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BIFAO 113 (2014), p. 51-80

Maher Bashendi

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A Roman Period Tomb with a Pyramidal Superstructure in Bir el-Shaghala (Mut, Dakhla Oasis)

MAHER BASHENDI AMIN

The site of Bir el-Shaghala is located in Mut (Dakhla Oasis), some 3 km NW of new Mut. The full extent of the ancient remains is still in place and the area (750 m N/S × 350 m E/W) is one of the sites under the control of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. Bir el-Shaghala is not far from three other important ancient sites: to the SE, Tell el-Marqula and Kom Bishai, and, to the South, Mut el-Kharab.[1]

The site is a cemetery. Tombs are partly hewn in the shale of the hill and partly built of mudbricks, some of them being large and decorated monuments.[2] The present article intends to provide a significant example of the architecture and decoration of these monuments, as an initial overview of the Bir el-Shaghala necropolis, which will deserve further publications.

The monument measures 8.30 m N/S × 9.00 m E/W (overall superstructure dimensions). The preserved height is 6.30 m, the restored one being up to 12.90 m. The upper floor consists of a chapel once covered by a pyramid. To the East, a staircase leads into two storeys of tombs, both including an antechamber and two funerary rooms. The superstructure and most parts of the monument are built of mudbricks coated with a lime plaster. The doors of both tombs and the funerary chambers of the lower floor are built of sandstone.

1 As for an overview on cemeteries in Dakhla, see Maher Bashendi, "Cemeteries in Dakhla," in R.S. Bagnall, P. Davoli, C.A. Hope (ed.), *The Oasis Papers 6. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, Oxford, 2012, p. 249-261.

2 During the last decade the SCA made cleanings, excavations and conservation work on the site. The author, director of Dakhla Oasis area, was in charge of the field work.

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CHAPEL [FIG. 1, 7]

A vestibule precedes an inner room. The walls of the vestibule are preserved only to the height of 0.75 m. The façade shows four slightly protruding pillars (6 cm), on both sides of the door and in the angles. The vestibule is a broad room (5.22 m E/W × 1.87 m N/S) with a bench in the front of the chapel and recesses within the eastern and western walls. To the East, within the recess, opens a rectangular shaft (85 × 23 cm) 3 m deep, plumb with the door of the lower tomb. It was intended to operate a vertical slab to close the door of the lower antechamber. The vestibule was covered by a flat roof resting on engaged square pillars to the North and engaged semi-circular columns to the South. The inner room, under the pyramid, was certainly covered by a cupola-shaped corbelled vault. As the walls (thickness 70 to 75 cm) bend already from the floor level, the space left to stand inside the room was only around 3 × 3 m instead of 4.12 × 4.15 m (overall inside measurements). The angle of the outer slope of the pyramid is slightly different on the preserved parts from one face to another,[3] the average being 71.1°. So, the pyramid was 8.05 m high, as measured from the floor of the chapel (fig. 4, 5, 7, 10).

Except for other monuments in Bir el-Shaghala still to be documented, the only contemporary similar pyramidal tomb in regard to shape and size, is the still unpublished pyramid of Amheida in Dakhla.[4] Otherwise, the few pyramidal funerary monuments of the Graeco-Roman Period are completely different and incomparably smaller.[5] From older periods, the pyramidal superstructure of Padineith's tomb (Thebes, late XXVIth Dynasty) provides a good parallel, especially regarding the inner structure.[6] Searching for an archetype, we have to look back to the New Kingdom private pyramidal tombs.[7]

EAST ENTRANCE AND STAIRCASE [FIG. 1-2, 4, 5, 7]

The level of the eastern entrance is 1,50 m lower than the level of the chapel to the North. The outer floor was sloping downwards W/E and N/S. A parapet wall protects the stairwell.

3 West 70,2° (height preserved 2,08 m), South 71,6° (height preserved 2,20 m), East 72,2° (height preserved 0,90 m).

4 Cf. N. Warner, "Amheida: Architectural Conservation and Site Development 2004-2009," in *The Oasis Papers* 6, p. 363-379.

5 The evidence is collected and studied by G. Cartron, *L'architecture et les pratiques funéraires dans l'Égypte romaine*, *BAR International Series* 2398, 2012, I, p. 18-20, II, p. 174 (Hawara), 272 (Terenouthis), 297 (Touna el-Gebel). The pyramids of Terenouthis are truncated close to the summit. For those monuments see henceforth: S. Dhennin, "Térénouthis-Kôm Abou Billou : une ville et sa nécropole", *BIFAO* 111, 2011, p. 115-118, p. 122, fig. 3, p. 123, fig. 5, p. 125, fig. 7-8. As for Tuna el-Gebel, see D. Kessler, P. Brose *et al.*, *Ägyptens letzte Pyramide. Das Grab des Seuta(s) in Tuna el-Gebel*, München, 2008.

6 D. Eigner, *Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der thebanischen Nekropole, Untersuchungen der zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts VIII*, Vienna, 1984, p. 102-105, fig. 75, pl. 40 c.

7 B. Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1923-1924), FIFAO 2*, 1925, p. 7-20, pl. VI, XV, XXIX, XXX; *id.*, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh, (1924-1925), FIFAO 3*, 1926, p. 5-14; F. Kampp, *Die Thebanische Nekropole. Zum Wandel des Grabgedankens von der XVIII. bis zur XX. Dynastie, Theben* 13, 1996, p. 95-109.

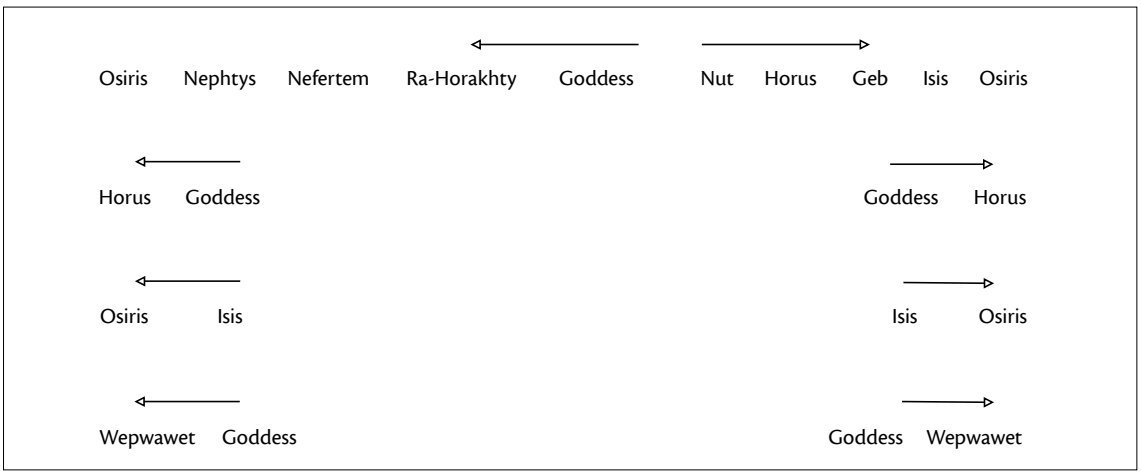
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The staircase is broad (2.15 m) and convenient. The difference of level between the upper and the lower floor being 2.55 m and the length of the staircase being 4.85 m, the eighteen steps are rather gradual (tread 25 to 32 cm, riser 13 to 19 cm; average tread 28.5, average riser 14 cm).

On the lower part of the western wall, a 1,10 m high plinth is painted red, the upper part being white.

TOMB, UPPER FLOOR [FIG. 2, 5, 6, 10, 11-14]

The door of the upper tomb opens from the upper floor of the staircase. It is set within a semicircular porch painted red. Two small columns suggest that it was covered by a false conch. The sandstone door is shaped in the usual Egyptian style with a cavetto cornice adorned with a winged solar disk. The lintel and jambs are carved and painted. They display standing figures of gods following and accompanying Osiris.



Lintel [FIG. 11, 12]

In the middle, three vertical red stripes separate two groups of five gods with their backs turned towards the door. Each group faces a stand covered with food offerings and lotus flowers. In front of each god a column was inscribed with his name painted but not carved. Nowadays the inscriptions are faded and have become mostly unreadable. The gods each hold a *was* scepter, the goddesses a *wadj* scepter. The goddesses wear the vulture shaped headdress under their crowns.

Right (North)

Osiris, green, depicted as a pharaoh, walking and wearing the *atef* crown.

Isis, a small seat or throne sign upon her Hathoric crown revealing her name.

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Geb wearing a typical crown made of an *atef* with an elongated base for the two horns within a red crown.[8]

Horus crowned with the *pschent*.

Nut with the sign of her name over her headdress instead of a crown.

Left (South)

Osiris depicted as on the right jamb, but with a small solar disk above his *atef* crown.

Nephthys with the sign of her name upon the disk of her Hathoric crown.

Nefertem, a clump of lotus above his head.

Ra-Horakhty with a solar disk comparatively far above his falcon head.

A goddess wearing the crown made of a disk and high feathers.[9]

Jambs [FIG. 13, 14]

Both jambs are divided into three registers. On each one a god, holding a *was* scepter, is followed by a goddess raising a hand. They look towards the outside. As the registers are symmetrical on both jambs, we shall describe the scenes by register in order to show the similarities.

Upper Register

- Right (North)
  Horus, falcon headed, wearing the *pschent* . A goddess wearing a Hathoric crown.

