

JULIA BUDKA

Re-use of a Middle Kingdom saff tomb in the Asasif

During my work in Thebes (Asasif), Zoltán Fábíán became our distinguished neighbour – both in the field and thanks to our accommodation. I am very grateful for all of his support and kindness during these weeks. Hoping that these short remarks from a saff tomb in the Austrian concession will raise his interest and wishing that we will have plenty of opportunities to discuss our comparable finds in the near future!

Saff tomb no. I, Austrian concession

Within the Winlock 700 cemetery in the area of the Asasif, a substantial saff tomb was mapped as MM 737.¹ It is located at the so-called hill 104, directly at the small asphalt road towards Dra Abu el-Naga and its pillared hall was noticed quite early.² However, it was not before excavations by Manfred Bietak that the monument, consequently labelled as saff tomb no. I of the Austrian concession (*Figure 1*), was properly investigated, mapped and excavated.³ A selection of finds has been published and the main phases of use presented.⁴ Similar to other tombs in the Asasif and neighbouring areas, a re-use during the late Seventeenth and

¹ Budka, J. 2010a. *Bestattungsbrauchtum und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif. Eine Untersuchung der spätzeitlichen Befunde anhand der Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in den Jahren 1969-1977*. UZK 34; DÖAWW 59. Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 85 with references. See also Arnold, Di. 1971. *Die Architektur der 11. Dynastie. Das Grab des Jnj jtj.f.* AV 4. Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern, 43 and pl. I.

² See Arnold 1971, 43 and pl. I.

³ Bietak, M. 1972. *Theben-West (Luqsor). Vorbericht über die ersten vier Grabungskampagnen (1969-1971)*. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 278, 4. Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 14-16; Budka 2010a, 83-95.

⁴ Budka 2010a, 83-95.

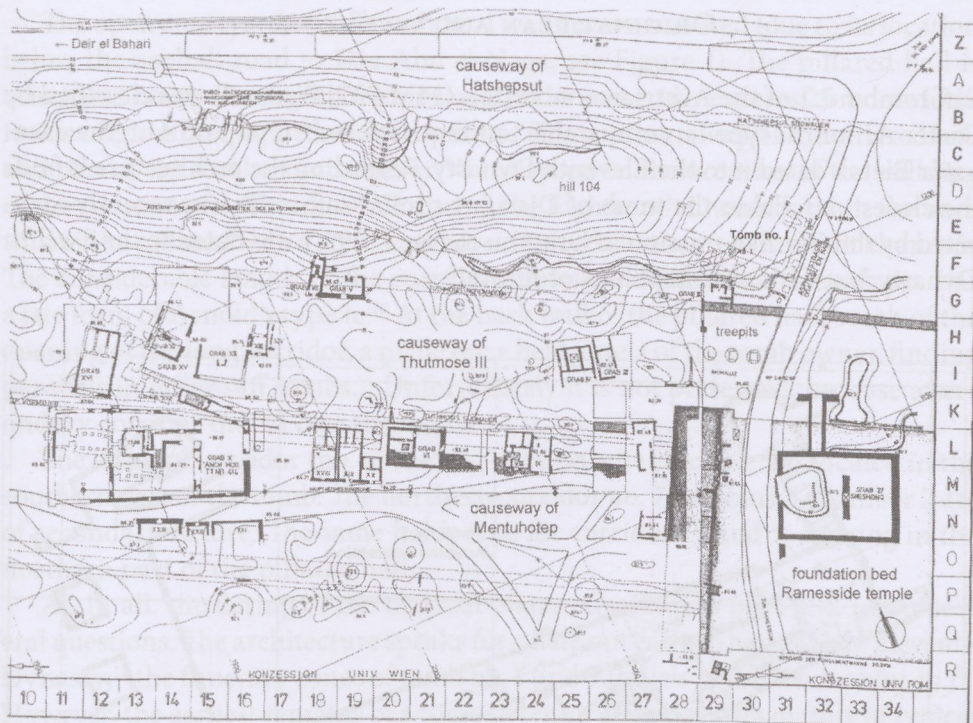


Figure 1. Plan of the Austrian concession in the Asasif with saff tomb no. I. After D. Eigner, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit*, Vienna, 1984, Plan 2

early Eighteenth Dynasties is attested.⁵ The southern part of saff tomb no. I was dismantled by the causeway of Thutmose III leading to Deir el-Bahari. During the Third Intermediate Period, the Late Period, Ptolemaic and Roman times burials took place in the monument, partly resulting in architectural modifications. Repeated plundering up to recent times resulted in a complex mixing of the material. The aim of this paper, taking saff tomb no. I as a representative case study, is to illustrate the typical use-life of a Theban tomb reflecting both phases of prime use, secondary use, of decline and robbery.

