



PRAGUE EGYPTOLOGICAL STUDIES

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Mastaba of Queen
Khentkaus III
in Abusir

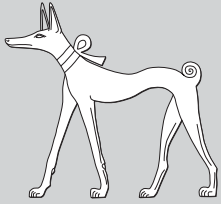


Tomb of the chief
physician
Shepseskafankh

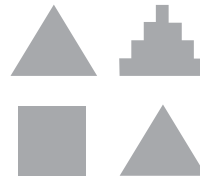
The miraculous
rise of the Fifth
Dynasty



Old Kingdom
canopic jars from
new perspective



P R A G U E EGYPTOLOGICAL S T U D I E S



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Photograph on the front page

A reconstruction of the offering place in front of the false door of Nefer in tomb AS 68d (photo M. Frouz)

Dear readers,

It has been thirteen years since the first issue of *Prague Egyptological Studies* was published in 2002. Since then it has become an important and wide-selling journal, providing both the scientific and laymen audience with the latest results of our fieldwork and various studies in the field of Czech Egyptology dealing with the civilisations of ancient Egypt and Sudan.

After more than a decade of its existence, we are pleased to launch the first issue of the English edition of *Prague Egyptological Studies*. The English edition is dedicated exclusively to the history, archaeology and language of third millennium BC Egypt. Yet it also aims to include studies dealing with foreign relations during the period. At the same time, we also welcome publications on the latest advances in the study of the environment and studies evaluating the significance of applied sciences. Our principal aim is to accommodate studies concerning either primary research in the field or those that bring up theoretical inquiries of essential importance to the indicated scope and time frame of the journal.

The present issue is devoted to the excavations at Abusir, the principal field of research of the Czech Institute of Egyptology. The individual reports are dedicated to the excavation projects carried out in the pyramid field (Khentkaus III), as well as in the Abusir South area (tomb complex AS 68, the tomb of Shepseskafankh). In addition to these, you will also find more theoretical studies focusing on the "Khentkaus problem", which analyses the significance and importance of three women bearing the same name during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties, a study dealing with model beer jars and their typological evolution, an interesting seal with a figure of Bes, and an interpretation of canopic jars bearing significant tokens of past treatment on their bodies.

We trust that the English edition of *Prague Egyptological Studies*, which will be produced once a year, will find a firm place among other Egyptological scholarly journals. We are convinced that a clearly defined profile of this scientific journal will attract not only the attention of many readers but also submissions of significant contributions from the scientific community and thus streamline major advances in the fields of third millennium BC Egypt history, archaeology and the like.

Miroslav Bárta and Lucie Jirásková

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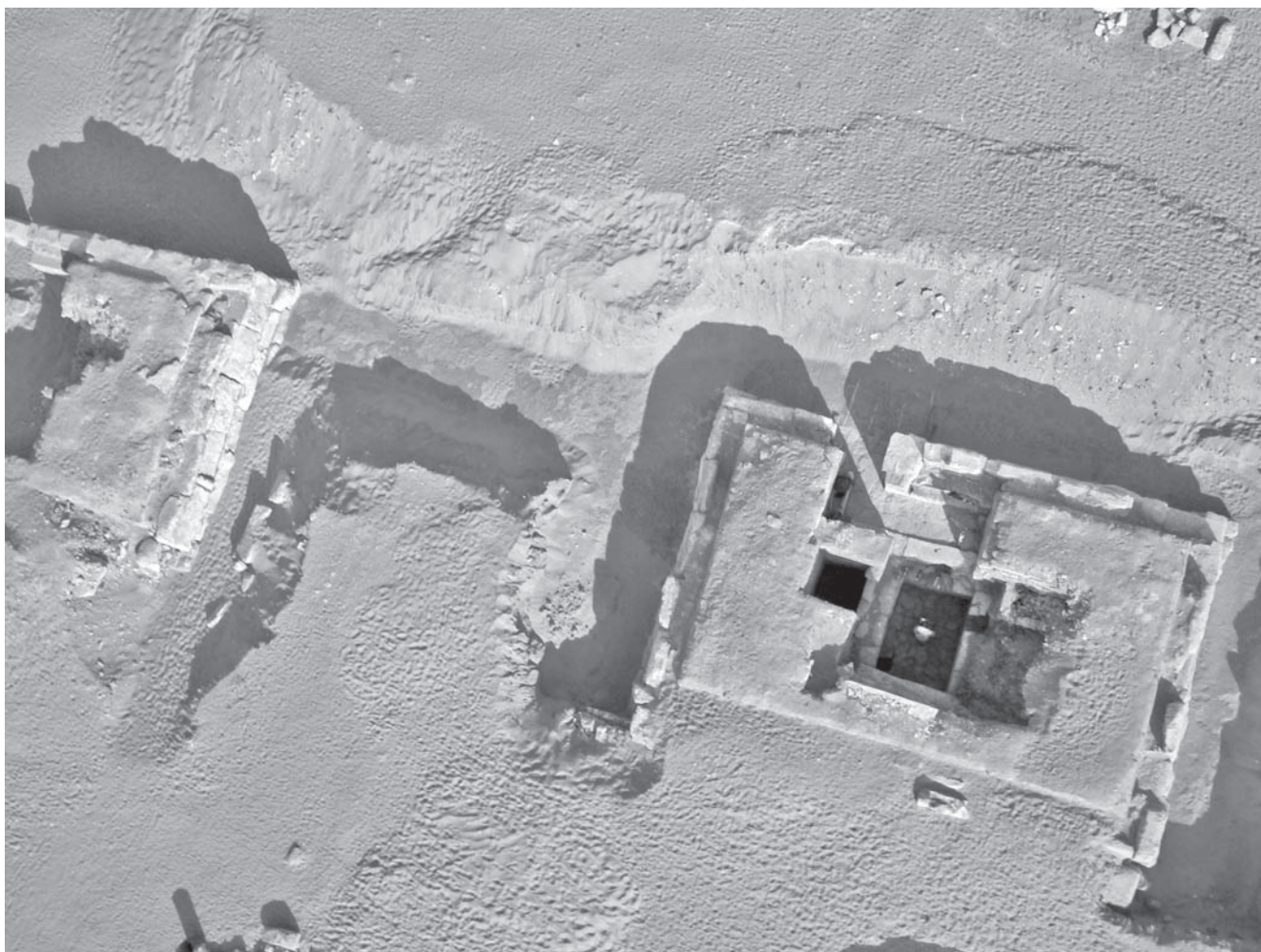


Fig. 1 View of the archaeological excavation in the area of tomb AC 30 (photo V. Brůna)

Archaeological excavation of the mastaba of Queen Khentkaus III (tomb AC 30) in Abusir

Jaromír Krejčí – Katarína Arias Kytarová – Martin Odler

For years, the Czech Institute of Egyptology (CIE) has been working in the southern part of the pyramid field, unearthing the monuments connected with the members of the royal family of the middle of the Fifth Dynasty. Since 1976, the archaeological expedition of the CIE has discovered, besides Raneferef's pyramid complex (Verner *et al.* 2006), pyramids of queens and tombs of other members of the royal family. During the first ten years of the new millennium, the tomb complex Lepsius no. 25 (Krejčí – Callender – Verner *et al.* 2008), and the mastaba of the “eldest son of the king” Werkaure (Krejčí – Arias Kytarová – Vymazalová *et al.* 2014), were unearthed. These excavations clearly showed that our knowledge of the Abusir royal pyramid necropolis was still insufficient. It is one of the reasons why the CIE expedition to Abusir has continued – since 2013 – its work in the comprehensive research of Nakhtsare's cemetery. Its archaeological excavation started with the unearthing of tomb AC 25, belonging to “son of the king” Nakhtsare, already in 1994 (Krejčí 2008: 37–64), and continued within the framework of this project with the excavation of tomb AC 29 ascribed to “count” Kakaibaef in 2013 (Krejčí 2013).

