

The question of ancestor cult in the first millennium BC.

Some thoughts based on archaeological findings

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Abstract

During the first millennium BC, foreign rulers (Libyans, Kushites, Saïtes and Persians) had a considerable impact on Egyptian royal ideology. The paper will address the question whether besides general developments related to changes in Egyptian kingship and religion during the Late Period, foreign kingship can also be linked to an increase of genealogies and various attestations of ancestor cult. Case studies, in particular from Abydos/Umm el-Qaab, will be discussed and the role of the god Osiris in connection with the worship of earlier kings highlighted.

1 Introduction

Within the general theme of the conference, “Egyptian royal ideology and kingship under periods of foreign rulers”, it seems of particular interest to highlight aspects of ancestor cult. Are there common features or specific differences how the Libyans, the Kushites, the Saïtes and Persians addressed their ancestors as Egyptian kings? Can specific patterns of legitimisation for foreign rulers in connection with predecessors be traced, as was already proposed by Anke BLÖBAUM?¹

This paper will present some case studies, with a focus on material from Abydos/Umm el-Qaab, and aims to illustrate the role and function of the god Osiris for ancestor cult in the first millennium BC. Whether the worship of previous generations and earlier kings took on specific features during periods of foreign rulers will be discussed based on archaeological, pictorial and textual evidence. For pure reasons of practicability, Alexander the Great and the Ptolemies are not included here. These later examples could, without doubt, also add up interesting thoughts as “last outcome of royal ancestor cult”² in Egypt.³

1 See A. I. BLÖBAUM, „Denn ich bin ein König, der die Maat liebt“. Herrscherlegitimation im spätzeitlichen Ägypten. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung der Phraseologie in den offiziellen Königsinschriften vom Beginn der 25. Dynastie bis zum Ende der makedonischen Herrschaft, AegMon 4, Aachen 2006, *passim* and 280: “Auffallend ist ebenfalls, daß insbesondere Fremdherrscher sich durch Anknüpfung an einen Amtsvorgänger legitimieren.”

2 M. FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, IBAES 20, Berlin/London 2018, 53–75, here: 66.

3 See, e.g., M. MINAS, *Die hieroglyphischen Ahnenreihen der ptolemäischen Könige: ein Vergleich mit den Titeln der eponymen Priester in den demotischen und griechischen Papyri*, AegTrev 9, Mainz am Rhein 2000; F. HERKLOTZ, *Der Ahnenkult bei den Ptolemäern*, in: M. FITZENREITER (ed.), *Genealogie –*

2 Preliminaries about ancestor cult in ancient Egypt

Within Egyptology, there is a still ongoing debate about the existence and role of ancestor cult.⁴ Several findings from ancient Egypt suggest, however, that in particular non-royal ancestor cult is well established since earliest times, especially by means of funerary cult and offerings to the dead.⁵ Martin FITZENREITER, Nicola HARRINGTON and others have stressed and illustrated the importance of ancestors for the living and established the concept of ancestor cult as part of the funerary beliefs.⁶ Ancestor worship and ancestor cult can be regarded as religious practice within Egyptian religion⁷ and there are different manifestations traceable throughout time.⁸ In the words of Juan Carlos MORENO GARCÍA: “Ancestor worship thus appears as an active, multifaceted social activity, operating at different levels (individual, domestic/family, community, palace), whose distinctive idiosyncrasies depended on the context in which it operated. Tensions but also mutual influences permeated all these spheres, thus making ancestor cults a dynamic manifestation of social values, political practices, and religious beliefs in pharaonic Egypt.”⁹

Realität und Fiktion von Identität. Workshop am 04. und 05. Juni 2004, IBAES 5, London 2005, 155–164; see also S. PFEIFFER, Herrscher- und Dynastiekulte im Ptolemäerreich: Systematik und Einordnung der Kultformen, MBP 98, München 2008; M. MINAS-NERPEL, Koregentschaft und Thronfolge: Legitimation ptolemäischer Machtstrukturen in den ägyptischen Tempeln der Ptolemäerzeit, in: F. HOFFMANN/K. S. SCHMIDT (eds.), Orient und Okzident in hellenistischer Zeit: Beiträge zur Tagung „Orient und Okzident – Antagonismus oder Konstrukt? Machtstrukturen, Ideologien und Kulturtransfer in hellenistischer Zeit“, Würzburg 10.–13. April 2008, Vaterstetten 2014, 143–166.

- 4 See, e.g., D. WILDUNG, Ahnenkult, in: W. HELCK/E. OTTO (eds.), Lexikon der Ägyptologie I, Wiesbaden 1975, 111–112; E. ENDESFELDER, Götter, Herrscher, König: zur Rolle der Ideologie bei der Formierung des ägyptischen Königtums, in: R. GUNDLACH/M. ROCHHOLZ (eds.), Ägyptische Tempel – Struktur, Funktion und Programm (Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagungen in Gosen 1990 und in Mainz 1992), HÄB 37, Hildesheim 1994, 47–54, here: 49; M. FITZENREITER, Zum Ahnenkult in Ägypten, in: GM 143, 1994, 51–72; J. C. MORENO GARCÍA, Ancestral Cults in Ancient Egypt, in: J. BARTON et al. (eds.), Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, Oxford, August 2016, 24 pages, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.242. Accessed on 07.06.2019; FITZENREITER, Allerhand Kleinigkeiten, 53–54.
- 5 See, e.g., R. J. DEMARÉE, The *3ḥ ikr nr*-stelae: on ancestor worship in ancient Egypt, EU 3, Leiden 1983; M. FITZENREITER, *3ḥ n jtn* als *3ḥ jkr n r*: Die königlichen Familienstelen und die religiöse Praxis in Amarna, in: SAK 37, 2008, 85–124; M. MÜLLER, Feasts for the Dead and Ancestor Veneration in Egyptian Tradition, in: V. RIMMER HERRMANN/J. D. SCHLÖEN (eds.), In Remembrance of Me: Feasting with the Dead in the Ancient Middle East, Oriental Institute Museum Publications 37, Chicago 2014, 85–94; FITZENREITER, Allerhand Kleinigkeiten, 53–75.
- 6 FITZENREITER, GM 143, 1994, 51–72; N. HARRINGTON, Living with the dead: ancestor worship and mortuary ritual in ancient Egypt, Oxford 2013, in particular 28–64; see also Y. EL SHAZLY, Royal ancestor worship in Deir el-Medina during the New Kingdom, Wallasey 2015; MORENO GARCÍA, Ancestral Cults in Ancient Egypt.
- 7 See H. HARDACRE, Ancestor: Ancestor worship, in: L. JONES (ed.), Encyclopedia of Religion I, 2nd edition, Detroit 2005, 320–325, here: 321; for a more general discussion of the problematic history of research on the relation of religion and ancestor cult/worship see T. INSOLL, Ancestor Cults, in: T. INSOLL (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion, Oxford 2012, online version, 17 pages, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199232444.013.0066. Accessed on 07.06.2019.
- 8 FITZENREITER, GM 143, 1994, 55. “A change in the status of ancestors” seems to be traceable in conjunction with the so-called personal piety during the New Kingdom, see HARRINGTON, Living with the dead, 30.
- 9 MORENO GARCÍA, Ancestral Cults in Ancient Egypt, 1.

