

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION OF A LATE PERIOD TOMB WITH ARAMAIC INSCRIPTION AT EL-SHEIKH FADL/EGYPT

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Abstract: *This article provides a brief summary of archaeological fieldwork conducted by the University of Vienna Middle Egypt Project at el-Sheikh Fadl Umm Raqaba with a special focus on one particular Late Period tomb, A2 T1. Having been discovered by Flinders Petrie in the early 20th century, this rock-cut tomb is of special interest because of a lengthy Aramaic dipinto inscription with a literary text telling the tale of the Egyptian rebel Ináros who fought against the Assyrian occupation during the 7th century BCE.*

The tomb was fully excavated for the first time by the Austrian mission in 2016 and 2017. Significant and substantial new evidence was uncovered including large quantities of human remains and artefacts that provide insights into the ancient occupation of the tomb as well as its dating. Importantly, the Aramaic inscription and the underlying original painted decoration of the tomb were subject to intensive new study that included first-hand confirmation of the reading of the rebel's name as ynḥrw being the Aramaic form of the Egyptian name 'ir.t-ḥr-r.r=w (Greek Ináros). Further, the inscription and decorations were recorded with the assistance of Multispectral Imaging (MSI) technology which enabled to counterbalance degeneration and modern graffiti to enhance better reading.

The first results of this new archaeological work would suggest that the tomb itself probably dates somewhat later than had been previously suggested, which, nevertheless, opens up new possibilities to explain the significance and provide an interpretation for this unusual inscription as well as for the tomb, the site and the region surrounding el-Sheikh Fadl.

Key words: *el-Sheikh Fadl, Late Period tomb, Aramaic dipinto inscription, Ináros, Multispectral Imaging (MSI) technology*

1. Introduction and description of the site

In his report of activities at Oxyrhynchos during spring 1922, W.M. Flinders Petrie wrote:

*'Beside work here described, tombs were visited in the eastern desert opposite Oxyrhynchos, in one of which was a series of Aramaic inscriptions. Here are references to Taharqa, Neka and Psamtek I, showing an early settlement of Syrians, probably Jews.'*¹

The site referred to is the main ancient necropolis at el-Sheikh Fadl Umm Raqaba (locally also known as Arab Hamada or Tamarikiya) which lies to the east of the modern town of Beni Mazar (Fig. 1), about 70 km north of el-Minya. In antiquity, it was located in the 17th and southern part of the 18th Upper Egyptian nomes and most probably represented the main cemetery for the cities of Henu, Saka, Hardai and Kynopolis, as they were variably called over time, located to the west.

Before Petrie discovered the important inscribed tomb that is the object of this study, the site was visited by several 18th and 19th century travellers and collectors like Claude Sicard or John G. Wilkinson.² The area was also briefly investigated by a number of European missions during the early 20th century. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt were looking for papyri for the Egypt Exploration Fund,³ and a Belgian mission under Jean Capart actually conducted two seasons of excavations in the 1920s before withdrawing from the site.⁴ But in the mid-20th century Hermann Kees complained that this was archaeologically one of the most neglected areas of the Nile Valley,⁵ and this situation has changed only marginally in the past 60 years. There were several Egyptian missions led by Abdel Halim M. Abdel Halim, Samir Anis, Adel Hassan and Ibrahim

¹ PETRIE 1925, 1.

² ROUVIÈRE 2017.

³ GRENFELL and HUNT 1902–1903.

⁴ BRUFFAERTS 2013.

⁵ KEES 1958



Fig. 1 Map of Egypt indicating the location of el-Sheikh Fadl

Zakariya for the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation in the later 20th century but these remained largely unpublished. Also, with a team from Tübingen University, Farouk Gomaa investigated various sites in Middle Egypt and incorporated this area in the *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients* project.⁶ Gomaa later also published three

inscribed sarcophagus lids, today in Brooklyn and Cairo, as well as a small number of artefacts from the Egyptian excavations. He demonstrated that this necropolis ought to be associated with the ‘city of the falcon’, i.e. Hardai.⁷

In spring of 2014 the University of Vienna Middle Egypt Project was granted permission

⁶ GOMAA 1984; GOMAA *et al.* 1991.

⁷ GOMAA 2001.

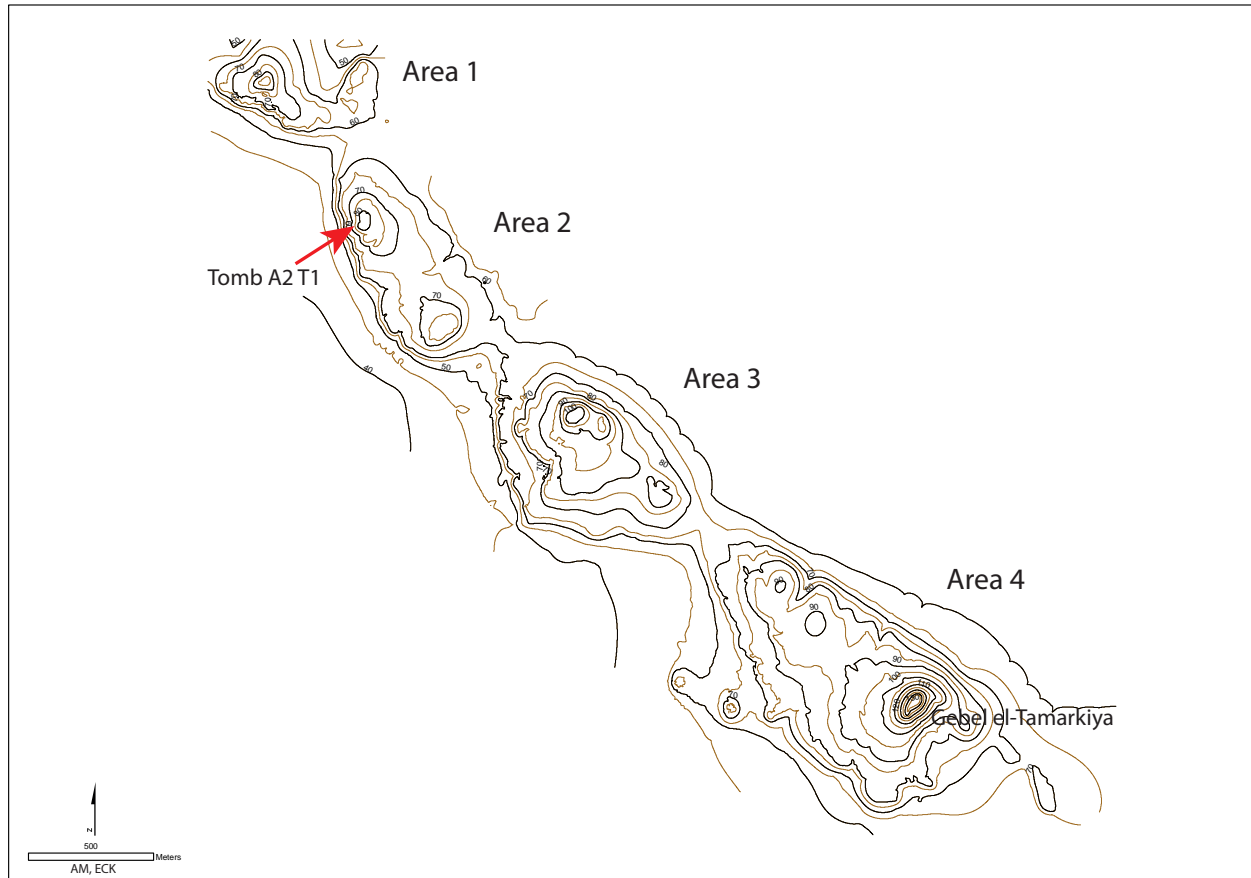


Fig. 2 Contour map of the necropolis at el-Sheikh Fadl - Umm Raqaba

from the Ministry of Antiquities in Egypt to survey and scientifically investigate the area.⁸ The project soon grew into an archaeological rescue operation because the surveys yielded evidence for substantial and on-going illicit digging. Since then, the project has conducted five field seasons, which have salvaged a large amount of data and produced significant new results.⁹

The necropolis covers a series of natural limestone hills, which rise to almost 100m above the surrounding low desert, the highest point being Gebel el-Tamarkiya at 137m above sea level. It comprises four naturally divided areas (numbered Areas 1–4 from north to south, Fig. 2) where ancient rock-cut tombs of various sizes and designs are located. Historical sources from the early Old

Kingdom onwards would allow postulating a start of occupation in the 3rd millennium BCE, and continually thereafter, given that the area had great regional significance during most of the Pharaonic period. However, as far as the archaeological evidence allows us to state at this time, the rock-cut tombs, including the tomb in question, date back from the second half of the 1st millennium BCE (from the late 27th Dynasty onwards) through the Ptolemaic-Roman and Medieval periods.

Sixty-one large and small tomb structures have been surveyed (numbered and sketched) or fully excavated in the course of our work to date. The tomb under discussion is a mid-size rock-cut structure located right at the top of Area 2 overlooking the Nile flood plain to the west (Fig. 3).

⁸ The authors are very grateful to the Ministry and Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt for having granted the permission and for their on-going support of this project. In particular, we would like to thank Mr. Gamal Abo Bakr, Director of Antiquities of Middle Egypt, Mahmoud Salah, Director of Antiquities of el-Minya, Gamal el-Fakeer, General Director of Antiquities at Maghagha, Hassan Mahmoud Abd el-Ghany, Director of Antiquities at Maghagha, as well as the assistance of the accompanying

inspectors of antiquities, Mr. Ahmed el-Laithy, Mohamed Fawzy, Baha el-Din Mohamed Sholkny, Safi Sultan Hassan, Mohamed Ragab, Mohamed Sha'aban, Ehab Rasheed and all the members of the UVMPEP team. Unless stated otherwise, the text is authored by the project director, E. Christiana Köhler.

⁹ KÖHLER 2018; KÖHLER and BOULET 2017; MARCHAND and LUACES, in press.



