

# Karol Myśliwiec

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## Saqqara 2007 : Archaeological Activities

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Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 19, 179-186

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2010

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# SAQQARA 2007

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES

Karol Myśliwiec

*The Polish archaeological mission in Saqqara continued work in the area adjoining the enclosure of the pyramid of Netjerykhet on the west. The fieldwork lasted from September 1 until October 24, 2007.<sup>1</sup>*

*Archaeological research was continued in both the Upper and Lower Necropolises. However, the chief aim of the present campaign was to continue the exploration and recording of the archaeological structures located in the area extending between the enclosure wall of Netjerykhet's pyramid and the tomb of Ny-ankh-Nefertem, in order to complete the materials for the following three volumes of publications to appear in the Saqqara series:*

- *Vol. III: The Upper Necropolis (i.e. the Ptolemaic Period burials in the stratum surmounting the Old Kingdom structures) (Myśliwiec et alii 2008);*
- *Vol. IV: The Funerary Complex of Ny-ankh-Nefertem, to appear in 2010;*
- *Vol. V: Old Kingdom structures between the enclosure wall of the pyramid of Netjerykhet and the "Dry Moat" (west section), to appear in 2012.*

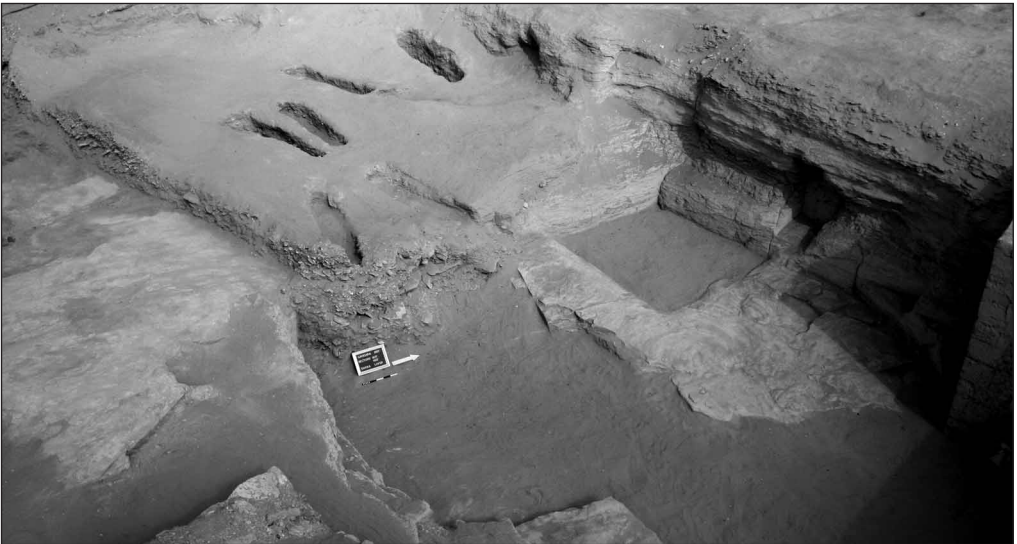
1 The mission comprised: Prof. Dr. Karol Myśliwiec, director of the mission; Dr. Teodozja Rzeuska and Dr. Kamil Kuraszkiewicz, egyptologists; Agnieszka Kowalska, Małgorzata Radomska, Joanna Rądkowska, Fabian Welc, archaeologists; Dr. Jerzy Trzciński, geologist; Zbigniew Godziejewski, Magdalena Abramowska, Marta Banaś, and Teresa Żurkowska, conservators; Beata Błaszczuk, architect; Jarosław Dąbrowski, photographer; Władysław Jurkow and Romuald Lewandowski, documentalists. The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by Mustafa Zaki Taha, inspector. Sayed Kereti assumed the task of *rais*.

We should like to express our deepest gratitude to Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Supreme Council, for his unlimited support of our scholarly aims. Our project also benefited from the generous assistance of Magdy El-Ghandour, Director General for Foreign and Egyptian Mission Affairs.