⁵ See M. Bietak, in Bietak, M. and E. Reiser-Haslauer. 1978. *Das Grab des Anch-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris I.* UZK 4. Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 24 n. 56; Carnarvon, G. E. S. M. H., Earl of, and H. Carter. 1912. *Five Year's Explorations at Thebes: a record of work done 1907-1911.* London, Henry Frowde Oxford University Press, pl. 30. Theban burials of the Second Intermediate Period were recently summarized by D. Polz. 2007. *Der Beginn des Neuen Reiches, Zur Vorgeschichte einer Zeitenwende.* SDAIK 31. Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 231-250.

ORIGINAL PLAN AND INVENTORY

Saff tomb no. I of the Austrian concession (MM 737, *Figure 2*) was classified by Dieter Arnold as type Ic, comparable to the structures CC 37 and 41.⁶ The excavator Bietak dated it to the Eleventh Dynasty. Regarding the architecture it finds the closest parallel in the tomb of Djari.⁷ A similar saff tomb was recently excavated by the German mission in Dra Abu el-Naga: K95.1 was dated to the Twelfth Dynasty, but with several phases of re-use.⁸

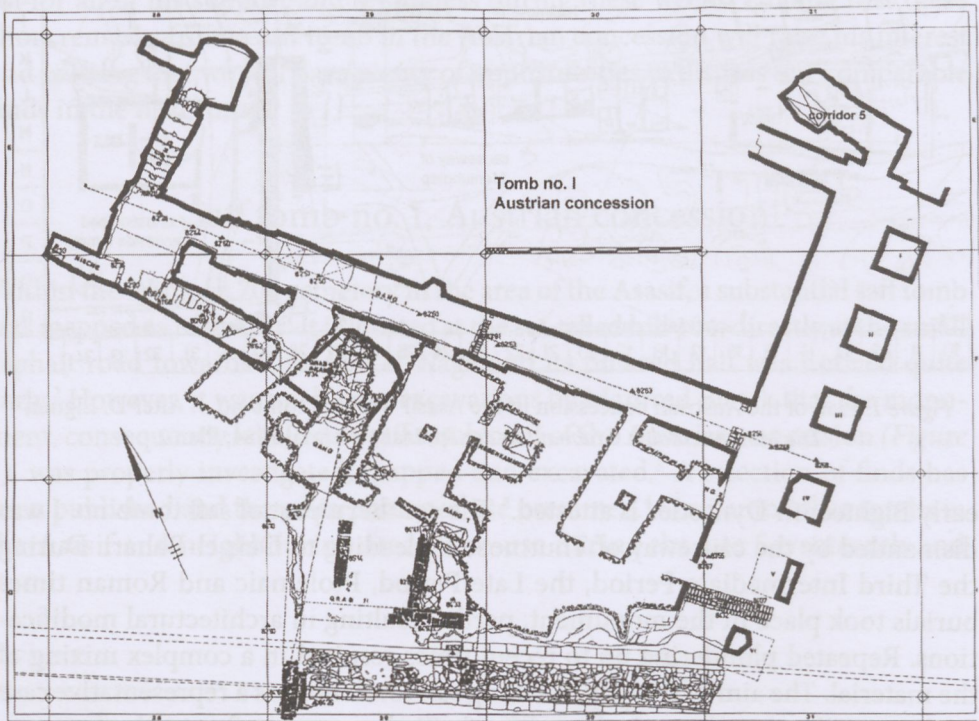


Figure 2. Plan of saff tomb no. I. After: M. Bietak, *Theben-West (Luqsor)*, Abb. 2

⁶ See Arnold 1971, 43.

⁷ Roehrig, C. H. 1995. The Early Middle Kingdom Cemeteries at Thebes and the Tomb of Djari. In Assmann, J. et al. (eds), *Thebanische Beamtennekropolen, Neue Perspektiven archäologischer Forschung, Internationales Symposium Heidelberg 9.–13.6. 1993*, SAGA 12. Heidelberg, Heidelberger Orientverlag, 255–269.

