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## Tombs of the Ist Dynasty at Abydos and Saqqara: Different Types or Variations on a Theme?\*

### 1. Introduction

In 1937 Walter B. EMERY excavated tomb S 3357 at Saqqara-North. He identified it as the tomb of the first ruler of the Ist dynasty, King Aha, and proposed that all kings of that dynasty had been buried at this site. Since the tombs of these rulers had only 40 years previously been located at Umm el-Qa'ab / Abydos by PETRIE, EMERY's publication triggered a debate on the burial place of the first pharaohs of Egypt which has not ended yet.

At Umm el-Qa'ab, Émile AMÉLINEAU and William M.F. PETRIE had, at the turn of the century, excavated ten mud-brick structures. Inscribed stelae and other finds helped to attribute the buildings to the seven kings and one queen of the Ist dynasty and two to kings of the IInd dynasty. Nothing was preserved of the superstructures, while the substructures which were built from mud-brick in huge pits sunk in the sandy desert ground remained more or less intact.

At Saqqara, EMERY uncovered over the years more than 20 impressive mud-brick mastabas with elaborate niches on all sides. The superstructures were not always well preserved but could be determined in one case (S 3507) as being at least 2.5 m high.<sup>1</sup> The substructures, on the other hand, were sunk into the local limestone. They are composed of parts cut out of the limestone and additions in mud-brick. The tombs were attributed to different owners again with

the aid of inscribed material, in these cases mostly seal impressions and inscribed stone vessels. But EMERY had to face the problem that on one hand he had far too many burials for the kings of the Ist dynasty and on the other hand that no burial could be attributed to King Semerkhet. Therefore, he explained that the largest tombs had to be those of the kings, while the smaller ones were those of queens and other members of the royal family or important members of the court and that the missing tomb had not been discovered yet.

Other Egyptologists followed in giving explanations for the archaeological findings at both sites. The main hypotheses were the following:

#### 1. Pro Abydos, contra Saqqara

The kings were buried at Umm el-Qa'ab, officials and members of the royal family at Saqqara and other places.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2. Pro Saqqara and Abydos

The kings were buried at Saqqara, the buildings at Umm el-Qa'ab are cenotaphs.<sup>3</sup> The additional mastabas at Saqqara are the second and the third tombs of the kings or belong to the queens.<sup>4</sup>

#### 3. Pro Abydos and Saqqara

The kings were buried at Umm el-Qa'ab, the mastabas at Saqqara are cenotaphs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W.B. EMERY, *Great Tombs of the First Dynasty III, Excavations at Saqqara*, London 1958 (hereinafter referred to as: *Great Tombs III*), p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. EMERY, *Great Tombs of the First Dynasty II, Excavations at Saqqara*, Oxford 1954 (hereinafter referred to as: *Great Tombs II*), pp. 1-4; B.J. KEMP, The Egyptian 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty Royal Cemetery, *Antiquity* 41 (1967), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> H. RICKE, *Bemerkungen zur ägyptischen Baukunst des Alten Reichs II*, Beiträge Bf 5, Kairo 1950 (hereinafter referred to as: *Bemerkungen II*), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. EMERY, *Great Tombs II*, pp. 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> H.W. MÜLLER, *Gedanken zur Entstehung, Interpretation und Rekonstruktion ältester ägyptischer Monumentalarchitektur*, in: *Ägypten – Dauer und Wandel*, SDAIK 18, Mainz 1985, pp. 7ff.; D. ARNOLD, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*, Düsseldorf, Zürich <sup>2</sup>1997 (hereinafter referred to as: *Lexikon*), p. 220 (s.f. Saqqara): "Wohl eher Gräber hoher Beamter, einige bestenfalls königliche Kenotaphe."; R. GUNDLACH, *Der Pharao und sein Staat. Die Grundlegung der ägyptischen Königsideologie im 4. und 3. Jahrtausend*, Darmstadt 1998 (hereinafter referred to as: *Pharao und sein Staat*), p. 121: "Ich vermute nun, daß die Zweiteilung des Grabbezirks in Körpergrab und Statuengrab,

## 4. Abydos and Saqqara

The Kings were buried at Umm el-Qa'ab or Saqqara depending on the place they died.<sup>6</sup>