Last autumn, the Czech expedition came back to Nakhtsare's necropolis and explored the monument marked as tomb AC 30. Before the beginning of its unearthing, three

main goals were established: to identify the name of the tomb owner, his/her social status and to explore its immediate surroundings, especially the space between

tombs AC 30 and AC 29. The exploration of the tomb brought forth answers to the first two questions, as well as conducted the clearing of a sondage between the tombs.

Archaeological excavation of tomb AC 30

Prior to the archaeological excavation, tomb AC 30 had the appearance of an elongated, north-south oriented, and approximately 18.00 × 23.00 m large mound, the maximal height of which was 1.50 m above the present ground. The mound was covered with limestone debris and blocks as well as pottery sherds, which – already before the start of the archaeological research – indicated that the tomb was extensively damaged through the extraction of building blocks by stone robbers. The state of preservation of tomb AC 30 was therefore rather bad, and the tomb in this way did not differ from the situation of the neighbouring monuments in this part of the Abusir royal necropolis. Due to safety reasons, the archaeological work was rather hazardous and the excavation had to be done with maximal care. As was the case with both tombs AC 25 and AC 29, the shape of the mound of tomb AC 30 clearly showed, already before the archaeological work, that it represented a mastaba oriented along its north-south axis.

Besides tomb AC 30 itself, during the autumn of 2014 the CIE expedition also explored the area around it. The archaeological work began with the digging of a sondage between tombs AC 29 and AC 30 (fig. 1) in order to clarify the situation in this area and to document the existence of an enclosure wall which was conjectured before the excavation of tomb AC 30. The area of the sondage was covered with 3.00 m high layers of clean, wind-blown sand partially deposited on rather thin contact layers of brown sand mixed with broken mud bricks and ash.¹ These contact layers also contained, besides ceramic contexts with Old Kingdom miniature vessels and sherds, a small model of a head with the features of a (female?) face indicated (17/AC30/2014). The function of this object remains unclear. The closest analogies – items found in the neighbouring mortuary temple of Raneferef (Benešová 2006: 429, Fig. 2.7.67, 7) – unfortunately do not bring much help in describing its function. It is probable that the accumulation of the layers of wind-blown sand developed in a very short period of time, as there was only a rather low number of pottery sherds found during the work in this sondage. The floor of the open courtyard was covered with a layer of mud mixed with a smaller admixture of gravel. Contrary to the situation in the space to the north of tomb AC 29 (Krejčí 2013: 33), the existence of a lower level of the courtyard's mud floor was not documented. As well, the repetitive cleaning of the floor connected with the standard re-coating with mud was not detected.

The areas along the eastern and southern façade of tomb AC 30 were filled with wind-blown sand, and only a 5–10 cm high contact layer above the mud floor of the open courtyard was revealed. This layer, consisting of sand mixed with ash, was deposited during the functioning of the chapel in this area. It also included pottery sherds of Old Kingdom date, miniature vessels and organic material.

Contrary to the situation outside the mastaba, its internal spaces were filled with debris consisting of layers of limestone blocks and fragments, mud bricks and rather voluminous strata of pottery (see below) that came mainly from the fill of the mastaba's core intermingled with sand layers. It is apparent that only a few of the pottery contexts unearthed inside tomb AC 30 are of primary character – the most important were those excavated at the bottom of the vertical shaft and, partially, in the lowermost levels of the fill of the burial chamber, and methodologically, the contexts included in the fill of the tomb's core.

Description of the tomb

Superstructure

When the layers covering tomb AC 30 were removed, it became clear that tomb AC 30 represented a mastaba measuring 16.12 × 10.70 m and that its masonry had been preserved to a height of 3.30 m. It represented a building very similar to other tombs in the Nakhtsare's cemetery; in its superstructure, there was an offering chapel, while the substructure was accessible through a vertical shaft connected to a burial chamber.

Not only were the dimensions and architecture of tomb AC 30 analogous to those of Kakaibaef's mastaba, but also construction methods similar to AC 29 were utilized. The outer faces of the tomb's core masonry were constructed of smallish, regularly worked blocks of grey and yellow, *i.e.* local limestone, joined with mud and lime mortar. Its fill consisted of masonry of mediocre quality – small fragments of limestone and grit – mixed with broken mud bricks and large amounts of weathered pottery sherds as well as whole vessels (see below). These pottery contexts consisted mainly of rough pottery (especially beer jars, *bdj* moulds, *etc.*).

The casing of tomb AC 30 was constructed of large blocks of white limestone (of the same, rather mediocre, quality as with Kakaibaef's tomb). The stone robbers destroyed it to a larger extent than is the case of AC 29.² As was the case of Kakaibaef's tomb, and unlike the mastaba of Nakhtsare, the casing was not smoothed (see fig. 2). It thus also demonstrates the supposition that tomb AC 30 was abandoned during the process of construction and not fully finished or fully completed after the tomb owner's death. This fact is a rather important distinction in comparison with tomb AC 25, whose casing was fully finished (Krejčí 2008: Fig. 3.4).

The entrance (0.85 m wide) to the superstructure of the tomb is located in its eastern façade. As is also the case of the offering chapel, the side walls (a part of the northern wall is missing) of the entrance were constructed with smoothed blocks of fine quality white limestone. The entrance gave access to the small (3.87 × 1.24 m) L-shaped chapel (see fig. 2), which originally had two false doors in its western wall. The stone robbers destroyed the masonry of the chapel to such an extent that only the underdecorated lower part of the northern false door was preserved. The existence, position and size of the southern false door were documented using the construction lines which survived on the upper face of the



Fig. 2 General view of tomb AC 30 (photo J. Krejčí)

largely destroyed western wall of the chapel. Unfortunately, no part of an inscription or a decoration was unearthed in the chapel, which was also the case with the whole of tomb AC 30 as well as that of other mastabas in the Nakhtsare cemetery. It also meant that information on the name of the tomb owner and his/her social status had to be found in the collection of the *Baugraffiti* found on the walls of the mastaba.

On the core masonry of the chapel, vertical and horizontal construction lines indicating the width and length of the chapel were documented, as well as horizontal lines specifying levels above the chapel's pavement. As a matter of course, masons' inscriptions including instructions for the tomb's construction accompanied them.

The L-shaped chapel – as is also the case of the chapels in tombs AC 25 and AC 29 – represents type 3 of Reisner's typology (Reisner 1942: 203) and can be, on the basis of analogy, dated to the second half of the Fifth Dynasty (Bárta 2002: 88, 92–93).

As far as the architecture of the tomb is concerned, it is not clear if a serdab existed in it. Having in mind the close similarity of the architecture of tomb AC 30 to the neighbouring mastaba of Kakaibaef, its existence can be estimated – only plausibly – in a similar position: namely, in the space between the western wall of the offering chapel and the burial chamber. The discovery to the west of the chapel, approximately at the level of the chapel's floor, of a fragment of a quartzite statue, which was a small part of an armpit and an arm (122/AC30/2014), does not by itself support this proposition.

