



Egypt's Greatest Treasure

Studies in Egyptology, Museology and Archaeology
in Honour of Wafaa T. El-Saddik

Herausgegeben von Konstantin C. Lakomy,
Sabah Abdel Razik Saddik und Rafed El-Sayed



Reichert

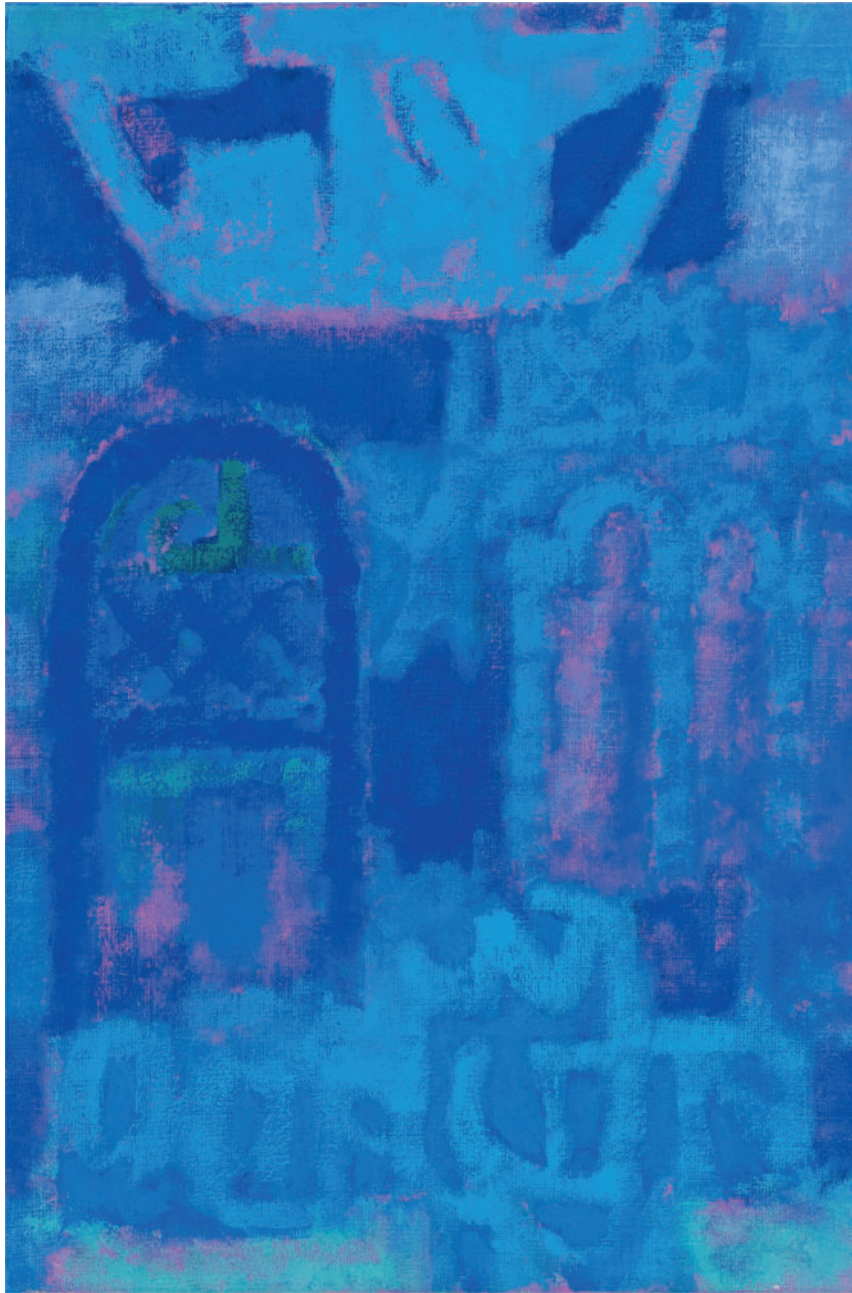


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in Honour of WAFAA T. EL-SADDIK

Herausgegeben von KONSTANTIN C. LAKOMY,
SABAH ABDEL RAZIK SADDIK und RAFED EL-SAYED

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Baboon, falcon and child – A unique painting at Tūna al-Ġabal

KATJA LEMBKE

When my team and I first started to study the Graeco-Roman necropolis near the modern village of Tūna al-Ġabal in Middle Egypt in 2004, D. WILDUNG, the former director of the ÄGYPTISCHES MUSEUM UND PAPYRUSSAMMLUNG Berlin, told me about the newly appointed director at the EGYPTIAN MUSEUM in Cairo named Dr WAFĀA EL-SADDIK and added: “*You will like her.*” And he was right. Soon, we became friends and are still in regular contact. During her directorship at the EGYPTIAN MUSEUM at the Taḥrīr Square, we enjoyed days of good and fruitful cooperations that I still remember very well.