Each of the mentioned hypotheses found its proponents and opponents. There are contrasting statements on the relation between both sites as, for instance, the following by Walter B. EMERY, who, in his later publications, modified his view of the two types to a certain extent: "In the south at Abydos, the superstructures of the royal tombs or cenotaphs were certainly entirely different in design from their counterparts in the north.... However, the substructures of the Abydos monuments in general conform to the same line of evolution as at Sakkara."<sup>7</sup> While he hints at similarities between both sites concerning the substructures, other authors emphasise the differences, for instance, Dieter ARNOLD: "Die Entwicklung der Abydos-Gräber verläuft anders als die der Saqqara-Gräber; sie beginnt und endet früher als dort."<sup>8</sup> or Rainer STADELMANN: "Dieser offensichtliche Mangel einer Entwicklung [of the Abydos tombs] und einer Entfaltung über fast zwei Jahrhunderte in einer an sich so dynamischen Zeit wirkt in der Tat erstaunlich und deutet doch vielleicht schon auf ein provinzielles Stagnieren und auf eine spürbare Distanz von dem Zentrum künstlerischer und geistiger Aktivität hin."<sup>9</sup> or Toby A.H. WILKINSON: "Unlike the contemporary mastabas at North Saqqara which emphasised the superstructure, the Ist dynasty royal tombs at Abydos seem to have con-

centrated on the subterranean element. During the early Ist dynasty the burial chamber was dug progressively deeper, culminating with the tomb of Den in which the burial chamber is 6 metres below ground level."<sup>10</sup>

Although they disagreed on many details, most participants in the debate agreed on two basic principles:

– the attempt to relate the size of the tomb to the proposed status of the owner. This argument was first used to suggest that Saqqara was the burial place since the tombs at that site are larger than those at Abydos. Later, after KAISER<sup>11</sup> and KEMP<sup>12</sup> had independently shown that the 'Talbezirke' at Kom el-Sultan belong to the royal burials at Umm el-Qa'ab and that, therefore, the labour input to construct those tombs was much larger than at Saqqara, the same argument was used in favour of Abydos.

– the assumption of two different types of tombs connected with the two parts of Egypt and/or two different population groups.<sup>13</sup> The criteria by which the two types were differentiated are summarised in **table 1**. They consist of quantitative (i.e. the depth of the burial chamber) as well as of qualitative criteria (i.e. the presence/absence of certain features). Surprisingly, even scholars who noticed similarities between tombs at both sites never questioned the validity of this principle.<sup>14</sup>

wie sie im Djoserbezirk gegeben ist, auch bei der Doppelung Abydos – Saqqara in der 1. Dynastie vorliegt. Das würde bedeuten, daß wir in den königlichen Gräbern in Saqqara von der Existenz von Königsstatuen ausgehen müssen, die dort die königliche Präsenz bewirkten."

<sup>6</sup> J.-P. LAUER, *Sur le dualisme de la monarchie égyptienne et son expression architecturale sous les première dynasties*, *BIFAO* LV (1955), p. 159; ARNOLD, E. HORNUNG, *Königsgräber*, *LÄ* III, p. 512, footnote 5; R. STADELMANN, *Die ägyptischen Pyramiden*, Mainz 1997 (hereinafter referred to as: *Pyramiden*), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> EMERY, *Archaic Egypt*, Harmondsworth 1961 (hereinafter referred to as: *Archaic Egypt*), p. 130.

<sup>8</sup> ARNOLD, *Lexikon*, p. 12 (s.f. Abydos).

<sup>9</sup> STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> T.A.H. WILKINSON, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, London, New York 1999 (hereinafter referred to as: *Early Dynastic Egypt*), p. 233. In this, he followed W. KAISER, *Zur Entwicklung des abydenischen Königsgrabes*, in: KAISER, G. DREYER, *Umm el-Qaab. Nachuntersuchungen*

im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof, 2. Vorbericht, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), p. 256.

<sup>11</sup> KAISER, *Zu den königlichen Talbezirken der 1. und 2. Dynastie in Abydos und zur Baugeschichte des Djoser-Grabmals*, *MDAIK* 25 (1969) (*Gedenkschrift Stock*), pp. 1ff.

<sup>12</sup> KEMP, *Abydos and the Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty*, *JEA* 52 (1966), pp. 13-22.