A difference must be made between royal and non-royal ancestor cult. Whereas evidence for the latter is clearly attested, the first has been debated and proof is mostly explained as references to royal succession, but not to ancestor cult. King-lists and annals are confirmed from the earliest times onwards,¹⁰ but are very often regarded as unrelated to ancestor cult, but as mirroring simply aspects of the royal succession.¹¹ From non-royal contexts, genealogies are well-known, showing interesting peaks in the first millennium BC.¹²

For both royal and non-royal contexts, a general division can be made between anonymous and identified ancestors, thus the veneration of anonymous or named ancestors. Throughout this paper, most examples will be addressing ancestors as individuals.¹³ Cults for such ancestors have a limited existence, which finds parallels in ancient and modern cultures, depending on the remembrance of the deceased and probably just lasting a few generations.¹⁴

Without doubts, the royal/divine ancestor par excellence is the god Osiris – the ruling king is an embodiment of the living Horus, his predecessor Osiris granting legitimacy to his son and successor.¹⁵ Originally limited to the royal sphere, this concept was extended beyond this from late Old Kingdom times onwards.¹⁶ Father and son are in Egypt the keys to reach eternity and essential elements of the structure of Egyptian funerary cult.¹⁷ Several Egyptian terms reflect complex semantic concepts of ancestors and different spiritualities of

10 See L. POPKO, History-writing in ancient Egypt, in: W. GRAJETZKI/W. WENDRICH (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles 2014 (August), 16 pages, here: 4–5 with references. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/73v96940> Accessed on 15.05.2019. For a new non-Manethonian king-list see L. POPKO/M. RÜCKER, P.Lips. Inv. 1228 und 590: Eine neue ägyptische Königsliste in griechischer Sprache, in: ZÄS 138, 2011, 43–62. I am grateful to Lutz Popko for this reference.

11 E.g. WILDUNG, LÄ I, 111–112; MORENO GARCÍA, Ancestral Cults in Ancient Egypt. For a different opinion about king-lists, see J. CERVELLÓ-AUTUORI, The thinite “royal lists”: typology and meaning, in: B. MIDANT-REYNES/Y. TRISTANT (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 2: Proceedings of the International Conference “Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt”*, Toulouse (France), 5th–8th September 2005, OLA 172, Leuven 2008, 887–899, here: 895.

12 See K. JANSEN-WINKELN, Die Entwicklung der genealogischen Informationen nach dem Neuen Reich, in: M. FITZENREITER (ed.), *Genealogie – Realität und Fiktion von Identität*. Workshop am 04. und 05. Juni 2004, IBAES 5, London 2005, 137–145; F. PAYRAUDEAU, Généalogie et mémoire familiale à la Troisième Période Intermédiaire : le cas de la statue Caire JE 37880, in: RdE 64, 2013, 63–92. Cf. also FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 67.

13 See HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 30, fig. 13.

14 HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 146. See also FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 67.

15 Cf. U. EFFLAND, Das Grab des Gottes Osiris in Umm el- Qa'ib/Abydos, in: I. GERLACH/D. RAUE (eds.), *Forschungcluster 4. Sanktuar und Ritual. Heilige Plätze im archäologischen Befund*. Menschen – Kulturen – Traditionen, Studien aus den Forschungscustern des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 10, Berlin 2013, 321–330, here: 323–324; J. BUDKA, Abydos. Totenstadt der Pharaonen, in: R. ACHENBACH (ed.), *Heilige Orte der Antike. Gesammelte Studien im Anschluss an eine Ringvorlesung des Exzellenzclusters „Religion und Politik in den Kulturen der Vormoderne und der Moderne“ an der Universität Münster im Wintersemester 2013/2014*, Kasion 1, Münster 2018, 67–93, here: 71–72 with references.

16 See M. FITZENREITER, Jenseits im Diesseits – Die Konstruktion des Ortes der Toten im pharaonischen Ägypten, in: C. KÜMMEL/B. SCHWEITZER/U. VEIT (eds.), *Körperinszenierung – Objektsammlung – Monumentalisierung: Totenritual und Grabkult in frühen Gesellschaften*. Archäologische Quellen in kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive, Tübinger Archäologische Taschenbücher 6, Münster/New York/München/Berlin 2008, 75–106, here: 81.

17 For the role of the king as son of the gods during the Early Dynastic Period and thus before the establishment of the cult of Osiris see ENDESFELDER, *Götter, Herrscher, König*, 47–54.

the dead (e.g. ba, ka and akh; the first two which are attested for kings and gods as well as for humans).¹⁸

Sources

Aspects of ancestor cult are diverse, but are especially evident in the following group of sources which I divide as primary and secondary evidence.¹⁹ One needs to stress that as a starting point also aspects simply linked to the veneration and/or memory of predecessors are included in this list.

Primary evidence (mostly referring to specific ancestors):

- Archaeological evidence in general (ritual traces, e.g. Breaking the Red Pots²⁰; votive offerings in general; traces of building activities; installations for ancestor busts and the busts themselves²¹ etc.)
- Textual evidence (e.g. letters to the dead²², stelae²³, text on statues²⁴, e.g. connected with statue cult, see the example of Nimlot A below; for some authors: also the king-lists²⁵ etc.)

Secondary evidence (referring both to anonymous and specific ancestors):

- Art/pictorial evidence (statues and reliefs, depictions of earlier kings/ancestors as well as pictures which are in artistic style and/or iconography relating to earlier depictions, thus revitalising old cultural models and elite representations) as well as 'archaising' pottery vessels (this paper)

A special case are 'archaising' aspects traceable in personal or royal names, thus in re-using names of older and deceased individuals/idealised kings as a conscious act aiming for legitimisation.²⁶ This seems to be comparable to the re-use of older titularies as common sources of inspiration from the Libyan Period onwards:

18 See FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 58.

19 Cf. the different model by FITZENREITER who divides the sources into: installations, pictures and texts as well as Egyptian terminology, see FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 55–58.

20 See HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 37–40; J. BUDKA, V. Die Keramik des Osiriskults: Erste Beobachtungen zu Formen, Datierung und Funktion, in: U. EFFLAND/J. BUDKA/A. EFFLAND, *Studien zum Osiriskult in Umm el-Qaab/Abydos – Ein Vorbericht*, in: MDAIK 66, 2010, 35–64, here: 61–62.

21 HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 49–59. See also J. TROCHE, *The living dead at Deir el-Medina*, in: A. DORN/S. POLIS (eds.), *Outside the box: Selected papers from the conference "Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact"* Liège, 27–29 October 2014, AegLeod 11, Liège 2018, 465–475.

22 HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 34–37 with literature.

23 HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 59–60.

24 See HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 40–49.

25 E.g. CERVELLÓ-AUTUORI, *The thinite "royal lists"*, 895: "The Thinite king-lists are the first recorded stage of the pharaonic ancestor cult." See also FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 66 with further references.

26 Cf. C. JURMAN, *Legitimation through Innovative Tradition – Perspectives on the Use of Old Models in Royal and Private Monuments during the Third Intermediate Period*, in: F. COPPENS/J. JANÁK/H. VYMAZALOVÁ (eds.), *7. Symposium zur ägyptischen Königsideologie/7th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology. Royal versus Divine Authority. Acquisition, Legitimization and Renewal of Power*, Prague, June 26–28, 2013, *Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen 4.4*, Wiesbaden 2015, 177–214; here: 177. See also D. WILDUNG, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewusstsein ihrer Nachwelt. Teil I: posthume Quellen über die Könige der ersten vier Dynastien*, MÄS 17, Berlin 1969.

- Names and titularies (for studies about 'archaising' aspects of royal names see, among others, Jochem KAHL and Anke BLÖBAUM, highlighting a specific use of references to predecessors for foreign rulers and usurpators).²⁷

Especially the sources for secondary evidence are particularly common during the first millennium BC, overlapping, however, with more general references to older rulers/deified individuals. The phenomenon of so-called archaisms is well known in Late Period art, but also in other periods. As Robert MORKOT, Claus JURMAN and others have shown in the last decades, various conscious references to cultural modes of the past are already well attested since the late Libyan Period in Egypt.²⁸ References to antiquity/earlier times can be located in an inspiring set of cultural repertoire between innovation and tradition. The appearance of various phenomena of 'archaisms' in the late Twenty-second Dynasty is contemporaneous to the attestation of extraordinary long genealogies and thus unlikely to be a coincidence²⁹, but rather aiming for legitimisation.³⁰ All in all, we need to consider that different media were used for the communication with ancestors,³¹ but also that this communication and respective references had a broad spectrum of varying degrees and diverse foci.