The building area which was covered by this mastaba (172.48 m²) and also by two other already unearthed tombs in Nakhtsare's cemetery – Nakhtsare (AC 25): 15.10 × 10.10 m, 152.51 m² (Krejčí 2008: 40), Kakaibaef (AC 29): 16.20 × 10.80 m, 174.96 m² (Krejčí 2013: 28) – is rather similar to the mastaba of another possible minor member of the royal family, Nebtyemneferes (AC 23): 15.90 × 11.50 m, 182.85 m² (Krejčí – Callender – Verner *et al.* 2008: 22), but quite different from the tomb of Werkaure with estimated dimensions of an interval between 20.45 × 15.01 m and 21.00 × 15.85 m (307.16 m² and 332.96 m²). Also, another minor tomb complex unearthed at the southern edge of the Abusir pyramid field was far larger than AC 30. It was architectonically an extraordinary tomb complex with its two mastabas: Lepsius no. 25/1 (Daughter of the King, Hanebu?: 27.70 × 21.53 m, 596.38 m², Krejčí 2008: 184) and Lepsius no. 25/2 (Hanebu's female relative?: 21.68 × 15.65 m, 339.29 m², Krejčí 2008: 184). It is also important to mention here that the other tombs built to the east of Nyuserre's pyramid were larger: the tomb of Userkafankh (18.48 × 12.87 m, 237.84 m², with a mud brick extension built to the east measuring 293.49 m², Borchardt 1907: Bl. 20); Anonymous tomb (16.90 × 11.81–12.27 m, 199.59–207.36 m², Borchardt 1907: Bl. 21); the tomb of Djadjaemankh (26.81 × 16.67 m, 446.92 m², Borchardt 1907: Bl. 22); the Mastaba of the Princesses (32.04 × 16.44 m, 526.75 m², Borchardt 1907: Bl. 25) and the tomb of Ptahshepses (initial mastaba: 29.35–30.25 × 19.85 m, 582.60–600.46 m² which grew to be an enormous



Fig. 3 Burial chamber in tomb AC 30 from the west (photo M. Frouz)

monument during its third building stage: 56.24×42.24 m, 2375.58 m², Krejčí 2009: 40, 108). From this short list it is evident that tomb AC 30 can be classified among smaller Abusir tombs belonging to the members of the then social elite and of the royal family. Its size was a sign of the social

status of the tomb owner (see also Kanawati 1974; Alexanian 1999: 33; Krejčí 2009: 186–188).

Substructure

The vertical burial shaft is located in the area behind the northern false door in the chapel. The maximum preserved depth of the shaft is 5.45 m. In comparison with tombs AC 25 and AC 29, its side walls are in a better state of preservation; only the upper part of the southern wall was destroyed by stone robbers. As has already been mentioned, some of the most important archaeological contexts unearthed in the whole mastaba were located at its bottom. Besides a whole, rather small, *bd3*-mould, parts of a calf (head, lower parts of its legs), pottery sherds, charcoals, wooden fragments and parts of ropes were also discovered. These finds represent important evidence for rituals made during the burial of the tomb owner. A fragmentarily preserved bovine skull was found at the bottom of a vertical shaft in the mastaba of Nakhtsare and is thus analogous to the find from tomb AC 30 (Krejčí 2008: 43, fig. 3.9; cf. offering of a gazelle in the mastaba of Khekeretnebty, Verner – Callender 2002: 19, Pl. II/Bf3). Below these remains, there is a layer consisting of construction waste mixed with pottery sherds, wooden fragments, parts of ropes and even of bark and bast fiber. This 35–40 cm high layer was used to fill the lowermost part of the shaft above its pavement.³

At the level where the bovine bones were placed, there is an opening in the southern wall of the shaft which gives access to a narrow passage connecting the shaft with the burial chamber. The passage is 0.93 m long, 0.82 cm broad and 1.11 m high. On the pavement of the passage was a kind of “ramp” made of rather coarse limestone fragments. The purpose of this ramp, sloping towards the floor of the burial chamber, was to facilitate the transportation of the tomb owner’s mummy into the chamber. The burial chamber itself (fig. 3) represented an east-west oriented space which measured 3.73×2.32 m and was 2.14 m high. The chamber was roofed with a flat ceiling which is almost



Fig. 4 Burial chamber in tomb AC 30 from the southeast with a large roofing block still *in situ* (photo M. Frouz)

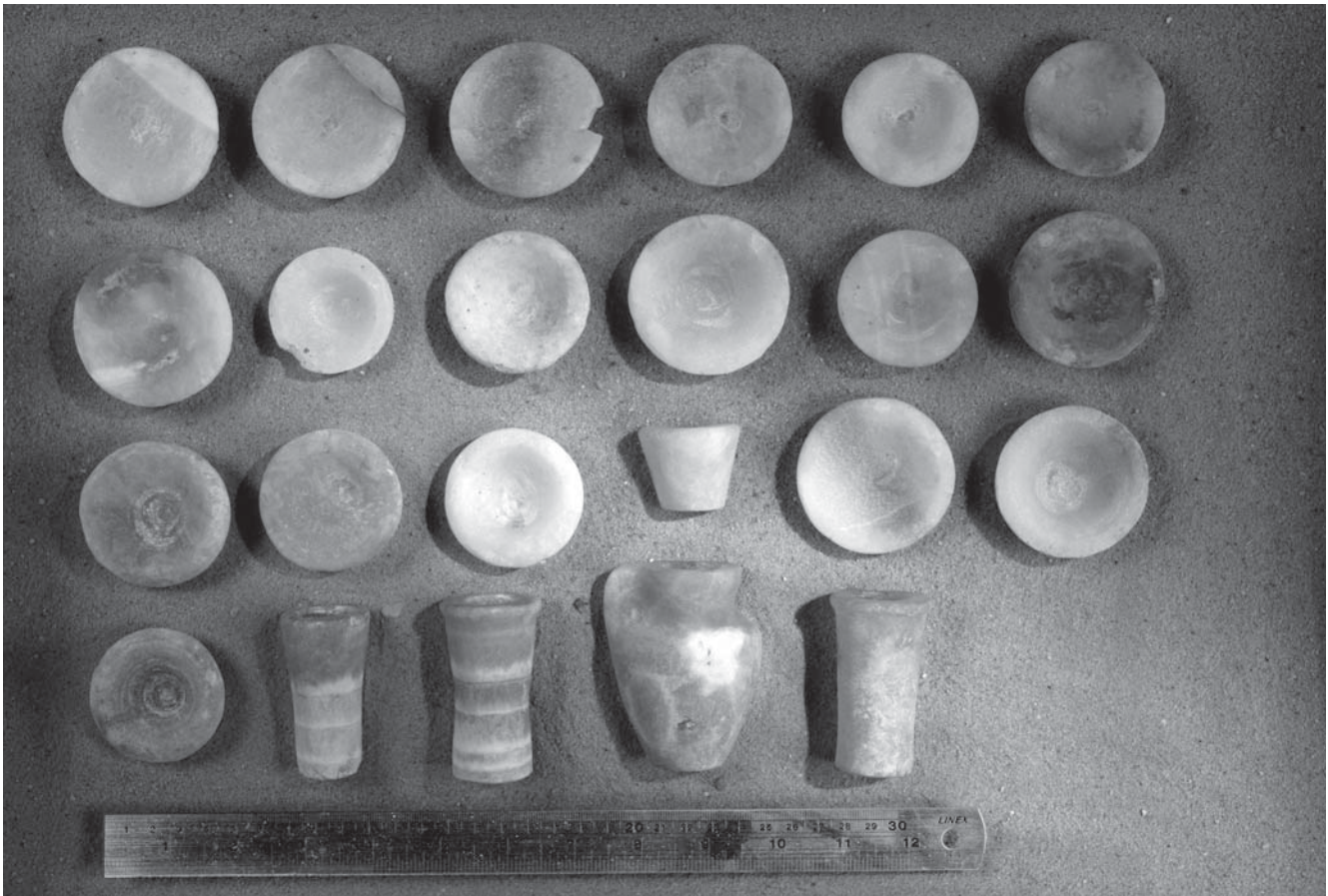


Fig. 5 Travertine model vessels found in the burial chamber (photo M. Frouz)

completely destroyed. Only its westernmost part, consisting of a large block of white limestone, still survives *in situ* (fig. 4). The extraordinary massiveness of this block confirms that the tomb was built for a member of the social elite, in this case of the royal family.

Also in the architecture of the substructure, the uniformity of the mastabas in Nakhtsare's cemetery is well documentable. It can be, as is the case of tombs AC 25 and AC 29, assigned to types 3 or 4 of Reisner's typology (Reisner 1942: 87, fig. 21–22).

