



The tomb chapel of Isisnofret at Saqqara

The Waseda University Egyptian Expedition has excavated the previously unknown Ramesside Period tomb chapel and burial chamber of Isisnofret on the summit of the rocky outcrop in the desert where Prince Khaemwaset's monument is located. **Nozomu Kawai** and **Sakuji Yoshimura** report on the discovery and suggest that this Isisnofret is a daughter of Khaemwaset.

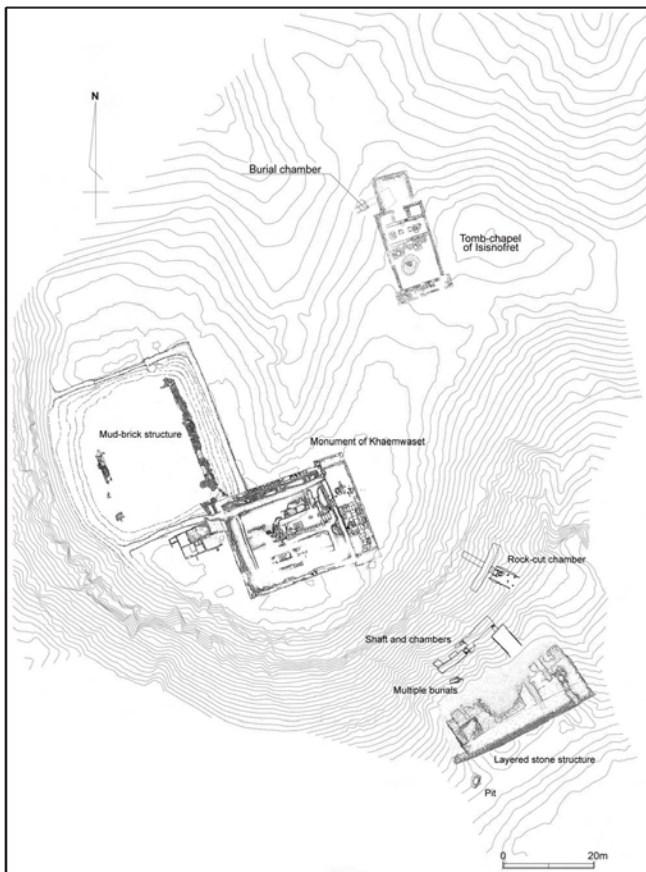
Since 1991 the Waseda University Egyptian Expedition has been conducting excavations at the rocky outcrop *c.*1.5km north-west of the Serapeum. Excavations have revealed a monument of Prince Khaemwaset (see *EA* 5, pp.19-23) and a mud-brick structure, probably belonging to Amenhotep II and Tuthmosis IV, on the summit of the outcrop. Excavations on the south-eastern slope have revealed a layered stone structure dating from the end of the Early Dynastic Period to the early Old Kingdom with an associated rock-cut chamber which had been reused in the Middle Kingdom. Another rock-cut chamber of the Middle Kingdom (see *EA* 23, pp.38-40) and a multiple burial dating from the end of the Second Intermediate Period to the early Eighteenth Dynasty (see *EA* 30, pp. 3-5) were found on the southern slope of the outcrop. Since we had almost completed excavating the western



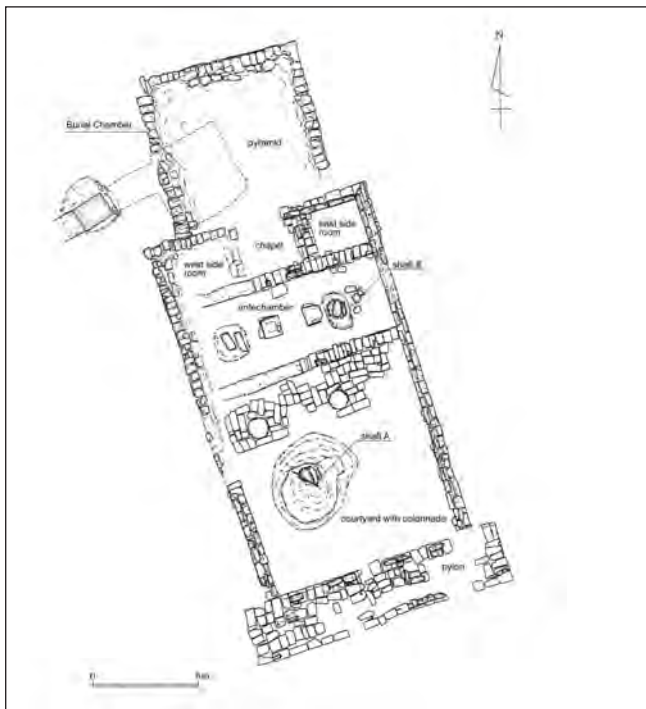
General view of the tomb chapel of Isisnofret from the north