The fulfillment of our tasks would have been impossible without the practical approach and kind help of Osama El-Shemi, Director General of the Saqqara Department of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and Sabri Farag, Chief Inspector. Their field experience proved inestimable in difficult moments.



*Fig. 1. Layer of the Upper Necropolis, area north and west of the funerary complex of Ny-ankh-Nefertem (squares 1805–1807 and 1907). Excavations in 2007, view from the west (Photo J. Dąbrowski)*



*Fig. 2. Burial pits in the dakka layer (Upper Necropolis), area adjoining the courtyard of Chapel 17 with Shaft 59 (squares 1906/1907); view from the southeast (Photo J. Dąbrowski)*

## THE UPPER NECROPOLIS

This stratum was excavated in the following squares: 1804/1805/1806/1903/1907. Seventeen burials explored and documented during this campaign (B.512–513, 515–520, 522–527, 529–530, and 534) represented the following burial types:

- mummies buried in niches cut into walls of late Old Kingdom shafts (B.512 and B.513 in square 1903);
- mummies buried in a cavity partly built into the filling of the upper part of the shaft and partly cut into the bedrock (B.525 in square 1805 and B.534 in squares 1804/1805);
- mummies buried in anthropoid pits hewn into bedrock surface among the Old

- Kingdom shafts (B.526 in square 1805);
- mummies buried in cavities, anthropoid or oval, hewn in the *dakka* layer (B.516–B.518, B.522, B.524 in square 1907; B.529 in square 1805, and B.530 in square 1806) [Figs 1–2];
- mummies buried in cavities hollowed out in the sand layer (B.519, B.520, and B.523 in square 1907);
- bodies laid in the surface layer of sand (B.515 in square 1907; incomplete skeleton of a child preserving traces of mummification).

Remains of coffins and cartonnages were found in the context of some burials. A trapezoid coffin made of palm leaves and