Fig. 3 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba from southwest with the location of tomb A2 T1 indicated by the arrow

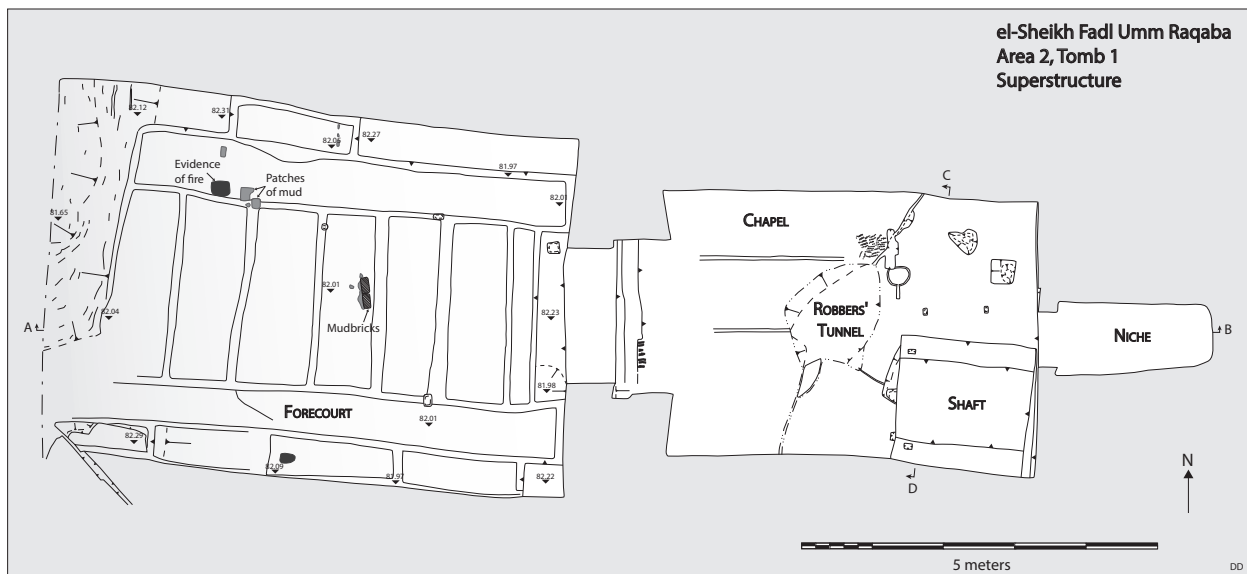


Fig. 4 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Plan of the superstructure of tomb A2 T1

Within the project's numbering system it received the label A2 T1. The tomb comprises a forecourt and a superstructure chapel with one vertical shaft leading to the multiple subterranean burial chambers. Prior to our work, it was fully accessible as it contained only little surface debris and sand fill. As a result, there has been significant disturbance. The ancient decoration and inscriptions on the chapel walls have suffered from modern graffiti, scratches and nesting birds, which caused much of the ancient paint to flake off and disappear. It was hence obvious from the onset that a strategy involving careful archaeological excavation, cleaning and conservation as well as modern visual documentation of the walls was

necessary. This was deemed particularly opportune given the fact that the Aramaic inscription is regarded as the oldest and longest narrative about the hero Inaros and is thus a very important Aramaic literary text in Egypt. Moreover, this is the only decorated tomb at el-Sheikh Fadl – at least to our current knowledge.

Thanks to fruitful cooperation with the *Centre of Image and Material Analysis in Cultural Heritage* (CIMA) in Vienna,¹⁰ initial assessment and testing of infrared photography of the painted inscriptions and decorations was conducted by Manfred Schreiner and Bernadette Frühmann of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.¹¹ The tomb was excavated over two seasons under the supervision of Del-

¹⁰ We are grateful to the team around Heinz Miklas for offering the technological know-how, advice and general support to this project.

¹¹ The application of XRF-analysis with a portable device was unfortunately denied by Egyptian airport authorities.

phine Driaux, and the walls in the chapel were then carefully cleaned by the project conservator Richard Jaeschke and photographed by Franz Stangelberger and the director. The photographer Ernst G. Hammerschmid, CIMA/Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, then conducted comprehensive multispectral photography of the walls with the objective to use this technology for clearer visualisation of the different layers of paint. Finally, the images were subject to a first round of statistical analysis and processing by Simon Brenner of CIMA/University of Technology in Vienna, although the post-processing is ongoing. This article aims to provide first, but preliminary, results of the work conducted.

2. Description of the tomb architecture¹²

The Superstructure

The accessible part of the tomb – the superstructure – exhibits a rather simple plan, oriented east-west. Using the topographical advantages of the place, a roughly rectangular forecourt of c. 6.80 m length and 5.04 m width was cut into the limestone bedrock (Figs. 4–5). Its entrance on the west side is undefined with the slope of the mountain simply dropping off while the northern and southern sides are delimited by the bedrock. The forecourt exhibits some architectural elements like what seems to be a bench (3.08 × 0.54 × 0.26 m) along the north wall and a small square pedestal (0.50 × 0.48 × 0.38 m) in the southeast corner. On the ground, there is a series of shallow parallel lines, which may be related to the extraction method indicating that the bedrock was removed in blocks during the construction phase (Fig. 6).¹³ During excavation, there were some isolated mudbricks (21 × 11 cm) coated with mud plaster as well as mud patches directly on the ground of the forecourt. This, as well as evidence of fireplaces, may indicate a later occupation, possibly during the Medieval Period as pottery of this era was found in abundance in the fill material. To the east, a broad step (15 cm high), with a possible door socket in its northern part, gives access to the chapel.

The façade of the tomb is poorly preserved, which may be due to the poor quality of the bedrock.

On each side of the doorway of 1.84 m height and 1.92 m width, there is a noticeable vertical and shallow carved line (about 8 cm wide) of unknown function, but possibly part of the design of the façade (Fig. 7).¹⁴

The chapel, whose floor level is higher than the forecourt, has a square, although irregular plan, with the western wall bending westward, and measures about 5.20 m in length, 3.88 m in width and 2.10 m in height (Fig. 8). The eastern wall of the chapel opens into a niche (max. 2.16 × 1.04 × 1.86 m) that may have been originally closed by a door as is suggested by door pivots on either side. The floor of this niche is 12 cm higher than the chapel floor and exhibits evidence of secondary burning.

At the centre of the chapel there is a deep, irregular cavity in the floor, which we interpret as a robbers' tunnel. This pit, which reaches deep down into the substructure by more than 10 m, is not indicated on the plan published by Giron in 1923,¹⁵ which may suggest that it was created during the 20th century, although this seems rather unlikely given that the shaft would have provided easier access to the substructure at that time. There is also a small, circular hole in the northeast corner of the ceiling.

The shaft to the substructure is located in the southeastern corner of the chapel. Square in shape, the opening is 1.90 m long by 1.82 m wide, while the shaft itself measures only 1.88 × 1.12 m (Fig. 9). These smaller dimensions are explained by the presence of two ledges (c. 30–35 cm wide), on both north and south sides of the opening, probably used for supporting some large stone slabs or timber, which may have sealed the access to the funerary chambers.

The Substructure

The subterranean part of tomb A2 T1 is much more complex than Giron's early description.¹⁶ Several chambers have been cut at different levels

¹² This section was authored by Delphine Driaux.

¹³ The accumulation of debris below the forecourt, which may derive from the time of construction, contains numerous large and coarse limestone blocks. For the method see GOYON *et al.* 2004, 141–161.

¹⁴ Tomb A3 T7 exhibits a similar, but here more elaborate feature, which reminds of false-door niching.

¹⁵ GIRON 1923, 40.

¹⁶ Although N. Giron has not been able to visit this part of the tomb, he nevertheless mentions the possible presence of three funerary chambers. See GIRON 1923, 39.



Fig. 5 El-Sheikh Fadl –
Umm Raqaba. Forecourt of tomb A2
T1 from northwest
(Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 6 El-Sheikh Fadl –
Umm Raqaba. View of the forecourt
of tomb A2 T1 from above
(Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 7 El-Sheikh Fadl –
Umm Raqaba.
The façade of tomb A2 T1
(Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 8 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Interior view of the chapel of tomb A2 T1 looking northeast (Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 9 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Interior view of the chapel of tomb A2 T1 looking southeast (Photo: E.C. Köhler)

into the walls of the shaft and there is a multitude of funerary chambers and niches at its bottom (Figs. 10–12).

At about 2.10m below the floor level of the chapel, a cavity (Niche 1), oriented north-south, is cut into the eastern wall of the shaft. Measuring approximately 1.76×1.32 m in area and 0.52 m high, this space exhibits an irregular shape with no straight walls. Its function is therefore unclear. It is indeed rather different from the three other rooms cut into the walls of the shaft at c. 1.20 m further below, which may indeed have served for funerary purposes. To the east, the shaft opens into a first chamber (Chamber 2), oriented east-west. With a length of 2.65 m and a height of 0.72 m, this room seems to have been conceived

originally as a long niche. In the northern wall and the middle of the eastern wall, one can notice the presence of two small square niches, roughly cut, again with unknown function. In the south, the shaft opens into a rectangular niche, oriented north-south (Niche 2), measuring about $1.87 \times 0.76 \times 0.70$ m. Finally, a large rectangular room (Chamber 1) of 3.10 m length, 2.15 m wide and 0.70 m high, is accessed to the west. Its ceiling is destroyed by the aforementioned robbers' tunnel, which also penetrates this chamber's floor on its way down.

At about 7.30 m in depth, the bottom of the shaft opens east to a large hall from whence several rooms and niches lead off (Fig. 13). As the chapel, the main hall (Chamber 5) has a roughly rec-

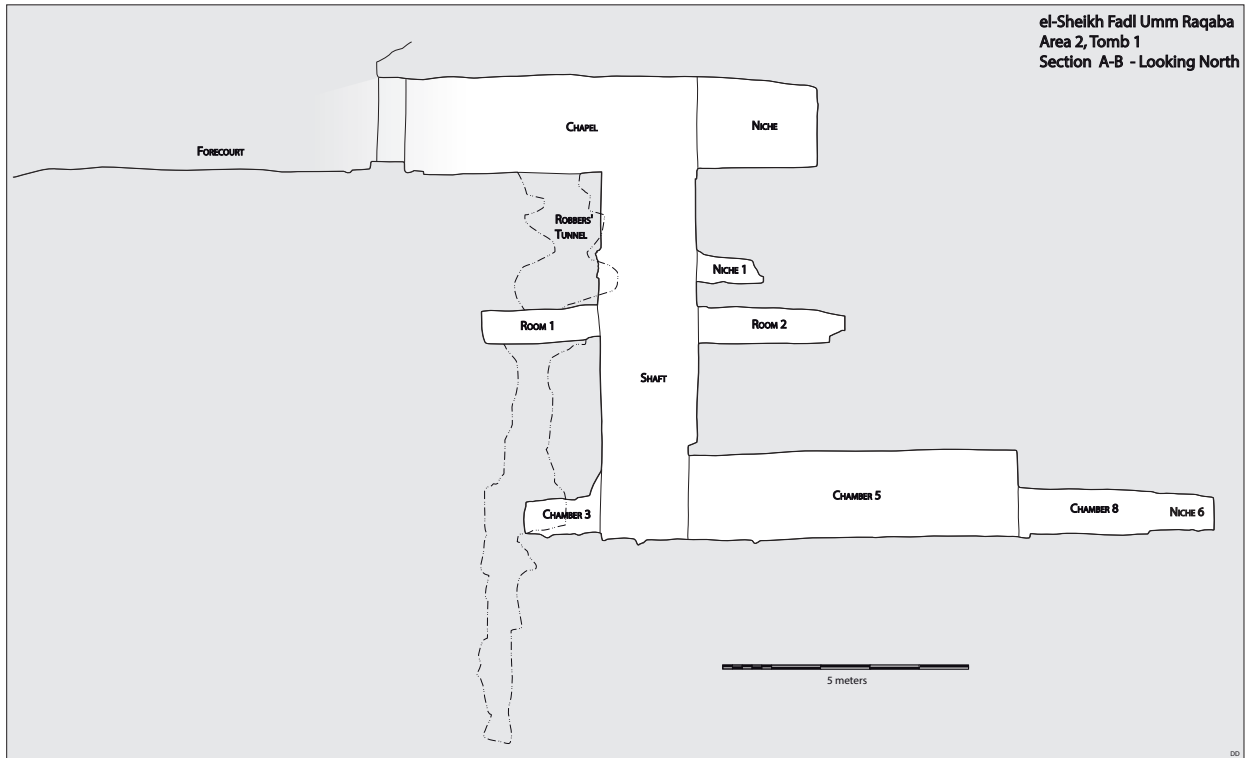


Fig. 10 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Longitudinal section through tomb A2 T1 looking north

