

EXPLORATION OF THE NECROPOLIS AT ABUSIR SOUTH IN THE SEASON OF 2012. PRELIMINARY REPORT

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THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SEASON

Miroslav Bárta

The objectives of the 2012 season in Abusir were threefold. First of all, we have finished exploration of the mastaba AS 54 dated to the reign of king Huni, in fact one of very few monuments known from his reign. Next to it, sounding works were carried out on the place of major robber's illicit diggings during the Arab Spring of 2011 and located about 200m south of the valley temple of Nyuserra (AS 70–73).

The most important part of the season, however, was dedicated to a cluster of tombs located to the east of the Sixth Dynasty tomb compound of Qar and Inti. Back in 2000, the Czech Institute of Egyptology started a new project focusing on the area adjacent to and east of the tomb complexes of Qar and Inti and their respective families, dating from the Sixth Dynasty.² It has taken several years to uncover and map the basic contours of the vast cemetery complex that has started to re-emerge. Although the project is still on-going, the emerging picture is fairly clear, with the exception of the north-eastern part of the complex (to the east of AS 37) and the central part, AS 40 (the site of a centralised cult?), which are to be explored during the season of 2013.

This cemetery was most probably established by the anonymous owner of AS 31 (Fig. 1), by far the largest mastaba in the area. This tomb was built in the “Giza style”, comprising a mastaba-shaped superstructure, with two cult niches set in the eastern façade, and a rock-cut cult chapel with a serdab and a shaft opening on the top of the mastaba.³ To the east of the tomb, on a lower level of the bedrock, was an open courtyard from which the rock-cut chapels of AS 31, AS 36 and AS 42 were accessible.

More tombs were added in the area to the east of AS 31 in several successive stages. These are most likely to have been built in the following order. The first was the tomb of Ptahhetep (AS 36) to the east of AS 31, which had a mastaba-shaped superstructure with one shaft. Underneath it was its rock-cut chapel, accessible from the open court in front of AS 31. Later, the tomb of Neferherptah (AS 65) was constructed to the south of AS 36 and south-east of AS 31.

Difficult to anchor in time is an impressive tomb, AS 67 (probably the mastaba of Nefer/Nefershepes), which is the easternmost mastaba of the cemetery so far uncovered. Slightly later than this tomb, a complex with a series of rock-cut tombs labelled as AS 68a–d (tombs of Duaptah, Shepesuptah, Iti (?) and Nefer) was built, along

¹ The expedition wishes to acknowledge the cooperation and kind support of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and the Saqqara and Abusir Inspectorates of Antiquities. The support of the following persons proved to be indispensable for the successful realisation of the mission's goals in the field: Kamal Waheed – director of the Saqqara Inspectorate, Hamdi Ameen – chief inspector of Abusir, and Mohammad Youssuf – chief inspector of South Saqqara. The expedition also acknowledges cooperation from the following inspectors and colleagues who worked with the mission in the field on a daily basis: Ayman Gamal, Samir Ramadan, Mashhour Aziz; Inspector of the Selim Hassan Storage Museum: Ragab Turki; chief conservator Ashraf Youssef and conservators: Osama Saber and Ahmad Abdel

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² For the tomb complex of Qar see BARTA *et al.* 2009.

³ For details see BARTA 2011a, 9–21.

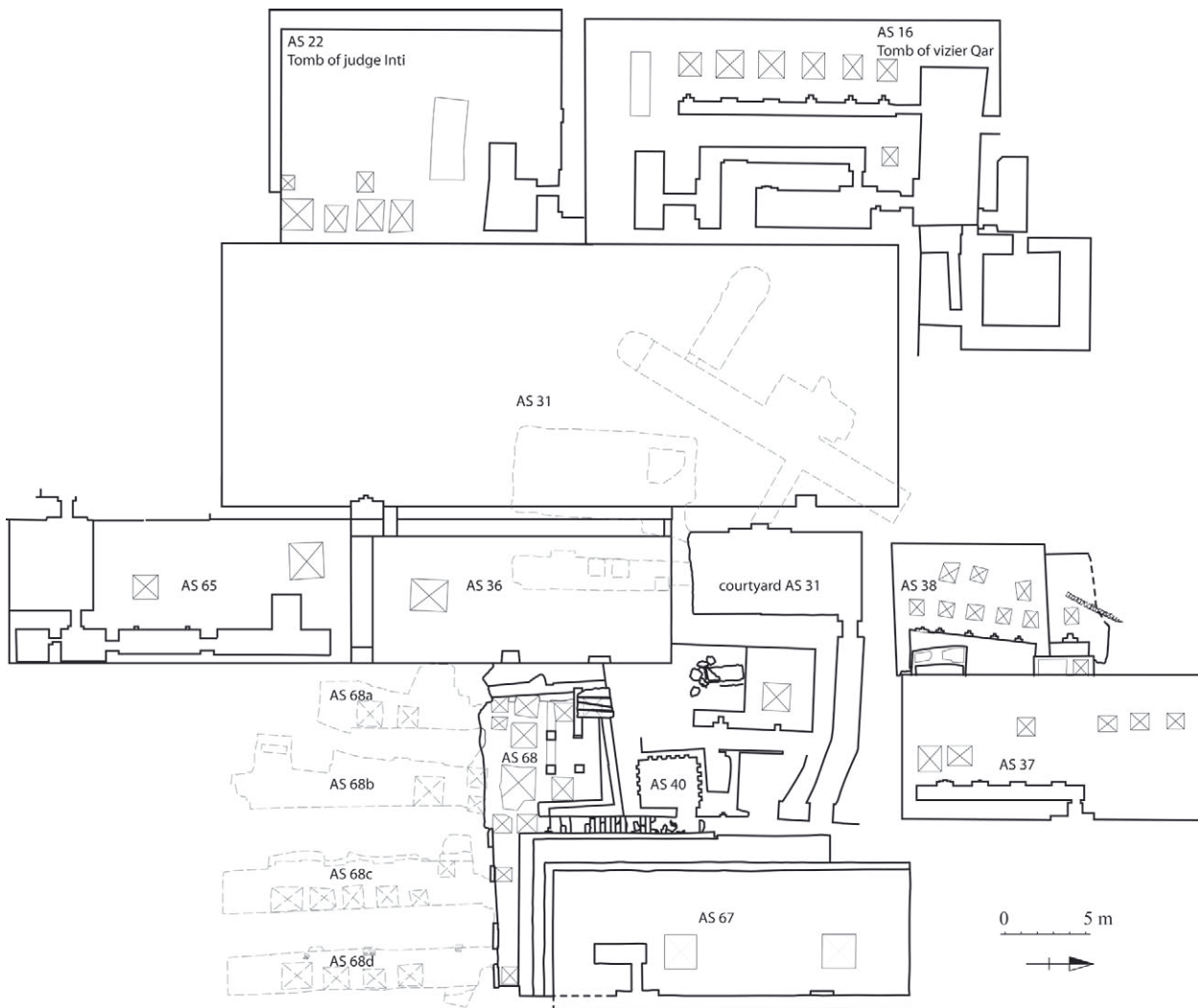


Fig. 1 Plan of the explored site (H. Vymazalová).

with an open pillared courtyard, AS 68, dedicated to the princess Sheretnebtj. The area above the rock-cut tombs was partly cleaned (structures AS 66 and AS 69) for safety reasons. Around the same time, the tomb of Neferinpu (AS 37) was built in the north-eastern part of the cemetery. Contemporary with the earlier stages of the tomb is the modest family mud-brick tomb of Kaiemtjenenet (AS 38), built to the west of AS 37; its owner, however, appears not to have belonged to the circle of the officials to which the other tombs belonged.⁴ The time range of the cemetery seems to be from the reign of Nyuserra through to the reign of Djedkara. This assumption is based on the archaeological evidence (rock-cut tombs with mastaba superstructures, pottery analysis, seal impressions in the

tomb of Neferinpu bearing the name of Djedkara and hieratic inscriptions on the masonry, which mention dates). A graffito from tomb AS 68b (Shepesuptah) mentioning the 20th cattle count indicates that the AS 68 tombs may be slightly later in date than the tomb of Neferinpu, though both date from Djedkara's reign.⁵

This complex cemetery probably represents another token of the revolutionary changes that took place in the reign of Nyuserra.⁶ As a result of a newly developing situation within the state and its administration, a new concept for the cemeteries was developed. The tombs and/or tomb complexes were frequently designed and expanded as closed and distinct units, intended to demonstrate the family and social relationships of the individu-

⁴ VYMAZALOVÁ *et al.* 2011, 173–180.

