

Chapter I

Re-awakening Osiris at Umm el-Qaab (Abydos)

New Evidence for Votive Offerings and other Religious Practices

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Introduction

Since 2006, a project of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo directed by Ute Effland has been dedicated to the later use of the Early Dynastic royal necropolis of Umm el-Qaab, focusing on the cultic activities at the site connected with the god Osiris.² It has long been known that Abydos was one of the most important cult centres of the god, with the presumed burial of Osiris in the royal tomb of king Djer of the First Dynasty (c. 2900-2730 BCE) at Umm el-Qaab.³ The previous studies of the Osiris cult of Abydos, however, relied primarily on textual sources and mainly on secondary text references (like, e.g., Middle Kingdom stelae).⁴ For the first time, primary testimonies are now being evaluated in detail and in their entirety for the reconstruction of the genesis and diachronic development of the cult at the site.⁵

Material evidence for the sacredness of the landscape of Abydos can be found in numerous pottery vessels deposited at Umm el-Qaab and other places connected with rituals and festive processions for Osiris (fig. 1.1).⁶ Responsible for the modern name of the site Umm el-Qaab ('Mother of Pots'), are the numerous small dishes and bowls, which are summarised under the term *qaab* and represent material evidence of the Osiris cult.⁷ Millions of broken *qaabs* cover the surface around the early graves

1 My investigation of the ceramic material from Umm el-Qaab was undertaken under the auspices of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* (DAI) Research Cluster 4 in the context of the project 'The Cult of Osiris in Abydos' initiated in 2006. First of all, I wish to thank Ute Effland as the project director. I am especially grateful to Andreas Effland for constant support and many useful references for this paper. Further thanks are due to all involved in studying the pottery deposits at Umm el-Qaab, especially to the late Günter Dreyer, Ulrich Hartung, Leon Ziemer, Ines Klenner, Nicole Mosiniak, Julia D. Preisigke and the local specialists as well as workmen from Quft.

2 Effland/Effland 2017; 2013; Effland/Budka/Effland 2010.

3 Budka 2018, 70-73; Effland 2013 with references; Effland 2006.

4 See Otto 1966; Schäfer 1904.

5 Budka 2014a; Effland 2006.

6 Effland/Effland 2017; Budka 2014.

7 Budka 2014a, 57 with further references; Budka 2010a, 35; Müller 2006a; 2006b.

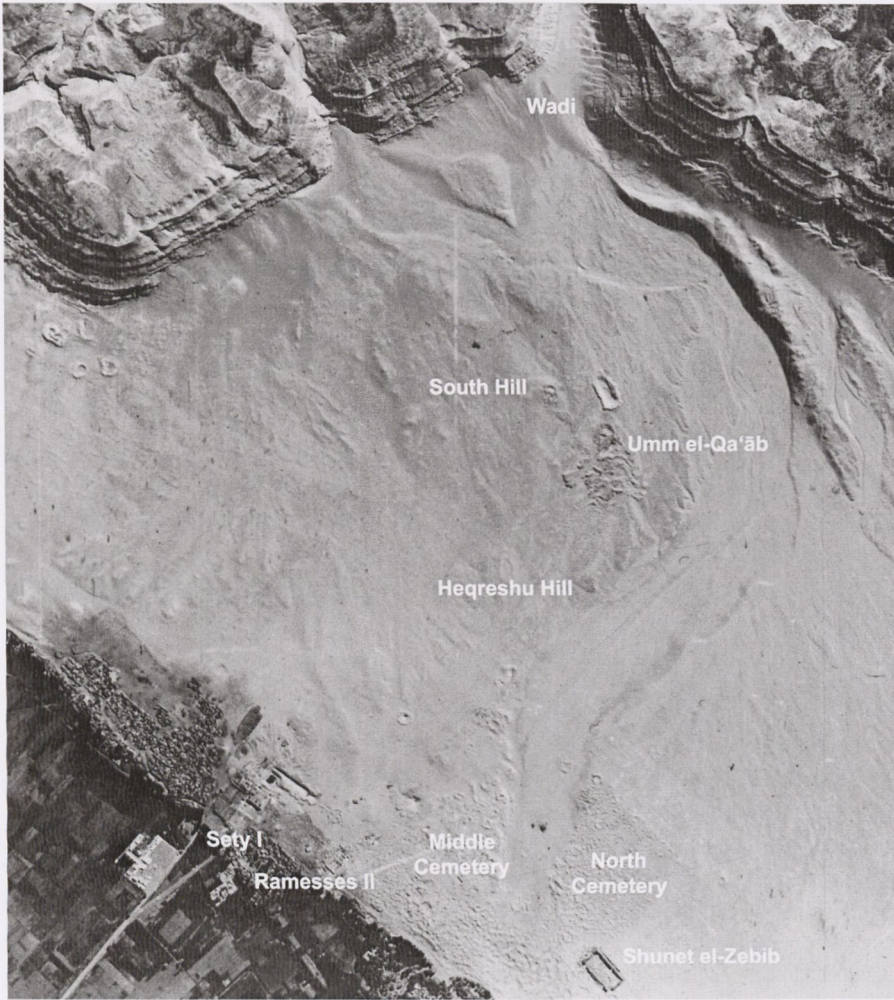


Figure 11. Aerial view of Abydos with the main sites. © DAI Osiriskultprojekt.

and turn them into an offering surface in the desert.⁸ The masses of vessels in Umm el-Qaab are unparalleled within pharaonic Egypt, which is in general very rich in pottery (fig. 1.2).

