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Richard Bussmann, Bart Vanthuyne

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## ABSTRACT

### Zawyet Sultan

Second Preliminary Report. Excavation Season 2022

Richard Bussmann – Bart Vanthuyne

Excavations in 2022 at Zawyet Sultan have revealed a cemetery of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period on the desert slope south of the rock tombs (zone 5). Tombs of the early Old Kingdom include shaft tombs, rock circle tombs, and surface burials in wooden, ceramic, and mud coffins, while those of the late Old Kingdom and early First Intermediate Period include shaft tombs and a mastaba with multiple shafts. The simple surface burials are located at the lower fringe of the desert slope, the shaft tombs halfway up, and the mastaba complex at the upper end of the hillside. The spatial distribution suggests that the social hierarchy of the local community was mirrored in the vertical landscape. The area was reused in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty for individual burials and possibly also for other purposes.

## KEYWORDS

Old Kingdom, First Intermediate Period, New Kingdom, cemetery, social hierarchy



# Zawyet Sultan

## Second Preliminary Report. Excavation Season 2022

### Overview

<sup>1</sup> Excavations at Zawyet Sultan took place from 14 January to 1 April 2022<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the season was to investigate a cemetery discovered in 2015 in zone 5<sup>2</sup> and provisionally dated to the early Old Kingdom based on ceramic surface material from this period. The excavations concentrated on three operations located at the upper end, in the middle, and at the lower fringe of the desert slope<sup>3</sup>.

### Zone 5. Old Kingdom to Early First Intermediate Period

<sup>2</sup> Five operations were laid out at the beginning of the season 2022 of which the results from operations 1 and 3 in sector 1 and operation 1 in sector 2 will be outlined further below (Fig. 1). The surface pottery indicated a date of the visible shaft tombs to the early Old Kingdom<sup>4</sup>. However, the excavations of 2022 revealed a chronologically and typologically diverse situation. The report that follows is organised in a diachronic order.

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoT&A) for permission to work at Zawyet Sultan and for its kind support of the mission. For previous reports of seasons 2015, 2017, and 2019, see Tiribilli et al. 2020 and Bussmann et al. 2020/2021. The members of the 2022 season were Richard Bussmann (director), Bart Vanthuyne (field director), Mustafa I. Tolba (archaeologist), Anouk Everts (archaeologist), Pia Lorenz (archaeologist), Hilke Spänhoff (archaeologist), Mariola Hepa (ceramicist), Rita Hartmann (ceramicist), Katarina Arias (ceramicist), Afaf Wahba Abdelsalam Wahba (anthropologist), Hussein Mohamed Ali Ibrahim (conservator), and Yehyia Othman Mahmoud Mahmoud (conservator). Rais Ala Farouk supervised the work of specialists from Quft and workmen from Zawyet Sultan. The Zawyet Sultan inspectors were Mohib Iskawy Alzordoky, Ahmed Gafer Khalf Sharaui, Walid Munir Ahmed Falil, Wael Soliman Sayed, and Sayed Hassan Shahata. The trainee was Mariam Nasim Louise Fahmi. The el-Ashmunein magazine inspectors were Safi Sultan Hassan Khalifa and Abtisam Faruk Habib Besalius. The season has been funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Universität zu Köln. This report has been written as part of the project »Sozialisierung der Landschaft im frühen altägyptischen Staat: der Friedhof des frühen Alten Reiches von Zawyet Sultan«, funded by the DFG, project no. 440396169.

<sup>2</sup> For location of zones, see Bussmann et al. 2020/2021, 44 f. fig. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Zone 5, sector 1, operation 5 and zone 5, sector 3, operation 1 were only briefly investigated in 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Marchand et al. 2016, 174–176. 180 fig. 1; 182–185 figs. 5–9; Tiribilli et al. 2020, 171 fig. 7.



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Fig. 1: Location of zone 5 sectors and operations investigated in 2022 (scale 1 : 5,000)

## Early Old Kingdom. Zone 5, Sector 2

3 Sector 2 is located at the lower end of the desert slope in zone 5. Several clusters of large stone boulders seemed to be the remains of rock circle tombs<sup>5</sup>. A small rectangular space surrounded by small stones with beer jars placed next to them<sup>6</sup> and fragments of a small oblong pottery coffin suggested the existence of further burials.

4 A 10 × 8 m operation was set out around the boulder and stone outlines. A densely packed burial ground of the non-elite inhabitants of ancient Hebenu was discovered just several centimetres under the current desert surface. Currently, at least 17 early Old Kingdom graves have been identified in the middle and west end of the operation (Figs. 2, 3), whereas certain parts of the east end require further investigation, whereby it seems certain that the total number of graves in this operation will be even higher. So far three graves with small wooden coffins, six graves with small pottery coffins, three graves with small mud coffins, and one grave with a ceramic vat have been identified, containing burials in tightly contracted positions of adult males and females, adolescents, juveniles, and infants. Most bodies were buried on their left side, with head to the north, though exceptions were also noted (Figs. 4, 5)<sup>7</sup>.

5 Further to the south, similar age groups and burial orientations were recorded at the early Old Kingdom rock circle cemeteries on the escarpments of Deir el-Bersha and Deir Abu Hinnis in the 15<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome and Beni Hasan el-Shuruq and Nuwayrat in the 16<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome<sup>8</sup>. Here, too, a wide variety of burial containers were used, including those so far attested at Zawyet Sultan<sup>9</sup>.

6 In a number of instances, pottery vessels were found placed around the burial containers<sup>10</sup>. The majority were various types of beer jars, including collared beer jars, as well as a variety of bowls and cups, including Meidum bowls. Bowls with inner ledge rims and *bd3*-bread moulds were far less common here than in zone 5, sector 1, higher up the hillside. These vessels securely date the tightly contracted burials to the early

5 Tiribilli et al. 2020, 171 fig. 6.

6 Vanthuyne 2023.

7 Vanthuyne 2023.

8 During 2009–2013, excavations were conducted at the Deir el-Bersha rock circle cemetery, while surveys were carried out in the three other rock circle cemeteries (Vanthuyne 2017a I).

9 De Meyer et al. 2011, 682–684. 702; pls. 5, 6; Vanthuyne 2016, 453–454. 456; Vanthuyne 2017a III, chap. 11, 1 f. tabs. 11, 1. 2; Vanthuyne 2017b, 505–509; Vanthuyne 2018b, 98–100.

10 The pottery and small finds from this operation will be examined in the upcoming season. For similar pottery types from zone 5, sector 1, see Figs. 11, 12.

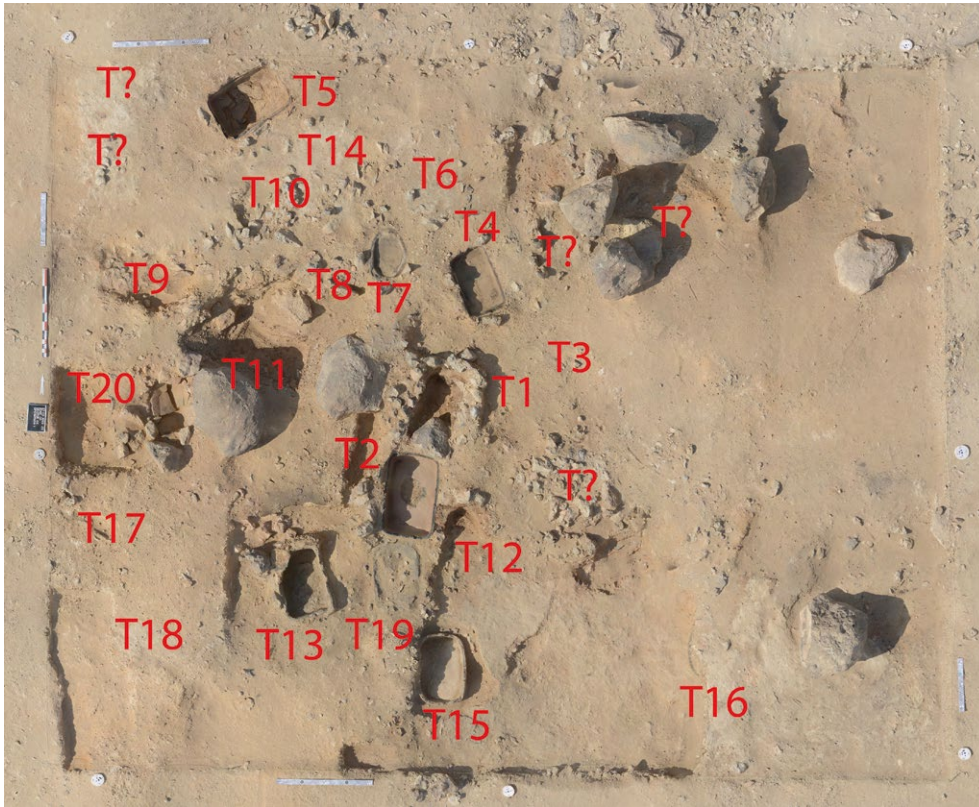


Fig. 2: Location of tombs and potential tombs in zone 5, sector 2, operation 1

2

Old Kingdom, and similar types were also present in the contemporary four rock circle cemeteries further to the south<sup>11</sup>. Fragments of calcite alabaster or limestone vessels were also found in the operation, though none could be linked with certainty to any specific grave. Nevertheless, it is clear that stone vessels formed part of the burial assemblage of a number of tombs in this particular cemetery. In the Deir el-Bersha rock circle cemetery, stone vessels were found in graves containing burials in wooden or pottery coffins, so this could also have been the case at Zawyet Sultan<sup>12</sup>. In the former cemetery, beads were found with adult female and juvenile burials, and, so far, in Zawyet Sultan faience beads were deposited in two early Old Kingdom pottery coffins containing adult females<sup>13</sup>. As at Deir el-Bersha, traces of textile were identified in several instances, suggesting prior treatment of the body before its final deposition in the cemetery<sup>14</sup>.

7 Numerous graves had a number of smaller stones immediately placed around the burial container, forming grave markers, and their position was respected, as no graves were found that cut into others. The boulder and stone outlines of tombs 11 and 20 confirm the presence of rock circle tombs in this area<sup>15</sup>. The semi-circle of boulders in the north-eastern corner of the operation was probably part of the outline of another completely disturbed rock circle tomb (Fig. 4). An additional rock circle tomb had previously been identified in zone 2<sup>16</sup>.

11 De Meyer et al. 2011, 684–690. 698 f. figs. 1–4; Vanthuyne 2016, 454 f.; Vanthuyne 2017a III, chap. 8, 9–129; Vanthuyne 2017b, 509–516; Vanthuyne 2018b, 99–102; Vanthuyne 2021.

12 Vanthuyne 2012, 80 fig. 4; Vanthuyne 2016, 455 f. fig. 18; Vanthuyne 2017a III, chap. 9, 4–9.

13 Vanthuyne 2016, 456; Vanthuyne 2017a III, chap. 9, 12 f. tab. 9, 3.

14 Textile fragments were recovered in about one out of every eight excavated tombs, though, due to poor preservation, bodies are likely to have been wrapped or covered in far more tombs; Vanthuyne 2016, 454; Vanthuyne 2017a I, chap. 3, 858 f.