⁵ BARTA 2013a, 220–225.

⁶ BARTA 2005 and 2013b.

als buried in them.⁷ The discovery of the evidence for the burial of princess Sheretnebtj in the cemetery (see below) also indicates that a policy of connecting the family of the king with his high officials was in full swing at this time. Further evidence of this is the marriage of another Abusir official, vizier Ptahshepses, to the royal daughter of Nyusera, Khamerernebtj.

A similar cemetery, displaying this combination of family relationships and professional ties and also occupied by persons of both royal and non-royal origin, has been excavated in the Central Field of Abusir and dates to the reign of Djedkara.⁸ Very clear professional links connect the persons in this cemetery. The anonymous owner of AS 31, Nefer/Nefershepes (AS 67), Nefer (AS 68d) and Shepesuptah (AS 68b) held high offices at the court; Neferinpu (AS 37), Duaptah (AS 68a), Nefer (AS 68d) and perhaps Kaiemtjenenet (AS 38) were executing priestly duties in the sun temples of Neferirkara and Nyusera in Abu Ghurab and in their respective mortuary complexes in Abusir, while Ptahhetep (AS 36) and Neferherptah (AS 65) were high-ranking physicians.

Exploration of Mastaba AS 54

Miroslav Bárta

Mastaba AS 54 is located on top of the Central Mound in Abusir South.⁹ It is located some 100 meters southeast from the mastaba AS 31 and it has no connection to the mastabas discussed below. Its importance lies in the fact that it is one of the very few monuments dated to the reign of Huni. It is a north-south orientated tomb which has been approximately dated, based on the indirect evidence of a magnetite vessel (excav. no. 123/AS54/2010), to the reign of Huni.¹⁰ Radiocarbon dating of a sample originating from the tomb (Sample IFAO_412) provided a probable date range of 2678–2561 BC.¹¹ The tomb measures 52.60 × 23.80 m in ground plan. The whole structure was built of mud-bricks and includes a southern chapel, a northern chapel, a northern substructure (reaching about 12.60 m in depth) and some adjoining structures.

During this season the surface embedded in the superstructure masonry of the tomb was cleared, as it was necessary to clarify whether there was an additional, southern shaft, to complete the supposed architectural design of the mastaba. A two-shaft arrangement was typical for non-royal tombs of the period.¹² Yet, despite the high degree of regularity of this feature, no shaft was found in the southern part of the tomb AS 54. It is clear that the interior of the superstructure contains only one shaft opening. Thus the opening of the second entrance (if there ever was such an entrance) must be located outside the tomb proper – perhaps to the east, or, less probably, to the south.¹³

During the excavation process it became clear that the architect had incorporated a natural bedrock knoll into the superstructure in order to save time and energy when filling the interior of the tomb. The knoll rises steeply from the south so that the southern surrounding wall is about 3 m lower than the actual top of the tomb.

The surface fill above the natural tafl outcrop consisted of wind-blown sand (about 15 cm in thickness) and occasional pockets of excavated tafl. In the south-western part of the superstructure (Context 1, AS 54, 2012) a concentration of Old Kingdom sherds was found, suggesting the ritual smashing of red pottery. According to the ceramics analysis, the context may be tentatively dated to the early Fifth Dynasty and thus bears no relationship to the date of the mastaba.

Exploration of Mastaba AS 67

Miroslav Bárta

Mastaba AS 67 is one of many structures that became the target of illegal excavation attempts during February 2011. It was therefore fully documented during this season. AS 67 is a typical north-south orientated mastaba measuring 20.00 × 6.80 m, with its core built of limestone chips cemented with mortar and its casing made of well-shaped white limestone blocks. The tomb consists of two basic parts: a superstructure, comprising a corridor chapel, a south false-door chapel built into the south-eastern corner of the tomb and a well-preserved northern niche; and a substructure

⁷ BARTA 2006a, 133–145.

⁸ VERNER and CALLENDER 2002.

⁹ BARTA *et al.* 2009, 3–7.

¹⁰ BARTA 2011b, 41–50; JIRÁSKOVÁ 2011, 1–18.

¹¹ BARTA 2013a, 224.

¹² BARTA 2006a.

¹³ REISNER 1936, 163–164, fig. 77.



Fig. 2 Chapel of the mastaba AS 67 (photo M. Bárta).

consisting of two shafts reaching to the top of the mastaba, each with a single burial chamber.

The tomb was accessed from the north-east by means of a corridor that runs along the eastern face of the tomb. It is precisely in this northern area where we suppose the entrance to the complex to have been; it is as yet unexcavated. The floor of the corridor chapel was paved with flagstones, and its walls are preserved to a max. height of 3.40 m. In the northern part of the corridor is located the northern cult niche, which takes the form of an un-inscribed false-door, 1.30 m wide and 0.20 m deep, with a central recess. It is completely preserved and reaches to a height of some 3.20 m.

The single false-door chapel in the south-eastern part of the tomb was entered from the corridor by means of a paved passage, 0.62 m wide and 1.47 m long. The cult room itself, orientated in a north-south direction, measured 2.92×1.10 m and was paved with flagstones (Fig. 2).

Nothing has survived of the false-door, which was originally placed in the west wall of the chapel. Furthermore, the upper parts of the walls of the room have been lost and no relief decoration was found *in situ*. The bottom part of the chapel walls

was painted red and sprinkled with black dots to imitate red granite casing. Of the decoration, only 16 limestone fragments with sunken relief were retrieved, originating from the false-door or from the chapel decoration itself. Only two of them provide any clues to the titles of the owner: *šmr* [...] ‘friend’ (excav. no. 1–4/AS67/2012) and [...] *zš(w)* (*nw*) *pr[w]*... ‘...of scribes of the crews...’ (excav. no. 1–11/AS67/2012). The latter title is also confirmed by hieratic inscriptions from the burial chamber of Shaft 1, where the title (*j*)*m(j)-r zš(w)* (*nw*) *prw* ‘overseer of the scribes of the crews’ occurs together with the personal name, Nefer (var. Nefershepes, together with another title and name (*j*)*m(j)-r gś* ‘overseer of the gang’, Memy, see below). This seems to contradict the evidence from the corridor of the mastaba, where the sign *wśr* appears to predominate.

The substructure consisted of two shafts. Shaft 1 is located in the southern part of the tomb, immediately to the north of the cult chapel. Its opening measures 1.80×1.90 m and the shaft is 12.40 m deep. In the fill of the shaft, fragments of a false door and the torso of a limestone statue were found (excav. nos. 12 and 13/AS67/2012). At the bottom of the shaft there is a corridor, 1.66 m



Fig. 3 Burial chamber at the bottom of shaft 1 of the tomb AS 67 (photo M. Frouz).

long, 1.10 m high and 0.80 m wide, giving access to the burial chamber to the south of the shaft.

The chamber is 3.35 m long, 2.92 m wide and 2.09 m high, with a white Tura limestone sarcophagus placed by its western wall (Fig. 3). It was found to have been robbed, but some remains of the burial equipment were discovered in the debris and in the sarcophagus.

The chamber walls were completely lined with local limestone casing blocks, joined with mortar. Most of the blocks bore hieratic inscriptions written in red paint, which mentioned, in particular, the titles and names of two individuals. Most frequently named was Memy, an 'overseer of the gang.' A few inscriptions referred to Nefer(shepes), an 'overseer of scribes of the crews.'

The sarcophagus itself was very well executed. Its chest measured $2.24 \times 1.03 \times 0.80$ m ($1.80 \times 0.50 \times 0.52$ m inside). The lid measured $2.28 \times 1.04 \times 0.22$ m and was fitted with two handles on each of its narrow sides. The lid had been moved slightly to the west by the ancient tomb robbers.

Owing to the fact that the chamber had been thoroughly robbed, only a few items of its original furnishings could be found. These included limestone canopic jars (excav. no. 15/AS67/2012),

miniature vessels made of limestone (excav. no. 16/AS67/2012), a copper tool (excav. no. 19a/AS67/2012), a stone tool (excav. no. 19b/AS67/2012), and human remains, found both outside and inside the sarcophagus (excav. nos. 18 and 20/AS67/2012).

