



P R A G U E
E G Y P T O L O G I C A L
S T U D I E S

XV/2015

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Mastaba of Queen
Khentkaus III
in Abusir

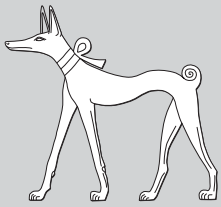


Tomb of the chief
physician
Shepseskafankh

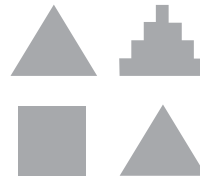
The miraculous
rise of the Fifth
Dynasty



Old Kingdom
canopic jars from
new perspective



P R A G U E EGYPTOLOGICAL S T U D I E S



XV / 2015
CZECH INSTITUTE OF EGYPTOLOGY



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Photograph on the front page

A reconstruction of the offering place in front of the false door of Nefer in tomb AS 68d (photo M. Frouz)

Dear readers,

It has been thirteen years since the first issue of *Prague Egyptological Studies* was published in 2002. Since then it has become an important and wide-selling journal, providing both the scientific and laymen audience with the latest results of our fieldwork and various studies in the field of Czech Egyptology dealing with the civilisations of ancient Egypt and Sudan.

After more than a decade of its existence, we are pleased to launch the first issue of the English edition of *Prague Egyptological Studies*. The English edition is dedicated exclusively to the history, archaeology and language of third millennium BC Egypt. Yet it also aims to include studies dealing with foreign relations during the period. At the same time, we also welcome publications on the latest advances in the study of the environment and studies evaluating the significance of applied sciences. Our principal aim is to accommodate studies concerning either primary research in the field or those that bring up theoretical inquiries of essential importance to the indicated scope and time frame of the journal.

The present issue is devoted to the excavations at Abusir, the principal field of research of the Czech Institute of Egyptology. The individual reports are dedicated to the excavation projects carried out in the pyramid field (Khentkaus III), as well as in the Abusir South area (tomb complex AS 68, the tomb of Shepseskafankh). In addition to these, you will also find more theoretical studies focusing on the "Khentkaus problem", which analyses the significance and importance of three women bearing the same name during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties, a study dealing with model beer jars and their typological evolution, an interesting seal with a figure of Bes, and an interpretation of canopic jars bearing significant tokens of past treatment on their bodies.

We trust that the English edition of *Prague Egyptological Studies*, which will be produced once a year, will find a firm place among other Egyptological scholarly journals. We are convinced that a clearly defined profile of this scientific journal will attract not only the attention of many readers but also submissions of significant contributions from the scientific community and thus streamline major advances in the fields of third millennium BC Egypt history, archaeology and the like.

Miroslav Bárta and Lucie Jirásková

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Fig. 1 A tentative reconstruction of the use of stands with platters during rituals, in front of the false door of Nefer (AS 68d). The ceramics were all found in fragments in the shaft of Nefer (photo M. Frouz)

Burial shafts and chambers of Nefer and Neferhathor in tomb AS 68d. A comparative evaluation of the ceramic finds

Katarína Arias Kytarová

In the course of the years 2012–2014 in the area of Abusir South, the Czech Institute of Egyptology uncovered a large complex of an until then unknown princess of the Fifth Dynasty, Sheretnebt, possibly a daughter of King Nyuserre (Vymazalová – Dulíková 2012 and 2014). The complex is very large and consists of an open pillared courtyard and four rock-cut tombs (AS 68a – AS 68d) that are situated south and southeast of it (see plan 1 in Vymazalová in this issue). During the course of the exploration, extensive funerary activity was attested, not only in the tombs but also in the open courtyard and the adjoining corridor between the rock-cut tombs and the tomb of Nefershepes/Memi (AS 67). In the whole complex, 29 shafts were built during the span of the late Fifth to the terminal Sixth Dynasty. The complex is unique in several features, one of them also being the quantity, quality and relevance of the ceramic finds, a large amount of which were found in primary contexts such as the burial chambers or deposits in the shafts. In other cases, even the mixed contexts had high spatial distribution value as they are the remains of the original intentional deposits.

The aim of this paper is to compare two sets of ceramic finds from the two main shafts uncovered in tomb AS 68d, namely Shaft 1 (that of the tomb owner, Nefer) and from Shaft 2 (very likely belonging to his wife, Neferhathor). Both names are attested on the false door of Nefer, situated roughly west of his shaft (Bárta – Vymazalová – Dulíková *et al.* 2014: 29, Fig. 10). Both their burial chambers were robbed and thus the shafts must have been disturbed, but despite this fact, large numbers of typologically and metrically similar vessels and their fragments were uncovered in the fills of these shafts. This paper shall

concentrate on the importance and interpretation of the spatial distribution of these ceramic finds, and thus the issues of dating and the providing of parallels shall be touched upon only occasionally as they are not the main topic of this analysis.

The shaft and burial chamber of Nefer

The southernmost shaft (Shaft 1) in tomb AS 68d was excavated during the 2014 season. It belonged without any doubt to the main owner of the tomb, the high official Nefer,

as is attested by his false door uncovered *in situ* roughly west of the shaft (see fig. 1). The ceramic finds from this shaft were very extensive and exceeded those uncovered in the neighbouring Shaft 2 of his wife (see *infra*). The fill of the shaft was not homogenous, and as a result, the ceramic finds were collected in several levels, each having a different context number. There were altogether six ceramic contexts in the shaft. The largest amount of pottery, at least 83 individual vessels, came from the top layer of the shaft, from a depth down to 1.00 m, and included very large fragments of stands (77.AS68d.2014). The most distinctive context (78.AS68d.2014) came from a depth of 3.00 m, where numerous ceramic fragments were found in a cluster in the southeastern corner of the shaft, together with animal bones (374/AS68d/2014). Yet another concentration of pottery was unearthed at a depth of 3.00 m (80.AS68d.2014) in the southwestern corner of the shaft, also accompanied by animal bones (375/AS68d/2014). Context 79.AS68d.2014 filled the area around and underneath this context, to a depth of 3.50 m. Careful documentation of the ceramic finds was necessary, as during the following reconstruction of the finds, fragments from different levels of the shaft were found to complement each other, thus proving the disturbed nature of the shaft. To give an explicit example, a large vat with a spout was uncovered in three different contexts; some body sherds came from context 77, one half of the spout and large part of the body was found in context 78 and the other half plus most of the body sherds from context 79. If a vessel was found in pieces in different contexts, the final vessel number was allocated according to the one with largest amount of sizeable pieces, in this case context 79.

