PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS IN THE SECOND DYNASTY NECROPOLIS AT SAQQARA. SEASON 2009.

ILONA REGULSKI, CLAUDIA LACHER, AND AMBER HOOD

Introduction

The present report will focus on the earliest usage of the southern part of Saqqara where the most visible remains nowadays consist of the New Kingdom necropolis, currently investigated by the Leiden expedition.[1] Since 2008, a team under the auspices of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo has been reexamining the Early Dynastic structures discovered by the Dutch expedition below the tombs of Maya and Meryneith.[2]

In 2008, the 'archaic' structure below the tomb of Maya could be successfully identified as the burial place of a high official or a member of the royal family of the late Second Dynasty.[3] In February 2009, the NVIC team therefore joined the Dutch expedition again. During this season, the team concentrated on confirming or even narrowing down that date and getting more information on the status of the tomb owner and the nature of the site by:

- further clearance of the complex below the tomb of Maya
- reinvestigation of the substructure of Meryneith
- finishing the architectural plans
- the study of the pottery and other small finds

The staff consisted of Dr. Kim Duistermaat, Dr. Ilona Regulski, Dipl.-Ing. Claudia Lacher, Drs. Amber Hood, Drs. Gwen Jennes, Mr. Paul Van Pelt, and Mr. Vincent Oeters. The fieldwork was carried out in close collaboration with Mr. Usama Abdessalam el-Shimy (Director of Saqqara) and was supervised in the field by Mr. Galal Moawad Moawad and Mr. Malak Shefik Fahmy (SCA inspectors). We want to express our gratitude to the Dutch expedition for their technical assistance and the pleasant cooperation in the field. The project had the financial support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Cairo.

---

[1] See earlier in this volume; for the history of research, see http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/saqqara/homepage.htm.

[2] M.J. Raven, R. Van Walsem, B.G. Aston, & E. Strouhal, Preliminary Report on the Leiden Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2002: The Tomb of Meryneith, *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 91-109; R. Van Walsem, Une tombe royale de la deuxième dynastie à Saqqara sous la tombe Nouve Empire de Meryneith. Campagne de fouille 2001-2002, *Archéo-Nil* 13 (2003), 6-16.

[3] M.J. Raven, H. Hays, C. Lacher, K. Duistermaat, I. Regulski, B.G. Aston, L. Horáčková & N. Warner, Preliminary Report on the Leiden Excavations at Saqqara, season 2008: The tomb of Ptahemwia, *JEOL* 41 (2008-2009), 5-30; I. Regulski, Investigating a new Second dynasty necropolis at South Saqqara, in R. Friedman & L. McNamara (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 3* (Leuven, forthcoming); I. Regulski, Investigating a new Dynasty 2 necropolis at South Saqqara, British Museum studies in Ancient Egypt an Sudan 13 (http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/regulski2009_b.pdf), 221-37.

Excavation of the Second Dynasty tomb below the tomb of Maya (I. Regulski)

The Early Dynastic substructure below the tomb of Maya can be reached through a secondary shaft (Maya shaft V) and an adjacent chamber in the corner outside the south wall of the tomb (Fig. 1). In 2008, we cleaned the easily reachable Early Dynastic chamber (A), which was filled with debris until the roof top.[4] To the south, a corridor (B100) leads into a second Early Dynastic chamber (B), which was re-used as part of another Late Period tomb. This chamber and the subsequent niche (B200) were left unexplored during the 2008 season and were therefore one of the focus points of this year's clearance.

While emptying the debris, it became increasingly clear that later visitors to the tomb thoroughly emptied chamber B in order to reuse it for a collective burial. At least 10 bodies could be distinguished, among which one child. Some of the articulated skeletal remains were possibly still lying *in situ*. Remains of decayed mummy tissue suggest some kind of mummification but apart from ushabtis — at least 268 could be reconstructed — grave goods were lacking. One other burial was found in niche B200.

The Early Dynastic period was poorly represented in this part of the tomb. Only a few pottery sherds (cfr. *Infra*) and two fragments of hard stone bowls were discovered. Although they could originally have belonged to room A, an Early Dynastic date for room B is nevertheless suggested by architectural features (cfr. *Infra*). The corridor to this room (B100) yielded a few fragments of mud sealing, although without impression. The main access to the tomb seems to have been in the north, but because the corridor was completely sand-filled, caused by a shaft, we left it unexplored last year. Also this year, it appeared to be impossible to continue in this direction given the instability this would have caused in Maya's first courtyard.

Architecture of the Early Dynastic tomb of Maya (Fig. 2) (C. Lacher)

The Early Dynastic tomb is cut out of the bedrock at an absolute altitude of about 51.10 m (ceiling) respectively 49.30-49.40 m (floor) AMSL. Accordingly the floor level lies 6.50 m below the level of the New Kingdom tomb. It is oriented northeast to southwest, in an angle of 27.5° from the north. Hence its original entrance probably leads in from northeast. Probably the huge heap of sand at the north of room A flowed in by a formerly porticullus shaft. It is also possible that a later shaft or maybe a breakthrough to the subsidiary complex IX[5] caused the heap of sand inside. Whether further rooms are situated in the north or if one can find the porticullus with a staircase or ramp is not known. The cleared part of the tomb (without entrance) has a length of about 13 m, while its width averages 10.50 m.

In the following, only the parts excavated during the 2009 season will be described in detail:[6] Passageway A400 (l. 2.00 m, w. 1.20 m, h. 1.40 m) is located at the southeastern corner of chamber A. On both sides, north and south, the walls are lined with narrow benches. The floor-level is about 20 cm higher than that of room A. A closer look at the design reveals a striking degree of parallelism between the Second Dynasty structure and the Late Period

[4] See previous note.

[5] H.D. Schneider *et al*., The Tomb of Maya and Meryt: Preliminary Report on the Saqqara Excavations, 1990-1, *JEA* 77 (1991), fig. 12; M.J. Raven, *The Tomb of Maya and Merit II: objects and skeletal remains* (London, 2001), pls. 4 and 5.

[6] For a more detailed description of the already in 2008 cleared chambers see: M.J. Raven *et al*., Preliminary report on the Leiden excavations at Saqqara, season 2008: the tomb of Ptahemwia, *JEOL* 41 (2009), 17-20.

Fig. 1. The tomb of Maya.

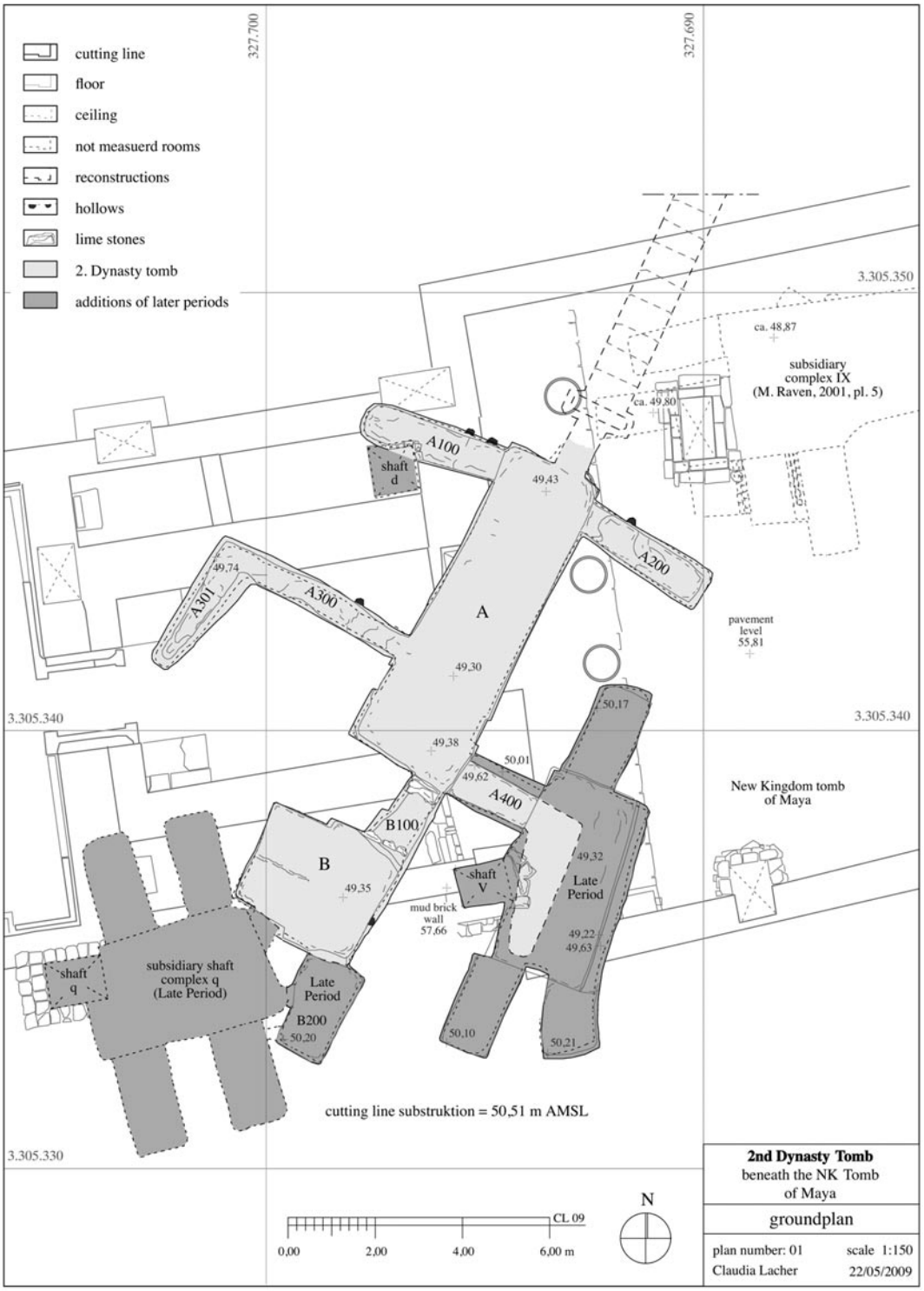

Fig. 2. Early Dynastic tomb below the tomb of Maya with additions of Late Period.

chamber; in contrast the orientation of shaft V is quite different. These distinctive features suggest that an Early Dynastic chamber had previously been there when the workmen of Late Period built shaft V.[7] A corridor similar in shape to A301 may have existed here (as reconstructed in Fig. 2), which was enlarged in later times. Unfortunately, no traces of an Early Dynastic room remain.[8] With regard to A400, the upper part above the benches was carved out in the Late Period with the purpose of making a fourth niche for the burials of the Late Period complex. The already existing space between the benches could have been filled with *taffl*-chips and the breakthrough to room A closed by a wall. Passageway B100 (l. 1.75 m, w. 90 cm-1.23 m, h. 1.60 m) leads from A to the south and gives access to room B. While its eastern wall runs straight, the western one widens up to the south. Chamber B (l. 3.00-3.35 m, w. 2.35-3.00 m, h. 1,65 m) is placed at the southern end of the tomb. The western part of the room is smaller then the eastern one, due to corners in the south and north. A hemispherical hollow, typical for Second Dynasty tombs, is located in its east wall.