The pottery at Umm el-Qaab attests to cultic activities from the late Old Kingdom (c. 2300-2100 BCE) throughout all ages until the Ptolemaic (332-30 BCE), Roman (30 BCE-395 CE) and Coptic periods (395-640 CE). According to the ceramics, one of the heydays of the cult for Osiris at Umm el-Qaab was clearly the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty/Kushite period (c. 722-655 BCE).⁹ Recent fieldwork by the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo resulted in a considerable increase in understanding the nature, date, size and variability of in situ pottery deposits in the

surroundings of the tomb of Djer/Osiris datable to the Kushite period.¹⁰

This paper will present the new evidence for votive offerings and other religious practices connected with the cult of Osiris at Umm el-Qaab. It also aims to contextualise the material remains of religious practises over a timespan of almost two millennia. Spatial features of the religious landscape of Abydos will be addressed as well.

Ceramic Vessels as Votive Offerings for Osiris?

One of the main issues with the masses of ceramic vessels around the tomb of Osiris at Umm el-Qaab is whether they are to be interpreted as offering vessels or as votives to the god. Several details of the archaeological findings offer here some clues. It will be discussed in the following, whether a superordinate term can be used

8 Budka 2014a, 57. For representations of rituals within desert environments see Wilkinson 1994, 391 with n. 23; Settgest 1963, 4, 64-65. I am grateful for these references to Andreas Effland.

9 Budka 2010a, 57-58; 2010b, 51-52.

10 Budka 2017; 2014.



Figure 1.2. Assemblages of votive cups at Umm el-Qaab. © DAI Osiriskultprojekt.

that describes the most probable function of all vessels deposited at Umm el-Qaab. In archaeology, boundaries between votive, sacrificial and depositional are often fluid and were only with the advent of the ‘Cognitive Archaeology’ discussed in more detail.¹¹ It is often argued that a functional assignment and definition of objects depends on accompanying textual findings.¹² The intentional deposition is generally understood as aiming at “exchange of material objects for supernatural returns”.¹³ For deposited ceramic vessels, the question arises in this context, whether they served as containers for offerings or whether they actually represent the votive, being deposited in the context of ritual acts.¹⁴

At Umm el-Qaab, an in situ deposit of *qaabs* in the surroundings of the tomb of Khasekhemwy illustrates that the vessels were carefully laid out reflecting organised votive activities embedded in the yearly festival of Osiris.¹⁵ Organic remains as contents of the *qaabs* strongly point to Osiris as the god of vegetation, but especially to the aspects of regeneration and fertility.¹⁶ These in situ deposits clearly attest that both vessels and botanical material, in

particular fresh branches, were simultaneously deposited at Umm el-Qaab (fig. 1.3). In many cases, the filling of *qaabs* with some coprolites (one or two pieces) could be observed.¹⁷ In other *qaabs* charcoal and incense remnants were found; some of the bowls were also painted with red paint, possibly with an apotropaic meaning.¹⁸ One has to assume therefore a ritual (or several rituals) in which the *qaabs* and fresh, still-green branches (mostly of sycamores) and small amounts of coprolite were used together,¹⁹ sometimes incorporating red paint to mark the vessels with irregular splashes.

The presence of sheep/goat dung in the *qaabs* offers various lines of possible explanation, from an association with Seth and enemies of Osiris,²⁰ to dung balls of the scarab beetle and thus a solar connotation to more general sacred aspects.²¹ All in all, we have to assume that the contents of these ritual deposits were highly evocative and hold

11 See e.g. Müller 2017; Budka 2014a, 63-64; Lindström/Pilz 2013; Osborne 2004, 3.

12 Osborne 2004.

13 Osborne 2004, 2.

14 Cf. Müller 2017.

15 Effland 2010, 25-30; Effland 2006.

16 Effland 2010, 29-30.

17 See Von Lieven 2011, 297-298 with references.

18 Budka 2014a, 62; 2010a, 41 with ns 117-118.

19 Effland 2010, 29-30.

20 Von Lieven 2011, 297-299.

21 For dung and excrements as *materia sacra* in religious contexts in Egypt see Von Lieven 2011, 292-296 with references. As was pointed out by Ramadan Hussein during the conference in Leiden, pottery deposits in Late Period shaft tombs in Saqqara also yielded dung, here in association with mummification. For pottery deposits connected with the embalming in Late Period shaft tombs see e.g. finds at Abusir (Smoláriková 2009, 79-88; 2008, 200).



Figure 1.3. Detail of *qaab* deposit with botanical remains.
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presumably a mythological meaning.²² Equally meaningful are the red splashes or irregular red paint on some of the pottery vessels. These are maybe a reference to blood and to real food offerings and belong to a very long tradition at Umm el-Qaab. In the vicinity of the famous Naqada period tomb U-j,²³ offering cult and the deposition of ceramic vessels was observed. Among more than 100 votive vessels which were deposited on the desert surface,²⁴ one example showed irregular red paint very similar to the Late Period examples of *qaabs*.²⁵

Overall, there seem to have been different reasons/ritual contexts for the deposition of these vessels at Umm el-Qaab. We know from textual sources that the complex cult for Osiris includes a number of different ritual acts, most of which were performed in the course of Osirian festivals, in particular the Khoiak festival.²⁶ These diverse rituals appear to be reflected in the variance of ceramic depositions in Umm el-Qaab and also find parallels in the intricacy of ritual activities connected with embalming deposits.²⁷ Textual sources attest the Opening of the Mouth ritual and apotropaic rituals during the deposition of embalming remains,²⁸ stressing the complexity which needs to be considered when explaining ritual traces.

