

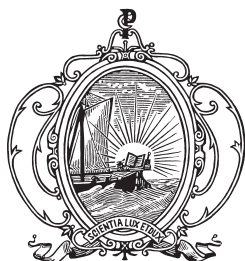
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## NUBIA IN THE NEW KINGDOM

Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions

edited by

Neal SPENCER, Anna STEVENS and Michaela BINDER



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Neal SPENCER, Anna STEVENS and Michaela BINDER Introduction: History and historiography of a colonial entanglement, and the shaping of new archaeologies for Nubia in the New Kingdom .....	1
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## PART 1

### THE APPARATUS OF CONTROL – FORMAL PHARAONIC MONUMENTS AND CULTURE

W. V. DAVIES Nubia in the New Kingdom: The Egyptians at Kurgus .....	65
Charles BONNET From the Nubian temples and palaces of Dokki Gel to an Egyptian <i>mnnw</i> during the beginning of Dynasty 18 .....	107
Dominique VALBELLE The use of stone and decorative programmes in Egyptian temples of Dynasty 18 at Pnubs (Dokki Gel/Kerma).....	123
W. V. DAVIES A statue-cache from Sai: Putting the pieces together .....	133
Florence DOYEN and Luc GABOLDE Egyptians versus Kushites: The cultural question of writing or not.....	149
Timothy KENDALL and El-Hassan Ahmed MOHAMED, with Heather WILSON, Joyce HAYNES and David KLOTZ Jebel Barkal in the New Kingdom: An emerging picture.....	159
Florence THILL The ‘pyramid’ of Sai: State of research .....	193
R. B. PARKINSON and Neal SPENCER <i>The Teaching of Amenemhat I</i> at Amara West: Egyptian literary culture in Upper Nubia .....	213

## PART 2

### THE ENVIRONMENT – LANDSCAPE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Jamie WOODWARD, Mark MACKLIN, Neal SPENCER, Michaela BINDER, Matthew DALTON, Sophie HAY and Andrew HARDY Living with a changing river and desert landscape at Amara West.....	227
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Dietrich KLEMM and Rosemarie KLEMM New Kingdom and early Kushite gold mining in Nubia .....	259
Caroline R. CARTWRIGHT and Philippa RYAN Archaeobotanical research at Amara West in New Kingdom Nubia.....	271
Anna STEVENS and Anna GARNETT Surveying the Pharaonic desert hinterland of Amara West.....	287

## PART 3

**THE PHARAONIC TOWNS OF NUBIA: LIFE HISTORIES AND LIVED EXPERIENCE**

Bruce WILLIAMS The New Kingdom town at Serra East and its cemetery .....	309
Neal SPENCER Building on new ground: The foundation of a colonial town at Amara West.....	323
Matthew DALTON Reconstructing lived experiences of domestic space at Amara West: Some preliminary interpretations of ancient floor deposits using ethnoarchaeological and micromorphological analyses .....	357
Marie VANDENBEUSCH Roofing houses at Amara West: A case study .....	389
Anna STEVENS Female figurines and folk culture at Amara West.....	407
Julia BUDKA Life in the New Kingdom town of Sai Island: Some new perspectives.....	429
Kate SPENCE Sesebi before Akhenaten .....	449
Pamela ROSE Sesebi: Ceramics, chronology and society .....	465
Derek A. WELSBY Gematon between the reigns of Rameses VI and Taharqa.....	475

## PART 4

**NUBIA IN EGYPT**

David ASTON and Manfred BIETAK Nubians in the Nile Delta: À propos Avaris and Peru-nefer .....	491
Dietrich RAUE Nubian pottery on Elephantine Island in the New Kingdom .....	525

PART 5  
CULTURAL CHOICES FOR ETERNAL LIFE

John H. TAYLOR	
The coffins from Debeira: Regional interpretations of New Kingdom funerary iconography .....	537
 Claudia NÄSER	
Structures and realities of the Egyptian presence in Lower Nubia from the Middle Kingdom to the New Kingdom. The Egyptian cemetery S/SA at Aniba .....	557
 Christian KNOBLAUCH	
The burial customs of Middle Kingdom colonial communities in Nubia: Possibilities and problems .....	575
 Michaela BINDER	
The New Kingdom tombs at Amara West: Funerary perspectives on Nubian-Egyptian interactions.....	591
 Stuart Tyson SMITH and Michele R. BUZON	
Colonial encounters at New Kingdom Tombos: Cultural entanglements and hybrid identity.....	615

# STRUCTURES AND REALITIES OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESENCE IN LOWER NUBIA FROM THE MIDDLE KINGDOM TO THE NEW KINGDOM: THE EGYPTIAN CEMETERY S/SA AT ANIBA

Claudia NÄSER

## Abstract

Cemetery S/SA at Aniba is one of the major burial grounds testifying to the Egyptian presence in Lower Nubia from the late Middle Kingdom, through the Second Intermediate Period, to the New Kingdom and beyond. While it could therefore represent a historical treasure trove, its analysis also poses numerous challenges arising from both the nature of the archaeological record and the research history at the site. The present contribution sets out to work meaningfully with the material while acknowledging these limitations. Establishing basal dates for the cemetery's occupation, and exploring the prevalent patterns of preservation and fragmentation, the social profile of its burial community and the use-life of individual tombs provide the starting points for discussion. Focusing on selected object categories and contexts, namely funerary masks, offering-installations and tombs S66 and S65, the paper then moves on to investigate some socio-cultural contexts of the Egyptian presence in Lower Nubia in the periods under study, and to scrutinise individual aspects of the lived experience of members of the burial community. Drawing on the concept of 'communities of practice', the paper focuses on the momentum of shared social practice as a means to methodically connect the archaeological record of a specific cultural repertoire to the processes of its production, appropriation and use.

## Introduction

Cemetery S/SA at Aniba was excavated between 1910 and 1914 by the Eckley B. Coxe Junior Expedi-

tion of the University of Pennsylvania and the Ernst von Sieglin Expedition of Leipzig University. The finds and findings were published by Georg Steindorff, the director of the second mission, and some of his collaborators in 1937. More than 3,000 objects from cemetery S/SA came to the museums in Philadelphia and Leipzig.<sup>1</sup> Since its deposition, the material has received little attention, although it constitutes one of the largest corpora of Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom grave goods accessible in museums outside Egypt. The following contribution is based on a project to re-study this material.<sup>2</sup>

The first aim of this paper is to explore both the potential of, and the problems connected to, the re-analysis of 'old' excavations, like those of Aniba, when only selected finds have been kept and when the field records often do not adequately illustrate the archaeological contexts — themselves heavily fragmented — from which these objects originate. Secondly, I want to retrace the socio-cultural and political contexts of the Egyptian presence, as well as the lived experience of Egyptians in Lower Nubia, from the late Middle Kingdom onwards, and I argue that, despite its deficiencies, the material from Aniba holds a considerable, yet hitherto little tapped, resource to investigate these questions. In this regard, the evidence from Aniba S/SA complements data from other sites. Buhen and Mirgissa witnessed a comparably complex history in the Second Intermediate Period after the end of Egypt's centralised administration of its Nubian province, while Amara West was the administrative counterpart of Aniba in Ramesside times.