It seems that no changes have taken place during the New Kingdom. The visible structural alterations of the Early Dynastic tomb date to later periods when shafts or their related burial crypts broke through. The already mentioned Late Period burial crypt at the southeast is probably an example of this practice. The later shaft 'd' in the tomb of Maya hits corridor A100 at its south wall. A roughly made wall of rubble completed the shaft's sidewalls. A third shaft (shaft 'q') is situated more to the west. It leads to a burial crypt in a regular design, with a central rectangular room and two pairs of lateral burial niches. At its northwest corner, a breakthrough to room B probably functioned afterwards as an entrance to chamber B. Thence another burial niche (B200) has been carved out of the bedrock. Because the niche's western wall is not cut in a straight way and takes account to a breakthrough into the neighboured burial crypt, it is obviously done later than burial complex 'q'. Finally room B itself has been reused as a burial place. A roughly made wall of undressed stone blocks and bedrock chips has blocked its formerly northern entrance. The remains of that blockade could be laid bare in passageway B100.

With the aim of analysing the architectural structure of the tomb, a number of Second and Third Dynasty tombs were compared. One similarity of the tomb design is the so-called entrance hall, which is located close to the burial chamber. Such a room exists in the royal tombs, Hetepsekhemwy/Raneb[9] and Ninetjer,[10] in several private tombs at Saqqara-North[11] and in Beit Khallaf.[12] Often two pilasters, which divide the room in a small southern and a large northern part, are visible. The arrangement of the narrow corridors, north of the

---

[7] Personal communication with B. Aston, spring 2009. By contrast the chisel marks of the whole Late Period crypt are small, long and bended, that means very typical for Late Period work.

[8] No imprints of a previous Early Dynastic corridor could be found, whether on the floor or on the ceiling.

[9] J.-Ph. Lauer, *Fouilles à Saqqarah, La pyramide à degrés I* (Cairo, 1936), fig. 2; C. Lacher, Das Grab des Hetepsechemui/Raneb in Saqqara, Ideen zur baugeschichtlichen Entwicklung in: E.M. Engel, V. Müller, U. Hartung (eds.), *Zeichen aus dem Sand. Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte zu Ehren von Günter Dreyer* (Wiesbaden, 2008), 425-451.

[10] G. Dreyer, Ein unterirdisches Labyrinth: Das Grab des Königs Ninetjer in Sakkara, in: G. Dreyer, D. Polz (eds.), *Begegnung mit der Vergangenheit – 100 Jahre in Ägypten. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo 1907-2007* (Mainz, 2007), 130-138; C. Lacher, The Tomb of King Ninetjer – Second Dynasty at Saqqara, in: R. Friedman, L. McNamara (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 3* (Leuven, forthcoming).

[11] J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1912-14), Archaic Mastabas* (Cairo, 1923), pl. 30.

[12] J. Garstang, *Mahâsna and Bêt Khallâf Egyptian Research Account, 7th Year* (London, 1902), 11-14, pl. 18.

pilasters, can also be found at both royal tombs and in the tomb below Meryneith (cfr. *Infra*). Instead of narrow corridors, earlier examples of the private tombs show small rooms, most often with a narrow entrance.[13] It is possible that in the Early Dynastic tomb below Maya the same design of small rooms has been projected, which would suggest that we are dealing with unfinished rooms, which should be enlarged in a second working stage. In contrast, at Beit Khallaf the lateral rooms are very small and narrow. The burial chamber is typically placed at the southwest, mostly south of the entrance hall. Sometimes the floor is lowered down, like in the tomb of Ninetjer and in S2429. In tomb K2 at Beit Khallaf, the place of the coffin is tightened, similar to our room B. The size of the private burial chambers varies from 3.75 m^2 to 13.87 m^2, while the royal burial chambers are with 18 m^2 bigger in size.[14] Because of its location at the southern end of the tomb, its size of 8.85 m^2 and its design with the tightened western part, room B most probably functioned as burial chamber. Whether the whole tomb is a design of a model-house, as Quibell described,[15] is difficult to say. The space allocation plan is reduced of its basic elements: the entrance from the north, the entrance hall A, some lateral corridors/rooms for storing supplies and the burial chamber at the south. The typical model-house features, like a room with water-jars or implemented toilets could not be identified.[16]

Because of the resemblance in the arrangement of the lateral corridors of room F in Ninetjer's tomb, the Early Dynastic tomb under Maya could roughly be dated to the second half of the Second Dynasty. The narrowed burial chamber with the two corners, which is very similar to Beit Khallaf K2-North, narrows the date down to the end of Second Dynasty.

Excavation of the Second Dynasty tomb below the tomb of Meryneith (I. Regulski)

Our attention this year moved to the tomb of Meryneith, already cleared by the Dutch expedition in 2002.[17] Its substructure could be reached through a Late Period shaft situated south of the actual tomb (2002/16) and an adjacent chamber of the same date (Fig. 3). In the western corner of the latter room, a breakthrough leads to the Early Dynastic tomb, reused as burial chamber in the time of Meryneith.

The Early Dynastic tomb can be reconstructed as a large central chamber (room C) surrounded by galleries extending in all directions (cfr. *Infra*, Fig. 4). The Dutch expedition already excavated the whole complex apart from a small part of room E with a breakthrough to perhaps more of the Early Dynastic substructure, and the northern part of room C. The former were left unexplored in 2002 because of safety reasons. The northern part of room C was completely sand-filled, caused by a later shaft (2002/20). After testing the debris in the northern part of room E without result — only material from the Late Period could be found — we focused on the central room (C). Numerous crates of stored bones were blocking further work and thus had to be removed. After reorganizing them in the niches of galleries C700

[13] S2406 (time of Ninetjer), S2498 (time of Ninetjer), S2307 (time of Ninetjer), S2171 (2nd Dynasty) etc., J.E. Quibell, *Archaic Mastabas* (1923), pl. 30.

[14] Probably the king's coffin was placed in a kind of wooden shrine with doors, that a bigger chamber became necessary.

[15] J.E. Quibell, *Archaic Mastabas* (1923), 11-12; see also: P. Jánosi, *Die Gräberwelt der Pyramidenzeit* (Mainz, 2006), 13-14.

[16] See tombs S2302 (Ruaben), S2337, S2307, S2429 and S2406 in: J.E. Quibell, *Archaic Mastabas* (1923), pl. 30.

[17] M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 91-109; R. Van Walsem, *Archéo-Nil* 13 (2003), 6-16.

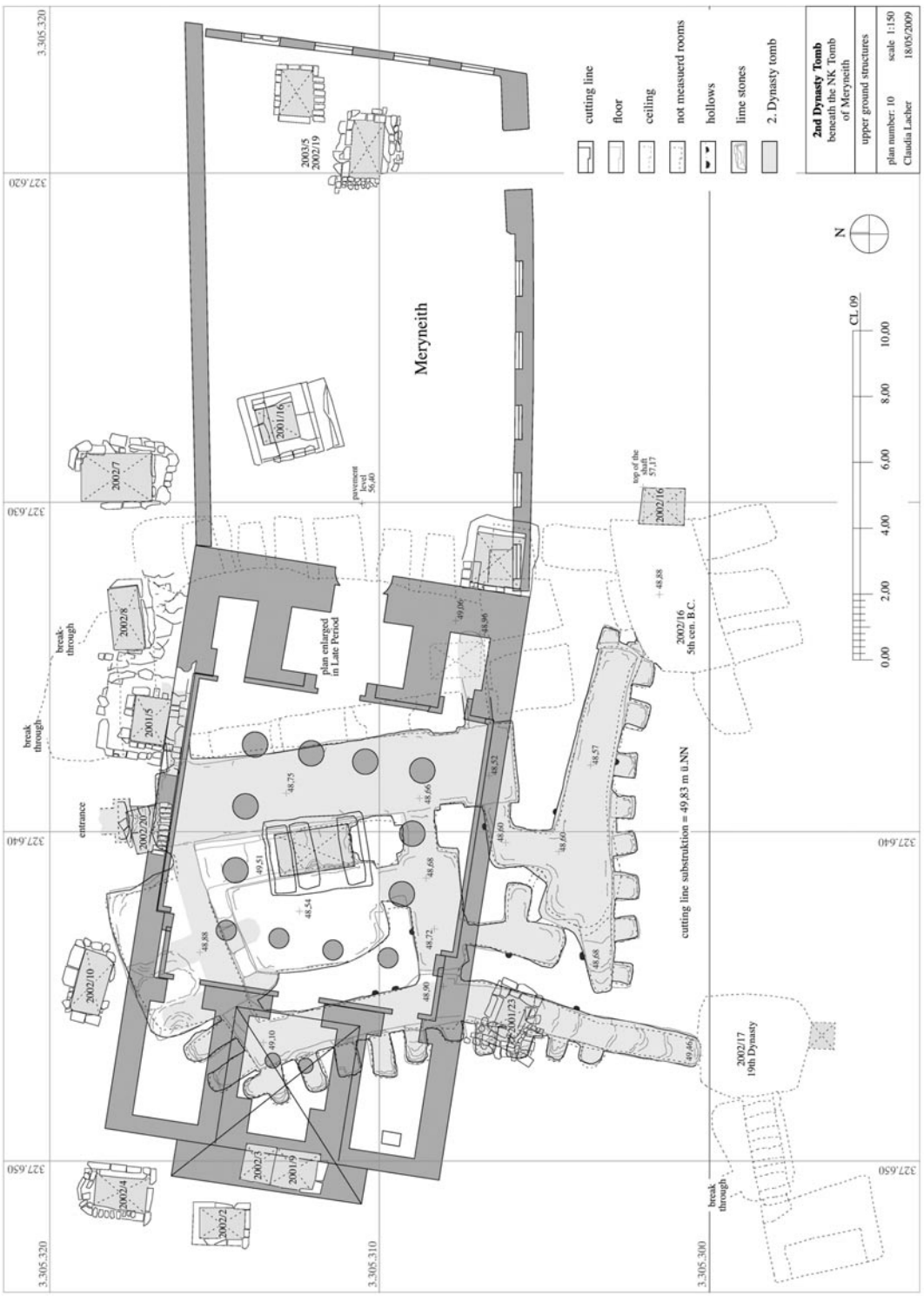

Fig. 3. The tomb of Meryneith.