This also applies to the ceramic vessels themselves. Votive vessels, cult ceramics and offering ceramics – these terms are often very difficult to differentiate,²⁹ and all appear to relate to the pottery in Umm el-Qaab. However, some characteristics can be mentioned that underline the votive character. A large part of the vessels in question was clearly produced specifically for local rituals and deliberately deposited in a sacred place, just at the Osiris grave. This holds true first of all for the *qaabs*. The suggestion that the small-scale *qaab* form is specifically related to the local Abydene cult at the tomb of Osiris finds support by the fact that very similar forms already exist in the Middle Kingdom, namely in Umm el-Qaab itself³⁰ and especially in the temple complex of Senusret III in South Abydos.³¹ A local production of the *qaabs* is very likely, not only due to the large number, but also because of the manufacturing technique which is almost ad-hoc style, suggesting that no proper long-term drying of the vessels took place.³² In general, a high proportion of the vessels deposited at Umm el-Qaab are not usable vessels.³³ Such non-usable vessels are in general widely known in various cultures and periods, primarily in funerary

22 See Von Lieven 2011, 298-299 for an association of sycamore branches with Nut and Seth.

23 Dreyer 1999; 1998.

24 Mostly simple dishes and plates: Dreyer 1998, 15-16, figs 8-9.

25 See Budka 2019.

26 Kucharek 2017, 122-123; Backes 2015, 18-23.

27 Budka 2006.

28 Von Lieven 2011, 293-294.

29 See Lindström/Pilz 2013, 267.

30 Budka 2010d, 60.

31 Wegner 2007, fig. 114, nos 91-92; fig. 125, nos 100-104.

32 This is evident from technological features like the manufacture of the bases but also from deformed parts of the vessels, very likely a result of the transport/movement of the vessel in a still wet state.

33 Due to the small size or pierced vessel bottoms, see Budka 2010a, 58-61.

contexts, often thought to hold a symbolic character.³⁴ These factors suggest that in the case of Umm el-Qaab the vessels are actual votive offerings for Osiris associated with a prayer/ritual act rather than being containers for offerings. This is especially evident for vessels from Umm el-Qaab which carry texts or labels.³⁵ Among the group of inscribed vessels, the so-called heart vessels are particularly relevant. These vessels in the shape of the *jb*-heart hieroglyph carry representations, dedications and ritual spells, which clearly mark the vessels as votives of high officials, among them the prominent Ramesside High Priest of Osiris at Abydos, Wenennefer.³⁶ Thus, from the Nineteenth Dynasty we have strong evidence and with the heart vessels the actual material manifestation of ritual performances at the tomb of Osiris in Umm el-Qaab.

I would like to suggest that the small percentage of inscribed/marked votive ceramics³⁷ in Umm el-Qaab helps with interpreting the mass of unlabelled ceramic vessels, which themselves provide various interpretive approaches. This case study from Umm el-Qaab can also serve as an example that texts should always be interpreted as complementary to, rather than as, substantive evidence, also in ritual contexts. Material findings are often even more variable than the textual testimonies that are generally associated with elites in Egypt. In the specific case of Umm el-Qaab, the material findings testify to votive actions over a very long period of time and give secondary evidence for the communication of people with the god Osiris, potentially supplementing the inscribed elite votives attested primarily from the New Kingdom.

For example, from the Middle Kingdom to Ptolemaic times, numerous model vessels, which probably have a symbolic value and are most likely to be interpreted as votive vessels, were deposited at Umm el-Qaab.³⁸ The millions of *qaabs* from the Late Period (Twenty-Fifth – Thirtieth Dynasties, c. 722-343 BCE) to the Ptolemaic era have previously been interpreted as a sign of a public, intensified pilgrimage at the site,³⁹ and thus of a changed agency concerning the main religious activities at Umm el-Qaab because restricted access to the site is well attested for the Middle Kingdom and other early periods.⁴⁰

However, recent research suggests that both the *qaabs* and the so-called Late Period bottles were deposited in the course of various Osirian rituals and festivals and were certainly subject to certain standards, being handled by ‘informed’ specialists and trained personnel of the cult.⁴¹ This is a new line of research, focusing in particular on the actual archaeological evidence and the careful layout of these ceramic deposits. Our interpretation thus differs from previous explanations, taking the millions of ceramic vessels as indication for open access to the site, based on the illusion of a random deposition of the pots which is actually not the case as our excavations of in situ pottery deposits clarified. All in all, I propose based on the recent finds that the situation in the Late Period was still very like it was in the Middle Kingdom, for which we have plenty of textual and archaeological evidence deriving from offering chapels and stelae, primarily associated with North Abydos.⁴² According to these texts from chapels and royal stelae, part of the rites at the Osiris celebrations were public and visible to everyone, but the beginning, end, and climax of the ritual – the resurrection of the god – was celebrated by a small, select circle of initiated priests, with every unauthorised observer banned and excluded.⁴³

Overall, according to the current state of research, questions about the participants in the deposition of vessels in Umm el-Qaab, and the concrete performance of the acts are still open, but it is possible to draw some parallels with the complex practices around animal mummies as votives in Egyptian animal necropolises.⁴⁴ Also at these animal necropolises, thousands of votive vessels are integrated into a complex structure with a high degree of organization.⁴⁵ I would therefore argue that the ceramic vessels deposited at the Osiris tomb in Umm el-Qaab represent an essential part of the Osirian votive offerings⁴⁶ – the vessels themselves, not their contents were of prime importance. Some of the vessels were probably deposited empty.⁴⁷ Quantitatively, ceramics are even the largest share of the find material deposited for the god at the site.

34 See Parker Pearson 2003, 10.

35 A. Effland 2013; 2010.

36 For Wenennefer as very prominent agent for religious practices at Abydos see most recently Raedler 2017 and see A. Effland 2013 with references.

