



Fig. 1 Rock circle tomb A1/1 with a disturbed pottery coffin (photo B. Vanthuyne)

## The Beni Hasan el-Shuruq region in the Old Kingdom: A preliminary survey report

*Bart Vanthuyne*

The archaeological site of Beni Hasan el-Shuruq is located in the Sixteenth Upper Egyptian nome, also known as the Oryx nome, about three kilometres south of the large Middle Kingdom necropolis of Beni Hasan (el-Qadim) (fig. 2). The best known monument in the area is the New Kingdom rock-cut temple known as the Speos Artemidos, several hundred metres inward from the mouth of the Wadi Batn el-Baqara, which opens into the Nile valley, just east of the village of Beni Hasan el-Shuruq (fig. 3). Over a century ago, John Garstang excavated an unknown number of late Old Kingdom rock tombs at the mouth of this wadi and slightly further to the south of it. These excavations were, however, poorly published and received little attention until Dieter Kessler looked at them from a regional perspective in the 1970s. More recently, the present author conducted several new brief surveys in the area as part of his Ph.D. research for the University of Leuven Deir el-Bersha Project under the direction of Harco Willems, resulting in the identification of an unknown Old Kingdom rock-cut mastaba and the discovery of a large early Old Kingdom cemetery (fig. 3). This article re-examines Garstang's Old Kingdom finds and presents preliminary survey results from 2012–2013.<sup>1</sup> In addition, several other Old Kingdom sites in the Oryx nome will be discussed to examine the development of the region.

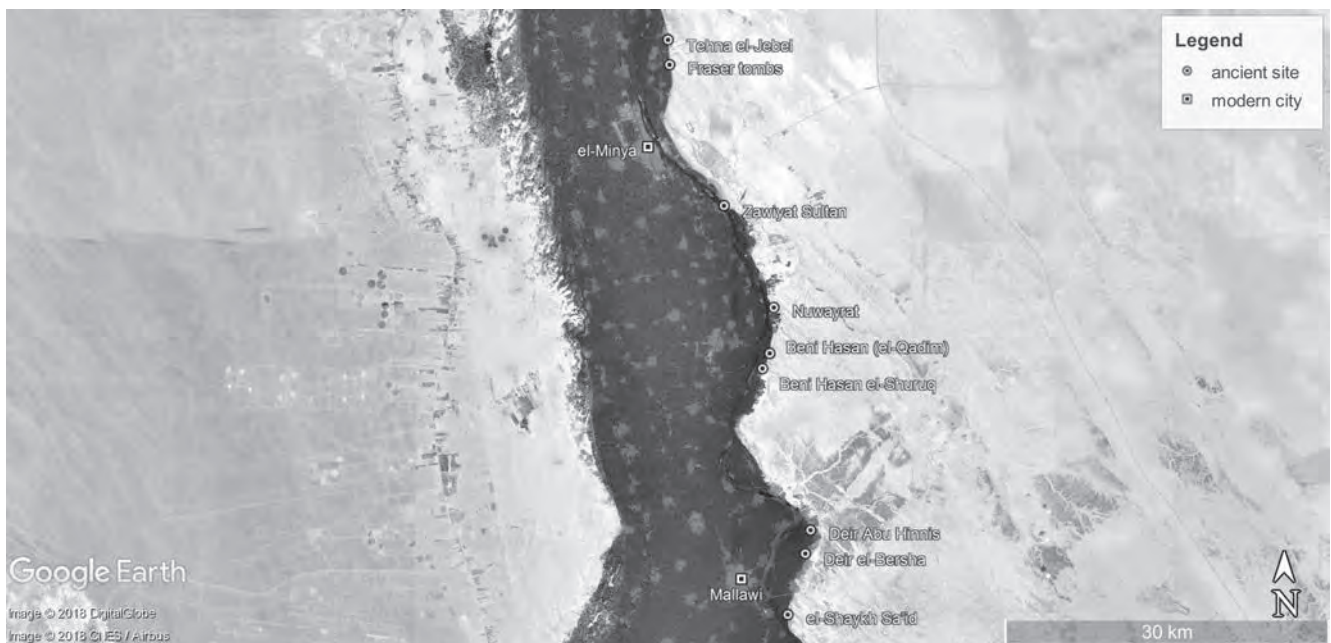


Fig. 2 Middle Egyptian sites mentioned in the article (Google Earth image, February 2018)

### Rock tombs, shaft tombs and the rock-cut mastaba

Between 1902–1904, John Garstang worked in the Middle Kingdom cemetery of Beni Hasan and the early Old Kingdom cemetery in Nuwayrat. In addition, at Beni Hasan el-Shuruq, he investigated a large necropolis immediately north of the wadi mouth, containing tombs he dated to the Twentieth to the Thirtieth Dynasties (fig. 2). He also cleared out Old Kingdom rock tombs (Fifth–Sixth Dynasty) in two locations south of the wadi (Garstang 1903a, 1903b, 1904a, 1904b and 1907).

The oldest tombs were located along the Nile-facing escarpment, according to Garstang.<sup>2</sup> Cut at intervals

into the limestone façade over several hundred metres were groups of rock tombs (figs. 3, 4), some containing inscriptions, and shaft tombs, which he dated to the Fifth Dynasty. However, hardly anything has hitherto been published about them (Garstang 1904a: 97; Garstang 1904b: 216; Garstang 1907: 30–35, 243–244).