Aniba, ancient Egyptian *Mj'm*, was situated about 230km south of the modern city of Aswan in one of the wide bay-like areas on the west bank of the Nile, which

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<sup>1</sup> About forty objects entered other museums, namely the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (some of these were recently transferred to the Nubia Museum in Aswan), the Egyptian Museum in Berlin and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Das Gräberfeld S/SA in Aniba: Strukturen und Realitäten der ägyptischen Präsenz in Unternubien vom Mittleren Reich bis in die Dritte Zwischenzeit', co-directed by the author and Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert of Leipzig University. The project was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft from 2010 to 2012.

have been generally recognised as pockets of productive agricultural land with comparatively high population density stretching from antiquity to recent times (e.g. Trigger 1965; Edwards 2004, 88). While the evidence for the A-Group period is inconclusive (Steindorff 1935, 24–7; Bakr 1963a, 112), the bay of Aniba certainly became a population centre from the late 3rd millennium BC (i.e. early C-Group times) onwards — as is witnessed in the large necropolis N and many other cemeteries and settlements which were excavated or surveyed, but only partly published, during the Second and Third Nubian Rescue Campaigns (Steindorff 1935; Emery and Kirwan 1935; Bakr 1963a; 1963b; 1967; 1980).<sup>3</sup> In the Middle Kingdom, Egypt's control of the region was secured by a fortress placed less than 2km south of the large C-Group necropolis N. Only later, members of the garrison opened a cemetery about 600m west of the fortress.

### The structure of cemetery S/SA

This cemetery comprises 157 tombs (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> With a few exceptions, they each consist of a substructure with a shaft or a staircase leading to one or more burial chambers. One-third of the tombs have a (preserved) superstructure of mud brick. These superstructures are oriented towards the Nile: their entrance is from the east and the cult installations are at the rear, i.e. the western end. Architecturally, the superstructures conform to two basic types, namely a simple rectangular design or a pyramidal shape. Specimens of the latter type are concentrated in the northern part of the cemetery — thus, on first glance, one would assume that the burial ground developed from the south towards this direction.

Pottery data indicate that cemetery S/SA was opened in the late Middle Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> The superstructures connected with this earliest phase of use are mud-brick

chapels of the simple rectangular type (Fig. 2). Six of them can be dated to the late Middle Kingdom by the ceramic material from their associated substructures. Seventeen further tombs with this chapel type contained pottery and/or other objects of Second Intermediate Period date. Only 25% of the tombs with chapels of the rectangular type cannot be dated to these periods *with certainty*. The fact that they did not produce any Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period material does not, however, *a priori* exclude their origin in these periods. Thus, contrary to some previous assumptions (e.g. Kampp 1996, 96–7; Kampp-Seyfried 2006, 123), the rectangular chapel type is not characteristic of the New Kingdom, but is already present in the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period. Notwithstanding the evidence of the superstructures, at least 45% of the tombs in the cemetery contained pottery or other objects datable to these periods.<sup>6</sup> This finding adds another piece to our understanding of the trajectory of Egypt's presence in Lower Nubia in this era:<sup>7</sup> as is known to be the case at a number of fortresses, an Egyptian population seems to have stayed on in Aniba, and its members continued to use cemetery S/SA. Indeed, the data suggest that the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period presence forms a substantial proportion of its overall occupation (*contra* e.g. Ben-Tor 2007, 58).

Interestingly, at least 80% of the tombs with finds of these early phases were re-used or continued to be used in the New Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> This might suggest that the administrative institutions installed at Aniba in early Dynasty 18 were not, or at least not exclusively, staffed with officials from Egypt, but that locally resident Egyptians were also recruited into them and continued to use existing burial facilities. New tomb construction, in fact, seems to have been at a low in this period: there are almost no tombs which contain finds of early to mid-Dynasty 18 date only, with no evidence of

<sup>3</sup> The density of sites was so high that many could not be investigated in detail but were only mentioned in passing, such as 'eine Anzahl von sehr zerstörten und ausgeraubten Begräbnisstätten' south of cemetery S/SA (Steindorff 1935, 196); cf. also Bakr 1963a; 1963b; 1967; 1980.

<sup>4</sup> On top of the 154 tombs published by Steindorff (1937), three more tombs, S119, S120 and S121, were excavated in 1914, but left unpublished (field diary 1914, 481, 487–8, 496–7, 504).

<sup>5</sup> See Seiler in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming. It must be underlined that the occupational use dates of the individual tombs provided by Steindorff (1937, 153–241) can no longer be

relied upon. Re-analysing the occupational history of cemetery S/SA is one of the primary tasks of the current project.

<sup>6</sup> Analysis of the material has not yet been concluded; this figure represents a preliminary result.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bourriau 1991, 130–5; 1999; and Smith 1995. For a cautioning against simplistic historic narratives see Knoblauch 2007; 2012.

<sup>8</sup> The New Kingdom pottery from cemetery S/SA will be presented by Jana Helmbold-Doyé in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming.

