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Ankh-Hor Revisited: Study, Documentation and Publication of Forgotten Finds from the Asasif

Of all areas within the extensive Theban necropolis, a specific part was without doubt the most significant during the Late Period: the Asasif. This toponym refers to the plain in front of the valley of Deir el-Bahari that is crossed by the royal causeways leading to the famous temples of Mentuhotep Nebheptre, Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.¹ Although its earliest remains date from as early as the Middle Kingdom, the Asasif flourished in particular during the Late Period (8th to 4th centuries BC). This is well attested by the considerable number of monumental tombs that were erected by the highest officials of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties (ca. 722-525 BC) in the area.

Compared to other periods, such as the New Kingdom, Theban history from the 8th to 4th centuries BC is still poorly understood.² One exception to this lacuna in Theban archaeology is the architecture and decoration of these monumental tombs. Their huge, temple-like, mud brick superstructures are still well preserved and visible, and have been the subject of scholarly work since the 19th century.³ Previous studies have focused on the architectural layout and decoration of these 'temple tombs', but little attention has been paid to the objects found in these tombs, such as the remains of funerary equipment and pottery. Thus, the present state of knowledge on the burial customs of Late Period Thebes, especially the tomb equipment of the highest officials recovered from the burial grounds in the Asasif, must be regarded as incomplete. This paper aims to illustrate the potential of an analysis of archaeological artefacts from such a monumental 'temple tomb' to generate a better understanding of Late Period material culture in general and funerary customs in particular.

The Austrian mission in the Asasif

The Austrian excavations directed by Manfred Bietak (Institute of Egyptology, University of Vienna and Austrian Archaeological Institute, Cairo) were undertaken in the eastern part of the Asasif from 1969 to 1977 (**fig. 1**). These works uncovered many small tombs with mud brick superstructures of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties as well

¹ For the strong connection between the Asasif and Deir el-Bahari throughout much of Egyptian history cf. M. BIETAK, E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor I, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris*, UZK 4, Vienna 1978 (hereinafter referred to as: BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor I*), pp. 19-29; D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, UZK 6, Vienna 1984 (hereinafter referred to as: EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten*), p. 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 (hereinafter referred to as: STRUDWICK, Some aspects of the archaeology), p. 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*.

² 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, Past, Present and Future*, London 2003 (hereinafter referred to as: ASTON, *The Theban West Bank*), p. 138.

³ For a concise history of archaeological research in the Asasif see: EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten*, pp. 18-20.

as numerous shafts and *saff*-tombs, mostly dated from the Middle Kingdom but showing features of repeated reuse in subsequent periods, especially during the Late Period (5th–3rd centuries BC).⁴

The small funerary chapels excavated in the Austrian concession are contemporaneous and similar to the monumental ‘temple tombs’ of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties, but usually with simple types of substructures. The chain of small tombs situated along the so-called ‘Hill 104’, which lies north of the causeway of Thutmose III, includes probably the earliest burial sites dated to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.⁵ Tomb no. VII, built against Hill 104 and discovered in 1971, yielded relatively complete equipment of several burials. Interestingly, this small burial place can be attributed to a family of Kushite origin (Irw and Kherirw) who used it during the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties.⁶ The non-monumental tombs of the Late Period in the Austrian concession that are situated at the bottom of Hill 104 and are equipped with freestanding, temple-like superstructures, originated in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.⁷

The major discovery: a monumental tomb in the Austrian concession

In 1971 the remains of a large mud brick structure were cleaned and later turned out to comprise the mission’s major discovery: a monumental ‘temple tomb’ belonging to the *jmj-r3 jmj hn.t dw3.t-ntr Ntrk.t*, High Steward of the Divine Adoratrice Nitocris with the name *‘nh-Hr*, Ankh-Hor (TT 414, **fig. 1**).⁸ This tomb was excavated, then restored and opened to the public in 1982 – and to the present day is accessible to tourists. Its stratigraphic evidence, architecture, decoration and the objects found *in situ* were published soon after excavations as a two-volume monograph by Manfred Bietak and Elfriede Reiser-Haslauer.⁹

Other than the material discovered *in situ*, the general corpus of finds did not receive special attention – despite the fact that many of the objects would nicely contribute to any