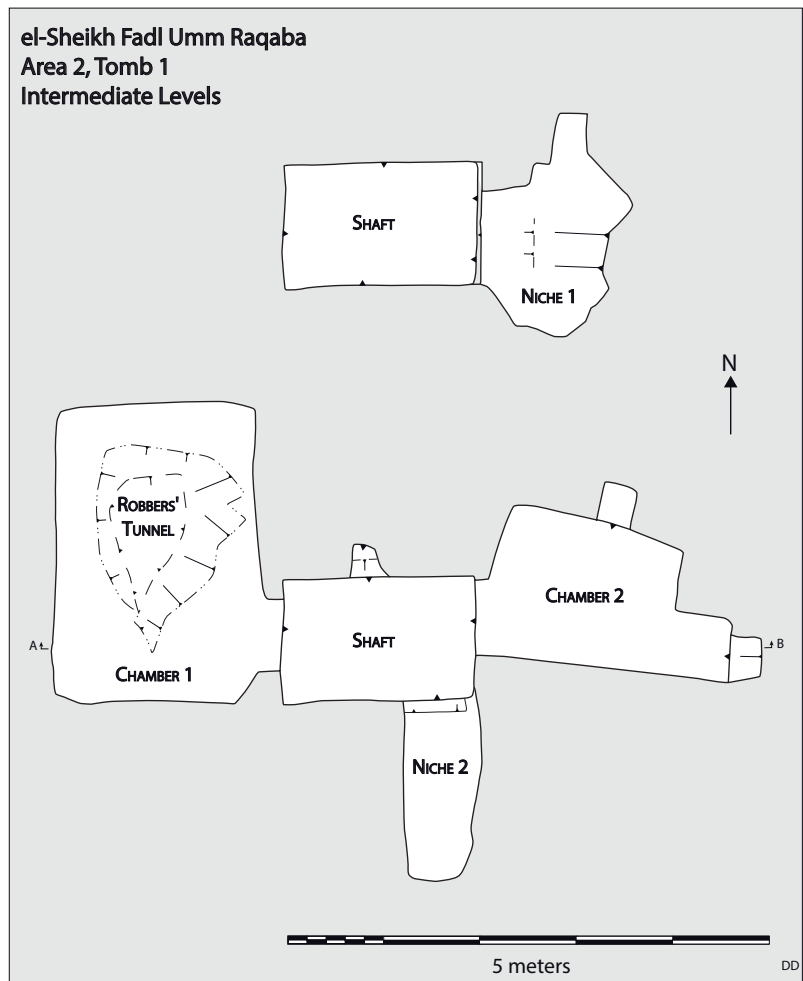


Fig. 11 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba.
Plan of the upper level of the substructure
of tomb A2 T1

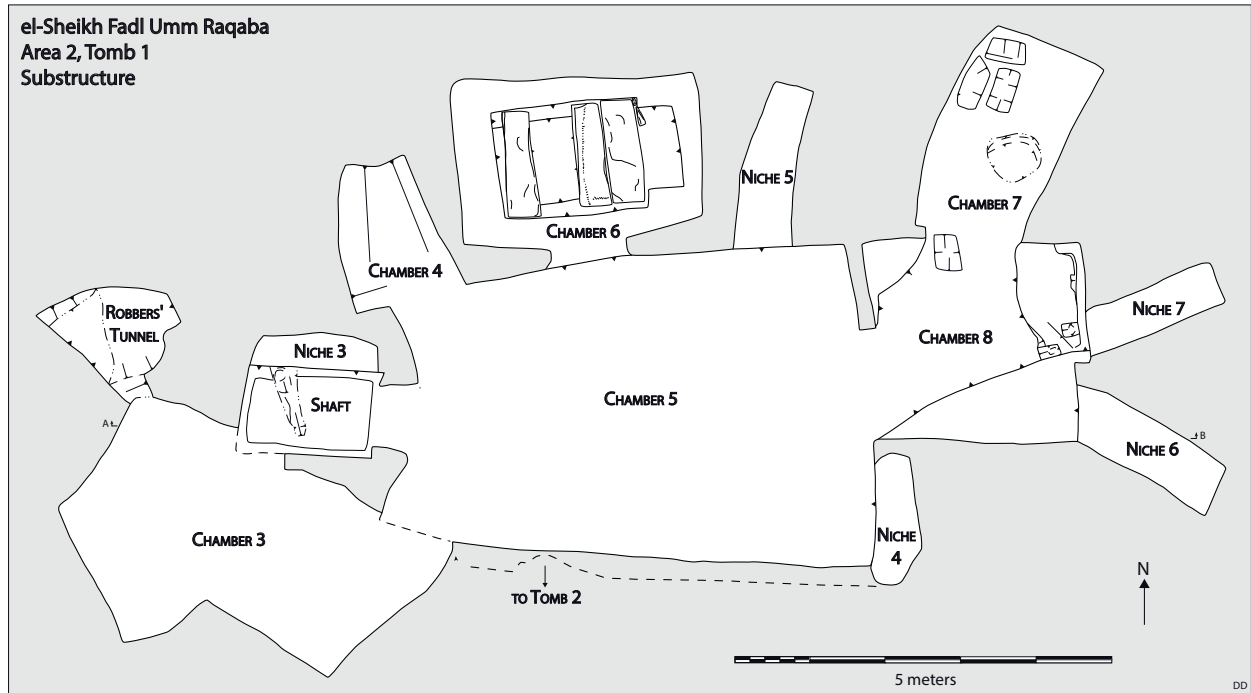


Fig. 12 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Plan of the lower level of the substructure of tomb A2 T1

tangular shape and its western wall bends westward. The hall measures c. 6.10m in east-west direction, with a north-south width varying from 3.30m to 4.26m while its ceiling height is 1.75 m. In its southern wall, there is a large irregular cut, which was probably made by looters leading to the funerary chamber of the neighbouring tomb (A2 T2). A small niche (Niche 4), oriented north-south, is located in the southern section of the eastern wall. Measuring $1.73 \times 0.56 \times 0.36$ m, it was probably not part of the initial design of the main chamber but is rather a later addition.

There are three openings in the north wall of the main hall, which give access to three other spaces, all different in size and plan. The largest one (Chamber 6) of 3.26m length, 2.25m width and 0.74m height, is cut in the middle of the wall. Oriented east-west, this room is also the most elaborate of the three: in its floor is a large burial pit of $1.80 \times 1.10 \times 1.12$ m which was originally covered by four large limestone slabs (c. 1.35m long and 0.40m wide). Three of them were found *in situ* (Fig. 14) – the fourth one probably having been removed by looters to access the burial. Considering the small size of the opening it seems likely that the burial pit contained a wooden coffin rather than a stone sarcophagus. There is no direct evidence that allows for ascertaining if this room was part of the original plan of the tomb, but its elaborate design makes it likely. Also, it appears

that it was made prior to the neighbouring space located west (Chamber 4). Measuring c. 1.90×1.50 m (max.) and 0.76m high, the direction and the arrangement of this room indicate that it has obviously been placed in the small space available in the north wall of the main hall, which remained after Chamber 6 was already present. The third chamber (Niche 5) is located in the northeastern corner of the hall and measures 2.25m in length, 0.80m in width and 0.76m in height. Oriented north-south, it was probably designed for a single burial.

The back of the main hall, i.e. to the east, gives access to a series of further chambers organised around a hallway (Chamber 8), which is almost square in shape (Fig. 15). In comparison to the main hall, it has modest dimensions: c. 2.80m by 2.65m with a height of about 1.00m only. The floor is not completely flat, exhibiting some irregularities and small pedestals (about 10cm high) in the northwestern corner and all along the southern wall. To the east, this small hallway leads to two niches, which, rather than following the main east-west axis of the substructure, have both quite a peculiar direction. The first one (Niche 6) (c. $2.20 \times 0.74 \times 0.72$ m) is oriented northwest-southeast while the second one (Niche 7) ($1.85 \times 0.60 \times 0.60$ m) has a southwest-northeast direction. Given the dimensions of these niches, one can assume they were used originally for one burial each. A larger



Fig. 13 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. View of the main substructure hall (Chamber 5) of tomb A2 T1 looking east (Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 14 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Chamber 6 of tomb A2 T1 looking northeast (Photo: E.C. Köhler)

space is accessed to the north (Chamber 7). Measuring approximately 2.85×1.66 m and 1.04 m high, this rectangular room exhibits a floor truncated by a pit of about 0.70 m in diameter and 2.05 m depth, possibly made by the looters and found by us filled mainly with stones. The ceiling of these different chambers is blackened, suggesting intensive use of open fire for lighting either during the construction stage of the tomb or during the reoccupation and looting phases (see below).

At the opposite end of the main hall, the southwest corner of the shaft opens into a third chamber (Chamber 3). There is no proper doorway marking the entrance of this chamber, but rather a window with a floor level a few centimetres above the floor level of the substructure (Fig. 16). This may suggest that this room was not part of the original plan of the tomb. The room, very irregular in shape with eight walls, measures at its maximum 4.90 m (east-west) by 3.22 m (north-south) and 0.72 m high. There is also a small cavity cut in the northwest corner of this room, measuring about 1.90×1.55 m, which is actually part of the vertical robbers' tunnel descending from above. Despite the fact that this tunnel reached the bottom of the substructure and leads to one of the funerary chambers, it did not stop at this level but continued further down, at a reduced width (1.00×0.50 m) until it reached a depth of 4.40 m below the substructure floor.

This complex layout of the substructure plan demonstrates an efficient use of limited space and indicates that the tomb as a whole clearly served more than just one individual.

3. Archaeological Excavation¹⁷

The archaeological excavation of the tomb took place over two seasons and proceeded from the forecourt and chapel in one season followed by the excavation of the substructure in the next year.

After the removal of a surface layer of about 5 cm, we found that the forecourt contained relatively homogenous, but layered fill of pale yellowish sand, mixed with dust and small stones. According to Giron, the forecourt had not been excavated in 1922 because Pierre Lacau, by then director of the Antiquities Service, was supposed to send someone for cleaning this space.¹⁸ Howev-

er, there is no indication in the literature that such work had actually taken place. The fill deposit, which is about 30 cm thick, is nevertheless disturbed by the modern material as it contained pieces of newspapers and plastic rubbish. Our excavations of this layer revealed a quantity of miscellaneous archaeological material: pottery fragments, bones, fragments of wood, charcoal, but also textiles. Also, numerous shabti fragments were found mainly in the eastern part of the forecourt, while several mud fragments have been exposed in the northwestern corner. It is precisely in this area, at the limit of the excavations, that a wooden figurine (K16-81, see below) was found located in a distinctive layer of material. This compact light greyish-white layer of sand, small stones and pebbles was below the disturbed upper layer. Containing almost no artefacts except a few potsherds and some fragments of textile, this layer seems to have been untouched by modern looters or recent visitors of the tomb. It is possible that it is the result of more ancient looting of the tomb.

The floor of the chapel was covered by a layer of fine sand, thicker in the western part near the entrance (c. 50 cm thickness) than in the east (max. 15 cm). The excavations revealed a concentration of bones in the northwestern part of the room. Alongside human bones, reduced to small fragments and often burnt, a large quantity of tiny bones belonging to fishes and probably birds were found. This material could possibly support the idea of a secondary, nonsystemic use of the tomb, especially during the Medieval Period, which is indicated by the pottery found in this layer as well as by the Christian symbols on the east wall of the chapel. The niche contained a thin layer of fine sand (less than 5 cm), some potsherds and one shabti fragment.

