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Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2001

Proceedings of the Symposium
(Prague, September 25th–27th, 2001)

*Edited by Filip Coppens, Czech National
Centre of Egyptology*

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In the Old Kingdom Egyptian cemeteries, the majority of tombs belong to men, and one would expect that the wives of these men would be buried in the tomb. Frequently, however, this is not the case. Although a large number of these male tomb owners had representations of children in their tombs, they had made no provision for the burial (and often the funerary cult) of their wives. Conversely, female tomb owners make no mention of their husbands, and these women, too, are usually the sole occupant of the tomb. This state of affairs has been found in both the Saqqara and Giza cemeteries up to the mid Sixth Dynasty. This article will focus not on the decoration of the tombs, but on the shafts that indicate burial arrangements. Sometimes a second burial shaft is present in a tomb but, as the cemetery of the children of King Djedkara at Abusir has revealed, each of those tombs has a dummy shaft that leads nowhere and was never intended for burial. Therefore,

we should not automatically expect that a tomb with two shafts indicates the burial of a husband and his wife. In the later Sixth Dynasty, however, single tombs for women are less frequent, and burial in family tombs predominates.

Filip Coppens:

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The Egyptian term *wab.t* occurs from the Old Kingdom onwards as a designation for the "mortuary workshop" where both the mummy was embalmed and craftsmen were engaged in a variety of activities related to funerary practices. In Graeco-Roman times, the same term was used in a number of temples to designate the architectural ensemble of an open court followed by an elevated chapel. In this locality, the statues of the gods were purified, adorned and provided with the necessary protective equipment before being united with the sun disc. The present article examines the possible connections between the *wab.t* in the temple and its mortuary counterpart.

Peter Der Manuelian:

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The article surveys the position and number of shafts within a mastaba and the problem of identifying the owners of these shafts in the „core cemeteries“ at Giza (Fourth Dynasty). When man and woman shared one tomb it is generally assumed that the larger and better built substructure, mostly situated under the southern part of the mastaba, belonged to the tomb owner while the lesser part pertained to his wife. It can be shown that such generalisations are misleading and do not reveal the different stages and aspects of tomb-development (one-shaft mastaba, twin-mastaba, two-shaft-mastaba and the distribution and positions of shafts/burial chambers) during this period. Every funerary structure demands a careful observation and consideration of all the available architectural and archaeological evidence in order to establish the identification of burials within one structure.

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Miroslav Verner:

Forty Years of Czech Excavations in Abusir 415-425

In his paper, Miroslav Verner, presents an overview and appraisal of the forty years of excavation by the Czech archaeological research in the pyramid necropolis at Abusir. Among the major results of the Czech team in Abusir have been the discoveries of several hitherto unknown cemeteries and pyramids, including the pyramid complex of Neferefre, spectacular tombs of high officials dating from the Old Kingdom, Late Period shaft tombs – including the intact burial of Iufaa and the shaft tomb of Udjahorresnet. Other results have included discoveries of invaluable royal sculptures, papyrus archives, etc.

A Contribution to the Burial of Women in the Old Kingdom

Vivienne G. Callender, Sydney

After a period of virtually total neglect, the theme of female burials in the Old Kingdom has lately been receiving a little scholarly attention. Several exploratory remarks¹ have been made in general publications and some specialised analysis has been given to the topic in a small number of tomb reports concentrating on this period.² This handful of contributions, though, merely represents the tip of the iceberg for a rather important aspect of social history, especially in view of the numerous detailed studies given to the burials of men – particularly men of the official class.