⁴ Cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben–West (Luqsor). Vorbericht über die ersten vier Grabungskampagnen (1969–1971)*, Sitzungsberichte der ÖAW 278, 4, Vienna 1972 (hereinafter referred to as: BIETAK, *Theben–West (Luqsor)*); J. BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauchtum und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif. Eine Untersuchung der spätzeitlichen Befunde anhand der Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in den Jahren 1969–1977*, UZK 34, Vienna 2010 (hereinafter referred to as: BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauchtum und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*). For other findings in the concession area such as the Ramesside temple and royal causeways see 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.), *Structuring Religion, Proceedings of the 7th Egyptological Tempeltagung, Leuven 2005*, Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen 3,2, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 17–45; J. BUDKA, *Non-textual marks from the Asasif (Western-Thebes): Remarks on function and practical use based on external textual evidence*, [in:] P. ANDRÁSSY, J. BUDKA, F. KAMMERZELL (eds), *Non-textual marking systems, writing and pseudo script from prehistory to present times*, *Lingua Aegyptia – Stud. mon.* 8, Göttingen 2009 (hereinafter referred to as: BUDKA, *Non-textual marks from the Asasif*), pp. 179–182.

⁵ Cf. ASTON, *The Theban West Bank*, p. 146; BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauchtum und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, p. 78.

⁶ See BIETAK, *Theben–West (Luqsor)*, pp. 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 in Grenoble*, OLA 150, Leuven 2007, pp. 241–250; J. BUDKA, F. KAMMERZELL, *Kuschiten in Theben: Eine archäologische Spurensuche*, *Der Antike Sudan* 18 (2007), pp. 170–174.

⁷ For details on these non-monumental tombs see BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauchtum und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, pp. 95–162; cf. as a summary J. BUDKA, *The Asasif revisited: new results from the Austrian concession*, [in:] P. KOUSOULIS (ed.), *Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Department of Mediterranean Studies, Rhodes 22–29 May 2008*, OLA (Leuven 2010, forthcoming).

⁸ BIETAK, *Theben–West (Luqsor)*, p. 30, pl. XIVA.

⁹ See BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor I* (see footnote 1); M. BIETAK, E. REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris II*, UZK 5, Vienna 1982 (hereinafter referred to as: BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor II*).

collection of Egyptian culture. Indeed, some of the finds from TT 414 were distributed to museums. In the early 1970s, 'find sharing' was still a custom in Egyptian archaeology – the best preserved and most representative finds unearthed during excavations were divided between Egypt and the institution of the mission. Up until 1974, objects from the Austrian mission were brought to the museums in Cairo and Vienna, where some of them are on display. Objects classified as being of 'secondary importance' (because of their fragmentary state and the like) were left on site, in the mission's storeroom at Thebes. After 1974, no more 'find sharing' took place and even objects like almost complete coffins were left in the mission's storeroom. Some of these pieces and assemblages were never documented or studied, for various reasons, especially due to lack of time and short-staffed seasons during the years when the restoration of the tomb of Ankh-Hor was considered the main priority.

Until now, only a minority of the finds coming from the work of the Austrian mission in the Asasif have been published. In 2001, this writer took over the task of studying and publishing all the small tombs and artefacts belonging to the Late Period that had been discovered, apart from TT 414. As part of this work, a season of clearance and study was conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in the Asasif in 2002. Tomb No. I of the Austrian concession, a Middle Kingdom *saff*-tomb (**fig. 2**) located opposite Theban Tomb 27, was used as the mission's storeroom, which was re-opened in 2002, and most of its contents were re-arranged and catalogued.¹⁰ This work was continued in three field seasons from 2007 to 2009.¹¹ The main goal of these study seasons was to clarify the exact number and character of the objects stored in the Austrian mission's storeroom in order to arrange the necessary means to study these finds and to prepare their final publication.

Ankh-Hor revisited

Since the inventory and study of the small tombs in the Austrian concession was completed in 2006,¹² the present focus is on the large amount of objects from TT 414. The initial classification of the finds and the inventory of the contents of the storeroom were completed in 2008. The artefactual data is very rich and comprises all periods from the Middle Kingdom up to Roman and Byzantine times. Almost 200 fragments of coffins and fragmented coffins as well as a selection of 300 baskets of finds with wooden objects (fragments of coffins, shrines, statuettes, etc) remain to be consolidated and documented in order to be published and preserved.

The study seasons in 2007 and 2008 revealed the exact number and specific character of the objects stored in the mission's storeroom. Most of the finds are not of 'secondary importance', but – especially the large group of coffins – were left in the storeroom due to shortages of both staff and time and to modified regulations after 1974, (as discussed above), not because of any lack of scientific relevance.