⁸ See Polz, D. 1999. 'Archäologie und Architektur.' In 'Areal G, Grabkomplex K95.1 – Ein Saff-Grab des Mittleren Reiches,' in Polz, D. et al., Bericht über die 6., 7. und 8. Grabungskampagne in der Nekropole von Dra' Abu el-Naga/Theben-West. *MDAIK* 55, 370–377.

The open courtyard of saff tomb no. I was never excavated (due to its location below the asphalt road to Dra Abu el-Naga, see Figure 1). The pillared hall is orientated north-south with the entrance in the east and measures 25 m in width. It was originally equipped with six pillars.⁹ The southern wall of the pillared hall and part of the southernmost pillar VI collapsed on the occasion of the building of the causeway for Thutmose III during the Eighteenth Dynasty. From the back wall of the pillared hall, a 30 m long corridor leads to the so-called cult chamber. The considerable length of the corridor allows a classification of tomb no. I as a late form of Arnold's type Ic.¹⁰ At the back wall of the pillared hall, south of the opening of the long corridor, a niche once held a stela of the tomb owner, finding parallels in other saff tombs.¹¹ Unfortunately it is not preserved, because a secondary corridor (no. 2) cuts through it.

The original corridor (no. 6) leading to burial chamber no. 1 is located in the southern part of the tomb. The northern corridor no. 7 and burial chamber 2 are of secondary nature. The same holds true for corridors 4 and 5, starting in the northern part of the pillared hall.

All in all, the dating of the original phase of saff tomb no. I still raises several questions. The architecture speaks for a date not earlier than the late Eleventh Dynasty;¹² the funerary cones of tomb no. I find parallels in the tomb of *Jnj-jtj.f*.¹³ However, the earliest remains of a tomb inventory – consisting mainly of typical burial pottery – suggest a date in the late Twelfth Dynasty.¹⁴ No pottery of the Eleventh Dynasty has been found. The location and orientation of the monument could also be arguments for a later date: saff tomb no. I is not situated with the opening of its courtyard towards the Mentuhotep Nebhepetre causeway as it is attested for tombs from the reign of this king. Rather, tomb no. I seems to refer to the location of the valley temple of Mentuhotep. Other than for the causeway and the temple at Deir el-Bahari, there is evidence for cultic activities at this valley temple long after the Eleventh Dynasty, well into the Twelfth Dynasty.¹⁵

All in all, some questions regarding the dating of saff no. I in the Austrian concession of the Asasif remain open. For now, I would propose to date its build-

⁹ See Bietak 1972, 14–16.

¹⁰ Arnold 1971, 43; saff tomb no. I is listed there as no. 5.

¹¹ For example CC 37 and MMA 840, see Arnold 1971, 42–43.

¹² D. Polz 2007, 264 attributes it to the end of the reign of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre.

¹³ M. Bietak 1972, 14; for the funerary cones in the tomb of *Jnj-jtj.f* see Arnold 1971, 17. Notice similar cones from the saff tomb of the Twelfth Dynasty: Polz 1999, 370–377.

¹⁴ Budka 2010a, 97.

¹⁵ See Arnold, Do. 1991. Amenemhat I and the Early Twelfth Dynasty at Thebes. *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 26, 5–48.

ing to the late Eleventh Dynasty, when burial chamber 1 was prepared for the tomb owner. It is very probable that there was continuous use (by the same family?) and the first architectural modifications (corridor 5) lasted well into the late Twelfth Dynasty.

PHASES OF USE AND RE-USE

For the purpose of this paper, a short summary of the main phases of use and re-use seems sufficient (*Figure 3*).¹⁶ Five main phases of use can be differentiated, stretching the period from the early Middle Kingdom up to Roman times. Some of the re-burials during the Libyan, the Late Period and Ptolemaic times will be addressed in the following. It is particularly noteworthy that the tomb was used during the Persian period,¹⁷ a still little understood phase.

Figure 3. Saff no. I, Austrian concession

Use of the tomb	Archaeological evidence	Date
a) Building of original structure & burial of owner	Pillared hall, main corridor, burial chamber no. 1, funerary cones	late 11 th /12 th Dynasties
b) Re-use (extended family member, second generation?)	Corridor 5, burial pottery (hemispherical cups and beer bottles)	12 th Dynasty
Deserted	Layers of dust and sand	Second Intermediate Period
c) Re-use with burials and mortuary cult	Human remains?; coffin (corridor 5) Cultic objects (offering plates, breaking of red pots)	late 17 th to early 18 th Dynasty
Destruction of monument	Collapse of southern part of pillared hall	Thutmose III (late phase of reign)
Plundering and abandonment	Destruction of inventory; mixing of material; displaced objects	New Kingdom to Third Intermediate Period

¹⁶ Budka 2010a, 94 tab. 4.