Excavation of the substructure started with the upper cavities in the shaft, which did not produce large amounts of material. The upper niche (Niche 1), contained no human remains, but a few animal bones (especially bird bones) which reinforces the idea that this space was unlikely used for funerary purposes. No diagnostic archaeological material was found in Chamber 2 and Niche 2. At this level, Chamber 1 was filled almost up to the ceiling with sand and stone deposits including some fragments of textile covered with resin, potsherds and two fragments of faience.

¹⁷ This section was authored by Delphine Driaux.

¹⁸ GIRON 1923, 38.



Fig. 15 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Chambers 7–8 and Niche 7 of tomb A2 T1 looking northeast (Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 16 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Chamber 5 of tomb A2 T1 looking southwest (Photo: E.C. Köhler)

The first inspection of the lower substructure chambers showed very disturbed contexts filled with rubble, sand deposits and numerous rocks of varying sizes. After two weeks of work, all the substructure chambers were entirely excavated, revealing only fragmentary artefacts and bones, no stone sarcophagus and no articulated human or animal remains.

Significantly, only the bottom of the shaft was covered by a loose deposit of 40–50 cm thickness, in which modern material (e.g. plastic bags) was mixed with sand, bones, sherds and fragments of wood.

In the main hall (Chamber 5), two deposits of large stones clustered in the southeastern and northeastern corners (Fig. 17). Some of these stones have been worked but none of them were part of a stone sarcophagus.¹⁹ Some of them, however, exhibited evidence of pinkish-white coating, or mortar, that might suggest that they were used to seal the doors of the different chambers and niches in the substructure. In the western part of the room, a sandy layer of about 1.25 m thickness, contained large stones (sometimes worked), human bones and sherds. This layer covered a darker layer, only about 10 cm thick, in which were found large numbers of wood fragments, burnt human bones and some fragments of burnt mudbricks indicating the presence of fire. The two stone deposits and this thin burnt layer were on top of a pale brown-yellowish sand layer covering the floor of the main hall. Its excavation revealed more material including human bones and large quantities of pottery and textile fragments with resin – some of them being completely burnt. Interestingly, a concentration of shabti fragments was found in the northeast part of the deposit, between the doors of Chamber 6 and Niche 5. Judging by the fill of the main hall, one can assume that this lowermost layer could correspond to an ancient phase of looting, covered later on by subsequent layers of occupation or exploration of the tomb.

It also yielded the fragments of an almost complete amphora (Figs. 29:2, 31) and many pottery fragments diagnostic for dating the tomb.

To the north, Chamber 6 was mainly filled by large stones mixed with human bones and potsherds. A similar deposit was found in Chamber 4



Fig. 17 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Fill in Chamber 5 of tomb A2 T1 before excavation (Photo: D. Driaux)

but it contained also some fragments of wood and shabti fragments. The third room, Niche 5, was already almost completely empty. Only a thin layer of sand (about 10 cm thick), mixed with bones and some wooden fragments, covered the floor of the niche.

At the back of the tomb, the fill of the small hallway (Chamber 8) was made up first of large stones, covering a loose greyish sandy layer suggesting a fire episode – a hypothesis reinforced by the discovery of burnt human bones in this layer. In the two eastern niches, the floor was covered by a thin layer of loose sand containing numerous small animal bones. The archaeological material uncovered in these two spaces consists mainly of faience beads while some human bones, some pieces of textile with resin and fragments of wood were found exclusively in Niche 7. The fill of the northern room does not differ from that, except for a few additional potsherds.

Finally, Chamber 3 was filled with fine yellowish-pale brownish sand, which was very disturbed by modern objects found in it (pieces of newspapers, plastic rubbish etc.). Measuring between 50 and 55 cm in thickness, this deposit contained some sherds, few fragments of shabtis and numerous small animal bones. A large quantity of human remains was observed, mainly gathered in two clusters, one in the middle of the room and the other near the eastern wall. A similar archaeological material was exposed in the fill of the robbers' tunnel.

With the exception of the large quantity of human bones, the relative paucity of the archaeo-

¹⁹ Stone sarcophagi, and fragments thereof, were encountered in most of the other larger tombs excavated by this mission.



Fig. 18 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1.
Decorated wall section of the chapel north wall
(Photo: F. Stangelberger)

logical material discovered in the substructure can probably be explained by the looting events starting in antiquity and ongoing until modern times. Evidence of these episodes is also visible in the surroundings of the tomb and especially down the slope (to the west) where large quantities of fragmentary artefacts were recorded, which were probably discarded by the looters. In an area extending approximately 17 m (north-south) and 9 m (east-west) below the forecourt, amongst a pile of large worked stones, a large number of ceramics was collected, together with very fragile and sun-bleached human bones, pieces of textile and matting. These finds, and especially the pottery, provide some complementary data that allow for reconstructing the different phases of occupation of the tomb.

4. Wall decoration and inscriptions

The chapel's walls and ceiling are roughly smoothed over with broadly spaced diagonal and vertical chisel marks (Figs. 8–9). From about 1.20–1.30 m above the floor and up to the ceiling, the south, west and north walls exhibit a horizontal band of well-smoothed wall that is covered with linear and figural designs painted directly onto the rock face (Fig. 18). The east walls on either side of the niche are smoothed almost from ceiling to floor with a low roughly finished dado zone of about 20 cm in height in line with the step leading to the eastern niche. There are solid, sometimes straight, sometimes irregular horizontal and vertical lines in dark red paint of up to 4 cm width that

seem to frame the main figural representations, which comprise several boats as well as human and animal figures painted in different colours. But due to modern disturbances and the fact that the tomb has been accessible for a long time, the walls of the chapel exhibit extensive damage which makes the identification and reading of images difficult. This was already the case in 1922 and has worsened since. Even after the superficial modern graffiti inscribed in charcoal and bird excrements had been removed, this situation had improved only marginally. Particularly problematic are the graffiti that are scratched into the wall's surface as well as subsequent attempts at making these illegible. There are also deep horizontal gouges as well as scratches caused by nesting birds which have destroyed much of the ancient designs. The dating of the figural decorations, and thus of the tomb since they most likely represent an original decorative element, has been a matter of discussion already at the time of discovery, ranging between the Middle Kingdom and the Saite Period.²⁰

The Aramaic inscription is located within the band of better-smoothed wall section. It covers and extends across the figural representations, which means that it is secondary to the decoration. Giron distinguished 17 panels of between two and 13 horizontal lines of text, which are often separated by thin red vertical lines. In total, the inscription comprised 116–120 lines written by at least six different persons.²¹ Today, the text is understood to tell the heroic stories of the Egyptian rebel Inaros of Athribis who lived during the 7th century BCE (see below).²²

The first results of the multispectral photography and subsequent imaging analysis (MSI) at high spectral resolution enable us to filter out damages and graffiti, to highlight and separate between the different colours of the original decoration and the Aramaic script. Although the analysis is on-going, we are in the position to present some preliminary results with two examples. Fig. 19 shows a section of the upper western end of the south wall (Panel 1), once photographed with normal light conditions (left) and after primary MSI processing (right). The processed image filtered out damage, scratches and black charcoal graffiti and now emphasises the red paint of the original decoration and framework. A boat with at

²⁰ GIRON 1923, 39.

²¹ HOLM 2007, 195–196.

²² HOLM 2007.



Fig. 19 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Decorated wall section of the chapel of tomb A2 T1 (Panel 1)
(Photo: E.G. Hammerschmid)

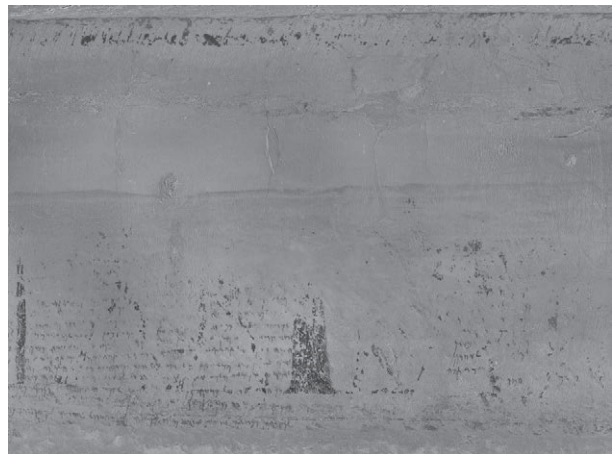


Fig. 20 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba. Decorated wall section of the chapel of tomb A2 T1 (Panel 5)
(Photo: E.G. Hammerschmid)

least 15 oars and numerous oarsmen is now clearly visible on the lower left side of the image. Similar results were also achieved with Panel 5 in Fig. 20. The numerous lines of Aramaic script are more in contrast and the underlying figures are visible somewhat better, with possibly a standing quadruped on the left, a solid, elongated up-right object behind it to the right, and a sitting quadruped, possibly a canide, on the right side.

It also shows that the writing extends well below the bottom frame line. These preliminary results are very promising and since the image analysis is on-going, we hope to provide even better results in the final publication.

5. The Aramaic inscription²³

Following Petrie's commission to study the Aramaic inscription, Noël Giron published a first brief article on the text in 1923 that included one photograph, a first assessment of the text's significance as well as a plan sketch of the tomb, in which the individual text panels were numbered from 1–17.²⁴ The *editio princeps* by André Lemaire followed decades later in 1995 and a more comprehensive reading and interpretation of the text was provided.²⁵

This new preliminary report on the Aramaic inscription contains observations by the writer made after the walls were cleaned in December

²³ This section was authored by Tawny Holm.

²⁴ GIRON 1923, 40.

²⁵ LEMAIRE, 1995. The text was reanalysed by Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni in 1999 with significantly different readings in several lines, as can be observed in their hand cop-

ies (= TAD D 23.1). We are very grateful to A. Lemaire for having provided scans of the early 20th century photographs by M. Busutil as well as of his own photographs from 1984.

2016, but before all of the results of the multispectral photography from late 2017 were available.

In general, the inscription in red ink has continued to slowly deteriorate since the last photographs were taken by Lemaire in 1984, with the most substantial damage to be found in Panel 2, which is now badly scratched and gouged. Nevertheless, after the walls were cleaned, some of the remaining inscriptions on many walls became more distinct (especially in Panels 5A-B and 6), and a previously-unnoticed section of text on the northeast wall to the left of the niche and directly below Panel 9 became visible.

First of all, some features of the main narrative have become slightly more intelligible. The name *ynhrw*, unrecognised by previous editors of the inscription, is now quite readable in the preserved lines in which it appears.²⁶ The identification of *ynhrw* as the Aramaic form of Egyptian *'ir.t-hr-r.r=w* (Greek *Ináros*) was proposed by the Demoticists Günter Vittmann and Kim Ryholt independently in 2003 and 2004 respectively,²⁷ thus establishing that the main character was the 7th century BCE Inaros of Athribis who fought the Assyrians, otherwise best known from the much later tales and stories in the “Cycle of Inaros” from the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.²⁸ Since this Aramaic text seems to be the earliest version of any Inaros story, it is interesting to note that one may now be able to read a reference to the weapon(s) of that hero in panel 5A. In 5A:7–8, it is probably Inaros who goes down into a boat and travels somewhere, and then he “raised and brought out to Taharqa king of the Nubians” some object, perhaps *špd[ḥ]*, “his spear” (from *špd*, “to pierce”), although other interpretations are possible. The hero then stands before Taharqa and proposes a plan to approach Pharaoh Necho, in which Inaros and his forty warriors will take part.

