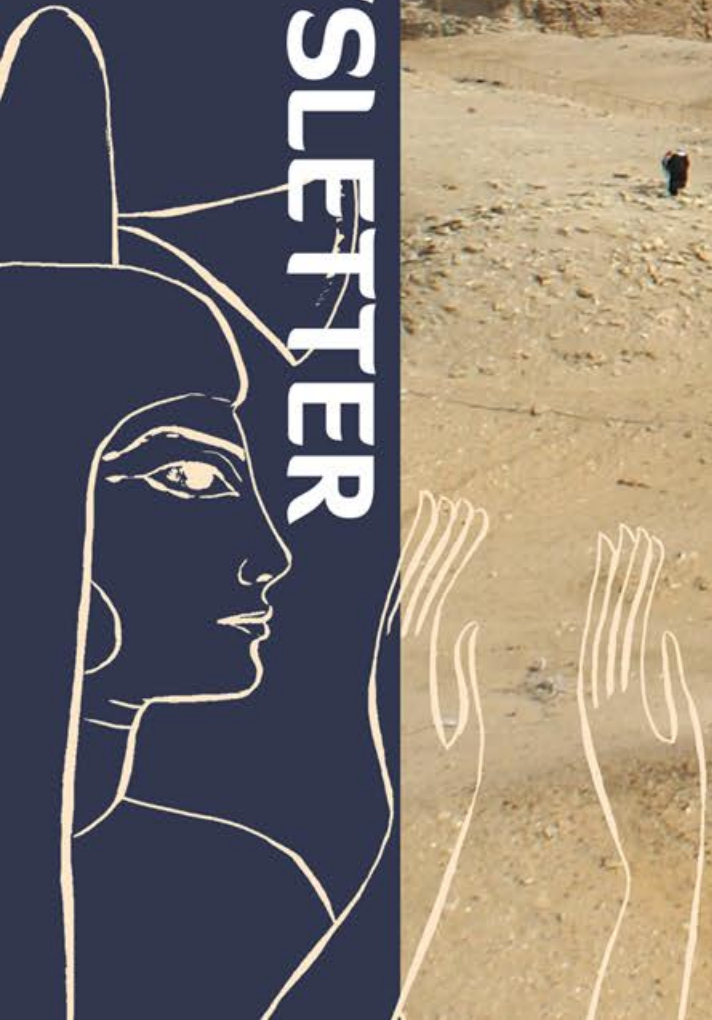




SAQQARA NEWSLETTER

Friends of Saqqara Foundation
Volume 19 2021



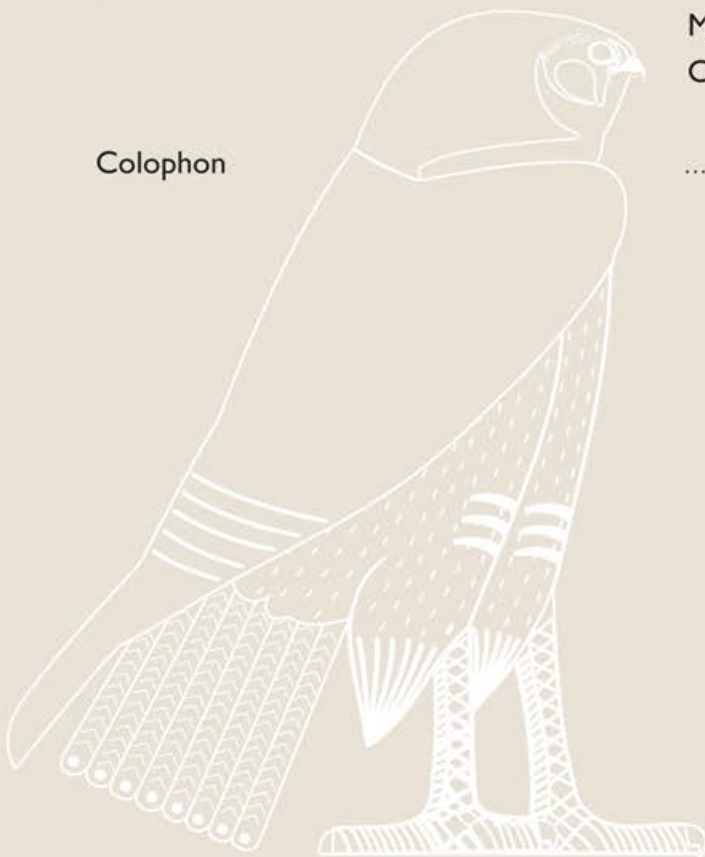


Saqqara Newsletter

Volume 19 (2021)

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Nico Staring*

Moving To and Through the Necropolis

The Wadi Gamal, looking south from the foot of the escarpment at the southern end of the New Kingdom cemetery. (Photo by the author).



This short article addresses the question how people moved through the landscape, and from where the New Kingdom cemetery at Saqqara was accessed in the past. What paths and tracks did people walk? Questions such as these are studied in more depth within the research project *The Walking Dead at Saqqara: The Making of a Cultural Geography*.¹ The research project aims to shift the focus from the dead tomb owners to the living, the people who experienced the cemetery space in their daily lives.

