

ENGLISH SUMMARY

THE PALACE-NECROPOLIS OF TELL EL-DAB^a

The Tombs of Area F/I of the Strata d/2 and d/1

This study concerns two late Middle Kingdom cemeteries, of strata d/2 and d/1 respectively, in area F/I of Tell el-Dab^a in the north-eastern Delta, Egypt. The historical time frame is the late 12th and early 13th Dynasties (the Middle Bronze IIA-period) in the late 19th to early 18th century BC.

The book is structured in two parts: Part I presents and discusses the layout of the cemetery, the tomb architecture, the tomb occupation, the equipment and the goods found in the tombs, the superstructures and the associated offering pits. It is followed by a suggested reconstruction of funerary customs, taking both Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian traditions into consideration. Questions of ethnicity and acculturation traceable in the funerary culture are discussed in the following chapters. The historical sources for the relationship between Egypt and the Near East in the Middle Kingdom are presented next. Finally, an attempt at a historical interpretation of the role of this community is made. A summary of the results concludes part I. Part II is a catalogue of all tombs and the remains of humans, animals and artefacts found in the tombs or associated with them.

Chapter I, following a discussion of the methodological framework, deals with the history of the archaeological excavation, the topographic setting and the basic stratigraphy. Area F/I is located about 500 m west of the tell-area of A/II. The site was excavated by a team of the Austrian Archaeological Institute under the direction of M. Bietak from 1979–1990. With a size of about one hectare, F/I is the largest connected area excavated in Tell el-Dab^a east of the Didamun canal. The constructions in stratum d/2, which can be equalled with the absolute stratum H, follow a hiatus after the abandonment of the workers' settlement of the early 12th Dynasty. In the northern part of area F/I in stratum d/2 a settlement, centring on a house of the "Mittelsaal"-type, is constructed. Some tombs are built on the southern fringe of this settlement, but the main cemetery is constructed further south. The exact stratigraphic

relationship between settlement and cemetery can only be established for the brief area of overlap on the southern edge of the settlement: here the tombs are constructed after the settlement. Whether this is also the case for the main cemetery in the south, or whether it is possibly somewhat older (stratum d/2.3?), can not be stated with certainty. In the following stratum d/1, which can be paralleled with stratum G/4, the settlement in the north is razed and replaced by two enormous residential complexes in Egyptian style, the so-called "palace", while the area in the south is converted into a garden. After a short time span the garden layout is abandoned and a cemetery consisting of rows of very large tombs is built. Based on the association of this cemetery with the palatial building the term palace-necropolis was coined. Thus this designation only applies to the younger of the two cemeteries discussed, namely that of stratum d/1. Despite the lack of any clear evidence for direct royal links, the name 'palace' has become established and is therefore maintained for this building, which is more appropriately classified as an 'elite residence'. The stratigraphic development and the relationship between the northern and the southern area are summarised in Abb. I.

Chapter II deals with the layout of the cemetery and all aspects of the tomb architecture, namely the various types of tomb constructions, the different types of vaults, the superstructures, the building materials and the offerings deposited during construction. Furthermore the positions of the bodies in the tombs and the occupation of the tombs are discussed. Finally, the issues of multiple burials, later reuse, plundering and secondary (non funerary) reuse of tombs are addressed.

The immediate proximity of the tombs to the contemporary settlement is not seen as an un-Egyptian, namely Asiatic, feature, as has been suggested in the past. It is shown that the archaeological reality for the spatial relationship between the living and the dead, both in the Nile valley and the Delta, is much more diverse than is generally taken into account. The specific setting of the cemetery in a palatial garden could, however, be inspired by Levantine traditions. The layout of the two cemeteries is markedly

different from each other: The cemetery of stratum d/2 is characterised by loosely distributed tombs, some forming clusters, but often with internally varying orientations. In stark contrast the cemetery of stratum d/1 displays a planned layout of parallel rows of tombs, of which four (I–IV, from east to west) have been partially excavated. In front of five prominent tombs in row II, trees were planted in pits. The distance between the middle of the pits is exactly 10 Egyptian cubits, reflecting a system also in evidence in Egyptian royal Middle Kingdom mortuary complexes, such as the Theban complex of Mentuhotep Nebhetepre and the pyramid of Senwosret II at Lahun. The thus formed avenue between the rows II and III was not built up until the Hyksos-period (15th Dynasty), despite the continued use of the area as a cemetery.

