

OBSERVATIONS ON STRATIGRAPHY

Northwestern part of Area I/E-F (former Pit I/E-F)

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ROCK SURFACE OF TERRACED SLOPE

In 1998, bedrock was reached on the terraced slope in Area I, located to the west of the Djoser step pyramid [Fig. 1].¹

In Area I/G, between Shafts 9 and 15, the rock was exposed at c. 52.50 m above sea level.² The next exposure level is at c. 50 m a.s.l., above the cult chamber

of vizier Meref-nebef (including Area I/E in the vicinity of Shaft 1).³ In a trial trench located north of the tomb complex, extending to the western perimeter (NW corner)⁴ of the excavated area (I/F), the rock surface was reached at c. 48 m a.s.l.

SECTION N - AREA I/E-F

The trench wall – "section N" of the 1998 season – constitutes the northern limit of the site [Fig. 2]. The middle part of the cross-section (Area I/F), which was the northern border of the site in 1997, had been the subject of sedimentary analysis.⁵ The section then examined was situated about 2 m south of the trench wall exposed this season.

The stratigraphy of the western end of section N provides important data for establishing a relative chronology sequence of human activity in this part of the necropolis.

LAYER 10

The surface of the rock terrace [Fig. 2:18, eastern end] was covered with a layer of limestone breccia of small angular rock fragments [Fig. 2:10]. A thin layer (up to 10 cm) of fine sea sand forms the bottom of layer 10.⁶ The upper part of this stratum was an occupational level with organic material and sherds datable to the 2nd-3rd dynasties.⁷ There are deposits of organic materials and pebbles in the eastern part of this layer, at the bottom. This is the oldest stratum of sediments in the excavated area.⁸

¹ Pit I, trial trench opened in 1987 (cf. K. Myśliwiec, T. Herbich, with contribution by A. Niwiński, *EtTrav XVII* (1995), pp. 186-195, figs 1-3 and 8-14), extended in the 1996-98 seasons, now called Area I. See also report by K. Myśliwiec in this volume.

² Shaft 15: SW corner – 52.47 m, NE corner – 52.62 m; see plan in report by K. Myśliwiec in this volume.

³ See plan in K. Myśliwiec, *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), fig. 1.

⁴ See plan in K. Myśliwiec, *PAM VIII, Reports 1996* (1997), fig. 1.

⁵ E. Mycielska-Dowgiałło, B. Woronko, Analysis of mineral deposits in the northern wall of Pit I, *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), pp. 106-115.

⁶ This corresponds to layer 1 of *ibid.*, p. 107, fig. 1:1. See also report by Mycielska-Dowgiałło and Woronko in this volume.

⁷ These are fragments of the so-called "Streifenpolitur" type vessels (personal communication of Teodozja Rzeuska).

⁸ See report by Mycielska-Dowgiałło and Woronko in this volume.

LAYER 9

The next level of deposits, layer 9, consists of mostly large angular rock fragments, with small rock fragments forming loose mounds in places. Blue faience plaques⁹ and sherds of Old Kingdom pottery, found mostly in the central and western parts of the layer, are not numerous. In the central part of layer 9, a deposit of fine yellow sand with small

angular rock fragments, layer 9a, is attested [Fig. 2:9a]. The surface of layer 9 was an occupational level, as evidenced by fragments of mud brick, pottery, animal bones and organic material.

SHAFT 1

Builders of this shaft had to pass through layers 10 and 9 before they reached the bedrock level of the terrace [Fig. 2:18]. The yellow sand layer [Fig. 2:9a] is most probably connected with the filling of Shaft 1. The shaft [Fig. 3] was hewn in the times after the 3rd dynasty and before the 6th dynasty (see below).

LAYER 8

Deposits superimposed on layer 9 are mostly large angular rock fragments, forming loose mounds in places, and small rock fragments. Some of mounds are the result of human activity, e.g. rock material from Shaft 1. Finds include blue faience plaques, charcoal and sherds of Old Kingdom pottery.

