



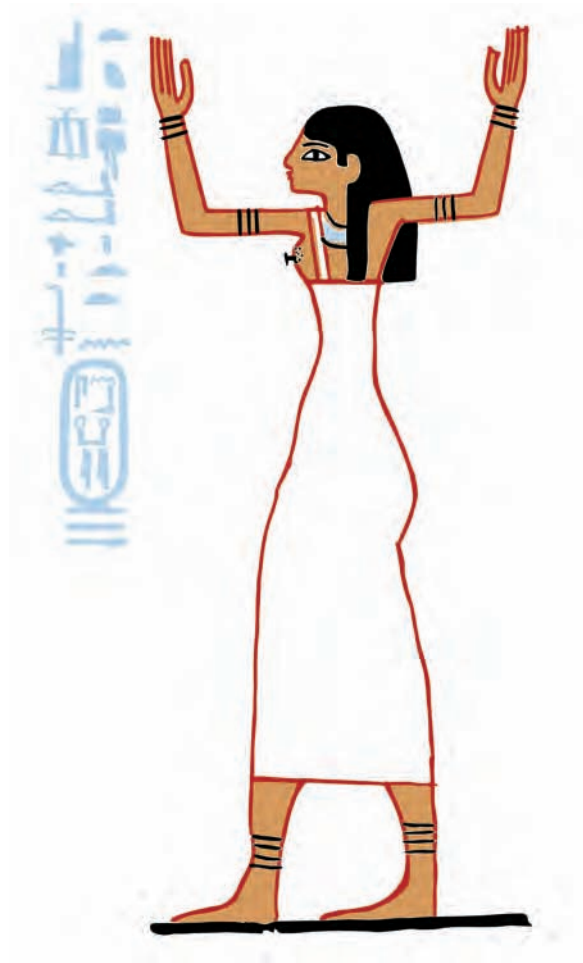
King Seneb-Kay's Tomb and the Necropolis of a Lost Dynasty at Abydos

Josef Wegner and Kevin Cahail

with contributions by

Jane Hill, Maria Rosado, and Molly Gleeson

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Frontispiece Goddess on the north wall of the burial chamber with reconstruction of the hieroglyphic label: "*It is Isis who folds her arms around King Seneb-Kay.*"

In memory of John Richard (Rick) Rockwell
whose interest and support of the work at Abydos
led to the discovery of Egypt's forgotten pharaoh,
Seneb-Kay.

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Glossary of Place Names and Terms

Avaris (Greek, from Egyptian *Hwt-w^crt*) Capital of the Hyksos Kingdom located on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile in the northeastern Nile Delta.

Coffin Texts (abbr. CT) Corpus of Egyptian funerary texts that emerge in the late Old Kingdom ca. 2300 BCE and develop into the Second Intermediate Period when their use declines.

Deir el-Bahri (Arabic) Modern name for the desert bay on the west bank of Thebes forming part of the Theban necropolis. Location of cemeteries of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period.

Dra Abu el-Naga (Arabic) Modern name for area of the Theban necropolis that includes many of the royal tombs of the late Second Intermediate Period.

el-Kab (Arabic, Egyptian *Nhb*) Modern name for the settlement and temple site of the goddess Nekhbet in the 3rd nome (province) of Upper Egypt. Location of cemeteries and rock-cut chapels of the Second Intermediate Period.

gebel (Arabic) “Mountain” refers to the high desert cliffs that flank the Nile Valley in Upper Egypt.

Head of the South (Egyptian, *tp-rsy*) Ancient Egyptian geographical and administrative term for the southern eight nomes (provinces) of Upper Egypt stretching from Elephantine to Abydos.

hetep-di-nisut formula (Egyptian, *htp-dī-nswt*) Standardized offering formula used on mortuary equipment including stelae, statuary, false doors and funerary architecture.

Hyksos (Greek, from Egyptian, *ḥkꜣw-ḥꜣswt*) Greek term for the “rulers of foreign lands” used in Egyptian texts to refer to the kings of the 15th Dynasty who ruled Lower Egypt during the late Second Intermediate Period.

Itj-Tawy (Egyptian, *It-bꜣwy*) Royal residence city founded by Amenemhat I (ca. 2000 BCE) and used as the capital during the 12th and 13th Dynasties (ca. 2000–1650 BCE).

Kerma Modern name for the town in Upper Nubia which formed the political center of the Nubian Kerma Kingdom during the Second Intermediate Period.

khat (Egyptian, *ḥꜥt*) Form of royal headdress characterized by a bag-shaped profile.

khekhher (Egyptian, *ḥkr*) Decorative frieze showing rows of bundled plants frequently used for the tops of walls in Egyptian funerary and religious architecture.

Kom es-Sultan (Arabic) The “mound of the ruler” refers to the walled area that encompasses the main town and temple of Osiris at North Abydos.

Lisht Location of the pyramids of Kings Amenemhat I and Senwosret I near the residence city of Itj-Tawy, location of private cemeteries of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period.

mahat (Egyptian, *m^cḥꜥt*) Egyptian term denoting a mortuary building with a primarily commemorative function that was devoid of an actual burial, sometimes translated as “cenotaph.”

mastaba (Arabic) Modern word commonly used for the rectangular, flat-topped mortuary superstructures that predominate in early Egyptian cemeteries.

Medamud (Egyptian *M3dw*) Settlement and temple site dedicated to the god Montu in the Theban nome, ten kilometers north east of the temple of Karnak.

Mirgissa (Egyptian *ʾlkn*) Modern toponym for the Egyptian fortress and community near the Second Cataract in Lower Nubia, location of cemeteries of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period.

nemes (Egyptian, *nms*) Royal crown characterized by lappets that extend down over the shoulders and a decorative treatment of stripes of alternating colors.

per-nu (Egyptian, *pr-nw*) Term for the symbolic shrine of Lower Egypt that is adapted into funerary equipment such as coffins and canopic boxes.

rishi (Arabic) “Feathered,” refers to the style of sarcophagus decorated with bird wings. The style is particularly diagnostic of the Second Intermediate Period and early New Kingdom.

serekh (Egyptian, *srh*) Paneled architectural design derived from royal palace architecture and adapted

for symbolic use on coffins and funerary art.

tafla (Arabic) Compact clay-like material encountered in the desert subsurface.

Thebes (Greek, Egyptian *W3st*) Capital of the 4th nome (province) of Upper Egypt; during the Second Intermediate Period political center of the Theban Kingdom (the 16th and 17th Dynasties).

Thinis (Greek, from Egyptian *Tni*) Capital of the 8th nome (province) of Upper Egypt. Located northeast of Abydos but not archaeologically identified.

Umm el-Qa’ab (Arabic) Modern name for the Predynastic and Early Dynastic royal cemetery at Abydos, necropolis of the earliest Egyptian pharaohs and symbolic burial place of Osiris.

uraeus (Greek, from Egyptian *ʾcrt*) Hooded cobra, symbol of royalty and dominion associated with Wadjet of Buto, the symbolic goddess of Lower Egypt.

wedjat (Egyptian, *w3di*) The eye of Horus or “sound eye” commonly used as symbol of bodily well-being in Egyptian funerary iconography.

wesekh (Egyptian, *wsh*) Beaded broad-collar which forms part of the assemblage of jewelry and amulets included in Egyptian funerary practices.