This imbalance naturally reflects the situation of the cemeteries themselves, where the majority of tombs belong to men; nonetheless, apart from the well-known, general comment that there are far fewer female tomb owners than male owners, there are some aspects of the information regarding female burials that need to be brought forward for our attention. In the following set of discussions, my colleagues, Miroslav Bárta, Peter Jánosi, and I wish to present a small contribution to the research in this field as represented by the Old Kingdom Memphite cemeteries in Giza and Abusir. This particular contribution will present the more general aspects of the topic, whilst my colleagues will

¹ Eg. V. G. Callender, "The Burial of Women in the Old Kingdom", *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 25.1 (1995), pp. 1-15 and A. M. Roth, *A Cemetery of Palace Attendants* (Giza Mastabas 6), Boston 1995, p. 44. Roth mentions that the pattern of excluding wives from tombs is quite common, particularly at the end of the 5th Dynasty, and she suggests that the women may have been buried elsewhere, or else were omitted because of "death, divorce [or] distaste". Roth also mentions a comment by N. Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom*, London 1985, p. 87, who says of the tomb of Ptahhotep: "Common links between all three chapels (Ptahhotep I, Ptahhotep II and Akhethetep) are the high quality of the relief and the practice of ignoring the representation of the female members of the family. "As all three men were viziers, such exclusion of provision for the female dead cannot be put down to financial considerations. For a contrary view, see R. Siebels, "The Burial of Women: an Alternative View", in: *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 25.2 (1995) and the rebuttal by V. G. Callender, "Once more – the Burial of Women in the Old Kingdom", in: *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 26.1 (1996), pp. 112-118.

² M. Bárta, *Abusir V. The Cemeteries at Abusir South I*, Praha, 2001; P. Jánosi, *Giza in der 4. Dynastie. Die Baugeschichte und Belegung einer Nekropole des Alten Reiches*, Wien, 2002 [in press] and M. Verner, V. G. Callender and E. Strouhal, *Abusir VI: Djedkare's Family Cemetery*, Praha 2002 [in press].

present detailed examples which they have encountered in recent work that they have undertaken.³

Our material from the decorated tombs (i. e. the people occupying the most wealthy stratum of Egyptian society) indicates that the majority of households in the Old Kingdom consisted of a man and one wife, although there is limited evidence for occasional polygamy.⁴ Sometimes apparent “polygamy” may simply record the consecutive marriage of one man to two or more wives, both of whom he wished to honour by recording their names in his tomb and, in this case, we might expect to discover evidence of multiple burial facilities within his tomb. In the few cases of true polygamy that we do have, we might also expect to find multiple burial shafts and mortuary cult arrangements, but this is not always the case.⁵

The significant new discovery of the tomb of Merefnebef, recorded in *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000*,⁶ is a particularly interesting example of multiple marriage for a prestigious Old Kingdom official, but the information on this tomb is as yet relatively brief and the following remarks may turn out to be quite inappropriate.

It seems incontestable that Merefnebef was a polygamist, rather than just a man who had been married many times. In one scene, for example, four wives, each with her title, *hmt.f*, play short harps for the delight of their husband⁷ and the women are represented as Merefnebef’s wives elsewhere in the tomb.⁸ In spite of this abundance of female company, however, Merefnebef may not in fact have provided a tomb for each of his wives, for the plan of the mastaba indicates only one burial shaft, protected by the mastaba’s superstructure, that was excavated for a previous owner, but reused by Merefnebef.⁹

³ See the contributions of M. Bárta, P. Jánosi and T. I. Rzeuska in these proceedings.

⁴ N. Kanawati, “Polygamy in the Old Kingdom of Egypt”, *SAK* 4 (1976), pp. 149-160. Some of these women may have been duplicated because of the custom of “beautiful names” being used, whereas, in the tomb of Kahif of Giza in Kanawati’s sample where it is possible that the wife, Henuts, is to be taken as a graphical error on the part of the tomb artist for Henutsen, whom Kanawati considers to be a second wife (*op. cit.*, p. 157).

⁵ E. g. Meryaa of Hagarsa had six wives, but within his tomb there are only three burial shafts. Where were the other wives buried? (N. Kanawati et al., *The Tombs of el-Hagarsa Vol III* [ACE Reports 7], 1995, p. 25).

