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THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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Miroslav Bárta
editor

Czech Institute of Egyptology
Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague
Academia
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Contributors

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Foreword

It is with pleasure that after more than two years the publication of the lectures held during the conference on the Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology in Prague in the year 2004 (May 3–June 4) has been made possible.

The conference held in Prague continued the tradition of previous meetings by being dedicated to the same subject: art and its dating in the Old Kingdom of Egypt: the period that forms the first apogee of the developing Egyptian state. The tradition of these irregular meetings was established in 1991 by Hourig Sourouzian and Rainer Stadelmann, at that time the Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, who organised the first conference. The second meeting also took place in Cairo, at this time the place of the venue was the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology and the conference, held on November 10–13, 1994, was organised by its director Nicolas Grimal. The penultimate meeting took place in Paris, France, on April 3–4, 1998, and was organised by Christiane Ziegler, Chief Conservator of Egyptian Antiquities in the Louvre.

The present volume continues a well-established and successful tradition of post-conference publications. As such, it makes available most of the contributions that were presented during the conference in Prague. It was mainly the scientific profile of the Czech Institute of Egyptology that led us to substantially widen the scope of the conference in 2004. The total of thirty-three contributions presented in this volume cover various aspects connected to Old Kingdom culture, not only its art, but also its archaeology and architecture, selected administrative problems, iconography, texts and the latest, often first time published results of ongoing excavations. From the list of contributions it becomes evident that natural sciences and their application in the widest sense receive general acceptance and support from among Egyptologists. It is one of the few aspects that can in the future significantly enhance our understanding of specific issues connected to the Old Kingdom art and archaeology.

Eng. Marta Štrachová carefully edited the manuscript and was essential in producing this volume. The advice and guidance of Eng. Jolana Malátková also proved indispensable. The Czech Academy of Sciences is to be thanked for the production of the book. Last but not least, it was Prof. Dr. Jean Leclant, Secrétaire perpétuel de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Paris, and the chair of the European branch of the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini, and Prof. Dr. David Silverman, University of Pennsylvania, chair of the North American branch of the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini and the respective committees that approved this publication and agreed to support it financially.

Miroslav Bártta

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1 The conference was held in the German Archaeological Institute, Cairo, on October 29–30, and the proceedings published in 1995 in the volume Kunst des Alten Reiches. Symposium des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo am 29. und 30. Oktober 1991, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo, Sonderschrift 28, Mainz am Rhein.
Bibliography


The following additional abbreviations are also used:

ACER – The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports, Sydney;
AOS – American Oriental Society, Michigan;
BSAK – Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur, Beihefte, Hamburg;
CA – Current Anthropology, Chicago, Illinois;
KAW – Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt, Mainz am Rhein;
LingAeg – Lingea Aegyptia, Journal of Egyptian language Studies, Göttingen;
OrMonsp – Orientalia Monspeliensia, Montpellier;
PAM – Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean, Warsaw;
SAGA – Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens, Heidelberg;
WES – Warsaw Egyptological Studies, Warsaw.
A new early Old Kingdom layered stone structure at Northwest Saqqara
A preliminary report*

Sakuji Yoshimura, Nozomu Kawai

Introduction

The Institute of Egyptology at Waseda University has been conducting excavations at Northwest Saqqara since 1991. The site is situated at a remote rocky outcrop in the desert approximately 1.5 km northwest of the Serapeum (figs. 1, 2).1 Because of the site’s remoteness and its occupation by the Egyptian army during the 1970s, it escaped scholarly attention, and no systematic archaeological exploration had been done until we were granted the permission from the Supreme Council of Antiquities. The work on the summit of this outcrop has revealed a monument of Khaemwaset, the fourth prince of Ramesses II, and a mud-brick structure surrounded by a dry moat, built by Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV.2

Since 2001, excavations have focused on the southern slope of the outcrop; the work has provided new archaeological evidence showing activity prior to the New...
In 2001, we began excavating at the southern slope of the outcrop in order to investigate if there was an approach like a causeway to the monument of Khaemwaset. Instead, we discovered a rock-cut chamber in the middle of the southeastern slope. Clearances of the chamber yielded a number of statues made of clay, pottery, and wood. Notably, they include the statues of lions and a lion goddess; some of which bear the name of Khufu and Pepy I. Because the votive pottery sherds found with them date to the Twelfth Dynasty, these statues were probably deposited at this period. In 2002, we extended excavations to the southwest in order to understand the function of the rock-cut chamber. Subsequently, we discovered a new layered structure and its associated substructure dating to the early Old Kingdom. On the basis of construction technique, we believe that the structure dates to the Third Dynasty. The substructure seems to have been made

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A new early Old Kingdom layered stone structure at Northwest Saqqara

at the same time, but it appears to have been reused in the Middle Kingdom. In the front area of the layered stone structure, extensive Middle Kingdom cult refuse deposits were identified. Excavations up to now have revealed significant activity of the early Old and Middle Kingdoms in this outcrop.

