

Some Significant Features in the Decoration of the Chapel of Iti-ibi-iqer at Asyut*

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(Plates 1-3)

Abstract

The present study represents a publication of the most significant scenes and inscriptions decorating the newly discovered rock-cut tomb-chapel of the late First Intermediate Period nomarch Iti-ibi-iqer at Asyut. These scenes include offering the *mnjt*-necklace and sistrum of Hathor, military activities, hunting in the desert with a fabulous creature, fowling in association with goddess Sekhet, commemorating Khety II and his wife Iti-ibi and forming sacred symbols of wood, the significance of which is discussed. The associated inscriptions provide us with two hitherto unknown nomarchs, Iti-ibi-iqer and his son Mesehti-iqer, who successively governed Asyut after Khety II and were contemporaneous to Mentuhotep II: Nebhepetre.

1 Introduction

The tomb of Iti-ibi-iqer (N13.1)¹ was discovered during the 2005 season by the members of the joint Egyptian-German mission of the “Asyut Project” while surveying the necropolis for mapping purpose². Except for its two burial shafts, the tomb’s forecourt and the chapel’s surface were cleaned and the epigraphic work was done during the following season in 2006. As far as the evidence shows, the tomb-chapel was completely decorated, but it was badly affected by the leak of rain through some roof cracks near the chapel’s north-eastern corner and through its entrance, the consequence of which was the loss of much of the decorated plaster. Further damage of the wall decoration was the result of later reuses attested as early as the end of the Seventeenth Dynasty, including 148 graffiti written in Hieratic script or drawn on the surfaces of the chapel’s walls and pillars³. Some time later, the chapel was used as a mosque, the prayer niche “*Mehrab*” of which is drawn in a thick dark red paint on the chapel’s southern wall in association with Arabic graffiti, covering thereby much of the original wall decoration.

Nevertheless, the remaining part of the original decoration is enough to identify the tomb owner and his family, to detect much of the represented motifs, and to recognize the associated historical context. Despite its fragmentary state of preservation, the decoration of Iti-ibi-iqer’s chapel documents some rarely attested themes of religious and semi-religious

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¹ For the new numbering system adopted for Asyut cemetery, see: J. Kahl/M. El-Khadragy /U. Verhoeven, in: SAK 34, 2006, 241-42.

² In regards to „The Asyut Project“, see: M. El-Khadragy/J. Kahl, in: SAK 32, 2004, 233-243; U. Verhoeven-van Elsbergen, in: *Natur und Geist: Das Forschungsmagazin der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz*, 2004, 14-17; J. Kahl/M. El-Khadragy/U. Verhoeven, in: SAK 33, 2005, 159-167; J. Kahl/M. El-Khadragy/U. Verhoeven, in: *Sokar* 11, 2005, 43-47; J. Kahl/M. El-Khadragy/U. Verhoeven, in: SAK 34, 2006, 241-249; J. Kahl/U. Verhoeven, in: *Antike Welt* 4, 2006, 65-72; M. Becker, in: *GM* 210, 2006, 7-11; J. Kahl, in: *GM* 211, 2006, 25-29; M. El-Khadragy, in: SAK 35, 2006, 147-164; M. El-Khadragy, in: *BACE* 17, 2006, 79-95; M. El-Khadragy, in: *GM* 212, 2007, 41-62.

³ On these graffiti, see: Kahl, in: *GM* 211, 2006, 25-29; J. Kahl/M. El-Khadragy/U. Verhoeven, in: SAK, 2007, forthcoming.

implications, and has some inscriptions and representations of historical significance, which constitute the main concern here.

2 *Architectural features* (Fig. 1; Pl. 1)

The tomb of Iti-ibi-iqer is situated slightly to the south of and much higher than the tomb of the First Intermediate Period nomarch Iti-ibi (Tomb III; N12.1). It was cut into the seventh of the eleven limestone layers forming the mountain encompassing Asyut necropolis. The tomb's architecture is almost completely preserved. Facing east with its axis perpendicular to the entrance wall, the tomb is provided with a small forecourt, into which fourteen poor burials in two rows were cut. Each burial consists of a shallow shaft leading to a small burial place to the west. The grave goods found in some of these shafts suggest that the owners of these tombs were probably retainers of Iti-ibi-iqer⁴. Through a short causeway (5.50m. max. length x 1.09m. wide), the forecourt leads to a recessed façade and entrance, both of which show no ornaments or decoration. The entrance, which is defined by a shallow recess, was closed by a door, which with the socket for the lower door-pivot are bigger than expected in such a small tomb. The technique of setting the wooden door-frame by putting the upper pivot in first and shifting the lower one through a groove is clearly detectable here⁵.

The chapel is trapezoid in design, and is provided with a large niche cut in its western wall. The chapel measures 8.79m. av. E-W x 7.57m. N-S on the east wall x 9.29m. N-S on the west wall x 2.97m. max. height. It is divided into two sections by a N-S row of two pillars (A, B), each 0.78m. square x 2.50m. high, at the front line of which the walls and the ceiling protrude. A nice detail here is the three stepped bands towards the ceiling, which are decorated with alternating dark brown, blue and yellow horizontally painted bands. The niche measures 3.41m. N-E x 1.97m. E-W x 2.36m. high, its back wall has a painted false door showing traces of its framing torus moulding, cavetto cornice, broad panel and upper lintel. Two burial apartments are recognizable, although not cleaned yet; the first is reached by a vertical shaft cut in the centre of the chapel's inner section with a mouth measuring 2.90m. N-S x 1.21m. E-W, while the second is reached by a sloping passage running from the chapel's south-eastern corner⁶.

3 *Representations and inscriptions* (Figs. 2-10; Pls. 2-3)

The walls are coated with a thin layer of gypsum-plaster, on which all the inscriptions and representations are painted. These walls are bordered at top by a zigzag-frieze⁷, while framed

⁴ For these subsidiary burials, see the previous note.

⁵ D. Arnold, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*, 1994, fig. in p. 268.

⁶ This second burial apartment seems intrusive and does not belong to the original design of the tomb. This is suggested by the chapel's design which follows the general layout of the early tombs at Asyut dated up to the early Twelfth Dynasty, according to which the main tomb-chapel consists of a single room supported by one or two rows of pillars with burial apartments reached by vertical shafts (e.g., Kahl/El-Khadragy/Verhoeven, in: SAK 34, 2006, 243-44, fig. 2 [Iti-ibi (Tomb III; N12.1)]; El-Khadragy, in: BACE 17, 2006, 83, fig. 2 [Khety II (Tomb IV; N12.2)]. The sloping passage, whether simple or a complicated system of sloping passages and shafts, leading to burial apartments are attested for the later group of tombs dated from the reign of Senwosert I onwards, each chapel of which consists of passages and transverse halls leading to one or more shrines (e.g., Commission des monuments d'Égypte, *Description de l'Égypte ou recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française*, IV. Antiquités: Plates, 1817, pl. 44; Antiquités: Texts, 1818, 139-40; F. Griffith, in: *The Babylonian and Oriental Record* 3, 1889, 167 [Djefaihapi I (Tomb I; P10.1)]; Description, Ant. IV, pl. 47 [3, 6]; Texts, 148-49; Griffith, in: *The Babylonian and Oriental Record* 3, 1889, 126-27, 246 [unknown owner (Tomb O12.1)]; cf., D. Magee, *Asyût to the End of the Middle Kingdom: A Historical and Cultural Study* (microfilmed Ph. D. Thesis, Oxford), 1988, I, 10-13).

