



Keys to unlocking the identity of “Tomb X”: Introducing Horemheb’s Army official, Ry*

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In 2013, the joint archaeological mission of Leiden University and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden added yet another anonymous tomb to the ever-growing list of funerary monuments uncovered over the last 40+ years (Fig. 1).¹ It subsequently entered the scholarly literature as “tomb X”. In order to preserve the tomb’s fragile walls made of mud bricks, and ‘[s]ince the tomb is unfinished and anonymous, and hardly contains any interesting features’,² it was decided to

have it backfilled in 2017.³ While the field-archaeological investigation of “tomb X” came to a close; “armchair archaeology” took off. And with success. The ‘awkward structure’ could in fact be identified as the original location of one of the masterpieces of Egyptian art produced in the New Kingdom! This article reports on the identification of the tomb owner, and offers a preliminary reconstruction of his magnificent monument.⁴

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¹ M.J. Raven, B.G. Aston, L. Horáčková, D. Picchi, and A. Bleeker, ‘Preliminary Report on the Leiden Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2013: The Tombs of Sethnakht and an Anonymous Official’, *JEOL* 44 (2012-2013), 9-11; M.J. Raven, ‘A Brief Report on the 2013 Season’, *Saqqara Newsletter* 11 (2013), 6-8.

² M.J. Raven, ‘A Brief Report on the 2017 Season (I): The South Sector’, *Saqqara Newsletter* 15 (2017), 18.

³ By this time, the archaeological mission had become a joint Dutch-Italian enterprise.

⁴ The present article is an abridged version of a more detailed study written by the present author and aimed at an academic readership. The tomb is scheduled for final publication in a volume edited by the former field director of the Leiden excavations, Maarten J. Raven, whom I should like to thank for a draft text of his chapter.

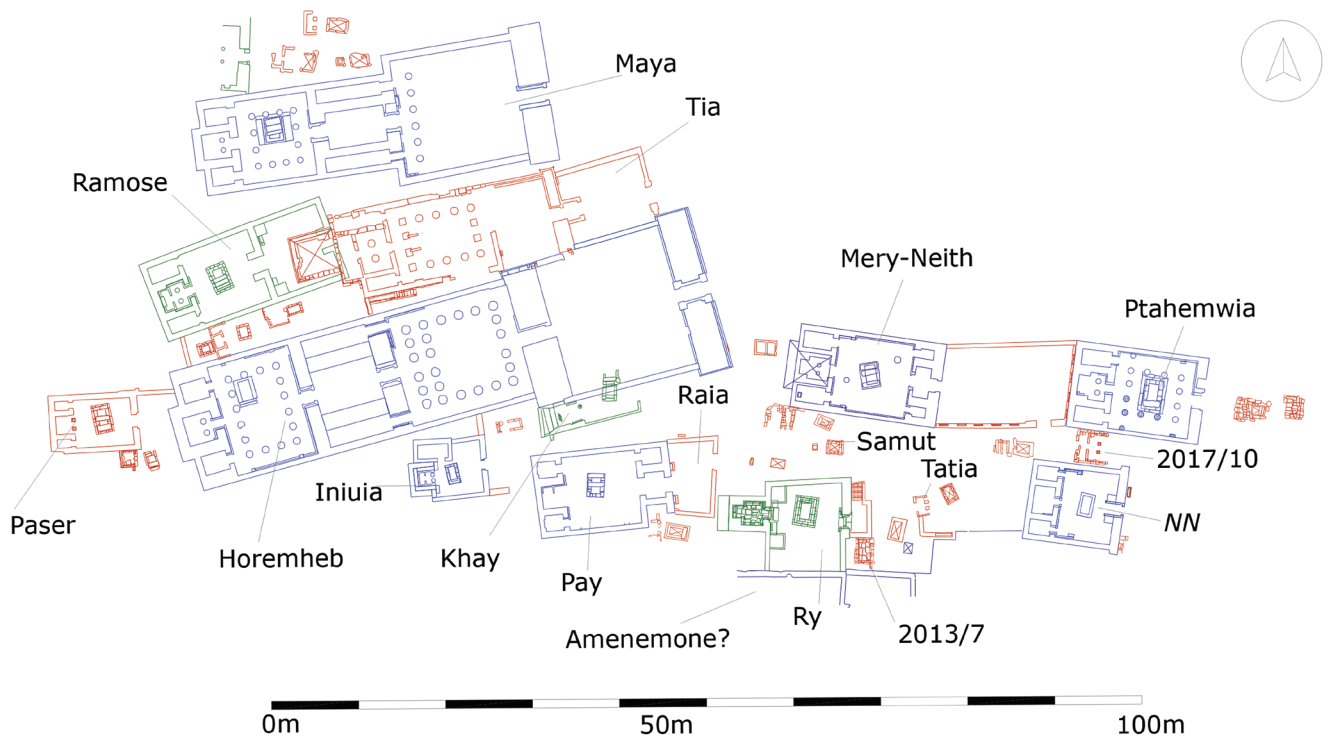


Fig. 1 The Leiden-Turin concession area in the Unas South Cemetery. Legend: blue: predating Ry; green, contemporary with Ry; red, postdating Ry. Image by the author after a map by Annelies Bleeker.

Starting at the bottom: the excavation of the underground tomb spaces

Back in 2002, the Leiden mission descended into the underground burial apartments of the late Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Meryneith, the now-famous Greatest of Seers and Steward in the Memphite temple of the Aten.⁵ It soon dawned on the excavators that the ancient Egyptian architects had in fact transformed pre-existing spaces to construct their patron's subterranean apartments. The ancient and extensive maze of corridors and chambers formed part of what was first believed to be a

royal tomb of Second Dynasty date, but upon closer inspection turned out to be a private tomb complex of that same dynasty.⁶ Breakthroughs cut by tomb robbers in later times connected the complex to even more underground passages. It thus provided the excavators with easy access to the burials of various New Kingdom officials. One such breakthrough gave way to the subterranean spaces of a neighbour to the south. These were assigned Feature No. 2002/17 (Fig. 2).⁷

Obviously underground complex 2002/17 was originally accessed from a tomb shaft, connecting it with the tomb super-

⁵ M.J. Raven and R. van Walsem, *The Tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara* (PALMA 10; Turnhout, 2014).

⁶ I. Regulski, C. Lacher, and A. Hood, 'Preliminary Report on the Excavations in the Second Dynasty Necropolis at Saqqara: Season 2009', *JEOL* 42 (2010), 25-53.

⁷ M.J. Raven, R. van Walsem, B.G. Aston and E. Strouhal, 'Preliminary Report on the Leiden Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2002: The Tomb of Meryneith', *JEOL* 37, 2001-2002 (2003), 97.