<sup>13</sup> RICKE, *Bemerkungen zur ägyptischen Baukunst des Alten Reichs I*, Beiträge Bf 4, Zürich 1944, p. 40; IDEM, *Bemerkungen II*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>14</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs of the First Dynasty I*, Cairo 1949 (hereinafter referred to as: *Great Tombs I*), p. 12, IDEM, *Great Tombs III*, p. 5 and KAISER, in: KAISER, DREYER, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), p. 251 on the similarities between S X and S 3338 on one hand with the tomb of Qa'a at Umm el-Qa'ab on the other; W. WOOD, *The Archaic Stone Tombs at Helwan*, *JEA* 73 (1987), pp. 59ff. compares the tombs at Umm el-Qa'ab with private burials at Helwan; G.A. REISNER, *The Development of the Egyptian Tomb*

## 2. The Tomb of Qa'a<sup>15</sup>

In 1991/92 the German Institute of Archaeology in Cairo re-examined the tomb of King Qa'a at Umm el-Qa'ab. In contrast to PETRIE's excavation, who, due to his excavation technique, had seen only parts of the tomb at one time, the structure as a whole was cleared. This proved that it had been built in several phases. The original layout consisted only of the burial chamber with a staircase descending from the north and two chambers, one on each side of the stair which were accessible from the staircase. 14 smaller chambers surrounded the burial chamber on its eastern, southern and western sides. In several subsequent phases, the building was expanded until, in the last phase, there were six magazines along the stair, five large magazines and 26 smaller chambers which were used for burials or also as magazines.<sup>16</sup>

The first phase, therefore, resembles the subterranean part of a certain "type" of tomb which can be found at Saqqara and other sites (e.g. Helwan). It is composed of burial chamber, staircase and two chambers accessible from the staircase (S 3505,<sup>17</sup> 3500,<sup>18</sup> 3338,<sup>19</sup> X<sup>20</sup>).

On the other hand, by expanding the tomb of Qa'a during the later building phases, its central part resembled more and more the tombs of the IIInd dynasty at Saqqara and Umm el-Qa'ab. Their main characteristic is the presence of long corridors from which several chambers branch off. But if there are similarities in the subterranean part between the pro-

posed different tomb types at both sites during the reign of one king, there might be similarities during the other reigns as well. By comparing the ground plans of the tombs, several resemblances can indeed be identified.

## 3. Comparison of Groundplan of the Subterranean Parts

The first buildings at both sites, for instance, consist of several large chambers built in a row: The tomb of King Aha at Abydos in Cemetery B<sup>21</sup> and the tombs S 3357,<sup>22</sup> 3503<sup>23</sup> and 3471<sup>24</sup> follow this scheme.

The next stage consists of tombs with a central burial chamber with smaller magazines first on three, later on four sides. Examples are the tombs of Djer,<sup>25</sup> Wadj and Meretneith<sup>26</sup> at Umm el-Qa'ab as well as S 3504<sup>27</sup> and 3111<sup>28</sup> at Saqqara.

During the next stage, a staircase gives direct access to the burial chamber at one of its smaller sides. Examples are the tomb of Den<sup>29</sup> at Abydos and tomb S 3036,<sup>30</sup> which, on the other hand, still resembles the tomb of Meretneith at Umm el-Qa'ab in the arrangement of its burial chamber and surrounding magazines.

Later, the staircase ends next to one corner at one of the longer sides of the burial chamber. The magazines are placed at the smaller sides. Examples are the tombs of Adjib<sup>31</sup> and Semerkhet<sup>32</sup> at Umm el-Qa'ab and S 3038<sup>33</sup> at Saqqara. The earlier tombs S 3035,<sup>34</sup> 3507<sup>35</sup> and 3506<sup>36</sup> might be intermediary stages between the last and this type.

*Down to the Accession of Cheops*, Cambridge 1936 (hereinafter referred to as: *Development of Egyptian Tomb*), pp. 336-337 considers the tombs of Semerkhet and Qa'a at Umm el-Qa'ab to be the forerunners of private tombs of the IIInd dynasty; on the similarities between tombs of the IIInd dynasty at both sites: STADELMANN, *Die Oberbauten der Königsgräber der 2. Dynastie in Sakkara*, in: *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, BdÉ XCVII/2. Le Caire 1985, pp. 298-299.

<sup>15</sup> In order to identify this – and the other tombs at Umm el-Qa'ab – as the royal burial place see below 5.

<sup>16</sup> E.-M. ENGEL, Grabkomplex des Qa'a, in: DREYER, ENGEL, U. HARTUNG, T. HIKADE, E.Ch. KÖHLER, F. PUMPENMEIER, Umm el-Qaab. Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof. 7./8. Vorbericht, *MDAIK* 52 (1996), pp. 57ff.

<sup>17</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs* III, pl. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pl. 114.