It was also WAFĀA EL-SADDIK who encouraged me to send an application to the Egyptian “Permanent Committee” to work on the archaeological site of Tūna al-Ġabal. After the project was granted, I was lucky to receive funding by the GERMAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION (DFG) that supported the

excavations in the years 2021/2022, the results of which are presented in this contribution for WAFĀA EL-SADDIK.

“CELEBRATING WITH THE DEAD” is the name of our project focusing on the burial customs at the necropolis at Tūna al-Ġabal. It is a mammoth undertaking as the geophysical investigations, carried out in co-operation with the INSTITUTE OF GEOSCIENCES at the UNIVERSITY OF KIEL, Germany, have revealed that less than a tenth of the cemetery has been excavated so far (**Fig. 1**).

The first tombs were built at the end of the 4th century BCE, and the last burials were interred during the 3rd century CE. In Late Antiquity, the necropolis began to be used as a quarry, and in the 19th century, tomb robbers were up to mischief at the site.¹ The first official excavations took place in 1913, when German scientists from the neighbouring ar-

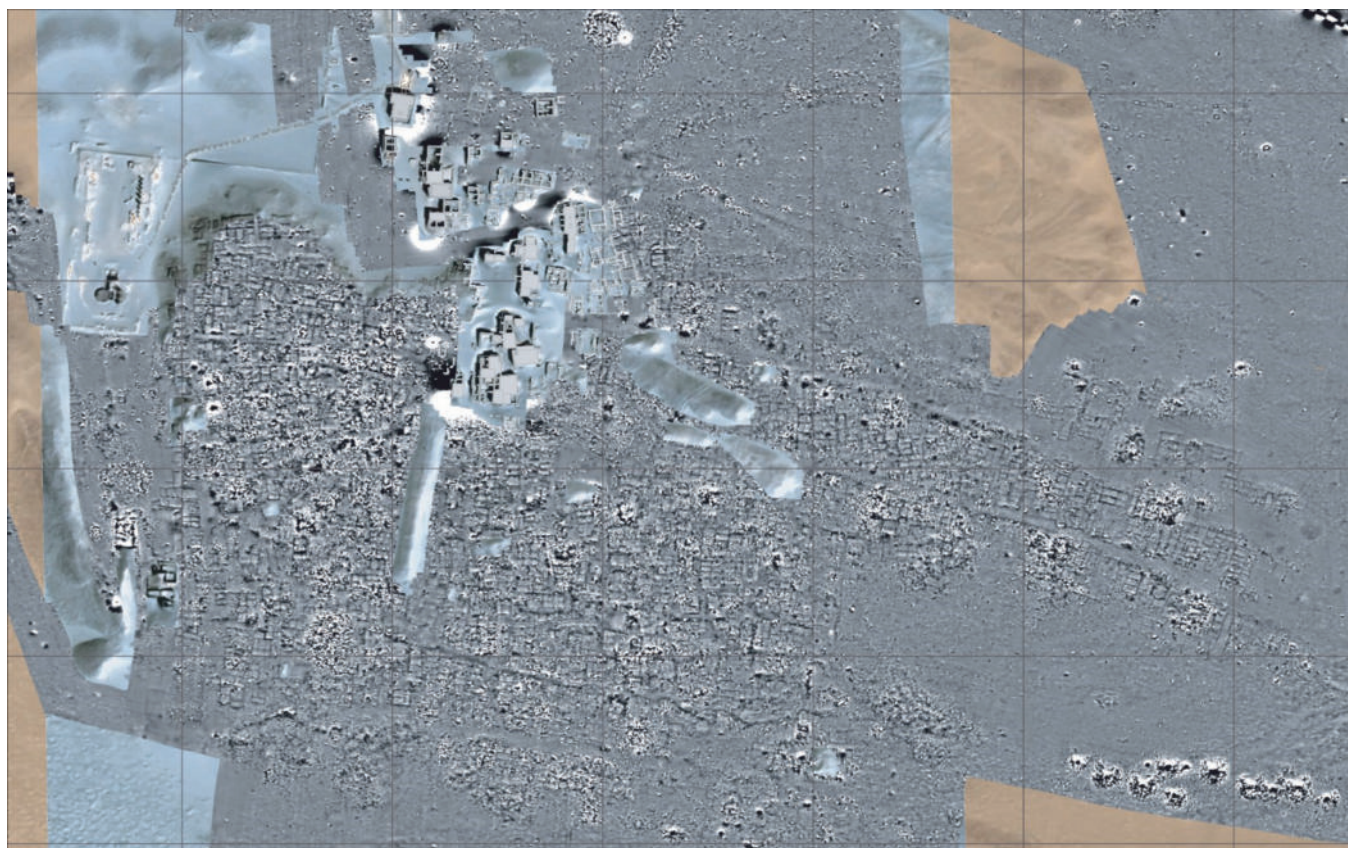


Fig. 1 Map of the geomagnetic survey showing the extension of the necropolis. (© UNIVERSITY OF KIEL, INSTITUTE OF GEOSCIENCES)

