

Note on Overbuilding and Intrusive Burials at Gīzah

At the north-west corner of the Cheops pyramid, on the eastern edge of the Western Field of the Gīzah Necropolis, stands a complex of five mastabahs. The chapels of all these mastabahs open on a stone-paved court approached by a sloping ramp leading up to the west from the pyramid-plateau. All these chapels have east-west offering rooms with a false-door stela (hollow cornice). The burial-chambers are all approached by a sloping passage from the east. The mastabahs and the burial-chambers belonged to eight men representing four generations: (1) Senedjemib-Yenti, (2) his sons, Senedjemib-Mehi and Khnumenti, (3) the grandsons, Merptaḥ'ankhpepy and Nekhebū, and (4) the great-grandsons, Impy and Ptaḥsabū. Seven of these (excepting Ptaḥsabū) acted as *imy-r kst nbt nt nswt* from the time of Isesy to that of Pepy II. The first mastabah was constructed in the latter part of the reign of Isesy, and Yenti appears to have been buried in the first year of Wenis (Unas) in a white limestone coffin provided by that king.

The examination of the subsoil of the area and the surrounding structures proves that the secondary cemetery of mastabahs of officials and funerary priests had already extended over this area. In constructing the mastabah of Yenti (G. 2370), the eastern side of an older crude-brick mastabah was ruthlessly cut away. Under the filling we found several small mastabahs completely buried out of sight. The eastern part of this mastabah, the communal court, and the mastabah of Nekhebū were found on about a metre of old debris resting on the rock as it was left by Cheops's quarrymen. The rock rises under the court from south to north, and the southern part of the mastabah of Mehi is founded on rock. Under the filling of the northern part we found on the rock crude-brick walls which also belonged to mastabahs of an older date. In the north-western part of the complex stands an older mastabah belonging to a man named Akhetmehū having no connexion with the Senedjemib family. The mastabah of Mehi was built against the eastern face of the open court of Akhetmehū while the mastabah of Khnumenti was built against the southern side of the mastabahs of Akhetmehū and Mehi. Later two additions to the mastabah of Mehi were built on the west and partly covered the court of Akhetmehū. These constructions closed all access to Akhetmehū's chapel. Yet the latter's tomb must be dated to the reign of Isesy himself or not long before his accession.

West and north-west of the mastabah of Akhetmehū stands a field of small ruined mastabahs earlier than that mastabah but still from the second half of Dyn. 5. These contained decorated chapels and *serdābs*, but the whole area had been occupied at the end of Dyn. 6 by intrusive burial-places, which had chambers and shafts built of stone taken from the ruined mastabahs. While recording these built burial-places we recovered a large number of inscribed stones taken from decorated chapels. In one case nearly the whole decoration of a chapel was recovered from the intrusive shafts found in the chapel itself and in the street east of it.

In the case of the Senedjemib-complex, a powerful family, favourites of kings, ruthlessly overbuilt tombs of persons whose descendants were still alive. In the case of the intrusive built burial-places, the tombs of men of little importance were destroyed little more than a century after their death by the poverty-stricken remnant of the Gīzah community.

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