A sarcophagus made of white limestone, which originally stood in the western half of the chamber, was completely destroyed by stone robbers. Its position is documented only by the construction lines surviving on the pavement of the chamber and on its side walls and the clusters of the masons' inscriptions with the name of the tomb owner. The stone robbers' "intervention", through which the sarcophagus was destroyed, entailed the existence of a layer of *raksha*, which was unearthed by the CIE expedition in the western half of the chamber. Despite this fact, we succeeded in discovering parts of the funerary equipment in the lowermost part of the chamber's fill – especially in its southern and southeastern parts. This collection consists of 23 travertine model vessels (fig. 5), 2 lids of canopic jars (?) made of fine white limestone, 4 copper models of tools (for the results of the analysis of the copper implements, see further below), animal bones and small fragments of wooden items. The quality of the material and of the workmanship – especially in the case of the travertine models – is high and shows that the tomb

owner belonged to the then elite (compare with sets found in the tomb of Nakhtsare (Krejčí 2008: 51–59) and in pyramid Lepsius no. 24 (Callender 2008: 102–110)).

In the fill of the burial chamber, pottery sherds were also discovered. However, following the preliminary analysis of relevant ceramics from the burial chamber contexts, the pottery types which would be attributable to the burial equipment were not discovered among them (Katarína Arias Kytnarová, personal communication). The other ceramic finds, in some cases extremely rich in the sense of the number of individual sherds or vessels, show two types of pottery usage: firstly, in the mortuary cult of the deceased and, secondly, in the utilization of large amounts of pottery as the fill of the tomb's core masonry. This particular usage accelerated the construction of the masonry and was less demanding in respect to time and expenses. The pottery which was used in this way is very important for the dating of the tomb's construction as *post quem* criterion (see excursus on the pottery analysis and conclusions below).

In the burial chamber and in the fill of the vertical shaft, a large number of fragments of cloth and bandages were also unearthed. The bandages were used during the embalming process of the body of the deceased. The textile fragments clearly show that the tomb robbers pulled the body of the tomb owner through the passage connecting the burial chamber and the shaft. This movement was probably done during the time the chamber's roof was still *in situ*. It is therefore very probable that fragments of a mummified body discovered in the shaft's different levels may have belonged to the tomb

owner. The anthropological analysis of the skeleton fragments showed that they belonged to a female who died at the age of *ca.* 20 years (see also below).⁴

In addition to other types of finds, the Czech mission also unearthed a large number of organic material and ecofacts – especially seeds, fruits, parts of plants, wood, ropes, remains of different species of beetles, *etc.* In contrast to the situation in the substructure of tomb AC 29, the amount of organic material is smaller, indicating that the destroyed subterranean spaces were not as accessible and were not, *e.g.*, inhabited by birds (owls), as was the case with the mastaba of Kakaibaef (Krejčí 2013). Even though a large number of rodent skeletons have been found, this circumstance has also been attested in other tombs in the southern part of the Abusir necropolis, *e.g.* in the mastaba of Werkaure (this material shall be published in the near future).

Tomb AC 30 and Nakhtsare's cemetery

As has already been mentioned, Nakhtsare's cemetery, in which the tomb of Khentkaus III is located, contains a north-south oriented line of four, regularly placed mastabas. It is the only place in Central Abusir (Krejčí 2009: 30–36), contrary to Giza (Jánosi 2005) or Dahshur ("Dahschur Mitte", Alexanian 1999: Abb. 1), where the tombs are distributed in such a regular pattern. The detected technological techniques, an almost total similarity in the architecture of the individual mastabas, and their relative position to already existing royal monuments enables us to suppose that the tombs were built in a short

period of time and that their construction was directed by royal architects. Also, this shows that the owners of the tombs in this part of the Abusir cemetery were members of the royal family and of the then elite. On the other hand, the small size of all the tombs in this part of the royal necropolis seems to demonstrate that their owners were of lesser importance than, *e.g.*, the owners of tomb complexes Lepsius no. 23 and Lepsius no. 25/1–2. This might have been, hypothetically, influenced by their putative relationship with King Raneferef, who died after *ca.* three years of his reign (Verner 2006: 23). Thus, members of his family and other persons that were connected with him might not have been in a similarly beneficial situation as those connected with Nyuserre (as is the case of Werkaure, for instance).

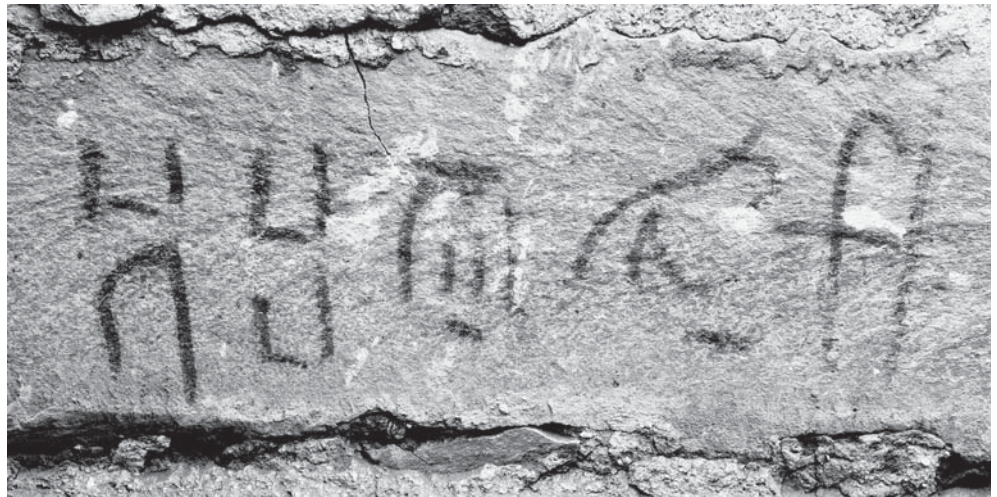
Masons' inscriptions and the tomb owner's name and social position

Having in mind the large extent to which tomb AC 30 was destroyed by tomb- and stone robbers, the numerous masons' inscriptions and marks are the only available epigraphic material from the tomb which can provide answers to the questions concerning the name of the tomb owner and her/his social position. The *Baugraffiti* along with the construction lines (fig. 6) were documented not only on the side walls of the chapel, but also on the side walls and pavement of the shaft, the burial chamber and of the connecting corridor between the shaft and the burial chamber. This collection includes, besides dates related to the building itself (without the entries concerning



Fig. 6 Masons' inscriptions (including the title and name of the tomb owner) and construction lines on the western wall of the burial chamber (photo J. Krejčí)

Fig. 7. Burial chamber, southern wall, masons' inscription with title and name: *hmt-nswt Hnt-k3w.s* (photo M. Frouz)



the cattle counting), also the tomb owner's name and titles along with the construction instructions. The collection of graffiti from tomb AC 30 is thus analogous to that found in Kakaibaef's tomb.

Already during the excavation of the fill of the space above the burial chamber, loose blocks and blocks *in situ* with the abbreviation of the tomb owner's name Khentkaus (*Hnt*) were found. It is important to mention that these inscriptions with the tomb owner's name were detected only at the level of the ceiling of the burial chamber or below this level. None of them were found in the superstructure of the tomb.

Through the clearing of the burial chamber, numerous attestations of the name and titles were discovered. Almost all of them were placed in the correct position – *i.e.* with these inscriptions “head up” – and because of this placement one can presume that they contain the name of the tomb owner.⁵ There was only one instance when the masons' inscription with the name and title was set in its place with its “head down”. Besides this fact, the high occurrence of inscriptions including the name were found only in the area of the burial chamber makes it very probable that the owner of the tomb was the *hmt nswt* and *mwt nswt Hnt-k3w.s* (fig. 7). Given that in Egyptian history two other royal ladies bearing the name Khentkaus are documented, the ordinal number “III” was added to the queen's name.