<sup>19</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs* I, pl. 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pl. 43.

<sup>21</sup> W.M.F. PETRIE, *Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties* II,

*MEEF* 21, London 1901 (hereinafter referred to as: *Royal Tombs* II), pl. LIX.

<sup>22</sup> EMERY, *Hor-Aha, Excavations at Saqqara*, Cairo 1939 (hereinafter referred to as: *Hor-Aha*), pl. 1.

<sup>23</sup> IDEM, *Great Tombs* II, pl. XXXVIII.

<sup>24</sup> IDEM, *Great Tombs* I, pl. 2.

<sup>25</sup> PETRIE, *Royal Tombs* II, pl. LX.

<sup>26</sup> IDEM, *Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty* I, *MEEF* 18, London 1900 (hereinafter referred to as: *Royal Tombs* I), pl. LXI.

<sup>27</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs* II, pl. II.

<sup>28</sup> IDEM, *Great Tombs* I, pl. 36.

<sup>29</sup> PETRIE, *Royal Tombs* II, pl. LXII.

<sup>30</sup> IDEM, *Great Tombs* I, pl. 14.

<sup>31</sup> PETRIE, *Royal Tombs* I, pl. LXI.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, pl. LX.

<sup>33</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs* I, pl. 25.

<sup>34</sup> IDEM, *The Tomb of Hemaka, Excavations at Saqqara*, Cairo 1938 (hereinafter referred to as: *Hemaka*), pl. 1.

<sup>35</sup> IDEM, *Great Tombs* III, pl. 85.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, pl. 40.

S 3506 especially resembles the layout of tomb T at Abydos: Although the stair ends on the smaller side of the burial chamber in the tomb of Den and on a longer one in S 3506, in both cases the burial chambers are surrounded by smaller rooms on a higher level, which are set further away in the case of Den, but close to the burial chamber in case of S 3506. The row of magazines continues over the main stair, a rather unique feature. Both tombs also have a second stair on the wall opposite the main staircase. For the tomb of Den, this was interpreted as leading to an annex that contained a statue of the king, of which a limestone base was found.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, as seen in the tomb of Qa'a and others at Saqqara, the staircase again ends at one of the small sides of the burial chamber.

Most of the architectural differences can be explained by the different types of underground at each site. The local limestone at Saqqara which is covered by a layer of gravel<sup>38</sup> requires different treatment than the sandy desert floor at Umm el-Qa'ab. While at Saqqara many architectural features were cut out of the rock with only additional partitioning walls and the superstructure built of mud-brick, at Abydos every part of the tomb had to be built of mud-brick since the sandy ground did not, for instance, support the weight of large wooden beams with which the roofs were constructed.

The previous sorting of Ist dynasty tombs depended solely on architectural criteria. But as the example of the tomb of Qa'a has shown, where only the re-excavation proved the modification of the layout, probably some more tombs were built in different stages. A similar change took place in the tombs of King Aha<sup>39</sup> and King Khasekhemui<sup>40</sup> at Umm el-Qa'ab which were also recently re-examined. Nothing can be said at present about the oth-

ers. In Saqqara, on the other hand, Emery observed different building phases only for the tombs S 3506<sup>41</sup> and S 3038,<sup>42</sup> but it seems likely that others were also subjected to changes during the building process.

The preceding points to two different problems:

1. While the sequence of burials at Umm el-Qa'ab is established, not all of the tombs at Saqqara can securely be dated to the reign of one king, and, unfortunately, the state of publications does not permit one to order the tombs from a reign of a single king in a single sequence.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the finds only give a terminus *ante quem*: the sequence they are sorted according to their funerary equipment might not be the same as the sequence they were built, since some of the structures might have begun decades before the burial took place. In some cases, however, the time span between the introduction of a variant in which a tomb was built and the burial seems to be too large so that one can assume that once a tomb variant was developed it was in use for a longer period.

2. An "ideal" burial layout probably did not exist.<sup>44</sup> Each tomb consists of different elements (burial chamber, magazines, superstructure, sometimes subsidiary graves, etc) which could be combined in different ways. Different factors determined the actual choice of arrangement, including technical possibilities, finances and status reasons of the tomb owner's, as well as the preference of a certain variant at different periods.

#### 4. The Size of the Tombs

The tomb types were also differentiated by several quantitative criteria. On one hand, the size of the

<sup>37</sup> DREYER, Umm el-Qaab. Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof. 3./4. Vorbericht, *MDAIK* 46 (1990), pp. 76-78.

