

# Introduction

## The Archaeological Investigations in Dra' Abu el-Naga (by Daniel Polz & Ute Rummel)

Since 1991, the German Archaeological Institute Cairo (DAIK) has maintained a long-term project in the area of the Theban necropolis referred to with the toponym Dra' Abu el-Naga.<sup>1</sup> The area in which the project is active encompasses almost the entire plain and hillside between the outskirts of the former village of Dra' Abu el-Naga in the west and the road leading into the Valley of the Kings in the east. Its northern boundary lies to the north of the summit of the Dra' Abu el-Naga hills, and the southern boundary is delimited by the modern tarmac road that runs in the direction of Deir el-Bahri (Figure 1).

The leather material presented in this volume derives from four different excavation areas within the larger concession area in Dra' Abu el-Naga, namely Areas A, E, G, and H. This chapter presents a short description of the main archaeological and architectural features of these areas.

### *Area A*

Work in Area A (Figure 2), a section of the concession that extends over the flat plain in front of the hill range, revealed, as was expected, a clear picture of the distribution and alignment of tomb shafts within a larger interrelated area of investigation. However, a most unexpected development was the discovery of the remains of almost a dozen contemporaneous mudbrick superstructures, which had been constructed above several of the shafts (Polz, 1992; 1993). These chapel-like buildings proved to be rooms in which painted and/or carved stelae of the individuals buried in the shafts were erected. Unequivocal indications of intensive cult practices in and at the superstructures<sup>2</sup> also enable us to paint a picture of the human activities which took place during the 18th Dynasty phase of this area of the necropolis. In the ensuing period, the area continued to be used for burials, and the existing architecture provided the framework for this purpose: the shafts already present at the site (not including the burial chambers which were intentionally left untouched) as well as individual tomb superstructures were

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1 This chapter is an abbreviated and rearranged version of an article published earlier (Polz *et al.*, 2014). For a more detailed description of the project's underlying questions and main objectives see Polz *et al.* (2014: 115-117). A continually updated list of all publications connected with the project can be found on the project's homepage at <https://www.dainst.org/project/45955> (February 10th, 2017).

2 For example flat bowls sunk into the ground with intentionally pierced bases. Libations were poured into these bowls and the liquid would gradually drain through the holes in the bases into the ground (Polz, 1995: 25 and Taf. 1a). Also large amounts of ritual pottery ('red polished bottles') were discovered on the antique surface between the buildings (Seiler, 2005: 50-52; 93 with Abb. 43-47; 198-199).