- Left (South)
  Horus with a human head, wearing the *pschent*. A goddess wearing a Hathoric crown.

Middle Register

- Right (North) and Left (South)
  Osiris, green, depicted as a pharaoh, walking and wearing the *atef* crown. Isis, a small throne sign upon her Hathoric crown giving her name.

Lower Register

- Right (North)
  Wepwawet (?),[10] jackal headed, black. A goddess crowned by the high feathers with a disk.

8 As for this crown, see Sh. BEDIER, *Die Rolle des Gottes Geb in der ägyptischen Tempelinschriften der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, *HÄB* 41, 1995, p. 170-171.

9 She may be Hathor-Sakhmet, according to the presence of Nefertem, Mut or even Isis.

10 By symmetry with the left jamb.

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- Left (South)

  Wepwawet, jackal headed, black.[11] A goddess crowned by the high feathers with a disk.

The gods following Osiris are the members of his family—the right part of the lintel with Geb, Nut, Isis and Horus being an example—the gods who take care of him (Nephthys, Isis, Anubis, Horus), and the gods who welcome him to daylight and eternally renewed life as Ra-Horakhty and Nefertem. The general composition is meaningful too. Indeed, on both jambs Osiris and Isis occupy the middle register between the registers of Horus and Wepwawet.

So, according to its location, its structure and to the decoration of the door, the porch was probably used to shelter offerings and could even perhaps have been designed to play the part of a small outdoor Osirian chapel in front of the tomb.

The door itself is low (height 1.05 m, width 0.62 m). Within the doorway, grooves on both sides and a shaft in the lintel were used in order to lift and lower a portcullis slab operated from the chapel above. The door opens onto an E/W antechamber (4.42 m × 1.05 to 1.15 m) divided by an arch and opening itself onto two N/S funerary chambers (3.25 × 1.88 m and 3.39 × 1.85 m). These rooms are covered with inclined brick vaults.

TOMB, LOWER FLOOR [FIG. 3, 5, 7-10, 15-29]

At the bottom of the staircase, the lower landing (1.98 to 2.09 m N/S × 2.13 m E/W) opens to the West, onto the lower tomb, and to the East onto a vaulted niche, itself opening onto a second vaulted recess (fig. 3, 7-8). In the niche, on the southern side an altar (0.67 × 0.60 m, height 1.23 m) is built in, slightly protruding outside. It belongs to the so-called "horned altar" type, very frequently encountered during the Graeco-Roman Period (fig. 9).[12] The niche with its altar must have been used as a place for offerings, the whole area of the floor providing a convenient space, in front of the door of the tomb, for performing the funerary cult.

The northern wall is decorated with a painted geometric red, yellow and green motif imitating a stone decoration (fig. 15).[13]

11 The name is readable.

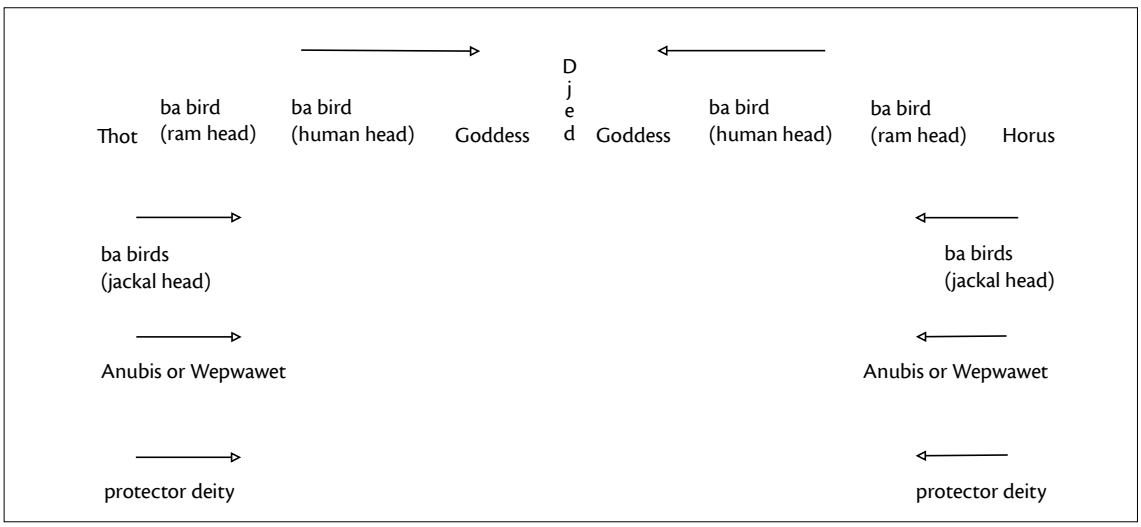
12 The most famous example is the altar set up in front of the tomb of Petosiris in Tuna el-Gebel (Late 4th-Early 3rd century BC): G. Lefebvre, *Le tombeau de Pétosiris*, Cairo, 1924, I, p. 13, II, pl. V.

13 Such painted panels partly imitating stone have been documented in Alexandria since the 2nd century BC. See, for instance, the Ras el-Tin 1 and Anfushy II and V tombs: A. Adriani, *Repertorio d'Arte dell'Egitto Greco-Romano C I-II*, Palermo,1963, fig. 365, 367, 382-386; M.S. Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria. The Theater of the Dead,* Cambridge, 2002, p. 69-70, 79-81. In the Oasis area, see the courtyard of the northern chapel of the monument of Pyiris in Ayn al-Labakha (Kharga Oasis, Late 1st-Early 2nd century AD): Adel Hussein, *Le sanctuaire rupestre de Pyiris à Ayn al-Labakha*, *MIFAO* 116, 2000, colour plates 3-4 and fig. 18-22, p. 30-31.

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Door [FIG. 16]

The sandstone door is built in the Egyptian style, with a cavetto cornice adorned with a winged solar disk. The lintel and jambs are carved and painted.



Lintel

In the middle of the lintel is the *djed* pillar crowned by a *henu* crown. On both sides of the *djed* pillar are symmetrical female figures, each with a disk above her head. They each raise a hand towards the *djed* pillar and present an ointment vase with the other. They could be Isis and Nephthys or the Hours who appear with an identical form in the antechamber. However it may be pointless to try to name them precisely, as they are meant to represent the goddesses who take care of Osiris. Behind them are four *ba* birds. The first two have a human head, the one at left wearing a long wig and the one at right having short hair. Behind these *bas* is an Osirian emblem: a *flagellum*. Then come two *ba* birds with a ram's head. At the extremities, the ibis headed Thot, to the left, and the falcon headed Horus, to the right, raise one hand and hold a piece of folded linen in the other. As with the goddesses, they are depicted according to the part they play as embalmers. The general meaning of the scene is the resurrection of the dead as Osiris embodied by the *djed* pillar within a solar context.

Jambs

The scenes are perfectly symmetrical on both jambs.

- Upper Register

  Jackal headed *ba* birds raise their arms in adoration towards the entrance.

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- Middle Register

A standing jackal headed black Anubis or Wepwawet, holding a *was* scepter and an *ankh* sign, looks towards the opening. In front of him is the outline of a column of hieroglyphs left uninscribed.

- Lower Register

A female protector deity holds a long *ds* knife upright and faces the doorway. In front of her is the outline of a column of hieroglyphs left uninscribed.

The opening is taller and wider (height 1.44 m, width 0.77 m) than that of the upper tomb. Within the doorway, the shaft intended for the portcullis slab opens in the lintel and there is a groove on both sides. Two steps lead down to the floor of the antechamber.

Antechamber and Funerary Chambers [FIG. 3, 7, 10, 17-29]

The lower tomb is larger and looks much more spacious than the upper one. Moreover the funerary chambers are built of sandstone. The decoration is painted directly onto the stone, or on a very thin white priming.

The antechamber (4.70 to 4.80 m E/W × 2.92 to 3.00 m N/S) was covered by an inclined mudbrick vault 3.20 m high, found mostly collapsed and nowadays restored. To the South, the doors of the funerary chambers are protruding (15 cm) from the wall. This façade wall and the funerary chambers are entirely built of rather large courses of sandstone (height up to 35 cm). The openings are low (East 1.23 m, West 1.18 m) but comparatively wide (0.70 m). In the doorway, the door sockets and the holes for the bolts are visible. Inside, in the funerary chambers, the floors are paved with sandstone slabs. Both rooms have the same size (East 4.80 × 2.12 m, West 4.98 × 2.10 m) and symmetrical layout. They are covered by a vault, which is nearly semi-circular.[14]

Antechamber, South Wall [FIG. 17-25]

- East Panel [FIG. 18]

Under a line of text, the eastern panel displays the procession of the Osiris reliquary from Abydos, the so-called "Abydenian fetish."

- Text

Ii.wy (n).k[15] *Inpw nṯr ʿ3 m nb tȝ ḏsr di.f (n).k qrst ʿ3t nfrt*
Welcome to you! It is Anubis, the great god, the lord of the Sacred Land, who gives you a great and beautiful burial.