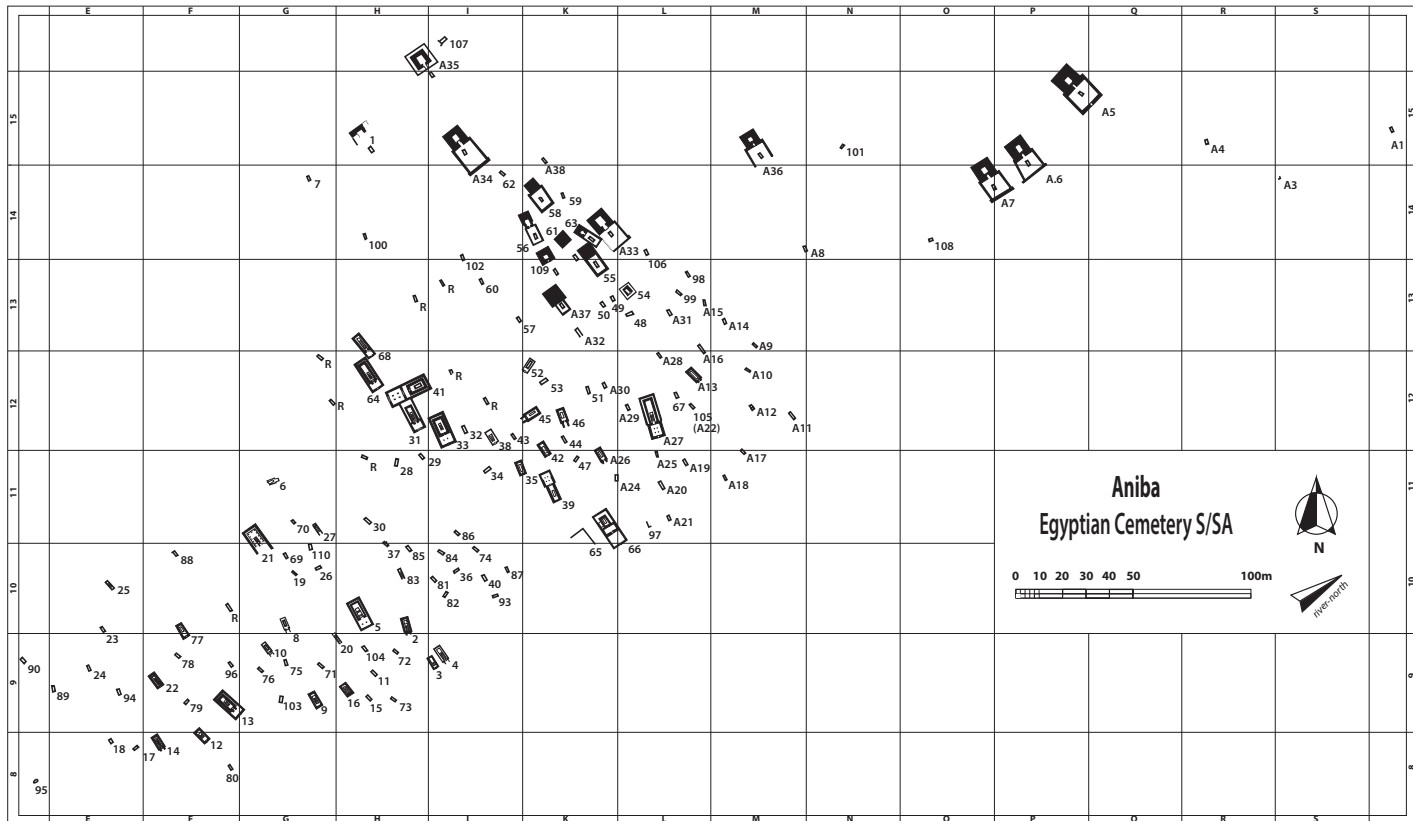


Fig. 1: Cemetery S/SA at Aniba (after Steindorff 1937, sheet 10; graphic adaptation: Florian Kirschner, Jens Weschenfelder).



Fig. 2: Rectangular mud-brick chapel of tomb S31 (Steindorff 1937, pl. 21c).



Fig. 3: Pyramidal superstructure of tomb SA34 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N4757).

previous use. Another marked development in the tomb architecture is the appearance of pyramidal superstructures (Fig. 3). Fourteen such monuments are preserved in cemetery S/SA. Conventionally, the emergence of this architectural type is attributed to the time of Amenhotep III, with most extant examples datable to the post-Amarna and Ramesside Periods (Kampp 1996, 95–109). The evidence from cemetery S/SA conforms to this picture.

A major challenge for reconstructing the history of cemetery S/SA is the multiple occupations of its individual tombs, the full scale of which only begins to emerge from the systematic analysis of the corpus of finds. S32 is a case in point (Steindorff 1937, 170, sheet 18). Among the objects from its western burial chamber are a polished monochrome ware juglet of possibly late Middle Kingdom date,<sup>9</sup> a fragmentary Tell el-Yahudiyeh juglet of the Second Intermediate Period<sup>10</sup> and five

<sup>9</sup> Leipzig, inv. no. 6738. There is confusion concerning vessels 32.23 to 32.25 in the publication of Steindorff 1937, 170. Of these, only one piece is preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Leipzig, namely inv. no. 6738. For its dating see Seiler in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming.

<sup>10</sup> Leipzig, inv. no. 6597; cf. Steindorff 1937, 170, pl. 86: 45.b.2. For its dating see Seiler in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming. A second Tell el-Yahudiyeh juglet from S32 is listed in Steindorff 1937, 170: no. 32.27, but does not occur anywhere else in the documentation.



Kerma beakers which can be assigned to the Second Intermediate Period or early Dynasty 18 at the latest.<sup>11</sup> A scarab from the chamber shows what might be the throne name of Intef Nubkhepera,<sup>12</sup> confirming the tomb's use in the late Second Intermediate Period. However, the chamber also contained eighteen shabtis of painted pottery,<sup>13</sup> one of which shows the figure in the dress of the living.<sup>14</sup> In addition, several mummy-form specimens have tools painted on their backs (Fig. 4).<sup>15</sup> Both of these iconographic features date to late Dynasty 18 at the earliest, but are more common in the Ramesside era (Freier 1993, 9–11). The white hairband on several specimens<sup>16</sup> possibly even points to the Third Intermediate Period (Freier 1993, 10). Two globular pottery jars from the chamber may also be of later Ramesside or post-New Kingdom date.<sup>17</sup> Amalgamating this data, we can conclude that the western burial chamber of S32 was frequented for more than 400 years, possibly even longer. S32 is not an isolated case, many other tombs of cemetery S/SA showing similar patterns.

#### All that remains? Issues of preservation

While the complex occupational histories of individual tombs are an analytically interesting phenomenon, such analysis is very challenging due to their extensive disturbance and plundering.<sup>18</sup> Following the period of their primary usage, further interventions occurred over subsequent centuries and millennia, continuing to the present. As a consequence, the contents of almost all tombs of cemetery S/SA are heavily frag-



Fig. 4: Shabtis from S32 (Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, inv. nos 6113, 7620, 6130; Marion Wenzel).

mented. For the western burial chamber of S32 we can reconstruct a minimum of five interments on the basis of coffin remains;<sup>19</sup> with these go twenty-three pottery vessels and thirty non-ceramic objects, plus an unspecified amount of summarily documented beads.<sup>20</sup> The significance of such fragmentary remains should not be overlooked: the 'early' objects testify to the presence of 'early' burials of which no other traces have been recorded, whereas the objects of New Kingdom or later date are nowhere near the original equipment of the

<sup>11</sup> Of these only one is preserved in Leipzig under inv. no. 89, but cf. Steindorff 1937, 170, pl. 84: 42.a.1–5.

<sup>12</sup> Leipzig, inv. no. 2239; cf. Steindorff 1937, 105, 170, pl. 56: 104. For comparisons see Hall 1913, 23: no. 215, Brunton 1930, pl. 19.21, Hornung and Staehelin 1976, 230: no. 197 and Tufnell 1984, 384–5, pl. 63; for a critical discussion see Hornung and Staehelin 1976, 53, 230: no. 197.

<sup>13</sup> Of these, ten are preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Leipzig; cf. Freier 1993 to whose list inv. nos 7602 and 7603 need to be added.

<sup>14</sup> Leipzig, inv. no. 6103; cf. Steindorff 1937, 170, pl. 44.4–7 and Freier 1993.

<sup>15</sup> See Steindorff 1937, 77 and Freier 1993. The tools are present on the decoration of four shabtis preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Leipzig, namely inv. nos 6113, 6130, 7617, 7620.

<sup>16</sup> See Steindorff 1937, 77 and Freier 1993. This detail is preserved on four shabtis from this context which are kept in the Leipzig Museum, namely inv. nos 6113, 6130, 7617, 7621.

<sup>17</sup> Leipzig, inv. nos 6950, 6980; cf. Steindorff 1937, 177, pl. 74: 17.1. For the dating see Helmbold-Doyé in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> For the analysis of intra-cultural tomb robbing in New Kingdom Egypt see Näser 2001; 2002; 2008; 2013.

<sup>19</sup> The field diary (1912, 66–7) supplements the published record (Steindorff 1937, 73, 170) in this respect, stating that fragments of at least five pottery coffins were brought to light, one of them almost complete, save for some small pieces: 'Aus der Westkammer werden mindestens Stücke von fünf Tonsärgen zu Tage gefördert; davon ist einer bis auf kleine Stücke vollständig.'