The external boundaries of the cemetery are not known. Recent magnetometric prospection indicates a continued expansion to the west. Within both cemeteries, groups of tombs could be surrounded by walls, thus binding them together. Also in both strata various structures which were not used as tombs (buildings K, 21, 19, H and 16) were erected in the cemetery area. Lacking traces of use or finds, an interpretation of their function is very difficult.

Chapter II.4 discusses the tombs in detail. The tombs are erected in a general ENE–WSW direction, in correspondence with the direction of the contemporary settlement. The tombs of stratum d/1 are oriented slightly more to the north than those of the previous stratum. The orientations in both cemeteries are presented in detail in tables 1 and 2. In stratum d/2 some tombs deviate strongly from the general direction; within tomb clusters, however, orientations tend to be more similar. Figure 2 compares the orientations of the tombs of the two strata showing the pronounced homogeneity in stratum d/1. The superstructures of tombs in stratum d/1 can possess different orientations than the subterranean chambers. In these cases the orientations of the superstructures are adapted to fit closer to the orientation of the palatial building.

Tomb types are discussed in chapter II.4.2. 74 tombs are classified and the quantitative distribution of types is summarised in Abb. 37. Pit tombs (type 1) constitute 10 % of the tombs of stratum d/2, in stratum d/1 there is only one case. There is one jar burial (type 2) in each stratum. The majority of tombs are constructed of sun dried mud-bricks and set in pits. Type 3 is a small cist-tomb, which is only represented in stratum d/2, constituting 14 % of the tombs. It was used for the burials of infants

and small children. The majority of tombs in both strata are chamber tombs: in stratum d/2, 73 %, in stratum d/1, 93 %. The tombs of stratum d/1 are much larger than those of stratum d/2. The height of the walls of the chambers of the former range from 6–17 layers of bricks, while the walls of the latter's chambers generally have 5–7 layers and only in exceptional cases 8–11 layers. The typology of the tombs presented (types 4–10) is mainly based on the type of roof construction and in particular the different types of vaults. Type 4 is a small chamber tomb with a gabled roof, a type that remains in use for a long time (Abb. 9). Chambers of type 5 are covered with a single layer barrel vault (Abb. 11–14). In the case of type 5 b a sloping brick is employed at the base of every second course (Abb. 13). This was considered a Near Eastern feature in VAN DEN BRINK's fundamental study of the Tell el-Dab'a vaults (1982), but older Egyptian examples can now be cited and this idea is refuted. In the case of the vaults of type 5 c, the bricks are laid in the axis of the chamber (Abb. 15–16). It is only documented in stratum d/2. Tomb type 6 is marked by a double layer barrel vault. With bricks laid perpendicularly to the axis of the tomb and varying placements of the sloping bricks, it constitutes the most common type of vaulting in stratum d/2. Alternatively, a half brick is employed at the base of a course (only used in a large tomb of stratum d/1, with a superstructure). The combination of an inner layer of bricks laid perpendicularly to the axis of the tomb and an outer layer laid in the axis of the tomb (type 6 c; Abb. 23–25) is present once in stratum d/2, but with six examples, it becomes the most common type of stratum d/1. A double layer vault in which both layers consist of bricks laid perpendicularly to the axis of the tomb is only known from stratum d/1 (type 6 d, Abb. 26). Two tombs of stratum d/1 possess a reconstructable vault of three layers, type 7 (Abb. 27–28). Either the outer two or the outermost layer uses bricks laid perpendicularly to the axis of the tomb. Various types of domical constructions are also known. Type 8, of stratum d/2 is termed a "turtle"-vault (Abb. 30–31). Barrel vaults with apsidal ends (type 9) exist only in stratum d/1. Both ends of the vault can be built as half domes (type 9 a, Abb. 32) or in a variation only the rear end is constructed in such a way (type 9 b1, Abb. 33). Finally type 10 is a tomb with a built shaft. This is documented for single chamber tombs (type 10 a, Abb. 35) and for a tomb constructed of three parallel chambers (type 10 b, Abb. 34). Chapters II.4.3 and II.4.4 summarize the different tomb types and roof constructions in