One of two intact tombs (Tomb 1015) contained a yellow painted wooden coffin with two *wedjat*-eyes, a wooden male statue, as well as several ceramic vessels (Garstang 1904b: 216; Garstang 1907: 30–32, figs. 19–20, 244). According to the typology of Julia Harvey, the wooden statue can, instead of the Fifth Dynasty, be dated to the reign of Pepy II or later (Harvey 2001: 622–624, wig type W.3, dress type D.3, stance type



Fig. 3 The Beni Hasan al-Shuruq region with the location of the rock circle cemetery (black outline = location of tombs in 2013), the rock tombs (white outline), the rock-cut mastaba and the New Kingdom rock-cut temple (Google Earth image, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011)

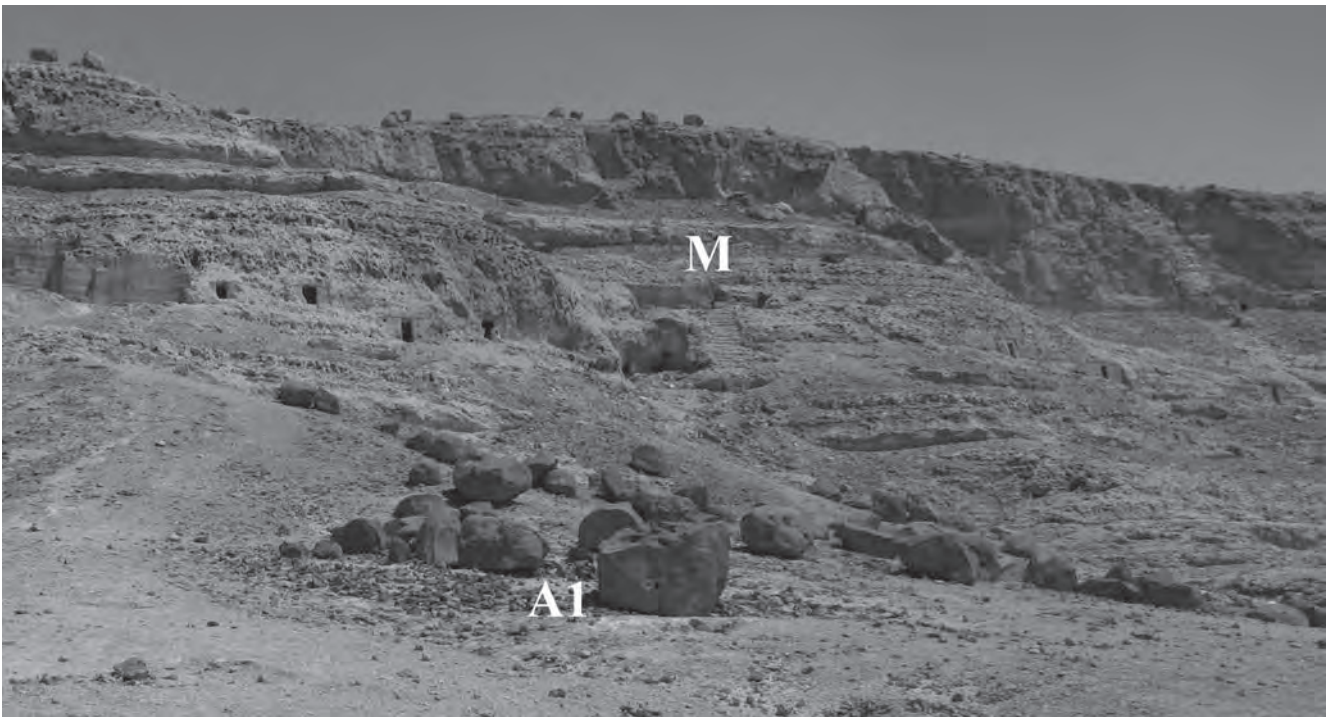


Fig. 4 Rock circle tomb cluster A1 in front of rock tombs and the rock-cut mastaba (M), taken from northwest to southeast (photo B. Vanthuyne)



Fig. 5 Rock-cut mastaba with shafts A–C, and with the rock circle cemetery on an escarpment lower downhill, taken from north to south (photo B. Vanthuyne)

S.1?, arms type A.8(a/b?)).<sup>3</sup> This would fit well with the finds from Tomb 1000, where fragments of wooden models and figures were likewise discovered (Garstang 1907: 34, 243). A late Old Kingdom – First Intermediate Period date for this necropolis was also accepted by Stephan Johannes Seidlmayer (1990: 217) and Martin Bommas (2012: 46). However, the poorly published finds make it impossible to precisely date other tombs in this area.

The surveys by the present author have identified further problems in Garstang's account, as he also seems to have mixed up information concerning some tombs and inadequately described others. This is certainly the case, as will be explained below, with Tomb 1000 and the rock-cut mastaba.

Without doubt Garstang found the mastaba and excavated its shafts, as he published a picture of the rock-cut staircase leading up to the monument.<sup>4</sup> However, Garstang also stated that the staircase led to a two-metre long shaft, *i.e.* Tomb 1000, that contained the earlier mentioned fragments of wooden figures and models (Garstang 1907: 34, fig. 23). This last element is incorrect, for there is no such large shaft in this location and, furthermore, besides three smaller square shafts, there were other important features that he did not report on.

There is an elongated shaft cut into the hillside about 40 m south of the rock-cut mastaba, which may instead be Garstang's Tomb 1000, for he specifically stated that

the coffin could be lowered into the burial chamber without tilting it (Garstang 1907: 34), and this is the only large enough shaft, outside a rock tomb, where this is possible.

The staircase that Garstang photographed led to more than just a few shafts. It goes up to a roughly cut platform, where an additional corridor was cut into the hillside in its south-eastern corner, extending southwards (fig. 5). This corridor is just under 3 m long and about 1.1 m wide. Carved into its western façade are two small false doors, with the southern one (95 × 33 cm) being slightly better preserved than its northern counterpart (83 × 43 cm) (fig. 6). The two false doors are probably associated with two squarish shafts (A–B)<sup>5</sup> that share the orientation of the corridor. A third, slightly larger squarish shaft (C)<sup>6</sup> was probably cut into the hillside later, just west of the corridor, for it is oriented northwest-southeast.<sup>7</sup> West of the shafts, part of the hillside was likewise cut away over a distance of nearly 13 m so as to create the impression that the shafts were cut into a freestanding stone structure, *i.e.* a rock-cut mastaba. The southern end of the monument was, however, never cut free from the hillside, nor was the southern part of its eastern side (fig. 5). It should also be mentioned that a second staircase leading up to the monument was cut into the hillside a little to the south of the first staircase ascending to the platform.