ROCK FACADE OF THE CULT CHAMBER OF THE VIZIER MEREF-NEBEF

Layers 10 to 8 had existed above the rock terrace when the construction of the cult chamber of vizier Meref-nebef was initiated in the reign of king Teti¹⁰ and the builders must have been aware of the presence of Shaft 1. The west end of the terrace was cut off vertically to prepare a rock facade for the tomb complex.¹¹

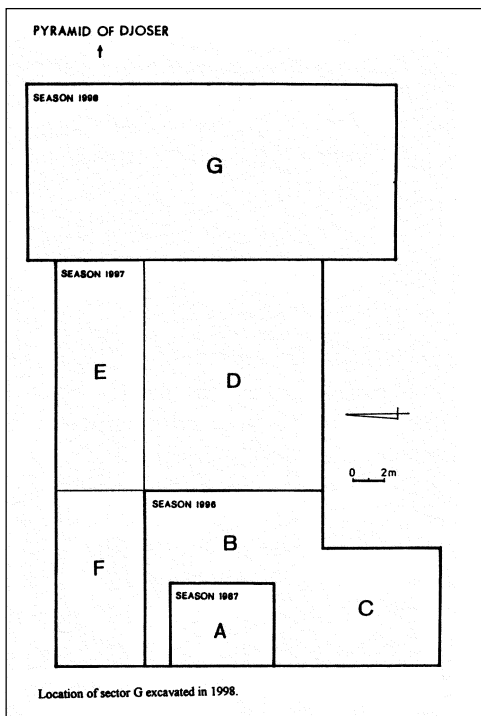


Fig. 1. Area I (former Pit I), location of excavated sectors (Drawing M. Puzkarski)

⁹ The plaques resemble objects decorating the so-called "south tomb chamber" of the *Netjerykhet*, Djoser's funerary complex, cf. Myśliwiec et al., *EtTrav XVII*, op. cit., pp. 186, 188 and n. 4, figs 11-12; id., *Nowe oblicza Sakkary* (Tuchów 1998); p. 8, fig. 13; Z.E. Szafranski, *Archeologia Żywa* (= *AŻ*) 2 (1998), p. 31. As for the blue faience plaques dated to the 3rd dynasty, see also K. Kromer, *Siedlungsfunde aus dem frühen Alten Reich in Gizeh. Österreichische Ausgrabungen 1971-75* (Wien 1978), pp. 77-78, fig. 23, pl. 33:6 & 8.

¹⁰ For the date of the vizier Meref-nebef, see Myśliwiec, *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), p. 95, fig. 3; id., *Nowe oblicza*, op. cit., p. 11; Szafranski, *Nieznany wezyr krola Teti*, *AŻ* 6 (1998), pp. 3, 6.

¹¹ See contribution by Mycielska-Dowgiałło and Woronko in this volume.

