

NEW KINGDOM ANTHROPOID POTTERY COFFINS FROM KOM ABU RADY AND SEDMENT

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Introduction

Anthropoid pottery coffins of the New Kingdom have been recorded at a number of sites, particularly in the Delta, the mouth of the Fayoum, Deir Rifeh and in Lower Nubia. However such coffins were generally badly broken when found, and usually no time was devoted to their reconstruction and restoration. As a result, they are generally poorly known, the more so since a proposed definitive study by Lisa Kuchman-Sabbahy, has yet to be published. The purpose of this article is to make known a number of fairly complete specimens, and numerous fragments, from the Sedment area, excavated by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization (now the Supreme Council for Antiquities) under Ahmed Galal between 1985 and 1997, in the hope of bringing such objects to a wider audience, and perhaps to put such objects back into the scholarly domain. New Kingdom Egyptian, and Late Bronze Age Palestinian pottery coffins, (Yassine's Type I), have been sub-divided into two basic types by Trude Dothan, namely Group A where the coffins are mummy-shaped, in which the general outline follows the traditional proportions of contemporary Egyptian anthropoid coffins with the head and shoulders being clearly delineated; and Group B, in which the head and shoulders are not defined. Pottery coffins are made by shaping a flat disc and then building up the vessel by a coiling technique in much the same way as that of a large storage jar or pithos, with the exception that the upper part of the vessel was also closed. Subsequently at the leather hard stage, circular holes were usually cut in the top and bottom, and sometimes at other places as well, and a semi-circular 'window' — the lid — was cut out of the upper part, to form an opening through which the body could be inserted. The circular holes have been seen as drainage holes to drain out the effluvia of the corpse, or as a means of enabling the soul to pass in and out, but it is more likely that such holes were made in an (often vain) attempt to stop the coffin cracking during firing. From the evidence uncovered at Deir el-Balah, it seems that the coffins were undoubtedly locally made where they were used, and fired in an open fire at a relatively low temperature, with the obvious result that they were not particularly stable in the

* We are grateful to E. Oren for reading a preliminary draft of this article, and for his comments and useful suggestions. In the preparation of this report Ahmed Ghalal is primarily responsible for sections 2 and 3, and all of the illustrations, whilst David Aston contributed sections 4 -6.

1 See the summaries by Oren 1973: 142-46, and by Kuchman 1977-78.
2 Cf. Kuchman 1977-78: 20 n.1.
3 Yassine 1975.
4 Dothan 1973; 1982: 254-5.
5 Rowe 1930: 39; Oren 1973: 133.
6 Steindorff 1937: 72

first place,⁷ hence the poor preservation of such coffins. Whilst the lids may also have been fired with the coffins, Dothan had already indicated that those from Deir el-Balah, may have been fired separately in a kiln,⁸ and this seems confirmed by the examples from Kom Abu Rady and Sedment described in this article since most, if not all, of them were evidently fired at a higher temperature in a kiln. At the latter sites the bodies of the pottery coffins were made of a local Nile clay which fired 7.5YR4/2 brown.⁹ Both types are often called slipper coffins, and have been much discussed in archaeological literature, particularly by earlier archaeologists who wished to link pottery slipper coffins with the Philistines,¹⁰ though such coffins certainly originated in Egypt.¹¹ The slipper coffins of Group B have been further divided into a naturalistic or grotesque style based on the modelling of the coffin lids.¹² In the naturalistic style the lid shows the human face in approximate life size and rendered with a certain degree of realism, often mould made and then applied to the coffin, with the subsequent addition of separately moulded ears and hands. In the grotesque style, the features are made by the application of coils of clay and frequent use of a knife or other tool for shaping the details. The faces are thus larger, somewhat stylised, and for want of a better word, grotesque.

The Coffins from Kom Abu Rady

The site of Kom Abu Rady lies approximately eight kilometres south west of Meidum, (cf. figs. 1-2), and was excavated between 1984 and 1987. The tombs were generally shaft tombs, the shaft opening into two chambers, one usually to the north, and one usually to the east. Stelae¹³ and pottery¹⁴ found in these tombs indicate that the cemetery was in use during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. Most of the coffins discovered were found broken, orientated east-west within the tomb chambers, though, in a few cases they were aligned alongside a north wall. Inevitably they were surrounded, and enclosed, by mud bricks:

- 1) (Beni Suef Museum 1244), figs. 3-4, pls. 1-5.

Location: Tomb 375, the body being found in room A, (north chamber), the lid in room B (east chamber). Length 190 cm., maximum width 50 cm., height 50 cm., wall thickness 2.5 cm. Lid, grotesque style, dimensions: 60 cm. long, 42 cm. wide and 2.5 cm. thick. Both lid and body were profusely decorated in red (2.5YR10/3), white and black (5YR1.2/8) on a yellow (8YR8/8) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This is the best preserved of all the coffins found. The face, beard and oversized ears are painted red, whilst around the face, and extending over the shoulders and along the chest as far as the crossed arms, is a stylised nemes headdress in black on yellow. Stylised bandages, consisting of wide white bands with an inner thin red one, run around the coffin at intervals;

⁷ Perlman/Asaro/Dothan 1973. Cf. also Oren 1973: 133, where it is also suggested that a number of such coffins were probably already broken before use, the breaks being patched with plaster.

⁸ Dothan, 1979: 99.

⁹ Colours after *Munsell Book of Colour* (Baltimore, 1966)

¹⁰ *inter alia*, Dothan 1957 (but she later changed her mind, cf. Dothan 1972); Wright 1959.

¹¹ As originally suggested by Albright 1932: 304. Cf. Oren 1973: 142-6 and Kuchman 1977-78: 11-12.

¹² These terms were coined by Fisher 1923: 234, and have since been widely accepted.

¹³ Galal Abdel Fattah 2000b: 207-14.

¹⁴ Galal Abdel Fattah 2000a: 1-10.

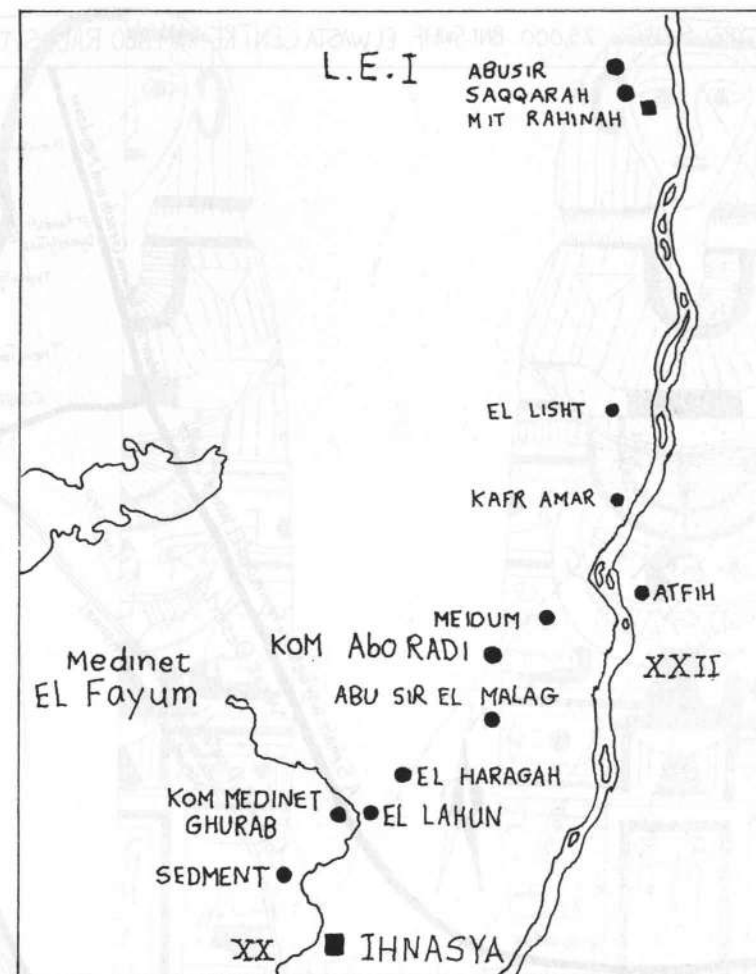


Fig. 1. Map showing Kom Abu Rady Site.

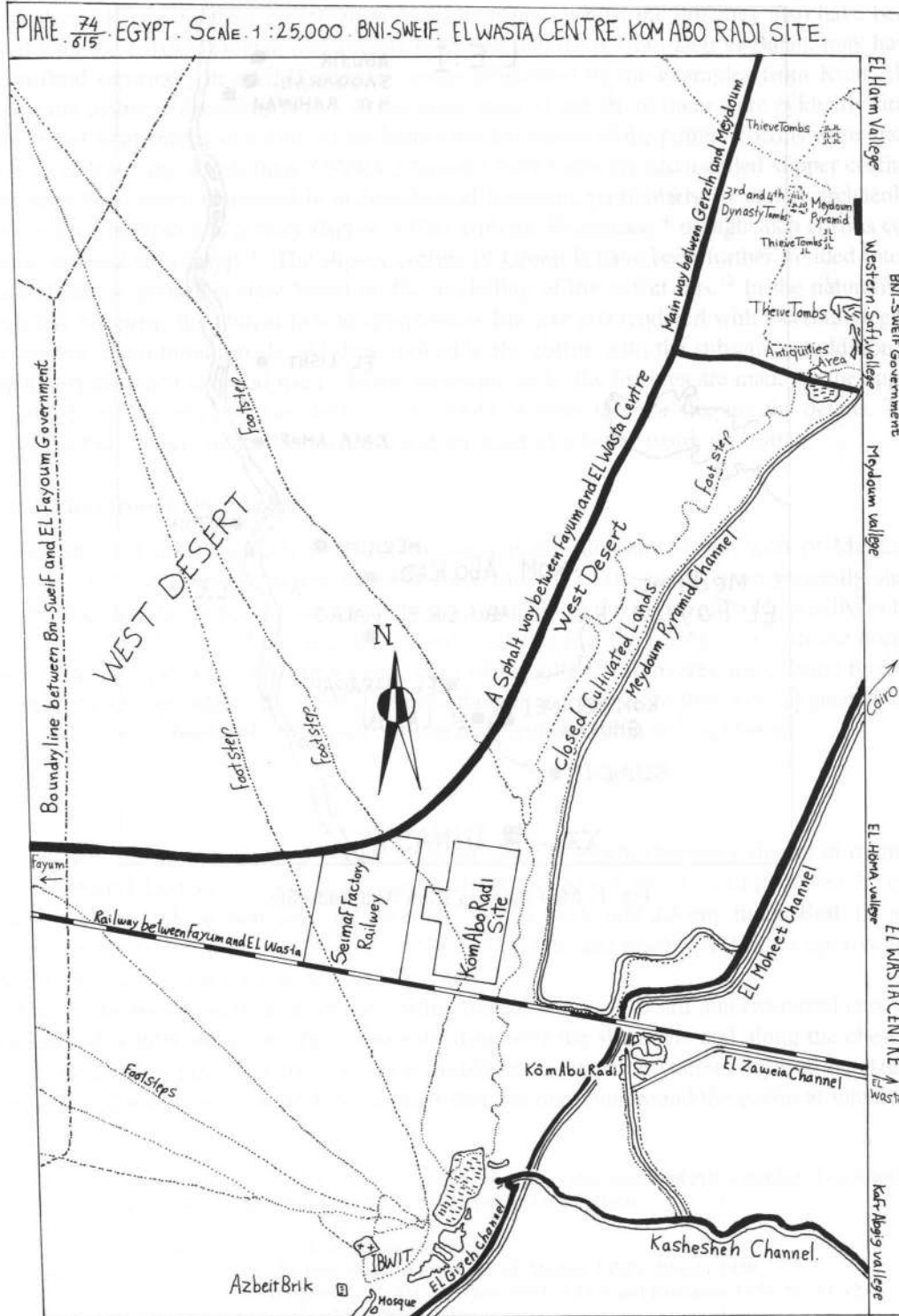


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

A.G.

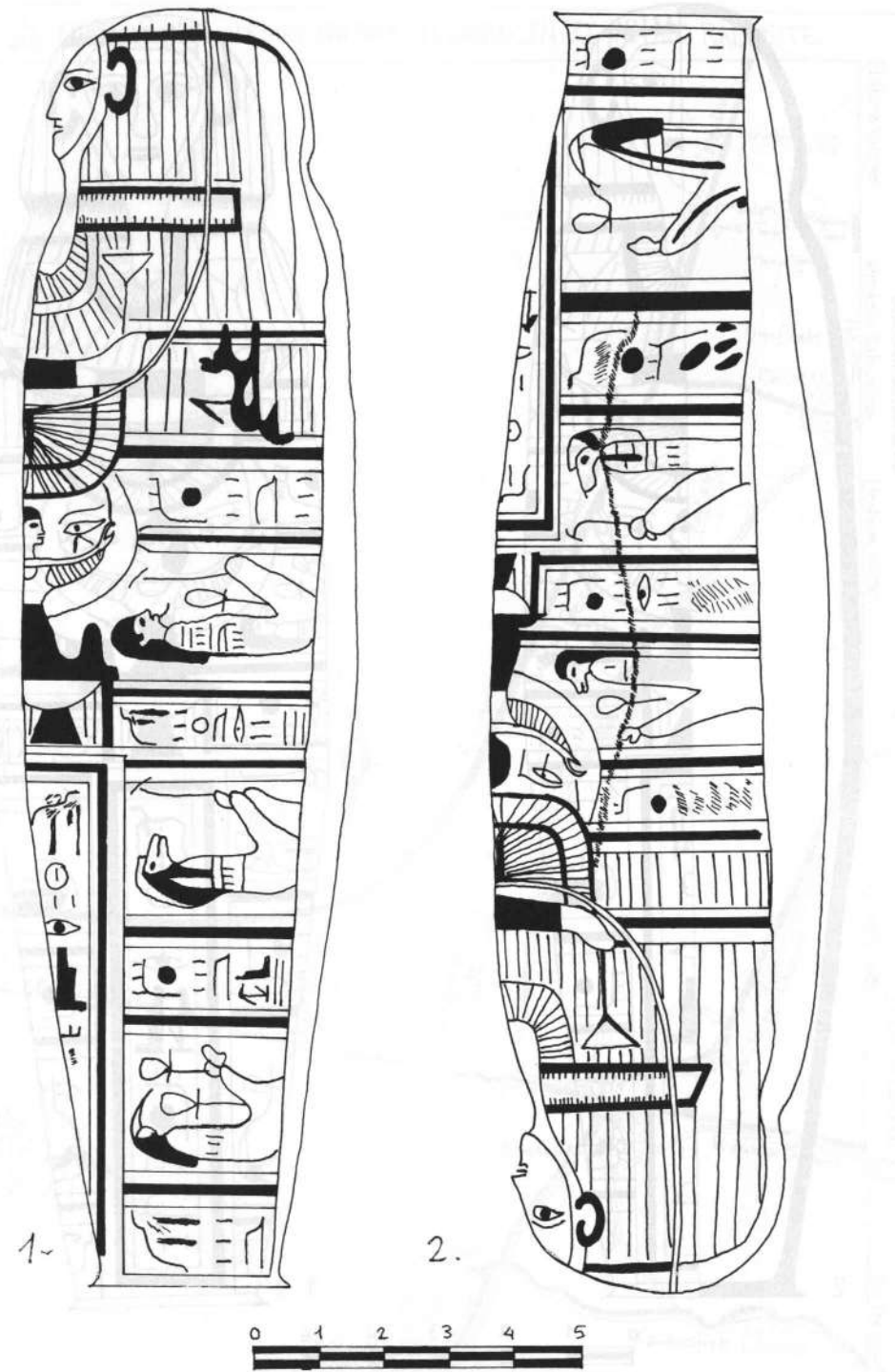


Fig. 4.