This mastaba is similar in design to some of the so-called Fraser tombs located about 30 km further north

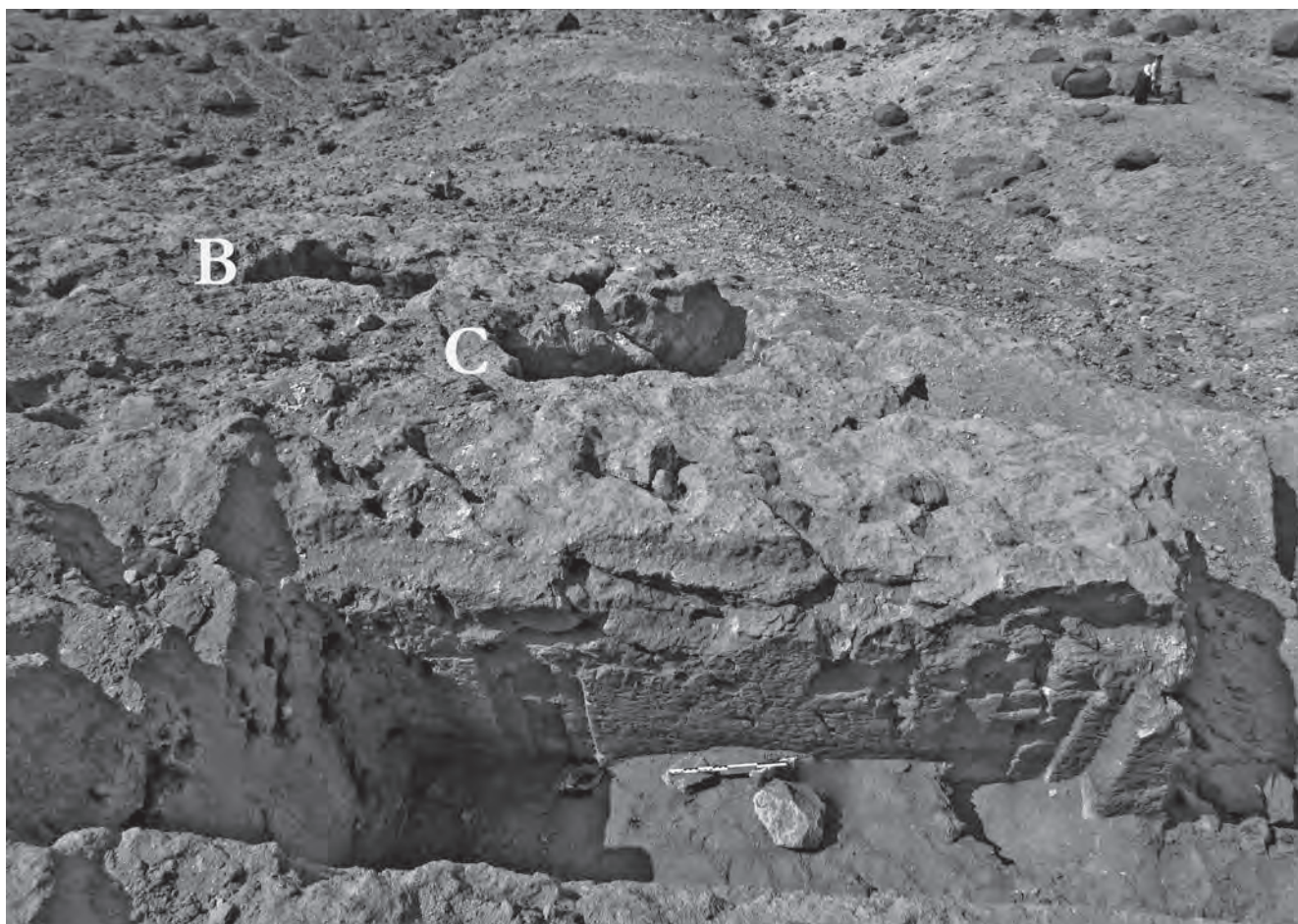


Fig. 6 Corridor of the rock-cut mastaba with two small false doors, taken from east to west. Shaft B has the same orientation as the corridor, while shaft C has a different orientation and may therefore be a later addition (photo B. Vanthuyne)

(fig. 2). The rock-cut mastabas there were built between the mid-Fourth Dynasty and the Fifth Dynasty (Fraser 1902: 67–76; Brunner 1936: 14–20, 78; Thompson 2014; for a discussion on the dating of the earliest tombs, see Willems 2013: 241–262).<sup>8</sup> At Tehna el-Jebel, about 2 km north of the Fraser tombs (fig. 2), the Japanese Akoris mission also excavated an early Fifth Dynasty rock-cut mastaba (Tsujimura 2003: 11–15, figs 8–10; Tsujimura 2004: 11–16, figs. 9–10; Tsujimura 2014: 14). Tombs comparable to rock-cut mastabas, with a roofed, L-shaped corridor chapel with false doors and shafts cut into the rock, were also built at el-Hammamiya in the late Fourth–Fifth Dynasties (El-Khouli – Kanawati 1990; Martinet 2013: 541–555).<sup>9</sup> A similar date range must for now be assumed for the monument at Beni Hasan el-Shuruq. Garstang states that all shafts, about 5–6 m deep with a burial chamber extending to the south, were no longer intact, but fails to mention if he actually found anything in them (Garstang 1907: 34). All the same, the mastaba is clearly of an earlier date than the nearby rock tombs 1000 and 1015. Furthermore, it should not be ruled out now that some of the other rock tombs indeed date to the Fifth Dynasty, as originally proposed by Garstang.

A second group of Old Kingdom rock tombs was cut into a projecting knoll, forming the southern boundary of the mouth of the Wadi Batn el-Baqara (fig. 3). However, the area was heavily quarried in later times, destroying certain parts of the tombs. Garstang still found some tombs containing decoration, inscriptions and life-sized rock-cut statues, leading him to believe that they were more developed than the rock tombs slightly further to the south. A further comparison with several Sixth Dynasty rock tombs in the Beni Hasan (el-Qadim) necropolis (Lashien *et al.* 2016) made him assign a similar date to the knoll rock tombs (Garstang 1907: 34–44, 201, fig. 214, Pl. II).

## Rock circle cemetery

The rock-cut mastaba and the rock tombs are, however, not the oldest tombs in the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq region. Several brief surveys carried out by the present author in 2012 and 2013 have led to the discovery of early Old Kingdom remains on the escarpment both north and south of the Wadi Batn el-Baqara (fig. 3).

South of the wadi, several dozen rock circle tombs were found on the foothills over a distance of more than 1 km. In general, a rock circle tomb consists of a burial container that was placed directly on the hillside, or at most in a very shallow pit, around and over which stones and boulders were placed to form a more or less circular stone dome or cairn. In this cemetery, it was also observed that burials were placed next to a single large boulder.

