



THE SHAFT TOMB OF UDJAHORRESNET AT ABUSIR

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ABSTRACT

The burial structure of Udjahorresnet is situated in the western part of the necropolis at Abusir, in a group of large shaft tombs dating to the late Twenty-sixth Dynasty and early Twenty-seventh Dynasty. The arrangement of the underground parts of the tomb is unique among the Abusir tombs of this kind, resembling only the burial place of Pakap in Giza. The superstructure of Udjahorresnet's tomb, although badly damaged by later quarrying of the stone masonry, is perhaps the best-preserved superstructure among all the large Late Period shaft tombs. In the past, it has been suggested that perhaps Udjahorresnet was never buried in his tomb at Abusir and that this structure might have served as a kind of a cenotaph. The question was definitely resolved in 2003, when an embalmers' cache containing remnants of materials that had been used in the mummification of Udjahorresnet was unearthed in the close vicinity of his tomb, proving without any doubt that this dignitary was indeed buried here.

The burial structure of Udjahorresnet is situated in the western part of the necropolis at Abusir, in a group of shaft tombs dating to the late Twenty-sixth Dynasty and early Twenty-seventh Dynasty. Altogether, five large and about eight to ten middle-sized and smaller structures of that kind have been identified here so far by archaeological prospection and geophysical measuring, as well as through aerial and satellite photography.¹ Of that number, three large and two smaller structures have been completely unearthed, namely those of Udjahorresnet,² Iufaa,³ and Menekhibnekau,⁴ as well as that of Padihor⁵ and the anonymous tomb dubbed R 3 (now AW 4).⁶

We can only speculate why Udjahorresnet and a group of high-ranking dignitaries of the royal court selected this place for construction of their tombs.⁷ It may have been important that it lies on the straight line connecting the oldest pyramid complex in the

country, at nearby Saqqara, with the largest Egyptian pyramids at Giza. It is also close to Fifth Dynasty monuments, and so a place sanctified by a long tradition, and probably also near the cemetery of foreign (Greek and Carian) mercenaries whom these dignitaries—Udjahorresnet and Menekhibnekau at least—commanded. The geological formation here, formed by massive layers of shale (*tafl*, in Arabic), was suitable for the construction of such tombs.

The tomb of Udjahorresnet, placed on the highest place in this part of the necropolis, seems to be the oldest structure in the entire group.⁸ The part of the tomb situated above the ground, although badly damaged by later quarrying of the stone masonry, is perhaps the best-preserved superstructure among all the large Late Period shaft tombs.⁹ It is formed by a relatively massive enclosure built of rather roughly worked blocks of local limestone, with small chips

of white Turah limestone used here and there. The enclosure wall is roughly square, measuring about 25.5 by 26 m; the inside is almost regular square measuring 24 by 24 m (FIG. 1). In its highest place preserved so far, in the southeastern corner, the wall reaches a height of 2.5 m above the ground. In its western part, the wall is built on a shallow foundation trench, only about 0.3 m deep. In the east, the wall is founded directly on the *tafl* bedrock. A number of short graffiti written in demotic was found on the outer face of the core masonry of the enclosure wall, some of them with dates. Mostly, regnal years 41 or 42 (i.e., about 530 or 529 BCE) are mentioned. Although the king is never named, Khnemibra Ahmose II/Amasis¹⁰ is the only option.¹¹

Originally, the outer face of the wall was cased with smaller blocks of white Turah limestone, about 0.4 m thick. Of the original casing, only a few pieces from the lowermost layer have been preserved on the northern and western sides. The original height of the enclosure wall can only be estimated hypothetically. Judging from the situation in the northwestern corner, where a group of five blocks lying originally upon one another was found that had slit from the wall, this portion of the enclosure was about 2.2 to 2.5 m high above the bedrock surface, at this spot at least, thus reaching to about 5 m in the east. In the preserved portion of the wall, no traces of any entrance were found, and no remains of any staircase or ramp were discovered around it. Most probably, therefore, the interior of the enclosure was completely closed from the outside.