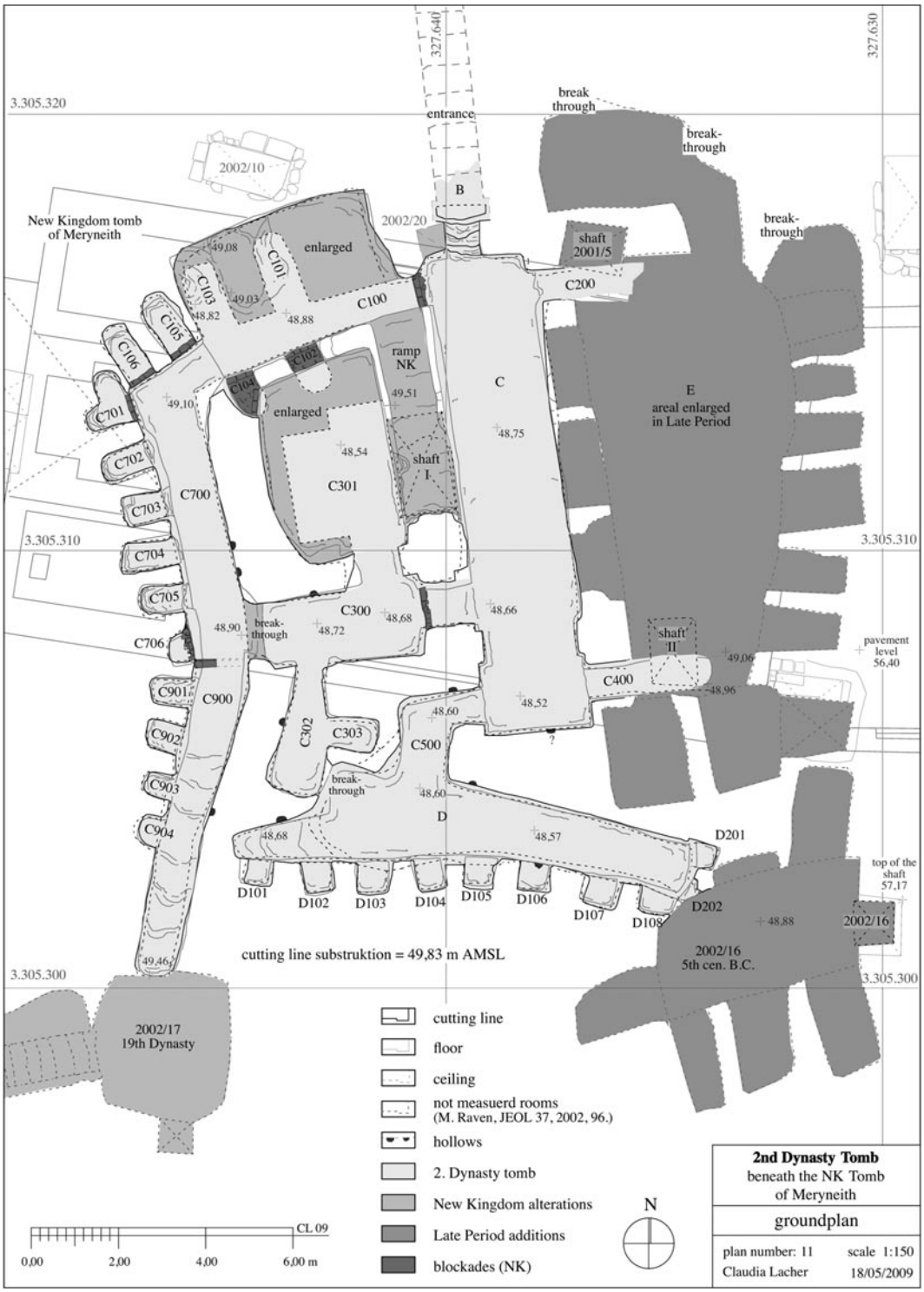

Fig. 4. Early Dynastic tomb below the tomb of Meryneith with enlargments of later periods.

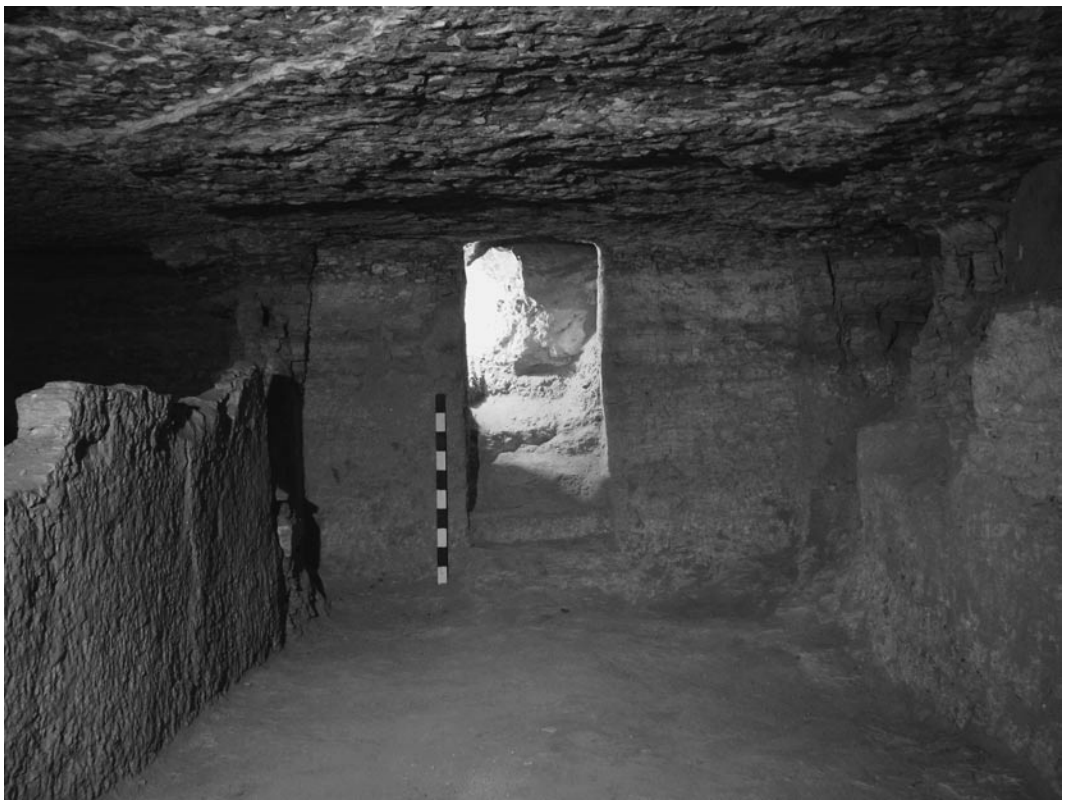

Fig. 5.

and C900, we excavated the northern part of room C where the huge heap of sand was blocking what we considered to be a northern corridor and the original entrance to the tomb. A significant amount of Early Dynastic material could still be found in the lower layers, suggesting that the sand used as backfill for shaft 2002/20 actually covered part of the original debris. It contained numerous stone vessel fragments, dummy vessels, pottery (cfr. *Infra*), and parts of a limestone offering table. One seal impression was found in the lowest layers of this sand filling. The sparse traces of the inscription yield a late Second date writing style.

Once the sand filling in room C was excavated, the edges of the northern corridor became visible. After clearing of this corridor a staircase appeared, and soon after, a portcullis still in situ (approximately 109cm in length and 133cm high) and the edges of shaft 2002/20 (Fig. 5). If the portcullis was lowered through this shaft — as was the usual practice in Early Dynastic period — it is a contemporary shaft, which was enlarged in later times. This shaft is known from previous excavations, and could therefore be cleared from below; the debris only consisted of sand backfill from the Dutch expedition. However, the portcullis could not yet be removed because of a lack of time. The central chamber and the area in front of the portcullis were cleaned for photography and in preparation for later exploration. The corridor was closed off by bricks and shaft 2002/20 was backfilled again for safety reasons.

Architecture of the Early Dynastic tomb of Meryneith (Fig. 4) (C. Lacher)

The Early Dynastic complex is hewn out of the natural bedrock at an altitude of about 50.10-50.30 m (ceiling) respectively 48.50-48.90 m (floor) ASML, that means almost 7.90 m below the pavement of the New Kingdom tomb. The original entrance of the Early Dynastic complex is placed in the north.[18] Only the beginning of a staircase and a porticullus, still *in situ*, could be uncovered from inside (Fig. 4-5). The orientation of the tomb differs from the northsouth direction about 8° to the west. The tomb (without entrance) has hitherto a length of 17.50 m and a width of about 14 m.[19] It is extending in several rooms and corridors flanked by small niches. [[[What does this last sentence mean?]]]

The formerly northern entrance B leads into a kind of entrance hall C (l. 11 m, w. 2.40 m, h. 1.80 m) that is divided by two pilasters in a longer northern, and a smaller southern part. It gives access to three corridors at the west (C100, C300 and C500) and two at its eastern side (C200 and C400). C100 (l. 7.15 m, w. 75-85 cm, h. 1.42-1.52 m) runs from the central room C westwards and leads to C700 (l. 6 m, w. 1.25 m) and further on to C900 (l. 7.45 m, w. 1.25 m/90 cm) in the south. The joining corridor C700 has a nearly north-south orientation, while the southern passageway C900 leads with a disorientation of 26° southwest. The floor-level rises to the south in two major steps, while its clear height declines from 1.30 m to 65 cm. C900 was obviously left unfinished. A later tomb complex, dated to the 19th Dynasty,[20] breaks through its southern wall. A remarkable design is the large number of small niches, 12 in all, which are situated at the northern and western side of these corridors. At C100 later enlargements dismantled most parts of the walls and the niches.[21] The two corridors C200 and C400 are leading from the big entrance hall C to the east. As a consequence of the bad quality of the bedrock, the upper part of C200 collapsed. The lower part is not yet excavated and is still covered by sand flowing in from shaft 2001/5. Because C400 leads to an enlargement carried out in later periods (room E), only some imprints are left in the floor east of the Late Period shaft II. Whether C400 ends there or continues cannot be reconstructed.[22] C300 (l. 3.60 m, w. 1.60 m, h. 1.60 m) is accessible by a smaller entrance passage leading to the west. At the north one can reach room C301, its southern side gives access to rooms C302 and C303, while its western end breaks through into corridor C700. The northern room C301 (l. 4.60 m, w. 3.00 m, h. 1.77 m) is carved out of the bedrock in a very regular way, only the southwest corner seems to be unfinished; some remains of the bedrock

[18] By contrast M.J. Raven suggested that the New Kingdom shaft I is an enlargement of the formerly existing 'archaic' shaft (see M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 98). In fact Second Dynasty tombs, whether royal or private, are accessible by a staircase from the north, which turns sometimes to the east. Usually the entrance to the underground galleries was blocked by a *porticullus*. Influenced by the royal tombs of Djoser, Sekhemkhet etc. in the Third Dynasty a combination of staircase and shaft came in use. Some earlier, very small tombs with just a burial chamber and no further rooms (dated by stone vessels to Khasekhemwy) are known, too (Type IV a (2), G.A. Reisner, *The Development of the Egyptian Tomb Down to the Accession of Cheops* (Cambridge, 1936), 145-146). The replacement of the staircase by a shaft didn't take place before the Fourth Dynasty. Furthermore, the chisel marks inside the shaft are all the same kind of thin, regular marks, inform the New Kingdom. The irregular shelf of rock inside the shaft is another hint for its unfinished working stage.