<sup>20</sup> Steindorff 1937, 170. Some additional information on these objects is given in the field diary (1912, 58, 61, 63–4, 66–7, 69, 71, 79, 81) and the find journal (1912).

five (+ x) ‘later’ burials. Given the wide chronological margin of individual object types — not least the pottery coffins themselves (Cotelle-Michel 2004) — it is not even possible to establish how many burial episodes are present in the surviving assemblage. As the use-life of S32 spans such a long period of time, intact assemblages from tombs with shorter use-lives may also not always provide appropriate bases for comparison.

Burial practices and their material inventories changed through time. Similarly, the varied social status and economic standing of the deceased, as well as specific local traditions, influenced the composition of burial equipment. Nonetheless, tomb groups such as those from the Eastern Cemetery at Deir el-Medina (Bruyère 1937; Näser 2001; 2002), the burial of Neferkhaut and family members in the Asasif (Hayes 1935), or the tomb of Sennedjem and his family, TT1 (Näser 2002; Podvin 2002; Mahmoud Abd el-Qader 2011), may provide some indications of the likely composition of New Kingdom burial assemblages in cemetery S/SA. An intact group in tomb S4 with three burials representing at least two interment events, dating to the beginning of Dynasty 18 (Ahmose) and the time of Thutmose II/Hatshepsut (Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler 2012), is also a useful guide. The burial equipment comprised thirty-one pottery vessels, but its non-ceramic equipment was limited to only two stone vessels and some personal adornment items. In contrast, the intact tomb group from the eastern burial chamber of S91, which belonged to the scribe User and his wife Tanefret, probably of mid-Dynasty 18, included twenty-eight pottery vessels and thirty items of non-ceramic equipment (Steindorff 1937, 198–200).

The situation is made additionally complicated by the very poor preservation of organic material at cemetery S/SA and the lack of systematic recording of anthropological data. Steindorff (1937, 40) only states: ‘Meist aber haben die Grabkammern eine größere Anzahl von Leichen enthalten, worauf die Menge der aufgefundenen Gebeine, Schädel und Knochen, sowie die Reste von zertrümmerten Särgen hinweisen.’ The highest number of attested burials in a single tomb, namely SA13, is twenty-one individuals (Steindorff

1937, 40). Other cemeteries in Nubia and Egypt with a similar chronological horizon and a similar clientele, as can be assessed from the investment in tomb architecture and the range of burial equipment, provide comparable figures. At Dra Abu el-Naga, Buhen J, Mirgissa MX and Soleb, the average number of burials per tomb lay between 13.5 and 17.5 individuals.<sup>21</sup> Based on such figures, cemetery S/SA would have contained 2,000 to 3,000 burials. In view of the high level of disturbance evident also at the comparative sites, such preserved evidence represents only a minimum number. At the same time, only some fifty coffins and forty mummy masks were preserved in cemetery S/SA. Despite the crudeness of such calculations, these figures suggest that the surviving burial equipment constitutes not more than 5% of the original material — both in terms of pots and people.

On this basis, what then is the analytical potential of this material, in particular with regard to the ‘cultural expression’ and the ‘lived experience’, which are the focus of the present volume? In the following section I want to explore avenues which bring us closer to resolving these issues, integrating both sides of the coin, namely the expectations of the material, which is one of the richest inventories of Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom burial equipment known to date, and the recognition of the preservational dilemma, which suggests that the surviving objects are only a tiny fraction of the original tomb content.

### Who was buried at cemetery S/SA?

Information on the social composition of the community who used cemetery S/SA can be obtained from inscribed architectural elements and funerary objects. Interestingly, the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period are completely without prosopographic record. Architectural elements and grave goods which carry the name and the title of the deceased appear only from the New Kingdom onwards, the majority being of Ramesside date. Prosopographic data for altogether forty-five male and twenty-eight female individuals have survived. Their analysis shows that the clientele of cemetery S/SA, at least during this

<sup>21</sup> These values derive from occupational data given in Polz 1995, Randall-Maciver and Woolley 1911, Vercoutter 1975 and Schiff-Giorgini 1971.

period, were the mayors of Aniba and the heads of the main economic and administrative institutions of the Lower Nubian province, i.e. the overseers of the treasury, the granary, the stable and the workshops (cf. Müller 2013, 44–88). Military titles are rare, with only four recorded (cf. Müller 2013, 31–43). The data also reveals one First Priest of Horus Lord of *Mj'm*. Several lower members of administrative and religious institutions, as well as privileged craftsmen, namely goldsmiths, were also present. The titles connected with women are mainly *nb.t-pr*, mistress of the house, and *šm'y.t*, singer. In sum, the deceased identified by the epigraphic evidence came mainly from the middle and lower echelons of the bureaucracy who administered the Lower Nubian province in and from Aniba. These officials and their families would have formed the locally resident elite at *Mj'm* in Ramesside times.

The higher officials of the Nubian administration were usually buried in Egypt, namely in Thebes. From there, four tombs of viceroys of Kush (TT40, TT289, TT300, TT383) and two tombs of captains of the Nubian troops, *hrj.w pd.t* (TT156, TT282), are known. Interestingly, no tomb of a deputy of the viceroy, *jdnw n z3 nsw n kš*, has yet been identified in the Theban Necropolis. In Aniba, the tombs of these individuals only exist from the early and the late New Kingdom, i.e. the phases of the consolidation and later disintegration of these institutions. SA38 may have contained the burial of the late Dynasty 20 viceroy *p3-nhsj* (Steindorff 1937, 240–1; Müller 2013, 147–9, 415), and the *jdnw pn-nw.t* who served under Ramses VI had a rock-cut tomb in Aniba (Steindorff 1937, 242–7; Fitzenteiler 2001; Müller 2013, 204–5, 418–9).

### Cultural expressions and lived experience

While assessing the prosopographic record of cemetery S/SA is a relatively straightforward task, uncovering the image which the members of the local community had — produced, affirmed and broadcasted — of themselves as individuals and as a social group is far more complicated. Obviously, their main point of reference was the cultural expression of the Egyptian

homeland. But how did the people of *Mj'm* come by current innovations and trends, and in which ways did they adopt and adapt them in the process of their self-presentations? With these questions in mind, I want to show that even if the highly fragmented remains of what were once socially and culturally meaningful assemblages are for the most part not sufficient to reconstruct individual tomb groups or burial events, they still allow us to take a closer look at the people behind them, at their concepts of social and cultural belonging, separation and integration.

Among the objects recovered by Steindorff and his team from cemetery S/SA were forty-one miniature plaster faces (Fig. 5), which are the remains of mummy masks, whose cartonnage headpieces have been completely lost. Such masks are a common find from burials in Egypt as well as Nubia. The largest group, namely 170 specimens, comes from Mirgissa MX. They were meticulously analysed by André Vila (in Vercoutter 1976) and dated to the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period. The attempt to integrate the masks from Aniba into the size typology of the Mirgissa masks (Vila in Vercoutter 1976, 160–1) produced a surprising result: 50% of the Mirgissa faces are longer than 10cm, whilst in Aniba only two specimens belong to this size group. In contrast, 50% of the Aniba faces are less than 7cm in length, while only one piece from Mirgissa belongs to this group. The disturbed archaeological contexts at both sites make the attribution of individual objects of a tomb group to a specific burial event, and thus their more precise context-related dating, impossible. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether the difference in size of the mask faces reflects chronological developments or regional differences. However, detailed analyses of the mask faces, from both Mirgissa and Aniba, suggest that they were manufactured locally,<sup>22</sup> making it at least possible that they represent locally distinct traditions and realisations.