<sup>38</sup> REISNER, *Development of Egyptian Tomb*, p. 122.

<sup>39</sup> DREYER, *MDAIK* 46 (1990), p. 63.

<sup>40</sup> IDEM, Grab des Chaschemui, in: DREYER, A. von den DRIESCH, ENGEL, R. HARTMANN, HARTUNG, HIKADE, V. MÜLLER, J. PETERS, Umm el-Qaab. Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof. 11./12. Vorbericht, *MDAIK* 56 (2000), p. 124.

<sup>41</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs III*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>42</sup> IDEM, *Great Tombs I*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>43</sup> In some cases, the sealings seem to indicate a sequence of the burials, as suggested by P. KAPLONY, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit I*, ÄA 8, Wiesbaden 1963, p. 107 for the reign of King Den: "Aus den Mustern und Belegzahlen der zwei- und einzeiligen Domänensiegel lässt sich die Reihenfolge der vier grossen Gräber der Dwn-Zeit: Sakkara 3504, Mjrt-Nt-Grab in Abydos, Sakkara 3506 und Königsgrab in Abydos, welches naturgemäss das letzte der Regierung ist, mit Sicherheit bestimmen."

<sup>44</sup> The variation in tomb equipment points to the same conclusion.

tombs themselves: it was generally stated that the tombs at Saqqara were much larger than those at Umm el-Qa'ab, and, therefore, the probable place of the royal burial as illustrated by the following quote from WILKINSON: "The impressive size and architecture of the North Saqqara tombs led scholars to question the identification of the smaller tombs on the Umm el-Qaab."<sup>45</sup>

But is there really a measurable difference between the tombs at both sites?

**Table 2** shows the size of the burial chamber in square metres. The burial chamber of the tomb of Aha at Umm el-Qa'ab, for instance, is, with more than 40 m<sup>2</sup>, much larger than those of the contemporary tomb at Saqqara, with about 10 m<sup>2</sup>, or the slightly later ones with 8.8-25 m<sup>2</sup>. The same can be said for the reign of Den with the exception of S 3506, which nearly reaches the size of the royal burial chamber. It also shows that during the reign of that king burial chambers are larger than during other periods. In general, the burial chambers at Umm el-Qa'ab seem to be larger than those at Saqqara.

How, then, did the generally accepted image of large tombs at Saqqara and their smaller counterparts at Abydos occur? This idea is probably the result of the differential preservation: While only the subterranean parts are preserved at Umm el-Qa'ab, at Saqqara the extensions of the superstructure were measured. Therefore, the underground parts of the tombs without adding the subsidiary graves at Umm el-Qa'ab were compared to the above ground parts at Saqqara.<sup>46</sup>

The other differentiation was the depth of the tombs. Those at Umm el-Qa'ab were considered to be deep, while those at Saqqara were taken to be rather shallow. This seemed to fit into the assumed origin of the Lower Egyptian type from the Delta, since the geological conditions in the Delta did not seem to permit the building of deep graves to prevent the flooding of the burials during inundation.<sup>47</sup>

But the mapping of the relevant data – the floor level of the burial chamber under the surrounding surface – shows a different picture: The equation *Abydos*

= *deep* versus *Saqqara* = *shallow* only works for the time of King Aha. During all the other reigns, there seems to be no tendency for the Saqqara tombs to remain shallow. On the contrary, the tomb S 3035 of Hemaka, at 8.4 m, and S 3036, at 6.5 m, both built during the reign of Den, are rather deep.

Two tendencies can be observed: During certain reigns, e.g. that of Den, deep burials were built at both sites. **Table 3** maps the depth of the burial chamber and the thickness of gravel at Saqqara. It indicates that there is a relation between both data: Rather deep tombs were built in areas in which the layer of gravel covering the limestone was rather thick so that less limestone had to be chiseled away to reach the intended depth. This correlation is rather clear until the reign of Den. After his reign, burials at Saqqara shifted to the second row behind the older ones – the favourable locations overlooking the Nile Valley had already been taken.

## 5. Conclusion

As we have seen, there are more similarities or at least less discrepancies between the tombs at both sites than suggested by the prevailing scheme of two different tomb types. Is it, then, justified to talk about two different types when dealing with the graves from both sites?

Unfortunately, not many archaeologists define what they consider to be a type and why. One of the few is Dorothea ARNOLD who differentiated types of pottery when the vessels were distinguished by at least three attributes<sup>48</sup>.

