

BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae 3

Texte und Denkmäler des ägyptischen Alten Reiches, herausgegeben
von Stephan J. Seidlmayer

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ACHET  VERLAG
Dr. NORBERT DÜRRING
BERLIN

2005

Herausgegeben von der Arbeitsstelle Altägyptisches Wörterbuch der
Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Texte und Denkmäler des ägyptischen Alten Reiches,
herausgegeben von Stephan J. Seidlmayer, Berlin:
Achet-Verlag 2005 (Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae; Band 3)
ISBN 3-933684-20-x
NE: Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae / 3

ISBN 3-933684-20-x

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VORWORT

Dieser Band geht auf eine Konferenz zurück, die die Arbeitsstelle Altägyptisches Wörterbuch an der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften im Februar 2001 in der Tagungsstätte der Akademie in Schloß Blankensee bei Berlin ausgerichtet hat. Der Hermann und Elise geborene Heckmann Wentzel-Stiftung gilt unser Dank für eine Zuwendung, die diese Veranstaltung erst ermöglicht hat. Der Leiterin der Tagungsstelle, Frau Freia Hartung, und ihren Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern, die die Tage im malerisch verschneiten Schloß zu einem unvergeßlichen Erlebnis des konzentrierten Austauschs werden ließen, wissen wir uns herzlich verbunden. Ebenso gilt unser Dank den angereisten Gästen wie allen Berliner Kollegen, Studierenden und Freunden, die vielfältig zum herzlichen und produktiven Charakter dieses Zusammenseins beigetragen haben.

Gegenstand der Tagung sollten die Texte und die Sprache des Alten Reiches sein. Hier zeigte sich in den Vorträgen, die im Rahmen der Konferenz präsentiert wurden und in den sich anschließenden Gesprächen einmal mehr, in welchem Maß dieses Forschungsgebiet durch den laufenden Zugewinn neuen Materials entscheidend geprägt wird. Die Verschränkung der Textzeugnisse mit archäologischen Kontexten, ihre Einbindung in ikonographische und epigraphische Zusammenhänge als Grundvoraussetzung ihres angemessenen Verstehens bildete denn auch ein Leitmotiv zahlreicher Projekte, über die berichtet wurde. Darin zeigt sich exemplarisch die charakteristische Situation gerade der altägyptischen Überlieferung, der sich auch jede systematische Erfassung und Erschließung des Textguts stellen muß.

Für den vorliegenden Band wurden die Beiträge der Konferenz teils wesentlich erweitert und aktualisiert. Den Autoren ist zu danken, daß sie sich der Mühe unterzogen haben, ihre Präsentation auch in schriftlich ausgearbeiteter Form vorzulegen. Die redaktionelle Bearbeitung wurde durch Angela Böhme übernommen und mit der gewohnten Sorgfalt durchgeführt. Doris Topmann ist für Hilfe bei den Korrekturen zu danken. Die Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften hat die Herausgabe des Bandes bis in die Drucklegung unterstützt. Um die verlegerische Betreuung hat sich Dr. Norbert Düring verdient gemacht. Ihnen allen sei auch an dieser Stelle herzlich gedankt.

Berlin, im August 2005

Stephan Johannes Seidlmayer

THE TRANSITIONAL TYPE OF TOMB
AT SAQQARA NORTH AND ABUSIR SOUTH

MIROSLAV BÁRTA

I. Introduction

Until recently, the area of Abusir South was outside the interest of most archaeologists. The first explorer of what later became the southernmost part of the Czech concession at Abusir, was KARL RICHARD LEPSIUS who worked there for a short period during his expedition to Egypt (1842–1845).¹ Subsequently, Abusir South continued to be ignored even after the extensive excavations of AUGUSTE MARIETTE at Saqqara in an area lying close by; the site simply was not considered to be of interest from the archaeological point of view, as the map of the Memphite necropolis published by JACQUES DE MORGAN shows (Fig. 1).²

Today, the boundaries of the “subsite” known as Abusir South are formed by a deep wadi (known as *Wadi Abusiri* by the local inhabitants) to the south and to the east by the same wadi running northward and by the local village and cemetery of Abusir lying north of the plateau of North Saqqara (Pl. Ia). The low plain of the western desert defines its western frontier, whereas the pyramid necropolis at Abusir (with the pyramid complex of Neferefra and Pyramid LEPSIUS No. LXXV) may be considered its northern limit.³

The first scientific exploration of the area started in 1989 when the Inspectorate of the Saqqara Zone of Antiquities rescued several blocks with reliefs from the looted tomb chapel of Kaaper. The Czech (then Czechoslovak) Institute of Egyptology undertook a rescue excavation in autumn 1991 in order to document the condition of the tomb and to conserve it in its current state. That same year the institute also began excavating the tomb of Fetekty and the cemetery around it.⁴

¹ The abbreviations used throughout the footnotes conform to the rules of *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (eds. W. HELCK, E. OTTO and W. WESTENDORF, Wiesbaden 1975–1992). LD I, 1975, pl. 32; no. 1 – tomb of Fetekty, 2 – an ox burial on the same mound as the tomb of Ity and Hetepi.

² J. DE MORGAN, *Carte de la nécropole Memphite*, Le Caire 1897, pl. 10 – only the south-easternmost tip of Abusir South is visible in the top right corner.

³ The area of Abusir South may be easily delineated with the help of the maps of the Ministère de l’Habitat et de la Reconstruction, Le Caire H 21 and H 22, coordinates 3 308 400 north and 3 306 800 south.

⁴ See M. BÁRTA, *Abusir V. The Cemeteries of Abusir South 1*, Prague 2001, 143 ff. (Kaaper) and 55 ff. (Fetekty).



Fig. 1: Plan of Central and North Saqqara (as published by DE MORGAN, *Carte de la nécropole Memphite*, pl. 10).

In fact, 1991 signalled the start of a new direction for the exploration of the Abusir necropolis. Since then, several tombs and tomb complexes in the area of Abusir South were explored. Prominent among them were the late Third/early Fourth Dynasty tombs of Ity and Hetepi that were cleared and documented during the 1993 and 1999 seasons, respectively.⁵ The architecture of these tombs and the overall architectural configuration challenged us with a new type of evidence. These tombs showed marked similarities to archaeological finds that had been known from early excavations at North Saqqara and, in particular, with evidence from the western part of QUIBELL's Archaic Cemetery.

