

THE ASASIF REVISITED: NEW RESULTS FROM THE AUSTRIAN CONCESSION¹

Julia BUDKA

(Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

1. Introduction

The part of the Theban necropolis known as the Asasif² is situated in front of the valley of Deir el-Bahari³. The royal temples of Deir el-Bahari (Mentuhotep Nebhepre, Hatshepsut and Thutmose III) rise above the plain of the Asasif valley. Bietak and others have shown extensively that there is a strong connection between the Asasif and Deir el-Bahari throughout much of Egyptian history⁴. Most importantly, the royal causeways run through the Asasif. These functioned as processional approaches to the temples, especially on the occasion of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley⁵. It is probably because of this position in relation to Deir el-Bahari, that the Asasif held an important

¹ The results presented here are based on the PhD-thesis of the author: J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif. Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur anhand der Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in den Jahren 1969-1977*, 4 Vols. (Vienna, 2006). For continuous support, I am grateful to my supervisors Manfred Bietak and Helmut Satzinger. Jenny Cashman kindly corrected the English of this paper.

² For the obscure etymology of the toponym cf. D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der thebanischen Nekropole*, Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 8, Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo 6 (Vienna, 1984), 28 and J.P. ELIAS, *Coffin Inscriptions in Egypt after the New Kingdom* (Chicago, 1993), 188, note 1.

³ F. KAMPP-SEYFRIED, 'Thebes, el-Asasif', in: K. BARD (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1999), 802; D. POLZ, 'Asasif', in: D.B. REDFORD (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. I (Oxford, 2001), 140-142.

⁴ M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris*, Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 6, Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo 4 (Vienna, 1978), 19-29; D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, 21; N. STRUDWICK, 'Some aspects of the archaeology of the Theban necropolis in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods', in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis. Past, Present and Future* (London, 2003), 174 with note 83; A. ŁAJTAR, *Deir el-Bahari in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, A study of an Egyptian temple based on Greek sources*, *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology, Supplements*, Vol. IV (Warsaw, 2006), passim.

⁵ For this important festival of the Theban necropolis see S. SCHOTT, *Das schöne Fest vom Wüstentale, Festbräuche einer Totenstadt*, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur in Mainz* 11 (Wiesbaden, 1953); C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals, Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Supplement to *Numen* 13 (Leiden, 1967), 137-139; E. GRAEFE, 'Talfest', in: *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* VI (Wiesbaden, 1986), 187-189; S.-A. NAGUIB, 'The Beautiful Feast of the Valley', in: R. SKARSTEN, E.J. KLEPPE & R.B. FINNESTAD (eds.), *Understanding and History in Arts and Sciences* (Solum, Oslo, 1991), 21-32.

position as sacred landscape for a long time span. The finds and structures within the area originate from the early Middle Kingdom⁶ and continue through the Roman period⁷ with a particular prominence in the Late Period (8th to 4th century BC).

In the eastern part of the Asasif, Austrian excavations directed by Manfred Bietak (Institute of Egyptology, University Vienna and Austrian Archaeological Institute, Cairo) were undertaken from 1969 to 1977 (fig. 1). These works uncovered many small tombs with mud brick superstructures as well as numerous shaft tombs, mostly dating to the Late Period⁸. The work focused on the monumental tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414, 26th Dynasty)⁹, but the remains of a large temple of Ramesses' IV and the causeways to the royal temples of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre and Thutmose III in Deir el-Bahari were studied as well¹⁰.

2. Early development in the Asasif: Middle and New Kingdom

The earliest remains in the Austrian concession area date to the 11th Dynasty and include the causeway of Mentuhotep and contemporaneous non-royal tombs. Tombs of high officials were dug into the rock along the royal causeway as well as into the cliffs of Deir el-Bahari¹¹. The types of rock-cut tombs found in the Asasif are Middle Kingdom saff and shaft tombs¹². The former type is illustrated by the large Tomb I that functioned as the Austrian mission's magazine for finds. It was numbered as

⁶ See H. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri 1911-1931* (New York, 1942), 4-6; M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor). Vorbericht über die ersten vier Grabungskampagnen (1969-1971)*, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 278.4 (Vienna, 1972), 13.

⁷ Cf. E. HASLAUER, 'Gesichter von Särgen aus dem Asasif. Eine Ergänzung zu den Särgen der Soter-Familie', in: E. CZERNY et al. (eds.), *Timelines. Studies in honour of Manfred Bietak*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 149.1 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA, 2006), 121-128; J. BUDKA, 'Neues zu den Nutzungsphasen des Monumentalgrabes von Ankh-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris (TT 414)', *Egypt & the Levant* 18 (2008), 61-85.

⁸ Cf. J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 112-305.

⁹ M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris*, 2 Vols., Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 6 and 7, Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo 4 and 5 (Vienna, 1978 and 1982); D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, 54-55.

¹⁰ Cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, fig. 1.

¹¹ Cf. H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri*, 6; H.E. WINLOCK, *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes* (New York, 1947), 44; M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 10; F. KAMPP-SEYFRIED, in: K. BARD (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 803.

¹² For saff tombs see D. ARNOLD, *Die Architektur der 11. Dynastie. Das Grab des Inj jtj.f*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 4 (Mainz am Rhein, 1971), 36-48; F. KAMPP, *Die Thebanische Nekropole, Zum Wandel des Grabgedankens von der XVIII. bis zur XX. Dynastie*, Theben 13 (Mainz am Rhein, 1996), 110-111; D. POLZ, *Der Beginn des Neuen Reiches. Zur Vorgeschichte einer Zeitenwende*, Sonderschriften des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo 31 (Berlin, 2007), 252-254.

MM 737 by Winlock but had not been excavated prior to Bietak's work¹³. Its date still needs to be verified, but it probably originated in the late 11th Dynasty¹⁴.

A major remodelling of the landscape of the Asasif happened during the reign of Thutmose III. Late in his reign, the king erected his terrace temple between the ones of his predecessors Mentuhotep and Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari and provided it with a monumental causeway¹⁵. This causeway is 32.5 m wide and runs along the northern side of the Mentuhotep causeway and therefore right through the Austrian concession (fig. 1). Space for this causeway was created between the two older ones by removing parts of the so-called Hill 104 and by cutting off older tombs¹⁶. The northern boundary wall of the approach is in some sections preserved up to its original height, measuring a maximum of 3.46 m. Both rough irregular filling blocks and casing blocks with dressed faces of the wall bear painted marks, mostly in red. These marks are related to building processes of the monument¹⁷.

The latest of the New Kingdom monuments in the Austrian concession of the Asasif is the western part of the foundation of a huge temple project by Ramesses IV which remained unfinished¹⁸ and can be dated because of several foundation deposits¹⁹. It occupies the eastern part of the causeway of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre and to some extent

¹³ Although it was still visible from the surface, cf. D. ARNOLD, *Das Grab des Jnj jnjf*, 43, nr. 5 = "Grab ohne Nummer".