As for the newly-discovered text (designated panel 9B), it is directly below Panel 9, under the large horizontal crack on the lower wall, and appears between two red decorative bars that are approximately 60 centimetres apart. Here are the remains of at least six very faint lines, most of

whose red ink has disappeared. While fuller comprehension awaits review of the most recent images, a few letters and words are discernible, especially in lines 4–6. For instance, someone seems “to arise” in line 4, and in line 5, a king is mentioned (perhaps this is Taharqa, since he is the only character in this text who is called “king”). Moreover, a plural subject (*-yn*) in line 6 either “arrives” or “carries” something (*ḥmt[ḥ]* or *ḥnš[ḥ]*). Perhaps the events of Panel 9B directly follow those of Panel 9 above. A discussion of the text’s possible date and its interpretation will be attempted below.

6. Human remains²⁹

The examination of the human skeletal assemblage from tomb A2 T1 was directed at establishing the minimum number of individuals, or MNI, present. Where possible, the ages-at-death and sexes of these individuals were estimated based on skeletal development, degeneration, and morphology.

Preservation

The human skeletal assemblage consisted of a large quantity of well-preserved, but fragmentary bones. The majority of bones exhibited good surface preservation with identifiable landmarks and intact internal structures. Several fragments showed surface and general degradation, but this was not common. Though much of the human skeletal material was well preserved, most bones were incomplete. Elements of the skull, as well as the pectoral girdle, pelvic girdle, ribs, and long bones were most frequently found in large fragments, while smaller bones like those of the hand, foot, and spine were more frequently found complete. Of the long bones, clavicles were most often found intact. There was no notable difference in preservation or fragmentation between adult and non-adult bones. Given the information above, it was difficult to assess whether the skeletons found were completely or incompletely represented within the tomb.

²⁶ PORTEN and YARDENI (1999) read *ḥstḥnhrḥw* in 5A:11; *[s]ḥnhrw* in 9:4; and *ḥstḥnhrḥw* in 9:7. LEMAIRE (1995) does not read the name, but sees the verb *ḥnhtw* in 9:7, and an uncertain *nḥḥr?pr* in 5A:11.

²⁷ VITTMANN 2003, 104; RYHOLT 2004, 496. For more on the interpretation of the tomb since the identification of the main character as Inaros, see HOLM 2007.

²⁸ For a recent overview of all the narratives belonging to this story cycle, and their manuscripts, see JAY 2016.

²⁹ This section was authored by Arianne Capirci.

Methodology

The MNI was first assessed for each context, then this data was collated to determine the MNI for each chamber and the structure as a whole. Additional analysis was performed on the remains from the main chamber to produce age-at-death and sex estimations.

Following White and Folkens’ protocol for obtaining MNI, the skeletal material was first divided into human and non-human remains, then sorted by age group, element, and side of the body.³⁰ For adults, the MNI was established by counting the most numerous skeletal element or element landmark. The MNI counts for all contexts excepting those from the main chamber, which reflect adult individuals only. For non-adult remains, each bone was first assigned an age category according to development, then analysed according to the steps outlined for adult bones. The petrous temporal (temporal), counted based on the presence of the carotid canal, as well as the talar head (talus) and sustentaculum tali (calcaneous) were identified as the most numerous adult elements. Due to the fact that the petrous temporal reaches adult size during childhood, it was excluded from the final adult MNI considerations in favour of the later-maturing tarsal bones.³¹

The estimation of age-at-death was a prerequisite for both non-adult MNI determination and adult sex estimations. All non-adult bones were assigned age-at-death ranges, then placed into age categories following Scheuer and Black (see Table 1). Skeletal development, dental development, state-of-fusion, and maximum diaphyseal length were the main criteria for age-at-death estimations.³² Many of the standard reference materials used for non-adult ageing are based on modern, clinical, and/or non-Egyptian populations, therefore large age ranges were given to negate populational bias. Adult age-at-death was estimated using late-fusing epiphyses as well as predictable auricular surface and pubic symphysis degeneration.³³ Individuals were then categorised as young, middle, or old adults according to Buikstra and Ubelaker’s standards (see Table 1).³⁴

Age Category	Definition
<i>Perinate</i>	Around the time of birth
<i>Neonate</i>	First 4 weeks after birth
<i>Infant</i>	Birth to the end of the first year
<i>Early Childhood</i>	Birth to the end of the fifth year
<i>Late Childhood</i>	About 6 years to puberty
<i>Puberty</i>	Beginning of secondary sexual changes, about 10–14 years in girls and 12–16 years in boys
<i>Adolescent</i>	Puberty/puberty period, about 13–19 years
<i>Young Adult</i>	20–35
<i>Middle Adult</i>	25–50
<i>Old Adult</i>	50+

Table 1 Defined Age Categories³⁵

All adult skeletal elements with diagnostic sexual dimorphism were utilised in sex estimations. Sex was estimated using metrics, including measurements of the maximum clavicular length, the maximum glenoid breadth of the scapula, the maximum head diameter of the humerus, and the maximum head diameter and epicondylar breadth of the femur, as well as morphology, including the innominate and sacral bones.³⁶ Although the majority of sexually significant elements could not be aged, several innominate bones proved useful in both age and sex estimations, casting light on specific individuals.

Results

The adult MNI for all internal contexts associated with Tomb A2 T1 is 90, based on the left talar head. This number grows to 91 when material from the forecourt and surface collections is included. A selection of MNI counts for locations delineated by tomb architecture are displayed in Table 2. Compared to other locations, the main chamber has a much higher MNI, especially when individuals from its side niches are considered.

Main Hall (Chamber 5)

The skeletal material from the main hall, excluding its niches, was subjected to a more thorough

³⁰ WHITE and FOLKENS 2005, 339.

³¹ SCHEUER and BLACK 2000, 81.

³² AL-QAHTANI, HECTOR and LIVERSIDGE 2010; ANDERSON, MESSNER and GREEN 1964; MARESH 1955; BLACK and SCHEUER 1996; FAZEKAS and KOSA 1978; GHANTUS 1951; MOLLESON and COX 1993; as cited in SCHEUER and BLACK 2000.

³³ BROOKS and SUCHEY 1990; LOVEJOY *et al.* 1985; SCHEUER and BLACK 2000.

³⁴ BUIKSTRA and UBELAKER 1994, 9.

³⁵ Adapted from BUIKSTRA and UBELAKER 1994, 9; SCHEUER and BLACK 2004, 6.

³⁶ BASS 2005, 19–20; BROTHWELL 1981, 59–63; PHENICE 1969.

Location	Right Petrous Temporal (Temporal)	Left Petrous Temporal (Temporal)	Right Talar Head (Talus)	Left Talar Head (Talus)	Right Sustentaculum Tali (Calcaneous)	Left Sustentaculum Tali (Calcaneous)
A2 T1, All Contexts	101	91	78	91	71	73
A2 T1, Internal Structure	100	91	74	90	69	73
Main Hall / Chamber 5	60	49	50	45	42	47
Niche 5	4	2	1	1	1	2
Chamber 6	1	2	2	3	3	0
Chamber 4	1	2	1	2	2	1
Small Chamber and Niches	8	12	3	13	3	6
Chamber 3	11	10	6	9	6	6
Robber's Tunnel	6	3	4	4	3	2

Table 2 Minimum Number of Adult Individuals by Location

analysis, including an examination of age-at-death and sex. The results of these estimations can be found in Tables 3–5. When the aged non-adult individuals (n=37) are added to the adult MNI, there is a total MNI of 87 for the main hall. Each non-adult has been assigned to an age category, although it was only possible to estimate the age-at-death for 25 adults. Individuals are evenly distributed across both non-adult and adult age categories, ranging from 2–7 individuals per group, excepting that of young adult category, which has significantly more (n=11, see Fig. 21). This is potentially a result of the greater variety of estimation techniques applicable to this age bracket and/or the larger age range it encompasses in compari-

son to non-adult categories. Sex estimation was possible for 35 individuals, indicating that there are at least 15 females, 2 query females, 6 males, 3 query males, and 9 individuals of indeterminate sex (see Table 5). Each sex estimation method indicates a larger number of females to males, except sacral morphology (n=3,3). However, the sexual disparity ranges across methods (see Fig. 22).

Several innominate bones allowed for the estimation of both age-at-death and sex, providing a clearer picture of 17 individuals (see Table 6). In sum, individuals of every age and sex are represented in the skeletal assemblage from tomb A2 T1.

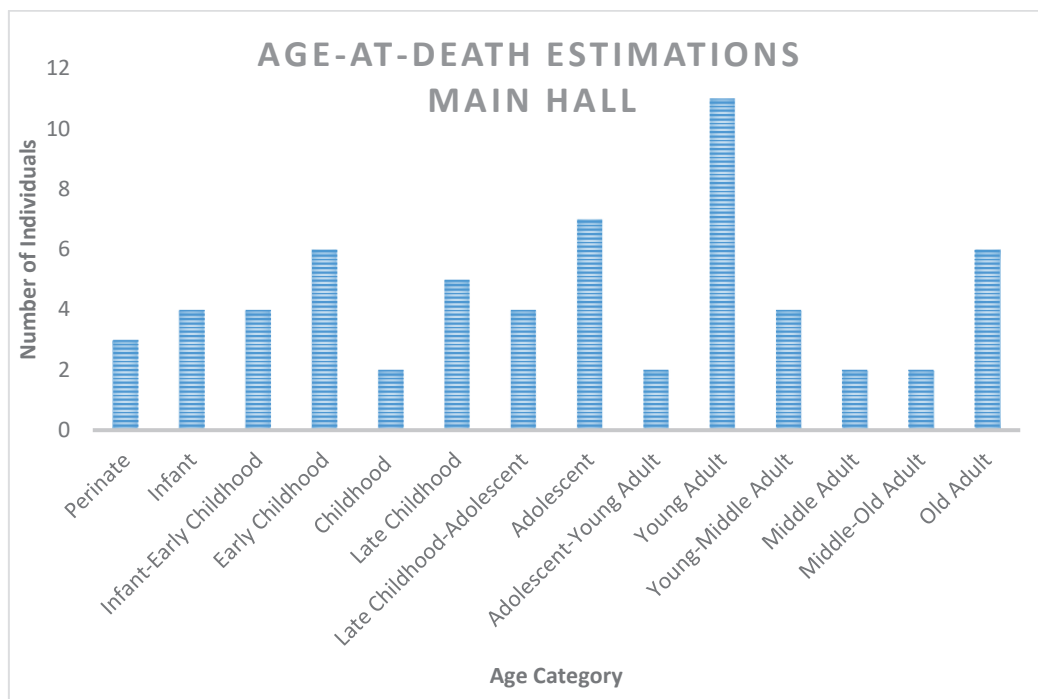


Fig. 21 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Non-adult and Adult Age-at-Death Estimations: Main Hall (Chamber 5)

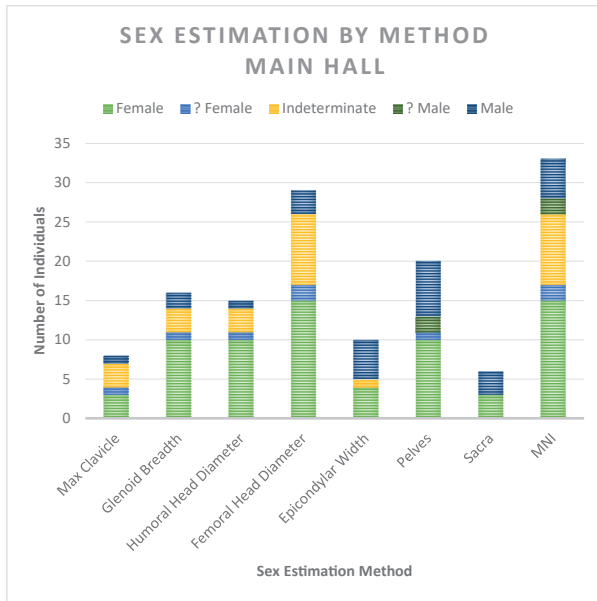


Fig. 22 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Sex Estimations According to Different Sexing Criteria: Main Hall (Chamber 5)

Problems Encountered

The disturbance of contexts seen within A2 T1 as a result of pervasive looting has led to both the disassociation of individuals from their original provenances and the disarticulation of individual skeletons. This lack of discrete individuals hinders skeletal analysis, as the precision of age-at-death and sex estimations decreases in tandem with the amount of skeletal material available for study. Furthermore, as complete skeletons are critical to making accurate diagnoses based on lesion patterning, pathological interpretations were of limited value and are not included here. The overall loss of contextual information impedes our understanding of the individuals interred as well as the spatial, cultural, and biological relationships between them.