In order to understand the newly evolving evidence from Abusir South, a review of contemporaneous evidence is necessary. The preliminary results of this analysis are the subject of this contribution. A new tomb type characteristic of the period from the Third through the early Fourth Dynasty could be identified. The type is distinguished by its clearly defined chronological and geographic distribution as well as by an architectural scheme that was strictly followed. It will be shown that this so-called transitional-type tomb was based in the earlier building tradition of the Second and Third Dynasties to which were added elements that became indispensable components of tombs from the Fourth Dynasty onward. The short-lived synthesis of both trends in this group of tombs at Saqqara and Abusir South toward the end of the Third and beginning of the Fourth Dynasty explains why this type of tomb is essential for understanding subsequent tomb development. From the present evidence it seems that the group of tombs is limited to the area of Abusir and Saqqara.⁶

II. Transitional type of tombs, some definitions

The following analysis is based on a group of tombs of late Third/early Fourth Dynasty date characterized above all by a remarkable combination of two underground systems: a substructure accessible via a stairway (substructure A, REISNER's Type IV)⁷ and a substructure with a shaft opening into a single burial chamber (substructure B, REISNER's Type VI).⁸ The combina-

⁵ Ity: BÁRTA, *Abusir V*, 1 ff.; Hetepi: M. BÁRTA and B. VACHALA, *The Tomb of Hetepi at Abu Sir South*, in: *EA* 19, 2001, 33–35.

⁶ Despite the fact that some tombs of the same type may be located in Dahshur, on the western shore of the Dahshur Lake – as shown by the recent excavations of the SCA Inspectorate of Antiquities in Saqqara, led by Magdi Ghandour (unpublished at present).

⁷ G. A. REISNER, *The Development of the Egyptian Tomb down to the Accession of Cheops*, Cambridge, Mass. 1936, 154 ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 154 and 167, the only substructure attested in combination with type VI is that of IVB (IVB1 – stairway + shaft tomb with two or more chambers and IVB2 – stairway +

tion of these two different substructures within a single tomb proved crucial for identifying and categorizing the group of “transitional type” tombs.

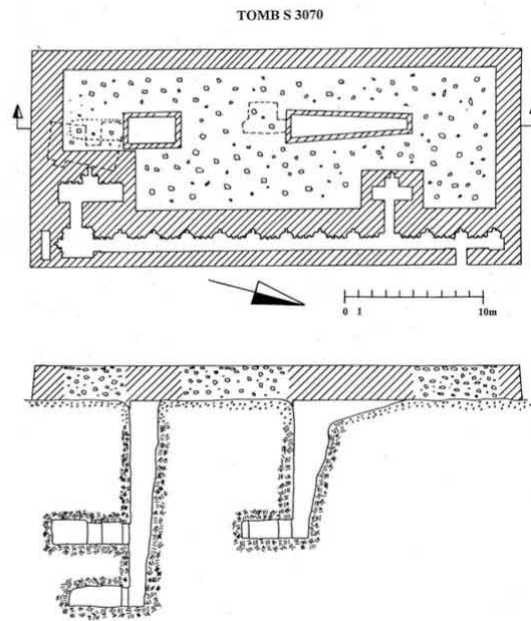


Fig. 2: Tomb 3070 (after EMERY, in: *JEA* 54 [1968], pl. 2).

Accordingly, the following nine tombs may be assigned to the “transitional type”: Saqqara tombs FS 3039 and 3009 dated by REISNER to the Third Dynasty⁹ (and probably also 3517¹⁰) and S 3070 (Fig. 2), 3071+3072, 3073 (Khabausokar), 3074, 3076 (Akhethetep) and the Abusir tomb of Ity (Fig. 3)¹¹ of the early Fourth Dynasty. These tombs, situated to the west of QUIBELL’s Archaic Cemetery in the northern part of the Saqqara necropolis,

shaft with a single burial chamber).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 167–168.

¹⁰ W. B. EMERY, *Preliminary Report on the Excavation at North Saqqâra, 1965–6*, in: *JEA* 52, 1966, 7, fig. 3.

¹¹ M. VERNER, *An Early Old Kingdom Cemetery at Abusir*, in: *ZĀS* 122, 1995, 78–84; IDEM, *Forgotten Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids. Abusir*, Prague 1994, 66–67; BÁRTA, *Abusir* V, 1–15.

represent a relatively homogenous group as far as their geographical distribution and architecture is concerned.¹² Interesting in this connection is the fact that all of them, except Ity's, are situated on the western escarpment of the North Saqqara plateau (Fig. 4).

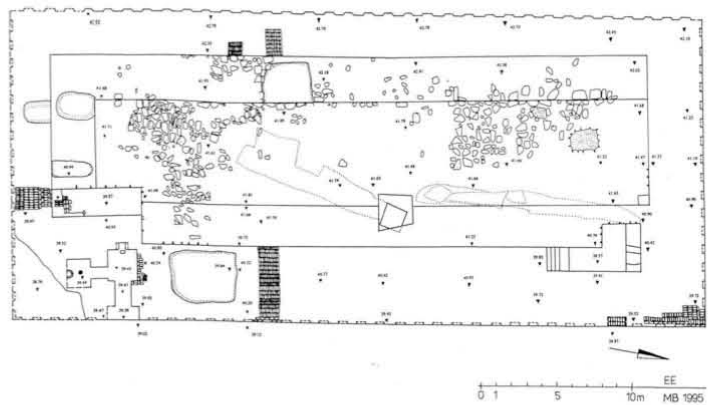


Fig. 3: Tomb of Ity at Abusir South.

By contrast, the tomb of Ity is located considerably deeper in the desert, on a hillock running north-south above the *Wadi Abusiri* which separates North Saqqara from the western desert (Pls. Ia and Ib).¹³

¹² A. J. SPENCER, *Researches on the Topography of North Saqqara*, in: *Orientalia N.S.* 43, 1974, 1–11 and tab.1; D. JEFFREYS and A. TAVARES, *The Historic Landscape of Early Dynastic Memphis*, in: *MDAIK* 50, 1994, 149–151; L. GIDDY, *Memphis and Saqqara During the Late Old Kingdom. Some Topographical Considerations*, in: *Hommages à Jean Leclant I*, eds. C. BERGER, G. CLERC and N. GRIMAL, Cairo 1994, 193–197, and H. SOUROUZIAN and R. STADELMANN, *La statue de Ny-ânkh-netjer. Un nouveau document de la période archaïque à Saqqâra*, in: C. BERGER and B. MATTHIEU (eds.), *Études sur l'Ancien Empire et la nécropole de Saqqâra dédiées à Jean-Philippe Lauer*, *OrMonsp* 9, Montpellier 1997, 400–401. On the non-royal tombs from the reign of Sneferu at Saqqara in general see REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 202–206. For the roughly contemporaneous tombs in Giza see now G. T. MARTIN, "Covington Tomb" and Related Early Monuments at Giza, in: *Études sur l'Ancien Empire*, 279–288.

¹³ PM III², 1, pl. 46.