To the south of the sarcophagus a double limestone statue was found, possibly an intrusion in the burial chamber (excav. no. 17/AS67/2012). It features two men, one striding, one standing, wearing striated wigs and dressed in short pleated kilts. The standing man has his right arm bent and folded on his chest in a gesture of veneration. The statue base measures $0.19 \times 0.12 \times 0.05$ m and the statues are 0.37 m high (max.).

Shaft 2 is situated to the west of the northern niche, with an opening measuring 1.90×1.90 m. It is 12.90 m deep, with a burial chamber to the west of the shaft. The room cut in the bedrock measures 2.80×2.00 m and is 1.10 m high. Along the western wall a sarcophagus pit was found, measuring 2.20 m in length, 0.70 m in width and 0.70 m in depth. Originally, it was covered with two limestone slabs (0.20 m in thickness). These had a break in the south-eastern corner, through which the body had been desecrated.

Inside the chamber, remains of the original burial equipment were found, including limestone canopic jars (excav. no. 5/AS67/2012), miniature limestone vessels (excav. no. 6/AS67/2012) and human bones, found both outside and inside the burial pit (excav. nos. 7 and 9/AS67/2012). In the fill of the chamber were scattered the bones of small rodents (excav. no. 4/AS67/2012).

Based on the architectural and archaeological evidence and the pottery (see below), the tomb may be dated to the late reign of Nyuserra – Djedkara. Although we lack conclusive evidence to indicate the owner of the mastaba, it is likely that he was called Nefer (var. Nefershepses), as graffiti giving this name match fragments of reliefs originating from the cult chapel of the tomb.

Exploration of the tomb complex AS 68

Hana Vymazalová and Veronika Dulíková

The tomb complex of AS 68 belongs to a large cemetery established in Abusir South in the middle of the Fifth Dynasty (see above). It is situated in the southern part of the compound and consists of a pillared courtyard, a corridor and four rock-cut tombs belonging to high officials of the state.

Courtyard AS 68

Courtyard AS 68¹⁴ was constructed on a lower level than the surrounding tombs, and its builders probably used and altered a naturally existing depression in the bedrock. The courtyard had a square plan, measuring 8.00 × 8.00 m. The south wall of the courtyard was cut into the bedrock while its north and west walls were built of (or rather cased with) large limestone blocks. The east wall was also built of limestone blocks, over which a mud-brick casing was added. A staircase made of limestone slabs descended along the east wall of the courtyard from north to south, ending in its south-east section (Fig. 4). In the courtyard's fill, layers of brown sand mixed with chips and pottery fragments alternated with layers of limestone fragments with no further inclusions.

The courtyard contained four limestone pillars which originally supported architraves and roofing blocks. One of the architraves was found *in situ*, but was cracked and needed to be consolidated;

two more architraves had fallen into the courtyard. Several broken roofing blocks were also found in the courtyard.

The four pillars bear identical hieroglyphic inscriptions carved on their south sides. The inscriptions read: *z3(t) nšwt nt ht.f mrt.f jm3hwt hr ntr 3 Šrt-nbtj* – ‘king's daughter of his body, his beloved, revered with the Great God, Sheretnebtj'. These inscriptions identify the previously unknown princess Sheretnebtj as the owner of Courtyard AS 68.

The date of the structure, based on the stratigraphy of the site, the pottery finds and the name analysis is the second half of the Fifth Dynasty, very probably the reign of Djedkara. The titles of the princess indicate that she was truly the king's daughter and that the monument was constructed for her after her father's death.¹⁵

The finds recovered from the courtyard included animal bones, pottery fragments, stone hammers with traces of copper, several faience beads and several fragments of statues and reliefs, including a fragment of a door lintel (excav. no. 77/AS68/2012). Two simple burials were placed on the floor of the courtyard: the burial of an elderly individual (excav. no. 68/AS68/2012) was found between the four pillars, and the burial of a small child (excav. no. 85/AS68/2012) was found in its southern part.

No chapel entrance and no cultic areas were identified in the courtyard. In its northern area the mud floor was partly preserved, while elsewhere in the courtyard twelve shafts were discovered, dug into the bedrock, of which nine have so far been explored.

The shafts were 3.60 to 10.00 m deep and cut into bedrock consisting of alternating layers of limestone and hard and soft tafl. The softness of the tafl layers, combined with the high humidity, prevented us from finishing the exploration of two of the shafts (nos. 7 and 11). In other shafts, however, burial niches or chambers were reached, holding the remains of simple burials (nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10). The fill of the deepest shaft (no. 4) also contained objects that attested to the activity of ancient tomb robbers. A fragment of a lintel (excav. no. 244/AS68/2012), matching the fragment found in the courtyard, and the complete

¹⁴ The exploration of the courtyard and some preliminary conclusions on its owner were presented in VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, and in VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2014.

¹⁵ VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, 341.



Fig. 4 Courtyard AS 68 with pillars of king's daughter Sheretneby (photo M. Frouz).

false-door of a certain Khai, dating to the Sixth Dynasty or the First Intermediate Period (excav. no. 247/AS68/2012), were found deep in the fill of this shaft.¹⁶

Corridor AS 68

From the south-east corner of the courtyard, a corridor runs towards the east. It is 9.40 m long, 1.70 m wide at the west end and 1.35 m wide at the east end. On discovery, the corridor was filled with rubble consisting of several layers (Fig. 5). The bottommost layer (i), consisting of brown sand with limestone chips, was horizontal, while the layers that had collected above it (ii–iv) sloped from south to north, indicating that most of the rubble fell into the corridor from the south. The second layer (ii) consisted of brown sand with numerous limestone chips and fragments and reached into the southern part of the courtyard, right under the bedrock lintel above the rock-cut tombs. This layer of fill is similar to the fill inside

the rock-cut tombs themselves. Above this level, the third layer (iii) consisted of mixed brown and yellow sand with large fragments of limestone, above which followed the fourth layer (iv) consisting of yellow sand with limestone blocks and fragments of blocks, which had apparently fallen off the casing of yet unexcavated structure AS 69 that is located further to the south above the south wall of the corridor (see below p. 33).

Many pottery fragments were found in the western part of the corridor, while a smaller number came from its eastern end. Like the east wall of the courtyard, its north and east walls were built of limestone blocks and covered with mud-brick coating.

Several hieratic inscriptions were found on the limestone blocks at the north-west corner of the corridor where the mud-brick coating did not survive. One of the inscriptions mentions *///zš(w)* (*nw*) *ʿprw Nfr-šps* '[overseer of] scribes of the crews, Nefershepes.' The same name and title were found on several hieratic inscriptions inside

¹⁶ DULÍKOVÁ 2013, 65–69.



Fig. 5 West end of the corridor showing the layers of the fill, and the naos 40/AS68/2012 (photo V. Dulíková).

the burial chamber of the owner of AS 67 (see above p. 19). This confirms that the tombs in this part of the necropolis were constructed within a short period of time in the second half of the Fifth Dynasty.

The present extent of the exploration indicates that tomb AS 67 was slightly earlier than the burial complex AS 68 of Princess Sheretnebt, and that the latter must therefore have been accessed along the west wall of the former, as a more direct access from the Abusir Lake to AS 68 was no longer possible. However, the two monuments were probably constructed in quick succession, because the mud-brick coating of the walls of the courtyard and the corridor of AS 68 continues beneath the coating of AS 67 but over the staircase of AS 68.

The south wall of the corridor is cut into the bedrock and is the continuation of the south wall of the courtyard. In this wall, entrances into four

rock-cut tombs were discovered, two of them in the courtyard (AS 68a and AS 68b¹⁷) and two others in the corridor (AS 68c and AS 68d). In addition to that, four limestone naoi with engaged statues were found in the corridor, perhaps associated with these rock-cut tombs. (Figs. 5 and 6)

Naos 40/AS68/2012 was discovered *in situ* in the western part of the corridor / south-east corner of the courtyard, facing the staircase.¹⁸ It measures 206 × 86.5 × 46 cm and bears no inscriptions; its owner therefore remains unknown at the moment. It contains an engaged statue showing a standing man. An altar was placed in front of the naos, made of stones and mud-brick and originally coated with whitewashed plaster.

Naos excav. no. 140/AS68/2012 was found *in situ* to the east of the above naos. It is 1.87 m high, 0.98 m wide and a maximum of 25 cm thick and contains two engaged statues, of a man and a boy. It is situated on the west side of the entrance into tomb AS 68c (see below) and most probably depicts its owner and his offspring.