37 For pot marks of the votive pottery for Osiris at Umm el-Qaab see Budka 2015.

38 Effland 2006, 136-137, fig. 2, model vessels in limestone. For general aspects of model vessels see Müller 2008, 151-152; Allen 2006; for miniature vessels cf. also Schattner/Zuchtriegel 2013, 259-263.

39 Richards 1999, 95.

40 See below and O'Connor 2009, 87-96; Effland 2006, 149.

41 Budka 2019; 2014; Effland 2010; for the *qaabs* see already Müller 2006b, 47.

42 See Effland 2006, 148; Simpson 1974.

43 Budka 2018, 74; Effland/Budka/Effland 2010, 79; Bonnet 1952, 496.

44 Budka 2019.

45 See Kessler 2003; Fitzenreiter 2003, 234; Kessler 1989; for the votive character of animal mummies see also Price 2015.

46 Effland 2006, 136; for Ptolemaic “votive pottery” from North Abydos see Pouls-Wegner 2011.

47 See Budka 2010a, 59.

Votive Pottery marking Sacred Places and Processional Routes at Abydos

The votive pottery at Umm el-Qaab can be associated with deposits at other locations and landmarks throughout the site of Abydos. It becomes obvious that the vessels marked the main cultic axes constructing the sacred landscape of Abydos which was interpreted as the stage for the Osirian myth, being used as the processional ways during the festival for Osiris.⁴⁸ This can be illustrated by a deposit at the Seti I complex. As one of the major buildings in Abydos, this temple complex⁴⁹ features a so-called desert pylon in its western part, opening the mud brick enclosure towards Umm el-Qaab and clearly connecting the monument to the presumed tomb of Osiris in the desert. Remarkably, in front of this western pylon there is a large deposit of votive pottery very similar to the ones found at Umm el-Qaab.⁵⁰ The pottery of this deposit mainly dates to the Late Period, especially to the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty which was one of the heydays of depositing pottery at Umm el-Qaab.⁵¹

The studies by Ute and Andreas Effland have revealed important connections between North Abydos, Umm el-Qaab, the Seti I complex and also South Abydos (fig. 1.1). A significant landmark at Umm el-Qaab was also the so-called 'southern hill'.⁵² It is striking that the main cultic axes constructing the sacred landscape of Abydos and representing the processional ways during the festival for Osiris⁵³ were marked by votive deposits, predominately dating to the Late Period.⁵⁴ It seems that the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty reused already existing structures and revived processional features set up during the New Kingdom. A similar Kushite re-construction of the sacred landscape can also be observed at Thebes.⁵⁵ The underlying concept for this was not only religious continuity, but probably also conscious references to earlier periods, frequently labelled as 'archaism'⁵⁶ and especially the wish to legitimise Kushite rulers by embedding them and their monuments into previous traditions.⁵⁷

Votive Pottery of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty

The votive pottery of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty illustrates cultic activities at Umm el-Qaab and the use of processional routes connected with the cult of Osiris. Despite the long

tradition of votive offerings around the royal tombs of the Early Dynastic period (c. 2900-2545 BCE), the Kushite period marks the beginning of some specific vessel shapes. The most significant new type is the so-called *qaab* that continued into the Ptolemaic era.⁵⁸ It has to be stressed that the *qaab* recalls miniature vessels of the Middle Kingdom specific to Abydos and in some respects also resembles canopic jars associated with the embalming.⁵⁹ The only close parallel for this specific vessel type outside of Abydos can be found at the royal Kushite necropolis of Nuri.⁶⁰ There, the cups which seem to represent copies of the *qaabs* from Abydos were primarily used in foundation deposits in the Kushite pyramids. This suggests that people with first-hand experience of ritual activities in Twenty-Fifth Dynasty Umm el-Qaab passed on their knowledge in order to shape Kushite funerary traditions.⁶¹ This transmission of religious ideas from Abydos to ancient Sudan raises several questions and will also be discussed below.

Apart from the *qaabs*, a specific type of storage vessel, the so-called Late Period bottles are most common during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty at Umm el-Qaab. These large bottles are a very special type of vessel, clearly locally made, produced in very large numbers and arranged to form two parallel rows marking pathways.⁶² Until recently, no traces of any content within the bottles were observed, suggesting that they were always deposited empty.⁶³ However, the latest discovery of a very large ceramic deposit at the tomb of Djer allows an updated assessment of Twenty-Fifth Dynasty votive activity at Umm el-Qaab.⁶⁴

A New Deposit at the Tomb of Djer/Osiris

Already in 2011, the first vessels of a votive deposit were unearthed along the eastern edge of the subsidiary tombs of Djer. These vessels are connected with the row of vessels found well preserved in the area before the tomb of Den⁶⁵ leading towards the south, to the so-called 'southern hill'.⁶⁶ In 2012 and 2013, more vessels of this deposit labelled O-NNO were unearthed. It became obvious that the pottery deposit excavated in 1985 above B40, comprising 300-400 vessels,⁶⁷ was probably once part of O-NNO in its south-eastern area (fig. 1.4). The

48 Effland/Effland 2010a; 2010b; see also Kucharek 2017.

49 Schröder 2010, 104 with further references; O'Connor 2009, 43-61.

50 Budka 2018; Effland/Effland 2017; 2010b, 142.

51 Budka 2017 with references.

52 Effland/Effland 2017; Effland/Budka/Effland 2010, 82-83, fig. 52; Effland/Effland 2010b, 137-139.

53 See Kucharek 2017; Lavier 1998; 1989.

54 Budka 2019.

55 Budka 2010b, 60-61 with references.

56 Cf. Morkot 2014; Tiradritti 2008.

57 Budka 2017.

58 Budka 2010a, 45; Müller 2006a, 82.

59 Budka 2010a, 58.

60 Dunham 1955, 125, fig. 125 (Nu. 9); 157, fig. 118 (Nu. 10); pls 134-135; see also Budka 2017, 54, fig. 1; 2010a, 45-46; Pumpenmeier 1998a, 134.