Methodological challenges

Within ancestor cult in Egypt, there exists a very fine and blurred line between ancestor worship and funerary cult (see above). Case studies from outside the funerary sphere can thus help in defining archaeological traces as sources for ancestor cult. I believe that the votives for Osiris at Umm el-Qaab, which will be discussed in the following, represent another context that is suitable in this respect, although certain methodological challenges remain.

Similar to other assessments of archaeological remains like the study of ritual activities, there is the general danger of archaeological sources, which form the majority of the material presented in this paper, that they turn out as a) very vague in interpretation or b) as being interpreted in more detail than what is evident from the archaeological findings themselves. It remains often impossible to determine a specific act or ritual based solely on the archaeological evidence.³² A contextual interpretation that is also considering all textual and pictorial sources is more purposeful and may lead to some results. For example, for

27 J. KAHL, Zu den Namen spätzeitlicher Usurpatoren, Fremdherrscher, Gegen- und Lokalkönige, in: ZÄS 129, 2002, 31–42; BLÖBAUM, Herrscherlegitimation, 144–151 and *passim*. For titularies and names of Libyan officials referring to older models see JURMAN, Legitimation through Innovative Tradition, 177–214.

28 R. G. MORKOT, Archaism and Innovation in Art from the New Kingdom to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, in: J. TAIT (ed.), 'Never Had the Like Occurred': Egypt's view of its past, Encounters with ancient Egypt, London 2003, 79–99; C. JURMAN, The Trappings of Kingship: Remarks about Archaism, Rituals and Cultural Polyglossia in Saite Egypt, *Aegyptus et Pannonia* 4, 2010, 73–118, here: 74–87; R. G. MORKOT, All in the Detail: Some Further Observations on "Archaism" and Style in Libyan-Kushite-Saite Egypt, in: E. PISCHIKOVA/J. BUDKA/K. GRIFFIN (eds.), Thebes in the First Millennium BC, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014, 379–395; JURMAN, Legitimation through Innovative Tradition, 177–183 with further references. See also F. PAYRAUDEAU, Les prémices du mouvement archaïsant à Thèbes et la statue Caire JE 37382 du quadrème prophète Djedkhonsouieufânkh, in: BIFAO 107, 2007, 141–156.

29 JANSEN-WINKELN, Die Entwicklung der genealogischen Informationen, 142.

30 See JURMAN, Legitimation through Innovative Tradition, 177–214.

31 HARRINGTON, Living with the dead, 63.

32 For general difficulties in interpretation, especially connected with the analyses of archaeological deposits see, e.g., M. K. H. EGGERT, Prähistorische Archäologie. Konzepte und Methoden, Tübingen/

traces of banquets celebrated by the living and the ancestors in ancient Egypt, we rely on additional sources and supporting information for the identification of the specific context and aspects of the ancient performance.³³ Also for the here discussed case studies of votives from Umm el-Qaab possible referring to ancestor cult, the archaeological and ceramicological contexts will be complemented by textual references and secondary sources where suitable.

3 Case studies from Umm el-Qaab/Abydos

My thoughts outlined in this paper are based on work by the Osiris cult project of the German Archaeological Institute Cairo, directed by Ute EFFLAND.³⁴ This project focusses on the cultic activities at Umm el-Qaab which post-date the Early Dynastic Period and are connected with rituals for the god Osiris. My own task within this project is the assessment of the ceramics from the site.³⁵ The name of Umm el-Qaab derives from the small votive cups, the so-called qaabs, attested in millions on the site – “mother of pots” is, therefore, an appropriate name.³⁶ During the last decade it became obvious that the long-lasting tradition of pottery votive offerings at Umm el-Qaab, reaching from the Predynastic Period until late Roman times with a florescence in the Kushite Period, refers to 1) kingship, 2) royal ancestors and 3) the god Osiris.³⁷ These new results and the close connections between the three spheres will be illustrated in the following.

It is essential to contextualise the votive pots deposited at Umm el-Qaab in a first step. Depositing pots had a very long tradition at Abydos and started already during the Naqada III Period, thus before the re-use of the Early Dynastic cemetery. The Predynastic cemetery Cemetery U yielded early evidence for votive pottery. In the vicinity of the famous tomb U-j³⁸, offering cult and the deposition of ceramic vessels was observed. The excavator Günter

Basel 2001, 78; G. GÖRMER, *Bronzezeitliche Depots in Mitteleuropa und ihre Deutung*, in: *Ethnographisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift* 47/3, 2006, 289–298.

33 Cf. V. MÜLLER, *Archäologische Relikte kultischer Aktivitäten in Umm el-Qa'ab/Abydos*, in: J. MYLONOPOULOS/H. ROEDER (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual. Auf der Suche nach der rituellen Handlung in den antiken Kulturen Ägyptens und Griechenlands*, Vienna 2006, 37–52 for some thoughts on ritual traces at Abydos.

34 See EFFLAND/BUDKA/EFFLAND, *MDAIK* 66, 2010, 19–91; U. EFFLAND/A. EFFLAND, “Ritual Landscape” and “Sacred Space” – Überlegungen zu Kultrausrichtung und Prozessionsachsen in Abydos, in: *MOSAIKjournal* 1, 2010, 127–158; EFFLAND, *Das Grab des Gottes Osiris*, 321–330; U. EFFLAND/A. EFFLAND, *Abydos. Tor zur ägyptischen Unterwelt*, Darmstadt/Mainz am Rhein 2013; U. EFFLAND/A. EFFLAND, „Und dann kam Osiris aus der Unterwelt...“ – Kultbild und Naos des Osiris vom „Gottesgrab“ in Abydos, in: *Sokar* 34, 2017, 6–23.

35 See BUDKA, *MDAIK* 66, 2010, 42–58; J. BUDKA, *Votivgaben für Osiris. Neue Forschungen in Umm el-Qaab/Abydos*, in: *Sokar* 29, 2014, 56–65; J. BUDKA, *Kushites at Abydos: A View from Umm el-Qaab'*, in: C. JURMAN/B. BADER/D. A. ASTON (eds.), *A True Scribe of Abydos. Essays on First Millennium Egypt in Honour of Anthony Leahy*, OLA 265, Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT, 2017, 53–63; J. BUDKA, *Umm el-Qa'ab and the sacred landscape of Abydos: New perspectives based on the votive pottery for Osiris*, in: I. REGULSKI (ed.), *Abydos: the sacred land at the western horizon*, British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 8, Leuven, in press.

36 See F. PUMPENMEIER, *Heqareshu-Hügel*, in: G. DREYER et al., *Umm el-Qaab, Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof*, 9/10. Vorbericht, in: *MDAIK* 54, 1998, 123–137, here: 125–26; MÜLLER, *Archäologische Relikte*, 38; BUDKA, *MDAIK* 66, 2010, 35; BUDKA, *Sokar* 29, 2014, 57.

