

SECOND DYNASTY INK INSCRIPTIONS FROM SAQQARA
PARALLELED IN THE ABYDOS MATERIAL FROM
THE ROYAL MUSEUMS OF ART AND HISTORY (RMAH)
IN BRUSSELS

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As described by Stijn Bielen in this volume, a research project was initiated in January 2002 to investigate comprehensively the vast number of objects from the royal tombs of the First and Second Dynasties at Umm el-Qaab, Abydos, which are currently kept in the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) in Brussels (see De Putter *et al.* 2000; Hendrickx *et al.* 2001). As regards the stone vessel fragments in this collection, each individual piece had to be cleaned in order to be able to handle it properly. The dust of nearly a century was removed by careful brushing and pouring water over the individual fragments, sampling possible remnants of original contents and carefully checking them for excavation marks. Given the overwhelming mass of over 50,000 individual fragments, this may seem like a dull and unrewarding enterprise, however, some interesting information emerged.

Unexpectedly, traces of ink inscriptions, in both black and red, appeared on a few fragments. Similar, but more legible, inscriptions had already been found on these fragments early in the 20th century, when the wooden boxes containing them were first perused. The newly discovered vessel inscriptions, however, could never have been noticed at first glance. Unfortunately, none of them could be attributed to a particular royal tomb at Umm el-Qaab.

It was not only the discovery of these additional inscriptions that was of interest — they also looked familiar to me in some way. In fact, I am currently working on a PhD dissertation on the topic of “Early Dynastic Palaeography”, for which I am collecting all the inscribed objects from this period, from the first examples of writing to the end of the reign of Netjerikhet/Djoser (~3400-2611 BC). This collection, of course, also includes Early Dynastic ink inscriptions.

With these sources at the back of my mind, I immediately recalled a particular group of inscriptions; the examples from Brussels looked surprisingly similar to some of the Second Dynasty ink inscriptions

discovered in the eastern subterranean galleries under the Step Pyramid in Saqqara (Lacau & Lauer 1965). On closer inspection, the palaeography of many signs on the vessel fragments from Brussels closely resembled the palaeographic style of the inscriptions from Saqqara (Table 1; Figs. 1-10). A few of them even seem to be in the same handwriting.

Figs. 1-10 present the most representative ink inscriptions from Brussels together with their parallel(s) from Saqqara.¹ The cursive texts from both sites display features that were to become typical of the hieratic script altogether, *i.e.* abbreviation and simplification of the depicted object by emphasizing its particulars.

A first example is provided by Brussels EA.3899 (Fig. 2.1) where the *nbw*-sign (S12) is not only placed within, but also attached to the *hw.t*-sign (O6) and the dots below it are reduced to a single horizontal stroke. The representation of the door of the *hw.t* is indicated only by a vertical strip of paint. Although the final *t* has disappeared because the vessel is broken, similarities with the Saqqara inscriptions are striking, especially with text n° 19 (Figs. 2.2-3).

The same level of cursiveness is reached with regard to the *ini*-signs (W25). In EA.3878 (Fig. 1.1), the *nw*-vessel is reduced to a single horizontal stroke and written with the left leg in one movement without lifting the pen. The right leg is then attached to it. Exactly the same technique was used at Saqqara to write this sign.

EA.3875 (Fig. 7.1) mentions the offering of bread and beer; *Sd.t ta Hnq.t*. Among the Saqqara examples, quite a number of inscriptions mention this offering and two different ways of drawing the water-skin *Sd* (F30) can be distinguished. The Brussels example again follows the palaeography of the Saqqara examples in which the water-skin is drawn as a loop and tied with cords. For the loaf (X1), depicted without internal detail, and the beer jar (W22) many parallels can be found.

The parallel texts from Abydos and Saqqara share other features typical of the Early Dynastic period. The eye (D5) on E.4880A and the Saqqara (Fig. 3) examples differs from Old Kingdom forms in that the eyelashes are indicated in the middle of the eye by simply extending the stroke of the pupil upward. The flowering reed (M17) on the same inscription in Brussels also resembles the northern examples and represents the flowering portion as a series of striations. Note that the upper

¹ Based on the published photographs from Lacau & Lauer 1965, digital tracings of which were made using Photoshop 6.0.

parallel from Saqqara in Fig. 3 was applied to exactly the same place on the vessel as the example in Brussels.