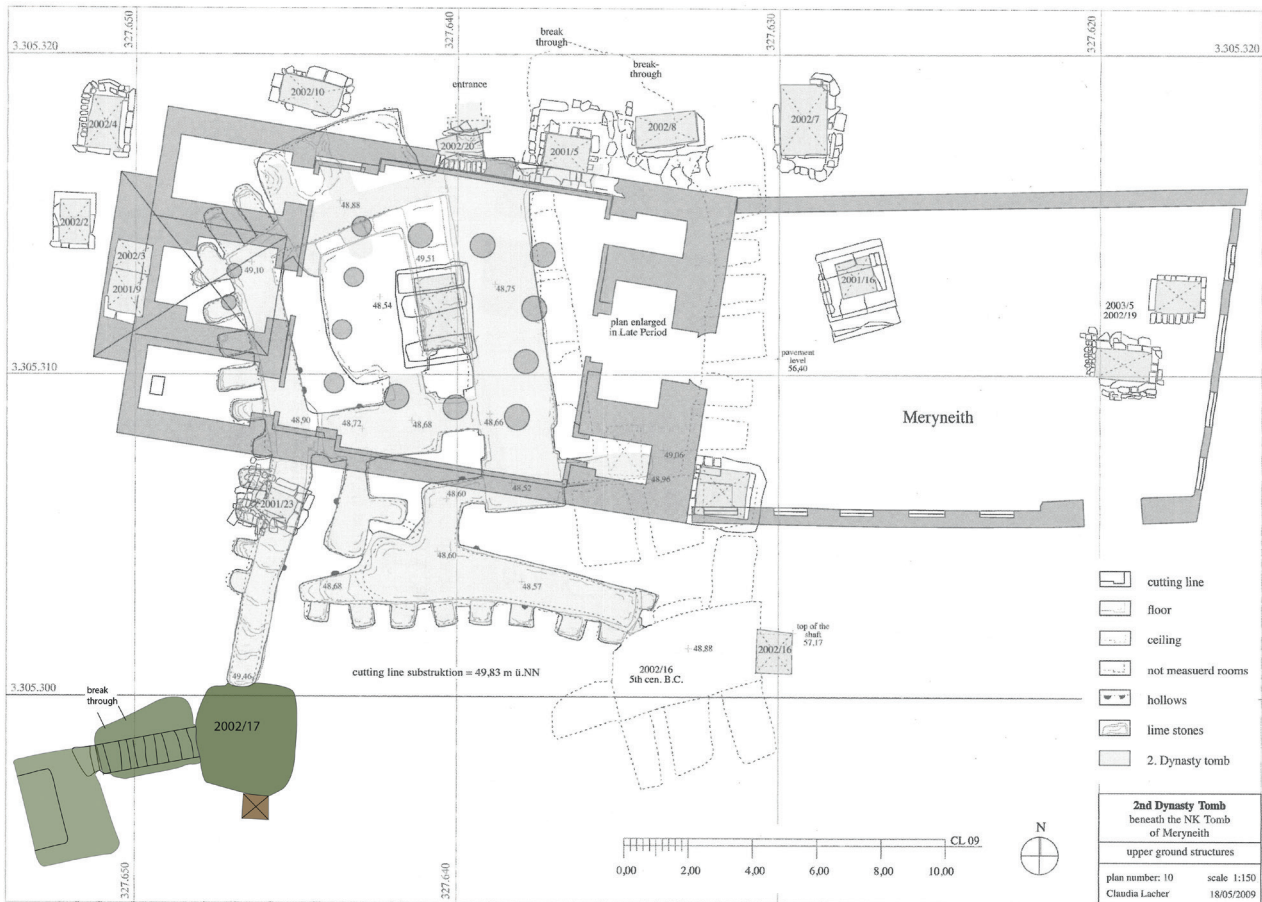


Fig. 2 Plan indicating the location of subterranean complex 2002/17, accessed from a Second Dynasty maze of subterranean spaces below the tomb of Mery-Neith. Image after Regulski, Lacher, and Hood 2010, fig. 3, adapted by the author.

structure. That shaft was visible from below, but it was not excavated in 2002. The burial spaces, on the other hand, were carefully recorded: the complex consisted of a tomb shaft leading into an antechamber from which a descending stairway gave access to the actual burial chamber.⁸ Unfortunately none of the underground spaces yielded inscriptional evidence to identify the original

tomb owner. What the excavators did find were several fragments of loose relief-decorated blocks that had fallen down the burial shaft, a long time ago. These included an inscribed block deriving from the nearby tomb of Tia, the brother-in-law of Ramesses II.⁹ Pottery collected from the burial chamber was dated to the Nineteenth Dynasty.¹⁰ It was suggested that this complex should

⁸ Raven and Van Walsem, *Tomb of Meryneith*, 30, 76, figs. III.23, III.29. Second Dynasty Gallery E connects 2002/17 to the subterranean complex of Mery-Neith.

⁹ For the tomb of Tia, see G.T. Martin, *The Tomb of Tia and Tia: A Royal Monument of the Ramesside Period in the Memphite Necropolis* (EES EM 58; London, 1997).

¹⁰ B. Aston, 'The Pottery', in Raven et al., *JEOL* 37 (2003), 102.

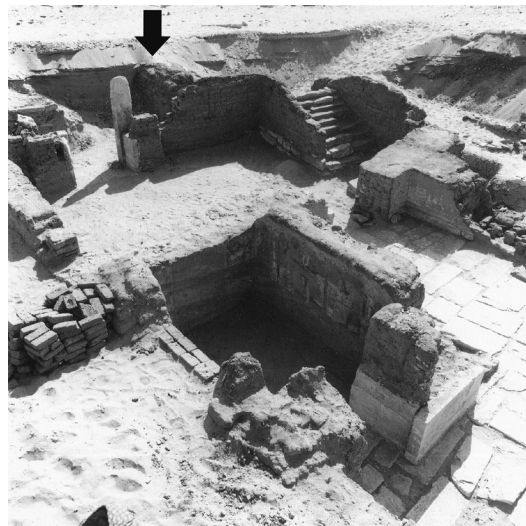
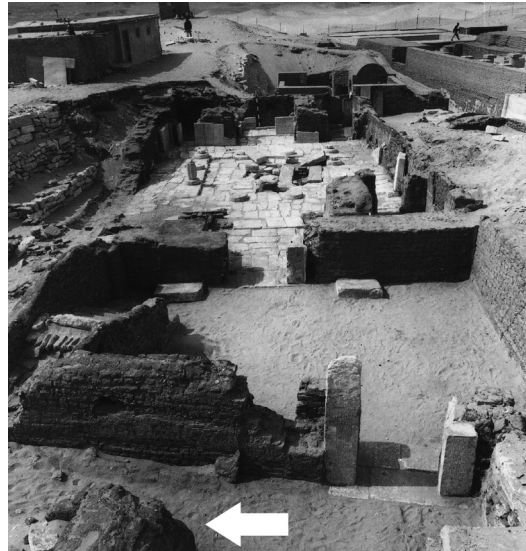


connect to a chapel built of mud bricks, situated in a previously unexcavated area due east of the tomb shared by Pay and his son Raia.¹¹ In the course of the excavations of the latter during the mid-1990s, parts of a neighbouring chapel began protruding from underneath the sand (Fig. 3). Notwithstanding the prospect of finding yet another magnificent tomb, it was decided to not further excavate in the area east. And as time passed, the previously visible remains of this mud brick chapel again disappeared underneath the sand.