Finally, there was a base of a beer jar (82.AS68d.2014) found at the bottom of Shaft 1, in front of the partly disturbed mud brick wall leading into the burial chamber. However, this beer jar should not be seen as any remnant of offerings or tomb goods but rather as refuse from secondary ritual activities connected to the burial – it was found with a thick layer of mortar (or a similar rough white substance) inside and therefore most likely served as a container for mortar designated for sealing the sarcophagus or whitening the closing wall. While it was evidently used during the sealing rituals, its presence at the bottom of the shaft may be intentional only in the sense that such a jar could not be later reused for any other purpose due to religious beliefs and thus had to be abandoned there. Vessels filled with mortar or a different white substance (such as finer plaster) are commonly found at the bottom of burial shafts, most notably in Giza, Nazlet Batran, Saqqara and Meidum.¹ They are not to be confused with the religious meaning and function of fully intact beer jars often uncovered *in situ* on the bottom of shafts with false Nile mud filling inside, such as a jar from Shaft 5 in the tomb of priest Neferinpu (Bárta *et al.* 2014: Figs. 3.56, 3.57) and in the tombs of the Lake of Abusir cemetery (yet unpublished). Some of these latter beer jars were additionally also sealed with a stopper and undoubtedly served as an offering during the closing rituals.²

The ceramic finds from the shaft bore several interesting characteristics, such as a large percentage of certain classes. Among these, the classes of stands and platters



Fig. 2 Almost fully reconstructed platter uncovered in fragments in a cluster of pottery and animal bones at a depth of 3.00 m in the shaft of Nefer (photo K. Arias Kytarová)

were by far the most dominant. Also, a large number of these stands and platters were able to be reconstructed to full profile, with more than 70 % of their rim and base diameters preserved. All this could point to the fact that the fill of the shaft, although disturbed, was not composed of some accidental refuse but rather that large parts of the original fill of the shaft were still in place. The fragments from which these vessels were reconstructed measured from large (especially shafts of stands) to very small (rim and base sherds) and all of them had sharp, uneroded edges without any traces of being exposed to sun, wind or other elements. Some platters were able to be glued almost fully from more than 10 individual fragments (*e.g.* see fig. 2). The other classes uncovered in the shafts included some bread moulds and beer jars.

The two ceramic contexts (78.AS68d.2014 and 80.AS68d.2014) that were collected around the animal bones, at a depth of 3.00 m in the southeastern and southwestern corner of the shaft, contained only a small number of individual vessels, but some of these were able to be reconstructed almost fully, such as platter 78-4.AS68d.2014 (fig. 2) and stand 80-1.AS68d.2014 (see fig. 4). The animal bones have not yet undergone an analysis; it is therefore impossible to state whether the bones were part of a single animal or two different ones. However, it is important to stress that the ceramic fragments from these two contexts complemented each other well, especially in the case of platters.

The whole assemblage is most characteristic for its high number of stands, having a high predominance over all the other ceramic classes. These stands are not all identical and they belong to three main groups; namely tall hour-glass shaped stands, lower biconical stands and finally low ring

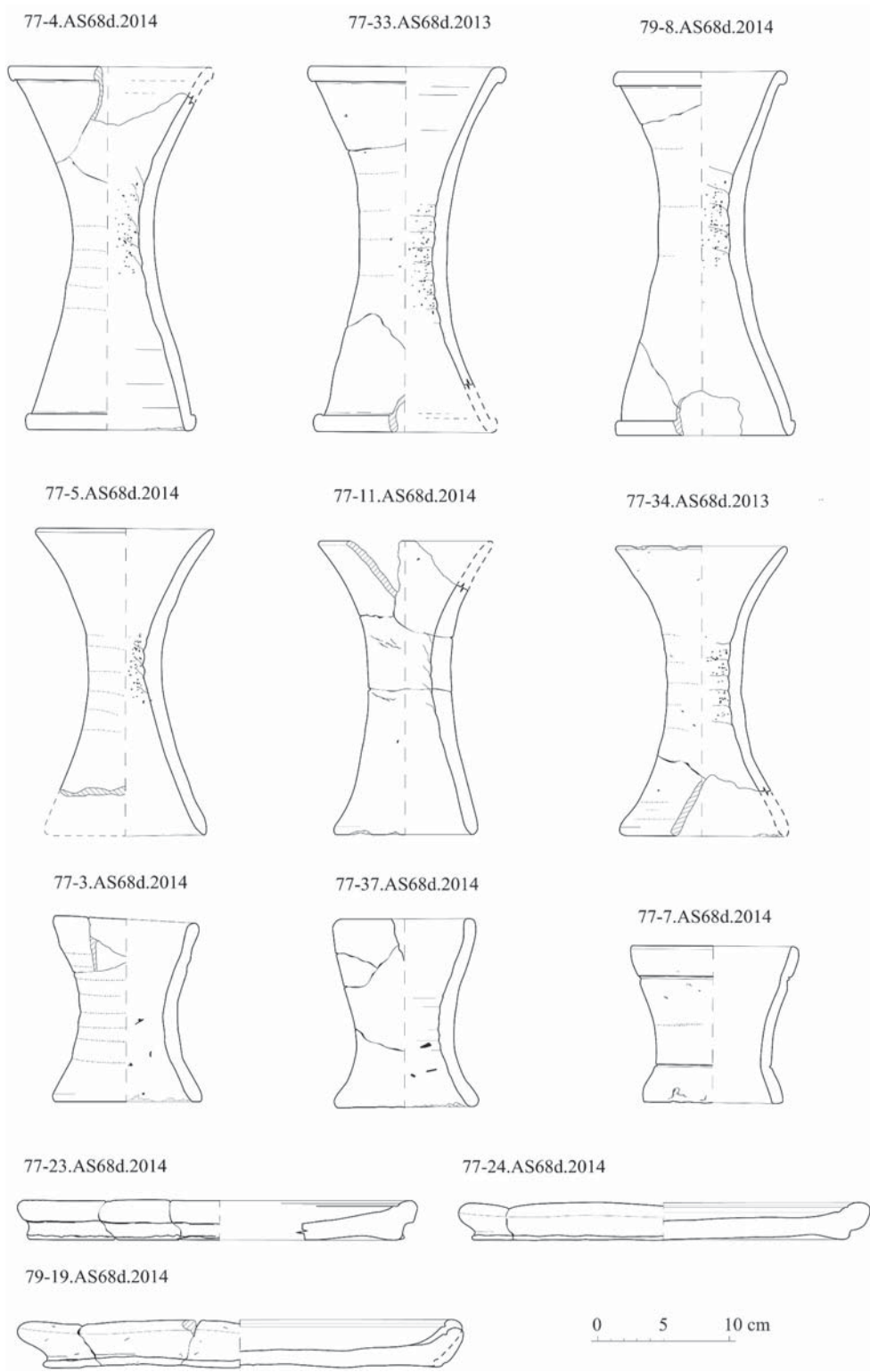


Fig. 3 Selected ceramic vessels from the fill of Shaft 1 (drawing K. Arias Kytarová, L. Vařeková)

stands. For each group, the specimens are very similar in quality, sizes and surface treatment. The tall hour-glass shaped stands (Abusir type S-1a) have either a simple or a rolled rim (fig. 3). The examples with a simple rim (S-1aI) are slightly smaller, with aperture diameters between 12.50 and 13.00 cm, base diameters of 10.50–12.50 cm and very constant heights of 23.00–23.50 cm (fig. 3, second row and fig. 4).³ Those with rolled or modelled rim (S-1aII) are visibly larger, with aperture diameters of 13.00–15.00 cm, base diameters of 12.00–14.00 cm and heights of 27.50–29.00 cm (fig. 3, first row and fig. 5).⁴ There were also two medium-sized biconical stands, with heights of only 15.50–16.00 cm.

Finally, the small ring stands of Abusir group S-6 were also constant in their sizes, with aperture and base diameters of 10.00–12.00 cm and heights between 11.00 and 14.50 cm (see fig. 3, third row).⁵ From this enumeration it should be clear that this was not random refuse but rather the remnants of a single deposit of a specific set and that the original number of stands in this shaft must have been very high. The different groups of stands served a diverse purpose; from iconographic representations it is clear that while low ring stands were used as stands for tall jars and especially beer jars, the tall biconical stands were rather used for bowls or platters, creating thus the form of a table (see also fig. 1).