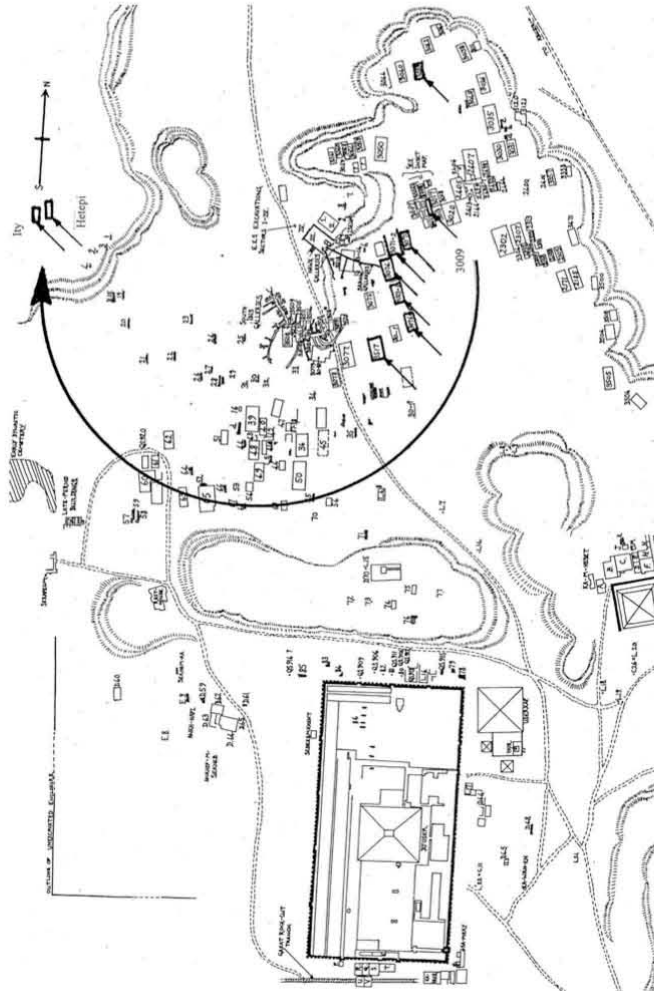


Fig. 4: Schematized plan of Central and North Saqqara (after SPENCER, in: *Orientalia N.S.* 43 [1974], pl. 1). The arrows show the distribution and spread of tombs that may be classified as “transitional” from Saqqara North to Abusir South.

This topographical situation was a consequence of the existence here of a bay which probably represented one of the principal approaches to the cemetery from the north.¹⁴ Moreover, the size of the tombs, their elaborate internal arrangements, and location within the cemetery suggest their association with higher-ranking officials of the day. The height of individual tombs, 40–50 m above sea level, confirms the fact that their owners were concerned about location. They erected their tombs on the most prominent sites above the rest of North Saqqara necropolis that subsequently became overcrowded with tombs of later date.

All these tombs are distinguished by large built area, a feature that disappears during the later reign of Sneferu when most non-royal tombs conform to a standard. Their size ranges from 610 to 1,431 sqm during the Third Dynasty and from 470 to 1,197 sqm during the very early Fourth (Fig. 5). It is noteworthy that the mean size of tombs from each timespan – 761 sqm and 789 sqm, respectively – is approximately the same.

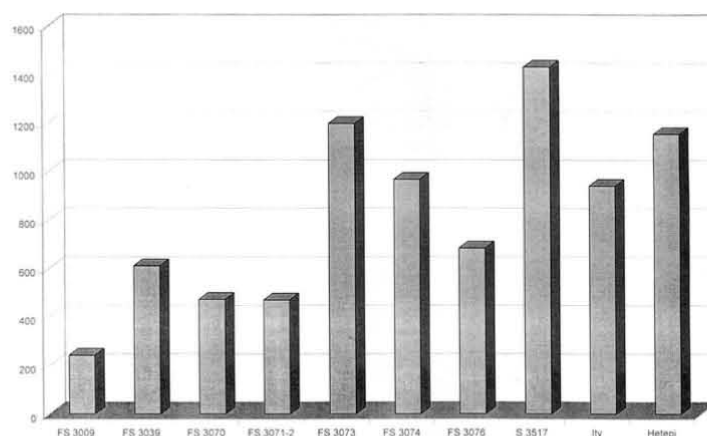


Fig. 5 The size (in sqm) of the built area of the “transitional” tombs.

A dramatic increase in tomb size occurred at Meidum during the early part of Sneferu’s reign. The largest tomb by far (M 16) covered an area of

¹⁴ This bay was the southernmost extension of the Lake of Abusir which existed here in antiquity. See M. LEHNER, *The Complete Pyramids*, Cairo 1997, 83, and M. BARTA, *The Title “Priest of Heket” in the Egyptian Old Kingdom*, in: *JNES* 58/2, 1999, 114, fig. 1.

6,948 sqm;¹⁵ it belongs to the vizier Nefermaat and his wife. The second largest is the anonymous mastaba M 17 with 5,512 sqm,¹⁶ followed by M 6, owned by Rahotep and Nefret, which measures 3,203 sqm.¹⁷ These numbers must be viewed with some reservations, since their owners were members of the royal family, whereas the Abusir and Saqqara tombs were built by the high, non-royal officials of the state. In other words, there may have been different rules in effect for each social group. Nevertheless, it can be postulated that the Meidum tombs were built just before the introduction of standards for tomb size.¹⁸ This undoubtedly occurred at Dahshur, still during the reign of Sneferu, where the mastabas for members of his family show highly standardized ground plans of approximately 600 sqm.¹⁹ This indicates a rapid decrease in tomb size at the time. On analogy with evidence from the Giza necropolis, it can certainly be interpreted as the first explicit indication for the imposition of restrictive policies on tomb building. The size of the Meidum tombs also helps clarify the date of their construction since they differ considerably from those of the later part of Sneferu's reign. The evidence from Sneferu's pyramids at Dahshur and Meidum shows that he established a new necropolis at Dahshur in his 15th regnal year; presumably the tombs at Meidum were built prior to this decision.²⁰

But back to Saqqara and the Third Dynasty. The superstructures of the transitional tombs are built in a comparatively uniform manner. The outer retaining walls of the tombs are made of mudbrick and the cores filled with loose material (limestone chips and flakes, sand, stones, fragments of mudbrick and sherds) (REISNER's Type Ia). The majority of these tombs were furnished with cruciform chapels (Pl. IIa).

¹⁵ A. MARIETTE, *Les mastabas de l'Ancien Empire*, Paris 1889, 473–477; W. M. F. PETRIE, *Medum*, London 1892, 15; D. Arnold, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*, Zürich 1994, 173.

¹⁶ PETRIE, *Medum*, 12; Arnold, *Lexikon der Baukunst*, 156–157.

¹⁷ MARIETTE, *Mastabas*, 478–484; PETRIE, *Medum*, 15; ARNOLD, *Lexikon der Baukunst*, 211.

¹⁸ For the architecture of M6 and M16 see now Y. HARPUR, *The Tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep and Maidum. Discovery, Destruction and Reconstruction, Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom*, Vol. 1, Oxford 2001, 35–54.

¹⁹ R. STADELMANN and N. ALEXANIAN, *Die Friedhöfe des Alten und Mittleren Reiches in Dahschur*, in: *MDAIK* 54, 1998, 304.

