

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE LEIDEN EXCAVATIONS AT SAQQARA,  
SEASON 2001: THE TOMB OF MERYNEITH

MAARTEN J. RAVEN, RENÉ VAN WALSEM, BARBARA G. ASTON, AND EUGEN STROUHAL

*Introduction*

The joint expedition of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities and the Faculty of Archaeology / Department of Egyptology of Leiden University resumed its fieldwork in the Saqqara New Kingdom necropolis<sup>1</sup> on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The site was closed on February 28<sup>th</sup>. The excavation team consisted of Dr Maarten J. Raven and Dr René van Walsem (joint field directors), Dr Barbara G. Aston and Ms Amanda Dunsmore (pottery specialists), Prof. Eugen Strouhal (anthropologist), Drs Willem Beex (surveyor), Ms Anneke de Kemp and Mr Peter Jan Bomhof (photographers), Mr Peter van Birgelen and Mr Frederik Maes (field assistants). Prof. Geoffrey T. Martin (honorary director) copied relief blocks in the Cairo Museum during the month of February.

The Expedition was kindly assisted in the field by the Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA) Inspectors Mr Osama Abd-es-Salam el-Shimy and Mr Yaser Hassan Abd-el-Fatah, and acknowledges with gratitude the efficient support by the Director of Saqqara, Mr Adil Hussein Muhammad, and of the Chief Inspector of Saqqara, Mr Sami el-Hoseiny. The permanent committee of the SCA, and especially the SCA Chairman Prof. Gaballa A. Gaballa and Dr Zahi Hawass (Director of Giza and Saqqara) did everything that lay in their power to make this season of the Leiden Excavations a success. Special thanks are due to the Director and staff of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) for all their assistance. The Egypt Exploration Society kindly granted us the use of the Saqqara dighouse. Finally, we wish to thank the following persons and institutions for their financial or logistic support: the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), Dr Karel Innemée (Deir Musa el-Eswed excavations), Mr R.J.M. Straathof (Koers-Kompas nv), and the Municipality of Weert.

*The excavations*

The area investigated this season lies due East of the tomb of Horemheb at a distance of about twenty metres. Within six days from the start of the season, the walls appeared of another tomb provisionally dated to the New Kingdom because of the characteristic dimensions and orientation of its mud-brick walls. Soon the remains of limestone architectural elements and wall revetment emerged from the sands. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, we uncovered the first

<sup>1</sup> For a preliminary report on the season 2000, see R. van Walsem, Preliminary report on the Dutch excavations at Saqqara, season 2000, *JEOL* 35-36 (1997-2000), 5-25; id., The Dutch expedition to Saqqara, 1999-2000, *EA* 17 (2000), 15-17. For popular versions of the present report on the season 2001, see R. van Walsem, Sporen van een revolutie in Saqqara: het nieuw ontdekte graf van Meryneith alias Meryre en zijn plaats in de Amarnaperiode, *Phoenix* 47.1-2 (2001), 69-89; M.J. Raven, The Tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara, *EA* 20 (spring 2002), 26-28.

inscription containing the titles and name of the tomb-owner (Fig. 1), which could be read as 'the greatest of seers of the Aten' Meryneith. In view of the other epigraphic evidence found later in the season, there can be no doubt that the newly-found monument is identical to Mariette's tomb no. H9<sup>2</sup>. The exact position of this tomb has hitherto been unknown<sup>3</sup>. Three blocks from the tomb have been depicted by Mariette<sup>4</sup>, but whether they were seen *in situ* or where these blocks are now is not mentioned. One other block is in Berlin (no. 2070)<sup>5</sup>, and there are two more fragments in Chicago (OIM 10595) and in a private collection<sup>6</sup>. There may, of course, be more relief blocks without the tomb owner's name in other public or private collections. A recent find from Saqqara indicates that other parts of the tomb are possibly still dispersed over the surface of the desert or inside SCA storerooms in the area<sup>7</sup>.



Fig. 1. North wall of courtyard: scene from the ritual of opening the mouth.

<sup>2</sup> Referred to in Porter and Moss 1979, III.2, 666.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Málek, in: *LÄ* 5, 409; Martin 1991, 200.

<sup>4</sup> Mariette 1889, 449: *fragments en calcaire trouvés parmi les tombeaux de Saqqarah au sud de la grande Pyramide, le 30 nov. 1850*. The lower two fragments also occur in the Wilkinson MSS (see n. 2; we thank Jaromir Málek for checking this).

<sup>5</sup> For references, see *supra* n. 2. The block was acquired in 1828 from the collection Von Koller (Berlin 1899, 130 no. 2070; cf. *ib.* 3). For Baron Franz von Koller, see Dawson and Uphill 1995, 231.

<sup>6</sup> D.P. Silverman, A litany from the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Merneith, in: Teeter and Larson 1999, 379-386. The OIM fragment was purchased in 1920. A further fragment of this litany was found by the present expedition.

<sup>7</sup> M. el-Ghandour, Report on work at Saqqara south of the New Kingdom cemetery, seasons 1994, 1996, 1997, *GM* 161 (1997), 5-25, esp. 12 cat. 1 and pl. XI. This block belongs to a screen wall from the central chapel.

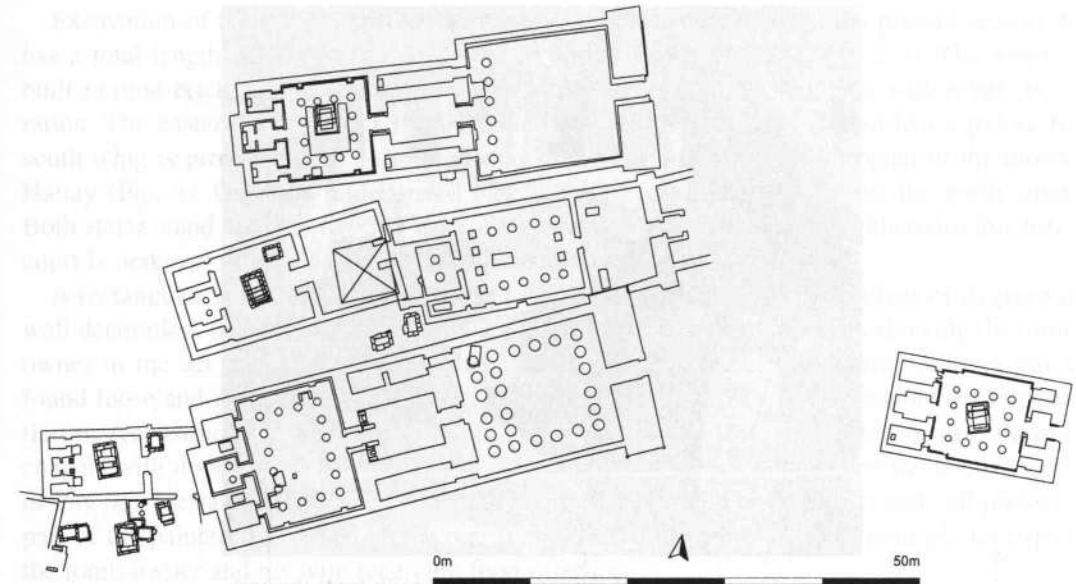


Fig. 2a. Position of the tomb in relation to the earlier monuments.