Under each of the northeastern, northwestern, and southwestern corners of the enclosure wall, always one set of foundation deposits was unearthed. Most probably, a similar deposit must have existed under the southeastern corner of the enclosure wall as well, but only spare traces of it were found at this spot. Each of the deposits consisted of a few small tablets made of different materials (mostly Egyptian faience or wood), some of them inscribed with the names of the pharaoh Khnemibre Ahmose, several pottery pieces, and

remnants of badly corroded copper artifacts.¹²

All the inside seems to have been originally covered with a pavement made of roughly worked blocks of local limestone, of which only a small portion of the uneven foundations has been preserved in the southwestern corner. In the center of the enclosure, a structure (measuring about 9 by 9 m) built of roughly worked ashlar of local limestone stood to the height of about 2 m above the level of the presumed pavement. Inside this structure, an empty space measuring about 5.5 m square was found, almost identical in its dimensions with the size of the mouth of the central shaft, situated just below it. The inner sides of this superstructure were inclined to the center, thus imitating a corbelled vault.

The structure above the mouth of the central shaft was so badly damaged that the original shape of its outer faces cannot be ascertained with any precision.

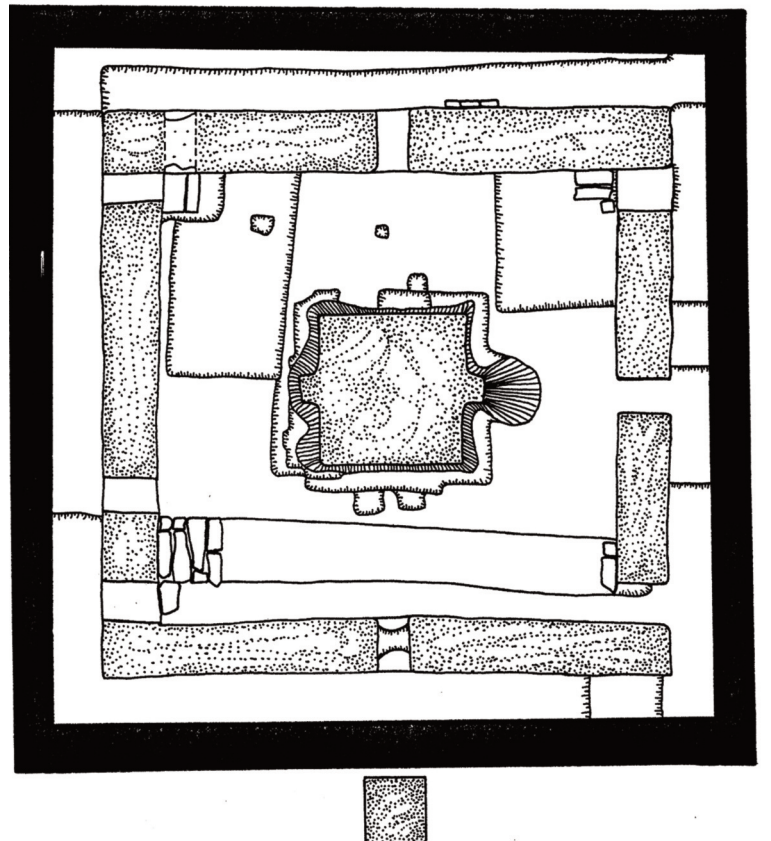


FIGURE 1: Plan of Udjahorresnet's tomb at ground level (after Bareš 1999, 71).