A Quiet and Desolate Plateau, Once Bustling with Life

To the modern-day visitor, the North Saqqara plateau might seem like a quiet and desolate place. It is difficult for the non-specialist (and, admittedly, also for many trained Egyptologists) to make much sense of the site now dotted with countless ruins of structures, sandy hills, and pits both deep and shallow. The present situation differs little from that witnessed by some of the early European explorers of the site. Take, for example, Georg Erbkam (1811–1876), the surveyor and architect of the four-year-long Prussian expedition to Egypt led by Carl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884). Two days after Erbkam had set foot on the terrain, he penned down the following account that leaves little to the imagination:

Ich orientiere mich heut zuerst von dem Pyramidenfelde, indem ich zuvörderst auf die größte der hiesigen Pyramiden steige (...). Das Feld ist öde, wüst und langweilig, nichts als Schutthaufen und Brunnen; fast nirgends hat man einen Überblick als auf der Pyramide. Knochen, Schädel, Thiergebeine, Mumien-

*fetzen, Alles liegt umhergeworfen rings um Einen, ein trostloser Anblick, zumal die Wüste selbst weder Formen noch Farben darbietet; dieses Todtenfeld hält gegen das von Ghize keinen Vergleich aus.*²

Lepsius's team had just travelled south from Giza, the site that had served as their first base camp, from where countless monuments were explored and documented. Giza had a lot to offer, certainly to the eyes of an architect. Saqqara, on the other hand, was less impressive, to put it mildly. Erbkam describes the desert-edge archaeological site as a 'barren, desolate, and boring' place that offered 'nothing but piles of rubble and pits' – certainly no great advertisement. To the reader of this *Saqqara Newsletter*, Erbkam's observations are perhaps difficult to reconcile with the present-day reality. After all, the Newsletter features page after page describing and illustrating Saqqara's wonderful antiquities. Yet, those who have had the pleasure of visiting Saqqara in person may be able to better understand Erbkam's sentiments. Certainly if one takes off the rose-tinted glasses of the Saqqara enthusiast, and wanders off the

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¹ Hosted at Leiden University (LIAS), and supported by a Vidi Talent Scheme research grant awarded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), dossier no. 016.Vidi.174.032 (2017–2022). The other team members are Lara Weiss (PI) and Huw Twiston Davies. The findings on the landscape perspective will be published by the present author as a monograph under the provisional title *The Saqqara Necropolis Through the New Kingdom: Biography of an Ancient Egyptian Cultural Landscape*. The text of the present article is adapted and expanded from a talk given at the Landscape Archaeology Conference (LAC 2020+1), Madrid, 10 June 2021.

² G. Erbkam, *Tagebuch meiner ägyptischen Reise, begonnen am 20sten Aug. 1842, 1842–1843*, 149. < deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/erbkam_tagebuch01_1842?p=149 > Accessed on 26 May 2021. For more on Erbkam and his experience with the Prussian expedition to Egypt, I would highly recommend E. Freier, »*Wer hier hundert Augen hätte...*« G.G. Erbkams Reisebriefe aus Ägypten und Nubien (Berlin, 2013).



trodden path, by which most modern tourists are directly led to the largely reconstructed Step Pyramid complex of Djoser (2592–2566 BCE). So, let us for a moment follow in Erbkam's footsteps and ascend the Step Pyramid just like he did 178 years ago (Fig. 1). If we take in the view that unfolds in front of us as we look to the northeast, one cannot deny that the landscape still feels barren and desolate. A lot of imagination is needed to perceive the once grandiose sacred landscape, filled with magnificent man-made structures. Instead, piles of rubble and pits dominate the plateau as far as the eye can see.

The biggest piles of rubble represent all that remains of the pyramids of Userkaf (in the foreground, c. 2435–2429 BCE) and Teti (in the background, c. 2305–2279 BCE).

There is not much to see in this photograph to suggest that it used to be, in fact, a very *lively* place, one where ancient people worked, lived, and moved through.³ In the past, it was not just a place for the dead. Rather, or perhaps first and foremost, it was a place frequented and shaped by the living.⁴ The area of the plateau captured in the photograph in particular was a lively



Fig. 1: View from atop the Step Pyramid of Djoser, looking northeast, 2013 (Photo by the autor).

³ Pretty much like today, it should be noted. Saqqara still is a place where people work (the local and international excavators, inspectors of antiquities, tour guides, guards, water-, coke-, and souvenir-vendors, etc.), live (the workmen's village built for Cecil Mallaby Firth's specialist excavators is still inhabited to this day by their descendants, located just beyond the pyramid of Teti on the edge of the plateau), and move through (tourists and all others just listed).

⁴ On this topic, see also N. Staring, 'The Necropolis as Lived Space and a Work in Continuous Progress', in M. Bárta, F. Coppens, and J. Krejčí (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2020* (Prague, 2021), 265–276.



place. For example, just beyond the pyramid of Teti lay the stone-paved Serapeum Way, a processional route – a sort of desert highway – that led people in the Greco-Roman Period from the city of the living – Memphis – all the way to the monumental burial complex of the sacred Apis bulls (the Serapeum) on the high desert, situated beyond the left-hand frame of this image.⁵ The stone-paved road probably had a less formalised predecessor in the New Kingdom, which in turn may have made use of (part of) the infrastructure laid down in earlier periods still.

