify the intended meaning. Furthermore, the human ear hieroglyph (D18) is also attested as an alternative to the cow's ear (F21) in the writing of the word *jdn* (see Roberson 2020: 55).

Function
Logogram

Value
sḏm

References:

Ragab, M.R. 2024. *The Workmen's Graffiti in the Valley of the Kings: The Impact of Landscape and Social Networks on Graffiti-Making, with a Focus on the Unpublished Graffiti Discovered by Howard Carter in 1915–1918*, Uppsala Studies in Egyptology VII: 126–127; 301–313, figs. 60, 168. Uppsala, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

Černý, J. 1956. *Graffiti hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques de la nécropole thébaine: Nos 1060 à 1405*: 8, figs. 15. Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale.

Roberson, J.A. 2020. *A Lexicon of Ancient Egyptian Cryptography of the New Kingdom*. Vol. 2. Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.

HIEROGLYPHS

Document: Graffito 1463 in the Valley of the Kings

Date: New Kingdom, Ramesside, Dynasty 20, Ramesses IV, year 22–Ramesses VI, year 4 (ca. 1153–1147 BCE)

Provenance: Valley of the Kings

Current location: *In situ*

Object type: Graffito

Material: Limestone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: (H8-Z1):I9-Y3-Aa28-D18-A26-O39\171\R90**H6{{165,120,98}}-N5-C10C-Aa15\101**M17{{0,379,61}}**Q3{{215,543,61}}**X1{{637,379,61}}**O1{{460,713,61}}-A50-Aa11\R270-P8

Transliteration: *s³=f sš-ḳd sḏm-ʿš (m) s.t m³ʿ.t ḥḳ³-m³ʿ.t-rʿ-m-jp.t m³ʿ-ḫrw*

Translation: His son the draughtsman and servant (in) the Place of truth Hekamaatre-emope (Hekamare-enope in Davies 1999), justified

Location: Second line