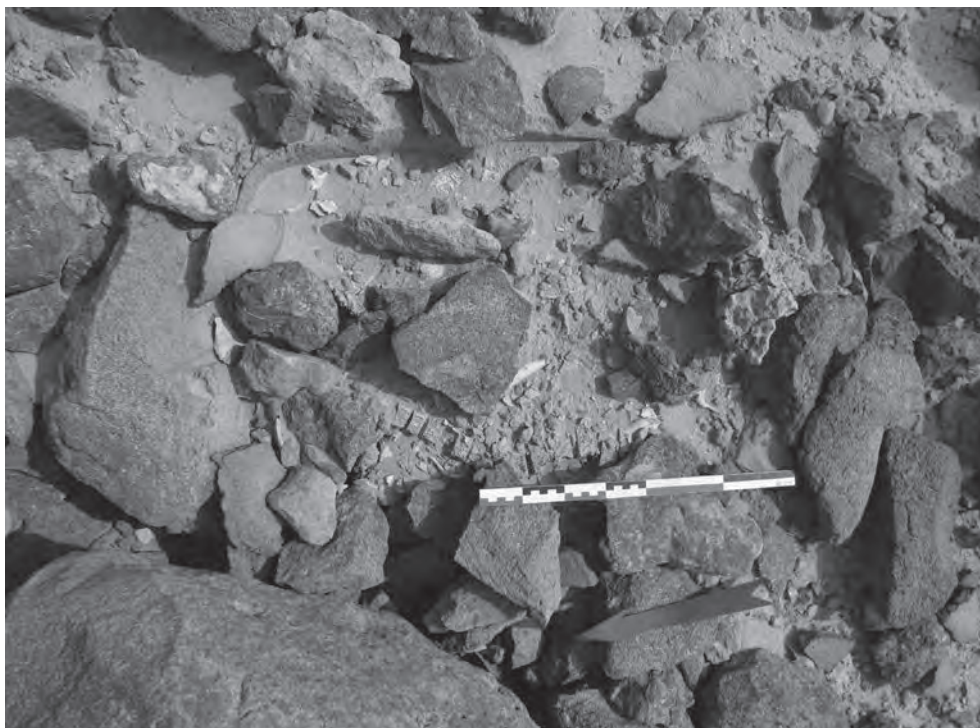
Other large rock circle cemeteries are known in Nuwayrat (De Meyer *et al.* 2011: 682–684, 701–702, Pls. 3, 5–6; Vanthuyne 2017a), about 6 km further to the north, and in Deir Abu Hinnis and Deir el-Bersha (Vanthuyne 2012, 2016, 2017a and 2017b), between 12 and 18 km to the south (fig. 2). They were the burial grounds of the nearby local rural population living in small villages and hamlets spread along the Nile valley (Vanthuyne 2017a).

Like in the other cemeteries, disturbed graves in Beni Hasan el-Shuruq show that adults and juveniles were buried in a tightly contracted position in pottery coffins as well as in medium- to large-sized vats. The burial goods are likewise similar, and included pottery, a circular limestone offering table and small calcite alabaster vessels.

North of the wadi, the escarpment was surveyed as far as the Middle Kingdom Beni Hasan necropolis, but early Old Kingdom remains were only found immediately north of the large Third Intermediate Period/Late Period cemetery excavated by Garstang (fig. 3). The fact that



**Fig. 7** Rock circle tomb cluster A1, taken from north to south. Two pottery coffin burials (A1/1–A1/2) were discovered within the main cluster of boulders, while a third coffin burial (A1/3) was found next to the large boulder on the right. The rock circle cemetery continues for hundreds of metres further to the south (photo B. Vanthuyne)



**Fig. 8** Partially exposed pottery coffin burial of an older teenager or adult in a contracted position, facing east, with head to the north. The coffin (70 x 45 cm) was placed next to a single large boulder, like Tomb A1/3, and originally had a small stone cover. Several sherds from a beer jar with a direct rim and a pronounced shoulder were scattered on the surface around the grave (photo B. Vanthuyne)

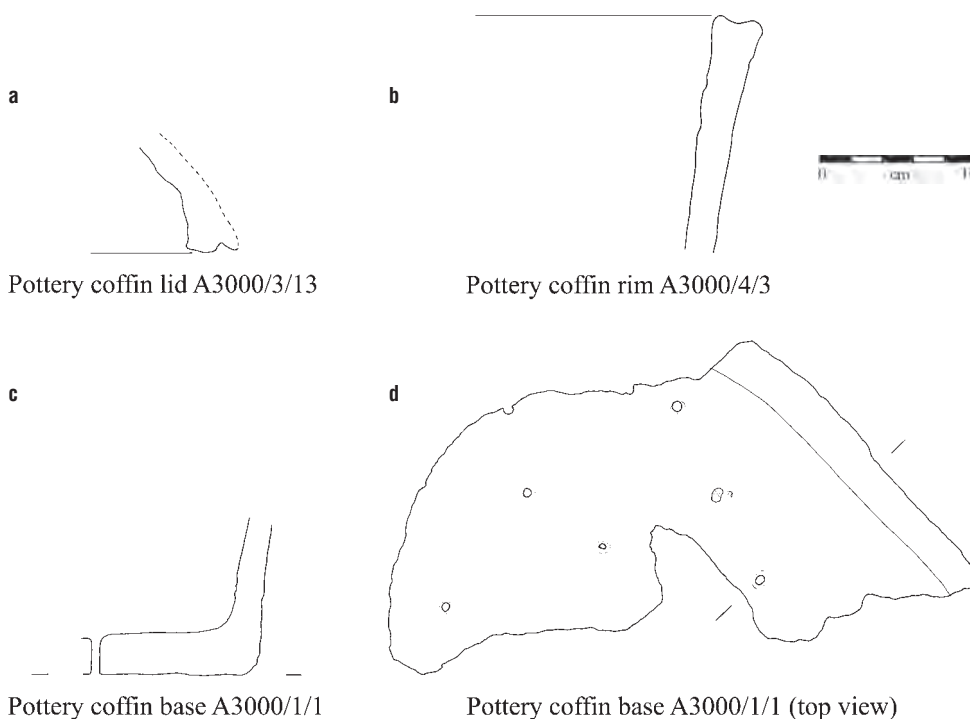
early Old Kingdom large vat fragments and sherds from smaller offering vessels were only recorded in the vicinity of large boulders, but at places where no tombs were still clearly identifiable, suggests that the establishment of this new, large cemetery destroyed older rock circle tombs in this location.