⁷ For the frieze-decoration, see: Vandier, *Manuel IV*, 41. For some provincial examples of the zigzag-frieze, see: N. Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish: The Cemetery of Akhmim IV*, 1983, figs. 14, 16-18; VI, 1986, fig. 6; idem, *Deir El-Gebrawi I: The Northern Cliff*, ACE: Reports 23, 2005, pls. 39, 50.

by a banded frieze with rectangular blocks of brown, blue and yellow paint separated from each other either by an uncoloured block or a tripartite unit divided by two vertical black lines. Blue, yellow and dark brown are used for the polychrome hieroglyphic inscriptions. Dark brown paint is used for male flesh and yellow paint for female flesh. Noteworthy are the blue painted flesh of the fabulous creature in the hunting scene, the similarly coloured figure associated with goddess Sekhet in the fowling scene, and the inconveniently blue painted tree in the felling-tree scene. Of the other conventionally painted scenes, blue, yellow, dark brown, black and orange-red are preserved.

3.1 Offering the *mnjt*-necklace and sistrum of Hathor (Fig. 2; Pl. 2a)

Although the westernmost section of the chapel's northern wall is badly damaged, enough remained to identify the theme of decoration and the associated inscriptions. At the top are three horizontal lines of hieroglyphs, the first two of which refer to the construction of the tomb, while the third one is devoted to the labels identifying the tomb owner and his wife who are depicted below. The first two lines read right to left:

(1) *jrt.n=f m mnw=f⁸ m jz n jt=f h³tj-^c jmj-r hm(w)-ntr Jt(=j)-jb(=j)⁹ jn z³=f smsw mrjj=f jw^cw=f¹⁰ nb n jšt=f nbt h³tj-^c jmj-r hm(w)-ntr* (2) *n Wp-w³wt nb Z³wtj Jnpw nb R-qrrt¹¹ sdm sdm^t w^c m [jzt]¹² [j³mj]-r hm(w)-ntr m³^c n Wp-w³wt Mzhtj-jqr*

„(1) That what he did as his monument, namely a tomb for his father, the count, the overseer of priests, Iti-ibi. It is his eldest son, his beloved, his heir, the possessor of all his possessions, the count, the overseer of priests (2) of Wepwawet, lord of Asyut, and Anubis, lord of Ra-qereret, the judge of that which one alone judges in the [palace], the true [overseer] of priests of Wepwawet, Mesehti-iqer“.

Below is a large standing figure of the tomb owner, facing right. He holds a staff in his left hand, and wears a long, projecting kilt. He is identified: *jrj p^ct h³tj-^c [h³mtj]-bjtj [j³mj-r hm(w)-ntr n Wp-w³wt] nb Z³wtj Jt(=j)-jb(=j)-jqr* - „the hereditary prince, the count, the [sealer] of the king of Lower Egypt, the [overseer of priests of Wepwawet], lord of Asyut, Iti-ibi-iqer“. Facing him is his wife attired in a long, tight dress, bracelets and anklets. She holds out a *mnjt*-necklace¹³ towards her husband with the right hand, while the relatively long and narrow

⁸ For the interpretation, significance, grammatical analysis and variants of this dedicatory formula, see: S. Taufik, in: MDAIK 27, 1971, 227-34; G. Vittman, in: WZKM 69, 1977, 21-32; R. El-Sayed, in: Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar I, 1985, 271-92; A. Leahy, in: J. D. Ray (ed.), *Lingua Sapientissima*, 1987, 57-64; K. Jansen-Winkel, in: MDAIK 46, 1990, 127-56; E. Castle, in: JEA 79, 1993, 99-120.

⁹ Writing the name of the tomb owner here without the epithet *jqr* attested for him elsewhere in the chapel's inscriptions supports H. Fischer's suggestion that this epithet might sometimes be added to and sometimes omitted from the name of an individual (Kush 9, 1961, 59). However, for the possibility of adding *jqr* to personal names as a posthumous distinction during the Heracleopolitan Period and the Eleventh Dynasty, see: Fischer, Dendera, 130-31, n. 576; E. Brovarski, in: Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar I, 1985, 134.

¹⁰ For this epithet, see: D. Doxey, *Egyptian Non-Royal Epithets in the Middle Kingdom: A Social and Historical Analysis*, PÅ 12, 1998, 254 [2.3].

¹¹ Ra-qereret is a name used for Asyut necropolis, for which see: Montet, *Géographie* II, 136, 139; F. Gomaà, *Die Besiedlung Ägyptens während des Mittleren Reiches I: Oberägypten und das Fayyum*, TAVO Beiheft B/ 66 [1], 1986, 270-72; Magee, *Asyût I*, 176-79.

¹² For the reconstruction, see: W. Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*, 1982, 174 [1504]. This title is not attested before the First Intermediate Period (K. Daoud, *Corpus of Inscriptions of the Heracleopolitan Period from the Memphite Necropolis: Translation, commentary and analyses*, 2005, 56). It was probably associated with some judicial hearing (H. Fischer, in: GM 128, 1992, 69-71; Daoud, *Inscriptions of the Heracleopolitan Period*, 56).

¹³ For some Old Kingdom evidence of the *mnjt*-necklace, see: Staehelin, *Tracht*, 125-27. For some examples, see: M. Saleh, *Three Old-Kingdom Tombs at Thebes*, AV 14, 1977, pl. 17; W. Simpson, *Giza Mastabas II: The Mastabas of Qar and Idu*, 1976, fig. 38.

„(1) An offering which the king gives, and Osiris, [lord] of Busiris, and [Khentiamenti, lord of] Abydos, that funerary offerings be presented to the ka of the count, the overseer of priests of Wepwawet, lord of Asyut, the overseer of priests of Anubis, lord of Ra-qereret, the truly honoured one, Iti-ibi-iqer. (2) [Viewing] the oxen by the hereditary prince, the count, the sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, the sole companion, the overseer of priests of Wepwawet, lord of Asyut, the overseer of the troops of the entire 13th Nome of Upper Egypt, the overseer of the *jsqwtwt*-cattle of Anubis, lord of the sacred land (3) and lord of Ra-qereret, the overseer of ... of the valuable acacia-trees of Wepwawet (?), lord of Asyut, the confidant of the king before his [Two] Land[s], his confident, the preeminent of his Two Banks, beloved of the king in his every place, the truly honoured one, Iti-ibi-iqer“.

To the left is a large figure of Iti-ibi-iqer, facing right. He leans on his staff with his left hand resting against the knob of the staff, while his right arm loosely curved round the staff with the hand holding a sceptre diagonally²⁵. With no preserved details of the hair, Iti-ibi-iqer wears a fillet and streamer, a beard, a broad collar, bracelets, a leopard's skin and a short, projecting kilt. Before Iti-ibi-iqer is a small standing figure of his wife, facing right. She wears a long wig, a broad collar and a long, tight dress, and holds a long-stemmed lotus flower close to her nose in her left hand²⁶ and a *nh*-emblem in the other hand²⁷. The label identifying the woman is written vertically before her, reading right to left: *hmt=f mrt=f hzjzt=f r^c nb ...* - „his beloved wife, whom he favours every day, ...“. Of the four registers occupying the space in front of the couple, the upper two are devoted to the presentation of animals. Each with four men and two animals, the uppermost register has the leading man labelled: (1) *jmj-r 3hwt Wp-w3wt-n[h]t*²⁸ (2) *htmtj-bjtj smr w^ctj jmj-r rwjtt*²⁹ *Wp-w3wt-nht* - „(1) the overseer of fields, Wepwawet-na[kh]t, (2) the sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, the sole companion, the overseer of the gateway, Wepwawet-nakht“, while the last man in the same register is labelled: *...w3 [wn]dw [jn] jmj-r jhw Sdh*³⁰ - „... addax [by] the overseer of cattle, Sedekh“.