⁶ K. Myśliwiec and K. Kuraszkiewicz, “Recent Polish-Egyptian excavations in West Saqqara” in: M. Bárta and J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000* (Archiv orientální Supplementa IX), Praha, 2000, p. 503. Merefnebef seems to have had as many as four wives – although an additional two females named Meresankh and Hemi, pose difficulties regarding identification as “wives” (*op. cit.*, p. 504). See also the tomb of Meryaa of Hagarsa (Dyn. VIII), from the late Old Kingdom (N. Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs at el-Hagarsa*, Sydney 1995, plates 42f) Other cases have been suggested for the Middle Kingdom and also the New Kingdom. As G. Robins (G. Robins, *Egyptian Women*, London 1993, p. 64) has pointed out, however, some of these possible cases of multiple marriage might include previous wives who had died, but whom the tomb-owner wished to remember.

⁷ K. Myśliwiec, *Eros nad Nilem*, Warszawa, 1998, colour plate 4.

⁸ Indeed, the excavator has referred in a jocular way to “five wives and a girlfriend”: K. Myśliwiec, “Five wives and a girlfriend”, *Discovering Archaeology* (July/August, 1999), p. 54.

⁹ K. Myśliwiec and K. Kuraszkiewicz, in: M. Bárta and J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the*

Nonetheless, many shafts can be seen to the east of the vizier's mastaba and it is possible that the women of Merefnebef's family may have been buried in some of those shafts. In an initial discussion on these shafts,¹⁰ Myśliwiec reveals that the shafts varied in depth, with the deepest being 17,7 m. Some had burial chambers at their foot, whilst others were without any chamber at all, and some were so small that they could never have housed a coffin.¹¹ All had some sort of superstructure – either of stone blocks or else mudbrick walls.¹² All of the shafts had been plundered. A number of skeletons were found among them, some of them being women, but only in two cases was identification possible.¹³ Neither of them was a wife of the vizier. The pottery found within the shafts ranges from the Old Kingdom to the First Intermediate Period. The shafts themselves are said to date from the late Old Kingdom and perhaps spreading into the First Intermediate Period.¹⁴ It would seem, at this stage, that none of these shafts was designed to complement the vizier's burial place.

Thus it is that the vizier's mastaba superstructure containing the mortuary chapel does not appear to have offered any of Merefnebef's wives the ritual promise of the afterlife that the vizier himself was thought to enjoy. Ritualistically, it seems to me, there could have been no afterlife for Merefnebef's wives, even though they were among the most privileged women in Old Kingdom Egypt.

Merefnebef's tomb is typical of other tombs that were designed for officials who made no provision for their wives.¹⁵ This was a situation also observed by Ann Macy Roth in her cemetery of so-called "palace attendants" – the *ḥntj-š* – in several parts of Khufu's Western Cemetery at Giza.¹⁶ Most of those

Year 2000, p. 506, plan 507, section. As the authors point out, this shaft was earlier than the chapel itself and lies outside the chapel's northeastern corner (500f).

¹⁰ K. Myśliwiec, "West Saqqara Excavations, 1998", *PAM X* (1999), p. 87.

¹¹ K. Myśliwiec, "West Saqqara Excavations, 1999", *PAM XI* (2000), p. 93.

¹² K. Myśliwiec, *PAM X*, p. 87.

¹³ I would like to thank Dr Andrzej Ćwiek for this useful information, and also for his preliminary estimate that these eastern shafts are of a later date than the mastaba of Merefnebef.

¹⁴ K. Myśliwiec, *PAM XI*, p. 91.