In 2009, a timetable for future campaigns was set up. Allowing for restoration work, the archaeological documentation (both drawings and photographs) of the conserved objects can be completed within a minimum of two more study seasons. As a result of previous unsatisfactory storage conditions, many objects are close to disintegration and most of

¹⁰ For the results see 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, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Vienna, Vienna 2006.

¹¹ Cf. J. BUDKA, *Wiedersehen mit Ankh-Hor: Neue Arbeiten in der österreichischen Konzession des Asasifs (Theben-West)*, *Sokar* 16 (2008), pp. 74–79; J. BUDKA, *Neues zu den Nutzungsphasen des Monumentalgrabes von Ankh-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris (TT 414)*, *Egypt & Levant* 18 (2008), pp. 61–85.

¹² See now BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, pp. 491–745.

the pieces are in urgent need of conservation. The main goal is to move all the registered finds to the general storeroom of the West Bank, which requires the collaboration of several specialists, especially restorers of wood, cartonnage and papyrus.

Survey of the contents of the mission's storeroom

For a classification of the objects in the storeroom, eight main categories were established:

1. Coffins (fragments and complete ones): in general, most of the coffins and coffin fragments that were studied come from TT 414, the tomb of Ankh-Hor. The total of coffins (including fragments and almost complete ones) now numbers 260, ranging in date from the Late Period to Roman times.

Some of the newly studied fragments attest to an interesting use-life of the coffins – they were secondarily used as building material in the open courtyard and later shaft systems of TT 414.¹³ For instance, large fragments of *krsw*-coffins from the Late Period had been used as part of mud brick walls in the open courtyard of TT 414 during the Thirtieth Dynasty.¹⁴ On the other hand, coffins dated to the initial phase of TT 414's use as a burial place were not completely demolished. It even seems to be the case that the burial chamber of Ankh-Hor had some kind of special value during the phase of reuse (see the burial of Padias below). From these later times, the coffins are in general better preserved. Reg. 614 serves as an example: within an almost complete coffin of tamarisk wood with incised decoration, datable to the Thirtieth Dynasty, remains of the Book of the Dead were found *in situ* at the base of the coffin next to the mummy (fig. 3). One of the really spectacular discoveries in shaft 10/2 of TT 414 was the intact burial of Wahibre, dated to the Thirtieth Dynasty.¹⁵ His complete inner coffin (Reg. 865), wooden with incised and gilded decoration, was found in pieces in 2007 and successfully consolidated and repaired. It is now stored in the general storeroom and will be published before long.

Another remarkable coffin ensemble of the phase of secondary reuse of TT 414 is the set of two coffins by Padias, an Amun-priest of the early Ptolemaic Period (Reg. 655 and Reg. 655a). He was buried in the original burial chamber dedicated to Ankh-Hor and the coffins were found *in situ* (fig. 4).¹⁶ While the outer anthropoid coffin was completely covered in black paint, his inner coffin was beautifully painted in colour and remained largely intact (fig. 5). The lid had been demolished in antiquity by robbers who also removed the mummy.

Many fragments of coffins date to the Roman period, including corniches and various appliqué.¹⁷ At least two almost complete coffins from the Roman period, which have fallen into pieces, remain to be consolidated and documented.¹⁸

2. Cartonnage: a considerable amount of the collection of cartonnage had not been studied before 2007. During the latest work conducted in the mission's storeroom, seven large pieces of cartonnage, which can be dated to the Roman period because of their

¹³ BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor I*, pl. 27.

¹⁴ Cf. J. BUDKA, Neues zum Grab des Ankh-Hor (TT 414, Asasif): Der „Lichthof“, *Sokar* 18 (2009), pp. 89, fig. 9.

¹⁵ BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor II*, pp. 182-220.

¹⁶ Cf. BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Ankh-Hor II*, figs 67-68.

¹⁷ BUDKA, *Egypt & Levant* 18 (2008), pp. 79-82, fig. 16; BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, pp. 296-297, fig. 131.