[19] Unfortunately, the already existing map of the tomb seems to be published (M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), fig. 3) in a wrong scale. The printed scale of the drawing is something about 1:194 instead of 1:150.

[20] M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 97.

[21] See also M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 99.

[22] See also M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 99.

are still left. The upper parts of the northern and eastern walls have collapsed. Because of its western location, C301 most probably functioned as the burial chamber of the Second Dynasty tomb, but its original shape was obviously smaller at that time. Owing to the already mentioned bedrock shelf at the southwest corner, the previous chamber had possibly a corner at that place. In comparison with the burial chamber of the Early Dynastic tomb below Maya and the one at Beit Khallaf, a room with two corners, limiting the space for a coffin, was reconstructed at Fig. 4. C500 runs from entrance hall C to corridor D at the southern end of the tomb. D (l. 10,5 m, w. 65 cm/2.15 m/1.25 m, h. 1.75 m) functions as a large passageway, giving access to ten additional niches. Eight niches are placed at its southern side (D101-D108) and two niches at the east (D201-D202).[23] A breakthrough at its southeast corner leads to crypt (2002/16) of the 5th century B.C.[24] The shape of D is quite unusual: It is not perpendicular, and its main orientation deviates from the intended design, which could be explained with an inaccurate orientation of the ancient workmen. Generally the basic design of the lateral niches is similar, they only differ in the working process, quality and size (from 1.55 m x 70 cm to 50 cm x 65 cm). Most of the niches start at a higher level than that of the bordered corridor level. Further typical hemispherical hollows could be identified in C300, C302, C500, D, C700 and in C900.

Obvious changes to the Early Dynastic tomb date to the New Kingdom (Fig. 4). Probably by chance, Meryneith's main shaft (shaft I) broke into the Early Dynastic tomb. Nevertheless its master-builder tried to cope with that situation and started to modify the tomb. Most likely the slope passage was cut out of the bedrock and C100 with the two niches C101 und C103 were enlarged into the big rectangular room.[25] In addition room C301 has been extended, which caused the destruction of the two niches C102 and C104. With the aim of reusing only the northwestern part instead of the entire tomb, the passageways C100, C700 and room C300 were blocked. By the blockade of C300 a new entrance had to be broken at its western side, leading to C700. Furthermore the small niches (C102, C104-106 and C701-706) have been closed, too. Remains of the blockades are still visible in five of them.[26] As already noted by Raven,[27] the New Kingdom tomb was never finished. One can see that the chiselers did not finalise their work at the lower parts of the shaft and the intended burial chamber C100. Possibly the collapsed walls of the ramp and that between C100 and C301 led to the abandonment of the project. Other changes took place in Late Period, for example the big complex E.[28] It is

[23] By contrast, M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 98, suggested just one niche at the eastern end of corridor B (respectively D). By the remained imprints in the bedrock it becomes obvious that there have been a second one in the southeast corner. The second niche has unintentionally crashed down in Late Period by the work of burial crypt 2002/16. That should be also a reason for the rounded down corner of the Late Period crypt at that place.

[24] M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37, (2001-2002), 97.

[25] See also M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 97.

[26] By contrast M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 98, suggested that the mud brick blockades belong to the original Early Dynastic tomb. In my opinion the blockades were most probably carried out in New Kingdom, with the aim to give the Early Dynastic corridors an acceptable shape. The blocked corridors C100 and C300, the existing of plaster remains on the sidewall of the ramp and the big size of the bricks (35 cm x 17 cm x 11 cm), which was unusual in Early Dynastic times are evidences of that thesis.

[27] M.J Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 97.

[28] As already pointed out by M.J. Raven *JEOL* 37, (2001-2002), 95 (chamber G in the map of *JEOL* 37, Fig. 3 corresponds to chamber E, Fig. 4 in the actual plan). By contrast he supposed that chamber D (respectively C302/C303) could be dated to the Late Period, too. Because of their design, the chisel marks and the hollow in C302, these rooms doubtless belong from my point of view to the original design of the Early Dynastic tomb.

located east of the entrance hall C and reachable by the two corridors C200 and C400 and later shafts, which lead in from above. It is designed as a big room with eight burial niches, two at the south and six at its eastern part. The design of the unexcavated northern part is not clear. In its northwestern corner a big heap of sand flows in through shaft 2001/5. A second shaft (shaft II) runs down at the southwest corner, without any connection to the surface.[29] The whole west wall is perforated by late *loculi*, breaking into room C. The very long thin chisel marks and the design of that burial crypt are very usual in Late Period. Without doubt the whole ensemble E is a Late Period enlargement of the Second Dynasty tomb, while the *loculi* probably were carried out even later. Unfortunately, these later modifications demolished the original corridors C200 and C400.

Special architectural characteristics of the Early Dynastic tomb are the corridors with the niches and the location of the burial chamber west of entrance hall C. The corridors are not aligned to an east-west orientation, rather they more or less frame the room ensemble with the burial chamber. In the following these features will be compared with royal and private tombs of Second and Third Dynasty at Saqqara and Giza.

At the southern part of the royal tomb of Hetepsekhemwy/Raneb a western and an eastern corridor frame the main corridor with its lateral magazines. At these two corridors small magazines are set in line like pearls on a string, comparable to the niches in the tomb under Meryneith. The difference is that in the tomb of Hetepsekhemwy/Raneb the small rooms along the corridors are real rooms for storing supplies, while in the tomb below Meryneith there are only small niches. More similar are the corridors with small niches in the royal tomb of Ninetjer,[30] which are placed in different parts of his tomb, except in the surrounding of the burial chamber. There, a simple corridor on the western side combines the entrance hall with the burial chamber. Other examples for such framing corridors can be found in some private tombs at Saqqara North[31] and in the Covington Mastaba[32] (early Third Dynasty) at Giza. In all these examples, the entrance hall is combined in some way with the burial chamber, by the addition of rooms (S2429 and S2405 Hesire), or by a simple corridor (S2407 and Covington Mastaba).[33] But none of these tombs have small niches. A comparison with the design of Djoser's tomb beneath the pyramid,[34] as Raven did it,[35] seems to be difficult. There certainly are long narrow corridors with joining smaller rooms or rather dead-end corridors, but those are much longer and arranged in an irregular way. These corridors are probably left unfin-

[29] See M.J Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 95.

[30] M.J. Raven dealt with the material of Nintejer's tomb that was published until 2002 (see M.J. Raven *et al*., *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), note 12). At that time the tomb was not yet systematically excavated. Later excavations, carried out by the German Archeological Institute (see note 10), showed the existence of a 25 m long ramp, leading in from the north. The so-called entrance-shaft is actually one of the *porticulli*-shafts, used for lowing down the stoneblock. The *porticulli* are still *in situ*. The whole tomb of Nintejer has a length of 77 m and a width of 50.5 m.

[31] See tombs S2429 (2nd Dynasty), S2407 (early Third Dynasty) in: J.E. Quibell, *Archaic Mastabas* (1923), pl. 30 and S2405 Hesire (middle Third Dynasty) in: J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1911-1912), The Tomb of Hesy* (Cairo, 1913), pl. 1.

[32] L.D. Covington, *Mastaba Mount Excavation, ASAE* 6 (Cairo, 1905) 193-218, Fig. 5; W.M.F. Petrie, *Giseh and Rifeh, BSAE 13th Year* (London, 1907), 1-9, Fig. 2; G. T. Martin, Covington's Tomb and related early monuments at Giza, *OrMonsp* IX (Festschrift Lauer) (Montpelier, 1997), 279-288.

[33] In case of the Covington's Mastaba the burial chamber lies on a deeper level that means the corridor is a dead-end one.

[34] J.-Ph. Lauer, *La pyramide à degrés, l'architecture*, Tome II (Le Caire, 1936), pl. 15.

[35] See M.J. Raven *et al*. *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 100.

ished, so we are not dealing with the final design. In addition, the entrance hall does not exist at all; the burial chamber is placed at the centre and the corridors running directly from the burial chamber in all directions. That is not the case in the other tombs. Djoser's magazines are probably placed under his western and northern mastabas, separated from the burial chamber. More similar are the corridors with the small rooms in the royal tomb of Sekhemkhet[36] and in the pyramid at Zawiyet el-Aryan,[37] as Raven already mentioned.[38] There one can see U-shaped corridors framing the northern part of the tomb. The joining small rooms are stringed in a very regular way and seem to represent the same function as those in the tomb below Meryneith. In contrast, the niches-corridors under the pyramids are on a much higher level, reached by the staircase.

To conclude, the best parallel to the niche-corridors comes from the tomb of Ninetjer. There, the small rooms have been interpreted as a kind of model-magazines, where only the entrances represent the whole,[39] while at the tomb of Hetepsekhemwy/Raneb full magazines are carved out of the bedrock. In the private tombs at Saqqara North and Giza the tradition of large storage rooms still seems to be current up to the Third Dynasty. Maybe the vicinity to the royal necropolis could be a reason for the adoption. Otherwise it is possible that only very high officials or members of the royal family were allowed to be buried in the vicinity of the royal necropolis. This fact could lead to a mixture of royal and private or an earlier adoption of elements of royal tomb architecture.

A study of the pottery (A. Hood)

The 2009 season saw the commencement of a systematic study of the ceramic material excavated from the Early Dynastic substructures below the New Kingdom tombs of Maya and Meryneith.[40] The following section provides preliminary findings, introduces several diagnostic types present in the assemblages and proposes a tentative analysis of the nature of this material.[41]

Two objectives were made and met for the preliminary examination of the ceramic material. Firstly, the Early Dynastic ceramics recovered from the 2009 'Maya' excavations were recorded, processed and analysed together with those excavated during the 2008 season. Secondly, the 2009 material from the 'Meryneith' excavations was examined and processed in conjunction with the previously examined Early Dynastic ceramics from the 2001-2003 excavations.

As previously discussed, the nature of the archaeology in the Early Dynastic substructures below Meryneith and Maya was badly disturbed, negatively impacting upon preservation of the material culture. Such contamination is evident in the ceramic assemblage with material

[36] M.Z. Goneim, *Excavations at Saqqara, Horus Sekhem-Khet, The unfinished Step Pyramide at Saqqara* (Cairo 1957), pl. 3.

[37] G.A. Reisner, C.S. Fischer, The work of the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts Egyptian Expedition, *BMFA* 9 (1911) 54-59; G.A. Reisner, *Development* (1936) Fig. 57.

[38] M.J. Raven *et al*. *JEOL* 37 (2001-2002), 100.

[39] C. Lacher, *Egypt at its Origins 3* (Leuven, forthcoming).

[40] This was carried out by the present author with the assistance of Dr Ilona Regulski, Mr Paul van Pelt and Mr Vincent Oeters. The author would also like to thank Dr Kim Duistermaat for providing her with a preliminary ceramic assessment of the 2008 season.