Part 1

The Tomb of King Woseribre Seneb-Kay

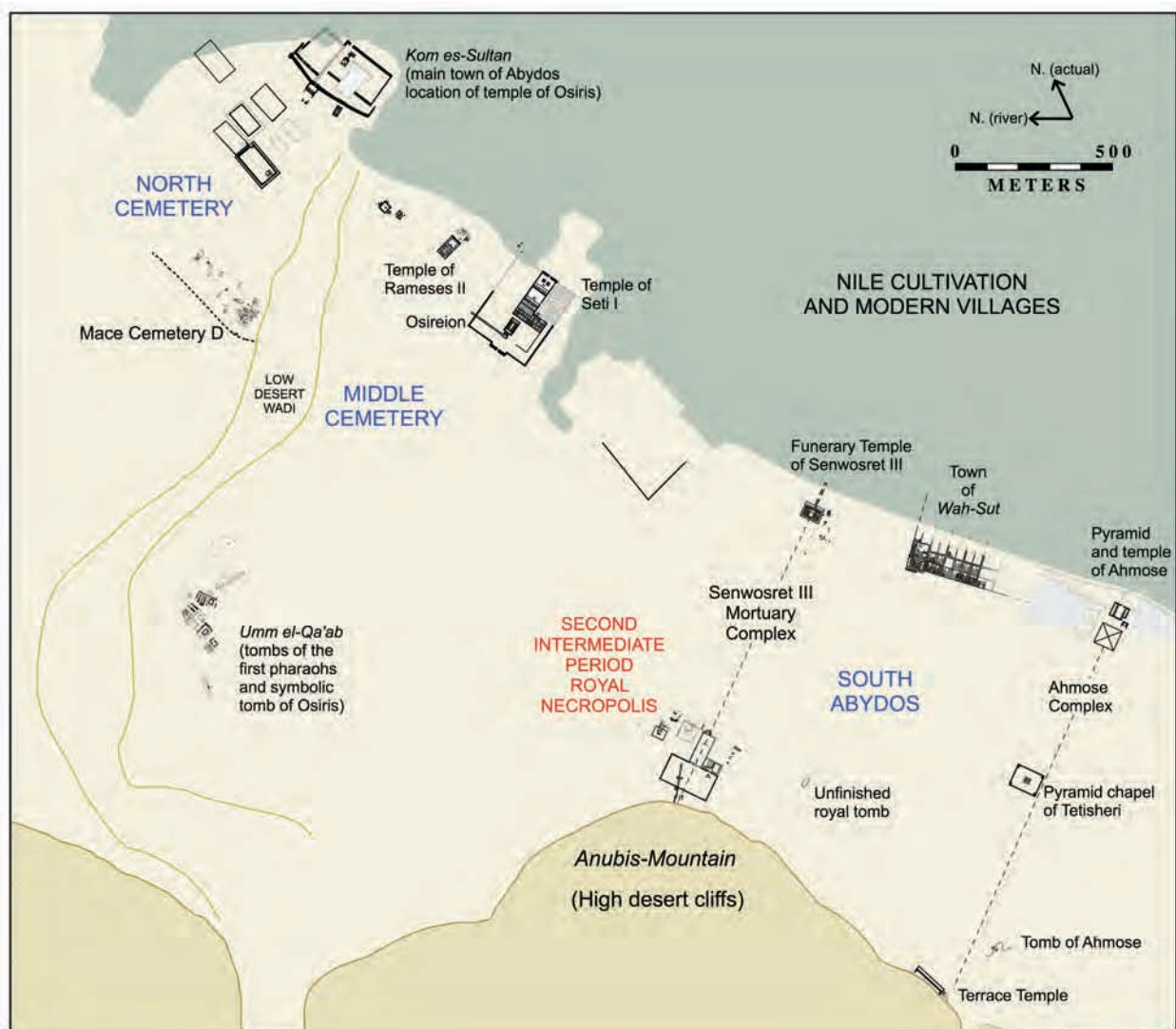


Fig. 0.1 Plan of greater Abydos showing the location of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period royal necropolis at the base of the cliffs at South Abydos.

Introduction

Between approximately 1650–1600 BCE, at the height of Egypt’s Second Intermediate Period, an Egyptian king named Woseribre Seneb-Kay was violently killed in a military encounter. Covered in the traumatic wounds that accompanied his death, his body was mummified and buried in a hastily constructed tomb at the site of Abydos in Upper Egypt. The location chosen for his burial was the foot of the high desert cliffs of South Abydos where a group of three large tombs that we now attribute to the Middle Kingdom pharaohs Senwosret III, Neferhotep I, and Sobekhotep IV formed a royal burial ground known to the Egyptians as *dw-Inpw*, the *Mountain-of-Anubis* (Wegner 2009). Seneb-Kay’s own tomb was inserted alongside these earlier, larger burial monuments dating the late Middle Kingdom (Fig. 0.1 and 0.2).¹

Although Seneb-Kay’s tomb was constructed quickly at modest scale (measuring just 13.5 meters in overall length), the builders took the time to decorate his burial chamber with painted funerary imagery and hieroglyphic texts. This decoration records his identity as the *Good-God, Lord-of-the-Two-Lands, Lord-of-Ritual, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Woseribre Seneb-Kay*. Perhaps surprisingly, his decorated burial chamber is the first one belonging to a king in pharaonic history that contains painted wall imagery. It is thanks to the survival of that decoration that we are able to identify the tomb’s owner, a king who would otherwise remain effectively lost to history. Apart from his tomb, archaeology has revealed no known monuments relating to this ruler. There exists only a single inscribed object, bearing

his misspelled birth-name, or nomen, in the form “Seb-Kay,” that we can attribute to his reign. Who was King Woseribre Seneb-Kay and why was he buried at South Abydos? This volume examines those questions in light of his tomb and its contents.

Seneb-Kay’s tomb was discovered in 2014 as part of the Penn Museum’s excavations at South Abydos. Among the fragmentary remains of his burial assemblage, we recovered the body of Seneb-Kay himself still substantially articulated but discarded on the floor of the tomb by ancient robbers. Osteological analysis testifies to the extent of the traumatic wounds that led to Seneb-Kay’s death. He is at present the earliest documented Egyptian king whose physical remains show he died in the midst of battle. Moreover, features of his skeleton indicate a man whose life included a specific regimen of physical and martial activities, a man who appears to have risen to power from the military elite of the Second Intermediate Period. Part 1 of this volume discusses the tomb of Seneb-Kay and its contents.

The discovery of this previously unknown ancient Egyptian king has opened a new window onto the practice of kingship during one of the most fragmented eras of Ancient Egypt: the late Second Intermediate Period, or “Hyksos Period.” During this time period, Egypt was divided among multiple rival kingdoms (Fig. 0.3). These dynasties include the final pharaohs of the 13th Dynasty, ruling from the city of *Itj-Tawy*; the 16th and 17th Dynasties, ruling sequentially from Thebes in Upper Egypt; and the Hyksos or 15th Dynasty, a line of kings of Levantine origin who, after