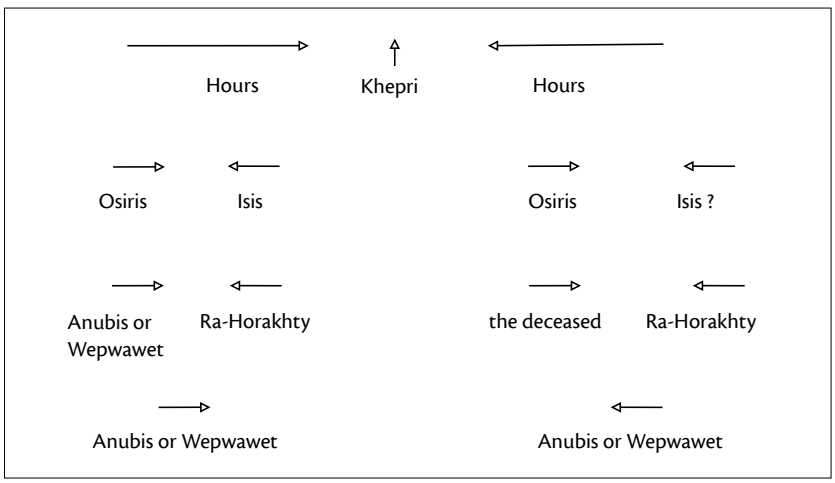
14 In Mut, similar stone vaults are documented in smaller tombs at Tell el-Marqula dating back to the XXVIth Dynasty onwards. As for Egyptian stone vaults in chapels and funerary chambers, mainly of Saite Period, see S. EL-NAGGAR, *Les voûtes dans l'architecture de l'Égypte ancienne*, *BdE* 128,1, 1999, p. 366-367 and 128,2, p. 289, fig. 373, p. 293, fig. 376, p. 295, fig. 378.

15 As for the value of the cobra I12 as *k*, see H.W. FAIRMAN, "An Introduction to the Study of Ptolemaic Signs and their Values," *BIFAO* 43, 1945, p. 78.

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The scene is very complete and elaborate. Four priests wearing long fringed kilts with belts and sandals[16] carry a palanquin in the middle of which is erected the Abydenian reliquary containing the head of Osiris. The high box on a pole shows the detail of a bead-net covering it. It is crowned by the crown made of a disk and two high feathers. On both sides of the reliquary, a standard bears a ram. At the base of the reliquary, small figures of the souls of Pe (falcons) and Nekhen (jackals) perform the *henu* gesture. Ahead of them, to the front, is the figure of a deity holding a *was* scepter. Partly damaged, this figure is difficult to identify. To the rear, a goddess opens her wings in order to protect the reliquary. She wears a solar disk and holds a *Maat* feather. She may be Isis or any other one among the goddesses accustomed to guarding Osiris. The fetish in the palanquin is set on a stand decorated with two images of the king supporting the sky on either side of a cartouche, which possibly contains the name of Osiris. In the upper part of the scene two falcons, each crowned by a solar disk and holding a *ḫw* fan, seem to fly on each side of the reliquary. They are figures of Horus Behedety. The scene is appropriately oriented towards the entrance of the antechamber.

- East Door [FIG. 20-22]



Front [FIG. 20]

Lintel

In the middle of the lintel, a winged scarab pushes a solar disk. Its rear legs hold a *shen* sign and two *ḫw* fans. It is Khepri rising at dawn. On both sides four ladies, each with a disk over her head, raise their right arms and present an ointment vase in their left hands. The two ladies who are closer to Khepri turn the palms of their hands towards their faces, while the other

16 Compare with the different dresses of the priests in the Kellis mammisi: O. KAPER, *Temples and Gods in Roman Dakhleh. Studies in the Indigenous Cults of an Egyptian Oasis*, Groningen, 1997, p. 89-96, fig. 47-54, p. 100-106, fig. 58-64, p. 110-113.

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ones raise their hands towards Khepri. They are most probably the Hours. They are named in those Underworld Books from the New Kingdom displaying the sun god's journey within an horary framework.[17] During the Late Period they keep watch over Osiris as well. Here, they mainly play the role of acclaiming the sunrise, but the ointment vase could be a hint towards the healing of Osiris. The location on the lintel is appropriate: the deceased comes forth to daylight with Khepri.

Jambs

As the scenes are the same or similar on both jambs, we shall describe them by register.

Upper register left (East):

Isis welcomes and guides Osiris, her left hand gripping his right wrist and her right hand raised up towards his shoulder.[18] She wears the vulture shaped headdress of goddesses and the Hathoric crown. Remarkably, a very small throne sign is placed over the disk in order to indicate her name. Osiris is not mummiform, but is shown as a king entering a temple. However, the light green colour of his body marks him clearly. He wears the *atef* crown. Between the gods are two columns designed for a hieroglyphic text but left empty.

Upper register right (West):

Mainly the scene is identical to the left one. However the Isis sign is missing over the crown of the goddess. So, she could be another one of the goddesses who used to take care of Osiris. Another slight difference is noticeable: there is a small solar disk with an *uraeus* on the top of Osiris crown.

Middle register left (East):

Anubis or Wepwawet faces Ra-Horakhty. The double *uraeus* is usually a feature of Montu; but here Ra-Horakhty is more likely. The gods raise up their right hands towards each other and link their left hands.

Middle register right (West):

The deceased, figured as the king, faces Ra-Horakhty. As on the left jamb, they raise up their right hands towards each other and link their left hands. Further details are significant: the light green skin of the left figure identifies him as the deceased. Moreover, his gesture, identical to that of the gods, puts him at the same level and shows that he takes his place among the gods.

17 See especially the *Amduat* and the *Book of Day and Night*: E. Hornung, *Das Amduat*, *ÄgAbh 7*, 1963; A. Piankoff, *Le Livre du Jour et de la Nuit*, *BdE 13*, 1942. In the neighbouring tomb of Petosiris in el-Muzzawaqa, the Hours tow the sun's boat (Room 1, West wall, upper register): J. Osing (ed.), *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, *AV* 28, 1982, pl. 26.

18 O. Kaper notices that this gesture by which Isis plays the part of protector and helper, well known for the gods welcoming the deceased pharaoh, was not yet documented for Isis and Osiris: O. Kaper, "Isis in Roman Dakhleh," in L. Bricault, M.J. Versluys (ed.), *Isis on the Nile. Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, Proceedings of the IVth International Conference of Isis Studies, Liège, November 27-29, 2008. Michel Malaise in honorem*, Leiden, 2010, p. 151, 154 and fig. 3.

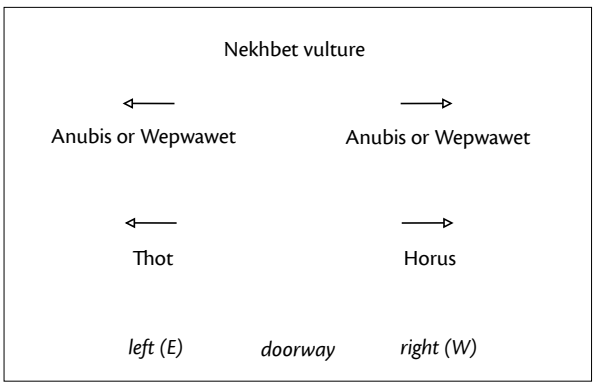
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Lower register:

On both jambs, a crouching black Anubis or Wepwawet jackal faces the door and plays the part of the tomb's guardian. Over him is a winged solar disk.

At first sight, we notice an apparent lack of symmetry between the jambs. Indeed, on a door, if Isis turns her back to the entrance on the left jamb, the goddess should do the same on the right one. Likewise, the figure of Ra-Horakhty on the right jamb should turn his back to the entrance. The West door displays the same layout. According to the accuracy noticed everywhere in the scenes and in their composition, an error is not likely. The most simple and probable explanation is the following one: the two highest registers of the door jambs are meant as part of the South wall and are related to the West wall of the antechamber which was probably considered as the rear wall and, so, the focus point of the room.

Doorway [FIG. 21-22]



Soffit

The soffit displays the great female vulture Nekhbet, with outspread wings, as is usual on a temple door lintel.

– Left Jamb (East) [FIG. 21]

Upper register:

Anubis or Wepwawet, holding the *was* sceptre, faces the entrance.

Lower register:

Thot with a black ibis head, crowned by a disk and holding the *was* sceptre, faces the entrance.

– Right Jamb (West) [FIG. 22]

Upper register:

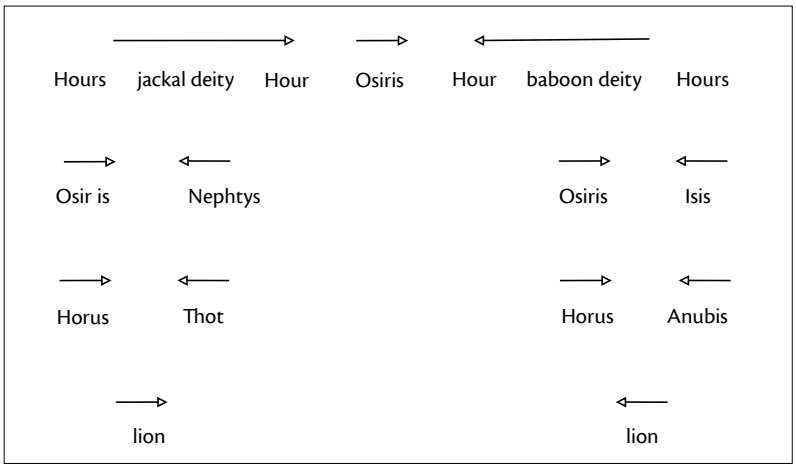
Anubis or Wepwawet, holding the *was* sceptre, faces the entrance.