[41] A final publication of this material is forthcoming.

dating from the Early Dynastic Period, the Old Kingdom, the New Kingdom, the Late Period and from Late Antiquity. Indeed, the quantity of verified Early Dynastic material was relatively small in contrast to Late Period and Late Antique material. Nevertheless, the remaining Early Dynastic ceramics are diagnostic with types present being identifiable and comparable to other assemblages of this period.

The tomb of Maya

During the 2008 and 2009 seasons, Chambers A and B of the Early Dynastic substructure below the tomb of Maya were examined. Chamber B yielded very little Early Dynastic material, with fragments of Type 4 wavy surface ovoid storage jars/ 'beer' jars being the only identifiable Early Dynastic remains.[42] Chamber B also produced a Meydum bowl fragment (Fig. 6), which although 'early' in character is not necessarily contemporary with the Early Dynastic assemblage.

In contrast, Chamber A provided a substantial quantity of Early Dynastic material. Typically diagnostic later Second Dynasty ceramic types were recovered, in particular the Type 4 wavy surface 'beer' jar with direct or collar rims (Figs. 7 and 8). 'Torpedo' elongated storage jar/'wine' jar fragments were present (Fig. 9) as well as a significant number of marl 'storage' vessels with restricted necks and grooved shoulders (Figs. 10 and 11).[43] Also present was a type seemingly comparable to a vessel from the tomb of Khasekhemwy — a restricted neck ovoid marl storage jar (Fig. 12).[44] Finally, a burnished, red slipped deep bowl with a direct rim was found (Fig. 13).

The Early Dynastic ceramic material from 'Maya' is characteristic of a late Second Dynasty context, with parallels known from the royal tombs of Peribsen and Khasekhemwy at Umm el-Qa'ab/Abydos, and from Helwan, Operations 3 and 4.[45] The occurrence of well defined forms such as the Type 4 'beer' jars, 'torpedo' elongated storage jars and marl 'storage' vessels confirm this.

The tomb of Meryneith

Of the material excavated from the substructure below Meryneith, Layer CIV contained the most abundant remains of Early Dynastic culture. In contrast, Layers CIII and EII and Shaft

---

[42] The Type 4 'beer' jar designation here follows E.C. Köhler and J. Smythe's proposed typological sequence of 'beer' jars in E.C. Köhler and J. Smythe, Early Dynastic Pottery from Helwan – Establishing a Ceramic Corpus of the Naqada III Period, *CCE 7* (2004), 133-134.

[43] The term 'torpedo' wine jar has been used by several authors (i.e. S. Hendrickx, Predynastic – Early Dynastic Chronology, in E. Hornung *et al*. (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology* (Leiden, 2006), 87; J. Smythe, New Results From a Second Storage Tomb at Helwan. Implications for the Naqada III Period in the Memphite Region, in B. Midant-Reynes and Y. Tristant (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 2* (Leuven, 2008), 156-157) to distinguish the latest form identified to date in the elongated storage jar/'wine' jar typology, discussed by Smythe *ibid*. and Köhler and Smythe *op. cit.,* 130 as having a vessel index of greater than 3.5.

[44] E. Engel, Abydos. Umm el-Qa'ab, Grab des Chasechemui, *BCE 20* (1997), 26 and Abb. 1.

[45] R. Hartmann, Grab des Peribsen: Funde, in G.Dreyer *et al*., Umm el-Qaab – Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen königsfriedhof, *MDAIK* 62 (2006); Engel, *op. cit*.; E.C. Köhler, On the Origins of Memphis – The New Excavations in the Early Dynastic Necropolis at Helwan, in S. Hendrickx *et. al*. (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins* (Leuven, 2004); Köhler and Smythe, *op. cit.;* Smythe, *op. cit*.; A. Hood, *The Ceramic Assemblage of the Naqada IIID Period* (Unpublished Honours Thesis, Macquarie University, 2007), 59; the author's personal observations at Helwan.

B only contained Type 4 'beer' jar fragments, while Layers EI, CI and CII contained no Early Dynastic ceramics. In Layer CIV, again the most frequent Early Dynastic type present was the Type 4 'beer' jar. While the majority of these fragments were body or base sherds, several rims were recovered — of both the direct and collared variety. Several marl clay body fragments were present, likely belonging to 'wine' jars. One 'wine' jar rim sherd displayed a potmark (Fig. 14) and in form is comparable to those recently excavated from the tomb of Peribsen at Abydos.[46] Also present were fragments of small Nile silt 'votive' dishes, which appeared frequently in the material recovered from the 2001-2003 excavations. These small dishes seem to be increasingly common in the ceramic assemblage of the later Second Dynasty (although this statement is in need of further clarification and examination). Another fragment similar to that of SAK2008 AVII-3 beneath the Tomb of Maya (seen in Fig. 12) was also present in the 'Meryneith' assemblage (Fig. 15). Remains of a dish with a direct square rim were present, possibly similar to that seen in the tomb of Peribsen,[47] although the state of preservation was too fragmentary to allow for sufficient comparison.

When considered in isolation, the Early Dynastic ceramic material from below Meryneith (excavated during the 2009 season) is limited. However, when examined in conjunction with the material recorded in the 2001-2003 seasons, which the present author was able to examine, it is clear that a probable date for the Early Dynastic occupation, based upon the ceramic material, would be of the late Second Dynasty from around the time of Peribsen or Khasekhmwy or perhaps slightly later.[48]

While the preceding remarks are a preliminary presentation of diagnostic ceramic types, it is clear that the excavations beneath the New Kingdom tombs of Meryneith and Maya have produced significant ceramic material for the study of the late Second Dynasty (late Naqada IIID?[49]) ceramic assemblage. This material has the possibility of adding to an ever-increasing ceramic corpus for the late Early Dynastic Period.

Descriptions accompanying Figures[50]

Fig. 6:
SAK 2008 – BI-1. Meydum bowl rim fragment.
Fine marl clay, high transverse strength. Red-grey-red fracture. Inclusions of fine sand, sand, limestone, mica, chaff and grit. Exterior surface polished with turning marks on rim, red slip. Interior surface polished with some turning marks present on rim, red slip. 10R 5/6. H: 2.9cm, RØ: 19cm (10.5%).

---

[46] Hartmann, *op. cit.,* Abb. 14 f-g.

[47] *ibid*., Abb. 14 a.

[48] The Early Dynastic ceramic material recorded from beneath the tomb of Meryneith between 2001 and 2003 will be published in collaboration with A. Dunsmore in a forthcoming publication.

[49] The possibility of still speaking of 'Naqada IIID' at this stage in the archaeological record continues to be discussed (i.e. Köhler and Smythe, *op. cit.,* p. 136; Hendrickx, *op. cit.,* p. 87-88; Hendrickx quoted in Köhler and Smythe, *op. cit.,* p. 136 (footnote 48); Hood, *op. cit.,* p. 66-67). It is hoped that this issue will be examined further in the forthcoming volume *Archéo-Nil* 21 (to be edited by E.C. Köhler), resulting from the 'Chronology Workshop' at the *Egypt at its Origins 3* conference (London, 2008).

[50] When inclusions are discussed in the following descriptions to accompany the figures, it should be understood that often a distinction is made to denote 'fine' or 'coarse' inclusions of the same type. The designation of 'fine' or 'coarse' is dependent upon the fabric of each individual sherd/vessel.

Fig. 7:
SAK 2008 – 603. Archaeologically complete Type 4 'beer' jar with direct rim.
Medium Nile silt clay, medium-low transverse strength. Light brown fracture. Inclusions of sand, fine sand, chaff, fine chaff, grit, mica and limestone. Exterior surface is roughly smoothed with turning marks around the rim. Interior surface is wet-smoothed with turning marks. 7.5YR 4/6. H: 27cm, RØ: 10-11cm (30%).

Fig. 8:
SAK 2008 – AII-5. Type 4 collared 'beer' jar fragment.
Medium Nile silt clay, medium-high transverse strength. Light brown fracture. Inclusions of sand, fine sand, chaff, fine chaff, grit, mica, limestone, organic and quartz. Exterior surface is rough smoothed with turning marks on rim. Interior surface rough smoothed with turning marks. 7.5YR 5/4. H: 5cm, RØ 9cm (16%).

Fig. 9:
SAK 2008 – 608 A and B. 'Wine' jar rim and base fragment.
Medium marl clay, medium transverse strength. Red-grey-red fracture. Inclusions of limestone, fine limestone, sand, fine sand, grit and mica. Exterior surface vertically scraped with turning marks around rim. Potmark and band decoration around shoulder and near base. Interior surface wet smoothed with turning marks around rim. A) H: 41.15cm, RØ:9.1cm. B) H: 9.5cm, Ø (above band decoration): 7cm (c.30%).

Fig. 10:
SAK 2008 – AIV-3. Marl storage jar fragment.
Medium marl clay, medium transverse strength. Light brown fracture. Inclusions of sand, fine sand, limestone, chaff, grit and mica. Exterior surface is smoothed, turning marks around the rim. Some diagonal scrap marks present. Interior surface is wet smoothed with turning marks around rim but most of the interior surface is eroded. 10YR 7-6/3. H: 20.2cm, RØ: 9cm (20%).

Fig. 11:
SAK 2008 – AVII-2. Marl storage jar fragment.
Medium marl clay, low transverse strength. Light red fracture. Inclusions of coarse limestone, limestone, sand, fine sand, chaff/dung and mica. Exterior surface is wet smoothed with many turning marks around rim and neck. Interior surface is wet smoothed with turning marks on rim. 2.5YR 5/4-6. H: 5cm, IRØ: 10cm (65%).

Fig. 12:
SAK 2008 – AVII-3. Marl storage jar fragment.
Medium-coarse marl clay, medium transverse strength. Red-brown fracture. Inclusions of sand, fine sand, limestone, fine limestone, mica, grit and chaff. Exterior surface is wet smoothed with turning marks from rim to shoulder and rough vertical smoothing marks on body. Interior surface is wet smoothed with turning marks and two prominent vertical scrap marks on body. 10YR 6/4. H: 12.4cm (drawn at 11.8cm), IRØ: 9cm (22.5%).

