

SUDAN & NUBIA

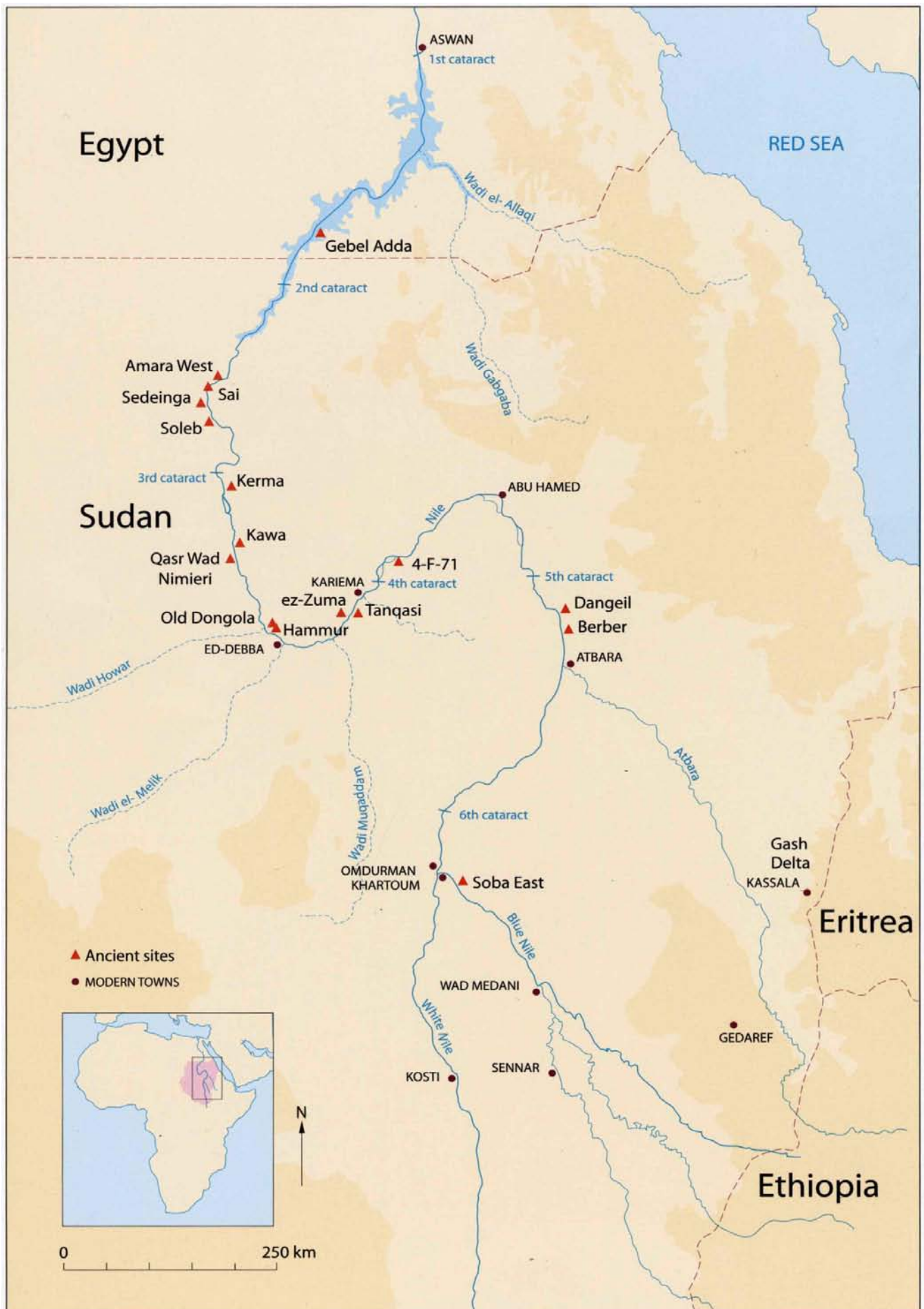
The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 14

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SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



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Front cover: Berber Meroitic Cemetery. Tomb, BMC 8, showing grave goods, the extended position of the skeleton and the remains of a coffin (photo: Mahmoud Suleiman Bashir).

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Cemetery D at Amara West: the Ramesside Period and its aftermath

Michaela Binder, Neal Spencer and Marie Millet

Introduction

Amara West is generally recognised as the administrative centre of Kush, or Upper Nubia, from the reign of Seti I until the collapse of Pharaonic control of the area (c. 1294–1069 BC), on the basis of Egypt Exploration Society (EES) excavations in 1938–9 and 1948–50 (Hein 1991, 83; Edwards 2004, 106). At present, there is no evidence for any significant 18th Dynasty activity at the site, and the foundation of the walled town during the reign of Seti I is indicated by cartouches stamped on bricks in the town wall (Spencer 1997, 15–17). Construction and decoration of the sandstone temple were principally undertaken under Ramesses II, with further scenes and inscriptions added in the reigns of Merenptah, Amenmose, Ramesses III, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX (Spencer 1997, 27–51). A year 6 inscription of Ramesses IX (c. 1120 BC) may represent the completion of the decoration; more importantly, it is the latest attested royal Pharaonic inscription in Upper Nubia.

The identification of Amara West as the administrative centre of occupied Kush is based on the discovery of a sizeable building (E13.2) likely to have been the residence of the ‘deputy (*idmw*) of Kush’. Door lintel and door-jamb fragments were discovered in this large building, some *in situ*, inscribed for a series of individuals who held the title (Spencer 1997, 164, 168–9, pls 117a–b, 121a–b, 153b, 166a–b). The office of ‘deputy of Kush’ ranked immediately beneath that of the ‘viceroys of Kush’, and was complemented by a ‘deputy of Wawat [Lower Nubia]’ based at Aniba (Dewachter 1976).

It is reasonable to assume these deputies lived within the area under their control. The burial of a ‘deputy of Wawat’ named Penniut, who held office under Ramesses VI, was found at Aniba (Steindorff 1937, 242–7, pls 101–4), administrative centre of Lower Nubia (Wawat). A ‘deputy of Kush’, Amenemope, was buried at Soleb (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 98, 227 fig. 435, 233–4 fig. 451, 277 fig. 537) during the 18th Dynasty, when the town fulfilled the role of administrative centre of Upper Nubia, prior to the existence of Amara West. Thus at least some ‘deputies’ were buried close to their official residences, within the territories they had administered on behalf of the Pharaonic state. Some of these individuals may have been Egyptians, but a number are likely to have been indigenous to Nubia. If the acculturation of other elite Nubians of the time is typical (Säve-Söderbergh 1991), these deputies, their families and staff would not only have taken an Egyptian name, but also chosen to be buried in tombs with Egyptian architecture and burial assemblages. The large

New Kingdom cemetery at Soleb displays an overwhelming preference for Egyptian-style burials, yet yielded relatively few inscribed remains. Titles attested include an overseer of workers (*hry-mr.w*), a royal messenger (*wp-nsu*), a scribe (*sš*) and a priest (*hm-ntr*) (for all see Schiff Giorgini 1971, 98–9). Given that Amara West seems to have superseded Soleb as seat of the deputy, it is reasonable to assume a similar range of officials would have been buried near that town.

In light of evidence from elsewhere in Nubia, the apparent absence of an elite New Kingdom cemetery at Amara West is thus rather puzzling, the EES excavations having apparently discovered Napatan (or even X-group) burials. The suggestion that Egyptians were returned to Egypt for interment (Spencer 2002, 2–3) would represent a departure from New Kingdom practices at other sites in Upper Nubia, for example at Sai, Tombos and Aniba, where Egyptians (or Egyptianised Nubians) were buried in Pharaonic-style tombs.

Unfortunately, the archives pertaining to the EES excavations contain no detailed plans of the cemetery at Amara West; surveying may not even have been completed due to time pressures (Spencer 2002, 2–3). The result is confusion over the location of the cemetery partly excavated in 1939. In a preliminary report, Fairman described how

‘on the high ground to the north of the town is the New Kingdom cemetery, partially robbed, and in the intervening dried-up watercourse are a number of small mound graves of X-group type’
(Fairman 1939, 139).

The description accords well with the location of cemetery D, the subject of this paper, partly re-excavated in 2010 (Figure 1), though if Fairman was using local ‘north’ (true ‘east/north east’), as elsewhere in the Amara records, it would fit better with post-New Kingdom cemetery C, itself partly re-excavated in 2009 (Spencer 2009, 57–60). A more detailed description by Fairman refers to the following sites (Spencer 2002, 1–2):

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Location</i>
A	New Kingdom cemetery	High ground immediately to the north of the town
B	Cemetery (post-NK?)	550m north west of E
C	Stone enclosures, robbed graves	800m south of the town
D	Cemetery	30 minutes walk west of A
E	X-group mounds	Between town and A

It is implicit in some of Fairman’s notes that site ‘A’ was excavated in 1939, and it was during these excavations that Tombs 101 and 112 were discovered. Now that these tombs have been re-located (see below), it might seem that Fairman was using true compass directions in the above descriptions, but this places ‘C’ south of the town, that is in the Nile. A



Figure 1. Key map of Amara West, showing location of town site and cemeteries C and D.

possible solution, assuming local directions were being used, is that work did commence in a site to the true north east of the town (our cemetery C), but that it later moved to cemetery D, leading to the discovery of Tombs 101 and 112. The relative survey data, in the form of entries on each grave card (EES Archive II.7), provides a distance and azimuth to one of four survey stations (A–D all located within 50m of the kom [town?]). For example, for Tomb 107,

bearing on A: 182° 14' 12"

bearing on B: 255° 22' 10"

Plotting the distance and azimuth information allows the positions of individual tombs to be placed in relation to each other. Unfortunately, the resulting relative plan is difficult to reconcile with the known topography of the site. In particular, it is interesting that Tombs 101, 106 and 112 were not surveyed at all, and we propose here that these were in a different area of the site, namely cemetery D, than the majority of simple tombs. The latter group comprises Tombs 102–4, 107–8, 110–111 and 113–121, which all lie within an area of 46 x 36m. These tombs are likely to be in post-New Kingdom cemetery C, north east of the site proper. Tomb 105 was used as a designation for nine pit-graves, each further designated by a letter. The survey data here shows how the pits were between 4.05m and 545m from the same survey station.

It is thus clear that the 1939 excavations sought a sample of graves across the cemeteries around the ancient site, though all of the tombs with a brick super- or substructure were found in our cemetery D (Fairman's cemetery 'A').

The burial grounds of Amara West were also included in the CNRS survey of the area around Abri, with three graves excavated at site 2-R-8 and 2-R-9. These two site designations in reality cover a continuous swathe of graves, designated cemetery C by the current project. These included a rectangular pit with two roughly-cut side chambers (Vila 1977, 28–31) and a pit with a lateral niche blocked with a schist blocking stone. At cemetery 2-R-56, dated to the New Kingdom, identical to our cemetery D, three tombs were excavated: two pit burials, and one with a lateral niche off a deep shaft (Vila 1977, 61–3).

Cemetery D: topography and extent

The cemetery presented here lies on the desert plateau 450m north-west of the town site, on the opposite side of the secondary Nile channel, now a dried up river bed (Figure 1, Colour plate VII). On the desert plateau, shallow drifts of wind-blown sand have accumulated over Holocene alluvial deposits (2m deep in places) and outcrops of grey-black schist bedrock. This local stone has a tendency to erode into thin

slabs, and with ongoing exposure to the elements, breaks up into even smaller fragments. As a result of this erosion process, some areas of cemetery D are covered with a layer of schist gravel. Given this variety of materials – bedrock, exposed alluvium, schist gravel and wind-blown sand – and the poor preservation of superstructures, defining the extent of the cemetery, or even individual features, is rather difficult.

An initial survey in 2009 identified a stretch of ground visible in archive images from the 1939 excavations, and a suspicion that two low mounds may actually represented spoil from this work (Figure 3). Surface cleaning promptly revealed the recognisable remains of the superstructure of G112 ('Tomb 112', Plate 1), and a previously unknown tomb of similar construction to the north (designated G301). Beyond these tombs, circular patterns of undressed local black stone blocks indicated the possible presence of tumuli, while in other places, shallow depressions filled with wind-blown sand and accompanied by eroded skeletal material marked the location of further graves.