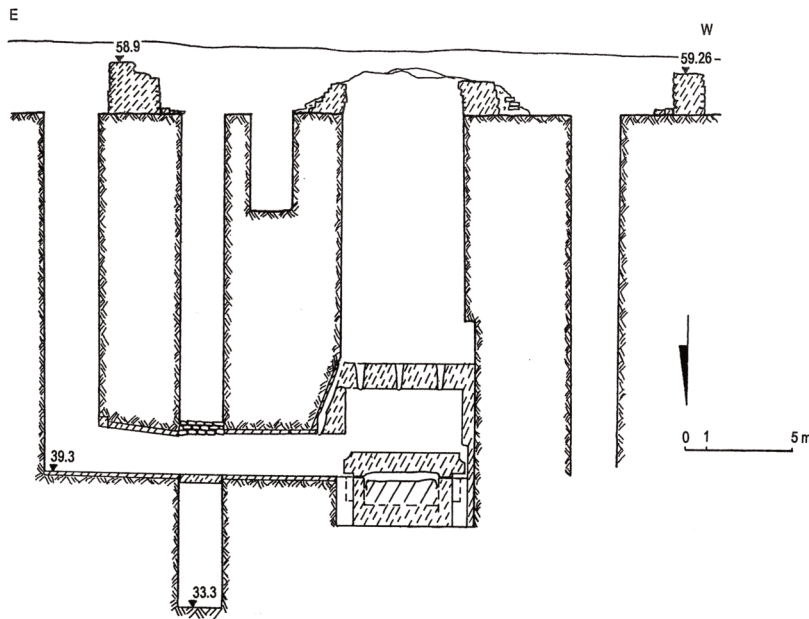


FIGURE 2: The tomb of Udjahorresnet, section east–west (after Bareš 1999, 72).

Judging from the remnants of completely crushed mud-brick masonry, the outer face of the superstructure, perhaps battered in the same way as its interior, might have been cased with a layer of mud brick. No definite traces of any limestone casing came to light in this place.¹³

The reconstruction of the possible outer shape of this superstructure situated in the center of the enclosure remains a problem. In 1981, Miroslav Verner suggested that perhaps a small pyramid might have been raised here.¹⁴ Judging from a small corner fragment of a white cavetto cornice and a small piece of limestone torus that were found close to this spot, the structure might have been decorated with a torus on its corners and ended with a flat roof bearing a cavetto cornice on its edges. In such a case, the structure would represent an imitation of a shrine (O 21, according to the Gardiner sign list), a mastaba, a sarcophagus, or a naos.¹⁵

The substructure of the tomb, dug into a very thick layer of *tafl*, is somewhat more complicated than usual in this type of tombs (FIGS. 2–3).

In the center of the enclosure, the main shaft measuring about 5.5 m square is situated. In the axes of its northern and southern sides are preserved recesses (about 1.4 m wide and going about 1 m deep into the bedrock) that continued to the roof of the burial chamber at the foot of the shaft. On all its four sides, still inside

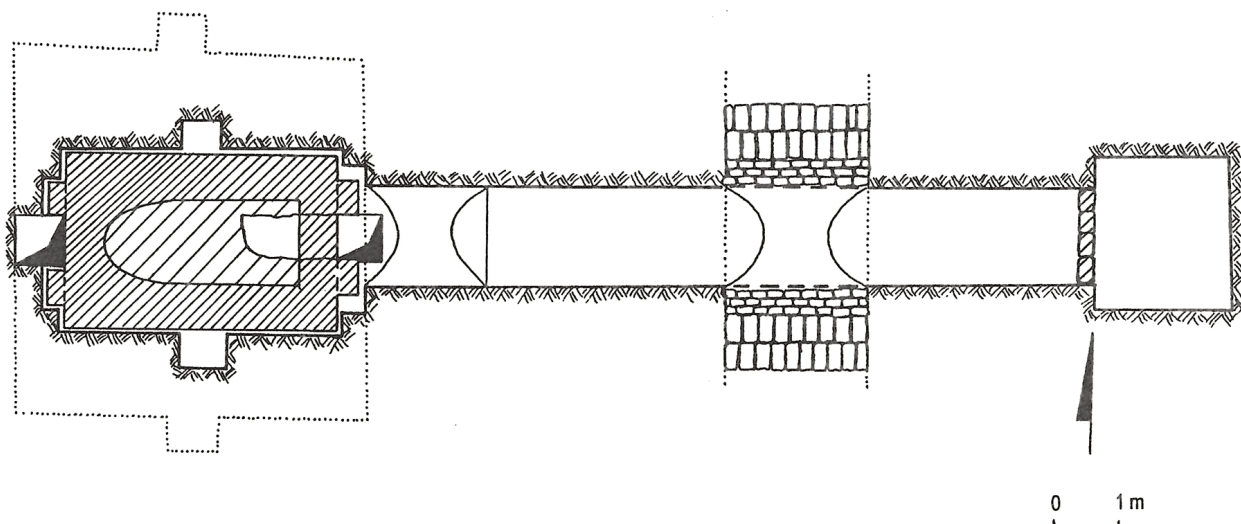


FIGURE 3: The tomb of Udjahorresnet, plan of the substructure (after Bareš 1999, 73).