¹⁷ Budka 2010a, 95.

Use of the tomb	Archaeological evidence	Date
d) Multiple re-use with burials and mortuary cult	Cartonnage, coffins, canopic jars, pottery etc.	Libyan Period, Late Period (22 nd -27 th Dynasties)
Plundering and abandonment	Destruction of inventory; mixing of material; displaced objects	Subsequent phases
e) Multiple re-use with burials and mortuary cult	New corridor, stair case and burial chamber no. 2; mud brick walls; burial compartments in pillared hall; mummies, coffins, funerary equipment, pottery	30 th Dynasty/ Ptolemaic-Roman
Plundering and abandonment	Destruction of inventory; mixing of material; displaced objects; two oil lamps (used by thieves?)	Late Roman to Coptic
Domestic use/shelter	Traces of burning on pillared hall; pottery	Coptic times (and later periods?)

The earliest architectural modification to the original plan was probably corridor 5 at the northern corner of the pillared hall; maybe it was used already in the late Middle Kingdom, it was definitely an active part of the tomb during the phase of use in the late Second Intermediate Period/early New Kingdom. The Third Intermediate Period cannot be clearly associated with any of the secondary elements. Maybe during the Late Period, but probably a bit later in the early Ptolemaic period, several mud brick walls were set into the pillared hall, creating small burial compartments. A new corridor with seven steps and a small square chamber with a *loculus* towards the west were cut into the rock towards the north of the original cult chamber (Figure 2). Probably all of these modifications are datable to the Roman period.

Dislocated objects and remains of destroyed burials are most frequent in the entrance part of tomb no. I: most of the material was found in the pillared hall and in the first section of the main corridor. The amount of debris and objects markedly decreased towards the back of the corridor and the burial chambers. This does not seem to reflect an accidental situation, but might be explained as follows: During the plundering, mummies and coffins were removed from the interior part into the front area of the tomb where there was more space and

better light and the objects could therefore be unwrapped easier, in order to search them for small artefacts and gilded pieces.¹⁸

SELECTED FINDS

A selection of the pottery from various phases of use (Twelfth Dynasty, early Eighteenth Dynasty, Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh Dynasty as well as Ptolemaic) in saff tomb no. I has already been published,¹⁹ as well as some of the other finds including canopic jars (e.g. Reg. 95, JE 94425; Reg. 120, a 1909; Reg. 121, a 1910)²⁰ and bead nets (e.g. Reg. 69, a 1886, JE 94412).²¹

Several shabtis have been found in tomb no. I, all of them fall into the simple type K, mud shabtis, in David Aston's typology and probably date to the 9th-7th centuries BC.²² In the loose debris excavated in the cult chamber, 83 complete pieces and 37 fragments were found (Reg. 34, KHM a 1867, Figure 4). Two different sizes are attested in this group (5.7-5.8 cm and 5.0-5.1 cm) and they might belong to two different burials, most likely from the Twenty-fifth or Twenty-sixth Dynasty.²³ Slightly larger mud shabtis were also found in the cult chamber – 33 pieces are now kept in the Cairo Museum (Reg. 35, JE 94396).

In 2008, seven additional shabtis were documented (K08/70) – their exact find spot within tomb no. I is unfortunately not known. One of them is well made and shows traces of blue paint, indicating an early date, probably before 850 BC (Figure 5).²⁴

Besides the pottery, *cartonnage* and coffins are the largest group of finds from tomb no. I.²⁵ They are very fragmented, having been found in the different mixed fillings, and have not yet been published in total. Recording of these small

¹⁸ I had the pleasure of hearing a paper by Zoltán Fábíán at the conference, 'Burial and Mortuary Practices in Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt' in Budapest, July 2014 – there he presented very similar findings in a saff tomb of the Hungarian concession; I am grateful for this inspiration and parallel.

¹⁹ Budka 2010a, 493–512.

²⁰ Budka 2010a, 513.

²¹ Budka 2010a, 514–515.

²² Aston, D. A. 2009. *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21–25: Chronology, Typology, Developments*. CCEM 21. Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 358–359.

²³ Budka 2010a, 524.