In a bid to gain a better understanding of the extent of this cemetery, a magnetometry survey was undertaken in 2010. Using a Dual Array Bartington Grad 601-2 Fluxgate Magnetometer, the plotted data shows the presence of between 40 and 50 tombs over an area of 200 x 120m (Figure 2). These are likely to include both simple burial pits and shafts providing access to subterranean chambers. The burial

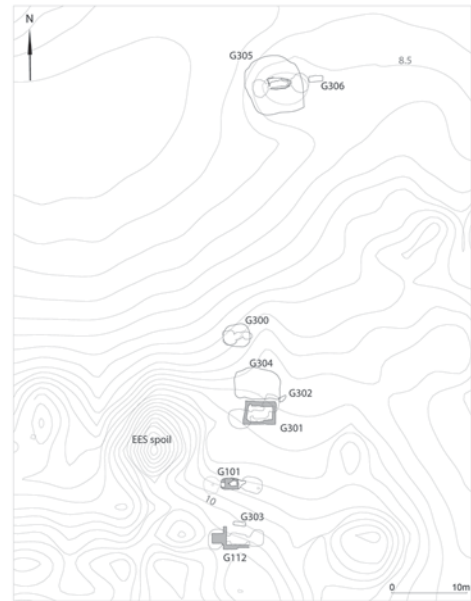


Figure 3. Cemetery D: plan of burials excavated to date, with 100mm contours (scale 1:1000).

chambers themselves do not appear in the data, other than where erosion of the alluvium has left the chambers at or near the present day surface level. Several clusters of graves are visible in the dataset, with the larger ones around the

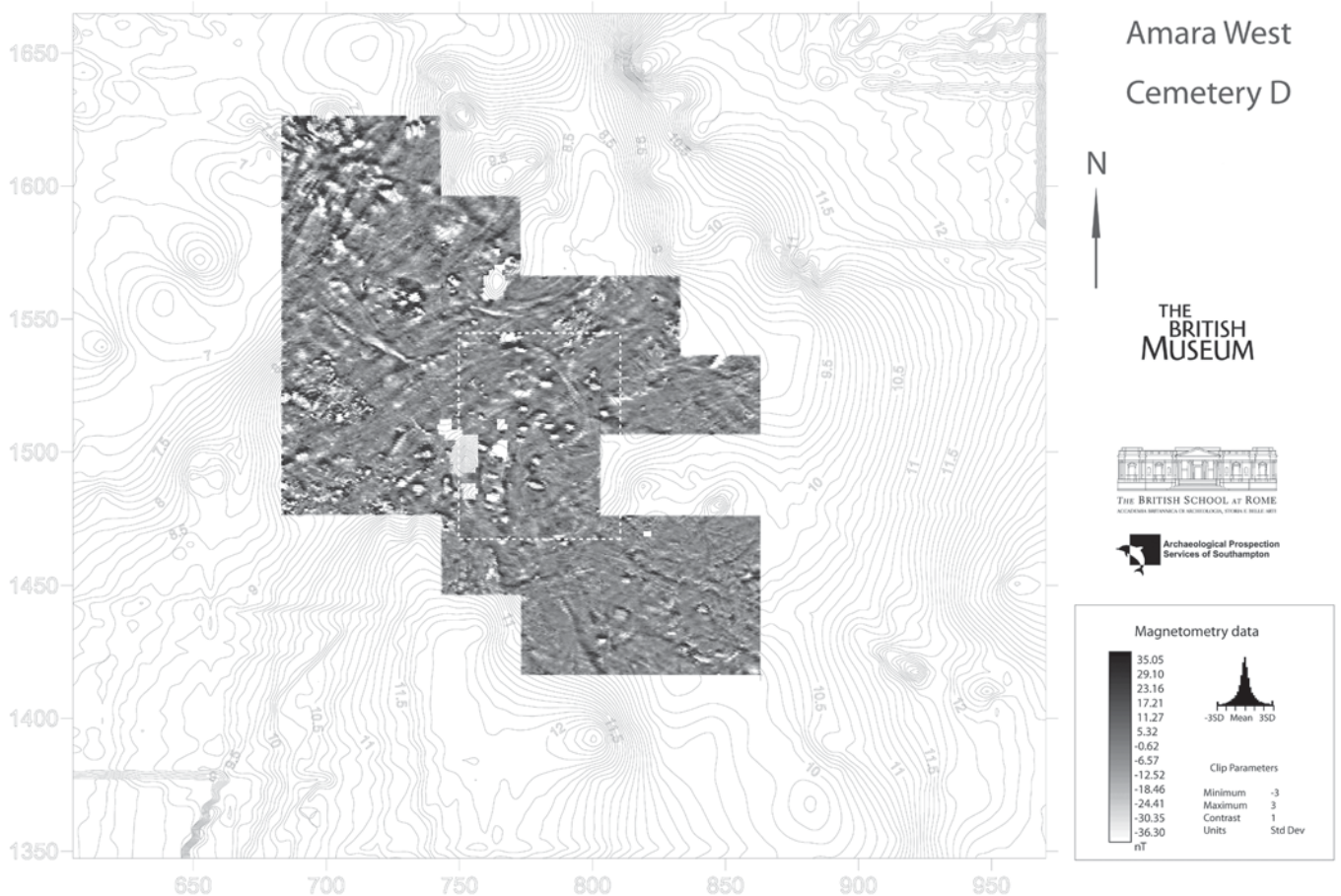


Figure 2. Cemetery D: magnetometry survey, with overlaid 100mm contours. Dashed rectangle indicates area of Figure 3.



Plate 1. G112, as preserved in 1939, from the EES archives (courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society; see Spencer 2002, pl. 7 [a]).

pyramid chapels discussed below. Further grave pits may be obscured by layers of upcast. Additional features are visible beyond the area surveyed in 2010, notably to the north, thus the total extent of the ancient cemetery is not currently known. All tombs, from simple pits to built structures with multiple subterranean chambers, are assigned a G-number, with the tombs excavated by the EES, when rediscovered, being assigned a G-designation that matches the original tomb number (Figure 3). The descriptions of the tombs below integrate evidence from the EES records.

Pyramid chapels

Only two such tombs provided with chapels and associated pyramids have been identified thus far, and it is possible that deflation will have removed traces of others. Excavation of subterranean features in future seasons, however, may result in the discovery of further burials that were originally provided with this classic New Kingdom form of funerary superstructure.

G112

One of the three large tombs excavated by the EES in 1939, the northern and eastern sides have been entirely eroded away over the past 70 years. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a superstructure consisting of a rectangular chapel aligned on an east-west axis with a small pyramid base (1.5 x 1.3m) attached to the west side (Figures 3–4, Plate 2). The superstructure was constructed of mud bricks (410 x 210 x 90mm), bonded with mud mortar; no traces of an inner or outer plastering, nor any painted surfaces, survived. Though the chapel walls are preserved to two courses in places, the pyramid base is limited to faint traces of the first course of bricks.

The rectangular shaft in the centre of the superstructure (2.3 x 1.3m; Plate 4) was once sealed with large schist slabs; one slab was still *in situ* in 2009, and the archive images depict a pile of additional slabs on the surface in front of the structure (Plate 1; Spencer 2002, pl. 7 [a, b]). Comparable stone coverings are known from the 18th Dynasty elite cemetery at Soleb (e.g. Schiff Giorgini 1971, 84–5, figs 122–3).



Plate 2. G112: view west with pyramid base in foreground, prior to excavation of shaft.

Removal of the wind-blown sand, accumulated within the excavated tomb since 1939, revealed a 2.6m-deep vertical shaft, cut through alluvium and a further metre of the underlying schist bedrock (Plates 3–4). Two roughly circular burial chambers are cut off the eastern and western sides of the shaft, accessible through well carved rectangular door-



Plate 3. G112: doorway to eastern chamber.

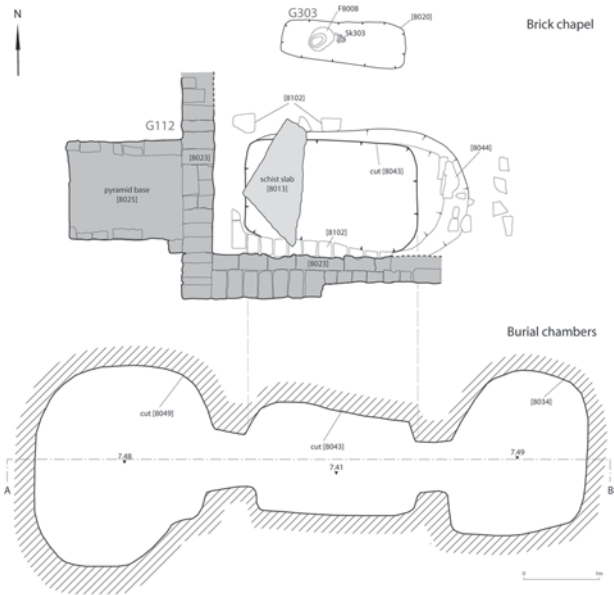


Figure 4. G112: plan of superstructure and burial chambers with G303 to the north (scale 1:100).

ways. No remnants of any blocking remain, but traces of mud plaster visible above the entrance to the eastern chamber suggest that the doors were originally sealed. The two burial chambers are approximately 800mm in height (Figure 5) with the western chamber being slightly larger (2.65 x 2.35m) than the eastern one (2.1 x 1.7m). It is notable that the walls and floor of both the shaft and chambers were carefully carved and smoothed, a significant undertaking given the nature of the bedrock. While the western chamber was empty, unsurprising given the 1939 excavations, the eastern chamber still

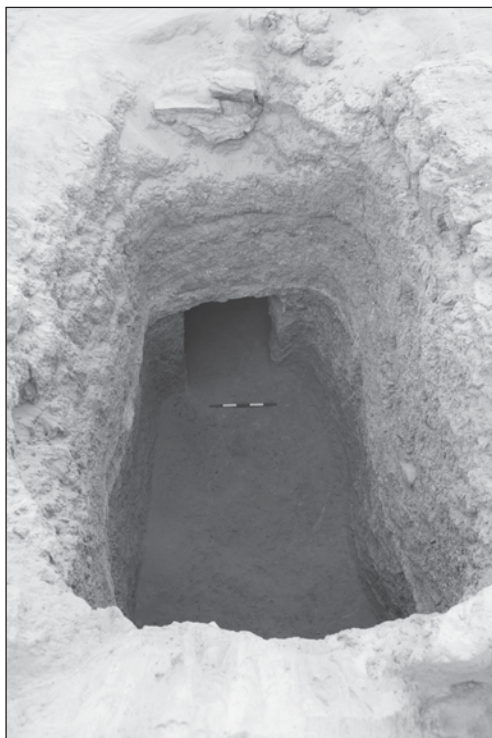


Plate 4. G112: view of shaft and entrance to eastern chamber.

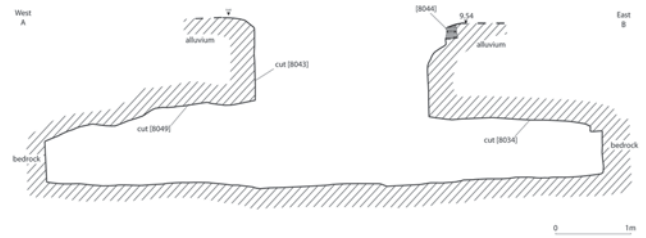


Figure 5. G112: section through substructure (scale 1:100).

contained human bones; the archives do not refer to the discovery of skeletal remains in either chamber (Spencer 2002, 6). Though fragmentary, the bones clearly derive from more than one adult.

Upon excavation in 1939, G112 had clearly been previously looted, most likely in antiquity. Only a small number of finds were recovered: two faience scarabs, some amulets, a carnelian earring, a copper-alloy fragment, and a large number of beads. The last group was interpreted as the remains of a bead net used for the covering of a burial. The majority of finds were recorded as coming from the eastern chamber, from the shaft, or their provenance was not specified (Spencer 2002, 6–8); the 17 pottery vessels are discussed further below.

A single shallow grave pit (G303) of 1.8 x 0.6m, cut to a depth of 220mm, was discovered immediately north of G112 (Figure 4). The size of the cut suggests it was intended for an adult burial, but it contained the burial of an infant aged ~1 year, covered with a heavily deteriorated organic object which may have been a basket (Plate 5). Dating the grave is not possible, as no finds and only one siltware body sherd were encountered. The child burial may be a re-use of an older grave pit, given the discrepancy in size.