15 Vanthuyne 2023.

16 Tiribilli et al. 2020, 173 fig. 12; Bussmann et al. 2020/2021, 53.

Tomb no.	Date	Preservation	Coffin type	Coffin/burial space size	Age	Sex	Objects in coffin
T1	Early OK	Intact	Wood	96 × 52 cm (C)	To be determined		
T2	Early OK	Disturbed	Pottery	96 × 60 × 21 cm (C)	Juvenile + adult		
T3	Early OK	Disturbed	Vat		Infant: 0–1 yr		
T4	Early OK	Intact	Pottery	76 × 46 × 20 cm (C)	Young adult	Female	7 faience beads
T5	Early OK	Intact	Pottery	88 × 60 × 28 cm (C)	Middle-aged adult	Female	3 faience beads + pebble
T6	Early OK	?	Mud?				
T7	Early OK	Poor	Mud	60 × 41.5 × 6 cm (C)	Juvenile: 2.5 yr		
T8	Early OK	?	Vat?				
T9	Late OK–early FIP	Intact	Matting?	ca. 100 × 50 cm (B)	Old adult	Female	Faience bead
T10	Early OK	?	Mud?				
T11	Early OK	Intact	Wood	92 × 61 cm (C)	To be determined		
T12	Early OK	Disturbed	Wood	56 cm wide (C)	Old adult	Male?	
T13	Early OK	Disturbed	Mud	84 × 55 × 30 cm (C)	Adolescent: 16–18 yr	Male	
T14	Early OK	?	Mud?				
T15	Early OK	Disturbed	Pottery	81 × 54 × 20 cm (C)	Juvenile: 6–9 yr		
T16	Early OK	?	Pottery				
T17	NK	Poor	X	52 × 18 cm (B)	Infant: 1–1.5 yr		
T18	NK	Poor	X		Infant?		
T19	Early OK	?	Mud	72 × 51 cm (C)			
T20	Early OK	Intact	Pottery	>70 × 50 cm (C)			

3

Fig. 3: Table 1: zone 5, sector 2, operation 1 tombs (green = excavated in 2022; blue = not yet excavated; OK = Old Kingdom; FIP = First Intermediate Period; NK = New Kingdom)

8 Such a dense concentration of burials was not attested in the Deir Abu Hinnis rock circle cemetery. The Beni Hasan el-Shuruq rock circle cemetery has only been briefly surveyed but at least one cluster of early Old Kingdom burials was identified on the escarpment, below late Old Kingdom rock tombs<sup>17</sup>. It is only at Nuwayrat that dense clusters of adjoining rock circle tombs existed on the hillside and the edges of gullies, but such dense boulder clusters do not – or do no longer – exist at Zawyet Sultan. However, there were also hillside surface burials in ceramic burial containers without clear boulder superstructures at Nuwayrat, though none have been excavated yet, and these burials might be similar to what has been found at the nearby nome capital<sup>18</sup>. No dense rock circle tomb clusters existed at Deir el-Bersha. Here, however, several early Old Kingdom surface burials, marked by boulders or small stones, were identified in the desert plain, though, due to time restraints, no large sectors were investigated to confirm if a similar dense burial occupation existed here as at Zawyet Sultan<sup>19</sup>.

9 The operation likely also contains two New Kingdom infant surface burials and one possible late Old Kingdom/early First Intermediate Period surface burial, though, for lack of burial goods, the dating of the latter three burials can only roughly be estimated based on burial position and parallels from nearby cemeteries (Fig. 3)<sup>20</sup>.

17 Vanthuyne 2017a II, chap. 5, 6–29; Vanthuyne 2018b, 98–102.

18 De Meyer et al. 2011, 682–684. 700 f.; pls. 1. 3; Vanthuyne 2017a II, chap. 6, 14–138. 209 f.

19 Vanthuyne 2017a I, chap. 3, 481–510.

20 A similar Ramesside infant burial (S77B – 18Z69/2) was recorded in a reused Deir el-Bersha rock circle tomb (Vanthuyne 2017a I, chap. 3, 380–395). The semi-flexed burial position in zone 5, sector 2, tomb 9 was also recorded in the late Old Kingdom/early First Intermediate Period zone 5, sector 1, tombs 4 and 11.



## Early Old Kingdom and Early First Intermediate Period. Zone 5, Sector 1, Operation 1

<sup>10</sup> Sector 1 is located further up in zone 5 (Fig. 1). An 8 × 10 m operation was set out in 2019 around the partially exposed shaft of tomb 1 (T0500100001)<sup>21</sup>, and all surface pottery within the operation was collected that year<sup>22</sup>. The shaft was dug in the poor-quality limestone hillside, with the shaft mouth (interior = 1.3 × 0.9–1 m) having a mud brick lining one header wide (exterior = 1.95 × 1.4 m), preserved in the local north-eastern corner up to three bricks high. It was filled with rubble consisting of sand, crumbled limestone, small stones, mud bricks, and lots of early Old Kingdom pottery. It had a sloping floor from the local south to north (depth [S] 1.5–[N] 2.3 m) towards the burial chamber (1.35 × 1.25 × 1.1 m, with max. depth from modern surface 2.65 m; Figs. 6. 7. 8). The latter had been filled with modern garbage in the upper level and lower down with the same rubble as in the shaft. The badly disturbed remains of an adult woman and fragments of a second younger individual were found at the bottom of the burial chamber. Poorly preserved wood suggests that one of them had been buried in a wooden coffin. A Graeco-Roman coin found in the fill between the human remains indicates that this tomb had been reused in this period (Fig. 9). Part of a mud brick blocking of the burial chamber was still present, whether this was from the original or secondary burial could not be determined.

<sup>11</sup> About 1.1 m east of the mud brick outline of tomb 1, remains of a mud brick wall, likewise one header wide, are preserved over a distance of 4.3 m, running nearly parallel with the local north-south orientation of tomb 1. The northern end of this wall is cut by the shaft of tomb 8 (T0500100008), while its southern end is cut by the pit of tomb 11 (T0500100011; Figs. 6. 7). It is possible that this wall was once part of the outer mastaba wall of tomb 1, though no traces of it were preserved elsewhere in the operation. This should, however, not be surprising as tombs of later periods were dug north and south of tomb 1, which could have cut away the surrounding wall there, while the situation west of the tomb still needs to be further investigated.

<sup>12</sup> The intact early Old Kingdom tomb 10 (T0500100010) is located about 3 m to the local south-east of tomb 1 (Figs. 6. 7). It consists of a pit dug into the poor-quality limestone hillside, with the pit mouth having a mud brick lining, preserved in the local north-eastern corner up to three bricks high. The base lining consists of a row, one stretcher wide, on top of which were placed transverse bricks forming an outer overhang. The interior of the lining was mud-plastered. The tomb measures ca. 1.23 × 1.05 m (interior) and is 1.9 m deep (from the top of the preserved mud brick lining; Fig. 10)<sup>23</sup>. The shaft was filled with sand mixed with crumbled limestone, small stones, mud bricks, and early Old Kingdom pottery (Fig. 11). On the surface, around the tomb, there were additional concentrations of early Old Kingdom pottery (Fig. 12). The contracted burial of a middle-aged adult man was found at the bottom of the pit in a poorly preserved small, rectangular wooden coffin, measuring ca. 0.8 × 0.52 m, with a preserved height of ca. 0.34 m, and was made from 1 cm thick planks (Figs. 9. 10 a; 13). The man was buried on his left side, with his head to the local north.

<sup>13</sup> The pottery in and around tomb 10 included beer jars with direct rims (Figs. 11, 1–3 and 12, 4–9) and collared rims (Fig. 12, 1–3), bowls with mainly wide inner ledge rims (Figs. 11, 4–6 and 12, 12–14), and Meidum bowls with max. diameter at the angular shoulder (Fig. 12, 10). The collared beer jars date the tomb between the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early to mid-4<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Marchand et al. 2016, 181 fig. 4; Bussmann 2018, 17 fig. 17; Tiribilli et al. 2020, 156 f. 172 fig. 10; Bussmann et al. 2020/2021, 54 f.

<sup>22</sup> Operation 1 was expanded in 2022 to 96 m<sup>2</sup>, but due to time restraints, the southern 8 × 4 m have not been examined yet. A small percentage of the pottery collected in 2019 was still available for study in 2022.

<sup>23</sup> The Zawyet Sultan project defines a surface burial as a burial between 0–0.5 m deep, a pit burial as a burial between 0.5–2.5 m deep, and a shaft tomb being over 2.5 m deep at its lowest point.

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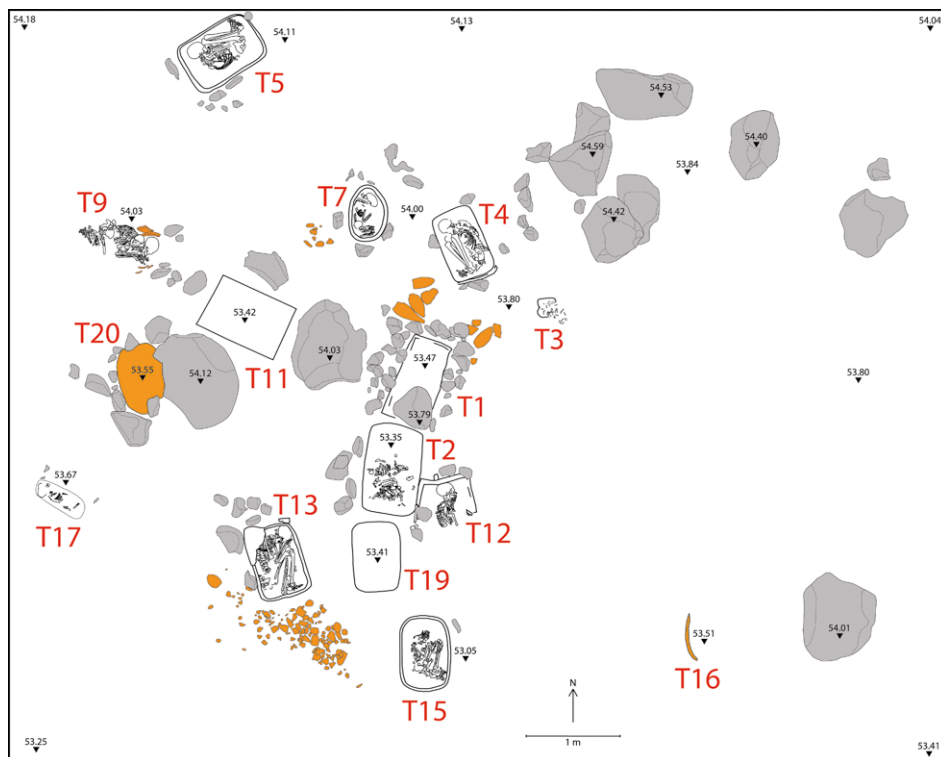


Fig. 4: Burial position and location of tombs and potential tombs in zone 5, sector 2, operation 1 (scale 1 : 80)

Fig. 5: Surface burial T5 (T0500200005): contracted burial in pottery coffin



Dynasties<sup>24</sup>. However, a late 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty date is unlikely as the pottery from the tomb is already slightly different from that from this period recorded at the Maghara Abu ʿAziz calcite alabaster quarry<sup>25</sup>. The vessel types compare well with those deposited in and around the early Old Kingdom rock circle tombs<sup>26</sup> or, e. g., large mastabas at Elkab<sup>27</sup> or several tombs at Helwan<sup>28</sup>. Closer by, it is likewise similar to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty pottery around small rock tombs at Nuwayrat, which again included the vessel types mentioned above<sup>29</sup>. A later date, by comparison with the settlement pottery from Giza<sup>30</sup>, el-Sheikh Said<sup>31</sup>, Elkab (ceramic series 1A)<sup>32</sup>, or Elephantine (*Bauschicht* VIII.2)<sup>33</sup>, can be ruled out as the pottery styles encountered there represent the next phase in the Old Kingdom pottery development<sup>34</sup>. This is also the case for the pottery deposited in and around the el-Tarif mastabas<sup>35</sup>.