37 BUDKA, *Umm el-Qa'ab and the sacred landscape of Abydos*, in press. See also BUDKA, *Abydos*, 67–93.

38 G. DREYER, *Umm el-Qaab I. Das prädynastische Königsgrab U-j und seine frühen Schriftzeugnisse*, AV 86, Mainz am Rhein 1998; G. DREYER, *Abydos, Umm el-Qa'ab*, in: K. A. BARD (ed.), *Encyclopedia*

DREYER documented an offering place (in German “Opferplatz”): a cultic area with more than 100 votive vessels on the desert surface.³⁹ Most common are simple dishes and plates, usually deposited upside-down on the ground.⁴⁰ One example shows irregular red paint, maybe a reference to blood and to real food offerings. Both the upside-down position of dishes and plates on the ground and red splashes on votive vessels are common features of the later cult associated with Osiris.⁴¹ It is important to note that the cult at tomb U-j lasted until the First Dynasty and was obviously covering several generations of rulers. Can this long-lasting funerary cult at a royal tomb be regarded as the root for ancestor veneration at the site or is it simply an early reference for funerary rites?

The tomb of Osiris

Within the Early Dynastic cemetery of Umm el-Qaab, the tomb of king Djer of the First Dynasty stands out because it is the earliest substantial monumental monument with hundreds of subsidiary tombs.⁴² During the Middle Kingdom, the main chamber was re-excavated and equipped with a staircase-building connected with the re-interpretation of the tomb as the burial place of the god Osiris.⁴³ With reference to ancestor cult, FITZENREITER has stressed here some important points: “To interpret the tomb of one specific king from times immemorial as the burial place of the mythic king Osiris is in some respects also reminiscent of the tendency to worship local heroes as ‘saints’.”⁴⁴

The most impressive relic of the Middle Kingdom re-modification of the tomb of Djer is the Osirian bed representing a mortuary bed with the recumbent Osiris.⁴⁵ The location of this statue discovered by Émile AMÉLINEAU was reconstructed by Ute EFFLAND and Andreas EFFLAND in the central chamber, enclosed in a limestone shrine, newly discovered by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo.⁴⁶ The Osirian bed, and especially texts and reliefs from the temple of Seti I at Abydos, illustrate the main themes of the Osirian cult⁴⁷: the regeneration of the god; his awakening from a passive mode and the impregnation of Isis, which are all essential for the cosmic cycle, and for both the royal and the funerary cult.⁴⁸ These aspects also include the treatment of ancestors as the creative power of the deceased Osiris as well as the guarding carried out by Isis. The power of creation and the protective factor are made available for the living, here represented by the god Horus.⁴⁹

of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt, London 1999, 109–114.

39 DREYER, Umm el-Qaab I, 15–16.

40 DREYER, Umm el-Qaab I, 15–16, figs. 8–9.

41 See BUDKA, Umm el-Qa’ab and the sacred landscape of Abydos, in press.

42 G. DREYER, Nebengräber ohne Ende. Der Grabkomplex des Djer in Abydos, in: Sokar 24, 2012, 6–11.

43 W. M. F. PETRIE, The royal tombs of the earliest dynasties II, EEF 21, London 1901, 9; MÜLLER, Archäologische Relikte, 44; D. O’CONNOR, Abydos. Egypt’s First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris, Cairo 2009, 89–90.

44 FITZENREITER, Allerhand Kleinigkeiten, 61.

45 A. EFFLAND/U. EFFLAND, IV. Der Schrein des Osiris, in: EFFLAND/BUDKA/EFFLAND, MDAIK 66, 2010, 30–35, here: 33–35 with references.

46 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 17–20.

47 See R. DAVID, A Guide to Religious Ritual at Abydos, Warminster 1981; R. DAVID, Temple Ritual at Abydos, London 2016.

48 Cf. O’CONNOR, Abydos, 31–41.

49 See FITZENREITER, Allerhand Kleinigkeiten, 62.

References to royal ancestors' cult and especially to royal succession are specific for Abydos and can be illustrated, for example, with the complex of Ahmose and the pyramid for Tetisheri,⁵⁰ but also the famous king-list from the Seti I temple where royal ancestors are named for political reasons and questions of legitimacy.⁵¹ Reflections of ancestors' cult may go back as early as to the First Dynasty,⁵² although this has been questioned by some scholars.⁵³ From my point of view, the most likely interpretation of the necropolis seals from the tomb of Qaa⁵⁴ and the tomb of Dewen⁵⁵ is the one originally proposed by DREYER⁵⁶: Horus Qaa appears here as first of the westerners (Khentamentiū) in front of his predecessors on the royal throne, illustrating the awareness of the importance of lists with royal names in a chronological order already at the very beginning of Egyptian kingship. Is this to be regarded as simple information on the royal succession, or rather as reflecting administrative units responsible for the funerary cult at the tombs of the named kings?⁵⁷ And if the latter, which seems much more likely⁵⁸, can it possibly be regarded as indication of the actual veneration of the earliest kings buried at Umm el-Qaab? This is what Josep CERVELLÓ-AUTUORI proposed with the following words: "The seals from Abydos show us the precise terms of the royal ancestral cult in this early time. Two gods are mentioned: Horus, the mythical living royal ancestor which every ruler embodies, and Khentamentiū, who, in my opinion, must be regarded here as the mythical royal dead ancestor, that is to say, the personification of every dead king as well as of the collectivity of the royal ancestors as a whole. I think the Abydos seals already show the dichotomy 'living ancestor / dead ancestor' (later 'Horus/Osiris') that defines the pharaonic kingship."⁵⁹ In line with this, even if certain aspects

50 O'CONNOR, Abydos, 105–110; see also S. P. HARVEY, *The Cults of King Ahmose at Abydos*, University of Pennsylvania, unpublished PhD thesis, 1998.

51 See B. J. KEMP, *Ancient Egypt – Anatomy of a civilization*, London/New York 1989, 21–22; A. EFFLAND, Abydos. Von der Frühzeit bis zur Zeitenwende, in: *Archäologie in Ägypten. Magazin des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 2, 2014, 22–27, here: 27; BUDKA, Umm el-Qa'ab and the sacred landscape of Abydos, in press. For the king-list in the Seti I temple see also M. EL-NOUBI MANSOUR, Die Königsliste von Abydos, in: S. DEICHER/E. MAROKO (eds.), *Die Liste: Ordnungen von Dingen und Menschen in Ägypten*, *Ancient Egyptian Design, Contemporary Design History and Anthropology of Design* 1, Berlin 2015, 233–242. For its role within royal ancestor cult see FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 66.

52 L. MORENZ, *Bild-Buchstaben und symbolische Zeichen. Die Herausbildung der Schrift in der hohen Kultur Altägyptens*, OBO 205, Freiburg/Göttingen 2004, 108, n. 458, G. DREYER, IV. Grabkomplex des Qa'a, 3. Kleinfunde, in: G. DREYER et al., *Umm el-Qaab, Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof, 7/8. Vorbericht*, in: *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 71–76, here: 72–73, fig. 26.

53 DREYER, *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 73; D. WENGROW, *The Archaeology of Early Egypt. Social Transformations in North East-Africa, 10,000 to 2650 BC*, Cambridge World Archaeology, Cambridge 2006, 131; T. C. HEAGY, Who was Menes?, in: *Archéo-Nil* 24, 2014, 59–92, here: 80–81.

54 See E.-M. ENGEL, *Umm el-Qaab VI: Das Grab des Qa'a, Architektur und Inventar. Mit einem Beitrag von Thomas Hikade*, AV 100, Wiesbaden 2017, 283–288, fig. 189.

55 G. DREYER, Ein Siegel der frühzeitlichen Königsnekropole von Abydos, in: *MDAIK* 43, 1987, 33–43; ENGEL, *Umm el-Qaab VI*, 283 with note 424.

56 DREYER, *MDAIK* 43, 1987, 33–43.

57 DREYER, *MDAIK* 43, 1987, 33–43; ENGEL, *Umm el-Qaab VI*, 283.

58 See HEAGY, *Archéo-Nil* 24, 2014, 80: "The seal is not a king list but an administrative document for the funerary cult, but whatever its purpose, it is a list of kings and can be utilized as such." For the identification of the seals as royal lists see also CERVELLÓ-AUTUORI, *The thinite "royal lists"*, 887–888.

