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The Tomb of Panehsy

The Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara Excavations in 2022



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This year's expedition to Saqqara took place from 18 September to 27 October 2022. The two partners in the excavation project, the *Rijksmuseum van Oudheden* (RMO) and the *Museo Egizio*, were supported by a generous grant awarded by the Dutch Research Council.¹ The prime aim of their six-weeks campaign was to further explore a tomb that had been glimpsed before. The entrance had already been located in 2018,² and during the tomb's partial excavation in 2019 the southeast corner of the courtyard was excavated to floor level.³ A number of the limestone revetment blocks were found *in situ* against the interior walls, but these were devoid of any texts. Thus, the tomb remained anonymous to us, and we continued to refer to it as tomb V82.1, after its archaeological context number. Further exploration of the structure was hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the related travel restrictions that paused the work of the Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara till autumn 2022. After an interval of three years, we are now very glad to finally present some preliminary results of this season's fieldwork and share our thoughts about the tomb now known as Panehsy's with the *Friends of Saqqara*.

The tomb of Panehsy is situated north of the tomb of Maya (Fig. 1).⁴ Already in 2019, when the superstructure was partially cleared of the sand deposits covering it, a date in the early Ramesside period was suggested.⁵ This date was primarily based on the tomb's location and its construction technique. Before discussing the newly acquired data, the clues for this dating shall be presented. First of all, tomb V82.1 is built against that of Maya, a structure built in the late 18th Dynasty reigns of Tutankhamun–Horemheb and used for the burial of its owner in year 9 of the latter king. This position indicates that construction of V82.1 began sometime after

Maya's tomb construction project had started. The observation that V82.1 is younger than Maya's also fits with the general northward development of the cemetery through time.⁶ In that sense, V82.1 fills part of the chronological gap in the cemetery between the Leiden-Turin concession area and that of Cairo University to the north.⁷ The second clue pertains to the construction technique. The walls of tomb V82.1 are made of mud bricks, and this type of construction has chronological implications. Tombs made in the late 18th and early 19th Dynasties were typically made in this manner. Building techniques changed only in the course

¹ Project details as well as all open access publications of the project can be accessed online: <https://www.nwo.nl/projecten/276-30-016-0>. The authors also wish to thank Dr. Mostafa Waziri, Dr Nashwa Gaber and the members of the permanent committee of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for kindly providing permissions to work, as well as Dr. Mohammed Yousef and Dr. Sabri Farag for their kind support at Saqqara.

² P. Del Vesco, L. Weiss, 'The Leiden-Turin Archaeological Mission in Saqqara – Preliminary Report of the 2018 Season', *Saqqara Newsletter* 16 (2018), 9, figs 1, 8.

³ P. Del Vesco, D. Soliman, L. Weiss, 'Brief Report of the Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara (Season 2019)', *Saqqara Newsletter* 17 (2019), 10–12, figs 1, 5, 10–12.

⁴ The code V82.1 refers to the location where the first remnants of the tomb (a portion of the east wall) were recorded, namely in square V82 of our local archaeological grid. The stretch of mud-brick wall represented the first architectural feature found in that square.

⁵ See e.g. N. Staring, *The Saqqara Necropolis through the New Kingdom: Biography of an Ancient Egyptian Cultural Landscape* (Leiden, 2023), 146–148, figs 49–50 (tomb 090/USC); available open access online <<https://brill.com/display/title/60376>> last accessed on 23-12-2022.

⁶ Staring, *The Saqqara Necropolis*, chapter 4.

⁷ Do note, however, that the spaces outside V82.1 continued to be used long after its initial use. For example, the three chapels located immediately east of the entrance to V82.1 all date to the later Ramesside period, probably all built in the reign of King Ramesses II. These chapels are numbered 125, 135, and 270, after their respective archaeological context numbers.



of the first half of Ramesses II's reign, when walls were made of limestone throughout.⁸ Thus, tomb V82.1 was likely made sometime before the second decade of that king. Taken together, these preliminary observations suggested a date in the early Ramesside period, which can now be corroborated with the results of a first assessment of the pottery analysed by our ceramic material experts Valentina Gasperini and Alice Salvador. According to their estimate, 95% of the material excavated from the subterranean complex of tomb V82.1 is Ramesside. Similarly, the material found in certain contexts in the superstructure points to a first usage of the tomb in the early 19th Dynasty also.⁹ This date agrees well with that proposed for the making of the wall reliefs unearthed during the 2022 fieldwork campaign, which we will discuss further below.

The Superstructure of Panehsy's Tomb

The tomb's superstructure is built on a central axis running from east to west, measuring 13.4m and it has a width of 8.2m, north to south (Fig. 2). It features an entrance pylon, an open columned courtyard with access to the burial shaft in the centre, and three chapels in the west. Two columns upheld the roof blocks of the central chapel (Fig. 3). The tomb's perimeter walls were built of mud bricks. On their interior sides, these were provided with a limestone revetment, although most of the limestone blocks have not remained *in situ*. The interior walls marking the chapel area were built differently. These were constructed as hollow skin walls of limestone with a stone and mud-brick rubble fill (Fig. 4). The floor of V82.1 had a limestone paving throughout, which had been