²⁰ R. STADELMANN, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alten Reiches. Die Länge der Regierung des Snofru*, in: *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 229–240; see also A. BOLSHAKOV, *Some Observations on the Early Chronology of Meidum*, in: *GM* 123, 1991, 11–15. On the length of Sneferu's reign see also J. VON BECKERATH, *Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten. Die Zeitbestimmung der ägyptischen Geschichte von der Vorzeit bis 332 v. Chr.*, *MÄS* 46, Mainz 1997, 157–158. For the latest analysis of the chronology of Sneferu's reign see M. VERNER, *Archaeological Remarks on the 4th and 5th Dynasty Chronology*, in: *ArOr* 69/3, 2001, 365–372.

Simple cruciform chapels appear, however, slightly earlier, initially in FS 3043, a late Second Dynasty tomb.²¹ Their number increases rapidly during the Third Dynasty; QUIBELL encountered them in several parts of the Archaic Cemetery at North Saqqara. In the South Group of tombs there, they appear in FS 2304 and 2306.²² In the North Group, they could be identified in FS 2464, 2446 and 2440.²³ Cruciform chapels occur in all of the aforementioned Fourth Dynasty tombs at Saqqara, and it seems that this type of chapel attained its peak of popularity precisely during this period.

Many of the tombs were decorated with niching in imitation of a palace façade (Pl. IIa).²⁴ This archaic motif decorated all four sides of the early Fourth Dynasty mastaba of Ity at Abusir South which probably is one of the latest examples of its kind in the period under discussion. Evidence for this phenomenon provided by Ity's tomb is rather intriguing at this late date, since a clear tendency towards simplification of the exterior is observable much earlier, at the end of the First Dynasty (reign of Qaa).²⁵ The niching motif was still in vogue, though limited in application, at Meidum early in the reign of Sneferu,²⁶ and it disappears during the reign of the same ruler, probably due to the preference for building in stone over mudbrick.²⁷

The pattern of the substructure with a vertical shaft (REISNER's Type VI²⁸) is structurally entirely different from the previous tradition of stairway tombs and exhibits several features which are typical of the newly evolving

²¹ J. E. QUIBELL, *Archaic Mastabas, Excavations at Saqqara (1912–14)*, Le Caire 1923, pl. II; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 154; G. A. REISNER, in: *Mélanges Maspero* T. I, Fasc. 2, MIFAO 66, Le Caire 1935–1938, 581 (reign of Khasekhemwy).

²² QUIBELL, *Archaic Mastabas*, pl. I.

²³ *Ibid.*, pl. II.

²⁴ See H. BALCZ, *Die altägyptische Wandgliederung*, in: *MDAIK* 1, 1930, 38–92; W. KAISER, *Nischengliederung*, in: *LÄ* IV, 1982, cols. 511–513; W. KAISER, *Zu Entwicklung und Vorformen der frühzeitlichen Gräber mit reich gegliederter Oberbaufassade*, in: *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar II*, BdE 97, Cairo 1985, 25–38; H. W. MÜLLER, *Gedanken zur Entstehung, Interpretation und Rekonstruktion ältester ägyptischer Monumentalarchitektur*, in: *Ägypten. Dauer und Wandel*, SDAIK 18, Mainz 1985, 7–33; J. DÖRNER, *Überlegungen zur Fassadengliederung der großen Mastabagräber aus der I. Dynastie*, in: *MDAIK* 47, 1991, 81–92; A. KREKELER, *Nischengegliederte Grabfassaden im nördlichen Teti-Friedhof*, in: *MDAIK* 47, 1991, 211–216; R. STADELMANN, *Origins and Development of the Funerary Complex of Djoser*, in: P. DER MANUELIAN (ed.), *Studies in Honour of William Kelley Simpson*, Vol. 2, Boston 1996, 794–800; ARNOLD, *Lexikon der Baukunst*, 174–176.

²⁵ W. B. EMERY, *Tomb 3070 at Saqqâra*, in: *JEA* 54, 1968, 11; W. KAISER and G. DREYER, *Umm el-Qaab. Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof. 2. Vorbericht*, in: *MDAIK* 38, 1982, 258.

²⁶ PETRIE, *Medum*, pl. 7; A. EL-KHOULI and G. T. MARTIN, *Meidum, ACE Reports* 3, Sydney 1991, pls. 13–25.

²⁷ KREKELER, in: *MDAIK* 47, 1991, 212–213; 216.

²⁸ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 167.

philosophy of tomb architecture. The burial chamber is approached by a deep shaft which opens roughly in the middle of the tomb. At the bottom of the shaft, a horizontal passage in the south wall gives access to the burial chamber (Pl. IIB). The entrance to this passage was usually blocked by a limestone monolith. In one case (Ity's tomb), there was a niche above the entrance to the passage, in the southern wall of the shaft. This recess may originally have been filled with ritual offerings. Close and roughly contemporaneous parallels for this niche are found in the tombs of Hemiunu (G 4000)²⁹ and Hetepheres I (G 7000x)³⁰ at Giza, both of particular interest since they date precisely to the reign of Khufu.

Another significant and chronologically limited feature is the recess in the southern wall of the burial chamber found in several tombs. One such recess, 35 cm deep, was found about 1 m above floor level in the tomb of Ity. Similar shallow recesses could be identified as early as the Second Dynasty in tombs QS 2337³¹ and 2406.³² There the recesses were situated in the southern wall of the antechamber which lay to the east of the burial chamber. Furthermore, from the same period comes QS 2498³³ and, from the Third Dynasty, FS 3040³⁴ with a recess in the southern wall of the burial chamber. There is, however, no precision possible concerning the substructure of these tombs.

Close parallels to this feature can be found in the tombs of Nefermaat,³⁵ Rahotep³⁶ and Ranefer³⁷ at Meidum. There such recesses were cut high up in the south wall of the burial chamber, near the southeast corner (in the case of Ranefer, the exact position of the recess above floor level is not explicitly stated in the publication, and the plan of the tomb does not provide any further clarification). The preserved remains of packages of viscera found in

²⁹ G 4000 – PM III², 1, 122; H. JUNKER, *Giza I*, DAWW 69, Abh. 1, Wien 1929, 143; 142, fig. 21.

³⁰ M. LEHNER, *The Pyramid Tomb of Hetep-heres and the Satellite Pyramid of Khufu*, SDAIK 19, Mainz 1985, fig. 2; 33.

³¹ QUBELL, *Archaic Mastabas*, pl. 30; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 141–142; 142, fig. 65; M. ROGOULINE, *Évolution des réceptacles à Canopes*, in: *BIFAO* 63, 1965, 237–238.

³² QUBELL, *Archaic Mastabas*, pl. 30; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 143; 142, fig. 66; ROGOULINE, in: *BIFAO* 63, 1965, 237–238.

³³ QUBELL, *Archaic Mastabas*, pl. 30; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 139–140; 140, fig. 62; ROGOULINE, in: *BIFAO* 63, 1965, 238.