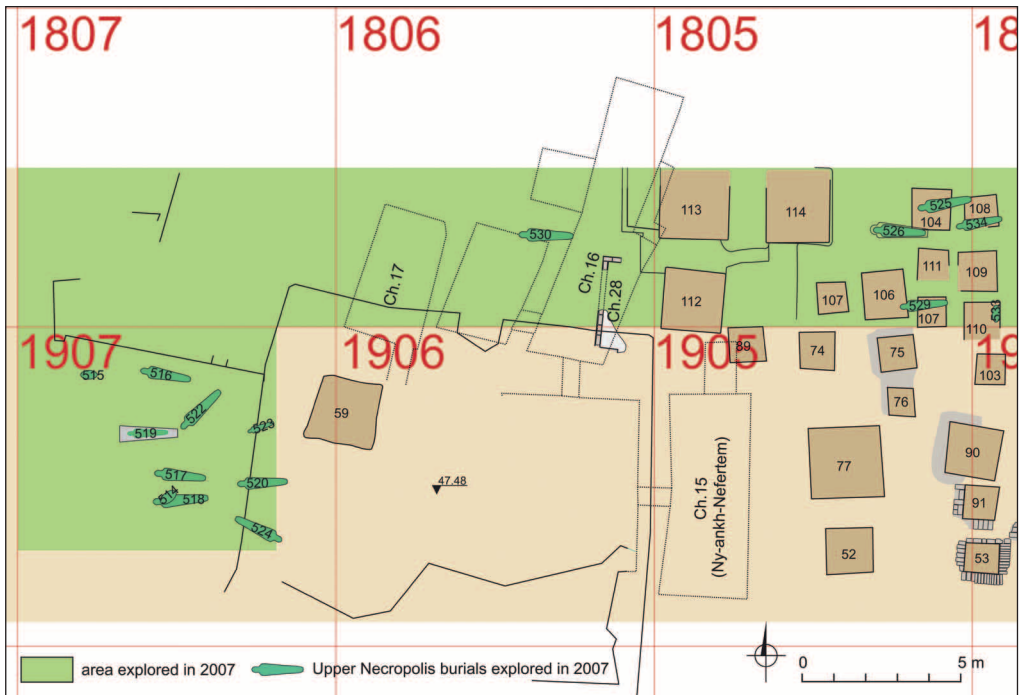


Fig. 3. Burials of the Upper Necropolis (Ptolemaic Period) and shafts of the Lower Necropolis (Old Kingdom) in the area adjoining the funerary complex of Ny-ankh-Nefertem, explored in 2007 (Plan K. Kuraszkiwicz)



Fig. 4. Upper Necropolis, Burial B.529 from the Ptolemaic Period: wooden canopic chest and figure of Ptah-Osiris-Sokar lying atop the burial pit hewn in the dakka layer (Photo J. Dąbrowski)

palm-leaf ribs housed a mummy laid E–W, facing west. Complete cartonnages were found on mummies in burials B.529 (poorly preserved head-cover and *wsh* collar) and B.534 (the same elements preserved), see Z. Godziejewski’s conservation report below, Figs 1, 2 on 227. Fragments of cartonnage were observed on the burial B.512.

One of the late burials (B.529) was found intact [Figs 4–5]. It contained a

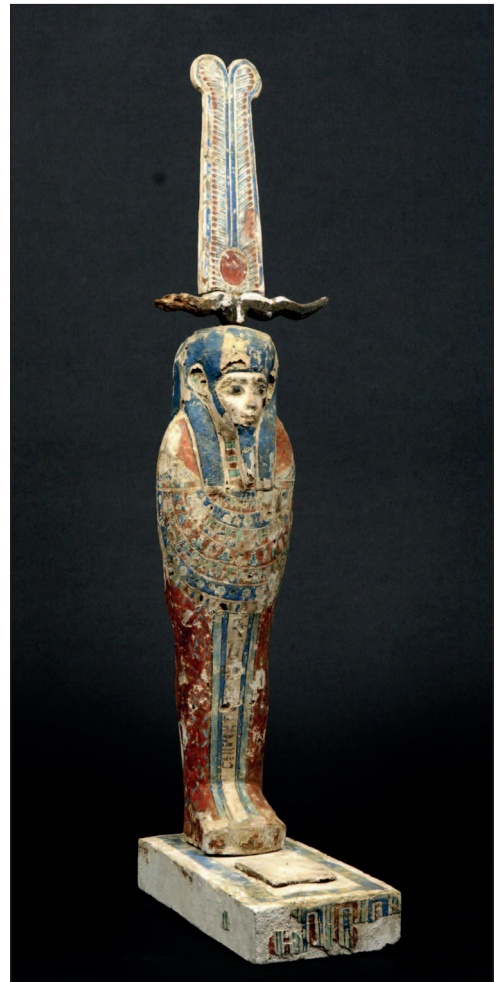


Fig. 5. Wooden canopic chest (left) and wooden figure of Ptah-Osiris-Sokar from Burial B.529 (Photo J. Dąbrowski)

wooden canopic chest with well preserved painting on its surface and a Ptah-Osiris-Sokar figure made of the same material, both lying beside the mummy. However, the cartonnage decoration was poorly preserved in this case. The base of a similar statuette was the only object found beside the mummy in burial B.512.

The orientation of the burials varies. Most of the mummies had an E–W alignment with the head to the west. Exceptions from this rule included a child burial with N–S orientation, head to the north (B.515) and two mummies laid SW–NE with heads to the southwest, both in cavities hewn in the *dakka* layer (B.522 and 524 in square 1907).

## OLD KINGDOM NECROPOLIS

During the exploration of the area located north and west of the funerary complex of Ny-ankh-Nefertem (i.e., in squares 1804 and 1805), 11 new shafts (nos. 104–114) were identified. One of these (Shaft 112), which is located just behind the anonymous

cult chapel 16, was explored this year [*cf. Fig. 3*].