¹⁴ D. POLZ, *Der Beginn des Neuen Reiches*, 264 attributes it to the end of the reign of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre.

¹⁵ See M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 16; J. LIPINSKA, *Deir el-Bahari II, The Temple of Thutmose III, Architecture*, Centre d'archéologie méditerranéenne de l'académie polonaise des sciences et centre polonais d'archéologie méditerranéenne dans la république arabe d'Égypte au Caire (Warsaw, 1977), 59; J. LIPINSKA, 'The Temple of Thutmose III at Deir el-Bahri', in: C.H. ROEHRIG (ed.), *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh* (New York, 2005), 285-288.

¹⁶ Cf. J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 44-45.

¹⁷ See J. BUDKA, 'Mason's marks, pot marks and other pictograms from the Asasif (Western-Thebes)', in: B. HARING, O.A. KAPER & C. VAN ZOEST (eds.), *Pictograms or Pseudo Script? Non-textual identity marks in practical use in Ancient Egypt and elsewhere*, Egyptologische Uitgaven 25 (Leiden and Leuven, 2009), 67-91 and J. BUDKA, 'Non-textual marks in relation to hieratic bench-marks and ostraca from the Asasif (Western-Thebes)', in: P. ANDRÁSSY, J. BUDKA & F. KAMMERZELL (eds.), *Non-textual marking systems, writing and pseudo script from prehistory to present times*, Lingua Aegyptia-Studia Monographica 8 (Göttingen, 2009), 179-203.

¹⁸ Cf. M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit – Die Häuser der Millionen von Jahren. Eine Untersuchung zu Königskult und Tempeltypologie in Ägypten*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 51 (Wiesbaden, 2002), 524-546; J. BUDKA, 'The Ramesside Temple in the Asasif: Observations on its construction and function, based on the results of the Austrian Excavations', in: R. PREYS (ed.), *7. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Structuring Religion, Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen 3.2* (Wiesbaden, 2009), 17-45.

¹⁹ A. LANSING, 'The Egyptian Expedition 1934-1935. The Museum's Excavations at Thebes', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts* 30 (Nov. 1935), Part II, 7-8; W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt, A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Part II: New Kingdom* (New York, 1990), fifth edition, 372, fig. 234; J. WEINSTEIN, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt* (Ann Arbor, 1973), 277-280; M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 19-20; J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 48-54, fig. 6.

the southern part of the causeway of Thutmose III. Blocks of these two older buildings were used along with other *spolia* for the foundation for the Ramesside monument²⁰. The foundation's filling blocks are basically the only parts of the temple that are left because it suffered from intense stone robbery from the Late New Kingdom onwards.²¹ Although this is regrettable, it offers a unique opportunity to study very remarkable hieratic bench-marks written on the *tafl* of the foundation bed that would be invisible had the temple been found intact²².

The blocking of the causeways of Mentuhotep and Thutmose III in the eastern part of the Asasif by the monumental temple of Ramesses IV started their complete dismantling, which is attested for the temples in Deir el-Bahari since the Late New Kingdom, probably partly supported by damage due to an earthquake²³. In consequence, a large area was cleared in front of the sacred valley – providing an ideal location to build tombs. These were the preconditions, in connection with a prominent position embedded in the sacred landscape of Thebes, that caused the Asasif to become the most important part of the Western Theban necropolis during the Late Period²⁴.

3. Funerary remains in the Asasif: Late Period

The Asasif is particularly famous for its function as necropolis. The cemetery flourished during the Late Period (8th to 4th century BC), a period which is still poorly understood and not systematically studied in Western Thebes²⁵. Well-known, of course, are the monumental tombs of the highest officials of the 25th and 26th Dynasties in the Asasif (e.g. TT 34 Montuemhat, TT 197 Padineith, TT 414 Ankh-Hor and TT 27 Sheshonq)²⁶. Their huge, temple-like mud brick superstructures are still partly well preserved. The distribution of these tombs is influenced by the presence of important cultural landmarks that dominate the area: the above mentioned causeways to the royal temples at Deir el-Bahari, especially the most northern one, the causeway of

²⁰ Cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 24-25.

²¹ Cf. D. ARNOLD, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York, 1999), 28.

²² J. BUDKA, in: R. PREYS (ed.), 7. *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung*, 17-45.

²³ Cf. E. NAVILLE, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, Part III, Egypt Exploration Fund (London, 1913), 1; H.E. WINLOCK, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri*, 7 with fig. 1; D. ARNOLD, *Das Grab des Inj jfff*, 32 with note 102 and M. DOLINSKA, 'Some Remarks about the Function of the Thutmose III Temple at Deir el-Bahari', in: G. GUNDLACH & M. ROCHHOLZ (eds.), *Ägyptische Tempel – Struktur, Funktion und Programm (Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagungen in Gosen 1990 und in Mainz 1992)*, Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge 37 (Hildesheim, 1994), 38.

²⁴ Cf. M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor I*, 29 and D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, 22-24.

²⁵ Cf. D.A. ASTON, 'The Theban West Bank from the Twenty-fifth Dynasty to the Ptolemaic Period', in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 138.

²⁶ For a concise study of these tombs see D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, passim.

Hatshepsut²⁷. This processional route, in contrast to the ones by Mentuhotep Nebhepetre and Thutmose III, was not completely dismantled after the New Kingdom but remained in use until Ptolemaic and Roman times.

Less famous than the monumental 'temple tombs' of the 25th and 26th Dynasties are smaller buildings, especially in the eastern part of the Asasif, that are contemporaneous mud brick chapels²⁸. They are similar to the monumental tombs but much smaller in scale and with simple types of substructures. More than 20 chapels were partly excavated in the Austrian concession. The chain of small tombs situated along the so-called Hill 104, which lies north of the causeway of Thutmose III (fig. 1), includes probably the earliest burial sites and originated in the 25th Dynasty. Because of the stratigraphic evidence and the associated finds, these structures can be dated to the period between 750-650 BC²⁹ and are thus earlier than similar ones in the plain of the eastern part of the Asasif.