The poor preservation of EA.563 (Fig. 4.1) causes problems for identifying the signs. If we compare it with parallels from Saqqara, similarities with text n° 1 (Lacau & Lauer 1965: pl. 1) can be seen. In this case, the swallow (G36) is written inside the house (O6) in *Hw.t wr*. However, when considering text n° 6, it is possible that the institution *Hw.t-kA-@r.w-sA* is being mentioned on the fragment from Brussels. In this case, the bird would be the Horus-falcon (G5) and the lower stroke on the Brussels fragment would be the *sA*-sign (V16), instead of the end of the enclosure. This is clearly the case in E.4827 (Fig. 5.1). Although the ancient scribe did not always indicate the difference between the birds very clearly, the upright position of the bird in this example, as well as the smaller tail extending beyond the left border of the *hw.t*-sign, favours the identification as a Horus falcon.

In other cases, parallels can be found mainly based on a similarity of content, such as in EA.3880 (Fig. 8.1). The faded traces of paint on this sherd can be identified as a recumbent ram (Kahl 1994: 481-482).² Although the handwriting itself differs from the parallels from Saqqara, it is highly likely that the same sign is depicted.

E.4880E, F-G (Fig. 10.1) combines the personal name *MA-apr-Mnw* with the Sed-festival. Compared to Saqqara text n° 12 (Fig. 10.2), the handwriting of the Min-sign differs considerably (Lacau & Lauer 1965: pl. 10.4-9). The few traces of the sign for *apr* (Aa20), however, do resemble the Saqqara parallels. In both cases, the rendering diverges from that of later periods in that the so-called “sack” is reduced to a single line. Regarding the Sed-festival, another example from Saqqara (Fig. 10.2) provides the best palaeographic similarities. Although the Sed-determinative is placed above the other signs, the capacious hand and the sharp angled curve at the top of the *c* resembles the signs on the sherd from Brussels. It is text n° 2 that provides the best parallels for the Sed-determinative. As in the Brussels example, the right post is often not attached to the rest of the tent. Especially on the examples where the determinative is placed at the top of the inscription, the *c* shows the sharp angled curve that can be seen on the Brussels fragment.

Apart from the above-mentioned examples, more traces in black or red ink could be discerned. In most cases, however, their illegibility

² Because this sign was not attested by Gardiner, it has received the new number e2 from Kahl (1994: 481-482).

prevented us from connecting them with any Saqqara parallel. It is therefore uncertain if they belong to the group of inscriptions under discussion.

Although inscriptions from Saqqara and Abydos with identical content have been noted previously (Lacau & Lauer 1959: 67, pl. VI.10; Kaplony 1963 III: figs. 857-858), their palaeographic connection has never been taken into account. A re-investigation of these inscriptions therefore seemed particularly worthwhile.

The discovery of similar ink inscriptions in the Brussels museum revives a number of questions. The first concerns the provenance of the inscriptions — and therefore the origin of the vessels that carry the inscriptions. Because the Abydene inscriptions bear such a close resemblance to those of Saqqara, a common origin for the vessels seems extremely likely. Although this possibility had been briefly considered in the past (Lacau & Lauer 1959: 20, 25), it has not been examined further and no opinion has been expressed in favour of a particular locus of origin.

The second question concerns their age. The inscriptions from Abydos in Brussels, which cannot be attributed to a particular Early Dynastic reign, are not very helpful in this respect. Regarding the inscriptions from Saqqara, more detailed suggestions have already been put forward, and these are discussed below.

Chronological Position of the Inscriptions

Between 1933 and 1936, an astonishing 40,000 stone vessels, representing an enormous variety of forms and materials, were discovered in the subterranean galleries VI and VII under the east side of the Step Pyramid in Saqqara (Lauer 1939: 6). The entire deposit had evidently never been disturbed, at least not in recent times. Most of the vessels were nevertheless broken, but a large number of complete examples could be pieced together from the fragments. Other vessels were found outside the pyramid, in the debris to the north of it, and were probably removed from the same galleries sometime in antiquity.

Among this mass of vessels only a relatively small number were inscribed. The inscriptions can be divided in two groups. Some of the vessels are provided with an inscription incised on the exterior, mentioning private names/titles or products. A considerable number of them include a royal name (Lacau & Lauer 1959). Apart from Khasekhemwy, every king before Netjerikhet is attested, including some ephemeral

rulers unknown from other sources. Some vessels are inscribed with the names of successive rulers, including a group of bowls bearing the names of the last four kings of the First Dynasty. The stone vessels from the Step Pyramid thus constitute one of the most important sources of historical information for the first two dynasties. Similar inscribed vessels were discovered at Abydos, although there they were often found in connection with the tomb of the (last) king mentioned on them.

Other vessels bear inscriptions written in ink referring to individuals, provenances or destinations.³ Sometimes the contents of the vessels, mainly bread and beer, are mentioned as well. Finally, there are references to the ceremonies in which these vessels played a part, especially the Sed-festival (Lacau & Lauer 1965) to which most probably all of the ink inscriptions are to be linked (*cf. infra*).