In this paper, we focus on the early Old Kingdom archaeological evidence among our recent discoveries, namely the layered stone structure and its substructure. The aim of this article is to present the current state of the research on the early Old Kingdom material from our site, although the excavations are not completed yet. First, we will discuss the characteristics of the layered stone structure. Second, we will tentatively evaluate the associated substructure and its finds.

**The layered stone structure**

In 2002, at the area approximately 20 m to the south of the rock-cut chamber, we opened a test trench. This sounding area had, in fact, indicated a line of limestone chips and some remnants of debris that were recognized during our surface reconnaissance. Subsequently, we exposed a wall of limestone blocks. As the excavation proceeded, it became clear that the building’s longer axis runs in an east-west direction. Then, a massive rectangular construction appeared. We temporarily call it ‘the layered stone structure’.

The layered stone structure (fig. 3, pls. XVII, 25–26) was built in a small wadi, which runs down along the southeastern slope of the hill. It has a rectangular plan with its longer axis running in an east-west direction, although it appears to have

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Sakiji Yoshimura, Nozomu Kawai

a slightly trapezoidal plan due to having been constructed on the slope. Both the east and west ends of the front façade are entirely settled into this *wadi*. The front façade is oriented to the east about 27 degrees from facing true south, and points to the south-east direction towards the zone where Djoser’s Step Pyramid and Sekhemkhet’s unfinished Step Pyramid are located. At this moment, the reason for its orientation remains unclear, but it is certain at least to have diverged from cardinal directions due to the direction of *wadi*, or because of a relation to the contemporary monuments in the Saqqara necropolis.

The entire extent of the layered stone structure is now missing, especially its upper part and back part, due to natural collapse and quarrying activities in the past. However, the remaining part still offers a magnificent appearance. The front façade measures about 34.3 m wide, and fifteen courses of stones remain, which measure about 4.1 m in height. The maximum length from the corner of the façade
A new early Old Kingdom layered stone structure at Northwest Saqqara

to the northern edge of the remaining area of the structure is approximately 14 m. The preserved total height is about 7 m. Because the structure is built in a wadi, which is concave in the middle, the lowest course of the blocks in the front façade appears to become gradually higher from the center towards the ends.

Because several architectural characteristics of our layered structure are consistent with the step pyramids of the Third and the early Fourth Dynasty, we believe that it was probably built at the same period. Both our structure and the step pyramids are strikingly similar in their use of local limestone and mortar, inclined masonry, and their layered character. The structure is built mainly of rough limestone blocks that fill up the inside of the structure. The limestone used in the structure is similar to that of the pyramids of Djoser and Sekhemkhet. Both groups of stones were probably quarried from the natural cliffs of the Saqqara plateau. Although each stone block varies in size, the height generally measures about 30 cm. The mortar, a mixture of yellow-brown tafl chips and clay, was packed together with the limestone chips into the crevices between the stones. The same kind of mortar can also be observed in the pyramids of Djoser and Sekhemkhet. Unlike Djoser’s Step Pyramid, our layered stone structure does not have a smooth outer casing. The outer stones of our structure, however, are laid so that the surface of the stones has a neat arrangement and appearance.

The layered stone structure has several depressions, which seem to be early robbers’ holes. By observing the sections of these depressions, we could understand the details of the structure’s internal construction technique. The side section of the structure reveals that the façade wall inclines about 70 degrees, while the individual inner layers of the stones incline about 20 degrees inward from the façade (fig. 4). Additionally, the layered

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5 These Step Pyramids include Djoser’s Step Pyramid, Sekhemkhet’s Step Pyramid, the Layer Pyramid at Zawiyet el-Aryan, and other small provincial pyramids. For these step pyramids, see N. Swelim, Some Problems on the History of the Third Dynasty (Alexandria, 1988). We would like to thank Nabil Swelim for providing information on these Third Dynasty step pyramids.

structure comprised at least three accretion layers, whose direction was only parallel to the southern façade. Their horizontal intervals measure about 2.5 m, or 5 cubits. The builders of the step pyramids commonly used the same technique of adding accretion layers every 4–5 cubits. These features clearly resemble those of the Step pyramids built from the Third Dynasty to the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty.\(^7\) In contrast to the front façade, however, the blocks of the eastern wall are piled up horizontally. By setting blocks back little by little like stairs, however, the eastern wall is also constructed as inclined (fig. 3).