²⁴ Budka 2010a, 324.

²⁵ Budka 2010a, 300–301.

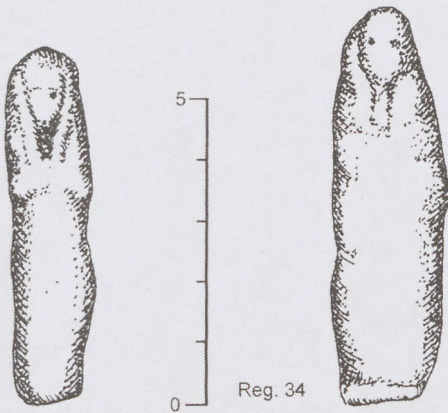


Figure 4. Two mud shabtis,
Reg. 34 from tomb no. I



Figure 5. Mud shabti K08/70.
Photo: J. Budka

pieces took place from 2007-2009 and a selection of *cartonnage* fragments is presented here.

The find assemblage K02/67 from the pillared hall comprises a number of interesting pieces. The earliest are two fragments of a *cartonnage* coffin datable to the Libyan period (K02/67f, Figure 6). The prime colour is yellow (10YR7/12) and details were executed in blue (10G4/1), light blue (10G8/2), green (2,5G6/6-6/4), black, red (10R5/6), orange (5YR5/2) and white. A large fragment of the left side of the lid with a fragmented collar is preserved. The goddess Nut was once depicted with outstretched wings in the middle, flanked to the right by an uraeus, crowned by the sun disc and with wings stretched forward. A fragment of the left foot part of the same coffin shows a reclining Anubis with a *w3t*-Hieroglyph behind him. Both motifs, the one on the lid and on the foot, are common and well attested. The colour scheme suggests an origin in the 9th century BC.

Much later in date is the small fragment K02/67g (5.8 × 12 cm, Figure 7). The motif is similar, with the goddess Nut on the central part of the lid – only the right wing is preserved, as well as two columns of text, giving Nut's most common epithets from right to left. This piece was part of a Ptolemaic *cartonnage* covering the complete body.²⁶

In general, many fragments from the upper part of *cartonnage* covers have been found in the pillared hall of tomb I, possibly illustrating the above mentioned

²⁶ Budka 2010a, 300.

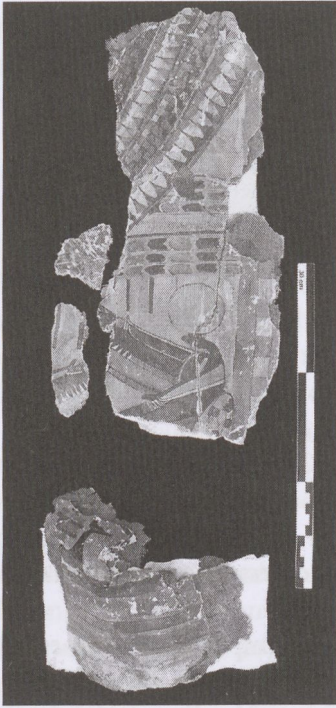


Figure 6. Fragments of a Libyan period cartonnage coffin (K02/67f). Photo: J. Budka



Figure 7. Cartonnage fragment, Ptolemaic (K02/67g). Photo: J. Budka

procedure of the tomb robbers: moving the objects from the interior to the front and ripping them apart there during the search for amulets which were often placed in the breast area of the mummy.

One of the Roman fragments from a *cartonnage* covering all of the body was found close to the entrance into corridor 1 in the pillared hall (K08/94, Figure 8). It is the large narrow fragment from the lateral side of the lid part as well as pieces from the collar on the breast, rich in floral details. There is a preference for the colours red, pink and green. No name or inscription has survived, but an unidentified protective deity is visible on one piece.