the enclosure, a peripheral shaft resembling more a narrow and deep trench surrounded the main shaft. In several places, pieces of the original *tafl* bedrock have been left in position, serving perhaps as partitions or struts intended to enhance the stability of the sides of the trench. At varying depth, all wings of the peripheral trench were connected by means of an opening covering its entire width, i.e., about 2.1 m. Because of safety concerns, the depth of this peripheral trench cannot be ascertained with any certainty.¹⁶ In addition to purely technical reasons, namely to protect the underground parts of the tomb against any penetration into the burial,¹⁷ such a trench might have been connected with religious symbolism as well.¹⁸

At the foot of the main shaft, at a depth of about 12 m (measured from the level of the presupposed pavement to the roof of the chamber), a burial chamber was built of relatively well-worked, medium-sized blocks of white Tura limestone. The chamber, orientated east–west, ended in a vaulted ceiling (about 1.2 m thick) consisting of three layers of ashlar. In the ceiling of the chamber, three openings (about 0.3 m wide) were left. Originally, these openings were closed by means of big pottery jars whose bottoms protruded inside the burial chamber and had to be smashed at the end of the burial ceremonies. The outer sides of the burial chamber were adjacent to the sides of the main shaft, which was somewhat widened in its bottom portion.¹⁹

The lowermost part of the burial chamber was almost completely filled with a huge double sarcophagus. In each of the four inner corners of the chamber, one low pillar was added, serving perhaps to guide the lid of the sarcophagus (provided with a vertical groove in each of its corners) during the procedure of lowering it into the final position. In the axes of each of the northern, western, and southern sides of the chamber, deep niches (64–78 cm wide and 41–50 cm deep) opened, reaching down to the lower edge of the chest of the sarcophagus and ending about 1.5 m above the upper edge of it. Rather probably, the niches in both the northern and southern sides were intended to house the canopic jars, although no traces of such items came to light either here or anywhere else in the tomb.²⁰

The lateral (i.e., northern and southern) sides of the burial chamber were apparently left unfinished, with only a small portion of them smoothed for the texts. Additionally, small irregular recesses (measur-

ing about 15 to 20 cm in both height and width and about 20 cm deep) had been cut into the axes of all four sides of the chamber. Most probably, those recesses were intended to house magical bricks made of Nile silt, of which five fragments were discovered in the sand and debris above the roof of the burial chamber.²¹

All four sides of the burial chamber were decorated with inscriptions, left again unfinished, i.e., only pre-drawn in single red lines and not carved in relief. In many places, the pre-drawn inscriptions were partly improved in black over the existing signs. On the western (i.e., in fact, front) wall, spell 213 of the Pyramid Texts, followed by the beginning of spell 214, was written in 15 columns. On both the northern and southern walls of the chamber, one line of the text was written in a prepared, much-better-dressed band. On the northern wall, a shortened version of PT spell 25 is preserved. On the southern wall, PT spell 226 has been written together with an excerpt from spell 242. On the eastern side of the chamber, much more damaged by the activities of ancient tomb robbers, only sparse remnants of an offering list were found, arranged into the usual tabular form (three lines with perhaps eight items each). Because of the damage, most items are now illegible. Below the offering list, a *hetep-di-nesut* formula appears written in one line.²²

The outer sarcophagus consisted of two large blocks of white Tura limestone. The upper side of the lid (5.1 m long, 2.76 m wide, and 1.1 m thick) was rather well dressed; its edges were beveled. According to tradition, the lid was anepigraphic. On both its shorter ends, two roughly shaped protrusions were left, situated exactly above the vertical channels used for lowering the lid after completion of the burial ceremonies. The channels, measuring 31 cm square, opened through small apertures (about 10 by 15 cm) into the niche in the west and into a small shaft adjacent to the side of the sarcophagus from the east.²³

The chest of the outer sarcophagus, 5.1 m long, 2.75 m wide, and about 2.1 m high, carved of white limestone again, was somewhat better dressed only on its upper side, where it adjoined the lid. At about the middle of its sides, two inscriptions (both starting behind the head, i.e., in the west, and ending in the east) were roughly cut—a shortened version of PT spell 367 in the south and a usual protective²⁴ text in the north.