The reduced size of the Aniba mask faces connects them to one specific group of masks, namely the *rishi* masks. Recent research suggests that *rishi* masks had a wider distribution than their ‘big brothers’, the *rishi*

<sup>22</sup> For the Mirgissa masks see Vila in Vercoutter 1976, 173–4; cf. also Bourriau 2001 and Knoblauch 2011, 177–8.



Fig. 5: Mask faces from Cemetery S/SA at Aniba (Steindorff 1937, pl. 41a).

coffins, but that both flourished in one distinct cultural environment, namely Second Intermediate Period Thebes (Miniaci 2011, esp. 136–8). Indeed, one *rishi* mask from an intact Theban burial represents a close parallel to the masks from Aniba. The mask derives from a famous grave complex which is located in the courtyard of a monumental Middle Kingdom *saff*-tomb in the Asasif.<sup>23</sup> The complex in question consists of a rectangular mud-brick chapel with an enclosure wall and a burial shaft in the courtyard, as well as two further shafts south and west of the superstructure.<sup>24</sup> The mask and the architecture of the chapel and the burial tracts are not the only features which link CC62 to Aniba cemetery S/SA. The most conspicuous element is an installation in the west, i.e. the rear, of the brick chapel of CC62. There, beside the mouth of shaft 1, three small mud-brick structures in the shape of truncated pyramids were found (Lansing 1917, figs 6–7,

13–4; cf. Dziobek 1989, 123 and Kampp 1996, 107, fig. 81 with wrong tomb no.). They can be identified as offering-places, not least since a number of votive objects had been deposited in small niches on their northern side and around their bases: ‘At the base of these were found model loaves of bread made of mud and crude shawabtis in coffins of clay or wood. In the niches of the central pyramidal structure similar objects were placed, as well as a scarab and a tiny stela of glazed steatite only 3.5cm. high with a representation of and an offering-inscription to Ahmes and his wife Ahmes’ (Lansing 1917, 20). Similar structures were recorded at three tombs in Aniba. S31 featured thirteen such structures beside the entry to the courtyard of the superstructure (Fig. 6; Steindorff 1937, 169, pl. 22a–c, sheet 19). To judge from the field photographs, several of them had small niches and a small ‘tray’ or basin on their eastern side. When the excavators demolished the

<sup>23</sup> See Lansing 1917, 24, figs 7, 16, 28. The mask is kept at present in the Egyptian Museum Cairo, inv. no. JE 45629. The Middle Kingdom tomb has been given the designations CC41 and CC62; cf. Lilyquist 1997, esp. 309 and Miniaci 2011, 98–102

with further references. For the mask see also Miniaci 2011, 99–100, 137–8, fig. 98.

<sup>24</sup> For the phenomenon of ‘satellite’ shafts in the vicinity of cult chapels of this type cf. Polz 1995.



Fig. 6: Mud-brick installations next to tomb S31 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N4739).

structures they found that only one contained a pot stand, a bowl and ring beads of ostrich eggshell and faience.<sup>25</sup> S54 possessed two such structures, one on each side of the entry to the chapel's courtyard (Steindorff 1937, 180, sheet 25). The northern one again featured a small 'tray' or basin. At S68 four such structures were preserved east of the entrance to the chapel (Steindorff 1937, 190, sheet 28), including one with a 'tray' and one with a basin. While the pottery from S31 includes late Middle Kingdom types, S54 and S68 contained only pottery of Second Intermediate Period and

later date.<sup>26</sup> Similar offering-installations came to light in two other Lower Nubian 'fortress cemeteries', namely cemetery K at Buhen and cemetery 110 at Kubban (Randall-Maciver and Woolley 1911, 190, 206–7, 212–4, pls 77–8, 80–3; Firth 1927, 67, 69, 246, pl. 10). At each of these sites, however, the position and design, and thus the use, of these structures differed. In Kubban they were placed inside the superstructure, in its rear part, behind the burial shafts. In one case, a small stone offering-table had been positioned in front of the brick structure. In Buhen, these

<sup>25</sup> Neither of the two vessels has been preserved.

<sup>26</sup> See Seiler and Helmbold-Doyé in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming.

installations were more numerous than at both Aniba and Kubban, and they usually had small niches constructed of two upright mud bricks at the front side. In sum, these offering-installations display supplementing tendencies in their pattern of distribution: as an object type they are known from a wide area, but they are also restricted to only some cemeteries — not appearing in others — while showing distinct local designs.

Local variation within a generally shared repertoire of material culture is not an abstract property, but rooted in social practice, namely the activities connected to the production, appropriation and consumption of these objects. This is a point that I want to develop drawing on the work of sociologists Richard Jenkins and Etienne Wenger. Jenkins has identified five major dimensions of the concept ‘community’ that revolve around the keywords ‘location’, ‘collectivity’, ‘quality of life’, ‘connections’ and ‘practice’.<sup>27</sup> He argues that communities share not only identities, but also networks, capital and knowledge (Jenkins 2008). Elaborating on the latter point, Wenger investigates how knowledge is generated, acquired and circulated through social relations. His concept of ‘communities of practice’ is based on the postulate that participation in a social community is essential for learning and the generation of knowledge. As ‘communities of practice’, Wenger regards ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’.<sup>28</sup> Thus, according to Wenger, ‘communities of practice’ are characterised by a shared domain of interest and sustained interaction over a longer period of time. It is easy to conceptualise the social group frequenting cemetery S/SA as a ‘community of practice’ in that sense. The task of providing for the afterlife represents a shared domain of interest par excellence — as it not only commanded considerable social attention, but also engaged considerable individual and shared input of cultural and economic resources.

Obviously, the funerary practices of the community frequenting cemetery S/SA were integrated into the cultural conventions and innovations of the Egyptian homeland. This is apparent from the material parapher-

nal of these practices such as tomb architecture, offering-installations, mummy masks or shabtis, which were briefly discussed above. Due to the fragmented state of the preserved tomb groups we lack the ability to date more precisely the appearance of individual cultural traits at Aniba, but the distribution of the comparative material suggests that the impulses for these expressions came from Thebes, from where they spread over Lower Nubia, taking on individual trajectories at each of the discussed sites. Evidence of local diversification further demonstrates that the adoption of these cultural expressions was not a wholesale mechanical process. Christian Knoblauch has explored the emergence of a specific pottery type, the so-called ‘golden ware’, in similar contexts, highlighting the role of local craftsmen and observing that ‘this creative output is visible in other crafts including metal and stone jewellery manufacture; plaster funerary mask production and building’, too (Knoblauch 2011, 177). The object categories discussed above are examples of this point. They show that the concrete manifestations of a commonly shared repertoire of cultural expressions are locally specific in each case. The observable patterns of variation open a path towards investigating the role of local communities in the creation and adaptation of funerary practices and the objects associated with them. They allow us to picture the involved communities in a multi-dimensional framework of relations, as suggested by Jenkins and Wenger, and to trace the meaning they attached to the cultural expressions they adopted and shaped.