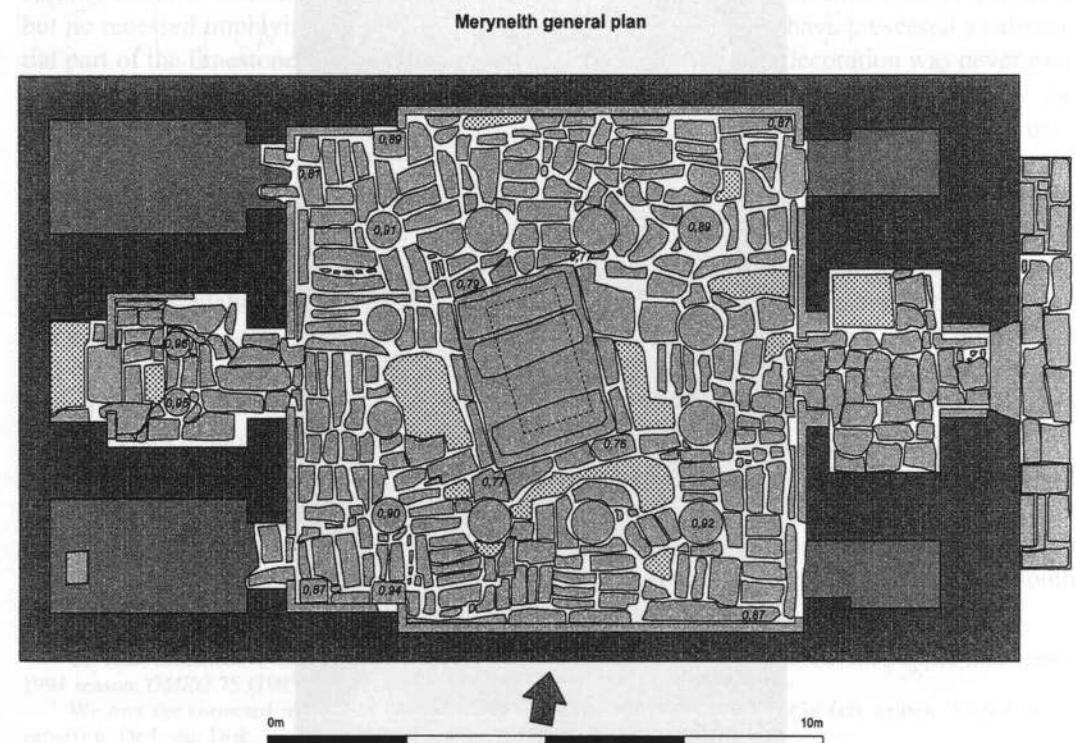


Fig. 2b. Plan of the tomb of Meryneith as far as excavated during the season 2001.



Fig. 3. General view of the tomb of Meryneith from the east.

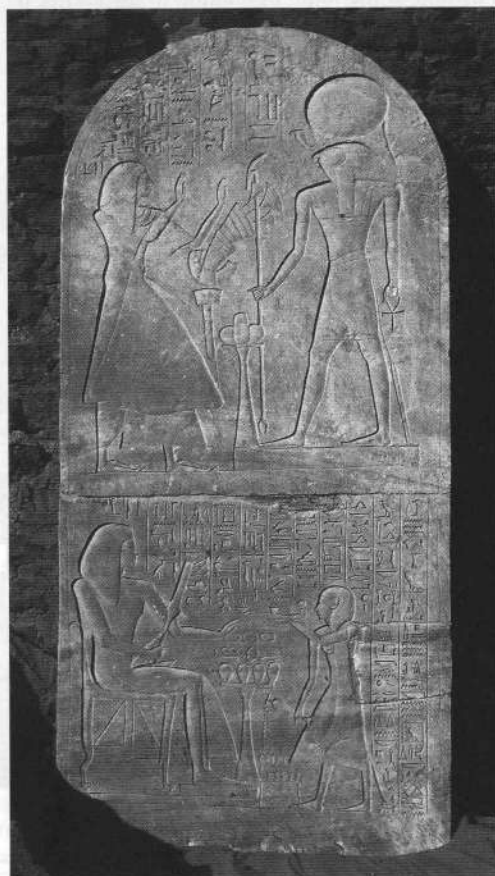


Fig. 4. Stela of Hatiay against the façade of the tomb.

Excavation of the tomb's superstructure could be completed during the present season. It has a total length (east-west) of almost 18 m and is 10.25 m wide (Figs. 2-3). The tomb is built in mud-brick with limestone pavements and wall revetment, the latter with relief decoration. The eastern entrance wall has a battered face and may have looked like a pylon. Its south wing is provided with a round-topped stela belonging to a 'first prophet of the moon' Hatiay (Fig. 4). Only the undecorated base survives of its pendant against the north wing. Both stelae stand on a 0.9 m wide strip of pavement in front of the tomb. Otherwise this forecourt is hemmed in by mud-brick walls on its north and south sides.

A rectangular vestibule provides access to the tomb proper. Nothing survives of its painted wall decoration, but its eastern entrance is flanked by two limestone panels showing the tomb owner in the act of leaving (south side) or entering (north side, Fig. 5) the tomb. A block found loose and representing the head of the northern figure (Fig. 6) will enable the Expedition to reconstruct the full height of this entrance. The vestibule is flanked by two narrow chapels with doorways on the west side, an architectural element for which the nearby tomb of Pay provides a parallel<sup>8</sup>. These originally had white-washed barrel vaults and still preserve part of the painted decoration on the rear (east) walls. These paintings on mud plaster depict the tomb-owner and his wife receiving food offerings.