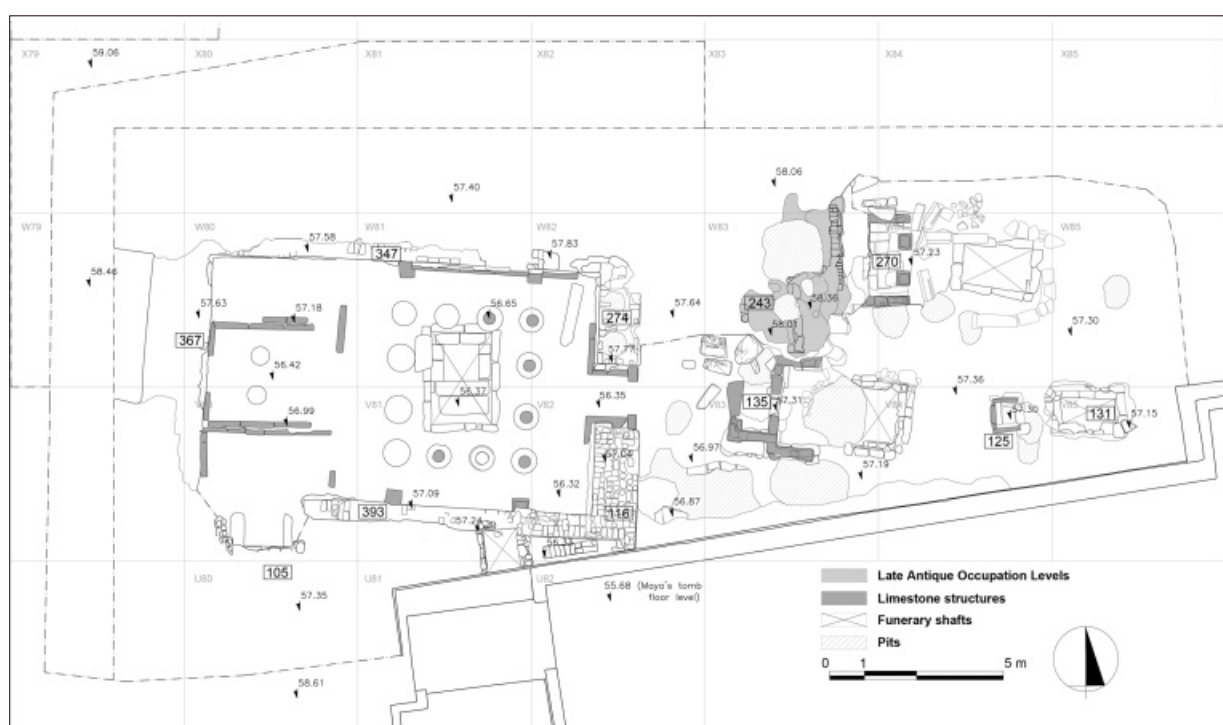


Fig. 1:: Plan of the excavation area north of Maya after the surveys produced by Alessandro Mandelli and Andrea Pasqui. (Drawing by Paolo Del Vesco, Image of the Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

⁸ An example is the tomb of Tia and Tia south of Maya's tomb: G.T. Martin, *The tomb of Tia and Tia: a royal monument of the Ramesside period in the Memphite necropolis* (EES EM 58; London, 1997); see also below.

⁹ For example, a jar manufactured from Levantine clay IV.7.5, typically commercialised in the early Ramesside phase. Their preliminary results will be published in the 2023 Leiden-Turin report forthcoming in the Rivista series. For the 2018 report, see 'The entrance to a new monumental tomb', in P. Del Vesco, C. Greco, M. Müller, N. Staring, and L. Weiss, 'Current Research of the Leiden-Turin Archaeological Mission in Saqqara. A Preliminary Report on the 2018 Season', *Rivista del Museo Egizio* 3 (2019). DOI: <10.29353/rime.2019.2236> Last accessed 23-12-2022.



very well preserved. Only parts of the pavement in the chapel areas had been removed in the past. The courtyard contained a total of 12 columns. None of these have been preserved in their entirety. All column bases are extant and half of them still support the remains of column drums. The two in the east, situated in front of the entrance doorway, are the best preserved, still standing to a height of c. 1.5m. Another near-complete specimen (1.84m high), preserving part of its capital, was found lying in the north-east corner of the tomb. This column may have stood on one of the column bases forming the north row. At the end of the excavation season, it was decided to restore the column to its original position (Fig. 5). The revetment of the

north and south wall of the courtyard additionally preserved square bases upon which pilasters had once stood. Two broken, yet joining fragments of one pilaster, recovered during excavation, were joined and re-erected upon the north-east base. This allows us to re-construct the pilaster's original height to 1.85m (pilaster + base). The information gleaned from the reconstructed column and pilaster suggest that the tomb's mud-brick walls had also been just under two metres high.

The three chapels in the west end of the tomb's superstructure were heavily damaged by digging activities in the past. The earliest such activities may date to as early as the pharaonic to Late



Fig. 2: Final general survey of the 2022 fieldwork campaign in the area north of Maya on 16 October 2022 by Alessandro Mandelli and Andrea Pasqui (Orthophoto of the Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).