1 See K. LEMBKE/S. PRELL (eds.), *Die Petosiris-Nekropole von Tuna el-Gebel 1, Tuna el-Gebel 6*, Hildesheim 2015 (hereafter K. LEMBKE/S. PRELL, *Die Petosiris-Nekropole 1*) and K. LEMBKE/J. H. SCHLEHOFER (eds.), *Die Petosiris-Nekropole von Tuna el-Gebel 2, Identität und Alterität. Ägypten im Zeitalter der Fremdherrschaften 1*, Baden-Baden 2023 (hereafter K. LEMBKE/J. H. SCHLEHOFER, *Die Petosiris-Nekropole 2*).



Fig. 2 The temple-like tomb of Petosiris (end of 4th century BCE). (© and Photo K. LEMBKE)

chaeological site of Tall al-‘Amārna moved to the edge of the Western Desert. Instead of tombs from the New Kingdom, they found Roman tombs that were several storeys high and built of mud bricks; as a consequence, the team abandoned the excavation after only ten days.² However, only a few years later, in 1919, the famous temple-like tomb of Petosiris was discovered (Fig. 2).³ Dating to the last years of the 4th century BCE, shortly after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great,⁴ its rich relief decoration shows strong influences

of Greek style and iconography. But it was not before the 1930s, that SAMI GABRA, professor at the EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO, began extensive excavations in the area of the so-called *Petosiris Necropolis*.⁵ With hundreds of workers and a lorry system to remove the sand, he excavated the area south and east of the tomb of Petosiris and discovered several tombs made of stones or mud bricks (Fig. 3). The documentation of this extensive work, however, leaves much to be desired.

Today, we work on a smaller scale and more meticulously. Instead of searching for decorated buildings and complete objects, the focus is on contexts and finds, some of which are only millimetres in size. The task is challenging: There are hardly any reliably dated tombs from Egypt’s last golden age under the rule of the Ptolemies and Romans. We also have little information about grave goods, rituals performed during burial and later visits at the tombs because such findings have mostly gone unnoticed. This makes it all the more important to close these gaps.

2 Cf. J. HELMBOLD-DOYÉ, *Die Grabung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft (DOG) unter der Leitung von Walter Honroth (12.01.–22.01.1913)*, in: K. LEMBKE/S. PRELL, *Die Petosiris-Nekropole 1*, pp. 18–93.

3 G. LEFEBVRE, *Le tombeau des Petosiris 1*, Cairo 1924; N. CHERPION/J.-P. CORTEGGIANI/J.-F. GOUT, *Le tombeau de Pétosiris à Touna el-Gebel. Relevé photographique, BG 27*, Cairo/IFAO 2007; K. LEMBKE, *Frühptolemäische Grabbauten in Tuna el-Gebel. Die Nachnutzung des Grabes des Petosiris*, in: K. LEMBKE/S. PRELL, *Die Petosiris-Nekropole 1*, pp. 211–215 (reuse); M. S. VENIT, *Visualizing the Afterlife in the Tombs of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Cambridge 2016, pp. 8–49 (hereafter M. S. VENIT, *Visualizing the Afterlife*).

4 Cf. S. E. COLE, *Cultural manoeuvring in the elite tombs of Ptolemaic Egypt*, in: R. M. GONDEK/C. L. SULOSKY WEAVER (eds.), *The Ancient Art of Transformation. Case Studies from Mediterranean Contexts*, Oxford 2019, pp. 78–85; K. LEMBKE, *Metropolis vs. Nekropolis. Stadt und Nekropole in ptolemäisch-römischer Zeit am Beispiel von Hermopolis*, in: H. KÖPP-JUNK (ed.), *Stadtleben*

im Alten Ägypten. Alltag und Gemeinschaft in pharaonischer Zeit, Darmstadt 2022, pp. 76–79.

5 He published his results in two volumes: S. GABRA, *Rapport sur les fouilles d’Hermopolis oust (Touna el-Gebel)*, Cairo 1941 (hereafter S. GABRA, *Hermopolis oust (Touna el-Gebel)*); S. GABRA/E. DRIOTON (eds.), *Peintures à fresques et scènes peintes à Hermopolis oust (Touna el-Gebel)*, Cairo 1954.