Finally, another indication of how damaged the material from tomb no. I is, can be given by K02/223 (Figure 9). This is one of the rare pieces of *cartonnage* coming from the cultic chamber at the end of corridor 1. It is a foot part, showing the lower side of a pair of sandals. The ground colour is red, the sandals were painted in yellow. Traces of a frieze of rosettes are also visible at the edge. Dating this piece is a bit problematic – it might be late Ptolemaic, but could also already belong to the Roman era. Among the large number of *cartonnage* fragments from

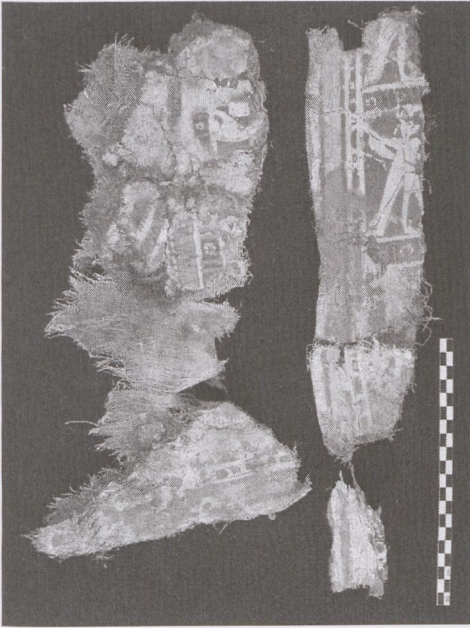


Figure 8. Cartonnage fragment, Roman (K08/94). Photo: J. Budka



Figure 9. Cartonnage fragment, Ptolemaic (to Roman) (K02/223). Photo: J. Budka

the pillared hall of tomb no. I, only one piece is similar to K02/223, showing comparable sandals.²⁷

Summary and outlook

Saff tomb no. I in the Austrian concession of the Asasif illustrates the typical phases of re-use in this particular type of Theban elite burial place. The Second Intermediate Period, the Third Intermediate Period, the Late Period as well as Ptolemaic, Roman and Coptic times are well attested. Ceramic vessels, shabtis, amulets and *cartonnage* fragments are the most numerous finds that indicate later use – they are complementing each other, and as the complete set they give us a better understanding of a very long history of use of saff tomb no. I.

The monument in the Austrian concession is not unique but finds many parallels, most of which have been excavated in earlier times when a clear preference of “prime” and “secondary” use was given to remains. The latter were often discarded or not documented in the same detailed way as the finds belonging to

²⁷ Budka 2010a, 301.

the original building period of a tomb. The importance of the complete use-life of tombs was only recognized in recent time.²⁸ It is therefore of great importance that closely similar finds to saff tomb no. I in the Asasif were discovered in the saff tomb of the Hungarian mission directed by the colleague we are celebrating with this Festschrift.²⁹

Detailed new excavations like the one undertaken by this Hungarian mission have the potential to understand more about the complex re-use patterns in Thebes, especially in little understood periods like the Persian era. Interconnection and relations, but also differences between the various time periods should be addressed by future research. Architectural modifications seem to be most common during the Ptolemaic and Roman era – and might be related to problems of restricted space and/or limited new building activity for new tombs. The large saff tombs of the Middle Kingdom are important and long-lasting landmarks in the necropolis and illustrate that for centuries burials of diverse people have been integrated into the same sacred landscape.

ABSTRACT

The characteristic phases of re-use in the common Middle Kingdom Theban saff tomb can be illustrated by saff tomb no. I in the Austrian concession in the Asasif. This monument was re-used during various periods, especially the Second Intermediate Period, the Third Intermediate Period, the Late Period as well as during Ptolemaic, Roman and Coptic times. Several types of finds like ceramic vessels, shabtis and cartonnage allow the reconstruction of this very long and complex history of use. Saff tomb no. I finds many parallels in Thebes and demonstrates that for centuries burials of diverse people have been integrated into the same sacred landscape, making individual adjustments and modifications depending on the era.

²⁸ See the seminal paper by H. Guksch. 1995. Über den Umgang mit Gräbern. In Assmann, J. et al. (eds), *Thebanische Beamtennekropolen, Neue Perspektiven archäologischer Forschung, Internationales Symposium Heidelberg 9.–13.6. 1993*. SAGA 12. Heidelberg, Heidelberger Orientverlag, 13–24. See also Budka, J. 2010b. Varianz im Regelwerk. Bestattungsabläufe im Monumentalgrab von Anch-Hor, Obersthofmeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris (TT 414). *Ägypten & Levante* 20, 49–66 with additional references.

²⁹ Fábíán, Z. I. 2009. The Middle Kingdom on el-Khokha: Saff-tombs. In T.A. Bács, Fábíán Z.I., Schreiber G. and Török L. (eds), *Hungarian Excavations in the Theban Necropolis. A Celebration of 102 Years of Fieldwork in Egypt. Catalogue for the Temporary Exhibition in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, November 5, 2009 – January 15, 2010*. Budapest, Mester Nyomda, 55–60.