Among the most interesting finds are almost intact tomb groups from Tomb VII, built against Hill 104 and discovered in 1971³⁰. This tomb is a small structure with a simple system of shaft and chambers. Its mud-brick superstructure, set between two already existing buildings (Tombs V and XXIV), is divided into two parts: a small open court in the front and a vaulted cult sanctuary with a niche in the back. The substructure was reached by a staircase, which proceeds down from the courtyard. Nearly complete burials were recovered from its original burial chamber: At the very bottom of a heap of several crude wooden coffins a sparsely decorated anthropoid coffin came to light that revealed another wooden case. The inner coffin disclosed the still untouched burial of an adult male covered with a fine bead net and amulets, whose body was in a badly preserved state³¹. Based on comparative material that provides good parallels, the extensively decorated inner coffin can be dated to 700-675 BC. The texts identify its owner as a male called Irw who does not have any titles. Another chamber in Tomb VII yielded the coffins of a female called Kherirw and remains of her burial equipment that can be dated between 670-640 BC. Both Irw and Kherirw can be identified as Kushites based on their representations in Kushite rather than Egyptian dress, their names with several variants in hieroglyphic writing and because of the skeletal remains³². The evidence from Tomb VII – revealing a high level of

²⁷ Cf. M. BIETAK, in: M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor I*, 19-37.

²⁸ Cf. J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 112-305.

²⁹ Cf. D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 146 who dated these buildings between 700-650 BC.

³⁰ See M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 30-35, J. BUDKA, 'Tomb VII in the Asasif: Its owners, date and implications', in: J. GOYON & C. CARDIN (eds.), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress for Egyptologists*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 150.1 (Leuven, 2007), 241-250.

³¹ M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 34, pls. 23-25.

³² J. BUDKA, in: J. GOYON & C. CARDIN (eds.), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress for Egyptologists*, 241-250.

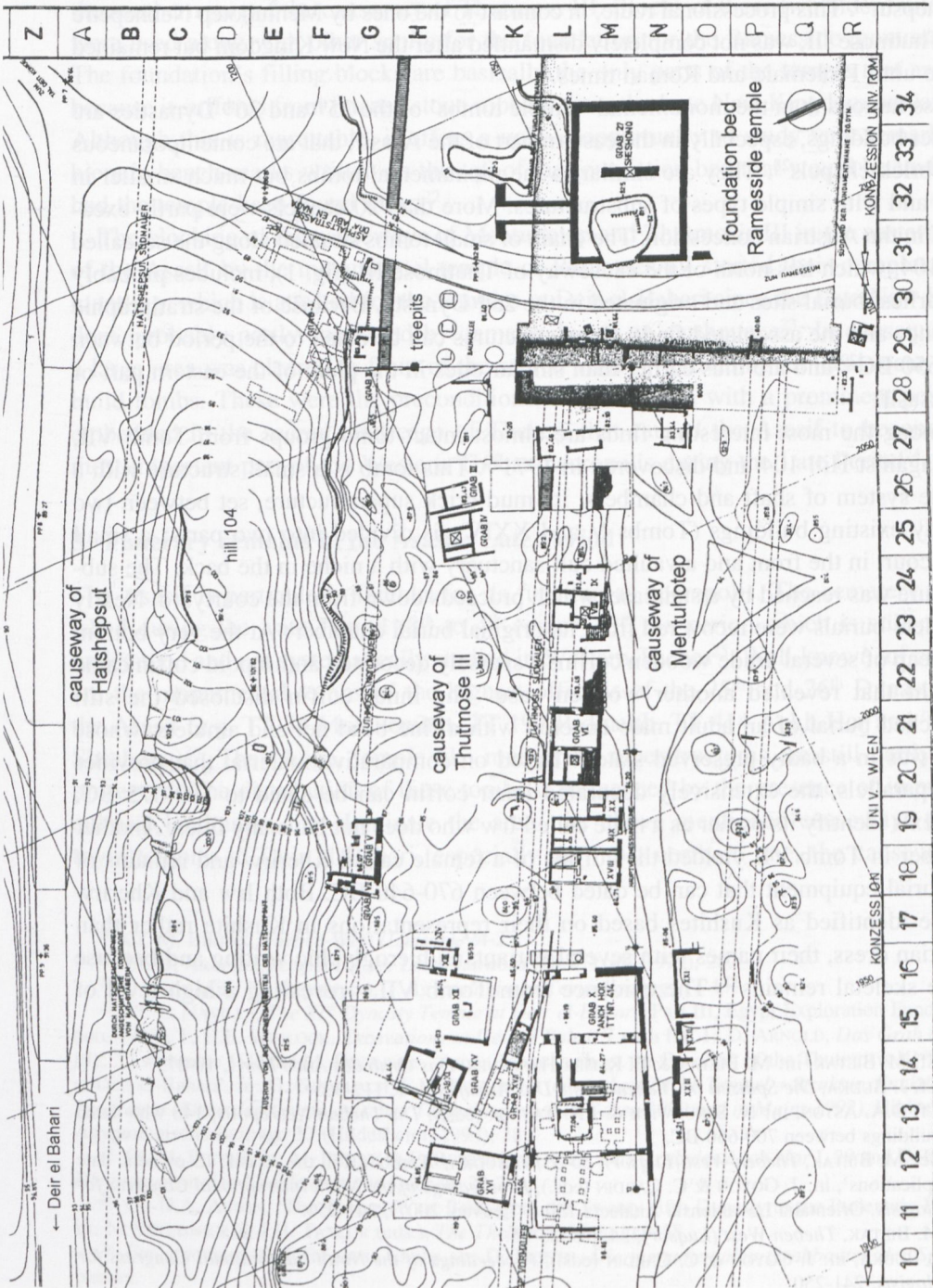


Fig. 1. The Austrian concession in the Asasif (featuring the location of the excavation squares). After D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, Plan 2.

Egyptianized burial customs as well as indigenous features of Kushite character – initiated the current research project on burials of Kushite people in Egypt that is based at Humboldt-University Berlin and directed by Frank Kammerzell³³. Tomb VII might indicate a cluster of Kushite burials along Hill 104³⁴. This will hopefully be investigated by means of excavation, especially by clearing the neighbouring structures of the building.

As already mentioned, the small tombs situated in the bed of the causeways are a little later in date. It appears that after the spatial capacity of Hill 104 was filled, mud brick chapels were built as freestanding monuments in the plain as well. The series of structures in the region of the Thutmoside causeway originates from the 26th Dynasty³⁵. The general distribution of the non-monumental tombs (fig. 1) shows a chronological pattern: 1) the first row along Hill 104 with superstructures built against the gebel; 2) the second row of tombs above the former Mentuhotep causeway that is orientated towards a processional route parallel to the causeway of Hatshepsut with freestanding superstructures; 3) the third and the latest row that fills the area between 1) and 2) with freestanding mud brick chapels³⁶.

It is reasonable to assume that there were favourite places along processional ways and prominent landmarks, similar to the monumental tombs of the highest officials further to the west and their orientation towards the Hatshepsut causeway. The case of the line of tombs along the southern edge Hill 104 is slightly different since they were cut off from this royal causeway that ran north of the hill. Here, a position high up on the hill with a good view on the necropolis and maybe to a side branch of the procession using the routes between the tombs in the plain might be the objective. Least desirable and therefore used last were clearly the places in between with neither a close connection nor a good outlook on the processional and necropolis routes³⁷.