61 Cf. Budka 2014b.

62 Budka 2010b, 56-57.

63 Budka 2010b, 55.

64 Budka 2019; 2017; 2014a.

65 Müller 2006b, 39-48; Naville 1914, 38, pl. 18.4 and pl. 19.1.

66 Effland/Effland 2010b, 138.

67 Aston 1996.

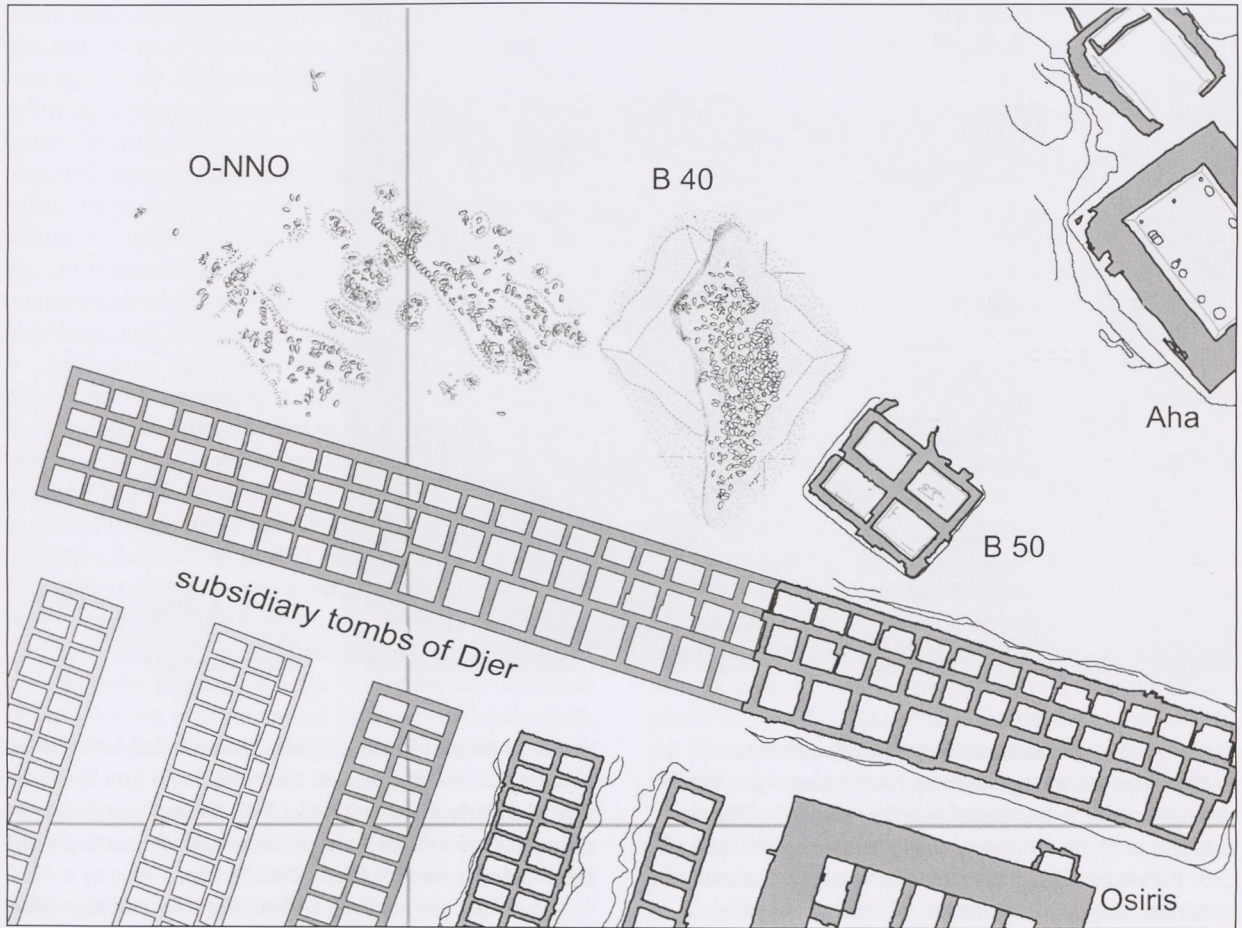


Figure 1.4. Plan of the deposit O-NNO on the eastern side of the tomb of Djer. Plan by U. Effland, I. Klenner, M. Sählhoff et al. © DAI Osiriskultprojekt.

most important vessel types fall into the two categories of closed and open forms. 24% are storage vessels of types already well attested at Umm el-Qaab, the so-called Late Period bottles, storage vessels of globular to elongated shape with various types of necks and modeled rims.⁶⁸ The large majority of the open vessels are various types of *qaabs*;⁶⁹ in addition, a few other dishes and incense burners are present.