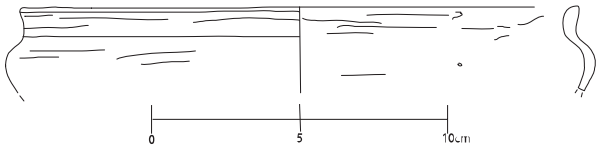

Fig. 6. SAK 2008-BI-1

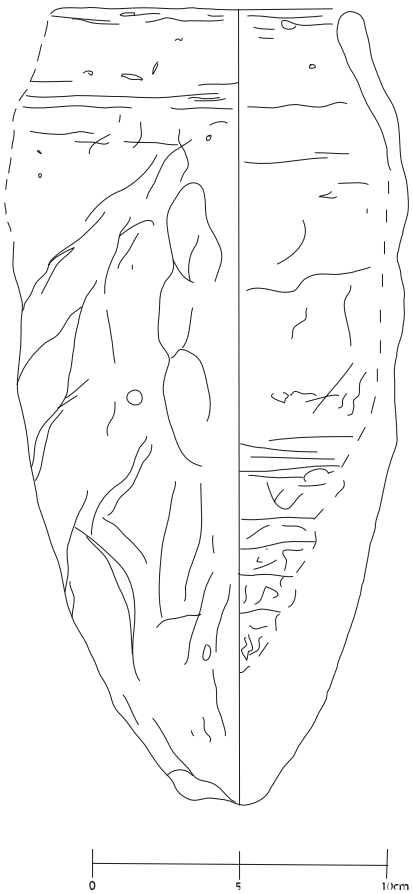

Fig. 7. SAK 2008-603

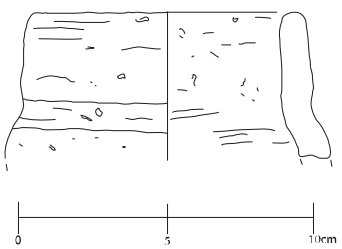

Fig. 8. SAK 2008-AII-5

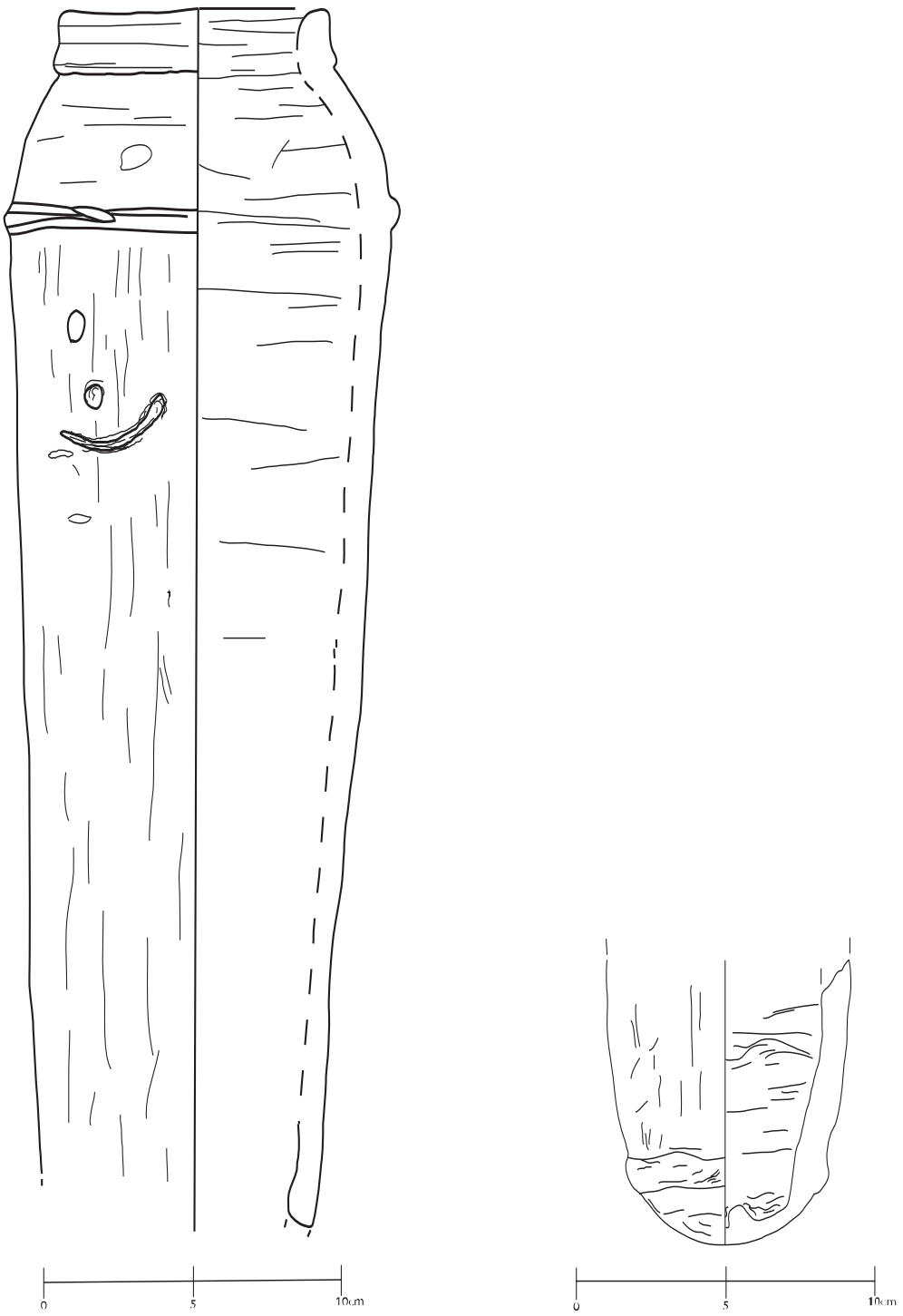

Fig. 9. SAK 2008-608 A & B

Fig. 10. SAK 2008-AIV-3

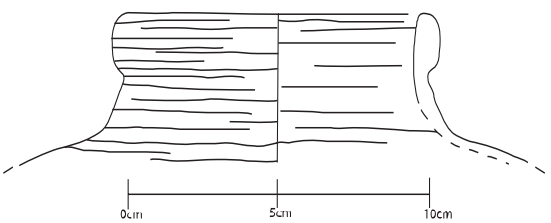

Fig. 11. SAK 2008-AVII-2

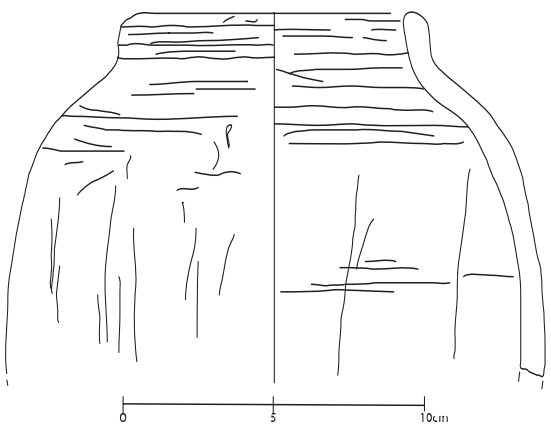

Fig. 12. SAK 2008-AVII-3

Fig. 13:
SAK 2008 – AII-2 + AIX-6. Burnished bowl fragment.
Medium Nile silt clay, medium transverse strength. Brown-red-purple-red-brown fracture. Inclusions of chaff, sand, fine sand, organic, grit and mica. Exterior surface is wet smoothed with turning marks, red slip. Interior surface is red slipped with horizontal and vertical burnishing and is wet smoothed. Clay body: 5YR 5/6. Red slip: 10R 4/8. H: 9.1cm, RØ: 19cm (35%).

Fig. 14:
SAK 2009 – CIV-13. 'Wine' jar fragment.
Medium marl clay, medium transverse strength. Red — grey-brown — red fracture. Inclusions of limestone, sand, coarse sand, grit and mica. Interior surface is wet smoothed with turning marks around rim. Exterior surface has rolled rim, band decoration and pot mark. Turning marks on rim to shoulder. Vertical scraping marks on body. 10YR 6/2-3. H: 13.1cm, RØ: 11cm (c.15%).

Fig. 15:
SAK 2009 – CIV-3. Marl storage jar fragment.
Medium marl clay. Inclusions of sand, fine sand, limestone, organic, grit, mica and fine grey particles. Exterior surface is scraped with turning marks on rim to shoulder, red slip. Interior is wet smoothed with working marks. Clay body: 5YR 5/4, Red Slip: 2.5YR 5/6. H: 13.1cm, RØ: 10cm (10%).

A study of the stone vessels (I. Regulski)

The Early Dynastic period is by far the richest period in Egyptian history in terms of the manufacture of stone vessels. In our context, stone vessel fragments form the largest group of material. A total of 308 diagnostic fragments were assembled, yielding a large variety of types and materials. The underground discoveries were complemented by sporadic finds immediately below the desert surface at different parts of the site.

The tomb of Maya

Of the 185 fragments that could be attributed to the Early Dynastic tomb of Maya, the majority (171) was found in the main chamber (A). In addition, shaft 2009/9, as well as the other subterranean chambers and corridors below the tombs of Maya provided the remaining number of fragments. The corpus reflects an ascendancy of open forms; more than 2/3 consists of bowls (130) with an average diameter of 19.4cm. A considerable number of small, squat calcite jars (34) and 5 dummy vessels were uncovered from this tomb. Only 4 fragments of plates and many pieces of one large offering plate were unearthed. One jar lid was found. A total of 47 complete profiles could be reconstructed. The remaining fragments are rims and bases in an order of magnitude of 75%-25%.

Among the stones worked into vessels were calcite-alabaster (often with limestone inclusions), breccia, diorite, dolomite, limestone (indurated and crystallized), quartzite, siltstone, and anorthosite gneiss.[51] Fig. 29 shows that calcite-alabaster was the most popular kind of

[51] B.G. Aston, *Ancient Egyptian Stone Vessels. Materials and Forms*, SAGA 5 (Heidelberg, 1994); L. Bavay, La pierre et le pouvoir dans l'Egypte prépharaonique et des premières dynasties, in Karlshausen, C. & De Putter,

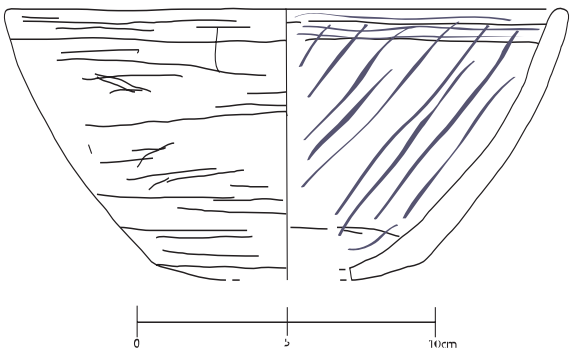

Fig. 13. SAK 2008-AII-2+AIX-6

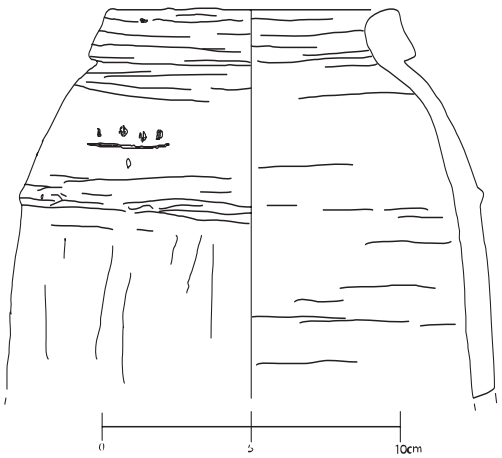

Fig. 14. SAK 2009-CIV-13

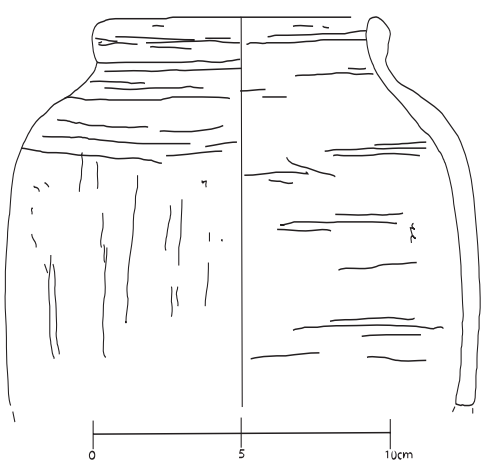

Fig. 15. SAK 2009-CIV-3

stone, followed by breccia. We can also observe the largest variety of stones among bowls, but this can perhaps be explained by the biased preservation of evidence; bowls being the most frequent type of vessel discovered so far. Jars and plates were exclusively executed in calcite-alabaster and limestone. Three of the dummy vessels were made of the latter material whereas two were made of calcite-alabaster. Quartzite and dolomites are only attested by non diagnostic body sherds and are therefore not represented in Fig. 29.