It is not probable that the blocks with *Baugraffiti* from (or better to say intended to be utilized in) the closely located pyramid of Queen Khentkaus II, which include the same name and titles, were used or reused in tomb AC 30. The main reason for this supposition, besides the already mentioned fact that, with one exception, all the blocks with the relevant masons' inscriptions were built in the side walls of the chamber with “their heads up”, is the situation in the pyramid of Khentkaus II. The *Baugraffiti* which were documented on the blocks placed in its masonry show the rise of the queen's importance. At the beginning of the pyramid's construction, the limestone blocks with the masons' inscription including the queen's name and her title *hmt-nswt* were set into the pyramid's masonry. In the later period (very probably after resuming the pyramid's construction, *i.e.*, during Nyuserre's reign), the title *mwt-nswt* was added to an already existing masons'

inscription mentioning *hmt-nswt Hnt-k3w.s* (Verner 2014: 50–51, fig. 7a-b).⁶ In tomb AC 30, only the *Baugraffiti* including the name of Khentkaus in combination with one or another title were detected, not the combination of both titles as found in the pyramid of Khentkaus II. Moreover, there are three attestations of the inscription *hmt-nswt Hnt-k3w.s* with a determinative of a sitting queen on the throne. Among the *Baugraffiti* documented in the pyramid of Khentkaus II, this determinative was documented only in combination with the title *mwt-nswt* (Verner 1995: 52). It thus seems that the set of masons' marks mentioning the name of Khentkaus from tomb AC 30 is different from that of the pyramid of Khentkaus II and that Khentkaus III was thus a real historical figure.

If the masons' marks mentioning the name Khentkaus were really secondarily used in tomb AC 30, one would expect that the blocks with such masons' marks would have also been built into the masonry of the two other unearthed tombs in Nakhtsare's cemetery.⁷ However, no such inscription was documented either in tomb AC 25 or in AC 29. It is worth remarking here that in the pyramid of Khentkaus II, the supposed abbreviated form of the queen's name was also attested (Verner 1995: 43, 45–49, 52).

Additionally, the quantity of the Khentkaus-*Baugraffiti* in the burial chamber of AC 30, especially in the eastern part of the chamber's pavement, seems to support the ascription of tomb AC 30 to Khentkaus III. It appears that the purpose of using such a high number of these graffiti was to in this way underline the fact that the queen was going to be buried in the sarcophagus located to the west from them. Nevertheless, this consideration is merely speculative and should be put aside in deference to the main problem of the ascription of tomb AC 30 to a certain person.

The discovery of the name and titles of Khentkaus III is very important as it perhaps provides (basic) information on an unknown historical figure that lived approximately at the beginning of the second half of the Fifth Dynasty. Due to the close position of her tomb to Raneferef's unfinished pyramid, Khentkaus III was very likely the wife of King Raneferef, whose tomb complex was unearthed by the Czechoslovak expedition led by Miroslav Verner in the 1980s and 1990s (Verner *et al.* 2006).

Khentkaus III's title “mother of the king” (Baud 1999) represents the more important of the two titles documented

with the queen's name. It shows that its bearer was the mother of a successor to the Egyptian throne. The name of her son, to whom the title referred, has not been documented and is thus missing. Bearing in mind the absent data concerning this question in the case of the two kings mentioned below, the results of a preliminary analysis of the pottery and the tomb's architecture, as well as of the mud seals unearthed in the fill of the chapel with the Horus name of Nyuserre (56, 57 and 60/AC30/2014), are important for the dating of the tomb's construction. It can be thus concluded that the tomb was built during the reigns of Kings Nyuserre and/or Menkauhor. The same conclusion is supported by the results of the archaeological work in other tombs of Nakhtsare's cemetery and the horizontal stratigraphy in this part of Central Abusir. It can be thus assumed that Khentkaus III's son was King Menkauhor or the little known and documented Shepseskare, to whom a construction site of a pyramid in Abusir North has been ascribed (Verner 1982; 2001: 310–311).

It is very difficult to decide which of the above-mentioned kings Khentkaus III might have been mother of – based on our current and lacking knowledge, this question is difficult, if not almost impossible, to answer. The fact that Menkauhor's reign (Vymazalová – Coppens 2011) is better known could lead one to connect Khentkaus III with this king, in the situation where his genealogical relationship to the rulers who were buried in Abusir is not obvious. However, the linkage of Khentkaus III and Menkauhor cannot be substantiated by any piece of information and remains speculative.

As concerns Shepseskare, the situation is a little different but still speculative: the rather small dimensions of tomb AC 30, its position among tombs of other members of the then elite, and it not being in the northernmost position – the closest one to the mortuary temple of her potential husband Raneferef – and thus not accentuating her prominent social status, seem to show that Khentkaus III might have given birth to Shepseskare. The reign of this king is documented so poorly that it is not improbable that he reigned for a very short period (Verner 2001: 582–588; Verner 2014: 55–56). It is thus then conceivable that Khentkaus III as his putative mother did not have a respectable position in Nyuserre's court, and so she might have been given a simple mastaba such as tomb AC 30 certainly is.

It is apparent that the owner of tomb AC 30 bore her name because of her two royal predecessors: Khentkaus I (Callender 2011: 136–154) and Khentkaus II (Callender 2011: 171–177). Whereas the family relationships of Khentkaus I are not clear (Baud 1999: 546–552; Callender 2011: 149–154; Verner 2014: 24), the position of Khentkaus II seems to be secured. She was wife of King Neferirkare and mother of King Nyuserre and his brother and predecessor King Raneferef. One also cannot exclude the possibility that Khentkaus III was a full-blood royal daughter of Neferirkare (with Khentkaus II?, see also Verner 2014: 58). Both Khentkaus I and II bore a title which can be understood in two different ways: either as “mother of two kings of Upper and Lower Egypt”, or as the “mother of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, king of Upper and Lower Egypt” (Baud 1996 and 1999; Callender 2011: 147–149). In the opinion of Verner (2014: 51–52),

this unusual title represents one of the attestations for the fact that they gave birth to twins. Unfortunately, this hypothesis is not documentable in the available epigraphic and other historical material dated to the period.

Also the tombs of both queens show that their place in the Egyptian royal family was extraordinary. Khentkaus I commanded an unusual tomb (LG 100) located in the local quarries at Giza (Hassan 1943). Its lower step represents a rock cut mastaba, the upper step with niching on its outer faces is constructed of limestone and its shape reminds one of a mastaba. The mother of Khentkaus' III putative husband Raneferef, Queen Khentkaus II, lived closer in time to the tomb owner of AC 30. King Neferirkare began construction of the pyramid complex for her to the south of his own pyramid; in the event of his death, however, even the pyramid itself was not finished. The construction work was resumed during the reign of King Nyuserre (Jánosi 1995: 151). The pyramid complex of Khentkaus II also contains some atypical architectural features. Beside others, it is important to mention one of the oldest satellite pyramids of a queen (Krejčí 2010: 181). The occurrence of the satellite pyramid in this queen's complex perhaps indirectly reflects the rising significance of female members of the royal family in the period.

The selection of the name of the owner of tomb AC 30, Khentkaus (III), seems to follow the example of her two distinguished predecessors. Besides this, one can take into consideration the fact that the personal names containing the term *k3w* were used by the members of the royal family first at the end of the Fourth Dynasty and rather more frequently during the Fifth Dynasty (for instance, Menkaure, Menkauhor, Werkaure, *etc.*).