59 CERVELLÓ-AUTUORI, *The thinite "royal lists"*, 895.

remain debatable, one can follow Ute EFFLAND who proposed that ancestors' cult might be viewed as the most important impact for the cult at the site of Umm el-Qaab over several millennia.⁶⁰ For example, this seems evident for the Kushite rulers and their references to royal ancestors.⁶¹ It remains, however, debateable whether these references aim to legitimise the succession only, following the mythic example by Osiris and Horus, or whether royal predecessors are addressed as ancestors. The model proposed by CERVELLÓ-AUTUORI would allow a combination of both and a focus on the ideological sphere.

3.1 Cult for Osiris or cult for ancestors?

In the following, I will try to highlight some aspects of cult at Umm el-Qaab in the period of key interest throughout this volume, in the first millennium BC. Besides Thebes, Abydos is the best documented site during this period in Upper Egypt. It will be discussed whether the ritual remains attest to a cult for Osiris or rather to a cult for ancestors or both. To start with, as cult for a god, the activities at Umm el-Qaab are not cult of the dead in a regular sense. Since, as was already highlighted, the deceased kings of the Proto- and Early Dynastic Periods were commemorated at the site from the very beginning onwards, it seems more likely that the real focus of the ritual activities around the tomb of Osiris are actually the living. Following FITZENREITER, this is one aspect which speaks for the cult at Umm el-Qaab as ancestor worship, normally defined as "directed much more to the living than to the dead."⁶²

Libyan Period

During the late Twenty-first and the first half of the Twenty-second Dynasty burials and monuments of high-ranking individuals are attested, sons of the Theban high priests, e.g. Psusennes and also royal sons, e.g. Iuput, son of Sheshonq I.⁶³ Andreas EFFLAND has undertaken the meticulous documentation of the attested kings and high priests from the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties.⁶⁴ More than 150 sherds of votive vessels from Smendes, Sheshonq I, Osorkon I and others were found by the Osiris project. This decorated votive pottery is so far unique and clearly illustrates that the cult at Umm el-Qaab was during the Libyan Period executed as official royal cult.⁶⁵ The sherds also stand for a new peak of activity at Umm el-Qaab, which is comparable to the New Kingdom, especially to Ramesside times, when similar votive vessels were used.⁶⁶

One particular important monument for ancestor cult in the Libyan Period at Abydos is the stela Cairo JE 66285. It was found re-used in the temple of Osiris by Auguste MARIETTE and the text represents a very interesting oracular decree of Psusennes II.⁶⁷ The Libyan chief and

60 EFFLAND, *Das Grab des Gottes Osiris*, 324–326; see also BUDKA, *Abydos*, 81.

61 Cf. J. REVEZ, *Looking at History through the Prism of Mythology: Can the Osirian Myth Shed any Light on Egyptian Royal Succession Patterns?*, in: *Journal of Egyptian History* 3, 2010, 47–71 for an adaption of the Osirian myth for the Kushite royal succession under Taharqa.

62 FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 54.

63 See A. LEAHY, *Abydos in the Libyan Period*, in: A. LEAHY (ed.), *Libya and Egypt, c1300-750 BC*, London 1990, 155–200; EFFLAND/EFFLAND, *Abydos*, 56–77; cf. also O'CONNOR, *Abydos*, 126.

64 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, *Abydos*, 72, fig. 24.

65 See EFFLAND/EFFLAND, *Abydos*, 74.

66 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, *Abydos*, 46–55. See also BUDKA, *MDAIK* 66, 2010, 57 and 59.

67 For this stela see S. BIRCH, *Inscription of Prince Nimrod*, in: *Records of the Past: Being English Translations of the Assyrian and Egyptian Monuments*, Volume XII: *Egyptian Texts*, London 1881,

later king Sheshonq I asks Amun of Karnak via the ruling king Psusennes II for permission to transport and erect a statue of his father Nimlot A at Abydos, establishing an offering for this statue in the temple respectively the installation of a funerary cult for Nimlot A.⁶⁸ Andreas EFFLAND has proposed that the text of the stela and this cult for a statue of Sheshonq's father is one important aspect of the creation of the testimony of a peaceful usurpation – the reference to Osiris seems to guarantee the identification of Sheshonq as living Horus and legitimate successor who is also accepted by Psusennes.⁶⁹ Following EFFLAND, the relics by Psusennes II, Sheshonq I and his successors at Umm el-Qaab highlight a new focus on a local cult for ancestors in direct connection to the cult for Osiris and thus of relevance for the royal ideology and legitimacy.⁷⁰

In this respect, the so-called cenotaph of Iuput at Abydos is of particular importance.⁷¹ This monument is the only new building erected during the Libyan Period in the sacred landscape of Abydos. It has a very peculiar architecture and was excavated by AMÉLINEAU in winter 1895/6.⁷² The so-called cenotaph is a long corridor, with inscribed and decorated granite blocks, including Amduat scenes.⁷³ According to AMÉLINEAU's documentation, no finds were made and the structure was found empty. Since no burial was found, but the names of Sheshonq and Iuput, a cenotaph for the later (who might have been buried in the Ramesseum) was suggested.

It would require a new archaeological investigation of this unique monument to verify its function, but for now one has to stress its very prominent location and that its orientation points directly to Umm-el-Qaab.⁷⁴ Andreas EFFLAND has proposed that this could have marked the location of the royal stela found in the temple of Osiris with the oracular decree, illustrating the established statue cult of the Libyan Dynasty. According to EFFLAND, this so-called cenotaph could actually represent a gallery for the ancestors – a “House of Ancestors” connected with the Libyan father Nimlot A of Sheshonq I.⁷⁵

As mentioned above, there is much cult activity at Umm el-Qaab during the Libyan Period. Several sherds are of particular interest within the framework of foreign rulers – they belong to Iuwelot, high priest of Amun and son of Osorkon I.⁷⁶ On these votive vessels for Osiris his name was classified with a person with a feather on his head, thus with an ‘ethnical’ classifier, stressing the Libyan identity of the official.⁷⁷

93–99; A. M. BLACKMAN, The stela of Shoshenq, great chief of the Meshwesh, in: JEA 27, 1941, 83–95; B. MENU, La fondation culturelle accordée à Sheshonq, in: CRIPEL 5, 1979, 183–189.

68 O'CONNOR, Abydos, 126–128; R. MEFFRE, D'Héracléopolis à Hermopolis: la Moyenne Égypte durant la Troisième Période intermédiaire (XXI^e–XXIV^e dynasties), Paris 2015, 265. For details of the text see also K. JANSEN-WINKELN, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Dritten Zwischenzeit, in: Journal of Egyptian History 10(1), 2017, 23–42, here: 30–33.

69 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 73–74.

70 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 74.

71 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 75–77.

72 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 75.a

73 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, figs. 27–30 for the architectural layout and position of the cenotaph.

74 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 75.

75 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 75–76.

76 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 68–69.

77 A. EFFLAND, Iuwelot der Libyer – Zwei neue Belege für den thebanischen Hohepriester des Amun aus der 22. Dynastie und ein ungewöhnliches Personendeterminativ, in: E.-M. ENGEL/V. MÜLLER/

The sudden end of cult activities at Umm el-Qaab might be explained with political changes and a new ruling family in the later Twenty-second Dynasty. It is noteworthy to stress that the latest evidence for votives for Osiris at Umm el-Qaab can be attributed to direct descendants of Sheshonq I, illustrating the importance of the site for the House of Sheshonq.⁷⁸ For almost 100 years, the cult for Osiris and royal investment at Abydos seems to fade, before it was reinstalled during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.