In the foreground are the partially reconstructed remains of the North Chapel of the Step Pyramid complex of Netjerikhet, better known from the New Kingdom onwards as Djoser. This ceremonial building was invisible to Erbkam when he traversed this place, as it was still buried under a thick deposit of sand and rubble. The very same building was still accessible to visitors of the New Kingdom, some 1,300 years after the complex was constructed. A number of the late Second Millennium BCE visitors left figural and textual graffiti on the interior wall surface of the building's cramped room.⁶ One of the individuals, a scribe named Tjay, sat there on day 2 of the 4th month of the Shemu season (the season of harvesting), in regnal year 4 of Tutankhamun, now ca. 3,337 years ago. Tjay's graffito served as a memento of his visit to this sacred site. In leaving his graffito, he literally inscribed himself into the site, and became part of its history. Tjay and his contemporaries referred to the pyramid of Djoser as the *ḥw.t nṯr n.y nsw.t bi.ty dsr*, the 'God's Temple of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Djoser'. The date recorded in his text makes him a contemporary to Maya and Horemheb. In the early years of Tutankhamun's

reign, these two highest-ranking court officials had just started construction of their tombs in the area that is today known as the Leiden-Turin archaeological concession area. That cemetery is located on the other side of the Step Pyramid, due south of the causeway of king Unas (c. 2321–2306 BCE).

A Dispersed Cemetery

Saqqara today 'looks' very different from the necropolis bustling with life over 3,000 years ago. Not just the ancient people who made Saqqara a very lively place are gone, but the thousands of tomb structures and the infrastructure connecting the various places and buildings have disappeared as well. The missing people can be overcome, for example, by studying the graffiti they left us – one of the most exquisite data sources available to us to study the movement of past humans through the landscape.⁷ Unfortunately, relatively few such graffiti have survived the ravages of time, and even less have been recorded and studied by scholars. The missing buildings and infrastructure present an even greater challenge to researchers. Ancient and more recent human activities have led to the almost complete disappearance of the tombs that once formed the nucleus of the cemeteries in the New Kingdom. During the first centuries before the Common Era, the construction of the stone-paved Serapeum Way meant the end of many New Kingdom tombs that stood in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery. The road was paved with limestone slabs that were quarried from numerous extant structures in the vicinity, including ones dated to the Second Millennium BCE. Practically nothing survived of the tomb structures that once stood

⁵ The Serapeum Way is no longer visible on the surface. However, a few years ago, a Scottish mission conducted a geophysical survey, and detected the course of the road beneath the desert sand. See: C. Price, 'Scotland at Saqqara: The Work of the Saqqara Geophysical Survey Project, 1990 - Present', *Saqqara Newsletter* 10 (2012), 47–51.

⁶ H. Navrátilová, *The Visitors' Graffiti of Dynasties XVIII and XIX in Abusir and Northern Saqqara* (Prague, 2007), 72–80.

⁷ See e.g. J.C. Hamilton, H. Navrátilová, and N. Staring, 'The Place is a Palimpsest': Spatial Approaches to Graffiti in Ancient Saqqara', forthcoming article.



closest to the paved road.⁸ Despite the ancient reuses of material quarried from the New Kingdom tombs, substantial remains must have survived, because early modern excavators were yet able to fill their private collections with countless inscribed and decorated stone elements derived from scores of funerary monuments. The large-scale 19th Century ‘excavations’ led to a paradoxical situation in which the Saqqara New Kingdom cemeteries existed largely *outside* the Memphite necropolis. Until not so long ago, the lay visitor was able to learn more about New Kingdom Saqqara tomb art from museums such as the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden than on-site at Saqqara.

Indeed, before 1975, no tomb from that period was yet visible at the site.⁹ More systematic excavations carried out in the last half century have contributed much to furthering our understanding of the site. Even though many of the tombs excavated by the current Leiden-Turin archaeological mission and others have the appearance of mud-brick skeletons (Fig. 2), primarily because the walls have long ago been stripped off their limestone relief-decorated blocks, it is thankfully sometimes possible to connect dispersed museum objects and reliefs with their original positions. Such was the case with the last tomb fully excavated in the Unas South Cemetery in 2013. The mud-brick walls



Fig. 2: The mud-brick ‘skeleton’ of the tomb built for the army official Ry, reign of Tutankhamun, excavated in 2013 (Photo by the author).

⁸ B.G. Ockinga, ‘In Search of the New Kingdom Tombs in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery North: Preliminary Results of the 2009 and 2010 Seasons Conducted by Macquarie University’, in M. Bárta, F. Coppens, and J. Krejčí (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2020/1* (Prague, 2011), 138.

⁹ It is only a couple of years ago now that the first New Kingdom tombs were opened to the public: first a handful of tombs in the current Leiden-Turin concession area, and later two rock-cut tombs in the southern cliff of the Bubasteion. This situation is nothing compared to the contemporary New Kingdom necropolises at Thebes in southern Egypt, however, where numerous rock-cut tombs are accessible, and where we have a much better understanding of the structure of the necropolises.



held just a few fragmentarily preserved pieces of limestone revetment blocks bearing relief decoration. No inscriptions were preserved, which meant that the tomb's owner remained anonymous to us. A few years later, the scanty remains allowed me to eventually link this tomb to various blocks held in museum collections around the world.¹⁰ These inscribed stone elements now enable us to identify the owner of the structure as the military official Ry, who served under the king Tutankhamun and who would have known Maya and Horemheb personally. The identification of the connection between the tomb structure and the reliefs thus added crucial historical and prosopographical information to the archaeological remains.