Soldiers engaged in some military activity are the theme decorating the following two registers. Of the fragmentary preserved warriors who face right, ten are shown on the upper register, and seven are recognizable on the lower one. Most of them are archers, while the fourth man of the upper register holds probably a battle-axe. Some soldiers wear shoulder-length wigs, while it is not clear whether the others have close-cropped hair or wear short wigs. Some of these soldiers wear protective wristlets³¹ (upper register, nos. 3, 9; lower register, nos. 1, 3). The relatively well preserved leading archer of the second register has a feather on his head and wears the distinctive Nubian dress consisting of a short kilt provided

²⁴ For the early Twelfth Dynasty variant *mh-jb n nswt hntj t3wj* attested for Djefaihapi II at Asyut, see: Griffith, *Siût II* [4]; cf., Doxey, *Non-Royal Epithets in the Middle Kingdom*, 314.

²⁵ For this posture, see: Y. Harpur, *Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom: Studies in Orientation and Scene Content*, 1987, 127-28.

²⁶ For this motif, see: E. Brovarski, *The Inscribed Material of the First Intermediate Period from Naga-ed-Dêr*, [microfilmed Ph. D. Thesis, Chicago], 1989, 237, 1039 with refs.).

²⁷ For this motif, see: H. Fischer, in: *ZÄS* 100, 1973, 23-24, nn. 31, 33; Brovarski, *Naga-ed-Dêr*, 236-37 with refs.).

²⁸ Ranke, *PN I*, 77 [24].

²⁹ Fischer suggests that *rwjtt* probably refers to some place of judgment at the door of the local nomarch's residence (Dendera, 165-66).

³⁰ Ranke, *PN I*, 323 [15].

³¹ For a parallel, see: B. Jaroš-Deckert, *Grabung im Asasif 1963-1970*, V: *Das Grab des Jnj-jtj.f: Die Wandmalereien der XI. Dynastie*, nach Vorarbeiten von Dieter Arnold und Jürgen Settgast, *AV* 12, 1984, pl. 14. For their possible value as “wrist-guards”, see: A. Schulman, in: *JSSEA* 12, no. 1, 1982, 170.

with a sash and a central pendant piece³². One of the archers is shown shooting an arrow (upper register, no. 8), other warriors are depicted in a variety of attacking attitudes (lower register, nos. 4, 5), while the rest are represented marching. Showing no enemy, the represented action could be a military training. Otherwise, the scene records an abbreviated battle³³, in which the attacked enemy was not represented for reasons dictated by the limited wall surface devoted to this theme, the close parallel of which is attested from a battle scene decorating the early Eleventh Dynasty Theban tomb of Intef, in which a naval engagement is represented without showing the enemy³⁴.

3.2.2 Further military activity is shown on the southern part of the chapel's eastern wall, wherein four registers of marching soldiers are represented. The badly damaged scene shows soldiers proceeding towards the right. The upper three registers are headed by a large figure of the troop-commander, who wears a fillet and streamer, a beard, a broad collar and a short kilt. Of his hair and the objects held in both hands, no details are recognizable. The better preserved soldiers have close-cropped hair and wear short kilts, of whom one is provided with a sash tied at the back³⁵ (register 4, no. 5). Of their weaponry³⁶, large, pointed-top shields covered by cow-hides³⁷ (register 4, nos. 2, 4), bows and sheaves of arrows, spears (register 4, nos. 2, 4) and probably long handled battle-axes are attested (register 4, nos. 3, 6).

3.3 *Hunting scene* (Fig. 5)

Hunting wild animals in the desert is the theme of decoration, to which six registers at the westernmost section of the southern wall are devoted³⁸. No attempt has been made to render the usual desert environment with its undulating terrain and sparse shrubs³⁹. The upper register depicts a Dorcas Gazelle⁴⁰, a spotted leopard⁴¹ and a baboon⁴² proceeding towards the left. The second register depicts one of the earliest known examples of some fabulous creature in private hunting scenes⁴³. With his flesh painted blue, the now headless fabulous creature is

³² For the characteristics of the Nubian dress during the First Intermediate Period, see: Fischer, in: *Kush* 9, 1961, 56, 62-75.

³³ For the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom military scenes from Asyut, see: M. El-Khadragy, in: *SAK* 37, 2008, forthcoming. For a study of the Middle Kingdom battle scenes, see: Schulman, in: *JSSEA* 12, no. 1, 1982, 165-183.

³⁴ Jaroš-Deckert, *Das Grab des Jnj-jtj.f.*, pl. 14.

³⁵ Although the characteristic central pendant piece is lacking, the presence of a sash around the man's waist might suggest a Nubian archer here (cf., Fischer, in: *Kush* 9, 1961, 56).

³⁶ For the different kinds of Ancient Egyptian weapons, see: R. Partridge, *Fighting Pharaohs: Weapons and Warfare in Ancient Egypt*, 2002, 21-74.

³⁷ For the Egyptian shields, see: A. Nibbi, in: *ZÄS* 130, 2003, 170-81

³⁸ For the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom hunting scenes, see: Vandier, *Manuel IV*, 802-15.

³⁹ For some post Old Kingdom examples, see: Jaroš-Deckert, *Das Grab des Jnj-jtj.f.*, pl. 21; Davies/Gardiner, *Antefoker*, pl. 6; Blackman, *Meir I*, pls. 6-8; Newberry, *Beni Hasan I*, pl. 30; *II*, pl. 13.

⁴⁰ For identifying the animal, see: P. Houlihan, *The Animal World of the Pharaohs*, 1996, 61-67.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 91-93, pl. 16.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 96-108.

⁴³ For other known examples of hunting scenes with fabulous animals, see: Newberry, *Beni Hasan I*, pl. 30 [Tomb 3 of *Hnmw-htp* II - reign of Senwosret II (for the king's name, see: *ibid.*, pl. 38, 2)]; *II*, pls. 4 [Tomb 15 of *B3qt* III], 13 [Tomb 17 of *Htj*]; Griffith/Newberry, *El Bersheh II*, pl. 11 [Tomb 4 of *Nhrj*]. Different dates are proposed for three of these tombs: Some scholars assign Beni Hasan Tombs 15, 17 to the Herakleopolitan Period or post-reunification Eleventh Dynasty (Newberry, *Beni Hasan II*, 7; E. Brovarski, in: *Studies in Ancient Egypt in Honor of D. Dunham*, 1981, 28-30; D. Spanel, in: *Or* 58, 1989, 308, n. 28, 309-10, n. 40; Schulman, in: *JSSEA* 12, no. 1, 1982, 176-78; D. Kessler, *Historische Topographie der Region zwischen Mallawi und Samalut*, TAVO Beiheft B/30, 1981, 130), while others propose an early Twelfth Dynasty date for both tombs (W. Schenkel, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, *Bonner Orientalistische Studien*, Neue Serie 13, 1962, 78-84 [§30]; H. Willems, in: *JEOL* 28, 1983-84, 91-93; *idem*, *Chests of Life: A Study of the Typology and Conceptual*

shown in frontal representation in a human form provided with a lion's tail⁴⁴. He carries a gazelle on his back and holds another one in his left hand. A comparison with the synonymous Bes-like demon *ḥꜥ*, who is represented on some magical wands as one of the helpers of the sun god in the fight against his enemies⁴⁵ and produced in a three-dimensional version as early as the Twelfth Dynasty⁴⁶, suggests that our fabulous creature had probably a lion's mane, ruff and facial features. On this same second register and to the right of the fabulous creature are two gazelles looking backward in a gesture of fear, both are fleeing afar rightwards with a third young gazelle depicted between them. The much defaced third register depicts a hunter with an ostrich-feather stuck in his filleted hair. He is accompanied by his hound, and is shown drawing the string of the bow with his right hand shooting an arrow at some unrepresented animal. On the fourth register, a lion attacks some unidentifiable animal, perhaps a wild bull⁴⁷. The fifth register is dominated by a Nubian hunter shown at the left, facing right. Having an ostrich-feather on his less well-preserved wig, the hunter wears a fillet and streamer, two crossed straps on his chest with both ends secured by a high waistband⁴⁸ and a short kilt provided with a sash and a central pendant piece⁴⁹. He holds a throwing stick in his right hand, ready to fling it in the animal's direction, while a bow and a quiver are held in his left hand. To the right are two hounds attacking some unidentifiable animal. The sixth register shows a hound chasing after a Nubian Ibex⁵⁰ running rightwards, behind whom a gazelle is represented looking backwards towards the unrepresented left part of the register.