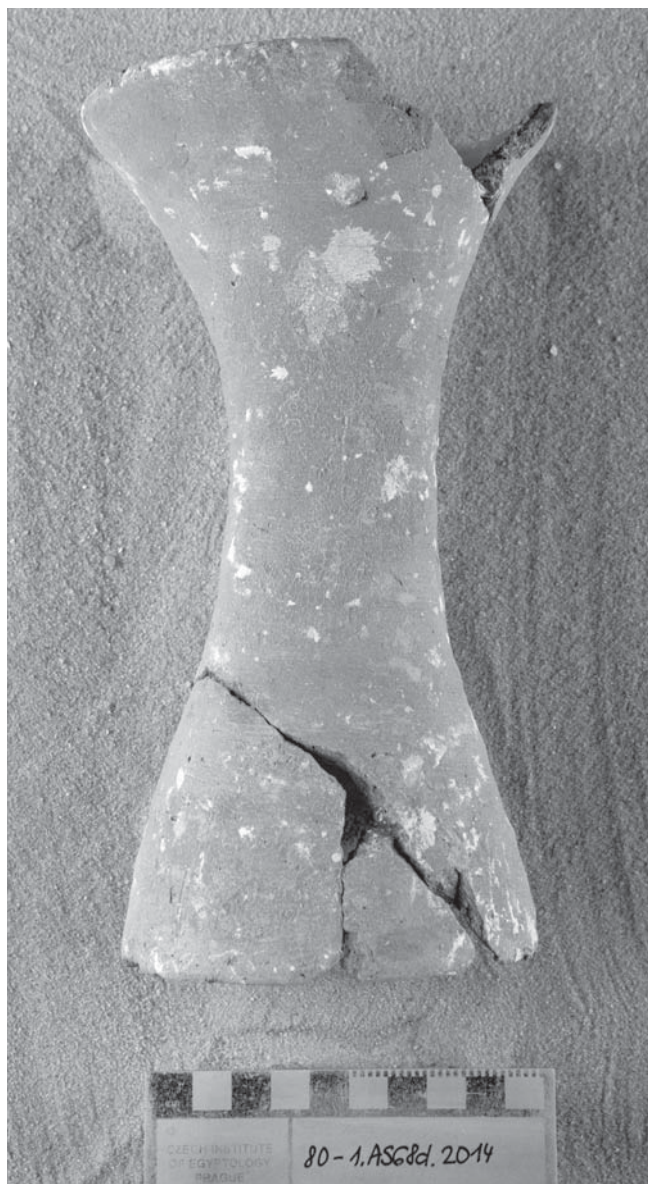


Fig. 4 Example of a tall hour-glass shaped stand with a simple rim and base (Abusir type S-1a1) from the shaft of Nefer (photo M. Frouz)



Fig. 5 One of the tall hour-glass shaped stands with a rolled rim and base (Abusir type S-1a1) from the shaft of Nefer. The left-over clay on the base is clearly visible (photo M. Frouz)



Fig. 6 Detail of the inner walls of a tall hour-glass shaped stand, with a thin layer of left-over clay visible (photo K. Arias Kytarová)

As a rule, all these stands were made of medium fine Nile silt B1 fabric. The tall hour-glass shaped stands were built up from coils and finished on a wheel in two different parts that were joined in the middle, resulting in a very rough inner middle surface which is characteristic for this group. All the low ring stands were made on a wheel, also from coils. A predominant number of these stands were left uncoated and were only wet-smoothed, leaving horizontal to diagonal smoothing marks on the outer body. An interesting technological detail is the little attention that was given to the bases of these stands – in almost all cases, while the rims of the stands were carefully smoothed, the bases are often left rough, with superfluous clay remaining on the inner and sometimes even the outer walls of the base (fig. 6 and see also fig. 5). In all cases from this shaft, it was therefore possible to identify whether a diagnostic sherd of a stand belonged without any doubt to a rim or a base.

Besides the stands, the platters were the most common ceramic class. In the whole area of the shaft, we uncovered numerous fragments belonging to at least 25 different platters. Some of them were able to be painstakingly reconstructed to full shape.⁶ Most of these platters belong to so called Abusir group P-3, with either a fine or deeper groove under the inner rim (fig. 7). Additionally, most of these platters share similar features; as a rule, they were made of rougher fabric, such as most commonly Nile silt B2. Despite this fact, almost all of them were covered with a thin layer of red slip on their upper (inner) surfaces and sometimes also on the outer rim. While their inner surfaces are roughly smoothed, their bottoms were only pounded and left further untreated.

The class of jars was surprisingly underrepresented. Concerning beer jars, there were numerous rims, body

sherds and base fragments, but only one example could be reconstructed to full profile, providing us thus with some metric data. This beer jar (77-6.AS68d.2014) was uncovered in fragments in the topmost layer of the shaft. It belongs to Abusir type J-1b with a low straight neck, ovoid body and pointed base (fig. 8). The beer jar was 33.00 cm tall, with an aperture diameter of 8.50 cm and a maximum diameter of 17.00 cm. These dimensions are in accordance with the time period between the first and the second stage of the nearby tomb of Neferinpu, thus very likely the reign of King Nyuserre (see chart 1 in Krejčí – Arias Kytarová – Odler in this issue). This particular beer jar is an exemplary case for observing some technological details concerning the making of these jars. They were commonly built by hand from three separate parts – the base, the main body and finally the neck. In this case, the neck itself was finished on a turning device. On the lower body, the point at which the body and base were connected is clearly visible both from inside and outside. The main body of the jar was smoothed; on the inner walls, there are visible traces of vertical smoothing in two levels. The outer

77-6.AS68d.2014

J - 1b

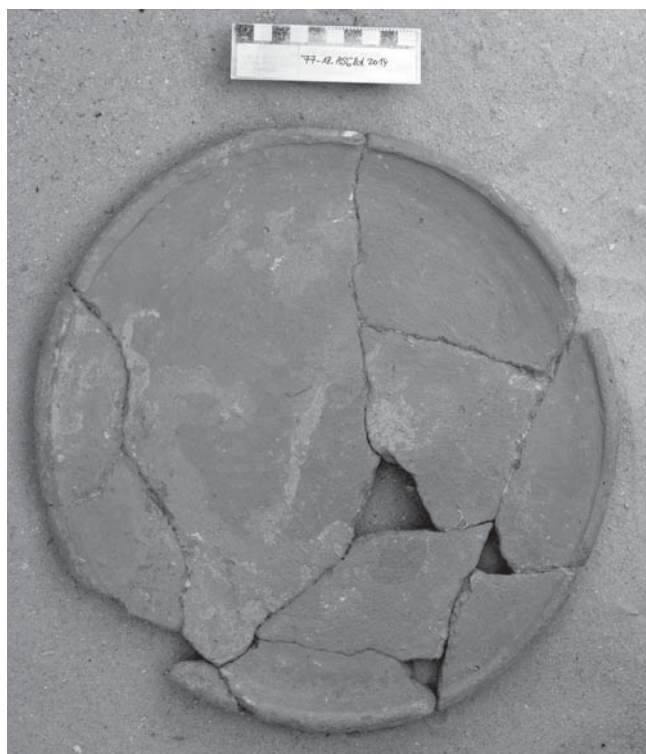
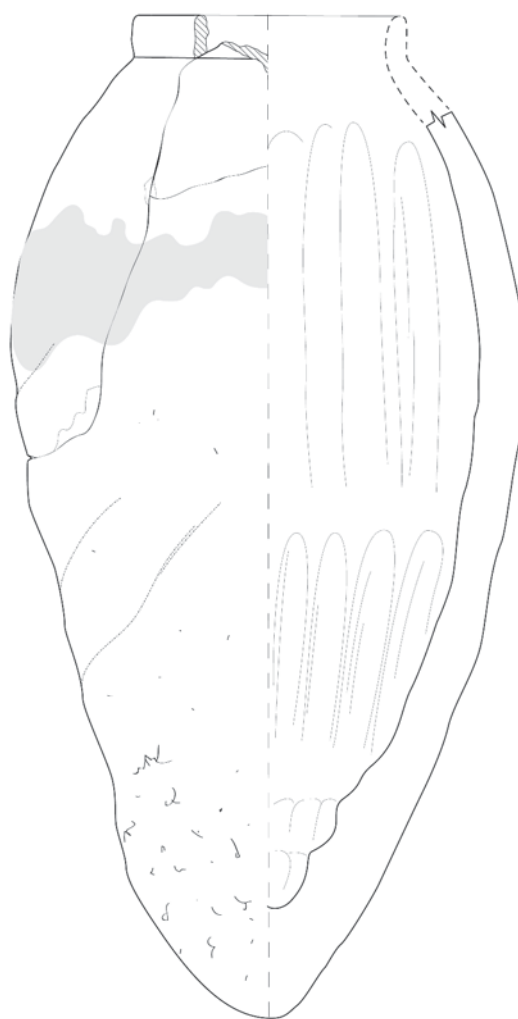