2.1. *Typology of non-monumental tombs*

Based on the evidence from the Austrian concession, a preliminary typology of non-monumental tombs in the Late Period in the Asasif has been established; all structures

³³ See J. BUDKA & F. KAMMERZELL, 'Kuschiten in Theben: Eine archäologische Spurensuche', *Der Antike Sudan* 18 (2007), 163-177; J. BUDKA, 'Kushite tomb groups in Late Period Thebes', in: *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Nubian Studies, Warsaw 2006* (Warsaw, 2010), 503-518.

³⁴ See D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 146.

³⁵ Tombs III, IV, VI, VIII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXII, XXIII and XXV in the Austrian concession area; see J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 300.

³⁶ J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 104-105 and 299-300.

³⁷ Cf. the similar situation during the New Kingdom, B. ENGELMANN-VON CARNAP, *Die Struktur des thebanischen Beamtenfriedhofs in der ersten Hälfte der 18. Dynastie, Analyse von Position, Grundrißgestaltung und Bildprogramm der Gräber*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Ägyptologische Reihe 15 (Berlin, 1999), 68.

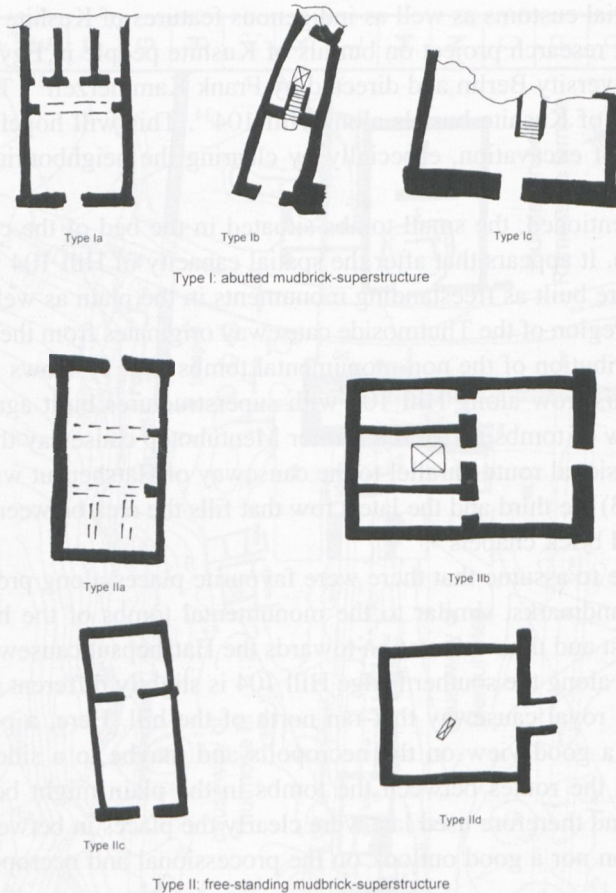


Fig. 2. Types I and II of non-monumental tombs in the Asasif (Austrian and German concessions).

find parallels in other parts of the Theban necropolis, e.g. in the area of the Ramesseum³⁸. Three main types have been classified (table 1 and fig. 2)³⁹. The most important characteristic is whether they are freestanding structures, abutting structures, or re-used ones. The last type is important because it is very common, especially during the Third Intermediate Period, and it comprises rock-cut tombs as well as freestanding monuments and shaft-tombs. It seems to be a Third Intermediate Period tradition that was revived during the Persian Period and again common in the 4th century BC up to

³⁸ Cf. M. NELSON, 'The Ramesseum Necropolis', in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 88-94.

³⁹ J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 296-305.

Roman times. This kind of re-use was not limited to tombs of small scale but monumental tombs like the tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414) were modified by high officials in a very similar way⁴⁰.

	Type	Features	Records	Dating
Type I: abutted mud-brick chapels	Ia	superstructure against rock, tripartite plan with three chapels; simple shaftsystem	Tomb II; Tomb E	750-670 BC
	Ib	superstructure against rock, plan in two halves; simple shaftsystem	Tomb VII; Tombs M und L	
	Ic	superstructure against rock, square plan; simple shaftsystem with staircase	Tomb V, (Tomb XXIV?)	
Type II: free-standing mud-brick chapels	IIa	tripartite plan with three chapels; simple shaftsystem	structure at Tomb XIa	700-640 BC
	IIb	plan divided in two with three chapels; simple shaftsystem	Tombs IV, VI, VIII, XVI, XVIII-XX; Tomb F	680-520 BC
	IIc	plan divided in two with single chapel; simple shaftsystem	Tombs III; XIII (?)	640-600 BC
	IId	square plan; shaftsystem	Tombs R, V (German concession)	?
	IIe	(not to be classified); shaftsystem	Tombs XIV, XXI, XXIII; Tomb S (?)	700-520 BC
Type III: re-use of older structures/shafts	IIIa	re-use of MK-saff tombs; abutted superstructure in mud brick (cf. type I, e.g. TT 312)	Tomb XIb	670-520 BC
	IIIb	re-use of MK-saff tombs; new corridors and shafts	Tomb I	780 BC ff.
	IIIc	re-use of MK-shaft tombs; new shafts and rooms	shafts in H-K/29-30; R/29	600 BC ff.
	IIId	re-use of non-monumental Late period-tombs (cf. monumental-tombs)	Tombs V-VII, "Tomb IX"	525 BC ff.

Table 1. Typology of Late Period non-monumental tombs at Thebes/Asasif (based on evidence from the Austrian concession and the published results from the German concession, after Budka, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, tab. 16).

⁴⁰ Cf. J. BUDKA, *Egypt & the Levant* 18 (2008), 61-85.

Tombs of Type I were located at so-called Hill 104 and characterized by a non-free-standing mud brick chapel and a simple shaft system. The earliest example (Tomb II) illustrates a tripartite ground plan (fig. 2). Tombs of Type II were built orientated towards the causeway of Mentuhotep and above the causeway of Thutmose III. Their distinctive feature was a freestanding mud brick chapel divided in two (fig. 2). The examples in the Asasif can be dated to the Saite period but Type II finds its precedents in earlier chapels behind the Ramesseum that also influenced Type I⁴¹.