Lower register:

Horus, holding the *was* sceptre, faces the entrance.

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- West door [FIG. 23-25]



Front [FIG. 23]

Lintel

The colours are mostly faded. Nevertheless the scene is readable. In the middle, a squatting mummiform image of Osiris faces right. He holds together three emblems including a *heqa* scepter (left), a *flagellum* (right) and a scepter made of an *ankh* sign over a *djed* like the scepter of Ptah (middle). On both sides are four deities, each crowned by a disk. Three of them are the Hours, each raising one hand and holding an ointment vase in the other. They are identical to the Hours of the eastern door. Here, however, the second figure starting from the center is, on the right side, a baboon and, on the left side, a jackal, both wearing a disk and making the same gesture as the Hours.

Jambs

Upper register left (East):

Osiris walking, clad as pharaoh, wears the *atef* crown with two *uraei:* he holds the *was* scepter. Facing him, Nephthys wearing the vulture shaped headdress and the Hathoric crown with the sign of her name upon the disk, holds the *wadj* scepter in her right hand and raises her left hand towards Osiris in a welcoming gesture. In front of each god, vertical outlines are intended for a column of text, but remain uninscribed.

Upper register right (West):

The scene is identical to the left one with some slight differences. There is a small solar disk over the Osiris crown. The goddess Isis has a small throne sign drawn upon the disk of her crown. Her raised left hand points an *ankh* sign towards Osiris.

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Middle register left (East):

Horus and Thot face each other. Both of them wear a crown shaped like the lower part of the red crown. To the left, Horus holds a *was* scepter in his left hand and raises his right hand towards Thot in a greeting gesture. Thot makes the same gesture towards Horus with his left hand and holds a folded piece of linen, a mummy wrapping, in his lowered right hand.

Middle register right (West):

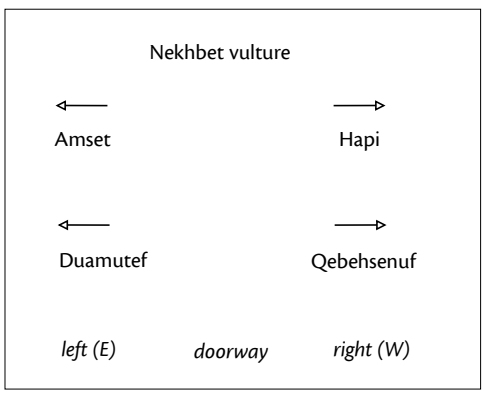
Horus and Anubis face each other. Both wear a crown shaped like the lower part of the red crown. To the left, Horus holds a *was* scepter in his left hand and points an *ankh* sign towards Anubis. In return, Anubis greets Horus with his upraised left hand and holds a piece of folded linen in his lowered right hand.

In this middle register Anubis and Thot play the part of embalmers. Horus greets them and presents the *ankh* sign in order to achieve the process. In this scene the gods congratulate each other on Osiris's resurrection.

Lower register right (West):

On both sides a seated lion faces the entrance. He holds a long knife upright in his paws. The lion is a guardian deity defending the entrance of the funerary chamber.[19]

Doorway [FIG. 24-25]



Soffit

As in the entrance of the eastern funerary chamber, the great female vulture of Nekhbet with outspread wings holds the *ḫw* fan.

19 Here, as with many guardian deities, the lion god is mostly defined by the part he plays, so that it is probably not necessary to try to name him more precisely. Concerning the lion as a guardian of the tomb, see C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne*, Leiden, 1951, p. 72-73.

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Jambs

On both sides, the gods having a solar disk above their heads face the entrance and raise their hands in a gesture of praise. In front of each god stands a tall *ḫs* vase with an *uraeus*. The left (East) jamb displays a human headed god (above) and a jackal headed one (below), while the right jamb shows a baboon headed god (above) and a falcon headed one (below). These gods are the four sons of Horus: Amset and Duamutef to the left, Hapi and Qebehsenuf to the right. They acclaim the resurrection of Osiris.

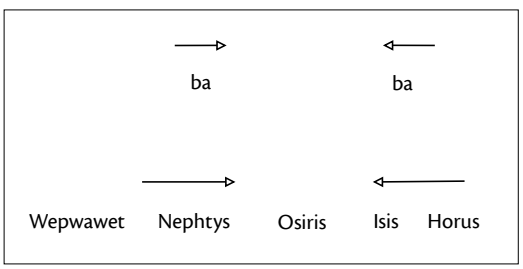
- Western Panel [FIG. 19]

Under a row of red stars is a very large frieze (height 50 cm) displaying an alternation of *djed* pillars and Isis knots. Below, the scene itself is partly damaged but clear. In the middle is erected the Abydos reliquary containing the Osiris head with the detail of a bead-net covering the high box. On both sides, goddesses protect it by their opened wings. Probably both of them hold a *Maat* feather. Noticeably, the disk crowning the right goddess is red, while the disk crowning the left one is blue with a yellow outline. The detail means that the protecting goddesses (who must be Isis and Nephthys) keep watch on Osiris throughout night and day.

Antechamber, West wall [FIG. 25]

Unfortunately the West wall is mostly destroyed. The remaining southern part is divided into two registers. In both registers we can see a standing goddess holding an *ankh* sign in her right hand. The upper goddess is clad in red and wears a vulture shaped headdress. The lower one wears a yellow dress and bears an *atef* crown over her vulture shaped headdress. In front of her face, the column of hieroglyphs giving her name is vertically half cut and does not provide a secure reading, but Wadjet is likely. As an hypothesis, the standing goddesses could have taken part in scenes showing Osiris and/or Re-Horakhty seated on a throne and adored by the deceased.

East Funerary Chamber [FIG. 26]



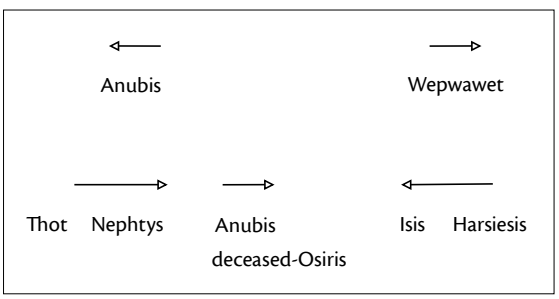
The rear wall (South) displays the Osiris resurrection. The arch is occupied by a big winged solar disk with two long crowned *uraei*. Human headed *ba* birds hold an *ankh* sign and look towards the central axis, facing the *uraei*. A green *khekeru* frieze separates the upper part from the lower scene. Above the scene is a long black sky sign. Osiris, mummiform, stands full face

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instead of in profile as he is usually depicted.[20] He is crowned by an *atef* crown with eight *uraei* upon ram's horns and a disk on top of this. He holds the *heqa* scepter in his right hand and the *flagellum* in his left one. The detail of the net over the mummy wrapping is visible. Isis (right, red dress) and Nephthys (left, yellow dress), each wearing a Hathoric crown, present and protect Osiris by the same gesture. On both sides, Horus (right) and Wepwawet (left) each hold out an ointment vase and pour a libation. Horus wears the *pschent* and Wepwawet a crown shaped like the lower part of the red crown with two large *uraei* on top. In front of each god, a small column of red hieroglyphs gives his name.

Isis: *ꜣst wrt* (destr.)
Isis, the great (…)
Nephthys: *Nbt ḥwt wrt*
Nephthys,[21] *the great.*
Horus: *Ḥr ꜥꜣ*[22]
Horus the great.
Wepwawet: *Wpy*[23] *ꜥꜣ nb tꜣwy nṯr ꜥꜣ*[24]
Wepwawet, the great, lord of the Two Lands, the Great God.

West Funerary Chamber [FIG. 27-29]



The rear wall (South) displays the embalming of Osiris on the funerary bed. In the arch is a winged solar disk with two long *uraei* wearing the red crown (right) and the *atef* crown as a variant of the white crown (left). Under the disk, within the curve made by the *uraei*, are two symmetrical captions in red hieroglyphs:

20 So, he looks as he does on the funerary shrouds. See E. Bresciani, *Il volto di Osiri. Tele funerarie dipinte nell'Egitto romano*, Lucca, 1996; Chr. Riggs, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt*, Oxford, 2005, p. 170, 276-278 dates the Saqqara shrouds to the 1st century AD.

21 The spelling for the name of Nephthys is unique, as far as we know. The cobra for *nbt* is used in Esna temple, e.g. *Esna* 503.18 or 530.8: S. Sauneron, *Le temple d'Esna N^os^ 473-546, Esna VI*[1], Cairo, 1975, p. 86, 163.

22 *ꜥꜣ* is written with the N31 sign. The *nṯr* sign is probably a mere determinative.

23 *Wpy* is the demotic form of *Wp wꜣwt*: *LGG* II, p. 342.

24 The star is to be read *nṯr*.

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Bḥdty nṯr ʿ3 nb pt s3b šwt
(Horus) Behedety, the great god, lord of the sky, with brightly coloured feathers.

Under the wings, two crouching black jackals look to the outside. To the right (West), the jackal god holds a red *Maat* feather. Above his head is a caption in small red hieroglyphs:

Wpw3wt nṯr ʿ3 nb t3wy ir.n.f di ʿnḫ ḏt
Wepwawet, the great god, who has given life eternally.

The caption of the left jackal is:

Inpw nṯr ʿ3 s3 Wsir ʿnḫ(.w) ḏt
Anubis, the great god, son of Osiris, given life eternally.