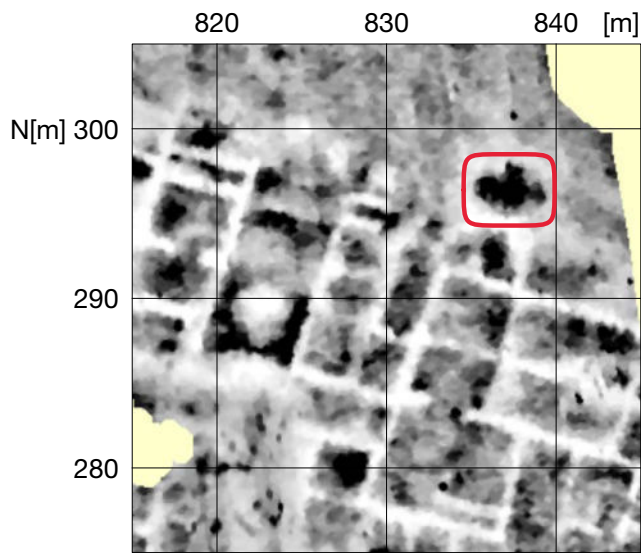


Fig. 4 Geophysical map of the area before the excavation in 2021 and 2022 with the indication of anomalies. (© UNIVERSITY OF KIEL, INSTITUTE OF GEOSCIENCES, H. STÜMPER)

Every campaign at Tūna al-Ġabal presents us with the difficult task of deciding where to dig next. Thanks to the close collaboration with H. STÜMPER (INSTITUTE OF GEOSCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KIEL), we were able to identify anomalies in the east of the necropolis in 2021 that led to an extensive excavation (Fig. 4). Indeed, we were not disappointed: during the subsequent season, we uncovered two lead coffins from the Roman period of a type that was previously unknown in the Nile Valley.⁶ Additionally, in the following year, a house tomb built of mud bricks with painted decorations was found in the same area.

The cleaning of the forecourt was already promising (Fig. 5). A stone altar in front of the entrance, a burial pillar – unfortunately without an inscription – and a cooking area indicate that meals were prepared in front of the entrance and that the bereaved made sacrifices to the deceased. The festivities themselves took place inside the tomb. The side walls of the first room are decorated with vines and leaves. Numerous fragments of wine amphorae confirm a direct connection between these depictions and the events that took place on site. A fireplace on the floor and cooking utensils with traces of burning are also indications that people were regularly gathered in this room. Visitors sat on bast-fibre mats and unburnt mud bricks served as tables. The pottery – among them cooking pots, plates, bowls and dishes used for cooking, eating, drinking and celebrating – was still in place on the floor (Fig. 6). Obviously, it had been used again the next time the family visited.

Excitingly, the excavation of the south wall of the same room brought a painted procession to light (Figs. 7, 8). On both sides, three people move towards the central passageway, all shown in Egyptian style. Unfortunately, the hieroglyphic inscriptions are very poorly preserved; only the right-hand figure on the western side can be clearly identified as the falcon-headed god Osiris. In front of him, a human (god) with green skin colour and an elongated snout strides to the left; he can probably be identified as the crocodile god Sobek.

On either side of the passageway stands a woman with her hands raised in greeting and wearing a strikingly patterned cloak. The fact that the western one (Fig. 8) does not wear a headdress excludes her interpretation as a goddess. The exposed position next to the passageway into the second room also suggests that both women may be identified as the tomb owner.⁷

On the opposite (eastern) side, the upper parts of the three figures have not been preserved (Fig. 7). The black skin colour of the figure on the left, however, supports the interpretation as the god Anubis. We can only speculate about the central figure on the eastern side; perhaps it is the local form of the god Thoth. As these depictions differ both stylistically and in size from the procession on the western side, they must have been executed by a different painter.

In the first phase, the adjoining room probably served as an area for burials until the tomb was extended to the south with the addition of a stone chamber. As its floor level was higher, an ascending stone ramp was built in the second room. We cannot exclude, however, that the construction of the ramp and the stone chamber both took place in the second part of the first phase. The oldest finds in this area date to the second quarter of the 1st century CE; the latest from the first half of the 3rd century CE. They include fragments of mummy masks and plaster statuettes, plaster decoration of a mummy bed as well as oil lamps, glass and pottery. In contrast to the finds from the first room, which provide evidence of visits to the tomb, these are grave goods or objects that were used during the burial ritual.