Fig. 7 One of the red-slipped platters of group P-3 (with a groove under the inner rim) uncovered in the shaft of Nefer (photo K. Arias Kytarová)

Fig. 8 A beer jar from Shaft 1, reconstructed to full profile from fragments. It was partly covered with a thin layer of Nile mud on the outer shoulders (drawing K. Arias Kytarová, L. Vařeková)

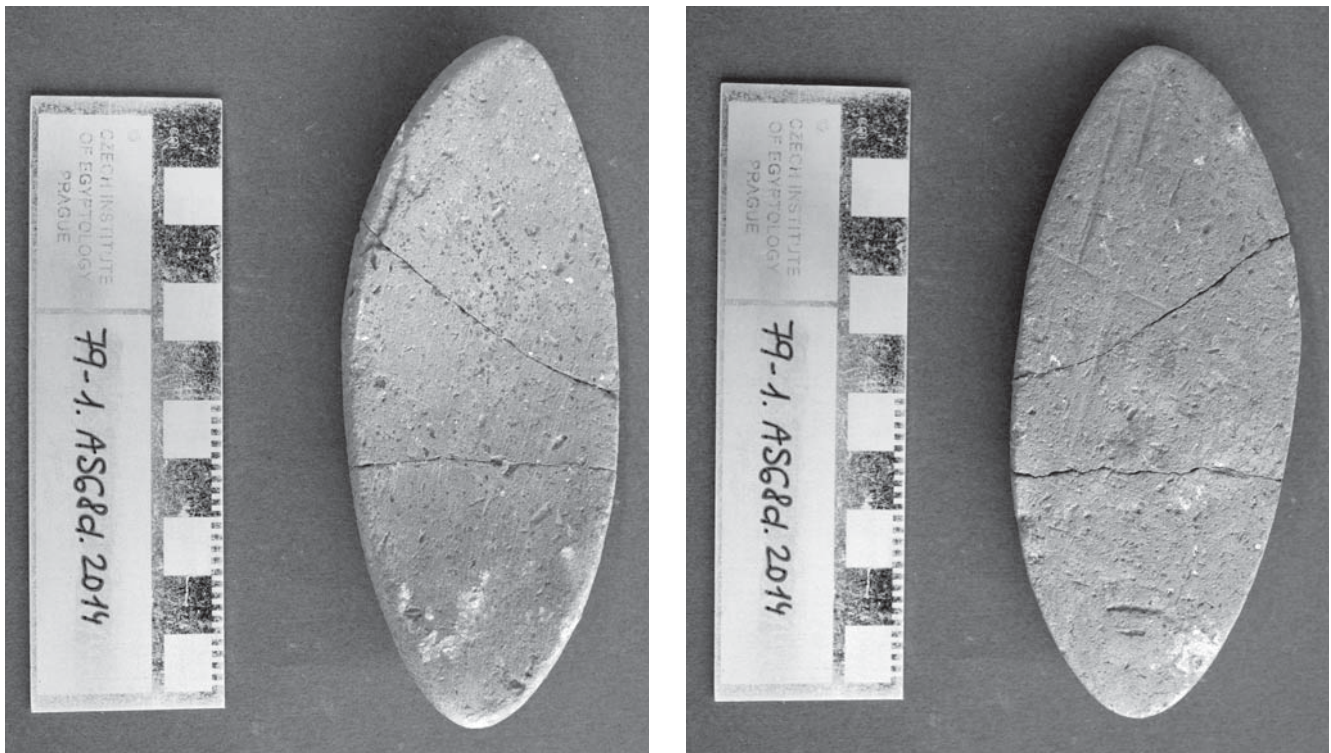


Fig. 9 Complete ceramic scraper uncovered in the middle part of the shaft (photos K. Arias Kytarová)

shoulders and lower body were smoothed with diagonal strokes. Additionally, the upper shoulders were covered with a thin layer of mud. Such a surface treatment is not unusual; it is clearly visible on early Old Kingdom beer jars, such as those from anonymous tomb AS 54 (see fig. 7 in Arias Kytarová – Jirásková in this issue). The purpose is unclear – in the case of the jars from AS 54, their outer walls were entirely covered in a compact layer of mud, and this could have served either as additional water-proofing or as thermal insulation. As far as jar 77-6.AS68d.2014 is concerned, only an attempt at thermal insulation can be seen, as the layer here is very thin and only randomly distributed over the shoulders, seeming more symbolic than functional.

There were numerous notable ceramic finds from the fill of Shaft 1 but not all can be discussed in this paper. One interesting find that shall be mentioned is ceramic tool 79-1.AS68d.2014, which was found in fragments in the middle area of the shaft, underneath and around the cluster with animal bones. It is an example of a tool made from a ceramic sherd, very likely originally belonging to a fine unslipped jar. It has an ellipsoid shape, and due to its smooth upper and lower surface and clearly worn edges, it has to be assumed that it served as a scraper or smoother (fig. 9). Such tools are gaining more interest, and in Abusir, several pieces have been uncovered to date.⁷ The closest parallels are those that come from the tomb of Prince Werkaure in Central Abusir (Arias Kytarová 2014b: Fig. 4.103:T and Fig. 4.104). The presence of ceramic tools in a shaft is unusual; however, it must be stressed that stone tools such as flint knives have been found both in ritual and burial shafts (see e.g. Rzeuska 2006: 451, 496, Table 4, Table 7; Arias Kytarová 2014b: 86). While these flint knives undoubtedly served a very different function,

very likely connected directly to the cutting of the animal pieces that are found as offerings in these shafts, it is possible that ceramic tools could also have had some so far unknown cultic purpose. It is, however, more likely that they were part of secondary technical pottery (used as a smoothing or scraping tool) that was left behind only accidentally. It is of no little interest that at least two examples of finer jars with visible traces of deep vertical smoothing, which could have resulted from the use of such a tool, were uncovered in the shaft of Nefer. None of these were able to be reconstructed to full profile, but two were spindle-shaped jars with pointed bases, while the last one is a larger jar with articulated shoulders, similar to the one almost fully preserved in the shaft of Nefer's wife (Bárta – Vymazalová – Dulíková *et al.* 2014: Fig. 13).