Two more naoi were discovered in the eastern part of the corridor. These were of smaller size than the two from the western end, but were much better executed. Naos excav. no. 141/AS68/2012 is 1.37 m high, 1.15 m wide and a maximum of 27 cm thick. It accommodates three engaged statues showing two men and a woman.

The last discovered naos, excav. no. 158/AS68/2012, measuring 1.43 m in height, 1.40 m in width and a maximum of 26 cm in thickness, is very similar to naos 141/AS68/2012 and shows three figures of two men and a woman, executed in the same style and with the same details. The two men wear short curly wigs while each of the two men on the previous naos wore a different wig. These last two naoi are placed on either side of the entrance of tomb AS 68d (see below) and very probably depict the people who were buried there.

The floor of the corridor contained several shafts, which seem to be slightly later in date. These shafts have not been explored yet.

Rock-cut tomb AS 68a – tomb of Duaptah

The entrance of this tomb was located in the west part of the south wall of the courtyard. The tomb was filled with rubble and had been robbed in

¹⁷ VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, 343–345.

¹⁸ VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, 345–346.



Fig. 6 Corridor AS 68 with naoi by its west wall (photo M. Frouz).



Fig. 7 Lintel of Duaptah restored from two pieces (photo M. Frouz).

antiquity and later flooded.¹⁹ It had a slightly irregular plan, measuring 11.00 × 4.00 m. The east wall was nicely carved into the bedrock while the west wall was much rougher. The tomb contained two burial shafts, which have not been explored yet. There was a small shallow niche by the south shaft and a large niche in the north-west part of the tomb. In the south part of the tomb, the ancient tomb robbers built a wall of irregular stones and mudbrick, behind which they threw the fill of the shafts when robbing them.

The main room of the tomb was cleaned and documented. The finds included fragments of pottery and of animal bones. Scattered remains of a burial were found in the fill of the niche in the north-west part of the room

A lintel broken into two fragments (see above excav. nos. 77/AS68/2012 and 244/AS68/2012) was found, which seems to have originally been placed above the entrance of this tomb (Fig. 7). The lintel bears an inscription in sunken relief, rendering the usual offering formula and the titles and name of the owner *ḥtp[-dj-nšwt] Jnpw ḥntj zḥ-nṯr ḳršt.f m ḥrt-nṯr [/// w]rt jmšḥw ḥr nṯr-š šḥd pr-š Dwš-Pth* ‘May the king give an offering and Anubis who presides over the god’s booth that he may be buried in the cemetery [at an old age] revered with the Great God, inspector of the Great House, Duaptah’.

The rock-cut tomb AS 68b – tomb of Shepesuptah

The tomb was filled with rubble and had been robbed in antiquity and later flooded.²⁰ The total length of the tomb was 17.00 m and its maximum

width was 4.50 m. Several old hieratic inscriptions on its walls revealed that Shepesuptah was the name of this tomb’s owner.²¹ The inscriptions mention some of his titles in both a shorter and a longer version: *ḥrj (n) šdm(w) pr-š Šps-pw-Pth Jdw* ‘chief of justice of the Great House, Shepesuptah called Idu’ and *ḥrj (n) šdm(w) pr-š m gšwj-pr (j)m(j)-r šḥtj-ḥtp wr 10 Šm^c nšt-ḥntt ḥtm(w) ḥst ḥtpw dfšw bitj Šps-pw-Pth* ‘chief of justice of the Great House in the two administrative units, overseer of the two fields of offerings, great one of the ten of Upper Egypt, (he who belongs to) the foremost seat, sealer of the best offerings and provisions of the King of Lower Egypt, Shepesuptah’.

The tomb consists of a cult chapel and a burial chamber. The chapel has a slightly irregular plan, with a nicely carved east wall and an uneven west wall. It seems that the latter was originally cased with fine white limestone blocks, some of which were found on the floor of the tomb, while most had been removed by tomb robbers. A large shaft is located in the north part of the antechamber, but this shaft has not been explored yet.

The south-east part of the chapel opens out further to the south and it is here that the entrance into the burial chamber is located. It was found blocked by a wall built of irregular stones but a hole in the top east corner indicated that tomb robbers had entered. The burial chamber had a rectangular plan with a niche to the west and a burial pit along its west wall. The burial pit contained the disturbed burial of a man, placed in an outstretched position with his head to the north and his face turned to the east.

¹⁹ VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, 343.

²⁰ VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, 343–345.

²¹ See also VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2012, 344.

Rock-cut tomb AS 68c – tomb of Iti (?)

This tomb was found partly filled with brown sand mixed with chips and pieces of limestone and numerous fragments of pottery. The fill reached almost to the ceiling at the entrance and sloped down further inside the tomb. The top of the fill was covered with a layer of dry mud, which indicates that the tomb was flooded in antiquity.

The chapel had a rectangular plan, measuring 17.00 m in length and 3.00 m in width. The east and south walls of the tomb were smoothly carved into the bedrock while the west wall was uneven and cased with grey limestone blocks. A large part of this limestone casing survived *in situ*. All the tomb's walls were originally covered with a brown clay plaster, 1 cm thick, which survived in large sections on the east and south walls and in small sections on the casing of the west wall.

The west wall casing featured three large niches, which seem to have accommodated at least four false-doors. Nothing of those doors survived *in situ*, except for the plaster imprints on the floor. Fragments of at least two different false-doors were however discovered in the tomb, one of an excellent quality of stone and craftsmanship, the other slightly rougher. One of these fragments bears a depiction of a female figure in a long dress, with a lotus in her hand, and part of a hieroglyphic inscription bearing part of the name of Sheret[nebtj] (excav. no. 230/AS68c/2012).²²

In the north part of the west wall of the tomb, a serdab was discovered. It was a niche measuring 1.70 × 1.20 × 1.90 m, sealed with a wall of regular limestone blocks joined with mortar and covered with brown plaster. The serdab seems to have been completely closed, without the usual peep-opening, but tomb robbers had removed two blocks and damaged part of the serdab's contents. The serdab was thus found partly filled with brown sand covered with mud, which indicated that the room had been flooded in antiquity.

Despite the robbers' activity, statues were discovered in the serdab (excav. no. 215/AS68c/2012). It seems that in total 10 statues were originally placed there, some of which survived complete and some in small pieces. The following five statues survived almost complete (Fig. 8):

Reg. no. 2637, excav. no. 215–1/AS68c/2012, Pair statue of a seated couple, the woman embracing the man; 62.5 cm high;

Reg. no. 2638, excav. no., 215–2/AS68c/2012, Pair statue of a couple, man striding and woman standing, with their hands along their bodies; 47 cm high;

Reg. no. 2639, excav. no. 215–3/AS68c/2012, Statue of a seated official, completed with three pieces and several small fragments; 46 cm high;

Reg. no. 2640, excav. no. 215–4/AS68c/2012, Statuette of a seated official, the pedestal bearing the hieroglyphic inscription (*j*)*m(j)*-*r gś(w) Jtj* 'overseer of the gangs, Iti'; 22 cm high;

Reg. no. 2641, excav. no. 215–5/AS68c/2012, Statue of a seated woman with a child; 37.5 cm high.

Two more statues that had originally been placed in the serdab were found broken and their fragments scattered around. These were pseudo-group statues, one of them showing two seated men while the other statue depicted two striding men. At least two wooden statues, badly preserved, were also found in the serdab, together with fragments of another limestone statue. The statues found in the serdab of the tomb AS 68c might depict several different people who were buried in the tomb.²³

Six burial shafts were found in the tomb, five of them located along the east wall, and one by the west wall in front of the serdab. The shafts have not been explored yet. Two of them (shafts 2 and 3) were, however, found partly emptied, as a result of ancient robbery. The floor of the tomb around and to the south of the shafts was covered with the fill removed by the robbers. This fill consisted of limestone and tafl chips and pieces and contained only very few fragments of pottery.

The tomb robbers also built a wall of irregular stones in the north part of the tomb, 5 m behind its entrance. This wall presumably helped to hold back the fill that had already started to settle in the tomb, to protect the robbers during their work in the shafts. For the construction of this wall, the robbers used various pieces of limestone, including some fragments of false-doors. This indicates that the tomb and its cult had already been abandoned at the time of their activity, which accord-

²² For more information on the false-door see VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2014, 3, 7–10.

²³ For the statues see also VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2014, 3–7.