Additionally, several methodological problems were encountered. Age-at-death and sex estimations rely on reference measurements derived from

Age Category	Perinate	Infant	Infant- Early Childhood	Early Childhood	Childhood	Late Child- hood	Late Child- hood- Adolescent	Adolescent	Adolescent- Young Adult
MNI	3	4	4	6	2	5	4	7	2
Individuals									
1	40 wks	6–9 mths	10–18 mths	3–6	4–7	6–10	11–19	14–18	18–21
2	perinatal	40wks– 3 mths	1.5–2.5 yrs	4–6	2–8	6–10	8–14	14–18	13–24
3	perinatal	10.5 mths	0–4 yrs	2–4		8–12	10–16	12–15	
4		0–1 yrs	0.5–2 yrs	5–6		8–12	10–18	12–17	
5				1–3		8–15		11–17	
6				2–6				12–17	
7								12–20	
Total Individuals = 37									

Table 3 Minimum Number of Aged Individuals per Non-adult Age Category with a Breakdown of Individuals: Main Hall

Age Category	Young Adult	Young-Mid Adult	Middle Adult	Mid-Old Adult	Old Adult
MNI	11	4	2	2	6
Individuals					
1	21–29	30–44	45–48	40+	50–59
2	21–29	30–44	35–39	45+	60+
3	21–29	30–44			50–59
4	21–29	25–39			50+
5	24–29				50+
6	24–30				50+
7	24–31				
8	16–21				
9	30–34				
10	16–38				
11	21–34				
Total Individuals = 25					

Table 4 Minimum Number of Aged Individuals per Adult Age Category with a Breakdown of Individuals: Main Hall

Sex Estimation Category	Female	? Female	Male	? Male	Indeterminate
Sex Estimation Criteria					
Maximum Clavicular Length	3	1	1	0	3
Maximum Glenoid Breadth of Scapula	10	1	2	0	3
Maximum Head Diameter of Humerus	10	1	1	0	3
Maximum Head Diameter of Femur	15	2	3	0	9
Maximum Epicondylar Breadth of Femur	4	0	5	0	1
Innominate Morphology	10	1	6	3	0
Sacral Morphology	3	0	3	0	0
MNI	15	2	6	3	9

Table 5 Minimum Number of Individuals per Sex Category: Main Hall

Individuals	Sex Estimation	Age Estimation	Skeletal Element
1	Female	19–40	L. Pubis
2	Female	20–23	L. Ilium
3	Female	20–24	L. Ilium
4	Female	30–34	L. Ilium
5	Female	30–38	R. Pubis
6	Female	42–87	R. Ilium
7	Female	45+	R. Ilium
8	Female	50+	L. Ilium
9	? Female	39	L. Pubis
10	? Male	20–23	L. Pubis
11	? Male	23–25	L. Ilium
12	? Male	38	R. Ilium
13	Male	30–44	R. Ilium
14	Male	30–44	L. Ilium
15	Male	21–34	R. Ilium, Pubis
16	Male	34–86, mean 61.2	R. Ilium
17	Male	50+	L. Ilium

Table 6 Individuals with Age-at-Death and Sex Estimations: Main Hall

specific, often clinical, populations. Without reference materials drawn from a compatible population, it is always possible that age-at-death estimations may be inaccurate due to different growth trajectories or adult size and/or that sex estimations may suffer due to dissimilar sexual dimorphism. The latter may be the case within this particular skeletal assemblage, where there appear to be many more adult females based on sexual metrics, especially those of the shoulder and hip joint. Lastly, adhering resin and soft tissues associated with mummification rendered age estimation using the auricular surface method impossible for several individuals.

Conclusion

The skeletal assemblage from tomb A2 T1 includes at least 90 adult individuals, with the majority excavated from the main hall. Additionally, human remains from the main hall indicate that at least 37 non-adult individuals were present within the tomb, ranging from perinates to adolescents. Sex estimation of the adults from this chamber show that both sexes are represented, although there are more females than males. Although extensive looting activity and the fragmentary nature of the skeletal remains from A2 T1 have limited the research potential of the skeletal assemblage, the information they do provide is fundamental to understanding the population interred within A2 T1.

7. Artefacts

The fill of the forecourt, chapel and substructure produced large quantities of artefacts and ecofacts, which still require full assessment, quantification and analysis. For the purpose of this preliminary report, a small number of diagnostic elements will be discussed.

Non-ceramic artefacts

As expected, there were large quantities of shabti figurines and especially fragments thereof. The vast majority was made of pale green to bright blue Egyptian faience of varying quality and represent different morphological types (Fig. 23). The most common type is of a small sized, mummy-form figure on a pedestal and with back-pillar. For example K17-45 (Fig. 24), which is preserved at full length of 9.4 cm, but with damage to its right side. It has a beard and a tripartite headdress with front lappets, but without distinction from the back-pillar. The two hands are visible at the front



Fig. 23 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Selection of shabti fragments (Photo: E.C. Köhler)



and no tools can be discerned. The quality of the faience material is poor giving the surface a matte, patchy and blistered appearance. The shabti K17-54 (Fig. 25) is only preserved with its upper part to just below the hands. Its back-pillar and headdress are similar to the above, but it is holding agricultural tools (possibly a hoe and a pick) in either hand, which are indicated in raised relief. There is also a bag incised in the back left shoulder of the shabti. Judging by the preserved section of this and comparable shabtis, these pieces appear to be of a larger size-range at around 12–15 cm in reconstructed length, more solid and of a somewhat better quality than the smaller ones mentioned here.

Far more surprising was the discovery of a wooden figurine (K16-81) in the lower fill layer of the forecourt (Fig. 26). It is 8.5 cm high, 4.5 cm long and 1.8 cm wide and shows a half-human, half-animal figure seated on a stool upon a rectangular pedestal. The canide-headed figure wears a headdress reminding of the *atef*-crown. The right side of the head and shoulder exhibit a wig lappet whereas the left front-side of the head is carved in a rounded fashion possibly indicating a fur-line, while the back left side shows the horizontal end of a wig. The left arm is stretched out in a slight curve and in front of the body, the right hand is holding a bow whose string is pulled, while a horizontal arrow with triangular tip is set in position, ready to be shot. The right arm is hence pulled back at a sharp angle with the elbow extending behind the back of the figure. Both legs, which end in human feet, are bent and set parallel to each other in front of but detached from the stool. The figure seems to be wearing a short kilt of which only the upper edge or belt is visible. On the right side of the stool, on the ground, is a simple angu-

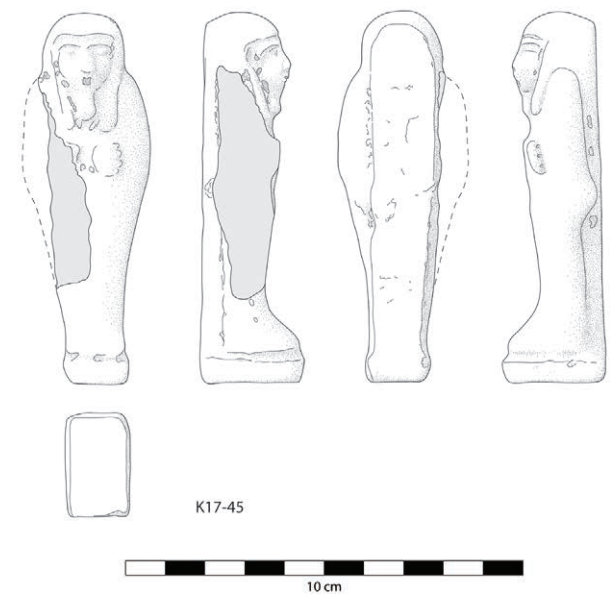


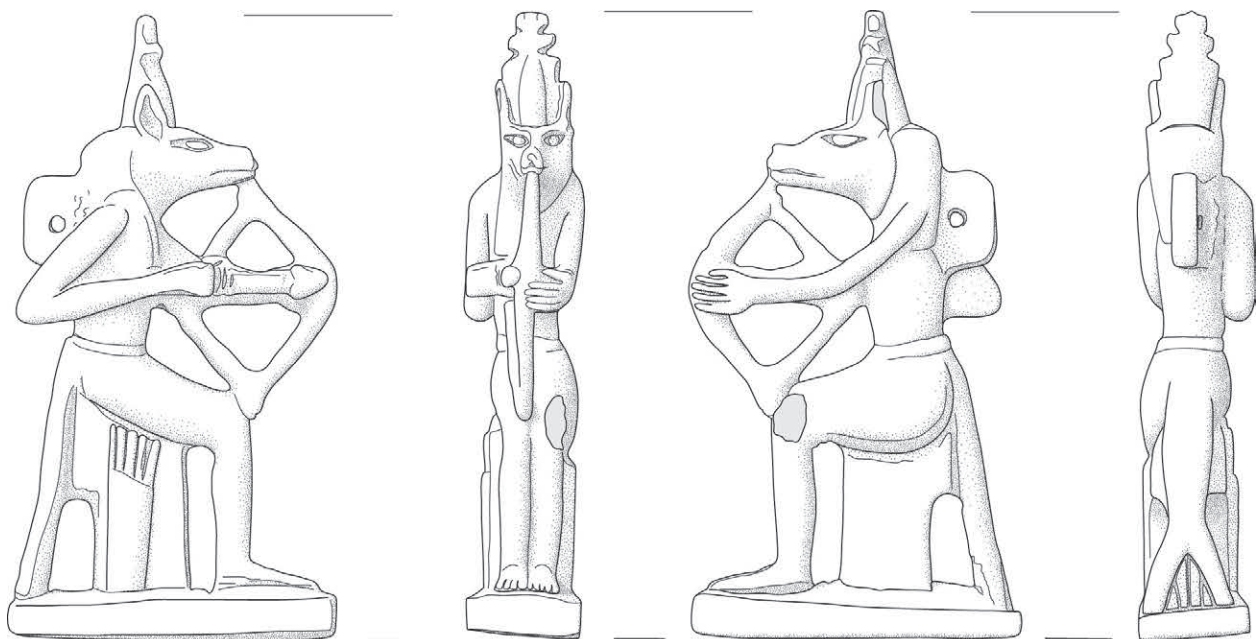
Fig. 24 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Shabti K17-45 (Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 25 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Shabti K17-54 (Photo: E.C. Köhler)

lar object representing a quiver containing five arrows. The lower back of the figure ends in a bird's tail, or rather the tips of two crossing bird's wings, creating a small triangular shape incised to show feathers. Also tail and stool are detached

from one another. At the back of the figure, just below the head, is an angular protrusion of about 4 mm width that is horizontally pierced, which renders the object most likely the function of an amulet.