Compared to the plentiful pottery from the shaft, the ceramic finds from the burial chamber of Nefer seem rather poor. However, the burial chamber was discovered with a partially collapsed and unstable ceiling, and thus only part of the original tomb goods were able to be recovered during the risky cleaning works. While the original extent of the items placed in his chamber is unclear, there were at least two different vessels – one beer jar found in fragments (83-3.AS68d.2014 and 83-4.AS68d.2014) and a carinated bowl, so called Meidum bowl, also broken to pieces (83-1.AS68d.2014). As far as the beer jar is concerned, it could not be reconstructed to full profile, but due to the quality of the sherds, firing and colours of the sherds and their surface treatment, it is clear that these fragments belonged to a single vessel, which had a slightly oval mouth with a diameter of 10.50 × 11.00 cm. Such disfiguration is not unusual and probably occurred either during the drying (Rzeuska 2006: 385) or the firing of the vessels (Junker 1950: 16), when they were stacked on

each other or placed too tightly in rows. In addition to the beer jar fragments, the burial chamber also yielded an intact mud stopper from unfired mud (83-2.AS68d.2014). As the beer jar rim is incomplete and oval in shape, the association of the mud stopper with it is tentative, but they could have belonged together. The mud stopper has the shape of a truncated cone (Abusir type D-4), similar to those found *in situ* in the undisturbed burial chamber of priest Neferinpu in tomb AS 37 (Arias Kytarová 2014a: Figs. 7.8, 7.9), but this one is of more compact material, without visible traces of coiling and smoothing on the outer walls. The presence of a sealed beer jar in a burial chamber is very common, and the vessels were part of the tomb goods of the deceased, representing different items needed for the afterlife. In the case of various jars, these represented diverse fluids, in this case naturally the beer. It is noteworthy that in the above-mentioned intact burial chamber of priest Neferinpu ten such beer jars were uncovered, probably designed as an afterlife *per diem* ration for the priest.

The carinated bowl uncovered in fragments east of the sarcophagus, underneath the collapsed ceiling, was able to be reconstructed to almost full shape (fig. 10). The bowl was of very high quality, being made of Nile silt A and covered thoroughly with a well-polished red slip of hue 10R4/8. It had a tall recurved rim and angular shoulders, with identical aperture and shoulder diameters (21.00 cm) and a medium deep body with a height of 7.50 cm. All its typological and metric features point to the fact that this bowl was manufactured in the late Fifth Dynasty (Op de Beeck 2004: 265, Table 3), with all reservations to the limitations of such a dating.⁸ Bowls such as these were commonly placed in the burial chambers representing

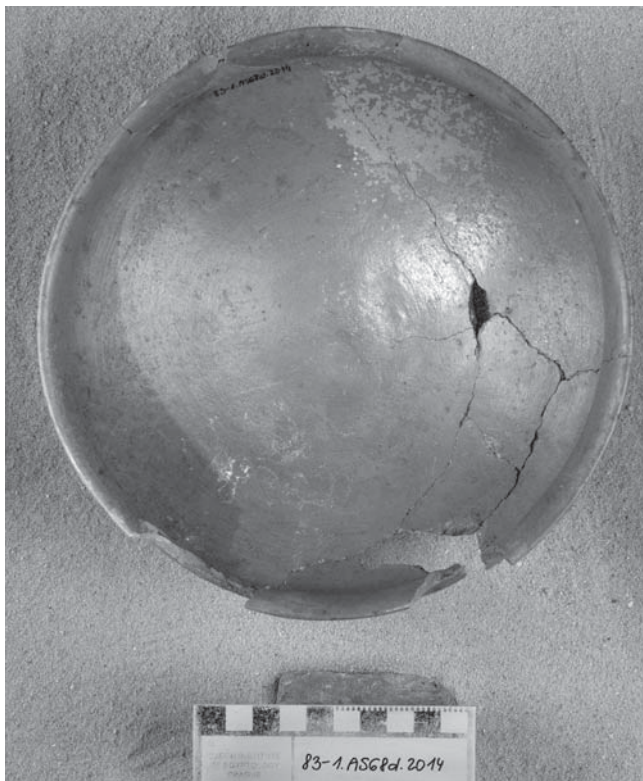


Fig. 10 Almost fully preserved carinated bowl uncovered in sherds in the burial chamber of Nefer (photo M. Frouz)

most likely the food for the deceased. There were no other fragments belonging to a different bowl, so it is very likely that this was the only one.

The ceramic finds of Neferhathor

Shaft 2 was very likely created for the wife of the main owner, Neferhathor, and at the time of its discovery in the autumn of 2012, it was found partly empty to a depth of about 3.00 m. The identification of the owner is based on the grounds of the epigraphic evidence, with her name attested on the false door of her husband, Nefer (situated immediately west of Shaft 1) and the fact that she would be expected to have been buried in this next, second shaft of the tomb. The anthropological analysis confirmed that a female was buried in the sarcophagus of the burial chamber of Shaft 2 and thus the association of Neferhathor with the owner of this shaft is relatively conclusive.

Ceramic finds were uncovered in several levels of the shaft and its burial chamber.⁹ Unlike the above-mentioned shaft, these were all assigned a single ceramic context number (44.AS68d.2012), only differentiated by the letters of the baskets and in the description. Similar to Shaft 1, the burial chamber of Shaft 2 was also robbed and, therefore, at least part of this shaft must have been emptied. However, clusters of pottery in certain corners of the shaft point to the fact that it was probably not emptied fully. The fill was rather compact, consisting of brown sand mixed with *tafl*, limestone chips and fragments. The most relevant context was a cluster of large ceramic fragments in the southeastern corner of the shaft at a depth of 2.70–3.50 m, consisting very likely of the remains of the original shaft deposit. Its contents were comprised predominantly of stands, platters and finer pottery. Roughly underneath this deposit was a scatter of animal bones (186/AS68d/2012), found along the eastern, western and northern side of the shaft, as well as fragments of wood (185/AS68d/2012). Smaller amounts of disarticulated pottery from Shaft 2 came from below the cluster, from a depth of 3.50 m and deeper.

Finally, at the bottom of the shaft, at a depth of 6.50 m and directly connected to the entrance into the burial chamber, the remains of numerous fragments of pottery were found (fig. 11). This cluster consisted mainly of stands, as well as a fully preserved bread form and sherds of finer pottery, including a bowl with a thick layer of a fine white substance inside, very likely plaster intended for coating. This bowl (44-5.AS68d.2012) is of Abusir type B-2c, namely with bent-sided walls and a spouted rim (fig. 12). Both curved spouts were found, although the vessel was preserved only to about 55 % of its diameter. The use of such fine pottery as a container for plaster is less usual, but in principle it reflects the similar discovery of a beer jar base with mortar filling at the bottom of Shaft 1 and has to be interpreted in a similar way (see *supra*).