Some of the ink inscriptions were applied to vessels that had been engraved earlier (Lacau & Lauer 1959: 7, planche VII.5-6; 11, pl. 7.30; 10, pl. 5.22; 12, pl. 10.51; 13, pl. VII.3, pl. 13.63; 16, pl. 19.97). Whereas the incised inscriptions appear on the exterior of the vessels, the ink inscriptions were generally put on the interior. This obviously implies that the vessels, almost exclusively cups and bowl, were empty when their inscriptions were applied. Apparently they were meant to be filled with the contents mentioned in the ink inscriptions later.

With more than one thousand short texts, this second group constitutes the largest body of early cursive writing from Egypt.

The vessels found below the Step Pyramid seem to have been gathered together from the royal storehouses, as they include many examples inscribed for earlier kings. The archaeological context in the subterranean galleries, which also contained seal impressions with the name of Netjerikhet (Lacau & Lauer 1965: fig. 178), indicates that this king was indeed responsible for the deposition of the vessels. As the accesses to the galleries were covered up in an early phase of the construction of the pyramid, the inscribed vessels were probably buried in the first half of Netjerikhet's reign.

The ink inscriptions on the engraved vessels are evidence of a secondary use of the vessel by individuals at a later date. The individuals named in these ink inscriptions are therefore not contemporaries of the king whose name is sometimes engraved on the same vessel. This is

³ It is unfortunately impossible to distinguish between provenance and destination in this group of inscriptions since grammatical relationships such as genitive or dative were never written.

especially clear in the one case where the serekh of the first king of the Second Dynasty, Hetepsechemui, was covered by an ink inscription place, on this occasion on the exterior of the vessel (Lacau & Lauer 1959: pl. 10). It seems, nevertheless, logical to date at least part of the ink inscriptions to the second half of the Second Dynasty or even later, perhaps after the latest king mentioned in the vessel inscriptions, Khasekhem. The individuals named in the ink inscriptions furthermore confirm such a dating, as some of them are also attested in other tombs from the second half of the Second Dynasty in Saqqara.

A powerful line of argument was developed by Helck (1979: 120-132) to arrive at a roughly similar conclusion; however, for a number of reasons he dated the ink inscriptions to the reign of Ninetjer (who actually belongs to the first half of the Second Dynasty). When presenting the reasons for this dating, he dealt with the archaeological evidence in a very selective way and only used material that seemed to confirm his ideas. The most decisive factor for Helck was the reference to “the 17th time of the counting of cattle” on an alabaster jar (Lacau & Lauer 1965: 88-89, figs. 172-173). Because these counts were carried out every other year, “the 17th time” represents the 34th regnal year of a king. Therefore Helck, followed by many others, accepted Ninetjer as the only possibility, since he was the only Second Dynasty king who definitely ruled for more than 34 years.

Serious objections, however, can be raised against applying this date to all of the ink inscriptions. Both the content and the palaeography of the cattle count inscription differs completely from the ink inscriptions under discussion. Furthermore, it is an inscription on the exterior of a handled jar, whereas the other ink inscriptions were applied to the interior of cups and bowls. This jar is therefore to be considered as an exception within the group of ink inscriptions under discussion.

If we take a closer look at the palaeography, it should be possible to obtain more detailed chronological information. It would have been very useful for research on early writing if the entire group of cursive texts from Saqqara had been differentiated palaeographically. However, the excavators were prevented from publishing all of the inscriptions because “*une reproduction intégrale de tous les exemplaires n’intéresserait que la paléographie et coûterait vraiment trop cher*” (Lacau & Lauer 1965: vii). Nevertheless, even on the basis of the most characteristic forms selected by Lacau and Lauer, numerous palaeographical and epigraphic differences can be discerned. Some of these differences were probably caused by the type of material, the function or form of the vessel and/or

the writing abilities of the individual scribes; others evidently have chronological significance.

Two signs among the ink inscriptions are particularly meaningful in this respect: Gardiner's N35 and Aa1.

Two different forms of the water ripple, the hieroglyph "n" (N35) can be distinguished among the signs. As well as the well-known zigzag line, a straight line, sometimes with thicker ends, was used to write this sign (Lacau & Lauer 1965: pl. 2.5, 3.1/5, 4.1, 5.1, 6.2-4, 7.1-5, 8.1-6, 9.5, 11.6, 21.4/6, 33.7-8). This form is attested for the first time in the reign of Ninetjer, but appears more often in the later part of the Second Dynasty, especially from the reign of Peribsen onwards (Kahl 1997: 140).