Although most of the blocks of the upper part of the structure are now missing, the original extent of the plan of the structure can be mostly reconstructed. By observing the trace of artificial scrapings located at the extension of the east wall, it seems that the original east wall measured approximately 20 m. This should also be the length of the corresponding west wall. Thus, the entire structure appears to have had a rectangular plan. It is assumed that the structure appeared to be either a huge platform like a mastaba or a stepped terrace.

The substructure

A sounding trench was opened perpendicular to the hill behind the middle of the structure in order to investigate further archaeological remains of the structure. While cleaning the bottom of the trench, we discovered a shaft mid-way down the slope of the hill. The entrance to the shaft is T shaped, measuring about 0.8 m square and about 2.7 m (5 cubits) deep. It leads to two chambers, one to the east and the other to the west (fig. 4). The east chamber is the original subterranean chamber and is blocked by a stone portcullis, while the west chamber seems to have been dug in the Middle Kingdom. We will discuss here only the east chamber, which dates to the early Old Kingdom (fig. 5, pl. XVII, 27).

At the entrance to the east chamber, the original stone portcullis was still in situ, but the east chamber had been entered in antiquity. This was evident because the bedrock to the south of the portcullis was penetrated and then resealed with piles of limestone blocks. The portcullis stone measure 2.5 m in height and 1.4 m in width with 25 cm in thickness. Stone portcullises are known to have been used to block the entrance to tomb's subterranean chambers of tombs from the Early Dynastic Period to the early

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\(^7\) See Di. Arnold, *Building in Egypt* (Oxford, 1991), 159, fig. 4.88.
Old Kingdom. In the Early Dynastic Period, stone portcullises were used to block the subterranean chamber from the stairway. The application of a stone portcullis to the vertical T-shaped shaft seems to have appeared in the Third Dynasty and ended in the early Fourth Dynasty. The date of the east chamber’s blocking system by portcullis stone is, therefore, compatible with that of the layered stone structure.

The east chamber consists of an antechamber and a main hall which are divided by a doorway (fig. 4, 5, pl. XVII, 27). The antechamber measures about 2.6 × 1 m and 2 m in height, while the main hall measures about 5.3 × 2.1 m and 1.9 m in height. An area near the northwest corner reveals the remains of unfinished digging. At the north end of the hall there is a rectangular entrance that opens toward the south, probably dug in the Middle Kingdom. The doorway measures 1.8 m in width and 1.1 m in depth. Its ceiling is a little bit lower than other part of the ceiling. There is no decoration on the walls of the chamber.

Masses of tafl chips, possibly debris from the substructure found in situ nearby under the layered stone structure’s blocks indicate that the digging of the substructure preceded the construction of the layered stone structure. It seems, however, that they were made during a single building project, since the architectural features of both the layered stone structure and the substructure date to the same period.

**Finds from the substructure**

The finds from the east chamber are grouped into two chronological assemblages: the first belongs to the Early Dynastic and early Old Kingdom and the second is from the Middle Kingdom finds. Here we will describe the major finds dating from the Early Dynastic Period to the early Old Kingdom.

Although we might expect to uncover funerary objects in a subterranean chamber sealed by a portcullis, the earlier dated finds from the subterranean chamber consist of a variety of votive objects: they closely parallel those from the early temple deposits at Abydos, Hierakonpolis, Elephantine, and Tell Ibrahim Awad. They include ivory objects such as female figurines and dummy vases; stone vessels; stone disks; clay model pottery, and miniature copper tools. The largest number, however, consisted of faience items. Most of objects were found in the antechamber (fig. 6).

An ivory figurine (fig. 7.1, pl. XVIII, 28) represents a naked woman with long hair. Her right arm hangs down to her foot, while her left arm is across her body under her breast. Part of the left arm and the lower part of the leg was broken away. The surface is smooth where intact. This type of ivory statue was often produced from the late Predynastic Period to the Early Dynastic Period. They parallel the small ivory female figurines from Abydos, Hierakonpolis, and Tell Ibrahim Awad.

