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## West Saqqara: Remarks on Corridor 1

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## REMARKS ON CORRIDOR 1

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Corridor 1 was discovered and explored during the 2000 season of Polish excavations at West Saqqara.<sup>1)</sup> This structure, having no direct parallels in the area excavated by the mission, as well as in all of the Old Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara, is situated in the western part of the presently known late Old Kingdom necropolis, its entrance being located in sector I/F1, where the edge of the alleged “dry moat” of Netjerykhet's funerary complex was expected.<sup>2)</sup>

The entrance to Corridor 1 is situated in the cliff ledge facing west, 1.00 m below its upper edge (*Fig. 1*).<sup>3)</sup> The floor level of this corridor is 2.88 m below the upper edge of the shelf. The corridor itself runs east-west, declining slightly south of due east; it is 22 m long, 1.55 m broad, its height varying from 1.20 m (in the middle part) to 1.80 m (in the western and eastern parts). On the east it ends in a plain wall.

At the eastern end of the north wall, there is the entrance to a rectangular, oblong chamber, which is parallel to the corridor, measuring originally 4.15 (E-W) by c. 1.50 (N-S) m, its maximum height being 1.80 m. In its present state, the walls and ceiling of the chamber, as well as the

walls at the eastern end of the corridor, are damaged in great measure (as much as c. 0.5 m in places) by heavy water action, most probably a huge flood.<sup>4)</sup> The three upper corners (SW, NE and SE) survive, however, permitting a reconstruction of the original shape. Both floor and roof in the chamber are depressed c. 0.20 m with respect to the floor and roof of the corridor. Like the corridor, the chamber was only roughly hewn out of the rock (deep chisel marks still visible) and devoid of any decoration.

In the south wall of the corridor, c. 13 m from the entrance and flush with the ceiling, there is the irregular opening of Shaft 37. Below this hole the shaft narrows down suddenly, almost certainly because of the presence of Corridor 1,<sup>5)</sup> indicating that the corridor was earlier than the shaft, itself dated to the late Old Kingdom.

The corridor was filled with debris practically up to the roof – c. 0.20 m below the ceiling at the entrance and c. 1.00 m below the ceiling in the chamber. A careful observation of the stratigraphy suggests that the lower strata in both the corridor and the chamber had been deposited intentionally.

1) Cf. report by K. Myśliwiec in this volume.

2) Cf. K. Myśliwiec, K. Kuraszekiewicz, *Recent Polish-Egyptian Excavations in West Saqqara, Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000*, *Archiv Orientalni Supplementa IX* (Prague 2000), 499.

3) See fig. 3 in the report by K. Myśliwiec in this volume.

4) According to expedition geologists E. Mycielska-Dowgiałło and B. Woronko.

5) K. Myśliwiec, *PAM XI, Reports 1999* (2000), 98.