Anonymous "tomb X" enters the stage

The area east of the double-tomb complex of Pay and Raia was not excavated until 2013. During a short season of fieldwork the perimeter walls of a mud brick superstructure were fully cleared from the sand.¹² In the following fieldwork season of 2015, the tomb shaft was finally excavated, providing access to underground complex 2002/17 recorded thirteen years prior.¹³ Yet again, the excavations did not yield evidence to identify the tomb owner; hence, the anonymous structure entered the literature as "tomb X".

The east-west oriented superstructure built of mud bricks consists of a gateway, an open courtyard, and a single cult chapel in the west (Fig. 4). The latter was once topped by a pyramid built of mud



Figs. 3a and 3b The mud brick chapel walls of the tomb of Ry protruding from the sand, east of the forecourt of Raia, seen from the east (a) and west (b) during the 1994 excavation season. After: Raven 2005, pls. 5 and 6.1, and adapted by the author.

¹¹ M.J. Raven, *The Tomb of Pay and Raia at Saqqara* (EES EM 74; Leiden, 2005), 11 n.2. The mud brick wall of a chapel is clearly visible in H.D. Schneider et al., 'The Tomb-complex of Pay and Raia: Preliminary Report on the Excavations, 1994 Season', *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 74 (1995), pls. 1.1, 6.1; Raven, *Pay and Raia*, pl. 5. Its position is not indicated in any of the published plans.

¹² See n. 1.

¹³ Raven et al., *JEOL* 43, 6-7.

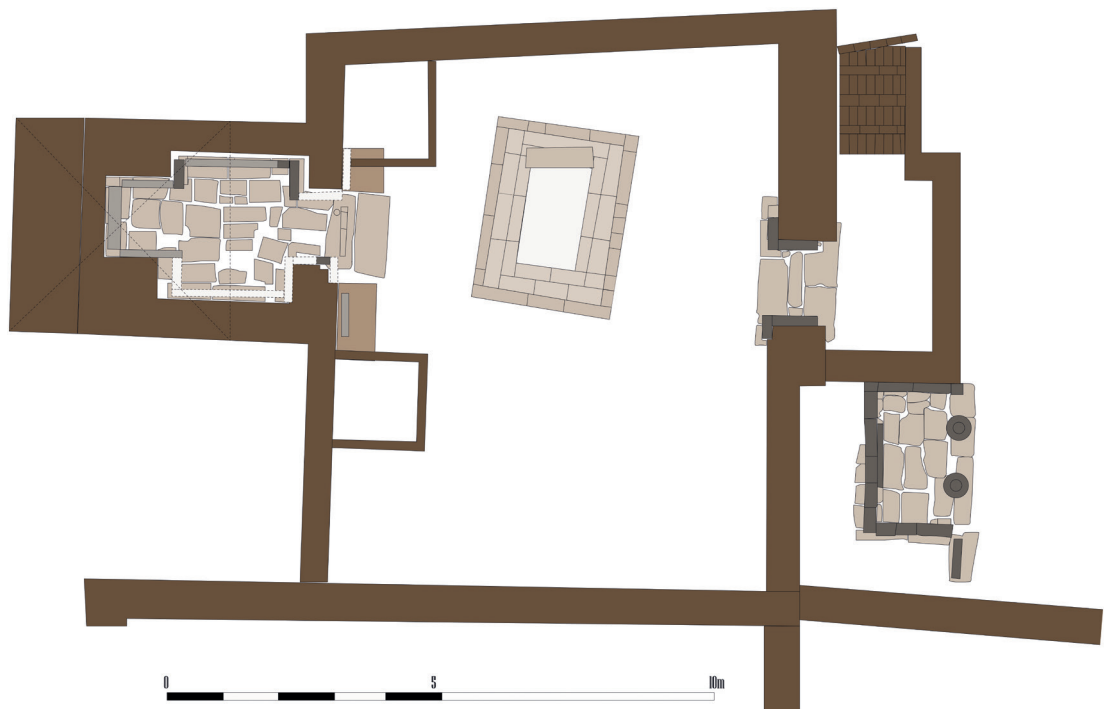


Fig. 4 The tomb superstructure of Ry (late Eighteenth Dynasty) and anonymous chapel 2013/7 (Ramesside). Image by the author.

bricks. Interestingly, the courtyard south wall is formed by the pre-existing north exterior wall of its presumed neighbour to the south. The east and west walls of Ry's tomb are not bonded with that wall. It implies that “tomb X” was not part of its initial architectural layout but rather represents a structure that was added later to what appears to be a truly monumental building. The overall layout of “tomb X” is rather asymmetrical. One notices, for example, that the north and south walls do not run parallel; the tomb entrance, burial shaft and west chapel are not exactly aligned; and the entrance to the cult chapel is not situated in the centre of the courtyard west wall.

Moreover, at some stage a north-south oriented ‘porch’ was added to the east gateway. This L-shaped annex is broadest in front of the tomb entrance.

At first the single cult chapel in the west may seem rather unusual. After all, the “typical” Memphite temple-tomb has three chapels in the west. Yet examples of tombs comprising a single chapel with forecourt abound in the New Kingdom cemetery surrounding the Sixth Dynasty pyramid of Teti.¹⁴ Tomb X also compares well with the nearby tomb of Iniua (*temp.* Akhenaten-Tutankhamun). It comprises an open court and a single chapel in the west. A second, vaulted chapel is situated in the northwest corner of the

¹⁴ See the examples collected in (the rather dated study of) K.A. Kitchen, ‘Memphite Tomb-chapels in the New Kingdom and Later’, in M. Görg and E. Pusch (eds), *Festschrift Elmar Edel* (ÄAT 1; Bamberg, 1979), 282-283. See also: D. Raue, ‘Zum memphitischen Privatgrab im Neuen Reich’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 51 (1995), 155-68. Note that the contemporary chapels in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery have quite modest dimensions compared to the tomb of Ry. For comparably sized single-chapel tomb superstructures at Thebes, see e.g. D. Polz, *Der Beginn des Neuen Reiches: zur Vorgeschichte einer Zeitenwende* (SDAIK 31; Berlin, 2007), 239-45.