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9 Ibid., 25.
10 Similar cult objects were found in early temple precincts such as Abydos, Hierakonpolis, Elephantine, and most recently Tell Ibrahim Awad. Cf. G. Dreyer, Elephantine VIII, Der Tempel der Satet, AV 39 (1986); Quibell, Green, Hierakonpolis II; Petrie, Abydos II; G. A. Belova, T. A. Sherkova, Ancient Egyptian Temple at Tell Ibrahim Awad: Excavations and Discoveries in the Nile Delta (Moscow, 2002). Early temples and their votive objects were recently discussed in B. J. Kemp, Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of Civilization (London, 1989), 64–83 and in T. A. H. Wilkinson, Early Dynastic Egypt (London, 1999), 269–272.
11 Cf. Smith, Sculpture, 1–12.
12 Petrie, Abydos II, pl. II-5; Quibell, Hierakonpolis I, pl. IX; B. Adams, Ancient Hierakonpolis (Warminster, 1974), 70, no. 360, pl. 45; B. Hornemann, Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary IV (Copenhagen, 1966), no. 871; Belova, Sherkova, Tell Ibrahim Awad, photo. 55.
incised expression of hair on the back part can be seen in some relief from the Early Dynastic cemetery at Helwan. The date of the manufacture may have been the Early Dynastic Period. Several other fragments of the same type of female figurines, made of either ivory or hippopotamus tusk, were found in the same chamber. Faience artifacts include plaques, beads, and miniature models. One faience plaque shows a recumbent jackal in relief on both sides (fig. 7.2, pl. XVIII, 29). The depiction of the jackal still shows the muscle expression seen in the animal representations of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic slate palettes. Animal motifs were often depicted on faience plaques during the Early Dynastic Period. Other plaques represent a part of an architectural element with a ridged surface. One of them is from a corner of a tile that is L-shaped in section (fig. 7.3). There are perforations and a back projection on the undersurface for joining. Some parallels were found in Abydos and Elephantine and date to the Early Dynastic period. A faience ornament composed of four faces of foreign enemies is probably a miniature model of a mace head, since there is a hollow inside (fig. 7.4). The same facial features are attested among the contemporary representations showing foreign enemies. Most of the faience beads were circular in shape, decorated with incised geometric patterns (figs. 6.5, 6.6). Similar types of cylinders, although without incision on the surface, were found in Abydos. They were probably beads for necklaces. One faience model represents a ship (fig. 7.7). A parallel, dating from the end of the Early Dynastic period to the early Old Kingdom was found in Tell Ibrahim Awad. A faience model of an archaic shrine or naos, most probably representing a Rpyt-shrine, is inscribed with an X-sign on its front, probably identifying 'Neith' (fig. 7.8). Some parallels were found at the early temple

15 Cf. Petrie, Abydos II, 25, pl. V.36.
16 Petrie, Abydos II, pls. VIII.181-183, XI. 237; Dreyer, Elephantine VIII, 138, fig. 49, pl. 47.
17 Cf. Ch. Ziegler, in Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids (New York, 1999), 174.
18 Petrie, Abydos II, pl. VIII.168.
19 Belova, Sherkova, Tell Ibrahim Awad, 119, photo. 50.
A new early Old Kingdom layered stone structure at Northwest Saqqara in Abydos and Tell Ibrahim Awad. Other faience models include a model vase (fig. 7.9), a model of a vase on a stand (fig. 7.10), a model of a pot stand (fig. 7.11), and a model of pottery (fig. 7.12). A miniature stone vessel, made of granodiorite, has a high, slightly flattened shoulder, wide flat rim with rounded outer edge, and flat base (fig. 7.13). This type of vessel became especially popular during the Third Dynasty. A number of clay model pottery sherds, sometimes called ‘clay nails’, were found (figs. 7.14, 7.15). Parallels were recovered at other Early Dynastic sites such as Buto, Elephantine, and Helwan. They may be miniature model of pottery. Other miscellaneous objects include miniature ivory vessels, stone disks and fragments of miniature copper tools: they all seem to be votive objects.