**Pottery from the rock circle cemetery (Tomb cluster A1)**

Sherds were collected from one badly disturbed rock circle tomb cluster (A1) (figs. 1, 3 and 7) for comparison

with the other rock circle cemeteries. They derived from pottery coffins, large and medium-sized vats, and at least twenty different kinds of ceramic vessels. This particular tomb cluster is located on the hillside, about 60 to 80 m downhill from several rock tombs and the rock-cut mastaba (fig. 4). In view of their proximity, it remains surprising that Garstang makes no mention of them at all.

A selection of drawings illustrates the range of vessels deposited in and around this particular tomb cluster in the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq rock circle cemetery.



Pottery coffin lid A3000/3/13

Pottery coffin rim A3000/4/3

Pottery coffin base A3000/1/1

Pottery coffin base A3000/1/1 (top view)

**Fig. 9** Pottery coffin base, rim and lid sherds (Nile C) (drawing C. Swerts)

### Pottery coffins and lids

At least three disturbed pottery coffin burials (A1/1, A1/2, and A1/3), all placed directly on the hillside, were discovered. Two coffins were surrounded by boulders, while one was positioned next to one large boulder (fig. 7). The pottery coffin in Tomb A1/1 contained the disturbed remains of two 16–20-year-old individuals (fig. 1), the coffin in Tomb A1/2 held another 16–20-year-old, while the one in Tomb A1/3 contained an 8–10-year-old child, buried in a contracted position, on its left side, head to north.<sup>10</sup> Textile fragments suggest this juvenile had been wrapped up. A similar contracted burial position in another partially exposed pottery coffin was observed on the escarpment further to the south (fig. 8).

Both rectangular and oval-shaped coffins (Nile C) were present, and one of them had holes in its base (A3000/1/1; figs. 9c, d). This feature is also attested in pottery coffins at Deir Abu Hinnis and Deir el-Bersha (Vanthuyne 2017b: 506), and elsewhere in Egypt (Cotelle-Michel 2004: 30–32). Additionally, coffin rim sherds (A3000/4/3; fig. 9b) were recovered with a groove in them for the reception of a coffin lid, of which several fragments were also collected (A3000/3/13; fig. 9a). Coffin lids have likewise been recorded in the other three rock circle cemeteries (Vanthuyne 2017b: 506). This type of burial container was already used in the Predynastic Period and remained popular into the early Old Kingdom (Hendrickx 1998: 120–121, tab. 5; Cotelle-Michel 2004: 57–59, 212–229).

### Large and medium-sized vats

Pieces of at least two different large (fig. 10) and two medium-sized vats (fig. 11) were likewise collected from several additional burials. The large ones likely held the burials of a young/mid-aged adult and a mid/old-aged adult, while the medium-sized vats probably held the burials of a perinate (0–1-month-old) and a 3–4-year-old child. Their original place of deposition could, however, no longer be determined.

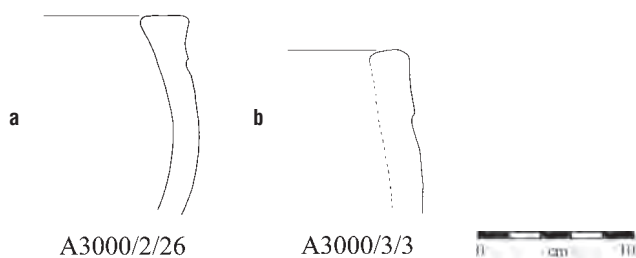


Fig. 10 Large vat rim sherds (Nile C) (drawing C. Swerts, G. Storms)

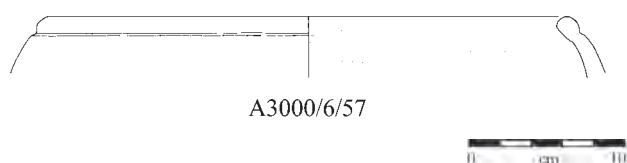


Fig. 11 Medium-sized vat with modelled rim (Nile B2) (drawing M. Baeyens)

Similar large vats have been found in the other rock circle cemeteries, where it was also noted that medium-sized ones were used as burial containers for children (De Meyer *et al.* 2011: 683–684; Vanthuyne 2012; Vanthuyne 2016: 453; Vanthuyne 2017b: 506–508). These vessels were common in the early Old Kingdom (Alexanian 1999: 126–130, Abb. 52–53). Vat burials also already occurred in the Predynastic Period and continued into the early Old Kingdom (Hendrickx 1998: 119, tab. 4).

### Bread moulds

A bread mould with an inner ledge rim (Nile C) had been deposited against the boulder superstructure of one of the pottery coffin burials (A3000/3/2; fig. 12a). This type of bread mould is also attested in the rock circle cemeteries at Deir Abu Hinnis and Deir el-Bersha (Vanthuyne 2017b: 514–515, fig. 15). They were common in the Early Dynastic Period and at the beginning of the Old Kingdom, but were gradually replaced by bread moulds without the inner ledge rim in the course of the early Old Kingdom (Köhler 1998: Taf. 45.3, Taf. 46.3, Taf. 45.4; Faltings 1998: 129–132, Abb. 9a–b; Raue 1999: 175, Abb. 34.3; Hartmann 2017: 621–626, fig. 9).