Kushite Period

Following the Libyan interest in Abydos, also the next foreign rulers of Egypt, the kings of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, were very active at the site. After a lack of activity of approximately 100 years, Umm el-Qaab encounters one of its heydays, comparable to the New Kingdom. There is some textual evidence, for example of Taharqa and Amenirdis I, and especially millions of votive vessels for Osiris found at Umm el-Qaab.⁷⁹ Together with burials of royal women and high officials in Cemetery D, the Kushite remains at Abydos are extensive.⁸⁰

Within the Kushite investment at Abydos, it is particularly interesting that the New Kingdom sacred landscape is re-evoked. The latter is best illustrated by the famous Seti I complex. Within its main east-west axis there is a so-called desert pylon in the western part of the precinct, opening towards Umm el-Qaab. Remarkably, in front of this desert pylon, a large deposit of votive pottery is noticeable.⁸¹ Based on a surface check, this pottery mainly dates to the Late Period, especially to the Kushite Period. Thus, the area behind the Osireion was clearly of importance during this era. This nicely corresponds to the choice of substructure of king Taharqa for his pyramid in Nuri: as several authors have stressed, he copied the Abydene Osireion with his royal tomb.⁸²

U. HARTUNG (eds.), *Zeichen aus dem Sand: Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte zu Ehren von Günter Dreyer*, Wiesbaden 2008, 59–69.

⁷⁸ EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 75.

⁷⁹ See EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 78–81; BUDKA, MDAIK 66, 2010, 53–54, 60.

⁸⁰ 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*, EES Occasional Publications 11, London 1994, 171–192; J. BUDKA, *Kuschiten in Abydos: Einige Überlegungen zur Nutzung von Cemetery D (Mace) während der 25. Dynastie*, in: GM 232, 2012, 29–51; A. LEAHY, *Kushites at Abydos: The Royal Family and Beyond*, in: E. PISCHIKOVA/J. BUDKA/K. GRIFFIN (eds.), *Thebes in the First Millennium BC*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014, 61–95.

⁸¹ EFFLAND/EFFLAND, MOSAIKjournal 1, 2010, 142.

⁸² See T. KENDALL, *Why did Taharqa Build his Tomb at Nuri?*, in: W. GODLEWSKI/A. ŁAJTAR/I. ZYCH (eds.), *Between the Cataracts. Proceedings of the 11th Conference of Nubian Studies*, Warsaw University, 27 August – 2 September 2006. Part One: Main Papers, PAM, Supplement Series 2.1 Warsaw 2008, 117–147; BUDKA, *Kushites at Abydos*, 54–63. It is noteworthy that the pyramid of Taharqa is not the only monument of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty recalling the Osireion: certain influences are also traceable in Theban monumental temple tombs, see D. EIGNER, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der Thebanischen Nekropole*, UZK 6, Vienna 1984, 163–183; J. BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif. Eine Untersuchung der spätzeitlichen Befunde anhand der Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in den Jahren 1969–1977*, UZK 34, Vienna 2010, 71 and 78. Cf. most recently C. TRAUNECKER, *Abydenian Pilgrimage, Immortal stars and Theban Liturgies in the Tomb of Padiamenope (TT 33)*, in: E. PISCHIKOVA/J. BUDKA/K. GRIFFIN (eds.), *Thebes in the First Millennium BC: Art and Archaeology of the Kushite Period and Beyond*, GHP Egyptology 27, London 2018, 126–151. See also the contribution by Angelika LOHWASSER in this volume.

The investigations of Ute and Andreas EFFLAND have shown that there were several important connections between North Abydos, Umm el-Qaab, the Seti I complex and South Abydos. A significant landmark at Umm el-Qaab was the so-called Southern Hill (Fig. 1).⁸³ It is striking that the main cultic axes constructing the sacred landscape of Abydos and representing the processional ways during the festival for Osiris were marked by votive

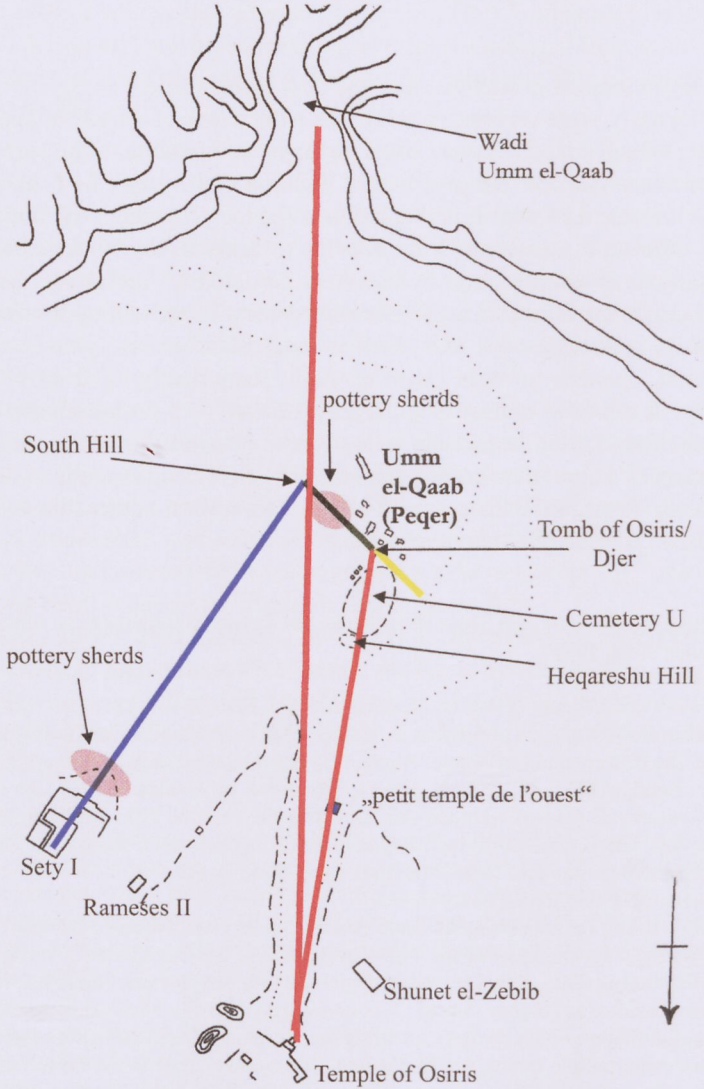


Fig. 1: Processional ways at Abydos with Kushite pottery deposits along the main cult axis (map: U. and A. EFFLAND)

83 A. EFFLAND/U. EFFLAND, VII. Kult- und Prozessionsachsen, in: EFFLAND/BUDKA/EFFLAND, MDAIK 66, 2010, 78–85, here: 82–83, fig. 52; EFFLAND/EFFLAND, MOSAIKjournal 1, 2010, 137–139.

deposits, predominately dating to the Kushite Period. Thus, the Twenty-fifth Dynasty obviously reused already-existing structures and revived processional features set up during the New Kingdom.