On the western side of the second room, we discovered five burials *in-situ*. According to the anthropological investigations by P. WITTEMEIER and S. NÖCKER (both UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN), a woman, three men and a child were buried here. There were no burials on the east side of this room, but

6 A publication by J. H. SCHLEHOFER and myself is in preparation.

7 E. g. GB 10 (painting with abduction of Persephone); see K. LEMBKE, *Die dekorierten Grabbauten der Häusergruppe 1. Grabbau 10 (M3/SS)*, in: K. LEMBKE/J. H. SCHLEHOFER, *Die Petosiris-Nekropole 2*, pp. 215–217; GB 29 (*Ta-shery.t-N.N.*); see M. S. VENIT, *Visualizing the Afterlife*, pp. 113–133; GB 45 (Isidora), see K. LEMBKE, *Ein weiblicher Antinoos? Heroisierung in Tuna el-Gebe*, in: B. MAGEN (ed.), «... Denn das eigentliche Studium der Menschheit ist der Mensch.» Festschrift für Alfred Grimm, Wiesbaden 2018, pp. 178–198.



Fig. 5 Forecourt of the tomb GB 79 after the excavation in 2021. (© and Photo K. LEMBKE)



Fig. 6 GB 79, first room, eastern part: the pottery on the floor bears witness to meals with food and wine. (© and Photo K. LEMBKE)



Fig. 7 GB 79, first room, south wall east: Painted procession with three figures turned right. (Photogrammetry V. BARBA COLMENERO; drawing by K. WESTPHALEN)



Fig. 8 GB 79, first room, south wall west: Painted procession with three figures turned left. (Photogrammetry V. BARBA COLMENERO; drawing by K. WESTPHALEN)

when the ramp was built, the level was raised using gravel and objects that were no longer in use. Thereafter, this area apparently served as a passageway to another room. Among the finds from the backfill are two particularly high-quality plaster plaques depicting the goddess Isis and the god Serapis, which were reconstructed from fragments only millimetres in size (Fig. 9).

The passageway into the adjoining stone chamber is decorated with classical Egyptian scenes. On the left-hand side is the Nile god Hapi, accompanied by a small bull (Fig. 10). Similar depictions are known from the Hathor Temple in Dandara where a procession of Nile gods with offerings and, in some cases, accompanied by a small bull, were carved into the vestibule of the “offerings D”⁸ or the Roman Temple of Khnūm at Isnā.⁹ The gods wear a headdress made of papyrus and lotus, as can be reconstructed in the painting. Hapi is also accompanied by a bull on the façade of Chapel F at the



Fig. 9 Gypsum plaquette of the god Serapis found in the second room of GB 79. (© and Photo K. LEMBKE)

⁸ S. CAUVILLE/A. LECLER, *Dendara. Le temple d'Isis 2, Planches*, Cairo/IFAO 2007, p. 223, pp. 226–228 pls. 201–202 (Augustus).

⁹ S. SAUNERON, *Le temple d'Esna 7*, Textes édités par J. HALLOF, Cairo/IFAO 2009, pp. 106–112, no. 587 (Trajan); pp. 229–234, no. 634 (Hadrian).



Fig. 10 GB 79, second room, passageway to the third room, east wall: The Nile god Hapi accompanied by a bull. (Photogrammetry V. BARBA COLMENERO; drawing by K. WESTPHALEN)



Fig. 11 GB 79, second room, passageway to the third room, west wall: The new-born sun as a child(?) on a lotus blossom and the female tomb owner turned left (upper register); child-god/Thoth with wings, sitting on a snake turned left. (Photogrammetry V. BARBA COLMENERO; drawing by K. WESTPHALEN)

Middle Egyptian site of Tihna al-Ġabal (Akoris).¹⁰ As other chapels in the vicinity date to the Roman period and the main temple of Akoris was remodelled in the Neronian period, there is much to suggest that the chapel dates to the 1st century CE. Already in the early Ptolemaic period, Nile gods with offerings appear at Tūna al-Ġabal, on the ramp leading to the temple tomb of Padjkam.¹¹ They represent the regenerating Nile flood, the fertility of agriculture and – accompanied by a bull – also livestock farming in Ancient Egypt.