slope of the outcrop, an archaeological reconnaissance of the unexcavated area on the summit of the outcrop was begun in the 2007 season.

Here we discovered in 2008 a previously unknown New Kingdom tomb chapel in the area *c.*40m north-west of the monument of Khaemwaset. The entire structure of the tomb chapel had been built of limestone and consisted of a pylon, a colonnaded courtyard, an antechamber with four pillars which terminated in three cult chapels, and the base of a pyramid - thus, a typical plan of a New Kingdom tomb chapel, especially those known from the later part of the reign of Ramesses II and attested in the New Kingdom cemetery to the south of the causeway of the pyramid of Unas. The overall length of the tomb-chapel, including the pyramid at the north, is *c.*27m and its width is *c.*10.3m (with the pylon 12.45m). Notably, the chapel is arranged on a south-north central axis unlike other Memphite New Kingdom tomb-chapels, which are normally arranged on an east-west central axis. The upper portion of the structure was largely missing, leaving only the foundations and some of the flooring. Nothing remains of any relief blocks that might have adorned the walls of the tomb-chapel, nor did a single fragment of roofing stone, column or pilaster survive. The north-western foundation of the tomb-chapel, behind the courtyard, is even more eroded, probably due to the inclination of the hill to the north-west where a *wadi* is situated. Excavations in the central cult chapel and behind it yielded hundreds of red granite fragments. Some are clearly from one monument - a part of the torus



Map showing the monument of Khaemwaset, the tomb chapel of Isisnofret and other structures on the rocky outcrop at Saqqara



Plan of the tomb chapel of Isisnofret

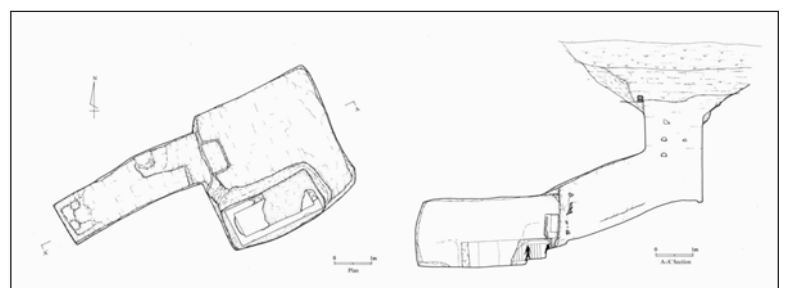
moulding, cavetto cornice and part of an inscription, which indicates that they came from a red granite false door once set up at the rear of the central cult chapel. However, no material inscribed with the name of the owner of the tomb chapel has been identified. Within this tomb-chapel, we found two unfinished shafts (A and B on the plan above) in the courtyard and antechamber. Excavations in the 2009 season near the area around the north-western part of the tomb-chapel exposed another shaft which dropped vertically and measured 1.5m by

1.15m. This shaft, 3.5m deep, leads to a burial chamber through a sloping passage opening on the eastern side at the bottom of the shaft. In fact the burial chamber is located under the western portion of the pyramid of the tomb chapel, indicating that this burial shaft does belong to the tomb chapel above. The sloping passage is 2m long and the burial chamber is 4m square. The sloping passage and the entrance of the burial chamber contained accumulated sand and rubble. After removing this layer, about 30 pieces of limestone sealing blocks were found scattered near the entrance of the burial chamber, which appears to have been disturbed in antiquity. We found a number of broken pieces of the sarcophagus, fragments of pottery sherds, pieces of faience objects, ivory fragments, pieces of inlay made of semi-precious stones and faience, and fragments of gold leaf. All the objects appear to date to the Nineteenth Dynasty which matches the date of the tomb chapel. Curiously, the number of the fragments of the funerary objects was relatively small and no canopic equipment or shabtis were found, suggesting that most of the funerary equipment was removed or plundered in antiquity. We also found four human skeletons (a child, two adult women and an adult man) scattered in the burial chamber, but it is uncertain whether they are the remains of the original burial or from an intrusive burial.