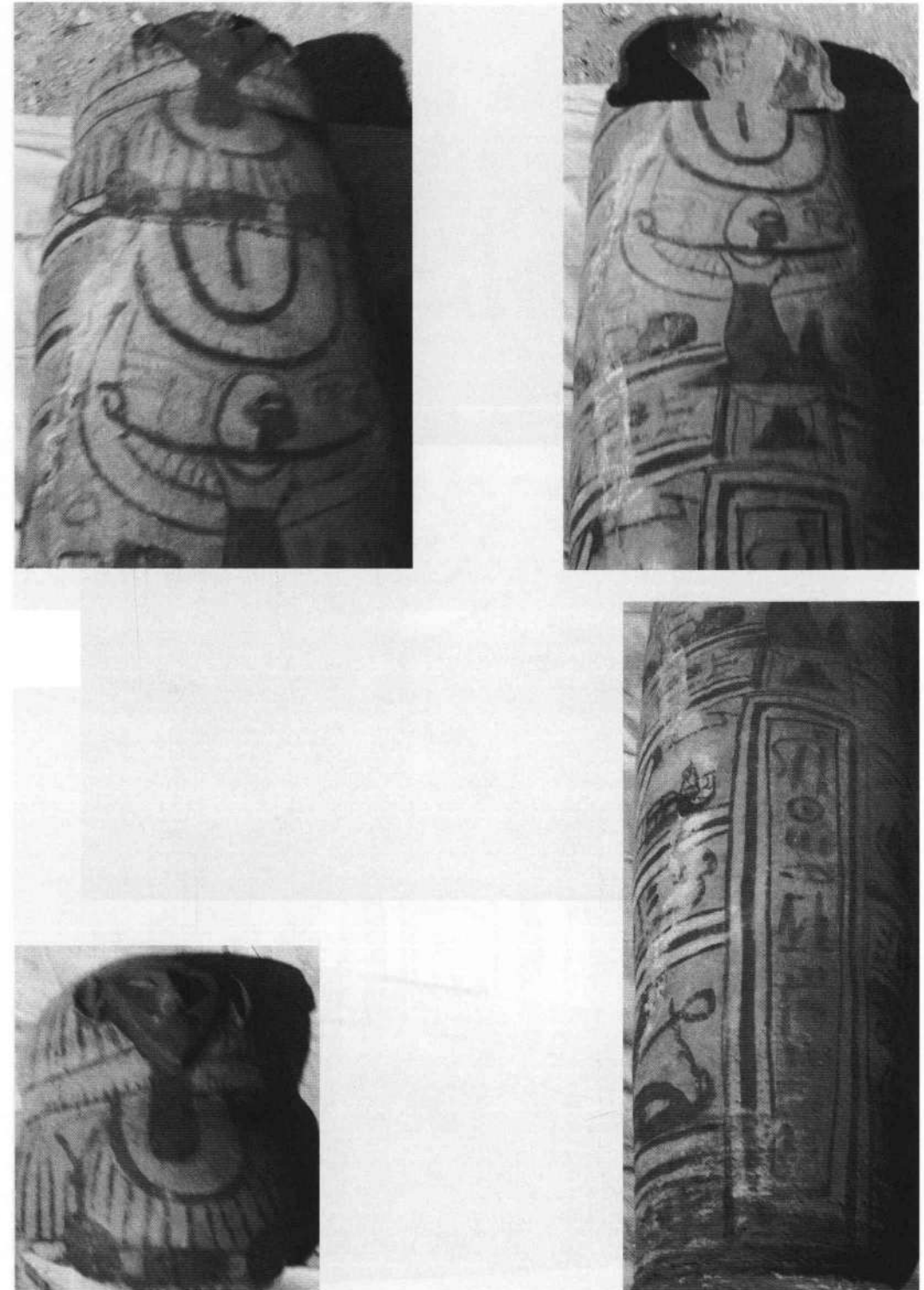


Plate 1.

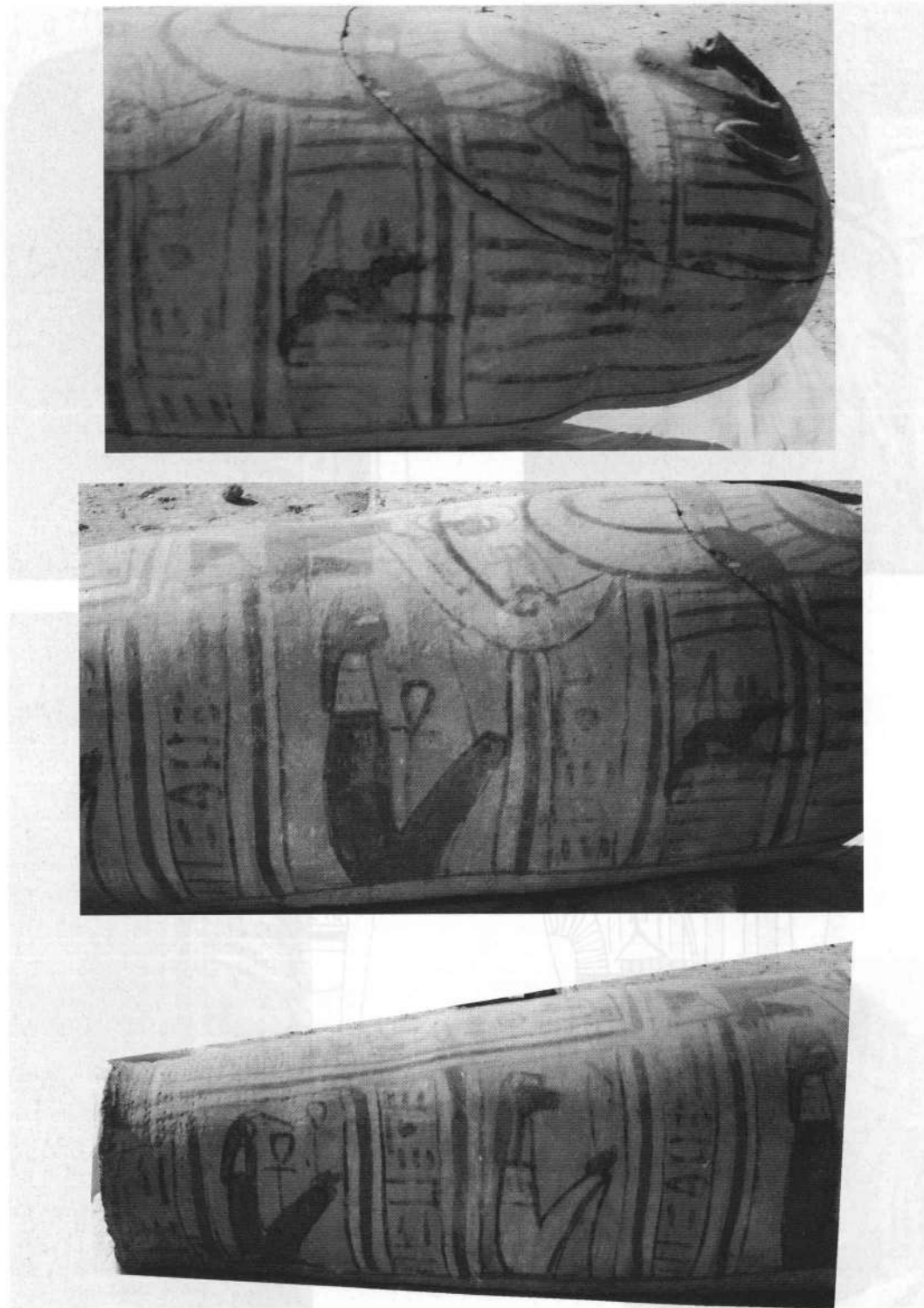


Plate 2.



Plate 3.



Plate 4.



Plate 5.

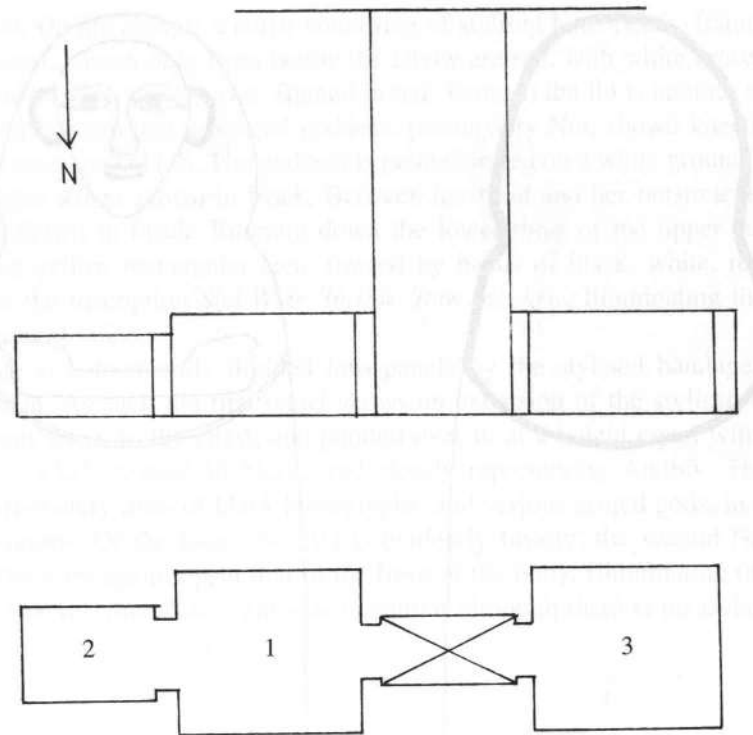


Fig. 6a. Tomb no. 44.

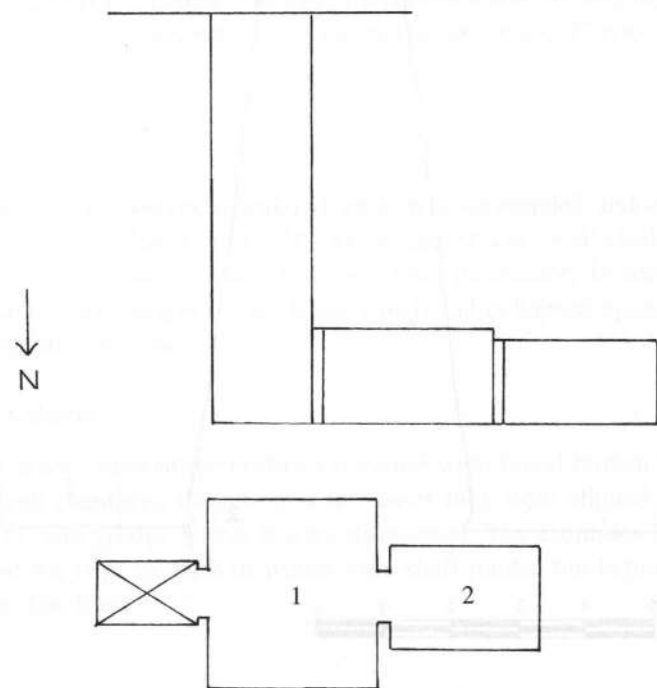


Fig. 6b. Tomb no. 52.

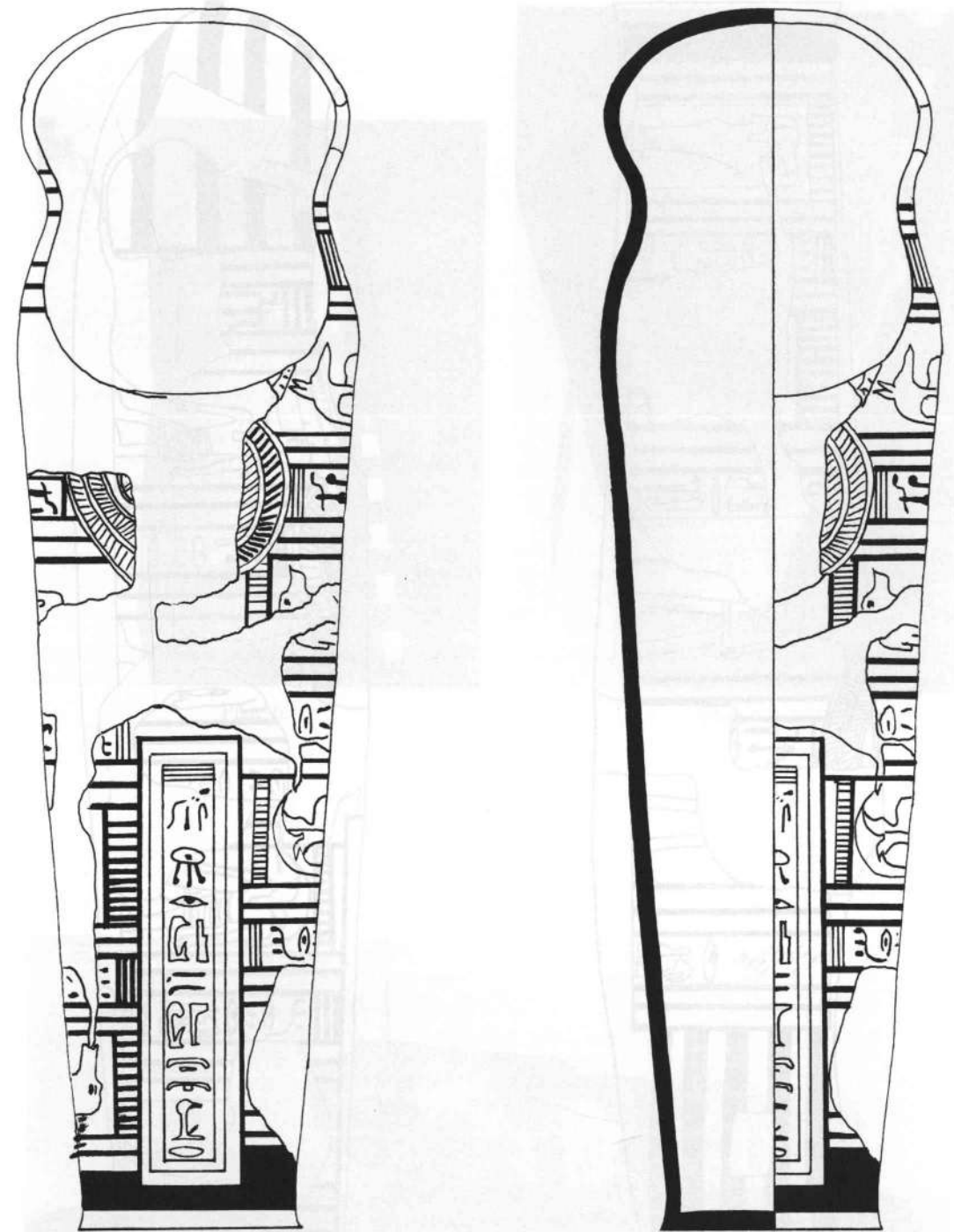


Fig. 7.

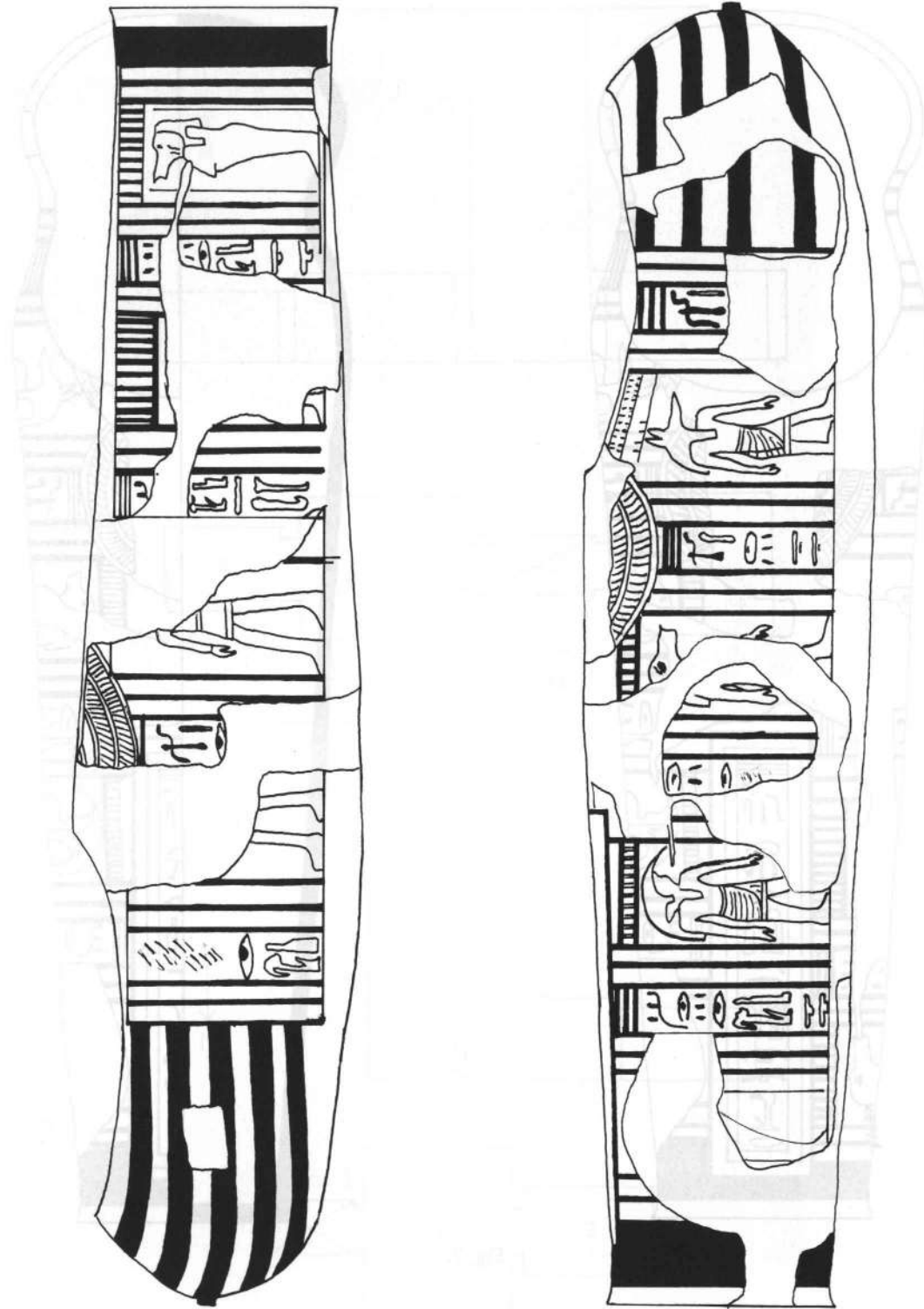


Fig. 8.