The pottery sherds dating from the Early Dynastic Period to the early Old Kingdom are a similar assemblage to those from other early cult centers. They include a black-topped small beaker (fig. 8.1), black-topped ‘hs’-jars (fig. 8.2), a large jar (fig. 8.3), and a large beer jar (fig. 8.4). The black-topped small beaker is bag-shaped with a rounded base and globular body. The black-topped ‘hs’-jars parallel those found at early temple sites in Abydos, Hierakonpolis, Elephantine and Tell Ibrahim Awad. Although this type appeared in the First Dynasty, it seems that they were in use until the beginning of the Old Kingdom. The large jar probably dates from the Third Dynasty or the early Fourth Dynasty. Parallels were found at Beit el-Khallaf and Dahshur. The large beer jar is typical of the Third Dynasty to the early Fourth Dynasty. Parallels are known from Djoser’s Step Pyramid complex, an area to the west of the Step Pyramid complex, the mastabas near the causeway of the Unas pyramid, Dahshur, and Hierakonpolis.

Most of these objects were found in the western half of the east chamber, while there are more Middle Kingdom objects in its eastern half. Based on their parallels with votive objects found in early temple sites, they were probably buried in the chamber after their initial usage for ritual. The presence of a number of Early Dynastic objects from our substructure may indicate the earlier remains in this area to the west of the Step Pyramid complex, the mastabas near the causeway of the Unas pyramid, Dahshur, and Hierakonpolis.

Fig. 8 Early Dynastic and early Old Kingdom pottery from the east chamber

23 Parallels, see Adams, *Ancient Hierakonpolis*, cat. No. 217, pls. 32, 37. Cf. UC11014 and UC27598 at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London.
26 Parallels, see *ibid.*, pl. VII-115, 127–129.
area, but so far no evidence has been discovered illuminating the presence of an earlier cult at this place.

It should be noted that Early Dynastic and early Old Kingdom objects were also found in the west chamber, although it seems to have been constructed in the Middle Kingdom. The objects include a small model granite vase, a faience model of harpoon, several pieces of miniature pottery models, and four pieces of hs-jars, three black-topped and one red-burnished. They seem to have been intentionally re-deposited there together with the Middle Kingdom objects.33

**Middle Kingdom reuse of the substructure**

In the Middle Kingdom, the east chamber appears to have been reused as a cult shrine when a new entranceway was opened to the south, where a forecourt was also constructed (fig. 4). Probably at the same time, a new chamber was made to the west of the shaft. Middle Kingdom artifacts were found in and near these enlarged and reused parts of the chamber. In the forecourt, two pot stands with dishes upon them were found in situ, showing that the forecourt was used as an offering place. The Middle Kingdom objects include a number of votive vessels with organic remains, wooden statue fragments, fragments of a clay statue of a lion goddess, and fragments of mud sealing, one of which bears the impression of shnyt enclosed with S-spiral pattern.34 Notably, these objects closely resemble those belonging to the assemblage found in the rock-cut chamber discovered in 2001. The same cult deposition, therefore, seems to have taken place in both these chambers in the Middle Kingdom.

One of the remarkable finds is a life-size female statue (pl. XVIII, 30). The statue measures 162 cm tall and both arms are missing. The female figure wears a rare elaborate wig, with a striated front and a braided section at the back. This wig parallels those worn in some female representations dating to the Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods.35 Based on its proportions and style, however, it probably dates to the Middle Kingdom. An archaism of artistic representations has been recognized in the later Twelfth Dynasty, when several statues imitated styles from the beginning of the Old Kingdom or even earlier.36 What is important here is that a Middle Kingdom statue showing archaism was found in a subterranean chamber originally made in the early Old Kingdom.37

**The front area of the layered stone structure**

There is a large heap of sand in front of the façade of the layered structure, which seemingly has accumulated since the time of the layered stone structure’s construction. In order to understand the successive stratigraphy since the time of construction, we opened a deep sounding trench from the middle of the façade out towards the south. The stratigraphy thus revealed is a layer which probably represents the floor level around the time of the structure’s construction. It

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33 For the example of the rearrangement of the Early Dynastic Objects in the Middle Kingdom at Umm el-Qaab in Abydos, see G. Dreyer, A. von den Driesch, E-M. Engel, R. Hartmann, U. Hartung, T. Hikade, V. Müller, J. Peters, ‘Umm el-Qaab, Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof, 11./12. Vorbericht’, *MDAIK* 56 (2000): 117–118. We are indebted to Stephan Seidlmayer for the stimulating discussion and the reference.

34 ‘shnyt’ normally means ‘double crown’ but it is also nisbe meaning associated with power or it could be a dual meaning ‘double divine powers’, which may be associated with goddess.