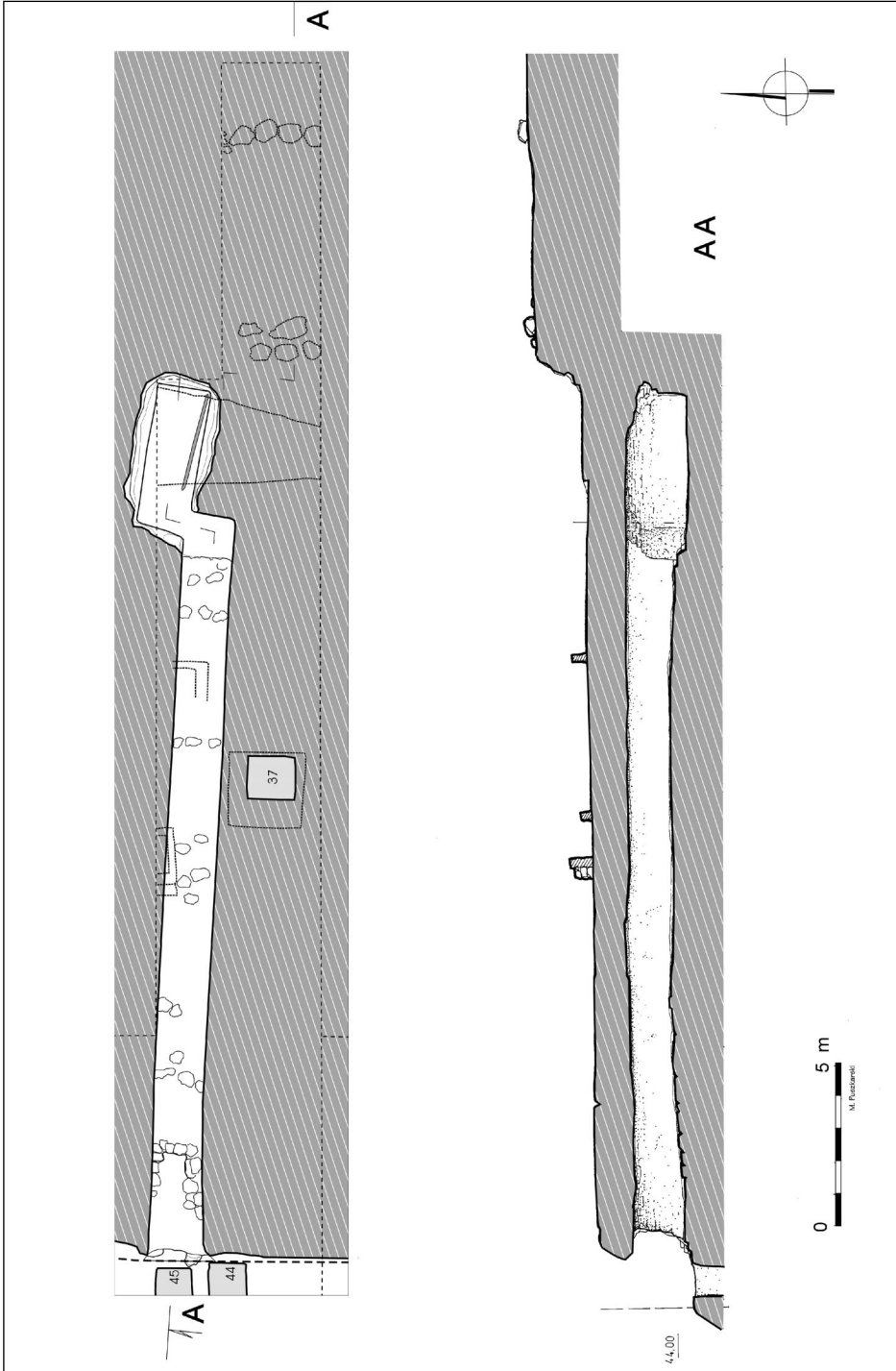
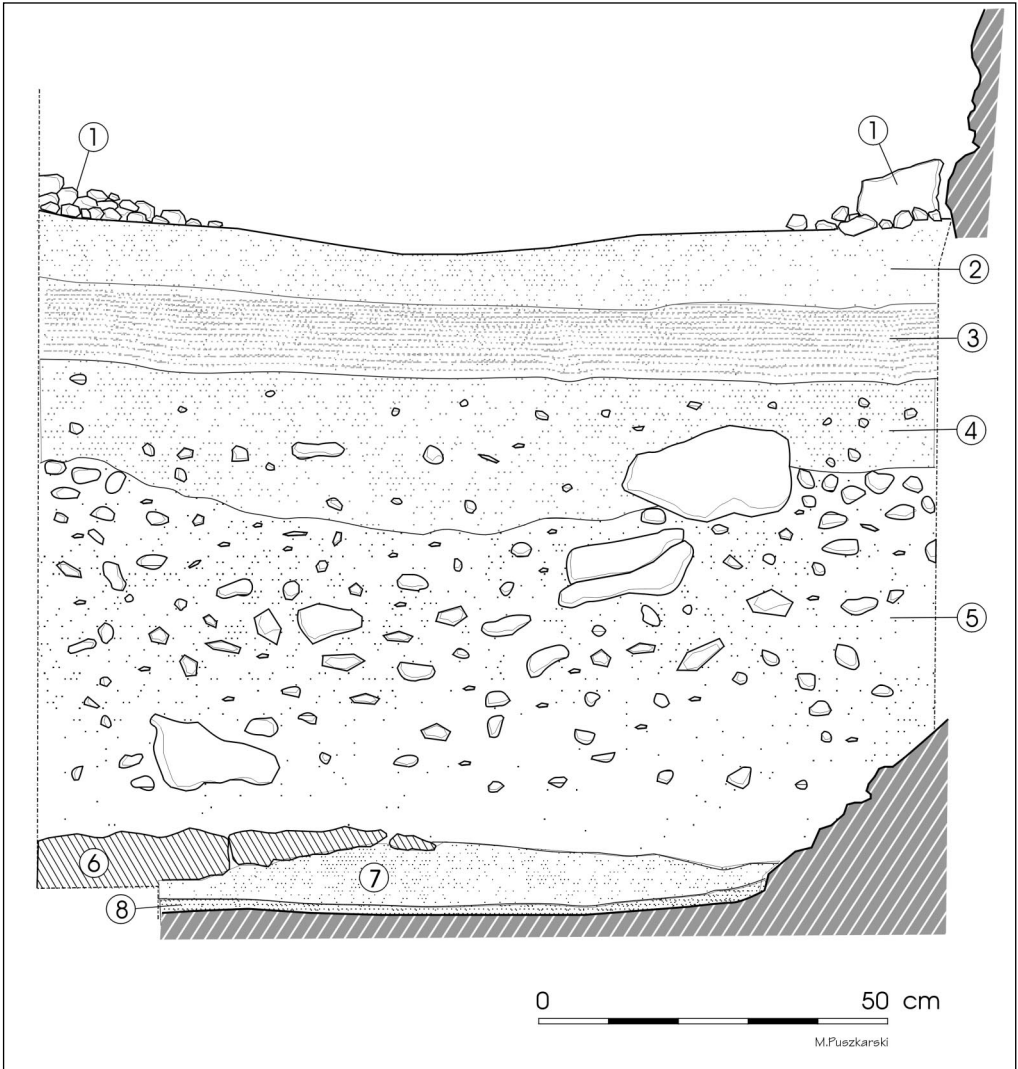