14 Tomb 1 with its sloping floor and small burial chamber seems to be a local adaption, befitting the cemetery terrain, of contemporary small stairway tombs. Parallels to the latter, as well as tombs similar to the simple shaft tomb 10, were built, e. g., at Ballas<sup>36</sup>, Nagaʿ el-Deir<sup>37</sup>, in the Qau-Badari region<sup>38</sup>, at Baskatib<sup>39</sup>, and Helwan<sup>40</sup>.

24 Vanthuyne 2021.

25 Vanthuyne 2018a, 163–166.

26 De Meyer et al. 2011, 684–690. 698 f. figs. 1–4; Vanthuyne 2016, 454 f.; Vanthuyne 2017a III, chap. 8, 9–129; Vanthuyne 2017b, 509–516; Vanthuyne 2018b, 99–102; Vanthuyne 2021.

27 Op de Beeck 2009.

28 Köhler 2017, 115 fig. 8; 210 fig. 51.

29 De Meyer et al. 2011, 680–682. 684–690. 698–701; Vanthuyne 2017a II, chap. 6, 155–180.

30 Wodzińska 2007.

31 Willems et al. 2009b, 308–313; Vereecken 2011.

32 Hendrickx et al. 2016.

33 Kaiser et al. 1999, 185 f. fig. 40.

34 De Meyer et al. 2011, 685–689; Vanthuyne 2017a II, chap. 6, 221–228.

35 Kammerer-Grothaus 1998.

36 Petrie – Quibell 1896, pls. 2. 3; Vanthuyne 2022, 237–247.

37 Reisner 1932.

38 Brunton 1927, pls. 5. 10–12.

39 Petrie et al. 1923, pls. 40–43. 45. 46.

40 Köhler 2008.

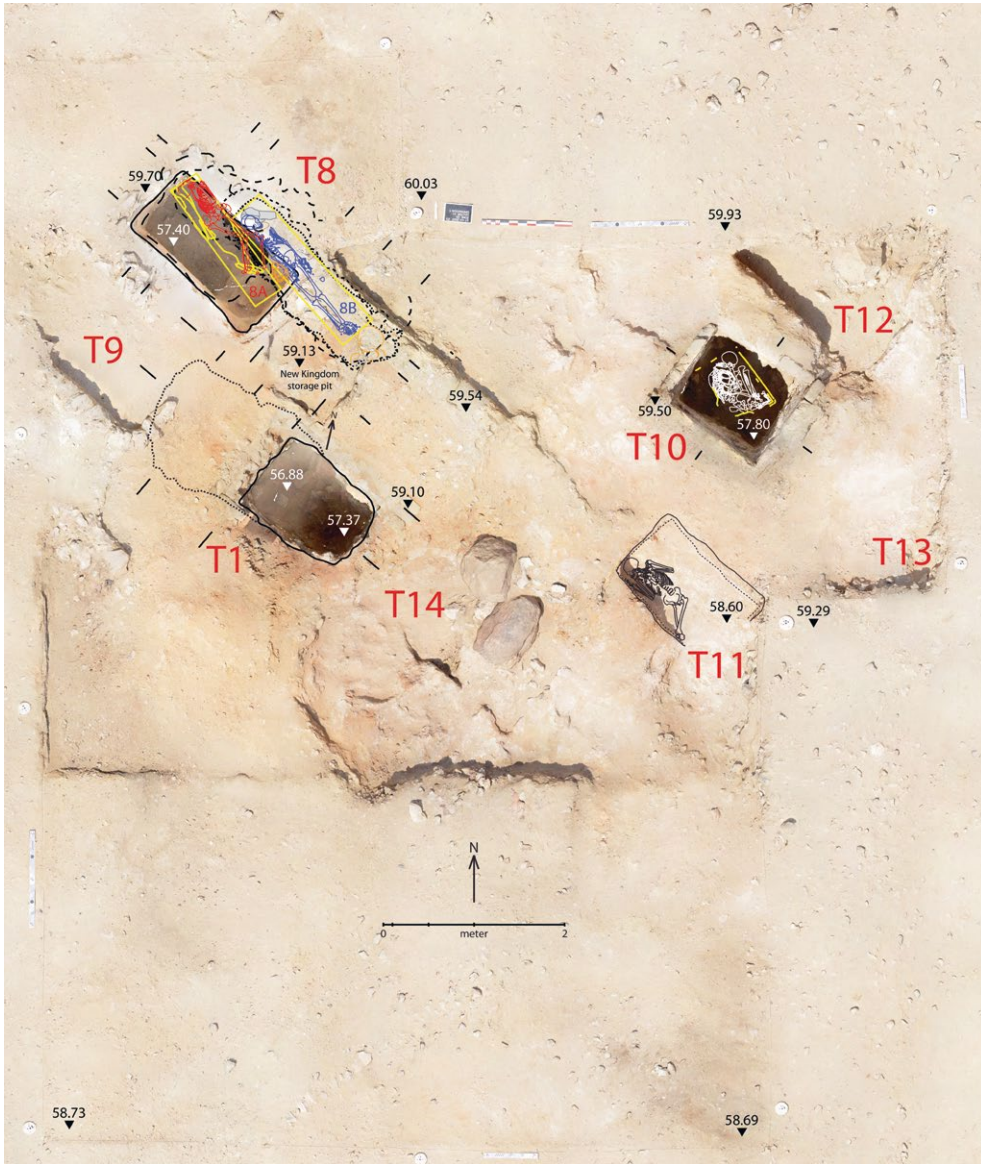


Fig. 6: Location of tombs and excavated burials in zone 5, sector 1, operation 1 (scale 1 : 80)

6



Fig. 7: Shaft tomb 1 (T0500100001) in the upper left corner with its possible mastaba wall east of it. Pit tomb 11 (T0500100011) cutting the south end of the latter. Intact early Old Kingdom pit tomb 10 (T0500100010) east of the wall

7



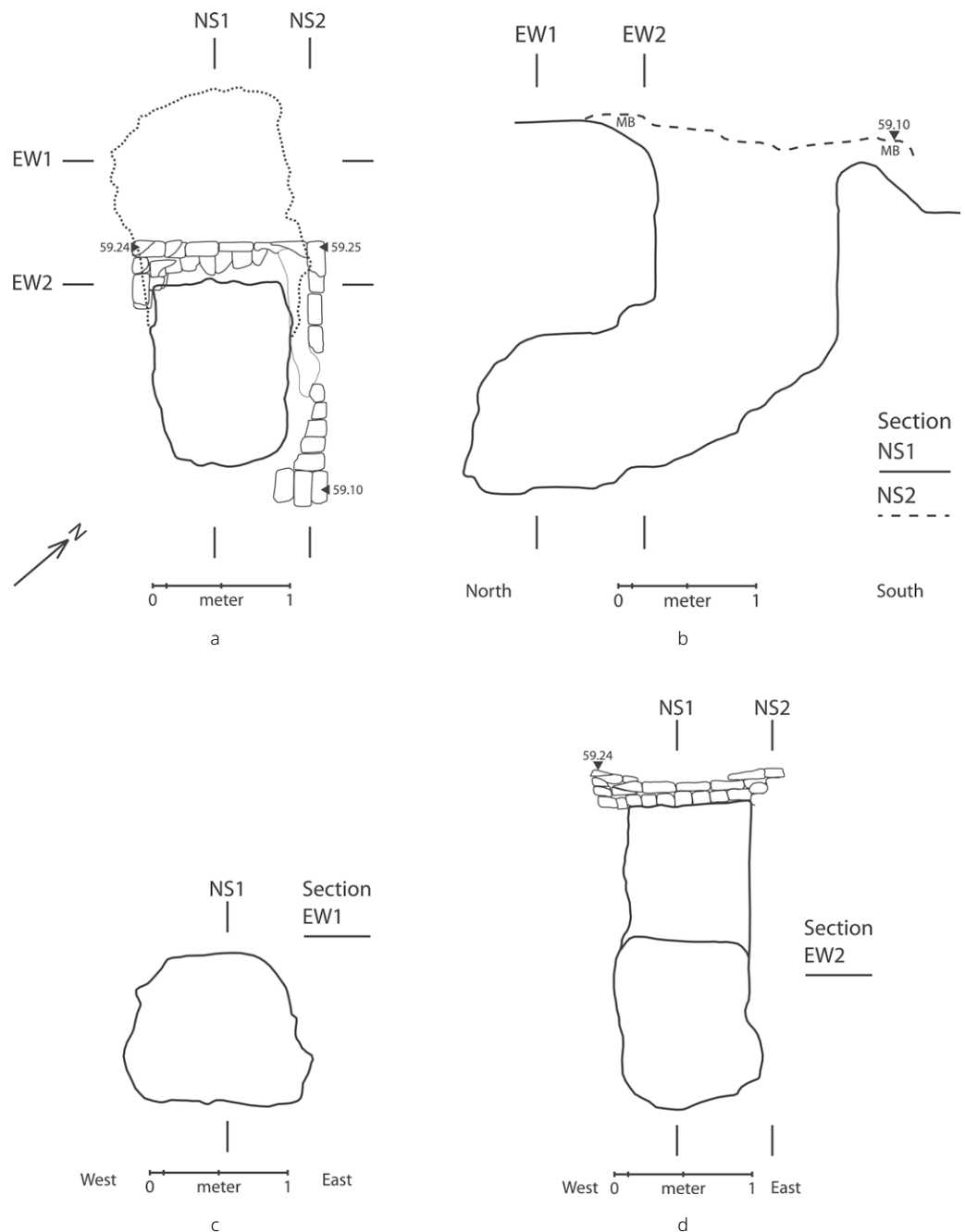


Fig. 8: Plan (a), local N-S section (b), and local E-W section (c, d) of tomb 1 (T0500100001; scale 1 : 50)

8

15 As mentioned before, the northern end of the possible outer mastaba wall of tomb 1 was cut by tomb 8, which contained two intact burials (Figs. 6. 9). Its rectangular shaft measures ca.  $1.9 \times 0.9 \times 2\text{--}3.2$  m, and it has an undercut burial chamber in the local south-eastern corner extending southwards, measuring ca.  $2.45 \times >0.7 \times 0.85$  m (Fig. 14). The upper end of the shaft was lined with small stones, which were coated with mud plaster on the inside. The rest of the shaft was cut into the poor-quality limestone hillside and filled with sand mixed with fragmented limestone and small to large stones. At the bottom, in the local east end, a young adult female was buried in a semi-flexed position<sup>41</sup>, with the head to the local north and arms crossed in front of the chest, in a poorly preserved wooden coffin (burial 8A). The latter was 0.32 m wide on the inside, having 2 cm

41 The semi-flexed position of the legs may be the post-depositional result after the coffin broke up following its decay.