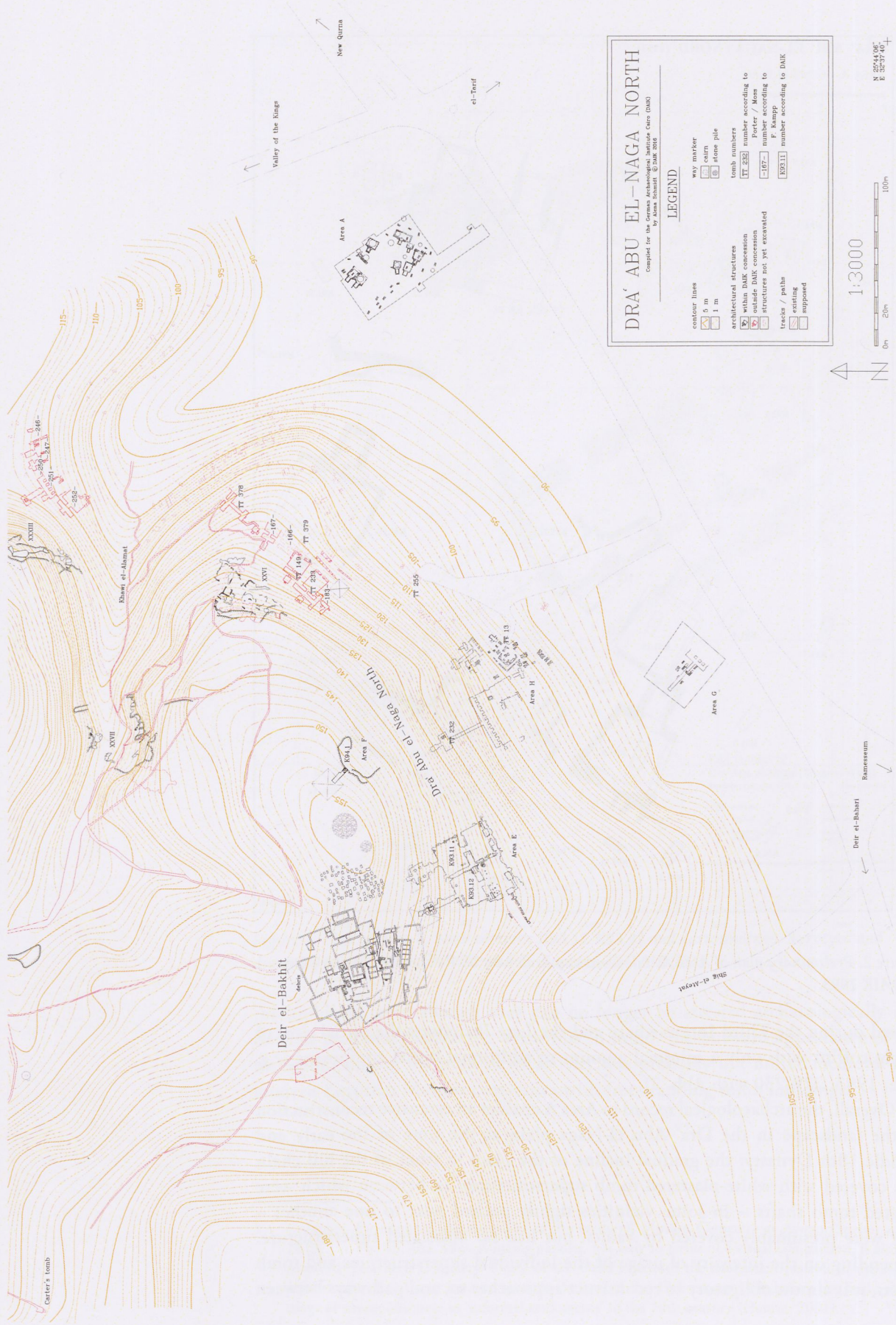


Figure 1. Preliminary map of Dra' Abu el-Naga North. Surveyed and drawn by A. Schmidt with additional material from H. Bücherl, P. Collet, I. Dudzinski, I. Eichner, U. Fauerbach, J. Goischke, W.E. Gordon, G. Heindl, G. Herdt, B. Ockinga, D. Polz, M. Reinke, U. Rummel and S. Winterhalter. © DAIK 2016.