Fig. 3: The central chapel in the west end of the tomb of Panehsy, looking west (Photo by Nico Staring/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

Antique period, when various pavement stones and undecorated wall revetment blocks were removed and perhaps reused as building material elsewhere. The agents of later, early 19th century, art collectors would have been predominantly interested in the inscribed and decorated blocks. The holes dug under the stone pavement of the central chapel might be connected to the persistent idea that valuables were hidden there. The southwest chapel had been damaged to the greatest extent: the pavement stones and part of the mud brick south wall of that chapel are missing. Continued excavation in this area may still unearth the lower courses of the wall's foundation below pavement level. The stone walls of the north and south chapels are largely undecorated. The two remaining wall slabs forming the south wall of the north chapel are an exception. These show the faint traces of carvings, perhaps the initial sketches made by the sculptor. Whether these were indeed contemporary to the tomb's con-

struction or were added at a later stage in the tomb's life remains subject to further study.

The Find of a Near-complete Stela in the Southern Chapel

One of the revetment blocks of the southwest chapel was found lying face down in the sand (see Figs. 2 and 3). It must have become detached from the wall sometime after the stone pavement slabs of the chapel had been removed long ago. In order to adhere to our stratigraphic excavation approach, we had to suppress our curiosity and could lift the block only during one of the final days of the 2022 field campaign. Luckily, our patience was rewarded. As soon as we lifted the block, we could see that the face hitherto hidden from view was extensively decorated. We could immediately identify it as the main offering stela of the southwest chapel, replete with the names and titles of the deceased couple and a colleague (Fig. 6).¹⁰ The near-complete stela measures 110cm high, 95

¹⁰ The remains in the west wall of the northwest chapel revealed that it too contained a stela, that has not been preserved.



cm wide and 12cm thick. Only its upper edge is broken off. The rectangular stela is framed by a raised jamb slightly tapering towards the top, and its decoration is divided into two registers. The upper register depicts a male individual standing, facing right, raising both hands in a gesture of adoration before the goddess Hathor, who is depicted as a cow standing on a raised dais in a shrine, facing left. The four framed columns of hieroglyphic text inscribed above the male individual reveal his identity. He is designated as the steward of (the house, i.e. temple) of Amun,¹¹ named Panehsy 'of Memphis'.¹² The latter addition may suggest that he originated from Memphis, a city otherwise strongly associated with the god Ptah. His name, Panehsy, translates as 'the Nubian'.¹³ This Egyptian name does not necessarily imply actual southern descent, however. The name Panehsy is not uncommon.¹⁴ Yet, until now, this man was not otherwise known from objects held in museum collections. The six framed text columns inscribed over the figure of Hathor enumerate the name and epithets of this deity.

The lower register shows Panehsy and his wife, the chantress of Amun, Baja (?),¹⁵ sitting on lion-legged chairs in front of an offering table (Fig. 7). The thin slices of bread neatly arranged atop the offering table are much reminiscent of Old



Fig. 4: An example of a hollow skin wall: the space between the limestone slabs forming the north wall of the central chapel and the south wall of the north chapel contains a rubble fill (Photo by Nico Staring/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

Kingdom art – an archaising feature that is regularly observed in Memphite tombs of the New Kingdom.¹⁶ We would also like to point the

¹¹ For observations on the temple of Amun at Memphis during the New Kingdom, see e.g. S. Pasquali, 'Données supplémentaires concernant les forms memphites d; Amon au Nouvel Empire', *ENiM* 2 (2009), 67–90. This temple may have stood to the southwest of the temple of Ptah temenos, as suggested by the find of statue fragments of the god by Petrie: W.M.F. Petrie, *Memphis I*, BSAE ERA 14 (London, 1909), 3. For a discussion of the title 'steward of the temple of Amun' in the god's Theban temple, see: S.S. Eichler, *Die Verwaltung des "Houses des Amun" in der 18. Dynastie*, SAK Beihefte 7 (Hamburg, 2000), 11–22.

¹² For the designation *n(y) Mn-nfr*, 'of Memphis', as a signifier of geographical origin, see J.S.G. Auenmüller, *Die Territorialität der Ägyptischen Elite(n) des Neuen Reiches. Eine Studie zu Raum und räumlichen Relationen im textlichen Diskurs, anhand prosopografischer Daten und im archäologischen Record*, PhD thesis, Freie Universität Berlin (Berlin, 2013), 365.

¹³ H. Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen I* (Glückstadt, 1935), 113.13.

¹⁴ The *Prosopographia Memphitica* lists eight individuals named Panehsy during the New Kingdom at Memphis, see: <<https://anneherz.github.io/ProM/>> Last accessed 25-01-2023.

¹⁵ A name with the precise spelling is not listed in Ranke's *Personennamen*, however, compare Ranke, *Personennamen I*, 89.17 (*Bz̄i*).

¹⁶ See for example the stela of Ry (Berlin ÄMP 7290), the late 18th Dynasty military official whose tomb is located at the southern extend of the Leiden-Turin archaeological concession area: N. Staring, 'The Late Eighteenth Dynasty Tomb of Ry at Saqqara (Reign of Tutankhamun). Horemheb's Chief of Bowmen and Overseer of Horses Contextualised', *RiME* 4 (2020), 27–29, scene [6], fig. 14.