Such a perspective can help to make sense of otherwise paradoxical findings. As outlined above, the analysis of the prosopographic record suggests that members of the administrative elite were not regularly buried at cemetery S/SA. However, at least two exceptions to this rule seem to be present in tombs S66 and S65. Located in the central part of the cemetery, S66 can be assigned to the deputy of the viceroy *Rwjw* on the basis of several pieces of burial equipment carrying his name as well as inscribed limestone doorjambs found *in situ* in the tomb chapel (Fig. 7; Steindorff 1937, 187–9). *Rwjw* is only known from his tomb, and

<sup>27</sup> See [http://identities.org.ru/readings/richard\\_module.htm](http://identities.org.ru/readings/richard_module.htm) [last accessed 6 September 2014].

<sup>28</sup> <http://wenger-trayner.com/theory/> [last accessed 6 September 2014]; cf. also Wenger 1998.

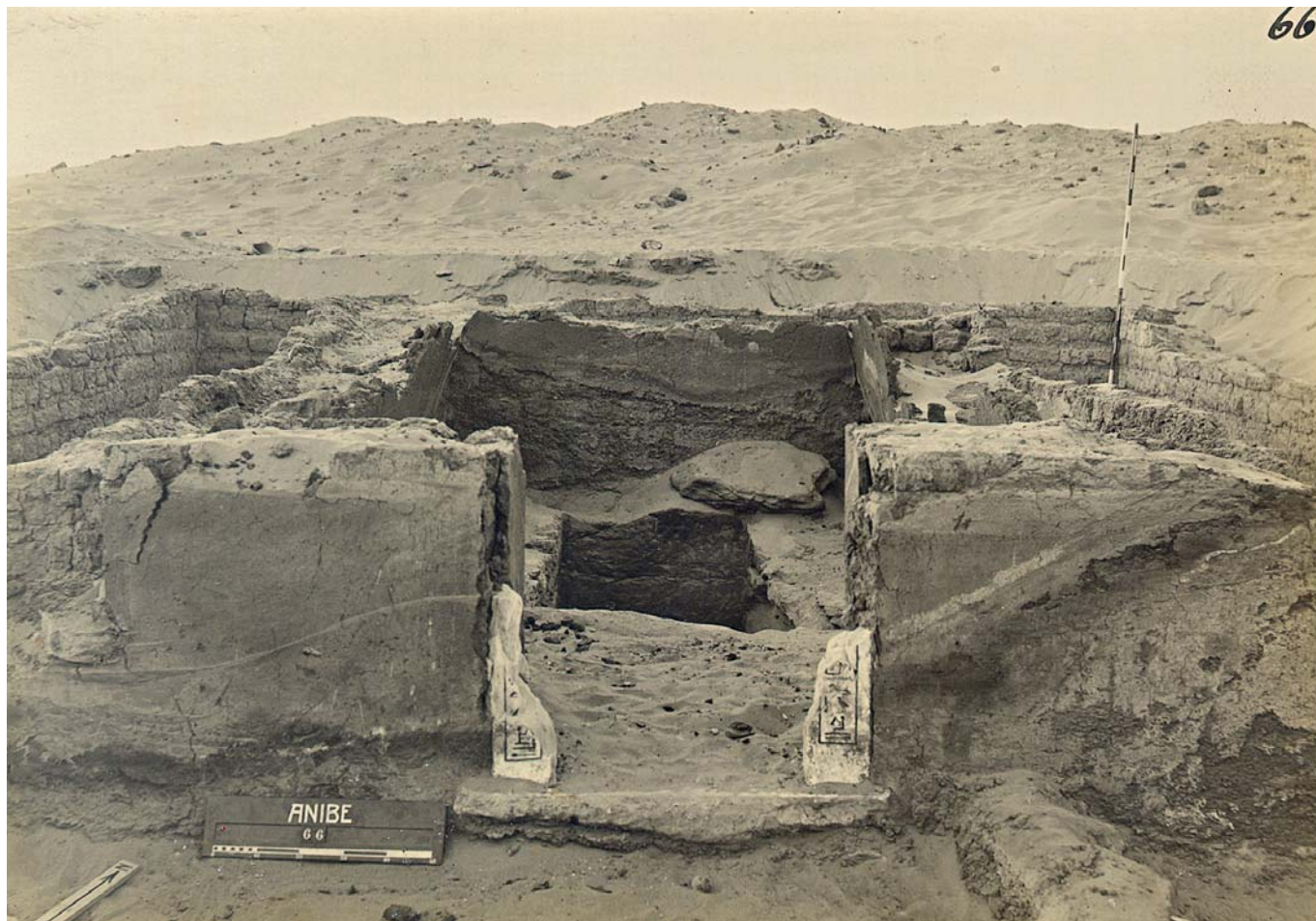


Fig. 7: Entrance to the chapel of tomb S66 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N4713).

the dating is widely debated. The most remarkable find from S66 are two statues, a cuboid and a seated figure, which are also the only objects mentioning *Rwjwt*'s titles next to his name (Steindorff 1937, 69–70, 189, pl. 37; Krauspe 1997, 64–7, pls 58–9). On the cuboid statue he is called *jdwn n z3 nsw* (Fig. 8), and on the seated figure *rh nsw tpi n z3 nsw* (Fig. 9). Palaeographic details, the missing *n W3w3.t* in the first title and the unique phrasing of the second title, have led Renate Krauspe (1997, 64–7) to assign the statue, and thus *Rwjwt*'s career, to the formative phases of the Nubian

administration in the early or early mid-Dynasty 18, more specifically to the time of Hatshepsut.<sup>29</sup> As remarkable as the statues is their find context. The figures derive from a subsidiary shaft, ‘Nebenschacht’, which is situated on the southern side of the corridor which surrounds the tomb chapel (Fig. 10; Steindorff 1937, 189, sheet 27). The field notes (1912, 115–6) reveal that none of the archaeologists were present when the statues were discovered and none saw them *in situ*. Rather, the mission's *reis*, Senussi, informed Georg Steindorff about an exceptional find which he

<sup>29</sup> For the genesis and the structure of the Nubian administration see now Müller 2013, for the versions of the title *jdwn* Müller 2013, 44–5, 197–8. Cf. also Müller 2013, 280 for the title *rh nsw*, which is restricted to three mentions, all from the first half

of Dynasty 18, in the Nubian administrative context. The earliest dated mention of the title versions *jdwn n W3w3.t* and *jdwn n Kš* is in the Theban tomb of viceroy Huy, TT40, from the time of Tutankhamun; cf. Müller 2013, 44, 199, 369–70.



Fig. 8: The cuboid statue of *Rwjw* from S66 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N6020).