A line of red hieroglyphs and a decorative horizontal band separates the upper part from the lower scene.
The text says:

*Hy (n).k Wsir Ḥry-t3wy-Wsir (*or *P3-di-Wsir) ms.n T(3)y-ḥʿʿ-Rʿ (*or *T(3)y-Hʿpy)*
Ii.wy (n).k
Inpw nb t3 ḏsr
di.f (n).k qrst ʿ3t nfrt ḫnt-ʿImntt

Hail to you, Osiris Hery-tawy-Osiris (or Petosiris)[25]
born to Tay-haa-Ra (or Tay-Hâpy).[26]
Be welcome! It is Anubis, lord of the sacred land, who gives you a great and beautiful tomb at the edge of the Occident.

In the middle of the scene is a lion shaped bed. The body lying upon the bed is comparatively small and looks more like the mummy of a deceased than like Osiris, lacking the god's usual distinctions, such as the beard and the crown. Above him, Anubis, black with a yellow wig, puts his right hand on the mummy's chest and holds an ointment vase in his left hand. Under

25 The first interpretation reads the signs as they are. The name Hery-tawy is attested: H. Ranke, *Personennamen* I, 253, 13 (Greek Period). As a divine epithet, *ḥry t3wy* is known too for the Graeco-Roman Period, being used for Ihy-wer and Geb: *LGG* V, p. 387. The second interpretation is grounded on writing and spelling features of the Graeco-Roman Period. The sky (N1) is often used for *p3*. The land *t3* can be written with the *di* sign (D37). In fact, as for the pronunciation, *t3* and *di* were almost identical. Moreover we notice the writing *t3wy ḏsr* for *t3 ḏsr* in the same text and also in the Antechamber, South wall, East panel (fig. 18). As the name Petosiris is very frequent during the Graeco-Roman Period, this second interpretation is more likely. We are grateful to Pr. Dr. Devauchelle for this suggestion and for the reading Tay-Hâpy as well (see n. 26).

26 The form *Ḥʿʿ-ib-rʿ* is well known: H. Ranke, *Personennamen* I, 234,5 (Late Period). A shorter form is documented with the name of Ptah: *Ḥʿʿ-Ptḥ*, *ibidem*, 234, 6. Another reading is possible. If we assume that the scribe wrote the circle of the sun (N5) instead of the rectangle of the *p* (Q3), we may read Hâpy. This reading fits well with the presence of *t3y*.

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the bed are three tall vases, each one with an *uraeus* instead of a spout. In this place they should be canopic jars.[27] Isis, wearing a red dress, stands at the head of the bed, and Nephthys clad in yellow, stands at the foot of the bed. They symmetrically raise a hand and present an ointment vase with the other. At the extremities, Horus, to the right, wearing the *pschent* and Thot, to the left, wearing an *atef* crown are also performing a symmetrical gesture. They raise a hand and pour a libation from a spouted vase with the other hand. In front of the gods, small columns of red hieroglyphs give their names.

Anubis: *Ḏd mdw in Inpw s3 Wsir*
Words said by Anubis son of Osiris.
Isis: *Ḏd mdw in 3st wr(.t) nb(.t)*
Words said by Isis, the great, lady.[28]
Nephthys: *Ḏd mdw in Nbt ḥwt wr(.t) irt s3 n*
Words said by Nephthys, the great who makes protection for (Osiris).[29]
Harsiesis: *Ḏd mdw in Ḥr s3 3st*
Words said by Harsiesis.[30]
Thot: *Ḏd mdw in Ḏḥwty*[31] *ʿ3 ʿ3 wr*
Words said by Thot, the very great god.

According to the consistency of the architectural structure and of the decoration it is clear that the monument answers to a precise design and was realized in a single unit of time.

As for the architecture, the tomb units consisting of a vaulted antechamber opening on two vaulted funerary chambers follow a layout that is widespread in Dakhla (Kôm Bishai, Tell el-Marqula, Bir Talata el-Arab) from the Late Period onwards. However, usually, there is only one underground storey with a shaft going down from the ground level to the door of the antechamber, but here, there are two storeys linked by a staircase. Such a design meets the requirements of a family funerary complex intended to be available for burials over a lengthy period. Apart from its pyramidal superstructure, the upper chapel is also a common feature of great tombs in Dakhla, as for instance in Ezbet Bashendi[32] or Ismant el-Kharab.[33] However, in our monument, the chapel is not the only place for the cult. The niche and altar of the lower floor show that offerings were brought directly in front of the tomb's door. The vestibule of the chapel was probably a room for people visiting the tomb during the feasts.

27 In the doorway too, the vases set in front of the Sons of Horus display the same *hes* shape.

28 As the space was insufficient, the expected complement of *nbt* is lacking.

29 The central figure of the scene perhaps takes the place of the word *Wsir*, a logical complement of *irt s3 n*. It is also possible that, as in the text of Isis, the last epithet is left incomplete.

30 About Harsiesis, see A. Forgeau, *Horus-fils-d'Isis : la jeunesse d'un dieu*, *BdE* 150, 2010.

31 The solar disk and the *nṯr* are mere determinatives.

32 Sayed Yamani, "Roman Monumental Tombs in Ezbet Bashendi," *BIFAO* 101, 2001, p. 393-414.

33 J.E. Knudstad, R.O. Frey, "Kellis: the Architectural Survey of the Romano Byzantine Town at Ismant el-Kharab," in *Dakhleh Oasis Project Monograph* 2, Oxford, 1999, p. 208-213.

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The decoration seems to be the work of one workshop. Apart from the style, we notice everywhere the same playing with colours, consisting of alternating them, especially red and yellow. Moreover, if we compare the figures of goddesses wearing a disk, the carved figures on the outer door are identical to the painted ones inside. Some features appear infrequently, such as the image of a crown looking like a vase (fig. 23, 26), the solar disk separated off from the headdress or from the crown (fig. 16, 19, 20, 25), or the *flagellum* distant from the divinities who should be holding it.

Despite a few Graeco-Roman features—such as the pillars on the façade of the chapel, the small columns of the door of the upper tomb, the horned altar and the painted wall imitating stone on the lower floor, the monument conforms to the pharaonic tradition. The scenes are representative of the Osirian beliefs: mummification (the eastern funerary chamber), the resurrection of Osiris (the western funerary chamber and antechamber), coming forth to daylight (the lintels). The *ba* birds, frequent during the Graeco-Roman Period, are present in both funerary chambers and at the entrance as well. Moreover, the location of the elements is appropriate, as, for instance, the figures of the gods guarding the tomb and taking care of Osiris (the door, the antechamber). We notice even some subtleties, such as the symmetry of Anubis and Wepwawet in the western funerary chamber. Finally some parts look like a temple decoration, mainly the door of the upper tomb, following a trend of the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods: the use in funerary monuments of representations borrowed from sanctuaries.[34] In conclusion we may assume that the decoration of the tomb proves an accurate knowledge of the Osirian cult.

As for the date of the monument, we lack decisive proof. Nevertheless several indications help us to estimate it. Architectural features point to a late Hellenistic or Roman date. The style of the decoration suggests also the Roman Period. Within this period, the conformity to the pharaonic models, especially noticeable on the outer doors, and, above all, the well organized and meaningful composition point to an early date. Therefore we suggest the 1st century AD.

34 In Dakhla Oasis, the tomb of Kitynos (Early 1st century AD) is designed and decorated as a small temple: J. Osing (ed.), *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, *AV* 28, 1982, p. 58-69, pl. 13-19, 64-69. About this trend in general, see A. von Lieven, "Das Verhältnis zwischen Tempel und Grab im Griechisch-Römischen Ägypten", *RdE* 61, 2010, p. 91-106.

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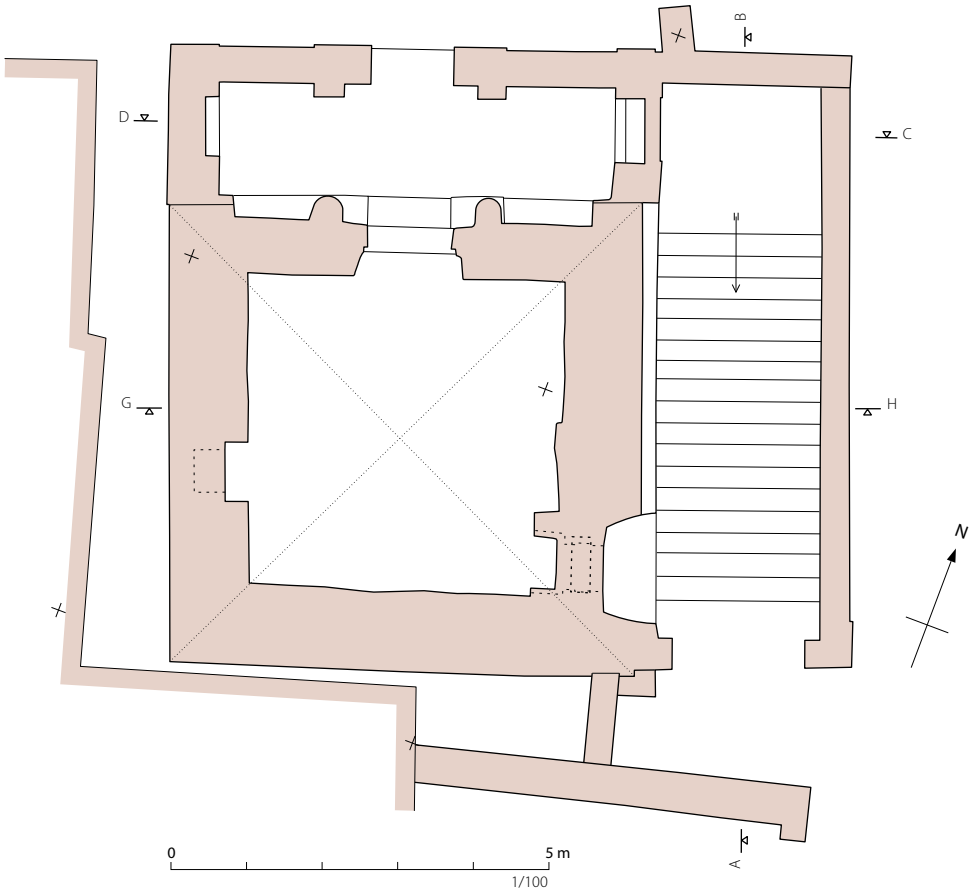


FIG. 1. Upper level, chapel and vestibule, plan 1/100.