The central part of the tomb of Meryneith is formed by a square open courtyard (9.2 x 9.3 m) with a peristyle of twelve columns. Four of these have been preserved, plus an engaged half-column against the north wall which stands in line with the western portico. The height of these columns (including base and capital) is 2.3 m; the columns of the western portico are slightly different from the others and lack the relief panel. The courtyard has limestone paving but no recessed impluvium in the centre. All walls of the courtyard have preserved a substantial part of the limestone wall revetment. On the east wall the relief decoration was never executed, although the north wing has now secondary decoration for Hatiay, presumably the same person who erected the stela on the forecourt although he is here called a 'scribe of documents of the Lord of the Two Lands' (Fig. 7). The north wall shows priests enacting the ritual of opening the mouth for Meryneith and his wife Aniuia<sup>9</sup>, who are depicted both as living persons and as statues (Fig. 1)<sup>10</sup>. Further to the west on the same wall is a large seated Osiris accompanied by Ma'at, Isis, and Nephthys, and followed by a number of registers with smaller representations of gods and goddesses. The part of this wall extending under the western portico shows detailed scenes of a smaller scale, depicting the workshops of goldsmiths and other artisans, and ceremonies around a royal bark involving scenes of butchers and performers (Fig. 8). The south wall of the courtyard bears representations of the funeral cortège of the deceased, including numerous male and female mourners (Fig. 9), a procession of chariots, and offerings inside a columned structure. The right-hand part of this wall (extending under the west portico) again has small-scale scenes of a granary, presumably of the Memphite Aten temple (Fig. 10). Finally, the west wall of the courtyard is devoted to the depiction of offerings for the tomb-owner and his wife. It should be noted that both the north and south

<sup>8</sup> Cf. H.D. Schneider *et al.*, The tomb-complex of Pay and Ra'ia: preliminary report on the Saqqara excavations, 1994 season, *OMRO* 75 (1995), 13-31, esp. 16 and fig. 1.

<sup>9</sup> We owe the corrected reading of this name (formerly interpreted as Iniuia but in fact written '3-iniw3 or '3-yniw3) to Dr J. van Dijk.

<sup>10</sup> Although the Berlin block represents similar ritual scenes, it is carved in sunk relief and cannot therefore have belonged to this wall, which is in raised relief.

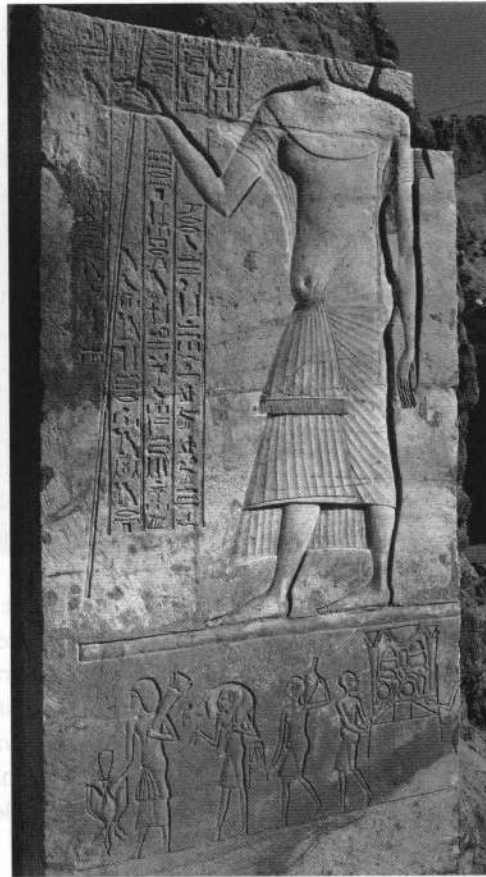


Fig. 5. North wall of entrance to vestibule: Meryneith entering the tomb, with offering bearers below.



Fig. 6. Loose block with head of the figure shown in Fig. 5.

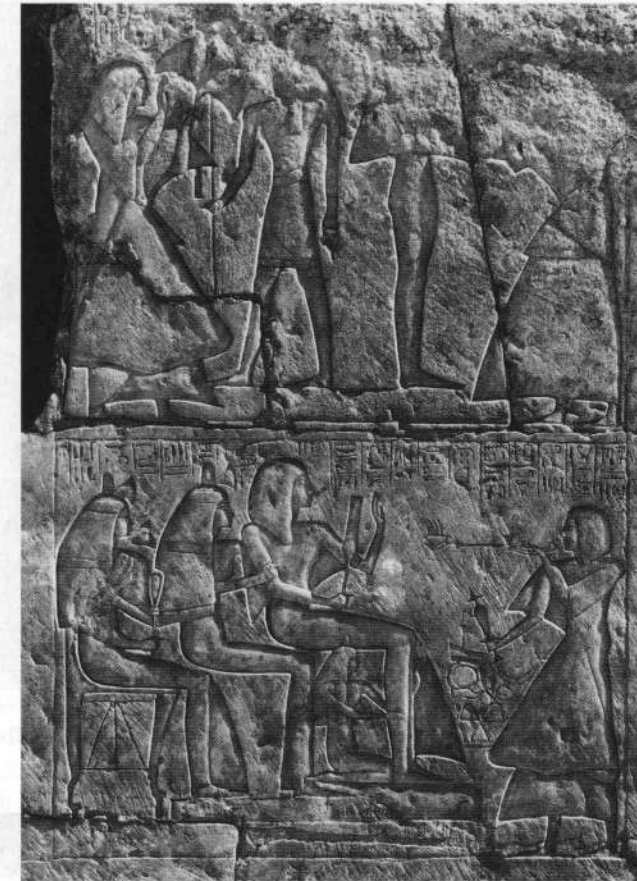


Fig. 7. East wall of courtyard: north half decorated by Hattiy.

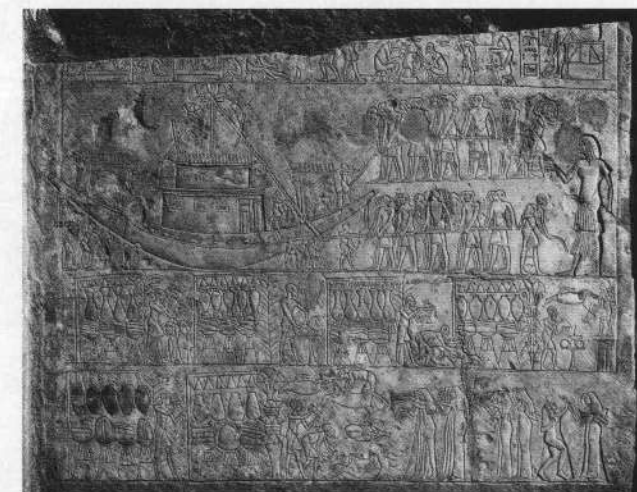


Fig. 8. North wall of courtyard, west end: launching of a ship and workshops of the Aten temple.