Ten other shafts identified in previous campaigns were also explored in the course of the season. Eight of them are located in squares 1903–1904 (nos 71, 73, 78, 79, 81,

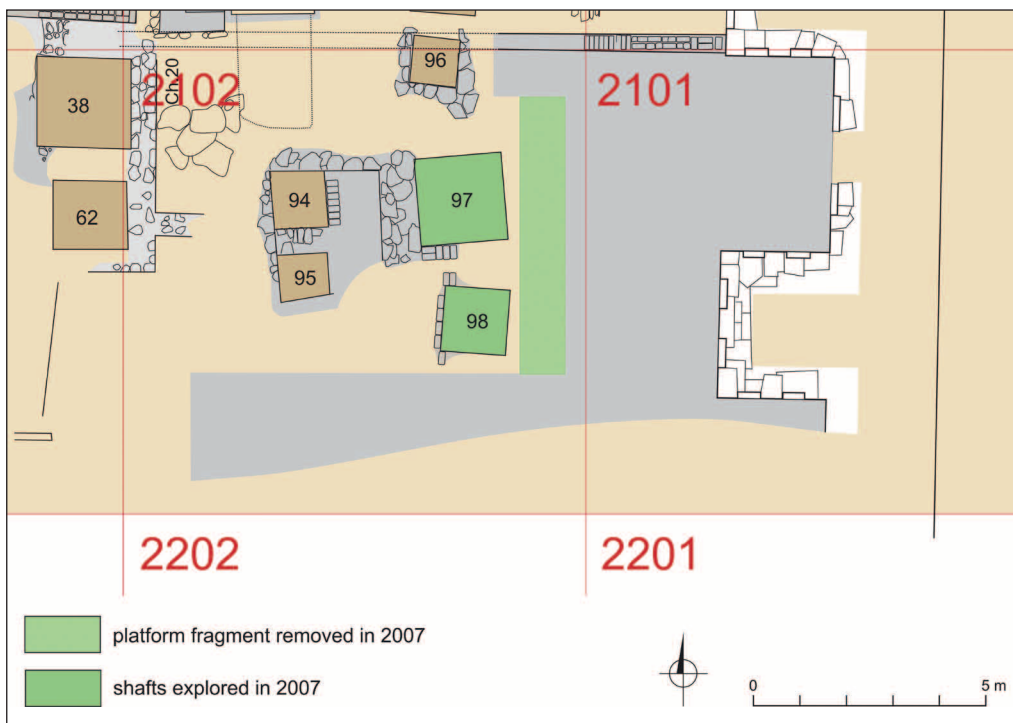


Fig. 6. Old Kingdom shafts below the mud-brick platform, explored in 2007 (Plan K. Kuraszkiwicz)

87, 92 and 93). Two, nos 97 and 98, found below the mud-brick platform extending next to the enclosure wall of the step pyramid at the level of the bottom edge of the wall (square 2102), could be explored only after another fragment of the platform, measuring 1.00 m (E–W) by 8.00 m (N–S) was removed with approval from the Supreme Council of Antiquities (for previous removal work on the platform, cf. Myśliwiec 2009: 161–164) [Fig. 6].

The present exploration of the platform yielded further sherds of New Kingdom pottery lying between and directly below the bricks, which confirms the *terminus post quem* (beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty) of this mysterious structure (Myśliwiec 2006: 14–16). Also removed was a layer of pure sand (containing, however, some fragmentary limestone blocks, doubtless from the enclosure wall of the pyramid) found below the platform, above the layer of *dakka*.