Inside the chest of the outer sarcophagus, a cavity

of roughly anthropoid shape was made for the inner sarcophagus; the gap between the sides of both outer and inner sarcophagi was filled with limestone chips and gypsum mortar.

The anthropoid inner sarcophagus, made of basalt, was completely finished in the best traditions of Saite decorative art. The head was decorated with a striped tripartite wig ending with long lappets and with a plaited Osirian beard. The chest is covered with a *wsh*-collar that ends on each shoulder with a clasp in the shape of falcon's head crowned with a sun disk. Below the collar, the kneeling goddess Nut appears, with extended winged arms, her head again crowned with a sun disk. To the right and left of her, Isis and Nephthys are depicted, respectively, accompanied by short hieroglyphic inscriptions (excerpts from the Book of the Dead chapter 151). Below the deities, the initial part of BD chapter 72 is written in incised signs arranged into 15 columns, accompanied by the depictions of the Four Sons of Horus and other funeral genii. On both sides of the BD 72 text, another protective formula (derived again from BD chapter 151) appears. On the outer sides of the chest of the inner sarcophagus, under its upper edge, two lines of inscription are written in shallow hieroglyphic signs. The text contains, among other things, a variant of PT Spell 369 and a full genealogy of Udjahorresnet.²⁵

The burial chamber was accessed through a narrow, roughly horizontal corridor (with sides and ceiling built of limestone ashlar) that started at the bottom of a small lateral shaft and ended in the eastern side of the chamber. In about its center, the horizontal corridor leads through the eastern wing of the peripheral trench, forming a kind of tunnel with sides and ceiling (originally vaulted, but destroyed following the end of the burial ceremonies) built of mud brick.²⁶ The lateral shaft, measuring about 2.5 by 2.2 m and 17 m deep, opened in front of the eastern face of the enclosure, almost adjoining it. No traces of any structure built above the mouth of the lateral shaft were unearthed at that spot.

The tomb seems to have been repeatedly attacked by the tomb robbers, who almost completely cleaned the entire main shaft to reach the burial chamber and broke through the double sarcophagus.²⁷ To judge from the pottery finds, the tomb robbers penetrated the burial chamber at least twice, most probably in Late Antiquity (4th–5th centuries CE) and in early

Islamic times (9th–10th centuries CE). Because of their activities, only sparse remnants of the original burial equipment came to light in the entire structure,²⁸ among these five complete shabtis in the usual Osirian form, made of faience glazed in light blue-green color and measuring between 12.7 and 13.9 cm. Texts on all shabtis are identical—“Osiris, Chief Physician Udjahorresnet, born of Atemirdis.” In addition to the fragments of the magical bricks mentioned above,²⁹ tiny fragments of miniature faience vessels were unearthed in the filling of the main shaft directly above the roof of the burial chamber, coming, perhaps, from a set of miniature receptacles for cosmetics, ointments, etc. A faience model of an offering table and a small fragment of another such piece were found in sand directly above the lid of the outer sarcophagus.

In the past, the possibility that Udjahorresnet was never buried in his tomb and that this structure might have served as a kind of a cenotaph only has been repeatedly suggested.³⁰ A considerable number of hints speak, however, against such a hypothesis,³¹ among them the presence of the burial equipment and, above all, the existence of embalmers' deposit adjoining Udjahorresnet's tomb (see below). Moreover, both parts of the double sarcophagus had been closed and sealed, and the burial chamber was subsequently filled by pouring sand from the main shaft through apertures that were opened in the ceiling after the burial.³²