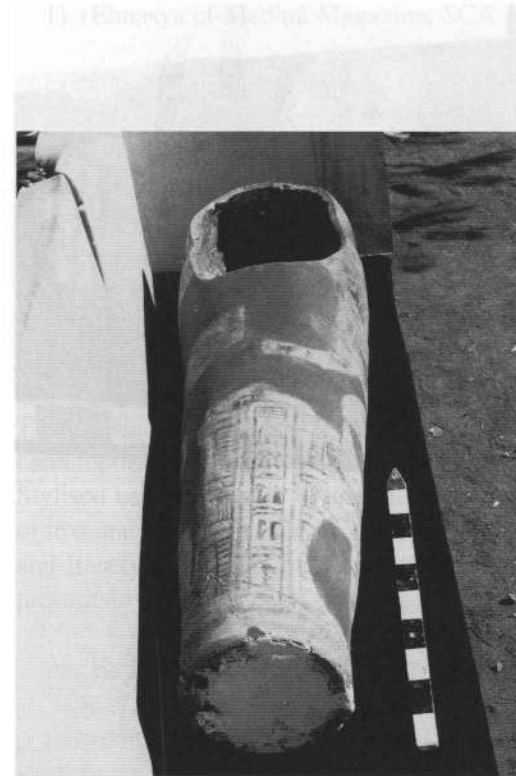


Plate 6.

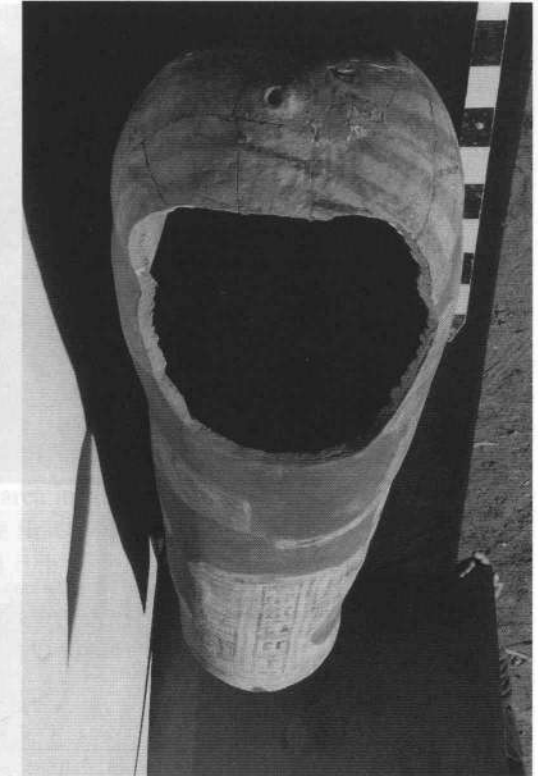


Plate 7.

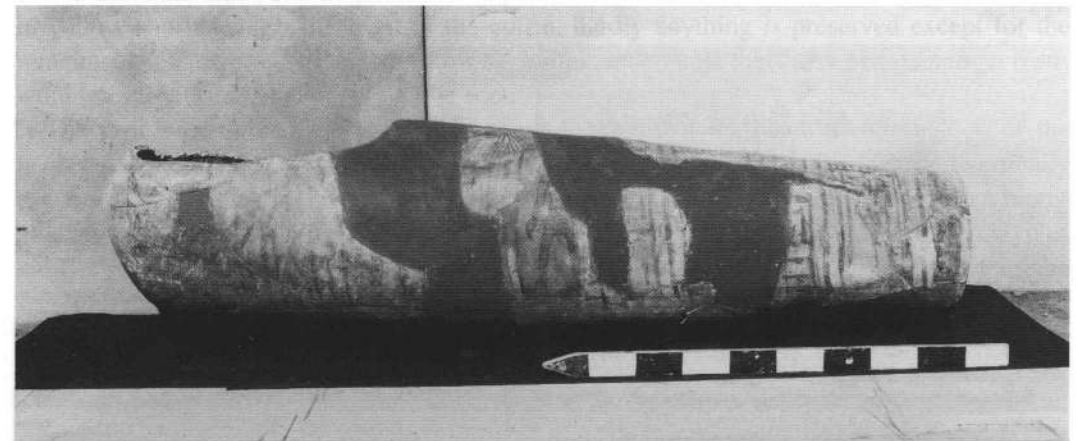


Plate 8.

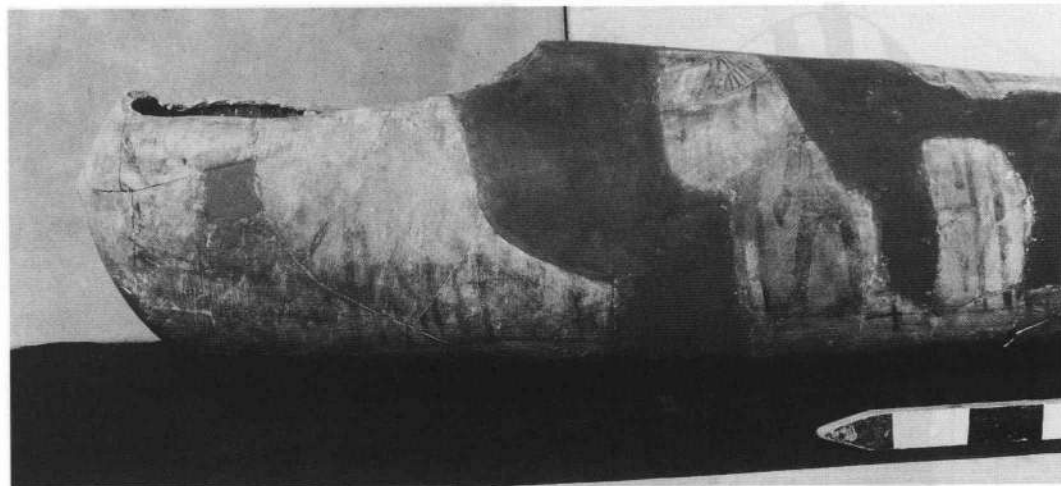


Plate 9.

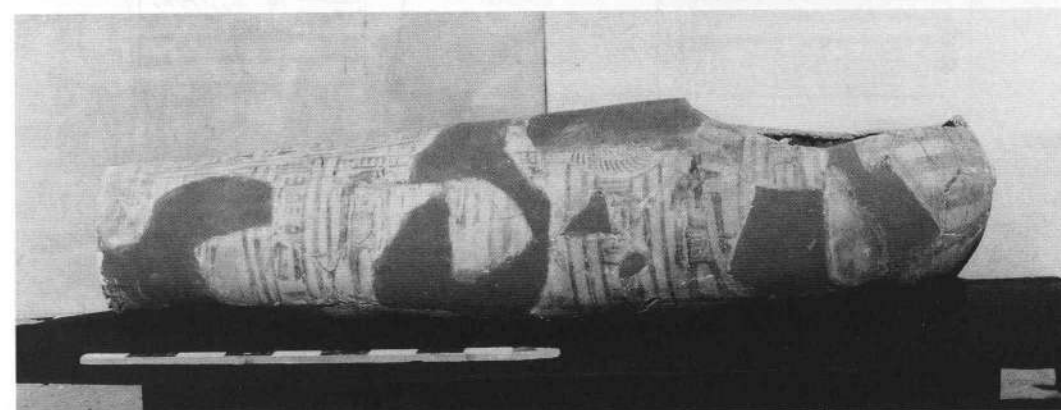


Plate 10.

1) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register 2417) figs. 7-8, pls. 6-11.

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, north-west corner of room 3, anthropoid coffin broken in several pieces. Length 194 cm., maximum width 40 cm., height 47 cm., wall thickness 2.1 cm. At the top, behind the head is a spouted hole made before firing. Lid not preserved. Profusely decorated in red (2.5YR8/3), white and black (7.5YR1/2) on a yellow (5YR8/7) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

Although this coffin is not so well preserved as that of Imy from Kom Abu Rady, it was clearly of better workmanship. Practically all of the front of the coffin is lost except for parts of a feathered collar, and the inscription, recording the name of the owner, written in black on a yellow ground: *Šḥd Wsir Nn-Ntr-tšwy mš'-ḥrw*, illuminating the Osiris, Nen-Netjer-Tawy. As with the coffin of Imy, this name panel is surrounded by black, red and black rectangles. The left side shows the typical thick banded black on yellow banded headdress, familiar from contemporary wooden coffins, which, this time, however, only extends as far as the chin. Stylised bandages again divide the remaining area into panels of alternating vertical columns of text and gods, this time shown standing. The first is Anubis, followed by Qebhsenuf, Thoth and Imsety (?), whilst the less well preserved right side was clearly similar, the gods being presumably, Anubis (?), Duamutef (?), Thoth (?) and Hapy.

2) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register 2418) figs. 9-10, pls. 12-17

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, north-west corner of room 3, slipper coffin broken in several pieces. Length 192 cm., maximum width 47 cm., height 47 cm., wall thickness 3.0 cm. In the back is a hole made before firing. Lid, grotesque style, only partially preserved. Profusely decorated in red (7.5YR4/2), reddish yellow (2.5YR6/4) and yellow (7.5YR8/7) on a black ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This poorly preserved coffin differs from those previously described in that it was painted with a black, rather than yellow background. Of the lid only parts of the upper right side, including the right ear and the lower left, including the modelled right hand were found. Remains of a *nemes* headdress formed by painted yellow stripes are present, and over the chest, under the arms, are the remains of a painted *wesekh* collar, the beads being represented in yellow and black. Of the front of the coffin, hardly anything is preserved except for the remains of some words written in yellow — *imšḥw*, revered, at the waist, and *ḏd mdw n Wsir*, words said by Osiris, and *pt ḏd.f* at the foot.

The right side, which is the better preserved, shows, at the head, a continuation of the *nemes* headdress in yellow which continues horizontally as far as the shoulder, and vertically to the floor of the coffin. This is followed by a panel which bears two rows of yellow hieroglyphs over, by analogy with the left side, a figure of Anubis. Of the two lines of hieroglyphs, the first is poorly preserved but appears to read *ḏd mdw in Nwt m pt*, words spoken by the goddess Nut, who is in the sky, and would have continued, as is the case on the left side, along the entire length of the coffin, [...] *ḥrt ntr in [wsir šm'yt] n Ḥry-šf [Hly mš'-ḥrw] m ḥtp ḏd.f Wsir*,... necropolis for the [Osiris, chantress] of Heryshef [Hly, true of voice], who is at peace and called Osiris. The lower, better preserved, line reads *ḥtp ḏl nsw 'Inpw ḥnt šḥ ntr*, a boon which the king gives to the god Anubis, who is in his shrine, and continues in two vertical lines which surround a standing figure of Imsety, *n Wsir šm'yt n Ḥry-šf Hly mš'-ḥrw*, for

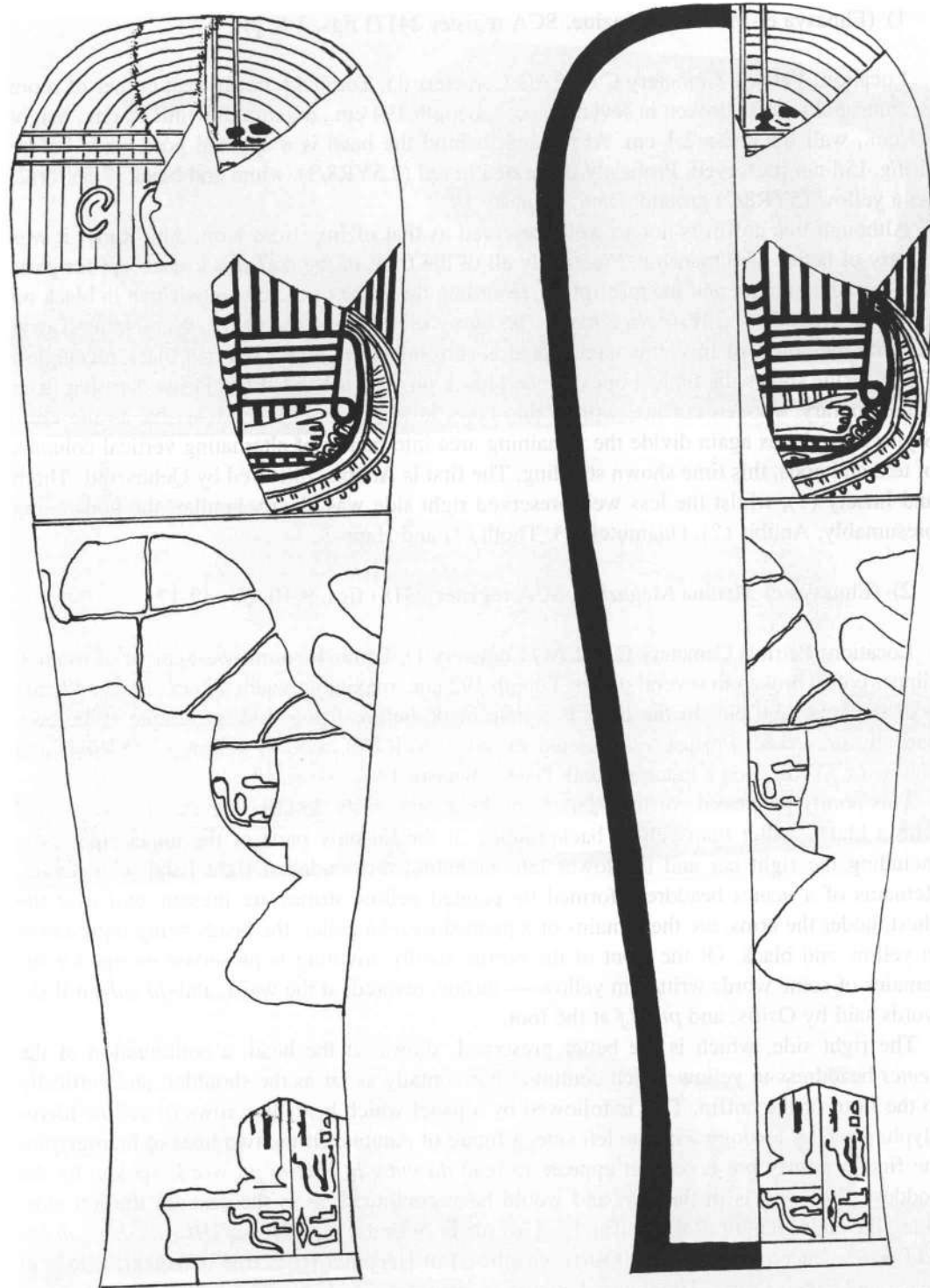


Fig. 9.