At Umm el-Qaab itself, millions of qaabs datable to the Kushite Dynasty were found. An *in situ* deposit of qaabs in the surroundings of the tomb of Khasekhemwy was investigated by Ute EFFLAND.⁸⁴ She was able to demonstrate that this deposit is not a random assemblage, but was carefully laid out, reflecting organised votive activities embedded in the yearly festival of Osiris. Organic remains strongly point to Osiris as god of vegetation, but especially to the aspects of regeneration and fertility.⁸⁵

The discovery of a very large new ceramic deposit at the tomb of Djer/Osiris allowed an updated assessment of Kushite Period votive activity at Umm el-Qaab (Fig. 2).⁸⁶ Already in 2011, the first vessels were unearthed along the eastern edge of the subsidiary tombs of Djer, soon identified as belonging to the row of well-preserved vessels leading towards the south⁸⁷ found in the area in front of the tomb of Den by Eduard NAVILLE and by Vera MÜLLER.⁸⁸ In 2012 and 2013, more vessels of this deposit labelled O-NNO were unearthed. It became obvious that the deposit excavated in 1985 above B40⁸⁹ was probably once part of O-NNO in its south-eastern area. All in all, the pottery assemblage comprising O-NNO and the rows of vessels discovered by NAVILLE and MÜLLER once formed an alley from the subsidiary tombs of the tomb of Djer to the tomb of Den and farther towards the so-called Southern Hill.⁹⁰

The votive deposit O-NNO, completely excavated in 2013, was documented and studied in 2014.⁹¹ A total of 2,686 vessels could be reconstructed from 3,806 sherds – the actual number of deposited vessels was probably even larger, as parts of the deposit were disturbed in antiquity. The most important vessel types fall into the two categories of closed and open forms. Of these, 24% are storage vessels of types already well attested at Umm el-Qaab: the so-called Late Period bottles.⁹² These large bottles are a very special type of vessel, clearly locally produced in very large numbers (Fig. 3). At Umm el-Qaab, they were arranged to form rows respectively to mark pathways.⁹³ Prior to the discovery of deposit O-NNO, no traces of any content were found within the bottles, suggesting that they were deposited empty. The majority of vessels from O-NNO are open dishes. More than 2,000 pieces are small qaabs.⁹⁴ In addition, a few other dishes and incense burners are present.

84 U. EFFLAND, III. Funde und Befunde, in: EFFLAND/BUDKA/EFFLAND, MDAIK 66, 2010, 24–30.

85 EFFLAND, MDAIK 66, 2010, 30.

86 See BUDKA, Umm el-Qa'ab and the sacred landscape of Abydos, in press.

87 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, MOSAIKjournal 1, 2010, 138.

88 E. NAVILLE, The cemeteries of Abydos I, EEF 33, London 1914, 38, pl. XVIII.4 and pl. XIX.1; MÜLLER, Archäologische Relikte, 39–48.

89 D. A. ASTON, A Group of Twenty-Fifth Dynasty Pots from Abydos, in: MDAIK 52, 1996, 1–10.

90 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, MOSAIKjournal 1, 2010, 138.

91 BUDKA, Sokar 29, 2014, 56–65.

92 J. BUDKA, The use of pottery in funerary contexts during the Libyan and Late Period: A view from Thebes and Abydos, in: L. BAREŠ/F. COPPENS/K. SMOLÁRIKOVÁ (eds.), Egypt in Transition. Social and Religious Development of Egypt in the First Millenium BCE. Proceedings of an International Conference, Prague, September 1–4, 2009, Prague 2010, 22–72, here: fig. 16.

93 BUDKA, The use of pottery in funerary contexts, 56–57.

94 See BUDKA, MDAIK 66, 2010, fig. 23; BUDKA, Sokar 29, 2014, fig. 5.

Interestingly, as observed in other votive deposits, there are several references to rituals in O-NNO.⁹⁵ First of all, a large number of killing holes was observed. Secondly, several traces of irregular red paint, possibly also with an apotropaic character, were documented on various types of vessels – on qaabs as well as Late Period bottles. Most important, however, is that for the first time there are traces of contents inside the Late Period bottles, which were previously assumed to have been deposited empty. Complete examples and fragments of qaab-dishes, and remains of their filling (botanical remains and sand) were discovered. Thus, for the first time, the deposition of the large Late Period bottles can be directly associated with the ritual deposition of qaabs. Because the contents of the qaabs are identical with what was documented by Ute EFFLAND in the *in situ* deposits, a similar ritual framework embedded into the calendar of the Osiris cult seems likely.



Fig. 2: Votive pottery deposit O-NNO at Umm el-Qaab – the large vessels form an alley leading towards the south (photo: U. EFFLAND)

Another interesting detail is that the bottles of O-NNO frequently have a hole in the base. In a number of cases, muddy remains closing this perforation (well attested for beer jars) were still found within the vessel. It remains unclear whether this indicates an original filling of these vessels with Nile water (strongly associated with the cult of Osiris) or with Nile mud, as is attested from other periods.

⁹⁵ BUDKA, Sokar 29, 2014, 57.



Fig. 3: Types of Late Period bottles from O-NNO (drawings: J. BUDKA)

All in all, the association of the qaabs with the Late Period bottles is of great importance to our understanding of the process of depositing the vessels. In some cases, the votive dishes were obviously positioned in already-laid-out storage vessels. In other cases, small groups of qaabs were put next to the Late Period bottles. This is well illustrated by a small assemblage of sixteen votive dishes found still *in situ* (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Qaab-deposit within O-NNO, including an Early Dynastic lid (photo: U. EFFLAND)

All of the vessels of this assemblage were deposited with the opening to the ground – a position already attested for offering dishes during the Naqada III Period at Cemetery U (see above) and also for Late Period dishes found *in situ* in front of the tomb of Dwen.⁹⁶ An unusual feature of the assemblage within O-NNO, however, is that from the sixteen vessels, one is not of Late Period date, but is actually an Early Dynastic lid.⁹⁷ Therefore, old and new vessels were used side by side within a pottery votive deposit of the eight century BC. The Early Dynastic lid is probably a piece from the original burial of Djer and obviously became ritually important for the votive offerings to Osiris more than 2,000 years later.

This seems unlikely to be an accidental finding and single case – rather, I would propose that ‘archaism’ and references to the original tomb contents seem to be important aspects in understanding the complex composition of the Late Period votive pottery at Umm el-Qaab.

⁹⁶ MÜLLER, *Archäologische Relikte*, 40.

⁹⁷ BUDKA, *Sokar* 29, 2014, 63, fig. 17.

In an earlier paper, I have proposed that the so-called Late Period bottles recall ovoid jars from the Pre- and Early Dynastic tombs.⁹⁸ There was obviously a clear intention to connect to, and to physically continue, the original inventory for Osiris Djer.⁹⁹ Given the Kushites' preferences for 'archaism' in relief and sculpture, it is no coincidence to find this in pottery deposited at Abydos.¹⁰⁰

Change and continuity seem to have acted as key drives for the votive activities at Umm el-Qaab; the qaabs are nothing other than a continuation of a very specific shape from the Sesostri III complex,¹⁰¹ but with a slightly modified shape, manufactured in Late Period clay fabrics. Red paint splashes on Late Period dishes find their predecessors in Naqada III dishes from the offering place at Cemetery U (see above). Osiris as king and as god forms a unity, being the essential part within the general dichotomy "living ancestor/dead ancestor" or "Horus/Osiris" (see above), and by this specific way of composing votive offerings making a connection between the original inventory and later activities, an everlasting cycle was evoked in the necropolis of Umm el-Qaab.