Area around tomb AC 30

In addition to the sondage already discussed between tombs AC 29 and AC 30, the area to the east and to the south of Khentkaus' tomb was also explored. In front of the entrance to the chapel, the Czech mission unearthed an interesting situation which is analogous to the similar areas in front of the entrances to tombs AC 25 and AC 29 (see fig. 2). Flanking both sides of the entrance to the chapel of AC 30, remains of low walls built of dried bricks were unearthed. These walls were probably erected in order to prevent the filling up of the entrance by the constantly blowing in sand and by pottery utilized during the mortuary cult of the tomb owner. Such analogous flanking walls were, for example, documented in the columned courtyard in Raneferef's mortuary temple (Verner 2006: 70) or in front of the entrance of the chapel in tomb Lepsius no. 25/1 (Krejčí 2008: 162, figs. 5.19–5.23) and also in many instances in the Giza or Saqqara necropolises. Along the walls in front of the entrance to tomb AC 30, as well as further to the east, south and north of them, stripes of white colour made on the mud floor of the open space were detected. According to the author's knowledge, similar bands have not been attested in the case of any other Old Kingdom necropolis. Because they partially delimited the ground plan of the flanking walls they appear to have been used as an aid – construction lines – for the positioning of the flanking walls. The stripes in the eastern part of the

Fig. 8 One of three secondary burials unearthed in the sondage between tombs AC 29 and AC 30 (photo J. Krejčí)



discussed area (see left lower part of fig. 2) show that there was an intention to extend the mud brick walls. This intention was apparently never fulfilled. Unfortunately, the area further to the east of the border of the excavation along the eastern façade of tomb AC 30 was not possible to be excavated, mainly due to time constraints. This might have clarified the function of the white stripes fully. Hopefully, it will be possible to do in the near future.

Another function of these white bands can hypothetically be connected with the cultic function of the tomb itself. At this point, one can also mention the main axes highlighted in the open courtyards in the pyramid complexes of Kings Menkaure (Reisner 1931: 40, pls. 26, 31, 33, Plan VIII), Neferirkare (Borchardt 1907: Bl. 10) or Raneferef (Verner 2006: 70, figs. 1.3.3, 1.3.13). The courtyards in all these cases had floors made of Nile mud, on which stone paved roads were laid. These routes accentuated the main axis of these courtyards and so determined the direction of ritual processions. Analogously, the white stripes documented in front of

the entrances to tombs AC 25, AC 29 and AC 30 might have represented a similar, even though rather simple certificate of a similar approach.

During the excavation of the northern sondage, three secondary burials (fig. 8) were discovered. The deceased were interred in a very simple way, directly into the sand layers. The margins of the burial pits were not discernible, and it is therefore very probable (mainly due to the loose character of the sand) that the burial pits were very simple. The dark brown colouring of sand originating from the tissues of the corpses was recognizable below and beside some of the skeletons. The skeletons themselves, which were relatively fragile and partially damaged, did not bear traces of mummification. These three secondary burials show the same orientation (approximately east-west) as those discovered around tomb AC 29 (Krejčí 2013), tomb AC 25 (Krejčí 2008: 48–51, fig. 3.1) and outside the tomb of Werkaure. In the burial pits from the vicinity of Lepsius no. 25, no items which could be attributable to the burial equipment were discovered. This is also the case with the



Fig. 9a–b General view and detail of the fill south of the burial chamber of Khentkaus III with a compact layer made of complete and crushed ceramic vessels, pieces of mud bricks and limestone debris (photos J. Krejčí)



Fig. 10 Examples of fully preserved beer jars from the ceramic context 24.AC30.2014 (photo M. Frouz)

burials from the vicinity of AC 25 and AC 29 and Lepsius no. 25. It therefore seems that all these burials can be dated to the same period. Despite the fact that they have been tentatively dated to a late, even Christian era (Krejčí 2008: 161), the dating of these burials remains open and will be based on C¹⁴ analysis in the future.

Selected analyses of finds

Some remarks on ceramic evidence (Katarína Arias Kytnarová)

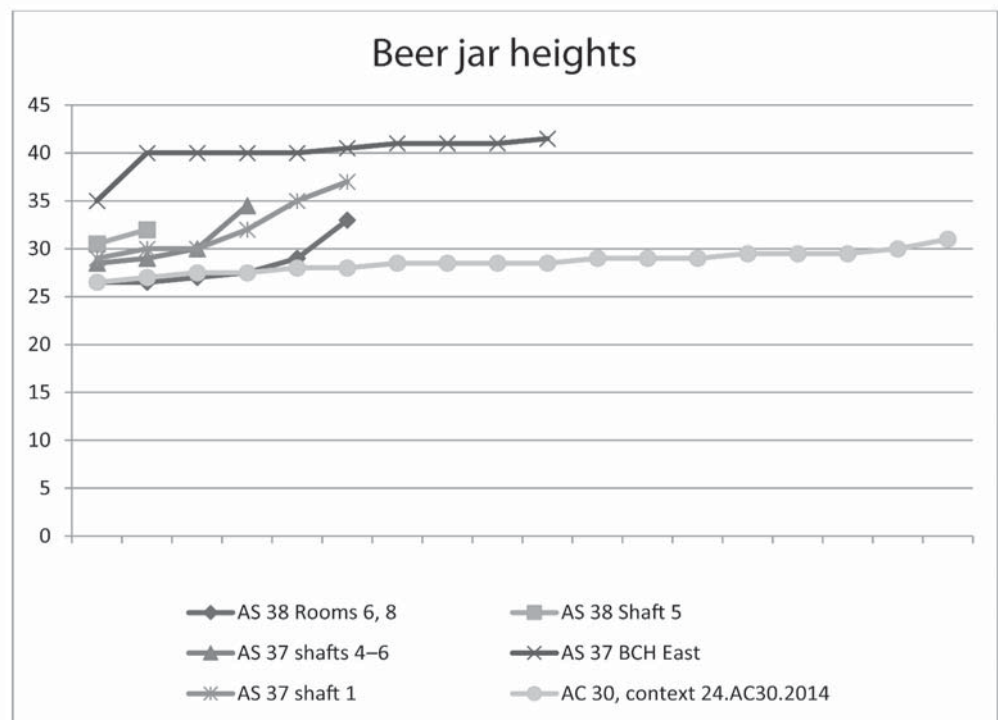
There were numerous ceramic finds from the area of the tomb of Khentkaus III, but due to time constraints, they have been analysed only partially so far. Only the most relevant and notable ceramic contexts shall be discussed here briefly.

One of the most important ceramic contexts was the fill of the mastaba itself, providing us with a *terminus post quem* for the building of the tomb. Immediately to the south and southeast from the burial chamber and in the fill above the level of its ceiling, a compact and continuous layer made of complete and fragmented ceramic vessels mixed with limestone pieces, sand and pieces of *tafl* was uncovered. It was divided into two ceramic contexts, namely one in the southern part of the burial chamber (24.AC30.2014) and one south of this (20.AC30.2014), with a clearly visible border between them. Both of these contexts were delimited by limestone blocks and altogether reach a height of more than 2.00 m (fig. 9a). The pottery was evidently used secondarily as a cheap building material. Such use is not unusual: in the area of Abusir South, we uncovered a compact and well-articulated wall built partially of bread moulds, with a few beer jars also included, west of the tomb of the sun priest Neferinpu and the anonymous structures AS 57d–e (Arias Kytnarová 2011: Figs. 6.11 and 6.12). What is uncommon is the high occurrence of pottery in this fill, making up the majority of the layer, as well as the almost perfect state of these vessels, not counting the breaking during the building process (fig. 9b). The fill of both contexts consisted of 80 % beer jars. A high percentage of them

were recovered not only in full profile, but also as complete vessels (see also fig. 10).