Fig. 9: The seated statue of *Rwjw* from S66 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N6019b).

then lifted and transported to the mission's boat. Interestingly, the statues were not the only objects from this shaft and the single chamber which opened at its bottom to the east.<sup>30</sup> There were also two shabtis of *Rwjw* (Fig. 11), four canopic jars without inscription, a heart scarab with an illegible name as well as some toilette objects, remains of furniture and several pieces of jewellery. Moreover, twenty-three pottery vessels were recorded. In their individual shapes and their overall composition they are typical for mid-Dynasty 18 burial equipment, with the remarkable exception of a large fragmentary incised bowl which seems to be of an

earlier date.<sup>31</sup> With regard to the chronological attribution, Steindorff (1937, 189) had already noted that the assemblage lacks the characteristic early Dynasty 18 imported vessels. Moreover, it is remarkable that only the statues mention *Rwjw*'s titles, while the doorjambs and the shabtis give simply his name (see Figs 7–9, 11). All these objects, however, consist of the same kind of limestone, which might indicate that they were all part of a single commission.<sup>32</sup> The offering-formulae on both statues name Osiris; only the seated figure mentions Horus Lord of *Mj'm*, while the cuboid figure names Amun-Ra Lord of the Thrones [sic]. It is likely

<sup>30</sup> The exact position of the individual finds has not been recorded.

<sup>31</sup> The bowl is kept in the Egyptian Museum in Leipzig, inv. no. 6200. Cf. Steindorff 1937, 189: no. 47, pl. 70: 8.c.1. For a discussion of this piece and its questionable context see Seiler in Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler, forthcoming.

<sup>32</sup> Information on the material of the canopic jars is contradictory. The field diary (1912, 116) and the find journal (1912, 712) mention pottery, the publication (Steindorff 1937, 74) limestone. As the objects themselves have been lost from the Leipzig museum in World War II, the data cannot be checked.



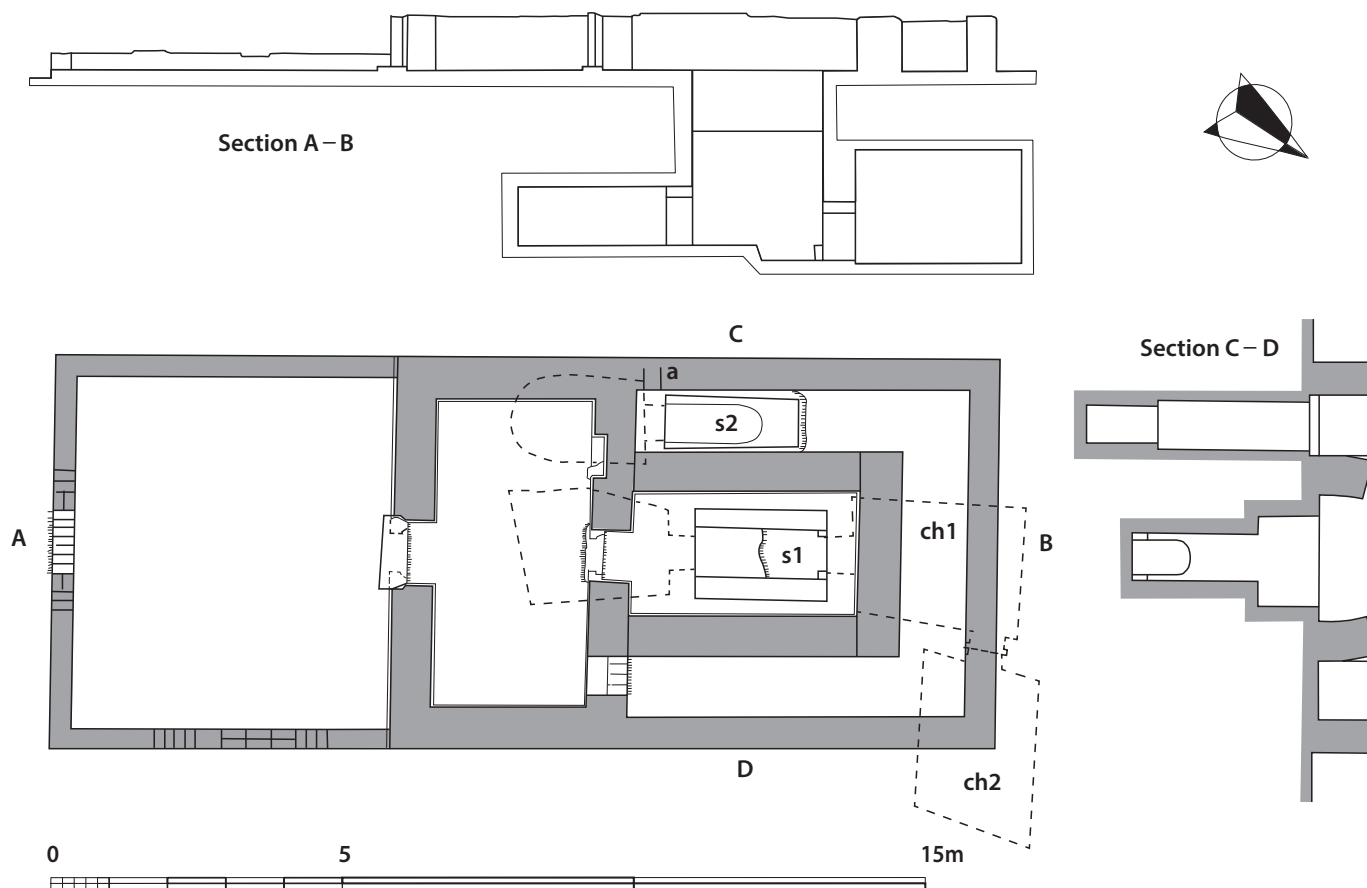


Fig. 10: Map of tomb S66 (after Steindorff 1937, sheet 27; graphic adaptation: Victoria Grünberg, Jens Weschenfelder).

that both statues were commissioned for *Rwjwt*'s tomb at Aniba. Regine Schulz (1992, 762–3) points out that in this period cuboids would usually have been niche figures. The architecture of S66 — at least the part that is preserved — does not comprise any feature that might have been the original site of the statues (Fig. 10; Steindorff 1937, 187–9, pl. 25, sheet 27). The location of the subsidiary shaft and the other objects found within make it unlikely that the two statues simply fell from an original position on the surface or were displaced there by tomb robbers, as Steindorff (1937, 189) assumed.<sup>33</sup> Rather, I suggest, they were deliberately

deposited in the shaft, together with the other items. The inscribed doorjambs of the chapel show that *Rwjwt* was indeed the owner of S66. But the burial equipment in his name all came from the subsidiary shaft. In the main burial tract, the access to which is from the chapel's interior, no inscribed objects were found (Steindorff 1937, 188–9, sheet 27). What does this distribution mean? Could it indicate that *Rwjwt* was never buried in S66 and that only isolated objects inscribed with his name were deposited in the subsidiary shaft? The finds from the main shaft do not throw light upon the situation as they only comprise twenty-two pottery

<sup>33</sup> A comparable situation has been recorded in the Theban tomb of *N3ht*, TT 52. There, a stelophorous statuette of the tomb owner was found in the burial shaft which is located in the centre of the rear room of the rock-cut chapel. Davies (1917, 36, 39, n. 5) had assumed that 'the burial chamber was rifled at a date which, as we shall see, must be subsequent to the heretical

movement at the close of the Eighteenth Dynasty; the last act of the robbers being to take the statuette from its place in the niche close by and to fling it on the top of the rubbish in the half-filled shaft'. But he also acknowledged doubts as to whether the niche, which is in the western wall of the rear room, had been the original site of the statuette.