Several references to ritual activities were observed in O-NNO.⁷⁰ First of all, a large number of ‘killing holes’ (intentional perforations of vessels executed post-firing) was recognised.⁷¹ Secondly, several traces of irregular red paint, possibly also with an apotropaic character, were documented on various types of vessels, both on *qaabs* as well as Late Period bottles (cf. above). The ritual breaking or ‘killing’ is a widespread funerary practice encountered

in various cultures throughout the world, neither limited to ancient times nor to a single explanation.⁷² Yet, the most common explanation is that objects were neutralised in this way, since they were associated with hostile powers, thereby preventing any future profane reuse.⁷³

For understanding the process of depositing votive vessels during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, traces of contents inside the Late Period bottles of O-NNO are especially relevant, in particular because it was previously assumed that the vessels have been deposited empty. Complete examples and fragments of *qaabs* and remains of their filling (botanical remains and sand) were discovered within the storage vessels. Thus, for the first time, the deposition of the large bottles can be directly associated with the ritual deposition of *qaabs*.⁷⁴ Because the contents

68 Budka 2010b, 57, fig. 16.

69 Budka 2014a, 58, fig. 5; 2010a, 44, fig. 23.

70 Budka 2014a, 57.

71 Budka 2019, fig. 3.

72 See e.g. Meyer-Orlac 1982, 54-56 and 317-318; Grinsell 1975, 60-67.

73 El-Shohoumi 2004, 316.

74 See, however, already the pit A 4 with a Late Period bottle and several *qaabs* excavated at the Heqareshu hill; Pumpenmeier 1998, 134.



Figure 1.5. Detail of O-NNO pottery deposit. © DAI Osiriskultprojekt.

of the *qaabs* are identical with that documented in the in situ deposits at the tomb of Khasekhemwy, a similar ritual framework embedded into the calendar of the Osiris cult seems likely. The association of the *qaabs* with the Late Period bottles is therefore of great importance for understanding the process of depositing the vessels. In some cases, the votive dishes were obviously positioned in already laid out storage vessels. In other cases, small groups of *qaabs* were put upside-down on the ground next to the Late Period bottles.⁷⁵ Here, an unusual feature of one of these *qaab* assemblages within O-NNO was recognised: from 16 dishes, one is not of Late Period date, but rather an Early Dynastic lid.⁷⁶ Consequently, ancient and modern vessels were used side by side within a pottery votive deposit laid out in the Eighth Century BCE. The Early Dynastic lid is probably a piece from the original burial of Djer and it was obviously ritually appropriated for the votive offerings to Osiris more than 2,000 years later.⁷⁷ There is another aspect speaking for a long tradition of the deposits at Umm el-Qaab: The common position of *qaabs* within the deposit of O-NNO, upside down with the mouth to the ground, finds already parallels in the Naqada period deposit around tomb U-j in cemetery U.⁷⁸

References to the original tomb contents from the early periods can be regarded as important aspects for understanding the complex composition of the Late Period

votive pottery at Umm el-Qaab. The so-called Late Period bottles give the impression to recall ovoid jars from the Pre- and Early Dynastic tombs.⁷⁹ There was obviously the clear wish to connect to and to physically continue the original inventory for Osiris Djer.⁸⁰

All in all, the deposit O-NNO (fig. 1.5) and the other remains of large streets composed of votive vessels can be understood as way markings in connection with the mysteries of Osiris and especially the Khoiak festival. Depositing the votive vessels seems to have been primarily undertaken during apotropaic rituals related to the god Osiris and his regeneration, as evidenced by the use of organic material within the vessels. The row of votive vessels at Umm el-Qaab also emphasises the importance of the connection between the Osireion and the 'southern hill' (fig. 1.1). Similar to finds made by Naville, during recent work more clay statues of Osiris were discovered.⁸¹ These statues were buried during the Khoiak rites at Umm el-Qaab. This all implies that the pottery vessels were themselves votives, but also markers of important pathways during the Osirian festivals.

75 Budka 2014a, 62-63, figs 15-17.

76 Budka 2014a, 63, fig. 17; see also Budka 2019.

77 Budka 2019; 2014a; cf. also Müller 2017.

78 See above, Budka 2019; Dreyer 1998, 15-16, figs 8-9.

79 Budka 2010a, 60.

80 Budka 2014a, 56-65. This might also be related to the Kushite preferences for 'archaism' in relief and sculpture, see Budka 2010a, 60 with references.

81 Pamer/Effland 2015.

The Re-Awakening of Osiris

Ute and Andreas Effland have convincingly argued that concepts of the Egyptian Netherworld were projected on to the landscape of Abydos, which in turn became a sacred place.⁸² The earliest burials at Umm el-Qaab facing the large wadi and thus the presumed entrance to the Netherworld made the plateau the perfect place to perform rituals aiming to achieve regeneration and resurrection (see fig. 1.1). Umm el-Qaab was the centre of this cult activity, which lasted several millennia, resulted in millions of pots and focused on continuity as well as change.⁸³

References to royal ancestors' cult and royal succession are specific to Abydos and can be illustrated, for example, with the complex of Ahmose and the pyramid for Tetisheri,⁸⁴ but also the famous kings list from the Seti I temple.⁸⁵ Reflections of ancestors' cult may go back as early as to the First Dynasty,⁸⁶ although this has been questioned by some scholars.⁸⁷ All in all, I agree with Ute Effland that ancestors' cult might be viewed as the most important 'cult-impact'⁸⁸ for the site which is also very evident for the Kushite rulers and their references to royal ancestors.⁸⁹

The most impressive relic of the Middle Kingdom re-modification of the tomb of Djer is the 'Osirian bed', representing a mortuary bed with the recumbent Osiris.⁹⁰ This bed, and especially texts and reliefs from the temple of Seti I at Abydos, illustrates the main theme of the Osirian cult: the regeneration of the god, his awakening from a passive mode and the impregnating of Isis are all essential for the cosmic cycle as well as the royal and the funerary cult.⁹¹ Osiris is thought to be buried at the site of Umm el-Qaab and received rejuvenating ritual acts which focus on reactivating his body functions.