an evaluation of both strata. A comparison of the different curvatures of the arc of the barrel vault shows that the semicircular arch is more common in both strata while the frequency of the steep, parabolic-shaped curve declines markedly from stratum d/2 to stratum d/1. The flooring of tomb chambers is briefly addressed in chapter II.4.6. Only in one case in each stratum were the floors tiled with bricks. Superstructures, the topic of chapter II.4.7, were only in evidence once in stratum d/2, but in stratum d/1 a majority (53 %) of the tombs possess traces of buildings above ground. As only the foundation layers remain, the original shape of these buildings is lost. In six out of nine cases where the architectural relationship between the superstructure and the chamber was still intact, they had been constructed as a unit. The areas of the superstructure range from 8,1 to 70,4 m² in size. A comparison of the sizes of the area of the chamber and the superstructure (Abb. 41) shows some interesting discrepancies: the largest superstructures are not built above the largest chambers. The superstructures had functioned as chapels in which offerings were deposited. Two possible shapes are suggested for their reconstruction based on well preserved Egyptian Middle Kingdom parallels (Taf. XXXII). As building material only sun-dried mud brick was employed, of two distinct sizes: In stratum d/2 their length ranges mainly from 33–35 cm, in stratum d/1 from 36–39 cm (Abb. 42). In one case a dish was deposited in the vault during construction as a form of offering deposit. Its placement in the SW-corner can be linked with offerings deposited in another tomb in the SW-corner of the pit, outside the chamber. Due to the high rate of disturbances by plundering, the positions of the bodies are rarely intact in stratum d/2 and never in stratum d/1 (chapter II.5). The undisturbed burials of children in stratum d/2 show a high degree of variability (Tables 7 and 8), in accordance with the evidence from other Egyptian sites. Generally, the adult bodies were placed with the head in the east, facing north. The body is in a contracted position, lying on the right side. This is a position otherwise not documented for Middle Kingdom Egypt, but common in the Middle Bronze Near East. In stratum d/2 most chamber tombs originally only held a single adult burial. The larger tombs of stratum d/1 contained the remains of up to seven bodies, but in disturbed circumstances the differentiation between multiple burials and later burials is often impossible. Tomb equipment is examined in chapter III. The use of coffins (chapter III.1) is indicated only by traces of plaster and paint. There is

evidence for two coffins in stratum d/2 and six in stratum d/1. Coffins were most frequently placed in the western part next to the southern wall. Fragments of limestone found in tombs of both strata (twice in stratum d/2 and three times in stratum d/1) could be remains of sarcophagi. The lack of preserved organic materials does not allow discussing whether some form of mummification or other special preparations for the body were undertaken.

The remains of three tomb statues were found in the cemetery, two statuettes and one statue larger than life size (chapter III.3, Taf. XIV). The statuette found in tomb l/19-Nr. 1 (stratum d/1) is a conventional late Middle Kingdom small format hard stone portrayal of a standing man (Abb. 306). Chapter III.3.1.1 discusses the iconography and parallels in detail, as well as the question of the place it was originally set up in. The association of the second statuette (Abb. 437) with the palace necropolis is by conjecture. The third statue was found in fragments distributed over the south-eastern part of the cemetery. Its stratigraphic position remains ambiguous, but stratum d/2 is more likely. As the statue is highly unusual, it is discussed in detail (chapter III.3.2). While only a small amount of the statue's fragments could be found, a graphic reconstruction is presented (chapter III.3.2.1, Abb. 44–46). It shows a seated man holding a curved implement in his right hand. He wears a prominent mushroom-shaped red hairdo and has yellow skin, both stereotypes of that period employed by Egyptians in portrayals of Asiatics. The man is dressed in a garment with red and black stripes, most likely a cloak. A fragment of the base retains traces of an inscription, which formed part of an offering formula. The reconstruction of the original placement of the statue is discussed in the following section and finally the mutilations inflicted upon the statue are analysed. The iconographic parallels, both Egyptian and Near Eastern, are presented in the following sequence: sculpture in the round, craftwork and relief. A small undecorated limestone stela (chapter III.4) and fragments of a ceramic offering tray (chapter III.5) were found in tombs of stratum d/1. Chapter IV deals with grave goods. The small group of purely Egyptian scarabs are examined first (chapter IV.1.1, Taf. XV–XVI), followed by a treatise of the substantial amount of jewellery. Remains of diadems and small metal pendants were found. Of particular importance is the small gold pendant depicting two antithetic dogs (Abb. 375, Taf. XVI) found in tomb p/17-Nr. 14 of stratum d/1. The discussion of its unique iconography is summarised and an Aegean, possibly Minoan, origin is

posited. The corpus of beads found in both strata, but primarily in stratum d/1, is compared with contemporary Syro-Palestinian and Egyptian corpora (Taf. XVIII–XX). The materials are primarily stone (amethyst, garnet, agate, carnelian), less frequently faïence and metal, mainly gold. The shapes and materials suggest an Egyptian manufacture. Bracelets, both in silver and gold, were found in tombs of strata d/2 and d/1.