According to W.Y. ADAMS and E.W. ADAMS, "types are differentiated from each other by the possession of unique attribute clusters. The attribute cluster which serves to define any type must have three characteristics: statistical significance, variability of association, and meaningfulness for the purposes of the typology."<sup>49</sup> They also state that "typologies are developed with reference to a specific purpose or purposes, and it is these purposes that give meaning to the individual types in the system. Archaeological typologies can legitimately serve many different pur-

<sup>45</sup> WILKINSON, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, p. 259.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. the representation by KAISER, in: KAISER, DREYER, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), fig. 13.

<sup>47</sup> But see, for instance, the burials at Minshat Abu Omar: K. KROEPER, D. WILDUNG, *Minshat Abu Omar I, Gräber 1-114*, Mainz 1994.

<sup>48</sup> Do. ARNOLD, *Keramikbearbeitung in Dahschur 1976-1981*, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), pp. 44, 47-48.

<sup>49</sup> W.Y. ADAMS, E.W. ADAMS, *Archaeological typology and practical reality. A dialectical approach to artifact classification and sorting*, Cambridge 1991, p. 241.

poses, and these will affect the way in which types are formulated and used.”<sup>50</sup>

But what, then, was the purpose of the typology in case of the burials of the Ist dynasty? The only context in which this typology was ever used was the search for the burial place of the kings of that dynasty. This question also determined the choice of attributes as, for instance, the interpretation of the meaning of the accompanying boat burials which were taken to be a royal attribute by some, while others pointed to contemporary burials at other cemeteries which also featured boat burials and were never seen as being royal.

But the layout of the substructures of both “types” resembles each other very closely, as do the sizes and depths of the tombs. These attributes, therefore, can hardly be used to differentiate two types. As **table 1** has shown, there were other criteria used by one or the other author to support his view regarding the location of the royal tombs:

– The mound underneath one of the Saqqara mastabas (S 3038), once taken to be an architectural forerunner of the later pyramids, equals subterranean tumuli in several of the Abydos tombs.<sup>51</sup> It seems to be an element of many tombs of the Ist dynasty and cannot be taken as a distinction between the two types.

– A wooden shrine or lining of the burial chamber was a feature not only of the tombs at Umm el-Qa’ab, but also of many Saqqara mastabas.

– Another argument used to prove that the kings were buried at Saqqara was the presence of a temple to the north of S 3505 that is seen as the “Prototyp der späteren Pyramidenbezirke”.<sup>52</sup> But Peter JÁNOSI points out that it is a vicious circle to identify S 3505 as a royal tomb only because of the presence of the temple.<sup>53</sup>

– The same holds true for the presence of boats which were first only seen in connection with the Saqqara mastabas. Other boats were found close to private tombs at Helwan and Abusir, and in 1991 also at the so-called Shuna el-Zebib, the ‘Talbezirk’ of King Khasekhemui at Kom el-Sultan/Abydos. Boats are, therefore, neither an exclusively royal nor private element and can also not be used to differentiate between the two types.

– Subsidiary burials occur at both sites. Therefore, it was not the simple presence of a royal tomb that was taken to be an attribute, but the number of burials.<sup>54</sup> Even with the undoubtedly royal structures at Umm el-Qa’ab, however, the number of these burials varies quite a lot during the Ist dynasty. It is therefore doubtful whether the sheer quantity can be a criteria to distinguish between the two different tomb types.

From the above-mentioned criteria, the shape and appearance of the superstructure, therefore, remains the only difference between tombs at both sites: the sandy tumulus at Umm el-Qa’ab opposed to the niched mudbrick mastaba at Saqqara. While the mastaba covers the complete substructure of the tomb, the tumulus was probably only erected above the burial chamber. But there is another niched feature that belongs to the tombs at Umm el-Qa’ab: the royal funerary enclosures, the so-called ‘Talbezirke’, that stand close to the ancient settlement at Kom el-Sultan. There are at least two formal similarities between these buildings and the superstructures of the Saqqara mastabas: Both are rectangular and oriented more or less north-south, and both are niched. The royal funerary enclosures seem to have fulfilled cultic purposes of still unknown character.<sup>55</sup> The development of the mastaba architecture shows that the niches that surround the mastaba during the Ist dynasty are soon reduced to two niches on its eastern side which were then used for offerings. I, therefore, assume that

only because of its similarities to the North-temple in the Zoser complex, and then taken to be the forerunner of royal mortuary temples.