Some examples of the sign identified as a "human placenta" in Gardiner's grammar (Aa1; x) have one or more horizontal strokes inside the circle (Lacau & Lauer 1965: 52 fig. 75, 65 fig. 109, pl. 5.5, 31.7-9, 34.5; Firth & Quibell 1935: pl. 107.7). Although this outline will become the classical form in later periods, the shape with crosshatched detail is more typical for most of the Early Dynastic period. The "classical" form is attested for the first time only in the reign of Sechemib, the successor of Ninetjer (Kahl 1997: 141). It became more common only from the end of the Second Dynasty onwards.

Both of the signs under discussion are therefore written in a way typical for the end of the Second Dynasty. The form of Aa1 is particularly inconsistent with the date suggested by Helck. Admittedly, the chronological relevance of these signs was originally derived from other types of documents (Saad 1957; Kahl 1997), thus further investigation is therefore needed to confirm that the same palaeographic conclusions apply to the ink inscriptions. Even so, despite these difficulties and the fact that only a few signs were examined, these observations show that a reconsideration of the data is worthwhile.

We can also draw some conclusions from the content of the inscriptions. Although it is, at first sight, very difficult to establish reliable interpretations, some entries yield information on a very general level. The Sed-festival is mentioned explicitly on some of the sherds. Many of the other small texts can also be linked to this festival, because they refer to the same products or individuals that appear in relation to the festival. This is corroborated further by palaeographic similarities. These vessels can be considered as evidence of deliveries distributed on the occasion of a Sed-feast. Kaplony suggests that the original owners of the vessels could have been participants in the Sed-festival as well as belonging to what he calls the "gift circle", based on the translation of

the entry *in-pr* among some of the ink inscriptions as “*Geschenk für das (Königs-)haus*” (Kaplony 1963 I: 380, 481; Bleiberg 1996: 37). It is indeed likely that members of the royal family and high officials of the administration attended the festival to reaffirm their bonds of loyalty with the king and to celebrate the rejuvenation of his divine and secular authority.

If we could tie this festival to a specific king, we would be able to fix a more precise date for the ink inscriptions. If we follow the widely accepted assertion that this feast was usually — though not always — celebrated in or around the 30th regnal year, Ninetjer and Khasekhemwy are the only possible candidates from the Second Dynasty. Because only 27 years are recorded for Khasekhemwy in the Turin Royal Canon, Helck concludes that the inscriptions referred to Ninetjer’s festival; however, the archaeological context suggests another possibility. Khasekhemwy, to whom 27 and, sometimes 28 regnal years are attributed (Wilkinson 2000: 257), is widely attested from Hierakonpolis in the far south to Byblos on the Lebanese coast (Montet 1928: 84, fig. 1). Nevertheless, his name is completely absent from the incised vessels found in the eastern subterranean galleries. The only vessel mentioning his name inside the Step Pyramid enclosure was discovered in the southern tomb (Lauer 1939: 21, n.1). His absence from the eastern subterranean galleries could indicate that the ink inscriptions were applied during his reign.

Under the earlier version of his name, Khasekhem (Wilkinson 1999: 91-94), he is attested only once among the engraved inscriptions. His predecessor, Sechemib, appears more often. So, if we take Khasekhem as a *terminus post quem* and the interment of the vessels in the time of Netjerikhet as a *terminus ante quem*, Khasekhemwy remains the only candidate. Supporting evidence is provided by seal impressions, carrying the royal name of Khasekhemwy, discovered in the same context as the vessels (Lacau & Lauer 1965: 93-94). The back of the impressions show clearly that they were applied to linen bags, suggesting that Khasekhemwy was responsible for packing the vessels and sealing the bags containing them.

The fact that the vessels were handled in this way during the reign of Khasekhemwy could mean that although all the preparations for a Sed-feast were made, it was never celebrated. For unknown reasons, the distribution of these vessels, which were already provided with ink inscriptions, was abandoned. In this scenario, one could theorise that all the preparations for Khasekhemwy’s festival were made, but because of his sudden death — before his 30th regnal year? — the vessels were left in the royal stores. This hoard of stone vessels was then taken by his successor Netjerikhet to furnish some of the galleries beneath his pyramid.

As mentioned above, the individuals mentioned in the ink inscriptions are also attested in tombs from the second half of the Second Dynasty. The most important among them was certainly Ini-Khnum addressed as a *Xrj-tp-nsw.t* and *sm* (Lacau & Lauer 1959: pl. VI.6; 1961: 70). According to Kaplony, he was promoted to *sm irj-pat* during the reign of Netjerikhet, showing that he outlived Khasekhemwy (Kaplony 1992: 27). Apart from the subterranean galleries, he is also attested in the pyramid of Sekhemkhet and furthermore in the private tombs 2429 and 3009 at Saqqara (Helck 1983: 398; Spencer 1974: 9), suggesting that he was the owner of one of these two tombs. Tomb 3009, in particular, is dated in the Third Dynasty (Helck 1983: 399). His appearance among the ink inscriptions indicates that a date for all of the inscriptions in the reign of Ninetjer would be too early.