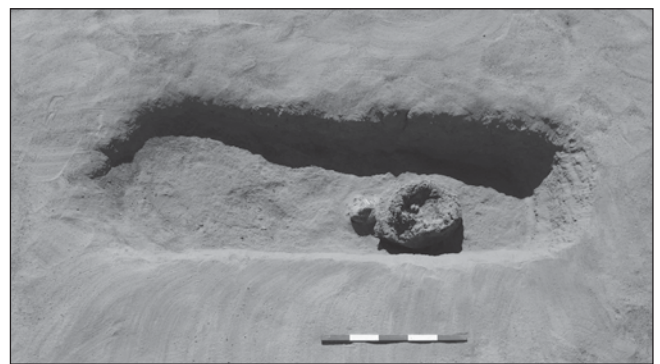


Plate 5. G303: pit-grave with child skeleton and remains of a basket.

G301

A second pyramid tomb was discovered a short distance to the north of G112 (Figures 3, 6–7, Plate 6). While the chapel (4.1 x 3m) is well-preserved, only a few bricks of the pyramid base survive (Figure 7). The chapel walls (bricks of 380 x 200 x 80–90mm) are preserved to a maximum of three courses (south wall). While the northern and southern walls have a thickness of 600–650mm, the eastern and western walls are only 380–400mm thick. The coursing of the bricks is not regular, with the lower course on the west wall featuring

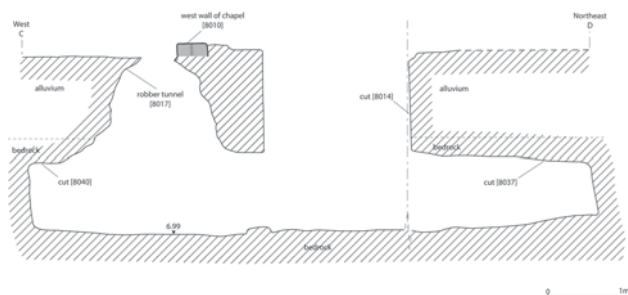


Figure 6. G301: section through substructure (scale 1:100).

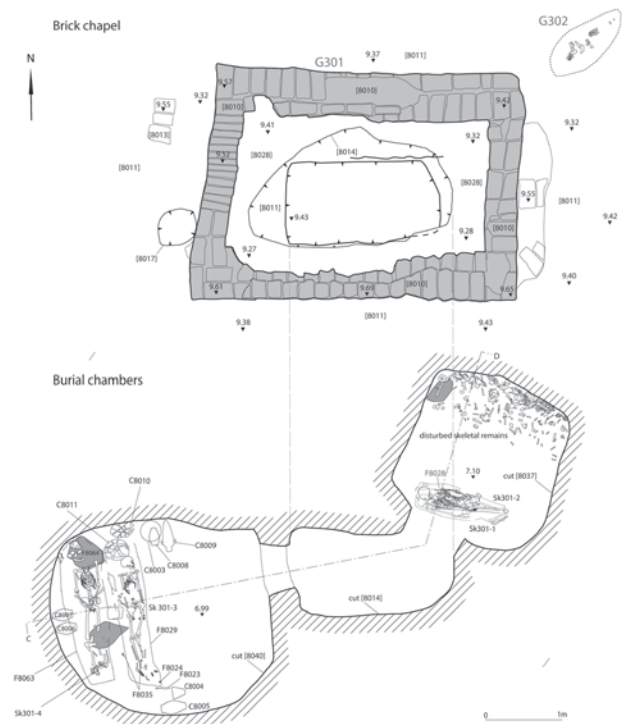


Figure 7. G301 upper and chamber plans with skeletons (scale 1:100).

bricks laid on edge, presumably to level out the uneven terrain.

In the centre of the chapel, a rectangular shaft (2 x 1.1m) descends to a depth of 2.8m, again cutting through alluvium and bedrock, providing access to two subterranean chambers, to the west and north east (Figures 6-7). This shaft was filled with wind-blown sand, though a deposit of brick rubble lay at the bottom, presumably from the entrance blocking of the north-eastern chamber. A *shabti* made of fired clay (F8004, 185mm in height; Colour plate VIII) was found in this deposit; though of unusual form given the lack of a tripartite wig, the shape of the legs and feet is consistent with late New Kingdom *shabti* types (e.g. Schneider 1977, 43-4 [3.5.1.1. 3.5.2.1, 3.5.2.3]). The *shabti* is partly covered in salt incrustations and no traces of any painted decoration or inscription remain.

Both burial chambers had once been sealed, and the rectangular entrance to the western chamber still preserved its mud-brick blocking wall (Plate 7). Despite the largely intact nature of this sealing, the chamber had been violated in



Plate 6. G301: view east over remains of superstructure prior to excavation of shaft.

antiquity, through a narrow tunnel from the surface. By digging a tunnel, the robbers precluded the need to remove fill material from the shaft, and this method was found in others tombs in the cemetery (G101, G112). In the case of G301, however, the tunnelling seems to have caused much of the



Plate 7. G301: brick blocking in doorway to western burial chamber.

ceiling to collapse, covering the interior of the chamber with a 650mm thick layer of schist rubble and alluvial debris (Plate 8). Though this had crushed the burials and accompanying objects, it did seemingly prevent the robbers from removing any grave goods.

The vertical walls and even floor of the chamber (3.2 x 2.7m, original height 800mm) were carefully carved, and an intact edge of the ceiling indicates it was also cut flat. Towards the rear, western, part of the chamber, two extended north-south orientated, burials of a male (Sk 301-3) and a female (Sk 301-4) were placed side by the side (Figure 7). Both were originally placed in wooden coffins (F8029, F8063), now largely reduced to powder through termite activity; the male's coffin had been placed upon two large schist blocks. Fragments of wood, and also of white plaster with remnants of red, black and yellow pigments, hint at the original appearance of the coffins. No figures or hieroglyphs could be identified amongst these tiny fragments. Small pieces of

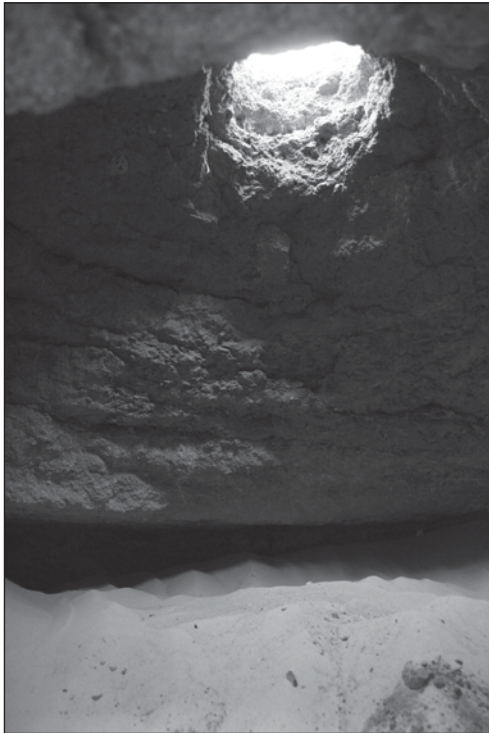


Plate 8. G301: western burial chamber, with hole from robber tunnel and collapsed ceiling material.

textile, adhering to both skeletons, indicate that both bodies were wrapped in linen.

The burials were equipped with an array of vessels arranged around the walls of the chamber (Figure 7, Plate 9): five beer jars (C8004-8008), three plates (C8003, C8010, C8011) and a large amphora (C8009). The amphora bears a hieratic inscription reading 'year 10, wine of 3 days (fermentation) of the vineyard of Hormes' (Plate 10); the palaeography is suggestive that the year date lies within the reign of Ramesses II (R. Demarée, pers. comm.). Few other objects accompanied the burials: a copper-alloy blade (F8024, Plate 11), a faience scarab (F8023, Colour plate IX) and the remains of a neonate piglet (F8035), all deposited near the feet of the female. The scarab bears the name of Ramesses II and depicts pharaoh offering a conical loaf of bread to an enthroned Amun-Ra, with the winged goddess Maat behind him.



Plate 9. G301: Selection of ceramic vessels found in the western burial chamber (left-right): C8009, C8008, C8006, C8007, C8005, C8004 and C8003.

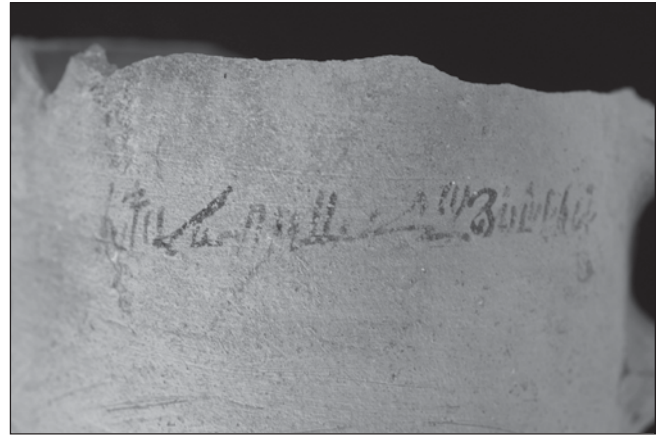


Plate 10. G301: detail of hieratic inscription on wine-jar C8009

In contrast to the western chamber, the north-eastern chamber had been re-opened for further burials, and is also likely to have been robbed in antiquity. Its entrance was originally blocked with a large schist slab (900 x 350mm)



Plate 11. G301: copper-alloy blade (F8024) from the western chamber.

and sealed with mud plaster; the slab still lay to one side of the doorway (Plate 12). Immediately inside the entrance, two extended juvenile burials were found on top of each other (Sk 301-1 and Sk 301-2; Figure 7 and Plate 13). Both had been tightly wrapped in an organic substance of which only fragile traces remain; the skeletons were disturbed below the knee, suggesting that they were not found in their original burial position. The back of the north-eastern chamber was filled with disarticulated human remains of at least four more individuals piled up against the back wall, presumably from an earlier phase of burials, moved to create space for the consecutive burials. These bones were completely disarticulated, in all likelihood indicating a long time period between their interment and the later burials (in such environmental conditions one would expect connective tissue to preserve some articulation).

Few finds were recovered from the fill deposits in the north-eastern chamber, and none can be explicitly associated with individual skeletons. Fragments of wood and painted plaster (e.g. F8030, Colour plate XII) again suggest that decorated coffins were used for the burials though it is not possible to ascertain if these derive from the earlier or later burials. Small finds recovered from the fill include several beads made of carnelian, bone, faience, ivory and red jasper (F8005, F8034, F8037), amulets in the



Plate 12. G301: doorway to north-eastern burial chamber, with schist blocking slab.



Plate 13. G301: skeleton 301-2, with traces of wooden coffin, in the north-eastern chamber.

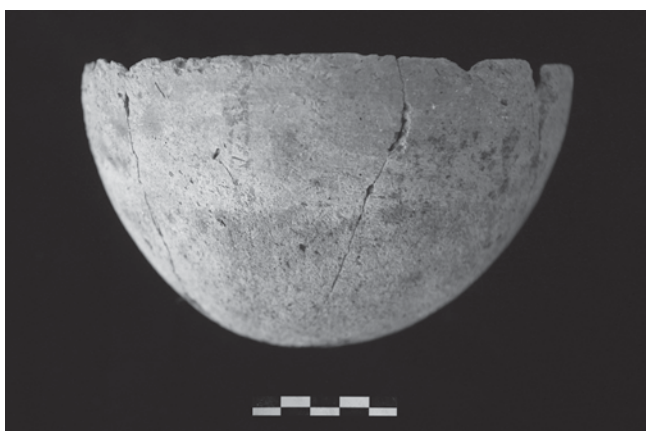


Plate 14. Siltware bowl with red-painted rim (C8105) from the fill (8029) of the shaft in Tomb G301.

form of *udjat*-eyes (F8014) and cats (F8010), and earrings of red jasper and carnelian (F8051, Colour plate X). While some of them were found in alignment, suggestive of a composite necklace, the majority were found loosely distributed within the fill. A faience scarab bearing four *uraei* crowned with sun discs was also found in the chamber (F8022, Colour plate XI). No complete vessels were found in this chamber; the

sherds are discussed below in relation to dating.

Vaulted brick tombs

G101

Also excavated by the EES in 1939, Tomb G101 differs from the pyramid chapels in having a rectangular mud-brick structure built within a rectangular cut into the alluvium and bedrock. When first excavated, remnants of a mud-brick enclosure wall were still preserved (Plate 15; Spencer 2002, pl. 2 [b]), but no details of its plan were recorded. None of this superstructure survives today (Figure 8, Plate 16), thus it is not possible to establish whether a pyramid was associated with the tomb.