¹⁵ We could cite a large number of such tombs, but perhaps a scattered example is sufficient. E. g. Nikauisesi, a most prominent official, seems to have made no provision for the women in his family – see N. Kanawati and M. Abder-Raziq et al., *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara Vol. VI: The Tomb of Nikauisesi* (ACE Reports 14), 2000, p. 31. Nikauisesi evidently had had two wives. The vizier, Ankhmahor, also had male children but no wife is mentioned, and none is provided for within the structure of his tomb – see A. Badawy, *The Tomb of Nyhetep-Ptah at Giza and the Tomb of Ankhmahor at Saqqara*, Berkeley 1977, pp. 43–46. Badawy does not mention the burial apartments of Nyhetep-Ptah, but he, too, only possesses one shaft and therefore only one burial is likely, even though the man does feature his wife, Khamernebti, within the decoration of his Giza tomb LG 25. A. Badawy, *The Tombs of Iteti, Sekhemankh-Ptah and Kaemnofret at Giza*, Berkeley 1976 also reveals that the tomb of Sekhemankh-Ptah [G 7152], while featuring his wife, Bunefer (*s3t nswt nt ḥt.f*), only has one shaft. Her burial is therefore also to be sought elsewhere. The same is true for the vizier, Khentika (Sixth Dynasty – Teti/Pepy I). See T. G. H. James, *The Mastaba of Khentika Called Ikhekhi* (Archaeological Survey of Egypt 30), London 1953, p. 14: "There is no representation or name of Khentika's wife on the walls of the mastaba. This is very unusual in a tomb of this period." His two sons, Ibi and Djedi-Teti are both represented. These several examples are perhaps sufficient to illustrate the point.

tombs are clustered in the neighbourhood of G 2000, but others lie scattered throughout the cemetery. Roth remarks that “although all these male tomb owners had representations of children in their tombs, several tomb owners entirely omitted their wives. In other tombs, a wife may be shown but her name is either lost or not present. In only two tombs, 2091 and 2093, is the woman accompanying the tomb owner specifically identified as his wife. In the other cases, the woman represented with the tomb owner may ... be his mother...” The possibility remains, however, there is also a chance that these few unidentified women may be wives, since children are represented in the tomb.¹⁷

Roth adds that „Wives are never shown on the false doors of their husbands, and with one exception, they do not have false doors of their own... In general, the wife seems to be more frequently omitted in tombs of the late Fifth Dynasty than they are in earlier periods.” Roth also observes that Tomb 2097¹, belonging to a husband named Kapi and his wife named Tjezet, was one of only a few tombs that had a second shaft – implying that there was provision for this wife’s burial in her husband’s tomb.¹⁸

In the companion volume to this series from Boston, Professor Kent R. Weeks prepared tomb reports on another cemetery nucleus at Giza, this time grouped around G 6000. The cemetery consists of four generations of men recorded in four or five mastabas.¹⁹ These men were royal stewards and men of lesser rank. My interest in this cemetery, however, is not with the tombs themselves, but with the shafts that indicate burial arrangements. However, because Weeks himself had insufficient time to prepare his own analysis, he had used Reisner’s original observations on the cemetery as a whole.

Reisner’s²⁰ remarks concerning the shafts for these tombs are quite illuminating. He says: “The burial shafts of the men of the family are easily identified. Shepseskaf-ankh, Iymery, Iti and Ptah-nefer-bauw were each buried in the chief shaft in his own mastaba. Only in the mastabas of Shepseskaf-ankh and Iti were there any additional burial shafts. The subsidiary shaft in the tomb of Iti was undoubtedly the burial place of his wife, Wesert-ka. In the mastaba of Shepseskaf-ankh there were three original shafts in which were buried the founder of the family and probably his wife and a minor relation. In addition there were two large burial chambers intruded in the mastabas, and I identify these as belonging to Neka-Hathor, the wife of Iymery, and to Khenuwt, the wife of Ptah-nefer-bauw. The burial places of the other children of the leading men cannot be identified, but they may have been in some of the small mastabas around the nucleus complex.” Once again, some of the females seem to have

¹⁶ A. M. Roth, *A Cemetery of Palace Attendants*, pp. 44f.

¹⁷ *Op cit.*, p. 44

¹⁸ “The deeper southern one was robbed, but the northern one was sealed and empty” (*op. cit.*, p. 45). There were also two ka doors, one in the south for Kapi and one in the north for Tjezet (*op. cit.*, p. 135).

¹⁹ K. R. Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000* (Giza Mastabas 5), Boston 1994, p. 6.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

been omitted from this group of burials and Reisner's attribution of the intrusive burial chambers in Shepsefkafankh's to known women is at least dubious.