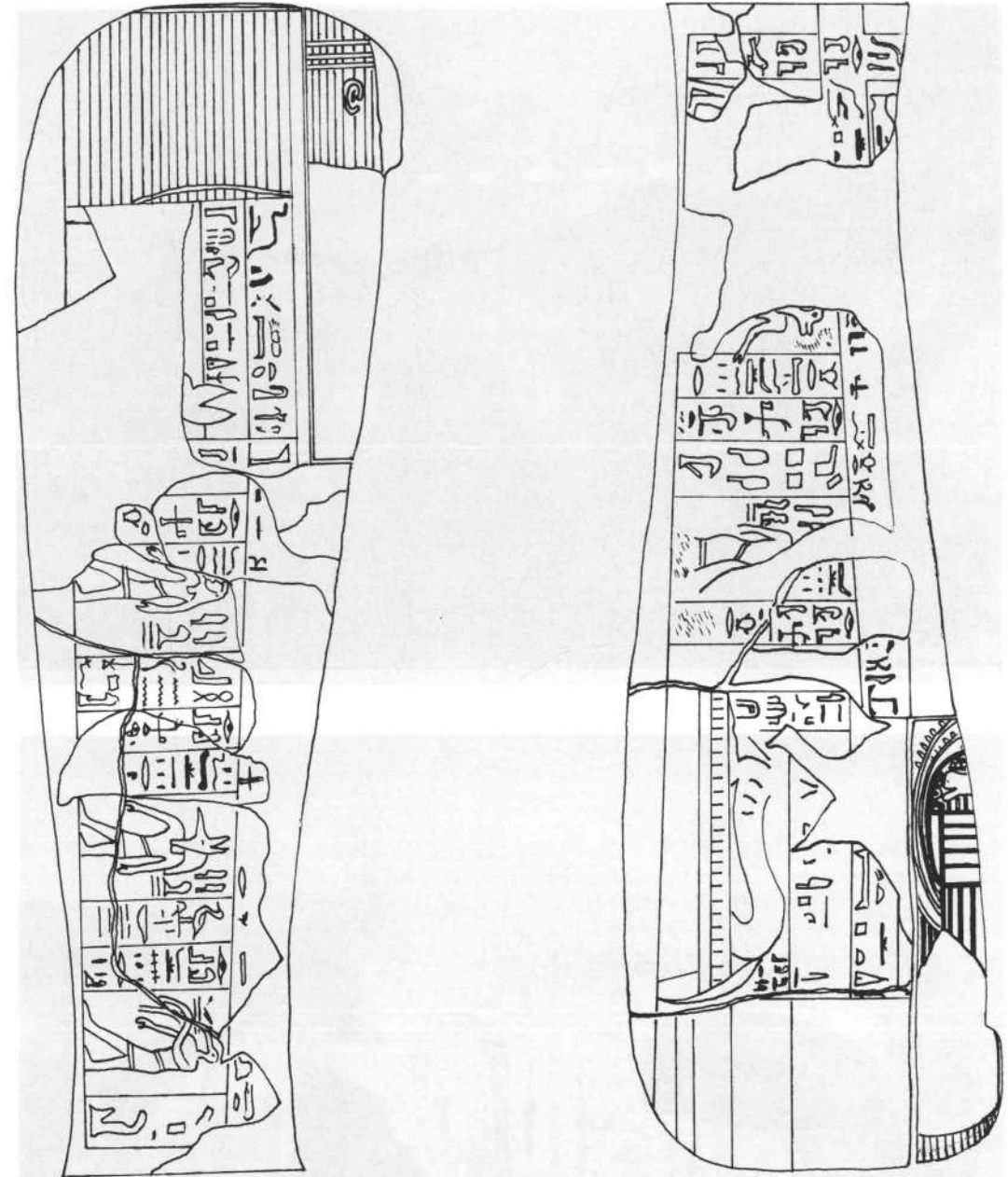


Fig. 10.

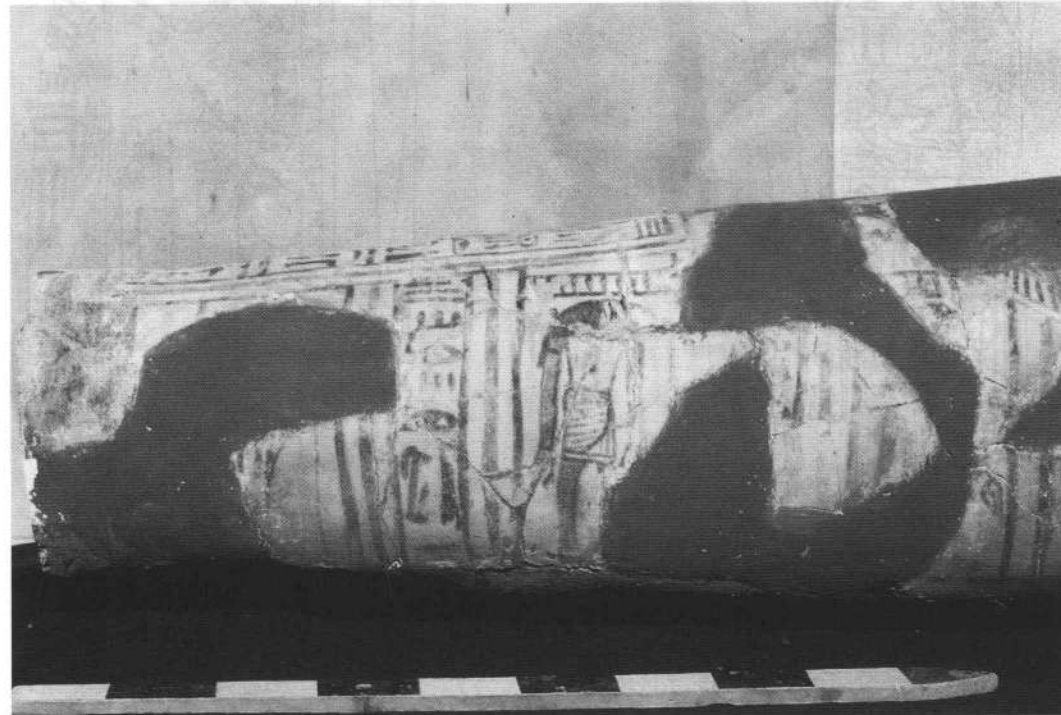


Plate 11.

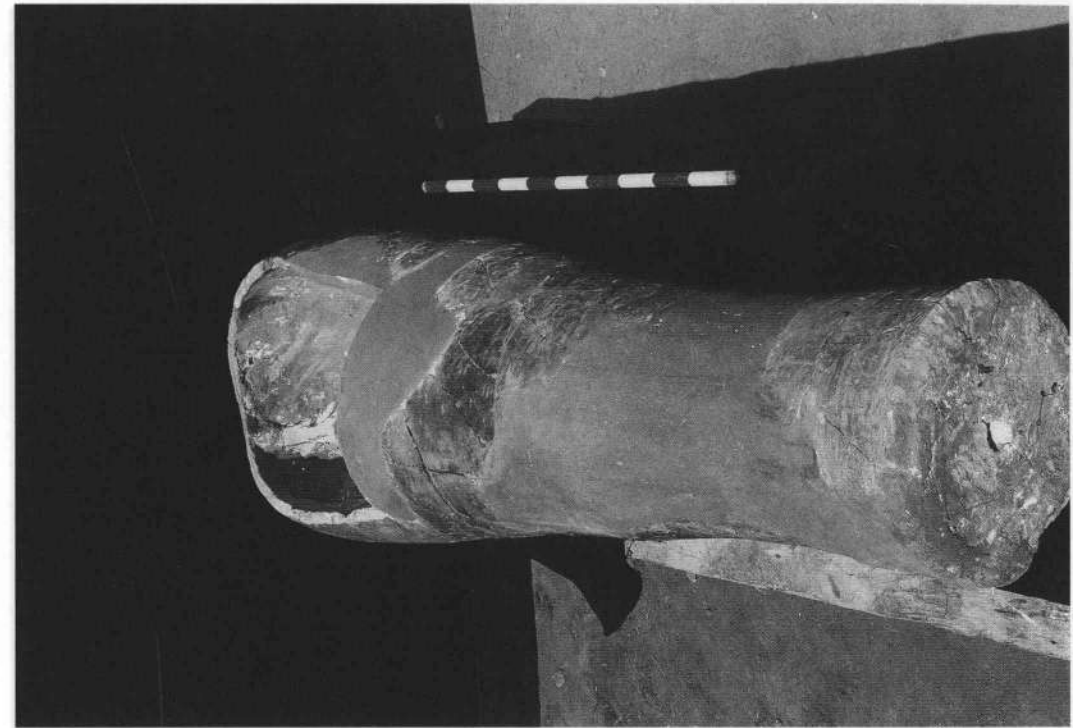


Plate 12.



Plate 13.

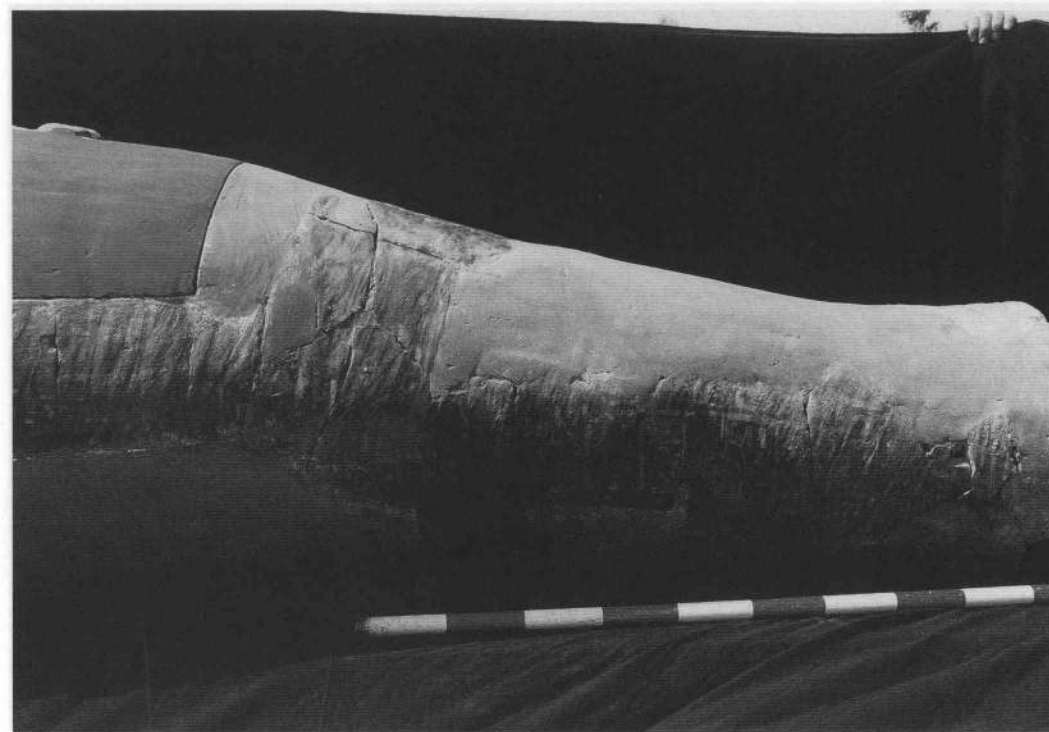


Plate 14.



Plate 15.



Plate 16.

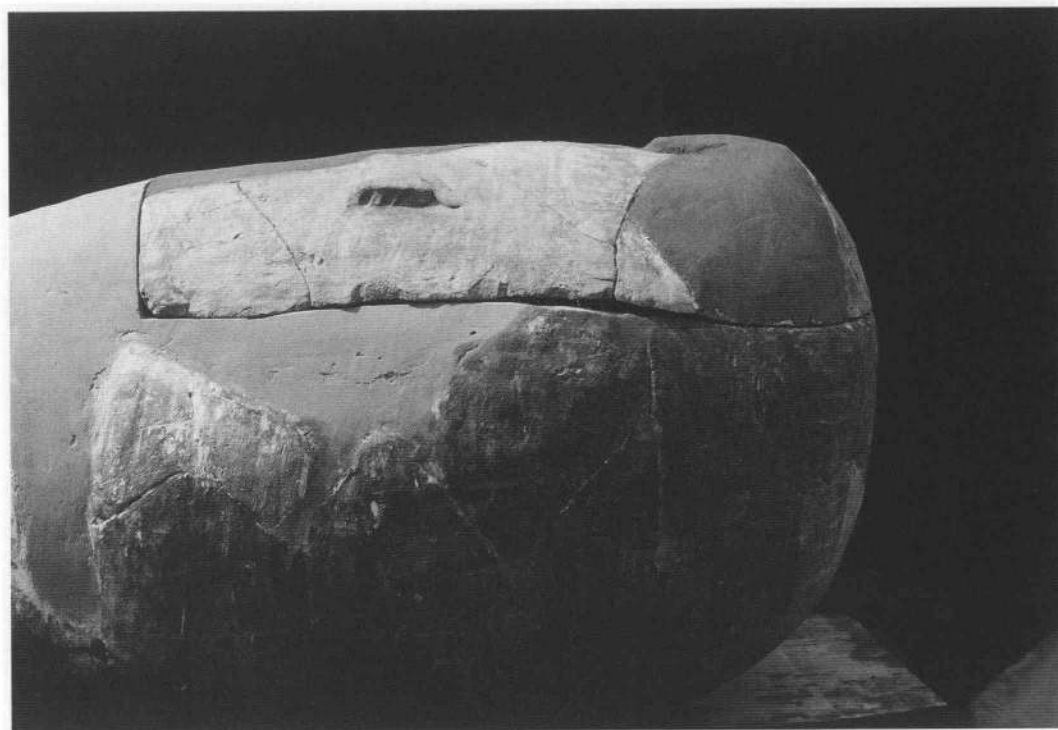


Plate 17.

the Osiris, chantress of Heryshef, Hly, true of voice. Interposed between the horizontal line and the first vertical row of this inscription is another vertical row of hieroglyphs mentioning the name of Imsety who follows. After the standing figure of Imsety there is another three vertical lines of text, the first bearing the name of Qebhsenuf, and the next two, the titles and name of the deceased. This is followed by a representation of a standing figure of Duamutef, presumably a mistake since one would have expected a figure of Qebhsenuf. Behind him are another two vertical lines of hieroglyphs, the first, *Dhwtj nb Hntw*, Thoth, lord of Hermopolis, and the second once more referring to the name and title of the deceased which continues either side of a standing figure of Thoth. The left side, fig. 10, is basically similar except that the Sons of Horus are presumably Qebhsenuf (- both his name¹⁷ and head are unfortunately missing -) and Hapy.

3) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 3/2) fig. 11a, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, fragment only, length 13 cm., maximum preserved width 8.5 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Profusely decorated in red (2.5YR8/4), black (2.5YR1/3) and white on a yellow (2.5YR6/8) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This fragment, which was similar in style to that found at Kom Abu Rady, preserves part of the figure of Qebhsenuf.

4) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 4/2) fig. 11b, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, room 3, (fig. 6a), fragment only, length 14 cm., maximum preserved width 16.0 cm., wall thickness 2.5 cm. Profusely decorated in red (7.5YR6/7), black (2.5YR1/3) and white on a yellow (2.5YR6/7) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This fragment, which was similar in style to that found at Kom Abu Rady, preserves part of the figure of Hapy.

5) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 1/2) fig. 11c, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, fragment only, length 13 cm., maximum preserved width 8.5 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Inscription in black (2.5YR1/3) on a yellow (2.5YR6/8) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This fragment bears the remains of an inscription, *Im3hw Wsir*, revered before Osiris.

6) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 2/1) fig. 11d, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, fragment only, length 14 cm., maximum preserved width 9.0 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Inscription in yellow (2.5YR6/8) on a black ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This fragment bears the remains of inscriptions, which refers to Duamutef and Heryshef, possibly from the coffin of Hly, or a similar one.

¹⁷ In view of the mistake on the right side, it is possible that the god here represented is indeed Qebhsenuf, but misnamed Duamutef.