complex – indeed quite unlike any other New Kingdom tomb hitherto excavated in the Memphite necropolis.¹⁵ It has been suggested that the “unusual plan” of “tomb X” is the result of the pre-existing tomb of Pay, and that access to the tomb of Pay ‘would have been blocked’ should Ry have opted for an additional northwest chapel.¹⁶ However, if we take a look at the plan of the cemetery (Fig. 1), we can see that the northwest chapel of Pay himself actually precludes an axial approach to the tomb of Iniua – a tomb that was built probably somewhat earlier. The reckoning with the preferred approach to a pre-existing tomb therefore appears not to have been a decisive factor in opting for a single cult chapel. The superstructure of “tomb X” measures ca. 17 meters in length (including the annex) and ca. 11 meters in width. A large, rectangular tomb shaft in the centre of the courtyard gives access to the subterranean complex situated at a depth of ca. 8 meters. One of the shaft’s covering slabs had remained in its original position. The courtyard provides traces for a rubble floor and the interior walls were originally plastered. Lime-

stone pavement slabs and stone wall revetment are limited to the entrance doorway and the cult chapel. Relief-decoration is reserved for the chapel walls. The cult chapel thus shows all signs of having been fully decorated. The stone bases originally supporting stelae are preserved on either side of the entrance to the west chapel. A remarkable feature connected to (and partly built over) them are the low, walled enclosures built of mud bricks. These features were excavated in 2015,¹⁷ and proved to contain a large amount of broken offering pottery of late Eighteenth Dynasty date.¹⁸ It suggests that the platforms served as repositories for used offering pottery.¹⁹ The cult chapel is accessed through a 1.0 m wide doorway in the courtyard west wall. The chapel walls were preserved to a height of ca. 1.3 m. The two-part chapel layout includes an antechapel of 2.0 m deep, and a narrower inner sanctuary measuring almost a meter deep. The thick walls of the chapel, the now-missing lintel architrave, and stone revetment will have supported the roofing slabs upon which the mud brick pyramid once stood.²⁰

¹⁵ H.D. Schneider, *The Tomb of Iniua in the New Kingdom Necropolis of Memphis at Saqqara* (PALMA 8; Turnhout, 2012), 31-3, figs. II.2-4.

¹⁶ Raven, *JEOL* 43 (2012-2013), 11.

¹⁷ In 2015, the excavation became a joint mission of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and the Museo Egizio in Turin.

¹⁸ B. Aston, ‘Pottery’, in M.J. Raven *et al.*, ‘Preliminary Report on the Leiden-Turin Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2015: The Tomb of an Anonymous Official (Tomb X) and Its Surroundings’, *JEOL* 45 (2014-2015), 3-17 16; B. Aston, ‘Pottery’, in Raven *et al.*, *JEOL* 44 (2012-2013), 20.

¹⁹ B. Aston, ‘Pottery’, in Raven *et al.*, *JEOL* 43 (2012-2013), 20. I thank Barbara Aston for kindly sharing with me a preliminary analysis of the pottery found in the tomb of Ry.

²⁰ Compare to the tomb of Iniua, the pyramid of which is similarly constructed: Schneider, *Tomb of Iniua*, 31-3, 35, figs. II.2-4. In case of Iniua, the side masses of the pyramid consist of step-laid courses of bricks arranged slantwise along the north, west and south sides of the chapel. In case of the tomb of Ry, only clear material evidence of the west slope has been found.

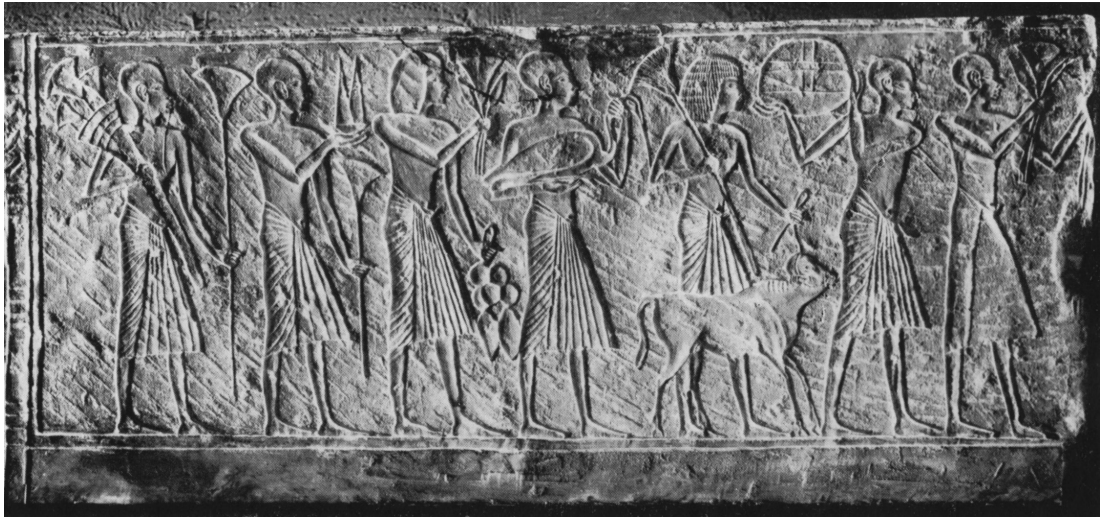


Fig. 5 Relief-decorated block Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7277. Photo copyright of The Geoffrey Thorndike Martin Archive.

“Tomb X” becomes the tomb of Ry, Army official in the reign of Horemheb

All interior chapel walls originally received a revetment of limestone bearing a decoration programme executed in both raised and sunk relief. The fragments of four such relief-decorated blocks were found in situ, and setting lines scratched into the limestone pavement point to the former presence of now-missing blocks. The relief-decorated blocks found in situ on the north walls of both the sanc-

tuary and the antechapel depict offering bearers. These rather unassuming scenes proved to present direct joins to two blocks now held in the collection of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. As such they provided me with the keys to unlocking the identity of the tomb owner. Moreover, they also made it possible for me to re-contextualise a number of additional stone elements held in various public collections around the world. In 2013 I was personally involved in the excavation of “tomb X”, and therefore

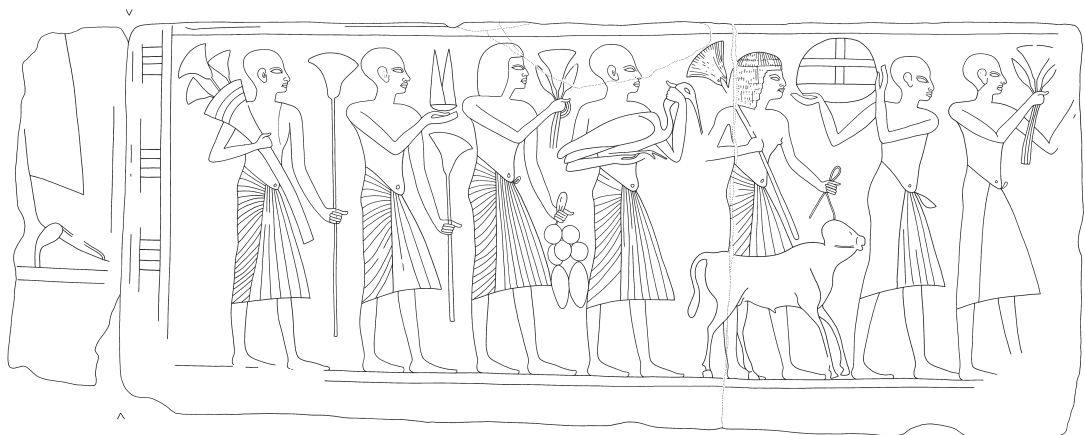


Fig. 6 Line drawing of relief-decorated block Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7277. Image after Martin 1987, pl. 16.