As Reisner assumes in the passage above, it is often assumed that the presence of two shafts in a tomb is indicative of a dual burial, but we need to be cautious about making such an assumption. Dr Jánosi will be dealing with shafts in the Southern Cemetery at Giza in his report and his analysis shows that of eight mastabas in the GIS cemetery, only one was used for a double burial. A similar situation is present in Cemetery 4000 in the Western Field, where most of the tombs contained only single burials.²¹

We also have to be wary about the nature of the second shaft being present in a tomb in other cemeteries, too. In the cemetery of the children of King Djedkara at Abusir, each of the tombs has a dummy shaft that leads nowhere and was never intended for burial. In the Egyptian concession at Giza, Hassan²² had earlier observed that "the majority of the large tombs possessed two shafts, one of which terminated in a burial-chamber containing a sarcophagus, while the other, which was usually found to the south of the true shaft, was smaller in size, less in depth and never contained a burial-chamber, and is, in fact, merely a pit filled with debris, and contained nothing at all." It is a pity that Hassan did not specify what the nature of this debris was, for it is possible that it may have consisted of discarded materials from the burial, or broken pottery, the nature of which may have been similar to that found by dr Teodozja Rzeuska in her excavations in Western Saqqara.²³

In Dr Bárta's article, he also mentions some interesting findings that have been made in Abusir South regarding the burial shafts of women, so I will leave that information aside for the present. It does not, however, conflict with these general remarks being made in this paper.

Jánosi's contribution in *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000*²⁴ has reminded us that, at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty, the classic mastaba was developed and it was only intended for one person.²⁵ This is what we have in the Western field at Giza, where so many of the *hntj-š* have their tombs. This origin clearly has some bearing on the problem of the absent female burials, in that tombs were originally designed for a single occupant. The later development of annexes to core mastabas and the cutting of a second shaft in the time of Khafre seems to

²¹ C. Roehrig deals with this mastaba and its burials in her chapter "Reserve Heads. An Enigma of Old Kingdom Sculpture" in: Do. Arnold and C. Ziegler (eds.), *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids*, New York 2000, pp. 75-77. There she confronts Reisner's assumption of a husband and wife burial in a tomb with two shafts with the archaeology: "In the case of G 4140, the mastaba of Meret-ites, an annex was added to the north end of the superstructure and excavation of a shaft was begun, presumably for the burial of a close family member. However, there is no chamber at the bottom of this shaft, nor was the shaft itself used for a burial."

²² S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza IV*, Cairo 1943, p. 95.

²³ See her contribution in these proceedings.

²⁴ P. Jánosi, "'Im Schatten' der Pyramiden – Die Mastabas in Abusir. Einige Beobachtungen zum Grabbau der 5. Dynastie", in: M. Bárta and J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000*, pp. 445-466.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 450.

have been intended to provide a double burial under one tomb core, but even this, as we have seen from Hassan's remark – and also proved to be the case in the GIS cemetery south of Khufu's pyramid – is not a reliable guide for discovering the burial places of tomb owners' wives. Many large mastabas mentioning females – particularly in the Fifth Dynasty, but even in the Fourth²⁶ – do not seem to have had any provision for the burial of the female members of the tomb owner's family.

From this small selection of tombs and burials in the Memphite cemetery, it is therefore apparent that not all women received a burial in their husband's tomb during the Old Kingdom. We might also mention in passing that it is rare for the woman who is buried in her husband's tomb to have been given a stone sarcophagus of her own. Sometimes, it is apparent that a wooden sarcophagus had been provided but frequently the burial seems to have been inserted in the shaft or burial chamber with no apparent additional protection.

I have deliberately kept to shafts and burial chambers in this introduction, but it is also noted that it was not common for a wife to receive a false door or offering place within the tomb of an official. One wonders how this aspect would affect the mortuary cult of such a woman. Was it perhaps merely sufficient for her just to be recorded on the walls of the tomb? Rather, I suspect, she was represented there to provide the tomb owner with whatever function he wished her to fulfil in the Afterlife; in other words, her image was there for his convenience, not for insurance that she would be an honoured spirit in the Afterlife on her own account.