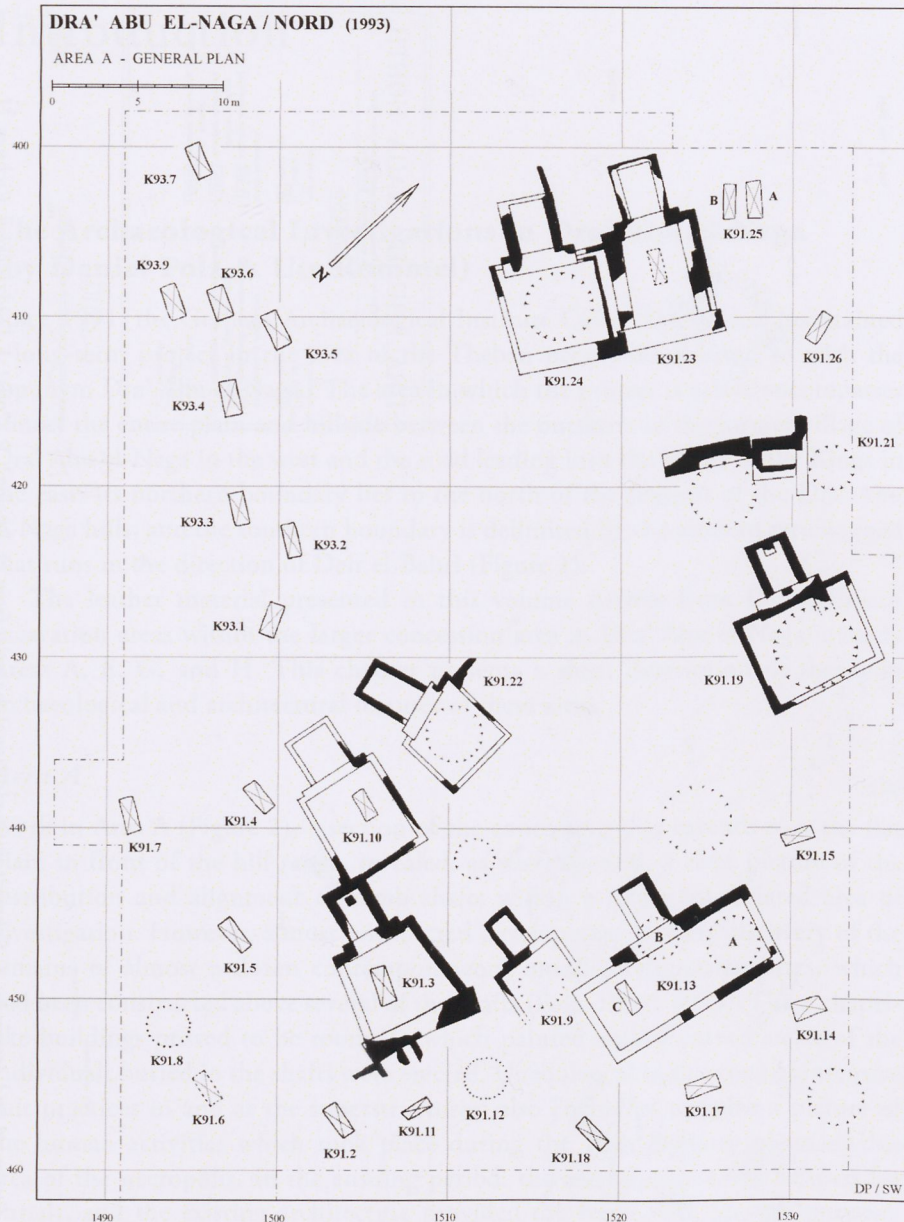


Figure 2. Preliminary plan of Area A. Surveyed and drawn by D. Polz and S. Winterhalter.  
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reused during the Third Intermediate and the Late Periods as the burial sites of single coffins with only a minimal amount of additional burial equipment (e.g. Polz, 1993: 229-230 with Abb. 2).

Overall, the archaeological record in Area A enables an extensive reconstruction of the landscape in the Dra' Abu el-Naga plain at the time of the early and middle 18th Dynasty: the gradual incline of the plain in front of the hill chain was covered with white-plastered tomb superstructures, in between which were located tomb shafts – in some vicinities tightly packed next to one another – that were presumably covered by vaults, but had no associated superstructure. Depending on the intensity of usage of the individual superstructures and tomb shafts, it is almost obligatory to reconstruct approaches to, and pathways between





Figure 3. Plan of Area E, tomb complex K93.11/K93.12 and surroundings. Surveyed and drawn by G. Heindl, J. Goischke and C. Ruppert. © DAIK 2015.

the buildings, even though they can no longer be attested archaeologically due to their temporary character. With this in mind, the outward appearance of the necropolis during the peak of its activity was probably not unlike medieval and modern Egyptian Muslim cemeteries with free-standing tomb buildings.<sup>3</sup>

3 Compare, for example, the mausolea of the medieval Muslim Cemetery at Aswan (Speiser *et al.*, 2013, esp. Pls. 45, 46a, 48c). A fitting parallel, not only in terms of a visual comparison, is also the so-called 'Northern Cemetery' ('City of the Dead') beneath the Mokattam plateau in the south-eastern area of Cairo in its state towards the end of the 19th century, *i.e.* before the fairly recent usage of necropolis areas as 'informal settlements' in the 20th century (Hamza, 2001).



## Area E

Area E designates the site of the double tomb complex K93.11/K93.12 and its immediate surroundings (see map and plan in Figures 1, 3) situated in the central part of Dra' Abu el-Naga, just below the hilltop. With an overall courtyard surface area of ca. 1600 m<sup>2</sup> (Figure 4), K93.11/K93.12 constitute one of the largest rock-cut tomb complexes in Western Thebes (Polz, 2006: 172-192; Polz *et al.*, 2014: 115-126; Rummel, 2013a; 2013b). The tombs are located in the immediate vicinity of the adjacent Coptic monastery, Deir el-Bakhit, which lies on the hill ridge (Burkard & Eichner, 2007; Polz *et al.*, 2014: 127-134). The archaeological work in the tombs was started in 1993 and, apart from a six-year pause (2001-2005), continues until today.<sup>4</sup> One overlying aim of the investigation is to ascertain the history of the site's occupation,<sup>5</sup> which can be traced from the beginning of the New Kingdom, with certain interruptions, to the Coptic period. Moreover, there is evidence for activity or maybe even an occupation in Islamic/Medieval times (see below in the chapter on provenance under FN 1799 *et al.* and FN 2901 *et al.*), and the discovery of fragmented pipe heads and leather shoes (*e.g.* FN 2000b-d, Cat. No. 25; FN 1893d, Cat. No. 26; FN 2563, Cat. No. 34) confirms that the site was visited in the Ottoman period. Activities in K93.11/K93.12, especially in the area of the open forecourts (mostly of a destructive kind<sup>6</sup>), can be traced until recent times.<sup>7</sup>