The opposite, right-hand side of the doorway is decorated with two registers (**Fig. 11**). The upper one is only preserved in its lower part, showing the feet of a woman turned to the left in front of a lotus flower. Parts of what seems to be

a crouching figure is depicted on the blossom. It is probably an embodiment of the morning sun god.¹² According to Egyptian mythology, the lotus emerges from the primordial ocean every morning, opens its blossoms and releases the newborn sun child (e. g. BD 81A). The Egyptians believed that the deceased accompany the sun on its daily journey; the image of a child on a lotus blossom is therefore frequently depicted in funerary contexts and as terracotta figurines from the Ro-

10 H. KAWANISHI/S. TSUJIMURA, *Rock-cut chapels and shafts. Chapel F*, in: K. SHOBO (ed.), *Akoris. Report of the Excavations at Akoris in Middle Egypt 1981–1982*, Kyoto 1995, pp. 41–43; Y. SUTO 2017, *Striding draped male figure of Chapel F*, in: H. KAWANISHI/S. TSUJIMURA/T. HANASAKA (eds.), *Akoris. Preliminary Report 2016*, Nagoya 2017, pp. 21–24.

11 S. GABRA, *Hermoupolis oust (Touna el-Gebel)*, pp. 19–20.

12 Cf. S. MORENZ/J. SCHUBERT, *Der Gott auf der Blume. Eine ägyptische Kosmogonie und ihre weltweite Bildwirkung*, *ArtAs* 12, Ascona 1954, pp. 13–82; H. SCHLÖGL, *Der Sonnengott auf der Blüte. Eine ägyptische Kosmogonie des Neuen Reiches*, *AegHelv* 5, Basel, Genf 1977; D. BUDDE, *Harpape-pa-chered. Ein ägyptisches Götterkind im Theben der Spätzeit und griechisch-römischen Epoche*, in: D. BUDDE/S. SANDRI/U. VERHOEVEN (eds.), *Kindgötter im Ägypten der griechisch-römischen Zeit. Zeugnisse aus Stadt und Tempel als Spiegel des interkulturellen Kontakts*, *OLA* 128, Leuven u. a. 2003, pp. 47–49 (hereafter D. BUDDE, *Harpape-pa-chered*); S. SANDRI, *Har-pa-chered (Harpokrates)*. *Die Genese eines ägyptischen Götterkindes*, *OLA* 151, Leuven u. a. 2007, p. 120 (hereafter S. SANDRI, *Har-pa-chered (Harpokrates)*).

man period.¹³ Since the 21st dynasty, the sun god appeared in the form of the god Horus, *p3 hrd*, “Horus-the-Child” or Harpocrates, and in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, he is also represented by other child-gods.¹⁴ The woman standing on the right is presumably the owner of the tomb.¹⁵

In addition to the annual Nile flood on the eastern side of the passageway, the daily course of the sun is focused in the upper register on the western side: as the child-god repeats the creation process every day, he is also responsible for the growth of plants and, thus, for the prosperity of men and animals.¹⁶

In the lower register, a naked man turned to the left sits on a snake. In his left hand, he holds a crook and flail (flagellum), which are symbols of power for pharaohs and deities in Ancient Egypt.¹⁷ His head is that of a baboon and is turned to the back and refers to the god Thoth, the main god of Hermopolis. Fragments of a falcon’s head turned to the front, however, clearly indicate that the figure was originally double-headed. Obviously, it is a polymorphic deity according to the definition of J. F. QUACK, a type that is not attested before the first millennium BCE.¹⁸ On his head he wears a red disc with the *wḏ3.t*-eye, a traditional symbol of the king-god Horus. It is also associated with the local god Thoth, who healed the eye of Horus after the battle against his adversary brother, the evil god Seth. The disc is a symbol of the sun, while the crescent that carries the disc refers to the moon. The dual aspect of the deity is also represented by the two heads:

the falcon is a form of the god Horus who is associated to the sun, whereas the baboon is a form of Thoth who is associated to the moon. Thus, the headdress and the heads of the figure indicate a cosmic interpretation of the deity.

Nude male figures are highly unusual in ancient Egyptian art. This imagery refers to a child-god, comparable to the birth of the sun in the upper register. The finger of his right hand raised to the lip of the falcon head is another typical gesture of children, also attested as a hieroglyphic sign (e. g. GARDINER A 17, A 18).

Child-gods became very popular from the Late Period onwards,¹⁹ especially the worship of “Horus-the-Child”, who was known far beyond the borders of Egypt under his Greek name Harpocrates (see above).²⁰ There were also other child-gods in various Egyptian sanctuaries; however, there is no evidence of a special form at Hermopolis. As D. BUDDÉ has recently shown, there were close connections between the god *Hr-p3-R(.w)-p3-hrd* (Har-pa-re-pa-khered) and the god Thoth:²¹ Both have the same divine mother, *R.t-t3.wj* (Rat-ta-ui), both are regarded as sons of the sun god Ra, and both wear the *hmhm*-crown. The deities also share some functions, such as the art of writing and arithmetic, as well as their creation. In the Ptah temple at Karnak-Temples, the child-god is even referred to as the “great Thoth”. D. BUDDÉ concludes “dass Harpare-pa-chered Funktionen des Thot und umgekehrt Thot aber auch die Rolle des jungen Sonnengottes einnehmen kann.”²² It is therefore reasonable that the double-headed depiction of a naked child simultaneously refers to the young god Thoth and the young sun god. The painting at Tūna al-Ġabal is the only known depiction so far that shows the child-god with an animal head and also the only one that iconographically expresses the close connection between the gods Harpocrates and Thoth.