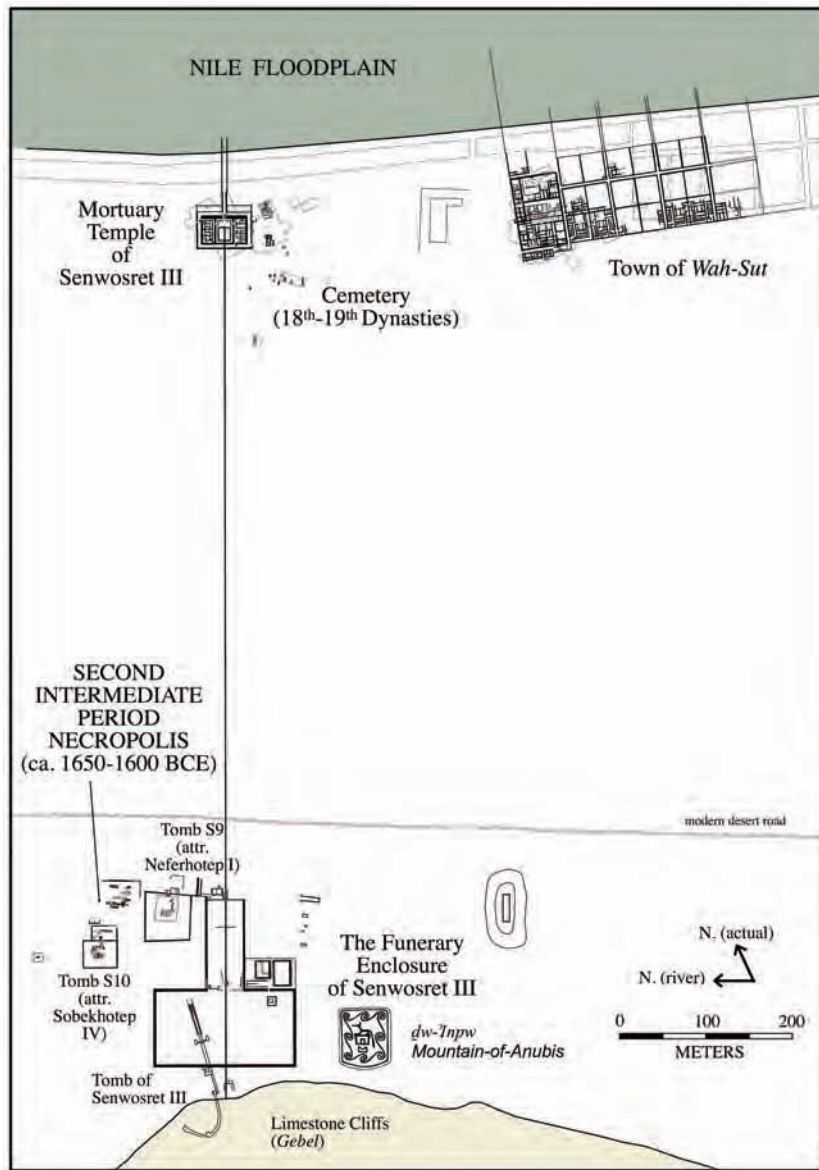


Fig. 0.2 The environs of the mortuary complex of Senwosret III showing the primary known structures and location of the Second Intermediate Period necropolis.

set of evidence by Detlef Franke in 1988.² The possibility of an “Abydos Dynasty” was then more fully developed by Kim Ryholt and presented in his 1997 volume, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800–1550 B.C.*, as part of his broader model of the dynastic and political structure of the period. The idea of the Abydos Dynasty was subsequently dismissed by the majority of Egyptologists. Seneb-Kay and the seven tombs of his close contemporaries provide new evidence for the existence of an Abydos Dynasty (Wegner 2014, 2018a).

After the initial discovery of Seneb-Kay’s tomb, work continued during 2015–16 with an expanded investigation of the surrounding landscape. The goal of this work has been defining the relationship of Seneb-Kay’s tomb

taking power following an earlier line of 14th Dynasty Delta kings, ruled from their capital at Avaris, the modern site of Tell el-Dab’a in the north-eastern Nile Delta. As we examine in this volume, there is no evidence indicating that Seneb-Kay belonged to any of these dynasties. His tomb and a group of seven other tombs of similar design near that of Seneb-Kay appear to belong to a succession of Second Intermediate Period kings whose names were edited out of the later pharaonic kinglists: a lost dynasty. The existence of such a line of monarchs ruling from the Abydene and Thinite region had first been hypothesized on a slim

to adjacent structures. Identification of the ownership of Seneb-Kay’s tomb in 2014 immediately shed light on a group of tombs of nearly identical design close to that of Seneb-Kay. Long before our recent excavations, Arthur Weigall, working in 1902 for the Egypt Exploration Fund, located and examined three mysterious tombs at South Abydos which, lacking dateable inscribed material, he chose to simply classify as “Late” tombs (Ayrton, Currelly, and Weigall 1904:17–18). Until the present time, these structures remained of unknown date and with no obvious architectural parallels at Abydos or elsewhere in Egypt.

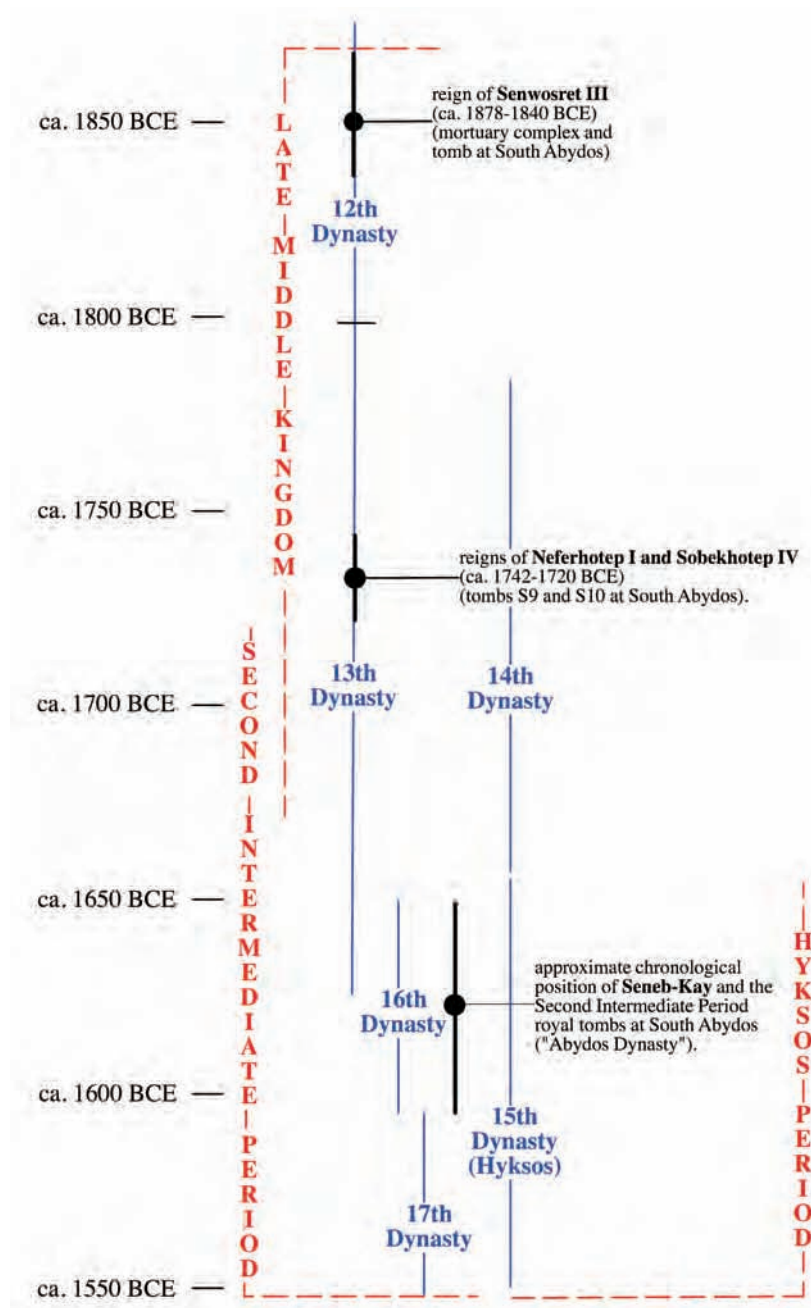


Fig. 0.3 Chronology of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period showing the position of Seneb-Kay and the other kings whose tombs are located in the royal necropolis at South Abydos.

“CS” designations for “Cemetery S” deriving from an earlier convention that Weigall had used for the Senwosret III mortuary enclosure.³ Tombs CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7, and CS8 were excavated in 2013.⁴ Three of these (tombs CS4, CS7, and CS8) we immediately identified as the tombs that Weigall had opened, while two others, CS5 and CS6, had been untouched by Weigall. CS6 presented us with a surprising new discovery.

Based on its location and brick architectural elements, CS6 was contemporary with the other tombs. Uniquely, however, this tomb made use of a reused, monolithic quartzite burial chamber, weighing approximately 50 tons and originally of 13th Dynasty date. From their scale and common design elements it was evident that all five of the tombs known at that point were closely contemporaneous and of elite status. However, no additional diagnostic artifacts emerged in 2013 with which to anchor their date. At

While the tomb of Seneb-Kay itself was discovered in 2014, work on the Second Intermediate Period royal cemetery discussed in this volume began the year before, when we initiated a survey of mortuary activity, the South Abydos Tomb Census (SATC). The initial goal of this work was searching for late Middle Kingdom private tombs at South Abydos. During this work we relocated and reexamined the three tombs that Weigall had previously encountered. At that point the tombs were assigned

that stage, the evidence included the puzzling phenomenon of the reuse of an abandoned or relocated 13th Dynasty royal burial chamber. The discovery of Seneb-Kay’s tomb in 2014, designated as CS9, close to these other five tombs finally provided a clear basis for dating the entire group to the Second Intermediate Period. Moreover, the status of Seneb-Kay’s tomb as the burial of a king, along with the presence of the preexisting late Middle Kingdom royal tombs

at the site, suggested the likelihood that many or all of these tombs belong to Second Intermediate Period kings who had made use of this same mortuary landscape at South Abydos. The tombs show intriguing patterns of architectural copying but also reuse of materials from the preexisting 13th Dynasty tombs at the site, a phenomenon which we will explore throughout this volume.

