Some Remarks on the Historical Topography of Saqqara in the Ptolemaic Period
An archaeological and historical synthesis of the Ptolemaic necropolis in Saqqara has yet to be written despite several of the monuments being discovered already in the Nineteenth century. And since provenance is often unclear, the proper attribution of objects can be difficult. A broader look at the necropolis in context is essential to form a comprehensive view of this group of human and animal cemeteries and cult complexes with not always defined interrelations and unclear mutual dependence.

Saqqara is part of the Memphite Necropolis, which extends along the western bank of the Nile from Abu Roash in the north to Medum in the south. It covers an area approximately 6km long and more than 1.5km wide. The present topographic borders of the necropolis in Saqqara are a derivative of a Nineteenth century Arab administrative division resulting from local area development. These borders with regard to ancient times are now in the process of being verified by modern archaeological research. Investigations by the Czech mission in Abusir in particular have demonstrated the artificiality of the modern geographic division of the Memphite Necropolis into North Saqqara and South Abusir when referring to the situation in the Early Dynastic through end of the Ptolemaic Periods.1

In the wake of an overall study of Memphis during the Ptolemaic Period made by Dorothy Thompson2 it seems only right to undertake a similar study of the town necropolis and produce a synthesis of existing archaeological and written sources concerning Ptolemaic Saqqara. Pending a conclusive study of the subject by the author, the following paper reviews the most important archaeological monuments of the Ptolemaic Period discovered hitherto in Saqqara.

Any description of the historical topography of the Saqqara necropolis has to begin with a map published by Richard Lepsius in 1849,3 presenting the private tombs and pyramids that he had investigated. A more detailed, but topographically inaccurate map is that of Jacques de Morgan from 1897;4 its main virtue is that it shows the approach to the Serapeum, the dog catacombs, and the Anubieion prior to Geoffrey Martin’s excavations.5

The Saqqara Geophysical Survey Project directed by Ian Mathieson creates a subsurface map of the Saqqara plateau6 based on geophysical and archaeological research. These maps

2 D. THOMPSON, Memphis under the Ptolemies, Princeton 1988, passim.
3 LD I, Pls 32–34.
4 J. DE MORGAN, Carte de la nécropole Memphite. Dahchour, Sakkarah, Abou-Sir, Cairo 1897 [= Carte de la nécropole], Sheet 10.
show not only hitherto unknown structures, but also those, like the avenue of sphinxes originally leading up to the Serapeum, which were seen during the Nineteenth or early Twentieth century but again have disappeared under drift sand.

Another mapping project is the work carried out recently by the Pisa University Expedition,\(^7\) which has implemented a database and topographical map analyzing various aspects of Saqqara including archaeological and environmental studies.

No less important is the research conducted by the Czech mission at Abusir South, including 3D-mapping of the area. The Czech scholars have collected all the most important archaeological maps of the Saqqara and Abusir necropolises.\(^8\)

In discussing Ptolemaic Saqqara one should take into consideration the human cemeteries, the animal cemeteries and the cult buildings.

**HUMAN BURIALS**

An extensive Ptolemaic cemetery west of the Step Pyramid, excavated since 1987 by a Polish mission headed by Karol Myśliwiec, has inspired the present study. Over 600 burials

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have been found so far in strata overlying the Old Kingdom necropolis\textsuperscript{9} (Fig. 1). For the most part, however, determining an accurate date for the various human cemeteries around the Step Pyramid, especially those of the Ptolemaic Period, is a difficult task in view of the fact that they are found in the uppermost levels and have largely lost any funerary equipment that may have been placed in the graves.

To understand the archaeological context of the Ptolemaic necropolis in question it is necessary to take a closer look at the surrounding area, that is, the vicinity of the Djoser pyramid (Fig. 2) starting from the northern side and continuing to the northeast and then turning south:

In the north, there is every reason to believe, based on current research, that the Saqqara necropolis encompassed the region of modern Abusir South. In the second half of the First millennium BC, as stated by Květa Smoláriková,\textsuperscript{10} Abusir necropolis was a huge secondary cemetery with many larger or smaller cemeteries occupying much older buildings. A small Greek cemetery, existed in the area of the mortuary temple of Nyuserra, dated to the middle of the Fourth century BC,\textsuperscript{11} appears to have been abandoned shortly before the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great probably because of a growing preference for the burial place in the vicinity of a sacred animal complexes in Saqqara.\textsuperscript{12} Another secondary cemetery, used between the Seventh century BC and the First century BC was found by the Czech mission inside and around the mastaba of Ptahshepses.\textsuperscript{13} They also discovered a cemetery of the Greco-Roman Period in the eastern part of the Lepsius 25 funerary complex.\textsuperscript{14}