Fig. 8 Statues from the serdab of Iti's tomb AS 68c (photo M. Frouz).

ing to the pottery finds took place in the Sixth Dynasty (see below).

Concerning the owners of tomb AS 68c,²⁴ we may suppose that the shafts belonged to the tomb-owner, his wife and their relatives. For the present, however, it is not clear whether Iti or one of his relatives was the actual owner. Four places for false-doors indicate that two of the six shafts could have been additions to the original plan.

Besides the shafts, a secondary burial was discovered on the floor along the east wall of the entrance (excav. no. 202/AS68c/2012). The body of a man aged between 35 and 50 was placed here in a contracted position with his head to the north and face to the west. The body seems to have been surrounded with stones, probably creating the base of a simple structure, of which only a little has survived. The relationship between this man and the owners of AS 68c is currently unknown.

Rock-cut tomb AS 68d – tomb of Nefer Miroslav Bárta

This is the easternmost tomb in the row of four rock-cut tombs (BÁRTA 2013c). The tomb is entered by a spacious entryway, which is 1.05 m wide, 2.75 m high and 0.60 m long. The stone-cut chapel itself measures 15.50 × 2.35 × 2.80 m. The serdab, which is located inside the tomb immediately to the east of the entrance, is in fact an irregular cavity with tentative dimensions of 2.07 × 0.68 × 1.35 m. It was found filled with a thick deposit of tafl mud and contained four limestone statues of the tomb owner and his wife (Fig. 9):

Statue reg. no. 2635, exav. No. 149a/AS68d/2012, Striding statue of Nefer wearing an elaborate wig and short pleated kilt reaching above the knees. The statue base measures 17 × 29 × 4.5 cm; the height of the statue is 71 cm. The sunken inscription on the statue base reads: *(j)m(j)-r*

²⁴ See also VYMAZALOVÁ and DULÍKOVÁ 2014.



Fig. 9 Statues found in the serdab of Nefer's tomb AS 68d (photo M. Frouz).

$zš(w) (nw) ḥprw Nfr$ 'overseer of the scribes of the crews, Nefer.'

Statue reg. no. 2634, excav. No. 149b/AS68d/2012, Scribal statue of Nefer who is rendered seated, wearing a striated wig, with crossed legs and holding a papyrus roll on his stretched kilt. The roll is inscribed with offering formulas. The base of the statue is roughly triangular, measuring $33 \times 21.5 \times 5$ cm; the height of the statue is 40 cm. The sunken inscription on the statue base reads: $(j)r(j)-ḥt nšwt (j)m(j)-r zš(w) (nw) ḥprw Nfr$ 'property custodian of the king, overseer of scribes of the crews, Nefer.'

Statue reg. no. 2633, excav. No. 149c/AS68d/2012, Striding statue of Nefer wearing a striated wig and a pleated kilt. The statue base measures $26 \times 46 \times 7$ cm; the height of the statue is 82 cm. The sunken inscription on the statue base reads: $(j)m(j)-r zš(w) (nw) ḥprw jmzḥw ḥr ntr-ḥ, (j)r(j)-ḥt nšwt ḥr nb.f Nfr$ 'Overseer of scribes of the crews, well-provided before the Great God, property custodian of the king, before his Lord, Nefer.'

Statue reg. no. 2636, excav. No. 149d/AS68d/

2012, a pair statue depicting Nefer being embraced by his wife Neferhathor. The statue base measures $27 \times 27 \times 4.5$ cm and the max. height of the statues is 58 cm. The man is rendered striding, wearing a wig covering his ears and a short pleated kilt. His wife is portrayed standing, with a heavy striated wig and long tight tunic reaching above her ankles. The sunken inscription on the statue base reads: $(j)m(j)-r zš(w) (nw) ḥprw Nfr, (j)r(jt)-ḥt nšwt Nfr-Ḥwt-Ḥr$ 'Overseer of scribes of the crews, Nefer, property custodian of the king, Neferhathor.'

The whole chapel was devoid of decoration except for the west wall, which originally contained three embedded false-doors. The southernmost one, excav. no. 164/AS68d/2012, is preserved *in situ*, placed in a niche (i) (Fig. 10). A rectangular hole in the floor in front of the false-door indicates that an offering table was placed here, which was perhaps removed by the tomb robbers. A highly eroded fragment of a limestone offering table, excav. no. 161/AS68d/2012, which accurately fits into the hole, was found behind the entrance into the tomb in the debris of brown sand and limestone chips.



Fig. 10 False-door of Nefer found in situ in the southern niche in his tomb AS 68d (photo M. Frouz).

The false-door belonged to Nefer and his wife Neferhathor and is 0.98 m wide and 2.13 m high, decorated with inscriptions and figures in low relief, on which the original polychrome is preserved.

The titles of Nefer and his wife Neferhathor preserved on the false-door are as follows:

Nefer's titles:

(j)m(j)-r prwj-ḥd – 'overseer of the two treasuries' (JONES 2000, 133–134, no. 524).

(j)m(j)-r zš(w) (nw) ḥ(w) (nw) nšwt – 'overseer of scribes of the king's documents' (JONES 2000, 209–210, no. 780).

(j)m(j)-r zš(w) (nw) ḥprw – 'overseer of scribes of the crews' (JONES 2000, 210–211, no. 783).

(j)m(j)-ḥt zš(w) (nw) ḥprw – 'under-supervisor of scribes of the crews' (JONES 2000, 297, no. 1083).

(j)m(j)-r šnwtj – 'overseer of the two granaries' (JONES 2000, 254–255, no. 923).

(j)m(j)-r gš ḥmwt – 'overseer of a gang of craftsmen' (JONES 2000, 286, no. 965).

(j)r(j)-ḥt nšwt – 'property custodian of the king' (JONES 2000, 327–328, no. 1206).

ḥm-nṯr Rḥ m (št)-jb-(Rḥ) – 'priest of Ra in the sun temple of Neferirkara' (JONES 2000, 537, no. 2005).

ḥm-nṯr B3-Nfr-jr-k3-Rḥ – 'priest of the pyramid of Neferirkara' (JONES 2000, 512, no. 1917).

ḥry-ššt3 – 'one who is privy to the secret' (JONES 2000, 609, no. 2233).

zš ḥ(w) (nw) nšwt – 'scribe of the king's documents' (JONES 2000, 838, no. 3057).

Nefer's epithets:

jmšḥw ḥr nb.f – 'well provided before his Lord' (JONES 2000, 28, no. 129).

Neferhathor's titles:

(j)r(jt)-ḥt nšwt – 'property custodian of the king' (JONES 2000, 328, no. 1206).

ḥm(t)-nṯr Ḥwt-Ḥr m šwt.š nb(w)t – 'priestess of Hathor in all her (cult) places' (JONES 2000, 550, no. 2041).

ḥm(t)-nṯr Ḥwt-Ḥr nbt nht – 'priestess of Hathor, Mistress of the *nehet*-shrine' (JONES 2000, 545, no. 2024).

Neferhathor's epithets:

ḥmt.f mrt.f – 'his beloved wife' (JONES 2000, 596, no. 2186)

nbt jmšḥw ḥr hn.š – 'well provided-one before her husband' or 'possessor of reverence with her spouse' (JONES 2000, 482, no. 1802)

False-door 2 had been completely removed except for the lintel, excav. no. 178/AS68d/2012, which measures 0.72 m in length and is 0.18 m high. It has a line of inscription detailing an offering formula *ḥtp dj nšwt kršt.š m ḥrt-nṯr nfrt wrt* 'May the king give an offering that she may be buried in the cemetery at a good old age'. This inscription indicates that the owner of this false-door was a lady; her name unfortunately is not preserved. The niche (ii) in which the stela was embedded measures 0.82 × 1.98 × 0.25 m and is very roughly carved. Near the niche was found a fragment of a limestone offering table with a basin, which may perhaps originally have been placed in front of the false-door. Interestingly, pottery finds and animal bones were associated with this offering table fragment, most probably representing the remains of offerings.

False-door 3 is completely missing; the empty, roughly carved niche (iii) measures at present 0.80 × 1.90 × 0.15 m. In front of it is a preserved limestone altar of 0.65 × 0.42 m, sunk into the floor of the chapel. It has a rectangular shape with an *ḥtp*-sign and two shallow basins.

A small niche (iv), measuring 0.80 × 0.65 m, was carved in the north part of the west wall of the tomb. A fragment of a limestone basin was found *in situ*, sunk into the floor in front of this niche.