The central chamber (3.2 x 1.6m, depth 2m) is lined by mud-brick walls on all four sides, with its western part covered by a vault (Figure 9), still partly intact today, constructed of two parallel rows of thin bricks (320 x 160–170 x 60mm). Its outer and inner sides were coated with a thick layer of mud plaster (20–30mm); schist stones and sherds were used as keystones. No vault was provided over the eastern end of the excavated chamber, thus creating a shaft through which the



Plate 15. G101, as preserved in 1939, from the EES archives (courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society archive; see Spencer 2002, pl. 2 [b]).

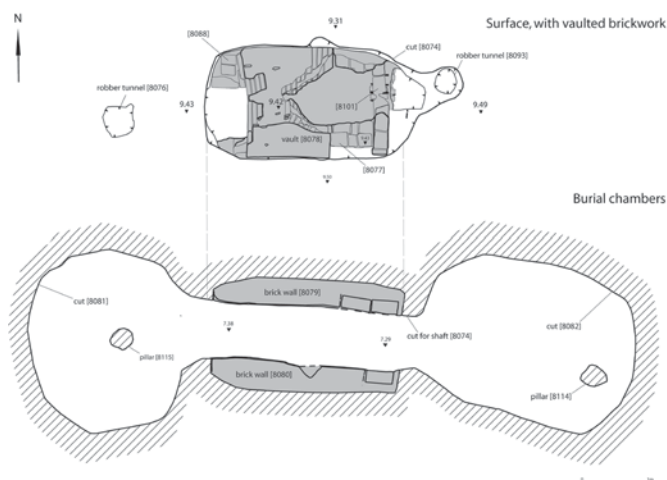


Figure 8. G101: plan of vaulted structure and burial chambers (scale 1:100).

subterranean spaces could be accessed. While the southern wall of the shaft is intact, the eastern and northern walls are largely destroyed.

Two arched doorways (eastern height 750mm, width 800mm; western width 890mm, height not preserved), provided access from the brick-lined central chamber to rock-cut chambers to the east and west; it is unknown if the doorways were originally blocked by a wall or stone slab, as found in

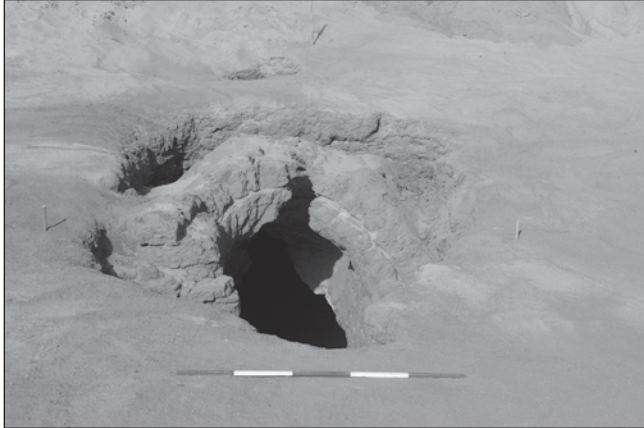


Plate 16. G101: view west, showing vaulted brick structure.

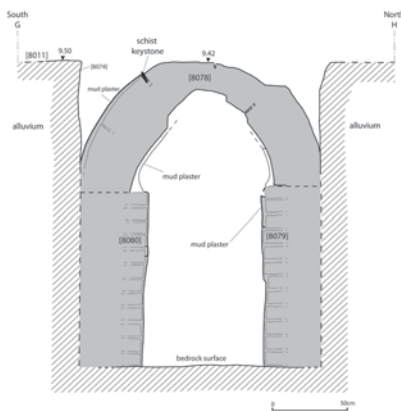


Figure 9. G101: north-south elevation of brick vault in central chamber (scale 1:50).

other tombs in cemetery D. A large sandstone slab, found leaning against the north wall of the shaft, may derive from one of the door blockings. In contrast to the elaborate brick doorways, the rock-cut entrances themselves are summarily carved.

The oval eastern chamber is the larger of the two at 3.3 x 2.15m (650–800mm in height, Plate 17); the western room is circular in plan (diameter 2.6m; height 700mm). Both chambers had been looted in antiquity, with robbers again using narrow tunnels cut from the surface directly into the subterranean rooms. As with G301, the ceiling collapsed around the opening in both chambers. During the cutting of the chambers, a supporting column of stone was left in place. No finds were discovered in the wind-blown sand which filled both chambers; the records from the 1939 excavations list two scarabs, a faience *udjat*-eye, a large number of beads of

precious stone, faience and glass, fragments of a copper-alloy vessel, fragments of coffins and painted plaster as well as a few fragments of textile, although no precise findspots are indicated (Spencer 2002, 4–5, pls 4–5). The EES archives refer to a single skull recovered from the eastern chamber; 15 vessels were also discovered (see below).



Plate 17. G101: eastern chamber with supporting pillar.

G305

Located 40m north of the cluster of tombs described above (Figures 3, 10, Plate 18), G305 is distinct in featuring a tumulus superstructure. The low oval-shaped mound (diameter 8m) is formed from alluvial silt, presumably the material created when the chambers were first excavated during construction of the tomb. The surface of the tumulus was covered by a loose scatter of local schist stones and heavily eroded fragments of pottery and human bone, indicating that the tomb had been looted in antiquity. Wind erosion had severely truncated the tumulus, exposing the eastern and western subterranean burial chambers.

Removal of wind-blown sand revealed a rectangular chamber (2.8 x 1.2m; depth 1.2m), lined with mud-brick walls (700mm in height; bricks 370–390 x 170–180 x 80–100mm), cut into the alluvium. The floor coincided with the top of the bedrock. On the western side, the shaft was originally covered by a mud-brick vault, 1.9m in height, of which only the last

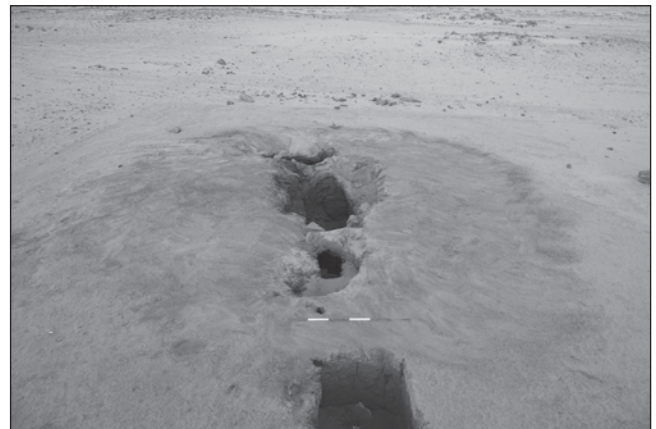


Plate 18. G305: view west showing remains of mound superstructure and exposed chambers. Part of G306 visible in foreground.



Figure 10. G305: plan of superstructure and burial chambers (scale 1:100).

course on the north side remains (Figure 11). The vault was constructed with a single course of thin mud-bricks (320 x 200 x 50–60mm), bearing distinctive finger grooves. On the eastern side of the brick-lined chamber, the lack of a vaulted cover created a rectangular shaft (depth 650mm) for access from the surface.

Two narrow brick doorways provided access from the central chamber to rooms on the west and east. The entrance to the eastern chamber (Plate 19), perhaps once arched, was originally sealed with a mud-brick wall, later partly dismantled to allow re-use of the chamber. Though the lintel, threshold and northern side seem to be original, the bricks on the southern side are later additions, associated with secondary burials. The shape of the entrance to the western chamber is even less clear (850 x 450mm). Large rectangular schist stone slabs placed on their ends, behind the entrance, may once have lined the entrance.

The central, brick-lined chamber, contained the heavily disturbed and entirely disarticulated remains of at least four different individuals, together with well-preserved fragments of wooden objects, some of which could be identified as feet from funerary beds (F8011) and maybe also coffins. It remains unclear whether the individuals were originally buried

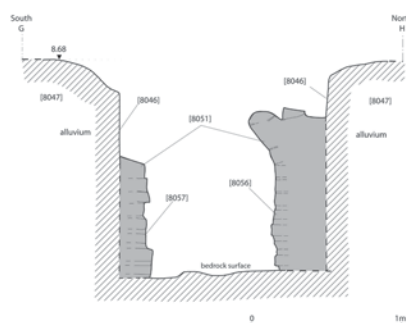


Figure 11. G305: section through vaulted structure (scale 1:50).

in the central portion of the chamber or whether they were removed from either of the chambers. Several facts argue for the former. Only upper body parts were recovered, exclusively in the western half of the shaft; perhaps the remains of west-east orientated burials. Furthermore, neither of the chambers yielded bones that did not belong to the skeletons buried in that chamber: if bodies had been dragged out to clear the side chambers for new burials, it is unlikely that some bones would not have been left behind. Burials in the shaft, or central part of the tomb, are also found in tombs at Tombos (Unit 6; Smith 2003, 145).



Plate 19. G305: doorway (8052) from central chamber to eastern burial chamber.

The tops of the two burial chambers do not survive, though the squat doorways argue for a relatively modest height, dictated by a wish to avoid cutting into the bedrock. The western chamber of G305 (diameter of 2-2.2m; preserved to 1.2m in height) contained the remains of four

adults (Figure 10; Plate 20). Three of them were found superimposed on the bottom of the chamber, with only the uppermost (Sk 305-4) being fully intact. Skeletons 305-5 and 305-6 were partly disturbed, though largely articulated, indicating that their disturbance occurred not long after burial. Skeleton 305-4 was orientated head to the north and feet to the south even though there are indications that this was in fact not its original burial position; remnants of wood around the body suggest it may have once been within a coffin. Small fragments of textile, now adhering to the bones, indicate that the body was wrapped, a conclusion supported by the position of some bones. The lower burials were covered with a 400mm thick deposit of fine sand, blown in through the door. The fourth burial (Sk 305-3) was found resting on top of this sand, orientated east-west. Thus, while skeletons

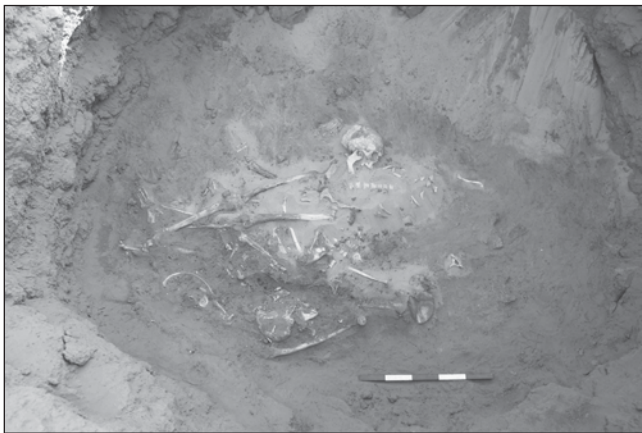


Plate 20. G305: skeleton 305-5 in the western chamber.

305-4, 305-5 and 305-6 represent one continuous phase of burials within the western chamber, Sk 305-3 might indicate re-use of the chamber after some time, during which the tomb shaft was open. The human remains are well preserved and comprise remnants of hair, skin and brain tissue, and a large number of coprolites.

Only two adult individuals were recovered from the eastern chamber of the tomb (diameter of 2m, approximate height 1.15m), again superimposed (Figure 10, Plate 21). While the lower skeleton (Sk 305-1) was buried in an extended position orientated north-south, the upper one (Sk 305-2) is a slightly flexed burial with head to the east. Both bodies were again surrounded by remnants of a dark organic substance, and remains of textile wrapping around the skeletons. Given their fragmentary state, it is not yet clear whether the organic brown material represents the remains of coffins or matting in which the bodies were wrapped; archaeobotanical analyses will be undertaken in due course. Apart from a single blue faience bead (F8061) associated with Sk 305-1, no objects were recovered from the chamber. Further grave goods were limited to a beer jar (C8012) and a plate (C8013); it is not clear with which burials these should be associated. Two large schist stones may have been intended to support the wooden coffins off the floor, as in G301.



Plate 21. G305: skeletons 305-1 (extended) and 305-2 (flexed) in the eastern chamber. Vessels C8012 and C8013 visible top right.

A small cut (G306), presumably for a burial, east of G305, yielded no skeletal material, but two very eroded sherds of Nubian vessels.