I knew the blocks very well. Yet it was not until fairly recently that I could make the connection to the Berlin blocks. I owe this to Geoffrey T. Martin, who shared with me his rich archive of high-quality photographs of hundreds of relief-decorated blocks held in worldwide public and private collections.²¹ When browsing through the stacks of photos, the black and white print of block Berlin ÄM 7277 caught my attention (Fig. 5). It had previously been published only in facsimile drawing (Fig. 6) and it was the first time that I saw the actual object.²² The relief depicts a scene of seven male offering bearers proceeding towards the right. My eye was immediately drawn to the second man on the right: an offering bearer with shorn head and wearing a simple sash kilt. He supports with both hands a bowl filled with food offers on his right shoulder. While this may seem to be a fairly regular means of depicting the carrying of an object, it is actually not at all so commonly depicted. I know of only one good parallel: the offering bearer depicted on the north end of the east wall in the antechapel of "tomb X" (Fig. 7). Moreover, that man, as well as his colleagues to his left and right, have a distinctive fold in their necks. This gives their shorn heads the appearance of being close-fitting caps. The five offering bearers on block Berlin ÄM 7277 display the exact same characteristics. It was therefore clear to me that the block should derive from "tomb X" – or at least be the product of the same artists' workshop. There was only one problem: the block did not join to any of those found in situ.

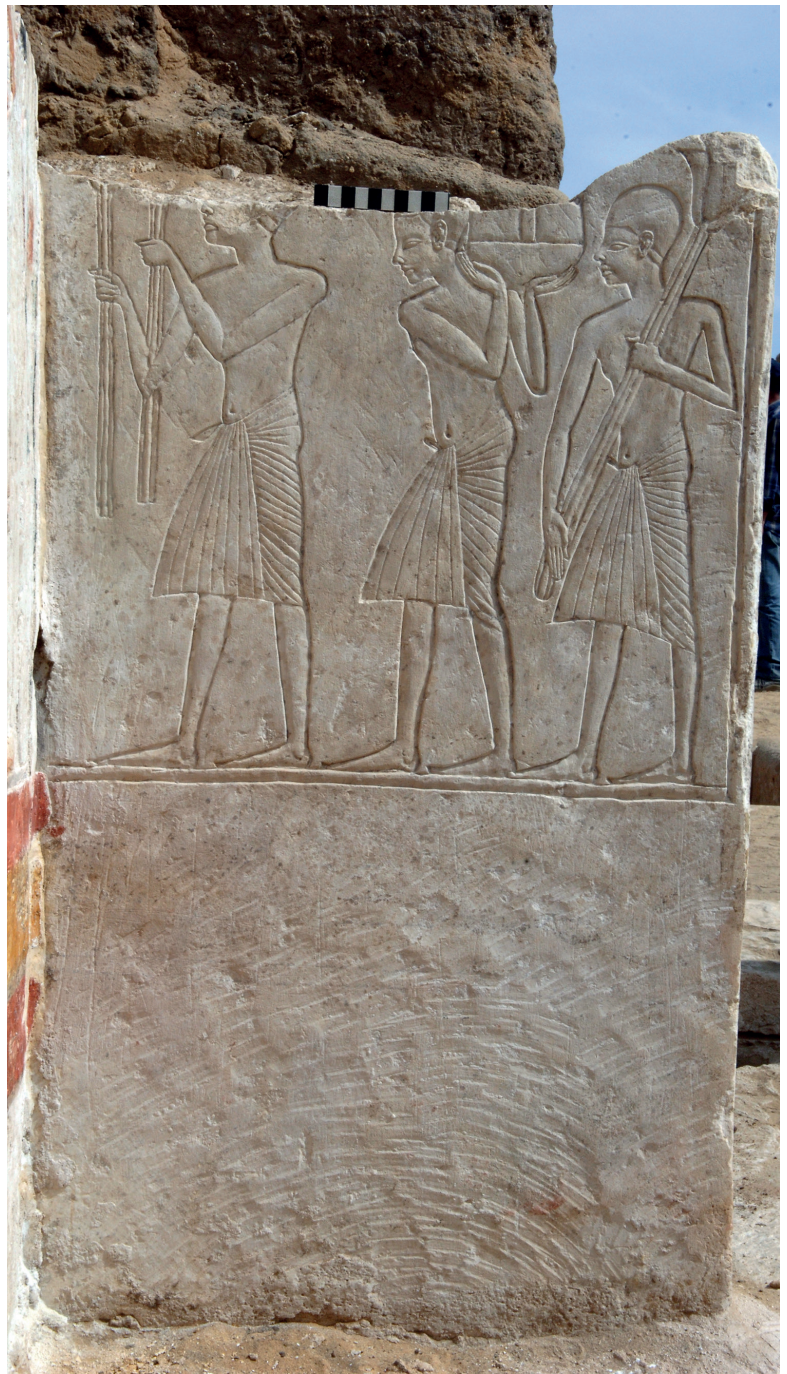


Fig. 7 Scene of offering bearers in the tomb of Ry, antechapel, east wall, north part. Photo copyright of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden.

²¹ *The Martin Memphite New Kingdom Archive*. In collaboration with Prof. G.T. Martin, the author prepares for publication Volume 2 of his *Corpus of Reliefs of the New Kingdom from the Memphite Necropolis and Lower Egypt*. Volume I was published in 1987. Work on this archive is made possible with financial support of the Leiden University Fund / Prof. dr. A.W. Byvanck Fund and The Friends of Saqqara Foundation.

²² Martin, *Corpus*, I, [43], pl. 16.



Fig. 8 Digital join of blocks Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7278 and block found in situ in the tomb of Ry, north wall of antechapel. Photo copyright of SMB Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, photo: Jürgen Liepe, and Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden. Composite image by the author.

Luckily Geoffrey Martin’s *Corpus* Volume I includes a number of blocks that are thought to derive from the same tomb as block Berlin ÄM 7277.²³ These include a true masterpiece of Egyptian art: two joining blocks depicting the purification scene for an official named Ry and his wife Maia (Berlin ÄM 7278).²⁴ The style is unmistakably immediate post-Amarna. What if this block derives indeed from “tomb X”? That would be truly spectacular. It took some digital puzzling to take away any doubt: the blocks definitely derive from “tomb X”, and they join

directly to one of the slabs found in situ (Fig. 8). In hindsight the key to unlocking the identity of the owner of “tomb X” had always been within reach, because the joining block Berlin ÄM 7278 adorns the front cover of Martin’s *Corpus*!