The floor of the chapel features four shaft lips, located along the east wall. Shaft 1 (counting from the south) has an opening of 1.40 × 1.50 m, Shaft 2 1.40 × 1.55 m, Shaft 3 1.10 × 1.20 m and Shaft 4 1.50 × 1.40 m.

Shaft 2, located in front of niche (ii) was found to have been partly uncovered by tomb robbers. The fill in the bottom part of the shaft contained brown sand with limestone and tafl chips, together with numerous pottery finds and animal bones, including the remains of a pottery deposit and animal offerings which had been placed in the shaft during the burial ceremonies. The shaft reached a depth of 6.5 m, where an entrance in the west wall lead into the burial chamber. The chamber was filled with tafl fragments that had broken off the ceiling and walls and contained a large limestone sarcophagus which had been damaged by tomb robbers (Fig. 11). Inside were scattered the bones of the deceased (a female), together with a large number of faience beads (excav. nos. 197 and 198/



Fig. 11 Burial chamber in shaft 2 of the tomb AS 68d (photo M. Frouz).

AS68d/2012). On the floor of the chamber, by the south-east corner of the sarcophagus, remains of the tomb equipment survived partly *in situ*, including copper instruments, the bones of meat offerings, beer jars, four limestone canopic jars (excav. nos. 193–196/AS68d/2012), and deteriorated wooden objects, including four models of boats.²⁵

The other three shafts in the tomb have not been explored yet. A wall of irregular stones was built by tomb robbers in the southern part of the tomb, south of the shafts, behind which they threw the fill of the shafts when robbing them.

Pottery finds from tomb complex AS 68

Katarína Arias

During the excavation season of 2012, large quantities of ceramics were recovered from all the excavated tombs, filling over 60 baskets and originating from several hundred individual vessels, some of which have been fully reconstructed. Due to the large quantity of finds, part of the analysis is to be completed in the coming season of 2013.

The largest amounts of pottery came from the stratified fill in the courtyard of princess Sheret-

neby (AS 68) and from the rock-cut tombs built into the bedrock south and south-east of it. The ceramics from the stratified fill of the courtyard reflect a rich ritual activity in the courtyard itself and also in the tombs around it. A large amount of characteristic ritual pottery was found, predominantly stands, platters and miniatures. The same is true of the corridor leading east of it towards the rock-cut tombs AS 68c and AS 68d. From its lower levels, over 40% of the collected ceramics were made up of stands and platters (counted by the minimum number of individual vessels, not merely by diagnostic fragments), complemented by a further 20% made up of miniature vessels.

Almost all the shafts in the main courtyard were excavated, but only two ceramic contexts have been analysed thus far. The material from Shaft 3 and its burial chamber is typical late Old Kingdom material, pointing towards the late Fifth Dynasty, with a large percentage of fine, red-slipped wares, such as very fine bowls and jars. For example, there are two shallow bowls with a lip rim and rounded base, found broken into numerous pieces and scattered in the fill of the burial chamber. They are very similar in shape

²⁵ For comparison see for instance the tomb of Kahotep in the Abusir pyramid field, see GRAJETZKI 2003.

and size.²⁶ There is also the upper part of a large jar made of Nile silt A, thin-walled and very well fired, with a metallic sound. It has a wide and low neck with open to flaring rim and a tall body.²⁷

In the tomb of Duaptah (AS 68a), only the rock-cut chapel has been excavated so far, where pottery finds were collected in the fill of the tomb and its entrance. The ceramics belong to a typical late Fifth Dynasty production, with a large amount of fine, red-slipped wares (especially jars and bowls). Among the bowls, there are a few very fine examples, with highly concave flaring walls and simple to modelled rims.²⁸ There are also some fine jars, with low to medium neck and angular rim, some made of marl clay. However, this tomb also has examples of possible later intrusions, such as low and wide beer jars with a straight rim, tubular body and rounded base, covered by red slip on the outer surface. They are typical of the early to middle Sixth Dynasty,²⁹ which corresponds to the period of the robbers' activity.

Some of the ceramics from the tomb of Shepesuptah (AS 68b) are of a very fine quality, especially those from the excavated burial chamber. While most of the pottery from the fill can be associated with the late Fifth Dynasty (especially the large number of miniature vessels), there are also several pieces of a slightly later date, found in the chapel of the tomb. The most exceptional find, both in quality and shape, is a small miniaturized platter found inside the burial chamber (Fig. 12a/b). It is extremely fine (made of Nile silt A), with a thickness of only 0.3 cm. It has an aperture diameter of 5.7 cm, a maximum rim diameter of 7 cm and a height of 1.5 cm. It was fully covered with high quality red slip. It imitates a large platter with a long-ledged rim with inner grooves (replicated even in this miniaturized form) and a flat base with three base knobs. While full-sized examples of this type are well attested, it is very rare in a miniaturized form. There are only very few analogies to the miniaturized version of this shape and these come



Fig. 12 Miniature platter no. 32-1.AS68b.2012 from the tomb of Shepesuptah (AS 68b) (photo M. Frouz).

from royal complexes.³⁰ Some of the large platters are fine and well fired,³¹ but more usually they are made of lower quality clays (Nile silt B2 or even C) and belong among rougher ceramic wares.³²

In the tomb of Iti (AS 68c), only the fill of the tomb-chapel proper and the serdab have been excavated. While the pottery from the serdab (very scant) is of typical late Fifth Dynasty morphology, the ceramics from the fill are mixed with forms characteristic of the Sixth Dynasty. These include several shallow bowls with a very low carinated rim and rounded shoulders (called Meidum bowls),³³ tall conical bread-baking forms with a flat base,³⁴ and short and wide beer jars with a straight rim, tubular body and rounded base, covered with red slip on the outer surface.³⁵ The robbing activity in this tomb (attested by the secondary

²⁶ For the type, see i.e. KAISER 1969, esp. 167–168; REISNER and SMITH 1955, Fig. 109.

²⁷ The general shape seems to be analogical to KAISER 1969, type III and BARTA 2006c, type III, also dating from the late Fifth Dynasty.

²⁸ Such as i.e. REISNER 1931, Fig. 78: 2–4; REISNER and SMITH 1955, Fig. 121: 14–3-66, 29–4-125 and 27–6-12; KAISER 1969, type XLI: 209–212.

²⁹ RZEUSKA 2006, Pl. 19: nos. 41 and 44, Pl. 20: no. 48.

³⁰ KAISER 1969, type XLII: 217.

³¹ REISNER 1931, Fig. 78: 8.

³² JUNKER 1950, Fig. 38: 4; KAISER 1969, type XLII: esp. nos. 213, 215 and 216; BARTA 2006c, Fig. XLII: esp. ACb; RZEUSKA 2006, Pl. 72: 311.

³³ See also OP DE BEECK 2004, Fig. 3: esp. nos. 43, 40, 42 and 43; BALLETT 1987.

³⁴ FALTINGS 1998, Abb. 10a: 22–30; ARIAS KYTNAROVÁ 2011, 213.

³⁵ For the nearest analogy, see RZEUSKA 2006, Pl. 19: nos. 41 and 44 and Pl. 20: no. 48.

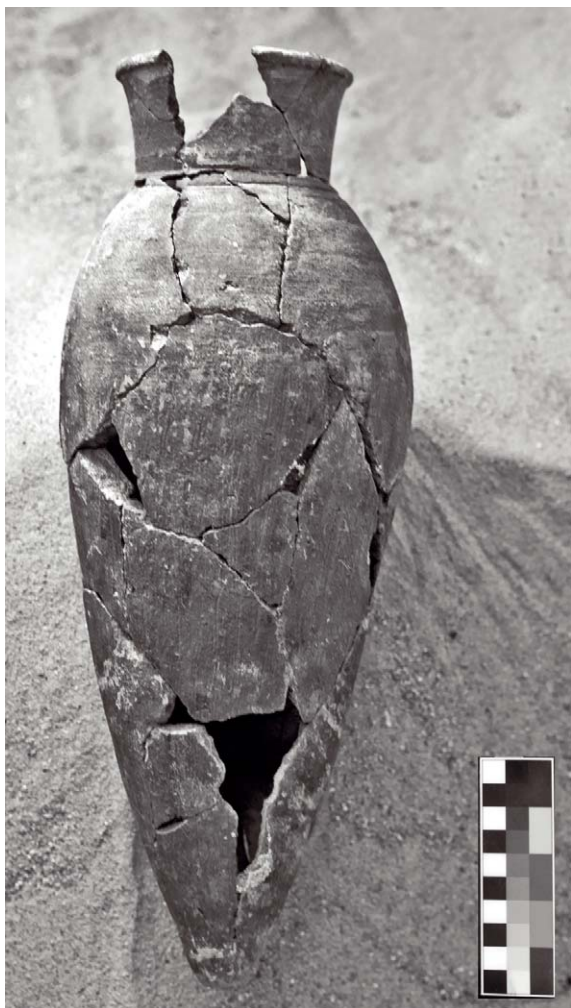


Fig. 13 Tall jar no. 43–13.AS68d.2012 from shaft 2 of the rock-cut tomb of Nefer (AS 68d) (photo M. Frouz).

wall built in the tomb) can therefore be dated approximately to the early to middle Sixth Dynasty.