Fig. 5: Four Egyptian colleagues working on the reconstruction of the column in tomb V82.1 (Photo by Nico Staring/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

reader to Panehsy's hairdo – or rather wig. The tresses of hair are curiously split in two: one hangs down the side of his face and the other lies over his right shoulder, which, according to the conventions of Egyptian art, is meant to show that it covers the man's neck. There are many ways to depict different types of wigs; however, to our knowledge, there is just one parallel for Panehsy's. This parallel is found in the iconographic programme of the tomb of Horemheb, Tutankhamun's regent and commander of the army, located c. 50m south of Panehsy (Fig. 8). The scene features on the south side of the inner courtyard's east wall, and depicts a group of four Egyptian army scribes writing on sheets of papyrus, making records

of the foreign captives that are being led before Horemheb.¹⁷ One of the scribes sports precisely the same wig as Panehsy, and we cannot escape the impression that the artist responsible for the reliefs in the latter's tomb was inspired by the depiction in the tomb of Horemheb – by that time a much-visited monument. A man with shaven head and clad in a leopard skin, who stands on the other side of the offering table, pours a libation of water from a so-called *hes-vase*. This man is identified as Piay, a chief scribe of the offering table and secondant (?)¹⁸ of the steward of Amun Panehsy. The title suggests that Piay was a subordinate of Panehsy and that he also worked in the Memphite temple of Amun. The professional relationship between

¹⁷ G.T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-chief of Tut'ankhamun, I: The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary* (EES EM 55; London, 1989), 79, scene [69], pls 87–88, 91.

¹⁸ Reading: *hr.y[-c]*. As an alternative, one could perhaps also read *hr.y[-hb.t]*, 'lector priest', which would fit the role attained by Piay in this scene, but is perhaps a less likely reading of the hieroglyphs.



the two men was apparently leveraged to service the mortuary cult of Panehsy. This in turn offers valuable information about the relationship between temple and tomb cult.¹⁹ Interestingly, Piay might have a link to Leiden also, as he could potentially be the owner of a stela held in the RMO collection. There, Piay bears the title of scribe of the offering table.²⁰ While the stela of Panehsy preserves some traces of colour, the object's overall state of preservation is not great. Most worryingly is that the surface of the limestone stela is rather

flaky, which is most notable on the lower side. Due to the object's fragility, it was decided not to move it to the antiquities magazines located at the foot of the North Saqqara plateau, but to preserve it in its original position against the chapel's west wall. In order to provide shelter against the weather conditions and vandalism, a protective structure of stone and wood was built around it. The structure will be removed next season, so that the restorers can continue their work on the stela and we can excavate the chapel further.



Fig. 6: The stela in the southern chapel of Panehsy repositioned in its temporary shelter (Photo by Nico Staring/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

¹⁹ For further examples, see e.g. the example of Amenhotep Huy, chief steward of Memphis in the reign of Amenhotep III, the performance of his mortuary cult and its relation to the temple of Ptah: N. Staring, 'From Landscape Biography to the Social Dimension of Burial: A View from Memphis, c. 1539-1078 BCE', in N. Staring, H. Twiston Davies, and L. Weiss (eds), *Perspectives on Lived Religion: Practices – Transmission – Landscape* (PALMA 21; Leiden, 2019), 213–218.

²⁰ Leiden, inv. no. VDL 1 (round-topped, 62x46 cm), acquired by the museum in 1831 from Mr. Albert van der Linden, captain of the merchant ship *De Snelheid*, who claim to have bought it in Smyrna. but its original provenance in Egypt is unknown. The stela has been published in the museum catalogues by Leemans (1840) and Boeser (1907), but has not hitherto received a closer study. A photograph of the stela is available on the museum's online catalogue, see: <<https://hdl.handle.net/21.12126/19651>> last accessed on 23-12-2022. Piay is quite a common name and the Piay on the Leiden stela bears the title scribe of the offering table without the specification 'of Amun', which makes it difficult to attribute the stela to the Piay from Panehsy's tomb with absolute certainty, even though the object can be dated to the same period.



Fig. 7: Detail of the stela in the southwest chapel of Panehsy, depicting the seated couple Panehsy and his wife, the chantress of Amun, Baja (?) in the lower register (Photo by Nico Staring/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

Relief-decoration in the Central Chapel

The central chapel in the west end of the tomb measures c. 3.8m from east to west and 2.7m from north to south. Its limestone wall slabs preserve extensive remains of relief decoration (Fig. 5). Only the lowermost course of the wall slabs is preserved *in situ*. The blocks measure ca. 60cm high and are largely undecorated. The actual relief decoration sits on an undecorated dado of ca. 40cm high. Thus, what we are left with, is just the lower ca. 20cm of the scenes executed in raised relief. In spite of their partial preservation, these remains allow us to largely reconstruct the iconographic themes depicted on the south, west, and north walls. The reliefs also preserve vibrant colours, including red, yellow, blue, and green. The central theme of the main offering chapel is – as one would expect – centred on the tomb owner’s eternal provision with (food) offerings. The chapel’s centrepiece, the cult stela, is missing, however. Only one small fragment of the lower right-hand side of the stela was recovered during ex-



Fig. 8: Two scribes depicted in the tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara, detail of the relief-decoration on the courtyard east wall, south side (Photo by Nico Staring/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

cavation. In the early days of the 2022 season, on 28 September 2022, the fragment depicting two feet carved in sunk relief and a raised jamb bearing the lower part of two text columns was recovered from a loose-sand deposit within the tomb’s perimeter (Fig. 9). The incompletely preserved hieroglyphic signs could be recon-



structed to read the name Panehsy twice. At the time of its discovery, we could not tell if the fragment derived from the tomb originally. More secure contextual evidence was needed to corroborate the hypothesis that we had indeed found the tomb of a man named Panehsy. It was only towards the end of the season, a month later, that the fragment could be joined to the gap left by the missing stela (Fig. 10). The remains of mortar on top of the low, limestone base of the stela enabled a seamless join to the mortar applied to the stela fragment.