Tomb	Date	Preservation	Coffin type	Coffin size	Age	Sex
Tomb 1 – burial 1A	Early OK	Disturbed	Wooden	NA	Adult + juvenile	Female + unknown
Tomb 1 – burial 1B	Graeco-Roman	Disturbed				
Shaft 4 – burial 4A	Late OK–early FIP	Damaged	Wooden	>130 × 53 cm	Adult	Male
Shaft 4 – burial 4B	NK or later	Destroyed	NA	NA	NA	NA
Shaft 5 – burial 5A	NK or later	Intact	Tree trunk	171 × 42 × 35 cm	Subadult	NA
Shaft 5 – burial 5B	Late OK–early FIP?	Disturbed	Wooden	NA	Young adult	Male
Tomb 8 – burial 8A	Early FIP?	Intact	Wooden	160 × 36 cm	Young adult	Female
Tomb 8 – burial 8B	Early FIP?	Intact	Wooden	185 × 42 cm	Young adult	Male
Tomb 9 – burial 9A*	?	Empty	Wooden	175 × 44 cm	NA	NA
Tomb 10	Early OK	Intact	Wooden	80 × 52 × 34 cm	Middle-aged adult	Male
Tomb 11	Late OK–early FIP?	Intact**	None	NA	Middle-aged adult	Male
Tomb 15	NK	Intact	Jar	Length = 34 cm	Foetus	NA
Tomb 16	NK?	Intact	Linen wrap – traces of wood	NA	Infant	NA

9

thick planks, and was max. 1.6 m long. White plaster was used to fill up holes and uneven surfaces. At the time of the funeral, the head end of the coffin was lowered first into the shaft at an angle. This caused the body to slide down into the northern end of the coffin in a contorted position, with the head and cervical vertebrae turned at an odd 90° from the rest of the body. Textile remains indicate that the body was wrapped or covered up. Three bag-shaped jars were placed in the local south-eastern corner of the shaft (Figs. 14 a. 15. 17). Burial 8A was a secondary burial in tomb 8. The original tomb owner, a young adult male, was buried on his back in an extended position in a wooden coffin in the south-eastern undercut (burial 8B)<sup>42</sup>. The extended right arm rested on the pelvis, while the left arm was extended next to the body. Multiple layers of thin strips of linen indicated that the body had been wrapped. A mud brick was used as head rest<sup>43</sup>. The coffin measured ca. 1.85 × 0.42 m and was made from 2 cm thick planks. White plaster was again used to fill up holes and uneven surfaces. One large ellipsoid storage jar and three bag-shaped jars were placed at the southern end of the burial chamber, and all four jars were sealed with a plain mud stopper (Figs. 14 b. 16. 18).

Fig. 9: Table 2: zone 5, sector 1, operation 1 tombs (\*burial 9A was located in the upper end of the shaft of tomb 9, the rest remains to be excavated in an upcoming season; \*\*except for lower legs)

16 Following the collapse of the Old Kingdom, certain pottery types became representative in the course of the First Intermediate Period for a northern ceramic tradition, predominantly identified in the Fayum region, which included jars with cylindrical, conical, or funnel necks, while others were part of a southern ceramic tradition, developed in the Qau-Matmar region and further south, which included, amongst others, bag-shaped jars. Middle Egypt formed a transition zone where pottery types of both traditions have been attested, though this varied distinctively from site to site<sup>44</sup>.

17 Tomb 8 contained six bag-shaped jars that, as stated above, are typical southern types. They are generally smaller in size than those found in the Qau-Badari region<sup>45</sup>. Of the first burial 8B, jar C0500101005 (Fig. 18, 2) is similar to Stephan J. Seidlmayer's K-B23.05 jars (Qau-Matmar *Stufen* IIC–IIIB, mainly IIIA–IIIB), while the large storage jar (Fig. 18, 4) is similar to Seidlmayer's K-B21.01 and K-B21.02 jars (Qau-Matmar

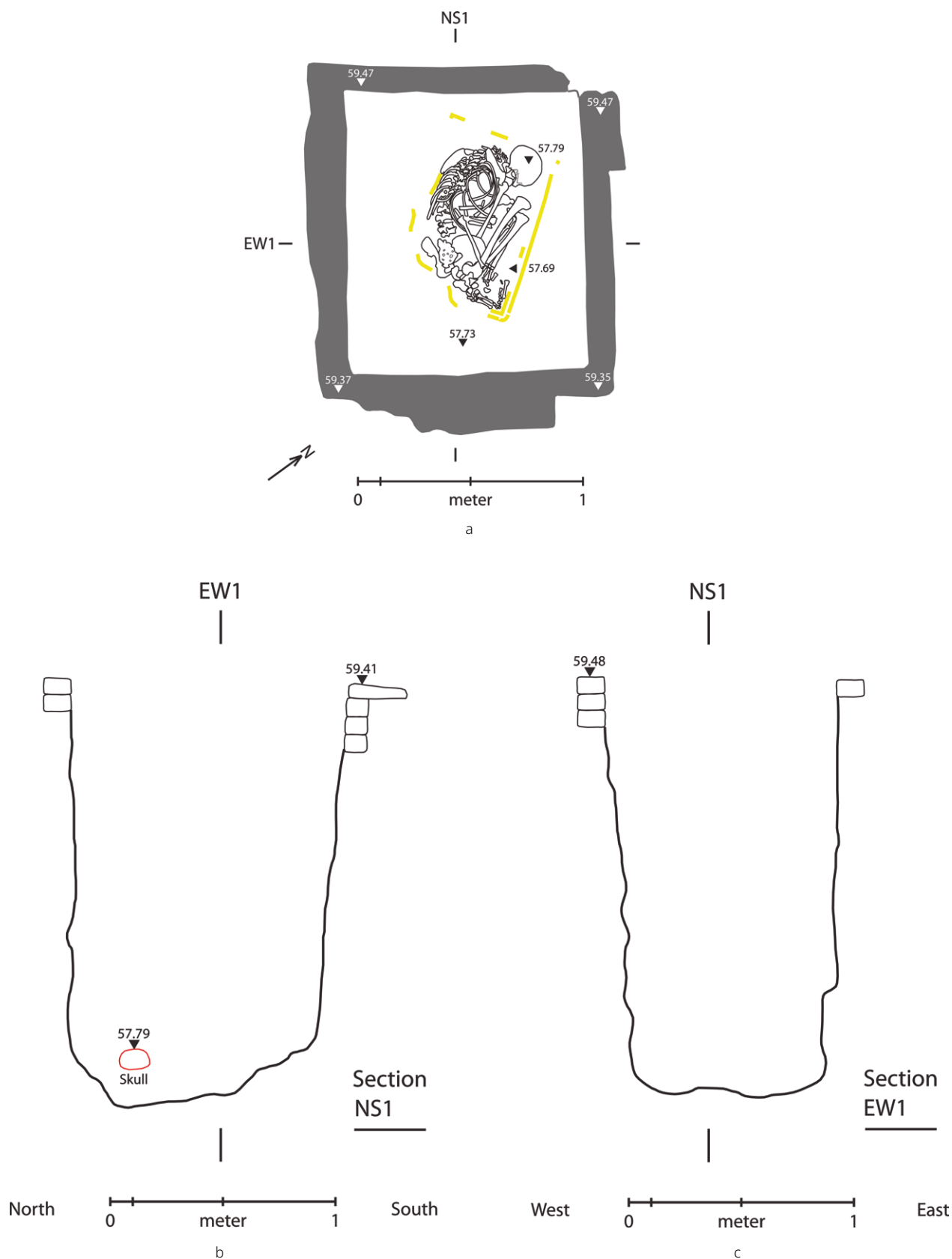
42 The burial chamber was enlarged to the east of burial 8B. This space was filled with large stones and has not yet been investigated for safety reasons.

43 The use of mud bricks as headrests has, e. g., also been attested in late Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period tombs at Qau-Badari (Brunton 1927, 62) and Elephantine (Seidlmayer 2001, 224–226).

44 For a concise overview with pertinent literature, see Cortebeeck et al. 2021.

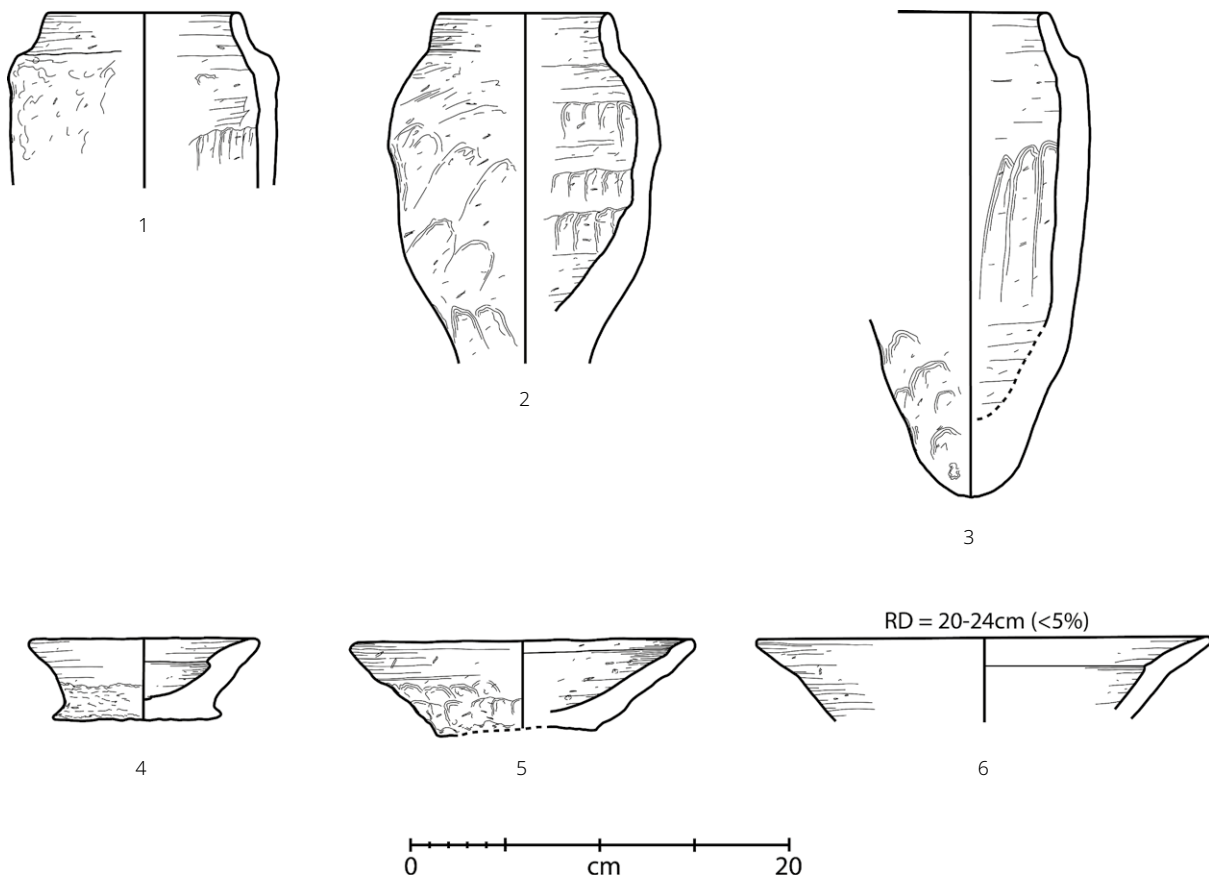
45 Brunton 1928, pls. 82–84.





10

Fig. 10: Plan (a), local N-S section (b), and local E-W section (c) of tomb 10 (T0500100010; scale 1 : 25)



11

*Stufen* IB–IIIA, mainly IIA–IIC). Of the second burial 8A, jar C0500101001 (Fig. 17, 1), with visible exterior coils, corresponds to Seidlmayer’s K-B21.02 jars (Qau-Matmar *Stufen* IB–IIIA, mainly IIA–IIC), while the two other jars (Fig. 17, 2, 3) are similar to Seidlmayer’s K-B31.03 jars (Qau-Matmar *Stufen* IIA–IIIB, mainly IIB–IIIA)<sup>46</sup>. The two burials in tomb 8 predate those in the late First Intermediate Period to early Middle Kingdom cemetery in the desert plain of Deir el-Bersha, zone 9(A). The bag-shaped jars there are more slender than the Zawyet Sultan vessels, and moreover, jars with cylindrical necks, typical of the northern ceramic tradition, were more frequently included in the burial assemblages, whereas jars with conical necks are nearly absent<sup>47</sup>. Also at Beni Hasan el-Shuruq, ca. 13 km south of Zawyet Sultan and ca. 30 km north of Deir el-Bersha, jars of the northern ceramic tradition are more frequent than those of the southern ceramic tradition. In addition, jars with conical necks were more common there than those with cylindrical necks<sup>48</sup>.