G106 (Spencer 2002, 6, pl. 14C)

This is another vaulted brick tomb found by the EES. Its location is as yet unknown, and may not even be in cemetery C (see above). The brief description of the tomb does not mention any details about the substructure (Spencer 2002, 6).

Other tombs

G300

This grave features a shallow tumulus superstructure, formed from alluvial silt and schist gravel, presumably the debris dug up while excavating the substructure of the grave. The top of the mound was covered with schist stones of 100–300mm in size.

The oval grave shaft (1.1 x 0.75m) was cut to a depth of 1.3m, the lower 650mm cut through the schist bedrock (Figure 12). Two small burial chambers are located to the east and west of the shaft, accessible through narrow, triangular doorways 850mm (western) and 600mm (eastern) in height. In contrast to those tombs discussed above, no remnants of blockings were found. The western chamber contained the disturbed and comingled remains of at least three adults; only some hand and feet bones remained in articulation. Termite activity has severely damaged these bones, and might also explain the almost complete lack of remains of coffins or other objects of wood. Only a few powdery traces remained of organic objects but it is impossible to reconstruct their shape; a considerable number of plaster fragments – some 260mm in length, and bearing the imprint of wooden surfaces – may attest to the presence of plastered wooden coffins. No traces of paint were found on these fragments. The eastern chamber, which was considerably smaller than the western one, was empty other than for some unarticulated human bones. The tomb yielded a small number of eroded sherds, principally from the shaft.

The most distinctive feature of G300 is its apparent sim-

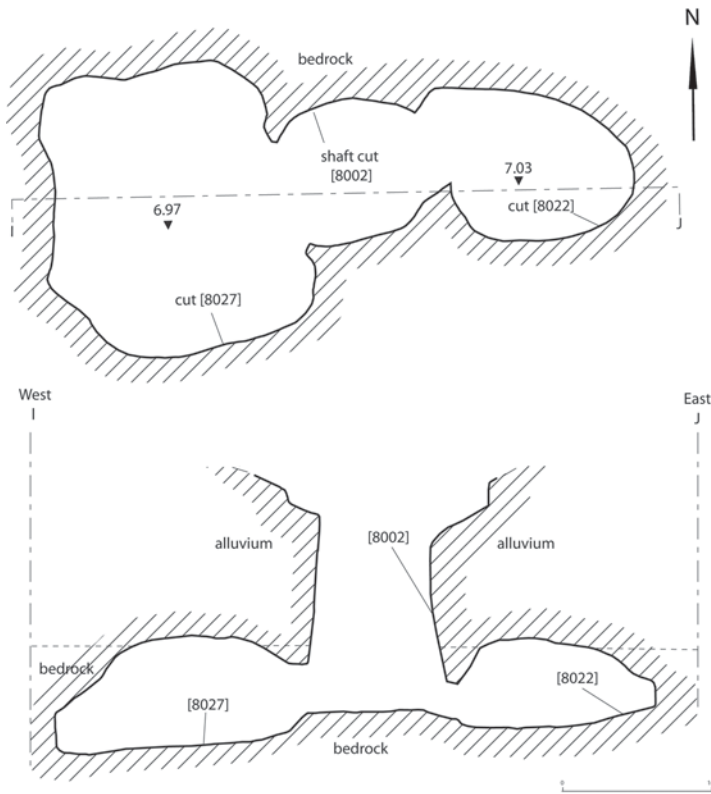


Figure 12. G300: plan and section through substructure (scale 1:50).

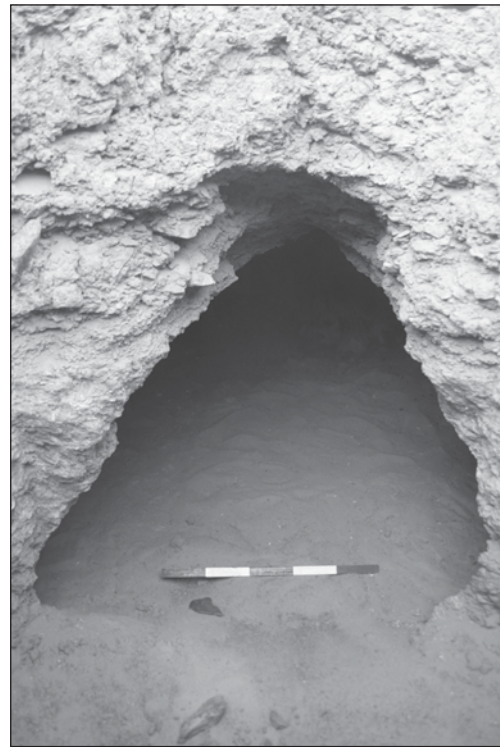


Plate 22. G300: opening to western chamber.

plicity. Apart from being considerably smaller than the other communal tombs discovered in cemetery D, and the absence of a preserved superstructure, its construction lacks the care afforded the pyramid and vaulted tombs: the shaft and chambers are roughly hewn, not smoothed, and do not have vertical side walls. Furthermore, the entrances to each chamber have not been dressed to form regular edges (Plate 22).

G304

Immediately north of the chapel of G301, and originally partly over it (the 1939 trench had destroyed its southern edge), lies a low tumulus of 6.39m in diameter, preserved to a maximum height of 400mm. The mound is formed from schist gravel placed directly upon the alluvial surface, with some larger schist slabs scattered across the surface (Plate 23; Figure 13). A depression filled with wind-blown sand may partly be the result of robber activity, with the remains of a small original cut below (8042). No skeletal material, or funerary goods, were found in and around this monument, other than some sherds. These are poorly preserved but nonetheless significant, as all are fragments of Nubian pots (Plate 24; see further below).

G302

A single adult burial (G302), was revealed at the north-eastern corner of G301 (Figure 7), immediately beneath the surface deposit of wind-blown sand. No remains of grave goods, superstructure or even a grave cut could be identified. Nevertheless, the flexed position of the burial does indicate a different funerary tradition; the 1939 excavation also found

simple pit burials with flexed skeletons (Spencer 2002, 8–14, pls 12–15).

Dating the burials

Fairman's initial assessment of the cemetery excavated in early 1939 was that the 'tombs are New Kingdom, have been robbed, reoccupied and robbed again' (Spencer 2002, 2). This assessment has proved to be relatively accurate, borne out by current excavations in the same cemetery. His colleague

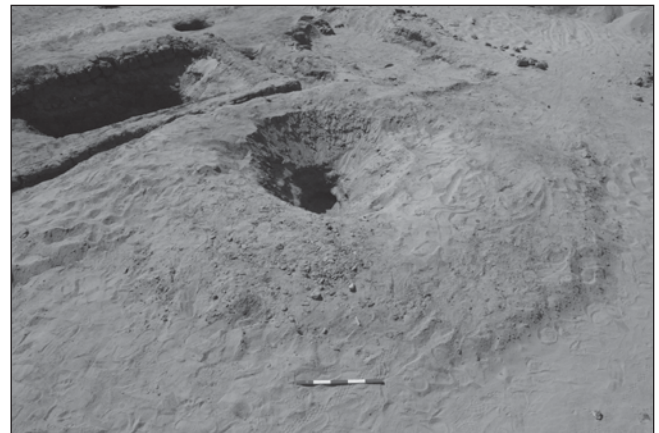


Plate 23. G304: view southwest over tumulus after excavation, with G301 in background.

John MacDonald assigned Tombs 101 and 112 (along with 102–4) to the New Kingdom, but others as 'X-Group (?)'; the latter interpretation can be ruled out. As the 1939 excavations found no explicit evidence for any of the tombs

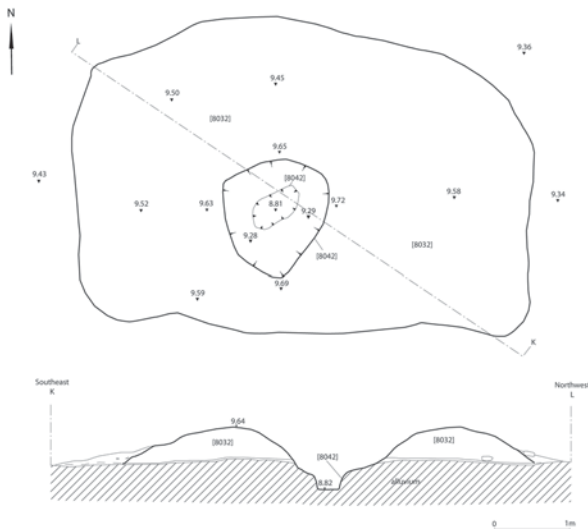


Figure 13. G304: plan and section (scale 1:100).



Plate 24. G304: sherds of Nubian pottery (clockwise from top left: C8109, C8110, C8108).

being New Kingdom in date, subsequent scholars assigned the tombs to the early Napatan era. This was based on parallels with the cemetery at Missiminia, south west of Abri on the opposite bank of the Nile (Vila 1980; Spencer 2002, 3). The new excavations provide clear evidence, however, that some of the tombs were built and used during the New Kingdom. Nonetheless, re-use was widespread, into post-New Kingdom times, but accompanied by the construction of new tombs. Vila also admitted that the vaulted tombs at Missiminia on which the redating was based might, in fact, have been built before the Napatan period and then re-used (Vila 1980, 31–2). Integrating the records of the ceramics recorded by the EES, although it is unclear if all sherds were being collected or only unusual ones and complete vessels, with the material recovered in 2010, it is possible to assign

date-ranges for when tombs were constructed and used for burials (Figures 14–18).

The western chamber of G301 can be securely dated to the 19th Dynasty, and in all likelihood the reign of Ramesses II. The undisturbed ceramic assemblage (Figure 14) featured five beer jars (two with painted rims) and three plates with red-painted rims. Such forms were popular throughout the New Kingdom, and even afterwards, but the marl D wine-jar with its long, narrow profile and convex neck is of Ramesside date (Aston 1996, 305 fig. 203 [c]; Andreu 2002, 89–90). Its inscription suggests a date in the reign of Ramesses II, which correlates well with the scarab bearing that king's prenomen. The form of the ceramic *shabti* (Colour plate VIII) is also consistent with such a date.

It seems reasonable to believe that the other, north-eastern, chamber of G301 was constructed at a similar time, and that the mound of skeletal remains pushed to the back of the chamber could be the remains of the original burials, moved during a re-use of this chamber. The ceramics indicate that the chamber was in use for several centuries after the end of the New Kingdom. Pottery from the north-eastern chamber is similar to that found in the shaft and indeed scattered on the surface around G301. The form of the plates (C8103 from the surface, C8119 from the north-eastern chamber) do not correlate well with the examples from the tombs excavated in 1939 (red-painted rims or red slips are not represented in the drawings), nor those found in cemetery C (see Spencer 2009, col. pls 23–4). Rather, they closely parallel examples from Elephantine (19th–21st Dynasties: Aston 2008, 90 [299], 225 [1587]) even if the form persists after the New Kingdom in Egypt (Aston 1999, pls 21 [603], 30 [933–4]). Bases of large jars, forms known in Egypt from both the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period, were found on the surface (C8116), in the shaft (C8117) and inside the north-eastern chamber (C8002). In addition to these two forms, 30 rim fragments from beer jars were found in surface deposits around the grave, perhaps reflecting their use in funerary rituals in the chapel. Finally, a bowl with red-painted rim (C8105, Plate 14), found in the shaft, can be compared to an example from Tomb 2-V-6/31 in Missiminia (Vila 1980, fig. 21 [2]).