After laying the first piece of the puzzle, I was able to make even more joins. Block Berlin 7275²⁵ joins directly to the slab in situ in the inner sanctuary north wall. The appurtenant chapel west wall once accommodated the monolithic limestone stela, presently also in Berlin (ÄM 7290)²⁶, and the chapel south wall is where block

²³ After a study by E. Fründt, ‘Eine Gruppe memphitischer Grabreliefs des neuen Reiches’, *Forschungen und Berichte* 3/2 (1961), 25-31.

²⁴ PM III/2, 716; Martin, *Corpus*, 20-21, No. 41, pl. 15; Fründt, *FuB* 3/2 (1961), fig. 1.

²⁵ Fründt, *FuB* 3.2, fig. 2.

²⁶ A. Herzberg, ‘Grabstele des Ry und seiner Frau Maja’, in F. Kampp-Seyfried and M. Jung (eds), *China und Ägypten: Wiegen der Welt* (Berlin, 2017), 198-9, fig. III.20.



Fig. 9 Relief decorated block fragments registered as R94-78. Image after Raven 2005, pl. 78.

Berlin ÄM 7277 used to be. The pyramidion now in Cairo, JE 14975,²⁷ formed the pyramid's capstone, and stela Brooklyn Museum 37.46E²⁸ stood upon a limestone base against the courtyard west wall, on the south jamb of the antechapel entrance. The only element that I have been unable to re-contextualise, is a relief-decorated block now held in Jerusalem.²⁹ The full list of dispersed tomb elements is as follows:

- I. Reliefs

- I.1 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7275

- I.2 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7277

- I.3 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7278

- I.4 Jerusalem, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Museum No. unknown [I.5 Saqqara R94-78]

- [I.6 Brooklyn 37.1505E]

- II. Stelae

- II.1 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung ÄM 7290

- II.2 Brooklyn Museum 37.46E

- III. Architectural elements

- III.1 Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE 14975 (pyramidion)

²⁷ A. Rammant-Peeters, *Les pyramidions égyptiens du Nouvel Empire* (OLA 11 ; Leuven, 1983), 24-5, pl. 16 (43), Doc. 21.

²⁸ T.G.H. James, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Inscriptions in the Brooklyn Museum* (Brooklyn, 1974), 178-9 [435], pl. 87.

²⁹ M. Piccirillo, *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Jerusalem, Museum* (Jerusalem, 1983), 79, with fig.



The two relief-decorated blocks listed between square brackets are possibly from the tomb. They display the same style and their iconography would fit in the unassigned spaces. Yet there are no direct joins nor is there inscriptional evidence to substantiate this claim.

The Saqqara block was found by the Leiden mission in 1994, in the sand east of the outer courtyard constructed by Raia: the spot where the chapel of Ry was excavated in 2013. The scene carved in sunk relief depicts a deceased couple facing left – a male seated on a low-backed chair at an offering table, and a female standing behind him, her right arm folded over her chest (Fig. 9). A monkey is depicted below the male’s chair. Preserved are also the remains of two offering bearers approaching from the left. The male figure is dressed in a garment similar to that worn by the officiant in the scene on Berlin ÄM 7278. As such, the Saqqara block may have decorated the opposite antechapel south wall. One may note that scholars also assign block Brooklyn 37.39E to the same corpus.³⁰ In my proposed reconstruction of the chapel, this block does not fit in any of the spaces available. I therefore suggest that it should derive from another tomb at Saqqara.

The famous Berlin block of Ry in context

In the remainder of this article, I will give a full description of the scene on the antechapel north wall of Ry’s tomb. In this confined space, a single relief decorated revetment block was found in situ, positioned perpendicular to the block pictured in Fig. 7. On the left-hand side it joins with Berlin ÄM 7278.³¹ Together

the blocks account for nearly the full width of this wall, measuring 198 cm. The single scene is carved in sunk relief and preserves ample traces of colour. The wall surface in between the scene and undecorated dado bears a horizontal band of alternating colours red-yellow-red. The Berlin blocks have only part of this band. At some point in time following the removal of these blocks from their original position on the wall, excess stone was evidently sawn off. The scene is bordered along the lower edge by a register line and on the right-hand edge by a vertical block frieze.

The scene depicts an offering and purification scene centred on the tomb owner and his wife. A group of five individuals approach the seated couple Ry and Maia from the right. This scene thus continues from the offering bearers on the adjacent wall, although they are depicted on a smaller scale. The five individuals include three offering bearers (two female and one male) and two male officiants. The anonymous offering bearers bring food offers (including a pintail duck and a bull calf), papyrus stalks and a bouquet of flowers. In front of them, a man with shorn head, clad in a sash kilt and wearing a leopard skin over his shoulder and hanging down his back, acts as a priest. In his two upraised hands he holds a *nemset* jar from which he pours a libation of water. The water is represented by two wavy lines that extend over Ry and Maia. A single column of framed hieroglyphs identifies this man as the Servant (*sḏm* ḥ), Ahanefer. The man standing in front of the well-stacked offering table is dressed in an elaborate garment consisting of a bag tunic with outward flaring pleated “sleeves” and pointed apron and

³⁰ See e.g. Fründt, *FuB* 3/2, 27; Martin, *Corpus*, 22 [44], pl. 17.

³¹ PM III/2, 716; Martin, *Corpus*, 20-21, No. 41, pl. 15; Fründt, *FuB* 3/2 (1961), fig. 1.



kilt reaching to the knees, in combination with a wrap-around sash kilt tied in front. In his raised left hand he holds a long-armed censer burning incense, and in his raised right hand he holds a *nemset* jar with spout from which he pours a libation of water. A short hieroglyphic text set in a framed column identifies him as the Stablemaster (*hr.y ih.w*), Maia.

The recipients of the offers and libations, Ry and Maia, are identified with their names and titles. Ry is addressed as 'the Osiris, the embalmed one' (*Wsir wt.w*), followed by the titles-of-office: *hr.y-pd.t im.y-r3 ss[mw.t]*, Chief of bowmen, Overseer of horses. Maia is referred to as *sn.t=f mr.t=f nb(.t) pr šm^c.yt (n) Imn-R^c*, His sister (i.e. wife) whom he loves, Lady of the house, Songstress of Amun-Re. The couple are seated on two distinct lion-legged chairs. A leashed monkey stands below (or besides) Maia's chair. The couple rest their feet on low footrests. Ry wears a composite garment, consisting of a "bag tunic" with outward flaring ample pleated "sleeves" and "skirt" reaching to the ankles, in combination with a wrap-around sash kilt tied in front, resulting in a short "apron" with fringed end. Over his shirt, Ry wears a broad wesekh collar and a perfume cone is positioned atop his duplex wig. He extends his raised left arm towards the offering table and in his right hand he holds a folded cloth and *sekhem* sceptre. Maia wears an

ankle-length pleated robe knotted below her breasts, over which she wears a broad collar. A lotus flower and perfume cone are positioned atop her elaborately braided hairdo. She embraces her husband with her left arm and her hand reappears on Ry's chest. In her right hand she holds four lotus flowers: two with open buds and two buds are closed.