³⁴ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 163; 164, fig. 77.

³⁵ W. M. F. PETRIE, *Meidum and Memphis III*, London 1910, pls. 3–4; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 209; 210, fig. 106; 222, fig. 117.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 211; 211, fig. 107.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

the recesses in the tombs of Rahotep and Ranefer are indicative of purpose and function:³⁸ the recesses were used for housing the mummified internal organs of the deceased, wrapped in linen packages.³⁹ A vestige of this tradition which disappeared abruptly, survived in the tomb of Hetepheres I at Giza where linen packages were placed in a compartmented alabaster box hidden in a deep recess in the west wall of her burial chamber, cut at a height of about 1 m above the floor.⁴⁰ The latest example of a recess for viscera cut in the south wall above the floor of the burial chamber is found in the tomb of Kaisedju, tomb F7 at Abu Roash.⁴¹

In tombs at the cemetery of the “second generation” of Sneferu at Dahshur, which is only slightly later, embalming recesses were replaced by canopic pits or holes, typically located at ground level, in the southeast corner of the burial chamber.⁴² This feature enjoyed widespread popularity at Meidum,⁴³ where analogous recesses were encountered in the south wall of the burial chamber in many of the so-called Great Western⁴⁴ and Far West Tombs.⁴⁵

Substructures with vertical shafts are undoubtedly among the earliest precursors of the new building tradition; they are not earlier than the late Third or early Fourth Dynasty. Vertical shafts became exclusive during the reign of Sneferu in tombs at Meidum⁴⁶ and Dahshur.⁴⁷ Thus this feature is diagnostic for classifying tombs during the early Old Kingdom.

³⁸ PETRIE, *Medum*, 18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁰ G.A. REISNER, *A History of the Giza Necropolis I*, London 1942, 155–156; IDEM, *A History of the Giza Necropolis II*, Cambridge, Mass. 1955, 15–16; fig. 22; pl. 44. For the recent review of theories concerned with the find of Hetepheres’s equipment in G 7000X see H.H. MUNCH, *Categorizing Archaeological Finds: the Funerary Material of Queen Hetepheres I at Giza*, in: *Antiquity* 74, 2000, 898–908.

⁴¹ F. BISSON DE LA ROQUE, *Rapport sur les fouilles d’Abu Roasch 1924*, FIFAO 2.1, Le Caire 1925, 6, fig.1.

⁴² REISNER, *Giza Necropolis I*, 156 (sloping passage tombs at Meidum from the reign of Sneferu); IDEM, *Tomb Development*, 206–216; R. STADELMANN et al., *Pyramiden und Nekropole des Snofru in Dahschur. Dritter Vorbericht über die Grabungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts in Dahschur*, in: *MDAIK* 49, 1993, 273, fig.10; 274, fig.11.; 276 (Tomb M I/1); 278; 279, fig.12; 280, fig.13 (Tomb M II/1); 285; 287, fig.17 (Tomb M I/2) and 289, fig.18; 290; 290, fig.19 (Tomb M III/1).

⁴³ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 206–216.

⁴⁴ PETRIE, *Meydum and Memphis III*, pl. 15.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pls. 17–18.

⁴⁶ PETRIE, *Medum, passim*.

⁴⁷ STADELMANN et al., in: *MDAIK* 49, 1993, 272–290; STADELMANN and ALEXANIAN, in: *MDAIK* 54, 1998, 299–306.

As already noted, tombs of the transitional type accommodate true internal cruciform chapels within the mass of the superstructure as developed at the end of the Second Dynasty. However, REISNER assigned the earliest tombs that had cruciform chapels in combination with substructures accessible by a vertical shaft (Type VI) to the reign of Sneferu.⁴⁸ Comparable evidence is provided by the following tombs at Saqqara: S 3517, FS 3071 and 3072,⁴⁹ FS 3074⁵⁰ and FS 3078,⁵¹ all tentatively datable to the early Fourth Dynasty.⁵² It is remarkable that these tombs very often combine two concomitant types of substructures: type VI as a new approach to the building of the burial chamber and type IV B, a remnant from the previous period (Pl. IIIa).

The position of the serdab to the west of the true cruciform chapel seems also to be of some significance. Ity's tomb is one of the earliest examples known,⁵³ even if some precursors of rooms equipped with statues have been identified in tombs of the first three dynasties.⁵⁴

III. Latest evidence – Tomb of Hetepi

The 1999/2000 season at Abusir South produced completely new evidence in terms of tomb architecture, especially for substructures and decoration during the period under discussion, in the form of a new tomb that may also be classified as transitional.

This tomb was a huge mastaba aligned north-south measuring 23.22 x 49.70 m to cover 1,154 sqm, erected upon a levelled platform of *tafl* bedrock at a height of about 37 m above sea level. The tomb is situated just to the east of Ity's tomb, above the bay of Abusir South. The masonry consists of three separate elements: a 1.0–1.6 m thick outer shell of mudbricks (measuring 25 x 14/13 x 9 cm), an inner shell of local limestone 1.0–1.2 m thick, and a loose filling. The outer layers of this core were made of walls 1.15–1.30 m thick composed of larger limestone flakes bonded with mortar. No remains of the original casing at the top of the mastaba (which was pre-

⁴⁸ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 359, 366.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵¹ PM III², 2, 443; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 266.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 280. A. J. SPENCER, *Saqqara. Private Tombs of the 4.–6. Dyn.*, in: LÄ V, 1984, col. 400, dates to the early Fourth Dynasty the following tombs: FS 3075, 3076, 3077 and possibly also 3073 and 3078.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, col. 403.

⁵⁴ M. BÁRTA, *Serdab and Statue Placement in the Private Tombs Down to the Fourth Dynasty*, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 65–75.

served to a height of 2.4 m) could be detected during the excavation. Only the north wall of the tomb was decorated with niching, each niche being 62–65 cm wide and 12–15 cm deep. This was another vital topographical indication that the principal approach to the area was from the north (Pl. IIIb).⁵⁵

The chapel itself was situated in the southeastern part of the tomb. Its façade was built of smaller, finely dressed blocks of snow-white Tura limestone. The northern wing was preserved to a height of 1.5 m and was completely decorated in low relief (Pl. IVa), providing a rare example of well-preserved decoration. The façade is dominated by a delicately-carved figure of the tomb owner Hetepi seated before a table of offerings. Below his seat, the subsidiary figure of a man named Nekhty kneels with both arms stretched out before him. Nekhty wears a short kilt while the tomb owner is dressed in a long, close-fitting garment draped over his left shoulder with a relatively large knot. The offerings arranged on a biconical stand consist of six slices of bread oriented uniformly southwards which is an archaic feature. The list of offerings starts just above. The upper part of the wall is taken up with two lines of hieroglyphic inscription, oriented rightwards, enumerating the titles of the tomb owner and concluding with his name. Some of the titles are highly unusual:

1. *Nḥt ḥrw (n) z3b, wr md ḥwt-ḥnh, ḥr(j) sš3 šh(rw), šd(j)r(jw) ḥkr(w) z3 w3d(t), šd ḥwt Nn Ḥ3t-mḥjt z3 wr,*
2. *zh(j) Jnpw, (j)m(j)-r šh(rw) -jwf ntr, (j)m(j)-r Nztt ḥwt B3stt z3 wr, (j)r(j) (j)ht nswt, Htpj.*

1. *Strong of voice of the king, Great one of the ten(s) of the mansion of life, Keeper of the secrets of the sekheru hall, Inspector of the custodians of the ornaments of the Wadjet phyle, Inspector of the Estate “Seat of the Goddess Hatmehit” of the Great phyle,*
2. *He who belongs to the booth of Anubis, Overseer of the sekheru-meat-hall of the god (6), Overseer of the “Thrones of the Estate of the Goddess Bastet” of the Great phyle, Property custodian of the king, Hetepi.⁵⁶*

Significantly, the individual signs are remarkably detailed while the juncture of the relief with the background is very gently modelled (Pl. IVb). In common with other early reliefs at Saqqara (see below), the upper surface of

⁵⁵ The reason for this might have been the fact that this zone of the Saqqara – Abusir cemetery was possibly accessible from the north – see BARTA, in: *JNES* 58, 1999, 107–116.

⁵⁶ For details on the inscription see IDEM, *A Third Dynasty tomb of Hetepi at Abusir South*, in: *Fs. Sawi*, Cairo 2006, *forthcoming*.

all elements share one plane.⁵⁷ But the seated feature of Hetepi reveals a remarkable feature of technique: in order to emphasize his importance and enhance visual impact, the sculptor cut back the surface deeply around the contours of his figure so that its height at 5–6 mm is almost twice that of the other elements of the scene and the hieroglyphs, even though it does not project above them on the surface.⁵⁸

The southern wing of the façade which still stands to a height of 1.4 m preserves the lower part of a standing figure of Hetepi facing north. Three small-scaled male figures stand in front of him. These probably depict Nekhty and two sons of Hetepi. Traces of the associated labels allow a partial reconstruction of the text. The importance of the scene lies mainly in the fact that it exists only in a preliminary drawing, executed in red and black ink. The sculptor evidently never started carving the relief. The apparent asymmetry of the decoration on the façade, which creates an impression of imbalance, contrasts with the norm evidenced in contemporaneous tombs.

The nearly square chapel itself measures 1.54 x 0.84 m (1.3 sqm) in ground plan. The south and north walls of finely polished, white Tura limestone were devoid of decoration. The west wall was completely missing. Two postholes preserved in the limestone paving of the floor (Pl. Va) make it very likely that there was no false door in stone, but rather there was a real, two-leaved wooden door occupying the west wall with a simple niche behind, decorated with a striding or seated figure of the tomb owner. A very similar arrangement can be postulated for the tomb chapel of Khabausokar.⁵⁹ A check of the niche from the western wall of his tomb reveals two tiny recesses (ca. 5 x 5 cm) in the door frame. The only plausible explanation of their function is that they were designed to accommodate two pivots for double doors (Fig. 6).

The substructure of the tomb of Hetepi consisted of two distinct parts, both of them embedded in the masonry of the tomb. These are, however, structurally almost identical. Both subterranean systems were built in open pits (which were lined with local limestone) and typically combine a vertical shaft with a twisting staircase leading from the north down to the opening of the shaft.

The southern substructure was built in an open pit oriented north-south and measuring 2.33/2.54 (N/S) x 10.40/10.60 (E/W) m. The staircase starts on top of the superstructure (Pl. Vb). After seven right-angle twists and at a

⁵⁷ W. St. SMITH, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, London 1958, 149.

⁵⁸ For a similar technique developed during the Fourth Dynasty Giza see *ibid.*, 162–163.

⁵⁹ CG 1365, see L. BORCHARDT, *Denkmäler des AR I*, Berlin 1937, 44, and M. A. MURRAY, *Saqqara Mastabas I*, London 1905, pls. 1 and 32.

depth of 4 m below the preserved height of the superstructure, the shaft opens in the south part of the pit. It has an irregular ground plan and measures 4.20 x 4.50 m. At a depth of 10.75 m, the burial chamber, cut in the *tafl* bedrock, opens from the floor of the shaft. The floor plan of the chamber is irregular. It extends to the south for ca. 3.70 m and is 1.50 – 2.00 wide with a height of 1.40 m. In the west wall there is a shallow niche (1.90 x 1.30 m) which once contained a burial in a wooden coffin. At a height of about 0.40 m above floor level there was a recess in the south wall measuring 0.75 m high and 0.40 m deep. Perhaps it was intended for packages with the mummified organs of the deceased (see above). All that was recovered from the original burial were badly damaged remains of the wooden coffin and broken bones. Virtually nothing survived of the original burial equipment except for several fragments of an offering table made of dark green slate.

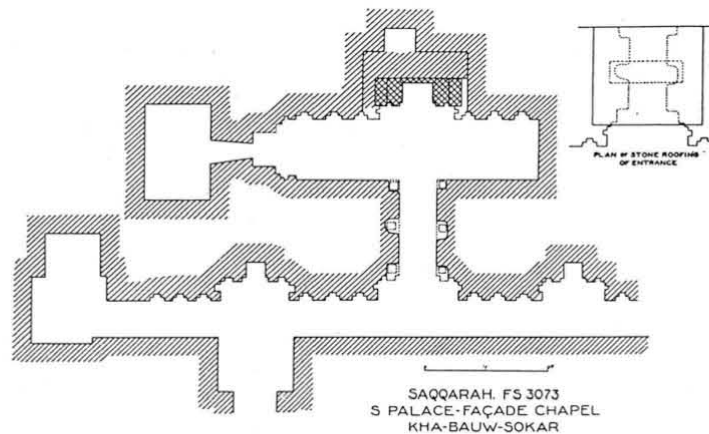


Fig. 6: The ground plan of tomb 3073, chapel of Khabausokar (REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 268, fig. 158).

The northern substructure was constructed in a similar fashion. The staircase originates in the northwest corner of the pit on the top of the mastaba and it runs eastwards; after three twists it descends to a depth of 5 m below the top of the superstructure. The 1.10 x 1.20 m shaft opens from the southwest corner of the pit to descend 6.80 m where access to a small burial chamber is provided in its south wall. The chamber, only roughly excavated from the *tafl* bedrock, is oriented north-south and measures 1.80 x 1.00 m with a height of 0.60 m. It was devoid of artifacts.

The tentative assessment of the principal features shows that Hetepi's tomb conforms well to the transitional type as defined above. As such, it throws more light on the first decorated tombs with cruciform chapels known from the Saqqara-Abusir area.