Fig. 11: Two shabtis from tomb S66 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N6022).

vessels and two small alabaster jars. In general terms, these items are of the same date range as the pottery from the subsidiary shaft. Furthermore, twelve ceramic vessels and eight non-ceramic objects were recorded from the courtyard of the tomb (Steindorff 1937, 188, sheet 27). While the former may include cult equipment originally used in the tomb chapel (cf. Seiler 1995), the latter doubtlessly represent fragments of burial equipment which had been displaced during plundering events, though whether they came from S66 or a nearby tomb is uncertain.

Tomb S65 is situated immediately south of S66. It consists only of the remains of a superstructure, namely ‘schwache Reste zweier winkelrecht auf einander zulaufender Mauerzüge [...], die keine Feststellung ermöglichen, ob sie Teile einer Pyramide oder einer

Kapelle sind’ (Steindorff 1937, 187). While a burial shaft could not be found, a pyramidion and more than two dozen funerary cones of a *šmsw n ḥmz-f ʿ3nw* were recorded from S65 (Fig. 12). It is unclear how they had been installed in the tomb complex. The field diary notes: ‘Im Sande findet sich eine Sandsteinpyramide [i.e. the pyramidion] [...]. Um die Pyramide lagen im Sande verstreut, nicht mehr an ihrem ursprünglichen Platze über 2 Dtzd. vollständige und unvollständige “Grabkegel” [...]’ (field diary 1912, 109–10; cf. Steindorff 1937, 187).<sup>34</sup> Surprisingly, further funerary cones of this *ʿ3nw* came to light in Thebes.<sup>35</sup> On these *ʿ3nw* bears the titles *šmsw n ḥmz-f* and *jd<sub>nw</sub> n z<sub>3</sub> nsw*. This can only mean that he started his career as a *šmsw* and was later appointed to the position of deputy to the viceroy (cf. Müller 2013, 42, 188, 198). Norman de Garis Davies dated *ʿ3nw*’s Theban cones to mid-Dynasty 18 or later (Steindorff 1937, 61). Based on the phrasing of his title, Müller (2013, 198) opts for a date in the first half of Dynasty 18. In contrast, Rammant-Peeters (1983, 27) and Steindorff (1937, 187) place *ʿ3nw* in mid-Dynasty 18 to the end of Dynasty 18 and Dynasty 19 respectively. With regard to the peculiar nature of the overall assemblage, both suggested that S65 is a cenotaph, while *ʿ3nw* was actually buried in Thebes (Steindorff 1937, 187; Rammant-Peeters 1983, 175).

Combining the insights from tombs S66 and S65 further substantiates the proposition that S66 also represents a cenotaph in the sense that *Rwjw* was never buried there. This would explain the find context of his statues and other items of his burial equipment in a subsidiary shaft of the tomb. It is possible that the objects had originally been commissioned for his planned burial in Aniba — at least the seated statue mentions Horus Lord of *Mj<sub>m</sub>* — and were not transferred for use in his eventual burial at another site, most probably Thebes. A clear difference between the two complexes, however, is that S66 had been laid out as a proper tomb, complete with burial tracts, while S65 seems to have been planned as a cenotaph from the very beginning. If we understand this as a sequence, it

<sup>34</sup> The pyramidion is currently kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, inv. no. 5/1/15/11; cf. Rammant-Peeters 1983, 26, pl. 17.48. Twelve funerary cones are in the Egyptian Museum in Leipzig, inv. nos 2603, 5631–41.

<sup>35</sup> Daressy 1893, 299, 318: no. 293; Davies and Macadam 1957, nos 599, 607. That the Theban and the Aniba specimens belonged to the same individual is confirmed by the mention of his wife, *nb.t-pr snw*, on both lots.



Fig. 12: Funerary cones from S65 (Ernst von Sieglin Expedition der Universität Leipzig; Ägyptisches Museum – Georg Steindorff – der Universität Leipzig, N5632).

would mean that during *Rwjwt*'s time in office, the decision about where an *jdntw n z3 nsw* should be buried had not (yet) been finalised — which in turn indicates that at that time the Nubian administration was still in its formative phases. *Rwjwt* apparently revised his own choice, only after he had had his funerary complex at Aniba built and after he had commissioned (part of) his burial equipment. In contrast, *3ntw* had designed his Aniba tomb as a cenotaph from the outset, which, following the logic of the sequence, would mean that he indeed was a successor to *Rwjwt*, as Müller (2013, 198)

had assumed. Unfortunately the architectural layout of S65 is not known in its entirety, but it must have been a structure accommodating a pyramidion and funerary cones. While the practice of extrasepulchral shabti depositions has been recognised for some time (e.g. Pumpenmeier 1998), extrasepulchral pyramidia and funerary cones have rarely been identified in the archaeological record so far.<sup>36</sup> The examples of S66 and S65 invite us to look for more instances of 'extrasepulchral' funerary objects in Nubia.

### Summary

In the analysis offered here, the findings from S66 and S65 are testimonies to individual choices as well as social negotiations. *Rwjwt*'s funerary complex seems to represent an individual response to a socially ambivalent situation, which arose in the context of the formation of the Nubian administration in the earlier Dynasty 18. *3ntw* had already adopted more conventional cultural expressions to meet the challenge. With the installation of his cenotaph, replete with pyramidion and funerary cones, he affirmed his belonging to Aniba on a communal level, while as an individual he apparently preferred to be buried in Thebes.

In conclusion, the examples discussed here show that while the highly fragmented record of cemetery S/SA may not be sufficient to reconstruct individual tomb groups and burial events, it still allows us to take a look at the people who frequented this cemetery as a group and as individuals, at their concepts of membership and belonging and at their shared social practice. There are many burial sites in Egypt and Nubia which exhibit characteristics similar to the ones outlined for cemetery S/SA: their continued intense use, sometimes over several centuries, associated with heavy plundering and fragmentation, similarly impedes analysis of the surviving material. However, perspectives such as the ones chosen in the present paper allow us to define local 'burial communities' and to explore the concepts and conditions of their funerary practices at least in some aspects. Beyond the search for differences — social hierarchies, gender dichotomies or ethnic dis-

<sup>36</sup> Cf. a finding from the Middle Kingdom necropolis of ed-Deir, where 'in unklarem archäologischen Kontext eine größere Anzahl von beschrifteten Grabkegeln zweier Typen wohl des

Neuen Reiches gefunden [wurde]' (Polz 2007, 260: n. 1018 after Sayce 1905, 163–4).

tinctions — this approach emphasises the dimensions of the ‘communal’, ‘collective’ and ‘connective’ and anchors funerary practices in the concreteness of the interactions of their protagonists, their commonly held socio-cultural concepts and their individual choices. This approach aims at placing the archaeological record of a certain cultural repertoire in a meaningful connection to the processes of its production, appropriation and use. The focus is on the dynamics of shared social practice which results in a distinct repertoire of material culture and ultimately in the subtle agreements between the archaeological findings, which allow us to

differentiate funerary installations and provisions in Aniba from those in Buhen, Kubban or Thebes, and to recognise and compare local variations of these practices. Seen in this light, the ‘communities of practice’ concept also represents a promising tool for archaeological analyses.

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