The history of the site can be outlined as follows: the two rock-cut tombs were conceived and built in the early 18th Dynasty as a dual monument. The original layout of the complex was essentially defined by the rock architecture comprising the tombs' interior rooms (*cf.* also Figure 8 below under FN 2901 *et al.*) and a large terrace platform, which opens out onto the Nile Valley and is delimited by a large dry-stone wall. No epigraphic sources are preserved in the tombs that indicate their original owners. However, on the basis of various observations it can be inferred that the complex was planned and constructed for king Amenhotep I and his mother, queen Ahmes Nefertari.<sup>8</sup> Approximately 400 years later, in the 20th Dynasty, the double tomb complex was selected by the High Priest of Amun, Ramsesnakht, and his son and successor in office, Amenhotep, for the construction of their tomb temples, thus K93.11 was adopted by Ramsesnakht and K93.12 by Amenhotep. The Late Ramesside occupation of the site began with the first building phase started by Ramsesnakht in the

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4 Polz *et al.* (1999; 2003; 2014). The excavation of the southern tomb, K93.12, began in 2006, see Rummel (2009; 2013c; 2014b; 2015). Also see the online field reports 2010-2015 downloadable at <https://www.dainst.org/project/46083> (February 10th, 2017).

5 Particular emphasis also lays on an investigation of the tombs' contextualization in the historical, religious and physical landscape of Dra' Abu el-Naga and its relation to other local monuments; for the ritual topography of Dra' Abu el-Naga, see Rummel (2013a: 214-222; 2013b) and Polz *et al.* (2014: 115-126).

6 Major destruction was, for instance, caused by the pits dug by the so-called *sebbakheen* in order to reach the ancient mudbrick structures. Ground mudbrick material (rich soil; Arab. *sebbakh*) was used as an organic fertilizer in the fields.

7 For the recent history of K93.11 (incl. earlier research), see Polz (2006: 172-183).

8 Several indications suggest that the northern complex, K93.11, should be attributed to Amenhotep I (Polz, 2006: 183-197). Another indication is a Ramesside cult installation dedicated to the deified Amenhotep I, which can be reconstructed in the inner courtyard of K93.11 (Rummel, 2013a: 214-222; 2013b).



early reign of Ramses VI<sup>9</sup> and ended with the destruction of both tomb temples during the reign of Ramses XI.<sup>10</sup>

After the New Kingdom, the site continued to be intensively used as a burial ground. Numerous Third Intermediate and Late Period burials, or rather their remains, were discovered in the intrusive shafts along the courtyard façades, in the courtyards themselves as well as in the main shaft of K93.12 (Mähltitz, 2014; Rummel & Fetler, 2017).<sup>11</sup> This ‘popularity’ can be taken as further evidence for the special significance inherent in the site that still prevailed after the New Kingdom. The last major usage of K93.11/K93.12 was the Coptic phase beginning in the 7th c. AD, in connection with the neighbouring monastery of Deir el-Bakhit, which can be identified as the monastery of St. Paul (Beckh *et al.*, 2011) – the largest Coptic monastery complex in Western Thebes known thus far. Its occupation dates to the period from the late 6th/early 7th until the end of the 9th/early 10th c. AD (Polz *et al.*, 2014: 127-134). The sheltered courtyards of the pharaonic tombs accommodated part of the production areas associated with the monastery, such as granaries and a bakery (Polz *et al.*, 1999: 322 with note 12, pl. 55a). Moreover, the inner courtyard of K93.11 probably housed a school for scribes, given the quantity of Coptic ostraca with writing exercises on them that were discovered there (Burkard *et al.*, 2003: 61-64).