The stela would have shown a representation of the tomb owner standing in adoration before the god of the Netherworld, Osiris, perhaps accompanied by his wife and possibly other relatives, colleagues, or servants, as we know so well from countless other examples. The reliefs abutting the stela on both sides of the west wall usually bear another representation of the tomb

owner in a pose of adoration, oriented towards the stela. While the feet of the elite male tomb owner are indeed preserved on either side, they are not oriented towards the centre. Instead, the feet are facing the opposite direction, suggesting that the tomb owner walks away from it, in the direction of the people entering his chapel and bringing offerings to him. The male individual wears a long, elaborately pleated garment and sandals. In both depictions, he holds a double staff. It is a combination of the so-called *wꜣs* sceptre and *mdw* or staff-of-office (Fig. 11). The iconographic motif of the double staff held by the tomb owner is not all too common, but there are a number of parallels known from the Memphite New Kingdom necropolis, including in the tomb of Maya, Panehsy's neighbour to the south.²¹ The example in Maya's tomb shows him alongside his spouse as they enter their tomb, which, according to the accompanying text, is a place 'where the god receives his offerings' and



Fig. 9: Relief block R93: a fragment of the lower right-hand part of the stela once positioned against the west wall of the central chapel (Photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

²¹ For a study of the motif, see N. Staring, 'The Tomb of Ptahmose, Mayor of Memphis: Analysis of an Early 19th Dynasty Funerary Monument at Saqqara', *BIFAO* 114:2 (2014): 481–483. The scene in the tomb of Maya is found on the south reveal of the doorway between the so-called statue chamber and the inner courtyard, where the deceased couple Maya and Meryt are welcomed to their tomb by Nahuher, Maya's half-brother: C.R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* III (Berlin, 1849–1859), pl. 240a; G.T.Martin, *The Tomb of Maya and Meryt, I: The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary* (London, 2012), scene [30], pls 24–25, 90. A large part of the relief seen and copied by Lepsius' expedition in spring 1843 had been destroyed afterwards; only part of the intact relief and loose fragments were found by the former EES-Leiden expedition in 1986–1987.



where Maya is 'being given a staff'. Further parallels are found in the nearby and contemporary late-18th Dynasty tombs of Pay, the overseer of the royal household, and in the 'Leiden' chapel of Paatenemheb, a royal butler.²² Like Panehsy, also Pay and Paatenemheb are depicted as if they are leaving their respective tomb chapels. In so doing, smaller-scale figures of attendants are standing in front of them, handing the high-ranking officials assorted items, including two strips of linen and a double-staff combination of the *mdw* and *w3s*, and pour a libation of water over the deceased.²³ The fact

that Panehsy is depicted alone (i.e. without his wife) while he 'leaves' his tomb and holds the double-staff combination, strongly suggests that the two scenes should likewise be reconstructed with the smaller-scale representations of servants handing the tomb owner assorted items. The acts of purification and handing of strips of linen connect the scenes to the vignette of Book of the Dead 110, which depicts the deceased, usually seen holding the double staff, as he is introduced to the Marsh of Offerings or the Fields of Iaru.²⁴ The latter is situated in the realm of Osiris, the god of the Netherworld, whom



Fig. 10: The restorer of the Saqqara Antiquities Service, Yusuf Hammadi, and field inspector of antiquities Ashraf Mabrouk, discussing the repositioning of the stela fragment (Photo by Nico Staring/ Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

²² For Pay see: M.J. Raven, *The Tomb of Pay and Raia at Saqqara* (Leiden, 2005), 36, scene [51], pls 52–53; For Paatenemheb see: Leiden AMT 1–32, P.A.A. Boeser, *Beschrijving van de Egyptische verzameling in het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden. De monumenten van het Nieuwe Rijk. Eerste afdeeling: Graven* (The Hague, 1911), pl. 5.

²³ The earliest-known representation of this iconographic motif can be found in the tomb of Aper-El, vizier of the north in the reigns of Amenhotep III–Akhenaten, cut in the Cliff of Ankhtawy, today better known as the Bubasteion. The scene in question is reproduced in A.-P. Zivie, 'Aper-El et ses voisins: considérations sur les tombes rupestres de la XVIIIe dynastie à Saqqarah', in A.-P. Zivie (ed.), *Memphis et ses nécropoles au nouvel empire. Nouvelles données, nouvelles questions. Actes de colloque international CNRS Paris, 9 au 11 octobre 1986*, (Paris, 1988), 103–112.

²⁴ See e.g. S. Quirke, 'Going Out in Daylight – prt m hrw: The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead: Translation, Sources, Meanings' (London, 2013), 243–247; J.S. Gesellensetter, *Das Sechet-Iaru. Untersuchungen zur Vignette des Kapitels 110 im Ägyptischen Totenbuch* (Würzburg, 2002).