Egyptologists generally tend to focus quite narrowly on the lives and careers of the highest ranking tomb owners. Additionally, in publications, tombs are often treated in isolation, completely detached from the landscape in which they are set. Plans of the cemetery (such as those published by the former (EES-)Leiden archaeological mission) take little interest in the wider landscape setting. The remainder of this article looks at how movements of the living shaped and reshaped the part of the cemetery included in the Leiden-Turin concession area, which also includes the tombs of Ry, Maya and Horemheb.

Means of Accessing the Necropolis

Scholars have addressed the question of how the elevated desert plateau was accessed in the past.¹¹ Such studies focus mostly on the ear-

liest stages of history, at a time when Saqqara was extensively used as a burial site for kings and their entourage. Thus we know that in the Early Dynastic period (c. 2900–2545 BCE), the plateau was accessed from the north. The broad *wadi*¹² of Abusir served as the main means of connecting the urban centre with the sacred desert landscape (Fig. 3). The Early Dynastic settlement called Ineb(u)-hedj, which translates as White Wall(s), was situated close to the *wadi*'s mouth. The northern *wadi* 'entrance' affected the spatial organisation of the monuments at the site. The royal complexes were all sited around the far southern end of the *wadi*. From the perspective of the visitor who ascended the plateau through this natural desert way, the complexes occupied prime locations. They were all sited nearest the point of access, and thus highly visible to the living. From the point of view of the modern-day visitor, however, some of the early monuments – as well as certain later Old Kingdom mastaba tombs such as that of Ti – may seem to be situated at rather unfavourable, out-of-the-way places of the plateau. This is because the modern visitor approaches the plateau from the east, where a tarmac road now runs up against the escarpment. Later during the Old Kingdom (c. 2543–2120 BCE), a number of the pyramids were also accessed from the east. The stone-paved causeways of these complexes ran through minor *wadis* and connected the valley temples to the pyramids sited on the eastern edge of the plateau. The best-preserved example of such a causeway is that of Unas. Large parts of the originally 666 metres long monumental pathway

¹⁰ N. Staring, 'Keys to Unlocking the Identity of "Tomb X": Introducing Horemheb's Army Official, Re', *Saqqara Newsletter* 16 (2018), 31–46; 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), <<https://doi.org/10.29353/rime.2020.2994>> Accessed on 21 August 2021.

¹¹ I would like to direct the reader to A. Dodson, 'Go West: On the Ancient Means of Approach to the Saqqara Necropolis', in C. Price, R. Forshaw, A. Chamberlain, and P.T. Nicholson (eds), *Mummies, Magic, and Medicine in Ancient Egypt: Multidisciplinary Essays for Rosalie David* (Manchester, 2016), 3–18; and C. Reader, 'An Early Dynastic Ritual Landscape at North Saqqara: An Inheritance from Abydos?', *JEA* 103/1 (2017), 71–98, both extensively listing further references on the subject.

¹² The Arabic term for a former seasonal water course.



Fig. 3: Satellite image (Google Earth, 02-2007) of the North Saqqara plateau showing the Early Dynastic access route through the Wadi of Abusir and the Old Kingdom pyramid causeways on the eastern escarpment, some of which conjectural. The Royal monuments in their order of appearance are: 1. Gallery tomb of Hetepsekhemwy; 2. Gallery tomb of Ninetjer; 3. Gisir el-Mudir (enclosure of Khasekhemwy?); 4. Step Pyramid complex of Netjerikhet/Djoser; 5. Step Pyramid complex of Sekhemkhet; 6. Pyramid of Userkaf; 7. Pyramid of Menkauhor; 8. Pyramid of Unas; 9. Pyramid of Teti; 10. Pyramid of Pepi I (Image © 2021 CNES/Airbus, digitally joined, enhanced and adapted by the author).



were excavated in the late 1930s.¹³ The upper extent of the causeway nearest the pyramid is still accessible to visitors (Fig. 4). Such causeways formed part of highly ceremonial royal pyramid complexes, and so we must assume that all people who were not members of its priesthood and support staff (i.e. the overwhelming majority of people) took different routes to reach the plateau.

The reason for the shift of the main point of access from the *wadi* of Abusir to the various *wadis* on the eastern escarpment has been explained in connection with the shifting location of the settlement in which the king resided. Evidence suggests that the royal residence moved southward over time, as can be seen in the positioning of early Dynastic Ineb-hedj, and the Old Kingdom settlements Djed-sut-Teti, founded in conjunction with the building of king Teti's pyramid, and Mennefer, built in connection with the pyramid of Pepi I. The latter settlement ultimately merged with the settlement located on a former island that included the early shrine of the city god Ptah. The changing natural landscape affected many of these changes – changes that ultimately impacted the way in which space was used at the necropolis also.

If we jump ahead in time and look at the situation in the New Kingdom, we see that the main channel of the river Nile lay much closer to the settlement of ancient Memphis than is the case today (Fig. 5).¹⁴ Since the New Kingdom,

the river has migrated to the far east end of the floodplain. A minor branch of the Nile was situated on the west side of the city, although it was probably dry for most of the year. The area between the *tell* or ruin-mound of Memphis and the desert escarpment inundated annually, and this of course greatly influenced the way in which people could possibly access the desert-edge necropolis at varying moments throughout the year.