2.2. *The development of funerary architecture and burial customs in the Late Period Asasif*

The dating of the above mentioned types of non-monumental tombs from the Asasif is based on the stratigraphic evidence, an architectural study and the analyses of the finds from the structures. The chronological distribution of non-monumental tombs in the Asasif can be summarized as follows (see table 2): During the 25th Dynasty tombs were re-used in the Third Intermediate Period tradition. A new kind of tomb, Type I, appeared around 700 BC (mud brick chapels that abutted against so-called

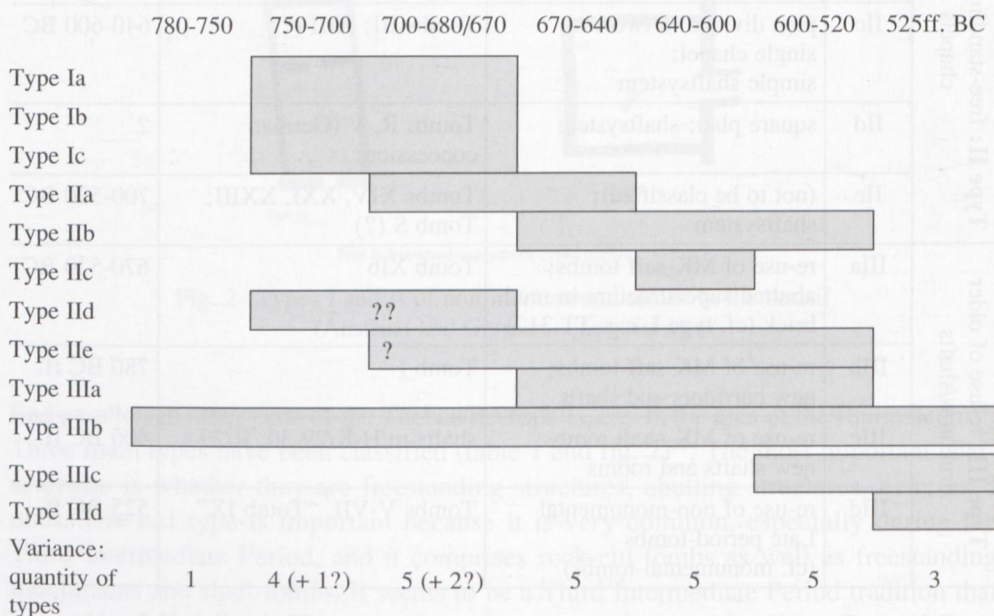


Table 2. Chronological evidence of non-monumental tombs at Thebes/Asasif (Late Period)

⁴¹ Cf. D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, 36, figs. 9 and 10; D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *Theban Necropolis*, 141, fig. 2.

Hill 104)⁴². The Saite period saw the development of freestanding mud brick chapels in the plain (Type II) and the continued re-use of older structures. After 525 BC burials in the Asasif were exclusively limited to Type III, the re-use of already existing structures.

In summary, four main phases of development may be differentiated according to the chronological variability of tomb types.

- 1) The experimental phase (750-700 BC) – the advent of new, innovative types that are not yet standardized. This holds true for the architecture (new types of tombs along Hill 104 parallel to Third Intermediate style re-burials in old shafts) as well as for the burial equipment (e.g. no standardized use of canopic jars, of shabtis etc.)⁴³.
- 2) The innovative phase (700-670/660 BC) is very closely linked to the experimental stage, but there is a bit more evidence. In general, both phases are poorly attested and the data is fragmentary. Again, innovations are both found in the architecture and the burial equipment (e.g. the innovative monumental tombs of Karabesken and Karakhamun, the frequent appearance of non-monumental tomb type I and the advent of tomb chapels of Type II as well as new types of coffins etc.).
- 3) The phase of expansion (670/660-525 BC) is characterized by the largest amount of tombs of the period in question. Saite tomb chapels are well attested and, in contrast to earlier phases, there are standardized and freestanding structures. Tripartite concepts were abandoned in favor of bipartite ones that became the norm (Type II). The same holds true for the contents of tomb groups that became standardized (e.g. shabtis, canopic jars, coffins etc.).
- 4) The restrictive phase (after 525 BC) is characterized by re-use only. No new or independent structures were built until Ptolemaic times. This reflects a totally different attitude than in the New Kingdom – it was no longer of first priority to build ones own tomb, but rather to be buried in a prominent location, in an already existing structure⁴⁴. The re-use phase seems to have started in the Persian period. The material evidence for the funerary culture of this period is scarce⁴⁵, but in general

⁴² This corresponds to the evidence in Abydos where independent tomb structures after a period of re-use were first built around 700 BC, see A. LEAHY, 'Kushite Monuments at Abydos', in: C. EYRE, A. LEAHY & L.M. LEAHY (eds.), *The Unbroken Reed. Studies in the Culture and Heritage of Ancient Egypt in Honour of A.F. Shore*, Egypt Exploration Society, Occasional Publication 11 (London, 1994), 188.

⁴³ Cf. D.A. ASTON, *Tomb Groups from the End of the New Kingdom to the Beginning of the Saite Period*, unpublished Ph.D.-thesis, University of Birmingham, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology (Birmingham, 1987), 639 who described the period 720-675 BC as experimental phase.

⁴⁴ Cf. D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 157.

⁴⁵ D.A. ASTON, 'Dynasty 26, dynasty 30 or dynasty 27? In search of the funerary archaeology of the Persian period', in: A. LEAHY & J. TAIT (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Egypt in honour of H.S. Smith* (London, 1999), 17-22; D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 155-162.

there is the tendency to stick to Saite types with some modifications. During the 4th century, earlier traditions, shapes and objects were revived with an emphasis on the Saite period. This fits well with the evidence, that tombs of this period were also 'revived' because they were used as favorite burial places.

Thus, in an attempt to synthesize the architectural evidence with the material culture plus the funerary remains, the following can be proposed (table 3):

Period	Phase	Characteristic architecture	Characteristic tomb groups
750-700 BC	<i>Experimental</i>	new types with individual and alternating elements	innovations and new elements, but not yet standard forms, no fixed norm
700-670/60 BC	<i>Innovative</i>	various new types, to be soon standardized	
670/60-525 BC	<i>Developmental</i>	standardized architecture (referring to older types, partly modified)	standardized tomb groups & objects (referring to older types, partly modified)
after 525 BC	<i>Restrictive</i>	re-use only, no new structures	modified shape and quantity of objects with archaizing tendencies ('re-use')

Table 3. Reconstruction of the main phases of the funerary culture in the Late Period Asasif (based on the architectural evidence and the material culture).

Only a small portion of the finds coming from the Austrian excavations in the Asasif have been published to date. Most of the results presented here are based on the renewed study of the objects that were left behind in the Asasif or transported to the Cairo Museum and the Kunsthistorische Museum Vienna⁴⁶. The finds reveal 1) the character of the period from 750-670 BC⁴⁷ as innovative and experimental⁴⁸; 2) the Saite period as a time of standardized forms; and 3) the Persian period as a time with different priorities and some consideration of earlier traditions that finally led to the 'revival' of Saite forms during the 4th century. It would appear safe to say that these phases reflect certain changes in society and seem to be related to historical events. The innovations and experiments around 700 are certainly linked to the rule of the Kushites that by this time was well established; these changes were further developed,

⁴⁶ For the detailed analysis see J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vols. 2 and 4.