Fig. 1. Corridor 1. Plan (showing original and present outline of the chamber, position of harpoon, as well as structures on the rock surface) and E-W section (Drawing M. Puzkarski)

## THE CORRIDOR

Blocks of local limestone, varying in size and shape, were found lying on the floor of the corridor, embedded in mud (6 in

*Fig. 2*). In places at least three layers of blocks are to be discerned.<sup>6)</sup> A thick stratum of sand, *tafl*, gravel and limestone



*Fig. 2. Corridor 1. Stratigraphy of the fill in the entrance to the chamber (see description of layers in the text) (Drawing M. Puzzkarski)*

6) As the stones do not form a flat surface, they could be considered as blockage. If so, then this blockage would have had to be dismantled before the subsequent layers could have accumulated.

chips of various size accumulated on top of the blocks (5 in *Fig. 2*). To judge by some of the features, the deposit should be considered as flood-related, the waters having also destroyed the walls of the chamber and corridor. The next layer on top of this consisted of a compact deposit of sand with numerous chips of local rock (4 in *Fig. 2*). Overlying this were multiple thin deposits of water-floated sand (3 in

*Fig. 2*), covered with a layer of loose sand with a few fragments of local rock (2 in *Fig. 2*). The uppermost stratum consisted of loose fragments of local rock, evidently fallen from the ceiling (1 in *Fig. 2*). A deposit of wind-blown sand covered this layer in the vicinity of the entrance. The corridor fill contained no artifacts with the exception of a few sherds that seem to be a later intrusion from Shaft 37.<sup>7)</sup>

## THE CHAMBER

The same sequence of strata, as in the corridor, could be observed in the chamber (*Fig. 2*). The only important differences concern the lowermost layers. The limestone blocks from the corridor end at the entrance to the chamber, giving way to a thin (c. 1 cm thick) layer of pure loose sand (8 in *Fig. 2*), apparently strewn intentionally all over the bedrock surface. Superimposed on it is a layer of mud with gravel and stones of various size, reaching up to 30 cm above the floor (7 in *Fig. 2*). It is in this layer that the wooden harpoon in its cylindrical casing was found, lying alongside the southern wall of the chamber.<sup>8)</sup> It was discovered on top of an unusual ceramic deposit consisting of a bowl, plate, two miniature plates, miniature beer-jar and four "nails".<sup>9)</sup>

The next level of deposits going up, consisting of sand, *tafl*, gravel and limestone chips, corresponds to a similar layer in the corridor. Also the strata immediately above

it were similar to those in the corridor. The uppermost layer, as in the corridor, was formed of loose rocks fallen from the roof. On the surface of this layer and partly imbedded in it was a deposit of animal bones (mainly heads and foreparts), including remains of catfish, pigs, a donkey and the horns of a hartbeest.<sup>10)</sup> A fragment of a beer-jar was found on the same level, but at the entrance to the chamber.

At the time of writing a precise dating and interpretation of Corridor 1 is still pending. The pottery found inside the structure is dated by T. Rzeuska to the second half of the Sixth Dynasty. The corridor itself seems to be earlier than Shaft 37, which is dated roughly to the same period.<sup>11)</sup> At least two periods of activity can be discerned in the corridor, separated by a relatively long span of time, during which heavy rain(s) seems to have been in evidence.<sup>12)</sup> The harpoon and the pottery deposit under it must have been left prior

7) For a discussion of the pottery from Corridor 1, see contribution by T. Rzeuska in this volume.

8) Cf. report by K. Myśliwiec in this volume, fig. 7 on p. 115.

9) Cf. note 7 above.

10) Cf. contribution by S. Ikram in this volume.

11) It cannot be excluded that Corridor 1 was merely reused in the times of the Sixth Dynasty, having been executed at an earlier date, possibly even in the Third Dynasty.

12) Evidence of rainfall has come up elsewhere, in Corridor 2, for example, cf. report by K. Myśliwiec in this volume. It is marked there by an alluvial stratum containing huge quantities of small-animal remains.

to the flood that destroyed the walls, deposited the thick accumulation of debris and caused the roof to collapse. Subsequently, the animal bone deposit was made in the chamber and this was

putatively the final stage in the “official” functioning of Corridor 1. It is possible, however, that there was some superficial penetration of the corridor in Middle Kingdom times.<sup>13)</sup>

13) Cf. note 7 above.