In my view, the preferred means of accessing the necropolis, in the New Kingdom at least, was the *wadi* system running north of the pyramid of Pepi I (Fig. 6). This 'entrance' is situated precisely opposite the West Gate of the temple of Ptah. If one were to exit the temple on foot and would continue to walk in a straight line, traversing the floodplain and passing by the various royal temples of Millions of Years,¹⁵ one would arrive exactly at the mouth of the Wadi Merire.¹⁶ This *wadi* branches off north to the Wadi Gamal, also known as the Wadi Tabbet el-Guesh. The gradual slope of the *wadi* here offers an easy means of access up to the plateau (Fig. 7). Of course there are more possible routes leading up the plateau. For example, scholars have proposed that the Unas causeway was still used in the New Kingdom, although there are various reasons for dismissing this option. Also, immediately to the east of the Leiden-Turin concession area, close to the ruins of the Coptic monastery of St. Jeremias, a slightly steeper slope is still used by some of the workmen employed at the excavation as

¹³ S. Bey. Hassan, 'Excavations at Saqqara 1937–1938', *ASAE* 38 (1938), 503–521.14

¹⁴ The literature on the subject is growing. Particularly relevant is M. Lehner, 'Capital Zone Walk-About 2006: Spot Heights on the Third Millennium Landscape', in M. Lehner, M. Kamel, and A. Tavares (eds), *Giza Plateau Mapping Project, Seasons 2006–2007: Preliminary Report* (Boston, 2009), 97–152, with a thorough discussion of previous work and an excellent presentation of data. The reconstruction of the Memphite landscape presented in my Fig. 5 is partly based on Lehner's pl. 38.

¹⁵ Note that no actual material remains of such temples have been recovered archaeologically. Their former presence is exclusively known from a few text sources. See: 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), 207–223 (esp. 213–218).

¹⁶ The West Gate was built in the 19th Dynasty reign of Ramesses II, probably started by his predecessor Seti I. Few remains of the once impressive pylon entrance have been preserved in situ. See: L.L. Giddy, D.G. Jeffreys, and J. Málek, 'Memphis, 1989', *JEA* 76 (1990), 1–15; L. Giddy, 'Memphis 1989: The Ptah Temple Complex', *BACE* 1 (1990), 38–41.



Fig. 4: The upper extend of the causeway of Unas, running west towards to pyramid, 2017 (Photo by the author).

they walk to and from their villages. While people in the past certainly had a number of options to choose from, the options were not limitless. For one thing, the eastern escarpment is often simply too steep to climb. Moreover, the former presence of seasonal lakes in the area south of the Valley Temple of Unas would have made some routes less likely. One also needs to take into account that during festival or funerary processions, assorted (heavy) items had to be taken along (the god's processional image, coffins, tomb furniture, etc.), and so one may assume that in such cases the most comfortable paths were preferred. Finally, there may have been different routes for different occasions, and people may have made different choices when walking alone or in groups.

Identifying the *wadi* system described above as the cemetery 'entrance' during the New Kingdom implies that the main cluster of tombs in the Leiden-Turin concession area was entered from the south. This observation corresponds to

the overall development of this part of the cemetery, at least as far as we can tell from the small area hitherto uncovered by excavations. The currently available data indicates that this part of the cemetery grew from south to north. Thus the earliest datable tombs lay closest to where people entered the plateau. If my hypothesis proves correct, we should be able to locate in the area south of the current Leiden-Turin concession area the now-lost tombs of various viziers, high priests of Ptah, and others dating to the pre-Amarna period, whom we know from dispersed stone tomb elements now held in museum collections around the globe.

The *wadi* route was likely taken during the numerous festival processions that were staged throughout the year, including the grand festival celebrated for the Memphite god Sokar. One of the god's festival days included a visit, in procession, to the necropolis. The owners of tombs in this area reckoned with such events when selecting the location of their funerary



monument. For example, the late 18th Dynasty Overseer of the Royal Household, Ptahmose, on his tomb stela makes reference to the celebrations, addressing Ptah-Sokar-Osiris:

*When one hears your [i.e. Ptah-Sokar-Osiris'] voice going around in the great valley [wadi; *in.t ʕ3.t*] of Hutkaptah [Memphis] <and> one is pulling you in your festival...*

Ptahmose further states that he is 'a true follower on the day of pulling the god's processional image'.¹⁷ He even claims to have laid hands on the rope to drag the sledge upon which the god's image sat, possibly along with the king, much like is depicted in a near-contemporary scene from the small Ptah temple at Memphis.¹⁸ Ptahmose also expresses the wish to be present for eternity at the festival procession of the god,

for which he may have secured a plot of land close to the processional route. Such a location would have guaranteed future visitors to his tomb. They may have brought offerings with them and/or read out the name of the deceased, a wish well known from the so-called 'appeals to the living' that we find inscribed on the facades of tombs dating back as early as the Old Kingdom. One may deduce from such texts that tomb owners had indeed very consciously selected the plots of land on which to build their funerary monument.