The fact that the double tomb complex was a significant/sacred place and dominant landmark, as well as the easy accessibility of the site via the ancient causeway,<sup>12</sup> are factors that motivated and facilitated its various (re-)usages over the centuries. The site naturally lost its emic religious meaning for the Coptic settlement, but still appeared to be ideal with regard to functional aspects. The major part of the leather finds from Area E presented in this volume is certainly of post-pharaonic date and can be associated with the Coptic/Late Antique occupation and later activities at the site. However, in many cases an unequivocal chronological ascription of the respective object cannot be provided due to the disturbed or plundered context.

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9 For the dating of the building activities undertaken by Ramsesnakht and Amenhotep, see Polz *et al.* (1999: 35) and Rummel (2014b: 383).

10 The demolition of both tomb temples at the end of the New Kingdom is evidenced by a destruction layer consisting of sandstone rubble that permeates both courtyards as well as secondary chisel marks on a large number of the more than 8,000 relief fragments and architectural elements made of sandstone recovered to date, see the online field reports 2010-2015 downloadable at <https://www.dainst.org/project/46083> (February 10th, 2017). These findings possibly correlate with a very specific historical event, namely the so-called “suppression of the High Priest” and the related crisis in the Thebais during the years 17 and 19 of Ramses XI (Rummel, 2014b).

11 Also see Rummel (2014a; 2015) and the online field reports at <https://www.dainst.org/project/46083> (February 10th, 2017).

12 The stratigraphy reveals the use of this causeway into the Coptic period and beyond, see the online field reports (Rummel, 2011: 9 with figs. 7, 8, and Rummel, 2012: 11 with fig. 8), downloadable at <https://www.dainst.org/project/46083> (February 10th, 2017).





*Figure 4. Overview of the forecourt area of K93.11/K93.12 towards the south-east. Photograph by U. Rummel. © DAIK 2012.*



### Area G

In Area G (Figure 1), one of the lowest-lying points of the concession (~ 80 meter a. s. l.), an ensemble of rock-cut tombs was discovered. At the centre of this area is a large *saff* tomb complex (K95.1) with a four-pillar/two-pilaster façade and a ca. 25 m-long corridor (Polz *et al.*, 1999: 370-377 with Abb. 14, Taf. 60). According to the pottery discovered in an antique systemic context on the corridor's floor, at least the first main phase of the *saff* tomb's usage dates to the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th Dynasty. The architecture and design, as well as its horizontal and vertical position in the plain of Dra' Abu el-Naga, suggests that the complex should be assigned to the 'archaic' type of (earlier) *saff* tombs found in the necropolis of el-Tarif rather than to the high-lying, conspicuous (later) *saff* tombs located in the Asasif and on the hill of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna.<sup>13</sup> The *saff* tomb must have been accessible even at a much later time and, perhaps due to its proximity to a processional way, retained a certain local significance. At the end of the Second Intermediate Period and the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, several shaft tombs were constructed in the immediate surrounding area in a way that presupposes exact knowledge of the *saff* tomb and its interior rooms as well as of the access to these spaces. The phenomenon of 'abutting' smaller tomb complexes on already-existent, large and 'time-honoured' tomb constructions is also attested elsewhere in Thebes and should be viewed as one of the many criteria for selecting the location of a tomb and for the practice of allocating sites for the planning and construction of a tomb in general (Polz, 2003: 81-83). This holds also true for the practice of re-using existing architectural structures at later times, especially during Third Intermediate Period and Late Period times.

### Area H

In Area H (Figure 1, 5), the ruins of the pyramid of king Nub-Kheper-Ra Intef were located and excavated in 2001 (Polz, 2007a: 116-138 with Taf. 15-20; Polz & Seiler, 2003). Due to the discovery of a pyramidion fragment from his presumed (elder) brother and predecessor, Sekhem-Ra Wep-Maat Intef, at least one further pyramid can be reconstructed in the immediate vicinity. These findings resulted in a substantial expansion of the original underlying questions of the overall project. The construction of two royal buildings in pyramid form (in the case of Nub-Kheper-Ra Intef including a pair of obelisks, a postulated cult site and an enclosure wall surrounding the precinct) in the middle of the necropolis permanently altered the ancient landscape and its further usage. The presence of the complexes and the cult practices that took place there had a determinative influence on the formation of both the immediate and more distant surroundings until the end of the New Kingdom. On the basis of present knowledge, it can be assumed that from the end of the 17th Dynasty on these royal pyramids constituted the decisive 'model'

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13 Arnold's '*fortgeschrittene*' and '*späte Form des Pfeilertyps*' ('advanced' and 'late form' of the pillar type), respectively (Arnold, 1971: 39-43 with Taf. XVIII-XIX).