<sup>54</sup> But see GUNDLACH, *Pharao und sein Staat*, p. 120: “Ich möchte nun die These aufstellen, daß die Gräber mit Nebengräbern königlichen Charakter hatten.”

<sup>55</sup> See the debate between Barry KEMP, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, New York 1991, pp. 64ff. and

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 240.

<sup>51</sup> DREYER, Zur Rekonstruktion der Oberbauten der Königsgräber der I. Dynastie in Abydos, *MDAIK 47* (1991) (*Festschrift Werner Kaiser*), pp. 93-104.

<sup>52</sup> STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 26.

<sup>53</sup> P. JÁNOSI, Bemerkungen zu den Nordkapellen des Alten Reiches, *SAK 22* (1995), pp. 145-168: especially pp. 154ff.: The building north of S 3505 was identified as a temple

there are – apart from formal similarities between the royal funerary enclosures and the superstructures of the Saqqara mastabas – also some functional similarities, in that both structures marked the place of cultic procedures.

The question of the location of the royal burial place can, therefore, not be solved by using the above-mentioned quantitative criteria nor by insisting on different tomb types that seem to be only variations of a single type. Instead, contextual arguments should be considered: While the tombs at Saqqara seem to appear at that site only with the reign of King Aha, the tombs at Ummel-Qa'ab develop in their layout and distribution pattern without any interruption from the tombs of predynastic rulers on cemetery U at the same site and,

therefore, show a certain continuity.<sup>56</sup> Another argument might be the distance of the tombs at Umm el-Qa'ab from other contemporary burials except the subsidiary tombs. The same pattern can later be observed for royal necropoleis during all periods of Egyptian history. The tombs at Saqqara, on the other hand, are not only part of a larger cemetery, but were also – at least partially – built over already during the II<sup>nd</sup> and III<sup>rd</sup> dynasties,<sup>57</sup> which should not have been the case had they been the place of the royal burials.

Finally, the presence of royal stelae, two of which accompanied every tomb at Umm el-Qa'ab, should point to Abydos as the site of the royal burials during the 1st dynasty.

attributes/tomb type	Lower Egyptian Tomb	Upper Egyptian Tomb
superstructure	mud-brick mastaba with niches	not preserved (reconstructed mound of sand or mud-bricks)
substructure <sup>58</sup>	shallow	deep
subterranean tumulus <sup>59</sup>	stepped	none
size of tomb <sup>60</sup>	large	small
burial chamber <sup>61</sup>	no wooden chamber	wooden chamber
temple <sup>62</sup>	one next to S 3505	none
boats <sup>63</sup>	with some tombs	no boats associated with tombs
subsidiary tombs <sup>64</sup>	with some mastabas less burials	with all tombs more burials

**Table 1: Supposed Characteristics of Different Tomb Types of the 1st Dynasty**

David O'CONNOR, The Status of Early Egyptian Temples: An Alternative Theory, in: B. ADAMS, R. FRIEDMAN (eds.), *The Followers of Horus. Studies dedicated to Michael Allen Hoffman 1944-1990*, Egyptian Studies Association Publication 2/Oxbow Monograph 20, Oxford 1992, pp. 83ff.

<sup>56</sup> KAISER, in: KAISER, DREYER, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), pp. 241-242.

<sup>57</sup> EMERY, *Hor-Aha*, p. 18, fig. 9.

<sup>58</sup> KAISER, in: KAISER, DREYER, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), pp. 256ff.; STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> EMERY, *Hemaka*, p. 2; IDEM, *Hor-Aha*, pp. 1-2; IDEM, *Great Tombs II*, p. 3; IDEM, *Archaic Egypt*, pp. 47 (tomb of Narmer at Abydos and the so-called royal tomb at Naqada), 63 (tomb O and S 3471), 66 (tomb Y and S 3503),

70-71 (tomb Z and S 3504), 76 (tomb T and S 3035), 81-82 (tomb X and S 3038), 86ff. (tomb Q and S 3505); STADELMANN, *Die großen Pyramiden von Giza*, Graz 1990, p. 48.

<sup>61</sup> KAISER, Zu den Königsgräbern der 1. Dynastie in Umm el-Qaab, *MDAIK* 37 (1981), p. 252 interprets this (reconstructed) structure as "Vorstellung des Wohnens im Grab"; STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 27; LAUER, Le premier temple de culte funéraire en Égypte, *BIFAO* 80 (1980), pp. 45ff.; KAISER, in: KAISER, DREYER, *MDAIK* 38 (1982), p. 259; KEMP, *Antiquity* 41 (1967), pp. 28ff.