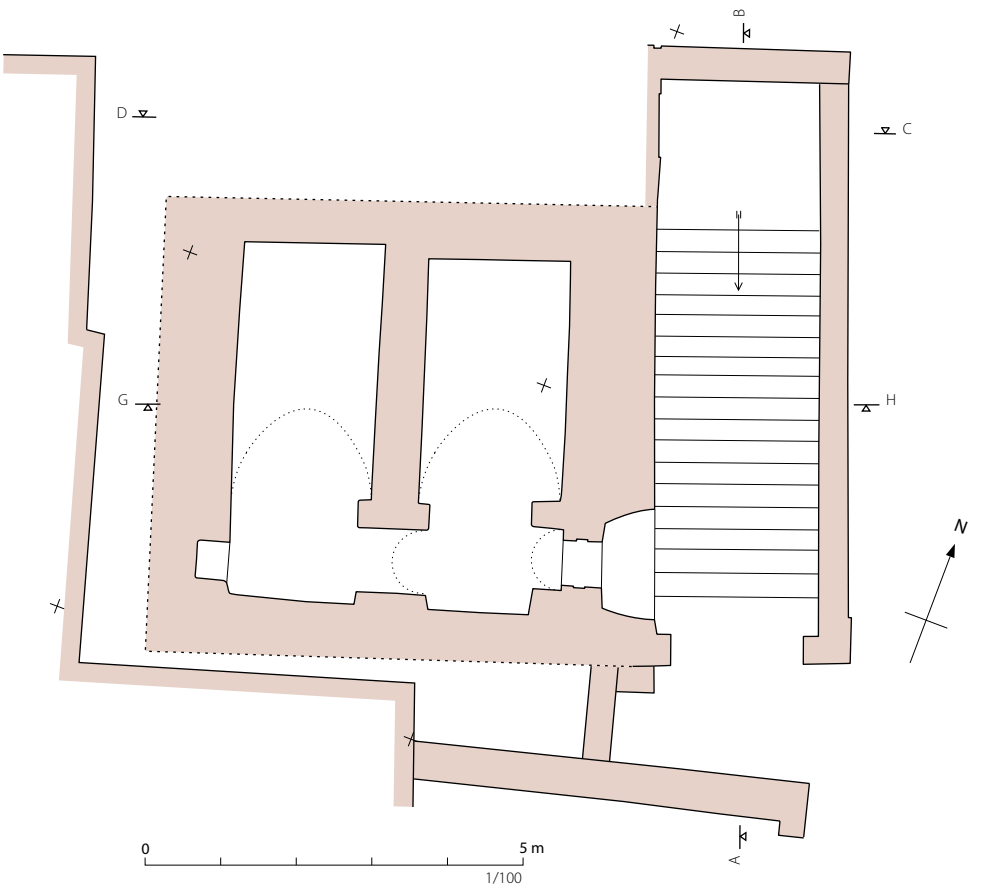


FIG. 2. Tomb, upper floor, plan 1/100.

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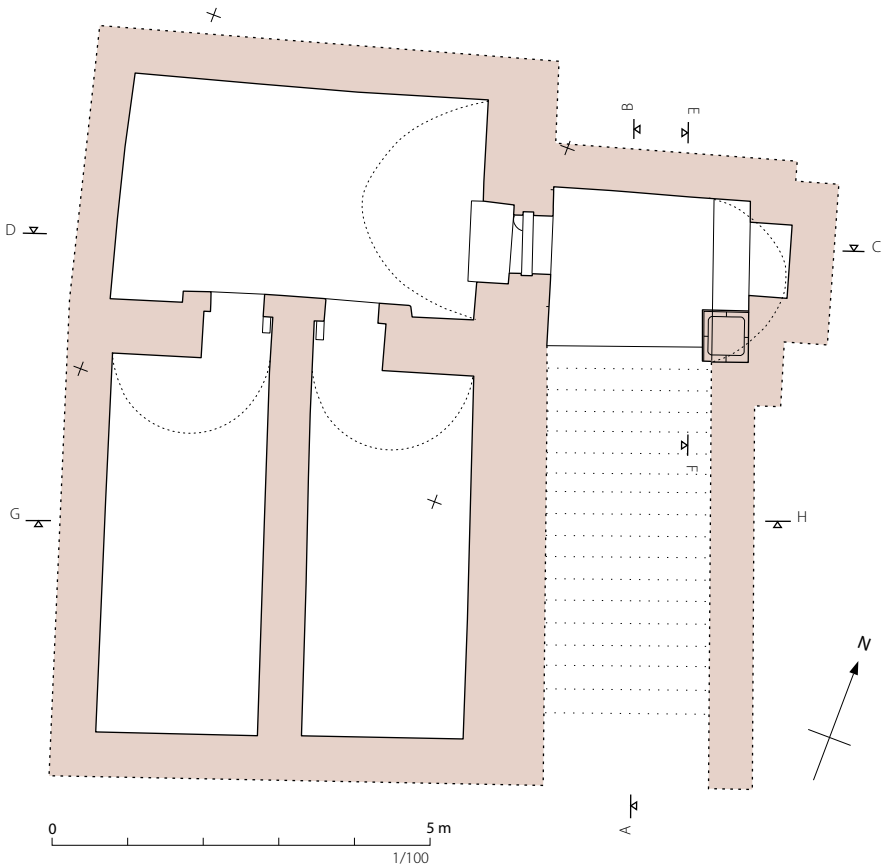


FIG. 3. Tomb, lower floor, plan 1/100.



FIG. 4. Eastern entrance and pyramid, view SE/NW.

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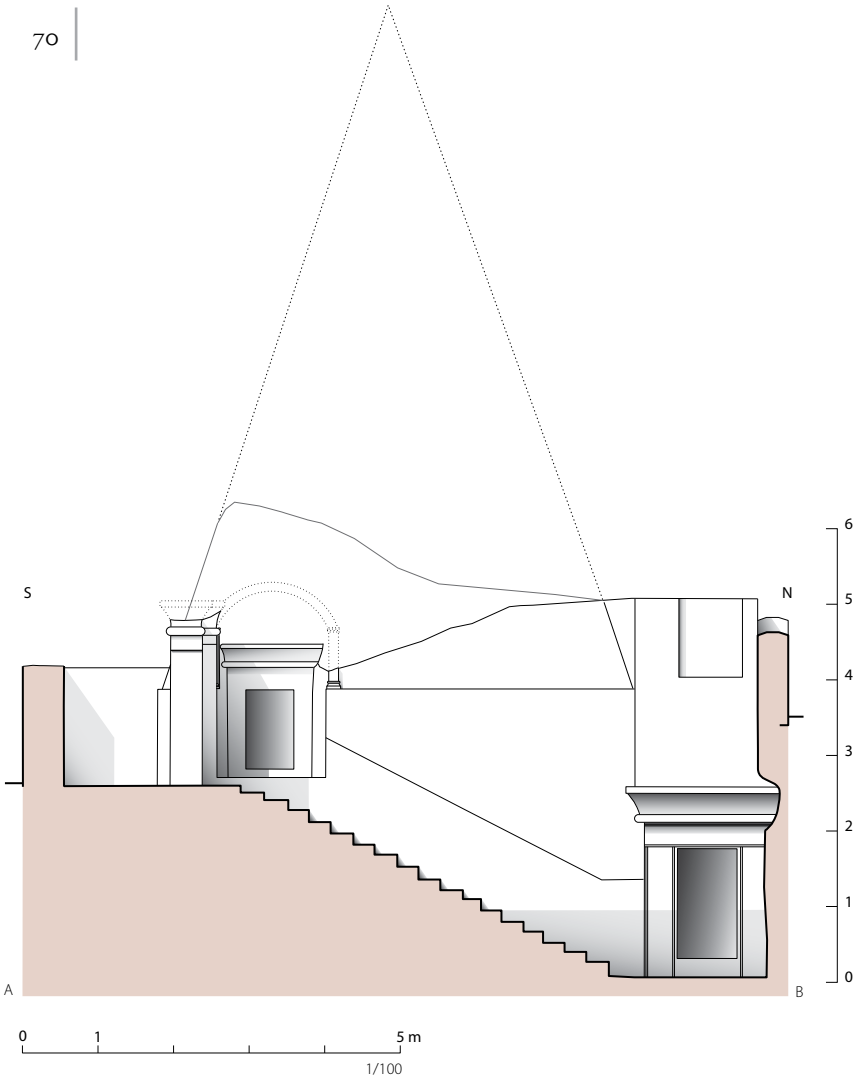


FIG. 5. Section S/N (A-B on plans), 1/100.