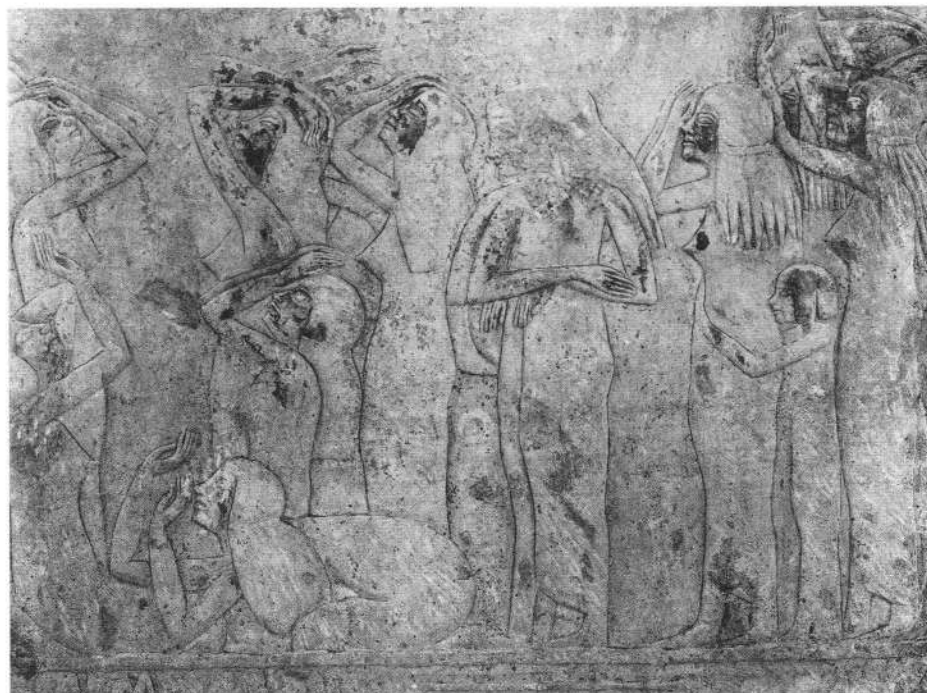


Fig. 9. South wall of the courtyard: detail of female mourners.

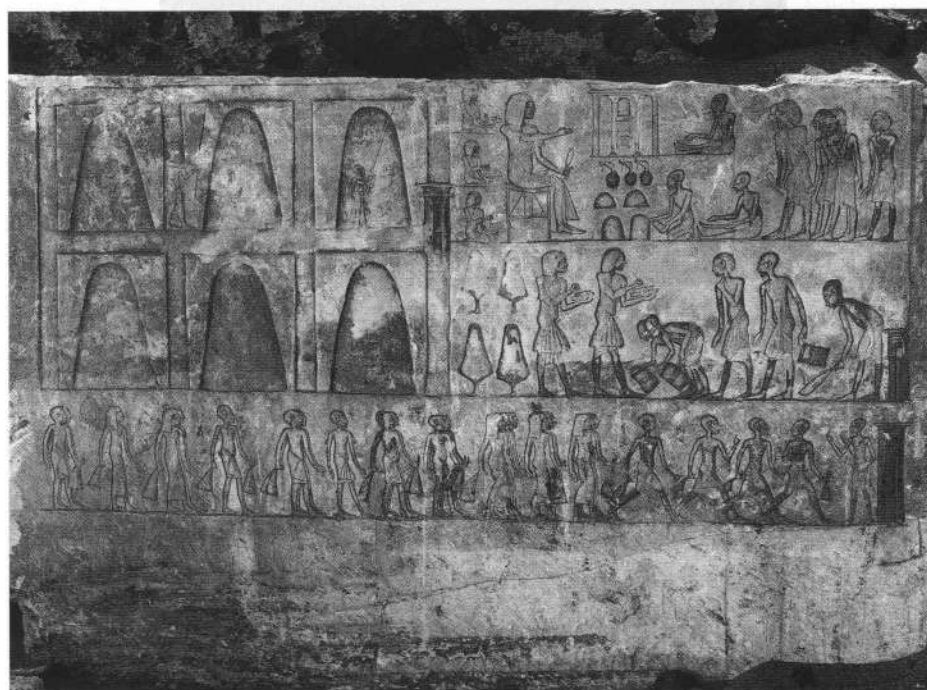


Fig. 10. South wall of courtyard, west end: granary of the Aten temple.

walls of the courtyard have decorations in raised relief, except for those parts under the roof of the western portico, which have sunk relief just like the west (and east) walls.

Behind the courtyard lie three chapels for the offering cult. The central one has remains of limestone revetment (with a scene of metalworkers, Fig. 11), limestone paving slabs, and the bases of two small columns. Two of the blocks seen by Mariette certainly derive from the door-jambes of this chapel, and the recently found slab from the SCA excavations south of our site forms part of a screen wall dividing this space into an antechapel and an inner sanctum. The two flanking chapels again had barrel vaults (still partly preserved in the southwest chapel) and paintings on mud plaster (best preserved in the northwest chapel which is mainly given to representations of a funerary meal of the deceased and his relatives, Fig. 12). Just like the east chapels, these western rooms have simple mud floors.

A spectacular discovery in the southwest chapel was the find of a limestone double statue of Meryneith and Aniuia in its original position against the west wall. The statue (85 cm high, 60 cm wide, and 50 cm deep; Fig. 13) is virtually intact and still has a considerable part of its polychromy. It shows the couple seated on a common animal-legged chair. The reverse of the back panel bears ten columns of offering formulas for husband and wife, whereas there is a further column of text on the front of Meryneith's kilt. At the end of the season, the statue was transported to the Cairo Museum where it has now received a place of honour in the permanent display (JE 99076).

In the centre of the peristyle opens a shaft of about 2.25 x 1.25 m. Although the presence of a loosely stacked brick wall around the aperture betrayed the activity of robbers, three of the original four slabs of the lid were still in position. Two of these were even sealed by gypsum plaster poured over the intervening joint and then provided with a rough finger-drawn inscription, which unfortunately proved to be so far illegible. At the request of the SCA Inspectors, the shaft itself was emptied to enable a quick inspection of the tomb-chambers. These are situated at a depth of about 6 m and form a maze of robbers' holes and breakthroughs to adjacent burial complexes of Late Period date. Several subsidiary shafts cutting right through the superstructure of Meryneith's tomb or around its exterior walls must form the original access of these complexes. It is very difficult at this stage to detect the true extent of Meryneith's own subterranean complex, especially since he seems to have appropriated a number of pre-existing galleries dating to the Archaic Period. This explains the presence of numerous limestone dummy vases and sherds of Archaic stone and pottery vessels, both in the fill of the shaft and chambers and in the debris covering the tomb's superstructure. A thorough investigation of this subterranean complex is planned for the season 2002.