¹⁸ This significantly increases our knowledge of the importance of the Asasif during Roman time and the broad usage of the Late Period 'temple tombs'; cf. the short paragraph on previously known, then rare material from the area: C. RIGGS, The Egyptian funerary tradition at Thebes in the Roman Period, [in:] N. STRUDWICK, J.H. TAYLOR (eds), *The Theban Necropolis, Past, Present and Future*, London 2003, p. 190.

stylistic features, were registered as single objects. Many fragments of differing sizes were documented from 158 baskets of finds. A considerable amount of cartonnage was recovered during the excavations from Tomb no. I, since this Middle Kingdom burial place was reused several times, starting with the Third Intermediate Period and continuing into the Ptolemaic and Roman times.¹⁹ Most of the cartonnage, however, was, like the coffins, found in the tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414) and attests to late burials within this Saite 'temple tomb'.

3. Wooden objects (shrines, boxes, statuettes): the large group of wooden objects comprises stelae, shrines, boxes and different types of statuettes and funerary equipment (e.g. *ba* birds, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures, falcon statuettes, etc) (figs 6-8). An analysis of the wooden funerary stelae from TT 414, focusing on their find position and patterns of decoration, suggests that there might have been a change in their function and use during the 4th-3rd centuries BC, as compared to the Twenty Fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties. The later stelae may be considered as freestanding monuments that were erected in the rooms for cultic use of the tomb whereas the earlier ones were deposited next to the coffin in the burial chamber.²⁰ Similar differences can be attested for the use of funerary pottery (see below). Here, the material evidence corresponds with textual data concerning specific changes in funerary customs during the 1st millennium BC.²¹

4. Stone blocks: the mixed baskets of finds yielded some small fragments of relief from TT 414. 65 fragments of stone blocks, offering plates and architectural features in stone were identified within the storeroom; a large number of blocks dated to the New Kingdom is stored outside the storeroom in the area of the former concession (mostly belonging to the causeway of Thutmose III and the Ramesside temple).²²

5. Small finds (funerary cones, shabtis, amulets, clay figures, fragments of papyri, mummy bandages): these finds come from all parts of the Austrian concession and date from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman Period. From TT 414, a considerable amount of shabtis in different materials (mostly mud and faience) was recovered. These funerary figures can be attributed to both original and secondary burials within the burial place and have yielded important genealogical data.

6. Pottery (complete vessels and sherds): the pottery from the Austrian mission comprises a total of 193 baskets and some isolated sherds as well as 230 complete vessels. From the tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414), mostly Ptolemaic material was studied, which attests to the functional use of the tomb during this period. The high concentration of votive cups, incense burners, goblets and libation jars is striking and finds strong parallels in other monumental tombs of the area (e.g. the tomb of Harwa, TT 37).²³ According to the study of the pottery, the Asasif and its large structures from the Late Period were not only favourite burial places for priests and other personell of the temple precinct of Karnak (as it is well attested from the coffins and funerary equipment), but also a central site for cultic activities in Thebes during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. The pottery confirms ritual acts related to burials such as burning incense and other offerings. Some acts attested by the ceramic evidence are, however, possibly connected with the cult of Osiris and most likely with the Beautiful Feast of the Valley. Taking into account other sources and groups of objects, as,

¹⁹ Cf. BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, pp. 83-95.

²⁰ Cf. BUDKA, *Egypt & Levant* 18 (2008), pp. 72-78.

²¹ See in more detail J. BUDKA, The use of pottery in funerary contexts during the Libyan and Late Period, [in:] *Proceedings of the International workshop "Social and Religious Development of Egypt in the First Millennium BCE"*, Charles University in Prague 2009 (in preparation).

²² BUDKA, Non-textual marks from the Asasif, pp. 182-198.

²³ 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, *ASAE* 79 (2005), p. 170. The pottery from TT 37 is currently being studied by Sabine LAEMMEL.

for example, the wooden funerary stelae, the material evidence from 4th (to 3rd) century BC Asasif seems to display a merging of the cult for the dead, the cult of Osiris and festivals with a funerary connotation.²⁴ This can be correlated with textual data concerning a specific adaptation of the theology of Amun in the Late Period Thebes and corresponding changes in the ritual and festive practice.²⁵

7. Baskets of mixed material (pottery and fragments of cartonnage and wood): a total of 6,200 potsherds and almost 6,500 objects, including wooden remains, cartonnage fragments, small finds, etc, were documented in baskets as 'mixed material'. Apart from a few finds originating from the Middle and the New Kingdom (e.g. pottery canopic jars, clay offering plates, wooden statuettes, funerary cone fragments, etc), the objects can be dated to the Late Period, the Ptolemaic Period as well as to the Roman Times.