This was not the only fine pottery used as a container for plaster – the context in front of the sealing wall contained fragments of another vessel, of much less usual shape, also with a layer of white substance on its inner walls. It is very small, with an aperture diameter of only 18.50 cm and a height of 9.50 cm. The most unusual features are its

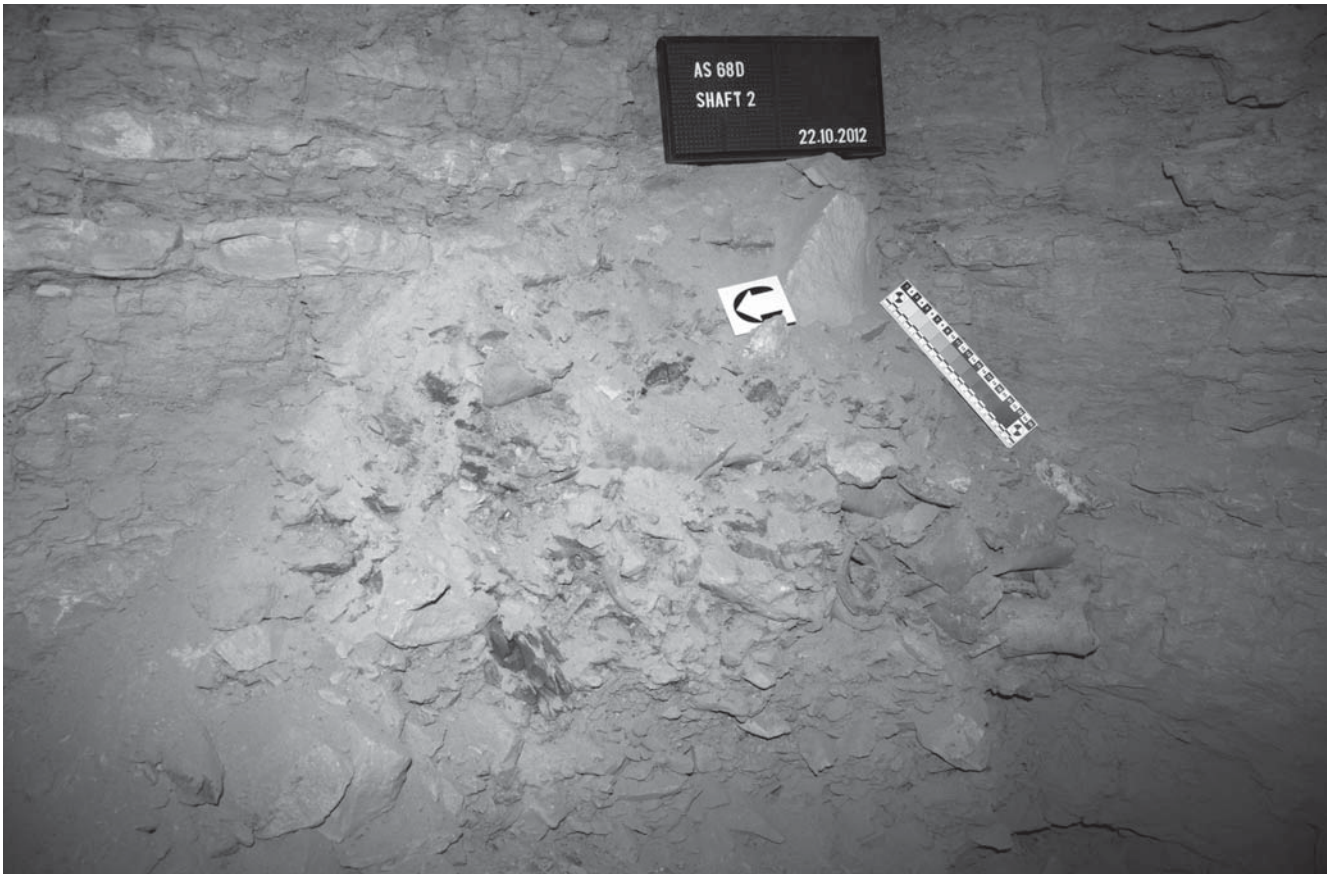


Fig. 11 Cluster of ceramic fragments found at the bottom of Shaft 2, connected to the partially preserved sealing wall of the burial chamber (photo H. Vymazalová)

spouted rim and a ledge, decorating the area underneath the outer rim (see fig. 13, 44-6.AS68d.2012).

The ceramic vessels from Shaft 2 were found extremely fragmented, and many vessels were broken to numerous small pieces, including a large and rather thick-walled storage jar 44-13.AS68d.2012, which was glued together from over 30 fragments (Bárta – Vymazalová – Dulíková *et al.* 2014: Fig. 13). Such fragmentation is probably not simply the result of robbing activity – more probably, it can be interpreted as the result of intentional breaking of the pottery, which shall be discussed below.

Looking at the main characteristics and typological similarities to Shaft 1, the most numerous classes attested were again stands and platters. These two classes occur together very often in ritual activities, making up small portable “tables”. In the case of this shaft, we had altogether at least 37 stands and 12 platters. For both classes, the numbers can actually be slightly higher, but they are only about half of those from neighbouring Shaft 1. Also, there were at least eleven attested bowls and ten jars. All other classes were sparse, with just one miniature bowl and one cup and only four bread forms.

44-5.AS68d.2012
B - 2c

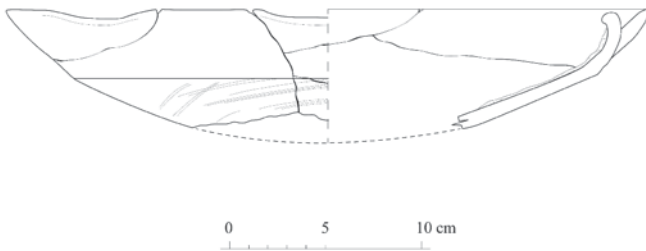


Fig. 12 Partially preserved red-slipped bowl with a spout rim and extensive remains of a finer white substance inside (drawing K. Arias Kytarová, L. Vařeková, photo M. Frouz)