During continued work in 2014 and 2015 we expanded excavation into unexplored areas between the known tombs and also around the periphery of the Second Intermediate Period cemetery. Primary goals of that work included the retrieval of new dating evidence for the necropolis as a whole and the identification of additional tombs that—like Seneb-Kay's—might yield evidence for specific ownership. This work led to the discovery of two additional tombs, CS10 and CS11, as well as a group of three brick shafts labeled CS12–14. Tomb CS10 is the largest and architecturally most impressive of the entire group of Second Intermediate Period tombs. The substructure has similarities with CS6 in its use of a single, monolithic burial chamber, but in this case incorporated within a structure that descends to over twice the depth of Seneb-Kay's tomb. Although it had been robbed, the excavation of CS10 recovered a substantial proportion of the skeletal remains of a single, adult male occupant, the analysis of whose skeleton complements the better-preserved remains of King Seneb-Kay. However, like the other tombs, it bore no decoration and the name of its likely royal occupant remains unknown. Similar results applied to the final tomb identified, CS11.

This group of tombs, CS4 to CS11, apart from Seneb-Kay we discuss here as constituting the “Main tomb cluster” (Part 3 of this volume). These structures and their contents add crucial information to our understanding of this necropolis and the social status of the individuals buried within it. Together they form a group of eight closely related tombs of the Second Intermediate Period. Seneb-Kay is the only one of these that can be identified by name. As we examine in this volume, these tombs appear to comprise a royal cemetery of the Second Intermediate Period that includes burials for at least eight kings dating between ca. 1650–1600 BCE (Fig. 0.4).

The discovery of the tomb of Seneb-Kay, containing the body of the king alongside remnants of his funerary assemblage, furnishes crucial new evidence on

Egypt's Second Intermediate Period. Even more fortunately, the tomb has rewarded us with a goldmine of other information. Because Seneb-Kay's tomb was built both quickly and economically, the tomb builders made extensive use of *spolia*: reused blocks and materials taken from other structures at Abydos. The king's limestone burial chamber was constructed from blocks that had originally belonged to one or more funerary chapels built at Abydos ca. 1750–1700 BCE by a powerful Theban family who were closely linked to the 13th Dynasty pharaohs Neferhotep I and Sobekhotep IV. The blocks commemorate the family of a man named Dedtu who served in the high-ranking office of *Overseer of Fields*, his son Ibiau who was the *Master of Offering Tables of Amun* at Thebes, along with their wives, Abeteni and Nekheteni, and other family members. The carved scenes and texts were attacked through a vicious *damnatio memoriae* and were later reused in Seneb-Kay's burial chamber. Despite the damage to their decorated surfaces, these reused blocks provide a significant new window onto elite society of the 13th Dynasty during the century that preceded the lifetime of Seneb-Kay.

Capping Seneb-Kay's burial chamber were roof blocks that the tomb builders had also taken from earlier structures at Abydos. These blocks included a royal false door belonging to one of the Sobekhotep kings of the 13th Dynasty, and possibly attributed to Sobekhotep IV (ca. 1732–1720 BCE) whose own tomb may lie adjacent to Seneb-Kay's at South Abydos (tomb S10). Another block, the earliest object recovered at the site, dates to the beginning of the 11th Dynasty, ca. 2100 BCE, over four centuries before the reign of Seneb-Kay. This is a commemorative stela belonging to a Nubian ruler, the *Foremost-one of the chiefs of Wawat*, named Idudju-iker. All of these reused materials make the tomb of Seneb-Kay an exceptionally rich source of new historical information, not just relating to the era of Seneb-Kay's own life, but also for the early and late Middle Kingdom. We examine the reused materials in Part 2 of this volume.

While the exact historical and political parameters of King Seneb-Kay and the neighboring tombs in the Second Intermediate Period cemetery remain open to discussion, there is one crucial aspect of the archaeological evidence that remains overwhelmingly clear. The tomb provides explicit archaeological testimony to the scope of political and social conflict that reverberates through Egypt's Second

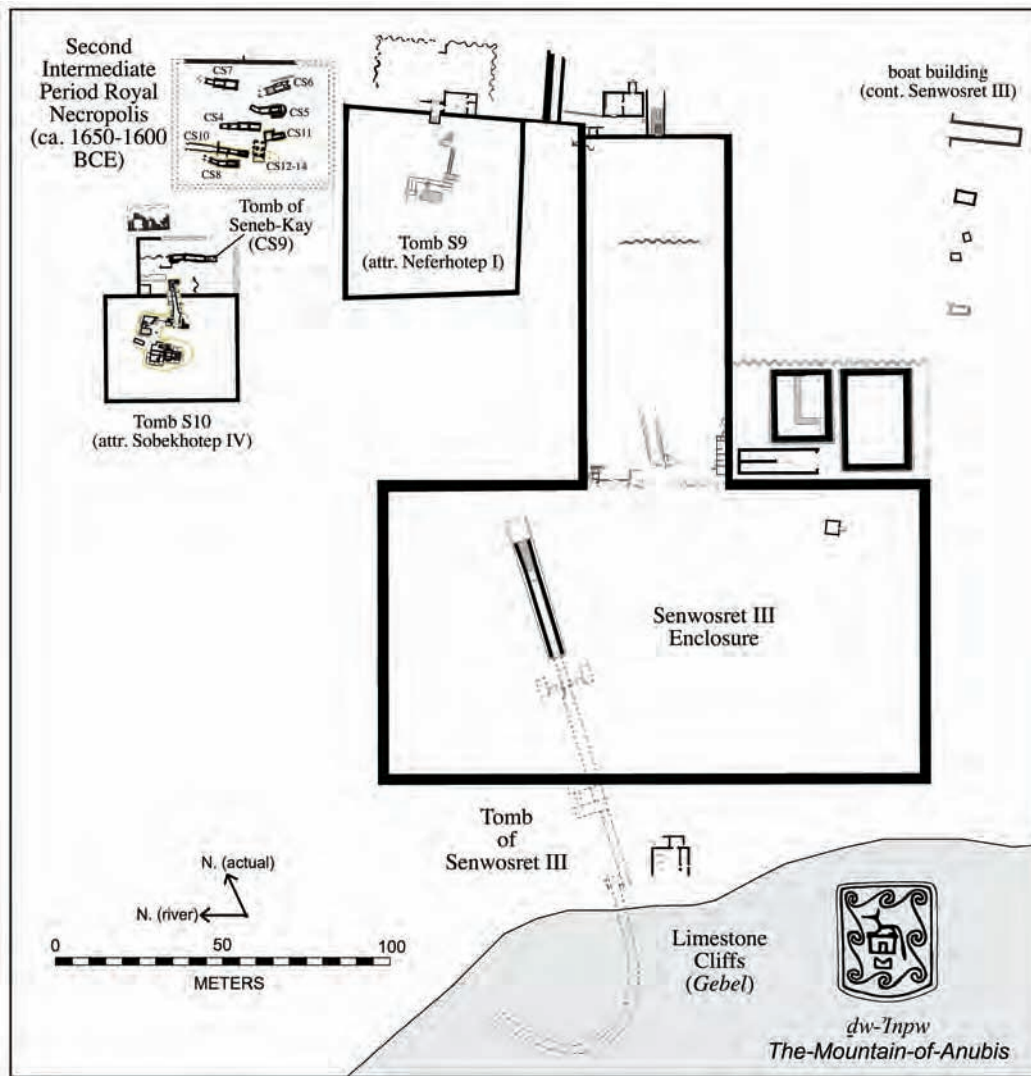


Fig. 0.4 The funerary enclosure of Senwosret III showing the location of the Second Intermediate Period necropolis on the northwest side and adjacent to the 13th Dynasty royal tombs.

