

The joined mission of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities and the Faculty of Archaeology/Department of Egyptology of Leiden University resumed its work at Saqqara on January 22th, 2008 and continued until March 7th. The staff consisted of Dr Maarten J. Raven (field director), Dr Harold M. Hays (deputy field director), Dr Ladislava Horáčková (anthropologist), Dr Barbara G. Aston (ceramicist), Dr Rob J. Demarée (hieraticist), Drs Willem F.M. Beex (surveyor), Mr Peter Jan Bomhof and Ms Anneke J. de Kemp (photographers), Ms Dorothea Schulz and Dr Lyla Pinch-Brock (artists), Mr Ben J.L. van den Bercken and Mr Daniel M. Soliman (field assistants). Dr Kim Duistermaat, Dr Ilona Regulski and Ms Claudia Lacher briefly joined the mission for the project in the Second Dynasty tomb (see below).

The fieldwork was carried out in close collaboration with Mr Usama Abdessalam el-Shimy (Director of Saqqara) and was supervised in the field by the Inspector Mr Adel Ragab Ali Basiuny. The Expedition wants to express its gratitude to Dr Zahi Hawass (Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities), Mr Magdy el-Ghandur (Chairman of the Department of Foreign Missions), and to the members of the Permanent Committee of the SCA.

Work was concentrated this year in and around the tomb of Ptahemwia, a contemporary of King Akhenaten, which was discovered in 2007. Otherwise the expedition conducted a brief investigation under the tomb of Maya, where a Second Dynasty tomb was located. Study and recording was undertaken of the relief fragments, pottery, and skeletal material found during the 2007 season.

### **Excavation of the substructure of the tomb of Ptahemwia**

The tomb of the 'royal butler, clean of hands' Ptahemwia is of the usual type with a pylon gateway, peristyle courtyard, and three cult chapels. The main shaft of the tomb is situated in the centre of the courtyard. Only one of its covering slabs was still present, whereas drystone walls erected around its aperture likewise betrayed it had been entered during the 19th century. The shaft proved to be 9 m deep. It gives access to an antechamber (A) in the south, leading to a descending corridor (B) and burial-chamber (C) in the west. A side-room to the south (D) leads to a 4.80 m deep pit (E) with a further burial-chamber (F) at the bottom. Part of the burial complex was found almost empty, doubtless the result of its excavation by our predecessors in the 19th century. Chamber F was the only one still containing a quantity of New Kingdom pottery and some decayed wood of the original coffins. Otherwise the complex was largely filled by wind-blown sand and surface material (including Coptic sherds) which had penetrated via the main shaft but also via a secondary shaft (2008/10) to the south of the tomb which breaks through the ceiling of Chamber D.

Objects found in this subterranean complex were few and comprise some inlays of New Kingdom coffins (eyes and eyebrows), some beads, a scarab with the name of Thutmose IV, and a number of Late Period amulets. The latter probably originate in a burial complex higher up in the secondary shaft and situated further to the south of Ptahemwia's tomb. This complex was not investigated, and the secondary shaft itself was refilled at the end of the season. The main shaft of Ptahemwia himself was closed with the concrete slabs made for that purpose by the architect Nicholas Warner.

### **Sondage in the north chapel of the tomb of Ptahemwia**

In 2007, a total of 21 individual burials had been excavated from the fill of Ptahemwia's north chapel. However, excavation was stopped at the original floor level, and it was only afterwards that we discovered that similar burials in the south chapel continued under floor level. Therefore, it was decided to make an additional sondage in the north chapel, in order to check whether perhaps some more burials had been missed. Indeed, three additional interments of children were discovered, which were duly registered and will be added to the total number of skeletons to be studied in the course of next season.