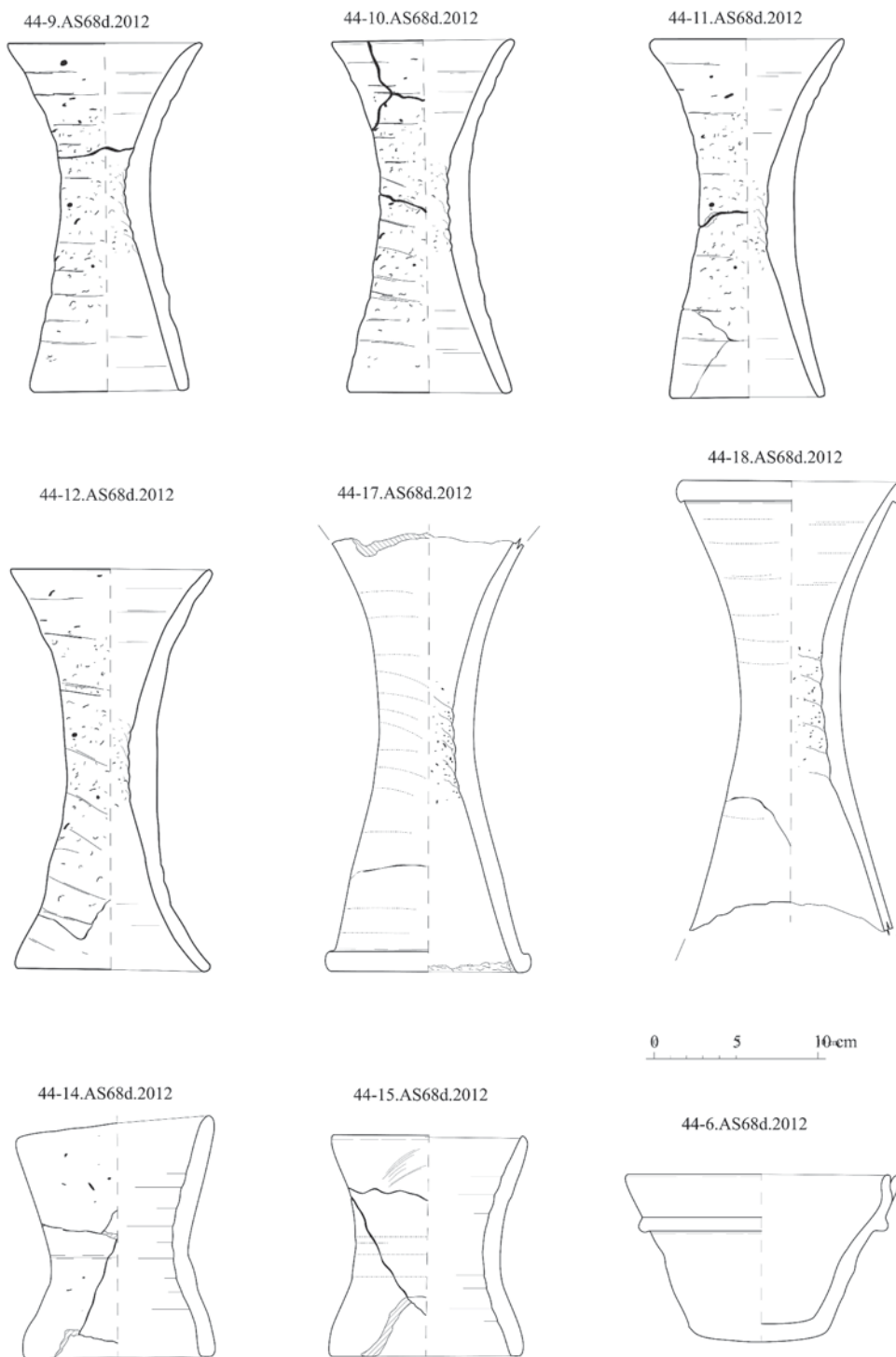


Fig. 13 Selected ceramic finds, especially stands, from the fill of Shaft 2 in tomb AS 68d (drawing K. Arias Kytarová, L. Vařeková)

Among the stands, two main groups (one with two variations) were observed, again very similar to the features attested in Shaft 1. The most common group was the tall hour-glass shaped stands with conical walls and with either a simple or a modelled rim. The second, much more infrequent group, were low ring stands with conical walls and, as a rule, simple rims (fig. 13). Among the tall hour-glass shaped stands (Abusir type S-1a), the form with a simple rim and base (S-1a1) was highly predominant. They were highly uniform not only in their forms but also sizes – the six fully preserved examples had rim diameters of 12.00–13.50 cm, base diameters of 10.00–13.00 cm and heights of 23.00 cm (five examples) and 26.00 cm (one example). Even the partly preserved

examples (such as only the upper rim or base rim fragments) showed conformity with these dimensions. As a rule, upper and lower rims were able to be easily distinguished, as the upper rims were carefully smoothed, while the base rims were often slightly flattened and sometimes left slightly rough, with the remains of redundant clay still on their inner surfaces (see also fig. 6 for occurrence from Shaft 1). Another rule that was observed was that the stands had either simple upper and base rims or modelled upper and base rims; there was never a case of a combination of a simple upper rim with a modelled base rim or *vice versa*.¹⁰ The variation with simple rims (S-1a1) was much more common, with six fully preserved examples and almost 60 more fragments. On

the other hand, the variation with modelled rims (S-1all) was represented by only two incomplete examples with rim/base diameters of 14.50 and 13.00 cm. The technical details of their production, surface treatment and other details are identical to those from Shaft 1 (see *supra*).

The ceramic finds uncovered in the burial chamber were very poor, consisting of only two partly broken beer jars and several other fragments. The beer jars were found *in situ*, deposited west of the sarcophagus (Bárta – Vymazalová – Dulíková *et al.* 2014: Fig. 11). One of them was able to be reconstructed to full profile (44-43.AS68d.2012) and belongs to type J-1b with a straight, low neck, ovoid body and partly pointed base. It is rather large, with an aperture diameter of 10.00 cm, maximum diameter of 17.00 cm and complete height of 36.50 cm. The other beer jar (44-44.AS68d.2012) was preserved only to the lower part of the neck but has similar dimensions, with a maximum diameter of 16.50 cm and preserved height of 33.00 cm. These beer jars were very likely part of the tomb goods of the deceased woman, similar to the already mentioned ten beer jars from the intact burial chamber of priest Neferinpu (Arias Kytarová 2014a: Figs. 7.8, 7.9), symbolizing beer as sustenance for her afterlife. The burial chamber held several other objects, most notably four canopic jars, a small set of copper tools and bones of animal offerings.

As far as the dating is concerned, this shaft was probably built and used slightly later than that of her husband. Both the rough pottery (such as the beer jars from the burial chamber) as well as the fine vessels (a large spindle-shaped jar, bent-sided bowls and other vessels from the shaft) point to the fact that they come from a time period closer to the stone enlargement of the tomb of priest Neferinpu. This enlargement can be dated due to the presence of two inscribed mud stoppers in the burial chamber of his wife, with the name of king Djedkare (Bárta *et al.* 2014: Figs. 6.37–6.40).

Conclusive remarks

When comparing the ceramic finds from these two shafts, it is important to stress the main facts – although both were undoubtedly robbed and thus the fills of these shafts must have been emptied at least once during their existence, their nature would suggest that the objects uncovered in them were not accidental arrays of unrelated items. In both shafts, we were able to uncover large amounts of fragments belonging not only to certain ceramic classes (especially stands, platters and jars) but also the same groups (tall hour-glass stands of group S-1 or the low stands of group S-6). Also, numerous examples from both shafts were able to be glued together to at least full profile, if not to full diameter. Had the shafts been emptied and then filled with material coming from the whole surroundings of the tomb, such a frequency would not be expected. During the excavations in Abusir South, the present author came across material from disturbed shafts in which each vessel was represented only by 7–10 % of its diameter. Such shaft fills can be seen as truly secondary in nature. Shafts like those of Nefer (Shaft 1) and Neferhathor (Shaft 2), in which predominant numbers of

vessels were preserved to more than 60–70 % of their diameters, should be considered as the potential remnants of the original context. Naturally, the exact state of the fragments was also carefully studied; in the case of the material from these two shafts, no traces of erosion or exposure to sun, wind or sand was observed. Therefore we can indeed assume that the shafts were back-filled with either their full original contents or at least a large part of it. The reasoning behind such back-filling is simple – if the shafts were robbed, the robbers might have attempted to hide such a fact and filled the shaft to accomplish this. Or, more likely, the robbed shafts might have been back-filled by priests who discovered that they had been robbed, both for reasons of safety (the ceramic evidence proves that funerary rituals were conducted in the rock-cut chapels until the terminal Sixth Dynasty) and religious piety. Naturally, such theories are to remain tentative unless more palpable data is collected supporting it. However, recent exploration in Abusir has proven that careful documentation of even disturbed contexts can bring to light very interesting results that might directly reflect funerary rituals.