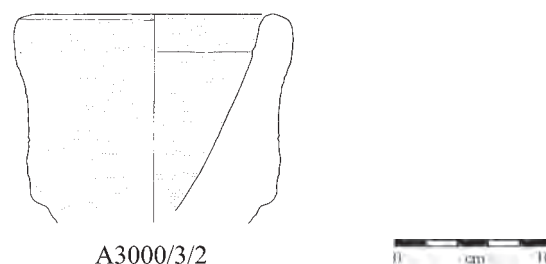


Fig. 12a Bread mould with inner ledge rim (Nile C) (drawing C. Swerts)

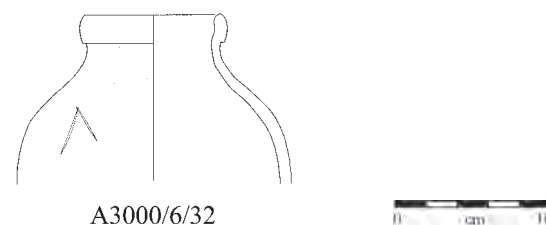


Fig. 12b Storage jar with pot mark (Marl A1) (drawing M. Baeyens)

### Storage jars

Tomb cluster A1 contained at least two different Marl A1 storage jars and at least one Nile B2 storage jar. Rounded inner lip rims (A3000/6/32; fig. 12b) appeared already in the Early Dynastic Period (Hartmann 2007: 92 Abb. 10, no 5), were common in the early Old Kingdom, and last well into the late Old Kingdom (Alexanian 1999: 138). It is interesting that a pot mark recorded on storage jar A3000/6/32 (fig. 12b) was also found on bowl A3000/3/1 (fig. 15c). Perhaps it designates the *mr*-sign, which would identify them as a milk jar and a milk bowl, respectively (Hendrickx *et al.* 2002: 283–284).

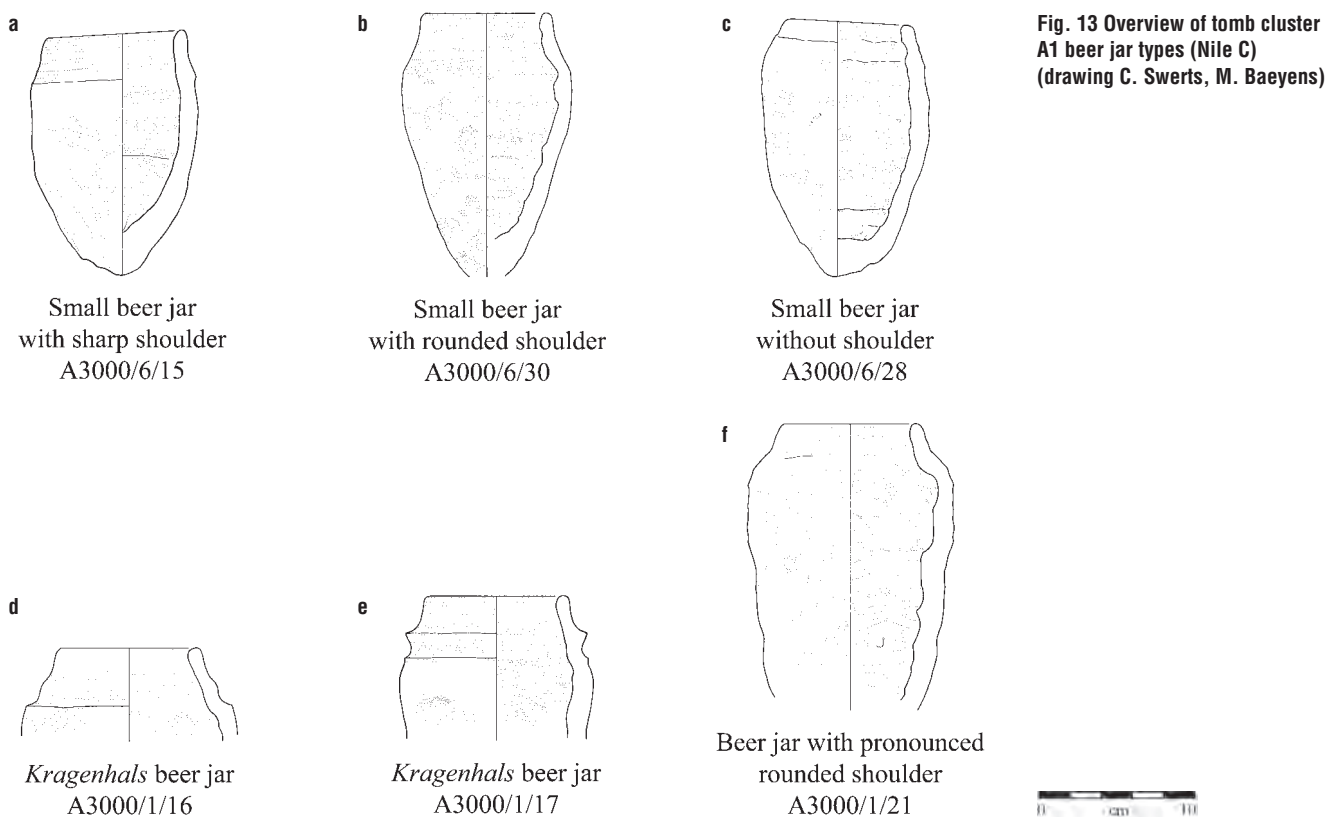


Fig. 13 Overview of tomb cluster A1 beer jar types (Nile C) (drawing C. Swerts, M. Baeyens)

### Beer jars

More than 30 beer jars (Nile C) were placed around the burials in tomb cluster A1. Almost all were small beer jars with a direct rim with or without a pronounced shoulder, which showed no traces of use (A3000/6/15, A3000/6/30, A3000/6/28; figs. 13a–c). Fragments of two large *Kragenhals* beer jars (A3000/6/16–17; figs. 13d, e) and a beer jar with a direct rim and a pronounced rounded shoulder (A3000/1/21; fig. 13f) were also recovered. The diagnostic *Kragenhals* beer jars, datable between the late Second Dynasty and the early Fourth Dynasty (Raue 1999: 178–185, Abb. 36.7, 37.8, 38.3, 39.12), have likewise been found in the three other rock circle cemeteries (De Meyer *et al.* 2011: 687–688, 698, fig. 2; Vanthuyne 2016: 455; Vanthuyne 2017b: 512, fig. 11) and in nearby Zawiyat Sultan (Marchand *et al.* 2016: 175, 182–184, figs. 6a, 7d and 8d).