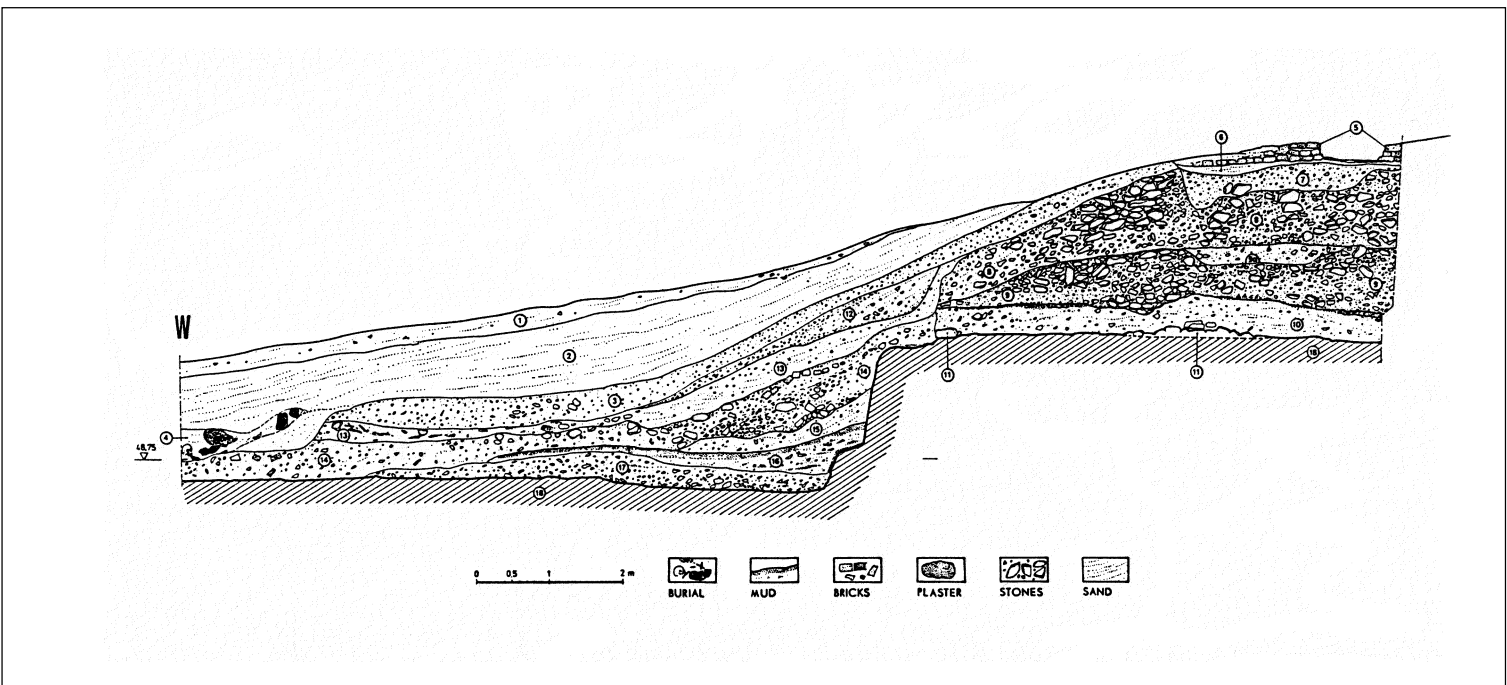


Fig. 2. Area II E-F, Section N, western part
(Interpretation Z.E. Szafranski, drawing M. Puzkarski)

MUD-BRICK WALLS IMITATING PALACE FACADE

Adjoining the rock facade on the east are two parallel walls of latitudinal orientation with a transversal wall linking them at the eastern end. On the outside, these walls are broken by a series of recesses imitating a palace facade. They

border a rectangular court located on a higher level than that in front of the cult chamber.¹² The walls are built above and on the top of the deposits of layer 8. Thus, they were most probably erected at the same time (or shortly after) the execution of the rock facade of the cult chamber. It seems that they existed until the