10 cm

Fig. 26 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Amulet K16-81 (Photo: F. Stangelberger)

There are few parallels for this kind of amulet,³⁷ some of which also in wood, others in Egyptian glazed composition and bronze, but none of these were found in reliably dated contexts. The lack of functional contexts, as well as some variations in the style of the crown, and the addition of a sun-disc in one case, also make the interpretation difficult. Finding it in a tomb and its function as an amulet would suggest a close relation with funerary rituals, which is supported by the canide aspect of this figure, most probably representing Anubis.³⁸ The latter seems most appropriate given that Anubis had a major sanctuary in the area of Saka and Hardai/Kynopolis. Anubis shooting arrows is known from other contexts, including temple *soubassement* representations of the Ptolemaic Period, where this deity is identified as a protector of Osiris.³⁹ What is particularly interesting, though, is the combination of this canide god with the bird's tail and the most likely deity behind it is the falcon god Horus. This hybrid combination, Anubis-Horus, is explicitly⁴⁰ and inexplicitly⁴¹ mentioned in relation with the 18th nome of Upper Egypt, to which this necropolis belongs. An amulet like this at el-Sheikh Fadl can therefore be easily explained by the religious significance of the area, but this raises the question if the other amulets of this kind, from sites like Tell el-Ruba/Mendes and Abusir, ought to be interpreted in the same way.⁴² Nevertheless, it is not impossible that representations of this particular deity, even when found elsewhere in Egypt, indeed referred to Anubis-Horus at Hardai/Kynopolis. Considering this area's significance also as *ḥw.t rdw*, i.e. the place where a relic of Osiris' body – the efflux – was kept and that, at least in the Ptolemaic Period, the wellbeing of the entire country was dependent on performing the Osiris rituals here, one could argue for a country-wide veneration of this particular deity in funerary contexts.⁴³ At the necropolis of el-Sheikh Fadl Umm-Raqaba that has long been

known as an ancient cemetery for sacred canides,⁴⁴ and in direct relation to Kynopolis, this amulet is valuable evidence of this area's religious significance during the Late Dynastic Period.

Pottery⁴⁵

The excavations of tomb A2 T1 produced a large quantity of pottery most of which is still awaiting full analysis. A small sample of material from a variety of archaeological contexts, some of which less affected by modern intrusions, e.g. from the lower layers of fill in the main substructure chambers, has been analysed by Sylvie Marchand and the writer in autumn 2017. A selection of particularly diagnostic pottery vessels will be presented here for the purpose of archaeological dating and interpretation. Of the 82 individual ceramic vessels studied and drawn, the vast majority (61 vessels) date to the Late Dynastic Period, two are Roman, one is Late Roman and 18 date to the Medieval Period.⁴⁶ This distribution suggests two main occupation phases for the tomb, i.e. the Late Dynastic Period (late 5th to early 4th century BCE) and the early Islamic Period (9th–10th century CE), and we will here concentrate on the former.

The Late Dynastic pottery vessels distribute over a range of typical Egyptian and foreign/foreign inspired typological groups that complement the corpus of material previously established for the site (Phase I)⁴⁷ and that are easily associated with funerary contexts at other sites of the period. The majority of vessels is made of medium fine to coarse Nile silt with organic and inorganic inclusions comparable to Nile B2 in the Vienna System, and many have a red slip. They include undecorated Nile silt incense burners (Fig. 27:1), cylindrical bowls (Fig. 27:2), so-called goldfish-bowls with carination and straight upper body (Fig. 27:3), jars with short neck (Fig. 27:4–6), handled jars without neck (Fig. 27:6), long-necked bottles with collared

³⁷ ANDREWS 1994, fig. 52a = British Museum EA71027 (glazed composition, no prov.); DARESSY 1905, no. 38.700 (bronze, from Mendes), 38.855 (wood, from Abusir), 38.857 (wood, no prov.); PETRIE 1914, pl. XXXVI.199 = UC52940 (wood, no prov.).

³⁸ See also ROUVIÈRE 2017.

³⁹ E.g. CAUVILLE 1997, pl. 192; ALTENMÜLLER 1975, sp. 330.

⁴⁰ E.g. BARGUET and LECLANT 1954, pl. 84.

⁴¹ LEITZ 2017, 319–321.

⁴² DARESSY 1905, 179, placed no. 38.700 from Mendes in the category of 'Amun-Ra (panthé)'.
⁴³ COLLOMBERT 2014; LEITZ 2017, 317.

⁴⁴ ROUVIÈRE 2017.

⁴⁵ This section was authored by Sylvie Marchand and E. Christiana Köhler.

⁴⁶ On the basis of this new material, we are able to extend the ceramic phases at el-Sheikh Fadl beyond the previously established Phases I–III by two more phases (IV–V), cf. KÖHLER and BOULET 2017.

⁴⁷ KÖHLER and BOULET 2017.

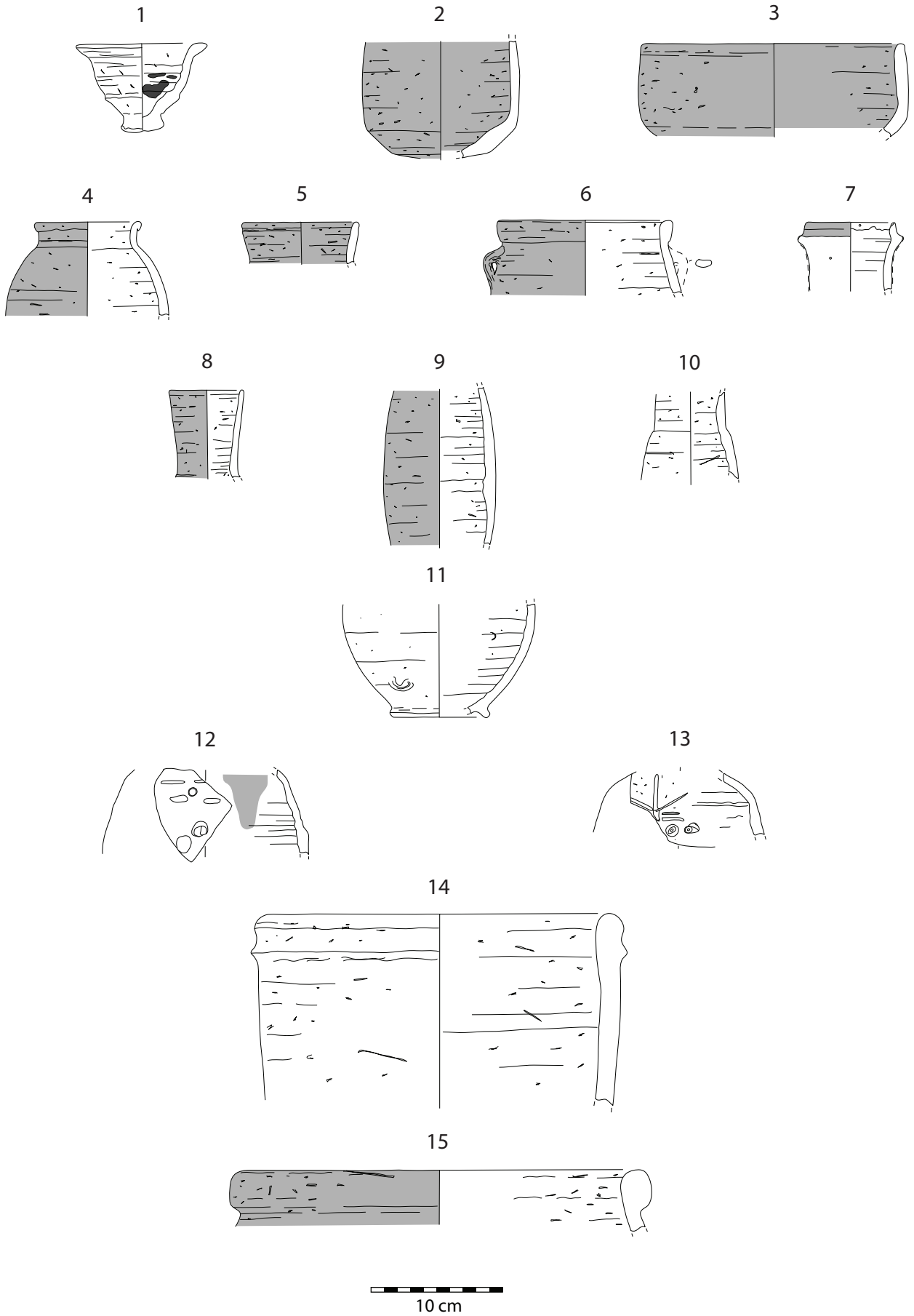


Fig. 27 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Selection of pottery

rim (Fig. 27:7), small ovoid jars with long cylindrical neck (Fig. 27:8–10) and large storage jars with broad rim (Fig. 27:14–15). There is also the base of a jug or bottle made of a fine buff-yellowish clay, which is either an Egyptian Marl clay or imported (Fig. 27:11), but Egyptian Marl clay vessels generally do not feature very frequently in this assemblage. Additionally, there were two Bes-jars of Nile and Marl clay (Fig. 27: 12–13, Fig. 28).

Particularly interesting were the numerous imported or foreign inspired vessels whose origin remains to be ascertained pending petrographic analysis. There were several body sherds and the neck of a very fine Attic black-glazed juglet (Figs. 29:1, 30). Also probably from the Aegean area is the neck of an amphora with flaring, folded-over rim (Fig. 29:5) which may point to the northern Aegean (Mende?).⁴⁸ There were numerous pieces and a nearly complete Phoenician amphora of the ‘torpedo’ type, which may have been imported from the Lebanese coast⁴⁹ (Figs. 29:2, 31) as well as local Egyptian productions thereof (Fig. 29:3–4).⁵⁰ These amphorae are characterised by their elongated shape, conical base, a slight shoulder ledge and a narrow neck with small lip as well as two relatively thick vertical handles. It is notable that imports have such a strong presence at the site given its remote location.

This pottery assemblage is significant as it presently provides the most secure dating criterion for the earliest occupation of this tomb. Based on parallels from other regions in Egypt, like the Northern Sinai, Nile Delta, Memphis, Kharga Oasis, Thebes and Elephantine,⁵¹ we can narrow down the earliest possible phase to the end of the 27th Dynasty (late 5th century BCE) and extending into the last indigenous dynasties of local Egyptian kings, i.e. 28th–30th Dynasty, or early 4th century BCE. It should be noted, though, that many pottery types which start during the 26th Dynasty were in use almost unchanged throughout the Late Dynastic Period until the 30th Dynasty, with some forms even surviving until the early Ptolemaic Period (beginning of the 3rd century BCE).⁵² El-Sheikh Fadl therefore contributes a significant amount of data for the region of Middle Egypt, where the Late Dynastic Period is not very well-attested.



Fig. 28 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Fragments of Bes-jars (Photo: E.C. Köhler)

8. Discussion, interpretation and conclusion

A most crucial result of the recent excavations in tomb A2 T1 at el-Sheikh Fadl is its chronological position and in consequence that of the Aramaic inscription on the tomb’s walls.