#### *Preliminary historical conclusions*

For an evaluation of the historical implications of the new find we have the disposal of two important classes of evidence: on the one hand the inscriptions, and on the other the artistic style and iconography of the tomb. The tomb-owner's original name is given in various forms: Merneith, Meryneith, Merytyneith, or Merneithy. A rare form occurring once on the west wall of the peristyle (probably due to an omission on the part of the scribe) is the simple Mery. The interesting thing is that this name has been changed in a number of places to Meryre. This can be observed on the door jambes of the western chapels, where the *Nt*-sign was recut (damaged extremities of the *Nt* sign) or partly filled with plaster and a deeply



Fig. 11. North wall of central chapel: metalworkers of the Aten temple.



Fig. 12. North wall of northwest chapel: funerary meal.

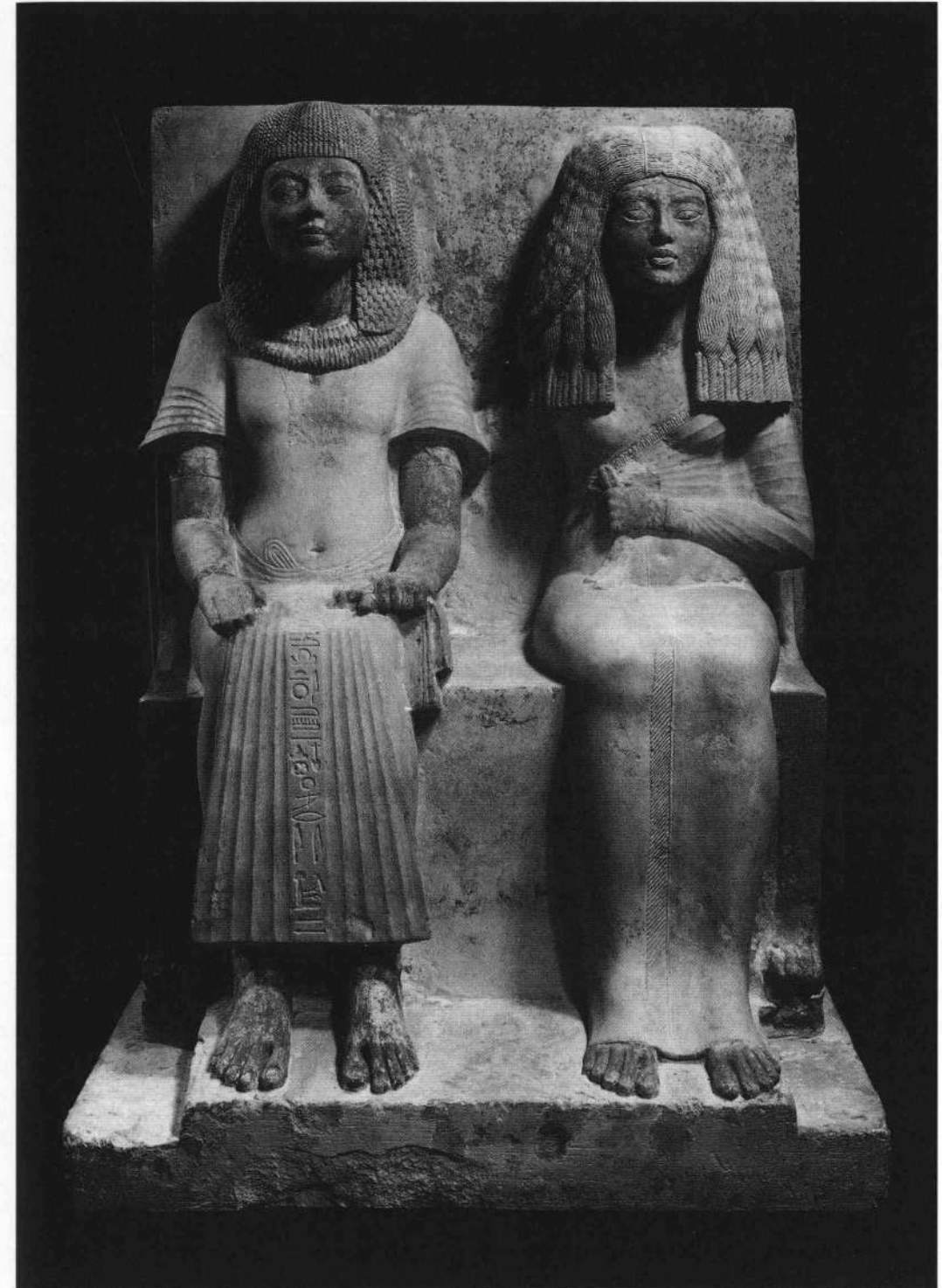


Fig. 13. Double statue of Meryre and Aniuia found in the southwest chapel.

carved sun disk was cut over it<sup>11</sup>. Still, the name Meryre is not always written in palimpsest over the earlier version; in the vestibule (Fig. 6), on the single extant column of the western portico, and on the painted rear wall of the northwest chapel (as well as on the statue, Fig. 13) it occurs as the original version of the name. Finally, in some places the name Meryre was changed back into Meryneith: on the jambs of the western chapels the *Nt*-sign was again restored over the secondary sun disk, since in a number of places its horizontal outlines can be detected on the bottom-plane of the recessed disk (Fig. 14).

The reason for all this confusion lies in the tomb-owner's eventful career, as illustrated by his various titles. In the texts on the jambs of the western chapels, where the name was corrected twice and which therefore must range among the oldest texts in the tomb<sup>12</sup>, Meryneith is only called 'steward of the temple of Aten'. The later name-form Meryre occurs in combination with the titles 'royal scribe' and 'steward of the temple of Aten in Memphis'<sup>13</sup>. On the double statue, however, where Meryre is also the original writing of the owner's name, he is called 'scribe of the temple of Aten in Akhet-aten (and) in Memphis' (Fig. 13). Finally, on the north wall of the tomb (Fig. 1), on a column of the eastern portico, and on the north jamb and rear wall of the northeast chapel (all places where the name Meryneith survives undamaged) the deceased is called 'greatest of seers of the Aten' and 'first prophet in the temple of Neith'.