18 So far, jars with cylindrical or conical necks have not been attested at Zawyet Sultan, and this could indicate that the site had been abandoned by the late First Intermediate Period, around the same time that the cemetery at nearby Beni Hasan el-Shuruq regains prominence<sup>49</sup>.

19 The recent surveys and excavations have also identified fragments of high-shouldered jars with vertically scrapped pointed bases and straight to slightly outward-curved modelled or disc-shaped rims in the fill of shaft 5, in the shaft fills of tombs 8 and 11, on the surface around tomb 8, and elsewhere in zone 5. Moreover, Raymond

Fig. 11: Early Old Kingdom pottery deposited inside the pit of tomb 10 (T0500100010; scale 1 : 4); beer jars = 11, 1: C0500101275 – Nile B2/C; 11, 2: C0500101272 – Nile B2/C; 11, 3: C0500101276 – Nile B2/C; bowls with inner ledge rim = 11, 4: C0500101264 – Nile B1/B2; 11, 5: C0500101273 – Nile B2; 11, 6: C0500101274 – Nile B2

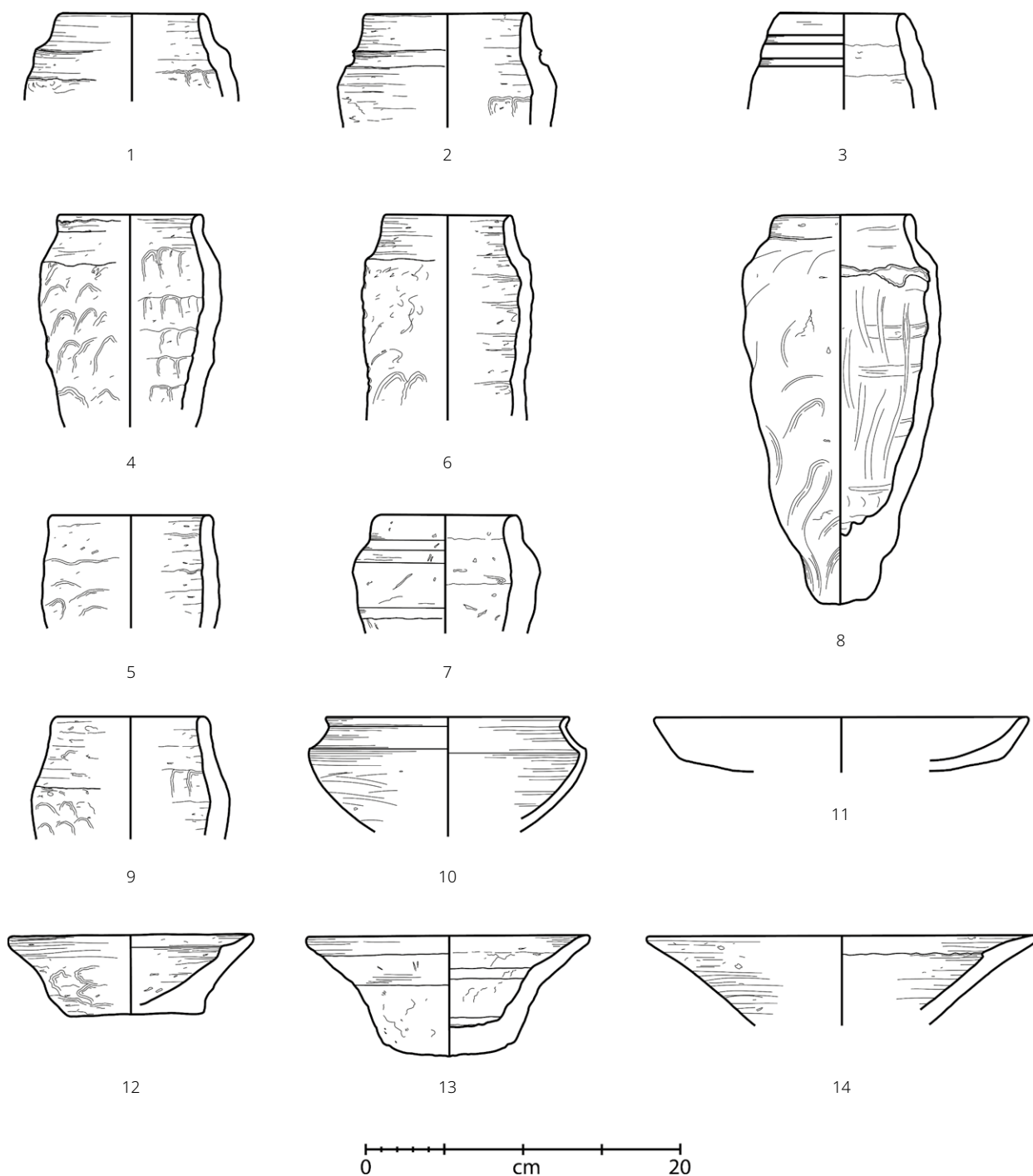
46 Seidlmayer 1990, 156–163.

47 Op de Beeck et al. 2012, 244–251; Cortebeek et al. 2021, 240–259.

48 Cortebeek et al. 2021, 259–261 fig. 15.

49 Seidlmayer 1990, 233.





12

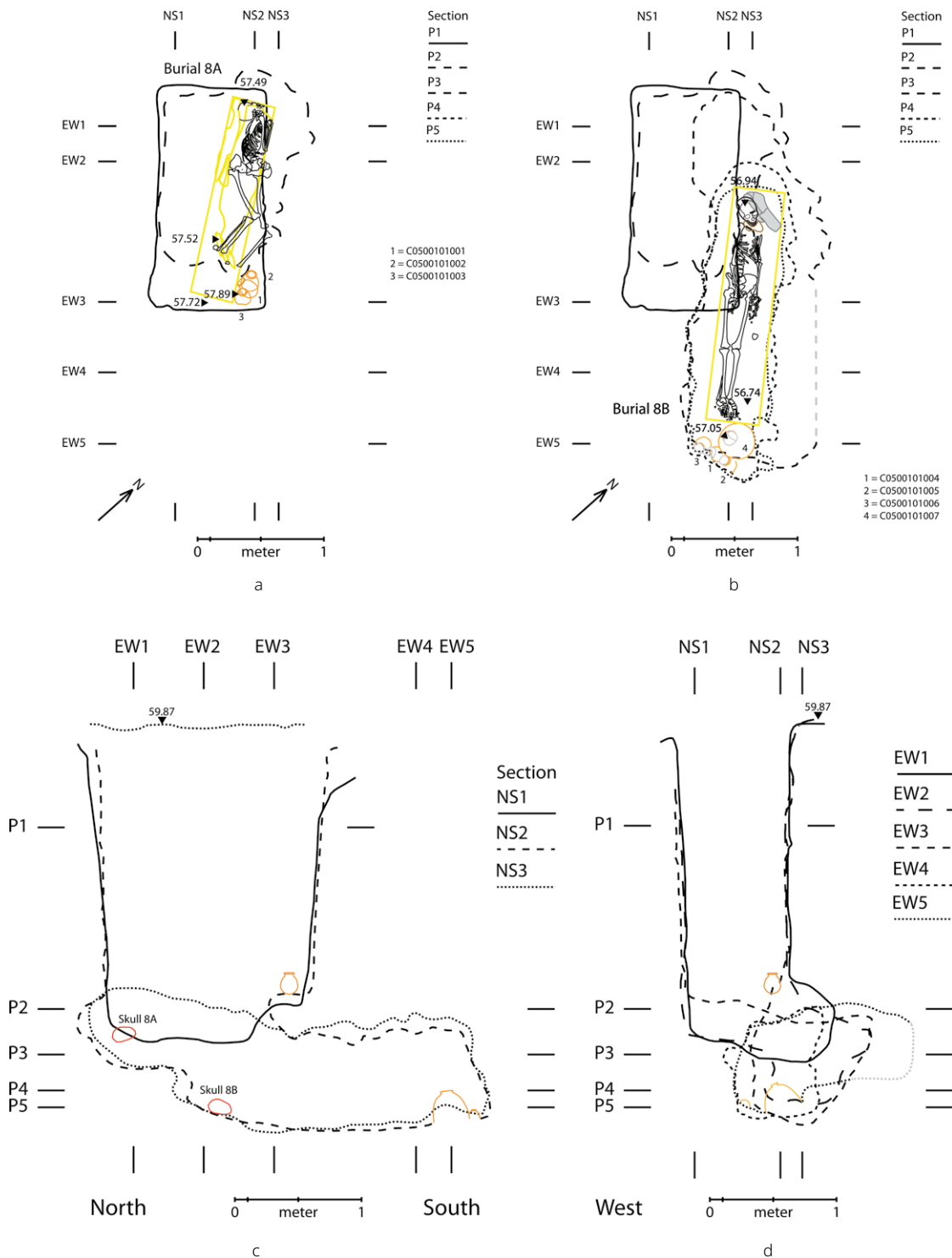
Fig. 12: Early Old Kingdom pottery deposited immediately around the pit of tomb 10 (T0500100010; scale 1 : 4); collared beer jars = 12, 1: C0500101105 – Nile B2/C; 12, 2: C0500101106 – Nile B2/C; 12, 3: C0500101148 – Nile B2/C; beer jars = 12, 4: C0500101164 – Nile B2/C; 12, 5: C0500101193 – Nile B2/C; 12, 6: C0500101063 – Nile B2/C; 12, 7: C0500101141 – Nile B2/C; 12, 8: C0500101378 – Nile B2/C; 12, 9: C0500101212 – Nile B2/C; Meidum bowl = 12, 10: C0500101068+C0500101071 – Nile A/B1 – red-slipped; plate = 12, 11: C0500101069 – Nile B1/B2; bowls with inner ledge rim = 12, 12: C0500101184 – Nile B2/C; 12, 13: C0500101124 – Nile B2; 12, 14: C0500101070 – Nile B2



Fig. 13: Intact early Old Kingdom adult male burial in wooden coffin at the bottom of the pit of tomb 10 (T0500100010)

Fig. 14: Plan (a. b), local N-S section (c), and local E-W section (d) of burials 8A and 8B in tomb 8 (T0500100008; scale 1 : 50)

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14



Fig. 15: Burial 8A in tomb 8 (T0500100008). The jar in the middle of the southern end of the shaft was originally placed in the south-eastern corner of the shaft