3.4 Fowling scene dominated by goddess Sekhet (Figs. 6-7)

The uppermost two thirds of the central section of the southern wall are devoted to a fowling scene with the caught birds being presented to Iti-ibi-iqer by goddess Sekhet. With all hieroglyphs facing left, the label identifying the tomb owner is written in two lines (1-2): a horizontal one at top and a vertical line behind the sitting figure of the owner, while the caption describing the represented action is written horizontally above the heads of both the goddess and the owner (3). Three short horizontal lines behind the head of the goddess refer to the deceased's unrepresented son, Mesehti (4-6). The inscriptions read: (1) ... *n jrj pꜥt ḥꜥtj-ꜥ ḥtmtj-bjtj s[mr wꜥtj jmj-r ḥm(w)-ntr] n Wp-wꜥwt nb Z[ꜥw]tj jmj-r mšꜥ n [Ndft ḥntt mj-ꜥd]=s*

Development of Middle Kingdom Standard Class Coffins, JEOL 25, 1988, 65). A Herakleopolitan Period or post-reunification Eleventh Dynasty date is suggested for Bersheh tomb 4 of *Nḥrj* (Anthes, Hatnub, 92-93; idem, in: ZÄS 59, 1924, 100-108; Faulkner, in: JEA 30, 1944, 63; Brovarski, in: Studies in Ancient Egypt in Honor of D. Dunham, 1981, 26-30; cf., E. Blumenthal, in: Aof 4, 1976, 35-62; El-Khadragy, in: SAK 37, 2008, forthcoming), while Schenkel assigns the tomb to the reign of Senusert I (Frühmittelägyptische Studien, 89-93 [§33-§34]), but Willems, on his part, dates the tomb to the reign of Mentuhotep IV (JEOL 28, 1983-84, 80-102; Chests of Life, 70-71).

⁴⁴ For a study concerned with the frontal representations in Egyptian art, including the closest Middle Kingdom parallel of our fabulous creature, the demon *ḥꜥ*, see: Y. Volokhine, La frontalité dans l'iconographie de l'Égypte ancienne, Cahiers de la Société d'Égyptologie 6, 2000, 70, 74-75, fig. 76.

⁴⁵ H. Altenmüller, Die Apotropaia und die Götter Mittelägyptens: Eine typologische und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung der sogenannten "Zauberwörter" des Mittleren Reichs, [Ph. D. Thesis, München], 1965, I, 152ff; II, fig. 16; SAK 13, 1986, 15-16, fig. 1.

⁴⁶ J. Bourriau, Pharaohs and Mortals: Egyptian Art in the Middle Kingdom, Catalogue, 1988, 111-13 [98-99], 116-17[106a].

⁴⁷ Compare: Duell, Mereruka, pl. 25; Davies, Ptahhetep and Akhethetep I, pl. 22; N. Kanawati/M. Abder-Raziq, Mereruka and His Family I: The Tomb of Meryteti, ACE: Reports 21, 2004, pl. 46; Blackman, Meir I, pls. 6, 8.

⁴⁸ For using such crossed straps with the securing high waistband by both Egyptian and Nubian soldiers, see: Fischer, in: Kush 9, 1961, 66.

⁴⁹ For depicting Nubian bowmen in post Sixth Dynasty hunting scenes, see: Vandier, Moꜥalla, pl. 26; Fischer, in: Kush 9, 1961, 63.

⁵⁰ For the animal, see: Houlihan, Animal World, 58-59.

Jt(=j)-jb(=j)-jqr (2) *mrjj Sht nb[t h3b]* ...*j=s r^c nb [J]t(=j)-[jb(=j)-jqr]* (3) *jn n=f Sht⁵¹ nbt h3b sht 3pd(w) m...* ...^c *jmj-r hm(w)-ntr [J]t(=j)-jb(=j)-jq[r]* (4) *z3=[f smsw]* ...*=f nb n jst=f nb[t]* (5) *mdd shr(?)⁵² [wh]mw⁵³ bw-nfr* ... *mnjw* (6) *bw-jqr hrj-tp h3tj(w)-^{c54} jmj-r [hm(w)-ntr] Mzhtj* - „(1) ... for the hereditary prince, the count, the sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, [the sole companion, the overseer of priests] of Wepwawet, lord of [Asyut], the overseer of the troops of the [entire 13th Nome of Upper Egypt], Iti-ibi-iqer. (2) Beloved of Sekhet, the mistress of fish and bird-catch ... every day, [Iti-ibi-iqer]. (3) Sekhet, the mistress of fish and bird-catch, brings to him the netted birds ..., the overseer of priests, Iti-ibi-iqer. (4) [His eldest] son ... the possessor of all his possessions, (5) the one who follows the plan, the [herald] of the place of beauty ... the herdsman (6) of excellence, the chief of the count(s), the overseer of [priests], Mesehti“.

On the right side of the scene sits Iti-ibi-iqer on a chair with a low, cushioned back and four lion legs resting on truncated cone supports. Facing left, he wears a short wig, a fillet and streamer, a broad collar, a sash across his chest and a short, tight kilt, and holds some unidentifiable thing with his left hand, while the action of his lost right hand is not clear. Goddess Sekhet with her body oriented towards the left looks backwards towards the sitting tomb owner presenting him live birds with both hands. Having the dark brown-coloured distinctive ideogram for *sht*  on her head, Sekhet wears a broad collar and a long, tight yellow garment with dark brown shoulder straps adorned with brown and blue dots, the lower part of the garment has a yellow and blue feather-like ornamentation. The preserved small part of her streamer suggests that her unpreserved wig was filleted too. At the left, three adjacent clap-nets are set next to a pool, above which the birds are flying. To the right of these nets is a small kneeling figure of a man, who is probably pulling the rope or giving the signal to close the net, which is full of Egyptian geese. A few words of the associated label are still legible: *jmj-r ... sht rk ... ^{c=k} st=(j) n mh.t(j) m..* - „The overseer of ... the trap (with) your hand, I will pull (the rope?) because it is full of ...“. At the left side of the nets is another fragmentary small figure of a kneeling man. He is probably untying the nets in order to collect the birds. Noteworthy is his blue painted flesh, a phenomenon which is attested for the fabulous creature of the hunting scene on this same wall, and again for Wepwawet in the Eleventh Dynasty “Northern Soldiers-Tomb” at Asyut⁵⁵. With all the other male figures in both chapels having the usual brown painted flesh⁵⁶, a divine being is probably represented here. Dominating the fowling scene with her designation *nbt h3b* - „mistress of fish and bird-catch“, Sekhet is probably assisted here by her son *H3b*, who is associated with her in a rather similar context dealing with the presentation of bird-catch to the deceased king⁵⁷. If this

⁵¹ The association of goddess Sekhet, as a patroness of the fish and bird-catch, with the fishing and fowling scenes is attested in the related captions as early as the Eighth/Ninth Dynasty onwards (e.g., Vandier, Mo^calla, 262 [inscription 16: 15], pl. 40; Blackman, Meir III, pl. 8; VI, pl. 13; Newberry, El Bersheh I, pls. 20, 22). Pictorially, a localized form of the goddess impersonating the fields of El-Qusiya is attested in the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of *Wh-htp* at Meir, wherein she is shown with other divinities impersonating the natural resources of the Nile-valley while presenting offerings to the tomb owner (Blackman, Meir VI, pl. 15).

⁵² For this doubtful epithet, see: Doxey, Non-Royal Epithets in the Middle Kingdom, 318.