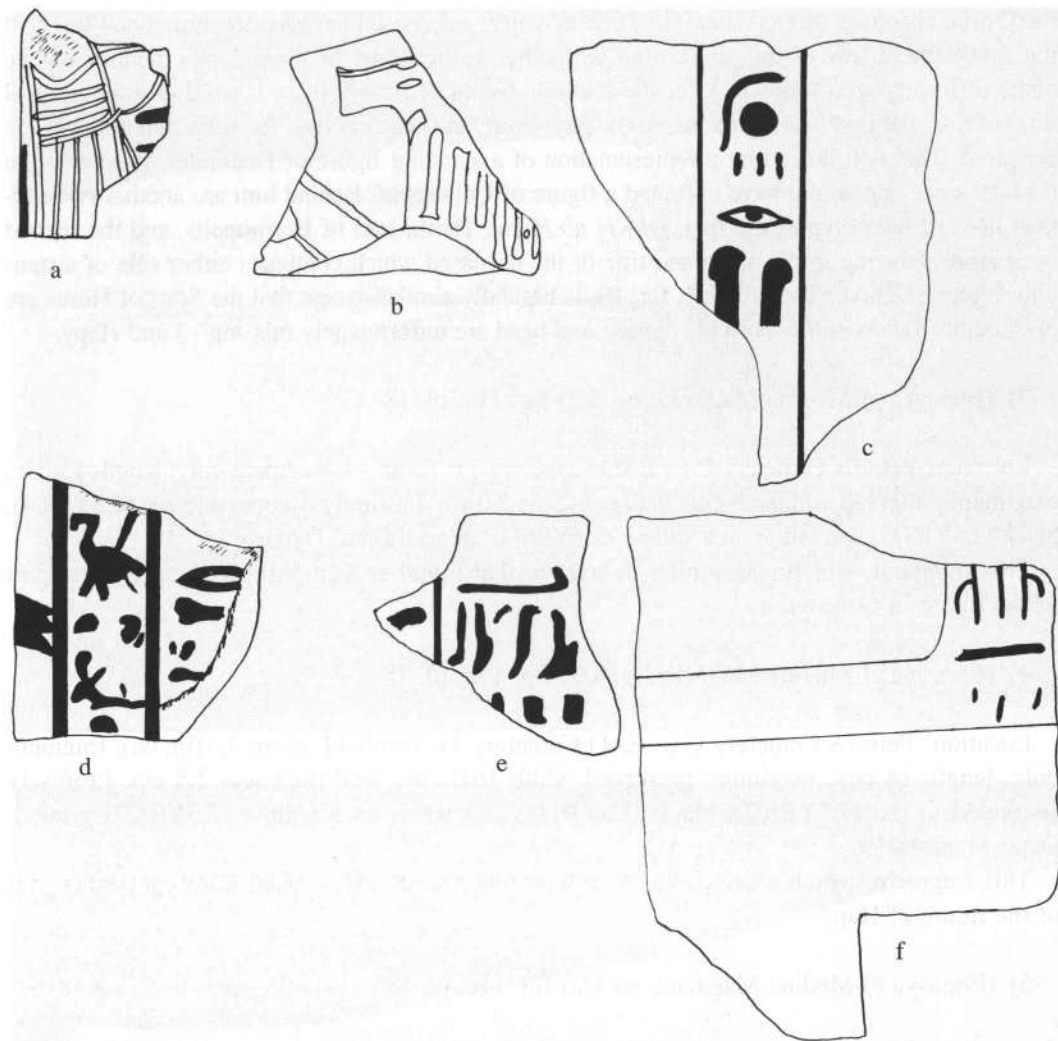


Fig. 11.



Plate 18.

7) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 1/4) fig. 11e, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, room 3 fragment only, length 13 cm., maximum preserved width 9.0 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Illegible Inscription in yellow (2.5YR6/7) on a black (2.5YR1/3) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

8) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 3/4) fig. 11f, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44, room 3, fragment only, length 30 cm., maximum preserved width 24.0 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Inscription in red (2.5YR8/4) on a white ground, the remainder being painted black (2.5YR1/4). Date: Dynasty 19.

This fragment bears the remains of an inscription, in red, *Khenty-t3w*, Khentiamentiw. This fragment is clearly different in style to all previous ones, and may come from a slipper coffin. It is painted black, with the inscription in red on a white ground.

9) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no 2/3) fig. 12a, pl. 19

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 44. Foot end only, length 52 cm., maximum preserved width 50.0 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Hole, pre-fired, in centre of base. Profusely decorated in red (2.5YR8/4), black (2.5YR1/3) and white on a yellow (2.5YR6/8) ground. Date: Dynasty 19.

This fragment bears the remains of decoration very similar to that of the coffin of Imw from Kom Abu Rady, and that of Nen-Netjer-Tawy found in the same tomb at Sedment. The preserved part shows, on the right side (fig. 12a), two panels bordered by alternating vertical lines of black, red and black. Of the two panels the first shows a seated figure of Thoth, whose upper parts are painted black, and lower body, red; and the second bars the end of an inscription, *Im3hw Wsir* (?), revered before Osiris (?). On the left side the only decoration which remains are thick vertical and horizontal white lines.

10) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 3) fig. 12b, pl. 19

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52. Foot end only. Length 23 cm., maximum width 34 cm., wall thickness 3.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19.

11) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 4) fig. 12c, pl. 19

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52. Foot end only. Length 20 cm., maximum width 35 cm., wall thickness 3.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19.

12) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 4/2) fig. 13a, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52 room 2. Lid fragment showing the right arm. Length 22 cm., maximum width 14 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, natural colour red 2.5YR6/7.

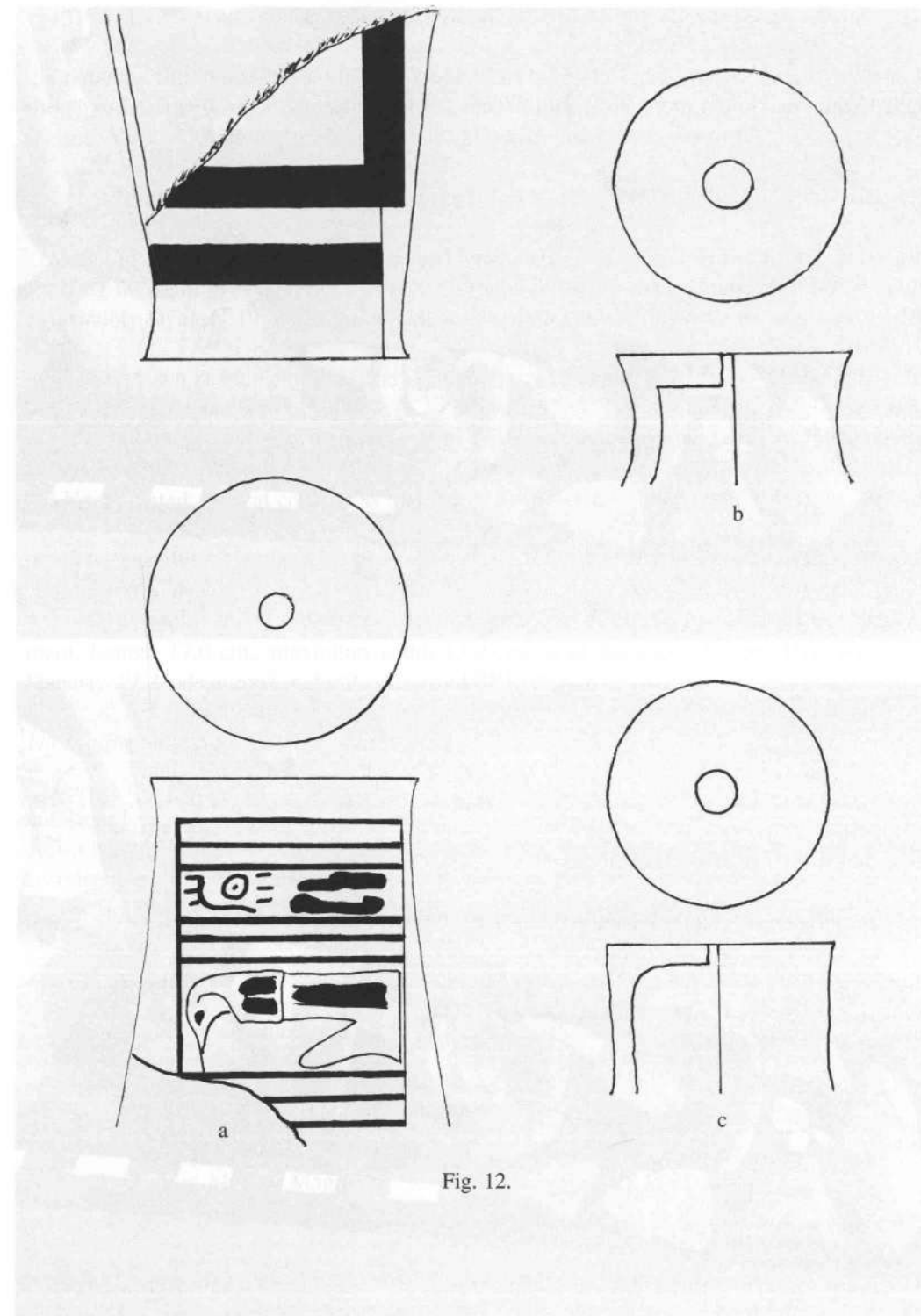


Fig. 12.

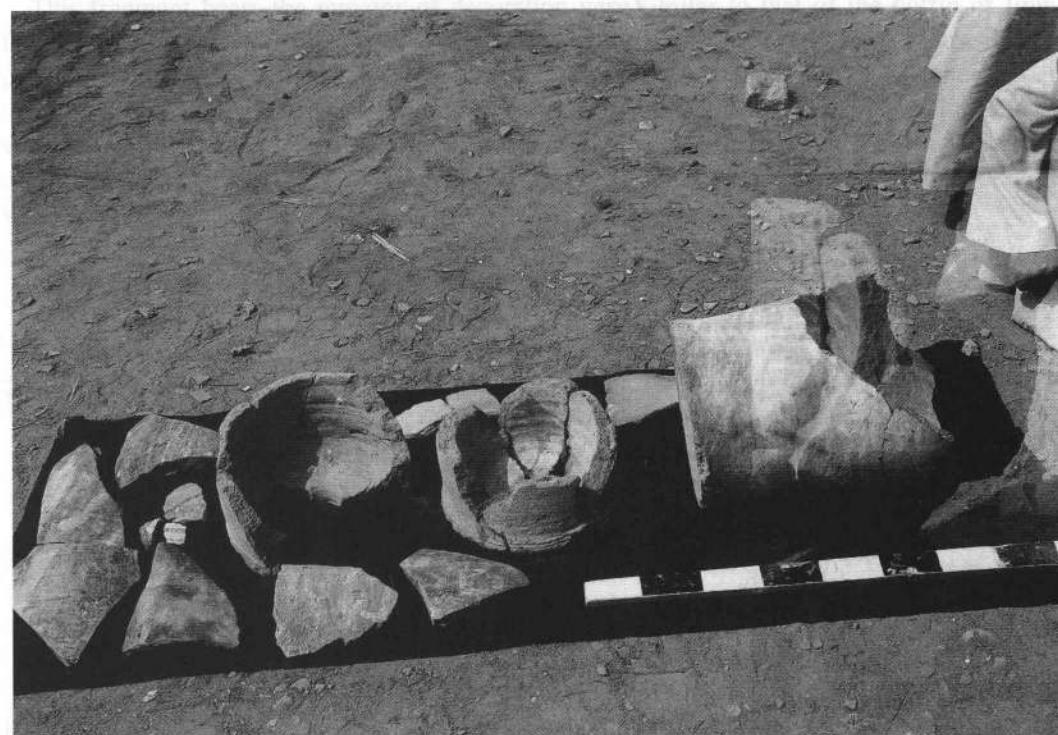


Plate 19.

- 13) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 5/2) fig. 13b, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52 room 2. Lid fragment showing the left arm. Length 14 cm., maximum width 7.5 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, natural colour red 7.5YR6/7.

- 14) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 6/2) fig. 13c, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52 room 2. Lid fragment showing the right eye. Length 20 cm., maximum width 8.5 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, natural colour red 7.5YR6/7. Grotesque style.

- 15) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 7/2) fig. 13d, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52 room 2. Lid fragment. Length 9.2 cm., maximum width 7.5 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, natural colour red 5YR6/4.

- 16) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 8/2) fig. 13e, pl. 18

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 52 room 2, (fig. 6b), Lid fragment. Length 17.0 cm., maximum width 13.0 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, natural colour red 5YR6/4.

The Coffin Lids from Sedment tomb 150

During the 1992 season, the re-clearance of tomb 150 led to the unexpected discovery of a number of objects principally wooden and pottery ushabtis, whole vessels and a number of coffin lids, all of which had evidently been found by Petrie in 1921. Whether these are to be correlated with the "pieces of five pottery coffins" from tomb 2010, mentioned by Brunton, is now impossible to ascertain.¹⁸

- 1) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register Beni Suef 1744/A) fig. 14a, pl. 20a

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 25 cm., maximum width 21 cm., wall thickness 7.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Decorated in red (2.5YR8/4), black (2.5YR1/3) and white. Naturalistic style. The face is painted red with the eyes in white, and the pupils, eyebrows and hair in black. Unusually thick.

- 2) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register Beni Suef 1742) fig. 14b, pl. 20b

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 54 cm., maximum width 50 cm., wall thickness 3.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Decorated in red

¹⁸ Petrie/Brunton 1924: 32.

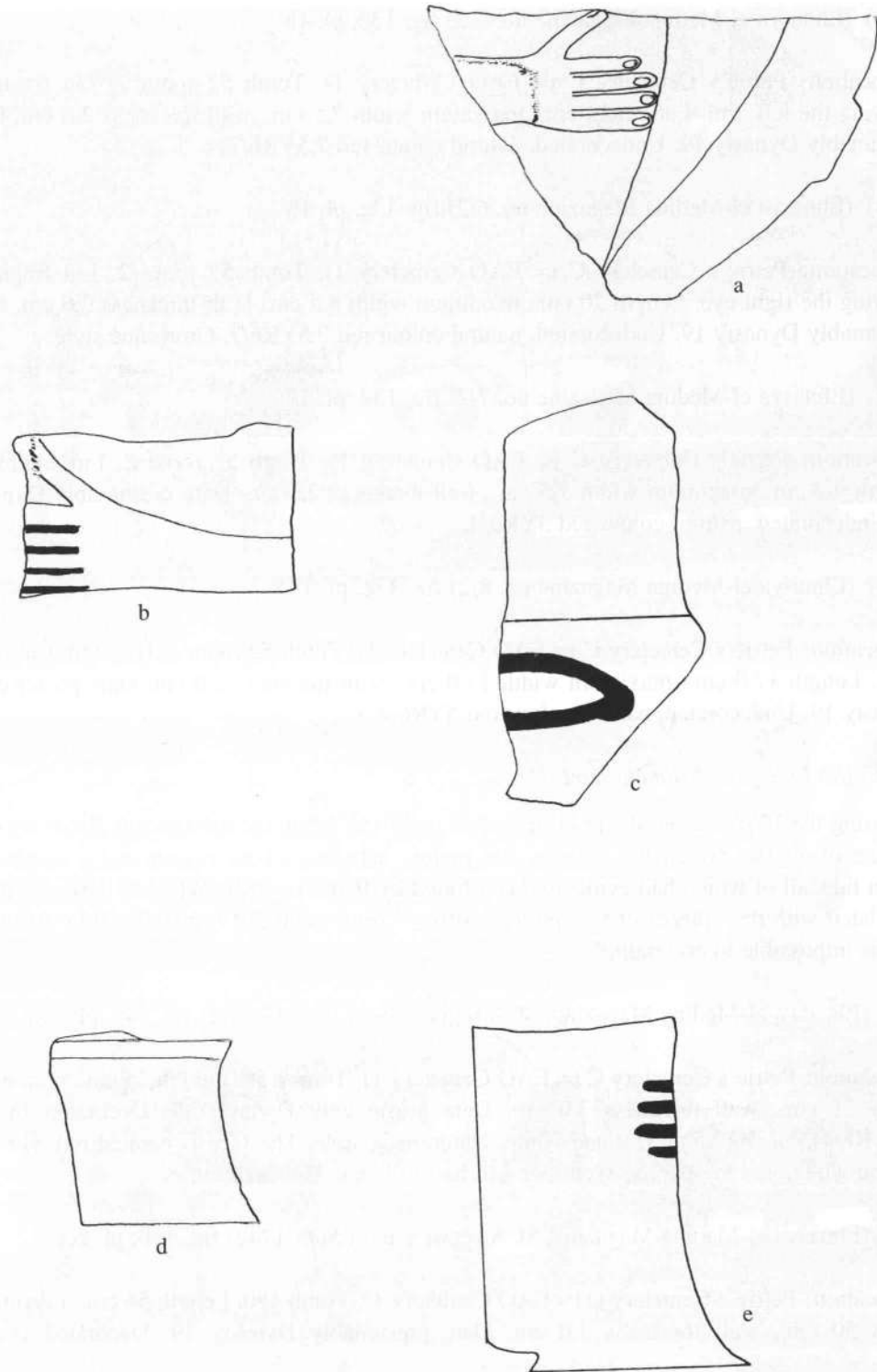


Fig. 13.