8. Human remains from the Austrian mission cover several skeletons and a large number of mummies from various, mostly late periods. These remain to be studied (in the future) by physical anthropologists. Especially noteworthy are the skeletal remains of Wahibre, whose burial was discovered *in situ* in chamber 10/2 in TT 414 (cf. footnote 31).

One of the highlights identified in 2007 is the inner coffin of the tomb owner, Ankh-Hor. Because of its rather crude execution (**fig. 9**), it does not seem very spectacular at first sight, but nevertheless it derives special importance from being one of the few datable coffins from Thebes between 600–300 BC (ca. 585 BC). Since the dates pertaining to Ankh-Hor's career and death can be closely dated because of his position in the court of the Divine Adoratrice Nitocris, the coffin should have been made around 585 BC.²⁶ Like most of the wooden pieces, the coffin, as found in 2007, was in urgent need of consolidation. Conservation work is an integral part of the general work by the Austrian Mission since it enables a full study and publication of the object. This holds also true for the outer coffin of Ankh-Hor that still requires consolidation.

The finds from TT 414 in context

Considering the well-preserved condition of the 'temple tombs' in the Asasif and the list of relevant publications from past and on-going excavations,²⁷ it is striking how little is known about the original contents of the tombs of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties.

²⁴ For this general development, and in particular the increasing importance of Osirian aspects, cf. J.F. QUACK, *Grab und Grabausstattung im späten Ägypten*, [in:] A. BERLEJUNG, B. JANOWSKI (eds), *Tod und Jenseits im alten Israel und in seiner Umwelt*, FAT 62, Tübingen 2009, pp. 597–629, especially p. 621.

²⁵ E.g. the assimilation of the Festival of the Valley with the Festival of the Decades/Ritual of Djeme, see C. TRAUNECKER, F. LE SAOUT, O. MASSON, *La Chapelle d'Achôris à Karnak*, Recherche sur les grandes civilisations, Synthèse no. 5, Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak 2, Paris 1981, pp. 134–137 and pp. 145–146.

²⁶ Cf. 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, Past, Present and Future*, London 2003 (hereinafter referred to as: TAYLOR, *Theban coffins from the Twenty-second to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty*), p. 119.

²⁷ For a summary see BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, pp. 31–36; for current work see e.g. F. GOMAA, *Bericht über die Freilegung des Grabes TT.197 des Padineith, Memnonia 15* (2004), pp. 197–201 and F. GOMAA, *Die Arbeiten am Grab des Monthemhet, Sokar 12* (2006), pp. 62–64. Published monographs dedicated to the Late Period tombs in the Asasif comprise of the two volumes on Ankh-Hor (TT 414, see n. 3) and the following: J. ASSMANN, *Das Grab des Basa (Nr. 389) in der Thebanischen Nekropole*, AV 6, Mainz am Rhein 1973, J. ASSMANN, *Das Grab der Mutirdis*, AV 13, Mainz am Rhein 1977; E. GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Ibi, Obervermögensverwalter der Gottesgemahlin des Amun (Thebanisches Grab Nr. 36)*, Publication du Comité des Fouilles Belges en Égypte, Bruxelles 1990; E. GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Padihoressnet, Obervermögensverwalter der Gottesgemahlin des Amun (Thebanisches Grab Nr. 196)*, Monumenta Aegyptiaca IX, Tournhout 2003 (hereinafter referred to as: GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Padihoressnet*); K.-P. KUHLMANN, W. SCHENKEL, *Das Grab des Ibi, Obergutsverwalter des Amun, Band 1 (Text und Tafeln)*, AV 15, Mainz am Rhein 1983.

This is due to the repeated robberies and reuse of the tombs in ancient times, but it has been further strengthened by the earlier scholarly tendency to ignore fragmentary or uninscribed objects from the tombs in favour of their architectural and decorative programmes.²⁸ 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 coffins²⁹), 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 from non-monumental structures.³⁰ Intact tomb groups from monumental tombs that were used as family tombs by the highest officials, like TT 414, are exceptional.³¹ But, as was written above, the current difficulties in reconstructing an elite burial within one of the 'temple tombs' of Kushite or Saite date are at least partly the result of past Egyptological practice, and can be largely resolved by a detailed study of these excavated objects.