During the recent work by the German Archaeological Institute, a new shrine for the 'Osirian bed' was re-discovered and identified based on thousands of small pieces.⁹² Although the texts and decoration on this shrine is heavily disturbed, it is very likely that the bed and the shrine carried the royal names of the same ruler from the Thirteenth Dynasty (c. 1759-1630 BCE). Remarkable is a scene showing the milk offering of the king. The ritual context of this scene is most probably the rejuvenation

of the god,⁹³ thus corresponding to the general theme expressed by the shrine and bed. Furthermore, Andreas Effland has suggested that one particular relevant scene within the regeneration theme of Osiris was also once present on the shrine:⁹⁴ the awakening of the god by Horus which is best known from the scene in the Osireion which is presumed to be its earliest representation.⁹⁵ In the context of the heydays of votive pottery at Umm el-Qaab, it is striking that this motif is otherwise well known from royal tombs at Thebes and Tanis, from Theban elite tombs⁹⁶ and royal tombs in Kurru (Ku. 16, Tanwetamani and Ku. 5, Qalhata)⁹⁷ as well as on private *krsw* coffins of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.⁹⁸ The awakening of Osiris was thus strongly revived during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty and the scene made its appearance in ancient Sudan. It needs to be stressed that, according to textual sources and here especially documentary papyri, we have to expect a continuous, probably dynamic transition of the motif of the re-awakening, strongly connected with the embalming process and corresponding techniques.⁹⁹ The pictorial evidence from Tanis suggests that we are probably missing a considerable amount of sources from the Libyan period (c. 1076-746 BCE). Thus, the reviving of the motif in the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty is at least partly reflecting our state of knowledge and the existing respectively lacking sources.¹⁰⁰ However, the close connections between Abydos, Thebes and Kush on the religious level make it very likely that we also do see an actual increase.¹⁰¹

The familiarity and involvement of the Kushite rulers, their officials, priests, architects and artists with the site of Abydos and its monuments left also other clear traces in Kush. The much-debated form of the underground rooms of the pyramid of Taharqa at Nuri can only be explained with a high degree of knowledge of the actual building of the Osireion at Abydos.¹⁰² It is noteworthy that the pyramid of Taharqa is not the only monument of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty recalling the Osirian sanctuary at the back side of the Seti I complex. Reflections of the Abydene monument in certain sets of rooms within the subterranean structures

82 Effland 2014, 27; Effland/Effland 2013, 11.

83 Budka 2019.

84 O'Connor 2009, 105-110; Harvey 1998.

85 Budka 2019; Effland 2014, 27; Kemp 1989, 21-22.

86 Morenz 2004, 108, n. 458; Dreyer 1996, 72-73, fig. 26.

87 Heagy 2014; Wengrow 2006, 131; Dreyer 1996, 73.

88 Effland 2013, 324-326.

89 Cf. Revez 2010 for an adaption of the Osirian myth for the Kushite royal succession under Taharqa.

90 Effland/Effland 2017; Effland/Budka/Effland 2010, 33-35; Trello 1997; Leahy 1977.

91 Cf. Budka 2018; Roberson 2013; O'Connor 2009, 31-41.

92 See most recently Effland/Effland 2017 with references.

93 Cf. Cassor-Pfeiffer 2017.

94 Effland/Effland 2017, 21, n. 9.

95 Roberson 2013, 1-2 and *passim*.

96 TT 132, Ramose, see Greco 2014 and TT 410, Mutirdis, see Roberson 2013, pl. 5; Assmann 1977a, 91, fig. 41.

97 See Dunham 1950, 38-41, pl. 9: Qalhata; 60-63, pl. 19: Tanwetamani.

98 E.g. CG 41001bis; personal communication Cynthia M. Sheikholeslami, September 2012; see also Greco 2014.

99 I am grateful to Koen Donker van Heel for pointing out this aspect and for stressing the importance of documentary texts as references to the techniques of embalming. For the complex history and text composition of the 'Embalming Ritual' see also Töpfer 2017; 2015.

100 Cf. Jurman 2009.

101 See Budka 2017; 2012, 32.

102 Cf. Kendall 2008.

of the Theban temple-tombs in the Asasif were already noted by Eigner,¹⁰³ for example in the tomb of Montuemhat, who had very close relations with the Kushite court.¹⁰⁴ Montuemhat left two important rock inscriptions at Abydos, illustrating his visit to the site.¹⁰⁵ Also remarkable is the ‘Osirian monumental tomb’ section of Theban Tomb (TT) 33¹⁰⁶, for which recently the term ‘Abydos pilgrimage place’ was suggested¹⁰⁷ and which illustrates the strong connections between Thebes and Abydos.

These references to Abydos and the Osireion also correspond to the general focus on Osiris during the First Millennium BCE, which markedly increased during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.¹⁰⁸ In my perspective, it is also no coincidence that the only known burial places of Kushites in Egypt – Thebes and Abydos – are also sites with a long tradition of pyramid building, especially regarding mud brick pyramids. It is striking that during the Late Period, pyramids which became the tomb memorials for the Kushite kings were used within burial monuments at both sites.¹⁰⁹ The Kushite pyramids built in Sudan were influenced by New Kingdom mud brick pyramids in Egypt and Nubia, not by Old or Middle Kingdom pyramids in stone.¹¹⁰ Thebes and Abydos therefore offer common funerary architectural elements which seem to have been highly relevant during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.