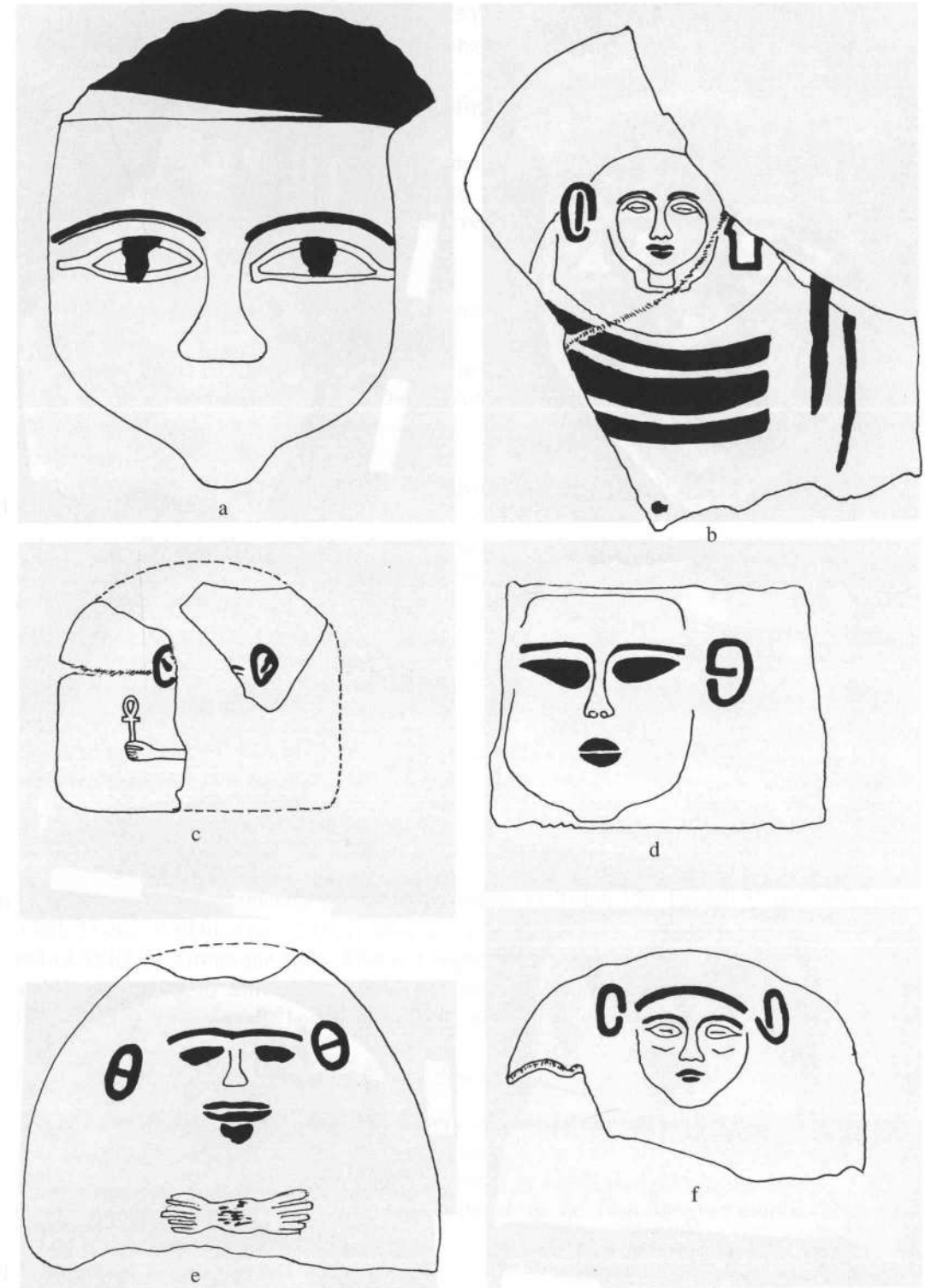


Fig. 14.

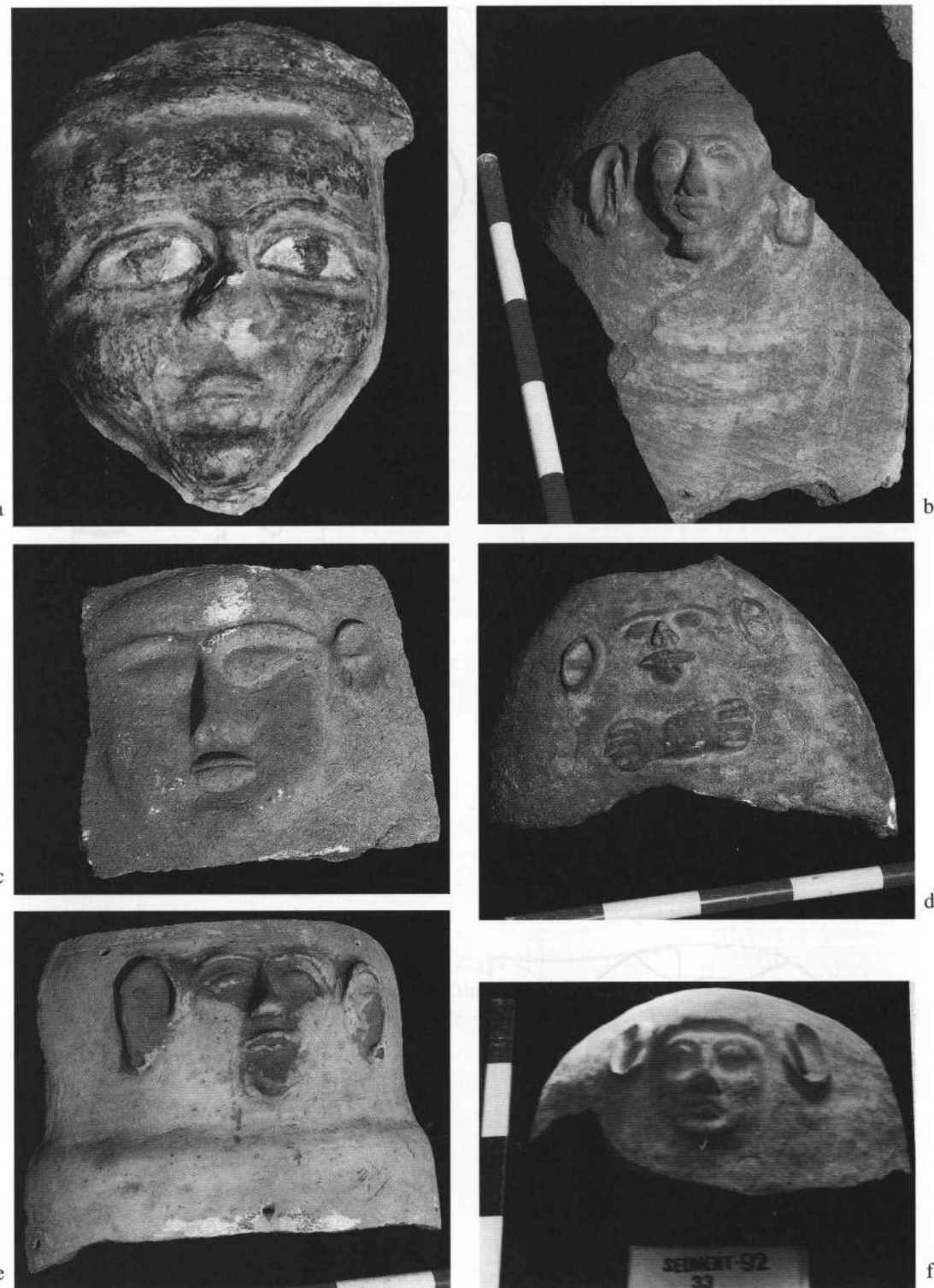


Plate 20.

(2.5YR8/4), black (2.5YR1/3) and yellow (2.5YR6/8). Naturalistic style. The face is painted red, the hair black, whilst three broad yellow bands represent a collar.

3) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine no. 1/3) fig. 14c

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 25 cm., maximum width 21 cm., wall thickness 7.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Decorated in red (2.5YR8/5). Naturalistic style (?). The preserved parts are painted red. The modelled hands hold an *ankh* sign.

4) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register Beni Suef 1744B) fig. 14d, pl. 20c

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 15 cm., maximum width 17 cm., wall thickness 3.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, incomplete. Naturalistic style

5) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register Beni Suef 1739) fig. 14e, pl. 20d

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 45 cm., maximum width 32 cm., wall thickness 3.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Undecorated, incomplete. Grotesque style

6) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register Beni Suef 1740) fig. 14f, pl. 20f

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 38 cm., maximum width 30 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Painted uniformly yellow (2.5YR6/8). Naturalistic style

7) (Ehnasya el-Medina Magazine, SCA register Beni Suef 1741) fig. 15, pl. 20e

Location: Petrie's Cemetery C (= EAO Cemetery 1), Tomb 150. Length 37 cm., maximum width 25 cm., wall thickness 2.0 cm. Date presumably Dynasty 19. Facial details painted dark red (2.5YR8/5). Grotesque style. This is a highly unusual example in that it derives from an anthropoid coffin, to which it was evidently attached by pegs pushed through the two post-fired holes at the top of the head and the three along the chest.

Previously Excavated Clay Coffins from Sedment

The earliest record of the finding of pottery coffins at Sedment known to us is the laconic reference by Naville to finding fragments of such in the 1890's.¹⁹ Only a single naturalistic style lid was published; it was so arranged with a group of pots which are all of mid-Eighteenth Dynasty date,²⁰ but whether this dates the coffin lid, or is simply fortuitous cannot be

¹⁹ Naville 1894: 14.

²⁰ Naville 1894: pl. x.

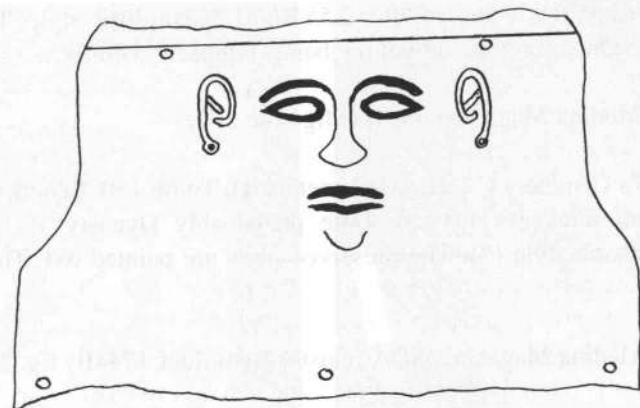


Fig. 15.

said. As is clear from the previous section, Petrie had uncovered fragments of clay coffins during his 1921 season, but apart from the five fragments mentioned above, and "a painted pottery coffin" from tomb 2017,²¹ no others are mentioned in the final excavation report. However the tomb records held at University College London also mention pottery coffins, or fragments thereof, in tombs 2012 and 2016.

The Kom Abu Rady and Sedment Coffins in the New Kingdom Sequence

Pottery coffins are perhaps not as uncommon as museum pieces may indicate, but, with the exception of those from Deir el-Balah, their very fragility has meant that few are well preserved. Indeed in terms of painted examples it is probably fair to say that this example from Kom Abu Rady, is among the best, if not the best, which has survived down to the present day. It is however difficult to place it in a typological context since so few have been published.

From a cursory examination of preliminary reports and final excavation reports it is clear that pottery coffins have been found in numerous sites from central Palestine through the whole of Egypt into Lower Nubia, and were already being produced as early as the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.²²

The best preserved of these early examples is undoubtedly that of Menna, from Tell el-Yahudieh which was found loose with early Eighteenth Dynasty vessels to either side of the head,²³ and with a painted pottery coffer, in which was a scarab of Tuthmosis III, at its foot. It is of the slipper, as opposed to the anthropoid, type, and has an unusual naturalistic style lid, in that a large handle was added in the middle of the neck below the mould made face. The entire coffin was painted yellow, with added details in red, black, white and blue (?).²⁴ Around the red face is the usual *nemes* headdress composed of alternating blue(?) and yellow bands. Immediately below the face, and above the handle is the first of five transversal bands, in

²¹ Petrie and Brunton 1924: 32.

²² Cf. Oren 1973: 142-6.

²³ Petrie 1906: 16, pls. xiv (colour), xiva, xv.

²⁴ At least the decoration is drawn in blue on the coloured plate, but the use of blue for painting pottery would be remarkable so early.

imitation of mummy wrappings, inscribed in black hieroglyphs on a white ground, which runs over the top of the coffin and down the sides, whilst below the handle a single column of text, again in black hieroglyphs on a white ground runs the entire length of the coffin. The transversal bands of inscription divide the sides of the coffin into five panels. Immediately below the headdress are pictures of on the left, Nephthys, followed by a *wdjt* eye, Hapy, Anubis, and Qebhsenuf, whilst on the right are shown, Isis, a *wdjt* eye, Imsety, Anubis, and Duamutef. Isis and Nephthys are shown standing, as are the four sons of Horus who all bear human heads, whilst Anubis is shown as a couchant jackal lying on top of a shrine. The foot end of the coffin depicts Isis standing on top of a *nb*-basket. Such a decorative scheme is clearly reminiscent of early Eighteenth Dynasty wooden coffins, on which this clay coffin is evidently modelled. It is probably unlikely that this example was the only one found in the cemetery, although it is the only one illustrated and dated to this period by Petrie. An incomplete grotesque style lid was found in tomb 23, together with early Eighteenth Dynasty pottery, including Cypriote Base Ring I ware, but also with a Late/Ptolemaic dish which led Petrie to conclude that the burial was a late one but with reused earlier pottery.²⁵ However, the style of the lid is certainly not so late, and rather it is more probable that the Late/Ptolemaic dish is intrusive. Other undecorated slipper coffins with plain lids and large holes at the head were also found in the cemetery, and were assumed by Petrie to be somewhat later, perhaps Ramesside or of Third Intermediate Period date.²⁶

The slipper coffins found at Aniba were described as being painted, but the only one with distinct traces of decoration still preserved came from tomb SA3, which, unfortunately, cannot be dated. Two clay coffins were found in this tomb, one of which was badly smashed, but the other "was painted greyish white and showed the places in which it had been bound round to keep its shape in the process of manufacture; the wig was black, face and breast yellow and black".²⁷ Those found in tombs S12, S28, S45, S90, and SA9 were associated with pottery clearly datable to the mid Eighteenth Dynasty, whilst those in S32 were discovered with a number of pottery vessels which are clearly of late Second Intermediate Period — mid-Eighteenth dynasty in date, thus the coffins themselves cannot be accurately dated within this time span.²⁸ All have naturalistic lids and would appear to be unpainted. A characteristic of the Aniba clay coffins, which is apparently not found elsewhere is the added representations of breasts between the moulded faces and modelled arms on the lids of some of the coffins which were presumed to have enclosed females.

Perhaps slightly later, but certainly dating to the early-mid-Eighteenth Dynasty by associated pottery, is the slipper coffin from tomb 60 in cemetery 23 at Debod.²⁹ Tomb 60, chamber A, contained at least five burials, four in wooden coffins and one in a pottery slipper coffin. The lid was not preserved, but the remainder was painted black with lines of inscription on yellow bands, and figures in yellow. From the published photograph it would appear that standing deities were depicted along the sides of the coffin, whilst a line of hieroglyphs ran down the front of the coffin. At regular intervals running around the coffin were transverse bands of inscription.

²⁵ Petrie 1906: 16, pl. xiic.

²⁶ Petrie 1906: 17, pl. xviii no.4.

²⁷ Steindorff 1937: 73. Another undated coffin was found in tomb S79.

²⁸ Steindorff 1937: 170, pl. 39c, 40.2.

²⁹ Reisner 1910: 166, pl. 36a. The pottery types are illustrated on pages 337-42.

The pottery slipper coffins from Saft el-Henneh can also be dated to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty by associated pottery, but the coffins themselves remain unpublished. At least six, presumably fairly intact examples, all with lids of a naturalistic type are mentioned by Garrow Duncan, of which one was "very fairly painted and inscribed, the lid bearing a woman's face".³⁰

Of probable early-mid Eighteenth Dynasty date are the pottery slipper coffins found at Tura el-Asmant. Excavations there revealed more than thirty burials, some of which were placed in slipper coffins. Whilst no tomb was fully published, pottery, scarabs, ushabtis and jewellery were all found, and of the illustrated pots, none are later than the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.³¹ The poor photographs show slipper coffins with naturalistic lids. They were probably painted in a similar manner to those of Debod, but it is hard to tell.