These arguments suggest that a date for the ink inscriptions at the very end of the Second Dynasty is highly likely. Following the interpretation that these vessels refer to Khasekhemwy's Sed-festival, the inscriptions are to be dated to the end of his reign.

These conclusions are confirmed by combining the arguments presented so far with the above-mentioned parallels from Umm el-Qaab in Brussels. The Umm el-Qaab was abandoned as a royal cemetery during the first half of the Second Dynasty. Therefore, inscriptions from Saqqara paralleled at Abydos indicate once more a chronological position in the second half of that dynasty. A date in the reign of Khasekhemwy makes much more sense than one in the reign of Ninetjer, who was buried in the north and left no monuments at Abydos. Although the archaeological context at Umm el-Qaab is very disturbed, the fact that Khasekhemwy was buried there makes it plausible that most of the Abydene parallels are connected with his tomb.⁴

For at least one of the parallels already noted in the past, an ink inscription on a piece of slate bowl kept in Berlin (ÄMP 15454), Petrie (1902: pl. III.48) stated that it was discovered in the tomb of Khasekhemwy. Depicting the figure of the God Min, it is an exact parallel for Saqqara text n° 26, which refers to the temple of Min (Lacau & Lauer 1965: 19, pl. 15.1/3-5).⁵

⁴ Helck (1979: 120-132) rejects Khasekhemwy on the basis of one sherd that seems to come from the tomb of Peribsen; however, because the archaeological context in Umm el-Qaab is so disturbed, it is hardly likely that the sherd was found *in situ*.

⁵ The exact provenance of the two other examples published by Kaplony (1963 II: 1196; III: figs. 857-858) is uncertain.

Original Provenance of the Inscriptions

If we ask the question of where the inscriptions were originally applied, the issue of transportation arises. Identical seal impressions found at different sites⁶ show that vessels could be transported over long distances from Middle or Upper Egypt to their find spots in the Delta and beyond. Although the idea of “travelling scribes” could also be considered, it seems more reasonable to suppose that large-scale transport between Saqqara and Abydos was responsible for the appearance of similar inscriptions at both locations.

Because the inscriptions were found in Saqqara as well as in Abydos, we may be inclined to assume that the inscriptions were applied in one of these two places. However, one should be careful not to confuse find spot with actual geographic origin. Perhaps the possibility should be considered that a centre in neither Abydos nor Saqqara was responsible for the delivery of the inscribed vessels.⁷ In that case, Hierakonpolis, as a third major centre of the Early Dynastic period, maybe considered an alternative, especially if the evidence for a Sed-festival of Khasekhem at Hierakonpolis is taken into consideration.

The statues and reliefs of Khasekhem found in Hierakonpolis show the king wearing the close-fitting robe associated with the Sed-festival (Alexanian 1998: 14-15; Jiménez Serrano 2002: 75). The building in the centre of the mud-brick ceremonial enclosure, or “Fort,” at Hierakonpolis has been explained as a palace where the king was present to partake in ceremonies (Friedman 1999: 11; Jiménez Serrano 2002: 54). It has even been suggested that this imposing enclosure may have been built to commemorate the king’s rejuvenation festival or perhaps the reunification under his command and the grand festival when Khasekhem was reborn as Khasekhemwy (Friedman 1999: 12).

⁶ Found in Abydos and Saqqara: Kaplony 1963 III: figs. 32B, 91B, 98, 101, 190, 203A, 218, 247, 306B; found in Abydos and Abu Roasch: Kaplony 1963 III: figs. 118, 198; found in Abydos and Zawiyet el-Arian: Kaplony 1963 III: figs. 13, 26A; found in Nagada, Abydos and Saqqara: Kaplony 1963 III: fig. 138, to name only a few examples.

⁷ The precise origin of stones commonly used in the stone-vase repertoire is, of course, beyond the scope of this paper and not relevant for the present discussion because only roughed-out vessel blanks were produced in the ancient quarries while the vessels were finished at the workshops in the Nile valley (Aston 1994: 49-50; Caton-Thompson & Gardiner 1934: 110-113; el-Khouli 1978: 798; Harrell 2002). Any inscription was applied only after the vessels were transported to an institution/domain where they awaited further distribution.