### **Excavations to the east of the tomb of Ptahemwia**

A small limestone chapel (2007/6) in front of the entrance of Ptahemwia's tomb was already discovered by the Expedition in 2007. Unfortunately, this did not contain any wall-reliefs or inscriptions to inform us about its owner. In an endeavour to find out more about this, it was decided to investigate the small shaft belonging to this chapel and situated in front of it. To this end, an area of about 8 x 12 m to the east of 2007/6 was excavated. This indeed exposed the full aperture of the shaft of chapel 2007/6, which was then emptied. It proved to be 4.70 m deep and gives access to a west chamber (A) with one shallow niche (B) and two side-chambers (C and D). Apart from some remains of decayed mummies, coffins, and cartonnages (including an attractive facial mask), hardly anything was found in these rooms, and inscribed material was sadly lacking altogether. This means that the owner of the chapel is still unknown, although its architectural type allows us to date it to the Ramesside period.

The sondage further east and south of this chapel led to the discovery of a Late Period shaft (2008/2, unexcavated), a further limestone tomb-chapel (2008/6, likewise uninscribed) and the corner of a large mud-brick tomb of Dynasty XVIII type (2008/5, including one relief slab still in situ and depicting the owner and his wife in front of three fishermen). None of these structures was further explored; instead shaft 2008/2 was secured with cement, tomb 2008/5 was recovered with sand, and the shaft of 2007/6 was refilled and its covering slabs laid back.

### **Excavations to the south of the tomb of Ptahemwia**

Apart from shaft 2008/10 (see above), one further limestone chapel of Ramesside date (2007/10) was investigated further west along Ptahemwia's south perimeter wall. This was of the same type as the two chapels found to the east of the tomb, being built of limestone slabs erected on a stone floor, and unfortunately again quite anonymous. Part of this tomb had already been seen in 2007, but now also its south half could be exposed, which has been built against a massive mud-brick wall belonging to a further 18th Dynasty tomb (2008/11). The limestone chapel also had a shallow shaft in front of its floor; because this had been much damaged by stone robbers, it could not be safely excavated to its full depth. Instead, further work was suspended at a depth of 4.35 m, after two small chambers to the north of the shaft had been briefly inspected. Both this dangerous shaft and the much deeper shaft 2008/10 next to it were refilled at the end of the season.

### **Excavations to the north of the tomb of Ptahemwia**

To the north of Ptahemwia's tomb, a shallow sondage had already been executed in 2007. This had resulted in the find of some beautiful relief blocks, so that the Expedition decided to remove some more sand in order to exclude the possibility that more wall decoration would be overlooked in this area. In fact, the number of finds from here was restricted, although a

very interesting fragment of a gabled stela belonging to a certain Nebiau and dating to the Amarna period could be salvaged from the rim of a Late Period shaft (2008/16).

### **A new Second Dynasty tomb found under the monument of Maya**

In 1991, a secondary shaft (Maya shaft V) dating to the Late Period and situated in the corner between Maya's outer courtyard and his south chapel (A) had already been emptied by the Expedition. At roughly 9.10 m underground, a burial-chamber of that period was investigated, but an adjacent complex behind a breakthrough leading to the west was then left unexplored. Of this complex, it was only noted that it seemed to belong to the Old Kingdom. This was refuted by a comparison with the Second Dynasty material found under the tomb of Meryneith in 2002, and further exploration of this mysterious complex under Maya's tomb was considered to be advisable. Therefore, the architect of the German Expedition in the Saqqara tomb of Ninetjer, Ms Claudia Lacher, was invited to join the team, seconded by Dr Duistermaat and Dr Regulski representing the Dutch-Flemish Institute in Cairo.

The Late Period burial-chamber with its three mummy-niches is of the usual type of the period. There is a small corridor at the northern part of the west wall, probably carved in the Late Period in order to make a fourth mummy-niche and accidentally breaking through to the adjacent underground complex. The first room of this complex (A) has an orientation from northeast to southwest. It has a length of 7.70-7.85 m, with a width of 2.77 m (south) and 2.32 m (north). The height is about 1.75-1.88 m. Two pilasters, one at the west and another one at the east, divide room A into two parts. Beside the pilaster corridor A300 leads to the west. Two other corridors, A100 (west) and A200 (east), are situated at the north of room A. The main access seems to be in the north, but this corridor is completely sand-filled, caused by a later shaft.