### Meidum bowls

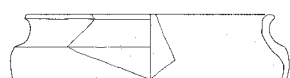
Meidum bowls, made from Nile B1 and Nile B2 fabrics, all had their maximum diameter at the angular shoulder (figs. 14a, b). These vessels were also found in the other rock circle cemeteries (De Meyer *et al.* 2011: 688–689, 699, fig. 3; Vanthuyne 2016: 455; Vanthuyne 2017b: 512, fig. 12) and in nearby Zawiyat Sultan (Marchand *et al.*

2016: 175, 182, figs. 5 and 6b). This type of Meidum bowl starts to appear in the course of the Second Dynasty and is gradually replaced by other Meidum bowl designs in the Fourth Dynasty (Op de Beeck 2004: 270).

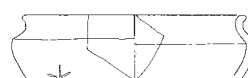
### Small bowls, cups and beakers

A range of small bowls and cups with a direct or modelled rim, with or without a cut-off base, were identified (figs. 15a–d). Several were discovered next to a pottery coffin burial, most likely placed there at the time of the funeral, while others were probably brought to the site later as offerings by relatives. These small offering vessels were also popular in the rock circle cemeteries at Deir Abu Hinnis (Vanthuyne 2017b: 514, fig. 14) and Nuwayrat. They had been around since Predynastic times (Crubézy *et al.* 2002: 20–406), but it appears that they were gradually replaced by miniature or model vessels in rituals from the Fourth Dynasty onwards (Allen 2006).

Part of a small beaker (A3000/4/2; fig. 15d) was also recovered next to one coffin burial. Similar vessels were likewise found at Nuwayrat and Deir el-Bersha. Other parallels are known in the Predynastic and the Early Dynastic Periods (Petrie 1921: pl. L, type L58C–D; Petrie 1953: pl. XXV, type 86 variant; Hendrickx – Eyckerman 2009: 15, 23, fig. 20).



A3000/1/6

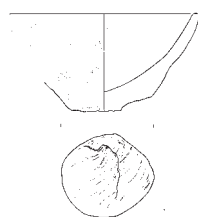


A3000/1/7

Fig. 14a Meidum bowl (Nile B1) (drawing M. Baeyens)

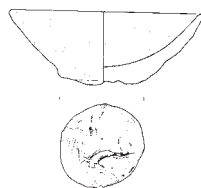
Fig. 14b Meidum bowl (Nile B1) (drawing M. Baeyens)





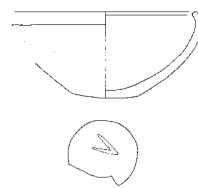
A3000/2/1

Fig. 15a Cup with cut-off base and direct rim (Nile B2) (drawing M. Baeyens)



A3000/2/2

Fig. 15b Bowl with cut-off base and direct rim (Nile B2) (drawing M. Baeyens)



A3000/3/1

Fig. 15c Bowl with modelled incurving rim (Nile B2) (drawing M. Baeyens)



A3000/4/2

Fig. 15d Beaker (Nile B1) (drawing M. Baeyens)

## Dating the rock circle cemetery

Several burials were recorded at tomb cluster A1 that, in view of their similarity, are likely to have been created within a short time span. The presence of small bowls, cups and beer jars suggests that on occasion offerings were brought to the tombs. Most of the recovered ceramic types were already known in the latter half of the Early Dynastic Period and continued to be used in the Third Dynasty. More significantly, a number of them tend to disappear from the records in the early Fourth Dynasty, such as the *Kragenhals* beer jars and the bread moulds with inner ledge rim. The former type of pottery was also seen around other rock circle tombs further to the south of A1, which indicates that the entire foothill cemetery was in use in the same time period.

Notably absent were stroke-polished vessels, which were very common in the Early Dynastic Period. However, such vessels were gradually replaced thereafter by red-slipped bowls (Raue 1999: 175–185; Adams 2009: 163–168), and it is the latter that were also noted elsewhere in the rock circle cemetery. It is also of significance that the ceramic assemblage of the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq rock circle cemetery differs from that recovered in the dumps of the early Fourth Dynasty royal domain of Khufu at el-Shaykh Said (fig. 2) (Willems *et al.* 2009: 308–313; Vereecken 2011: 278–285; Vereecken 2013: 53–71).

In conclusion, the pottery from the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq rock circle cemetery has parallels in well-dated Third Dynasty contexts and in assemblages from the time of Snofru, the first king of the Fourth Dynasty. The earliest tombs may well even date to the late Second Dynasty, around the time when *Kragenhals* beer jars first appear in the archaeological record, and the above-mentioned small beakers disappear from it.

## The Beni Hasan el-Shuruq region in the Old Kingdom

Beni Hasan el-Shuruq is located in the Sixteenth Upper Egyptian nome. Ink inscriptions on stone vessels found under the Step Pyramid of Netjerykhet prove that this administrative unit was in existence at least from the reign of Khasekhemwy onwards (Lacau – Lauer 1965: 45–47, nos. 84–87, 89, 89bis, pl. 28.1–6; Regulski 2004; Engel 2006). The late Third Dynasty small step pyramid in the Old Kingdom nome capital of Hebenu (modern Zawiyat Sultan) attests to further royal interest in the region (Moeller 2015:

217–219; Bussmann *et al.* 2016),<sup>11</sup> and late Third – early Fourth Dynasty shaft tombs, possibly with a mud brick superstructure, containing pottery coffin burials (Marchand *et al.* 2016: 174–176, 181–185, figs. 4–9; Vanthuyne 2017a: 7–10–7–20), suggest the presence of a higher social class compared to the persons buried in the nearby rock circle tombs at Nuwayrat and Beni Hasan el-Shuruq (fig. 2).

The Nuwayrat rock circle cemetery is far larger than Garstang assumed, containing hundreds of late Second Dynasty – early Fourth Dynasty rock circle tombs, spread out over a distance of over 2.6 km along the Nile-facing escarpment (Vanthuyne 2017a). Without going into detail, rock tombs were also cut into the limestone hillside in the late Third – early Fourth Dynasty (De Meyer *et al.* 2011; Vanthuyne *et al.* 2017). In addition, a large rock tomb with statues also suggests that some Nuwayrat rock tombs are of a later date, with other evidence suggesting a recurrence of rock tombs in the Fifth Dynasty (Vanthuyne 2017a: 6-223–6-228; Vanthuyne 2018: 44–46).