The other pyramid chapel (G112) was almost entirely devoid of archaeological material when re-excavated in 2010, other than a small number of sherds, and some skeletal remains found in the western chamber. Given that G301 lies on the same alignment, and is very similar in terms of architecture and layout to G112 (Figure 3), it is tempting to conclude that this was also an elite Ramesside tomb. The 1939 excavators distinguished ceramics found in four different parts of G112: outside the tomb, in the shaft, in the eastern chamber and by the door to the western chamber (Figure 15). The recorded assemblage is notable for a wide variety of forms, the majority of which can be dated to the New Kingdom or Napatan era. Some forms, however, are known to have been in use across that whole time span. For example,

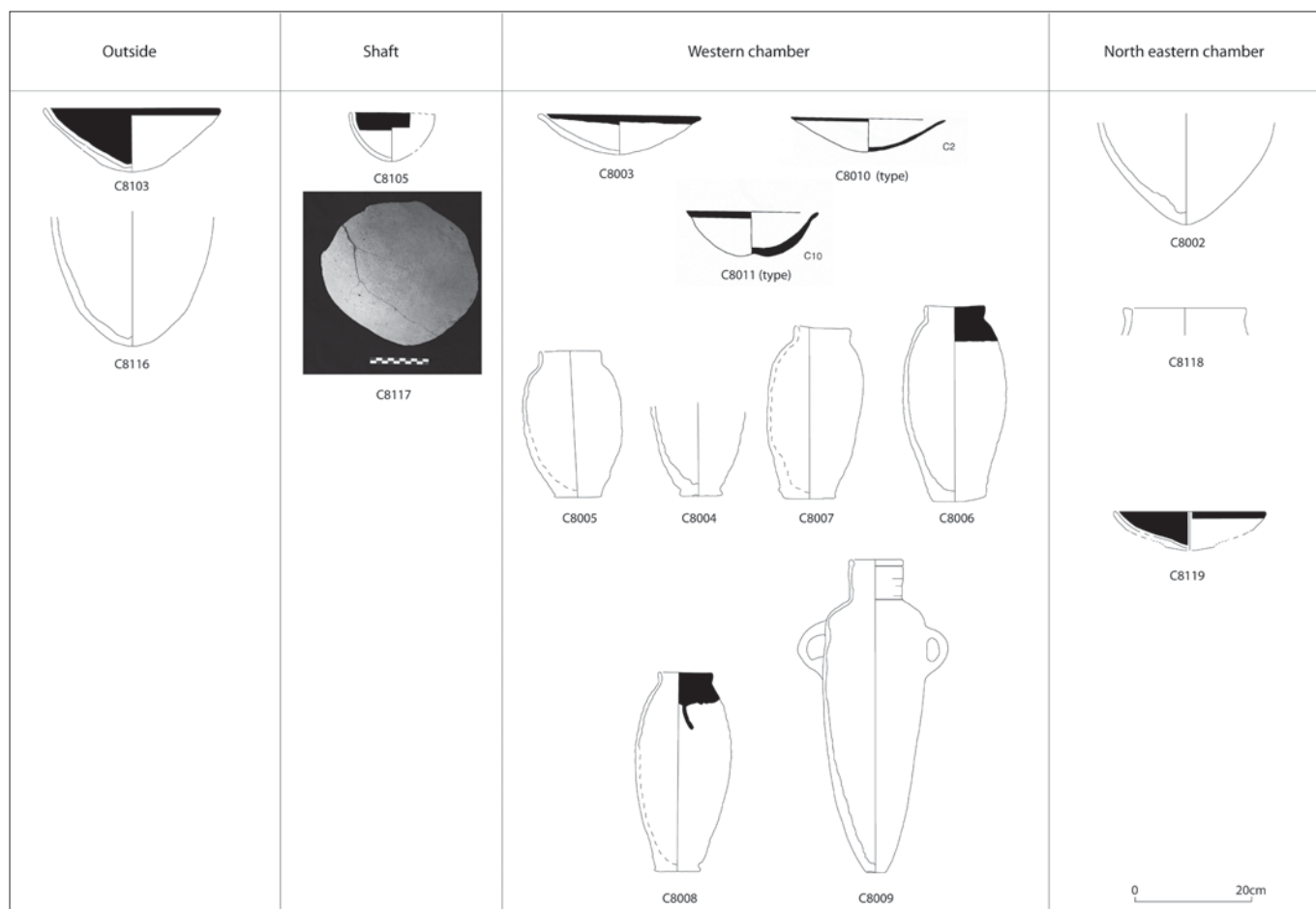


Figure 14. G301: ceramics.

an ovoid jar found outside the grave (AW496), could date to the late New Kingdom (Aston 1999, pl. 5, 116), post-New Kingdom (Aston 1999, pl. 19 [558]) or even the mid 8th-7th centuries BC (Aston 1999, pl. 52 [1616]).

Forms typical of the New Kingdom include a beer jar (AW502) and plates; their findspot in the eastern chamber suggests that this space once held a Ramesside burial. The presence of only one beer jar contrasts with the number found in G301, although our excavations yielded further fragments scattered on the surface, along with a bread mould. Further forms dating to the late New Kingdom include a funnel-necked jar (AW498; phase I of Aston 1996, 63, 296 fig. 194 [d]); for an example from the tomb of Ramesses IV, see Aston 1996, fig.17 [1]), a globular jar with a red rim (AW499, compare Aston 1996, fig. 17 [2]) and globular jars typical of the late 19th and 20th Dynasties (AW512 and AW497; see Aston 2008, 50 fig. 20 [q] and 53 fig. 23 [b]). In Egypt, this last form continues in use during the Third Intermediate Period, sometimes with a red slip (Aston 1989, 219 and 605; 2008, 140).

Nonetheless, Napatan ceramics were also found in the eastern chamber of G112. A slender marl jar (AW494) is similar to examples known from Elephantine (mid 8th/7th centuries BC: Aston 1999, pl. 55, 1685) but also Missiminia (Vila 1980, fig. 17 [1]), a globular marl jar features a ribbed

profile diagnostic of the 8th-7th centuries BC (Aston 1999, pl. 55, 1690) and bowl AW495 is similar to a bowl with a painted rim found in Tomb 2-V-6/31 at Missiminia (Vila 1980, fig. 21 [2]). Napatan ceramics were also recovered from the shaft of G112: jar AW503 can be paralleled at 25th-26th Dynasty Thebes (Aston, 2008, 360, 143, 2966), while bottle AW500 has parallels in Tomb 2-V-6/18A at Missiminia (Vila 1980, fig. 17 [2]) and at Sesebi (Spence *et al.* 2009, 43, pl. 6).

It seems reasonable to conclude that the eastern chamber was cut and used for a New Kingdom burial, but was later re-opened in Napatan times. The western chamber, however, seems to have been empty; it is not clear when the two New Kingdom plates (AW491, AW492) were placed by the entrance to this western chamber. Of course, the possibility of re-use of earlier ceramic vessels during secondary burials makes such chronological classifications somewhat tentative.

Two tombs (G101, G305) feature a brick-lined subterranean chamber with vaulted roof, providing access to two burial chambers. The architectural form is related to tombs found at other New Kingdom cemeteries in Nubia (see below), and the position of G101, between and aligned with G301 and G112, is suggestive of a similar date (Figure 3). Ceramics recovered from the tomb, however, provide scant evidence of any New Kingdom use, and the tomb was dated to the Napatan Period on the basis of the 1939 excavation

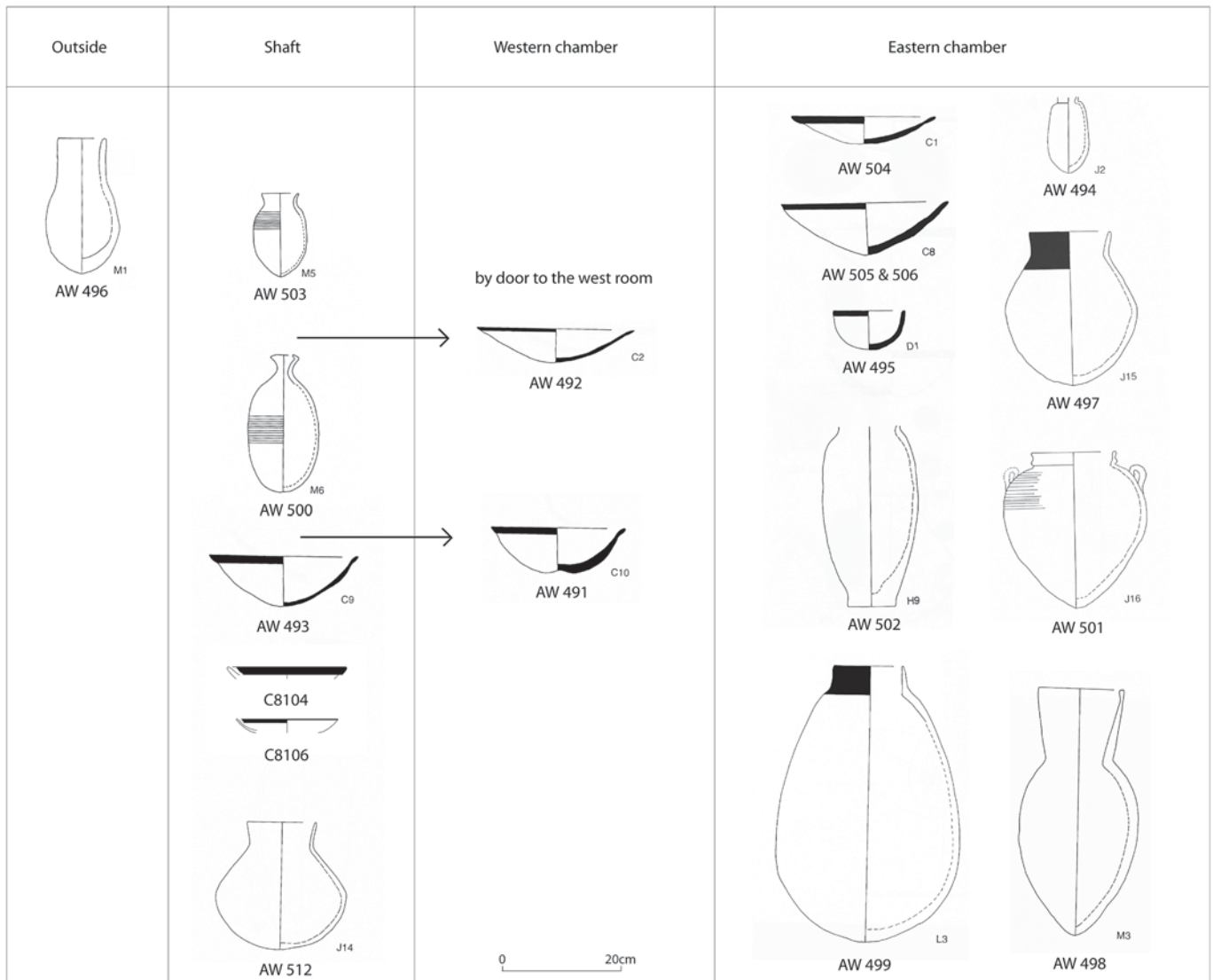


Figure 15. G112: ceramics. Drawings of pottery excavated by EES (after Spencer 2002) and current project (C8104, C8106).

records (Vila 1980; Spencer 2002, 4). The EES archives record 15 vessels, seven from the western chamber and eight in the eastern chamber (Figure 16). No pottery from the shaft or surface was recorded, although some sherds from beer jars and a fragment of a bread-mould were found in 2010. Given that this grave was ‘the best preserved and [...] the best recorded’ of those investigated in 1939 (Spencer 2002, 4), perhaps the ceramic assemblages in the burial chambers were relatively undisturbed. Only two of the vessels may date to the New Kingdom. Although the form of the tall-necked bottle from the eastern chamber (AW486) is found in Third Intermediate Period Egypt (Aston 1999, pl. 19 [558]), the blue- and red-painted decor suggests a late New Kingdom date (Aston 1996, 63, 297 fig. 195 [e]; 1999, pl. 6 [119]), perhaps before the reign of Ramesses IV (see at Qantir, Aston 1989, 375, 1312–13). Vessel AW509 was assigned to the 20th Dynasty (Spencer 2002, 5), but this form is also found in the 19th Dynasty (Aston 2008, 50, fig. 20 [b]).