A huge cemetery from at least the Sixth century BC through First century AD, lying on either side of the avenue of sphinxes leading from the Anubieion up to the Serapeum, was used in the area immediately to the north and northeast of the Djoser complex (Fig. 2). Bodies, mummified or wrapped only in bandages, were buried there not always in wooden coffins, and almost always without funerary equipment. A small part of this large necropolis was studied by Harry Smith and David Jeffreys in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{15} Still debatable are two graves of unknown owners, one a shaft tomb and the other a reused mastaba, discovered

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11] Ibid., p. 68.
\item[12] Ibid., p. 71.
\item[13] Ibid., p. 69.
\end{footnotes}
2. General plan of Saqqara necropolis (after: Smith, Davies, Frazer, SAN Main Temple Complex, Fig. a).
in 1962 and identified as either Ptolemaic or Roman. They are situated along the avenue of sphinxes, north of the Step Pyramid.\textsuperscript{16}

A cemetery near the Anubieion yielded imports of Greek ceramics from well-stratified layers. The burials discovered under the Ptolemaic stratum and that of the foundation of the enclosure wall should predate the Third century BC. \textit{EES} excavations in 1977 and 1978 revealed approximately 108 graves scattered about on the site, some contained in anthropoid coffins, others found as loose bones.\textsuperscript{17}

The huge Ptolemaic Tomb\textsuperscript{18} discovered in 1926 by James Quibell to the southeast of the Djoser complex, just outside the south enclosure wall of the Step Pyramid,\textsuperscript{19} was a shaft tomb of an unknown owner. Its exact position today is unknown and its dating uncertain (\textbf{Fig. 2}). It had four burial chambers, one of which was a reused Old Kingdom tomb.

A Ptolemaic burial chamber (A) made in a reused Old Kingdom Shaft 99/I located south of the Tomb of Horemheb (\textbf{Fig. 2}), was excavated in 1999 and 2000 by an \textit{EES-Leiden} mission. According to Eugen Strouhal,\textsuperscript{20} the burials could be dated to the Ptolemaic Period.

Another tomb from the Ptolemaic Period, probably from the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes,\textsuperscript{21} belonged to Horemakhet; it is not recorded in Porter and Moss.

A cemetery from the First millennium BC was discovered by a mission from the Louvre north of the Unas causeway (\textbf{Fig. 2}). Three usage layers were identified there: Old Kingdom, Late and ‘Coptic’ Periods.\textsuperscript{22}

A cemetery found by \textit{IFAO} mission in the top layer of Tabbet al Guesh in Saqqara South was dated by Vassily Dobrev to the Late Period.\textsuperscript{23}

In view of the fact that there are so few cemeteries identified from the Ptolemaic Period, it is necessary in this study to pay attention to tombs with any kind of Greek inclusion as well as the many loose finds from the Ptolemaic Period reported from the area.

\textsuperscript{16} PM III.2/1, p. 505, Tomb between Nos I and II of Basta, and Tomb No. VI of Basta, referred to by the name of their discoverer; respectively NSP 169 [code 314] and NSP 170 [code 315] in the Italian database, cf. \textit{AGO}, BRESCIANI, GIAMMARUSTI, Environmental Risk Analysis, pp. 364–365.


\textsuperscript{18} PM III.2/2, pp. 650–651; APU 59 [code 113], cf. \textit{AGO}, BRESCIANI, GIAMMARUSTI, Environmental Risk Analysis, pp. 358–359.

\textsuperscript{19} J.E. QUIBELL, [\textit{in:}] Notebooks and papers of Battiscombe Gunn, with photographs from various sources (1883–1950), MMS XXII (\textit{non vidi}).

\textsuperscript{20} E. STROUHAL, Abusir and Saqqara in the year 2010, [\textit{in:}] List of Abstracts, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{21} TPU 54 [code 652], cf. \textit{AGO}, BRESCIANI, GIAMMARUSTI, Environmental Risk Analysis, pp. 378–379.

\textsuperscript{22} CH. ZIEGLER, C. BRIDONNEAU, A New Necropolis in Saqqara, [\textit{in:}] Abusir and Saqqara 2005 p. 58.

\textsuperscript{23} V. Dobrev, personal communication.