FIG. 6. Tomb, upper floor, entrance, view E/W.

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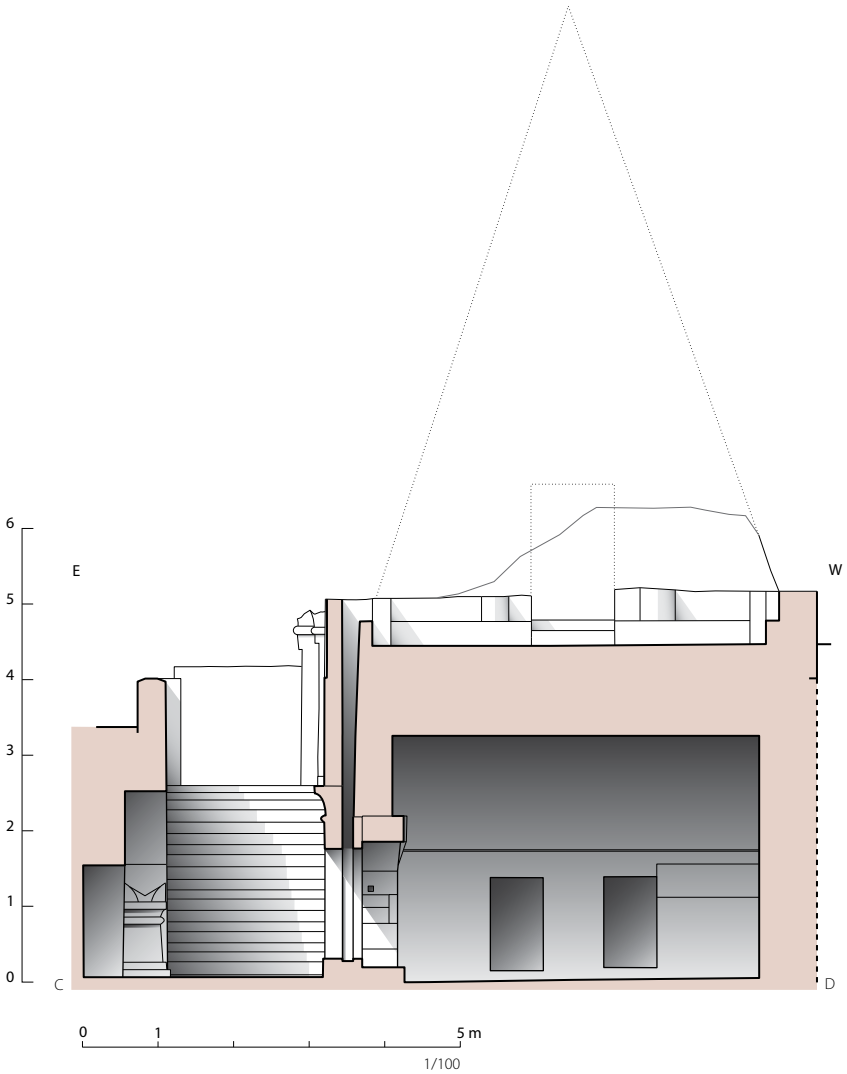


FIG. 7. Section E/W (C-D on plans), 1/100.

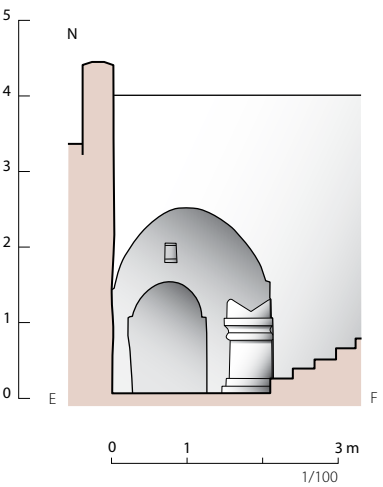


FIG. 8. Section N/S through the lower landing (E-F on plans), 1/100.



FIG. 9. Tomb, lower floor, altar, view N/S.

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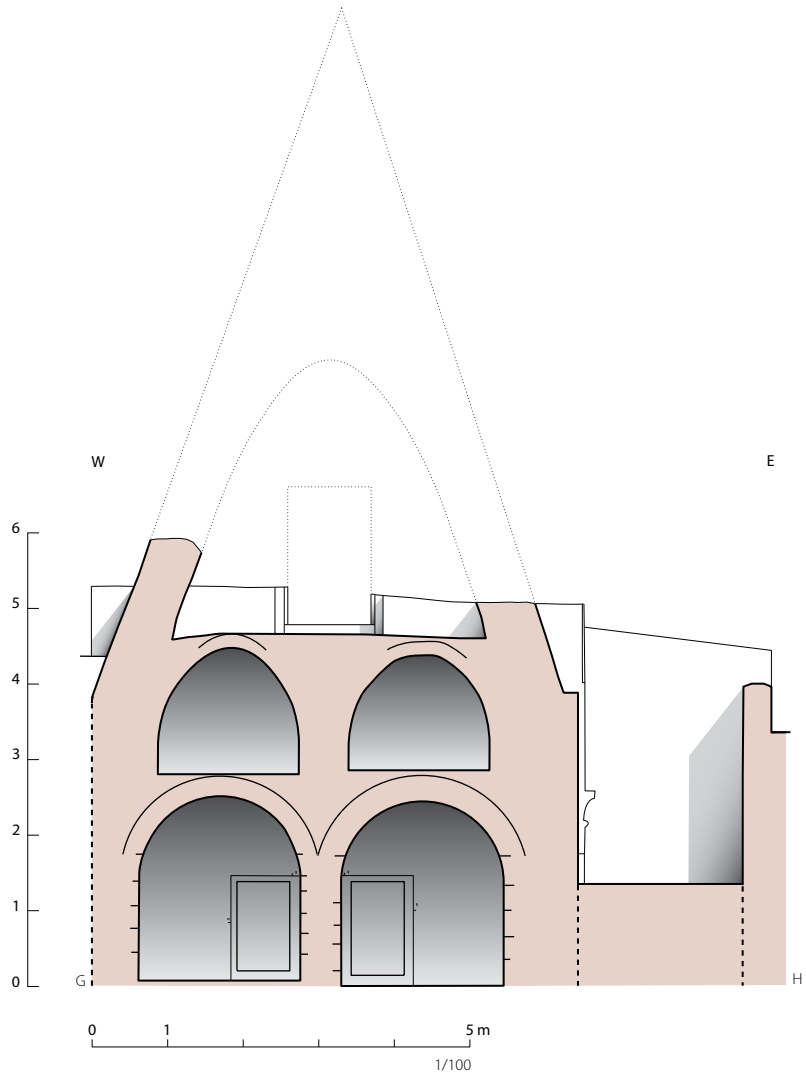


FIG. 10. Section W/E (G-H on plans), 1/100.

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FIG. 11.



FIG. 12.



FIG. 13.



FIG. 14.

FIG. 11. Tomb, upper floor, door, view E/W.
FIG. 12. Tomb, upper floor, door, lintel.
FIG. 13. Tomb, upper floor, door, South jamb.
FIG. 14. Tomb, upper floor, door, North jamb.

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FIG. 15. Tomb, lower floor, landing, North wall.

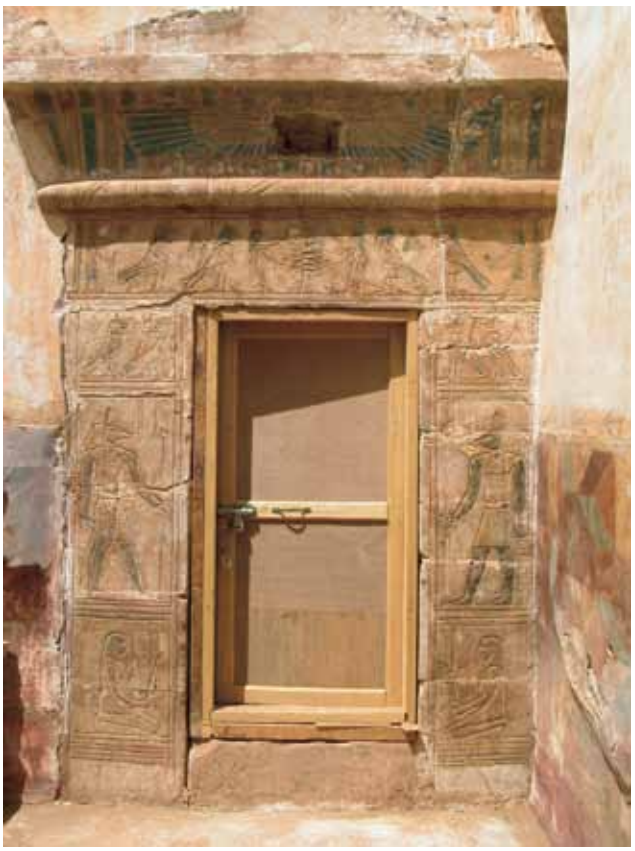


FIG. 16. Tomb, lower floor, door.