Figure 5.  
 Preliminary  
 plan of Area H.  
 Surveyed and  
 drawn by C.  
 Ruppert, based  
 on previously  
 surveyed data  
 by P. Collet  
 and G. Heindl.  
 © DAIK 2016.



**Dra' Abu El-Naga, Area H**  
**Plan of overground structures**  
 Scale 1:400  
 April 2016 (PC, GH, CR)



in terms of form and meaning for the numerous pyramids that were erected above private tombs during the early to late New Kingdom throughout the Theban necropolis (and presumably elsewhere<sup>14</sup>).

In this area (*i.e.* the immediate and broader surroundings of the pyramid of Nub-Kheper-Ra Intef) a group of as yet nine shaft tombs were discovered to have been dug into three different levels of the sloping hilly terrain. This group significantly differs from the other shaft tombs uncovered so far in Dra' Abu el-Naga: in general they are considerably larger and deeper than the other shaft tombs, each have an antechamber with benches ('mastaba') on both sides for the deposition of offerings and pottery vessels, and were only intended to house a single burial. Although the remains of the original walls that surrounded the shafts' openings are, in almost all cases, preserved on the surface, there are no traces whatsoever of former superstructures associated with the complexes. An analysis of several objects originating from the antique context of their burials, as well as a study of the original ceramic burial equipment (preserved in varying amounts in each complex), enables an assignment of these shaft tombs to a chronological frame that ranges between the late 12th and the mid-13th Dynasty.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the remains of the burial equipment unequivocally show that the interments in question belonged, without exception, to elite individuals.

With the discovery of this early group of shaft tombs, the underlying questions have acquired additional facets with far-reaching implications concerning the origin of the necropolis in Dra' Abu el-Naga. Whereas the 11th/12th Dynasty *saff* tomb in Area G and a number of isolated burials in the immediate vicinity<sup>16</sup> can indeed be interpreted as offshoots of the royal necropolis of el-Tarif, a direct reference point or context for the tombs of this considerably later sub-necropolis (dating to the 12th/13th Dynasty) cannot be identified at first glance. This group differs greatly from the previously-known occupation history of the overall Theban necropolis for two reasons: first, no other comparably dense group of tombs of this period is known elsewhere in Western Thebes,<sup>17</sup> and second, this is the first sub-necropolis of Middle Kingdom tomb complexes known of this kind (*i.e.* shaft tombs without superstructures but with extremely specific and uniform

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14 The structural affinity (dimensions, angle of inclination, components) of the royal pyramids of Dra' Abu el-Naga with the first royal Nubian pyramids of el-Kurru (*e.g.* Pianchi [Ku 17]; Dunham, 1950: 64 and Figure 22a) indicates that these Nubian buildings were, at least, inspired (directly or indirectly) by the constructions in Thebes.

15 This also applies to the coffin ensemble of Imeni and Geheset, which was discovered in one of these complexes in an almost entirely intact state (Polz, 2007b).

16 Such as two very simple (mat) burials of this period in Area H (Polz, 2007b: 15, Abb. 14), or the two earlier burials discovered near to Area G during the course of excavations undertaken by the Spanish mission directed by Galán (2009: 32-35).

17 The vast majority of the tomb complexes known today from the Middle Kingdom in Thebes (shaft, *saff* and corridor tombs) date to the 11th and the beginning of the 12th Dynasties and should be viewed in connection with the royal necropolis of el-Tarif, the Asasif or the adjacent basin to the south with the so-called 'unfinished royal temple'. The latter, or rather its unfinished causeway and its, presumably only planned but never realized, valley precinct on the edge of the floodplain, seems to have been reference points for both the *saff* tombs high up on the hill of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (M.M.A. Cemetery 1100, *e.g.* MMA 1120/1121) as well as the necropolis located in the plain in the area of the Ramesseum, which was discovered by Petrie and Quibell and contained shaft and corridor tombs (Quibell, 1898: 3-5). This is also probably the case for the recently discovered tomb complex APO.CN21, "located in the middle part of the West processional way of the Ramesseum" (with thanks to H. Guichard and V. Asensi Amoros for providing information on this complex during a visit in the spring of 2012).