⁴⁷ On the basis of the tomb groups, a distinction between the period 750-700 and the time span of 700-670/650 is possible, cf. D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 138-149.

⁴⁸ Cf. D.A. ASTON, *Tomb Groups*, 639.

modified and standardized during the Saite period. No abrupt break or discontinuity can be observed between the 25th and 26th Dynasties⁴⁹. The Persian period seems to mark a break in the funerary tradition in regard to the organisation of the necropolis and the assignments of tombs⁵⁰. In the material culture, however, there is a certain consistency from the 6th to the 4th century BC. The 4th century BC – featuring once more indigenous kings after periods of foreign domination – was the second heyday of the Asasif as a cemetery and cult place⁵¹. As attested in other sources, the 30th Dynasty in particular was strongly attached to the traditions of the 26th Dynasty – both architecture and objects were revived, re-used and imitated.

Still, all of these changes in burial custom do not reflect a sudden shift of religious ideas or distinct political events but can be interpreted in context and with consideration of the more general development in 1st millennium BC Egypt. Fundamental changes in the Egyptian funerary belief system as well as in society started as early as in the New Kingdom⁵² and markedly increased during the Third Intermediate Period⁵³. This shift found its architectural expression in the perception of the tomb as a ‘temple tomb’ which is as much reflected in the mud brick chapels of medium and small size as it is in the monumental ‘temple tombs’ in the Asasif⁵⁴. Thus, the trend based on the funerary remains in the Asasif may be understood as the indirect outcome of social and economic development and historical events as well as the mirror of Late Egyptian funerary beliefs, affected by the processes mentioned above and focusing on the idea of funerary cult as cult for the gods, most prominently Osiris, and the concept of the tomb as a temple site⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Cf. K. JANSEN-WINKELN, ‘Thebanische Statuen der 25. und 26. Dynastie’, *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 34 (2006), 240; see also the career of Montuemhat that bridges the 25th and 26th Dynasties, B.J. KEMP, *Ancient Egypt. Anatomy of a Civilization* (London, 2006, 2nd edition), 346-348.

⁵⁰ D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 157.

⁵¹ See J. BUDKA, *Egypt & the Levant* 18 (2008), 61-85.

⁵² Cf. J. ASSMANN, *Das Grab des Basa (Nr. 389) in der Thebanischen Nekropole*, *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo* 6 (Mainz am Rhein, 1973), 30-32; J. ASSMANN, ‘Das Grab mit gewundenem Abstieg. Zum Typenwandel des Privat-Felsgrabes im Neuen Reich’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 40 (1984), 284; J. ASSMANN, *Das Grab des Amenemope TT 41*, *Theben* 3 (Mainz am Rhein, 1991), 6-8.

⁵³ Cf. K.M. COONEY, *The Cost of Death, The social and economic value of Ancient Egyptian funerary art in the Ramesside Period*, *Egyptologische Uitgaven* 22 (Leiden, 2007), 272.

⁵⁴ For the concept of the so-called “Grab im Tempelhof” see J.F. QUACK, ‘Das Grab am Tempeldromos. Neue Deutungen zu einem spätzeitlichen Grabtyp’, in: K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN & H.-W. FISCHER-ELFERT (eds.), *„Von reichlich ägyptischem Verstande“*. *Festschrift für Waltraud Guglielmi zum 65. Geburtstag*, *Philippika* 11 (Wiesbaden, 2006), 113-132.

⁵⁵ Cf. the likewise very complex background of the change in funerary art during the New Kingdom, K.M. COONEY, *The Cost of Death*, 272.

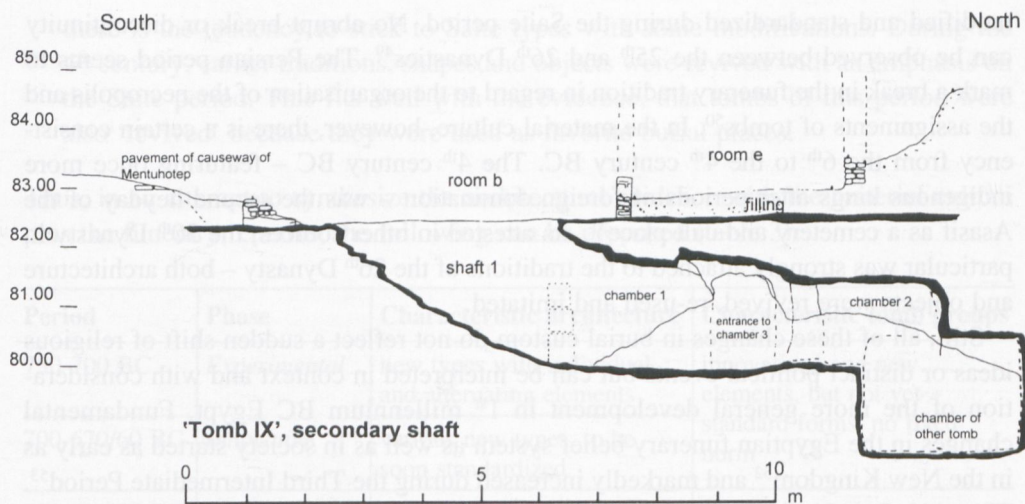


Fig. 3. North-South-section of the secondary shaft in 'Tomb IX'.

2.3. Burials and beyond: cultic activities & daily routine in the Asasif

The architectural evidence within the Austrian concession is not restricted to tombs and temples only. A very interesting and unusual structure, with a unique ground plan reminiscent of domestic architecture, was found and labelled 'Tomb IX'⁵⁶. In its original building phase, there were no shafts or any substructure – the two existing shaft systems are secondary and were added much later (fig. 3). What might have been the original function of this building?

The answer may come from the investigation of the distribution of deposits of embalming material in the Austrian concession. There are two notable concentrations, both along roads of the necropolis and in both cases connected with buildings whose ground plan is unusual⁵⁷. The building that is better preserved is the structure in question, 'Tomb IX'. Taking into account its ground plan, mud brick installations in the superstructure, the lack of tomb shafts, the nearby embalming deposit and the textual evidence from P. Vindob. 3873⁵⁸ (table 4), an interpretation that this may have been

⁵⁶ M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, 29 and fig. 7; J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*, vol. 1, 203-215; vol. 3, 772-778; J. BUDKA, 'Deponierungen von Balsamierungsmaterial im spätzeitlichen Theben (Ägypten). Befund, Kontext und Versuch einer Deutung', in: H. ROEDER & J. MYLONOPOULOS (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual. Auf der Suche nach der rituellen Handlung in den antiken Kulturen Ägyptens und Griechenlands* (Vienna, 2006), 96-97.