A partially-broken sarcophagus of fine limestone was found in a recess hewn from the floor level along the south wall of the chamber. The sarcophagus is the so-called *krst* type: a rectangular box with vaulted lid and low, transverse end boards. This is the most common type for coffins and sarcophagi of the Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom, but is rare in the New Kingdom when



Shaft of the tomb's subterranean chamber



Plan and elevation of the burial shaft of Isisnofret



The burial chamber at the time of its discovery



The lid of Isisnofret's sarcophagus

an anthropoid shape became more popular. The images of the protective goddess Selket, depicted at both the head and foot ends, and the orthography of hieroglyphic writings also show archaism, but other parts of the exterior decoration are typical of the New Kingdom, especially the Ramesside Period. The sarcophagus represents the meeting of old and new styles.

The owner of the sarcophagus is 'the noble woman, Isisnofret'. The title *Špst* 'noble woman' is very rare in the New Kingdom and is often used for women from



Decoration on the foot end of one of the side walls of the sarcophagus

the royal family or of some sort of exceptional status. A certain Isisnofret who has the title of *Špst* and is mentioned as the daughter of Prince Merenptah (the future King Merenptah) appears in the Leiden Papyrus I 350 verso. In this papyrus, both Prince Khaemwaset and this Isisnofret are frequently mentioned, indicating that they were contemporary influential dignitaries. On the other hand, Prince Khaemwaset also had a daughter named Isisnofret, although she is never described as *Špst* on her attested monuments. The presence of the sarcophagus of Isisnofret in the burial chamber situated under the pyramid of the tomb chapel suggests that the tomb chapel was constructed for this noblewoman. The location of the tomb chapel of Isisnofret, orientated to the central axis line of the Khaemwaset monument (probably his *ka*-chapel), and the archaizing style of Isisnofret's sarcophagus which reflects the archaizing style of Khaemwaset's own monuments, suggest strongly that the owner of the sarcophagus may have been Khaemwaset's daughter.

The monument of Isisnofret is the only New Kingdom tomb chapel in this remote rocky outcrop in the desert to the north-west of Saqqara and no other traces of any



Sarcophagus of Isisnofret, looking from the north-eastern corner of the burial chamber



The image of the goddess Selket on the head end of the sarcophagus



The god Horus depicted on one of the side walls of the sarcophagus

tomb shafts or burials have been found in its vicinity. If she was indeed the daughter of Prince Khaemwaset, perhaps this outcrop in the Memphite necropolis was exclusively reserved for Prince Khaemwaset and his family during Ramesses II's reign. It is hoped that further evidence of the nature of the site during the Ramesside Period will be revealed in the coming seasons.

□ Nozomu Kawai is a Visiting Associate Professor at Waseda University and Field Director of the Abusir-Saqqara Project of the Institute of Egyptology at Waseda University. Sakuji Yoshimura is the General Director of the Waseda University Egyptian Expedition. The authors are indebted to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for its grant-in-aid for Scientific Research. Photographs and illustrations © Institute of Egyptology, Waseda University.

P & P BOOKS

*Specialising in Antiquarian
Rare and Out-of-Print*

BOOKS ON EGYPTOLOGY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Single Volumes to Libraries Purchased

Catalogues Issued

Bookroom by Appointment

P&P BOOKS
Dairy Cottage, Yarhampton
Stourport-on-Severn
Worcs.DY13 0UY

Fax/Phone: (01299) 896996
jim@pandpbooks.eclipse.co.uk



**CYBELE
BOOKSHOP**

EGYPTOLOGY

New and out-of-print books
CATALOGUE ON REQUEST

LIBRAIRIE CYBELE
65BIS RUE GALANDE, 75005 PARIS
TEL: 01 43 54 16 26 - FAX : 01 46 33 96 84
e-mail : cybele5@wanadoo.fr

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.librairie-cybele.com