Various conclusions may be drawn from this material. In the first place, the fate of the tomb-owner was intimately connected with that of King Akhenaten and his religious revolution. Secondly, these combinations of names and titles strongly suggest a chronological development of the owner's career and, at the same time, of the construction of his Memphite tomb. Meryneith apparently started the construction of his tomb<sup>14</sup> when he was only a steward of the Memphite Aten temple. There can be no doubt that this temple was constructed by orders of Akhenaten during the early years of his reign, although perhaps not before year 5 since a memorandum from the King's great steward Ipy dated to that regnal year does not mention the temple<sup>15</sup>. The reliefs from Meryneith's chapels and the adjacent side-walls of the western portico (Figs. 8, 10-11) show a lively style full of realistic details and expressive movement, obviously influenced by Akhenaten's new artistic ideals as expressed e.g. on the Karnak *talatât*. This is also obvious from the depictions of the human body, where we see the thin arms and legs, long fingers, and bulging skulls and bellies of the Amarna style. Large-scale depictions of the King himself, so characteristic of the courtiers' tombs at Amarna, are lacking. However, the King's name occurred at least twice in the inscriptions (on one of the

<sup>11</sup> Leading to the reading 'Meryre' on both jambs of the southwest chapel and on the south jamb of the northwest chapel, to 'Merytyre' on the north jamb of the northwest chapel and on both jambs of the central chapel. On the latter, however, the signs *n* and *t*, as phonetic complement of *Nt*, are still extant. Changed names also occur on the Berlin fragment. The new form of the name has erroneously been read as 'Mery(ty)aten' by several previous authors, doubtless through confusion with the preceding titles containing the element 'Aten'.

<sup>12</sup> Because of the importance of the chapels for the offering cult, one would also assume that these were built and decorated first, before the construction of the rest of the tomb's superstructure.

<sup>13</sup> This settles the dispute whether the Aten temple mentioned in some Memphite texts really refers to a construction in Memphis itself; cf. B. Löhr, *Aḥanjati in Memphis*, SAK 2 (1975), 163.

<sup>14</sup> As far as the superstructure is concerned. This phase of the construction would have been preceded by the levelling of the construction site (perhaps including the razing of an Archaic mastaba) and perhaps by the appropriation and adaptation of the mastaba's substructure.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Löhr, SAK 2 (1975), 142-143, 168.

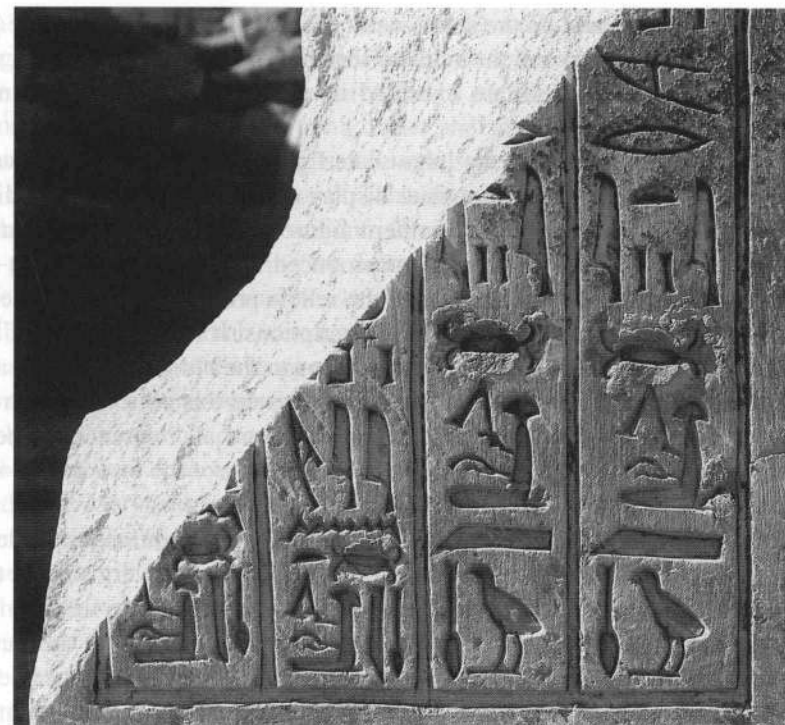


Fig. 14. North doorjamb of central chapel: inscriptions with corrected names.



Fig. 15. Detail of shipyard scene: obliterated figure of Akhenaten.

blocks published by Mariette and on the south wall of the vestibule) and his figure graced the kiosks on the royal boat (Fig. 15) and the sides of shrines represented on the north wall of the western portico. All of these reliefs are executed in sunk relief, the favourite medium of Amarna art.

A more mature style can be seen in the large-scale figures on each side of the vestibule of the tomb. Here the portraits of the tomb-owner display a full-bodied monumentality in very deep relief (Figs. 5-6). The head of the northern figure with its oblique eye and slightly opened mouth is very reminiscent of the best art produced in the private tombs at Amarna<sup>16</sup>. That these portraits are in fact slightly later than the reliefs produced for the western chapels is suggested by the name form 'Meryre' of their inscriptions. It rather looks as if Meryneith felt that it would further his career to drop each reference to the old goddess Neith and to take a new name that was politically correct. He may have adopted this policy around regnal year 9, when Akhenaten himself became more strict and removed all reference to the old gods from the standard name of the Aten himself. Thus, the recutting of the inscriptions in the west part of the tomb would be datable to this period, too.

Other parts of the tomb using the new name 'Meryre' are more traditional in style. Thus the paintings on the side-walls of the northwest chapel (Fig. 12) are still very similar to those in the Theban tombs of Menna, Nakht, or Nebamon and Ipuky, all datable to the reign of Amenhotep III. Perhaps they were executed slightly earlier than the end wall of the same chapel, where the new name Meryre occurs twice. More problematic is the double statue, which is inscribed with the new name but otherwise still follows the art style of the late reign of Amenhotep III, as is shown by the round faces with almond-shaped heavy-lidded eyes and rimmed and pursing mouths (Fig. 13)<sup>17</sup>. Perhaps the statue had been made earlier on in Meryneith's career and was only inscribed now<sup>18</sup>. Its inscriptions contain the new title of 'scribe of the temple of Aten in Akhet-aten (and) in Memphis'. This suggests that like so many officials Meryneith was now summoned to come to the new capital Amarna<sup>19</sup>. At first sight the title may appear rather lower in rank than that of steward. However, it may also reflect that Meryneith's career was undergoing major changes at the time and that, pending his new appointment, he chose to use the neutral title 'scribe' instead. The statue depicts him together with his wife Aniuia, who herself has no title.

The final stage in Meryneith's career is reflected on the south and north walls of the peristyle courtyard (Figs. 1, 9) and in the decoration of the northeast chapel. Here we find the name Meryneith without any corrections in the spelling, which suggests that these parts were added after Akhenaten's death<sup>20</sup>. Although at first sight this seems to be refuted by Meryneith's title, which is here given as 'greatest of seers of the Aten (in the temple of Aten)', one should note that the inscriptions on the north wall also contain the title 'first prophet in the temple of Neith', which would never have been tolerated during the apogee of

<sup>16</sup> Cf. e.g. Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999, cat. 232-233.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Kozloff, Bryan and Berman 1992, 125-184.

