

DJOSER

Djoser was a king of the Third Ancient Egyptian Dynasty, c. BC 2800. Three kings combined that name in their prenoms: Sekhemkhet of the same dynasty, and Amenhotep I and Horemheb of the Eighteenth Dynasty, c. BC 1500. The word stands for sacred or holy: in modern works it is written Djoser, Djeser or Zoser.

His importance is indicated on the Turin Canon of Kings by exceptionally introducing his title in red. The length of his reign on this New Kingdom document is 19 years. In the tradition of Manetho Djoser comes in two versions: Tosorthros of a reign of 29 years by Africanus and Sesorthos by Eusebius. The former mentioned that Imhotep the physician, writer and inventor of building with stone lived in his reign. The latter seems to have credited Djoser himself with those qualities.

All contemporary records at The Step Pyramid Complex at Saqqara state that the owner was Horus Netjerykhet with the unusual epithet of King of Lower Egypt Senwy. The name Djoser has not been found in those records. The earliest mention of that name was in New Kingdom graffiti. The identification of Djoser with Netjerykhet, however, does not occur before the Late Period from other sources.

His dynasty introduced stone buildings on a large scale for the first time in the history of mankind. Earlier funerary open courts enclosed by mud brick walls at Abydos were planned much larger and were enclosed by great stone walls at Saqqara. The tomb was introduced into the open court and was ultimately transformed into a step pyramid.

Exploitation of the copper mines especially in Sinai, from which turquoise was supplied, became necessary for stone cutting implements. The earliest rock inscriptions at Wadi Maghara in Sinai show the owners of step pyramid complexes smiting their enemies.

Bibliography

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NABIL SWELIM

July 1 1986

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MacMillan.