<sup>63</sup> STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, pp. 15-16, 29.

<sup>64</sup> EMERY, *Great Tombs II*, pp. 1-2; STADELMANN, *Pyramiden*, p. 20; GUNDLACH, *Pharao und sein Staat*, p. 120.

**Table 2: Size of burial chambers**

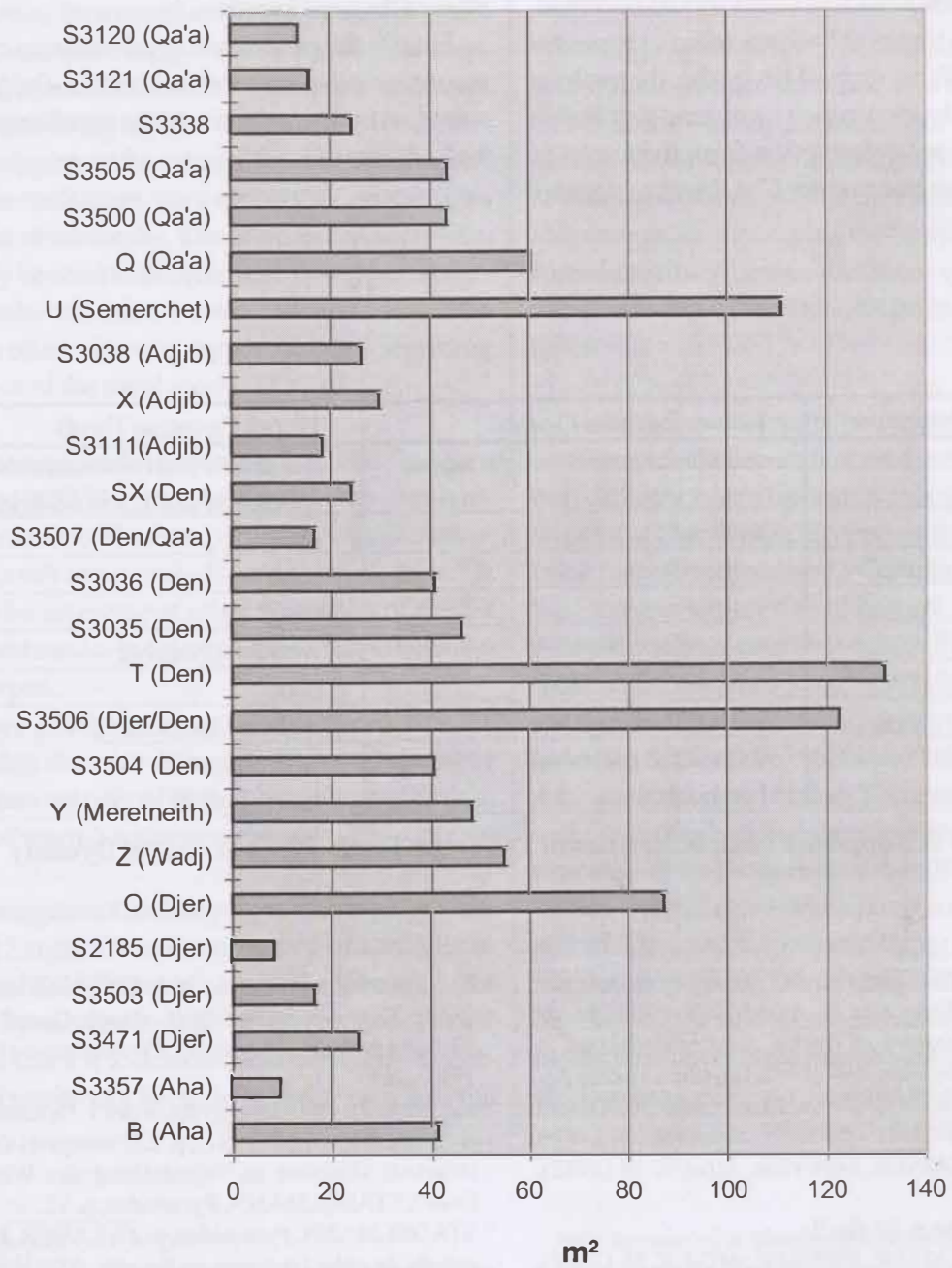




Table 3: Depth of burial chambers