⁵³ For the reconstruction, see: *ibid.*, 289.

⁵⁴ For the synonymous epithet *h3t h3tjw-^c* attested for Khety II at Asyut and *Nhrj* I, the nomarch of the Hare Nome, see: Griffith, Siut IV [57]; Anthes, Hatnub, no. 16, respectively.

⁵⁵ El-Khadragy, in: SAK 35, 2006, 152.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 151. As for the colour conventions followed here, see above.

⁵⁷ Compare: Pyr. § 555 (PT 341), which reads: ... *rdj.n b^cht ^cw(j)=s r NN šnj.n ^cw(j) NN h3b jrt nb Sht n z3=s H3b wnm NN hn^c=fm hrw pn* - „... Plenty has put her hands on king NN, and the hands of king NN have enclosed the bird-catch. Whatever goddess Sekhet makes belongs to her son Hab (i.e., Bird-catch), and king NN eats with him today (Pyr. § 555 [b-e]; R. Faulkner, The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, 1969, § 555).

identification is accepted, then we have here a pictorial version of Pyr. § 555 (PT 341). Proceeding towards the left is a third small figure of a man depicted above the nets, he carries two bunches of waterfowl suspended on ropes from both ends of a pole born across his shoulders.

3.5 Commemorating Khety II and his wife Iti-ibi (Figs. 8-9)

3.5.1 The upper left side of the southern wall is reserved to a face-to-face representation of the tomb owner accompanied by some woman, on the one hand, and Iti-ibi-iqer's predecessor, Khety, on the other hand. The labels identifying both men are symmetrically written in two lines; a horizontal line above the associated figure, and a vertical one in front of him, separating thereby each figure from the other by a double hieroglyphic inscription, a well known practice adopted for separating the dead from living as early as the Old Kingdom⁵⁸. To the left stands Khety, facing right. Fragmentally preserved, Khety wears a short, projecting kilt, and holds a long staff in his left hand and a *hrp*-sceptre in his right. With only three isolated hieroglyphic signs preserved of the upper line, of which a part of Wepwawet's determinative is still recognizable, the second line reads: ... [*h3tj*]-^c *htmtj-bjtj smr w^c[tj jmj-r hm(w)-ntr n Wp-w3wt nb Z3wtj]*⁵⁹ *jm3h[jjw]* ... *mrj nb R-qrrt* ... [*hz*]jj n ntr=f njwtj *Htjj-jqr m3c-hrw* - „ ... the [count], the sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, the sole companion, [the overseer of priests of Wepwawet, lord of Asyut], the honoured one ... beloved of the lord of Ra-qereret, whom his local god [favours], Khety-iqer, true of voice“.

Facing him in equal size is Iti-ibi-iqer attired in a broad collar, a bracelet around his remaining right wrist, a long, projecting kilt provided with a belt and having a downward curved hem at the front and a sandal in his preserved left foot. He holds a long staff in his left hand and a *hrp*-sceptre in his right. The associated caption reads: (1) [*jrj*] *p^{ct} h3tj-c htmtj-bjtj smr w^ctj jmj-r hm(w)-ntr n Wp-w3wt nb [Z3wtj]* ... (2) [*jmj-r*] *hm(w)-ntr n Wp-w3wt [nb Z3wtj]* ... *Jnpw nb [R-qrr]t jm3h[jjw]* ... *j w3h tpj b3 Jt(=j)-jb(=j)-[jqr] m3c-hrw* - „(1) [The hereditary prince], the count, the sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, the sole companion, the overseer of priests of Wepwawet, lord of [Asyut], ... (2) [the overseer] of priests of Wepwawet, [lord of Asyut], ... Anubis, lord of [Ra-qerere]t, the honoured one ... the one enduring on earth, Iti-ibi-[iqer], true of voice“.

Behind Iti-ibi-iqer is a badly obliterated figure of a standing woman. She wears a long, tight garment and anklets, and holds what seems to be a long-stemmed lotus flower, of which only the lower part of the stem is preserved.

Being *h3tj-c*, the most characteristic for nomarchs during the First Intermediate Period and the Eleventh Dynasty⁶⁰, and being a high priest of the local god Wepwawet suggest that this Khety was a nomarch, and that he is to be identified with one of the two well known First Intermediate Period nomarchs of Asyut, Khety I (Tomb V; M11.1) or Khety II (Tomb IV; N12.2). Judging by the prominence given to the military scenes in Iti-ibi-iqer's chapel, his military title *jmj-r m3c n Ndft hntt mj-qd=s* - „the overseer of the troops of the entire 13th Nome of Upper Egypt“, which is not recorded for any other nomarch at Asyut during Herakleopolitan Period, and his probable premature death suggested by preparing the tomb

⁵⁸ For the different methods adopted in the Old Kingdom representations aiming at separating the dead from living, see: N. Kanawati, in: SAK 9, 1981, 213-225. For a Twelfth Dynasty example in which a vertical column of hieroglyphic inscription is used to separate *z3-rnpwt* II from his deceased mother, see: H. Müller, Die Felsengräber der Fürsten von Elephantine aus der Zeit des Mittleren Reiches, ÄF 9, 1940, pl. 34; cf., Kanawati, in: SAK 9, 1981, 219, n. 37.

⁵⁹ This reconstruction depends only on the preserved determinative ☀, attested frequently here for *Z3wtj* referred to in such a title.

⁶⁰ Helck, Verwaltung, 206-9.

for him by his son Mesehti-iqer, Iti-ibi-iqer seems to have lived during the troublous period of the civil war. Of the two men called Khety, while Khety I enjoyed a peaceful governorship⁶¹, Khety II refers in his biography to a military campaign against the Theban forces⁶², in which he allied with the Herakleopolitan king Merikare. Accordingly, the identification of Khety II with his namesake represented here seems plausible. Although no reference to a filial kinship is preserved in this scene commemorating Khety, it seems quite possible that Iti-ibi-iqer was the latter's son.

3.5.2 To the right and left of the false door decorating the back wall of the niche are two table scenes, each is devoted to a woman. With its associated label identifying the represented woman completely lost now, the right table scene is of little use here. The left scene shows a woman seated on a chair with a low, cushioned back and bull legs⁶³ resting on truncated cone supports, with the bull's tail clearly shown hanging down from the back of the chair. Having no recognizable details, the woman, who faces right, extends her hardly preserved right hand towards an offering table, the stand of which is no longer preserved. The offering table is laden with fourteen stylized half-loaves, over which a foreleg of an ox and a plucked goose are shown. Two stands with variously shaped jars of drinks are depicted above the table. Faint traces of an offering bearer holding a goose are the only preserved decoration below the table scene. The caption identifying the commemorated lady reads: *jm³hjjt mrjyt Hwt-hr Jt(=j)-jb(=j) m³ct-hrw* - „the honoured one, beloved of Hathor, Iti-ibi, true of voice“.

In fact, Iti-ibi-iqer's wife is called once on the northern wall as *Snbty-jqrt mst K³w=f* - „Senebti-iqeret, born of Kauef“, and in each of the two well preserved labels identifying Iti-ibi-iqer's wife on the same wall she is introduced by the designation *hmt=f* - „his wife“. Although a second wife of Iti-ibi-iqer should not be excluded⁶⁴, the absence of the introductory designation *hmt=f* - „his wife“ before the woman's name here argues against the possibility of having a second wife in this table scene. On the other hand, the commemoration of Iti-ibi-iqer's possible father Khety II attested here is tempting to suggest a similar commemoration of Iti-ibi-iqer's mother herein. In favour of this identification is the similarly named female relative accompanying Khety II in the decoration of his chapel's northern wall. Therein, she is designated as: *hkrt nswt w^{ct} hm(t)-ntr Hwt-hr jm³wt=s nt r^c nb jm³hjjt Jt(=j)-jb(=j)* - „The sole ornamented one of the king, the priestess of Hathor, her well-disposed one of every day, the honoured one, Iti-ibi“⁶⁵. Thereupon, the identification of Iti-ibi of our table scene and her namesake represented in Khety II's chapel is suggested here, and being a mother of Iti-ibi-iqer is a possibility which should not be excluded.