The provenance of granite and basalt sarcophagi, found out of original context west of the Step Pyramid, and now housed, among others, in the Cairo Museum, the Louvre and the British Museum, remains to be identified.

ANIMAL BURIALS

Undoubtedly the Saqqara necropolis with its numerous sacred animal complexes and cults, celebrated in the worship of Serapis – the hellenized Memphite name of the god Osiris-Apis, reached a zenith during the Ptolemaic Period.

The Serapeum (Figs 2–3) unearthed in 1851 by Auguste Mariette included a temple and catacombs, where mummiﬁed Apis bulls were buried inside basalt and granite sarcophagi (Fig. 4), all plundered in antiquity, set up in a catacomb of burial chambers. Hundreds of votive stelae were found in niches hewn in the walls of the underground corridors and in the debris lying in the galleries.

Two temples dedicated to Apis, eastern and western (built by Nectanebo II?), belonged to the complex. The two sanctuaries were joined by a paved road, called a dromos, bordered on either side by a low (one meter high) wall decorated with stone statues in Greek style. Beside the north wall of the dromos, a temple in Greek-style, dedicated to Apis, was added during the Ptolemaic Period.

A round exedra of Greek poets and philosophers (built by Ptolemy I?) (Fig. 5) was discovered by Auguste Mariette at the end of the dromos, near the East Temple. Jean-Philippe Lauer and Charles Picard considered the monuments as purely Greek in form and content and dated them to the beginning of the Second century BC. In his analysis of the monument Michał Pietrzykowski argued persuasively for a date in the Third century BC. The issue of the dating of this monument can be resolved only by further field research in the area.

Sacred Animal Necropolis to the northeast of the Serapeum (Fig. 2) is the largest and the most important. This vast complex of animal burials was discovered by an EES mission in the 1960’s. It has become clear that, from the early fourth to the late First

6. North Saqqara: plan of the Sacred Animal Necropolis (after Smith, Davies, Frazer, SAN Main Temple Complex, Fig. b).

8. The Mother of Apis Catacomb: introduction of coffer into Vault 7a or 9a – Axonometric projection (after Davies, Smith, Frazer, SAN Mother of Apis and Baboon, Fig. 31).

9. The Mother of Apis Catacomb: Vault 1a and stela niches (after Davies, Smith, Frazer, SAN Mother of Apis and Baboon, Pl. IXa).
century BC, the territorial extent of this necropolis was broadened to include the southern fringes of the South Abusir cemetery after the Czech mission discovered animal bones in secondary excavated pits in the superstructure of an anonymous mastaba of the Third Dynasty (AS 33).

The sacred animals cemetery consists of three complexes devoted to three separate animal cults: Mother of Apis complex, a complex for baboons and a complex for falcons (Fig. 6). These structures occupied two enclosures built on artificial terraces: the Central Temple Enclosure and the Northern Enclosure. Our knowledge of the organization, administration and functioning of the sacred animal cults as revealed by the Demotic Papyri from the site is the result of studies by Sue Davies.

The Mother of Apis Complex is associated with the Northern Enclosure. It comprises the sanctuary on ground level and the underground catacombs reached by a dromos. A sanctuary of Isis, the Mother of Apis, designated Sanctuary A, was the earliest structure here (Fig. 7). Mummified cows were buried in stone sarcophagi placed in rock-hewn rectangular pits (Fig. 8).

A study of inscriptions from the Sacred Animal Necropolis, found on stelae (Fig. 9), blocks and graffiti, and bearing the records of masons who cut the vaults, has demonstrated that the catacombs started to be cut most probably at the beginning of the Fourth century BC. They remained in use probably until 41 BC. The first cow burial for which we have a record was Taamun in year 2 of Hakoris/year 1 of Psammuthis of the Twenty-ninth Dynasty (392–391 BC); the latest that of cow Taihy in year 11 of Cleopatra VII and Ptolemy XV Caesarion (42–41 BC).

The Complex of Baboon, animal considered as incarnations of Thoth, whose cult was practiced in the temple at Memphis, lies south of Sanctuary A, inside the enclosure of the Central Temple. It comprises a courtyard, Baboon Chapel, Sanctuary B and catacombs


28 VERNER, BÁRTA, SUVOVÁ, Renaissance of Abusir, p. 268.
29 A terms initiated by the EES scholars to show the relationship between the two.
32 DAVIES, Org. Sacred Animal Cults, p. 79.
33 Ibid., p. 57–84.
10. The Baboon Catacomb: Upper Gallery, Door II and niches (after Davies, Smith, Frazer, SAN Mother of Apis and Baboon, Pl. XXIb).