Whether or not any mortuary cult installation existed in the tomb of Udjahorresnet or in its vicinity cannot be said with any certainty at present.³³ Among all the Late Period shaft tombs found at Abusir so far, such a cult place came to light only in front of the eastern face of the nearby tomb of Iufaa.³⁴ Whether this cult place served the mortuary cult of Iufaa or, possibly, it might have been used for other dignitaries who had been buried in this part of the cemetery remains open to a debate. A possibility exists that several or even all the dignitaries who have built their funeral structures here, including Iufaa and Udjahorresnet, might have belonged to one and the same family or been otherwise related.³⁵ On the other hand, Udjahorresnet seems to have been venerated even centuries after his death,³⁶ judging from a statue dedicated to his memory by a certain Minirdis and found in Mitrahina in 1956,³⁷ and his commemoration was connected with the Memphite region.

REMAINS OF UDJAHORRESNET'S EMBALMING DEPOSIT

by Květa Smoláriková

In the area adjacent to the southwest corner of the huge limestone enclosure wall of the large shaft tomb of Udjahorresnet, about 4 m to its south, a rather small shaft, with dimensions of about 2.30 by 2.40 m and about 10 m deep, was cleaned and thoroughly examined after it had been partly unearthed by previous research within the wider area all around the monumental funerary complex of Udjahorresnet.³⁸ In its upper layers, the fill of the shaft consisted of clean yellow sand, while lower layers contained numerous fragments of mud bricks, pebbles, and some eroded pieces of broken vessels. Above its floor level, a massive, some 1.5 m thick, layer of pottery sherds mixed with sand was discovered. The assemblage of pottery comprised mainly large, fragmentary Egyptian storage jars (ca.

70–75 pieces), while small bottles, bowls, lids, medium-sized jars, torches, and some intact stands occurred in much smaller quantity, including some tiny fragments of damaged faience cups (FIG. 4). Some of the smaller vessels contained residues of fluid organic materials, as well as sticky cream-colored remnants of fine linen, i.e., traces of the fine embalmers' materials. On a few shards, faint remains of short inscriptions written in black ink in hieratic and demotic scripts, were still preserved and mentioned the previous organic contents of those vessels, such as "oil of Manu."

The embalming vessels, in respect of their significance and function, represent a rich variety of well-known shapes abundantly attested throughout numerous cemeteries.³⁹ In this instance, however, large transport amphorae clearly predominate. They were used by the ancient embalmers as an universal type, large enough to perfectly store all kinds of



FIGURE 4: Pottery from the embalmers' cache of Udjahorresnet (photograph by Květa Smoláriková, Czech Institute of Egyptology).

waste materials including pottery vessels, both intact (when smaller) and broken (when too large).⁴⁰ Even though the large storage jars were found broken, it is very probable that the vessels had been deposited at the bottom of the shaft intact (i.e., not ritually damaged). This idea clearly corresponds to a situation in the intact embalmer's cache of Menekhibnekau buried too at the Abusir cemetery,⁴¹ but mostly with the extremely similar, or even identical, situation described by C. M. Firth (during his work within the area of the pyramid temple of king Userkaf in 1928–1929) in the deep lateral shaft, situated near the south-western corner of the double tomb of the Saite dignitaries Neferibrê-sa-Neith and Wahibrê-Men.⁴² This indicates some care in its disposal, rather than a mere dumping of unwanted embalming equipment. The small lateral shaft, as an integral part of the funerary complex of Udjahorresnet, served with certainty for storing the whole assemblage of pottery vessels, as well as the fine faience cups and other objects, which functioned as containers for a wide range of materials that had been used during the costly mummification process and the final funeral ceremonies.