3.6 Forming sacred symbols of wood and fighting bulls (Fig. 10; Pl. 3)

On the western wall, to the south of the entrance giving access to the inner niche, is a large figure of the tomb owner watching fighting bulls⁶⁶ and inspecting cattle, while the lower

⁶¹ Griffith, Siût V [1ff.]; Schenkel, Memphis, Herakleopolis, Theben, 71-74 [§57]. For Khety I's efforts in developing the irrigation methods at Asyut, see: W. Schenkel, *Die Bewässerungsrevolution im alten Ägypten*, 1978, 29ff.

⁶² Griffith, Siût IV [9-19]. For a detailed discussion of the biographical inscription of Khety II, see: El-Khadragy, in: SAK 37, 2008, forthcoming.

⁶³ Although chairs with bull legs were replaced by those with lion legs before the end of the Fifth Dynasty (N. Cherpion, *Mastabas et Hypogées d'Ancien Empire: Le problème de la datation*, 1989, 34), some Middle Kingdom examples of chairs with bull legs are attested (e.g., Newberry, *El Bersheh I*, pls. 12, 16-17, 19, 32, 34; Blackman, *Meir VI*, pls. 15, 17).

⁶⁴ For the question of polygamy in Egypt in the Middle Kingdom, see: W. Simpson, in: *JEA* 60, 1974, 100-105.

⁶⁵ El-Khadragy, in: SAK 37, 2008, fig. 3, forthcoming; Griffith, Siût IV [38-40].

⁶⁶ For a study of the bull fight scenes, see: J. Galán in: *JEA* 80, 1994, 81-96.

register is reserved for an unusual scene depicting carpenters forming some sacred symbols of wood. Facing left, the tomb owner is shown leaning on his staff and accompanied by two of his dogs. The caption above the first dog is almost lost, with a preserved ... *r^c nb* - „... every day“ at its end, while the caption of the second dog reads: *Dst⁶⁷ pw mrt nb=s* - „It is Djeset, whom its master loves“.

Of the remaining details of his attire, a fillet and streamer, a broad collar, a bracelet around his right rest and a short, projecting kilt provided with a belt are still recognizable. The label identifying the tomb owner is written horizontally above his head, while the caption describing the represented action is written vertically before his figure as follows: (1) *jrj p^{ct} [h³tj]-^c htmtj-bjtj smr w^{ct}tj jmj-r hm(w)-ntr n Wp-w³wt J[t(=j)-jb(=j)-jqr]* (2) *m³³ h³ k³w [k³w] sht ht [nb(t)] nfr[t] sht n k³ n h³tj-^c jmj-r hm(w)-ntr Jnpw nb R-qrrt jm³h[jjw]* ... - „(1) The hereditary prince, [the count], the sealer of the king of Lower Egypt, the sole companion, the [overseer] of priests of Wepwawet, I[ti-ibi-iqer]. (2) Viewing a fight of bulls, [bulls] of the field and [every] good produce of the field for the Ka of the overseer of priests of Anubis, lord of Ra-qereret, the honoured one, ...“

Of the three badly damaged registers depicting the activities watched by the tomb owner, the upper one shows traces of a pair of fighting bulls, one tossing up the other, with the caption *[h]³ sw k³ nht⁶⁸* - „bring him down, strong bull“. Next are few outlines of a calf facing a cow, which was probably shown milked by a now lost figure⁶⁹. Two bulls in front of a squatting figure with the associated caption ... *sw Wp-w³wt-nht* - „... him, Wepwawet-nakht“ occupy the right side of the second register, while few traces of more cattle are preserved on the left side. At the right side of the third register is a bull lifted most probably by the horns of its now lost rival⁷⁰. The left side of this register and the following one(s) are now completely lost.

The remaining right side of the lower register of this wall depicts the unusual motif of forming the *tjt*-symbol  and *dd*-column ⁷¹. A kneeling carpenter is shown with an adze in his right hand forming a wooden *dd*-column⁷², which is diagonally set on a sloping block-support. An upright *tjt*-symbol is shown placed on the ground to the right of the carpenter, while another *dd*-pillar and *tjt*-symbol are horizontally set above him. Next stands a man on a

⁶⁷ This name is neither listed by J. Janssen nor by Fischer in their studies concerned with the dog names (MDAIK 16 (Fs Junker), 1958, 176-182; JEA 47, 1961, 152-53, respectively).

⁶⁸ For parallels, see: N. Kanawati, The Tombs of El-Hagarsa III, ACE: Reports 7, 1995, pl. 22; Newberry, Beni Hasan I, pls. 13, 30.

⁶⁹ Compare: Vandier, Mo^calla, pl. 27; Naville, Deir el-Bahari I, pl.20 [II]; Griffith/Newberry, El Bersheh II, pl. 14.

⁷⁰ For similar scenes, see: Davies, Deir el-Gebrâwi I, pl. 11; Newberry, El Bersheh I, pl. 18.

⁷¹ Although none of the craft scenes dating to the Old and Middle Kingdoms show such a motif (cf., R. Drenkhahn, Die Handwerker und ihre Tätigkeiten im alten Ägypten, ÄA 31, 1976, 97-127, and passim), the *dd*-column is used as ornate grills which surmounted the shrines of the queens of Mentuhotep II: Nebhepetre at Deir el-Bahri (Naville, Deir el-Bahari II, pls. 14, 15; Hayes, Scepter I, 160-61, fig. 97), and it decorates again the lunette at the top of an Eleventh Dynasty stela belonging to *nhtj-jqr* (H. Müller, in: MDAIK 4, 1933, 187, fig. 11; cf., Brovarski, Naga-ed-Dêr, 1043-44). Later, in the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of *Wh-htp* at Meir, a *dd*-column is presented to the tomb owner by some attendant (Blackman, Meir VI, pl. 13). For associating the *tjt*-symbol with the *dd*-column at an early date, and for associating them with Isis and Osiris as early as the First Dynasty, see: A. David, Religious Ritual at Abydos (c. 1300 B.C.), 1973, 247.

⁷² Using the adze in forming the *dd*-column here suggests that the material is wood; for, in craft scenes, the adze occurs exclusively in connection with the manufacture of products made of wood (M. Eaton-Krauss, The Representations of Statuary in Private Tombs of the Old Kingdom, ÄA 39, 1984, 48-49 [§54]).

high platform smoothing probably some unidentifiable oblong object with both hands⁷³. Before him, on the same platform, is a kneeling man, whose action is not preserved.

4 Dating

4.1 Architectural evidence: Although single-roomed chapels supported by one or two rows of pillars with burial apartments reached by vertical shafts are attested at Asyut up to the early Twelfth Dynasty⁷⁴, the zigzag-frieze bordering the tops of the decorated walls is not attested for the Middle Kingdom provincial tomb-chapels, and was replaced in many examples by the *hkr*-frieze in association with the banded frieze⁷⁵.