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FIG. 17. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, photomontage.



FIG. 18. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, East panel.



FIG. 19. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, West panel.

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FIG. 20.

FIG. 20. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, East door, front.
FIG. 21. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, East door, doorway, East.
FIG. 22. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, East door, doorway, West.



FIG. 21.

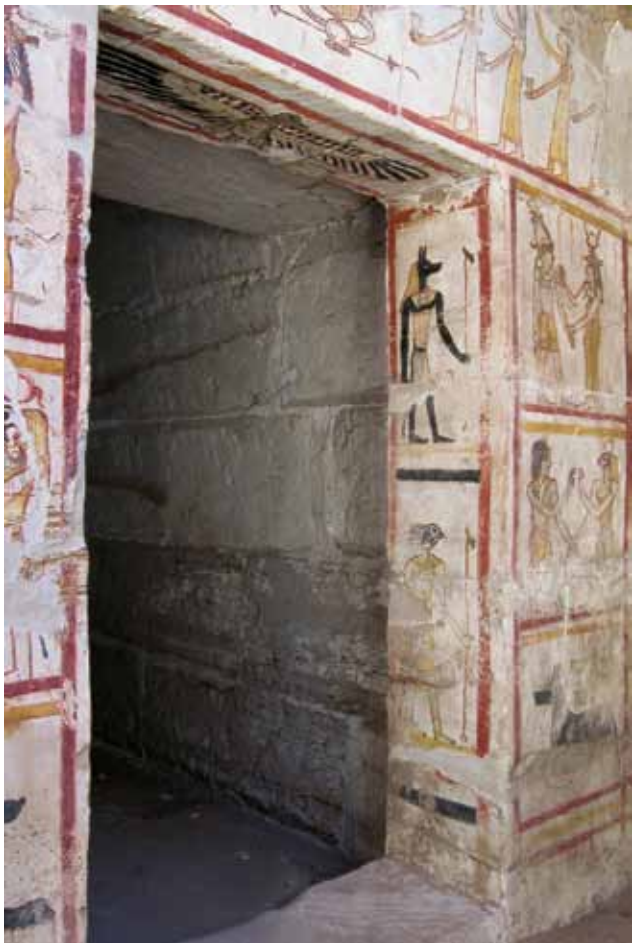


FIG. 22.

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FIG. 23. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, West door, front.
FIG. 24. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, West door, doorway, East.
FIG. 25. Tomb, lower floor, antechamber, South wall, West door, doorway, West Panel, and in the background, the antechamber, West wall.



FIG. 23.

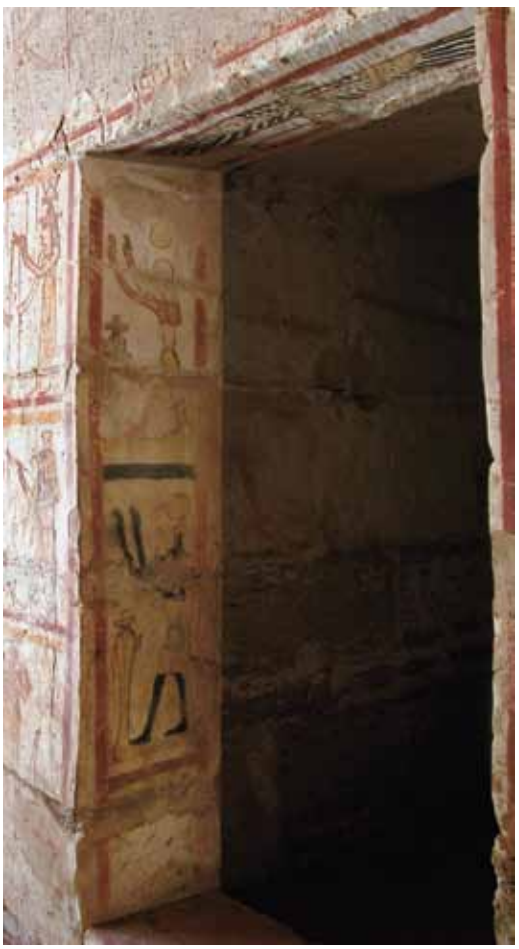


FIG. 24.



FIG. 25.

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FIG. 26. Tomb, lower floor, East funerary chamber, South wall.

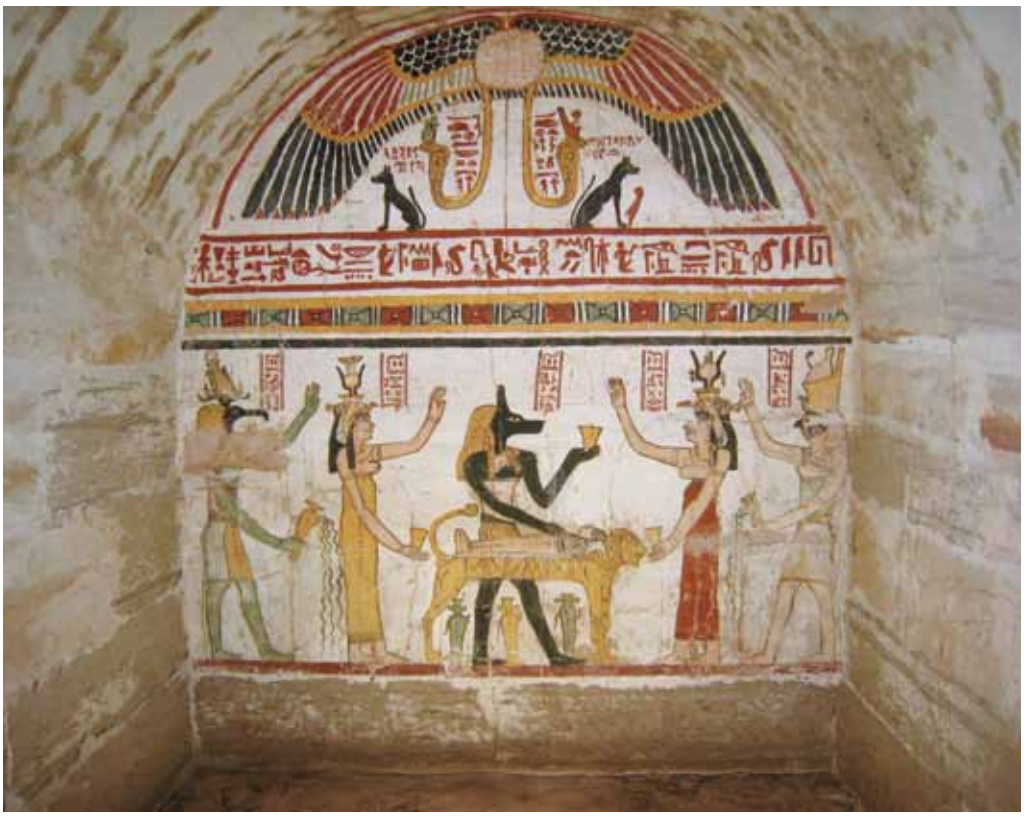


FIG. 27. Tomb, lower floor, West funerary chamber, South wall.

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FIG. 28. Tomb, lower floor, West funerary chamber, South wall, detail of the inscriptions.

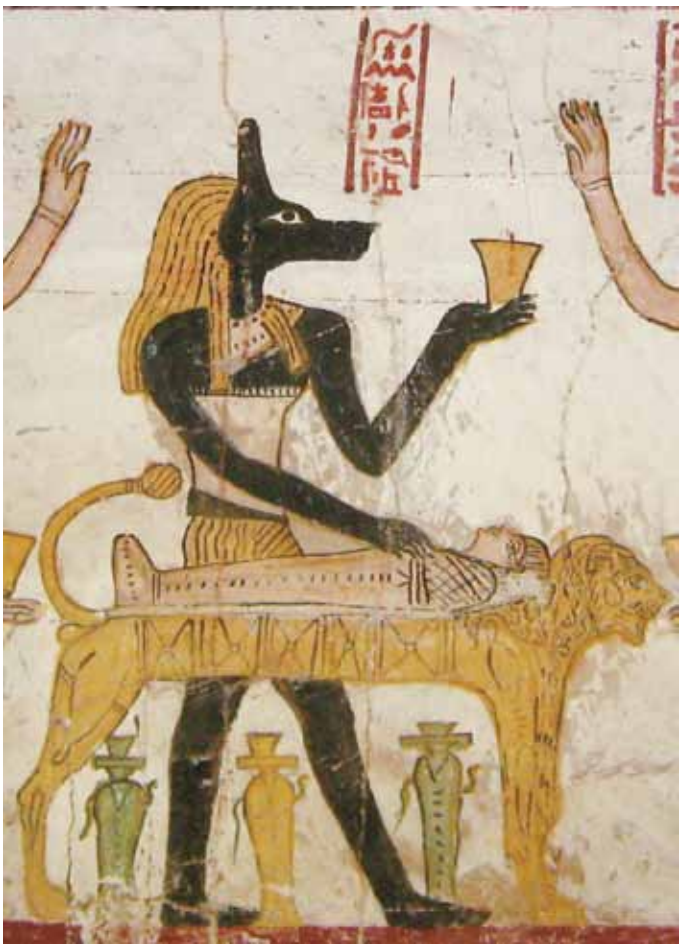


FIG. 29. Tomb, lower floor, West funerary chamber, South wall, detail of Anubis and the funerary bed.

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