11. The Baboon Catacomb: Vault C, intact burial in Niche 6 (after Davies, Smith, Frazer, SAN Mother of Apis and Baboon, Pl. XXa).

12. Mummy from burial in Niche 6 (after Davies, Smith, Frazer, SAN Mother of Apis and Baboon, Pl. XXb).

13. Rectangular wooden coffin with a mumiform cavity containing two falcon mummies (after Davies, Smith, SAN Falcon Complex, Pl. XXIVa).
accessible through a dromos (Fig. 10). Baboons were mummified, bandaged and placed in wooden shrines (Figs. 11–12). The shrines were then buried in the upper and lower galleries in sealed niches. The earliest stage of the occupation of the baboon catacombs, identified by the EES mission, based on the epigraphic material, is attributed to the year 404 BC, and the last to around 40 BC.\textsuperscript{35}

The Falcon Complex\textsuperscript{36} is located south of the Complex of Baboon. It consists of catacombs and structures associated with the cult: Courtyard, Falcon Enclosure and Falcon Sanctuary, the latter accessible by a ramp with steps hewn in the rock leading down to the catacombs. Sacred falcons were embalmed and wrapped in bandages, then buried in stone sarcophagi, wooden coffins (Fig. 13) or pots, placed in niches hewn in the rock and sealed with mud bricks.

The North Ibis Catacomb is located to the extreme north of the Sacred Animal Necropolis and the complex belonging to the South Ibis Catacomb is located to the extreme south of it (Fig. 2). Both complexes consisted of catacombs and a courtyard with a cult chapel above it. The sacred birds were mummified, bandaged and placed in pots, then stacked in the side galleries of the catacombs. The catacombs appear to have been in use until 89 BC.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 83.


\textsuperscript{37} J.D. Ray, The Archive of Hor, London 1976, pp. 136–46; Martin, SAN Southern Dependencies, pp. 7–14; T. Nicholson, C.M. Jackson, K.J. Frazer, The North Ibis Catacomb at Saqqara: „The tomb of
The South Ibis Catacomb (Fig. 14) was opened not later than the beginning of the Second century BC, when the northern ones apparently filled up.\textsuperscript{38} On a side note, the location of the South Ibis Catacomb was known to travellers visiting Saqqara as early as the Eighteenth century AD,\textsuperscript{39} but there is no indication that the other complexes were located before Walter Emery’s excavations.\textsuperscript{40} The South Ibis Catacomb was re-discovered by the EES and its continues till today.

Successive phases of the Sacred Animal Necropolis site have been distinguished and dated in the process, the third phase being attributed to the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 BC).\textsuperscript{41} At this time the Central Temple Enclosure had been adapted for the construction of a new north-south sacred way. The next stage was the construction of the North Enclosure, perhaps in order to enclose an unknown Ptolemaic building.

CULT BUILDINGS

Two large cult complexes were identified to the east and northeast of the Djeser complex (Fig. 2):

The Anubieion, a complex undoubtedly devoted to the funerary cult, is situated to the northeast of the funerary complex of Teti, partly covering its mortuary temple (Fig. 15). It was discovered by August Mariette.\textsuperscript{42} It is a large enclosure, constructed on three terraces. Three temples built in the Saite and Ptolemaic Periods stood side by side on the middle terrace, aligned north-south, two of them facing the Serapeum. The area of the South Temple was partly excavated in 1905–1906 by James Quibell,\textsuperscript{43} who unearthed its stone foundations within the temenos wall. The Ptolemaic Bes Chambers were uncovered in the southeastern corner of the precinct. Their function is still not clear. To the west of the Central Temple there was a residential area.

The Anubieion was excavated properly in 1976 and published in 1988 by Harry Smith and David Jeffreys.\textsuperscript{44} They examined parts of the central area, the settlement precinct on the

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\textsuperscript{38} Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{39} P. Lucas, Voyage du Sieur Paul Lucas, fait en 1714 par ordre de Louis XIV dans la Turquie, l’Asie, la Syrie, la Palestine, la Haute et la Basse-Égypte, etc..., Tome I, Livre IV, Amsterdam 1720, pp. 341–346.
\textsuperscript{40} J.E. Quibell, Excavations at Saqqara (1905–1906), Le Caire 1907 [= Excavations at Saqqara], pp. 12–14, Pls. XXVI–XXVIII.
eastern terrace, the stores and surrounding cemeteries. The Late Period cemetery, underlying the foundations of Anubieion, covered a New Kingdom necropolis, established on top of the remains of the mortuary temple of Teti. Excavations in the Anubieion by the SCA in 2006-2007 partly overlapped with the Lepsius 29 Pyramid. Several finds from there are of significance for the Ptolemaic Period. The southwestern corner of the Ptolemaic temenos wall of the Central Temple was uncovered above Old Kingdom levels. At its eastern end, a north-south extension was cleared.