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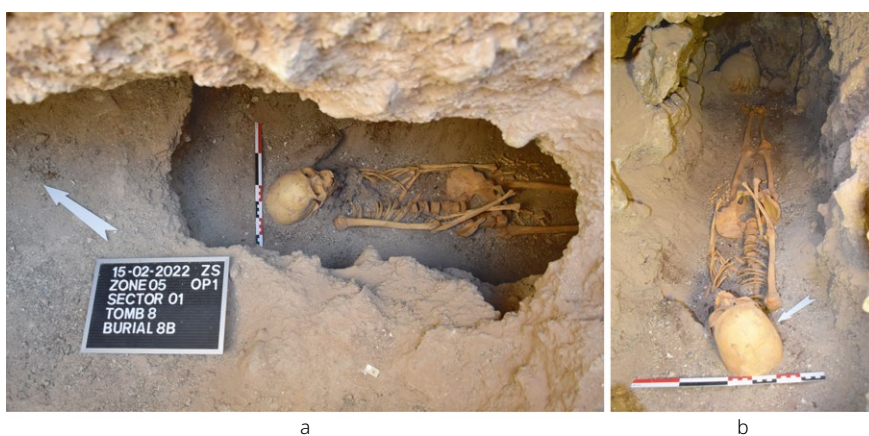
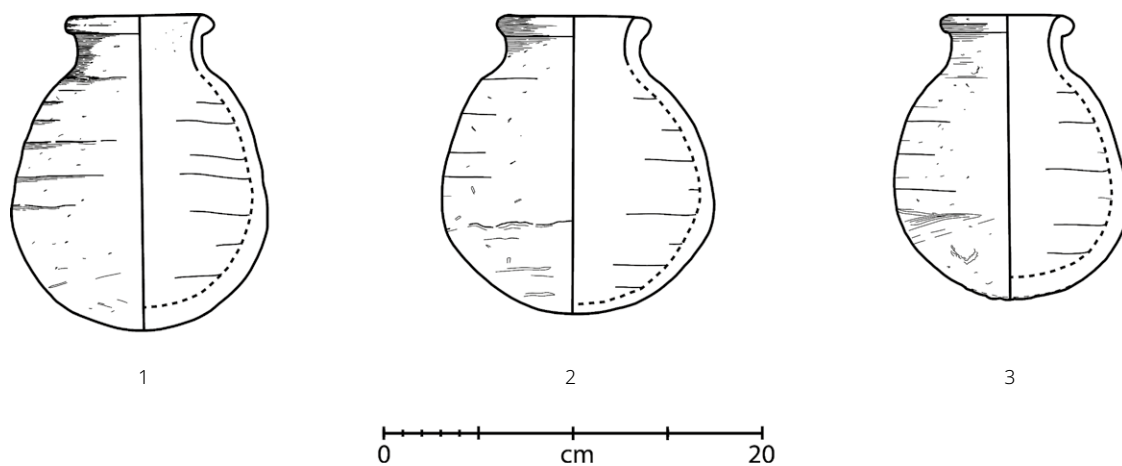


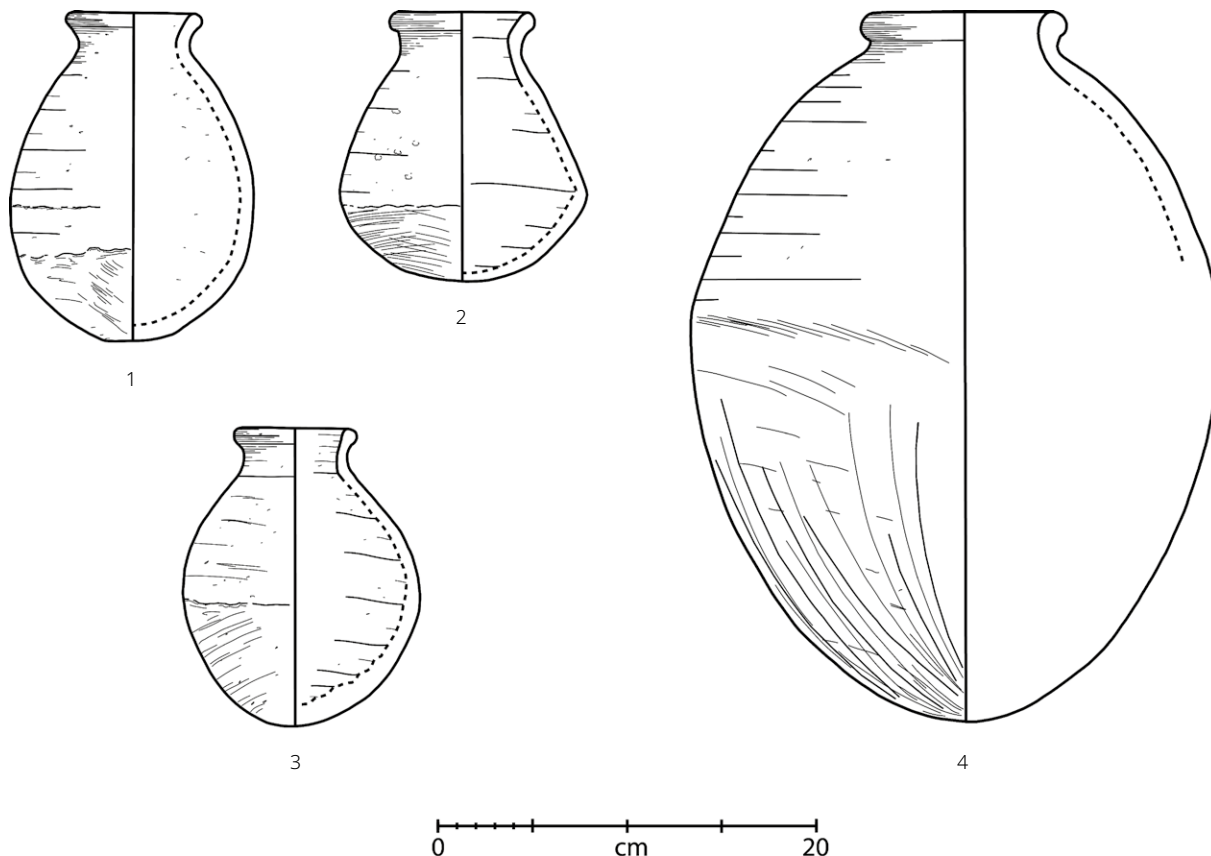
Fig. 16: Burial 8B in tomb 8 (T0500100008)

16



17

Fig. 17: Pottery from burial 8A in tomb 8 (T0500100008; scale 1 : 4); bag-shaped jars = 17, 1: C0500101001 – Nile B2 – white-slipped; 17, 2: C0500101002 – Nile B2 – white-slipped; 17, 3: C0500101003 – Nile B2 – white-slipped



18

Weill found a similar jar in what he labelled cemetery RN at the northern end of the site (Fig. 19)<sup>50</sup>. These jars are made from Nile B1/B2 clay, mixed clay, or Marl A clay. Some are red-slipped, others are white-washed on the exterior. This type of jar seems to have the base of the First Intermediate Period northern style jars with funnel neck and the top of contemporary *hes*-jars<sup>51</sup> and could represent a local adaption of such a ritual vessel. Alternatively, it could also be a local ceramic adaptation of stone slender pointed jars and stone-shouldered jars with neck and projecting rim<sup>52</sup>.

Fig. 18: Pottery from burial 8B in tomb 8 (T0500100008; scale 1 : 4); bag-shaped jars = 18, 1: C0500101004 – Nile B2 – white-washed; 18, 2: C0500101005 – Nile B2 – white-slipped; 18, 3: C0500101006 – Nile B2 – white-slipped; ellipsoid jar = 18, 4: C0500101007 – Nile clay – white-slipped

### Late Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period. Zone 5, Sector 1, Operation 3

20 Operation 3 is positioned around two shafts originally labelled tomb 4 and tomb 5 in the field documentation (Fig. 1)<sup>53</sup>. It turned out in the course of the season that the two shafts belong to a grid-like cluster of at least four shafts. The excavated shafts – now referred to as shaft 4 and shaft 5 – and a third unexcavated shaft (F307) were arranged in one line, and a fourth unexcavated shaft (F308) was located next to F307 in a parallel line (Fig. 20)<sup>54</sup>. The cluster might have originally formed a single mastaba with multiple shafts comparable to other mastabas in provincial cemeteries of the late Old Kingdom, the First Intermediate Period, and the Middle Kingdom<sup>55</sup>. The

50 Musée Joseph-Denais, Beaufort-en-Anjou, BF 913.00.160; Weill 1913, 7. 35. 39 no. 278; Miniaci 2017, 14 f. fig. 3.

51 Op de Beeck – Vereecken 2011, 736. 738. 741. 745 fig. 3 b. c; 747 fig. 5 c; 749 fig. 7 c; Bader 2012, 220 fig. 7 e–g; 221–223 fig. 8 a. b; Schiestl – Seiler 2012, 508–513. 624 f.

52 Aston 1994, 137 no. 127; 138 no. 134.

53 T0500100004 and T0500100005.

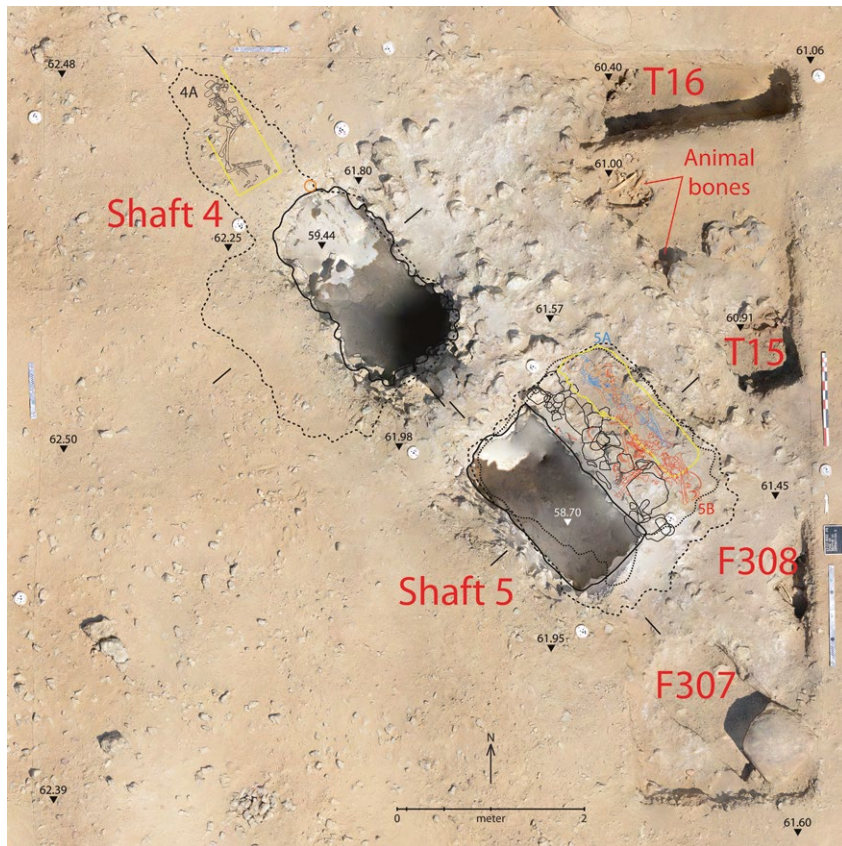
54 F0500100307 and F0500100308.

55 Seidlmayer 1990, 402–408.



19

Fig. 19: High-shouldered jar with pointed base, straight neck, and disc rim (Musée Joseph-Denis, Beaufort-en-Anjou, BF 913.00.160)



20

Fig. 20: Location of tombs and excavated burials in zone 5, sector 1, operation 3 (scale 1 : 80)

outline of the superstructure, which would include the offering niche of a chapel, has not been identified so far. Better preserved mastabas of zone 1 in Zawyet Sultan show several layers of mud bricks that extend the outline of the shaft aboveground<sup>56</sup>. Unlike in operation 1, mud brick walls were not preserved around the shafts in operation 3. However, individual mud bricks found in shaft 5 hint at the existence of such walls for this mastaba. It is possible that the current surface is located below the floor level of the Old Kingdom that might have eroded over the millennia or was destroyed during the reoccupation of zone 5 in the New Kingdom (see § 29–34).

21 The bedrock in operation 3 is composed of two *tafl*-layers. The upper layer is compact and limy and includes many irregularly shaped hard pieces of limestone. The lower layer is soft and clayey, with occasional inclusions of similar stones. Many of these stones had collapsed into the shafts, and loose ones kept falling during the excavation. The walls of the shafts and chambers had an irregular surface with no remains of plaster that would indicate attempts to smoothen them. The quality of the bedrock and of the execution of the tombs is poor. The burial chambers, e. g., resemble simple caves.