architecture) in Western Thebes. In view of this, the assumption that the site for the construction of a tomb, especially in the case of the elite, was made purely coincidentally is not particularly convincing. The fact that a whole group of such tombs were constructed within a relatively short time frame, at the same place and also spread over three naturally-formed terraces, and that these tombs show only minimal variations in terms of their axial alignment in the terrain, makes clear that the choice of site and the construction of these tombs must have been based on a deliberate plan. It is still unclear what specific meaning was originally inherent to this site on the Theban West bank. Nevertheless, the construction of the 12th/13th Dynasty tombs marked the site and perpetuated its significance into the ensuing centuries. With the erection of the two royal pyramids at the end of the 17th Dynasty in the immediate vicinity of the group of 12th/13th Dynasty tombs or (in the case of the pyramid attributable to Nub-Kheper-Ra Intef) directly above one of these tomb complexes, the site was established as a royal burial and cult site. The site also retained its significance as a cult place in the non-royal sphere for almost another half a millennium, until the end of the New Kingdom.

Besides the above-mentioned *saff* tomb K95.1 in Area G, a series of additional rock-cut tombs, the majority of which were previously unknown, were discovered in Areas E and H and subsequently excavated and documented. The range of architectural forms featured in these complexes reflects the spectrum already known from the Theban necropolis: small single-room tombs are attested alongside complexes with the typical T-shape, *saff* tombs, both with more modest dimensions as well as examples of monumental size (Theben Tomb [TT] 232), and also several individual solutions. In at least six of these complexes, the ancient polychrome painted wall decoration is preserved to varying degrees. Three of the decorated tomb complexes are small single-room tombs (K99.4, K01.1 and K01.2), another small tomb has a T-shaped ground plan (K01.5) and two complexes belong to the *saff* tomb type (K01.4 and TT 232). On the basis of the remaining decoration, all of these tomb complexes were originally constructed in the early to mid-18th Dynasty; some show signs of being newly decorated or having decorations changed at a later date (K01.4, K01.5, TT 232; K99.4 was prepared for redecoration of the entire tomb; Polz *et al.*, 2003: 374-377, Taf. 61-62).

In several cases, individual decorated and undecorated rock-cut tombs can be assigned to specific people, either on the basis of preserved inscriptions, funerary cones found in or in front of the tombs (Kruck, 2012), or inscribed objects belonging to the burial equipment. Amongst the tomb owners are:

- the High Priest of Amun, Minmontu (TT 232) (Polz, 2009)
- the High Priest of Amun, Maya (K99.1)
- the High Priest of Montu in Thebes, Neferamun (K10.5)
- the scribe of letters of the High Priest of Amun, Neferhebef (K99.4)
- the sailor of the High Priest of Amun, Nebanensu (K01.1) (Hilbig, 2013)
- the overseer of works at Karnak, Mahu (K01.4, later phase)
- the overseer of the two granaries of Amun, Nebamun (K10.1)
- the scribe and domain administrator of the god's wife, Amenhotep with his wife Amenemhab (K01.5)
- the standard bearer of the military unit "Bull in Nubia", *etc.*, Nakht (the exact position of his tomb is still unknown but is presumably in the forecourt of TT 232)



- the wab priest of Amun, Amunpanefer (K13.6, partial redecoration of the forecourt during the Ramesside period) (Polz, 2016: 9-10).

According to the current state of knowledge, the undecorated rock-cut tombs situated in Areas E and H were also, with only a few exceptions, originally constructed in the period from the early to the mid-18th Dynasty. In the case of the tomb owners named above, as well as other individuals (who are only attested by funerary cones) it is remarkable that almost all were, in some way or another, associated with the temple of Amun at Karnak.<sup>18</sup>

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18 See Kruck (2012: 72-75). The only exception is the officer Nakht, who exclusively names his military titles without any affiliation to the Karnak temple whatsoever on two fragmentarily preserved stelae found in Area H (Kruck, 2012: 47-50; 84-85 with Taf. 1d). By contrast, the tomb complex of Neferamun (K10.5), the High Priest of Montu of Thebes represents an exception only on first glance: even though a temple building dedicated to 'Montu of Thebes' is not yet archaeologically attested, the subject in question is presumably a structure, which preceded the Montu temple erected in Karnak at the latest by Amenhotep III, and perhaps already by the reigns of Thutmosis III/Amenhotep II (personal communication L. Gabolde, 18 September 2013).