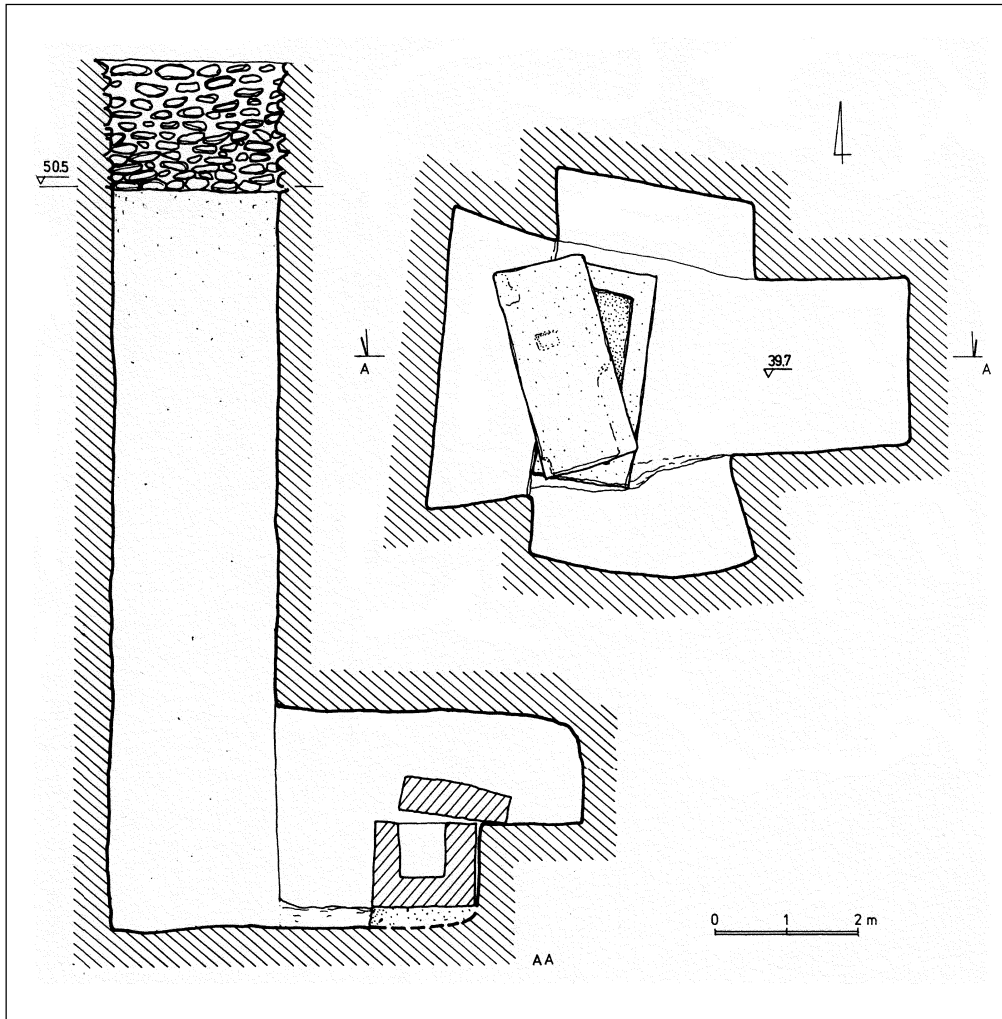


Fig. 3. Area I/D, Shaft 1, vertical and horizontal cross-sections
(Drawing M. Puzkarski)

¹² Cf. Myśliwiec, *PAM IX*, op. cit., pp. 90-92; id., *Nowe oblicza*, op. cit., fig. 19; Szafranski, *AŻ 6*, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

end of the Old Kingdom and perhaps their upper part, especially in the eastern area, was still visible above the sand (layer 2, *Fig. 2:2*) in the times of Alexander the Great.

LAYERS 7-5

The stratigraphical sequences, mud-brick structure [*Fig. 2:5*] and the objects associated with it provide the most reliable basis for dating these layers to the 6th dynasty.

Layers in the eastern part of section N (Area I/F SQ'98) correspond to accumulations resulting from human activity both during the construction of the tomb complex of vizier Meref-nebef and in the succeeding period. The material from layer 10 is not attested in deposits from this part of the section.

LAYERS 17 and 16

The accumulation comes from layers accumulated upon the rock terrace, above the tomb of the vizier (layers 9 and 8). Nile silt, resulting perhaps from mud-brick building activity, and occasional Old Kingdom sherds overlie layer 16.

LAYER 15

Windblown sand which had accumulated on the slope. The layer also extends to the north.¹³

LAYER 14

Large angular rock fragments in the eastern part of the stratum, numerous mud

bricks, whole and fragmentary, and the presence of a weathering-soil horizon characterize this layer. Blue faience plaques, small rock fragments, sherds of late Old Kingdom pottery, animal and human bones are in evidence. The layer corresponds to layers 3, 3a and 3b identified in Section N - Saqqara 1997.¹⁴

LAYER 3

The layer covers stratum 14, layers 13-12 and the mud-brick structure (5) on top of the deposits in the eastern part of the section. There is no gap (i.e., layer 13 especially) between this deposit and stratum 14 in some places of the excavated site. The horizon of stratum 3, sometimes identical (and contemporary) with that of stratum 14, forms an occupational level (called in Arabic *dakka*) consisting of weathering-soil with blue faience plaques, small rock fragments, sherds of late Old Kingdom pottery, animal bones, charcoal and organic material. This is the stratum of destruction of the Old Kingdom structures in the excavation area.¹⁵

LAYER 2

The stratum consists of two phases of sandy deposits, corresponding to layers 4a and 6 from Section N - Saqqara 1997.¹⁶ At the bottom of this stratum, the sand carried by floodwater forms a horizontal stratification.¹⁷ The chronology is confirmed additionally by massive Nile flooding dated to 1850-1550 BC.¹⁸

¹³ After analysis by E. Mycielska-Dowgiałło and B. Woronko.

¹⁴ Cf. Mycielska-Dowgiałło and Woronko, *PAM IX*, op. cit., pp. 107-108, fig. 1.

¹⁵ This stratum (corresponding to layer 3c in Section N-Saqqara 1997) should be dated to the times before ca. 2050 BC, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 107-108, 115.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 108-109, fig. 1.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 109-layer 4a.