A hieroglyphic text is carved in seventeen framed columns set above the offering table scene, starting in front of Ry's face and extending onto the second officiant. The wavy lines of water poured from the *nemset* jar dissect the text. From column 3 onwards, the text can be identified as an excerpted version of Book of the Dead spell 149l.³² To my knowledge there are no parallels for BD 149 in the iconographic programme of other New Kingdom tombs at Saqqara. The spell is neither widely attested outside the Memphite necropolis. Only four tombs located in the Theban necropolises bear text excerpts and/or vignettes illustrating of BD 149.³³ It is interesting to note that in the late Eighteenth Dynasty, Book of the Dead manuscripts were concluded with exactly this chapter, entitled: 'Spells for knowing the mounds of the house of Osiris in the Field of Rushes'.³⁴

On the titles held by Ry

The titles held by Ry are listed in table I. To start with, the honorific titles are a

³² BD Nav. 149l, lines 71-4. The BD chapter was already noted by Martin, *Corpus*, 46 n. 45c (erroneously as 14gl). For BD 149, see also: B. Lüscher, *Totenbuch Spruch 149/150* (Totenbuchtecte 6; Basel, 2010); S. Quirke, *Going Out in Daylight: prt m hrw. The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead: Translation, Sources, Meanings* (London, 2013), 362. BD 149l developed from CT 278, see: R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Spells 1-1185 & Indexes* (Warminster, 2004), 209-10.

³³ TT 11, TT 32, TT 353, TT 459. See e.g. M. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den thebanischen Beamtengräbern des Neuen Reiches: Texte und Vignetten* (AV 46; Mainz am Rhein, 1984), 83; H. Milde, *The Vignettes in the Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet* (EU 7; Leiden, 1991), 122 [2.5]; and Lucía Díaz-Iglesias Llanos, personal communication.

³⁴ Milde, *Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet*, 113-4. Milde notes that some BD manuscripts add a final vignette showing the rising of the sun. On the north wall of the inner sanctuary of or the tomb of Ry, the rising sun, Re-Horakhty, is being adored by Ry and Maia.



means to establish the official's social position and in particular his proximity to the king. The epithets indicate that he held a position within the king's inner circle (*šn.yt*).³⁵ Ry also received the Gold of Honour, which he wears in the upper register of stela Berlin ÄM 7290. It may have been awarded to him by the king on the same occasion when he was awarded with his epithets.

The Chief of bowmen – casually translated as 'Troop commander' – is a military official with field experience in the infantry. The title's position in the lists of rank indicates that its bearer held one of the highest ranking positions in the military. The *hr.y-pd.t* was subordinate only to the *im.y-r3 mšc wr*, the General.³⁶ During Ry's tenure, that office was held by Horemheb and, when the latter ascended the throne to become pharaoh,

by Amenemone³⁷ who may in fact be Ry's neighbour to the south!

The title Overseer of horses denotes a command over the chariotry.³⁸ This branch of the army was established in the late-Eighteenth Dynasty reign of Amenhotep III. Yuya, the father-in-law of that king, was the first to bear the title in a combination with military offices.³⁹ Overseers of horses, or Commanders of the chariotry, were drawn from the ranks of Chiefs of bowmen.⁴⁰ It usually is the highest-ranking title held by those officials.⁴¹

The military offices held by Ry are by no means low ranking. Prominent bearers of the title-combination Chief of bowmen and Overseer of horses of the Lord of the Two Lands are Ay, Paramessu (Ramesses I), and Seti (I): all military men who ascended to the throne in the late and post-Amarna period.⁴²

³⁵ C. Raedler, 'Rank and Favour at the Early Ramesside Court', in R. in Gundlach and J.H. Taylor (eds), *4. Symposium zur ägyptischen Königsideologie / 4th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology: Egyptian Royal Residences, London, June 1st-5th 2004* (KSG 4.1; Wiesbaden, 2009), 141; H. Guksch, *Königsdienst: zur Selbstdarstellung der Beamten in der 18. Dynastie* (SAGA 11; Heidelberg, 1994), 40.

³⁶ A.R. Schulman, *Military Rank, Title, and Organization in the Egyptian New Kingdom* (MÄS 6; Berlin, 1964), 51-3. Note that Schulman lists Ry erroneously among the fourteen individuals bearing this title in the Eighteenth Dynasty (ref. 400: Berlin ÄM 7578, 7290) and among the fifteen bearers of the title in the Nineteenth Dynasty (ref. 406: Brooklyn 37.46E).

³⁷ For this official, see: PM III/2, 701; O. Djuževa, 'Das Grab des Generals Amenemine in Saqqara', in M. Bárta and J. Krejčí (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000* (ArOr Supp. 9; Prague, 2000), 77-98. For the suggested burial place of Amenemone (Unas South Cemetery instead of the Teti Pyramid Cemetery), see: N. Staring, 'Toward a Prosopography of New Kingdom Tomb Owners in the Memphite Necropolis', in M. Bárta, F. Coppens, and J. Krejčí (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2015* (Prague, 2017), 603-8.

³⁸ A.M. Gnirs, *Militär und Gesellschaft: ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte des Neuen Reiches* (SAGA 17; Heidelberg, 1996), 29-31, 66-70.

³⁹ Gnirs, *Militär und Gesellschaft*, 21; Urk. IV, 1895, 15. The first to bear the title *im.y-r3 ssm.wt n.y nb t3.wy*, Nakhtmin (Urk. IV, 1179, 8), did so in the reign of Thutmose III, when it was not a military office. Instead it belonged to the state administration.

⁴⁰ Gnirs, *Militär und Gesellschaft*, 21.

⁴¹ Schulman, *Military Rank*, 46-7.

⁴² Gnirs, *Militär und Gesellschaft*, 67, 70.



Table I Overview of titles held by Ry

Related to the king, royal court, and government (incl. honorific)	
Noble and Count, Seal bearer of the King of Lower Egypt, Sole Companion	II.2
One greatly praised by the Perfect God (i.e. the king)	II.1
One beloved of the Lord of the Two Lands on account of his character	II.1
Scribal	
Scribe of the army	II.2
[True (?) royal scribe] whom he loves	II.1
Military	
Chief of bowmen	I.1; I.2; II.1; II.2; III.1
Overseer of horses	I.1; II.1

Legend: I.1 relief-decorated block Berlin ÄM 7278; I.2 relief-decorated block Jerusalem; II.1 stela Berlin ÄM 7290; II.2 stela Brooklyn 37.46E; II.1 pyramidion Cairo JE 48840

The tomb of Ry in its spatial setting

To conclude this article, I would like to briefly address the question of what the necropolis looked like when Ry had his tomb constructed there, and how it developed afterwards.