⁵⁷ J. BUDKA, in: H. ROEDER & J. MYLONOPOULOS (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual*, 93-94.

⁵⁸ For the text see R.L. VOS, *The Apis Embalming Ritual, P. Vindob. 3873*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 50 (Leuven, 1993), 32-33 (rt. IV 20; rt. IV 23 VI a 11; rt. I 1).

an embalming workshop (*pr nfr*) or *w^cb.t* was proposed⁵⁹. This evidence, unique to date in Thebes, is relevant for reconstructing the organisational structure of the necropolis and for clues about the daily routine of those who worked with tombs and burials. As archaeological data from the Late Period it enlarges our knowledge based on later textual sources regarding the business of embalmers and their workshops in Thebes (e.g. the archives of the choachytes)⁶⁰. It furthermore highlights that embalming deposits constitute integrative aspects of the funerary practise during the 8th-5th centuries⁶¹.

Functional units of a *w^cb.t*

according to P. Vindob. 3873	possible analogy in 'Tomb IX'
portico <i>sbh.t</i>	porch with pilaster-like doorjambs
broad hall <i>wsh.t</i> '3.t	room b
<i>.t nm^cj.t</i> – sleeping room	room c with mastaba
embalming room (Vos) with mastaba of sand	room e
+ storerooms, secondary rooms	rooms d and f

Table 4. Units of a *w^cb.t* according to P. Vindob. 3873 compared to the architecture of 'Tomb IX'.

Pottery is another group of artefacts that attests to burials and other uses of the Asasif. Numerous pot sherds and complete vessels provide proof not only for burials, but also for rituals and cultic activities. The pottery confirms ritual acts such as burning incense and other offerings related to burials and funerary rites. Some acts attested from the ceramic evidence are, however, possibly connected with the cult of Osiris and most likely with the Beautiful Feast of the Valley. Similar to TT 414, the non-monumental tombs in the Asasif have yielded a large amount of votive and cultic pottery, mostly of 30th Dynasty and Ptolemaic date (fig. 4). The high concentration of votive cups, bowls, incense burners, goblets and libation jars identified in TT 414 have good parallels in the tomb of Harwa (TT 37)⁶². Similar votive pottery is attested in great quantity

⁵⁹ J. BUDKA, in: H. ROEDER & J. MYLONOPOULOS (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual*, 96-97.

⁶⁰ Cf. P.W. PESTMAN, *The Archive of the Theban Choachytes (Second Century B.C.)*, *Studia Demotica II* (Leuven, 1993) and M. DEPAUW, *The Archive of Teos and Thabis from Early Ptolemaic Thebes*, *P. Brux. Dem. Inv. E. 8252-8256*, Monographies Reine Élisabeth 8 (Brussels, 2000), 13-17.

⁶¹ Cf. D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 153-160, J. BUDKA, in: H. ROEDER & J. MYLONOPOULOS (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual*, 85-103.

⁶² See the preliminary remarks by F. TIRADRITTI, 'Archaeological Activities of the Museum of Milan in the tomb of Harwa (TT 37) and Akhimenru (TT 404). October 2002-January 2003', *Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 79 (2005), 170.

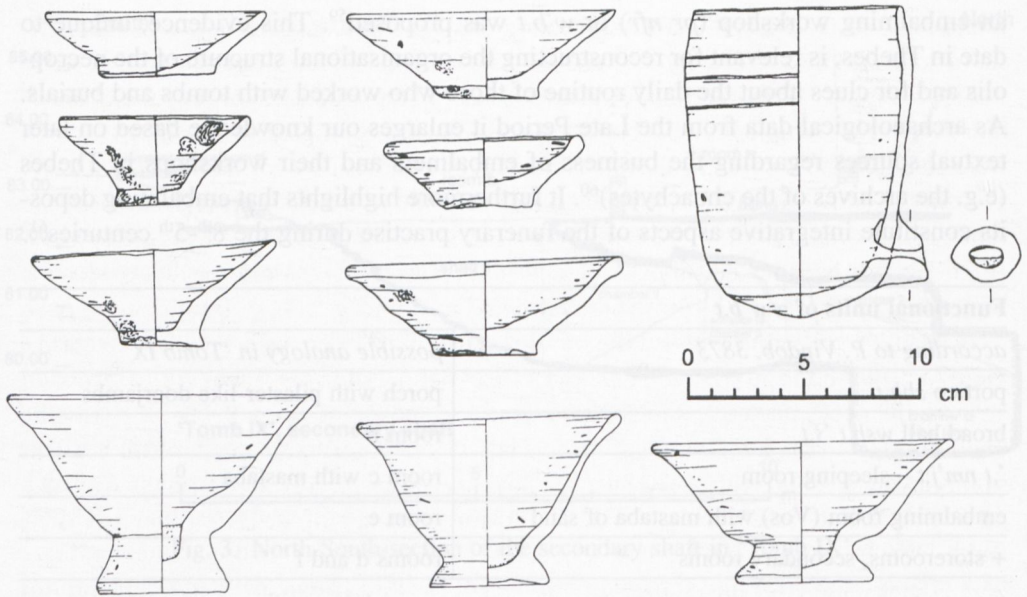


Fig. 4. Cultic and votive pottery from non-monumental tombs in the Asasif.

in Umm el-Qaab and related to the cult of Osiris⁶³. Thus, a merging of the cult for the dead, the cult of Osiris and festivals with a funerary connotation seems to be displayed in the material evidence from 4th (to 3rd) century BC Asasif. This can be correlated with textual data concerning a specific adaptation of the theology of Amun in Late Period Thebes and corresponding changes in the ritual and festive practise⁶⁴.

3. Recent work in the Asasif (Austrian concession)

The major discovery by the Austrian Mission in the Asasif was the monumental tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414). It was published soon after excavation as a two-volume monograph, presenting the stratigraphic evidence, architecture, decoration and the objects

⁶³ Cf. e.g. the small offering qaabs, see V. MÜLLER, '3. Deponierungen östlich und südöstlich des Grabes', in: G. DREYER et al., 'Umm el-Qaab. Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof, 13./14./15. Vorbericht', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 59 (2003), 100-102 with fig. 11.