<sup>18</sup> One wonders what the obliterated pectoral on the husband's chest once represented: the traditional gods of Egypt, or (if both the decoration and the obliteration were executed at a later stage) a depiction of Akhenaten or his god.

<sup>19</sup> For a similar episode in the career of the great steward Ipy, see Löhr, *SAK 2* (1975), 171.

<sup>20</sup> So far, no inscription has been associated with the south wall of the peristyle; however, this shows the same relief style and technique as the north wall.

Akhenaten's revolution<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the same (north) wall comprises a scene depicting Osiris and other gods of the traditional pantheon. Finally, these decorations display the elegant style in raised relief so well known from the nearby tombs of Maya and Horemheb, with a masterful combination of large figures for the tomb owner and smaller ones for the priests and servants, quite different from the expressionistic small-scale style in the western chapels. In other words, we would date these walls to the reign of Tutankhamun and not before<sup>22</sup>. It is well known that the Memphite Aten temple survived well into the reign of Seti I<sup>23</sup>, so it stands to reason that there were high-priests for this cult during the post-Amarna period. Although Akhenaten's cult was tolerated for a while, his person was clearly not: all cartouches and depictions of the King on the earlier walls of Meryneith's tomb were erased (Fig. 15). Still, we cannot prove that these erasures were done at this stage, since the large-scale persecution of the Amarna heresy did not begin until the reigns of Horemheb and especially Ramesses II<sup>24</sup>. What must have been contemporaneous with this phase in the tomb's decoration, however, are the final corrections of the names on the door-jambs of the west chapels, which were changed back from Meryre to Meryneith (Fig. 14). We may add that Meryneith's wife Aniuia now bears the title '[songstress?] of Amun-Re' (Fig. 1). The north wall also mentions Meryneith's father, the dignitary Khaut<sup>25</sup>.

Two questions still need to be answered: where was Meryneith during Akhenaten's last years, and where was he buried? It is quite possible that under his new name Meryre the tomb-owner actually lived at Amarna for a while, since the title on the statue suggests that he had a post as temple scribe there. He may even have acquired his new position of high priest of the Aten in Akhenaten's new capital. A high priest Meryre is well known there from an unfinished rock tomb cut in the hills east of the town<sup>26</sup>, and one may well ask whether this is not the same person as the former Meryneith from Memphis. This may be further supported by the vestibule in Meryre's Amarna tomb, which is unique for that site but rather resembles the parallel at Saqqara<sup>27</sup>. It is rather puzzling that the Amarna Meryre had a wife called Tjener, who is called a 'favourite of the mistress of the two lands'. Perhaps Meryneith's wife changed her name just like her husband, but for lack of additional evidence this has to remain an open question. The fact that the Amarna tomb remained unfinished is nothing extraordinary at that site, since the town was left soon after Akhenaten's death. It may also be explained by the fact that Meryneith made a late start, since he was still constructing his Saqqara monument around year 9, as we have seen above<sup>28</sup>.

After the assumed return to Memphis and the resumption of building work at Saqqara, time was apparently running out. It is also possible that for some reason Meryneith fell in

<sup>21</sup> The existence of a temple of Neith in the Memphite area is also indicated by a stela of a 'first prophet of Neith' Ptahemwia recently found at Dahshur and provisionally dated to the reign of Amenhotep III. See S. Yoshimura and S. Hasegawa, *New Kingdom necropolis at Dahshur — the tomb of Ipay and its vicinity*, in: Bárta and Krejčí 2000, 149.

<sup>22</sup> As opposed to Silverman, in: Teeter and Larson 1999, 380-381.

<sup>23</sup> Löhr, (1975), 146-147 (Dok. I 4), 169-170.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999, 36, 185.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ranke 1935, I, 262,25.

<sup>26</sup> Tomb no. 4 at Amarna, see De Garis Davies 1903. Other Memphite tomb-owners who built at Amarna are Ipy (Löhr, *SAK 2* (1975), 171: Tomb no. 10) and Maya (Van Dijk 1993, 71: Tomb no. 14).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. G. Johnson, Norman de Garis Davies & the rock tombs of el Amarna, *Amarna Letters 2* (San Francisco, 1992), 64-65.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. De Garis Davies 1903, 42, for arguments that the Amarna tomb was not decorated until year 9 or 10.



disgrace because of his connections with the old régime. The Saqqara tomb was left unfinished, as is testified by the unfinished columns and the blank east wall of the peristyle. The north half of that wall was then decorated by another person, Hatiay, who does not explain his relationship to the original tomb-owner. From a stylistic point of view, these reliefs and Hatiay's stela against the tomb's façade (Figs. 4, 7) appear to be later than the decoration executed for Meryneith. The rather elongated figures look almost Ramesside, and the male figures with their flaring kilts are reminiscent of the depictions in the subterranean tomb-chambers of Maya (*temp.* Horemheb)<sup>29</sup>. It is rather confusing that on his stela Hatiay 'adores Aten' who is depicted as a falcon-headed god and is labelled 'Re-Horakhte'. At first sight this reminds one of the iconography of Akhenaten's early years<sup>30</sup>, but under the circumstances it must date to the post-Amarna period, another monument attesting the survival of the cult of the Aten after Akhenaten's death. Hatiay's main titles are given as 'first prophet of the Moon' and 'scribe of documents of the lord of the Two Lands'. This seems to preclude his identity with Maya's chief sculptor of the same name<sup>31</sup>, or with the earlier high priest of the Aten Hatiay who seems to have been the original owner of Amarna tomb no. 4<sup>32</sup>. On his reliefs on the east wall of the peristyle courtyard, Hatiay clearly poses as the new tomb-owner. Accordingly, he must have intended to be buried in the tomb. Whether this burial actually took place, and what happened with Meryneith himself, are matters that need to be investigated in the underground tomb-chambers of the Saqqara tomb. A preliminary exploration of this complex leads us to believe that it was never used as a burial place during the New Kingdom. A proper investigation of this subterranean complex is planned for the season 2002.

#### *Restoration and preservation*

During the season 2001, a good deal of restoration work could be done to the newly-found monument. All columns (three of them fallen and one dislodged) were re-erected. All reliefs and paintings could be cleaned, cracks were filled with gypsum or mud plaster, and the colours were fixed by solutions of paraloid and polyvinyl. A number of loose fragments were put back on the walls, whereas others were joined together and await further study in the storerooms. This work was executed by the local SCA restorers. At the end of the season all reliefs were protected by plywood panels. The shaft was closed by a metal door and the whole site was closed off by a new barbed wire fence. On the last day of the season, the double statue was transported to the Cairo Museum for inclusion in its collections. After the close of the season, the mud-brick vaults of the four painted chapels were reconstructed in modern brick and the entrances closed by wooden doors. Finally, a hoard of 246 silver Ptolemaic coins found during the season 2000 could be cleaned during the present season and shall be studied by a specialist in the course of next year.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Martin 1991, figs. 113-114.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999, cat. 20. Maybe the omission of the article *p3* is a chronological indicator.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. J. van Dijk, Maya's chief sculptor Userhat-Hatiay. With a note on the length of the reign of Horemheb, *GM* 148 (1995), 29-34.