If the ink inscriptions came from Hierakonpolis, this would leave us with the question of whether they refer to this Sed festival / unification festival of Khasekhem or to the preparations for the second Sed-festival of this ruler after he changed his name into Khasekhemwy.⁸ Recent examination of the pottery discovered within the Hierakonpolis enclosure reveals that none of it dates later than the middle of Khasekhemwy's reign (Raue 1999). This does not correspond to the date for the ink inscriptions at the very end of the Second Dynasty as argued above and the pottery dating would appear to rule out the interpretation that the Hierakonpolis festival was canceled because of the early death of the king. It is therefore highly likely that the ink inscriptions refer to another Sed-festival at the end of Khasekhemwy's reign. Moreover, the fact that no stone vessels were found at Hierakonpolis to parallel those from Saqqara and Abydos reduces the possibility of Hierakonpolis as origin of this material to mere speculation, although it must of course be acknowledged that no vessels have been found in a primary Sed-festival location and all have come from mortuary contexts to which they had been moved later.

If we exclude Hierakonpolis as place of origin of the inscriptions and only consider Saqqara and Abydos, two possibilities remain:

- A. The vessels were originally stored in Saqqara, and some were transported to Abydos by Netjerikhet to accomplish the "Abydene funeral" of his predecessor, while others were kept in the treasuries until they were buried under the Step Pyramid.
- B. The vessels originally come from Abydos, and although most of them were transported to Saqqara, a number were left behind.

Both reconstructions seem feasible, although the archaeological evidence favours Abydos, as will be shown.

Several incised inscriptions mention the name of Sekhemib-Perenmaat. Apart from the vessel fragments from the Step Pyramid, he is not attested by contemporary inscriptions outside Upper Egypt. The evidence seems to be slightly in favour of identifying Sekhemib with Peribsen (Wilkinson 1999: 90), who probably ruled only in the southern part of the country, his relationship with the northern part of Egypt being

⁸ In this case, it is maybe important to draw attention to the mention of a "second (zp snw) filling of the temple" on more than 40 vessels; Lacau & Lauer 1965: 9, 34, 48.

obscure. The choice of Umm el-Qaab as his burial place may have been intended to confer legitimacy by association in death with the kings of the First Dynasty.

Likewise, the inscribed diorite vessel from the Step Pyramid bearing the name Khasekhem is the only evidence of this king outside Upper Egypt (Lacau & Lauer 1959: pl. 3.18), while travertine and granite vessels bearing his name were discovered inside the temple of Horus at Hierakonpolis (Quibell 1900: pl. XXXVI).

Sealings of Netjerikhet found in the tomb of Khasekhemwy at Abydos (Petrie 1901: pl. XXIV.211; Kaplony 1963 III: figs. 768, 798; Dreyer 1998a: 164-167, Tf. 15b), and further examples from the Shunet ez-Zebib (Newberry 1909: pl. XXIII; Kaplony 1963 III: figs. 800-801) suggest that Netjerikhet, as son and heir, oversaw the burial of Khasekhemwy. This leaves no doubt that Netjerikhet must have been Khasekhemwy's successor (Dreyer 1998b). Sealings of Nimaathap, who is called "mother of the king's children", probably indicate that Netjerikhet was Khasekhemwy's son.

Conclusions

In the early part of his reign, when only the Horus falcon wearing the white crown surmounted his serekh, Khasekhem seems to have shown particular interest in, and reverence for, Hierakonpolis, the ancient Predynastic capital in the south of the country. It has been suggested that Khasekhem first ruled from Hierakonpolis, given the number of fine objects bearing his early name found at the site. Following this scenario, he may originally have planned to be buried at Hierakonpolis and started to build his funerary enclosure there. Campaigns against the north ultimately resulted in Khasekhem's victory, and he was able to reunite Egypt (Wilkinson 1999: 91-92). To commemorate this achievement, he changed his name to the dual form demonstrating that peace and harmony had returned after the period of unrest, which seems to have followed the death of Ninetjer (Kaiser 1992: 184-185, n.44). He then built a new enclosure and tomb at Abydos, the long-standing traditional burial place of Early Dynastic kings. Whether he also planned another funerary monument at Saqqara, the Gisir el-Mudir, remains to be demonstrated. A date at the end of the Second Dynasty has been suggested for this enclosure (Mathieson *et al.* 1997: 53; Davies & Friedman 1998: 64-69; see also van Wetering this volume), although there certainly is no

unanimity on this dating.⁹ While it has been suggested that it was intended as the northern location for the Sed festival of Khasekhemwy, the information available at present does not allow more than mere speculation on this matter.

There is clear evidence to conclude that a large number of the ink inscriptions refer to the Sed-festival of Khasekhemwy and that many examples eventually ended up in his tomb. The stone vessels were recycled from the royal treasuries/tomb in Abydos when Netjerikhet abandoned the traditional royal burial ground of Umm el-Qaab in favour of a site overlooking the capital. The Step Pyramid complex of Netjerikhet is the most informative contemporary source for the form and structure of the Sed-festival in the Early Dynastic period and it is perhaps no coincidence that the vessels were deposited in large quantities within this complex.