Beer jars in themselves are a very common ceramic group – in Abusir South, they can constitute between 50 to 70 % of all pottery finds per tomb, depending mostly on the social status of the tomb owner and post-depositional processes occurring in the tomb after the burial. These beer jars are usually made of very poor material, either Nile silt B2 or C, often very porous, with numerous organic inclusions and fired at very low temperatures, resulting in soft to medium hard sherds that break very easily. All this supports the fact that beer jars were meant for a single use and after that primary usage, were simply discarded. We often find them in refuse deposits, such as that in the tomb of Kaaper (Bárta 1996) or as the already mentioned building material, together with bread forms. The beer jars from the compact fill of the mastaba of Khentkaus III are unusual in light of the fact that a high number of them were fully preserved and without any traces of erosion or of being exposed to sun, wind and sand. All this could signify that they were used as a building material only a short time after their primary usage as beer containers and thus would not be much older than the mastaba itself. Naturally, we have to assume that all the ceramic vessels uncovered in the fill of a structure have to be older than that structure, sometimes even in several generations or spanning dynasties. It is not unusual, in the cemetery of Abusir South, to find Third Dynasty beer jar fragments in the core of the tombs of the Fifth Dynasty; however, these are clearly worn and rarely more than small sherds, such as 7–9 % of the rim. On the other hand, in the two ceramic contexts making up the core of the mastaba of Khentkaus III, we found numerous fully preserved jars with no traces of erosion or of being exposed to the elements. It can be assumed that they originally came from cultic activities taking place in one of the neighbouring tombs (or mortuary temples) from a period not long before the building of the mastaba itself and therefore provide a valuable dating criterion. The 19 beer jars uncovered in full shape or at least full profile had an average height of 28.10 cm,

Chart 1 Comparison of heights of fully preserved beer jars from different stages in the tombs of Kaiemtjenenet (AS 38) and Neferinpu (AS 37) with those from context 24.AC30.2014 in the tomb of Khentkaus III (author K. Arias Kytarová)



with most of these measuring between 27.50 and 29.50 cm (fig. 10). When compared to other contexts with numerous beer jars from the cemetery of Abusir South, it is clear that these beer jars were made approximately at the same time as the building of the older stage of the tomb of Kaiemtjenenet and certainly a longer time period before the stone extension in the tomb of Neferinpu (chart 1). This delimits the first usage of these beer jars approximately to the reign of Nyuserre (for the dating of these structures, see Vymazalová *et al.* 2011: 176–177 and Chart 10.1; Bárta *et al.* 2014: 5–6). This conclusion is important for the history of tomb AC 30, since it represents a dating criterion *post quem*.

There are typological similarities of the ceramic finds from the tomb of Khentkaus III to those from other tombs dating to the second half of the Fifth Dynasty, such as the complex of Princess Sheretnebty (AS 68) from Abusir South and the tombs of Werkaure (AC 26) and Kakaibaef (AC 29) in the pyramid field of Abusir. Some include peculiarities such as a flat-based beer jar of Abusir type J-1i. Although bases of such beer jars were found in other parts of both sites, in AC 30 we had the first example of a fully preserved vessel of this type (18-1.AC30.2014). It was found in the destruction layer in the southern part of the chapel; this layer consisted of grey sand, limestone fragments and ceramics. The shape of the vessel is unusual, as it resembles a *hs* vase. However, it is made of low quality Nile silt B2 and was only very roughly smoothed by means of diagonal strokes on the shoulders and the upper body, with the general feel and quality of beer jars. The vessel had a low, straight neck, bulging shoulders and a thin, tall foot with a flat base partly chipped away (fig. 11). Having such a shape in low quality of material is very unusual, and the only relative parallels come from Abusir itself, namely from the fill above the serdab in the tomb of Princess Khekeretnebty (Verner – Callender 2002: 40, 204d/B/76, Fig. B36 and Pl. VII, Bf19) and from the sun

temple of Userkaf in Abusir North, where a predominance of examples (over 100 pieces) came from a single refuse deposit in the area of the causeway (Kaiser 1969: IX). Both



Fig. 11 Beer jar of type J-1i, resembling a *hs* vase (photo K. Arias Kytarová)

these analogies differ slightly from our example but the main features are evident. The example from the tomb of Khekeretnebt, dating to the period of King Djedkare, is the closest parallel so far. The slightly later date would correspond to the possible cultic activity in the chapel of Khentkaus III.

Copper objects (Martin Odler)

Finds of most importance made of copper alloy were found in the burial chamber of tomb AC 30. Their location in the burial chamber was secondary; other models which were part of the burial equipment were most probably taken away by tomb robbers. Four blades of model tools include: an axe, a saw and two chisel blades (fig. 12). All of these blades were covered with green coloured corrosion and sand grains, and the orange-coloured metal core was visible on some spots of the blades. The assemblage has parallels in the corpus of copper model tools from the burial chamber of an unknown queen buried in pyramid Lepsius no. 24, close in time and space to tomb AC 30 (Krejčí – Callender – Verner *et al.* 2008: 69–151) and among smaller artefacts of a similar type in the burial assemblage of Neferhathor, the wife of the official Nefer, found at Abusir South (Bárta – Vymazalová – Dulíková *et al.* 2014; Odler 2015). Both analogous assemblages are from the second half of the Fifth Dynasty, the first from the reign of Nyuserre, the latter from the reign of Djedkare.

Model axe blade (200/AC30/2014) has a flat butt and a rivet near one of the edges of the butt (37.00 × 39.00 mm, weight 6.20 g). Smaller axe blades of similar shape, but with perforations, have been found in the burial chamber of Neferhathor at Abusir South (Odler 2015: Fig. 4.1, 193/AS68d/2012_a, b). A bigger axe blade from pyramid Lepsius no. 24, has a more elongated shape (Callender 2008: 127, Fig. 4.87).

Model blade of a flat, wide chisel (238/AC30/2014) has a blunt, curved edge and on the other end butt bulge (length 71.50 mm, weight 4.50 g). A chisel of similar shape and size was found in pyramid Lepsius no. 24 (Callender 2008: 123, Fig. 4.81b).

Model saw blade (253/AC30/2014) has a tang made together with a narrow blade with both edges serrated (l. 116.00 mm, w. 5.60 g). A similar but longer piece with a more rounded tip was found in pyramid Lepsius no. 24, in the original publication incorrectly determined as a spatula (Callender 2008: 123, Fig. 4.81d). A smaller saw blade of a similar type was found in the assemblage of Neferhathor (Odler 2015: Fig. 4.1, 193/AS68d/2012_k).

Model blade of a flat, narrow chisel (263/AC30/2014) has a butt bulge, narrow shaft and straight edge with a flare (l. 73.00 mm, w. 3.80 g). Bigger chisels of similar shape were found in pyramid Lepsius no. 24 (Callender 2008: 123, Fig. 4.81b) and smaller ones in the assemblage of Neferhathor (Odler 2015: Fig. 4.1, 193/AS68d/2012_l-p).

It has been argued that copper model tools were symbols of the patron – craftsman dependence and that model blades symbolized the power and ability to order the craftwork from craftsmen. The patrons could have been men (Odler – Dulíková 2015) and women (Odler 2015) belonging to the social elite of the Old Kingdom. The copper model tools found in the burial chamber

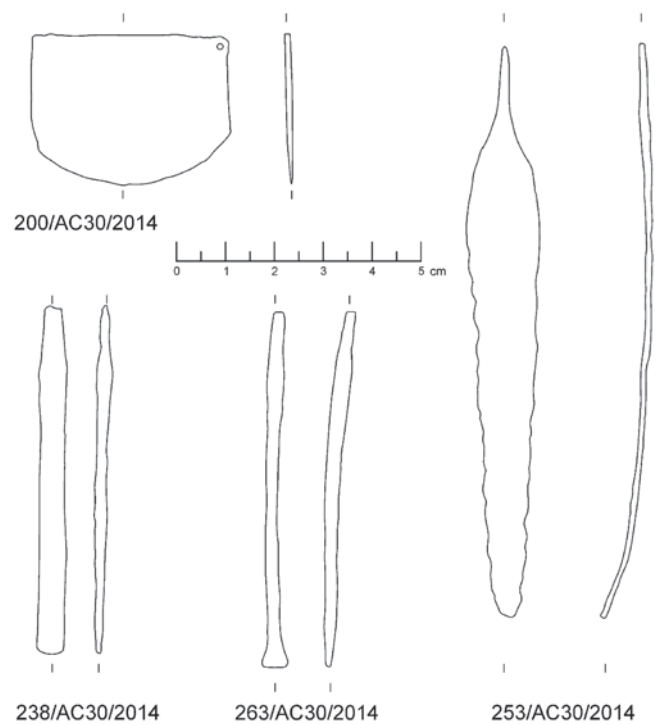


Fig. 12 Copper objects found in the burial chamber of tomb AC 30 (drawing M. Odler)

of Queen Khentkaus III widen our information about the funerary equipment of the royal entourage in the second half of the Fifth Dynasty. A comparison with contemporary assemblages from pyramid Lepsius no. 24 and Neferhathor, wife of the official Nefer, shows that the expenditure for the material and craftsmanship was higher in the case of pyramid Lepsius no. 24, yet the models were bigger than the models belonging to the wife of a middle-rank official.