Although lacking the immediate spectacular popular appeal of new archaeological digs, much invaluable information can be gained from the reinvestigation of objects buried in the storerooms. In this respect, the Ankh-Hor project has the potential to resolve many unanswered questions regarding burials of high officials during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. From TT 414, fragments of the coffin of Ankh-Hor himself have already been published and provide an almost unique example of a dateable coffin within the period between 600-300 BC; however, during work on the inventory of the storeroom even more pieces from family members, including a daughter, a sister (**fig. 10**), brothers and cousins were identified.³²

The frequent reuse of the Asasif 'temple tombs' like those of Harwa, Padihorresnet, Mutirdis, Basa, Ibi and Ankh-Hor in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC is well known.³³ Vast amounts of later coffins, shrines, cartonnage cases, papyri, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures and pottery were found in all these monumental tombs, but once again, few of these finds have been published. The most important and already published intact burial is that of Wahibre in TT 414.³⁴ Since this burial was found *in situ*, it gives a very good indication for both the reconstruction and dating of other remains in Thebes and especially those within TT 414 itself. The inventory of the Austrian mission's storeroom has shown that several family members of Wahibre are attested as well,³⁵ thus a typology of coffins from the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, based on a correlation of stylistic features and genealogical data, might be established in the future. The complete corpus of coffins and other objects from the tomb of Ankh-Hor (TT 414) will help us to fill one of the major blanks in the development of Theban coffins during the time period from 600 to 300 BC.³⁶

²⁸ The only exception is GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Padihoressnet*. This volume presents all finds and pottery from the tomb, but lacks an interpretative approach (the objects are merely catalogued and mostly are not even dated). In addition, line drawings and descriptions do not meet modern standards.

²⁹ Cf. M. NASR, A New 26th Dynasty Sarcophagus from Thebes, *Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum* 2 (1988), p. 82; A. AWADALLA, A. EL-SAWY, Une Sarcophage de Nsi-Ptah dans la tombe de Montouemhat, *BIFAO* 90 (1990), pp. 29-39 and the short list of dated Theban sarcophagi and wooden coffins from the 8th to 6th centuries BC by TAYLOR, Theban coffins from the Twenty-second to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, pp. 98-99.

³⁰ ASTON, *The Theban West Bank*, figs 7 and 11.

³¹ Cf. the intact burial of Wahibre in TT 414, BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor II*, pp. 182-220.

³² BUDKA, *Egypt & Levant* 18 (2008), pp. 66-69.

³³ See ASTON, *The Theban West Bank*, p. 162 with literature; add here GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Padihoressnet*, where much material from the 4th century was discovered.

³⁴ BIETAK, REISER-HASLAUER, *Das Grab des Anch-Hor II*, pp. 182-220.

³⁵ Cf. already the 'Genealogisches Register' as composed by E. REISER-HASLAUER, [in:] *Das Grab des Anch-Hor II*, pp. 267-282. The reinvestigation of the material allows some additions to this study.

³⁶ For the development of Theban coffins from the Twenty-second to Twenty-sixth Dynasty see: J.H. TAYLOR, *The Development of Theban Coffins during the Third Intermediate Period*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham 1985; TAYLOR, Theban coffins from the Twenty-second to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, pp. 95-121.

The rich material from the 4th and 3rd centuries is of special importance, since it attests to a revival or 'renaissance' in this period that recalls many aspects of the culture of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. This has been frequently studied in private and royal sculpture,³⁷ but clearly Theban funerary architecture and burial equipment were also reused and imitated.³⁸ For example, the inner coffin of Padias, Reg. 655, illustrates that 'ancient' motifs as the *Running Apis with the Mummy on his Back* was revived as a decoration for the foot part of the coffin (fig. 11) in this era.³⁹ This vivid period is still poorly understood and often neglected by Egyptologists,⁴⁰ as is the following Roman period, partly due to the lack of published contextualised finds such as the ones from TT 414. Consequently, a recent, innovative study of this latter period is for example based on objects from publications and museum collections, which are often unprovenanced or were at least not retrieved from documented excavations.⁴¹ As in the earlier Twenty-sixth and Thirtieth Dynasties, the Asasif held a very prominent position within the Theban necropolis during the Ptolemaic and Roman times. Many coffins and shrine fragments found in TT 414 illustrate the reuse of the site as burial place until at least the 2nd century AD;⁴² it is intriguing that the majority comes from the tomb chamber of Ankh-Hor himself.