22 Shaft 4 measures ca.  $2.2 \times 1.2$  m at the mouth and bulges towards the bottom. The max. depth of the shaft, measured from the current surface of the bedrock, is 3.2 m. The burial chamber (ca.  $1.9 \times 0.9 \times 1.3$  m) is located in the local north, true north-west. It contained the burial of an adult male (burial 4A). The body was arranged in a semi-flexed position with the chest lying flat on the ground and the left leg superimposed on the right leg. The individual was looking to the river, where the ancient settlement of Hebenu would have been located, but the skull was piled under collapsed stones and was not excavated for safety reasons. Discolourations on the ground and bits of white plaster attached to



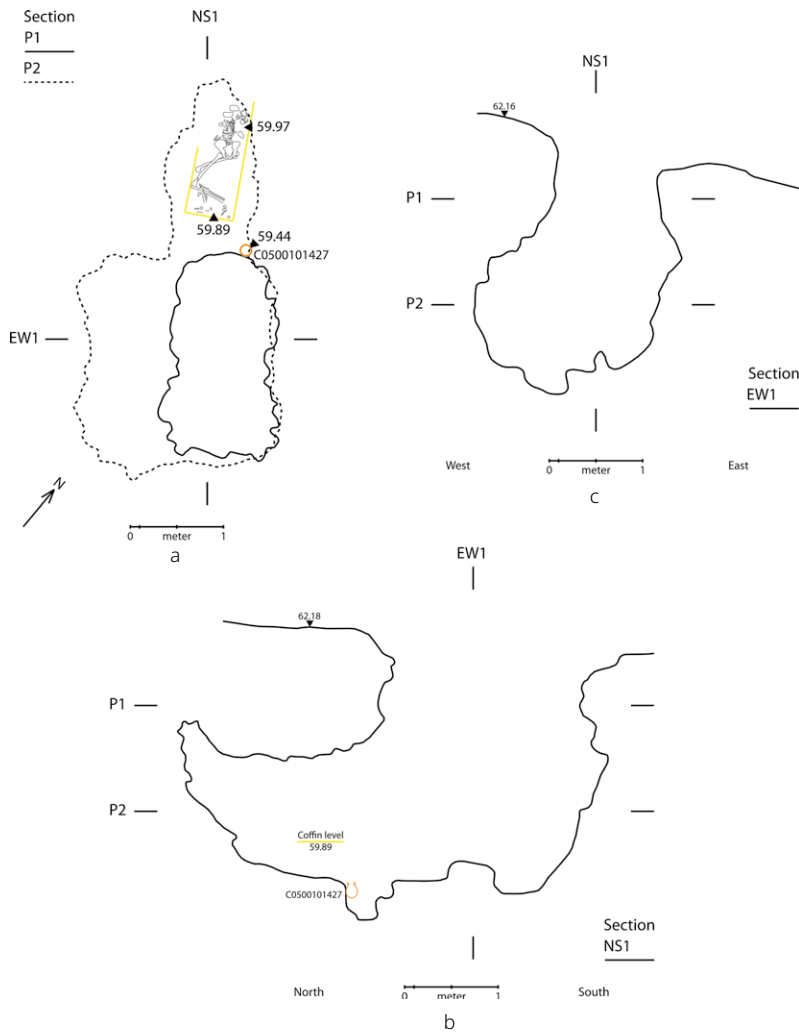


Fig. 21: Plan (a), local N-S section (b), and local E-W section (c) of burial 4A in shaft 4 (T0500100004; scale 1 : 80)

21

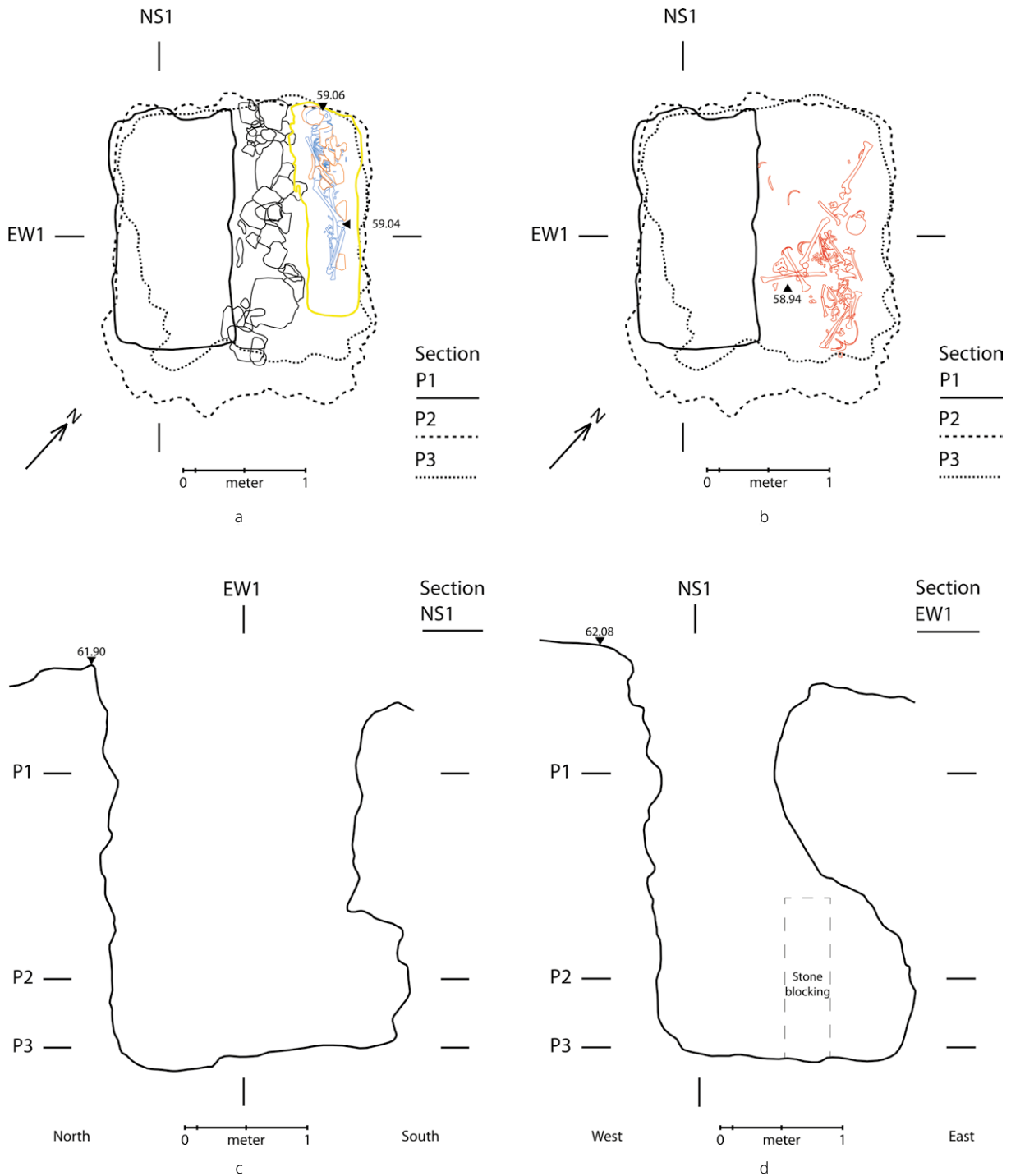


Fig. 22: *Udjat*-eye amulet with the throne name of Amenhotep III (O0500103007) from shaft 4 (T0500100004; scale 2 : 1): (a) front, (b) back

22

decayed wooden planks indicate that the deceased was buried in a rectangular coffin measuring at least  $1.3 \times 0.53$  m, with the northern end left unexcavated (Figs. 9. 21).

23 The surface level on which the coffin was placed in the chamber is ca. 0.4–0.5 m higher than the irregular floor level of the shaft. A small test trench in the entrance area of the chamber has not yielded evidence of a second expected lower burial. A complete bottle-shaped jar of the late Old Kingdom or early First Intermediate Period (C0500101427) that came to light in the test trench seems to belong to burial 4A (Fig. 21 a. b). The layers (03001, 03003, 03005) that cover the burial contain a few potsherds and pieces of textile, but they might be intrusive.



23

Fig. 23: Plan (a, b), local N-S section (c), and local E-W section (d) of burials 5A and 5B in shaft 5 (T0500100005; scale 1 : 50)

24 The shaft was reused in the New Kingdom or later. Potsherds, a blue faience *udjat*-amulet inscribed with the throne name of Amenhotep III (Fig. 22), and individual bones suggest that a burial (4B) was placed in the shaft, but a large boulder that had fallen into the shaft seems to have destroyed it (Fig. 9). The pottery of shaft 4, which is still being investigated, includes sherds of the early and late Old Kingdom. These likewise attest to activity in the vicinity during those periods.

25 Shaft 5 measures ca.  $2.2 \times 1.3$  m and is 3.3 m deep measured from the current surface of the bedrock. The burial chamber, ca.  $2.4 \times 1 \times 1.4$  m, is a soft opening into the ground rather than a rectangular structure. It was blocked by several layers of stones. The upper layer of the wall had been removed in antiquity, presumably for looting. Two



24



25

burials were found in the chamber (Figs. 9. 23. 24). The upper burial 5A of a subadult individual was placed on its back in a hollowed-out trunk of a tree, facing east to the mountain, legs crossed, arms crossed over the pubic area, with no burial equipment remaining. The trunk was cut into two parts of unequal size, the lower one containing the body and the upper one serving as a lid. The coffin was almost preserved in its entire length and width, measuring  $1.71 \times 0.42$  m. The preserved height is 0.35 m. The body was wrapped in linen. Some hair was preserved. The date of the burial is uncertain, possibly New Kingdom, as zone 5 was reoccupied during this period.

26 The lower burial 5B was severely disturbed by burial 5A, which suggests that the deceased of burial 5B was not respected when the upper burial was executed, perhaps because much time had elapsed between the two burials. The individual of the lower burial was an adult man, but the original position of the body is unclear. Faint remains of a plastered wooden coffin, very likely of rectangular shape, have been found. The femur of the individual of 5B was built into the blocking wall of the chamber either because the original wall was dismantled and rebuilt for the upper burial or because the wall was only built for the upper burial (Fig. 24). A comparable wall has not been identified in shaft 4 and may, therefore, not have been a regular feature in this mastaba.

27 Very few pottery sherds were found in the burial chamber, and these might be intrusive. The sherds from the shaft date to the early and late Old Kingdom, according to a preliminary assessment. It is likely that the original burial 5B dates to the same period as burial 4A, i. e., the late Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period, and that mixed earlier and later material slipped into the shaft when the area was reoccupied in the New Kingdom.

28 The spaces around shafts 4 and 5 were reused for tomb 15 (T0500100015), the burial of a prenatal foetus aged 26–28 weeks (Fig. 25; see § 29–34), and for tomb 16 (T0500100016), the burial of an infant aged ca. six months (Fig. 9). Two further depositions contained animal bones, perhaps from rites carried out for the funeral of these very young individuals (Fig. 20). The animal bones have been left in place for proper documentation and study.