Intermediate Period. Some form of dire political vendetta that may have wider political ramifications is embedded in the vicious attack witnessed on the reused 13th Dynasty chapel blocks. Separately—but perhaps not entirely unrelated to the historical phenomenon of this *damnatio* directed against 13th Dynasty monuments—Seneb-Kay’s body testifies to the warfare and violence that characterized the age in which he lived. His savage death in battle, with multiple battle axe impressions embedded in his skull, is likely to be symptomatic of the territorial conflicts that, around 1600 BCE, brought an end to the brief-lived kingdom over which he ruled.

The Second Intermediate Period tombs at South Abydos were large and richly equipped for the era to which they date. However, the phenomenon of copying of earlier late Middle Kingdom architecture, along with reuse of building materials and even tomb equipment, belies the pervasive poverty that gripped Upper Egypt at the height of the Second Intermediate Period. It is likely that the economic and political pressures of the age combined to drive the blossoming of a prevalent military culture, which many scholars have observed to be a defining feature of the era. Based on analysis of their skeletal remains, the bodies of Seneb-Kay and the unknown king buried in

tomb CS10 provide indications that these rulers rose to power from military backgrounds and lived and died as military leaders, as “warrior kings.” This was an era of innovations in military technology and tactics that accompanied the Hyksos Period. Through the evidence of musculoskeletal stress markers, we see indications that Seneb-Kay and the rulers buried at Abydos were integrally involved in the martial practices and territorial conflicts that appear to have dominated their era.

Despite the fact that we have recovered his tomb and skeletonized mummy—the earliest, substantially preserved physical remains of an Egyptian king to survive in the archaeological record—Seneb-Kay remains a shadowy figure. Apart from his tomb, we have no architecture, stela, statues, or inscribed stone monuments bearing his name. While he died at about 35–45 years of age, how long he reigned prior to his death in battle remains unknown. There is, however, one object today in the collection of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, that establishes an intriguing link between Seneb-Kay and another object, a stela from Abydos today held, coincidentally, in the collection of the Penn Museum.

In 1900, the British archaeologist Arthur Mace discovered the only artifact that likely names King Seneb-Kay, an ebony apotropaion or “birth wand” found in a tomb at North Abydos. From the same tomb as the wand came the stela now in Philadelphia (Penn Museum E9952) that commemorates a military official, the *Commander of the Crew of the Ruler*, Sobekhotep, and his wife, the *Lady of the House*, Neferuptah. Aside from affirming the close connections of Seneb-Kay with Abydos, the wand suggests some form of personal or familial association that Seneb-Kay held with Sobekhotep and Neferuptah. Possibly these people were family members or even parents of the man who became King Woseribre Seneb-Kay. Here we may have evidence for the derivation of Seneb-Kay from an elite, military family, as well as more broadly a reflection of the altered practices of kingship in the Second Intermediate Period. Kings of the era did not typically follow the more familiar mode of father to son succession seen in most periods of pharaonic history. Rather, they ascended to the throne from a variety of different elite lineages. Possibly we see in this evidence further indications for Seneb-Kay’s rise to rulership as the scion of an elite, Abydene military family. We will explore this

possibility in Part 4 of this volume, along with consideration of the wider political and historical context of his reign.

In the writing of the present volume, the principal author has benefitted from the scholarly expertise of the other contributors. Work on the canopic chest of Seneb-Kay and the complex set of alterations associated with it is the product of coauthor, Kevin Cahail’s detailed analysis (Chapter 4). Kevin Cahail has also undertaken detailed chronological and historical study of the individuals recorded on the reused 13th Dynasty chapel blocks (Chapter 10). Preliminary results of this analysis had been presented elsewhere but are now superseded by the final publication of the reused blocks in Part 2. Molly Gleeson of the Conservation Department at the Penn Museum has completed restoration on the paintings of Seneb-Kay as well as other archaeological materials at South Abydos. An overview of the conservation work on the tomb is included here in Chapter 6.

Documentation and osteological analysis of the skeletal remains of Seneb-Kay and the other individuals buried at South Abydos was completed by Jane Hill and Maria Rosado, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Rowan University. Their analysis forms the basis for Chapters 5 and 13. The insights of the osteological analysis provide a valuable window into the life experience and social context of the Second Intermediate Period rulers buried at South Abydos. The text of Chapters 5 and 13 has been substantially structured by the principal author and any errors or omissions are his responsibility.

NOTES:

0.1 Throughout this book we will employ the term “*late Middle Kingdom*” to encompass the period from the reign of Senwosret III (ca. 1850 BCE) through the 13th Dynasty (ca. 1800–1675 BCE). The term “*Second Intermediate Period*” refers broadly to the period of the final decline of the Middle Kingdom state—including the final phase of the 13th Dynasty—up to the reunification of Egypt by the 17th Dynasty Theban king, Ahmose (ca. 1550 BCE). The use of these broader historical phases is inexact (Müller 2018:199–216) and complicated by the evidence that the final phase of the 13th Dynasty overlapped with the rise of the Hyksos 15th Dynasty, as well as the early phase of the Theban Kingdom (Dynasty 16). Some scholars choose to include the entirety of the 13th Dynasty within the Second Intermediate Period. Here we also use the term

“late Second Intermediate Period” to specify the century immediately preceding the reunification of Egypt under Ahmose (see Franke 1988:245–274; Ryholt 1997:311–312; Schneider 2006:168–170). This phase of time is also usefully designated as the *“Hyksos Period”* recognizing the territorial division of the country that accompanied the period of rule of the Hyksos 15th Dynasty in the Nile Delta. It is to this period that we can date the reign of Seneb-Kay and the associated royal tombs at South Abydos (see Fig. 0.3).

0.2 The site of Abydos is located on the western side of the Nile in the 8th nome of Upper Egypt. Abydos was closely related to the nearby provincial capital of Thisis. Thisis has never been identified archaeologically although the disposition of ancient cemetery sites suggest its location at the edge of the Nile to the north-east of Abydos (Brovarski 2018:51–57). In this context, we use the terms “Abydene” and “Thinite” with the same broader geographical reference. During the Second Intermediate

Period the political center of the region was likely located at Thisis while Abydos served as the primary cemetery and ceremonial center of the funerary god Osiris.

0.3 Tomb numbers discussed in this volume that are preceded by the “S” follow the designations originally assigned by Weigall (principally here the 13th Dynasty tombs S9 and S10). Tomb numbers with the “CS” prefix are structures discovered and numbered since 2013 (including CS1 to CS14. To clarify this distinction at the outset, tombs S9 and S10 (the large royal tombs dating to the middle 13th Dynasty) are different than CS9 and CS10 (Second Intermediate Period tombs of Seneb-Kay and a close contemporary of unknown name).

0.4 The structures designated CS1–3 are located on the opposite side of the tomb enclosure. They belong to the original funerary ceremonies associated with the tomb of Senwosret III (Wegner 2017a:5–30) and are unrelated to the group of Second Intermediate Period tombs discussed here.

1

Excavation and Architecture of the Tomb of Seneb-Kay*

The tomb of King Woseribre Seneb-Kay (tomb CS9) was discovered and excavated in 2014. Seneb-Kay's tomb, situated in close proximity to the 13th Dynasty royal tomb S10, was deeply buried beneath extensive debris mounds flanking the front of that larger, earlier structure. Following the excavation of the main tomb cluster in 2013, work was expanded southwards towards S10 with the goal of generating more evidence on the date and attribution of that group of tombs. The resulting removal of the debris mounds fronting S10 defined the denuded remnants of a rectangular enclosure with interior dimensions of 16.2 by 28 m situated against the north (Nile facing) side of S10. This enclosure, labeled "Enclosure B" (Fig. 1.1) contains remnants of a group of thin walled structures including a set of sinusoidal walls that frame the major original feature within Enclosure B: the entrance staircase into tomb S10. The tomb of Seneb-Kay is positioned inside this earlier enclosure and only 5 m from the entrance to tomb S10.