The importance of this nome is further highlighted by the establishment of five royal domains during the reign of Snofru, the highest number in all Upper Egyptian nomes (Fakhry 1954: 581, Pl. IX-B; Fakhry 1961: 43; Jacquet-Gordon 1962: 133–134, nos. 44–48). There is certainly the possibility that one or more of these domains were established in the neighbourhood of the contemporary rock circle cemeteries. One of the domains, Menat-Snofru, is not only mentioned in the valley temple of Snofru in Dahshur but also in the tomb of the king's eldest son Nefermaat in Meidum (Petrie 1892: 39, pl. XIX; Jacquet-Gordon 1962: 13, 134, no. 48, 443, no. 1). It was most likely later renamed by Snofru's successor to Menat-Khufu, which became an important city, certainly from the Sixth to the Twelfth Dynasties. Kessler suggested this settlement was located on the east bank of the Nile, between the Wadi Batn el-Baqara and the Middle Kingdom Beni Hasan necropolis (Kessler 1981: 135, 197; De Meyer *et al.* 2011: 692).

Kessler also examined the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq Old Kingdom rock tombs. He assumed that the area contained quite a few Fifth and Sixth Dynasty tombs and suggested that this late Old Kingdom cemetery together with the one in Beni Hasan (el-Qadim), which as outlined above contained several Sixth Dynasty tombs, served as elite burial grounds for the ancient cities of Herwer, Nefrusy and Menat-Khufu (Kessler 1981: 129–137). Herwer and Nefrusy are believed to be located on the west bank of the Nile, opposite the Beni Hasan necropolis (Kessler 1981: 178–185).

Our new investigation of the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq and Nuwayrat cemeteries leads to a different proposition regarding Menat-Snofru/Menat-Khufu. The first rock tombs at Nuwayrat were built in the time period when these new domains were created in the nome. Therefore, it is possible that these tombs were made for the families of the domain administrators. Beni Hasan el-Shuruq does not have small, well-made rock tombs similar to those in Nuwayrat. Consequently, Menat-Snofru/Menat-Khufu is initially more likely to have been located north of Beni Hasan (el-Qadim), in the neighbourhood of Nuwayrat. The absence of Sixth Dynasty tombs there suggests that the elite cemetery then moved south to Beni Hasan (el-Qadim).

Where the common people were buried after the rock circle cemeteries went out of use remains unknown. It is only with the construction of the rock-cut mastaba that we can really see the first large, elite tomb in Beni Hasan el-Shuruq, sometime between the latter half of the Fourth Dynasty and the early Fifth Dynasty, and rock tombs follow suit. This process also occurred at Deir Abu Hinnis<sup>12</sup> and Deir el-Bersha<sup>13</sup>.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This reworked article was originally intended for the proceedings of the 2014 *Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology* conference in Warsaw. It only deals with the results of the 2012–2013 surveys. The site was briefly revisited in 2017 resulting in the discovery of more early Old Kingdom tombs on the edge of the desert plateau.
- <sup>2</sup> The white outline in fig. 3 gives an approximate location of the rock tombs. It is possible that more exist further to the south.
- <sup>3</sup> Wooden figures and models increasingly start to appear in tombs from the Sixth Dynasty onwards (Tooley 1989: 6–17).
- <sup>4</sup> Two glass slides (B58 and B723) of the staircase are preserved in the Garstang Museum of Archaeology in Liverpool, but there are no surviving slides in the archive of the mastaba itself.
- <sup>5</sup> Shaft A: 1.25 m (north-south) × 1.00 m (east-west); Shaft B: 1.10 m (north-south) × 1.00 m (east-west).

- <sup>6</sup> Shaft C: 1.35 m (northwest-southeast) × 1.10 m (northeast-southwest).
- <sup>7</sup> Shaft C is also deeper than shafts A and B, which provides a further clue that it was not dug out at the same time as the other two shafts.
- <sup>8</sup> Beer jars (UC17641 and UC17642) from the “Fraser” rock-cut mastaba of *Ny-k3-nh* (no. 13), kept in the Petrie Museum, also date to the first half of the Fifth Dynasty (Arias Kytarová 2011: 91–93: type J-1bII), whereas the Meidum bowl (UC17639) from the “Fraser” rock-cut mastaba of *Mr.y (?)* (no. 11) is of a type very common in the Fourth–Fifth Dynasties (Op de Beeck 2004: 267–268, type B3a).
- <sup>9</sup> The el-Hammamiya rock-cut tombs are located about 124 km south of Beni Hasan el-Shuruq. Elsner (2004: 143–147) classifies el-Hammamiya tombs A1 and C4–C6 as variants of rock-cut mastabas, with an L-shape.
- <sup>10</sup> All three pottery coffins were poorly preserved. Pottery coffin in Tomb A1/1: ? × 60 cm; pottery coffin in Tomb A1/2: 50–55 × max. 80 cm; pottery coffin in Tomb A1/3: 70 × 35 cm.
- <sup>11</sup> Beni Hasan el-Shuruq is located about 16 km south of Zawiyat Sultan, also known as Zawiyat el-Mayitin.
- <sup>12</sup> A rock-cut mastaba was also discovered in Deir Abu Hinnis in 2009 (Vanthuyne 2012: 78,afb. 2). There were also several other shafts nearby, but no rock tombs. The mastaba was built in the late Fourth Dynasty at the earliest.
- <sup>13</sup> There is no rock-cut mastaba in Deir el-Bersha, but rock tombs appear in the Fifth Dynasty (De Meyer 2011: 42–45).

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### Abstract:

Surveys carried out in 2012 and 2013 by Bart Vanthuyne (University of Leuven Deir el-Bersha Project) led to the discovery of early Old Kingdom rock circle tombs on the Nile-facing escarpment in the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq region. An Old Kingdom rock-cut mastaba was likewise found. The first excavations in the area had been conducted over a century ago by John Garstang. The article discusses Garstang’s finds and presents the new survey results in order to examine the development of the Beni Hasan el-Shuruq region in the Old Kingdom.

Old Kingdom – Beni Hasan el-Shuruq region – Sixteenth Upper Egyptian nome – rock tomb – rock-cut mastaba – rock circle tomb – pottery – John Garstang

**Bart Vanthuyne** ([bart.vanthuyne@kuleuven.be](mailto:bart.vanthuyne@kuleuven.be))  
Archaeology department, Egyptology research group, Faculty of Arts, KU Leuven