Again with grave goods of the early-mid Eighteenth Dynasty is a reference to a pottery coffin at Sawama, but again no details are forthcoming on its type.³²

Unpublished "Fragments de grand sarcophages en terre cuite à masques humains" were found at Tôd, but their dating is a matter of question. Vercoutter wrote that they were like the (Late Period) ones found at Saqqara, but then argued that all the finds from the same cemetery were characteristic of the early Eighteenth Dynasty.³³ However Vercoutter refers only to Jéquier's article of 1929, in which the Saqqara coffins were not illustrated, instead of his 1933 publication with photographs.³⁴ It is thus not certain whether the Tôd coffins are really like the Saqqara Late Period ones, or whether Vercoutter was simply referring to pottery coffins *per se*.

A few pottery coffins, probably Eighteenth Dynasty in date were found by Petrie at Deir Rifeh, but with the exception of two abnormal examples, illustrated to show the best and the worst of them, these were never published.³⁵

At Lahun, there is a reference to a single unpublished pottery slipper coffin having been found in a plundered New Kingdom cemetery, which has never been published. However several jugs of Late Eighteenth Dynasty type were also found in the same plundered cemetery, and this may date the coffin.³⁶

At Qau, Cemetery E, three unpublished 'plain pottery coffins' ascribed to the Eighteenth Dynasty were found in tombs 635C, 699 and 3506.³⁷

Apparently dating to the late Eighteenth — early Nineteenth Dynasties would appear to be the pottery coffins found at Kom Abu Billo,³⁸ discovered in a cemetery with scarabs of that date, along with Cypriote, Mycenaean and Egyptian pottery. The coffins had both naturalistic and grotesque lids, and were painted with figures of divinities and Hieroglyphic inscriptions, though in only one published photograph is this clear. That shows a coffin with naturalistic lid, a painted face, with a painted representation of a beard and hands. Below the figure is a kneeling goddess, presumably Isis, with outstretched wings, and a vertical line of hieroglyphs.

³⁰ Garrow Duncan, in Petrie 1906: 42-43.

³¹ Yacoub 1988: 208-9, pl. xvi, fig. 1. The pottery is shown on pl. xix.

³² Bourriau/Millward 1971: 30.

³³ Vercoutter 1952.

³⁴ Jéquier 1929; 1933: 49-52, pls. xi-xii.

³⁵ Petrie 1907: 22, pls. xxvii, xxviiiB.

³⁶ Petrie/Brunton/Murray 1923: 35, tomb K.I.4. The type of jug is shown on pl. lviii.90M.

³⁷ Brunton 1930: 16.

³⁸ Leclant 1971: 227-8, pl. xxii, figs. 8-9.; Farid 1973: 21-27, pls. iii-iv.

Of similar date are the pottery slipper coffins found at Kom Firin. The associated pottery is of Late Eighteenth or early Nineteenth Dynasty date down to and including the reign of Ramesses II.³⁹ The published photograph of one of these coffins shows a coffin with a naturalistic lid with modelled hands. No painted decoration is visible.

Dated to the Nineteenth Dynasty, are the pottery coffins found at Deir el-Balah.⁴⁰ Whilst approximately fifty of them, both anthropoid and slipper coffins as defined above (Dothan's types A and B), are known to have come from this site, only three (one anthropoid and two slipper) were excavated *in situ*, with associated finds which are no earlier than the reign of Ramesses II,⁴¹ and probably somewhat later.⁴² The coffins were coil built, and in some cases a row of small holes was pierced along the back, and a round opening cut in the base. Some coffins have a round aperture at the top of the head rising to a moulded pithos-like rim; in others a round hole is cut, whilst others are completely closed at the top. Traces of paint were rarely preserved, but in those cases where it is recognisable it would appear that on some lids a heavy red slip covers all or part of the features; on others a heavy white stucco-like slip serves as a background. A yellow gold-like paint appears on one lid. Black paint is used to accentuate hair, eyes and nostrils, while traces of red remain on cheeks and lips. On one coffin a wide lotus petal collar in yellow and greyish black paint remains.

Probably dating to the Nineteenth Dynasty is an unpublished naturalistic lid from Tell Hebwa IV,⁴³ whilst a 'markedly Ramesside' anthropoid slipper coffin was recently excavated at Saqqara.⁴⁴ The latter was unpainted and had a naturalistic style lid, on which, unusually the wig was also modelled.

Numerous examples of pottery coffins, dated to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties must have been found at Gurob, since Petrie points out that the numbers found at Deir Rifeh were "not nearly so usual as at Gurob",⁴⁵ although none are described in his publications of that site, with the possible exception of "two pieces of the lid of a terra-cotta coffin with ink drawn figures" from tomb 31.⁴⁶ A number of such coffins were, however, mentioned by Loat,⁴⁷ who described them as being quite plain, or "roughly painted with the usual figures of the guardians of the dead etc." Brunton and Engelbach, also found a small number of painted pottery coffins, but again none were published, except by means of a schematic sketch which shows a slipper coffin with naturalistic face.⁴⁸ A fragment of such a coffin would now seem to be London UC. 7723, which shows part of a deity, presumably one of the sons of Horus, in black and blue on a yellow ground.⁴⁹ Whilst Loat's coffins should be of Nineteenth Dynasty date by associated pottery, Brunton and Engelbach's examples are harder to date. The form of

³⁹ The cemetery is unpublished but cf. Leclant 1952: 247, with one of the pottery coffins shown in fig. 28; idem, 1953, 100. Some of the associated pottery is shown in Leclant 1953: figs. 45-6.

⁴⁰ Dothan 1972, 1973, 1979; Beit-Arieh 1985.

⁴¹ Dothan 1979: *passim*.

⁴² Cf. Finkelstein 2000: 161-2; Oren/Aston forthcoming.

⁴³ Quoted here by kind permission of Dr. J. Dörner. It comes from a plundered cemetery in which only mid-Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty pottery was recovered.

⁴⁴ Raven/Martin/van Dijk/Aston/Strouhal 1997: 76, pl. 4.3.

⁴⁵ Petrie 1907: 22, pls. xxvii, xxviiiB.

⁴⁶ Petrie 1890: 39.

⁴⁷ Loat 1905: 3.

⁴⁸ Brunton/Engelbach 1927, painted pottery coffins mentioned in the tomb register, pls. xiv-xviii, sketch, type E on pl. xviii. Pottery coffins were found in tombs 13, 16, 17, 29, 42, 65, 242, 255, 275, 499, and 601.

⁴⁹ Petrie 1937: 24 no. 561; Thomas 1974: 82 no. 706, pl. 54.

burial, where some of these coffins were surrounded by brick sarcophagi is so similar to well-dated Twentieth Dynasty burials in the Delta that some of them may well be that late.

A New Kingdom cemetery at Amada must have contained pottery coffins though the cemetery remains unpublished. One of the pottery coffins, however, is now in Boston (MFA 1985.808), and though perhaps not as aesthetically pleasing as the example from Kom Abu Rady, must rank as one of the best preserved examples.⁵⁰ Dated to the Nineteenth Dynasty, it has a naturalistic lid with modelled hands. The wig is striped, and there is a representation of a lotus flower on top of the head. Below the neck, under the hands, and over the chest is a representation of a collar made of blue lotus petals, beneath which is a depiction of Isis with outstretched wings, flanked by opposing couchant Anubis figures. Down the centre is a line of hieroglyphs, with three transversal bands dividing the remaining area into four decorative panels. The upper two show opposing figures of Osiris, and the lower two, mummiform sons of Horus, two to each side. The sides of the coffin, however, remained unpainted.

Perhaps dating to the Nineteenth Dynasty is the pottery coffin from Aniba tomb S23.⁵¹ This tomb was clearly used for at least six burials, five in wooden coffins, and one in a slipper coffin, but had been used at least twice since the pottery found falls into two distinct chronological periods. The earlier pottery can be attributed to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, whilst the second group clearly stems from the reign of Ramesses II. The pottery coffin was found in the West Chamber in which most of the pottery can be dated to the early-mid Eighteenth Dynasty, but a scarab of Ramesses II, and two Ramesside pots were also found in this chamber. By contrast most of the objects found in the East Chamber were Ramesside in date, but included a few of the earlier items, suggesting that the contents had become thoroughly mixed at some stage. The pottery coffin differs to those from tombs S12, S28, S32, mentioned above, in that running down the centre of the lid, and front of the coffin proper, and along both sides was a raised rib with torus moulding, whilst the lid was grotesque. A very similar coffin to this, but without the torus moulding was also found loose in the sand, and is almost certainly to be attributed to the same timespan.⁵² Fragments of broken coffins were also found in tombs S100, along with obviously Ramesside grave goods, and S103 with mixed mid-Eighteenth Dynasty and Nineteenth Dynasty material.⁵³

For the Twentieth Dynasty, more pottery coffins are mentioned in the literature than for both the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Dynasties, and whilst this may be the result of chance, it is probably more likely that such coffins were growing more popular, the more so since material remains dated to the Twentieth Dynasty are generally few in comparison to cemetery material of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. At Qantir, a brick built four chambered tomb can be dated to the reign of Ramesses III or later since a faience scarab bearing his cartouches was found in the floor of it.⁵⁴ Although no pottery was discovered, fragments of pottery slipper coffins were found in two of the chambers. At Tell el-Yahudieh, a number of tumuli burials, found just outside the town, could be dated by the presence of scarabs of

⁵⁰ Ikram/Dodson 1999: 227, fig. 293.

⁵¹ Steindorff 1937: 164-5, pl. 39b.

⁵² Steindorff 1937: pl. 39e.

⁵³ Steindorff 1937: 203, 204.

⁵⁴ Pusch 1989: 81-2.

Sethnakht, Ramesses III and Ramesses VI found within them.⁵⁵ These mounds were made of basalt blocks, picked up from the surface of the desert, and sand, which covered several interments, all of which were very similar. 'The first things discovered were generally two urns of red earthenware, about a foot and a half [45 cm.] in height. They sometimes contained ashes intermixed with some vegetable substance, and once or twice they also contained a bronze rasp. The urns were the certain predecessors of a coffin since they were nearly always placed on each side of the head, or of the feet. The interment consisted of an outer coffin of large crude bricks, laid horizontally, while two bricks leaning against each other made a kind of vaulted roof. Inside was a mummiform terracotta coffin made of one piece, with a large opening at the head, through which the corpse was introduced. This done the head was covered with a facepiece, on which were modelled the features, the hair, and sometimes the hands'.⁵⁶ The slipper coffins, often several to a single tumulus, were painted in yellow, blue, black and red, and many had illegible or nonsense inscriptions down the front. The burials were analysed by Griffith who wrote:⁵⁷

In the vast majority of cases the body was placed with its ornaments in a cylindrical coffin, being introduced through an opening at the head, which was afterwards closed by a moveable face piece, on which the features were more or less rudely represented. Each coffin including the head piece, seemed to have been made in one piece, through the foot, which was closed up afterward. The head piece was clearly sliced out of the coffin after it had been formed and thus fitted exactly. A small round hole was pierced at the head and foot. The coffins of adults varied in length and girth to some extent. Many of them were unpainted, the pottery having a whitish surface. Most were painted on the front half only, in three colours, red, yellow, and black; some in four adding blue. The pattern was the same on all, as far as it could be traced, and with an imitation of the bands of a mummy cartonnage. On the breast there was generally a winged figure kneeling, between the legs ran a line of blundered hieroglyphs, intended to represent a common formula. On each side of this strip were four or five seated deities, including Thoth and the four genii, separated by bands with more sham hieroglyphs. The heads varied considerably. Sometimes the whole face, sometimes only the most prominent features, were added in separate lumps of clay to the curved surface. Painted stucco was occasionally used to complete them. Those that belonged to painted coffins were also painted, one having a lotus flower over the forehead. Moulded earrings, crossed arms, etc. were sometimes added.

Parts of another pottery coffin were also found at Tell el-Yahudieh by the Comte du Mesnil de Buisson.⁵⁸ Similar tombs were found at Tell Nebesheh, which owing to the presence of scarabs of Ramesses V and Ramesses XI, can also be dated to the Twentieth Dynasty.⁵⁹ The burials in all of these tombs were, as at Tell el-Yahudieh, interred within pottery slipper coffins, painted in black, yellow and red. In addition Petrie also found a series of brick built tombs which he termed "Cypriote" on the basis of his belief that the foreign pottery found within them originated in Cyprus sometime between the seventh and fifth centuries BC.⁶⁰ As a group these tombs were characterised by foreign pottery, pottery slipper coffins and bronze spear/sceptre butts, whilst other finds include gold earrings, glazed scarabs, amulets, pieces of

⁵⁵ Naville 1890: 15-17, erroneously ascribed to the Graeco-Roman Period; Griffith 1890: 42-48.

⁵⁶ Naville 1890: 16.

⁵⁷ Griffith 1890: 44-47, slightly shortened.

⁵⁸ Mesnil de Buisson 1929: 157.

⁵⁹ Petrie 1888: 19-21.

⁶⁰ Petrie 1888: 20-21.

pumice and bronze knives. It has long been recognised, however, that Petrie's pottery attribution and dating are erroneous. The pottery is in fact Palestinian and dates to between the twelfth and tenth centuries BC.⁶¹ Similarly the forked butts "range in time from the thirteenth century BC. to the end of the eleventh with possible extensions in both directions".⁶² This particular group of burials has been much discussed by earlier archaeologists who wished to link pottery slipper coffins with the Philistines,⁶³ though such coffins almost certainly originated in Egypt.⁶⁴ A by-product of these studies, however, is the observation that the Nebesheh burials have close parallels with assemblages from Tell Qasile stratum X, Megiddo level VIA and Beth Shan level VI, all of which indicate that, like the brick tombs described above, these "Cypriote" tombs also date to the second half of the eleventh century BC.⁶⁵

A cemetery at Bubastis was clearly in use during the Twentieth Dynasty when a series of vaulted brick tombs were built for a number of high officials, including the viceroys of Kush, Hori II and Hori III, active under Siptah-Sethnakhte and Ramesses III-IV respectively.⁶⁶ Further work in 1961 led to the discovery of poor New Kingdom burials with scanty traces of reed, plaster or wooden coffins, though most were buried in "pottery slipper coffins, of which the small lids over the heads were, in a few cases, moulded in the form of a human face," with infants placed in pottery jars. With some of these poor burials were faience and stone amulets, faience, schist and jasper scarabs inscribed with the names of Amenophis III, Ramesses III and Menkheperre.⁶⁷

At Riqqeh, Engelbach excavated three cemeteries, C1, D and E, which he assigned to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties,⁶⁸ though it is obvious that they extended well into the Twentieth Dynasty since a faience vessel bearing the cartouches of Ramesses IX (London UC 16064) was found in cemetery C.⁶⁹ Furthermore it is clear from the illustrated pottery and stone vessels that, of the published graves, those from cemetery D are more likely to be Twentieth rather than Nineteenth Dynasty in date, whilst a few in cemetery E were likely to have been reused at this time. From the little which remained or has been published, Cemetery D is characterised by arrow heads, spear heads, razors, copper knives, pottery ushabtis, some in boxes, faience buttons, scarabs, beads, hair rings, Twentieth Dynasty style pottery, and limestone and 'brick and pottery' coffins. The latter phrase is strongly reminiscent of the burials at Tell el-Yahudieh, that is pottery slipper coffins surrounded by brick structures, and indeed, the one published example of a Cemetery D slipper coffin from Riqqeh,⁷⁰ of which a large number were found, some of them being quite plain, the majority, however, being painted in black, blue, red and yellow, is practically identical with those from the Twentieth Dynasty graves at Tell el-Yahudieh. The published example, presumably the best preserved, from cemetery D grave 407 has a naturalistic lid. Below the face is a painted collar, and the hands may have been represented, either in paint or as modelled clay, but the

⁶¹ Cf. Albright 1932: 301-2.

⁶² Dothan 1976: 29.

⁶³ Eg. Albright 1932; Dothan 1957; Wright 1959.

⁶⁴ Oren 1973: 142-6; Kuchman 1977-78: 11-12. Dothan 1972.

⁶⁵ Dothan 1973: 141-5.

⁶⁶ Gauthier 1928; Habachi 1957: 97-102 (called there Hori I and II); Leclant 1970: 325.

⁶⁷ Farid 1964: 95-6. One of the pottery slipper coffins is illustrated by Leclant 1965: 180, fig. 4.

⁶⁸ Engelbach 1915: 1.

⁶⁹ Engelbach 1915: 31, pl. li.1.

⁷⁰ Engelbach 1915: 18, pl. xix.1.

requisite parts were not preserved. On the coffin itself is a figure of a kneeling goddess, presumably Isis, whilst below her runs a single line of hieroglyphs. Running around the body are at least four (five?) transversal bands of hieroglyphs. Many more pottery slipper coffins were found in cemetery E,⁷¹ and this too would appear to be mostly of Twentieth Dynasty date.