The earliest tombs of New Kingdom date that are situated in the Unas South Cemetery were built in the reign of Amenhotep III.⁴³

However, at the present we know very little about the architectural layout these early funerary monuments had. It is likely, though, that they were built as (partially) rock-cut tombs.⁴⁴ The finds of mud bricks stamped with the *prenomen* of Amenhotep II (Aa-kheperu-Re) are indicative of possibly earlier building activities at the site.⁴⁵ Some of the stamped bricks were excavated from the fill of Ry's burial shaft.⁴⁶

⁴³ The now-lost tomb of Amenhotep III's Chief Steward in Memphis, Amenhotep Huy, should also be situated in this section of the necropolis: PM III/2, 702-3; W.C. Hayes, 'A Writing-palette of the Chief Steward Amenhotep and Some Notes on Its Owner', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (1938), 9-24. See also Raven *et al.*, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander in Chief of Tutankhamun, V: The Forecourt and the Area South of the Tomb With Some Notes on the Tomb of Tia* (PALMA 6; Turnhout 2011), 39, for pit-graves dated to the reign of Amenhotep III. Some of the tombs dated to the reigns of Akhenaten-Horemheb are in fact built by officials whose careers started in the reign of Amenhotep III (e.g. Pay: Raven *et al.*, 'Preliminary Report on the Leiden Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2009: The Tombs of Khay II and Tatia', *JEOL* 42 (2010), 17).

⁴⁴ N. Staring, 'The History and Topography of a New Kingdom Necropolis', in P. Giovetti and D. Picchi (eds), *Egypt: Millenary Splendour. The Leiden Leiden Collection in Bologna* (Milan, 2016), 210-5.

⁴⁵ A *hr.y-hb n ʿ3-hpr.w-Rʿ*, Lector Priest of Amenhotep II, named Neferhat, features on the stela of his son, the Royal Butler Ipu (*temp.* Tutankhamun), Leiden AP 9. This might be a reference to the Memphite memorial temple of that king.

⁴⁶ L. Weiss, 'New Evidence of Amenhotep II at Saqqara', *Saqqara Newsletter* 13 (2015), 46-50.



As far as the development of this section of the necropolis goes we are on firmer ground in the reign of Akhenaten. This is the time when a number of the monumental, freestanding temple-tombs were constructed. As such, the spot selected by Ry was surrounded by fairly new monuments. Ry's neighbour to the west was Pay, the Overseer of Cattle and Overseer of the Royal "Harim" at Memphis (*temp.* Tutankhamun);⁴⁷ to the north stood the tomb of Mery-Neith, the Greatest of Seers (High priest) and Steward in the temple of the Aten in Memphis (*temp.* Akhenaten-Tutankhamun);⁴⁸ and his neighbours to the east and south are yet anonymous.⁴⁹ Moreover, within a radius of 50 metres were situated the tombs of two of the most prominent officials of Tutankhamun's tenure: Horemheb (*temp.* Tutankhamun) and Maya (*temp.* Tutankhamun-Horemheb). The archaeologically attested tombs plus prosopographic information recorded on loose tomb-elements paint the picture of it being a cemetery reserved exclusively for courtiers. They include Stewards of

royal memorial temples, Army officials (incl. Royal butlers), Overseers of (royal) construction works, Harim officials, and High priests.⁵⁰

The area surrounding the tomb of Ry continued to develop after his funeral had taken place. Existing tombs were adapted and new chapels were added in the ever decreasing spaces available in between pre-existing buildings. The son and successor of Pay, Raia (*temp.* Horemheb-Seti I) – also an Overseer of horses and thus a close acquaintance of Ry – enlarged the tomb of his father by adding an open forecourt. Yet space between the tombs of Ry and Pay was constrained and thus the form and layout of this annex were influenced by the pre-existing tomb of Ry.⁵¹ An axial approach to Raia's annex was not an option and his builders therefore had to shift the entrance towards the north.⁵²

To the north and east of Ry, several chapels of (early) Ramesside date were constructed in the open spaces in between the monumental late Eighteenth Dynasty tombs. A four-sided stela inscribed for

⁴⁷ Raven, *Pay and Raia*.

⁴⁸ Raven and Van Walsem, *Tomb of Meryneith*.

⁴⁹ The tomb neighbouring Ry to the east was excavated in 2010 (Raven *et al.*, *JEOL* 43 (2011), 3-18). Based on an analysis of architectural features, Hays proposes a date in the time-period Tutankhamun-Ramesses II (H. Hays, 'On the Architectural Development of Monumental Tombs South of the Unas Causeway at Saqqara from the Reigns of Akhenaten to Ramses II', in M. Bárta, F. Coppens, and J. Krejčí (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010/11* (Prague, 2011), 84-105). The tomb of Ry's neighbour to the south has not been excavated.

⁵⁰ Staring, in Bárta, Coppens, and Krejčí (eds), 593-611.

⁵¹ Note the shape of Pay's southeast chapel, which may also be the result of pre-existing structure due south.

⁵² Raven, *JEOL* 44 (2012-2013), 11, suggests that Raia was responsible for the partial destruction of Ry's mud brick pyramid because his annex was constructed right against it. This makes little sense, because Raia evidently went into the trouble of creating a north approach that was far removed from the pyramid. The forecourt is asymmetrical and clearly reckons with the pre-existing pyramid of Ry. Furthermore, there is no clear evidence to suggest a date for the pyramid's destruction.



a Stone-mason named Samut, without accompanying superstructure, was set up halfway between Ry and Mery-Neith;⁵³ a chapel for a Priest of the Front of Ptah, Tatia,⁵⁴ occupied the open space to the east; and a third Ramesside chapel was built against the southeast face of the façade of Ry's tomb.⁵⁵ A number of additional tomb shafts of New Kingdom date found in the area surrounding Ry's funerary monument now await further publication. The porch leading up to the entrance doorway of Ry's tomb may have been

added in conjunction with these later building activities. In so doing, Ry, or members of his household responsible for the tomb's upkeep, anticipated these developments by changing the approach and thus funnelling visitors from the north down towards the entrance as the previous axial approach from the east had been blocked.

Continued research on Ry and his monument will enlighten us further about this exciting piece of the New Kingdom necropolis!

⁵³ M.J. Raven *et al.*, 'Preliminary Report on the Leiden/Turin Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2015: The Tomb of an Anonymous Official (Tomb X) and Its Surroundings', *JEOL* 45 (2014-2015), 13, fig. 11; Raven, *Saqqara Newsletter* 15 (2017), 12-14.

⁵⁴ V. Oeters, 'The tomb of Tatia, *Wab*-priest of the front of Ptah and Chief of the Goldsmiths', in V. Verschoor, A.J. Stuart, and C. Demarée (eds), *Imaging and Imagining the Memphite Necropolis: Liber Amicorum René van Walsem* (EU 30; Leiden, 2017), 57-80.

⁵⁵ Raven, *Saqqara Newsletter* 15 (2017), 14-16.