Based on the complete exposure of this area, it is apparent that the builders of Seneb-Kay's tomb made intentional use of the existing terrain and still standing 13th Dynasty enclosure walls as a site for the king's tomb (Figs. 1.2 to 1.5). This pattern of reuse of a preexisting enclosure directly parallels the repurposing of another enclosure, the abandoned "Enclosure C" for the main group of Second Intermediate Period tombs. An advantage to the particular location chosen for Seneb-Kay's tomb is that the enclosure originally formed a discrete, elevated terrace with a compact floor surface. The relatively level floor would

have provided a convenient location for cutting a trench into the subsurface while also being protected from the wind by still standing enclosure walls. The tomb of Seneb-Kay follows the same orientation as the surrounding 13th Dynasty architecture and was carefully situated in the middle of the enclosure. The 13.5 m long tomb was centered between the brick entrance staircase of S10 and the northern wall of the enclosure. The position makes it clear the builders of Seneb-Kay's tomb were aware of the entrance into S10 which appears likely to have been accessible during the construction of his tomb. These spatial relationships corroborate the evidence discussed in Chapter 4 for the reworking of cedar boards from the painted coffin of a king Sobekhotep to form the canopic chest of Seneb-Kay. It appears possible these boards had been taken from tomb S10 in a form of state-sponsored tomb robbery that accompanied the construction and furnishing of Seneb-Kay's tomb.

The location of Seneb-Kay's tomb inside Enclosure B creates a distinct spatial separation between it and the main cluster of Second Intermediate Period tombs. There is a distance of 25 m between the tomb of Seneb-Kay and CS8, the southernmost tomb in the main cluster. Given the close architectural similarities that exist among the tombs it was initially surprising during excavations completed in the intervening area in 2014–2016 that there does not exist a continuous spread of tombs from Seneb-Kay northwards to CS6 and CS7 at the northern end of the Second Intermediate Period group. The probable explanation for this separation is that the position of

*This chapter written by Josef Wegner.

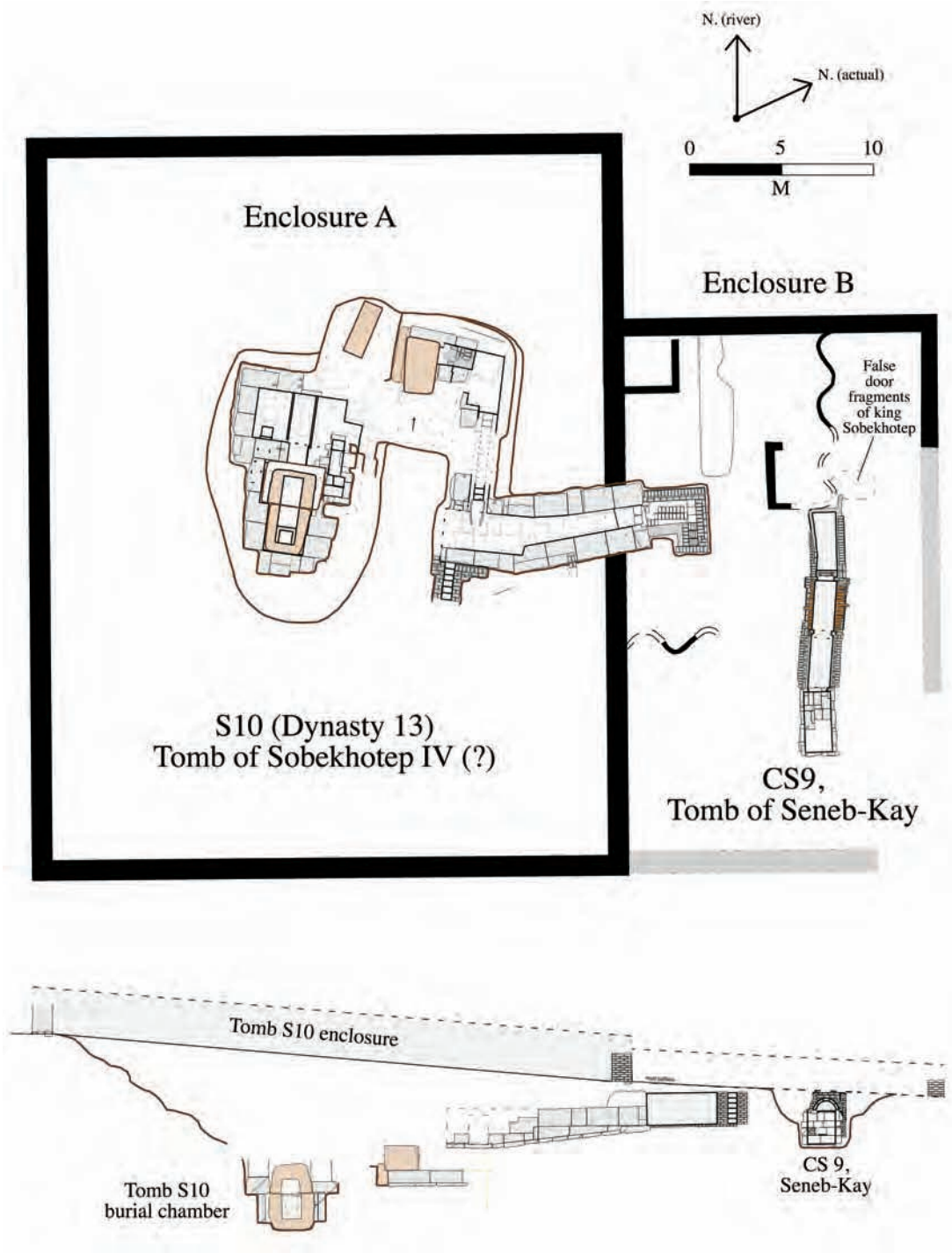


Fig. 1.1 Plan and sectional view showing the location of the tomb of Seneb-Kay (CS9) relative to the earlier 13th Dynasty royal tomb S10.



Fig. 1.2 View looking southeast over the tomb of Seneb-Kay (CS9) showing the disposition of the tomb relative to the enclosure wall of tomb S10.

these tombs reflects the locations of still extant 13th Dynasty enclosure walls at the time the tombs were constructed. Whereas Seneb-Kay's architects made use of the relatively smaller area of S10's entrance enclosure, the rest of the known tombs took advantage of what appears to have been a larger walled space: an abandoned 13th Dynasty royal enclosure to the north of S10 (for which see the discussion below in Chapter 11). The 25-meter gap between Seneb-Kay and CS8 reflects the relative positions of these two different walled enclosures.

TOMB DESIGN

The tomb of Seneb-Kay is a passage-style tomb measuring 13.5 m in total length (Figs. 1.6 to 1.8). The tomb has four primary elements: (1) a walled entrance ramp leading down to a doorway fitted

with a limestone portcullis, (2) a pole-roof chamber (Chamber 1) covered with a flat roof of wooden beams; (3) a brick vaulted antechamber (Chamber 2); and (4) the stone-built burial chamber (Chamber 3). From the upper rim of its entrance ramp to the floor of the burial chamber the tomb has a vertical descent of 2.85 m. Apart from its unique use of a burial chamber composed of reused limestone masonry, Seneb-Kay's tomb is remarkably similar to the main group of Second Intermediate Period tombs in all aspects of its design and construction techniques. Particularly notable is use of the same architectural sequence of unroofed entrance ramp, pole-roof chamber, vaulted antechamber, and burial chamber in a predominantly linear descent. A summary of the tomb's major components and the excavation of these elements follows here. The architecture and decoration of the burial chamber are discussed in detail in the next chapter.



Fig. 1.3 Overview of the tomb of Seneb-Kay (CS9) showing the enclosure wall and entrance leading into tomb S10.



Fig. 1.4 The substructure of tomb S10 showing the position of the tomb of Seneb-Kay (CS9) with its burial chamber covered by the wooden structure at upper left (view looking east in 2015).



Fig. 1.5 View looking east over the tomb of Seneb-Kay (CS9) showing the full exposure in 2015 of the surroundings with the tombs of the main cluster on the upper left.



Fig. 1.6 Overview of the tomb of Seneb-Kay (view looking east after the end of the first season of excavation in January 2014).