The next category is objects of bronze, mainly weapons (chapter IV.1.3). Typologically they can all be classified as Near-Eastern. Two types of axes (chapter IV.1.3.1) were in use: in stratum d/2 one example of the so-called “duck-bill” axe is found in tomb o/19-Nr. 8, and two examples of the chisel-shaped axe are known from tombs of stratum d/1. The duck-bill axe is the only one found in an Egyptian tomb to date and is examined in detail. It is plotted in a graph (Abb. 50) showing duck bill axes arranged according to their length-width index. The chronologically distinct daggers (chapter IV.1.3.2) are the type with two mid-ribs found only in stratum d/2 (Abb. 212) and the version with five mid-ribs (Abb. 337) found in stratum d/1. Both have a wide distribution in the Levant, yet the latter at Tell el-Dab^a is a uniquely styled luxury-version, including gold elements. Two less distinct types are a narrow dagger with three flat mid-ribs and a simple dagger without decoration. A knife with a curved point (Abb. 337) is another artefact with good Levantine parallels. The largest group of weapons are socketted javelin-heads (chapter IV.1.3.4). The 13 examples were generally placed in the tombs in pairs and usually found in the eastern part of the chamber, their points directed towards the outside (see Tabelle 13). Five different sub-types (A–E, Abb. 51) are presented. They are known from tombs of both strata (summarised for stratum d/2 in Tabelle 15, for stratum d/1 in Tabelle 16). A metal belt was part of a set of the equipment of the tomb where the duck-bill axe was found. While typologically the weapons are clearly Levantine, their place of production is harder to determine and discussed in chapter IV.1.3.6.

Weapons and tools made of stone are rare: one axe, one curved knife and numerous flint inlays for sickles were found (chapter IV.1.4). The corpus of stone vessels (Abb. 54) encompasses small *kohl*-pots, fragments of a small deep dish, a cylindrical jar and a large globular jar or bottle. The lid of a faïence jar and an ostrich egg dish were found as well. Small sticks of bone with carvings and astraguli were used as throw sticks and dice, respectively (chapters IV.1.8 and IV.1.9).

Chapter IV.2 presents the ceramic finds, which are divided into 31 types. The corpus is small and not very diverse. The material is organized according to firstly fabric and secondly shape. The vessels made of Nile-clay – the finer fabrics, according to the Vienna System Nile B1 and Nile B2 preceding the coarser material Nile C1 and 2 – are followed by the Marl-clay vessels and, finally, the Syro-Palestinian imports are discussed. The open shapes are followed by the closed. The coarse Nile C fabric is in both strata the most commonly used material for pottery production (see Abb. 55). The ensemble of hemispherical cups (type 1) made of Nile B1 and Nile B2 is discussed extensively, as this shape is considered crucial for Middle Kingdom pottery (chapter IV.2.1.1.1). The cups are assembled stratigraphically and contextually, presenting the cups from tombs (Abb. 61–62), superstructures (Abb. 63) and from offering pits and from a building deposit (Abb. 64). The cup indices are plotted in comparison to the published cups from Tell el-Dab^a (Abb. 60). They are thus contrasted with cups from settlement contexts of the same period. The cup indices of stratum d/2 fall in the upper range or are even higher, while those of stratum d/1 have a wide range, confirming the picture established for the settlement material. The largest group of pottery are large round based dishes with direct rims made of Nile C1 and 2, type 10. Their sizes and details are presented in two tables (Tabelle 20 for stratum d/2, Tabelle 21 for stratum d/1). As chronologically significant group the so-called “beer bottles” made of Nile C2, type 15, are discussed in detail. Based on the shape of their necks and rims they are separated into five subtypes (A–E, Abb. 82). Such bottles were found in tomb chambers, in pits in front of tombs and in large numbers in the superstructures. Pottery made of Marl A is very rare. Four types of vessels made of Marl C are known. Types 24 to 31 are vessels imported from Syria-Palestine. Many are single pieces, but in stratum d/1 a substantial group of amphorae (type 30) was found. Their origins are discussed using data provided by the petrographic analyses by A. Cohen-Weinberger and Y. Goren (chapter IV.2.2.1). Based on these results the majority of vessels had been produced in the northern Palestinian, Lebanese or northern Syrian coastal regions. The markings on jars are presented in fig. 103 (chapter IV.2.3). In a summary, the main developments of the pottery of the two strata are compared. The thus established corpus is also compared with the “Residential Corpus” which had, by the advanced 12th Dynasty, become established in all of Egypt (chapter IV.2.5).