To give more evidence for this assumption of deliberate shaft deposits, consisting of vessels used most likely during the burial itself and then ritually destroyed by being thrown into the shaft, it has to be highlighted that similar compositions of ceramic classes were also uncovered in other shafts in the area of Abusir South. These include the two shafts in the tomb of Nefershepes (AS 67) as well as the shaft of the presumed husband of Princess Sheretnebtu (Shaft 1 in AS 68c) and Shaft 1 in the anonymous tomb AS 47 (Arias Kytarová 2011a: 121–123, Figs. 19–22, 25). In all these cases, the shafts were filled with large amounts of ceramic sherds, with a prevalence of the classes of stands and platters. Also, in each case, although these classes were the same, the types and forms were not necessarily identical and the sets from each shaft can easily be distinguished from each other by size, quality and general make. These differences can be seen either as the result of the social status of the owner and thus his economic power (in being able to afford better quality stands covered in red slip such as those in the tomb of Nefershepes), or even with yet unexplored questions such as differences in ceramic material between male and female burials, which come to light with the increasing amount of material from Abusir South.

Other cases include the burial shaft in the tomb of Princess Hedjetnebu in Abusir Center. Although the pottery from this shaft was not documented in full detail, from the photos and field notes it is possible to state that very large quantities of at that time intact ceramic vessels were found, together with other objects, at a depth of 2.50–3.30 m in the shaft (Verner – Callender 2002: 89, Pl. XXI: Kf2). Again, there was a striking predominance of certain classes, such as stands and platters, complemented with beer jars and their unfired mud stoppers. Due to the presence of mummy wrappings, this context was interpreted as originally part of the goods placed in the burial chamber and thrown out by the tomb robbers. However, due to parallels from our necropolis,

it is likely that, while part of the contents of the burial chamber indeed pervaded into the shaft, most of the pottery was part of the shaft fill.

All these above-mentioned shafts from Abusir used as parallels were ones belonging to high-ranking officials or members of the high levels of the society, as without any exception their owners were buried in stone sarcophagi and had tomb goods such as limestone canopic jars. At the same time, we have burial shafts of lower-ranking officials whose shaft deposits are much poorer and often consist of only several vessels, predominantly beer jars. These include the shaft of Neferinpu (AS 37) that held eight beer jars, three stands and one bread form, all clearly deposited intentionally at different levels of the shaft (Bárta *et al.* 2014: Fig. 3.21). Large amounts of pottery, in vast predominance consisting of beer jars, were also found in two intact shafts of the anonymous mud brick mastaba AS 78 of the Fifth Dynasty, which was recently excavated in Abusir South. All this material provides valuable comparative data for the study of pottery not only from a chronological and historical view, but also concerning the differences in the socio-economic power of the deceased.

Shafts of the Sixth Dynasty, especially those excavated in the cemetery of Saqqara West where the ceramic finds were documented with utmost care and detail, exhibit similar general features. Often, the shafts contained not only larger amounts of vessels but also other objects such as animal bones. However, there are also striking differences, as the most common ceramic group present in these shafts is that of beer jars – in a few tombs, the numbers per single shaft can exceed 50 individual vessels.¹¹ Additionally, some of these beer jars were filled with ashes (Rzeuska 2006: 468–480), a custom not yet recorded in our necropolis. The classes of stands and platters are present in the shafts of Saqqara West but do not constitute the majority of the ceramic finds. Following the beer jars, bread baking forms are the most common class from their burial shafts. Again, such high occurrences of bread moulds have not been confirmed in our necropolis; however, all these differences could be the result of several factors, one of them being the different dating of the structures that they come from (the Sixth Dynasty) and therefore the possibility of a slight development in funerary rituals and customs.

To conclude, the aim of this paper was to evaluate the potential of the ceramic finds from disturbed contexts such as robbed burial shafts, exemplified by the two main shafts from the tomb of Nefer, belonging to the tomb owner and possibly his wife (AS 68d). The main point of discussion was the proposition that in some cases, such robbed shafts still hold relatively extensive remnants of their original deposits. On the basis of the above-mentioned facts, it is highly possible that both these shafts were back-filled with their primary fills within a relatively short time span from their robbing, given the uneroded nature of the pottery. Thus, large parts of their original contents were still preserved at the time of discovery and are worth detailed documentation and analysis as they bring to light new facts concerning the use of pottery in rituals connected to burials.

Notes:

- ¹ For a detailed list of observed examples, see *e.g.* Rzeuska (2006: 446–448).
- ² See also a more detailed discussion of beer jars filled with Nile mud and positioned in front of the sealed entrance into a burial chamber or niche in Arias Kytarová (2014a: 134).
- ³ In the whole shaft, there were seven stands of this form (S-1a) preserved in full profile, together with at least 12 other partly preserved ones.
- ⁴ There were eight stands of form S-1a preserved in full profile, with a few other rim and base fragments.
- ⁵ In the shaft, there were six low ring stands with a simple rim, preserved in full profile, with at least other six examples in incomplete fragments.
- ⁶ Here, I would like to thank my Egyptian helpers Ahmad Abdel Nasr, Muhammad Mahmud and Usama Abdallah, whose help in sorting, cleaning and especially reconstructing the ceramic finds from these contexts has been invaluable.
- ⁷ See *e.g.* tools from Shaft 5 in the anonymous tomb AS 20 (Tomášek 2002: Tab. 3, no. 5) or those uncovered in tombs AS 59 (Arias Kytarová 2011b: Fig. 6.9, 40-12.AS59.2010) and AS 57a–c (Arias Kytarová 2011b: Fig. 6.10, 35-4.AS57.2010).
- ⁸ As discussed on many occasions, carinated bowls are not considered a reliable tool for dating individual structures as they could have been kept for an unknown amount of time before being deposited in the given context. As such, they reflect the period in which they were made but rarely the date of the structure in which they were found (see also Rzeuska 2006: 409).
- ⁹ A very brief mention of the most important finds from Shaft 2 was offered in the preliminary report on the 2012 excavation season (Bárta – Vymazalová – Dulíková *et al.* 2014: 32). Here, a much more detailed analysis and discussion of these finds shall be offered.
- ¹⁰ This has been noted particularly while documenting the extensive ceramic remains from the complex of Princess Sheretnebt, including all the tombs, not only the one of Nefer.
- ¹¹ Such as 29 beer jars from the shaft of anonymous Complex 2; at least 18 examples from Burial Shaft 28 and over 50 pieces from Shaft 31 in the tomb of Pehenptah; 56 jars from Shaft 46 in the complex of Seshemnefer, *etc.* (Rzeuska 2006: 455–458).

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to compare two sets of ceramic finds from the two southernmost shafts uncovered in tomb AS 68d, namely Shaft 1, belonging to the main tomb owner named Nefer, and Shaft 2, which very likely belonged to his wife, Neferhathor. These shafts are interesting due to the fact that although both their burial chambers were robbed and thus the shafts must have been disturbed, a large number of typologically and metrically similar vessels and their fragments were uncovered in the fills. In both shafts, we were able to uncover a large amount of fragments belonging not only to certain ceramic classes (especially stands, platters and jars) but also to the same groups, such as the tall hour-glass stands or the low ring stands. Also, numerous examples from both shafts were able to be glued together to at least full profile, if not to full diameter. Thus it is possible to assume that these shafts were back-filled with either their original contents or at least an unknown fraction of it, and the ceramic finds uncovered in them were originally part of intentional burial shaft deposits.

Old Kingdom – Abusir – rock-cut tomb – shaft deposit – pottery – spatial distribution

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