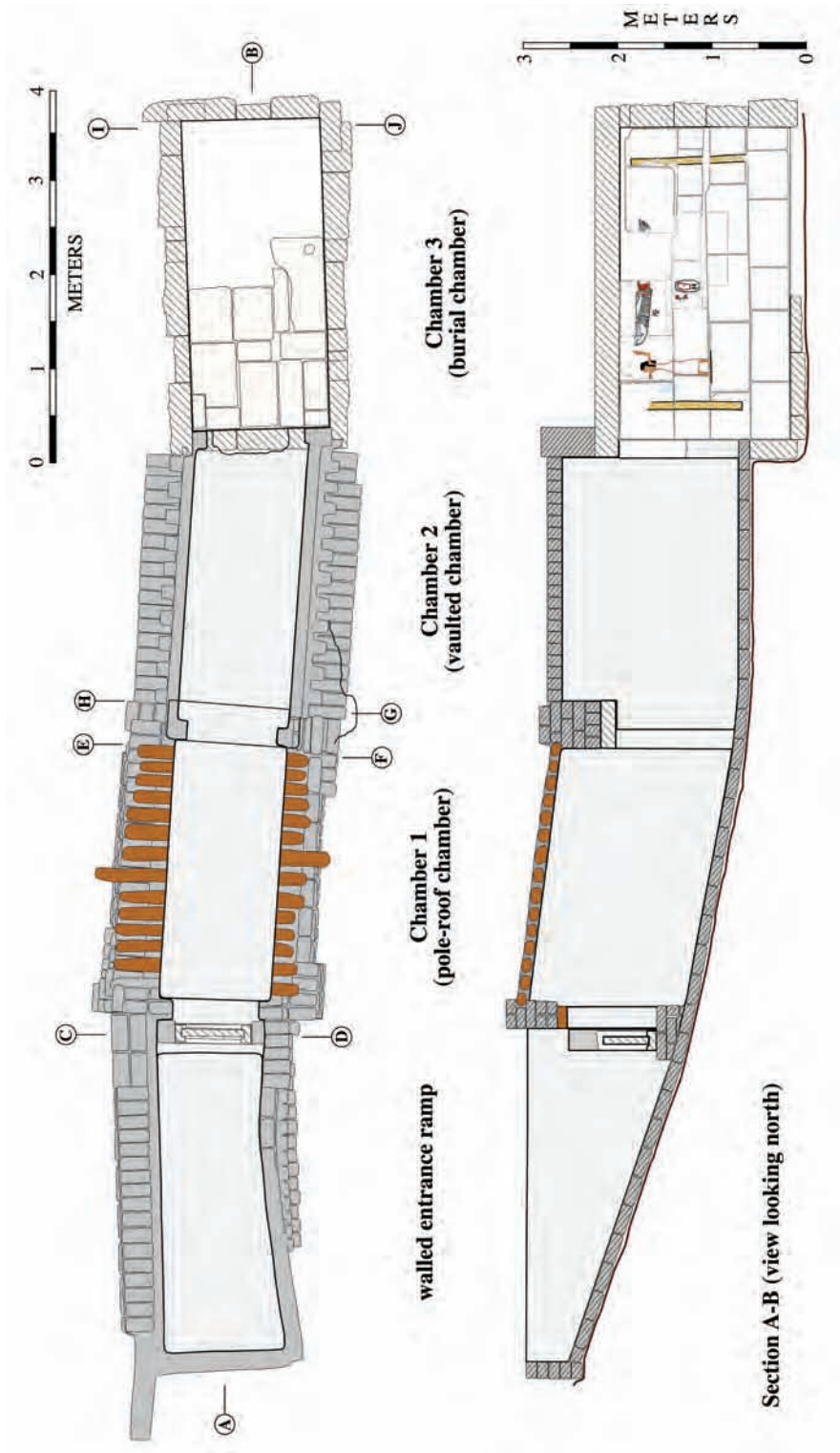
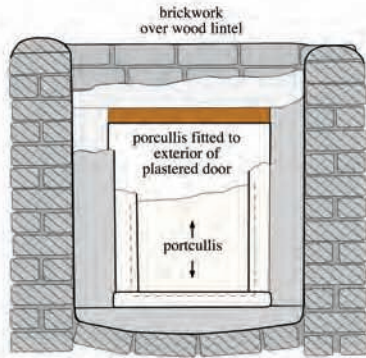
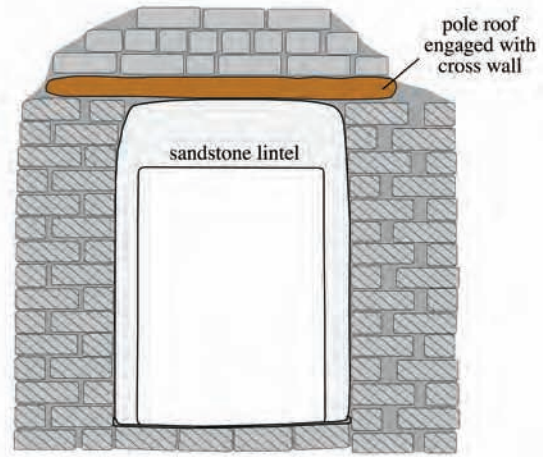


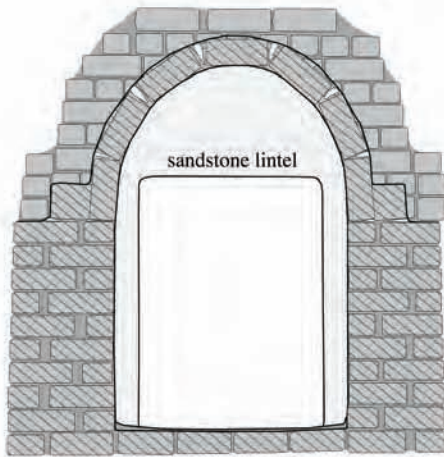
Fig. 1.7 Plan and section of the tomb of Seneb-Kay showing the roofline reconstructed to its original height.



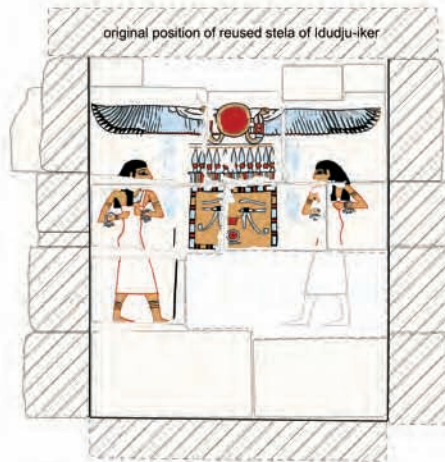
Section C-D
(section through entrance ramp looking east to porcellis)



Section E-F
(section through Chamber 1 looking east to doorway into Chamber 2)



Section G-H
(section through Chamber 2 looking west to doorway into Chamber 1)



Section I-J
(inner wall of the burial chamber, view looking east)

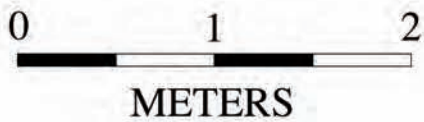


Fig. 1.8 Cross sections through the primary elements of the tomb of Seneb-Kay.

ENTRANCE RAMP AND PORTCULLIS

The brick entrance ramp (Fig. 1.9) measures 3.55 m long by 1.28 m at its widest point. The structure is constructed on a 0.48 m wide base of brickwork (composed of one row of headers and one row of stretchers, but the brickwork is irregular and steps up towards the west end where the rim of the ramp is only 0.22 m wide (a single brick width). On the south side, the upper part of the ramp is completed with bricks laid as stretchers forming a thin, 0.22 m wide wall. The ramp's south side has a significant inward bow which appears to have occurred during the construction process. This curvature is not intentional but is the result of excess weight against the wall when it was still not fully hardened. Like the rest of the tomb, the entrance ramp was built in a trench cut down from the surface. When the exterior of the construction trench was filled in, the relatively thin format south wall bowed inwards through the weight of the material on the outside causing this deformation.