The living audience is also addressed on a four-sided stela derived from the now-lost chapel of Parahotep, the well-known vizier in the late reign of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE).¹⁹ He lived almost a century after Ptahmose, the official

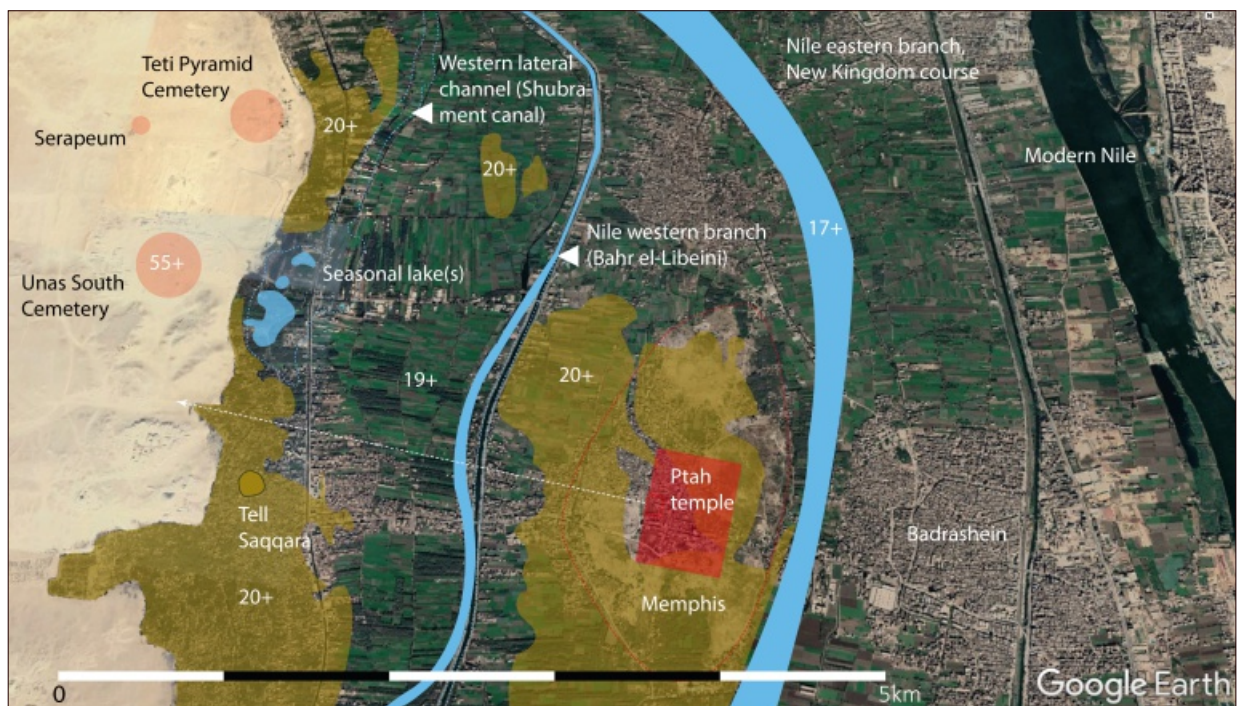


Fig. 5: Reconstruction of the Memphite landscape at the time of the New Kingdom. The numbers indicate the elevation measured in metres above mean sea level (AMSL) (Image by the author, projected on a Google Earth satellite image).

¹⁷ Stela New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 67.3. See: <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/549236>> Accessed on 21 August 2021.

¹⁸ W.R. Johnson, 'A Ptah-Sokar Barque Procession from Memphis', in D. Aston, B. Bader, C. Gallorini, P. Nicholson, and S. Buckingham (eds.), *Under the Potter's Tree: Studies on Ancient Egypt Presented to Janine Bourriau on the Occasion of Her 70th Birthday* (OLA, 204; Leuven, 2011), 531–540.

¹⁹ Stela Cairo JE 48845: M. Moursi, 'Die Stele des Vezirs Re-hotep (Kairo JdE 48845)', *MDAIK* 37 (1981), 321–329.