The tomb of Meryneith

The second largest group of stone vessel fragments was already discovered during the 2001-2002 season in the tomb of Meryneith (92 out of the total 119) although only 18 fragments received a number during the season. The remaining 74 were numbered during the 2009 season. In addition, our recent clearings of the lowest layers of the debris in the northern part of Chamber C and the 2009 excavations of shaft 2002/16 again yielded some stone vessel fragments (29). Interestingly, some of the latter could be joined to pieces that were previously discovered by the Dutch expedition.

The ascendancy of open forms is even clearer here then in the tomb of Maya with 91 bowl fragments showing an average diameter of 23.5cm. A considerable number of small, squat calcite jars (22) and no less then 72 dummy vessels were uncovered. Only 4 fragments of plates and pieces of one large offering plate were unearthed. One sherd was reused later as digging tool. A total of 84 complete profiles could be reconstructed due to the large number of dummy vessels that were found in this tomb. As was the case for the Maya tomb, the remaining fragments are rims and bases in an order of magnitude of 75%-25%. Likewise, almost the same hard material was worked into vessels; calcite-alabaster (often with limestone inclusions), breccia, diorite, limestone (indurated and crystallized), siltstone, basalt, and gneiss.[52] The additional presence of basalt in this tomb is probably a result of negative evidence and does not bear any major significance. Fig. 30 shows again that calcite-alabaster was the most popular kind of stone, in the case of Meryneith followed by limestone. We can also observe the largest variety of stones among bowls although jars show a wider variety of different stones when compared to Meryneith. All dummy vessels were, however, executed in limestone. Plates were exclusively made out of calcite-alabaster.

Dating stone vessels more precisely within the Early Dynastic period remains difficult, due to the lack of substantially published parallels from well-dated contexts, and consequently, the absence of any general typology. However, the large number of dummy vessels could be significant. Dummy vessels of cylindrical shape appear occasionally at the end of the First Dynasty but become more common during the Second Dynasty, heralding their mass-production in the Old Kingdom.[53] In addition, the overwhelming number of bowls when compared

---

T. (éds.), *Pierres égyptiennes… Chefs-d'œuvre pour l'éternite* (Mons, 2000), 63-67; D.A. Stocks, *Experiments in Egyptian Archaeology. Stoneworking technology in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2003), 17.

[52] B.G. Aston, *Ancient Egyptian Stone Vessels. Materials and Forms*, SAGA 5 (Heidelberg, 1994); L. Bavay, La pierre et le pouvoir dans l'Egypte prépharaonique et des premières dynasties, in Karlshausen, C. & De Putter, T. (éds.), *Pierres égyptiennes… Chefs-d'œuvre pour l'éternite* (Mons, 2000), 63-67; D.A. Stocks, *Experiments in Egyptian Archaeology. Stoneworking technology in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2003), 17.

[53] A. el-Khouli, *Egyptian Stone Vessels. Predynastic Period to Dynasty III. Typology and Analysis* II (Mainz am Rhein, 1978), 770.

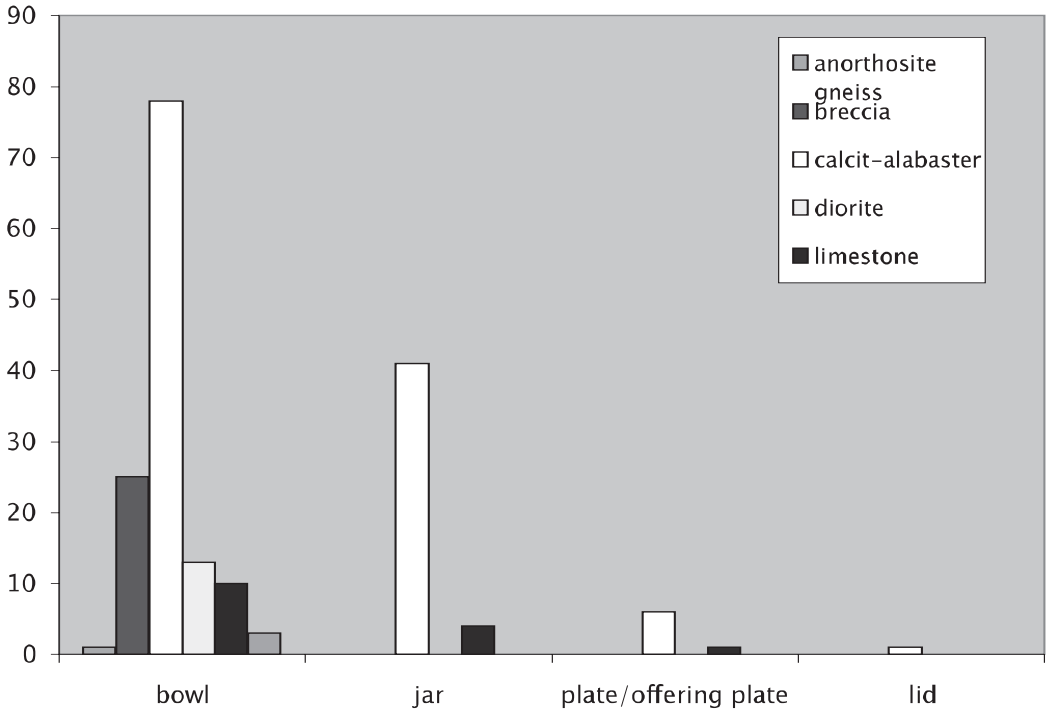

Fig. 29. Types of vessels from the tomb of Maya in combination with materials used

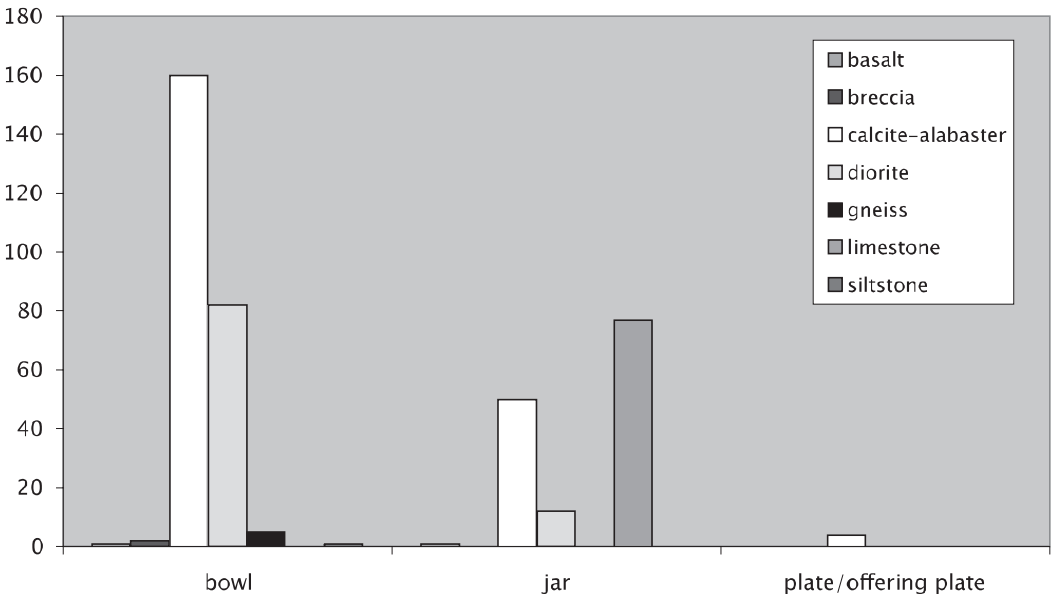

Fig. 30. Types of vessels from the tomb of Meryneith in combination with materials used

Fig. 31.

to more closed forms could also be a reflection of a tendency towards more open forms throughout the First and Second Dynasties.[54]

Fortunately, two calcite bowl fragments carried an inscription, written in black ink on the interior of the vessel (Fig. 31). Both probably yield a personal name. Although a definite reading cannot yet be presented, the writing style closely resemblances the palaeography of the ink inscriptions discovered by Lacau and Lauer below the Djoser pyramid.[55] Most of these ink inscriptions have recently been dated to the end of the Second dynasty.[56] A late Second dynasty date has already been suggested for our contexts on the basis of pottery analysis (see Hood in this article) and the seal impression bearing the name of Khasekhemwy.[57] In combination with the more reliable pottery and the inscribed evidence, the prevalence of calcite-alabaster and limestone as raw material could perhaps also be a chronological indicator.

[54] S. Hendrickx, S. Bielen, & P. De Paepe, Excavating in the Museum: The Stone Vessel Fragments from the royal Tombs at Umm el-Qaab in the Egyptian Collection of the Royal Museums for Art and History at Brussels, *MDAIK* 57 (2001), 88.

[55] P. Lacau & J.-P. Lauer, *La pyramide à degrés. Tome V. Inscriptions à l'encre sur les vases.* Fouilles à Saqqarah (Le Caire, 1965).

[56] I. Regulski, 2nd Dynasty Ink Inscriptions from Saqqara paralleled in the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, in: S. Hendrickx, R.F. Friedman, K.M. Cialowicz & M. Chlodnicki (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins. Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams.* OLA 138 (Leuven, 2004), 950-970.

[57] Raven *et al.*, *JEOL* 41 (2008-2009), 21, fig. 14.

Although the technique of manufacturing stone vessels continued to be important, their number decreased considerably towards the end of the Old Kingdom, with most of the harder stones going out of use.[58] Calcite-alabaster lies near to the boundary dividing soft from hard stone. Given the need for stone tools to cut and incise them, calcite-alabaster falls on the harder side of this boundary. Limestone and steatite are categorized as soft stone. Is the predominance of these 'softer' stones in our repertoire a result of negative evidence or does it already reflect a more large-scale production, which starts at the end of the First Dynasty, and the subsequent decline of stone vessels manufacture at the end of the Early Dynastic period? The large number of dummy vessels could support this idea.