In the absence of hard evidence, this reconstruction of events must remain speculative, though it does fit the available data well.

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⁹ The Gisir el-Mudir has also been dated to the early Second Dynasty (Stadelmann 1985), the early Third Dynasty (Swelim 1991) and the second half of the Third Dynasty (O'Connor 1989).

Inscriptions from Abydos in the RMAH	Fig.	Parallels from Saqqara (Lacau & Lauer 1965)
EA 3878	Fig. 1	pl. 1.2, 4, 6 (1); pl. 10.4 (12); 22.9 (48); pl. 26.2-3, 4 (67); pl. 29.6 (98)
EA 3899	Fig. 2	pl. 13.1-5 (19); pl. 14.1-5 (24) ¹⁰ ; pl. 19.1-5 (36)
E.4880A	Fig. 3	pl. 21.1-3, 5 (40)
EA 563	Fig. 4	pl. 1.1-7 (1); pl. 7
E.4827	Fig. 5	pl.7.2 (6)
E.4880H	Fig. 6	pl. 30.1 (100)
EA 3875, EA 729	Fig. 7 (3875)	pl. 6.1-6 (6-7); pl. 7.1-7 (6)
EA 3880	Fig. 8	pl. 30.1-2 (100)
EA 3872	Fig. 9	pl. 9.5 (8)
E.4880E, F-G	Fig. 10	pl. 10.4-8 (12) and pl. 2.1-7; 3.1-6; 4.1-3 (2) for the Sed-festival
EA 4410	no Fig.	pl. 22.1-3 (42)

Table 1. Inscriptions from Umm el-Qaab paralleled in Saqqara

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¹⁰ Although no traces are visible above the *Hwt*-sign. However, pl. 14.3 shows that the inscriptions could be divided into two columns.

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Brussels examples from Umm el-Qaab

Saqqara

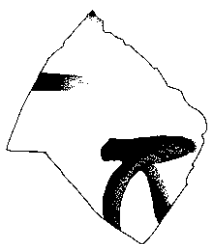


Fig. 1.1. Body sherd of tuff bowl(?) EA 3878 (1:1)



Fig. 1.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 40 (n° 67), pl. 26.2

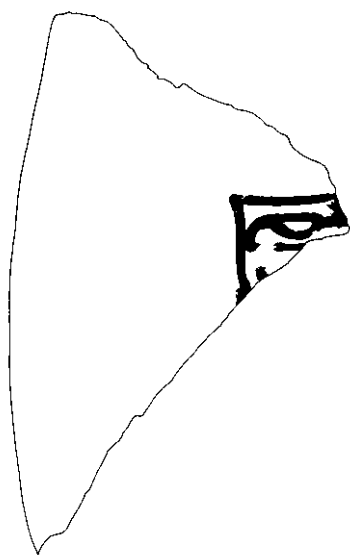


Fig. 2.1. Rim fragment of calcite bowl EA 3899 (2:3)



Fig. 2.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 14-15 (n° 19), pl. 13.1



Fig. 2.3. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 14-15 (n° 19), pl. 13.5



Fig. 2.4. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 17-18 (n° 24), pl. 14.4

Brussels examples from Umm el-Qaab

Saqqara

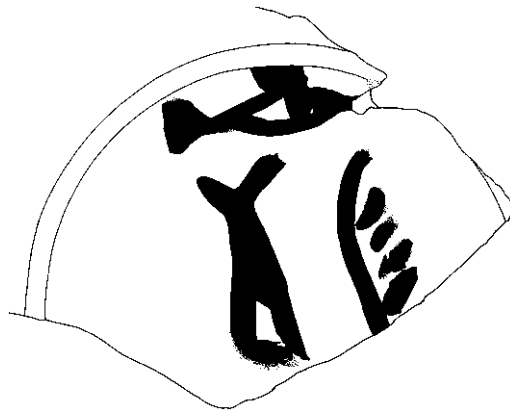


Fig. 3.1. Base fragment of tuff bowl E. 4880A (1:2)



Fig. 3.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 31 (n° 40), pl. 21.2



Fig. 3.3. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 31 (n° 40), pl. 21.3



Fig. 4.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 1-3 (n° 1), pl. 1.3

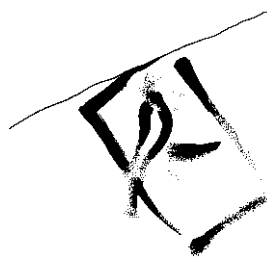


Fig. 4.1. Rim fragment of tuff bowl EA 563 (1:1)