Thus, the current Asasif-project can contribute to our understanding of the frequent reuse of the Asasif 'temple tombs' in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC up to the Roman times. This usage is well known (cf. the tombs of Harwa, Padihorresnet, Mutirdis, Basa, Ibi and Ankh-Hor)⁴³ 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 originates from the 6th century BC to the 2nd century AD will be studied and published as one corpus.

Outline

The exhaustive documentation of the objects brought to light by the Austrian mission offers a unique opportunity to both study and preserve a large corpus of material coming from scientifically up-to-date excavations and covering a timespan from the Twenty-fifth Dynasty up to the Roman times. Because of their unusually secure context, the Asasif objects serve as important terms of reference in order to analyse many objects without provenience in museums collections throughout the world. This will enable us to gain further insights to the specific usages and functions of monumental tombs in the Asasif in general, and to increase the understanding of the connections, interrelationships and developments between the Twenty-sixth and Thirtieth Dynasties and Ptolemaic and Roman times.

³⁷ Cf. B.V. BOTHMER, *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period, 700 B.C. to A.D. 100*, New York 1960, *passim* with important additions by J.A. JOSEPHSON, *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period Revisited*, *JARCE* 34 (1997), pp. 1-20.

³⁸ EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, pp. 91-102, 106, 163-182; J. BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif*, p. 59.

³⁹ Cf. J. BUDKA, *Egypt & Levant* 18 (2008), pp. 71-72, fig. 6. An 'ancient' example for the use of this motif is the inner coffin of Kerirw from Tomb VII in the Austrian concession (late Twenty-fifth Dynasty), cf. M. BIETAK, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, pl. XXII.

⁴⁰ See STRUDWICK, *Some aspects of the archaeology*, p. 167.

⁴¹ C. RIGGS, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt. Art, Identity, and Funerary Religion*, Oxford 2005 (hereinafter referred to as: RIGGS, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt*).

⁴² Some of the fragments have been published recently by 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*, OLA 149.1, Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA 2006, pp. 121-128.

⁴³ See ASTON, *The Theban West Bank*, p. 162 with literature; add here E. GRAEFE, *Das Grab des Padihorresnet*, 2003 with much material from the 4th century BC.

The scientific value of the Ankh-Hor project lies in its broad approach and wide dimension: the phases of use and reuse of TT 414 are neither studied selectively nor isolated. In the present research design, there is no focus on its primary use as an elite burial ground but rather a preference for a contextual analysis that considers all kinds of usage of the building, spanning a period from the 6th century BC to the 2nd century AD. This approach will enable us to gain further insights into the specific usages and functions of monumental tombs in the Asasif in general, and an increased understanding of the connections, interrelationships and developments between the Twenty-sixth and Thirtieth Dynasties and Ptolemaic and Roman times. The coffins (both complete and fragmentary) clarify the role of local traditions and the background for the 'conservative art' and 'archaistic' culture in Thebes.⁴⁴ The character of Theban burials from the 6th century to the Roman Period is poorly understood, but an analysis of the material from TT 414 will help to establish a sequence of tomb groups for the specific time periods and thus add fundamentally to our knowledge of the burial customs.

Since these perspectives depend on the finds presently located in the Austrian mission's storeroom, the first priority is to conserve all the pieces in order to preserve them as parts of Egypt's cultural heritage and to enable us to study the issues mentioned above. The objects themselves will be stored and preserved as best as possible; registered pieces will be transported to the official storeroom of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (behind the Carter House in Luxor) – we will continue with this task in our field season in 2009.⁴⁵

Much current fieldwork by international missions in the Asasif confines itself to architectural and epigraphic features of monumental tombs. The Ankh-Hor project contrasts this tendency. Otherwise, there is the danger that Egyptology in 2020 might still not understand the material culture and funerary beliefs of the period between 650 BC and 200 AD even though tons of material data have been collected and are stored in local storerooms. Publishing the results and objects from past excavations in the Asasif can provide an example of how modern Egyptology may become aware of the general potential of every pot sherd and broken object in its context, and that these can illumine long neglected periods such as the Late Period, or the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. There is some chance that taken together as one single corpus, the finds from TT 414 will reveal some of the mysteries about Late Period funerary archaeology and burial customs of the Theban elite.

⁴⁴ Cf. RIGGS, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt*, pp. 175-244.

⁴⁵ Until 2008, four almost complete coffins and several smaller objects including mummy bandages, pottery vessels, shabtis and funerary shrines were successfully consolidated and transported to the official store rooms.