The following description lists a few typical examples, which can be considered representative of the whole corpus:[59]

Fig. 16: SAK 2008-401/14, 411/8, 415/10, 447/4
Diorite bowl with indirect internal angular rim, convex walls, and narrow 'countersunk' base, indicated on the interior by drilling traces.
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya; A I (02-02-2008)
H 7.9, IRØ: 16

Fig. 17: SAK 2008-446/7, 401/6, 404/25-26, 409/24, 454/3
Calcit-alabaster bowl with indirect internal angular rim, convex walls and narrow, slightly rounded base.
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya; A VIII (07-02-2008)
H: 7.7, IRØ: 22

Fig. 18: SAK 2002-139
Calcit-alabaster bowl with indirect internal angular rim, convex walls, and slightly interior thickening just below the rim.
Provenance: ED tomb below Meryneith; C, surface north of forecourt (3 fragments, rejoined, 30-01-2002)
H: 10, IRØ: 26

Fig. 19: SAK 2008-415/1, 454/2, 473/2
Calcit-alabaster bowl with direct rim, convex walls, and drilling traces at the narrow base. The thickness of the profile increases near the rim.
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya; A IV (05-02-2008)
H: 7.5, IRØ: 20

Fig. 20: SAK 2008-432/1
Calcit-alabaster bowl with direct rim, slightly convex walls, drilling traces at undercut base
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya. A VII (06-02-2008)
H: 13, IRØ: 17.6

[58] De Putter *et al*., in *Pierres égyptiennes*, 59. The drawings were inked by Pieter Collet.
[59] The drawings were made by the author except for SAK 2002-13, which was drawn by Amber Hood (25-2-09).

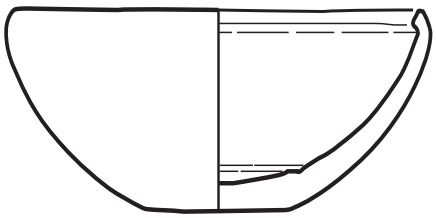

Fig. 16. SAK 2008-401/14
411/8, 415/10, 447/4

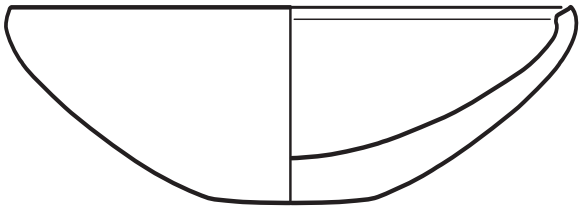

Fig. 17. SAK 2008-446/7, 401/6
404/26, 409/24-25, 454/3

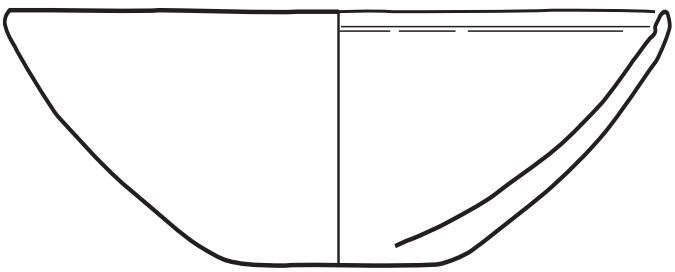

Fig. 18. SAK 2002-139

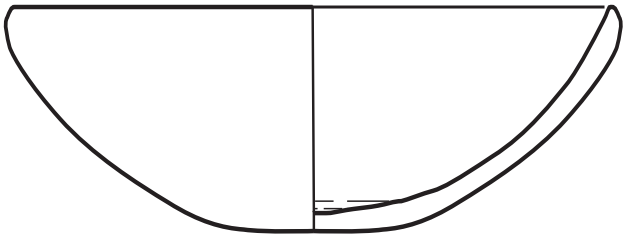

Fig. 19. SAK 2008-415/1, 454/2, 473/2

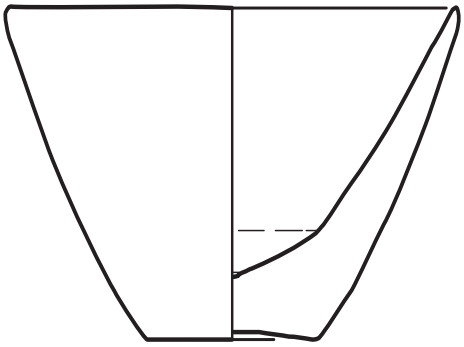

Fig. 20. SAK 2008-432/1

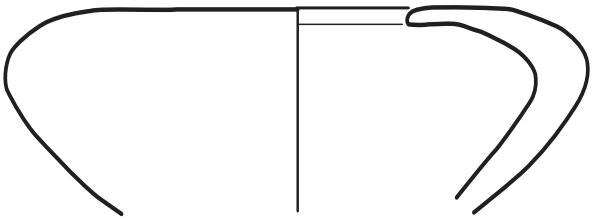

Fig. 21. SAK 2008-411/2-3
409/7, 415/5, 415/24

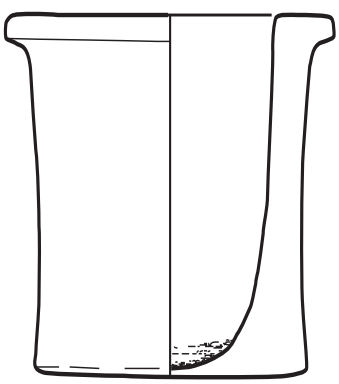

Fig. 22. SAK 2002-65

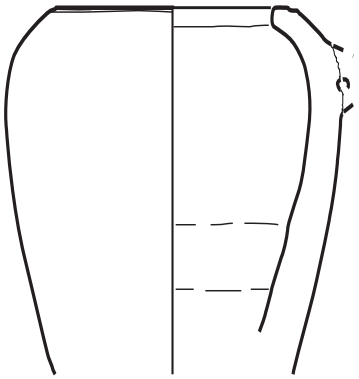

Fig. 23. SAK 2002-125

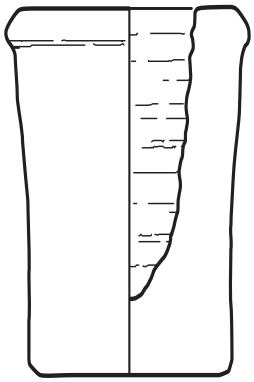

Fig. 24. SAK 2008-484

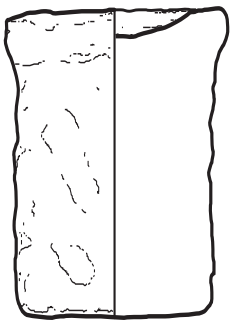

Fig. 25. SAK 2002-13

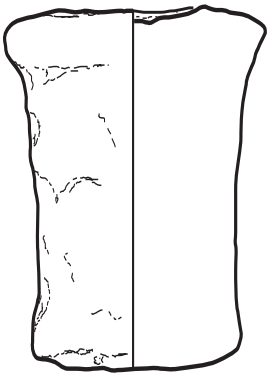

Fig. 26. SAK 2002-29

Fig. 27. SAK 2009-701

Fig. 28. SAK 2009-698

Fig. 21: SAK 2008-411/2-3, 409/7, 415/5, 415/24
Bowl made of indurated limestone with internal direct rim, and convex walls. Base is not preserved. Remains of white substance visible.
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya; A III (03-02-2008)
H: 8, IRØ: 9

Fig. 22: SAK 2002-65
Calcit-alabaster cylindrical jar with external straight edged rim, slightly concave walls, and very thin flat base with drilling traces.
Provenance: ED tomb below Meryneith. Gallery C700 niche 3 (2 fragments, rejoined, 2002)
H: 13.8, IRØ: 12

Fig. 23: SAK 2002-125
Diorite jar with convex walls and steep shoulder, converging to very low neck with flat ledge around, and double direct rim; one remaining vertical lug handle or some kind of decoration. Base not preserved.
Provenance: ED tomb below Meryneith; E and surface south of tomb (2 fragments rejoined, 2002).
H: 14.0, IRØ: 9

Fig. 24: SAK 2008-484
Calcit-alabaster cylindrical jar with external rounded rim, walls extending toward rim, flat base, regular drilling traces on the interior and a relatively smooth outer surface.
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya; A IX (09-02-2008)
H: 14, IRØ: 8

Fig. 25: SAK 2002-13
Limestone dummy vessel with external round rim, flat topped with concentric groove underneath and shallow recess, with straight slightly flaring walls, and flat base. All faces roughly worked with visible tool-marks.
Provenance: ED tomb below Maya; A (2002)
H: 11.7, IRØ: 8.3

Fig. 26: SAK 2002-29
Limestone dummy vessel with external round rim, flat topped with concentric groove underneath and shallow recess, with concave slightly flaring walls, and flat base. All faces roughly worked with visible tool-marks
Provenance: ED tomb below Meryneith (2002)
H: 13.7, IRØ: 9.2

Fig. 27: SAK 2009-701
Rim fragment of a limestone offering plate, disc-shaped and rounded edge, and concave sided. A pedestal or base cannot be reconstructed.
Provenance: ED tomb below Meryneith. CIV (22-02-2009)
H: 2.4, IRØ: 38

Fig. 28: SAK 2009-698
Calcit-alabaster offering table, disc-shaped with smooth transition to cylindrical stand and rounded edge.
Provenance: ED tomb below Meryneith; CIV, surface south of tomb, Chamber C, Chamber E near loculus b, and unknown (10 fragments, 04-02-2002 and 22-02-2009).
H: 1.4, IRØ: 36

Conclusion (I. Regulski)

Pottery analysis, architectural features and other finds indicate that the two Early Dynastic substructures below the tombs of Maya and Meryneith are partly contemporary and can be dated to the end of the Second Dynasty. The discovery of the royal name of Khasekhemwy is significant, not only for dating purposes, but also for reconstructing the social status of the tomb owners. Since his royal tomb is identified with certainty at Umm el-Qa'ab/Abydos, our tombs probably belong to high officials or even members of the royal family. This discovery raises interesting questions regarding the nature of this part of the Saqqara necropolis, and particularly its relation to the elite cemetery in the north. As Köhler recently pointed out, Early Dynastic society at Memphis was already highly structured and complex, and mortuary data suggest that there were a number of discrete social strata.[60] We may assume that the cemetery at South Saqqara represents a different social stratum than its northern counterpart given the obvious continuation of the latter into the Third Dynasty.

[60] E.C. Köhler, Early Dynastic Society at Memphis, in: E.M. Engel, V. Müller & U. Hartung (eds.), *Zeichen aus dem Sand. Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte zu Ehren von Günter* Dreyer, MENES 5 (Wiesbaden, 2008), 398.