Fig. 11: Relief decoration in the central chapel, west wall, north end: Panehsy holding the double staff, facing right (Photo by Nicola Dell’Aquila/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

the deceased tomb owner was shown venerating on the central stela.

The north and south walls of the chapel contain near-mirrored scenes. Both depict the male tomb owner sitting on a lion-legged chair, a typical status symbol of the elite, in front of an offering table. A monkey is depicted underneath the chair on the north wall. One may wonder if this detail could have been inspired by the motif depicted in the courtyard of Maya’s tomb, again in eyesight immediately to the south of Panehsy.²⁵ While this motif is relatively common in Memphite New Kingdom tomb decoration, we should not immediately dismiss the possibility that the artists responsible for Panehsy’s relief decoration took inspiration from the neigh-

bouring tombs. The more so, since some other details have a close connection with Maya’s decoration programme, as we have seen above. The scene on the chapel’s north wall depicts two offering bearers leading a fat bull into the tomb, moving towards the seated tomb owner. A third individual stands in front of the offering table. He is probably engaged in placing further items to the pile. Two details stand out. First of all, the hoofs of the bull are represented in a peculiar way, indicative of fattened cattle – a welcome feature in this setting. A second detail pertains to the kilt of the individual leading the bull. The style and length, reaching to a level above the knees, is reminiscent of Old Kingdom art.²⁶ The individual lifts his heel and probably turned his head to face the bull behind him. To the left side

²⁵ G.T. Martin, *The Tomb of Maya and Meryt I: The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary*, EES EM 99 (London, 2012), scene 36 pl. 31. Note that the tomb of Maya included multiple scenes depicting a monkey standing under the chair of (exclusively) a female.

²⁶ See, for example, the various individuals depicted on the walls of the pillared hall of the tomb of Ptahhotep, a vizier dated to the late 5th Dynasty reign of Unas, whose tomb was recorded by the Prussian expedition led by Carl Richard Lepsius in spring 1843, located approximately 70m northwest of Panehsy’s tomb: Lepsius, *Denkmaeler* II, pls 102–104.



Fig. 12: Relief decoration in the central chapel, south wall, west end: offering bearers placing assorted goods on offering stands (Photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

of the seated tomb owner are three other individuals, all depicted on a larger scale than the first three offering bearers, but smaller than the tomb owner. The three are positioned in front of another (offering) stand, which includes at least one incense burner. These individuals were likely engaged in the act of placing more items on the stand, thereby facing the representation of the standing tomb owner on the adjoining west wall. The colouring of the individuals' legs are alternating light brown, darker reddish-brown, and again light brown. The variously coloured offering bearers are known from as early as the Old Kingdom, which was probably meant to break the monotony in such rows of human figures.²⁷

The south wall of the chapel depicts a variation on the scene observed on the opposite north wall. It depicts two officiants on the left-hand side. One wears the priestly leopard skin over

his garment, which identifies him as the so-called Sem-priest, the leading priestly officiant in the mortuary cult of the deceased. The individual standing behind (to the left of) the Sem-priest wears a composite garment (tunic in combination with a wraparound sash kilt) typically associated with members of the elite. The two are likely engaged in the act of purifying the two (!) offering tables by pouring a libation of water and burning incense. The offering tables are flanked by jars on low stands and bouquets of flowers. Like on the opposite wall, the tomb owner is depicted seated in the centre of the wall, resting his sandaled feet on a low footrest. Further offering bearers are depicted behind (to the west of) the seated tomb owner, placing assorted goods in bowls supported by offering stands (Fig. 12). We can observe a total of four individuals, although it seems that the scene was intended to depict two figures before the first stand and a third before the second stand. The

²⁷ See e.g. G. Pieke, 'The Evidence of Images: Art and Working Techniques in the Mastaba of Mereruka', in N. Strudwick and H. Strudwick (eds), *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives: Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750-2150 BC* (Oxford, 2011), 216–228.



fourth offering bearer, standing nearest the hind-leg of the chair of the tomb owner, is carved in a different manner compared to the other three. He is also represented in a smaller scale and wears a distinctly different garment. The three larger figures are sculpted in thick raised relief, a technique by which the background of the stone's surface is lowered. The stone's surface had also been lowered in the space between the hind-leg of the chair and the first larger offering bearer. The fourth offering bearer was, by contrast, made by deeply incising the contours of the figure and modelling the internal details. As a result of this carving technique, this figure too attained the visual appearance of raised relief, although, technically, it was carved as sunken relief. Taken together, these relief features allow us to conclude that this fourth figure was produced at a moment later in time, after the first three were made. As such, the example presents an interesting indication of the long-term process during which these tombs were decorated. These later changes may have been made by the same sculptor(s), however.

The same scene preserves another feature related to the workmanship and work processes of the ancient sculptors. After smoothing the surfaces of the stone slabs, the sculptors concealed any defects such as those in the stone joints by applying a gypsum plaster. The fill was similarly smoothed to blend in with the stone surface. The two offering bearers closest to the juncture of the two blocks were subsequently carved partly into this layer of plaster. After the application of paint, one would have been unable to

make a distinction between the relief in stone and plaster.