We have recently, i.e. before the tomb was excavated, suggested that the dating of the Aramaic inscription would provide a convenient *terminus ante quem* for the tomb,⁵³ as it had been placed in the first half of the 5th century BCE on palaeographic grounds.⁵⁴ Now, however, this date is not consistent with the earliest date of the pottery assemblage, i.e. late 5th century BCE, at least as far as the ceramics studied to date would suggest. This apparent inconsistency is even more problematic when considering the discrepancy between the context of an Egyptian tomb and the content of the Aramaic text, being a tale entirely unrelated to ancient Egyptian funerary customs and beliefs. As far as the evidence currently allows us to say, a possible sequence can thus be reconstructed. It should be noted, though, that the archaeological assemblage is still awaiting full analysis and that the MSI analysis is also still in progress. The results of these could potentially yield more evidence to ascertain the earliest and latest date for the first occupation phase as well as more clues as to the dating of the Aramaic text.

1. The tomb was most likely cut out of the rock for a wealthy Egyptian person who lived in the area at the end of the First Persian occupation

⁴⁸ DEFERNEZ 2017, 8, n° 66–67.

⁴⁹ BETTLES 2003.

⁵⁰ DEFERNEZ and MARCHAND 2006, 69.

⁵¹ WUTTMANN and MARCHAND 2005, 97–128.

⁵² MARCHAND 2013, 239–253.

⁵³ KÖHLER 2018.

⁵⁴ PORTEN and YARDENI (1999, 287) dated it in the first quarter of the 5th century BCE, whereas NAVEH (1970, 41) placed it in the second quarter of the 5th century BCE, a date to which LEMAIRE (1995, 105) agreed.

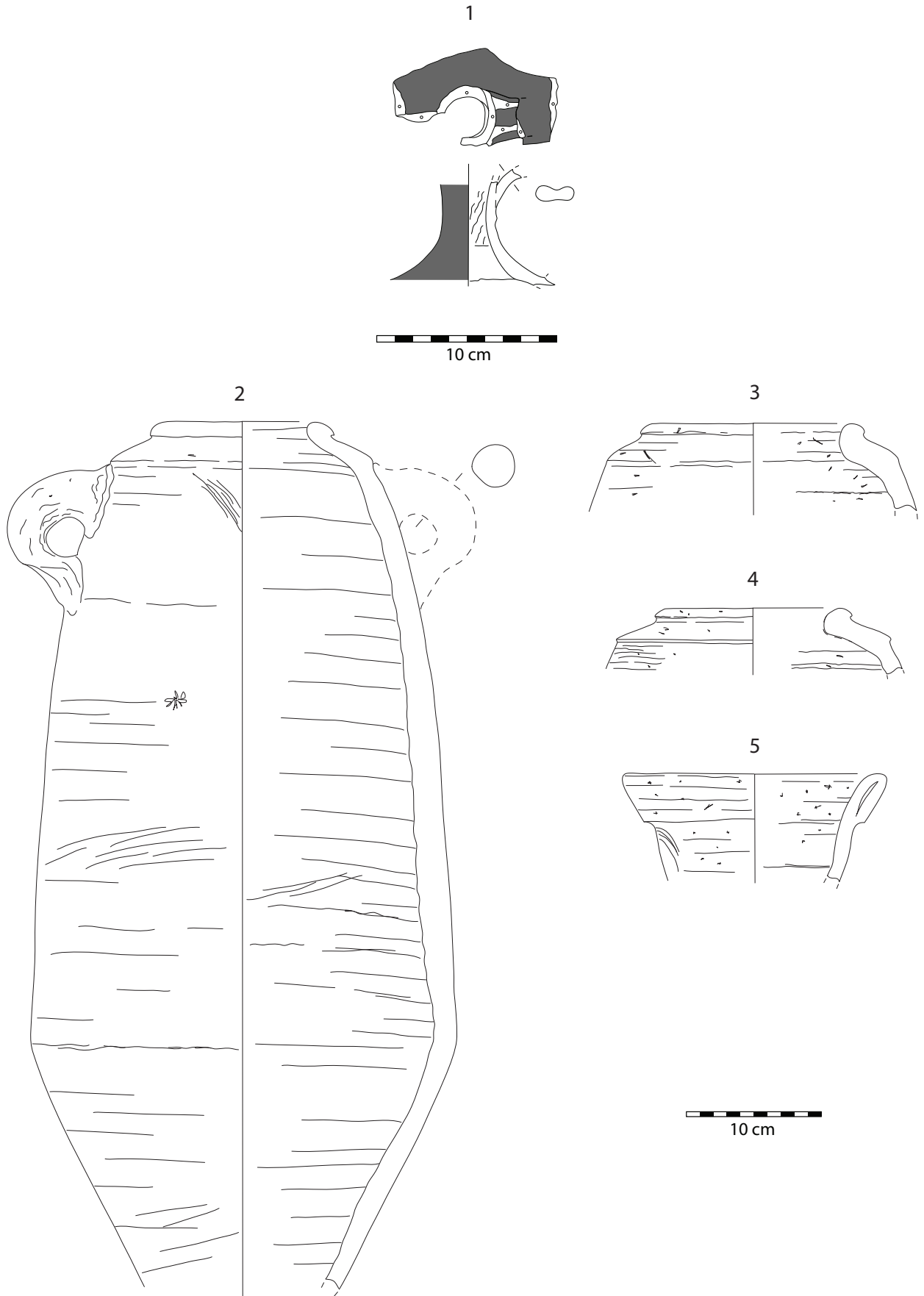


Fig. 29 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1. Selection of foreign/foreign influenced pottery

(late 27th Dynasty = late 5th century BCE). The tomb's chapel was decorated with scenes from the Egyptian corpus of funerary representations, possibly including images relevant to the life of the owner as well as religious scenes related to local cults and/or funerary literature. The architecture of the substructure as well as the large number of human individuals buried therein would strongly suggest that numerous other persons, possibly of the same family, subsequently found their burial place here and that this first phase of occupation may have lasted for maybe two generations until the early 4th century BCE. During this phase, the tomb not only received multiple burials, but it was also the site of mortuary rituals, which would have taken place in the public part of the tomb, i.e. the chapel. The niche in the eastern wall of the chapel may have contained either a statue of the main owner or the image of a deity to whom the rituals were also addressed – possibly Anubis, the main divinity of the area. This might be indicated by the elongated plan of the niche, which would accommodate a crouching jackal figure.

2. At a later point in time, the Aramaic *dipinto* inscription was painted over the decoration of the chapel's walls. The question now is when exactly this conceivably could have occurred. One key to determining this is probably the content of the inscription; it is a literary tale embedded in historical events of the 7th century BCE, i.e. more than 200 years prior to the first occupation phase. The tale's main protagonist is the Egyptian hero *'ir.t-ḥr-r.r=w* of Athribis, who fought against the Assyrian occupation of Egypt.⁵⁵ This literary text bears no direct relation to Egyptian funerary concepts and it seems very unlikely that it fulfilled a function within the funerary cults performed in the tomb, be it during the burial or in the subsequent mortuary cult.⁵⁶ The text is thus not only secondary to this tomb but also a non-systemic addition in terms of its function. Given its prominent location, i.e. right across the original decoration, one could argue that the inscription was not written on the walls when



Fig. 30 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1.
Neck fragment of an Attic black-glazed juglet seen from above
(Photo: E.C. Köhler)



Fig. 31 El-Sheikh Fadl – Umm Raqaba, tomb A2 T1.
Levantine pottery 'torpedo' amphora (Photo: E.C. Köhler)

mortuary cults still took place, which would make the date of the inscription significantly later than the tomb. If this conclusion is correct, the inscription would date towards the end of the first occupation phase, i.e. early 4th century BCE.

3. After a long hiatus of well over a millennium, when the tomb was probably occasionally visit-

⁵⁵ see also QUACK 2006.

⁵⁶ GIRON (1923) had supposed that the tomb dated to the Middle Kingdom and was subsequently reused by a Late Period person who had a direct relation to concepts conveyed in the text, see GIRON 1923, 43. It should be noted that

GOMAA (2001) had identified at least one person with the name *'ir.t-ḥr-r.r=w* as the owner of a burial assemblage he published from the site. However, this is a very popular name during the Late Period, cf. RANKE 1935, vol. I, 42, No.11.

ed during the Roman Period – be it for burial, cultic activity or for the purpose of looting – the space was again used for burial and for Christian rituals during Medieval times.

Throughout its existence within just under 2500 years, this tomb received almost 100 human burials, was the stage for ancient Egyptian and Christian rituals, a resource for looters in ancient and modern times and a site for visitors who left random graffiti. Moreover, and puzzlingly, it was also a meeting place for at least six different persons capable of writing in Aramaic script and language, and knowledgeable of intrinsic Egyptian tales already of great age at that time. While the language is obviously foreign, the text's content is fully Egyptian in character and content, suggesting that the writers may have been Egyptians. But why then did they choose Aramaic to tell this tale? Friedhelm Hoffmann has recently observed that it was not uncommon for Egyptian tales to be written down in other languages, i.e. Greek and Aramaic, during the late 6th and 5th century BCE and that the transition to a Demotic tradition of literary tales only occurred during the 4th century BCE.⁵⁷ Citing work by Günter Burkhard,⁵⁸ he suggested that the Egyptian tradition of literary texts was possibly interrupted during the First Persian occupation of Egypt (27th Dynasty) because Egyptian temple schools had been closed by the Persians. This could explain why the Inaros tale was written in Aramaic, possibly by Persian-educated writers, but it does not help to understand why it was written down in a tomb at el-Sheikh Fadl, especially if schools would have presumably reopened with Egypt's liberation by Amyrtaios in 404 BCE, i.e. before the text was inscribed here – provided our

chronological conclusions are correct. Moreover, during the New Kingdom, classic Egyptian literary texts, especially of the Middle Kingdom 'teachings' genre, were frequently inscribed in Hieratic on the walls of Middle Kingdom tombs,⁵⁹ but to the knowledge of the authors, these inscriptions do not include tales. Could the motivation for this particular text be found in not the literary realm, but rather in something about the political background of its time? We may never be able to tell.

In any case, the Aramaic text in this tomb at el-Sheikh Fadl represents the first known rendition of a tale about the famous Egyptian hero Inaros, who would later be the focus of an extensive and popular story cycle. The text's sub-plots became integrated into a Demotic tradition, told and embellished as time progressed until well into the Roman Period.⁶⁰

With the start of excavations at el-Sheikh Fadl, a new, previously rather uncharted territory has now been entered given that the site has been neglected for such a long time. As is the nature of new archaeological projects in Egypt, every new day of excavations has the potential to elucidate previously unknown aspects of ancient Egyptian culture. This is certainly the case with the area of el-Sheikh Fadl, ancient Saka and Hardai/Kynopolis, and especially in regard to lesser known periods like the Late Dynastic, whose material culture, religious cults and socio-economic background are still very much under-represented in the area of Middle Egypt. Despite the site's long history of looting and poor preservation, the material contained in this report documents very well that a modern approach does produce more than satisfactory results and genuinely new insights.

⁵⁷ But see HOFFMANN 2009, n. 365. We are grateful to Friedhelm Hoffmann for drawing our attention to this article.

⁵⁸ BURKARD 1994.

⁵⁹ VERHOEVEN 2015.

⁶⁰ HOFFMANN 2009, 359–360.

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