Summary: The Ritual Framework for Osirian Votive Vessels

The long-lasting tradition of pottery votive offerings at Umm el-Qaab, reaching from the Predynastic period until late Roman times with a florescence in the Kushite period, relates to kingship, royal ancestors and the god Osiris. The new finds in O-NNO illustrate that, despite the very high number of ceramic votive vessels, the millions of pots at Umm el-Qaab were deposited in an organised way during the Late Period. The ritual traces and the careful layout of the deposits strongly speak against an open ‘pilgrim activity’ and a random deposition of the vessels by pilgrims. This was already indicated by the in situ deposits of *qaabs* meticulously studied by Ute Effland,¹¹¹ and is now strengthened by the organised deposits of the Late Period bottles in conjunction with *qaabs*. Since the pottery deposit O-NNO allows a clear association between *qaabs* and Late Period bottles, it is now unlikely that any

kind of vessel could have been deposited at Umm el-Qaab in the First Millennium BCE by an ordinary visitor or an individual pilgrim. We have to assume that priests and other personnel of the temples were responsible, along similar lines to what was always proposed for the earlier periods (especially the Middle and the New Kingdom). It is clear that a lot of manpower must have been involved in arranging the votive vessels on special occasions (festive dates) embedded in the sacred landscape of Abydos. Of course, one cannot exclude that during the extraordinary circumstances which are always associated with festivals, turning the regular order up-side-down, restricted access was modified to open access,¹¹² resulting in specific festival votive offering behaviours.¹¹³

The deposit O-NNO forms an integral part of the sacred landscape shaped during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty in Abydos. Following major landmarks from earlier periods, especially the complex of Seti I with the Osireion, the Kushites also activated the old processional way through the large wadi (fig. 1.1). Burials of Kushites discovered at Cemetery D towards the north of this wadi¹¹⁴ and monuments such as the stelae recently identified by Leahy as Kushite dedications,¹¹⁵ further support the prominence of ceremonies associated with Osiris and his burial place at Umm el-Qaab during the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.¹¹⁶ The importance of Abydos, and here especially the concept of a sanctuary of Osiris as represented by the Osireion, led to the much-debated form of the underground rooms of the pyramid of the Kushite king Taharqa in Nuri.¹¹⁷

All in all, there was probably no single, regulated deposition of votive pots at Umm el-Qaab. However, the deposits are the results of ritual acts which are clearly associated with Osiris and the Khoiak festival, but cannot be specified in all respects by means of the archaeological evidence alone.¹¹⁸ A complex ritual framework, comprising several rituals, seems altogether very likely.¹¹⁹

In the context of Umm el-Qaab, I would like to suggest, however, that it is not a coincidence that during the Kushite heyday of depositing vessels at the tomb of Osiris also the theme of re-awakening Osiris was reinforced, at least according to our present knowledge (see above). In addition to the scenes in Theban and Kushite tombs

103 Eigner 1984, 163-183 and see also Budka 2010c, 71 and 78.

104 See Budka 2010c, 65 with further references in n. 246; Leclant 1961.

105 Effland/Effland 2013, 81.

106 Traunecker 2014, 217-221.

107 Traunecker 2018.

108 Budka 2010c, 476-477.

109 Budka 2012, 32.

110 Lohwasser 2004.

111 Effland 2010, and see above.

112 See e.g. Rummel 2013; Assmann 1991.

113 I am thankful to Ute Rummel for this important note about the specific character of festivals which might have influenced votive practices.

114 Budka 2012 with further references.

115 Leahy 2014; see also Leahy 1994.

116 Effland/Effland 2013, 78-79.

117 Kendall 2008; see also Budka 2014b.

118 Cf. above; for general discussions of these interpretative challenges see e.g. Görmer 2006, 289-298; Eggert 2001, 78.

119 I am very grateful to Ramadan Hussein for stressing the aspect of a complex ritual framework during the Leiden conference.

mentioned above, one can also add the re-composition of the Ritual of the Hours.¹²⁰ Awakening hymns were introduced into the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty version of the Rituals of the Hours of the Night with the first attestation in the Kushite tomb of Karakhamun at Thebes (TT 223).¹²¹ Twenty-Fifth Dynasty *qaab* votive cups with organic material might also very well refer to the resurrection of the god; the red paint on some votive vessels might have served as protection against enemies like the rows of vessels marking a pathway to the safe burial of the god.

It is still unclear when the ritual scene of the awakening of Osiris was developed; Roberson argued for the New Kingdom and most likely the Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1292-1191 BCE).¹²² There are some indications of an earlier conception;¹²³ the evidence from Umm el-Qaab could also be counted as supporting an earlier tradition, based on the shrine for the Osirian bed but also on the votive pottery.¹²⁴ With all the innovative aspects already known for the Kushite religion, building upon older tradition, the revival of the awakening motif might have been a modification of the available New Kingdom sources like the Osireion, but potentially also included older sources which are still lost, possibly from Abydos or elsewhere. The focus on this moment of awakening within the late sources like at Edfu and Dendera does not come as a surprise because it is the essential aspect of the Osiris myth, enabling the succession of kingship and the complete idea of resurrection. Thus, it seems likely that more traces of this very ritual are still to be found. Although it must remain open whether the votive vessels from the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty at Umm el-Qaab are really connected with the ritual of awakening Osiris within the general sphere of Osirian rituals, I hope to have illustrated that contextualising material remains of ritual activities has much potential and leads to further questions. The complexity of the rituals and whether similar acts were performed for various rituals, thus if the same material evidence can actually reflect diverse activities which appear blended in the archaeological remains, needs to be investigated in the future. The main theme of the funerary and temple rituals in Late Period Egypt – at Abydos and beyond as reflected in pottery deposits, material remains as well as in architectural designs and text compositions – was, however, clearly Osiris and the resurrection of the god.

120 For the rituals of the “Hourly Watches”, *Stundenwachen*, attested both in the funerary and in the temple sphere; see Pries 2011.

121 Griffin 2017.

122 Roberson 2013.

123 Werning 2014; see already Quack 1999. For this reference, I am grateful to Andreas Effland.

124 Effland/Effland 2017, 21.