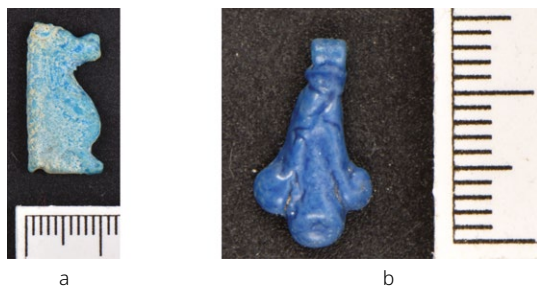
Fig. 24: Partially dismembered burial 5A in a tree-trunk coffin, with remains of disturbed burial 5B under it in shaft 5 (T0500100005)

Fig. 25: Prenatal foetus burial in a slender drop-shaped New Kingdom jar in tomb 15 (T0500100015)

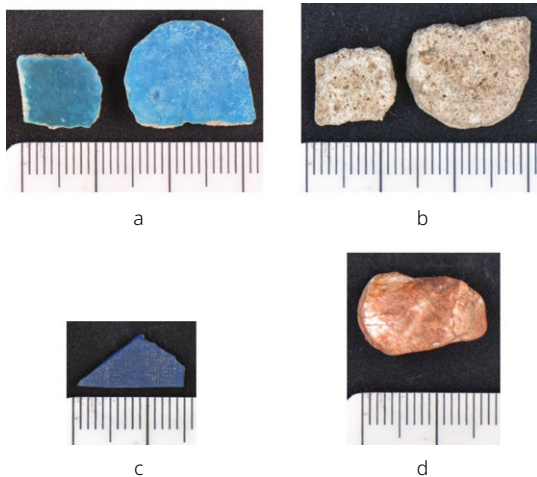
## Zone 5. New Kingdom

29 The excavations in zone 5 yielded traces of occupation during the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Shaft 4 in sector 1 appears to have been reused several times, as was out-

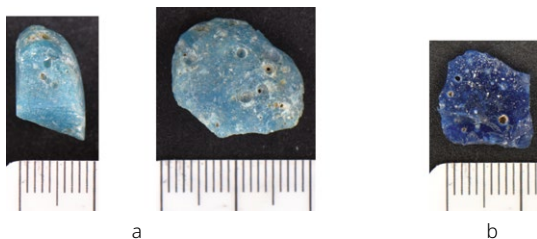




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27



28

Fig. 26: Personal adornment from zone 5, sector 1: (a) light blue-coloured faience Taweret pendant (O0500100018; scale 1 : 1); (b) dark blue-coloured faience southern lily plant pendant (O0500100020; scale 2 : 1)

Fig. 27: Inlays from zone 5, sector 2 (scale 1 : 1): (a, b) light blue-coloured faience inlay fragments (O0500200007); (c) dark blue glass flat bar (O0500200008); (d) drop-shaped stone inlay fragment (O0500200009)

Fig. 28: Raw materials from zone 5, sectors 1 and 2 (scale 1 : 1): (a) light blue-coloured glass fragment (O0500200049); (b) dark blue-coloured glass fragment (O0500100086)

lined above. The *udjat*-eye amulet with the throne name of Amenhotep III (Fig. 22)<sup>57</sup>, found at the bottom of the main shaft, signals disturbance or possible reuse during his reign<sup>58</sup>. The intact foetus of tomb 15 was buried in a typical New Kingdom slender drop-shaped jar in a shallow pit east of shaft 5 (Fig. 25)<sup>59</sup>. It confirms that this zone was used as burial ground during the New Kingdom (Fig. 9). New Kingdom infant surface burials had also been found in sector 2 (Fig. 3).

30 A mud-lined storage pit filled with ashes, organic waste, animal and fish bone remains, and pieces of various types of small objects and pottery, including some blue-painted sherds, had been constructed in-between tombs 8 and 1 and immediately west of the northern section of the mud brick wall east of the latter tomb (Fig. 6). Sector 1 also yielded various types of light and dark blue faience beads<sup>60</sup>, a light blue faience Taweret pendant (Fig. 26 a)<sup>61</sup>, a dark blue faience pendant in the shape of the southern lily plant (Fig. 26 b)<sup>62</sup>, a fragment of a light blue faience ring shank<sup>63</sup>, fragments of decorated light blue faience bowls<sup>64</sup>, fragments of light and dark blue glass objects, including a dark blue glass rod, as well as fragments of carnelian.

31 Work in the east end of sector 2 stopped when possible New Kingdom levels were encountered. Finds included small faience beads, a light blue faience scarab with a *nefer*-sign<sup>65</sup>, fragments of light blue drop-shaped faience inlays with bevelled edges (Fig. 27 a, b)<sup>66</sup>, and drop-shaped white stone inlays (Fig. 27 d).

32 A lump of raw dark blue glass was recovered in sector 1 and a piece of raw light blue glass in sector 2 (Fig. 28 a, b). No pieces of glass crucibles have so far been found, which tentatively suggests that raw glass was shipped to Hebenu for remelting and/or reshaping into other glass objects. A small fragment of a dark blue glass flat bar suggests that glass inlays were being made or used on site (Fig. 27 c)<sup>67</sup>.

33 Faience moulds have not yet been found in zone 5, but one was noticed lying on the surface near the pyramid in zone 1, and Weill also found several others<sup>68</sup>, though it remains unknown if they were used in the New Kingdom or later<sup>69</sup>.

34 Some of the objects described above may derive from burials in sector 1, but others indicate the presence of late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty workshops and perhaps other types

57 Similar to Frankfort – Pendlebury 1933, pl. 49, III.B.2.

58 The post-Old Kingdom pottery still needs to be examined.

59 Wodzińska 2010, 96 (New Kingdom type 63).

60 No chemical analysis has been done yet on the glass and faience objects, but the light blue colour is likely to derive from the addition of copper to the mixture, while the dark blue colour likely comes from the addition of cobalt (Kaczmarczyk – Vandiver 2008, 59. 72–76; Hodgkinson et al. 2019, 37).

61 Petrie 1894, pl. 17, 296; Boyce 1995, 345. 348 f. (type A5).

62 Petrie 1894, pl. 19, 462; Boyce 1995, 345. 348. 351 (type C24).

63 Petrie 1894, pl. 16, 239.

64 Strauß 1974.

65 Frankfort – Pendlebury 1933, pl. 49, II.C.5.

66 Kemp – Stevens 2010, 255–263; esp. 259 pl. 19, 2 (no. 35600).

67 Kemp – Stevens 2010, 279–284.

68 Weill 1912, 64 no. K.236.

69 For use of faience moulds, see Vanthuyne 2012/2013.

of buildings in zone 5. However, the limited concentration of New Kingdom pottery suggests that sections of this zone were only occupied for a short period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The older cemetery in sector 1 was at least in certain areas covered by a layer of small stones, on top of which new structures were built, thereby hiding and effectively preserving the older tombs. In other areas, the superstructures of earlier tombs and their floor levels might have been erased or otherwise destroyed when the site was reused in the New Kingdom.

## Conclusion

35 The occupation of zone 5 is far more complex than was anticipated prior to the season in 2022. The early Old Kingdom surface burials were located at the lower fringe of the hill and the contemporaneous shaft tombs a bit further up. The late Old Kingdom to early First Intermediate Period shaft tombs were built in the upper early Old Kingdom cemetery and again further up the hill, closer to the rock tombs of the local elite. It remains to be determined if zone 5 was used during the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasties. The distribution in zone 5 suggests that types and locations of tombs were determined by chronological and sociological factors. During the early and late Old Kingdom/early First Intermediate Period, the more complex tombs – presumably of individuals of higher rank – were erected higher up than those of lower social groups. The vertical landscape thus mirrors the social hierarchy of the community that lived in Hebenu. The area stopped being occupied from the later First Intermediate Period to the early New Kingdom – according to the current evidence – and zone 5 was then shortly reused in the New Kingdom, specifically perhaps during the reign of Amenhotep III. The New Kingdom occupation likely consists of individual tombs and settlement structures.

36 The chronological development of the zone 5 cemetery recalls the situation at Naga<sup>c</sup> el-Deir. Here, cemetery N500–900, a burial ground with early Old Kingdom stairway and square shaft tombs, containing contracted burials in a variety of burial containers, was reoccupied with rectangular late Old Kingdom shaft tombs with elongated and side burial chambers, containing mainly extended burials in wooden coffins<sup>70</sup>. The zone 5 mastaba with multiple shafts in Zawyet Sultan, however, has no clear parallel in Naga<sup>c</sup> el-Deir, unless some of the late Old Kingdom shafts excavated by George A. Reisner originally formed clusters or pairs of mastabas with multiple shafts.

37 The spatial organisation of the Old Kingdom cemeteries in Zawyet Sultan has parallels elsewhere in Egypt<sup>71</sup>. Nearby, Deir el-Bersha offers a snapshot of a ranked funerary community in the late Old Kingdom, with wealthier individuals buried in rock tombs (zone 7) and others in the low desert plain (zone 9B)<sup>72</sup>. The 2022 excavations at Zawyet Sultan have identified a new cemetery with rock circle tombs, in addition to the previously known rock circle cemeteries at Deir el-Bersha, Deir Abu Hinnis, Beni Hasan el-Shuruq, and Nuwayrat.

38 Another good example of a ranked vertical landscape is the Middle Kingdom cemetery of Beni Hasan el-Shuruq. Seidlmayer has assigned the large rock tombs of the site to the nomarchs of the 16<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome, the simple rock tombs to mid-ranking administrators, and mastabas with multiple shafts to low-ranking functionaries in the local administration<sup>73</sup>. By analogy, the late Old Kingdom rock tombs of Zawyet Sultan might belong to high- and mid-ranking local elites and the mastaba with

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70 Reisner 1932.

71 Alexanian 2016, 475–480.

72 Vanthuyne et al. 2008; Vereecken et al. 2009; Willems et al. 2009a, pl. 44.

73 Seidlmayer 2007.

multiple shafts to a low-ranking official. The situation in Zawyet Sultan suggests that the individuals buried in this mastaba were still high-ranking in the local hierarchy, as simpler burials were found in sector 1 further down the hill.

<sup>39</sup> Future excavations in Zawyet Sultan are designed to explore which overlapping and complementing information can be gleaned to model social organisation in Middle Egypt and how individual life histories that are evident in the well-preserved skeletal and material remains from this site were situated in the organisation of cemeteries.



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## Zawyet Sultan

## Second Preliminary Report. Excavation Season 2022

Richard Bussmann – Bart Vanthuyne

كشفت أعمال التنقيب التي أجريت في زاوية السلطان في عام 2022 عن جبانة، تعود إلى عصر الدولة القديمة والعصر الإنتقالي الأول، وتقع على المنحدر الصحراوي جنوب المقابر الصخرية (المنطقة 5). تشتمل المقابر التي تعود إلى أوائل عصر الدولة القديمة على مقابر بئرية، ومقابر دائرية صخرية، ومدافن سطحية في توابيت خشبية وخزفية وطينية، بينما تشتمل المقابر التي تعود إلى أواخر الدولة القديمة وأوائل العصر الإنتقالي الأول على مقابر بئرية ومصطبة ذات آبارًا عديدة. تقع المدافن السطحية البسيطة عند الحافة السفلية للمنحدر الصحراوي، والمقابر البئرية في منتصف الطريق إلى أعلى، أما المصطبة التي تضم آبارًا عديدة فتقع عند الطرف العلوي من التل. يشير التوزيع المكاني لهذه المقابر إلى أن التسلسل الهرمي الاجتماعي للمجتمع المحلي انعكس في المشهد الرأسي للمنطقة. أعيد استخدام المنطقة في أواخر الأسرة الثامنة عشرة لدفن الأفراد وربما أيضًا لأغراض أخرى.

## الكلمات المفتاحية

الدولة القديمة، العصر الإنتقالي الأول، الدولة الحديثة، جبانة، التسلسل الهرمي الاجتماعي

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## ADDRESSES

Richard Bussmann  
Universität zu Köln, Institut für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie, Abteilung Ägyptologie  
Meister-Ekkehart-Straße 7  
50937 Köln  
Germany  
r.bussmann@uni-koeln.de  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9405-8398>

Bart Vanthuyne  
Universität zu Köln, Institut für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie, Abteilung Ägyptologie  
Meister-Ekkehart-Straße 7  
50937 Köln  
Germany  
bart.vanthuyne@uni-koeln.de  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5907-5141>

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