Saite Period

The next dynasty, again with foreign descent, the Saïtes, was also active at Abydos. Besides royal building activity by Psametik I and II in the temple of Osiris, votive vessels are present at Umm el-Qaab. These are less numerous than in Kushite times, but there are still some problems dating ceramics from the period of the late Twenty-fifth and the early Twenty-sixth Dynasty. All in all, the so-called Late Period bottles seem to continue. This would correspond to fragments of a shrine of Apries which were found by William M. Flinders PETRIE at Umm el-Qaab.¹⁰² We have to imagine a similar situation as in the tomb of Djer with the shrine and the Osirian bed – and it seems unlikely to be a coincidence that the titularies of the Saite kings recall names of the Thirteenth Dynasty¹⁰³ and the main Osirian cult statue at Umm el-Qaab also derives from the Thirteenth Dynasty.¹⁰⁴ This is further emphasised by the autobiographical text on a statue of Pafnuemaneith referring to building activities and cultic installations under king Apries.¹⁰⁵

Similar to Libyan and Kushite times, also burial activities continue at Abydos. A typical Saite tomb monument is the family burial close to the Early Dynastic enclosures of Redj-Anhur. It represents a family monument including the coffins of a large number of family members, presumably his brothers and sisters. A large limestone stela was erected above the tomb and shows the deceased worshiped by his sons and daughters, probably recalling social structures like the famous Middle Kingdom Abydos stelae which were set-up close by to this

⁹⁸ BUDKA, The use of pottery in funerary contexts, 60.

⁹⁹ BUDKA, Sokar 29, 2014, 56–65.

¹⁰⁰ BUDKA, The use of pottery in funerary contexts, 60 with further literature; see also BUDKA, Umm el-Qaab and the sacred landscape of Abydos, in press.

¹⁰¹ BUDKA, MDAIK 66, 2010, 58.

¹⁰² A. DODSON, The so-called Tomb of Osiris at Abydos, in: KMT 8(4), 1997–1998, 37–47, here: 46; EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 84. See also O'CONNOR, Abydos, 133 for some other royal inscribed fragments from Umm el-Qaab datable to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.

¹⁰³ See BLÖBAUM, Herrscherlegitimation, 146.

¹⁰⁴ A. LEAHY, The Osiris "Bed" Reconsidered, in: Or 46, 1977, 424–434; EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 17–20.

¹⁰⁵ O'CONNOR, Abydos, 128; EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 83–84.

new Twenty-sixth Dynasty tomb.¹⁰⁶ Similar like for the Middle Kingdom stelae and funerary chapels, the emphasis of this Saite tomb is on family relations and ancestor worship.¹⁰⁷

Persian Period

The question of Persians at Abydos is a bit complicated – textual references speak about destructions at the site which were re-established in the Thirtieth Dynasty.¹⁰⁸ Although a number of pottery vessels seem to be of Twenty-seventh Dynasty in date, no clear attestation of Persian kings is notable at Umm el-Qaab.¹⁰⁹ This might be still due to the general bias of the archaeological record for this period. In general, the Persian kings continued throughout Egypt with Saite building activity¹¹⁰ and made interesting references to earlier kings, in particular to the legendary ‘unifier of the two lands’ Mentuhotep Nebhepetre by means of adopting his Horus names.¹¹¹

4 Conclusion

Except for the difficult Twenty-seventh Dynasty, all periods with foreign rulers mentioned in this paper revived older structures and the cult of Osiris at Abydos. One can add here major activities at Thebes, since in the Libyan Period the Osirian precinct within Karnak was created, getting extended in Kushite and Saite times.¹¹² Common features of a particularly strong investment in Abydos and the cult of Osiris are especially notable for the Libyan and the Kushite Periods when rulers appeared also as non-Egyptian and were in need of legitimacy.

Despite these common features, some individual aspects are also present: The proposed “House of Ancestors” for the Libyan family of Sheshonq and the use of the Osiris myth for the legitimization of the succession (see above). The focus of Kushite royal females at Abydos is striking and is mirrored also by the importance of females at Kush. Abydene features like the Osireion and the shape of the qaab-vessels were transferred to Kush, in particular during the reign of Taharqa.¹¹³ The Saïtes who appear completely Egyptian despite of their Libyan descent maybe referred to Thirteenth Dynasty installations at Abydos. The Persians are a special case as they are presently not attested by means of royal votives at Umm el-Qaab.

The long-lasting tradition of offerings at Umm el-Qaab, reaching from the Predynastic Period until Ptolemaic times with a heyday in the Kushite Period, refers to kingship, royal ancestors and the god Osiris.¹¹⁴ Concepts of the Egyptian Netherworld were projected on the

106 O’CONNOR, Abydos, 127, fig. 69, 131, fig. 71.

107 Cf. HARRINGTON, *Living with the dead*, 63.

108 EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 90.

109 See BUDKA, MDAIK 66, 2010, 54.

110 Cf. J. VON BECKERATH, *Nochmals die Eroberung Ägyptens durch Kambyse*, in: ZÄS 129, 2002, 1–5, here: 1 with references.

111 See KAHL, ZÄS 129, 2002, 34 and 38.

112 L. COULON/A. HALLMANN/F. PAYRAUDEAU, *Historical and Art Historical Overview Based on Recent Fieldwork and Studies*, in: E. PISCHIKOVA/J. BUDKA/K. GRIFFIN (eds.), *Thebes in the First Millennium BC: Art and Archaeology of the Kushite Period and Beyond*, GHP Egyptology 27, London 2018, 271–293 with further references. See also the contribution by Essam NAGY in this volume.

113 See BUDKA, *Kushites at Abydos*, 54–63. Cf. also LOHWASSER in this volume.

114 See also EFFLAND, *Das Grab des Gottes Osiris*, 326: “Ahnenkult und Osiris-Kult laufen durch die Zeit hindurch immer wieder parallel und stehen auch nicht im Widerspruch zueinander.”

landscape of Abydos which in turn became a sacred place.¹¹⁵ I would like to propose that the concept of FITZENREITER, connecting “second burials” with ancestor cult (whereas the “first burial” is connected with cult of the dead)¹¹⁶ works perfectly for the cult at Abydos: the cultic activities at Umm el-Qaab can be regarded as ancestor veneration because the re-interpretation of the royal tombs as tombs of the god Osiris represent “second burials”. The prime recipients of this kind of cult are therefore the living, first of all the living rulers. With this focal point, the cult for Osiris at Abydos is mostly directed towards the royal succession and royal ideology.

To sum up, I would strongly agree with Timothy INSOLL that archaeological approaches to ancestor cult should not think of it as isolated aspect of ancient cultures, but rather “as part of a multiple ‘package’ of phenomena, practices, and beliefs whose configuration and importance can change over time.”¹¹⁷ For the Egyptian context, I believe that ancestor cult was an integral part of royal ideology, especially for foreign rulers. As KAHL, BLÖBAUM and others have shown, the foreign rulers are in a stronger need of legitimacy.¹¹⁸ This seems to be mirrored with the very specific investments of the Libyans, Kushites and Saïtes at Abydos. Royal ancestor cult and its main concepts of legitimacy and regularity aim for social and political legitimation.¹¹⁹ This becomes especially visible with the ‘best practice example’ set by Sheshonq I with the installation of a cult for his father Nimlot at Abydos, presumably connected with the increase of ceramic votives at Umm el-Qaab. I would furthermore propose that since Ramesside times, one general aspect of the Egyptian *Zeitgeist* was to refer to gods as legitimation. This becomes also obvious from the increase of importance of the Osirian cult during the first millennium BC.

In conclusion, the significance of Abydos throughout the ages seems to be first of all connected with royal ancestor cult at the site which goes back to Early Dynastic times of which all later generations were very well aware of and took advantage for questions for legitimacy. The understanding of ancestorship as a basis of fertility allows stressing the closeness of ancestors in Egypt with Abydos/Umm el-Qaab since this aspect relates to the site’s main god and to the “Osirian concept of recreation out of the death.”¹²⁰

115 See EFFLAND/EFFLAND, Abydos, 11; EFFLAND, *Magazin des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* Kairo 2, 2014, 27.

116 FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 54.

117 INSOLL, *Ancestor Cults*, 13.

118 KAHL, *ZÄS* 129, 2002, 31–42; BLÖBAUM, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 139–142.

119 FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 67.

120 FITZENREITER, *Allerhand Kleinigkeiten*, 68.