Unique is also the combination of the child-god (Thoth) with wings, sitting on a snake. A group of reliefs and coins from Roman Egypt depicts the god Tutu standing on a snake, which is most probably intended to represent the victory of good over evil, especially as Nemesis also appears above the sphinx.²³ The painting at Tūna al-Ġabal also appears to be

13 A terracotta from the 1st century CE found in the Alexandrian necropolis of Ibrāhīmīya depicts a child god in front of a solar disc (Alexandria Inv. GRM 20286), cf. D. BUDDÉ, „Die den Himmel durchsticht und sich mit den Sternen vereint.“ *Zur Bedeutung und Funktion der Doppelfederkrone in der Götterikonographie*, in: SAK 30 (2002), pp. 92–93, pl. 2,1 (hereafter D. BUDDÉ, *Doppelfederkrone in der Götterikonographie*). Cf. also the Roman terracotta figurines without provenance in Karlsruhe (BADISCHES LANDESMUSEUM Inv. H811); see D. BUDDÉ, *Doppelfederkrone in der Götterikonographie*, pl. 2,2 und Heidelberg (SEMINAR FÜR ÄGYPTOLOGIE DER UNIVERSITÄT inv. no. 962); see D. BUDDÉ 2005, pp. 334–341, p. 646 cat. no. 232 and the standing child god (Thoth?), unclothed except for a cloak, on a stela from Hermopolis; see D. BUDDÉ, *Ägyptische Kindgötter und das Orakelwesen in griechisch-römischer Zeit* (Kat. 232–238), in: H. BECK/P. C. BOL/M. BÜCKLING (eds.), *Ägypten. Griechenland. Rom. Abwehr und Berührung*, Katalog Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, 26.11.2005–26.02.2006, Tübingen 2005, pp. 647–648, cat. no. 234.

14 D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, pp. 16–17.

15 Alternatively it may be the goddess Rat-ta.ui, the mother of the solar child; cf. D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, pp. 31–38.

16 D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, pp. 56–66.

17 They symbolise the kingdom as well as rebirth and regeneration, cf. S. SANDRI, *Har-pa-chered* (Harpokrates), pp. 118–119. F. HOFFMANN and J. QUACK have provided me with some suggestions for the following interpretation, for which I would like to thank them warmly.

18 J. F. QUACK, *The so-called Pantheos. On polymorphic deities in Late Egyptian Religion*, in: *Aegyptus et Pannonia* 3 (2006), pp. 175–190.

19 See D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*.

20 D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, pp. 15–110; S. SANDRI, *Har-pa-chered* (Harpokrates).

21 D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, pp. 82–86.

22 D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, p. 85.

23 B. LICHOCKA, *Némésis en Egypte romaine*, AT 5, Mainz 2004, pp. 39–42; R. EL-SAYED, *Statuette of Nemesis as a Griffin*, in: R. EL-SAYED et al. (eds.), *Akhmīm. Egypt's forgotten city. Publication accompanying the special exhibition of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin in the James-Simon Galerie*, Berlin, Petersburg 2021, p. 212 with further references. Cf. also a stela in the ALLARD PIERSON MUSEUM, Amsterdam where a naked, bound enemy is depicted in the lower panel, framed by two crouching children with a lotus flower and a finger on their mouth; see D. BUDDÉ, *Harpere-pa-chered*, p. 110, fig. 16.



Fig. 12 GB 79, lower part of the façade of the third room built by stones with relief. (© and Photo K. LEMBKE)

a symbol of victory, as the child-god's feet rest on the head of the snake. It may be the evil god Apophis, the enemy of the sun god and the universe, whom the child sun has defeated. The serpent threatened the solar cycle and thus the order (Ma'at) and the continued existence of the world. It was also a danger to the deceased who accompanied the sun god on his daily journey. In older texts and depictions, Apophis was pierced by Seth with a spear. In the Late Period, however, Seth himself, as the murderer of his brother Osiris, the later father of Horus, became the personification of evil and has since been fought as vehemently as Apophis.²⁴ In the Hibis temple in Dakhla Oasis, the victor over the serpent already appears as a polymorphic god.²⁵ Furthermore, the god Thoth was closely connected to the sun god Ra: he was regarded as his heart and tongue and was a member of the divine crew that protected his barque from enemies, especially Apophis, during the nightly journey through the underworld.