From Cemetery 1000 at Matmar comes an unpublished "pottery coffin with crude face," and a fragmentary example from tomb 1097, whilst parts of two others were found in Cemetery 1100.⁷² From an analysis of the funerary material, particularly the pottery found in these two cemeteries, these unpublished coffins are probably to be dated to the Twentieth Dynasty.⁷³

Between May and August 1900, Reisner, working on behalf of the Hearst Expedition of the University of California, excavated a Late New Kingdom/Third Intermediate Period fortress, town and cemetery at El-Ahawaih.⁷⁴ This material remains largely unpublished,⁷⁵ but access to the records and some of the finds, presently housed in the Phoebe Hearst (formerly Lowie) Museum of Anthropology at Berkeley,⁷⁶ clearly shows that the nearest parallel for the graves located in Cemetery 500 are to be found at Tell Nebesheh, and may well date to the Twentieth Dynasty. The tombs at El-Ahawaih are brick built, vaulted structures, and among the grave goods were fragments of pottery slipper coffins, spear heads and at least one forked bronze butt. A date in the twelfth — eleventh centuries BC. for the main use of Cemetery 500 is consistent with Lacovara's redating of the fort to the Late Ramesside — Third Intermediate Period,⁷⁷ correcting Reisner's mistaken Middle Kingdom date.⁷⁸

The Twentieth Dynasty graves at Aniba include Grave S 90, a double burial, which contained twelve faience shabtis of the Viceroy of Kush, Mes-sui, temp. Merenptah-Seti II, and thus at least one of the burials found within this grave should be no earlier than the reign of Seti II. Steindorff surmised it unlikely that the occupant of this poor tomb was indeed the Viceroy, but rather the shabtis were donated as a grave gift. Both bodies were interred in pottery slipper coffins, and the remaining grave goods comprised, four uninscribed pottery shabtis, beads, carnelian earrings, a hair slide, bronze tweezers, a pottery lamp, and Ramesside pottery.

Finally an undated example is also known from a *sebakh* pit in Tell el-Dab'a.⁷⁹

Interpretation

The interpretation of anthropoid pottery coffins has usually revolved around two major points of view; namely a) that such coffins are indicative of a foreign element in the population, usually being attributed to the Philistines, on the one hand, or to the Sea Peoples in general on the other; and b) that such burials belong to a poor class of society which could not afford more costly wooden coffins. The ethnic interpretation was first forwarded by Vincent

⁷¹ Petrie/Wainwright/Mackay 1912: 26-7.

⁷² Brunton 1948: 59, 60, pl. xlv.

⁷³ Aston/Bader 1998: 19-48.

⁷⁴ Reisner 1900-01: 23.

⁷⁵ For photographs of some of the pottery found see Aston 1996: pls. 2a-b.

⁷⁶ This material was excavated by Reisner in 1900; Reisner 1900-01: 23.

⁷⁷ Lacovara/Quirke/Podzorski 1989: 60-2.

⁷⁸ Reisner 1909: vi.

⁷⁹ Find no. 3648 (Vienna KHM A3937), mentioned here by kind permission of M. Bietak.

and Fisher, but gained in popularity when Petrie found two examples within what he called "tombs of the Philistine lords",⁸⁰ and was most enthusiastically championed by Wright.⁸¹ However in a review of the supposed Philistine components of the anthropoid coffins found in Palestine, Oren effectively refuted this idea indicating that the supposed Philistine burials were often not only too early, but contained no distinctly Philistine pottery. Leaving aside the question of whether so-called Philistine pottery reflects ethnicity, or is simply a later development of Late Mycenaean IIC pottery,⁸² Oren indicated that these coffins were simply copies of a long established Egyptian form of burial, and, in terms of the naturalistic style coffins, supposed that they were used by Egyptian personnel.⁸³ However he still retained the idea that grotesque style coffins at Beth Shan should be ethnically associated with the Sea Peoples through a supposed similarity of the headdresses found on the representations of the Sea Peoples shown in battle reliefs on the outer wall of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, and to the applied decoration found on the foreheads of the grotesque style lids.⁸⁴ In so-doing he followed Vincent, Fisher, Ranke and Dothan, but differed from them by attributing these coffins not to the Philistines, since he had effectively negated this idea, but to the Denyen. However, this is almost as contentious as attributing such coffins to the Philistines since in the Medinet Habu battle reliefs there is no visual distinction between the Peleset and the Denyen. Moreover grotesque style coffins also exist elsewhere without the supposed Sea People features. Indeed the zigzag lines and vertical fluting found on some of these coffin lids could just as easily represent stylised lotus flowers and lotus petal headbands, as were usually depicted on wooden coffins of the Ramesside Period,⁸⁵ (and compare Griffith's description of a clay coffin found at Tell el-Yahudieh, and that from Amada quoted above), whilst the applied dots could just as easily represent mandrake fruits, since the close association of lotus flowers, petals and mandrake fruits is well known on late Eighteenth Dynasty blue-painted pottery. If this is true there is no need to force any non-Egyptian ethnic implications on to the grotesque lids;⁸⁶ their method of manufacture simply allowed the maker to be more expressive in his creations. The fact that the earliest clay coffins developed in Egypt is clear evidence that such burials are Egyptian in style, though whether they contained the burials of Egyptians or Egyptianised foreigners (elite emulation) cannot be ascertained, though the fact that most of the clay coffins recorded in Palestine come from Deir el-Balah, Beth Shan, and possibly Pella,⁸⁷ three sites most closely associated with Egyptian government activity, makes it possible to suggest, with Oren, that they were used by elite Egyptians. Stager goes one stage further, not only concluding that the Late Bronze/Iron I anthropoid pottery sarcophagi found in Palestine were used to house deceased Egyptians, but that they indicate areas of Egyptian controlled Canaan as opposed to areas under Philistine hegemony.⁸⁸

The belief that pottery coffins are associated with the poor is widespread, but is clearly erroneous. Such an idea probably stems from the fact that most known examples come from

⁸⁰ Petrie 1930: 7.

⁸¹ Wright 1959.

⁸² Cf. Killebrew 2000.

⁸³ Oren 1973: 140.

⁸⁴ Oren 1973: 135-39.

⁸⁵ Cf. Taylor 1989: 35-39.

⁸⁶ Cf. also Negbi 1991: 208; Gonen 1992: 28-30; Stager 1995: 341-2; Gilmour 1995: 163.

⁸⁷ Unpublished, cf. Yassine 1975: 62.

⁸⁸ Stager 1995: 342.

plundered burials, but where such burials have been found intact one could certainly not describe them as poor. In fact one would suggest that it is the opposite. One needs only to look at the grave goods buried with the pottery coffin found in the intact Tomb 114 at Deir el-Balah to bring this home.⁸⁹ These included, Egyptian, Mycenaean and Palestinian pottery, bronze knives, jars, bowls, a mirror and a wine set, jewellery, scarabs, a gold amulet and a travertine vessel. It is also noteworthy that pottery coffins found in plundered cemeteries were often discovered with imported vessels, both Aegean, generally Mycenaean, but also Cypriote, and Palestinian, and as Oren points out, the pottery assemblages found with such coffins is the same as that associated with burials found in supposedly more expensive wooden coffins.⁹⁰ The decoration of these clay coffins is sometimes — such as the fine specimen published in this paper, and that from Amada, — as good as, and better than most, contemporary wooden coffins, since it should not be forgotten that most of our ideas about New Kingdom wooden coffins are derived from elite burials found at Thebes, capital of the Empire, whilst information on provincial coffins is lacking. Where they are known the workmanship is of inferior quality. The fact that pottery coffins have been found in brick built tombs at Qantir, Nebesheh, and Bubastis is certainly indicative of high status burials since it is unlikely that the poor could afford such tombs. Moreover the cemetery at Deir el-Balah shows that among the graves containing anthropoid clay coffins were a number of pit tombs, of which at least some were found intact.⁹¹ These are considerably 'poorer' than the clay coffin burials. Of course the real poor were probably not buried in coffins, but rather in reed mats or in nothing at all.

Conclusions

Whilst there can be no doubt that pottery coffins must have developed at the beginning of the Eighteenth, and continued throughout the Nineteenth Dynasty, their major period of use would appear to be in the Twentieth Dynasty, and that they were used by the elite. This would also appear to be the case in Palestine,⁹² where the earliest examples are undoubtedly those of Deir el-Balah, which continued from the Late Bronze IIB (Nineteenth Dynasty) into the Terminal Bronze Age (i.e. contemporary with the Twentieth Dynasty), whilst similar Terminal Bronze Age examples were found, with naturalistic lids at Tell el-Midrassa,⁹³ with both naturalistic and grotesque lids at Beth Shan, and with grotesque lids, at Tell el-Farah South and Lachish. At Beth Shan eleven tombs, ten of which had originally been cut in the Early Bronze IV period and reused in the Late Bronze II-Iron I Periods, contained the remains of nearly fifty pottery coffins, which with the exception of five examples from tombs 66 and 90, had naturalistic lids.⁹⁴ The Tell el-Farah pottery coffins were found in tombs 552, 562 and 935,⁹⁵ the exact dates of which are not clear owing to the reuse of these tombs over a long period of time. However it is clear from the associated finds that the 500 Cemetery dates to the mid twelfth-eleventh centuries BC., whilst Cemetery 900 can be dated principally to the

⁸⁹ Dothan 1979: 5-27.

⁹⁰ Oren 1973: 143.

⁹¹ Beit-Arieh 1985: 45-48.

⁹² Note in addition to the Palestinian examples mentioned here, there are also a number of unpublished examples currently on display in the Amman Museum. E. Oren, personal communication.

⁹³ Tzori 1953: 4-5, pl. Ia; Dothan 1982: pl. 15.

⁹⁴ Oren 1973: 132-39, 248-66, figs. 61-63.

⁹⁵ Petrie 1930: 8, pl. xxiv; Macdonald/Starkey/Harding 1932: 31.

thirteenth-twelfth centuries, with an extension into the early eleventh century BC. They are of Dothan's type B in which the head and shoulders are not defined, and belong to the grotesque style. The Lachish coffins⁹⁶ are distinctly Egyptian in style with one, from tomb 570, even bearing poorly drawn, but understandable, hieroglyphs down the centre, and having representations of Isis and Nephthys on each side. More anthropoid pottery coffins were clearly found at Pella, but these remain unpublished.⁹⁷ Nevertheless since they were accompanied by scarabs, 'alabaster' objects of Egyptian and local origin, and local and Mycenaean pottery, it is clear that the burials must have been very similar to those found at Deir el-Balah, and thus presumably date to the thirteenth or twelfth centuries BC. In view of the Palestinian findspots it is clear that pottery coffins were introduced into Canaan by the Egyptians during the course of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC. It has also been suggested that pottery slipper coffins are associated with burials in large pithoi and bronze hoards in a wide crescent along the coastal plain and entering Trans-Jordan via the Jezreel and Jordan valleys,⁹⁸ though such a hypothesis seems hard to sustain, since it would appear that such pithos burials derive from a different tradition and a different area.⁹⁹

That pottery slipper coffins continued to be made in Palestine during the Iron Age is certain from the examples found at Sahab,¹⁰⁰ Amman,¹⁰¹ and Dibon,¹⁰² with other examples apparently occurring as far north as the Euphrates in Syria,¹⁰³ whilst in Egypt it is probable from examples found at Gerzeh,¹⁰⁴ Tell el-Yahudieh,¹⁰⁵ and possibly Tell el-Retabeh.¹⁰⁶ The pottery coffin found at Sahab was in a fragmentary state and only the lid was well preserved. It differs to any of the preceding examples in having a handle at the top of the head, two handles on either side to represent the ears and, as in the early example from Tell el-Yahudieh, a handle below the mouth, perhaps representing a beard. Handles were also placed on the coffin in a similar position to those on the lid, which may imply that they were not really handles in the true sense but simply acted as a means of fastening the lid to the coffin proper. Three further 'handles' were also placed at regular intervals along the coffin proper presumably as an aid in transport. The pottery coffins from Amman are similar in having loops and handles on both the lid and body, but could be divided into two types: The first, Yassine's Type II, consisted of coffins with lids on which the facial features were modelled, with, in addition, modelling of extended arms alongside the coffin body, whilst the second type, Yassine's type III, not only had no modelled arms, but no modelled features on the lid at all, though the coffins still retained a number of 'handles' down their sides. The coffin found at Dibon in tomb J3, differs from the preceding examples in comprising a rounded box with a separate lid

⁹⁶ Hennequin 1939; Tufnell 1958: 131-2, 248-9, pls. 45-6.

⁹⁷ Yassine 1975: 62.

⁹⁸ Wengrow 1996: 318.

⁹⁹ Negbi 1998: 188-92.

¹⁰⁰ Albright 1932: 297, pl. xii.1

¹⁰¹ Pritchard 1968: 108; Oren 1973: 140; Yassine 1975; 1988: 33-46.

¹⁰² Reed, in Winnett/Reed 1964: 59-60, pls. 52-53.

¹⁰³ Dornemann 1982: 136.

¹⁰⁴ Wainwright, in Petrie/Wainwright/Mackay 1912: 27. There he refers to Sheshonq II, but presumably he means Usirmare Setepenre Sheshonq III as the existence of Heqakheperre Setepenre Sheshonq II was unknown at the time Wainwright was writing.

¹⁰⁵ Petrie 1906: 17, 18, pls. xviii, xix.

¹⁰⁶ Fuller 1981.

which covered the entire coffin body, Yassine's Type IV. Although the 'face' could thus not be removed separately, it still had the eyes, nose nostrils, mouth, a dimple (beard?) under the chin, and a hairline which acts as a frame to the facial features. Two large solid ears may have acted as handles. Dated to the beginning of the eighth century BC, the Dibon coffin clearly represents the final stage of the pottery slipper coffin, for whilst later pottery coffins are known, particularly in Egypt, these are all of the box type with plain undecorated lids. Late Period pottery coffins from Saqqara, which can be attributed to the Persian Period since they bear Aramaic inscriptions, are anthropoid in shape, and have full length lids, though not always made in one piece.¹⁰⁷ Similar Late Period coffins are also known at Asfuneh-Mataneh,¹⁰⁸ whilst even later box coffins are known at Saqqara (unpublished) and Heracleopolis (unpublished SCA excavations), the latter possibly being as late as the Roman Period.

The pottery coffins from Gerzeh, were found in association with scarabs of Sheshonq III and a Pedubast (I?) suggesting that an earlier cemetery there, dated by the excavator to the Eighteenth Dynasty was reused in the Third Intermediate Period. These secondary burials were found in a dilapidated state and neither published nor preserved. As Wainwright's brief note is all that has been written on them, it is no longer clear whether a) the scarabs of the two named kings were found inside any of the coffins or loose in the sand; or b) whether the coffins belonged to the original "Eighteenth Dynasty" interments or to the Third Intermediate Period reuse. Similar doubt must also exist with the examples found at Tell el-Yahudieh and attributed by Petrie to the Twenty-second Dynasty. The coffin lid found in tomb 310 came with pottery which is clearly Persian in date, but, as Petrie had already supposed, the lid is probably earlier, datable to the Twentieth Dynasty.¹⁰⁹ Thus if one example would appear to show that the so-called Twenty-second Dynasty cemetery consisted of a number of tombs which had been reused, the same may be true of the other pottery coffins found there.

Dothan has suggested that the grotesque style of lid is later than the naturalistic type, and, in essence, this does seem borne out by the examples found in Egypt, in that all those which can be dated to the Eighteenth Dynasty have naturalistic lids, whilst the grotesque style is not known before the Ramesside Period, when both styles were present. Whether the grotesque style ever completely replaced the naturalistic style, however, cannot be proved since not enough information has been published. It is also noticeable that at Deir el-Balah and Beth Shan, the two sites which have so far produced the largest number of New Kingdom/Terminal Bronze Age anthropoid pottery coffins, the overwhelming majority have naturalistic lids, which rather implies that the differences in style have no chronological significance.

It would appear that most of the pottery coffins were not decorated, but those that were can be roughly divided into two; those with a black background, and those with a yellow one. It would be tempting, as with New Kingdom wooden coffins to assume that the examples with a black background are earlier than those with a yellow ground, but too few published details are available for such an assumption. Certainly the black painted example from Debod is early, but then again the early example from Tell el-Yahudieh is painted yellow.

¹⁰⁷ Jéquier 1929: 160-61; 1933: 49-52, pls. xi-xii.

¹⁰⁸ Bakhry 1968.

¹⁰⁹ Petrie 1906: 18.

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Correction to JEOL 35-36, p. 18, fig. 3.



Fig. 3. Shaft 99/I.