¹⁸ Cf. Z.E. Szafranski, *Patterns of settlement life in Egypt in the first half of the second millennium BC*, Excursus in Part Two, in print.

BURIAL STRATA

Two main strata of tombs have presently been identified in the explored [Fig. 4]: a) Layers of a necropolis of Ptolemaic (or even earlier)¹⁹ and Roman times.²⁰ The strata of Ptolemaic tombs is clearly distinguished, especially in Areas I/A²¹

and I/G.²² The layer of the early Roman period burials is attested in the western part of the excavated area (I/B-I/A-I/F).²³ b) Stratum of Old Kingdom shaft-tombs, hewn in the rock, including the tomb complex of vizier Meref-nebef.²⁴

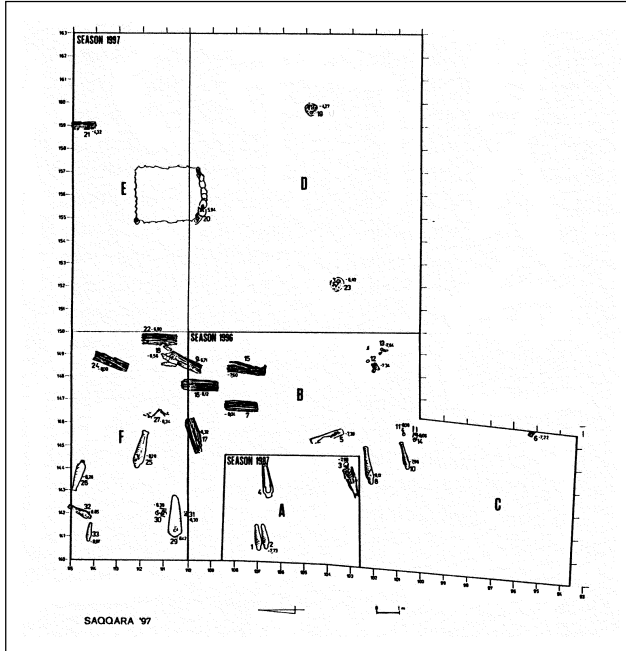


Fig. 4. Area I/A-F, location of burials of the Ptolemaic-Roman necropolis (Drawing M. Puzkarski)

¹⁹ E.g. Burials 55 and 65 in Area I/G might perhaps be dated to the end of the Late Period.

²⁰ Cf. Myśliwiec, *PAM IX*, op. cit., p. 93; id., *Nowe oblicza*, op. cit., pp. 7-9; id., *A new mastaba, a new vizier*, *Egyptian Archaeology* (= EA) 13 (1998), p. 37; Szafranski, *AŻ 6*, op. cit., pp. 4, 6; id., *Mówią Wieki* (= MW) 1 (1999), p. 3.

²¹ E.g. Burial 4, dated by Myśliwiec, *Nowe oblicza*, op. cit., figs. 8 and 9) to the end of the 4th century BC, and by Niwiński, [in:] Myśliwiec et al., *EtTrav XVII*, op. cit., p. 195, to the late Ptolemaic Period.

²² E.g. Burials 36, 47 and perhaps 46, found in the same stratum. A deposit (Dep. 2) of amphorae, including Solocha type I – dated to the 4th-3rd century BC (personal communication of T. Witkowska), was discovered in the same context and close to the burials.

²³ E.g., from south to north: Burials 11, 14, 10, 8, 3 (?), 2, 1, 29 and perhaps 33, cf. Szafranski, *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), p. 105 (with references). As for Burial 29, see Myśliwiec, *Nowe oblicza*, op. cit., figs. 5-7; id., *EA 13*, p. 37.

²⁴ For the location of Shafts 1 and 25 (i.e., the so-called "shaft III", unearthed in 1996) and the tomb complex of vizier Meref-nebef, cf. Myśliwiec, *PAM VIII*, op. cit., fig. 1; id., *PAM IX*, op. cit., fig. 1; id. *EA 13* (1998), p. 38; id., *Nowe oblicza*, op. cit., pp. 10-11, figs. 23, 25, 26; Szafranski, *AŻ 2*, op. cit., p. 31; id., *AŻ 6*, op. cit., pp. 2, 6; id., *MW* (1999), p. 3.