Broadly speaking, three categories of social class have been involved in these observations: the vizier class, the *hntj-s* class and a group of lower-middle ranking officials. For whatever reason, each group revealed that there were examples where no burial place was apparent within the tomb for the matriarch. Reisner had supposed that there would be a tomb for each of the missing wives and this is a generalised assumption that many archaeologists have made, yet there are very few individual female tombs²⁷ in comparison with those of male members of Egyptian society in the Old Kingdom and it is extremely unlikely that each of those missing women received a burial within her own tomb. Even if we were to assign every empty tomb in the Giza or Saqqara necropolis to a missing wife, I doubt that there would be sufficient tombs to provide for the numbers we need.

²⁶ For example, the burial place of Princess Hetepheres, the wife of Vizier Ankhhaf, is unknown; there was no second shaft in Ankhhaf's tomb, in the Eastern Cemetery in front of Khufu's pyramid at Giza.

²⁷ Coincidentally, those tombs possessed by female owners provide the deceased with the same set of burial provisions that was available to a man, indicating that it was considered essential, by some women at least, to be properly equipped for the Afterlife. Those tombs, however, usually belong to princesses or to women who pursued a career at court – such as Neferes-res, who was the overseer of pleasures and entertainment at the court (S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza II*, Cairo, 1936, p. 204-208) and seldom indicate the name of a husband. With some of these women, no children are mentioned either, and it is doubtful whether they had ever married. The fact that these women did have fully functional cultic provisions means that the absence of cult equipment for the women buried with their husbands must indicate that they would have expected a less satisfactory Afterlife.

Of course, there were a number of females who had tombs of their own in various cemeteries. It goes without saying that these women were from the upper classes of Egyptian society. From the Fourth Dynasty, it is the princesses who predominate. From the Fifth Dynasty, women at the royal court are frequently represented, along with the princesses. In the Sixth Dynasty, single tombs for women are less frequent,²⁸ but burial in family tombs predominates as far as the society is concerned.

As to where these women missing from the tombs of their husbands might be buried, we can only suggest that many of the numerous intrusive shafts that were cut into older mastabas or lay around the perimeter of previous tombs might have been the final resting place of those women left out of their husbands' tombs. There are certainly plenty of these secondary shafts, and one found by Zahi Hawass²⁹ near the northwest corner of Khufu's pyramid at Giza, clearly inserted later into a wall in tomb 5520, may be just the sort of evidence that will resolve this conundrum. Our problem is, however, that in the past, archaeologists paid too little attention to those remains that were still left in rocky cavities such as these. The bones were frequently left unsexed. As a result, we cannot tell whether or not a greater or lesser ratio of male to female burials has ended up in such hasty burial places, but information like that would certainly be helpful in our pursuit of the answers to these archaeological questions.

Although we have not been able to provide an answer regarding the whereabouts of these female burials, is it at all possible that we might be able to discover how this situation originated? Once again, it seems, no clues have been left that would help us answer this question, either, but some contemporary understanding of the problem is to be found in the nature of Old Kingdom society itself. We know that the officials earned the right to be buried in the Memphite cemeteries as a reward for diligent service and that burial in the royal cemeteries depended upon royal approval. Simply put, maybe the women did not have the right to be buried with their husbands. The frequency of female burials, however, may vary from reign to reign, and it may have been some royal edict that resulted in the absence of females in the tombs of court officials at certain times – perhaps because the cost involved in excavating a second shaft and burial chamber was considered to be too expensive by the administration.

Alternatively, perhaps the absence of female burials was due to the fact that a much smaller proportion of women to men actually served within the royal court, and thus provided actual service to the royal family. It is very interesting, for example, to note the number of *rht nswt* and *hkrt nswt* that are found within these official cemeteries. Perhaps many of those wives were buried

²⁸ Nedjetempet, *Temp. Teti/Pepy I*, the mother of vizier Mereruka (N. Kanawati and S. Hassan, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara Vol. I: The Tombs of Nedjet-em-pet, Ka-aper and Others* [ACE Reports 8], 1996), is an exceptional instance of a single burial.