Both Corridor A100 (long 3.32 m) and A200 (long 3.18 m) are unfinished. Each of them displays the peculiar hemispherical recesses in the side-walls typical of Second Dynasty underground galleries. Corridor A300 has a length of 4.85 m and also has a hemispherical recess in the north wall. At its west end, the connecting corridor A301 runs south for a length of about 2.75 m. Probably in the Late Period or even later A301 was reused as a burial chamber for possibly three mummies, as shown by some bones, potsherds and faience beads.

The whole complex was found filled with a big amount of debris. This contained a quantity of pottery, complete and broken stone vessels made of alabaster, gneiss, breccia and other stones, and some seal impressions including one with the name of King Khasekhemuy. Both these finds and the architecture itself date the new tomb to the late part of the Second Dynasty (an Old Kingdom stela fragment inscribed for a man Masekhem and an offering basin must be intrusive). Room A looks a little like corridor F of Ninetjer's tomb, and the arrangement of the narrow corridors is similar too. In both cases the main access leads in from the north. The room in the south could be interpreted as the burial-chamber, but this part is still partly filled with debris and has not yet been mapped.

### **Study of pottery**

Pottery work this season began with the recording of pottery from two New Kingdom contexts excavated last year. The first of these was Shaft 2005/1 in the forecourt of the tomb of Tia and Tia, which contained a 'beer jar' of Nineteenth Dynasty type and at least 11 pots of Second Dynasty date. The second New Kingdom context was a deposit of 17 red-slipped jars

found above the shaft of Ptahemwia's tomb. There can be little doubt that here we have the actual remains of the 'breaking of the red pots' ritual.

Excavations in 2008 encompassed several New Kingdom complexes. Shaft 2007/6 contained a set of five dishes with matching lids that may date to the Third Intermediate Period. Some late New Kingdom pottery remained in and around Chapel 2007/10, and in its shaft. Further excavation in the north chapel of Ptahemwia's tomb revealed a long-necked jar of late Dynasty 19 to Dynasty 20 date, and parts of an amphora inscribed with a hieratic wine docket specifying Year 7. The main shaft of Ptahemwia's tomb initially seemed rather disappointing. However, Chamber F contained exclusively New Kingdom potsherds which remain to be reconstructed next season.

Lyla Pinch-Brock this season made additions and revisions of drawings of blue-painted pottery from the tomb of Maya and Meryt.

### **Study of human remains**

Human skeletal remains studied this season came from the western chapels of Ptahemwia and from shaft 2005/1 in the forecourt of the tomb of Tia. Partly preserved skeletons of 56 individuals from the south chapel of Ptahemwia, and 11 individuals from the central chapel (both adults and children) were studied. From shaft 2005/1, 2 individuals in the west room and 7 individuals in the east chamber (both adults and children) were recorded.

Bones found in the subterranean complex of Ptahemwia and skeletons from the northern chapel of the tomb (including three child's skeletons found this season) were only sorted to be prepared for study next season. The accidental finds of isolated bones in the course of removal of surface sand layers during the whole season were only assessed with respect to the occurrence of paleopathologic changes.

### **Other tasks**

All relief fragments found in and around the tomb of Ptahemwia during the seasons 2007-2008 could be studied and recorded in facsimile drawings before the end of the season; the small fragments were also photographed, whereas the larger blocks still need to be recorded in photography during the next season. All small fragments of the season 2007 were transferred from the Expedition's magazine to the south chapel of the tomb of Ptahemwia, whereas the north chapel was used for storing the skeletal fragments and the finds from the Second Dynasty tomb.

Dr Maarten J. Raven

Field Director