In particular possible reasons for the absence of some common “residence-shapes” in Tell el-Dabʿa are discussed.

Chapter IV.3 deals with the meat offerings found in the tombs (Abb. 109). The most frequently found bones in both strata were those of sheep and goat, followed by cattle and in third place pig bones. Chapter IV.4 summarizes the placement of the equipment and the goods in the tomb chambers (Abb. 110).

The offerings deposited outside the tomb chamber are discussed in chapter V. Offerings in the tomb pit (chapter V.1) and in the entrance pit in the east of the tomb (chapter V.2) are examined first. Burials of donkeys, often combined with sheep and goats, are first observed in stratum d/2 and by stratum d/1 were deposited regularly in the entrance pits of tombs. The combinations and numbers of deposited animals are shown in figs. 112 and 113. The long history of this custom in the Near East is presented in chapter V.2.1. Associated with these animal offerings pottery could be deposited as well (Tabelle 26, Abb. 114). Three superstructures of stratum d/1 contained remains of offering pottery (Abb. 115). The types mainly found are beer-bottles and hemispherical cups. As chronologically sensitive types, they are used in the following chapter (V.3.1) to attempt to establish the time span during which offerings were made in the chapels (see also Abb. 60, 116, 117). While the cups form a homogenous group, the rims of the beer bottles indicate a long period of cultic activity of about 30–40, possibly 50, years. A comparison of the classes of pottery deposited in the chambers (mainly dishes for presentation and consumption) and the superstructure (mainly containers for storage) show distinct differences of the function of these spaces. The tomb chamber is only equipped for providing the dead for the short transitory period until the regular cultic activity, situated in the superstructure, is set in motion. These specifically allocated supplies add to our understanding of the conceptualisation of the afterlife.

Different types of offering pits are documented in the cemetery: Some pits are clearly associated with particular tombs (“tomb offering pits”, chapter V.4). In these either predominantly animals or predominantly pottery are deposited. A second type of offering pit is a collective pit not for one particular tomb. Two such pits, one for each stratum, were found. They were filled with animal offerings.

Chapter VI discusses the demographic data of the buried people. Pronounced differences are notable between strata d/2 and d/1. The former shows a roughly equal proportion of men, women and chil-

dren, while in stratum d/1 the proportion of children drops drastically, in favour of adult men. This means that a proportion of children and women were buried somewhere else and excluded from the elite cemetery. The scarce epigraphic sources, in particular the partially preserved title and name on a scarab from a tomb of stratum d/1, are examined in chapter VI.1.

Possibilities and limitations of interpreting funerary customs based on archaeological remains are the topic of chapter VII. A sequence of events surrounding a burial can be established on archaeological grounds and is presented in fig. 121. Age and gender-specific tomb equipment and grave goods are discussed in chapter VII.2. Due to the heavy plundering, any definite patterns are hard to establish. New borns and small infants did not receive any pottery, only occasionally were they given a necklace with some beads. After a certain age, which possibly is in connection with the end of breast feeding around age 3, small children are equipped with some pottery. Weapons are exclusively associated with adult male burials and most jewellery with women; however, some jewellery, such as bracelets, is present in male burials. Chapter VII.3 discusses the different funerary traditions of Egypt and the Near East. Using a fluid model of ethnicity, an ethno-cultural “classification” for some artefacts and customs is suggested in the following chapter VIII.1. A critique of a traditional Egyptological concept of acculturation processes is offered in chapter VIII.2. The historical and archaeological sources for the relationship between Egypt and the Near East in the Middle Kingdom are addressed in chapters VIII.3 (Egypt in Asia) and VIII.4 (Asia in Egypt). Historic interpretations of the community of people buried in these cemeteries are attempted in chapter IX. The areas of the military, the economy (expeditions to the Sinai, trade) and finally the political role are examined. Concerning the latter, the idea recently suggested by K. Ryholt (1997) that this is the cemetery of a Canaanite dynasty (his 14th Dynasty) is disputed and an alternative model is put forward. The men of stratum d/1 were functionaries of the Egyptian state, who, profiting from their bicultural background, contributed to the intensification of relations between Egypt and the Levant. Their integration into the Egyptian administration could have been actively pursued on the part of the Egyptian crown, possibly in reaction to a developing self-determination of the Asiatic community of stratum d/2, which, from the point of view of the central government, might have been considered alarming. Chapter X offers a summary of the results.