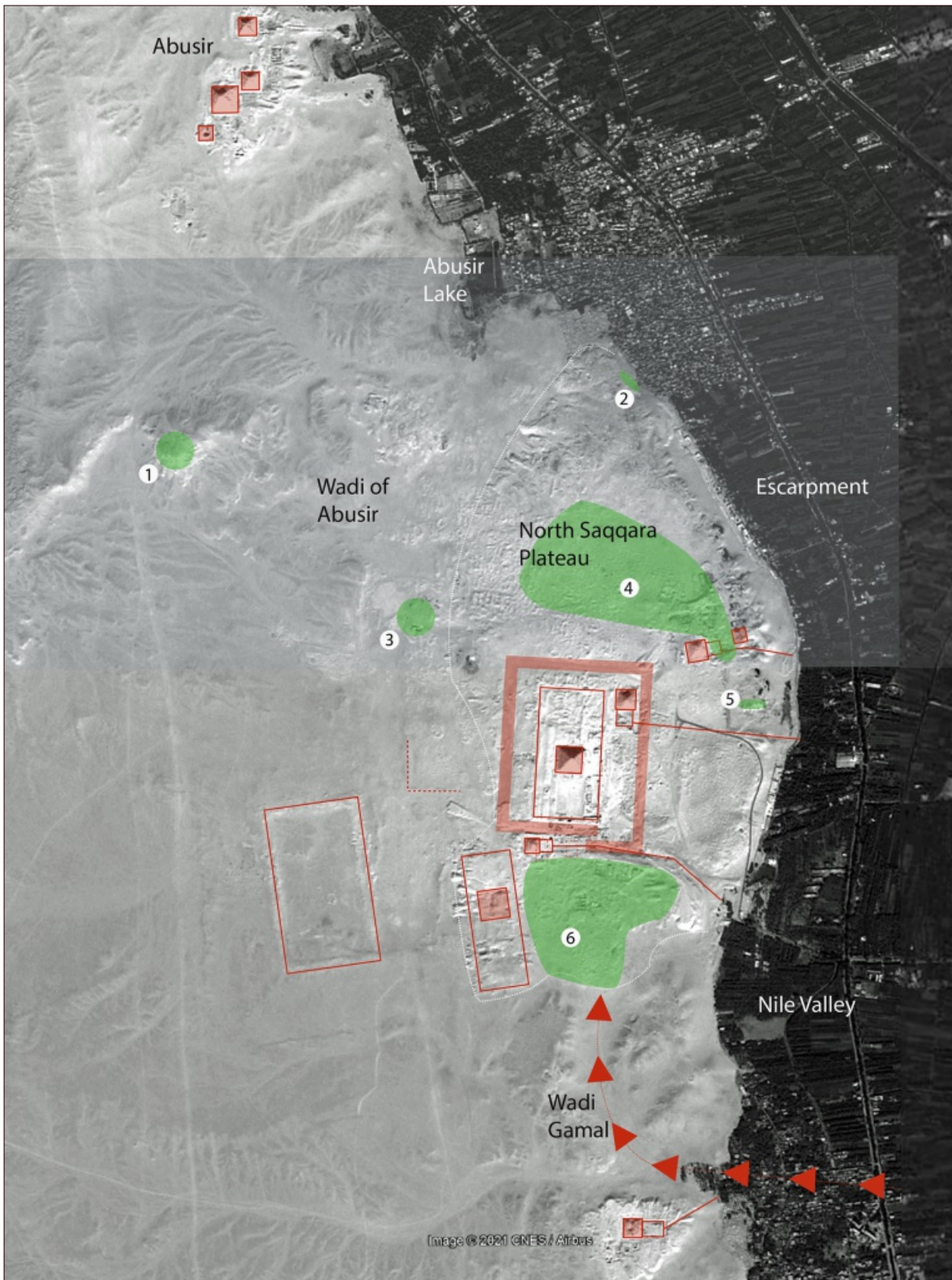


Fig. 6 Satellite image (Google Earth, 02-2007) of the North Saqqara plateau showing the Wadi Gamal access route to the Unas South Cemetery in the New Kingdom. The image also shows the main clusters of New Kingdom remains on the North Saqqara plateau: 1. Hilly outcrop with temple structures; 2. Rock-cut tombs opposite Abusir village; 3. Serapeum; 4. Teti Pyramid Cemetery; 5. Rock-cut tombs in the southern cliff of the later Bubasteion; 6. Unas South Cemetery. (Image © 2021 CNES/Airbus, digitally joined, enhanced and adapted by the author).



whom we have just encountered. The text carved on Parahotep's stela addresses individuals on their way to the Serapeum – the grand burial place of the sacred Apis bulls that were the earthly manifestation of the Memphite city-god Ptah. The Serapeum was without question the most important religious establishment located on the Saqqara plateau. In his stela text, Parahotep asks people to visit his chapel *en route* to the Serapeum, and to present food and voice offerings in his service daily:

... the overseer of the town and vizier, Rahotep, he says: "O all lector priests, mourners/supporters (?) of the living Apis [ts.w n(.w) ḥp ḥnh] herald of Ptah, may you turn your faces, every (time) you come (to) the chapel of Apis (and) to the temple of eternity of the overseer of the town and vizier Rahotep, to perform censuring and libation (and) to say: 'For your ka (and) for your name, vizier Rahotep'. You will say (so), daily."



Fig. 7: The Wadi Gamal, looking south from the foot of the escarpment at the southern end of the New Kingdom cemetery. The pyramid on the left is that of Pepi I, visible on the horizon to the right are the Mastabat Faraun of Shepseskaf and the pyramids of Snefru further south at Dahshur, 2019 (Photo by the author).