In amount, variety and form, the most interesting pottery came from the rock-cut tomb of Nefer (AS 68d). The ceramic finds came from several contexts, including the remains of a shaft deposit in Shaft 2 consisting of more than 50 individual vessels, predominantly stands and platters. Several vessels could be fully reconstructed – these include a very tall fine jar measuring 41.5 cm with an open neck, modelled rim, tapering spindle-shaped body and pointed base (Fig. 13).³⁶ The stands include both a tall bi-conical X-shaped type

with a simple rounded or rolled rim, in at least two examples also with a triangular cut window³⁷, and a simple low concave type.³⁸ Some of the less usual types include a small bowl with a lip rim, an outer ridge under the rim and a flat base, covered with a thick white wash.³⁹ After the preliminary analysis, the pottery from the deposit in Shaft 2 and from the burial chamber seems to fit the late Fifth Dynasty, while the ceramics from the fill of the tomb-chapel proper, on the other hand, reflect the later robbing activities occurring in the course of the Sixth Dynasty.

Overall, a very large percentage of the ceramics from the tombs and shaft associated with the courtyard of princess Sheretnebtj consists of fine wares of high quality, reflecting the high social status of the tomb owners. The closest analogy from Abusir can be seen in the pottery from the royal necropolis, such as the remains of the original burial equipment of Prince Werkaura (manuscript in preparation) or Princess Hedjetnebu⁴⁰, etc.

The pottery from the short excavation in the anonymous tomb AS 54, consisting of only three baskets collected in the area north of the mud-brick chapel, was documented completely. While the finds from the previous seasons were characterized by typical early Old Kingdom pottery, such as slim and tall beer jars with a rib on the lower rim, articulated shoulder and pointed base, or bowls with an inner ledge, both of the late Third Dynasty,⁴¹ none of the pottery from this season could be associated with the period of the building of the tomb. The ceramic finds (mostly ovoid beer jars with a low neck and partly pointed base and a few bowls with a carinated rolled rim) probably reflect later ritual activity in this area, most possibly from the Fifth Dynasty.

The pottery from the large Mastaba AS 67 has been documented only partially, due to time constraints. The material from the chapel (consisting predominantly of beer jars and a few bread forms) seems to belong to the early Fifth Dynasty. Very large amounts of pottery came from both burial chambers. To give an idea of the scope of the pottery finds, the northern chamber yielded nine baskets of diagnostic fragments, later sorted into four

³⁶ Probably a further development from type VIII of REISNER 1931, Fig. 65: nos. 11, 12 and esp. 13.

³⁷ I.e. REISNER and SMITH 1955, Fig. 129 and 130: nos. 36–3-44 and 36–3-46.

³⁸ REISNER and SMITH 1955, Fig. 131: 13–10-48 and 14–2-122; ARIAS KYTNAROVÁ 2011, Fig. 21: 9.AS47.07 and 10.AS47.07.

³⁹ Bowls with an outer ridge are exceptional, but see e.g. BARTA 2006c, Fig. XXIV: Z.

⁴⁰ VERNER and CALLENDER 2002, 85–98, esp. 97–98.

⁴¹ For other examples of both types from Abusir South cemetery see e.g. ARIAS KYTNAROVÁ 2010, Fig. 2.5.1 and 2.5.5.

baskets of rough ceramics (predominantly platters and trays), three baskets of finer pottery (such as stands) and two baskets of very fine pottery (consisting exclusively of jars made of marl clays and fine red-slipped Nile silt bowls). The southern chamber contained predominantly fine to medium-fine ceramics. Interestingly, while there is some early Fifth Dynasty pottery in the burial chambers, several types are more characteristic of the late Fifth to middle Sixth Dynasty, especially the bent-sided bowls with both simple and modelled rims,⁴² and shallow bowls with very low carinated rims and rounded shoulders⁴³. The most common fine jar type is a simple ovoid jar with a low neck, rolled rim and partly pointed base.⁴⁴ To conclude, the ceramic finds from both burial chambers seem to reflect a reuse in the course of the Sixth Dynasty, a hypothesis supported by the anthropological material.

Structures AS 66 and AS 69

Hana Vymazalová and Mohamed Megahed

Above the south wall of the courtyard, just above the rock-cut tombs of AS 68a–AS 68d, the rubble was partly removed in order to reduce the heavy weight over the tombs. As a result, the remains of two structures built of mud-bricks and limestone were found, of which the north walls were uncovered. Structure AS 66 is located above rock-cut tombs AS 68a–b while structure AS 69 was built further to the west on the bedrock above tombs AS 68c–d.

Cleaning the north wall of structure AS 69 revealed how the wall had been constructed. The core of the tomb was cased with a plastered mud-brick wall, creating several high steps. Over this mud-brick wall, a layer of backing-stones was added, creating similar steps, which survive in the bottom section of the north wall. Over this layer, a casing of white limestone blocks was constructed, which survive only at the east end, the rest of it having fallen down into the corridor of AS 68 (see above p. 21).

The north wall of structure AS 66 shows the very same method of construction. It was later in date, as it adjoins the west wall of AS 69. In addi-



Fig. 14 Models of three wooden boats found in the small structure AS 69b, excav. no. 134/AS69b/2012 (photo H. Vymazalová).

tion AS 66 adjoins the east wall of the tomb of Ptahhetep (AS 36). All of these three tombs (AS 66, AS 69 and AS 36) seem to have been built within a short period of time.

It is possible that tombs AS 66 and AS 69 may be related to the rock-cut tombs located just underneath. However, only further excavation can confirm or exclude this hypothesis.

During the cleaning of the north wall of AS 69, a small intact structure built of stones and mud-bricks was discovered, which was numbered AS 69b. It was located ca 1.5 m south of the north wall of AS 69 and was built within the core of this structure. It would seem, therefore, to be part of structure AS 69.

⁴² Such as REISNER and SMITH 1955, Fig. 107: esp. 15–12-22, 34–10-9 and 13–1-512; KAISER 1969, type XXI: esp. 133–135 and type XXIV: esp. 145 and 147; from Abusir i.e. BÁRTA 2006c, Fig. XXIII; ARIAS KYTNAROVÁ 2011, Fig. 17: 15–2/AS47/07 and 12/AS47/07.

⁴³ KAISER 1969, type XIV.

⁴⁴ I.e. REISNER and SMITH 1955, Fig. 82: esp. 14–2-120, 14–4-27 and 12–10-45.

The little tomb measured 1.70 × 0.86 m and was 0.65 m high, covered with 10 cm thick limestone slabs and sealed with mortar. The inside walls were covered with nicely preserved pink plaster. Inside the tomb, three wooden boat models and 18 oars/ rudders, excav. no. 134/AS69b/2012 (Fig. 14), were found. Although boat models are sometimes found associated with burials in Old Kingdom tombs,⁴⁵ our examples from Abusir South had no directly related burial; the structure AS 69b was built purely to house the models.

Each of the three boat models exhibits a different form:⁴⁶ one of them is a papyrus-form wooden boat, another is a flat-bottomed river boat, perhaps with seven oars on each side of the deck, and the third is a flat-bottomed boat with a wider stern.⁴⁷ None of the boats shows any sign of masts or deck constructions or has any models of sailors.⁴⁸ It therefore seems that it was the symbolism of the boats themselves which was represented by these models, rather than the idea of sailing, which was represented in the Middle Kingdom by models which include human figures.