<sup>32</sup> De Garis Davies 1903, 16, 42, 53 and pl. 34.

#### *The pottery* (Barbara G. Aston)

During the excavation of the superstructure of the tomb of Meryneith, Early Dynastic pottery was found in the surface fill over the southern courtyard, southwest chapel, and vestibule of the tomb. Material of this early date had not previously been identified in the New Kingdom necropolis. Five tops and four bases were recovered of a type of slender marl clay jar with one ridge below the shoulder and one above the base, which dates to the Second Dynasty. One of these tops joined a rim sherd from Chamber A of the main shaft of Meryneith from which this Second Dynasty material undoubtedly derived. Other Early Dynastic forms recovered from the surface debris include miniature model pots and hand-made silt jars with rolled rims.

A small amount of late New Kingdom (late Dyn. 19 to Dyn. 20) pottery was found on the pavement in the courtyard and chapels and east of the entrance to the tomb. This includes thin-walled pointed-base cups, small globular pink-washed jars, carinated dishes, and sherds with linear blue-painted designs with dark blue bands.

A Late Period embalmers' cache was uncovered northeast of the façade of the tomb. It consisted of two large vessels filled with blackened linen and natron and one small bottle with remains of resin inside. One of the large pots was a basket-strap handle amphora with the rim and handles broken away prior to re-use, and the other was a large red-slipped bottle of typical 5<sup>th</sup> century BC type, also with the rim broken off halfway down the neck before it was re-used.

Simultaneously with the current excavation, work was continued on pottery from the area south of the tomb of Horemheb excavated in 1999 and 2000. Reconstruction of forms from the *tafl* foundation fill around shafts 2000/I and 99/VI resulted in a number of new late New Kingdom forms being added to the Saqqara corpus, including a wide carinated bowl with vertical rim, and a small globular necked jar with rolled rim. Two new late New Kingdom Canaanite jar fabrics were also identified and described. Pottery recorder Amanda Dunsmore drew over 240 pots from the embalmers' caches and Late Period level south of the tomb of Horemheb (as well as earlier material from the tomb of Pay). A particularly interesting find from Shaft 99/I was a small Bes jar associated with the burials and coin hoard in Chamber A. The jar is of marl clay, only 6.4 cm in height, with simple blobs of clay applied for the eyes, nose and ears, but lacking a mouth.

#### *Anthropology and palaeopathology* (Eugen Strouhal)

The main aim of the anthropological work this season was an analysis of the human mummified remains found by the Expedition in Chamber A of Shaft 99/I, and unearthed during the last week of the season 2000. Most of these mummies were broken by robbers and their fragments dispersed, except for 14 individuals who could still be identified by the archaeologists. The bulk of the material consisted of isolated bones, often broken by the activities of the robbers.

The material was firstly cleaned of dust and resin, then sorted according to findspot: niches nos. 1-5, the burial chamber itself (no. 6), and the lower parts of the shaft (2 to 8 m deep, or above the level of the chamber; 8 to 10 m deep below the entrance to the chamber). Because of the small number of individuals buried in the niches, it proved possible to sort the bones from these areas according to their age and sex. For the chamber itself (no. 6),

such a classification was seldom possible due to the large number of burials. Because of pressure of time, the chamber material (except for 9 individual skeletons) was studied preliminarily only by skulls and mandibles, indicating the presence of at least 31 additional individuals. The other bones were sorted according to their kinds, and marked according to their provenance within the chamber, to be measured and analysed during the next season. After mending them, their good state of preservation should allow not only to specify the number of individuals in this part of the tomb, but also to complement the measurements and observations performed during the present analysis.

In the tomb as a whole, the total number of preliminary ascertained individuals was found to be 73. The majority (40) were buried in the burial chamber itself (no. 6), 9 in niche no. 1, 5 in niche no. 2, 2 in niche no. 3 (3a + 3b), 5 in niche no. 4, 10 in niche no. 5, and 2 in the shaft. Thus, it may be observed that more skeletons were found in the larger niches closest to the entrance of the chamber (nos. 1 and 5) than in the smaller ones towards the rear of the chamber. Some skeletons may have been drawn out of the niches by the robbers and thrown on the floor.

Of the total number, the majority was adult (50 individuals, or 68.5 %). Among them, males (32, or 45.2 %) curiously dominated in number over females (17, or 23.3 %). The rest were immatures (people less than 20 years old). Their number of 23 individuals, or 31.5 %, is much lower than one would expect in the ancient Egyptian demographic situation. They consisted of 7 juveniles (14-19.9 years old, all males), 13 children (2-13.9 years old), and only 3 infants (0-1.9 years old). The masculinity index calculated for adults and juveniles amounts to an extraordinary high value of 2166.7.

When compared with other, roughly contemporary Egyptian series, the mean ages at death of this particular group are also unusually high, *scil.* 27.8 years for the group as a whole, 38.2 years for adult males, and 33.0 years for adult females. One may compare these data *e.g.* with those from the 7th cent. BC and 1st cent. AD series from the mastaba of Ptahshepses at Abusir. Here the mean age at death for the whole series was 19.5 years, with 33.3 years for the adult males and 32.3 years for the adult females<sup>33</sup>. This comparison makes it clear that a demographically anomalous group is concerned, without doubt the result of social selection, with preferential burials of adult and juvenile males and a clear under-representation of females and infants.

Special attention was devoted to the detection of palaeopathological finds. There were several congenital anomalies, some of them found in a couple of individuals and thereby betraying family relationship (*e.g.* not-fused sternebrae, spondylolysis and spondylolisthesis, cervical ribs, etc.). Most common were the usual age-related changes, such as degenerative productive changes of the joints, osteophytosis of the spine, and osteochondrosis of the intervertebral plates. There was a general lack of injuries, although compressive fractures of three lumbar vertebrae and fractures of three long extremity bones could be detected. Tooth loss was due to severe dental attrition, paradontosis combined with calculus, and caries accompanied by its sequelae such as dental cysts.

A populational biological study of this sample, aimed at corroborating the hypothesis of the assumed family relationship, would request additional examination of the remaining non-matching bones from the burial chamber itself (no. 6). This has been planned for the season 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Strouhal and Bareš 1993, 71.

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