IV. Conclusions

There is no doubt that "transitional tombs" were decisive for tomb development, harbingers of things to come. Surprisingly, however, a large number of their chapels were not lined with limestone blocks, and the tombs themselves were built simply of mudbrick, subsequently whitewashed. This contradicts REISNER's surmise that stone-lined chapels instigated the development that led directly towards stone mastabas.⁶⁰ Apparently, the process that resulted in an entirely new form of stone tomb architecture, as exemplified by the Giza cemetery, was not linear but rather, contrary to earlier beliefs, manifold and more complex. As such, it consisted of three major innovations: stone-lined chapels (1) and stone masonry (2), complemented by the construction of a vertical shaft (3) for access to the burial chamber. These three elements did not necessarily occur together. Another argument that can be cited in support of this conclusion may be found in the architecture of Ity's tomb at Abusir. The core of the superstructure was made of and cased with limestone, but the cruciform chapel was built of mudbrick.

The Saqqara and Abusir evidence shows that the introduction of stone decoration was in no way connected with a single tomb type; rather it evolved independently of the architectural development of the tomb. The tombs of transitional type undoubtedly stood at the beginning of a new line of non-royal tomb development, and as such they profited both from archaic prototypes and newly developing architectural forms such as cruciform chapels, some of them containing reliefs carved in stone, and vertical shafts leading to a single burial chamber. Their relatively brief survival into the early reign of Sneferu does not diminish their relevance for the following period. It seems that decorated chapels in stone were typical for slightly later tombs with vertical shafts to the substructure, as well as for the transitional type of tomb.

Due to the limited nature of evidence currently available, we can only hypothesize about the internal appearance of the first cruciform chapels. (The wooden panels discovered in the tomb of Hesyra, together with the mural paintings in his corridor chapel, provide some of the earliest information about tomb decoration at Saqqara-Abusir, but it is not directly pertinent to a discussion of the development of decoration in cruciform chapels.)⁶¹

⁶⁰ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 202.

⁶¹ J. E. QUIBELL, *The Tomb of Hesy, Excavations at Saqqara (1911–12)*, Le Caire 1913;

Several tombs with stone-lined cruciform chapels are known at Saqqara that are tentatively datable to the end of the Third and the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty (reigns of Sneferu-Khufu)⁶²:

- FS 3073, the tomb of Khabausokar.⁶³ Over the entrances to both chapels there were stone drums and lintels; the western chapel niches were decorated with limestone blocks with reliefs and inscriptions. The chapel itself was probably devoid of any reliefs.
- FS 3076, the tomb of Akhtihetep.⁶⁴ The southern cruciform chapel was lined with limestone blocks, only the lowermost course containing several titles and sub-registers with a procession of offering bearers preserved.
- FS 3077,⁶⁵ filled mudbrick superstructure, twin mastaba. Modified cruciform chapel with serdab behind, probably only the west wall of the chapel was lined with limestone.
- FS 3078,⁶⁶ filled mudbrick mastaba with stone-lined cruciform chapel. The decoration is on both the niche and the entrance thickness.
- LS 6 – Tomb of Metjen;⁶⁷ a completely decorated tomb chapel.
- the chapel from the lost tomb of Pehernefer.⁶⁸
- tomb FS 3020.⁶⁹ The stone casing of the doorway recess and of the entrance corridor of chapel are attested. The walls of the uncased chapel were simply plastered white.

J. VANDIER, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* I,2, Paris 1952, 708–723; E. W. WOOD, *Early Wooden Sculpture in Ancient Egypt*, PhD. Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University 1977, 30–66; IDEM, *A Reconstruction of the Reliefs of Hesy-Ra*, in: *JARCE* 15, 1978, 9–24, pls. 1–4.

⁶² For the discussion of their decoration see SMITH, *Art and Architecture*, 148–156; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 204–205. For the decoration of some of these tombs see also E. EL-METWALLY, *Entwicklung der Grabdekoration in den altägyptischen Privatgräbern*, *GOF* IV.24, Wiesbaden 1992, 21–23 (Hesyre), 23–24 (Khabausokar), 25–30 (FS 3078), 59–66 (FS 3076) and 67–68 (Metjen) – see, however, review by P. JÁNOSI, in: *WZKM* 84, 1994, 175–180. For the roughly contemporary decorated tombs in Meidum and Dahshur see now N. ALEXANIAN, *Dahschur II. Das Grab des Prinzen Netjer-aperet. Die Mastaba II/1 in Dahschur*, AV 56, Mainz 1999 (tombs of Netjeraperet and Inyefer), and HARPUR, *The tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep at Maidum*.

⁶³ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 203.

⁶⁴ MARIETTE, *Mastabas*, 69, Tomb A1; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 204.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 204–205; ground plan H. K. JACQUET-GORDON, *Les noms des domaines funéraires sous l'Ancien Empire Égyptien*, *BdE* 34, Le Caire 1962, 331, fig. 117.

⁶⁷ *LD Text*, 142; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 205.

⁶⁸ *LD Text*, 188; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 205–206.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

- tomb of Akhetaa.⁷⁰ The reliefs probably once decorated the entrance walls of the chapel.

Some other contemporaneous tombs could have been merely decorated with painted ornaments as attested in FS 3070⁷¹ and FS 3075.⁷²

To this corpus we may now add the entrance and chapel proper of Hetepi's tomb that were devoid of any decoration, but the problem with this evidence is that the façade preserves an unfinished decorative program. Thus it is indeed possible that the original intention was to decorate the walls of the chapel as well.

On the one hand, it is clear that the available evidence for tomb decoration is very sparse, but even this meagre evidence indicates that there were several options: reliefs (or paintings) could have decorated the surfaces of the façade flanking the chapel entrance, the entrance thicknesses, the western wall of the chapel itself and, even if only sporadically documented, the other walls of the chapel as well.

The number of these tombs is so limited that one wonders where other high officials of the late Third and the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty were buried. Should we search for a completely new sector within the necropolis? Or was the number of tombs for high officials somehow restricted? Probably both alternatives are correct. We must bear in mind that large parts of what lies between North Saqqara and Abusir South is still *terra incognita*. The evidence presented here for the existence of a transitional tomb type shows that its history comes full circle at Abusir South. What follows is a completely new chapter written by the tombs at Dahshur and Giza.

The recent discoveries of the Czech mission show clearly that Abusir formed with Saqqara a single geographical unit in ancient Egypt and that the modern separation of them is outdated. Abusir seems to have played the crucial role as the last area into which the necropolis expanded after exhausting the space occupied by the Archaic Cemetery of North Saqqara. In fact, it is the last vestige before the move from the area (including Dahshur and Meidum) to Giza at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty. The tombs of Hetepi and Ity, discovered and explored during the past few years, are probably the final representatives of genuine Third Dynasty tomb evolution in the Saqqara-Abusir area which drew its last breath at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty. These tombs undoubtedly belonged to the upper class in the

⁷⁰ R. WEILL, *Des monuments et de l'histoire des I^{er} et III^e dynasties égyptiennes*, Paris 1908, 262–273, Pls. 6–7; CH. ZIEGLER, *Stèles, peintures et reliefs égyptiens de l'Ancien Empire et de la Première Période Intermédiaire*, Paris 1990, 96–103, Nos. 14–15.