Hitherto, boats found in pyramids and tombs have usually been in pairs, and are interpreted as representing the night and day journeys of the deceased.⁴⁹ Some scholars also suggest that although the boats were buried within a funerary context, they might refer to the solar cult of the Fifth Dynasty.⁵⁰ In our case, however, the number of boat models is not two but three and they show three different types of boats. It is possible, therefore, that these models played a similar role to that of relief scenes which show boats being made, scenes of sailing, fishing and fowling, and the transportation of funerary goods and the deceased during the funeral.⁵¹ Such scenes may also have symbolised the journey to the West, and to symbolic religious centres associated with the celebration of the New Year festival and the concept of renewal.⁵²

It is worth noting that structure AS 69b containing the boat models was located directly above

the tomb of Nefer AS 68d, in which boat models were also found as part of the burial equipment in Shaft 2 (see above p. 30). No clear connection, however, can be derived from the evidence available so far. The interpretation of the two sets of boat models is still the subject of study.

Rescue excavation at the eastern edge of the Abusir necropolis

Ladislav Varadzin

This archaeological exploration was carried out in the area of the archaeological features AS70–AS73, between October 2 and 24, 2012. It was a rescue excavation in an area affected by eight robbers' pits that had disturbed several structures, discernible by mud-brick walls and significant layers of limestone debris. The area in question attracts archaeological attention from a broader, topographical point of view, as it is situated in the lowermost (eastern) section of the Czech concession, in the vicinity of agricultural cultivation, on the boundary between the Nile Valley and the ancient necropolis. The exploration was organised in cooperation with the Abusir and Saqqara inspectorates as an archaeological field school attended by 11 participants, who were Egyptian inspectors of antiquities and archaeology graduates. The participants underwent training throughout the entire archaeological exploration, during which they became acquainted with excavation methods, forms of documentation, and methods of processing and evaluating archaeological finds.

Description of the site

During the rescue excavation, an area of ca. 500 m² was excavated to a depth of 0.20 to 2.00 m. Several structures were uncovered in the course of the excavation (see Fig. 15).

The most extensive of these is a mud-brick complex, AS 70, the uncovered part of which consists of two buildings interconnected by walls and

⁴⁵ See for instance FIRTH and GUNN 1926, 33 and Pl. 49; JÉQUIER 1933, 33–40, Pls. XXXIII–XXXV; POJUJADE 1948. For other finds of boat models see also STEPHENS 2012. For a discussion on Old Kingdom boats see ALTENMÜLLER 2002. For a detailed study of the boat types and the associated terminology see DÜRRING 1995.

⁴⁶ REISNER 1913; GLANVILLE 1972; WARD 2000; STEPHENS 2012.

⁴⁷ Parallels to these types can be found among the boat models from Kaemsenu's tomb, FIRTH and GUNN 1926, Pl. 49 model 2, 5, 7 left.

⁴⁸ As was pointed out by REISNER 1913, models of boats should have sailors.

⁴⁹ ALTENMÜLLER 2002.

⁵⁰ See for instance FIRTH and GUNN 1926, Pl. 49.

⁵¹ See for instance DÜRRING 1995, 168.

⁵² KESSLER 1987.



Fig. 15 Rescue-excavation site (photo L. Brůna, J. Melzer).

occupying an L-shaped ground-plan of at least 20.00×38.00 m in size. The entire complex is oriented, on its longer axis, in a NW–SE direction.

The smaller of the two buildings, on the north-western side, comprises two rooms – B1 and B2 – accessed from the south-west through a door of which only the threshold, made of high-quality white limestone, has survived. Along the south-eastern wall of this building, there were three structures – Structures 1–3 – situated on the outside, of which Structure 3 (on the SW side) was probably a granary; the function of the remaining structures could not be established. The second, larger, building is located on the SW side of the complex. This markedly elongated building contains only one room – C – which is 5.00 m wide and at least 38.00 m long. Both buildings can be tentatively interpreted as relating to economic activities.

The whole complex hitherto uncovered evidently came into being in a single construction phase. It was built of dark-grey mud bricks $32 \times 15 \times 10$ cm in size. The external walls measured as

much as 1.5 m in thickness; the thickness of the remaining walls was around 1.00 m. The depth of the foundation, laid into clean sand, reached on average 0.60 m below the original surface of the terrain. The stated parameters of the masonry allow one to assume that both buildings had at least one above-ground storey, or supported a roof with a high static load. The floors, where ascertained, consisted of a simple fill of sand mixed with soil, heavily hardened through salt precipitation. Below the fill, there was a layer of limestone debris, some pieces of which bore fragments of reliefs dated to the Old Kingdom. Based on stratigraphic observations, this layer came into existence underneath the floor only after the walls of AS 70 had been built. Therefore, the finds contained in these layers (in particular the pottery, but also other types of finds) constitute an important source for the date of the construction of AS 70, which according to tentative conclusions falls within the New Kingdom.

Another structure – AS 73 – is situated in the centre of the area delimited by the buildings of AS



Fig. 16 Remains of the columns (photo L. Varadzin).

70. It consists of two parts. The first of these, situated to the SE, comprises the remains of a large stone platform made of blocks of white limestone (as large as $1.80 \times 1.20 \times 0.40$ m), carefully laid with very narrow interspaces. Part of the platform was a carefully carved stone threshold, perhaps the remainder of a staircase. The courtyard appears to have featured monumental (ca. 1.20 m in diameter) limestone columns, the remains of which were found scattered around (Fig. 16).

The other component, revealed in the NW part of AS 73, is an almost completely razed limestone building. On the grounds of the matching orientation, the recurrent distance relations and the correspondence of the main axes, it is possible to claim with certainty that AS 70 and AS 73 once formed a single building complex undoubtedly created at the same time.

The earliest features uncovered in the course of the excavation were mud-brick tombs that had been overlaid by AS 70 and AS 73 and that were revealed in minor test soundings. Where ascertainable, the tombs were found oriented with their long axes in the N-S direction and with niched eastern facades. The exploration was confined to the documentation of two small uncovered sec-

tions of two well-preserved tombs, AS 71 and AS 72; however, they were not systematically excavated. From the masonry and sizes of the mud-bricks, these tombs can be attributed to (a rather early phase of) the Old Kingdom.

The latest stratigraphic unit on the site (if we omit the recent robbing activities) is represented by four simple burials oriented N-S and dug into the layers or ruins of AS 70 and AS 73. Two of the burials were placed in wooden, whitewashed and polychrome coffins that, according to their general design, fall within the Late Period. The coffins were in a bad state of preservation and fell to pieces upon touch.

Finds

The most abundant category of finds is represented by pottery fragments attributable to two periods. The earlier group, retrieved from the context of the mud-brick tombs and, in a tertiary position, also from later contexts, can be attributed to the Old Kingdom. These include fragments of common beer jars, bread moulds and several Meidumware bowls. The second, later group of pottery finds, datable to the New Kingdom, derives from

the contexts connected with the period of the establishment and existence of AS 70 and AS 73. It comprises fragments of storage vessels and amphorae, often painted in blue. Two fragments of amphorae yielded hieratic inscriptions, and the handle of one amphora bore the impression of a cartouche with the name *Mn-ph-R^c* (Ramesse I).

Another abundantly represented category of finds comprised fragments of limestone reliefs and of painted limestone walls. From the point of view of chronology, they also fall into two groups. The first group, which includes carefully modelled low reliefs (originating most probably from the nearby pyramid complexes), falls within the Old Kingdom. We associate the occurrence of these fragments at the site with the period of the construction of AS 73, in the course of which the adjacent Old Kingdom tombs and temples were dismantled to provide building material. The second group of reliefs, datable to the New Kingdom, can be viewed as an original part of the stone structure AS 73 from which the reliefs were cut during dismantling and left on site.

Other artefacts, represented in more limited numbers, include small faience implements, several fragments of blue frit, etc.

Preliminary conclusion

The rescue exploration at the above-mentioned site brought to light the presence of Old Kingdom tombs that were overlaid during the New Kingdom by a single, more extensive complex of mud-brick and stone structures, the function of which cannot be determined with certainty at the present stage of research. However, it is a surprising find of a considerable significance. We do not rule out the hypothesis that the complex represents either a smaller temple or – more probably – a residence. Burials dated to the Late Period dug into the masonry of AS 70 attest that by that time the building complex was already in ruins. Hitherto unresolved uncertainties about the layout and a number of other unanswered questions argue for a continuation of the exploration at this site.

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