4.2 Epigraphic evidence: Expressing filiations by the perfective passive participle form of *ms* as recorded on the northern wall here is first attested in the reign of Intef I or II⁷⁶, and was replaced by the relative *sdm.n=f* form of *ms* by the end of the Eleventh Dynasty⁷⁷. The consonantal shift from *w>jj* attested here for the epithet *jm3hjjt* „the honoured one“ in the table scene to the south of the false door proves that the tomb was not inscribed before the first change of Nebhepetre’s Horus-name from *S^cnh-jb-t3wj* into *Ntrj-hdt*, i.e., between his 14th and 39th years⁷⁸. The book-roll determinative used for  in the epithet *mn rdwj m šms ntr=f mrjj* - „firm footed in following his beloved god“ recorded on the still unpublished south face of the chapel’s southern pillar (A) shows no ties, a feature which characterizes the inscriptions dated up to the end of the Eleventh Dynasty⁷⁹. The writing of  *jmj-r* „overseer“ with a vertical stroke under the *r*-sign attested everywhere in the chapel’s inscriptions is known for the inscriptions dated from the reign of Intef I: Seher-tawy up to the reign of Senwosert I⁸⁰. Using the phrase *n k3 n* „to the ka of“ in the invocation-offering formula on the northern wall is rarely attested for Old Kingdom inscriptions⁸¹, attested at Asyut for the inscriptions dated to the First Intermediate Period and Eleventh Dynasty⁸², and commonly found in those dated to the Twelfth Dynasty⁸³. Introducing personal names with *jqr m3^c-hrw* „iqer, true of voice“, as frequently attested here, is known since the early Eleventh Dynasty⁸⁴. More Palaeographic features attested here and consistent with the inscriptions of the other First Intermediate Period tombs at Asyut include the standing soldier ideogram used for *mš^c* „troops“ on both the northern and southern walls, and for *h3* „fight“ in the bull fight scene on the chapel’s

⁷³ The slightly curved hands with the downward palms placed over the surface of this unidentifiable object may suggest that the figure was holding some stone rubber usually used for smoothing the surfaces of wooden products and other stone objects (Eaton-Krauss, *Statuary in Private Tombs*, 51 [§58]).

⁷⁴ See n. 6 above.

⁷⁵ See for example: Blackman, *Meir* II, pl. 10; VI, pls. 13, 15-17, 19; Davies/Gardiner, *Antefoker*, pls. 4, 15, 31-33; Newberry, *Beni Hasan I*, pls. 11-20, 29-30, 32, 34-37; II, pls. 4-5, 7, 11-17; Griffith/Newberry, *El Bersheh II*, pl. 11. For a First Intermediate Period example associating the *hkr*-frieze with the banded frieze at Asyut, see: El-Khadragy, in: *SAK 37*, 2008, figs. 1-5, forthcoming.

⁷⁶ C. Obsomer, in: *Individu, société et spiritualité dans l’Égypte pharaonique et copte: Mélanges égyptologiques au Professeur Aristide Théodoridès*, 1993, 178, list 5.

⁷⁷ Schenkel, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, 75 [§27].

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 51 [§16b], 144 [§58i]; L. Gestermann, *Kontinuität und Wandel in Politik und Verwaltung des frühen Mittleren Reiches in Ägypten*, *GOF IV/18*, 1987, 42.

⁷⁹ Schenkel, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, 27-28 [§2]; D. Spanel, in: *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson II*, 1996, 767; *idem*, in *Or 58*, 1989, 309.

⁸⁰ Schenkel, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, 35-36 [§7].

⁸¹ G. Lapp, *Die Opferformel des alten Reiches, unter Berücksichtigung einiger späterer Formen*, *SDAIK 21*, 1986, 208 [§355].

⁸² Spanel, in: *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson II*, 1996, 767, n. 9, 769, n. 15.

⁸³ C. Bennett, in: *JEA 27*, 1941, 79, 81.

⁸⁴ Schenkel, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, 76 [§28a].

western wall instead of the more usual form ⁸⁵. Also, they include the phonogram  used for *hmt* „wife“ twice on the northern wall showing deviation from the standard shape of the sign with a slit extending upwards from its curved bottom resembling thereby the female genitalia⁸⁶.

4.3 Iconographic evidence: Commemorating Khety, the predecessor of the tomb owner and his probable father who is identified here with the First Intermediate Period Siutian nomarch Khety II is the most conclusive evidence for dating the tomb. Not only does this mean that Khety II was followed by Iti-ibi-iqer in his office as a Siutian nomarch, but it excludes any possibility of dating the tomb after the reunification of Egypt by Nebhepetre. For it would be highly unexpected for any Siutian nomarch who was contemporaneous to Nebhepetre after having control of the whole of Egypt to commemorate the king's rival, Khety II, who had allied with the Herakleopolitan king Merikare and involved in the war against the Thebans under the command of Nebhepetre. Further iconographic features characteristic of the time are attested here. Of them is the long-stemmed lotus flower held in the left hand of Iti-ibi-iqer's wife close to her nose on the northern wall, which is regarded by Brovarski as typical Dynasty Eleven fashion⁸⁷. Also, the *nh*-emblem shown in the right hand of this same figure is not attested for non-royal individuals before the late First Intermediate Period and the late Dynasty Eleven⁸⁸.

Suggested date: A date after the 14th year of Nebhepetre and before his 39th year⁸⁹ is the most likely for decorating the tomb by Iti-ibi-iqer's son and successor, Mesehti-iqer.

5 General commentary

Due to its nearly completely preserved state, the decoration of Tomb N13.1 constitutes one of the most valuable sources from the end of the First Intermediate Period in respect of the Egyptian history and history of art. This discovery proves the importance of archaeological work in a necropolis which suffered much by quarrying activities and some inappropriately performed excavations⁹⁰. The fully decorated chapel provides us with many represented themes based closely on the Old Kingdom Memphite conventional style and showing scarcely any trace of the First Intermediate Period crude style attested elsewhere in Upper Egypt since the late Old Kingdom⁹¹. Nonetheless, some of the represented motifs reflect the spirit of the troublous time of the civil war exemplified in military scenes and other motifs with religious

⁸⁵ Griffith, Siût III [7, 16]; IV, [48]; V [17]. However, such a paleographic feature is attested for *mšc* and some other related words as early as the late Old Kingdom both at Asyut and other sites (e.g., L. Habachi, *Tavole d'offerta, are e bacili da libagione n. 22001-22067*, 1977, 29, pl. on p. 133; Griffith/Newberry, *El Bersheh II*, pl. 13 [15]; Brovarski, *Naga-ed-Dêr*, 268-70, fig. 20).

⁸⁶ Spänel, *in*: *Or* 58, 1989, 310-11 with refs.

⁸⁷ Brovarski, *Naga-ed-Dêr*, 237, 1039 with refs.

⁸⁸ H. Fischer, *in*: *ZÄS* 100, 1973, 23-24, nn. 31, 33; Brovarski, *Naga-ed-Dêr*, 236-37 with refs.

⁸⁹ The reunification of Egypt by Nebhepetre is suggested to be after his 14th year and before his 39th year (J. Quack, *Studien zur Lehre für Merikare*, *GOF* IV/23, 1992, 98-113).

⁹⁰ For the early Twentieth Century excavations at Asyut, see: Magee, *Asyût I*, 7-8; D. Ryan, *The Archaeological Excavations of David George Hogarth at Asyut, Egypt*, 1988, 25-28, and *passim*. Noteworthy is the use of explosives by David Hogarth in removing the large stone blocks of the collapsed tomb bearing his number XXVII (*ibid.*, 54).

⁹¹ For this crude style attested in Upper Egypt since the late Old Kingdom, see: Smith, *Sculpture*, 217ff. For some examples, see: Vandier, *Moçalla*, pls. 25ff; Kanawati, *El-Hagarsa III*, pls. 20ff; D. Dunham, *Naga-ed-Dêr Stelae of the First Intermediate Period*, 1937, pls. 2ff; Fischer, *Coptite Nome*, pls. 16ff; Fischer, *in*: *Kush* 9, 1961, figs. 3-6, pls. 10-13.

implications aiming at bestowing the tomb owner support, protection and abundant provisions.