According to the above-analyzed situation, it seems that the reason for a thorough deposition of such a wide variety and a rather huge quantity of embalming material was very probably more ritual than strictly practical or even economic, especially in this case, when a person from the uppermost level of Egyptian society was involved. All these facts should demonstrate that this assemblage was either too sacred or too ritually unclear for further use, and as such was solely connected with the deceased.⁴³ In that spirit, there can be little doubt that the mummy of the high-ranking dignitary Udjahorresnet was indeed buried in his largely unfinished but functional monumental tomb in the newly founded cemetery at a border of the vast Memphite necropolis.⁴⁴

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- NOTES**
- ¹ Bareš 2015a, 37–38.
 - ² Verner 1982, 163–165; Verner 1994, 195–209; Bareš 1999; Verner 2002, 177–191; Verner 2017, 321–338.
 - ³ Bareš and Smoláriková 2008.
 - ⁴ Bareš and Smoláriková 2011.
 - ⁵ Coppens 2009.
 - ⁶ Smoláriková 2009.
 - ⁷ Verner 1989, 289; Verner 1994, 204–205; Bareš 1999, 82–84; Bareš 2005, 178–179; Verner 2002, 187–189; Verner 2017, 334–335. On Udjahorresnet as a typical representative of the administrative elite of the late Twenty-sixth Dynasty, see also the paper by A. Schütze in this volume.
 - ⁸ Bareš 2013, 19–20.
 - ⁹ Bareš 1999, 46–49; Bareš 2015a, 40–41.
 - ¹⁰ Or Ahmose III, if Senakhtenra Ahmose, a pharaoh of late Dynasty 17, is considered Ahmose I; see Biston-Moulin 2012 (we owe this reference to an anonymous reviewer).
 - ¹¹ Bareš 2002a, 37–38.
 - ¹² Bareš 1996; Bareš 1999, 65–66.
 - ¹³ Bareš 1999, 47–48.
 - ¹⁴ Verner 1982, 164.
 - ¹⁵ Bareš 1999, 49; Bareš 2015a, 40–41.
 - ¹⁶ Verner 1982, 164; Verner 1989, 286.
 - ¹⁷ Verner 1982, 164.
 - ¹⁸ Bareš 1999, 63; Stammers 2009, 36–39, referring also to the tomb of Pakap in Giza.
 - ¹⁹ Bareš 1999, 49–50.
 - ²⁰ Bareš 1999, 50–51.
 - ²¹ Bareš 2015b, 53–54.
 - ²² Bareš 1999, 51–54.
 - ²³ Bareš 1999, 54–56.
 - ²⁴ For the parallels, see Barsanti and Maspero 1900, 261; see also Drioton 1952, 126.
 - ²⁵ Bareš 1999, 56–61.
 - ²⁶ Bareš 1999, 61–63.
 - ²⁷ Verner 1989, 290; Bareš 1999, 64, 85–86.
 - ²⁸ Bareš 1999, 67–69.
 - ²⁹ See NOTE 21.
 - ³⁰ Verner 1989, 289–290; Verner 1991, 167; Verner 1994, 189–191; Verner 2002, 189–191; Verner 2017, 335–338. This assumption was accepted and repeated by Burkard 1994, 45, and Bickel and Tallet 1997, 88.
 - ³¹ Bareš 1999, 79–80; Bareš 2005, 179.
 - ³² Bareš 1999, 50. The system is aptly described by Spencer 1982, 106–108 (with fig. 38).
 - ³³ Bareš 1999, 80–82.
 - ³⁴ Bareš 2002b, 19–23; Bareš and Smoláriková 2008, 73–80.
 - ³⁵ Bareš 2010, 141–142. On the family and social background of Udjahorresnet, see also the paper by N. Markovic in this volume.
 - ³⁶ Verner 1989, 289; Bareš 1999, 41–43, 84, referring to Holm-Rasmussen 1988, 37, and Blenkinsopp 1987; see, however, Bresciani 1985, 2 and 6 (note 18).
 - ³⁷ Anthes 1965, 98–100. See also the paper by M. Wasmuth in this volume.
 - ³⁸ Bareš et al. 2005.
 - ³⁹ Aston and Aston 2010), 207–225.
 - ⁴⁰ French 2003, 224; Smoláriková 2016, 545–555, fig. 5.
 - ⁴¹ Bareš and Smoláriková 2011, 81–163.
 - ⁴² Firth 1929, 64–70; Lauer and Iskander 1955, especially page 174; Ikram and Lopez-Grande 2011, 205–228.
 - ⁴³ Smoláriková 2006.
 - ⁴⁴ Smoláriková 2015.