The remainder of the vessels are of post-New Kingdom

date. In both the western and eastern chambers of G101, shallow bowls with a thick red-painted band on the rim are similar to examples found in cemetery C, in burials of the 10th–8th centuries BC (Spencer 2009, col. pls 23 [C9122, C9121], 24 [C9009]). In Egypt, such bowls are dated to the 11th–10th centuries BC (e.g. Memphis: Aston and Jeffreys 2007, fig. 42). Bowls AW488, AW507 and AW513 are similar to those found in Tombs 2-V-6/51 (Vila 1980, fig. 32 [3]) and 2-V-9/69 (Vila 1980, fig. 40) at Missiminia, ostensibly of Napatan date. Meanwhile, bowl AW484 is similar to examples from G112 (AW495) and G301 (C8105), and the bowl with red-painted rim from Tomb 2-V-6/31 in Missiminia (Vila 1980, fig. 21 [2]). Vessel AW485, perhaps the rim of a bottle (such as AW500 from G112) also dates to the Napatan era (Spence *et al.* 2009, 43, pl. 6). It is notable that beer jars are absent from G101, a phenomenon matched in cemetery C, and given the range of forms described (similar to Tomb ARA 15 at Hillat el-Arab, Vincentelli 2006, 99), it seems the tomb was constructed and used in the Napatan Period,

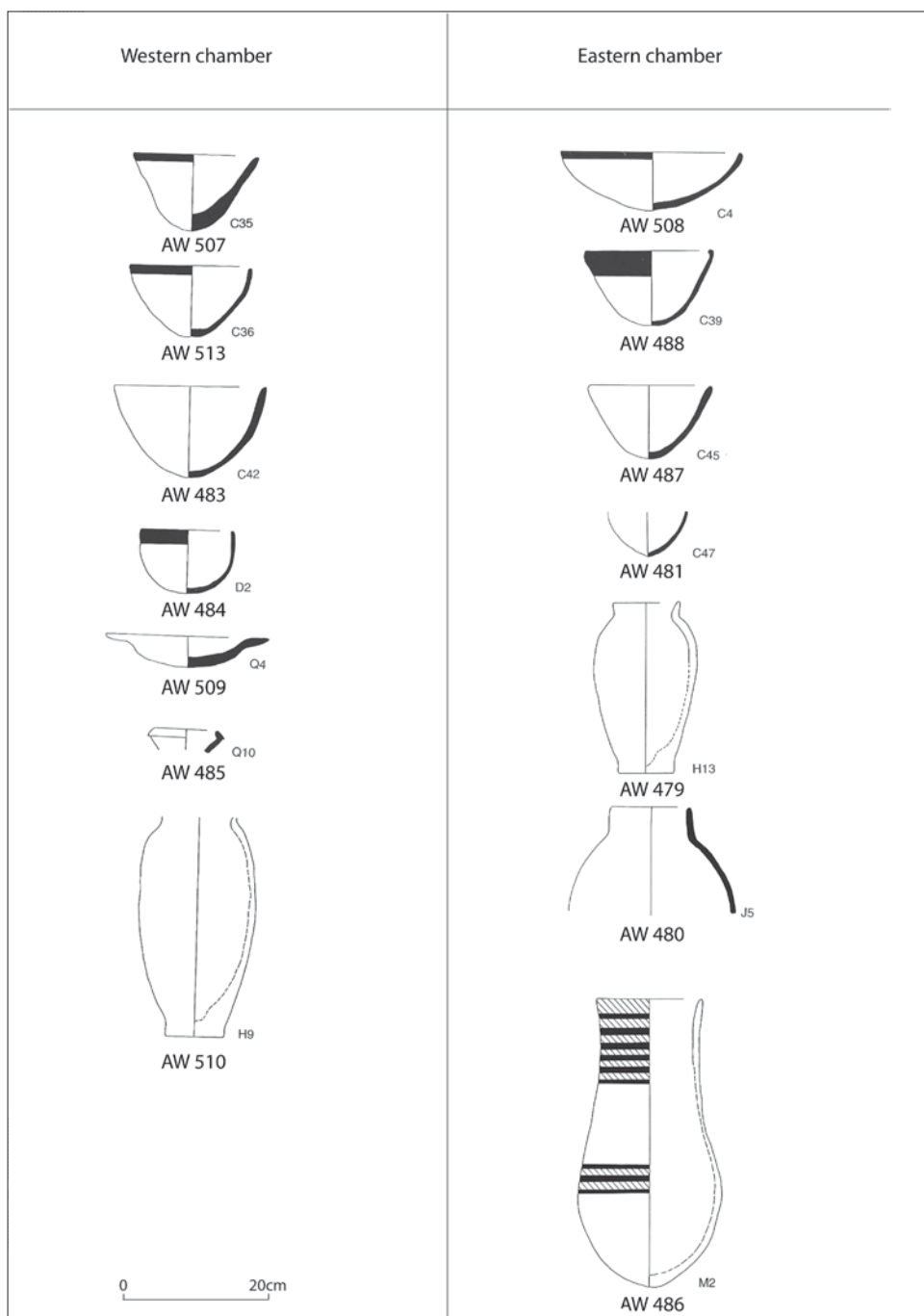


Figure 16. G101: ceramics. Drawings of pottery excavated by EES after Spencer 2002.

contemporary with the reuse of adjacent Ramesside tombs (G112 and G301).

A plate and a beer jar (Figure 17), both with red-painted rims, were found *in situ* in the eastern chamber of G305. The form of these vessels cannot be precisely dated, as they were popular in the New Kingdom and its aftermath. Within the shaft, and in surface deposits around the tomb, however, the pottery is clearly of Napatan date. Two globular jars (C8113 and C8112) find parallels in mid-8th and 7th century Egypt (Aston 1999, pl. 63 [1867]), while a slender jar with flaring neck (C8115) is probably contemporary (similar to AW494 from G101). The eroded surface of these sherds cautions

against assuming they reflect a re-use of the tomb for burials; the sherds may simply represent debris fallen into the shaft. It is also worth noting that G305 features the only remnants of a funerary bed found anywhere in cemetery D, in contrast to cemetery C, where this type of furnishing was typical in all of the larger tombs. Of course, pit burials such as G302, and those found by the 1939 archaeologists (Spencer 2002, 8–14, pls 12–15), are not possible to date, but there is no reason that they cannot be contemporary with the more grandiose New Kingdom and post-New Kingdom tombs surrounding them.

Elsewhere in the cemetery, G300 is difficult to date. The cutting of the chambers is rather coarse compared to that in G112 and G301, and badly eroded pottery was only found in the shaft, not in either chamber (Figure 18). Sherds from two beer jars and three plates (two with a red-painted rim) cannot be closely dated, as they are forms common across the chronological span of cemetery D. In addition, two small sherds of Nubian ware were found. The pottery from G304, a small tumulus, only included fragments of Nubian pottery (Plate 24); while this tomb is likely to post-date the New Kingdom (it was built over the remains of G301), a more refined dating is not currently possible. Amongst the subsidiary graves investigated in 2010 (G302, G303), the lack of ceramic remains makes dating impossible.

In summary, it seems the cemetery was first used for burials during the early Ramesside Period, though many of the tombs were then re-opened for later burials, perhaps after the collapse of Egyptian control over the area. It is even possible that the large tombs with pyramid-chapels (G112, G301) were designed with only one, western, burial chamber, with the second chambers representing part of a post-New Kingdom re-use. At this period, new tombs were also constructed. Further fieldwork in cemetery D at Amara West should elucidate how the later use of the necropolis related to the earlier tombs, and also investigate the nature and date of a number of other tumulus tombs in the cemetery.

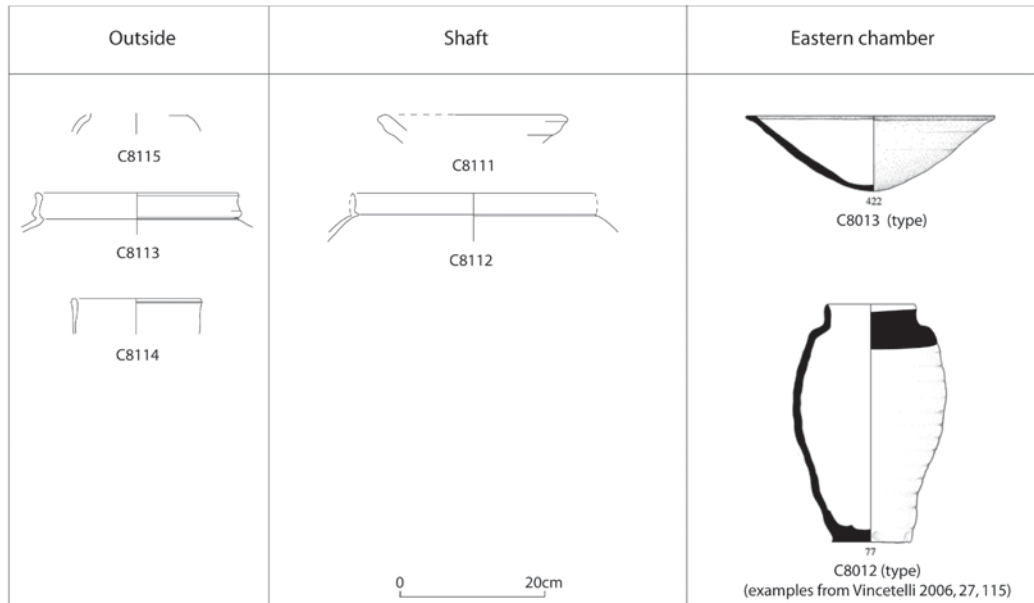


Figure 17. G305: ceramics.

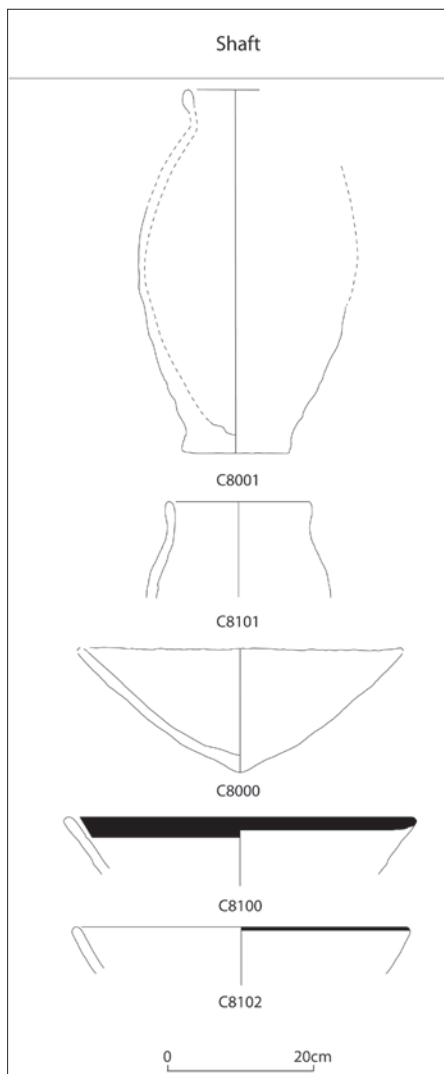


Figure 18. G300: ceramics.

Cultural expression in burial: integrating indigenous and pharaonic traditions

The excavations in 2010 have shown that an elite, Egyptian-style, cemetery existed at Amara West during the Ramesside Period. During the town's heyday as administrative centre of occupied Kush, a number of elite individuals were being buried in a style consistent with that prevalent in Pharaonic Egypt. Above ground, an offering chapel, perhaps vaulted, and possibly whitewashed or painted, provided the focal point for the funerary cult, with an eastern entrance allowing the morning sun to flood the chapel with light. The final element of the visible tomb was a small pyramid of mud brick, perhaps once plastered and painted white.

This type of superstructure is found throughout New Kingdom Nubia, as far south as Tombos. The architectural form is exemplified by the tombs at Soleb, where stone architectural elements included doors and pyramidia (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 79–340), or at Aniba in Lower Nubia (Steindorff 1937). The pyramid is, of course, a feature of many New Kingdom tombs throughout the Nile Valley, such as at Saqqara (Martin 1991) and Deir el-Medina (e.g. Bruyère 1924, pl. 30); the importance of such solar iconography is evident when very modest burials were accompanied by triangular-topped stelae, as in the South Tombs Cemetery at Tell el-Amarna (late 18th Dynasty; Kemp 2006, 37–9, figs 12–13; 2008, 31). The focal point of the chapels at Amara West may have been a stela or offering table (see Schiff Giorgini 1971, 83; Minault and Thill 1974, 81), though remnants of such artefacts are yet to be found at Amara West.

The two pyramid tombs in cemetery D do not preserve any trace of a brick enclosure wall outlining the tomb precinct, as found at Soleb (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 82–3), Sai (Geus 2004, 116, figs 90, 91), and Tombos (Smith 2003, 138–43). Many of the tombs at these three sites feature a pyramid with a much larger footprint than the offering chapel before it; the reverse proportions are found at Amara West. The majority of published New Kingdom pyramid-tombs in Nubia date to the 18th Dynasty, not the Ramesside Period as at Amara West. Beneath ground, the provision of multiple burial chambers off a shaft is also found at Soleb, Sai and Tombos, though examples with a series of interconnected chambers are also found at Soleb, where the chambers are sometimes cut with vault-shaped ceilings (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 84–6). In all cases, examples of stone slabs used to close the chambers were



found; these could of course be easily opened and closed for additional burials.