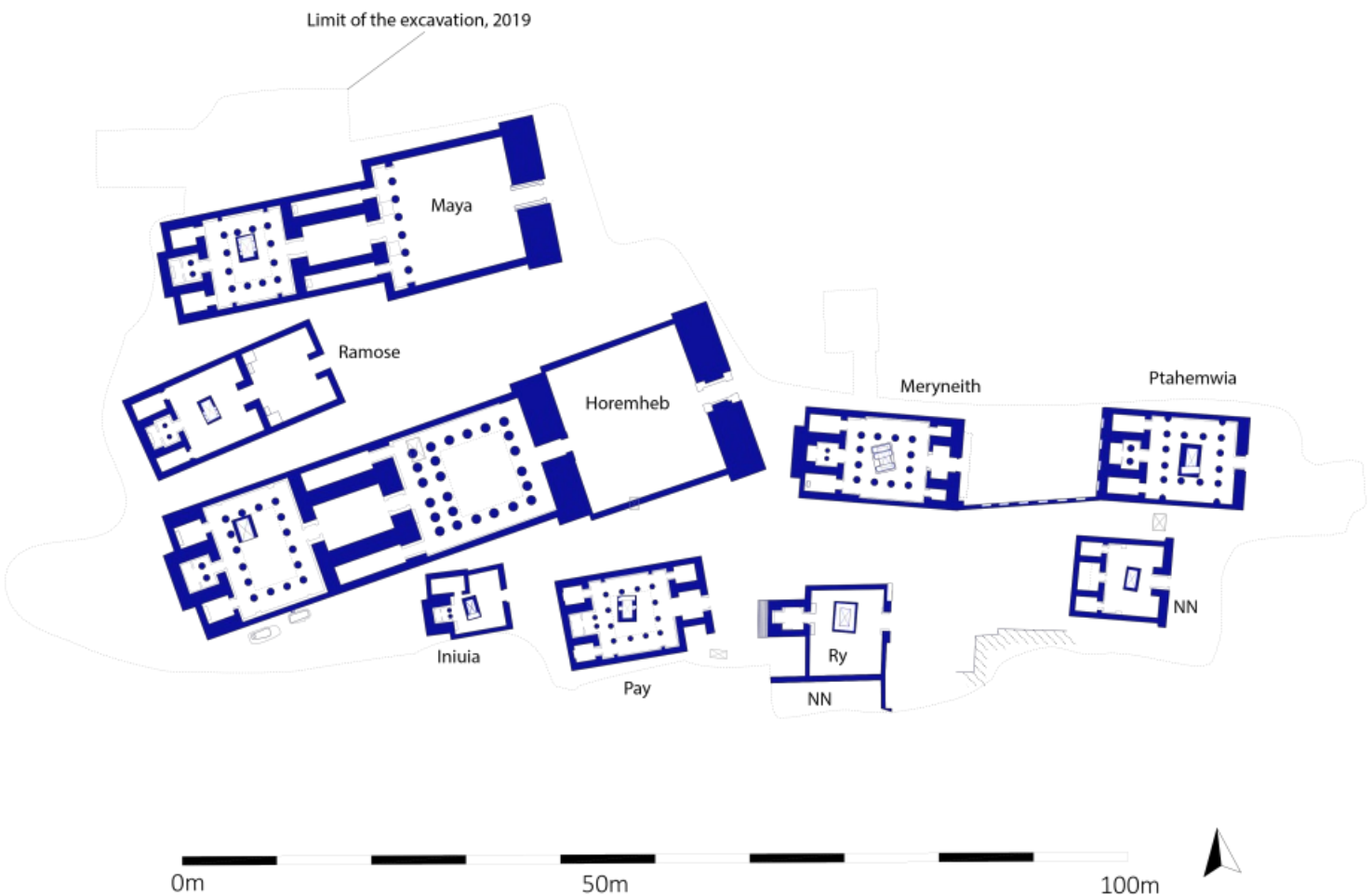


Fig. 8: The cluster of tombs in the Leiden-Turin concession area of the Unas South Cemetery, built up to the late 18th Dynasty, reign of Tutankhamun. (Image by the author).

The location of the tomb of Ptahmose is not known to us. The stela was found and taken in the early 19th century and the tomb has since been lost. However, there is ample reason to situate it in the Unas South Cemetery. For one thing, the official who held the same title before him, Pay, also built his tomb in this part of the cemetery. The tomb of Parahotep on the other hand is situated not in Saqqara, but in Sedment near the entrance to the Fayum, ca. 90 km to the south.²⁰ Apparently, Parahotep felt the need to also construct a memorial chapel in the Memphite necropolis, so as to take advantage of

the large numbers of people that traversed the plateau at that point. In this manner, he could also remain forever present at all future festival processions,²¹ be among his illustrious predecessors in office, and inscribe himself into the history of this religiously significant site.

A Cemetery Forever in the Making

To enable easy access to the tombs, each free-standing monument was ideally built at a small distance from its neighbour. Such was the situation at the end of the 18th Dynasty (Fig. 8). Visitors to the necropolis would have had no

²⁰ Cemetery B, Tomb 201: W.M. Flinders Petrie and G. Brunton, *Sedment II* (BSAE 35; London, 1924), 28–31, pls 71–76.

²¹ Indeed, not only the living participated actively in the festival celebrations. The deceased who dwelled in their tombs could also actively participate in the various festivities – at least according to Egyptian thought. This is for example illustrated by an inscribed tomb-pyramid panel of Maya, the Treasurer of king Tutankhamun. He expresses the wish that his *ba*, or soul, leaves the tomb freely in order to follow the god in (all) his festivals.



Fig. 9: The cluster of tombs in the Leiden-Turin concession area of the Unas South Cemetery, showing the situation at the end of the New Kingdom, c. 230 years after fig. 8. All later added structures are coloured differently (Image by the author).

trouble locating and reaching these structures. However, over time, as the cemetery grew in a northward direction, the spaces in between the aging buildings were gradually filled with more modest structures (Fig. 9). In some cases, these chapels were built for dependents or family members of the deceased owners of the larger tombs – although, unfortunately, often we have no idea who ‘occupied’ these largely anonymous tombs. Such an organic growth process of the cemetery compares very well to what has been observed in the suburbs of the cities of the living, such as at contemporary Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna) in Middle Egypt.²² The filling up of available cemetery space could lead to a situation where possible routes crossing the cemetery were blocked, which necessarily re-

directed the routes people had to take to reach their destination. It also made it increasingly difficult to navigate the cemetery. Such processes could lead to situations in which certain areas were completely locked off, no longer receiving the casual visitor, and eventually falling into oblivion. This could enable later tomb reuse, sometimes even for mass burial, or it led to the quarrying of monuments for their building material, thus entering a new chapter in the biography of the individual monument – all made possible by the changing uses of the funerary landscape by the living. The necropolis should thus be regarded as a space lived in and also as a work in continuous progress – a process that continues with every new day.

²² B.J. Kemp, *The City of Akhetaten and Nefertiti: Amarna and Its People* (London, 2012), 161–181.