The scenes on the chapel walls preserve no traces of the owner's wife or children. Panehsy's wife may have been present on the blocks once forming part of the upper course(s) of these walls, and/or on the now-missing central stela. The fact that a colleague of Panehsy served the couple's mortuary cult, as depicted on the stela in the southern chapel, might be indicative of the fact that the couple died childless, that the couple had only daughters, or that all children died before their parents.²⁸ Ideally, the role of main/leading officiant would have been performed by the 'eldest son' or another relative acting in his stead.²⁹

The few remaining wall slabs in the northwest chapel preserved no traces of finished relief decoration. However, the south doorjamb of the entrance to that chapel was inscribed with three framed columns of hieroglyphic text carved in raised relief. The block bearing these inscriptions was first seen on 6 October 2022, when the upper part of the slab forming part of the north section of the courtyard's west wall surfaced (Fig. 13). All three columns preserved the lowermost section of text, each bearing the name of Panehsy. The wall section between the south doorjamb of the northwest chapel and the (now-missing) north doorjamb of the central chapel contains relief decoration depicting two groups of men each slaughtering a bull and two individuals placing meat on a pile, oriented towards the central chapel. This scene was thus meant to secure (symbolically) the eternal provisioning

²⁸ Compare the decoration chapel of Paatenemheb in Leiden, who had two or three daughters, but no son. Thus, their servant Kasa performed the offering cult as depicted on the main cult stela. See, e.g., the discussion by L. Weiss, 'Ägyptische Religion in der Alltagswelt: Ein praxistheoretischer Zugang', in T.L. Kienlin, R. Bußmann (eds), *Sociality – Materiality – Practice. Cologne Contributions to Archaeology and Cultural Studies / Universitätsforschungen zur prähistorischen Archäologie* (Bonn, 2022), 203–224.

²⁹ See e.g. L. Weiss, *The walking dead at Saqqara: strategies of social and religious interaction in practice*, (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 78; Berlin, 2022), 65–66, with further references. The book can be read and downloaded for free on the publisher's website: DOI: <10.1515/9783110706833> last accessed on 23-12-2022.



Fig. 13: Daniel Soliman and Nico Staring investigating the north-eastern wall of the entrance to the main chapels of tomb V82.1 (Photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila/Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara).

of meat towards the mortuary cult performed in the central chapel. The execution of the slaughtering scenes is very reminiscent of Old Kingdom scenes, and can also be compared to similar scenes depicted on the west wall of the courtyard of Maya's tomb, between the south and central chapel, and on the south reveal of the doorways into the north and south chapels.³⁰ This likeness to the scenes in the tomb of Maya corroborates the suggestion, raised above, that the artist responsible for the reliefs of Panehsy took inspiration from that of the neighbour to the south.

The Substructure and Burial Chamber

The shaft of tomb V82.1 is situated just off the

centre of the courtyard to the north. The aperture of the shaft is sunken in the floor (c. 30 cm), creating a ledge upon which the cover slabs rested. Two such slabs were found *in situ*, covering the south part of the shaft. The limestone cover slabs were of poor quality and needed to be removed in order to safely excavate the shaft. The burial shaft itself is rectangular and measures 165cm from north to south and 98cm from east to west. The upper part of the shaft consists of seven courses of limestone masonry, bridging the distance to the bedrock. The limestone masonry gives way to the bedrock at a depth of 1.7m. The shaft descends to a depth of no less than 10.20m (Fig. 14), making it one of the deepest burial shafts in

³⁰ Martin, *Tomb of Maya*, scene 51, pl. 34, scene 66, pl. 37, and scene 62, pls 35, 94, respectively.



the Leiden-Turin concession area.³¹ In order to empty the shaft of sand, the expedition uses a purpose-made winch, which is called *tamboura* in Arabic (Fig. 15). The workmen use it to lower and haul up the baskets full of sand (and occasionally people). The Leiden-Turin expedition's winch proved not to be stable enough to reach these depths. We are very grateful to Mohammad Youssef who came to the rescue and kindly borrowed his *tamboura* for the duration of the excavation.



Fig. 14: Tomb shaft section by Alessandro Mandelli and Andrea Pasqui. Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara.

Two subterranean chambers divert from the shaft's southern wall. The upper chamber is located at a depth of 5.9m. It consists of a square room measuring about 4m from north to south and 2.5m from east to west. The doorway to this room is 2.07m high. It was found almost completely filled with sand, and in the south-east corner the opening to another shaft was visible. The latter could be identified as a Late Period shaft seen in 2019. Its aperture is visible aboveground in the space between the north wall of the northwest chapel of Maya and the

south wall of Panehsy. It is possible, therefore, that this upper chamber did not form part of the original Ramesside complex of tomb V82.1. One possibility is, that it became part of that complex by creating a breakthrough from the chamber into the burial shaft. Another possibility is that the burial shaft and upper chamber formed part of an earlier, Old Kingdom burial complex. The cross section of the burial shaft in figure 14 shows that the upper part of the shaft down to the level of the upper chamber is wider and more regular of shape than the part below the level of the upper chamber. This could point to a later elaboration of the shaft below the level of the first chamber. This possibility needs to be further explored during the next season. This season, it was decided to postpone the emptying of this upper chamber, and to prioritising further excavation of the sub-terranean spaces that formed part of the Ramesside complex.

About 93cm below the floor of the upper chamber another doorway opens into a second, lower chamber. The floor level of this second chamber lay flush with the bottom of the burial shaft at a depth of 10.20m. This chamber is slightly smaller than the upper one, and measures about 3.54m from north to south and 3.33m from east to west, reaching a maximum ceiling height of 1.55m. When found, the chamber was largely filled with a rather loose sand deposit.