The ramp has a bricked and plastered floor that descends at slope of -18° . At the lower end of the ramp is a 0.56 m wide brick threshold beyond which are two 0.2 m wide brick jambs forming a doorway 0.92

m in width. The jambs were capped by a wood lintel, 0.23 m in width and 10 cm thick that supported brickwork above that engaged with the roof of Chamber 1. This brickwork was plastered on the west side forming a smooth exterior face. Set on top of the outer part of the threshold and mortared against the jambs of the 0.92 m wide door is a limestone portcullis. The portcullis consists of a base slab 0.21 m wide, 0.82 m long, and 0.11 m thick with a grooved surface to receive the sliding slab. Mounted against the sides are C-shaped channel blocks containing a limestone slab 7 cm in thickness. The frame of the portcullis is 0.82 m wide and is fitted by means of secondary brick jambs which were appended against the outer face of the already plastered inner jambs. The brickwork used to install the portcullis was left unplastered. The limestone slab would have slid upwards against the exterior face of the doorway lintel. However, there is a substantial gap of some 8 cm between the portcullis slab and the exterior face of the lintel which must have been sealed on the top by some other means.

The architecture of the entrance clearly shows two phases of construction: (1) an original doorway composed of inset jambs that supported the wood lintel above, followed by (2) the insertion of the brick threshold and limestone portcullis against the outer face of the original door jambs (Fig. 1.10). Once added,

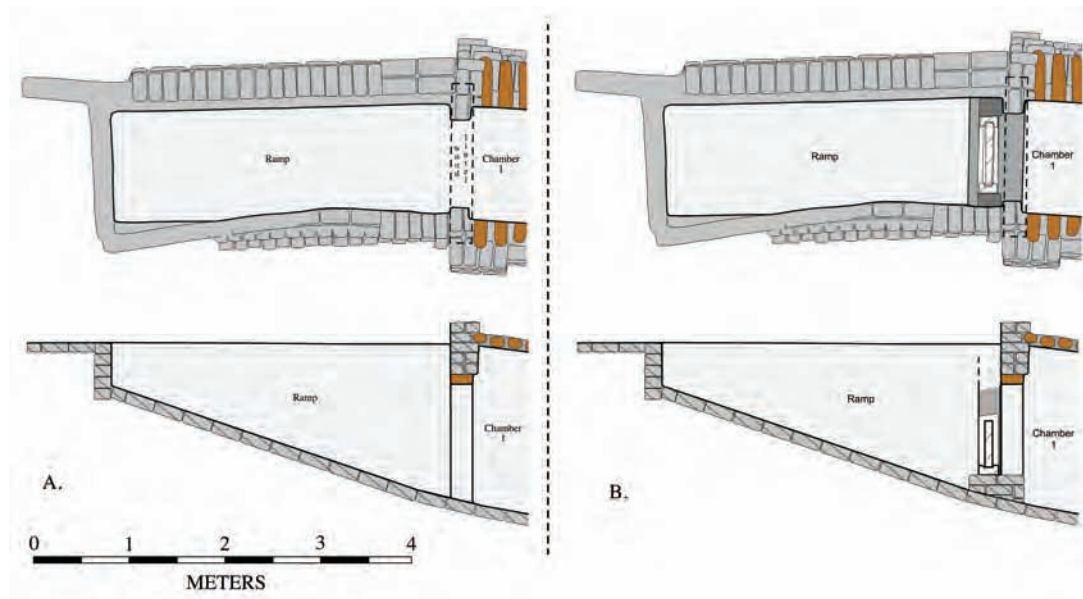


Fig. 1.9 Detail of the entrance ramp and doorway into Chamber 1 showing the original structure (A) and alteration of the entrance with the addition of threshold and portcullis (B).



Fig. 1.10 View of the outer side of the portcullis showing the original robbers' break through the top of the portcullis.

the portcullis and surrounding brickwork would have substantially narrowed the width of the main entrance into the tomb from 0.92 m to 0.6 m. It seems likely the wider opening was maintained during the plastering and decoration of the tomb interior and the portcullis was added as a final step, just prior to, or even after the installation of the king's burial.

The vertically sliding limestone slab is insubstantial and the door would have functioned as only a minor deterrent to anyone who wished to break into the tomb. Although still in situ when exposed in 2014, the portcullis was found with the upper half of its slab and frame torn away (Fig. 1.11). It is clear that the initial robbery of Seneb-Kay's tomb occurred through the portcullis, which was simply broken through at the top permitting access to the tomb's interior. The robbers' opening between the base of the wood lintel and top of the broken portcullis block is 0.38 m at its maximum which would have created sufficient space for people to climb in and despoil the tomb's interior. Physical evidence for the use of this access point during the robbery process occurs in the pole-roof chamber.

THE POLE-ROOF CHAMBER (CHAMBER 1)

From the brick threshold supporting the portcullis there is a 0.28 m drop down to the floor of the first internal space, the pole-roof chamber (Chamber 1). The pole-roof chamber of Seneb-Kay's tomb measures 1.18 m wide and 2.75 m long. The chamber floor is composed of brick with a layer of mud plaster and whitewash. It descends 0.5 m over the length of the chamber. Beneath the secondary brickwork of the threshold, the bricked and whitewashed floor continues uninterrupted from the ramp into the pole-roof chamber. There is a diminution of the angle of descent of the floor from -18° in the ramp to ca. -10° in Chamber 1. When discovered in 2014, Chamber 1 presented us with the only architecturally intact example of the pole-roof chamber, a feature that occurs in many of the other Second Intermediate Period tombs at South Abydos (CS4, CS8, CS10, and probably also CS7). Choice of the pole-roof format rather than a vault for the initial chamber likely reflects the relatively higher elevation of this initial part of the tomb interior. Use of the pole-roof permitted construction of a chamber slightly below ground level with a roof system that did not protrude as a vaulted roof would at this shallow depth.

Because the roof was found intact (Figs. 1.12 and 1.13), Chamber 1 preserves the full chamber height: 1.7 m at the west end, rising slightly to 1.82 m at the inner end. The roof consisted of fourteen parallel wood poles. Unlike the wood lintel that capped the entrance into the chamber, these poles were trimmed of branches but not substantially squared or dressed. The poles average 0.15 m in diameter and include two different wood species. The roof is composed of alternating use of palm wood, probably *Dom palm*, *Hyphaena thebaica*, along with a more compact form of acacia or sycamore, probably *Ficus sycamorus*. It is unclear why the two different wood species were employed together but the wood certainly reflects the reliance on locally available building materials. The poles were coated on the upper surface with a layer of Nile mud. The ceiling of the chamber was originally plastered smooth and whitewashed. This is indicated by a slight inward lip of the plaster on the



Fig. 1.11 The inner side of the portcullis. The unplastered brickwork represents the addition of the portcullis to the tomb's entrance.



Fig. 1.12 View looking north showing the intact wooden roof of the pole-roof chamber prior to removal of the central section.



Fig. 1.13 View looking south showing the intact wooden roof of the pole-roof chamber.

top of the walls of the pole-roof chamber. The mud layer on the exterior would have bonded through the crevices between the poles with the plastering of the chamber's ceiling.

When the wooden pole-roof of Chamber 1 was first exposed in 2014, it was found to be intact: the only chamber of the tomb of Seneb-Kay with its roof still in situ. Although the wood poles and exterior mud coating were still in place, the roof was pitted in many areas and the wood had decayed. The original interior plastering on the ceiling was gone. The lack of resiliency of the wood meant that excavation of the interior of Chamber 1 was not possible without removal of the central portion of the roof. When it was determined that there were indications for preserved funerary equipment and human remains inside Chamber 1 we made the decision to remove the central part of the pole-roof. The wood was cut flush with the inner face of the chamber's side walls leaving the ends of each beam in place on the side walls (Fig. 1.14). Excavation of Chamber 1 was then completed.

THE EXCAVATION AND CONTENTS OF THE POLE-ROOF CHAMBER

During the excavation of the interior of CS9 we first dug to floor level in the tomb's unroofed components: the entrance ramp along with the burial chamber and vaulted antechamber where the roof had been broken away in ancient times. Although no original artifacts remained inside the burial chamber itself, the excavation of the vaulted antechamber showed that there were multiple elements of the king's funerary assemblage scattered on the floor at the western end of the antechamber and extending into the pole-roof chamber. As the final stage of excavation inside the tomb, we then exposed Chamber 1's interior by cutting out the central portion of the decayed pole-roof, a necessary procedure that prevented the disintegrated roof from collapsing onto the delicate remains of Seneb-Kay's burial equipment that lay below (Fig. 1.15).