The other type of large tomb in cemetery D at Amara West, that with a vaulted subterranean chamber with access to two burial chambers (G101, G106 and G305), varies somewhat from the examples found at other sites in Upper Nubia. As the superstructure is only known from the 1939 photos, and was already heavily eroded then, its exact plan is unclear; at Missiminia, a tomb with a single vaulted chamber may have had a low mound over the top (Vila 1980, 26 [Tomb 314]), though those vaulted tombs at this site feature only one chamber, reached by a sloping descendary (Vila 1980, 21, type V). In the rather different environment of Serra East, low mounds were created over the burial shafts of some tombs, fronted by built chapels (e.g. Williams 1993, 162–3).

Vaulted superstructures are found in some New Kingdom tombs at Sai, above a shaft leading to one or more subterranean burial chambers (Minault and Thill 1974), but such architecture is typically within the subterranean part of the tomb. In another cemetery at Sai, vaulted brick-lined subterranean chambers are encountered (Gratien 2002, 220–1, 224), as at Tombos (Smith 2003, 142–5, fig. 6.9). In some of the latter examples, staircases provided access, and additional chambers lay off the vaulted rooms. Thus far excavations at Amara West have yet to find examples of tombs with descending staircases, in either cemetery C and D; descendaries are a common feature in Napatan and later cemeteries, such as at Missiminia (Vila 1980, 21, types IV and V).

Vaulted brick architecture is as much a New Kingdom funerary tradition as the pyramid, with tombs found throughout the Nile Valley and Delta, for example that of the Viceroy of Nubia Hori (temp. Ramesses III/IV) at Tell Basta (Habachi 1957, 97–102), and tombs at Abydos (Garstang 1901, pl. 35) and Tell el-Amarna (Kemp 2006, 30–6 fig. 6). Thus these burials at Amara West were being placed in a consciously Egyptianising architectural setting, though with a more indigenous appearance above ground: the low mound.

Although the chronological classification of graves in the cemetery is likely to be refined with future work, it is striking how many different tomb types are encountered in a relatively restricted area. While such a variety is familiar at sites such as Aniba or Tell el-Amarna (Kemp 2008, 42), other cemeteries have more defined zones, with distinct tomb types in each. This is the case for cemeteries associated with two important Egyptian settlements in Upper Nubia. The pyramid cemetery and the contemporary vaulted brick tombs at Sai are located in distinct, though adjacent cemeteries (Geus 2004, 115), while at Tombos the pyramid tombs, vaulted brick tombs and tumuli are confined to three different zones (both for New Kingdom and later burials, Smith 2007a, 347; 2007b, 3).

It is rather early to speculate whether the tombs in cemetery D represent communal tombs, perhaps for family groups, or are examples of opportunistic appropriation of earlier tombs. Both phenomena seem to occur at Tombos (Smith 2003, 136–66), Soleb (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 86–7)

and Sai (Thill 2007). At Amara West, the western chamber of G301 was only used for the burial of a man and woman, despite plenty of available space for further bodies. The ceiling may have collapsed here shortly after the initial burial, precluding any re-use. That communal burials, rather than single interments, continued at Amara West after Pharaonic state control waned shows how embedded aspects of Egyptian funerary ritual had become in this region, though by the early first millennium BC, such phenomena may have been seen as essentially indigenous to the region. The ancient inhabitants lacked the perspective over centuries available to the modern scholar.

A striking feature of cemetery D is the apparent lack of subsidiary burials of infants and children, a notable phenomenon in cemetery C, where several single child burials were found scattered around the larger communal tombs (Spencer 2009, 59). Furthermore, bones of infants and children were not encountered amongst any of the larger tombs. This is evidently unlikely to be a result of low childhood mortality; it seems more reasonable to assume that the children were either buried in separate places or in a distinctive zone of the cemetery which has yet to be located. Separate areas for the graves of young infants and children within a necropolis are reported from other New Kingdom sites such as cemetery G at Gurob (Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 3), but are also found in the *Kerma Classique* cemetery at nearby Sai (Murail *et al.* 2004). The scarcity of sub-adult remains is similarly noted in the New Kingdom cemetery at Tombos (Buzon 2006). Burial of children within settlement areas is another possibility, though no evidence of such a practise has thus far been found at Amara West.

Identification of the ethnicity of the individuals buried in cemetery D is not presently possible, though strontium-isotope analyses to assess region of origin may have potential at this site (see Buzon *et al.* 2007). How any results correlate with architectural form and burial assemblage would prove particularly interesting. At present, the choice of objects to accompany the dead is worth consideration. The archaeologically intact double burial of the 19th Dynasty (G301) is wholly Egyptian in form, with wooden (anthropoid?) coffins, a scarab, a copper-alloy blade, five beer jars, three plates and a wine-jar. In the other chamber, which was subject to re-use, the burials were also in coffins, provided with Egyptian necklaces and in one case a scarab. The small fragment of an ivory or bone plaque (F8026) in this eastern chamber may point towards a more ‘Nubian’ artefact type; objects of this type were also found in the post-New Kingdom cemetery C (Spencer 2009, 59, pl. 26). The *shabti*, though unusual in form, clearly reflects an interest in Egyptian funerary traditions; an artefact type also found at Soleb (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 93), Sai (Minault and Thill 1974, 89–90) and Tombos (Smith 2003, 146–9). Heart scarabs and canopic jars, present at some of these sites, have yet to be found at Amara West. The evidence from G112 may largely pertain to a post-New Kingdom re-use, but the objects are still fundamentally Pharaonic in style

(beads, scarabs, amulets, pottery; see Spencer 2002, 6–8). For the vaulted brick tombs, G101 had been badly disturbed, and the material recovered may relate to both Ramesside and post-New Kingdom assemblages, but it is interesting that fragments of copper-alloy bowls, and perhaps even a wooden bed, were found (Spencer 2002, 5), reflecting a desire that one or more of those interred were accompanied by recognisably Nubian objects. In G305, architecturally similar to G101, the presence of both a fragment of a funerary bed (F8011), and the flexed position of some skeletons (Sk 305-2) underlines that indigenous traditions were entering into the burial assemblages in the aftermath of the New Kingdom, a phenomenon even more prominent in post-New Kingdom cemetery C (Spencer 2009, 58, pl. 24). At Hillat el-Arab, in contrast, funerary beds may have been more prevalent, and no evidence for wooden coffins was encountered (Vincentelli 2006, 5). Though adjacent to the Egyptian temples at Jebel Barkal, Hillat el-Arab is far upstream from the heartland of Egyptian occupation and associated cemeteries. Finally, the presence of linen wrappings adhering to the skeletal remains suggests some form of mummification was taking place with both the New Kingdom and post-New Kingdom individuals. Without finding traces of embalming oils and fluids, or examples of the ethmoidal bone being deliberately broken, it may be that a simple wrapping of the dead sufficed, as attested at Tombos (Smith 2003, 160–2).

The ceramics buried with the dead, and those used in any ongoing rites in and around the tomb chapel, again suggest a predominately Egyptian cultural sphere, with the notable exception of tumulus G304, which is also of distinctive architectural form. Throughout these tombs, it is striking that almost no fragments of Nubian vessels were found within the burial chambers. Sherds with impressed, incised or burnished surface décor, typical of Nubian pottery found in the settlement at Amara West, were found only in surface deposits, or in subsidiary pits/burials around the large tombs (one Nubian sherd was found in the eastern chamber of G305). This is in contrast to the settlement, where Nubian sherds make up around 10% of the ceramic assemblages (see Spencer 2009, 55, col. pl. 21). Rather, Egyptian beer jars and plates predominate, presumably reflecting the bread and beer fundamental to Egyptian funerary rites. Within G301, the deceased was also provided with wine, probably imported, in jar C8009. Wine jars in marl D were produced specifically for wine transport and storage, perhaps in northern Egypt (Andreu 2002, 90). The Nile silt vessels found in cemetery D were presumably made locally, though pottery kilns have yet to be identified at Amara West, but the marl vessels are likely to come from Egypt: including the Ramesside wine jar in marl D (C8009), but also Napatan vessels in marl A2 and A4. These attest to continuing links between the inhabitants of Amara West and Egypt, even after pharaonic control of the area lapsed, and possibly in the centuries prior to Egypt falling under direct Kushite control.

Ongoing fieldwork will allow these preliminary observa-

tions to be refined, and perhaps answer further questions. Should we expect larger-scale tombs at Amara West, for the ‘deputies of Kush’ and other officials and priests, as found at Soleb? With the evident post-New Kingdom use of cemetery D, what is the relationship between it and cemetery C, the latter apparently first used after the New Kingdom? Tumuli graves are scattered throughout cemetery D: are any of these contemporary with the Ramesside tomb-chapels, given that further upstream, indigenous funerary traditions clearly persisted alongside the Egyptian ones (Welsby and Welsby-Sjöström 2007, 387–9)? Now that it is clear that burials of the 19th Dynasty through the 9th century BC are preserved at Amara West, the site may throw light on aspects of the population in this region in the late New Kingdom and its aftermath, long thought to be an era of declining population and even abandonment (Edwards 2004, 111). The cemeteries at Amara West are also likely to prove another reminder that chronological developments in funerary traditions were not always synchronised with political periods.

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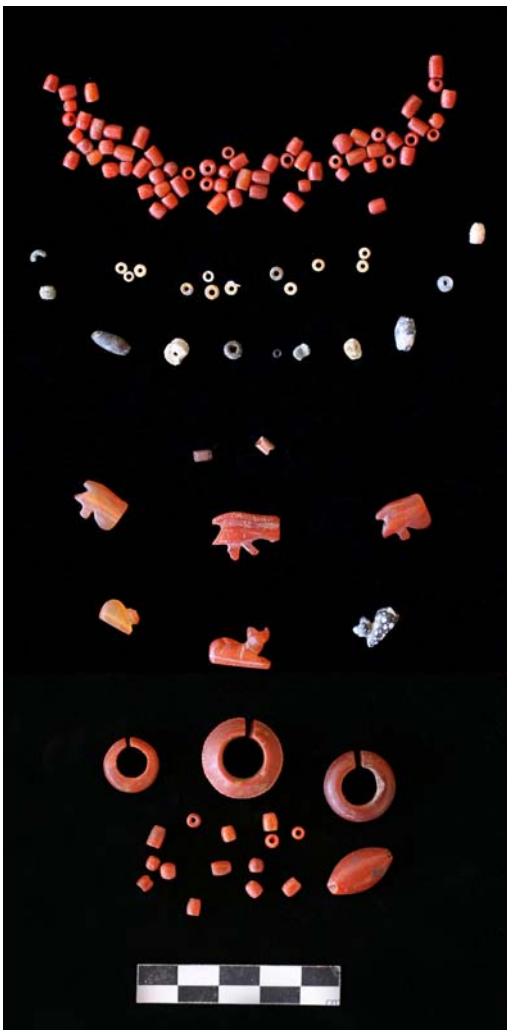
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Colour plate VII. Amara West. View south west over cemetery D.



Colour plate VIII. Amara West. G301: ceramic shabti (F8004) from the shaft fill.



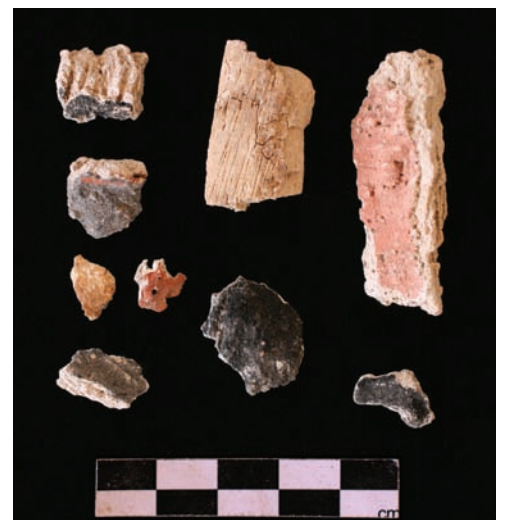
Colour plate X. Amara West. G301: Beads, amulets and earrings from the north-eastern chamber (F8010, F8051).



Colour plate IX. Amara West. G301: faience scarab (F8023) from the western chamber.



Colour plate XI. Amara West. G301: scarab F8022 from the north-eastern chamber.



Colour plate XII. Amara West. G301: painted plaster fragments (F8030), probably from coffin decoration, from the north-eastern chamber.