Another shaft descends from the floor in the south-east corner of this chamber. A drystone wall of two to three courses of mostly irregularly shaped limestone blocks was found built on the north and west side of it. This construction can be connected to the activities of tomb robbers,

³¹ Interestingly, shaft iv of Horemheb, the main burial shaft accessed from the inner courtyard, likewise descends to a depth of 10.25m below pavement level (G.T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-chief of Tut'ankhamūn*, I: *The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary* (London, 1989), 140). The subterranean complex of Horemheb reaches a total depth of 28.12. Note that burial shaft i, situated in the first peristyle courtyard of Horemheb's tomb, descends to an astounding depth of 17.24m. Like shaft iv, shaft i was made in the Old Kingdom and adapted for reuse in the New Kingdom.



who wished to prevent the loose sand from shifting back into the second shaft while emptying it. Before proceeding to the second shaft, the chamber needed to be completely emptied. The sand deposit did not yield any notable finds. It did contain quantities of bones, bone fragments, and pot sherds. Both find categories likely derived from the spaces below, and were moved by robbers in antiquity who may have preferred to examine the spoil in the daylight penetrating from the burial shaft.

One of the cover slabs of the second shaft was found *in situ* (Fig. 16). It may have been left there intentionally, having been used by robbers to ease access to the burial chamber and to haul up the finds from below. The expedition decided to remove this slab for safety reasons and replace it with a sturdier wooden beam to ease work in the shaft. The shaft was found to be empty to a depth of 3.90m, while the bottom of the shaft was reached at around 5.40m after removing

more than a metre-thick deposit of rubble fill.

At a depth of 15.60m below the pavement level of the tomb's courtyard, the second shaft gives access to a third room, the burial chamber. It opened from the south side of the shaft and measured 2.90m from north to south and 2.5m from east to west. The maximum height of this third room is about 120cm. The location of the burial chamber is noteworthy, because it is not located below the central chapel of the tomb of Panehsy, as one would expect, but precisely below the northwest chapel of Maya's tomb. When found, the burial chamber was largely filled with sand and rubble, leaving no more than 40cm to the ceiling, posing some practical issues when recording (measuring, describing and photographing) the space while crawling. The southern part of the room was found filled with rubble, including limestone blocks, undoubtedly again left by the tomb's robbers, and chunks of *tafla* that had broken off from the ceiling. A first



Fig. 15: The Egyptian workmen led by Essam Said Ahmed operating the tamboura. Photo: Photo Nico Staring/Leiden Turin Expedition to Saqqara.



Fig. 16: The southeast corner of the lower chamber with the aperture of the second shaft and one of the cover slabs preserved in situ. Photo Nico Staring/Leiden Turin Expedition to Saqqara.



Fig. 17: Three fragments of one of the cover slabs of the second shaft could be joined together, showing traces of an Old Kingdom relief. Photo: Nicola Dell'Aquila/Leiden Turin Expedition to Saqqara.

assessment of the chamber suggests that it had remained unfinished by its builders. The levelling of the chamber's floor was clearly halted at one point. Despite its unfinished state, the archaeological evidence strongly suggests that this chamber received at least one or perhaps more burials in the early Ramesside period. For example, the fragments of at least two calcite canopic jars were found and also the ceramic evidence is rather homogeneously datable into the Ramesside period. The human remains collected in this chamber consist mainly of bone fragments and shall be studied by Ali Jelene Scheers

and her team in more detail in 2023. The humidity and high temperatures in the subterranean chambers are not ideal for the preservation of organic material, which may explain why almost no traces of wood (such as coffins) were found. The burial chamber yielded one surprising find, though. Two of the limestone fragments that formed part of the slabs that had originally covered the aperture of the second shaft were in fact reused (Fig. 17). The remains of raised relief decoration still visible on one of its short sides can be dated to the Old Kingdom. It means that the block was



taken from a centuries old mastaba tomb that stood nearby, and that it was reworked to fulfil a different purpose in the New Kingdom.

Outlook to the Next Season of Fieldwork

This short article summarised some of the most interesting features of the latest addition to the cluster of tombs located in the Leiden-Turin concession area, namely that of Panehsy, an early Ramesside overseer of the Memphite temple of Amun. As always, it requires more time to process the data collected during excavation than the actual six weeks of fieldwork. The various specialists of the Leiden-Turin Expedition to Saqqara will therefore continue to study the material excavated last season. We should also add that the excavation of the tomb is not finished and that for example the architecture and relief decoration require more study on-site. Thus, next season, with the kind financial support of the Friends of Saqqara, we will continue our exploration of the subterranean spaces of Panehsy's tomb, trying to better understand what happened with the tomb after the Ramesside period, and excavate the area between the entrance of Panehsy's tomb and the later, Ramesside chapels (excavation context numbers 135 and 270).³² Both chapels, partially excavated in 2017 and 2018 respectively, are still anonymous. Plenty of more work to look forward to!

³² The lower part of the stela placed in the west wall of this stela, containing a half-sculpted 'family portrait', was studied this year in detail by Lyla Pinch-Brock (see her article in this Newsletter). Lyla Pinch Brock's work was made possible by a generous grant of the Amarna Research Foundation.