Conclusions (Jaromír Krejčí)

As has already been mentioned, Nakhtsare's cemetery, in which the tomb of Khentkaus III is located, represents a north-south oriented line of four, regularly placed mastabas. Like the situation in Giza or Dahshur, where a regular pattern in the physical distribution of the non-pyramidal tombs can be detected, the Nakhtsare's cemetery is the only place in Abusir where such regular distribution is apparent. This, together with the technological procedures used for the construction of the mastabas, as well as the similarity of their architecture and their relative position to already existing royal monuments, allows us to assume that these mastabas were built in a short period of time. The owners of the tombs in this part of the Abusir pyramid field were members of the royal family and of the then elites – as has been shown by preserved parts of the burial equipment or utilization of the unusually large block of white limestone in the ceiling of the burial chamber of tomb AC 30.

Concerning the burial equipment, only the copper models were studied thoroughly so far. As has been shown, the copper model tools were an important marker of social status of the tomb owners. It does not appear to be accidental (see discussion regarding the position of tomb

AC 30 in relation to the mortuary temple of Raneferef, as well as the status of the tomb's probable owner Khentkaus III in the royal court after the death of her putative husband in this article above) that the quality of the copper models from tomb AC 30 is lower than those from pyramid Lepsius no. 24 in Central Abusir and higher than that of copper items from the burial equipment found in the tomb of Neferhathor in Abusir South. Both of these sets originate from approximately the same period as those from tomb AC 30. In this way, the items from the burial equipment of Queen Khentkaus III bring new information concerning the burial equipment of the deceased belonging to the elite of the second half of the Fifth Dynasty.

The numerous masons' inscriptions documented in the newly unearthed tomb AC 30 enabled us to ascribe this largely destroyed mastaba to Queen Khentkaus III. Due to the position of the tomb, it is highly probable that she was wife of King Raneferef, for whom no spouse was associated before the unearthing of tomb AC 30 in 2014. The queen also bore the title "mother of king." Two kings can be connected with this important title of Khentkaus:⁸ the rather ephemeral Shepseskare and Menkauhor with more probability on the side of Shepseskare. As concerns the horizontal stratigraphy, it is logical that one of the children who was born to the putative couple Raneferef and Khentkaus III may have been "son of the king", Nakhtsare (see also Verner 2014: 58). Nevertheless, the supposed connection of Kakaibaef with Khentkaus III and Raneferef conjectured by Verner (2014: 58) is hypothetical due to the thus far missing attestation of the title of the royal son in connection with his name.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain of whom she was mother and this question remains open until future excavations. Due to the fact that the CIE expedition found two mud seals with the Horus name of Nyuserre, it is clear that the tomb could not have come into existence before the reign of this king. In this connection, the analysis of the pottery discovered in the fill of the core masonry of tomb AC 30 is methodologically very important. It brings a *terminus post quem* for the dating of the tomb's construction. Two pottery contexts, 20.AC30.2014 and 24.AC30.2014, were excavated in the core masonry to the south and southeast of the burial chamber and clearly originated during the construction of the tomb and before its cultic usage. The pottery (found both as whole vessels and sherds) does not show any signs of weathering, so it is very probable that it was re-used in the tomb's fill not long after its primary use in a close monument (e.g. mortuary complex of Raneferef). This rather common practice thus enabled us to date the tomb's construction. Some of the finds, such as the flat-based beer jar in the fill of the chapel, represent proof of cultic activities in the tomb during the reign of Djedkare, which perfectly coincides with the conclusions of the general discussion on tomb AC 30.

The pottery analysis, the tomb's architecture, the methods used during this tomb's construction, together with other tombs in the Nakhtsare cemetery, and the horizontal stratigraphy in this part of the Central Abusir, enable us thus to date the construction of the tomb of Khentkaus III to Nyuserre's reign or slightly later. The

tomb's cultic use can be dated to the rather long period of the reigns of Kings Nyuserre, Menkauhor and Djedkare.

Notes:

- ¹ These contact layers did not cover the whole area of the probe: pottery contexts 6, 7 and 8.AC30.2014 overlaid the mud floor 6.00 m to the south of the southern outer wall of tomb AC 29, and pottery context 10.AC30.2014 overlaid the mud floor in the soundage 1.20 m to the north of the northern outer wall of tomb AC 30. The contact layers were 10–15 cm high (their heights differentiated in connection with the unevenness of the mud floor of the open space between both tombs). Even though they were of very similar nature, they were not continuous.
- ² However, the masonry of the chapel, the vertical shaft and the burial chamber are in rather better condition than the analogous parts of both tombs AC 25 and AC 29.
- ³ As concerns the methods used during the construction of the tomb, it is worth mentioning that – contrary to the situation in the shaft of Kakaibaef's tomb – there is no change in the type of masonry in the side walls of the shaft in tomb AC 30 (see Krejčí 2013).
- ⁴ "The individual of Khentkaus III was assessed as a young adult female with almost complete skeletal preservation. The age at death was around 20 (± 2 years). The stature was estimated to 154.2 cm (± 1.9 cm)" (Pířová – Bejdová 2015: 1).
- ⁵ In the opinion of Vassil Dobrev (noted in a personal communication), masons' inscriptions including personal names on construction blocks set in the masonry of a tomb in its important parts (a serdab, a burial chamber) with their "heads up" very probably represent the name of the tomb owner. Dobrev made this conclusion following the similar situations in the monuments built during the Sixth Dynasty in Saqqara South.
- ⁶ In the whole pyramid complex of Khentkaus II, the masons' marks mentioning her unusual title "mother of two kings of Upper and Lower Egypt" were not detected (see Verner 1995: 43–54).
- ⁷ It was already mentioned in this article that due to their identical architecture, as well as the same construction methods, the tombs in Nakhtsare's cemetery were built in one period of time. The hypothetical re-usage of the construction blocks originally intended for the pyramid of Khentkaus II would have thus been logically reflected in their usage also in tombs AC 25 and AC 29.
- ⁸ Further family relationships in the royal family of the middle of the Fifth Dynasty shall be discussed in a separate article.

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Abstract:

During the autumn of 2014, the Czech Institute of Egyptology continued its archaeological research of the southern part of the Abusir royal pyramid necropolis. In Nakhtsare’s cemetery, tomb AC 30 was unearthed, which appeared to belong to a hitherto unknown queen, Khentkaus III. Much damaged by stone robbers, the tomb consists of a north-south mastaba, 16.12 × 10.70 m large

with a rather simple layout, including an L-shaped chapel in the superstructure and a vertical shaft and a burial chamber in the substructure. In the tomb's substructure part of the burial equipment was found (travertine model vessels, copper models of tools or fragments of wooden objects) as well as fragments of a mummified female skeleton, which might have belonged to the tomb owner. The identification of the previously unknown "wife of the king" and "mother of the king", Khentkaus III, as the tomb owner was made thanks to the numerous masons' inscriptions documented on the tomb masonry in the subterranean part of the tomb. This discovery opens new avenues into the investigation of the situation in the royal family at the beginning of the second half of the Fifth Dynasty. The analysis of the pottery used in the fill of the mastaba's core masonry is methodologically very

important as it has been used as the major dating criterion *post quem*.

Abusir – queen – Khentkaus III – royal family – Raneferef – Nyuserre – Menkauhor – Djedkare – tomb – architecture – pottery – copper

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