The earliest preserved royal name in the Anubis enclosure is that of Ptolemy II, but it appears that some works for the installation of an extensive temple-town to the west of the Central Temple were conducted there already in the mid-Fourth century BC. Major works, that is, the construction of terraces for new courtyards and halls, took place in the time of Ptolemy V. A block showing Ptolemy V offering to Anubis had been found by previous excavators, while current excavations added a number of new blocks with cartouches of Ptolemy V, belonging probably to a monumental gateway leading to the temenos. Occupation of the site declined definitely in the First century BC.

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46 Jeffreys, Smith, Anubieion, pp. 50–51; Hawass, Anubieion, p. 184.
48 Quibell, Excavations at Saqqara, p. 29, Pl. 31.5; Jeffreys, Smith, Anubieion, pp. 3, 61, Fig. 79, Pl. 39a.
49 Id., Anubieion, p. 21.
Temple dedicated to Bastet – the Bubastieion – was built on the eastern escarpment of the Saqqara plateau, to the south of the Anubieion. Part of the enclosure wall of this complex has been unearthed. It was connected with the Anubieion by a ramp. To the north, this wall is still visible and it shows up clearly on a geophysical map made by Ian Mathiesson’s team.\(^{50}\)

The complex was discovered by Jacques de Morgan\(^{51}\) in the Nineteenth century AD and identified by the subterranean galleries cut in the cliffs, where between the Thirtyith Dynasty and the Roman Period thousands of mummified cats were buried. Smith and Jeffreys mentioned the Bubastieion in their publication of Anubieion.\(^{52}\) Currently, a French mission directed by Alain Zivie is excavating the Bubastieion.\(^{53}\) It most certainly included a group of sanctuaries, but nothing of these has survived. Pre-existing rock-hewn tombs of the New Kingdom were used for the cat burials (Fig. 16). The catacombs contained not only burials associated with the cult of Bastet, but also other animals. Cats, equipped with amulets and other votive objects, were sometimes buried in wooden or stone coffins and placed in the tombs in layers.

The Asklepion – most probably to be identified with the chapel or temple devoted to the Divine Imenhotep\(^{54}\) – is the third, beside the Anubieion and Bubastieion, temple on this site. Its location, however, is still a matter of speculation.

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\(^{50}\) Price, Geophysical survey, p. 39.
\(^{51}\) De Morgan, Carte de la nécropole, Sheet 10.
\(^{52}\) Jeffreys, Smith, Anubieion, pp. 78–79.
There can be no doubt as to the importance in the Ptolemaic Period of the sacred animal necropolises at Saqqara as a place where the different religious communities living in Memphis, the Greeks and the Egyptians, came together reinforcing through a shared cult the unity of the state. It was during this period that the sacred animal cult reached its zenith. The logistics of such an extensive cultic and funerary complex must have been on a grand scale. The necropolis seems to have changed in character to accommodate the new situation, but it is only in the Anubieion that this process can be traced. The Anubieion complex appears to have been the administrative center of the necropolis. It is referred to in Greek and Egyptian texts from the Ptolemaic Period, found by Mariette near the Serapeum, which attest to the activities within it, especially in the Ptolemaic Period. Its position on the processional way from the Ptah temple at Memphis to the Serapeum would have made it well suited for use during funeral ceremonies for Apis. It housed embalmers, officials, policeman and nobles and also offered ample place for pilgrims.

Further studies will focus on identifying the mutual relationship between these various structures and on reconstructing the cultural landscape of the necropolis in the last centuries BC. Priority will be given to establishing a topographic map of the Saqqara necropolis within its ancient boundaries, as suggested by modern research, taking into consideration all of the buildings existing in the area in the reign of the Ptolemaic kings.

Małgorzata Radomska
Instytut Kultur Śródziemnomorskich
i Orientalnych PAN, Warszawa
malrad@wp.pl

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