Fig. 4.3. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 7-8 (n° 6), pl. 7.3



Fig. 4.4. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 7-8 (n° 6), pl. 7.4

Brussels examples from Umm el-Qaab

Saqqara



Fig. 5.1. Body sherd of calcite cylindrical vessel E.4827 (2:3)



Fig. 5.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 7-8 (n° 6), pl. 7.2

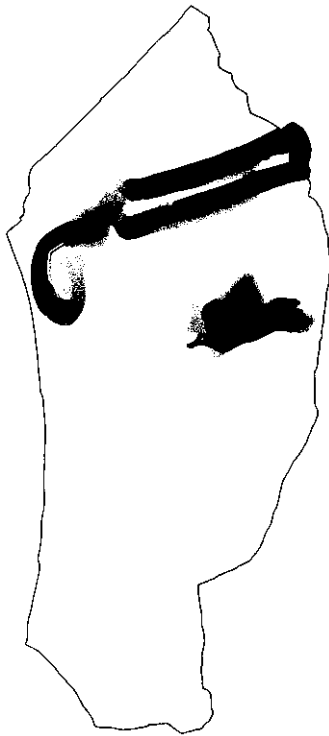


Fig. 6.1. Body sherd of tuff bowl E.48801H (1:2)



Fig. 6.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 50 (n° 100), pl. 30.1

Brussels examples from Umm el-Qaab

Saqqara



Fig. 7.1. Body sherd of tuff bowl EA 3875 (2:3)



Fig. 7.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965:
7-8 (n° 6), pl. 6.5

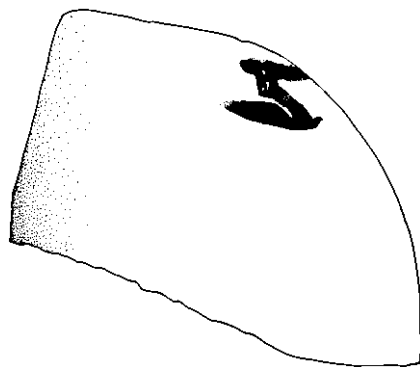


Fig. 8.1. Body sherd of tuff bowl EA 3880 (2:3)



Fig. 8.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965:
50 (n° 100), pl. 30.2

Brussels examples from Umm el-Qaab

Saqqara

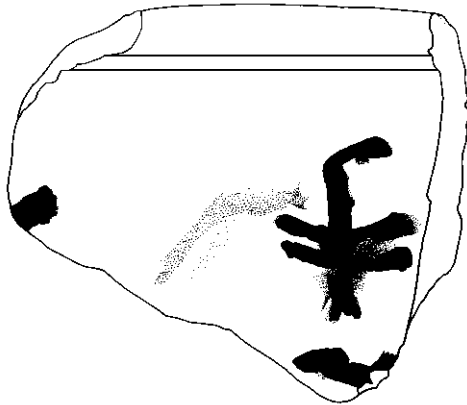


Fig. 9.1. Rim fragment of tuff bowl
EA 3872 (2:3)



Fig. 9.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965:
8 (n° 8), pl. 9.5

Brussels examples from Umm el-Qaab

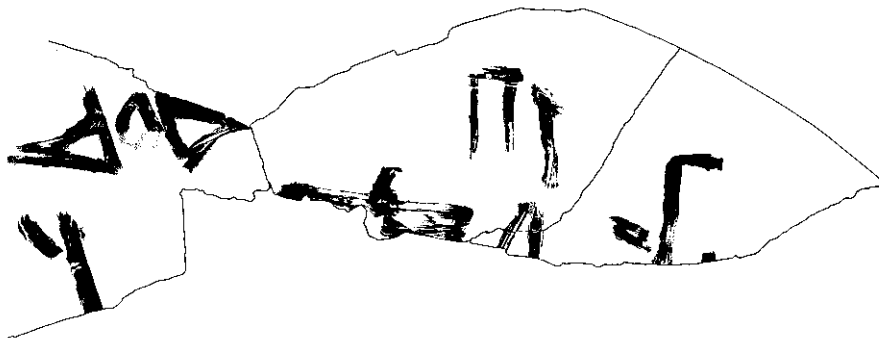


Fig. 10.1. Rim fragment of tuff bowl E.4880E-F-G (1:1)

Saqqara

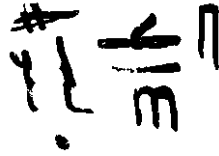


Fig. 10.2. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 10-11 (n° 12), pl. 10.6



Fig. 10.3. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 10-11 (n° 12), pl. 10.8



Fig. 10.4. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 3-5 (n° 2), pl. 2.5



Fig. 10.5. Lacau & Lauer 1965: 3-5 (n° 2), pl. 2.4