36 The details of the statue will be discussed elsewhere.
A new early Old Kingdom layered stone structure at Northwest Saqqara contained fragments of beer jars dating from the Third Dynasty to the early Fourth Dynasty, which is compatible with the date of the layered structure on the basis of architectural evidence. An upper layer at the area approximately 16 m to the south of the layered structure contained hundreds of miniature Middle Kingdom pottery vessels, indicating cult refuse deposits. Between the layers of the Third Dynasty and the Middle Kingdom we identified four layers containing masses of limestone chips, showing the layered stone structure was abandoned between these periods. It is hoped that future extensive excavations will reveal more remains contemporary to the layered stone structure, as well as the extent of the Middle Kingdom cult refuse deposits.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the evidence so far demonstrates that there was already building activities as early as the early Old Kingdom at this remote outcrop to the west of Archaic Memphis. As we have demonstrated, the layered stone structure and its associated subterranean chamber were presumably made as a unit. Although the layered structure shows close similarities to the step pyramids from the Third Dynasty to the early Fourth Dynasty in terms of construction technique, its location, design, and orientation are different. The same construction technique as the step pyramids may indicate that it was built under the direction of a king, but so far no inscriptive evidence has been found. The layered stone structure probably was a huge rectangular platform or stepped terrace, based on observation of the preserved remains. Its original height must have been much higher than the currently preserved surface and could have at least reached at the level of the entrance of the shaft.

The objects from the subterranean chamber provide yet another group of examples of votive objects parallel to those found in early temples at such places as Abydos, Hierakonpolis, Elephantine, and Tell Ibrahim Awad. This types of objects are usually found as deposits in the cult shrines, as if they were ritually buried after their initial usage. If our objects were employed for the same purpose, where were they originally dedicated or used for ritual? The upper surface of the layered stone structure, now missing, could have been a possible place for cult shrine. This environment for a cult shrine probably parallels the early temple at Hierakonpolis, which consists of a large mound supported by sandstone revetment. On the other hand, the presence of the stone portcullis in the substructure may indicate that the layered stone structure was originally a tomb. Otherwise, why was such a heavy blocking system needed in the substructure? The available evidence does not show any indication of burial, but further excavations may reveal the remnant of the original contents from the subterranean chamber. It can also be assumed that there was an earlier cult shrine somewhere nearby. It is possible that there was a previous structure before the construction of the layered stone structure and the votive objects were brought to the subterranean chamber when it was cleaned out. But we have no evidence to prove any hypothesis yet. Nevertheless, these votive objects clearly indicate that there was an early cult sanctuary in this area of the vast Abusir-Saqqara necropolis. If this area was a sanctuary from the Early Dynastic period to the early Old Kingdom, to which local cult deity or deities were these votive objects dedicated? Just as Barry Kemp noted about the assemblages from early cult centers such as Abydos, Elephantine, and Hierakonpolis, no direct finds tell us to which deity it was dedicated. It was not until the Middle Kingdom that

38 The beer jar type is the same as that found in the east chamber of the substructure. See note 21 for the parallels.
39 Barry Kemp proposes a mud-brick structure stood on the top of the mound of the early formal temple at Hierakonpolis, while Mark Lehner assumes that there was a reed and wood shrine in the form of the Per-wer on the top of the mound. See Kemp, Ancient Egypt, 76–77, fig. 25; M. Lehner, The Complete Pyramids (London, 1997), 72–73.
40 Kemp, Ancient Egypt, 74.
a particular deity or deities are represented at cult centers. Our Middle Kingdom evidence demonstrated that the subterranean chamber was reused for a cult shrine. A number of lion goddess and female statues deposited in the chambers during the Middle Kingdom indicate a cult of a goddess in this place. This probably indicates the nature of the cult in this site from the Early Dynastic period and the early Old Kingdom. For now, however, this can only be a hypothesis.

We should resist making final conclusions about the function of the layered structure until completing excavations in the entire area around the structure. In the coming season, we will excavate the area in front of the layered stone structure, where we have already partially uncovered extensive Middle Kingdom cult refuse deposits and pot sherds dating to the Third Dynasty. We expect to uncover the entire floor level dating from the time of the construction of the layered stone structure, or perhaps even earlier. We hope that the coming seasons of excavation will provide more evidence that will permit us to elucidate the function of this enigmatic structure.
25 Overview of the layered stone structure

26 The layered stone structure view from the east

27 Interior of the subterranean chamber looking to the stone portcullis
28 (left) Ivory female figurine

30 (right) Life-size female statue

29 Faience plaque with a jackal in raised relief