Starting from the so-called Metternich stela (NY inv. 20.2.23) L. MIATELLO recently studied the winged polymor-

phic god.²⁶ In his conclusion he states that this deity “represents the cosmic Horus, associated to Atum and the creation of the sun and the moon, and a form of Amun-Ra.”²⁷ His interpretation matches with the results presented by G. FIRST²⁸ in 2017: “The distinction of the solar deities, their features such as the earthy aspect of Atum and the more heavenly of Ra – Horakhty are visible also in the distinctive nature of the elements constituting polymorphic iconography. The god is a complex being here, travelling and changing with time-phases. These changing states seem to be represented in the polymorphic depiction.”²⁹ Both scholars agree that the deity incorporates the creative cosmic forces of the sun god and is associated with different phases including the moon.

24 Cf. D. FABRE, *Le dieu Seth. De la fin du Nouvel Empire à l'époque gréco-romaine. Entre mythe et histoire*, in: *Égypte, Afrique & Orient* 22 (2001), pp. 19–40.

25 J. OSING, *Seth in Dachla und Charga*, in: *MDAIK* 41, Mainz 1985, pp. 229–233.

26 L. MIATELLO, *The Winged Polymorphic God, Associated to the Two Udjat-Eyes and the Solar Creation*, in *GM Beihefte* 20, 2023 (hereafter L. MIATELLO, *The Winged Polymorphic God*). Many thanks to H. BEHLMER who sent me a copy of this publication.

27 L. MIATELLO, *The Winged Polymorphic God*, p. 61.

28 G. FIRST, *Multiheaded Protector of the Living or the Dead?*, in: K. A. KÓTHAY (ed.), *Burial and Mortuary Practices in Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 17–19 July 2014*, Budapest 2017, pp. 345–358 (hereafter G. FIRST, *Multi-headed Protector*).

29 G. FIRST, *Multiheaded Protector*, p. 355.

The passageway into the rear room, which was made of stone, marks the entrance to the former main burial chamber. The themes of the paintings are the continued supply of food for the dead and eternal daily re-creation as a companion of the sun. On the eastern side, where the Nile Valley is located, the god Hapi and the divine bull represent the fertility of the land *km.t* and the offerings of food to preserve the body of the deceased; this depiction refers to linear *d.t*-eternity. On the opposite (western) side, the rebirth of the sun as a child and Harpocrates-Thot guarantee the perpetual existence of the dead in the entourage of the sun; these scenes refer to cyclical *nḥh*-eternity.³⁰

The façade of the adjoining stone room was also decorated, but only one layer with relief remained. In addition to some hieroglyphic signs on the doorpost, there are two feet of a human (god) with green skin and a long tail, facing the doorway (Fig. 12). The gods Horus and Thoth are often depicted in the same position on both sides of a door, pouring out water for purification. However, a reconstruction remains speculative because of the poor condition of the stone wall.

Why is this complex so unique? Overall, the paintings reveal that the tomb owners maintained deep roots with the ancient Egyptian religion and – unlike other Roman tombs in Egypt – did not resort to familiar and frequently reproduced iconography. It is also the first Roman tomb in Egypt with decorations that has been documented together with its entire and almost undisturbed archaeological context. This provides information for the dating of the building and its different phases of use for us. The decorations in the first room date to around the middle of the 1st century CE, contemporaneously with the construction of the tomb and the first burials in the second room; the stone extension with the paintings of the gods Hapi and Harpocrates-Thoth at the passageway was either added during the building process or slightly later. However, the depictions in both the first and second room refer to a female tomb owner as frequently attested at Tūna al-Ġabal.

In the third phase, the tomb was changed radically. A coin from the burial of a child in the first room proves that this area, where family used to celebrate, was converted into a burial chamber after 127 CE. Another male burial was placed directly by the main door, so that the tomb could no longer be entered from this side. Apparently, the entrance was moved to the south side of the tomb during this time period. The Egyptian paintings were also partially covered up, which can be interpreted as a farewell to ancient Egyptian traditions.

Overall, this tomb offers the opportunity to trace the changes in Egyptian funerary traditions from the 1st to the 3rd century CE. Rituals, which are currently being analysed

within this project, can also be reconstructed based on this discovery. The collaboration between archaeologists, geophysicists, architects and anthropologists will provide a new and comprehensive picture of a site at the crossroads of the Orient and the Occident.

30 For the different concepts of “time” in Ancient Egypt cf. J. Assmann, *Stein und Zeit. Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten*, München 1991, pp. 39–46.