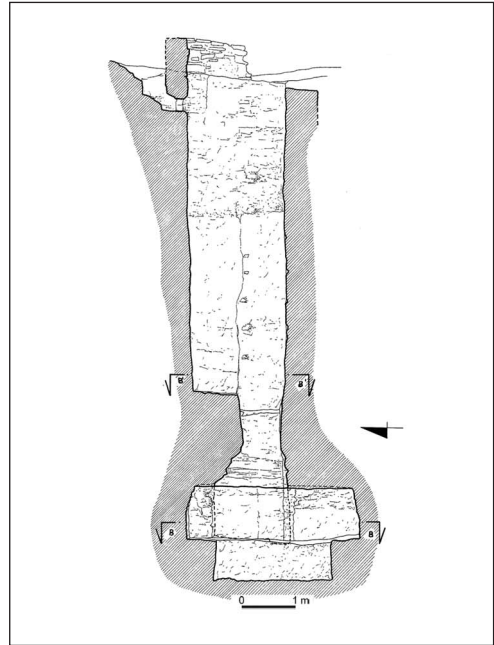


Fig. 7. Shaft 73, vertical N–S section (Drawing B. Błaszczuk)



Fig. 8. Burial B.540 (late Old Kingdom) in reed coffin inside the burial chamber of Shaft 81 (Photo J. Dąbrowski)

The southern shaft (no. 98) measures 1.41 by 1.43 m at the mouth and is 4.09 m deep. It has an L-shaped burial chamber on its eastern side, at a depth of 1.70 m. Inside the chamber, a displaced burial, B.541, and remains of a wooden figure were found. Below the burial chamber there is a niche hewn in the east wall of the shaft; it turned out to be empty.

The northern shaft (no. 97) measures 1.98 by 1.92 m at the mouth. It was explored to a depth of 10.90 m. Remains of two wooden figures were found in the fill (at a depth of 3.40 m) as well as an anepigraphic offering table (at 6.20 m). Two successive rock "floors" were identified inside the shaft, the first one at 7.72 m below the surface and the second at 8.40 m. Both have the form of horizontal shelves with irregular openings leading to the deeper parts of the shaft. The burial chamber was not reached this season.

The eight shafts explored in squares 1903–1904 vary in size, structure and contents. All of them were found robbed, most probably at the end of the Old Kingdom, but some still preserve remains of the original funerary equipment. The largest of these shafts, no. 73 (square 1903), measures 1.77 by 1.76 m at its mouth, and is 9.40 m deep [Fig. 7]. The burial chamber,

located on the west side and measuring 3.05 m (N–S) by 1.65 m (E–W), 1.08 m high, is accessible through an irregular hole in its quasi-roof which is a false bottom in the shaft; this opening was left in the rock directly above the chamber level. A rectangular burial pit is hewn in the west part of the floor of the chamber. The pit measures 2.16 m (N–S) by 0.64 m (E–W) and is 0.74 m deep. Inside the burial pit and in the fill of the chamber there were the remains of a rectangular wooden coffin fitting the dimensions of the pit. The outer face of the coffin bears decoration in sunk relief, including fragments of an offering-list [cf. below, 189–192 and Figs 2–6]. Some dispersed bones from the burial (B.521) were found in the chamber, while two secondary burials (B.512 and B.513) were placed in the uppermost part of the north wall of the shaft.

The burial chambers of the other shafts contained, beside fragments of skeletons, such objects as: fragmentary wooden planks, probably from coffins (B.537, shaft 79, and shaft 92, without burial); a wooden headrest (B.539, shaft 87). An intact coffin made of reed, containing a skeleton and a simple wooden staff, was found *in situ*, in a small niche located at the bottom of a shallow, 2.40 m deep shaft (no. 81), in its west wall [Fig. 8].

## STUDIES

Geological and ceramological studies (see below, contributions by J. Trzciński, K. Kuraszkiwicz and F. Welc and by T.I. Rzeuska and F. Welc), as well as conservation of the structures and objects discovered in this and previous campaigns (see below, report by Z. Godziejewski) supplemented

the activities of the mission in this campaign. Selected objects were transferred to the Cairo Museum for the exhibition *Seventy Years of Polish Archaeology in Egypt* (Rzeuska 2007), where they underwent additional conservation treatment before being put on display.



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