⁷¹ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 202.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 204.

society of the day, though certainly not to members of the royal family. Their characteristics clearly show exactly what preceded later tomb development at Meidum, Dahshur and Giza.

*V. Catalogue***FS 3009**⁷³

Third Dynasty;

mudbrick filled twin mastaba with two pairs of niches, exterior corridor chapel;

21 (N-S) x 11.5 (E-W) m, area: 241.5 sqm;

substructure A in the north, substructure B in the south.

FS 3039⁷⁴

Third Dynasty;

mudbrick filled mastaba;

31 (N-S) x 19.7 (E-W) m, area: 610 sqm;

substructure A in the north, substructure B in the south.

FS 3070⁷⁵

Early Fourth Dynasty;

mudbrick filled mastaba with true cruciform chapel and palace façade cruciform chapel and with exterior corridor;

35 x 13.5 m, area: 472.5 sqm;

substructure A in the north and substructure B in the south.

FS 3071+3072⁷⁶

Early Fourth Dynasty;

mudbrick filled mastaba with two true cruciform chapels;

47 x 10 m, area: 470 sqm;

substructure A in the north and substructure B in the south.

FS 3073, tomb of Khabausokar and Neferhotepthor⁷⁷

Early Fourth Dynasty;

mudbrick filled mastaba, true palace façade cruciform chapels, exterior corridor chapel;

63 x 19 m, area: 1,197 sqm;

substructure A in the south and substructure B in the north.

FS 3074⁷⁸

Early Fourth Dynasty;

mudbrick filled mastaba with true cruciform chapels;

⁷³ *PM III*², 2, 440; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 168.⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 168; 267, fig.157; EMERY, in: *JEA* 54, 1968, 11–13.⁷⁶ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 168–169.⁷⁷ MARIETTE, *Mastabas*, 71–79; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 169; 268–269, figs. 158–163; *PM III*², 2, 449–450;⁷⁸ REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 169.

44 x 22 m, area 968 sqm;
substructure A in the south and substructure B in the north.

FS 3076, tomb of Akhtihotep⁷⁹

Early Fourth Dynasty;
mudbrick filled mastaba with two cruciform chapels and with exterior corridor;
38 x 18 m, area: 684 sqm;
substructure A in the south and substructure B in the north.

S 3517⁸⁰

Third Dynasty;
mudbrick filled mastaba with two cruciform chapels;
56.8 x 25.2 m, area 1,431.4 sqm;
substructure A in the south and substructure B in the north.

A closer look at the layout of the southern substructure allows to include this tomb in the present list. At first sight it may seem that this tomb falls out of the previous scheme. The affinity of its southern substructure with the northern substructure of tomb 3070, however, shows that they were laid out according to the same plan (a wide open trench with a vertical shaft opening at its southern end). The only marked distinction between both tombs is the unfinished state of this substructure in the case of tomb 3517.⁸¹

Abusir South – Ity

Early Fourth Dynasty;
mudbrick filled mastaba with true cruciform chapel;
45.7 x 20.6 m, area: 941.4 sqm;
substructure A in the north (Fig. 3) and substructure B (Fig. 3) in the south.

Abusir South – Hetepi

Early Fourth Dynasty;
mudbrick filled mastaba with square-shaped chapel;
49.70 x 23.22, area of 1,154 sqm;
substructure A (IV B2) both in the south and north.

⁷⁹ MARIETTE, *Mastabas*, 68–70; REISNER, *Tomb Development*, 169; PM III², 2, 453.

⁸⁰ EMERY, in: *JEA* 52, 1966, 7; 7, fig.3; pl. 3.3–4.

⁸¹ For the ground plans and sections see IDEM, in: *JEA* 54, 1968, pl. 2 (tomb 3070) and IDEM, in: *JEA* 52, 1966, 7, fig. 3 (tomb 3517).



a) The area of North Saqqara (in the background) and of Abusir South with the tombs of Ity and Hetepi.

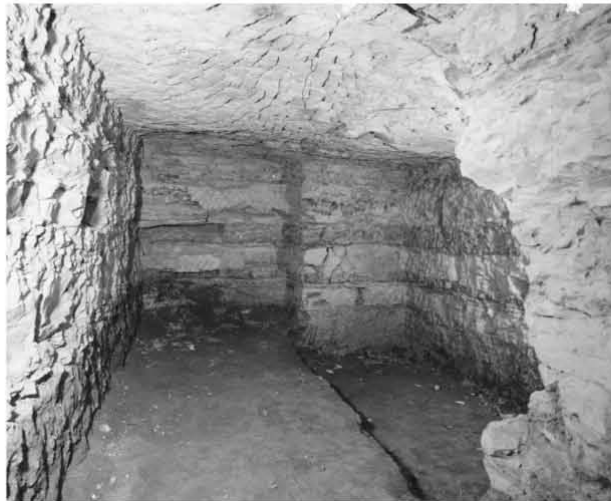


b) Abusir South, view of the tomb of Ity, looking north.

Taf. II



a) The cruciform chapel in the tomb of Ity (on the left).



b) The burial chamber of Ity at the bottom of the southern substructure, looking south.



a) The steps leading from the south into the northern substructure in the tomb of Ity.

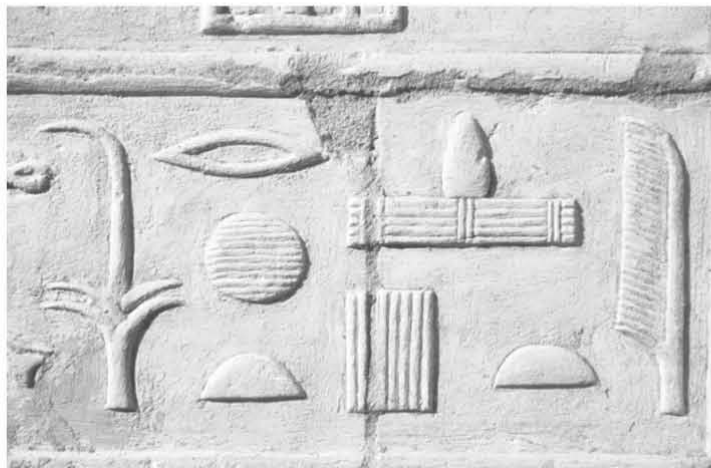


b) The northern façade of the tomb of Hetepi with niching.

Taf. IV



a) The northern wing of the eastern façade of the tomb of Hetepi after partial excavation.



b) Tomb of Hetepi, detail of the hieroglyphic inscription.



a) The chapel of Hetepi with postholes left behind by a two leaved door in front of the destroyed west wall.



b) Flight of steps descending from the north into the southern substructure.