²⁹ Z. Hawass, "A Burial with an Unusual Plaster Mask", in: R. Friedman and B. Adams (eds.), *The Followers of Horus. Studies dedicated to Michael Allen Hoffman 1944–1990* (Oxbow Monograph 20), Oxford, 1992, pp. 327–336.

in the royal cemeteries because they were entitled to be there. And perhaps the missing women were not entitled to be buried there during certain reigns because they had no function at the court.

A third suggestion could be that women for whom burial provision was made were those whom their husbands valued sufficiently to pay for their burial apartments to be excavated. And perhaps those tombs where the wife is missing belonged to men who could not or would not afford the additional financial burden for one reason or another, as Roth has suggested.

Last, but not least, perhaps because women, on average, died younger than men, their burials may have taken place before an official had received his tomb from the king. This very possible scenario does not excuse us from looking for the female burials, however, for we still wish to know where it was that such women were buried.

Finally, perhaps material from burial in the provinces might enlighten us. From tomb reports available, there seems to be an apparent trend which shows a greater proportion of wives sharing tombs with their husbands in provincial cemeteries.³⁰ Perhaps this was because it was the local nomarch who decided which persons had the right to be buried in cemeteries like those at Akhmim, or perhaps it was local custom that family members just tended to share tombs in the provinces. Wherever the answers lie, the questions raised by female burials of the Old Kingdom seem to me to be a fruitful field for future investigation.

³⁰ N. Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish. The Cemetery of Akhmim VI*, Sydney 1986, pp. 7ff, records from the Sixth Dynasty, possibly early – mid Pepy II, F1 Tomb owner: Hesi-Min, an Overseer of apportionments of fields and serfs in the Two Houses, *hry-tp nswt*. His wife: Senut; who had five sons and a daughter were depicted in the tomb. The burial chambers of the tomb featured two sloping passages and two burial chambers.

Secondly, N. Kanawati, *op. cit.*, pp. 15ff. Date: Fifth Dynasty, end of the reign of Djedkara Isesi. L6 Tomb owner: Dua-Min, Overseer of Commissions for the young men. His wife: Khenut; there might possibly be a second wife named Djefat-s[en], or else this could be Khenut's good name. There were three sons and a daughter. Burial chambers: three vertical shafts, one well-cut burial chamber, one roughly cut one, a third burial chamber well-cut and containing a burial pit with surrounding ledge.

N. Kanawati, *op. cit.*, pp. 23ff. Date: Fifth Dynasty, reign of Djedkara Isesi. L8 Tomb owner: Aa-Min, Overseer of ka servants. His wife: Khenutes, and a child of unspecified sex. The tomb's burial chambers feature: 4 vertical shafts, one burial chamber with burial pit with lid, one smaller burial chamber and burial pit with lid, one incomplete burial chamber.

N. Kanawati, *op. cit.*, pp. 29ff. Date: Mid Sixth Dynasty. L21 Tomb owner Sefekhu, Superintendent of priests, Companion. His wife: The walls are almost totally destroyed, the only record surviving mentions his brother (29). The tomb's burial chambers contain: 8 shafts with 4 complete and two incomplete burial chambers, and two attempted niches which were abandoned incomplete.

N. Kanawati, *op. cit.*, pp. 34ff. The tomb dates to the Sixth Dynasty, Merenra – early Pepy II. L31 Tomb owner: Qar: *hrj sšt3 sd3wt ntr* ("One who is privy to the secrets of the god's treasure"), *hrj tp nswt pr* 3. His wife: ? The tomb is much destroyed, but women of the family appear in front of him in smaller size (fig. 15). Three sons and a daughter seem to be depicted. Burial chambers: 4 main burial apartments: two sloping passages leading to one complete and one incomplete burial chamber, one vertical shaft giving access to two burial apartments, one at the bottom of the shaft, the other in its western wall, and a fourth shaft (vertical) with an incomplete chamber in its southern part, and another passage on its northern part leads to a rectangular burial chamber.

All these examples indicate the preparedness of the tomb owner to include a burial for either his wife or other members of his family.

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