⁶⁴ See C. TRAUNECKER, F. LE SAOUT & O. MASSON, *La Chapelle d'Achôris à Karnak, Recherches sur les grandes civilisations, Synthèse no. 5*, Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak, vol. 2 (Paris, 1981), 134-137 and 145-146 (assimilation of Festival of the Valley and the Festival of the Decades/Ritual of Djeme).

found *in situ*⁶⁵. The architecture and decoration of the monumental tombs of the highest officials of the 25th and 26th Dynasties has been the subject of scholarly work since the 19th century⁶⁶. Previous studies have focused on the architectural layout and decoration of these 'temple tombs', but little attention has been paid to the objects which were found in these structures, such as the remains of funerary equipment and pottery.

Current fieldwork in the Asasif aims to contribute to a better understanding of the funerary material culture of Thebes during the 1st millennium BC. Thus, the tomb of Ankh-Hor has become the subject of renewed interest. During two recent study seasons conducted in 2007 and 2008⁶⁷, work focused on the large amount of finds coming from TT 414 that were left in place in the mission's magazine. The main goal was to clarify the exact number and character of the objects stored in the magazine in order to arrange the necessary means to study and publish these finds completely⁶⁸. It became quite obvious that a large amount of the finds is, although fragmented, of high scientific relevance. This holds true especially for the group of coffins that dates from the 6th century BC to the 2nd century AD. The coffin fragments of the tomb owner himself, Ankh-Hor, for instance, belong to the very rare datable pieces of this period⁶⁹.

A good example for the high quality of the coffins discovered in TT 414 is an almost complete, nicely painted coffin of the early Ptolemaic period (Excav. No. 655). The piece is important not only because of its decoration but especially because of its context: its find spot was the burial chamber of Ankh-Hor himself and this confirms the planned re-use of TT 414 during the 4th and 3rd century BC. Similar to the small tombs, the monumental tombs were utilized as burial places for a large number of people; most of these were connected with Karnak and Amun. This use continued into Roman times as can be traced in the case of TT 414 by means of coffins and mummy cartonnage cases.

⁶⁵ M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor I* and II.

⁶⁶ For a concise history of work in the Asasif see D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, 18-20.

⁶⁷ The team consisted of Manfred Bietak (Director); Julia Budka (Field director); Sara Bock, Jana Helmbold, Veronika Hinterhuber (all Egyptologists); Arvi Korhonen (student of Egyptology); Erico Peintner & Ahmed Refaat Eisa Abo El-Ata (both Conservators); Zsuzsanna Thót (Archaeologist, drafts person); Katharina Vogt (student of Egyptology) and Angelika Zdiarsky (Egyptologist). We are much indebted for the assistance of our SCA inspectors: Ahmed Hassan Abeer (2007), Hassan Ramadan Mahmoud (2007) and Abdel Hakiem Ahmed el-Sorghiar (2008). For permission to undertake the work we are grateful to Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary-General of the SCA and the local authorities in Luxor, especially to Dr. Mansour Bourraik, Director General of Southern Upper Egypt and Ali el-Asfar, Director General of the West Bank. The 2007-2008 activities were partly funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Germany).

⁶⁸ Cf. J. BUDKA, 'Wiedersehen mit Ankh-Hor: Neue Arbeiten in der österreichischen Konzession des Asasifs (Theben-West)', *Sokar* 16 (2008), 74-79; J. BUDKA, *Egypt & the Levant* 18 (2008), 61-85.

⁶⁹ J.H. TAYLOR, 'Theban coffins from the Twenty-second to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty: dating and synthesis of development', in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 119; the pieces are already published, see M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor II*, 167-170, figs. 69, 70, 73 and pl. 93.

4. Prospects of future work

To consider the scientific value of the renewed work in the Asasif and prospects of future studies, we have to review the present state of research. First, the inventory of monumental tombs of the Late Period in Thebes is presently only vaguely known. There are few datable coffins (stone sarcophagi and wooden coffins⁷⁰), shabtis, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris-figures, stelae and boxes or shrines. The reconstruction of a typical tomb group as proposed by Aston is largely based on a collection of data from different tombs, mostly non-monumental structures⁷¹. Intact tomb groups from monumental tombs used by the highest officials are exceptional⁷². Nevertheless, the current difficulties in reconstructing an elite burial within one of the 'temple tombs' of Kushite or Saite date are at least partly due to the previous focus of Egyptologists on texts, tomb decoration, architecture rather than on the finds. In this respect, the finds from the tomb of Ankh-Hor have the potential to answer many questions regarding burials of high officials during the 26th Dynasty as well as during later periods.

This is the second important aspect of the current Asasif-project: It can contribute to our understanding of the frequent re-use of the Asasif 'temple tombs' in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC up to Roman times. This usage is well known (cf. the tombs of Harwa, Padihorresnet, Mutirdis, Basa, Ibi and Ankh-Hor)⁷³ and vast amounts of coffins, shrines, cartonnage mummy cases, papyri, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris-statuettes and pottery were found in all of the monumental tombs. Again, only a few of these finds have been published to date. The Austrian mission aims to fill this gap in Theban archaeology. The complete material from a Late Period monumental 'temple tomb' which was excavated according to modern standards and originates from the 6th century BC to the 2nd century AD will be studied and published as one corpus.

The coffins from TT 414 (both complete and fragmentary) will help to clarify the role of local traditions and the preconditions for the 'conservative art' and 'archaistic' culture in Thebes⁷⁴. As was recently illustrated on the basis of the material coming

⁷⁰ Cf. M. NASR, 'A New 26th Dynasty Sarcophagus from Thebes', *Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum* 2 (1988), 82; A. AWADALLA & A. EL-SAWY, 'Une Sarcophage de Nsi-Ptah dans la tombe de Montouemhat', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'archéologie orientale* 90 (1990), 29-39 and the short list of dated Theban sarcophagi and wooden coffins from the 8th to 6th century BC by J.H. TAYLOR, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 98-99.

⁷¹ D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, figs. 7 and 11.

⁷² Cf. the intact burial of Wakh-ib-Ra (30th Dynasty) in TT 414, M. BIETAK & E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor II*, 182-220.

⁷³ See D.A. ASTON, in: N. STRUDWICK & J.H. TAYLOR (eds.), *The Theban Necropolis*, 162 with literature; add here E. GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Padihorresnet, Obvermögensverwalter der Gottesgemahlin des Amun (Thebanisches Grab Nr. 196)*, *Monumenta Aegyptiaca IX* (Turnhout, 2003) with much material from the 4th century BC.

⁷⁴ Cf. C. RIGGS, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt. Art, Identity, and Funerary Religion* (Oxford, 2005), 175-244.

from the smaller tombs of the Late Period in the Austrian concession⁷⁵, a detailed analysis of the finds from TT 414 will add fundamentally to our knowledge of the burial customs. Future work will help in understanding the connections and inter-relations during the relevant periods and in eventually reconstructing the general development of the most important necropolis in Thebes during the Late Period.

⁷⁵ J. BUDKA, *Die Spätzeit in Theben-West: Das Asasif*.