Of its valuable historical implications, the securely dated tomb provides us with two hitherto unknown nomarchs, Iti-ibi-iqer and his son Mesehti-iqer, who successively governed Asyut before the reunification of Egypt by Nebhepetre. Moreover, the chapel's decoration provides evidence for the connection between these two nomarchs and Khety II, who has been considered for a long time the last of the First Intermediate Period family of nomarchs who ruled Asyut up to the reunification of Egypt by Nebhepetre⁹². This evidence might help in reestablishing the history of Asyut during the final stages of the war between the northern kingdom of Herakleopolis and the Theban rulers. Taking Franke's reasonably suggested sequence of the earlier stages of this war as a point of departure⁹³, Iti-ibi (Tomb III; N12.1) was involved in the rebellion of Thinis dated to the 14th year of Nebhepetre⁹⁴. He is believed to be still alive when Nebhepetre recaptured the town, and that he was the victim of attacking Asyut afterwards by the Theban troops⁹⁵. Expelling the Theban troops from Asyut, Khety II who was contemporaneous of both Merikare and Nebhepetre enjoyed a relatively short tenure of governorship as suggested by his unfinished tomb⁹⁶. This suggests that Iti-ibi-iqer started his career as governor around the second decade of Nebhepetre. On the other hand, the preparation of this tomb by Iti-ibi-iqer's son Mesehti-iqer, as stated here, suggests a rather short tenure of governorship for the father.

A study of the Siutian repertoire of military scenes elsewhere led to the conclusion that Mesehti-iqer could be identified with Mesehti, the owner of CG 257, CG 258, CG 28118 (JE 30966) and CG 28119 (JE 30966)⁹⁷, or that the former was followed by his namesake Mesehti, a possible member of this same family, who ruled Asyut before the reunification of Egypt⁹⁸. In favour of the first suggestion is the proposed pictorial rendering of § 555 (spell 341) of the Pyramid Text here, which may be taken as a forerunner of appropriating a royal prerogative, which culminated afterwards in inscribing coffins with the Coffin Texts⁹⁹. Being responsible for the tomb's decoration, Mesehti-iqer took probably a further step towards inscribing his coffins with Coffin Texts, the presence of which on his coffins led both Schenkel¹⁰⁰ and Willems¹⁰¹ to suggest a relatively later date for Mesehti¹⁰².

⁹² See for example: Quack, *Lehre für Merikare*, 111; D. Franke, in: SAK 14, 1987, 53; Spanel, in Or 58, 1989, 302; Gestermann, *Frühen Mittleren Reiches*, 41-42.

⁹³ Franke, in: SAK 14, 1987, 52-53.

⁹⁴ For the rebellion of Thinis, see: Clère/Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XI^{ème} dynastie*, 19 [§23]; Schenkel, *Memphis – Herakleopolis - Theben*, 226-28 [§374]. For the two successful battles of Iti-ibi against the Southern Nomes, one of which is suggested to be correspondent to the afore-mentioned rebellion of Thinis, see: Griffith, *Siût III* [16-37]; Schenkel, *Memphis -Herakleopolis - Theben*, 79-81 [§60]; cf., Franke, in: SAK 14, 1987, 52.

⁹⁵ El-Khadragy, in: SAK 37, 2008, forthcoming.

⁹⁶ Idem, in: BACE 17, 2006, 83-89.

⁹⁷ PM IV, 265. For CG 257-258, see: M. Bietak, in: *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar I*, 1985, 97, pls. 1-4. For CG 28118-28119, see: P. Lacau, *Sarcophages antérieurs au Nouvel Empire II*, 1906, 101-33, pl. 9.

⁹⁸ El-Khadragy, in: SAK 37, 2008, forthcoming.

⁹⁹ An even earlier usurpation of spells from the Pyramid Texts is attested in the late Old Kingdom burial chamber of *Mnj* at Dendera, this literal borrowing, according to Fischer, may belong to the first use of Coffin Texts during the First Intermediate Period (Dendera, 88).

¹⁰⁰ Schenkel dates Mesehti to the very end of the Eleventh Dynasty or the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (*Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, 117-118 [§44 a]).

¹⁰¹ Willems suggests a date for Mesehti not earlier than the middle of the Twelfth Dynasty (*Chests of Life*, 103-104).

¹⁰² However, according to Schenkel, the earliest datable example inscribed with Coffin Texts is that of *ḥḥjyt*, a minor wife of Nebhepetre, who was buried shortly before the reunification of Egypt, thereby both *ḥḥjyt* and Mesehti were contemporaneous (*Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, 121; cf., Fischer, Dendera, 88). Moreover,

Believing that military scenes reflect actual historical events¹⁰³, it seems possible that Iti-ibi-iqer resumed the fight against the Theban troops. He was probably the first Siutian nomarch who levied Nubian archers in his army¹⁰⁴. Nubian archers are also attested for the Theban troops at the same time¹⁰⁵. Judging by Mesehti-iqer's statement that he prepared the tomb for his father, Iti-ibi-iqer seems to be another victim of this civil war.

In decorating the tomb, Mesehti-iqer beseeched the support of every possible divine power. Overcoming the enemies was essential for Mesehti-iqer who previously lost his father, grandfather and great grand father in this war. Under this concept comes the representation of the fabulous creature, the Bes-like demon *ḥꜥ*, in the hunting scene understood as one of the helpers of the sun god in his fight against his enemies¹⁰⁶, that he may provide support in this earthly war. Seeking stability and life, Mesehti-iqer included here the valid combination of the *ḏd*-pillar and *tjt*-symbol¹⁰⁷. Securing provisions of every good produce of the field led Mesehti-iqer to produce a pictorial version of § 555 (spell 341) of the Pyramid Text that Goddess Sekhet and her son *Hꜥb* may guarantee renewed provisions. Aiming at reviving the deceased¹⁰⁸ and bestowing Hathor's blessings, favour and good fortune on him¹⁰⁹, the deceased's wife is represented offering him the *mnjt*-necklace and sistrum of Hathor. The inclusion of the proposed symbolic scene of bull fight was also chosen for the chapel's decoration that it may maintain the deceased's leadership in the Netherworld¹¹⁰.

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Plate 1 (a) Iti-ibi-iqer, forecourt and façade

isolated instances of Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period coffins inscribed with Coffin Texts are cited by Willems (Chests of Life, 244-49). A further early use of Pyramid and Coffin Texts is attested from a Ninth Dynasty coffin from Naga-ed-Dêr (Brovarski, Naga-ed-Dêr, 661-63).

¹⁰³ G. Gaballa, Narrative in Egyptian Art, 1976, 138-41; cf., Schulman, in: JSSEA 12, no. 1, 1982, 180-183.

¹⁰⁴ According to Bietak Nubian mercenaries were not attested at Asyut before the end of the Eleventh Dynasty (Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar I, 1985, 87-97).

¹⁰⁵ Nubian archers are represented in the two battle scenes of the early Eleventh Dynasty Theban tomb of Intef, whose tomb was decorated during the early part of Nebhepetre's reign (Jaroš-Deckert, Das Grab des Jnꜥ-jtꜥ.f, pls. 14, 17), and are attested again in the battle scene represented on the now displaced fragments of the mortuary temple of Nebhepetre at Deir el-Bahri (Schulman, in: JSSEA 12, no. 1, 1982, 170-76).

¹⁰⁶ Altenmüller, Die Apotropaia und die Götter Mittelägyptens I, 152ff.

¹⁰⁷ H. Schäfer, in: Studies presented to F. Ll. Griffith, 1932, 424ff.

¹⁰⁸ Gillam, in: JARCE 32, 1995, 233.

¹⁰⁹ Davies/Gardiner, Amenemhêt, 94-96.

¹¹⁰ Relating the bull fight scene to symbolism concerning the afterlife, J. Galán suggests that the deceased in his struggle to maintain his leadership in the Netherworld is symbolically identified with a bull who has to defeat another one who challenges him, and that the purpose of this challenge is to prove that the deceased is entitled to be the lord of the herd and fields, i.e. of the Netherworld (JEA 80, 1994, 81-96).

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